

2017

THE CHURCH IN A HOSTILE STATE:
CALVINISM & THE STRUGGLES OF THE
CHURCH IN 16TH CENTURY FRANCE



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I. Introduction

In times of security political thought tends to be superficial and to express mere acquiescence in existing facts. Fundamental questions as to the nature of governmental authority are either not raised at all or are shelved with unexamined catch words. It is even comfortably assumed that they have been satisfactorily answered. The amount and the seriousness of the thought devoted to the nature of the State seems to tend to vary inversely with the sense of security. When government breaks down and the country is infested with marauding bands of ruffians and no one's life, property or honour is safe, it is perceived that these questions need an answer. So it was in sixteenth-century France, when it became a question of reconstructing government. So it was in England in the seventeenth century; and so it may be again. In the latter half of the sixteenth century France became a great factory of political ideas.¹

This comment by J. W. Allen describes the subject matter of this lecture. Our aim is to see what we can learn from a study of this "great factory of political ideas," particularly the application of the Calvinist doctrine of the Christian citizen's response to oppressive government as it occurred in the experience of French Protestantism. As in the English Civil War and the American Revolution (which the English called "that Presbyterian rebellion"), the Calvinist doctrine was challenged to be applied to existing legal forms and constitution.² Indeed, this is so much the case that failure to consider this fact has resulted in the view that Huguenot political theorists departed widely from Calvin when actually they were very nicely in line with his principles. We will

be surveying the development of this doctrine, the progenitor of our own Savoy doctrine, in its historical setting, as its advocates encountered the forces of political absolutism and repression through seven kings across eight decades.

II. Rising Absolutism

One way of expressing the status of the Crown under Louis XII (the last king before the Reformation) as it was described by Claude du Seyssel in *Le Grant Monarchie de France* (1518) is "regulated Sovereignty;" kings showing their greatness by voluntarily accepting three "bridles" upon their power: religion, justice, and "*la police*." "The clergy admonished the king if he acted in contravention of religious precept."³ The king's ordinances were subject to regulation by the *Parlements*; which had been established to check the king's authority.

The established law provided the basis for the two primary spheres of right in the social structure ...and it was the duty of the *Parlements*, as guardians of the law, to give redress whenever the king went beyond the established bonds of accepted law by encroaching upon the rights of his subjects. The *Parlements* ... provide judicial recourse...of subject against king.⁴

This also implied that the officers should be perpetual; beyond the king's power to depose. The "*police*," perhaps the most constitutionally significant⁵ of the "bridles," "included both the organized structure of the state and the established law at its basis."⁶ The fundamental laws included the inalienability of the royal domain, and the Salic law which provided for the royal succession through the male blood lines only, eliminating all female claimants. The State existed as a hierarchical social organism

¹ J. W. Allen, *A History of Political Thought in the Sixteenth Century*, (London, Methuen & Co. 1960 paperback edition), pp. 272-3.

² Christoph Jungen, "Calvin and the Origin of Political Resistance Theory in the Calvinist Tradition" (Th.M. thesis, Westminster Theological Seminary, 1980), pp. 63-81. Jungen's thesis provides an important corrective to previously held opinion in this area. For a thorough, recent and accurate analysis of Calvin see Matthew J. Tuininga, *Calvin's Political Theology and the Public Engagement of the Church: Christ's Two Kingdoms*, Cambridge University Press, 2017.

³ J. H. M. Salmon, *Society in Crisis: France in the Sixteenth Century*, New York: Saint Martin's Press, 1975), p. 61

⁴ William Farr Church, *Constitutional Thought in Sixteenth-Century France: A Study in the Evolution of Ideas* (New York: Octagon Books, 1979), p. 25

⁵ Quentin Skinner, *The Foundations of Modern Political Thought*, 2 vols. (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 1978) II: 260

⁶ Church. *Constitutional*, p. 27

wherein were recognized the legal rights and privileges of the social groups which constituted it; particularly the nobility, the bourgeoisie, and the farmers and men, with the king at the top (of course). These were customary rights which the king was obliged to recognize. The king was also bridled by an obligation to take counsel.⁷ Over all, *Le Grant Monarchie* reflects the essence of a feudal monarchy with its mutual rights and obligations. "Monarchy rests on custom and expediency, not on divine right."⁸ The strict pyramidal structure of society was, however, impossible to maintain under the pressures of sixteenth century social mobility

According to William Farr Church, "the most striking characteristic" of political writing during the reign of Francis I "is its complete unanimity in the glorification of the monarch."⁹ The foundation for the king's authority became not fundamental law but divine gift ("the divine right of kings"). The writers of that period weaken the check of "*la police*" at almost every point. They "move decisively towards a denial of the necessity of counsel."¹⁰ Furthermore,

They question Seyssel's fundamental assumption that the commonwealth should be regarded as a harmoniously ordered whole. Although this attitude survived, there was also a contrary and increasing tendency to focus on the person of the monarch, treating him less as the head of a feudal hierarchy and more as an absolute ruler over all his subjects.¹¹

This move toward absolutism included the assumption of "marks" of sovereignty; e.g. "the right to appoint the highest magistrates, followed by ... a long list of *iura regalia* which extended ... to no less than two-hundred and eight items."¹²

In his *Commentaries on the Customs of Paris* (1539), Charles Du Moulin virtually denied any reciprocity of obligation on the part of the king,

claiming "that all seigneurial jurisdictions are technically held as designations of the king's authority, and not as independent rights, since 'it must be emphasized that throughout every part of this kingdom the king is the source of all justice, holding all jurisdictions and enjoying full Imperium'."¹³ He concluded from this that the king is not subject to the *Parlements*, nor are its officers perpetual. With the exception of altering the laws of succession and of inalienable domain, which were safeguards for the monarchy anyway, the king had virtually all powers attributed to him. The king was under no law except "abstract concepts of justice and reason," and he was the ultimate judge of what constituted these.¹⁴ This absolutist view was favored by the Gallicans since it eliminated the higher authority of the Pope in any but spiritual matters and gave to the king of France a secular authority equal to the Emperor.¹⁵

Nevertheless, the tensions of the age were not to be met by merely attributing greater sovereignty to the Crown.

Behind all such talk and in spite of the lawyers, there existed a widespread and growing resentment of the aggressive and centralizing action of the government. The concordat of 1512, the restriction of seigneurial and ecclesiastical jurisdiction by the ordinances of Villers-Coterets, the attack on municipal liberties in the ordinance of Cremieux, above all, perhaps, the great increase of taxation and the persistent effort to compel grants from provincial Estates, resulted in the development of an opposition that nearly wrecked the monarchy.¹⁶

The fact that the idea of the rights of the monarch varied between the provinces probably was also a significant *second cause* in the course of the Reformation. "Customarily the king had more power at Amiens or Borges than at Rouen," says Allen.¹⁷ The Huguenot movement was quite strong at Rouen.

The importance of this for our doctrine of the Christian's relation to the state, i.e., to "the

⁷ Skinner, *Foundations*, p. 261

⁸ Lewis W. Spitz, *The Renaissance and Reformation Movements*, 2 vols. (St. Louis: Concordia Publishing House, 1971) 2:504

⁹ Church, *Constitutional*, p. 44

¹⁰ Skinner, *Foundations*, p. 262

¹¹ *Ibid.*

¹² *Ibid.* p. 263

¹³ *Ibid.* p. 264

¹⁴ Church, *Constitutional*, pp. 60-64

¹⁵ *Ibid.* pp. 43-73

¹⁶ Allen, *History*, p. 286

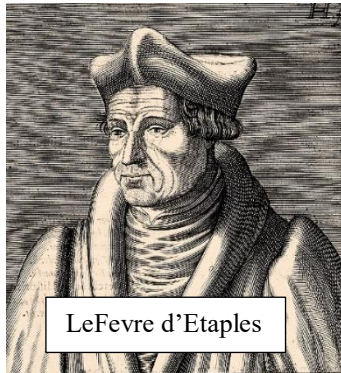
¹⁷ *Ibid.* One consequence of this difference was that the rebellions tended to be local rather than national, and thereby were weakened.

higher powers” is that Christians often unwarrantably understand the Bible in terms of simply commanding obedience in an absolutist monarchical state, when, in fact, the state may not be an absolute monarchy, but a constitutionally, even covenantally defined entity. What, in such cases, is the duty of Christian citizens and of the lesser magistrates and what are they to do in the event that they live under a hostile government?

III. Persecution comes to France

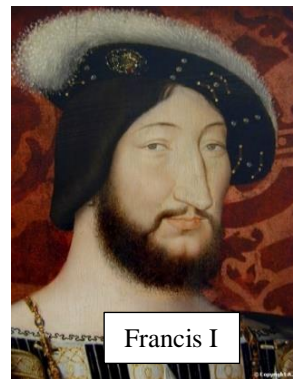
The Reformation of the church in France, on the popular level anyway, may be said to have begun at Meaux through the efforts of Jacques LeFevre d’Etaples. Lutheran doctrine had been attacked by the Sorbonne, which received authority from Parliament (1520) to censor religious literature, and LeFevre’s writings were becoming identified with the new teaching.¹⁸ Aware of his precarious position, the renowned humanist and biblical exegete had left the University of Paris for the relative seclusion of Meaux. Here in addition to translating the Bible into French he encouraged the preaching of the gospel of grace by his bold student William Farel and some other young men. According to Henry Baird,

It was not long before the apprehension of the monastic orders was aroused by the great popularity of the new teachers. The wool-carders, weavers, and fullers accepted the novel doctrine with delight as meeting a want which they had discovered in spite of poverty



and ignorance. The day-laborers frequenting the neighborhood of Meaux, to aid the farmers in harvest-time, carried back to their more secluded districts the convictions they had obtained, and themselves became efficient agents in the promulgation of the faith elsewhere.¹⁹

One of these, a wool-carder named Jean Leclerc, went from house to house handing out scriptures and tracts and edifying the brethren. He was one of the first Frenchmen to be burned for his faith.



Initially, King Francis I, a patron of Renaissance, had supported LeFevre’s humanistic studies, but being warned by the papal nuncio that “a new religion established in the midst of a people involves nothing short of a change of prince,”²⁰ became wary of “Lutheran” doctrinal reform. Wary openness changed into vigorous repressive hostility after the “affair of the placards,” when posters attacking the Mass were placed not only in many of the chief towns, but also on the king’s bedroom door! Investigations, arrests and even burnings followed. Francis got involved in war with the Emperor, was captured, and sent to Madrid. By the time of his return in 1536 the persecution of Protestants was well underway. Faced with an ever more aggressive Protestantism and a desire for firmer ties with the Pope, he began a campaign against heresy which continued until his death in 1547.²¹

A great many undertook self-imposed exile, seeking refuge in Geneva or other reformed cities. Other prevaricating souls became “Nicodemites,” who said they believed the gospel in their hearts, but continued in the communion and practice

¹⁸LeFevre was not a Lutheran, but a forerunner to Luther. For a detailed account of LeFevre’s dispute with the Sorbonne see Phillip Edgcumbe Hughes, *LeFevre: Pioneer of Ecclesiastical Renewal in France* (Grand Rapids: William B. Eerdmans Publishing Co., 1984) pp. 121-128.

¹⁹ Henry M. Baird, *History of the Rise of the Huguenots*, vol. 1 (London: Hodder and Stoughton, 1880), 76.

²⁰ *Ibid.*, p. 103.

²¹ Sutherland, *The Huguenot Struggle for Recognition*, (New Haven: Yale University Press, 1980), Chapter 1.

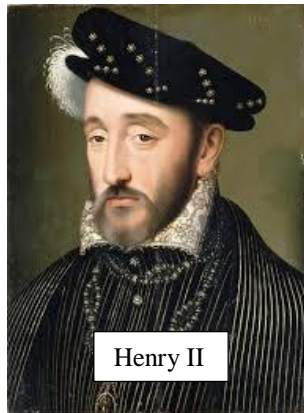
of the Roman church.²² Nevertheless, there was also a noble army, men and boys, matrons and maids,

... valiant saints; their hope they knew
And mocked the cross and flame.
They met the tyrant's brandished steel,
The lion's gory mane;
They bowed their necks the death to feel--

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In addition to the usual coronation oath, the new King Henry II vowed to exterminate heresy. Immediately he instituted a tribunal of the Paris Parliament to deal exclusively with heresy cases. Within three years, this "*chamber ardente*" obtained some 500 condemnations of clergy, Royal officers, merchants, artisans, laborers and others, 60 of them dying in the flames.²⁴ A son of one of the chamber's leading judges reacted against his father's beliefs and fled to Lyon in 1548.²⁵ This was Francois Hotman, who would become one of the most important of the Calvinist political theorists, and professor of law in Geneva.

In December 1547 Henry delivered the Edict of Fontainebleau, providing for the Sorbonne's control of all religious literature, making even the possession of proscribed books a capital offence. Book smuggling increased. Many suffered cruel tor-



tures, finding the flames a relief. Henry also promoted popular support for his cause (and there was tremendous popular hatred for the heretics and their religion) by an elaborate, richly endowed religious procession against heresy.²⁶ Not satisfied with

the progress, in June 1551 he issued a "true code of persecution" in the Edict of Chateaubriant: iconoclasm was forbidden, for the illiterate it was forbidden to even discuss religion, judges, administration officials and teachers (public and private) had to be Catholic, informing became mandatory and rewarded, heretics were to be tracked down, the property of exiles was to be confiscated and Church attendance became compulsory.²⁷

That the strong absolutism of Grassaille was still acknowledged is demonstrated by a comment of the jurist Vincent de la Loupe: "Whatever he says is accepted as law, and as though it were the oracle of a new Apollo."²⁸

IV. "And the Lord added to their number ..."

Not *everyone* had such esteem for his Highness, however, and some judged that they ought to obey God rather than men. "Every day, says the historian De Thou, persons were burned at Paris on account of religion."²⁹ Eventually, in the midst of this terror, a group of Parisian Protestants decided to become organized as a congregation. Henry Baird describes it like this.

In the house of a nobleman named La Ferrière, a small body of Protestants met secretly for the reading of the Scriptures and for prayer. Their host had left his home in the province of Maine to enjoy, in the crowded capital, greater immunity from observation than he could enjoy in his native city, and to avoid the necessity of submitting his expected offspring to the rite of baptism as superstitiously observed in the Roman Catholic Church. On the

²² In a number of sermons, tracts, and letters, Calvin and Pierre Viret reproved them strenuously. See Stuart Foster, "Pierre Viret and France, 1559-1565" 2000 Ph.D. thesis, University of St. Andrews, pp. 25-26.

²³ Reginald Herber, "The Son of God Goes Forth to War" (1827). While secular histories of the Huguenots may focus on the "Wars of Religion," many women and children bore witness to the gospel, choosing to suffer for Christ's sake.

²⁴ Salmon, *Crisis*, p. 87

²⁵ *Ibid.*

²⁶ Diefendorf, Barbara B. *Beneath the Cross: Catholics and Huguenots in Sixteenth Century Paris* (Oxford: Oxford University Press, 1991) p. 47. Diefendorf's book shows that the persecution of the Protestants had not only royal, but widespread popular support.

²⁷ Sutherland, *Struggle*, pp. 338-344

²⁸ Harold J. Laski, *A Defense of Liberty Against Tyrants*, (Gloucester: Peter Smith, 1963) p. 11.

²⁹ Henry M. Baird, *History of the Rise of the Huguenots*, vol. 1 (London: Hodder and Stoughton, 1880), 282.

birth of his child, he set before the little band of his fellow-believers his reluctance to countenance the corruptions of that church, and his inability to go elsewhere in search of a purer sacrament. He adjured them to meet his exigency and that of other parents, by the consecration of one of their own number as a minister.... After fasting and earnest prayer the choice was made (September, 1555). John le Maçon, surnamed La Rivière,... was now set apart as the first reformed minister of Paris. A brief constitution for the nascent church was adopted. A consistory of elders and deacons was established. In this simple manner were laid the foundations of a church destined to serve as the prototype of a multitude of others soon to arise in all parts of France.³⁰

In 1555 Calvin and the Geneva company of Pastors also began their formal missionary campaign to establish and encourage Reformed Churches in France. Between 1555 and 1562 some ninety-eight missionaries were sent to every province, from Geneva,³¹ and Geneva was not alone: over 100 pastors came from the Bernise territories, Neuchatel, and Lausanne.³² Book distributors came from Neuchatel, Strasbourg, and other places sowing the seed of the gospel despite the king's edict. Congregations were springing up like dandelions. Also, in 1555, "no less than a record 119 nobles or gentry sought refuge in Geneva.... shortly to provide some of the political and military leaders of the Huguenot movement."³³

The result was a rapidly growing and even stronger Protestantism. Henry attempted to increase the persecution by the establishment of a French version of the Spanish Inquisition, though this met with resistance in Parliament, by letters patent, and by the Edict of Compiègne which imposed the death penalty without appeal for all "sacramentarians."³⁴



Even this was not enough for the emissaries of the gospel determined to fulfill "the great commission." Under the patronage of Gaspard de Coligny, three ships carried colonists and provisions to Brazil. Most of the colonists were Protestants, who organized the first Protestant church in the new world, and that on the Genevan model, served by two pastors from Geneva. Soon thereafter this mission was destroyed by the Portuguese.³⁵

³⁰ Baird, *History*, 1: 294–295.

³¹ Janet Lynn Gray, *The French Huguenots*, (Grand Rapids: Baker, 1981) p. 67.

³² Foster, *Viret*, p. 236. One of the main theses of Foster's work is that the French Reformed churches were not under the exclusive influence of Calvin and Geneva as previously thought but also owed much to Viret and others, that Calvinism in France was a "many headed movement."

³³ Sutherland, *Struggle*, p. 52

³⁴ *Ibid.*, pp. 55–6

³⁵ Henry M. Baird, *History of the Rise of the Huguenots*, vol. 1 (London: Hodder and Stoughton, 1880), 292–293. Coligny sponsored another Huguenot attempt at colonization in Florida which was destroyed by the Spanish. The report of this Florida attempt was no doubt known to Sir Walter Raleigh, who took part in the English support of Henry of Navarre.

V. Prelude to War



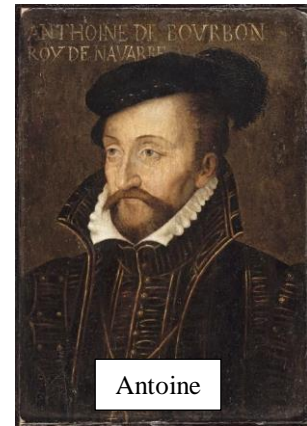
On 4 September 1557, three to four hundred Protestants were holding a typical Genevan style worship service in a private home on the Rue St. Jacques of Paris. Upon leaving they were surrounded and attacked with stones and beaten. Some nobles with swords provided protection for those trying to escape, but about 135 men and women were arrested and led through the hostile mob. Several were subjected to extreme tortures and killed, even by burning to death.³⁶ One thing that the incident makes painfully clear: the persecutors were not merely the authorities actively carrying out a royal decree, but a mob of citizens enraged at the “heretics.” In discussions of church-state matters, this must be considered: church-state issues will certainly be complicated by the passions and convictions of the religiously opposed citizenry, as well as the religiously opposed magistracy.

Calvin wrote to the Church in Paris to encourage them to prayer and patience:

Let it be your study to attempt nothing
which is not warranted by God’s word.
In maintaining a meek obedience to his

will, we are assured that he will ward off the blow, or at least give us strength and courage to endure it; but if we go beyond the limits he has prescribed to us, let us always fear to receive at last the wages of our temerity.... And indeed better it were that we were all involved in ruin, than that the gospel of God should be exposed to the reproach of arming men to sedition and tumult; for God will always cause the ashes of his servants to fructify, but excesses and violence will bring with them nothing but barrenness.³⁷

Conditions grew worse and tension and fear mounted. Even before the 1559 ruling that penalized meetings in the home, razing the dwellings to the ground, many refused to have them any longer. Yet, at the same time, many others, even members of the nobility



like Antoine de Bourbon, the king of Navarre, together with his wife, Jeanne d'Albret (niece to Francis I) were participating in large open-air Psalm-singing demonstrations, infuriating King Henry by their defiance. (The singing of Psalms played an important role in French Reformed piety, in preaching, in prayer and the encouragement of the faithful, in peaceful as well as antagonistic demonstration, in victory and defeat in battle, and in understanding the ways of God with His people. It is no wonder that Psalters were among the proscribed books.)³⁸ Antoine de Bourbon was a “prince of the blood,” i.e., a descendent of royalty making him a potential heir of the throne. He, his wife, his younger brother Louis (the “prince of Conde”), and his sons will be central figures in the Huguenot struggle. Henry responded to this Protestant boldness by increasing the activity of the *commissaires*—special agents for finding heretics.³⁹

³⁶ Henry M. Baird, *History of the Rise of the Huguenots*, vol. 1 (London: Hodder and Stoughton, 1880), 307.

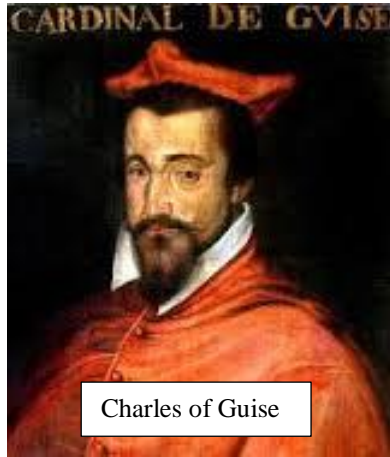
³⁷ Calvin to the Church of Paris, *Letters of John Calvin*, ed. Jules Bonnet, (Philadelphia: Presbyterian Board of Publications, 1858),

III:361 Note: Hereafter letters will be referenced by addressee and date.

³⁸ Diefendorf, *Beneath the Cross*, pp. 136-141

³⁹ G.A. Rothrock, *The Huguenots: A Biography of a Minority*, (Chicago: Nelson-Hall, 1979), pp. 61-2

Though Calvin had counseled the sufferers for Christ to endure with patience even unto death, he was very active in measures for their relief. First, he urged Antoine to speak for them at the upcoming



assembly of the Estates-General. Calvin was not advocating an overthrow of the Government, but he hoped that pressure from the First Prince of the Blood for the cause of toleration and in the interest of the good of France might bring about relief. To Antoine he wrote,

If the circumstances do not yet admit of approving what is good with entire liberty, and condemning what is evil, the least thing you can do is to require that the cause be investigated, and that so many poor people be not condemned without any valid reason. Nay it seems fitting that you should demonstrate by well-chosen arguments, that it is not for the tranquility and advantage of the kingdom to seek these ends by violent executions, inasmuch as the fires of persecution do but increase the number of the persecuted, so that the blood of the martyrs becomes the seed of the church. It seems proper also that without furnishing a pretext to those who cannot relish the gospel, of demeaning themselves with too much violence, you might bring forward some points which would not inspire them with so much horror; as to allege for example: If a man contented himself with praying to God, and held Jesus Christ for his advocate, to put him to death for such an offence is an excess of rigour, and that there might

be danger that God should be irritated against the country, considering that the apostles and disciples of our Lord Jesus, who, are the true mirrors and patrons of Christianity never knew what it was to offer up prayers to deceased Saints.⁴⁰

Calvin's final argument for Antoine to present is that otherwise the people will become "profane, godless, and lawless" so that the kingdom will be overrun. Antoine is to use all of his endeavors "according to the measure of his capacity," not to hide his light under a bushel, but to bestir himself manfully and be the advocate of God's cause.⁴¹

Antoine was the great hope of the Protestants; but also their great disappointment. While Calvin exhorted him to be strong, Charles of Guise, the Cardinal of Lorraine, was countering these good motions by intimidation, aided by Antoine's frivolity. He was absent from the Assembly.⁴²

Second, Calvin endeavored to obtain help from the Protestant Princes of Germany, by letter, and by sending Beza, Bude, and others as envoys. Apparently, some prisoners were released but the presence of one German delegation in May "appeared only to irritate the king, who contemptuously increased the persecution while they were still at court."⁴³

Third, by sending a copy of the Confession of Faith to Henry, Calvin continued to endeavor to show that the Reform was neither heretical nor seditious, just as he had done in his *Institutes*' dedicatory epistle to Francis I.

In 1559 Henry was enabled to turn his attention from foreign disputes to his primary domestic goal which was to rid his kingdom of its heretical and seditious members—Calvin's protests notwithstanding. "The treaty of Cateau-Cambresis ended the long series of Habsburg-Valois wars. The treaty that reversed the diplomatic alignments of Europe now bound the Catholic monarchies in a joint endeavor to crush Protestantism."⁴⁴ According to Jean de Seeres,

The King sent new letters to every Parliament, in the which he commanded that the *Lutherans* should be most severely persecuted. Heretofore (saith

⁴⁰ Calvin to Navarre, 14 December, 1557

⁴¹ *Ibid.*

⁴² Sutherland, *Struggle*, pp. 69-71

⁴³ *Ibid.*, p. 69

⁴⁴ Rothrock, *Huguenots*, p. 63

he) in the troublesome time of wars, the *Lutherans* greatly increased: but now that he had enjoyed and gotten peace, he would wholly bend himself and all his force utterly to race and destroy them: wherefore he exhorted them to use the same diligence in doing the like. If they want power and strength, he promiseth that he will provide for them a band of soldiers, to be ready to aide them at all need. In any wise he willed them not to be cold in their businesses, as some began to be, for if they were, he would first begin with them, and make them feel the smart of punishment prepared for others.⁴⁵

One of the notable effects of this policy was the arrest of Anne du Bourg, a member of the Paris parliament who had dared to oppose the persecutions. Henry boasted that he would see du Bourg burned.

What does the church do under an oppressive regime? It continues to be the church, preaching the word, ministering to the suffering, growing in the fellowship of the Spirit, acting toward one another as the body of Christ, and affirming and defending the faith. In May, even while plans were being made to intensify persecution for the sake of the Savoyard deputations arriving in Paris to ratify the treaty, the first national synod of the 72 French Reformed Churches secretly met there also. This “seditious” synod revised and approved their *Confessio Fidei Gallicana* (French Confession of Faith). The Confession was thoroughly Reformed, though not overtly Presbyterian in government.⁴⁶ The preface contained a lengthy apologetical appeal to the king, and in the body of the confession it asserted, “We hold, then, that we must obey their laws and statutes,

pay customs, taxes, and other dues, and bear the yoke of subjection with a good and free will, even if they are unbelievers, provided that the sovereign empire of God remain intact.”⁴⁷ According to one source it was presented to the King by the Admiral Coligny.⁴⁸

Protestantism was becoming more organized in France. With the increasing patronage of the converted or disgruntled nobility and the increasing efforts of the Calvinists to obtain influence in high places, under the present economic crisis and factional division, there was an increasing tension in the court which was only restrained by the strength of the monarchy. All that changed on July 10, 1559: ironically, in a tournament held to celebrate the very



treaty expected to free Henry to carry on his anti-Protestant domestic agenda, he was mortally wounded when he caught a piece of a splintered lance in his eye.

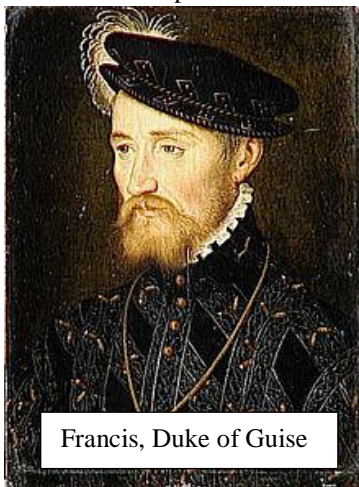
⁴⁵ Jean de Serres, *The Three Parties of Commentaries Containing the Whole and Perfect Discourse of the Civil Warres of Fraunce, Vnder the Raignes of Henry the Second, Franceys the Second, and of Charles the Ninth: With an Addition of the Cruell Murther of the Admirall Chastilion, and Diuers Other Nobles, Committed the 24 Daye of August, Anno 1572 / Translated out of Latine into English by Thomas Timme Minister*, Early English Books Online (Imprinted at London: By Frances Coldocke, 1574), 33.

⁴⁶ Possibly written by Calvin and revised by Calvin’s student, Antoine de la Roche Chandieu. Williston Walker, *John Calvin: The Organizer of Reformed Protestantism* (New York; London: G. P. Putnam’s Sons, 1906), 385. Bavinck numbered this prisoner for Christ and pastor among the greatest French

theologians of the century (*Reformed Dogmatics*, Vol. 1, 178). The author of the confession did take the part of the Genevans against the Congregationalism of Morellius. For a discussion of the Congregationalism in French Reformed churches, the role of Pierre Viret in all this, and its significance to French Reformed historiography see Foster, *Pierre Viret and France*, pp. 181-214.

⁴⁷ Philip Schaff, *The Creeds of Christendom, with a History and Critical Notes: The Evangelical Protestant Creeds, with Translations*, vol. 3 (New York: Harper & Brothers, 1882), 382.

⁴⁸ Thomas Fuller, *Abel Redevivus, Or, The Dead yet Speaking by T. Fuller and Other Eminent Divines*, Early English Books Online (S.l.: Sould by John Stafford ..., 1652), 398.



Francis, Duke of Guise

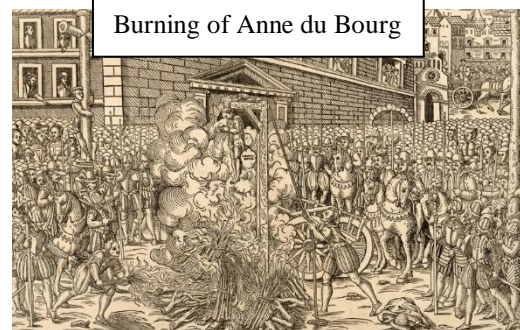
At this point we must introduce Francis, the Duke of Guise and brother of the Cardinal of Lorraine. These two were the uncles of Mary, Queen of Scots (wife of Francis II, the young king). They lost no time in securing their position; taking control of Francis, his Mother Catherine di Medici, the Army, the church and all foreign negotiations. According to Beza they had so divided the kingdom between them that the king was left with an empty title.⁴⁹

Sutherland has stated the significance of this turn of events well. As a result of Henry's severe measures,

the attempts of this distressed community to ensure its survival had slowly been sucking the Protestants towards the vortex of politics and diplomacy. So long, however, as Henry's stable rule continued ... the affiliations of the Protestant church with Bourbon and German princes, contracted in the search for protection, had little or no political significance. But when the accession of a youthful king precipitated a struggle for power between the persecuting house of Guise, who seized control of the court, and the supposedly pro-Protestant Bourbons, the fate of the Protestant church was automatically involved in the outcome of the political situation.... As the Protestant church was already the center of the religious crisis, both under Henry II and under the new regime, it was naturally also the center of attraction for those involved in the political crisis. As a result, the Protestants become a pawn in the international game of diplomacy,

and were soon to be regarded as a faction in the State. Within a matter of weeks they were swept up in a mounting clamor of opposition, and their cause was rapidly embraced by many new and embarrassing recruits whose motives and interests had little in common with those of the evangelical movement.⁵⁰

Persecution was maintained, including the December (1559) burning of Anne du Bourg. Du Bourg's condemnation and burning did not have the desired effect—it "made more converts in a day than all the executioners could burn in a year."⁵¹ Some military units were disbanded, thereby increasing dissent among the lesser nobility: common soldiers who reacted by rallying to the support of the Huguenots. This accelerated the increase of the "political" Huguenot faction.



Burning of Anne du Bourg

The Huguenot movement experienced phenomenal growth in numbers, but it included also more participants whose passions were more political than the spiritual, and more boldness, not necessarily in preaching the gospel of grace, but in disobeying edicts and authorities and engaging in iconoclasm and violence. Open air worship services, for instance became occasions for open agitation, and Protestants actively disrupted Catholic processions.

⁴⁹ Sutherland, *Struggle*, p. 75.

⁵⁰ Sutherland, *Struggle*, p. 62

⁵¹ Henry M. Baird, *History of the Rise of the Huguenots*, vol. 1 (London: Hodder and Stoughton, 1880), 402.

About this time Catherine di Medici began to assert herself. She had the moderate Michael de L'Hopital appointed to the office of chancellor. Seeking to avert civil war by a policy of moderation and toleration. L'Hopital was at the head of a number of like-minded "*politiques*," who sought to unite France under a strong monarchy. For the sake of secular unity L'Hopital was, like the rest of the *politiques*, willing to forgo religious unity. He was not indifferent to religion, but to avoid civil war at all costs he advised toleration and the winning of the Protestants by gentle persuasion. The *politique* attitude became one of sacrificing the union of the Church and State for the sake of the State, i.e., toleration for the sake of expediency. "This is the view of Bodin, Pasquier, and L'Hopital. Persecute in the early stages if the cost is not excessive. The cost is now excessive. Religious unity is a blessing but we can live without it."⁵² That is, loyalty must not be identified with orthodoxy; heresy is not necessarily sedition.



It was hoped by the Protestants that Antoine, as first Prince of the Blood, would request an assembly of the Estates and take over the government in place of the Guises. This was the lawful salvation for the oppressed that Calvin had been waiting for; and he urged Morel, the pastor of the church at Paris, to induce Navarre to assume control.

It is clear from the correspondence that Calvin had some elaborate plan for placing Navarre in power, and also that this was an adaptation of a previous plan, already contrived with certain German princes in cooperation with Francois Hotman, professor of law at Strasbourg, and their mutual friend, Jean Sturm, rector of the Academy there. But it is not clear what the plan

was. The implication would appear to be that Calvin's instructions envisaged a veritable coup d'état, backed by foreign help, in order to put Navarre in his legitimate place at the head of the government.⁵³

However, as Morel expected, Navarre was slow to take the necessary action. As an alternative solution, elaborating upon counsel he had received from Hotman—to the effect that 1) only the closest relatives should form the governing council for the king, 2) The Estates must assemble to install the council, and 3) the king of France is a minor—Morel wrote to Calvin to ask if only the King of Navarre could call the Estates. Could not anyone summon the Estates, and if refused could they not take up arms against the tyrannical faction of the Guises?⁵⁴ He was not alone in believing so.

In March of 1560 an abortive attempt was made to kidnap the king, kill the Guises, and estab-



lish toleration. The Guises' reprisal for this "conspiracy of Amboise" resulted in over 1,000 deaths. The conspiracy was the idea of a young nobleman named La Renaudie. He had gone to Geneva to seek the approval of the Company of Pastors. Calvin opposed the idea.

Before the end of 1559 there had begun,

an outpouring of Huguenot pamphlets, appeals, denunciations, and apologies that continued until the end of 1560

⁵² John Nevil Figgis, *From Gerson to Grotius*, (Cambridge, 1907), p. 99

⁵³ Sutherland, *Struggle*, p. 77.

⁵⁴ Jungen, *Calvin*, p. 115.

and the accession of Charles IX. These writings express mainly, simply, an acute exasperation that becomes almost hysterical after the failure of the conspiracy of Amboise.⁵⁵

Generally, they held that it was lawful to overthrow if any prince of the blood sanctioned it. Calvin's position was much more precise.

VI. Calvin's Doctrine of Resistance.

Protestant active resistance to "lawful authority," i.e., in this case the Emperor, was practiced as early as 1548 by the Lutherans of the free city of Magdeburg. The justification for this was that "the Bible sanctioned resistance by true believers against duly constituted but intolerant and oppressive over-authority when they were led against that over-authority by duly constituted inferior agencies of government."⁵⁶ The idea was not new; the previous year, Pierre Viret had published his *Remonstrances aux fideles qui conversent entre les Papistes; et qui ont offices publiques touchant les moyens qu'ilz doivent tenir en leur vocation a l'exemple des anciens serviteurs de Dieu*, which discusses a theory of resistance upon religious grounds.

In the 1536 *Institutes*, Calvin had written on the right and duty of resistance on the part of such inferior agencies, or "popular magistrates."

For if there are now any magistrates of the people, appointed to restrain the willfulness of kings (as in ancient times the *ephors* were set against the Spartan kings, or the tribunes of the people against the Roman consuls, or the demarchs against the senate of the Athenians; and perhaps, as things now are, such power as the three estates exercise in every realm when they hold their chief assemblies), I am so far from forbidding them to withstand, in accordance with their duty, the fierce licentiousness of kings, that if they

wink at kings who violently fall upon and assault the lowly common folk, I declare that their dissimulation involves nefarious perfidy, because they dishonestly betray the freedom of the people, of which they now they have been appointed protectors by God's ordinance.⁵⁷

Christoph Jungen has demonstrated that Calvin had a well-developed political doctrine which he maintained until his death and which he not only did not alter with the situation, but rather deftly applied to the revolutionary times and the changing situation of the Church in the kingdom of France. The key to understanding Calvin's political philosophy, says Jungen, is his concern for the lawful actions of Christians under God, and the due regard for the doctrine of the "two Kingdoms." With this in mind, Calvin admonishes against resistance to authority in general. Certain reasons alleged for disobedience are refuted by Calvin. According to Jungen's research

(1) The personal faith of a ruler does not come into consideration, for we owe obedience to all instituted authorities, Christian and non-Christian alike. (2) The fact that the form of government, the process of election or the laws do not correspond to biblical patterns is equally irrelevant in determining the grounds for disobedience. (3) Whereas it is admitted that rulers are obligated to their subjects, such a mutual obligation does not warrant disobedience if the ruler should not live up to his calling and abuses the office that has been given to him by God.⁵⁸

Jungen goes on to describe the conditions in which disobedience to authority is warranted: "He makes repeatedly clear that only that authority is legitimate that keeps within the bounds divinely prescribed for it."⁵⁹ This involves the doctrine of the two Kingdoms. The king must be disobeyed when he attempts to usurp the authority of the God by whom

⁵⁵Allen, *Thought*, p. 304

⁵⁶Robert Dean Linder, *The Political Ideas of Pierre Viret*, (Geneva: Librairie Droz, 1964), p. 127

⁵⁷ *Institutes*, IV.xx.31, quoted in Jungen, *Calvin*, pp. 95-6. As Jungen points out this is unchanged from the 1536 edition.

⁵⁸ *Ibid.* p. 73

⁵⁹ *Ibid.*

he rules in the first place. The principle is that the king has no legitimate power or authority in the spiritual kingdom or over men's consciences. This emphasis upon legitimacy is the basis for Calvin's doctrine of resistance even in the non-spiritual realm.

By far the most significant element in Calvin's teaching in this respect, however, is his insistence ... that magistrates as the living law and in some sense authors of the positive law of their dominions are themselves subject to that very same law and are not *legibus solutus* with respect to it. The positive laws of the state have therefore not some decorative function that help the magistrate in his task, but they have fundamental significance. Their primary purpose is to insure that neither a king, nor a lower magistrate with administrative functions nor the subjects themselves can act willfully and arbitrarily, but that all may learn what their task is and may be held to their calling as by a bridle. Thus the laws of the ruler, rather than being a yoke put upon the subjects, "*sint veluti populi armorum armatura*," that protect them from the willfulness of the magistrate and give them recourse to a court of appeal when difficulties arise. That which therefore characterizes a tyrant who is legitimately resisted is not only the intrusion into a sphere where divine law alone should rule, or into a geographical area where another magistrate already holds the legitimate rule, but also and especially the infringement on the positive law of his own realm. Such a tyranny, according to Calvin, is no longer to be called legitimate. Illegitimacy is thus determined by departure from the legitimate order, and God shows that he protects the public law. Any infringement on it, no matter by whom, is not to be excused. Obedience still required to such tyrants is ... due to an exception based on the will of God who wants to

maintain an order that he has once instituted. But ... even this will for the maintenance of the order does not exclude the use of legitimate means for resisting the ruler who by his very actions endangers the order.

Resistance is directed against the magistrate who violates or endangers this order. It is therefore to be expected that for Calvin legitimate resistance is not supposed to suspend the order, but has to be carried out in an orderly way that upholds the order; in accordance with the legitimate means that the laws of the order provide.⁶⁰

For Calvin the lawful agents of such resistance are the popular, or inferior magistrates such as he refers to in the portion of the *Institutes* already quoted. He had encouraged Navarre as first prince of the blood, but he really wanted the action to involve even more of the government than him alone. Perhaps he thought that in Navarre alone was the most hope of a return to the right order with the least amount of bloodshed. To Admiral Coligny, France's chief military commander, a pious Protestant, he was to write later; "I admitted, it is true, that if the princes of the blood demanded to be maintained in their rights for the common good, and if the Parliament joined them in their quarrel, that it would then be lawful for all good subjects to lend them armed assistance."⁶¹ When asked by Morel, whether the same was true if another prince of the blood should decide to take the same step, Calvin answered negatively. To Peter Martyr he explained why: "But not even this plausible pretext satisfied me at first, unless they should be perfectly on their guard not to shed blood, for I declared it to be an inevitable consequence that from a single drop would immediately flow streams that would inundate France."⁶² As Jungen has concluded,

For him the legitimate way to resistance could never be bypassed and that is why he claimed that 'everything depends on their gaining over the king of Navarre.' ... It was probably not so much Conde's secondary position to

⁶⁰ *Ibid*, pp. 78-9, 81

⁶¹ Calvin to Coligny, 16 April, 1561

⁶² May 11, 1560.

Anthony that bothered Calvin, but rather the fact that only one of the princes of the blood, without the support of the Estates, could not likely successfully bring to completion an armed resistance without causing great unnecessary bloodshed.”⁶³

This was not only Calvin’s teaching, however. It was shared by Pierre Viret, his exiled countryman who also wrote extensively on the questions of the Christian and the Magistrate

VII. The Failure of the Peace

On December 5, the young King Francis II died. Since his brother Charles IX was too young, a formal regency was necessary. Again Calvin urged Navarre (Antoine) to establish a council of regency. “It is above all necessary,” he wrote to the ministers of Paris, “to insist on establishing a council, which can only be done by the Estates.”⁶⁴ Catharine and Navarre became co-regents. The Guises fell from favor and the meeting of the Estates-General ended in a policy of moderation. Though Catherine tried to preserve the peace as the best way of preserving her control, the forces operating against it were too strong. In the interest of religious unity through reformation of the Gallican Church, Catherine called for a conference of Catholic and Protestant clergy to take place in August at Poissy.

Attending the conference were the Guises, the king, Theodore Beza, and Peter Martyr and others. She little realized the depth of religious conviction and the differences between Geneva and Rome that made such a meeting doomed from the start.⁶⁵ At the same time as this

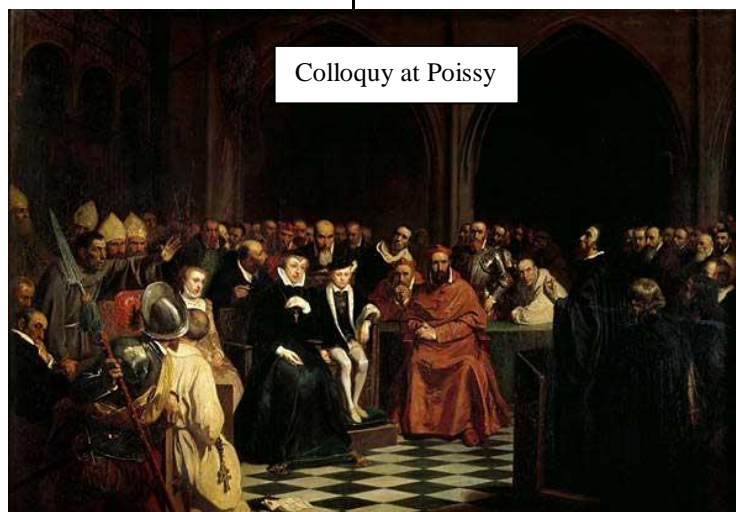
Colloquy at Poissy, the other two Estates were assembled at Pontoise, where the nobility was claiming more control of, and by, the Estates:

They aimed at control of the advisory council,... They asked that a provision be made for the convocation of the Estates whenever the crown passed to an heir less than twenty years old. The responsibility for the summons should rest with the nearest princes of the blood, but if they should prove negligent, each baillage should elect deputies to meet and act in their stead. Anyone who was not a prince of the blood and presumed to govern in the interim, should be attained of treason. The Estates were to have control of war and peace, taxes and disbursements, and were to meet regularly every two years. Finally, they asked that all persecution on account of religion should cease.⁶⁶

Thus, there was a turn towards the constitutionalism demanded by the 1484 Assembly, and away from the absolutism of the preceding years. As Jungen points out,

The striking fact about all these claims is again that they are in full agreement with the political theory that Calvin first formulated many years before and

in some respects even go beyond these to incorporate some of the additional demands made by Hotman and Morel.... In addition we may



⁶³ Jungen, *Calvin*, pp. 119-20.

⁶⁴ December 1560

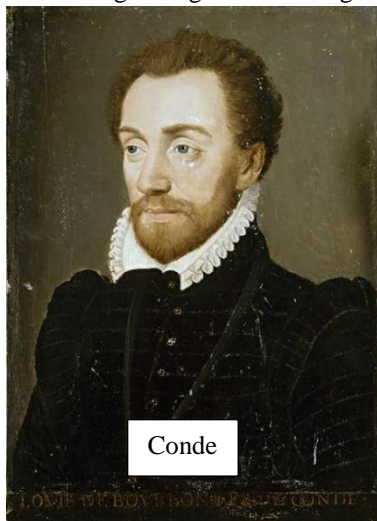
⁶⁵ Cf., Donald Nugent, *Ecumenism in the Age of Reformation: The Colloquy of Poissy*, Harvard University Press, 1974

⁶⁶ Jungen, *Calvin*, p. 130

note here that they also clearly anticipate the more fully developed theories Beza and Hotman propagated more than a decade later.⁶⁷

Exiled Nobles returning from Strasburg, Zurich, and Geneva (under the amnesty), even more deeply convinced for reform than before, added to the unrest which was felt in town and country. For example, in Languedoc and Guienne, Protestants seized churches and property and also expelled catholic clergy and monks. Calvin and Viret rebuked such behavior.

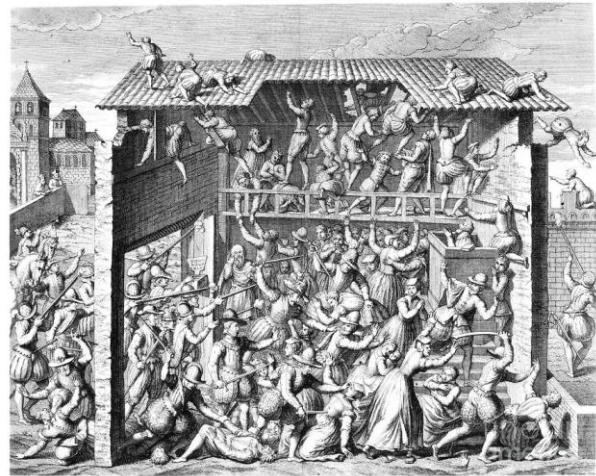
In January 1562, by the Edict of St. Germain, toleration and full civic status was granted to the "Pretended Reformed Religion." The terms were inadequate for some of the Huguenots, though Calvin and Beza were apparently pleased with the considerable progress the Edict represented. It was unpalatable to the Catholics (including Philip of Spain); Guise, Montmorency, and the Marshal de St. Andre (the "Triumvers," three of "the most determined enemies of the Gospel"⁶⁸) were undaunted in their resolve to exterminate the Reformed, who were now some 1000 congregations and an estimated one and a half to two million people. Many, Protestant and Catholic thought it was a "piece of treachery," designed to mollify the Protestants into a false sense of peace, and it was not well received by the Catholic populace. "Not only did the courts throw every obstacle in the way of the formal recognition of the law establishing the rights of the Huguenots, but the out-



breaks of popular hatred against the adherents of the purer faith were alarming evidence that the chronic sore had only been healed over the surface, and that none of the elements of future disorder and bloodshed

were wanting."⁶⁹

The beginning of the first civil war was the March 1562 attack by Guise upon a congregation at



worship at Vassy, in which soldiers set the place of worship on fire, killing over 60 and injuring over 100. The month following this violation of the King's edict, the Triumvers brought Catherine and her son back to Paris as captives of the Catholic party. Catherine appealed to Conde for help. "Thus a manifesto was issued in April to the general public and to foreign powers that Protestants were taking up arms... to return to full liberty the person of the King, the Queen, and messieurs her children, and to maintain the observation of the edicts and ordinances of his Majesty, and namely the last edict concerning religion."⁷⁰

The principle justification for the war was along this line. The Huguenots maintained that their loyalty was to the crown and that their war was for the king and against the usurpers (Guises). The law had been violated and the Protestants were fighting to re-establish it.

The first war was ended by the Edict of Amboise. Antoine had been mortally wounded. Francis, the Duke of Guise had been assassinated. The peace was negotiated by the captured Conde, much to the disdain of Admiral Coligny, who wanted to press his military advantage to obtain a more satisfying and secure peace. Coligny's misgivings were well grounded. The Edict of Amboise was "a group of tentative and sometimes unenforceable concessions... an appropriate result of an inconclusive

⁶⁷ *Ibid.*, p. 130-131

⁶⁸ Paul Henry and Henry Stebbing, *The Life and Times of John Calvin, the Great Reformer*, vol. 2 (New York: Robert Carter & Brothers, 1851), 354.

⁶⁹ Baird, *History of the Rise of the Huguenots*, vol. 2 (London: Hodder and Stoughton, 1880), 373.

⁷⁰ Gray, *Courage* p. 107

war.”⁷¹ As is often the case with such settlements, peace was short.

The second war broke out in 1567. The causes were complex, but the basic one was a well-founded distrust in the crown as a result of legislation denying the rights guaranteed by the peace of Amboise. In September, Conde unsuccessfully attempted to seize the king and to besiege Paris. The war ended in four months with another similar and similarly unstable treaty. War quickly resumed, resulting in another compromise in the 1570 Edict of St. Germain. Conde was killed in this third war, leaving Admiral Coligny as the leader of the Huguenots.

The justification for this war could hardly have been defense of the king, and the literature fell back on the claim that they were “fighting in defense of the ancient laws and liberties of their oppressed country.”⁷² The king was charged with endeavoring to subvert the ancient constitution. Even here, and with good reason, the Huguenots asserted their loyalty to the king and put the blame on his advisors. Some of the pamphlets, while not using the terminology of “contract,” nevertheless stressed the idea of reciprocity of obligation between the king and the people. For example, “In 1568 ...the magistrates of LaRochelle issued a declaration to the effect that kings who behave as enemies of God are not true kings but merely private persons.”⁷³ This is similar to Knox’s view, but it goes beyond what Calvin said.

Catherine, still intent on strengthening the crown, arranged for the wedding of her daughter Marguerette with the young Henry of Navarre. (The son of Antoine, who had been killed in the first war.) The wedding was scheduled for August 18, 1572.



Coligny

Huguenots who had come for the wedding of their leader filled Paris. Among them was Coligny, a great threat to peace with Spain, a favorite counselor and even mentor to the young King Charles, and the principle enemy of the Catholics. He had already

been burned in effigy. Someone (probably at the instigation of Henry of Guise, who blamed Coligny for



the assassination of his father) made an unsuccessful attempt on his life. Catherine argued with her son that the wounded Coligny must be finished off for the peace of the realm. Charles finally agreed but went even further; condemning to death all the Huguenots in France. This “St. Bartholomew’s day massacre” marked the beginning of a month long blood bath and also the beginning of militantly anti-royalist political writing in France.

VIII. Justification for a Rebellion

There was another outbreak of pamphlets. There was no attempt to reconcile the renewed resistance with defending the monarchy, but in the major Huguenot apologies there was still conformity to Calvin’s emphasis upon legitimacy; in fact, the major burden of the first one, the *Francogallia* of Francois Hotman, was to demonstrate the *constitutional* basis of French law. Though written as a history even before the Massacre, Hotman was certainly aware of the political implications his work when he published it in 1573. In it he showed that the king of France was never intended to have anything like absolute powers but that they were bound by settled law, and restrained from tyranny. The Three Estates had their powers as their ancient right: a right to be reasserted.

Shortly afterwards, Theodore Beza published his *The Right of Magistrates*. Concerning this, Julian Franklin says,

⁷¹ Rothrock, *Huguenots*, p.87

⁷² Allen, *Thought*, p. 305

⁷³ *Ibid.*, p. 306

We know, indeed, that Beza consulted personally with Hotman, who was at Geneva in the spring of 1573, when Beza's treatise was composed. Hence, Beza's *Right of Magistrates*, which is the first major statement of Huguenot resistance doctrine, may also be considered as a systematic transformation of Hotman's reflections on the ancient constitution into a general constitutionalist doctrine of the state.⁷⁴

We might modify this, in the light of Jungen's research, to calling it a systematic application of Calvin's political doctrine to Hotman's political history.

In 1576 Simon Goulart published the *Memoires de l'Estat de France sous Charles IX*, which included most of the principle Huguenot writings dating after 1572. One of the works was the *Discours de la Servitude Volontaire*, of LaBoetie. This was an essay on tyranny, emphasizing the right of resistance to tyranny as based upon natural law. Beza's *Right of Magistrates* also was included; as also was a work which attempted to explain away the usual texts condemning rebellion, entitled *Dialogue d'Archon et le Politie*. According to Allen, the general teaching of the *Memoires* may be summed up something like this: 1) Political authority was established to answer to needs and is therefore limited, i.e., when the authority fails to satisfy the needs it was created for it ceases to be an authority, 2) There is no absolute sovereignty save that of God, therefore power must be limited; 3) Kings are agents of God for the general welfare and are therefore bound to natural law; 4) Though established by God they are established by consent of the people, e.g., King David; 5) The right to speak and act for a community in the kingdom rests upon the public officials of that community. This might be the Estates-General and/or *Parlements*, but even the magistrates of a town (e.g. La Rochelle or Montauban) may stand against tyranny and the citizens of that community have the right and duty to stand behind them.⁶⁰

These ideas were put forth in more biblical, systematic, and developed form in the most famous of the apologias, the *Vindiciae Contra Tyrannos*⁷⁵

(1579). Published 65 years before Rutherford's *Lex Rex*⁷⁶ and highly recommended by John Adams, it is believed it exerted a strong influence on political thought through the English Civil War and even to the American Revolution.

The *Vindiciae* poses four questions, the answers are quite full, profusely supported by quotes of scripture, and too lengthy to repeat here, other than giving their gist. First, it asks, are subjects bound to obey princes if their orders contradict the law of God? This may seem easy, we ought to obey God rather than men, but in this time when rulers arrogate absolute power to themselves and insist that it is the subject's duty to obey, it is necessary to emphasize afresh that the king rules as God's instrument and his authority has limits set by God.

The second question asks whether it is permissible to resist a prince who violates God's law and desolates His church. After arguing from scriptural precedents, he concludes, "It is then lawful for Israel to resist the king, who would overthrow the Law of God and abolish His church; and not only so, but also they ought to know that in neglecting to perform this duty, they make themselves guilty of the same crime, and shall bear the like punishment with their king.

Describing how this may be carried out, he says,

If their assaults be verbal, their defense must be likewise verbal; if the sword be drawn against them, they may also take arms, and fight either with tongue or hand as occasion is: indeed, if they are assailed by surprisals, they may make use both of ambuscadoes and countermines, there being no rule in lawful war, that directs them for the manner, whether it be by open assailing their enemy, or by close surprising; provided always that they carefully distinguish between advantageous stratagems, and perfidious

⁷⁴ Julian H. Franklin, *Constitutionalism and Resistance in the Sixteenth Century*, (New York: Pegasus, 1969, p. 10.

⁷⁵ *Vindiciae contra Tyrannos: A Defense of Liberty against Tyrants, or, Of the lawful power of the Prince over the People, and of the People over the Prince*. Translated out of Latin and French by Hubert Languet, London: Richard Baldwin, 1689.

Published under the pseudonym Stephanus Junius Brutus, uncertainly attributed to Philippe du Plessis Mornay.

⁷⁶ Rutherford also could have drawn on Andrew Buchanan's *De Jure Regni apud Scotos*, written the same year as *Vindiciae*. The 1689 English translation of *Vindiciae* quoted here was bound together with Buchanan's work.

treason, which is always unlawful.⁷⁷

Who are “the people” with authority to resist?

only those who hold their Authority from the people, to wit, the Magistrates, who are inferior to the King, and whom the people hath substituted, or established, as it were, Consorts in the Empire, and with a kind of Tribunitial authority, to restrain the encroachments of Sovereignty, and to represent the whole body of the People. We understand also, the Assembly of the Estates, which is nothing else but an Epitome, or brief collection of the Kingdom, to whom all public Affairs have special and absolute reference,... In like manner the Judges and Provosts of Towns, the Captains of thousands, the Centurions and others which commanded over Families the most valiant noble and otherwise notable Personages, of whom was composed the Body of the States assembled divers times as it plainly appears by the word of the Holy Scripture.⁷⁸

What about private person? He comes just short of saying no, never; giving a few examples of persons extraordinarily called, but warning for extraordinary caution, as these are extremely rare, and the false all too common.

Then there is the commonly debated question of the use of arms in the defense of religion.

Although then that the Church be not increased by Arms, notwithstanding it may be justly preserved by the means of Arms; I say further, that those that dye in so holy a War, are no less the Martyrs of Jesus Christ, then their brethren which were put to death for Religions; nay, they which dye in that War seem to have this inadvantage, that with a free will and knowing sufficiently hazard, into which they cast

themselves notwithstanding, do courageously expose their lives to death and danger, whereas the other do only not refuse death, when it behoveth them to suffer.⁷⁹

The third question is, “May a Prince who oppresses or devastates a commonwealth be resisted; and to what extent, by whom, in what fashion, and by what principle of law?” This is perhaps the most significant and the longest portion of the treatise. It begins with the demonstration from scripture and profane history that not only does God appoint kings, but also “the People establish Kings, put the Sceptre into their hands, and ... with their suffrages, approves the Election.”⁸⁰ Then he demonstrates that the “whole body of the people is greater than the king, and while some officials derive their authority from the king (“the sovereign officer”), other officers of the kingdom derive their authority from the people (“the sovereignty itself”). It is a clear and powerful demonstration of the lower magistrates’ (i.e., the representatives of the people) regulation of the Sovereign.⁸¹

Next, the *Vindiciae* addresses the question of why were kings created because, “We usually esteem a thing just and good when it attains to the proper end for which it is ordained.”⁸² Likewise, supported by a lengthy argument from scripture, history, and reason, the answer is that “they are established in this place to maintain by Justice, and to defend by force of Arms, both the public State, and particular persons from all Damages and Outrages.”⁸³ In summary,

Seeing then that Kings are ordained by God, and established by the People, to procure and provide for the good of those who are committed to them, and that this Good or Profit is principally expressed in two things, to wit, in the administration of Justice to their Subjects, and in the managing of Armies for the repulsing their Enemies: certainly, we must infer and conclude from this, that the Prince who applied himself to nothing but his peculiar profits and pleasures, or to those ends

⁷⁷ *Vindiciae*, p. 34.

⁷⁸ *Ibid.*, pp. 34f.

⁷⁹ *Ibid.* p.55.

⁸⁰ *Ibid.*, p. 58.

⁸¹ *Ibid.*, pp.58 -79.

⁸² *Ibid.*, p. 79.

⁸³ *Ibid.*, p. 80.

which most readily contribute thereto, who despises and perverts all laws, who uses his subjects more cruelly than the barbarous Enemy would do, he may truly and really be called a Tyrant, and that those who in this manner govern their Kingdoms, regardless of their majesty, are more properly unjust pillagers and thieves, than Lawful Governors.⁸⁴

This being the case, the *Vindiciae* addresses the legitimate powers of the king, showing that kings are not only not above the law, but also the law comes to them not from God directly, but through the people. The prince is the “Minister and Executor of the Law, and may only unsheathe the sword against those whom the law has condemned; and if he does otherwise, he is no more a King, but a Tyrant; no longer a Judge, but a Malefactor, and instead of that honorable Title of Conservator, he shall be justly branded with that foul Term of Violator of the Law and Equity.”⁸⁵

The fourth and final question asks, “Whether neighboring princes may, or are bound by Law to aid the Subjects of other Princes, persecuted for true Religion, or Oppressed by manifest Tyranny.”⁸⁶ This is obviously a necessary question, since Protestant forces were often in need of help from foreign nations. Again, using a battery of examples from scripture, history, and natural law, it finds for the affirmative.

Briefly, to Epitomize what has been formerly said, if a Prince outrageously overlooks the bounds of Piety and Justice, a neighboring prince may justly and religiously leave his own Country, not to invade and usurp another’s, but to contain the other within the limits of Justice and Equity. And if he neglects or omits his duty herein, he shows himself a wicked and unworthy Magistrate. If a prince tyrannizes over the People, a neighboring Prince ought to yield succors freely and willingly to

the People, as he would do to the Prince his Brother if the people mutinied against him: indeed, he should so much more readily succor the people, by how much more there is more just cause of pity to see many afflicted, than one alone.⁸⁷

....

And to conclude this Discourse in a word, *Piety* commands that the Law and Church of God be maintained; *Justice* requires that Tyrants and Destroyers of the Common-wealth be compelled to reason; *Charity* challenges the right of relieving and restoring the oppressed. Those that make no account of these things attempt, as much as in them lies, to drive Piety, Justice, and Charity out of this World, that they may never more be heard of.⁸⁸

IX. The Struggle for A Protestant King.

The swift recovery and renewed fighting by the Huguenots brought about the Edict of La Rochelle (August, 1573), which promised Protestants amnesties, liberty of conscience, but liberty of *worship* only in La Rochelle, Montauban, and Nîmes, and even there only privately within their own residences.⁸⁹ In the south there was formed a Protestant Union, a political organization in which lay the foundations for the “State within a State,” which was a point of attack for the Catholic polemicists until it served as sufficient justification for the extermination of Protestantism under Louis XIV.

In May, 1574, Charles IX died. In fear for the throne and on behalf of her absent son, Catherine formed a new regency. An alliance was formed between the sieur de Damville (a politique, and brother of the imprisoned duc du Montmorency) and the Huguenots. Damville guaranteed the free exercise of

⁸⁴ *Ibid.*, p. 85.

⁸⁵ *Ibid.*, p. 91.

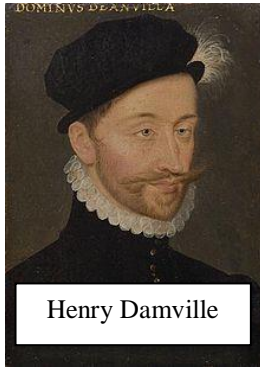
⁸⁶ *Ibid.*, p. 151.

⁸⁷ *Ibid.*, p. 163

⁸⁸ *Ibid.*, p. 164.

⁸⁹ Charles IX, *The Edict of the French King, for the Appeasing of the Troubles of His Realme Published at Paris in the Court of Parliament the Eleue[n]th of August. 1573. Printed in French by Frederic Morel the Kings Ordinarie Printer, with the Kings Priuilege*, Early English Books Online (London: By Henrie Bynneman, 1573).

religion. The return Hercule of the duc d'Anjou⁹⁰ (King Henry II's 4th son) in 1575 resulted in a conflict between Navarre, Conde, Montmorency, and Damville on the one hand, and Guise and the Crown on the other. However, the terms of the ensuing Peace of Monsieur reflect the diminishing significance of the religious issue.



Henry Damville

A major concession to the politiques was the government's agreement to convene the Estates-General. This resulted in intense political activity. Under the leadership of Guise, many of the regional Catholic associations were

fused into a Catholic League. This league opposed toleration in general and the peace of Monsier in particular; they campaigned for the election of conservative Catholics and the exclusion of heretics. The League dominated the assembly when it convened.

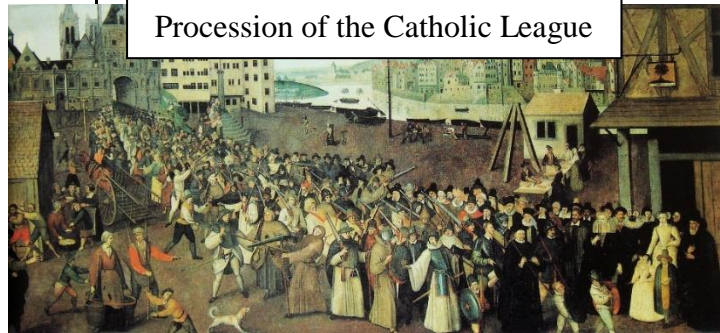
On January 1, 1577, Henry III, revoked the Peace of Monsier and promised to eradicate heresy. The Huguenots obtained promises from England, Germany and Scandinavia, and war broke out again. The situation was complicated in 1584 by the death of the duc d'Anjou, which left the present Henry III as the last remaining Valois. The old Salic law had limited succession to the male bloodlines, which in the present case meant Henry of Navarre, the leader of the Protestants.

In 1585, Henry III signed a treaty with the Catholic League, abolishing toleration. According to Rothrock,

A contemporary parliamentary diarist noted that the king remarked upon the irony of his position. Earlier, he said, he had registered edicts of toleration, against his conscience but willingly, for the security of his people; now he found himself abolishing toleration, in keeping with his conscience but unwillingly, for he foresaw the ruin of his

people.

Navarre renewed the old Huguenot-Politique alliance. After a victory over German and Swiss mercenaries, Guise decided to go to Paris for the adulation. The king refused him entrance but he entered anyway. The situation turned against Henry III, who slipped out of town. Catherine made a complete royal surrender to the Guise, and Henry had him assassinated shortly thereafter. He could not, however, assassinate the League which was still in control, and which made the son of Guise, Mayenne, their leader. Henry III went over to the loyal Henry of Navarre, who reasserted his devotion to the king



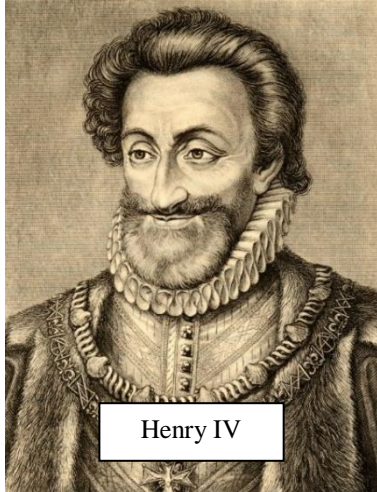
Procession of the Catholic League

and promised never to deny to Catholics the liberty for which he had fought. Daniel Defoe described Henry III's end thus—

In this Exigence, the Protestants, against whom he had carry'd on Four Persecutions and Wars, and therein destroyed many thousands of their Brethren, undertook his Defence, and joining all their Forces, in order to Restore him, marched with him to the very Gates of *Paris*; where, while he was preparing for a general Attack of the City, he was barbarously Assassinated by *Jacques Clement*, a *Jacobin* Monk, sent out of the City on purpose, being stabb'd in the Belly with a Poynard, of which he died the Day after.⁹¹

⁹⁰ Hercule-Francois Valoise, Henry II's, fourth and youngest son.

⁹¹ Daniel Defoe, *Lex Talionis, Or, An Enquiry into the Most Proper Ways to Prevent the Persecution of the Protestants in France*, Early English Books Online (London printed: s.n, 1698), 15–16.



X. "Not as the world gives"

Navarre now claimed the French crown as Henry IV, the first of the Bourbons. The League, allied with Spain, succeeded in keeping him from his capital, and various provincial towns would not recognize his authority since he was a Protestant heretic. With neither side able to win a total victory, and having lost over 160,000 soldiers, he concluded that the only alternative to endless civil war was a compromise. In July, 1594, Henry announced his conversion, saying "Paris is worth the mass."

There was fighting with Spain until 1598. At last, Henry IV could turn his attention to the religious situation at home. The result was the "perpetual and irrevocable" Edict of Nantes (13 April, 1598). While the Edict provided for considerable relief to the Protestants it provided no foundation for a permanent religious settlement. Security towns and military subsidies were guaranteed by letters patent, not by that part of the Edict that fell under the "perpetual and irrevocable" clause. This proved to be disastrous when these were not renewed by Henry's son, Louis XIII. (Henry IV died in 1610, assassinated by an unhappy Catholic.) Royal and Catholic prerogatives were pressed to Huguenot disadvantage. Three Huguenot rebellions resulted in crushing defeats, which were followed by an even stronger royal absolutism under the "Sun King," Louis XIV whose laws were even more crushing blows to French Protestants. Had France become evangelized, or had the philosophy of toleration for its own sake (as opposed to toleration for the sake of expediency) become the rule, the revocation of the Edict of Nantes would have meant nothing. As it

turned out, it meant the renewal of intense persecution and the end of the Huguenots as an influence in France. There was no toleration for Protestants until religious freedom for all was made an article of the Declaration of the Rights of Man under the French Revolution.

XI. Conclusion

The purpose of this study was to examine the mutual influence of Calvinistic political thought with the unique political situation of sixteenth century France; unique, for unlike the case in the Protestant districts of Switzerland and Germany, or Scotland, or England, Protestantism never obtained the status of the "established religion." Consequently, Calvinist political thought, like other Calvinistic doctrines, was challenged to prove itself; and it developed in the process.

Let us close with two questions. First, we may ask, what have we learned about what the church may expect from the state? It is one thing to assert the state's duty toward the church, but, as we have seen, it is not guaranteed in scripture or experience that the church will receive it. What *is* guaranteed in scripture is that in this world the church will have trouble, that power will be given unto the beast to make war against the saints (Rev. 13:7). In the political failure of the Huguenot movement we are reminded of the stark reality of the difference that exists between good intentions and success. Men are but flesh, and it is vain to trust in princes, no matter how Reformed their doctrine or sincere their principles. Their principles often prove to be less than resolute, and even the best of them may be removed by death, or defeated in war, or frustrated by others. The "peace" that the world gives, it gives only to serve the interests of the world, and when it has done so, it can just as easily be taken away. Also, the visible church at best is a mixed body. God's plans for it, and for the state, may be different from ours. Questions about the application of a Reformed doctrine of church and state will always be complicated by these simple and basic questions: which church and which state? Not to mention the fact that there is a profound lack of unity, on the part of both church and state, in understanding what the state even is, in a world where various bodies are claiming to speak for the church, the church will be in trouble if the state in question exercises its power to "nurse" the wrong one. For instance, Simon Vigor, of Paris used some of the same

arguments as the Huguenots to call upon the magistrates to carry out the will of God: God is chastening the nation (by plague, military defeats, etc.) on account of the heretics (Protestants), the king must protect the Church by acting against them.⁹²

The second question, conversely, is what is the church's action toward the state? Here the doctrine of the two kingdoms is particularly important. The Christian is not only in two kingdoms, but he is a representative and agent of the one by his very activity in the other. Depending on the state's constitution and his personal calling, this will likely mean some, perhaps much, participation in the state, and will definitely mean a responsibility to it whether it is peaceful or hostile or something in between.

Separation from it, in the form of desert hermitage or monastic seclusion, a self-imposed closed community, or submission to exclusion for the sake of peace, is not a biblical option.

While we are not the Apostles, all to some degree, in some fashion, are called to stand before governors and kings for Christ's sake, to bear witness before them and the Gentiles (Mt 10:17–18), and that witness is borne by clarity in proclamation, diligence in service and patience in suffering.

The real success of the Huguenot movement must be seen with the eye of faith. Regardless of the affairs of state, the church must be about the business of the church. Living by faith may not necessarily bring us physical peace. For some, faith will mean that they "conquer kingdoms, enforce justice, obtain promises, stop the mouths of lions, quench the power of fire, escape the edge of the sword, are made strong out of weakness, become mighty in war, and put foreign armies to flight." For others, faith just as true will mean they will be tortured, refusing to accept release, so that they might rise again to a better life, suffer mocking and flogging, and even chains and imprisonment, are stoned, sawn in two, are



killed with the sword, go about in skins of sheep destitute, afflicted, mistreated, wandering about in deserts and mountains, and in dens and caves of the earth (Heb. 11:35–38). This is the true and best heritage of the Huguenots. Some continued to live in France, a faithful Christian people who continued to profess and live the gospel, and suffer persecution; some went out, emigrating to other lands where they carried the Reformed doctrine and worship and life, carrying with them the true presence of the Kingdom of Christ.

Living by faith may sometimes mean living under persecution and sometimes, when called upon as citizens, standing up to tyranny, but it does not guarantee the immediate success of the latter. Attempts at gaining the power of rule of the State will almost certainly involve the Church in questionable activities, compromises and alliances which it is rather to eschew than accept. Since good theory often becomes difficult to carry out without corruption, the individual Christian must be diligent, circumspect, and always prefer the way of the cross to any false way that brings worldly glory. Can we cherish a hope for any more certain issue in this life? Should the difficulty in living faithfully to our calling in this world make us stop trying?



(above) Huguenots fleeing after the revocation of the Edict of Nantes.

(left) The caves along the coast of Gironde, where Huguenots resorted to worship in the late 17th century.

⁹² Diefendorf, *Beneath the Cross*, pp. 152–158.