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Edited by Andrew Pettegree, Alastair Duke and Gillian Lewis
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1 Perspectives on international Calvinism

Alastair Duke

With the notable exception of Scandinavia, Lutheran churches were confined to the German lands, to the German-speaking minorities in the Slav countries and to foreign merchants who traded with the cities of the Empire. By contrast Reformed Protestant communities were scattered, more or less thickly, right across late sixteenth-century Europe, from Transylvania to the Western Isles of Scotland: Italy, the Iberian peninsula and the Nordic countries alone proved unreceptive. Reformed Protestant churches not only flourished, or at least cohabited with other confessions, in several cultures, they exhibited a marked sense of confessional solidarity. For that reason the moderate English Puritan William Bradshaw declined to speak of 'those Churches being all the same household of faith that we are' as 'Forreyners ... because they are all citizens of heaven and we all make one family.'[1]

True, their Catholic and Lutheran enemies sometimes took needless alarm at the bellicose fraternal rhetoric in which Reformed theologians and statesmen indulged. Pulpit invective against the forces of the Antichrist did not necessarily translate into effective military support as the Elector Palatine found to his cost in 1620. Yet we cannot therefore dismiss the notion of a Calvinist international as a figment of Catholic imagination. Through their collections and their fast days Reformed communities not only inculcated the habit of lending material and spiritual help to their 'distressed' coreligionists in France and the Palatinate, they became participants in an unfolding apocalyptic drama whose stage was Europe.[2] In the 'language of Canaan' so natural to ministers of the Word, they were engaged as the 'children of God' in a spiritual warfare with the 'children of the world'.

To a marked degree Calvin was himself the architect of this cosmopolitan

[1] P. Collinson, 'England and International Calvinism, 1558–1640' in M. Prestwich (ed.), *International Calvinism 1541–1715* (Oxford, 1985), p. 213.

[2] For a detailed investigation of the collections initiated by the London Dutch consistory chiefly for 'the poor exiled Ministers of the Palatinate' during the Thirty Years War, see O. Grell, *Dutch Calvinists in Early Stuart London. The Dutch Church in Austin Friars, 1603–1642* (Leiden, 1989), ch. 5.

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character. His reverence for the catholicity of the church and his lifelong dedication to 'the common defence of the gospel'[3] prevented the French-born reformer from devoting himself for long exclusively to ecclesiastical matters in Geneva. The visible church comprised, in his opinion, the 'whole multitude of men spread over the earth who profess to worship one God and Christ'.[4] This church also contained 'individual churches, disposed in towns and villages according to human need, so that each rightly has the name and authority of the church'.[5] Calvin did not expect such 'individual churches' to achieve 'perfect conformity in ceremonies',[6] and he warned that 'we must not thoughtlessly forsake the church because of any petty dissensions'.[7] In 1553 the French-speaking Reformed congregation at Wesel in Cleves was pressed to follow the Lutheran eucharistic rites and to use candles and hosts. Conscience-stricken, the strangers sought the advice of the Genevan ministers, only to be told bluntly to conform 'in all those ceremonies, which do not have a decisive influence on our faith so that the unity of the church is not disturbed either by our excessive severity or timidity'.[8]

The divisions within Christendom as a result of the Reformation made the definition of the true church an urgent matter. Luther invariably made the preaching of the Word the first requirement, 'for God's people cannot be without God's Word', to which he usually added the sacraments and sometimes other signs, including discipline. The Anabaptists hedged their exclusive notion of the Christian congregation about with several more signs, six in the case of Menno Simons and no fewer than twelve according to Dirk Philips. Calvin however considered the indispensable characteristics of this visible church to be the pure preaching of the Word and the administration of the sacraments 'according to Christ's institution'. He also believed discipline to be essential to the 'well-being' of the church and he praised the revised Ecclesiastical Ordinances of 1561 'as a light [for] all the churches instructed in the Christian reformation'. Yet if he deliberately stopped short, at least in principle, of making discipline a mark of the church, it is less clear quite how preaching and the sacraments could in practice be detached from discipline. Indeed the very care Calvin lavished

3 W. Nijenhuis, *Calvinus oecumenicus. Calvijn en de eenheid der kerk in het licht van zijn briefwisseling* (The Hague, 1959), pp. 143–4.
4 *Institutes of the Christian Religion*, Bk. IV, i, 7.
5 *Institutes*, Bk. IV, i, 9. The Dutch statesman and lay Calvinist theologian Philippe de Marnix faithfully expressed this notion of the universal church when he reminded a coreligionist in 1585 'that the Church of God is not tied down to particular places or seats: it is Catholic, that is to say Universal, not Alexandrian, nor Roman, nor Belgic'. *Philips van Marnix van St. Aldegonde. Godsdienstige en kerkelijke geschriften*, ed. J.J. van Toorenenbergen (4 vols., The Hague, 1878), IV, p. 66.
6 W.J. Bouwsma, *John Calvin. A Sixteenth Century Portrait* (New York–Oxford, 1988), p. 224.
7 *Institutes*, Bk. IV, i, 12.
8 Nijenhuis, *Calvinus oecumenicus*, 84–5.

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on the consistory at Geneva warns us that within his comprehensive view of the visible church there lurked a sectarian streak which was, as we shall see shortly, to have momentous consequences for the further development of Reformed ecclesiology. Significantly, several Reformed churches elevated discipline to the third *nota ecclesiae* even in Calvin's own lifetime.[9]

Nevertheless, since Calvin's discussion of the church had been remarkably free from confessionalism and his attitude to church order (to a degree) pragmatic, his influence extended well beyond the synodal-presbyterian churches emerging in the late 1550s. Indeed the Genevan reformer initially owed his authoritative position in the theology of the English Elizabethan church to his flexibility in the matter of church order and of discipline. As a result both the 'zealous Gospellers' and their opponents in the English Elizabethan church could appeal to 'that learned and godly minister of Christ Maister Calvin'.

Calvin's ecumenical instincts also appeared in his sincere concern for friendly relations with other reformers. He especially deplored the conflicts between the Swiss and the German Protestants because these played into the hands of the enemies of the gospel, and he therefore worked for a *rapprochement* between Zurich and Wittenberg. Calvin concealed neither his distaste for the Lutheran liturgy nor his dismay at the deficient discipline in the German evangelical churches, yet he always held Luther in the highest regard and took an evident delight when the older reformer commended one of his works.[10] The outbreak of the second sacramentarian controversy in 1552, into which the gnesio-Lutheran Joachim Westphal dragged Calvin, first undermined this policy of reconciliation and then wrecked it in 1557. Though Calvin lamented this outcome, the debate about the real presence extended his reputation in Germany among non-Lutheran Protestants and from that time the stranger churches there tended to look to Geneva, rather than to Zurich, for advice.[11]

Swiss mistrust of the Lutheran theologians certainly contributed to the breakdown, but this only spurred Calvin on to seek an agreement with Bullinger. These efforts were crowned in 1549 when they concluded the Consensus Tigurinus, an agreed statement on the eucharist. This achievement brought Genevan Protestantism two important benefits. Locally, it

[9] J. Plomp, *De kerkelijke tucht bij Calvijn* (Kampen, 1969), 125–8, 208 n.355. The Scots, Belgic and Hungarian Confessions, composed between 1560–2, went beyond Calvin when they added discipline to the *notae ecclesiae*, though it is a moot point whether in this respect they went against the Genevan reformer.

[10] Nijenhuis, *Calvinus oecumenicus*, 131–41; R.D. Linder, 'The Early Calvinists and Martin Luther: A Study in Evangelical Solidarity', in J. Friedman (ed.), *Regnum, religio et ratio. Essays Presented to Robert M. Kingdon* (Sixteenth Century Essays and Studies, VIII, 1987), 103–16.

[11] A. Pettegree, 'The London Exile Community and the Second Sacramentarian Controversy, 1553–1560', *ARG*, 78 (1987), 223–52.

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brought recognition from Zurich for Calvin and, though more grudgingly, for his church order so that when Calvin's theological and political opponents there appealed to Zurich for support, Bullinger was prepared to thwart their manoeuvres. In the context of the Reformation as a whole the agreement between the two leading Swiss theologians heralded a form of Protestantism which is more aptly described as 'Reformed' rather than 'Calvinist'.[12] The church order of Marten Micron, intended for use in the Dutch stranger church in London in Edward VI's reign, is a product of this hybrid churchmanship. For all Micron's regard for Calvin, he called the Zurichers 'our fathers, teachers and guides in the reformation of the churches' and he therefore adopted certain practices, among which the prophesyings, from the church at Zurich. These Ordinances might have lacked official sanction, yet they helped to shape the orders of other Dutch stranger churches as well as the church at Emden and, consequently, contributed to the earliest orders of the Reformed churches in the Dutch-speaking Low Countries.[13] The greater warmth of the relationship between the churches of Geneva and Zurich may also have persuaded Hungarian evangelicals, who at first looked to Bullinger, subsequently to extend their horizons to include Geneva.[14]

Ironically the actions of Catholic rulers also contributed to the formation of a Calvinist, or more properly Reformed, international. The repressive policies of Charles V and Philip II in the Low Countries, of Mary Tudor, of Francis I and Henry II in France and of the Holy Office in Spain and the Roman Inquisition in Italy not only created martyrs; they also drove many dissidents abroad, into the arms of the Reformed stranger churches. Though persecution compelled the religious dissidents to flee, the leading reformers added to their anguish: they declared the mass to be an abomination in which evangelicals could not in conscience partake. In the 1540s Calvin wrote scathingly of those 'protonataires delicatz' who heard the gospel yet did nothing, alleging in defence of their inaction the example of Nicodemus. Other reformers, including Pierre Viret and à Lasco, also joined the attack on those whom they called 'trimmers' or 'temporisers' because they continued to attend mass. 'Christians', they insisted, should

[12] The term 'Calvinist' as a pejorative description of a follower of Calvin first circulated in 1553 among evangelicals at Basel who deplored the execution of Servetus earlier that year. Calvin's rise to prominence is reflected in the rapid spread of this epithet, Pettegree, 'The London Exile Community', 251.

[13] A. Pettegree, *Emden and the Dutch Revolt. Exile and the Development of Reformed Protestantism* (Oxford, 1992), pp. 22–4; M. Micron, *De Christelicke Ordinancien der Nederlantscher Ghemeinten Christi te Londen (1554)* ed. W.F. Dankbaar (The Hague, 1956), pp. 23–30. Bullinger's theology may have also left its imprint on the Heidelberg Catechism (1563). It would, however, be a mistake to suppose that the agreement between Bullinger and Calvin settled the substantial differences between Zurich and Geneva on ecclesiastical discipline.

[14] See below David Daniel, ch. 11.

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withdraw from the 'execrable blasphemies' of the Roman church, even at the risk of persecution or they should depart for some place where they might freely follow the gospel.[15]

Although assorted dissidents from France and the Low Countries had made their way to Germany since the early 1520s,[16] the first major diaspora of the magisterial Reformation began in the early 1540s. It coincided with the onset of the Counter Reformation and of confessionalisation, and continued until the outbreak of the wars in France and the Low Countries in the 1560s.[17] After 1542 a trickle of evangelicals began leaving the Veneto and the towns of northern Italy for Zurich and Geneva. At about the same time larger groups of merchants and skilled artisans emigrated from the Low Countries; Walloons headed for Wesel and Flemings, Brabanders and Hollanders went first to London and subsequently to Emden and the Lower Rhine. Meanwhile Walloon and French evangelicals, particularly from the lower Rhône valley, no longer as welcome at Strasburg after the Lutheran party gained the ascendancy there, made their way to Geneva. It is impossible to calculate the total number of emigrants, not least because the exiles were forever on the move. They could be the victims of a change in the religious régime of the host community or they might choose to leave to take advantage of commercial opportunities elsewhere. Some 800 English Protestants left for the Continent in Mary's reign while more than 5,000 refugees registered as *habitants* at Geneva in the decade 1549–60.[18] Aside from Geneva the chief cities of refuge in this first exodus were London and Frankfurt, each of which counted between 1 and 3,000 church members. At Emden where the Netherlanders (unlike the Walloons and the English Protestants) joined the town church the population of the town swelled by approximately one-third between 1555 and 1562.[19] In addition substantial communities of Netherlanders settled in the towns of the Lower Rhine as well as at Sandwich and Norwich.

In this period the experience of exile confirmed the Reformed character of the *emigrés*. Few of the dissidents would ever have encountered confessional Calvinism before they left their native cities. 'Églises dressées',

[15] E. Droz, 'Calvin et les nicodémites', in *Chemins de l'hérésie* (4 vols., Geneva, 1970–6), I, pp. 131–71.

[16] Already in 1524 Capito claimed that religious exiles from every country were finding asylum at Strasburg, P. Denis, *Les Églises d'étrangers en pays rhénans (1538–1564)* (Paris, 1984), p. 63. Anabaptists also sought refuge abroad but apart from Moravia they were no safe havens for them.

[17] The first 'stranger church' emerged at Strasburg in 1538 for the 'welsche', that is the French-speaking, fugitives and Calvin, then in exile from Geneva, served as its pastor.

[18] E.W. Monter, *Calvin's Geneva* (New York, 1967), pp. 165–7.

[19] H. Schilling, *Niederländische Exulanten im 16. Jahrhundert. Ihre Stellung im Sozialgefüge und im religiösen Leben deutscher und englischer Städte* (Gütersloh, 1972), pp. 175–9; Pettegree, *Emden and the Dutch Revolt*, p. 41.

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congregations with consistories, only emerged around 1555, and though several hundred quickly sprang up in France, their first pastors were often autodidacts, hedge-preachers and ex-monks with scant knowledge of the Calvinist ministry. Most dissidents fled because they had fallen foul of the anti-heresy legislation, though some Flemings may have left for England in search of employment, rather than out of religious conviction. But whatever the reasons for their going, they gravitated out of choice or necessity towards the stranger congregations. Often aliens could only stay if they became members of the stranger churches, which stood surety for their good conduct. The churches were also charged with the relief of their own poor and recent arrivals might find employment within the congregation.[20] In other words, many of those who fled only became Calvinists after they had gone into exile. Except in the case of Emden for Dutch speakers and Geneva for francophones, differences of language and of confession not only set, but kept, the members of these stranger churches apart from the native populations and the consistories, which had political as well as religious responsibilities, did little to assist the process of integration.[21] Instead the Reformed leadership fostered the *esprit de corps* among the local strangers as well as a sense of belonging to a wider Calvinist fraternity. Informal networks not only linked the 'Églises du refuge' together but also extended to the 'churches under the cross'. French, Dutch and Walloon ministers met in the London *coetus*, the Walloon community at Antwerp kept in touch with the brethren at Wesel and Frankfurt and their Dutch-speaking colleagues received advice, ministers and books from Emden; Calvinists in foreign parts corresponded with family and friends left behind, Reformed merchants criss-crossed Europe on business and the immature congregations in France despatched their promising young men to Geneva to train for the ministry.

The development of the Calvinist international entered a new phase with the outbreak of civil war in France in 1562 and of the 'Troubles' in the Low Countries in 1566. Alva's repressive régime, the massacre of St Bartholomew and Parma's reconquest of Flanders and Brabant in the early 1580s reduced the once powerful and influential Protestant communities of Tournai, Paris, Rouen, Lyons, Ghent and Antwerp, to a pale shadow of their former selves. In Germany the succession of a Lutheran elector in the

[20] There was, however, less need to belong to a stranger church in a cosmopolitan city like Tudor London with its several alien communities than in the smaller English towns.

[21] Though contacts between natives and strangers were harder to police in London, the consistories of the Dutch and French churches in the capital still censured those members who married in the parish churches, A. Pettegree, *Foreign Protestant Communities in Sixteenth-Century London* (Oxford, 1986), pp. 186, 302–5. Work in progress on the foreign Protestants at Sandwich and Southampton suggests that few took English spouses in Elizabeth's reign.

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Palatinate in 1576 precipitated an exodus of Calvinist ministers, some of whom subsequently served in the Reformed churches of the Low Countries. Since the existing stranger churches could not absorb these influxes, new Calvinist communities sprang up in south-east England and Germany as towns vied with one another to attract these industrious *emigrés*. The urban infrastructure of Holland and Zeeland profited hugely from the influx of Flemings and Brabanders during the first generation of the Dutch Republic's existence. These revived the cloth industry of Leiden, provided capital and commercial expertise for the Amsterdam market, expanded the printing industry, set up schools and bolstered the Reformed ministry. The culture too of the Dutch Golden Age is inconceivable without the literary and artistic contribution of these southern Netherlanders.[22]

In this period previously freestanding clandestine congregations in France slowly found niches in a presbyterian system with its pyramidal structure of consistories, colloquies and synods. The Calvinist churches in the Low Countries followed the French example. The national synod of Emden in 1571 prepared an ambitious blue-print for the organisation of the Netherlands churches 'scattered through Germany and East Friesland' as well as the 'churches under the cross'. The greater ecclesiastical convergence of the Calvinist world found expression in the mutual recognition of church orders, the widespread use of the Genevan and Heidelberg catechisms and increasingly the adoption of a presbyterian polity. Whereas Calvin had taken a rather relaxed view of church government, Beza showed himself to be increasingly intolerant of episcopacy. In his view the principle of the parity of ministers, enunciated at the first national synod of French Reformed churches in 1559 and reiterated at Emden in 1571, was alone in being in full accord with Scripture. Though the association of presbyterianism with Calvinism certainly gave the Reformed churches a sharper focus, it was at a price. In the ensuing debate about church order in England the proponents of episcopacy also claimed that the office of bishop was 'apostolical and divine'.[23] After the defeat of the English Presbyterians in

[22] It has been tentatively estimated that between 1540 and 1630 as many as 60,000 left the southern Netherlands for England and Germany, most of whom emigrated before 1585. Roughly 150,000 southerners may have settled in the United Provinces, mainly after 1584, of whom perhaps 35,000 reached the north from England or Germany. In all 175,000 southerners may have migrated, see J. Briels, *De Zuidnederlandse immigratie 1572–1630* (Haarlem, 1978) pp. 9–22 and his *Zuid-Nederlanders in de Republiek 1572–1630. Een demografische en cultuurhistorische studie* (St Niklaas, 1985), pp. 213–21. The scale of the migration from the southern Netherlands in the late sixteenth century bears comparison with the better known exodus of French Protestants under Louis XIV, calculated at 200,000 by P. Joutard, 'The Revocation of the Edict of Nantes: End or Renewal of French Protestantism?' in Prestwich (ed.), *International Calvinism*, pp. 346–7.

[23] W. Nijenhuis, 'Beza's Treatise "De triplici episcopatu"', in his *Ecclesia reformata. Studies on the Reformation* (Leiden, 1972), pp. 138–39.

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the 1580s, it proved hard to disentangle the theology of Calvin from the offensive ecclesiology of Beza, and the discredit into which the latter fell with the late Elizabethan episcopate gradually dimmed 'the great reputation and renowne' of the Genevan reformer in England.

The conflicts in France and the Low Countries hastened the politicisation of Reformed Protestantism. A new vocabulary reflected this dilution of the purely religious agenda. Alongside such specifically confessional labels as 'Calvinist' and 'the Religion', contemporaries now also employed a party political terminology. They spoke of 'Huguenots', 'Beggars' and 'Patriots' and distinguished between 'gueux de religion et des Gueux d'estat'.[24] Their enemies claimed, with some justice, that the Protestant 'Cause' in France and 'the common Cause' in the Low Countries camouflaged outright rebellion. Some strict Calvinists too deplored the meshing of political and religious programmes. Perhaps this explains the conspicuous failure of the Reformed synod, meeting at Emden in 1571, to endorse William of Orange's enterprise for the 'restoration of the Netherlands'.[25] Yet despite such fastidiousness the politicisation proved irresistible. The freedom of worship granted to the Protestant *seigneurs hauts justiciers* since the edict of Amboise (1563) and the authority of the Huguenot political assemblies merely reflected the growing importance of the Protestant nobility in the French Calvinist movement. Likewise, the presence of Jeanne d'Albret and her son Henri of Navarre with Coligny and Orange's younger brother Louis of Nassau at the synod of La Rochelle in 1571 exposed the inseparability of political faction and religion as well as the interconnected character of the conflicts in France and the Low Countries.

The interventions of the Palatinate and Christian of Anhalt on behalf of the Huguenots, and of John Casimir and John VI of Nassau-Dillenburg in the Dutch Revolt brought small benefit to either cause. They did, however, demonstrate that Reformed Protestantism, only represented in the Empire before the conversion of the Elector Palatine in 1561 in the Calvinist stranger churches, now had the aggressive support of an influential minority of the German princes. The courts of the Electors Palatine (after 1561), and those of John VI of Nassau-Dillenburg (after 1577) and John I of Zweibrücken (after 1588) and Christian of Anhalt (after 1596) became the magnets for a talented, if restless, array of Reformed theologians, academics, learned counsellors and pastors. Few of these were native-born and

[24] *Correspondance du Cardinal de Granvelle, 1565–1586*, ed. E. Poullet (12 vols., Brussels, 1877–96), I, p. 341.

[25] J.J. Woltjer, 'De politieke betekenis van de Emdense synode', in D. Nauta *et al.* (eds.), *De synode van Emden oktober 1571* (Kampen, 1971), pp. 45–8. In 1571 a Protestant supporter of William of Orange lost patience with 'those heretics who loudly proclaim that the clattering of arms does not accord with the Gospel', *Texts Concerning the Revolt of the Netherlands*, ed. E.H. Kossmann and A.F. Mellink (Cambridge, 1974), p. 91.

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several indeed came from France and the Low Countries. Their remarkable mobility between the German centres of Reformed Protestantism has been attributed to the general dearth of administrators with the legal qualifications necessary to consolidate the prince's authority in the territories.[26] This may be so, yet their turbulent diplomatic and political careers reinforced the cohesion of the Calvinist cause in the Empire. The Reformed Protestants in Germany also had connections with the wider Calvinist world, in particular with the Low Countries.[27] Before the outbreak of the Thirty Years War students with Calvinist credentials might matriculate at several of the best Reformed academies, which included Heidelberg, Herborn, Geneva, Saumur and Leiden. Their peregrinations and *alba amicorum* testify to the existence of a cosmopolitan, yet far from exclusive, Calvinist fraternity.

If Calvin is commonly perceived as the stern schoolmaster of the Reformation, and Geneva as the 'school of Christ', then the Reformed churches might be regarded as being preternaturally preoccupied with what a Scots kirk session called 'the maneris of the pepill'. Though this mistakes the form for the substance, the original Calvinist rationale for discipline was readily susceptible to subversion. Calvin's insistence on discipline sprang from his doctrine of the visible church and, above all, from his concern to prevent the 'profanation' or 'pollution' of the Lord's Supper. The church contained both 'the saints presently living' and 'hypocrites who have nothing of Christ but the name and outward appearance'.[28] Christ had therefore given the 'power of the keys', to his church to ensure 'that the Supper of our Lord may not be polluted by people of scandalous lives',[29] to avoid the corruption of the good and to shame sinners into repentance. The community that sat at the Lord's Table should aspire to become the body of Christ.[30]

[26] H. Schilling, 'Confessionalization in the Empire: Religious and Societal Change in Germany between 1555 and 1620', in his *Religion, Political Culture and the Emergence of Early Modern Society. Essays in German and Dutch History* (Leiden, 1992), pp. 215–16.

[27] For example, the Reformed churches of the Wetterau counties adopted in 1586 the Dutch church order of Middelburg (1581).

[28] *Institutes*, Bk. IV, i, 7.

[29] Cited in J. Calvin, *Institutes of the Christian Religion*, ed. J.T. McNeill (2 vols., London, 1961), II, p. 1232 n. 8.

[30] A. Th. van Deursen, *Bavianen en slijkgeuzen. Kerk en kerkvolk ten tijde van Maurits en Oldenbarnevelt* (Assen, 1974), p. 198. Arguably the precautions taken to preserve the purity of the eucharistic community thwarted the realisation in the Reformed tradition of Calvin's ambition that the 'Sacred Supper' be 'set before the church ... at least once a week' in most Reformed congregations, *Institutes*, Bk. IV, xvii, 43. Quarterly communions became the pattern in Geneva. In the Dutch Reformed churches the synods enjoined bi-monthly celebrations, though such frequency was rarely achieved. In the stranger churches and at Emden monthly communions were common. In Scotland 'Sacrament Sunday' occurred infrequently, sometimes only once a year in the seventeenth century, and was preceded by a

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In his doctrine of the church Calvin always insisted that God alone knew who belonged to the church of saints, while the church on earth, though holy, 'is not yet perfect'. Geneva was a *corpus christianum* and its church a *Volkskirche* in the sense that it included all the inhabitants. He rejected the gathered fellowships of the Anabaptists which sought through their exclusivity and moral rigorism to close the gap between the visible and invisible churches. Yet Calvin's loathing of 'pigs and dogs among the children of God',[31] and his foreboding that the elect made up only 'a small and contemptible number' always threatened to disturb the delicate balance he tried to strike between his comprehensive vision of the church and the need for ecclesiastical discipline to 'restrain and tame those who rage against the doctrine of Christ'.[32] The latent sectarianism in the master's thought became more pronounced among some of the early Calvinist ministers, chiefly concerned to draw their flocks away from 'papist superstitions'.[33]

The Genevan consistory in its original form was a compromise between Calvin and the magistrates. Calvin therefore described the Ecclesiastical Ordinances of 1541 as 'tolerable given the infirmity of the age'. The *Messieurs de Genève* conceived of the consistory at first as an arm of the Council. After all the elders serving in the consistory were chosen from among the three councils and they exercised a delegated authority. For that reason the elders were originally also designated as 'commis pour la seigneurie'.[34] The magistrates of Geneva wanted a body to take the place of the defunct consistorial court of the bishop, with a competence similar to the new courts of morals, which the magistrates of Zurich and Berne had established after the Reformation to deal with matrimonial causes, suppress popery and, generally, to impose stricter codes of conduct.[35] At first too the Council tried to reserve the power of excommunication to itself, though from the outset Calvin fiercely contested any such claim.[36]

thorough examination of parishioners' scriptural knowledge and the reconciliation of quarrels, procedures which might take several weeks, D.B. Thoms, *The Kirk of Brechin in the Seventeenth Century* (Society of Friends of Brechin Cathedral, 1972) pp. 75–7. In the larger town congregations in seventeenth-century Holland the Reformed church abandoned regular visitations. Communicants were urged instead to search their consciences and attend the preparatory service on the preceding Saturday, van Deursen, *Bavianen en slijkgeuzen* pp. 197–9. [31] *Institutes*, Bk. IV, i, 15. [32] *Institutes*, Bk. IV, xii, 1.

[33] See below Mark Greengrass, on Pierre Viret, ch. 7, and Guido Marnef, on Gaspar van der Heyden, ch. 8.

[34] *RCP*, I, p. 1; this designation was omitted in the revised ordinances of 1561, cf. Plomp, *Kerkelijke tucht*, pp. 180, 191.

[35] The Bernese *Chorgericht*, established in 1528, and its subordinate 'consistoires' had the authority to fine and even to banish offenders. The Bernese had introduced these 'tribuneaux des moeurs' into the Pays de Vaud under their control, H. Vuilleumier, *Histoire de l'Église Réformée du Pays de Vaud sous le régime bernois* (4 vols., Lausanne, 1927–33), I, p. 254–6, 299–305. [36] Plomp, *Kerkelijke tucht*, p. 203.

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