



This is an author manuscript post-peer-reviewing (accepted version) of the original publication. The layout of the published version may differ .

An institutional collective publisher ? : Geneva's Company of Pastors exploiting printing (c.1620-c.1685)

Dami, Hadrien

How to cite

DAMI, Hadrien. An institutional collective publisher ? : Geneva's Company of Pastors exploiting printing (c.1620-c.1685). In: Early modern publishers : identities and strategies in the book trade. Cullen, B., MacLean, I. & der Weduwen, A. (Ed.). Leiden : Brill, 2025. p. 68–86. (Library of the Written Word - The Handpress World) doi: 10.1163/9789004727182_006

This publication URL: <https://archive-ouverte.unige.ch/unige:185066>

Publication DOI: [10.1163/9789004727182_006](https://doi.org/10.1163/9789004727182_006)

An Institutional Collective Publisher? Geneva's Company of Pastors Exploiting Printing (c. 1620-c. 1685)

Hadrien Dami

Agents of the modern book trade, printers, booksellers, as well as bookbinders and peddlers, were generally individuals or small groups of professional partners. However, the function of publisher, as manager, promoter, financier and even editor of printed works, could also be performed by a legal entity, an institution. What then were the characteristics of an institutional publisher, as compared to a sole individual? In what ways did books produced and distributed by an institution raise specific issues? To provide some insights on these questions, I will focus both on the motives that defined the editorial agenda of such a publisher and on the reasons why authors turned to them. The Company of Pastors and Professors of Geneva is a good example of an institution that took on the role of publisher as part of its work. This article offers a case study of the Company's relationship with the printed word and the specific features of its publishing activity.

Created by the ecclesiastical ordinances of 1541, the Company of Pastors and Professors of Geneva was the religious authority of the city. Its members were all the ministers serving in the area and the professors of the Academy. It ensured the maintenance of orthodoxy and morality, provided worship and teaching and was responsible for the administration of charity through the establishment of the *Hospital general*.¹ Since the sixteenth century, the Company of Pastors and Professors of Geneva had been an authority recognised by the Reformed communities across Europe. Many of its members were renowned theologians. Ministers and churches throughout Europe, especially in France, appealed to the Company for advice on doctrinal, theological and ecclesiastical matters. This position of authority became even more pronounced after the Synod of Dort (1618-1619) and the reaffirmation of Reformed orthodoxy in response to Arminian controversies.² At least until the revocation of the Edict of Nantes (1685), which led to the European dispersal of the Huguenot community in France, the Company of Pastors of Geneva constituted a reference and an authority within the international Reformed world. It was strengthened by its

¹ For a first approach: Matteo Campagnolo, 'Compagnie des pasteurs', *Dictionnaire historique de la Suisse*, online version (2004) <https://hls-dhs-dss.ch/fr/articles/030188/2004-01-21/>. For the history of the Company from its beginnings to early seventeenth century, see the introductions of the edited registers of the Company from 1546 to 1619: *Registres de la Compagnie des pasteurs de Genève*, (14 t., Genève: Droz, 1964-2012). Very little has been written on the Company in the seventeenth century, except for the extremely well documented but hard to read Roger Stauffenegger, *Église et société: Genève au XVIIe siècle*, (2 vols., Genève: Droz, 1983).

² William A. McComish, *The Epigones: A study of the theology of the Genevan Academy at the time of the Synod of Dort, with special reference to Giovanni Diodati* (Allison Park: Pickwick Publications, 1989); Nicolas Fornerod, 'Introduction', in Id etc. (eds.), *Registres de la Compagnie des pasteurs de Genève: le synode de Dordrecht. t. 14 et dernier: 1618-1619* (Genève: Droz, 2012), pp. VII-CXXI.

status as the ‘mother church’ and heir of Calvin and Beza.³ Concomitantly, the Geneva Company positioned itself as a Protestant citadel committed to defending the interests of Reformed communities within a context of confessional confrontation.

As an institution, the Company's links with the printed book mainly involved two complementary functions. It had both a publishing and censorship role. The Company was involved in the oversight of the editorial activity in Geneva, both in terms of the production and circulation of books.⁴ On an international scale, its status as an authority within the Reformed sphere led it to prevent the printing and distribution of works that it considered deviant, dangerous or simply not very useful. Other contemporary institutions acted similarly as both censors and publishers. The establishment of the *Imprimerie Royale* in 1640 has been persuasively interpreted as a means of cultural promotion in the growing censorial concerns of the French Monarchy.⁵ As Paolo Sachet has shown, the Roman Curia, previously mostly studied for the censorship exerted through the Inquisition and the Index, maintained close and productive links with the printed word. The *Stamperia Camerale* (1589) and the *Tipografia Apostolica* (1587) were the names of printing workshops and institutional publishers emanating from the Roman Curia.⁶

Unlike these examples, the Company of Pastors and Professors of Geneva did not possess nor directly use a printing press. As we shall see, although the Company financed several books, its involvement often did not concern funding. It is essential to consider a large number of cases in which the Company was not the entity that invested the money needed to produce a book nor did it sell them for profit. It could take care of the editing and revision of texts submitted to the press, choose the printer or bookseller to whom a publication was entrusted, negotiate the terms of the printing contract, and correct the manuscript or proofs. The Company acted as a publisher in one established definition of the word, in close collaboration with printers and booksellers, artisans and trade agents who were publishers in the modern commercial meaning of the term. I will therefore use the term ‘publishing function’ to describe the active editorial role played by the Company. The term can be understood as: ‘a person’, or a group of persons, ‘who prepares and issues a book or

³ Stauffenegger, *Église et société*; Karin Maag, *Seminary or university? the Genevan Academy and reformed higher education, 1560-1620* (Aldershot: Ashgate, 1995); Maria-Cristina Pitassi, ‘De l'exemplarité au soupçon. L'Église genevoise vue de l'étranger’, in Ead, *Jean-Alphonse Turretini (1671-1737). Les temps et la culture intellectuelle d'un théologien éclairé* (Paris: Champion, 2019), pp. 111-130.

⁴ See Catherine Santschi, *La Censure à Genève au XVII^e siècle, de l'Escalade à la Révocation de l'Édit de Nantes* (Genève: Tribune Éditions, 1978), and Ingeborg Jostock, *La Censure négociée. Le contrôle du livre à Genève (1560-1625)* (Genève: Droz, 2007).

⁵ On the creation of the *Imprimerie royale*, see Paul-Marie Grinevald, ‘Richelieu et l'Imprimerie royale’, in André Tuilier etc. (eds.), *Richelieu et le monde de l'esprit. Sorbonne novembre 1985* (Paris: Imprimerie nationale, 1985), pp. 237-248. Henri-Jean Martin, in his *Livre, pouvoir et société à Paris au XVII^e siècle (1598-1701)* (t.1, Genève: Droz, 1969), pp. 467-471, already suggested that the creation of the *Imprimerie royale* had to be analysed as part of the control exerted over printing by the French monarchy.

⁶ Paolo Sachet, *Publishing for the popes. The Roman Curia and the Use of Printing (1527-1555)* (Leiden/Boston: Brill, 2020); Id. ‘The Rise of the Stampatore Camerale: Printers and Power in Early Sixteenth-Century Rome’, in Nina Lamal etc. (eds.), *Print and Power in Early Modern Europe (1500–1800)* (Leiden: Brill, 2021), pp. 181-201.

document to the public, as author, editor, printer, or bookseller'.⁷ The Company mostly took on this function not to generate commercial profit, but rather to achieve its objectives, which were the preservation and dissemination of orthodoxy and the defence of the Reformation during a time of confessional confrontation.

The following analysis is primarily based on the numerous references to printed matters in the registers of the Company of Pastors and Professors of Geneva during an understudied period, that of the consolidation and the crisis of the Reformed orthodoxy between about 1620 and 1685.⁸ My aim is to explore the motivations behind the editorial choices made, as well as the publishing strategies employed. Books written and published individually by members of the Company will not be discussed here, as they do not fall within the institutional and collective concern of this article. The first section focuses on the texts for which the Company possessed the right to print.⁹ My second section focuses on the role of the Company as an expert editorial promoter, using its publishing skills at the service of the Reformed cause. The final section examines some of the strategic uses of publication by the pastors of Geneva, and their failures.

Publisher, author and censor

According to early modern Genevan regulations, a right to print meant the prohibition of anyone to reprint a text or to have it reprinted before the first edition had sold out. A further restriction extended this prohibition as long as the author of a work was still alive and, in practice, living in Geneva. The permission of the author was required for any new printing. Privileges could also be granted by the civil authorities, guaranteeing a monopoly for a certain period, usually a few years. At the censorship level, any publication relating to religion required the permission of the Company, granted on its behalf by the rector of the Academy.¹⁰

The Company of Pastors and Professors of Geneva held the right to print texts written or edited by itself. These texts were those for which it was institutionally responsible. As an educational institution, the Company was responsible for the publication of linguistic treatises. Relating to its pastoral and theological authority, it organised the publication of printed materials used in the practice of the Reformed faith. With these educational and confessional works, the Company performed the triple function of publisher, author and censor. It financed the publishing process and

⁷ 'Publisher, n., sense 2.a', *Oxford English Dictionary* (Oxford: University Press, September 2023) <https://doi.org/10.1093/OED/3798048956>.

⁸ The Pastors and Professors gathered once a week and the minutes of their discussions were taken on these registers, today held in the Geneva State Archive (Archives d'État de Genève; hereafter: AEG). On the Reformed orthodoxy, see Maria-Cristina Pitassi, *De l'orthodoxie aux Lumières. Genève 1670-1737* (Genève: Labor et Fides, 1992).

⁹ In the sources, we read 'droit d'imprimer'; 'droit sur l'impression'; 'droit sur la copie' and other similar expressions. Using the term 'copyright' would be anachronistic; I will use the more neutral and polysemic expression 'right to print' in the following pages.

¹⁰ See the text of the printing ordinances of 1560, revised in 1625, in Jostock, *La Censure négociée*, pp. 326-328.

selected the printers and booksellers to whom it granted or sold the right to print. Furthermore, it prepared the texts before they were sent to the printer, corrected the proofs, and exercised its censorial prerogative by blocking editions deemed inappropriate.

As the institution responsible for teaching at the Academy, the Company coordinated the publication of language manuals. Latin, Greek and Hebrew, the biblical languages, were fundamental for the formation of Reformed theologians. The objective was to publish high quality teaching manuals at an affordable price for the students. To achieve this, the Company employed different means. For example, the 1644 revision of the Latin Grammar on the behalf of the Company by one of the professors granted the Company the legal status of author.¹¹ Another option was to secure the control over a work by obtaining a privilege from the Council, as was done for the new Greek Grammar published in 1653.¹² As the Company was an institution and not a printer or bookseller, authorship and privilege were the two ways of being legally recognised as the holder of the right to print, according to Geneva's printing ordinances. In both cases, the Company was able to control the distribution and the sales price of the books. It acted therefore as a publisher, in that it was the author, editor, investor and market regulator for these textbook editions.

Together with the didactic books, the Company held the right to print 'books of piety', as referred to in the archival sources. These were the fundamental works for the practice of the Reformed religion: Bibles, Psalters, prayers, and catechisms. As a theological authority, the Company was responsible for the texts, principally their preparation and correction. In its publishing function, it oversaw their distribution. The case of the Bible is emblematic of this dual responsibility, theological and editorial. From a legal point of view, the Company of Pastors held the right to print the Bible since 1588, when it produced a new translation, indicating on the title page that the text had been 'all revised and conferred on Hebrew and Greek texts by the Pastors and Professors of the Genevan Church'.¹³ This edition of a new French version of the sacred text put an end to a period of proliferation of competing translations that had lasted some fifty years since the first French Reformed Bible, translated by Olivetan and published in 1535.¹⁴ In 1560, the Geneva printing ordinances included an article stating that the printing of Bibles and other religious books should be 'common to all'. A right to print and privileges could, however, be granted for a translation that was 'new ..., better and more exquisite' than the others.¹⁵ This was the case with the 1588 revision, which

¹¹ *Grammatica latina. In usum scholae Genevensis conscripta. Nunc autem diligenter recognita et variis mendis purgata* (Genevae: s.n., 1644) (USTC 6700026); AEG, Cp. Past. 9, p. 19, 13 August 1643.

¹² *Institutiones Linguae Graecae Olim quidem scriptae à Nicolao Clenardo* (Genevae: Ex Typographia Ioannis de Tournes, Reipublicae et Academiae Typographi, 1653) (USTC 6085499); AEG, Cp. Past R. 9, p. 344, 12 September 1651; AEG, Cp. Past R 10, p. 6, 23 January 1652.

¹³ *La Bible ... le tout revu et conféré sur les textes Hebreux et Grecs par les Pasteurs et Professeurs de l'Eglise de Geneve*. Several editions in different formats were issued in 1588 (USTC 5884, 5885, 60663, 45606, 1894).

¹⁴ Max Engammare, 'Cinquante ans de révision de la traduction biblique d'Olivétan: les bibles réformées genevoises en français au XVI^e siècle', *Bibliothèque d'Humanisme et Renaissance*, vol. 53 (1991), pp. 347-377.

¹⁵ Quoted in Jostock, *La Censure négociée*, p. 327.

was printed in a great number of copies.¹⁶ Since the permission of the Company was required for any religious work to be printed, the publication of other versions of the Bible in Geneva ceased after this date. Thus, in the seventeenth century, the Company's right over editions of the Bible, mentioned several times in the sources, was combined with its censorship function to create a monopoly over the sacred text.¹⁷ Of course, the Company did not finance all the editions produced in Geneva.¹⁸ However, it was responsible for the text and its correction. It could choose the printers and booksellers to whom the rights of printing and distribution would be entrusted.¹⁹ In this respect, the institution can be described as a publisher.

On a European scale and with all the various versions considered, Geneva was second only to Paris in the number of printed editions of the Bible in French, with 137 throughout the seventeenth century, including 91 between 1620 and 1685. Above all, the French version repeatedly revised by the Company since 1588, the 'Bible de Genève', was the most widely printed translation, with minor variations, ahead of the Catholic translation overseen by the theologians of Louvain.²⁰ Until the end of the seventeenth century, this version of the Scripture remained the reference text for French Bibles printed in the European Reformed world. During the period under study, the Company of Pastors and Professors of Geneva was undoubtedly the publishing body that supervised the greatest number of French editions of the sacred text in Europe.

Above all, the Company was the theological institution responsible for the French version of the Word of God. Throughout the chronological period under study, the dual function of the Company, both as religious authority and publisher, was manifested in the crucial question of correction. This issue was part of a wider dynamic of multiple complaints about the poor quality of Genevan printing at the beginning of the seventeenth century. Paper, typefaces, and typographical correction were all to blame.²¹ In July 1617, for example, the French National Synod of Vitré wrote to the Company of Pastors to complain about the errors contained in the Bible. Again, in May 1619,

¹⁶ More than 10,000 copies of the Bible were published, including 6,000 in in-8° format, in addition to in-folio and in-4° editions (Engammare, 'Cinquante ans', p. 368).

¹⁷ For example AEG, Cp. Past R 10, p. 371, 13 November 1657; Cp. Past R 11, p. 146, 16 November 1660.

¹⁸ A single mention in the registers refers to a direct financial investment, although it is not known whether it resulted in a publication: 'Whereas the Company has money which is not put to use, whether it would be appropriate to use it for the said printing [of the Bible] and to enter into some sort of partnership with the ... merchant booksellers' / 'Attendu que la Compagnie a des deniers qui chomment, s'il seroit point à propos de les employer en ladite impression [de la bible] et entrer en quelque profit avec les ... marchands libraires.' (AEG, Cp. Past R 11, p. 109, 27 January 1660).

¹⁹ The Company, for example, decided in 1609 to sell its right over the Bible for a period of twenty years to an association of several Geneva publishers. The money gained was donated to charity (AEG, R.C. 106, f. 92, 19 May 1609).

²⁰ The French 'Bible de Genève' of 1588 should not be confused with the English translation of 1560 called the 'Geneva Bible'. My statistics emerge from an analysis of the appendices to Bettye T. Chambers' *Bibliography of French Bibles. II: Seventeenth Century French-Language Editions of the Scriptures*, (Genève: Droz, 1994), 'Appendix III: Index of editions by version', pp. 923-926; 'Appendix V: Index of printers and publishers by city of publication', pp. 930-938.

²¹ Santschi, *La Censure*, pp. 31-33; Jostock, *La Censure négociée*, pp. 252-254.

Jean Diodati, an eminent Genevan theologian and delegate to the Synod of Dort, reported criticisms of Genevan printing that arose within the assembly.²² But here there was more at stake than the consequences for believers. These years were amid the controversy sparked by the publication at the end of 1617 of the *Genève Plagiaire* by the Jesuit Pierre Coton.²³ This work attacked the Genevan translations of the Scriptures, accusing them of being biased and of betraying the original texts. Coton's attack was the first against the French Reformed translations of the Bible, using the philological issue to make the question of the authenticity of the biblical text part of the confessional controversy.²⁴ One of the arguments was the multiplicity of Protestant versions of the Bible.²⁵ For the Reformed side, this reinforced the need for a single and correct version of the Scripture from 1618 onwards.

This requirement for a careful correction is the reason for the strict control exercised by the Company over the printing of the Bible in Geneva. In practice, the pastors ensured this correction on three levels. Firstly, the censorship legislation gave the Company, in the person of the rector, the right to monitor the proofreaders employed in the printing workshops.²⁶ Secondly, some pastors were often deputised to correct the proofs themselves.²⁷ Finally, the Company, and, among its members, the professors of theology, constantly reworked the text. The aim was to eliminate translation errors and misprints, but also to bring the text up to date, for example by changing 'words

²² Nicolas Fornerod etc. (eds.), *Registres de la Compagnie des Pasteurs de Genève, t. XIII (1617-1618)* (Genève: Droz, 2001), p. 80, 11 July 1617; *Registres de la Compagnie des Pasteurs de Genève, t. XIV and last (1618-1619)*, p. 94, 28 May 1619.

²³ Pierre Coton, *Genève plagiaire, ou verification des depravations de la parole de Dieu, qui se trouvent és Bibles de Geneve* (Paris: Claude/Sébastien Chappelet, 1618) (USTC 6015912; 6001834).

²⁴ François Laplanche, *L'écriture, le sacré et l'histoire. Érudits et politiques protestants devant la Bible en France au XVIIe siècle* (APA: Holland University Press, Amsterdam: Maarssen, 1986), pp. 313-317.

²⁵ *Registres de la Compagnie des Pasteurs de Genève, t. XIII*, pp. XVII-XIX; *Registres de la Compagnie des Pasteurs de Genève, t. XIV*, pp. LXXXIX; Frédéric Gabriel, 'Verbe exposé et théologie à la source: l'exégèse combattante de Pierre Coton (1600-1620)', *Mélanges de l'École française de Rome - Italie et Méditerranée modernes et contemporaines*, 132 (2020), pp. 135-146.

²⁶ The last revision of the printing ordinances, in 1625, reiterated a measure that had previously been included in the legislation: 'All printers are enjoined to take good care of the correction of the books that they print, on pain of punishment, both themselves and the correctors, by arbitrary fines, according to the abuse and faults that will be recognised in their printings; and to these ends they are ordered to keep good and sufficient correctors, whom they will present to the rector to be examined for their sufficiency.' / 'Tous imprimeurs sont enjoins de tenir bonne main à la correction des livres qu'ils imprimeront, à peine d'estre chastiés, tant eux que les correcteurs, par amendes arbitraires, selon l'abus et les fautes qui seront recogneues en leurs impressions; et à ces fins leur est commandé de tenir de bons et suffisans correcteurs, lesquels ils presenteront au Sieur recteur pour estre examinés de leur suffisance.' (Jostock, *La Censure négociée*, p. 362, no. 76).

²⁷ AEG, Cp. Past R 10, p. 261, 23 November 1655; p. 339, 23 January 1657; R 11, p. 315, 13 November 1663.

that are no longer in use'.²⁸ Several attempts were made to reformulate the text more substantially, but these were unsuccessful.²⁹

The correction of the text extended beyond Geneva and the Company. Theologians from abroad, such as Daniel Chamier, a pastor from Montbéliard, and Laurent Drelincourt, son of the famous pastor and controversialist Charles Drelincourt, contacted the Company to point out errors in the Bible.³⁰ The pastors of Geneva welcomed these comments and incorporated them into their process of correcting the text. The participation of foreign theologians in the correction of the Geneva Bibles is significant: it illustrates the collective nature of the work on the sacred text within the Reformed sphere. It also shows the recognition of the authorial status of the Company of Pastors and Professors of Geneva, whose name appeared from 1588 in the title (*'La Bible ... Le tout reveu & conferé sur les textes grecs, par les pasteurs & professeurs de l'Eglise de Geneve'*).

For more than a century, the Company was the theological authority and institutional publisher of the French Reformed version of the Bible, delivering the printed Scripture to the Reformed world. This specific case of a publisher entrusted with a doctrinal mission concerning the printed transmission of the Word of God raises fundamental questions for religious history and for the history of confessional confrontation. The name and reputation of the Church of Geneva appeared on every copy, acting as a guarantee for the believers and a deterrent for confessional opponents.

A Reformed expert publisher

To describe its publishing functions, it is not enough to consider only the publications for which the Company of Pastors and Professors held the right to print. Because of its status as an authority, it was regularly approached by foreign theologians who submitted manuscripts for its theological expertise and editorial services. This recognition of authority enabled the Company to assume the role of regulator of Reformed printed works. In this capacity, it acted as a specialist publisher of religious books and works defending the Reformation. According to the Company's registers, when a manuscript was submitted by a foreign author, the procedure was generally as follows. One or more of its members, often professors of theology, were appointed to examine the text. On the basis of their report, the Company could provide a range of assistance: textual revision, approaching printers in Geneva to have the work published, simply commenting on the text, or trying to dissuade the

²⁸ AEG, Cp. Past R 13, p. 281, 6 November 1674. A few months later, the professors of theology were again enjoined to make corrections, 'particularly for the old words that must be removed'. (AEG, Cp. Past R 13, p. 453, 31 March 1675).

²⁹ This was particularly the case in 1672. An 'assembly for the revision of the Bible' was set up. The theologians who made up this assembly were supposed to meet periodically to review the translation as a whole. It seems that the task was too great, given the many reports of work not being carried out in the months and years that followed (AEG, Cp. Past R 13, p. 69, 16 August 1672).

³⁰ AEG, Cp. Past R 10, p. 339, 30 January 1657 (Chamier). AEG, Cp. Past R 11, p. 315, 13 November 1663; Cp. Past R 11, p. 377, 12 January 1665 (Drelincourt).

author from publishing his book. In 1667, efforts were made to improve the efficiency of this process. The examination of manuscripts was taking too long as ‘all the members’ wanted to see them. It shows that this was indeed a regular practice.³¹

Ingeborg Jostock addresses this issue in her book on censorship in Geneva between 1560 and 1625. She examines the reasons why the Company refused to print some of the submitted texts and shows the publishing services it provided to its ‘confessional clientele’.³² In extending the chronology, I feel it is necessary to qualify one of Jostock’s assertions. According to her, ‘the main reason’ why French authors chose to publish their works in Geneva was the ‘lack of Protestant printing workshops in most parts of France’.³³ This explanation was no longer valid after the development of Protestant printing presses in the provinces of the kingdom, which became legal after the Edict of Nantes of 1598.³⁴ Even if Protestant printing was strictly regulated under the Edict, many Reformed printers and publishers were able to issue Protestant books, from places such as La Rochelle, Rouen and Saumur. Appealing to Genevan presses was indeed a deliberate choice made by authors. It is therefore important to understand the reasons why the Reformed not only in France, but also in other European countries, turned to the pastors in Geneva to have their manuscripts published. An examination of the matters relating to publishing mentioned in the Company’s registers provides some clues.

One of these cases is particularly detailed: on 30 April 1624, Adrien Chamier, pastor of Montélimar, son and successor of the pastor and famous controversialist Daniel Chamier, appeared before the Company of Pastors and Professors of Geneva.³⁵ He addressed the assembly and

said that the reason for his trip to this town was his intention to have the works of the late Mr Chamier, his father, printed, and that although he had been approached from various places for this printing, he had nevertheless looked more favourably on this place, first because his late Father had laid his first and most solid foundations for his studies in this town, secondly because he believed that it would be possible to print more faithfully [*fidelement*] here, thirdly because of the *debite*.³⁶ For this reason, to facilitate his project, he enlisted the help and assistance of the Company from whom he requested three things: first

³¹ AEG, Cp. Past, R 12, p. 193, 4 October 1667.

³² Jostock, ‘Genève - une maison d’édition pour les réformés de France’, in Id., *La Censure négociée*, pp. 228-243; cit. p. 241.

³³ *Ibid*, p. 228.

³⁴ During the period considered in this article, however, the Company was approached by Waldensian pastors from the valleys of Piedmont. They most likely turned to the Company because of their lack of local printing workshops (AEG, Cp. Past R 8, p. 244, 26 September 1634; p. 337, 22 September 1637).

³⁵ Eugène and Émile Haag, *La France protestante*, second edition, ed. by Henri Bordier, t. 3 (Paris: Fischbacher, 1881), col. 1026-1038. Adrien’s son was also called Daniel Chamier, mentioned above, p. 7.

³⁶ The seventeenth-century French word ‘*debite*’ is hard to translate into modern French and English. The meaning is close to sale, disposal. But there is a nuance implying an idea of facilitated diffusion or distribution. The underlined phrase is emphasised in the original.

to help him to negotiate with some on reasonable and advantageous terms, secondly that the terms made be observed, thirdly that some of the Company take the trouble to review these writings, and to add the necessary amendments, which he was sure the Company would kindly do.³⁷

The Company of Pastors responded favourably to the request: it found a printer and bookseller, Judith de Laimarie, widow of Pierre Rovi re, who printed under his name.³⁸ The Company negotiated the contract. It also sent the professors of theology of the Academy to proofread and correct the work before it went to press. The book was published in 1626 in four large folio volumes under the title *Panstratiae catholicae, siue Controversiarum de religione aduersus pontificios*.³⁹ In this example, although the Company of Pastors and Professors was not the entity that provided the funds for the editorial work and did not have the right to print the treatise, it was nonetheless the essential agent that ensured the link between the manuscript and the printer. It offered its expertise both in the revision of the text and with its knowledge of the local printing industry.⁴⁰

The reasons given by Chamier to justify his request to the Company and his choice of Geneva as the publishing place for his father's works, despite requests from other publishers, are insightful. Chamier justified his preference with an initial argument that emphasised the role of the Geneva Academy as a place of formation for pastors, implicitly considered superior to other intellectual centres that did not enjoy its prestige, seniority and theological expertise. It was here that Daniel Chamier had studied and developed 'the first and most solid foundations' of his thought.

The second reason involved the fidelity (*fidelement*) of the printing. This is probably a question of faithfulness to the author's writings, which implied that the quality of the editorial work done in Geneva was higher than elsewhere. But this fidelity must also be understood as conformity to Reformed orthodoxy and doctrine, since the editorial work of preparing the text was carried out, as we have seen, by Geneva's professors of theology.⁴¹ Finally, the reference to '*debite*' raises a

³⁷ AEG, Cp. past. R 7, f. 68v, 30 April 1624: 'lui a fait entendre que la cause de son voyage en ceste ville estoit le dessein qu'il avoit de faire imprimer les  uvres de feu Mr Chamier son p re, et que quoi qu'il eust est  recherch  de divers endroits pour ceste impression, neantmoins il avoit regard  plustost   ce lieu, 1    cause que feu son Pere avoir mis ses *premiers et plus solides fondements de ses estudes en ceste ville*, 2    cause qu'il croit qu'il se pourra ici imprimer plus fidelement, 3.   cause de la debite. Parquoi, pour faciliter son dessein, imploieroit l'aide et assistance de la Comp. de laquelle il requeroit trois choses: 1  de lui aider   traicter avec quelcun   conditions raisonnables et avantageuses, 2  que les conditions faites soyent observees, 3. prioit que quelques uns de la Comp. prissent la peine de revoir ces Escrits, et d'y adjouster les animadversions necessaires, ce qu'il se promettoit de la bienveillance de la Comp.'

³⁸ 'La Rovi re, Pierre de', in *R pertoire des imprimeurs et  diteurs suisses actifs avant 1800*, database hosted by the Biblioth que cantonale de Lausanne (<https://db-prod-bcul.unil.ch/riech/imprimeur.php?ImprID=-8520705>).

³⁹ USTC no. 6701984.

⁴⁰ The notice to the reader of the *Panstratiae catholicae* is signed 'in Geneva' with the initials B. T., which are undoubtedly those of Benedict Turretini, the professor of theology in charge of revising the text.

⁴¹ This allegation is not here relative to the typographical quality of Genevan books, which was notoriously poor within the Reformed world, as recalled *supra*, p. 5.

This is the "author accepted manuscript". To cite this chapter, please refer to the published version printed in Barnaby Cullen, Ian MacLean, Arthur der Weduwen (ed.), *Early Modern Publishers. Identities and Strategies in the Book Trade*, Leiden, Brill, 2025, p. 68-86.

question. Was Adrien Chamier referring to a sales and distribution facility specific to the commercial networks of Geneva's booksellers? Or is this '*debite*' specific to the books printed in Geneva under the aegis of the Company to be understood differently?

Other examples of the Company's activity as a publisher shed light on this. In 1635, Matthieu Cottière, a pastor in Tours, sent a manuscript to Geneva, dedicating it to the Company and asking the Pastors and Professors to print it.⁴² They initially acknowledged the text's 'singular piety and erudition' but did not consider its publication particularly useful. However, it was decided that the rector should submit the work to the local printers.⁴³ None of them were eager to finance the publication, although the Company was willing to cover part of the costs. Cottière responded by offering to contribute financially, in exchange for a few copies.⁴⁴ In the end, the work was printed thanks to the joint financing of the author and the Company.⁴⁵

The significance of this case lies in the particular role played by the dedication to the Company of pastors of Geneva. The practice of dedication established a relationship of institutional patronage.⁴⁶ This dedication allowed Cottière to benefit from the Company's financial support. Without it, the Company would not have decided to invest in a work which, in its opinion, 'for many reasons did not appear to be very fruitful if printed'.⁴⁷

An examination of this dedication sheds light on Cottière's reasons for having his work published in Geneva under the auspices of the Company. The *Paradoxe que l'Eglise romaine, en ce qu'elle a de different des Eglises dites Reformees, n'est ancienne que de quatre cents ans environ* was a controversial treatise. It used exegetical and historical arguments to address the points of divergence between the Catholic and Reformed confessions and identify and historicise the errors of the former. Its main point, expressed in the title, was to prove the antecendency of the Reformed tradition over the innovations of the Roman Church. Behind this question lay one of the main points of the confessional controversy: the origins of the Church. The dedication '*à messieurs les pasteurs et professeurs de Genève*' allowed Cottière to benefit from the Company's funds. Cottière here set out an argument that referred to the special status of religious works published in Geneva. The author began by recalling his affection for the Company and his personal ties with its 'most honoured brothers', having himself studied at the Academy. In doing so, he emphasised that the Church of

⁴² AEG, Cp. Past R 8, p.254, 6 March 1635. On Matthieu Cottière, see the few lines devoted to him in Haag, *La France protestante*, t. 4, col. 753-754.

⁴³ AEG, Cp. Past R 8, p. 273, 14 August 1635.

⁴⁴ AEG, Cp. Past R 8, p. 276, 11 September; p. 279, 9 October 1635.

⁴⁵ The Company's financial contribution is confirmed in a later reference to the edition: AEG, Cp. Past R 8, p. 414, 18 December 1640. The work, dated 1636, is entitled *Paradoxe, que l'Eglise romaine en ce qu'elle a de different des Eglises dites Reformees, n'est ancienne que de quatre cent ans environ... par Matthieu Cottiere, ministre de la parole de Dieu* (A Genève: Imprimé pour Pierre [I] Chouet, 1636) (USTC 6701486).

⁴⁶ On this question, see Aurélien Ruellet, 'Chap. II. Patronage et culture de l'imprimé', in Id., *La Maison de Salomon. Histoire du patronage scientifique et technique en France et en Angleterre au XVIIe siècle* (Rennes: Presses universitaires de Rennes, 2018), pp. 85-118.

⁴⁷ AEG, Cp. Past R 8, p. 273, 14 August 1635: 'Pour beaucoup de raisons on ne trouvoit pas qu'estant imprimé il apportast grand fruit'.

This is the "author accepted manuscript". To cite this chapter, please refer to the published version printed in Barnaby Cullen, Ian MacLean, Arthur der Weduwen (ed.), *Early Modern Publishers. Identities and Strategies in the Book Trade*, Leiden, Brill, 2025, p. 68-86.

Geneva 'has without question its special graces' and that the city 'is miraculously protected from heaven', referring to Savoy's failed attempt to annex the city by force in 1602.

Cottière ended by declaring that, 'being sheltered from your names it [his work] will be more acceptable to all, and of better odour towards good people'.⁴⁸ The names of the dedicatees, i.e. the pastors and professors of Geneva, conferred certain attributes on the work, which was placed under their protection thanks to the dedication. On the one hand, it would be better received (*'plus recevable partout'*), and on the other, it would have a better reputation (*'meilleur odeur'*) with its target audience (*'les gens de bien'*). Cottière implied here that the reputation of the Church of Geneva and the Company of Pastors granted credit to the book. It gave it an imprimatur, a guarantee of quality. By sending his manuscript with a dedication, Cottière obtained both the theological and publishing expertise of the institution and the guarantee provided by its reputation. This idea of a particular reputation conferred by the Company to the books it published applied generally to all of them. In this regard, the *'debite'* mentioned in the Chamier case referred precisely to the reception facilitated by the Company's reputation.

The dedication made visible, public, and explicit the symbolic charge associated with the reputation of the Company of Pastors. This reputation was based on the theological and ecclesiastical authority of the institution. Considered to be favoured by God's 'special graces', the Church of Geneva still enjoyed a distinct prominence within the Reformed world in the seventeenth century. It benefited from a prestige derived from its status as the mother church, the first place where the Reformed Church was established and consolidated by Jean Calvin. The Company was the very institution created and directed by the reformer to administrate the church. Its members, in the seventeenth century, were seen as Calvin's heirs. This reputation was invoked whenever a Reformed work bore the address of Geneva on its title page. The review, validation, and commitment of the Company to the publishing process in Geneva provided a guarantee of the quality and orthodoxy of the submitted works. The symbolism associated with Geneva's publishing reputation was achieved through the Company's theological expertise. It was implemented and, above all, manifested through the exercise of its publishing function.

Strategic uses of publication

A case uncovered by institutional sources illustrates the use of the Company's editorial reputation by the pastors, in what can be described as a strategic communication operation. This example also demonstrates the limits and pitfalls that a collective and institutional publisher could face. It is a case of confrontation between the pastors and the secular authorities, which also reveals elements of internal dissension within the Company.

⁴⁸ Cottière, *Paradoxe*, f. *ij-*iij: 'estant à l'abri de vos noms il sera plus recevable par tout, et de meilleure odeur envers les gens de bien'.

In March 1649, just a few months after the execution of Charles I of England, the printer Jean III De Tournes was prosecuted by the Small Council of Geneva for having printed without permission a book entitled *Mastix independentium*. This was a Latin translation by the theologian and archdeacon (*archidiaque*) of the Church of Basel, Wolfgang Meyer, of a pamphlet by the English parliamentarian William Prynne, directed against the Independents. After several interventions by the Basel authorities, who urged that the text be published, the copies that had been seized by the Geneva Council were returned to the printer. De Tournes completed the work and was allowed to distribute it, but under some modifications hiding the Geneva implication, to which we shall return shortly.⁴⁹ The reasons for the Council's repressive action were diplomatic: it was important not to interfere in the unrest among English co-religionists, and printers had previously been expressly forbidden to publish any text whatsoever on 'English affairs'.⁵⁰

At his first appearance before the Council, Jean III De Tournes defended himself by stating that the manuscript had been given to him by David Le Clerc, then '*prorecteur*'.⁵¹ Correspondence between the Basel authorities and the Geneva Council reveals that Meyer had approached De Tournes through 'some of his good friends', including Le Clerc.⁵² Armed with his authority as censor and representative of the Company, he approached a printer for a publication in direct violation of the civil authorities' injunctions.

The context of the tensions between the Company and the Council helps us understand the pastor and professor's actions. Jean III De Tournes' first appearance before the Council was on 14 March. During the same session, the magistrates discussed the sermon delivered three days earlier by Jean Diodati, one of the most prominent pastors in the Company and an internationally renowned theologian. Despite being forbidden to do so, Diodati had vigorously denounced from the pulpit the execution of the English monarch. On this occasion, he had attacked the revolutionaries in no uncertain terms, declaring that 'we should make manifestos to show that we disapprove of and condemn this action [the execution of Charles]. And all the more so as it has been said that the sparks of this came from Geneva.'⁵³

⁴⁹ The book was published as Guilhelmi Prynne, *Fulcimentum gladii christianorum regum principum et magistratuum ... Latio donatum a Wolfgango Meyero* (s. l. [Genève], s.n. [Jean III De Tournes], 1649) (USTC 2025286).

⁵⁰ AEG, R.C. 148, p. 123, 14 March; p. 130, 17 March; p. 181, 9 April; p. 184, 10 April; p. 290, 5 June 1649. On the Geneva response to the English civil wars, see Nicholas A. Cumming, "Oliver Cromwell is a Devil!" Religious Radicalism and Political Turmoil in Geneva during the English Civil Wars' *The Seventeenth Century*, 2024, <https://doi.org/10.1080/0268117X.2024.2339548> (consulted the 8 July 2024)

⁵¹ In other words, he performed the duties of rector in the absence of an incumbent.

⁵² AEG, P.H. 3202.

⁵³ AEG, R.C. 148, p. 123-125, 14 March 1649: 'nous devrions faire des manifestes pour monstrier que nous improuvons et condamnons ceste action. Et de tant plus qu'on a voulu dire que les estincelles de ceci viennent de Geneve.'

This is the "author accepted manuscript". To cite this chapter, please refer to the published version printed in Barnaby Cullen, Ian MacLean, Arthur der Weduwen (ed.), *Early Modern Publishers. Identities and Strategies in the Book Trade*, Leiden, Brill, 2025, p. 68-86.

The idea to which Diodati wanted to respond was the link drawn by Catholic polemicists between Protestantism and political sedition. In controversial literature, the ecclesiastical organisation of the Reformed churches was seen as analogous to republican or even anarchic forms of political government.⁵⁴ It was therefore necessary to disabuse the public and, above all, to preserve the image of Geneva and its doctrine, which was suspected of favouring the regicide of a legitimate monarch. The conditions requested by the Council to release the copies of Meyer's translation and let the printer finish his work impacted this goal, leading to a partial communication failure from the point of view of the pastors. Meyer's long preface, dated April 1649 and addressed to the ecclesiastical authorities of the Swiss cantons, surely fulfilled the need for a denunciation. It consisted of an attack against the Independents, the victors in early 1649 and executioners of Charles, who were blamed for the civil unrest in England. The schismatic and sectarian nature of their movement was stressed in contrast to the Anglican confession and its links with the Reformed faith.⁵⁵

However, the modifications requested by the Council neutralised the Geneva implication: the book was allowed to be completed but the dedication had to be changed, the title modified and the typographical address of Geneva omitted.⁵⁶ There is no way of accessing the changes made in the dedication, as we can only read the text in the finally printed book. On the contrary, the refusal of the original title (chosen by either Meyer, the Geneva Pastors or the printer), *Mastix Independentium*, is significant. The term 'mastix' (whip in ancient Greek) acts as a keyword for designating the abhorred adversary in polemical English literature of the seventeenth century.⁵⁷ The final title, *Fulcimentum gladii christianorum regum principum et magistratuum*, is closer to the English original of 1647, *The sword of Christian magistracy supported: or A full vindication of Christian kings and magistrates authority*.⁵⁸ Moreover, a close examination of the translation process reveals an alteration of the explicitly designated adversaries. In the title of the English pamphlet, Prynne refuted the 'objections ... made by Donatists, Anabaptists, Independents, and Mr William Dell in his late fast-sermon'. The attack *ad nomen* to Dell and the reference to the specific sermon preached and probably published inscribed the publication in a precise polemical context. In the title of the Latin translation, the attack was directed against 'those who today trouble the Anglican Church, the partisans of the ancient Donatists and adulators of the Münster Anabaptists'.⁵⁹ Although they were

⁵⁴ Bernard Dompnier, *Le Venin de l'hérésie. Image du protestantisme et combat catholique au XVIIe siècle* (Paris: Le Centurion, 1985), pp. 82-87; Maria-Cristina Pitassi, "Refuge" e "esprit républicain": qualche traccia di lettura', in Fiorella De Michelis Pintacuda and Gianni Francioni (eds.), *Ideali repubblicani in età moderna* (Pisa: ETS, 2002), pp. 177-192.

⁵⁵ Prynne, *Fulcimentum*, pp. 3-40.

⁵⁶ AEG, R.C. 148, p. 290, 5 June 1649.

⁵⁷ '-mastix, comb. Form', *Oxford English Dictionary* (Oxford: Oxford University Press, September 2023) <https://doi.org/10.1093/OED/9082240742>.

⁵⁸ William Prynne, *The sword of Christian magistracy supported* (London: Printed by John Macock for John Bellamie, 1647) (USTC 3050776).

⁵⁹ 'Contra hodiernos Ecclesiae Anglicanae turbatores, veterum Donatistarum, et Monasteriensium Anabaptistarum amulos'

the principal target of the English version (as William Dell was a notorious Independent) and above all in the originally intended Latin title, the Independents completely disappeared from the title page after the Geneva Council's intervention. Thus, in view of Diodati's injunction to 'make manifestos' against those who committed the regicide, omitting the name of Geneva and the designation of the Independents on the title page represented a failure.

This case provides a significant insight into the use of publication by the Pastors of Geneva, or rather some of them. As the records of the civil authorities reveal, some of the pastors disagreed with Diodati's attitude in the days before his sermon delivered against the will of the Council.⁶⁰ The first attempts to publish the *Mastix* were undertaken by using the authority conferred to Le Clerc in his capacity of rector, and therefore as representative of the Company and as censor. This strategic use of authority, in this case in direct violation of the Magistrate's will, must be seen as the pursuit of a specific institutional objective. The aim was nothing less than to defend the reputation of the Reformed doctrine, damaged by polemical associations based on current European political events.

Finally, it is highly significant that the archdeacon of the Church of Basel chose to publish his translation of Prynne in Geneva. Despite the city of Basel having an active publishing industry, Meyer preferred the Geneva presses. It is likely that it was in order to benefit from the reputation conferred by publishing in Geneva that he sought out some of his theologian 'good friends'. Furthermore, it was for the use of this reputation in a committed communication campaign that Le Clerc, no doubt in agreement with Diodati, sought to circumvent the censorial edicts laid down by the Small Council. The aim was to combine the editorial reputation of Geneva with the reputation of the Church of Basel, to defend the Reformed faith. The name of Wolfgang Meyer, Doctor of Theology and Minister of the Divine Word in the Church of Basel, indeed clearly appeared as translator on the title page.⁶¹ But then, because of the censorship process that took place in Geneva, this name was alone in representing the continental theological institutions that condemned the regicide in the name of their doctrine.

Conclusions

The chronology of the Company's publishing function remains to be discussed. As we have seen, the number of Bible editions published in Geneva remained very high throughout the seventeenth century. Apart from the case of 'books of piety', the Company's records suggest a decline in publishing activity from the 1640s until the end of the period under study in 1685. It should be first emphasised that the absence of the discussion of publications produced or supervised by the Company in the registers did not mean that they had disappeared. It seems likely that a standardisation of revision practices and editorial support given to foreign authors offers a first element of explanation, as illustrated by the mention in 1667 of an effort to make the procedure

⁶⁰ AEG, R.C. 148, pp. 109-111, 2 March 1649.

⁶¹ 'Latio donatum a Wolfgango Meyero, Sanctae Theologiae Doctore et Verbi Divini in Ecclesia Basiliense Ministro seniore'.

This is the "author accepted manuscript". To cite this chapter, please refer to the published version printed in Barnaby Cullen, Ian MacLean, Arthur der Weduwen (ed.), *Early Modern Publishers. Identities and Strategies in the Book Trade*, Leiden, Brill, 2025, p. 68-86.

more efficient.⁶² Nevertheless, it is highly probable that the publishing activity exerted by the Company decreased in the second half of the century. The requests from outside, which were an important part of its overall activity, undoubtedly diminished with the growing influence of alternative Reformed intellectual centres, such as Saumur in France and Leiden in Holland. These would compete with the Company of Pastors in Geneva as theological authorities and publishing places. The rise of the United Provinces on both these levels reached its climax after the revocation of the edict of Nantes and the Refuge of French Reformed intellectuals who published much from Dutch workshops.

In addition, from the 1660s, until the revocation of the Edict of Nantes, the Genevan archives show a decrease of the Company's influence in the application of censorship, and therefore in the publishing activity of the city. This decrease of authority was the consequence of a divergence between the objectives of the pastors and those of the Council. The persecution of Protestantss gradually orchestrated by the French royal power under Louis XIV was most likely one of its main causes. This dynamic led to a shift in the focus of literature from confessional confrontation to Reformed criticism of the political actions of the Crown. The Geneva civil authorities were very sensitive to their powerful neighbour and ally, and they exerted their censorship with varying degrees of success on texts that directly attacked French royal power. From this point, criticism towards France, and with it the religious issues that had previously been addressed in controversial literature, could only be printed in Geneva via circuitous routes. As an institution, the Company was no longer able to support and publish such texts and its publishing activity decreased. The overall Genevan book production did not follow the same tendency: it shifted to less official channels, and most of the books addressing these matters were then published under false typographical addresses.

The publishing function of the Company of Pastors and Professors of Geneva was exercised within the framework of its institutional objectives. For the production and distribution of devotional books and didactic treatises, the Company had legal authority over the works it edited and revised. To carry out this role, it negotiated with printers and booksellers, and in some cases even financed them. In the defence of the doctrine and the Reformed confession, the Company offered theological, doctrinal and controversial expertise to authors who submitted their manuscripts. When it deemed it appropriate, the Company combined this textual expertise with its knowledge of the Geneva publishing world through dealing with printers and booksellers and by supervising publication. The specificity of the publishing activity of the Company of Pastors of Geneva as a publisher lay in the editorial and religious reputation conferred on the books it produced or supervised. Whether it was the Bible or controversial treatises printed in Geneva, religious books bearing the address of Geneva on their title page were marked by this reputation and carried it with them.

Looking at an institution's role as publisher provides a valuable interpretive tool for analysing its relationship with the books. Highlighting the editorial dynamics and latent motivations behind its

⁶² Cf. above, p. 8 and n. 31.

publishing activity sheds light on how the institution itself operated. In addition, I hope to have shown that the study of an institutional publisher offers ways of understanding in a more rounded way the complex processes that led to the publication of books in the early modern period. This approach allows us to look beyond the merchants and craftsmen who, alongside the authors, contributed to the transformation of textual content into an edition of which hundreds of copies were put into circulation.

By considering the active role played by the entities and authorities involved in regulating the production and circulation of books, we are able to explore the subtle and nuanced dynamics that complexify a dual author-printer approach. For every case discussed in this article, it would have been possible to consider only the commercial publisher, printer or bookseller, indicated on the title pages. However, such an approach would be blinding. In many cases, institutional publishers were involved along with other figures of publishers in the often long process of taking a message, an opinion or an idea, from its conception to its dissemination in printed form. A methodological approach consisting in observing the publishing function of an institution allows us to enhance our understanding of the dynamics of publishing and of the works studied.

Observing the interventions of the Company of Pastors, its relations with authors, and its arguments to have a text published brings to light a series of extremely rich dynamic interactions. We gain access to a detailed understanding of what was at stake in these publications, and to the contexts in which they were produced. We can understand the intellectual, cultural, and religious networks from which the books emerged. We gain insight into the reasons for choosing Geneva as a publishing city. Above all, this perspective sheds light on the specificities of the Genevan editorial centre, highlighting the importance of its status as ‘mother church’ and Protestant citadel. This fundamental aspect of Geneva’s book production depended heavily on the activity and status of its longest-exercising publisher, active during centuries: the Company of Pastors and Professors.

This is the “author accepted manuscript”. To cite this chapter, please refer to the published version printed in Barnaby Cullen, Ian MacLean, Arthur der Weduwen (ed.), *Early Modern Publishers. Identities and Strategies in the Book Trade*, Leiden, Brill, 2025, p. 68-86.