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**Renaissance and Reformation**  
**Renaissance et Réforme**



**Gilmont, Jean-François. Insupportable mais fascinant: Jean Calvin. Ses amis, ses ennemis et les autres**

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such, this collection makes accessible to a wide range of people a vibrant and rich portrait of medieval devotion to Saint Louis.

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**Gilmont, Jean-François.**

***Insupportable mais fascinant: Jean Calvin. Ses amis, ses ennemis et les autres.***

Nugae humanisticae 13. Brepols: Musée de la maison d'Érasme, 2012. Pp. viii + 292. ISBN 978-2-503-54513-4 (broché) 50 €.

In this, the latest of several books Gilmont has published since the completion of the three-volume *Bibliotheca calviniana* (with Rodolphe Peter) in 2000, we have brief sketches of 52 “friends, enemies, and others” that complement, and expand, the narrative account in his 1997 *Calvin et le livre imprimé* (re-issued in English in a translation by Karin Maag in 2005). His purpose here is, as the title suggests, to examine Calvin’s relations with an assortment of women and men that cast a sharper light on Calvin the man than the more traditional accounts—which Gilmont sees as examples of *calvinolâtrie*, a tradition that goes back to Beza’s biography, published soon after Calvin’s death—have made available. We will have a glance at Gilmont’s roster in a moment. It may be useful to point out first that the *amis* listed here are not the sort of “friends” one encounters in the *alba amicorum* that were so popular in Calvin’s time. Here we have instead those who went to work on Calvin’s behalf or who, at one time or another, provided support when Calvin needed it. Similarly, the *ennemis* are not the Catholic Pighius or the anti-Trinitarian Biandrata, but a number of individuals who began by being attracted to Calvin and his version of the Reformation and ended up bitterly opposed to and (just as bitterly) by Calvin. What is more, “friends” and “enemies” are in this case not exclusive categories, as we shall see.

Gilmont lays out ten short chapters tracing a progression from “friends” to “enemies,” with representatives of the intermediate states (and at different times during Calvin’s career) treated in between. These chapters are framed by a brief introduction and a short conclusion. Consequently, Gilmont provides sketches of Guillaume Farel and Pierre Viret in the first chapter, “La très sainte

triade” (15–30); and in the last, “Les relations orageuses” (185–247, by far the longest), we find Castellion, Servetus, and Jérôme Bolsec—among a dozen others. In between are entries on Jean Crespin, Clément Marot, and several lesser-known associates such as Michel Mulot and René de Bienassis. The entries on each are not equally long. Gilmont gives less than a page to Étienne de La Forge (a wealthy supporter who met a bad end in Paris, where he was hanged and incinerated in 1535); he gives more space to the likes of Renée de France and, for different reasons, to Sébastien Castellion. Most of the individuals will be familiar to readers of his *Le livre imprimé*, and in most cases what we read of those here—Olivétan for instance—complements what we learned about them from the earlier book. The sketches of Bullinger (66–73) and Melanchthon (78–82, where it is pointed out that it was not until about 1554 that differences between Calvin and Melanchthon emerged clearly) bring order to scattered material in *Le livre imprimé*.

The short-entry format obviously has advantages, but it also has some disadvantages for the reader. Gilmont’s list of dramatis personae here is not arranged merely in terms of the places occupied by the characters on a scale of relative amity/enmity. It is not readily evident, for instance, that the entries for “friends” tend to cover Calvin’s early years while the entries on the “enemies” side of the scale—Bauduin and Servetus, for instance—concern problems Calvin faced later in his career. Moreover, one of the early entries (17–24) concerns Guillaume Farel, Calvin’s staunch ally in *La Cause*. But one mustn’t miss the fact that Farel keeps re-appearing throughout Gilmont’s survey (see Gilmont’s index, s.n.), in entries on such well-known fellow Reformers as Bullinger (73f.) and Bucer (75–77); but also in those on Olivétan (116–18), Jean Girard (143, 145), Henri de La Mare (the account of his shabby treatment at 200–03), and Antoine Marcourt (210–12)—capped, it seems, by Gilmont’s description of Farel’s visit seeking Servet’s recantation just before his execution (244). Servet did not recant. Farel figures, then, in a range of Calvin’s relationships that covers both friends and enemies, usually in making sure that dissidents and backsliders, the “Nicodemites,” suffered for their shortcomings, until Calvin himself found it necessary to distance himself from his old companion after 1558 (see 254–56 in Gilmont’s conclusion).

The short-entry format also requires Gilmont (and the reader) to make decisions about what and whom to include. In the entry on Renée de France (129–36), for instance, Gilmont relates the conflicts Renée was torn by after

leaving Ferrara to return to France in 1560. While she seemed dedicated to the ends of the Reform, as her correspondence with Calvin himself makes clear, her daughter Anne had married François, Duke of Guise, one of the founders of the Catholic League. Nevertheless, on her return to Montargis, she requested a minister from Geneva. That minister, François de Morel, was sent to her in July, 1561. Before settling in at Montargis, however, Morel went to Poissy, where he was part of the Reform contingent headed by Bèza, assisted by Nicolas des Gallars and Augustin Marlorat (later listed by Bèza as a “martyr” for *La Cause*). The papal legate sent to Poissy was, of course, Renée’s brother-in-law, Ippolito d’Este. No wonder then that, as Gilmont writes, “Renée n’affirme jamais clairement son adhesion à l’Église réformée. Elle ne veut pas heurter sa famille” (134).

Gilmont’s interest in countering what he sees as “calvinolâtrie rampante” (6) may lead readers to expect more polemic than they will get from *Insupportable*. Recent Calvin scholarship already took that turn long ago; and for the very good reason that, as William Naphy put it eloquently in the introduction to his 1994 *Calvin and the Consolidation of the Genevan Reformation*, much of the earlier scholarship tended to reinforce a bias towards Calvin’s interpretation (or worse, Bèza’s) of events as found, primarily, in his letters. Gilmont, however, uses those letters—along with scores from Herminjard’s invaluable collection—to support interpretations of events that are not particularly favourable to Calvin’s reputation, using the various *Registres* (and other materials from the *Archives d’État de Genève* more recently available) to put those letters into their proper contexts. Gilmont’s handling of both the correspondence and the Genevan archives is, in short, magisterial.

On the whole, this is a most rewarding book.

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