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## THE RITES OF VIOLENCE: RELIGIOUS RIOT IN SIXTEENTH-CENTURY FRANCE \*

These are the statutes and judgments, which ye shall observe to do in the land, which the Lord God of thy fathers giveth thee . . . Ye shall utterly destroy all the places wherein the nations which he shall possess served their gods, upon the high mountains, and upon the hills, and under every green tree:

And ye shall overthrow their altars, and break their pillars and burn their groves with fire; and ye shall hew down the graven images of their gods, and destroy the names of them out of that place [Deuteronomy xii. 1-3].

Thus a Calvinist pastor to his flock in 1562.<sup>1</sup>

If thy brother, the son of thy mother, or thy son, or thy daughter, or the wife of thy bosom, or thy friend, which is as thine own soul, entice thee secretly, saying Let us go serve other gods, which thou hast not known, thou, nor thy fathers . . . Thou shalt not consent unto him, nor hearken unto him . . . But thou shalt surely kill him; thine hand shall be first upon him to put him to death, and afterwards the hand of all the people . . .

If thou shalt hear say in one of thy cities, which the Lord thy God hath given thee to dwell there, saying, Certain men, the children of Belial are gone out from among you, and have withdrawn the inhabitants of their city, saying Let us go and serve other gods, which ye have not known . . . Thou shalt surely smite the inhabitants of that city with the edge of the sword, destroying it utterly and all that is therein [Deuteronomy xiii. 6, 8-9, 12-13, 15].

And [Jehu] lifted up his face to the window and said, Who is on my side? Who? And there looked out to him two or three eunuchs. And he said, Throw her down. So they threw [Jezebel] down: and some of her blood was sprinkled on the wall, and on the horses: and he trode her under foot . . . And they went to bury her: but they found no more of her than the skull and the feet and the palms of her hands . . . And [Jehu] said, This is the word of the Lord, which he spake by his servant Elijah . . . saying, In the portion of Jezreel shall dogs eat the flesh of Jezebel: And the carcase of Jezebel shall be as dung upon the face of the field [II Kings ix. 32-3, 35-7].

Thus in 1568 Parisian preachers held up to their Catholic parishioners the end of a wicked idolater.<sup>2</sup> Whatever the intentions of pastors

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<sup>1</sup> *Histoire ecclésiastique des Églises Réformées au Royaume de France* (hereafter *Hist. eccl.*), ed. G. Baum and E. Cunitz, 3 vols. (Paris, 1883-9), i, p. 537.

<sup>2</sup> Claude Haton, *Mémoires de Claude Haton contenant le récit des événements accomplis de 1553 à 1592, principalement dans la Champagne et la Brie*, ed. Félix Bourquelot (Collection de documents inédits sur l'histoire de France), 2 vols. paginated continuously (Paris, 1857), pp. 527-8.

and priests, such words were among the many spurs to religious riot in sixteenth-century France. By religious riot I mean, as a preliminary definition, any violent action, with words or weapons, undertaken against religious targets by people who are not acting *officially and formally* as agents of political and ecclesiastical authority. As food rioters bring their moral indignation to bear upon the state of the grain market, so religious rioters bring their zeal to bear upon the state of men's relations to the sacred. The violence of the religious riot is distinguished, at least in principle, from the action of political authorities, who can legally silence, humiliate, demolish, punish, torture and execute; and also from the action of soldiers, who at certain times and places can legally kill and destroy. In mid sixteenth-century France, all these sources of violence were busily producing, and it is sometimes hard to tell a militia officer from a murderer and a soldier from a statue-smasher. Nevertheless, there are occasions when we can separate out for examination a violent crowd set on religious goals.

The sixteenth century itself had its own generalizations about crowd violence. Once in a while it was seen as having a kind of system or sense. In Corpus Christi Day drama, the violence against Christ is represented as a series of formal competitive "games", which hide from His tormentors the full knowledge of what they do.<sup>3</sup> In Dürer's *Martyrdom of the Ten Thousand*, the Persian torturers of the Christians are spaced apart, doing their terrible business in an orderly, methodical way.<sup>4</sup> Most of the time, however, as in Breugel's flaming *Dulle Griet* and *The Triumph of Death*, the image of the crowd was one of chaos. Learned writers talk of grain rioters in Lyon as "the dregs of the populace, with no order, no rein, no leader . . . a beast of many heads . . . an insane rabble" and of the Paris mob as "an ignorant multitude, collected from all nations . . . governed by the appetite of those who stir them up [to] extreme rage, just looking for the chance to carry out any kind of cruelty".<sup>5</sup>

<sup>3</sup> V. A. Kolve, *The Play Called Corpus Christi* (Stanford, 1966), ch. 8. Also see L. Petit de Julleville, *Histoire du théâtre en France. Les mystères*, 2 vols. (Paris, 1880), ii, pp. 391, 408, 444-5. Breugel's *Procession to Calvary* has some of this same gamelike, "orderly" quality.

<sup>4</sup> Philipp Fehl, "Mass Murder, or Humanity in Death", *Theology Today*, xxviii (1971), pp. 67-8; E. Panofsky, *The Life and Art of Albrecht Dürer* (Princeton, 1955), pp. 121-2. For the range of sixteenth-century explanations of human violence, see J. R. Hale, "Sixteenth-Century Explanations of War and Violence", *Past and Present*, no. 51 (May 1971), pp. 3-26.

<sup>5</sup> Guillaume Paradin, *Memoires de l'Histoire de Lyon* (Lyon, 1573), p. 238; *Hist. eccl.*, i, pp. 192-3. See also Christopher Hill, "The Many-Headed Monster in Late Tudor and Early Stuart Political Thinking", in C. H. Carter (ed.), *From the Renaissance to the Counter-Reformation. Essays in honour of Garrett Mattingly* (London, 1966), pp. 296-324.

Nowadays this hydra monster has taken on a more orderly shape, as a result of the work of George Rudé, Eric Hobsbawm, E. P. Thompson, Charles Tilly, Emmanuel Le Roy Ladurie and others.<sup>6</sup> We may see these crowds as prompted by political and moral traditions which legitimize and even prescribe their violence. We may see urban rioters not as miserable, uprooted, unstable masses, but as men and women who often have some stake in their community; who may be craftsmen or better; and who, even when poor and unskilled, may appear respectable to their everyday neighbours. Finally, we may see their violence, however cruel, not as random and limitless, but as aimed at defined targets and selected from a repertory of traditional punishments and forms of destruction.

This picture of pre-industrial crowd violence has been drawn primarily from the study of grain and bread riots, tax riots, craft violence, and certain kinds of peasant revolts. The broad spectrum of religious riot, however, has not received analytical attention, except in the case of the anti-Semitic pogrom and the millenarian movement,<sup>7</sup> both of which have evident contemporary significance and non-religious features. To present-day church historians, especially in an age of ecumenicalism, the popular violence of their Calvinist and Catholic ancestors may have been an embarrassment (as is Belfast).

<sup>6</sup> The literature on crowds and violence is vast. I list here only those works which have especially assisted the preparation of this paper: George Rudé, *The Crowd in History. A Study of Popular Disturbances in France and England, 1730-1848* (New York, 1964); E. J. Hobsbawm, *Primitive Rebels, Studies in Archaic Forms of Social Movement in the 19th and 20th Centuries* (Manchester, 1959); E. P. Thompson, "The Moral Economy of the English Crowd in the Eighteenth Century", *Past and Present*, no. 50 (Feb. 1971), pp. 76-136; Charles Tilly, "Collective Violence in Nineteenth-Century French Cities" (Public Lecture, Reed College, Feb. 1968); "The Chaos of the Living City", forthcoming in Charles Tilly (ed.), *The Building of an Urban World*; Charles Tilly and James Rule, *Measuring Political Upheaval* (Princeton, 1965) — I am also grateful to Charles Tilly for his comments on this paper; Emmanuel Le Roy Ladurie, *Le paysans de Languedoc*, 2 vols. (Paris, 1966), i, pp. 391-414, 495-508, 607-29; Roland Mousnier, *Fureurs paysannes* (Paris, 1967); M. Mollat and Philippe Wolff, *Ongles bleus, Jacques et Ciompi, Les révolutions populaires en Europe aux XIVe et XVe siècles* (Paris, 1970); J. R. Hale, "Violence in the Late Middle Ages: A Background", in Lauro Martines (ed.), *Violence and Civil Disorder in Italian Cities, 1200-1500* (Berkeley, 1972), pp. 19-37; Neil J. Smelser, *Theory of Collective Behavior* (New York: Free Press Paperback, 1971). There are also some helpful classifications of crowds in Elias Canetti, *Crowds and Power*, tr. Carol Stewart (German edn. 1960; N.Y., 1966), pp. 48-73.

<sup>7</sup> As in, for instance, Philippe Wolff, "The 1391 Pogrom in Spain. Social Crisis or Not?", *Past and Present*, no. 50 (Feb. 1971), pp. 4-18; Norman Cohn, *The Pursuit of the Millennium* (2nd edn., N.Y., 1961); Sylvia L. Thrupp (ed.), *Millennial Dreams in Action. Studies in Revolutionary Religious Movements* (New York, 1970).

To social historians it is the seeming “irrationality” of most sixteenth-century religious riot that has been puzzling. To bear the sword in the name of a millennial dream might make some sense, but why get so excited about the Eucharist or saints’ relics? It is hard to decipher the social meaning of such an event.

Not surprisingly, the pioneering remarks of C. Verlinden and his colleagues on popular iconoclasm, and of Janine Estèbe on popular Catholic violence, insist upon a strong linkage between religious conflict and economic issues. It is argued that a rise in grain prices triggers these disturbances, and that the Saint Bartholomew’s massacres are also a “class-crime”, “rich Huguenots being attacked and pillaged by preference”. Beyond this, Estèbe accounts for the crowd action in the massacres as an expression of the primitive soul of the people, pushed by events into pathological hatred. Similarly, in Philippe Wolff’s study of anti-Semitic pogroms in Valencia and Barcelona in 1391 and in George Rudé’s analysis of anti-Catholic riots in eighteenth-century London, there is a tendency to identify the “real” elements in the disturbance as the social ones, social being defined only in terms of a conflict of poor against rich, artisans against wealthy burghers or craftsmen, and wage-earners against manufacturers and merchants.<sup>8</sup> There is no doubt that some religious violence has this character — Wolff’s evidence for Barcelona is very good indeed — but is this the only kind of social meaning inherent in a religious riot? What does one make of popular religious violence where class conflict of this type is not present?

I will try to answer these questions in regard to sixteenth-century France in the course of this paper. My first purpose is to describe the shape and structure of the religious riot in French cities and towns, especially in the 1560s and early 1570s. We will look at the goals, legitimation and occasions for riots; at the kinds of action undertaken by the crowds and the targets for their violence; and briefly at the participants in the riots and their organization. We will consider differences between Protestant and Catholic styles of crowd behaviour, but will also indicate the many ways in which they are

<sup>8</sup> C. Verlinden, J. Craeybeckx, E. Scholliers, “Mouvements des prix et des salaires en Belgique au XVI<sup>e</sup> siècle”, *Annales. E.S.C.*, x (1955), pp. 185-7. Janine Estèbe, *Tocsin pour un massacre. La saison des Saint-Barthélemy* (Paris, 1968), pp. 97-8, 196, 135-6, 189-98. Though I will take issue at several points in this paper with Estèbe’s interpretation of the massacres, her valuable book is surely the most imaginative study we have had of the social psychology of that event. Wolff, “Pogrom”, p. 16; Rudé, *Crowd in History*, pp. 62, 138: M. Wolff characterizes the pogrom at Valencia, where “violence directed against the Jews predominates, committed moreover by persons from the most diverse social backgrounds”, as “pseudo-religious” (p. 16).

alike. Our sources will be contemporary Catholic and Protestant accounts of religious disturbance, from which we will do our best to sort out utter fabrication from likely fact.<sup>9</sup> I hope this inquiry will put the massacres of Saint Bartholomew's day in a new perspective, and also deepen our understanding of the religious riot as a type of collective disturbance.

## I

What then can we learn of the goals of popular religious violence? What were the crowds intending to do and why did they think they must do it? Their behaviour suggests, first of all, a goal akin to preaching: the defence of true doctrine and the refutation of false doctrine through dramatic challenges and tests. "You blaspheme", shouts a woman to a Catholic preacher in Montpellier in 1558 and, having broken the decorum of the service, leads part of the congregation out of the church. "You lie", shouts a sheathmaker in the midst of the Franciscan's Easter sermon in Lyon, and his words are underscored by the gunshots of Huguenots waiting in the square.<sup>10</sup>

<sup>9</sup> Where possible, I have tried to use both Catholic and Protestant accounts of the same episode. For instance, for events in Toulouse in 1562, I have used among others the account of the Catholic G. Bosquet (*Histoire de M. G. Bosquet, sur les troubles Advenus en la ville de Tolose l'an 1562* [Toulouse, 1595]) and that of the Reformed *Histoire ecclésiastique*. I have taken especially seriously descriptions of Catholic violence coming from Catholic writers (as in the *Mémoires* of the priest Claude Haton) and descriptions of Protestant violence coming from the *Histoire ecclésiastique*. These sources are not necessarily telling the whole truth about their party's violence, but at least we can assume that what they positively describe did occur. I have also taken especially seriously the omission of certain kinds of violence in accusations made by one party about the opposing party (for instance, that Catholic accounts say very little about the desecration of corpses by Protestant crowds), since these writers show so little willingness to put their opponents in a favourable light. If certain kinds of violence are regularly *not* attributed to the enemy, then I think we can assume that they did not in fact occur very often.

In regard to accepting evidence about acts of desecration of corpses, torture and acts of filth, where there is no way of getting "impartial" eye-witness accounts, I have used my judgement, based on a general understanding of the range of possibilities in sixteenth-century behaviour. My guides here have been French legal practice and penalty, Rabelais, descriptions by Pierre de L'Estoile of behaviour in Paris in the late sixteenth century, and the comments of Montaigne on tortures in his time ("On Cruelty", "Of Cannibals").

<sup>10</sup> *Hist. eccl.*, i, p. 248; Jean Guéraud, *La chronique lyonnaise de Jean Guéraud*, ed. Jean Tricou (Lyon, 1929), p. 151. Other examples: Geneva, Advent 1533, a young man interrupts a sermon of the Catholic theologian Guy Furbity, "Messieurs, listen . . . I will put myself in the fire to maintain that all he has said are lies and words of the Antichrist"; "Into the fire", shout some of the congregation: Jeanne de Jussie, *Le levain du Calvinisme ou commencement de l'hérésie de Genève* (Geneva, 1865), p. 74. Rouen: a barber's journeyman denies at the end of a Franciscan's sermon that there are seven sacraments, insisting that there are only two: *Hist. eccl.*, i, p. 355. Rouen, March 1562 in *Hist. eccl.*, iii, p. 713, n. 1. Toulouse, 4 May 1562 in Bosquet, *Histoire*, p. 38. Provins, 1560, Protestants disturb a Catholic sermon: Haton, *Mémoires*, pp. 136-7.

“Look”, cries a weaver in Tournai, as he seizes the elevated host from the priest, “deceived people, do you believe this is the King, Jesus Christ, the true God and Saviour? Look!” And he crumbles the wafer and escapes. “Look”, says a crowd of image-breakers to the people of Albiac in 1561, showing them the relics they have seized from the Carmelite monastery, “look, they are only animal bones”.<sup>11</sup> And the slogan of the Reformed crowds as they rush through the streets of Paris, of Toulouse, of La Rochelle, of Angoulême is “The Gospel! The Gospel! Long live the Gospel!”<sup>12</sup>

Catholic crowds answer this kind of claim to truth in Angers by taking a French Bible, well-bound and gilded, seized in the home of a rich merchant, and parading it through the streets on the end of a halberd. “There’s the truth hung. There’s the truth of the Huguenots, the truth of all the devils”. Then, throwing it into the river, “There’s the truth of all the devils drowned”. And if the Huguenot doctrine was true, why didn’t the Lord come and save them from their killers? So a crowd of Orléans Catholics taunted its victims in 1572: “Where is your God? Where are your prayers and Psalms? Let him save you if he can”. Even the dead were made to speak in Normandy and Provence, where leaves of the Protestant Bible were stuffed into the mouths and wounds of corpses. “They preached the truth of their God. Let them call him to their aid”.<sup>13</sup>

The same refutation was, of course, open to Protestants. A Protestant crowd corners a baker guarding the holy-wafer box in Saint Médard’s Church in Paris in 1561. “Messieurs”, he pleads, “do not touch it for the honour of Him who dwells here”. “Does your God of paste protect you now from the pains of death?” was the Protestant answer before they killed him.<sup>14</sup> True doctrine can be defended in sermon or speech, backed up by the magistrate’s sword against the heretic. Here it is defended by dramatic demonstration, backed up by the violence of the crowd.

<sup>11</sup> Jean Crespin, *Histoire des Martyrs persecutez et mis à mort pour la Verité de l’Evangile, depuis le temps des Apostres jusques à present (1619)*, ed. D. Benoît, 3 vols. (Toulouse, 1885-9), ii, pp. 307-8. *Ibid.*, iii, p. 515 for a similar episode in Flanders. *Hist. eccl.*, i, p. 931.

<sup>12</sup> Haton, *Mémoires*, p. 182. “Relations de l’émeute arrivée à Toulouse en 1562”, in L. Cimber and F. Danjou (eds.), *Archives curieuses de l’histoire de France* (hereafter *Arch. cur.*) (Paris and Beauvais, 1834-40), iv, p. 347. *Hist. eccl.*, iii, p. 989. [Richard Verstegen], *Théâtre des cruautés des hérétiques au seizième siècle, contenant les cruautés des Schismatiques d’Angleterre . . . les cruautés des Huguenots en France, et les barbaries cruelles des Calvinistes Gueux aux Pays-Bas. Reproduction du texte . . . de 1588* (Lille, 1883), p. 38.

<sup>13</sup> *Hist. eccl.*, ii, pp. 650-1; “Massacres de ceux de la Religion à Orléans”, *Arch. cur.*, vii, p. 295. *Hist. eccl.*, ii, p. 839 (Valognes), iii, p. 315 (Orange).

<sup>14</sup> From the memoirs of Canon Bruslart of Paris, quoted in *Arch. cur.*, iv, p. 57, n.1.

A more frequent goal of these riots, however, is that of ridding the community of dreaded pollution. The word "pollution" is often on the lips of the violent, and the concept serves well to sum up the dangers which rioters saw in the dirty and diabolic enemy. A priest brings ornaments and objects for singing the Mass into a Bordeaux jail. The Protestant prisoner smashes them all. "Do you want to blaspheme the Lord's name everywhere? Isn't it enough that the temples are defiled? Must you also profane prisons so nothing is unpolluted?"<sup>15</sup> "The Calvinists have polluted their hands with every kind of sacrilege men can think of", writes a Doctor of Theology in 1562. Not long after at the Sainte Chapelle, a man seizes the elevated host with his "polluted hands" and crushes it under foot. The worshippers beat him up and deliver him to the agents of Parlement.<sup>16</sup> The extent to which Protestants could be viewed as vessels of pollution is suggested by a popular belief about the origin of the nickname "Huguenots". In the city of Tours, *le roi Huguet* ("King Huguet") was the generic name for ghosts who, instead of spending their time in Purgatory, came back to rattle doors and haunt and harm people at night. Protestants went out at nights to their lascivious conventicles, and so the priests and the people began to call them Huguenots in Tours and then elsewhere. Protestants were, thus, as sinister as the spirits of the dead, whom one hoped to settle in their tombs on All Souls' Day.<sup>17</sup>

One does not have to listen very long to sixteenth-century voices to hear the evidence for the uncleanness and profanation of either side. As for the Protestants, Catholics knew that, in the style of earlier heretics, they snuffed out the candles and had sexual intercourse after the voluptuous Psalmsinging of their nocturnal conventicles. When their services became public, it was no better, for their Holy Supper was perceived (in the words of a merchant-draper of Lyon) as disordered and drunken, "a bacchanalia".<sup>18</sup>

<sup>15</sup> Crespin, *Martyrs*, ii, p. 470.

<sup>16</sup> Claude de Saintes, *Discours sur le saccagement des Eglises Catholiques, par les Herétiques anciens et nouveaux Calvinistes en l'an 1562* (1563) in *Arch. cur.*, iv, p. 368; Haton, *Mémoires*, p. 375.

<sup>17</sup> *Hist. eccl.*, i, p. 308. On popular attitudes toward ghosts and the souls of the dead, see Arnold Van Gennep, *Manuel de Folklore Français*, 4 vols. (Paris, 1943-58), ii, pp. 791-803; André Varagnac, *Civilisation traditionnelle et genres de vie* (Paris, 1948), ch. 7; Roger Vaultier, *Le Folklore pendant la guerre de Cent Ans d'après les Lettres de Rémission du Trésor des Chartes* (Paris, 1965), p. 80; Keith Thomas, *Religion and the Decline of Magic* (London, 1971), pp. 587-606.

<sup>18</sup> Haton, *Mémoires*, pp. 49-50, and p. 511 on "incest" among Huguenots, spurred on by reading the Bible in French. Crespin, *Martyrs*, ii, p. 546. Gabriel de Saconay, *Genealogie et la Fin des Huguenaux, et descouverte du Calvinisme* (Lyon, 1573), fo. 68v, who cites a work by Antoine Mochi, alias  
(cont. on p. 58)

But it was not just the fleshly licence with which they lived which was unclean, but the things they said in their “pestilential” books and the things they did in hatred of the Mass, the sacraments and whole Catholic religion. As the representative of the clergy said at the Estates of Orléans, the heretics intended to leave “no place in the Kingdom which was dedicated, holy and sacred to the Lord, but would only profane churches, demolish altars and break images”.<sup>19</sup>

The Protestants’ sense of Catholic pollution also stemmed to some extent from their sexual uncleanness, here specifically of the clergy. Protestant polemic never tired of pointing to the lewdness of the clergy with their “concubines”. It was rumoured that the Church of Lyon had an organization of hundreds of women, sort of temple prostitutes, at the disposition of priests and canons; and an observer pointed out with disgust how, after the First Religious War, the Mass and the brothel re-entered Rouen together. One minister even claimed that the clergy were for the most part Sodomites.<sup>20</sup> But more serious than the sexual abominations of the clergy was the defilement of the sacred by Catholic ritual life, from the diabolic magic of the Mass to the idolatrous worship of images. The Mass is “vile filth”; “no people pollute the House of the Lord in every way more than the clergy”. Protestant converts talked of their own past

(note 18 cont.)

De Mochares, *Apologie contre la Cene Calvinique*, printed in Paris in 1558. Guéraud, *Chronique*, p. 147. Also, note the reaction of the Catholics Florimond de Raemond and Claude de Rubys to male and female voices joining together in the Psalms: Florimond de Raemond, *L’histoire de la naissance, progresz et decadence de l’hérésie de ce siècle* (Rouen, 1623), p. 1,010; Claude de Rubys, *Histoire veritable de la ville de Lyon* (Lyon, 1604), pp. 390-1 (“Leurs chansons Androgynes”, etc.).

<sup>19</sup> Gentian Hervet, *Discours sur ce que les pilleurs, voleurs et brusleurs d’Eglises disent qu’ils n’en veulent qu’auz Prestres. Au Peuple de Rheims, et des environs* (Paris, 1563): “The execrable words of diabolic ministers”, “pestilential little books full of poison”; Haton, *Mémoires*, p. 150; harangue of Canon Jean Quintin at Orléans, Dec. 1560, in *Hist. eccl.*, i, p. 476. Another Catholic quotation expressing these attitudes and fears is: “Nothing remains in the churches. The impious takes away everything. He destroys, he overturns, he pollutes all holy places” — from the MS. “De tristibus Francorum” illustrated with pictures of the iconoclastic Protestants of Lyon with animal heads: Léopold Niepce, *Monuments d’art de la Primatiale de Lyon, détruits ou aliénés pendant l’occupation protestante en 1562* (Lyon, 1881), pp. 16-17.

<sup>20</sup> *Le Cabinet du Roi de France*, described in Jean-Jacques Servais and Jean-Pierre Laurend, *Histoire et dossier de la prostitution* (Paris, 1965), p. 170. Crespin, *Martyrs*, iii, p. 324, i, pp. 385-90. [Pierre Viret], *Le Manuel ou Instruction des Curez et Vicaires de l’Eglise Romaine* (Lyon, 1564), p. 137; for the identification of the author of this work see R. Linder, *The Political Ideas of Pierre Viret* (Travaux d’humanisme et renaissance, lxiv, Geneva, 1964), p. 189.

lives as a time of befoulment and dreaded present “contamination” from Catholic churches and rites.<sup>21</sup>

Pollution was a dangerous thing to suffer in a community, from either a Protestant or a Catholic point of view, for it would surely provoke the wrath of God. Terrible wind storms and floods were sometimes taken as signs of His impatience on this count.<sup>22</sup> Catholics, moreover, had also to worry about offending Mary and the saints; and though the anxious, expiatory processions organized in the wake of Protestant sacrilege might temporarily appease them, the heretics were sure to strike again.<sup>23</sup> It is not surprising, then, that so many of the acts of violence performed by Catholic and Protestant crowds have (as we shall see more fully later on) the character either of rites of purification or of a paradoxical desecration, intended to cut down on uncleanness by placing profane things, like chrism, back in the profane world where they belonged.

This concern of Catholic and Protestant crowds to destroy polluting elements is reminiscent of the insistence of revolutionary millenarian movements that the wicked be exterminated that the godly may rule. The resemblance is real, but is limited. Our Catholic and Protestant rioters have a conviction not so much of their immanent godliness as of the rightness of their judgement, envisage not so much a society of saints as a holier society of sinners.

<sup>21</sup> *Hist. eccl.*, i, p. 486; “Récit de l’oeuvre du Seigneur en la ville de Lyon pour action de grâce” and “Epigramme du Dieu des papistes” in Anatole de Montaiglon (ed.), *Recueil de poésies françaises des XV<sup>e</sup> et XVI<sup>e</sup> siècles* (Paris, 1867), vii, pp. 36-9, 42-5. On the loathsome and magical aspects of the Mass, Antoine de Marcourt, *Declaration de la messe* (Neuchâtel, 1534). *Les cauteles, canon et ceremonies de la messe* (Lyon, 1564) (see n. 82 below). Thomas, *Religion*, pp. 33-5. Jean Calvin, *Institution de la religion chrétienne*, Book IV, para. 18, in *Ioannis Calvini Opera quae supersunt omnia*, ed. G. Baum, E. Cunitz, E. Reuss, 57 vols. (Brunswick, 1863-96), iv, col. 1,077 (*ces villaines ordures*).

Calvin’s comments on the “mire” of his earlier life in the Preface to his Commentaries on the Psalms, *Commentaire sur le livre des Pseaumes* in *Opera omnia*, xxxi, col. 22. On the danger of “pollution” and “contamination” from Catholic religious life, Crespin, *Martyrs*, i, p. 563 and Haton, *Mémoires*, pp. 407-8.

<sup>22</sup> Haton, *Mémoires*, pp. 427-8; [Jean Ricaud], *Discours du massacre de ceux de la Religion Reformée, fait à Lyon par les catholiques romains, le vingthuitieme de mois de août et jours ensuivant de l’an 1572 (1574)* (Lyon, 1847), pp. 110-11; *De l’effroyable et merueilleux desbord de la riviere du Rhosne en 1570* (first published Lyon, 1576; Lyon, 1848 edn.), p. 6.

<sup>23</sup> There were expiatory processions in Paris in the wake of “execrable crimes” against religious statues in 1528, 1547, 1550, 1551, 1554 and 1562, described in *Le Journal d’un bourgeois de Paris sous le règne de François Ier (1515-1536)*, ed. V. L. Bourrilly (Paris, 1910), pp. 290-4; M. Félibien and G. A. Lobineau, *Histoire de la ville de Paris* (Paris, 1725), iv, pp. 676-9, 728, 748, 755, 765, 804-5; *Arch. cur.*, iv, pp. 99-102. Note also the expiatory procession in Lyon after an iconoclastic outrage in 1553 in Guéraud, *Chronique*, pp. 65-6.

For Catholic zealots, the extermination of the heretical “vermin” promised the restoration of unity to the body social and the guarantee of its traditional boundaries:

And let us all say in unison:  
 Long live the Catholic religion  
 Long live the King and good parishioners,  
 Long live faithful Parisians,  
 And may it always come to pass  
 That every person goes to Mass,  
 One God, one Faith, one King.<sup>24</sup>

For Protestant zealots, the purging of the priestly “vermin” promised the creation of a new kind of unity within the body social, all the tighter because false gods and monkish sects would no longer divide it. Relations within the social order would be purer, too, for lewdness and love of gain would be limited. As was said of Lyon after its “deliverance” in 1562:

Lyon has changed indeed . . .  
 The profit of Mercury, the dance of Venus  
 And presumption, too, each man has left aside.

And again:

When this town so vain  
 Was filled  
 With idolatry and dealings  
 Of usury and lewdness,  
 It had clerics and merchants aplenty.

But once it was purged  
 And changed  
 By the Word of God,  
 That brood of vipers  
 Could hope no more  
 To live in so holy a place.<sup>25</sup>

<sup>24</sup> “Et dirons tous d’une bonne unyon: /Vive la catholicque religion/ Vive le Roy et les bons parroysiens,/ Vive fidelles Parisiens,/ Et jusques à tant n’ayons cesse/ Que chacun aille à la messe/ Un Dieu, une Foy, un Roy”: “Déluge des Huguenotz faict à Paris” in *Arch. cur.*, vii, p. 259. On Protestants as “vermin”, Guéraud, *Chronique*, p. 141; Saconay, *Genealogie*, p. 64a; Claude de Rubys, *Histoire veritable*, p. 404.

I have tried in this paragraph to generalize Estèbe’s important insight in regard to the popular aspect of the Saint Bartholomew’s Day massacres: that the Protestants appeared as “profaners” (pp. 194-5). There seems to me very little evidence, however, that the Catholic killers wished to exterminate “a foreign race” (p. 197). This exaggerates and misreads the evidence in regard to the killing of pregnant women and the castration of males (see below, pp. 78, 82-3 and n. 87). Heretics were hated for polluting and disorderly actions, not as a “race”; and the crowds sometimes forced them back to the Mass rather than killing them.

<sup>25</sup> “Lyon est bien change . . . /De Mercure le gain, & de Venus la dance/ Tout homme a delaisé, & toute outrecuidance”: *Eglogue de deux Bergers, Demonstrant comme la ville de Lyon a esté reduite à la Religion vrayement Chrestienne, par la pure predication de l’Evangile* (Lyon, 1564), A 4<sup>r</sup>. “Quand ceste ville tant vaine/ Estoit pleine/ D’idolatrie et procès/ D’usure et de paillar-  
 (cont. on p. 61)

Crowds might defend truth, and crowds might purify, but there was also a third aspect to the religious riot — a political one. E. P. Thompson has shown how in the eighteenth-century English food-riot, the crowd's behaviour was legitimated by a widely held belief that it was acting in place of the government. If the justices of the peace failed to do their legal duty in guaranteeing the food supply, then the crowd would carry out the provisions of the Assize for them.<sup>26</sup> I have found the same thing to be true, at least as far as the *menu peuple* ("the little people") are concerned, in the great grain-riot, or *Grande Rebeine*, of Lyon in 1529. Under the slogan, "The commune is rising against the hoarders of grain", the crowd met on the grounds where municipal assemblies were ordinarily held and then went about opening the municipal granary and seizing grain from wealthy people with ample supplies, actions which the city council had undertaken in the past, but had failed to do promptly during the current crisis. In the grain-riot of Provins in 1573, the artisans seized grain that had been sold at a high price to non-residents of the city because the civic authorities had failed to provision the town at an honest price.<sup>27</sup>

Now we can deduce some of the same assumptions from the actions of the religious crowds of the mid-sixteenth century. When the magistrate had not used his sword to defend the faith and the true church and to punish the idolators, then the crowd would do it for him. Thus, many religious disturbances begin with the ringing of the tocsin, as in a time of civic assembly or emergency. Some riots end with the marching of the religious "wrongdoers" on the other side to jail. In 1561, for instance, Parisian Calvinists,

(note 25 cont.)

dise/ Clercs et marchans eut assés./ Mais si tost qu'en fut purgee/ Et changee/  
Par la Parolle de Dieu:/ Cette engence de vipere/ Plus n'espere/ D'habiter en si  
sainct lieu": Antoine Du Plain, "De l'assistance que Dieu a Faite à son Eglise de  
Lyon" in H. L. Bordier (ed.), *Le chansonnier huguenot au XVIe siècle* (Paris, 1870), p. 221. On Catholic clergy as "vermin", see *Discours de la vermine et prestraille de Lyon, dechassé par le bras fort du Seigneur, avec la retraicte des moines . . .* Par E.P.C. (1562) in Montaignon, *Recueil*, viii, pp. 24-45.

For the theory in this paragraph, I have found helpful Mary Douglas's remarks on the relation between pollution fears and concern for social boundaries (*Purity and Danger, An Analysis of Concepts of Pollution and Taboo* [London, 1966], ch. 7) and the definitions by Neil J. Smelser of "value-oriented movements" (*Theory of Collective Behavior*, pp. 120-9 and ch. x).

<sup>26</sup> Thompson, "Moral Economy", pp. 91-115.

<sup>27</sup> The essential documents on the *Rebeine* are reprinted in M. C. and G. Guigue, *Bibliothèque historique du lyonnais* (Lyon, 1886); and on the Provins riot in Haton, *Mémoires*, pp. 714-25. For the relation of the food-riot to governmental action in France in the late seventeenth and eighteenth centuries, see Louise Tilly, "The Food Riot as a Form of Political Conflict in France", *Jl. of Interdisciplinary History*, ii (1971), pp. 23-57.

fearing that the priests and worshippers in Saint Médard's Church were organizing an assault on their services in the Patriarche garden next door, first rioted in Saint Médard and then seized some fifteen Catholics as "mutinous" and led them off, "bound like galley-slaves", to the Châtelet prison.<sup>28</sup>

If the Catholic killing of Huguenots has in some ways the form of a rite of purification, it also sometimes has the form of imitating the magistrate. The mass executions of Protestants at Merindol and Cabrières in Provence and at Meaux in the 1540s, duly ordered by the Parlements of Aix and of Paris as punishment for heresy and high treason, anticipate crowd massacres of later decades. The Protestants themselves sensed this: the devil, unable to extinguish the light of the Gospel through the sentences of judges, now tried to obscure it through furious war and a murderous populace. Whereas before they were made martyrs by one executioner, now it is at the hands of "infinite numbers of them, and the swords of private persons have become the litigants, witnesses, judges, decrees and executors of the strangest cruelties".<sup>29</sup>

Similarly, *official* acts of torture and *official* acts of desecration of the corpses of certain criminals anticipate some of the acts performed by riotous crowds. The public execution was, of course, a dramatic and well-attended event in the sixteenth century, and the wood-cut and engraving documented the scene far and wide. There the crowd might see the offending tongue of the blasphemer pierced or slit, the offending hands of the desecrator cut off. There the crowd could watch the traitor decapitated and disemboweled, his corpse quartered and the parts borne off for public display in different sections of the town. The body of an especially heinous criminal was dragged through the streets, attached to a horse's tail. The image of exemplary royal punishment lived on for weeks, even years, as the corpses of murderers were exposed on gallows or wheels and the heads of rebels on posts.<sup>30</sup> We are not surprised to learn, then,

<sup>28</sup> *Histoire véritable de la mutinerie, tumulte et sédition, faite par les Prestres Saint Medard, contre les Fideles, le Samedi XXVII iour de December 1562* [sic for 1561] in *Arch. cur.*, iv, p. 55; memoirs of Canon Bruslart, *Arch. cur.*, iv, p. 57, n. 1; Haton, *Mémoires*, p. 181. On Toulouse Catholic crowds leading Protestants to prison, see *Hist. eccl.*, iii, pp. 17-18.

<sup>29</sup> Crespin, *Martyrs*, i, pp. 381-418, 494-500, iii, p. 639.

<sup>30</sup> Samuel Y. Edgerton, Jr., "Maniera and the Mania: Decorum and Decapitation in the Sixteenth Century", in F. W. Robinson and S. G. Nichols, Jr. (eds.), *The Meaning of Mannerism* (Hanover, N.H., 1972), pp. 67-103; *Journal d'un bourgeois*, pp. 229, 373, 384-5; Claude Bellière, *Souvenirs de voyages en Italie et en Orient. Notes historiques*, ed. C. Perrat (Geneva, 1956), p. 26, n. 27; Haton, *Mémoires*, p. 375; Guéraud, *Chronique*, pp. 28-9; Pierre de

(cont. on p. 63)

that the body of Admiral Coligny had already been thrown out of the window by the king's men and stoned by the Duc de Guise hours before the popular attacks on it began in 1572. Furthermore, crowds often took their victims to places of official execution, as in Paris in 1562, when the Protestant printer, Roc Le Frere, was dragged for burning to the Marché aux Pourceaux, and in Toulouse the same year, when a merchant, slain in front of a church, was dragged for burning to the town hall. "The King salutes you", said a Catholic crowd in Orléans to a Protestant trader, then put a cord around his neck as official agents might do, and led him off to be killed.<sup>31</sup>

Riots also occurred in connection with judicial cases, either to hurry the judgement along, or when verdicts in religious cases were considered too severe or too lenient by "the voice of the people".<sup>32</sup> Thus in 1569 in Montpellier, a Catholic crowd forced the judge to condemn an important Huguenot prisoner to death in a hasty "trial", then seized him and hanged him in front of his house. In 1551 a masked Protestant group kidnapped and released a goldsmith's journeyman, who had been condemned in Lyon for heresy and was being removed to Paris. And in 1561 in Marsillargues, when prisoners for heresy were released by royal decree, a Catholic crowd "rearrested" them, and executed and burned them in the streets.<sup>33</sup> The most fascinating example of the assumption of the magistrate's

(note 30 cont.)

L'Estoile, *Mémoires-journaux*, ed. Brunet et al., 12 vols. (Paris, 1888-96), ii, pp. 323-4; F. A. Isambert et al. (eds.), *Recueil général des anciennes lois françaises* (Paris, 1822), xii, nos. 115, 210, xiii, nos. 18, 90; Edmé de la Poix de Freminville, *Dictionnaire ou traité de la police générale des villes, bourgs, paroisses et seigneuries de la campagne* (Paris, 1758), pp. 56, 171; Le Roy Ladurie, *Paysans*, p. 506; Roland Mousnier, *L'assassinat d'Henri IV* (Paris, 1964), pp. 32-4; A. Allard, *Histoire de la justice criminelle au seizième siècle* (Ghent, 1868), pp. 333-4.

<sup>31</sup> *Hist. eccl.*, ii, p. 175. For the Marché aux Pourceaux as a place of execution for heretics, see the *Journal d'un bourgeois*, pp. 384-5. Bosquet, *Histoire*, p. 38.

<sup>32</sup> L'Estoile, *Mémoires-journaux*, ii, p. 85 (describing here the freeing by a Parisian crowd of a man condemned to death for impregnating a young woman).

<sup>33</sup> Jean Philippi, *Mémoires in Nouvelle Collection des Mémoires pour servir à l'histoire de France*, ed. Michaud and Poujoulat (Paris, 1838), viii, p. 634. Crespin, *Martyrs*, ii, p. 37; *Hist. eccl.*, i, p. 983. In Rouen, a Catholic crowd of 1563 pressured the Parlement to condemn Protestants to death; a Catholic crowd of 1571, having had some of its members arrested for killing Protestants, broke into the prison and freed them: *Hist. eccl.*, ii, p. 792, n. 1; Crespin, *Martyrs*, iii, pp. 662-3. For two examples of Catholic crowds seizing from the gallows female heretics who had been condemned merely to be hanged, and burning them instead, see *Hist. eccl.*, iii, pp. 43-4 and L'Estoile, *Mémoires-journaux*, iii, p. 166.

rôle by a crowd, however, is the mock trial by the boys of Provins in Champagne in October 1572. A Huguenot had been hanged for thefts and killings committed during the religious troubles. Groups of boys put ropes around his neck and his feet, but a tug-of-war could not resolve which way the corpse was to be dragged. The boys then elected lawyers and judges from among their midst for a trial. Before the eyes of a hundred spectators, they argued the penalty, appealing from the decision of the real judge that the Huguenot be only hanged and not burned alive. After the boys' decision, the corpse was dragged through the streets by the feet and burned.<sup>34</sup>

The seizure of religious buildings and the destruction of images by Calvinist crowds were also accomplished with the conviction that they were taking on the rôle of the authorities. When Protestants in Montpellier occupied a church in 1561, they argued that the building belonged to them already, since its clergy had been wholly supported by merchants and burghers in the past and the property belonged to the town. In Agen the same year, with Reformed ministers preaching that it was the office of the magistrate alone to eradicate the marks of idolatry, Protestant artisans decided one night that "if one tarried for the Consistory, it would never be done" and proceeded to break into the churches and destroy all the altars and images.<sup>35</sup>

To be sure, the relation of a French Calvinist crowd to the magisterial model is different from that of a French Catholic crowd. The king had not yet chastised the clergy and "put all ydolatry to ruyne and confusyon", as Protestants had been urging him since the early 1530s.<sup>36</sup> Calvinist crowds were using his sword as the king *ought* to have been using it and as some princes and city councils outside of France had already used it. Within the kingdom before 1560 city councils had only *indicated* the right path, as they set up municipal schools, lay-controlled welfare systems or otherwise limited the sphere of action of the clergy.<sup>37</sup> During the next years, as revolution and conversion created Reformed city councils and governors (such as the

<sup>34</sup> Haton, *Mémoires*, pp. 704-6. The boys were aged twelve or younger, according to Haton.

<sup>35</sup> *Hist. eccl.*, i, pp. 970, 889.

<sup>36</sup> Antoine de Marcourt, *The booke of Marchauntes* (London, 1547), C iv-ii<sup>r</sup>. The *Livre des Marchands* was first published in Neuchâtel in 1533. Antoine de Marcourt, *A declaration of the masse, the fruyte thereof, the cause and the meane, wherefore and howe it oughte to be maynteyned* (Wittenberg: Hans Luft [*sic*, for London, John Day], 1547), D iv<sup>v</sup>, conclusion written by Pierre Viret. Marcourt's work first appeared in French at Neuchâtel in 1534.

<sup>37</sup> Municipal schools in Toulouse, Lyon and Nîmes among other places, and urban welfare systems in Paris, Rouen, Lyon, Troyes, Toulouse and other cities. See N. Z. Davis, "Poor Relief, Humanism and Heresy: The Case of Lyon", *Studies in Medieval and Renaissance History*, v (1968), pp. 216-75.

Queen of Navarre) within France, Calvinist crowds finally had local magistrates whose actions they could prompt or imitate.

In general, then, the crowds in religious riots in sixteenth-century France can be seen as sometimes acting out clerical rôles — defending true doctrine or ridding the community of defilement in a violent version of priest or prophet — and as sometimes acting out magisterial rôles. Clearly some riotous behaviour, such as the extensive pillaging done by both Protestants and Catholics, cannot be subsumed under these heads; but just as the prevalence of pillaging in a war does not prevent us from typing it as a holy war, so the prevalence of pillaging in a riot should not prevent us from seeing it as essentially religious.

## II

What ever made the people think they could rightfully assume the rôles of priest, pastor and magistrate? Like other Catholic writers, when the Jesuit Emond Auger composed his *Pedagogue d'Armes* in 1568 to urge a holy war to exterminate the heretics, he addressed his instruction only to Charles IX.<sup>38</sup> Like other Reformed preachers, Pastor Pierre Viret told his flock that private individuals should never take it upon themselves to stop public scandals under cover of having some “extraordinary vocation”. There was no way that one could get certain evidence from a Scripture to show that a particular private individual had such a calling, and everything was best left to those who held political power.<sup>39</sup> When Protestant resistance theory was fully developed it too never conceded a clear right of violent disobedience to private persons.<sup>40</sup> Nor were secular authorities in sixteenth-century cities in the habit of telling the “little people” that they had a right to riot when they felt like it.

Yet the crowds did riot, and there are remarkably few instances reported of remorse on the part of participants in religious disturbances. Of the many Catholic murderers mentioned in

<sup>38</sup> Emond Auger, *Le Pedagogue d'Armes. Pour instruire un Prince Chrestien à bien entreprendre et heureusement achever une bonne guerre, pour estre victorieux de tous les ennemis de son Estat, et de L'Eglise Catholique. Dedie au Roy, Par M. Emond, de la Compagnie de Iesus* (Paris, 1568), especially fos. 18r-24v.

<sup>39</sup> Letter from Pierre Viret to the *Colloque de Montpellier*, 15 Jan. 1562 in *Hist. eccl.*, i, pp. 975-7. Pierre Viret, *L'Interim, Fait par Dialogues* (Lyon, 1565), pp. 396-7. Linder, *Political Ideas*, pp. 137-8. Robert Kingdon, *Geneva and the Consolidation of the French Protestant Movement* (Madison, Wis., 1967), pp. 153-5.

<sup>40</sup> See, for instance, the *Vindiciae contra Tyrannos* (trans. by J. H. Franklin) on this subject in J. H. Franklin (ed.), *Constitutionalism and Resistance in the Sixteenth Century* (New York, 1969), pp. 154-6.

Crespin's *Book of Martyrs*, only three were said to have fallen ill in the wake of their deeds, to have become mad and died invoking devils or denying God. Leading killers in the Lyon Vespers of 1572 exhibited their bloody pourpoints in the streets and bragged of the numbers they had slain; their subsequent absolution by a papal legate appears a formal, political affair. In cases where Protestants returned to Mother Church, there may well have been some regret for smashing statues or assaulting priests, but here only as part of a whole pattern of "heretical" behaviour. So long as rioters maintained a given religious commitment, they rarely displayed guilt or shame for their violence. By every sign, the crowds believed their actions legitimate.<sup>41</sup>

One reason for this conviction is that in some, though by no means all, religious riots, clerics and political officers were active members of the crowd, though not precisely in their official capacity. In Lyon in 1562, Pastor Jean Ruffly took part in the sack of the Cathedral of Saint Jean with a sword in his hand.<sup>42</sup> Catholic priests seem to have been in quite a few disturbances, as in Rouen in 1560, when priests and parishioners in a Corpus Christi parade broke into the houses of Protestants who had refused to do the procession honour.<sup>43</sup> (In other cases, the clergy was said to have been busy behind the scenes organizing the crowds.<sup>44</sup>) At Aix a band of Catholic rioters was headed by the First Consul of that city, while at Lyon in 1562 the merchant-publisher and Consul, Jean de La Porte, led a Protestant

<sup>41</sup> Crespin, *Martyrs*, iii, pp. 694, 701, 711-12 and 717. The infrequency of these tales of remorse is all the more significant because they could be used so readily by Protestants to show the just punishment of God: cf. *Hist. eccl.*, i, p. 357. Pastor Jean Ruffly, formally rebuked by Calvin for his rôle in an iconoclastic riot in Lyon in 1562 (Robert Kingdon, *Geneva and the Coming of the Wars of Religion in France, 1555-1563* [Geneva, 1956], p. 110), led a Protestant crowd against dancing Catholics in 1565 (de Rubys, *Histoire*, p. 406). On ambivalence about disobedience and violent behaviour that might be embedded deep in the feelings of rioters, I have no evidence one way or the other.

<sup>42</sup> Guéraud, *Chronique*, p. 155; Charles Du Moulin, *Omnia ... Opera*, 5 vols. (Paris, 1681), v, p. 618; Kingdon, *Geneva and the Coming*, p. 110.

<sup>43</sup> *Hist. eccl.*, i, p. 352. For other allegations that priests took part in Catholic riots in Toulouse, 1562 (*ibid.*, iii, pp. 4-5); in Lavaur, 1561 (i, pp. 938-9); in Clermont in Auvergne, 1568, Crespin, *Martyrs*, iii, p. 651. Also see the comments of the priest Claude Haton about brawling priests with swords in their hands, *Mémoires*, pp. 17-18.

<sup>44</sup> For instance, priests at Nemours were said to have helped plan an attack on Protestants there in 1561, and Dominicans at Revel are alleged to have organized an attack on Psalm-singers the same year: *Hist. eccl.*, i, pp. 833-4, 959. The bishop of Autun was accused of organizing groups of artisans to exterminate Protestants in that city in 1562, and Cardinal Strozzi, the bishop of Albi, was supposed to have helped to organize a massacre in Gaillac in May 1562: *ibid.*, iii, pp. 487-8, 80-1.

group to an assault on the cloister of Saint Just.<sup>45</sup> The fighting crowd of Protestants which “arrested” Catholics at Saint Médard’s Church in 1561 had in its midst the chief officer of the “royal watch” in Paris. And among the image-smashers of Agen the same year was the town executioner. “It is my office to set fire”, he said as he put the statues to the flames.<sup>46</sup> Finally, there is the well-known participation of some of the militia officers in the Saint Bartholomew’s Day massacres in Paris and in the Lyon Vespers. Their murdering and sacking, as Janine Estèbe has pointed out for Paris, went beyond any informal encouragement that they had from the king and clearly beyond the official orders given them by the *Bureau de la Ville*.<sup>47</sup>

On the other hand, not all religious riots could boast of officers or clergy in the crowd, and other sources of legitimation must be sought. Here we must recognize what mixed cues were given out by priests and pastors in their sermons on heresy or idolatry. If we do not know whether to believe the Catholic priest, Claude Haton, in his claim that a Huguenot preacher at Sens told his congregation that “to exterminate papal vermin would be a great sacrifice to God”, it is surely significant that iconoclastic riots in Gien and Rouen both occurred on 3 May 1562 after sermons on the text from Deuteronomy xii with which I opened this study.<sup>48</sup> However much Calvin and other pastors opposed such disturbances (preferring that all images and altars be removed soberly by the authorities), they nevertheless were always more ready to understand and excuse this violence than, say, that of a peasant revolt or of a journeymen’s march. Perhaps, after all, the popular idol-smashing was due to “an extraordinary power (*vertu*) from God”. How else was it possible, says Jean Crespin about iconoclasm in the Netherlands in 1566, for a small number of men, women and children, badly equipped and of modest condition, to demolish in four days what it would have taken many

<sup>45</sup> Crespin, *Martyrs*, iii, pp. 390-1; Léopold Niepce, “Les trésors des Eglises de Lyon”, *Revue lyonnaise*, viii (1884), p. 40, n. 1.

<sup>46</sup> Haton, *Mémoires*, p. 182; *Histoire véritable de la mutinerie . . . faite par les Prestres Saint Medard*, in *Arch. cur.*, iv, p. 56. On the position of the *chevalier du guet*, or chief officer of the watch, in Paris, see Isambert, *Recueil*, xii, no. 296. *Hist. eccl.*, i, p. 889.

<sup>47</sup> Estèbe, *Tocsin*, pp. 137-40. The orders given to the militia officers of Paris from 22 Aug. to 30 Aug. 1572 are printed in *Histoire Générale de Paris. Registres des délibérations du Bureau de la ville de Paris*, ed. F. Bonnardot, 19 vols. (Paris, 1883-1958), vii, pp. 9-20. Also see the leadership of doctors of theology and militia captains in an unofficial burning of Protestant books by a Catholic crowd in Paris in 1568: Félibien and Lobineau, *Histoire*, iv, p. 828; I am grateful to Alfred Soman for this reference.

<sup>48</sup> Haton, *Mémoires*, p. 191. *Hist. eccl.*, ii, pp. 537-8, 719-20.

masons twice as long to do? How else to explain the fact that artisans, women and children had been able to clean out fifty churches in Rouen in only twenty-four hours?<sup>49</sup> Pastor Pierre Viret may have similarly wondered about God's rôle in a crowd seizure of Nîmes cathedral in December 1561. Though he had opposed such actions, he was nevertheless willing to preach to the Calvinists in the church three days later.<sup>50</sup>

The rôle of Catholic preachers in legitimating popular violence was even more direct. If we don't know whether to believe the Protestant claim that Catholic preachers at Paris were telling their congregations in 1557 that Protestants ate babies, it is surely significant that, in the year of the attack on the rue St. Jacques conventicle, Catholic preachers did blame the loss of the battle of Saint Quentin on God's wrath at the presence of heretics in France.<sup>51</sup> In the next years, they held up Ahab and his wife Jezebel, and Belshazar and others as examples of the terrible end that would come to those who tolerated idolatry. Before a Catholic riot at the Cimetière des Innocents, Brother Jean de Han told his listeners in the church that they could not count on royal judges to punish Lutherans and would have to take matters into their own hands.<sup>52</sup> On St. Michael's Day 1572 at Bordeaux, a few days before the massacres there, the Jesuit Emond Auger preached on how the Angel of the Lord had already executed God's judgement in Paris, Orléans and elsewhere, and would also do so in Bordeaux.<sup>53</sup> And if Protestant pastors could timidly wonder if divine power were not behind the extraordinary force of the iconoclasts, priests had no doubts that certain miraculous occurrences in the wake of Catholic riots were a sign of divine approval, such as a copper cross in Troyes that began to change colour and cure people in 1561, the year of a riot in which Catholics bested Protestants, and the long-barren hawthorn tree at

<sup>49</sup> Crespin, *Martyrs*, iii, pp. 519-22; *Hist. eccl.*, ii, pp. 719-20. Also, see Condé's letter to the king of May 1562, in which he argues that though "le peuple" was at fault for destroying images without waiting for an order from the magistrate, nevertheless, their action could be imputed to "a secret movement of God, inciting the people to detest and abhor idolatry, and not to any disobedience or rebellion": *Hist. eccl.*, ii, p. 74.

<sup>50</sup> Ann Guggenheim, "Calvinism and the Political Élite of Sixteenth Century Nîmes" (New York University Ph.D. thesis, 1968), ch. 6, p. 214.

<sup>51</sup> Crespin, *Martyrs*, ii, pp. 538, 546. *Hist. eccl.*, i, pp. 268-9.

<sup>52</sup> Haton, *Mémoires*, pp. 527-9; *Hist. eccl.*, i, pp. 192-3, 481.

<sup>53</sup> Crespin, *Martyrs*, iii, p. 727; Henri Hauser, "Le père Emond Auger et le massacre de Bordeaux, 1572", *Bulletin de la société d'histoire du protestantisme français*, 5th ser., viii (1911), pp. 289-306.

the Cimetière des Innocents, which began to bloom from the beginning of the Saint Bartholomew's massacres.<sup>54</sup>

In all likelihood, however, there are sources for the legitimization of popular religious riot that come directly out of the experience of the local groups which often formed the nucleus of a crowd — the men and women who had worshipped together in the dangerous days of the night conventicles, the men in confraternities, in festive groups, in youth gangs and militia units. It should be remembered how often conditions in sixteenth-century cities required groups of "little people" to take the law into their own hands. Royal edicts themselves enjoined any person who saw a murder, theft or other misdeed to ring the tocsin and chase after the criminal.<sup>55</sup> Canon law allowed certain priestly rôles to laymen in times of emergency, such as the midwife's responsibility to baptize a baby in danger of dying,<sup>56</sup> while the rôle of preaching the Gospel was often assumed by Protestant laymen in the decades before the Reformed Church was set up. Talking about the Bible among themselves, some Calvinist city-dwellers decided that private persons might be obliged to act independently of the magistrate in defence of religion, and even published a tract — *The Civil and Military Defense of the Innocents and of the Church of Christ* — in support of this view with Old Testament precedents.<sup>57</sup>

<sup>54</sup> Haton, *Mémoires*, pp. 195-7, 681-2. Protestant writers also stress divine intervention to show God's disapproval of Catholic rioters and violence. For instance, in Draguignan two Protestants killed by a crowd were found three months later with no sign of corruption in their bodies and with their wounds still fresh in appearance. A Catholic who had been guarding the bodies was killed by Protestant soldiers and his body instantly became rotten, and was eaten by crows and dogs. *Hist. eccl.*, i, p. 428. In Marennes (Charente-Maritime), a rich burgher who tried to prevent a Protestant service being held and beat up one of the Protestants died shortly after from apoplexy. This was viewed as the "hand of God" and led to the conversion of his children to the new religion. *Ibid.*, i, p. 357.

<sup>55</sup> Fréminville, *Dictionnaire*, p. 400, citing edicts of 1536 and 1550. Isambert, *Recueil*, xii, no. 115 (Edict of Sept. 1523), p. 531 (Edict of 25 Jan. 1536), pp. 557-8 (Edict of 9 May 1539).

<sup>56</sup> Jacques Toussaert, *Le sentiment religieux en Flandres à la fin du Moyen Age* (Paris, 1963), p. 90; T. J. Schmitt, *L'organisation ecclésiastique et la pratique religieuse dans la diocèse d'Autun de 1650 à 1750* (Autun, 1957), p. 166. Until the Council of Trent, canon law allowed that a marriage promised between two persons privately, without the presence of a priest, and consummated was a sacrament. Even after Trent, it took some time for the 1564 legislation requiring a priest's presence to be widely known and followed.

<sup>57</sup> *La Deffense civile et Militaire des Innocens et de l'Eglise de Christ* was published in Lyon in 1563, and burned on 12 June 1563 after a condemnation by the pastors of Lyon and Governor Soubise: Du Moulin, *Opera*, v, pp. 17-22. On Old Testament precedents for private individuals killing tyrants, see Mousnier, *Assassinat*, p. 28.

Finally, the very experience of singing the Psalms together in French in a large armed group intent on challenging the religious practices of the world around it; the very experience of being part of a Corpus Christi day procession at a time when danger threatened the sanctity of the host — these processional experiences in themselves would feed a popular certitude that the group did indeed have the right on occasion to move into the realm of violence for the sake of religion.

### III

What then of the occasions for religious riot? By “occasions” I don’t mean here the specific events, such as the Saint Bartholomew’s rumour of conspiracy to kill the king, which have triggered particular instances of religious riot. Nor do I here mean anything as grand as theories of structural strain, relative deprivation among the people or crises among the élite, which might account for the timing of all riots. In fact, I am considering the chronological question of timing very little in this paper . . . that is, I am not asking why there are a cluster of religious disturbances in Lyon, say, in the early ’50s,<sup>58</sup> a cluster of religious disturbances throughout France in the early ’60s, and so on. I don’t have the extensive data upon which to base such an analysis. Working from the crowd behaviour itself, I have merely stressed the fact that religious riot is likely to occur when it is believed that religious and/or political authorities are failing in their duties or need help in fulfilling them.

All I would add in regard to the timing and triggers of religious riot is that a rise in grain prices does not seem to be a significant variable. For instance, the religious disturbances in Toulouse in the first five months of 1562 correspond to a period of grain prices which were the same as, or lower than, those of the preceding two years. The supply was surely more abundant there than during the hard times in the spring and early summer of 1557, when there was no religious disturbance.<sup>59</sup> The Catholic attack on the conventicle on the rue

<sup>58</sup> These disturbances included armed marches of hundreds of Psalm-singing Protestant artisans and their wives in the spring of 1551; “assemblies and sedition” in the wake of heretical preaching by a Florentine at the St. Lawrence Hospital in August 1551; the theft of all the ornament and the Sacrament from the Church of Fourvières in October 1551; the desecration of a crucifix and an image of Saint Anne in January 1553, etc. Guéraud, *Chronique*, pp. 54-5, 58, 65-6; Archives départementales du Rhône, B, Sénéchaussée, Sentences, 1551-2, Dec. 1551.

<sup>59</sup> Georges and Geneviève Frèche, *Les prix des grains, des vins et des légumes à Toulouse (1485-1868)* (Paris, 1967), pp. 44-5. The famine and plague of 1557 were interpreted in Toulouse as the hand of God falling on the city for its iniquities. The local government then tried to purge the town of the “idle vagabonds”, to feed the starving in Toulouse and from nearby villages, and to get rid of “infecting vapors” and other filth in the streets. Antoine Noguier, *Histoire Tolosaine* (Toulouse, n.d., royal privilege, 1559), pp. 126-33.

Saint Jacques in September 1557 occurred at a time when grain had dropped to a good low price in Paris and was plentiful. The Saint-Médard riot at the end of 1561 took place when prices were rising, but were far from what contemporaries would have thought a famine level.<sup>60</sup> As for the 1572 massacres, they occurred at a time of slowly rising grain prices, but not yet of serious dearth, with August-September prices in Paris being a little lower than those of October 1571 and in Toulouse lower than in the immediately preceding summer months.<sup>61</sup> In short, grain prices are relevant to religious riot in France only in the general and indirect sense that the inflation of the last forty years of the sixteenth century had an effect on many aspects of life, as did the Religious Wars themselves. Perhaps it is only in this broad sense that they are part of the background to the Flemish iconoclastic movement of 1566 (I am here raising a query about the interpretation of Verlinden and his colleagues), the specific trigger for the riots being more likely, as Crespin claimed, the sudden upsurge in public Protestant preaching.<sup>62</sup> What are *specific* rises in grain prices correlated with in France? Why, with grain riots and penitential white processions to beg for rain.<sup>63</sup>

<sup>60</sup> Micheline Baulant and Jean Meuvret, *Prix des céréales extraits de la Mercuriale de Paris (1520-1698)*, 2 vols. (Paris, 1960), I, pp. 47, 49, 152-3. Maximum prices for wheat in December 1561 were something over 5 *livres tournois* per *sétier*, but a famine price would be thought of in Paris as something like the 9½ *l.t.* per *sétier*, to which wheat rose in the summer of 1546.

<sup>61</sup> Frêche, *Prix*, p. 46; Baulant and Meuvret, *Prix*, I, pp. 56-7.

<sup>62</sup> See p. 54 and note 8 above. Crespin, *Martyrs*, III, pp. 518-9. A recent study of fifteenth-century Spain has shown how complex the relation was between a rise in food prices and anti-Semitic pogroms. Its author suggests that a prolonged rise in food prices is part of the *general* background for a variety of popular risings. The sharper the price rise, the more likely the disturbance was *not* to be "exclusively anti-Semitic in character". Angus MacKay, "Popular Movements and Pogroms in Fifteenth-Century Castile", *Past and Present*, no. 55 (May 1972), pp. 58-9.

<sup>63</sup> As in the white processions in Lyon in the spring of 1504 and in the great grain riot, or *Grande Rebeine*, of Lyon in 1529: Paradin, *Mémoires*, p. 281; Davis "Poor Relief", pp. 227-30. The assertion of the physician Symphorien Champier, whose granary was sacked in the *Grande Rebeine*, that the crowd also smashed religious statues in his house is surely false and was not taken seriously by contemporaries: *ibid.*, n. 43, and H. Hours, "Procès d'hérésie contre Aimé Meigret", *Bibliothèque d'humanisme et renaissance*, xix (1957), pp. 20-1. During the drought of spring 1556 in the Lyonnais, there were both penitential white processions of rural parishioners to Lyon and a crowd attack on boats removing grain from the city for the Order of Malta: Paradin, *Mémoires*, p. 357; Guéraud, *Chronique*, p. 95.

For famine prices and grain riots in Provins in 1573 see Haton, *Mémoires*, pp. 714 ff; famine prices and a penitential procession in Paris in June 1521, Baulant and Meuvret, *Prix*, I, p. 94 and *Journal d'un bourgeois*, pp. 82-3; and for extraordinary prices and a bread riot in Paris in July 1587, Baulant and Meuvret, *Prix*, I, p. 223 and L'Estoile, *Mémoires-journaux*, III, p. 58.

Questions of chronological timing apart, then, the occasion for most religious violence was during the time of religious worship or ritual and in the space which one or both groups were using for sacred purposes. There were exceptions, of course. Profanation of religious statues and paintings might occur at night, especially in the early years when it was a question of a small number of Protestants sneaking into a church.<sup>64</sup> Widespread murder, as in the 1572 massacres, might occur anywhere — in the streets, in bedrooms. But much of the religious riot is timed to ritual, and the violence seems often a curious continuation of the rite.

Almost every type of public religious event has a disturbance associated with it. The sight of a statue of the Virgin at a crossroad or in a wall-niche provokes a Protestant group to mockery of those who reverence her. A fight ensues. Catholics hide in a house to entrap Huguenots who refuse to doff their hats to a Virgin nearby, and then rush out and beat the heretics up.<sup>65</sup> Baptism: in Nemours, a Protestant family has its baby baptized on All Souls' Day according to the new Reformed rite. With the help of an aunt, a group of Catholics steals it away for rebaptism. A drunkard sees the father and the godfather and other Protestants discussing the event in the streets, claps his sabots and shouts, "Here are the Huguenots who have come to massacre us". A crowd assembles, the tocsin is rung, and a three-hour battle takes place.<sup>66</sup> Funeral: in Toulouse, at Easter-time, a Protestant carpenter tries to bury his Catholic wife by the new Reformed rite. A Catholic crowd seizes the corpse and buries it. The Protestants dig it up and try to rebury her. The bells are rung, and with a great noise a Catholic crowd assembles with stones and sticks. Fighting and sacking ensue.<sup>67</sup>

Religious services: a Catholic Mass is the occasion for an attack on the Host or the interruption of a sermon, which then leads to a

<sup>64</sup> As in Paris on the day after Pentecost 1528, when some heretics cut off the head of a Virgin in a wall-niche at night: *Journal d'un bourgeois*, p. 291. Iconoclastic episodes in Lyon in January 1553 probably occurred at night: Guéraud, *Chronique*, p. 65. For iconoclastic riots in Annonay at night in 1561 see Achille Gamon, *Mémoires* in *Nouvelle Collections des Mémoires pour servir à l'histoire de la France*, ed. Michaud and Poujoulat (Paris, 1838), viii, p. 611. For an iconoclastic riot by sailors of Dieppe at night in 1562, see *Hist. eccl.*, ii, p. 796.

<sup>65</sup> Haton, *Mémoires*, pp. 340-1; *Hist. eccl.*, i, p. 284.

<sup>66</sup> *Ibid.*, i, pp. 833-4; Crespín, *Martyrs*, iii, p. 210.

<sup>67</sup> *Hist. eccl.*, iii, pp. 4-5; Bosquet, *Histoire*, pp. 67-9. For an episode concerning a Reformed burial at Bordeaux on All Souls' Day 1561, see *Hist. eccl.*, i, pp. 870-1.

riot.<sup>68</sup> Protestant preaching in a home attracts large Catholic crowds at the door, who stone the house or otherwise threaten the worshippers.<sup>69</sup> In the years when the Reformed services are public, the rivalry of the rites becomes graphic. Side by side at Saint-Médard, the Vesper bells are rung to drown out the pastor's sermon; side by side at Provins, the Huguenots sing their Psalms to drown out the Mass.<sup>70</sup>

But these encounters are as nothing compared to the disturbances that cluster around processional life. Corpus Christi Day, with its crowds, coloured banners and great crosses, was the chance for Protestants *not* to put rugs in front of their doors; for Protestant women to sit ostentatiously in their windows spinning; for heroic individuals, like the painter Denis de Vallois in Lyon, to throw themselves on the "God of paste" so as "to destroy him in every parish in the world". Corpus Christi Day was the chance for a procession to turn into an assault on and slaughter of those who had so offended the Catholic faith, its participants shouting, as in Lyon in 1561, "For the flesh of God, we must kill all the Huguenots".<sup>71</sup> A Protestant

<sup>68</sup> E.g., at the Vespers service on the 18 March 1562 in Rouen (*Hist. eccl.*, ii, p. 713, n. 1); at Paris at the Sainte Chapelle in 1563 (Haton, *Mémoires*, p. 375); at Toulouse at the Eglise Saint Sernin while the Inquisitor della Lana was preaching, 4 May 1561 (Bosquet, *Histoire*, pp. 38-9). Bosquet claimed that an heretical merchant was killed by the zealous *menu peuple* after he shouted, "You lie, hypocritical monk" and other blasphemous remarks. A Protestant account claims that the merchant was actually a Catholic, dissatisfied with the seditious remarks made by the preacher (*Hist. eccl.*, i, p. 905). Protestant sources report other episodes in which jumpy Catholic worshippers killed persons as heretics who were in fact Catholics. The victims had been merely asking for more room or had laughed at a neighbour's remark (e.g., Angers in 1561, *ibid.*, i, p. 837; Paris, Church of Saint Eustache, 1558, and at the Cimetière des Innocents, 1559, *ibid.*, i, pp. 193-4).

<sup>69</sup> In addition to the well-known attack on the conventicle on the rue St. Jacques in Paris in 1557, there were four attacks on conventicles in Paris in April-May 1561: Félibien and Lobineau, *Histoire*, iv, pp. 797-8; R. N. Sauvage, "Lettre de Jean Fernaga, procureur syndic de la ville de Caen, touchant les troubles survenus à Paris en avril 1561", *Bulletin de la société de l'histoire du protestantisme français*, 5th ser., viii (1911), pp. 809-12. Crowds in Lyon in Sept. 1561 were out to sack all houses in which "people were having certain assemblies" and threatened the house of the Protestant merchant Jérôme Pellissari: Archives départementales du Rhône, B, Sénéchaussée, Audience, Sept.-Dec. 1561. For an attack on a conventicle in Auxerre on 9 Oct. 1561, see *Hist. eccl.*, i, p. 852, and on one in Cahors on 16 Nov. 1561: Crespin, *Martyrs*, iii, p. 211.

<sup>70</sup> *Histoire véritable* . . . in *Arch. cur.*, iv, p. 52; Haton, *Mémoires*, pp. 179-82, 147, 177-8; Félibien and Lobineau, *Histoire*, iv, p. 800. Also see the conflict between a Protestant service at a pastel mill at Castelnaudry and a Catholic procession for *Pâques fleuries* in 1562: *Hist. eccl.*, iii, p. 157.

<sup>71</sup> E.g., at Geneva at the *Fête-Dieu*, see Jeanne de Jussie, *Le levain du calvinisme*, p. 94. At Le Crosic, Brittany in 1558, and at Rouen in 1560; *Hist. eccl.*, i, pp. 179-80, 352. For the Lyon episode on Corpus Christi Day, 1560, see Guéraud, *Chronique*, pp. 133-4 and Archives départementales du Rhône, B, Sénéchaussée, Sentences, 1561-2, sentence of 12 Sept. 1561. At Clermont-Ferrand in 1568, Crespin, *Martyrs*, iii, p. 651.

procession was a parade of armed men and women in their dark clothes, going off to services at their temple or outside the city gates, singing Psalms and spiritual songs that to Catholic ears sounded like insults against the Church and her sacraments. It was an occasion for children to throw stones, for an exchange of scandalous words — “idolaters”, “devils from the Pope’s purgatory”, “Huguenot heretics, living like dogs” — and then finally, for fighting.<sup>72</sup> Sometimes the two processions encountered each other, as in Sens in 1562. The Calvinists would not give way and insisted upon passing through the centre of the Catholic procession. The groups confronted each other again after services, and the Catholics, aided by processions from peasant villages, prevailed in a bloody battle.<sup>73</sup>

The occasions which express most concisely the contrast between the two religious groups, however, are those in which a popular festive Catholicism took over the streets with dancing, masks, banners, costumes and music — “lascivious abomination”, according to the Protestants. In Lyon, when Catholics did their traditional summer dancing on St. Peter’s Day 1565, the Huguenots attacked them in a riot that led eventually to the exile of Pierre Viret and another pastor from the city. In Montpellier, in the summer of 1561, the confraternities organized Sunday processions of hundreds of men, women and children with *pains bénits* (“blessed loaves of bread”) — dancing, jumping, and crying, “In spite of the Huguenots we dance”.<sup>74</sup>

But festivities led to more than spite and intimidation. For Mardi Gras at Issoudun in 1562, a Catholic group organized a dramatic costumed dance for thirteen pilgrims, thirteen reapers, thirteen wine-harvesters and thirteen tithe-collectors, each armed with large macabre tools. The Protestants got hold of the scenario for this grisly carnival and were able to get the players arrested.<sup>75</sup> In Pamiers

<sup>72</sup> The first big Psalm-singing parades seem to have occurred in 1551 in Lyon, with artisans, and especially printers’ journeymen, taking the initiative in organizing them: Guéraud, *Chronique*, pp. 54-5; letters of Claude Baduel to Calvin in 1551 in Jean Calvin, *Opera . . . Omnia*, xiv, pp. 16ff. See Guéraud on an episode in Lyon in Dec. 1561, *Chronique*, p. 145. Also see Haton, *Mémoires*, pp. 177-8, 190; Bosquet, *Histoire*, p. 60, and *Hist. eccl.*, iii, p. 2 on Toulouse in 1562. See L’Estoile, *Mémoires-journaux*, i, p. 157 on the stoning of “Huguenot troops” returning from services into Paris in Sept. 1576, followed by a violent *mêlée*.

<sup>73</sup> Haton, *Mémoires*, pp. 189-94.

<sup>74</sup> De Rubys, *Histoire*, p. 406; *Hist. eccl.*, i, pp. 969-70 and 970, n. 1. In Rouen in 1562, Protestant *menu peuple* stoned the members of the festive Abbey of Conards as they were about to begin their Mardi Gras activities: *ibid.*, ii, p. 713.

<sup>75</sup> *Hist. eccl.*, i, p. 844.

in 1566, however, the festive youth society, with its popes, emperors, bishops and abbots, was able to dance its Pentecostal dance to the end. The Calvinists, who had stoned earlier dances, tried to prevent the affair, but the Catholic group insisted. "If [the heretics] can preach secretly, then we can dance — or it will cost five hundred heads". After a procession with relics and a silver statue of St. Anthony, the dancing began, three by three, with tambourines and minstrels. When they got to the quarter where Pastor Du Moulin was preaching, the song turned into "kill, kill", and serious fighting began which was to divide the town for three days. "It's a long time since I was up to my elbows in Huguenot blood", one of the dancers said. He was to be disappointed, for this time it was the Huguenots who won.<sup>76</sup>

These occasions for religious riot show us how characteristic was the scenario for the Paris St. Bartholomew's massacres. A marriage — one of the great rites of passage, but here, as with the baptism of Nemours and the burial at Toulouse, conflict over whether its form should be Catholic or Protestant — and then wedding masques of all kinds. In one, later seen as an allegory of coming events, the king and his brothers prevent wandering knights from entering Paradise and are pulled down to Hell by demons.<sup>77</sup> Soon after, as in Pamiers, the festivity turned into a rite of violence.

#### IV

As with liturgical rites, there were some differences between the rites of violence of Catholic and Protestant crowds. The good Calvinist authors of the *Histoire ecclésiastique* went so far as to claim that outside of the murder of a certain Seigneur de Fumel, killed in the Agenois "not for religion but for his tyrannies", "those of the

<sup>76</sup> *Discours des troubles advenus en la Ville de Pamies le 5 Juin 1566. Avec un brief recit des calamitez souffertes l'Annee precedente* (1567) in *Arch. cur.*, vi, pp. 309-43. On the relation between carnival and masked festivities, and various kinds of disturbance, see Le Roy Ladurie, *Paysans*, i, pp. 395-9; N. Z. Davis, "The Reasons of Misrule: Youth Groups and Charivaris in Sixteenth-Century France", *Past and Present*, no. 50 (Feb. 1971), pp. 68-70; and A. W. Smith, "Some Folklore Elements in Movements of Social Protest", *Folklore*, 77 (1966), pp. 241-51.

<sup>77</sup> *Relation du massacre de la Saint-Barthélemy* in *Arch. cur.*, vii, pp. 88-9; Frances Yates, *The French Academies of the Sixteenth Century* (London, 1947), pp. 254-9. Marriage as a possible occasion for slaughter remained in the mind of Henri de Navarre. In 1588 he feared that the festivities which an Armagnac nobleman was giving for his daughter's wedding were an occasion for a plot on his life. To prevent this, one of Navarre's supporters, a neighbour of the nobleman, entered the house with a band of men during the festivities and slaughtered about thirty-five gentlemen: L'Estoile, *Mémoires-journaux*, iii, p. 121.

Reformed Religion made war only on images and altars, which do not bleed, while those of the Roman religion spilled blood with every kind of cruelty".<sup>78</sup> Though there is some truth in this distinction, Protestant rioters did in fact kill and injure people, and not merely in self-defence; and Catholic rioters did destroy religious property. At the Patriarche garden in Paris, at Vassy, at Senlis, Catholics smashed the pulpits and benches used in Reformed worship; at Amiens they went on to burn them.<sup>79</sup> As houses which had been used for Protestant worship in Meaux and Paris were ordered to be razed by Parliamentary decree, so in Lyon in 1568 a Catholic crowd razed the Protestant *Temple du Paradis*, which hundreds of Psalm-singing men, women and children had built only a few years before.<sup>80</sup> Both Protestant and Catholic crowds destroyed books. The Catholic target was especially the French Bibles which they had so often seen burned publicly by the authorities in the 1540s and 1550s.<sup>81</sup> The Calvinist targets were especially the priests' manuals, the missals and the breviaries which Protestant writers like Viret had already desecrated in gross and comic satire.<sup>82</sup>

Nevertheless, when all this is said, the iconoclastic Calvinist

<sup>78</sup> *Hist. eccl.*, i, p. 887.

<sup>79</sup> *Histoire véritable de la mutinerie . . . faite par les Prestres Sainct Medard . . .*, p. 62; Crespin, *Martyrs*, iii, p. 205; *Hist. eccl.*, ii, pp. 425, 433-5.

<sup>80</sup> Crespin, *Martyrs*, i, pp. 495-8; *Discours de ce qui avint touchant la Croix de Gastines l'an 1571, vers Noel*, extracted from *Mémoires . . . de Charles IX*, in *Arch. cur.*, vi, pp. 475-8. De Rubys, *Histoire véritable*, pp. 402, 412. [Jean Ricaud], *Discours du massacre de ceux de la Religion Reformée, fait à Lyon par les catholiques romains, le vingthuitieme du mois de août et jours ensuivant de l'an 1572 (1574)* (Lyon, 1847), pp. 9-13.

<sup>81</sup> Crespin, *Martyrs*, iii, p. 204; *Hist. eccl.*, ii, pp. 650-1, 839, 883, 932-3; iii, 15, 315; Félibien and Lobinaux, *Histoire*, iv, p. 828.

<sup>82</sup> Bosquet, *Histoire*, pp. 22, 143-4; Haton, *Mémoires*, p. 181; de Saintes, *Discours sur le saccagement . . .* in *Arch. cur.*, iv, p. 384; *Hist. eccl.*, i, p. 935, ii, pp. 720, n. 1 and 925, iii, p. 515. A Catholic polemical piece from Toulouse describes the opening Protestant "crime" in that city as the sale by Protestant *libraires* of the *Canon de la Messe*, which the Calvinists had depraved. This is in all probability a Protestant edition of the Missal, with mocking and satirical footnotes throughout, which had various editions, including one in Lyon in 1564: *Les cauteles, canon et ceremonies de la messe. Ensemble la messe intitulé, Du corps de Iesuchrist. Le tout en Latin et en François: Le Latin fidelement extraict du Messel à l'usage de Rome imprimé à Lyon par Iean de Cambray l'an mil cinq cens vingt* (Lyon: Claude Ravot, 1564). In the comic tradition of Marcourt's *Livre des Marchands*, the work resembles in organization Pierre Viret's *Manuel, ou Instruction des Curez et Vicaires* (Lyon: Claude Ravot, 1564).

As with statue-smashing, Protestant pastors much preferred that ecclesiastical libraries be confiscated and catalogued by the authorities (as in the Archives départementales du Rhône, 3E566, Inventory of 10 May 1562) and not destroyed by the crowds. The *Histoire ecclésiastique*, iii, p. 515, expressed regret at the insolence of Huguenot soldiers who destroyed an enormous quantity of books at the Abbey of Cluny under the impression that they were all Missals.

crowds still come out as the champions in the destruction of religious property (“with more than Turkish cruelty”, said a priest). This was not only because the Catholics had more physical accessories to their rite, but also because the Protestants sensed much more danger and defilement in the *wrongful use of material objects*. In Pamiers, the Catholic vicar might drop his Black Virgin of Foix when she failed to bring good weather; but then he tenderly repaired her broken neck with an iron pin. When the Protestants found her, they promptly burned the head in Pamiers and the body in Foix.<sup>83</sup>

In bloodshed, the Catholics are the champions (remember we are talking of the actions of Catholic and Protestant crowds, not of their armies). I think this is due not only to their being in the long run the strongest party numerically in most cities, but also to their stronger sense of *the persons of heretics* as sources of danger and defilement. Thus, injury and murder were a preferred mode of purifying the body social.

Furthermore, the preferred targets for physical attack differ in the Protestant and Catholic cases. As befitting a movement intending to overthrow a thousand years of clerical “tyranny” and “pollution”, the Protestants’ targets were primarily priests, monks and friars. That their ecclesiastical victims were usually unarmed (as Catholic critics hastened to point out) did not make them any less harmful in Protestant eyes, or any more immune from the wrath of God.<sup>84</sup> Lay people were sometimes attacked by Protestant crowds, too, such as the festive dancers who were stoned at Pamiers and Lyon, and the worshippers who were killed at Saint-Médard’s Church.<sup>85</sup> But there is nothing that quite resembles the style and extent of the slaughter of the 1572 massacres. The Catholic crowds were, of course, happy to

<sup>83</sup> Hervet, *Discours sur . . . les pilleurs; Hist. eccl.*, i, p. 957. On the complexity of Catholic attitudes towards their statues, see Richard C. Trexler “Florentine Religious Experience: The Sacred Image”, *Studies in the Renaissance*, xix (1972), pp. 25-9.

<sup>84</sup> That priests and religious were the preferred (though not the exclusive) target for Protestant crowds is a fact emerging not only from an analysis of many crowd actions, but also from Catholic literature. The *Théâtre des Cruautés des hérétiques* gives few examples of lay persons murdered, but many of priests and religious. Claude de Saintes’s *Discours sur le saccagement* (1563) also stresses Protestant attacks on priests. Gentian Hervet’s *Discours sur . . . les pilleurs* talks with horror of the Protestant war against unarmed priests, and the Protestant claim that their grudge is against the priests only. He warns that once all the churches are destroyed, the Protestants will start on the common people.

<sup>85</sup> *Discours des troubles advenus en la Ville de Pamies . . .*, p. 318; de Rubys, *Histoire véritable*, p. 406; Haton, *Mémoires*, p. 181.

catch a pastor when they could,<sup>86</sup> but the death of any heretic would help in the cause of cleansing France of these perfidious sowers of disorder and disunion. Indeed, while the number of women killed by Protestant crowds seems to have been very small, observers' reports show about one out of ten people killed by Catholic crowds in the provinces in 1572 was a woman, and the ratio was higher in Paris.<sup>87</sup>

Clearly, crowds that attacked unarmed priests and unarmed women were not trying to destroy only the physically powerful. But is Jeannine Estèbe right in suggesting that the 1572 massacres were also an expression of class hatred, by which she means a rising of the people against the rich Huguenots?<sup>88</sup> We can even broaden her question and ask whether it's true of other Catholic disturbances and of Protestant riots as well. As Charles Tilly and James Rule have asked in *Measuring Political Upheaval*, is the "isomorphy" of these disturbances high or low, by which they mean is there a high or low "degree of correspondence between the divisions separating the

<sup>86</sup> Among the pastors killed or assaulted by Catholic crowds were Leonard Morel at Vassy, 1561; Pastors Richer and Marcil at Poitiers, 1562; Pastor Giscart at Castelnaudary, 1562; a pastor at Gaillac, 1562; and Pastor Bonnet at Macon, 1562. Martin Tachard, formerly pastor at Val d'Angrogne and Montauban, was led in mockery through Foix in 1567. Among the pastors killed in the 1572 massacres were: Bugnette, Le More and Des Gorris at Paris; Jacques Langlois and N. Dives at Lyon; Pierre Loiseleur dit de Villiers and Louis Le Coq at Rouen; and a minister at Bordeaux.

<sup>87</sup> Estimates in Crespin of persons killed in the 1572 massacres give, for Rouen about 550 men and about 50 women; for Orléans, 1,800 adult men and 150 adult women. No female deaths were reported from the Lyon Vespers. So many women were victims at Paris that word went out on the 28 or 29 Aug. 1572 that no more women were to be killed, especially pregnant women. Even here, the listings show many fewer female deaths than male. The same is true for earlier crowd actions by Catholics, as in Provence in 1562: Crespin, *Martyrs*, iii, pp. 695, 721, 710 ff., 678, 371-88. It is clear from these estimates that pregnant women could not have been *preferred* targets, though they obviously were not spared. Whether they were the "choice victims" (*victimies de choix*) of Catholic crowds, as Estèbe claims (*Tocsin*, p. 197), I do not know. She associates this, as well as the castration of male corpses, with an attempt to extinguish "a foreign race, a hated and cursed race". As suggested above (n. 25), I find no evidence of the perception of the Huguenots as a "race". By their heresy, they appeared outsiders and finally non-human to their killers, but this is not a *racial* distinction. On the castration of corpses and the killing of unborn infants as ultimate efforts to humiliate and weaken the dangerous enemy, see below pp. 82-3.

As for Protestant killing of women, Catholic sources report women killed by the Huguenots in the Saint-Médard massacre at Paris, in the May events at Toulouse in 1562 and in the diocese of Angoulême: Haton, *Mémoires*, p. 181; *Relations de l'émeute de Toulouse*, p. 351; *Théâtre des cruautés*, p. 44. Bosquet reports nuns raped at Montauban in 1562; *Histoire*, ch. ii. On the whole, accounts of Protestant crowd action say little about assaults on females; with *statues* of the Virgin and female saints, it is another matter.

<sup>88</sup> Estèbe, *Tocsin*, p. 196.

antagonists in a . . . disturbance and those prevailing in the social system within which the disturbance occurs"?<sup>89</sup>

Though only extensive quantitative research could establish the point, it seems to me that Estèbe's view does not hold for these *urban* disturbances. To be sure, pillaging played its rôle in all riots. To be sure, the Catholic crowds who threw slime and shouted "putains" ("whores") at the Protestant noblewomen being led from the rue Saint Jacques conventicle to prison in 1557 were savouring social resentment as well as religious hatred. So probably were the embroiderer's journeyman who slew a notable jewel merchant in 1572 at Paris and the cutler who slew a lawyer in Orléans.<sup>90</sup> For Protestants at Valence in 1562 who killed the Sire de La Motte Gondrin, lieutenant-governor of the Dauphiné, there were political grievances to reinforce religious and social complaint.<sup>91</sup>

Nevertheless, despite such individual cases of "high isomorphy", the overall picture in these urban religious riots is not one of the "people" slaying the rich.<sup>92</sup> Protestant crowds expressed no preference for killing or assaulting powerful prelates over simple priests. As for Catholic crowds, contemporary listings of their victims in the 1572 massacres show that artisans, the "little people", are represented in significant numbers. In Lyon, for instance, in a list of 141 males killed in the Vespers, eighty-eight were artisans, thirty-four were merchants and six were lawyers.<sup>93</sup> Reports from

<sup>89</sup> Tilly and Rule, *Political Upheaval*, pp. 59-60.

<sup>90</sup> Crespín, *Martyrs*, ii, p. 545, iii, pp. 676, 696.

<sup>91</sup> *Hist. eccl.*, iii, pp. 301-5. So also in Troyes, where a stockingmaker killed the merchant-provost of the town, who had formerly been a member of the Reformed Church, one expects that political grievances reinforced religious hatred: Crespín, *Martyrs*, iii, p. 685. At Meaux, Crespín reports that one Gilles Le Conte was killed in the 1572 massacres, less because of his Reformed Religion than because he was a tax-farmer for Catherine de Médicis and was sometimes hard on Catholics: *Martyrs*, iii, p. 682.

<sup>92</sup> Though numerous other examples of "high isomorphy" can be found, the pages of Crespín are full of examples where artisans and merchants slew people in their trade (*ibid.*, iii, p. 675) and where relatives slew relatives (iii, pp. 676, 697). There are also individual cases of "high isomorphy", where the killing occurred "downward" — that is, the wealthy Catholic killed a poor Protestant. Indeed, the author of the *Tocsain contre les massacreurs* (in *Arch. cur.*, vii, pp. 58-9) asked the following question: as for the little people who professed the Reformed Religion, what humanity could they expect after the illustrious families had been treated in such a fashion?

<sup>93</sup> Figures compiled from *Première liste des chrétiens mis à mort et égorgés à Lyon par les catholiques romains à l'époque de la S. Barthélemi août 1572*, ed. P. M. Gonon (Lyon, 1847) and Crespín, *Martyrs*, iii, pp. 707-18. Letters from Lyon to Paris in early September reported that between six and seven hundred persons were killed in all: A. Puyroche, "Le Saint-Barthelemy à Lyon et le gouverneur Mandelot", *Bulletin de la société de l'histoire du protestantisme français*, xviii (1869), p. 365; Jacques Pannier, *L'Eglise Reformée de Paris sous Henri IV* (Paris, 1911), p. 369, n. 1. These estimates seem high on the basis of all the available evidence from wills and burials.

other cities give a similar spread, as can be seen in the following table. Only in Orléans were more merchants reported to have been killed than artisans, while in Rouen and Meaux the "little people" outnumber the wealthier merchants among the victims many times over. The distributions are all the more significant because the prominent and rich who were slain were especially likely to be remarked. If we had fuller evidence about the massacres, it would doubtless multiply the names of victims of modest background.

TABLE I  
SOCIAL-OCCUPATIONAL DISTRIBUTION OF MALE VICTIMS IN  
CONTEMPORARY LISTINGS OF THE 1572 MASSACRES\*

CITY	Nobles †	Law- yers, Officers	Mer- chants	Teach- ers, Pastors	Artisans	Un- skilled, Ser- vants	Occu- pation un- known	TOTAL
Bourges	0	7	6	0	8	0	2	23
Meaux	0	5	13	0	10 (+200) ‡	1	0	229
Troyes	0	1	11	0	22	2	0	36
Orléans	2	15	50	2	47	11	15	142
Rouen	3	9	18	3	119	3	31	186
Lyon	0	6	34	3	88	5	5	141
Paris	36	14	13	5	40	2	11	121

\* Sources for Lyon are given in n. 93. Other lists are from Crespin, *Martyrs*, iii.

† Nobles are here defined as persons listed with the title "Sieur de" in Crespin. Some of the lawyers and high officers killed may also have been ennobled.

‡ The names of ten artisans are listed for Meaux, after which the author says and "other artisans to the number of 200 or more". This figure has been added, not because it is believed to be accurate, but because it reflects the impression of contemporaries as to what level of the population was hit by the massacres.

As I show in detail in my forthcoming book *Strikes and Salvation at Lyon*, Catholic and Protestant movements in French cities up to 1572 cut vertically through the social structure, but had each a distinctive occupational distribution. On the basis of limited evidence, that distribution seems to be fairly well reflected in the victims of crowd action,<sup>94</sup> and (as we will see more fully in a moment) in the make-up

<sup>94</sup> In my forthcoming book *Strikes and Salvation at Lyon*, an analysis of the social and vocational distribution of several thousand male Protestants in Lyon in the period up to 1572 shows them to be drawn from the Consular élite, notables and *menu peuple* in numbers roughly proportional to their distribution in the population at large, but to be selected especially from the newer or more skilled occupations, occupations where the literacy rate was higher, or occupations (such as tavernkeeping) which had been transformed by the urban developments of the

(cont. on p. 81)

of the crowds. Only the most vulnerable of the urban poor — the *gagnedeniers*, that is, the unskilled, the day labourers and the jobless — are not among the killers or the killed. Neither committed to the Calvinist cause nor well integrated into the Catholic city parish, these “*bélistres*” (“rascals”) appear only after the violence is over, stolidly robbing clothing from the corpses.<sup>95</sup>

Is popular religious violence in sixteenth-century France never then correlated in a *systematic* way with socio-economic conflict? Not when it is among the city-folk, who account for most of the disturbances; but when peasants raise their arms for the faith, the relationship is more likely to exist. How else to explain the dispatch with which peasant pilgrims fell upon the Huguenot burghers of Sens, surprising even the urban Catholics by their initiative? And when Protestant peasants in the Agenois pursued their persecuting lord, the Seigneur of Fumel, they were shouting, “Murderer! Tyrant!” Even Catholic peasants joined in the siege of his chateau.<sup>96</sup>

Before turning to the composition of the urban crowds, let us look a little further at what I have called their rites of violence. Is there any way we can order the terrible, concrete details of filth, shame and torture that are reported from both Protestant and Catholic riots? I would suggest that they can be reduced to a repertory of actions, derived from the Bible, from the liturgy, from the action of political authority, or from the traditions of popular folk justice, intended to

(note 94 cont.)

early sixteenth century. At the top of urban society, it is the new élite rather than the more established élite that tends to produce Protestants (in Lyon, therefore, among the Consular families it is the wealthy merchants rather than the lawyers who tend to become Protestant). This vocational distribution is, of course, not perfectly expressed in the victims of the massacres, since so many factors operated in the choice of any one person as a victim. For instance, very few persons from the publishing trade were killed in the Vespers at Lyon (the *libraires* Jean Honoré, Mathieu Penin, and Jean Vassin, the bookbinder Mathurin Le Cler and the proofreader Jean de Saint Clément), though a very large percentage of the industry had been Protestant in the 1560s and many masters and publishers still were so in 1572. It is my impression that in other cities, members of the publishing trade, though certainly found among the victims, were under-represented relative to their presence in the Reformed Church. This can probably be explained by the special relations among the men in the trade or by their absence from France.

<sup>95</sup> *Rélation du massacre de la Saint-Barthélemy*, reprinted from *Mémoires de l'Etat de France sous Charles IX* in *Arch. cur.*, vii, p. 151; Crespin, *Martyrs*, iii, p. 703.

<sup>96</sup> Haton, *Mémoires*, pp. 190-3; *Hist. eccl.*, i, pp. 885-6. See also a religious riot with “high isomorphy” in Beaune, a small town with a very high percentage of winegrowers — that is, a large *rural* element — within its walls. In 1561 the winegrowers and others of the “little people”, supported from above by one of the city councillors, attacked Protestants returning from services. The latter group included some of the wealthier families in Beaune. *Ibid.*, i, pp. 864-5.

purify the religious community and humiliate the enemy and thus make him less harmful.

The religious significance of destruction by water or fire is clear enough. The rivers which receive so many Protestant corpses are not merely convenient mass graves, they are temporarily a kind of holy water, an essential feature of Catholic rites of exorcism. The fire which razes the house of a Protestant apothecary in Montpellier leaves behind it not the smell of death, of the heretic whom the crowd had hanged, but of spices, lingering in the air for days, like incense. If Protestants have rejected holy water and incense, they still follow Deuteronomy in accepting fire as a sacred means of purification.<sup>97</sup>

Let us take a more difficult case, the troubling case of the desecration of corpses. This is primarily an action of Catholic crowds in the sixteenth century. Protestant crowds could be very cruel indeed in torturing living priests, but paid little attention to them when they were dead.<sup>98</sup> (Perhaps this is related to the Protestant rejection of Purgatory and prayers for the dead: the souls of the dead experience immediately Christ's presence or the torments of the damned, and thus the dead body is no longer so dangerous or important an object to the living.) What interested Protestants was digging up bones that were being treated as sacred objects by Catholics and perhaps burning them, after the fashion of Josiah in I Kings.<sup>99</sup> The Catholics, however, were not content with burning or drowning

<sup>97</sup> On Catholic rites of exorcism, see Thomas, *Religion and the Decline of Magic*, chaps. 2 and 15. For the Montpellier episode, see Philippi, *Mémoires*, p. 634. Cf. the somewhat different treatment by Estèbe of the Saint Bartholomew's Day massacre as a "ritual crime" and purification rite: *Tocsin*, p. 197.

<sup>98</sup> Though Catholic writers such as the priest Claude Haton admit to various acts of desecration of corpses by *Catholic* crowds (e.g., *Mémoires*, pp. 704-6), they make remarkably few accusations against *Protestants* for the same kind of acts. Haton gives only one example — the dismemberment of a doctor of theology, killed in the Saint Médard massacre (*ibid.*, p. 181) — though he accuses the Huguenots of many other kinds of vicious actions. Bosquet's book on Toulouse gives one example of Protestants disemboweling a priest and displaying his entrails (*Histoire*, pp. 9-10, at Montauban), but stresses much more the Protestant humiliation and torture of living persons. The *Théâtre des cruautés des hérétiques*, which would surely have mentioned the Protestant acts of desecration of corpses if they had been common, talks only of the torture of living priests. In contrast, Protestant writings are full of descriptions of Catholic desecration of corpses, and Catholic sources describe these as well.

<sup>99</sup> Calvin on Purgatory and the whereabouts of the soul between death and the Last Judgement in the *Institutes*, Book III, ch. 5, sections 6-10; Book III, ch. 25, section 6. See also Keith Thomas's discussion of Protestant attitudes towards the dead in *Religion*, pp. 588-95, 602-6; Claude de Saintes, *Discours sur le saccagement*, p. 381 (burning of "holy bones" at Orléans). For the digging up and throwing around of saints' bones at Lyon, see Guéraud, *Chronique*, p. 156, and Niepce, *Monuments*, p. 42-3.

heretical corpses. That was not cleansing enough. The bodies had to be weakened and humiliated further. To an eerie chorus of "strange whistles and hoots", they were thrown to the dogs like Jezebel, they were dragged through the streets, they had their genitalia and internal organs cut away, which were then hawked through the city in a ghoulish commerce.<sup>100</sup>

Let us also take the embarrassing case of the desecration of religious objects by filthy and disgusting means. It is the Protestants, as we have seen, who are concerned about objects, who are trying to show that Catholic objects of worship have no magical power. It is not enough to cleanse by swift and energetic demolition, not enough to purify by a great public burning of the images, as in Albiac, with the children of the town ceremonially reciting the Ten Commandments around the fire.<sup>101</sup> The line between the sacred and the profane was also re-drawn by throwing the sacred host to the dogs, by roasting the crucifix upon a spit, by using holy oil to grease one's boots, and by leaving human excrement on holy-water basins and other religious objects.<sup>102</sup>

And what of the living victims? Catholics and Protestants humiliated them by techniques borrowed from the repertory of folk justice. Catholic crowds lead Protestant women through the streets with muzzles on — a popular punishment for the shrew — or with a crown of thorns.<sup>103</sup> A form of charivari is used, where the noisy throng humiliates its victim by making him ride backward on an ass.

<sup>100</sup> Strange sounds in Paris at the Saint Bartholomew's Day massacres: Crespin, *Martyrs*, iii, p. 681. Bodies thrown to the dogs in Draguignan and in Fréjus in 1560 (*Hist. eccl.*, i, pp. 421, 429) and in Orléans (Crespin, *Martyrs*, iii, p. 693). Parts of corpses were sold at Villeneuve d'Avignon in 1561 ("Five pence for a Huguenot's liver!"); at Vire in 1562 ("who wants to buy the tripe of Huguenots?"); at Paris in 1572; at Lyon in 1572 (where an apothecary rendered fat from Protestant corpses and sold it at 3 blancs the pound): *Hist. eccl.*, i, p. 978; ii, p. 846; *Le Tocsain contre les auteurs de Massacre de France in Arch. cur.*, vii, p. 51; Crespin, *Martyrs*, iii, p. 713.

There are also a few reports of cannibalism by Catholics in the wake of crowd murder ("not for hunger", as Montaigne says of "Cannibals" in his *Essais*, "but to represent an extreme vengeance"): at Carcassone in 1561, Troyes in 1562 and Sens in 1562: *Hist. eccl.*, i, p. 94; ii, p. 478; iii, pp. 419-20. Le Roy Ladurie reports a curious story of cannibalism among Protestants at Lodève in 1573: the body of Saint Fulcran, miraculously conserved, was shot and then eaten by order of the Huguenots in the wake of an uprising there: *Les paysans*, i, p. 398, n. 5.

<sup>101</sup> *Hist. eccl.*, i, p. 931.

<sup>102</sup> Haton, *Mémoires*, pp. 181-2; Guéraud, *Chronique*, p. 156; Bosquet, *Histoire*, p. 148; de Saintes, *Discours*, p. 372. See pp. 58-9 and n. 21 above.

<sup>103</sup> For the muzzle at Toulouse in 1562, and the crowns of thorns at St. Martin de Castillan and Brignolles in 1562, see *Hist. eccl.*, iii, p. 43; Crespin, *Martyrs*, iii, pp. 386-7. On punishments for the shrew, see Davis, "Reasons of Misrule", pp. 52, 56, n. 48. Prisoners were sometimes muzzled on the way to execution: L'Estoile, *Mémoires-journaux*, iii, p. 166.

In Blois in 1562, the Catholics did this to a Protestant saddler, poking him with a pike and shouting, "Oh, don't touch him, he belongs to the Queen Mother". In Montauban, a priest was ridden backward on an ass, his chalice in one hand, his host in the other, and his missal at an end of a halberd. At the end of his ride, he must crush his host and burn his own vestments. And, as in the festive parade on an ass of henpecked husbands it was sometimes necessary to get a neighbour to replace the husband, so sometimes a Protestant had to replace the priest. Dressed in holy vestments, he would be led through the streets pretending to say mass, while the crowd with him sang in derision *Te Deum Laudamus* or a requiem.<sup>104</sup>

With such actions, the crowds seem to be moving back and forth between the rites of violence and the realm of comedy. Are we at a Mardi Gras game, with its parodies and topsy-turvy mockery? At Lyon, a Protestant, in the midst of sacking the Church of Saint Irénée, dresses up as the Saint with his episcopal ring around his neck. At Rouen, the host is paraded at the end of a Rogation's Day lance with a dragon on it: "The dragon has eaten the host"<sup>105</sup> At Macon in 1562, the familiar blessing from Numbers vi. 24-6 is parodied as Protestants are slain: "The lord God of Huguenots keep you, the great Devil bless you, the Lord make his face to shine upon you who play the dead". Murder finally began to be called a "farce" in Macon, the "farce of Saint Point", the lieutenant-governor. The game was to go with some women after a party and get one or two Protestant prisoners from jail, have the ladies chat pleasantly with them, as they walked to the Saône bridge, and then drown them.<sup>106</sup>

<sup>104</sup> Crespin, *Martyrs*, iii, pp. 311-2; *Hist. eccl.*, i, p. 935; Bosquet, *Histoire*, pp. 9-10; de Saintes, *Discours*, p. 384. There were other charivari-like actions in religious riots: at Tours in 1562 Protestant women were taken back to mass on horseback "in derision" (probably facing backward on the horse): *Hist. eccl.*, ii, p. 695. At Macon in 1562, Pastor Bonnet was promenaded through the town with "mockery, a thousand raps on the nose and punches", the crowd crying, "Whoever wants to hear this pious and holy person preach, come to the Place de L'Escorcherie": *ibid.*, iii, p. 522. In 1567, Pastor Martin Tachart was led through Foix in triumph, in a "white bonnet, with a rosary round his neck": *Discours des troubles advenus en la Ville de Pamies*, p. 342. On charivaris, see Davis, "The Reasons of Misrule".

<sup>105</sup> Claude de Rubys, *Oraison prononcee a Lyon a la Creation des Conseillers et eschevins . . . le jour de la feste S. Thomas . . . 1567* (Lyon, 1568), Bb 2<sup>v</sup>; the journal of Canon Bruslart of Rouen, quoted in *Hist. eccl.*, ii, p. 720, n. 1.

<sup>106</sup> *Hist. eccl.*, iii, pp. 518, 524. Other examples of the renaming of objects or actions of violence: Protestants in Béziers and Montpellier called the clubs with which they hit priests and religious and other Catholic enemies *épousettes* or "whiskbrooms". Catholics in Mont-de-Marsan and its region used the same term for the clubs with which they hit Protestants: *Hist. eccl.*, iii, pp. 158-9; ii, pp. 963-4; Philippi, *Mémoires*, p. 624. At Agen, the gibbet on which Protestants were hanged was called the "Consistory": *Hist. eccl.*, ii, pp. 941-2. At Rouen, Catholic crowds referred to killing Huguenots as "accomodating" them: Crespin, *Martyrs*, iii, p. 721.

These episodes disclose to us the underlying function of the rites of violence. As with the “games” of Christ’s tormentors, which hide from them the full knowledge of what they do, so these charades and ceremonies hide from sixteenth-century rioters a full knowledge of what they are doing. Like the legitimation for religious riot examined earlier in this paper, they are part of the “conditions for guilt-free massacre”, to use a phrase from a recent study of violence in our own day.<sup>107</sup> The crucial fact that the killers must forget is that their victims are human beings. These harmful people in the community — the evil priest or hateful heretic — have already been transformed for the crowd into “vermin” or “devils”. The rites of religious violence complete the process of dehumanization. So in Meaux, where Protestants were being slaughtered with butchers’ cleavers, a living victim was trundled to his death in a wheelbarrow, while the crowd cried “vinegar, mustard”. And the vicar of the parish of Fouquebrune in the Angoumois was attached with the oxen to a plough and died from Protestant blows as he pulled.<sup>108</sup>

## V

What kinds of people made up the crowds that performed the range of acts we have examined in this paper? First, they were not by and large the alienated rootless poor that people the pages of Norman Cohn’s *Pursuit of the Millennium*.<sup>109</sup> A large percentage of men in Protestant iconoclastic riots and in the crowds of Catholic killers in 1572 were characterized as artisans. Sometimes the crowds included other men from the lower orders, as in 1562 in Gaillac, where Catholic boatmen from Montauban participated in the May massacres, and in Dieppe, where Protestant sailors entered the churches at night to smash statues. More often, the social composition of the crowds extended upward to encompass merchants, notaries and lawyers, as

<sup>107</sup> Troy Duster, “Conditions for Guilt-Free Massacre”, in Nevitt Sanford and Craig Comstock (eds.), *Sanctions for Evil* (San Francisco, 1971), ch. 3. Duster especially stresses the dehumanization of victims, and this volume contains several interesting essays on this matter.

<sup>108</sup> Crespin, *Martyrs*, iii, p. 684; *Théâtre des cruautés des hérétiques*, p. 44. There are several examples of Catholics associating Protestants not only with animals, but also with excrement. Excrement is thrown at them by crowds (Crespin, *Martyrs*, ii, p. 545, iii, pp. 203-4, 672), and in an extraordinary episode in Toulouse Protestants hiding in the sewers along the river are flushed out, covered with excrement, by great streams of water poured into the *cloacas* by Catholics, and are drowned (*Hist. eccl.*, iii, p. 19).

<sup>109</sup> Cohn, *Pursuit*, pp. 32, 137, 281.

well as the clerics whose rôle has already been mentioned.<sup>110</sup> Depending on the size, extent and occasion of the disturbance, the leaders of the crowd were sometimes artisans themselves, but frequently a mixed group. Iconoclastic disturbances, other than those carried out by Protestant noblemen and their soldiers, were ordinarily led by the "little people", but notable personages led the Protestant rioters into Saint Médard's church in 1561. Of twenty leaders of the 1572 massacres at Orléans, three were lawyers, eight were merchants, and others were various kinds of craftsmen — tanners, butchers and candlemakers.<sup>111</sup>

In addition, there was significant participation by two other groups of people who, though not rootless and alienated, had a more marginal relationship to political power than did lawyers, merchants or even male artisans — namely, city women and teenaged boys. As the wives of craftsmen marched with their husbands in the great Psalm-singing parades, so they were always busy in the iconoclastic riots of the Protestants. Sometimes they are active in other ways, as in Pamiers, where a bookseller's wife set fire to the house of the leading enemy of the Huguenots there, and in Toulouse, where La Broquiere, a solicitor's wife, fought Catholics with firearms.<sup>112</sup> As the wives of Catholic tradesmen march with their husbands in Corpus Christi

<sup>110</sup> Artisans in iconoclastic riots: *Hist. eccl.*, i, pp. 889, 702, 719. Analysis of Catholic crowds from Crespín, *Martyrs*, iii, pp. 663-733. Catholic boatmen at Gaillac, *ibid.*, iii, p. 82; Protestant sailors at Dieppe, *ibid.*, ii, p. 796. Catholics arrested in the wake of the Corpus Christi day riot at Lyon in 1561, during which Barthélemy Aneau, rector of the Collège de la Trinité, and others were killed: a boatman, a miller, a tavernkeeper, a shearer, a silkwormer (Archives départementales du Rhône, B, Sénéchaussée, Sentences, 1561-2, sentence of 14 Aug. 1561). Councillors from the Parlement of Toulouse in a violent Catholic crowd of May 1562 in *Hist. eccl.*, iii, p. 15.

In an interesting paper of May 1972, given at the Newberry Library Conference on the Massacre of Saint Bartholomew's Day, John Tedeschi presented a hitherto unknown manuscript by Tomasso Sassetti, Newberry Lib., Castelvetro MSS. Cod. 78/2, describing the massacres at Lyon and especially in Paris: "Brieve Raccontamento del Gran Macello fatto nella città di Parigi". Sassetti reported that printers were active among the Lyon killers; but his assertion is not borne out by any other accounts by residents of Lyon, nor by the patterns of deaths (see n. 94 above). Only two merchant-publishers are known to have had a connection with the massacres — Guillaume Rouillé, who was a Consul at the time and thus bears some responsibility for what happened, and Alexandre Marsigli, a Luccan exile who killed a merchant Paolo Minutoli in the hope that he would be pardoned in Lucca and allowed to return. Sassetti had just arrived in Lyon when the Vespers occurred.

<sup>111</sup> Crespín, *Martyrs*, iii, p. 692.

<sup>112</sup> *Hist. eccl.*, i, pp. 227, 719; Crespín, *Martyrs*, iii, p. 522; *Discours des troubles advenus en la Ville de Pamies*, p. 325; Bosquet, *Histoire*, pp. 148-50. I have also treated this subject in "City Women and Religious Change in Sixteenth-Century France", forthcoming in Dorothy MacGuigan (ed.), *A Sampler of Women's Studies* (Ann Arbor, Mich., 1973).

day processions, so they participate in Catholic religious disturbances. They shout insults at a Protestant funeral in Montauban and throw mire at a minister in Vassy, screaming, "Kill him, kill the evil-doer who has caused so many deaths"; but their most extreme violence seems directed against other women. At Aix-en-Provence in 1572, a group of butcher women torment a Protestant woman, the wife of a bookseller, finally hanging her from a pine tree, which had been used as a meeting place for Protestant worship.<sup>113</sup>

Adolescent males and even boys aged ten to twelve played a strikingly important rôle in both Catholic and Protestant crowds. In Lyon and Castelnauary in 1562 *enfants* stoned Protestant worshippers on their way to services. In several towns in Provence — Marseille, Toulon and elsewhere — Catholic youths stoned Protestants to death and burned them. The reputation of the adolescents in Sens and Provins was so frightening that a member of a well-known Huguenot family was afraid to walk through the streets, lest the children of Provins (*enfants de Provins*) massacre him.<sup>114</sup> In Toulouse, Catholic students take part in the massacres of 1572, and a decade earlier Protestant students had had the university in an uproar, whistling and banging in lectures when the canon law or the "old religion" was mentioned. In Poitiers in 1559 and again in 1562, Protestant youngsters from ten to twelve and students take the initiative in smashing statues and overturning altars. Indeed, youths are mentioned as part of almost all the great iconoclastic disturbances — in the Netherlands, in Rouen and elsewhere.<sup>115</sup>

I am struck here by the similarity between the licence allowed

<sup>113</sup> *Hist. eccl.*, i, p. 913; Crespin, *Martyrs*, iii, pp. 203-4, 392. At Lyon a woman was among those arrested for her actions in the Corpus Christi day riot of 1561: Archives départementales du Rhône, B, Sénéchaussée, Sentences, 1561-2, sentence of 14 Aug. 1561. Catholic women stoned a Protestant mercer at Vire in Normandy: *Hist. eccl.*, ii, p. 846.

<sup>114</sup> Lyon: Guéraud, *Chronique*, p. 145; Castelnauary: *Hist. eccl.*, iii, p. 157; Marseille, Toulon, Poignans, Forcalquier: *Hist. eccl.*, iii, pp. 412-15; Provins and Sens: Haton, *Mémoires*, pp. 194, 315. In addition, the "petits enfans" ("children") of Auxerre start stoning the doors of a conventicle in 1561, and the "petits enfans" of Druguignan, egged on by priests and councillors of the Parlement of Aix, kill the important Protestant, Antoine de Richier, Sieur de Mouvans, in 1560: *Hist. eccl.*, i, pp. 852, 421. The tug-of-war over a corpse by the boys, ten to twelve years old, in Provins has already been described, as has the riot in Pamiers, provoked by the *jeunes hommes* ("young men") of the festive youth group: above, pp. 63-4 and 74-5. Already in Geneva in 1533, we see Catholic "enfants", twelve to fifteen years old, joining their mothers in Catholic crowds which stoned the heretical women: Jeanne de Jussie, *Levain*, p. 47.

<sup>115</sup> Toulouse: Crespin, *Martyrs*, iii, p. 726 (students also participated in the 1572 massacres at Orléans, *ibid.*, p. 695); Bosquet, *Histoire*, p. 46. Poitiers: *Hist. eccl.*, i, pp. 227-8, ii, p. 703. Rouen: *Hist. eccl.*, ii, p. 719. Flanders: Crespin, *Martyrs*, iii, pp. 519, n. 1, 522.

youth to do violence in religious riot and the festive licence allowed adolescents in the youth-abbeys in villages and small towns to act as the conscience of the community in matters of domestic discord. As young teenagers and children participated in the processional life of, say, Rouen ("their prayers are of great merit before God, especially because they are pure and clean in their conscience and without malice", noted a Rouennais priest) and led some of the great League penitential processions in Paris in 1589, so Catholic adolescents moved into religious violence without much criticism from their elders.<sup>116</sup> In the Protestant case, where sons might sometimes disagree about religion with their fathers and where the revolt is in part against the paternal authority of the clergy, youthful violence seems to have more of the character of generational conflict. But ultimately Calvinism, too, was a movement cutting across generational lines, within which adolescents or artisans sometimes took the early initiative in open militant action. Thus in Lyon in 1551, the first public Psalm-singing marches were organized by printers' journeymen, while in Montpellier in 1560-61 it was the "young people" ("*jeunes gens*") who first invited a minister to the city and began public Psalm singing in French in front of the city hall.<sup>117</sup>

Finally, as this study has already suggested, the crowds of Catholics and Protestants, including those bent on deadly tasks, were not an inchoate mass, but showed many signs of organization. Even with riots that had little or no planning behind them, the event was given some structure by the situation of worship or the procession that was the occasion for many disturbances. In other cases, planning in advance led to lists of targets, and ways of identifying friends or fellow rioters (white crosses on Catholic doors in Macon in 1562; red bonnets worn by the killers in the *Bande Cardinale* in Bordeaux in 1572; passwords and slogans — "Long live the Cross", "The

<sup>116</sup> F. N. Taillepieud, *Recueil des Antiquitez et Singularitez de la Ville de Rouen* (Rouen, 1587), pp. 195-7; L'Estoile, *Mémoires-journaux*, iii, pp. 243-4, 247. Peter Ascoli also describes the rôle of children in the League procession of 1589 in "The Sixteen and the Paris League, 1589-1591" (University of California at Berkeley Ph.D. thesis, 1971). In a recent lecture on fifteenth-century Florence, Richard Trexler has emphasized the rôle of male adolescents first in the processional life of the city and then as zealous and active supporters of Savonarola's war on the vanities: "Ritual in Florence: Adolescence and Salvation in the Renaissance", Conference on Late Medieval and Renaissance Religion, The University of Michigan, Ann Arbor, Apr. 20-22, 1972.

<sup>117</sup> N. Z. Davis, "Strikes and Salvation at Lyons", *Archiv für Reformationsgeschichte*, lvi (1965), pp. 51-2; Philippi, *Mémoires*, p. 623. For youth-groups and their rôle in sixteenth-century France, see Davis, "Reasons of Misrule".

Wolf", "Long live the Gospel").<sup>118</sup> Existing organizations could provide the basis for subsequent religious disturbance, such as confraternities and festive youth societies for Catholics; and for both Protestants and Catholics, units of the militia and craft groupings.<sup>119</sup>

Zeal for violent purification also led to new organizations. Sometimes the model was a military one, as in the companies of Catholic artisans in Autun, Auxerre and Le Mans raised by the lifting of an ensign; the "marching bands" organized in Beziers by both Protestants and Catholics; and the *dizaines* set up by the Reformed church of Montauban in 1561.<sup>120</sup> Sometimes the model was a youth group, as in the case of a band of young unmarried lesser nobles in Champagne, who went around terrorizing Catholics.<sup>121</sup> The creation which best expresses the spirit of religious riot, however, is the band of the Sieur de Flassans in Aix-en-Provence. This nobleman, First Consul of Aix, in 1562 organized a troop of "little people", butchers among them, and monks, to seek out Protestants in the area, stoning their houses, shouting at them, killing, or imprisoning them. They wore rosaries and special feathered hats with white crosses on them; they sang special songs against the Huguenots; carried an ensign with the Pope's keys upon it; and went everywhere led by a Franciscan with a great wooden cross.<sup>122</sup>

<sup>118</sup> For the rôle of Protestant targets in Nemours, see *Hist. eccl.*, i, p. 834. For the white crosses in Macon, *ibid.*, iii, p. 518; and the red bonnets in Bordeaux, Crespin, *Martyrs*, iii, p. 729. For "Vive la Croix" in Toulouse, "Le Loup", a Catholic password in Vire in Normandy, "Vive l'Evangile" in La Rochelle, see *Hist. eccl.*, iii, p. 33, ii, pp. 845, 989.

<sup>119</sup> *Ibid.*, i, pp. 355, 844; *Discours des troubles advenus en la Ville de Pamies*, pp. 319-20.

<sup>120</sup> *Hist. eccl.*, iii, p. 487; Crespin, *Martyrs*, iii, pp. 287, 641; *Hist. eccl.*, iii, pp. 158-9, i, p. 913. Also see the "company" of horsemen of the draper Cosset of Meaux, founded in 1572 right after the massacres to round-up and kill Huguenots who had escaped to nearby villages (Crespin, *Martyrs*, iii, p. 684), and the image-breaking band formed in 1562 in Mont-de-Marsan (*Hist. eccl.*, ii, pp. 963-4).

<sup>121</sup> Haton, *Mémoires*, p. 334. In Annonay in 1573, a young man, formerly head of the *Bazoche*, or festive society of law clerks, of Vismes, put himself at the head of eighty men "of his type" and lived off the countryside. This was evidently a Protestant band of young men. Achille Gamon, *Mémoires*, p. 615. The most interesting new youth group formed in this period was, however, the Whistlers or *Siffiars* of Poitiers, so-called from a whistle the members wore around their necks. Founded among students around 1561, it initially mocked both religions. Initiates had to swear by flesh, belly, death and "the worthy double head, stuffed with Relics" and by all the Divinity in this pint of wine, that they would be devoted Whistlers, and that instead of going to Protestant service, mass or Vespers, they would go twice a day to a brothel, etc. The group grew to some sixty-four youths and became especially hostile to the Reformed Church and its services, perhaps because of Reformed hostility to them. Its members began to go around armed. *Hist. eccl.*, i, pp. 844-5.

<sup>122</sup> *Ibid.*, i, pp. 983-6; Crespin, *Martyrs*, iii, pp. 390-1.

That such splendour and order should be put to violent uses is a disturbing fact. Disturbing, too, is the whole subject of religious violence. How does an historian talk about a massacre of the magnitude of St. Bartholomew's Day? One approach is to view extreme religious violence as an extraordinary event, the product of frenzy, of the frustrated and paranoid primitive mind of the people. As Estèbe has said, "The procedures used by the killers of Saint Bartholomew's Day came back from the dawn of time; the collective unconscious had buried them within itself, they sprang up again in the month of August 1572".<sup>123</sup> Though there are clearly resemblances between the purification rites of primitive tribes and those used in sixteenth-century religious riots, this paper has suggested that one does not need to look so far as the "collective unconscious" to explain this fact, nor does one need to regard the 1572 massacres as an isolated phenomenon.

A second approach sees such violence as a more usual part of social behaviour, but explains it as a somewhat pathological product of certain kinds of child-rearing, economic deprivation or status loss. This paper has assumed that conflict is perennial in social life, though the forms and strength of the accompanying violence vary; and that religious violence is intense because it connects intimately with the fundamental values and self-definition of a community. The violence is explained not in terms of how crazy, hungry or sexually frustrated the violent people are (though they may sometimes have such characteristics), but in terms of the goals of their actions and in terms of the rôles and patterns of behaviour allowed by their culture. Religious violence is related here less to the pathological than to the normal.

Thus, in sixteenth-century France, we have seen crowds taking on the rôle of priest, pastor or magistrate to defend doctrine or purify the religious community, either to maintain its Catholic boundaries and structure, or to re-form relations within it. We have seen that popular religious violence could receive legitimation from different features of political and religious life, as well as from the group identity of the people in the crowds. The targets and character of crowd violence differed somewhat between Catholics and Protestants, depending on their perception of the source of danger and on their religious sensibility. But in both cases, religious violence had a connection in time, place and form with the life of worship, and the violent actions themselves were drawn from a store of punitive or purificatory traditions current in sixteenth-century France.

<sup>123</sup> Estèbe, *Tocsin*, pp. 194, 197.

In this context, the cruelty of crowd action in the 1572 massacres was not an exceptional occurrence. St. Bartholomew was certainly a bigger affair than, say, the Saint Médard's riot, it had more explicit sanction from political authority, it had elaborate networks of communication at the top level throughout France, and it took a more terrible toll in deaths. Perhaps its most unusual feature was that the Protestants did not fight back.<sup>124</sup> But on the whole, it still fits into a whole pattern of sixteenth-century religious disturbance.

This inquiry also points to a more general conclusion. Even in the extreme case of religious violence, crowds do not act in a mindless way. They will to some degree have a sense that what they are doing is legitimate, the occasions will relate somehow to the defence of their cause, and their violent behaviour will have some structure to it — here dramatic and ritual. But the rites of violence are not the rights of violence in any *absolute* sense. They simply remind us that if we try to increase safety and trust within a community; guarantee that the violence it generates will take less destructive and less cruel forms, then we must think less about pacifying “deviants” and more about changing the central values.

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<sup>124</sup> The non-resistance of the Protestants is an extraordinary fact, which emerges from all accounts of the 1572 massacres, and which is in contrast with the militant high morale of the Protestants when they were attacked in, say, 1561-2. The Protestant martyrs described in Crespin in 1572 either try to run away — the males sometimes dressed in their wives' clothes (*Martyrs*, iii, p. 698) — or die bravely in their faith. When an individual does try to resist (such as Maistre Mamert, a school-teacher and swordmaster in Orléans), it is the occasion of some notice by Crespin: *Martyrs*, iii, p. 697.