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Olivier Fatio, *Louis Tronchin: Une transition calvinienne*. Paris: Classiques Garnier, 2015. 1,143 pp. Collection: *Histoire des temps modernes*, 2. Bibliography and index nominum. 83.00 € (pb) ISBN 978-2-8124-4622-1.

Review by Michaël Green, University of Cordoba.

Professor Olivier Fatio is a distinguished theologian from the University of Geneva. Throughout his academic career, he has focused on early modern theology, which is also the subject of the present book. As Fatio states in his preface, this book is the fruit of thirty years of work. Indeed, it is a remarkable achievement, as its 1,143 pages are dense with information on the seventeenth-century Genevan theologian and professor Louis Tronchin. As the title suggests, the main purpose of the author is to elucidate the transition and the development of Tronchin's theological ideas.

Louis Tronchin was born on 4 December 1629 to the pastor and theologian Theodore Tronchin, professor at the Academy of Geneva, a tough father, but a man of theological reputation. His mother, Theodora Rocca, came from a family of religious refugees from Piedmont. Louis studied theology at the academy where his father taught, became a pastor, and then embarked on a Grand Tour, which included London and Leiden. He continued his studies at the renowned Huguenot academy of Saumur, where at the time the principal was Moses Amyraut. After returning to Geneva in 1662, Tronchin served as pastor and then as rector of the Genevan Academy until 1668. He continued to occupy various posts at the Academy until his death in 1705. As a contemporary of Bayle and François Turretini, professor to Jean-Alphonse Turretini, Jacques Lenfant, and many other prominent Protestant theologians, Louis Tronchin led a life that serves as a mirror of Genevan intellectual life in the second half of the seventeenth century.

Tronchin produced only a very limited number of publications, among them *Sermon sur ces paroles du Ps. XCV. vers. VII* (Geneva, 1670) and *Theses theologicae, de providentia Dei* (Geneva, 1670). He nevertheless left a large amount of documents, located currently at the Public Library of Geneva, that served as the basis for Fatio's book. The book is divided into twenty-one chapters, preceded by a preface and succeeded by an epilogue. Each chapter is divided into several subchapters that in their turn are divided further by subject. The very large abbreviation list—given before the preface—gives the most common sources and books used by the author. While overall organization of the book is chronological, certain chapters include material from different parts of Tronchin's life to show the evolution of his ideas.

The preface gives a brief overview of Tronchin's life from birth till death, stressing the most important milestones and connections. Fatio briefly presents secondary works about Tronchin and corrects factual mistakes. The first chapter, "The Milieu," is one of the shortest and depicts the family into which Tronchin was born. Remy Tronchin, his grandfather on the father's side, was a Huguenot refugee, who found a safe haven in Geneva after the Saint Bartholomew's Day Massacre and quickly advanced up the social ladder, eventually becoming part of the Conseil de Deux Cents. Tronchin's father Theodore was

professor of Hebrew and Theology at the Genevan Academy. Fatio also presents various other relatives and Louis himself, as well as the different means by which his relatives gained additional income.

The second chapter deals with Tronchin's education. At the age of ten, Louis entered the *collège* and then ten years later the Academy of Geneva. He studied theology together with some Italian students, including François Turretini, who was in fact Swiss-Italian, and would later become professor alongside Tronchin in the same academy. Besides his father, a rather orthodox Calvinist, Tronchin's professors were Antoine Léger and Philippe Mestrezat. He would develop a personal friendship with the latter over the years. It was during this time that Tronchin wrote the fifteen theses that, according to Fatio, were the quintessence of Genevan orthodoxy. After his Grand Tour, in 1653 Tronchin arrived at the Academy of Saumur to spend a year, despite the fact that Amyraut was strongly criticized by some Genevan theologians. Fatio dedicates much space to the discussion of this controversy and to Amyraut's thought. Falling under his spell, the young Tronchin's views began to become less orthodox. Louis Cappel also was also one of his professors there. In Saumur he also met the future Huguenot theologian Pierre Jurieu, and continued to build his personal network.

Chapter three provides insight into Tronchin's stay in Lyon. Having been nominated pastor of the city in 1654, he spent seven years there before finally getting a professorship at the Academy of Geneva. His networks of correspondents grew steadily and he received news from across France about the situation of the Huguenots there. He was also involved in this period in the reedition of the writings of John Cameron. As part of his preparation for a professorship in Geneva, he learned Eastern languages and deepened his knowledge of theology.

Chapter four focuses on the establishment of Tronchin's career in Geneva until 1669. In 1662 he was appointed first pastor, then professor, and eventually in 1663 rector of the Academy. He was a member of the *Compagnie des pasteurs* of the city and maintained constant contact with various city authorities. During this period, Tronchin followed the Cartesian philosophy, but he also opposed claims by Lodewijk Meyer that Scripture can only be explained by reason. Much attention was given to the moral education of the students. He also defended the interests of the *Compagnie* and various colleagues, and gained a reputation as a talented orator. His networks continued to be effective—one of his correspondents, Chouet, informed him of the news in Saumur, others about the situation in Charenton and the Academy of Puylaurens.

The fifth chapter presents the conflicts of 1669-1675 surrounding the theology of Saumur regarding the doctrine of grace. The issue erupted in 1669 when Charles Maurice, a French Huguenot who was offered a post as pastor in his home country, asked to be exempt from the obligation not to teach universal grace, as demanded by the Genevan authorities. Tronchin supported the view of Mestrezat to allow this exemption contrary to the opinion of François Turretini. He openly expressed his frustration with the "cabale italique," the professors of Italian origin. The long debates around this question are addressed in his chapter, as well as the difficult relationship between Tronchin and the "cabale."

Chapter six focuses on the *Consensus helveticus*, a document written in 1675 containing twenty-five canons of theological opposition to the doctrines of Saumur. Tronchin strongly opposed this document and continued to attack it almost until his death. The next chapter, seven, addresses Tronchin's theology between the years 1670 and 1685. Tronchin, a Cartesian, believed that God tells about himself in the Scriptures that reveal the truth about him, even if one cannot fully comprehend the content in its entirety. Fatio discusses some of Tronchin's works in this context, and in particular his commentary on the manual of Marcus Friedrich Wendelin, to which a major part of this chapter is dedicated. Correspondence is not absent from this chapter either, among others that exchanged with David Wyss, his former student and a professor of philosophy in Bern. Chapter eight, "Day to Day," deals with Tronchin's life in the years 1678-1685. These years he spent representing the *Compagnie* and teaching. Among his students at the time we find the famous journalist Jean Le Clerc, the philosophers Pierre

Bayle, Daniel Chamier, Jacques Lenfant, and Jean-Frederic Ostervald. The latter would become an important correspondent during Tronchin's final years.

The ninth chapter explores the end of Protestantism in France in 1679-1685. Tronchin, who was engaged for many years in religious polemics with the Catholic Church, and who received news from his French correspondents, was well acquainted with the challenges faced by Huguenots in France, making this chapter of particular interest to historians of the persecution of the Huguenots. Fatio presents the efforts made to preserve Protestants and the development of the signs of the end of Protestantism in the Kingdom. The subsequent chapter (ten) deals with the Revocation of the Edict of Nantes and the following developments in 1685-1695. Without referring to the well-known facts on the Revocation, Fatio presents the Genevan strategy for dealing with this crisis, both politically and following the flux of the refugees. Chapter eleven takes a turn away from political questions into the relationship that Tronchin had with his students, already mentioned in chapter seven, including their philosophy, theology and particular views. Many of his students developed their ideas in the context of the rather "inclusive" spirit of Tronchin.

The next chapter, twelve, returns to the question of refuge, this time in England. Tronchin, having visited England in his youth, had many connections there. He corresponded with Louis Dumoulin, one of the members of the renowned scholarly Huguenot family, about the situation there. This chapter also presents Tronchin attempting to use his connections to find a post for Michel David, a Huguenot refugee. Despite numerous attempts, Tronchin was not successful. Fatio writes rather extensively on the tensions between the Presbyterians and the *episcopaux*, a subject that occupied Tronchin. Chapter thirteen focuses on the mature years of Tronchin 1685-1705. Fatio explores his life and thought as a moralist and pastor. It was during this period that Tronchin taught his most famous student—Jean-Alphonse Turretini—who, despite being the son of his rival, became his closest friend. It is Turretini's account of Tronchin's teaching and personality that Fatio uses the most in his book. During this period he continued to perform his regular tasks, though occasionally complaining of ill health. In 1698 he succeeded Charles Dufour as the Dean of the *Compagnie des pasteurs*. In 1700, he took part in the implementation of the Gregorian calendar. In chapter fourteen, Fatio sketches the character of Tronchin as a family man and traces the lives of his children.

Chapters fifteen through twenty are dedicated to the analysis of Tronchin's thought and of his views on various contemporary issues both religious and political—revisions of the translations of the Psalms, Quakers, and Pietists, his correspondence with his former student Jean-Rodolphe Ostervald, relations with Lutheranism, English societies, and the Huguenot Refuge after the Peace of Rijswijk. Chapter twenty-one depicts the final days of Louis Tronchin and his death. The epilogue draws a concluding line in Tronchin's life by pointing out the evolution of his religious thought from rather orthodox thinking to the ideas of Amyraut, combining tradition and innovation. While Tronchin knew how to accept views that differed from his own, he wanted Calvin's heritage to remain relevant. According to Fatio, the fact that Tronchin did not have a publication track of his theological thought, other than his commentaries on the Psalms and his Theses, resulted in the covering up of the traces he had left in history as the years went by. This raises the question of how influential Tronchin indeed was beyond the circle of his acquaintances; had he published more, he would have gained a much wider readership. Fatio concludes this study with a bibliography of Tronchin's works and of secondary literature on Tronchin. He also provides a large index of names.

This book presents an excellent exploration of Tronchin's thought in its social, religious and political context. The various archival sources found or reassessed by Olivier Fatio are a great starting point for historians who want to further explore his networks—social, political, intellectual, religious and private, making an excellent case-study on any of these topics. The density of the book and the large amount of topics debated also present some difficulties for the reader. The book would gain in strength if the author included an introduction in which he set clear goals that he sought to achieve in this book. While

the overall structure tends to suggest that this is a biography, there is no methodology or a framework presented and there are no clear research questions raised. Furthermore, it would help the reader if the author stated what the criteria for choosing one text over another were, or how the author approached the assessment of Tronchin's personality and personal qualities, of whom he speaks very highly. A biographical framework, in addition to the methodology of working with ego documents, could have given this portrait of Tronchin an additional dimension, and perhaps increased its value to the scholarly community even more.

In addition to the references to primary sources given by the author, an interpretation based on a set of research questions would allow the reader to follow the author's line of thought more closely. Certainly, because the book is already extremely long, it would seem inappropriate to ask for more information on certain topics. In some cases, however, there seem to be gaps, as for example, when referring to Genevan *collège* and Academy, where Tronchin studied for ten years, from 1639 till 1649, some explanation about the structure of the academy or its relation to the *collège* and references to the secondary literature could be very helpful. In general, there are limited references to the secondary literature, thus the reader is expected to be fluent enough in the subject to find these references himself. This of course does not take away from the value and the importance of the book, as it opens up new horizons for the reader. It presents the flourishing theological milieu in Geneva and the vivid networks of correspondence flowing into the city, pointing to connections in remote places. The book is in particular of interest for theologians who now have access to one of the dominant figures of seventeenth century Genevan Protestantism. It will also be of interest to historians of various religious groups such as Huguenots, Quakers, Pietists, and Lutherans, as there are numerous references to correspondence containing less-known facts regarding their history.

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