An unequal apportionment: the conflict over space between Protestants and Catholics at the beginning of the Wars of Religion

Jérémie Foa*

Abstract—Although theological and political aspects of the Wars of Religion have been extensively studied, their spatial dimension has often been neglected. Despite the plethora of urban monographs, space has been considered as the setting rather than the object of conflict. On account of its scarcity, space brought a variety of benefits and accordingly generated strategies of appropriation and exclusion for which the two confessions were unequally prepared. If Charles IX was the first to ‘tolerate’ Protestants, he almost always confined them to domestic space or excluded them from the centre of towns. Employing a sociology of domination drawn from the work of Pierre Bourdieu, this article seeks to examine the unequal situation of the two confessions from a spatial perspective, refusing to explain this difference solely by recourse to theological concepts. On the contrary, it attempts to show how, in a manner that requires explanation, socioconfessional inequalities were transformed into spatial ones.

The space which before any other seems to me to raise the problem and manifest just that strong social and historical differentiation between societies is the space of exclusion—of exclusion and imprisonment.

Michel Foucault, La scène de la philosophie (1978)¹

According to Michel Foucault, societies can be distributed in historical time ‘according to their means of getting rid, not of their dead, but of their living’. Seeing such a process at work in the spatial exclusion imposed on the French Huguenots under the reign of Charles IX might at first sight seem paradoxical. Charles IX, his mother Catherine de Médicis and his chancellor Michel de l’Hôpital are, as we know, famous for having been the first to recognize freedom of

¹ Jérémie Foa is a doctoral student with the RESEA (Religions, Sociétés et Acculturations research centre), at the Université Lumière Lyon 2, and ATER (temporary teaching and research assistant), at the Université Blaise Pascal, Clermont-Ferrand 2, CHEC (Centre d’Histoire ‘Espaces et Cultures’). He may be contacted on email: jeremie.foa@gmail.com. This article is a product of the reflective teamwork that has taken place at Olivier Christin’s seminar at the Ecole Pratique des Hautes Etudes. The author thanks Professor Christin, along with all the participants in his seminar, for such stimulating encounters. This article has been translated by Roger McLure, with assistance from Malcolm Crook and Mark Greengrass.

conscience in France. They were the first to put an end to the persecution of the Protestants and also the first to distinguish heresy from sedition, that is, to assign different purposes to Church and State. Despite that, the subsequent situation gives the impression of the Protestants having been rescued from an underground existence and officially recognized only to be subjected to a spatial exclusion—relegated to the suburbs of the smallest towns or confined to the domestic sphere. Except in the case of a handful of towns, the Protestants had to make do with suburbs for collective worship. True, they could worship at home but only among themselves. Anyone refusing to see behind this exclusion some design perfected in the corridors of the Louvre—a plot hatched by a monarchy that was naturally both Catholic and Machiavellian—is led to take cognizance of the many struggles for space which set Protestants against Catholics on a daily basis. In the eyes of Catholics, expelling the heretic meant cleansing the city of a pollutant, and so the spatial exclusion of the Huguenots became defined as the sum of the (frequent) defeats suffered and (rare) victories gained in their daily struggle for the assignment of places of worship and for the right to occupy urban space. As the parties to this outlawing of the Huguenots were also themselves to be included among the humblest of the king’s subjects, the exclusion in question can only be studied by paying particular attention to the micro struggles and daily wrangles over space.

The study of the spatial dimension of the conflict between Protestants and Catholics has, however, scarcely engaged the attention of historians. This stems from at least two reasons. The most obvious has to do with the fact that the study of the Wars of Religion, confronted by a welter of events, privileges temporal analyses over spatial ones. Guided by the sources, research has focused on understanding events in the framework of time, ultimately neglecting their spatial dimension. Although urban monographs pile up, the town is often treated as the neutral receptacle of the civil war, space has been considered as the setting rather than the object of conflict. On the contrary, geographers and sociologists, taking their cue from Pierre Bourdieu, have proposed problematical reconceptions of space in working through such concepts as, in particular, ‘spatial dimension’, ‘spatial capital’ and appropriation of space or the struggle for space—concepts which I shall be investigating here within the context of the Wars of Religion.

---


3 By contrast, the research of Natalie Davis has pioneered key notions like that of social space: Society and Culture in Early Modern France (Stanford, CA, 1975).

appropriation of which presupposed certain resources and the possession of which ensured a certain gain. As a result, it was the subject of disputes between the two unequally matched faiths.

The second reason relates to the perspective introduced by a theological approach. Catholic and Protestant theologians having different ideas of what exactly constituted a town, religious causes were often invoked to explain the differential occupation of space by the two faiths. Now, this theological approach, which does not utilize the resources of the sociology of domination, has led people to believe that an unspoken agreement regulated the sharing of urban space: the Catholics would have the town centres and the Protestants the suburbs. In reality the apportionment was unequal, the outgrowth of political and practical discrimination, space being what was at issue in struggles for which the two faiths were very differently equipped.

Following a multilevel approach, I shall attempt to investigate the inequality of access to space as between Catholics and Protestants at the beginning of the Wars of Religion. At the level of the town, first of all, the Protestants were usually excluded from occupying the centres to practise their cult, baptise their children, marry their relatives and bury their dead. Except for towns where worship was allowed within the gates, it was mainly to the suburbs that Protestants had to go to worship collectively and indeed usually to the suburbs of obscure far-flung towns. The Huguenots were not, however, reduced to total helplessness by this exclusion, for they sometimes tried to turn these forced movements into demonstrations of force. At the level, now, of the household, the domestic sphere meant not only a place of refuge for the Protestants but also a place of confinement. That is why they turned their minds to expanding space so as to achieve spatial visibility. These two levels illustrate the two constraints that deprived the Huguenots of access to space: banishment and confinement.

I

Let us start with the legal texts that regulated Huguenot worship: these are mainly edicts of pacification, together with the relevant interpretative texts. These texts punctuated the reign of Charles IX, putting a temporary end to the various civil wars. Although the monarchy now distinguished heresy from sedition, thus recognizing freedom of conscience, freedom of worship—which came under the maintenance of law and order—remained much more limited. The story of Huguenot worship under Charles IX is in fact one of a gradual deprivation of access to public space, enforced through the remoteness of town centres and confinement to the domestic sphere.

Finally, above all, P. Bourdieu, ‘Site effects’, in P. Bourdieu et al., eds., *The Weight of the World: Social Suffering in Contemporary Society* (trans., Cambridge, 1999), pp. 123–9; this article was largely inspired by that essay.

5 Edict of January 1562, Amboise March 1563, Peace of Longjumeau March 1568, Edict of Saint-Germain August 1570 and Boulogne July 1573. The best edited edition, published under the aegis of Bernard Barbiche, is to be found online: http://elcc.enc.sorbonne.fr/editsdepacification/.
The edict of January 1562 was the most favourable to the Huguenots: it allowed them to foregather in the outskirts of every town except Paris. Remoteness from the centres was presented as a spatial solution to religious conflict—designed to prevent the inevitable clashes that would ensue if the two faiths were practised together within the towns. But throughout the course of the wars, this freedom of worship was called into question. First, by the terms of the Edict of Amboise (as early as March 1563, that is) and then by the Edict of Longjumeau in March 1568, Huguenot public worship was henceforth to be restricted to the suburb of a single town in each bailliage or sénéchaussée. That meant that they had to make do with the suburbs of about seventy-five towns. The Edict of Saint-Germain, in August 1570, was even more restrictive, in that it allowed them to foregather in the suburbs of just twenty-four towns. There were, however, two exceptions to these restrictions. The first concerned towns where Huguenot worship was ‘publicly practised’ before peace was concluded, that is, before 7 March 1563 in the case of the Edict of Amboise and the first day of the month of August 1570 in the case of the Edict of Saint-Germain.6 The second exception related to noble worship. The Edict of Amboise allowed the seigneurs hauts justiciers to worship with ‘their family and subjects’ and the other seigneurs just with their family. This applied to both their principal and secondary residences, provided they themselves were present.7 The Edict of Saint-Germain reiterated the same principle: the seigneurs hauts justiciers could practise their worship with their family and subjects and the other seigneurs, those of lower rank, only with their family and friends, provided that the number of friends did not exceed ten.

The royal edicts regulated identically the slightest visibility of Huguenot burials.8 By the terms of a declaration interpreting the Edict of Amboise,9 Protestants were permitted to buy a site outside the town where they could bury their dead. The Edict of Saint-Germain, on its side, ordered baillis and sénéschals to provide Protestants with sites for their burials but drastically restricted the visibility of these burials by specifying that they must be carried out ‘at night [. . .] with a procession of no more than ten persons’.

The edicts fell far short of solving the cluster of problems posed by places of worship. Although the law laid down that Huguenots were to practise their

---

7 Déclaration et interprétation du Roy sur l’édit de la pacification des troubles pour le fait de la religion. Publié en la cour de parlement à Paris, le XX. décembre 1563 (1563), reprinted in the Mémoires de Condé ou Recueil pour servir à l’histoire de France contenant ce qui s’est passé de plus mémorable dans ce Royaume sous les Regnes de François II et Charles IX, 6 vols (London, 1740), ii. 383ff.
9 ‘As for burials, we allow them to purchase, by mutual agreement, ground located outside the towns, bourgs and villages where they reside so they can bury their dead’, in Déclaration et interprétation du Roy sur l’édit de la pacification… ii. 384.
worship in the suburbs of one town per bailliage, it did not say which town: was it to be a principal town? And what would happen if that town already had an internal place of worship as a result of the celebration of Protestant worship at the time of the declaration of peace? More than a manual or a ‘road map for peace’ could have done, the edicts of pacification fixed the general horizons of expectation while at the same time leaving subjects, but also the royal agents and the king’s council, with considerable scope for interpreting—but also for getting round—the texts. Now, the subjects of the king, but also the religious groups, were very mixed in their ability to interpret the texts in their favour.

Soon after the conflict, in 1563 and 1570, following consultation and no doubt negotiation, a first list of towns in whose suburbs Huguenot worship was permitted was drawn up. The main town of the bailliage or of the government seldom appeared on this list, as we might verify from a glance at the names of the towns designated in Normandy: Ponteau-de-Mer, Caudebec, Vire, Conches, Gisors, Carentan and Alençon. In 1564 the Huguenots of the bailliage of Senlis had to travel to the suburbs of the town of Allonne (48 km) to hold their public worship.\(^{10}\) Although strategic and military factors no doubt played a role here, the symbolic factors were even more important. In crossing on a daily or weekly basis the physical distance that separated them from their worship, the Huguenots were crossing the social and religious distance that separated them from a legitimate order. Thus, the way the Huguenots embodied their exclusion was effected step by step at ground level, the spatial distance mirroring a social and religious distance.\(^{11}\)

Moreover, because the allocation of sites was very far from stable, it was subject to frequent pressure, to supplications and to petitions which occasioned numerous ‘changes of address’ and testified to the unequal ability of the two faiths to muster support for their cause. Although the royal council had ultimate power of decision, numerous governing bodies—governors, nobles, royal commissioners, municipalities and the clergy—could be mobilized to tip the balance in favour of one group or the other, that is, to locate the place of worship at a greater or lesser distance. But here again, Protestants and Catholics were unequally matched, in particular owing to the almost systematic interference of governors, who in the main were very hostile to Protestants. Although the king had proposed the town of Chaumont en Bassigny, in Champagne, as a place of worship, the governor—a Guise—shifted it ‘to the extremity of the gouvernement [district administered by a governor], in the Ardennes, at a good fourteen leagues from the town of Chaumont’.\(^{12}\) As against this, in Montdidier where the Protestants had a powerful protector in the person of Louis de Condé—the governor of Picardy who through marriage had come into

---


\(^{11}\) Bourdieu, n. 4, ‘Effets de lieu’, p. 260.

\(^{12}\) *Lettre de Monseigneur le Prince de Condé à la Roine mere du Roy*, in *Mémoires de Condé…*, iv. 275.
possession of numerous lands in the environs—they obtained the right to worship in the suburbs.\textsuperscript{13}

And so it was that social networks greatly influenced the allocation of Huguenots places of worship. It was through them that the Catholics obtained the designation of towns in whose suburbs reformed worship was authorized. Conversely, Protestants complained about ‘having received none’.\textsuperscript{14} Moreover, the necessary mastery of legal instruments and an indispensable endowment with the financial wherewithal redoubled the expropriation of the Huguenots. Unlike the Catholics, the Huguenots were unable (especially where they were a minority) to muster the legal and financial resources vouchsafed by, say, the control of a magistrature, a \textit{présidial} or a \textit{parlement}. This was obvious in Dijon, where the Parlement delegated (in the person of Jean Bégat) one of its most brilliant representatives to oppose the Edict of Amboise.\textsuperscript{15} It was also obvious in Tours, where magistrates paid lawyers, sent delegates to the courts or elsewhere to stop the establishment of a place of worship in the suburbs of their town. For example, in 1564 lawyer Gilles du Vierger was paid twelve \textit{écus} for having attempted to ‘stop the establishment of the places of worship demanded by adherents of the new religion in one of the suburbs of the said town and [for having] produced and drawn up in writing several pleas, remonstrances and statements of abuses’.\textsuperscript{16} And in 1570 they delegated two men to La Rochelle to serve with the maréchal du Cosse (then in charge of the enforcement of the Edict) ‘to assist in the establishment, to be effected for the said seigneur, of a general place of worship for adherents of the new religion in the district of Touraine, and to designate for him the right place, as far as possible from the town of Tours’.\textsuperscript{17}

Thus, we see that the ability of a group to obtain a place of worship near at hand (i.e., to obtain mastery over its localization in space), no less than its power to fend off undesirable persons and the constructions they brought in their wake (Protestant churches and cemeteries), depended very much on the group being well endowed with capital—with financial capital as well as social and symbolic capital. The unequal distribution of places of worship reflected inequalities in the possession of capital as between the various religious groups and may be read as the spatial expression of that inequality. In places where the Protestants were numerous, rich, supported or held a \textit{consulat}, they were able to secure closer places of worship. Conversely, wherever they were meagrely endowed, their places of worship were remote and implanted in condemned space where the negative properties were concentrated. In Troyes, for

\textsuperscript{13} V. de Beauvillé, \textit{Histoire de la ville de Montdidier} (1875), p. 200.
\textsuperscript{14} Lettre de Monseigneur le prince de Condé à la reine mere du Roy . . . iv. 275.
\textsuperscript{15} J. Bégat, \textit{Remonstrances au Roy des députez des trois Estats de son duché de Bourgogne sur l’édict de la pacification, par où se monstre qu’en un royaume deux religions ne se peuvent soutenir, et les mauux qui ordinairement adviennent aux roys et provinces ou les hérétiques sont permis et toléréz} (Antwerp, 1563).
\textsuperscript{16} Archives Communales (AC) Tours, CC 79, fo. 69.
\textsuperscript{17} AC Tours, CC 88, fo. 111 (27 Sept. 1570).
example, the Huguenots had to make do with Séant-en-Othe, a nasty little town’ according to Pithou. They met in a barn in Gaillac, in a hayloft in Angers and in the plague hospital in Carcassonne. In Lyon, the Protestants described the town of Quincieu, which they had been allocated, as ‘an old lump of earth’. Nameless spaces accommodated a group deprived of space. Thus it was easy for the Catholic controversialists to denounce the Protestants who preached in these degrading places whenever the focus was on the spatial expression of socioconfessional inequalities and not on theological options.

This unequal allocation of places of worship in space was not fixed once and for all, moreover: it fluctuated across time in response to the changing pattern of local and national power relations. In the case of Montpellier, the gradual shifting of the Protestant place of worship is a revealing example of the successes gained and setbacks suffered in the struggle for the appropriation of space, as well as of the conditions governing success or failure in these appropriative bids. In the period when they held the town and controlled all the consuls, the Huguenots were allocated two churches within the walls, in 1563. Following their gradual expulsion from the municipal bodies, from August 1570 onwards they had to travel to Saint-Jean de Vedas (a distance of 6.5 km) to attend a service. Their drooping social and political trajectory was reflected in the lengthening journey that separated them from their place of worship.

The struggle over space was, then, far from being merely a number of trivial disputes or of quarrels over priority. It meshed into issues of vital importance, as what was at stake was not only security in this world and survival in the next but also the social reproduction of the group.

Holding the Protestants at a distance meant, in the first place, protecting the town from pollution by heretics. But it also meant jeopardizing their lives, depriving them of both the heavenly benevolence accorded by the patron saints of the towns and the worldly protection afforded by the administrators of urban justice. In the confused world that extended beyond the city walls, the Protestants were condemned to wander on dangerous roads, haunts beyond the pale of law and God. They were thus vulnerable to evil encounters, in the shape of real persons and imaginary ones, highway robbers, brigands of every hue and colour. On the roads that led them away from the towns, the Protestants were in fact often attacked and robbed. The same thing happened in the towns where preaching was permitted, because far from all of these

18 Séant-en-Othe, now known as Bérulle, is situated 38 km to the east of Troyes.
20 AC Lyon, GG 77, unnumbered item.
22 Nicolas Pithou said that the path he was obliged to use to attend services ran through ‘an extremely desolate, hilly and wooded area, surrounded by impoverished people who were very ill-disposed towards Huguenots’, in Pithou, *Chronique de la ville de Troyes et de la Champagne durant les guerres de Religion (1524–1594)*, 2 vols (Reims, 2000), ii. 539.
towns agreed with the permission that had been granted. In shifting Protestant worship from Auxerre to Crevant, the governor knew that he was exposing the Huguenots to the hatred of the local winegrowers. Despite a petition from the Protestants to the king, passing though Auxerre, worship continued to be held in Crevant, where a massacre finally took place on the last day of June 1564. It was also a common occurrence for Huguenots returning home from worship to find the gates of their own town closed against them. Such misfortunes provided Catholics—sometimes even Huguenots—with proof that God had abandoned them.

Protestant worshippers wasted hours, sometimes days, travelling to their places of worship. In Provins, according to Claude Haton, the Huguenots gradually got fed up attending a service too far removed from the centre of the town. To command space was, therefore, to command time as well: to lose space was to waste one’s time. The fact was especially evident in the case of Protestant baptisms: for all that it was the moment of entry into the Church of Christ, and indeed a crucial moment in the social reproduction of a religious group, the Protestants were permitted baptism only in the places where worship was publicly authorized. The result was that children had to be conveyed over great distances. In Troyes, where the place of baptism was 38 km away, ‘most of the infants that had been taken there to be baptised had become miserably weak and died on the road without having been baptised, as much because of the extremely cold weather that had been prevalent as because of other mishaps’. Thus, placing the Protestants at a distance also had the effect of exposing them to the risk of dying without baptism and blighting their chances of salvation. It was therefore no accident that the years 1560–70 coincided with a loss of momentum for French Protestantism. By their command of space and (therefore) time, the Catholics directly influenced the Huguenots’ capacity for social reproduction.

Protestants accordingly experienced their spatial exclusion not as a religious choice but rather as an infliction of suffering. We find the same thing elsewhere, with their cemeteries: though the Huguenots no longer believed in the power of their dead to intercede and protect, they nevertheless still attached importance to the burial of their ancestors being close at hand, their ideal solution being to have funerals conducted in familiar cemeteries in accordance with their faith. In Castres, for example, in 1562, the Protestants buried a man in the cemetery of the Cordeliers’ monastery ‘with no show of idolatry or other papist superstition’, according to one Huguenot witness. In Guyenne, ‘they

23 Abbé Lebeuf, Histoire de la prise d’Auxerre par les huguenots et de la délivrance de la même ville, les années 1567 et 1568 avec un récit de ce qui a précédé (Auxerre, 1723), pp. vi–vii.
25 ‘Baptism is the sign of initiation by which we are received into the society of the church, in order that, engrafted in Christ we may be reckoned among God’s children’: J.T. McNeill, ed., Calvin, Institutes of the Christian Religion (1960, 1st edn., 1536), p. 303.
26 Pithou, n. 22, ii. 608.
27 John, ch. 3, verse 5: ‘No one can enter into the Kingdom of God unless he is born of water and the Spirit’.
demanded of the king that their dead be buried in the graves of their forebears and in public cemeteries, according to the form of their religion’. Being buried outside the city meant, in fact, ‘receiving the burial of an ass’, as the Bible put it—a fate reserved for heretics, bad Christians and those who had died by their own hand. That is why Catholics were much more intent on demanding that Huguenot burials took place outside the towns than Huguenots were in demanding a cemetery set apart. Generally speaking, Huguenot demands for a cemetery of their own were motivated by their desire to protect themselves from the recurrent conflict which attended burials. For while the Protestants as long as they lived had to be distanced from the dead, once dead they had to be distanced from the living; the Huguenots of Arles, for example, wrote to the King that some of their co-religionists had been dug up and dumped outside the town.

No law being ever sufficiently precise to preclude evasion, the Protestants were not wholly at a loss in the face of the laws ranged against them: they were able to try to achieve spatial—and social—visibility by exploiting weaknesses and loopholes in the letter of law. This was especially true with respect to burials: in denying Protestants the right to bury their dead in the parish cemeteries, the Catholics thereby elected to allow them their own cemeteries. Now, it is impossible to set at a distance a place of burial as easily as a place of worship, considering how difficult it is to transport corpses over long distances. Consequently, Protestant burials had to be allowed in the suburbs, followed usually by sermons, ‘not [by way of] preaching for the dead man but [as] an exhortation to the people’, in the words of a Huguenot of Castres. Thus, the Protestants found a way round the law by delivering sermons in places where worship was officially denied to them. This was the reason why the Catholic authorities constantly wavered between the refusal to allow Huguenots to bury their dead in Catholic cemeteries and the fear of seeing them possess their own place of burial in the suburbs. So they often preferred to confine them to the Hôtel-Dieu or to the paupers’ cemetery, under prohibition of preaching: there was a clear case of this in Périgueux, where despite the recent establishment of a Huguenot cemetery, the municipal authorities continued to force the Protestants to bury their dead in the paupers’ cemetery.

The Protestants found other ways of getting round their spatial exclusion. For example, a gathering of Protestants, ostensibly to attend services outside the city walls, or to return, was a common sight. In Provins, the bailli, a Protestant, escorted by more than 200 of his co-religionists, set off ‘with an incredible

---

29 Bibliothèque Nationale (BN), Manuscrit français (Ms. fr.) 15878, fo. 73 (Protestants of Guyenne to the King, July 1563).
31 BN, Nouvelles Acquisitions françaises 20598, fo. 239.
32 Journal de Faurin sur les guerres de Castres, n. 28, p. 9.
33 Archives Départementales du Périgord, J 60; G. Penaud, Histoire de Périgueux (Périgueux, 1983), p. 204.
cheek to fetch the Huguenots from their houses in Provins’ to take them to hear sermons preached outside the town. In Lyon, following the edict of January 1562, the Huguenots were forced to abandon the houses they used to deliver sermons within the city walls and to travel to the suburb of La Guillotière. Now, if we are to believe the Catholic testimonies of the time, their numbers were swollen by people from the surrounding rural areas so as to enhance the significance of their demonstration. The mere fact of them all striking up the psalms of David was enough to transform them into a noisy singing host which, along the path leading them to their services, was in the process of re-appropriating that very space from which they had been removed. Another common scene was the Huguenots transforming a baptism or a burial into a conspicuous assembly, bent on displaying its strength of numbers. While group formations did help protect them against the dangers of the journey, they had the additional function of providing an inverted image of the Catholic procession: acting as an icon of rebellious Protestantism.

It was therefore no accident that interconfessional conflict sprouted at the points where the law was flawed, wherever the constant struggles over interpretation revealed the fragility of the distinctions made by the monarchy between private faith and collective practices. When does a collection of Protestants stop being just a family gathering, a meeting of friends, and start to be a group? Who was going to count them? By what minimum spatial gap would adherents of the faith have to be separated from each other in order for a collection of them not to count as an unlawful assembly? Well, this gap in the text of the law, which arose from an unsustainable distinction between the private and the public, could have tragic consequences. The return of preaching in particular constituted a major episode in the interconfessional confrontations of the Wars of Religion. In Rouen, on 18 March 1571, a band of Catholics lay in wait for a group of Huguenots and attacked them on their journey home from their devotions in Notre-Dame de Bondeville (6.5 km). In Amiens, on 13 November 1570, a ‘commotion’ occurred at Coisy, again on a homeward journey. That was the reason why the Dijon magistrates decided, so as to avoid trouble, to post themselves at the gate of the town (La Porte d’Ouche) on Sundays, ‘at time when the said adherents of the new religion travel home from Nuict [ie Nuits-Saint-Georges]’. It would seem that nothing attests more eloquently to the frequency of these practices of spatial subversion—and the conflicts attendant upon them—than the proliferation of laws, ever more precise

37 Coisy, situated in the department of the Somme, is located 9.5 km to the north of Amiens.
38 AC Dijon, B 200, fo. 216 (June 1564).
and more punctilious, which forbade Protestants gathering to travel to their devotions, to their services, baptisms and burials. In Sens, in March 1571, the royal commissioners made it unlawful for Protestants to assemble, on their way to or return from their devotions, ‘in groups numbering more than ten’.\footnote{A. Challe, \textit{Histoire des guerres du Calvinisme et de la Ligue dans l’Auxerrois, le Sénonais et les autres contrées qui forment aujourd’hui le département de l’Yonne}, 2 vols (Auxerre, 1863), i. 292. The same regulation was issued at Troyes and Tonnerre.}

Furthermore, from 1563, the monarchy fixed a quota of ‘twenty-five to thirty persons’ on the size of Huguenots funeral processions, a number which was reduced to ten in 1570.\footnote{Déclaration et interprétation du Roy sur l’édict de la pacification des troubles.} The law also prescribed punishments, for in 1564 a reminder was issued concerning the prohibition on attending baptisms, marriages and burials in greater numbers than were permitted by the edicts, on pain of ‘a fine of 500 \textit{livres} for the first offence and corporal punishment for the second: this was aimed as much at the culprits as against those who may have attended’.\footnote{Lettres patentes du Roy pour l’entretènement et entière exécution de l’édict et déclaration de la pacification des troubles de son royaume pour le faict de la religion (1564).}

The concepts that distinguished the private from the public did not, then, pre-date the Wars of Religion but emerged out of the conflicts. This is especially true in the second movement that deprived the Protestants of space: within the towns themselves the saying of prayers was, most of the time, confined to domestic space.

II

The interiors of the towns where the Huguenots were denied the right of worship were characterized by the contrast between the conspicuous consumption of space by Catholics and the relegation of the Huguenots to the domestic sphere. It is a fact that the public space of sixteenth-century towns proclaimed in all quarters, though the density of spatial markers, the dominance of the old religion. In Chartres, for example, at the end of the Middle Ages, space was shot through with religious markers, which became \textit{confessional} with the Wars of Religion. The signs that dominated the streets, suspended from L-shaped supports, often bore religious themes: Ave Maria, the Three Kings, Paradise and La Maison du Pain à Chanter. The niches at street corners housed statues of saints, and at the crosses at crossroads quartered space, like La Croix Thibault or La Croix des Vieux Capucins.\footnote{C. Billot, \textit{Chartres à la fin du Moyen Âge} (1987), ch. II.} Built-up space thus became a kind of fossilized domination, petrified in the literal sense. Through the mute injunctions it issued, it meant to show the intruder, now and forever, that he was in religious error, that he was out of place and must move on.

Moreover, buildings and signs were far from passive reminders of Catholic spatial dominance and superiority. The most famous case in point was that of La Croix de Gastines in Paris in 1569: the Parlement of Paris had in fact
ordered that the house of the five white crosses, where sermons had been held, should be knocked down and that the 'wood and iron locks reclaimed from the demolition of the said house will be sold and that the money proceeding from the sale will be converted and used to have built a substantial stone cross, above which a copper plate will be erected, on which shall be written in engraved letters the reasons why the said house was demolished and razed to the ground; and the place will henceforth and forever be used as a public place'. Here, there and everywhere, space had been instrumentalized in this way and resounded with the echoes of lost battles and shattered dreams—it was like an open-air history book. A long drawn-out conflict then got underway between the monarchy, which wanted to have the cross resited, and the Catholics, who persisted in their refusal. These religious markers could, moreover, be temporary as at Pamiers where, on Whitsunday 1566, the Catholics 'set up in the public square a silver image of Saint-Antonin, together with other relics which might have been worth 6,000 francs or more, and did not remove them until after vespers, behaviour which devotees of the rival religion, who had their houses nearby, found hard to tolerate'.

In addition to this 'trace-marking', Catholics were able to appropriate space through 'presence-marking'. Beyond their religious significance, dances and processions above all constituted temporary styles of appropriation of space. More effectively than anything else, the conspicuous consumption of space spoke of the extent of power and the surface area controlled by a religious group, by its God or holy protector. In the eyes of the Catholics, the procession—a veritable 'march by which space was made sacred' as Denis Crouzet has put it—was the most visible style of symbolic (legal) appropriation of public space. Through the procession, the holy protector reaffirmed possession of his territory, and the Church expanded its domain to that of the town. In Toulouse, for example, the Church organized, every 26 May from 1562 onwards, a procession through the city to celebrate the end of the Huguenot occupation. The contrast with the status of processions in the Middle Ages is clear: processions then embraced the whole of urban space and in so doing celebrated the civic community in its entirety, thus enabling the construction of a communal identity. With the Wars of Religion, on the contrary, processions took on a sectarian and polemical significance, exalting in the first place a confessional
community and the bonds which rooted it in a certain concrete space. This is why the Wars of Religion ushered in a new golden age for processions. They were reinvigorated and reinvested with a polemical and vindictory meaning. This symbolic appropriation of public space was also effected through dancing, which was openly criticized by the Huguenots and which was redeployed on the occasion of confessional confrontations. In Pamiers, for example, the young men ‘were in the habit of spilling over into dance and other dissolute behaviour on Whit Monday, waving flags and beating drums. They created a pope, an emperor, a king, a bishop and two abbots, and with this equipage paraded noisily through the streets’. By contrast, all the edicts had forbidden the Huguenots to constitute ‘congregations and assemblies’.

Except in the town designated by the edicts, Protestants were obliged to restrict their religious practices to the domestic sphere. Accordingly, the Edict of Amboise stated that ‘everyone may live and reside freely in and throughout his house, without being pursued or molested or forced or constrained on account of the inclination of his conscience’. And the Edict of Saint-Germain too stipulated that Protestants could not ‘be pursued in their houses or in whatever places of residence, provided that they conduct themselves in a manner consonant with the content of the present edict’. Domestic space thus took on the meaning not only of protective asylum but also of a place of confinement: the house was both a refuge and a place of arrest. The Huguenots could not, qua Huguenots, come out of their houses, on pain of a fine. Now, this relegation of religious life to the domestic sphere was not something that could go without comment in the sixteenth century: a man of the Middle Ages, and equally a Renaissance man, achieved self-realization only in public, for public space was where the self flourished. The private sphere, by contrast, was traditionally conceived negatively, precisely as a privation, as the domain of people who were politically inactive. Moreover, domestic space in the sixteenth century was not synonymous with our idea of ‘the private’, so common was the overspill of domestic ‘sociability’ into the street, so frequent was the overlap between different spaces. In other words, domestic space in the sixteenth century was not perfectly synonymous with what we now call the ‘private sphere’. So what the edicts imposed did not correspond to the traditional modes of either religiosity or sociability. That is why the Huguenots found it hard to accept the deprivation of space and availed themselves of commonplace activities—such as cooking or making a noise—which overlapped between spaces. In this way, they achieved spatial reappropriations—at least temporarily—indicated by a symbolic and subversive marking of space.


50 Discours des troubles de Pamiers.

Most of the time, this reappropriation was effected legally, with the means available to them, that is, by encroaching outwards from their private space onto public space. Many strategies enabled the Huguenots to be out in the street without actually leaving their house, the trick being to gain spatial visibility without thereby contravening the royal edicts. In this regard, ‘workshops’, windows and even facades constituted the preferred vehicles of the Huguenots’ subversive marking of space, inasmuch as these things possessed features linked to both public space (visibility) and private space (freedom of conscience). Thus, the shops that opened onto the street were very often used as ‘markers of ideological territory’. At the same time as they enjoyed freedom of conscience at home, Huguenots could publicly proclaim their religious affiliation by working on Catholic religious holidays. Given a polemical context, leaving a window open on a shop or workshop succeeded as a way of getting private space to encroach on public space. In Montpellier, Philippi wrote that during ‘religious holidays, whatever they be, Catholics do no work and remain idle, keeping their workshops and shops closed; [the faithful], on the other hand, work openly’. In this case, the symbolic transgression from domestic space on to public space (the space of the street) was effected by means of the gaze—either that of the passer-by or the neighbour. The Huguenots made use of the human senses to break down the barriers between the house and the street.

Smells, too, enabled a sensory bridging of the divide between house and street. On Lent days, you could smell odours of meat wafting out of the houses or shops of the Protestants—a sort of deliberately staged promiscuity. In Millau, for example, the Huguenots ‘keep their butcher’s shops open on Fridays and Saturdays, and at Lent too, and they have meat sold in them’. In other cases, the sensorial encroachment on forbidden space was effected by songs or by noises. For the Huguenots, the singing of psalms, which was germane to the Calvinist sense of identity, took on a confrontational meaning when it was carried out in a loud voice from their houses. Defying walls and windows, singing offered the possibility of a sonorous expansion of the space within which the Protestants were confined: in Troyes, for example, a young girl was denounced by her neighbours for having sung at home, ‘as gleefully as you please’, a psalm of David. With all this, the permeability between public and private space functioned, of course, in the opposite direction—from the outside to the inside—so that it could be instrumentalized by the Catholics. In Amiens, for example, in June 1561, a band of children made a game, played every day, out of forming sorts of processions, which stopped outside the windows of the

55 AC Millau, 2e inv. CC 37, unnumbered item.
56 Pithou, n. 22, ii. 681.
Protestants to deliver them ‘greetings’ by song, emboldened by encouragement from adults shouting ‘sing children, sing in spite of the Huguenots’. The well-known disputes around bells belong in this category and were experienced by the Huguenots as a sonorous invasion of their space. Because the Protestants claimed the right not to be pursued in their houses, what was involved here was a symbolic denial of the inviolability of their private space.

Lastly, the Protestants were able to use their domestic space to make a public proclamation of their faith. Although they made their shops or windows stand out through markers implanted in public space, be these visual, sonorous or olfactory, they set their facades apart by the absence of markers, by refusing to cover them with banners. In Castres, for example, Faurin wrote that ‘on the day of the Fête-Dieu, on 5 June, none of the adherents of the reformed religion festooned their houses to honour the idol’. As with their shops and windows, they were acting in and on a transitional space—the front of the house—of which they were masters inasmuch as this space was private but one which other people wished to control as a space of social visibility. In so doing, the Huguenots refused to allow the fronts of their houses to be used to celebrate a religious faith of which they did not approve and denied the right of the community to decide the confessional allegiance of the city as a whole.

There is nothing surprising about the fact that this interconfessional conflict arose precisely at the points where the law failed—in the liminal spaces constituted by windows, shops and facades. On these amphibious surfaces, in the ill-defined boundaries, each person could apply a different rule to the situation. Many of these conflicts were thus disputes over definitions, that is to say, disagreement over the correct way to describe a situation. Did windows, shops and facades belong to public or to private space? Did a group of five, ten or twenty people, comprising family or friends, constitute a private gathering or a collective assembly? While Catholics categorized shops and windows as public space, and thus applied the public rule prohibiting overt manifestations of Protestantism, the Huguenots by contrast used them as private spaces within which they were free to follow their religious conscience and the practices of their faith. Against this, Catholics regarded facades overlooking the street as public space and demanded that they be covered with banners on days when there were processions. Protestants, on the contrary, considered this space to be private and refused to comply.

When the law failed to settle these differences, violence carried the day. In Clermont, for example, the day of the Fête-Dieu was an occasion to affirm the confessional allegiance of the city as a whole: a procession displaying the Holy Sacrament crossed the town from one side to the other before arriving at the

57 A. Dubois, La Ligue. Documents relatifs à la Picardie d’après les registres de l’échevinage d’Amiens (Amiens, 1859), p. 3: ‘They stopped at several houses, where they sang saluts, something which these days can only produce division and unrest’.
58 Journal de Faurin sur les guerres de Castres, n. 28, p. 8.
Eglise Saint-Genès. During the Fête-Dieu of 1568, Gilbert Douxsainct, a Protestant worshipper in the town, refused to festoon his facade for the passage of the procession. Additionally accused of having thrown stones at the ‘corpus domini’, he was burned alive by the mob. Moreover, such conflicts, linked as much to the undefined status of spaces as to their permeability, were soon used by the Catholics to reject the establishment of Huguenot places of worship within towns. In Lyon, for example, the abbesses of Saint-Pierre complained that between their monastery and the Protestant church being built at Terreaux, ‘the distance is no greater than that of a street or passage of ten paces; so close are they that it will be impossible for the sound of bells and processions emanating from one side, and the voices and singing from the other, not to become confused’. The same protest was made by Catholics in Montpellier although the assertion was disputed by the Huguenots who averred that the physical separation between the Protestant and Catholic churches was such that ‘the practice of the two religions may be carried out, each in its place, without mutual interference’.

The proliferation of conflicts around these indeterminate zones between house and street compelled the monarchy to plug the gaps left by the edicts of pacification and to come up with ever more exact definitions, ones better adapted to the disputes and dodges which occurred on a daily basis. The monarchy realized that space could not be construed in terms of categories (public space versus private space), nor by means of the functions it was supposed to fulfil in theory, but only with reference to its social uses: it could not be assumed a priori that a kitchen could not serve as a confessional marker. This was the reason why royal decrees, issued under a full head of casuistic steam, put in place ever more precise mechanisms designed to regulate the legitimate uses of various spaces for religious practice. Because the function of a shop was not simply to sell goods, the king specified that Protestants would not be allowed to work on Catholic holidays ‘in an open shop’. This meant they only had the right to work behind closed doors on Catholic holidays. The Huguenots of Montpellier hit back with the claim that they were unable to work in a completely closed shop owing to lack of light. In the end, they obtained from the governor the right to work ‘in a closed shop, with the door open just enough to let the light in’. In this way, they managed to carry on giving a manifestly confessional aspect to their shops—a potential source of further conflict. Despite the monarchy producing ever more precise texts, they fell far

---

60 AC Clermont BB 36: Plea entered by G. Duteilhet and G. Genoilh, imprisoned for the murder of Gilbert Douxsainct.
61 Guiraud, n. 21, VI, 399.
62 Text of the Edict of Saint-Germain. Symptomatically, the text registered at the Parlement of Paris omitted the passage specifying ‘à boutique ouverte’, which alters the meaning of the phrase, by completely forbidding Huguenots to work on Catholic holidays. This omission has been pointed out by Bernard Barbiche.
63 Guiraud, n. 21, VII, 39.
short of solving all the problems; on the contrary, they merely exacerbated the issue of implementation.

It was, then, ‘on site’ and day by day that the monarchy and its agents imposed an increasingly precise definition of the legitimate use of various spaces for religious practice. The commissioners charged with applying the edicts of pacification, despatched from town to town to effect interconfessional coexistence, were the main architects of these accommodations.64 In Sens, for example, they specified the number of participants beyond which a domestic space ceased to be one and became instead a place of assembly. They in fact forbade the Huguenots to assemble in numbers exceeding ‘two or three households or families to hold services in places where the practice of their religion was not allowed’. Furthermore, tackling head-on the numerous sensory encroachments from house to street, they laid down that it would henceforth be forbidden to hold prayers ‘or to sing or intone psalms in a loud voice which might be heard by neighbours and passers-by’; it was also forbidden to ‘sell or display [goods] in an open shop on holidays, or to work in any way on those days, or to carry out any kind of manual labour which might be seen and heard by people passing in the street or on the public highways’.65 The commissioners therefore invented new mechanisms to prevent the conflicts linked to the permeability of boundaries by trying to seal the space of Huguenot worship, at least to human eyes and ears. Thus, in Lyon, for example, the specification given to the master masons for the construction of a Huguenot cemetery provided for ‘regulating the heights and thicknesses of the walls separating the church from the garden of the Saint-Pierre monastery’.66

To ignore the spatial dimension of the Wars of Religion is to miss out on a fundamental twofold process at work in the emergence of modernity: on the one hand, the religious struggles generated a redefinition of space; on the other hand, the struggle for space reciprocally gave rise to a redefinition of religious experience.

In the first place, as we have seen, the Wars of Religion helped to sharpen the boundary between the private and public space: domestic space came to coincide more exactly with what we now call the private sphere. The house receded from the street.67 However, this restriction of the domestic sphere was not greeted as something innocuous, in so far as it fitted neither with traditional sociability nor with traditional religiosity: wilfully or not, the Huguenots were constantly able to expand the space allotted to them. Thus, it was left to the monarchy to seal the leaky dividing line between the space of free

64 On this matter, if I may, see J. Foa, ‘Making peace: the commissions for enforcing the pacification edicts in the reign of Charles IX (1560–1574)’, French History, 18 (2004), 256–74.
65 BN, Ms. Dupuy 428, fo. 69: author’s emphasis.
66 AC Lyon, GG 84, pièce 41 (12 May 1564).
conscience and the space of public order to create, by means of measures taken in response to daily problems, an enhanced degree of impermeability such as we experience today. It is precisely because interconfessional conflict arose in spatial terms—precisely at the points where the boundary between the public and the private, the communal and the domestic, was shifting—that society felt the need for more exact concepts. Yet, only the monarchy possessed the intellectual and practical wherewithal (theoreticians and various agents, in particular the commissioners) to bring about this redrawing of boundaries.

In the second place, we have seen the extent to which issues of space tended to exacerbate the external signs of differentiation between Protestants and Catholics. Confessional coexistence, in other words day-to-day spatial cohabitation, led to a frenzy of permanent competition and comparison, where clerics were far from being the only players and theology was by no means the only medium of mass ideological diffusion. Space was, it is true, a place—but above all it was the privileged instrument by which the strategies for reinforcing a distinct identity were forged: think of Catholic processions or the Huguenots’ refusal to festoon their facades. In his use of urban space, the individual was subjected to trials of truth, which constantly bore a confessional dimension. Would he open his shop on holidays, leave the town on Sundays to attend a prayer meeting or decorate his facade? Thus, we see that the interiorization of a confessional identity was mediated by its exteriorization in the shape of the many spatial tests to which minds, but above all bodies, were subjected (think of the enforced travelling, but also of the injunction to sing in a low voice, or to eat meat during Lent in secret...). Repeated indefinitely, these spatial tests became a habit, indeed constituted an identity. This use of spatial markers for the purpose of affirming and vindicating identity shows that space must be borne in mind as an essential instrument in the process of the interiorization and consolidation of religious identities. In other words, space, as the place where one showed oneself and compared oneself with others, constituted a fundamental dimension in the construction of religious identity.

---

69 The conclusion has been formulated in these terms thanks to Olivier Christin at his seminar, 2004–5.