



Adultery and Divorce in Calvin's Geneva (Harvard Historical Studies)

Robert M. Kingdon

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In Calvin's Geneva, the changes associated with the Reformation were particularly abrupt and far-reaching, in large part owing to John Calvin himself. *Adultery and Divorce in Calvin's Geneva* makes two major contributions to our understanding of this time. The first is to the history of divorce. The second is in illustrating the operations of the Consistory of Geneva--an institution designed to control in all its variety the behavior of the entire population--which was established at Calvin's insistence in 1541. This mandate came shortly after the city officially adopted Protestantism in 1536, a time when divorce became legally possible for the first time in centuries.

Robert Kingdon illustrates the changes that accompanied the earliest Calvinist divorces by examining in depth a few of the most dramatic cases and showing how divorce affected real individuals. He considers first, and in the most detail, divorce for adultery, the best-known grounds for divorce and the best documented. He also covers the only other generally accepted grounds for these early divorces--desertion.

The second contribution of the book, to show the work of the Consistory of Geneva, is a first step toward a fuller study of the institution. Kingdon has supervised the first accurate and complete transcription of the twenty-one volumes of registers of the Consistory and has made the first extended use of these materials, as well as other documents that have never before been so fully utilized.

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