

Visites de quakers en Suisse dans les années 1857-1914, d'après les extraits des minutes de l'Assemblée annuelle de Londres et d'autres sources

Des quakers missionnaires se rendaient en Europe continentale pour rencontrer des personnes progressistes et pour tenir des rencontres publiques. Certains sont passés par Genève au moins en 1859 et 1866, où ils ont rencontré en particulier le pasteur César Malan et le colonel Tronchet. On les voit aussi à Morges, Lausanne, Neuchâtel, Le Locle, Veytaux et Villeneuve. Les extraits qui suivent sont centrés sur la Suisse romande.

En 1856, l'assemblée annuelle de Londres publie un court texte intitulé « Appel en faveur de la liberté de conscience, particulièrement adressé aux hommes du pouvoir dans les différents États de l'Europe, de la part de la Société Religieuse des Amis (dits Quakers), réunie en séance annuelle à Londres, en 1856 », traduction de « A plea in behalf of liberty of conscience : addressed especially to those in authority in the several governments of Europe ». Un *Committee for the distribution of the Plea for Liberty of Conscience* est constitué. Le document est distribué sur le continent, en particulier par Joseph Cooper et son fils en **1859**, qui ont pris avec eux un *nombre considérable d'exemplaires* en diverses langues. Ils vont en particulier à **Genève**, puis à Berne, Zurich et Bâle. Ensuite à Milan, en Sardaigne et à Turin.

«Our first call (...) was upon Dr. Malan¹, at his present residence, a few miles from Geneva. The aged pastor received us with much kindness, and, fully uniting in the sentiments of our religious Society on the subject, gave us some information which afterwards proved very useful. He thought the circulation of the document in Switzerland and Savoy might just now be very serviceable to the cause of religious liberty ; and especially so in Lombardy and Piedmont, if we would be able to visit those countries. »
«At his recommendation we drove, over to Bressinge the seat of Colonel Tronchet², who received us cordially, and entered in to the subject with much interest. The Appeal he thought calculated to do much good in Switzerland, especially In twelve our fourteen of the Cantons which he named ; but he entertained some fear lest its circulation in Lombardy at that particular time should prove injurious, by arousing the opposition of the priests. He remarked that the ancestors of his own family had suffered much formerly from religious persecution, and that twice from this cause their numbers had been reduced to one individual He was engaged at the time we saw him with a committee on liberty of conscience in Italy, for whom we left copies of the 'Plea', and we afterwards called at the house of Dr. Merle d'Aubigné³, but not finding him at home, left the Appeal for him. »
« At Berne we had a very interesting interview with B. de Watteville⁴, formerly president of the Evangelical Society of Geneva, and at one time filling an important office in the

¹ Le pasteur César Malan (Genève 1787 - Vandoeuvres 1864) a fait partie du mouvement du *Réveil*, et il était connu comme compositeur de cantiques. Il était aussi l'un des d'étudiants de la *Société des Amis*, avec Ami Bost, en 1810 à Genève.

² *Bressinge* désigne Bessinge à Coligny, où se trouvait la *Campagne Tronchin*.

Tronchet désigne Armand Henri Louis Jacob Tronchin (1794 - 1865), lieutenant-colonel fédéral d'artillerie, membre du *Réveil*.

³ Jean-Henri Merle d'Aubigné (Genève 1794 - 1872), était un pasteur et un historien de la Réformation, membre du *Réveil*.

⁴ Apparemment : Bernhard Friedrich von Wattenwyl (1801 -1881), en français Bernard de Watteville.

government of the country. He gave rather a discouraging account of the present position of those who cannot conscientiously conform to the churches established by law in that country, and said, that although a considerable improvement had taken place, yet those who cannot conscientiously conform are looked upon by the community in general much in the light of rebels. We also visited Charles de Rodt⁵, the pious pastor of a free church I Berne, who has suffered much from religious persecution. (...) Fully uniting with the Appeal, and believing the present time very seasonable for its circulation, he kindly devoted much time and labour to the work ; and it was mainly through his aid that we were enabled to make a very wide and, we believe, judicious distribution of the document. »

«As the conference of the plenipotentiaries for the negotiation of peace between France, Sardinia and Austria, was sitting in Zurich when we were in that city, we sent a copy of the ‘Plea,’ accompanied by a written note, to each of the eight representatives of those countries ; and we had afterwards reason to believe that the subject before the Conference at that time was, the separation of the ecclesiastical from the civil power, and the limitation of the former. At Basle we received the kind assistance of Dr. Marriott (...). »

«Altogether about 700 copies in German language , 250 in French and fifty in Italian, were distributed in Switzerland. The principal parties to whom they were sent were members of the Federal, National and Executive Councils – the Council of State – the grand Cantonal Council – the members of the superior tribunals – the professors and heads of colleges and schools – ministers of religion, and individuals connected with the press and literature of the country. »

(*Extracts ...*, 1860 p. 78-80).

En **1866**, John Henry Douglas (de Indiana Yearly Meeting) et Murray Shipley ont visité l’Europe, accompagnés de Robert et Christine Alsop. Ils quittent Londres le 4 août et atteignent Paris le soir du même jour. Ils passent à Strasbourg, Bâle (Chrischona), sont à Zurich le 12 août (ils rencontrent C. F. Spittler à Beugen), puis à Berne, **Genève, Morges et Lausanne, Veytaux et Villeneuve** (J. H. Douglas ne participe pas à cette tournée en Suisse romande, étant malade). A Veytaux, ils prennent deux jours de repos, dont le dimanche 19 août durant lequel ils tiennent deux rencontres : une à leur hôtel avec quelques personnes sérieuses, une autre le soir à Villeneuve. Puis c’est l’Italie, le Sud de la France et l’Allemagne.

«At Veytaux, at the extremity of the lake of Geneva, a rest of two days, including First-day the 19th, was productive of much comfort, and that day two meetings were held, one at the hotel with a few serious persons, which was a heart-tendering season, and another in the evening at the small town of Villeneuve, a very irreligious place, with about 40 women of the poorer class, who were addressed in a strain of loving sympathy, and encouraged to look unto Jesus, “Who for the joy that was set before Him, endured the cross, despising the shame.” Many tears were shed, and it was found that many of these poor people have to suffer much from the persecution and scoffs of those around them. Many pleaded very feelingly for a longer stay amongst them. »

(*Extracts ...*, 1867 p. 59).

En novembre de la même année **1866**, William Edward Turner est en Suisse, accompagné de Charles Wilson. Ils sont d’abord à Paris, Nîmes, Congénies, Marseille et autres lieux, puis en Suisse. À **Genève**, ils sont rejoints par B. Combe de Valence et une rencontre avec environ 250 personnes a lieu le dimanche 2 décembre. Lors de visites faites à quelques personnes âgées, celles-ci se souviennent avec gratitude des visites de quakers ayant eu lieu de nombreuses années auparavant. Une rencontre publique a aussi lieu à **Lausanne**, puis ils se

⁵ Carl von Rodt (1805 - 1861), Voir <www.bautz.de/bbkl/r/rodt_c.shtml>.

rendent au **Locle** où ils visitent une institution pour jeunes filles, à **Neuchâtel** où ils rencontrent la baronne et le baron Derschau et le professeur Petavel, à Berne et finalement à Bâle.

«On Seventh-day evening we were joined [in Geneva] by B. Combe of Valence, and having made arrangements previously, a public meeting was held on First-day afternoon, the 2nd of Twelfth Month ; about 250 present. Several visits were paid to individuals, in which the social intercourse and the religious opportunities were felt to be mutually comforting and strengthening, profitable to both visitor and visited. A few pious elderly persons in this city well remember the visits of Friends, extending for many years back, and expressed their affectionate interest in the Society, speaking with gratefulness of the visits paid to them. »

«At Lausanne a public meeting was also held, to which about 350 came ; it was a good meeting. We made a few calls on individuals. At Locle a visit was paid to the “Institution des Billodes⁶,” established upwards of forty years ago by M. A. Calame for neglected and orphan girls ; we had much satisfaction in this visit, and in the religious opportunity with the family, numbering about 80 ; a solemn influence was spread over us, and some of the young children appeared much tendered. At Neufchatel, a little meeting was held on First-day morning in our room at the hotel, to which three persons came by invitation, one the Baroness Derschau, who with her sister seemed much interested in inquiring into the views of Friends. We spent a short time with them at their house, with Baron D., in the afternoon, continuing the subjects of inquiry. At 8 o’clock a public meeting was held, to which about 300 came ; it was a good solemn meeting. We spent some time with Professor Petavel and his family, and had considerable religious opportunity with them, opened, at their own request, by Professor P. reading a chapter in the Testament. It was an interesting occasion, the servants and some visitors also assembled with us. »
(*Extracts ...*, 1867 p. 68-69).

Joseph Bevan et sa femme Martha Braithwaite sont allés en Europe en automne **1875**, accompagnés de Robert et Christine Alsop. Ils rencontrent les étudiants de Chrischona (où Theophil Walmeier a étudié en 1856-1858) et la maison des missions de Bâle en septembre, puis ils passent à **Lausanne**, Chambéry, progressent jusqu’aux vallées Vaudoises du Piémont, visitent divers lieux dans le Sud de la France, l’Italie, Vienne, Budapest, et Paris finalement.

En mai **1898**, Joseph Gundry Alexander reçoit un certificat pour son service en France, Belgique, **Suisse romande** (“French Switzerland”) et les vallées Vaudoises du Piémont.

Eliza Pickard rapporte au *Meeting for Sufferings* sur son voyage au Proche-Orient en **1911**. Elle est d’abord passée par Paris et **Genève**, « where, after two days’ reflection, she felt strengthened for her services » (*The Friend*, Jan. 12, 1912).

Une *Conférence pour la Paix* a lieu à **Genève** en septembre **1912** ; Joseph G. Alexander y participe et rapporte dans le *British Friend* :“ ... The organization was faulty, Geneva Society was unfriendly ...”. Le même participe à la *Peace Conference* de Berne en mars **1914**, puis se rend à **Lausanne** et **Genève**, puis Paris (*The Friend*, Jan. 29, 1915).

⁶ L’institution *Les Billodes* a été fondée par Marie-Anne Calame (1775-1834) en 1815. Aujourd’hui c’est un centre pédagogique qui accueille des enfants d’âge scolaire et un foyer pour les jeunes filles. <www.billodes.ch>

Sources

- «Extracts from the Minutes and Proceedings of London Yearly Meeting», volumes : 1860 (78), 1867 (57 et 66), 1876 (29 et 48), 1898 (26).
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(Documents consultés dans la bibliothèque de Woodbrooke, février 2009, cote F25.1).
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- *The British Friend*, 1912
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Michel Mégard, Genève, 2009