The Theology of the French Reformed Churches

Reformed Historical-Theological Studies

General Editors
Joel R. Beeke and Jay T. Collier

Books in Series:

The Christology of John Owen
Richard W. Daniels

The Covenant Theology of Caspar Olevianus
Lyle D. Bierma

John Diodati's Doctrine of Holy Scripture
Andrea Ferrari

Caspar Olevian and the Substance of the Covenant
R. Scott Clark

Introduction to Reformed Scholasticism
Willem J. van Asselt et al.

The Spiritual Brotherhood
Paul R. Schaefer Jr.

Teaching Predestination
David H. Kranendonk

The Marrow Controversy and Seceder Tradition
William VanDoodewaard

Unity and Continuity in Covenantal Thought
Andrew A. Woolsey

The Theology of the French Reformed Churches
Martin I. Klauber

The Theology of the French Reformed Churches:

From Henri IV to the Revocation of the Edict of Nantes

Edited by
Martin I. Klauber

Reformation Heritage Books
Grand Rapids, Michigan

The Theology of the French Reformed Churches
© 2014 by Martin I. Klauber

All rights reserved. No part of this book may be used or reproduced in any manner whatsoever without written permission except in the case of brief quotations embodied in critical articles and reviews. Direct your requests to the publisher at the following addresses:

Reformation Heritage Books
2965 Leonard St. NE
Grand Rapids, MI 49525
616-977-0889
orders@heritagebooks.org
www.heritagebooks.org

Printed in the United States of America
20 21 22 23 24 25/10 9 8 7 6 5 4 3 2

Library of Congress Cataloging-in-Publication Data

The theology of the French Reformed churches : from Henri IV to the revocation of the Edict of Nantes / edited by Martin I. Klauber.
pages cm. — (Reformed historical-theological studies)
Includes bibliographical references and index.
ISBN 978-1-60178-313-4 (pbk. : alk. paper) 1. Reformed Church—Doctrines—History—17th century. 2. Reformed Church—Doctrines—History—16th century. 3. Reformed Church—France—History—17th century. 4. Reformed Church—France—History—16th century. 5. France—Church history—17th century. 6. France—Church history—16th century. I. Klauber, Martin I., 1956- editor.
BX9422.3.T44 2014
230'.45—dc23
2014025237

For additional Reformed literature, request a free book list from Reformation Heritage Books at the above regular or email address.

To **John D. Woodbridge** and
Robert M. Kingdon
(*in memoriam*)
for their inspiration, mentorship, and
teaching on the French Reformed churches

Table of Contents

Introduction — *Martin I. Klauber* 1

Part One: The Historical Background

1. The Cradle of Reformed Theology: The Reformed Churches from Calvin's Geneva through Henry IV and the Edict of Nantes — *Jeannine Olson* 9
2. Theodore Beza (1519–1605) and the Crisis of Reformed Protestantism in France — *Scott M. Manetsch* 24
3. The French Reformed Synods of the Seventeenth Century . . . 57
   — *Theodore G. Van Raalte*
4. The French Reformed Churches, Arminianism, and the Synod of Dort (1618–1619) — *Donald Sinnema* 98
5. The French Reformed Churches: Caught between the Rise of Absolute Monarchy and the Counter-Reformation 137
   — *John B. Roney*
6. The Edict of Nantes "à la Rigueur" (1661–1685) 156
   — *Marianne Carbonnier-Burkard*

Part Two: Theology and Theologians in the French Reformed Churches

7. John Cameron (ca. 1579–1625) and the French Universalist Tradition — *Albert Gootjes* 169

8. Beyond Hypothetical Universalism: Moïse Amyraut (1596–1664) on Faith, Reason, and Ethics 197
— *Richard A. Muller*

9. Defender of the Faith or Reformed Rabelais? Pierre du Moulin (1568–1658) and the Arminians — *Martin I. Klauber* 217

10. Whose Side Are They On? Jean Daillé (1594–1670) on the Church Fathers — *Martin I. Klauber* 237

11. Andreas Rivetus (1572–1651): International Theologian and Diplomat — *Willem J. van Asselt* 251

12. The Pastoral and Polemical Theology of Charles Drelincourt (1595–1669) — *R. Jane McKee* 276

13. Polemics, Rhetoric, and Exegesis: Claude Pajon (1626–1685) on Romans 8:7 — *Albert Gootjes* 296

14. "This Glorious Seal of God": Jean Claude (1619–1687), Ephesians 4:30, and Huguenot Pneumatology — *Michael A. G. Haykin* 321

15. The Devotional Theology of Pierre Jurieu (1637–1713). 335
— *Jason Zuidema*

Appendix A—Excerpts from the Edict of Nantes (April 13, 1598). 349

Appendix B—The Edict of Fontainebleau (October 22, 1685) or the Revocation of the Edict of Nantes 353

Selected Bibliography 359

List of Contributors 391

Subject Index. 393

Introduction

Martin I. Klauber

The theologians of the seventeenth-century French Reformed churches displayed a theological richness rarely remembered even among Reformed believers in the centuries following their labor. This particular volume is an attempt to resurrect some of this vitality to a new audience. The book is divided into two sections. The first focuses on the history of the movement and the second on particular theologians. The idea is that we must get a sense of the historical context in which they ministered to gain a full appreciation for the depth of their thought. The period was an unusual one in which France boasted two state religions, Roman Catholic and Protestant, due to the protections afforded the latter by the Edict of Nantes. These protections limited the locations in which they could worship, but the clergy were supported by the state. The Edict also afforded them military protection. Few of the French Reformed theologians of the early seventeenth century still had personal memories of the religious wars, but they had heard the stories and never regained trust for the Roman Catholic elite, although they remained loyal to the king.

The opening salvo in Roman Catholic–Protestant polemics in seventeenth-century France began with a major theological debate at Fontainebleau, the palace of King Henri IV. The major combatants were the Roman Catholic Jacques-Davy du Perron and the Huguenot leader, Philippe du Plessis-Mornay at the famed Conference at Fontainebleau presided over by King Henri IV. Du Perron was one of the most capable Roman Catholic scholars of his generation. He was raised in the Reformed faith of his father, a physician turned Reformed pastor who fled to Bern to escape persecution in France. As a teenager,

Jacques-Davy converted to Roman Catholicism while under the tutelage of the French abbot and poet Philippe Desportes, and then devoted himself to the study of theology and service in the Roman Catholic Church. He then returned to Normandy and became such an impressive scholar that he was made a reader to King Henri III. He also delivered the funeral oration for the famous poet Ronsard and delivered the eulogy for Mary, queen of Scots. Having obtained the bishopric of Évreux in 1591, he then was responsible for the negotiations with Henri IV that led to the king's conversion to Rome, leading the delegation sent to Rome to obtain Henri's official absolution from the pope.[1]

The focus of the conference was to determine the accuracy of Mornay's five thousand citations from the church fathers cited in his *De l'institution, usage et doctrine du Saint Sacrament de l'Eucharistie en l'Eglise ancienne* (1598).[2] This was a comprehensive treatise that served as a foundational document for the debates on the church fathers that raged between Protestant and Roman Catholic polemicists throughout the following century. It also became the talk of the town within the French intellectual and religious world because Mornay challenged the twofold argument that the teachings of the early church supported Roman Catholic theology and that Protestantism was an innovation. Mornay claimed that transubstantiation had been a theological innovation, unknown in the early church. His use of patristic sources continued the trend that went back to the earliest days of the Reformation. Although the early Reformers held to *sola Scriptura*, they also believed that they had the testimony of the fathers to support them and to show that Protestant theology was not new, but could trace its roots back to the New Testament era. Mornay's defeat at Fontainebleau threatened this narrative, and many of his followers took up the pen to vindicate his honor.

Although the Lord's Supper was the subject of much controversy, there were a host of other matters that occupied the attention of Reformed theologians. One major issue was how they were going

1. On Du Perron see Pierre Feret, *Le Cardinal Du Perron: orateur, controversiste, écrivain* (Paris: Librairie Académique Didier, 1876).

2. Philippe du Plessis-Mornay, *De l'institution, usage et doctrine du Saint Sacrament de l'Eucharistie en l'Eglise ancienne. Ensemble quand, comment, et par quels degrez la Messe s'est introduicte en sa place* (La Rochelle: Jérôme Haultin, 1598).

to respond to the canons of the Synod of Dort in 1618–1619. King Louis XIII would not allow the French Reformed delegates to attend the conference, so the French input was limited. However, the French Reformed synods weighed in and adopted the Canons of Dort at the Synod of Alais in 1620. Acceptance of these decisions was by no means unanimous; many, most prominently the theologians at the Academy of Saumur led by Moïse Amyraut, posited a response to the doctrine of limited atonement, referred to as hypothetical universalism or sublapsarianism. The real architect of this view was John Cameron, a Scotsman, who taught briefly at Saumur and influenced a host of French theologians, including Amyraut and Jean Daillé.

The scholars who have participated in this project have already done significant work in the history and theology of the French Reformed churches. Richard A. Muller needs no introduction, and in many ways he has been the dean of scholarship of post-Reformation Reformed thought for many years. His publications have been voluminous, and his magisterial four-volume *Post-Reformation Reformed Dogmatics* is a treasure trove of information and areas for further study. His essay here on Amyraut is significant because it goes beyond the typical focus on his views of the atonement. Three of Dr. Muller's former students, Albert Gootjes, Theodore G. Van Raalte, and Jason Zuidema, are also contributors to this volume. Albert Gootjes has recently completed a fine dissertation on Claude Pajon based on extensive research at the *Institut d'histoire de la Réformation* in Geneva, and he has been very successful in translating major works on the post-Reformation era from Dutch, German, and French into English. He is also on the editorial board of the Post-Reformation Digital Library (PRDL) sponsored by the Meeter Center for Calvin Studies and Calvin Theological Seminary.[3] Ted Van Raalte, former co-pastor of the Redeemer Canadian Reformed Church of Winnipeg, Manitoba, has done extensive research on the spiritual theology of Guillaume Farel along with Jason Zuidema.[4] For the present volume, Van Raalte has written an extensive essay on the French Reformed synods in the seventeenth century. The majority of

3. Albert Gootjes, "Claude Pajon (1626–1685) and the Academy of Saumur" (PhD diss., Calvin Theological Seminary, 2012).

4. Jason Zuidema and Theodore Van Raalte, *Early French Reform: The Theology and Spirituality of Guillaume Farel* (Surrey, England: Ashgate, 2011).

historical studies of these synods have focused on the sixteenth century, as illustrated by Glenn Sunshine's important work on the subject.[5] Jason Zuidema has produced an impressive amount of publications on the early Reformed movement, including an important work on the theology of Peter Martyr Vermigli.[6] He has also published much on Reformed thought in French-speaking Europe. His essay here on Pierre Jurieu continues that work.

Part of the goal of this volume has been to include studies by outstanding European scholars. One of the most prominent among them is the late Willem J. van Asselt, who has also done wide-ranging work on post-Reformation Reformed thought and has recently published a very helpful introduction to the topic as a whole. His major work was on the federal theology of Johannes Cocceius, and many of his own students from Utrecht have gone on to continue research in the same vein.[7] R. Jane McKee is a prominent scholar of the French Reformed movement. She has written on the Huguenot diaspora and on Charles Drelincourt and is editing the extensive correspondence of the Drelincourt family.[8] Marianne Carbonnier-Burkard has enjoyed a distinguished career at the Institut Protestant de Théologie in Paris. She has written extensively on the history of the Huguenots[9] and the Camisard rebellion.[10] She has also served on the board of directors of the Bibliothèque de la Société de l'histoire du protestantisme français and on the editorial board of its journal.

Several prominent North American scholars also have contributed to this work. Donald Sinnema has recently retired from Trinity Christian College in Palos Heights, Illinois, and has long been a leading expert on the Synod of Dort. He writes here on the so-called French

---

5. Glenn S. Sunshine, *Reforming French Protestantism: The Development of Huguenot Ecclesiastical Institutions, 1557–1572* (Kirksville, Mo.: Truman State, 2003).

6. Jason Zuidema, *Peter Martyr Vermigli (1499–1562) and the Outward Instruments of Divine Grace* (Göttingen: Vandenhoeck & Ruprecht, 2008).

7. Willem J. van Asselt, *The Federal Theology of Johannes Cocceius (1603–1669)* (Leiden: Brill, 2001).

8. Jane McKee and Randolpe Vigne, eds., *The Huguenots: France, Exile and Diaspora* (East Sussex, U.K.: Sussex Academic Press, 2012).

9. Marianne Carbonnier-Burkard and Patrick Cabanel, *Une histoire des protestants en France, XVIe-XXe siècle* (Paris: Desclée de Brouwer, 1998).

10. Marianne Carbonnier-Burkard, *Comprendre la révolte des Camisards* (Rennes: Éditions Ouest-France, 2008).

connection with the synod. His current project is the publication of the Acts of the Synod of Dort, under the sponsorship of Ref0500.

Scott M. Manetsch has written extensively on Theodore Beza and his relationship with the French Reformed churches.[11] He has also recently published a major monograph on pastoral theology in Geneva from Calvin's arrival through the early seventeenth century.[12] His contribution in this book is to show the connection between Beza and the Reformed movement in Geneva with their French counterparts. One must remember that both Calvin and Beza were Frenchmen and that there was significant interaction between Geneva and France, as Robert Kingdon has so eloquently shown.[13]

Jeannine Olson of Rhode Island College has examined the French-Genevan relationship and published a major work on the *Bourse française*; she is now researching the life of Calvin's friend Nicholas des Gallars.[14] John B. Roney of Sacred Heart University has published a major book on the nineteenth-century Reformation historian Jean Henri Merle d'Aubigné.[15] Roney's major research area is the historiography of the Reformation. Michael A. G. Haykin of the Southern Baptist Theological Seminary in Louisville, the author of the chapter on Jean Claude, has a wide array of research interests including eighteenth-century British Baptist life and thought, as well as patristic trinitarianism and Baptist piety.[16] He is a leading expert on the spiritual formation movement.

---

11. Scott M. Manetsch, *Theodore Beza and the Quest for Peace in France, 1572–1598* (Leiden: Brill, 2000).

12. Manetsch, *Calvin's Company of Pastors: Pastoral Care and the Emerging Reformed Church, 1536–1609* (New York: Oxford University Press, 2012).

13. Robert M. Kingdon, *Geneva and the Coming of the Wars of Religion in France, 1555–1563* (Geneva: Librairie Droz, 1956); Kingdon, *Geneva and the Consolidation of the French Protestant Movement, 1564–1571* (Geneva: Librairie Droz, 1967).

14. Jeannine Olson, *Calvin and Social Welfare: Deacons and the Bourse française* (Selingsgrove, Pa.: Susquehanna University Press, 1989); Olson, "The Mission to France: Nicolas Des Gallars' Interaction with John Calvin, Gaspard de Coligny, and Edmund Grindal, Bishop of London," in *Calvinus clarissimus theologus: Papers of the Tenth International Congress on Calvin Research*, ed. Herman J. Selderhuis (Göttingen: Vandenhoeck and Ruprecht, 2012).

15. John B. Roney, *The Inside of History: Jean Henri Merle d'Aubigné and Romantic Historiography* (Westport, Conn.: Greenwood Press, 1996).

16. Michael A. G. Haykin, *The Spirit of God: The Exegesis of 1 and 2 Corinthians in the Pneumatomachian Controversy of the Fourth Century* (Leiden: Brill, 1994).

One of the most difficult decisions in editing this volume has been which theologians to include and which to exclude. If not for the limits of space, it would have been desirable to include essays on other professors at Saumur, including Josué de La Place, Louis Cappel, and Isaac D'Huisseau. Other French Reformed thinkers worthy of consideration include David Blondel, Daniel Chamier, Michel Le Faucheur, Edme Aubertin, and Jean Mestrezat. These were all important theologians, but not well known to a contemporary audience. As always, there is room for further research.

PART ONE

The Historical Background

CHAPTER 1

The Cradle of Reformed Theology: The Reformed Churches from Calvin's Geneva through Henry IV and the Edict of Nantes

Jeannine Olson

The institution of the church was the cradle of theology. The growing church provided not only theologians but also church members who were eager to understand their faith. For the Reformed churches, the seventeenth century saw a flowering of theology built on the work of John Calvin and other Reformers of the sixteenth century. This would not have occurred had it not been for the zeal of Reformed Christians in establishing congregations in Europe and the emerging New World. The purpose of this brief chapter is to place the theology of the Reformed church in historical context, concentrating especially on the mission from Geneva. Only with this background in mind can one fully understand the ardor and tenaciousness of Reformed Christians of the early modern era. It is a captivating story.

The Beginning

The origins of the Reformed tradition can be traced back to the humanism of the Renaissance in which the Reformers were steeped. Alternatively, one could begin with the youth and education of individual reformers such as Ulrich Zwingli, Heinrich Bullinger, Guillaume Farel, and above all, John Calvin, but this is a chapter, not a full-length book. It is necessary to set aside the Reformation in Zurich and the biographies of the Reformers. I will focus, then, on Geneva and the Reformation in France that spread to the Low Countries (modern-day Belgium and the Netherlands), the British Isles, and on to the New World. Let us begin in Geneva in 1535–1536, when the city was

experiencing the culmination of a religious Reformation and a political revolution that began her transformation from an insignificant city to a beacon of Protestantism.

Located on Lake Geneva (Lake Leman) and the Rhone River, Geneva has been a part of Switzerland since 1815, but in 1500, Geneva was not yet one of the Swiss cantons. Geneva was under the duchy of Savoy to the south. (Savoy was a dukedom contiguous to Italy, to Savoy's east, and the Rhone River of modern France, to Savoy's west.) Genevan tutelage to the Duke of Savoy was not to last long, however. In the first decades of the sixteenth century, Genevan magistrates broke with Savoy and separated from the Church of Rome.[1]

A Move toward Independence

The political transformation of Geneva had deeper roots than the religious Reformation. Geneva already had obtained considerable self-government and control of its own legal system over the two centuries prior to its religious Reformation, but the crowning blow came when the city's magistrates launched out on their own and formed an alliance with Bern and Fribourg in 1526. The prince-bishop of Geneva, brother of the Duke of Savoy, was unable to stop this assertion of Genevan independence. In 1534 he transferred his court in Geneva to the neighboring territory of Gex (today suburban Geneva). With this break from Savoy, Geneva lost much of its hinterland, and tiny Geneva became an independent state. In 1535 Geneva began to mint its own money, imprinting upon the coins the insignia *Nach tenebras lux* ("After the darkness light") and the symbol of a rising sun.

Savoy wanted Geneva back and would not give up on its attempts to recapture Geneva until the seventeenth century, when the Savoyards were repulsed in a nocturnal attempt to scale the city's walls. Genevans celebrate *Escalade* (December 12, 1602) still today as its independence day, for after that, Geneva remained independent until the invasions of Napoleon. Independence was never assured, however, and there were always other dangers. Throughout its centuries of independence,

1. For details see Jeannine Olson, "Reformation and Revolution in Calvin's Geneva," *Halcyon: A Journal of the Humanities* 7 (1985): 93–103; also published in Richard C. Gamble, *Articles on Calvin and Calvinism* (Hamden, Conn.: Garland Publishing, 1993).

Geneva was aware of the potential threat of its larger neighbor to the west, France, which remained predominantly Catholic. France's monarchs, with the possible exception of Henry IV (r. 1589–1610), did not welcome Protestant books and pastors from Geneva. As Geneva's governing authority, the members of Geneva's city councils were often more cautious than the French Protestant pastors and religious refugees who used the city as a launching pad for Reformed propaganda and books.

A Religious Reformation

While these political and international events were playing themselves out, Geneva experienced a religious Reformation under the influence of Guillaume Farel's preaching. The Genevan magistrates in 1535–1536 suspended the Mass, confiscated ecclesiastical property, and set up a new social welfare system under the control of the city council rather than the church.

The political revolution in Geneva of the same era radicalized the religious reformation. The Genevans insisted that the city's inhabitants, including the clerics, switch their allegiance from the Church of Rome to the new Reformed church or leave, whereas other cities in which the Reformation triumphed allowed Catholic nuns, priests, and monks to live out their lives in Catholic cloisters or on incomes from benefices granted when the cities were Catholic.

John Calvin's Role

What is to be noted in the preceding paragraphs is that John Calvin was responsible neither for Geneva's break with Savoy nor Geneva's separation from the Catholic Church. These had already happened before he appeared on the scene in the summer of 1536 to stay overnight. Guillaume Farel recruited Calvin from a Genevan inn to remain in the city and help further establish the Reformed church. This was not so easily done, because the city magistrates and the Venerable Company of Pastors were often at odds over the institutional and liturgical aspects of church practice. For instance, the pastors wanted the city council to form a committee to oversee Genevan morals and fill the gap the canon law of the Catholic Church had once filled, particularly in

matters concerning sex and matrimony.[2] The city magistrates rejected the pastors' requests.[3]

Relations between the city council and the pastors became so difficult that in 1538 Calvin, Farel, and another pastor were expelled from Geneva over disagreements about whether Geneva should imitate church practices in Bern, a city Geneva needed as an ally. Only Calvin returned, three years later, at the request of the Genevan magistrates. Upon Calvin's return he appeared to have had an upper hand, perhaps in part because he had expressed reticence. After he went back to Geneva in 1541, he got more of what he wanted, such as a committee to oversee the morals of the city, known as the consistory. It brought together on a weekly basis (usually Thursday afternoons) the pastors of Geneva and selected city councilors, labeled elders, who sat as a body, discussing how to handle individuals for evidence of residual Catholicism, spotty church attendance, and digression from the Ten Commandments. The consistory also occasionally barred the unrepentant from the Lord's Supper, celebrated only four times per year in Geneva. This system of moral encouragement came to be called "the discipline."

Conflict continued in Geneva after the return of Calvin and the formation of the consistory. Some resisted Calvin and what appeared to be a new morality that frowned on dancing, card games, and ostentatious dress. Some influential Genevans were especially resentful that these new dictates were imposed upon them by foreigners, such as Calvin and other Frenchmen, who came to dominate the Venerable Company of Pastors. In the 1540s and 1550s, to complicate matters further, the entire city seemed to be inundated by a rising tide of foreigners. It had become a known city of refuge, especially for men and women seeking escape from religious persecution in France and the Low Countries.

The Mission to France

It was not until 1555 that the last of the serious opponents to Calvin in Geneva were defeated and exiled or executed. This made it possible

2. For matters of sex and matrimony see John Witte and Robert Kingdon, *Sex, Marriage, and Family Life in John Calvin's Geneva*, vol. 1 (Grand Rapids: Eerdmans, 2005).

3. Olson, "Calvin as Pastor-Administrator during the Reformation in Geneva," *Pacific Theological Review* 14, no. 2 (Spring 1981): 10–17; also in Gamble, *Articles on Calvin and Calvinism*.

for Calvin and the other Frenchmen in Geneva, refugees themselves, to turn their sights on their homeland and concentrate their energies on evangelizing France through the export of books and pastors to that country.

Before the Reformation, Geneva was not a leading publisher. With the Reformation, the number of printing presses in Geneva mushroomed. It became profitable to publish the writings of the Reformers, especially the treatises, sermons, and commentaries of Calvin. These presses also produced Bibles in the vernacular, catechisms, and psalters (hymnbooks containing translations of the Psalms into French set to music). Although books from Geneva were illegal in France, there was a market there for these books. Colporteurs, many of whom were poor, obtained consignments of books from a financier of the book trade, Laurent de Normandie. A welfare fund for French refugees in Geneva, the *Bourse française*, helped to finance this endeavor.[4] The colporteurs hauled their consignments of books over the Jura Mountains and sold them in France. Some colporteurs lost their lives for their illegal book trade, but the books worked their wonders.

By the mid-1550s congregations of Reformed Christians were forming in France. They requested pastors, and the Venerable Company of Pastors of Geneva sent men to serve them. In 1956 Professor Robert Kingdon of the University of Wisconsin published *Geneva and the Coming of the Wars of Religion in France, 1555–1563*,[5] based on extensive research in Genevan archives and particularly on the minutes of the weekly meetings of the Venerable Company of Pastors. Because of evidence revealed in Kingdon's book, today the consensus of sixteenth-century scholars is that the growth and organization of the Reformed faction in France into congregations was caused by pastors and books sent illegally into France from Geneva in the 1550s and early 1560s.

Geneva, located safely outside of France, had become the capital of French Protestantism. The pastors whom the Company of Pastors sent into France were French or French-speaking men. Some were educated

4. For more on the support of a French refugee fund for the export of books and pastors to France see chap. 4 in Olson, *Calvin and Social Welfare: Deacons and the Bourse française* (Selinsgrove: Susquehanna University Press; London: Associated University Presses, 1989), 50–69.

5. Robert M. Kingdon, *Geneva and the Coming of the Wars of Religion in France, 1555–1563* (Geneva: Librairie Droz, 1956).

in Geneva in the days of John Calvin's last sojourn there (1541–1564), which saw the foundation of the Genevan *collège* (Latin secondary school, built 1558–1559) and Academy, later to become the present University of Geneva. With the leadership of Geneva, Reformed congregations in France tended to copy the institutional framework of the Genevan church with its pastors, elders, and deacons, although they could not necessarily fill the fourth office of doctors of the church, that is, professors. Particularly important was the discipline of the Reformed churches, enforced through consistories in individual congregations. As the number of Reformed congregations in France grew, they organized regional colloquies and a national synod (in Paris, 1559) to coordinate their efforts and to avoid the splintering off of individual congregations.

The spread of Reformed Christianity in France evoked a response. The increasing numbers and hearty psalm-singing of these congregations called attention to their presence in the midst of Catholic France. Some participants were put to death as heretics. For instance, in 1557, Reformed Christians meeting in a house on the rue de St. Jacques in Paris were surrounded by an angry mob. Some Reformed Christians were incarcerated. Some lost their lives.

On this and other occasions, executions occurred very high in society. In 1559, Anne de Bourg, a member of the Parlement of Paris, the highest court of France, was burned to death for objecting to the persecution of Reformed Christians. The broad publicizing of these executions by Reformed Christians, including the martyrologist Jean Crespin, created the impression that persecution was on the rise in France, whereas E. William Monter, investigating the regional parlements (courts), asserted in his book, *Judging the French Reformation: Heresy Trials by Sixteenth-Century Parlements*,[6] that persecution was less in the late 1550s and early 1560s than in earlier years. Furthermore, even the diminished persecution of the 1560s was widely publicized by the growing Reformed element in society.

The Colloquy of Poissy and Its Aftermath

Despite persecution, the numbers of Reformed Christians in France increased to the point that in 1561, the crown shifted policies from

---

6. E. William Monter, *Judging the French Reformation: Heresy Trials by Sixteenth-Century Parlements* (Cambridge, Mass.: Harvard University Press, 1999).

persecution to attempted reconciliation. This shift was facilitated by the numbers of French noblemen who were attracted to the Reformed cause. These included princes of the blood (nobles who were in line for the French throne in the case of the death of all the males in the royal family).

The Genevan Company of Pastors paid particular attention to the nobility, providing them with resident pastors once their allegiance had been procured. In 1560, Jeanne d'Albret, the Queen of Navarre, a kingdom in the southwest of France that straddled the Pyrenees, converted to the Reformed faith. Her conversion would turn out to be fortuitous. She saw to it that her son, Henry, had Protestant tutors. As a prince of the blood, Henry later became the first and only Protestant to inherit the French throne (1589).

These French noblemen of the sword who came over to the Reformation movement had been trained to fight. Some had supporters to call to arms if their cause was just. It was they who ultimately would initiate the Wars of Religion in France, but first there was a massive effort to avoid conflict initiated by the crown; by the chancellor of France, Michel de l'Hôpital; and by Reformed leaders such as Gaspard de Coligny, admiral of France. This effort culminated in the Colloquy of Poissy in September 1561 when invited representatives of the Protestant cause met with prelates of the Catholic Church.[7] Thus began the process of what historian N. Sutherland has called "the Huguenot struggle for recognition," in her book by that name.[8]

From the point of view of many, the Colloquy of Poissy was a failure because it did not prevent the Wars of Religion in France, but more was accomplished for the Huguenot struggle for recognition in the months that followed. Some Reformed pastors, who had been active in the colloquy, stayed at court, exerting their influence (such as Theodore Beza, Nicolas Des Gallars, and others), and in January 1562, the crown issued an edict of toleration, granting Reformed Christians the right to preach in many areas in France. It was at least a beginning

---

7. Olson, "Nicolas Des Gallars and the Colloquy of Poissy: The Neglected Participation of a Pastor of the London Stranger Church in an Ecumenical Council," *Proceedings of the Huguenot Society of Great Britain and Ireland* 28, no. 5 (2007): 664–683.

8. N. M. Sutherland, *The Huguenot Struggle for Recognition* (New Haven, Conn.: Yale University Press, 1980).

that could have led to greater toleration of the Reformed Christians, or Huguenots, as they would come to be called.[9]

A Peak in Church Membership

The months before the Wars of Religion are considered to be the height of the Reformed cause in France in terms of numbers of adherents. Philip Benedict and Nicolas Fornerod recently renovated the assertion in the *Histoire ecclesiastique des Eglises reformées au royaume de France* that the number of Reformed churches in France was 2,150 in January 1562.[10]

Wars of Religion

Despite the efforts of the crown to keep the peace, some members of the Catholic nobility of France, especially the Guise faction, would not tolerate the Protestant minority. Noble leaders of the Catholic faction, the Duke de Guise and his followers, broke up a Protestant gathering and massacred participants at Vassy (March 1). A Protestant nobleman, Louis de Condé of the Bourbon family, first prince of the blood, rallied Huguenot supporters at Orléans, on the Loire River. War broke out. The Huguenot noblemen and their followers made Orléans their headquarters during the first War of Religion (1562–1563). Unfortunately for the Protestants, Condé had failed to secure the person of the king, Charles IX, a minor, whom Condé claimed to be defending. He thus lost a possible opportunity of gaining the crown's backing. However, with Orléans secure, Reformed theologians, including Nicolas Des Gallars, conducted a school of theology at Orléans, so that Reformed pastors could complete their Protestant theological education in France rather than having to leave the country.[11]

Historians, admittedly not members of a bellicose profession, have bemoaned what might have been had peace prevailed. With the

9. Olson, "An English Window on the Huguenot Struggle for Recognition: Nicolas Des Gallars and the Colloquy of Poissy," *Toronto Journal of Theology* 25, no. 2 (2009): 235–236.

10. Philip Benedict and Nicolas Fornerod, "Les 2,150 'églises' réformées de France de 1561–1562," *Revue historique* 311, no. 3 (2009): 559–560.

11. Olson, "The Mission to France: Nicolas Des Gallars' Interaction with John Calvin, Gaspard de Coligny, and Edmund Grindal, Bishop of London," in *Calvinus clarissimus theologus: Papers of the Tenth International Congress on Calvin Research*, ed. Herman J. Selderhuis (Göttingen: Vandenhoeck and Ruprecht, 2012), 353.

onset of war, Huguenot numbers appear to have declined because of the dampening effect of the religious warfare. There were eight wars of religion with interludes between them. Each peace treaty, except for that of the second war of September 1567–March 1568, granted some limited freedom of worship or fortified towns to the Huguenots. After the third war (October 1568–August 1570) there was hope for lasting peace when, in the spring of 1572, Jeanne d'Albret and the French Queen Mother, Catherine de Médici, agreed to the marriage of their children—Henry, a Protestant, to the king's sister, Marguerite of Valois, a Catholic. Jeanne did not live to see the August 18 wedding. She succumbed to tuberculosis on June 9, and Henry became King of Navarre.[12]

The St. Bartholomew's Day Massacre

Within a week after the wedding of Henry and Marguerite, all hope of peace was squelched. Members of the Huguenot nobility who had gathered for the wedding were still in Paris, despite an attempt on the life of Huguenot leader Gaspard de Coligny on August 22. Although the facts are murky, the fear of reprisal by the Huguenots drove King Charles IX, apparently in consensus with the Queen Mother and his royal council, to order a preemptive strike. Between three and four in the morning on August 24, several dozen leading Huguenots, including Coligny, were torn from their beds and killed, triggering a general massacre of Protestants by civilians in Paris that lasted for three days. During the next six weeks, the violence spread to a dozen provincial cities, including Orléans and Lyon, uncomfortably close to Geneva. One can never be exact, but Mack Holt estimates that the dead totaled approximately five thousand and that the massacre caused a catastrophic defection from the Protestant community in France even where there was no massacre. Many Protestants became Catholic.[13] Some immigrated to foreign Protestant centers such as Geneva. Refugees overwhelmed the city of Geneva and her welfare funds.

---

12. For an extended description of Jeanne's death and interment see Nancy Roelker, *Queen of Navarre Jeanne d'Albret, 1528–1572* (Cambridge, Mass.: Belknap Press of Harvard University Press, 1968), 387–394.

13. Mack P. Holt, *The French Wars of Religion, 1562–1620*, 2nd ed. (New York: Cambridge University Press, 2005), 95.

Prudently, Henry of Navarre stayed at court, apparently acquiescing to Catholicism. Civil wars in France resumed (1572–1573 and 1575–1576). Henry escaped from court in 1576 and joined the Protestant cause again. War recommenced (1577, 1580). In 1584 Catherine de Médici's youngest son, Francis, Duke d'Alençon, died, making Henry of Navarre the heir to the French throne if he outlived Catherine's third son, the king of France, Henry III, from whom no heirs were anticipated.

The League and Two Henries

With the death of the Duke d'Alençon, the prospect of a Protestant on the throne energized the formation of a Catholic League, which was especially strong in Paris and existed apart from the crown. The Leaguers resolved never to allow a Protestant on the throne of France. An eighth civil war broke out. Henry of Navarre, a brilliant military leader, fought on Henry III's behalf. When Henry III was assassinated in 1589, Henry, already king of Navarre, became also the first Bourbon to inherit a right to the French throne, but it was an untenable situation. The Guise faction and other Catholic nobles of France and their followers in the League fought against him and held Paris. Catholic Spain sent soldiers to support the League's efforts.

Henry IV's Conversion

Henry realized that he needed to convert to Catholicism in order to take Paris, bring peace to France, and pull the rug out from under the Catholic League. He did not convert precipitously, which might have been interpreted to be a sham; rather, he announced that he intended to convert willingly after instruction from Catholic prelates. To the chagrin of many Reformed Christians, after instruction, he converted in 1593 and was crowned Henry IV, king of France, in February 1594, at Chartes. Paris submitted to him in March and other towns followed suit. Instead of taking revenge on his former foes, he won them over with pensions and promises.

Was Henry sincere? Given the circumstances of the conversion, one might have suspected that he was insincere, but to all intents and purposes, Henry IV seemed to embrace Catholicism. If he was still a Protestant at heart, he hid it well. He encouraged other nobles to convert, even his own sister, Catherine, who ruled Navarre for him. A stauncher Calvinist than her brother, Catherine remained loyal to the Reformed

church, but Henry withheld his permission for her to wed her beloved. She married another man. Henry IV's new Catholicism did not stand in the way of his keeping Protestants on as advisors, however—most notably, the Baron of Rosny, the Duke de Sully, credited by historians with contributing to the brilliance of Henry IV's reign.

It is perhaps easier for political realists of the twenty-first century to applaud Henry's conversion to Catholicism as a means of bringing peace to France, but although there were Reformed Christians who were disappointed with Henry IV's conversion, others backed him and even fought beside him when he allied with a Catholic king, Henry III. One could also argue that Henry's Protestantism had become superficial over the years following his mother's death. He had wavered before. After the St. Bartholomew's Day Massacre he had appeared to go along with Catholicism, perhaps to guard his life until he could escape the court. There is also the question of how much Henry had taken Reformed moral standards to heart. Throughout much of his life, Henry had a retinue of mistresses and illegitimate children, but this was true of others among the nobility as well, even some of the Protestant nobility, to the consternation of the leaders of the Reformed Church in Geneva and elsewhere.

Today French patriots consider Henry IV the most beloved of the kings of France. One reason for this is his successful promulgation of an edict that brought peace to France, the Edict of Nantes of 1598.

The Edict of Nantes

In April 1598, after interactions with the engaged parties, Henry accomplished what none of the edicts of pacification during the Wars of Religion had been able to do: he issued an edict that brought peace to France, and he did this by personal fiat. But even in this age of emerging absolutism, as some historians have considered it, the "permanent" features of the edict had to be registered by the Parlements, the courts of France. The Parlements were reticent to do so and did not register the edict immediately—the Parlement of Paris not until February 25, 1599, after a visit to the king, during which Henry used all of his persuasive powers, and they were considerable.[14]

---

14. The information about the Edict of Nantes here and in what follows is based largely on the summary of Holt in *French Wars of Religion*, 166–171.

Protection for the Huguenots

Based on earlier edicts, the Edict of Nantes granted freedom of conscience and freedom of worship to Huguenots, but not all over France—rather, in cities and towns controlled by Protestants in August 1597, in towns indicated in earlier peace edicts, and in the homes of Protestant nobles. The Huguenots were not to worship in Catholic churches, but they could build houses of worship in areas they controlled. (In prior decades, Huguenots had taken over individual Catholic churches.) In the French courts, bipartisan chambers were introduced guaranteeing the Huguenots some judges to protect their rights.[15] The Huguenots were eligible to study in schools, colleges, and universities, and they could hold public office. Huguenots could sell books in the areas they controlled but not outside those areas. What they did print was censored.

Catholics, on the other hand, could worship anywhere in France, which meant that the Mass was introduced into regions controlled by Protestants where it had not been heard for decades. Huguenots were to observe all Catholic holidays. They were not to work on those days. They were required to pay the tithe to the Catholic Church and had to observe Catholic laws regarding contracts and marriages.

As Mack Holt has put it: "The Edict…did not introduce a systematic policy of religious toleration, [but rather] it allowed for temporary religious co-existence."[16] Henry's challenge in issuing the edict had been to mollify the Huguenots in a manner that would not be so one-sided as to antagonize the Catholics and precipitate renewed warfare. Thus the edict did not entirely please everyone, perhaps not even Henry himself.

Secret Articles

In addition to the public articles, there were secret articles and two additional documents. The rights and privileges above were in the ninety-two general articles of the Edict of Nantes. There were also fifty-six secret articles that were more favorable to the Huguenots, granting them the all-important right to hold consistories, colloquies,

---

15. Diane C. Margolf, *Religion and Royal Justice in Early Modern France: The Paris Chambre de l'Edit, 1598–1665* (Kirksville, Mo.: Truman University Press, 2003).

16. Holt, *French Wars of Religion*, 166.

and synods in towns that they controlled. Thus the Reformed churches could maintain their discipline and organizational structures.

In addition to the above articles, there were also two *brevets* that did not require registration by the Parlements. The *brevets* contained rights that the Parlements would have objected to registering. One *brevet* granted a subsidy to pay Huguenot pastors. The second allowed the Huguenots to maintain troops in several hundred towns. These "troops" consisted of either citizen militia or, in "fortified towns," troops paid for by the crown. (Huguenot nobles had insisted on this military presence before they would lay down their arms.) The *brevets* were to expire within eight years. The *brevets* were renewed in 1606, however, even though the royal subsidies were never fully paid.

The Assassination of Henry IV

The Edict of Nantes worked as well as it would ever work during the lifetime of Henry IV, but that life was soon to be cut short. Henry was casual about his personal security, certainly by modern standards, and this was despite his vulnerability, several attempts on his life, the assassination of his predecessor as king, and the advantage to arch-Catholics of removing Henry IV from the scene. Thus in May of 1610, when Henry's carriage passed through a narrow stretch in Paris, an assassin leapt into his carriage and stabbed him through his aorta. Almost immediately Henry expired.[17]

The crown passed to his eldest legitimate son, Louis XIII, who was only nine years old at the time. This son was so young because Henry had never had a child with his first wife, Marguerite, although they had cohabited long enough to produce one. Marguerite found herself in the same situation as Catherine, the first wife of Henry VIII, king of England, except that Catherine and Henry had at least one child that survived, a daughter, Mary Tudor. In the case of Henry IV of France and Marguerite, it was clear that the problem in conceiving a child lay with Marguerite, even without modern fertility studies to determine the cause of infertility, for Henry had had illegitimate children with numerous mistresses. Henry had entered into relationships with a

17. For a graphic description of this assassination see the biography of Henry IV by Vincent J. Pitts, *Henri IV of France: His Reign and Age* (Baltimore: Johns Hopkins Press, 2009), 269, 328–329.

sequence of women, and these women were fertile.[18] The children of these relationships had not been secreted away. Enough of them were at court to make Henry the father of a large family of children, none of whom had been born in wedlock, but they were illegitimate, and Henry needed a legitimate heir.

So Henry IV of France, like Henry VIII of England, looked for a second wife, but Henry IV did not marry one of his mistresses. Henry IV married into a wealthy Italian family, just as one of his predecessors on the throne of France, Henry II (r. 1547–1559), had done. However, in order to get married a second time, Henry IV of France, like Henry VIII of England, needed an annulment of his first marriage from the Pope in Rome. Henry VIII had been unable to get an annulment from the Pope and had broken with the Church of Rome because of it, creating a Church of England, but Henry IV obtained such an annulment. He married Marie de Medici, who was both willing and fertile. Their first-born son later inherited the throne of France as Louis XIII with Marie de Medici as his regent.

The Catholic Education of the Royal Children and Its Impact on the Reformed Church in the Seventeenth Century

After the death of Henry IV, the nature of his children's education became crucial in determining the fate of France just as it had been crucial for Henry IV, who had been raised Protestant, as had Edward and Elizabeth Tudor of England, who reigned over England as Edward VI (r. 1547–1553) and Elizabeth I (r. 1558–1603). These three royal children, Henry, Edward, and Elizabeth, had been raised as Protestants, thanks to queens Jeanne d'Albret and Catherine Parr, but the young Louis XIII of France had been raised a Catholic.

The education of the royal children would arguably become the most important fallout of Henry IV's conversion to Catholicism, for succeeding Louis XIII on the throne of France would be Louis XIV, who would eat away at the provisions of the Edict of Nantes that protected the Huguenots. In 1685 Louis XIV revoked the Edict of Nantes entirely and insisted that the remainder of the Huguenots in France convert to Catholicism. Many did convert, but many left France in a

18. For a colorful description of the children and mistresses of Henry IV, some of whom were barely past puberty, see Pitts, *Henri IV of France*, 270.

great Huguenot diaspora. The Huguenots who remained in France were a tenacious remnant. Often persecuted as Protestants, the remaining Huguenots created what they called the "Church of the Desert" because they were forced to meet outside in secret. The Church of the Desert became the precursor to the modern Reformed Church of France, whose members inherited the tenacity of their Huguenot forebears. During World War II these descendants of the Huguenots became conscientious objectors or were active members of the Resistance to Nazi rule, but their story is beyond the scope of this book, and the Revocation of the Edict of Nantes belongs to another chapter.