

SECTARIANISM AND THE FRENCH REFORMATION

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At the beginning of the sixteenth century, before the appearance of Protestantism forced a number of semantic changes into the vocabulary of religious description, the French word *secte* could mean company, band, lineage, or type. True to its Latin root in *sequor*, it encompassed the idea of following something or someone, a political or philosophical doctrine or a military leader as easily as a religious teaching or heresiarch. As the century progressed, however, while it never lost this general usage, it also came to indicate a group separate from, and condemned by, the established religion, and its application to Protestants was the crucial component in this development. The phrase *sectaire de la religion*, when applied to a Huguenot, was not by definition pejorative, although in practice it usually was, and during the religious wars it was used by hostile writers along with *sectateur* and *religionnaire*, betraying a certain fluidity about 'sect' and 'religion' when the intention was to imply schism and inferiority.¹ In their own eyes, of course, Protestants were 'the faithful', upholders of true and eternal religion, the heirs to all those who had preached the truth since the birth of Christianity. Two fundamentally different concepts were at work here, but both marked a linguistic mutation from the idea of following to that of being. The *religionnaire* was no longer a follower, but a different kind of person from the majority. The language of royal edicts reflected this process. Edicts of January 1534 and July 1535 talked of 'the Lutheran sect and other heresies' and 'new heresies and sects', but by 1562 Charles IX's edict of St Germain had to acknowledge a 'diversity of opinions prevalent in religion' and to call Protestantism 'the new religion'.² A shift of perception had taken place, mirroring a grudging acceptance that the French Reformation had resulted in the creation not of a sect but of a substantial religious minority.

Today the word 'sect' has specific connotations, and a sociological account of how a 'sect' becomes a 'denomination' has been proposed:

¹ E. Huguet, *Dictionnaire de la langue française du seizième siècle*, 7 vols. (Paris: Champion, 1925–27), s.v. 'sectaire', 'sectateur', 'secte', 'religion'; E. Littré, *Dictionnaire de la langue française*, 4 vols. (Paris: Hachette, 1885–89), s.v. 'religionnaire'.

² F.-A. Isambert, *Recueil général des anciennes lois françaises*, 29 vols. (Paris: Belin-le-Prieur, 1827–33), xii. 402, 405; *Edits des guerres de religion*, ed. A. Stegmann (Paris: Vrin, 1979), 8–14.

a protest group gradually compromises with its initial principles, undergoes a process of schism (the more totally disinherited usually finding occasion to re-assert the original values of the group), and finally, is acknowledged by other religious movements – and is satisfied itself – to be one denomination among others.³

Despite some similarities, such a schema could only be applied to French Protestantism at a fair degree of abstraction and with considerable linguistic ingenuity, but for that very reason it may serve to indicate some reasons why permanent sects did not emerge in France. There was no single ‘protest group’ at the origins of the French Reform, but a complex process involving groups and individuals of varying heterodox views; schism and individualism were inherent in the progress of Protestantism, and the final acknowledgement of the new religion by its opponents was a recognition of fact, not an acceptance on principle.⁴ Nevertheless, the history of the Reformation up to 1562 may be divided into three broad overlapping phases: a pre-Calvinist period in the 1520s and 1530s, the establishment of Calvinist hegemony in the 1540s and early 1550s, and the period of the foundation of churches after 1555. Sectarian or schismatic tendencies are visible throughout, and looming behind them is the peculiar position of Calvin as an acknowledged leader and authority, but occupying no position of power within France. This raises the question of how far the failure of sectarian trends may be attributed to the actions of Calvin and his fellow ‘Genevans’ or to the social conditions underlying the growth of the Protestant movement.

A number of accepted signs of sectarianism could all have grown from the conditions of the early Reformation in France, during what Lucien Febvre called ‘a long period of magnificent religious anarchy’:⁵ prophecy and millenarianism; antinomianism; anti-intellectualism, stressing the claims of emotion over rational theology; pacifism; rejection of the world and all its works; women finding self-expression through preaching; and a refusal of pragmatism, with the only justifications for belief and behaviour being the ultimate authorities of scripture and revelation. It is not difficult to find radicals showing one or more of these features within the general field of officially-defined heresy, but a sect needs supporters as well as leaders, and it was all too easy for writers of religious polemics, including Calvin himself, to lump together individuals holding broadly similar views as a ‘sect’ and to exaggerate their influence. Religious labelling – ‘Lutheran’, ‘Zwinglian’, ‘Calvinist’, ‘Anabaptist’, etc. – was at best imprecise during the early history of the Reformation, and it was conceivable for sects to be created virtually out of thin air by polemicists.

³ B.R. Wilson, *Sects and Society: A Sociological Study of Three Religious Groups in Britain* (London: Heinemann, 1961), 1.

⁴ An up-to-date general account, with bibliography, is provided in M. Greengrass, *The French Reformation* (Oxford: Basil Blackwell, 1987).

⁵ L. Febvre, *Au coeur religieux du XVIe siècle*, second edition (Paris: SEVPEN, 1968), 66.

This was especially the case with the sectarian tendency which caused most ink to spill in France during our period – the antinomianism associated with the so-called ‘spiritual libertines’. As a ‘sect’ rather than small groups of intellectuals these may have been, as far as France is concerned, an invention of Calvin’s. He had encountered the spiritualist known as Quintin of Picardy, a follower of Antoine Pocquet, in Paris in 1533 or 1534, at a time when their ideas were circulating in the Latin Quarter and at the court of Francis I’s sister, Marguerite de Navarre, at Nérac, where Pocquet was a chaplain and Quintin a *huissier*.⁶ Later, in 1545, dependent on friendly correspondents for contact with France, but aware of the threat of prophetic radicalism in the southern Low Countries and the Rhineland, Calvin took up his pen against the libertines, and in particular Pocquet, who was still at Marguerite’s court.⁷ Warning against them was thus a political necessity from Calvin’s point of view, given their influential connections, but evidence of any direct influence outside rather rarified courtly and intellectual circles is not easy to find and difficult to interpret.

Pocquet had developed a sophisticated theology of history from which he drew some alarming theoretical consequences, including the abandonment of medicaments, the elimination of the power and authority of the state in religious matters, and the formation of a truly spiritual community, replacing state, church and family, and based on love of one’s neighbour and one’s enemy. Quintin, for his part, thought that the age of the perfection of the world was now dawning and that every Christian would, in a pantheistic and mystical sense, become Christ.⁸ Clearly, a proper understanding of such ideas required familiarity with the medieval prophetic tradition and possibly also with Greek thought. They would constitute interesting subjects for debate in a remote court which must have come close to the Renaissance ideal of a Platonic academy, and Calvin’s alarm is explained by the political positions of the people associated with it.

But whether similar notions would find fertile ground in French cities in the 1530s and 1540s is another matter. When Calvin wrote his tract against spiritual libertinism he was mainly concerned with its influence in the francophone Low Countries, primarily Artois and Hainault, and he only gives one example of a French townsman become libertine. This is the story, provided by Etienne de la Forge, of a Parisian shoemaker, clearly a master, who found his antinomian principles tested when he was robbed by a servant.⁹ There were libertines in Paris at this time, portrayed by Calvin’s correspondent,

⁶ G.H. Williams, *The Radical Reformation* (Philadelphia: Westminster Press, 1962), 585.

⁷ ‘Contre la secte phantastique et furieuse des libertins qui se nomment spirituelz’, *Ioannis Calvini opera quae supersunt omnia*, ed. G. Baum, E. Cunitz, E. Reuss. 59 vols. (Brunswick: Schwetschke, 1863–1900) (hereafter cited as *CO*), vii. 145–248.

⁸ Williams, *Radical Reformation*, 354–5, 599.

⁹ *CO*, vii. 185. Calvin explained his reasons for writing his tract in a letter to Marguerite de Navarre, printed in *ibid.*, xii. 64–8.

Antoine Fumée, as being sleek and elegant ‘Epicureans’, influenced by the Greeks, especially Plato, but despising moral laws and considering all religions, Protestantism included, to be nothing but words.¹⁰ Pocquet’s ideas also appear to have been circulating in the university city of Montpellier in 1548.¹¹ But in both instances we seem to be dealing with intellectual circles, owing nothing to Reformed ideas, and probably considering themselves way above the common multitude.

On a more popular level, individuals with highly unorthodox ideas and inspired by curiosity about religion are in evidence.¹² Given the largely unorganized nature of pre-Calvinist heresy, members of the lower classes falling foul of ecclesiastical authority were more likely to be semi-heretical, drawing upon reading, more or less heterodox preaching, and a fund of popular scepticism to detach themselves from the magical or more obviously venal aspects of Catholic practice. In terms of the sociological model of sect development, there was as yet no established Protestant tradition against which popular radicalism could define itself. In the Low Countries, trade routes, high urban development, the printing of Protestant books in Antwerp, and probably a higher rate of literacy, had all ensured that conventicles of artisans were discussing Lutheran ideas as early as 1524. Then consistent persecution in the 1530s assisted the growth of popular radicalism by forcing so many moderate evangelicals into flight or abjuration.¹³ In France, with the exception of Meaux,¹⁴ although the initial targets of popular criticism were similar, everything took place slightly later, and less persistent repression ensured the survival of evangelicals of various stripes. Nor were the disinherited ever attracted to heresy in any numbers. The social basis of adherence to unorthodox ideas remained insecurity rather than misery; a certain level of literacy was a highly desirable, though not absolutely essential, precondition for the discovery of heresy; and such organization as existed had to be created clandestinely, drawing on the sociability of workshops, private houses and inns, associated at the lowest with the social level of the master artisan or journeyman.

Any proto-sectarian tradition arising from the conditions of the early Reformation in France, then, would be likely to remain on the level of ideas being ‘in the air’ and visibly manifest only at particular moments. It would also be implicated in a complex dialectic between intellectual and popular and, from the mid-1540s onwards, between

¹⁰ *Ibid.*, xi. 490–4.

¹¹ Aegidius Michaux to Calvin, *ibid.*, xiii. 27–8.

¹² For examples, see D. Nicholls, ‘The Nature of Popular Heresy in France, 1520–1542’, *Historical Journal*, xxvi (1983), 274.

¹³ A. Duke, ‘The Face of Popular Religious Dissent in the Low Countries’, *Journal of Ecclesiastical History*, xxvi (1975), 41–67.

¹⁴ For Meaux, see H. Heller, *The Conquest of Poverty: The Calvinist Revolt in Sixteenth Century France* (Leiden: E.J. Brill, 1986), ch. 2.

Calvinist and non-Calvinist. It was also likely to be highly localized, with the city providing the necessary continuity. An example of a city where a radical or prophetic tradition of sorts does appear to have existed from the 1540s to 1562 is provided by Rouen, although the precise relationship between its various manifestations remains a matter of conjecture. In 1540, Guillaume Farel wrote about a ‘pessimus anabaptista’, named Duval, then in prison in Paris but previously active in Normandy. This Duval, it appeared, among other vices, was against marriage and in favour of temporary unions.¹⁵ A few years later, in 1547, Calvin was constrained to take up his pen against a ‘certain Franciscan’ of Rouen, also imprisoned, whose writings had come to his attention.¹⁶ This ‘libertine’ cited Quintin in his support, but combined a spiritualist disapproval of ‘useless knowledge’ with a misunderstanding of Calvinist predestination to draw his own antinomian conclusions. Because God created all things, because He made mankind with an inherently evil nature, and because the damned are not responsible for their own perdition, therefore the distinction between good and evil is artificial, and we are permitted to rejoice in our sins, which are forgiven us when we admit that we cannot do anything about them. According to Calvin, the Franciscan had attracted a considerable following, including ‘simple folk’, and he used this to attack the Genevans, claiming that Geneva welcomed rich refugees in order to get their money, but rejected the poor, a charge rebuffed by Calvin on the grounds that rich *émigrés* must of necessity leave the greater part of their wealth behind.¹⁷ Here we have, then, a genuine struggle for the souls of the faithful between Calvinism and an embryonic local radical movement, but one in which Calvin’s job is done for him by the Catholic authorities’ arrest of his adversary.¹⁸

Calvin does not mention whether the Franciscan was Rouennais by origin or adoption, and he may or may not be identifiable as the millenarian preacher recorded by the local Catholic observer, Pierre Pelhestre, some time in the 1540s. This prophet, who claimed to come from Flanders – ‘but he was lying, for he was French’ – declared himself to be an angel sent to spread forth the spirit of God and also the Last Trumpet announcing the end of the world, and he attracted a following, though how large we do not know. He was arrested, and an attempted rescue by his disciples failed because advance information had been leaked to the prison guards. The Last Trumpet was thus burnt along with two of his followers, while the rest were ‘beaten

¹⁵ *Correspondance des réformateurs dans les pays de langue française*, ed. A.L. Herminjard. 9 vols. (Geneva and Paris: Georg, Levy, 1866–97), vi. 294–5.

¹⁶ ‘Epistre contre un certain cordelier, suppost de la secte des libertins, lequel est prisonnier à Roan’, *CO*, vii. 341–64.

¹⁷ *Ibid.*, 362.

¹⁸ The Franciscan replied to Calvin in a *Bouclier de défense*, now lost, which in turn brought forth Farel’s *Le glaive de la parole véritable, tiré contre le Bouclier de défense*, published at Geneva in 1550, despite Calvin’s doubts about its voluminous and confused content.

through the city of Rouen'.¹⁹ Millenarian cults could thus flare up and flourish briefly within the city, but centred on particular individuals who could be dealt with without too much difficulty and who left no organizational legacy behind them. No alternative was provided to the Calvinist church model, propounded by its creator to the nascent congregations in the 1550s.

Quietist spirituals could expect less trouble, but only at the cost of a self-conscious elitism. In Rouen, they were grouped around the *palinods*, a society of amateur poets who competed annually to write the best poem in praise of the Virgin Mary, and their best-known representative was Pierre du Val, who adopted the spiritualist device of *Rien sans l'esprit*, while his poetry took up and developed mystical themes in a manner reminiscent of Marguerite de Navarre, and with no trace of antinomianism. He moved away from orthodox Catholicism in the mid-1540s, but in his poetry and plays he never embraced Calvinist predestination, seeing the elect rather as those who voluntarily refuse the world, in a manner which may be viewed as 'sectarian', but which remains the province of an intellectual elite. In du Val's writings the spirit of earlier evangelical mysticism lived on into the early 1550s, but he left Rouen for London in 1552, and the gatherings of like-minded poets called the *puys des pauvres* ended in 1554.²⁰

The Rouen tradition, then, breaks down into three components: a rare example of antinomianism with popular support; a short-lived prophetic movement; and intellectual 'libertinism' among members of well-off bourgeois families. And it fades from sight in the mid-1550s as the Protestant Church, *dressée* ('gathered') in 1557, became organized along Calvinist lines. It took the uncertain political and economic situation after 1559 to revive it under new circumstances, when Protestant hopes were high for the conversion of the kingdom, and the man who did it combined intellectual prowess with popular appeal to an unusual degree. Jean Cotin, a native of Gisors on the border of Normandy, returned to his native province after being expelled from Geneva as a 'libertine' and initially found fame in Rouen by teaching languages using a new and secret method. By 1559 the Rouennais Protestants were holding large public meetings or *prêches* in any suitable open space outside the city walls, but when in March 1560 the ministers decided to call a halt to such assemblies, Cotin accused them of cowardice and held his own meetings, attracting large crowds, including members of the Protestant Church, by his emotional and theatrical style. Accounts of his doctrines are unreliable and come

¹⁹ P. Pelhestre, 'Relation des troubles excités par les calvinistes dans la ville de Rouen, depuis l'an 1537 jusqu'en l'an 1582', *Revue rétrospective normande*, ed. A. Pottier (Rouen: N. Périaux, 1842), 8.

²⁰ See V.-L. Saulnier, 'L'évangélisme de Pierre du Val et le problème des libertins spirituels', *Bibliothèque d'Humanisme et Renaissance*, xiv (1952), 205-18; E. Picot, *Théâtre mystique de Pierre du Val et des libertins spirituels de Rouen au XVIe siècle* (Paris: D. Morgand, 1882).

from hostile Calvinist sources, but it is clear that he caught a prevalent militant and apocalyptic mood, saying that Antichrist would shortly be overthrown by force of arms and that God had chosen him, Cotin, to lead the army. The wicked of the earth and all evil princes and their magistrates would be destroyed, and it had been revealed to him that he would not die until a new world free from sin had been established. Unfortunately, this last revelation was reckoning without the elders of the Protestant Church, who put a price of 100 *écus* on his head. He was taken the next day, handed over to the *parlement*, and burnt, while two other men captured with him, his cousins according to one account, were hanged.²¹ The joint efforts of the Calvinists and the civil authorities thus put an end to Cotin, and the Protestant church seems to have prevented his having any posthumous influence by publishing in 1561 the first French translation of Luther's *On Christian Liberty*, with an introduction, possibly by the pastor, Augustin Marlorat, warning against libertinism as false freedom.²²

Rouen, with a population of probably more than 70,000 by the mid-sixteenth century, had a good claim to be the second city in the kingdom, as an administrative centre, major port, and, with textile-making spreading out through the *faubourgs*, centre of a manufacturing system based on a relatively advanced division of labour. It is, therefore, no surprise, in the light of recent work on the Reformation, to find a strong Protestant movement there.²³ What is striking about the radical elements outside magisterial Protestantism is the importance of preaching. Whereas in the 1540s the mainstream of the Reformation was still based around small clandestine groups, with occasional disturbances mounted by the more unruly elements, more radical manifestations were sparked off by charismatic preachers who struck a chord in some at least of the many listeners who would have turned up through curiosity. They were in a tradition of theatrical and emotional open-air preaching, used to great effect by the Franciscans in the fifteenth and early sixteenth centuries.²⁴ Its effects, however, were both temporary and localized. Obviously seen as seditious, by magistrates with Protestant sympathies as well as by Catholics, a

²¹ *Histoire ecclésiastique des églises réformées au royaume de France*, ed. G. Baum and E. Cunitz, 3 vols. (Paris: Fischbacher, 1883–89), i. 348–52; 'Discours abrégé et mémoires d'aulcunes choses advenues tant en Normandye que en France depuis le commencement de l'an 1559, et principalement en la ville de Rouen', *Deux chroniques de Rouen*, ed. A. Héron (Rouen: Lestringant, 1900), 189–90; J. Berthelin, 'Journal d'un bourgeois de Rouen, 1545–64', *Revue rétrospective normande*, 8–9; L. Regnier de la Planche, *Histoire de l'estat de la France sous le règne de François II*, ed. E. Mennechet. 2 vols. (Paris: Techener, 1836), i. 230–4.

²² H. Hauser, *Etudes sur la Réforme française* (Paris: Picard, 1909), 289–92.

²³ Cf. Greengrass, *French Reformation*, 54–61; D. Nicholls, 'Social Change and Early Protestantism in France: Normandy, 1520–62', *European Studies Review*, x (1980), 279–308; P. Benedict, *Rouen during the Wars of Religion* (Cambridge: University Press, 1981), chs. 1–3.

²⁴ I have attempted to explore the relationship between revivalist preaching and the Reformation in my 'Looking for the Origins of the French Reformation', *Late Medieval France*, ed. C.T. Allmand (Woodbridge: Boydell and Brewer, forthcoming).

prophetic movement in a city like Rouen, the seat of an archbishop and *parlement*, was easily controllable. In a crowded urban environment where everyone in a neighbourhood knew everybody else's business, it was not difficult to discover where a seditious preacher might be hiding and to take him.

Some of the earliest heretics found in France in the 1520s were 'holy men', hermits preaching heterodox ideas in the villages of the Ile-de-France and apparently arousing popular interest within a restricted area.²⁵ Later an eccentric figure like the itinerant preacher calling himself 'John the Baptist' could wander up the Garonne between Bordeaux and Toulouse for a while, but, despite some confusion about his ideas, they led him fairly swiftly to the stake.²⁶ And at about the same time another 'Baptist' was telling the nobility of Picardy that it was wrong to emigrate to Geneva and was attacking Calvin personally.²⁷ But such figures remained largely isolated. As the example of Cotin shows, however, schism within the new Protestant churches was an altogether more serious matter. When the faithful of a particular locality wrote to Calvin for advice about the proper constitution of a church, he would reply with detailed instructions about the establishment of a correct church order, and the Genevan Company of Pastors did their best to provide a properly-trained minister as quickly as possible.²⁸ But they had no control over what was happening in the localities, and the 'Genevan' minister had to establish his authority and be accepted by a congregation accustomed to self-organization and free discussion. Indeed, one feature of 'schismatics' was that, like the 'Baptist' of Picardy, they attacked Genevan 'tyranny'. As Calvin said of a certain De La Vau, a schismatic at Poitiers: 'He says that everybody here must kiss my shoes'.²⁹ This kind of thing was bound to be said, for the faithful in France, suffering from persecution and forced to worship in secret, would naturally be suspicious about the easy life led in Geneva. And those who, like De La Vau, had spent time in Switzerland had there become familiar with opposition to Calvinism led by such as Sébastien Castellion and Jérôme Bolsec. Such suspicions could unite with traditions of Bible-reading and discussion to produce doctrinal 'deviations' with sectarian overtones, especially when hopes were running high for the overthrow of the papist Antichrist and the triumph of the Word in one form or another.

The churches of the Loire valley and Poitou were particularly prone to schism, as were to a lesser extent those of the Ile-de-France. Calvin's injunctions to the faithful to stand firm but not to resist

²⁵ Nicholls, 'Nature of Popular Heresy', 268–9.

²⁶ R.A. Mentzer, *Heresy Proceedings in Languedoc, 1500–1560* (Transactions of the American Philosophical Society, 74, part 5, Philadelphia, 1984), 118.

²⁷ François de Bourgogne to Calvin, Jan. 1552: CO, xiv. 264–5.

²⁸ See R.M. Kingdon, *Geneva and the Coming of the Wars of Religion, 1555–1563* (Geneva: Droz, 1956), and, for examples of Calvin's letters, CO, xiv. 637–9; xv. 173–5.

²⁹ Calvin to church of Poitiers, 20 Feb. 1555: CO, xv. 442.

persecution could lead to disagreements and impatience anywhere, but the urban network of the Loire region, where an 'unofficial' preacher like the troublesome François Chasseboeuf could move from town to town with virtual impunity,³⁰ created the possibility of schism breeding sectarian features. Among De La Vau's crimes at Poitiers was his proposition that on the day of judgement all would have equal glory.³¹ Similarly, at Beaugency in 1559, schism was caused by a local man named Jean Bonneau, who preached against the idea that magistrates could punish heretics. At Tours in 1561 schismatics set up a short-lived 'academy', where women as well as men could debate any question they chose, while a manuscript circulating in the Protestant army at Orléans at the beginning of the first religious war was anti-predestinarian and pacifist, arguing that religion should never justify war or be imposed by arms.³² Such events were offshoots of a mood of expectant militancy which the Calvinist notables in the churches were trying to restrain and absorb, a task which they performed successfully in doctrinal matters but not entirely in questions of organization and social discipline. For the most part, schism was engendered by people kicking against this discipline.

Wherever Protestant churches were established, members of the urban elites swiftly took control, using the Calvinist consistories as their agencies for imposing moral and doctrinal discipline upon the faithful. Protestant notables tried to restrain the public psalm-singing and iconoclasm of activist artisans because they had no desire to threaten the established social order, but, rather, a desire to create a new moral community within the cities while proclaiming their loyalty to king and state. Disunity was most likely to arise from resistance to the consistory, but, with Calvinism itself a minority religion, the realistic alternatives for those excluded from the new moral community were to return half-heartedly to Catholicism or to lapse into indifference. For example, when the printers' journeymen of Lyon found that the consistory wanted to impose strict standards of moral behaviour on them, while offering no support for their economic grievances, the majority returned, probably with no great enthusiasm, to the Catholic Church. The journeymen were branded as 'Epicureans' and 'seekers after carnal liberty' by the Calvinists, not because of theological radicalism but because of their resistance to Calvinist rigour.³³ History had precluded the serious possibility of French Anabaptism, for, by the time Protestantism had developed beyond individualism, the Anabaptist movement elsewhere had

³⁰ Between 1556 and his arrest and execution in 1562 Chasseboeuf created problems in Angers, Blois, Orléans, Beaugency and Tours, and made an excursion to Dauphiné: *Histoire ecclésiastique*, i. 126–8, 835; ii. 680.

³¹ *CO*, xv. 440.

³² *Histoire ecclésiastique*, i. 191, 835–6; ii. 194–7.

³³ N.Z. Davis, 'Strikes and Salvation at Lyon', in her *Society and Culture in Early Modern France* (London: Duckworth, 1975), ch. 1.

passed its peak as an activist group. In a city like Lyon, spiritual religion seemed to be a pastime for 'eccentric editors and professional men', entertaining in its attacks on established forms, but not a serious option for people whose lives revolved around the workshop and their own forms of sociability.³⁴ Sectarianism had missed its chance of establishing roots in popular culture.

The hopes of the late 1550s and early 1560s were not fulfilled of course. French Protestantism after 1563 embarked on a tenacious struggle for survival and recognition as 'one denomination among others'. Dissension continued within the ranks, but it was about the relationships within and between congregations, not about theology. Even Jean Morély, who produced the most substantial challenge to the Calvinist church model and gained considerable support for his congregationalist ideas during the 1560s, contested no Calvinist dogmas and showed a persistent desire to gain the approval of Geneva and to submit to its supremacy.³⁵ Morély's God was the same as Calvin's God, an autocrat who demanded obedience and social discipline. The less remote God of the sectarians, manifesting Himself through his human instruments, could not have provided the external discipline essential to Huguenot survival. The failure of great expectations did not lead to millennial outbursts – these had already occurred – but to a Calvinist dominance which imposed, within a theoretically ecumenical enterprise, its own criteria for worthiness, leading, it was hoped, to the creation of a 'new man'.³⁶ Visible signs in modes of behaviour, dress, and attitude now marked the Huguenot apart, and religious vocabulary had to adapt to this new being, even if only as an object of hatred. The defeat of sectarian tendencies was a necessary part of the creation of the new man, but conditions had been favourable for the success of the Calvinist enterprise. The common interest of Catholic and Protestant notables in suppressing social disorder, the tardy arrival of popular heterodoxy, the lack of any exact coincidence between popular religious radicalism and the social demands of the lower orders, the continuation of moderate evangelicism, even within the higher clergy, and the dependence of religious forms upon neighbourhood and locality, all helped to confine embryonic sectarianism within narrow elite circles. And the very failure of French Protestantism to dominate society and the state made ideological unity a necessity, throwing the potential popular audience for sectarianism back into the arms of mother church or into indifference and *attentisme* as they ensured their survival through more than thirty years of religious and political conflict.

³⁴ *Ibid.*, 15, 274 n. 48.

³⁵ Jean Morély, *Traité de la discipline et police chrestienne* (Geneva: Slatkine Reprints, 1968); R.M. Kingdon, *Geneva and the Consolidation of the French Protestant Movement, 1564–1572* (Geneva: Droz, 1967), 43–137.

³⁶ J. Garrisson-Estèbe, *Protestants du Midi, 1559–1598* (Toulouse: Privat, 1980), part 3.