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Theatre, Calvinism and Civil Society in Eighteenth-Century Edinburgh and Geneva

By

Ashley Carroll Leyba

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requirements for the degree of

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in

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University of California, Berkeley

Committee in Charge:

Professor Thomas Laqueur, Chair

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Abstract

Theatre, Calvinism and Civil Society in Eighteenth-Century Edinburgh and Geneva

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Over the course of eighteen months in 1756 and 1757, theatre crises, large-scale debates about the morality of the stage, erupted in both Edinburgh and Geneva. Traditionally, these debates have been explained away as examples of Calvinist anti-theatricality. This dissertation argues, however, that this understanding is inaccurate. Beyond the fact that there was no consistent tradition of Calvinist anti-theatricality in the early modern period, taking such a narrow view of the theatre crises undermines their importance. The theatre debates of 1756 and 1757 must be understood in the context of the Enlightenment and changing notions about the relationship between the Calvinist church and civil society. The theatre symbolized the birth of civil society and the end of a particular brand of Calvinism. When the eighteenth-century debates about the stage are understood only as examples of “Calvinist anti-theatricality,” though, this importance is lost. This project remedies the current gap in scholarship by demonstrating that these debates were not simply about the theatre; they were about the fate of Calvinism in an increasingly polite, enlightened society.

For J and S

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Introduction: Calvinists and the Theatre

Over the course of eighteen months in 1756 and 1757, theatre crises, large-scale debates about the morality of the stage, erupted in both Edinburgh and Geneva. While the initial impetus for crisis varied between the two cities, the debates that followed took on a familiar form. Those who opposed the theatre argued that it encouraged idle pursuits, wasted money, and, most importantly, destroyed civic morality. Those who supported the theatre, on the other hand, lauded the theatre's ability to provide moral instruction and act as a civilizing influence on cities too long denied the benefits of the stage. On the surface, very little separated the debates in Edinburgh and Geneva from the many other theatre debates that took place in the post-Reformation period. These were, after all, Calvinist cities and Calvinists had a long history of opposing the stage. Because of this tradition, when the theatre crises of 1756 and 1757 are studied, they are often explained away as examples of Calvinist anti-theatricality.

In *The Annals of the Edinburgh Stage*, James Dibdin blames the “illiberal feeling and bigotry” of the Scottish clergy for the 1756 theatre crisis in Edinburgh.¹ Writing nearly one hundred years later, Richard Sher echoes this idea when he notes that it was “zealous Presbyterians” who believed the theatre to be sinful who fought to keep theatres out of Edinburgh.² Even John McIntosh, who tends to sympathize with those zealous Presbyterians, argued that the clerical reaction against the stage in 1756 was in keeping with Calvinist theology and practice.³ Similar statements and analyses can be found in the literature regarding the 1757 theatre crisis in Geneva. Helena Rosenblatt, though focused primarily on how Jean-Jacques Rousseau's Genevan heritage inspired his political writings, does address the Genevan theatre crisis in *Rousseau and Geneva*. Rosenblatt contends that Geneva's theatre crisis was caused by the town's “traditionalist clergy” who were unyielding in their opposition to the theatre.⁴ In some ways, these interpretations are accurate. As will be explained in more detail throughout this dissertation, Calvinist ministers did play an important role in restricting and/or banning the theatre in Calvinist cities. What is problematic about these accounts, though, is the underlying assumption that Calvinism was inherently anti-theatrical. Those ministers who opposed the stage in the eighteenth century loudly proclaimed that the stage was incompatible with Calvinism and, more importantly for our purposes, had **always** been so. Since Calvinists did in fact protest the stage in the seventeenth and eighteenth centuries, most scholars have not challenged the assertion that Calvinists had always been opposed to the theatre.⁵ This, however, is untrue.

¹ James Dibdin, *The Annals of the Edinburgh Stage* (Edinburgh: R. Cameron, 1888), 85-86.

² Richard Sher, *Church and University in the Scottish Enlightenment: The Moderate Literati of Edinburgh* (Edinburgh: Edinburgh University Press, 1985), 76.

³ John McIntosh, *Church and Theology in Enlightenment Scotland: The Popular Party, 1740-1800* (East Linton: Tuckwell Press, 1998), 88-89.

⁴ Helena Rosenblatt, *Rousseau and Geneva: From the First Discourse to the Social Contract, 1749-1762* (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 1997), 221-222.

⁵ With the exception of the English Puritans, there is not an expansive historiography relating to Calvinist theatre opposition. The English case, though, has been thoroughly researched (and will be discussed briefly in chapter two). When scholars approach this instance of theatre opposition, they are almost always trying to answer one central question: why did Puritans hate the theatre so much that they would enforce a strict ban on the stage? This question is complicated by the fact that the late sixteenth and early seventeenth-century was a golden age for the English stage. This was the period of Shakespeare and the Globe, of Ben Jonson and Christopher Marlowe--why would Puritans seek to shut this down? In *Idolatrous Eyes: Iconoclasm and Theater in Early Modern England*, Michael

Calvin and his followers frequently used the theatre to further their goals during and after the Reformation. It was only at the end of the sixteenth century, with the rise of purpose-built secular theatres, that Calvinists began to systematically and consistently oppose the stage.

This opposition to the stage, though, does not mean that Calvinists were anti-theatrical. As Colin Rice correctly notes in *Ungodly Delights*, there were two types of complaints against the theatre in early modern Europe: those that were anti-theatre and those that were anti-theatrical. Anti-theatre complaints were “of a practical nature” and “stressed the disruptive effects of the theatre on everyday community life.” This could include objections to plays being performed on the Sabbath, complaints about the idleness that resulted from theater attendance, and assertions that actors were rogues and vagabonds who disturbed the tranquility of the community. Anti-theatrical complaints, on the other hand, were “aimed at the dramatic art itself.”⁶ Anti-theatricalists objected to the theatre in very Platonic terms. They argued that staged plays were only shadows of reality whose sensual appeal often prevented theatregoers from experiencing “true” emotions.⁷ The distinction between being anti-theatre and anti-theatrical is rarely acknowledged. Instead scholars conflate the terms under the broad heading of anti-theatricality, which has resulted in a disconnect in scholarship. In treating these two arguments as essentially analogous, scholars ignore the fact that the arguments reflect different motives and different fears about the stage. Anti-theatre arguments better highlight culturally

O’Connell explains that Puritan anti-theatricality was an extension of Protestant iconoclasm. According to O’Connell, the theatre, with its visual sumptuousness, conflicted with a Protestant, logocentric understanding of the world. O’Connell stresses the many ways that the theatre was simply incompatible with the belief that “God’s self-revelation is to be found in the exact words of a text.” Like the iconoclastic activities that immediately followed the Reformation in England, closing the theatres in 1642 was a way to destroy worrying aspects of visual culture. O’Connell offers a cogent explanation of the religious justification for Puritan opposition to the stage, but this is far from the only religious rationale provided for Calvinist anti-theatricality. In *The Antichrist’s Lewd Hat*, Peter Lake and Michael Questier similarly analyze the religious roots of Puritan anti-theatricality, but instead of arguing that the closing of the theatres was a renewal of iconoclasm as O’Connell does, they argue that anti-theatricality was driven by a belief that the theatre posed a threat to the Church’s monopoly on moral instruction. Proponents of the theatre often claimed that stage plays had the potential to teach morality and virtue. Church officials, not surprisingly, heartily rejected this notion, maintaining that it was their place, and not that of the theatre, to instruct parishioners in virtue. Lake and Questier provide several examples of church officials contesting the thought that “ruffianly players” could adequately and correctly transmit “the saving word of God.”# Closing down the theatres in 1642, then, was a way to effectively end the debate about the theatre’s ability to impart moral instruction. Both of these works rest on the assumption that the theatre was incompatible with Calvinism.

⁶ Colin Rice, *Ungodly Delights: Puritan Opposition to the Theatre, 1576-1633* (Genoa: Edizioni dell’Orso, 1997), 2.

⁷ The most thorough study of anti-theatricality is, without a doubt, Jonas Barish’s *The Antitheatrical Prejudice* (Berkeley: University of California Press, 1981). In this work, Barish provides his reader with a grand narrative of anti-theatricality, from antiquity to the modern period. Unlike many other scholars who focus on the specific local circumstances that gave rise to anti-theatrical outbursts, Barish argues that antitheatricalism was “too widespread, too resistant to changes of place and time to be ascribed entirely, or even mainly, to social, political, or economic factors.” Barish instead contends that there is a prejudice against the theatre that “goes back as far in European history as the theatre itself can be traced.” People are naturally antagonistic or hesitant towards the theatre and, though Barish does not attempt to provide an explanation as to *why* this is true, he does rather convincingly show, at the very least, that distrust of the theatre was hardly limited to members of the Calvinist confession. While Barish does much to show that anti-theatricality was not limited to one locale, his treatment of the Calvinist reaction to the stage relies almost exclusively on the English Puritans. The one slight exception to this is his discussion of Jean Jacques Rousseau’s *Letter to D’Alembert* (1758), though it is a stretch to use Rousseau’s objections to the stage as an example of Calvinist anti-theatricality as Rousseau was, at best, a half-hearted Calvinist.

specific anxieties about the danger of the theatre and were easier to convey to a popular audience. For example, writings that condemned the production of plays on the Sabbath reflected a concern with flagging church attendance (and were usually written by ministers), an argument that would have certainly made sense to most people. It would be hard to say the same about anti-theatrical arguments, which relied more on classical and religious beliefs about the relationship between word and image. Anti-theatricalists were apprehensive about the visual, a preoccupation that was not easy to explain to a wide audience.⁸

Although Calvinists occasionally utilized anti-theatrical arguments when justifying their opposition to the stage, there was nothing inherently anti-theatrical about Calvinism, nor was theatricality understood to be theologically unsound. Many Calvinist practices, including the meting out of church discipline, actually relied on theatrical elements in order to be effective.⁹ Calvinists were not as a rule anti-theatrical. Why, then, were they anti-theatre?

This dissertation argues that Calvinists were opposed to the theatre in the sixteenth and seventeenth centuries because a secular theatre that operated outside of the control of the church threatened Calvinist ideals of order and discipline. Theatres were disorderly places that encouraged and invited all manner of sinful activity that directly contradicted Calvinist expectations for proper, godly behavior. It should be noted that very few religious leaders, no matter their confession, supported the stage. In non-Calvinist cities, though, civil and religious leaders rendered the stage acceptable by restricting and marginalizing--not banning--the stage. Calvinists, however, wanted to create cities full of godly and god-fearing citizens. Very few amusements, and most assuredly not the theatre, were acceptable. Where possible, theatres were banned. Ministers could not independently ban the stage, so this action required the support and cooperation of civil authorities. Because of this reliance on civil support, most cities were unable to maintain theatre bans into the eighteenth century.¹⁰ There were, however, two notable exceptions: Edinburgh and Geneva.

Early modern Edinburgh and Geneva exemplified “civic Calvinism,” meaning that in these cities, religious and civic officials worked together to create a *respublica Christiana* of the elect. At the turn of the eighteenth century, residents of Edinburgh and Geneva found their spiritual and temporal lives were both largely dictated by the church and its leaders. Civil society was nonexistent. This started to change, though, in the early decades of the century once Enlightenment ideas about sociability, politeness, and progress gained in popularity. Younger

⁸ A review of the pamphlets generated during the theatre debates in eighteenth-century Edinburgh and Geneva show that only anti-theatre arguments were used in pamphlets intended to reach a large audience. More philosophical works, including Rousseau’s *Letter to d’Alembert*, where the audience was expected to be better educated, occasionally made reference to more traditionally anti-theatrical arguments.

⁹ Though most work on theatrical cities focuses on Catholic cities (see, for example, Robert Schneider, *The Ceremonial City: Toulouse Observed*), Calvinist cities were in fact theatrical cities. From rituals, processions, and other ceremonies, citizens of Calvinist areas took part in a broad array of theatrical activities. Moreover, though rarely recognized as such, Calvinist worship services were actually quite theatrical and dramatic. Calvinist leaders realized that, just as stage plays could instruct spectators on religious matters, adding theatrical elements to the worship service could help congregants better understand their faith. Much like the elevation of the host was a dramatic moment in the Mass intended to catch the attention of the congregation and force them to meditate on the sacrifice made in their name, rituals within the Calvinist service were meant to move congregants closer to salvation.

¹⁰ It should be noted that we are talking solely about cities in this context. Permanent, purpose-built theatres were an urban phenomena in the sixteenth and seventeenth centuries. Moreover, the organization of Calvinist churches (i.e. presbyterian or congregational) gave tremendous authority and importance to individual (city/local) churches. Even the Church of Scotland, which did have regular national meetings, gave ultimate approval of laws/regulations to the local presbyteries.

ministers, inspired by contemporary philosophy, began to turn away from traditional Calvinist models of public life, embracing instead a vision of society in which the church played a much smaller role. The theatre debates of 1756 and 1757 must be understood in this context. A legitimate, secular theatre represented the height of disorder (though this was less and less true as the theatre became more respectable over the course of the eighteenth century). Furthermore, the theatre also symbolized the birth of civil society and the end of civic Calvinism. When the eighteenth-century debates about the stage are understood only as examples of “Calvinist anti-theatricality,” though, this importance is lost. This project remedies the current gap in scholarship by demonstrating that these debates were not simply about the theatre; they were about the fate of Calvinism in an increasingly polite, enlightened society.

This dissertation is organized into four chapters. Chapter one provides a broad overview of the relationship between church and stage from the pre-Reformation period to the middle of the seventeenth century, focusing specifically on how religious leaders used the stage to further their own religious and pedagogical goals. This chapter argues that Calvinists were not historically or traditionally opposed to the stage, as would be claimed in the seventeenth and eighteenth centuries. Calvinists, including John Calvin himself, found the theatre to be an effective means of communicating their ideas and showing the errors of Catholicism. The theatre was controlled, but it was not banned.

Chapter two explores the rise in laws banning the theatre that occurred in the seventeenth century. This was a period of intense anti-theatre sentiment amongst Calvinists, largely because the establishment of secular, public theatres threatened the public order that was so valued by Calvinists. This chapter defines Calvinist notions of “good order” and will detail why Calvinists found the theatre to be a fundamentally disorderly institution.

By the early eighteenth century, most cities and churches accepted the establishment of licensed theatres. As mentioned above, Edinburgh and Geneva were the exceptions to this trend. Chapter three will focus on the theatre debates that occurred in Edinburgh in 1756-57. In Edinburgh, the debate over the stage was caused by the performance of *Douglas*, a play written by a minister within the Church of Scotland. I argue that the *Douglas* debate represents the culmination of a decade-long struggle between rival ministerial factions within the Church of Scotland. The theatre debate highlighted many of the differences between the two groups of ministers and, when the debate was over, the Church of Scotland was fundamentally changed.

Chapter four will provide a case study of the theatre debates that took place in Geneva in 1757-58 in the wake of Jean le Rond d’Alembert’s article on Geneva that appeared in the seventh volume of the *Encyclopédie*. In this article, d’Alembert describes the city’s ministers as being Socinians (this was not, for d’Alembert, a bad thing) and also suggests that the city would be much improved by the addition of a legal, public theatre. What started as a debate over how d’Alembert represented the faith of Geneva’s ministers transformed into a debate about the stage when Jean-Jacques Rousseau became involved in 1758. Unlike Edinburgh’s ministers who were deeply divided on the issue of the stage, Geneva’s ministers, horrified that their religious innovations had caused an outsider to accuse them of abandoning Calvinism, joined together to rebuff the suggestion that Geneva needed a theatre. We should be careful, though, to assume the ministers were simply continuing a Calvinist tradition of opposing the theatre, because more was at stake in this debate. I argue instead that the debate was as much about what it meant to be Calvinist in an increasingly modern world as it was about the fate of the stage. As with Edinburgh, the debate over the theatre acted as a proxy for bigger questions about Calvinism.

The eighteenth-century debates about the stage in Edinburgh and Geneva are important,

not only because they show that the relationship between Calvinism and the theatre was more complex and nuanced than is traditionally believed, but also because the debates highlight a moment when religious leaders were forced to negotiate how Calvinism would be integrated into a new world.

Chapter One: Theatre Amongst the Reformed

“Stage plays had their birth, and primary conception, from the very devil himself, who is all, and only evil. Therefore they must needs be sinful, pernicious, and altogether unseemly, yea, unlawful unto Christians.”

William Prynne, *Histriomastix*

When William Prynne published *Histriomastix* in 1633, he took aim at a variety of seventeenth-century leisure and worship practices that he believed were fundamentally incompatible with the Protestant faith. Very little escaped his notice: he chastised those who partook in “lust-exciting dancing,” warned against the perils of the Maypole, eviscerated those who accepted “Laudian rituals,” and even railed against the continued presence of stained glass windows in England’s churches.¹ And while each of these sinful practices received its fair share of attention in *Histriomastix*, Prynne saved the bulk of his ire for something far more sinister: the theatre. According to Prynne, the performance of stage plays trespassed against all that was good, moral, and Christian. In his thousand-page diatribe, Prynne detailed the sins specific to the theatre. Prynne claimed that stage plays originated from the devil, meaning that most plays were written by Pagan or Catholic authors, which, for Prynne, was the same as having been penned by Lucifer himself. Beyond the play-texts’ heathenish origins, Prynne had serious concerns about those who made their living on the the stage. Prynne argued that actresses were no better than whores, and those companies who sought to avoid employing actresses by instead having men portray female characters were not doing any better, because they were simply encouraging cross-dressing.² Prynne was not content to merely deride the stage based on one or two objections. Rather, he offered a full compendium of all that was evil about the stage: it was a lascivious form of idolatry, a “superfluous pleasure,” capable of “enraging” the hearts and minds of spectators by exposing them to “bloody” and “tyrannical” subject matter, and the theatres themselves were the “seminaries of all wickednesse.”³

Extreme as were Prynne’s views they were representative of seventeenth-century Reformed ideology and practice. When *Histriomastix* was published, theatre attendance was accounted one of the worst sins possible by Reformed leaders, not only because the success of theatrical performances depended on actors being able to convincingly lie and deceive the

¹ William Prynne, *Histriomastix: The players scourge, or, actors tragædie, divided into two parts. Wherein it is largely evidenced, by divers arguments, by the concurring authorities and resolutions of sundry texts of Scripture ... That popular stage-playes ... are sinfull, heathenish, lewde, ungodly spectacles, and most pernicious corruptions; condemned in all ages, as intolerable mischiefes to churches, to republickes, to the manners, mindes, and soules of men. And that the profession of play-poets, of stage-players; together with the penning, acting, and frequenting of stage-playes, are unlawfull, infamous and misbeseeming Christians. All pretences to the contrary are here likewise fully answered; and the unlawfulness of acting, of beholding academicall enterludes, briefly discussed; besides sundry other particulars concerning dancing, dicing, health-drinking, &c. of which the table will informe you..* (London: Printed by E[dward] A[llde], Augustine Mathewes, Thomas Cotes] and W[illiam] I[ones] for Michael Sparke, 1633).

² In this instance, most believe that Prynne was not-so-subtly attacking the Catholic Queen Henrietta Maria, who had a fondness for masques and participating in court theatricals.

³ Prynne, *Histriomastix*, 34, 38, 73, 454.

audience, but, more importantly, because the theatre itself was recognized as being disorderly and vice-ridden. Consequently, the stage was condemned by nearly all theologians, ministers, and leaders associated with the Calvinist confession. Moreover, beginning in the 1610s, and continuing through the remainder of the seventeenth century, laws were passed in the major Calvinist cities (Geneva and Edinburgh, for example) that outlawed the establishment of public theatres. Perhaps better known, though, was the shuttering of London's notorious theatres in 1642, immediately after Puritans gained parliamentary control.

Outside of a substantial body of scholarship devoted to the English Puritan case, there is relatively little research concerning the anti-theatre stance of Calvinist leaders. As a result, the prevailing narrative regarding the stage, the church, and the Calvinist faith more generally, is devoid of nuance. The story often told goes as follows: the theatre thrived before the Protestant Reformation. Not only was the mass itself something of a theatrical experience, but the Catholic Church often gave its blessing to religious plays and other dramatic representations. But then the Protestant Reformation happened and, because Protestants were iconoclastic, wary of visual culture, and rejected any perceived "religious innovations," religious theatre suffered serious setbacks (secular theatre, meanwhile, thrived in many, primarily Catholic, places during this period). While the theatre might not have been banned in all Protestant areas, it was almost always heavily restricted. The degree to which it was restricted depended on what confession took root in a given place--the "hotter" the Protestant, the more restrictive the regulations. Anglicans and Lutherans were relatively accepting of the stage (and the theatre often thrived in these places), whereas Calvinists typically offered the strongest resistance.⁴

This narrative is not wrong, so much as it is reductionist. The basic points are more or less correct: the Protestant Reformation did impede the development of the secular theatre in much of western Europe, and Calvinist cities generally had more restrictive laws regarding the theatre than Anglican or Lutheran cities. Much is left out of this narrative, though. For example, even in the "hottest" of Calvinist cities, the theatre was not heavily restricted or banned until seven or eight decades *after* the Reformation was accepted by civic leaders and citizens. Furthermore, the stage was not simply tolerated in the intervening period; in some places, it was embraced and utilized by religious leaders to further their own religious and civic goals. It was only in the early part of the seventeenth century that this began to change. But perhaps even more problematic than this chronological simplification is the false dichotomy that it presents. All the actors in this narrative either accept or oppose the theatre; there really is no middle ground, and this is where the problem lies. When it comes to the church and the stage in early modern Europe, it's all middle ground. Rarely was the stage enthusiastically accepted by church leaders, even at the height of the medieval period.

⁴ See, for example, James Dibdin, *The Annals of the Edinburgh Stage, With an Account of the Rise and Progress of Dramatic Writing in Scotland* (Edinburgh: Richard Cameron, 1888), Peter Lake and Michael Questier's *The Anti-Christ's Lewd Hat: Protestants, Papists, and Players in Post-Reformation England* (New Haven: Yale University Press, 2002), or Michael O'Connell's *The Idolatrous Eye: Iconoclasm and Theater in Early Modern England* (Oxford: Oxford University Press, 2000).. As will be repeated many times throughout this dissertation, there is an overwhelming amount of scholarship devoted to the English stage. England, with its Puritan interregnum, is a useful case study because it highlights this spectrum of Protestant responses to the stage. In *Staging Reform, Reforming the Stage* (Ithaca: Cornell University Press, 1997), Huston Diehl agrees with this basic narrative, though then complicates it by arguing that a "distinctly Protestant aesthetic" emerged in England in the aftermath of the Reformation. More recent scholars

Conversely, even those who railed most virulently against the stage often found ways that the theatre and theatricality could prove useful to their cause. Instead of seeking to define who was or was not opposed to the theatre, we should instead attempt to understand what local conditions and factors affected the church's stance on the stage. When we do this, it becomes clear that religious leaders' attitudes towards the theatre were not solely dictated by confessional affiliations or theological concerns.

When easily regulated by religious leaders, as it was prior to the late sixteenth century, the theatre was understood to be a useful educational and spiritual tool. When allowed to develop outside of the bounds of the Church, though, the theatre was something else entirely. A legitimate and professionalized secular theatre had the potential to become a powerful socio-cultural institution, one that performed many of the same functions as the Church. Like the Church, the theatre offered a physical space for the community to gather together to engage in a common activity, but instead of listening to sermons or receiving spiritual instruction, the theatre's audience gathered together to watch, learn from, and discuss a theatrical performance. We should keep this in mind when reading the anti-theatre texts of the late sixteenth and early seventeenth centuries. When ministers lambasted the stage, it was not only because they believed the stage to be inherently immoral (though they would argue this was true), or that they worried the stage would lead their parishioners off of the godly path (though they would argue this, too). No, the stage was to be feared and reviled for much bigger reasons; the theatre had the potential to undermine the Church.

Part One: Theatre and the Church Before the Reformation

In many of the Protestant treatises and sermons that derided the stage, the notion that the theatre was "too popish" was provided as ample justification for its condemnation. There can be no doubt that the theatre, and religious plays more specifically, played an important role in pre-Reformation religious practice, but what is less clear is how this came to be, and how theatrical performances shaped religious experience and practice in this period.

Most scholars place the beginning of medieval religious theatre in the late tenth century, but even before the introduction of religious plays, the mass was an intensely sensual and theatrical experience.⁵ Congregants, most of whom were illiterate, relied on their senses in order to navigate their way through the rituals of worship. Throughout the service, all five senses would be engaged: handbells would ring when the host was elevated, incense would be burned to aid in purification and sanctification, a kiss of peace would be offered between congregants in anticipation of receiving communion, the rituals of different prayers would force the congregation to move from standing to kneeling throughout the service, and creeds would be recited.⁶ In his essay about popular piety in the medieval period, Robert Scribner emphasizes the visual aspects of medieval worship, pointing especially to the elevation of the host during mass as a moment that specifically highlights the visual nature of piety and worship. During this moment in the mass, the priest would speak the words consecrating the

⁵ Here, I'm using the term "theatrical" very broadly to mean formal acts performed or authorized--outside of the theatre proper-- by a central power (in this case, the Catholic church) that make use of elements of stagecraft and are intended to be widely witnessed.

⁶ C.M. Woolgar, *The Senses in Late Medieval England* (New Haven: Yale University Press, 2006), 40, 71-73, 124.

bread and then hold the bread above his head in order to allow the congregation to witness what was now the literal body of Christ. Much was done in order to ensure that the congregation fully witnessed this important act: “candles were lit on the altar just before the consecration, the choir-screen was opened, and the hem of the celebrant’s mass-vestment was held up so that the priest could lift the host as high as possible.” In some countries, darker colored cloths were also pulled across the altar to serve as a backdrop for the host--this added drama also made it easier for congregants to see the host during the elevation.⁷ The most practical explanation for the importance of the senses in worship and expressions of piety would be literacy rates in the medieval and early modern period. Though actual rates of literacy in this period are a much-debated topic, we can say with some confidence that most Europeans in the pre-Reformation era were functionally illiterate.⁸ The reliance on the visual certainly makes sense in this context.

Formal medieval religious theatre grew out of the *Quem quaeritis* trope, a dialogue spoken at the Easter mass in nearly all European churches by the year 1000 CE. This dialogue was inserted into the traditional Easter liturgy, and consisted of the question, “Whom do you seek in the Sepulchre?” followed by the answer, “Jesus of Nazareth.” There were some regional variations of this trope (in Southern France and Northern Italy, for example, the dialogue was recited prior to the Introit to the Easter Mass, whereas in England, Germany, and Northern France, the trope was not recited until just before the final hymn), but the sentiment and wording was fairly consistent.⁹ From these rather humble beginnings emerged the *Visitatio Sepulchri*, the first known medieval religious play, which, according to theatre historian Dunbar Ogden, was initially recorded in tenth-century Winchester, England.¹⁰ Unlike most scholars who overlook the *Visitatio Sepulchri* performances in favor of the better documented passion plays, Ogden insists that examining the *Visitatio* performances provides us with valuable insight into how drama was initially incorporated into the medieval church, and the work theatrical performances were expected to do.

The *Visitatio* was a simple play with just four roles: an angel and the three Marys (Mary Magdalene, Mary, mother of James, and Mary Salome). In Winchester, the set piece, which consisted of a sepulchre containing linen wrappings from the cross, was placed at the high altar. Though the main dramatic actions took place at the altar, the monks (who performed all the roles in the play, including that of the three Marys) made use of the entire cathedral when performing. The three Marys, clothed in “cape-like apparel,” entered from the rear of the cathedral, making their way to the altar, carrying the objects necessary for anointing the body of Jesus. Upon reaching the tomb, the angel asks the three Marys whom

⁷ Robert Scribner, “Popular Piety and Modes of Visual Perception in Late-Medieval and Reformation Germany,” *The Journal of Religious History* 15.4 (December, 1989), 458.

⁸ See Charles F. Briggs, “Literacy, Reading, and Writing in the Medieval West,” *Journal of Medieval History*, 26.4 (2000): 397-420, for an excellent historiographical essay regarding the scholarship on this contested issue.

⁹ Dunbar Ogden, *The Staging of Drama in the Medieval Church* (Newark: University of Delaware Press, 2002), 19-20.

¹⁰ Ogden gets his information from the *Regularis Concordia*, which was written by Dunstan, the Archbishop of Canterbury, and Ethelwold, the Bishop of Winchester. The purpose of this book was to set out in writing the monastic customs of the Benedictine monks (it was to supplement the *Rule of St. Benedict*). Ogden believes it likely that the *Visitatio* was first performed in continental European monasteries, but, unfortunately, there are no surviving documents to prove this theory.

they seek and, upon hearing their response, reveals the now empty tomb. Ogden notes that these actions and spoken words were very purposeful--there were "indications as to gesture, facial expression, and method of line delivery" throughout the "script."¹¹ This was something that the monks took quite seriously. The important question to ask here is why: why innovate and introduce a new element to the worship service? What was the play supposed to do? In his personal writings, Ethelwold, Bishop of Winchester, notes that the plays were actually not staged with the intent of educating the laity (as might be assumed), but were rather meant to strengthen the "faith of uninformed and uninstructed" men who were training to become priests or monks.¹² This focus on the clergy, however, was short lived. By the eleventh and twelfth centuries, plays had also become an important part of the lay religious experience.

Religious plays and less scripted dramas (for example, the "music-dramas" that were incorporated into the liturgy) became an important part of medieval worship and helped congregants commemorate important days throughout the year. By the twelfth century, nearly all feast days and religious holidays were marked by a performance of some sort, though the more elaborate plays were saved for Christmas and Easter. Outside of the Easter and Christmas performances, there were plays to celebrate the lives of important Bible stories (*The Play of Daniel* and *The Conversion of Saint Paul* in the twelfth century), lesser religious holidays (Annunciation plays throughout the thirteenth and fourteenth centuries), and saints (St. Sebastian plays in the sixteenth century). The fact that large numbers of plays were performed in conjunction with the celebration of mass indicates that plays were accepted (we do not know how enthusiastically) by most religious leaders in the pre-Reformation period. An examination of religious theatre indicates that these performances served four important cultural, civic and religious functions: they provided instruction, allowed spectators to empathize with their Savior, were a means to salvation, and encouraged social cohesion.

Plays provided religious leaders with a means to instruct the less educated in religious and theological matters. In a period when mass was conducted entirely in Latin, and bibles were not common household possessions, plays performed in the vernacular proved to be an eminently accessible medium for spectators. Those who might not effectively receive religious instruction during Mass could learn about biblical stories and basic elements of theology by attending a theatrical performance. Someone attending a passion play, for example, would watch (and hear, when the noises of the crowd did not overwhelm the actors' voices) Jesus' trial, suffering, crucifixion, and ultimate resurrection. Beyond being exposed to the most important story in the Christian Bible, spectators would also witness the foundation for the rite of communion--Christ's innocent blood being shed to save sinners. In this regard, plays were powerful teaching tools.¹³

Passion plays, Corpus Christi cycles, and other religious dramas were also intended to bring spectators closer to their Savior by allowing them to acutely feel and experience Christ's pain during crucifixion; this was "affective piety" at its most literal. Plays were designed and performed in such a way as to achieve a type of vividness meant to elicit a very visceral response from the audience. The actors and stage managers of a theatre in sixteenth-

¹¹ Ogden, 24.

¹² Ibid, 23.

¹³ Kevin Wetmore, "What is Catholic Theatre?," in *Catholic Theatre and Drama: Critical Essays*, ed. Kevin Wetmore (Jefferson, NC: McFarland and Company, 2010), 3.

century Freiburg im Breisgau, for example, went to great lengths to ensure that their audience members understood the horror of the crucifixion. They attached a rather sophisticated system of tubing to the crucifix upon which Jesus hung, which allowed them to spray faux blood over the stage with each jab of the spear into Jesus's ribs.¹⁴ Spectators were able to literally see the spilling of Christ's blood for their sins, which was undoubtedly a highly emotional sight.

By allowing spectators to empathize with their Savior, the plays were also intended to be salvific. Watching and, more importantly, *feeling* the plays as they were performed, led a spectator closer to God, and closer to their own salvation. In 1388-89, members of the York Pater Noster guild noted that their plays were performed "for the health and reformation of the souls, both of those in charge of that play and of those hearing it... for the greater glory of God ... and for the reprovng of sins and vices." The plays were explicit in their salvific goals. The Alsfeld passion play opened up with the following words of instruction and encouragement for the audience:

"Now hear ye all and hearken unto me,
be ye old, young, poor, or rich,
all who are gathered here!
Mark well my words,
As I have often read:
that no one can be saved
from eternal death and the agonies of hell,
lest he ponder in his heart
the great suffering and bitter death
and all the diverse afflictions
which our lord suffered
for the sins of us all!"¹⁵

And just a few lines later,

"And hence you should witness
with reverence the beautiful play
Which we shall present here,
concerning the suffering of our Lord.
Turn your hearts to it,
you men and women too!
Devoutly you should watch it."¹⁶

Plays were intended to be a form of devotional spectatorship: audience members would learn the basics of the biblical stories, but they would also get ever so closer to personal salvation. Beyond hoping that spectators' relationship with Christ would be strengthened through a form

¹⁴ Glenn Ehrstine, *Theater, Culture, and Community in Reformation Bern, 1523-1555*, (Leiden: Brill, 2002).

¹⁵ Larry West, trans., *The Alsfeld Passion Play*, (Lewiston, NY: Edwin Mellen Press, 1997), 3.

¹⁶ West, *The Alsfeld Passion Play*, 5-7.

of devotional spectatorship, though, theatre attendance was also more practically beneficial for salvation. Indulgences and remission of sins were regularly granted to those who attended or participated in religious theatre: Pope Clement VII and the Bishop of Chester granted liberal pardons to those who attended the Corpus Christi cycles in Chester; playgoers in Lucerne, Mainz, Strasbourg, and Vienna received remissions for their sins at several points in the early sixteenth century; in 1502, Raimund Perudi, a papal legate, granted 240 year long indulgences to a group who performed a Corpus Christi play in Calw; and the citizens of Bern received special indulgences following the production of a play in 1516. What is interesting about this practice are that the letters of indulgence stress the *visual* nature of salvation--spectators specifically “received grace through an act of vision, not of hearing.”¹⁷

Religious plays were meant to strengthen a spectator’s faith and were an important part of the pre-reformation religious experience, but their significance reached beyond the religious instruction of individual spectators. Theatrical performances were a community effort that allowed residents to work closely together for a common goal. The York Corpus Christi plays, which were especially elaborate, frequently had “as much as a tenth of the city involved in the production--up to twenty Christs, twelve Maries, several different “Gods,” and a few Satans wandering the city giving multiple performances at several sites.”¹⁸ These were enormous undertakings that involved nearly every sector of society: community theatre in the true sense of the term--theatre performed by and for members of a given community.

On the eve of the Protestant Reformation, a rich culture of religious theatricality had deeply penetrated medieval society. So far, this all seems to fit into the traditional narrative of Catholic theatricality. This is, however, only part of the story, because while plays and other forms of theatricality were utilized extensively in the pre-Reformation church, the theatre was handled carefully and, at times, hesitantly. The stage was a culturally powerful medium with many potential uses, which explains both the acceptance and rejection of the stage in early modern Europe. When properly harnessed, the theatre could solidify communal values or provide instruction, but there was always the possibility that the stage could create problems. Characters could poke fun at leaders, challenge political realities, sow the seeds of discontent, or spectators could simply misinterpret the intended message of the performance. Even when the stage was embraced and utilized, it was done knowing that the theatre was an erratic and volatile medium.

Much of the worries about the theatre stemmed from a bigger conflict within medieval Catholicism. The reliance on the senses for instruction was an accepted reality in the medieval world, but there were problems inherent to trusting one’s senses for instruction, divine or otherwise. Individuals were expected to choose between their rational side, which leads to contemplation of the divine and, ideally, salvation, or the baser, animalistic side, which gives in to the desires of the flesh. The paradoxical, and problematic, bit was that your senses were necessary for both routes: “The senses - sight, hearing, touch, smell, taste - were both the means by which the self could appreciate beauty and truth, indeed, obtain access to the divine Word itself, yet they were also the gateway to temptation and desire.”¹⁹ This was

¹⁷ Ehrstine, 18.

¹⁸ Sarah Beckwith, *Signifying God: Social Relation and Symbolic Act in the York Corpus Christi Plays* (Chicago and London: University of Chicago Press, 2001).

¹⁹ Greg Walker, “The Cultural Work of Early Drama” in *The Cambridge Companion to Medieval English Theatre, Second Edition*: Richard Beadle and Alan Fletcher, Eds.. (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press

one of the most worrying aspects of the stage--while it could be the gateway to the divine, it could also lead you down the path to temptation.

More troubling, though, was the inability of the church, performers, or other civic leaders to control the reception and interpretation of the play itself. Plays were intended to be affective, but they were more than this; plays were also reflexive. While reflecting upon a performance, a spectator re-interpreted the play's content. This process could not be controlled, and there was always the possibility that spectators would come to the "wrong" conclusions after watching a performance. One of the more cited examples of just this happening is the story of an old man from Cartmel in Lancashire, who was asked what he knew about Jesus Christ. His response was that he believed he had "heard of that man you speake of once in a play in Kendall, called Corpus-Christi play, where there was a man on a tree & blood ran downe." As Greg Walker notes, "the witness seems to have been oblivious to all of the theological implications of the story and to have responded only to a powerful image of violence and human suffering."²⁰ Any time a play was performed, there was the possibility that it would be profoundly misinterpreted by the audience.

Despite these potential pitfalls, though, the leaders within the Catholic church found that on the whole religious plays did more good than harm. This is one of the many beliefs that would be seriously challenged by the leaders of the Protestant Reformation.

Part Two: A Reformed Stage

One of the most common complaints leveled against the sixteenth-century Catholic Church by those who sought to reform it was that an excessive reliance on the visual had corrupted the Church. There were several reasons why the reformers thought this to be true. First, any attempt to represent God, be it in artwork or in theatrical form, was seen as highly problematic because "God was so totally other, so far beyond the reach of the natural world, that the supernatural could not be apprehended by any merely human effort."²¹ In this context, passion plays or Corpus Christi cycles that featured actors assuming the role of God or of Jesus, stained glass windows that were comprised of divine images, or woodcuts that showed Christ on the cross were, at best, pale imitations of the divine. At worst, though, these images were impeding true understanding of religious truths and preventing lay people from developing a relationship with God based on scripture. Reformers worried about the type of message conveyed to congregants when images were used extensively for devotional purposes and religious drama (be it in an actual theatre or the celebration of the mass) constituted a substantial part of the religious experience. Were these images and dramatic practices solely affective? Passion plays, for example, had an obvious emotional impact on spectators, but what did this actually mean in terms of salvation? In one of his early sermons, Luther questions this practice, noting that passion play spectators "take pity on Christ, lamenting and crying over him as an innocent man...but make no further progress" in terms of their salvation.²² The plays certainly caused all manner of emotional turmoil for spectators,

,2008): 75-98.

²⁰ Walker, 72.

²¹ Scribner, 462.

²² Martin Luther, "Eyn Sermon von der Betrachtung des heyligen leydens Christi," (1519).

but nothing more. Spectators learn that simply feeling Christ's pain (or looking upon a particular image) is enough to be saved; Luther and his fellow reformers disagreed. *Sola scriptura* did not, after all, leave any room for relying on images to ensure one's salvation.

Although all reformers believed that visual representations could be a serious distraction from personal salvation, there was no consensus about what should be done with the religious images that already existed in parish churches. At one extreme, there was Andreas Karlstadt, Ulrich Zwingli, and John Calvin, who opposed all forms of religious imagery. This seemingly unyielding stance led to unrestrained iconoclasm in many places.²³ In an act that wonderfully draws together many of the issues at the heart of the Protestant reformation, in 1532, residents of Esslingen cooked a wedding feast for an evangelical priest and former nun over a fire fueled by images taken from the parish church.²⁴ In St. Gallen, residents were not content to simply destroy images, so they put all of the images taken out of the churches in the city's stocks. In England, all the stained glass windows in the Lady Chapel of Ely Cathedral were broken, and nearly all of the limestone statues within the cathedral were decapitated.²⁵

Iconoclasm, though, was but one (albeit very extreme and violent) reaction to images and should not be understood to be the only Protestant reaction to imagery. Even John Calvin, who was staunchly opposed to religious imagery, lamented that upon his arrival in Geneva, the locals "were good at seeking out idols and burning them," but otherwise had "no Reformation."²⁶ Calvin was not opposed to iconoclasm, per se, but he did not see the point in abolishing all the images if true reformed worship was not also being implemented. On the other end of the "image spectrum" was Martin Luther, who urged moderation towards images and opposed iconoclastic activities. While he was opposed to the veneration of images, Luther thought that images could be a useful means of instruction. Of the woodcuts often found in bibles, Luther writes,

"Pictures contained in these books we would paint on walls for the sake of remembrance and better understanding, since they do no more harm on walls than in books. It is to be sure better to paint pictures on walls of how God created the world, how Noah built the ark, and whatever other good stories there may be, than to paint shameless worldly things. Yes, would to God that I could persuade the rich and mighty that they would permit the whole Bible to be painted on houses, on the inside and outside, so that all can see it."²⁷

Luther rejected the premise that salvation or deep spiritual understanding would result from gazing upon certain images, but he did recognize that images had some value and use in a post-Reformation society. This is very reminiscent of the rationale behind imagery in the Catholic church, and also further highlights the disparate reactions to imagery in the wake of

²³ W.A. Dyrness, *Reformed Theology and Visual Culture: The Protestant Imagination from Calvin to Edwards* (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 2004), 53-80.

²⁴ Edward Muir, *Ritual in Early Modern Europe* (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 2005), 190.

²⁵ Muir, 190.

²⁶ E. William Monter, *Calvin's Geneva* (New York: John Wiley & Sons, 1967). 95.

²⁷ *Luther's Works*, ed. John Doberstein (Philadelphia: Muhlenberg Press, 1959), vol. XL, 99.

the Reformation.

Contrary to what we would expect of them (and what the traditional anti-theatre narratives would tell us), sixteenth-century reformers did not advocate the banning of the stage, nor is there any evidence that they encouraged their followers to destroy theatres during iconoclastic periods. More than simply accepting the stage as a civic or cultural institution, though, many reformers actually used it to further their own religious goals of spreading the Gospel as far and wide as possible. Not unlike pre-Reformation Catholic theologians who believed the stage could teach religious truths, there was a “general consensus among Protestant theologians” that the stage could be a powerful site for instruction and the fostering of the reformed faith.²⁸

In addition to providing instruction about the errors of Catholicism, or truths of Protestantism, plays served an important socio-cultural function during the tumultuous process of a city or region adopting the reformed faith. As Glenn Ehrstine shows in his work on the role of the stage in promoting the Reformation, much of the “social, moral, and political issues left unresolved in the aftermath of the local Reformation” were addressed in stage plays, which provided theatre-goers with “orientation during a period of cultural transition.”²⁹ Theatres created a public forum “in which the changes brought on by religious upheaval might be acted out.”³⁰ Nowhere was this purpose more obvious than in the Swiss cantons.

It goes without saying that the Protestant Reformation was a disruptive process that challenged and re-ordered many people’s lives. This was especially true in the Swiss cantons, though, where competing confessional allegiances (not just Catholic vs. Protestant, but Catholic vs. Lutheran vs. Zwinglian vs. Calvinism) threatened to destroy the fragile Swiss Confederacy.³¹ Religious and secular plays proved to be an effective means of encouraging cross-confessional cohesion during the tumultuous Reformation period. When plays were performed, more often than not, the audience was comprised of more than just local citizens. There is a great deal of evidence showing that Swiss citizens attended plays in a number of cantons, regardless of the canton’s confessional affiliation, and, moreover, that this type of cultural exchange was encouraged. In 1549/50, the Zurich council made funds available to invite representatives “from all cantons” to a theatrical performance.³² In this situation, an aggressively sectarian play could not be performed, lest an unwanted civil war be initiated. The plays that were performed were either political dramas or standard biblical plays, though in the case of plays of a religious nature, the proclinator nearly always asserted in the prologue that “no particular group [would] take umbrage at the content.”³³ Because of this sensitivity, plays allowed members of competing confessional allegiances the opportunity to interact with each other in a non-threatening environment.

The Swiss plays of the early Reformation period aimed for cross-confessional

²⁸ Ehrstine, 28.

²⁹ Ibid, 12. It may be that the same argument could be made of Lutheran territories, but there is not yet sufficient scholarship to make this claim.

³⁰ Ibid, 13.

³¹ There would, in fact, be civil wars--the wars of Kappel--as a result of the Reformation, but the confederacy survived these and remained intact, until it was defeated by the Napoleonic army in 1798.

³² Ehrstine, 141.

³³ Ibid.

acceptability, but this does not mean that specific confessional polemics were entirely absent--they were just more subtly incorporated. In Bern, a protestant canton that wavered somewhat between Lutheranism and Zwinglianism, biblical dramas featuring a single protagonist were the favored type of play. In these performances, spectators would witness the protagonist encounter difficulties meant to try their moral and religious convictions. In *Goliath*, which was first performed in Bern in 1535, audience members were treated to the classic story of David, the archetypal underdog, who saved the Israelites from the Philistines by defeating the giant, Goliath. On the surface, this type of story would have broad confessional appeal, but upon closer inspection, it is clear that the play has very Protestant undertones. David was a single person who was able find the means within to save himself, much as Protestants believed that salvation was a personal path that must be trod alone.³⁴ In performing *Goliath*, the Bernese were able to maintain peaceful relations with their neighbors, without betraying their own doctrinal beliefs.

Evidently, the reformers found the theatre a useful tool. This is not to say, however, that the theatre of the pre-Reformation Catholic church was appropriated in its entirety by the reformers, because some changes were necessary to make the stage more compatible with a reformed faith. One of the most common methods of controlling the theatre, and ensuring it was compatible with Protestant values, was to establish censorship committees that would read and approve (or reject) all plays, religious or secular, before their performance. These types of committees were established in nearly every Protestant city in the sixteenth century. Other types of theatrical “innovations” depended a great deal on specific religious confession. Since it is difficult to articulate a Protestant theory of the stage that adequately encompasses all confessional variations, at this point we should differentiate between Lutheran and Calvinist responses to the stage. While both Lutheran and Calvinist ministers used the theatre in some manner, as a general rule, the former were less restrictive and more enthusiastically supportive of the stage than their Calvinist counterparts. An incident in Dessau in 1542 provides us with a good sense of the Lutheran stance on the theatre.

In 1538, Joachim Greff, a Dessau schoolmaster with aspirations of becoming a playwright, began to compose a passion play. Upon learning of Greff’s intent, local ministers were scandalized. Plays in and of themselves were not troublesome, but a passion play, which would necessarily require an actor to assume the role of Jesus, smacked too much of Catholicism. Disheartened, but not deterred, Greff sought the counsel of both Luther and Dessau’s own reformer, Niklaus Hausmann, only to have both theologians advise him against his plans, for fear it would lead, in Luther’s words, to a “fiasco.”³⁵ Greff did not relent (though he did edit his play to focus more on the resurrection than the passion), and his resulting work, *Geistliches schones neues spil auff das heilige Osterfest gestellet* was published in 1542, much to the dismay of local authorities. What was initially a local theatre crisis escalated when Greff, annoyed at his inability to have the play staged locally, appealed to Prince George of Anhalt, the territorial ruler of Dessau. Anhalt ordered Greff to consult five prominent Lutheran theologians, including Luther and Philipp Melancthon. Despite his earlier admonitions to Greff, Luther, and the other four theologians, “ruled” in favor of Greff over the local ministers (though Luther was quite right in his earlier warning that Greff

³⁴ Ibid, 147-151.

³⁵ Ibid, 2.

pushing forward with his play would lead to a fiasco).

Two basic tenets about plays emerged from this incident. First, scripturally based plays were understood by Lutherans to be theologically neutral. Second, plays, when appropriately performed, were viewed as an effective means (even more so than sermons) of disseminating the word of God, particularly to younger audiences. Hieronymus Nopus, one of the consulting theologians was especially adamant about a play's capacity for instruction, writing that "Christ wished to infix the Gospel of our salvation upon our minds, not only by the Word, but even more so by spectacles of the Sacraments."³⁶ Melancthon, who had previously encouraged the production of secular plays by school-aged children, echoed Nopus' sentiments, arguing that it was especially important for people to see dramatizations of Christ's resurrection, writing that "people should be taught to gaze upon the resurrected Christ as he hears and saves those who call upon him."³⁷ This is a bit perplexing. While it makes sense, given Luther's moderate stance on imagery and opposition to iconoclasm, that he and his followers would be accepting of religious theatre, it is surprising that Lutherans would condone any type of play that would feature an actor portraying Christ, or one that relied heavily on a particular emotional response from the audience.

An acceptance of resurrection plays seems to contradict many Luther-approved teachings. Resurrection plays had much in common with passion plays: both types of plays highlighted a period that is essential for understanding basic Christian theology, and both expected to be emotionally resonant with their audience, albeit in different ways. The same arguments used to reject passion plays could certainly have been used to reject resurrection plays. Why, then, were these plays permitted? The only real answer seems to be that resurrection plays were not terribly common in Catholic churches; they certainly were not as prevalent as passion plays, which were absolutely rejected by the five consulting theologians in the Dessau case. Resurrection plays did not have the same Catholic connotations as passion plays, so they were viewed as more acceptable, and, consequently, Greff's play was permitted to be performed. Lutherans were decidedly more enthusiastic about the theatre than their Reformed counterparts proved to be. Despite more hesitance on their parts, though, Calvinist ministers were not averse to appropriating the stage during the Reformation when they felt it would further their own goals.

Of all the sixteenth-century theologians, John Calvin was the least sympathetic to the stage, but even he believed that the theatre could, and should, be used as a "cultural and polemical tool" during the Reformation process.³⁸ Most of the leading Calvinist ministers³⁹ agreed with Calvin and accepted that there could be a place for the theatre in a reformed society. In some ways, these ministers even went beyond the efforts of the Lutheran theologians, because several of the leading Calvinist theologians actually wrote their own plays: Theodore de Beze, Calvin's successor in Geneva, wrote *Abraham Sacrifiant* in 1550, Heinrich Bullinger wrote *Lucretia und Brutus*, a drama in 1526 (published 1533), and though

³⁶ Ibid, 2-6.

³⁷ Quoted in Ehrstine, 3. Melancthon approved of the performance of the secular plays, so long as the students were performing them in Latin, thus giving them a chance to brush up on their language skills.

³⁸ Graham Gargett, *Jacob Vernet, Geneva, and the Philosophes*, (Geneva: Voltaire Foundation, 1994), 113.

³⁹ I am using this term very broadly to include Martin Bucer, Heinrich Bullinger, Ulrich Zwingli, Johannes Oecolampadius, Wolfgang Capito, Zacharias Ursinus, Caspar Hedio, Peter Martyr Vermigli, John Knox and John Calvin.

he did not pen a play, Zwingli gave some approval to the stage by composing choral music for a play a few months before his death in 1531. Just as in Lutheran territories, plays were thought to provide valuable instruction in the midst of the Reformation, particularly to the less educated and illiterate. Calvinist leaders were willing to countenance a fairly liberal theatre “policy” during the Reformation--in this case, the ends most assuredly justified the means. Once the Calvinist confession was firmly established within a territory, however, the theatre was subject to alterations in order to make the stage more compatible with protestant theology.

In the aftermath of the Reformation, the split between Lutheran and Calvinist theologians on the issue of the theatre became even more apparent. Once the Lutheran confession was adopted by a locale, very little changed in regards to the official stance on the theatre. Luther himself was a proponent of religious theatre, so as long as a performance was not directly associated with Catholicism, it was allowed. Calvinist areas were rather different. This is not entirely unexpected since Calvinist ministers and theologians were traditionally more hostile towards visual culture and more supportive of iconoclasm than their Lutheran counterparts. Performances were not banned outright, but restrictions and regulations were put in place to render them more acceptable; these restrictions were primarily focused on regulating timing and subject matter. In many places, parameters were set as to when plays could be performed: in Edinburgh, for example, laws established in 1574 forbid plays to be performed on the Sabbath.⁴⁰ Similar prohibitions were established in other Calvinist cities as well.

In his treatise *De Regno Christi* (1550), Martin Bucer explains the circumstances under which plays could be considered “honest diversions” in a Calvinist society. Bucer believed that men were not able to “concentrate on grave and serious matters” at all times and, as a result, thought that appropriate Christian plays could entertain spectators while simultaneously encouraging religious education.⁴¹ The subject matter and contents of a play, though, needed to be closely monitored. Bucer cautioned civic leaders who sought to have plays performed, writing:

“It must be observed, however, that when in both kinds of poetic material, comic and tragic, the activities and sins of men are described and actively presented to be seen with the eyes, it should be done in such a way that although the crimes of reprobate men are related, yet a certain terror of divine judgment and horror of sin should appear in these things, and a shameless daring and an exultant delight in crimes should not be expressed. It is better here to take something away from the poetic finesse rather than from the concern for edifying the piety of the spectators, which demands that in every representation of sin there be felt the condemnation of one’s conscience and the horrible fear of God’s judgement.”⁴²

⁴⁰ Adrienne Scullion, “The Eighteenth Century,” *A History of Scottish Theatre*, Ed. Bill Findlay (Edinburgh: Edinburgh University Press, 1998), 87. James C. Dibdin, *The Annals of the Edinburgh Stage, With an Account of the Rise and Progress of Dramatic Writing in Scotland*, (Edinburgh: Richard Cameron, 1888), 12.

⁴¹ Martin Bucer, *De Regno Christi*, in *Melanchthon and Bucer*, ed. and trans. Wilhelm Pauck, (Philadelphia: Westminster, 1969), 346.

⁴² Bucer, *De Regno Christi*, trans. Pauck, 351.

So long as “poetic finesse” was subordinated to the greater goal of religious instruction, there was no real reason, according to Bucer, to forbid theatrical performances of biblical material in Calvinist cities. In other locations, though, ministers felt it best to avoid sacred material altogether, just in case “poetic finesse” could not be adequately controlled. The 1574 regulations that forbade plays from being performed on the Sabbath in Edinburgh also forbade the production of any play based on canonical scriptures. Additionally, a master of revels was appointed and, prior to performance, a play had to be submitted to him for approval; approval was usually only given if the local ministers were amenable.⁴³ Performances were certainly controlled and regulated in Calvinist cities, but they were not forbidden.

In the years immediately following the Reformation, theatrical performances took place in Calvinist cities across Northern Europe. While the theatre might not have been fully embraced by Reformed theologians, it was tolerated because it was understood to be a helpful medium for spreading their faith. This is a remarkable position, and one that is very much at odds with the Calvinist stance on the theatre just a few decades later.

Part Three: Banning the Stage

In Switzerland, bans on the theatre began appearing in the late 1610s, often as part of civil sumptuary legislation. The town council of Lucerne was first to act, banning stage productions in 1616. Geneva followed in 1617 and Zurich in 1624. This move away from the theatre was not limited to the Swiss cantons. After securing their religious and political freedoms in the aftermath of the Eighty Years War (1568-1648), civic officials throughout the Dutch Provinces (many of which were Calvinist) were quick to force theatres out of business.⁴⁴ As has already been noted, the Puritans shuttered London’s theatres in 1642, not long after gaining parliamentary power. A little further to the north was Calvinist Edinburgh, a city that took a bit longer to fully outlaw the theatre; stage plays were not completely forbidden there until 1692. The move from accepting, tolerating, and, in some places, encouraging theatre attendance, to a complete ban on the establishment represents a dramatic shift in Reformed attitudes towards the usefulness of the stage. Why did this happen?

One way to explain Reformed anti-theatre laws would be to argue that the rejection of the theatre was simply a rejection of visual culture more generally. Given that Reformed ministers would prefer their parishioners to learn more “by [their] ears than by [their] eyes,” anti-theatre rhetoric would seem to fit nicely within the topos of Reformed iconoclasm.⁴⁵ It is hardly surprising that some have focused in on this when explaining the theatre bans. The

⁴³ Bill Findlay, “Beginnings to 1700,” *A History of Scottish Theatre*, Ed. Bill Findlay (Edinburgh: Edinburgh University Press, 1998), 72-74.

⁴⁴ Timothy De Paepe, “How new technologies can contribute to our understanding of seventeenth- and eighteenth-century drama: an Antwerp case study,” *Journal of Dutch Literature* 1.1 (December 2010).

⁴⁵ Michael O’Connell, *The Idolatrous Eye: Iconoclasm and Theater in Early-Modern England* (Oxford: Oxford University Press, 2000), 121.

main problem with this type of argument, though, is that it fails to explain why this was not an issue for Reformed leaders *prior* to the seventeenth century. One would think that iconoclastic attitudes towards the stage would have been evident at the moment when iconoclasm more generally (i.e. dismantling of the Catholic churches) was rampant. Bern, for example, was known for particularly virulent iconoclastic riots in the mid-sixteenth century, but the theatres were not attacked in this period. What changed to make leaders view the theatre as a hotbed of sin and vice?

Acceptance of the stage had always hinged on the belief that plays were more helpful than harmful; by the seventeenth century, a variety of factors converged to tip this balance in the other direction. Two main reasons for outlawing the stage are given in the sermons and pamphlets produced in this period. The first was a belief that theatre attendance impeded proper religious observances by encouraging people to waste their time at the theatre. Second, was the increasingly discussed notion that the theatre was inherently immoral, and that no amount of reform or laws could salvage the stage.

Despite laws in nearly every Calvinist city that forbid theatrical performances on the Sabbath, those who sought to ban the theatre in the seventeenth century almost always cited declining church attendance (presumably in favor of theatre attendance) as a reason for their actions. It is difficult to say how real this problem was--the lament of declining church attendance and the loosening of community moral standards was a familiar protestant trope in the early modern period. It is possible that the laws regarding the theatre were being entirely ignored; this did happen in eighteenth-century Edinburgh and Geneva, but there is no evidence of this happening in earlier periods. The timing of theatre attendance was not really the problem, though, because anti-theatre writers objected to *all* theatre attendance, not just performances that took place during church services (or on the Sabbath more generally). John Stockwood, a London-based Calvinist minister, asserted that playgoing, even if it did not interfere with proper church attendance, was an abusive practice.⁴⁶ Theatre attendance was now understood by Calvinist leaders to be a waste of time; in making this argument, Calvinists were truly turning their backs on all previous efforts to use the theatre as a place of religious and moral instruction. By arguing that the theatre was nothing more than a frivolous leisure activity, the Calvinist ministers stripped it of all religious value. And why was the theatre now without value? According to anti-theatre writers, the theatre could no longer serve a religious purpose because it was a thoroughly immoral place.

The supposed immorality of the stage was, without question, the most frequently cited reason for banning the stage. By the early seventeenth century, the charge of immorality had become nearly universal amongst Calvinist leaders, and, more than being immoral, it was argued that the stage was so corrupted that reform was impossible. The charge of immorality was leveled against the stage for two main reasons: that actors and actresses were morally bankrupt, and that the very nature of the dramatic arts was artificial and hypocritical.

Actors were counted as immoral primarily because they made their living assuming other personas; because of this, they could never be trusted to be authentic or true. In *Histriomastix*, Prynne effectively explained the problem with actors:

“For God, who is truth it selfe, in whom there is no variableness, no shadow of

⁴⁶ John Stockwood, *A very fruitful Sermon preched at Paules Cross the tenth of May last, being the first Sunday in Easter terme: in which are contained very necessary and profitable lessons and instructions for this time*, (London: George Bishop, 1579).

change, no feining, no hypocrisie; as he hath given a uniforme distinct and proper being to every creature, the bounds of which may not be exceeded: so he requires that the actions of every creature should be honest and sincere, devoyde of all hypocrisie, as all his actions, and their natures are. Hence he enjoynes all men at all times, to be such in shew, as they are in truth: to seeme that outwardly which they are inwardly; to act themselves, not others.”⁴⁷

By assuming another character, even for the purposes of performing a play, actors were defying God’s wishes and living an inauthentic life. Furthermore, Prynne believed actors to be more likely to sin because in “play[ing]the sinnes of others,” actors learn to “perpetrate the very selfsame crimes” themselves.⁴⁸ This same argument was applied to actresses, though it should be noted that actresses received more scorn than their male counterparts because they dared to step outside of the domestic boundaries prescribed to their sex. More than being inauthentic, though, these actors were the prototypical “masterless men.” Before the establishment of standing theatres, actors made their living traveling from town to town, setting up rather ad hoc theatres. This type of free movement was very concerning for civic and religious leaders, who were distrustful of such “rogues” and “vagabonds.” Supporting this class of people through regular theatre attendance necessarily compromised a good Christian’s morality.

Similar to the arguments made about acting was the charge that everything associated with the theatre was inauthentic and hypocritical (and thus immoral). It is no coincidence that it was in the late sixteenth and early seventeenth centuries that the term “theatrical” began to be used to establish a dichotomy between that which was true and natural, and that which was inauthentic and contrived. According to the Oxford English Dictionary, this dichotomy can be traced back to a parliamentary petition written by Joseph Hall (1574-1656), the Bishop of Norwich. Hall noted that a “man in businesse is but a theatricall person” who “personates himself.”⁴⁹ The theatrical man, in this case a business person, was but an impersonation of an authentic person. Hall was certainly not the only writer to note the artificiality seemingly inherent in the theatrical. Robert Boyle, the noted seventeenth-century scientist, wrote in *Greatness of Mind*, that “Philosophers...can easily distinguish betwixt that real Greatness..and that Theatrical one,” again perpetuating the belief that the theatrical is not real or true. The notion that the theatrical was synonymous with artificiality and inauthenticity was a pervasive one from the seventeenth century onwards. A moral person was an authentic person, so it is hard to imagine something theatrical also being deemed moral.⁵⁰

All of the above justifications for closing theatres are anti-theatrical in nature, meaning that the objections focus on the fraudulent nature of theatrical performance and the sensual appeal of the stage. As was noted above by Prynne, stage plays were fictions performed by

⁴⁷ Prynne, *Histriomastix*, 159.

⁴⁸ *Ibid*, 908.

⁴⁹ “Theatrical, adj. and n,” OED Online, March 2014. Oxford University Press, <http://www.oed.com/view/Entry/200230?redirectedFrom=theatrical&> (accessed April 30, 2014).

⁵⁰ This raises the issue of how “anti-theatrical” Calvinists actually were; many of their practices, from public disciplining to how sermons were preached, could be considered theatrical, so they were not anti-theatrical in the most literal sense of the term. However, there can be no doubt that they would have self identified as anti-theatrical because of the equation of theatrical with artificial.

actors who committed a fraud by assuming an identity other than their own. In his *Letter to D'Alembert*, Jean-Jacques Rousseau explained the troubling talents of the actor, noting acting was “the art of counterfeiting [one]self, of putting on another character than [one’s] own...of becoming passionate in cold blood.”⁵¹ Good acting hinged on one’s ability to effectively lie. Additionally, the theatre appealed to theatregoers’ eyes. Sumptuous costumes, set pieces, and the actor’s “presence” all aimed to overpower the senses. The spectators’ passions would be inflamed by this visual and emotional onslaught. The engagement of the passions was not, in and of itself, a worrisome development. As theatre sympathisers would argue during debates in the mid-eighteenth-century, some of the best aspects of human nature were revealed when the passions of pity, sympathy, and compassion are roused. Calvinists did not object to these passions, per se, but rather objected to the fact that theatre-goers were directing these feelings and emotions to something that was false. It was a waste of emotion and feeling; passions were not being used constructively. There is also a carnality and emphasis on sensuality in the theatre that does not mesh well with a Calvinist, logocentric understanding of the world. The theatre used the visual to exert power over an audience, and it was a power that the church could not harness or control.⁵²

According to Calvinist leaders, then, the theatre was an immoral place that encouraged people to waste time and potentially miss worship services; the theatre was thoroughly immoral and unchristian. It could not be salvaged. At least, this is what they wrote and preached. None of these anti-theatrical explanations, though, account for why the theatre suddenly became problematic in the early seventeenth century, or explain how “anti-theatrical” Calvinist were more than willing to adopt theatrical practices when it suited them. The theatre did not just become inherently and unchangeably immoral overnight. Something different was at stake here. The focus of this chapter has been on the theatre in the context of religious practice, primarily because secular theatre, while it certainly existed, was very informal through much of the sixteenth century. Beginning in the late sixteenth century, and intensifying in the early seventeenth, though, this began to change. Purpose-built theatres began to appear in cities, acting troupes gained the patronage of monarchs and noblemen, and people began flocking to the theatre by the thousands. This was new, and **this** was the problem for Calvinist leaders. Theatricality, for all that Calvinists were hesitant to fully embrace it, did not cause the Calvinists to ban the theatres. Calvinists were not anti-theatrical. They were, however, anti-theatre.

A legitimate, formal theatre brought with it a number of sinful practices that threatened Calvinist social order and discipline. In cities like Edinburgh, Geneva, and interregnum London, religious leaders worked with civic officials to create model cities full of citizens who devoted their lives to God and the Church.⁵³ While an occasional church-sanctioned amusement was acceptable, theatres did not have a place in the Calvinist city. Consequently, theatres were banned. Again, this was not because Calvinists were anti-theatrical; with a wide variety of processions, rituals, and religious practices, the Calvinist city was, in fact, a theatrical city. This is an important distinction and one that will be

⁵¹ Jean-Jacques Rousseau, *Letter to D'Alembert on the Theatre*, Trans. and Ed. Allan Bloom, (Ithaca: Cornell University Press, 1960), 79.

⁵² O'Connell, *The Idolatrous Eye*.

⁵³ How successful these leaders were is up for debate.

analyzed in greater detail in the next chapter.

Chapter Two: Theatre and the Godly, Calvinist City

Throughout the seventeenth century, laws were passed that banned theatres in nearly all Calvinist cities. Calvinists were not unique in being hesitant about the stage; in fact, most early modern cities, no matter the confessional allegiance, limited the theatre in some way. These cities did not, though, completely ban the stage, which became the prevailing practice in Calvinist cities. Civic and religious leaders in these cities--which included Edinburgh, Geneva, and (at times) London--argued that the theatre was a thoroughly immoral place that diverted good Christians from their religious and moral duties. Some have argued that this stance was representative of a tradition of Calvinist anti-theatricality. The problem with this belief, however, is that there was no established history of Calvinist anti-theatricality by the early seventeenth century.¹ Calvinists did not object to theatricality or to theatrical performances--not consistently anyways. They did, though, have a problem with theatres. This is an important distinction, and explains the timing of the theatre bans in Calvinist cities. It was only after purpose-built theatres began to be constructed in the late sixteenth century that Calvinists moved to outlaw the stage. Early modern Calvinists understood theatres to be a threat, not because performances were theologically unsound, but because the institution of the theatre violated all notions of what constituted a well-ordered Calvinist city.

Order, and more specifically “good order,” was a frequent topic in John Calvin’s Genevan sermons. He often reminded his parishioners that godly people were orderly, disciplined, and steadfast. Ministers and other religious leaders did their part to ensure that parishioners remained on a godly path. Sermons, devotionals, and in-home ministerial visits served to teach people what it meant to be a good Christian. The consistent use of disciplinary procedures, a hallmark of Calvinism, ensured compliance. Parishioners were routinely told that their lives should be devoted to the glory of God, and that there was no time for any activity or practice that did contribute to this greater aim. This meant no dancing, no gambling, no games, and certainly no permanent theatre. While Calvin and his followers supported the occasional performance of a religiously themed play that furthered biblical or doctrinal education, they could not support the establishment of a theatre that regularly performed secular plays. Theatre attendance did nothing more than permit parishioners to shirk their responsibilities in pursuit of leisure. Theatres, founded as they were on inauthenticity and play-acting, were the epitome of disorderliness: spectators were invited to forget themselves, to waste their time and money, to intermingle with all sorts of people, to allow their passions to override their restraint, and to take part in something entirely false. When surveying the circumstances surrounding the closing of the theatres, it is clear that anti-theatre sentiment was caused primarily by the theatre’s potential to disrupt the Calvinist ideals of discipline and good order.

Believing that the theatre should be banned, and actually being able to act on this belief, though, are different things. While nearly all Calvinists opposed the building of theatres in the seventeenth century, there were only a few cities where Calvinist leaders were actually able to institute and maintain theatre bans into the eighteenth century. What distinguished those cities that could institute long-term bans from those that could not was the degree to which religious and civic leaders shared a common vision and were willing to work cooperatively. Religious

¹ See chapter one.

leaders could not independently ban the theatre; they needed civic officials to do this.² Cities that practiced this brand of “civic Calvinism,” with Edinburgh and Geneva being perhaps the most well-known examples, were the cities that were able to maintain bans on the stage and other types of amusements. When civic Calvinism broke down, as it did in both Geneva and Edinburgh in the mid-eighteenth century, it was no longer possible to maintain civic laws prohibiting theatre attendance.

This chapter defines the Calvinist ideals of discipline and orderliness, with specific attention paid to how notions of orderliness determined the types of amusements and diversions permitted of Calvinists. Case studies of the implementation and maintenance of theatre bans in London and Edinburgh will demonstrate the need for cooperation between civic and religious leaders in order to achieve this ideal of orderliness.

Part One: Order and Discipline in the Calvinist Church

The ideal Calvinist city was one in which spiritual and secular authorities worked together to create a *respublica christiana* full of godly citizens.³ Religious conformity was important to Calvinists, just as it was for Lutherans and Catholics. But, more than simple confessional conformity, Calvinists wanted full, outward commitment to all aspects of biblical law and Calvinist doctrine. They wanted cities full of devout citizens who exemplified the features Calvin had identified as the central components of a Christian life. Calvin believed a Christian life was a life marked by self-denial, bearing the cross of Christ, and meditation. Good Christians turned away from self love, and looked instead for ways to “live for the Lord first and foremost;” they accepted the challenges God had allowed in their lives because these trials were intended “to test their patience and to instruct them to obedience;” and they meditated on their future life with Christ, secure in the knowledge that they would one day experience “the complete renewal of [themselves] and the whole world.”⁴ The ideal was clear; building a community based on this ideal, though, was no easy feat. Religious leaders did their part by consistently enforcing church discipline and through providing their parishioners with adequate religious instruction.

Discipline was the cornerstone of Calvinist practice, and was the means by which order was established and maintained. Though Calvin asserted that “the saving doctrine of Christ [was] the soul of the church,” he was adamant that “discipline serve[d] as its sinews, through which members of the body [were held] together.” Discipline was not simply a way of enforcing religious and moral standards, though; it was a way of binding a community of believers together. It was the foundation of the godly, Calvinist city, and the means by which religious conformity was enforced. Calvin was clear that any attempts to remove discipline would quickly lead to “the ultimate dissolution of the church.”⁵ Moreover, many Calvinist and Reformed leaders believed that failing to enforce discipline would actually provoke the wrath

² It should be noted that we really are just speaking of cities. Beyond the fact that theatres were urban institutions, this “ideal” of Calvinism only worked in cities where church and city worked together to uphold Calvinist doctrine and practice.

³ Philip Gorski, “Calvinism and State Formation in Early Modern Europe,” in *State/Culture: State Formation after the Cultural Turn*, ed. George Steinmetz, (Ithaca: Cornell University Press, 1999).

⁴ John Calvin, *Institutes of the Christian Religion*, transl. Henry Beveridge (Peabody, MA: Hendrickson Publishers, 2007), III. 7.1-10, III. 8. 1-11, III. 9. 3-6, III. 10. 1-6.

⁵ *Ibid.*, IV. XII. 1.

of God. When Charles V was able to secure the passage of the Augsburg Interim in 1548, for example, several leading protestant theologians proclaimed that God was punishing churches within the Holy Roman Empire because they lacked adequate church discipline.⁶ Proper discipline was understood to be essential to the survival of Calvinism.

Though Calvin was unspecific about the types of infractions that would warrant discipline in the *Institutes*, mentioning only the difference between public and private sins, in practice, Calvinists were subject to church discipline for moral, religious, and social infractions that ranged from adultery, licentious behavior, blasphemy, to usury, idleness, church absence, and more. Ensuring church discipline was not solely the responsibility of the minister, but was instead a community effort. When someone committed a sin, they sinned not only against God, but against their community, and if the community did not appropriately discipline the sinner, and attempt to bring him or her back into the fold, they would risk insulting God “by giving the name of Christians...to those who lead shameful and flagitious lives.”⁷ Because of this community-minded approach to discipline and sin, parishioners were expected (and encouraged) to report any sinful or morally questionable activities that they witnessed. Records from the Dutch city of Delft indicate that church members took this moral responsibility quite seriously; a large number of disciplinary cases were initiated by people lodging formal complaints against their neighbors. When sinful behavior was reported to the minister, he and other elders investigated the matter and, if the charge was found to have merit, the minister either handled it privately (if the infraction was relatively minor) or took the matter to a council.⁸

The manner in which someone was disciplined in council--typically called either a presbytery or a consistory--depended on the severity of the offense and whether or not this person was a repeat offender. For lesser offenses, a single admonition from the presbytery/consistory would suffice.⁹ When someone was admonished during a presbytery or consistory session, s/he was asked to stand before the council while the moderator read the official admonition. The exact wording of these admonitions remains unknown to us since scribes rarely transcribed the entirety of what was often a very long verbal admonishment. From the little that was recorded in presbytery and consistory minutes, we can piece together that admonitions consisted of a recitation of the charges against the person, an acknowledgment that the council had found the parishioner guilty of these charges, a reading of relevant biblical verses, and the censure itself. This disciplinary ritual was performed every week in the

⁶ Amy Nelson Burnett, “Church Discipline and Moral Reformation in the Thought of Martin Bucer,”

⁶*The Sixteenth Century Journal*, Vol. 22, No. 3 (Autumn, 1991), 439.

⁷ Calvin, *Institutes*, IV.XII.V

⁸ In Edinburgh, there were two types of councils that managed church discipline. The first was the kirk session. Each parish had its own kirk session, which was comprised of the minister(s) and laymen. Disciplinary procedures began here, but if the session was in disagreement with how to handle a case, or if the offender was unrepentant, the case was referred to the Presbytery of Edinburgh, which consisted of all the city’s ministers as well as select elders from the kirks. Both the kirk session and the Presbytery had the ability to discipline offenders. In Geneva, disciplinary cases were heard before the consistory, an ecclesiastical institution with the power to excommunicate citizens and, similar to the Presbytery of Edinburgh, recommend cases for criminal prosecution.# The consistory was comprised of all the members of the Compagnie des Pasteurs, as well as twelve lay elders, who were selected by the city’s magistrates. In Delft, where membership in the Calvinist church was voluntary, the Church followed a system that was very similar to what was found in Geneva; disciplinary cases started and ended in the consistory.

⁹ How “private” this admonition was varied, though, since Presbytery and Consistory sessions were open to the public.

presbytery and consistory. Repeat offenders and those whose sins were deemed more serious were dealt with in far more public manners. In these cases, the sinner was either publicly censured from the pulpit, physically punished, or excommunicated from the Church.

Public censure from the pulpit was the most common form of discipline in Calvinist churches. This consisted of the minister calling the sinner, or sinners, forward to stand before their community and congregation. In some Scottish kirks, the transgressors would make use of the “stool of repentance” and kneel in front of their congregation. Once they were on display in front of their community, the minister would recite the transgression(s) for which the person was being disciplined and exhort him/her to return to the path of the godly. The sinner(s) would remain at the front of the congregation for the duration of the service and, depending on the severity of the crime, this ritual could be repeated for several weeks.

Physical punishment meted out by the presbytery or consistory was a common occurrence in the sixteenth and seventeenth centuries, though it became increasingly rare as the eighteenth century progressed. There were still, however, some instances of physical discipline in the eighteenth century. For example, until 1769, men and women convicted of fornication in Geneva could be sentenced to public genuflection.¹⁰ In Edinburgh, those guilty of “filthy fornication” faced up to two hours in the city’s pillory.

When all other options had been exhausted, church members could be excommunicated. Full excommunication was frequently preceded by “lesser” forms of excommunication, including exclusion from the sacrament of holy communion for a specified period of time. The goal of church discipline was to reform sinners and return them to the church and God’s grace, so excommunication was reserved for only the most inveterate and unrepentant of sinners (and in even these extreme cases, excommunication could be revoked if the sinner proved sufficiently repentant). In most Dutch and French cities, excommunication was used sparingly. In Amsterdam, for example, only 33 church members were excommunicated between 1578 and 1700.¹¹ In the French city of Nimes, records indicate that around 15 people were excommunicated each year; more than in Amsterdam, but still not an overwhelming amount of people. Geneva’s record of excommunication stands in stark contrast to these milder examples; it is estimated that between 1564 and 1569, the Genevan Consistory excommunicated over 2,500 people. The reason for this spike in excommunications is not clear, but given that these years represent the five years immediately following Calvin’s death, it is possible that the increase in excommunications was caused by a desire to maintain Calvin’s disciplinary standards; or, conversely, perhaps Genevans, finally free from Calvin’s watchful eye, began to behave very badly.

Discipline involved more than simply correcting inappropriate behavior, though. Parishioners needed to understand what good behavior entailed and, more importantly, they needed to be made aware of the harsh realities of eternal damnation. This all required instruction and education. This education took on a variety of forms, including individual interactions with ministers and elders and independent reading of scriptures or devotional materials. The sermon, though, was the primary means of instructing and communicating with parishioners.

¹⁰ E. William Monter, “Women in Calvinist Geneva (1550-1800),” *Signs* 6.2 (Winter, 1980), 195.

¹¹ To put this number in better perspective, 5,754 members were disciplined during this same period. Charles Parker, “The Moral Agency and Moral Autonomy of Church Folk in the Dutch Reformed Church of Delft, 1580-1620,” *The Journal of Ecclesiastical History* 48.1 (January 1997), 48.

Sermons preached in Calvinist churches in the seventeenth and early eighteenth centuries show that ministers ardently and frequently reminded their parishioners of the hell that awaited those who did not seek God and salvation. In these sermons, audience members were exhorted to repent and turn to God. Those who did not heed these words would be “made companions for devils” and “damned souls for ever and ever.”¹² Parishioners were reminded time and time again that they were naturally sinful. In a sermon preached in Geneva, Calvin reminded his audience that “there is nothing but rottenness” in people, “nothing but sin and death.”¹³ This message of original sin and total depravity was echoed in a sermon preached at the New-North Church in Edinburgh in July 1708, when John Dalgleish told his parishioners that “corruption [was] a part” of themselves and that their “sinfull self must be entirely extirpated.”¹⁴ Vivid imagery was used to describe the fate that awaited those who did not repent and seek salvation. In a sermon published in 1702, John Allis describes a near death experience in which an angel showed him both heaven and hell. Allis described hell as “an ugly black den, where thousands of poor souls [were] tormented with fire and brimstone...the swearer and the lyar [were] hung up by the tongue, with melted lead poured down their throat...it was a place of torment for all them that do forget God.”¹⁵ This gruesome and vivid imagery was meant to frighten parishioners to godliness. Sermons like those mentioned above were an effective way to warn parishioners of the damnation that awaited them in hell if they did not behave and believe as they ought in the temporal world. When combined with consistently enforced disciplinary practices, religious leaders were able to maintain order and godliness within the Church. These practices, though, were not enough to enforce these ideals across an entire city. In order to create and maintain an orderly, Calvinist city, religious officials needed to convince civil authorities to work with them to establish laws restricting or forbidding activities and practices deemed sinful.¹⁶ This--the near merging of church and state--was a difficult proposition, and was only accomplished in a handful of early modern cities.

Part Two: Creating a Godly City

In the *Institutes of the Christian Religion*, Calvin outlined the duties and responsibilities of civil government and citizens. Repudiating “fanatics” who contended that civil government was unnecessary or contrary to divine law, Calvin instead argued that magistrates were “ordained guardians” with a spiritual mandate to maintain an orderly, godly city. Citizens owed them respect and reverence (and taxes and service) because these magistrates were the “ministers and ambassadors of God.”¹⁷ Calvin was certainly not the only Reformation-era theologian to affirm the necessity of civil government--Martin Luther famously wrote of the “two kingdoms” of God--but Calvin and his followers took matters further than other

¹² John Allis, “The Poor and Doubting Christian’s Guide to Everlasting Life,” Edinburgh: 1702.

¹³ John Calvin, Sermon on I Timothy, 3:16, in *A Selection of the Most Celebrated Sermons of M. Luther and J. Calvin* (New York: R. Bentley, 1829), 23.

¹⁴ John Dalgleish, “A sermon concerning self-denial preached in the New-North-Church of Edinburgh, Lord’s day, the 18th of July 1708,” Edinburgh: 1708.

¹⁵ Allis, “Poor and Doubting Christian’s Guide,” 2.

¹⁶ Philip Gorski has written at length about the “disciplinary revolution” that accompanied the adoption of Calvinism. See *The Disciplinary Revolution: Calvinism and the Rise of the State in Early Modern Europe* (Chicago: University of Chicago Press, 2003).

¹⁷ John Calvin, “Of Civil Government,” *Institutes of the Christian Religion*, IV. XX. II, IX, XXII.

mainstream confessions. Lutherans and Catholics were content to maintain some separation between the secular and the spiritual, but this was not entirely true of Calvinist cities. The model Calvinist city was one in which civic Calvinism reigned. In this schema, Calvinist ideology and practices informed the ethos of a city, and religious leaders worked in concert with civic officials to ensure that Calvinism shaped how the city was governed. This was the ideal, but it was only achieved in a few cities, namely Geneva, Edinburgh, and interregnum London.

Calvin put his ideas about government and church-state relations into practice in Geneva. Not long after returning in 1541, Calvin took part in two committees that drafted the constitutions that would ultimately govern both the Church and the newly formed Genevan republic.¹⁸ The Church was governed by the *Ecclesiastical Ordinances*; this document established the Compagnie des Pasteurs (the ministerial cadre for the city) as well as the Consistory, which was composed of an equal number of lay and religious members. Citizens, whose ability to claim citizenship hinged on their accepting Calvinism, could attend any parish church they wished and were subject to the Consistory's moral and religious discipline. Geneva, because of its small size, is perhaps not the best example of a "mature" Calvinist organization. The Church of Scotland, for example, consisted of four organizational tiers (kirk session, presbytery, synod, and general assembly) in contrast to Geneva's two.¹⁹ But Geneva, for all its smallness, nicely illustrates what civic Calvinism looked like in practice.

While the Genevan church was independent of the civil government, the civil government was very much entwined with the Church and was responsible for ensuring that "the true religion which is contained in the law of God be not violated and polluted by public blasphemy."²⁰ As Harro Hopfl has compellingly illustrated, Geneva was a city of reciprocal collaboration, in which "the officers of the institutionalized state and the institutionalized church had one end: the maintenance of Christian social relations."²¹ The Church provided religious education and discipline, but the city was responsible for creating an environment that allowed Calvinism to flourish. This collaboration between church and state manifested itself in a number of ways, including in the establishment of civil laws that forbade participation in amusements and diversions the Church deemed inappropriate.

Calvin is not remembered for being supportive of leisure, luxury, or even pleasure. The primary qualities of a Christian life--self-denial, bearing the cross of Christ, and meditation--lend themselves to a more ascetic life. These were, however, but three of four characteristics of the Christian life as described by Calvin in the *Institutes*. The fourth tenet, which charged believers to use and enjoy "God's creational gifts," differs from the other three in that it relates to a person's secular life. With this injunction, Calvin gives his approval to participation in activities that were not explicitly devotional or necessary for survival. Calvin, perhaps aware that this charge might lead to some confusion, clarified what he meant by enjoying God's

¹⁸ Calvin was actually returning to Geneva in 1541. He initially arrived in Geneva in 1536, when the city formally adopted protestantism, but he was kicked out of the city in 1538. The city elders invited him back in 1541.

¹⁹ William G. Naphy, "Geneva II," in *The Calvin Handbook*, ed. H.J. Selderhuis, (Cambridge: Eerdmans Publishing, 2009), 44-47.

²⁰ John Calvin, *Opera Omnia*, (Amsterdam: J.J. Schipper, 1667-1771), volume I, 230.

²¹ Harro Hopfl, *The Christian Polity of Calvin* (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 1985), 152-154; Abel Athouguia Alves, "The Christian Social Organism and Social Welfare: The Case of Vives, Calvin and Loyola," *The Sixteenth Century Journal*, 2.1 (Spring, 1989), 9.

²¹

creational gifts in his biblical commentaries. He was not giving his followers permission to trod “the path of licentious indulgence.” He was, however, acknowledging that people could enjoy luxuries or diversions so long as they remained aware that these were gifts from God, were moderate in their consumption and/or enjoyment, and were ready and willing to provide an accounting of their actions to God.²² Under these very specific circumstances, diversions were acceptable.

As with any other element of Calvinist ideology or practice, ministers devoted considerable time in their sermons to teaching their parishioners what types of amusements met these standards.²³ In seventeenth-century Geneva, for example, ministers heartily approved of and also participated in multi-day celebrations to commemorate a Genevan military triumph. During La Fete de L’Escalade, citizens took part in processions, partook of large feasts, and solemnly remembered those whose lives were lost while fighting for their city. This was a fully sanctioned diversion. Similar church and state-sanctioned amusements took place in other Calvinist cities, including annual horse races and guild processions in Edinburgh. Ministers could certainly give or withhold their blessing on different activities, but they had limited options for recourse (outside of public shaming via church disciplinary procedures) should parishioners choose to ignore their directives on amusements. With the support of civic officials, though, ministers could do more than speak out against improper behavior and activities. They could outlaw them, and ensure that Calvinist “good order” became the rule of law.

Though there was a degree of local variation, Calvinist cities tended to outlaw many of the same activities: gambling, dancing, and blasphemy were routinely forbidden. Most Calvinist cities also instituted curfews that restricted how late citizens could stay in taverns or public houses. The aim of these laws was to create an orderly city that was distinct from the perceived excesses and disorder of the pre-Reformation era.²⁴ Geneva before Calvin, for example, was described as a “noisy” and “riotous” city full to the brim with citizens overly fond of “gambling, immorality, loose songs, and dances.”²⁵ Edinburgh was described in similar terms, and prior to their ascension, Puritan leaders decried the excesses, both monarchical and otherwise, that characterized seventeenth-century London. Calvinist leaders wanted stability, and these laws, when coupled with spiritual instruction and conformity, provided that.

Given their preoccupation with orderliness and godliness, it is not surprising that Calvinists were quick to outlaw purpose-built theatres in the seventeenth century. As was shown in chapter one, Calvinists were willing to sanction plays when they furthered their religious or pedagogical goals. The theatres that began to be built at the end of the sixteenth century, though, were primarily secular, and epitomized social disorder. In order to preserve

²² Calvin, *Institutes*, III.10. 1-6; Calvin, Commentary on 1 Corinthians 7:20; 1 Timothy 4:2-5, 6:17.

²³ See, for example, George Anderson “Use and Abuse of Diversions, A Sermon on Luke XIX. 13, With an Appendix, Shewing that the Stage in Particular is an Unchristian Diversion,” Edinburgh: 1733.

²⁴ It should be noted that many of the attempts to organize and order society came with the second generation of Reformers. The Reformation itself did not lead to order. The break with Rome turned the world upside down, fractured communities, and created nearly unparalleled social disorder.

²⁵ Herbert Darling Foster, “Geneva Before Calvin: The Antecedents of a Puritan State,” *American Historical Review* 8 (January, 1903), 239.

the city, the stage had to be banned.

Part Three: Banning the Stage, Two Case Studies

Before theatres were constructed in the late sixteenth and early seventeenth centuries, secular acting troupes without the benefit of a patron had to make do with performing wherever a bit of space opened up. In Britain, for example, actors sometimes constructed stages out of overturned barrels and performed in the courtyards of inns.²⁶ The ramshackle nature of this setup did not invite spectators to settle in for an entire performance. Inn yards were crowded places, with people jostling around and, since acoustics were not a primary concern when setting up the stage, the ability to even hear the play being performed was not guaranteed. In the German lands, acting companies eschewed the outdoors, choosing instead to adapt indoor facilities, including tennis courts, riding-houses, and fencing rooms, for their dramatic purposes.²⁷ Unlike the chaotic innyard performances in Britain, indoor performances (usually) provided a sense of seclusion from the bustle of everyday life. Attending a play performed in a fitted out fencing room was hardly the same as going to a dedicated theatre, but it was certainly an improvement over performances hastily staged on the edge of a market square.

Like their British counterparts, German actors led very peripatetic and economically precarious lives. These traveling actors were entirely dependent upon local authorities who often only grudgingly granted them permission to perform and, even then, often required substantial “monetary contributions” before doing so.²⁸ In a letter to Danzig city officials, for example, members of a German acting company humbly and excessively begged permission of their most “worthy, right honourable, estimable, most sagacious, gracious Gentlemen” to be permitted “to perform fourteen plays” in the city. The city agreed, but only after setting financial caps on the amount of money the performers could earn.²⁹ This informal setup was agreeable to Calvinist ministers and civic leaders because they easily maintained control in these situations. Permission to perform could always be denied, profits could be regulated, and, above all else, the plays were not allowed to become more than temporary distractions. Even innyard performances (and other similar performances), which did not always receive prior approval, were tolerated because they were fleeting occurrences that were unlikely to make a significant impact in a city. This changed when theatres began to transform into legitimate and permanent civic institutions.³⁰

A formal, purpose-built theatre that enjoyed the patronage of elites and popular support

²⁶ Simon Trussler. *The Cambridge Illustrated History of British Theatre* (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 1994), 62.

²⁷ George W. Brandt, *German and Dutch Theatre, 1600-1848* (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 1993), 25.

²⁸ *Ibid.*, 17.

²⁹ Johannes Bolte. *Das Danziger Theater im 16. und 17. Jahrhundert* (Hamburg and Leipzig: Leopold Voss, 1895), 42-43.

³⁰ Though this chapter is devoted to the development of the theatre in Calvinist cities, the rise of the theatre crossed all confessional boundaries. Catholic regions, most noticeably Spain, also had thriving theatre companies staffed by authors and actors who fundamentally changed dramatic writing and stagecraft. But, for reasons outlined in chapter one, theatre was not as contested in Catholic areas. The dramatic arts did not receive *carte blanche* in Catholic cities--there were still restrictions on when plays could be performed and a degree of censorship--but the relationship between church, state, and stage was not nearly so tortured in Catholic areas as it was in Reformed cities.

presented Calvinist leaders with issues that the relatively informal theatrical performances of the early sixteenth century had not. As explained in chapter one, religious leaders articulated many of their fears about the stage by condemning performances and actors as immoral. This anti-theatricality accounts for some of the hostility towards the stage, but it does not explain why the stage suddenly became a problem for Calvinists in the early seventeenth century. This happened because the theatre, as an institution, threatened the order and discipline that was so valued by Calvinists. The cause and effect relationship--the rise of the theatre followed by swift anti-theatre rhetoric and actions by Calvinist leaders--is particularly apparent in interregnum-era London and seventeenth-century Edinburgh.

London

In London, early support for the secular stage came primarily from the ruling classes. The Tudor and Stuart monarchs were great patrons of the theatrical arts, a passion that trickled down to the aristocracy, who in the mid-sixteenth century, began to support their own acting troupes. The most well-known of these in-house troupes was Leicester's men, an acting troupe attached to the Earl of Leicester that would go on to staff London's first public theatre--Richard Burbage's "The Theatre"--from 1576-1583. The earliest public theatres, including Burbage's Theatre, the Curtain, and the Rose, had more in common with amphitheatres than the modern theatre. The Theatre, for example, was three stories tall and polygonal in shape, with a variety of galleries for spectators to sit or stand. The galleries encircled a centrally placed thrust stage that had no permanent roof, leaving it, and the actors on it, subject to the elements.³¹ This set-up allowed theatre managers to use the space for plays and, when finances were in trouble, to stage lucrative bear (or other animal) baiting spectacles. In the early years, investors and managers were not entirely certain that theatres were going to thrive. The next generation of theatres, those built after the 1590s, no longer needed to rely on this alternative revenue source, though, and began to fully roof their playhouses.

With the opening of London's public stages, theatre attendance became accessible to nearly all social classes. While there was still social stratification at the theatre--more money bought you better seats in the galleries, while the cheapest seats meant standing in the crowded open-air pit--the Elizabethan theatre was from its inception a place for everyone to come together to take part in a common activity.³² And theatre attendance proved to be an immensely popular leisure activity. Despite being located on the outskirts of London, and thus requiring funds for transportation in addition to the price of admission, theatres could (and regularly did) accommodate well over 2,000 spectators at every performance.³³ With royal and aristocratic approval, as well as strong popular support, the theatre gained legitimacy as a cultural institution and began to establish roots in (or just outside of) the city. Actors, playwrights, and the others who made their living on or by the stage no longer existed on the fringes of society, forced to eke out an existence through constant travel to the people; now, the people went to the theatre.

Though the theatre was allowed to exist in late sixteenth-century London, it was not

³¹ Glynne Wickham, ed. *English Professional Theatre, 1530-1660* (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 2009), 332. Trussler, 72-73.

³² Theatre was socially diverse, but the poorest of the poor still could not attend the theatre, even for penny performances.

³³ Mary I. Oates and William J. Baumol, "On the Economics of the Theater in Renaissance London," *The Swedish Journal of Economics*, 74.1(Mar., 1972), 136-160.

always an enthusiastically accepted institution, and there was a tension between court and city that manifested itself in legislation about the stage. In 1583, Elizabeth extended her patronage and protection to an acting troupe that would come to be called the Queen's Men and upon his accession to the throne in 1603, James went even further by paying his acting troupe a wage even during times of plague, when they were forbidden from performing. The court protected and supported actors; the city did not. In 1574 and 1582, city officials passed laws limiting what performances could take place within the city's boundaries, and in 1594, all performances were banned.³⁴ These bans successfully forced theatre managers to build their theatres outside the city limits, but did not have the ultimate intended effect of completely stopping people from attending performances.

In this accounting of the rise of the London stage, one group seems to be missing: the Calvinists. Though Calvinist leaders attempted to do their part to limit the stage--by trying to influence the Master of the Revels, who was responsible for approving plays before they were performed, through appeals to the city councils, and by preaching restraint to their parishioners--the reality of late sixteenth-century London was that Calvinists simply did not have the clout to independently impose their will on the stage. London was not a consistently Calvinist city in the sixteenth and seventeenth centuries. Officially Anglican from the Elizabethan settlement in 1559, London could not be considered Calvinist (or Puritan, as the case may be) until the early 1640s. Though not in a position to effect change until the mid-seventeenth century, Puritan ministers frequently preached about the dangers associated with theatre attendance. In a sermon preached in London at Paul's Cross in 1578, not long after the opening of Burbage's Theatre, John Walsall claimed that "vaine plaiers have had about this citie of London farre greater audience then true preachers."³⁵ Walsall believed that more people were attending theatrical performances than regular church services. Worse, actors were accorded an honor and following that (presumably much worthier) ministers were not given. The problems with the stage, though, were not simply with its popularity. The disorderly conduct of theatre goes in the late sixteenth and early seventeenth centuries was also cause for concern.

London's early theatres had the potential to be boisterous, filthy, vice-ridden places. Though there is some disagreement about how often this potential was realized, we do know that jeering at actors, hurling rotten food on the stage, brawling, and groping were all common behaviors. Some of this was due to sheer numbers--the pit at the Globe, for example, could accommodate close to one thousand people. Having that many people standing around (seats were only provided in the boxed areas), all trying to watch a performance, necessarily led to some bad behavior. Even supporters of the stage recognized that audience members could be a rough group. Henry Chettle, an Elizabethan dramatist, scandalized by the "shameful disorder" of audience members, suggested that these poorly behaved spectators "abstaine altogether from playes."³⁶ In addition to disorderly audience behavior, the location of London's theatres, Southwark, contained brothels, alehouses, and other sites for sinful behavior. In *The Anatomie of Abuses*, Philip Stubbes, a prominent sixteenth-century Puritan social reformer, cautioned against the social disorder and excess created by theatres. Stubbes described the theatres as

³⁴ Janette Dillon, *Theatre, Court and City, 1595-1610: Drama and Social Space in London* (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 2000), 2-5.

³⁵ John Walsall, "A Sermon Preached at Pauls Cross," London: 1578.

³⁶ Quoted in Alfred Harbage, *Shakespeare's Audience* (New York: Columbia University Press, 1941), 102.

“wanton” and “prophane” places, where “roisters, brallers, il-dealers, bosters, louers, loiterers, and ruffins” gathered together to behave inappropriately.³⁷

For their part, playwrights and theatre managers were aware of rising Puritan hostility, and recognized that should the Puritans gain power, the theatre would be closed. In the prologue to Abraham Cowley’s *The Guardian*, which was performed before the King in March 1642, the prologue begins with an acknowledgement that, “We perish if the *Round-heads* be about./ For now no Ornament, the head must wear,/ No Bayes, No Myter, scarce so much as hair./ How can a play Passe safely?”³⁸ Cowley was aware that, without without civil or ecclesiastical authority, Puritan leaders were powerless to do anything other than publicly condemn the stage. But if this changed, as it did in 1642, playwrights understood that the theatre would be an early and easy target.

Before the triumphant Puritans executed the king, or even solidified their parliamentary successes with military victory, they closed the theatres. The theatres were understood to be so powerful, and so potentially dangerous to their socio-political control, that the Puritans could not delay their closures. The manner in which they went about doing this--through parliamentary measures--was rather unique. Prior to 1642, Parliament had not successfully passed any laws regarding the stage.³⁹ The (il)legality of the stage was generally understood to be a matter for city councils to work out.⁴⁰ In 1642, though, with rebellions in Ireland and Scotland (and, come August, in England as well), the Puritan parliamentarians were able to make a case for using a national governing body to dismantle theatres. In an ordinance passed on September 2, it was decreed that in order to “appease and avert the wrath of God...it is therefore thought fit, and ordeined by the Lords and Commons in this parliament assembled, that while these sad causes and set times of humiliation doe continue, publike stage-playes shall cease and bee forborne.” Plays, which were little more than “spectacles of pleasure,” were inappropriate for “seasons of humiliation.” Instead of going to the theatre, English citizens should participate in public fasting and seek “repentance, reconciliation, and peace with God.”⁴¹ Puritans around the country rejoiced when this ordinance was passed. John Vicars, a poet and Puritan, for example, praised the “most renowned and religious parliamentary worthies” who successfully closed the “odious hell-houses of the land.”⁴²

According to this ordinance, and similar ones that would be passed during the early years of the civil wars, the theatre was banned not because it was an immoral or disorderly institution; it was simply inappropriate to attend plays when the country was in such turmoil. The precarious situation in England necessitated the bans. While there may have been some truth in this, this rationale is disingenuous at best. That the Puritans consistently attacked the stage from their opening performances in the 1580s, when the country was not embroiled in

³⁷ Philip Stubbes, *Anatomie of Abuses in England in Shakspeare’s Youth*, London: 1583.

³⁸ Abraham Cowley, *The Guardian; a Comedie. Acted before Prince Charles, his Highness at Trinity-Colledge in Cambridge, upon the twelfth of March, 1641*, Prologue.

³⁹ There were several attempts to close the theatres in both England and Ireland in 1641, but local officials were able to push back against these attempts by arguing that it would hurt the town to have unemployed actors roaming around the city.

⁴⁰ N.W. Bawcutt, “Puritanism and the Closing of the Theaters in 1642,” *Medieval and Renaissance Drama in England* 22 (2009), 184.

⁴¹ As quoted in Bawcutt, 186.

⁴² John Vicars, *God on the Mount* (London: 1643), 152.

civil war, undermines this pious justification for the bans.⁴³

When the first phase of the civil wars came to an end in late 1646, some actors and stage managers, believing the rationale for closing the theatres to no longer be valid, attempted to reinstate their theatres. The parliamentary ordinances of suppression that were passed in 1647 and 1648 disabused them of this notion. The theatres would stay closed because theatres were the site of “many and sundry great vices and disorders.” Actors who persisted in trying to ply their trade would be branded as rogues and vagabonds, even if they possessed a royal license to perform (those now being rendered meaningless). And if these actions were not enough to signal that the puritans intended to dismantle theatre culture, the ordinances also required that the interiors of all existing theatres be completely demolished.⁴⁴ The theatres were not closed in 1642 because leaders feared God’s wrath; they were closed because their disorderliness threatened the well-regulated state the Puritans hoped to build. England’s Puritans were not anti-theatrical; they were not condemning performances or the process of acting. They were very specifically anti-theatre. Theatres invited audience members to behave immorally, to relax their self-discipline, and certainly to forget their duties to God. Because of this, the theatres could not be allowed to exist in a Puritan city. This reasoning also explains the decision of religious and civic leaders to close the theatres in seventeenth-century Edinburgh.

Edinburgh

At the end of the seventeenth century, the Duke of York, and future King James VII and II took up residence at Edinburgh’s Holyrood Palace (he lived in Edinburgh from 1679 to 1682). Like his brother Charles II, James was a great supporter of the arts and was especially fond of the theatre; he brought his own troupe of London-trained actors with him to Edinburgh and established the “Tennis Court Theatre” on the palace grounds.⁴⁵ During the Duke’s stay in Edinburgh, the master of revels, whose approval was necessary in order for plays to be performed (and who usually fell in line with the wishes of the Calvinist clergy and town council) approved far more plays than was typical. Plans were even made for the construction of a proper theatre within the city.⁴⁶ In the span of a few years, James’ presence and patronage allowed the secular theatre to flourish in Scotland’s capital city. Local ministers were not well pleased, but once royal approval had been bestowed upon the theatre, there was little that ministers could do besides condemn the theatre from the pulpit, and exhort their congregants to resist the lure of the stage. The town council was equally subject to the wishes of the Duke of York. Their actions following his departure in 1682, however, indicate that they did not support the stage. In October, 1682 the town council of Edinburgh demolished the newly built theatre and outlawed the construction of any future theatres.⁴⁷ This was a drastic action. It was

⁴³ Between 1647 and 1649, parliament dealt with bills related to the closing of the stage on seventeen separate occasions.

⁴⁴ Reprinted in *Acts and Ordinances of the Interregnum*, Eds. Firth and Rait, (London: Wyman and Sons, 1911) 2:1070-1072.

⁴⁵ Bill Findlay, “Beginnings to 1700,” *A History of Scottish Theatre*, Ed. Bill Findlay (Edinburgh: Edinburgh University Press, 1998), 72-74.

⁴⁶ The rise of the theatre during the Duke of York’s stay in Edinburgh also led to the theatre often being associated with Jacobitism during the course of the eighteenth century.

⁴⁷ Quoted in Adrienne Scullion, “The Eighteenth Century,” *A History of Scottish Theatre*, Ed. Bill Findlay (Edinburgh: Edinburgh University Press, 1998), 74.

not enough for civic leaders to simply outlaw the stage; the entire structure had to be pulled down to the ground. Leaders were undoubtedly aware of what happened in London--royal approval of the stage led to secular theatres being established outside of court, becoming a legitimate activity for everyone, no matter their social station. They would not allow that to happen in Edinburgh. Throughout the remainder of the seventeenth century, and well into the eighteenth, the Church and local magistrates worked closely together to restrict the theatre. Their alliance proved effective, and although theatrical performances were never completely eliminated, the number of plays performed throughout Scotland dropped considerably.⁴⁸

Because of the combined efforts of city and church, theatrical performances were rare through the middle of the eighteenth century. Most acting troupes chose to avoid Scotland when traveling because the possibility of ecclesiastical and civic opposition made such a visit financially uncertain. The lay-people of Scotland also “fell into a state of indifference in regard” to the theatre, which also contributed to the troupes’ financial uncertainty.⁴⁹ Since ministers and magistrates worked closely together to restrict the stage, religious leaders were rarely forced to defend their policies on the theatre. When this partnership broke down, or when actors were able to appeal to higher authorities, religious officials were forced to explain to parishioners why the theatre was such a sinful, vice-ridden institution.

In 1726, in defiance of local custom, members of the town council invited Anthony Aston to perform in the city. The invitation issued to Aston, a prominent English actor, was very much an anomaly in early eighteenth-century Scottish theatre history and represents one of the few instances when the Church and town council were not in accord in regards to the theatre.⁵⁰ Initially, local society and the council members warmly received Aston. Ministers within the Church did not approve, but without the cooperation of the town council, there was little they could do to force Aston’s departure. Aston managed his theatrical company within Edinburgh without direct interference from the Church throughout 1726. His fortunes changed, however, in 1727 when Archibald Macauley replaced George Drummond as Lord Provost of the town council. Unlike his predecessor, Macauley did not approve of Aston’s presence in Edinburgh. Not long after Macauley’s election, Aston was locked out of his performance hall because the council deemed it “unsafe for public meetings.” Aston was eventually able to reopen his hall, but the town council and Church were not willing to concede defeat. The Presbytery of Edinburgh printed an *Admonition and Exhortation* that mirrors the arguments against the theatre that were given in 1715. The theatre was described as a dangerous place that could “corrupt the minds of the Spectators.” Plays were filled with “horrid swearing, obscenity, and expressions of a double meaning.” According to the Church, it was the duty of ministers to warn their parishioners of the inherent immorality of the theatre and protect the souls of those “committed to their charge.” The town council also weighed in on the matter, noting that current magistrates were not bound to uphold the “verbal licenses from former magistrates.” They also maintained that Aston’s theatre was only granted a license for the year 1726, so his continued presence in 1727 was nothing short of illegal. Aston fought the efforts of Church and council for close to a year, but was eventually forced to leave the city.⁵¹

⁴⁸ Dibdin, 34.

⁴⁹ Scullion, 87.

⁵⁰ Scullion, 89. Dibdin, 35-36. This also reinforces the point made in chapter one: theatre bans only worked when church and state were in agreement.

⁵¹ Scullion, 89. Dibdin, 37-40. Presbytery of Edinburgh, *Admonition and Exhortation* (Edinburgh: 1727).

In 1730, Allan Ramsay succeeded where Anthony Aston had failed. Ramsay, a Scottish poet and playwright, obtained a royal patent for his theatre, which ensured that neither the Church nor the council could close it. Ministers did, however, try to use their pulpits to persuade their parishioners to avoid Ramsay's theatre. In 1733, the Reverend George Anderson published a sermon entitled *The Use and Abuse of Diversions*. The pamphlet also included an appendix "shewing that the stage in particular is an Unchristian Diversion." Anderson was concerned about the "overgrown levity of the age," and hoped that his sermon would "offer some correction in righteousness." The citizens of Edinburgh, he preached, lived idle lives "made up of pleasures and diversions." Even seemingly harmless diversions (which the theatre most certainly was not) were "unchristian" because they distracted people from their true purpose to "improve...and to use every opportunity to the best advantage." For Christians, Jesus Christ was not only their savior, but was also their "example to follow." Jesus "denied himself several enjoyments" and Christians should do the same.⁵² In his sermon, Anderson does not focus his attention on any one specific diversion, but in his appendix, which is nearly as long as the sermon, he outlines why theatre attendance is particularly unchristian. This argument is not fundamentally different from the one presented in the sermon, but it does provide what Anderson views as specific scriptural condemnation of the stage.

Anderson's admonition to his congregation, which was surely repeated in other congregations throughout Edinburgh, had little effect on theatre attendance. Between 1730 and 1736, Ramsay, along with his group of "Edinburgh Players," enjoyed considerable success. During these years, Ramsay invited acting troupes from London to perform in Edinburgh and, in 1736, apparently confident of his continued success, Ramsay opened a permanent theatre at Carruber's Close.⁵³ On the opening night of the new theatre, Ramsay had one of his actresses recite a prologue that he wrote specifically for the occasion:

Long has it been the business of the stage
 To mend manners and reform the age.
 This task the muse by nature was assign'd,
 Ere Christian light shone in upon the mind;
 Ev'n since these glorious truths to men appear'd
 Her moral precepts still have been rever'd
 And when the sacred monitors have fail'd,
 Just satyre from the stage has oft prevailed.
 Tho' some sour critics full of phlegm and spleen
 Condemn her use as hellish and obscene;
 And from their gloomy thoughts and want of sense
 Think what diverts the mind gives Heav'n offence.
 Would such from truth and reason from their sample
 They'll find what's meant for precept, what example,
 Nor think when vice and folly shall appear
 The characters were drawn for them to wear!
 Fools in their native folly shall be shewn,

⁵² George Anderson, *The Use and Abuse of Diversions* (Edinburgh: R. Fleming and Company, 1733), iii, 11-13.

⁵³ Scullion, 93. Scullion notes that Ramsay's theatre "is generally considered to be the first regular theatrical establishment (a venue with its own company committed to producing regular seasons of plays) in Scotland."

And vice must have its language to be known.
To such this lesson then we recommend
Let each one mend the stage will have its end,
Good sense shall flourish, Reason triumphant reign,
And hypocrites no more their power maintain,
The muse shall once again resume her throne,
And our stage vie with Athens or with Rome.
Long in those realms she held her rapid flight,
Filling their minds with profit and delight.⁵⁴

This was a bold, and perhaps reckless, way to open a theatre in Edinburgh. Ramsay presents a tirade against the opponents of the theatre, referring to them as “hypocrites,” who were “sour” and “full of phlegm and spleen.”⁵⁵ More interesting, though, are his comments about the theatre’s capacity for moral instruction, an argument that would be repeated in later debates about the stage. Ramsay ends his prologue with the confident assertion that the theatre would one day assume a prominent place in society. There is an implication that the opening of his theatre signaled this change, but Ramsay’s belief in the permanence of his theatre proved to be premature.

In 1737, Ramsay’s theatre at Carubber’s Close fell victim to Parliament’s Licensing Act. This act limited the number of patented theatres in Britain to two (both of which were in London), and required other cities that wished to open a theatre to undergo a licensing process. Additionally, the Lord Chamberlain had to approve every play before it was allowed to be performed.⁵⁶ In much of England, obtaining a license to operate a theatre was not difficult. In Calvinist Scotland, however, Church leaders were able to use their influence to block the establishment of legal theatres. The Licensing Act prevented performances in theatres, but as will be further explained in chapter three, it did not signal the end of the theatre in Edinburgh.

Conclusion

As these examples of anti-theatre rhetoric and actions show us, a legitimate, popularly supported theatre was a thing for Calvinist leaders to fear. The theatre was a disorderly place that allowed spectators to transgress nearly all notions of order and propriety. The above examples highlight that in most European cities, including Edinburgh, London, and even most of the Swiss cantons, religious leaders were unable to independently ban the stage. They instead needed the support of civic authorities (or, as was the case in London, to become the civil authorities) to take such drastic actions. This reliance on civic authorities explains why

⁵⁴ *Caledonian Mercury*, November 15, 1736. This is not the full prologue. Ramsay continues on in the same vein for another twelve lines.

⁵⁵ Ramsay was certainly not the only person to depict the Scottish ministers in such an unappealing light. In his *Letters Concerning the English Nation* (1733), Voltaire describes the Presbyterian ministers as “pedants” who maintained a strict stance on diversions and entertainments because they earned very poor livings. Voltaire, *Letters Concerning the English Nation* (Oxford: Oxford University Press, 1994), 29-30.

⁵⁶ The fact that each play required the Lord Chamberlain’s approval prior to performance probably had more of a long-term impact on British literature than did the actual closing of most theatres. Authors who knew they’d not be able to have their plays approved, often switched to writing novels.

most Calvinist cities were unable to maintain theatre bans for the long term--once local leaders distanced themselves from the Calvinist church, which began happening at the end of the seventeenth century, ministers were powerless to do anything more than scold their parishioners from the pulpit. The only places where theatre bans survived into the eighteenth century were those cities where Church and state remained one and the same, even if unofficially: cities like Edinburgh and Geneva. These two cities were the last European Calvinist holdouts against the stage.

Beginning in the middle of the eighteenth century, however, anti-theatre laws were challenged in both Edinburgh and Geneva. The specific circumstances of who challenged the laws (and their motivation for doing so) varied by city, but with both theatre debates, it is clear that the legality of the stage was not the only issue at stake.⁵⁷ Calvinist resistance to the stage in Edinburgh and Geneva shows us that religious leaders saw the expansion of civil society as a threat to traditional Calvinist moral and disciplinary authority. In Edinburgh and Geneva, a robust civil society, which the theatre would come to symbolize, meant the end of civic Calvinism. Arguing against the theatre became an easy and popular way to argue against civil society. Anti-theatre rhetoric, and the unfounded belief that Calvinists were--and had always been--opposed to public theatres, allowed more traditional leaders to fight back against perceived threats to their religious authority. Just as the move to ban theatres in the early seventeenth-century was motivated by the fear of a new emerging cultural institution and how it would disrupt Calvinist order, the debates over the stage in the mid-eighteenth century were occasioned by anxiety about changing civil culture.

⁵⁷ The specifics of each debate will be explained in detail in chapters three (Edinburgh) and four (Geneva).

Calvinism Made Polite: *Douglas* and the End of Civic Calvinism in Eighteenth-Century Edinburgh

The excitement was palpable as the crowds gathered outside of Edinburgh's Canongate Concert Hall on December 14, 1756. A new play was opening, and it was rumored to be quite good. Well-placed advertisements in the *Caledonian Mercury* in the weeks leading up to the debut had ensured a sold out performance. There was much to be excited about. Written by a Scotsman and set in the Scottish Highlands, *Douglas* was supposed to rival the works of England's great playwrights. National pride, and Scotland's literary reputation, were on the line with this performance.

When the play began, spectators were swept away by the story of young Norval, who was separated from his family at birth, only to be briefly reunited with his mother many years later, and then killed by her misinformed husband. It was all very tragic, and very appealing to the audience. At one point, a gentleman stood up and yelled, "Where's yur Wully Shakespeare noo," giving voice to the common belief that Scotland had finally produced a playwright that could compare with England's own Shakespeare. Scottish theatre was redeemed. Or maybe not. *Douglas* would indeed go on to represent an important moment in Scottish history, but not because of its literary merit. Instead, *Douglas* is important for what happened *after* the play was performed. In the seven months following its initial performance, a fierce debate about the morality of the stage consumed Edinburgh.

The anti-*Douglas* rumblings started out small enough: a pulpit admonition from local ministers, reminding their parishioners that good Christians did not go to the theatre. When this did not stem the tide of people attending *Douglas*, though, the anti-theatre contingent went further, publicly censuring those who attended the performances of *Douglas*. Ultimately, theatre-attendees would be subject to the full weight of the ecclesiastical courts, including for the least repentant of the attendees, public trial before the Church of Scotland's annual General Assembly. The anti-theatre group did not hold back in prosecuting theatre attendance, but why? *Douglas* might not have been the most well-written of plays, but there was nothing particularly radical contained within it. Why, then, was there such an uproar?

That *Douglas* caused some controversy is not entirely surprising--Edinburgh was a Calvinist city and Calvinists were traditionally very wary of the stage.¹ And the performance was technically illegal; of course *Douglas* would be contested. If this was the entire story, the *Douglas* crisis would not warrant more than a footnote in scholarly works. But more was at stake here. The novelty of the *Douglas* crisis lies in the fact that the ministers of the Church of Scotland, previously united in their disapproval of the stage, were now divided. And intensely so. *Douglas* was written by John Home, minister of Athelstaneford, a small parish outside of Edinburgh. This was in itself new: Home was the first Scottish minister to have a play performed publicly.² That he enjoyed the overwhelming support of many of his colleagues is astonishing. The performance of *Douglas* was a bold repudiation of traditional Calvinist

¹ See chapter one.

² He was the first minister since the Reformation to have a play performed--it's entirely possible that this was not unusual in the pre-Reformation Scottish church. It was quite common for ministers in pre-Reformation England, for example, to write plays for their parishioners to perform.

practices, and represented the culmination of a struggle between two rival factions within the Scottish clergy that had raged on for over five years. When the *Douglas* debate finally came to a close in 1757, it was clear that the religious culture of Edinburgh had been irreparably changed: civic Calvinism was dead, and Edinburgh had been transformed.

Part One: Gentlemen and Evangelicals

The factions within the Church of Scotland had been established well before *Douglas* was first performed in 1756. Beginning with a skirmish over patronage in 1751, the ministers within the Church increasingly found themselves divided into two groups, each with very different visions of how the Church and her ministers should function in society. On one side were a group of ministers whom I term “gentlemen ministers;” these were newly minted members of the clergy who had been taught to value ideas of politeness and sociability. They wanted to preside over a Church that reflected these values, which necessitated moving away from the more rigid and austere elements of Calvinism. Opposing them were a group I have termed the “evangelical ministers.” These ministers were generally older and held fast to traditional Calvinist ritual, church governance, and doctrine. This group of ministers wanted to see civic Calvinism--the prevailing religious culture that allowed ministers to control civic life and activities--continue without change.³ These competing views, as well as a tendency on the part of both groups to escalate problems whenever they had the chance, made conflict inevitable. While a certain amount of debate and dissent was normal for the Church of Scotland, the vitriolic nature of the debates in the 1750s was not normal. How did the ministry get to this point? The only way to answer this question is to examine how these differences in the worldviews of Calvinist clergy came into being.

To do this, we will undertake a prosopography of twenty leading Scottish ministers: ten gentleman ministers and ten evangelical ministers.⁴ When we study these men as a group, we are able to highlight what it meant to be a gentleman or evangelical minister. It should be noted that these ministers were not necessarily involved in every conflict that we will discuss in later sections, but they are representative of what it meant to be either a gentleman or evangelical minister.

³ See chapter two for a discussion of the types of activities were considered compatible with Calvinist doctrine.

⁴ Choosing twenty to study, and not fifty or one hundred, is a decision dictated largely by available archival information. It would be nigh impossible to examine every practicing minister from the mid-eighteenth-century: there simply is not enough information available to make this type of large-scale study possible. Instead, I will focus on this group of twenty ministers who were admittedly more active--more frequently published, more frequently involved in clerical skirmishes, and so on--than most ministers. The problem with this approach, of course, is that in studying the same number of gentlemen and evangelical ministers, it is hard to get a sense of the overall strength of these groups within the church at any given point. As will (hopefully) be apparent, though, the evangelical ministers were more numerous in the first half of the eighteenth century, whereas the gentlemen ministers gained ascendancy in the aftermath of the *Douglas* controversy. It should be noted that there were ministers in the eighteenth century who were not actively involved in this emerging schism in the Church. The ministerial divide within the Church of Scotland was also primarily an Edinburgh phenomenon, for reasons that will become clearer in the next sections.

Table One:

Evangelical Ministers	Gentlemen Ministers
John Adams (1702-1757)	Hugh Blair (1718-1800)
George Anderson (1677-1756)	George Campbell (1719-1796)
John Bonar (1721-1761)	Alexander Carlyle (1722-1805)
John Erskine (1721-1803)	Adam Ferguson (1723-1816)
John Gillies (1712-1796)	Alexander Gerard (1727-1795)
John Maclaurin (1693-1754)	John Home (1722-1808)
Thomas Randall (1711-1780)	John Jardine (1715-1766)
Robert Walker (1716-1783)	William Robertson (1721-1793)
Alexander Webster (1708-1784)	Matthew Stewart (1717-1785)
John Witherspoon (1723-1794)	William Wilkie (1721-1772)

A quick look at the birth years in this table highlights one of the biggest differences between these two groups: the gentleman ministers, as a group, were younger than the evangelicals. When the patronage crisis erupted in 1751, for example, the average age of the gentlemen ministers was 31, but 43 for the evangelicals. Under most circumstances, an age difference of twelve years would not signify much, but these twelve years were quite significant, particularly in Edinburgh, where twelve years meant a dramatic difference in the type of education one received. 80% of the above ministers (those whose names are in bold type) attended the University of Edinburgh.⁵ The younger gentlemen ministers, though, attended **after** reform efforts had transformed the university into a well-respected center of learning.

In the first two decades of the eighteenth century, when most of the evangelical ministers matriculated, the university of Edinburgh was suffering from centuries of neglect and intellectual stagnation.⁶ A combination of factors and outdated traditions contributed to this situation. First, the university's professors were overburdened, underpaid, and, more often than not, not very interested in teaching. Moreover, effective teaching was greatly hindered by an outdated "regent system" which required professors to remain with the same group of students from matriculation to completion, teaching all courses along the way. Not only did this hinder faculty specialization, it also served to dampen the professor's enthusiasm since they were required to teach subjects in which they had little interest or knowledge. Instructors were not generally

⁵ The university of Edinburgh was never intended to act solely as a seminary, but many of the Church of Scotland's ministers did ultimately attend school in Edinburgh. There were not many other options--the only other universities in mid-eighteenth century-Scotland were located in Glasgow, St. Andrews, and Aberdeen.

⁶ Reforms were not limited to the university of Edinburgh--nearly all of the Scottish universities underwent significant changes in the early eighteenth century.

lauded for their teaching skills as most classes consisted of the professor reading directly from notes in Latin. Besides being “arid” and “dull,” this teaching method was pedagogically unsound given that most students did not possess sufficient knowledge of Latin to follow course lectures.⁷ To make matters worse, the only classical language the university taught was Greek, so, unless the student was particularly self-motivated to develop his Latin on his own, it was unlikely he would ever fully understand lectures.⁸ Despite these problems, the university administration was reluctant to part from centuries of tradition. All of this combined to create a stifled and lethargic academic environment that was in desperate need of change.

In the 1710s, newly appointed university principal William Carstares, a minister of Edinburgh’s Greyfriars kirk and one time confidante of William III, began the long process of reforming the university. Carstares’ goal, to transform the University of Edinburgh into a respectable center of learning, would take just over two decades, and the work of two subsequent principals, to be realized.

The first change that was made, and one that was well overdue, was the abolition of the ineffective regent system. Instead of teaching all subjects to the same group of students, professors were appointed as chairs of specific fields of study, teaching only those courses in which they were trained. The university also began allowing professors to collect fees directly from their students, which meant that the more popular (and generally better) professors were better paid. Once pay was tied directly to student attendance, professors voluntarily changed their teaching: Latin was replaced by English for course lectures, professors began to speak more extemporaneously (as opposed to reading directly from their notes), and class time was occasionally devoted to the discussion of student work.⁹ The professors of the post-reform period also attempted to attract and retain students by reading and discussing contemporary authors in class, and, unlike their pre-reform counterparts, were more likely to eschew what they viewed as outdated aspects of Calvinist theology, such as predestination, in favor of a philosophy and curriculum more “tolerant in its attitudes to religion.”¹⁰

The university curriculum also underwent significant change in this era of reform. Prior to reform, students specialized in one subject area with their regent, which came at the expense of a well-rounded education. This was not true of the post-reform period, where students were expected to take a broad liberal arts curriculum, including courses in Latin, Greek, mathematics, logic, and natural philosophy. Courses in moral philosophy also became increasingly popular in the post-reform period, particularly once the university was able to hire a competent professor in the subject.¹¹ These innovations were well received by Edinburgh’s students. Alexander Carlyle,

⁷ H. Grey Graham, *The Social Life of Scotland in the Eighteenth Century* (Edinburgh: R&R Clark, Ltd., 1950), 463.

⁸ *Ibid.*, 452-455. In his *Recollections*, Andrew Carlyle, an Edinburgh student in the late 1730s, noted that the Greek courses offered were not especially good or useful. Alexander Carlyle, *Recollections*, Unpublished manuscript, Library of Scotland, Manuscript 3463, pages 56-57.

⁹ Richard Sher, “Professors of Virtue: The Social History of the Edinburgh Moral Philosophy Chair in the Eighteenth Century,” in *Studies in the Philosophy of the Scottish Enlightenment*, ed. M. A. Stewart (Oxford: Oxford University Press, 1990), 90; Graham, *Social Life of Scotland*, 454; Adam Ferguson, *Principles of Moral and Political Science* (New York: AMS Press, 1973), v.

¹⁰ Nicholas Phillipson, “The Scottish Enlightenment,” in *The Enlightenment in National Context*, eds. Roy Porter and Mikulas Teich (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 1981), 34. Richard Sher, *Church and University in the Scottish Enlightenment: The Moderate Literati of Edinburgh* (Edinburgh: Edinburgh University Press, 1985), 28-29.

¹¹ To read more about the town council of Edinburgh’s attempts to replace James Balfour with Adam Ferguson in

who was a student at the University of Edinburgh in the late 1730s, reminisced fondly about his time in Professor John Stevenson's logic course, noting that,

“By civility to his students who began to think themselves men, as he [Stevenson] treated them as gentlemen, he drew their respect and attention, and as their minds were just ripening for science and belles lettres, his lectures on Aristotle's *Poetics* and the sublime, captivated our opening taste.”¹²

The university of Edinburgh attended by most of the evangelical ministers produced scholars and ministers who were very narrowly trained, often in theology. The pre-reform university was designed for stasis, and was appreciated by those who saw no problem with Edinburgh remaining a provincial city ruled by its Church. As Carlyle alludes to in his *Recollections*, the post-reform university of the gentlemen ministers was intended to do something quite different: to produce “well-rounded gentlemen” familiar with “all branches of polite learning.” The pedagogical and curricular revolution at the university of Edinburgh meant that graduates of the post-reform period were exposed to a liberal arts education that not only taught new subjects, but also encouraged them to value those traits intrinsic to a liberal education--politeness and sociability, for example. In a sermon preached well after his graduation from university, Carlyle makes it clear that the gentlemen ministers recognized the worth of this type of education for clergy members.¹³ Carlyle argues that a liberal education develops a “strength of character” and temperament that ministers must have to succeed in their profession. He notes that, since “the clergyman's profession is the only one that is entirely set aside and devoted to the service of mankind, he must have a double portion of disinterestedness, and the love of his species; neither of which can be acquired without...the liberal arts and sciences.”¹⁴ Effective (gentlemen) ministers needed the type of education being offered by the university of Edinburgh.

It is clear that the post-reform graduates, including all of the gentlemen ministers whom I have studied in depth, were taught differently from their predecessors, and it would appear that at least some of them adopted the lessons of the reformed school, but reviewing the changes at the university level only gives us a partial view of whether or not these teachings were accepted by students once they left the confines of the university. Once we examine the types of social activities that ministers were involved in post-graduation, though, it becomes clear that the lessons of the university were well heeded by her graduates.

the 1750s, see Sher's “Professors of Virtue.”

¹² Carlyle, *Recollections*, 57. MSS 3463.

¹³ Alexander Carlyle, “The Usefulness and Necessity of a Liberal Education for Clergymen: A Sermon from Matthew 14, Preached in the Tron Church of Edinburgh, Before the Society for the Benefit of the Sons of the Clergy,” (Edinburgh: 1793), 1.

¹⁴ *Ibid*, 23.

Table Two: Club Membership Amongst Ministers¹⁵

Minister	Literary	Political	Debate	Dining	Total
Hugh Blair	3	2	1	1	7
George Campbell	2	0	0	0	2
Alexander Carlyle	3	1	1	0	5
Adam Ferguson	3	1	1	1	6
Alexander Gerard	3	0	0	0	3
John Home	3	1	1	0	5
John Jardine	3	2	1	0	6
William Robertson	2	1	1	0	4
Matthew Stewart	1	0	0	0	1
William Wilkie	2	0	1	0	3

The gentlemen ministers, on average, belonged to four clubs over the course of their lives, and all belonged to at least one.¹⁶ Evangelical ministers did not belong to **any** of Edinburgh's clubs; not a single one. Given their educational background, though, it makes sense that participating in club culture would not have been appealing to the evangelicals. Clubs were expected to teach men moderation, tolerance, and politeness, all vital skills for the eighteenth-century Scottish gentleman, but not necessarily skills valued by evangelical ministers, who did not believe that one's ability to perform ministerial tasks was improved by polite sociability.

Though new to Edinburgh, clubs were hardly a Scottish phenomenon. Associational culture, and the socio-political impact of clubs, has been well documented for both England and France.¹⁷ At a very broad level, the clubs in Edinburgh served the same function as those in London and Paris: they provided a space for sociable activity (discussions, debates, card playing, etc) and, more often than not, eating and drinking. Also like the clubs in Paris and

¹⁵Information about club membership was gathered from a number of sources: Sher, *Church and University*. Graham, *Social Life of Scotland*, Davis D. McElroy, "The literary clubs and societies of eighteenth century Scotland: and their influence on the literary productions of the period from 1700 to 1800," Ph.D. Dissertation (University of Edinburgh, 1952), and biographical entries for each minister in *Oxford Dictionary of National Biography*. The full list of club membership can be found in Appendix A.

¹⁶ It is very likely that this number was actually much higher, but with some of the smaller, shorter-lived clubs, it is hard to get an accurate list of members.

¹⁷ See, for example, Jurgen Habermas, *The Structural Transformation of the Public Sphere: An Inquiry into a Category of Bourgeois Society* (Cambridge: MIT Press, 1991), Peter Clark, *British Clubs and Societies, 1580-1800: The Origins of an Associational World* (Oxford: Oxford University Press, 2001), Dena Goodman, *The Republic of Letters: A Cultural History of the French Enlightenment* (Ithaca: Cornell University Press, 1996).

London, there was an extraordinary amount of diversity between clubs.¹⁸ The Select Society (founded in 1754), for example, was a discussion and debating group (though, in their bylaws it clearly states that they would *not* discuss revealed religion or Jacobitism), with rigorous membership standards and a high degree of organizational structure. The Oyster Club, on the other hand, was a very small dining club (founded by Adam Smith) that met irregularly and seemed to be bound together more by friendship than strict membership regulations.

In many ways, the clubs were the practical application of the theoretical lessons learned at the reformed university. In the clubs, and most especially those devoted to debate and discussion, men learned to honestly and frankly disagree with each other, learned to encourage freedom of expression and ideas, and learned that being part of polite society meant making oneself agreeable to those around you. In “Of Essay Writing,” David Hume affirmed the civilizing function of conversation and social interaction, writing that men only become mannered and “cultivated” through “conversation” with others. Hume also argued that, without this conversation and social interaction, men became pedants, “barbarous” and “secluded from the world.” The clubs provided men with a much-needed respite from the often narrow confines of their professional life, and allowed men to develop important social bonds with other members. For Hume, the club offered a chance to “dine,” “play a game of backgammon,” “converse,” and be “merry with...friends,” all of which helped to “dispel” the clouds brought on by “cold” and “strain’d” philosophical speculation.¹⁹

Further supporting the idea that the gentlemen ministers had absorbed the lessons of the reformed university is the brief and unfortunate history of the *Edinburgh Review*. Those readers even slightly acquainted with the major works of the Scottish Enlightenment will have recognized the names of many of the gentlemen ministers as men who would come to define the Scottish Enlightenment--Adam Ferguson, Hugh Blair, William Robertson, and so on. In the early 1750s, these men had not yet established themselves as serious intellectuals, but they were trying. One of their earliest attempts to do this was the *Edinburgh Review*. Founded in 1755 by Hugh Blair, William Robertson, John Jardine, and Adam Smith, the *Edinburgh Review* was meant to “lay before the public, from time to time, a view of the progressive state of learning in Scotland; to give a full account of all books published there within the compass of half a year; and to take some notice of such books published elsewhere as are most read in this country, or seem to have any title to draw the public attention.”²⁰ The *Review* was entirely devoted to criticism (apparently the first of its kind in Scotland) and, in its first issue the editors reviewed Jonson’s *Dictionary*, several literary and historical criticisms, and a host of religious works. Their criticisms of religious publications is in keeping of what would come to be expected from the gentlemen ministers: works written by evangelicals were decried as “ludicrous,” “peevish,” and “ill-natured,” whereas those written by gentlemen ministers and their idols (Francis Hutcheson, for example) were extolled as “very proper” and responsible for removing “a great deal of rubbish from the science of morals.”²¹ The gentlemen ministers wanted desperately for this venture to succeed, so much so that they purposefully avoided any mention of the works of David Hume in the *Review*, and actively prevented him from being involved with its publication

¹⁸ I’m using the term “clubs” loosely. Coffee houses and salons served the same purpose as clubs.

¹⁹ David Hume, *Treatise of Human Nature*, Edinburgh: 1748, 269.

²⁰ Preface, *Edinburgh Review*, January 1755.

²¹ *Edinburgh Review*, January 1755.

(for some time, he did not even know who the editors were).²² As will be explained in more detail below, Hume was a great friend to many of the gentlemen ministers, but these ministers knew that allowing Hume, an avowed religious skeptic, to be involved in their publication would invite (and in the minds of many, perhaps even justify) evangelical criticism.²³

Thomas Boston, one of the evangelical ministers singled out for scorn in the first issue published a “sixpenny review” of the magazine and noted, “tho’ I am not so much Shaftsburian, as to think ridicule the criterion of truth, yet it is my opinion, that when a certain set of men presume to palm themselves as censors and critics upon the world, the way to make them blaze is to oppose them: But if nobody condescends to take any notice of them, they quickly go out like the snuff of a candle, leaving a stench behind them.”²⁴ Not all of the evangelicals thought it best to simply ignore the *Review*--there were a variety of pamphlets published against the magazine. Ultimately, the editors of the *Review* decided to cease publication after just two issues. Though their reasons for doing so are not entirely clear, it would seem that, in addition to eliciting some strong criticisms from evangelical ministers, the *Review* was not as well received (and well-sold) as they had expected. This episode is informative, not only because it confirms that the gentlemen ministers wanted to institutionalize and spread the ideas taking shape in Edinburgh, but also because it was a big failure for the gentlemen ministers. We can see that, as late as 1755, the gentlemen ministers did not have the clout to disregard the opinions of the evangelicals.

Gentlemen ministers received a different education than their evangelical counterparts had received and were active participants in, and creators of, Edinburgh’s emerging civic culture from which the evangelicals remained aloof. These differences alone would not have been enough to generate the sort of animosity that flared between the two groups in the 1750s. What would ultimately cause problems would be how these educational and social differences affected the manner in which gentlemen and evangelical ministers carried out their ministerial responsibilities. Once they took on their first ecclesiastical posts, it became clear that the gentlemen ministers had reconceived what it meant to be a Calvinist minister in the mid-eighteenth century; this re-imagining was not well-received by the evangelicals.

Doctrinally, the gentlemen and evangelical ministers did not differ substantially, as the gentlemen ministers officially upheld all tenets of the Westminster Confession, including original sin and predestination. Practically, however, there were several important differences between the gentlemen and evangelical ministers. These differences, which are highlighted in how these ministerial groups approached the most basic of their duties--preaching the sermon and disciplining parishioners--became very apparent over the course of the late 1740s and show that, even though the gentlemen ministers officially supported the Westminster Confession, they were more than willing to de-emphasize those ideas and beliefs that did not easily fit into their vision for the Church of Scotland.

In his *Lectures on Rhetoric and Belles Lettres*, which was composed of lectures delivered during his tenure at the University of Edinburgh, Hugh Blair offers us a glimpse into

²² Ernest Mossner, *The Life of David Hume* (Oxford: Oxford University Press, 2001), 338-339.

²³ Even though the gentlemen ministers were willing to criticize (sometimes very harshly) the works of their evangelical counterparts, they were still outnumbered by evangelicals in the governing bodies of the Church. Bringing Hume into the matter would have unduly antagonized the evangelicals, and perhaps even given the evangelicals sufficient ground to initiate disciplinary measures.

²⁴ As quoted in Mossner, 339.

how the gentleman minister preached, as well as negative generalizations about the preaching of their evangelical counterparts. Though these lectures were not themselves sermons, Blair devoted significant time to teaching his students--many of whom would become ministers after graduation--how to properly preach. Blair lamented the two extremes commonly found in evangelical preaching: the more “fanatic” of ministers adopted a “warm, zealous, and popular manner of preaching” that relied on inflamed passions, whereas other ministers, in an effort to differentiate themselves from these spirited ministers, adopted a “studied coolness and composure of manner.”²⁵ Blair found fault with both of these styles. Ministers should not be overly impassioned or overly dispassionate when delivering their sermons. They should instead aim for something more temperate and polite. Hyperbolic sermons, a favorite of many evangelical ministers, were, according to Blair, suited only for “rude periods of society.” These should be avoided and replaced with careful, deliberate sermons delivered with the right degree of passion: “a degree as to rouse and kindle the mind, without throwing it out of the possession of itself.” Once the correct tone was found, ministers should attempt to structure their sermons very simply. The sermon should have one main argument, and, instead of resorting to endless examples and biblical verse, the minister should choose only a few subordinate points to support his primary argument.²⁶ This argument should be clearly articulated and accessible to the audience. Perspicuity, Blair’s favorite word if the frequency with which he used it is any indication, was the goal of a well-crafted sermon. These ideas clearly shaped the manner in which Blair preached. He abandoned the longer sermons of the early eighteenth-century in favor of “simple and short lectures that appealed to one’s reason and experiences.”²⁷

Changes to preaching were not simply formal or stylistic, though; the content of sermons changed as well, as original sin, predestination, and salvation gave way to lessons on practical morality. Again, Blair serves as an example of this shift. His sermons, which included “The Duties of the Young,” “The Duties and Consolations of the Aged,” “The Importance of Order in Conduct,” “The Importance of Religious Knowledge to the Happiness of Mankind,” and “Gentleness,” focused on simple moral lessons that would be easy for an audience of mixed educational levels to understand.²⁸ A review of the sermons published by other gentlemen ministers shows that this content shift was not limited to Blair. George Campbell preached about “The Spirit of the Gospel, neither a spirit of superstition nor of enthusiasm,” as well as “The nature, extent, and importance, of the duty of allegiance;” in addition to a sermon extolling the virtues of a liberal education for ministers, Alexander Carlyle delivered a sermon entitled, “The Love of Our Country, explained and enforced;” and Alexander Gerard published sermons about the “Influence of Piety on the Public Good.”²⁹

A few common themes emerge in these sermons. The first is that of duty--parishioners are regularly reminded of their duties to themselves, their families, and their country. Gentlemen ministers often justified this insistence on duty by noting it would be good for society to be

²⁵ Hugh Blair, *Lectures on Rhetoric and Belles Lettres, Volume I* (Boston: Printed for I. Thomas and E.T. Andrews, 1802), 383.

²⁶ Blair, *Lectures, Volume I*, 356.

²⁷ Jonathan Yeager, *Enlightened Evangelicalism: The Life and Thought of John Erskine* (Oxford: Oxford University Press, 2011), 58.

²⁸ Hugh Blair, *Sermons* (Dublin: Printed for William Colles, 1784).

²⁹ For a full list of works published by both groups of ministers, please see Appendix B.

comprised of dutiful citizens; civic virtue was at stake. The sermons preached by gentlemen ministers also placed a high value on personal and national happiness, both of which the ministers thought could be found through moderation. Sin, salvation, and damnation were not regularly discussed. In these sermons, the gentlemen ministers were laying the groundwork for a more “polite” religion, something wholly different from the civic Calvinism of the evangelicals.³⁰

The evangelical ministers deplored the innovations being introduced by the gentlemen ministers, and even though the gentlemen ministers never directly challenged any aspect of Calvinist theology, the evangelicals frequently presented themselves as the defenders of Calvinist orthodoxy. The evangelicals wanted the Church of Scotland to remain as it was at the turn of the eighteenth century--this meant a strong church with the authority to regulate the moral and social life of Edinburgh. To achieve this goal of stasis, evangelicals supported and discussed all aspects of the Westminster Confession, even the harsh bits the gentlemen ministers preferred to de-emphasize. These were zealous preachers who ardently declared their beliefs; there was none of the moderation found in the gentlemen ministers’ sermons.

The content of evangelical sermons differed substantially from that of the gentlemen ministers. A survey of sermons preached in the first half of the eighteenth century reveals that evangelical ministers devoted most of their time and energy to the subjects of sin, self-denial, and salvation. In these sermons, audience members were exhorted to “be speedy in reopening and turning to God, because life is short and Death is at the Door.” Damnation awaited all those who refused to do so.³¹ These sermons were decidedly negative--not just in the sense that they were not especially optimistic about human nature, but also because they focused almost exclusively on what good Christians should not do. In “The Use and Abuse of Diversions,” for example, George Anderson reminds his parishioners that good Christians abstained from leisure activities. This theme of abstention and denial runs rampant through the evangelical sermons. In a set of published sermons, John Maclaurin advised his readers that happiness was not necessary because “melancholy [was] not inconsistent with sincere piety;” and Alexander Webster, who was perhaps the most zealous of the evangelicals, regularly told his congregation that they were hopeless sinners who led “wicked” lives.³² The gentlemen ministers quite clearly held this style of preaching in contempt. In a review published in the *Edinburgh Review* (1755), Hugh Blair and/or John Jardine (the review was anonymous, but Blair and Jardine were responsible for all reviews of religious works) wrote the following about a recently published collection of sermons written by Ebenezer Erskine, a recently deceased evangelical minister,

“Such are the sentiments, such the stile and manner of these discourses, which, however acceptable they may be to such readers as are more apt to be caught with sound than sense; are in our opinion but little calculated to promote that reformation of manners, which ought to be one great object of every preacher’s attention: On the contrary, they are so full of childish conceits and fancies; the

³⁰ See chapter two for a discussion of civic Calvinism and the relationship between church and state in early modern Calvinist cities.

³¹ John Allis, “The Poor and Doubting Christian’s Guide to Everlasting Life,” (Edinburgh: 1702).

³² George Anderson “Use and Abuse of Diversions, A Sermon on Luke XIX. 13, With an Appendix, Shewing that the Stage in Particular is an Unchristian Diversion,” Edinburgh: 1733.

sublime doctrines of Christianity are treated of, in such a low and ludicrous manner, and are so disfigured with obscure and sometimes indecent allegories; there is so little morality, and such a peevish and ill-natured spirit to be found in them; that we are sorry to say, they seem to be rather calculated to do harm than good; to expose religion to contempt and ridicule, instead of recommending the love and practice of it.”³³

Ministers should, according to Blair/Jardine, teach morality, but with a spirit of generosity and an eye towards the “reformation of manners.” They did not hold with “ill-natured” practices that sought to change people through terrifying them. Given this, it is not surprising that the gentlemen ministers did not approve of the use of discipline in Calvinist churches.

As was discussed in chapter two in some detail, discipline was a fundamental component of Calvinist practice aimed at ensuring parishioners remained godly and god-fearing. In *Institutes of the Christian Religion*, Calvin outlines the importance of church discipline, noting that the church would suffer “complete devastation” if there were no discipline and everyone “was allowed to do as he pleases.”³⁴ Discipline was meant to ward off “lethargy” and act as “a kind of fatherly rod by which those who have made some more grievous lapse[s] are chastised.”³⁵ Evangelical ministers supported the traditional practice of publicly shaming parishioners whenever they strayed from the path of righteousness, as it was central to maintaining the type of social order they valued. Evangelicals wanted a city tightly controlled and regulated by the consistent meting out of discipline; gentlemen ministers did not.

In his *History of Edinburgh* (1753), William Maitland decried the “iniquitous” practice of public penance that took place in Edinburgh’s kirks. He was particularly appalled by the harsh punishment of sexual transgressions, noting that “bashful women” would rather “murder their innocent infants” who were conceived out of wedlock than subject themselves to the humiliation of public discipline.³⁶ Maitland was echoing a sentiment that had become popular amongst the gentlemen ministers starting in the late 1740s. Church discipline, the cornerstone of Calvinist practices, was increasingly being viewed by these ministers as archaic and incompatible with a modern society. Presbytery records indicate that the gentlemen ministers made efforts to change disciplinary practices. In 1750, 114 disciplinary cases were brought before the Presbytery of Edinburgh. By 1755, that number had dropped to just 35.³⁷ As we will see later, though, once they successfully defeated the evangelical ministers (or, at the very least, outnumbered and/or outlived them), the gentlemen ministers saw to it that discipline was essentially abolished.

The significant philosophical and practical differences between the gentlemen ministers and evangelical ministers caused some small skirmishes in the late 1740s. These were relatively inconsequential, though, when compared to the debates and crises that occurred over the course of the 1750s. There were two key debates in this period that pitted the gentlemen ministers

³³ *Edinburgh Review* (1755), as quoted in Mossner, *The Life of David Hume*, 338.

³⁴ John Calvin, *Institutes of the Christian Religion*, transl.. Henry Beveridge (Peabody, MA: Hendrickson Publishers, 2007), IV. XII. I.

³⁵ *Ibid*, IV.XIII.

³⁶ William Maitland, *The History of Edinburgh from its Foundation to the Present Time...in Nine Books* (Edinburgh: Hamilton, Balfour, and Neill, 1753), 282.

³⁷ Presbytery of Edinburgh, Meeting Minutes, National Archives of Scotland, CH2/121, 1700-1800.

against the evangelical ministers and set the stage for the *Douglas* crisis in 1756/57: the Torphichen patronage debate in 1751 and the infidelity trial of David Hume and Lord Kames in 1755. With each successive crisis, the stakes got higher and the rhetoric more vitriolic.

Part Two: The Early Conflicts: Patronage and Infidelity

In 1711, the British Parliament passed the Church Patronage law, which required Scottish church vacancies to be filled by ministers chosen by members of the nobility and gentry, as opposed to the customary Presbyterian practice of allowing the congregation to choose its new minister. This violated the terms of the 1707 treaty of union which forbade parliamentary interference in Church matters and, because of this, for the first few decades after the law was passed, it was enforced rather haphazardly. Churches who disobeyed were not always punished and the Church leaders, many of whom could not in good conscience support patronage, were unable to agree on any alternatives to the law. Many of the gentlemen ministers saw this confusion as being detrimental to the authority of the Church, not to mention to the authority of gentlemen and their values over “popular” sentiment and those ministers who appealed to it. Consequently, they took a very definitive stance in favor of the patronage law when, in 1751, parishioners in Torphichen, a small village near Bathgate in West Lothian, repeatedly refused to recognize the minister appointed to their kirk by a local landowner.

The Torphichen case actually began a few years earlier in 1748, when Lord Torphichen exercised his right to fill a ministerial vacancy within the local parish. His choice--a young reverend named James Watson--enraged the congregation. It does not appear that Watson was all that terrible of a choice; there were only two real objections raised against him. The first was that he spoke quietly and parishioners feared they would not be able to hear him when he preached. The second reason for rejecting Watson (and more likely than not the only real concern) was that he was chosen by Lord Torphichen. When questioned about why they would not induct Watson, locals responded that they “never could submit to his ministry, in that he had accepted..a presentation without the consent and concurrence of almost the whole parish.”³⁸ The very fact that he agreed to Lord Torphichen’s appointment made him unacceptable.

Watson proved to be remarkably unpopular in Torphichen; in a parish of close to one thousand households, only six agreed to his appointment.³⁹ When the local presbytery refused to enforce Watson’s appointment or preside over his induction, the ecclesiastical battle commenced. This case made its way through the various kirk sessions, presbyteries, and synods, until ultimately ending up in front of the General Assembly in 1749. The Assembly sided with Watson and Lord Torphichen, and instructed the parishioners to follow through with Watson’s induction. They refused. The case was brought before the Assembly again in 1750, and again Watson’s appointment was upheld. And again, the parishioners of Torphichen, with the support of their local presbytery, ignored the ruling. The case was before the Assembly for the third time

³⁸ Nathaniel Morren, *Annals of the General Assembly of the Church of Scotland, from the final secession in 1739, to the origin of the relief in 1752 : with an appendix of biographical sketches, illustrative documents, and notes* (Edinburgh: John Johnstone, 1838), 181-200.. Torphichen was particularly hostile to the patronage laws, so it’s not surprising that the crises over patronage began there. Ultimately, this debate over patronage would cause Torphichen to break away from the Church of Scotland during the nineteenth-century schisms.

³⁹ *Ibid*; Sher, *Church and University*, 51.

in 1751. The key players probably expected the case to proceed exactly as it had in 1749 and 1750; the parishioners of Torphichen might be censured or rebuked, but it is unlikely that they anticipated anything more serious than that. 1751, though, did go rather differently, because 1751 just so happened to be the first Assembly where there was a strong contingent of gentlemen ministers amongst the delegates.

The gentleman ministers not only supported the patronage law, but also advocated making an example of Torphichen's recalcitrant parishioners. In order to better advocate for their views on patronage in the Assembly, the gentlemen ministers joined together to form the Moderate party.⁴⁰ The Moderates argued that law and order took precedence over conscience and custom. William Robertson, who became the *de facto* leader of the Moderates, noted that "there c[ould] be no society where there [wa]s no subordination."⁴¹ Congregations were not independent entities; they were accountable to the General Assembly (and to Parliament) and should face punishment when they violated laws. The Moderates recognized the right of parishioners and church elders to disagree with church policies--that was absolutely their right.

⁴⁰ The ministerial divide within the Church of Scotland in the late 1740s and 1750s has been acknowledged by nearly all scholars of eighteenth-century Scotland. Often, though, this schism is defined in terms of church parties within the Church of Scotland's General Assembly. This approach, made popular by Ian Clark and Richard Sher, posits that ministers aligned with the General Assembly's Moderate party were representative of the younger generation of ministers who were more willing to embrace church reform and the ideas of the Enlightenment (those ministers I classify as "gentlemen"), whereas those who aligned themselves with the Popular party represented the older generation of ministers who were loathe to part with tradition and tended to be evangelicals. While this can be a useful generalization, it is one that overstates the importance, consistency, and homogeneity of the two parties. The Moderate and Popular parties did not have broad theological or ecclesiastical platforms. The parties were instead formed in response to a very specific disagreement over the issue of patronage. The 1751 Torphichen debate was the first debate over patronage--patronage continued to be a topic for debate and disagreement well into the nineteenth century--but it is the debate that firmly established the two competing parties in the General Assembly. It was also the debate that generated a good deal of enmity between members of opposing parties. Depending on who was speaking, the terms "Moderate" or "Popular" became terms of abuse, hurled at rivals throughout the mid century period. Such blatant antagonism centered around the Moderate/Popular divide certainly explains why so many choose to characterize the internal Church debates of the mid-eighteenth century as an extension of contentious Assembly politics. But if you look closer at voting records in the General Assembly, party allegiances, and what most ministers within the Church actually preached and did, it becomes clear that the distinction between Moderate and Popular has become overemphasized. Many ministers who were "Popular" in that they agreed to customary patronage practices, also supported church reform and believed that the ministry of the Church of Scotland would be much improved by adopting Enlightenment ideas of sociability and politeness. Robert Wallace, William Wishart, and Patrick Cuming, for example, rarely supported the Moderate stance on patronage, but their views on civil society and theology were very much in line with the ministers associated the Moderates. Should we, then, consider them moderates or popularists? Or what of John Witherspoon, who was educated at the reformed university of Edinburgh alongside many of the most "Moderate" of ministers, but went on to ardently decry the Moderates in the General Assembly? We should absolutely attempt to determine the fault lines within the Scottish ministry, but using the Moderate/Popular distinction is limiting and only allows us to accurately deal with the issue of patronage. .

⁴¹ Sher, *Church and University*, 52-53. William Robertson, "Reasons of Dissent from the Judgment and Resolution of the Commission, March 11, 1752," quoted in Morren, *Annals of the General Assembly of the Church of Scotland*, 231-237.

Acting on this disagreement, though, was completely unacceptable and would lead only to “rebellion and disorder.”⁴² After several months of political wrangling in the General Assembly, the Moderates emerged victorious. On May 30, 1751, a “riding committee” successfully inducted Watson.⁴³ The Moderates were also successful in enforcing the patronage law in a similar case from Inverkeithing in which the popularly-supported minister Thomas Gillespie was actually deposed by the General Assembly. These were not, however, definitive victories. Patronage continued to be a source of strife until the General Assembly Veto Act was passed by parliament in 1832. The importance of Torphichen and Inverkeithing lies not in what was, or was not, settled with them, but rather in that they were the first large-scale, public debates between the two opposing groups of Scottish ministers. After being defeated on Torphichen and Inverkeithing, the evangelical ministers looked for a way to strike back at the gentlemen ministers. It did not take them too long to find a new target.

In 1755, John Bonar of Perth published (with the help of George Anderson) a pamphlet entitled *An Analysis of the Moral and Religious Sentiments contained in the Writings of Sopho and David Hume, Esq., addressed to the consideration of the Reverend and Honourable Members of the General Assembly of the Church of Scotland* which urged members of the Assembly to censure Henry Home, Lord Kames (Sopho) and David Hume for infidelity. Bonar alleged that Hume and Kames had included a number of potentially heterodox and heretical statements in their various treatises and essays. Kames was accused of denying the “possibility of knowledge of God and of divine providence over the material world,” “that he asserted the perfection of all classes of being; and that God had planted a deceitful feeling of freedom in action in man, since all actions were in fact determined and subject to an irresistible necessity.”⁴⁴ The allegations against Hume were far more egregious. He was accused of arguing that there was no real difference between virtue and vice, that religion (and most ministers) were “prejudicial to mankind,” and that the Scottish Reformation was worse than anything that happened “during the darkest night of papal superstition.”⁴⁵ The content of Hume and Kames’ writings was a concern to Bonar, but it was clear that this was not the only reason why these two authors were targeted by the evangelical ministers.

Hume and Kames were good friends with many of the gentlemen ministers--they belonged to many of the same social clubs, regularly corresponded with the ministers, and were frequently seen in each other’s company.⁴⁶ This association with the gentlemen ministers, as much as their heretical statements, caused Hume and Kames to be targeted by the evangelicals. That ministers would fraternize with men of, at best, questionable morality and spirituality greatly concerned the evangelicals. After all, how could ministers who “live[d] in the greatest

⁴² Morren, 231-237.

⁴³ The Moderates also attempted to have the rebellious presbyters suspended for a period of time, but this more “extreme” punishment was overwhelmingly rejected. Sher, *Church and University*, 52.

⁴⁴ John R. McIntosh, *Church and Theology in Enlightenment Scotland: The Popular Party, 1740-1800* (East Linton, UK: Tuckwell, 1998), 69.

⁴⁵ David Hume, *The History of Great Britain: The Reigns of James I and Charles I*, ed. Duncan Forbes (Harmondsworth: Penguin, 1970), 145-149. McIntosh, 70. There was a great irony in Hume and Kames being linked together in this set of accusations--Hume was roundly condemned by Kames in the *Essays on the Principles of Morality and Natural Religion*, which just happened to be the very treatise the evangelicals were using to prosecute Kames.

⁴⁶ Sher, *Church and University*; McIntosh, *Church and Theology*, and McElroy, “Literary Clubs and Societies.”

intimacy with one who represents the blessed Saviour as an imposter, and his religion as a cunningly devised fable,” effectively instruct their parishioners in how “to live soberly, righteously, and godly in the world?”⁴⁷ The private, social lives of the gentlemen ministers seemed, at least to the evangelicals, to be greatly at odds with traditional expectations of ministerial conduct. Since there was no ecclesiastical law restricting with whom ministers could interact, censoring Hume and Kames would have to suffice.

Initially, though, the General Assembly did not play along with the evangelical scheme. The General Assembly of 1755 acknowledged Bonar and the evangelicals by issuing a blanket denunciation of “those impious and infidel principles which are subversive of all religion, natural and revealed, and have such pernicious influence on life and morals.”⁴⁸ The writings of Hume and Kames, though implicitly condemned by the Assembly, were not explicitly referenced. This did not satisfy the evangelicals, and Hume and Kames seemed to recognize that they had only received a temporary reprieve. In a letter to the Scottish portrait artist Allan Ramsay, Hume wrote, “The last Assembly sat on me. They did not propose to burn me, because they cannot. But they intend to give me over to Satan, which they think they have the power of doing. My friends, however, prevailed, and my damnation is postponed for a twelvemonth. But next Assembly will surely be upon me.”⁴⁹ Hume’s prediction proved to be correct. The evangelical ministers redoubled their efforts and were able to bring the issue of Hume and Kames up again at the 1756 General Assembly meeting.

The General Assembly opened on May 20 and, over the course of the first five days of the session, evangelical ministers published a veritable barrage of pamphlets condemning Hume as an infidel. Kames had been spared and was no longer the target of evangelical ire; his writings were, perhaps, heterodoxical, but he was certainly no infidel. The evangelicals instead focused all of their resources on Hume, “who had been bold enough to acknowledge some of his infidel writings publicly.” The gentlemen ministers prepared for the confrontation as best as they could, biding their time and strategizing in a low-brow inn that was well stocked with a dozen cases of good claret.⁵⁰

The issue of the censure was first raised on May 27 when a committee was officially formed to look into Hume’s writings, which were described as containing “the most rude and open attacks upon the glorious Gospel of Christ, and principles evidently subversive even of natural religion and the foundations of morality.”⁵¹ One of the ministers who heard this pronouncement was Alexander Wedderburn, a twenty-three year old minister sympathetic to Hume and the gentlemen ministers. Wedderburn, in his first address before the Assembly, asked the moderator to deny the request to form this committee, because nothing could come of censoring, or even excommunicating, someone like Hume, who refused to accept the disciplinary dictates of the Church of Scotland.⁵² In a speech that was no doubt aimed at the evangelicals,

⁴⁷ Morren, *Annals of the General Assembly*, 58. John Bonar, *An Analysis of the Moral and Religious Sentiments contained in the Writings of Sopho and David Hume, Esq., addressed to the consideration of the Reverend and Honourable Members of the General Assembly of the Church of Scotland* (Edinburgh: 1755), preface.

⁴⁸ Morren, 59.

⁴⁹ David Hume to Allan Ramsay, June 1755, *The Letters of David Hume*, ed. JYT Greig (Oxford: Oxford University Press, 1932) 1:224.

⁵⁰ Mossner, 346.

⁵¹ As quoted in Mossner, 346.

⁵² Hume, who was well-connected and could rely on the help of powerful patrons, was in a unique position to spurn

Wedderburn asked, “what advantage do you really expect from the course which is proposed? Is there any chance of your convincing Mr. Hume, and of making him cry *peccavi*? Alas! I am afraid he has withstood the reasonings of the subtlest philosophers who have attempted to refute him; and you can hardly expect that a miracle should again be performed—one of your number being specially empowered to speak to him.” Wedderburn further argued that excommunication was a useless tool in this case, because it was “a sentence which the civil power now refuses to recognize, and which will be attended with no temporal consequences. You may wish for the good of his soul to burn him as Calvin did Servetus; but you must be aware that, however desirable such a power may appear to the Church, you cannot touch a hair of his head, or even compel him against his will to do penance.”⁵³ Besides the evangelicals being powerless, they were well beyond their spiritual jurisdiction, as Wedderburn sarcastically reminded them, saying “Your *liber*, as we lawyers call it, is *ex facie* inept, irrelevant, and null, for it begins by alleging that the defender denies and disbelieves Christianity, and then it seeks to proceed against him and to punish him as a Christian.”⁵⁴ Wedderburn argued that the Church (and perhaps more specifically, the evangelicals) had no power in this case, or really any ecclesiastical case. They could scold and try to prod people into voluntarily accepting their dictates, but they had no real power to discipline anyone, especially someone who made no claim to be a Christian and did not recognize the Church’s authority in his life. This was a bold, and more than a little reckless, opening salvo against the evangelicals. While it is highly likely that most gentlemen ministers privately supported Wedderburn’s pronouncements, those responsible for defending Hume—namely, Blair, Robertson, Ferguson, Carlyle, and Wilkie—recognized that this was not the best way to woo supporters to their cause. The gentlemen ministers had gained considerable power in the first half of the 1750s, but they still did not have a solid majority within the Assembly; they needed to be more circumspect in their defense of Hume.

Hugh Blair represented the gentlemen ministers and defended Hume’s writings by distinguishing between intellectual freedom and the freedom to act. Intellectual freedom, according to Blair, was not only acceptable, but should be encouraged, as intellectual freedom was “the force behind the rise of Christianity, the Reformation, and even the Church of Scotland.”⁵⁵ There was nothing wrong with Hume having heretical thoughts. It was, though, very problematic to act in a manner that would destabilize the church or society (for example, by denying the rightful induction of a new minister). Furthermore, ministers could befriend those who lived outside of the boundaries of the Church. Such friendships did not compromise their ability to properly minister to their parishioners. In an argument that echoes what Kant would write nearly thirty years later, Blair and his colleagues argued that ministers were permitted to have a private, social life outside of their public, ministerial responsibilities.⁵⁶ As long as they upheld official church doctrine and practice, ministers could be men of letters who socialized

the Church. Most Edinburghians, who could not afford to court the wrath of the Church, had to, at least outwardly, conform to church discipline.

⁵³ Though Wedderburn implies that civil laws had changed recently, especially in regard to the ability to enforce ecclesiastical discipline, there is no evidence that this was true.

⁵⁴ Wedderburn quoted in Mossner, 347-348.

⁵⁵ Sher, *Church and University*, 68. Hugh Blair, *Observations upon a pamphlet intitled An Analysis of the Moral and Religious Sentiments Contained in the Writings of Sopho and David Hume, Esq.* (Edinburgh: 1756).

⁵⁶ See Immanuel Kant, “What is Enlightenment?” in *Foundations of the Metaphysics of Morals*, transl. Lewis White Beck (New York: Macmillan, 1990).

with non-believers outside of the kirk. This proved to be an effective argument, and the gentlemen ministers carried the day, with a vote of 50-17 in the Assembly against the censure. This outcome, however, did little to solve the debate over ministerial conduct and duty within the Church of Scotland.

As the debates between gentlemen and evangelical ministers escalated, it became clear that the gentlemen ministers were gaining in number and influence. This did not, however, thwart the evangelical ministers, who continued to look for ways to highlight what they perceived as the hypocrisy, faint-heartedness, and misguided priorities of their younger colleagues. The performance of *Douglas* in December, 1756 provided another such opportunity.

Part Three: The Theatrical Turn: *Douglas*

The gentlemen ministers had worked hard to nurture a civic culture in Edinburgh that encouraged the arts, polite sociability, and the reformation of manners. By 1756, though, there was still one piece missing from making the city a model of Enlightenment culture: Edinburgh did not have a legal, public theatre. The gentlemen ministers hoped to rectify this, but, as was explained in chapters one and two, theatre attendance was considered by most Calvinists (and all the evangelicals) to be a fundamentally un-Christian activity that disrupted good civic order. Moreover, it was illegal. When *Douglas* was staged in 1756, Edinburgh (all of Britain, actually) was subject to the Licensing Act of 1737, which granted a monopoly on legitimate theatrical productions to only two British theatres, both of which were in London. Other theatres required a royal patent to operate legally. In most of Britain, obtaining such a patent was not terribly difficult, but in Calvinist Scotland, such a thing was nearly impossible. Almost all of scholars of the church and stage point to the Licensing Act as the end of the theatre in Edinburgh (or at least the end until *Douglas* burst onto the scene in 1756). They appear to be working under the assumption that since Scotland’s ministers did not publicly decry the theatre in the years between 1739 and 1756, there was no theatre to protest. This is entirely wrong. Yes, the Licensing Act prevented performances in theatres, but it did not actually end anything. Enterprising theatre managers found a way around the Licensing Act. These managers operated “concert halls,” where audience members paid for a musical performance, and were treated to a free play (or plays) during the intermission. Such intermissions in the concert halls were often longer than the musical performances. Concert hall managers were not especially coy in their attempts to work around the Licensing Act. Table three below shows the number of plays that were advertised in Edinburgh’s newspapers in the years between 1739 and the initial performance of *Douglas* in 1756.

Table Three: Plays Advertised in Edinburgh Newspapers⁵⁷

Year	Plays Advertised
1739	2
1740	No Records

⁵⁷ Numbers gathered from *Caledonian Mercury* and *Edinburgh Evening Courant*, 1739-1756.

1741	4
1742	3
1743	9
1744	14
1745 (incomplete records due to Jacobite rising)	4
1746	4
1747	33
1748	50
1749	40
1750	25
1751	54
1752	18
1753 (incomplete records)	5
1754	30
1755	87
1756	73

This data shows that initially, the Licensing Act was able to end most, but not all, theatrical performances. By 1744, and certainly after the Jacobite rebellion had ended in 1746, theatrical performances were becoming a regular part of Edinburgh's civic life. The spike in performances after the rebellion can be partially attributed to the economic boom and political stability of the latter half of the 1740s. After the Jacobite rebellion, Edinburgh's citizens no longer had to worry about marauding Highlanders occupying their city, and they had money to spend--it appears they spent some of it at the theatre.

In this period, Edinburgh had two primary concert halls. The first, Tailor's Hall, opened in 1741 and could hold an audience large enough to generate between forty and forty five pounds in ticket sales each showing.⁵⁸ This soon became too small of a facility and, in 1747 the Canongate Concert Hall was opened, which had a capacity for sixty to sixty five pounds of ticket

⁵⁸ I have not been able to determine how much a ticket cost, so I'm not sure how many people this actually equated to. The Tailor's Hall, as its name suggests, was actually a re-purposed facility that was originally used by the city's incorporation of tailors.

sales per showing. The plays performed at Tailor's Hall and Canongate Concert Hall rivalled what could be found in any major city. The acting company at the Tailor's Hall had a preference for performing comedies, particularly the works of Colley Cibber. With the opening of the Canongate, though, we begin to see a balance between tragedy and comedy. Nearly all of the tragedies were works of Shakespeare--in fact, a full 21% of the plays performed at the Canongate were penned by Shakespeare. The comedies, on the other hand, were most often contemporary works and, beginning most noticeably in 1752, there appears to be a concerted attempt to include the works of Scottish playwrights.⁵⁹ These performances were advertised in the local Edinburgh papers, and yet there is no record of clerical outrage. The Church turned a blind eye to the existence of the concert halls. Until 1756, that is, and the production of John Home's *Douglas*.

Home never actually intended for *Douglas* to be staged in Edinburgh. His first plan--to have *Douglas* staged by David Garrick, the renowned London actor and theatre manager--failed when Garrick told Home that *Douglas* was so poorly written that it was "unfit" for the stage. Edinburgh, and the Canongate Concert Hall, would have to suffice.⁶⁰ Although it was not his first choice, Home and his colleagues devoted considerable time to ensuring the Edinburgh premiere was a success. Over the course of November and December, 1756, Home and his friends staged several readings and rehearsals in order to help the official cast "understand the full meaning of the play."⁶¹ During these rehearsals, the gentlemen ministers took to the stage. William Robertson and Adam Ferguson assumed the role of Lord and Lady Randolph. Alexander Carlyle took on the role of Norval, *Douglas*' ill-fated hero. Hugh Blair was Lady Randolph's young maid.⁶² John Home rounded out the cast by playing the titular role of Douglas.⁶³ Lord Milton, whose patron the Duke of Argyll managed Scotland for the British government, as well as Murray and Elliot, acted as audience members at these rehearsals, providing critique and feedback to the novice thespians. By December 14, the professional actors had been trained and all were ready for the opening performance.

Despite the aspirations of Home and friends, *Douglas* was not an exceptional literary work. In fact, it was a mostly derivative story, based heavily on the old Scottish ballad of *Gil Morice*. Set in the Grampian Hills in the Scottish Highlands, *Douglas* tells the sad story of Young Norval, a child born of a clandestine marriage between a noblewoman and Douglas, a clan leader who was killed in battle prior to his child's birth. His maternal grandfather, in true Spartan fashion, abandoned the baby outdoors shortly after his birth.⁶⁴ Rescued by Old Norval, a

⁵⁹ The works of the eighteenth-century Scottish poet and playwright, Allan Ramsay (not to be confused with Allan Ramsay, the portrait artist), were the most frequently performed Scottish plays at the Canongate.

⁶⁰ Janet Sorensen, "Varieties of Public Performance: Folk Songs, Ballads, Popular Drama, and Sermons," in *The Edinburgh History of Scottish Literature*, vol. II, Ed. Susan Manning (Edinburgh: Edinburgh University Press, 2007), 133.

⁶¹ Sher, *Church and University*, 77.

⁶² At this point in time, women were allowed on the stage, and a woman would assume this role when the play was publicly performed. For the early rehearsals, though, before all casting was complete, the ministers performed both the male and female roles.

⁶³ Letter from Alexander Carlyle, quoted in Henry Brougham, *The Life and Times of Henry, Lord Brougham* (Edinburgh: William Blackwood and Sons, 1871). David Hume also took part in these rehearsals taking on the role of the villain.

⁶⁴ This was "necessary" because Norval's mother had conceived him while clandestinely married to Douglas, who was killed prior to the birth of his son, giving the appearance, for all intents and purposes, that the child had been

shepherd, our hero is eventually given a commission in the army, and through courageous acts saves the life of Lord Randolph, who just happens to be married to Norval's long-lost mother (Norval and Lady Randolph do not discover this bit of luck until act four). Norval's rise within the Randolph clan greatly upsets Randolph's heir, Glenalvon. Sensing that his position within the household was becoming increasingly tenuous--and rightly so, as Lady Randolph had boldly proclaimed that Norval was "the rightful heir of yonder castle"--Glenalvon responded to the threat of Norval by telling Lord Randolph, who was still unaware of Norval's connection to his wife, that Norval and Lady Randolph were involved in an illicit affair.⁶⁵ With this lie, Home sets up the conclusion of the play, in which everyone, save Lord Randolph, dies: Norval kills Glenalvon, Lord Randolph kills Norval, and Lady Randolph kills herself. It was a rather convoluted tragedy. Home's friends did not seem to think so, though, and even the great David Hume, who knew something of good writing, declared that Home possessed "the true theatric genius of Shakespeare and Otway, refined from the unhappy barbarism of the one and licentiousness of the other."⁶⁶

Douglas was initially performed at the Canongate Concert Hall for seven nights. According to Carlyle, the "play had unbounded success...and was attended by all the literati, and most of the judges." The *Scots Magazine* corroborates Carlyle, noting that "there never was so great a run on a play in this country."⁶⁷ Early reviews of *Douglas* were excessively complimentary, but, once the idea of a Scottish playwright ceased to be novel, reviews became more critical. Even James Dibdin, the decidedly pro-theatre author of the *Annals of the Edinburgh Stage*, could only half-heartedly compliment the play. He notes that Home's attempt at tragedy was impressive given that "he had no practical knowledge of the stage and the requisites of dramatic writing."⁶⁸ Faint praise indeed. Despite its literary shortcomings, though, *Douglas* would continue to occupy the newspapers and pamphlets of Edinburgh for seven months following its debut.

When Home and his colleagues decided to stage *Douglas* in Edinburgh, they knew that they would be doing so illegally. While there was some risk in this, Home had no real reason to believe that he would encounter problems with the staging of his play. As table three above shows, over seventy plays had been advertised and performed in Edinburgh in 1756 alone--all without garnering any attention or criticism. Equally important, Home had significant support for his plan. Beyond his close group of friends and fellow ministers, Home also had the approval of Lord Bute, the Duke of Argyll, and Lord Milton, all powerful men within Scotland and Britain. The combined influence of these men kept the Canongate from being closed when *Douglas* was performed.⁶⁹ Home's influential patrons did not, however, prevent the evangelical ministers from using the opportunity created by *Douglas* to once again criticize the questionable morals of the gentlemen ministers.

Even though *Douglas* was well publicized, it took the Church of Scotland a little over

born out of wedlock. The mother was told the baby had died shortly after his birth, so she was not complicit in this act.

⁶⁵ John Home, *Douglas* (Edinburgh:Hamilton and Balfour, 1757), Act IV.

⁶⁶ David Hume, *Four Dissertations*, (London: A. Millar, 1757), dedication.

⁶⁷ *Scots Magazine* 18, December, 1756, 623-624

⁶⁸ Alexander Carlyle, *Anecdotes and Characters of the Times* (London: Oxford University Press, 1973), 158. Dibdin, 87. And Home was not actually a novice playwright--*Douglas* was his second dramatic work.

⁶⁹ Richard Sher, *Church and University*, 46, 76; Sorensen, 133.

two weeks to formulate an official response to the performance, by which time the play was no longer even being performed. In an *Admonition and Exhortation* published on January 5, 1757, the Presbytery of Edinburgh, which was comprised of a mix of gentlemen and evangelical ministers, outlined its general objections to the theatre.⁷⁰ *Douglas* was not specifically mentioned in this publication, though the Presbytery's actions in the months after the *Admonition* was issued indicate that this play, and not the 70 others performed in 1756, was the intended target. After briefly lamenting the "declining state of religion" and the "growing luxury and levity of the...age," the Presbytery explains that the theatre was sinful and illegal.⁷¹ The Licensing Act, as well as the fine for offences against it, was fully explained. The Presbytery also argued that it was unconscionable to waste time and money on "such vain and idle" pursuits during a time of war (the Seven Years War had just begun). The overriding concern in the *Admonition*, though, is one of morality. The theatre was described as a seminary of "folly and vice" that "seduced" people and prevented them from doing what was right.⁷² Ministers within the Church, as the prime instructors of morality, had the right to warn "their flock" of the dangers inherent in the theatre. The Presbytery ordered the *Admonition* to be read from all the pulpits within Edinburgh on January 30. Perhaps the debate would have stopped here, had *Douglas* not been performed again, but the gentlemen ministers refused to back down. Home and his colleagues staged *Douglas* again, some nine days after being officially admonished by the presbytery, and continued to have it staged once or twice per month for the next eight months.⁷³ By refusing to cease their theatrical activities, the gentlemen ministers ignited the last important conflict between the Church of Scotland's ministers.

In February, 1757, John Witherspoon contributed to the growing debate over the production of *Douglas* with his *A Serious Enquiry into the Nature and Effects of the Stage*. Witherspoon claims that the stage "c[ould] not be attended by any Christian without sin." This bold claim was supported by Witherspoon's belief that the stage was nothing more than an amusement that encouraged spectators to become overly impassioned by that which was false, when they would be better served to devote themselves to the glory of God.⁷⁴ The fact that it was a Church of Scotland minister who penned *Douglas* and instigated the theatre crisis necessitated some variations in what were very traditional anti-theatre arguments. Witherspoon depicted Home, and all those ministers who supported him by attending the performances, as having abandoned their moral duty to their parishioners. Calvinist ministers were expected to live their lives above reproach because, ultimately, it was their responsibility to censure and discipline moral infractions within their kirk. Theatre attendance threatened a minister's moral credibility with his congregation and made it difficult for him to effectively discipline his flock's moral transgressions. While these were new themes in anti-theatre literature, the claim that ministers were behaving in an un-ministerly fashion recapitulated the arguments made against the gentlemen ministers during Hume's trial in the General Assembly. The pro-theatre ministers,

⁷⁰ Unfortunately, Presbytery records don't indicate who approved or disapproved of this action. Perhaps the gentlemen ministers in the Presbytery argued in favor of the play, or perhaps they went along with the evangelicals (an admonition is a fairly mild rebuke).

⁷¹ Presbytery of Edinburgh, *Admonition and Exhortation by the Reverend Presbytery of Edinburgh to all within their Bounds* (Edinburgh: 1757), 1.

⁷² Ibid.

⁷³ *Caledonian Mercury*.

⁷⁴ John Witherspoon, *A Serious Enquiry into the Nature and Effects of the Stage* (Glasgow: 1757).

not surprisingly, rejected these arguments and provided a description of the stage that was quite at odds with two centuries of Calvinist anti-theatre teachings.

Those gentlemen ministers who supported the stage justified their support by arguing that, far from being detrimental to civic morality, stage-plays had the ability to teach virtue. Perhaps the most popular, and certainly the most cited, pro-theatre pamphlet was Adam Ferguson's *The Morality of Stage-Plays Seriously Considered*. In this piece, Ferguson rejects the traditional claim that stage-plays were inherently immoral and contends that there was no scriptural justification for theatre opposition. Though he recognized that the stage, as with any other institution, might "be abused," he argues that it also had the ability to improve the mind "by fostering [an] aversion to wickedness...[and] height[ening]...love of virtue."⁷⁵ Tragedies, and, as Ferguson took pains to emphasize, *Douglas* in particular, "engaged[d] the minds of men, and convey[ed] instruction under the shew of amusement."⁷⁶ Ferguson believed not only that ministers should attend the theatre, but also that they should encourage their parishioners to do the same. He reasoned that the attendance of morally upstanding community members would force theatre managers to offer virtuous plays, thus rendering the theatre more scrupulous, decent, and reputable. Alexander Carlyle echoed Ferguson's sentiments, noting that *Douglas* was "calculated to present characters to our just approbation or blame, and furnish'd with Sentiments of Pity, of Generosity, [and]of Friendship."⁷⁷ Carlyle was, in fact, so convinced that the theatre could be a place for moral instruction that he also encouraged some of his own parishioners to see *Douglas* performed.

On the surface, these pamphlets and pronouncements seem to show a rather straightforward disagreement about whether or not the theatre would threaten civic, and clerical, morality. While this was certainly the primary issue in the *Douglas* debates, much more was being contested than the fate of the theatre in Edinburgh. The arguments made in support of or in opposition to the stage really highlight the two competing, and fundamentally different, visions of morality and human nature at work amongst Edinburgh's clergy.

As previously noted, the evangelical ministers who opposed the stage insisted on maintaining traditional Calvinist practice and doctrine. This meant that morality was scripturally determined, transgressions were publicly disciplined, and moral instruction was believed to be the sole domain of the Church and her ministers. Scripture, and not some abstract "moral sense," provided all necessary moral knowledge.⁷⁸ Since the theatre was not described as an acceptable form of amusement in scripture, it was considered immoral and something to be avoided.⁷⁹ Men were also thought to be naturally depraved and corrupted, so it was the responsibility of ministers to keep their flock on a godly path by preaching of sin and salvation, while also rigorously, and publicly, disciplining parishioners' moral transgressions. Parishioners needed this type of discipline because they could not be trusted to independently correct sinful behavior.⁸⁰ This inherent distrust in an individual's ability to recognize immoral acts or behaviors was on full display during the theatre crisis. John Witherspoon worried that theatre-goers would be seduced

⁷⁵ Adam Ferguson, *The Morality of Stage Plays Seriously Considered* (Edinburgh: 1757), 5-10.

⁷⁶ *Ibid*, 11.

⁷⁷ Papers Regarding the Libel Against Alexander Carlyle, University of Edinburgh Archives, La.II 483, Folio 7.

⁷⁸ Witherspoon, 37.

⁷⁹ Presbytery of Edinburgh, *Admonition*, 1-2.

⁸⁰ Calvin, *Institutes*, IV.XII.I

by the stage. He argued that actors, by making use of sumptuous set pieces, costumes, and other “theatrical” devices, would do such a good job of representing “bad characters” that the audience would look upon these characters with pleasure and approbation. Rather than learning to disapprove of immoral actions, spectators would be “seized and carried away” by the performance and applaud these acts instead.⁸¹ Man could not be trusted to look upon sin and recognize it as such; he needed moral guidance, which could only come from the Bible or fellow Church members, not the stage. Witherspoon writes that the stage was an “uncommanded and unauthorized” form of moral instruction and that adhering to the “system of the morality of the stage” would make it impossible for one to lead a “holy life.”⁸² According to Witherspoon, and several presbyteries and ministers who published virtually identical commentaries, the stage was utterly incompatible with Calvinist morality. The gentlemen ministers, though, disagreed and presented a rather different system of morality during the theatre crisis.

Where the evangelical ministers were wedded to doctrinal stasis, the pro-theatre, gentlemen ministers wanted their Church to change to accommodate, among other things, their beliefs about human nature and morality.⁸³ While the evangelical ministers asserted that anything not given specific approval in the Bible was immoral, the gentlemen ministers argued that Christians should only abstain from those activities explicitly forbidden by scripture. This change had important ramifications for the stage. Adam Ferguson notes that, despite “plays being in high repute” during Jesus’ lifetime, there was to be found no “warning against the Stage, either in the Old or New Testament,” nothing to “warn” Christians of the theatre’s “immorality.”⁸⁴ Any prejudice against the stage, then, was not biblically supported. The pro-theatre ministers did not end their argument here, though. Once establishing that the theatre was not scripturally forbidden, they sought to show how it could actually support and encourage civic morality. Central to these arguments was a change in how human nature was understood. As opposed to the evangelical belief in man’s total depravity, the gentlemen ministers thought man to be imbued with a moral sense that allowed him to innately perceive whether something was virtuous or pernicious. Inspired by the writings of Francis Hutcheson, who was professor of moral philosophy at the University of Glasgow in the the 1730s and 1740s, pro-theatre ministers presented a view of man as capable of independent moral judgments.⁸⁵ In his pamphlet supporting the stage, Ferguson did not assume that spectators would be so swept away by a performance that they would forget their moral sensibility. He believed instead that “every humane person” who saw *Douglas*, or any other play for that matter, performed would necessarily “detest” immoral characters, learn prudence from the incautious, and be moved to compassion over character’s “fatal” flaws.⁸⁶ Frequent theatre attendance would allow spectators to be regularly “affected” by these “generous sentiments,” thus exercising their moral sense and allowing them to develop a type of polish and discernment that Ferguson believed to be

⁸¹ Witherspoon, 50.

⁸² *Ibid*, 27, 33.

⁸³ Sydney Ahlstrom, “The Scottish Philosophy and American Theology,” *Church History* 24.3 (September 1955), 258.

⁸⁴ Ferguson, *Morality of Stage Plays*, 3-4.

⁸⁵ Francis Hutcheson, *Inquiry into the Original of Our Ideas of Beauty and Virtue*, ed. Wolfgang Leidhold (Indianapolis: Liberty Fund, 2004), preface.

⁸⁶ Ferguson, 9-11.

“necessary to every man of letters, whether clergyman or layman.”⁸⁷ In this system of moral philosophy, theatre attendance was not simply an acceptable diversion, but was in fact instrumental in developing personal morality. We can detect in these assertions about the theatre’s ability to provide moral instruction traces of the arguments that Adam Smith would make in *The Theory of Moral Sentiments*. Though Smith did not publish this work until 1759, two years after the *Douglas* crisis ended, he had given a series of lectures on moral theory, rhetoric, and jurisprudence in Edinburgh in the early 1750s.⁸⁸ There are no remaining notes from these lectures, but given the arguments that Smith would make in the *Theory of Moral Sentiments* about spectatorship and sociability being essential to moral instruction, and the fact that he was good friends with many of the gentlemen ministers, it is reasonable to think that his ideas helped shape the arguments supporting the stage.⁸⁹

By late February, the pamphlet war in Edinburgh was becoming increasingly vitriolic. As Dibdin notes, “a moderate-sized pamphlet might be made up of the names alone...*pro* and *con*, that were published at the time.”⁹⁰ The dissension over the theatre, and the dissension within the Church of Scotland, were further aggravated by the regular performances of *Douglas* throughout this period of crisis. In addition to repeatedly re-staging the play, the gentlemen ministers found other ways to deliberately antagonize the evangelicals; Carlyle led this charge. In addition to penning a brief pamphlet to advertise the new staging and “to make the lower orders of tradesmen and apprentices come to the playhouse,” he also wrote a satirical pamphlet entitled *An Argument to Prove that the Tragedy of Douglas ought to be Publicly burnt by the hands of the Hangman*. In this pamphlet, Carlyle mocks the seeming hypocrisy of the anti-theatre, evangelical ministers who have “winked for many years at the diversions of the theatre, and permitted the most virtuous matrons, and tender virgins, to repair to that shop of iniquity unrepov’d, reserving the fire of their zeal til it should be blown up by motives purely ecclesiastical.”⁹¹ Carlyle then proceeds to make light of the more common criticisms of *Douglas*, even arguing at one point that the evangelical ministers objected to *Douglas* out of jealousy, since Home was “said to have some peculiar qualities, such as learning, eloquence, and wit...and, what is worst of all, he is young!”⁹² After the publication of this pamphlet and the second staging of *Douglas*, the pamphlets, which had previously maintained some degree of civility, degenerated into mostly anonymous, hate-filled diatribes.

The Player’s Scourge is a good example of this type of pamphlet. In it, actors and actresses are referred to as “imps of Satan” and “debauchers of mens minds and morals.” The pro-theatre ministers, and their litany of crimes, are individually mentioned. According to the author, Home was guilty of “deserting his poor people,” Carlyle was guilty of delivering “intolerable” sermons that featured “passages from plays,” and Ferguson was an “avowed deist.”⁹³ The pro-theatre pamphlets were equally vitriolic.

⁸⁷ Ibid, 16. Nicholas Phillipson, *Adam Smith: An Enlightened Life* (New Haven: Yale University Press, 2010), 52.

⁸⁸ Phillipson, 89-119.

⁸⁹ Conversely, we can also speculate that the *Douglas* crisis might have focused Smith’s attention on these topics when he came to publish the *Theory of Moral Sentiments*.

⁹⁰ Dibdin, 90.

⁹¹ Alexander Carlyle, *An Argument to Prove that the Tragedy of Douglas ought to be Publicly burnt by the hands of the Hangman* (Edinburgh: 1757), 6.

⁹² Ibid, 11.

⁹³ John Haldane. *The Player’s Scourge: or a detection of the horrid prophanity and impiety of stage-plays, and their*

In late February, once it became apparent that pulpit admonitions would not be enough to stem the tide of people flocking to the stage, the Presbytery of Edinburgh began censuring Edinburghian ministers for attending the production of *Douglas*. The Presbytery also wrote a letter to all other Scottish presbyteries encouraging them to take the same action against their wayward ministers. Most complied. In the March issue of the *Scots Magazine*, five presbyteries are listed as having censured ministers who attended *Douglas* while in Edinburgh. Most ministers were absolved after issuing an apology and promising to abstain from the theatre in the future.⁹⁴ There were two ministers, though, who refused to submit to their presbyteries. Both John Home and Alexander Carlyle were summoned before their presbyteries on charges relating to *Douglas* and both found ways to challenge the charges.

John Home was repeatedly asked to present himself to the elders at the Presbytery of Haddington, a town roughly 20 miles east of Edinburgh. Home was well aware of what awaited him at Haddington. Members of his parish were responsible for writing *The Immorality of Stage-Plays in General and of the Tragedy Called Douglas in Particular*. In this open letter, Home was accused of having “lavished much of his time in composing and writing plays.” He also “deserted” his congregation at least three times to travel to London “for the vending and acting of one or more of these plays.” The author(or authors) recounted Home’s role in the staging of *Douglas* and also accused Home of inviting members of his parish to attend the theatre in Edinburgh. Not having seen the performance himself, the author is at “a loss to state the contents” of *Douglas*. He is certain, though, that it contained several “immoralities.”⁹⁵ Home knew that censure was certain if he appeared before the presbytery, so, he ignored the summons for as long as possible. Then, in June, he resigned from his parish post and demitted from the Church. Home’s resignation was a victory for the evangelical ministers. Carlyle would not, however, concede.

Carlyle was called to appear before the Presbytery of Dalkeith in March, 1757. Unlike Home, though, Carlyle’s presbytery wanted to do more than censure their theatre-going minister. The presbytery, citing Carlyle’s theatre attendance, disorderly behavior at the theatre, and participation in the rehearsals for *Douglas*, sought a libel.⁹⁶ Libel, which in eighteenth-century Edinburgh did not have its present-day connotations, was a more formal ecclesiastical charge that required a trial. After speaking individually with the elders of the presbytery and learning that “no submission on [his] part would turn them aside from their purpose,” Carlyle decided not “to yield” to their demands. Submitting to the libel would, according to Carlyle, mean submitting to a “fanatical” and “illegal exertion of power.”⁹⁷ Doing so would also “have stamp’d disgrace on the Church of Scotland, kept the younger clergy for half a century longer in the trammels of bigotry...and debar’d every generous spirit from entering into orders.”⁹⁸ Carlyle

wicked supporters (Edinburgh[?]: 1757), 3-5.

⁹⁴ *Scots Magazine* (March, 1757), 158.

⁹⁵ Anonymous, *The Immorality of Stage-Plays in General and of the Tragedy Called Douglas in Particular* (Edinburgh: 1757), 4.

⁹⁶ The accusation of “disorderly conduct” relates to Carlyle supposedly turning gentleman out of his theatre box “in a forcible manner.” Papers Regarding the Libel Against Alexander Carlyle, UE Archives, MSS La.II 483.

⁹⁷ Contrary to Carlyle’s claims, as a ministers he was expected to submit to the dictates of the Presbytery, Synod, and General Assembly. There was nothing illegal about his prosecution.

⁹⁸ Carlyle, *Anecdotes*, 160. Carlyle does indicate that he would have accepted a censure for “offence against decorum.”

was willing to sacrifice his career to ensure that the progress made by the gentlemen ministers was upheld.

The Presbytery of Dalkeith, which was located seven miles outside of Edinburgh, was initially split over how to proceed with the libel against Carlyle, because, unlike Home, Carlyle had a remarkable degree of support from his parishioners. In a letter to the presbytery dated March 15, 1757, parishioners from Inveresk wrote that they,

“have been..acquainted with the behaviour of their worthy Minister Mr. Alex. Carlyle ever since his settlement in their Parish; and it is with the greatest pleasure they can assure the Presbytery that he has been extremely zealous in the Exercise of his Office, in promoting the Glory of God, & the Interests of Religion since his Settlement. Nay that he has abounded in the works of Charity and Mercy as the poor and needy when call'd upon will testify; and by these means has acquired the Universal Confidence & esteem of his Parishioners in a very high degree.”⁹⁹

Carlyle's parishioners were willing to accept a private censure of their minister, but found that any further measures beyond this would fail to “promote peace and harmony in the Church and secure their parish against schism and division.”¹⁰⁰ Ultimately, this appeal did not sway the members of the presbytery and it was decided that a public trial was necessary, because even

“tho' the Playhouse at Edinburgh is winked at, yet as the law has given it no Countenance, we think that Common sense must dictate to Every Unprejudiced Person, that a Minister's attending upon an unlicensed playhouse...is a practice very irregular, and of most dangerous Consequence, and even against the Spirit of these Laws.”¹⁰¹

Just as the Hume/Kames trial was ultimately a case about (im)proper ministerial conduct, this case was not so much about the legality of the stage as it was an opportunity for the evangelical ministers to highlight the supposedly inappropriate behavior of the gentlemen ministers.

Carlyle's trial took place before the Synod of Lothian and Tweeddale in April. Patrick Cuming, Alexander Webster, and John Hyndman headed the committee in favor of libel. Unsurprisingly, Carlyle has harsh words for these men in his *Anecdotes*. He particularly disliked Webster, whom he described as doing mischief “with the joy of an ape.”¹⁰² Carlyle spoke in his own defense and was also publicly supported by other gentlemen ministers, most notably William Robertson. The synod ruled in favor of Carlyle, but the Presbytery of Dalkeith appealed this decision to the General Assembly, the governing body of the Church of Scotland. In May, 1757, Carlyle again went on trial and, yet again, the charges were dismissed.¹⁰³ To appease anti-theatre members, though, the Assembly agreed to issue a statement “strongly recommending that

⁹⁹ Papers Regarding the Libel Against Alexander Carlyle, University of Edinburgh Archives, La.II 483, Folio 36.

¹⁰⁰ Ibid.

¹⁰¹ Papers Regarding the Libel Against Alexander Carlyle, University of Edinburgh Archives, La.II 483, Document 9.

¹⁰² Carlyle, *Anecdotes*, 162.

¹⁰³ John Home spoke before the Assembly during the trial and “declared that he rather than Carlyle was responsible for any harm done.” Sher, *Church and University*, 85.

presbyteries ‘take care that none of the ministers of this church do upon any occasion attend the theatre.’”¹⁰⁴ This half-hearted condemnation was, however, a small, and relatively insignificant, victory. Though the laws restricting the stage were not formally lifted for several years, plays continued to be staged in the Canongate Concert Hall after these admonitions were issued. In fact, 118 plays were performed over the course of 1757 alone.¹⁰⁵ By 1763, members of the Church of Scotland’s General Assembly were actually re-arranging their meeting schedule in order to allow ministers to take in the newest offerings at the theatre.

The gentlemen ministers, by withstanding the Carlyle trial and refusing to back down on the issue of ministerial conduct, had proven victorious. In the long term, the *Douglas* victory marked the very public moment when the gentlemen ministers’ vision of moral philosophy, moral instruction, and ministerial duties eclipsed the rigid, traditional views of those who opposed the stage. After the *Douglas* crisis, the evangelical ministers were unable to mount another serious opposition to the gentlemen ministers; civic Calvinism in Edinburgh was dead.

Part Four: Post-Civic Calvinism

What does it mean to say that civic Calvinism was dead, though? Most importantly, it meant that the evangelicals were well and truly out of power in Edinburgh. The logistics of the General Assembly had always favored the gentlemen ministers--it was convened annually in Edinburgh, and though all parishes had equal rights in terms of how many delegates they could send to represent their interests, poorer parishes located far away from Edinburgh rarely had the funds to do so. Gentlemen ministers, however, were overwhelmingly located in Edinburgh and its environs; they had no trouble making it to the annual meeting. It was only a matter of time, really, before they began to outnumber the evangelicals there. *Douglas* hastened this decline by generating support for the gentlemen ministers in the Assembly (Assembly members who might not have taken a side on the evangelical/gentleman split were pushed to the gentleman cause after the witch-hunt to prosecute ministers for theatre attendance). Between 1762 and 1785, our group of gentlemen ministers were, on average, members of the General Assembly eleven separate times, compared to three for our group of evangelicals. Clearly, the gentlemen ministers wielded more ecclesiastical power in the aftermath of *Douglas*. With a majority in the General Assembly, the gentlemen ministers were free to continue the changes they had pushed for prior to 1756. It should be noted, though, that these changes were primarily witnessed in urban areas. Rural churches were not as affected by the ministerial schism as were those parishes in Scottish cities. So long as these parishes towed the line on patronage, however, the Assembly did not become involved in how their kirks and presbyteries functioned.

One of the most striking changes in religious culture post-*Douglas* has to do with church discipline. In Edinburgh, there was a rapid decline in the instances of church discipline cases brought before the Presbytery in the decades following the performance of *Douglas*.

¹⁰⁴ *Scots Magazine* (March, 1757), 159. Alexander Carlyle, *Autobiography of Alexander Carlyle of Inveresk* (Edinburgh: Morrison and Gibb Limited, 1910), 338. Sher, *Church and University*, 85.

¹⁰⁵ Information collected from the *Caledonian Mercury* and *Edinburgh Evening Courant*, and reflects the plays advertised therein.

Table Four: Disciplinary Cases Heard Before the Presbytery of Edinburgh¹⁰⁶

Year	Disciplinary Cases	Number of Meetings
1730	155	20
1740	164	19
1750	114	12
1760	30	14
1770	21	15
1780	1	13

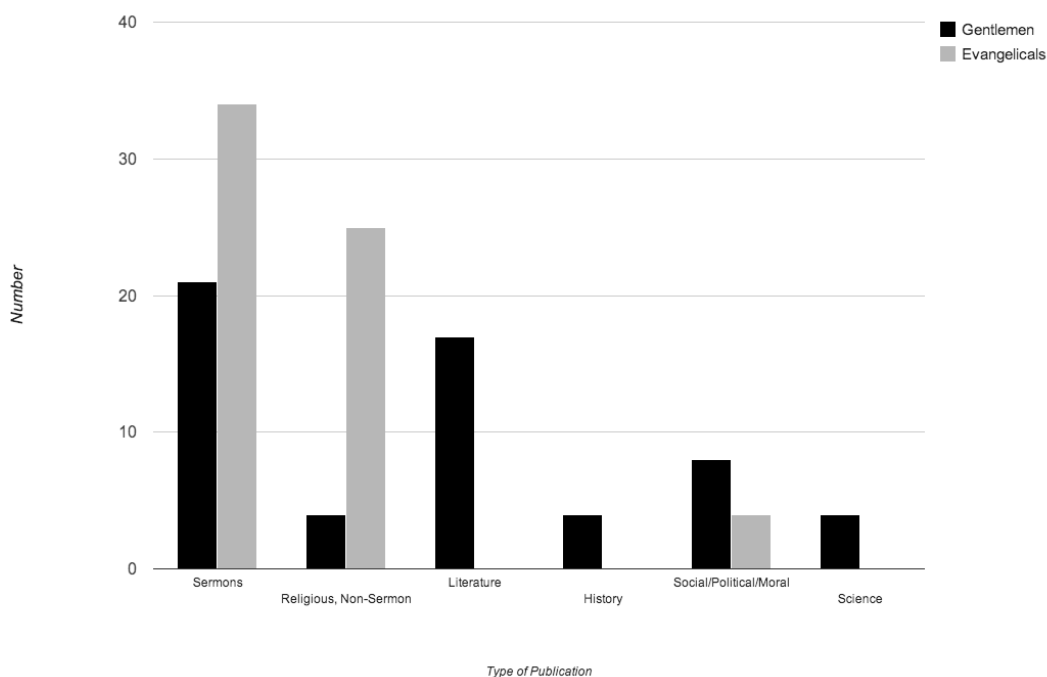
By the end of the eighteenth century, discipline was no longer the primary function of the Presbytery. As table four indicates, even though the Presbytery disciplined people less frequently in the second half of the eighteenth century, the members of the Presbytery still met on a regular basis. Instead of disciplining parishioners, though, the Presbytery administered exams to divinity students at the University of Edinburgh, settled minor disputes between parishes, appointed ministers to vacancies within the city's kirk, and oversaw the Church's charity work. As the century progressed, the Presbytery devoted considerably more attention to these non-disciplinary duties, focusing the energies of the church not on the performance of discipline, but on administrative duties. The Presbytery had relinquished its right to control the moral lives of its parishioners.¹⁰⁷ This would have been an unthinkable development as late as 1750.

Post-*Douglas*, we also see the full potential of the gentlemen ministers realized--the defeat of the evangelicals and civic Calvinism opened up a space for full and open ministerial involvement in civil society and in the Scottish Enlightenment. A review of the works published by our twenty ministers effectively highlights this change.

¹⁰⁶ Presbytery of Edinburgh, Meeting Minutes, National Archives of Scotland, CH2/121, 1700-1800.

¹⁰⁷ Presbytery of Edinburgh, Meeting Minutes, National Archives of Scotland, CH2/121, 1700-1800. This discipline might have continued on a more informal basis at the parish level.

Chart One: Published Works of Scottish Ministers¹⁰⁸



Publishing religious tracts and sermons had long been the domain of Scottish ministers, but, beginning in the late 1750s, we begin to see greater variety in the types of works being published by Scotland’s clergymen. The gentlemen ministers continued to publish religious works; Hugh Blair, for example, published several volumes of sermons over the course of his career. But as the chart above shows, these ministers were also branching out into other genres, and almost all of this branching out occurred after the *Douglas* debate. Of the 58 works published by the gentlemen ministers over the course of their career, 44 were published after the *Douglas* crisis. The gentlemen ministers were not amateurs, merely dabbling in different literary forms to sate their curiosity. Instead, these ministers would go on to represent the best of the Scottish Enlightenment: Adam Ferguson’s *Essay on the History of Civil Society* would lay the foundations for modern sociology; William Robertson’s historical works would establish the practice of conjectural history, one of the defining features of the Scottish Enlightenment; and Matthew Stewart’s mathematical theorems and scientific work would help solve the problem of measuring planetary motion. Who knows whether or not these works would have been published had the gentlemen ministers failed to transform Scottish Calvinism (perhaps the gentlemen ministers would have found other ways around the evangelicals?), but we can be sure that the death of civic Calvinism made it much easier for our gentlemen ministers to pursue non-

¹⁰⁸ Full list of published works for both groups of ministers can be found in appendix B.

religious intellectual interests.

Beyond controlling the General Assembly, many of the the gentlemen ministers became professors (6 out of our 10 ministers--Blair, Ferguson, Robertson, Campbell, Gerard, and Stewart--went on to be professors), and assumed responsibility for educating the next generation of ministers and civic officials. This institutional control of Church, university, and civil society ensured the success and continuation of the gentlemanly vision of Calvinism in Edinburgh well after the eighteenth century ended.

Calvin Meets Voltaire: Defending “Enlightened Orthodoxy” in Eighteenth-Century Geneva

After spending the summer of 1756 at Les Délices, Voltaire’s Genevan residence, Jean Le Rond d’Alembert had conducted enough research and personal observations to compose his entry on Geneva for the seventh volume of the *Encyclopédie*. d’Alembert’s essay was glowing and full of praise for the small republic, which he presented as the ideal enlightened city. d’Alembert found Geneva to be a “prosperous” city able to maintain stability and calm even when “everything around [it was] in flames.” The political situation of the city was also most equitable and set up in such a way that “the government of Geneva has all the advantages and none of the drawbacks of democracy.” d’Alembert did not limit his praise to the city’s politics and economy, though. He also praised the city’s sumptuary laws, which “eliminate[d] lavishness” and improved civic morality, without also eliminating happiness. And d’Alembert thought Genevans were especially happy, even going so far as to claim that “there exist[ed] no city perhaps where there are more happy marriages.” These happy marriages were fruitful, producing children who went on to the Academy to be “taught free of charge.” If their classes failed to provide enough intellectual stimulation, citizens could also make use of the expansive public library which allowed all citizens to freely borrow books. As a result, “everyone reads and becomes enlightened, and the Genevans are much better educated than any other people.”

Happily, Genevans had also shed the more rigid aspects of Calvinism: its ministers had enough sense to reject some of Calvin’s more “reprehensible” actions and ideas. d’Alembert was clearly impressed by all that he saw while in Geneva. Except for one small thing: Geneva did not have a theatre. It should. d’Alembert understood some of the religious reasons why the theatre had been banned in Geneva: he was aware that many believed the theatre to be an immoral activity and that the very sumptuary legislation he praised in an earlier section of the essay was responsible for the bans on the stage. But d’Alembert was certain that rather than Genevans being tainted by the loose morals of actors or negatively affected by the very presence of a theatre, the “exemplary” morality of the Genevans would in fact change the stage, ultimately producing a theatre that set the standard for the rest of Europe. This article was published in November, 1757. By December, Geneva’s ministers were loudly proclaiming their displeasure.¹

While many of the civic officials in Geneva appreciated the laudatory tone of d’Alembert’s article, the city’s ministers were troubled by how d’Alembert described their faith. d’Alembert was not subtle in this characterization--he boldly proclaimed that Geneva’s ministers had no other religion “than a perfect Socinianism.”² The ministers, however, considered this to be a gross misinterpretation of their beliefs and practices. d’Alembert’s suggestions about the

¹ Jean Le Rond d’Alembert, “Geneva,” *The Encyclopedia of Diderot & d’Alembert Collaborative Translation Project*, Translated by Nelly S. Hoyt and Thomas Cassirer (Ann Arbor: MPublishing, University of Michigan Library, 2003). Originally published as “Genève,” *Encyclopédie ou Dictionnaire raisonné des sciences, des arts et des métiers*, 7:578–578D, (Paris, 1757).

² Ibid. Socinianism was a doctrine that was especially popular in sixteenth and seventeenth-century Poland. Socinians were “characterized by antitrinitarianism, rationalism, and denial of the divinity of Jesus.” “Socinianism, n.” OED Online. March 2014. Oxford University Press. <http://www.oed.com/view/Entry/183778?redirectedFrom=socinianism> (accessed May 14, 2014). It is unclear if d’Alembert had a full understanding of what Socinian theology entailed, or if he simply meant that, unlike “orthodox” Calvinists, the Genevan ministers were more enlightened and rational.

stage also attracted the ire of the ministers. Geneva's pastors were unswayed by d'Alembert's argument that they were so morally exemplary that they could change the reputation of the stage and, furthermore, were offended by the suggestion that their laws banning the stage somehow made their city less enlightened or civilized than those cities with vibrant theatre cultures. From the Genevan point of view, d'Alembert was arguing that the ministers had so diverged from Calvinist orthodoxy (not a bad thing, according to d'Alembert) that they might as well have a legal, public theatre. Geneva's ministers vehemently disagreed with this assessment, and thus began a several-month-long debate about Calvinism, the stage, and the relationship between Church and society in an age of progress.

This episode is a well-known story of the Enlightenment. d'Alembert, the author of the article, was an established French mathematician and scientist who wrote over one thousand entries for the *Encyclopédie*, which he also co-edited with Denis Diderot until 1759. Voltaire, who needs no extended introduction, was d'Alembert's guide whilst in Geneva. Rounding out our group of Enlightenment philosophers was Jean-Jacques Rousseau, the erstwhile "citizen of Geneva" who inserted himself into the debate about the theatre and d'Alembert's article in 1758 with the publication of the *Letter to d'Alembert on the Theatre*. Traditionally, when scholars have studied the debate that erupted in the aftermath of the article on Geneva, they have focused on one or more of these Enlightenment thinkers. As a result, the debate has been stripped of its local, Genevan context; it has become part of the Enlightenment narrative, and not a story of Geneva.

Helena Rosenblatt's *Rousseau and Geneva*, for example, devotes eight pages to the crisis over the Geneva article, but instead of explaining why the theatre, or the description of Geneva's ministers, would create such a furor in the city, Rosenblatt focuses instead on the socio-political theory embedded in Rousseau's famed *Letter to d'Alembert*.³ In this context, the theatre crisis in Geneva becomes little more than a feud between Voltaire and Rousseau, a continuation of the debate started with Rousseau's *Discourse on the Arts and Sciences* (1750) that questioned the validity of the Enlightenment-era devotion to the advancement of the arts and sciences. Graham Gargett does a better job than Rosenblatt of situating the crisis in Geneva in *Jacob Vernet, Geneva, and the philosophes*, but where Rosenblatt focuses too much on Rousseau and his involvement in the affair, Gargett focuses unduly on Voltaire (which makes sense, given this book is part of *Studies on Voltaire in the Eighteenth Century*). In both of these works, the Genevan crisis is only considered important because of its connection to Voltaire and Rousseau.⁴

In addition to removing the local context from the debate, these scholars also conflate the issues of faith and the stage. In each of the above mentioned works, the debate occasioned by the d'Alembert article is explained as having been a debate about both the description of the ministers' faith and about d'Alembert's suggestion to build a theatre. This is not what happened, though. Initially, the ministers only sought to have d'Alembert refute his claims about their piety. It was only after these attempts failed--and Rousseau wrote the *Letter to d'Alembert*, which focuses almost exclusively on the theatre--that the ministers even mentioned the stage.

³ Helena Rosenblatt, *Rousseau and Geneva: From the First Discourse to the Social Contract, 1749-1762*, (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 2007).

⁴ Graham Gargett, *Jacob Vernet, Geneva, and the philosophes*, (Geneva: Voltaire Foundation, 1994). Lest I be accused of completely disregarding the role played by Voltaire and the philosophes in the Genevan theatre crisis, let me clearly state now that these philosophers were very involved in what happened in 1757/1758 and no accounting of the crisis that fails to mention these figures could be considered complete or accurate. Voltaire will, in fact, be an integral part of this chapter. That being said, though, that is not the story that interests me most; I am far more interested in the debate that happened in Geneva.

This progression from faith to stage does not fundamentally alter the claims made by scholars seeking to place the d'Alembert crisis in a larger, European context. It does, however, shape the Genevan story.

d'Alembert's claims about religion and faith were mostly right. The ministers who objected most strenuously to the Geneva article were the same ministers who had actively and intentionally changed Calvinist practice: they had de-emphasized original sin, made significant changes to the Academy, and relaxed disciplinary processes, among other things. For the ministers, these innovations were consistent with Calvinist orthodoxy; this is not how d'Alembert described them, though. To d'Alembert, these changes signalled the end of Calvinism. The ministers, horrified by d'Alembert's claims, needed to find a way to rebuff d'Alembert, and assert their orthodoxy. The stage conveniently provided this opportunity.

Geneva's ministers were not consistently anti-theatre in the eighteenth century, but they were willing to adopt anti-theatre rhetoric when it proved useful. This is the only reason the theatre became a debated issue in 1758. Discomfited by how d'Alembert's description of their faith could be interpreted, ministers sought out an issue that would rally Genevans to their side and allow them to prove their Calvinist orthodoxy. The theatre, with its questionable morality and dubious theological standing, served this function. This critique of the stage was a common one for Calvinists, but unlike many of their predecessors, Geneva's ministers were not using the stage in an attempt to prevent religious change. Geneva's ministers instead resorted to anti-theatre rhetoric because it allowed them to protect the changes they had already made.

Part One: Enlightened Geneva

When Voltaire arrived in Geneva in March, 1755, having already been exiled from both the French and Prussian courts, he was happy to find a respite from both the excesses and the great restrictions of a courtier's life.⁵ For those familiar with Voltaire--particularly the scandals he left in his wake as he traveled (fled) from one court to another--Geneva may seem an unlikely place of residence for the philosopher. Why would Voltaire willingly choose to settle in a strict and austere Calvinist city? But, as Voltaire knew, and as modern scholars are only recently beginning to appreciate, eighteenth-century Geneva bore little resemblance to the city over which Calvin presided in the late sixteenth century. Calvin was not entirely forgotten, though. Church and faith were still an important aspects of daily life in Geneva, but, as the city changed, so too did its religious culture. These changes, and specifically the question of how far one could diverge from traditional Calvinist practice before ceasing to be a Calvinist at all, would be the crux of the d'Alembert debate in 1757.

Enlightenment philosophy, particularly French philosophy, inspired many of the changes made to the eighteenth-century Genevan church. Restrictive French publishing laws meant that the Swiss, more so than any other nationality, had very easy access to these philosophical works. Beginning in 1699, authors who wished to have their works published in France were required to submit their writings to a royal censor for approval.⁶ Though historians have debated the restrictiveness and consistency of this system of censorship--Raymond Birn, for example contends that "censors were unable to come up with workable critical guideposts," which meant that "their decisions appeared inconsistent and arbitrary"--it is known that eighteenth-century

⁵ Ian Davidson, *Voltaire in Exile: The Last Years, 1753-1778*, (New York: Grove Press, 2004), 7-9.

⁶ This was hardly the beginning of censorship in France--prior to 1699, censorship was handled by the universities--but the era of royal censorship often proved to be more restrictive than what was imposed by academics.

French censorship created a booming trade in illicit books.⁷ Authors who could not have their books published in France found a haven in Switzerland, where censorship was, on the whole, far less severe.⁸ As a result, almost all of the major cantons, including Geneva, boasted several publishing firms that happily published and exported works that were banned elsewhere.⁹ Over the course of the eighteenth century, as its printing industry profited from the books forbidden by the French censors, Switzerland became a major player in the European underground press, and ultimately controlled the dissemination of controversial Enlightenment publications.¹⁰ The Swiss involvement with the Enlightenment, though, went beyond their role as distributors of information and ideas. While we do not normally associate the Enlightenment with Switzerland--there were after all very few major eighteenth-century Swiss philosophers--the Swiss were voracious consumers of the works produced by Enlightenment philosophers.¹¹ Furthermore, the lessons gleaned from philosophy were put into action in Geneva, and no where is this more apparent than in the significant pedagogical changes instituted at the Genevan Academy in the early eighteenth century.

When John Calvin established the Academy of Geneva in 1559, he intended it to act primarily as a seminary for Reformed ministers.¹² Although classes in philosophy and languages (Hebrew, Greek, and Latin) were offered in an attempt to provide students with a more “humanistic” education, the Academy was at its heart a seminary.¹³ In the seventeenth century, close to eighty percent of the Academy’s students graduated from its theology program, and a full seventy percent of its graduates went on to become ministers. These ministers, though, did not stay in or hail from Geneva.¹⁴ The seventeenth-century Genevan Academy was not so much a *Genevan Academy* as it was a training center for Scottish and continental Calvinists that was intended to produce the next generation of orthodox ministers. Throughout much of the seventeenth and early eighteenth centuries, Geneva’s *Compagnie des Pasteurs*, the governing body of the city’s ministers and professors, resisted any attempts to deviate from this original purpose.¹⁵ The *Compagnie* wanted the Academy to remain a seminary focused exclusively on

⁷ Raymond Birn, *Royal Censorship of Books in Eighteenth-Century France*, (Stanford: Stanford University Press, 2012), 68.

⁸ One exception to this was Zurich, where town councils were famously restrictive.

⁹ Samuel S. B. Taylor, “The Enlightenment in Switzerland,” *The Enlightenment in National Context*, eds. Roy Porter and Mikulas Teich, (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 1981), 82.

¹⁰ *Ibid*, 82. In Geneva, the most prominent publishing house was owned and operated by the Cramer brothers--Gabriel and Philibert. The Cramer brothers, part of a printing dynasty that stretched back to sixteenth-century Lyons, were active participants in Genevan society and politics (though not well-connected enough to mix with the very top members of the aristocracy), and were without doubt a great inducement for Voltaire to settle in Geneva. Between 1756 and 1776, the Cramer firm handled all of the first printings of Voltaire’s works, even his scandalous *Dictionnaire Philosophique*, which would ultimately be burned in Geneva’s town square.

¹¹ *Ibid*, 78.

¹² It is worth noting that the Academy was not a university. As Michael Heyd notes in “The Geneva Academy in the Eighteenth Century: A Calvinist Seminary or a Civic University,” in *The University and the City: From Medieval Origins to the Present*, ed. Thomas Bender, (Oxford: Oxford University Press, 1988), “with neither an imperial nor a papal charter, the academy could not give official degrees,” 80.

¹³ *Ibid*. Attempts were made to introduce a chair of law and medical faculty, but neither were especially successful.

¹⁴ Throughout the seventeenth century, only about 20% of the student body were Genevan residents at the time they matriculated. Heyd, 81.

¹⁵ The *Compagnie* was tasked with ensuring the orthodoxy of its members, which included all the city’s ministers and professors--though it should be noted that most professors were also ordained ministers. The *Compagnie* also acted as a censor for printed materials, approved candidates nominated for either the ministry of professoriate, and communicated with other Reformed churches throughout Europe. Introduction to the *Manuscrits de la Compagnie*

theology; in this, the Compagnie was wildly successful.

The Academy's early success as a seminary was primarily due to its professors' adherence to a pedagogical method that encouraged vigorous debate and an almost single-minded focus on defining the limits of orthodox theology. This approach--reformed scholasticism-- grew out of the medieval scholastic tradition, a tradition that Luther and Calvin actually criticized at length while in the midst of the reformation process. Once the Reformed and Lutheran confessions were established, though, this hesitation about scholasticism seemed to disappear, and was adapted to fit the needs of Reformed education. The scholastic method, which encouraged students to study material by making use of "an ever recurring system of concepts, distinctions, definitions, propositional analyses, argumentational[sic] techniques, and disputational methods," was rendered acceptable once wedded to Reformed theology.¹⁶ This approach to teaching yielded Calvinist ministers willing to devote considerable amounts of energy to debating small theological points. In fact, theologians and ministers spent most of the seventeenth century in Geneva doing just this--having narrowly defined theological arguments that amounted to splitting hairs on doctrinal issues.¹⁷

Ultimately this obsession with refining orthodoxy created an insulated ministry more concerned with theological dispute than adapting to the changing needs of the society around them. As the seventeenth century ended, leading professors at the Academy, fearing that this approach to teaching and ministry was not sustainable, began to push for changes to how and what students were taught at the Academy. Making these institutional changes, though, also meant redefining orthodoxy, and, as would become clear during the d'Alembert debate in 1757, made the Genevan church susceptible to charges of completely abandoning Calvinism in favor of Socinianism.

Beginning in the early eighteenth century, the theology chairs at the Academy, Jean-Alphonse Turretin and his successor, Jacob Vernet, challenged the scholastic approach to teaching and, in the process turned the Academy into "the centre for one of the most advanced educational philosophies in Europe."¹⁸ Getting to this point of advancement was no easy feat, and required Turretin, Vernet, and their colleagues to "shed the rigorism of the early Calvinist faith" in favor of an "enlightened orthodoxy" that allowed for rationalism and emphasized the more practical aspects of Calvinism.¹⁹ By the mid eighteenth-century, not only had the

des pasteurs, Bibliotheque de Geneve, CH BGE Ms. Compagnie des pasteurs 1-1040. When Calvin's successor, Theodore de Beze, took over the Academy, he attempted to establish chairs for both law and medicine, but on both counts was continuously blocked by the Compagnie.

¹⁶ William van Asselt, *Introduction to Reformed Scholasticism* (Grand Rapids, MI: Reformation Heritage Books, 2010), 7.

¹⁷ Perhaps the most glaring example of reformed scholasticism in action was the adoption of the Helvetic Formula Consensus in 1675. The Formula Consensus was developed in reaction to Amyraldism, a belief in universal redemption that had become popular in the 1670s. Most Genevan Calvinists, though, viewed Amyraldism as little more than a compromise to the stricter (and, in their minds at least, correct) Calvinist belief in predestination and election. The Consensus outlined the differences between orthodox Calvinism and Amyraldism, and, not surprisingly, upheld all tenets of orthodox Calvinism. This very narrow interpretation of Calvinism was adopted by all the cantons in 1675, and for a short while was the guiding confessional doctrine in the Calvinist Swiss cantons. The rejection of Amyraldism in such a public and thorough way highlights the seventeenth-century preoccupation with precision, consistency, and orthodoxy, all of which were firmly supported by the commitment to reformed scholasticism in the Academy.

¹⁸ Taylor, 79.

¹⁹ Martin I. Klauber, "The Eclipse of Reformed Scholasticism in Eighteenth-Century Geneva: Natural Theology from Jean-Alphonse Turretin to Jacob Vernet," in *The Identity of Geneva: The Christian Commonwealth, 1564-*

professors turned away from scholasticism, but the Academy had also transformed into something more than a seminary.

Turretin, who came from a long line of Genevan theologians, saw the problems faced by an increasing insular Calvinist church, which led him to embrace pragmatism and inclusivity over static orthodoxy and exclusion.²⁰ Like his counterparts in Edinburgh, Turretin ignored, though did not formally renounce, many of the traditional tenets of Calvinism, including predestination and reprobation. Turretin took over the theology chair at the Academy in 1705 and, within the first year of his tenure, he spearheaded an effort that led to the abrogation of the Formula Consensus. In his courses on theology, he urged his students to believe only that which was supported by reason, noting “the Holy Spirit does not work in us blindly, but through reasons presented in this mind...Without this our faith would be mere enthusiasm.”²¹ And though faith is inherently irrational--at a certain point you just have to believe--Turretin argued that it should at least have some basis in reason. Turretin’s rationalism was on full display in his major theological work, *Theses de theologica naturali*, in which he explained the major points of enlightened orthodoxy: God exists, He created the world, and the soul is immortal. Of course, none of these were novel arguments; Turretin’s contribution to Calvinist theology was in the manner he justified and proved these claims.

Turretin proved the existence of God, and also that He was the creator, by arguing that their had to have been a “first cause” or “necessary being” that got the world started. For Turretin, it was clear that this was God: the world was simply too complex to have arisen by chance; it had to have been designed by a deity.²² He used a similar argument to reject claims made by atheists. Turretin posited that these groups could not explain the world around them without accounting for a divine creator; it was simply unreasonable to be an atheist. The immortality of the soul was also a belief that could be supported by reason: there are obvious differences between the nature of the body and that of the soul, enough so that a reasonable person could believe that the death of the physical body does not necessarily mean the soul dies, too.²³ Many of these claims, and the manner in which Turretin arrived at them, appear to echo the arguments found in Rene Descartes’ *Discourse on Methods* and *Meditations* (particularly the first meditation). We should be careful, though, in labeling Turretin a Cartesian, as he was not systematic in his approach. He appropriated elements of Cartesianism, but he was also willing to using scholastic and more teleological arguments if they better suited his needs. Turretin’s “enlightened orthodoxy” (a term he coined) reflects this rather hodgepodge approach to philosophy and theology.

Jacob Vernet took over the chair of theology from Turretin in 1756, and continued the reforms to the theology program that Turretin had begun. Vernet’s background made him especially suited to becoming an evangelist for enlightened orthodoxy. As a tutor to the children of a wealthy Parisian family in the 1720s, Vernet had been exposed to the works and culture of the French philosophes. Vernet had cordial relationships with many of the leading thinkers of the period, and even courted Voltaire when he first arrived in Geneva in 1755. As a professor of

1864, eds. Martin Klauber and John Roney, (Westport, CT: Greenwood Publishing Group, 1998), 130.

²⁰ Joel R. Beeke, “The Order of the Divine Decrees at the Genevan Academy: From Bezan Supralapsarianism to Turretinian Infralapsarianism,” in *The Identity of Geneva: The Christian Commonwealth, 1564-1864*, eds. Martin Klauber and John Roney, (Westport, CT: Greenwood Publishing Group, 1998), 68.

²¹ Jean-Alphonse Turretin, *Dilucidationes*, (Basel: JR Imhof, 1748): 1.2.22.

²² *Ibid*, 1.2.35-1.3.37.

²³ *Ibid*, 1.12.2.

theology, he encouraged his students to be skeptical of revelation and sought to return Calvinism “to a purer form of biblical theology.”²⁴ Like the gentlemen ministers in Edinburgh, Vernet hoped to be more than just a theologian. He wrote several historical works, including *Lettres critiques d’un voyageur anglais* and *Abrégé d’histoire universelle pour la direction des jeunes gens qui commencent cette étude*, in addition to the religious tracts traditionally expected of theologians. He had all the makings of a strong supporter of Enlightenment and enlightened orthodoxy and, up until the publication of d’Alembert’s article on Geneva, he was just this.

While the theological changes to the Academy, and the underlying pedagogical revolution these changes signalled, were among the most important reforms made to the Academy in the early eighteenth century, they were far from being the only changes made. The Academy also became more locally oriented and less focused on exporting Reformed ministers. While close to eighty percent of students in the seventeenth century came from outside of Geneva, by 1725, Genevans comprised just over fifty percent of the student body population. These students received a far more well-rounded education than their seventeenth-century counterparts. With the addition of several new academic chairs, the Academy broadened to become more than a seminary: in 1722, two chairs of law were established, in 1724, a regular chair of mathematics was approved, a chair of experimental physics followed in 1737, and then civil history in 1739. For a brief period of time in the mid-1750s, the Academy also boasted a professor of medicine, though that chair was ultimately allowed to lapse under pressure from Geneva’s competing Faculté de Médecine. Turretin and Vernet were not the only ministers who wanted to see changes in the church and Academy. The Compagnie des Pasteurs, which was comprised of ministers and was responsible for governing the Academy (with input from the city’s Council of 200), fully supported and encouraged the Academy’s transformation into a liberal arts institution in the eighteenth century.²⁵

Changes at the Academy accompanied broader changes in how Calvinism was practiced in Geneva. As with Edinburgh, Geneva’s ministers never formally challenged any aspect of Calvinism, which is most likely why many scholars assume that Calvinism did not evolve much over time. Although there were no official doctrinal changes, through a variety of big and small actions, ministers showed that they had in fact diverged from sixteenth-century Calvinism.²⁶

Though the actual order and contents of the worship service were unchanged from the services established by Calvin, ministers did make alterations to elements of the worship service in the eighteenth century. Sermons, which had once lasted for well over an hour, now barely took forty five minutes, and their subject matter was substantially altered.²⁷ The devil, an important character in the fire and brimstone Calvinist sermon of the sixteenth and seventeenth centuries, was rarely, if ever mentioned by ministers in eighteenth-century sermons. Turretin went further than simply eliminating the devil from his work, noting that it was absurd to believe that “God hath formed the greatest part of mankind in order to consign them to eternal misery.”²⁸

The theory of original sin was also de-emphasized, a change that is reflected in how

²⁴ Klauber, 134.

²⁵ For more information about the Academy developing into a civic institution, see Michael Heyd, “The Geneva Academy in the Eighteenth Century: A Calvinist Seminary or a Civic University,” in *The University and the City: From Medieval Origins to the Present*.

²⁶ Linda Kirk, “Going Soft: Genevan Decadence in the Eighteenth Century,” in *The Identity of Geneva: The Christian Commonwealth 1564-1864*, eds. John B. Roney and Martin I. Klauber (Westport, CT, Greenwood, 1998), 148.

²⁷ Andrew Le Mercier, *The Church in Geneva in Five Books* (Boston: 1732), 210.

²⁸ Jean- Alphonse Turretin, *Dissertations on Natural Theology* (Belfast: 1777), 14.

ministers referred to children during worship services. In sixteenth and seventeenth-century sermons, children were described as sinful (a product of original sin), whereas by the eighteenth century, they were shown to be inherently innocent and naturally moral and good.²⁹ In 1762, Genevan citizen Jean-Louis du Pan acknowledged this shift, writing that while he had been taught “that Jesus Christ came to save us from the punishment for original sin,” this teaching could no longer be heard in Geneva’s churches.³⁰ Though Geneva could hardly be called confessionally pluralistic, the city was also becoming more tolerant. Beginning in 1711, the town council and Compagnie allowed for an Anglican worship service, and several year later they also allowed Lutheran worship services. Genevan leaders still forbade Catholic Mass from being celebrated within the city, but even these small nods towards religious toleration made by the ministers and civic leaders would have seemed inconceivable in the sixteenth and seventeenth centuries. Even more inconceivable in the early post-Reformation period was the idea that the leaders and ministers of Geneva would enthusiastically welcome a lapsed Catholic who openly lived with a woman who was not his wife (and was, in fact, his niece) into their fold. But this is what happened when Voltaire and his mistress, Madame Denis, were welcomed into Geneva in 1755.

Part Two: Voltaire’s Theatricals

Scholars have repeatedly suggested that Geneva, with its “austere” Calvinism and lack of many of the entertainments that Voltaire was known to enjoy, was an odd choice of residence for the philosophe.³¹ But, as has been shown, mid-eighteenth century Geneva was no longer the city of Calvin. Besides being more religiously tolerant than has been generally acknowledged, Genevan citizens and leaders also went out of their way to make Voltaire comfortable in their city. From the first day of his arrival, when city leaders did the unprecedented by allowing the city gates to remain open past the appointed hour in order to accommodate Voltaire’s travel schedule, Voltaire was treated as a distinguished and most welcome visitor.³² Genevans wanted him to stay and did their utmost to keep him and Madame Denis happy. As a Catholic, even if only nominally so, Voltaire was forbidden from buying property in the republic. With the help of the Tronchin brothers, though, Voltaire was granted a long-term lease on a house in the northern part of the city, which he would ultimately name “Les Délices.”³³ The Tronchin “tribe” as Voltaire referred to them (the brothers Tronchin, Jean-Robert and François, as well as their cousin Theodore) were especially welcoming, and hosted frequent dinners for Voltaire and Madame Denis to introduce them to Genevan society.³⁴ Not all city leaders were enthusiastic about Voltaire and Denis, though. Voltaire had a well-earned reputation for being critical of organized religion, which concerned some of the older civic and religious leaders. Jacob Vernet,

²⁹ Philip Rieder, “Les Enfants de la Chaire...ou ces chers Enfants. Être Enfant à Genève au XVIIIe siècle,” *Revue de Vieux Genève* (Geneva: 1994), 23-24.

³⁰ Jean-Louis du Pan, *Miscellaneous Writings*, Bibliothèque de Genève, Mss. Suppl., 1540, f. 59.

³¹ See, for example, Jean-Daniel Condaux, “Voltaire contre Genève: les stratégies d’un combat pour le théâtre,” *Voltaire et ses combats*, vol. I, ed. Ulla Kölving and Christiane Mervaud (Oxford: Voltaire Foundation, 1997), 151.

³² François-Marie d’Arouet Voltaire, *Correspondence and Related Documents*, ed. Theodore Besterman, (Geneva: Institut et musée Voltaire, 1972), Letter 3929. There is some irony in this, as Rousseau was famously locked out of the city gates as a teenager. Having his intellectual enemy accorded rights that he, as a citizen, did not receive must have rankled.

³³ Voltaire, *Correspondence*, Letter 3970.

³⁴ Davidson, 20.

who believed himself to be a good friend to Voltaire advised the philosophe to curry the favor of those Calvinist traditionalists who worried about Voltaire's supposed irreligion. Vernet urged Voltaire to distance himself from the "works of his youth" that were critical of religion and further suggested that Voltaire outwardly adopt (or at least not intentionally criticize) Vernet's brand of enlightened orthodoxy.³⁵ Outside of this piece of advice, though, Voltaire was welcomed to the city.

In the beginning, Voltaire was enchanted by Geneva. Not long after settling into his new home at Les Délices, Voltaire penned an ode to his new city, praising the beauty of Geneva and its "noble liberty."³⁶ Voltaire had found a much-needed refuge in Geneva. The city that welcomed Voltaire with open arms is the Geneva that is described so glowingly by Rousseau and (in time) d'Alembert--the Geneva of possibilities and republican values, the Geneva that the philosophes thought the rest of Europe would do well to emulate. Geneva occupied a special place in the imagination of (primarily French) philosophers. Often presented as having an ideal form of government or society, Geneva was frequently used as a dramatic foil for France. Until the debate caused by the d'Alembert article, Voltaire had little reason to critique this rosy view of Geneva, especially once it became clear that he would be able to (unofficially) take part in one of his favorite past times.

Voltaire's known love of the stage was a concern for city leaders even before he arrived. How would Voltaire adjust to living in a city where the stage, including private theatricals, was banned? When he formally applied for permission to live in Geneva, Voltaire attempted to reassure the city leaders, promising, via J-R Tronchin, that he would respect the wishes of the Compagnie and would never seek to stage theatricals for large crowds in his home.³⁷ Voltaire was granted permission to live in Geneva on February 1, 1755. Within a few months of moving into their new home, though, Voltaire and Madame Denis were hosting performances in their recently renovated private theatre.

The beginning of Voltaire's illicit private theatricals marked a pivotal moment in Genevan theatre history. It was not, however, as some have claimed, the beginning of that history. Voltaire did not lure Genevans to the stage or encourage within them a "taste for the theatre" that would not be satisfied until Geneva had its own theatre.³⁸ In the aftermath of the d'Alembert article, many Genevans, including Jacob Vernet and Jean-Jacques Rousseau, would argue that this was exactly what happened. Without Voltaire, so this narrative goes, Geneva would have remained a city without a theatre, and Genevans would have maintained their irreproachable morality. The facts, though, do not support this narrative. Certainly, Voltaire's theatricals and, ultimately d'Alembert's article, provided the impetus to have a full, city-wide debate about the morality of the stage, but this does not in any way mean that theatre was absent from eighteenth-century Geneva.

³⁵ "La seule chose (je vous le dirai librement en vertu du titre d'ami dont vous m'honorez) la seule chose qui a un peu troublé la satisfaction générale de voir arriver parmi nous un homme aussi célèbre que vous l'êtes, c'est l'idée que des ouvrages de jeunesse ont donnée au public de vos sentiments sur le fond même de la religion, quoique des ouvrages d'un âge mûr semblent s'en prendre aux abus de la religion." Letter from J. Vernet to Voltaire, February 8, 1755, Voltaire's Correspondence, Letter 6146. [All translations are my own, unless otherwise indicated]

³⁶ Theodore Besterman, Appendix to *Correspondence*, 148.

³⁷ Voltaire, "declarent qu'il ne permettra pas qu'on represente dans sa maison devant dix personnes une piece pleine de morale...si cela deplait a la compagnie." Quoted in Margaret Moffat, *Rousseau et la querelle du théâtre au XVIIIe siècle*, (Paris: E. de Boccard, 1930), 62-63.

³⁸ Gargett, 108.

Despite being officially banned as part of city-wide sumptuary ordinances in 1617, by the early eighteenth century, private theatricals were regularly staged in Geneva.³⁹ By 1730, members of the Genevan patriciate regularly attended private theatricals, and made several attempts to have a legal, public theatre established within the city boundaries. Frequent travel to France, and perhaps even a desire to emulate French fashions, had exposed citizens to the pleasures of the stage; they did not want to travel so far to enjoy the newest plays. In April 1737, Jean Du Pan made a speech before the Council of 200, urging them to consider allowing a theatre to be established because, “despite the prejudice” Genevans had against the stage, it was “much more successful than austere sermons” at “correct[ing]...bad habits.” Plays could inspire audience members to behave better and, as Du Pan reminded the council, having a legal theatre would also increase tourism in the city (it was often cited that foreigners preferred to stay in Lausanne instead of Geneva because of the former’s lax stance on the theatre and other amusements).⁴⁰ The council did not follow Du Pan’s suggestion, but later actions suggest that the council members were beginning to change their opinion on the stage. The councils allowed the Mediation of 1737 to be celebrated with a theatrical performance put on by traveling actors from Lyons.⁴¹ More public performances were permitted in 1739, which again seems to indicate that, at the very least, the council was becoming more amenable to the idea of a civic theatre. Had there been no outside intervention on the issue of the theatre, it is likely that the Genevan councils would have eventually agreed to a public theatre.⁴²

Although he assured council members and ministers that he had no intentions of disobeying the laws regarding the stage, Voltaire wasted little time in setting up his own private stage at Les Délices. It is unclear if Voltaire intended to antagonize local officials with this action. On the one hand, he did explicitly promise not to establish a theatre in his home, but as has been noted private theatricals were a normal part of Genevan social life by 1755 and, by and large, citizens who staged these private performances were not censured or otherwise penalized. Vernet had told him upon his arrival to give the appearance of complying with Genevan law and custom. Perhaps Voltaire thought that in publicly pledging to abstain from the theatre, he was doing just that. Whatever the reasoning behind the decision, by the spring of 1755, the theatre at Les Délices was fully functional and proving to be a very popular diversion for the local patriciate. In a letter from Charles-Benjamin de Langes de Montmirail, Baron de Lubieres (a member of the Genevan patriciate who would go on to serve on the Council of 200), written to his niece, Marie-Charlotte Saldin, he writes,

“Madame Denis has given us the great pleasure of comedy by establishing a small theatre in one of the galleries at the St. Jean house [the original name of Les Délices], and, under the direction of Monsieur de Voltaire, has formed a cast, in which there are several Cramers [a wealthy Genevan family involved in printing many of Voltaire’s books whilst he was in Geneva], who are going to premiere

³⁹ Gargett, 110.

⁴⁰ Excerpt from Jean Du Pan’s speech: “Le Théâtre, malgré le préjugé que l’on a contre, est tellement épuré, qu’il châtie et corrige en badinant les mauvaises habitudes et les ridicules, avec beaucoup plus de succès que les Prédications les plus austères...Elle attirera ici les Etrangers en plus grand nombre et qui resteront aussi plus longtemps parmi nous.” As quoted in Michel Launay’s *Jean-Jacques Rousseau écrivain politique 1712-1762*, (Cannes: CEL Grenoble, 1971), 50.

⁴¹ For more information about the Mediation of 1737, read Sir Francis d’Ivernois’s *Tableau historique et politique des deux dernières révolutions de Genève* (London: 1789).

⁴² Condaux, 152.

Alzire, which we will test here before sending to your theatre.”⁴³

Not only were plays being staged at Les Délices, but Voltaire had also begun to use his private theatre to preview newly composed plays before sending them abroad to be performed more widely. Little is known about the set-up of the theatre at Les Délices. Some records indicate that Les Délices could accommodate up to two hundred audience members, but outside of this, not much else is known about the theatre space. We do know more, though, about who comprised the audience. In addition to traveling intellectuals who would stop by to pay homage, Voltaire regularly entertained both Genevan patricians and ministers. In the spring of 1755, Voltaire wrote to a friend that “most of the gentlemen” from the Council of Geneva came to Les Délices for a dramatic reading of Voltaire’s *Zaire* by the celebrated French actor Lekain. This reading was so powerful that most of the audience was moved to tears, prompting Voltaire to note that “Calvinists had never before been so tender.”⁴⁴

Gaining the approval of the council and some ministers, however, did not put Voltaire entirely beyond the reach of the Consistory, the body responsible for enforcing community moral standards and meting out church discipline. On July 31, 1755, less than six months after his arrival, Voltaire’s theatre was a central topic at the weekly Consistory meeting. Consistory records indicate that “Voltaire [was] preparing to have tragedies performed at his home at Saint Jean” with local Genevans standing in as actors. The consistory feared he would attempt to “establish a theatre” within the city unless an “energetic intervention” was staged.⁴⁵ The intervention, which amounted to nothing more than a slap on the wrist for Voltaire, did not dissuade him from continuing to stage his theatricals. And there really was no reason for him to discontinue his performances, because in 1755 and 1756, Voltaire seemed destined to win his fight to stage theatricals.

In 1756, the stage was on the rise: ministers attended private theatricals at Voltaire’s home (and, perhaps, the homes of other Genevans), the council had shown itself willing to bend the rules on the theatre, and, most importantly, Genevans gave all appearances that they wanted a legal, public theatre. The removal of all (or most) restrictions on the stage would have been a likely next step for ministers and council members in the late 1750s. Perhaps this would have happened naturally, but d’Alembert’s article forced the issue. Voltaire and d’Alembert thought Geneva was the ideal moderate city, with enlightened, progressive ministers who supported Voltaire’s attempts to bring the stage to Geneva. They were wrong. In the aftermath of the article on Geneva, ministers, threatened by an outsider’s characterization of their faith, needed a way to effectively prove their Calvinist orthodoxy. Backtracking on the theatre was an effective way to do this; as in Edinburgh, the theatre would become a religious proving ground.

⁴³ Letter from Charles-Benjamin de Langes de Montmirail, Baron de Lubieres to Marie-Charlotte Saldin, July 20, 1755. Original text reads: “Madame Denis nous donnera le plaisir de la comedie elle fait établir un petit théâtre dans une des galeries de sa maison de Saint Jean, et, avec une troupe qui se forme sous les yeux de M. de Voltaire, et dans laquelle il y a beaucoup de Cramer, ils vont debuter par *Alzire*, et puis nous donnerons une nouvelle piece, dont on fera un essai ici, avant de l’envoyer a votre theatre.”

⁴⁴ Voltaire, *Correspondence*, Letter to d’Argentals, April 2, 1755, Letter 6229. “Nous n’ayons fait pleurer presque tout le Conseil de Genève; la plupart de ces messieurs étaient venus à mes Délices, nous nous mêmes à jouer Zayre pour interrompre le cercle....jamais les calvinistes n’ont été si tendres.”

⁴⁵ Records of the Genevan Consistory, Archives d’Etat de Genève, 7/31/1755, 45. “Voltaire, se dispose a faire jouer des Tragedies chez lui a Saint Jean, et qu’une partie des acteurs qui les representent sont des particuliers de cette ville, qu’on ajoute qu’il fait établir un Theatre.”

Part Three: The d’Alembert Crisis

d’Alembert spent the summer of 1756 with Voltaire in Geneva. During this time, he met many prominent Genevan citizens, spoke with ministers about faith and religious practice, accessed the city’s records, and had the opportunity to observe daily life in Geneva. When he returned to France, he set about writing the entry on Geneva for the seventh volume of the *Encyclopédie*. The length of the article, a full 5,082 words, highlights how much the philosophes idealized (idolized?) the tiny republic. In comparison, the entry on France was a mere 786 words in length. d’Alembert’s Geneva is a near-perfect city, with a strong government, equitable laws, and an involved citizenry. It also boasted something d’Alembert found to be rather novel: a pastoral corps possessed of “exemplary morals.”

d’Alembert found much to approve of in Geneva’s ministers and their religious beliefs and practices. Unlike ministers in other countries who “persecute each other, and accuse each other in unseemly fashion,” d’Alembert found that Geneva’s pastors worked “in great concord” with each other. This is not to say, though, that the ministers always agreed with each other, but rather that they had learned how to politely disagree. Consequently, Genevan ministers held a variety of theological beliefs, some of which pushed the boundaries of Calvinist orthodoxy. d’Alembert claimed that some ministers “no longer believe[d] in the divinity of Jesus Christ,” that others believed damnation and Hell to be inconsequential, and still other clergymen thought that only those passages in the Bible that could be reconciled with “humanity and reason” should be followed. These were ministers who understood the importance of moderation in all things, including faith. The harsh actions of Calvin, and particularly his decision to burn Servetus at the stake, were understood to be “reprehensible.” d’Alembert heartily approved. So much so, in fact, that he did not think the ministers should even be considered Calvinists anymore (because what enlightened individual would want that?). No, the ministers of Geneva had “no other religion than a perfect Socinianism.”⁴⁶

The claim that Genevan ministers were Socinians was outlandish, but nearly all of d’Alembert’s other claims about eighteenth-century Genevan Calvinism were well founded: it was true that Geneva’s ministers worked well with each other, and they certainly were no longer embroiled in the petty scholastic and theological debates of the seventeenth century.⁴⁷ The ministers had also rejected many of the harsher aspects of Calvinism, and in the matter of Servetus, were willing to concede that Calvin’s decision to execute him was a “stain” on both Calvin’s life and the history of Geneva.⁴⁸

d’Alembert’s more specific comments about theology could also be found in easily accessible sermons and religious writings. His argument, for example, that Geneva’s ministers no longer insisted on the necessity of revelation, was supported by Jacob Vernet’s own treatises on religion. In his *Traité de la vérité de la religion chrétienne* (1740), Vernet insisted that revelation was a fundamental aspect of faith, but he tempered this assertion--and essentially rendered revelation impossible--by outlining the five characteristics of “true revelation.” In

⁴⁶ d’Alembert, “Genève.” d’Alembert’s entire article can be found in Appendix C.

⁴⁷ See above section on the changes to Geneva’s Academy.

⁴⁸ Quoted in an anonymous letter published in the *Mercure suisse* on May 30, 1757. Original text reads indicates that the execution of Servetus was “une tache à notre histoire et une tache à la vie de Calvin.” There is reason to believe that this letter was written by either Jacob Vernes or Jacob Vernet. For an explanation of the debate over authorship, see Gargett, 128-130.

order to be true, revelation must not contradict reason, must not contradict itself, must reinforce “the natural light of divine things,” strengthen natural reason, and be accompanied by “visible signs, such as prophecies and miracles.”⁴⁹ Vernet does not reject revelation out of hand, as d’Alembert seems to imply many ministers had done, but he does expect revelation to be subject to serious scrutiny before being accepted as true.

Despite d’Alembert representing the faith of Geneva in the most accurate way he could, the article scandalized Geneva’s ministers, because while d’Alembert got the particulars of Geneva’s faith right, his interpretation of these changes was all wrong. For d’Alembert, the changes to Calvinism were positive and encouraging because they signalled that Calvinism (and perhaps religion more generally) was on the wane. d’Alembert represents Calvinist orthodoxy--which he equates to Calvinism as originally established and practiced by Calvin--as static and unchanging. Any diversion from this orthodoxy, then, is a move away from “true” Calvinism. Geneva’s ministers, though, had a very different understanding of orthodoxy. For them, orthodoxy was dynamic and was responsive to the changing needs of society. This was part of the Calvinist tradition--as Philip Benedict has shown, Calvinism was a multi-voiced confession that was able to adapt to local circumstances, so it is almost impossible to speak of a single Calvinist orthodoxy.⁵⁰ What constituted orthodoxy varied by place, changed over time, and was subject to debate. Ministers in eighteenth-century Geneva played an active role in determining what practices and ideas would constitute orthodoxy, and ministers had discretion to determine what they emphasized or de-emphasized in their sermons and while carrying out other ministerial duties. This is not to say that anything was permissible; checks were built into the Genevan church to ensure that ministers did not venture too far outside the bounds of propriety. The Compagnie des pasteurs, for example, censured ministers who did not successfully comply with accepted practices and beliefs. But what was considered acceptable by the Compagnie and the rest of Geneva’s ministers changed over time. d’Alembert did not acknowledge this aspect of Calvinism, which is really the problem with his article. d’Alembert was right to note that Calvinism had changed in Geneva, but change and orthodoxy were not incompatible.

In the aftermath of the article’s publication, Geneva’s ministers were confronted with two questions: what role did Voltaire play in the “misrepresentation” of their faith, and how were they to repair the damage done? The matter of Voltaire’s involvement was rather straightforward, despite attempts by many leaders, including Vernet, to argue that Voltaire wrote the article himself. d’Alembert lived with Voltaire while he was researching the Geneva article, so it seems certain that Voltaire influenced his views of Geneva. Letters between the two men, though, indicate that the article was entirely composed by d’Alembert. Voltaire clearly enjoyed the article, however, and supported d’Alembert’s claims, writing at one point that the Genevans should thank him for his flattering portrayal of their city and faith.⁵¹ The Genevan ministers disagreed.

Replying to d’Alembert’s claims, Theodore Tronchin, who acted as spokesperson for the city’s ministers, expressed his outrage, noting that d’Alembert was certainly aware of “the

⁴⁹ Original text: “la Révélation ne doit pas être contraire à elle-même;” “la Lumière naturelle à l’égard des choses divines;” and la Révélation doit être accompagnée de signes sensibles, tels que sont les Prophéties et les miracles.” Jacob Vernet, *Traité de la vérité de la religion chrétienne* (1730), 137-147.

⁵⁰ Philip Benedict, *Christ’s Church Purely Reformed: A Social History of Calvinism*, (New Haven: Yale University Press, 2008).

⁵¹ “Je viens de lire et de relire votre excellent article Geneve. Je pense que le conseil et le peuple vous doivent remerciements solennels.” Letter from Voltaire to d’Alembert, Dec 29, 1757, *Correspondence*, Vol. 32, 257-258.

influence of religion in general and Christianity in particular on trust, esteem, and public benevolence.” As such, any claim that Genevans were “not Christians,” argued Tronchin, was both “odious” and “despicable.”⁵² That Tronchin would focus on the issue of Genevans not being Christian is a telling one. He does not dispute the facts, but he does challenge d’Alembert’s assertion that Geneva had abandoned Christianity or Calvinism. After issuing this initial statement, the ministers of Geneva established a commission to respond to d’Alembert’s claims. At the commission’s first meeting on December 23, 1757, though, it became clear that there was no easy or obvious solution to the d’Alembert crisis.

Members of the d’Alembert commission wanted to resolve the crisis quickly, but no one knew how to go about rejecting claims that were almost entirely accurate. Disputing interpretation was a difficult proposition, and one that was hard to explain or make compelling to other Genevans. For his part, d’Alembert was shocked by the article’s reception, as he believed that the ministers supported his “way of thinking” about Genevan faith.⁵³ In the spirit of helping resolve matters, d’Alembert suggested an easy resolution to the problem: have each minister sign off on a pledge that stated, “I believe as an article of faith that the fires of hell are eternal and that Jesus Christ is God [is divine], equal in all things to His father.”⁵⁴ For reasons that are unknown to us today, the ministers would not take the pledge. In the midst of this public outcry, Voltaire wrote to d’Alembert to encourage him and warn him away from printing any type of retraction simply to appease the ministers.⁵⁵ At this point, there was not much cause for Voltaire to worry about d’Alembert; the ministers’ complaints were falling on deaf ears.

On January 20, the d’Alembert commission announced that it had devised a declaration of faith that, while not enthusiastically accepted by all of the commission members, was ultimately approved by the Consistory and Compagnie des Pasteurs. The declaration was a vague document; ministers, for example, went so far as to assert their belief in the need to “listen to what the Divine Master and Spirit say in Scripture.”⁵⁶ This was not a radical declaration of faith. In fact, the ministers did not even definitively assert their belief in the divinity of Christ. The declaration did little to aid the ministers in their quest to refute d’Alembert. Civic officials made a difficult situation for the ministers even worse when they refused to be associated with any actions taken by the ministers.⁵⁷ Council members, well-pleased to have their city described

⁵² “Pardonnez cet effroy à une petite Republique dont le repos, le bonheur, peut etre même l’existence, est incompatible avec la haine ou avec le mepris public. Et qui connoit mieux que vous, Monsieur, l’influence de la Religion en general , et du christianisme en particulier sur la confiance, l’estime, et la bienveillance publique...cette accusation [que nous ne sommes pas chretiens] nous rend odieux à ceux dont malheureusement nous sommes separez et meprisables à ceux à qui nous sommes reunis.” Appendix 191, *Correspondence complete de Jean Jacques Rousseau*, ed. R.A. Leigh (Geneva: Institut et Musee de Voltaire, 1965).

⁵³ On January 15, 1758, d’Alembert restated his position on the article and stood by all that he wrote, noting “j’ai même cru voir que les ministres se faisoient honneur de cette façon de penser.” *Correspondence complete de Jean Jacques Rousseau*, Appendix 195.

⁵⁴ Letter from d’Alembert to Voltaire, January 28, 1758, in Voltaire, *Correspondence*, Letter 7606. Original text reads, “Je soussigné crois comme article de foi, que les peines de l’enfer sont éternelles, et que Jesus-crist est dieu, égal en tout à son père.”

⁵⁵ Voltaire wrote, “Ne vous retractez jamais, et ne paraissez pas ceder a ces miserables en renoncant a l’Encyclopédie.”

⁵⁶ “Nous disons que c’est avec Foi avec une Vénération religieuse avec une entière soumission d’Esprit et de Coeur, qu’il faut écouter ce Divin Maître et le Esprit parlant dans les Ecritures.”

⁵⁷ From the Registres de Compagnie des Pasteurs, 1758, 74, “Monsieur l’ancien Modérateur a encor rapporté que Messieurs les Syndics voulant relire entr’eux nôtre déclaration, la lui avoient fait demander Lundi passé, et l’avoient prié de suspendre toute rèsolution à ce sujet jusqu’a ce qu’ils l’eussent relüe, qu’ensuite Mercredi Monsieur le

in such positive terms, did not understand why the ministers were offended by d'Alembert's article. The ministers were not faring well, and were on the brink of having their concerns completely ignored when two well-timed events occurred: a traveling troupe of actors performed near Geneva, and, more significantly, Jean Jacques Rousseau, the *enfant terrible* of the Enlightenment and sometimes citizen of Geneva, decided to insert himself into the crisis.

In late May, 1758, a comedic acting troupe set up a makeshift stage in Carouge (a neighborhood just outside of the city of Geneva, but within the canton) and announced their intention to perform plays for several weeks.⁵⁸ This was not the best time to set up shop in Geneva. Beyond the ministerial strife occasioned by d'Alembert's article, the local economy was not faring well.⁵⁹ In a letter to a friend, Jean Du Pan wrote that the watch factory, a major Genevan employer, was "languishing," leaving workers with "less money" for theatre attendance.⁶⁰ In an effort to draw in a larger crowd, the actors courted scandal by performing a play that mocked Geneva's pastors. Under normal circumstances, the ministers would have allowed this outside attack to go unremarked. The play was not especially well-written and did not attract large crowds; there was no real need to condemn the actors or make a fuss. In the spring of 1758, though, the ministers were not feeling magnanimous. They had spent much of the winter and early spring defending their piety, only to have local government officials abandon them and then traveling actors attack them. The presence of the acting troupe gave the ministers an opportunity to revive the d'Alembert controversy, though this time they did not address the issue of their piety (perhaps they recognized that fight had been lost), but focused instead on another section of d'Alembert's article.

d'Alembert believed Geneva to be a model city in many regards, but he thought it could be improved. He was frustrated that "no theater [wa]s permitted in Geneva," even as he recognized that the reason the stage was forbidden was because "it [was] feared that troops of actors would spread the taste for adornment, dissipation, and loose morals among the youth." While d'Alembert respected these concerns, he also believed that Geneva could impose laws that strictly regulated "the conduct of the actors." If Geneva but treated actors "exactly like other citizens, the city would soon enjoy the advantage of having a company of honorable actors, something that [is] believe[d] to be so rare." By reforming actors and actresses, Geneva would create an honorable acting troupe and remedy one of their only city-wide deficiencies. Because while d'Alembert believed Geneva possessed the "wisdom of Sparta," he found that her citizens lacked the "delicacy of tact and...subtlety of feeling" that could only be gained by frequent theatre attendance. More than exposing citizens to the arts, though, a theatre would entice foreigners (and their money) to the city. As it was, "many Frenchmen [found] a stay in Geneva [to be] depressing because they are deprived of seeing plays."⁶¹

Most of d'Alembert's arguments in favor of the stage, particularly his assertion that the

premier Syndic la lui avoit remise en disant que le Conseil n'avoit pas jugé à propos de la lire, et qu'en conséquence il ne vouloit pas y être nommé"

⁵⁸ Because the play was performed outside of the city walls, this did not violate anti-theatre laws. Genevans attending the play, though, could have been subject to fines/sanctions from the Consistory.

⁵⁹ Although it was doing well enough that these actors believed they would make some money.

⁶⁰ Letter from Jean Du Pan to Madame Freudenreich, May 22, 1758, Bibliotheque publique et universitaire, MS Suppl. 1539, f. 179. Du Pan writes, "Les comidiens qui étoient l'année dernière à carouge y sont revenus depuis quinze jours, leur troupe est meilleure, sur tout pour les comedies, mais ils ne feront pas trop bien leurs affaires, on a moins de curiosité, la fabrique d'horlogerie languit un peu à cause de la guerre, les ouvriers ont moins d'argent, et le parti contraire à la comedie s'est fortifié."

⁶¹ "d'Alembert, "Geneve."

theatre would act as a civilizing influence by teaching a “delicacy of tact” and “subtlety of feeling,” were standard pro-theatre claims. These arguments had been made by nearly all early modern supporters of the stage, including Edinburgh’s gentlemen ministers who had been embroiled in their own theatre debate just a few months earlier. What made d’Alembert’s argument different was his insistence that the exemplary morality of Genevan citizens made them well-suited to reforming the stage and, more importantly, actors and actresses. d’Alembert recognized that the stage could be a sinful place, but he was equally certain that, with the type of wise and enlightened laws for which Geneva was known, a new, moral era of the theatre could begin.

When the article on Geneva was initially published in late 1757, this section on the theatre garnered very little attention from Genevans. The ministers were much more concerned about d’Alembert’s religious claims, and, as has been shown in this chapter, the theatre was not a very contentious issue in eighteenth-century Geneva. The theatre was illegal, but private theatricals were tolerated and easily accessible. Once it was clear that their outrage over being characterized as overseeing the dismantling of Calvinism was not going to go anywhere, however, the ministers set their sights on the stage. Early modern Calvinist ministers had a history of attacking the morality of the stage whenever they felt as though their faith was threatened, so the decision of the Genevan ministers to do the same in 1758 was historically well-founded.⁶² The presence of the acting troupe, particularly a troupe that went out of their way to mock the faith of Geneva, presented ministers with an opportunity to reframe the d’Alembert debate in a way more favorable to themselves, and also allowed them to do so in a way that strengthened their claims to be orthodox Calvinists. It had proven nearly impossible to rally people to their cause when that cause was solely theological. The theatre, though, allowed the ministers to latch on to something a bit more salacious and more readily understandable. The publication of Jean-Jacques Rousseau’s *Letter to d’Alembert* in the late summer of 1758 provided additional support as the ministers pivoted to focus their ire on d’Alembert’s claims about the stage.

Rousseau, who famously identified as a “citizen of Geneva,” was appalled by d’Alembert’s suggestion that Geneva needed a public theatre. Unlike many other anti-theatre writers of the period, Rousseau did not believe the theatre to be an inherently evil institution. Given the specific local circumstances and history of Geneva, however, Rousseau argued that the establishment of a legal, public theatre would destroy all that was good and unique about Geneva. Rousseau found much to admire in d’Alembert’s claims about Geneva’s exceptionalism, and went so far as to note that there was “much to commend” in d’Alembert’s work. The article on Geneva actually echoed many claims that Rousseau had made in his own writings.⁶³ Rousseau’s great love of Geneva was what drove him to write the response to d’Alembert. As a Frenchman, d’Alembert could not be expected to understand how the establishment of a theatre would dismantle all that he claimed to admire about Geneva.

Rousseau believed that large cities, which were “full of scheming, idle people without

⁶² See chapters 1 and 2.

⁶³ Rousseau, for example, had also commended Geneva’s size, the patriotic zeal of its citizenry, and love of moderation. In fact, Rousseau found that “the more [he] reflect[ed] upon your[Geneva’s] political and civil situation, the less [he was] capable of imagining that the nature of human affairs could admit of a better one.” Jean-Jacques Rousseau, *The Basic Political Writings*, ed. and transl. Donald Cress (Indianapolis: Hackett Publishing, 1987), 29.

religion or principle,” were great places for theatres.⁶⁴ In these cities--cities like Paris and London, for example--where temptation lurked around every corner, the theatre prevented residents from getting into a worse sort of mischief. Theatres should be built and attendance encouraged in these locations. Geneva, full as it was of honest, hardworking folk (at least in Rousseau’s mind), had no need of such amusements. Were a theatre to be established in Geneva, Rousseau predicted four major catastrophes: the destruction of the Genevan economy, the end of transparency in Geneva, the rise of women, and the decline of republican morality.

Rousseau understood Geneva to be an industrious small city where “everyone is busy, everyone is moving, everyone is about his work and his affairs.” Genevans could not rely on the land to support them (there not being much in the way of arable land within the confines of Geneva), and so the city “support[ed] itself only by dint of labour.”⁶⁵ Relying on their own hard work to support themselves had made Genevans austere and disdainful of unnecessary luxuries, both admirable traits in Rousseau’s mind. A theatre, which was necessarily the “amusement of the idle” would cause workers to abandon their jobs (or work less) and ruin the labor-based Genevan economy. More than that, it would bankrupt the small city. Through a series of speculations and calculations, Rousseau demonstrated the economic infeasibility of the stage, arguing that “it [was] absolutely impossible to support a theatre at Geneva with the sole participation of the spectators.”⁶⁶ The state would have to subsidize the stage, which would mean reducing spending somewhere else. The theatre, therefore, was bad for Geneva because of the economics of the stage.

The theatre was also problematic because it undermined one of the qualities Rousseau most admired about Geneva: its transparency. In the dedicatory epistle for his *Discourse on Inequality* (1754), Rousseau notes that, in an ideal republic (which Geneva represents), citizens are all “known to one another.” In knowing everyone, and being known to everyone else, the citizen is able to live a transparent, free life. This keeps society honest and virtuous because “neither the secret machinations of vice, nor the modesty of virtue [are] able to escape the notice and judgment of the public.”⁶⁷ The theatre would end all of this since the talent of an actor, according to Rousseau, was “the art of counterfeiting himself, of putting on another character than his own, of appearing different than he is, of becoming passionate in cold blood, of saying what he does not think as naturally as if he really did think it, and, finally, of forgetting his own place by dint of taking another’s.”⁶⁸ A society could not maintain transparency if some of its citizens were professional liars.

Most worrying to Rousseau, though, if the number of pages he devotes to the issue is any indication, was his belief that the theatre would allow “women to make us[men] into women.”⁶⁹ Rousseau thought that men and women should “live separated ordinarily” and only come together on (very) rare occasions. He favored the Genevan practice of *cercles*, which were similar to French salons in purpose (discussing ideas and staying current on the news of the day), but differed in one significant way. *Cercles* were entirely male, which meant that participants were exempt “from having to lower their ideas to the range of women and to clothe reason in

⁶⁴ Jean-Jacques Rousseau, *Letter to D’Alembert on the Theatre*, transl. and ed. Allan Bloom (Ithaca: Cornell University Press, 1960), 59.

⁶⁵ *Ibid.*, 93.

⁶⁶ *Ibid.*, 97.

⁶⁷ Rousseau, *Basic Political Writings*, 29.

⁶⁸ Rousseau, *Letter to d’Alembert*. 79.

⁶⁹ *Ibid.*, 100.

gallantry.”⁷⁰ The theatre, however, would encourage men and women to socialize together on a regular basis. As a result, men would change their manners to make themselves more agreeable to their female companions. Men would also lose their vigor and become more concerned with sounding polished than being honest.⁷¹ Rousseau did not want to see Geneva emasculated in such a way.

But the theatre could only lead to the ruination of all that was good in Geneva and eventually would even destroy the foundations of the city’s republican government. Rousseau predicted the following progression,

“The two sexes meeting daily in the same place; the groups which will be formed by going there; the ways of life that they will see depicted in the theatre, which they will be eager to imitate; the exposition of the ladies all tricked out in their best and put on display in the boxes as though they were in the window of a shop waiting for buyers; the affluence of the handsome young who will come to show themselves off, for their part, and who will soon find it much nicer to caper in the theatre than to exercise on the Plain-Palais; the little suppers with women which will be arranged on leaving, even if they are only with the actresses; finally, the contempt for the old practices which will result from the adoption of the new ones, all of this will soon put the agreeable life of Paris and the fine airs of France in the place of our old simplicity; and I rather doubt that Parisians in Geneva will long preserve the taste for our government.”⁷²

Geneva would become Paris and all would be lost. In all of the explanations as to why the theatre would be so detrimental to Geneva, Rousseau does not argue that the stage would compromise the faith of Genevans (though it is, perhaps, implied). Though the *Letter to d’Alembert* was not a religious tract, Geneva’s ministers were pleased to have someone support their cause. Their willingness to adopt many of Rousseau’s moral arguments against the stage, though, highlights how desperate the ministers were to refute d’Alembert. Despite his occasional claims to the contrary, Rousseau was hardly a model Calvinist.

Determining Rousseau’s faith is a complicated undertaking. Officially, Rousseau was a Calvinist when he penned the *Letter* in 1758; this was a relatively new state of affairs, though. Not long after leaving Geneva at the age of sixteen in 1728, Rousseau converted to Catholicism, a move that stripped him of his rights to Genevan citizenship. In 1754, for a number of reasons, including a desire to lay claim to an inheritance, Rousseau returned to Geneva, re-converted (unconverted?), and was once again a Calvinist. His written works, however, raise questions as to the sincerity and consistency of his faith. Rousseau was not a theologian, and certainly made no claims to have a systematic approach to theology. When reading through the *Letter*, one has to wonder how many of his comments about faith were written with the purpose of flattering the ministers of his beloved Geneva. In an early section of the *Letter*, for example, he states that he is “disinclined” to agree with Socinianism and is appalled that d’Alembert would accuse Geneva’s ministers of complying with this set of beliefs. One sentence prior to this condemnation, though, he noted he did not actually “know what Socinianism [was].”⁷³

⁷⁰ Ibid, 105.

⁷¹ Ibid. Much of these arguments can be traced to the first discourse.

⁷² Ibid, 111.

⁷³ Ibid, 11.

Rousseau then goes on to make, in many ways, a more radical argument than d'Alembert did about the faith of Geneva's ministers. Other than disputing the charge of Socinianism, Rousseau does not appear to contest any of d'Alembert's claims about ministerial piety. He notes that he is not "scandalized that those who serve a merciful God reject eternal punishment," and then pushes beyond d'Alembert when he questions the authenticity of the bible (though "no one is more filled than [he] with love and respect for the most sublime of all books"), and ultimately argues that temporal authorities have no right to judge the faith of others.⁷⁴ This was far from a stinging rejection of d'Alembert, but the ministers were willing to overlook this in exchange for Rousseau's support on the theatre issue.

Several of Geneva's ministers wrote to Rousseau after the *Letter* was published to praise him for his timely and well-written defense of their faith and civic culture. Jean Sarasin (1693-1760), a veteran minister, praised Rousseau for the service he had done their common homeland by "showing all the...danger of some people's project to establish a theatre in" Geneva.⁷⁵ Daniel de Rouchemont (1720-1769), a younger pastor, overcome by a patriotic zeal inspired by the *Letter*, wrote that Rousseau had inspired all Republican souls with his "patriotic spirit" and "love of liberty."⁷⁶ Not all pastors were unequivocal in their support of Rousseau and his *Letter*. Jean Perdriau, though pleased with the overall defense of Genevan morals, was wary that some of Rousseau's other comments might provoke the wrong sort of reaction. Perdriau specifically referenced Rousseau's praise of Genevan *cercles*, noting that "the *cercles* might not be as positive as you[Rousseau] thought."⁷⁷ Rousseau described the *cercles* as incubators of male virtue, but the Church had a different interpretation. Religious and civil authorities had actually been trying to restrict the activities of the *cercles*, which were understood to be hotbeds of anti-patriotic action, for several years.⁷⁸

The question of the *cercles* was a small concern relative to the rest of Rousseau's claims about Genevan culture, politics, and faith. Much of what Rousseau wrote simply was not true. Letters written between ministers and Rousseau show that the ministers were well aware that some of Rousseau's claims were not based in reality. Theodore Tronchin, wrote to Rousseau and told him very bluntly that, "this land, my good friend, is not what you imagine."⁷⁹ In spite of these factual issues, Geneva's ministers were comfortable allowing Rousseau to be their voice on the issue of the stage. And his was a powerful voice to have. Rousseau's strong patriotic fervor, when coupled with the idealized version of Geneva he described in his writings, tapped into pre-existing tensions within the city, and ultimately allowed the ministers to discredit

⁷⁴ Ibid, 10-15.

⁷⁵ Letter to Rousseau, 4 November, 1758, *Correspondence*, Letter 726. "Vous venés, Monsieur, de rendre un service signalé à notre commune Patrie, en vous élevant aussi solidement et aussi fortement que vous l'avez fait contre la fureur des spectacles, et en montrant tout le ridicule et le danger du projet qu'ont formé certaines personnes d'établir un Théâtre dans cette ville."

⁷⁶ Letter to Rousseau, November 10, 1758, *Correspondence*, Letter 251. "Mon cher Compatriote...Il faut que tout instinct moral de la belle nature soit entièrement mort chez lui...s'il y a encore quelque étincelle d'Esprit Patriotique, de vertu male, et d'amour de la liberté, elle doit s'allumer au feu de vos discours...Depuis le peu de tems que votre Livre est répandu, on sent qu'il travaille dans toutes les Ames Républicaines."

⁷⁷ Letter to Rousseau, November 15, 1758, *Correspondence*, Letter 737. "Je ne croyés pas que ces Cercles aient autant de bons cotés que vous pensés."

⁷⁸ Gargett, 156.

⁷⁹ Letter to Rousseau, *Correspondence*, Letter 734. "Cette patrie, mon bon ami, n'est pas ce que vous imaginez. Par un effet de cette loy generale qui fait que tout degenere, ces amusements publics, et ces cercles dont l'institution paroît si bonne, sont une source de distraction, de perte de tems et de dissipation, qui passent les bornes honnetes d'un amusement necessaire, et qui nuisent sensiblement à l'éducation domestique."

d'Alembert.

Eighteenth-century philosophers wrote extensively about the privileges enjoyed by Geneva's citizens and, for the most part, they correctly identified the privileges and rights conferred by citizenship in Geneva. Citizens received a free education, had access to the city library, could vote in city elections, and could serve on the various councils that governed the republic. What is not mentioned, though, is that of a city population of nearly 19,000 people, only 1,500 were citizens in 1750.⁸⁰ Less than 10% of the Genevan population actually enjoyed the political and social rights of citizenship. This represents a significant shift from the late sixteenth-century when citizenship was easily earned and required little more than an agreement to accept the Reformed faith and a personal vow to "consider the public good" before self-interest.⁸¹

When Rousseau's *Letter to d'Alembert* was published in 1758, Genevan residents belonged to one of four groups: citizens, who were the sons of the bourgeois and were born in Geneva; bourgeois, who were the "sons of bourgeois or of citizens but were born in a foreign country, or who are foreigners to whom the magistracy has granted the rights of a bourgeois;" *habitants*, a group that consisted of foreigners granted permission to live in Geneva; and *natifs*, who were the Genevan born children of *habitants*.⁸² All bourgeois and citizens (who were, naturally, all men) belonged to Geneva's General Council. Though the General Council originally had the capacity to initiate legislation and was involved in taxation, by the eighteenth century, members of the General Council simply signed off on a list of preapproved magistrates. The actual governing of Geneva happened in smaller councils--the council of 200 and the council of 25 (also referred to as the small council)--which were comprised entirely of citizens.⁸³ Over the course of the seventeenth century, these councils had become oligarchical. In 1734, there were only 94 different family names in the council of 200 (compared to 176 in 1570). These 94 families governed all aspects of Genevan life. If you were either a *habitant* or a *natif*, even if your family had lived in Geneva for multiple generations, you had no political rights. d'Alembert was very much aware of these socio-political distinctions (it is included in his entry), but, for reasons we can only guess at, he glossed over the problems caused by this increasingly rigid and immobile social hierarchy.⁸⁴ d'Alembert notes that there were disturbances in the 1730s, but he describes this period of intense domestic unrest as relatively insignificant.

In fact, there was significant tension among these groups, largely from the bourgeoisie towards the citizens, because they believed that their traditional rights to citizenship had been ignored. Further exacerbating these socio-political problems were issues of national identity. Genevan residents could be classified as pro-French (this would have been most of the patriciate, who were wealthy enough to travel abroad and be influenced by French philosophy and culture) or pro-republic (the rest of the city). The ministers occupied a shaky place somewhere between these two extremes. Their patrons, and often their family members, were members of the patriciate, but their congregations were comprised almost entirely of non-citizens. Moreover, the ministers greatly appreciated and supported the Calvinist ethos of the non-citizen. As the eighteenth-century progressed, a strong adherence to Calvinism came to represent "a 'patriotic'

⁸⁰ Rosenblatt, 18.

⁸¹ Anonymous, *Edits de la République de Genève* (Geneva, 1735), 2.

⁸² Rosenblatt, 17-18; d'Alembert, "Geneve."

⁸³ Rosenblatt, 18.

⁸⁴ It's less clear how much Rousseau was aware of these problems.

stand against the domination exercised by the ruling, pro-French oligarchy”⁸⁵ During the periods of domestic unrest in the 1730s, the pastoral corps overwhelmingly supported the magistrates and citizens.⁸⁶ In 1758, though, the ministers, who had their religious concerns brushed aside by the magistrates in the aftermath of the d’Alembert article, were willing to stoke the fires of popular discontent.

The theatre question proved to be the ideal issue to rally Geneva’s non-citizens because it spoke to many of their fears and concerns. First, the theatre was understood to be a distinctly patrician, upper-class amusement. It was not an amusement intended for all (or, more specifically, intended for non-citizens). Second, the theatre was strongly associated with the French. When Genevans wanted to go to the theatre, they went to France; d’Alembert and Voltaire, who were pushing the theatre issue, were both Frenchmen; and d’Alembert’s article even suggested that allowing a legal theatre in Geneva would make the city more palatable to visiting Frenchmen. And, finally, the theatre was thought to be fundamentally incompatible with Calvinism. Though Rousseau never acknowledged in the *Letter* that life in Geneva was anything less than perfect, by emphasizing the ideal of republican life, he provided fodder for those who found reality in Geneva to fall far short of this ideal. Rousseau’s criticisms of the stage, which were often anti-French, encouraged and supported the non-ruling classes to publicly, and loudly, protest d’Alembert’s claim that a theatre would improve Geneva. The ministers were silent regarding the actions of the lower classes, but there can be no doubt that popular discontent supported their anti-d’Alembert agenda.

As d’Alembert was not physically in Geneva, Voltaire received the brunt of public scorn. Geneva’s ministers, even those who had once been his close allies and participated in his private theatricals, abandoned him. Voltaire also found himself increasingly harassed in Geneva; by the end of 1758, public demonstrations were regularly taking place outside of Les Délices. Voltaire’s personal secretary, Jean-Louis Wagnière, noted that the people of Geneva frequently “came to insult him [Voltaire],” going so far as to erect “injurious placards at the doors of his home.”⁸⁷ This was too much for Voltaire; in early 1759, he left Les Délices. Since he was not welcome in France, Voltaire moved as far away from the city center of Geneva as he could without actually crossing the border into France. He bought a large chateau in Tournay, which was quickly outfitted with a much larger theatre than the considerably smaller Les Délices could accommodate. Lest anyone doubt that the building of his theatre, which attracted large numbers of the Genevan patriciate, was intended to snub Geneva’s ministers, Voltaire informally called his theatre the “anti-consistory.”⁸⁸

d’Alembert did not escape this crisis unscathed. He resigned his post in 1759, once it was clear that the notoriety occasioned by the theatre debate in Geneva would make it difficult for him to effectively act as the co-editor of the *Encyclopédie*. The ministers--and Rousseau and the non-citizens--had proven victorious. d’Alembert was discredited, Voltaire had fled, and Calvinism had been successfully defended.

That this crisis was really about Calvinism and how Calvinism was integrated into a new world, and not about the ministers’ strong and sincere anti-theatre beliefs, is supported by the fact that Genevans approved (with ministerial support) the building of a theatre in the mid-1760s.

⁸⁵ Gargett, 151.

⁸⁶ Rosenblatt, 103.

⁸⁷ “Aussi ai-je vu alors des gens de la populace de Genève venir l’insulter jusque chez lui, et l’on affichait des placards injurieux aux portes de sa maison.” Quoted in Leigh, 1206

⁸⁸ Gargett, 167.

Furthermore, once the d'Alembert article had been effectively managed, the ministers wasted little time in turning on their most vocal of supporters. Jacob Vernet publicly accused Rousseau of helping d'Alembert write the article about Geneva and, to ensure there was no doubt about Rousseau's standing in the city, had Rousseau's newest publication, *Emile*, publicly burnt in the city square.⁸⁹ The theatre was nothing more than a tool for the ministers, a way to prove their orthodoxy and show that Geneva was still the city of Calvin.

⁸⁹ Gargett, 164.

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Appendix A: Club Membership Amongst Edinburgh's "Gentlemen Ministers"

Hugh Blair

- Select Society
- Society for Promoting the Reading and Speaking of the English Language
- Revolution Club
- Belles Lettres Society
- Oyster Club
- Poker Club
- Royal Society

George Campbell

- Aberdeen Philosophical Society
- Theological Club

Alexander Carlyle

- Select Society
- Society for Promoting the Reading and Speaking of the English Language
- Edinburgh Society for the Encouragement of Arts
- Poker Club
- Royal Society

Adam Ferguson

- Select Society
- Society for Promoting the Reading and Speaking of the English Language
- Edinburgh Society for the Encouragement of Arts
- Royal Society
- Oyster Club
- Poker Club

Alexander Gerard

- Aberdeen Philosophical Society
- Edinburgh Society for the Encouragement of Arts, Sciences, Manufactures, and Agriculture
- Royal Society

John Home

- Select Society
- Society for Promoting the Reading and Speaking of the English Language
- Edinburgh Society for the Encouragement of Arts
- Poker Club
- Royal Society

John Jardine

- Poker Club
- Select Society
- Society for Promoting the Reading and Speaking of the English Language
- Edinburgh Society for the Encouragement of Arts
- Revolution Club
- St. Giles Society

William Robertson

- Select Society
- Society for Promoting the Reading and Speaking of the English Language
- Edinburgh Review
- Poker Club

Matthew Stewart

- Royal Society

William Wilkie

- Select Society
- Society for Promoting the Reading and Speaking of the English Language
- Edinburgh Society for the Encouragement of Arts

Appendix B: Published Works, Gentlemen and Evangelical Ministers

Gentleman Ministers

- **Hugh Blair**
 - The Resurrection, a Poem, 1747
 - Observations upon a Pamphlet Intituled, An Analysis of the Moral and Religious Sentiments contained in the writings of Sopho and David Hume, 1755
 - The Edinburgh Review, 1755-1756
 - Dissertation on Ossian, 1763
 - Sermons, 1777 (multiple volumes)
 - Lectures on Rhetoric and Belles Lettres, 1783
 - **SERMONS:**
 - Wrath of Man Praising God, 1746
 - The Importance of Religious Knowledge to the Happiness of Mankind, 1750
- **George Campbell**
 - Dissertation on Miracles, 1762
 - Philosophy of Rhetoric, 1776
 - **SERMONS:**
 - The Character of a Minister, 1752
 - The Spirit of the Gospel, neither a spirit of superstition nor of enthusiasm, 1771
 - The nature, extent, and importance, of the duty of allegiance, 1776
 - The Success of the First Publishers of the Gospel, 1777
 - An Address to the People of Scotland...in regard to Popery, 1779
 - The Happy Influence of religion on civil society, 1779
- **Alexander Carlyle**
 - An Argument to Prove that the tragedy of Douglas ought to be..., 1757
 - A Full and True History of the Bloody Tragedy of Douglas, 1757
 - Plain Reasons for Removing a Certain Great Man, 1759
 - The Question Relating to a Scots Militia Considered, 1760
 - Essay upon Taxes, 1769
 - **SERMONS:**
 - The tendency of the Constitution of the CoS to form the temper, spirit and character of her ministers, 1767
 - Justice and Necessity of War with our American Colonies examined, 1777
 - Sermon on the Death of David Dalrymple, 1792
 - The Usefulness and Necessity of a Liberal Education for Clergymen. 1793
 - National Depravity the cause of national calamities, 1794
 - The Love of Our Country, explained and enforced, 1797
- **Adam Ferguson**
 - Reflections Previous to the Establishment of a Militia, 1756
 - Morality of Stage Plays Seriously Considered, 1757
 - Sister Peg (authorship contested), 1760
 - Essay on Civil Society, 1767
 - Institutes of Moral Philosophy, 1769

- Progress and Termination of the Roman Republic, 1783
- Principles of Moral and Political Science, 1792
- **SERMONS:**
 - Sermon Preached in Ersh Language, 1746
- **Alexander Gerard**
 - Plan of Education in the Marischal College and University of Aberdeen (1755)
 - Essay on Taste, 1759
 - Dissertations on subjects relating to the genius and the evidences of Christianity, 1766
 - Essay on Genius, 1774
 - **SERMONS:**
 - National Blessings, an argument for Reformation, 1759
 - Influence of the pastoral office on the character, 1760
 - Influence of Piety on the Public Good, 1761
 - Liberty, the Cloak of Maliciousness, 1778
 - Corruptions of Christianity, 1792
- **John Home**
 - Douglas, 1757
 - Agis, 1758
 - Siege of Aquileria, 1760
 - The Fatal Discovery, 1769
 - Alonzo, 1773
 - Alfred, 1778
 - History of the Rebellion, 1745, 1802
- **John Jardine**
 - Edinburgh Review
- **William Robertson**
 - History of Scotland, 1759
 - History of Charles V, 1769
 - History of America, 1777
 - **SERMONS:**
 - Situation of the world at the time of Christ's Appearance
- **Matthew Stewart** [only preached for 2 years]
 - Some General Theorems, 1746
 - Solution of Kepler's Problem, 1756
 - Tracts, Physical and Mathematical, 1761
 - Distance of the sun from the earth, 1763
- **William Wilkie**
 - Epigoniad, 1757
 - Moral Fables in Verse, 1769

Evangelical Ministers

- **John Adams**
 - An inquiry into the powers committed to the general assemblies of this Church, 1754

- **George Anderson**
 - Estimate of the profit and loss of religion, 1753
 - Remonstrance Against Lord Viscount Bolingbroke's philosophical religion
 - **SERMONS:**
 - Use and Abuse of Diversions, 1733
 - Reinforcement of the reasons proving the stage is an unchristian diversion, 1733
- **John Bonar**
 - Observations on the conduct and character of Judas Iscariot, 1751
 - Analysis of the moral and religious sentiments contained in the writings of Sapho and Hume, 1755
 - **SERMONS:**
 - The Nature and Necessity of a Religious Education, 1752
 - The Nature and Tendency of the Ecclesiastic Constitution, 1760
- **John Erskine**
 - Signs of the Times consider'd, 1742
 - Fair and Impartial Account of the Debate in Synod of Glasgow and Air, 1748
 - Humble Attempt to Promote Frequent Communicating, 1749
 - Qualifications Necessary for Teachers of Christianity, 1750
 - Theological Dissertations, 1765
 - Equity and Wisdom of Administration, 1776
 - Considerations on the Spirit of Popery, 1778
 - Vindication of the oppositions to the late intended bill for the relief of Roman Catholics in Scotland, 1780
 - Thoughts upon the duty of a more frequent administration of the Lord's Supper, 1781
 - Simplicity recommended to the ministers of the Gospel, 1783
 - Sketches and hints of church history and theological controversy, 1790-1797
 - **SERMONS:**
 - People of God Consider'd as all righteous, 1745
 - Influence of Religion on National Happiness, 1756
 - Ministers of the Gospel cautioned against giving offense, 1764
 - Shall I go to war with my American Brethren?, 1769
 - Education of Poor Children recommended, 1774
 - Prayers for those in civil and military offices recommended, 1779
 - Fatal Consequences and the general source of anarchy, 1793
 - Discourses preached on several occasions, 1798
- **John Gillies**
 - Historical Collections relating to remarkable periods of the success of the Gospel, 1754
 - Rules and Examples of preaching the Gospel, 1754
 - Appendix to Historical Collections, 1761
 - Catechism upon the sufferings of the redeemer, 1763
 - Devotional Exercises on the new testament, 1769
 - Memoirs on the life of Rev. George Whitefield, 1772

- **John Maclaurin**
 - The case of the poor consider'd, 1729
 - A Loud Cry for help to the struggling Church of Scotland, 1753
 - The Nature of Ecclesiastic Government, and of the Constitution of the Church of Scotland Illustrated, 1754
 - **SERMONS:**
 - Sermons and Essays, 1755
- **Thomas Randall**
 - Observations on the letters published by the Rev. Mr. James Baines, 1767
 - **SERMONS:**
 - Christian Benevolence, 1763
 - Christ the propitiatory for sin, 1775
 - God the father of the fatherless, 1776
- **Robert Walker**
 - **SERMONS:**
 - Short account of the SPCK, 1748
 - Sermons on Practical Subjects, 1765, multiple volumes
 - We have nothing which we did not receive, 1775
- **Alexander Webster**
 - Remarks on the pamphlets lately published re: Porteous, 1737
 - Divine Influence, the true spring of the extraordinary work at Cambuslang, 1742
 - Census, 1755
 - **SERMONS:**
 - The Wicked Life, 1740
 - Supernatural Revelation, the only sure hope of sinners, 1741
 - Heathens Professing Judaism, 1746
 - Zeal for the civil and religious interests of mankind recommended, 1754
- **John Witherspoon**
 - Ecclesiastical Characteristics, 1753
 - Essay on connection between doctrine of justification.., 1756
 - Serious Inquiry into the nature and effects of stage, 1757
 - Practical Treatise on regeneration, 1764
 - Essays on Important Subjects [religious], 1765
 - Inquiry into scripture meaning of charity, 1768
 - Practical Discourses on the leading truths of the Gospel, 1768
 - Address to inhabitants of Jamaica, 1772
 - Series of Letters on Education, 1798
 - **SERMONS:**
 - Charge of Sedition and Faction against good men, 1758
 - Absolute Necessity of salvation through christ, 1758
 - Prayer for national prosperity, 1758
 - Trial of religious truth by its moral influence, 1759
 - Seasonable Advice to Young Persons, 1762
 - Ministerial Fidelity, 1768
 - Sermons on Practical Subjects, 1768
 - Dominion of Providence over the Passions of Men, 1776

- Address to natives of Scotland residing in America, 1778
- Christian Magnanimity, 1775 and 1787
- Religious Education of Children, 1789

Appendix C: Jean le Rond d'Alembert, "Geneva," *Encyclopedia*, 1757

Geneva. This city is situated on two hills, at the foot of the lake which today is named after the city but formerly was called Lake Lemman. It is very pleasantly situated. On one side one sees the lake, on the other the Rhone, and all around the smiling countryside. Along the lake there are hills dotted with country houses while a few miles away rise the Alpine peaks, which are always covered with ice and look as if they were made of silver when on a fine day the sun shines on them. As a rich and busy trading center, Geneva owes its prominence to the harbor, with its jetties, its boats, its markets, etc., as well as to its location between France, Italy, and Germany. The city has several fine buildings and attractive promenades. The streets are lighted at night and on the banks of the Rhone a very simple pumping machine has been installed that provides water even for the highest quarters, located a hundred feet above. The lake is approximately eighteen leagues long and four to five across at its widest point. It is a kind of little sea with storms and other remarkable phenomena. See Waterspout (*Trombe*), See Tidal Wave (*Seiche*), etc., and the *Histoire de l'académie des sciences* for the years 1741 and 1742. Geneva lies on latitude 46.12, longitude 23.45.

Julius Caesar mentions Geneva as a city of the Allobroges who were then already under Roman dominion. He came to the city to oppose the passage of the Helvetii, today called the Swiss. As soon as Christianity was introduced, the city became a bishopric suffragan to Vienne. At the beginning of the fifth century Emperor Honorius ceded it to the Burgundians. These were driven out by the Frankish kings in 534. When toward the end of the ninth [*sic*] century Charlemagne set out to war against the Lombard kings in order to free the pope (who rewarded him with the imperial crown), he passed through Geneva and chose it as the meeting place of all his armies. Later the city was annexed to the German empire and it was here that Conrad assumed the imperial crown in 1034. Succeeding emperors, however, neglected to keep their eyes on the city since for three hundred years they were preoccupied with the great difficulties in their relationship with the popes. This enabled Geneva gradually to throw off its yoke and to become an imperial city whose bishop was its prince, or rather its lord, for the authority of the bishop was tempered by the authority of the citizens. The coat of arms which it chose at that time gave expression to this mixed constitution: on one side an imperial eagle, on the other a key representing the power of the Church, with the device *Post tenebras lux* [Light after darkness]. The city of Geneva kept these arms when it renounced the Roman Church. The keys [*sic*] in its coat of arms are now all it holds in common with the papacy. It is actually rather strange that Geneva retained them after having broken, with a sort of superstitious zeal, all the bonds that could possibly bind it to Rome. Geneva apparently thought that the device, *Post tenebras lux* , expressed so perfectly its present attitude to religion, that there was no need to change anything in its coat of arms.

The dukes of Savoy, neighbors of Geneva, repeatedly made covert attempts, sometimes with the aid of the bishops, to establish their authority over the city, but the latter resisted courageously, supported by its alliance with Fribourg and Berne. At that time, that is to say around 1526, the Council of Two Hundred was established. The ideas of Luther and Zwingli were beginning to penetrate. Berne had rallied to them, Geneva received them favorably and was finally converted to them in 1535. The papacy was no longer

recognized and since that time the bishop resides in Annecy. He still carries the title "Bishop of Geneva" but has no more jurisdiction over the city than the bishop of Babylon has in his diocese.

Between the two doors of Geneva's city hall one can still see a Latin inscription commemorating the abolition of the Catholic religion. In it the pope is called "Antichrist." This name, which the Genevans' fanatic love of liberty and innovation gave him in a century that was still half barbarous, today seems scarcely worthy of a city so imbued with the philosophic spirit. We venture to suggest that the Genevans replace this insulting and vulgar monument with an inscription that is truer, nobler, and simpler. For Catholics the pope is the head of the true Church, for reasonable and moderate Protestants he is a sovereign whom they respect as a prince without obeying him, but in a century such as ours there is no one for whom he is still the Antichrist.

In order to defend its liberty against encroachment by the dukes of Savoy and by its bishops, Geneva strengthened its position still more by an alliance with Zurich and, above all, with France. Thanks to this aid it resisted the weapons of Charles-Emmanuel and the wealth of Philip II, a prince whose memory is assured of the execration of posterity because of his ambition, his despotism, his cruelty, and his superstition. Henri IV, who had sent three hundred soldiers to help Geneva, soon thereafter himself needed the city's help: it was of some use to him in his wars with the League and on other occasions. This is the origin of the privileges which the Genevans, like the Swiss, enjoy in France.

The Genevans, wishing to bring fame to their city, called in Calvin. He enjoyed a great and well-deserved reputation because he was a man of letters of the first rank, who wrote Latin as well as a dead language can be written, and French with a purity of style that was exceptional for his time. This purity, which our grammarians still admire today, renders his writings far superior to almost all others written in his century, just as today the works of the Messieurs of Port-Royal still seem far superior to the barbarous rantings of their adversaries and contemporaries. Calvin was both an excellent jurist and as enlightened a theologian as a heretic can be, and together with the magistrates he drew up a compendium of civil and ecclesiastical laws that was approved in 1543 by the people and has become the basic code of the republic. The excess of ecclesiastical property, which before the Reformation fed the luxury of the bishops and their subordinates, was now used to found a hospital, a college, and an academy; but the wars in which Geneva had to engage for almost sixty years prevented the arts and commerce from flourishing as much as the sciences. In 1602 the failure of the attempt by the duke of Savoy to scale the walls brought peace to the republic. The Genevans repulsed their enemies who had attacked by surprise, and they hanged thirteen of the leading enemy generals in order to give the duke of Savoy a distaste for such undertakings. They thought they were justified in treating men who attacked their city without a declaration of war as if they were highwaymen. The strange new policy of waging war without having declared it was not yet known in Europe; and even if it had then been followed by the great states, it would still be true that it is too much against the interest of small states ever to gain favor among them.

When Duke Charles-Emmanuel saw himself repulsed and his generals hanged, he gave up the idea of conquering Geneva. His example served as a lesson for his successors and since that time the city has been at peace and has not ceased to grow in population, in wealth, and in beauty. From time to time the tranquillity of the republic has been slightly disturbed by internal dissensions, of which the last broke out in 1738, but peace was luckily restored by means of the mediation of France and the Swiss Confederation, while external security is today more firmly established than ever with two new treaties, one concluded with France in 1749, the other with the king of Sardinia in 1754.

It is very remarkable that a city, which scarcely counts 24,000 souls and has a fragmented territory containing fewer than thirty villages, is nevertheless a sovereign state and one of the most prosperous cities of Europe. Geneva is rich because of its liberty and its commerce and often sees everything around it in flames without being in any way affected. The events that disturb Europe are only a spectacle for this city from which it profits without taking any part. Because it is linked to France by treaties and commerce and to England by commerce and religion, it maintains an impartial opinion on the rights and wrongs of the wars which those two powerful nations wage against each other, and at the same time it is too prudent to take any part in these wars. Geneva judges all the sovereigns of Europe without flattery, insult, or fear.

The city is well fortified, especially on the side facing the prince it fears the most, the king of Sardinia. The side bordering France has been left almost completely open and undefended. Military service, however, is performed as in a fortress city. The arsenals and military storehouses are well stocked and every citizen is a soldier, as in Switzerland or in ancient Rome. Genevans are permitted to serve in foreign armies but the state does not supply any power with bodies of troops and no recruiting is allowed on its territory. While the city is wealthy, the state is poor because of the people's aversion to all new taxes, even the least burdensome. The revenue of the state comes to less than five hundred thousand livres in French money, but the admirable economy with which this is administered makes it quite sufficient for all the needs of the city and even produces reserves for emergencies.

There are four classes of inhabitants in Geneva: the *citizens* who are the sons of bourgeois and were born in the city; they alone can become magistrates. The *bourgeois* who are the sons of bourgeois or of citizens but were born in a foreign country, or who are foreigners to whom the magistracy has granted the rights of a bourgeois, which it has the power to do; these can be members of the General Council and even of the *Grand Conseil*, called the "Council of the Two Hundred." The *residents* are foreigners who have the permission of the magistrate to reside in the city but do not exercise any function. Lastly *thenatives* are the children of residents; they have some privileges which their fathers did not possess, but they are excluded from the government.

The government is headed by four *syndics* who can hold this position for only one year and must wait at least four years before holding it again. They are aided by the *Petit Conseil*, composed of twenty counselors, a treasurer, and two secretaries of state, and by another body called *Le Corps de la Justice*. These two bodies deal with the daily business that demands immediate action, whether criminal or civil.

The *Grand Conseil* is composed of two hundred and fifty citizens or bourgeois. It judges major civil suits, it grants pardons, coins money, elects the members of the *Petit Conseil* and decides what matters should be brought before the General Council. This General Council comprises all citizens and bourgeois, with the exception of those under twenty-five years of age, and of those who are bankrupt or have incurred censure of some sort. This assembly holds the legislative power; it has the right of decision over war and peace, the right to form alliances, levy taxes, and elect the principal magistrates. The election is conducted with orderly decorum in the cathedral, even though there are about 1,500 electors.

This fact shows us that the government of Geneva has all the advantages and none of the drawbacks of democracy: everything is under the direction of the syndics, everything is originally discussed in the *Petit Conseil*, which also has the ultimate executive responsibility. Thus it seems that the city of Geneva has taken as its model the very wise law of the ancient Germanic government: *De minoribus rebus principes consultant, de majoribus omnes; ita tamen, ut ea quorum penes plebem arbitrium est, apud principes praetractentur.*

The civil law of Geneva is almost entirely drawn from Roman law, with some modifications: for example, a father can leave no more than half his property to any heir he wishes to designate, the rest is equally divided between his children. This law on the one hand guarantees the independence of the children and on the other forestalls any injustice by the fathers.

M. de Montesquieu is right to give the name of "beautiful law" to the law that excludes from responsible positions in the republic all citizens who do not pay their father's debts after his death, and, of course, also all those who do not pay their own debts.

The degrees of family relationship that prohibit marriage do not go beyond those laid down in Leviticus: thus first cousins are allowed to marry, but on the other hand no dispensation can be obtained in forbidden cases. Divorce is granted, upon declaration in a court of law, in cases of adultery or intentional desertion.

Criminal justice is dispensed scrupulously rather than harshly. Torture, which has already been abolished in several states and should be abolished everywhere because it is useless cruelty, is forbidden in Geneva. It is administered only to criminals who are already condemned to death, in order to discover their accomplices, if that is necessary. The accused has the right to ask for a transcript of the proceedings and to be assisted by his relatives and a lawyer who defends his case before the judges in open court. Criminal sentences are rendered by the syndics in the public square with great ceremony.

Hereditary titles are unknown in Geneva. The son of a first magistrate remains lost in the crowd if he does not rise above it by his merit. Neither nobility nor wealth carry with them rank, prerogatives, or easy access to public office. Corrupt practices are strictly forbidden. Offices carry so little remuneration that they do not tempt cupidity. Only noble souls are tempted because of the high esteem in which these offices are held.

There are few lawsuits. Most of them are settled out of court by the efforts of mutual friends, by the lawyers themselves, and by the judges.

Sumptuary laws prohibit the use of jewels and gold, limit funeral expenses, and oblige all citizens to go on foot on the city streets. Carriages are used only for trips to the countryside. In France these laws would be considered too strict and almost barbarous and inhuman, but they do not restrict the true comforts of life which can always be obtained at little expense. The laws only eliminate lavishness, which does not bring happiness and bankrupts us without being useful.

There exists no city perhaps where there are more happy marriages. On this point there is a gap of two hundred years between Geneva and our morals. Thanks to the regulations against luxury, no one is afraid to have many children. In Geneva luxury is not, as in France, one of the chief obstacles to population increase.

No theater is permitted in Geneva. There is no objection to plays in themselves, but it is feared that troops of actors would spread the taste for adornment, dissipation, and loose morals among the youth. Would not, however, a series of laws, strictly applied, on the conduct of the actors counteract this undesirable effect? In this way Geneva would possess both theater and good morals and would enjoy the advantages of both. Theatrical performances would educate the taste of the citizens and endow them with a delicacy of tact and a subtlety of feeling, which it is very difficult to acquire otherwise. Literature would profit while morals would not decline, and Geneva would add to the wisdom of Sparta the civility of Athens. There is another consideration, worthy of a republic that is so wise and enlightened, which might induce it to allow a theater. One of the principal causes of the loose morals for which we reproach actors is undoubtedly the barbarous prejudice against the acting profession. These men who are so indispensable to the progress and the vitality of the arts have been forced to live in a state of degradation. They seek in pleasures compensations for the esteem their estate cannot bring them. An actor whose morals are good should be doubly respected, but he is given scarcely any credit for his morality. The tax farmer who is an affront to the penury of the nation from which he draws his wealth, the courtier who fawns and does not pay his debts, those are the types of men we honor most highly. It would be better if actors were not only tolerated in Geneva, but if they were first restrained by wise regulations, then protected, and even granted respect as soon as they were worthy of it. In short, if they were treated exactly like other citizens, the city would soon enjoy the advantage of having a company of honorable actors, something that we believe to be so rare and yet is rare only by our own fault. I might add that such a company would soon be the best in Europe. Many people would hasten to Geneva who have great inclination and talent for the theater but who at present fear they would be dishonored by acting. There they would cultivate a talent that is so pleasing and so unusual, not only without shame but even in an atmosphere of respect. While many Frenchmen now find a stay in Geneva depressing because they are deprived of seeing plays, the city, which is already the abode of philosophy and liberty, would then also be the abode of respectable pleasure. Foreigners would no longer be surprised that in a city where regular performances of decent plays are forbidden, vulgar and stupid farces, as offensive to good taste as to good morals, may

be presented. This is not all. Little by little the example of the Genevan actors, their steady conduct, and the esteem it would bring them would serve as a model to the actors of other nations and as a lesson to those who until now have treated them so inconsistently and even harshly. We would no longer see them being on the one hand pensioners of the government and on the other the objects of anathema. Our priests would lose the habit of excommunicating them and our bourgeois of viewing them with disdain. Then a small republic could claim the glory of having reformed Europe in this respect, and this is perhaps more important than one thinks.

Geneva has a university called the *Académie* where the young people are taught free of charge. The professors can become magistrates, and in fact several have held the office. This does much to stimulate the zeal and the fame of the Academy. A few years ago a school of design was founded as well. The lawyers, the notaries, and the doctors belong to associations to which one is admitted only after public examination, and all the craft guilds also have their regulations, their apprenticeships, and masterpieces.

The public library contains a good selection of books. It contains twenty-six thousand volumes and quite a number of manuscripts. These books can be borrowed by all citizens. Thus everyone reads and becomes enlightened, and the Genevans are much better educated than any other people. There is no suggestion that this might be bad, as some people maintain it would be for our country. Perhaps the Genevans and our politicians are equally right.

After England, Geneva was the first to practice smallpox inoculation which is so difficult to introduce in France and which nevertheless will be introduced, although a number of our doctors still fight it, as their predecessors fought the circulation of the blood, emetic, and so many other incontrovertible truths and useful practices.

All the sciences and almost all the arts have been so well cultivated in Geneva that one would be surprised to see the list of scholars and artists of all kinds produced by the city during the last two centuries. Sometimes it has even had the good fortune to have famous foreigners chose to live in Geneva because of its pleasant location and the freedom enjoyed by its inhabitants. M. de Voltaire, who took up residence in Geneva three years ago, is now accorded the same tokens of esteem and respect by these republicans which he formerly received from several monarchs.

The most flourishing manufacture in Geneva is watch-making. It employs more than five thousand persons, that is to say more than a fifth of the citizens. Nor are the other arts neglected, particularly agriculture: painstaking cultivation compensates for the lack of fertile land.

All the houses are built of stone. This often prevents fires which are also promptly contained because of the good arrangements for extinguishing them. Genevan hospitals are not, as elsewhere, merely a retreat for the poor who are sick or crippled. While they offer shelter to the homeless poor, they provide above all a great many small pensions that are distributed to poor families to help them live at home and

continue working. Every year the hospitals spend more than three times their revenues, so generous are charitable gifts of every kind.

We must still speak of religion in Geneva. This is the section of the article that is perhaps of greatest interest to philosophers. We are now going to take up this subject but we beg our readers to remember that we are only writing as historians, not as partisans. Our theological articles are intended to serve as antidote to the present article and, besides, to recount is not to approve. We refer our readers to the words Eucharist, Hell, Faith, Christianity, etc., to caution them beforehand against what we are going to say. The ecclesiastical constitution of Geneva is purely presbyterian. There are no bishops, not to speak of canons. Not that there is objection to the institution of episcopacy, but the Genevans do not grant it any divine right and are of the opinion that a small republic is better served by ministers who are not as rich and influential as the bishops.

The ministers are either pastors, like our parish priests, or postulants, like those of our priests who do not have a living. The minister's income does not exceed 1,200 livres and there are no perquisites. The state provides the income since the church owns nothing. No one is accepted into the ministry before the age of twenty-four and only after examinations that are very strict in respect to knowledge and to morality. One would wish that most of our Catholic churches would follow this example.

The clergy plays no role in funerals. These are a purely administrative matter and are performed without any pomp. The Genevans believe that to put on a display after death is ridiculous. The dead are buried in a large cemetery quite far from the city, a custom that should be followed everywhere.

The clergy of Geneva have exemplary morals. The ministers live in great concord. One does not see them, as in other countries, quarrel bitterly among themselves about unintelligible subjects, persecute each other, and accuse each other in unseemly fashion before the magistrates. Yet they are far from all thinking alike on the articles that elsewhere are considered the most essential to religion. Several no longer believe in the divinity of Jesus Christ, which Calvin, their leader, defended with such zeal that he had Servetus burned at the stake. When anyone speaks to them about this execution, which mars the charity and moderation of their patriarch, they do not attempt to justify him. They admit that Calvin's action was very reprehensible, and they confine themselves (if it is a Catholic who speaks with them) to contrasting the execution of Servetus with that dreadful Saint Bartholomew's Day which every good Frenchman would wish to erase from our history with his own blood. They also compare it to the execution of John Hus which even the Catholics, they remind their interlocutor, no longer attempt to justify; it was an action that equally violated humanity and good faith and should cover the memory of the Emperor Sigismund with opprobrium for all time.

"It is no small sign of the progress of human reason," writes M. de Voltaire, "that it was possible to publish in Geneva, with public approval, the statement (in the *Essai sur l'histoire universelle* by the same author) that Calvin had a cruel soul as well as an enlightened mind. The murder of Servetus today seems abominable." We believe that the praise which this noble freedom of thought and of writing deserves should be

addressed equally to the author, to his century, and to Geneva. How many countries are there where philosophy has made just as much progress but where truth is still captive, where reason does not dare raise her voice to thunder against abuses she condemns in silence, where we find only too many pusillanimous writers, called "wise men," still respecting prejudices they could combat with complete propriety and safety!

Hell, one of the principal tenets of our faith, is no longer given such importance by several ministers in Geneva. According to them it would be an insult to the Divinity if we imagined that this Being full of goodness and justice were capable of punishing our offenses with eternal torments. They explain as best they can the passages in the Bible which are explicitly contrary to their opinion and assert that in the Holy Scriptures one must never take anything literally if it seems to go against humanity and reason. They believe that there is punishment in the afterlife, but that it is only temporary. Thus purgatory, once one of the principal causes of the separation of the Protestants from the Roman Catholic Church, is today the only punishment after death that many of the former will accept. Here is another item to add to the history of human contradictions.

In short, many of the ministers of Geneva have no other religion than a perfect Socinianism; they reject everything called "mystery" and imagine that the first principle of a true religion is not to propose any belief that conflicts with reason. When they are pressed on the question of the "necessity" of revelation, a dogma that is so basic to Christianity, many substitute the term "utility" which seems more agreeable to them. If they are not orthodox in this, at least they are true to their principles.

A clergy holding these opinions must needs be tolerant and is tolerant enough to be viewed with disfavor by the ministers of the other reformed churches. One might add further, without any intention of approving the religion of Geneva, that there are few countries where the theologians and the clergymen are more opposed to superstition. As a result, because intolerance and superstition serve only to increase the number of unbelievers, one hears less complaint in Geneva than elsewhere about the spread of unbelief, and this should not surprise us. Here religion consists almost entirely in the adoration of a single God, at least among all classes other than the common people. Respect for Jesus Christ and for the Scriptures is perhaps all that distinguishes the Christianity of Geneva from pure deism.

The clergymen of Geneva are not merely tolerant: they remain entirely within their province and are the first to set an example for the citizens by submitting to the laws. The Consistory, charged with watching over morals, inflicts only spiritual punishment. The great quarrel between the priesthood and the Empire, which in the age of ignorance imperiled the crown of many an emperor, and which—we know this only too well—causes troublesome disturbances in more enlightened times, is unknown in Geneva where the clergy does nothing without the approval of the magistrates.

Worship is very simple in Geneva. The churches contain no images, no lights or ornaments. However, a portal in very good taste has just been added to the cathedral; little by little the interior of the churches will perhaps be embellished. Indeed, what objection could there be to having paintings and statues? If one wishes, the common

people could be told not to worship them and to look on them only as monuments destined to recount in a striking and pleasing manner the principal events of religion. This would be to the advantage of the arts yet would bring no profit to superstition. The reader surely realizes that we are speaking here according to the principles of the ministers of Geneva, and not those of the Catholic Church.

The divine service includes both sermons and singing. The sermons are almost entirely concerned with morality and are all the better for that. The singing is in rather bad taste and the French verses that are sung are in even worse taste. It is to be hoped that Geneva will become reformed on these two points. An organ has just been placed in the cathedral and perhaps God will now be praised in better language and in better music. We must admit, however, that the Supreme Being is honored in Geneva with a seemliness and calm that is not noticeable in our churches.

Perhaps we will not devote articles of such length to the greatest monarchies, but in the eyes of the philosopher the Republic of the Bees is no less interesting than the history of great empires. It may be that the model of a perfect political administration can be found only in small states. If religion does not allow us to believe that the Genevans have successfully worked for their happiness in the next world, reason forces us to believe that they are perhaps as happy as one can be in this world.¹

¹ Jean Le Rond d'Alembert, "Geneva," *The Encyclopedia of Diderot & d'Alembert Collaborative Translation Project*, Translated by Nelly S. Hoyt and Thomas Cassirer (Ann Arbor: MPublishing, University of Michigan Library, 2003). Originally published as "Genève," *Encyclopédie ou Dictionnaire raisonné des sciences, des arts et des métiers*, 7:578–578D (Paris, 1757).