

# Places, Times, and People in Worship in Calvin's Geneva

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The Protestant Reformation involved many significant theological changes, and a great number of these affected or were reflected in the practice of worship. One of the features of reform which has sometimes been neglected is the “nuts and bolts” of implementing the new ways of corporate worship. Or, since one of the most significant changes was the introduction of regular, sometimes daily preaching as the central act of the liturgy, and this entailed a quite considerable change in the space and time organization of Protestant worship, one might call this the “pulpits and pews” approach to reform. In short, it is an exploration of the church buildings and schedules of daily worship in Protestant Geneva. Some fine pioneering work has been done on this by Thomas Lambert,<sup>1)</sup> but as with all pioneers, further refinements and corrections are left to be made by later research. Having tabulated many more years of the baptismal and marriage records of Geneva than Dr. Lambert and having given special attention to this topic, I can provide a fuller and more exact picture.<sup>2)</sup> This sketch is an overview of part of a larger project; only a portion of the

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1) Thomas A. Lambert, *Preaching, Praying and Policing the Reform in Sixteenth-Century Geneva*. Ph.D. Dissertation at the University of Wisconsin-Madison, 1998. Hereafter Lambert.

2) The years Lambert covers are December 1550 - December 1551; see Lambert, *Preaching, Praying and Policing*, pp. 291-96. My own research covers 1550-51, 1553, 1555, 1557, 1559, 1562, 1564 for St. Pierre and St. Gervais, and 1550-1564 for la Magdeleine (which has the most irregular schedule). For a preliminary sketch of the fruits of this examination, see Elsie Anne McKee, “Calvin and His Colleagues as Pastors: Some New Insights into the Collegial Ministry of Word and Sacraments,” in *Calvinus Praeceptor Ecclesiae*, ed. Hermans J. Selderhuis (Geneva: Droz, 2004), pp. 9-42.

evidence can be cited here. The first part deals with places, the second with times.

## I

Where did Protestant Geneva worship? This seems like a simple question, and most of it is straightforward. The common names for the locations of worship are the three parishes established by the 1541 Ecclesiastical Ordinances: St. Pierre, St. Gervais, and the Magdeleine.<sup>3)</sup> That is not the whole story, however, and there has been some controversy recently, so it is worthwhile to note briefly the rather confused situation before the 1541 Ordinances and then to add the developments over the course of Calvin's second Genevan ministry. The smaller part of the city on the western side of the Rhone River had only one parish, St. Gervais; this church building remained in steady use from the establishment of Protestantism. However, for the larger, older part of Geneva east of the Rhone, which church buildings were to be used was indeed an issue. In this central area around the cathedral there were multiple traditional parishes, the Magdeleine and four others, though none of these was designated the parish of "St. Pierre."<sup>4)</sup> Before the Ordinances of 1541, the old parish structure remained the basis for Geneva's worship, but the introduction of Protestantism meant that the focus of worship was preaching, not the Mass, so providing services in all the parishes was out of the question: there were not enough ministers. Thus, there is some doubt about exactly where Genevans were worshipping at different times in the period 1536 to 1541/42.

A tentative picture can be pieced together from various sources. After

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3) "Ordonnances ecclésiastiques," 1541 *Opera Calvini* 10:15-30; *Registres de la Compagnie des Pasteurs de Genève au temps de Calvin, tome premier 1546-1553*, ed. J-F. Bergier (Genève: Droz, 1964), pp. 1-13; and *Opera Selecta* 2, pp. 328-45. Here OC 10:20-21; *Compagnie des Pasteurs*, p. 5; OS2, p. 337.

4) See Lambert, *Preaching, Praying and Policing*, p. 205.

the small group of Protestants grew too large to gather in a private house, the Franciscan monastery of the Rive became the first “public” location of Protestant preaching in the early 1530s,<sup>5)</sup> and it seems to have retained the role of a favored worship site in central Geneva until 1542. When the city-state voted “to follow the Gospel” in May 1536, the cathedral came into Protestant control although it is not certain whether it was used for daily worship or only for Sundays. The church order enacted at the beginning of 1537 gives some information about actual practice when it says that the Lord’s Supper will be held monthly in “one of the three places where preaching is now being held, that is St. Pierre, the Rive, and St. Gervais.”<sup>6)</sup> These are in fact the three places where the council anticipated having the Lord’s Supper celebrated when they made preparations on Thursday, April 18, 1538, for the following Sunday.<sup>7)</sup> The Supper service was celebrated only on Sundays, which means these preaching places were used on those days but the edict does not indicate whether preaching was also held in these places on weekdays. The probability is that the cathedral was used mostly on Sundays; on March 30, 1537, a dawn service at St. Pierre was established for the benefit of servants. However, references to daily worship are more scarce.<sup>8)</sup> On September 8, 1536, the church of St. Germain was chosen as the place for the weekday service which council members were obliged to attend before their meetings.<sup>9)</sup> If worship was

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5) See Antoine Froment, *Les actes et gestes merveilleux de la cité de Genève...*, ed. G. Revilliod (Genève: Fick, 1854), p. 82.

6) “Articles concernant l’organisation de l’église et du culte à Genève,” OS 1, pp. 369-77, here p. 371.

7) *Registres du Conseil de Genève à l’époque de Calvin* publiés sous la direction des Archives d’Etat de Genève. Tome III (Genève: Droz, 2006), p. 225. Hereafter *Registres du Conseil* with volume and page.

8) *Sources du Droit de Genève* II, pp. 336-37 for 30 March 1537, orders everyone to attend worship on Sundays and instructs servants to come “au sermon le matin le dimanche en l’esglise nommee Saint Pierre” as quoted in Lambert, *Preaching, Praying and Policing*, p. 183 n.66.

9) OC 21:204-05. *Registres du Conseil*, Tome I (Genève: Droz, 2003), p. 134.

actually held in this building, that soon changed. Only a few months later the new ordinance stated that preaching was being held in three places, none of which were St. Germain, and then a council minute on March 30, 1537, instructed all councillors and officers to attend the sermon and Lord's Supper at the chapel of St. Ambrose in the Rive.<sup>10)</sup> Thus it seems clear that in 1537 and early 1538 the locations of worship in the old city were St. Pierre (perhaps only for Sundays) and the Rive, along with St. Gervais across the Rhone.

The equipment of particular buildings contributed to decisions about where people might attend the sacraments, one of the traditional parish functions. Baptismal fonts had been removed from city churches in 1536 and in early 1538 the ministers objected to the proposed reintroduction of such papal ceremonial furnishings.<sup>11)</sup> The arguments became more heated at Easter and Farel, Calvin, and Coraud were exiled for refusing to serve communion as the council instructed. In fact, because of the departure of these ministers the council decided not only to delay the Supper by one week but also to have it celebrated only at St. Gervais and the Rive, not St. Pierre, for lack of ministers.<sup>12)</sup> On May 16, 1538, the council ordered that fonts be re-erected in the Madeleine as well as St. Pierre and St. Gervais.<sup>13)</sup> Thus two of the regular preaching sites, St. Pierre and St. Gervais, were being re-equipped for the sacrament of baptism. Along with these was the Magdeleine, which had not hitherto figured in the list of places where Protestant worship was held but which had been "the most populous parish in the city" before the Reformation.<sup>14)</sup> Apparently this parish church building was now being re-considered for regular parish services. On Dec. 3, 1538, the council began preparations for the Christmas Lord's Supper

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10) *Registres du Conseil*, Tome II (Genève: Droz, 2004), p. 126.

11) Lambert, *Preaching, Praying and Policing*, p. 178 n.56, p. 210.

12) *Registres du Conseil*, Tome III (Genève: Droz, 2006), p. 239.

13) *Registres du Conseil*, Tome III (Genève: Droz, 2006), p. 267.

14) See Lambert, *Praying, Preaching and Policing*, p. 35.

and ordered repairs to the windows and baptistries of the churches; now they also decided to put a baptistry at the Rive,<sup>15)</sup> demonstrating that it was now functioning for all the sacraments of a parish. A week later, on Dec. 10, the preachers asked again for the repairs because they said that otherwise snow would fall through the ceiling onto the communion table at the Rive. The council's response was to say that baptism should be held "in all the churches" and repeat its instruction to have baptistries made and that all should practice the same way.<sup>16)</sup>

The state of (dis)repair of the various buildings was also a factor in their use, and notes about repairs can give glimpses of where services were held. On Dec. 6, 1539, the council decided that repairs should be made in the Madeleine because they considered it a very appropriate place to hold the preaching services.<sup>17)</sup> In some places the story is sketchy but apparently the cathedral was used only for specific services, especially Sundays (at least for the dawn service). On June 27, 1541, the council ordered that St. Pierre be repaired for use on weekdays when the council met.<sup>18)</sup> Furthermore, when the 1541 Ordinances were being written, although Sunday dawn services were to be held at St. Pierre, the location for the main Sunday morning service was first marked as "Rive (St. Pierre)" and then Rive was struck from the text in favor of St. Pierre. This suggests that a transition from the Rive to the cathedral was projected or desired for both weekday and Sunday services<sup>19)</sup> but it also suggests that St. Pierre had not been the site of most worship services in the old city. Probably the Rive was the normal preaching place in the central city, although the Magdeleine may also have come back into use. However, after Calvin's return the Rive was judged too dilapidated and on 19 May 1542 the council

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15) *Registres du Conseil*, Tome III (Genève: Droz, 2006), p. 507.

16) *Registres du Conseil*, Tome III (Genève: Droz, 2006), p. 516.

17) *Registres du Conseil*, Tome IV (Genève: Droz, 2009), p. 540.

18) RC 35 f245; cf. Lambert, *Preaching, Praying and Policing*, p. 206 n.117.

19) OS 1, p. 337.

ordered that the daily services be moved to St. Pierre because the Rive was falling into disrepair.<sup>20)</sup> It appears that holding the weekday services in the cathedral did not last long, since by August it was only the dawn services which took place in St. Pierre.<sup>21)</sup> In fact, weekday worship at the “ordinary” hour had already begun at the Magdeleine; for example, on 27 April 1542 the Consistory decided that Claudaz, wife of Michel Julliard, and Jehan de La Pierre were to be reconciled “Monday after the sermon at the Magdeleine.”<sup>22)</sup> Despite the complicated route to reach that point, it is clear that by mid-1542 regular worship was being held on Sundays and weekdays in the three parishes defined by the 1541 Ordinances: St. Pierre, St. Gervais, and the Magdeleine.

This remained the basic organization during Calvin’s ministry, with some additions in the 1550s when the influx of refugees into Geneva led to a need for more worship spaces. In 1555 Notre Dame la Neuve, next door to the cathedral, was refurbished with pulpit and benches for use by the Italian and English language congregations.<sup>23)</sup> In 1557 St. Germain was reopened as a French-speaking congregation (effectively a parish because sacraments could be held there as well as catechism) and the following year the small group of Spanish refugees was also given space to worship there.<sup>24)</sup> By 1559 it was determined to add another set of daily weekday services at St. Pierre at the “ordinary” time, in addition to the three dawn services. At first this was done because the crowds were so great that the

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20) OC 21:296.

21) See below at n.44.

22) *Registres du Consistoire au temps de Calvin* publiés par Thomas A. Lambert & Isabella Watt sous la direction de Robert M. Kingdon avec l’assistance de Jeffrey R. Watt, Tome I (1542-1544) (Genève: Droz, 1996), p. 48. Hereafter *Registres du Consistoire* with volume and page.

23) OC 21:608 (10 June 1555) and 21:620-621 (25 Nov. 1555). On 7 Aug. 1559 Calvin requests space for another service because the great crowds at St. Pierre cannot hear, and he suggests repairing the Rive or finding some other place, but the council says that Notre Dame la Neuve should be used instead, OC 21:719-20 (RC 78v).

24) OC 21:668-69 (12 July 1557, RC f234). 21:706 (10 Oct. 1558, RC f302).

summer heat was unbearable, so the weekday sermon at St. Germain was moved to St. Pierre. Later, this became the regular practice, as is evident from the baptismal records of the parish of St. Pierre, and was confirmed by the 1561 revision of the Ecclesiastical Ordinances.<sup>25)</sup> By 1560 French refugees were returning home and ministers were being called to serve in France so the weekday sermons at the extra parish of St. Germain were suspended in September, and in October 1561 this parish was closed. (The same September 1560 ordinance suspended the dawn services at the Magdeleine, which had been begun only in 1559, and the baptismal records confirm this.)<sup>26)</sup> So the city of Geneva functioned again with its three parishes of St. Pierre, St. Gervais, and Magdeleine and this organization was given ex post-facto recognition in the revised Ordinances in 1561.<sup>27)</sup>

## II

Rather more elusive and complicated than the choice of buildings is the question of times of worship in Calvin's Geneva. Essentially the outline included services on every day of the week, with four times and places on Sundays and at least two different places on weekdays, including both sides of the river. Over the years the number of services increased and the organization became more elaborate but that pattern of services on all

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- 25) OC 21:718 (19 June 1559, RC f59); cf. below n. 51. The crowds that came to hear Calvin or Viret at Magdeleine were so great that it was decided to have daily services at St. Pierre instead of St. Germain (the new parish), and move these popular preachers from Magdeleine to the cathedral. The move must have been made immediately because baptisms are recorded for the days of the week which had never been used for daily worship since 1542 (if then; cf. n.19). For weekday services at St. Pierre at the "ordinary" time of 6 a.m./ 7 a.m., six days/ week, see evidence of baptismal records; earliest date for Thursday baptism is 22 June 1559; for Tuesday baptism is 11 July 1559; for Saturday baptism is 29 July 1559. OC 10:99 for 1561 Ordinances. See also continued baptismal records for St. Pierre.
- 26) OC 21:735 (6 Sept. 1560); 21:763 (13 and 14 Oct. 1561, RC f248v, 249v). See baptismal record for Wednesday dawn service, 20 Dec. 1559.
- 27) OC 10:99: The dawn services at St. Gervais on Wednesdays had not been foreseen in 1541; the weekday services at St. Pierre at the regular hour had not been planned.

seven days and in at least two of the three parish churches, remained basic.

The number of weekday services has recently been a matter of debate. The earliest evidence for a specific time for weekday worship in Protestant Geneva is a council order on 8 September 1536 for a sermon in St. Germain at 6 a.m. on the days the council meets.<sup>28)</sup> As Thomas Lambert points out, this preaching service replaced the Mass which councillors were accustomed to attend before their meeting. Lambert goes on to say that for some time after Calvin's return in 1541, there was preaching in most of Geneva only on the days when the council met, which he identifies as Mondays, Tuesdays, and Fridays; St. Pierre would have had a Wednesday rather than a Tuesday sermon.<sup>29)</sup> However, this conclusion seems to be owed to a modern editor's punctuation of the copy of the Ordinances which Lambert was using and does not fit the rest of the evidence. It may be useful to outline what is known about the times and days of worship before the 1541 Ordinances, then deal with the editorial challenges, and return to the story of times of worship established by the 1541 Ordinances and practiced thereafter.

For a summary of the number of services in the period 1536-38 a significant witness is Antoine Saunier. In 1538 he wrote that "every Sunday there are five sermons of the pure and simple Word of God, but on each of the other days there are only two, and the times are distributed in such a way that one can easily attend all of the sermons one after the other."<sup>30)</sup> Other records, especially from the minutes of the small council, give a few more details. An order on 30 March 1537 instructs all the people to come to Sunday services; included is a special note about an

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28) OC 21:204-05, *Registres du Conseil*, I, p. 134.

29) Lambert, *Praying, Preaching and Policing*, pp. 285-86 n.12.

30) Antoine Saunier, *L'ordre et maniere d'enseigner en la Ville de Geneve au College* (Geneve par Jehan Gerard, 1538), facsimile in E. A. Betant, *Notice sur le College de Rive* (Genève: Jean-Guillaume Fick, 1866), p. 12 of non-paginated text. (Since the punctuation of Saunier's reference to sequential times of the service is modern, it is unclear whether it refers to Sundays, weekdays, or both.)

early morning (dawn) service on Sunday at St. Pierre for servants.<sup>31)</sup> It is certain that another service would have been at St. Gervais, and one at the Rive, which would account for three of the five sermons Saunier mentions; the remaining two were probably divided between the two parts of the city, probably a mid-morning service at St. Pierre or perhaps an afternoon service at the Rive, plus a second service at St. Gervais, either morning or afternoon. The weekday sermons each day were almost certainly held at St. Gervais and the Rive. These probably began at 6 a.m., which was the "ordinary" time of the traditional daily Mass and the time named in several council notes from Sept. 1536 and July 1541.<sup>32)</sup> That these services were indeed held on many weekdays can be corroborated by other council notes - usually criticizing some aspect of a sermon. These refer to services on Saturday 20 April 1538 (just before Farel and Calvin and Coraud were exiled), Tuesday 10 May 1538, and Saturdays 24 Sept. 1540 and 25 Dec. 1540. It is very unlikely that there would have been Saturday services and none on Wednesdays or Thursdays, and an ambiguous note on 18 Nov. 1541 (just before the Ordinances went into effect) appears to indicate regular services, with particular reference to a Thursday.<sup>33)</sup> Thus, it would seem that Saunier was correct: there were weekday services, Monday

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31) *Sources du Droit de Genève* II, pp. 336-37 for 30 March 1537, orders everyone to attend worship on Sundays and instructs servants to come "au sermon le matin le dimanche en l'esglise nommee Saint Pierre" as quoted in Lambert, *Preaching, Praying and Policing*, p. 183 n.66.

32) OC 21:204-05 (8 Sept. 1536), and 18 July 1541 quoted by Lambert, p. 291 n.24.

33) OC 21:286 (RC f404). Another form of circumstantial support for daily services is found in the activities of the council. Its members were required to meet on Mondays, Tuesdays, and Fridays, but in fact they often met nearly daily. Records from 1536 regularly give minutes for sessions on four or five days per week (sometimes even including Sundays), and Wednesdays and Thursdays and Saturdays - which were not obligatory meeting days - are well represented. *Registres du Conseil*, Tome I, (for the period May 22 to July 11, 1536), pp. 18, 34, 50, 57 (Mondays), pp. 5, 13, 19, 27, 34, 39, 52, 58, 67 (Tuesdays), pp. 14, 19, 41, 61-62 (Wednesdays), pp. 30, 36, 43, 62 (Thursdays), pp. 7, 15, 23, 30, 36, 46, 54, 64 (Fridays), pp. 4, 26, 38, 49, 55, 66 (Saturdays), pp. 10, 39, 56 (Sundays), etc. Since the evidence for daily services is fairly clear, it is probable that the councilors attended worship each day before they met.

through Saturday, in Geneva before Calvin's Ordinances in 1541.

The provisions for services made by the 1541 Ecclesiastical Ordinances seem clear but have been disputed. Part of the reason may be that there are a number of different versions of the Ordinances; of these, the distinction between Calvin's "draft" and the council's "received" versions is known and these variants are found in the *Opera Calvini* (OC) in the *Corpus Reformatorum*, although the *Compagnie des Pasteurs* text gives only the received version.<sup>34)</sup> There are, however, some further differences in the text as found in the *Opera Selecta*, which may be an earlier version of the "draft." There it reads: "On Sunday there is to be a sermon at the break of day at St. Pierre and St. Gervais, and at the customary hour at Rive/(St. Pierre) and St. Gervais. At noon there is to be catechism.... at all three places, i.e., St. Pierre, Magdeleine, and St. Gervais. At three o'clock at Rive/(St. Pierre) and St. Gervais the second sermon." The received text then adds "the Magdeleine" to the list of Sunday morning services "at the customary hour."<sup>35)</sup> The OC draft text does not mention the Rive at all, which suggests that this version in OS represents an earlier stage before the shape of the Ordinances recorded in the OC. The received text alters the last point; no longer does it list the places where the afternoon service is to be held, but instead refers to "all three parishes," thus adding a third location not foreseen in either form of the draft.<sup>36)</sup>

It appears that most of the confusion about reading the 1541 Ordinances is owed to modern punctuation of a text which originally had no such punctuation. There are two locations of this confusion. The one which concerns only English readers and has to do with Sundays can be dealt with briefly. The translation of the draft ordinances in *Calvin: Theological Treatises* gives the received text in notes, but it makes a mistake in locating a footnote (here the text is given with the footnote inserted in

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34) See above, n. 3.

35) From OS 2, p. 337.

36) OS 2, p. 337 n. c; OC 10:20; *Compagnie des Pasteurs*, p. 5.

brackets). "Each Sunday, there is to be a sermon at St. Peter [editor adds: the Magdalene], and St. Gervais at break of day, and at the usual hour at the said St. Peter, [reference to the Magdeleine should be located here] and St. Gervais."<sup>37)</sup> By putting the reference to the Magdeleine in the wrong place it appears that this parish had a dawn service on Sundays but not a mid-morning one, which constitutes an exact reversal of the French.

More recent and serious cause for confusion about the number of daily services has been the result of different punctuation in the original French, and this point may confuse scholars as well as English language readers. In fact, two different modern editors of the Ordinances change the sense by the places where they choose to put a comma. Here the issue is not the draft but the received text. The words are: "Es jours ouvriers oultre les deux predications que se font que trois fois la sepmaine on presche a Saint Pierre asscavoir le lundy mecredi et vendredy ...". The *Compagnie des Pasteurs* puts the comma between "sepmaine," and "on presche à Saint Pierre" which is followed by Lambert and explains why he says that sermons are held three times per week. "On weekdays besides the two sermons which are done three times a week, there is preaching at St. Peter's on Mondays, Wednesdays, and Fridays."<sup>38)</sup> The *Opera Calvini* editors placed the comma between "se font" and "que trois fois la sepmaine" which makes the three sermons refer to St. Pierre and not to the daily worship at the ordinary time. "On weekdays besides the two sermons, there will be preaching three times a week at St. Peter's, that is, on Mondays, Wednesdays, and Fridays."<sup>39)</sup> The order found in the *Opera Calvini* fits the rest of the evidence better, because it is clear from other sources that there were in fact two sermons every weekday, one in St. Gervais and one at the Magdeleine, plus an early service on three days at St. Pierre.

The clearest evidence for the practice of the Ordinances is found in the

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37) "Draft Ecclesiastical Ordinances," *Calvin: Theological Treatises*, ed. J. K. S. Reid. (Philadelphia: Westminster, 1954), p. 62.

38) *Compagnie des Pasteurs*, p. 5; Lambert, *Praying, Preaching and Policing*, p. 285 n. 12.

39) OC 10:21.

Consistory records. In 1542 and 1543 parishioners who are questioned about attendance at worship name all the different days of the week: Mondays, Tuesdays, Wednesdays, Thursdays, Fridays, and Saturdays, as well as Sundays of course. For St. Gervais there are explicit references to Monday, Wednesday, Thursday, Friday, and Saturday.<sup>40)</sup> For the Magdeleine there are references to Monday, Tuesday, Thursday, and Friday.<sup>41)</sup> For St. Pierre there are only references to Monday and Wednesday.<sup>42)</sup> Some other parishioners who do not mention the parish do refer to services on Monday, Tuesday, Wednesday, Thursday, and

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40) *Registres du Consistoire*, I: Tues. 2 May 1542, p. 53, Jana wife of Cortagiez, said she “fust dymenche au sermon et lundi a Saintz Gervays...” (Monday). Thurs. 6 April 1542, p. 30, La gueyniere: “Qu’elle se trouve demain au sermon avec son mari...” (i.e., Friday). Fri. 26 May 1542, p. 74, Francoys Dupra and wife & her family to be reconciled “demain apres le sermon a Saintz Gervays” (Saturday). Thurs. 10 Aug. 1542, p. 100, Françoyse, widow of Claude Loup, says she goes “au sermon a Saint Gervays”... every three days and “fut mecredi hier passé” (Wednesday). Thurs. 7 Sept. 1542, p. 111, Gonyn Floutet “esté aujourd’huy et hyer au sermon a Saincty Gervays” (Wednesday and Thursday). Tues. 28 Aug. 1543, p. 251, Jane Lulliemon “fust dymenche au sermon az Saint Gervays apres dyné et quelque foys les mecredi” (Wednesday).

41) *Registres du Consistoire* I: 27 April 1542, pp. 46, 48, Claudaz, wife of Maystre Michel Julliard and husband to be reconciled with nephew Mermet and servant Jehan de La Pierre, “lundi a la Madeleine apres le sermon” (Monday). Thurs. 10 Aug. 1542, p. 98, Noble Pernete and three children to be reconciled “demain... a la Magdeleine apres le sermon”; Thurs. 7 Sept. 1542, p. 110, reconciling Noble Jehan Gringallet with C. Savoex, “demain a la Magdaleine apres le sermon”; on Friday 31 Aug. 1543 reconciling Noble Bartholomie and Ypolite Revit at the Magdeleine; Thurs. 25 Oct. 1543, p. 264, Françoyse, widow of Tyvent Tissot, and son should be reconciled “a la fin de quelque sermon... apres le sermon a demain a la Magdeleine”; on Friday 26 Oct. 1543, p. 266, “apres le sermon” at Magdeleine reconciled Tissot family (Friday). 10 Aug. 1542, p. 99, Guygonaz says “az esté aujourd’huy en la Magdalene”; and 15 March 1543, p. 195, Anthoyne de Cruz said “az esté aujourd’huy au sermon a la Magdeleine et a presché le Sr. Calvin et de Joseph az partie” (Thursday). Tuesday 27 May 1544, p. 371, Michiel Cochet says that his baby “fust bastisé a la Magdalene il i a VII jour” (which, if it can be taken exactly, would mean the previous Tuesday).

42) *Registres du Consistoire* I: Thurs. 3 Aug. 1542, p. 94, Michiel Cochet, “ne fust pas au sermon et qu’il n’y fut dempuis huyctz jors a Saint Pierre” (apparently Wednesday). Thurs. 21 Dec. 1542, p. 151, La Donne Jane Begaz, “fust lundi au sermon et a la priere a Saint Pierre” (Monday).

Saturday.<sup>43)</sup> Besides confirming that there was preaching daily on weekdays, this list reveals that most of the daily services were held at St. Gervais and the Magdeleine, as the Ordinances decreed, and that the only two days when St. Pierre is mentioned by parishioners are two of the three which were so designated by the Ordinances. Thus it is clear that after Calvin's return from exile Geneva had worship services every day, held in the parishes of St. Gervais and the Magdeleine, with three services, Mondays, Wednesdays, and Fridays at St. Pierre, as the Ordinances planned.

What was the schedule of services? If the Ordinances regulations are correct about the daily worship, do they also give an accurate picture of the rest of the practice? Here the weekday services are examined first because in this case they are clearer than Sunday. Some of this question has already been answered by the previous list of days named by parishioners who attended worship in the three parishes. Further evidence is found in a council regulation of 18 Aug. 1542 regarding the distribution of ministers for conducting weekday worship.

Master Calvin explained that it would be very suitable to have a change

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43) *Registres du Consistoire* I: On 6 April 1542, p. 32 Venturinayz, wife of Sollier: "qu'elle vaz quand elle peult et y a esté aujourd'huys et az presché Mayster Viret" (i.e., Thursday). On 10 Aug. 1542, p. 98, Aymoz, son of Egrege Nycod de Prato, "n'y peult aller bonnement sinon la dymenche et le mecredi" (Wednesday). On 17 Aug. 1542, p. 104, Mama Buctin & his wife Claudaz: "saz femme respond qu'elle fust mardi au sermon et n'a rien retenu" (Tuesday). On 21 Sept. 1542, p. 121, Tybauldaz, wife of Glaude Martin, says "vaz aux sermons les dymenches et les lundi" (Monday). On 28 Dec. 1542, p. 159, the wife of Jehan Corajod "elle viendra tous les samedis et dymenches et mecredis pour venir aux sermons et cathequesme" (Wednesday and Saturday).

There are multiple references to "tous les jours"; sometimes it is instruction by the Consistory, sometimes an excuse from the accused. On 30 March 1542, p. 22 Jaques Emyn is told "qu'il vienne tous les jours ou plus souvent a la predication"; on 17 May 1542, p. 65, Jaques Emyn is ordered to go to catechism "toutes les dymenches" & "tous les jours aux sermons." On 20 July 1542, p. 88, Aymoz Cortagier says he does not go "tous les jours"; p. 90, Andri Arnod says he cannot go "tous les jours." In addition, the reconciliation of the Tissot family (above) speaks of doing this "a quelque sermon" as if these were regular occasions.

of ministers from time to time so that the people may be so much the better edified. [The ministers having consulted] among themselves have proposed that Calvin and Champereau would do their duty at the Magdeleine, Master Henry de La Mare and M. De Geneston would do the [early] morning sermons at St. Pierre, and de Ecclesia and Master Pierre Blanchet at St. Gervais.<sup>44)</sup>

Here is seen that two men worked in each of the preaching stations, i.e. St. Gervais and the Magdeleine; the two assigned to St. Pierre for “the morning service” (the only one which is given a specific temporal description) would have been responsible for the dawn services. Although days are not named, it is evident that this is specifically intended for weekdays (except for the dawn services) because on Sundays Calvin was preaching at St. Pierre at least in the morning, perhaps both morning and afternoon.

An edict on 30 March 1543 also contributes to the picture of the schedule of Genevan sermons by assigning them times.

It is ordered that from Easter until next St. Michael’s Day [Sept. 29] the bell for the morning sermon (“sermon de matin”) should be rung before four o’clock and the service should begin at four [a.m.]. The “ordinary” sermon should begin at six o’clock and the Wednesday sermon at seven. And the council meeting should begin at seven o’clock. From St. Michael’s Day until Easter the council will begin at eight o’clock.<sup>45)</sup>

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44) See OC 21:301 (18 Aug. 1542, RC f98).

45) *Registres du Conseil*, 30 March 1543 (RC 37, 45v): “Ordonne que dempuy Pasques jusques a la St. Michel prochain, le sermon de matin ce doybge sonner devant quatre heures et commencé a quatre heures. L’ordinayre sermon ce doybge commencé a six heures et le sermon du mecredy a sept heures. Et que l’on doybge entré en conseyl a sept heures et dempuy la St. Michel jusque a Pasques a huyct heures.” Lambert, *Praying, Preaching and Policing*, p. 290 n.23 misreads this as “L’ordinayre sermon ce doybge commencé a IX heures” because he misinterprets a scribal correction; the word just before IX is crossed out, and that mark almost obscures the “s” of “six,” leaving what Lambert interprets as the Roman numeral IX. When the “s”

Here the specific times of daily worship are identified. There is a dawn service which begins at 4 a.m. (this is three days/ week at St. Pierre) and then the regular daily services at the "ordinary" time of 6 a.m./ 7 a.m. (at St. Gervais and the Magdeleine). The reference to Wednesday has to do with the day of prayer service which was a particularly important time of worship, second only to Sunday and thus given more significance by being set at a later time. (This subject is dealt with elsewhere.<sup>46)</sup> There is some further important information which can be drawn from this quotation. The hour for each service changes twice/ year, alternating between a winter time and a summer one. Here the rotation is named only for the ordinary sermon but in fact it applied to the dawn services also, as the baptismal records show.

Confirmation of this picture of daily worship is found in the records of baptisms and marriages, especially the more frequent baptisms, records which were begun in Geneva in 1550. These demonstrate that St. Gervais had daily services, Monday through Saturday, 6 a.m. or 7 a.m., with the addition of a dawn service on Wednesday, when the other service is held an hour later than usual, at 7 a.m. or 8 a.m. (This day of prayer service at dawn was not planned in the Ordinances, but it is evident at least by 1550.<sup>47)</sup> The Magdeleine had an almost identical schedule, with services Monday-Tuesday, Thursday-Saturday at 6 a.m. or 7 a.m. The one difference was that its day of prayer service on Wednesday was moved to St. Pierre at the later hour of 7 a.m. or 8 a.m. St. Pierre itself had the three dawn services planned in the 1541 Ordinances, on Mondays, Wednesdays, and Fridays at 4 a.m. or 5 a.m. On Wednesdays St. Pierre also hosted the day of prayer service which would otherwise have been at the Magdeleine.

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is restored, the passage in fact fits the rest of the evidence.

- 46) See Elsie McKee, "John Calvin's Day of Prayer: Origin, Nature, and Significance," in *Calvin und Calvinismus – Europäische Perspektiven*, ed. Irene Dingel (forthcoming).
- 47) Dawn baptisms are recorded in the St. Gervais registers from the beginning of those registers in 1550. As yet I have not seen concrete evidence for the exact date of institution of these dawn day of prayer services in a second location (besides St. Pierre). Logic suggests 1549, when the council was asking for more services.

(This move was not planned in the 1541 Ordinances or the daily assignments of the preachers established in August 1542 but was evidently begun some time before the baptismal and marriage records became a regular practice in 1550.)

The schedule of Sunday services in 1541 is not so complicated as that for the weekdays but it offers certain challenges of its own because there the Ordinances cannot be taken at face value, at least at the beginning. The reason was a lack of sufficient trained clergy and therefore the need to limit the number of places that services were held. Theoretically there should have been eleven: four each at St. Pierre and St. Gervais, and three at the Magdeleine (although it may be noted from the draft ordinances that Calvin did not plan a third service at the Magdeleine; that was added by the council's wish). St. Pierre and St. Gervais had services at dawn, mid-morning, catechism at noon, and in the afternoon at 3 p.m. These eight services were organized immediately (on the basis of what were probably two existing sermons in St. Pierre and one or two in St. Gervais), although it took a few months to get the dawn service at St. Gervais functioning.<sup>48)</sup> Thus worship was held at four times throughout the day, beginning at 4 a.m. and concluding at 4 p.m., in two parishes. The story at the Madgeleine was different, however. There the only regular Sunday service was the noon catechism, although a mid-morning service was held on the four days per year when the Lord's Supper was celebrated in the city.<sup>49)</sup> On other Sundays the people of the Magdeleine parish attended worship at St. Pierre. By 1549 it was possible to make the mid-morning

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48) OC 21:300 (8 Aug. 1542, RC f91).

49) The existence of a service on Supper Sundays is witnessed by the fact that elders are assigned to serve the cup, beginning with first Supper recorded in Consistory records, at the meeting on 6 April 1542 for following Easter Sunday April 10 and 22 March 1543 for Easter March 25 and 30 Aug. 1543 for September Supper (*Registres du Consistoire* I, pp. 34-35, 207, 254) and references by parishioners to having taken communion there, e.g., Colleta, daughter of Andrier Berthier, 14 Sept. 1542 (*Registres du Consistoire* I, p. 116), who also says that she goes to the [daily] sermons at the Magdeleine and to St. Pierre on Sundays [evidently except when the Supper is celebrated].

service at the Magdeleine a regular weekly occurrence, and by mid-1555 the afternoon service was added so that all three Sunday services called for in the Ordinances were finally in practice.<sup>50)</sup>

Who were the people who attended worship at all these hours? Or did they, in fact? It is clear that Protestant worship demanded much more of laity than the daily medieval Mass had. Now it was necessary to have laity present at every service to hear the sermon, and the churches were accordingly provided with a new item of furniture: benches for all the congregation and chairs for some (i.e., members of the magistracy and judiciary). One Catholic critic said that seating took no note of rank, so although there were some distinctions in Geneva's system (as is evident in the better seats for the civic officials), it is probable that questions of status in seating were less marked than in traditional attendance at Mass.<sup>51)</sup> However, it is clear that high and low, rich and poor, magistrate and artisan, everyone was supposed to come at least once on Sunday. And although there were repeated exhortations (or complaints) about those who did not come to the sermons, in later years the evidence of crowded churches (especially when Calvin or Viret was preaching), and expanding parishes, indicates that quite a number of people did attend at least once or twice on Sunday and usually once or more often during the week.<sup>52)</sup>

All laity were free to attend sermons in any parish, although they were

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50) OC 21:457 (28 Oct. 1549, RC f250). OC 21:608-09 (10 June 1555, RC f102); 21:609 (24 June 1555, RC f114). See confirmation in baptismal and marriage records.

51) For discussion of seating, cf. Lambert, *Praying, Preaching and Policing*, pp. 206ff; 332ff. For RC critic, see Cathalan, *Passevent Parisien*, pp. 26-27: "C'est tout comme dedens un collège ou escolle, tout y est plain de bancz, et une chaire au milieu pour le prêcheur, et au devant d'icelle les bancz plus bas pour les femmes et petits enfans: et tout autour les plus haultz pour assoyr les hommes, sans différences des personnes."

52) See examples of parishioners attending twice on Sundays, *Registres du Consistoire*, I, pp. 18, 19, 20, 28. OC 21:718 (19 June 1559 RC f59): "[]Seromons[]. Pour ce quil fait si grande chaleur quon ne peult durer a la Magdelaine a cause de la multitude qui sy trouve pour ouir Monsieur Calvin et Monsieur Pierre Viret. A este arreste que doresnavant pendant quil fera chault on presche a Saint Pierre la sepmaine au lieu de Saint Germain." See also 21:719-20, 7 Aug. 1559.

supposed to go to their own for sacraments and to send their children or dependents to their own parish for catechism.<sup>53)</sup> For clergy the regular preaching rotation insured that no one served in exactly the same place all the time.<sup>54)</sup> This was least true for Calvin, who was usually in St. Pierre on Sundays, although he probably preached fairly regularly at St. Gervais on Sunday afternoons in the first half of his ministry. Almost all ministers had assignments which meant alternating responsibility for a service with a colleague. One example from 1550: Michel Cop and François Bourgoing did the dawn service at St. Pierre in alternate weeks and the catechism at Magdeleine in the same rhythm. (Cop would have dawn at St. Pierre one week and the catechism at Magdeleine that same day; the next week Bourgoing would have the St. Pierre dawn service and catechism at Magdeleine. When one man was ill the other had to fill in for these absences.) In effect, the population of Geneva, both people and preachers, were actively moving about the city participating in an abundance of preaching services which were available at four times on Sundays and every day at least once, with two different times on half of the weekdays.

### III

So what can be concluded? It is clear that the 1541 Ecclesiastical Ordinances provide an accurate basic guide to the worship life in Calvin's Geneva. The parishes of St. Pierre and St. Gervais followed the decree exactly; the Sunday services at the Magdeleine took some time to develop but when the morning and afternoon services were added they did implement what had been planned. The additions which went beyond the 1541 Ordinances, which included summer time-winter time alternations and additional services, were essentially codified in the 1561 revision. What does not appear in the ordinances is the way that the symbiosis

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53) OC 10:20; OS 2, p. 337.

54) McKee, "Calvin and His Colleagues as Pastors."

between St. Pierre and Magdeleine functioned, and how the assignment of ministers to worship schedules was developed, but these details are provided from baptismal and marriage records.

**Abstract**

Amid the many theological developments of the Protestant Reformation the practical implementations of changes in worship sometimes are forgotten. This essay examines where and when Genevans worshiped, clarifying recent arguments about times and frequency of services as well as how places, their state of repair, and the arrival of many refugees contributed to the material organization of worship. It is shown that the 1541 Ecclesiastical Ordinances are a generally reliable guide to days and numbers of services, but these should be supplemented by data about personnel and hours of worship drawn from baptismal and marriage registers and civil records.