

Article

Consistory and Youth Surveillance in the Republic of Geneva: The Case of Games (16th–18th Centuries)

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Abstract: This article explores the theme of youth gaming in the Calvinist Republic of Geneva. This investigation is largely based on disciplinary cases found in the registers of the Consistory of Geneva. Legislative sources, and the registers of the Pastor's Company and the Small Council, are also used herein. This study, deliberately placed at the crossroads of the history of games, childhood, and Calvinist-style ecclesiastical discipline, aims to shed light on the Consistory's policy of controlling play activities, and to understand what was at stake. The author defends the idea that the surveillance and control of games played by children was intended to prevent them from straying from their religious education, but also to protect them from the excesses and dangers of abusive play and immoderate behavior (violence, lost money, insults, etc.).

Keywords: Church discipline; consistory; Republic of Geneva; Calvinism; gambling; history of adolescence and youth; history of games; addiction

1. Introduction

This article examines the supervision of games played by the youth of Geneva between the 16th and 18th centuries. I focus primarily on the ludic affairs found in the registers of the Consistory of the Republic. In addition, the registers of the Small Council, the Pastors' Company, and Geneva's legal sources will be consulted. I demonstrate that even if the consistorial affairs related to games do not represent more than 3% of the total themes dealt with by the Consistory (Manetsch 2017, p. 107), they allow us to understand a significant aspect of the social and religious history of the cities of Ancien Régime, such as Geneva. Historiographically, this investigation is located at the intersection of the history of games, dated from the inaugural works of Huizinga (Huizinga [1938] 1951), and here, more precisely games in the modern era, a field of study now well invested since the 1980s (Grussi 1985; Ariès and Margolin 1982; Vickers 1990; Belmas 2006; Arcangeli 2003, 2017a, 2017b; Grendler 2009; Parlebas and Depaulis 2017; Verdier 2019; Kopp and Lapina 2021), with the history of the Geneva consistorial discipline, the history of childhood as inaugurated in the 1960s by the work of Philippe Ariès (Ariès [1960] 2014), and the study of addictions and pathological gambling (See Brenner and Brenner [1990] 1993; Walker 1992; Fortis 2010).

The archives of the Consistory of Geneva represent one of the richest collections for the study of ecclesiastical discipline in the modern era.¹ Established in 1541 under the decisive impetus of Calvin, the Consistory was a quasi-ecclesiastical tribunal. Hybrid in nature, it was made up of pastors and elders, members of the Small Council, the political institution at the head of the Republic. Without any coercive or judicial powers (which were reserved for the Small Council), the Consistory was charged with taking up the scandals and immoralities observed in the Republic and could (although the practice was never systematic) ban sinners from the Lord's Supper and excommunicate the most recalcitrant. It always sought to reintegrate offenders into the community of the faithful, as definitive excommunication was experienced as both an individual and collective failure. The role



Citation: Werly, Baptiste. 2024. Consistory and Youth Surveillance in the Republic of Geneva: The Case of Games (16th–18th Centuries). *Religions* 15: 1289. <https://doi.org/10.3390/rel15111289>

Academic Editor: Bruce Gordon

Received: 25 July 2024

Revised: 24 September 2024

Accepted: 15 October 2024

Published: 22 October 2024



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of the Consistory was to reconcile parties in crisis (married couples, brothers and sisters, friends, neighbors...) in a charitable and fraternal approach to pastoral accompaniment. The goal was the collective correction of the community of the faithful. The Consistory's eyes were everywhere, in town and country (Tosato-Rigo and Staremborg Goy 2004), and every Thursday it met and recorded immoralities, a ritualized practice that helped to build a collective memory (Grosse 2018). This recording method made it possible to identify recalcitrant and other "incorrigible" offenders over a long period of time, thus inscribing the discipline over an often long period of fraternal correction (Grosse 2006).

A multitude of themes appear in these consistorial registers that are well known in the specialized historiography, detailed as follows: magic and witchcraft (Watt 2013), illegitimate children (Spierling 2010), bawdiness and "anticipations"² (Mottu-Weber 2002), ignorance of Reformed teaching (Manetsch 2017), drunkenness (Lescaze 1983), infidelity and adultery (Grosse 2010), hate (Kingdon 1998), domestic violence, anticlericalism (Kingdon 1993; Rieder 1998), blasphemy, insults, fights, dances, or profane and saucy music and songs (Latour 2015), defamation, bullying and sexual harassment (Rieder 1998), suicide (Watt 2001), luxury, and the wearing of excessively exuberant or luxurious clothes and jewelry (Walker 1987, 2004).

To these themes must be added the control of games, which I shall address in detail. The subject of games has a historiography. As far back as the 19th century, the historian Frédéric-Auguste Cramer recorded references to games in his notes and transcriptions of consistorial records (Cramer 1855).³ Recently, Jeffrey Watt has taken an interest in the place of games in Genevan society; however, he only covers sources from the time of Calvin, and his particular interest is in ribald songs (Watt 2004; Watt 2020, pp. 168–70). Local Genevan historians specializing in the history of justice in the Ancien Régime have explored this theme, particularly through 18th Genevan judicial sources (Porret 1994; Cicchini 2012). My work follows these earlier studies but focuses more especially on the consistorial monitoring of the games played by youth.

My main questions are as follows: Why was the Consistory concerned about games? Why did it consider the playing of games to be potentially problematic and harmful to youth? To address those questions, it is crucial to lay the theoretical foundations of the relationship that Calvinism had with games and recreation by returning to the words of John Calvin, Theodore Beza, and Lambert Daneau. I will present cases that illustrate the problem with the youth's games. The theological and practical sources lead us to the Consistory's understanding of the causes of the perceived problems. Finally, I explore the means implemented by the Consistory and the Small Council to fight against the "fury of the game", a famous expression used in early modern times and found in the Consistory registers, (Dusaulx 1775).

My principal argument is that the Consistory believed it had the moral duty of ensuring that the youth of the Republic diligently followed religious education and did not fall into the vice of games (especially gambling), an evil which could lead to poverty, violence, and social isolation.

I begin with a definition of "youth" in the Genevan context. Unfortunately for historians, Genevan Consistory sources rarely indicate the age of young people involved in playful affairs. The smallest details are invaluable. There is little mention of "young people" said to be aged between 10 and 24–27. Traditionally, the rite of passage of marriage has been a good indicator, marking the end of childhood and adolescence. In Geneva, people generally married between the ages of 26 and 30 (*Dictionnaire historique de la Suisse*, s.v. "Mariage"; Piuz et al. 1990, pp. 84–93). Husbands and wives could have children, and sexual relations between spouses were understood as a sign of adult life. Furthermore, an individual could be considered to have left the world of childhood–adolescence as soon as he or she was no longer a mouth to feed, entirely dependent on the economic care of parents. Working marked a transition, but above all it was the responsibility, burdens, and involvement in public life at the economic level that counted. A young apprentice under the tutelage of a master could still be considered an adolescent. Finally, the category

of youth also included a large proportion of those who attended catechism classes and students at the College of Geneva. Other indications of youth existed, such as children who had not yet received communion. The attitude towards the youth was that they were those whose words were neither fully acknowledged nor respected in discussions. Their words carried no authority. In my study, the youth in this age group fall between the years 5–7 and 25–27, which were regarded in Geneva as the period from childhood to adolescence (civil majority was officially reached at 25).

2. What Did the Reformation Think About Gaming?

I begin with the reformers. For John Calvin, Theodore Beza, and Lambert Daneau, gaming, considered in itself, was both excellent and truly necessary to the Christian life. Some games, however, such as dice, cards, or all games of money or chance, were morally reprehensible.⁴ This reflection on the morality and lawfulness of games was part of a dual theological and legislative tradition easily traced back to the Middle Ages, proving that the Reformation was not particularly innovative in its attitude. The general view was that games were mostly good and necessary, because the youth needed free time to play and have fun.

2.1. *The Christian's Life and the Necessity of Playing Games*

The author knows of no Protestant theologian has ever radically opposed gaming as such. Calvin considered that God “has created the whole [meaning the world] not only for man’s use, but also for his recreation”. Humanity has every right to enjoy and occasionally amuse itself with the pleasures God places at its disposal (eating and drinking, playing, conversing and laughing among friends, singing and praising God): “For this Father is so good to his children, that he is willing (provided we take them with gracious action and without excess) that we use his goods freely in our necessity, even and without making any scruples of conscience: that we receive pleasure and enjoyment.” (Calvin 1863–1900, vol. 23, p. 635).

In his 1566 “Letter upon Games” sent to the Protestant Church of Troyes in the context of the Wars of Religion, Beza summarized his thoughts on gaming. According to him, entertaining oneself and playing are a necessity: “we know well that the mind, not being able to be always tense, requires some recreation” (Bèze 1960–2017, vol. 7, n° 456). The Geneva theologian referred to an episode in the life of John the Evangelist found in the ancient Cassian, a story that had a significant posterity, notably in the writings of Thomas Aquinas. (Thomas d’Aquin 1984–1986, II a–II ae, q. 168, art. 2 to 4). The story goes that John, who was playing with and caressing a partridge, was approached by a birder armed with a bow. The latter asked him to explain why he was enjoying himself. John replied that, just as the bow cannot be constantly strung, man must allow himself moments of relaxation: “Hey! don’t be surprised either, young man, that I allow my mind this innocent and brief recreation” (Cassien 1959, p. 213). For Beza, after working and praying to God, humans need to relax. The total absence of play and a life of pure work are in no way desirable, nor willed by God: “extreme severity is to be condemned in this place as in all others”, concluded Beza (Bèze 1960–2017, vol. 7, n° 456).

In the second half of the 16th century, Lambert Daneau contributed to theoretical reflections on games with his *Brieve remonstrance sur les jeux de sort, ou de hazard* (Daneau 1574).⁵ This treatise encapsulated early modern Reformed thinking on this subject. The author, before attacking the immorality of gambling, argued that gaming was good for children, men, and women, and affirmed that a life without games is inhuman and unbearable. It was even a form of “cruelty” (Daneau 1574, p. 9). Further, it was a sin to forbid what is “licit and honest” (Daneau 1574, p. 17). Against the overly rigorous positions of Ambrose and John Chrysostom, Daneau preferred the Augustinian approach: “for we believe, with Saint Augustine, in the second book of Music, that it is the duty of a wise man, whatever it may be, to recreate and rejoice his spirit so as to be able to last, take breath, & then return more cheerfully to his ordinary work” (Daneau 1574, pp. 7–8). “We therefore neither forbid nor

condemn gaming, nor do we think it wrong that Christian men sometimes play and frolic". However, concluded Daneau, the games must be "licit and honest, and in moderation" (Daneau 1574, p. 8). Finally, all games must be played to the glory of God and with respect and love for others (Daneau 1574, p. 8).

2.2. Games Are Good, at Certain Conditions. . .

Calvin, Beza, and Daneau distinguished between good and bad games. Bad games were those that relied solely on chance.⁶ This position was explained by the reformers' refusal to make vain use of fate, which they considered divine. This was why dice and card games were to be banned: "The card and dice game, is a true corruption of a holy permission of God, & of the true & honest game" (Daneau 1574, p. 33). Beza specified that illicit games were "those which are based entirely on chance, and which provide no praiseworthy exercise of body or mind, as are dice and cards and such other games defamed and condemned by the civil laws themselves". The theologian concluded "in truth, whatever pretext one invokes, these games [of cards and dice] are but inventions to attract the good of others" (Bèze 1960–2017, vol. 7, n° 456, p. 60).

Physical exercise games, such as the use of a bow, harquebus, and crossbow, were strongly encouraged by Daneau. They were introduced by a legitimate authority, namely, the magistracy, and they kept the body fit and the spirit vivid. These pleasurable games, part of the military drill, also ensured the "state's security, at the right time" (Daneau 1574, pp. 18–19). Daneau was also in favor of jeu de paume (the ancestor of tennis), which he described as "an honest exercise of body & industry of mind" (Daneau 1574, p. 14). Beza pointed out that other lawful games existed and were worth playing, such as the excellent chess, which required strategy and intelligence (Bèze 1960–2017, vol. 7, n° 456), a view that Daneau also shared (Daneau 1574, p. 44).

Finally, apart from the official prizes offered at games organized by the magistracy, the general rule was that gambling was inherently immoral. Calvin considered that "it is almost impossible to play for money, without God being offended in some way" (Calvin 1863–1900, vol. 17, n° 3150, p. 714). For Daneau, betting money was illegitimate because "whoever takes and retains another's money, for having won it in game, retains it without any legitimate cause, and therefore has it in bad conscience, & to truly say is a thief" (Daneau 1574, p. 13). There was only one exception. In the fourth point of his *Remonstrance*, entitled "Of those who play to drink", Daneau advocated that one could bet a little money while playing only if it was immediately consumed in drinks at the end of the game (Daneau 1574, p. 22), but "any sum played for drink must be a moderate sum: for otherwise the whole thing is an excess to be condemned, & punished by the Magistrate who then must do his duty" (Daneau 1574, p. 22). Gaming, Daneau wrote, "is neither instituted nor permitted to anyone, to be a means of earning money or acquiring it, but only for the exercise of the body, or the recreation of the mind: so that whoever uses it for any other purpose, does not use gaming, but abuses it" (Daneau 1574, p. 11). Calvin finally called on gamers to exercise moderation: "What I desire [concerning games (quod ad lusus)] is moderation. That games do not exceed measure, either in expenditure or in frequency" (Calvin 1863–1900, vol. 19, p. 549).

2.3. The Gaming Legislation Resulting from the Reformation

Game regulations existed in Geneva long before the Reformation. The first recorded law dates from March 1430 and prohibited gambling before and during the celebration of mass (Rivoire and Van Berchem 1927–1935, vol. 1, n° 156). Between 1430 and 1534, some twenty edicts were promulgated, banning gambling and games of chance, and condemning without exception all games played during mass (Rivoire and Van Berchem 1927–1935, vol. 2, n° 300, 372, 424, 425, 519, 540, 578, 610, 632, 645, 677). Dice and cards were systematically condemned. Since 1459, dice players risked excommunication (Rivoire and Van Berchem 1927–1935, vol. 1, n° 221). Card players were punished with fines and humiliated in the public square, forced to wear a shackle for a few hours, with cards

tied around their necks to show passers-by that they had committed an offense. (Rivoire and Van Berchem 1927–1935, vol. 2, n° 523; Picot 1811, vol. 2, p. 271). From this we can conclude that the Reformation invented neither gaming legislation nor the condemnation of dice, cards, and all forms of gambling. More to the point, it revived a rich heritage of medieval legislation.

What did occur in the sixteenth century was that Reformation consolidated this medieval legislative foundation. From 1536 onwards, edicts were issued on the supervision of cabarets and inns, with hosts obliged to refuse illicit gambling in their establishments and to report any gamblers to the authorities (Rivoire and Van Berchem 1927–1935, vol. 2, n° 692, 694). The ecclesiastical edicts of the Consistory of 1541, which bore the ideological stamp of Calvin, forbade the clergy to play games that were illicit and condemned by civil edicts (article 21) (Rivoire and Van Berchem 1927–1935, vol. 2, n° 794). The makers of playing cards were banned from the trade as early as 1550 (Calvin 1863–1900, vol. 21, p. 465). Gambling was also prosecuted in the countryside in the villages of Peney and Jussy, as well as in the lands of the Franchises, and the Chapter of St Pierre and St Victor (Rivoire and Van Berchem 1927–1935, vol. 2, n° 766, 843, 841).

This theological and legislative context defined a framework in which playful practices were either frankly encouraged or morally and judicially condemned. Youth in no way escaped this political–ecclesiastical reality. Like adults, young ones had to follow the laws of the Republic and submit to social and ecclesiastical discipline.

3. The Youth and Gaming: What Is the Scandal All About?

During one of the first consistorial sessions of the year 1719, the members of the Consistory affirmed that “gaming is the source of the disorders of young people” (*Registres du Consistoire*, vol. 77, f° 148 [26 January 1719]). This formulation needs to be understood by addressing some disciplinary matters.

3.1. *The Profanation of Sunday, Desertion of Catechism Classes, and Absenteeism from Sermons*

In the Republic, respect for the sacredness of Sunday was a duty to which all Genevans had to adhere. Work was forbidden, and attending sermons and following the doctrinal teachings of the catechism taught in the temples were compulsory. Catechism played a decisive role in the religious education of young people (Watt 2004, p. 49). Sunday was not synonymous with leisure, as it may be today in the secularized European societies of the 21st century. In Calvin’s time, the indoctrination⁷ of youth was a necessity and part of the constitution of an evangelical Genevan identity. Consequently, emphasis was placed on assiduous catechism attendance, since the religious education provided by parents, while essential, was not considered entirely sufficient. Instruction needed to be completed in an institutionalized and formal setting. What is more, no one was permitted to take communion without first having attended catechism classes and being able to answer its questions by heart. Anyone who disregarded the catechism was barred from taking part in one of the four Lord’s Suppers (January, Easter, Pentecost, 1st Sunday of September). The stakes were high. By instilling the most elementary truths of the Reformed faith in the minds of the Republic’s children from the earliest age, society was guarding against the spread of false doctrines responsible for political, social, and religious disorder. Catechesis played a central role in the metaphysical fight against evil. That was why the Consistory took a dim view of young people’s absenteeism from sermons and catechism classes.

“They [the children] often played truant, sneaking out of the temple while the sermon was being preached, or they talked loudly, laughed, fought among themselves, and sometimes made such a scandal that the faithful could hear nothing of the sermon and were indignant about it” (Pittard et al. 1896, p. 107). Consistory sources show that some children in the Republic preferred to skip catechism classes and miss sermons to play. As a result, the Consistory regularly had to deal with the desecration of the Lord’s Day through play. The problem existed from Calvin’s time, and continued unabated until the end of the Ancient Regime.⁸ At the beginning of the 17th century, pastors reported that “young

people don't sing catechisms" (which they should) and instead "go out and play in the city", and sometimes leave the city gates to play in the countryside, far from their parents, which, quite apart from the scandal of not attending catechism classes, was also a serious danger to their safety (*Registres du Consistoire*, vol. 37, f° 34 [21 April 1608]; vol. 39, f° 28v [22 May 1610]). In town, whole troops of children went "running and playing through the streets during catechism classes, with great disregard for the word of God". (*Registres du Consistoire*, vol. 40, f° 109v [28 November 1611]). It was common to observe these groups of children gathering every week in the streets and squares of the city, where they "play during preaching and make a lot of noise" (*Registres du Consistoire*, vol. 80, f° 93 [18 March 1728]). To the regret of the pastors, these children seemed "uneducated" in religion (*Registres du Consistoire*, vol. 47, f° 3 [15 January 1618]). In the Saint Gervais district, on the right bank of Lake Geneva, "some people of consideration [...] had made serious complaints about the impiety of the children and the scandals they committed around the temple during preaching" (*Registres du Consistoire*, vol. 72, f° 103 [22 September 1707]). Children gathered in gangs and played in the alleys, boulevards, main streets, and squares, where they chased each other, played skittles and cards, squabbled, etc., and if they were not playing directly in those places, then they would meet up and "play during prayers above the Saint-Gervais cemetery" (*Registres du Consistoire*, vol. 73, f° 387, 366 [14, 21 May 1711]). Sometimes, "The grounds⁹ of the Saint Gervais temple were full of people [during worship] who were walking around & children who were making a lot of noise & playing, which distracted either the minister or the listeners" (*Registres du Consistoire*, vol. 89, f° 234 [20 June 1771]).

One remarkable episode deserves mention. One Sunday, a pastor spotted a whole troop of merry boys playing noisily around the Saint Gervais square. Determined to get the youngsters into the temple to attend the sermon, the pastor channeled their energy for a short while and managed to get them into the building, but the pastoral victory was short-lived. The consistorial register testifies that "they came out of it [the temple] and, by their bad example, urged their comrades who were already in the temple to come out too"! The temple was completely emptied of children, and religious instruction was definitively interrupted...what an unacceptable scandal (*Registres du Consistoire*, vol. 78, f° 598 [23 January 1721])! Clearly, the profane space of the street, with its children's games, competed with the edifying pulpit that transmitted the word of God.¹⁰

On closer examination, the sources clearly indicate that games even penetrated the interior of temples. We know that children, quite bored with listening to soporifically long preaching or following the boring catechism, brought their cards or skittles into the temple to pass the time. The weariest decided, after a few minutes, to race and chase each other down the aisles, creating a hubbub "which is such that the minister cannot be heard".¹¹ At the Saint Pierre temple, "some children [...] played cards during the service and shouted 'Amen' at the top of their voices when the sermon was over", a most cheeky way of expressing their relief at finally being freed from their religious duties! (*Registres du Consistoire*, vol. 80, f° 93 [18 March 1728]).¹² Among the children who went to the temple on Sundays to attend catechism classes, some were known to bring card games. At the end of a Sunday sermon given in the Saint Gervais temple, several decks of torn cards were found under the children's pews. The sight of this card confetti made it clear that they had spent the entire sermon playing, and had (one could easily imagine) listened to absolutely nothing of the sermon (*Registres du Consistoire*, vol. 80, f° 312 [23 February 1730]).

On another day, several boys were caught "playing a certain game in the temple [of Saint-Pierre], in which they push a kind of ball with sticks, and when they are seen by a man of honour going towards them, they first run away so as not to be recognized" (*Registres du Consistoire*, vol. 69, f° 162 [26 September 1700]). The scandal could also be observed at the Madeleine (See *Registres du Consistoire*, vol. 41, f° 125 [17 December 1612]; vol. 42, f° 114v [2nd December 1613]) or Saint Gervais temple. Games also took place in the side galleries of the temples (*Registres du Consistoire*, vol. 73, f° 387 [15 May 1711]) (See *Registres du Consistoire*, vol. 73, f° 387 [14 May 1711]). There, children found the perfect space to

roughhouse, chase, and play bowling. It happened for instance in the Temple Neuf (located on Place de la Fusterie)¹³ or in Saint Gervais or at La Madeleine.¹⁴ In the end, it was a kind of a common habit to bring games to worship to pass the time, and every week there was “a great number of children at the bottom of the temple who disturb[ed] the devotion of those placed there” by playing and shouting (*Registres du Consistoire*, vol. 73, f° 419, [1st October 1711]).

3.2. The Deleterious Effects of the Abuse of Games among the Youth: Violence, Debts, and a Lack of Responsibility

The desecration of Sunday is undoubtedly one of the worst effects of gaming abuse. But there are other consequences to consider as well.

Sometimes, when a game organized by children went wrong, violence occurred. In the early 17th century, the Pastors' Company reported that one Sunday “two children from the College who were playing together were injured, one of them by a knife in the ribs, with great scandal. God has provided that the injured child will be well. The one who injured him escaped and is the son of one of our [Huguenot] brothers from France, a good man”. While in this case the child survived, this was not the case in December 1661, when “the children of the college have been fighting for some time with coats and handkerchiefs, at the ends of which some put stones, as a result of which a child died in the last few days...” (Pittard et al. 1896, p. 185). Children used to play “Jean-Jean-boiteux”, “la-béquille-à-trois-nœuds”, some dangerous games whose meaning and rules completely escape us today (Mercier 1938, p. 34). Such cases were rare, however, and in most cases the children confined themselves to non-life-threatening fights and squabbles. These brawls, which sometimes took place inside and outside the temples, generated noise pollution during prayers and rendered the sermons almost inaudible. (*Registres du Conseil*, vol. 259, f° 386 [3rd September 1759]). A troupe of little boys, for example, made “an extraordinary din in the Place du Temple de Saint Gervais, quarrelling and swearing over disputes that had arisen through play” (*Registres du Consistoire*, vol. 78, f° 605 [6 February 1721]). In February 1764, it was reported that “young people of about 10 to 12 years of age for some time have been playing frequently, that this gives rise to difficulties and disputes” (*Registres du Consistoire*, vol. 87, f° 356 [23 February 1764]). Arguing, insulting, and fighting while playing was not appropriate for a Christian.

The Consistory kept a close eye on another major problem, namely, the youthful taste for gambling. During sermons “the streets, cabarets and public squares are filled with young men gambling, and that they even gamble money publicly, and that such disorders are committed [...] around the temples” (*Registres du Consistoire*, vol. 43, f° 84v [29 September 1614]); *Registres du Conseil*, vol. 112, f° 291 [30 September 1614]). The consistorial reports stated that large sums of money could be lost by the youth in gambling. They were principally referring to young men who belonged to Geneva's upper society, offering a poor image of Geneva's patrician families, as it “was represented that there are young men of this city, children of families, who have played very big games at cards and are losing a lot of money, whereupon it was recalled that these are the young lawyers Chapeaurouge and Trembley, first cousins, to whom a foreign officer won nearly sixty gold louis » (*Registres du Consistoire*, vol. 67, f° 215, 215v [24 February 1692]). At the same time, gambling also affected “a fairly large number of idle young people, whose outward appearance indicates that they belong to the lower classes, and whose education appears to have been very neglected” (*Registres du Consistoire*, vol. 91, f° 482, [26 May 1785]). In 1764, we learn a bit more about the children's age, given that “there are also young people between the ages of 20 and 24 who gamble from three in the afternoon until three in the morning, that they play big games and that these games can have unfortunate consequences for young people” (*Registres du Consistoire*, vol. 87, f° 356 [23 February 1764]).

Gambling made and broke fortunes, an abhorrent and highly scandalous reality in an Ancient Regime society designed to be well-ordered under the eyes of God. In Geneva,

social classes were distinguished in socio-economic terms and in terms of the right to participate (or not) in political life. From top to bottom, we find “citoyens”, “bourgeois”, “habitants”, “natifs”, “sujets” and “étrangers”. The sons and daughters of the great patrician families had a duty to represent the highest standards. They embodied the city’s socio-economic elite in a Calvinist Republic that valued enrichment through hard work (Biéler 1959) and the rejection of any materialistic demonstration. Winning or losing money (sometimes their parent’s money) while gambling was not acceptable. This was particularly true when all the money could have been used for a better investment or even given to charity.¹⁵ This is why, in the second half of the 18th century, a time of unprecedented growth in gambling in gaming circles, salons and academies, the Consistory deplored the terrible and tragic example of those “sons of families for whom these games [of money and chance] were an opportunity to dissipate themselves, to neglect their work, as well as their other duties, to such an extent that they ended up, after incurring considerable debts, fleeing their paternal home, and their homeland, without their parents knowing what became of them”. (*Registres du Consistoire*, vol. 91, f° 450 [3rd February 1785]). This last quotation is striking. Because of gambling, the evangelical Republic, depicted as a desolate mother, had tragically lost its beloved sons. Young men belonging to the Genevan elite represented the economic and political future of the city. For the Consistory, losing money gambling could only lead to social, political, and economic instability and a weakening of patriarchy. Finally, such immorality attracted divine punishment for the entire community, and there was also a great fear of seeing young girls abandon themselves to the passion of gambling (an essentially male problem). If young girls gambled with as much passion as men, they could only become bad mothers and participate, with their husbands, in the destruction of the Christian family. Protecting young people from the abuses of gambling was a way of saving the future of the family, and by extension, the future of the entire community from a relational, economic, and spiritual point of view.

4. What Are the Causes of the Abuse of Games among the Youth?

What were the causes of game abuse in Geneva among young people? I argue that there were three. First, young schoolchildren seem to have taken refuge in play as a reaction to strict, boring, and time-consuming school teaching. Secondly, the Consistory believed that children were influenced by the bad habits of adults. Lastly, young people were attracted by the new forms of sociability that were spreading throughout the city, such as academies or gaming circles, billiard halls, gambling halls, etc. The Consistory was faced with the problem of controlling the places of sociability in which children loved to play. Its surveillance was aimed as much at official and tolerated public play areas as well as at illicit establishments.

4.1. Too Much Study?

It is not impossible that the abuse of youth gaming so regularly condemned by the Consistory stemmed from overworked students at the College. I turn to the school system in Geneva and the timetable for students at the College (established in 1559).

At the College, the subjects taught were reduced to Latin, Greek, and religious instruction: “it is certain that teaching must have been a painful monotony, both for the regents and for the pupils [...]. Let’s try to imagine the life of a student at the old College in the 16th century. By adding the hours of class and rehearsal to those of catechism and sermons, we arrive at the sizeable number of sixty hours per week”! (Pittard et al. 1896, p. 103) Indeed, in a letter sent to a parent, Theodore Beza did not hesitate to complain about a child who refused to study for more than fourteen hours a day! In despair, Beza even confided to the father, “I fear that nothing good will ever come of your son”! (Pittard et al. 1896, p. 103). College regulations stated that the teaching week, which ran from Monday to Saturday, began at 6 a.m. in summer and 7 a.m. in winter. On Wednesday afternoons, young people had the day off “and permission to frolic until three o’clock”... but only on the condition that “it be without dissolute licence” (Pittard et al. 1896, p. 105). At harvest

time, a three-week vacation was granted. (Pittard et al. 1896, p. 49). The College's teaching discipline responded to the urgency of Calvin's reform project. From the 1550s onwards, its aim was to improve religious education and make the Republic's youth literate. In the 17th and 18th centuries, teaching hours tended to decrease slightly, but the fundamental problem remained: studying at College was exhausting.

Disgust with this new exigent school education, which was intended to "train good Christians and reasonable men" (Le Capitaine and Karpowicz 2014, p. 13), turned into rejection, and rejection into an all-consuming passion for play and recreation, seen as a way of escaping the discipline. For instance, in 1682, it was reported that children were bored in class and brought cards back to the College and even played during teaching hours (Registres du Consistoire, vol. 64, f° 221v [26 January 1682]). Further, it led to mocking education in a rebellious way. The demand for humanist education and the progressive reinforcement of schooling in the modern era had the effect of introducing "an increasingly rigorous and harsh disciplinary regime" that tended to confine children in rigid and often stifling educational structures (Le Capitaine and Karpowicz 2014, p. 13).

4.2. The Dangers of Social Mimicry: When Children Play as Passionately as Adults

As Marie-France Morel has recently observed, "When children grow up, it is the role of parents and educators to repress their natural inclinations which lead them to pleasures" (Morel 2019, p. 8). According to the Consistory, youthful debauchery could be explained by the bad example set by adults. Children mimicked their actions. The institution took a stand against this phenomenon, holding not only parents, but also hosts who tolerated abuses in their homes, responsible for the youth's decadence.

In September 1605, Martin Rosso, a refugee father (from Italy) with a reputation for "gambling so hard he can't have a day off", appeared before the Consistory to be reprimanded for his habit of involving his son Joshua in his gambling activities whenever he found himself without "company". His conduct caused a scandal in the neighborhood (Registres du Consistoire, vol. 35, f° 53–53v [5, 12 September 1605]). Urged to change his behavior, the father was asked to stop influencing his son to gamble. His conscience was described as completely "asleep", and he was told to get his act together. The Rosso case illustrates the Consistory's attention to the lack of parental authority (the key role of *pater familias*) and to the education of the young. The case is also a clear example of the pastoral support of the Consistory. A few years later, we learn that another father, accompanied by his son, took part in a card game during Easter celebrations. Wanting to imitate the assembly of players, the child cried out "Ah my father! give me ten cards!" (Registres du Consistoire, vol. 43, f° 36v [28 April 1614]). Bad parents received a serious exhortation from the Consistory. They were considered the shame of the Republic.

In November 1612, the Consistory sought to identify those who illegally hosted children in their homes or hotels to drink, eat and play illicit games. The surveillance was not easy, because there were many hotels in Geneva where young people could come to have fun and get drunk until late at night (Deonna 1935). The investigation led to the redaction of a *Rôle de ceux qui jouent aux cartes et dés durant les prêches et autres heures et qui débauchent beaucoup de jeunesse* (List of those who play cards and dice during sermons and other hours and who debauch many young people) (Registres du Consistoire, vol. 41, f° 114 [12 November 1612]). Seven people from the town and countryside (from the village of Jussy) were identified. The information revealed that Jeremy Debrunes' son "makes a trade and merchandise of playing cards and dice and at the tripot", a clear sign that trafficking existed as well. In February 1752, a shoemaker named Jacques Jobert also had to appear before the Consistory to be severely censured for having "received young people in his home who spent nights playing games of chance" (Registres du Consistoire, vol. 85, f° 300, 306 [10 february, 3rd March 1752]).

In December 1689, a damning report emphasized the responsibility of adults in spreading the gambling scandal among the Republic's youth. It "has been represented that the youngest in age in the city are very fond of gambling, following the example given to them

by the older ones, so that if this great abuse is not remedied, it is to be feared that all the youth of both sexes will be lost, since admonitions and exhortations have not been able to do anything until now" (*Registres du Consistoire*, vol. 67, f° 93 [26 December 1689]). An investigation revealed that a certain Moïse Genet spent long hours playing cards with Daniel Garde's son and his young apprentice (*Registres du Consistoire*, vol. 55, f° 128 [15 October 1640]). A few years later, the situation had not improved, for in January 1695, at the Consistory's annual meeting, it was announced that "it is necessary to remedy the great abuses of games [...] people of both sexes of all conditions being strongly addicted [fort adonnés] to games, particularly card games, even children, which is the cause of much disorder in families" (*Registres du Consistoire*, vol. 68, f° 96 [17 January 1695]). Notable is the Consistory's fear of seeing girls (who represented the future mothers of the Republic) caught up in the vice of card games.

The Consistory dealt with scandalous parents, but exhortations did not always work, and the response was frequently resistance or indifference. In the second half of the 18th century, for example, a case reports that Pastor Dewaldkirch had great difficulty in reasoning with Jean Antoine Fontaine, nicknamed Barradi, who "has reduced himself to the last misery by his debauchery & laziness" and who has "a son who follows such a bad example & who has no education" (*Registres du Consistoire*, vol. 86, f° 106 [6 May 1756]). Barradi was a renowned gambler and, when his pastor lectured him, he replied with "hauteur" and defiance "that there was nothing wrong with his way of life & that he deserved no reproach". Incurable, the bad father was finally absolutely forbidden from the Lord's supper.

These cases highlight the problem of game addiction that was considered as a disease following the inaugural work of the humanist Paschasius Justus (*Paschasius Justus 1561*). Only regular pastoral support, consisting of conversations and encouragement to behave better, could help improve the situation.

4.3. *The Modern Temptation of New Sociability Spaces*

The registers of the Consistory of Geneva reveal that between the 16th and 18th century, the youth of the city became passionate about new spaces of sociability in which games, legal or not, were played. These spaces came in different types, including the jeu de paume (tennis courts), official establishments run by "paumiers", sometimes called "tripotiers" or "masters of the jeu de paume". These were gaming academies, illicit gambling houses where young people from good families often came to play dice, cards and gambling. The "circles", private male associations known for their political dimension, but which also hosted games of money and chance, and other places, such as cafés. In short, the Consistory had to supervise the activities of new establishments that went beyond the strict framework of traditional cabarets, taverns, cellars, and other inns that were usual until the end of the 16th century.

What about the youth's enthusiasm for jeu de paume? This game had been played in Geneva since the end of the 15th century. At this time it was the "jeu de longue paume", played outdoors in the public squares of the city or the countryside (*Flournois 1823*, p. 67). The historian of tennis, de Luze, believes that "courte paume", played indoors, existed in Geneva from the first half of the 16th century (*Luze 1933*, p. 218). We know, for example, that in 1511, it was prohibited in the steam rooms (ludus stuphæ in bastubis), "for fear that the youth would indulge in idleness" (*Flournois 1823*, p. 97). More generally, this game was well regarded in Geneva, as was the case throughout Europe in the Middle Ages and modern times.¹⁶ For example, the Geneva chronicler Bonivard said that "courte paume" was frequented by nobles wanting to maintain their bodies and sociability (*Bonivard 1865*, p. 321).

We know that there were up to three tennis halls in the city. The two oldest were located on the left bank in the neighborhoods of Longemalle and Rive and were built in the second half of the 16th century; the second was built on the right bank in the Saint Gervais district, rue du Chevelu, in the second half of the 17th century.¹⁷ During the 1550s,

several scandals took place at Jean Alboyt's jeu de paume (Rive district). He was accused of leaving his room open on Sundays during catechism and sermons (Watt et al. 1996, vol. 16, p. 355). In 1564, the scandal occurred again, and children were involved in the affair. On March 17, Calvin asked the Small Council to act against "Calbuy" (certainly Alboyt, here mistakenly written, as sometimes he was even called Albuis or Albois) because he "receives the children at the game of tennis, and takes their books as pledge, which is a kind of sacrilege, [and] even took a dictionary"; the checks carried out, and the gambler was punished with a stay in prison; then, on August 7, "the Council is informed that there are several echo merchants who debauch at the jeu de paume, and bet money and all their goods, and a man named Philibert Disque, known as the Viscount, spent a good 34 sous out of pocket, and for the meal of four people, 26 sous, without bread. [It has been] Decided to forbid the Paulmier [game master] from giving schoolchildren more than 6 sous of paume per day" (Pittard et al. 1896, p. 183).

Like jeu de paume, billiards was legal in Geneva. In its form of being played indoors on a table (we speak of table billiards, as opposed to ground billiards, played outside), it was one of those highly distinguished noble games, requiring strategy and dexterity from the players. It became fashionable, especially in the 17th and 18th centuries. The French game theorist Jean Barbeyrac categorized it among those "games of pure skill" which "require [...] dexterity of the Hand or flexibility of the Body", "some spirit, & some penetration", while using a certain physical strength, but necessarily "tempered and regulated" (Barbeyrac 1709, vol. 1, p. 102). Even if billiards was not considered a bad game, the context in which it was played, such as a dim indoor atmosphere, alcohol consumption, introduction of gambling, could lead to abuse; this innocent game quickly became the heart of disciplinary cases in which the city's youth were involved. Between 1644 and 1662, the Consistory recorded complaints from mothers against a certain Gabriel Ballissert. He was accused of letting children come to his house to play billiards at any time and it was suspected that the teenagers were getting drunk and engaging in debauchery at his house (Registres du Consistoire, vol. 55, f° 259 [26 December 1644]). An additional scandal was that his game of billiards had prostitutes, even though they had been banned in Geneva since the Reformation. Once informed, the Small Council decided to close the establishment, but the host illegally continued his activity (Registres du Conseil, vol. 144, f° 26v [28 February 1645]). Some time later, the Consistory reported that "Ballissert continues to attract young people, even those who still attend college, to his house, where they indulge in debauchery under the pretext of playing billiards, notwithstanding all the admonitions made to him and his wife, and since Monsieur Gautier had the said game broken up, the said Ballissert had it redone!" (Registres du Consistoire, vol. 55, f° 267 [6 March 1645]). Ballissert the incorrigible ended up imprisoned and fined.¹⁸ But, nothing changed and, in 1662, College students still went to his house and bet their study books to be able to pay their part! (Registres du Consistoire, vol. 58, f° 325v, [25 September 1662]). And, in November 1682, it was discovered that another billiards owner allowed children to play on credit (Registres du Consistoire, vol. 65, f° 61v [30 November 1682]).

Yet another problem exists. From the 17th century, the European fashion for tobacco academies and gambling academies reached Geneva. These academies should not be confused with the very respectable academies of sciences and letters. The "academies" we are talking about were illicit conventicles of players highly appreciated by the wealthy social classes.¹⁹ In these private rooms, sociability was organized around gambling and the consumption of tobacco, a luxury product which was either smoked or snorted. Among the regulars of these "smoke-filled rooms" (also called "tabagies") where large sums were gambled, some were members to illustrious Genevan families, as demonstrated by the presence in one of these conventicles of a certain Gallatin.²⁰ From the 1660s, the craze for "academies" quickly affected young people. An academy was spotted at host Albert Dubelis', where debauchery was reported and where "several complain that their children go there and frequently at night to play and smoke tobacco" (Registres du Consistoire, vol. 58, f° 172, 172v [8, 15 November 1660]). Scandals multiplied. In 1686, it was the turn of Louis

Bartolonne's wife, Judith, to organize parties.²¹ She ran an academy in which "disreputable people" went, the accommodation being "an academy of debauched players and tobacco smokers". Influenced by adults, one of the children of the prestigious Fatio family often debauched there (*Registres du Consistoire*, vol. 66, f° 58v [14 January 1686]). Despite the referral of the matter to the Small Council and the usual consistorial exhortations, the problems continued, with alcohol, prostitution, and gambling "to the great scandal of the entire neighbourhood who make great complaints about it" (*Registres du Consistoire*, vol. 66, f° 65,67 [4, 11 February 1686]). In order to put an end to the too-public abuses, Judith was finally imprisoned in February 1686, "after the excesses committed in her house & those who favored debaucheries" (*Registres du Consistoire*, vol. 66, f° 69v [18 February 1686]).

5. How to Deal with the "Fury of Games" among the Youth?

Measures were taken to combat the "fury of games" (Dusaulx 1775) among the youth. They were of different natures. Those who played forbidden games, or who had fun at inappropriate times, such as sermons or catechism classes, were seriously admonished and at times publicly corrected. In terms of the legislative history of the city, the Consistory played a role with the Small Council in the renewal and updating of the laws on games, which highlighted the interaction between the two institutions. Finally, the content of the consistorial registers suggests that gaming abuse among young people was perceived as a collective fault involving all social actors.

5.1. Exhorting and Punishing the Youth

In Geneva, young people caught in the act of illicit gaming were exposed to serious pastoral exhortations, parental punishments, and public physical corrections.

During the winters of the 1550s, the Consistory noticed that the children of the city enjoyed playing "marc" on the ice, a game comparable to modern-day curling. One of these children had the reprehensible habit of betting money on the game. Banned from the Lord's Supper, he was reprimanded for his attitude and sent back to the Small Council at the request of the Consistory. He was finally "beaten with rods" publicly, as an example to the other children (*Registres du Conseil*, vol. 54, f° 26 [28 December 1557]). Shortly thereafter, a group of young marc players were forced to appear in front of the Consistory for having played during catechism. They received the same punishment (Watt et al. 1996, vol. 14, p. 404).

The "youth was subjected to the yoke of a very severe discipline" and "corporal punishments were inflicted, even for minor offences", such as joyful amusements at prescribed hours (Pittard et al. 1896, p. 177). The regents in charge of discipline and correction at the College were reputed to be at times to be excessively violent during punishments (humiliating castigations of truant students). Pastors, who were not in charge of such physical punishments, actively encouraged them. However, the pastors were not in favor of abusive violence. They advocated for moderation in punishment and, at times, had to censure regents who punished youths with excessive violence. (Pittard et al. 1896, p. 178).

The Consistory's records have left traces of children's responses, or testimonies of their reaction to ecclesiastical discipline. This detail is valuable, because it allows us to collect voices that are often absent from history²². For instance, we hear adolescent voices rebelling against discipline. Philippe de Choudens (19 years old) and François Baraban (25 years old) who gambled for money during a game of boules (nowadays called pétanque) "mocked their [the members of the Consistory] remonstrances, whistling after them" They even confess their misdeed "in a mocking and disrespectful manner, hiding their laughter behind their hat" (*Registres du Consistoire*, vol. 60, f° 289 [3rd November 1670]). Choudens, who at one point refused to appear in the Consistory when gaming was cited as the reason, said jokingly to the officer of the Consistory²³ who summoned him "tell these Gentlemen [of the Consistory] that I am drinking Muscat [a type of wine] for the moment! and that they will see me when I have decided to come!" (*Registres du Consistoire*, vol. 60, f° 301v [29 December 1670]) Consequently, the Consistory severely reprimanded him. Most of

the time, the exhortations in the Consistory were followed by private and secret pastoral interviews, regular visits during which the neighborhood pastor reminded the adolescents of the danger of their actions both for themselves and for the community.

5.2. *Protecting the Youth through Legislative Updates*

The Consistory expressed its concerns about the gaming situation in Geneva in reports transmitted by committee to the Small Council. Not limited to the role of observer, the Consistory played a decisive role in updating the legislation on games in Geneva. Although an institution with legislative power, the Consistory often insisted to the Small Council that the laws on gambling and those on the desecration of Sundays be renewed, or even updated to meet changing circumstances.

We have noted the trend of *jeu de paume* in the second half of the 16th century. Following the numerous scandals that occurred in, during, or on account of this game, a regulation, in order to limit it, was drawn up by the *paumier* Jean Alboyt in August 1564. Before accepting it, the Small Council asked Alboyt to have it read by Theodore Beza to obtain the moral agreement of the Company of Pastors (which was obtained). In this text, particular attention was given to the presence of children at the games. Given that the abuse of *jeu de paume* could lead to insults, swearing, and blasphemy, in addition to violence and score-settling between enraged players, it was specified that “schoolchildren in classes will not be able to play if they are not capable of behaving”! (Rivoire and Van Berchem 1927–1935, vol. 3, n° 1054). Fair play was necessary, and young people had to conform.

Still, in the second half of the 16th century, the Pastors’ Company was dismayed to observe children playing *jeu de mail* outside during catechism and sermons. This game was the ancestor of *croquet*. In 1588, the Company asked the magistrates to prohibit “the students of the College” from playing the game “Item that they [members of the Small Council] gave orders that at the gates [of the city] no one would allow point pass the children who go out with mail”. It was also said that the game of mail would be forbidden for students at the College (Cahier et al. 1964–2001, vol. 5, p. 66). The request was taken into consideration, because we know that young Genevans were prohibited in 1644 from playing mail in Plainpalais, the plain in which an official mail court had been installed in 1637 (Monod 1913, p. 19).

The consistorial struggle against the unbridled development of tobacco and gaming academies, in which the city’s youth were thought to become debauched and ruin themselves, was successful in 1667, when the Consistory obtained from the Small Council the promulgation of a new law prohibiting tobacco academies (Rivoire and Van Berchem 1927–1935, vol. 4, n° 2221). A second legislative victory occurred in 1692 with the banning of games academies (Rivoire and Van Berchem 1927–1935, vol. 4, n° 2746). Nevertheless, the scandalous activity continued despite the laws. Concerning billiards, the Consistory sought to control access to the game more effectively. In January 1694, a commission was set up. Its objective was work with the Small Council to achieve a reduction in the number of billiard rooms in the city. The rapid multiplication of billiard rooms where people played until very late, bet and lost money, and consumed many drinks, was a “cause of [the] debauchery of youth” (Registres du Consistoire, vol. 68, f° 47v [28 January 1694]). Once the Consistory’s request was received, the Small Council requested the police lieutenant write a report on the number of billiard tables in the city, on their owners, and on the morality of these new spaces of sociability (Registres du Conseil, vol. 194, f° 56 [9 February 1694]). From this investigation appeared a most damning report on the “debauchery of the youth who frequent the said [billiard] houses” (Registres du Conseil, vol. 194, f° 71–72 [14 February 1694]). To halt the spread of the contagion, a political decision was taken to promulgate a restriction of the total number of billiards in Geneva. The game was then only to be played in the two *jeu de paume* locations and in the countryside, while one billiard was tolerated in Plainpalais (Rivoire and Van Berchem 1927–1935, vol. 4, n° 2780). Finally, one of the last consistorial victories was recorded in 1746, when the Small Council agreed—given

a proposition by the Consistory—to ban the youth’s “games circles” from the Republic (*Registres du Consistoire*, vol. 84, f° 389 [18 February 1746]).

5.3. *In Favor of a Collective Exhortation: Of the Christian Society’s Responsibility as a Whole*

The Consistory considered Genevan society to have had some responsibility for the scandalous behavior. According to the institution, several actors were to blame for the development of vice in the city, and the regrettable situation was largely due to a lack of disciplinary zeal and a relaxation of vigilance. The Company of Pastors occasionally criticized the regents of the College, whose task it was to accompany the children to catechism and to stay by their side to channel their boundless energy into proper activities. The regents were accused of not sufficiently monitoring the children, a negligence that led to abuses. In March 1728, the officers responsible for monitoring the temples and the pews assigned to the youth were also responsible for restraining disorder. It was “through the fault of the officers who do no duty, that it has been resolved that they will all appear at the chamber of accounts to be exhorted to fulfill their function”. The Lieutenant then had the right to “dismiss those who neglect to go to the temples and who do not do their duty” from their role of surveillance (*Registres du Consistoire*, vol. 80, f° 93 [18, 23 March 1728]). The Consistory also asked the churchwardens to “close the galleries on weekday service days and to prevent children from making noise in the temples on those days” (See (*Registres du Consistoire*, vol. 78, f° 676 [10 July 1721]; vol. 80, f° 313 [2nd March 1730])).

Those who sold prohibited games to children were held responsible for the scandal. “We need to prevent young children from playing with certain small balls [kittles]. Merchants were forbidden to sell them, and children were forbidden from playing them anymore” (Pittard et al. 1896, p. 183). Also, the Consistory was informed of the Officers stationed near the Pin bastion, who were already well known for their card parties, and who often provided “balls and skittles to children” during catechism, a scandalous offense that made them complicit in youthful debauchery. (*Registres du Consistoire*, vol. 73, f° 419 [1st October 1711]).

To fight against evil, the dangers of game abuse were denounced in sermons. Sermons against the passion for gaming even became a distinctive type of preaching in the 17th and 18th centuries. In 1696, Pastor Élie Merlat had a sermon published in Geneva titled *La divinité du sort* in which he firmly condemned the use of chance, which belonged only to God and could not serve as recreation for men (Merlat 1696). The first half of the 18th century saw the publication of two sermons entirely concerning the game, clear evidence that the subject was causing considerable concern. The sermons were written by Gamaliel Vautier and the famous Jean-Alphonse Turretini (Vautier 1727; Turretini 1727). In his *Sermon sur la passion du jeu*, Vautier offered a depiction of the players, stating that they “most often neglect both their parents and their friends, and the closest and most tender connections; they barely have any relationship with their children.” (Vautier 1727, p. 12). Addicted, the pathological gamer was considered to be playing a role in the destabilization of social bonds. Typically, he is a solitary character consumed by gambling and having lost his family relationships. Clearly, such writings from the disciplinary and literary history of Geneva had little effect on the widespread enjoyment of games in the city.

6. Conclusions

Although cases involving games in Geneva form a small part of the records of the Consistory, they are of great interest to historians. The consistorial control of the games, particularly those played by young people, reveals how, throughout the Ancien Régime, the Consistory of Geneva, without ever opposing the games as such (apart from cards, dice, money and chance), sought to better supervise and monitor the activities of young people. The Consistory was fully aware of the youthful taste for forbidden games and sought as much as possible to avoid scandal. The protection of young people also involved exhorting their negligent parents to reform and those who organized illicit games in their establishments to cease. The Consistory’s surveillance targeted official games such as

paume, mail, and billiards because of the excesses they spawned (debauchery, violence, gambling, etc.). The issues were numerous, including the prevention of young people avoiding catechism and sermons (religious education); the necessity of limiting young people's addiction to gambling and preventing them from falling into idleness and poverty; the importance of preventing social isolation due to addiction to games (especially gambling), which, according to the received testimonies, destroyed families and ultimately threatened the social order. The Consistory also acted against games in and around temples during sermons in order that the Word of God might be heard by the faithful. It is also striking to see the extent to which the Consistory played, alongside the Small Council, an active and determining role in the modernization of the laws concerning games and leisure facilities, such as academies and gaming circles, and billiards, in the 17th and 18th centuries. The disciplinary control of games in the modern era is not limited to strictly legislative, political, or economic issues. Beyond these aspects, there was a purely theological, even eschatological dimension to the problem, as evidenced by the printing of two sermons on games in 1727. The consistorial fight against the abuse of games, which was another form of combat against the Devil, took place through sermons, pastoral care (Manetsch 2015), and discussions between sinners and pastors.

Funding: This research received no external funding.

Institutional Review Board Statement: Not applicable.

Informed Consent Statement: Not applicable.

Data Availability Statement: No new data were created or analyzed in this study. Data sharing is not applicable to this article.

Acknowledgments: I would like to thank the guest editor, Bruce Gordon, for his invitation to propose a contribution to this special issue and for his feedback and critical suggestions. My sincere thanks to the two anonymous reviewers who helped to improve this article for the best.

Conflicts of Interest: The author declares no conflicts of interest.

Notes

- ¹ The reputation of the Geneva consistorial sources should not, however, obscure the existence of other consistorial sources in Europe. For example, for French-speaking Switzerland, a work listing all the known collections of the consistories of this region was recently published, revealing an entire territory of archives to explore; see (Grosse et al. 2021). For a quick review (in French) of the book, see (Werly 2022).
- ² An “anticipation” of marriage is a sexual relationship that takes place between two engaged couples before they are married.
- ³ Cramer only transcribed a tiny part of the consistorial sources between 1541 and 1798 (around 5%) and the greatest specialists, such as Isabella and Jeffrey Watt, Robert Kingdon, Christian Grosse (and others), agree that only the most notable, exceptional and scandalous disciplinary cases caught Cramer's attention, which could, one can easily imagine, give a distorted representation of daily life. Robert Kingdon summarized in 1990 the interest and limits of Cramer's work, see (Kingdon 1990, pp. 169–70).
- ⁴ Here, only the Geneva context interests us, hence the mention of these three theologians. But, others, such as Zwingli, expressed the importance of playing games or any kind of physical exercise. The Zurich reformer took a position as early as 1526 on the legality of games in the treatise he composed on the education of Christian youth (the first Latin edition was printed in Basel in 1523). Physical exercise games such as running, swimming, jumping, weight throwing, wrestling and more intellectual relaxation, mobilizing, for example, mental arithmetic, as is the case with chess, are valued. On the other hand, the theologian unreservedly condemns games of money and chance. Zwingli invites young people to train regularly in wrestling, avoiding however getting carried away and ultimately perverting the exercise into a regrettable fight. Note that, under the Ancient Regime, the distinction between game and sport is not as clear as in contemporary times, which is why military exercises, such as archery or arquebus shooting, are considered to fall under games. See (Zwingli [1523] 1899, pp. 90–93).
- ⁵ About Lambert Daneau's life and works, the most essentials works to consult are the following ones (De Félice [1882] 1971; Fatio 1971, 1976, 1981; Ridderikhoff 1985; Dictionnaire historique de la Suisse, s.v. “Lambert Daneau”; Fatio [1995] 2006; Chareyre 2006).
- ⁶ The criticism of games of chance is very old and dates back to Christian antiquity. Lambert Daneau translated the key text of Saint Cyprian, the *Libellum de aleatoribus*, and draws inspiration from it in his own writings, see (Daneau 1566; Cyprian 1889).
- ⁷ “In an era of intense religious conflict, both Protestant and Catholic thinkers were quite concerned about the religious indoctrination of the young”, (Watt 2004, p. 48)

- 8 Jeffrey Watt mentioned a few of those gaming affairs during Calvin's time, see (Watt 2002, 2004). This problem will never be solved, it is quite common to find cases among the 17th and 18th centuries consistory registers.
- 9 This is certainly the area of today's rue des Terreaux-du-Temple. The "terreaux", from the Latin terralia, represented the defensive ditches of the Saint Gervais district enclosure; they were built in the second half of the 15th century. See (Galland 1988).
- 10 Here, we use the expression which gave a title to a great classic of specialized literature. See (Grosse et al. 2018).
- 11 Here are some references for the 1690s, see (Registres du Consistoire, vol. 68, f° 84, 83, 188, 264 [13 September, 16 October 1694; 13 August 1696; 16 March 1698]).
- 12 As early as the early 17th century, major disturbances and noises were reported. See (Registres du Consistoire, vol. 48, f° 117v, 121v [28 October, 11 November 1619]).
- 13 The Fusterie temple was built in 1715, a few years after the revocation of the Edict of Nantes (1685). Its aim was to compensate for the lack of space during worship that occurred after the arrival of the French Huguenots in Geneva.
- 14 Lots of archives' references could be cited here, see for instance (Registres du Consistoire, vol. 61, f° 14v [14 December 1671]; vol. 75, f° 164 [12 mMrch 1716]; vol. 78, f° 676 [10 July 1721]; vol. 89, f° 301 [7 May 1772]; vol. 94, f° 98 [21 February 1793]).
- 15 An essay on luxury was even published in Geneva during the 18th century, in which exuberant materialism and money lost in games are absolutely condemned. See (Butini 1774).
- 16 On the history and success of jeu de paume in Europe, see (Luze 1933; Bonhomme 1991; Bonnefoy et al. 1991; Mehl 1993; Rollan and Reneaud 1995; Clastres and Dietschy 2009).
- 17 For more information about the urbanistic detail of the jeu de paume in Geneva, see (Travers 2020, p. 4); Alain Mélo gives also some information about the buildings in (Broillet et al. 1997–2023, vol. 2, pp. 236–38).
- 18 He was fined 25 florins, a substantial sum, given that in the 17th century the average daily wage was about 2 florins, see (Lescaze 1981, pp. 38, 41, 42) and (Registres du Conseil, vol. 152, f° 35, 16 February 1653).
- 19 See the specific definition of those games academies in (Furetière 1690; Dictionnaire de l'Académie française).
- 20 See (Registres du Consistoire, vol. 57, f° 91v [31 May 1655]). About the Gallatin family, see (Vuilleumier 2009, pp. 52–56).
- 21 The first rumors date from September 1685: "Complaint against Sieur Bartelogne & his wife. It was represented that Mr. Bartologne and his wife having been in debauchery during the last sermon last Sunday, they were sent back here by the Lord of Justice to undergo censorship advised to call them", see (Registres du Consistoire, vol. 66, f° 24v, 17 September 1685); "Louis Bartelogne & Judith Fabry his wife appeared on the Dismissal of Mr. Lieutenant for having spent last Sunday eight days preaching at their home in drinking and entertainment who admitted that people who had business with them came to their home and spent the preaches, collating there without any noise or scandal having nevertheless been amended by the lieutenant advised to seriously censure them for this bad behavior and profanation of the said day and particularly the said woman to make it a profession and custom.", see (Registres du Consistoire, vol. 66, f° 26, 24 September 1685).
- 22 This is a well-known problem in historical research: women and children are often absent from historical sources, which is all the more true when we go back to ancient periods. Recomposing their history and giving life to their voices is a constant challenge for historians.
- 23 The bailiff of the Consistory is mostly called a "sautier" in Geneva. This expression is proper to Swiss context and more particularly to Geneva.

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