

‘A Survival of a Distant Past’.

J.A. Martin and the Victorian Revival of the French Church at Canterbury.*

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In October 1885, religious services and other events were held across the country to commemorate the bicentenary of the Revocation of the Edict of Nantes.¹ At Canterbury cathedral, the Dean preached on how the religious co-existence established by the Edict of Nantes ‘gave France peace for nearly a century’ after the conflicts that had divided the nation during the late sixteenth century. From the beginning of his Personal Rule in 1661, Louis XIV had sought ‘to discourage and if possible to destroy Protestantism’, his actions culminating in the revoking of the Edict on 18 October 1685. While some French Protestants or Huguenots, as they were known, did convert to Catholicism

... large numbers of these people left their country, left all behind them, proving their faith by giving up their property. Many came to this country, and their coming resulted in one of the greatest blessings that had ever happened to England for they brought with them not merely sturdy love of truth, but they brought with them also a great many trades which were unknown in England ... Through the coming of these people, although so poor and destitute, a great many improvements resulted in this country and

* I am grateful to Mr Michael Peters and the consistory of the Eglise Protestante Française de Cantorbéry for allowing me access to their nineteenth century archives and also for the assistance of Miss Lucy Gwynn at the Huguenot Library, University College London, and the archivists of Canterbury Cathedral.

1 See Andrew Spicer, ‘1885: French Protestantism and Huguenot Identity in Victorian Britain’, in Philip Benedict, Hughes Daussy, Pierre-Olivier Léchor (eds), *Histoire, mémoire et identités en mutation. Les huguenots en France et en diaspora (XVIe–XXIe siècles)* (Geneva: Droz, forthcoming).

many of them attained high distinction as divines, and some also rose to become members of the nobility of England.²

Although the principal commemorative events were held in London, 'especial interest was attached to the celebration in Canterbury on account of the close connection between the Huguenots and the Cathedral, they and their descendents having worshipped in the Crypt for nearly two hundred years'.³ The local newspaper reported that the commemoration concluded with an evening service:

a special celebration of the Holy Communion was held in the French Church in the Crypt, when members of the Presbyterian Church and others joined the descendants of the Huguenots in the solemn ceremonial ... The scene was one of unusual interest and suggested thoughts of what must have been witnessed long years ago, when it was customary for as many as 3,000 communicants belonging to the Huguenots to assemble in the Crypt of Canterbury Cathedral and partake of the Sacrament.⁴

The newspaper accounts of the bicentenary celebrations obscured the fact that the French church of Canterbury had been founded not in the wake of the Revocation but in the sixteenth century by settlers escaping from the religious persecution and economic dislocation associated with the Revolt of the Netherlands and the French Wars of Religion. The community of French and Walloon refugees had been formally established at Canterbury in 1575; they initially worshipped in one of the parish churches in the city but during Elizabeth's reign they were granted permission to gather in the cathedral crypt.⁵ Religious persecution and the subsequent revocation of the Edict of Nantes had had a dramatic effect on the Canterbury community. The influx of refugees swelled the size of the congregation, while the new draperies produced by the earlier settlers gave way to silk manufacture. However, as the settlers and their descendants became assimilated into the local community, the French congregation steadily declined.

2 *Daily News*, 19 October 1885; *The Whitstable Times and Herne Bay Herald*, 24 October 1885.

3 *Ibid.*

4 *The Whitstable Times and Herne Bay Herald*, 24 October 1885.

5 Anne M. Oakley, 'The Canterbury Walloon Congregation from Elizabeth I to Laud', in Irene Scouloudi (ed.), *Huguenots in Britain and their French Background, 1550-1800* (Basingstoke, 1987), pp. 56-71; Beate Magen, *Die Wallonengemeinde in Canterbury von ihrer Gründung bis zum Jahre 1635* (Bern, 1973).

By 1885, Canterbury was one of only three French churches established in the Elizabethan era that still remained, but its survival was largely due to the efforts that had been taken during the previous decades to rescue it from the parlous state into which it had fallen. The minister Jean François Miéville died in 1840, after serving the church for more than fifty years. He had been blind since 1817, so services were led by a reader although the minister continued to preach and administer communion for as long as his health permitted. Services continued to be led by the reader after Miéville's death with a minister coming down quarterly from the French church in London to preach and administer communion to a congregation of around twenty.⁶ The French church's moribund condition was revealed through investigations undertaken by the Charity Commissioners, however their reports galvanised those who sought not only to preserve but also revitalise it. At the forefront of the efforts to restore and revive the church was Joseph Auguste Martin, who had been the minister of the Canterbury congregation since 1870, but important support also came from the Archbishop of Canterbury, Archibald Campbell Tait and his successor Edward White Benson.⁷ This article will focus on the efforts to ensure the survival of the French Church and how it attempted to adapt to the religious environment of Victorian Britain.

I

The principal threat to the continued existence of the French church came from the detailed inspections into its financial arrangements by the Charity Commissioners.⁸ These raised concerns about whether the

6 J.A. Martin, *The Christian Firmness of the Huguenots and a Sketch of the History of the French Refugee Church of Canterbury* (London, 1881), pp. 87–88; Francis W. Cross, *History of the Walloon & Huguenot Church at Canterbury* (Huguenot Society Quarto Series, 15, 1898), pp. 175–79.

7 On Archbishop Tait's support for the French church, see Andrew Spicer, 'Archbishop Tait, the Huguenots and the French Church at Canterbury', in Peter Clarke and Charlotte Methuen (eds), *The Church on its Past*, Studies in Church History, 49, forthcoming 2013. In J.A. Martin's obituary, it was claimed that the minister had been a French Master at Wellington College under Edward Benson although the College does not have a record of him being on the staff. Nonetheless on Benson's appointment as Archbishop of Canterbury, Martin wrote to him renewing his acquaintance and to enlist his support for the French church. *Pall Mall Gazette*, 9 February 1883; *The Kentish Gazette*, 13 February 1883, 23 July 1889. I am grateful to Dr Guy Williams, Archivist of Wellington College, for his assistance.

8 On the role of the Charity Commissioners, see Richard Tompson, *The Charity Commission and the Age of Reform* (London, 1974).

funds that had been left to the French church for charitable purposes were being misapplied. They also questioned the continued existence of the French church and its purpose in the nineteenth century. Furthermore the proposals made by the Commissioners to ensure that the funds were used for charitable purposes threatened the already precarious financial standing of the French church. The dispute between the French church and the Commissioners attracted widespread attention through newspaper reports and even led to questions being asked by Archbishop Tait in the House of Lords. The resolution of the issues relating to the charitable funds was an important factor in ensuring the survival of the French church at Canterbury.

Even before the investigations of the Charity Commission, the financial arrangements of the French church had raised controversy. In 1675, the French church had purchased about forty acres of marshland in the parish of Burmarsh at a cost of £770 raised from the deacons' fund, which was intended to finance the poor relief system within the French church. The land was held by a trust – composed of elders of the congregation and their heirs – which was to apply the income from the rented land to the benefit of the poor. As the income from this land exceeded the costs of poor relief, the surplus was transferred to another fund to provide for the maintenance of the ministry. Following the death of the minister in 1840, a dispute had arisen between the French church and trustees of the Burmarsh estate, who although not members of the congregation were descendants of past worshippers; they questioned the legality of the transfer of these charitable funds to the maintenance of the ministry. The church argued that the trustees were obliged to transfer the surplus income and lacked the authority to determine its use. Legal counsel concluded that the original church order or discipline, which defined the government and organisation of the institution, had established two funds, one for the maintenance of the ministry and the other for poor relief. The one fund could be used to assist the other when necessary and therefore it was deemed that the use of the Burmarsh income to support the ministry was legal.⁹

The dispute revealed the complexity of the church's financial arrangements and the apparent use of funds for non-charitable

9 Martin, *Christian Firmness of the Huguenots*, p. 127; Cross, *History of the Walloon & Huguenot Church at Canterbury*, pp. 177–78. On the church discipline and initial organisation of the church's finances, see Andrew Spicer, 'Poor Relief and the Exile Communities', in Beat Kümin (ed.), *Reformations Old and New. Essays on the Socio-Economic Impact of Religious Change c. 1470–1630* (Aldershot, 1996), pp. 242–43; Magen, *Die Wallonengemeinde in Canterbury*, pp. 100–9.

purposes. These came under even closer scrutiny with the investigations conducted by the Charity Commissioners. In 1857, an inspection was undertaken into all of the charitable foundations in the city of Canterbury, including those of the French church. A trustee of the French Protestant church appeared before the inspector and gave an account of the church's membership, services and financial arrangements. He stated that there was a congregation of eighteen and that divine service in French was held every Sunday, using a translation of the Book of Common Prayer. The service was taken by a reader who received a stipend of £30 per annum. Sermons were delivered quarterly when a minister came down from London, who would also conduct any baptisms, although if a child fell ill before that time they would be baptised in the English Church. An overview of the church's finances was also provided. Its income was derived from renting several acres on Romney Marsh – the Burmarsh estate – and a further 25 acres near Canterbury at 'Dane Strood' (Denstrood); two houses in King's Street, Canterbury had in the past provided a revenue but they were now occupied rent-free by two of the five poor members of the congregation.¹⁰ Although measures were taken to address the current state of other charities in the town, the Inspector appears to have been satisfied with the condition of the French church and did not recommend a scheme for improvement as he did for the cathedral grammar school.¹¹

A decade later, a more critical examination was undertaken. The Charity Commission was concerned with foundations that no longer fulfilled the objectives for which they had been established in the distant past and a further investigation of the Canterbury charities in 1870 provided 'a remarkable illustration of the evils' and 'the importance of providing the means of remedying them'.¹² During this investigation, the former minister, Théophile Marzials, appeared to give evidence relating to the French church's charities. In the past Marzials had made quarterly visits to Canterbury from London to preach to the congregation and administer the Lord's Supper. Although the situation seems to have been little different from at the time of the previous inspection, a less favourable view was taken of the church and

¹⁰ *The Kentish Gazette*, 8 December 1857.

¹¹ *Ibid.*

¹² *Eighteenth Report of the Charity Commissioners for England and Wales 1870* (London, 1871), pp. 5–6.

its charities.¹³ At the end of his inquiry, the inspector concluded that the charity had 'failed for want of objectives' and questioned what was now to be done. He went on to observe that:

... the church was being kept up for the charity instead of the charity for the church. It is perfectly useless to go through the form of having a service in French, when many of the congregation did not know anything about the French language, and those who did spoke English as well as he did.¹⁴

This indictment of the French church's charities was also reflected in the Commissioners subsequent report, where they observed:

Another foundation (that attached to the French Walloon Church) may be referred to as almost grotesque in its inapplicability to the needs of the day. In this case an Englishman receives 40*l.* per annum for reading a service, according to the English ritual, but in the French tongue, to a congregation which cannot understand him, but is paid for going to hear him. It is stated that one of the recipients is the tenant at a nominal rent of a house belonging to the foundation, and that although unable to speak French, he is bound by one of the clauses of his lease to attend the service at the church every Sunday.¹⁵

These findings were reported in both the national and local press.¹⁶ Even before the publication of the results of this investigation, the French church's governing body, known as the consistory, had resolved to address the problems concerning the payment of poor relief, which the inspector had highlighted. They agreed 'that in future no applicant shall be entitled to any relief from the fund, who is not bona fide a member of the Church'.¹⁷

In November 1873, the Charity Commissioners informed the consistory that they sought 'a thorough revision of the affairs of this Church', but the elders were concerned that provision should be made to ensure the continuance of the church's services. After further

13 *The Whitstable Times and Herne Bay Herald*, 7 May 1870; French Church of Canterbury [hereafter FCC], Livre des comptes de l'église Française Wallonnes de Cantorbery le 1^{er}me Janvier 1848, 19 May 1870.

14 *The Whitstable Times and Herne Bay Herald*, 26 March 1870.

15 *Eighteenth Report of the Charity Commissioners*, pp. 7–8.

16 *Whitstable Times and Herne Bay Herald*, 15 April 1871; *Manchester Guardian*, 12 April 1871.

17 FCC, Livre des comptes, 19 May 1870.

correspondence, the consistory proposed: 'That a portion of the annual income (say £120) be set apart for the payment of the Clergyman's stipend and other necessary expenses for conducting the services of the Church and the surplus to be applied in assisting the sick and needy inhabitants of Canterbury who are descendents of French Protestant Refugees'.¹⁸ The Charity Commissioners had very different ideas and proposed that the funds should be used to establish French scholarships at the King's School, Canterbury but as this did not find favour with the school, they suggested that the money should be divided between the infirmaries in Canterbury and Maidstone.¹⁹ Prompted by these proposals, in August 1875 Archbishop Tait asked in the House of Lords:

Whether any scheme has been prepared by the Charity Commissioners for diverting to other objects the funds at present available for a French Protestant Service in Canterbury Cathedral? His Question divided itself into three branches. He wished to know whether there was any such scheme; whether the Charity Commissioners had the power, without control from any higher authority, to carry such a scheme into effect; and whether, if such a scheme was intended to be prepared, an opportunity would be given to those who felt an interest in the subject to make known their sentiments on the subject.²⁰

In responding to the question, the Duke of Richmond acknowledged that a scheme was being prepared and reiterated the earlier findings of the Charity Commissioners, adding that 'the number of worshippers who attended was seven; of whom one spoke French, another spoke it imperfectly, and the remainder were entirely ignorant of that language'. He concluded that in such circumstances, 'the necessity of something being done would be admitted'.²¹

The Archbishop's support for the congregation was reported in *The Times* and received international attention.²² It also prompted a letter from Pastor Martin disputing the lamentable account of the French Church that had been given in the House of Lords. In particular, the

18 Ibid., 15 March 1874.

19 Lambeth Palace Library [hereafter LPL], Tait 206, ff. 374-75 Charity Commission to Archbishop Tait, 30 July 1875.

20 *Hansard's Parliamentary Debates. Third Series: Commencing with the Accession of William IV*, 226, col. 726, 9 August 1875.

21 Ibid., col. 727.

22 See Spicer, 'Archbishop Tait, the Huguenots and the French Church at Canterbury'.

minister challenged the jurisdiction of the Charity Commissioners to reassign the church's funds, which he claimed had been accumulated through offertory collections and donations to the poor box.²³ He was thereby arguing that the charitable funds relating to the church were not the result of a particular bequest or foundation. Although the Charity Commissioners 'considered that there was no sufficient reason for keeping on foot a French service for English-speaking people, or for preserving the shadow of a charity which has long since failed for want of objects', following the Archbishop's intervention they consulted him on possible solutions, if he considered it 'desirable that a French service should still be continued in the Cathedral'. A scheme was proposed whereby two thirds of the church's income would be assigned to charitable purposes; it was suggested that it could be divided between the Kent & Canterbury Hospital and the Royal Sea Bathing Infirmary at Margate. The remaining income would be used to ensure the maintenance of the French church.²⁴ The proposal prompted a stinging attack from Martin arguing that it would remove 'a revenue already quite inadequate for the maintenance of that very Service', observing 'This is an ingenious way of sustaining life, by drawing the blood out of the body'.²⁵

As a result of the Archbishop's intervention a further investigation into the church's finances and charitable funds was undertaken by the Commission in February 1882. This identified the principal sources of the church's income as coming from the Burmarsh estate which yielded £111 per annum, the Denstrood estate worth about £50 per annum and trust funds. In addition there was the small bequest made by Abraham Didier in 1688, which was to be distributed to the poor in the form of fuel and the two properties in King's Street Canterbury, now used as almshouses, bequeathed by Mary Lisy in 1725. It was revealed that the church's annual income from all these sources was £165 15s. per annum, of which £120 was spent on the minister's salary. After other expenses had been paid, the inspector noted that besides the property used as almshouses, in 1881 only £6 2s. 6d. was spent on charitable relief. Martin was able to defend this arrangement by using an argument that had been made some decades earlier concerning the terms of the church's discipline. The minister argued that according to the discipline, there were two funds and it was permitted for the

23 *The Times*, 13 August 1875.

24 LPL, Tait 217, ff. 373–76v, The Charity Commissioners to the Dean of Canterbury, 7 April 1876.

25 Martin, *Christian Firmness of the Huguenots*, p. 130

income to be assigned to church matters if that was regarded as being of greater need than the provision for the poor. While this was queried by the Dean of Canterbury with regard to specific benefactions, it seems to have been passed over by the inspector in his investigation. The inspection concluded with the proposal to appoint a board of trustees to administer the church's funds, comprising of the Archbishop of Canterbury, his suffragan the Bishop of Dover and the Dean of Canterbury, together with the pastor and treasurer of the French church, as *ex officio* members.²⁶

The Charity Commissioners revisited the issue of the French church in 1887 and writing to Archbishop Benson, they acknowledged that while their 1870 investigation revealed 'that the service in the crypt in the Cathedral was little better than a "mockery"', the subsequent inspection of the church had shown that the abuses concerning the distribution of money to the poor had ceased. The Commission again questioned the legality of using the charitable funds for the maintenance of the congregation, but more importantly reflected on whether 'now under better management, its ministrations supply a real want'.²⁷ An exasperated Dean asked why the Commissioners 'cannot let the French Church in our crypt alone' and that 'it is annoying to find those commissioners lying by until late Archbishop Tait dies and then trying it on again'.²⁸ Benson informed the Commissioners that he was 'entirely at one with the opinion of Abp Tait upon the subject' of the French church.²⁹

Due to the continued support of the Archbishop and Dean, the Charity Commissioners finally put forward a scheme in 1888 to settle the French church's finances and the provision of charitable relief. The management of the charitable funds would be overseen by a committee of trustees: the Archbishop, Dean and Archdeacon of Canterbury would be *ex officio* members and there would be six others who were 'persons residing, or carrying on business, in or near Canterbury'. This proposed dividing the church's revenue into two distinct funds. The first part was composed of the properties bequeathed by Mary Lisy, the Denstrood estate and invested stocks, which were to be applied:

26 *The Whitstable Times and Herne Bay Herald*, 18 February 1882, 4 March 1882, 20 January 1883; *The Kentish Gazette*, 23 January 1883.

27 LPL, Benson 55, ff. 361–65v, Charity Commission to Archbishop Benson, 26 November 1887.

28 LPL, Benson 55, ff. 365–66v, Robert Payne Smith to Archbishop Benson, 30 November 1887.

29 LPL, Benson 55, ff. 367–68v, Archbishop Benson to the Charity Commissioners.

to the general purposes of the French Walloon Church, at Canterbury, aforesaid, and of the congregation of the same Church in accordance with the Code of Regulations framed in or about the year 1641, for the government of the Walloon Churches then existing in England, under the title of 'La police et discipline ecclésiastique observée dans les Eglises Valonues recueillies en Royaume D'Angleterre sous la protection de nostre Souverain Sire Charles selon quelle a été receue en l'an 1641 par le Synode de dittes Eglisses'.

The Charity Commissioners therefore recognised the historic existence of two funds relating to the French church. The revenues from Abraham Didier's bequest and the Burmarsh estate, were to be used 'for the benefit of deserving and necessitous members of the congregation attending the said Church, to be selected by the trustees in such manner as shall be considered by them most advantageous to the recipients and most conducive to the formation of provident habits'.³⁰

Although the Charity Commissioners' investigations were intended to address issues relating to the application of charitable funds established in the past, at Canterbury their inspections also questioned the purpose of the French church in the Victorian era while their proposals threatened its very existence. Its survival was in part due to the robust defence of the French congregation by the pastor but also the particularly influential support of Archbishop Tait. The financial arrangements outlined in the church's discipline, which had not been revised since the seventeenth century, provided the basis for a solution to the crisis that these investigations had provoked.

II

Against the background of the dispute with the Charity Commissioners, efforts were made to revitalise the French church. Crucial to its survival was the need to increase the size of the congregation. In 1870, Théophile Marzials had persuaded the consistory of the importance of

30 LPL, Benson 55, ff. 380v–381; Charity Commission, *In the Matter of the several Charities called or known as Mary Liz's Gift, Abraham Didier's Gift, the Burmarsh Estate, the Denstrood Estate and the Trust Stock, administered in connexion with the Society or Congregation known as The French Walloon Church, in the City of Canterbury* (London, 1888), pp. 6–7, 10; *The Times*, 14 April 1888; *The Whitstable Times and Herne Bay Herald*, 5 May 1888; *Proceedings of the Huguenot Society*, 2 (1887–88), 487–88.

having 'a permanent resident minister' and had advised them of the need 'to revive the church, which had fallen very low'.³¹ Furthermore he speculated that 'the French at Deal, Dover, Folkestone and other places would be glad to be able to come to a French church – not perhaps every Sunday – if they knew the doors were open to them'.³²

Initially the new minister Joseph Martin continued the practice of serving the congregation from London, but he agreed to settle at Canterbury in 1875.³³ Reflecting on the earlier history of the congregation and his decision to move to the city, Martin observed:

How can a Church really be a living one without a Pastor in its bosom, and without regular ministrations? The mere mechanical reading of a Liturgy on every Sunday, even with the excuse that the Pastor cannot be secured oftener than once a month, will never draw a congregation.³⁴

Even allowing for exaggeration, Martin seems to have had some success in increasing attendance at services. Writing to *The Times*, he claimed that it was intended if 'the increase of the congregation continues, to have two services instead of one'. The minister went on to argue that 'it is clear to every observer that the present state of that Church is like a resurrection from the dead'.³⁵ Only days earlier a letter published in the *The Standard* noted that 'the congregation, which numbered at least 60 persons, is steadily increasing' and 'it is, moreover, well known that in the summer many persons come from Dover on purpose to attend it'.³⁶ As Martin himself argued, besides the descendants of the Huguenots, 'the services are intended, without any distinction, for all the inhabitants of Canterbury, who possess a knowledge of French, as well as for visitors to the city who may be interested in offices conducted in this language'.³⁷ Furthermore, the special annual services that Martin introduced attracted large congregations that regularly exceeded the normal capacity of the church.³⁸

It is unclear whether there were any further efforts during Martin's ministry to attract French Protestants from other parts of Kent to the

31 *The Whitstable Times and Herne Bay Herald*, 7 May 1870.

32 Ibid.

33 FCC, Livre des comptes, 3 April 1875.

34 Martin, *Christian Firmness of the Huguenots*, p. 78.

35 *The Times*, 13 August 1875.

36 *The Standard*, 11 August 1875.

37 Martin, *Christian Firmness of the Huguenots*, p. 108.

38 See below pp. 120–22.

church. However, his successors did attempt to extend the church's mission beyond Canterbury. There had apparently been difficulties in the past in organising a service at Dover and also at Folkestone, which led the consistory to conclude in October 1892 that Ramsgate might be more fruitful 'as many French persons came there in the summer season'.³⁹ Nonetheless a meeting was held the following year in Folkestone to establish closer links between Canterbury and the French Protestants there, which resulted in a regular Sunday service being established in the town.⁴⁰ In 1895, *The Whitstable Times and Herne Bay Herald* described these services as being 'a notable extension of its [the French church's] sphere of usefulness' and that the services were 'much appreciated by French-speaking residents or visitors at Folkestone'. It also expressed the hope that 'this successful offshoot of the Church of the Crypt will probably lead to similar branches at other Kentish ports frequented by French-speaking sailors, visitors and others'.⁴¹

Besides increasing the size of the congregation, there were two projects that Martin regarded as being essential to the future survival of the French church. The first of these was the establishment of an endowment fund in order to address the church's precarious financial position which had been revealed by the Charity Commissioners investigations. The second project was to undertake the restoration of their place of worship. Initially the pastor had intended to publish an appeal to establish an endowment fund and for the church's restoration. For some reason he decided to make his call for financial support as part of his pamphlet on the Huguenot faith and its steadfastness under persecution; entitled *Christian Firmness of the Huguenots*, it was published 1881.⁴² Although referred to in the preface, the appeals are hidden at the end of appendices X and XVII.⁴³ This was a surprising error of judgment on Martin's part; his appeal does not seem to have

39 Cross, *History of the Walloon & Huguenot Church at Canterbury*, p. 181; FCC, Actes du Consistoire de l'Eglise Française de Canterbury fondée en 1550, 18 Février 1877 – 13 September [sic] 1946, p. 58.

40 Ibid., p. 60; *The Whitstable Times and Herne Bay Herald*, 28 January 1893.

41 *The Whitstable Times and Herne Bay Herald*, 13 April 1895. On the later development of the French church at Folkestone, see Hugh R. Boudin, 'Some Aspects of the History of French-speaking Protestantism in the United Kingdom', in Alan P.F. Sell and Anthony R. Cross (eds), *Protestant Nonconformity in the Twentieth Century* (Carlisle, 2003), pp. 329–34. I am grateful to Professor David Bebbington for bringing this essay to my attention.

42 J.A. Martin, *The Christian Firmness of the Huguenots and a Sketch of the History of the French Refugee Church of Canterbury* (London, 1881).

43 Ibid., pp. 1–2, 93–95, 141–43.

received any attention in the national press before 1885 and *The Morning Post* reported in 1886 that he had received less than £250 in subscriptions over the last nine years.⁴⁴

Martin argued that 'the means at the disposal of the Church are very limited, and altogether inadequate to insure the continuance of its existence'. As a result 'This Church, the contemporary of the Reformation in England, requires, for its preservation, an appropriate endowment, which will guarantee its maintenance. Nothing else will save it'.⁴⁵ Martin proposed that a sum of £3000 was required to achieve this goal. He considered it to be 'but a trifle for Protestant England' and argued that 'a more distinctly Protestant work than this, or one more significant, in opposition to the Romanising tendencies of the time, can hardly be conceived'.⁴⁶ His comments reflected the antipathy towards Catholicism in Victorian Britain, but he was keen to emphasise that his strictures were directed not against individuals but the spirit of Catholicism, which he argued would 'always be superstitious, idolatrous, tyrannical, and intolerant'. Nonetheless Martin's confessional stance was more measured than some other ministers and generally tended to focus more on the fundamental characteristics of a French Protestant identity.⁴⁷

Besides calling for the establishment of an endowment fund, the minister also explored other options to put the French church on a sounder financial footing. Following the death of Archbishop Tait in December 1882, Martin drew up a short memorandum in January 1884 for his successor Edward White Benson. In order to resolve the financial difficulties in providing the minister's salary it was proposed that the Mastership of Eastbridge Hospital, which was in the gift of the Archbishop, should be transferred to the pastor of the French Church after the death of the current master.⁴⁸ The Dean advised the Archbishop on the difficulties concerning this proposal, stressing that it was not something which could be considered until after the death of the present incumbent. At such time, the Archbishop tactfully informed Martin: 'there are cases of entire non-endowment in and about Canterbury which would necessarily be dealt with first. Whether

44 *The Morning Post*, 24 April 1886.

45 Martin, *Christian Firmness of the Huguenots*, pp. 93, 94.

46 *Ibid.*, pp. 94, 95.

47 *Ibid.*, pp. 31–32; Spicer, '1885: French Protestantism and Huguenot Identity in Victorian Britain'.

48 LPL, Benson 12, ff. 177–78v, Robert Payne Smith to Archbishop Benson, January 1884.

any allowance would then be made to the French Church could then be considered'.⁴⁹ The Archbishop went on to argue that:

... it would be seen that many wealthy descendants of Huguenots & others who are settled in England and among the most honoured people, are those to whom in the first instance an appeal should be made. I should suppose that they would respond liberally if the appeal were made rightly. Until they do so I fear an appeal to English churchmen would not have much success.⁵⁰

It may have been this suggestion, which led to the renewed attempts to establish an endowment fund.

During the summer of 1885 a number of newspapers across the country carried the church's appeal for funds for the restoration of the church but also 'for making some provision towards securing a fixed stipend for the pastor'. They reported that a sum of £2000 was required.⁵¹ By the end of the year, it seems that there was a separate appeal for £3000 for an endowment fund.⁵² There appears to have been a relatively swift response to the latest appeal because by late January, there were reports that if one half of the endowment fund could be raised in Canterbury and Kent, the remaining £1500 had been promised by the descendants of the Huguenots residing in London and the north of Ireland.⁵³ Whether this was achieved is unclear as the consistory minutes are completely silent on the whole question of fund raising and the restoration of the church.

Appendix XVII of *Christian Firmness of the Huguenots* was entitled 'Reparation or Restoration of the French Church at Canterbury'. Martin argued that the work was of 'primary and unavoidable necessity' and would take place as soon 'as the Christian spirit of the public has contributed the necessary funds'. He pointed in particular to the poor state of the pews and floor which were 'perishing from age, and other causes of decay'.⁵⁴ The list of works to be undertaken demonstrates that Martin intended the complete refurbishment of

49 LPL, Benson 12, ff 179–80v, Archbishop Benson to J.A. Martin, 12 March 1884.

50 Ibid.

51 *The Standard*, 11 June 1885; *Birmingham Daily Post*, 12 June 1885; *Berrow's Worcestershire Journal*, 13 June 1885; *Lloyd's Weekly Newspaper*, 14 June 1885; *Trewhman's Exeter Flying Post or Plymouth and Cornish Advertiser*, 17 June 1885.

52 *The Standard*, 31 December 1885.

53 *The Morning Post*, 19 January 1886; *The Standard*, 19 January 1886; *The Times*, 20 January 1886;

54 Martin, *Christian Firmness of the Huguenots*, p. 139.

the French church. The existing vestry was to be taken down and a new one constructed; stonework and vaulting was to be cleaned and made good; all the windows were to be made good with hinged pane-pieces to allow ventilation; the walls partitioning the church from the rest of the crypt were to be lowered and glazed; new seats or chairs with desk backs were to be provided; proper gas fittings were to be installed. The project went beyond the refurbishment of the church, it also included the restoration of the Black Prince's Chantry. Martin noted:

These alterations, besides being necessary, will greatly benefit that part of the Undercroft of the Cathedral: particularly will they improve the Black Prince's Chantry, the most elaborate portion of the entire Crypt, by exhibiting its columns, walls and artistic vaulting in their completeness and beauty. It is on record that this Chantry was richly painted. By the removing of many coats of whitewash, dirt &c., it will be possible to expose and preserve the original painting. The lowering of the floor to its 15th century level will give additional height, which is much needed.⁵⁵ The work was to be undertaken by James Neale who had already been responsible for the restoration of the frescoes in St Gabriel's chapel in the crypt. His reputation derived from his work at St Alban's cathedral, but he later became diocesan surveyor for the archdeaconries of Canterbury and Maidstone with testimonials from the Dean, the late Sir Giles Gilbert Scott and the late George Edmund Street.⁵⁶ It was estimated that the repairs and restoration could be completed for between £700 and £800, with a further £100 being required for the organ. Nonetheless 'much more might be expended with benefit to the French Church and congregation, and to the noble Building which is one of the glories of England'.⁵⁷ It seems that Archbishop Tait had consented to be the patron of this appeal, but by 1884 the Dean expressed the view that 'the appeals of the Pastor for their church, which contains the chantry of the Black Prince, has produced no result'.⁵⁸ Even a direct appeal in 1882 to the Directors of the

55 Ibid., pp. 140–41.

56 Ibid., pp. 139–40; James Neale, *The Abbey Church of Saint Alban: Hertfordshire* (London, 1877); *Diocesan Surveyorship for the Archdeaconries of Canterbury and Maidstone. An Application by James Neale FSA* (s.l., 1888), pp. 3, 5, 6; Antonia Brodie, *Directory of British Architects, 1834–1914* 2 vols (London, 2001), II, p. 244. See below, p. 129.

57 Martin, *Christian Firmness of the Huguenots*, p. 141.

58 Ibid., p. 142; LPL, Benson 12, ff. 175–76, Robert Payne Smith to Archbishop Benson, 9 February 1884.

French Protestant Hospital in London 'for a contribution towards the restoration of that [Canterbury] Church and the maintenance of the work connected with it' had been rejected when it was put to the vote.⁵⁹ During the summer and autumn of 1885, the French church's fundraising was reported in national and local newspapers and appears to have ultimately been successful.⁶⁰ Whether this was linked with the popular interest in the Huguenots that surrounded the commemoration of the bicentenary of the revocation of the Edict of Nantes in October 1885 or the decision to complete the restoration as a memorial to the late Archbishop Tait is unclear. Certainly in some instances donations were prompted by the symbolism of the French church. The Principal of Ridley Hall, Cambridge explained that he believed that he was of Huguenot descent but that 'Spiritual sympathy is a still stronger bond, and I value as a Protestant Anglican such as testimony as the church at Canterbury affords to the ancient, and, I hope, abiding, fellow-feeling between the Huguenots and the Church of England'.⁶¹ It was reported in January 1886 that the work had been completed and Martin claimed that a debt of only £40 remained from the restoration costs.⁶²

III

One of the proposals that were put forward to reinvigorate the French church and community was the establishment of a French Protestant college in Canterbury. Martin discussed the idea of Canterbury as a French educational centre in his *Christian Firmness of the Huguenots*. In particular, he quoted at length from a letter that he had received from a lady who recognised the importance of learning French but deplored how English children sent to France to learn the language returned 'tainted in heart and mind by the corrupt vapours of the atmosphere of either Romanism and Jesuitism, of Frivolity and its adjuncts, which are inhaled in that country'.⁶³ Paraphrasing the Jesuit boast about taking a child of seven and making them Catholics for life, she questioned

59 Huguenot Society Library, H/A3/3 French Protestant Hospital, Rough Minute Book, pp. 418, 423–24.

60 *The Standard*, 11 June 1885; *Birmingham Daily Post*, 12 June 1885; *Berrow's Worcestershire Journal*, 13 June 1885; *Lloyd's Weekly Newspaper*, 14 June 1885; *Trewhman's Exeter Flying Post or Plymouth and Cornish Advertiser*, 17 June 1885; *The Standard*, 7 October 1885.

61 *The Whitstable Times and Herne Bay Herald*, 22 January 1887.

62 *The Morning Post*, 19 January 1886; *The Times*, 20 January 1886; *The Morning Post*, 24 April 1886.

63 Martin, *Christian Firmness of the Huguenots*, p. 109.

why the Protestants might not be able to achieve similar results for their faith.⁶⁴ This proposal had an immediate appeal for the pastor who called for it 'to be seriously examined and weighed' and the formation of a committee. It was a plan which would be 'carried out in the spirit and according to the principles of the Reformation'. Martin asked:

Why should the young ones of the land be exposed to pernicious influences? Their minds may be protected from these, at the same time that their intellectual improvement may be promoted and secured without danger. The bringing them up under the teaching of the Word of God, and beneath the blessed influence of the Spirit is the paramount duty of their Christian guardians.⁶⁵

After a quotation from Milton's *Paradise Lost*, Martin went on to launch a diatribe against the Jesuits.⁶⁶

Perhaps spurred on by this proposal, Martin started a weekly Bible class which was 'open to both sexes (free)' and intended 'for Scriptural French studies, with remarks and explanations in English, and for practice in French reading, singing and psalmody'.⁶⁷ It is unclear whether this venture was successful, because three years later the consistory considered a plan for French instruction and the possible revival of the Sunday School. The French classes were to be held in the church from October to April for a fee of 6s. (with a reduction for those who attended the services in the crypt) focusing on books relating to the history of the Huguenots and their Church.⁶⁸

Besides these comparatively small initiatives, there were more ambitious attempts to establish a centre for French Protestantism in Canterbury. Martin appears to have explored the possibility of forming an association with St Augustine's Missionary Society, which had been established in Canterbury during the late 1840s to train ministers for the British Empire. He argued that there was a need for French-speaking clergy to serve in 'some English dependencies, as Canada and Mauritius [which] are composed of or contain French speaking populations'. Martin suggested to Archbishop Benson that two scholarships should be established at the College for 'French Missionary Candidates (easily to be found in the Channel Islands or in England or in France, or perhaps in those dependencies)'. The trainee ministers

64 Ibid., p. 110.

65 Ibid., p. 111–12.

66 Ibid., pp. 112–23.

67 *The Whitstable Times and Heme Bay Herald*, 17 January 1885.

68 FCC, Actes du Consistoire, pp. 21–22.

would be able to undertake their probationary preaching at the French church in Canterbury and perhaps other duties if the congregation was without a minister. He went on to argue that as the proposal had found favour with Archbishop Tait before his death, then these scholarships for training missionary clergy might be financed from the appeal fund being raised in his memory.⁶⁹ In principle, the Dean of Canterbury and Archbishop Benson were in favour of Martin's proposal but the money for the scholarships would have to be raised from 'French churchmen' and they considered this a further financial burden for the church.⁷⁰ As a consequence, it seems that this particular project was not taken any further.

The notion of a French Protestant School in Canterbury was discussed by the consistory in January 1887 but there does not appear to have been any further serious consideration of the scheme until after Martin's death. A committee was established in April 1890, the minister Eugène Choisy having already canvassed opinions amongst members of the French Reformed Church, including the chairman of the committee of the French Synod, professors in Lausanne and Geneva, and from Paris, the editor of *Le Christianisme du XIX Siècle*. They expressed support for the proposal and offered assistance. The committee discussed various options about the form that this should take. They considered establishing a college that would only take Foreign Protestant students but would also provide accommodation for foreign Protestant pastors. The earlier scheme to admit English students for the study of French and German was considered. A variation of this proposal, which also permitted the admission of non-Protestants with safeguards as to their character, also received attention. In the end, the financial implications of such a venture led the committee to agree to establish a 'French Protestant Home' that could provide accommodation for students and pastors wishing to learn English. This was to be under the direction of the pastor and be united with the French church. It was a project that could also be developed further in the future, if the initial results proved promising.⁷¹ Announcing the scheme and call for funds in a letter to the local newspaper, the minister explained that the intention was to establish somewhere that could receive 'young French pastors, who desire to

69 LPL, Benson 12, ff. 177–78v, Robert Payne Smith to Archbishop Benson, 2 January 1884, 9 February 1884.

70 LPL, Benson 12, ff. 175–76, Robert Payne Smith to Archbishop Benson, 9 February 1884, 179–80v Archbishop Benson to J.A. Martin, 12 March 1884.

71 FCC, Actes du Consistoire, pp. 19, 29, 31–33.

study the religious life in England, as well as to familiarise themselves with English literature'. It was also believed that founding such an institution would 'help to bind together the religious life of the two countries'.⁷²

The scheme for a French Protestant College lost one of its key advocates in 1890, when the minister Choisy left to take up a new appointment. He promised to be 'a representative of the College on the continent' and that he would 'endeavour to induce his friends in Geneva to subscribe to the fund now being raised for that purpose'.⁷³ In the negotiations over the salary of his successor, Edouard Archinard, it was proposed that he might augment his income through teaching and also 'as a principal of the French Protestant College which it is hoped will soon be established'.⁷⁴ By July 1891, as only £60 had been raised towards the founding of a college, it was proposed that the donors should be consulted as to whether their subscriptions should be returned or given to other projects connected with the French church. A decision was postponed following the new minister's offer to make enquiries about the feasibility of the scheme when he went to Switzerland later in the year.⁷⁵ Archinard reported his findings to the consistory in early October:

... respecting the support for a Protestant College, if established in Canterbury, would be likely to receive. It appeared that if students came from the continent it would only be for three months in the year; that they would probably be few in number on account of education being obtainable at a much cheaper rate abroad than in England; and that the majority of those who would come for instruction in the French language would be Roman Catholics.⁷⁶

Although the decision on the college was deferred and there was later discussion about a proposed home for students, Archinard's findings seem to have effectively killed any further consideration of the church developing a new role as a centre for French Protestant education.⁷⁷

72 *The Whitstable Times and Heme Bay Herald*, 21 June 1890.

73 FCC, Actes du Consistoire, pp. 38–39.

74 *Ibid.*, p. 34.

75 *Ibid.*, p. 42.

76 *Ibid.*, p. 45.

77 *Ibid.*, pp. 46, 60.

IV

As part of his attempt to preserve the French church, Martin attempted to develop and build on its distinctive religious identity. As the reports of the Charity Commissioners had made clear, the congregation's services were conducted using a French translation of the Book of Common Prayer. The church's dire financial plight in the late eighteenth century had led them to adopt a French translation of the Anglican liturgy, which probably contributed to their subsequent receipt of the financial assistance through the Royal Bounty.⁷⁸ The Charity Commissioners had attacked what they regarded as the absurdity of an Anglican service being conducted in French to a congregation that did not understand the language. This in part may have prompted Martin to compile his *Le Livre du Sanctuaire*, which he described as 'a work mainly founded on the English Prayer-Book, but with special features adapted to the wants of the French worshippers'.⁷⁹ He claimed that the service book formed 'a connection between the Church of England and the continental Reformed Churches'.⁸⁰ The *Livre du Sanctuaire* provided a more Protestant liturgy than that contained within the Prayer Book, but it can be seen as part of Martin's attempt to establish the distinctive religious identity of the congregation.⁸¹ The move itself proved controversial at the time and Cross in his history of the church argued:

The change is to be regretted; for if it were thought desirable to abandon the Anglican form it would have been better to return to the ancient liturgy of the Walloon churches which had been used for more than two centuries in the crypt.⁸²

Besides instituting a new liturgy, Martin also established two new annual services which sought to commemorate the history of the congregation and to link it with the Reformation movement. The first known as the 'Anniversary Service' celebrated the foundation of the church which was mistakenly believed by Martin to date from the

78 Martin, *Christian Firmness of the Huguenots*, pp. 86–88; Cross, *History of the Walloon & Huguenot Church at Canterbury*, pp. 176–77.

79 Martin, *Christian Firmness of the Huguenots*, p. 92.

80 LPL, Tait 216, ff. 127–28, J.A. Martin to Archbishop Tait, 18 January 1876.

81 J.A. Martin (ed.), *Le livre du Sanctuaire, recueil complet de culte divin* (Canterbury, 1875?); Peter B. Nockles, 'Aspects of Cathedral Life, 1828–1898' in Patrick Collinson, Nigel Ramsay and Margaret Sparks (eds), *A History of Canterbury Cathedral* (Oxford, 2002), p. 277.

82 Cross, *History of the Walloon & Huguenot Church at Canterbury*, p. 180.

letters patent granted by Edward VI to the London churches on 24 July 1550. The other service, the 'Festival of the Reformation' was held in late October or early November, 'in memory of the greatest event for good, which in the dispensations of God, had ever been brought about since the first publication of the Gospel'.⁸³ Martin claimed that these festivals were intended to express 'the union which exists among all Christians whose only foundation of faith and practice rests on the Word of God'. It was this sentiment that led the congregation to use the French translation of the Book of Common Prayer at these special services rather than their own liturgy.⁸⁴

These services appear to have become important occasions at which the congregation could remember the persecution of their Huguenot forebears and the tolerance which they had experienced in England. They became civic events attended by the Mayor of Canterbury in his official robes and were widely reported in the press. The church also seems to have achieved some success in getting prominent speakers to preach at the services, including the Dean of Canterbury, the Dean of Peterborough (a Huguenot descendant and founder member of the Huguenot Society) and Archbishop Tait's son Crauford Tait. Sermons on subjects such as Romanism, the defeat of the Spanish Armada as well as the history of the French church served to underscore the association of Catholicism with intolerance.⁸⁵ Martin himself preached at the service commemorating the fourth centenary of the birth of Luther in 1883 and 'paid high tribute to the memory of the great Reformer who laid bare the corruptions of Romanism and the Papal Court'.⁸⁶ These services were apparently exceptionally well-attended and the congregation spilled over into the cathedral crypt as their own church had insufficient accommodation. Even allowing for Martin's hyperbole, the record of the service held in 1880 gives some sense of their success:

A few words on the 330th Anniversary of the French Church.

On Sunday the 25th of July 1880, as it has already been observed, was celebrated the 330 anniversary of the French Church. The special preacher for the afternoon service was the Rev. G. Daugars,

83 Martin, *Christian Firmness of the Huguenots*, p. 98.

84 Ibid.

85 *The Standard*, 26 July 1886; *The Morning Post*, 23 July 1888; *The Whitstable Times and Herne Bay Herald*, 3 September 1893, 21 September 1895; Martin, *Christian Firmness of the Huguenots*, p. 98n.

86 *The Kentish Gazette*, 13 November 1883.

Pastor of our Confederate Church of London, who preached a most appropriate and eloquent sermon. The Church was crowded to overflowing and a considerable number of persons could not obtain admittance, a sad proof that our place of worship is not large enough for such occasions.

After the service, the members of the Consistory went into the Vestry to offer their thanks and the thanks of the Church to the Rev. G.G. Daugars who availed himself of the opportunity to express his surprise and immense gratification at the great progress the Church had made &c being able to command the interest and attendance of so large a congregation as he had met.⁸⁷

These services continued after Martin's death and still attracted large congregations, which far exceeded the numbers who attended regular Sunday worship.⁸⁸

The historical associations of the French service in the crypt was one aspect of the symbolic importance of the church that existed at several levels. The church was 'a survival of a distant past', but as the themes of some of the anniversary sermons alluded, it was also a reminder of past Catholic persecution and the religious toleration afforded the exiles in England. It therefore recalled those 'who for love of religion chose poverty and exile' and 'the good fight which our fathers fought for religious liberty'. The actual location of the congregation's place of worship further emphasised the religious tolerance and co-existence that resulted from the Huguenot settlement in Canterbury. The French church was 'a memento of the Christian brotherhood which united under one roof the Protestant Churches of the Continent and the Protestant Church of England'.⁸⁹ It was this multi-layered symbolism of the French church, which particularly appealed to Archbishop Tait and led to him vigorously defending the institution and the continuance of the services in the crypt.⁹⁰

Besides this symbolic significance, the French church also benefited more generally from an increasing public awareness of the Canterbury congregation. From the mid-nineteenth century there was a growing academic and popular interest in the history of the Huguenot diaspora. Accounts of the foundation of the Canterbury congregation and its place of worship in the cathedral crypt were provided by both John

87 FCC, Actes du Consistoire, p. 8.

88 Canterbury Cathedral Archives [hereafter CCA], U39/8/1.

89 Cross, *History of the Walloon & Huguenot Church at Canterbury*, p. 182.

90 See Spicer, 'Archbishop Tait, the Huguenots and the French Church at Canterbury'.

Southerden Burn and Samuel Smiles in their studies of the Huguenots in England.⁹¹ Martin published an account of the French church's early history in the *Kentish Magazine* in 1878, which was included in the substantial appendix to his *Christian Firmness of the Huguenots* (1881), entitled *A Sketch of the History of the French Refugee Church at Canterbury*. This mainly consisted of Martin's observations on particular documents or periods of the church's history.⁹² It was not until 1898 that a detailed history of the Canterbury congregation was published. Written by the cathedral librarian and member of the consistory, Francis Cross's monograph made extensive use of the congregation's archives.⁹³ Besides these academic studies, fictional accounts of the French church appeared in Victorian novels and James Gow's painting 'Huguenot Refugees in the Crypt of Canterbury Cathedral in 1564' was exhibited in London, Glasgow and Manchester in 1870–71.⁹⁴

This historical interest in the French church also attracted visitors to Canterbury. The Directors of the French Protestant Hospital at Victoria Park, London, organised 'A Canterbury Pilgrimage' in July 1884, 'with an especial view to the examination of the Refugee Memorials and Inscriptions still existing in the Cathedral City'. The visit included inspecting the archives at the Guildhall, a tour of the cathedral and French church, some academic papers delivered after dinner and attendance at morning service in the cathedral and the French church's

91 John Southerden Burn, *The History of the French, Walloon, Dutch and other Foreign Protestant Refugees* (London, 1846), 38–53; Samuel Smiles, 'The French Church in Canterbury Cathedral', *Good Words* 7 (April 1866), 253–8; S. Smiles, *The Huguenots: Their Settlements, Churches and Industries in England and Ireland* (London, 1867), 120–7; Spicer, 'Archbishop Tait, the Huguenots and the French Church at Canterbury'.

92 Martin, *Christian Firmness of the Huguenots*, pp. 33–40.

93 Francis W. Cross, *History of the Walloon & Huguenot Church at Canterbury* (Huguenot Society Quarto Series, 15, 1898).

94 See Spicer, 'Archbishop Tait, the Huguenots and the French Church at Canterbury'; Andrew Spicer, 'Victorian Vignettes of the French Church at Canterbury', *Proceedings of the Huguenot Society* 29 (2008–12), 716–18; Algernon Graves, *The Royal Academy of Arts. A Complete Dictionary of Contributors and their Work from its Foundation in 1769 to 1804*, 8 vols (London, 1905–6), III, p. 284; Jane Johnson, *Works Exhibited at the Royal Society of British Artists, 1824–1893* 2 vols (Woodbridge, 1975), I, p. 188; Roger Billcliffe, *The Royal Glasgow Institute of Fine Arts, 1861–1989. A Dictionary of Exhibitors at the Annual Exhibitions of the Royal Glasgow Institute of the Fine Arts*, 4 vols (Glasgow, 1990–92), II, p. 136; Jane Johnson and A. Greutzner, *The Dictionary of British Artists, 1880–1940* (Suffolk, 1976), p. 208.

anniversary service.⁹⁵ Following the visit, the directors of the French Hospital expressed the hope that the visit would establish an “entente cordiale” between the Huguenot descendants of Canterbury & of London which it may be hoped will lead to practical and useful results’. They immediately went on to discuss the possibility of contributing to the restoration of the tomb in the cathedral of the sixteenth-century Huguenot leader, Odet de Coligny.⁹⁶ The newly established Huguenot Society, of which Martin was an honorary Fellow, visited Canterbury in 1887 for their first meeting outside London. Some thirty members of the Society attended ‘to enjoy mental communion with the relics of the past’. They were received by the Mayor, Town Clerk, Pastor Martin and others at the Guildhall at the start of an itinerary that closely matched that followed by the directors of the French Protestant Hospital three years earlier.⁹⁷ Although a proposal by Martin to establish a branch of the Huguenot Society in Canterbury for ‘bringing together the descendants of the Walloons & the friends of the Church’ does not seem to have materialised, the French church continued to attract visitors.⁹⁸ In 1895, ‘a large party of American Presbyterians’, which included academics, Church leaders and ‘a considerable number of ladies’ were welcomed in the French church by the minister.⁹⁹ According to the earliest visitors’ book, between January 1892 and February 1897, almost five thousand people visited the church, a number responding to the invitation to record whether they were of Huguenot origin.¹⁰⁰

Although Martin’s attempts to establish the distinctive religious identity of the French church through the *Livre du Sanctuaire* proved to be controversial, he was more successful in emphasising its historical importance. This was achieved through the annual services commemorating the foundation of the church as well as the beginnings of the Protestant Reformation, which swelled the congregations and became civic events. Martin was also able to build on the growing interest in the history of the Huguenots, which encouraged visitors to the cathedral crypt and raised the profile of the community.

95 Huguenot Society Library, H/A3/4 French Protestant Hospital, Rough Minute Book, 1883–87, inserted between pp. 151–52.

96 Ibid., pp. 153–54.

97 ‘Summer Conference at Canterbury and Sandwich, July 9, 10, 11, 1887’, *Proceedings of the Huguenot Society* 2 (1886–88), lxi–lxxviii; FCC, Actes du Consistoire, p. 20; *The Whitstable Times and Herne Bay Herald*, 16 July 1887.

98 FCC, Actes du Consistoire, pp. 18, 20.

99 *The Whitstable Times and Herne Bay Herald*, 27 July 1895.

100 FCC, Visitors’ Book.

V

In spite of the attempts to develop a distinctive identity for the French church and to establish its historical importance as a memorial of the Huguenot diaspora, there was not universal support for its continued existence. There remained some who like the Charity Commissioners questioned the purpose of these French services in the Victorian era. During the inspection undertaken by the Commissioners in 1882, evidence was also heard from those who opposed the continued existence of the church. Particularly vocal was William Welby, a Huguenot descendant. He argued that the French church had ceased to exist following the death of the last members of the congregation who were descended from the original settlers. He judged that there were about '40 or 50 pure descendants of the refugees now abiding in the city, but unconnected with the church'. Welby himself was a Catholic, which led Martin to denounce him as a renegade. The connection with the original settlers had been broken according to Welby; the present pastor and elders were 'not necessarily descendants of refugees or anything to do with them'.¹⁰¹

Welby's was not a lone voice in questioning the purpose of the church's continued existence. W.M. Claris, the son of a former trustee of the Burmarsh estate and so presumably also a Huguenot descendant, had written to Archbishop Tait in 1877. He reflected on 'the amount of benefit that is likely to accrue from such [French] services' and suggested that its charitable funds 'might be devoted to better purposes, of augmenting some of the poor livings in the City or devoting it to the education of the young'.¹⁰² Similar questions were also raised in the national press. Reporting on the appeal for the church's endowment, for example, *The Morning Post* observed:

It is alleged, however, that the institution has served its purpose and should now be extinguished. There are now at Canterbury, it is said, a certain number of French Roman Catholics, who have been virtually expelled by a Government of Freethinkers and Protestants on religious grounds, but there are no actual French-speaking Protestant refugees, and the few families descended from the refugees of 200 years ago have become completely anglicised.¹⁰³

101 *The Whitstable Times and Herne Bay Herald*, 4 March 1882

102 LPL, Tait 228, ff. 269–72, W.M. Claris to Archbishop Tait, 18 July 1877.

103 *The Morning Post*, 24 April 1886.

Pastor Martin robustly refuted the allegations arguing that the support of the late Archbishop Tait and his successor were an indication that the church was not 'past interest and usefulness'.¹⁰⁴

Even amongst the cathedral chapter there were some members who felt that the church had outlived its usefulness or simply objected to Martin himself. In a particularly candid letter, he was described as being 'a fussy little man and wants to justify his own existence'; the writer observed that 'little Martin & his imaginary refugee flock are rapidly becoming a bore ... There is not one soul in the said flock who does not know English better than French'.¹⁰⁵ Even the Dean was forced to acknowledge that 'the French church is not popular with us [Cathedral chapter]'.¹⁰⁶

In the face of such opposition, the survival of the French church owed much to the tenacity and energy of Joseph Martin. The Dean, Robert Payne Smith told Archbishop Benson that 'the present Pastor has ... earned for himself great respect and undoubtedly has saved his little church for the present' but was sceptical about its long term future.¹⁰⁷ Following Martin's death in July 1889, writing from Paris, the Reformed minister and former pastor of the French church at Brighton, César Pascal questioned whether there was any intention to appoint a new minister as 'practically speaking the church [ceased] to exist the descendant[s] of the Huguenots having all become English and members of the English Churches'. He also stressed the importance of any new minister being a graduate and be properly ordained, the appointment thereby being in accordance to 'the same laws as the Reformed Church of France with which they claim similarity'.¹⁰⁸ The consistory recognised the necessity of appointing a new minister so that the French church did not languish and Canon Fremantle appears to have been responsible for securing the appointment of Eugène Choisy, who was installed as minister within three months of Martin's death.¹⁰⁹

¹⁰⁴ Ibid.

¹⁰⁵ LPL, Tait 216, ff. 131–33v. 'E.D.' to 'C', 21 June 1876. 'E.D.' can be tentatively identified as Edward Parry, Bishop of Dover.

¹⁰⁶ LPL, Benson 55, ff. 365–66v, Robert Payne Smith to Archbishop Benson, 30 November 1887.

¹⁰⁷ LPL, Benson 12, ff. 175–76, Robert Payne Smith to Archbishop Benson, 9 February 1884.

¹⁰⁸ LPL, Benson 69, ff. 234v–35v, César Pascal to Archbishop Benson, 15 October 1889; Boudin, 'Some Aspects of the History of French-speaking Protestantism', p. 314.

¹⁰⁹ LPL, Benson 69, ff. 236–37v, W.H. Fremantle to Archbishop Benson, 18 October 1889; FCC, Actes du Consistoire, pp. 24, 26–27; *Pall Mall Gazette*, 10 October 1889.

Choisy's rapid appointment and his efforts towards establishing a French Protestant College suggest that he held similar views to Martin regarding the importance of the French church and developing its role in the late nineteenth century. This was not an opinion that was ultimately shared by his successor Edouard Archinard. Leaving in January 1892 to take up the pastorate of the French church at Naples, Archinard reviewed his ministry at Canterbury over the preceding fourteen months.¹¹⁰ In his report he challenged the consistory 'to recognize loyally the present situation and pronounce the final end of a Church which had long and glorious days in the past and has a right of dying as she lived, with dignity'. Like the Charity Commissioners in the past, Archinard argued that the French church had lost its *raison d'être*:

The average attendance [at Sunday services] has numbered from 15 to 20, if I take out of account the Anniversary services, which attract an unusual number of outside hearers. Out of this average number, 3 governesses of foreign nationalities have been the only ones of which French was the maternal tongue. All others, without a single exception have been English understanding French with more or less difficulty, or even not understanding it all. The sake of truth contrives me to acknowledge that case is the same in the Consistory of the Church where more than more than [sic] one is altogether unable to speak French or to understand it.

... The very fact that, for being understood by you all Gentlemen, I need to write this report in English is sufficient proof of it. As I have said in my letter of resignation there is actually nothing in Canterbury which is to be properly termed a French Church.¹¹¹

Archinard went on to ask:

... the Church of the Crypt has perhaps still kept her primitive Huguenot character? Not any more. There is scarcely one, either amongst Sunday's hearers or here in the Consistory itself who does not belong to other religious communities, either Conformist or non-conformists. The service itself, translated into french from the services of the Church of England, has lost altogether the character of the Primitive Huguenot Churches.

¹¹⁰ FCC, Actes du consistoire, pp. 34–35, 38; *The Whitstable Times and Herne Bay Herald*, 16 January 1892; CCA, U39/8/4.

¹¹¹ CCA, U39/8/1

Things have gone so far as to lead to this situation that which is called to-day the French Church in Canterbury is no more a body of living members, but a mere stone building kept for the sake of a dead past.¹¹²

This damning report on the state of the French church was rejected by the consistory, who refused to allow it to be recorded in the minutes of the meeting, but a copy was sent confidentially to the Bishop of Dover, one of the church's trustees.¹¹³ Included with the report was a list of the members of the consistory in 1891, of the sixteen members (excluding the pastor), only five were identified as the descendants of French or Walloon refugees.¹¹⁴

While Archinard questioned the rationale for continuing French services in the crypt, this view was not shared by the consistory nor by his successor Emmanuel Christen who sought to extend the church's mission to other French-speaking communities in Kent. Although Archinard argued against the continuance of the French ministry, he did recognise the significance of the French church itself as a memorial to the Huguenot diaspora and the toleration that they found in Canterbury: 'It is of no importance to do away with services scarcely understood, but it would be of great importance not to keep the building, [as a] witness of the faith of the old Huguenots and of the protection generously granted to them by the Metropolitan Church in England'.¹¹⁵

This was not a view shared by Joseph Martin and his other immediate successors. They recognised the church's historical importance but they also considered that it still had a practical role to fulfil in the Victorian era. The congregation's future was dependent on ministers who were able not only to lead the congregation but could also vigorously defend the church from its critics and detractors. Although the succession of ministers during the 1890s, with the exception of Archinard, continued this role, their time in Canterbury was relatively short. In 1898, the consistory appointed Jean Reglaine Barnabas from Québec, as minister of the congregation. Like Martin, he was an energetic minister providing the congregation with the leadership that

¹¹² Ibid.

¹¹³ Ibid.; U39/8/4

¹¹⁴ CCA, U39/5/4.

¹¹⁵ CCA, U39/8/1.

it required into the twentieth century; he served as minister until his death in 1947.¹¹⁶

VI

A further threat to the existence of the French church came in the 1890s as a result of the proposals to restore the cathedral crypt. During the 1860s and 1870s restoration work had been undertaken to the main fabric of the cathedral although not without public controversy, particularly over the proposed plans for refitting the choir.¹¹⁷ The cathedral crypt was not part of this process of restoration and one antiquarian lamented 'it is much to be regretted that, while means seem always at disposal for the timely improvement or adornment of the beautiful Choir above, some part of them could not have been devoted to the contemporaneous preservation of this venerable monument of the past'.¹¹⁸

There had been increasing architectural and antiquarian interest in the crypt of Canterbury cathedral during the late nineteenth century. The crypt was considered to exceed those of other cathedrals in terms of its antiquity and size. It was believed to date from the early twelfth century, when Priors Anselm and Ernulf had torn down the original building erected by Archbishop Lanfranc and had constructed a much larger choir on new foundations but reusing the pillars from the earlier structure. A close study of the capitals of these pillars was published by an architect, J. Donkin, which illustrated and briefly described their decorative details.¹¹⁹ It was not only the capitals in the crypt that were of interest, the twelfth century paintings in the chapel of St Gabriel were also the focus of detailed study by the architect James Neale who was commissioned by the Kent Archaeological Association to record them for publication, an enterprise that almost bankrupted the society.¹²⁰ Neale was later employed by the Dean and Chapter to restore these frescoes.¹²¹ Both the capitals and frescoes were discussed at length in W.A. Scott Robertson's *The Crypt of Canterbury* published

116 *The Whitstable Times and Herne Bay Herald*, 4 June 1898; Boudin, 'Some Aspects of the History of French-speaking Protestantism', pp. 318–19.

117 Nockles, 'Aspects of Cathedral Life', pp. 280–82.

118 J. Donkin, *The Capitals in the Crypt of Canterbury Cathedral* (s.l., s.n.), p. 7.

119 Donkin, *The Capitals in the Crypt of Canterbury Cathedral*, p. 2.

120 Frank W. Jessup, 'The Origin and First Hundred Years of the Society', *Archaeologia Cantiana* 70 (1956), 22.

121 *Pall Mall Gazette*, 25 October 1878.

in 1880.¹²² His 'brief archaeological treatise upon the crypt' provided an overview of the fabric and history of the crypt mainly during the medieval period and concluded with a short assessment of the French church and the area of the crypt where they gathered for worship.¹²³

Further investigation of the cathedral crypt led to several archaeological and historical discoveries. It was reported in May 1874 that 'a large and valuable collection of charters and manuscripts' had been recently discovered, although exactly what these were remains unclear.¹²⁴ As part of the restoration of the French church in 1885 it had been necessary to remove a portion of the floor. Subsequent excavations revealed:

... a large number of pieces of exquisitely carved and moulded stonework were brought to light, which once without doubt, formed parts of an elaborately executed shrine. They are coloured blue, vermillion, and gold, and are finely wrought in the style of the middle of the fourteenth century. Many of the pieces are carved canopy-work, very delicately executed, clearly showing that there were many such niches surrounding what must have been a splendid work of art. A small piece of a sculptured robe was found, belonging to an ecclesiastical figure life-size, and in this a single pearl remains embedded as one of the ornaments of the robe, showing how rich and elaborate the monument must have been in the days of its glory. From a careful inspection of these fragments, it is believed they agree in character with the remains known as the shrine of St Dunstan, situated on the south side of the choir.¹²⁵

Other finds included 'a finely-carved head of the saint [Dunstan], in an excellent state of preservation' and 'a hand of the saint, clasping a book'. 'Other fragments unearthed are believed to belong to the shrine of Prior Bradwardine, which stood in the Anselm's Chapel, while

122 W.A. Scott Robinson, 'The Crypt of Canterbury Cathedral', *Archaeologia Cantiana* 13 (1880), 17–80, 500–51; W.A. Scott Robertson, *The Crypt of Canterbury Cathedral. Its Architecture, its History, and its Frescoes* (London, 1880).

123 *Ibid.*, pp. v, 113–18.

124 *The York Herald*, 16 May 1874; *Manchester Times*, 16 May 1874. According to the reports a full account was to be published by the Historical Manuscripts Commission but the newly-found charters are not identified, *Fifth Report of the Royal Commission on Historical Manuscripts* (London, 1876), pp. xii–xiv, 426–62.

125 *The Leeds Mercury*, 29 August 1885.

several pieces of carving that are totally distinct from the rest may, it is conjectured, have been portions of Beckett's shrine'.¹²⁶

The Dean and Chapter appointed a committee to 'make an Antiquarian Investigation of the Cathedral', which presented its first report on an inspection of the cathedral crypt on 28 April 1888.¹²⁷ This closer interest in the crypt may have been prompted by the discovery by workmen of some human bones close to the site of Thomas a Becket's tomb. The discovery quickly led to reports in *The Times* that the remains of the martyred archbishop had escaped destruction at the Reformation and had been hastily concealed in the crypt. The bones were photographed and subjected to scientific examination before being reinterred shortly afterwards. Debate over whether these really were Becket's bones continued in the newspapers as well as a series of pamphlets and papers on the subject.¹²⁸

This archaeological and architectural interest in the cathedral crypt also prompted criticism of its use by the French church. Amidst the dispute with the Charity Commissioners in 1882, *The Times* had railed against their presence:

The French Protestants, however, conceived themselves now the proprietors of the whole area [cathedral crypt], at least an acre of substantial well-covered space, dry and warm, if not as well lighted as might be. They painted French texts over all the arches and passages. They either found or made a thoroughfare from the north to the south. In the process of time they let portions to builders and carpenters for the storage of materials. They allowed the children

126 *The Morning Post*, 4 April 1885. See also, *The Standard*, 14 February 1885; *The Observer*, 15 February 1885; *The Leeds Mercury*, 16 February 1885.

127 Charles F. Routledge, J. Brigstocke Sheppard and W.A. Scott Robinson, 'The Crypt of Canterbury Cathedral', *Archaeologia Cantiana* 18 (1889), 253–56.

128 I. Report on the Antiquarian Investigation of the Cathedral, by Canon Routledge, S. Robertson and Dr. Sheppard. II. An Anatomical Report on the Skeleton found, by P. Thornton. III. A Summary of the 'Becket's bones' Controversy, by Canon Routledge (Canterbury, 1888); *The Times*, 1 February 1888; W. Pugin Thornton, 'Surgical Report on a Skeleton found in the crypt of Canterbury Cathedral', *Archaeologia Cantiana* 18 (1889), pp. 257–60; John Morris, *The Relics of St Thomas of Canterbury* (? 1888); W. Pugin Thornton, *Becket's Bones* (Canterbury, 1901); A. Beazeley, 'Certain Human Remains found in the Crypt of Canterbury Cathedral Church', *Proceedings of the Society of Antiquaries of London*, 2nd series 22 (1907–9), 15–28; Arthur James Mason, *What Became of the Bones of St Thomas? A Contribution to his Fifteenth Jubilee* (Cambridge, 1920), pp. 173–93; John Butler, *The Quest for Becket's Bones. The Mystery of the Relics of St Thomas of Canterbury* (London, 1995), pp. 35–42.

of the town to make it a common playground – a capital idea as far as they were concerned. Thus the great metropolitan cathedral lost its connexion with English soil, and became an upper chamber on a basis of French Protestantism, not of a very ceremonious or reverential character.¹²⁹

Disingenuous as this attack was, it underscored the tensions that the presence of the community provoked. Even Archbishop Benson appears to have questioned the restoration of the French church, barely legible pencil annotations on a letter from Pastor Martin requesting a contribution to the restoration of the French church seem to refer to the ‘wanton “restoration”’ and ‘desecration’ of the Black Prince’s Chantry.¹³⁰ The Dean commented on how ‘the place has been renovated, painted (in bad style I think)’.¹³¹

By the 1890s, the French church had come to be regarded as an obstacle to the restoration of the cathedral crypt. A rough plan sketched in the early eighteenth century shows that the congregation occupied the western end of the crypt, but in the 1820s with dwindling numbers the church moved into a smaller area. The Black Prince’s chantry in the south transept and the adjacent two bays of the south aisle served as a vestibule to the church which occupied the four western bays of the same aisle. The area was partitioned from the rest of the nave by the erection of brick walls between the vaulting with a small window in each of the blocking walls. The incongruity of these brick walls seems to have been increased by the fact that they were not evenly built.¹³²

Donkin had drawn attention to the ‘most neglected condition’ of the crypt and observed that ‘far, indeed, from sustaining its legitimate character as sacred to the relics of a patron Saint, the Crypt is everywhere else desecrated by coals, lumber and pipes. The floor – once no doubt beautifully paved – is now only of common earth, rough and untended’.¹³³ In November 1892, a report was drawn up, probably by the architect Sir Arthur Bloomfield for the re-flooring and restoration of the crypt. While it discussed the merits of different types of flooring, it also reflected on the difficulties posed by the presence of the French church.

129 *The Times*, 25 February 1882.

130 LPL, Benson 12, ff. 181–82v, J.A. Martin to Archbishop Benson, 31 December 1884.

131 LPL, Benson 55, ff. 365–66v, Robert Payne Smith to Archbishop Benson, 30 November 1887.

132 Scott Robertson, *The Crypt of Canterbury Cathedral*, pp. vi–vii, 18, 108, 113

133 Donkin, *The Capitals in the Crypt of Canterbury Cathedral*, p. 7.

... the work in question cannot be considered in any sense complete so long as the deplorable encroachment of the French Protestant Church is allowed to exist. I am quite sure that all those who really and fully appreciate the beauty and dignity of the Crypt will be unanimous in thinking that the money now being spent on excavation will have been in great measure thrown away, if so important a section of it is left untouched, thereby not only ruining the general effect, but perpetuating the exclusion of light where it is most wanted and rendering it impossible to open out the proper entrance on the South side.

The only argument I have heard in favour of retaining this unseemly blot in the largest, loftiest, and finest crypts in the kingdom is that it is historically interesting ...

The partitioning off a portion of the crypt with mean woodwork screens to serve as a church is of quite modern date, and to throw it open again now would not interfere with a single feature which in the wildest flight of fancy could describe as historically interesting. The windows in the outer wall would of course be left untouched.

The arch at the western end which has been mutilated in a barbarous manner would be restored and the southern entrance to the Crypt would be opened out and generally used.¹³⁴

The cathedral chapter appears to have moved relatively swiftly on the matter of restoring the crypt and the minister and representatives of the French consistory met the Dean, Bishop of Dover and Canon Fremantle in January 1893 to discuss the proposals. By the end of the month, the delegation had recommended to the consistory:

... that the part of the crypt now occupied by the French congregation be placed in the hands of the Dean and Chapter for the restoration together with the rest of the crypt provided:

1. That either open work iron screens or glazed shutters be substituted for the present partition walls.
2. That this be done at the expense of the Dean and Chapter and to the satisfaction of the Consistory.
3. That means be adopted to admit warmth from the crypt when warmed into the French Church.
4. That the entire use of the French Church remain with the consistory who undertake to make no structural or decorative alterations without the consent of the Dean and Chapter.

It was agreed that the report of Sir Arthur Bloomfield be communicated to the Consistory with the view to carrying into effect of his recommendations so far as they affect the French Church.¹³⁵

Six months later the Dean and Chapter made an alternative proposal to the consistory which suggested that the congregation should instead be confined to the area of the Black Prince's chantry which would be duly partitioned off from the rest of the crypt. On special occasions when this area would be inadequate for worship, the congregation would be allowed to use the general area of the crypt. The chapter also undertook to repair and put in order the chantry 'in accordance with the requirements of the Consistory'.¹³⁶ The consistory generally viewed this proposal favourably but also wanted to hear 'the opinion of those interested in the Huguenot cause and especially members of the Huguenot Society of London'.¹³⁷

It is clear that there was some resistance to the proposed 'restoring and beautifying of the crypt', which would restrict the French church to the Black Prince's chantry. A petition against the proposed alterations was presented to the consistory in April 1894.¹³⁸ The opponents of the scheme felt that in being asked to relinquish their present place of worship, the Dean and Chapter were seeking to bring to an end the French services in the crypt. There also seems to have been an attachment to their current location which had been recently been restored and was reopened in 1886 as a memorial to the late Archbishop Tait who had defended the French church's interests.¹³⁹ The matter was also discussed in the correspondence columns of national newspapers. In a letter to *The Times*, one T. Field from King's School, Canterbury argued that the Dean and Chapter sought to preserve the French church but questioned whether 'for that maintenance, it is necessary to disfigure and, indeed, to ruin the beauty of the whole crypt. There can not be any question as to the desirability of the proposed change from an architectural point of view, and it will not really affect the conduct of the French service'.¹⁴⁰ Another newspaper commented on how the proposals would allow the French church to move into

135 FCC, Actes du Consistoire, p. 61.

136 Ibid., p. 65.

137 Ibid.

138 Ibid., p. 70; *The Whitstable Times and Herne Bay Herald*, 16 February 1895.

139 *The Ipswich Chronicle*, 24 March 1894; Spicer, 'Archbishop Tait the Huguenots and the French Church at Canterbury'.

140 *The Times*, 22 February 1895.

'the more lofty and lighter portion of the crypt' and how Sir Arthur Blomfield's alterations would 'include the removal of the modern wall which, cutting off a portion of the most beautiful crypt in England and the light of the southern windows, has long been regarded by all lovers of architecture visiting the Cathedral as a barbarism'.¹⁴¹

The minister, Emmanuel Christen also wrote about the benefits of the scheme and against those who had challenged the proposals:

This minority is absolutely wrong in charging the Dean and Chapter with any desire or intention inimical to the French Church. On the contrary, they have fully recognized its historical rights in the crypt; and are not proposing to interfere with them, but rather have had a deed prepared which recognizes those rights.

This church will retain every inch of the area it at present occupies, and the change is nothing more than a shifting of the place of service from the low, dark crypt aisle into the loftier and lighter Black Prince's Chantry which joins it, and will be properly prepared for the purpose. This change will enable the architect to remove the modern brick wall now blocking up the arches of the south aisle of Ernulf's Crypt and will give both light and ventilation to that crypt. The architectural improvement will be very great, and I believe the new place of service for the French Church will be much more convenient.¹⁴²

As the minister mentioned, legal recognition of the French church's rights to worship in the crypt was to be part of the arrangements for their relocation to the Black Prince's Chantry. There seems to have been some delay in the conclusion of this agreement, which led the consistory to seek legal opinion concerning their historic rights.¹⁴³ In the past, Joseph Martin had argued that the congregation's right to worship in the crypt was based on letters patent issued by Edward VI on 24 July 1550, although this was regarded with some scepticism.¹⁴⁴ The evidence presented before the eminent ecclesiastical lawyer Sir Walter Phillimore QC established that the community had been founded in 1567 and were worshipping in the cathedral crypt by 1576. In defending their position, the French church challenged the assertion that they had 'no valid right to the Crypt, but occupy it only on sufferance and

¹⁴¹ *Nottingham Evening Post*, 16 February 1895.

¹⁴² *The Times*, 25 February 1895.

¹⁴³ FCC, Actes du Consistoire, p. 82.

¹⁴⁴ Martin, *Christian Firmness of the Huguenots*, pp. 37–40; Scott Robertson, *The Crypt of Canterbury Cathedral*, p. 118.

by consent of the Dean and Chapter'.¹⁴⁵ They argued that the original grant or concession by the crown which was referred to in an Order in Council in 1662 established their right to worship in the crypt. In December 1895, Phillimore stated that:

the French Walloon Church had either the absolute right to the use of the Crypt for their Religious Services as in times past, or a right which can only be taken away by the joint action of the Crown, the Archbishop and the Dean and Chapter.¹⁴⁶

Satisfied with this verdict, the consistory agreed to publish and circulate this legal opinion.¹⁴⁷

The French church's historic rights to the crypt had already been fully recognised in the agreement reached between the consistory and the cathedral authorities over their move to the Black Prince's Chantry.¹⁴⁸ Furthermore, it granted:

Minister Elders and Deacons and Congregation of the said Walloon Church at Canterbury the sole use control and enjoyment in perpetuity of that portion of the Crypt of the said Cathedral Church which is called or known as the Black Prince's Chantry as from the date hereof in as full free uninterrupted and beneficial manner as the said Minister, Elders, Deacons and Congregation have heretofore used occupied and enjoyed the said undercroft or crypt.¹⁴⁹

The cathedral chapter also undertook to prepare the new location for the congregation and at their expense to transfer and set up the French church's furnishings and also install gas lighting. The Dean and Chapter were also obliged to move the congregation to another part of the crypt should the Black Prince's Chantry by 'any standard defect or dampness be unfit for the continuance of Divine Service'.¹⁵⁰

Although the new arrangements took some negotiation, the final settlement with the chapter and the legal opinion sought by the consistory recognised the historic right of the French church to worship

145 Canterbury Cathedral Archives, DCC/Fabric 60/3 The French or Walloon Church Canterbury. Case for Opinion, p. 5

146 *Ibid.*, p. 6

147 FCC, Actes du Consistoire, pp. 85–86; *The Standard*, 14 September 1896; *The Morning Post*, 15 September 1896.

148 *The Whitstable Times and Heme Bay Herald*, 23 February 1895; LPL, Benson 135, ff. 440–42.

149 *Ibid.*

150 *Ibid.*

in the cathedral crypt. Furthermore the subsequent restoration sought to reveal the architectural beauty of the crypt but it did not at the same time attempt to erase all traces of its earlier use by the Huguenots:

The removal of accumulated coats of whitewash from the walls and the beautiful vault has revealed the remarkable delicacy of the sculptured bosses, than which we know of nothing more perfect and interesting in the period of architecture to which this Chantry of the Black Prince belongs. There has also been uncovered and preserved with great care an ancient text, one of those which were painted on the walls of their 'temple' by the Huguenot refugees, who occupied nearly the entire area of the western crypt from the 16th century ...¹⁵¹

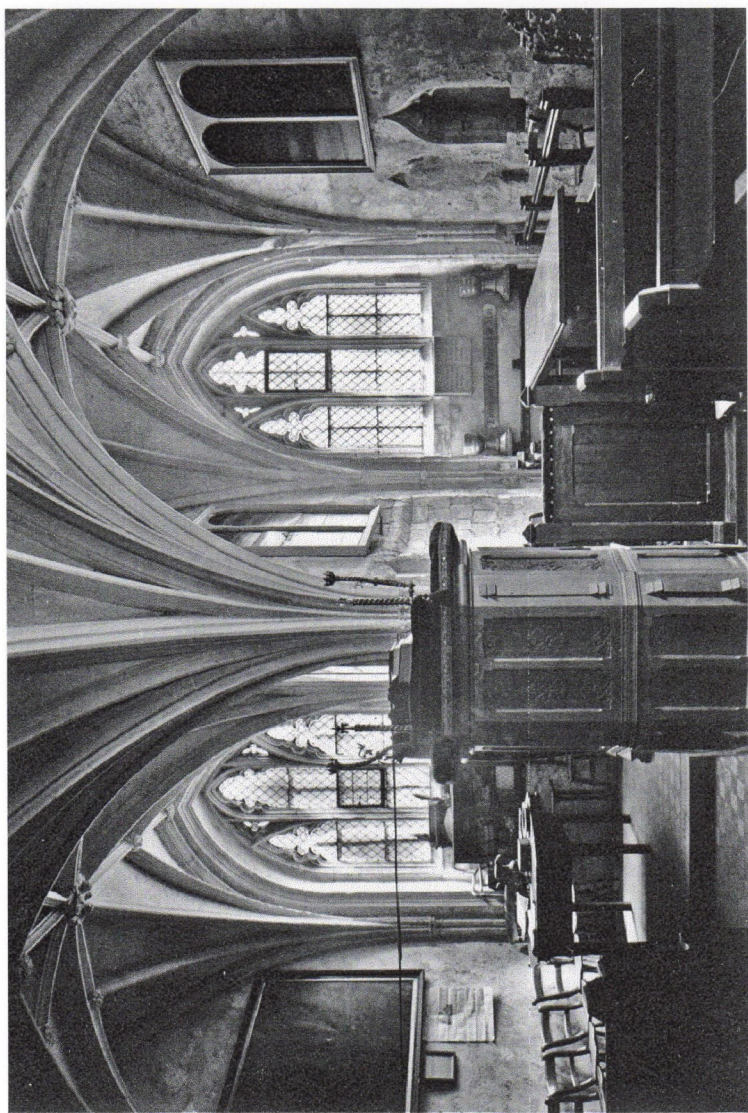
VII

In September 1896, the anniversary service was held for the first time in the Black Prince's chantry. Their new place of worship was furnished with 'the pews, pulpit, communion table, organ and other furniture fittings' that dated from Martin's earlier refurbishment of the French church.¹⁵² Most of these fittings can be seen in the photograph of the Black Prince's chantry which was taken a decade later, together with other pictures of the restored crypt, by Sir Benjamin Stone (Figure 1). The relocation of the French church in some ways could be seen to be the culmination of the attempts to preserve and revitalise the institution. As part of the negotiations for this move, the relationship between the French congregation and the dean and chapter of Canterbury was formalised while legal opinion had also asserted the church's historic right to worship in cathedral crypt.

Although Joseph Martin had died several years earlier, this achievement was largely down to his promotion of the French church and vigorous defence of its interests. The most serious challenge had come from the Charity Commissioners which threatened the church's survival through questioning its *raison d'être* and seeking to reassign its finances to more charitable purposes. Martin campaigned tirelessly against their proposed reforms but it was ultimately the influential support for the congregation that came from Archbishop Tait that led to the matter being satisfactorily resolved.

151 *The Whitstable Times and Herne Bay Herald*, 7 September 1895.

152 FCC, *Actes du Consistoire*, pp. 81, 88.



Benjamin Stone, Photograph of Crypt Chapel used by the French Huguenots, Canterbury Cathedral, Kent (1906)
© Victoria and Albert Museum, London

The minister and consistory responded to the abuses which had been identified by the Charity Commissioners' investigations and sought to ensure that the church, which had initially served the needs of French-speaking refugees, still had a purpose three centuries later. Martin re-established regular services in the crypt and became the resident minister of the Canterbury congregation in 1875. He also strove to put the church on a much sounder financial footing and to restore their place of worship. While he was relatively successful in some of these measures, the ambitious attempts to find a new role for the church within the context of making Canterbury a centre of French Protestant education came to nothing. Furthermore it was more Martin's successors who sought to extend the mission of the church beyond Canterbury to French communities in other Kentish towns. Nonetheless the energy and conviction with which Martin sought to further the role of the church and defend its interests was pivotal in reviving and revitalising the institution. Martin's role was recognised by contemporaries, but they were also sceptical about whether this could be sustained in the longer term. Although the consistory recognised the need for someone who like Martin could lead and defend the interests of the congregation, the French church was served by a succession of ministers during the 1890s not all of whom believed that it should survive. It was almost a decade after Martin's death that a minister who had similar qualities was appointed and he served the congregation for half a century.

Martin worked particularly hard to develop the distinctive identity of the institution and to strengthen its associations with the events of the Reformation and the religious persecution of the late sixteenth century as well as at the time of the Revocation. This was in tune with the nineteenth-century concern for the past and in particular the growing academic and popular interest in the Huguenot diaspora. Both Archbishop Tait and Martin recognised the symbolic and historic importance of the church's continued survival as 'a living Memento if the Refugee Establishments in England'.¹⁵³ However, Martin's efforts and those of his successors sought to revitalise the church and its congregation. They believed that it was more than a 'precious relic' but was a living church that still had a pastoral and religious role to fulfill in the Victorian era.¹⁵⁴

¹⁵³ Martin, *Christian Firmness of the Huguenots*, p. 133.

¹⁵⁴ *Ibid.*, p. 89.