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**SIXTEENTH-CENTURY CIVIC COMMUNITIES AND THE
ADVENT OF THE REFORMATION
THE MOELLER INITIATIVE, THE SUBSEQUENT DEBATE AND
CURRENT DOMINANT INTERPRETIVE TRENDS IN THE SOCIAL
HISTORIOGRAPHY OF THE URBAN REFORMATION IN GERMANY
AND FRANCE**

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ABSTRACT

In 1962, the German Reformation historian Bernd Moeller published his Reichsstadt und Reformation, bringing about a major revitalization of historical interest in the German urban Reformation. Moeller's book sought to disengage the historiography of the Reformation from theological controversy by pointing, in the tradition of Max Weber, to the intersection of Reformation theology with the urban socio-political milieu.

Moeller's initiative met with considerable criticism mainly by ecclesiastical and cultural historians who accused him of introducing 'sociologism' in the historical examination of a purely religious phenomenon. However, it soon found eager followers among social historians who took the opportunity to approach the Reformation from the perspective of social history. The 1970s and 1980s have been marked by a plethora of major works on the urban reformation, all directly or indirectly related to 'the Moeller initiative'.

This thesis follows critically the evolution of the social historiography of the urban Reformation as initiated by Reichsstadt und Reformation. In the light of recent research, it examines the merits and weaknesses of Moeller's interpretation with reference to the urban Reformation in Germany but, also, France, as Moeller himself has suggested that his interpretation can be equally applied in the French Reformation.

This thesis examines the evolution of the social historiography of the urban Reformation in Germany and France, as related to the postulates of Reichsstadt und Reformation. It traces the interpretive trends currently dominant in the Anglo-Saxon and French social historiographical traditions and attempts to detect the possibility of a new, all-embracing historical interpretation of the Reformation, as initiated by Moeller and envisaged by numerous historians who further elaborated on his original formulations.

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PART ONE: THE PRELUDE TO THE REFORMATION ERA: EARLY MODERN URBAN COMMUNITIES IN GERMANY AND FRANCE

The 'urban background of the Reformation', or the analysis of the socio-political structures of German and other European cities and their impact on early Reformation developments, is not the product of recent studies, and did not originate with 'the Moeller initiative'. However the interpretations of Bernd Moeller, especially in his Reichsstadt und Reformation (1962), are seen as landmarks in the interpretation of the Reformation. Without discounting the importance of earlier urban studies like that of Hans Baron in 1937, it can be said that Moeller's study of the Imperial Cities and the Reformation initiated a new widespread analysis of the socio-political anatomy of pre-Reformation urban communities. His 'initiative' has had a major impact on the historiography of the German Reformation, openly acknowledged by scholars internationally - even when they point to major limitations in his theories *1.

This thesis will analyse Moeller's interpretations, the strengths and weaknesses of his methodological approach, and the impact that his initiatives have had on subsequent historiography of the Reformation. Obviously this involves a study of research on pre-Reformation urban society in Germany and the reception of the Reformation there. However Moeller -

possibly rashly - suggested that some of his interpretations could be applied to French urban society and the Reformation in France. Historians' studies of the French urban Reformation have largely dealt with the postulates of his theory. This thesis undertakes therefore to investigate the impact of an interpretative initiative on two major areas, and on the interpretive insights of historians coming from different historiographical traditions.

This thesis is a study of historical methodology and interpretation; it is not intended as a study of urban societies as such, based on direct 'original' evidence. A concern with methodological approaches, as opposed to accumulating 'all the available evidence' justifies this writer tackling the theme without being a German speaker. Moeller's central work has been translated - and the English and French versions of his Reichsstadt und Reformation are to be seen as superior to the German original *2. Other major interpretations of German urban society and the early Reformation are available in English translation, or have been produced by American and British historians. In the case of France the contributions studied are largely from native French historians - though again there are some important contributions from English speakers. The study of 'the Moeller initiative' soon involves us in the interaction of various 'schools' or traditions of historical methodology.

It is always a temptation for the student of historiography to offer ready-made qualifications of his historians, according to their apparent affiliation with certain dominant interpretive

trends or 'schools'. In an effort to avoid abstract formulations common to methodological essays, I shall attempt to depict and classify the different views offered by historians who have been stimulated by Moeller's paradigm, by examining their specific approaches to aspects of the contact between the Reformation and the urban communities as originally pinpointed by Moeller.

The first part of the thesis will examine the urban socio-political and cultural background to the Reformation, as depicted by Moeller and the historians who participated in the subsequent debate. It will deal with the urban social stratification, hierarchical relationships and cultural universe in early modern Germany and France.

Then, the second part will deal with the examination of the outbreak of the Reformation crisis in Germany and France. Besides Moeller's interpretation, it will present and evaluate other historians' contributions to the investigation of the original contact of the Reformation with urban societies. Both urban Reformations will be dealt with in separate chapters, following the pattern set in Part I, but an attempt will be made to offer some initial conclusions on common underlying characteristics of the urban Reformation in Germany and France.

The third part of the thesis will examine the merits and weaknesses of Moeller's theory in the light of subsequent historical research, as outlined in parts I and II. Then, the discussion will pinpoint the dominant interpretive trends in the social historiographies of the urban Reformations in Germany and France. Finally, the thesis will offer a global view of the German

and French urban Reformations, as given by the current state of research; it will outline the limitations of current scopes of investigation and examine the possibility of an all-embracing approach to the urban Reformation in both countries.

CHAPTER ONE: THE GERMAN CIVIC COMMUNITIES PRIOR TO THE REFORMATION

The fundamental contribution of Moeller's Reichsstadt und Reformation (in an extended essay rather than a full monograph) lies not so much in his positive interpretations, as in the questions he raised, but which could not be answered because of the current lack of detailed studies of the relationship between German Imperial Cities and the Reformation. Questions also remained unanswered - or were inadequately answered - because of methodological limitations in the scope of his investigations.

Moeller follows the evolution of urban communities from their early period in the eleventh century to the Reformation, and stresses the emergence of **communalism** as the fundamental characteristic of the early modern German town. This was the product of important socio-political changes that had occurred in the fourteenth and fifteenth centuries, culminating in the guild revolts. The new broadened civic governments that emerged following these turbulent years had a profound formative influence on the social outlook of the burghers - that is, the urban inhabitants that enjoyed the right of citizenship. This was a new awareness of the burghers' special relationship to the

civic community, a code of civic ethic that dictated the duties and rights of the individual towards the collectivity [pp. 12-13].

This new conception of the civic community was something more than a usual arrangement of mutual assistance: it made the city the central point of reference in the daily activities and thoughts of the citizenry; the citizens should strive collectively for their city's prosperity, they should defend it against any external or internal threat.

One of the fundamental characteristics of early modern urban communities was the fusion of the sacral with the temporal, the sanctification of the community. Like the Church, all urban institutions and offices were held responsible in a spiritual way. Citizens and magistrates alike believed that the community had a responsibility for the salvation of its members. The city was held responsible in case of natural disaster, and the solemn sermons offered by the authorities in such cases manifest the deep belief in that collective civic responsibility towards God [pp. 14-15].

According to Moeller, these considerations enable the historian to apprehend better the motives behind the civic councils' drive to gain control of urban ecclesiastical institutions. The fusion of secular and spiritual obligations brought forth by the sanctification of the urban community made the civic authorities and community into a kind of lay **ecclesia** in direct competition with the Church.

To the newly-formed citizen it was unacceptable that his salvation as well as that of the city depended on an institution

separated from the civic community and - needless to say - with a disputable record. In the Imperial Cities with resident bishops, the struggle against ecclesiastical autonomy and immunity from taxation and from legal punishment probably dated from the beginnings of civic autonomy. By the end of the Middle Ages, many civic authorities had gained a monopoly of ecclesiastical control, transforming the Church into a kind of private institution (**ecclesia propria**) reserved for the community. This was the culmination of an effort to integrate the ecclesiastical ministers into the urban collectivity, as necessary to eternal salvation. As Moeller puts it, 'however exaggerated it may sound, the late medieval German town considered itself as a miniature **corpus Christianum**' [pp. 16-18] ^{*3}.

This image of civic unity was greatly distorted during the fifteenth century and, subsequently, its principal expression, the communal spirit, started to wane. For various reasons, both the internal and external situations of the cities were changing for the worse: the incessant rivalry with the territorial princes had eventually shown that the urban forces were too weak to cope with the might of aggressive feudal elements. On the one hand, this rivalry accentuated the internal shift towards authoritarianism on the part of the ruling groups, who had built up a costly and delicate framework of territorial estates to combat princely aggression. On the other, the economic crisis of the late fifteenth century forced the civic councils to impose a stricter control over the guilds - the backbone of the civic community.

Another development which led to authoritarianism was the participation of the Imperial Cities in the Imperial Diets after 1486; the great divergence of the cities' interests and territorial policies necessitated the formation of a bureaucratic body which would deal with the administration and coordination of urban policies. As a result, the urban communities experienced an increasing isolation from public affairs and civic power.

Finally, Moeller interprets this fade-out of communalism as a consequence of the continuous monopoly of government on the part of the patricians and wealthy merchants, even in towns with corporate constitutions: he speaks of a 'well-qualified oligarchic tendency' in the cities at the end of the fifteenth century. The urban ruling groups had never really lost their overall control of civic life and they were now supplying the Empire with its new elite. In the age when Germany attained an intellectual level of the highest order amid European nations, urban life was troubled by bitter social struggles and antagonisms, most acute in towns with long-distance trade facilitating the creation of enormous fortunes and subsequently furthering the gap between rich and poor. Around 1510, social upheavals were evident in most cities and towns and the ancient communal ideas were rapidly decaying, as the social cohesion of the citizens was loosened on the grounds of their internal, socio-political and economic differentiations [pp. 18-23].

A close study of Moeller's brief but stimulating book will reveal a series of problems of historical interpretation concerning the structural characteristics of pre-Reformation

urban communities. Three issues appear as essential to our appreciation of Moeller's approach as well as of the subsequent contributions to the debate about the nature of the urban communities: a) the correspondence between the civic hierarchical order and urban socio-economic conditions; b) the underlying factors of the quest for a share in civic power and the revitalization of communalism; c) the place of Church and religion in the urban community and the foundations of urban aggression towards the urban ecclesiastical institution.

Section 1: Civic hierarchical order and urban socio-economic conditions

The first issue refers us to the perennial debate about the nature of early modern European society, namely the social stratification and its foundations. Existent social forces, socio-political relationships, and the peculiarity of the cities within feudal structures are topics repeatedly met throughout this thesis as they form the general framework that was to be marked by the advent of the Reformation. The diversity of historical interpretations of this first problem can be reduced to a basic polarization between two main contrasting views, advocating a social stratification by order or by class. The former approach derives mainly from empirical studies of late medieval feudalism and the latter has been influenced by the conceptual tools suggested mainly by Marxism. However, there

are some historians of the urban Reformation whose investigations appear to reach an intermediary position: either they accept the concept of class but refuse to base themselves on a class-conflict approach, or they suggest a possible coexistence of orders and classes within the early modern urban framework.

Historians not willing to legitimize class conflict as a principal force behind social evolution, are basically contrasting pre-industrial society with its industrial successor in terms of the former's relative social stability and the absence of antagonisms deriving from the relations of production. They adhere to a model of society characterised by a hierarchy of degrees (**orders, stande, états**), distinctly arranged according to the esteem that society attributes to their social status. A society of orders is based on a broad consensus concerning the permanent predominance of the ruling elite, the top of the hierarchical order; its structural organization always derives from the top, according to the various needs of the dominant order *4.

Following this theoretical presupposition, these historians examine the socio-political evolution of late medieval urban communities, acknowledging the inherent tensions and conflicts but stressing continuity in the predominance of the ruling elite. They interpret the failure of fifteenth-century guild revolts to alter drastically the civic hierarchical structures in terms of the burghers' blurred social consciousness and the lack of socio-economic demands that could constitute an open threat to

the patriciate's rule. Instead they suggest that the main point of conflict as manifested in the various citizen petitions and lists of grievances was always the misuse or abuse of power by the civic authorities, but never the appropriation of civic government by the ruling elite.

Two years before the publication of Moeller's book Erich Maschke produced an elaborate presentation of the evolution of urban social stratification from the formation of communities to the sixteenth century ^{*5}. This was a very clear outline of the above mentioned interpretive trend, stressing the continuity in the urban hierarchical order and the non-revolutionary character of burgher uprisings.

Maschke's contribution also sheds ample light on the historical evolution of the term **bürger**, another point of controversy among current historians: following the judicial unification of the inhabitants of urban centres (dating from the eleventh century) the term **burgensis** (later: **bürger**) designated all members of the newly-formed community. However, after the mass peasant immigration in the towns, the term **burgensis** lost its traditional importance and was gradually replaced by the term **civis**, which had now acquired a double meaning: collectively, it referred to all persons having the right of citizenship but, individually, it only designated members of the ruling elite. This status was attributed to the most powerful and wealthy members of the traditional urban community - established citizens and not newcomers.

Although the term **patriciate** was a humanist invention,

Maschke maintains that it referred to all families participating in the municipal councils from the end of the twelfth century onwards. Between the twelfth and fourteenth centuries, the elites of the Alsatian and Swiss towns also included persons qualified for military offices (**Konstafflers**, from the Latin **Constabularii**) as well as mercantile and banking elements. This diversity of 'patricians' proves according to Maschke that the patriciate was not a judicially segregated group but was rather basing its separatedness on the special status it had acquired through a consensus within the citizenry. Although Maschke accepts a correspondence between order and economic background (the wealthiest elements being among the patricians) he asserts that the fundamental distinction was to be found in the status of each order [pp. 936-940].

From the thirteenth century onwards the bipartite division was clarified in full: the once united burgher community was now divided into the patriciate and the community, the latter comprising the various crafts. In the south German cities this distinction led to political upheaval; the thirteenth century saw the first uprisings of the urban communities against the patrician monopoly of government, a fact that led to the 'opening' of civic councils to representatives of the lower social ranks, under new constitutions, so-called corporate (**Zunftverfassung**).

The fourteenth century was a period of rapid growth both for the northern German towns - under the leadership of Lubeck and the Hansa - and the southern Imperial Cities, united in the

Swabian-Rhenish Confederation; it was also the era of the guild revolts, starting in 1332 and continuing up to the end of the century. The revolts were only partly successful in the Hanseatic towns due to the limited importance of the artisans. The situation was quite different in the southern cities with their highly developed crafts industry. However, even in that case the success of the guild revolts proved to be ephemeral for various reasons. Firstly, the guild revolts coincided with a relaxation of the rigid social division between the orders. Secondly, there was no solid social group behind the revolts; certainly, the mass of the insurgents were artisans as shown in the cases of Augsburg and Constance but, still, the ultimate beneficiaries of the revolts in cities like Zurich, Augsburg and Cologne were the members of the nobility or, as in the case of Lubeck, non-patrician merchant groups.

Based on that evidence, Maschke concludes that the guild revolts were neither revolutionary nor had they the character of a modern class conflict since most of the leaders of the uprisings were economically and socially closer to the elites than to their colleagues in the guilds. Moreover, the new corporate constitutions did not introduce social equality among individual citizens but rather among civic associations, the patriciate being one amongst others. Finally, despite some political concessions, the urban patriciates had not really lost their overall predominance and control of civic affairs.

Maschke's investigations of the guild revolts also direct him to economic factors: the incapability of the guilds to maintain

power even in towns with corporate constitutions was linked to the position of the craftsmen in the process of production. Their almost total preoccupation with their work, the limited possibilities of accumulation of capital, their extremely limited spare time made it impossible for them to participate actively in civic administration. The various cases of active guild participation in high civic offices were mainly due to the gradual reduction in the numbers of the patriciate and its subsequent loss of power (due to wars, deaths, etc). This made the prospect of joining the patriciate less promising than it used to appear to the wealthy rising burghers who now preferred to remain in their guild status. Thus, the guild representatives in municipal councils were in reality wealthy merchants and not artisans [pp. 946-947].

In the early 1510s there was another series of urban uprisings against civic governments even in towns with guild constitutions. Maschke interprets this renewal of urban upheaval as a protest of the guilds against civic councils they had themselves elected. The turbulent early years of the sixteenth century proved once more that the ruling patriciate had never actually lost its hegemonic position in government, largely aided by its political flexibility and the mercantile nature of urban economies; long-distance trade always weighed on external policies but also determined the internal hierarchical relationships [p. 948].

Moeller's book closely follows the pattern of interpretation suggested by Maschke, without any apparent attempt to link the

investigation of urban stratification with contemporary socio-economic realities. His depiction of the Imperial City rarely goes below the surface when dealing with the social evolution of urban communities. His 'communal spirit' appears to have been equally shared by both patriciate and community at least till the fifteenth century [p. 18]. Moreover, the social upheavals of the thirteenth and fourteenth centuries appear to have consolidated the collective belief that the individual burgher was an integral part of the greater organic unity of the town. This image of peaceful stability and harmonious coexistence was suddenly blurred in the sixteenth century when the ideal of civic unity faded away and was mysteriously replaced by humanist republicanism and the will of the burghers to restore their model of civic community against the oligarchic tendencies of the ruling groups [pp. 12-13, 22-23].

Heinz Schilling's recent contribution follows the same interpretive trend but refers to the relatively neglected northern towns, specifically the Hanseatic League. Schilling questions the validity of Moeller's argument that the Hanseatic cities were rather poor and backward in the intellectual/cultural sphere when compared to their southern counterparts. Also, he rejects Moeller's assertion that the Hanseatic Reformation proceeded under close princely control, stating that the Hanseatic cities were still powerful during the Reformation period since the princely states had only begun to emerge *6.

Suggesting that Reformation and burgher movements had common roots in the organisation of urban society, Schilling

underlines the fundamental opposition between the oligarchic tendencies of the ruling groups on the one hand, and the popular communal principles of town government on the other. Unlike its south German counterpart, sixteenth-century Hanseatic communalism was stronger than ever as the common cause behind burgher defense of the theoretical and legal foundations of the civic community against the threat of territorial princes but, also, against oligarchic governments.

Despite the lack of corporate guild constitutions and their absence from civic councils, Hansa burghers had a great share in civic power through special institutions supplementary to the patrician magistrates ('Bauernschaften', 'Lanschaften', 'Kirchspiele'). Reference to communal principles legitimized burgher opposition to oligarchies. However, behind burgher dissent (which was primarily of middle-class origin) there was - again - a group of rising wealthy families directly or indirectly influencing the opposition [pp. 448-449].

The character of Hanseatic burgher opposition was, as with the Imperial Cities' movements, non-revolutionary, and comprised mixed social and religious grievances and demands. Like their south German counterparts, the Hansa burghers stressed that they were not in rebellion against city authorities but that they were using their legal right to influence town policies. In their religious demands, the burghers manifested a mixture of communal principles with early Reformation ideas such as the right of the community to appoint preachers against the will of the magistracy. The absence of any form of class

conflict is taken for granted in Schilling's account and we are once more referred to the interpretive model of an order-based society [pp. 452-453] ^{*7}.

Lastly, a study by Hans Rublack can be used to supplement this group of historians' views of civic hierarchical order. He offers ample information concerning the social-juridical foundations of civic hierarchy. He adds to the general empirical approach of the others a more theoretical perception. Rublack's approach can serve as a theoretical bridge between the above mentioned two interpretive trends. His study can be fittingly discussed here because it highlights, with much elaboration, the general consensus behind the order-based hierarchy as envisaged by those historians who accept it as the historical reality of the period ^{*8}.

Rublack uses the concept of **norms** to investigate the civic hierarchical order and its relationship to society. He defines norms as principles legitimizing social action, and by 'social action' he means 'the entire realm of activities and behaviour which were oriented towards a social system'. His examination of various codes and treatises shows the norms of 'peace', 'justice', 'unity' and 'the common weal' to be prevalent in sixteenth-century urban communities. All these norms referred directly to the 'praise of God' as the fundamental mission of the community. In their more earthly application, these norms served as integrators for the preservation of urban status quo; as such, they were one expression of universal norms of peace and justice propounded by Augustinian and Thomist thought.

The all-embracing norm of the common weal emerged as incompatible to individual pursuit of wealth and power; thus, pressure by the guilds for a redistribution of civic power appeared as an offensive act against 'the common weal' of the civic community. Natural disasters and all sorts of calamities were treated as divine punishment for breach of these norms by the citizenry. The presence of these norms in the civic oaths that legally constituted the urban corporation, indicates their manipulation by the ruling elites [pp. 27-31].

With regards to citizen compliance with these norms, Rublack points to the coexistence of two mutually exclusive legal and governmental principles in the civic communities: the one theocratic and descending, the other populist and ascending. The former maintained that power and authority were invested only in the higher orders, the latter claimed that power came from the community which legitimized the civic governments by election. In other words, Rublack describes here the oligarchic and the popular-communal views of the civic hierarchical order presented above by Maschke and Schilling.

According to Rublack, the whole sphere of activities of civic oligarchies corresponded to these norms: civic oath, poor relief, council and community gatherings, various civic services, etc., and the norms were incessantly referred to by jurists and pamphleteers writing in support of the regimes. However, the same norms were to be found also in guild vocabulary, a fact that indicates that they were universally accepted as valid, and that it was precisely on this ground that an ideological war was

fought between oligarchs and burghers [pp. 51-52].

Rublack's study suggests an interplay of interests between oligarchies and burghers, based on a commonly-accepted judicial and ideological foundation. The norms legitimizing social action in the urban communities had basically a 'horizontal' function, reflecting the cohesion and solidarity of the citizenry. At the same time they acquired a 'vertical' function, legitimizing civic authorities.

For all its merits, Rublack's interpretation is marred by weaknesses inherent in the order-structured interpretive model, namely, the lack of a clear definition of the social forces which, grouped together under the broad category of 'citizenry', used these commonly accepted norms to strengthen their anti-oligarchic stand *9.

With their emphasis on the legal-ideological foundations of early modern urban societies, the order-based interpretations stress the continuity that characterized the structures of the civic hierarchical order. They approach the various burgher uprisings as mainly protests against abuses of power on the part of oligarchies, and treat urban struggles as 'constitutional' rather than manifestations of class conflict.

Although these interpretations provide us with valuable information concerning the ideological backbone of civic communities, they are weak in detecting the inner differentiations that occurred within the broad social spectrum of 'citizenry'. Thus, they present a static rather than an evolutionary, picture of urban societies prior to the Reformation.

Moreover, although they admit that participation in one of the two main orders depended heavily on the economic situation of the individual or group, they persistently refuse to ascribe to economic factors any formative role in the history of urban communities.

The other group of historians who use a class-structure analysis has produced a great number of cases which contradict the assumptions of the order-based interpretations. A series of studies, usually on a regional scale and with an application of quantitative techniques, have revealed new details on the social composition of both ends of the urban hierarchical ladder. Although the majority of these studies were prompted by the Moeller book, one can trace direct influences from previous relevant studies by leading historians of the medieval town, like Henri Pirenne and Fritz Rorig.

Rapid reaction to Moeller's depiction of urban communities came from Bob Scribner's study on the city of Erfurt during the Reformation ^{*10}. Based on tax registers of 1511, Scribner traces three broad strata in Erfurt's citizenry: an upper stratum comprising the urban patriciate, woad-dealers and some well-to-do artisans, a middle stratum of smaller retailers, artisans, officials and liberal professions, and a lower stratum of poorer artisans, lower officials, day labourers, agricultural workers as well as the student population [p. 31, see table]. The extreme polarities of wealth exacerbated social and economic grievances and this was revealed in the turbulent early years of the sixteenth century when Erfurt experienced a revolt leading to

the overthrow of government.

Examining Erfurt's hierarchical structure, Scribner concludes that behind a 'democratic' façade (the city had a new constitution introduced in 1510), exclusive control of city politics was in the hands of the patriciate which had also built a small interest group based on kinship and intermarriage, quite openly called 'The Few'. Its semi-dictatorial attitude and, more importantly, the exclusion from it of many wealthy merchants and members of the Great Guilds led to an alliance of these groups with the lower stratum which overthrew the aristocratic government in 1509. Still, the continuous predominance of the upper stratum and its heavy pressure on the poorer citizens were constant factors of revolts, as discussed below, in section 2 of this chapter. It suffices here to acknowledge that Scribner points to a correspondence between the hierarchical order and socio-economic conditions and, subsequently, adds specific socio-economic aspects to the 'constitutional' character of the burgher movements [pp. 34-35].

In a later article, Scribner strongly attacks Moeller's idealization of early modern society and depicts the notion of 'common good' as a purely aristocratic invention, justifying inequality among citizens. The civic hierarchical structure 'ordained by God' had direct reference to socio-economic realities and that is why traditional patrician families had to share power with the emerging merchants and master guildsmen during the years 1480-1517 *11.

In the same article, Scribner also touches upon the question

of the social consciousness of the various groups competing for power, exclusively in the higher social ranks. He suggests that, due to profound changes in the relations of production - with the introduction of the **putting-out system** and the emergence of proto-capitalist activities in metal trades, textiles and the printing industry - social differentiation was even more acutely felt, chiefly through the emergence of masses of wage-labourers and, also, of a distinct lower middle class in the town. At the top of the social ladder, Scribner is reluctant to detect a concrete class consciousness in the Marxist sense. The urban ruling elites were still permeated with a feudal mentality, generally termed as **feudalization** or **betrayal of the bourgeoisie**. Their assimilation to the feudal ruling groups was not nevertheless total, as the urban oligarchies maintained their particular social outlook.

To Scribner, this feudalization of urban oligarchies may have been a matter of tactics, as this proved to be the only means to tackle feudal aggression. However, the gradual establishment of urban ruling groups as feudal sovereigns ^{Over} of their citizenries, isolated them from the mass of burghers and it is there that one must seek the causes of urban disturbances in the decade before the Reformation [pp. 496-497].

Scribner's overall assumptions are directly influenced by the relevant work of Christopher Friedrichs ^{*12}. Friedrichs is one of the historians of early modern German cities who construct their interpretation on the concept of class, and it is in his work that we find a clear definition of the concept as

applied to preindustrial societies. By the term 'bourgeoisie' Friedrichs refers to a class 'which tends both to control the means of production - especially non-agricultural production - and to enjoy a concentration of political power and prestige in urban society'. The other city inhabitants who enjoyed full citizen rights but were becoming economically subordinate to the bourgeoisie, are grouped together under the term 'lower middle classes', distinct from the mass of non-citizens [p. 25].

Following the evolution of German urban communities from their early years to the Reformation, Friedrichs traces, like Maschke, the fundamental aspect of social organization in the division between citizens and non-citizens. Late medieval citizenry was not a unitary class as it was characterised by extreme variations in the economic, social, and political status of individual citizens. Certainly, access to political power had been restricted since the very beginning either by the establishment of ruling castes or by the imposition of a certain amount of wealth as qualification for a seat in government. However, Friedrichs suggests that the mass of citizens had - despite their differentiations - a common characteristic: merchants and artisans alike were all independent producers, with some control over the means of production and, as long as this situation was maintained, all inner differentiations remained blurred, since opportunities for upward social mobility were still available to all members of the community [pp. 27-31].

Friedrichs' depiction of the 'traditional' urban community

fits well in the picture presented by the order-based historians; however, he moves on by suggesting that a crucial economic change had taken place between the thirteenth and fourteenth centuries, a change that destroyed the homogeneity of traditional structures and led to the formation of antagonistic classes. This process did not occur at the same time or with the same speed in all German towns, as it was dependent not only on economic, but also on political factors. It concerned the gradual loss of economic independence on the part of the craftsmen; this came as the result of the expansion of the 'Verlagsystem', the putting-out system under which the artisan retained his autonomy but received the raw materials and sold his finished product to a capitalist entrepreneur, the 'Verleger'. The putting-out system started in the textiles but it rapidly expanded in every type of production. In periods of economic depression or of weakness of the guilds, direct producers established individual contracts with the 'Verleger', which, because of the lack of protective institutions usually resulted in a state of permanent economic dependence to the 'Verleger'. The loss of economic independence blocked upward social mobility and pushed the craftsmen further down the social ladder. This was most acutely experienced in the lower artisan ranks who gradually acquired a mentality of wage-labourers. Clear class lines were drawn above and below the master craftsmen who now formed the lower middle class.

As already noted, Friedrichs is very careful in avoiding a strict chronological delineation of this process. He admits that

entrepreneurial capitalism - as expressed in the putting-out system - did not penetrate all urban communities simultaneously; also, he ascribes an important role to constitutional factors, as many towns with guild constitutions did not immediately produce a distinct middle class. Lastly, the differentiation of burgher political and social status also depended on the policies of the ruling elites; in places where they pursued an aggressive separatist policy, the loss of political power and social status was clearer to the citizenry.

This happened in large cities with a rapidly expanding entrepreneurial capitalism like Ulm, Nuremberg, and Strasbourg. Cities with economies centred mainly on exports experienced a three-way class formation. At the top came the ruling patriciate whose enormous wealth and prestige made it acquire an aristocratic outlook. Then, the larger bourgeoisie of propertied elements and, lastly, the lower middle class of craftsmen (the cases of Hamburg and Frankfurt). The smaller towns evolved differently: their burgher community was never divided into classes, mainly because of the minimal economic differentiation and the still prevalent feeling of civic solidarity. In such cases, Friedrichs claims that the citizens adopted the mentality of the lower middle class [pp. 31-34].

Friedrichs offers a predominantly economic interpretation of the evolution of German urban communities in contrast to the judicial-ideological propounded by the order-based historians. In the place of Moeller's broad citizenry he detects two or three separate classes with distinct consciousness deriving from their

position in the relations of production.

Further light on the evolution of the patriciates' social composition from the Middle Ages to the Reformation is shed by A. B. Hibbert ^{*13}. He mainly challenges the theory of Henri Pirenne, but his conclusions are here relevant because they are linked to the general debate on the nature of civic hierarchical order initiated by Moeller's book. Hibbert outlines two main processes in the evolution of the patriciate, its internal transformation and the recruitment of newcomers from the more successful merchants and master craftsmen. Hibbert particularly detects a special mentality among the patricians, fed by an ambition to liberate themselves from their initial position as subjects and agents of lay or ecclesiastical lords; taking advantage of their position at the top of urban hierarchy, they sought to become a separate dominant group.

The 'internal transformation' of the patriciate refers to the shift in its economic interests. Initially a land-owning administrative group, it readapted its economic interests in the face of the emergence of trade as a more profitable source of income. Although this situation was to be reversed later - through the feudalization of the patriciate - it enabled the ruling elites to approach the dynamic elements among the merchants and the guilds and to form alliances with them, that gradually led to recruitment of new members from non-established families. This process took two forms; in cases where the patriciate had developed trading interests, integration of wealthy newcomers was usually a matter of time. In contrast,

where the patriciate exhibited an exclusivist stand, the group of 'nouveaux riches' emerged as a dynamic opposition to traditional aristocracy [pp. 102-103].

Hibbert's formulations are echoed in the work of Thomas Brady jr., passionate contributor to the Moeller debate. Like Hibbert, Brady suggests that the success of south German urban oligarchies in securing a continuous political control of their communities was primarily due to their fusion with mercantile elites into new cohesive urban aristocracies in the period between the guild revolts and the Peasants' War of 1525. Building up solid social, economic, and political bonds, the ruling classes managed to overcome political upheavals and withstand the Reformation crisis ^{*14}.

By 'noble patriciates' Brady refers to south German citizens who were members of the lesser nobility. These old-established families merged with the long-distance merchants in two different ways: they became involved in trade, as shown in the case of Nuremberg where the 'nobiles Norimbergenses' were all merchants, while, in cities like Strasbourg and Ulm, patrician families invested in banking and trading firms or even joined guilds, evading thus their constitutional ban from trade.

The second way was urban investment in rural property, a widespread phenomenon in the early 1500s. Merchant investment in land facilitated greatly their fusion with traditional noble patriciates; but it caused great resentment among lesser nobles, fighting to avoid their total submission to the wealthy urban elements. The fusion of merchants and patricians was even more

strengthened through intermarriages and ennoblement of the wealthiest of the merchants [pp. 40-42]. Finally, Brady traces another meeting point for patricians and merchants in the common career opportunities offered to their sons in the service of territorial principalities. From this emerged a new bureaucratic body with a common outlook, which Brady finds to have been of a predominantly bourgeois nature.

The political alliance of patricians and merchants rested on the non-revolutionary character of the guild movements. Looking at the balance of power in guild-dominated towns like those of Upper Swabia and Strasbourg, Brady detects the same plutocratic oligarchies that could be found in Nuremberg, a city free of guilds. The pattern of civic power was everywhere the same: the wealthiest and more powerful were in control through a complex network of connections and a subtle manipulation of political affairs. Still, the integration of merchants into the feudal order should be approached as an ultimately negative development as it showed the German merchant class incapable of maintaining and enhancing its separatedness from the nobility, a tendency that Brady attributes to the decadent general economic situation of the country at the end of the Middle Ages [pp. 44-45].

Brady's major contribution to the Moeller debate is his work work Ruling Class, Regime and Reformation at Strasbourg, 1520-1555, one of the most articulate responses to the questions raised by Moeller. In the 'prolegomena' to his study, Brady attacks Moeller's conception of sacral corporatism for

being inadequate to analyse urban societies of the Reformation era, as it derives from the long-standing myth of the political, social and cultural uniqueness of the early modern town, elaborated by liberal historiography of early twentieth century. For all their relative autonomy, towns were still dependent on their rural surroundings. The corporate ideal was an aristocratic invention, an attempt to tackle the problem of the dualism of purpose (spiritual-temporal) and of power (clerical-lay) that preoccupied late medieval urban elites. Specifically, the corporatist ideal had two expressions, the Italian civic humanism that secularized public life, and the German sacral corporatism that sacralized it. Both expressions served to secure the separatedness and autonomy of the self-governed towns within feudal structures *15.

Brady is equally critical of the historical sociology which presents early modern society as order-structured. He points at two fallacies inherent in this methodological trend, namely the assumptions that 'classes' and 'orders' were mutually exclusive types of social formation, and, secondly, that there were no social classes before the nineteenth century.

Against these theoretical assumptions, Brady projects two objections. At a theoretical level he suggests that, basing themselves on a model of customary or status society, the order-based interpretations are very poor in detecting socio-economic changes inherent in early modern society; they usually isolate political antagonisms within the dominant layer of society and interpret burgher uprisings as attempts to

preserve the customary social relations against the expansionism of urban oligarchies [p. 21] *16.

At the empirical level, Brady traces basic alterations in feudal social relations following the development of market agriculture from the twelfth century onwards. On the one hand, the lines of feudal subordination were blurred, especially in the emergent urban communes; on the other, feudal political and judicial relations gave way to class relations. Brady depicts the numerous upheavals as an endemic social warfare between lords and their labourers, but also - it should be noted - between dominators and dominated in the towns [p. 22]. This situation is barely analysed by order-based interpretations. As for the 'estates' or 'orders', Brady is willing to legitimize their existence but reduces them to those groups that participated in the officially ordained structures of domination. Consequently, orders should not be viewed as structural characteristics of early modern societies but primarily as the institutionalized expression of the ruling class' domination over the lower social groups.

Brady also touches upon the problem of social consciousness. His examination of the rich political literature of the fourteenth-sixteenth centuries, especially of the works of Niccolo Machiavelli and the French jurist Jean Bodin leads him to conclude that the traditional three-fold division of society into 'oratores-bellatores-laboratores' had actually lost any significance as the changes in feudalism generated a new awareness of the multiplicity of social conditions within each

order. He suggests that, throughout this period, it was becoming clear that the categories of orders comprised parts of different classes and that a dichotomous division of society (lords and subjects, rich and poor, gentlemen and commons) was strongly felt to exist beyond the traditional trichotomous scheme, as shown by the popular literature from the fourteenth century onwards. This fundamental division was equally perceived by the dominant groups who, to avoid such an open polarization, propounded the theory of the divinely ordained civic harmony. Brady quotes Bodin, who in his Six Books on the Commonwealth (Book 5, ch. 2) stresses the importance of the existence of an 'intermediate position between rich and poor, the good and the bad, the wise and the foolish' as an example of the ruling class' awareness of the problems posed by social polarization [p. 30].

Still, Brady stresses that early modern classes were not exclusive products of economic relationships; his classes were not direct ancestors of the social classes of industrial society and they were not that self-conscious or clear-cut. Against the order-based interpretation, Brady suggests that historians work both with order and class categories and try to understand the various factors and conditions that led to the predominance of class over estate solidarities [pp. 31-33].

The study of Strasbourg is a good test for Brady's assumptions. The city's hierarchical structures attest to a careful manipulation of city politics by the ruling elite. At the top of the civic hierarchy were the 'Constoflers', patrician families of noble status; few in numbers at the beginning of the

sixteenth century, they never truly constituted a coherent social class. Their flexibility towards the rising merchants - dictated by their diminishing numbers - enabled them to preserve a place among the new aristocracy [pp. 92-94].

One factor consolidating the cohesion of the ruling elite was the relatively wide distribution of wealth throughout the entire guild hierarchy. Strasbourg was a city 'where there was room for the more eminent of the "little people" - the tradesmen, shopkeepers and artisans - in the chambers of government'. A complex network of mutual interests and family lineages was the greatest weapon of the oligarchy [p. 96].

Brady links the phenomenon with the city's economy, which he sees marked by four main features: i) the city's role as a centre of transportation of goods, ii) its role as collection and export centre for wine and grain from both banks of the Upper Rhine, iii) the relatively unspecialised nature of its crafts, and iv) the modest participation of the city's merchants in the south German mercantile and banking boom from the 1480s onwards. These four features secured the rule of the aristocracy. The Strasbourgeois were closely tied to their region, pursuing a distinct 'provincial' policy in the Empire. Due to its 'provincial' character, Strasbourg's economy was always balanced by the authorities for the preservation of social peace. The staunch loyalty of the master-artisans to the regime enabled the authorities to use the guilds as instruments of political control. Finally, massive urban investment in real property fostered the alliance of the guild aristocracy and the noble patriciate [pp.

97-102] *17.

It emerges that Strasbourg's aristocracy was an amalgam of 'creditors, vassals, landlords and usurers'. In order to secure its interests as well as to maintain peace and stability, its control of the urban community was indispensable [p. 162].

The means of securing that control were abundant despite the guild constitution. The heart of Strasbourg's regime lay in the patrician-controlled privy councils, the XV for domestic affairs, and the XIII for war and diplomacy. The largest representative body, the assembly, consisted of 300 representatives, called to the City Hall to hear and vote on propositions put forward by the authorities. Their number in a city of approximately 20,000 inhabitants shows perfectly the extent of 'democratization' that the ruling elite was willing to tolerate [pp.165-167]. Increasing concentration on office-holding, close supervision of all guilds and the exclusive administration of external policies, were all expressions of the ruling group's power politics. Furthermore, access to the privy councils was severely restricted and scrutinized by the oligarchs [p. 173].

Powerful guild members tended to concentrate in a few guilds like the 'Zum Encker' and, mainly, the 'Zum Spiegel'. This caused problems, contradicting the image of equal representation of all guilds in government. The oligarchy was quick in inventing a solution to the problem. The widespread invasion of poorer guilds by the sons of wealthy merchants and changes in guild membership, enabled the oligarchy to preserve an apparent

corporal equality among the guilds, according to the constitution. Nevertheless, the second decade of the sixteenth century saw an active burgher reaction to the increasing concentration of power into the hands of the few [pp. 174-178]. In the years 1520-1555, the share of rentiers and merchants in the privy councils reached nearly 80 %, while 94,3 % of the XIII was recruited from the same group; it is highly possible that not a single artisan served in the XIII throughout this period.

Behind a democratic façade, Strasbourg's oligarchy had established a self-perpetuating rule through its control of the councils and the manipulation of the guilds. Its political domination was both institutional and social as it was only the aristocracy that could afford to deal exclusively with the government of the city [pp. 179-180, 195-196].

Studies of other major German cities reveal a similar pattern of hierarchical structures. Gerald Strauss' study is another example of socio-economic analysis. Like Brady, Strauss approaches Moeller's 'civic communalism' as an instrument aiding Nuremberg's aristocracy to establish its sovereignty in all spheres of urban activity. Society in Nuremberg consisted of separate groups and classes, each with its own laws, habits, and way of life. The institutional differentiation of each group from others enabled its members to adopt a common outlook and a sense of belonging to that group. something that Strauss depicts as a primitive class consciousness. Nevertheless, the ideological foundations of the social order dictated that this particular outlook would not compete with others. Each group was part of

the broad civic community and, consequently, ought to coexist peacefully and harmoniously with the other groups *18.

Strauss' examination of the evolution of south German urban economy reveals a contradictory picture: on the one hand, a mercantile boom following the decline of Hansa and the opening of a new world market in the late fourteenth and early fifteenth centuries. On the other, the persistently high inflation of the late fifteenth and early sixteenth centuries that forced most town councils to adopt strict policies to control the market and guild production. These measures were usually ineffective in smaller towns which suffered from the sharp rise in prices and as a consequence, there was widespread popular indignation, expressed in the various reform manifestos like the Reformatio Sigismundi in the 1480s. Larger cities were able to avoid general disarray mainly because of the existence of a substantial middle class, whose total dependence on the mercantile patriciates guaranteed its passive obedience [pp. 123-126].

Nuremberg is a clear example of the policies pursued by the oligarchies of major cities. Its mercantile patriciate was not as adventurous as its counterpart in Augsburg, the most 'capitalist' city in the Empire. Nuremberg's patricians attached prime importance to the maintenance of internal peace and stability. As Strauss puts it, they acted 'in a dual capacity: as merchants driven by the expectation of profits and second, as city fathers anxious to supply their town with its needs and sell abroad the products of native skills in order to maintain full employment and assure a fair distribution of gains' [p. 127].

The patricians' outward economic moderation was matched internally by a strict and widespread control determining the levels, quality and specialization in the crafts production. The artisan in cities like Nuremberg, Augsburg and Strasbourg was exclusively a city-dweller legally limited to practice his own calling and bound to regulations imposed by the city council; he had no control of the market, whose needs were dictated by the policies of the patriciate. Because of the nature of Nuremberg's economy - centred on exports - the oligarchy exerted a fierce quality control on all products carrying the city's stamp. It also forbade any overlaps in production, imposing a sharp specialization even in the interior of one particular craft [pp. 133-136].

Nuremberg's society mirrored the patriciate's will to preserve a stable socio-economic growth that would avoid any adventurous expansions and thus prevent possible tensions. Nuremberg's patricians knew very well that the city's prosperity and their continuous predominance depended totally on the will of the citizenry to obey the strict code of ethics and the professional practice expressed in the ideal of civic communalism. Their regime was paternalistic and autocratic, forcing the **utilitas publica** against the **utilitas privata** [pp. 152-153].

Strauss' approach to the nature of Nuremberg's hierarchical order is supplemented by Bernard Vogler's depiction of the city's structures of political dominance ^{*19}. Political power in the city was concentrated into the hands of a few patrician families,

forming the 'Rat' with forty-two members, thirty-four of which were patricians and eight representatives of the 'honourable' crafts, having a mere decorative function. As in Strasburg, the largest representative body - the 'Grosse Rat' - consisted only of 200 members, all burghers of the 'honourable' crafts; their role was strictly advisory. The ability of the ruling caste to perpetuate itself at the top was clearly shown in the electoral system. Every year, five members of the 'Rat' - three patricians and two representatives of the 'Grossen Rat' - chose the forty-two civic officials, always recruiting the same people under various pretexts (previous experience, etc.) [pp. 45-46].

Nuremberg lacked a guild constitution and organisation. Members of each craft belonged to professional associations closely controlled by the 'Rat'. The system of supervision over Nuremberg's crafts was clearly outlined by Strauss. Vogler additionally points to the tendency of many patrician-run firms to introduce the practice of manufacture by piece, something that accentuated social differentiation within the crafts. Nuremberg's flourishing commerce was run not only by patricians but also by wealthy burghers and outsiders enjoying the right of residency but being exempted from taxation. The right of association between patricians and wealthy non-patricians was put under legal regulation from 1479 [pp. 47-49].

Vogler also attempts a reconstruction of Nuremberg's social stratification in the early years of the sixteenth century. From the 50,000 inhabitants that the city had around 1500, 450 were designated as 'patricians'. Upward social mobility was blocked in

1521 when a statute defined the permanent list of forty-two 'great families'. By the end of the fifteenth century, the lifestyle of Nuremberg's patriciate had been characterized by what we have termed 'feudalization' - that is, rural investment and abandonment of commerce [pp. 49-50].

Then came the 'honourable' families, 6-8 % of the total population, an elite of merchants, jurists, officials, artists and master artisans, sometimes linked to the patriciate by marriage. Third was the 'middle class', big in number, consisting of master artisans and lesser tradesmen and characterized by great social differentiation [pp. 50-51].

Further down the social ladder, the great mass of the population, called the 'petty folk': artisans, labourers and servants, together with petty employees and municipal workers. Although they enjoyed the right of citizenship, they were economically oppressed and exploited and most of them were quite poor. Finally, like any other European urban centre of some proportions, Nuremberg had its marginal population, lepers, professional beggars, prostitutes and others living on the city's poor relief system, which was probably the best in Europe [pp. 51-52].

Nuremberg's society was characterized by a slowing down of social mobility and the aggravation of the condition of the lower social groups. Paradoxically, the city was free from social struggles, as noted previously by Strauss. The main reasons - according to Vogler - were the existence of a vast number of unemployed, who rendered any possible strike ineffective, as

well as of a numerous middle class, whose dependence on the ruling merchants eliminated the chances of massive unrest. However, despite the harmonious image projected by literature and art, the social problem was always immanent during the pre-Reformation period [pp. 52-53].

Bernard Vogler's approach contradicts the harmonious image of civic communities depicted by Moeller. Without underestimating the importance of judicial and ideological institutions, Vogler traces the foundations of German civic hierarchy in the concentration of power within a segregated multifaced elite. Despite their occasional tendency to overexaggerate the nature of urban social polarization in the Reformation era, historical interpretations based on the concept of class produce a picture of social stratification that is far more detailed than that suggested by Moeller.

As we shall see below, in Part II, chapter 3, historians advocating a class structure, stress the inner diversification that characterized the response of urban communities to the Reformation, whereas Moeller's depiction is one of a contact between a message spelled from a unique source and a unified, homogeneous body of recipients.

Section 2: The underlying factors of the quest for a share in civic power and of the revitalization of communalism.

This section focuses on historians' works on the various internal and external socio-political factors that determined the evolution of civic struggles throughout the pre-Reformation period. Special reference will be made to the general framework that embraced pre-Reformation German cities, the political situation of the Holy Roman Empire that conditioned or even dictated internal socio-political situation and external policies of the urban centres.

For all their wealth and glamour, the major German cities never really attained the status of the Greek city-states of classical antiquity, or of contemporary Italian cities which in many ways served as models to the German urban oligarchs. Their policy-making ability was always dependent on superior forces active within the Empire: the Habsburg dynasty, the centralist authority, which was however too weak to cope with the true overlords of the Empire, the lay and ecclesiastical territorial princes.

The emergence of expansionist territorial principalities in the same period came as a major threat to the cities: a possible disintegration of the Empire into independent states would certainly end the growth and expansion of the Imperial Cities. The urban oligarchies desperately needed a stable, centralized regime that could afford them protection and guarantee their

far-flung economic interests. Moreover, they needed a powerful Emperor to assist them in safeguarding the autonomy they had zealously defended against the oppressive feudal forces.

It is in the light of these considerations that historians of the urban Reformation have sought to interpret the multiple urban disturbances of the era. Our discussion of historians engaged in the Moeller debate will again be based on the broad distinction between historians advocating an order-based social structure and those suggesting a social model based on class.

To Moeller, it was princely aggression that brought forth the drive to authoritarianism on the part of the urban oligarchies; this came as the culmination of incessant rivalry between civic councils and their feudal overlords. To meet the growing needs of that struggle, the civic authorities had to establish themselves as absolute masters in their territory. Thus, the rivalry between prince and city was now paralleled by a reaction of the burgher communities against the authoritarianism of their councils, reaction further fuelled by the deepening socio-economic divisions within the once united citizenry. Moeller acknowledges that, around 1510, traditional civic communalism gave way to acute antagonism almost in every major urban centre. He asserts that, by the first decade of the sixteenth century, a new kind of civic communalism was emergent, this time the expression of oppressed burgher communities, calling for the restoration of old communal constitutional principles [pp. 18-23].

Nevertheless, Moeller never makes it quite clear whether he is willing to acknowledge the existence of two contrasting types

of civic communalism, the former an aristocratic invention, and the latter a burgher reaction to authoritarianism. This task - always puzzling to historians not accepting the concept of socio-economic conflict - is taken over by Rhiman Rotz whose recent contribution to the debate further elaborates the theory set up by Moeller but also attempts a detailed counter-offensive to criticisms coming from historians who focus on class conflict in their interpretation *20.

Stressing the relative independence of cities within a weakened Imperial structure, Rotz follows Moeller in detecting the foundations of urban uprisings in 'the special relationship' developed between councils and citizenry. From the fourteenth century onwards, most urban oligarchies had transcended the limits set to their authority by the traditional civic constitutions and sought to establish a new hierarchical relationship with their communities. This met with growing burgher opposition and, subsequently, internal strife. Rotz suggests that the best way of understanding the true nature of urban disturbances throughout the Middle Ages is to envisage them as 'the price of power' the civic councils had to pay for having surpassed their traditional authority [pp. 65-66].

Rotz then looks closely at the arguments of historians who focus on the 'democratic' and 'socio-economic' nature of urban upheavals and pinpoints three broad common features of the uprisings that in his opinion contradict any socio-economic interpretation. First, he claims that the German urban uprisings had no truly revolutionary goals: the rebels 'did not seek

wide-ranging changes in existing political, social, or economic systems'. Furthermore, even the alterations imposed by the guild revolts on towns' constitutions were far from being revolutionary. They were intended to broaden the base of government and not to overthrow it. This is, according to Rotz, well shown in the poor results the uprisings had precisely at this point: in most cities with guild constitutions, true power was still within the elite, as the representatives of guilds in the civic councils were almost always a minority, closely controlled and selected by the oligarchies.

Secondly, historians cannot detect any exclusive and solid socio-economic group behind the uprisings, so it is difficult to link them with the economic depression of the fourteenth and fifteenth centuries. Uprisings varied in their composition, according to local conditions: there were merchant-artisan coalitions fighting the traditional patriciate, but also alliances between patricians and lesser craftsmen against merchant and guild aristocracies, as in Strasbourg in 1349 [p. 69].

Thirdly, urban uprisings carried on well into the early modern era despite the apparent establishment of 'democratic' guild constitutions. Rotz offers a chronological delineation with peak periods in the years 1330-1350, 1365-1385, 1400-1430, as well as in the early years of the sixteenth century. The continuity that characterized internal strife in urban communities should direct historians to other possible explanations [pp. 72-73].

To Rotz, the main source of trouble for the civic

communities was the general situation of the Empire and, specifically, what he presents as a two-fold struggle of civic councils, 'against princes on the one hand and their own citizens on the other'. Following the fall of the Hohenstaufen and the Interregnum, there was a sudden power vacuum in the Empire which both princes and cities strove to fill [p. 76]. Most civic councils conducted successful expansionist policies during the last decades of the fourteenth century, a fact amply demonstrated in the formation of powerful urban leagues like the Swabian-Rhenish and the Hansa. However, the cost of such policies often irritated the burgher communities. By the mid fourteenth century the civic councils had acquired extensive authority over the citizenry, so violating the traditional rules set by the civic constitutions concerning the rights and responsibilities of the burghers. Despite their inner differentiations, German burghers still conceived of themselves as equal members of the organic unity of the civic community [pp. 78-83].

Thus, the various uprisings were the citizens' reaction against the abuse of power on the part of the authorities. As Rotz puts it, fundamentally, 'two different concepts of government, of citizens on the one hand and councillors on the other, most clearly and sharply collided' [p. 83]. The German burghers usually related the expansionist policies of their councils with their internal drive to authoritarianism and, thus, posed severe obstacles to the development of such policies [p. 86].

Lastly Rotz accepts that 'social struggle' and

'socio-political antagonism' may have been behind the uprisings, and he acknowledges that the burgher movement clearly sought to obtain a fair representation in the dominant civic circles. But he denies that there was a democratic element in the burgher drive for collective responsibility; basically, the burghers aimed to retain the original relationship and accountability of civic authorities to the communes. He has a similar attitude towards the hypothetical connection between uprisings and socio-economic trends through the late fifteenth and early sixteenth centuries.

In response to Christopher Friedrichs, he recognises that the growing socio-economic differentiation resulting from the expansion of the putting-out system in the southern cities, represented a major threat to the lower social ranks. Correspondingly, at the top of the social pyramid, members of the elites tended to distance themselves from the rest of their fellow-citizens and join the feudal nobility. In such cases, Rotz accepts that one can speak of a class consciousness, but he still maintains that the uprisings were a struggle 'of the entire citizen class against a clique which was trying to get out of that class by exploiting it' [pp. 89-90].

Rotz advances in many ways Moeller's elaborations on the nature of civic hierarchical order as well as of the uprisings, a point where Moeller is particularly weak and ambiguous. To Rotz, the considerable growth of the German cities largely altered both the composition and the general perception of the - once united - citizenry. Moeller's civic communalism is now giving

way to two contrasting notions of government: government for the citizens or government over the citizens, that was the question dividing the urban communities throughout the pre-Reformation period.

Rotz is one of the historians who transcend 'social history' and link with historians who concentrate on political aspects of the Reformation. Basil Hall is another historian influenced by Moeller but who also transcends the limitations of his approach. Hall, like Rotz, treated the question of government as a major source of upheaval in early modern Germany. In a way Hall formed a bridge between the political historiography of the Reformation - as represented by Hans Baron - and the social historiography initiated by Moeller ^{*21}.

Hall reproaches Moeller for overshadowing the 'political revolution' immanent in pre-Reformation German cities [p. 104]. Unlike Moeller, he stresses the sense of freedom - the medieval ideal of the democratic and free city - that served as the major differentiating point between city and countryside. Hall's formulations are very reminiscent of the Pirenne thesis concerning the formation of medieval towns [p. 109]. Like Moeller, he stresses the great ideological strength of what he terms 'a mystical sense of identity' of burghers with their town [p. 112], but, equally, underlines the continuity of antagonisms within the theoretically united community. To Hall, the composition of a city council 'reflected the power pressures of different social groups ... There was tension between the pressing forward by the craft guilds and the resistance of the

patrician merchants who tried to close the ring against them' [pp. 112-113].

Like Rotz, Hall sees the question of civic government as part of the broader national question of government in Germany. The question of what institutional form of government represented the Empire had puzzled jurists from the mid-fifteenth century, a period noted for the reemergence of the concept of **obrigkeit** (government) as a fundamental issue to be tackled by the authorities [p. 113]. Finally, what distances Hall from Moeller's assumptions is his emphasis on the political side of urban tensions. Despite their strong sense of communalism, the burghers still felt that they were 'underrepresented politically, ignored and held in contempt by those in power', a feeling aggravated by the worsening economic situation of the Empire [p. 114].

Many contributions to the Moeller debate have come from historians who have seen 'civic communalism' as an exclusively aristocratic invention, and who have stressed socio-economic antagonisms and class conflict. In this context, Scribner's study of Erfurt exemplifies the interaction between internal socio-economic strife and external political intervention, on which depended the destinies of the cities and, equally, their response to the Reformation *22.

In their ruthless rivalry with the territorial princes, the civic oligarchies expected their opponents to take advantage of every sign of weakness. 'For the German town of that period it was axiomatic that internal strife increased the dangers of

external intervention' [p. 35]. Besides the growing popular resentment against its monopoly of power and the heavy public debt, Erfurt's ruling elite had to cope with a double external pressure from the ecclesiastical ruler of Mainz and the lay rulers of Saxony [p. 36]. After seven years of internal tumult, the new city council of 1516 managed to settle this dispute, suppressing the civic oath of allegiance - major cause of popular indignation - and invalidating all agreements signed with Mainz [p. 37].

The restored civic unity meant little to the middle and lower social strata of Erfurt, who had always placed themselves at the core of every revolt. It was mainly the upper-middle class that had benefited from the broadening of government. Moreover, these seven years of internal strife had taught the ruling elite to be aware of burgher reaction to its administration as well as to manipulate popular support of civic independence, now officially - and persistently - linked with 'civic unity'. Thus, what Moeller saw as the fundamental feature of civic communities is depicted by Scribner as the ideological product of decades of internal tension and revolt [pp. 37-38].

The case of Erfurt clearly demonstrates how the internal socio-political situation of the cities was conditioned both by external interventions and internal manoeuvring by the elites; it shows how, behind the laboriously built image of 'civic unity' and 'communalism', there was a clear and conscious effort by the oligarchies to perpetuate themselves in government, at the expense of their 'equals' in the community. The success of this effort depended on the oligarchs' ability to forestall any internal

dispute and secure a role of passive participation for their citizens.

The case of Cologne is worth noting because, as Scribner analyses it, it offers the rare example of an elite managing to suppress a popular movement, as well as all attempts to introduce the Reformation in the city ^{*23}. Cologne, like other major cities, had a full record of civic disturbances. The powerful guilds had seized control in 1370, protesting at the patrician monopoly of power; but they were immediately overpowered by the patriciate which then established a firm control over them. In turn, patrician rule was overthrown in 1396, and a new, 'democratic' constitution was introduced [p. 236].

Throughout the late fifteenth and early sixteenth centuries the ruling elite maintained political predominance through close control and electioneering practices within each 'Gaffel' (the city's guild groupings). Every citizen had to belong to a 'Gaffel' and thus was subject to strict corporate discipline. The scrutiny of all 'Gaffel' members eligible for offices, the gradual take-over of the militias by the oligarchy, were all means to ensure that no popular movement would emerge in Cologne. The success of uprisings which did occur depended on factional war within the ruling council [p. 239].

There have been other attempts to create a typology of urban dissent based on regions other than south Germany. John C. Stalnaker provided valuable information on uprisings and the relationship between cities and territorial rulers in the Hessian

lands *24. The death of Landgrave William II in 1509 triggered off rivalry among the Hessian landed nobility. The situation was intensified when the urban centres became involved, resenting - like the lesser nobles - the increasing centralization of the Landgrave's territorial government [pp. 114-115].

Stalnaker concentrates on Marburg, where he detects a pattern of power typical of the German cities with guild constitutions. Behind a democratic façade, the civic council was dominated by a small privileged group of patricians. They had to deal with numerous burgher riots in 1446, 1457, and 1462 [p. 120]. The first decade of the sixteenth century was equally turbulent, with representatives of Marburg's guilds protesting to Landgrave William about the heavy taxation imposed by the patricians, who then exiled the most politically active burghers in 1510 and 1511. Feudal antagonisms following the death of William were echoed in Marburg's internal tensions.

The victory of Anna of Mecklenburg, apparent supporter of the burgher cause, led to a dynamic popular reaction against the most prominent of the patricians in 1514. Anna's quick change of attitude towards the burghers - as soon as she had assured control of the regency - brought a period of political instability and frequent riots especially in 1516 and 1517 [p. 121].

Stalnaker concludes that the antipatrician movement was primarily political - on the evidence of numerous petitions to the Landgravate between 1514 and 1525. The occasional economic grievances dealt usually with breaches of urban craft liberties, or individual infringements of guild regulations. The bulk of cited

grievances dealt with the oligarchy's abuse of power, the imposition of heavy taxation, corruption , and the exclusion of the commons' representatives from government. The ultimate task of the antipatrician movement was 'the banishment of its greater antagonists among the patrician oligarchs and the alteration of the civic constitution to provide a more broadly based government and the end of effective patrician monopoly of authority' [p. 123]. Moreover, Stalnaker suggests that evidence on the various disturbances and burgher demands certifies the existence of a clandestine political organisation, a 'popular party', which co-ordinated the antipatrician opposition between 1510 and 1525.

The fervent opposition of Marburg's burghers to their oligarchs had not overshadowed their bitterness against oppression and exploitation by the territorial government. As already noted, Stalnaker links Marburg's antipatrician movement with the policies pursued by Anna of Mecklenburg. The Marburgers' antipatrician movement was further intensified because most of their autocratic rulers were also agents of central government. Drawing on information about the social origins of the officials of the Landgravate from the late fifteenth century onwards [pp. 125-126], Stalnaker concludes that most of Hesse's urban aristocracy had been recruited in the bureaucracy of the territorial government. This dual capacity of Marburg's patricians further jeopardized their position in the civic community, because, 'the urban commons did not fail to observe that the oligarchs who profited from their control of

city government were from the same group or were the very same men who oversaw the exclusion of their cattle from the city common pasture to make way for the Landgrave's sheep or who collected unprecedented taxes from them for the Landgrave's treasury'. That can be considered the core of the popular party's political argumentation [p. 127].

The east German historian Karl Czok tackles an interesting and somewhat neglected aspect of urban Reformation history, when he deals with the socio-economic stratification of Thuringian and Saxon suburbs, and with their participation in civic struggles culminating in the Peasants' war of 1525. Czok's study is important for the wider debates of this thesis because he provides information on the role of the non-citizen marginal population within civic territory, and portrays a group characterized by a social class solidarity *25.

It was that solidarity that differentiated the suburbanites from citizens. For all their socio-economic differentiation, what actually united them against urban oppression was the total lack of constitutional rights that made them easy prey to the exploitative policies of urban merchants and master-craftsmen [p. 92]. Consequently, their particular position, 'lying as it were between town and country, led them to take sides at once with insurgent peasants and citizens' [pp. 92-93]. the suburbanites took an active part in most major uprisings throughout the fifteenth and early sixteen centuries and were frequently used by the various competing factions in their struggle for government *26.

The most recent and by far most elaborate discussion of the network of relationships between the Imperial Cities and the Empire comes from Thomas Brady jr. He attempts to draw a typology of the pattern of civic power, socio-economic stratification and the internal and external pressures experienced by the Imperial Cities during the early sixteenth century ^{*27}.

There were sixty-nine Imperial Cities according to the Imperial Tax Lists of 1500, most of them in the South, direct reflection of the political structure of the Empire. For all their judicial equality, the southern cities were a mosaic of large and small urban centres with leading cities as Nuremberg, Augsburg, Strasbourg and Ulm; a middling stratum of cities of lesser importance including Worms, Constance, Heilbronn, Reutlingen and Esslingen; and, thirdly, towns of the size of 'big villages', like Zell and Bopfingen. The lesser cities were usually clients of the leading ones or were organised in groups, such as the cities of the Swabian League and the Alsatian Decapolis.

Brady suggests that there was a remarkable similarity between the free and the territorial cities in terms of socio-economic structures: they were all centres of trade and manufacture, credit and administrative capitals and also spots of rich cultural activity amidst the primitive countryside. What differentiated them was the orientation of their economies which were either centred on specialized manufacture and exports (Nuremberg, Augsburg, Nordlingen) or integrated into regional markets (Basel, Strasbourg). That orientation had

profound influence on the socio-political situation of each city, with the most turbulent cases to be met in cities with specialized export economies, facilitating the creation of enormous fortunes and thus widening the divisions within the citizenry.

Urban investment in land and the continuous influx of labourers in the towns were manifestations of the strong links between the urban and rural worlds. Like other historians previously cited, Brady sees urban territorial expansion to have been paralleled by the internal drive to authoritarianism. The latter process, although occurring at different periods, was the major feature of the German urban world in the beginning of the sixteenth century. The aggressive stand of the territorial nobility was the principal propulsive force behind increasing urban authoritarianism. By the early years of the century, most urban oligarchies strove to establish political alliances between themselves and with the Emperor, as it had become evident that 'urban solidarity alone could no longer check the great princes' [pp. 8-15].

The once-powerful urban leagues were crushed in the cities' war of 1449-1453; the civic oligarchies of south Germany became almost passive observers of the decomposition of the Empire into separatist territorial states. The only apparent solution was to ape their aggressors and build separatist states of their own. Thus, there emerged a widespread phenomenon of urban particularism, notably strong in the 1480s, a period of great economic and cultural growth; still, this was a period of

ephemeral glory, since the political and economic weaknesses of the Empire would soon minimize German prevalence in the world economy.

Brady draws on contemporary judgements to present an overall view of the situation faced by the urban oligarchies in the early sixteenth century. Among others, two writers attract his attention as they appear closer to reality than some other exuberant narrators; these are the Nuremberger Willibald Pirckheimer (1470-1530) and his great Italian contemporary, Niccolo Machiavelli (1469-1527). The image presented by the disillusioned aristocrat Pirckheimer is one of urban internal strife and incessant friction, either manipulated by the surrounding overlords, or triggered off by the abuse of power by the authorities.

Machiavelli's elaborations present, according to Brady, in its entirety the political dilemma faced by the urban oligarchies around 1500. They would either follow the 'republican solution' which meant the elimination of princes and the formation of federations of urban and rural republics, copying the Swiss way; or, they could follow 'the monarchist solution' which necessitated the consolidation of an alliance with the crown against the territorial princes. This dilemma ruled over the thoughts of the oligarchs throughout the early sixteenth century. In view of the emerging territorial states, they would either seek 'security from below, from the communes' or seek it 'above, from the king'. 'The two horns of their political dilemma may thus be termed monarchism and communalism' [pp. 16-22] ^{*28}.

Brady then offers an assessment of the ideological function of monarchism in civic hierarchy, as well as of its use during the urban upheavals. The monarchist feeling bred by the oligarchies was but another expression of the conception of the cosmic order embracing their cities: the king was placed at the top of the urban hierarchical pyramid and immediately followed the oligarchies, not as simple royal agents, but rather in a position of alliance with the king against the territorial nobles. That cosmic order necessitated the political predominance of the urban ruling classes, who were endowed by God with special charismas for governing.

However, monarchism was equally strong in the various popular manifestos, such as The Reformation of Emperor Sigismund. This indicated that the lower social ranks also aspired to royal protection, this time against the abuses of their ruling groups. Generally speaking, German monarchism drew its ideological justification from the traditions of Imperial Roman history and the implementation of Roman Law. As for the civic ideal propounded by the urban ruling groups, Brady reasserts the commonly accepted view that 'it clothed itself in Christian images. The ideal of the sacral commune, the sense of common standing before God that the Protestant preachers would refurbish to such good effect, owed less to the polis than to the monastery'. A universal monastery, Moeller's 'miniature corpus Christianum', was however dynamically questioned by the burghers [pp. 22-27].

The expectations from the crown expressed in the strong

monarchism of the urban oligarchies certainly went beyond reality. The Empire was governed by a dynasty still struggling for power against the separatist policies of the princes. In their financial, political, and military weakness, the Habsburg Emperors also aspired to a close alliance with the powerful urban centres. Emperor Maximilian I was particularly conscious of the expectations of his urban subjects; being almost totally dependent on the great banking houses and especially the Augsburgers, Maximilian spent a quarter of his twenty-six years' reign in the free cities.

Nevertheless, according to Brady, Maximilian was never a friend to the urban governments; he was their patron and customer and used his close relationship with the cities to balance the bad reputation he had acquired through ever-increasing debts. Not all German burghers were happy with their monarch's frequent demands for cash. Still, the official stand of the urban oligarchies, elaborated by the humanists, was the typical fervent monarchism just seen. Maximilian did his best to secure urban interests, but without irritating the princes.

This ambiguity in his policy was shown in the case of Worms which paid direct homage to the king in 1494, in order to secure his intervention against the aggressive bishop. There was eventually a compromise, but the bishop's officials and priests re-entered the city, to the dismay of the citizens. As Brady puts it, 'this story illustrates a hard lesson of German politics; no free city could be sure of the king's aid, even when he

was well paid for it' [pp. 80-89]. The urban oligarchies faced increasing difficulties after Maximilian's death. The new Emperor, Charles V, was not willing to concede any greater role to his cities than that of major suppliers of royal income.

This section has dealt with historians who sought to correlate internal urban political strife with external intervention and the overall political situation of the Empire in the pre-Reformation years. Despite their differing scopes of investigation, the cited historians, when analysing the social structures and civic conflicts of the era, have undermined Moeller's concept of 'civic communalism'. The cited historians, though reminiscent of some older political historians, have broken new ground by a more mature, evidence-based, amalgamation of local-social and national/territorial-political history, which again profitably moves beyond the limited scope of Moeller's view *29.

Section 3: The place of Church and religion in the civic community and the foundations of urban aggression towards the ecclesiastical institution.

This section will conclude the discussion of pre-Reformation Germany, concentrating on the place of Church and religion in the urban communities. This inclusion is indispensable to our understanding of the multiplicity of factors that led to the outbreak of the crisis. To present the Reformation as the exclusive product of socio-economic tensions in early

modern European society, would certainly be one-dimensional. What characterized sixteenth-century Europe was the presence of religion as the ultimate conception and justification of man's purpose of existence. It is precisely at this point that a persistent debate is being held, first between historians and theologians, and now between social historians and those of their colleagues who continue the tradition of intellectual and religious history.

A formidable ideological and political power, the Catholic church was present in the daily life of German urban communities. Despite its non-cosmic pretensions, the Church always had a share in civic power and wealth. Most commonly under the protection of some ecclesiastical overlord of the city, the urban ecclesiastical institutions constituted a powerful organism living within the limits of civic territory but enjoying a great judicial and financial autonomy. The urban clergy was free of all obligations and duties that were indispensable parts of burgher life; consequently, the Church presented a rather negative image to the communities, a fact that most historians have not failed to notice. Its hegemony had already started to suffer a gradual erosion due to its increasingly negative public image.

In his work, Bernd Moeller outlined the main points of friction between the burgher communities and the ecclesiastical mechanism. At the top of civic hierarchy, most city councils had to face interventions by local bishops; this fact had dramatic implications, related to the ideological backbone of the civic

community, as depicted by Moeller: 'all in all, urban ecclesiastical history in the later Middle Ages is a history of tensions. This is linked with the fact, ... that towns had the character of associations. This involved a certain exclusiveness of the citizen body and its striving to embrace within itself all the town's inhabitants. thus a kind of conflict with the Church's universality was generated' *30.

From the point of view of civic authorities, the whole affair was conceived as an open struggle for the extension of their control over the immense urban ecclesiastical property as well as over ecclesiastical functions 'which had civic consequences, such as schooling, provision for the poor and the sick, oversight of social morality' [p. 263].

Second and equally important point of friction between the Church and the lower citizen ranks was its indirect engagement in the social conflicts of the pre-Reformation period. The deepening divisions of the early 1500s directed popular indignation against church officials living scandalous and extravagant lives. Social hatred against the rich and mighty of the cities now emerged in the relations of the clergy with the burgher community. In towns with corporate constitutions, the guilds were the most dynamic pressure groups for the suppression of the Church's financial and legal immunity and the integration of the urban clergy into the community. The situation was even more explosive in towns where the lower artisan guilds were excluded from government *31.

Approaching the socio-political roots of urban

anticlericalism, Moeller accurately detects the various levels of antagonism between Church and city, primarily that between Church and city councils, and that between the Church and the lower citizen ranks. What nevertheless made the position of the Church even more precarious was its organic separateness from the community. The collective belief in the global responsibility of the civic community towards God - that is, Moeller's conception of 'civic communalism', greatly strengthened the drive of authorities to integrate the Church into civic life and order [p. 42].

Of prime importance to our discussion is Moeller's assertion that the institutional separateness of the Church had also acquired intellectual and ideological dimensions. It would be too far-fetched to suggest that the Church had totally lost its hegemonic position as mediator between man and God, and Moeller is very careful in his approach. What basically weakened the position of the Church was **not** any form of open religious dissent *32.

In the European urban centres of late fifteenth-early sixteenth centuries, the Church had long lost its cultural supremacy over the burgher community. The rapid socio-economic growth of the Imperial and free cities was paralleled by the cultural revitalization of the Renaissance. First and foremost in Italy and the Netherlands, 'Europe's most urbanized areas', and later in Germany, new intellectual communities came into contact with the Catholic culture. Humanist thought liberated human intellect from the reins of

late medieval ecclesiastical culture and projected its new, dynamic and predominantly lay character. But did it represent a threat to the established religious practice and culture?

Moeller believes it did not: German humanists and their urban audiences, the new social elites of the urban centres, were profoundly pious and spared no expense in manifesting their Christian fervour.

What however made them maintain their intellectual autonomy from Catholic control was their lay origin and rich educational background. As Moeller puts it, German humanism was 'fairly and simply integrated into urban life' and came to complement the dominant ideology of the era, the ideal of civic communalism. Humanism could not maintain a neutral stand towards the most important question of the times: the administration of the life of the community and the integration of the urban clergy into the society of the city. Thus, 'it took part in the polarization of citizens against clergy and hierarchy... Concern about personal Christian conduct, about conscience, and serious attention to Christian moral teaching could be directed against the ecclesiastical system. Communal and humanistic attitudes could come together and reinforce each other', and the outcome was a great propulsion of lay anticlericalism.

An increasingly unpopular social and political institution, the Church had lost its remaining advantage over the citizenry: its cultural and educational monopoly. And it now came under fierce criticism for malpractice and distortion of its role as mediator between man and divine grace. Civic communalism and

humanism together paved the way to the Reformation in the cities, bringing into question the presence and role of the Church in the civic community.

In 1966, A. G. Dickens suggested a brief but all-embracing sketch of the presuppositions of Reformation in sixteenth-century Europe ^{*33}. The wide scope of this work brought under historical consideration factors and phenomena that had been scarcely dealt with by Moeller. Primarily, it further established the - by now universally accepted - image of the Reformation as the product of long-standing tensions in feudal society.

What is of interest to our discussion is Dickens' assumptions concerning the situation of Church and religion in early modern Europe generally, and in Germany specifically. First and foremost, Dickens detects in the evolution of European nations the first signs of erosion of the cosmic predominance of the Papacy. Europe was gradually and steadily changing and, already, blows of far-reaching importance had been inflicted on the Roman Catholic cosmic edifice [pp. 9-10].

On the ideological level, new intellectual trends came into play, expressions of the will of new European social and political elites to settle permanently their ever-lasting differences with the Church. Erastianism, anticlericalism and antipapalism were nothing but facets of a new lay state ideology which meant to define the role of Church within the new realities [pp. 20-21]. In Germany, the drive for a national Church met with formidable obstacles due to the decentralisation of the country and the

weakness of the Emperors. Nevertheless, the need for disengagement from Papal supremacy had acquired dimensions of a collective mentality within the dominant secular forces of the Empire, as manifested in the Imperial Diet of Augsburg in 1518. The growing tensions between the Emperor, the princes and the representatives of Rome paved the way to the crisis [p. 23] *34.

As for the urban communities, Dickens' assumptions on the position of the Church are quite reminiscent of Moeller's. He also asserts that the new cultural communities of the pre-Reformation era acted as a further factor of instability for Catholic predominance. It was primarily the towns which saw the emergence of a new dynamic lay culture and mentality that could not content itself within the limits of the given Catholic spiritual and cultural universe. It is quite essential to note here that Dickens does not speak only of some social and cultural minorities: 'within these communities we must reckon not only with humanist oligarchs but with the growth of literacy even among the artisans, and with the continual transit of a floating population of traders, miners, preachers and mobile craftsmen' [p. 45].

On the socio-economic level, Moeller's harmonious image of a unified urban front against the Church is greatly questioned by Dickens. The deep socio-economic divisions of urban communities created an intellectual and spiritual climate that was increasingly undermining ecclesiastical predominance. Dickens' pre-Reformation Germany was in a state of continuous

uproar: 'scarcely anywhere in Europe did the Reformation encounter a quiescent, a satisfied, and apathetic society. there were too many underdogs - and too many dissatisfied with the bones and scraps offered them in this world by any current social philosophies. In both town and countryside the element of class struggle never lay far below the surface, though its character is not always elucidated by the vocabulary of nineteenth-century socialism' [p. 47].

To the urban world, Catholicism was far from satisfactory as it could not cope with the growing agonies and expectations of the oppressed lower strata. The result was a tremendous diversity in popular religious feelings and beliefs that even flirted with heresy. In a deeply religious world, masses of people in both town and countryside had diverted from Catholic orthodoxy [pp. 47-48].

Comparing Dickens' historical explanation with Moeller's theory one can easily assume that his approach is more profoundly 'social' than that of his German colleague. It is very interesting to note that Dickens' own assumptions concerning the Reformation go well beyond the limits of social history and deliberately leave ample space for the intervention of intellectual history, in an effort to establish an all-embracing view of the Reformation. In his explorations on the pre-history of the Reformation, Dickens considered themes traditionally dealt with by intellectual or religious history. His blending of socio-economic and spiritual-religious phenomena does not follow a monocausal direction. Dickens speaks of the interaction

of the socio-economic background of the era with changes in the religious sphere and calls for further historical investigations of this particular point. Thus, he emerges as mediator in the debate between social historians of the Reformation on the one hand and the adherents of religious and intellectual history on the other. And although this stand met with considerable criticisms, one cannot deny the need for such an approach.

This brief juxtaposition of Dickens' and Moeller's explanatory hypotheses indicates that the specific question of Church and religion in the urban communities cannot be dealt with exclusively within the limits of social history. However, as the scope of this thesis is limited to the critical presentation of social historians of the urban Reformation, attention will concentrate on those historians who, like Dickens, tried to strengthen their interpretation by considering factors and phenomena beyond socio-economic analysis.

Two historians from the French historical camp, Bernard Vogler and Francis Rapp, deserve special attention as they too apply in their research Dickens' theoretical directions. Moreover, they blend Dickens' scope with a rich and powerful tradition of French historiography, the history of mentalities, as propounded by the **Annales**.

In his study of early sixteenth-century Nuremberg, Vogler acknowledges a very active religious life in all social groups. What also characterised the city's cultural life was the clear prevalence of the spirit of the 'bourgeoisie'. In Vogler's article the term denotes the dominant groups of the civic community,

Nuremberg's ruling elite *35.

The two facets of this 'bourgeois' idiosyncrasy detected by Vogler are its open-minded and rationalist stand towards the world on the one hand and a Christian attitude profoundly rooted in medieval piety on the other. This bizarre ambiguity clearly demonstrated that, for all their considerable achievements, the men that frequented the chambers of the city's 'Rat' had not truly overcome fears and thoughts originating in the medieval period: the fear of death, survival of an uncertain past, was the propulsive force behind poor relief, the numerous pious foundations, processions and the cult of relics *36.

On the other hand, the rich religious literature (fifteen editions of the Bible till 1500) and the presence of numerous Franciscan and Augustinian preachers revealed another feature of burgher religious feelings. Primarily, it showed that the 'bourgeois' mentality demanded a larger and more energetic share in religious life and culture. The mighty of Nuremberg, together with their counterparts in other cities, had already started questioning the spiritual monopoly of the Church [p. 53].

The second French historian, Francis Rapp, has studied Strasbourg from the mid-fifteenth to the early sixteenth centuries *37. Like Dickens, Rapp examines the interaction between socio-economic and mental phenomena as a determinative factor in the evolution of burgher mentality generally, and of the stand of the community towards the ecclesiastical organism specifically.

According to Rapp, the main constituent characteristics of

burgher mentality in Strasbourg were four: first was the **cult of effort and efficacy**. From the fourteenth century onwards the bourgeoisie of Strasbourg had been engaged in a struggle for a redistribution of civic power and control. Its members, powerful merchants and well-to-do artisans, were the new socio-political majority that was nevertheless underrepresented in government due to the restrictions imposed by the city's political organization. Despite that reality, the bourgeoisie continually enriched itself with new dynamic and wealthy elements from the crafts and trade.

The continual recruitment of wealthy newcomers certainly caused a problem of socio-economic differentiation within burgher ranks. In order to preserve the necessary balance, the bourgeoisie pursued a policy of strict control of wages, number of apprentices and industrial output. Strasbourg's constitution facilitated the collaboration of the ruling elite with the new burgher elements in the control of the social and economic order. In this effort, Strasbourg's rulers came to face the big problem of the marginal population. To people driven by the fervent passion for efficacy and advancement, marginal elements were alien and dangerous; and they were determined to combat that social plague either by the welfare system or by the violent restriction of the number of beggars and vagabonds. It was precisely at this point that the burghers clashed with the Church; the extensive ecclesiastical poor relief institutions were condemned as asylums for the idle. First of all, these foundations were not always effective; great anomalies in the

ecclesiastical distribution of alms often meant that the beggars did not receive anything more than mere scraps. Secondly, to the burghers, the role of these institutions was ultimately negative: they encouraged laziness and threatened to increase pauperism. Contrary to the Church, the newly-developed burgher mentality sharply distinguished between 'charity' and 'assistance'.

Second came **the desire to learn and understand**. Rapp reasserts the assumptions of Moeller and Dickens with regards to the emergence of a new cultural community in pre-Reformation cities. The case of Strasbourg was a striking example: education increasingly controlled by the authorities, printing, circulation of books in the vernacular, all these constituted a new emerging culture which undoubtedly owed a lot to clerical instruction but nevertheless preserved its originality, primarily expressed in its practical spirit.

This caused further frictions with the clergy, as the educated lay audience could now criticise the depth of knowledge of the clerical body. At the beginning of the sixteenth century, Strasbourg's clergy had lost its cultural supremacy; its moral and spiritual authority were soon to be questioned.

The third characteristic of the burgher mentality was **the preoccupation with respectability**. In their effort to consolidate the image of 'burgher self-respect', Strasbourg's magistrates were often quite severe in applying the penalties determined by civic legislation on any citizen, irrespective of status. The scandalous life of many priests not only irritated them for being provocative to burgher self-respect, but , also,

could rarely be dealt with by civic legislation. In their attempt to impose a strict moral control of the urban clergy, Strasbourg's magistrates had the full backing of their community.

Fourth was **municipal patriotism**. In the strictly defined microcosm of Strasbourg, every citizen had concrete duties and privileges referring to his relationship with the community; this special relationship was reconfirmed annually with the oath of allegiance to the constitution and obedience to the magistracy. The presence of an autonomous ecclesiastical organism greatly distorted this image of 'municipal patriotism'. To both magistrates and citizens, the Church was an alien body, a segregated world within the civic community [pp. 441-452].

In his explorations of the situation of the Church and religious culture in German civic communities, Rapp develops the pattern of investigation set up by Dickens. His mentality-centred approach represents a viable answer to Dickens' call for a study of the interaction of socio-economic and mental-intellectual phenomena in the pre-Reformation urban centres.

All historians so far examined basically agree on one point: in the German urban centres there occurred a clash of cultures between the Church and the burgher communities. Although no one suggests that the burgher world was totally separate from the Catholic universe, they all point to its relative autonomy.

Moeller's explanation was basically accurate but it left much to be desired due to his rather simplistic depiction of civic communities. Historians after Moeller have produced a more complicated picture of burgher opposition to the Church,

suggesting that different levels of opposition require special investigation. It is not yet clear whether the acknowledged clash of 'the burgher world' and 'the Catholic universe' was generalised through all cities that faced the Reformation crisis.

Some quite illuminating comments come from the German historian Kaspar von Greyerz in his study of the advent of the Reformation in Colmar, Imperial City and member of the Alsatian Decapolis ^{*38}. Most interesting is his examination of the causes behind the delay of the advent of the Reformation and its final outbreak.

According to von Greyerz, what differentiated early sixteenth-century Colmar from other Imperial Cities was 'the general impression of a fairly harmonious relationship between the secular clergy and the city's population in general'. He explains this peculiarity in terms of an intellectual proximity between the dominant groups of the burgher community and the clergy. The well-educated members of the ruling elite had found worthy companions in the priests of St. Martin. Thus, the previously noted intellectual rivalry between the upper burgher strata and the clergy was almost non-existent and this greatly impaired the spread of Reformation ideals [pp. 30-31].

Finally, another fact that minimized the possibilities of friction between Church and community was the relatively small size of the clerical population of the city: the presence of 250 clergymen in a city of around 6,000 could not in any case cause problems detected in cities with large clerical bodies [p. 25].

However, even the peaceful atmosphere of Colmar concealed

in itself the seeds of tension between Church and bourgeoisie. Colmar's intellectual life on the eve of the Reformation was closely intertwined with the ecclesiastical institutions; religious processions, donations, pilgrimages, charitable foundations and numerous confraternities meant that Church and laity came face to face almost on a daily basis. The profound religiosity of the Colmariens did not prevent them from critically viewing the Church as spiritual mediator between them and God. Together with other historians, von Greyerz asserts that religiosity and anticlericalism were two facets of the citizens' deep concern for salvation [p. 37] *39.

Subsequently, the coexistence of Church and laity led to explosive situations. One by one, ecclesiastical privileges were questioned and attacked by all strata of the community. Here again, von Greyerz detects two main levels of urban anticlericalism: the 'official' anticlericalism displayed by the authorities in their drive to integrate the Church into the civic community, and the broadly-based communal anticlericalism, stemming from the burgher mentality and socio-political outlook [p. 40].

This discussion of the place of Church and religious culture in pre-Reformation German urban centres should complete a fairly clear picture of urban communities. In the process it has been possible to see how Moeller's theory has been elaborated and challenged, and how social historical thought has evolved. The methodological preferences and the theoretical assumptions of certain historians should now have been established. They will

be highlighted again, when discussing their understanding of the contact of the Reformation with the urban communities, in Part II, on the history of the Reformation.

CHAPTER TWO: THE FRENCH URBAN COMMUNITIES PRIOR TO THE REFORMATION

'This study, although only dealing with the German Reformation, can be of some interest to French speaking-readers. For if our principal thesis is correct, it illuminates certain facts of the period preceding the advent of Calvinism and reveals some directing lines in European history since the Middle Ages'.

Moeller's self-assured claim for the applicability of his interpretive theory to the examination of the advent of the French Reformation is based on the obvious parallel in the historical characters of pre-Reformation urban centres in France and Germany. Both countries had powerful cities, self-governing political entities, centres of cultural fermentation and indisputable economic power. At the time when the translation of Reichsstädte und Reformation appeared, French historiography of the Reformation was obsessed with themes familiar to Moeller: the question of interrelationship between the rise of Calvinism and French urban societies had preoccupied successive generations of historians, starting from Imbart de la Tour, going to Henri Hauser, Emile Leonard, and Lucien Febvre, to name but few.

If the French case is to be related to the German, according to Moeller's suggestion, it is necessary to establish the

similarities between urban centres in Germany - especially the Imperial Cities - and those in France - especially the 'bonnes villes'; to establish the extent of a 'civic communalism' spirit in the French cities, and to analyse the relationship of the French civic community with the old Church.

In comparing France with Germany there are going to be obvious differences. Firstly, in terms of historical background, France as a supposedly unified centralised monarchy is different from a fragmented Holy Roman Empire, and so the legal position of urban centres and their relationship with the crown was somewhat different. Secondly the French historiographical traditions are dissimilar, with different approaches to social history and Reformation studies. French historians, and their English-speaking associates, have rather different attitudes to social analysis, and to 'cultural' history. It can be said from the outset that the persistent trends of French historiography are implicitly likely to reject the Moeller 'initiative'. Moeller may here appear from the outset more like a 'straw-man' than in the German context; but in pursuing the historiography of the French urban Reformation, and in showing why Moeller's suggestions are not suitable, we may be able to see some parallels with Germany - on common anti-Moeller grounds - and arrive at a better understanding of the interconnections between the Reformation and urban communities. As an important by-product there should be suggestions available for an improved approach to 'social history', as Moeller wanted. (see below Chapter 5).

section 1: Cities in early modern France

Talking of 'early modern cities', one has to be very careful in defining what exactly constitutes a city, or rather what size of an urban settlement can be termed 'city', 'town', 'township', etc., according to its respective size, rate of growth and the level of its internal social, economic, political organisation and cultural world. A major source of confusion to historians is the vocabulary of contemporary documents, usually governmental reports, which arbitrarily promotes minor urban settlements or even large rural ones to the rank of 'city' for various reasons, financial interest being a major one. Another obvious difficulty is that the available documentation is also fragmentary. Finally, due to the overall fluidity of the era, one has to make sure that his 'city' not only survives as such over a long time span, but that it also exhibits clear signs of stability or growth.

The above mentioned difficulties are fully considered in the general survey of the development of early modern French cities by B. Chevalier ^{*1}. What strikes him is the great disparity that characterises the development of urban centres if 'photographed' at the turn of the sixteenth century.

A rough idea of the rate of demographic growth of an average town as suggested by Chevalier for the period between 1500 and 1600, is one of a rising tendency from 1500 to 1540 and a rapid fall after 1580 (approximately). Our overall view is

further clarified by P. Benedict's estimate that in mid-sixteenth century, the population of leading provincial cities was in the range of 20 - 40,000 inhabitants *2.

Viewed from a long-term perspective, the French urban demographic system presents a remarkable stability in its hierarchical structure, with long-established cities as leaders: Paris, Toulouse, Lyon, Rouen, Bordeaux and Marseille. Throughout the period 1500-1700 the same hierarchy was preserved, with some newcomers such as the port of Le Havre and Versailles. To most urban historians, the newcomers did not manage to alter the existing hierarchical relationships, being 'foreign bodies imposed from the exterior and finding great difficulty in integrating themselves in the existent network' *3.

Viewed on the *longue durée*, the French cities expanded from the late fifteenth century to the 1560s, while they entered a period of stagnation and decline in the late sixteenth-early seventeenth century [pp 44-45]. Following the devastation of the Hundred Years' War, the demographic system had found a new equilibrium, to which the urban contribution was only a relative one. Throughout the period 1330-1520, the cities relatively managed to counterbalance the drop in population numbers that occurred in the countryside during the various crises but, generally speaking, they cannot be considered as actual demographic accelerators *4.

Principal factor determining urban growth was the extreme mobility of populations, preceding the sixteenth century and continuing well into it. The case of Lyon, a city of great

proportions is a characteristic example: the entry registers for patients of the 'Grand Hôpital du Pont-du-Rhône' between April 18, 1537 and April 4, 1544, mentions 5,302 names, one third of whom were born in Lyon, one third in neighbouring provinces and another third in the rest of the kingdom or abroad. Throughout the century the rule had it that, in periods of war, cities attracted those seeking protection behind their walls, in periods of famine those seeking charity and assistance, in periods of epidemics those seeking cure and protection (although in many cases what occurred was the reverse) and in periods of prosperity the surplus, jobless rural population. Still, for all their power of attraction, the cities occupied a mere 10 % of the total national population *5.

Section 2: Political evolution: the 'bonnes villes' and their changing fortunes

This section will examine the evolution of the political role of the cities as organic parts of the French state. What immediately emerges is a powerful entity, very much reminiscent of the German Imperial City depicted by Moeller: the 'bonne ville', principal estate in the national administrative organisation, drawing its power from its military strength and its key position in the complex network of political dependences that constituted a state mechanism under formation. Powerful

and prestigious estates, regional capitals, the 'bonnes villes' of sixteenth century presented themselves as models to their surrounding towns, the minor 'villes champêtres' *6.

In his work, B. Chevalier follows closely the changing fortunes of the 'bonnes villes' from the years of their emergence to the period under consideration. His delineation of their historical evolution is based on major political developments that determined in the long run the ambiguous relationship between the king and his cities

After a long period of considerable prevalence within the political and economic structures of the kingdom, the 'bonnes villes' entered a phase of stagnation and decline in the sixteenth century. The first sign of the cities' changing political fortunes had already emerged in the convocation of the Estates General in 1484, when urban representatives were called to participate as representatives of the Third Estate. In 1529, the local assembly of Clermont-en-Beauvaisis was enlarged with the inclusion of the 'villes champêtres', something that numerically increased urban representation but degraded it politically. Finally, during the wars of religion, only the major cities, sixty in number, maintained their representation in the assemblies. Sixteenth century was the era when it became clear that the cities were being replaced by a rising socio-political force, the Third Estate [p 48]. From the fourteenth century onwards, the cities had managed to emerge as new, dynamic unities challenging the traditional structures of French feudalism; for the first time, feudal lords found themselves facing organised urban

communities that were not only becoming increasingly hard to deal with, but, moreover, were in a process of establishing new economic relationships with surrounding territories, a fact that the feudal nobility could no longer ignore.

However, the defeat of the feudal nobility was temporary, and the hierarchical gap that had emerged was gradually taken over by the recovering royal authority. As in Germany, there was no solid urban front to push its way through existing hierarchical structures. The position of the cities was undermined by a fundamental weakness and this represents the general framework which we shall have to keep in mind when dealing with the spread of the Reformation in French urban communities.

Section 3: The French urban community; social stratification and hierarchy

1) The constituents of the commune: orders or classes?

Historians of the urban Reformation need an articulate historical sociology of urban communities, to enable them to examine the impact of the Reformation on urban societies. This section will summarize current historical views on the social stratification of early modern French cities. The main focus of attention will be on the applicability of Moeller's concepts of 'civic community' and 'communalism', as interpretive tools in the examination of the nature of urban societies in the era of the

Reformation.

R. Mousnier, a fervent exponent of the 'social stratification by order' has provided us with a largely theoretical work outlining the fundamental characteristics of sixteenth-century French society *7. From his three main types of social stratification it is the order-based society that Mousnier sees to have existed in that period. A society of orders, markedly different from a society of classes that was to follow, together with the expansion of market economy and capitalist economic relationships. Namely, 'a hierarchy of degrees each one distinct from the other and organised not according to the wealth of their members nor their consumption capacity, not yet their role in the process of production of material goods' [p. 23].

To Mousnier, this social edifice presupposed the existence of an ideological basis to which it always refers for its ultimate justification. Mousnier detects such a basis in a consensus referring to the hierarchical structure of society: in order to survive, this social system needed to ensure that everyone accepted the existence of one social group at the top of the hierarchical pyramid. Such a consensus existed in early modern France and had managed to survive intact due to four reasons: firstly, the general interest in maintaining social order and the fear of social upheavals, secondly, the force of habit that made it difficult to conceive of an alternative social order, thirdly, the existence of an intellectual system which supported and justified the established social order and fourthly, the sheer determination of the ruling elite to perpetuate itself in power,

using all means and engineering all possible favourable situations [p. 24].

Mousnier's depiction of French society is primarily based on the work of seventeenth-century jurist C. Loyseau, leading source of information for social historians. What was mirrored in Loyseau's treatises was a static tripartite society of orders, which however presented some complex features despite its apparent simplicity. First came the clergy, occupying the first rank of honour because of its mission. Then followed the nobility, traditional-hereditary, and newly-acquired. Lastly, the third estate, encompassing the rest of society.

Behind the evidently medieval tripartite division into those who prayed, those who fought and those who produced, there was a more complicated reality. Each of the principal orders was subdivided into special orders structured into 'ranks', 'degrees', or 'minor orders' [p. 67]. The clerical order was subdivided into various and distinct hierarchical layers, starting from the cardinal and ending in the common clergyman. Nobles of the blood had their own hierarchically descending order with dukes, marquises, counts, barons, etc. The situation became even more complicated in the third order or estate. At its head were the 'learned professions', some mingling with nobles of high office (especially in the judiciary and finance); then came the lawyers, financiers, the officers of the long robe - clerks, notaries, procurators - those of the short robe - sergeants, official valuers, inspectors, etc. Next followed the merchants, the last entitled of a honorific prerogative, usually presented as

'honorable hommes' or 'bourgeois of the towns'. Together with them came those of the crafts that did not involve manual labour and were connected with trade - drapiers, goldsmiths, furriers, etc. They were all considered to be 'bourgeois' and had the right of participation in general assemblies. Near the bottom of the hierarchical scale, were the various manual crafts with a special lower category of the manual rural workers. Lastly, there were the wage labourers and journeymen, marginally superior to the social outcasts, the vagabonds and beggars [pp. 68-69].

What was remarkable was that this mosaic of estates and ranks was openly manifesting its subdivisions: each individual rank or status was designated by a multitude of factors, such as natural comportment, clothes, and proper 'culture'. Contemporary literature was rich in inventories of the various honorific attributes that designated social status. To some authors, outward physical appearance also denoted social origin (e.g. the complexion of women), a view presumably based on the varying quality and quantity of nutrition of individual social groups. In short, everything in daily life and activities manifested social differentiation *8.

A fundamental feature of an order-based society was its rigidity towards social realities which it was called to mould within its own structures. If we accept Mousnier's account, the social formation of sixteenth-century France was not influenced by socio-economic, cultural and political developments. It was a purely ideological arrangement, drawing its power of

justification in medieval mythology and tradition and envisaging human society as part of a wider cosmic order. As noted, such a state of affairs presupposed a general social consensus eliminating tension between social groups. A closer view of French social reality will however reveal several points of friction that contradict the overall harmonious image projected by contemporary tracts, something that Mousnier does not fail to notice.

Mousnier centres his attention on the dominant layer of French society, the nobility, which he presents as being divided in two different ranks or 'corps', the traditional hereditary nobility and a newcomer, the nobility of the robe, of the higher offices in administration, finance, and justice. Loyseau's tracts referred to a later period, when the traditional nobility was openly questioning the noble status of the 'robins' at the Estates-General [p. 78]. This confrontation between traditional nobles and ennobled commoners is depicted by Mousnier as 'a conflict of orders'

Mousnier bases his account on the assumption that in an order-based society conflict between various social groups was not based purely on economic power. Money alone could not push the individual up the social ladder. Economic power did not necessarily lead to political power and higher social status. This was rather dependent on a person's origins or, rather, on a consensus concerning the nobility of the claimant's roots.

Mousnier's sixteenth-century France was not the place where dynamic newcomers broke through noble lines and

established themselves as equal members of the elite. To them, the only way available was the slow ascension in the world of offices, which however presupposed that they abandoned trade [pp. 79-80]; a slow-moving and very costly course, the inevitable price of success in a society which judged the individual on the grounds of his social status and not the size of his wallet.

The new nobles of the robe were never particularly attracted by the way of life of the 'gentilshommes'. Those who dared to take the challenge usually ended up in total bankruptcy. Rather, nobles of the robe aspired to the peaceful, financially promising world of higher offices and it was there that they directed their sons, not the open countryside of hunting and duels. They had different aspirations from the military nobility; still, they demanded a share of its noble status. Mousnier tackles this complicating situation in a rather ambiguous way: he ascribes to the world of high offices an indisputable noble status and, simultaneously, asserts that they constituted a quite distinct group within the noble order: 'the majority of men of the robe preferred the king's council and the sovereign courts, the high magistracy, with the members of all these bodies forming a single social group, an order, with a nobility of function legally similar to that of the gentry though socially distinct from it' [p. 81].

Although he presents ample proof that the nobility of the robe did not challenge the traditional predominance of hereditary nobility, Mousnier is in difficulties when it comes to classifying it socially. Literally, there is no place in his order-based scheme

where that particular group easily fits.. Was it part of the second, noble estate? Or was it simply the dominant upper echelon of the third? Or, even, did it constitute a fourth estate as it appeared in the Estates-General of 1614-1615? Moreover, the rivalry between 'gentilshommes' and 'robins' was not the only one in French society. There were also other tensions, some of them referring to socio-economic realities. And when it comes to examining antagonisms of a socio-economic nature, the validity of the theory of orders clearly fades away.

The work of another French historian, A. Jouanna ^{*9}, greatly complements Mousnier's assertions, by focusing on sixteenth-century Frenchmen's perception of social realities. Like Mousnier, Jouanna treats the symbolic and mythical representations of social hierarchy as an ideological basis justifying the established social order. The difference in Jouanna's approach is that she does not envisage symbolic representation of hierarchy as an accurate reflection of social realities. Jouanna distinguishes between social realities of the period and their image projected by contemporary writers, whom she sees to be promoting specific social and political interests.

Jouanna's study reveals as essential characteristics of French society, the tendency to deny all human involvement in the construction of society and a passionate attachment to the idea of resemblance between the social and natural order [pp. 9-11].

The problem of the nobility of the robe that preoccupies

Mousnier ascribes to the broader question of social mobility, that can serve as a reliable pointer of the rigidity or flexibility of society - that is, the ability of the ruling elites to maintain status quo without succumbing to pressure from the lower social groups.

In her work, Jouanna offers a general outline of the state of social mobility in the sixteenth century. She detects a gradual slowing down of mobility, culminating in the second half of the century, when it became evident that social mobility had stagnated. In the first half of the century there was a tendency of social segregation manifested in various groups and at different paces. Thus, the treaty of Cateau-Cambresis between the kingdom and the Empire brought an end to the aspirations of upward-moving petty nobles. In Paris, the Parlement was controlled by family dynasties on a monopoly basis, whereas the powerful new merchant aristocracy of Lyon was incapable of trespassing on the domain of the traditional oligarchic elite, the 'grandes familles' [pp. 95-96].

During the same period, social ossification was propagated as ideal in numerous tracts and treatises. Jouanna traces a remarkable change in the philosophy of contemporary social observers: from their original humanist belief in the great potential of the individual - a belief encouraged by the evident social fluidity of the earlier period - they now manifested a serene, passive acceptance of social inequality. They transcended the individual and built their new political theories on the concept of totalities, political and social regimes. Tracts

spoke of an 'equilibrium', a 'cosmic order' manifesting part of itself in human society. By doing so, they legitimized the stagnation of social mobility [pp. 100-101].

G. Huppert's work on the 'bourgeois gentilshommes' of early modern French society openly questions the accuracy of long-standing conceptual tools such as 'the nobility' and 'the bourgeoisie' *10. Huppert concentrates on the social message conveyed by sixteenth-century jurists. He approaches these tracts as reflexions of their authors' own aspirations rather than of contemporary realities. The first noticeable feature he detects is a highly developed social outlook; writers like Jean Bacquet, refusing to consider the clergy as a social category, were acute observers of contemporary realities [p. 6]. Secondly, most of them were members of the legal professions. It was precisely the peculiarity of their standing, situated between the nobility and the merchant bourgeoisie, that made them produce numerous treatises on social realities of their time.

To Huppert, Loyseau was the chief spokesman of this class. Writing at a time when possibilities of ennoblement were meagre, Loyseau presented as the chief political conflict within the elites, that between the 'gentilshommes faisant profession des armes' and the 'noblesse de ville'. He continually stressed the inner differentiation of the Third Estate by stating that it comprised several 'orders'. Huppert finds this complicated view of the situation to have been the expression of the overall confusion of Loyseau's era, but, also, the product of deliberate obfuscation. In their fierce rivalry with hereditary nobility, the

'nobles hommes' had to make sure that their bourgeois origin was totally erased, since, having a bourgeois amongst one's ancestors automatically meant, in the eyes of the traditional nobility, that the person was not noble. Loyseau's tracts represented a well orchestrated attempt 'to graft a newly-coalescing class onto the archaic structure of orders and estates' [pp. 10-11]. His voice was that 'of a very large group of men ... retired from commerce and living off rents, forming a class which can be distinguished from the rest of the bourgeoisie by their use of the honorific title "noble homme" ' [p.12].

Drawing information from Christine de Pisan, an early fifteenth-century Parisian writer, B. Chevalier sums up the peculiarity of early modern 'bonne ville' in its internal division into 'corps', not orders or classes. Although this division followed the traditional threefold scheme, it was solidly linked with urban socio-political and economic realities. The three 'corps' that emerged in de Pisan's work were the 'clergie' - which in this case denoted the intellectuals and learned professions, the 'bourgeois and merchants', and finally, the craftsmen and labourers, referred to as 'le commun'.

According to Chevalier, firstly, the 'bonne ville' had a strong corporatist character, emerging as an organic unity, with strictly defined parts. Secondly, in this corporate social system, the various constituent members were arranged hierarchically according to the importance of their function; they were 'corps', following their own hierarchical order, with a powerful elite at the head, a bourgeoisie of the offices, manning the new urban

political and economic machinery. Lastly, the city's strong unity - obvious parallel to Moeller's Imperial City - was in fact undergoing a gradual and profound transformation, a process initiated by the ruling groups. The third constituent 'corps', the craftsmen and labourers was obviously devaluated when referred to as 'le commun', in comparison to the 'bons bourgeois et marchands' who constituted the social basis of the ruling elite. The coexistence of the terms 'communaute', denoting the whole of urban society, and 'commun', the lower social group in sixteenth-century vocabulary points out that not everyone was considered as equal member of the urban community, something that would lead to the exclusion of large urban groups, and the identification of urban community with the bourgeoisie [pp. 65-66].

It emerges from the above considerations that French urban societies, especially in the 'bonnes villes', were undergoing a phase of social fragmentation of the traditional 'orders'; this fragmentation followed the social, economic and primarily political realities of the century. As in the German Empire, the French 'bonne ville' depicted itself as a divinely ordained organic unity, embracing all strata and people living within the cities' walls. Behind this façade, the French 'civic community' was just a minor part of the actual urban community, the majority of urban inhabitants having been excluded from civic administration and politics. This generated internal tensions which are greatly obscured if we adopt Moeller's social model. Furthermore, a clash of cultures and interests was already evident, separating urban

elites from the commons but, equally, breaking the traditional cohesion of the ruling groups, as shown in the rivalry of the nobility of the robe with traditional ruling groups, such as the merchants. Subsequently, even if we equate Moeller's 'civic community' with the bourgeoisie, we still cannot speak of a unified social body, sharing a common culture and interests.

As in Germany, the emergent Reformation came into contact with a diversified urban audience and the particular socio-economic and political condition of each urban group dictated to a large degree its reaction. A few case-studies of the French urban world will reveal the internal compartmentalisation of urban societies, a tendency greatly underestimated by Moeller.

The city of Rouen is a major source of information on the socio-political realities of the 'bonnes villes' in the pre-Reformation era. P. Benedict's relevant study is by far the most complete discussion of Rouen and also offers useful suggestions concerning the methodological problems inherent in the urban history of the *Ancien Régime* *11.

The royal entry of Henry II in 1550, immortalised by numerous authors, provides Benedict with ample material concerning the social stratification and hierarchy of the city. The most prestigious events in early modern France, royal entries served a double purpose: to consolidate absolutist monarchical power in the eyes of its subjects as well as to ascertain the supreme authority of the urban ruling groups over their communities. They reproduced a model of socio-political

hierarchy inherited from late medieval times and not taking under consideration the new socio-economic dimensions of mid sixteenth-century urban life.

The entire procession, official image of Rouen's stratification and hierarchy revealed according to Benedict some fundamental features of the city's life. First of all, its highly corporate structure; all citizens belonged to distinct corporations, religious confraternities or craft guilds. This corporate scheme was characterised by a sharp division between two groups, the powerful urban elite and the 'menu peuple', each with its own subdivisions and hierarchy. The 'menu peuple' were divided horizontally, according to their wealth and status, and vertically, into guilds. The elite was divided into 'marchands bourgeois' and officials of the judiciary, the latter subdivided into different corporations, ranked in accordance to their importance and prestige. Apart from lay society, the clerical population was also subdivided horizontally according to wealth and status, and vertically, in corporations [pp. 4-8]

The obvious absence of particular groups from the 1550 entry directs Benedict beyond the official façade presented by the ceremony, in an examination of social realities deliberately obscured by the organisers. For a city with such an extensive judicial authority, the absence of lawyers from the parade was more than striking. According to Benedict, the 'procureurs' and 'avocats' did not participate because their demand to move from the 'corps de métier' and march with the 'officiers' was not satisfied. Their protest reflected their ambiguous social

position, 'midway between the world of officialdom and that of the guilds' [p. 9]. Two other groups deliberately excluded from the royal entry were the sub-artisanal groups, lower crafts and agricultural workers flirting with poverty, and the urban poor, a threatening 5 % of the city's population, which in times of crisis could reach the ominously gigantic proportion of around 20 % [pp. 9, 11].

The third main feature revealed in the royal entry, the city's 'economic foundations as well as its social structures', what can be called the three pillars of Rouen's prosperity and power. Justice, with numerous law courts and the presence of the Parlement, was 'one of Rouen's main export bases'. Cloth and stocking industries were the second source of income and prestige for the city. Although those two industries were already in decline due to the transfer of industrial production to the countryside [p.13], the immense diversity of the city's crafts and specialisations maintained prosperity. Because of the size of Rouen's export activities, there was a large number of resident craftsmen who, in their turn, could support a large number of local service artisans such as bakers and butchers. Rouen's service industry prospered together with justice since the evercoming influx of foreign visitors on legal business was a permanent source of income to the hotel and provisioning trades [pp.15-16].

Rouen's numerous trades - apart from the small or new - were organised following the traditional guild pattern: independent master artisans owning their tools, assisted by a

few skilled journeymen and apprentices, and selling directly their product in the 'boutique'. However, Benedict asserts that capitalism was already creeping underneath the surface of the guild system. Monetary economy was becoming prevalent as shown in the case of English merchants who booked with money advances the entire production of playing cards over a specific period. Also, in the city's woolen industry, the penetration of capital and new division of labour had advanced considerably. The 'drapiers drapants' owned large workshops where they employed wage labourers called 'ouvriers', not 'compagnons', something suggesting a possible shift in the working relations [pp 17-18].

Commerce was the third pillar of Rouen's economy. The city's big port and its favourable geographic location were stable sources of a vast income [pp.18, 20]. The city had long established a huge network of international communications, from the Baltic to the Mediterranean. In this network, the presence of a foreign merchant community was strong but not predominant as in Lyon. The city's commerce was dominated by native merchants; among the local merchant community, wealthiest and most powerful were those involved in international trade, and especially those not specialising in any specific commodity, the giants of commerce simply referred to as 'marchands' [pp 22-24].

At a methodological level, Benedict's depiction of the social stratification and hierarchy of Rouen's community is far more articulate than Moeller's simplistic formulations on the nature of German urban communities. Benedict goes well beyond the

official reconstruction of Rouen's community, as presented in the 1550 entry, traces the various hierarchical layers and pinpoints the powerful groups in Rouen's community that were to play a major role during the Reformation crisis (see below, chapter 4, section 4).

Benedict's reading of his sources - the 1550 entry and surviving parish registers - is much more penetrating than Moeller's. Although The Imperial Cities and the Reformation is poorly documented, it is clear that Moeller contented himself with legitimizing as historical reality the official image of 'civic communities' projected by contemporary sources.

Nevertheless, as is noted below in chapter 6, section 1, Benedict's investigation is marred by his overemphasizing of the socio-cultural aspect of the spread of the Reformation in Rouen's community.

The considerably smaller southern city of Montpellier presents roughly the same picture for the same period, as portrayed by E. Le Roy Ladurie ^{*12}. Ladurie draws information from the 'taille' registers of the quarter of St. Firmin, residence of Montpellier's wealthy, for the period 1555-1565. The residents of the quarter, members of the elite were divided into several categories, according to their contribution to the 'taille'. First came the so-called 'noble lords' of undefined social origin, drawing their wealth from money-lending and selling rye to the peasantry. They shared the neighbourhood, with the ecclesiastical aristocracy, the city's canons. Next were the bourgeois and the big rentiers. They were also exploiting their

peasants , and lived off rents and landed revenues.

Then followed a broad category of legal professions, and a diversified group comprising merchants, apothecaries, medical doctors and university professors. At the bottom of the scale, were the notaries, mostly of modest status, as well as the well-to-do shopkeepers and various craftsmen involved in trade and the services, such as booksellers, tailors, etc. [p. 153].

Outside the residence of the wealthy, the scenery dramatically changed. Ladurie speaks of a city 'still impregnated with rural life and encumbered with manure pits, droves of swine, and convoys of mules laden with vats for the vintage that risked poking out the eyes of passers-by in the narrow streets' [p.154]. This evokes - according to Ladurie - a fundamental aspect of Montpellier's society: in a city closely connected with the surrounding rural countryside, the wealthy classes living in the 'beaux quartiers' were practicing a real and deliberate segregation vis - à - vis the peasants [p.155]. Generally speaking, there were three socio-cultural milieux in mid sixteenth-century Montpellier: the dominant class of landowners, merchants and officeholders, the artisan class, mainly occupied in the cloth industry and enjoying a certain level of prosperity, and lastly, the peasants and farm labourers, excluded from all civic activities and life [p.157].

Again, this contrasts sharply with Moeller's harmonious portrayal of the homogeneous and unified 'civic community'. In a way, Montpellier represents the typical case for a middle-ranking early modern town, when it comes to its social

composition and the nature of its 'urban' community. However, as we shall see in chapter 6, section 1, the obvious polarization between the urban bourgeoisie and the peasantry, as detected in Montpellier, can lead to misleading antithetical schemes, opposing the 'urban core' of the town or city with the backward-looking peasantry of surrounding territories.

V. Chomel's study of Grenoble ^{*13} also reveals the same hierarchical structure. First in status and impressively numerous, the urban clergy, characteristic feature of a diocesan capital. The city's cathedral, the chapter, two monasteries and a hospital were all signs of the clergy's massive presence in the daily life of the city [p. 97]. A novel feature was the presence of immigrant noble families, who had left their meagre seigneuries and came to the city to become royal officials; together with the ennobled resident bourgeois, they formed a separate group, exhibiting all characteristics described above by Loyseau.

Chomel's investigation of the merchant community is based on the registers of a loan imposed on the 'wealthy merchants' and members of the judiciary in the entire province of Dauphiné in 1557. Only 12 % of the city's contribution came from the merchants, something that reveals their particular situation: mainly intermediaries between the rural population and royal officers, they concentrated in the local market (grain, meat etc.) and in provisioning the judiciary.

Next followed the artisans, mingled with shopkeepers. It was the metal trades - 'armouriers', 'orfèvres', etc., that were the more prevalent among the city's crafts. Oppressed by

restrictive regulations, the urban crafts had nevertheless acquired a certain level of organisation, such as the corporation of the barbers and surgeons of 1505. Confraternities, heralds of the later corporate structure of the crafts, existed in Grenoble from the mid-fifteenth century. Chomel notes that there was no clear-cut distinction between the mechanic trades and the shopkeepers as all shared a common mediocrity of living and of levels of production [p. 99].

What emerges as the major feature of Grenoble's community is the overall predominance of monarchical institutions and agents. The presence of the Parlement and of numerous royal officials weighed heavily on Protestant attempts to introduce the Reformation in the city against royal will (see below, chapter 4, section 3).

B. Chevalier's study of the 'bonne ville' of Tours ^{*14} again detects an internal compartmentalisation and divisions of social groups, product of the city's economic expansion and reorganisation but, also, a social trend, as dynamic social groups sought to distance themselves from the rest of the community in order to attain the wished social predominance.

What characterised life in the crafts at the turn of the century was the tendency to restrict access to mastership. In a city flocked with foreigners, the masters were usually Tourangeaux, and most of them were sons of masters themselves. As for the journeymen (compagnons), they were excluded from all civic privileges but participated in festivities organised by confraternities and also enjoyed social assistance. All crafts

appeared like families; nevertheless, what had already become apparent was a growing differentiation which would lead to the division of artisans in divergent, even rival groups. The spirit of 'compagnonnage' was born as journeymen and masters increasingly distanced themselves from one another. Chevalier notes particularly the attitude of the masters who, instead of pursuing capitalist interests, taking advantage of their position, tried to maintain a stability within their ranks, in view of the city's expansion [pp. 415-416].

Concluding his observations on the artisanat of Tours, Chevalier maintains that the end of the fifteenth century saw the parallel existence of three sectors in the urban labour market. The traditional sector which, not influenced by economic development and protected by statutes saw a relative improvement in its fortunes between 1470 and 1490. The professions furnishing the royal court, economically important but fragile; Chevalier treats these trades mainly as ephemeral instruments of social ascendancy for the daring few. Third, the silk manufacture; its workers belonged rather to the first group, due to the traditional nature of their craft, but they were all concentrated in the suburbs, away from the sources of their raw material. Increasingly economically dependent, they constituted a separate group, relatively open to the poor and women, the traditional social outcasts. Around 1520 they formed a strong workforce in the city, representing the avant-garde of industrial workers [pp. 424-425].

The tendency of the various crafts to isolate themselves

from the rest of the artisan class ascribed - according to Chevalier - to a wider phenomenon, involving the whole of Tour's society in this era of transition: the main tendency that Chevalier traces is 'the multiplication of professional groups who, following the example of the crafts, tend to isolate themselves from each other'. At the head of society, the 'grandes familles', a closed world of high royal officials; then, the merchants, progressing socially but always stable second and gradually in retreat, since from the beginning of the sixteenth century they were barely distinguishable from the better-off 'marchands-ouvriers' [p. 427]. Between the two groups, an intermediary layer, the 'honorable hommes', a new social formation since the bourgeoisie in the precise sense of the word *¹⁵ had been enlarged to include jurists and some merchants, notably in the 1450s. Beneath these three groups, the social barriers were well defined and strictly controlled. It was the class of the 'honorable' men that was rising throughout the kingdom [p. 428].

In the world of the 'honorable', the merchant group had considerably increased in numbers, especially following the opening of the Loire to navigation. Within this multilevelled group, the great merchants were prevalent, forming alliances with the men of the robe and thus establishing themselves as 'bourgeois et marchands' at the end of the fifteenth century [pp. 428-433].

The legal professions were among the first to close ranks. This group was characterised by a high level of education: in

1471, three quarters of the known 'avocats' and one quarter of the 'procureurs' had the title of 'maitre' and were university graduates. Heredity of offices was a widespread phenomenon in that group. The same tendency characterised the world of royal notaries, a lesser rank which saw its opportunities of upwards social mobility vanishing from the 1470s onwards. Thus, the judicial society was gradually becoming rigid, closed, and an exclusive domain of the few [pp. 435-436].

The 'officier corps' constituted another great part of the bourgeoisie of Tours. The royal officers were placed at different hierarchical levels and, generally speaking, were not obliged to perform their duties personally. As far as the lower ranks were concerned, no special education or training were necessary. Multiple vacancies and resignations created a fluid situation in the officer group, which everyone sought to exploit. Subsequently, the city's bourgeoisie was packed with officials of all ranks, resident in Tours in expectation of a better opportunity instead of pursuing their duties in their own places of work [pp. 438-440].

The highest social rank was occupied by around fifteen 'grandes familles', in their majority of local origin; coming from the bourgeoisie, they were still sharply distinguishable from the rest of the city's inhabitants as superiors. According to Chevalier, this situation invalidates the assertion that the entire bourgeoisie was rising as a class. Rather, there was a small group isolating itself from the rest of the community in order to 'achieve success in a society where the preeminence of

nobility remained indisputable' [p. 471].

Constituent members of this elite were the jurists, officers of the long robe, the social elite of every 'bonne ville' at the end of the fifteenth century. Secondly, there were the financiers, quite distinct from the jurists but with equal status. During the second half of the fifteenth century the administrative reorganisation of state finance led to the emergence of several ranks of high offices. In this privileged world, venality and nepotism were prevalent., as manifested in the numerous 'lettres de provision'. Generally speaking, the 'grands officiers de finance' came from families of financiers ('receveurs', etc.), but not from merchants or shopkeepers. Apart from offices in the royal mechanism, many families pursued offices in the service of the princes, such as the Duke of Orleans [pp.472-478]. The ruling oligarchy drew its strength primarily from its inner cohesion, secured by intermarriages and parentage and, equally, its flexibility and the openness with which it treated dynamic newcomers to its ranks. Third factor of their strength was their indispensability to the crown as effective and zealous administrators, but also, as creditors to the royal household *16. The members of this elite had to defend zealously their position and safeguard their cohesion facing the fierce rivalry of the traditional feudal nobility [pp 484-490].

The 'bonne ville' of Lyon, Rouen's archrival and a city of gigantic proportions represents perhaps the most dramatic test-case when examining the new realities that broke through the apparent political stability of the 'ancien régime'. The period

1470-1540 saw an emerging, new society coexisting with the traditional one and its corresponding institutions. The triple impact of Lyon's mercantile boom, demographic, social and political accelerated urban socio-economic evolution and tensions *17.

Like most historians previously presented, R. Gascon pinpoints the ambiguity of contemporary vocabulary: various social and professional groups constituting Lyon's 'commune' are designated with changing and variable terminology, in accordance with social, economic and political circumstances. Thus, the word 'artisan' acquired an extra, negative connotation in the years of the artisans' great dispute with the city council. Artisan was not only the professional craftsman, he could also be the enemy of the civic oligarchy. Equally, the newly-emerged 'ouvrier' (worker) had a greatly ambiguous application: usually denoting those who produced by using their own manual labour, the term was usurped by some merchants wishing to take advantage of certain privileges (such as tax exemption) offered by the king to urban artists and silk workers. Lastly, the word "marchand", while denoting at the beginning everyone exercising a commercial activity, gradually ended up the exclusive property of big merchants. The rest of the city's merchants appeared in city tracts always accompanied by complementary, explanatory definitions such as 'merchant of flour', etc [pp. 352-353].

Similarly, Gascon is very careful in evaluating the usefulness of available documentation: the urban 'taille' - which however did not include the very rich and very poor - and the

several tax registers are the only sources of information. They are complemented by the 'Nommées' of 1545 and 1518-1538 which reveal a considerable part of urban property and, also, the predominance of the silk industry [pp. 354-355].

The foreign merchant community preserved its inner ethnic divisions (Germans, Spanish and the various Italian 'nations', Genoese, Florentines, etc) and every national group preserved its proper hierarchy and business interests and practices. A divided world, living between Lyon and the vast territories where they had expanded their affairs, they were nevertheless a dynamic constituent part of the community. Forces of assimilation were quite strong; for economic reasons but also for social recognition and the acquisition of a higher status, many foreigners participated energetically in civic life but also chose to ask for naturalisation as Lyonnais, a tendency particularly traceable in the big merchants. Religious sentiment also played a strong role as a socially binding force; the Strasbourgeois Georges Obracht emerged as a leading figure in the Protestant community. Finally, the existent powerful cultural links and influences also brought closer the foreign and native communities [pp. 365, 367]. However, 'forces of separation' were always at work, as many wealthy Italian merchants never made Lyon their home, having their families in their native lands and themselves wandering in the Holy Roman Empire. This represented, according to Gascon, a fundamental weakness of the city, which never succeeded in becoming a permanent basis for the great foreign merchants [pp. 368-369].

The professional registers of the *Nommees* of 1545 (mentioning 3,644 names) reveal six official 'degrees' in the city's professional hierarchy, the top three being occupied by merchants of all sorts, with a tax assessment varying from one hundred to 1,500 'livres tournois' [pp. 369, 372]. In the native merchant community, there were four strata in accordance with personal wealth and social status; lowest were the petty merchants, closer to the wealthy artisans. Then there were the drapiers, booksellers, participating in export activities and furnishing an extensive clientele beyond the city's frontiers. Next came the 'bourgeois', merchants who had quitted the profession and were living off their incomes. This broad category also included the various officials, royal 'courtisans' and members of the liberal professions. At the top, around ten families of native 'grand marchands', primarily involved in international trade and, to a lesser degree, banking [p. 373].

Merchant families of old Lyonnais roots were a rare sight in the sixteenth century, as most heirs to merchant households had chosen the road to the offices and the various minor seigneuries. They were replaced by dynamic newcomers, enriched by the fairs and openly competing with the foreigners [p. 375]. The native merchant community preserved its cohesion through endogamy but also by sharing a common outlook vis - a - vis their foreign competitors. Their constant obsession was the pursuit of rural estates and, finally, of noble status and a seat in the Consulate. However, despite the great attraction of the offices, their limited number and their monopolisation by some 'officier'

families meant that not too many Lyonnais merchants actually had left commerce before the outbreak of the civil wars [pp. 376-378]. Another binding force for local merchants was common education; having founded the 'Trinity College', Lyon's merchants directed their sons to various universities and foreign merchant households as apprentices in the profession [pp. 379-380]

The ambiguity of contemporary vocabulary is again shown in the case of Lyon's 'bourgeois'. Gascon is able to offer three alternative meanings of the term as applied throughout the sixteenth century. The most current one denoted a merchant who had left commerce and lived off his rents; Gascon also traces some particular cases in this first group, where old, retired merchants holding offices were described and taxed as bourgeois, paying one hundred livres tournois instead of the 1,000 they used to pay as merchants. Secondly, the term had a political sense: in the urban hierarchical order, the bourgeois came before the merchant; living off one's incomes was considered more 'honourable' than practicing commerce. The third meaning was clearly a product of the fluidity of the times: 'bourgeois' were also called the wealthiest of the merchants as shown in the 'ordonnance de police' of 1572, where it was acknowledged that 'in Lyon, the majority of the bourgeois are engaged in commercial activities'. Thus the term came to denote wealthy and prestigious citizens, coming closer to nineteenth-century realities [pp. 380-381]

The artisan world was most profoundly affected by the era

of the 'grand commerce'. The emergence of new crafts and the decay of traditional ones, the rapid changes in the orientation of manufact^urial production, always dependent on the interests of the 'grands marchands', meant an atmosphere of continuous tension with economic crises as an imminent possibility. Within the artisan world, the wealth and status of every craft depended on a combination of factors, such as the number of masters, apprentices, engaged workforce, tools, invested capital, credit and the sale of products.

Taking into account the multiplicity of factors that determined the status of each artisan, Gascon offers a delineation of the inner hierarchy of Lyon's artisanat. First came the 'artisans-marchands' - such as the 'orfèvres' and the 'tissotiers' - that is, producers with a certain amount of accumulated capital, numerous assistants in the workshop, and an established wealthy clientele. Next appeared the 'artisans-salarient', mainly builders and cutlery makers, with a limited number of employees; then, the 'artisans familiaux', using their own family as workforce. A fourth category was that of the 'artisans non-salarient', producers based on personal labour and working in small workshops. The lowest rank was occupied by the 'artisans salariés', those selling their personal labour. Gascon also detects a vague type of 'faux artisanat', close to the 'artisans salariant', as they employed a certain number of assistants, but, equally, close to the 'artisans salariés', as they were dependent on the great merchants; such professions of a vague status were the master velvet makers [pp. 392-394].

There was a vertical division between rich, modest and poor artisan crafts, with the rich crafts being those engaged in the sector dominated by the great merchants. Still it was evident that, due to the overall fluidity of the era, personal wealth did not necessarily correspond to professional status [pp. 398-399].

Finally, there were the 'menu peuple', lowest social category, the heterogeneous mass of people often depicted as the 'classe dangereuse' of the 'bonnes villes'; a diversified lot, including members of the commune as well as outsiders, united on the grounds of their common fear for tomorrow. Always acquiring threatening dimensions and adopting an aggressive stand in times of economic stagnation and famine, they were the constant headache of city councillors, especially after the shattering events of the Grande Rebeune of 1529 [pp. 400-401].

It is becoming clear that the vast fresco of Lyon's society presented by Gascon conceals several concrete points of friction and socio-economic antagonisms, creeping underneath the official hierarchical structure and determining in their way the city's evolution. Capital of the 'grand commerce', Lyon offered numerous opportunities of ascendancy to the daring ones. Nevertheless, social mobility was checked and controlled by what Gascon calls 'the three frontiers'. Firstly, there was **the use of the 'lettre-de-change'** (paper money); in the world of merchant aristocracy, it distanced its holders from the rest of their colleagues as it presupposed a vast personal property and an international clientele. Secondly, came **political power**: this second frontier traversed the artisan world, where it was only

the wealthiest that enjoyed it at the expense of the weaker ones. Thirdly, there was **the level of subsistence**; the most decisive division, separating those who had some kind of property from the destitute.

Those three frontiers, as barriers to social mobility, varied in their effect, according to the socio-economic conditions: the first opposed the native merchants with their powerful foreign competitors, creating nationalistic and xenophobic sentiments. The second brought the councillors - representing merchant aristocracy - in direct clash with the artisans in the beginning of the sixteenth century; it reached a peak in the time of the 'Great Quarrel' of 1515-1522. The third emerged in periods of profound crisis and shook the social order, with its most dramatic expression in the 'Grande Rebeyste' [pp. 404-405].

A dominant opposition inherent in sixteenth-century Lyonnese society was that between rich and poor, paralleled by others (citizens versus non-citizens, traditional merchants versus merchant capitalists). Class conflicts were difficult to detect and, mainly, to be experienced by contemporaries in a society where class and especially class-consciousness were still ill-defined and only partially formed [pp. 405-406].

The case of Lyon's printers' journeymen was probably the most clear-cut manifestation of an emerging professional and social self-awareness on the part of the workforce. It is here that the intervention of N. Z. Davis further extends Gascon's own formulations concerning the emerging opposition between capital and labour in Lyon ^{*18}. Lyon's printing industry was not only 'a

massive case-study for the examination of the interrelations between "social forces" and the Reformation in the city'. A massive sector, employing around 1,000 professionals, it was a new industrial area, characterised by new tensions and tendencies [p. 48].

Newcomers to the city, both socially and professionally, the printers' journeymen exhibited clear signs of self-consciousness in their attempt to assimilate themselves in Lyon's society. First of all, the group was characterised by a strong inner cohesion, primarily based on the collective nature of their work; each one responsible for a certain stage in the printing process (pressmen, typesetters, proofreaders), they had established extremely solid professional links between themselves. Those links acquired a social dimension, since the journeymen carried their collective way of life beyond the workshop, forming a microcosm within the artisan population.

As a group, they felt at odds with the gulf that separated them from their masters, whom they did not consider to be superior in any way. This dissatisfaction became even more acute as soon as this gulf acquired a social dimension, with the decision of the master printers to stop providing food in the workshop [pp. 49-50]. The rivalry finally led to total separation of the printers' journeymen from the printing confraternity controlled by the masters, and the formation of a secular brotherhood, the Company of the Griffarins, for journeymen only.

The formation of the Griffarins led to an escalation of tension as it became clear - according to Davis - that the

printers' journeymen were not willing to conform either with the obligations specifically defined by their professional status or - and that is worth noticing - with the established hierarchical order of their craft. The Griffarins became the troublemakers of Lyon, pressing their masters with organised industrial action [pp. 52-53]. Davis notes that it was precisely their pride in their professional vocation that brought the printers' journeymen into the Calvinist camp of the city. However, sharing an interest in Protestantism but also working underground with their masters did not preclude fighting on economic matters. It appears that the printers' journeymen distinguished between religion and profession, employing the Company of the Griffarins as their main instrument in their socio-economic struggle, beyond the religious disputes of the era; the proof was that not all members of the Griffarins became Protestants, as they were not forced to do so.

A dynamic professional community, aware and proud of its advanced skills and state of work, it was ready to take all measures to secure and promote their professional status. As such, it constitutes a clear case of partial class-consciousness, since it appears to have been unanimously pursuing common goals, but its members were not aware of the proximity of their condition with that of the other workers of the city.

A city of approximately 50,000 inhabitants, Bordeaux presents the same image of social corporatism detected above *19. This image was product of the French reconquest of the city following a long period of English occupation and, to a certain

extent, it represented a reshuffle of the inner hierarchical order, since the new state of things - particularly the emergence of sworn craft corporations - was imposed by royal will over and against a reluctant municipal oligarchy [p.151].

Again, despite the appearances, the civic community was not terribly extensive, as it included only the bourgeois of Bordeaux, citizens with full rights and privileges. Ascendancy into the bourgeoisie was always subordinate to conditions of residence, prestige and honourability of the socially ambitious. In 1502, in order to obtain his 'lettres de bourgeoisie', Jehan de Portau declared that, together with his wife, he had been living in the quarter of La Tropeyte for the last twenty years. The city's bourgeoisie had several ranks of honour, as shown in the case of old-established bourgeois families carrying the title 'citoyen de Bordeaux', reminiscent of the old era of autonomy from the French state. It was the 'citoyens' who formed the nucleus of the oligarchy [p.152].

Within the society of Bordeaux, the traditional hierarchy - clergy, nobility, commoners - was paralleled by another, newly formed, based on the possession of material goods and the power of money. This new hierarchy was finally assimilated into the traditional one, with the ennoblement of the bourgeois of Bordeaux [p. 157].

The fundamental division in Bordeaux's society was, traditionally, that between rich and poor, manifesting itself daily in the contrasting ways of life, levels of housing and nutrition. Nevertheless, apart from the truly distinguishable way

of life of certain 'parlémentaires' and ecclesiastical prelates, the way of life of the majority of Bordelais carried clearly marks of a peasant ancestry, mainly exhibited in the 'goût de paraitre', trademark of the Gascon mentality *20.

The artisans and journeymen of Bordeaux were a diverse lot, a world of 'gens mécaniques' but also of agricultural workers. In their majority, they were an urban proletariat, dangerously close to perpetual poverty. Within the 'urban' crafts, it was only the masters who could afford to accumulate capital, own their tools, a shop, and, perhaps, part of a vessel. Among the agricultural workers, the 'laboureurs' of the vineyards formed a petty bourgeoisie, usually possessing a parcel of land and a pair of oxen; their overall condition was similar to that of master craftsmen of the urban professions [pp. 160-163].

The merchant sector was a vast mosaic of diverse ranks, both social and economic. One possible categorization was the distinction between 'commerçants' and 'marchands'. The former included owners of vineyards selling their production, and master artisans directly selling their products and occasionally participating in export activities. At the top of the 'commerçants', there were nobles of traditional lineages, exploiting their fiefs. Between the two extremes, the merchant in the strict sense of the word - that is, the one practising specialised commerce on a continuous basis, native or foreign. A particular group within the merchant community, appearing under the title 'marchands et bourgeois de Bordeaux', owned their own warehouses, lived in exclusive quarters but, equally,

exhibited marks of a medieval nature: they were still 'marchands', not large scale 'negociants' - who were to appear later. They ran shops, commissioned cargos, or even took the occasional business trip to neighbouring fairs. Their business activities took them to Toulouse, Bayonne and La Rochelle. They were not capitalists; their socio-economic outlook focused on nobility as their ultimate destination [pp. 163-167].

A large part of the city's commercial activities was gradually taken over by new merchants. The traditional families were now preoccupied with their estates, receiving rents and custom dues from their tenants. They were obsessed with a 'passion of the earth', continually enlarging their landed property. Owning and running a vineyard, but not engaging personally in open commercial activities was a precondition to ennoblement: *'vendens vinum ex suo matrimonio proveniens vel beneficio, non dicitur mercator'* [p.169]. This love for the earth openly defied the city's identity, that of a great port.

The society of Bordeaux reflected the overall socio-economic and political tendencies that marked mid-sixteenth century France; it was governed by a dynamic bourgeoisie of the offices, not by the 'merchant adventuring spirit' [p.183].

The sixteenth century saw the emergence of numerous new and dynamic urban groups - 'officiers', merchants, various artisan crafts - which, in their intervention, led to a redefinition of their societies. The simplicity that characterised feudal relationships of vassalage and clientele gave way to a new

complexity which cannot be analysed and explained if one persists on the order-based interpretive model. On the other hand, it is time for historians to redefine the word 'class', and this redefinition must take place away from controversies which have little if anything to contribute to historical investigation.

The work of numerous historians on French urban communities suggests that throughout the century, there was an awareness of the inapplicability of the tripartite scheme. This awareness was shown by various social groups that were either in the midst of social and economic ascendancy (merchants, men of the robe, some artisan crafts) or experienced intensified oppression brought forth by the restructuring of the urban industrial sector. The merchants, the nobility of the robe and the more advanced crafts did exhibit signs of a class or 'group' consciousness, since they appeared to be pursuing common goals, they were aware of the peculiarity of their position and were clearly antagonistic to other urban groups. This attitude led them to defy the rigid social stratification of their era: officers of the robe zealously defended their noble status against the offensive of traditional nobility, while powerful 'grands marchands' emerged as dynamic pretenders to civic power. The lower ranks of legal professions - such as Rouen's advocates - openly disputed their low social profile and fought for their inclusion in the 'officier corps'; artisans of advanced sectors - such as Lyon's printers' journeymen and Rouen's drapiers - defied the inner hierarchy of their craft, forming separate exclusivist brotherhoods and associations ^{*21}.

Nevertheless, it would be too far-fetched to suggest that we are dealing with premature manifestations of class struggle. From the test-cases above presented it appears that no single social group questioned radically the foundations of urban hierarchies. The corporatist nature of urban societies was a fact of life, a 'collective mentality', continually and faithfully reproduced in the interior of every professional association or social group.

A necessary precondition for the survival of regimes was a social consensus referring to the foundations of urban communities. Like the German civic communities, the French communes were deeply impregnated by the norms of corporatism and organic unity. As R. Muchembled puts it, the norm had it that every citizen had to belong to a certain 'corps', as well as to a family and a certain circle of friends, allies and clients. Isolated individuals were treated as marginals and were always subject to social recrimination and oppression. Participation in the various 'corps' made the citizen respect the civic religious and moral codes, as well as the established hierarchy. The multiplication of the 'corps' in the urban communities previously detected ultimately served oligarchic interests, by diffusing the hierarchical model throughout all layers of the urban social pyramid *22.

In a relevant study, R. Gascon detects a common socio-economic evolution of the French cities, lying underneath local variations, and characterised by three main changes: material degradation of the petty folk, brought forth by the

dramatic drop of purchasing power of salaries and the subsequent inflation, and further aggravated by the wars of religion. This was followed by the sclerosis of the 'corps de metiers', namely, the restriction of access to mastership, and finally, the monopolisation of city government by merchant and 'officier' oligarchies *23.

Similarly, G. Duby speaks of two main breaches within the urban social body. The most visible opposed a mass of artisans and shopkeepers to oligarchies constituted of 'officiers', rentiers and merchants; the second separated from society a voluminous group of journeymen, petty labourers, poor and beggars. Early modern French 'communes' were republics of the few, with large sections of their populace excluded from civic life and politics, and permanently on the verge of pauperization. Beyond those two major breaches of social cohesion, there occurred a rivalry between the merchant and 'officier' aristocracies.

At a legal-institutional level, the tripartite division still persisted. Duby stresses that it was the fluctuation of the level of subsistence that ultimately altered the balance of the system. In a formulation very much reminiscent of the 'three frontiers' of R. Gascon presented above, Duby asserts that it was the politico-economic dependance of every social group that determined the level of its suffering and its subsequent reaction *24.

It is a historian of the German urban Reformation, T. Brady jr., who offers the most satisfactory delineation of the state of things and, also, a useful methodological suggestion. Brady

asserts that the classical three-fold division into 'oratores, bellatores, laboratores' never had a true practical significance,. A growing awareness of the dichotomy of the social order appeared early in fourteenth-century literature, with themes such as 'lord and subject' and 'producer and parasite'. It first appeared in Italian political thought and carried on in the political thought of French jurists, like Jean Bodin in the sixteenth century.

Speaking of the concept of 'class', Brady maintains that it is not an economic phenomenon but, rather, the result of a relationship between two or more social groups; it is therefore wrong to identify the 'bourgeois' of the nineteenth-twentieth centuries with the 'marchand', 'bourgeois' or 'burger' of sixteenth-century Europe. The political vocabulary of the Renaissance was one of estates, divinely ordained social order, the common good, etc. The social historian must work with both concepts ('orders', 'classes') and judge over the predominance of each according to the circumstances and the social groups involved *25.

With reference to Moeller's social model, it becomes clear that, once we move beyond the official tripartite scheme and tackle the problem of socio-political and economic tensions inherent in the urban communities, his depiction of the French 'civic community' and 'communalism' as a socially binding force is, as in the German case, quite misleading. French urban societies were far more complex than suggested in the foreword to the French edition of the Imperial Cities and the Reformation.

They should not be viewed as homogeneous social units in contact with the emergent Reformation. As we shall see below in Chapter 4, there were numerous quite distinct urban audiences of the 'Reformation message', instead of the one-dimensional view offered by Moeller.

2) The French bourgeoisie - Moeller's 'civic community' ?

One could argue that, confining his study exclusively in the urban socio-political microcosms of sixteenth century, Moeller has rashly treated the French bourgeoisie as counterpart of his 'civic community'. Previous discussion has pinpointed the emergence of 'bourgeoisie' as a distinct social category, as well as its gradual identification with the urban 'commune', product of the social ossification of urban societies. This ossification had led to the institutional exclusion of the majority of the urban populace from the official 'community'. If that was really the basis of Moeller's view of French urban society, we must check whether the bourgeoisie has been accurately depicted as a distinct social category in Moeller's interpretation.

The above mentioned mosaic of interchanging and, occasionally, contradictory definitions of 'bourgeoisie' shows that it was clearly not a socially homogeneous group, although its social position was quite clear, in between the nobility and the 'menu peuple'. As R. Mandrou puts it, 'living between the lower classes, which were a source of new recruits at each demographic upheaval or social crisis, and the nobility, to which it aspired, [the bourgeoisie] was the least distinctive of the

social categories in a shifting society' *26. An obvious inner social differentiation was that between the upper strata, consisting of the nobles of the robe, financiers, international merchants and tax farmers, and the middle and lower bourgeoisie consisting of small-scale dealers, well-to-do artisans, second-rank merchants and lesser legal professions. Within this diversified world, predominant tendencies were those of the upper strata, the 'officiers' and merchants. Those tendencies overshadowed the distinct features of lesser bourgeois ranks and characterised the entire social category.

To Mandrou, 'the most important feature of the class remained a two-fold escape, a "double feudalisation" - the elevation to the ranks of the traditional ruling class, and the creation of a second category of nobility, the noblesse de robe, which immediately detached itself from the "upper third estate" ' [p.110]. In other words, the **defection** or **betrayal** of the bourgeoisie of sixteenth-century France, who chose the way to the offices, the acquisition of landed property and noble status, instead of pursuing its historical role, that of adopting a capitalist outlook.

'Defection', 'betrayal', are perhaps too strong motions. Still, there is no better way to define the feudalisation of urban elites. One can however question whether it was indeed capitalism that was abandoned by the bourgeoisie. Capitalism was just an emerging economic alternative, not a dominant reality to which the bourgeois turned their back. Chevalier rightly asserts that if there was a betrayal, the losing party was not capitalism but

the 'bonnes villes': 'by refusing to supply their commerce and workforce with their capital - now reserved for offices and rural property - and by abandoning their government, they broke down the economy and dispersed their major sources of income' *27.

The principal cause of this drive to feudalisation is justifiably detected by historians in the 'collective mentality' of sixteenth-century bourgeois. A diversified world, cramped together between the traditional oligarchies and the 'menu peuple', the bourgeoisie had no place in the feudal tripartite arrangement. The aspirations of its upper rank for political and socio-economic ascendancy had to conform with the given rigid social stratification in order to succeed. Thus, the members of the 'officier' and merchant groups did not finally overcome their 'feudal mentality'. Their model was that of the rural nobility.

'The principal explanation for this political impotence is psychological: the inefficacy and fruitlessness of the opposition of the bourgeoisie stemmed from the fact that it had less of a sense of solidarity than any other class. Class consciousness was awakened within it under the threat of looting, when the urban lower classes rose up against all who had houses of their own. But, following the example of the "noblesse de robe", with the parlementaires leading the field, the bourgeoisie above all fostered a mentality of escape to noble rank' *28.

It emerges that Moeller's depiction of French urban society falls apart even in the case of bourgeoisie, a social minority in sixteenth-century urban centres. Chapter 4 will show that, although it undoubtedly coloured the French Reformation with its

distinct mark, the bourgeoisie did not exhibit a uniform stand towards Protestantism and this subsequently led to the ultimate failure of the Protestants to conquer the urban communities.

Section 4: Power and Politics in the urban commune

As in Chapter 1, this section will deal with the political framework of existence for the 'bonnes villes' in the period prior to the spread of Calvinism and the outbreak of the religious wars. For it is through a combined examination of the socio-economic, political, and cultural urban structures that we shall be adequately equipped to deal with the complex interplay of political and socio-economic realities with the religious sentiment that emerged as their product but, also, their solvent
*29.

Despite the lack of detailed documentation on a national scale and the particularity of individual cities' political and administrative organisation, Chevalier attempts a brief delineation of the general features of urban political organisation from the fourteenth to the sixteenth centuries *30.

The first evolution he detects is the spread of mayorship in the country, paralleled by the emergence of the 'premier consul' in the municipal bodies of the Midi. The establishment of mayors in French cities was followed by the distribution of honorific titles to all secondary functionaries in the urban administrative committees. The third common feature was the closely scrutinized and totally controlled renovation of the ruling bodies.

As in the German Imperial Cities, the system of cooption was the usual method of renewing urban government, mainly in those of the 'bonnes villes' that had derived from ancient communes or medieval 'consulats' [p. 203]. In the rest of the 'bonnes villes', candidates to the city council could sometimes be nominated by a general assembly of inhabitants but, even in this case, candidates had already been selected by the outgoing governors. The ascent to power of the newly-elected authorities was one of the most important and symbolic civic ceremonies. It was there that, before the eyes of the commune, the newly-elected 'échevins' swore allegiance to the city and received their nomination letters from their predecessors. Nomination letters directly referred to royal authority, which was the ultimate legitimization of civic office; their distribution by the old civic council had a two-fold symbolic meaning: the new governors were not simply elected by popular mandate but had their authority certified by the old one and, also, by the king himself [p. 204].

The overall administrative machinery was completed with the inclusion of numerous advisory councils and colleges of officials, recruited by cooption. The body politic of early modern French cities, the 'corps de ville', consisted of the mayor, the 'échevins' or 'consuls' and the numerous chambers and committees. It rarely exceeded the number of one hundred members, all coming from a small circle of family lineages. Thus, according to Chevalier, the true nature of the 'échevinages' was the perpetuation of the reign of the social elite. Like the

Imperial Cities, the 'bonnes villes' were governed by a tiny faction of the urban elite, a closed and privileged world of urban notables and royal officials; it was precisely the interplay of interests within the oligarchic groups that determined to a large degree the fate of urban Reformation movements [pp. 205-206].

Besides their 'corps de ville', numerous cities had another, more broadly based representative body, the general assembly of urban inhabitants, survival of the medieval past but, as in Germany, not a haven of direct democracy, as it comprised only representatives from various city quarters, selected from above. It was only in the minor assemblies of the parishes, confraternities and various corporations that the citizens of lower social ranks had a right to participate fully. These general assemblies had generally an advisory and ratifying role. Nevertheless, they could play an important political role in times of crisis and that was why they usually fell prey to manipulation by various factions of the ruling elite.

The advent of the sixteenth century and the deepening of socio-economic divisions saw a gradual devaluation of their role and, finally, their replacement by other, more easily controlled representative bodies. The disappearance of general assemblies reflected the dominant political realities of the era, namely the drive to authoritarianism and the deepening division between the elites and the broad urban communities [pp 207-209].

A random selection of test-cases will certify Chevalier's concluding remarks with reference to urban political situation and its impact on subsequent religious and political tumult.

Thus, in Benedict's Rouen, the advent of the sixteenth century saw the municipal government being shared by a number of bodies representing local oligarchy and monarchical power. The simplified administrative organisation of the city, imposed by a royal edict in 1382, had been replaced by a new complex reality, the most important feature of which was the gradual devaluation of the role of the city council. Apart from the royal governor - mainly an honorific title - and his lieutenant - the actual governor - the newly introduced Parlement further ensured the expansion of royal authority to the detriment of the municipal one. Benedict notes that from thirty-five meetings yearly in the 1550s, the city council of Rouen met twenty-seven times per year from 1575 to 1584 and only twenty-three in the 1590s. Thus, viewed on the long term, Rouen is a typical example of the gradual subordination of urban government to the centralist, royal one, an underlying political reality not immediately detected by all urban inhabitants *31.

The city council was assisted in its duties by the council of twenty-four, consisting of the six members of the city council, all previous councillors, one 'quartenier' from each of the city's four quarters, six 'pensionnaires', the royal 'bailli' and the 'gens du roi au baillage'. In periods of crisis, a limited number of senior citizens were called to join in the deliberations. Most important questions were referred to the General Assembly, third civic representative body, with around two hundred members, drawn from the most notable families [p. 35].

A vast range of legislation covering all aspects of daily life

revealed the oligarchic mentality of the ruling few, as well as the permanent threat that the 'parlementaires' felt coming from the urban populace, 'une mauvaise beste a maintenir' [pp. 36-39]. The vulnerability of the authorities - due to the lack of reliable militias - meant that the only way they could preserve order was to maintain a social consensus with reference to the foundations of civic life, religious belief being one of the most preponderant *32.

The case of Grenoble, presented by V. Chomel, also attested to the overall political tendencies marking the French urban communities: the two lords of the city, king and bishop, never truly shared equal power. Royal authority seemed to undermine episcopal control and despite the distinction between secular and spiritual authority in the administration of justice the bishop always complained of being the poor relative in the government of the city *33. In the 1520s, royal authority, represented by the governor of Dauphine', was the exclusive master of the city.

Like Rouen, Grenoble's government was oligarchic. Its inner structure purposefully maintained a balance of power: each of the four 'consuls' of the city acted as spokesman of a different pressure group, the first representing the doctors or 'licencies' in law, the second the bourgeois and the 'gentilshommes', the third the merchants and the fourth the artisans. The same quadripartite representation characterised the Council, an advisory body. Nevertheless, lower social ranks never truly had a significant influence in the political decision-making [p.101].

The political organisation of Lyon is perhaps the most blatant manifestation of the profound political alterations brought forth in urban structures by the reshuffle of urban societies. The political history of the city before the advent of the Reformation fully reveals the social and political powergame that came into contact with Calvinism *34.

The new 'aristocratie des affaires' that Gascon sees establishing itself in Lyon, occupied all municipal offices and gradually altered the function of communal institutions. In Gascon's words, a 'merchant republic' succeeded the medieval patriciate that used to share political power with the urban ecclesiastical authority. The take-over of civic power by the 'grands marchands' met with dynamic reaction by all affected groups: the first years of the sixteenth century were marked by tension and artisan riots, which the old ecclesiastical masters of the city were only too eager to promote, in cooperation with the third governing power, royal representatives.

With the merchants in power, the urban economy was reorientated to cope with the demands of 'Grand Commerce'. However, the persistence of an obsolete and unfair taxation meant that Lyon's rulers were in a constant state of war with all disaffected groups, especially the artisans. Finally, another factor determining political developments in the city was the presence of the foreign merchant community which, although not directly engaged in communal affairs, could influence legislation and impose its will on the grounds of its special relationship to the crown [pp. 407-408].

The nature of Lyon's commune was almost identical to realities already depicted. The city's 'corps de ville' - body politic - was totally controlled by the ruling group and was recruited by cooption. Communal authority was in continuous friction with the urban Church over 'ordinary justice' and urban property [pp. 410-412].

The consulate was the absolute master of communal assemblies; no assembly could be convoked without its consent and the permission of royal authority ^{*35}. The consulate always held those assemblies that were most needed. That explains - according to Gascon - why the 'assemblée' des notables', literally an enlarged consulate, was most frequently convoked. General assemblies were ultimately nothing but a political fraud; nevertheless, they were the last resort for the artisans and lower social ranks and thus represented a permanent threat to councillors, threat occasionally used by royal agents in their rivalries with the consulate [pp. 413-416] ^{*36}.

Paris, the capital of the kingdom, epitomized all aspects of the precarious relationship between royal and municipal authorities. It is from the extensive research on the city's municipal body by B. Diefendorf that we draw information on the overall administrative structure of the capital but, also, the relationship of the ruling elite with the city's bourgeoisie ^{*37}.

The structure of municipal government carried clear marks of a medieval inheritance. The head of the government was called the 'prévôt des marchands', merchant provost, a title

surviving from the past, since in the sixteenth century the provost represented the bourgeoisie. He was assisted by four 'echevins', elected for a two-year term with two of them elected annually so as to always have some experienced men in government. The 'prévôt', the 'échevins', the city's employees and the sixteen 'quarteniers' formed the 'corps municipal', or 'bureau de ville'. In important matters they were assisted by the twenty-four 'conseillers de la ville', an advisory body. Matters of great importance were referred to larger bodies, like the municipal assemblies [pp. 5-7].

The royal share in civic power was obviously a major one. The 'Prévôte' de Paris', often referred to as the 'Chatelet', exercised police and judicial functions in the name of the king; many of these functions overlapped with those of the 'bureau de ville', whereas the 'lieutenant-civil' was the actual administrator of the city, assisted in his duties by other, specialised royal officials and the royal police force [pp. 8-9].

Apart from royal officials, the city government had to share power with the Parlement which, besides being the highest judicial authority, had also power to interfere in urban administrative matters. The role of the Parlement was primarily that of an intermediary between royal and urban government. What clearly emerges from this delineation of Parisian administrative structures is, quoting Diefendorf, that 'the city government was in fact an agency of limited mandate, dependent for its very existence on the toleration that the kings accorded it for the sole reason that it served their own purposes well' [pp.

10-14].

The nature of the Parisian commune was, again, oligarchic. Although the authority of the 'corps municipal' extended to all inhabitants of the city, the right of participation in municipal elections and politics in general was restricted even to those enjoying a full bourgeois status. Attendance of council meetings, and the right to vote in the city elections came at the invitation of the officers of the 'bureau de la ville'. Elections were always a complicated and thoroughly planned procedure, serving the interests of those already in power [pp. 16-18].

For all its oligarchic nature, the municipal government of Paris did not meet with any dynamic opposition on the part of the bourgeoisie or organised citizen corporations. The wealthiest of the merchants and artisans were favourably predisposed towards municipal authorities, as these were their best lobbying agents with the monarchy. Lists of participants in the various civic ceremonies suggest that there was a positive identification of municipal government and with, at least citizen corporations. As already noted, these ceremonies projected the two faces of urban authority, the municipal and the supreme, royal [pp. 29-31].

Friction between royal and municipal authorities, detected in all previously examined cities, had enormous repercussions with reference to the political fortunes of the 'bonnes villes' and, particularly, the spread of Calvinism. The truth is that the historical relationship between the kings and their cities was never stable or amicable. According to B. Chevalier, for all the weakness of numerous French monarchs, urban oligarchies

always feared the monarchy, which they considered as permanently ill-advised. French cities were ultimately weak to survive the plight of feudal wars on their own. Their occasional flirting with neighbouring princes usually proved to be disastrous. They had to reorientate their policy, and it was under Charles VII and Louis XI that a reconciliation was firmly established for almost a century. Nevertheless, the contradiction between an expanding absolutist state and urban autonomy was never obscured, and finally broke loose in the wars of religion, when the cities, Protestant in the early 1560s and pro-League later, found themselves in open rebellion against royal authority
*38.

Opposition between kings and cities usually focused on two aspects of urban administration: increasing fiscal demands, and, occasionally, direct political intervention by the monarch. It gradually acquired explosive dimensions and led to dynamic measures by both sides, with always ambiguous results. Thus, in 1549, Lyon's merchant oligarchy was imprisoned by royal officers for failing to satisfy royal financial demands; however, only twelve years later, the royal governor was totally helpless in controlling the chaos brought about by the spread of Calvinism
*39.

Urban dissent to royal authority was doomed to fail. Furthermore, by acquiring a religious dimension, it provided the monarchy with a major justification for its expansionist policies. The political history of early modern French cities was sealed with the outbreak of religious wars. As H. Cohn rightly

asserts, 'from the 1520s to the 1540s, the power of the state was more pervasive in most European countries than it had ever been before, and in many cases it would be for centuries to come. The Reformation had a major part in the intensification of royal authority' *40.

As with the German political situation, this has been an underlying reality that greatly eluded Moeller's approach to the urban Reformation. Chapter 4, section 3 will underline the limited autonomy of urban authorities towards the French crown. The possibility of losing their legitimacy in the eyes of the monarch, made the Calvinist urban oligarchies compromise their religious fervour with the need to preserve urban autonomy and welfare.

Section 5: The urban mental and spiritual universe

This section will deal with the examination of the mental and spiritual universe of sixteenth-century urban Frenchmen, the urban 'collective mentality' that blended with Calvinism. What primarily interests the historian of the urban Reformation at this point is to discover firstly, whether urban mental and spiritual universe had lost its uniformity and subsequently offered ample space to Calvinist infiltration and, secondly, whether there was a direct correlation between possible mental-cultural divisions and individual or collective confessional choice.

What emerges from the bulk of research on the French urban

cultural universe of the later Middle Ages is a picture which is at once quite reminiscent of that depicted by Moeller with reference to the Imperial Cities and, yet, surprisingly different in its very foundations. The indisputable mental and cultural uniformity characterising French cities in the fourteenth and fifteenth centuries was not yet based on the bourgeois ideals of civic humanism; its main features were predominantly rural. To use R. Gascon's remark, cities of late medieval times exhibited a dual character, of an open and yet simultaneously closed world. They were open because of their special relationship with the surrounding countryside and closed because they were mainly walled settlements, facing multiple external threats in a world shattered by aggression ^{*41}.

French urban centres had not yet acquired an exclusively 'urban' character. Meeting places for an immense variety of people, they exhibited cultural and mental trends which in no way can be classified as purely urban in the current sense of the word. They reveal, according to Gascon, 'a collective psychology dominated by the fear of violence as well as by a vigorous sociability and a profound religious sentiment' [pp. 430-431] ^{*42}. This vigorous sociability was the fundamental feature of early modern urban communities: they were enlarged families, idealised organic unities where every individual was known through his specific contribution to collective welfare. Urban communities lived, worked and celebrated as a whole ^{*43}.

It is through the examination of the evolution of urban festivities that one can see the urban cultural and spiritual

world in its most comprehensive manifestation. With the advent of early modern period, it is through these festivities that the historian can detect the way socio-economic divisions and mainly the drive to authoritarianism had a profound impact on urban culture. For it was inevitable that the breach of urban social cohesion would run parallel to a breach of the urban cultural uniformity, as inherited from the Middle Ages ^{*44}.

Nevertheless, to suggest that the advent of the era of Renaissance and the Reformation imposed a new culture or worldview on urban societies, would be too far-fetched ^{*45}. Secondly, one has to be very careful in detecting the various social groups or impersonal trends that were propulsive forces behind the emergence of the new state of things. Controversy is usually sparked off by oversimplistic divisions of early modern urban societies into two rival cultures, an antithetical scheme that emerges when historians deal with collective belief systems in isolation from their social, economic, and political framework. Lastly, one has to be very precise with the use of generalisations such as 'culture'.

In a highly controversial book, R. Muchembled attempts a delineation of the gradual differentiation of urban popular culture from its rural counterpart and the establishment of a new culture in French cities ^{*46}. The first phase of differentiation occurred during the fifteenth century, when urban authorities were forced by royal or ecclesiastical overlords to take charge of the maintenance of peace and order within their areas of jurisdiction. This led to a strict subdivision of urban

populations into several 'corps'. At this stage, Muchembled asserts that this effort on the part of urban oligarchies was marred by the persistence of popular culture, which they finally had to tolerate and, try to manipulate so as to serve their needs. This meant that the danger of subversion was always imminent, as the burlesque nature of the various urban festivities could not be confined within the limits imposed by municipal governments.

A second phase took place from the end of the fifteenth till the mid-sixteenth century, characterised by a series of oppressive measures on the part of authorities in an effort to alter the nature and content of the various manifestations of popular culture. The gradual transformation of popular festivities to magnificent spectacles uniting the citizenry and glorifying authority - royal and municipal - and the close supervision of potential troublemakers, such as the youth, were just two aspects of that policy. Finally, the battle against 'popular culture' was won during the mid-sixteenth - early seventeenth centuries, when a regenerated Church, the absolutist state and the urban oligarchies successfully imposed their own worldview, expressed in the ideals of order, peace, prosperity and the mystification of work [pp. 216-217].

Muchembled's assumptions seem to be verified by the earlier specialised study of Y. M. Bérce' on the evolution of popular festivities in early modern France. It is widely acknowledged that these collective manifestations are excellent test-cases for the examination of the historical evolution not only of urban

civilisation but, also, of the incessant power-game between civic oligarchies and their subjects *47.

Occasions of massive and usually irrational activities, the various popular festivities, carnivals, processions, etc., were always a potential threat to the authorities, always afraid of any situation that could develop beyond their control. Bérce' classifies six potentially dangerous aspects of festivities. Firstly, the concentration of crowds in the narrow urban streets, that were difficult to control and ideal meeting-places for troublemakers. Secondly, there was the influx of foreigners which could always cause open confrontation and riots. Thirdly, the widespread consumption of wine. Fourthly, there was the fact that every festivity attracted various small retailers and, subsequently, customs officers. This led to frequent rioting against taxation on the part of the merchants. Fifthly, there were the parades of armed artisans and the various militias, still evident in the reign of Louis XIV, which, although closely supervised by the authorities, could end up in explosive situations, with the surfacing of social rivalries.

Lastly, there was the fear of external attack; in times of festivities, cities could easily fall prey to external aggressors, if necessary precautions had not been taken. Thus, in 1579, while the citizens of Mende were attending mass on the occasion of Christmas Eve, the city was suddenly raided and taken over by Huguenots [pp.13-15].

What emerges from Bérce's account with reference to the oligarchies' view of popular festivities can be summed up in one

phrase: fear of the unexpected. The urban consulates had to intervene and establish total control of these festivities, a task not instantly difficult, since they too participated in them. For the rule had it that 'there were no ceremonies where the sovereigns were not represented either in person or symbolically'.

According to Bérce', it was mainly from the fifteenth century onwards that the various civic ceremonies and popular festivities gradually became propaganda instruments of the monarchy or the oligarchs. The various entries of royal dignitaries or the king himself offered an excellent opportunity for the implementation of that policy. They underlined and sanctified the total association of the city's fate with the struggles and victories of the sovereign. These ceremonies usually lost their historical meaning and ideological influence, once the dynasty with which they had been linked ceased to rule. Nevertheless, they were preserved by the new authorities, undergoing a change in their contents and, occasionally, a chronological displacement. Bérce' mentions the festivities in honour of St. John the Baptist, famous for their identification with republican Florence, preserved and further enhanced under Medici rule.

As reflections of social hierarchy, civic ceremonies quite often turned into arenas of political antagonism between the various participants, mainly focusing on the question of 'préséance' , that is, the hierarchical arrangement of various groups in the ceremonial parade [pp. 56-61].

During the sixteenth century the various urban festivities underwent a gradual change in their contents and ideological meaning, through the open intervention of the royal and municipal authorities. Primarily, they ceased to function as an indirect dialogue between oligarchies and the urban populace ^{*48}. Now 'it was the social elites which provided the model of collective festivities and the common people served as their audience and imitator'. In the urban carnivals, it was the sons of the 'grandes familles' who led the crowd formations and chariots, under the high supervision of the authorities. Nevertheless, the traditional content of these festivities met with the growing suspicion of both royal and municipal authorities, anxious to detect possible hidden messages transmitted to the participants. Thus, an edict by François I in 1538 prohibited the 'abbayes des jeunes', rituals performed in the alpine parts of the kingdom, because the king considered them as instruments of Protestant propaganda. Equally, the various biblical themes in urban processions in Flanders were banned because of alleged Protestant affiliations. On their part, Calvinist municipal authorities were usually hostile to popular processions, which they found naive and blasphemous. In all, from 1540 onwards, a whole range of festivities and processions was banned by the civic or royal authorities [pp. 63-67] ^{*49}.

With the advent of the sixteenth century, the long-standing cultural uniformity that had so far characterised urban communities had receded or disappeared, giving way to an open clash of two 'cultures', one of the elites and the other of the

urban population. Muchembled was quick to offer an interpretation to what he saw as a breach in early modern social, cultural and spiritual cohesion.

In his already mentioned work, he speaks of a 'clash of cultures' brought about by the decision of the elites to 'acculturate' their subjects. Muchembled's urban communities had transgressed their medieval, rural culture and created a new system of civilisation, characterised by a new worldview, specially adapted to cope with given socio-economic and political conditions. However, this worldview, carrying the mark of the bourgeoisie, was forced to coexist with ancient belief systems, moral codes and spiritual attitudes. Every city concealed in itself an ancient and a modern 'world system', something that sparked off new types of tension [pp.189-190]. In this urban 'clash of cultures', the definition of the sacred - read: orthodox - emerged as major point of rupture between the combined forces of Church, state and ruling elites on the one hand, and the broad popular masses on the other *50.

Attempts to introduce a gross antithetical scheme as an interpretation of the cultural division of urban social bodies could be greatly misleading, especially when they are based on broad generalisations and highly disputable theoretical a priori. Muchembled's interpretation is a typical example, and it justifiably met with severe criticism from many of his colleagues in France and elsewhere. From the bulk of various criticisms, the responses of two French historians, J. Wirth and R. Chartier are in our view the most elaborate and, also,

successfully reorientate the historians' approach to the problem. Wirth's approach rather tends to underline the social dimension of the problem, whereas Chartier concentrates on the cultural.

In his response, Wirth ^{*51} attacks Muchembled firstly on his vague definition of 'culture' and its exponents. To Wirth, this approach does not define culture as a global manifestation of society, but rather it sees it as 'the comportment of a group of individuals, in as much as it distinguishes itself from another group of individuals'. Moreover, Muchembled's two rival groups do not constitute classes. Secondly, Muchembled's approach presupposes the existence of an advanced 'learned' culture as the exclusive property of the dominant lay and ecclesiastical groups,. In reality, it is very difficult to distinguish between popular culture and ecclesiastical culture, if one is based on their manifestations (various rituals, dances, etc.)

To Wirth, although it is unquestionable that those who first questioned the medieval cultural situation were the elites, it remains to discover 'whether there was such antagonism between an avant-garde elite of reformers and the traumatized masses'. A fourth point of disagreement on the part of Wirth again refers to the definition of 'culture' by Muchembled; according to Wirth, what Muchembled presents as 'popular culture' is in fact a vast fresco of sexual, magical, religious and festive practices, a culture where all urban groups - the elites included - participated. To Wirth, 'popular culture' denotes that of subordinate social groups.

Lastly, with reference to Muchembled's two agents of

acculturation, the Church and the state, the difficulty that arises concerns the identity of the social classes which controlled these institutions as well as of the social relationships that generated changes. Wirth uses the case of the Carmelite preacher Thomas Connecte who became the spokesman of the urban masses in 1428-29 and was subsequently sentenced to death by his superiors. According to Wirth, Connecte's case proves that 'the so-called ecclesiastical elites, instead of acculturising other people, defended themselves against those who questioned their function and practices' [pp. 67-71]. Muchembled's study is essentially neglecting 'the study of relations between these groups, which is to say, the dialectic of change' [p. 77].

For his part, R. Chartier^{*52} concludes that in Muchembled's work 'popular culture' is usually defined by contrast to what it is not: scholarly literature and post-Tridentine normative Catholicism. By 'popular culture' one can confuse the religion of the peasants with lay religion generally, as opposed to ecclesiastical doctrine and practice. Thus, it appears that Muchembled did not invent the term after all. He inherited it from the early modern period [pp. 229-231].

Secondly, not all ingredients of this culture can be classified as 'popular'. In reality, the so-called popular culture contained elements of diverse origins. Chartier uses the case of the popular 'Bibliothèque Bleue' as an illustration of that inner diversity. This particular form of religious literature contained popular hymns, myths and medieval novels but, also, texts by well-known scholars of the time. Therefore, 'it is pointless to

try to identify popular culture by some supposedly specific distribution of cultural objects. Their distribution is always more complex than it might seem at first glance, as are their appropriations by groups and individuals' [pp. 232-233].

As for the 'acculturation process', Chartier believes that the acculturating force of the elites has been overestimated; instead, he suggests that one should concentrate on 'the differentiated ways in which common material was used. What distinguished cultural worlds is different kinds of use and different strategies of appropriation' [pp. 235-236].

Thus, speaking of the intellectual/cultural condition of French urban communities, it appears that Calvinism met with a divided urban audience; urban divisions were social, economic, cultural and political, and they cannot be explained by oversimplistic antithetical schemes that presuppose the coexistence of 'savages' and 'civilised' in early modern urban societies *53.

One could suggest a possible interpretation of urban divisions by laying greater emphasis on the possible correlation between cultural outlooks on the one hand, and specific socio-political aspirations on the other. An apparent difference of sixteenth-century urban 'corporatism' and 'collectivity' from that of medieval communes was that the former ascribed to a more solidly defined hierarchical structure that was clearly different from the traditional collectivity of medieval urban communes.

Additional suggestions come from the cited article of P.

Ariès. In his investigation of the transition from the fusion of private and public of the Middle Ages to the social anonymity of our era, Ariès detects three great 'external events' that shaped modern social realities: the new role of the state, increasingly pervasive from the fifteenth century onwards; the spread of alphabetization and the diffusion of reading. Ariès rightly asserts that although 'passive reading' was still widespread, it was the emergent private reading that helped individuals create their personal worldview. Lastly, the new forms of religion that developed in the sixteenth and seventeenth centuries, both Protestant and Tridentine Catholic, introducing new forms of internal piety *54.

Pre-Reformation urban spiritual world is often described as heavily linked to religion, a world where the Church had supreme authority in all matters affecting daily life of the inhabitants. Still, with the advent of the sixteenth century, it became evident that ecclesiastical authority within the urban communities was already receding. The 1520s saw the first open manifestations of religious dissent. The years that followed profoundly marked the fate of the cities, the nation and the Church.

Explaining the reasons for the collapse of religious uniformity has by now become a routine affair: absent or corrupt bishops, a largely inefficient urban clergy, abuses of spiritual power, active humanist circles, plus a bourgeoisie that was clearly disaffected by ecclesiastical moral standards and religious practice. What is usually obscured is the fact that the

idea of reform - out of which emerged the phenomenon of the Reformation - had long preceded the tumultuous years of the sixteenth century. What remains to be seen in the concluding part of this section is whether the typical image presented by pre-Reformation urban Church conforms to the causality of the above mentioned historical interpretation.

What initially strikes the historian is the diversity of daily contacts between clergy and laity in the cities. Long before the emergence of printing and the spread of reading, the parishes were primal cells of urban life and activity. Small communities controlled by vicars and supervised by the local bishop, parishes were the milieux where lay and clerical activities and forms of organisation ran parallel to each other. The parishes were the clearest manifestation of the spiritual and social authority of the urban ecclesiastical institution *55.

It was within this framework that the laity gradually presented a higher profile and finally attained the autonomy and self-organisation that was evident in pre-Reformation years. According to Chevalier, it was mainly the emergence of confraternities that must be seen as the principal development in lay piety. This meant craft confraternities with obligatory membership, so densely intermingled with guilds that they sometimes replaced them as forms of association, but also devout confraternities, open to everyone, or recruiting by cooption. At the top of the social pyramid, there emerged prestigious confraternities of the wealthy. The golden era of confraternities was between 1450 and 1550. Chevalier mentions

the case of Bordeaux which had fifty-seven confraternities from 1350 to 1500, three quarters of which appeared after 1450. Before their recession during the religious wars, lay confraternities had managed to establish a high degree of urban autonomy towards the control exerted by the Church [pp. 250-254].

As for the actual condition of the urban clergy, it is again Chevalier's all-encompassing work that offers a view, quite close to a national scale. According to Chevalier, a 'bonne ville' of 10,000 inhabitants had at least 500 clergymen, while many cities surpassed this number. For example, at the end of the fourteenth century, 4 % of Toulouse's population were clergymen. Chevalier detects two principal causes for the impressive concentration of clerics in urban centres. Firstly, the mass of available ecclesiastical benefices was urban. Secondly, clergymen were mainly recruited from the cities and mainly from the elites, as the rural petty folk could not afford to get a place in the ecclesiastical body.

At the top of ecclesiastical institution, the bishops had become agents and clients of the monarchy and had subsequently turned to politicians instead of remaining spiritual leaders. Spiritual authority over the urban laity was transferred to the lower clerical ranks, as the chaplains and curés were also rarely resident in their parishes. Poor priests were usually employed to administer mass with negative effect on the Church's prestige to the eyes of the urban elites. It was mainly the mendicant orders that still enjoyed some popularity and respect but were equally

suspected for their scholasticism and opposition to popular religious culture [pp. 242-247].

On the other hand, the humanists could restore lost ecclesiastical credibility if only they met with Church's approval in their drive to create a new religious culture that would meet with the aspirations of the urban elites. Instead the apostles of 'the new man' were usually banned from ecclesiastical spiritual and educational institutions. The consequences of their exclusion are very well known: the new lay culture emerged as autonomous from traditional ecclesiastical control and, moreover, it turned out to be quite antagonistic to the obvious backwardness of established Catholicism. As members of the social elites, sixteenth-century humanists enjoyed a social standing 'incomparably superior to that of the intellectual in the Middle Ages' *56.

Thus, the Church's spiritual supremacy was corroded in both ends of the urban social pyramid. To the popular masses, the strict ecclesiastical code of morality and discipline was clearly at odds with the comportment of numerous clergymen of all ranks. The various abuses of spiritual authority by ecclesiastical courts further discredited the Church to both urban and rural Frenchmen. At the other end of the social scale, the low moral conduct of clergymen and 'the dissociation of lay morality from the morality of the theologians' brought about by humanist preaching greatly undermined ecclesiastical supremacy [p. 201].

It becomes clear when going through the bulk of current

historiography of the French urban Reformation that, despite the sincere efforts of the several 'Brignonets', Catholicism was in a state of recession in the urban centres. Discredited morally but also doctrinally, arousing increasing indignation on the part of urban elites - with whom it frequently clashed for a redistribution of civic power - always subject to royal supervision and hostile intervention, the Church could only rely on the easily controlled illiterate masses in its clash with the elites. Although most of the Church's rivals changed their stand with the outbreak of religious wars ^{*57}, one can safely suggest that the whole situation further deepened the breach of urban social and cultural cohesion, something that the Calvinist movement quickly exploited.

6: Some initial conclusions:

The discussion of French urban cultural and spiritual realities completes our view of pre-Reformation Germany and France. Viewed together, German and French urban communities present several common characteristics, linked with wider socio-political, economic and cultural developments taking place in sixteenth-century Europe. In sum, the principal common characteristics of the two urban communities were, firstly, a

social sclerosis, primarily expressed in the authoritarian drive of the ruling elites and the subsequent divisions of urban social bodies. Secondly, there was a **growing cultural division** following the socio-political one between elites and commoners. Thirdly, with regards to Church and religion, there was a **two-levelled anticlericalist trend**, opposing the Church with the urban ruling groups and, equally, the citizenry and the lower social ranks. A state of religious anarchy - both elitist and popular - was evident behind the apparent uniformity of Catholicism.

Fourthly, despite their prestige and power, the great cities of Germany and France were **greatly dependent on the national political situation**, being exposed to external intervention, princely or royal. Both the 'Reichsstädte' and the 'bonnes villes' as self-governed communities needed the support of a central government against the surrounding feudal lords. Thus, **the crown always played a major role** in the development of urban internal and external policies, and the apparent weakness of the German monarchy, when compared to the French, must not obscure from our eyes the cities' dependance on it.

The above realities clearly do not fit into Moeller's interpretation. Moeller accurately described the official representation of the German 'civic community' and the French 'commune' respectively, but failed to detect underlying socio-economic and political divisions in both cases. At a political level, Moeller overestimated the autonomy of urban

centres from external influences. At a cultural level, by focusing exclusively on the educated urban elites, he failed to appreciate the powerful popular anticlericalism and the cultural divisions of urban societies.

Finally, his overall depiction of Reformation urban communities leads to the conclusion that emergent Protestantism successfully responded to the collective aspirations of the 'civic community', and, through its marriage with the 'communal spirit', established itself as the only confessional form truly expressing urban collective aspirations. In reality, Protestantism had to overcome multiple urban divisions and, equally, withstand external pressure to attain supremacy (See chapters 3 and 4, sections 6 and 5 respectively).

At a methodological level, we are dealing with two different historiographical traditions: the historiography of the German urban Reformation greatly focused on Moeller's theory, whereas French historiography of the Reformation has remained largely indifferent to the postulates of the German historian, being preoccupied with its particular interpretive problems, referring to urban social stratification and, at a level parallel to Moeller's investigations, to the contact of Calvinism with the bourgeoisie.

Secondly, most historians who chose to follow Moeller's path tend to espouse a socio-political basis of investigation, still, without ignoring cultural dimensions. **Annales**-dominated French historiography emphasises the socio-cultural dimension, mainly the question of 'mentalités', again, without

underestimating the political aspect of the problem. With regards to sixteenth-century cultural realities, the French view has been richer and more productive than the German and Anglo-Saxon - with notable exceptions like Chrisman and Scribner (See below, Chapter 3, section 5a; also, Chapter 5, section 2).

Both historiographical traditions have provided historians with a more complex and analytical view of urban socio-political, economic and cultural realities. Chapters 3 and 4 of Part II will show how both historiographical traditions responded - directly or indirectly - to Moeller's formulations on the contact of the Reformation with urban societies.

PART TWO: THE HISTORY OF THE URBAN REFORMATION

Chapter 3: The Reformation in the German cities

In the years following the Moeller initiative, social historiography of the German urban Reformation has brought the entire phenomenon under new scopes of investigation, revealing a multifaced historical reality previously neglected or ignored. It is the diversity hidden underneath the apparently simple term 'Reformation' that has ultimately undermined the consensus initially established among the social historians of the urban Reformation ^{*1}. This by no means implies that we should resort to the convenience of traditional and highly disputable historical interpretations of the phenomenon. On the contrary, we are now better equipped to tackle with the problem in its multiple manifestations. First of all, various fallacies that had long impeded historical investigation have been discarded. Three initial remarks will prove the point.

Viewed from a religious/ecclesiastical perspective, the Reformation was clearly neither the first nor the unique attempt at ecclesiastical reform. The process of ecclesiastical and doctrinal reform had started during the fourteenth and fifteenth centuries and went on long after the schism. Therefore, 'Reformation' should be distinguished from ecclesiastical

reform, out of which it grew and which it finally surpassed in its broader implications *2.

At a socio-political level, the Reformation was certainly the culmination of long-standing civic conflicts. It reshaped the political map of the Empire with regards to the overall position of the Imperial Cities and the territorial towns. Nevertheless, it is highly disputable whether the Reformation crisis ended the period of urban conflict *3.

Thirdly, when it comes to examining the leading figures and trends of the Reformation movement, it is by now commonly acknowledged that Luther's voice was initially the strongest but it was not unique. The one man's crusade against the evils afflicting humanity because of the papacy was soon to create other protagonists, defying the very core of Lutheran teaching: Zwingli, Bucer, Muntzer, and a multitude of minor figures at a local parish level. Right from the start, the Reformation was not 'Lutheran'. Furthermore, when it comes to examining the lay protagonists of the movement, the Reformation again presents a diversified face: the banners of Reformation were carried by urban popular movements, by civic magistrates but, also, by the princes. And it now becomes pretty obvious that the 'Reformations' of the urban popular pamphleteers, of Jacob Sturm and Lazarus Spengler, and, lastly, of Philip of Hesse and Ulrich von Hutten only barely concurred.

So, behind this apparently simple concept, there lies a whole amalgam of socio-economic developments and political

tendencies in concurrence with powerful currents of secular and theological thought and changes in collective religious beliefs of the urban masses. It is the task of the social historians of the urban Reformation to put together - and in accordance with their interdependence - the pieces of this enormous jigsaw. This chapter will present and critically assess the various interpretive hypotheses emerging in the current state of the social historiography of the urban Reformation, following the publication of the Moeller's Imperial Cities and the Reformation. We shall proceed by according first place to the views of the master of the controversy.

Section 1-Moeller's view of the German urban Reformation

In the divided German urban world depicted in the Imperial Cities and the Reformation, emerging Lutheran ideas were quick to find allies and faithful adherents. Apart from the humanists - who were in any case favourably predisposed towards new ideas, especially when these referred to the vital question of ecclesiastical reform, the Reformation message found fertile ground in the social conflicts of the German cities, as it met with the disaffection of a new 'class' under formation, composed of journeymen and professional workers and, on a broader scale, with the hatred nurtured against the rich and powerful, and especially the well-to-do ecclesiastics, by all social groups

excluded from government.

Throughout the early years of the Reformation, Lutheranism appeared as synonymous with social tumult. In every place where Lutheranism spread, the citizens demanded that their council suppress the payments of interests to the Church, subject it to civic authority but, also, offer the citizenry a larger share in civic administration and appoint evangelical preachers in the place of the proponents of the old faith. In 1525, the year of the great Peasant Rebellion, there was a clear rapprochement between the rural insurgents and the urban opposition elements, especially in the centres of the rebellion - such as Heilbronn, Schweinfurt, Nordhausen, etc., - where 'there were true fraternisations between the urban evangelical communities and the peasant masses', with the insurgent urban citizens providing the revolutionary thinkers and propagandists to the peasants. However, this rapprochement between urban and rural dissenters proved to be ephemeral as the urban opposition, under the influence of the preachers, in their majority against the peasant rebellion, gradually distanced itself from the insurgent peasants [pp. 26-27]. Still, this temporary coexistence had fatal implications for the establishment of the Reformation in several cities. In some Franconian and Thuringian cities - such as Rothenburg, Nordhausen and Mulhouse - the bourgeoisies, shattered by the peasants' rebellion returned to Catholicism. This was clearly the case with numerous humanist followers of Luther who were horrified at the possibility of an overthrow of

the political status quo. 'The fact that the evangelical demands were found to be connected with socioeconomic ones slowed down instead of accelerating the spread of the Reformation in the cities' [pp. 28-29].

Nevertheless, the Reformation was firmly established within urban societies and the profound influence it exerted on the masses was clearly exhibited in the widespread wave of iconoclasm . In the early years of the Reformation, Luther's message attracted the attention of the broader burgher mass which in its turn coloured the entire movement with its own aspirations : 'if we set apart the humanist milieux, the evangelical movement of the first half of the sixteenth century was a people's movement... The Reformation was never the work of a Council' [p. 30].

It was only in a few Imperial Cities - Nuremberg, Strasbourg, Constance, Memmingen and, in the north, Magdeburg - that the city council conceded to burgher demands and initiated a process of reform. Usually, the civic magistrates tried to restrain and impede the expansion of the Reformation. Deeply influenced by medieval conceptions of civic peace and unity, the magistrates considered themselves responsible guardians of the peace and unity of the civic community. The coexistence of two rival churches would certainly jeopardise social cohesion and threaten the 'sacred order' of the city. Thus, in many cases, the city magistrates attempted quite desperately to prevent their citizens from distancing themselves from Catholic ceremonies

and customary religious practice [pp. 33-34].

From a social perspective, most of the city councils were deeply conservative bodies, fearing any prospect of reform and not willing to sacrifice their multiple links with the urban ecclesiastical establishment. It was therefore inevitable that 'cities where the artisans participated in government adhered to the Reformation faster than those governed by patricians'. The only exception to that reality was the city of Constance, where the patriciate took the lead of the reform movement right from the start. Ultimately, the struggle of the urban evangelical movements to drag their cities under Luther's banner was rooted in the medieval conception of 'civic community': peace ought to be maintained and safeguarded to the benefit of the community.

The only difference from the medieval period was that, now, it had become obvious that peace could not be established if the ecclesiastical institutions did not change. Moreover, the conviction that the urban community was one and the same before God was to influence urban internal policies following the establishment of the Reformation. The citizens were connected with each other like members of the same body, and the concept of global responsibility towards God pushed the civic authorities to ameliorate their welfare system and intensify their struggle for the integration of the Church into civic life and order. Purely political and social considerations were thus closely intermingled with spiritual demands, as the republics of the new faith brought back to life medieval conceptions of the

city and its institutions that had deeply receded during the long-lasting period of urban socio-economic tensions [pp. 35-36, 38, 40-42].

All these were direct or long-term consequences of the establishment of the Reformation in the German urban centres. Still, according to Moeller, they stemmed from a misunderstanding of Luther's views and personal motives.

To Moeller it is indisputable that Luther gave to the *raison d' être* of the city a new, profounder signification: the fundamental law that the members of a community were equal and enjoyed the same rights on principle. Luther's theology legitimised the integration of the ecclesiastical body into the broader civic community. Furthermore, Luther declared that the exercise of a profession, irrespective of its nature and status, was a good work before God's eyes. This idea complemented the traditional medieval conception of the individual citizen's contribution to the welfare of the community [pp. 47-48]. The misunderstanding of Luther on the part of his urban audiences lay in the fact that, ultimately, his assertions modified the medieval conception of the civic community. Indeed, Luther's more individualistic stand on the personal relationship each Christian had with God, undermined the position of civic community as an intermediary between God and individual. With its emphasis on personal faith, Luther's doctrine 'breached the ancient urban community' [pp. 49-50] *4.

Contrary to Luther's introspective attitude, the theologies

of Zwingli and Bucer, leading figures of the Reformation and citizens of free cities, underlined the collective duty of Christians to realise and obey the divine will, thus emphasising the external rather than the internal nature of religion. Zwingli's theology brought about the unification of civic and ecclesiastical communities (*ecclesia et populus*), the obedience of the state to God, in a theocratic framework of existence [p. 51]. On his part, Bucer advocated the close collaboration of the two communities - civic and ecclesiastical - and considered the ideal of love as the fundamental social binding force. His ethic was communal, and he finally integrated the ecclesiastical community into the broader civic one, bringing the church under the control of the civic government.

Both Zwingli and Bucer were humanists but also republicans, unlike Erasmus whose monarchical humanism they rejected at numerous points. The realities of their cities and mainly their constitutions had shaped their political and theological orientations. Both of them were closely connected with the urban world and, unlike Luther, started off from the collectivity and not from the individual. The two reformers preached that 'in reality, the sanctity of the city did not derive from the fact that it constituted a sacred community in itself, guaranteeing the salvation of those who joined in its ranks, but, rather, from the word of God which was communicated to and obeyed by that community'. Subsequently, the ideal of the *Regnum Christi* of both Zwingli and Bucer surpassed the medieval conception of the

sacred civic community [pp. 62-70].

Behind the theological differentiation, there lay a socio-economic and political differentiation between the urban north and south of Germany. Firstly, the economic decline of the Hanseatic League had led to acute social conflicts in the northern towns in the beginning of the sixteenth century. Secondly, intellectual life in the north was far less intense than that of the south. Ridden with socio-economic problems, the north thus experienced a less passionate wave of Reformation. Thirdly, the degree of political participation of the lower citizen ranks in Franconian and northern urban centres was considerably smaller than that of the south. Excluded from decision-making and daily administration, the broader burgher community was characterised by a 'considerable apathy toward the communal affairs and a certain detachment from communal ideology'. On the contrary, in the southern cities, there was a particularly strong influence of the lower citizen ranks and the artisan guilds on the exercise of government. Moeller proceeds from the hypothesis that the cities which were organised according to the communal principle were exactly those which followed Zwingli and Bucer. He subsequently maintains that the success of the Zwinglian and Bucerian Reformations was due to their shaping by the particularly vivid communal spirit of the south German cities [pp. 78-85].

In the German urban centres of early sixteenth century, the emergent Reformation message became immediately entangled

in a complex interplay of socio-political interests. It appealed to all members of urban communities irrespective of rank and status. Nevertheless, this message was received and interpreted variably according to the position and the role of its particular recipients within the civic communities. A broad categorisation of acceptance and interpretation of the Reformation message can be based on the question of **Obrigkeit**, namely the given hierarchical relationships in the urban societies. For every group of the community reacted to the Reformation in accordance with its position within the civic hierarchical order.

Furthermore, the Reformation crisis went beyond the limits of civic territories by acquiring a national dimension. Subsequently, major external forces, territorial or national, were called into the dispute and their intervention had profound implications for the evolution of the urban Reformation as well as for the urban political situation in general. Moeller's approach outlined above offered a global interpretation of the crisis and suggested a possible classification of the two main trends that ran through the urban Reformation movements, still without touching upon the inner diversification of reactions to the Reformation, taking place in both Lutheran and Reformed urban communities. It remains to be seen whether subsequent historical production on the urban Reformation in Germany verified all the postulates of this ambitious if not controversial interpretive approach.

Section 2-The Reformation and sixteenth-century sociopolitical realities

a:The Reformation message and its recipients: The socio-economic and political status as determining the reaction towards the Reformation ideas.

In communities which perceived their hierarchical order as manifestation of divine will, it was almost axiomatic that changes in religious beliefs, especially the profound ones introduced by Luther, would provoke a chain reaction. It did not matter whether Luther's own aspirations and particular message were of any relevance to sixteenth-century urban socio-political realities. Religion and, subsequently, theology, was a 'dominant medium through which the human condition was interpreted' - to use H. Rublack's useful remark ^{*5}.

According to Rublack, for all their abstract nature - one has to remember that Luther addressed the entire Christendom in general, not the urban citizens - the ideas of the reformer appealed to urban audiences which were quick in adapting them to their contemporary realities, anxieties, disaffections, and aspirations. Furthermore, Rublack maintains that because of the abstract nature of the Lutheran message, this was greatly misinterpreted by all ranks of the citizenry and especially the lower and the oppressed: 'Luther's recommendation to love the poor was transformed by the poor into a legitimate claim in their attempt to solve their social problems in overcoming the dichotomy rich-poor'. Lutheran theology turned out to become political theology as it questioned theological principles legitimising civic inequality, oppression and exploitation. By bringing new hope to the poor and oppressed, Lutheranism did emerge as a potentially subversive ideology. Indeed, 'authoritative power was endangered until restored by the teaching of the two realms' [p. 32].

Are we then to take it for granted that the urban Reformation movements were exclusively manifestations of dissatisfaction of one particular group in urban communities? Such is the view maintained by Moeller and more effectively established by Rublack. In his recent survey of the political side of the German urban Reformation crisis, T. Brady brings back to historians' attention the fact that the Reformation also presented some attractive aspects to the urban oligarchs of the

time, namely the subjection of clerical activity to governmental control. The integration of the urban clerical body into the civic community as well as the subjection of clerical education and poor relief to civic authority would certainly further enhance the oligarchs' drive to fully establish an authoritarian control over all aspects of urban life and organisation. Moreover, it would settle once and for all the ever lasting dispute on the presence and the contribution of the Church to collective welfare: 'this domestication of urban religion converted the ecclesiastical order from a disruptive into an integrative element in civic life' *6.

Nevertheless, the prospect of the Reformation taking over the cities could still appear as a potential threat to the eyes of the urban elites. The civic oligarchs were primarily afraid of a further agitation of their commons' political frustration by the evangelical preachers: 'the movements had ... to be mastered in the name of the historic civic norms of peace, justice and unity', ultimate aristocratic ideological weapons which had served well their exponents throughout the period of urban tension preceding the Reformation. However, these exerted only a meagre influence when brought against the Bible, the pure word of God. Brady emphasises the great challenge presented to the civic oligarchs by unauthorised popular interpretation of the divine will. The Bible could either legitimise or condemn the civic oligarchies before the eyes of their communities and this was why throughout the early phase of the Reformation - mainly the

years 1523-24, the various edicts on preaching issued by the civic governments commanded the clergy to avoid preaching anything but 'the pure Gospel'. Such edicts were issued in Zurich, Worms, Basel, Bern, Mulhouse, Augsburg, Constance, Strasbourg, and numerous other urban centres and they drew consultation from a decree issued by the Imperial Diet on February 9, 1523. 'Such laws were proof not of an official partisanship for evangelical religion but of the urban governments' determination to bring the internal divisions under control through the exercise of the *jus pacificandi* ' [pp.152-158].

A brief survey of eight cities - Nuremberg, Augsburg, Strasbourg, Ulm, Frankfurt am Main, Constance, Esslingen and Nordlingen - shows, according to Brady, that the overall situation was pretty fluid up to early 1524, for the urban evangelical movement was still under close clerical control and had not yet engaged itself in disturbances of the civic order. This was largely due to the cooperation of civic oligarchies which, nevertheless, depended on the amount of pressure they received from their neighbouring princes, the bishops, and imperial courts. Then, in 1524, 'there arose a kind of political scissors, of which one blade was the urban commons' direct pressure for religious change, and the other was Charles V's new determination to scotch the Lutheran heresy. The convergence of these two blades made it impossible for most urban governments to continue the policy of benign inaction'. Pressure from the commons augmented according to their social distance from the oligarchy - large in

Nuremberg, Augsburg and Frankfurt, small in Strasbourg, Ulm and Constance - and their level of internal organisation into guilds, with, for example, powerful guilds in Strasbourg, Esslingen and Constance, weak in Augsburg and Frankfurt, and none at all in Nuremberg. 'Each of these factors - external forces, social structure and constitution - contributed to the urban governments' variegatedly common situation' [pp. 158-166] *7.

To Brady, it was inevitable that Luther's voice would meet with distortion and misinterpretations on the part of urban audiences. At the top of the social order, those able to communicate directly with Lutheran thought through their high level of education did not ultimately share the reformer's worldview - if there was indeed any. Bred with civic humanism, members of the civic oligarchies had a genuine passion for religious renovation, namely the restoration of religious ritual and practice according to their personal high standards of internal piety. Still, they did not share Luther's theological eschatology. They could clearly differentiate between the secular and the spiritual domains; namely, they were not willing to sacrifice the political status quo for the sake of an all-embracing theological revolution. Right from the start, they treated Lutheranism with caution. They were conservative in their reforming drive precisely because, to them, the Reformation had very clear-cut limits.

At the other end of the urban hierarchical scale, were the middle and lower burgher ranks, master-craftsmen, artisans,

journeymen and wage-labourers. They exhibited a different appreciation of the Lutheran message. Their particular social aspirations, their vocational ethos not only appeared to be compatible with Lutheran teaching but it was further enhanced through the Lutheran idealisation of manual work and the doctrine of the priesthood of all believers ^{*8}. Thus, in the bitter socio-political antagonisms between civic oligarchs and burghers that swept through urban Germany during the late fifteenth and early sixteenth centuries, the burgher opposition found a strongly needed ally in Luther. Their own brand of civic communalism, namely the demand for a fair redistribution of civic power and common wealth ^{*9} was reinforced by what they envisaged to be the true essence of Lutheran preaching. The early years of the Reformation, the 'period of innocence' - to use B. Hall's expression - were characterised by the precarious coexistence of two reforming trends, one of the rulers and one of the ruled. This is a point of view whose legitimacy is also acknowledged even by historians who strongly oppose a 'sociological' and 'political' interpretation of the urban Reformation ^{*10}. A random selection of urban communities as presented by the current historiography of the German urban Reformation will confirm this assumption.

The Imperial city of Strasbourg is a convenient starting point for our examination of the ways the sociopolitical situation of the urban elites and burghers dictated their response to the Reformation. A 'guild republic' under the total

control of a multifaced civic oligarchy, Strasbourg became the capital of the Bucerian brand of Reformation which, if we follow Moeller's line of thought was but an expression of the strong communal spirit of this guild-dominated city.

In the picture of Strasbourg of the early 1520s depicted by Brady ^{*11}, Lutheranism met with an extremely tense situation not only in the civic territory, but on the whole of Lower Alsace: a growing indignation primarily on the part of the peasant masses facing poor harvests, the rising cost of loans and generally the multiple oppression of the urban ruling classes, had burst open in numerous uprisings in 1493, 1502 and 1517, the targets of which - besides the clergy - were clearly the urban oppressors of the Alsatian peasantry. Peasant indignation was echoed in the cities, and for all the oligarchy's efforts, Strasbourg was not an exception [pp. 202-203].

Lutheranism appeared in the city as early as 1521, finding its first adherents in young clergymen of humanist influences. 1523 was the first year of popular disturbances in support of persecuted preachers and against the urban church. Then, in January 1525, the guild of the gardeners, the largest, most radical, and probably the poorest group of artisans rebelled demanding the total expropriation of ecclesiastical property, while simultaneously attacking with a small group of men the civic treasury. The oligarchy was quite prepared to tackle the situation; enjoying the support of the larger and the more prestigious guilds, it took a series of military preparations

and other measures which enabled it to survive the crisis unscathed [pp. 203-204].

As for the nature of the Reformation movement, Brady asserts that 'the doctrines peculiar to Luther never dominated local religion in Strasbourg during the Reformation generation'; to Brady this was not due to a massive misunderstanding of Lutheranism, for, in Strasbourg, 'the meaning of reform depended more on local issues - within the larger framework of the movement against clerical lordship - than it did on the teachings of Luther' [pp. 204-205]. Thus, the nature of the Reformation movement in Strasbourg was conditioned by local conditions and was not merely a chain reaction provoked by the appearance of Luther *12 .

The side-effects of the revolt could include a reversal of the civic order, and that was why Strasbourg's oligarchy remained united throughout the hysteric years 1523-25, despite their factional frictions and personal differences. Subsequently, the regime took a series of measures in order to appease the populace, gradually introducing the Reformation in civic life. The suppression of clerical legal immunity and the liquidation of convents clearly aimed at putting popular resentment under control. The oligarchy of Strasbourg knew only too well that it was through specific concessions that it would survive the crisis; moreover, in this process of proto-Reformation, the regime 'learnt well and correctly that the reformers' reform was not only dangerous to established order, it was itself the best

antidote to revolution' [pp. 207-208].

With regards to the reaction of the urban elite to the Reformation, Brady detects three main factions: The *zealots*, militant evangelicals favouring Zwinglianism as an ecclesiastical policy and a pro-Swiss separatist foreign policy, the *politiques*, moderate evangelicals, who took great care in preserving the city's standing on the national political scene, while simultaneously trying to foster alliances with the neighbouring Lutheran princes in an attempt to prevent unexpected chaotic situations. Finally, the *old guard*, staunch Catholics who relentlessly fought for their faith till they finally conceded defeat in 1529 and either resigned their offices or renounced their citizenship altogether. They were usually members of the wealthiest stratum of the guilds and all were merchants except one rentier, according to the list 'quarti anti papi' drawn by J. Sturm [pp. 209-211]. Both the zealots and the old guard were only a small fraction of the privy councillors and senators. The religious convictions of the majority are not known, though it appears that those who were in the Senate and the XXI by 1524 were willing to proceed with ecclesiastical reforms in order to maintain peace and social order. Thus, it emerges that, from its standpoint, Strasbourg's ruling elite was not prepared to jeopardise its predominance for the sake of the Reformation. [pp. 212-213].

Brady concludes that the urban Reformation in Strasbourg was shaped even in its most dramatic moments by the firm

stand of the civic oligarchy, whose political convictions were not overshadowed by religious zeal: 'in 1524-25, Strasbourg/~~well~~-integrated ruling class ~~staved~~ off a conjuncture of social revolt with the reform movement by sacrificing the old ecclesiastical order, a manoeuvre which, performed rapidly and without major losses or severe factionalism, is an index of this class' internal solidarity and strong political will' *13 .

The work of another American historian, Lorna Abray complements Brady's above mentioned picture by taking a closer and more elaborate look at the inner differentiations of Strasbourg's Reformation camp which, again, she sees as being a mosaic of aspirations and political theological views *14 . Among the many trends of Strasbourg's Reformation movement, the Bucerian interpretation went quite beyond a scathing attack on the Church's corruption, abuses and inefficiency in fulfilling its duties: it introduced new radical measures, such as the suppression of images and monasteries, the 'Germanisation' of mass, the restructuring of the tithe system and the integration of the clergy into the citizenry. On their part, the conservative reformers - who had preceded the outbreak of the Reformation - were primarily interested in expanding lay control over clerical authority. As for the humanists, they were rarely preoccupied with the power structure of early modern cities. Amidst these three currents, the evangelical-Bucerian camp appeared to be introducing more sweeping changes which, however, led ultimately to the subjection of the church to lay municipal

authority. Alongside these three groups, there was a radical movement advocating the total renewal of Christianity with the destruction of the power of the temporal lords. Their political and social goals were expressed in their fervent iconoclastic stand: 'the blows that annihilated the faces of saints also obliterated the faces of ruling class donors, frequently the ancestors of men now sitting in the city council'. Finally, a fifth reformed current emerging in Strasbourg was that of the spiritualists, advocating an individual direct relationship between man and God; they were not in favour of institutionalised religion, either in conservative or radical form. All these streams of Reformation overlapped at numerous points but, still, were separated in matters related to the definition of orthodoxy, enforcement of a new morality, and the relations of clergy and laity [pp. 33-39].

In their majority, Strasbourg's magistrates chose to support the evangelicals led by Bucer, Capito, Zell and Hedio. Members of a generation educated in Christian values, they formed passionate audiences for the evangelical preachers' sermons for religious reform. At a more practical level, the magistrates espoused Bucer's Reformation as it clearly did not question their authority. Thus, 'they made concessions to the preachers, counting on their influence to calm the rebellious crowds in their streets, and at the same time made sure that the preachers recognised that the price of religious reform was social peace'. This coalition of evangelicals and magistrates greatly influenced

the character of the - now established - Reformation [p. 39].

In their effort to establish the Reformation, the evangelical preachers pressed the magistrates to make concessions and introduce reforms. On the other hand, they exerted an appeasing influence over the zealous crowds in an effort to preserve social peace required by the civic oligarchy. By defusing popular resentment, they indirectly served as the government's agents: 'in the space of fifteen years the secular rulers of Strasbourg had established a control over the church and religious life that would have been unthinkable a generation earlier' [p. 43]. This situation led to disappointing results in the eyes of the evangelical reformers. Near the end of his life, Bucer criticised the German ruling classes for learning 'only two things from the Gospel: to throw off the tyranny of Pope and Bishop, and to abandon all discipline and penance. In their carnal wisdom they preferred reason of state to scripture' [cited p. 44].

Another case of sharp polarisation between a magisterial and a popular Reformation as the product of contrasting sociopolitical interests comes from R. Scribner's study of the urban Reformation in Zwickau ^{*15}. In this city, the Reformation met with official approval and encouragement from the very beginning. Under the mayorship of a Lutheran sympathiser, Hermann Mühlfort, the city council called in and employed several preachers, including Thomas Müntzer and Nikolaus Hausmann, the leading Reformation figure in Zwickau. The council defended Müntzer from the attacks of the bishop and the resident

Franciscans, while it encouraged Hausmann to proceed with ecclesiastical reform. With regards to the urban clergy, the council limited its ceremonies in 1520 and 1523, established its own common chest for the poor, and largely reduced its overall activities. At the end of 1524, the council appeared to be seriously considering to organise a religious disputation. Finally, in May 1525, the Franciscans were forced to leave the city [pp. 55-56].

According to Scribner, the whole procedure of reform had the features of a **Ratsreformation**, since the Zwickau council proceeded by always seeking the highest possible approval of its impending reform measures. The reason was that, even in 1525, a considerable part of the citizens refused to conform to the principles of the new faith and, instead, remained Catholic. Subsequently, the council appeared to be acting as the executor of the innovating policies of the Elector of Saxony, in an attempt to attribute an official standing to its policies [pp. 56-57].

However, besides the council's cautious Reformation, there was another, 'unofficial' evangelical movement, mainly centred around Thomas Muntzer and the anabaptist Nikolaus Storch, pressing the city council for more dynamic action. Contrary to official Reformation procedures, this particular movement exhibited signs of impatience and a violent nature, usually resorting to direct and aggressive action against the clergymen. Culmination of pressure by the popular evangelical movement forced the council of Zwickau to expel all Franciscans from the

city, on May 2, 1525. To Scribner, the action of the popular evangelical movement demonstrated the feeling that reasonable demands and expectations were not being met and, primarily, the fact that the people involved in this movement were in little position to influence the council's policies through legal, constitutional means [pp. 57-59] *16.

On its part, the city council openly encouraged the emergence of a reform movement, in order to manipulate it in its drive to expand its authority. However, once the evangelicals realised the power they could acquire by forming an independent Reformation movement, they became a potential threat to the civic authorities: 'it is clear from the example of Zwickau that an evangelical movement is by no means a static phenomenon, but that it develops in a dialectical relationship to the responses of authority' [pp. 59-60, p. 62].

The case of Leipzig's Reformation, also presented by Scribner in the above mentioned article brings further confirmation of this postulate. The first open manifestations of Lutheranism dated back to 1518-19, when leading anti-Lutherans like Tetzel and Eck had grave problems in dealing with hostile crowds during their visit to the city. Leipzig's council had to cope with dynamic preachers attracting large crowds in small chapels or churchyards. In April 1524 a petition was drawn up, addressed to Duke George of Saxony: its aim was to get a larger church for the sermons of the preacher Andreas Bodenschatz. The signatures in this petition reveal valuable information on the

social composition of Leipzig's evangelical movement. Scribner juxtaposes the document with the 1529 'Turkensteuer' register and what emerges from this comparison is the preeminence of the rich, the wealthy elite from which the civic oligarchy was drawn. This explains according to Scribner the tone of the petition which painstakingly dissociated the petitioners from the charge of seditious assembly [pp. 64-66].

The Duke's intransigence was to precipitate intense underground Protestant mobilisation. In the subsequent years, the intensification of persecution on the part of the Duke led to the drawing of two additional lists of suspected Protestants in Leipzig [pp. 66-69].

By analysing the wealth of the citizens involved in these three lists and comparing it to the distribution of wealth in the *Turk* register of 1529, Scribner assumes that 'the rich formed the disproportionate part of the evangelical party in Leipzig. Indeed, given that there were 207 taxpayers worth over 1,000 gulden in 1529, virtually one in every three from this group was an adherent of the Gospel. This undoubtedly influenced the nature of the Leipzig movement' [pp. 69-71]. The dissenting members of Leipzig's ruling elite had no reason to provoke a profound division with unexpected and dreaded consequences.

Philip Broadhead's investigation of the evolution of the Reformation process in Augsburg equally detects concrete sociopolitical considerations behind the oligarchy's response to popular pressure for the introduction of the Reformation in the

city ^{*17}. Due to the vulnerability of the city, surrounded by Catholic rulers who controlled the food supply and trade routes and the need of a stable alliance with the Emperor, the city council of Augsburg pursued a careful policy with regards to the religious question during the early years of the Reformation, despite being Protestant in its majority. Its dualism was demonstrated at the Imperial Diet held in the city in 1530, when the city council refused to implement Charles' orders but, equally, to join the protesting powers. Nevertheless, the situation in the city was becoming explosive: due to popular pressure, the Lutheran preachers were expelled and replaced by Bucerians from Strasbourg, who immediately forgot the conciliatory theology of Bucer and joined in the militant ranks. On January 21, 1533, all preachers presented the council with a petition, asking for immediate action to be taken against the Catholic church in Augsburg. The petition attacked the councillors for failing to promote the Reformation cause and meet their spiritual responsibilities towards their subjects. In addition, the preachers' representative, Dr Sebastian Mayer, underlined the fact that, ultimately, the councillors were the servants of God, not of the Emperor [pp. 55-56].

Pressed by the situation, the council authorised its committee for reform - formed in 1530 - to proceed with the preparation of memoranda on a civic Reformation. The committee elaborated in secrecy and pinpointed the various topics of controversy upon which it required guidance. Afterwards,

several people, most of them lawyers, sworn to silence to preserve secrecy, were asked to prepare and submit the various memoranda, each of them given only one particular topic and not informed of the other memoranda in preparation. Each lawyer was initially asked to discuss the general question 'whether the town council of Augsburg, as a temporal power, has the authority to institute changes and new ordinances in religious matters or not'. The civic secretary Konrad Peutinger was asked to elaborate on the question of how religious and social unity in the city could best be restored, and whether religious reform would have this effect. The committee also wished to know the extent to which the doctrinal differences could be judged by the Bible as well as the best way of restricting the ritual practices of the Roman Church. This question was de facto addressed to a persuaded Protestant, and that was the court secretary, Franz Kotzler. The same question was also put to another Zwinglian sympathiser, the lawyer Hans Hagk, while the lawyer Dr. Balthassar Langnauer was asked to elaborate on what should the authorities do regarding the ecclesiastical property once the civic Reformation was introduced. Finally, the lawyer Konrad Hel was asked to point to the various legal changes that should occur in case of the suppression of Canon Law and, also, the various political dangers inherent in religious reform [pp. 56-58].

The deliberations of both confessional camps focused primarily on the question of legality of the civic government's

actions in the face of the Emperor. The legal right of the city council to proceed independently with ecclesiastical reform, and the side-effects of royal or princely reaction, were equally dealt with by advocates and opponents of ecclesiastical reform [pp. 58-64].

The city council met in April 1533 and rejected the memoranda of those opposing reform. However, manifesting its serious consideration of their arguments, it compiled a list of twenty-two points based on their views and presented it to prominent lawyers favouring reform, for further elaboration. The list was divided into three categories of questions: i) the impact of reform on the life of the city, ii) the question of the legal rights of the clergy, which, once expelled, could cause problems and severe losses to alms-giving and other charitable foundations; iii) the possibility of intervention by the Emperor, the Swabian League, or the Dukes of Bavaria [p. 65].

Again, the fear of Imperial reaction governed the thoughts of the pro-reform group. Only the court secretary Kotzler dismissed the possibility of royal intervention, on the grounds that spiritual matters had nothing to do with the Emperor. Kotzler stressed that the will of God was of far greater importance than that of the Emperor. However, the rest of pro-reform lawyers stressed the need of legality in all actions of the council, whereas the influential pastor W. Musculus even promised a total subordination of urban preachers to the council, in an attempt to persuade the city's oligarchs that their rule was

not threatened by the new confession [pp. 66-69].

According to Broadhead, what becomes clear from the entire process is that the city council was interested primarily in the legal aspects of the reform without neglecting the political and economic results of a possible confrontation with the Emperor and the princes. The council proceeded with religious reforms only when it could predict the possible social, political, and economic consequences of its actions; 'in the event, councillors were forced to act against their better judgement, and to reject the advice they had solicited from most trusted servants in order to pass legislation restricting Catholic worship in the city. They did so, not because their council was dedicated to the Protestant cause, not yet because they believed religious reform would best serve the long-term interests of Augsburg. They went ahead solely to maintain their authority as a council and prevent the popular rebellion of their own citizenry' [p. 70].

Marburg's antipatrician movement of the early 1520s presents another clear example of a misinterpretation of Lutheran preaching based on urban socio-economic and political conditions. According to John Stalnaker ^{*18}, terrified by the emergence of a powerful territorial prince, Marburg's antipatrician movement reorientated its battle line against the Church. They made the town's priests the political scapegoats in their struggle for social justice and a fair and more representative political system. Only this time they met with princely consent in the implementation of their religious

principles and the imposition of the new faith [p.134].

However, the drive to establish the reformed church of Hesse met with a growing indifference and hostility on the part of the population. A series of complaints by Protestant preachers and synods, attacking the scornful and indifferent attitude of their parishioners and, also, a series of angry letters by the Landgrave indicated that 'the attitudes and behaviour of the populace were far from meeting the expectations of the lay and clerical leaders of the Hessian Reformed church'. Furthermore, the presence of Anabaptist cells forced the leaders of the Reformation to introduce a close surveillance of the behaviour and thoughts of the population in Hesse [pp. 135-136].

This extraordinary attitude of the Hessian people towards the new Church, manifested in abstentions from sermons and the occasional stoning of church windows, can only be explained by the examination of the overall political and ecclesiastical situation of the city following the Peasant Rebellion in 1525. Two major changes had occurred in the civic and ecclesiastical institutions between 1513 and 1524: the constitution of the city was altered so as to allow ample space for intervention by the Landgrave, the long-hated civic oligarchy was replaced by a new form of government, bringing the city council closer to the burghers and the guilds, under the watchful eye of the prince. Secondly, the autonomous Catholic church was replaced by the new territorial reformed church, whose pastors acted as representatives of the Landgrave in the city. Thus, from the

1520s to the 1540s the political situation of the city had drastically changed , with long-standing divisions gone and both government and commune facing the increasingly expansive authority of the Landgrave [pp. 136-141].

As Stalnaker puts it, the reasons behind the growing hostility and apathy of Marburg's antipatrician opposition and the broader burgher community towards the territorial church and the new Lutheran cult lay in their misinterpretation of the message of 'liberty' transmitted by Luther. To the dissenters in Marburg, Luther's 'liberty' was their last hope of attaining something in their desperate struggle against the civic oligarchy, and later against the territorial government. However, 'liberty' was envisaged by both Luther and the Landgrave in a radically different way: it presupposed obedience to one's superiors following his 'transformation' by the spirit of the Gospel. In other words, it maintained and justified the political and social status quo. Facing a new Church which was in many ways more demanding than its Catholic predecessor, the popular evangelical movement lost its faith and confidence; its only alternatives was to resort to muted hostility or become apathetic [pp. 141-143].

Heinz Schilling's work on the differentiations in the reception of the Lutheran message is of particular interest since it focuses on the northern 'Hanseatic type of Reformation'. This was generally underestimated by many historians of the urban Reformation starting with Moeller ^{*19}. As in the south, a wave

of reform ideas swept over the Hanseatic cities. To Schilling, it was a predominantly burgher Reformation movement, supported by craftsmen and initiated in the 1520s when the Lutheran ideas were propagated by intellectuals - teachers, clerics, councillors and burgher discussion groups. In 1525 there were urban riots coinciding with the peasant rebellions in Dortmund, Minden, and especially in Munster and Osnabruck. Those uprisings had mainly a sociopolitical character, and Lutheran ideas remained in the background. However, they fully emerged in the burgher uprisings of 1527-1528 and they reached a momentum in the years 1531-1532, when the Lutheran Reformation was established in the Hanseatic cities.

What is of particular importance at this stage of our discussion is Schilling's assertion that the alliance between the burgher community and the Reformation remained strong and solid, even in towns where the territorial princes and the civic authorities had sided with the Lutheran camp. Thus, when the territorial princes and the civic authorities chose to conform to Charles' Interim, following the defeat of the Smalkaldic League, the burgher Reformation movement remained an active guarantor of Protestantism, occasionally expressing the will to defend its faith with dynamic measures [pp. 447-448].

According to Schilling the common roots of the Reformation and the burgher movements could be found in 'the constitution and organisation of society, in the underlying legal principles, and in the special mentality of burghers in early modern Europe'.

In the pre-Reformation period, many Hanseatic civic communities had been divided on the question of **Obrigkeit**, namely the authoritarian tendencies of the ruling elites which met with increasing hostility on the part of the burgher communities ^{*20}. The outbreak of the Reformation crisis enabled the burgher opposition movements to promote their communal principles. Thus, during the urban Reformation crisis in the Hansa, there was a coincidence of 'both religious and non-religious demands with different emphases in different places and at different times'. Usually, the two sets of demands were presented in two separate lists of gravamina, as in the cases of Lengo and Soest.

In all cases the burghers emphasised that they were using their legal right to participate in civic policy-making. Their religious demands were also manifesting communal principles: unless the word of God was restored - and that would only be with the official appointment of preachers - the burghers as a community had the right to employ their own preachers, in defiance of their authorities [p. 450] .

However, the Hanseatic urban Reformation was branded different from southern Imperial City Reformation, precisely because the shaping of the Reformation process involved other major forces, external to the polarized world of civic oligarchies and burgher communities (See below, Section 3).

b: The nature of the hierarchical relationship between the urban elites and the burgher communities as a determining factor in the shaping of the urban Reformation.

Social historians of the urban Reformation tend to underline that the ability of the popular evangelical movements and the civic oligarchies to promote their own sociopolitical and religious aspirations largely depended on the nature of hierarchical relationships established between these two broad social groupings.

Cologne, examined by Bob Scribner ^{*21} is indeed a very solid verification of the postulate that the degree of social control exerted by the civic oligarchies as well as their inner cohesion largely determined the fate of the urban Reformation movement which - to remind ourselves of Moeller's words - was never a movement 'from above'. Contrary to the majority of Germany's big cities, the civic government of Cologne exhibited a fervent anti-evangelical stand right from the early days of the Reformation. Within Cologne's elite, the Lutheran cause had failed to establish a stronghold. Strong social and institutional

links between the government and the academic establishment of the university enabled them to present a unified stand towards the possible appearance of an evangelical movement. In addition, humanism, natural ally of the reform cause, had failed to promote it, due to its weakness within the ruling circles. Rather, it acted as 'a feeble brake which held the government back for a while from a rigorous antilutheranism, and this influence had faded by 1530'. Lastly, the long-standing rivalry between the oligarchy and the urban clergy came to an end following the events of 1525, when the government realised that its anticlericalism could encourage social unrest [pp. 233-234].

Thus, by the end of the 1520s, Cologne's elite was united in its decision to forestall any attempt to introduce heresy in the civic community. This decisive anti-Lutheran stand was exhibited in the drive of the urban elite to eliminate or at least reduce the dissemination of Lutheran printed propaganda. The degree of censorship was extensive but, with the transfer of the printing presses outside the city, access to Lutheran ideas became easier. From the 1520s onwards, governmental control of the printed or oral dissemination of evangelical ideas was intensified, assisted by the university which exerted a large amount of influence over the city parishes and the educated laity in general [pp. 234-235].

According to Scribner, 'if no institutional focal point for a religious movement could be established, the only other chance was that it might take root as a wider movement of opposition

within the civic commune'. At this particular level, and despite the tumultuous prehistory of the relationship of the governing elite with the commune - the entire century prior to the Reformation had been marked by incessant tension - the Reformation failed to proceed dynamically and establish itself as a broadly based communal movement against the conservative authorities and the reactionary academic and ecclesiastical establishment. The reason was that the civic oligarchy had been able to establish a large degree of sociopolitical control principally through the 'Gaffel' constitution which brought the guilds and literally all citizens of Cologne under the close scrutiny of the government [pp. 238-240].

In this atmosphere of rigorous surveillance, close control and political stability, the evangelical movement had no chance of attaining any of the above mentioned targets: 'in Cologne the Gospel could find no institutional footing, and the structure of social control was such that a basis in the commune or guild corporations was equally unviable ... In the long run the weight of social control was therefore decisive, for it did not allow the social space for a Reformation movement to appear. In this regard the failure of the Reformation in Cologne was as much a product of the urban environment as its success elsewhere' [pp. 240-241].

Nuremberg, as viewed by G. Strauss, is another major example of the weight of civic hierarchical relationships on the shaping of the Reformation *²². The city's authoritarian

government had managed to extend its control in the ecclesiastical domaine before Luther. During the late fifteenth - early sixteenth centuries, the city council's cunning diplomacy at the Vatican curia led to it assuming total control over the administrative affairs and appointments of prelates and clerics of the urban church. To Strauss this constituted a natural evolution since 'a political system that regarded nothing as irrelevant to the public purpose and immune from administrative direction was not likely to exclude the religious establishment from its competence' [p. 154].

Luther's preaching had reached an eager audience in the dominant circles of the city long before his Theses were publicised. The 'Sodalitas Staupitziana', an elite group of humanists and intellectuals, all members of the civic oligarchy, had been sympathetic to ideas of reform long before Luther's emergence; it was Wenzeslaus Linck, professor of theology at Wittenberg university and a friend of Luther that brought as a preacher Nuremberg's elite closer to Luther's message. People like Christoph Scheurl and Kaspar Nutzel immediately responded to Luther's call; his ninety-five theses were translated into German and circulated among the population, and the 'Sodalitas Staupitziana' became an active propaganda centre.

At this particular time, the religious reforming aspirations of the elite were matched by its rivalry with the Church over the question of the indulgences for the building of St. Peter's. Thus, Nuremberg's elite was pushed towards Lutheranism with ease.

The original enthusiasm of some of the members of the 'Sodalitas' however quickly faded away, especially following Luther's harsh treatment of Johann Eck, well known scholar and much admired by Nuremberg's intellectuals. Thus, Christoph Scheurl withdrew and was replaced in the Lutheran leadership by the secretary to the city council, Lazarus Spengler [pp. 160-162].

Following the Diet of Worms, Nuremberg became temporarily the capital of the Empire, with the Imperial Council and Court transferred to the city. As a consequence, national events of the period were immediately and directly reflected in the city's political situation and the evolution of the urban religious dispute. The city council found itself in a great dilemma, facing the Emperor on the one hand and the prospect of Reformation on the other; it chose to pursue a cautious policy, advising its appointed Lutheran preachers to maintain a low profile and underlining before the central government its inability to withstand popular pressure to introduce the Reformation into the city ^{*23}. When in January 1523 the arrival of the papal Nunzio - with the clear intention to implement the edict of Worms - almost led to an armed confrontation between the city and the ecclesiastical prelate, Nuremberg's council realised that Lutheranism was too firmly established in the city to permit turning back to the Catholic cult [pp. 163-166].

Following a religious disputation between the two confessional camps from March 3 to March 14, the council

immediately proceeded with the incorporation of urban clergy into the civic community and the imposition of the Lutheran cult in all churches. However, ecclesiastical integration into the citizenry never truly had the dimensions of similar developments in other cities, as the civic oligarchy did not want to risk a full integration of the clergy; although the clergy's political power had fallen, ordinary lay men had still 'little or nothing to say about their ministers and their religion' [pp. 178-179].

Following the events of 1525, Nuremberg came to face the Catholic counter-offensive on the part of the Bishop and the Swabian League, while simultaneously it was building a new ecclesiastical organisation. The emergence of anabaptist agitators and of a radical wing of the Reformation ended the period of flirtation with religious innovation on the part of the civic oligarchy. The newly-established Church was clearly marked by the oligarchy's own aspirations and interests: 'while the Roman church had preserved, in fact encouraged, diffused overlapping and vaguely adumbrated authorities, the new dispensation established, at least in clerical matters, those clear-cut and decisive procedures which advocates of centralisation have always regarded as indispensable to good government' [pp. 179-182].

The above discussion has pinpointed the divergent response of urban audiences to the Reformation and the shaping of the urban Reformation process by factors beyond the will - and

ability of intervention - of the leaders of the movement. We may conclude that behind the apparently unified Reformation movement, either Lutheran or Reformed, there lay different motives and perceptions that undermined its unity and uniformity of expression right from the start.

Moeller himself has argued that the urban Reformation was never the work of a council. However, his assertion that the Reformation wave met with a resurrected civic communalism in the urban communities is false, since it has been adequately shown that there has not been a single and homogeneous conception of civic communalism, precisely because of the differentiation of the urban audiences of the Reformation towards the question of the appropriation of civic power and wealth.

It would be more accurate to suggest that, at a socio-political level, the Reformation met with the distinct aspirations of magistrates and burghers, with the drive of the former to fully establish their authoritarian regime, with the incorporation of the urban ecclesiastical institution and the appropriation of the church's role as spiritual leader and patron; and, finally, with the struggle of the latter for a fair redistribution of civic power and wealth. Whether burgher opposition verged on revolution will be discussed in Section 5. Section 3 will focus on the external factors and forces that, besides the internal sociopolitical situation, greatly influenced the shaping of the urban Reformation.

Section 3: Reformation and Politics:

Brady's Turning Swiss is a useful initial guide in detecting the ways the political situation of the Empire influenced the shaping of the urban Reformation.

To Brady, the period till 1524 was relatively trouble-free for the civic oligarchies, as religious disturbances had not yet acquired threatening dimensions. Thus, when the Imperial envoy at the 1523 Imperial Diet of Nuremberg communicated to the urban delegates the Emperor's decision to deal with the religious question, the cities were still able to evade Imperial pressure by stating that they were willing to enforce the Edict of Worms to the extent that the 'common man' was given no cause for 'rebellion, disobedience, murder or slaughter'. In addition, the Diet asked for a national council of the Church to be convened in Speyer in September of the same year.

With the arrival of Cardinal Campeggio in mid-March, the cities displayed an impressive solidarity in the religious question by refusing systematically to sign the reaffirmation of the Edict. However, according to Brady, it was now that the cities took 'de facto a pro-evangelical position' by stressing the futility of all outside attempts to suppress the evangelical doctrine, taking into account the broad popular support for the evangelical cause in the civic communities. The cities declared themselves unable to promote the Imperial policies and

subsequently provided their evangelical movements with much needed breathing space.

During the spring and the summer of 1524 the urban evangelical movements acquired threatening dimensions. In Strasbourg, the parishes of the 'little people' - the gardeners, fishermen and lesser craftsmen - chose to elect their own preachers, whereas in Augsburg, following the dismissal of Johachim Schilling on the grounds of his subversive preaching, the senators were forced to face a large crowd before the city hall on August 6 and 9. However, despite these disturbances, the German cities managed to maintain their cohesion when they met at the Urban Diet of Speyer in mid-July 1524.

It was this Diet that officially acknowledged that the 'religious matter' had become the major problem for the urban governments. Under the combined leadership of Strasbourg and Nuremberg, the urban delegates tried to formulate a common policy. This attempt proved to be in vain, since there was a fundamental disagreement between the civic oligarchies of the two major cities: Nuremberg suggested that the Diet should make another petition to Charles V, asking for a more moderate law and also insisted that each city should individually prepare its case for the autumn Diet at Speyer. On the contrary, the Strasburghers advocated the formulation of a common religious stand, through greater censorship and control of preaching and other means of evangelical propaganda. Strasbourg insisted that the cities should face Charles united. As for the Edict of Worms,

the city's delegates suggested that it should be made clear to the Emperor that, if applied, it would certainly lead to rebellion and civil war [pp. 166-173].

By 1524, the Emperor had been convinced that the southern free cities had become havens of a heresy, undermining the Church but also the symbolic sanction of Habsburg authority. In late September 1524, the Edict of Burgos reached the urban front from Spain, bluntly declaring that there would be no national council of the Church and that the Edict of Worms would be enforced to the letter. The Imperial decision came as a horrific blow to the governments of the urban front which at that time were being pressed by their commons for even greater concessions and reforms. However, the Edict of Burgos had adverse results as it further reinforced the slide of the urban governments toward the evangelical cause. In the urban Diet of Ulm, December 6-13, 1524, boycotted by some small Swabian Catholic towns, most of the urban delegates openly declared their reformed faith, while Lazarus Spengler of Nuremberg went even beyond that, by accusing his own government and the rest of the leaders of the urban front of timidity and hesitation. The revolt of the peasants was going to act as a catalyst to the situation, since it would reveal 'both the fundamental weakness of the Habsburg power in South Germany and how impotent the free cities were without effective royal leadership' [pp. 174-183].

In February 1525, Charles V defeated Francis I of France in

Pavia and subsequently won the war. From then on, he was determined to permanently settle the religious question. Throughout the great rebellion, there was widespread suspicion among the princes that behind the insurgent peasants there were the free cities, either because of their religious policies or, to some observers, because of their will to destroy the princes and create republics on the model of Athens or Venice. With the Emperor now free-handed and the Peasant Rebellion in full blow, the precarious cohesion of the urban front was rapidly approaching an abrupt end. Pressed by their popular evangelical movements, civic oligarchies pursued dangerous policies despite their better judgement; in this way, they were increasingly distancing themselves from the Emperor and becoming exposed to princely aggression [pp. 184-193].

The year 1525 is quite justifiably presented by current historiography as the turning point in Reformation history. It certainly marked the beginning of the end for the German urban front for it abruptly exposed the cities' fundamental weakness as political entities within the Empire. The post-1525 image of urban politics presented by Brady is quite illuminating: following the suppression of the main phase of the Peasants' War, the leading free cities tried for about one year to establish a minimum form of collective defense; this effort was inaugurated at the Diet of Ulm in late July 1525 - where, however, Strasbourg and Frankfurt were not even invited - and it ended with the Imperial Diet of Speyer in the summer of 1526.

According to Brady's presentation, two main proposals emerged throughout this period of intensive meetings between the urban delegates: the formation of a general urban military league and the formation of a Three Cities' league by Nuremberg, Augsburg and Ulm. The idea of a general urban military league was quickly abandoned, undermined by the reluctance of their major cities to adhere, for fear of Imperial reaction. On the other hand, Nuremberg, Ulm and Augsburg reached an agreement of modest military assistance in case of emergency. What was emerging throughout these hopeless sessions was the catalytic role of the Emperor as a potential adversary of the urban front.

A second major cause for the disintegration of the urban front was the dynamic interference of the powerful territorial princes. There had already been some talks between evangelical cities and princes - Nuremberg negotiating with the princes of Saxony, Brandenburg-Ansbach and Hesse in October and November 1525. These negotiations would later lead to the formation of the Smalkaldic league. However, when the evangelical princes actually proposed such a coalition to the urban front during the 1526 Imperial Diet of Speyer, the idea was rejected by urban delegates still confused about the course they should follow in their struggle to safeguard their cities' autonomy - and the Reformation.

Furthermore, the bitter memories of the Peasant Rebellion weighed heavily on the increasingly deepening division between Lutheran and sacramentarian cities. To Brady, southern

Zwinglianism clearly reflected a particular conception of close cooperation between 'clergy and laity, church and government, government and commune, and city and city'. As for the Lutheran conservative stand opposing the sacramentarians on the grounds of their seditious attitude, Brady asserts that it expressed 'in the psychological backwash of the Revolution of 1525, the rulers' fear of the Swiss model's attraction for all South Germans who "wanted to be their own lords" '.

An inspired though unsuccessful attempt to prevent the collapse of the urban coalition came from the representative of Constance at the Urban Diet of Esslingen in July 1528: the Constancers proposed the formation of a purely urban military league which would defend the cities' interests against the princes and the bishops. Of particular interest is the Constancers' proposal that this league should not be based on religion, which was a matter to be individually arranged by the city-members of the coalition [pp. 193-202].

Constance's proposal fully manifested the profound fear of its civic oligarchy who had grasped the fundamental trends of the underlying political reality: following the Peasants' War, German cities had emerged as defiant rivals of the Emperor whom they greatly needed to defend their autonomy from princely aggression. The Peasant Rebellion had accentuated the political and confessional divisions of the urban front. Only a purely politico-military urban coalition could negotiate with the Emperor and withstand the territorial princes. Religious

disputation was a luxury that the urban oligarchs simply could not afford at this particular moment.

In the years following the Peasant Rebellion, urban Reformation gradually succumbed to princely control to the point that it finally lost its autonomy and was institutionally replaced by the princely or territorial Reformation *25.

City and Empire, city and territorial state: an unequal relationship that determined the evolution of the urban Reformation . Three selected cases, those of Nuremberg, the Hansa towns, and Erfurt, reveal the extent to which the general political situation weighed over the decisions of civic oligarchies already engaged in reform policies.

In the period following the Peasant Rebellion, Nuremberg's oligarchy faced the menacing prospect of a Catholic counter-revolution initiated by the bishop and the Swabian League. The second Diet of Speyer in 1529 made the city governors realise that Germany was soon to be divided into rival factions in a relentless civil war. On the other hand, Nuremberg's oligarchy had to cope with the emergence of a radical Anabaptist wing of the popular evangelical movement which was far from being satisfied with the slow pace of the introduction of the Reformation in the city. This brought an end to the period of the council's flirtation with religious innovation.

Nuremberg's political stand towards the emerging division of the Empire was determined by its traditional pro-imperial principles. In no way could the city oligarchs envisage

themselves openly defying the Emperor, whose protection and friendship the city had always been more than willing to secure. Thus, when the question of a Lutheran estates' alliance emerged at a meeting held in the city in 1530, the city council sharply distanced itself from the rest of the Protestant camp by refusing to rebel against the Emperor, despite admonitions and pressure from its principle allies but, also, from the city's preachers. Nuremberg, a Reformation city would not join in the Protestant ranks against the Catholic sovereign of the Empire *26 .

The Hanseatic city Reformation is expressly distinguished by current historians from the Imperial city Reformation because of its heavy dependence on political interference by the territorial princes. In his above cited work, Heinz Schilling outlines the particular nature of the Hanseatic case by asserting that, in the Hanseatic towns during the Reformation crisis, the 'bipolarity in the Imperial cities between burghers and the council became a triangular constellation between burghers, magistrates, and princely rulers'. The early phase of the north German Reformation presented the civic oligarchies with a solid opportunity to further secure the autonomy of their cities against the expansionist states of surrounding Catholic territorial princes. However, not long afterwards, the diplomacy of Philip of Hesse managed to convert the majority of the territorial princes and, subsequently, the urban Reformation movement was not only absorbed in the broader territorial trend but also provided the territorial princes with a major weapon in

their drive to fully subjugate the dissenting urban centres. During the second half of the sixteenth century, the civic oligarchies of northern territorial towns would meet with increasing difficulties in their effort to defend urban autonomy from princely authoritarianism. With regards to the nature of the Reformation process, the newly- emerging territorial ecclesiastical organisation represented a backward step to the urban reformers , fervent advocates of an autonomous, municipal reformed church ^{*27}.

Finally, the case of Erfurt, presented by Robert Scribner reveals in a quite dramatic way the multifaced interaction of Reformation and politics in early sixteenth-century Germany. Scribner's study reveals with an extraordinary clarity that underneath the religious dispute there lay an intense atmosphere of political intrigue and a ruthless interplay of political interests which in the long run determined the final outcome of the Reformation crisis ^{*28}.

Lutheranism had gained ground in the city before 1521, the year when a passing-by Luther was formally greeted and offered hospitality by the city council. The attempts of Erfurt's clergy to discipline those openly expressing their religious dissent led to students' riots and, then, widespread troubles, with the students joined by apprentices, journeymen and countryfolk visiting the town for the midweek market on June 11-12, 1521. The fervent anticlericalism of the Erfurters was immediately linked with the city's struggle against the Archbishop of Mainz. The council

skilfully exploited the situation, by intervening and dispersing the rioters before any Mainz property was destroyed. It offered the urban clergy protection on the condition of accepting civic responsibilities. On 29 July 1521, both chapters of the city agreed with the terms and subsequently lost many of their privileges [p. 40].

However, the council was quite apprehensive of the potential threat presented by an evangelical movement barely controlled by its weak leadership. In four of the city's parishes, there were already preachers directly elected by the community. A radical side of the movement, linking religious with socio-economic grievances was clearly emerging. The council's cautious policy of promoting the cause of reform actually encouraged the radical side to further increase its demands and expand its scope of action, and in June 1523 there were outbreaks of violence in both town and countryside, with destruction of property and several deaths. These disturbances led to a shift in the council's policy.

In 1523, the leaders of the Protestant camp proceeded with the formulation of a two-fold policy: on the one hand, the Reformation was to be further established with the first official offering of communion under both kinds; on the other, under pressure by the council, they emphasised the duty of all good citizens to respect and obey secular authority. The Catholic clergy conveniently served as their scapegoat. This led to an alignment of Lutheran leadership with the policies of the

council, in a combined effort to suppress seditious preaching [pp. 40-42].

In the years 1523-1525, the Lutheran and Catholic factions of the civic oligarchy managed to reach a minimum agreement on two major issues: the elimination of Mainz's power and the subordination of the urban clergy to secular control. In 1524, the council started a systematic policy of confiscation and secularisation of ecclesiastical and monastic property; their policy was already well advanced when the Peasant War broke out in April 1525 [p. 44].

The council quickly took advantage of the new situation: it convinced the peasants that it was sympathetic to their cause and stressed that the real cause of troubles was the policy of the Archbishop of Mainz. On the other hand, the council offered to the city's canons its renewed protection in return for their cash and valuables. On April 28, the peasants were allowed into the city after swearing not to harm the citizens or their goods and limiting their demands to the removal of the Archbishop's control from the city

What followed was a devastation of Mainz's property and the destruction of its symbols of authority, orchestrated by the council. However, the peasant rebels came into contact with the dissenters within the urban commune and this led to the reemergence of a popular movement similar to that of the tumultuous years 1509-16. The twenty-eight Erfurt articles submitted to the council revealed an indisputable urban

predominance over the insurgent peasants; demands of the country folk appeared only 'where they had common cause with those of the townsmen'. Two of these demands met with immediate satisfaction: all excises were revoked, and a new 'eternal council' responsible to the commune took the place of the previous ruling body. For all the appearances, nothing truly revolutionary had happened, as, for instance, the members of the new 'eternal council' were again recruited from the oligarchy. Furthermore, the new council made it clear to the commune that it was to assume all spiritual and secular power taken away from Mainz. The peasants left the city on May 6 with reassurances of amnesty. This was simply a game of appearances as, following the collapse of the rebellion, the council broke all agreements with the peasants, destroyed the revolutionary seal - which it anyway used solely before peasant audiences - and played a major role in the persecution and extermination of the rebel leaders [pp. 45-46].

In a letter addressed to the Archbishop, the council blamed the peasants for the destruction of Mainz's property while presenting the subordination of the clergy to lay authority as a *fait accompli*. However, the full introduction of the Reformation and mainly the suspension of mass meant that the council's balancing policy in the religious dispute had come to an end [pp. 46-47].

On the long term, the establishment of Lutheranism had unexpected and far-reaching effects on Erfurt: It shattered the

consensus previously maintained within the city council and led to open warfare between the two rival confessional factions. The council's disunity had three important features: factionalism was promoted by external interests; both the Protestant Elector and the Catholic Duke George found reliable allies and confidants in councillors and other members of the civic oligarchy. Amongst them, it was the Lutherans who were the most exposed to public opinion as instruments of foreign influence. They were branded agents of the external aggressor - the Elector of Saxony - and were accused of spreading disunity in extremely difficult times. Secondly, Lutheranism was disassociated from peace and order and became identical with riot and disturbance. Lutheran preachers and councillors were accused of agitating the crowd in order to promote the Saxon cause and their reform plans. By 1528, the Lutheran camp had emerged as opposition to the city council.

This was shown in Lutheran intransigence over the question of religious coexistence. The religious dispute was settled with Mainz in a treaty in 1530: the Catholics got the control of seven churches and the Protestants preserved six. 'Civic unity was more important than religious uniformity for a government which had no claim to intervene in the matter of doctrine. In Erfurt this disunity was inextricable from social order and independence, and the more an explicit alignment with one creed was seen to threaten either, the more compelling a pragmatic solution became' [pp. 51-56].

To sum up the discussion of the dependence of urban Reformation on national politics, it emerges that all above presented historical works view the urban Reformation as inextricably linked with urban socio-political conflicts long preceding the actual crisis itself. In addition, they stress that, following the Peasants' War, the Reformation acquired national dimensions and rapidly led to a reshaping of the political map of the Empire, much to the detriment of urban communities. This was a reality greatly obscured by Moeller's overexaggeration of the cities' ability to proceed with ecclesiastical reform independently of the Emperor and the territorial princes.

Section 4: A typology of the urban Reformation

With regards to a possible typology of the urban Reformation, no serious objection has been voiced so far to Moeller's distinction between a northern Lutheran Reformation and a southern Reformed one ^{*29}. Historians of the urban Reformation dealing with the Protestant schism have further elaborated on Moeller's initial rather simplistic assertions by revealing in much greater depth the profound interaction that took place between the theologies of the Reformation and the given socio-economic and political conditions of the civic communities of their time.

The map of the German urban Reformation in the 1530s not only shows a clear geographical distribution of confessions but

equally brings into relief the socio-political factors that determined the confessional choice of individual urban communities: The north and east were Lutheran, led by the Hanseatic ports and princely towns like Gottingen, Luneburg, Magdeburg and Brunswick. Also Lutheran were the central provinces of Thuringia and Franconia, with Nuremberg, Windsheim, Weissenberg and other cities, as well as the Hessian cities together with Frankfurt and Worms. On the contrary, the cities of the southwest and the extreme south were Reformed: Strasbourg and the lesser Alsatian towns together with towns of Swabia, from Esslingen in the north to Constance in the south, from Augsburg in the east to the Rhine in the west *30.

In his greatly influential The German Nation and Martin Luther, A.G. Dickens stresses like Moeller that, contrary to Luther's, the theologies of both Zwingli and Bucer can be termed 'political' as their exponents had a much more immediate and profound understanding of their current sociopolitical realities. Dickens depicts the two men as 'ecclesiastical statesmen' rather than prophets, as both Zwingli and Bucer produced a worldview which not only took into consideration the socio-political status quo of the times but, furthermore, suggested a way of restructuring it to the benefit of the urban communities [pp.192-193].

The validity of this line of thought is acknowledged by Heiko Oberman, a Church historian who, in his penetrating analysis of the doctrinal differences between Luther, Zwingli and Bucer

asserts that the two leaders of the 'Reformed' camp used Luther's early propaganda writings on the 'priesthood of all believers' to restructure and reorganise their communities. According to Oberman, the Zwinglian and Bucerian brands of Reformation went well beyond the renewal of the ecclesiastical doctrine and organisation, as they 'overflowed directly into a reconstruction and restructuring of society' ^{*31}.

By laying an excessive stress on the doctrinal differentiation of the leaders of the Reformation with regards to the Eucharist, ecclesiastical historians and historians of ideas have often overlooked the fundamental importance of the doctrine of the priesthood of all believers, initially propounded by Luther and subsequently elaborated by the southwestern reformers. If implemented to the letter, this concept would undoubtedly lead to a restructuring of the socio-political realities of the times ^{*32}. The fact that Luther was quick to restore the true meaning of the concept in view of its appropriation by both peasants and the urban opposition movements reveals his isolation from the contemporary currents of communal republicanism and civic humanism that shaped the theologies of Zwingli and Bucer. Furthermore, when one projects Reformation theologies onto the political map of the Empire, the adherence of the urban centres of the north and centre of Germany to Lutheranism becomes easily explicable.

Robert Scribner has pointed out that the formation of a popular evangelical movement largely depended on the amount of

social space accorded to it by the given state of civic hierarchical relationships - that is, the amount of social control and overall hegemony exerted by the ruling elite over the broader burgher community ^{*33}. On the other hand, the adherence to a certain trend of Reformation thought on the part of the burgher communities and the ruling elites was again dependent upon the state of their hierarchical relationships and the political and ideological traditions of the cities.

An initial remark is that the theologies of the Reformation appeared as potential allies to ruling elites already engaged in a bitter struggle with the Church in their effort to establish their secular authority over all aspects of civic life and administration and especially those domains traditionally controlled by the Church - poor relief, education, public morality, etc., as well as some more material assets like the urban ecclesiastical property. Thus, the theologies of the Reformation met with the traditional erastianism nurtured by both oligarchies and territorial princes towards the Church. This was perhaps the only common underlying feature of all versions of the urban Reformation; one could suggest that, at a very early stage, the idea of the Reformation appealed to the ruling groups, civic, territorial, and, indeed, national, bearing in mind the not so amicable relationships between the Habsburgs and the Roman Popes ^{*34}.

For all their lack of a precise political and social corollary, early Lutheran writings - such as those on the concept of the

priesthood of all believers - could be potentially dangerous to the ruling elites precisely because of their vague definition. In fact, they led to the emergence of popular evangelical movements dynamically pressing their governments for concessions clearly not restricted to the religious-ecclesiastical sphere. To autocratic ruling bodies greatly distanced from their burgher communities such as, for example, those of Nuremberg and the northern princely towns, it was axiomatic that, once it erupted, the Reformation should in no way develop beyond their total control. Thus, although the Reformation 'was never the work of a council' in its emergence, once initiated as a process it should become a movement directed from above, otherwise it would have dreaded consequences for the oligarchy. This constitutes a reality that has evaded Moeller, and it applies to both Lutheran and Zwinglian Reformations. For all their obvious differences, both Reformations were always subject to control and intervention by civic oligarchies anxious to maintain power and promote their particular interests.

The political quietism of Lutheranism suited those greatly conservative bodies of the middle and the north of urban Germany as well as it suited the territorial princes. It blended positively with their conception of their role as secular and spiritual leaders, deeply rooted in medieval traditions, while it did not threaten the political status quo. The members of these oligarchies and territorial governments were probably genuine

and conscientious reformers but they certainly were not religious zealots. They were attracted by Luther's emphasis of the internal-personal nature of Christian faith and religious practice. Once the Reformation process tended to emphasise rather the external-social aspects, they were quick to 'correct' it or even repudiate it. Christoph Scheurl of Nuremberg was a typical example of this attitude *35.

Zwingli's political theology had a distinct southern mark: his appeal for the union of the civic and ecclesiastical communities in a crusade to materialise God's kingdom on earth clearly went beyond the clerical integration in the civic communities as conceived by Luther. Zwinglian pastors were to be plain citizens enjoying full rights and responsibilities and carrying the special obligation to justify their fellow-citizen's trust as manifested in their election as ministers of god. On the contrary, Lutheran preachers usually required confirmation of their appointment by a higher authority than the burgher communes. Thus, Zwinglianism appealed to urban communities bred in the traditions of communalism and civic republicanism. These were the guild-dominated cities, where the participation and the interest of the lower citizen ranks in the civic life and communal affairs was considerably larger than that of their northern counterparts. Zwinglianism, a much more *collective* Reformation - which nevertheless did not fail to acknowledge the special duties and responsibilities of the governors - was much more attractive to these communities than the

conservative and less promising Lutheranism. Zwinglian and Bucerian theologies conquered the south and southwest of the Empire precisely because they responded to the particular socio-political and intellectual needs of the urban communities.

In the guild-dominated cities of the south and southwest, the Zwinglian and Bucerian message blended powerfully with civic traditions of communal republicanism and particularism towards the Emperor and the powerful territorial lords. Throughout the crisis of the Peasants' War, southwestern oligarchies were exposed to the political dilemma outlined by Brady: they could either turn Swiss - that is, proceed with the formation of a confederacy with the Swiss rural republics, or remain monarchical. And although at the end the civic oligarchies of the south chose the monarchical way because of their reluctance to join in a political union with peasant bodies, they were certainly more *urban* in their political outlook than their colleagues in Thuringia and Franconia and, certainly, those in the north who were already becoming high functionaries in the territorial state mechanism. They were urban more in the sense of the ancient Greek **polis** or the Italian **res publica**, in so far as they pursued a strong particularist policy, specifically conceived on the basis of the city's interests and welfare.

Thus, not before long, Zwinglianism appeared to be openly challenging the very hierarchical structure of the Empire while Luther had already sided with the princes in their onslaught on the rebellious peasants. This is certainly a broad suggestion

which covers most of the examined cities, although one has to be careful in detecting the variety in local conditions and brands of 'Lutheranism' and 'Zwinglianism' *36.

Generally speaking, the confessional schism corresponded to a socio-political and also cultural differentiation - Moeller was right in that sense. The events of the late 1530s showed that Zwinglianism was doomed to end in bloodshed following the counter-offensive of the feudal forces. The rapid incorporation of the Lutheran cities and their ecclesiastical organisation into the territorial state mechanism and church shows that Lutheranism was not a genuine *urban* Reformation movement, since it never truly touched upon the questions of urban autonomy and civic collectivity. In the defeated Zwinglian camp, the struggle of the municipal Reformed churches to withstand pressure for their integration into the territorial ecclesiastical organisation and , equally, that of the lay protagonists of the Zwinglian Reformation to stay free of princely domination, although unsuccessful, revealed their strong urban outlook. Kniebis of Strasbourg, an old Zwinglian militant within the city's ruling elite presents perhaps the clearest manifestation of the political frustration of the now defeated Zwinglians at the policies of the prevalent anti-Zwinglian camp led by Jacob Sturm. In his correspondence with Bernhard Meyer, burgomaster of Basel in the year 1542, examined by Brady in his above mentioned work, the old statesman referred to the glorious days of the early urban Reformation, contrasting them to the misery

of being subjected to princely rule. Indeed, Kniebis' dreams went even further back, to the days when 'their ancestors had fought for local autonomy and for something else, something that could not be brought back, the right of the people "to be their own lords" ' [p. 211]. In the fierce battle between the two rival reformed confessions Lutheranism emerged as the ultimate victor, to the detriment of Zwinglianism and, equally, the proud autonomous cities of the southwest of the Empire. And this represents the fundamental weakness in Moeller's approach which exhausted itself in an accurate description of the proximity of Zwinglianism to the southern civic communal spirit but, due to its greatly static and idealised conception of sixteenth-century sociopolitical realities , failed to grasp the underlying mainly political factors that ultimately undermined south German civic communalism.

Section 5: Reformation and Revolution

This section will take a closer look at the urban Reformation as a social movement. Historians of different persuasions agree that the urban Reformation rapidly transcended its anti-clerical stand and moved on in areas affecting all aspects of urban life.

Firstly, we shall examine historians' views on the process by which Reformation theology became interrelated to social protest. Secondly, we shall try to establish whether it can be

suggested that the urban Reformation was a unified and homogeneous social movement, drawing common scriptural justification from Reformation theology. Finally, we shall attempt to detect the variations in the mode of diffusion of the original Lutheran message in urban societies, as a factor predetermining its reception by the various social groups. All these above mentioned questions obviously refer to the postulates of Bernd Moeller outlined in section 1.

a. Reforming religion - reforming life

Peter Blickle is a historian best known for his formulations on the intersection of Reformation theology and social protest in German urban and rural communities. Blickle does not depict urban Reformation movements as progressing lineally from a spiritual-religious set of demands to secular and social ones; to him, the reaction of the Church and civic authorities played a formative role in the shaping of urban social protest movements

***37**

Apart from his broad distinction of urban and rural communities as agents of social protest, Blickle distinguishes between two forms of social protest in relation to the Gospel - that is, the use of the Gospel as a means of justification of one's demands. The first is what he terms 'positive' social protest, demanding through the Gospel a fairer and more broadly based sociopolitical order; the second is termed 'negative' social protest, as it used the Gospel in order to totally deny the

sociopolitical status quo and call for its overthrow [p. 4].

Blickle's model presents the urban protest movement in the Reformation as developing in three phases; the first phase began with the preacher delivering the sermon, which initially dealt with the papacy and then moved on to a 'critique of the secular and monastic clergy, the questioning of the position of the old church on basic matters and finally on into the social sphere', with the preacher openly attacking the authorities for various injustices they committed against the people. Blickle argues that, on the long run, at this phase, it was the Church that was the main target of protest and, subsequently, the first to react to the Reformation. This created an embarrassing situation for the civic authorities which 'fell prey to double pressure' by both their commons and the bishops and ecclesiastical prelates; if they succumbed to the demands of the commons, then the process of transition to the Reformation was being initiated.

The second phase began only if the council refused to take measures against the Church, and was characterised by active and organised opposition, with the guilds refusing to pay the ecclesiastical tithes and the various dues to the monasteries, but also by the articulation of socioeconomic and political demands. In this phase, Blickle asserts that the position of the civic authorities was considerably weaker as their power of legitimation was disputed and the various civic institutions, mainly in the poor relief sector, were threatened with bankruptcy due to the refusal of burghers to pay the tithes. The

city council had only one possible choice and that was cooperation so as to avoid the outbreak of revolt; compromise or active opposition would certainly further enflame the situation [pp. 5-7].

In the third phase demands were made for the removal of the Catholic councillors or, even, for the enlargement of the council, no longer considered to be representative of the community. These demands were imposed by threat or use of violence . This phase ended up with a debate between the Catholic and the Protestant clergy, the outcome of which was obviously predetermined and, finally, with the official introduction of the Reformation sometimes paralleled by constitutional change [p. 7].

The above presented model refers to the 'positive social protest' category as the burgher movements were mainly pressing for a more open and collectively-based model of civic government. In fact, Blickle uses his second, 'negative social protest' category solely to depict the anabaptist movement which proceeded from an a priori negation of the urban socio-political status quo. Blickle asserts that all forms of social protest - including the rural model - proceeded from a fusion of secular and sacred realities and ideals, as they were 'essentially attempts at making the "idea" "practical", seeking a direct transformation of Reformation theology into political and social behaviour' [p.12]. Thus, it is clear that, once the Reformation theologies became property of the masses, and

especially the lower and oppressed social ranks, they quickly moved beyond doctrinal or anticlerical considerations and provided the insurgent groups with a ready-made model for a restructuring of contemporary worldly realities. Whether the ideological product of this fusion was indeed revolutionary , is a matter to be discussed later in this section.

Blickle's approach focuses on the transmutation of Reformation theology into social protest rather than on the essential features constituting a social movement. Scribner complements Blickle's interpretation by distinguishing between two sets of events, which help the historian to appreciate the usually subtle difference between isolated 'private' and 'public' revolt ^{*38}.

A characteristic example of Scribner's first set of events occurred in Wittenberg on September 29, 1521, when, amidst the inflamed debates between members of the university staff on the introduction of radical reforms, Melanchthon and his students received communion under both kinds , whereas the Augustinians decided to cease holding private masses. According to Scribner, the events had a 'private' and 'internal' character as they had occurred behind closed doors. On the contrary, on December 10, 1520, Luther publicly burned the papal bull and books of canon law; this act was followed by a carnival procession organised by students and another burning of books. This event had a 'public' character since it took place openly; furthermore, it proved to be a major encouragement for the emergence of the Wittenberg

evangelical movement [pp. 49-50, 53].

Scribner goes on to outline the essential features which, in his opinion enable historians to present the diverse events and manifestations of religious dissent as constituting a movement: thus, a social movement primarily involves numerous persons who can be conceived as a **collectivity**, as identifiable groups - students, citizens, the commune. Secondly, the members of a movement are involved in **collective action**, whether as a demonstrating crowd, a group of hecklers, or even just people making threats. Thirdly, they exhibit some degree of **common consciousness**, typified either positively - as adherents of Luther ('Martinists') or negatively, as opposing the administration of mass, the clergy and all traditional ceremonies. Equally, they involve attempts to **change the existing order**, especially the ecclesiastical. Fifthly, they are characterised by **rapid and immediate action**. To Scribner, impatience was the most characteristic feature of the evangelical crowds. Sixthly, this rapid action is carried out by **non-institutional means**, by-passing established procedures and official administrative channels [p. 54]. Once the religious dissenters turned out as a collectivity, a group unified on the grounds of a common consciousness and campaigning for wide-scale changes in civic life and administration, they truly constituted a social movement which represented a threat to the civic governing bodies, once it developed beyond their control. A few examples drawn from specific cases of urban unrest as

presented by the current historiography of the Reformation will prove this point.

A dramatic example of the intersection of Reformation theology with urban socioeconomic and political aggravation comes from Blickle's research on the Imperial city of Memmingen during the Peasants' War ^{*39}. Memmingen's impoverished weavers presented a major threat to a civic oligarchy exclusively recruited from the rich. The tense situation was further aggravated by the fierce rivalry between the ruling oligarchs and the preachers of St.Martin's, the most prestigious parish church of the city. This long-standing antagonism, mainly focusing on oligarchs' attempts to impose taxes on the clergy reached a momentum when Dr. Christoph Schappeler was appointed preacher at St.Martin's. Following the tactics of his predecessor, Schappeler launched a series of inflammatory sermons castigating the wealthy minority and calling the burgher community to dynamically defend its proper interests against the exploitation and oppression of the ruling elite. In the face of Schappeler, Memmingen's Senate had found a formidable opponent, a passionate crusader for social justice and an outspoken friend of the humble and the oppressed of the community. Despite its intervention in the years 1516 and 1521, the Senate was ultimately incapable of ridding itself of the preacher's annoying presence [p.106] ^{*40}.

In November 1521, Schappeler openly declared his Lutheran persuasion. From then on, his pulpit at St.Martin's would become

the major propaganda centre both for the Lutheran camp and the artisan opposition to the ruling elite. The situation became so alarming to the Bishop of Augsburg and the oligarchy that Schappleler was forced to flee to Switzerland. Immediately after his departure there occurred a major incident involving some middle - and upper-class burghers and a priest, forcing the Senate to intervene , this time in fear of Imperial reaction. Schappeler was quickly back to his pulpit after having presided over the Religious Disputation of Zurich in October 1523. His renewed inflammatory sermons led to his excommunication by the Bishop in 1524. This development forced the Senate to quit its inactive and neutral stand and side with the city's Lutheran preachers.

Schappeler's sermons led to a massive refusal on the part of the peasants and some members of the citizenry to pay the tithes; this provoked the vigorous reaction of the Senate, in view of the possible bankruptcy of major civic institutions such as the city hospital. The threat of heavy penalties and fines forced many of the rebels to change their mind. However, the imprisonment of an intransigent master-baker rapidly led to organised protest with the formation of an ad hoc committee by guild members. This committee presented the Senate with several articles of complaints demanding i) jail arrest only in felony cases, ii) preaching 'without human additions' in all the churches of the city, iii) no intervention by the Senate in the tithe controversy between the 'common man' and the priests, iv)

punishment of the priests who had insulted Schappeler and the other leading figures of the Lutheran camp and v) a religious disputation between the representatives of the old and the new faiths [p. 107]. The demands were approved by the Senate and, at the end of 1524, a religious disputation was forced upon the Catholic clergy, ending with the total victory of Schappeler and the Reformation camp. This accelerated the full introduction of the Reformation in the city. Schappeler's sermons and the well-publicised inactivity of Memmingen's Senate greatly encouraged the peasants of the surrounding hinterland, who produced their own list of grievances and presented it to the city council in February 1525. Blickle underlines the fact that 'the urban reformers were providing the Memmingen peasants with an argument for godly law', as the twelve articles of the peasants of Memmingen were formulated by a committee appointed by the council [p. 108].

Lawrence Buck's study of the Franconian city of Windsheim is another example of the intersection of Reformation with urban socio-political and economic realities. As in Memmingen, it was the preaching of a defiant preacher, Thomas Appel, that fuelled the resentment of the middle and lower ranks of artisans and shopkeepers against an oppressive oligarchy ^{*41}.

Appel's inflammatory sermons and widespread influence led to his dismissal by the city council in April 1521. The city chancellor, Johann Greffinger, was sent to Nuremberg, Windsheim's closest ally, to find a new pastor. In his absence, a

number of artisans and vinedressers presented a list of grievances to the burgomaster Sebastian Hagelstein. Although referring to Appel's case, these grievances, presented on March 25, 1525, clearly focused on problems of a political and economic nature, by emphasising that the city was governed too oligarchically, the taxes were too high and that there was rumour that the city oligarchy would call in 3,000 soldiers of the Swabian League. Despite Hagelstein's conciliatory stand, the rebels seized the city keys, armed themselves and, after calling a meeting of the citizenry, arrested the city council on March 26, 1525 [p. 103].

The threat of a possible union of Windsheim's rebels with the insurgent peasants forced the city council of Nuremberg to send a delegation to the rebels. On March 31, after consultations with a committee of the rebels that included Appel, the Nurembergers outlined in a document all reforms and concessions that Windsheim's oligarchy had agreed to make. This document, called *Versicherungsbrief*, carried Nuremberg's seal as a guarantee.

At the political level, the community was granted the right to elect four ward captains to sit in the outer (younger) council. The second reform was the expulsion from both the inner and the outer councils of members with close family ties. The community also elected nine members to the outer council, following these expulsions. Lastly, according to article 27, the community would share the keys to the city with the council, a

symbolic gesture denoting the government's limited authority over the citizens. At the socio-economic level, taxes were reduced, procedures of collecting various levies were reformed and some were suppressed; other articles regulated a fixed rent of shops, a maximum salary for some civic servants, and an ordinance obliging the council to protect the citizenry from usury and economic speculation [pp. 104-106].

In the social sphere, more attention was to be paid to poor relief and the management of the common chest. Buck asserts that, viewed as a whole, these reforms mainly satisfied the demands of the middle class of artisans and shopkeepers. As for the introduced ecclesiastical reforms, Appel and his fellow preacher Reiser were given the right to continue preaching, while another article stated that, although the urban clergy would not yet be required to pay taxes, the whole question was to be settled following the example of Nuremberg, once the city council of the latter had reached a decision. Thus, Windsheim's case again shows that 'although the rebellion was initiated by a religious controversy, clearly most of the demands concerned governmental, financial and social questions ' [p. 106].

Kaspar von Greyerz's examination of the case of Colmar reveals no different course of events ^{*42}. In December 1524, because of the dismissal of an evangelical preacher by the city council and the dean of the church of St. Martin there occurred an outbreak of social unrest which, although temporarily muted, reemerged on April 23, 1525 to last for a few weeks before it

was finally suppressed by the authorities. Von Greyerz's investigation leads him to conclude that while the 1524-25 urban unrest was an autonomous movement in its initial phase, during its second phase, 'it appeared closely - but never intimately - connected to the course of the revolt in the surrounding countryside'. It was no coincidence that the leaders of the movement came from the agrarian guilds - the gardeners, peasants and vinedressers. Because they had formed a movement pursuing its goals through unconstitutional means - to remind ourselves of Scribner's typology - the leaders of the movement were reprimanded for not going the formal way - that is, present their requests to the guild masters or a member of the XIII [pp. 45-46].

The response of the insurgents was to assemble on the same day and formulate their grievances in 13 articles. Similarly to the twelve articles of the peasants of Swabia, the first article demanded greater participation of the community on the appointment of a common priest, or minister; also, both documents combined religious and political demands with socio-economic grievances, and this was revealed in the fact that, although half of the thirteen articles of Colmar referred to the clergy, they all attacked indirectly oligarchic practices of the ruling patricians [p. 49].

At the beginning of 1525 there was a substantial group within the city council which had approached the Reformation camp and did not oppose open manifestations of religious

dissent. However, acting wisely, the council declared itself incapable of formulating on the religious dispute. Typical to all cases previously examined, this benign attitude would not last long and the dismissal of the preacher in the previous year revealed that, despite their religious convictions, the members of Colmar's patriciate had to equally consider the Imperial reaction. However, because of the limited spread of social discontent - confined within the agrarian sector of the urban community - the oligarchs of Colmar were able to avoid open revolt and, furthermore, channel popular indignation against the traditional scapegoat, the clergy of St.Martin's and, especially, the monasteries. The insurgent minority was further weakened by its unstable contact with the surrounding peasants, who could provide it with a formidable negotiating weapon [pp. 50, 54].

Finally, in his already presented work on the Hansa, Heinz Schilling asserts that the Reformation strengthened the communal principles in the civic constitution as well as the political position of the burgher representatives. The Hanseatic communal movement was reinforced by the Reformation in three specific fields. Firstly, traditional burgher anticlericalism was cultivated to the fullest extent during the Reformation, when the urban clerical community was portrayed as useless to the welfare of the community and, indeed, an 'obstacle on the burgher community's way to eternal salvation'. Secondly, the political position of the burghers was considerably strengthened with the establishment of the Reformation. Burgher

representatives gained increased access to city government and, in some cases, the burgher community could intervene in the recruitment of the city councillors, limiting the established practice of cooption. In addition, the burgher oath was renewed during the Reformation crisis, reaffirming the legal and moral responsibilities and rights of the civic community [p. 451].

Schilling espouses Blickle's 'positive social protest' model when depicting the nature of the Hanseatic burgher movements. He maintains that their 'ultimate political goals were the restoration - not the revolution - of the communal constitutions with the participation of the burgher community and the adjustment of the town church to these communal norms'. Finally, the advent of the Reformation also legitimised burgher demands of a purely socio-economic nature, such as the supply of grain at reasonable prices and access to common grounds for all members of the community. Ultimately, the Hanseatic city Reformation was 'a burgher movement based on communal principles, in opposition to autocratic, hierarchic and oligarchic tendencies in the ecclesiastical and political system as well as in the urban society as a whole, through constitutional and not revolutionary means' [pp. 452-453].

Thus, it appears that all three above presented cases do verify Blickle's and Scribner's assertions on the immediate correlation of Reformation theology with contemporary socio-economic and political goals. Indeed, one can safely suggest that the urban Reformation movements were social

movements referring to specific injustices and other anomalies in sixteenth-century urban life.

Before passing on to the examination of current historical views on the social composition of these movements as well as a possible characterisation of their particular aims we shall concentrate on another crucial aspect of the urban Reformation, the communication and subsequent perception of the original Protestant message in sixteenth-century German civic communities.

It is a commonplace among historians of the Reformation - irrespective of their methodological preferences - that a social body so diversified and, indeed, so divided as the urban communities in early modern Germany, could not react in a unified and homogeneous way to the original calling of the Reformation. The various modes of communication and diffusion of the Protestant message largely contributed to the great diversity characterising urban response to the appeal of the Reformation. Speaking of modes of communication and ways of perception, we shall be referring to the collective mental outlook of the era: the religiosity of ruling elites and burgher communities, their perception of the sacred and the profane and their means of expressing it.

In a much-cited book, the American cultural historian Steven Ozment propounded the thesis that the original Protestant message promised the liberation of sixteenth-century Christians from the burdens of late medieval tradition - fear of the

purgatory, the almost tyrannical version of religious practice and piety propounded through catechism and confession and the oppressive surveillance of the Church - and, equally, brought forth a novel secularisation of human life *43.

The 'first lay enlightenment' as Ozment calls it, early Protestantism - as opposed to its later institutionalised version that Ozment clearly dislikes - enabled the sixteenth-century man to stand on his feet, face his new relationship with God with a confident eye, free from the oppressive and nightmarish atmosphere imposed on him by a centuries-long religious tradition. Its main vehicle of dissemination, the pamphlet, so abundant in the German urban centres, brought its liberating message to an eagerly awaiting audience. To all urban groups the appeal of Protestantism lay in its 'effectively displacing of so many of the beliefs, practices and institutions that had organised daily life and given it security and meaning for the greater part of a millenium' *44.

It is clear that the prospect of the urban Reformation as a social movement does not fit in Ozment's picture of the psychological rejuvenation of western Christianity, and although he acknowledges the sociopolitical dimensions of the Reformation crisis *45, he still maintains that, ultimately, all the diverse - and contrasting ? - trends of the Reformation were united in their crusade for the liberation of mankind from a depressing perception of human life as a mirror of divine will.

Ozment's rather simplistic presentation greatly obscures

the variety of factors and forces that constituted the urban Reformation. It depicts the original Protestant message - without even clarifying **what** was the original Protestant message - as being equally communicated to and having the same effect on all urban groups, through a unique means of communication - the pamphlet. Subsequent and more detailed research has proved that there was no unique source of the 'Protestant message', neither was it communicated solely by the pamphlets. Right from the start, there were diverse and quite distinct audiences to the particular intellectual needs of which the Reformation message had to be adapted. Finally, it was precisely due to the varied communication and subsequent perception of the Protestant message that the urban Reformation was torn apart into rival groups, rival versions of 'Protestantism'.

In a pioneering study on the spread and establishment of the Reformation in Strasbourg, focusing mainly on the means of communication, Miriam Usher Chrisman has revealed the enormous diversity of the dissemination and subsequent perception of the 'Protestant message' that hid behind Ozment's one-dimensional view ^{*46}. Chrisman points to Strasbourg's clergy and educated laity as the main agents of the spread of the Reformation in the city. She follows their combined efforts to introduce the Reformation, underlining that 'the union of clerical and lay aspirations proved to be ephemeral, as both sides clearly differentiated their interpretation of the message

of the Reformation, each one according to its own spiritual or political needs' [p.151].

According to Chrisman's presentation, the process of reform had already been initiated in Strasbourg by biblical humanism. Its aim was to restore Christian doctrine to its original purity but, also, to develop new interpretations of the texts, well beyond the official Catholic scholastic tradition. Erasmus' chief theological treatises - New Testament, Paraphrasis on Romans, the treatise on biblical exegesis - appeared in the city somewhat later than in the other German urban centres, as his sole agent, Mathias Schurer, neglected these works in favour of Erasmus' literary tracts. However, following 1520, numerous editions of Erasmian tracts, all in Latin, appeared in Strasbourg; their audience was the prestigious microcosm of patricians and university graduates. In the years 1522-23, Erasmus still exerted some influence but, following his bitter attack on Ulrich von Hutten, there occurred a breach of consensus with Strasbourg' intellectual community.

From 1523 onwards, Erasmian influence receded while the task of editing biblical texts and writing commentaries passed into the hands of Strasbourg's reformed theologians. By 1524, Strasbourg's reformers, aided by the French Dominican refugee François Lambert, had started producing their own commentaries and theological treatises, while simultaneously publishing treatises by Luther, Melanchthon and Johannes Bugenhagen. However, these treatises often produced fierce

controversy among the city's theologians, as was the case with Capito's *Hosea* which was accused by Bucer for possible Anabaptist influences. To Chrisman, these treatises could not satisfy the city's laity as they were 'written by the clergy for other clergy. If they had been intended for educated laymen, they would have continued to be published in the latter part of the century'. This was not the case, as once they had completed the major revision of the Scriptures and other important doctrinal issues, Strasbourg's reformed theologians turned their attention to other, more practical matters dealing with the implementation of the new doctrine in the life of the community.

The result of this exclusivist policy on the part of Strasbourg's clergy was the emergence of various lay dissenters to 'official' theological thought. Chrisman's statistics show that 37% of the German commentaries were written by men mistrusted by Strasbourg's reformers, usually because of their possible anabaptist affiliations. However, Strasbourg's lay reformers were ultimately weak in competing with the clergy as the Christian audience was definitely dependent on the clergy for their understanding of the Scripture. Chrisman maintains that the average Strasbourg family most commonly owned a psalms book, or the New Testament but very seldom an entire Bible.

Because of this reality, the new faith had to be communicated in varied form, in order to be understood by all members of the urban community. 'The new faith was not communicated in well-reasoned, dispassionate sermons or

carefully argued doctrinal works. It was presented in polemical pamphlets that violently attacked Catholicism, the Pope, the bishops, and the teachings of the church'. In the early years of the Reformation, both ecclesiastic and lay intellectuals were enthusiastically engaged in a passionate crusade against Catholicism. The figures on Protestant publication presented by Chrisman are quite illuminating: the majority of Protestant books was published before 1528. Doctrinal works, sermons and liturgies never truly equalled the totals achieved by the polemical tracts. What is important here with reference to Ozment's assertion is that these pamphlets clearly focused on current issues such as clerical abuses, rather than doctrinal matters. In fact, according to Chrisman, with the exception of the question of the eucharist - which in any case required a massive defense through the publication of tracts - no serious attempt was made to systematically create and establish the new church and faith.

When this was introduced in the late 1530s, the year of the fall of Bucerianism and the emergence of the territorial Lutheran church, it met with the apathy or even muted hostility of Strasbourg's laity who were primarily interested in restructuring their daily life and relationships according to the new meaning of the Gospel, rather than exhaust themselves in endless doctrinal disputations. As Lorna Abray puts it, 'for most men and women in Strasbourg in the sixteenth century, religion was fundamental to the understanding of human life. To them

the true religion was simple and hearteningly certain ... Sola fide, sola scriptura, and sola gratia were enough for them. Religious services should not drag on to the point of making people late for dinner' ^{*47}. The case of Strasbourg clearly shows the varied and indeed contrasting perception of the 'original Protestant message' by the city's reformed clergy and laity, a fact that was undoubtedly due to their differing secular and religious aspirations but, also, the channels through which they approached the Reformation ideals.

In a direct response to Ozment's and Moeller's formulations on the urban means of communication of the Reformation message, Robert Scribner points to the very important - and yet curiously neglected - fact that, during the Reformation crisis, only a very small minority of the urban populations could read and, subsequently, very few people must have got information concerning the message of the Reformation through print. Instead, oral modes of communication must have been much more important: reading aloud, discussion and explanation of the texts, casual conversation in inns, at the workplaces, while travelling but, also, satirical ballads, hymn-singing, and broadsheets, plays and processions . Apart from oral communication, visual means of communication like woodcuts or folk customs were equally important. To Scribner, it is particularly through the study of popular behaviour - as contrasting with elite culture - that we can appreciate how the new ideas were understood by the broader burgher communities

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In an article very reminiscent of Yve-Marie Bérce's approach to French popular culture and its expressions, Scribner examines the German Carnival as manifestation of popular culture and a potential vehicle of Protestant propaganda *49. Investigating the various potential links of Carnival with the Reformation, Scribner elaborates on views first propounded by Mikhail Bakhtin in his Rabelais and his world (1968), concerning the ideological content and social function of popular festivities. Contrary to the widespread view that Carnival, as all other manifestations of popular culture was closely regulated by the ruling elites so as to act as a 'safety-valve', defusing popular indignation, Scribner suggests that the Carnival presented an alternative, utopian world, in an effort to overturn the official realities, by exposing them to ridicule. The degradation of highly valued social norms - such as the oath of allegiance of the citizens - through their equation to basic bodily functions minimised the social distances between the elites - whose way of life and gestures were being ridiculed - and the broader populace. Furthermore, exposing elite culture - often characterised by secrecy and the sense of 'private' - to popular observation, made the ruling elites more vulnerable to burgher criticism and this was the tactics of urban opposition movements in the sixteenth century. In the Carnival as an alternative mass medium, 'the community spoke to itself and to its rulers' [pp. 256-257].

Another obvious and important link of carnivalesque activities with the Reformation was their 'ritual desacralisation'. According to Bakhtin, the degradation and grotesque realism of the Carnival were the means 'through which the ideal, the spiritual and the abstract are reduced to the level of material reality'. When applied to the study of the parody of the cult, however, Scribner finds Bakhtin's assumptions too far-fetched, as they treat popular culture as 'essentially materialistic' and, subsequently, cannot consider the Carnival as a means of communicating religious messages, as was the case with the Reformation.

Scribner believes that Bakhtin's formulations are valid when it comes to examining the various expressions of anticlericalism: the mockery and ridicule of the Pope, the bishops and all ranks of the clergy, tended to prove that, contrary to their image, they were nothing but puppets, straw men. The same applied to relics and images, when ridicule denied them their divine status and power and reduced them to simple material objects. Relics and images were subsequently smashed in order to demonstrate their material and impotent nature.

Going beyond Bakhtin's simple materialism, Scribner believes that besides a few incidents - such as in Munster - social and religious degradation was not accompanied by social change but was rather confined to the symbolic world of Carnival as distinct from everyday realities. To Scribner, it is a fact that, in the Reformation, 'religious change did not lead to

radical social change'; it was mainly a case of restructuring and secularizing worldly affairs and dependencies. Carnival was indeed a major popular means of secularising daily life - to follow Ozment's formulations, and as a desacralising process it primarily expressed popular rather than elite culture [pp. 258-260].

However, the most fundamental feature of Carnival was, according to Scribner, its inversion of cosmic realities; the 'world turned upside-down', the *verkehrte welt*, most prominent and recurrent theme in late medieval culture. It also represented the most essential link of Carnival with Reformation propaganda, namely through the appropriation by Luther of 'the most compelling form of inversion known to the middle ages', the figure of the Antichrist and its identification with the pope, the Catholic cult and religious doctrine. The assimilation of the *verkehrte welt* into the Lutheran propaganda provided the Reformation with a formidable weapon. The evangelical movement became 'the inheritor of the prophetic and chiliastic notions of inversion so prevalent in the later middle ages. This gave the opposition of the old and new belief a cosmic significance it might otherwise have lacked. It made it a contest of true and false belief in a total sense. Catholicism was thus not merely a mistake or a delusion, it was the very antithesis of the belief' [pp. 262-263].

From the presentation of the works of Chrisman and Scribner it emerges that the 'Protestant message' was neither

spelled out from a unique source nor communicated in a homogeneous way to its urban audiences. The Reformation spoke a different language to different people otherwise it would have been secluded within the limits of the educated lay and clerical elite. The Reformation became a movement, a social movement because of the diversity of its dissemination through the masses. Indeed, 'if the evangelical movement became in many places a movement of social protest, this does not mean that men did not really believe the new doctrines, or fail to apprehend the new religious practice as a change in their religious life. It shows us rather the ways in which they sought to relate their religious and secular aspects were more varied and complicated than the neat compartmentalisations "religious" and "social" imply' *50.

b. Reformation and Revolution: the Common Man

The intersection of the Reformation with its contemporary socio-economic and political realities, and especially the appropriation of Lutheran slogans by insurgent groups has led Peter Blicke to formulate his theory on the role of the gospel as the ultimate ideological force in the struggle of the oppressed in town and countryside. Blicke's theory focuses on the Peasants' War which he sees as the major manifestation of the appropriation of Reformation theology by radical popular

evangelical movements.

The second part of this section will concentrate on the examination of the validity of Blickle's concept of the 'Common Man' as a social historical concept designating the insurgent urban groups; secondly, it will examine whether Blickle's emphasis on the power of the gospel to bridge the differing aspirations of townsmen and peasants is firmly grounded on historical realities. This will involve the examination of relevant studies by historians who tried to check the applicability of Blickle's interpretation.

Blickle maintains that the Lutheran doctrine of 'the priesthood of all believers' led to the emancipation of the urban lower orders and the peasants - people till then considered totally incapable of appreciating divine wisdom. Furthermore, it proved to be a revolutionary breakthrough in their hopeless struggle against feudal oppression and exploitation, since it deprived feudalism of its force of legitimation. 'Through godly law, the needs of the peasants could be presented as ethically justified demands (the Twelve Articles). This aim of realising godly law, for the peasants a non-negotiable demand, and alongside it the gospel as a concretisation of godly law, left the social and political order in principle completely open' ^{*51}.

Thus, according to Blickle, the events of 1524-1526 should be viewed as a revolutionary movement of the 'Common Man', the politically excluded, socially oppressed and economically exploited of both town and countryside. These alliances of poor

townsmen and peasants were the product either of a community of interests or, in cases where there was no such clear-cut coincidence of aims and aspirations, of their common commitment to the radical message of divine justice that overshadowed their differences and united them.

Such a cooperation and community of interest occurred, according to Blickle, mainly in the territorial towns and the smaller administrative districts of Wurttemberg, Thuringia and Tyrol, and in municipalities with peasant-burgher communities, such as farming towns and minor urban settlements. Equally, the population of the suburbs, petty artisans, labourers and country-dwellers proved to be true brothers in arms to the insurgent peasants ^{*52}.

Although Blickle maintains that close cooperation between peasants and territorial towns stemmed from 'their agreement on the Reformation' and 'similar forms of dependence and economic interests' [p.119], he concedes that in some territorial towns enjoying a higher than usual status - like Freiburg im Breisgau - the municipal authorities refused to form a common alliance with the insurgent peasants. But even in these towns there were strong factions campaigning for such an alliance [p. 120].

In the Imperial Cities, it was the middle and lower social strata that united with the peasants, aroused by popular preachers and pressed by their own misery. They pressed their authorities or even revolted against them in order to promote

the idea of a townsman-peasant alliance under a common cause. Memmingen is the typical case offered by Blickle, as already noted in this chapter. Blickle maintains that only when the rebellious peasants proceeded in propounding a wide-ranging revolutionary programme that went well beyond their own grievances, were they able to recruit the full-hearted support of oppressed townsmen. It was the message of the gospel, transformed into political theology, that brought together peasant and burgher, the 'Common Man' of town and countryside [p. 115].

As for the concept, it is not Blickle's invention but actually a contemporary term widely used in both town and countryside. According to Blickle, at the beginning of the sixteenth century, 'Common Man' still had a narrow definition as the head of the household, the urban citizen with political rights inherited from the late Middle Ages, now struggling to extend them in the light of the new urban hierarchical relationships. Later on, the term was used in the cities to denote the generally underprivileged groups, such as journeymen, servants, labourers, agricultural workers and those with 'dishonourable' occupations. 'Common Man' was the mob, the urban commons, incapable of ruling in the eyes of civic oligarchies. Lastly, in 1525, 'Common Man' was equated with rebel and was depicted as such by civic authorities in their correspondence with the central government and the territorial lords [pp.122-124].

Subsequently, viewed in its entirety, the Peasants' War was

a much wider historical phenomenon than its title - a historians' invention - implies: it was an effort 'to overcome the crisis of feudalism through a revolutionary transformation of socio-political relations'. The goal of this revolution was 'the abolition of all rights and privileges specific to particular social groups'. At a political level, the aim of the rebels was to form 'a corporative-federal state in the petty territories', and in the large territories, 'to form a constitution based on a territorial assembly. These two political forms drew their rationale entirely from the gospel and the communal principle of election' [p.187]. Although the Reformation ideals had been exported from the urban centres by preachers, it was ultimately the peasants who set the pace of the events and provoked a chain of urban uprisings.

As already noted, Blickle's generalising formula of the 'Revolution of the Common Man' is indeed a landmark in the evolution of the social history of the Reformation as it provided historians with a ready-made explanatory model of the impact that had the Reformation ideals on the poor and oppressed in town and countryside. For all its deviations from historical realities, quickly detected by subsequent research, Blickle's interpretation further confirmed the, by now widespread, assumption that, viewed as a social movement, the urban Reformation rapidly exceeded the original scope and intentions of its leading figures and produced a wide range of differing and, indeed, contrasting socio-political, economic and religious

demands, promoted by different social groups, which had in their turn been encouraged by their own interpretation of the Lutheran or Zwinglian message.

Scribner's examination of the evangelical movements in Zwickau and Leipzig - already presented in Section 2a - tends to support Blickle's general idea. Scribner draws evidence from a document written by Hermann Mühlport, magistrate of Zwickau and admirer of Luther, in June 1525. This document was a surprisingly critical assessment of Luther's stand during the Peasants' War. Mühlport attacked Luther for legitimizing the mass murder of peasants, following the suppression of the rebellion. To the magistrate of Zwickau, it was necessary that the civic authorities put down the revolt and punish the rebels, but the violence and especially the extent of the vengeance were intolerable, as the poor peasant folk had rebelled because of its ignorance of Luther's ideas and its terrible plight under the princes, who were those really responsible for the outbreak of the crisis. To Mühlport it was precisely the poverty of the peasants that Luther had completely ignored when he called for the violent suppression of their revolt ^{*53}.

To Scribner, it is clear that the differing fortunes of the evangelical movements in Leipzig and Zwickau were product of their differing social composition and interpretation of the message of the Reformation [pp. 76-77]. However, Scribner is very careful in avoiding the easy-going generalisations of Blickle. He admits that the wealth-based distinction he used as

the basis of his comparative examination of the two movements is just one parameter of a social reality far more complex than that suggested by Blickle. For instance, he stresses that it would be a fallacy to take it for granted that participation of lower social ranks always radicalised the evangelical movement *54.

At the end, Scribner rightly stresses the unquestionable value of Blickle's formula by underlying on his part that the divergent evolutions of the evangelical movements in Zwickau and Leipzig help historians 'to point to the different ways the Gospel was taken up by dominant or subordinate social groups' [p. 77].

One of the major pitfalls of Blickle's 'Common Man' as a socio-historical tool is that it confuses Reformation propaganda with socio-political realities. As already noted, the term was not Blickle's invention and it can be found in abundance in sixteenth-century German literature. Whether it serves the purposes of the social historian, this is a question that Blickle fails to answer satisfactorily. In her latest article Lyndal Roper employs simple historical semantics to prove the fallacy behind Blickle's claim of having established an adequate socio-historical description of sixteenth-century realities *55.

Roper's own research on Reformation propaganda in the Imperial City of Augsburg reveals that the realities portrayed in slogans like 'Common Man' and 'community' were not necessarily those of contemporary life. The images of 'Common Man' and

'community' reflected a situation which actually was not so 'communal'. Firstly, 'the imagery of the common man, the Reformation hero, and the rhetoric of community which underlay it were relentlessly male'; whereas 'Common Man' (*Gemeiner Mann*) was depicted as the hero of the Reformation, 'common woman' (*Gemeine Frau - Gemeinerin*) was the prostitute. Thus, Roper proves that the intrusion of gender suffices to reverse totally the status of a cult-figure.

A second ambiguity of the image was that it denoted a man who was both urban and rural; although the majority of surviving representations depict him as the 'wise peasant' - modelled on the myth of karsthans - Roper mentions cases where he was presented as a cityman or a city-dweller. On the contrary, women appear very seldom and usually in marginal positions. To Roper, the grievances of the urban and rural 'Common Man' reflected a male set of political priorities - such as hunting rights and taxation of beer - and subsequently, one can safely claim that Blickle's tool is one-sided when it comes to depicting the social realities of the time [pp. 2-4].

Furthermore, Roper quite rightly points to the fact that although, when compared to Moeller's, Blickle's notion of the 'Common Man' presents a more dynamic view of the community as a political and religious concept in contrast with the official 'corpus christianorum' which was an aristocratic invention, it is still far from being accurate. To Roper, Blickle 'naturalises' the notion and uses it as an explanatory tool instead of

investigating its underlying realities - and its various and contrasting uses. The greatest value of Roper's contribution lies precisely in that examination of the various uses of the terms 'Common Man' and 'community'; as it emerges, 'community' could also represent the ruler besides the ruled [pp. 6-7].

Taking the Imperial City of Augsburg as her test-case, Roper presents three different uses of 'Gemein', three different occasions on which 'communities' were (claimed to be) constituted. The first was the ceremony of the annual oath of allegiance on the part of the citizenry: all citizens together with their sons and servants but, also, those who were just residing in the city should assemble before the major guild houses, the patricians' houses and outside the town hall. At the sound of the storm bell, women should stay indoors; the inhabitants swore an oath of allegiance to the mayor and various civic ordinances were publicly read. Those who could not attend the ceremony were to be called at a later date and perform it. This was an official expression and constitution of the community [p. 10].

The second occasion that Roper chooses to describe was wholly unofficial: in 1524, following the council's decision to expel the popular preacher Schilling, a group of evangelical supporters gathered on the Perlach, the square facing the town hall and demanded his return. The whole incident verged on widespread riot but was finally checked by the city council which later punished the suspected ring leaders by executing two of them, symbolically on the Perlach. The symbolic meaning of

that gathering of dissenters is what matters to Roper: by gathering at the Perlach, the dissenters could claim to be constituting the 'community' in its medieval form, directly opposed to the idea of 'community' equated to the civic oligarchy. What proves the point is that similar guild gatherings on the Perlach during the early fourteenth century had won Augsburg guilds their political power [p. 13].

The third case of manifestation of the 'Common Man' and the 'community' refers to their different uses and interpretation by contemporary writers. The first is Wilhelm Rem, a leading merchant of Augsburg who presented in his 'chronica' a detailed account of the events of 1524. Rem accorded a degree of legitimacy to the assembled 'common people' by pointing to the wide representation of the guilds - at least thirteen were represented - at the Perlach. He asserted that Schilling's expulsion was the root of the problem and he depicted the protest as expression of the united opposition of the 'common people' to their council's policies. To Roper, it appears that 'in Rem's work, the common people are distinct both from the council and from the elite whose loyalty the council still retains. He sees it as a bounded, almost concrete entity, with shared aims and beliefs, which can assemble as a collectivity and can be seen as a unit' [pp. 16-17].

Clemens Sender, a Catholic monk and strong adversary of the Reformation, presented a different account of the same event; he referred to Schilling's 'gang of supporters' and never used the

word 'community' to describe the dissenters. To him, those who gathered on the Perlach were an unruly mob with revolutionary aims. Nevertheless, Sender was equally ironic when presenting the council's claim that it enjoyed the support of the 'community'. Thus, he indirectly implied that the crowd on the Perlach was also part of the community. This is also manifested in his reference to the executions, which he justified as a righteous punishment to those who threatened 'the council and the common good', not 'the council and the community' [p. 17].

Roper's selective presentation of three different uses of 'community' and 'Common Man' in Reformation Augsburg reveals the one-dimensional nature of Blickle's concept. Most importantly it shows that 'Gemein' is a term which derives its meaning from its use. Community is not an existent entity which can simply be invoked - rather, it is a term which different speakers appropriate in different ways' [p. 18].

Blickle's view of the 'Common Man' and the 'community' is certainly more dynamic and flexible than Moeller's depiction of the sacred community; nevertheless, in the long run, Blickle's approach suffers from the same inherent weakness as Moeller's, as he was not able to further extend his analysis beyond the one-dimensional connotation that sixteenth-century German literature gave to the term. By accepting a priori that 'Common Man' and 'community' depicted the urban opposition to the ruling elites, Blickle used the term as a socio-historical tool for the description of the urban lower strata, whereas, as Roper's

research has shown, the term in itself did not constitute a historical entity. Rather it was claimed by both sides in the urban community, the ruling elite and the dissenting burghers.

In fact, in a situation identical to that depicted by Gascon with reference to Lyon ^{*56}, the equation of the city council with the 'community' was vital in times of political fluidity and social unrest, and that is why the city council of Augsburg usually resorted to using the Great Council, twelve representatives from each guild and the Small Council, a group of several hundred trusted delegates as the incarnation of 'community'. These two bodies constituted the 'worthy' - read: reliable - community with which the civic oligarchy was identified [p.18].

In their attempt to forestall any possible formation of a rival 'community' within the city walls, German civic oligarchs were undermined by their own stand towards the princes in the Imperial Diets, where they often presented themselves as 'Herren' (lords, rulers) in order to counteract the argument that the cities were not legitimate political entities since they were not rulers, 'obrigkeiten'. The adoption of the term 'Herren' on the part of the ruling groups made them vulnerable to disaffected citizens who could then claim that it was they who constituted the true community [p.19].

What remains to be examined in this part of section 5 is whether Blickle's interpretive model of 'The Revolution of the Common Man' in Reformation Germany accurately portrays the

historical realities of the time; namely, whether the peasant-townsmen alliances that emerged during the Peasants' War were as strong and solid as suggested by Blicke and, secondly, whether they constituted indeed a revolutionary movement, based on a common radical (mis)interpretation of Reformation ideas.

The work of Tom Scott represents by far the best and more solidly based response to Blicke's formulations, as the British historian chose to construct his own approach by using small territorial towns as models. Thus, he was able to enter Blicke's territory and get a first-hand appreciation of his depiction of the peasant-burgher alliances during the great rebellion.

The first case examined by Scott is the little Austrian town of Waldshut on the Upper Rhine, a town greatly involved in the peasant uprisings in the wider territory ^{*57}. The first obvious explanation that Scott points to with regards to Waldshut's rapid engagement in the tumult is the town's involvement with the Swiss Confederacy: Waldshut's immediate neighbourhood, although Austrian, was under the direct political and military supervision of the Swiss confederates; it was precisely due to this particular relationship that Zwinglianism was quickly disseminated in the area. Equally, the threat of military intervention on the part of Zurich, deterred the Habsburg authorities from intervening [pp. 84-85].

A second major cause for the rapprochement of the town with its surrounding peasant communities was their common

fight against the monastic institutions of the territory. Waldshut was in constant tension with the Swiss nunnery of Konigsfelden in Canton Aargau, which controlled two parishes in the town. Tension focused on the attempts of Waldshut's priests B. Hubmaier and K. Armbroster to increase their autonomy towards the nunnery, as well as on the nunnery's attempts to evade its fiscal and legal obligations to the urban community. The town's rivalry with Konigsfelden was manifested in the refusal of some burghers to pay the excises of corn and wine to the nunnery.

Nevertheless, the most bitter rivalry existed between the town and the abbey of St. Blasien in the Black Forest: although a 'burgher' of Waldshut, St. Blasien not only refused to fulfill its duties and responsibilities but also exhibited an aggressive and antagonistic stand towards the town, by selling its own wine in the immediate vicinity and by acquiring urban property. It also demanded that its former subjects who had moved in Waldshut - mainly ex-bondsmen - continue to swear allegiance to the abbot and render servile dues to the abbey. This created an atmosphere of fierce antagonism that long preceded the peasant rebellion.

Apart from the town, St. Blasien was in fierce rivalry with the Black Forest peasants, dynamically opposing the abbey's attempts to reduce them to serfdom. Thus, 'the common opposition to St. Blasien in town and country provided a bond of mutual interest between Waldshut and its northern hinterland, a bond strengthened by their solidarity which the town displayed

towards the abbey's subjects in asserting the freedom of its inhabitants in the face of abbatial interference' [pp. 85-87].

It is against this background that Scott examines the spread of Reformation ideals in the town and the broader territory, mainly through the preaching of B. Hubmaier. Right from the beginning of his preachership Hubmaier was under the influence of Zwingli and other leading Swiss reformers. Still, although a Zwinglian, he shared some views with the radicals, for instance, by laying more stress on the role of the congregation in the constitution and administration of the Reformed Church. Hubmaier's position on another crucial point of friction between Zwingli and his radical followers - the payment of tithes to holders of benefices ^{*58} - was ambivalent: he was accused of preaching against the payment of tithes, accusation which he rejected in a brief apology after his flight to Moravia in 1526. According to Scott, the fact that many Waldshut burghers had withheld the payment of tithes shows that Hubmaier was opposing the payment of dues, especially when it benefited a 'ungodly' lord [pp. 88-90].

In December 1523 the town was visited by two Imperial emissaries, enquiring as to the reasons that made Waldshut still employ a heretical preacher, in defiance of law and public order. They met with the firm stand of Waldshut's council, which defended Hubmaier by maintaining that he was simply preaching the unadulterated truth. However, incessant pressure by the Upper Austrian government finally showed that Hubmaier's

popularity was waning even within the city's council. His continuing presence in the town meant endless trouble, as he was now accused of encouraging a general rebellion against the Church and the state; in fact he was accused of attending the second colloquy of Zurich as representative of all Forest towns and the Black Forest peasants [pp. 90-92].

By mid-summer 1524 the peasants of the territories surrounding Waldshut had revolted against the ecclesiastical and lay lords; amongst these uprisings, that of the peasantry of the Landgraviate of Stühlingen marked the outbreak of widespread rebellion in south-west Germany. All four Black Forest towns intervened as intermediaries between the Stühlingers and the counts of Lupfen. When the Austrian envoys proposed the formation of an arbitrating committee, the Stühlingers insisted that six out of its twelve members be elected by them and, also, that they should comprise representatives from the Black Forest and the Forest towns.

When this demand was turned down, the two sides agreed on a moratorium of thirty days. This was almost immediately broken by the rebels, when around 600 armed Stühlingers marched to Waldshut and settled there for three days. To Scott, this represented a calculated act of defiance, pressing for a broader alliance of the insurgents. On its part, the town encouraged the peasants to stay as it desperately needed reinforcements for its garrison; nevertheless, the peasants found no common language with Waldshut's authorities and left after

three days [pp. 94-97].

By August 1524 the feudal lords and the Austrian authorities had been persuaded that the Stühlingers were preparing for war as soon as the moratorium ended. Indeed, on August 29, Hubmaier left Waldshut for Schaffhausen and a few days later 800 Stühlingers entered the town carrying the revolutionary banner and pledged for an alliance of mutual protection.

They were followed by another armed band under Hans Müller, which entered the town on September 1st. Simultaneously, representatives from thirty-five Stühlingen villages opened negotiations with the Austrian envoys in Schaffhausen. These internal contradictions gradually undermined the cohesion of the insurgents, while providing the helpless authorities with invaluable breathing space. In fact, as soon as the Schaffhausen negotiations started producing results, only a radical minority, gathered around Müller refused to surrender and went on intimidating moderate village prelates [pp. 98-100].

Scott concludes that the alliance between Waldshut and the Stühlingen peasantry was not an expression of defensive solidarity against feudal oppression but, rather, 'a calculated attempt by the militant wing of the Stühlingen peasantry to forge an active alliance with an urban community in order to widen the basis of resistance and so transform a local rural uprising into a general revolt'.

Secondly, it was not a socio-political alliance between the radical wings of both sides; Scott finds it dubious whether Waldshut's community exhibited a homogeneous and clear-cut commitment to social revolution. Rather, they were committed to 'Hubmaier's Zwinglian iconoclasm'. Thirdly, it ultimately became impossible to reconcile the different strategic aims of the two communities; 'the militant Stühlingen peasants looked on the town as a strategic base for operations and a stronghold to which they could withdraw. Waldshut, on the other hand, saw the peasants as reinforcements for its meagre garrison'. Still, the peasants could not remain enclosed in the town, as they needed to expand and gain new recruits. Thus, when the Müller band embarked on an expedition through the Black Forest and the Baar, Waldshut took no part; it was to remain isolated from the rebels till the end of January 1525 [pp. 100-102].

According to Scott, viewed in their entirety, 'all the alliances between Waldshut and the rebellious peasantry up to May 1525 were essentially the product of immediate and specific political and military exigencies, not of any deep-rooted sense of common interest between town and country [pp.166-167]. Behind the concept of 'the Revolution of the Common Man' in town and countryside there lay a more complex pattern which 'suggests that the origins of alliances between town and country in the Peasants' War and their contribution to its radicalisation depended less upon the impact of an overriding

extraneous ideology than upon the circumstances in which these alliances were formed' [pp. 167-168].

Scott's second test-case for the examination of the relations between townsmen and peasants during the peasant rebellion comes from his latest study on Freiburg and the Breisgau ^{*59}. A territorial town on the Upper Rhine, Freiburg and its hinterland Breisgau enjoyed two apparently peaceful decades in the beginning of the sixteenth century, only briefly interrupted by fears of a peasant 'Bundschuh' movement. Nevertheless, religious dissent was already undermining that peaceful atmosphere, coming into contact with the traditional fervent anticlericalism of townsmen and peasants.

In the early 1520s, there were reports of the subversive action of Lutheran preachers like Hans Murer, who was identified in 1523; the spread of Lutheranism especially in the countryside had acquired threatening dimensions and Murer became a menace to the town authorities but also to the central government in Innsbruck. The public image of Freiburg among the surrounding peasantry was already that of an oppressor of the true faith; however, the town itself did not remain immune from Protestant infiltration [pp. 190-194].

In 1522, after the bishop of Constance had turned down a petition by a group of burghers to receive the Eucharist in both kinds, a satirical broadsheet appeared in the town, not claiming any Lutheran connections but still mocking the bishop and the clergy. By 1523, Lutheran books and tracts were being chased in

the town and numerous incidents - expressions of religious dissent - occurred. Despite all that, the Reformation movement in Freiburg never truly gained the pace of its counterpart in other territorial towns as it had to cope with major disadvantages, such as the lack of a spirited preacher who could magnetize the crowds in favour of the Lutheran cause, the limited influence of the humanist university and, above all, the hardline policy zealously pursued by the civic authorities [pp. 196-198].

To Scott, the council's dislike of religious heterodoxy was primarily dictated by its foreign policy. To the eyes of the magistracy and the majority of burghers, religious dissent was a major threat to civic unity and independence from the Austrian Archduke; subsequently, Freiburg was to emerge as the champion of oppression during the Peasants' War. The only challenge within the town came from the heavily ostracised guild of wine-growers [pp.198-200].

Still, despite the council's policies of strict supervision of religious and social dissent, the town experienced a dramatic escalation of dissent among the commons during its siege by the rebellious peasants. When the rebels finally entered the city, around 200 inhabitants followed them as brothers in arms. To Scott, the most reliable source on the stand of Freiburg's commons - and especially the guilds - is the testimony of Peter Beck, a baker who had fled to Strasbourg following the defeat of the rebellion. In his supplication to the authorities, Beck portrayed himself as a principal advocate of an active alliance

with the peasants. Throughout the negotiations of Freiburg with its besiegers, Beck stressed the special interests of the commons in the establishment of a common understanding with the peasants. Beck - who claimed to be voicing the unanimous stand of the bakers' guild - was finally outmanœuvred by the skillful policies of the council which chose to deliberate with the guilds on an individual basis, thus avoiding to offer them the opportunity of appearing en bloc. Generally speaking, throughout the difficult hours of the siege there was 'an uneasy mixture of fear and sympathy amongst the citizens at large, little desire to withstand the peasants, but no broad enthusiasm or commitment either' [pp. 212-216].

Scott's investigation reveals the failure of the insurgent rural population to establish any significant bridgehead in Freiburg - apart from the poor carters, labourers and smallholders, members of the wine-growers' guild, who obviously had an identity of interests with the peasants. With reference to Blicke's theory, the case of Freiburg proves first of all the vagueness of the term 'Common Man', which clearly overshadows 'the real divisions between peasantry and townsfolk' but also overestimates 'the capacity of an ideological programme to forge a bond of solidarity between town and country which surmounted those divisions'.

Scott argues that even in the broader Breisgau territory as well as in most areas involved in the Peasants' War, alliances between townsmen and peasants cannot be interpreted in terms

of Blickle's 'Revolution of the Common Man'. In place of Blickle's generalising formula, Scott offers a more concise typology of urban-rural alliances by distinguishing between 'alliances of convenience' and 'alliances of interest'. The former were merely forms of mutual support between parties with divergent socio-economic backgrounds and aspirations. The latter occurred only between country dwellers, peasant-burghers and peasants, or between urban and rural subjects of the same feudal lord [pp. 229-232] ^{*60}.

Paul Russell's study of a selection of popular pamphleteers in southwest Germany of the same period ^{*61} suggests that, in their majority, pamphleteers tended to underline the need to preserve the common good for the collectivity: in their tracts, they combined fear for the fate of the Reformation in the early 1520s with a traditional anti-Romanism and an appeal for a fairer redistribution of wealth, clearly a medieval influence. To Russell, these pamphleteers were not anti-feudal in the sense that they did not wish to reverse the status quo. Their demands - more influenced by local preachers than by Luther himself - were rooted in the medieval assumption that 'reform in head and members would result in a total redemption of society' [pp. 218-219].

Russell's contribution stresses two valuable points with reference to our overall discussion of the ambiguous equation 'Reformation = Revolution'. First of all, the traditional medieval character of the socio-economic and political demands

propounded by insurgent townsmen and peasants. These demands did not represent anything radically new, and were not revolutionary in the absolute sense of the term. They were rather of a defensive nature, due to the socio-political trends of the era, that is, the recession of traditional rights and privileges of the burgher communities and the emergence of authoritarian governing bodies greatly distanced from their former equals in the burgher communities. Thus, as a dynamic attempt to return to the good old days of communalism, the Revolution of the Common Man was not that revolutionary; even if it totally denied the feudal system - in the cases of Gaismair and Müntzer - it did not produce a viable socio-economic alternative *62.

The second point which in a sense derives from what we have just discussed further reinforces Blickle's theoretical a priori concerning the Revolution of the Common Man: the peasant-burgher alliances that emerged throughout the crisis may not have been as solid and homogeneous as suggested by his generalising formula, but they certainly expressed the reaction of the economically oppressed and politically excluded in town and countryside against the great changes in the structures of the German rural economy and society. In fact, Blickle is right when attacking the one-dimensional nature of the term 'Peasants' War'. In his already cited historiographical review, Tom Scott stresses the fact that the war was more strongly felt and was more successful in the highly urbanised areas of the Empire, not the rural ones [p. 964].

Certainly, when it comes to examining the social origins of those townsmen who joined forces with the insurgent peasants of their territory, one will certainly detect crafts closely linked to the rural world - besides the propertyless elements. But when referring to the ideology of the revolution as manifested in its various 'articles', this appears to have been predominantly urban. The Reformation ideals were exported from the urban centres to the rural countryside; and they were based on the traditional communalism nurtured by the burgher communities vis - a - vis their oligarchies and feudal overlords. In this perspective, Blickle's **Gemeindereformation** (Communal Reformation) is a valuable conceptual tool as it depicts the blending of the original Lutheran message with the socio-economic condition and corresponding aspirations of the middle and lower citizen ranks and the peasants; and as Scribner quite rightly argues, the concept of the Communal Reformation has brought back to the centre of discussion the problem of 'the socio-economic causation influencing the Reformation' *63.

Section 6: Some concluding remarks

a. Towards a possible sociology of the urban Reformation

Ratsreformation, Gemeindereformation, or Volksreformation: not mere historical conventions, but concise historical tools in the examination of the various

dominant trends within the same historical process, as viewed by social historians today. All urban Reformation movements presented above tend to justify the broad antithetical scheme: magistrates' Reformation - communal Reformation; the polarization between these two notions of reform and, equally, of the Reformation itself can be established as a historical fact. The reform policies pursued by civic oligarchies were far from being implementations of popular will, of the communities' view of the Reformation as a process of change. On the other hand, the 'Reformations' of the popular evangelical movements were clearly different in their ideological foundations and motives from the spirit of the reform policies pursued by oligarchs and territorial rulers.

Indeed, the entire history of the Reformation can be seen as an incessant clash between rival notions of 'reform' and 'Reformation' ^{*64}, contrasting socio-political, economic and religious aspirations, only briefly united in a precarious coexistence during the early years of the crisis. The outbreak of the Peasants' War and the violent suppression of communal Reformation paved the way to the total imposition of the 'official' territorial Reformation and the 'purification' of Reformation theology from all 'blasphemous' and 'fanatic' deviations and misinterpretations. In this sense, Scribner's remark that 'if we look back to "the original evangelical message", it was a long way from what had, by the end of the sixteenth century, become "Protestantism" ', acquires a special

gravity *65.

The task of the social historian is to pinpoint the various factors and realities that, hidden beneath the foam of events, conditioned to a large degree the evolution of the Reformation and dictated its final outcome; urban hierarchical relationships, general political situation, economic situation, collective beliefs, the spirituality of the era, etc. A question of obvious importance is the social composition of urban Reformation movements. The current state of research allows us only a fairly abstract sketch *66.

It is undoubted that the impetus of every urban Reformation movement largely depended upon the socio-economic condition of its constituent groups - social and professional rank, degree of political and socio-economic dependence, personal education, generally speaking aims and aspirations directly deriving from one's position within the civic community. However, the historical sociology of all urban Reformation movements presented above does not justify any monocausal interpretation: to put it bluntly, the Reformation was never the cause of a single class or group of people; it appealed to all ranks and strata of urban societies though disproportionately and in accordance with their place in the community. It was the interplay of interests but also the antagonism between the constituent groups of urban Reformation movements that finally conditioned their evolution by colouring their strategic aims with the aspirations of the group that was to prevail in the long run.

The Reformation process may have been initiated by the radical gardeners' guild in Strasbourg but it had also attracted members of the ruling elites, who managed to maintain their inner cohesion and control the movement in the 1520s, thus succeeding in incorporating it in their broader political expectations. In Zwickau, although the ruling group had sided with the Reformation cause, it was incapable of forestalling the emergence of a popular evangelical movement, composed of strata excluded from civic politics and decision-making, and it finally had to succumb to popular pressure, undermining its own 'Ratsreformation'. On the contrary, the evangelical movement of Leipzig comprised in large numbers members of the urban elite, the wealthiest stratum of the town's society, and their prevalence - socio-economic and political - fundamentally shaped its character making it a dispassionate movement, not willing to proceed to a major rupture within the urban hierarchical system.

In Augsburg, a ruling council anxious to safeguard its position finally had to succumb to popular pressure and proceed with religious reforms despite its better judgement in order to prevent popular rebellion. In Marburg, the popular antipatrician movement which had adhered to the Lutheran camp was quickly disillusioned realising that even the Reformation as a prospect of change served the interests of the town's oligarchy and, more importantly, of the Landgrave. The same occurred in the Hanseatic burgher Reformation, a movement based on communal

principles, which desperately tried to preserve its autonomy against the imposed princely Reformation. In Nuremberg, a broad evangelical movement which, as in Strasbourg, had been initially formed by members of the city's educated elite, never managed to develop beyond the oligarchy's paternalistic leadership.

In Erfurt, once the oligarchy lost its cohesion - and this happened with the establishment of Lutheranism as the official confession - the community was torn apart by religious factionalism skilfully promoted by external interests; in the long run, the need to secure civic unity and independence and, on the other hand, the blatant incapability of Lutheran leaders to control the radical popular base of the movement, brought forth a compromise which condemned Lutheranism to a minority status.

In Memmingen, where the Senate was confronted by a united city commune pressing for the introduction of the Reformation, the pace of events and particularly the Peasants' War quickly led to a differentiation between a radical wing composed of propertyless elements and impoverished weavers, and the moderates, the middling groups of shopkeepers and artisans that were to finally prevail. Finally in Colmar, a radical evangelical movement comprising the agrarian guilds of gardeners and wine-dressers was ultimately incapable of imposing its own will against the cautious policy of a council sympathetic to reform, because of its isolation within the urban artisanat.

Subsequently, a detailed historical sociology of German urban Reformation movements, based where possible on

statistical analysis and reinforced with a detailed structural examination of the network of urban relationships - that, again, will avoid the simplistic equations suggested by Blickle - will adequately illuminate the inner contradictions that led to the diversification of urban evangelical movements in conservative and radical, Lutheran and Reformed. Furthermore, such a 'global' approach will also shed light on those impersonal factors and realities such as collective belief systems and long-term political trends that influenced the shaping of the urban Reformation and determined its final evolution.

b. Social mediators and propagators of the new faith: the preachers; a case worth further investigation

This review of the current state of the social historiography of the German urban Reformation would be incomplete without a reference to that group of people who first lifted the Reformation banners and carried the true Word in town and countryside, facing expulsion, persecution and physical intimidation. Symbols of Protestant propaganda, some of them

powerful figures with an almost mythical status, most of them social catalysts in tumultuous urban centres, the preachers of the Reformation constitute a challenging subject of study to the modern historian, especially when the only available study on the role and social background of a fairly wide national selection of preachers depicts a reality which is quite incompatible with the image that these heroes of the Reformation had managed to establish mainly over the subsequent Protestant generations *67.

Robert Scribner's study on the social origin, status and education of 176 preachers active in Germany between circa 1520 and 1550, although inevitably focusing on the better-known figures, is a truly vital contribution precisely because it pinpointed realities meticulously hidden behind the 'Reformation myth'. First of all, 80 % of the listed preachers had begun their activities before 1530 and in their great majority were priests or members of monastic orders. Thus, as Scribner rightly remarks, 'if the German Reformation was a revolt against clerical domination of religion, it was also a revolt from within'; clerical predominance in the group of 176 preachers has also other, far-reaching implications to the eyes of the modern historian. It appears that not only did the Lutheran Reformation have a clerical stamp from its very inception but also, that ordination of the preachers was to be expected. Thus, the vast majority of men who initiated the reformation came from a group most hated and despised for its domination and

blasphemous exploitation of religion and the symbols of the Christian cult.

Scribner's second important find concerns the listed laymen: he concludes that half of them started preaching after 1530, that is, when the Reformation was already in the process of institutionalisation, with the emergence of the new territorial Church and its appointed clergy. As Scribner points out, it appears that the priesthood of all believers was nothing but a mere Lutheran slogan as, in their majority, the urban communities sought spiritual guidance among people 'professionally inured to the task'. Subsequently, the first apostles of the true gospel were members of the old clerical estate with all the limitations, weaknesses, but also qualifications that went with it. What interests the social historian is whether, as clerics, they were in the position to appreciate the social needs and inner aspirations of the urban folk. Contrary to the image of the friend of the poor and the crusader for social justice established by the case of Schappeler, Scribner believes that, in their majority, due to their clerical background, the Reformation preachers were socially and ecclesiastically conservative.

Other factors contributing to the social isolation of the majority of the listed preachers from the urban communities were their age, education and, primarily, social origins. Scribner finds their majority to have been into the age band of thirty-one - forty, what is considered to have been the age of mature

adulthood in the sixteenth century. Only when the Reformation was established, recruitment concentrated on younger well-trained preachers. As for their education, based on information concerning the 81 % of the group, Scribner concludes that three quarters of the listed had attended university while others had the equivalent of a basic university education, acquired during their monastic years. These figures strongly indicate that the Reformation preachers were a very unrepresentative section of the urban population, a 'minute educational elite', with all the educational background and spiritual fervour to lead their parishioners to the true word of God but little contact with their surrounding social and cultural realities.

When it comes to their social origins, the degree of the social distance of the majority of listed preachers is further brought into relief. With information available about half of the group, Scribner finds that a quarter of the preachers came from councillor or patrician families, something that far exceeded the overall share of these elite groups in urban populations - estimated by Scribner to be around 5 %. If we add to them the sons of wealthy merchants and officials, then two from every five preachers can be identified as members of the upper social stratum. According to Scribner, even if one suggests that it was usually only the wealthy that were mentioned in the sources, one can still assume that one preacher in five belonged to the upper class-group. Next to them^{were} those from artisan families, with a

percentage well below the average artisan share in sixteenth-century urban communities. Then appear those designated as 'burgerlich', between the artisans and the poor; as for the poor, they constituted only a minute group within the 176 listed preachers. The overall examination of the available statistics leads Scribner to conclude that 'age, education and social status place these men among the establishment of their day' and, subsequently, 'it is hard to envisage them as rebels advocating radical change in either Church or society. Indeed, they seem little qualified to lead any popular movement, or to address the mass of the people in their own terms' [pp. 99-116].

This, of course, by no means implies that , in their majority, the German Reformation preachers constituted a reactionary group within the urban socio-political system, unwilling to cope with the needs of the flock ^{*68}. Rather it accurately points out the extreme difficulties that these men faced as propagators of the new faith and social mediators between communities and ruling elites. For, despite their generally conservative background and predisposition , preachers were popular as they were demanded by people who expected them not only to bring a revival of communal religious life but also to support their social aspirations as well as all efforts to satisfy their needs [p. 117].

The German urban Reformation preachers present an excellent test-case for the study of the intersection of Reformation thought with its contemporary socio-political and

economic realities: their initial formidable power - product of the broad popular base of their support - made them potentially dangerous to urban ruling groups. In fact, their standing in the community actually promoted them to a social position from which they could negotiate and collaborate in equal terms with the urban elites in the shaping of the new Reformation communities. The studies of Abray and Brady suggest that, ultimately, the preachers failed to cope with the enormous responsibilities of this task. Crushed in between popular agitation and oligarchic pressure, they only managed to serve as safety-valves for the urban hierarchical systems, defusing popular indignation and assisting the authorities in the preservation of their rule over the communities, something that most usually meant that they had to readapt and moderate their demands in order to prevent chaos and civil disorder. In this sense, Bucer's bitterness at the final outcome of the Reformation in Strasbourg is quite illuminating.

We can safely assume that the preachers were the channels - direct or indirect - through which socio-political considerations shaped the original Reformation thought. Their politically-minded actions, their concessions in the political game, their support of popular sedition or of oligarchic oppression influenced the evolution of the urban Reformation and, equally, of the Reformation thought itself.

CHAPTER FOUR: THE FRENCH CITIES AND THE REFORMATION

The earlier examination of pre-Reformation French urban communities revealed a world that was socially, politically, economically and also culturally divided. Catholicism as faith and in its institutionalised expression - the Church - was in a stage of rapid recession having failed to cope with the anxieties and aspirations of a vast range of urban groups, starting from the elites and ending up with the artisans and the lower social strata, greatly affected by economic stagnation and social rigidity.

This image of early modern French urban society, propounded by the majority of historians represents a situation suitable for the emergence of a rival religious doctrine which would succeed in usurping the cultural hegemony only nominally in the hands of the Catholic Church and, primarily, in satisfying the new set of values and demands of sixteenth-century urban Frenchmen, by providing them with a cohesive, all-embracing and, especially, a caring form of Christianity. This should be effected without replacing the greatly questionable Catholic stability with a chaotic situation, where a clash of a multitude of individual and collective heresies would lead to a total breach of the social cohesion and unity of the urban communities ^{*1}.

This chapter will examine the degree of Protestant success in meeting with the above requirements. It will consider whether

Protestantism and especially Calvinism, the only organised and institutionalised form of Protestantism in France, was able to fill the vacuum left by Catholicism and arm sixteenth-century Frenchmen with a new dynamic and coherent worldview, irrespective of status, profession or personal education. A faith of this kind would indeed become the dominant ideology of the era, having assembled under its banners all - or most - constituent members of urban societies.

As an initial step , it is necessary to take a closer look at the state of religious dissent and deviation from Catholic principles in the French urban communities of the 1520s. This will enable us both to acquire a detailed view of the world with which Calvinism came into contact and to evaluate its success in conquering this world and moulding it according to its own principles. In addition, it will provide a useful guide in our wandering in the rough waves of distorted historical semantics by helping us tell - when possible - the Calvinist from the Lutheran, the superstitious simple man from the educated bourgeois, a task which still appears to be considerably difficult

*2.

Section 1: The precedents of Calvinism: religious dissent and popular heresy in France during the 1520s.

'A multitude of personal quests for salvation in a hostile environment which nevertheless provided opportunities for thought and questioning of established ideas' is the description of pre-Calvinist France, almost unanimously accepted by the historians of the French Reformation ^{*3}. The state of early sixteenth-century French society and politics allowed ample space for the emergence and relatively trouble-free expansion of religious dissent ^{*4}.

Due to the great diversity of the French urban mental and intellectual universe, religious dissent found divergent expressions and it also focussed on different aspects of piety and doctrine, according to the psychological and intellectual needs and, primarily, the educational background of its carriers. In short, there was no unified, homogeneous and solid corpus of heretical ideas that could provide the springboard for Protestantism. What also needs to be stressed is that religious dissent and heretical inclinations in general had an individualistic rather than collective character and this largely impeded possible convergences of aspirations and opinions in an atmosphere of 'magnificent religious anarchy' that characterised Lucien Febvre's sixteenth-century France ^{*5}.

Against this diversified world, invading Protestantism had a major weapon and an unexpected ally: the dissemination of

printed books and, subsequently, of reading and the role of the Catholic reformist clergy. In his Peasants of Languedoc, Emmanuel Le Roy Ladurie speaks of the two revolutions that changed mental attitudes in sixteenth-century France. It was primarily the linguistic revolution, namely the diffusion of the French language from 1450 to around 1590, that swept all over the country, conquering not only the cities but equally the highest strata of rural society; the state of the available evidence suggests that where the French language came, the Protestant message soon followed *6.

The dissemination of Protestant ideas by print proved to be a menace to the crumbling Catholicism not because it attracted the attention of vast masses but mainly because it provided the urban elites - infuriated by the state of ecclesiastical affairs - with the opportunity to face their ecclesiastical opponents on equal terms. In this sense, the printed word truly rearranged the relationship between church and people, only within the limits of a minuscule social elite. As David Nicholls puts it, 'printing gave authority to private heretical thoughts, and showed that other people had stepped out of bounds. Above all, perhaps, religious discourse laid out before the readers' eyes the possibility for individual abstract thought as opposed to the contemplation of the concrete images visible on churches'. In fact, reading in France could be 'a sign of dissent as well as a path to conversion' *7.

As noted, printed Lutheran tracts had a powerful though limited audience, being confined within the boundaries of the

educated urban elites. A far greater audience was attracted to the ideas of ecclesiastical reform and , finally, to the Reformation through preaching; and it was here that the Lutheran infiltrators found an unexpected ally in the face of Guillaume Briçonnet and the reformist group of Meaux. It was in this diocese that the zealous reformer gathered around him an imposing team of men who were to become the Trojan Horse of the Reformation. The arrival of Lefèvre d' Etaples together with Gerard Roussel, Pierre Caroli, François Vatable and numerous preachers like Guillaume Farel proved to be the most dynamic stimulus for the spread of heresy but, also, for its gradual transformation into the concise corpus of doctrinal and liturgical dissent that was to become Calvinism.

Inspired by its leader's fervent adherence to the Gospel as the sole means of ecclesiastical reform, the Meaux group quickly launched a campaign for the dissemination of Bible-reading and of the Scriptural principles among the broader mass of the population. Besides their numerous publications, it was their preaching that attracted large audiences to the idea of ecclesiastical reform. But how did they end up with openly preaching the Reformation message? The bulk of research on the personality of Briçonnet as well as of his team tends to suggest that it was not the reformers' intention that an open revolt against Catholicism should take place. It could be that their preaching also touched upon other sensitive matters in the relationship between Church and the laity, matters of such gravity that led to an uncontrolled outbreak of popular

indignation against the Church as a spiritual but also a worldly institution.

In this perspective, Henry Heller's investigation of the contents of the preaching of two leading figures of the Meaux group, Martial Mazurier and Pierre Caroli is quite illuminating *8. The basic source of information on the two reformers is the *Determinatio Facultatis Theologiae Parisiensis*, approved by the Sorbonne in October 1523. It consisted of forty-one articles drawn from the sermons of the two reformers at Meaux. According to Heller, a close examination of the preachers' theses as depicted in the Sorbonne document reveals, firstly, that 'there was scarcely any trace of the characteristic motifs of Luther - sin and grace, the law and gospel, faith as against works'. It appears that dogma had an entirely secondary role and that the two preachers concentrated instead on abuses in ecclesiastical practice. The preachers attacked those abuses directly linked with the venality of ecclesiastical practices, such as the veneration of saints and the prayers for the dead. The Sorbonne pinpointed seventeen out of the forty-one articles that explicitly dealt with the question of ecclesiastical venality [p. 137].

Heller maintains that if one follows the ecclesiastical training of the two suspects, it becomes clear that the interpretation of the Sorbonne exaggerated their dislike of the veneration of saints. The contents of these articles were rather responding to specific needs and feelings of their audience: 'The articles of Meaux ... take the form they do because they are taken from sermons actually preached at Meaux before a mass of

artisans. They are a product not so much of an attempt to define articles of faith as to awaken and change popular consciousness' [p.139]. As for their aim, 'it is clear that they constituted a rejection of Catholicism which was based on the veneration of the virgin and the saints, on special cults and feast days, relics, special masses and prayers for the dead. But in particular the articles repudiated the venality which pervaded the structure of these traditional practices' [p. 141].

This again had to do with the special mentality of artisan audiences, namely their disgust at having to buy ecclesiastical services in particularly hard times: 1520 was the year of the outbreak of war between France and the Holy Roman Empire, and the region of Brie experienced all the dramatic consequences. Brigands governed the countryside, the peasants deserted their fields and fled to the towns, there was a sharp rise of inflation and, finally, famine and plague. In this context, Mazurier's and Caroli's preaching reveals an awareness of popular misery and indignation against the greed of the Catholic Church [p. 144]. It is of no coincidence that initial positive response to evangelical ideas came from the cloth workers of the Marche' quarter, where Mazurier was preacher at the parish church of Saint Martin.

Thus, the role of the reformist group of Meaux undermined the Church's capability of forestalling heresy and preventing the Huguenot schism. It has to be noted however that the Catholic reformers of the Meaux group should not be held solely responsible for the outbreak of the crisis. Their campaign for a Gospel-based ecclesiastical reform and the dissemination of

Bible reading in the laity could indeed contribute to the prevention of the crisis, if only they met with assistance and support from high-ranking ecclesiastical officials and the members of the Theological Faculty of the Sorbonne *9.

Apart from the investigation of tangible factors and aspects of early sixteenth-century French mental universe that led to the emergence and spread of Protestantism in France, historians associated with the **Annales** have sought to ascribe the Protestant phenomenon to a long-term causality in early modern French history. Since the days of Lucien Febvre, the **Annales'** historiography has attempted to establish an image of French Protestantism as the culmination of a shift in mental and ideological attitudes over the *longue durée* , or even to present Protestantism as the vanguard of a 'new civilisation' that was to conquer France in the Counter-Reformation years *10.

The most outspoken representative of the **Annales'** line of argument - and of its major weaknesses - is Pierre Chaunu, leading figure of the movement and a persuaded Protestant. In his Niveaux de Culture et Réforme , Chaunu presents the Reformation as the outcome of the combination of long- term trends and phenomena that swept through late medieval European civilisation: merchant capitalism, the emergence and spread of school education, the *Devotio Moderna* and, finally, the role of powerful 'cultural diffusion groups' - such as the humanist laity and ecclesiastical prelates, the classic scholars and disciples of Erasmus - all combined to set forth a process of cultural and mental revolution, a cultural mutation as Chaunu

calls it, which was accelerated initially by the Reformation and, then, by the Counter- reformation *11.

To Chaunu, the advent of Protestantism in France as well as in the rest of Europe appears to have been an irreversible process since it expressed underlying trends and forces of change that expanded throughout several centuries of European history: 'The time of the Reformation of the Church is contemporary in its *longue duree* with the time of the application of an original model of civilisation' [p. 325]. Obviously, this self- assured statement leads us back to the acculturation controversy which we need not reproduce at this stage of our discussion *12 . What however needs to be stressed here has less to do with the pitfalls of the **Annales'** approach than with Chaunu's Protestant persuasion. His association of Protestantism with literacy and acculturation is a modern resurrection of sixteenth-century French Protestant superiority complex. The fourth section of this chapter will show that the identification of French Protestantism with 'high' or 'advanced' culture is justified historically only to a certain extent. Rather, it points to the particular emotions and agonies of a dynamic movement which, for all its prestige and unquestionable power, never managed to breach the frontiers of its status of a persecuted minority. And as such, it certainly cannot be applied as an articulate method in interpreting the advent of Protestantism in France *13.

According to David Nicholls, 'the collision between scepticism and piety- manifested in the fervent popular reverence of images in France led individuals towards heresy'

*14. In our view, this epitomizes in the best possible way the characteristics of French mental and ideological universe that facilitated the advent of Protestantism. The true paradox of early sixteenth -century French religious world was expressed in the sceptical and more esoteric stand of the educated elites towards religion, their dislike of the ecclesiastical hierarchy and the way it ran the affairs of the Church . On the other hand, it was expressed in the fervent popular devotion to the symbols of Catholicism such as relics, feasts and images, counterbalanced by popular indignation against ecclesiastical venality and the fabrication of a tyrannical form of religion , exemplified in the presence of purgatory as the leitmotif of Catholicism.

Religious dissent reinforced by socio-economic discontent did manage to find a basic form of organisation - besides the iconoclastic riots - in the private gatherings and *veillées* organised in urban households, artisan, bourgeois or even feudal mansions. However, the religious content of these discussions cannot be adequately defined due to the overall confusion and ignorance of the persecuting authorities, something vividly shown in the available archives. Thus, people were being condemned for 'blasphemous' or 'heretical' actions with penalties varying from the *amende honorable* to death and only very rarely can such cases be identified with genuine Lutherans [p. 273]. To conclude, it appears that the overall depiction of pre-Calvinist religious dissent in France as given by current historiography is an accurate one. Furthermore, this status of 'anarchy' and confessional confusion persisted even during the years of the

Calvinist organisational boom, despite the efforts of leading Huguenot figures - and of some current apologists of French Protestantism - to impose an image of solid unity and confessional cohesion.

Section 2: The advent of Protestantism: 'Protestantism' and 'Calvinism', 1530s -1550s.

Recent research on the development of the French Reformation has shown that Protestant infiltration of urban communities was a well-known fact before the affair of the Placards shattered public opinion and made the lay and ecclesiastical authorities fully aware of the imminent threat of widespread heresy. Thus, Grenoble's community experienced a major incident involving a Cordelier preacher as early as 1515 whereas in 1524 a scathing attack on the concept of salvation by pious works was launched from the pulpit of Notre-Dame before an astonished Parlement ^{*15}.

In Lyon, a Dominican inquisitor began proceedings against 'heretics' in 1521 and in 1523 the first list of suspected Protestants appeared, comprising merchants, bourgeois, artisans and a Dominican preacher ^{*16}. In Normandy, the 1520s saw persecutions of 'Lutherans' taking place in Rouen and Caen, while the New Testament of Lefèvre d' Etaples was publicly taught at Alençon. Various expressions of heresy, though unorganised and

rather individualistic in nature led to the first massive arrests in the pays de Caux, the Seine valley and Neufchatel in the early 1530s.

The first identifiable Protestants were clerics, mainly the lower regular clergy and monks, especially in Upper Normandy with the Augustinians of Rouen and the Franciscans of Caen as the most affected groups. Nevertheless, the available evidence shows that the early urban Protestant movement in Upper Normandy was primarily a middle-class movement, comprising journeymen and artisans of large workshops, ideal places for the dissemination of Protestant ideas. The presence of the youth in Protestant cells appeared to be quite preponderant; what is also striking at this stage - striking because it heralded the 'idiosyncrasy' of the French Huguenot movement - was the almost total absence of unskilled wage- labourers and the lower artisan ranks from the early lists of suspected heretics *17.

Finally, at the reformist centre of Meaux, the seed of Protestantism sowed by a bishop largely unaware of the profound social, political and religious side-effects of his reforming policies, quickly manifested itself openly and massively. Despite Briçonnet's sincere efforts to revitalize religious life and bring about a new quality in the relationship between Church and laity, this relationship was already a strained one as in the majority of sixteenth-century French urban communities. The causes of the latent conflict between Church and laity focused, characteristically, on the assessment of taxes, schooling and poor relief. On the part of the urban elites - which provided the

initial nucleus of the Protestant camp, anticlericalism suited their plans of extending their control over and against ecclesiastical influence. But it was mainly in the craftsmen, and especially the cloth-workers of the Marche' quarter that evangelicism found its most fervent and loyal supporters *18.

Thus, it appears that even by the early 1520s, Protestantism was infiltrating the majority of the French urban centres and their immediate vicinity *19 . What remains to be seen in the remaining part of this section is whether Protestantism did indeed manage to offer a doctrinally solid and socially cohesive ideology to its urban audiences; namely, bringing back Moeller's assertions, whether it succeeded in having an equal appeal to all strata of French urban communities, bridging their socio-economic, political and cultural differences and reinforcing social cohesion amongst the citizens' ranks. The best way to cope with this question is to examine the actions and overall comportment of the early Protestant movements in France - that is, between the 1520s and the 1550s, the decade that saw the emergence of an organised Calvinist church.

What clearly emerges from the bulk of recent research is a diversification of aims, strategies and actions in the majority of cases, a fact that refers directly to the greatly divergent social basis of the early Protestant movements. Thus, D. Nicholls' examination of the nature and spread of early Protestantism in Normandy has underlined the gradual differentiation of the attitudes of the nobles and notables on the one hand and the lower citizen ranks on the other *20 . In an atmosphere of

'religious anarchy', a world dominated by individual heretical beliefs and barely convergent religious and social aspirations, each social stratum responded to a still vaguely defined Protestant appeal according to its own status and corresponding aspirations. Thus, it was almost inevitable that 'in so far as Protestantism represented a revolt against the established order, it may have been, for its lower- class adherents, a revolt of rising expectations' [pp. 292-293]. In fact, the heavy involvement of the Norman skilled crafts and especially those with large workshops brings back to mind S. Ozment's theory of the 'socially mobile' elements that first reacted positively to the Protestant message *21 .

On the contrary, the involvement of the Norman 'menu peuple' in the early urban Reformation movement was dangerously meagre, since their overall position on the margin of urban societies meant that to them, 'religious indifference may have been as popular a solution as the simplified forms of Protestant worship' [p. 297]. Finally, when it comes to the reaction of the Norman merchant bourgeoisie and the 'officier corps' ,this is clearly at odds with fashionable monocausal explanations which identify Protestantism with a high level of literacy and prosperity. According to Nicholls, although appearing as the first candidates for conversion, most notables and bourgeois in the Upper Normandy reacted cautiously to the Protestant appeal, not willing to jeopardize life and fortune; in the south of the region, their counterparts felt freer to express themselves more openly as the persecution was less intense.

Still, on the whole, the attitude of the converted upper strata appears to have been passive when compared to the militancy of the artisanat

Richard Gascon's investigation of the social recruitment of Protestantism in Lyon prior to 1559, year from which the Protestants started appearing *en masse* in official lists, has showed that Protestantism had a wide-ranging though disproportionate appeal in the society of the city. Surviving persecution lists for that period centre either on artisan troublemakers or intellectuals whose publications made them suspect of heretical affiliations. According to Gascon, the first collective manifestation of Protestantism was that of the printers in 1551 and it was directly linked with their struggle against the master printers, dating from 1549 ^{*22}. Besides the artisans, a trial in 1534 revealed the involvement of several foreign merchants and, finally, there were numerous reported cases of converted priests. Apart from these social categories no other concrete information is available about other groups. Thus, generally speaking, the early period of Protestant expansion in Lyon was characterised by the heavy engagement of foreigners but, primarily, by the predominance of the 'mecaniques' crafts.

The case of Meaux's early Protestant community, again presented by Henry Heller, is a concrete example of the intersection of Protestantism with the economic *conjoncture* ^{*23}. Indeed, Meaux is but one indication of Protestantism's failure to appease urban socio-economic antagonisms and unite the dissenting groups of urban communities under a common

cause and a unique outlook, as suggested by Bernd Moeller: 'the beginnings of the Reformation must be seen as part of a crisis which divided communities already in bitter social and political conflict. At Meaux, it was marked by a protest of artisans mainly in the secondary and skilled sector of the economy, against the notables, wholesale merchants and ecclesiastics, their oppressors within the walls of the town' [pp. 57-58].

Although the evangelical artisans of Meaux were, similarly to the town's elite, the spiritual offspring of Briçonnet's reformist policies, they adopted a militant stand which differentiated itself from the more refrained attitude of their bourgeois and notables 'brothers'. Thus, as heresy spread from the late 1520s to the mid 1540s, the town's notables and ecclesiastics were becoming increasingly alarmed at the prospect of widespread religious and social tumult. Subsequently, with the first open manifestations of religious dissent they struck back violently, as was shown in the execution of an artisan following the posting of a mock papal bull revoking Leo X's and Adrian VI's condemnation of Luther, at the Cathedral's door [p. 60]. This execution precipitated the flight of at least forty suspected heretics. Characteristically enough, Briçonnet redoubled his gifts of grain and cash to the Hotel-Dieu, the city's poor relief institution, an act that attested to the recurrent problem of grain shortages and the disputes over alms giving [p. 61]

According to Heller's investigation, 'popular dissent was grounded in an assertion of new found religious identity in the

face of a sense of unwarranted economic hardship and social exclusion' [p. 63]. In other words, the Reformation as a vague prospect may have attracted supporters from all ranks of society but, when coming into contact with the given socio-economic and political polarization, it quickly succumbed to it and expressed it. Thus, it is no wonder that the members of the first Protestant church of Meaux were almost exclusively artisans as shown in the list of names of forty-seven men and seventeen women arrested in the house of Estienne Magin, a wealthy merchant and patron of the community on 8 September 1546, following a sudden raid by the 'lieutenant du bailli' and the 'procureur du roi '. The raid, a preemptive strike modelled on the previous attack against the Vaudois heretics was followed by mass and ritualised murder. Fourteen Protestants were executed after suffering torture and public humiliation; the survivors were marched into the streets in grandiose processions - where thousands from the surrounding towns and villages were called to participate - and were forced to abjure several times.

According to Heller, the heavy artisan involvement in the formation and subsequent expansion of Meaux's evangelical community largely justifies the theories of Henri Hauser: 'the artisans were the social base of the French Reformation. Theirs was a religious revolt founded in political and economic protest. They were not the only ones attracted to the Reformation or the ones able to lead or develop it further, but as a group they were its earliest and most determined supporters' [pp. 65-66, the citation from p. 69].

The case of Agen, a second- ranking city situated midway between Bordeaux and Toulouse, is another blunt example of an early polarization at the interior of an urban Reformation movement ^{*24}. The town's prehistory of bitter political and socio-economic antagonism between notables and commons on the one hand, and, on the other, between the notables and the Church, largely predetermined the shaping of the urban Reformation movement. On their part, the notables who adhered to the reformed camp usually did so because of their fervent anticlericalism. On the contrary, the craftsmen refused to be drawn to an alliance with the notables and, indeed, it was the artisans who denounced heretical notables to the inquisitor Louis de Rochette who visited the town in 1537, wishing to investigate the alleged spread of heresy among the teaching staff and the students of the 'College d' Agen' , the town's most prestigious educational establishment. However, these denunciations had little effect on the fortunes of the accused because of their political friendships and high connections. For it was almost the rule that, before the intensification of the religious wars brought chaos and murder to all social groups, 'friars and 'gens mécaniques' burned in the first decades of the Reformation. Notables or nobles seldom if ever did' [pp. 106-107].

It derives from Heller's research that the Reformation at Agen began as a current largely confined to the educated elite. The humanist regents of the College depended greatly on the patronage of this elite in order to bridge the gap between the notables and the common people of Agen through their educating

policies. However, the political isolation of the notables from the commune meant that the Protestant movement of Agen was divided from its inception. 'The popular Reformation grew up independently of the notables. Indeed, it developed in close association with popular political and social protest: Bitterness between the notables, on the one hand, and peasants and artisans on the other, persisted' [p. 107].

The connection between popular unrest and the Reformation became evident in the severe crisis of 1545-6, when the Agenais region, like most of the country, was struck by famine and plague. Amidst growing popular unrest, the evangelicals published a commentary on St. Paul's Epistle to Philomen and the Exposition sur le cantique virginal Magnificat. Only one regent, already suspected of heresy was arrested and summarily executed. In the meantime, the popular reform camp intensified its struggle and imposed its presence as a dynamic opposition. Thus, in 1546 the Agenais peasants refused to pay the taille and the tithe. Growing anticlericalism ran parallel to spreading evangelicism in the rural hinterland but, also, in the artisan quarters of the town. By 1551, 'the lines had been clearly drawn between heresy and orthodoxy in terms of the social conflicts dividing the town'. Artisans were openly accused of heresy, the clergy started to intervene dynamically in urban affairs and the Catholic consuls led the counter-offensive against the heretics, discovering unexpected allies in their struggle: The 'lieutenant criminel' who took charge of the persecution of heretical artisans was himself a Protestant. 'In short, as late as 1551 the

evangelical notables were isolated from the mass of craftsmen including those who were Protestant. In the 1530s their plan to spread Protestantism from the College to the workshops of the craftsmen failed to get off the ground. Likewise, they remained cut off even when Protestantism had taken hold among the craftsmen' [pp.109-110].

The above mentioned cases studied by Heller should by no means confine us to a monocausal explanatory model identifying the rise of Protestantism with the revolt of the artisanat or the rise of the bourgeoisie. The Reformation was the culmination of a long-standing and multifaced crisis, affecting all levels and sectors of urban life. Once this theoretical a priori has been adopted , we shall be able to face cases like Meaux and Agen in the correct perspective; and we may say in advance that this scope of investigation reveals to its full extent the utter fallacy upon which the Moeller thesis is constructed with reference to the French Reformation *25 .

Our discussion so far has shown that contemporary terminology overshadowed the inner diversification of the Protestant movement. We shall agree with David Nicholls' statement that the fact that the formative period of the French Protestant movement was 'largely formless' ultimately undermined the drive of Calvinism to acquire a majority status within French society *26 .

Section 3: Dissent and persecution; Protestantism and French politics

For all the favourable conditions they faced at the religious/ideological level, the urban Protestant movements still had to cope with other, more tangible and important realities in their drive for supremacy. Primal task of the French Protestants was to win over their urban communities. Additionally, in order to emerge as a nationwide movement, they had to establish a massive and well co-ordinated organisation which would enable them to pursue their cause undeterred by local or regional resistance. In order to win the battle against Catholicism, the French Protestants had to control the urban societies but also the existent state mechanism. Thus, it was inevitable that they become entangled in urban and national politics.

In their attempt to alter the existent unfavourable state of urban hierarchical relationships and infiltrate a state mechanism which was not as vulnerable as its German counterpart, French Protestants ended up with questioning the given expression of power both locally and nationally. In this struggle, their weapons were their numerical strength, political power and ability to influence the social bodies of their towns and, with regards to the state mechanism, their connections and political clientele in general. As it finally turned out, the French Protestants did manage to establish a national identity and organisation; only, it proved to be a defensive one, the product of intense persecution on the part of local and royal authorities. The Huguenot camp in the religious wars was not the proud and self-confident party vigorously pressing for final supremacy;

they were a defensive, greatly divided camp struggling for survival.; they had never truly managed to transcend their minority status. The reasons for this dramatic failure are to be found in urban hierarchical relationships and political systems in general but, primarily, in the role of the centralist government . At the end of the century it had become painfully evident to the French Protestants that they had blatantly failed in both of their objectives: to take over urban control and power and, at least, neutralise the royal one.

Going through specific cases of French urban centres infiltrated by Protestantism , it emerges that, right from the start, the Protestant camps had to cope with the stumbling block of urban government and hierarchical structures in general. Thus, in Rouen during the period 1550-1570, the successful spread of Protestantism was guaranteed by two obvious advantages related to the nature of the urban society: the city's openness as a port and the presence of a large community of highly skilled artisans, whose adherence to the Protestant cause appears to have been an undisputed social phenomenon for the whole of France. However, the presence of the Parlement and the position of Rouen as a major administrative centre imposed irreversible obstacles to the drive of Protestants towards attaining a majority status ^{*27}.

Rouen's Protestant community withstood the heavy pressure of the authorities for all the intensification of the repression. This is amply shown in the 139 inhabitants of the city who were forced to seek refuge to Geneva in the years 1549-1556 and

1557-1559, the highest number of refugees from any French city. By 1557, the arrival of the Calvinist minister de la Jonchee consolidated the local Protestant community, turning it to a Calvinist church . From 1560 onwards, Calvinist activities became open and the Edict of 1561 further encouraged the Calvinist drive for massive recruitments amidst the city's population. During that period, the actual size of Rouen's reformed community, based on accounts of the Histoire ecclésiastique des églises réformées au royaume de France is estimated by Benedict to have been not less than 10,000. For 1565, the first surviving Protestant baptismal register suggests a membership of around 16,500 people , an estimated 15-20 % of the entire population. According to Benedict, it was evident by the early 1560s that two radically differing visions of the world and the sacred were emerging in full- fledged opposition. It was then that Catholic pamphleteers attacked Protestantism on the grounds of being seditious and a threat to the established order and social cohesion in Rouen's community [pp. 66-67].

In their struggle for control of the city's community, Rouen's Protestants failed to gain sufficient strategic ground at either end of the social scale. Lacking broad popular support but also official recognition and assistance within the governing elite, they were doomed to failure once local government had managed to recuperate after a period of fluidity and instability. As Benedict puts it, in Rouen, there was no social space for Protestantism to develop freely. The Calvinists had gained their initial strength in periods of weakness and fluidity, a fact that ,

as we have already seen, was typical of the German urban Reformation. When the Calvinist movement met with a dynamic and oppressive local government, its expansion stagnated [p. 93]
*28.

On April 2, 1562 the city of Grenoble changed hands in a sudden and dramatic escalation of the hostilities of the first religious war. The Calvinist minority, an estimated 20 % of the city's population was now in full control having elected Ennemond Coct, a leading Protestant figure, to the seat of the captain of the town and , in addition, three out of the four members of the new consulate. Following a brief period when the city was besieged, lost to and regained from the Catholic armies, the Protestant camp established an authoritarian rule which was to last from 25 June 1562 to July 1563. It was during their short-lived reign that Grenoble's Protestants did their best to radically alter the balance of power to their own advantage; they reorganised - or, rather, recreated the Parlement whose members had fled the town, proscribed the Catholic cult and popular religious festivities and transformed all churches into Calvinist temples. Finding themselves under continuous threat from neighbouring Catholic armies and an ever-increasing shortage of food supply, Grenoble's Protestants proceeded with strict and severe measures, such as the confiscation of all ecclesiastical property and the relentless persecution of well-known 'papists'.

The conciliatory Edict of Amboise appeared as a unique opportunity for the consolidation of the Calvinist creed in

coexistence with Catholicism. The Parlement returned from Chamberry and an equal representation of both confessions was decided with regards to all offices of the municipal corps, including the city schools. All churches were returned to the Catholics apart from Sainte-Claire which was to remain Calvinist. However, despite the apparent balance of power between the two confessions, the Protestant position was gradually and openly undermined by several royal degrees contradicting the Amboise Edict and, also, by frequent interventions of the Parlement. Thus, by 1565 it emerged that Grenoble's Protestants had gained little more - if anything - than an ephemeral glimpse of power ^{*29}.

The city of Lyon, 'the second Geneva', is perhaps the best example of the strenuous effort of France's urban Protestants to alter the balance of political power and consolidate their presence amidst a hostile environment. In the evening of April 29, 1562 the Protestants seized control of the city following a well-orchestrated attack ^{*30}.

New masters of the city, the Protestants of Lyon came immediately face to face with a major political dilemma that was to colour their subsequent policies with an inherent contradiction. On the one hand, they had to defend themselves against external threats but, equally, against a hostile Catholic majority within the city's walls; they had no choice but to establish a firm, authoritarian regime over their fellow-citizens. On the other, they were anxious to repudiate all accusations of rebellion launched against them by Catholic

polemicists. To sustain the claim that they had risen in arms only to save the king from the Guise, Lyon's Protestants had to preserve all aspects of legality in their rule and refrain from major and radical innovations in civic administration [p. 478].

From April 1562 to June 1563, Lyon's Protestant masters passionately devoted themselves to a major reshuffle of the city's governmental structures and institutions. This drive that Gascon calls municipal revolution was spearheaded by novel administrative bodies, specifically conceived to consolidate Calvinist supremacy: the Consistory, a religious authority with the duty of modelling Lyon on the Protestant celestial city, the Council of the Reformed Church which presided over the assemblies of the notables and assisted the Consulate mainly in the liquidation of ecclesiastical property, and the tribunal, replacing the old 'Sénéchaussée' in the judicial domaine, all were new Calvinist instruments of power [pp. 479-480]. However, it was mainly the Consulate that was envisaged by the Calvinist rulers as the very core of their political reorganisation of the city.

The city Consulate elected in December 1561 did not satisfy the Calvinists despite its considerable concessions to their side; still, anxious to safeguard their image of legality, Lyon's rulers refrained from openly overthrowing it. Instead, they enlarged it with further twelve councillors who were to sit together with the already elected (six Catholics and six Protestants). This however turned out to be too much for the members of the Catholic minority who finally fled the city and informed the

queen of the reasons for their departure. Once away, they were immediately replaced by Protestants. This action on the part of Lyon's Catholic councillors greatly exposed the Calvinist authorities who now concentrated all their effort in trying to persuade the royal governor de Sault to remain as a nominal figure at the top of urban hierarchy. However, these attempts proved to be in vain.

Gascon's investigation shows that Lyon was governed by a two-faced regime, military and theocratic. The baron des Adrets, the Council of the Reformed Church and the Consistory were the pillars of the new political status quo. Despite their temporary strength, Lyon's Protestants knew only too well the underlying fragility of their new regime. Amidst the conflicting views on what course of action was to be adopted with regards to the welfare of the city and that of its leaders, it was the moderate policies of the Protestant notables , Lyonnais and foreigners, that finally prevailed. Their motives cannot be fully explained; to Gascon, they probably stemmed from a combination of fear of royal reaction, fear of impending war, a desire for conciliation and, definitely, a desire to safeguard the purity of the faith. In their moderate policies, the notables of Lyon had the approval of both Calvin and the prince of Conde' [pp. 481-482].

Right from the first days of Calvinist domination there was a clear attempt on the part of the Consulate to check all popular violence and destruction of property: a preacher was relieved of his duties and several soldiers were hanged for theft. All ecclesiastical property was put under guard, while the Consulate

promised to assist all those who wished to proceed with charges against aggressive fellow-citizens. On the other hand, the Catholic cult was proscribed.; preaching replaced the Sunday mass in all monastic orders and all churches became Protestant. Work was strictly forbidden on Sundays and the orphan boys of Chana were taken regularly to attend the preachings while the orphan girls of St Catherine had a new, reformed mistress.

Still, the greatest threat to Lyon's Calvinists came from the exterior and it was on the defensive tactics that the authorities strongly disagreed with des Adrets who was conducting successful - though costly - operations in far-distanced territories. On the 19th of July, Jean de Parthenay- Larchevêque, a moderate noble, replaced the arrogant baron. The new Calvinist military chief quickly reinforced the city's fortifications and skillfully obtained the neutrality of the neighbouring noble Emmanuel- Philibert in his attempt to secure the defensive capability of the city against Catholic aggression [pp. 482-484].

Finally, what is of obvious importance with reference to this stage of our discussion is the overall political line pursued by Lyon's new governors. Despite their revolutionary nature, both Protestant Consulates of May and December 1562 exhibited a political line surprisingly conforming to that previously set by their Catholic predecessors. Comprising wealthy merchants who were well accustomed to the traditional policies pursued by the previous regime, the Protestant Consulates aimed at a continuation and possible enhancement of basically the same policies, and in some areas they even succeeded where their

Catholic predecessors had failed *31.

In their struggle for survival, Lyon's Calvinist rulers were greatly undermined by the city's dramatic change of economic fortune, namely the rocketing inflation caused by shortages in supplies combined with a drastic drop in fiscal revenues following the transfer of the international fairs to Chalon. It is against this background that Calvinist insecurity is put into relief, as amply manifested in the cautious tax policies of the Consulate in the period 1562-63. Taxation expanded to include the local and foreign merchant community but, also, due to its minimal results, the master craftsmen. Lyon's artisans and 'menu peuple' were left largely unaffected. The Calvinist authorities could not afford another Grande Rebeayne [pp. 487-488].

So far we have dealt with Calvinist attempts to alter the political landscape of the cities in order to secure a permanent foothold in the urban communities. In all above mentioned cases, the Protestant pretenders to power came face to face with the stumbling block of generally hostile administrative institutions and, indirectly, with the crown. In the remaining part of this section we shall concentrate on the examination of the ways that a more direct relationship between city and crown predetermined the outcome of the Protestant drive for supremacy.

For this purpose we have selected two cities largely gained by Calvinism; it is through these two examples that we shall be able to fully appreciate the steady erosion of the Protestant edifice by the royal government and, on the other hand, the dramatic contradiction befalling the Calvinist urban oligarchies.

Before the entire country plunged into the chaos of the religious wars, Protestants who ruled French cities were men of conflicting loyalties: They had to decide whether to serve their own principles and defy the king or, on the contrary, compromise their beliefs and safeguard urban autonomy vis - a - vis the royal government.

From 1561 to 1563 the city of Montpellier experienced a period of Calvinist supremacy as the new faith had managed to obtain broad popular support and , more importantly, disciples in the highest civic offices: all six consuls and the Council of the twenty-four which assisted them were Calvinists or sympathisers. Their religious persuasion in combination with a profound feeling of civic responsibility towards the 'republic' of Montpellier shaped their stand towards the royal authority ^{*32}.

Initially, the new masters of the city turned their attention to the city of Toulouse, Montpellier's traditional arch-rival. Following an abortive attempt by Toulouse's Protestant minority to gain control of the city, Montpellier's enemy became a bastion of militant Catholicism. It was the Parlement of Toulouse, regional representative of royal authority, whose repressive policies posed a major threat not only to the faith of Montpellier's masters but to the autonomy of the city as well ^{*33}.

In a series of direct confrontations with the king, as in March 1561, when the royal representatives ordered the demolition of the city's walls, May 1562, when the consuls began assembling troops in order to resist an approaching royal

garrison and, finally, in November 1562 when, following the assembly of Nîmes, the decision to create a Huguenot state in the Languedoc came to the fore, the oligarchy of Montpellier exhibited a stand of uncomfortable obedience to the king. To Jouanna, the reasons lay in the overall relationship between the king and an urban community whose autonomy and prosperity were guaranteed solely by him.

The Calvinist masters of Montpellier had no intention of proceeding to an open rupture with the king. On the other hand, they zealously defended their status as a self-governed urban community. They considered the king as an arbitrator in intra-communal affairs and not as an absolute master with the right to intervene in urban matters. Thus, the oligarchy of Montpellier was unanimous in its stand when urban privileges and liberties were threatened by the royal authority. Only, their unity and cohesion evaporated when they were called to decide on the political and social measures they should adopt in order to withstand Catholic pressure [pp. 152-154] ^{*34}.

La Rochelle, a medium-sized commercial town and a citadel of Protestantism on the western coast of the kingdom is our second test-case of the intersection of the fortunes of urban Calvinist movements with national politics. In the 1560s the majority of the town's population had converted to Protestantism and La Rochelle was to maintain a high profile in the French Huguenot camp till its destruction by Richelieu's troops in 1628 ^{*35}.

The decade of the 1560s was a landmark in the history of

the French Protestant movement. Two decades of gradual spread amidst an atmosphere of religious confusion and individualist heretical tendencies had been sealed by the emergence of organised Calvinist churches throughout the country in the late 1550s. It was now that the French Protestants came to face an increasingly hostile environment. In 1562, the massacre of the Protestants at Vassy and the subsequent religious war quickly presented the Calvinist camp with the urgent need for a nationwide political and military organisation. An obvious paradox in La Rochelle's case is precisely its refusal to join in the ranks of the insurgent Huguenots at a time when unity and solidarity were most urgently needed. It was only in 1568 that the town agreed to align itself with Conde' and emerge as a defiant stronghold of heresy against the royal authority [pp.170-172].

Judith Meyer maintains that this belated adherence of La Rochelle to the Huguenot alliance cannot be interpreted solely on the grounds of the indisputable fear that the town's magistrates had of an approaching royal garrison. The causes of the town's reluctance to pursue a policy of open dissent to the crown must be traced back in its special relationship with the king. ' Two related themes are clearly present in La Rochelle's history: a steady accumulation of liberties, franchises and privileges, and a careful watchfulness in maintaining them. By the sixteenth century the effect of these developments was clear - the creation of an independent city which prized its freedoms' [p. 174].

The town's long history of political emancipation to a status comparable to the 'Freistädte' of Germany was abruptly interrupted by royal intervention at the beginning of the sixteenth century. In 1535 the king suppressed the town's municipal government and replaced it with a smaller 'corps de ville' under the leadership of a lifetime mayor exclusively selected by him. In addition, during the 1540s François I and Henri II extended the 'gabelle' tax to cover the whole of western France, a move that was a serious blow to the city's autonomy over fiscal affairs [pp. 177-178].

Against the damaging royal policies the authorities of La Rochelle tried to maintain a conciliatory stand, still without compromising the urban liberties and franchises. Thus, it became evident that, in the 1560s, the town was not yet ready to proceed to an open break-up with the crown. However, in 1568, with a religious war already behind them and the royal decision to install an armed garrison in the town emerging as a direct threat to urban autonomy and confessional choice, La Rochelle's magistrates were forced to revolt against their king as it had become clear that 'continuous loyalty would mean religious and political annihilation' [pp. 179-180].

Thus, in times of extreme difficulties for the national Huguenot movement, the Calvinist oligarchs of La Rochelle clearly considered the preservation of urban independence as their top priority; their belated adherence to the Huguenot camp was a move imposed on them and Judith Meyer is correct when pinpointing the obvious parallel between the case of La Rochelle

and that of the German Imperial Cities. They both attest to the inherent weakness of the urban front against the king and, with reference to our discussion, the importance of municipal independence in the evolution of Protestantism in the European urban centres [pp. 181-182].

To sum up our discussion, the bulk of current research on the evolution of the French Protestant movement from the late 1520s to the late 1560s points to a fundamental inability on the part of the dissenters to reverse radically the urban political scene in their favour and, equally, present a unified and solid nationwide opposition to the Catholic crown. At a secondary level, it also appears that the fate of the French urban Reformation was inextricably linked to that of the French cities as self-governed communes; as we have already stated in Chapter 2, urban dissent against royal authority was condemned to fail. Furthermore, by acquiring a religious dimension it provided the monarchy with a major justification for its expansionist policies. The political history of early modern French cities was sealed with the outbreak of the religious wars; so was the fate of the French urban Reformation *36.

Section 4: Calvinism and the urban social groups

As in Germany, Protestantism drew adherents from the entire fabric of French urban society; only this appeal was a disproportionate one, varying from group to group but also, within the various ranks internal to particular social or

professional groups. Approaching the French urban communities as articulate socio-political, economic and cultural systems, the most viable method for the purposes of the social historian is to examine the ways that the socio-political, economic and cultural situation of the recipients of the Protestant message influenced their stand towards the Reformation.

Class relationships and, generally speaking, what we have termed hierarchical relationships between the various social groups need to be thoroughly examined as a determining factor in the shaping of their response to Protestantism. At the mental/cultural level, the above-mentioned approach needs to be enriched with a study of the ways that the cultural and mental differentiations inherent in French urban societies also predetermined the adherence of the various social groups to the Calvinist camp.

However, speaking of sixteenth-century French urban communities, it has to be stressed that it would be too short-sighted to treat them in isolation from national political realities. As already noted, considerable fractions of the urban elites had developed a particular 'worldview' directly referring to their status as state officials; thus, the response of this particular stratum to the Protestant appeal was equally conditioned by factors external to the urban microcosm. Furthermore, events taking place on a national scale, namely the outbreak of the religious wars and the intensification of royal repression had a dramatic impact on the social composition of the French urban Protestant movements.

The sources of information currently available to historians bear witness to this **politicization** of the Reformation crisis, with their obvious bias in favour of either side, their tendency of over-exaggeration and, occasionally, their totally unreligious motives ^{*37}. In their bulk, they mainly refer to the period 1560s-1570s, the era of intensification of persecution and the religious wars. As such, the documents on Protestant communities drawn by the Catholic side are mainly persecution lists, judicial records, inquisitorial records, Parlements' reports, fiscal documents ,etc. The other camp is represented by lists of people attending Calvinist preaching in towns under Huguenot control, petitions to the king or Parlements, lists of councillors and other officials of the years of Protestant domination, ecclesiastical records and baptismal registers.

This section will be devoted to the examination of the social composition of French urban Protestant movements as well as an attempt to explain why specific social groups became totally identified with the Calvinist 'spirit' whereas others remained silent, passive sympathisers or, indeed, fervent opponents. For the sake of clarity we shall proceed with the presentation of specific urban Protestant movements as examined by current historians and, then, with a discussion of historical works that sought to generalise on the nature and social composition of French urban Protestant movements on a national, or regional scale.

R. Gascon's study on Lyon offers ample information on the social composition of the city's Calvinist minority and, equally,

on its ability to withstand Catholic pressure and maintain the predominance it had suddenly gained in 1562 ^{*38}. What initially strikes the observer is the fundamental weakness of Lyon's Calvinists to overcome their minority status; throughout the 1560s they rarely passed the 4,000 mark in a city of an estimated 80,000 inhabitants. The enormous number of 25,000 that appeared in August 1563 must be attributed to the international fairs held in the city during that period; the fact that by Christmas of the same year the Protestant population had fallen back to 4,000 shows that foreign visitors must have been included in the 25,000 counted Protestants in 1563 [pp. 475, 517].

A second observation of major importance is the geographic distribution of Lyon's Protestants. Bearing in mind the compartmentalization of early modern city into different 'quartiers' , hierarchically arranged according to their role in urban administration and economy and, also, the social categories that inhabited them, one can again detect from Gascon's analysis the failure of Protestantism to acquire a broad social basis. Thus, the quarters of the 'grands marchands' , the foreign merchant-bankers, the ecclesiastical prelates and members of the legal professions appear to have remained solidly Catholic with a few notable exceptions. On the contrary, artisan quarters were true fermentation spots for Protestantism; within the artisan world, it was the well-to-do artisans who, together with the lesser merchants provided the rank and file of the Calvinist camp. The involvement of numerous

middling merchants provided Lyon's Calvinists with the political connections necessary to their bid for power; indeed, Gascon presents the generally moderate stand of Lyon's Catholic Consulate towards the Calvinists as an expression of solidarity to Protestant colleagues [pp. 476-477]. Nevertheless, for all their apparent strength within Lyon's most powerful professional communities - the merchants and the artisans, the Calvinists failed to consolidate themselves as a dominant group, even when they were given the chance to do so. Their failure was essentially due to the social composition of the movement and, on the other hand, to the overall political and economic situation of Lyon during the civil wars.

With reference to the Calvinist social composition, the almost total lack of recruits from the 'menu peuple' meant that Calvinism was acquiring a 'middle-class' character, having failed to attract the two extremes in Lyon's hierarchical order - the 'grandes familles' and 'officiers' on the one hand, and the petty folk on the other. This proved to be disastrous in the years 1562-3, when the ruling merchant oligarchy was identified with Calvinism and the disillusioned lower orders fell victim to clerical demagoguery and massively remained loyal to the Catholic camp *39.

At the economic and political level, for reasons already discussed when referring to the Calvinist 'municipal revolution' of 1562-3, the ruling Calvinist merchant oligarchy failed to satisfy the socio-economic demands of the artisans and the petty folk and subsequently alienated itself from the basis of the

movement. As Gascon puts it, 'the Reformation proved to be profoundly conservative in social terms' and thus, the Calvinist spirit failed to bring cohesion and solidarity to the mosaic of social groups that constituted the Protestant movement of the city. Lyon's reformed community was certainly 'a reflexion of Lyon's society' [pp. 516-519]; but, being a reflexion of the urban community it carried in itself the seeds of inner division and socio-economic rivalries that Calvinism failed to obscure in the eyes of the interested parties. The very fact that Lyon's Calvinist minority was quickly and bitterly divided points out that the various social groups constituting the urban Protestant movement had adhered to the Reformation cause stimulated by their own needs and aspirations, their own perception of 'reform' and 'Reformation'; and, ultimately, these various - and usually contradictory - views of the Reformation proved to be quite incompatible with each other.

This is amply demonstrated by Natalie Davis' pioneering attempt to place Protestantism within a broader social context, with a view to clarifying the degree of the success of Protestantism to foster a new kind of common urban mentality over and despite the divisions inherent in urban societies. Her 'massive case for the examination of the interrelations between "social forces" and the Reformation in the city', Lyon's printing community attests to the failure of Protestantism to overcome socio-economic antagonisms even in the interior of a single professional group ^{*40}. Calvinism had brought together master-printers and printers-journeymen despite their

long-standing antagonism; only this peaceful coexistence and collaboration against the common enemy had faded away by 1565, when the disillusioned printers-journeymen returned to the Catholic church whereas publishers and master-printers remained in their majority Protestant [p. 49].

What primarily constitutes the novelty in N. Z. Davis' approach is her stress on the social and cultural realities which, rather than the economic and political ones, conditioned the response of each social group to the Protestant appeal; namely, professional status, level of skill and educational background. In other words, Davis identifies Calvinism with those groups of Lyon's society that were characterised by advanced professional skills, a high degree of literacy and self-confidence. Ranging from entrepreneurs, merchant-publishers and attorneys to printers-journeymen, Davis' Protestant community appears to have been a social and professional *avant-garde* in comparison to the professional groups and social strata that remained Catholic *41.

The same emphasis on the socio-cultural rather than the socio-economic background of the adherence of particular social groups to the Calvinist camp characterizes P. Benedict's meticulous statistical analysis of the Protestant community of Rouen *42. His juxtaposition of available Protestant lists with the contours of the broader society of Rouen shows that the representation of certain groups was disproportionate to their importance within the urban community. First of all, the office-holders were proportionately underrepresented in the

Huguenot camp, something that leads Benedict to conclude that the dominant classes of Rouen were reluctant to join in the Protestant adventure and jeopardize their fortune and position. Similarly, in the mercantile world, it was not the wealthiest merchants who were drawn into the Calvinist movement, but, mainly people coming from the fringes of the elite of international trade. As for the artisans, Benedict underlines the heavy engagement of the printers, goldsmiths, painters and some small trades in contrast to the provisioning trades that had remained Catholic in their majority. Finally, there was a notable absence of semi-rural groups and day-labourers, something that, to Benedict, was a general phenomenon in the French Protestant movement *43.

Comparing the available documentation on the membership of Rouen's reformed Church with that of the Catholic confraternity of the Holy Sacrament Benedict finally concludes that, firstly, traditional Catholics tended to come disproportionately from the provisioning trades and the very poor levels of society such as domestic servants and streetsweepers; however, there was also a Catholic majority in the clothworkers and lawyers. Secondly, Protestants were more likely to be recruited from the ranks of the artisanal elite - that is, trades with a higher degree of literacy and more challenging professional tasks, and, in the merchant community, from the second ranking wealthy families. Thirdly, differences in confessional choice among various occupational groups reveal the prudence of high-ranking citizens such as the members of

sovereign courts and the wealthiest of merchants , but were not reflexions of internal factional rivalries as, for instance, three out of the six ruling 'conseillers-échevins' for the years 1559-62 were known Protestants [p. 90].

The theoretical a priori that the Protestant ethos was particularly attractive to the socially mobile, professionally and culturally advanced groups of the urban communities is further elaborated and, one would argue, implemented to the extreme in Le Roy Ladurie's analysis of the impact of the Reformation on the society of Montpellier ^{*44}. Ladurie's sociology of the town's Protestant movement is based on the 'roll of those present in the Calvinist assemblies', a fiscal document drawn by the Catholic authorities in November 1560, listing 817 names and 561 professions of alleged Huguenots. Ladurie's statistics show 387 artisans and shopkeepers, 132 of whom were textile workers with the woolcarders in a position of indisputable preponderance. However, the rule had it that the artisans provided the rank and file of the Reformed camps and Montpellier proves no exception. The Huguenot leadership was drawn from the ranks of the petty bourgeoisie and the bourgeois intelligentsia; clerks, advocates, sollicitors, registrars. What is of special interest to us here is the large representation of learned professions (15 % of all Huguenots with known professions) in the Reformed camp which, according to Ladurie, is clearly an overrepresentation in comparison to their actual share in the total population of the city [pp. 158-9].

It is from this statistical reality that stems Ladurie's

socio-cultural interpretation of the urban Reformation as an exclusively urban event, product of the aspirations and needs of the most advanced groups of the urban community. When it comes to the numerous peasants and agricultural labourers residing in the town, Ladurie's depiction is that of a backward-looking, ideologically and socially rigid world, the socio-cultural backwater of the town that remained unaffected by the Protestant message. As the manifestation of the newly-emerging artisan and bourgeois worldview, Protestantism considerably deepened the inherent socio-cultural division between the urban and the rural communities of Montpellier; referring *de facto* to those well-educated, self-confident professionally and upwards moving socially, Protestantism simply could not get through to the peasant masses, politically and socially excluded from the urban community and, for that matter, culturally and ideologically idle: 'in the same town, the same community, there was a complete divorce between the agricultural element on the one hand and the artisan, intellectual and bourgeois elements on the other ... From a social point of view, the Reformation remained circumscribed to the urban and artisan classes from which it sprang. It did not migrate and did not spill over into the peasant masses, who remained steadfast in their Catholic beliefs' [pp. 160-161].

By evaluating the response of various urban social groups to the Protestant appeal on the grounds of their differing 'worldviews', mental and cultural microcosms, Ladurie carries N. Z. Davis' thesis to the extreme. His theory is closer to Max

Weber's thesis on the affinity of the Protestant ethos with the mentality of a cultural and professional elite of middle-class origin, than to historical reality itself. His freezing of the historical evolution of Montpellier's Protestant movement at a certain phase and date - 1560 - leads him to neglect other forms of division **within** the Protestant camp, divisions that can barely be explained in terms of professional skills and particular group mentality ***45**.

The inner divisions that marred the attempts of Montpellier's Protestants to attain total supremacy over the urban community were clearly of a socio-economic and political nature. A. Jouanna highlights two main points of friction, engaging rival groups and rival conceptions of the Reformation ***46**. The first major division of the Huguenot camp took place within the social elite, in the form of a fierce struggle for the control of the Consulate. The traditional merchant majority was now receding under the attack of the judiciary; till 1560, the combined forces of merchants and bourgeois - ex-merchants turned rentiers - were still able to maintain a majority status. Nevertheless, the judiciary were rapidly gaining ground , greatly aided by the presence of two prestigious sovereign courts in the city, the 'Cours des Aides' and the 'Chambre des Comptes' , a fact that contributed to the gradual transformation of Montpellier from a mercantile to an administrative centre. Thus, during the Protestant domination, the merchant and bourgeois camp struggled to remain a powerful lobby in the General Council and the Consistory, though in vain, as their rivals had by then

acquired fame as specialists in civic administration. The Catholic restoration in 1564 brought the final victory to the judiciary, by imposing them as professional administrators of the city [pp. 155-6].

Second and more far-reaching rupture within the Protestants of Montpellier occurred between the city's Huguenot notables and the lower citizen ranks, the militant wing of the movement. This hostility of militant Calvinists towards the men of the Robe was manifested in the replacement of the ceremonial bonnets of the magistrates with simpler, 'lay ones'. The pretext was that the old hats resembled those worn by the ecclesiastics but the contemporary writer Jean Philippi implies in his Histoire des Troubles en Languedoc that behind that, there lay a growing hostility of the lower social orders against the 'robins'. The feud between the leaders and the members of the Huguenot camp focused on the orientations and tactics of the movement vis - a - vis Catholicism but, also, the imposition of a new order in the city. The attitude of the reformed 'robins' was judged too lukewarm by the militant wing. The wave of iconoclastic riots, particularly violent in Montpellier and its hinterland in 1561 alerted ruling Protestants who joined forces with their Catholic colleagues in order to forestall widespread revolt. The militant Calvinists accused their ruling brothers of treason and in July 1562 some of the leading radicals were forced to flee Montpellier, avoiding their proscription by the Consistory [pp. 156-7].

The conclusions of Jouanna and Ladurie, when juxtaposed,

enable us to have a deeper understanding of the historical evolution of Montpellier's Protestant movement and, in fact, of the French urban Protestant movements on a national scale: Protestantism, especially in its more articulate expression, Calvinism, provided a powerful stimulant to those groups of the urban societies that had started to differentiate themselves from the rest of the urban commune. Indeed, Calvinism, as a dominant ideology, could lead to 'the creation of a new kind of man with a remodelled personality' ^{*47}. Only it did not prove to be that strong as an ideology of social cohesion. The socio-economic and cultural divisions of French urban communities, further aggravated by the emergence of Protestantism, expressed themselves even within Protestant ranks; having failed to acquire a common stand towards their contemporary realities, Montpellier's Protestants were ultimately condemned to fail.

The remaining case studies of this section tend to underline this fundamental weakness of French Protestantism. Apart from providing us with valuable information concerning the social composition of urban Protestant minorities, they mainly attest to the **defensive** nature of the French Protestant movement - namely the fluctuation of the Protestant numbers and the shift in their social composition resulting from royal oppression and the crisis of the civil wars.

Joan Davies' study of the interrelation between the social profile of the Protestant movement and the intensification of persecution in Toulouse also reveals another dimension of the

tragic fortune of France's urban Protestants, namely the hopeless situation that senior Huguenot figures found themselves in once civil war swept the country *48.

According to a Parlement report of 1561, the Protestant population of Toulouse was an estimated 4,000, clearly a minority in a city of 40,000 inhabitants. Following the Protestant failure to take over control of the city in May 1562, Huguenot members considerably decreased under a state of severe persecution. The impact of Catholic oppression on the indigenous Protestant community was reflected in a rapid shift in its social composition, though not the one to be usually expected: the declining revenues from taxes and fines against the Huguenots apparently point to the withdrawal of wealthy elements from the Huguenot camp; still, Davies' investigation reveals quite the opposite. In a list of 989 named Huguenots for the period 1562-1572, it was the liberal professions - that is officeholders, lawyers, university staff, students, medics and the clergy that dominated; 405 of their lot, with 335 artisans, 150 merchants, 48 servants, 32 seigneurs and 19 military. This contrasts with the original composition of Toulouse's Protestant community which, according to Davies, had been dominated by the artisans, though only with a fractionary majority [p. 37].

Davies explains this peculiarity of Toulouse by formulating various hypotheses: the reduction in the numbers of artisans and the 'menu peuple' in general may be ascribed to their massive immigration - something amply demonstrated in the Livre des Habitants of Geneva for the years 1547-60 and 1572-74 - or, to

their natural extinction through executions. This latter hypothesis is presumably based on Calvinist martyrology, especially the book of Jean Crespin, Actiones et momimenta martyrum - Histoire des martyrs persecutez et mis a mort pur la verite de l' Evangile. depuis le temps des Apostres jusques a présent (later edition, 1619). Still, existing statistics of persecution tend to contradict Davies' claim *49.

It is more likely that the drop in artisan numbers was due to their migration abroad. This is reinforced by the very fact that bourgeois and officeholders appeared to have remained a considerable group, obviously because of their inability to flee to exile. Members of the upper strata of Toulouse's society had - unlike the artisans - everything to lose with their departure; thus, many of them decided to stay and maintain a low profile or, even, dynamically resist oppression *50. Still, the intensification of repression brought forth a shift even within the now dominant Huguenot liberal professions: Thus, university students ceased to be the dominant group, either because of their highly volatile nature as converts or simply because they had stopped attending courses at a fervently Catholic university. In the 1560s onwards, it was the lawyers and the officeholders that dominated the Huguenot liberal professions [p. 42].

An identical shift from a popular, artisan-based to a movement of the notables is detected by Denis Richet in the Parisian Protestant community for the period 1557-62 *51. It was during that period that members of the urban elites massively adhered to Calvinism, something manifested in the

execution lists which started including notables from 1559 onwards. Basing his investigation on the Livre des habitants of Geneva, Richet proceeds with a qualitative analysis of the social composition of Parisian Protestants. Typically of the French urban Reformation, Richet detects an overrepresentation of artisans, merchant-booksellers and goldsmiths in the Geneva lists of Parisian refugees.

Still, Parisian Protestantism was able to gain ground in those strata of the urban elites that would enable it to withstand royal pressure. Unlike Lyon, the Parisian 'grands marchands' and big financiers were affected by Protestant ideas. A contemporary writer, Regnier de la Planche, mentions several highly respectable figures from his circle who had either openly adhered to the Calvinist cause or were largely sympathetic to it. More importantly, Protestant infiltration of the state and municipal mechanism had won recruits like the 'prévôt des marchands', Nicolas Perrot, and one of the four 'échevins', Guillaume de Courlay, in 1556. From 1558 to 1561, Richet detects two Huguenot 'echevins' and three 'quarteniers' [p. 767]. Still, although 'officier' adherence to the Gospel must be taken for granted, the overall percentage of 'conseillers' and 'robins' in the Parisian Huguenot community is far from being estimated due to the unreliability of the sources ^{*52}.

The profound intersection of the fate of Protestantism with urban socio-economic and political antagonisms is vividly demonstrated by Richet's examination of the sociology of St. Bartholomew's victims, a quite difficult task, given the tendency

to mention only the major figures or, even, not to mention the status of the victims at all. Thus, from the available documentation one notices an underrepresentation of artisans and an overrepresentation of notables, merchants and 'officiers'. To Richet, it is easy to explain the prevalence of some crafts and professions on the grounds of social hatred or pure common crime (murder and robbery).

The worst affected professions were those involving metal processing, leather working, and the book trade. The unpopularity of Protestant booksellers is to be expected; but that of leather and metal workers or traders is less so. They may have suffered because popular opinion was still affected by semi-pagan superstitions and medieval prejudices [pp. 774-775].

A viable explanation of the existence of 'privileged' categories of victims is based on the examination of social antagonisms preceding the civil wars. Such was, according to Richet, the case of the rivalry between the officials of the sovereign courts and the 'corps' of the judicial clerks, a socially disappointed group due to its exclusion from Parisian bourgeoisie and the subsequent lack of honours and career opportunities [p. 775]. Social antagonism and skilful manipulation of the crowd combined with the intensification of royal repression to drastically reduce the numbers of influential citizens among the Huguenot minority. St. Bartholomew's massacre further accelerated the massive return to Catholicism [pp. 776-777].

Caen, with a Protestant community occupying the one-quarter to one-third of a population of approximately 25,000

is another major source of information concerning the sociology and evolution of the urban Protestant movements, thanks to the survival of a full set of Calvinist baptismal records beginning in 1561-63 and then covering intermittently the years 1568-70, 1572-77, and 1585-89. Maryelise Suffern Lamet's study, based on a computerised analysis of the register from 1561 to 1568 dealing with 9,500 individuals, will serve as our guide ^{*53}.

According to Lamet, the Protestant community of Caen seems to have been dramatically increasing throughout the early sixties, reaching an estimated total of 12,000 in 1564, despite the religious wars; the growth rate of the indigenous Protestant population was maintained, favoured by the Edict of St. Germain-en-Lay; in 1571 the estimated Protestant population was an impressive 6,400 and there is evidence that it rose again before St. Bartholomew's massacre. The geographic distribution of Caen's Protestants points to their limited success in gaining ground in the poorer industrial and agricultural quarters of the city; indeed, it appears that the Protestants were mainly strong in the wealthiest and most important quarters of Caen [pp. 39-41]. Nevertheless, Lamet warns us against identifying Protestantism with a socio-economic and cultural polarization within Caen's community, by maintaining that Protestantism recruited from all quarters and groups of the city, even from the city's hinterland.

As for the occupational status of Caen's Protestant community, Lamet's depiction follows the pattern previously established in this section with two notable exceptions: the

considerable representation of the provisioning trades and especially the butchers, something that sharply contrasts with other urban communities, and the almost total absence of tanners despite the predominance of leather trades in the city's artisan community [pp. 42-47].

One aspect of particular importance that, this time, falls within the broad situation of urban Protestant movements previously outlined, was the heavy dependence of Caen's Protestant community upon converts in the royal and municipal offices. Starting from the governor of the province, prince of Sedan and Duke of Brouillon, Caen's Huguenots had established a powerful political lobby within the very mechanism that was supposed to bring forth their destruction. From the mid 1550s to the late 1560s, there was a substantial Huguenot majority in both the 'conseillers' and the 'echevins' of the city. However, the death of the influential 'Lieutenant-General' in 1568 initiated a period of declining fortunes for Caen's Protestants. His successor, a fervent Catholic and, especially, the end of the period of toleration on the part of the crown in the early 1570s proved to be too difficult a match for Caen's powerful Protestant community [pp. 48-49].

Several French historians have attempted to establish regional patterns for the social composition of Protestantism, as the basis for generalisations about the urban Protestant movement in France. Despite obvious difficulties and pitfalls, these studies provide valuable information which not only largely confirms the analyses of Protestant communities

already mentioned, but which also underlines the profound dependence of the fate of Protestantism on national events. These regional studies highlight the political dimension of French Protestantism (as stressed above, in section 3).

Marc Vénard's study of Protestantism in the Comtat Venaissin attributes the striking difference between the numbers of Protestants in the north and south-east to the intensification of repression in the south, where authorities had already suspected close connections with the Waldensian heresy^{*54}.

Vénard's investigation stresses the predominantly urban character of the regional Protestant movement, particularly strong in places like Avignon, Carpentras and Valréas, and notoriously weak in the rural countryside. This urban character is also revealed by the fact that the local Protestant communities evolved irrespective of the attitude of local seigneurs whereas, on the other hand, Protestant lords were largely unsuccessful in precipitating a massive conversion of their rural subjects [pp. 291-292]. As for the engagement of various social groups in the Reformed cause, Vénard presents the notaries as the principal crusaders, closely followed by apothecaries, barbers and surgeons - that is, the liberal professions [pp. 292-293] ^{*55}.

Janine Garrisson has produced a massive amount of information on the social composition of the occitan Protestant camp; still, the work's all-embracing scope renders it unhelpful on the causation of the urban Reformation in the region ^{*56}.

Garrisson's sociological account of the Protestants of the

south is based on a total of 2,733 Protestants , which, for all its impressive size, represents only a tiny fraction of an estimated Protestant population of 1,000,000 to 1,500,000 in the south of France between 1560 and 1572 *⁵⁷. Amongst the listed Protestants, the representation of ex-members of the Catholic clergy amounted to 2,5 %, percentage that, to Garrisson, was considerably lower than their actual participation in the Calvinist movement. It was mainly the priests and vicars that adhered to the Reformation, whereas the monastic orders appear to have been little affected. High-ranking ecclesiastical prelates like canons and bishops also appear in the list and their adherence to the Protestant camp must have acquired threatening proportions considering the fact that six French bishops were ordered by the Inquisition to present themselves at the Holy See in order to absolve themselves of the suspected stigma of heresy. In addition, a series of manifestly angry proclamations by the Parlement of Bordeaux for the period 1554-59 attest to the unwillingness of numerous bishops to proceed with persecuting emerging heretical cells [pp. 17, 21-22].

The participation of royal officials in the region was also considerably higher than their actual share in the local society, reaching an estimated 6,2 % of the listed Huguenots: There were magistrates, 'conseillers' , 'parlementaires' , and members of the lower judiciary. The striking predominance of members of the 'présidiaux' (presidial courts) is interpreted by Garrisson in terms of their indignation against inconsistencies in the royal policy affecting the number of offices but, primarily, their

fervent opposition to the presence of a Parlement that intended to devalue and finally diminish the 'sièges présidiales' as autonomous jurisdiction bodies [pp. 29-30].

As for the legal professions, with the exception of Valence, all urban centres of the examined region experienced a massive adherence of advocates to the Huguenot camp. Their heavy involvement in the Calvinist cause is interpreted by Garrisson only on the grounds of their high cultural level, an explanation that pays tribute to the long-standing Protestant pride in education but is of little help to the social historian, especially when the author finds no concrete social, economic or political reasons for their massive adherence [pp. 30-31].

When it comes to municipal officials and administrators, the image of the Midi presented by Garrisson largely contradicts the widespread assumption that the 'consuls' and 'jurats' of the French urban centres were fervent protagonists in the Reformed movements; what appears to be a fact is that their adherence to the Calvinist cause was of fundamental importance on purely political grounds. As already stated in section 3, Calvinist infiltration of the urban administrative mechanism was a necessary precondition for the successful dissemination of the Reformation but, equally, for its institutional implementation when the Protestants felt strong enough to assume total control of their cities.

In addition, Garrisson rightly reminds us of the long-standing rivalry between the urban oligarchies and the ecclesiastical body when pointing out that many oligarchies

were favourably predisposed to reform even as suggested by Calvinism, because this suited their plans to create a strictly controlled Church, with its spiritual authority and responsibilities defined by statute. This traditional conception of the function and role of the Church went hand in hand with the - equally traditional - fear of popular rebellion. Thus, the Protestant-dominated city authorities of the region strove to control their local movements especially in their early period (1559-1561), by trying to regulate iconoclastic violence. It is in the examination of the response of the 'consuls' to the Calvinist appeal that Garrisson's approach is enriched with sociopolitical considerations: by stressing that numerous converted consulates failed to persuade the mass of their urban subjects to follow them, Garrisson acknowledges the conditioning of the urban Reformation process by socio-political divisions [pp. 31-33].

The world of the officers of the long and the short Robe is impressively represented in the list of the 2,733 southern Huguenots, occupying an estimated one-tenth of the total. A diversified lot, comprising notaries, procurators and solicitors representing the long Robe, and royal sergeants representing the short, they were massively present in the Calvinist minorities of Bordeaux, Toulouse, Beziers and Nimes, cities with extensive judicial and administrative communities. Their adherence to the Reformed camp cannot be explained one-dimensionally, as they were greatly differentiated between themselves on the grounds of status and opportunities of social ascendancy. What nevertheless united them in their positive response to

Protestantism was the fact that they spoke French and were able to read and appreciate Reformed tracts as well as to hear itinerant Protestant preachers [pp. 33-35].

All ranks of the teaching professions and especially the regents and tutors of the various urban colleges appear to figure low in the lists of Protestants drawn in the region between 1564 and 1572. This, however, according to Garrisson, attests to the vigilance of the Catholic authorities who were quick to grasp the potential enormous danger that a Protestant-dominated education posed to the Catholic faith and their regimes; in fact, the surviving tracts from the 1520s-1550s depict the urban academic intelligentsia as 'the mortal enemy of Roman orthodoxy'.

What is remarkable with reference to the cultural diffusion of Protestantism in the South of France is the low representation of printers' journeymen in the listed group; the printers adhered massively to the Reformation in isolated cases, as for example in Toulouse where twenty-four printers were arrested between 1562 and 1574, but these cases are treated by Garrisson as exceptional. The low representation of the printers' journeymen is attributed by Garrisson to the lack of printing installations and materials in the south which, as well known, was the region of the language of oc.

The very fact that despite the lack of printing presses the south of the kingdom became a bastion of Protestantism attests mainly to two realities: the obvious fragility of the ready-made equation of printing and Reformation and, secondly, other,

non-printed ways of diffusion of the Protestant message. Garrison's own investigation leads her to conclude that Calvinism was also disseminated orally, affecting the lower cultural groups and even illiterate people: 'the trials for heresy show how theological controversies were as familiar to the people as are discussions on rugby teams today' [pp. 35-39] *58.

The impressive participation of merchants in the Huguenot camp of the south is attributed by Garrison to the existence of numerous commercial centres of relative or major international importance: Toulouse, Beziers, Montpellier, Vienne and Valence, all had thriving merchant communities which, for all their inner socio-economic differentiations responded positively to the Calvinist message. [pp. 39-41]

When it comes to examining the impressive artisan involvement, Garrison's conclusions verify the 'stereotype' of artisan adherent previously suggested by N. Z. Davis and others: it was mainly the petty bourgeoisie of the artisan groups that was more susceptible to conversion, with only exceptions the cases of Guyenne and Toulouse. Generally speaking, in urban centres with a high proportion of artisan population like Bordeaux and Toulouse, Garrison maintains that the majority of artisans tended to remain loyal to Catholicism, due to the overall social and religious conformism that characterised these societies and the close contact with the numerous and usually efficient secular priests and preachers *59. In these cities, the 'gens mecaniques' usually ended up as 'ligueurs'.

To Garrison, Protestant artisans were usually those

involved in highly demanding crafts, characterised by a spirit of novelty, enterprise and adventure, such as the 'drapiers-drapants' or 'marchands-drapiers' of Beauvais and Valence. Within the artisan and shopkeeper world, the innkeepers deserve a special mention due to their enthusiastic adherence to the Calvinist side; Garrison believes that this was mainly due to the natural openness of their working environment that, similarly to the travelling merchants, brought them into contact with a multitude of new ideas and trends. As well known from the German case, the inn had always been the ideal place where new ideas could find eager audiences and numerous recruits from all strata [pp. 44-45].

Finally, another major feature of the social geography of southern Protestantism was the very poor representation of the rural element. Garrison's investigation confirms Le Roy Ladurie's celebrated antithetical scheme 'Huguenot carder - Catholic peasant'; with the exception of Valence, whose agricultural community was anyway well-integrated in the urban community to adopt an urban 'worldview', the majority of rural communities surrounding the urban centres of the Midi remained Catholic. It was only later, during the wars of religion that agricultural labourers and peasants appeared in Huguenot lists, but this must primarily be attributed to the pressure exerted by Protestant seigneurs. [pp. 45-47].

Thus, the overall image of southern Protestantism is that of a predominantly urban phenomenon. Protestantism managed to conquer considerable fractions of the urban communities. It

appears to have managed to take further advantage of the complex network of influences and dependencies that tied together the big or middle-ranking city with its surrounding 'bourgs' and 'bourgades'. Thus, the notables and better-off artisans of the lesser urban centres followed their patrons in the big cities in their conversion to Protestantism. This points, according to Garrisson, to two main ways of diffusion of Calvinism in urban societies: a vertical one, using the traditional vertical solidarities, starting at the top of the hierarchical scale and moving downwards; this way of diffusion was widespread in the 'officiers' , 'parlémentaires' and 'conseillers' and, in the artisan world, it revealed itself in the great influence exerted by the merchant-drapers on wool carders, and other sub-specializations of the cloth trades. Secondly, there were also horizontal lines of diffusion, taking place in the interior of culturally and socially homogeneous groups, like the families of the nobility of the Robe or Toulouse's international pastel merchant community [pp. 52-56].

Section 5: The lost cause of French Protestantism.

The social composition of French urban Protestant movements as depicted in the local and regional studies discussed in the previous section attests to the fundamental incapability of French Protestantism to attain ideological

supremacy over the crumbling Catholicism even within the urban societies of the time. We have already noted that the bulk of information drawn from current research allows us to safely assume that the Reformation was never truly the cause of a single class or group of people in sixteenth-century urban communities; on the other hand, it appears that the Reformation in France did not exert an all-embracing appeal to the entire urban social fabric as suggested by Emile Leonard and numerous French historians.

Specific social categories are obviously absent from the surviving lists whereas others appear to have had only a minimal engagement in the Protestant cause. In short, contrary to what has been suggested by Moeller with reference to the German but, also, the French Reformation, French Protestantism never truly managed to associate itself with the collective aspirations of the urban community. To put it bluntly, in sixteenth-century France, there has not been any happy and fruitful marriage between Protestantism and the 'urban community' for there was no such thing as an urban community of interests, ideals and aspirations. The final section of this chapter will be devoted to a summing up of the major causes of the ultimate failure of French Protestantism to establish itself as a dynamic, nationwide majority movement. This will also serve us to fully appreciate the profound fallacy upon which the Moeller thesis was constructed with reference to the French urban Reformation.

In the introduction to this chapter, it was stated that Protestantism's attempt to oust Catholicism as the dominant

confessional form depended on its ability to fill the religious-ideological vacuum left by the crumbling Catholic faith and arm the Frenchmen with a new dynamic and coherent worldview, irrespective of their status, profession and personal education. In short, Protestantism should overcome the socio-economic, political and cultural divisions inherent in urban societies in a way that would consolidate social cohesion and avoid chaos and tumult.

The social geography of French urban Protestantism previously examined points to quite a different outcome. Indeed, as M. Greengrass puts it, 'the new religion was bound to be deeply divisive of the urban environment'. The strongholds of French urban Protestant communities, most commonly in the artisan neighbourhoods and the middling merchant and bourgeois quarters point to the particular social forces that backed the new faith. The rest of the city's quarters and the urban population largely remained indifferent or hostile to the Protestant cause. By associating itself with particular social categories, Protestantism became immediately entangled in the atmosphere of urban socio-political rivalries and cultural divisions and, subsequently, failed in its effort to emerge as an all-embracing and socially binding form of religion *60.

The course of events in sixteenth-century French history wholly contradicts Moeller's assertion of a mutually positive interaction between Protestantism and 'civic communalism'; within the French urban socio-political and cultural systems, it appears that the role of Protestantism was that of a catalyst in

a period of overall disintegration, to an extent that it rapidly led to the 'age of ideological pandemonium, of subversion not only of values but even of language', that represented the era of the religious wars *61.

Thus, with reference to the impact of Protestantism on French urban societies we may conclude that it greatly deepened their cultural, political, social and economic divisions. This can be explained if we focus our attention on the peculiarities of Protestant sociology, namely the predominance of the middling groups of 'honourables' - notaries, jurists, clerks, liberal professions, etc., and better-to-do and technically advanced artisan crafts, and the singularly low representation of the petty folk of wage-labourers, agricultural workers and other marginal social categories. Without succumbing to the charms of the acculturation thesis we may agree that, being coloured with predominantly 'bourgeois' features, the French urban Reformation not only failed to appeal to the illiterate and superstitious lesser social groups but also further deepened the cultural gap between the middle classes and the common folk *62.

More importantly, the contrasting patterns of urban Reformation ideologies and movements that we have seen emerging in the majority of our test cases reveal that Protestantism actually succumbed to the socio-economic and political divisions of the urban societies of its time; the clash between an artisan-based militant Calvinist wing and a notables-based moderate one detected in the cases of Meaux and Agen points to a polarization within the Protestant ranks that

followed the overall pattern of urban divisions. Once a possible radicalization of the urban Protestant movements became apparent through waves of iconoclastic riots and destruction of property, considerable numbers of the upper strata and especially people serving in sensitive places like the 'robins', quickly distanced themselves from the insurgent mob. Thus, what had apparently started as a unified, solid minority movement was quickly dissolved under the weight of its inner contradictions. Calvinism could not cure the French urban societies of their inner divisions and antagonisms for it could not rid itself of them *63.

The diversity of cultural universes and socio-political and economic aspirations was matched by a doctrinal diversity, which was to a large extent the continuation of the state of religious anarchy and individualistic heresy that had preceded the advent of Calvinism. Thus, at a doctrinal level, behind the laboriously constructed 'Calvinist' façade, there lay an amalgam of theological views and theories of ecclesiastical organisation. It was only under the crushing weight of events following St. Bartholomew's massacre that a strictly defined Calvinist Church emerged in France, together with the Huguenot political party. For a movement with such far-reaching pretensions, French Calvinism could not afford doctrinal diversification and endless internal quarrels, and all efforts of the consistories, national and provincial synods and, finally, of the Genevan elders concentrated on the elimination of internal doctrinal dissent *64.

A second major postulate of the Moeller thesis is that the contact of Protestantism with the urban communal ethos, as manifested especially in southern Germany, brought forth a major boost to the ideal of civic independence, of what historians have termed 'urban republicanism' towards the central government of the nation. This was the case with the 'republican Protestants' Zwingli and Bucer, both citizens of thriving autonomous urban communities, whose particular version of Protestantism greatly appealed to the societies of major urban centres, proud of their independence, wealth, and political power.

A brief look at the political philosophy of French Calvinism will not fail to produce ample evidence pointing to a fervent Huguenot republicanism, especially in the period of civil wars and the intensification of royal oppression. In the late 1560s, the Huguenot camp in France had entered a phase of profound and rapid politicization. Having failed to conquer the country in 1562, French Protestants came face to face with the Catholic crown, with a political status quo which they could not afford to tolerate. It was then as well as later in the 1570s that they were forced to proceed with the formation of a nationwide political organisation capable of withstanding royal pressure and, primarily, substituting royal government in regions under Huguenot control. It is in the examination of the Huguenot bid for political power that one can test the viability of Moeller's assumptions with reference to the proximity of urban republicanism with the Calvinist doctrine.

What we have discussed in section three of this chapter

wholly contradicts Moeller. Certainly, at an ideological-propaganda level, Moeller would have no difficulties in sustaining his thesis. As Donald Kelley puts it, the Calvinist propaganda machine projected to the inhabitants of the French cities and towns an idealised new state of affairs, a clear-cut alternative to the Catholic faith and royal centralism: 'A purified, de-ritualized and de-politicized faith; secondly, a legal order likewise purged of foreign and "tyrannical" rules and open to local autonomy; and finally, a popularly-based social organism free of litigiousness, persecution (fiscal as well as religious) and tyranny' *65.

Nevertheless, when it comes to examining the reaction of French urban authorities to the Calvinist appeal it appears that things had not turned that well for the Calvinist minority. By dint of historical hindsight, we can argue that Calvinism failed to present a viable political alternative to the French monarchy, even in the south of the kingdom where it desperately strove to form a separate state. The French monarchy may have been particularly weak in the 1560s-1570s but the southern Protestant success in creating a state against the state proved to be ephemeral *66.

With reference to the relationship between the French cities and the crown, namely the spirit of urban independence against royal control and exploitation, Calvinism's ability to control and shape urban policies was considerably smaller than that of the monarchy. We need only remind ourselves of Protestant-dominated Lyon, Montpellier and La Rochelle to

clearly detect the importance of each of the two rivals with regards to the preservation of urban autonomy. With the advent of the wars of religion, Calvinism appeared to be quite incompatible with civic independence. In sixteenth-century France, contrary to Moeller's assertions, civic autonomy and Protestantism emerged as mutually exclusive options due to the intensification of royal oppression.

Thus, when it comes to describing the nature of the French urban Protestant movement as a socio-political phenomenon we can conclude that Calvinism was always a minority movement. Within the urban communities, it was mainly the middling groups that emerged as its most fervent exponents; despite its considerable gains in the upper strata of the urban elites, Calvinism was ultimately incapable of persuading high-placed state officials and the 'grands marchands' to risk status, fortune and life by revolting against the status quo of the time, precisely because it did not and could not offer a viable alternative to the Catholic crown *67. On the other hand, its blatant failure in recruiting the urban plebeians and the broad rural masses made Calvinism a minority within the minority that constituted urban communities in sixteenth-century France; the hopeless Huguenot political revolution of the 1570s was but the manifestation of the despair of a dynamic movement which had failed to win over the masses to its cause. If Moeller's thesis has considerable difficulties in its application to the historical interpretation of the urban Reformation in Germany, it is clearly at odds with the French Protestant case.

PART THREE: THE MOELLER THESIS AND THE SOCIAL HISTORY OF THE URBAN REFORMATION

The two previous parts were devoted to a critical evaluation of the Moeller thesis and to the evolution of the social history of the urban Reformation in Germany and France in direct relation to the German historian's fundamental postulates. These concluding pages will summarise the merits and weaknesses of the Moeller thesis, and its applicability in the advanced state of research in the 1980s to the social history of the Reformation.

Without losing sight of the content of the Moeller thesis it is still possible to pinpoint a common directing line in the social historiography of the urban Reformation; and it is possible within specific limitations to suggest a new all-embracing interpretation for the social history of the Reformation.

CHAPTER FIVE: THE MOELLER THESIS REVISITED

The greatest merit of Moeller's formulations lies in his stress of the question of the **social appropriation of the Gospel** in the civic communities of Luther's time. By calling for the historians' attention to the contact of Luther's ideas with contemporary urban societies and their subsequent elaboration and development in accordance to the urban sociopolitical milieu, Moeller ridded the international historical community of a long-lasting interpretive tradition that has quite justifiably

been depicted as **romantic idealism** *1. Only it is again this point that conceals Moeller's greatest methodological limitations and interpretive weaknesses.

Once opening the path to a historical sociology of urban Reformation movements in Germany, Moeller was unable to use conceptual tools and interpretive methods alien to his original training as an ecclesiastical historian. Thus, in comparison even with preceding similar endeavours like those of Max Weber and Ernst Troeltsch, Moeller's view of the urban socio-political and cultural realities of the Reformation era is very static. Moeller himself has argued that the urban Reformation was never the work of a city council. However, his assertion that the Reformation ideas came into contact with late medieval civic communalism and contributed to its reestablishment in the urban communities is false, since the previous discussion has shown adequately enough that there has not been a single and homogeneous conception of 'civic communalism', precisely because of the differentiation of the urban audiences of the Reformation message vis - à - vis the question of the appropriation of civic power and wealth.

More accurately, at the socio-political level, the Reformation met the different aspirations of oligarchies and burghers; the former strove to establish their autocratic regime by incorporating the urban ecclesiastical institutions into the civic community, and by appropriating the Church's role as ideological leader and patron of the entire citizenry; the burghers instead were struggling for a fairer redistribution of

civic power and wealth.

'Civic communalism' as an interpretive tool becomes even more dubious when the snapshot of sixteenth-century urban realities, as they formally appear in the sources, is replaced by considerations of the underlying changes in urban structures and mentalities occurring throughout the early modern era. First of all, as already shown in Roper's Augsburg, 'community' and 'common good' as oligarchic propaganda instruments were meeting with open dissent on the part of the citizenry which used the same concepts in order to question the legitimacy of their usurpation by the urban ruling groups.

Secondly, the early modern era has been in our opinion quite accurately described as that of the transition from urban patriotism to loyalty to the state, more evident in France but, nevertheless, also existent in Germany. In Germany, the merchant oligarchies needed the safety of a national, or at least regional juridical framework that would ensure their far-stretched economic interests and transactions. Politically, even in a decentralised country like Germany, the need of royal authority and protection as the guarantor of urban welfare was vividly felt by the ruling bodies in their political considerations even if they had not yet fully transcended the phase of proud urban particularism and autonomy towards the king.

In France, the abandonment of the service of the city for that of the state on the part of the ruling elites was far more clear-cut as new generations of high civil functionaries and state bureaucrats had adopted a mentality that was emerging as

quite incompatible with traditional urban particularism, still without managing to erase it, as shown in the wars of religion, when urban autonomy violently clashed with royal power. And although it would be too risky to view sixteenth-century civic communalism as a *lettre morte*, to take it for granted that it was the unanimous ideological expression of homogeneous urban societies constitutes a total fallacy *2.

Moeller correctly depicted the nature of the original contact between Luther and the city; as Thomas Brady has shown in the case of Strasbourg, the Reformation was primarily conditioned by local realities - in Strasbourg's case, the struggle against clerical lordship, and was not merely a chain reaction provoked by the appearance of the reformer. As deriving from our discussion of recent social historiography of the German urban Reformation, the notion that 'the civic society of Reformation Germany transformed Luther's gospel according to its own lights' has by now attained a consensus of opinion among historians *3.

But Moeller entirely misses the point of his argument by failing to detect the difference between an institutional, official **Ratsreformation** and a non-institutional, illegal and unofficial **Gemeindereformation** and, also, failing to view the urban Reformation process as the product of a dialectical relationship between the reform policies of civic authorities on the one hand and popular evangelical movements on the other, something vividly depicted by Scribner in the case of Zwickau and Broadhead in the case of Augsburg *4.

What must also be noted is that this clash of differing

perceptions of 'reform' and 'Reformation' characterised even those urban regimes won over by the Zwinglian or Bucerian thought. Their inclinations were more 'republican' in comparison with the political conservatism of Lutheran oligarchies; but Lorna Abray's study of Reformation Strasbourg has stressed the manipulation of evangelical preachers by the civic oligarchs, in their drive to forestall any popular sedition, a clearly 'worldly' approach to the prospect of the Reformation that understandably exasperated Bucer. The rulers of Bucerian Strasbourg were genuinely inspired by the Reformation but they were not willing to compromise the status quo; subsequently, they viewed their preachers as 'defusion valves' for popular aspirations and demands. The same observations have led Scribner to suggest that urban preachers were the channels through which socio-political considerations shaped the original Reformation thought; their politically-minded actions, their concessions in the political game, their support of popular sedition or of oligarchic rule influenced the evolution of the urban Reformation and, equally, of the Reformation thought itself *5.

At an ideological/cultural level, by viewing the sixteenth-century urban community as unified and unanimous in its ideological aspirations and cultural needs, Moeller flatly ignored the diversity that characterised the dissemination of Reformation ideas in urban societies. By insisting primarily on one source of diffusion, the pamphlet, Moeller confined his study of urban reaction to the Reformation solely to the educated elite and thus ended up with a static and greatly idealised view of

urban socio-political and cultural realities.

Moeller's approach views the whole question of the contact of the Reformation with the urban audiences as one between a message spelled from a unique source and a unified body of recipients. Chrisman and Scribner have shown that neither was the 'Protestant message' spelled out from a single source nor was it communicated in the same way to its urban audiences. The Reformation spoke a different language to different people, otherwise it would have been secluded within the limits of the educated lay and clerical elite.

The Reformation became a movement, a social movement, because of the diversity of its dissemination in the masses. Indeed, as Scribner argues, 'if the evangelical movement became in many places a movement of social protest, this does not mean that men did not really believe the new doctrines, or fail to apprehend the new religious practice as a change in their religious life. It shows us rather that the ways in which they sought to relate their religious and secular aspects were more varied and complicated than the neat compartmentalizations "religious" and "social" imply' *6.

When approaching the German urban Reformation from a broader perspective, it becomes clear that the limitations of Moeller's scope of investigation inhibited him from fully grasping the overall conditioning of urban Reformation processes by the political framework embracing his cities, namely the princely factor in German politics of the sixteenth century. Although he correctly depicted the affinity of the political

theologies of Luther, Zwingli and Bucer with autocratic and republican regimes respectively, he somewhat overestimated the ability of the German cities, including the Imperial ones, to implement their own policy of religious and ecclesiastical reform independently of external pressure.

Brady's Turning Swiss has sufficiently underlined the limited political autonomy of Imperial Cities - including defiant Strasbourg - from princely political interests. Once the German Reformation crisis acquired a national dimension, urban Reformations gradually ceased to be exclusively 'urban' as they had to conform to a pattern of ecclesiastical reform and organisation that, recalling the case of Marburg and Hesse, did not necessarily correspond to their particular needs and aspirations. As H. C. Rublack puts it, 'urban Reformations cannot be understood as autogenously generating new ecclesiastical systems'; and that is a reality that eluded Moeller in his pioneering attempt to introduce social history in the domain of the Reformation ^{*7}.

This synopsis of our critique of Moeller's theory leads us to conclude that, in view of the progress of the social historiography of the Reformation in the 1970s and 1980s, his original formulations are of little value to serve as a basis of a modern, articulate interpretation of the complex phenomenon that constituted the urban Reformation. Having said that, we think that it is only fair to agree with Profesor Brady in his description of Bernd Moeller's study as 'one of the fundamental impulses for the "social history of the Reformation" '. For, as

already seen, the social historiography of the Reformation *post Moeller* , largely followed his original path by trying to elucidate the numerous historical questions he left unanswered or badly interpreted and, also, widen his scope of investigation as well as his methodological preferences. In the final chapter of our conclusions we shall attempt to pinpoint the new interpretive approaches and, equally, the problems that have emerged from the social historians' revitalized preoccupation with the Reformation era.

CHAPTER SIX: A NEW SOCIAL HISTORY OF THE REFORMATION?

Section 1: Current dominant interpretive trends in the social historiography of the urban Reformation

a: The German urban Reformation

The debate that was generated by The Imperial cities and the Reformation was characterized by an increasingly common awareness of the necessity of an interdisciplinary approach, a synthesis of the various scopes of investigation of the urban Reformation. Stimulated by Moeller's postulates, historians of differing methodological persuasions and schools of thought have converged on the examination of the phenomenon, realizing that its complexity by far exceeded their original scopes of investigation, as vividly shown in the case of Moeller. Thus, when

it comes to classifying the historical interpretations of the German urban Reformation it is sufficiently justifiable to pinpoint three major interpretive approaches, each of them dealing with a specific dimension of the urban Reformation. These approaches should only be viewed as functioning in close correlation, as they obviously constitute integral parts of the synthesis that is now replacing the previous state of 'solitary' investigations of the urban Reformation.

The first approach is a sociopolitical one. We shall call it **internal** as it focuses its attention on the interior of sixteenth-century urban regimes, namely the intersection of Reformation ideas with socio-political rivalries in the urban systems. Closely following Moeller's line of investigation but far profounder in its analysis, this approach seeks to portray the urban recipients of the Reformation message and accurately depict their socio-economic and political status as a determining factor in the shaping of their response to the Protestant appeal. Thus, instead of taking the 'civic community' for granted, it speaks of oligarchs, merchants, burghers and artisans as distinct audiences of the Reformation, groups that came in conflict with regards to their perception of the aims and extent of the 'Reformation'. The works of Brady and Abray on Reformation Strasbourg, Scribner on Leipzig and Zwickau, Schilling on the Hanseatic towns, Blickle on Memmingen and Roper on Augsburg are based principally on this approach.

Another feature of the internal approach - that in many ways constitutes a theoretical bridge linking it to the second

major interpretation of the urban Reformation - is its preoccupation with the question of the socio-political control established over the urban communities by the elites and with citizen resistance to it. Principal importance is attributed to the question of legality in the interior of the urban regimes, something that, as already noted, was often translated into a question of legitimacy of the appropriation of civic power by the governing elites.

Blickle's stress on the far-ranging expectations that the Reformation gave to the lower urban social strata, the formulations of Abrey and Scribner on the delicate position of the urban preachers as social mediators and propagators of the new faith, Broadhead's presentation of the intricate debate that took place between lawyers and pastors in Reformation Augsburg, all attest to the potential antinomianism of the Reformation, in so far as it made people feel free of their obligations vis - a - vis their rulers and the man-made laws that governed the life of the civic community.

Gerald Strauss' latest work on resistance to Roman Law in Reformation Germany has shed ample light on this very important aspect of the original contact of Luther's ideas with the subordinate urban groups of his time. Strauss stresses the heavy influence of religious considerations on peoples' 'perceptions of legal constraints, and of the ways in which these constraints bound them to their political and social world' ^{*1}, as the background coming into contact with Luther's original call for a return to a purified form of christianity: 'by sounding its call for

a return to a primitive condition existing before written, man-made law, the Reformation at first held out hopes of emancipation from enforced obedience to artificial restraints. Separating salvation altogether from legal obligations, it encouraged during its initial free-wheeling phase , in a public well primed to act on this appeal, an almost irresistible sense of lost christian freedoms restored'.

Most importantly, this expectation was analogous 'to the widely felt wish to shake the grasp of that other law of the Romans whose agents were seeing everywhere now, ready to turn people into passive subjects' [p.192]. Subsequently, it was inevitable that, in the early days of the Reformation, 'support for the evangelical cause grew in large part out of the period's general dissatisfaction with existing legislation. Luther rallied his followers by holding out the prospect that the fall of the old order would bring new and better laws' [p. 208].

As we have repeatedly stated above, this massive misinterpretation of Luther's early preaching wholly exposed the urban oligarchic regimes to the criticism of their citizen-subjects, by destroying their alleged divine justification. The question of legitimacy of urban autocratic rule quickly led to socio-political unrest. As Rublack argues in a recent review of the social historiography of the urban Reformation, the very tangible crisis of authority in the German urban regimes implies that 'conflict rather than consent emerges as the hallmark of the Reformation' *2.

These considerations lead us directly to the second

interpretive approach of the urban Reformation, the one we shall call **external** or political. The elaborations of Strauss and Broadhead on the question of the legality of the Reformation urban regimes, the already mentioned study of Schilling, the works of Stalnaker on Marburg and Scribner on Erfurt and, primarily, Brady's Turning Swiss have reintroduced the political dimension into the examination of the Reformation crisis. This approach seeks to locate urban Reformation processes within the political framework of the Empire by underlining the fundamental weakness of the urban front when brought against the princes or the Emperor. This examination, scarcely preoccupying Moeller, enables historians to appreciate the limited autonomy of the urban Reformation as a process of religious change taking place in sixteenth-century Germany. The manipulation of the urban Reformation by forces external to the urban regimes of the period is more than obvious in the majority of the above presented cases, including the Imperial Cities.

The territorial Church was to prevail over the urban ecclesiastical organisation especially following the shattering events of 1525. This evolution, clearly to the dismay of the leading reformers including Luther, finally met with the consent of Reformed political theology as propounded by Melanchthon. It is again G. Strauss that depicts the passive subordination of the urban Reformation to princely control: 'As "emergency bishop", the territorial ruler had originally been intended to serve only as a temporary substitute for the missing episcopal jurisdiction. But while undertaking the necessary reforms in his land, he

steadily gained organizational power over the Church in his state. De facto possession of the *jus reformandi*, an essential precondition of state building in the modern style, led naturally to political domination, not of the institutions of religion only, but of all of religious life. Luther was not happy with this development but had to resign himself to an accomplished fact. Melanchthon, after 1525, seems to have regarded it as not only an inevitable, but also as a rightful, solution' [pp. 233-234].

Beyond the previous two approaches, a handful of historians have focused their attention on urban cultural and mental realities of the era and their influence by the advent of the Reformation. The collective psyche and intellect of preindustrial societies, the religious life of the early modern times seemed to be the exclusive domaine of cultural and theological historians and, later on, of sociologists of religion; to the majority of the social historians of the 1970s, works like Febvre's Un destin: Martin Luther and Au cœur religieux du XVI^e siècle seemed to be too perilous paths of historical investigation. Furthermore, the emergence of powerful trends like structuralism and, mainly, cultural anthropology, seemed to cover the field sufficiently enough for social historians to endeavour to enter it *3.

When applied to sixteenth-century German urban societies, this approach, which we shall call **socio-cultural**, clearly rejects Moeller's static and oversimplified depiction of urban mental and cultural realities and their contact with the 'Reformation message'. From the relatively few contributions based on this approach we have chosen the works of Chrisman

and Scribner as the most thought-provoking examples ^{*4}.

Chrisman and Scribner strongly underline the varied pattern of the dissemination of Protestantism in German urban communities; they point to the varied means of diffusion and, equally, levels of communication of the Reformation in the urban mental and cultural universe. They show that the 'Reformation message' was perceived by the educated elites in a radically different way than that of the commoners and the petty folk. Furthermore, Scribner points to the conscious appropriation of popular cultural themes and notions - like the 'world turned upside down' - by the Reformation propagandists. By stressing that the Reformation used two broadly contrasting symbolic languages, one for the elite and one for the people, Chrisman and Scribner further reinforce the by now widespread assumption that one should speak of Reformation messages and, indeed, of Reformations instead of the one-dimensional image presented by previous cultural and ecclesiastical historians and Moeller himself.

The use of the pamphlet, the printed theological tract for the educated laity and, on the other hand, the use of popular slogans, images and the oral dissemination of Reformation ideas in inns, taverns and workshops, clearly indicate that, right from the start, there were several contrasting perceptions of the prospect of 'reform' and 'Reformation', for the urban audiences of Luther and the other leading reformers were far from being uniform in their collective aspirations, cultural needs and religious worlds. Thus, as demonstrated also in the case of the

French urban Reformation, one cannot simply juxtapose a Protestant 'worldview' with a Catholic one; the historical realities of the era are far more complex than the image presented by this antithetical scheme.

b: The French urban Reformation

A similar pattern of methodological preferences and research priorities can be traced in the social historiography of the French urban Reformation, additionally coloured by the peculiarities exclusive to history - writing *à la Française*. Ever since the days of Henri Hauser and Lucien Febvre, the two antipodes in the historical interpretation of the Reformation, a debate has been taking place between the advocates of a socio-economic and political and, on the other hand, a mental-cultural causation of the French Reformation crisis. The French urban centres have been the common field of investigation for both approaches, as the French Reformation has been a predominantly urban event, far more isolated from the rural countryside than its German counterpart. Interestingly enough, the French translation of Moeller's book did not have any impact on subsequent historical preoccupation with the urban Reformation. On the contrary, the bulk of historical works on French urban Protestant movements presents a unanimous rejection of Moeller's assumptions *5.

The **internal** approach previously outlined seems to be equally prevalent in the social historiography of the French urban Reformation. Historians were able to follow closely the

intersection of emergent Protestantism with the social, political and economic realities of sixteenth-century urban milieux; main focus of attention has been centred on divisions inherent in the French urban communities of Luther's time and the various ways in which they influenced the urban Protestant movements.

A plethora of works has dealt with the socio-political rivalries that impeded the Protestant drive for supremacy. Thus, Jouanna has shown the Huguenot camp of Montpellier to be bitterly divided, firstly within the elite - with merchants and bourgeois fighting the judiciary - and, secondly, between the elite and the lower citizen ranks. Denis Richet's study of the lists of Parisian Protestants slaughtered in the night of St. Bartholomew reveals a long-standing antagonism between the officials of the sovereign courts and the judicial clerks as the main driving force behind the selective killings.

Richard Gascon speaks of a Calvinist communal revolution describing the Protestant attempt to alter the balance of power to their advantage, whereas Benedict and Lamet speak of the limited possibilities of success for the dynamic Protestant minorities of Rouen and Caen, which they ascribe precisely to the lack of social space much needed for their spread and development. Finally, Henry Heller on Agen and Janine Garrisson on ^{the} Midi underline the great dependence of Protestant movements on the ability of Protestant-dominated urban authorities to drive their citizens into their church; in this perspective, they stress that socio-political divisions between the 'corps de ville'

and the broader communes emerged as a stumbling block to Calvinism's spread in the urban centres.

From the above mentioned historians, Nicholls and Heller also point to an economic causation of the final division of French urban Protestant camps into moderates and radicals. Nicholls' study of the varied pattern of Protestant infiltration in Normandy, and, principally, Heller's study of the popular evangelical movements of Meaux and Agen reveal that, on numerous occasions, the economic condition of the artisanat and the lesser urban groups influenced their view of the Reformation as a prospect of religious but, equally, of socio-economic change.

The overall picture painted by the bulk of historical works based on the internal, socio-political and socio-economic approach is, again, one of dissent as the hallmark of the urban Reformation. It shows clearly that historians of the urban Reformation must seek the causes both of Protestantism's success in massively gaining some social groups and its failure to attract others elsewhere than in the collective mentality of the 'civic community' as suggested by Moeller. And, in this direction, it has to be stressed that the internal approach cannot stand by itself as an all-embracing interpretation of the urban Reformation.

The emergence of powerful Protestant minorities in numerous French cities that culminated in the major Protestant offensive of the early 1560s was to have dramatic repercussions in the life of the entire kingdom; as noted above, the two prime tasks of the Protestant offensive were the internal take over of

political power and control of the major urban centres and, secondly, the undermining of the centralist royal authority, through the recruitment of state officials and functionaries to the Calvinist cause. To the Protestant pretenders to power, it was clear that the French crown was always a force to be reckoned with. The subsequent entanglement of Protestantism with French national politics, through the emergence of the Huguenot party underlines in the boldest way the great dependence of the urban Reformation upon national events, and that is something that historians did not fail to realize.

Thus, as in the case of the German urban Reformation, an **external** political interpretive approach emerges as a vital instrument in the examination of the urban Reformation. The underlying theme of research based on this approach has, inevitably, been that of the precarious relationship between king and city, central authority and urban autonomy. The studies of the urban Reformation movements of Montpellier, La Rochelle and Lyon by Jouanna, Meyer and Gascon respectively have put into relief the profound weakness of the Calvinist urban oligarchs in the face of a Catholic crown. The Calvinist urban ruling groups had to compromise between their genuine drive for religious reform and the legality of their actions as official governing bodies bound with the monarch with bonds of respect and obedience.

Furthermore, Benedict, France, Mentzer and Garrison have pinpointed the role of regional Parlements as instruments of royal oppression. To match their enemy's strength, the Huguenot

leaders had to seek the protection of the nobility, and the subordination of urban Protestant movements to the nobility appeared as the sole way of survival. In this perspective, the exclusively 'urban' character of the French Reformation is highly disputed. Like the relevant studies on the political aspect of the German urban Reformation, the actual state of research on the French case reveals a very fragile autonomy of urban Reformation processes from external pressures and manipulation. As such, it warns historians against enclosing themselves in the confines of the urban microcosm in search of a thorough interpretation of the Reformation crisis.

Finally, a third major interpretation of the French Reformation - vividly coloured with the idiosyncracies of French historiography, is the **socio-cultural** one. In an academic environment saturated with cultural anthropology and the *mentalités*, trademark of the **Annales'** line of thought, it is not surprising that the vast majority of French historians of the Reformation has sought to ascribe it to a mutation in the urban cultural and mental universe taking place over the *longue durée*.

In the tradition of Lucien Febvre, cultural historians like Delumeau trace the causation of the Reformation crisis in the collective psychology - or, one would argue, psychosis - of late medieval and early modern Frenchmen. Others, like Bérce' and Garrisson have sought to explore the increasingly divided mental and cultural universe of the urban communities by pointing to the contrasting cultural manifestations of the petty folk and the urban elites. These investigations have shown that French

Protestantism came into contact with divergent religious and cultural aspirations, mental needs and realities that were to impair its attempt to consolidate itself as a collective mentality, a religious force of social cohesion. The contrasting patterns of Reformation, the moderate, 'esoteric' stand of the notables and the radical and 'extrovert' one of the artisanat attest to the subordination of Protestantism to the divisions of the French urban mental and cultural universe.

These considerations have prompted historians like Chaunu, Delumeau and Chartier to speak of Protestantism as a culmination of an acculturation process imposed by the urban elites on the petty folk. In its extreme, this point of view has led to the notorious acculturation thesis propounded by Muchembled. Avoiding the extremities of this thesis, we may argue that, carrying clearly the mark of the ideological aspirations and the cultural universe of the urban elites, French Protestantism acted as a further catalyst in the existent division between them and the urban petty folk; as such, it became largely confined within the limits of the middle and upper social strata, and the lack of mass plebeian support, further aggravated by the reluctance of the great families of the robe and commerce to actively support its cause, led to its final downfall following the Catholic counter-attack.

A line of interpretation in direct relation to the acculturation theme has been that propounded by N. Z. Davis, E. Le Roy Ladurie and P. Benedict. Their identification of Protestantism with the socially mobile, intellectually alert

and technically advanced socio-professional groups of the French urban communities again represents a valuable interpretive suggestion, only if it is not carried to the extreme, as, for instance, in the gross antithetical scheme 'Huguenot carder - Catholic peasant', propounded by Ladurie. In all, we agree with D. Nicholls that cultural reductionism can be 'just as distorting as crude economic determinism. People should not be seen as puppets leaping around in pre-ordained mental structures, nor as consumers merely choosing one of only two alternative religious goods handed down from above' *6.

All the above mentioned interpretive approaches should work together in a combined, multi-levelled interpretation of the urban Reformation. This task, dictating interdisciplinary collaboration and team work, is the only way to avoid the distortions of examined historical realities that emerge in the application of Moeller's theory in the French urban Reformation.

Section 2: Our current view of the urban Reformation in Germany and France; limitations and weaknesses.

The present state of the social historiography of the urban Reformation undoubtedly represents a major step forward when compared to the original phase of the 'invasion' of social history in that particular historical domaine, invasion spearheaded by the Moeller initiative. In the past two decades, social historians of the urban Reformation have been able to master techniques,

interpretive tools and concepts borrowed from neighbouring sciences; primarily, they have succeeded in overcoming the jargon of the social scientists - and, equally, of their sources - and, subsequently, gained a thorough view of the multilevelled political, socio-economic and cultural realities that constituted the background to the original contact of the Reformation with the urban milieux. Furthermore, historians are now in the position to acknowledge the limitations of their preoccupation with the urban manifestations of the Reformation crisis.

First of all, social historians of the German urban Reformation are warned against concentrating solely on large urban centres, such as the Imperial Cities. A multitude of lesser towns, like the territorial ones and periphery towns of approximately 500-1,500 inhabitants should clearly be taken into consideration, as they constituted the majority in the Reformation German urban world. The investigation of Reformation processes in these towns should further illuminate the limits of the 'urban' character of the Reformation with regards both to the surrounding princes but, also, the peasantry of their hinterland *7.

Secondly, and in direct correlation to the previous remark, there has been an overexaggeration of the 'urban' character of both the German and the French urban Reformations, with regards to urban mental and cultural realities. As Jan de Vries has pointed out, 'in the early modern era behavioural urbanization, the diffusion of an "urban way of life" throughout society, was subject to severe limitations. The very largest cities surely

affected the sociological character of extended areas, but at the same time in smaller places one must still speak of the strong rural influences of town life. Behavioural urbanization remained highly uneven in its incidence' ^{*8}.

Subsequently, one should not view the urban Reformation in the French way - that is, 'as something laying the ground for the "modern world" by means of its contribution to "rationalization" or "modernization" '. As Robert Scribner and David Nicholls argue for the French case, 'neoweberianism' greatly obscures sixteenth-century socio-cultural realities by insisting on a unilateral 'civilizing' process taking place in the interior of urban societies ^{*9}. In addition, the work of Thomas Brady among others has underlined the fragile autonomy of urban Reformation processes with regards to the policies and interests of political forces external to the urban systems.

Thirdly, the current orientation of the social historiography of the urban Reformation in Germany and France points to the question of the social appropriation of the Gospel in the urban centres as the principal and most promising field of research. It has also been widely acknowledged that this particular undertaking strongly calls for a meticulous historical sociology of urban Reformation movements, based where possible on statistical analysis and reinforced with a detailed structural examination of the complex network of urban relationships, political, economic, social and cultural.

The evident polarization between rival wings that emerged in the majority of German and French urban Reformation

movements has prompted numerous historians to form a generalised view of the urban Reformation, based on a broad antithetical scheme separating the urban 'bourgeoisie' - namely, the elites - from the lesser social ranks such as the poorer artisans and the marginal social groups including the peasants. This point of view has found disciples among historians of both the German and French urban Reformations, with Peter Blickle and Henry Heller as the most outspoken representatives *10.

However, what we have discussed above shows clearly enough that a historical sociology of urban Reformation movements cannot be based on such ready-made and simplistic equations; what needs to be examined with reference to the social appropriation of the Gospel is the background to the inner contradictions leading to the subsequent diversification of urban evangelical movements in conservative and radical, Lutheran and Reformed. Furthermore, as already stressed, this equally needs to take into consideration those impersonal factors and realities - such as collective belief systems and underlying political trends - that influenced the shaping of the urban Reformation and determined its final evolution.

Finally, historians of the German urban Reformation should move beyond their highly 'urbanized' view of the peasantry as an agent of the Reformation, especially in the case of the small German towns. The same observation applies equally to the French view of the urban Reformation, which clearly needs to move beyond a strictly socio-cultural approach that automatically opposes townsmen and peasants.

As a final, 'concluding message' of this thesis I shall use the words of David Nicholls which epitomize in the best possible way the principal features but, also, the future tasks emerging from the continuous preoccupation of social historians with the urban Reformation, as originally outlined by Bernd Moeller: 'over and above events, the history of the Reformation needs to be an attempt at total history, with social, economic, political, intellectual and military affairs taking their place alongside the anthropologically inspired history of culture and communication' *11.

Notes to Chapter 1

*1: For acknowledgement of the major importance of Moeller's book, see among others: A. G. Dickens & J. M. Tonkin, The Reformation in Historical Thought, 1985, pp. 298-300.

H. C. Rublack, 'Is there a "New History" of the Urban Reformation?' in T. Scott & E. Kouri eds., Politics and Society in Reformation Europe, 1987, pp. 125-131.

T. Brady, 'The Social History of the Reformation between "Romantic Idealism" and "Sociologism" - A Reply' in W. Mommsen, P. Alter & R. W. Scribner eds., The Urban Classes, the Nobility and the Reformation - Studies on the Social History of the Reformation in England and Germany, 1979, pp. 42-43.

S. Ozment, The Reformation in the Cities, 1975, pp. 6-9.

S. Ozment, Review of T. Brady's Turning Swiss, in The Journal of Interdisciplinary History, XVIII, 2, 1987, pp. 368-369.

R. W. Scribner, The German Reformation, 1986, pp.1-2.

For a comprehensive summary of Moeller's intervention and the debate it generated, see: H.E. Midelfort, 'Toward a Social History of Ideas in the German Reformation' in K. Sessions & P. Bebb eds., Pietas et Societas - New Trends in Reformation Social History - Essays in honour of H. J. Grimm, 1985.

*2: Bernd Moeller, Reichsstadt und Reformation, 1962. French Edition, Villes d'Empire et Réformation, 1966. American Edition, The Imperial Cities and the Reformation,

1972. The American edition is enriched with two additional essays, 'The German Humanists and the Beginning of the Reformation', and 'Problems of Reformation Research', first published in 1965. The French edition, used in the thesis, has an extended bibliography prepared by Moeller.

Moeller's book is being currently republished in the German Democratic Republic, without any revisions in the original text .

***3:** Moeller also speaks of the increasingly precarious position of urban Church in 'The town in Church history: general presuppositions of the Reformation in Germany', The Church in Town and Countryside, 1979, pp. 263-265.

***4:** The most concise presentation of order-based society is R. Mousnier, Social Hierarchies 1450 to the Present, 1973, pp.23-26.

***5:** E. Maschke, 'Continuite' sociale et histoire urbaine médiévale', Annales ESC, 15, 2, 1960.

***6:** H. Schilling, 'The Reformation in The Hanseatic Cities', Sixteenth Century Journal, XIV, 1983, pp. 443-446.

***7:** Schilling comes in support of Moeller's interpretation in 'Die politische Elite nordwestdeutschen Städte in der religiösen Auseinandersetzungen des 16. Jahrhunderts', The Urban Classes, the Nobility and the Reformation, see English Summary, pp.307-308.

***8:** H. C. Rublack, 'Political and Social Norms in Urban Communities in the Holy Roman Empire' in K. von Greyerz ed., Religion, Politics and Social Protest - Three Studies on Early Modern Germany, 1984.

- *9: For a short discussion of Rublack's theory see T. Scott, 'Community and Conflict in Early Modern Germany' (Review article) European History Quarterly, 16, 1986, 209-217, p. 213.
- *10: R. W. Scribner, 'Civic Unity and the Reformation in Erfurt', Past and Present, 66, 1975, 29-60.
- *11: R. W. Scribner, 'Is there a Social History of the Reformation?', Social History, 4, 1977, pp. 494-496.
- *12: C. Friedrichs, 'Capitalism, mobility and class formation in the early modern German city', Past and Present, 69, 1975.
- *13: A. B. Hibbert, 'The origins of the medieval town patriciate' in P. Abrams & E. Wrigley eds., Towns in Societies: essays in Economic History and Historical Sociology, 1978.
- *14: T. Brady, 'Patricians, Nobles, Merchants: internal tensions and solidarities in south German urban ruling classes at the close of the Middle Ages' in M. U. Chrisman & O. Grundler eds., Social groups and religious ideas in the sixteenth century, 1978, p.39.
- *15: T. Brady, Ruling Class, Regime and Reformation at Strasbourg, 1520-1555, 1978, pp.3-19.
- *16: Scribner also calls this interpretation a 'disfunction approach'; 'Is there a Social History of the Reformation', p. 494.
- *17: The importance of Strasbourg's regional economy was first stressed by H. Baron, in 'Religion and Politics in the German Imperial Cities during the Reformation', English

Historical Review, 52, 1937, 614-633.

*18: G. Strauss, Nuremberg in the Sixteenth Century - City Politics and Life between Middle Ages and Modern Times, 1976, pp. 116-117.

*19: B. Vogler, 'Institutions et société' à Nuremberg au début du XVI^e siècle', Hommage a Durer - Strasbourg et Nuremberg dans la première moitié du XVI^e siècle, 1971.

*20: R. A. Rotz, ' "Social struggles" or the price of power? German urban uprisings in the late Middle Ages', Archiv fur Reformationsgeschichte, 76, 1985, 64-95.

*21: B. Hall, 'The Reformation City', Bulletin of the John Rylands Library, 54, 1971, 103-148.

*22: R. W. Scribner, 'Civic unity and the Reformation in Erfurt'

*23: R. W. Scribner, 'Why was there no Reformation in Cologne?', Bulletin of the Institute of Historical Research, XLIX, 1976, 217-241.

*24: J. C. Stalnaker, 'Residenzstadt and Reformation: religion, politics and social policy in Hesse, 1509-1546, Archiv fur Reformationsgeschichte, 64, 1973, 113-146.

*25: K. Czok, 'The socio-economic structure and political role of the Suburbs in Saxony and Thuringia in the age of the Early Bourgeois Revolution', first published in German in 1975; the English translation I use here comes from R. Scribner & G. Benecke eds., The German Peasant War of 1525: New Viewpoints, 1979. Czok's sources of information are the 'Turk' tax register of 1529 and the Land Tax register of 1554 for Leipzig, civic statutes for Thuringia, and lists of

grievances and citizens' petitions in Altenburg and Leipzig in the years 1522 and 1523.

***26:** As, for example, in the case of Erfurt, where Scribner shows how bands of poorer artisans were used by Mainz against the city council.

***27:** T. Brady, jr., Turning Swiss - Cities and Empire, 1450-1550, 1985; this book is the second part of an intended trilogy on the south German urban Reformation. The first part was Ruling Class, Regime and Reformation at Strasbourg, 1520-1555, 1978; Brady is currently working on the third part, a book on the rise and fall of the Smalkaldic League.

***28:** Brady's outline of the political dilemma facing the German urban oligarchies with regards to their relationship with the Emperor, the territorial princes and their citizenry is quite accurate and is reinforced by other relevant studies on the political situation of the Empire. However, it has been suggested to me by Mr. C. F. Black that Brady's reading of Machiavelli's 'republican way' is based on a misunderstanding of Machiavelli's writings. Whereas Machiavelli distinguishes between urban 'gentlemen' and feudal aristocrats, Brady mistakenly refers to one category of 'gentlemen' that had to be eliminated to allow the urban communities to maintain their political independence within the Empire.

***29:** A critical comparison of Moeller's views with subsequent historical research as well as some general remarks on the evolution of the social history of the

Reformation *post Moeller* in chapters 5 and 6-section 1.

*30: B. Moeller, 'The town in Church history', p. 263.

*31: B. Moeller, Villes d' Empire, p. 25.

*32: B. Moeller, 'The town in Church history', p. 263.

*33: A. G. Dickens, Reformation and Society in Sixteenth-century Europe, 1966.

*34: Further comments on the emergence of anti-papal and nationalist sentiments within the German dominant groups in: A. G. Dickens, 'Intellectual and Social forces in the German Reformation', The Urban Classes, the Nobility and the Reformation, pp. 13-15.

*35: B. Vogler, 'Institutions et société' à Nuremberg'.

*36: It has to be noted, however, that numerous historians find this over-emphasis on 'the fear of death' too far-fetched. This has been an indispensable part of the mentalites-centred approach, as propounded by the **Annales** and further elaborated mainly by Delumeau.

*37: F. Rapp, Réformes et Réformation à Strasbourg - Église et Société' dans le diocèse de Strasbourg, 1450-1525, 1974.

*38: K. von Greyerz, The Late city Reformation in Germany, the case of Colmar, 1522-1628, 1980.

*39: 'Religiosity' is used here not in the pejorative sense; rather it denotes 'religious fervour' or 'religious sentiment', as in the French: 'réligiosité'.

Notes to Chapter 2

*1: B. Chevalier, Les bonnes villes de France du XIVe au XVIe siècle, 1982. This work will be our major source of reference throughout this chapter.

*2: P. Benedict, Rouen during the wars of religion, 1981

*3: G. Duby, Histoire de la France urbaine. 3. la ville classique, 1981, p. 25, the quotation from H. Neveux.

*4: B. Chevalier, Les bonnes villes, pp. 30, 33.

*5: R. Gascon, Grand Commerce et vie urbaine au XVIe siècle. Lyon et ses marchands, 1971, 1, p. 349. B. Chevalier, Les bonnes villes..., p 35. G. Duby, Histoire de la France urbaine..., p. 33.

*6: B. Chevalier, Les bonnes villes, p. 43.

*7: R. Mousnier, Social Hierarchies. 1450 to the present, 1973.

*8: A. Jouanna, Ordre social - Mythes et hiérarchies dans la France du XVIe siècle, 1977, pp. 89-93; R. Mousnier, Social Hierarchies..., pp. 69-70. From the two social categories, it is the bourgeoisie that is the undeniable troublemaker of history, to both sixteenth-century Frenchmen and today's historians. Section 3 will attempt a general survey of the historic evolution of the term as well as of current dominant historical theories concerning the nature of the group.

*9: A. Jouanna, Ordre Social

*10: G. Huppert, Les Bourgeois Gentilshommes, 1977; Huppert's suggestions have met with the full-hearted

support of Fernand Braudel who quotes exclusively from this work in the second volume of his Civilisation and Capitalism, pp. 482-485.

*11: Philip Benedict, Rouen during the wars of Religion, 1981. See also, P. Benedict, 'Catholics and Huguenots in sixteenth-century Rouen: the demographic effects of the religious wars', French Historical Studies, IX, 1975, 209-234; J. Dewald, 'Magistracy and political opposition at Rouen: a social context', The Sixteenth Century Journal, V, 1974; J. Dewald, The Formation of a Provincial Nobility: The Magistrates of the Parlement of Rouen, 1499-1610, 1980. A fascimile of the Royal Entry has been published by Orbis Terrarum Ltd - Amsterdam & Johnson Reprint Corporation, N.Y.

*12: Emmanuel Le Roy Ladurie, The peasants of Languedoc, 1974

*13: Vital Chomel, Pouvoir royal et croissance urbaine, 1453-1626 - Histoire de Grenoble, 1976

*14: B. Chevalier, Tours ville royale 1356-1520, 1975

*15: Although Chevalier does not clarify at this point what is the "precise sense of the word", it should be remembered that in the bonnes villes the 'bourgeois' is the wealthy citizen with full rights, living off rents, not a merchant or a manual labourer.

*16: The close relationship of many urban oligarchies with the crown greatly impeded the spread of Calvinism in the cities as most urban authorities were anxious not to distance themselves from the king. See below, Chapter 4,

section 3.

***17:** Richard Gascon, Grand Commerce et vie urbaine au XVI^e siècle- Lyon et ses marchands, 1971.

***18:** N.Z.Davis, 'Strikes and salvation at Lyons', Archiv fur Reformationsgeschichte, 56, 1965, 48-64. As we shall see below, in Chapter 4, section 4, the standard historical interpretation has it that it was mainly the socially and professionally advanced groups of Lyon's society that responded positively to Protestantism. As such, Lyon is a clear indication that, contrary to Moeller's assertions, Protestantism did not emerge as a socially cohesive form of religion, neither did it appeal to 'civic communities' in their entirety.

***19:** All references taken from J. Bernard, 'La Société', in: R. Boutruche, ed., Bordeaux de 1453 à 1715, 1966

***20:** We shall later have the opportunity to discuss further this "hidden aspect" of the urban mentality, which is not particular to the city of Bordeaux. It suffices here to say that this phenomenon revealed the heavy peasant influences in urban centres, and especially the small towns.

***21:** R. Mandrou, Introduction to Modern France, 1500-1640, 1975, pp.102-104. G. Duby, Histoire de la France urbaine, 3. La ville classique, 1980, pp.198-200

***22:** Robert Muchembled, Culture populaire et culture des élites dans la France moderne (XV^e-XVIII^e siècles), 1978, pp.145-147

***23:** P. Chaunu-R. Gascon, Histoire Économique et Sociale de la France, 1. de 1450 à 1660, 1977, pp. 423-427

*24: G. Duby, Histoire de la France urbaine, 3, pp. 198-200

*25: Thomas Brady jr., Ruling class, regime and reformation at Strasbourg, 1520-1555, 1978, 'Prolegomena, B, estates and classes - historical sociology and the age of the Reformation, 3, 4, 5'.

*26: R. Mandrou, Introduction to Modern France, 1500-1640, p.110

*27: B. Chevalier, Les bonnes villes..., p.149

*28: R. Mandrou, Introduction..., p.113

*29: Chapter 5, section 3 of the thesis will show that it was precisely the combination of political and socioeconomic realities of the 'bonnes villes' that ultimately impeded the spread of Calvinism; namely, the centralised oligarchic political regime, royal intervention, and, at the socioeconomic level, the widening social divisions, especially those within the artisan world.

*30: B. Chevalier, Les bonnes villes..., p.197

*31: P. Benedict, Rouen during the wars of religion, pp. 31-34

*32: A well-grounded explanation of the exceedingly paternalistic stand of the city authorities and especially the Parlement comes from Jonathan Dewald, whose own research on the social composition of the nobility of the Robe of Rouen led him to discover that the majority of the parlementaires were drawn from the lesser ranks of traditional aristocracy, and only few actually came from the city's bourgeoisie. It was precisely the social origins of Rouen's parlementaires as well as their professional

position in between the king and the province , that had led to their detachment from their immediate social surroundings. This social but also psychological detachment made Rouen's parlementaires exhibit a 'surprising belief in the rational and coherent moral outlook of even the urban masses', a view justified by the vertical social bonds they had established within the urban society. But, 'the assumption of shared values and responses to events... did not imply a sense of confidence in the face of potential urban disturbances. The magistrates' attitude to the society around them combined paternalism and fear': Jonathan Dewald, The formation of a provincial nobility - the magistrates of the Parlement of Rouen, 1499-1610, 1980, pp.15, 67. Such an attitude was an obvious parallel to the German notion of **Obrigkei**t as discussed above, Chapter 1, section 2, pp. 46-47.

***33:** V. Chomel, Pouvoir royal, p.100. The Bishop had every right to complain since it was the antagonistic outlook of the city's legal ranks and especially the parlementaires, agents of royal authority, that subsequently undermined the position of the Church and Catholicism in Grenoble. This predetermined the considerable success of the spread of Calvinism in the years which were to follow. In the early 1560s, many of the city's jurists emerged at the head of the Calvinist movement.

***34:** R. Gascon, Grand Commerce et vie urbaine

***35:** The incident that took place in Augsburg in 1524, involving protestant citizens and the city council shows

quite clearly the absolute necessity of a total control of the convocation of assemblies on the part of the civic oligarchies. A fairly wide representation of citizens assembled in the city centre - Town Hall or square - could still appear institutionally as the 'commune' (*Gemeinde*) referring back to the days of the self-governing communes. As such, it could threaten and question the authority of the consulate. See Lyndal Roper, 'The common man', 'the common good', 'common women': Gender and meaning in the German Reformation commune', Social History, 12, 1, 1987, 1-21.

*36: Thus, Lyon's merchant oligarchs were facing relatively the same dilemma as their German counterparts depicted by Brady in the first chapter of the thesis. But, from the two 'horns' of the political dilemma they appear to be flirting mainly with the second, as they resurrected the general assemblies in the 1550s, in order to get popular and especially artisan support in their struggle against the ever-demanding royal authority and the return of the clergy as a major political force. Furthermore, this antagonism between the merchant oligarchy and the urban clergy played a major role in the advent and successful spread of Calvinism, since it fostered a fervent anticlericalist stand on the part of the entire merchant community.

*37: Barbara Diefendorf, Paris city councillors in the 16th century - the politics of patrimony, 1983. Diefendorf offers two main definitions of 'bourgeoisie' that fit into the pattern that we have so far established: The first is a juridical one: 'bourgeoisie' is a privilege accorded by the

city's government to persons who had resided in the city at least for a year and who had property, paid taxes and served in the militia; this definition obviously included merchants, artisans, officers, even noblemen, all called 'bourgeois de Paris' in the sixteenth century. The second definition is a functional one, referring only to the city's residents who lived off revenues from lands and other investments without having to exercise any profession or trade. Introduction, p XXIII.

*38: B. Chevalier, Les bonnes villes, p. 93. Chevalier is correct in underlying this fundamental contradiction between royal authority and urban autonomy openly manifested in the era of the advent of absolutism. The fact that the upper strata of the urban bourgeoisie - the nobility of the Robe - emerged as fervent royal allies should not obscure the underlying reality which was to the detriment of the 'bonnes villes', whose numerous political social and economic losses have already been outlined in this chapter, when dealing with the 'betrayal' of the bourgeoisie. This reality has eluded the attention of numerous historians who mistook the 'rise' of the urban bourgeoisie for the 'rise' of the cities. See, for example, Fritz Rorig's formulations in chapter 3, 'City and State' of his famous work The Medieval Town, 1967.

*39: R. Gascon, Grand commerce et vie urbaine, p. 432, pp. 470-471

*40: H. J. Cohn, Government in Reformation Europe, 1520-1560, 1971, Introduction.

*41: P. Chaunu-R. Gascon, Histoire Économique et Sociale, 1, pp. 429-430

*42: However, according to Gascon, two reservations should be noted with reference to the accuracy of description and the reliability of these sources: The first is that the bulk of these sources was the product of high social strata such as merchants, notables and, mainly, the legal professions; the cultural world of the lower social ranks and especially of the poor and destitute is totally absent, despite their considerable proportion within the urban populations. The second refers mainly to the style of the documents, namely their taste for the spectacular and the exaggeration.

*43: In a recent article by Philippe Ariès, posthumously published, the French historian outlined in an excellent manner the fusion of private and public that served as the fundamental binding force in late medieval urban societies: 'The communal solidarities, the lineage solidarities, the vassal bonds enclose the individual or family in a world which is neither private nor public... The community which embraces the individual - city quarter, rural community, township - constitutes a familiar milieu where everybody knows each other and beyond which there extends a *terra incognita* ' Philippe Ariès, 'Pour une histoire de la vie privée', pp 7-8, in P. Ariès & G. Duby eds., Histoire de la Vie Privée, 3. De la Renaissance aux Lumières, 1986

*44: We have examined the 'message' of the urban festivities and processions when dealing with the manifestations of the urban hierarchical order as, for

example, in the case of Rouen. In their bulk, early modern urban popular festivities are classified by Yves-Marie Bérce' in four main types: a) religious processions, b) civic processions, c) festivities of the youth, d) festivities of 'abundance', celebrating the welfare of the city, and mainly referring to the abundance of agricultural products and meat in the urban market. According to Bérce', the organisation of urban festivities reveals two essential features of sixteenth but also seventeenth-century societies: insecurity caused by natural disasters, calamities and external threats and a fixed social hierarchy, namely, the arrangement of urban social groups following a hierarchical order expressing divine will and sanctioned by civic custom. This underlying reality was never obscured or questioned by the burlesque character of the popular festivities: Yves-Marie Bérce', Fête et Révolte - Des mentalités populaires du XVIe au XVIIIe siècle, 1976

*45: One needs only to look at recent cultural historical and sociological studies of industrial societies to realise that, in numerous cases, the traditional 'popular' culture survives along with the modern mental and cultural outlook; in his already cited work, Philippe Aries notes that ancient forms of collective sociability survive mainly in the rural areas even at the beginning of the 20th century, p. 8.

*46: R. Muchembled, Culture populaire

*47: Yves-Marie Bérce', Fête et Révolte

*48: For all its irrational and burlesque character, the popular satire emerging in the various festivities quite

often hinted at various problems concerning the urban daily life and administration, such as the comportment of city officials, priests, etc. Bérce' mentions the case of a festivity of the youth at Besançon, where the various petitions propounded by the 'Emperor of the youth' disguised in satirical verses met with the appreciation and instant approval of the city's magistrates, p. 64

***49:** The question of the Protestant stand toward the manifestations of popular culture and piety and its possible correlation with the "clash of cultures" between the urban elites and the lower populace will be dealt with in the second part of the thesis.

***50:** Muchembled's views are shared by a great number of French historians with Pierre Chaunu and Jean Delumeau as prominent figures. See, for example, Chaunu's 'Niveaux de culture et Réforme', Bulletin de La Société de l'Histoire du Protestantisme Français, 1972, 305-325, and Delumeau's Catholicisme entre Luther et Voltaire

***51:** Jean Wirth, 'Against the acculturation Thesis', in K. von Greyerz ed., Religion and Society in Early Modern Europe 1500-1800, 1984

***52:** Roger Chartier, 'Culture as appropriation: popular cultural uses in early modern France', in S. Kaplan ed., Understanding Popular Culture - Europe from the Middle Ages to the Nineteenth Century, 1984

***53:** The division of early modern urban cultural-mental universe in two systems, one 'popular'-irrational and one 'learned'-rational is a theoretical a priori of the history of

mentalities as propounded by Lucien-Levy Bruhl and further elaborated by Lucien Febvre, Pierre Chaunu, Robert Muchembled and Jean Delumeau. This theoretical a priori is probably the greatest pitfall of an otherwise useful interpretive theory as it presupposes on the one hand the inability of broad popular masses to escape from their 'mental prison' of fear, superstition and insecurity and, on the other, the existence of a radically different mental-cultural outlook, exclusive property of the emerging bourgeoisie. This considerable weakness of the **Annales'** interpretive theory was recently underlined by the English historians Stuart Clark and Peter Burke in their respective articles, 'French historians and early modern popular culture', Past & Present, 100, 1983, 62-99, and 'Strengths and weaknesses of the History of Mentalities', History of European Ideas, 7, 5, 1986, 439-451; it is Burke who suggests a possible synthesis of the mentalités-analysis with the parallel examination of socio-economic and political realities and interests; 'it will not be easy to combine what might be described as the "innocent" and the "cynical" views of thought, but a synthesis might be possible along the lines of the study of the unconscious harmonising of ideas with interests; conflicts of interest make the unconscious conscious'.

*54: Philippe Ariès, Histoire de la Vie Privée, pp. 9-10; see, also, the relevant formulations of François Lebrun's 'Devotions communautaires et piété personnelle', Histoire de la Vie Privée, p. 73

***55:** G. Duby & R. Mandrou, Histoire de la Civilisation Française.1. Moyen Age-XVI^e siècle, 1968, pp. 288-291; B.Chevalier, Les Bonnes villes de France, pp. 248-249: Chevalier mentions the case of the 'fabrique' ,a lay association under the authority of the bishop, responsible for the maintenance of the ecclesiastical buildings, as a lay form of organisation within the parish which was heralding the forthcoming 'emancipation' of the lay faithful from the total control of their vicars and bishops.

***56:** V. Chomel, Pouvoir royal et croissance urbaine

***57:** R. Mandrou, Introduction to Modern France, p. 173. Chapter 4, section 4 will show that the majority of the top ranks of the nobility of the Robe - and especially the parlementaires, quickly suppressed their religious and spiritual disaffection as soon as they saw a possible social and political threat in the emergent Calvinist movement; moreover, and with reference to the humanist circles, one has to bear in mind Mandrou's accurate distinction: 'to be a Protestant in the sixteenth and seventeenth centuries was to be possessed by a desire for renewal which was strong enough to lead to an actual break with the Catholic church. This is the important distinction between the protestants and those who sought to promote reforms within the church', Introd., pp. 201-2.

*1: One needs only to look at the debate between Moeller, Brady and Scribner at the conference organised by the German Historical Institute -London, The urban classes, the nobility and the Reformation- Studies on the social history of the Reformation, 1979, to appreciate the depth of the current division among social historians of the urban Reformation.

*2: The need for a distinction between 'reform' and 'Reformation' is persuasively underlined in Marc Vénard's article 'Réforme, Réformation, Pre-Réforme, Contre-Réforme ... Etude de vocabulaire chez les historiens recents de langue française', in: Historiographie de la Réforme, 1977, pp. 362-364.

*3: Contrary to Moeller's assertion that the Reformation was the final revival of civic communalism in the German cities, Christopher Friedrichs presents the Reformation as just one phase in 'a recurrent pattern of internal conflict in German cities which stretched from the end of the 13th to the end of the 18th century': 'Citizens or subjects? Urban conflict in early modern Germany', Social Groups and Religious Ideas in the 16th century, M.U. Chrisman & O. Grundler eds., 1978, p. 58. Section 5 will deal with the relationship of the Reformation with urban popular movements

*4: In a later article, Moeller further completes this assertion by arguing that Luther's own theology was hardly

relevant to early modern urban socio-economic realities and that, subsequently, it barely affected the evolution of urban life. Similarly to other historians whom we are going to examine later in this chapter, Moeller maintains that Luther's theology rather provided the ideological foundation for the emergence of the early modern state; B.Moeller, 'The Town in Church History: General presuppositions of the Reformation in Germany', in: D. Baker ed., The Church in Town and Countryside, 1979, p. 265.

*5: Hans-Christoph Rublack, 'Martin Luther and the urban social experience', The Sixteenth Century Journal, XVI, I, 1985, p. 32. Chapter 1, Part 1 above discussed the various conclusions drawn by current historians of the German urban Reformation with reference to the ideological foundations of the civic hierarchical order. For all their disagreement on the actual ideological power of these norms as well as on the question of their manipulation by the civic oligarchies, both historical camps - the order- and the class- oriented - do agree that divine sanction of the given hierarchical relationships was indeed in broad use as manifested in the incessant repetition of slogans such as 'common good', 'community', etc.

*6: Thomas Brady jr., Turning Swiss-Cities and Empire, 1450-1550, 1985, pp. 152-158.

*7: Reminding ourselves of Brady's depiction of the urban socio-political situation in the period preceding the Reformation, we can clearly see that the stand of the urban oligarchies directly reflected their precarious political

position in between their communities and the threatening territorial princes and, now, the Emperor; see Chapter 1, Part 1, pp. 52-55. We shall later further examine in Section 2b how exactly the nature of the hierarchical relationship of urban elites and the broader burgher communities determined to a large degree the evolution of the urban evangelical movement. It suffices here to say that, always based on Brady's view, one can argue that, right from the start, the Reformation message met with two broadly defined audiences, the rulers and the ruled; and the response of each particular recipient was dependent on his position within the civic hierarchical structure, the question of **Obrigkeit** ; for additional comments on this concept most commonly ignored by those historians of the urban Reformation who maintain an order-based interpretive stand, see Chapter 1, Part 1, namely the contribution of Basil Hall.

*8: This remark is taken from Antony Black's Guilds and Civic Society in European Political Thought from the 12th-century to the Present , 1984, p.110. Although the craftsmen's appreciation of Lutheranism was clearly based on a misinterpretation - we have already seen that Luther's brand of religion was introvert, individualistic and, therefore, suspicious of all forms of lay associations such as the confraternities or the guilds, Black maintains that, nevertheless, 'the artisan and the journeyman were given a revolutionary assurance of their worth as what they were, a recognition of their standing in the highest court', p. 111.

*9: A fact that even Moeller recognises - though indirectly; see the relevant discussion in pp. 40, Chapter 1.

*10: For example, Steven Ozment, a fervent supporter of the peculiar view that the Reformation came as the relief of sixteenth-century Christians from the social and psychological burdens of late medieval religion, admits that, right from the start, the Lutheran message met with the divergent aspirations of those 'more ideologically and socially mobile, either by reason of social grievance (as with the lower clergy and workers), ambition (as among certain guilds and the new rich), or ideals (as witnessed by university students and various humanistically educated patricians) '. According to Ozment one can distinguish between 'three agents and levels of the Reformation within the cities, each making an important contribution to the final shape of reform. Preachers and laymen learned in Scripture provided the initial stimulus; within the broader citizenry, ideologically and socially mobile burghers, primarily from the larger lower and middle strata, created a driving wedge of popular support; and government consolidated and moderated the new institutional changes. S. Ozment, The Reformation in the Cities-The appeal of Protestantism to sixteenth-century Germany and Switzerland , 1975, p.123, p.131.

*11: Thomas Brady, Ruling Class, Regime and Reformation at Strasbourg 1520-1555, 1978; for a brief reminder of Strasbourg's socio-political situation see pp.19-21, Chapter 1; Part 1.

***12:** In Section 4 of this Chapter we shall be dealing with the discussion among current historians on the matter of a possible typology of the urban Reformation. A reinforcement of Brady's remark comes from Heiko Oberman who detects a clear-cut initial differentiation in the ecclesiologies of Luther and the southern reformers by asserting that whereas Luther's ecclesiology was antipapal, in the south German cities, because of the long-standing rivalry between communes and bishops, the reformers tended to espouse an antiepiscopal ecclesiology. Heiko Oberman, Masters of the Reformation-The emergence of a new intellectual climate in Europe , 1981, pp. 290-295.

***13:** Thomas Brady jr, 'The Social History of the Reformation between "romantic idealism" and "sociologism" - A Reply', in: W. Mommsen, P. Alter, B. Scribner, eds., The Urban Classes. the Nobility and the Reformation , p. 41.

***14:** L. J. Abray, The People's Reformation - Magistrates, Clergy and Commons in Strasbourg. 1500-1598, 1985.

***15:** Bob Scribner, 'The Reformation as a social movement', The Urban Classes. the Nobility and the Reformation.

***16:** We shall later discuss Scribner's formulations on the nature of Zwickau's popular evangelical movement, when, in Section 5 of this chapter, we shall deal with the proximity of the Reformation with socio-political revolution, as propounded by Peter Blickle.

***17:** Philip Broadhead, 'Politics and expediency in the Augsburg Reformation': in P.Brooks, ed., Reformation Principle and Practice- Essays in honour of A.G.Dickens ,

1980.

***18:** John Stalnaker, '*Residenzstadt* and Reformation: Religion, Politics and Social Policy in Hesse, 1509-1546', Archiv für Reformationsgeschichte, 64 , 1973; see pp. 34-36, Chapter 1, Part 1.

***19:** Heinz Schilling, 'The Reformation in the Hanseatic cities', Sixteenth Century Journal , XIV, 1983.

***20:** See pp. 14-16, Chapter 1.

***21:** Bob Scribner, 'Why was there no Reformation in Cologne?' Bulletin of the Institute of Historical Research, XLIX , 1976; see also pp. 33-34 of Chapter 1, Part 1.

***22:** Gerald Strauss, Nuremberg in the Sixteenth Century - City politics and life between Middle Ages and Modern Times , 1976; see also pp 22-23, Chapter 1, Part 1 for a brief presentation of Strauss' assertions on the city's hierarchical structure.

***23:** Nuremberg's stand throughout the Reformation crisis will be further discussed in the next section, dealing with the question of 'Reformation and politics'.

***24:** Chapter 1, Part 1, pp. 52-54. Thomas Brady, Turning Swiss , 1985.

***25:** Further discussion of this evolution of the Reformation process in Germany in the following section, dealing with a possible typology of the Reformation. Although this will only be a brief reference - since the princely phase of the Reformation is beyond the scope of this thesis - it is worth noticing at this stage that, viewed in a long-term perspective, the princely phase of the Reformation was the

one that truly secured the establishment of the new faith, through its institutionalisation - namely, the creation of the territorial reformed ecclesiastical organisation. The political situation of early sixteenth-century German Empire meant - or, rather, dictated - that the Reformation could only survive if it passed under the direction and protection of the most powerful political force, and that was the princes and not the urban front. Princely Reformation - no matter whether 'progressive' or 'reactionary' - appeared clearly as the only precondition for the survival of the Reformation itself. Heiko Oberman, Masters of the Reformation , p. 277.

*26:G.Strauss, Nuremberg in the Sixteenth Century, pp. 179-182.

*27:H.Schilling, 'The Reformation in the Hanseatic cities', pp. 454-456; this situation was already underlined in our presentation of J.Stalnaker's formulations on Marburg's Reformation in Section 2a of this chapter.

*28:Bob Scribner, 'Civic unity and the Reformation in Erfurt', Past & Present, 66 , 1975; see also pp. 32-33 of chapter 1, part 1 .

*29: H.Schilling's reservations about the cultural- political climate of the northern territorial towns as depicted by Moeller do not really constitute an objection since ^{he} himself recognises the peculiarity of the 'Hanseatic city Reformation' with reference to the catalytic presence of the territorial state.

*30: A.G.Dickens, The German Nation and Martin Luther,

1974, p.190.

*31: H.Oberman, Masters of the Reformation , p. 294.

*32: The following section will deal more extensively with the formulations of recent historians of the urban Reformation with reference to the proximity of the ideal of reform with that of revolution . It is no wonder that it was precisely the doctrine of the priesthood of all believers that armed the insurgent peasants with a godly justification of their worldly struggle for social justice on earth.

*33: R. W. Scribner, 'Why was there no Reformation in Cologne?', Bulletin of the Institute of Historical Research, XLIX , 1976, 217-241, p. 241.

*34: A.G.Dickens is one of the very few historians who paid due attention to the capital importance of the wave of erastianism that swept all over major European countries and reached a climax in Germany; Reformation and Society in Sixteenth-Century Europe , 1966, pp. 22-23; see also, Chapter 1, pp. 47-48. The importance of erastianism as a precondition for the success of the German Reformation was also underlined to me by Dr.Scribner during a discussion in Cambridge, on June 24, 1987.

*35:The way Nuremberg's oligarchy conceived of the Reformation was clearly manifested in the debate that took place between Dr.Christoph Scheurl, Cardinal Campeggio and Archduke Ferdinand in 1524-25; see the relevant article by Philip Norton Bebb: 'The lawyers, Dr.Christoph Scheurl, and the Reformation in Nurnberg', in: L. P. Buck & J. W. Zophy eds., The Social History of the Reformation , 1972, pp.

53-68.

***36:** For example, we have already seen Erfurt's Lutheran leaders espousing a radical anti-oligarchic stand, disillusioned with the city council's stand: Bob Scribner, 'Civic unity and the Reformation in Erfurt', Past & Present, 66 , 1975. Equally, Wolfgang Musculus, the man who offered Augsburg's oligarchy the right to control the appointments and functions of the preachers happened to be the most influential Zwinglian pastor in the city, and certainly not a Lutheran: P.Broadhead, 'Politics and expediency in the Augsburg Reformation', in P.Brooks ed., Reformation principle and practice.

***37:** Peter Blickle, 'Social protest and Reformation theology' in: K. von Greyerz ed., Religion, Politics and Social Protest - Three Studies on Early Modern Germany , 1984.

***38:** Bob Scribner, 'The Reformation as a social movement', in: The urban classes, the nobility and the Reformation.

***39:** Peter Blickle, The Revolution of 1525 - The German Peasants' War from a new perspective , 1981.

***40:** Something that is omitted in Blickle's presentation is the fact that the civic oligarchy of Memmingen faced a fervent opposition on the part of the preachers of St. Martin, even before Schappeler's appointment. It was Dr. Jodokus Gray, Schappeler's predecessor who forced the Emperor Maximilian to order him to stop arousing the popular sentiment against the city government in 1507. See, Paul Russell, Lay Theology in the Reformation - Popular pamphleteers in Southwest Germany, 1521-1525 1986, p. 83.

- *41: Lawrence Buck, 'Civil insurrection in a Reformation city: The *Versicherungsbrief* of Windsheim, March 1525' Archiv für Reformationsgeschichte, 67, 1976, 100-147.
- *42: Kaspar von Greyerz, The late city Reformation in Germany - the case of Colmar. 1522-1628.
- *43: Steven Ozment, The Reformation in the cities - the appeal of Protestantism to sixteenth-century Germany and Switzerland, 1975.
- *44: S. Ozment, 'Pamphlets as a source: Comments on Bernd Moeller's 'stadt und buch' ', in: The urban classes, the nobility and the Reformation, p. 47.
- *45: See note 10 of this chapter.
- *46: Miriam Usher Chrisman, Lay Culture, Learned Culture - Books and Social change in Strasbourg. 1480-1599, 1982.
- *47: Lorna Abray, The People's Reformation - Magistrates, Clergy and Commons in Strasbourg. 1500-1598, 1985, p. 184.
- *48: Bob Scribner, 'How many could read? Comments on Bernd Moeller's 'Stadt und Buch' ', The urban classes, the nobility and the Reformation.
- *49: Bob Scribner, 'Reformation, Carnival and the World turned upside-down', in: Ingrid Batori ed., Städtische Gesellschaft und Reformation, 1980; see, also, Yves-Marie Berce', Fête et Révolte - Des mentalités populaires du XVIe au XVIIIe siècle, 1976.
- *50: Bob Scribner, 'Is there a social history of the Reformation?', Social History, 4, 1977, p. 499.
- *51: Peter Blickle, 'The Peasant War as the Revolution of

the Common Man - Theses' in Bob Scribner & Gerhard Benecke eds., The German Peasant War of 1525 - New viewpoints, 1979, p. 20. In an extract of his Revolution of 1525, published in the same compilation of works on the Peasants' War, Blickle correctly uses the term 'biblicism' as it was indeed biblicism - as the distortion of Luther's message on the part of the oppressed in town and countryside - that emerged as a potential threat to feudalism. It is here that Blickle asserts that frequent reference to the Bible armed the rebels with enormous power: 'Godly law was potentially dynamic in a threefold sense. Now any kind of demands which were deducible from the Bible could be put forward. The social barriers which had previously separated the peasants and townsmen were now removed. In principle the future social and political order now stood open' [p. 142].

***52:** Peter Blickle, The Revolution of 1525 - The German Peasants' War from a new perspective, 1981, p. 117.

***53:** R. W. Scribner, 'The Reformation as a social movement', The urban classes, the nobility and the Reformation.

***54:** Something masterfully proved by Tom Scott in his extensive examination of the relations between town and country during the rebellion; see the following pages.

***55:** Lyndal Roper, 'The "Common Man", "The Common Good", "Common Women": Gender and meaning in the German Reformation commune', Social History, 12, 1, 1987.

***56:** See p.127, Chapter 2.

***57:** Tom Scott, 'Reformation and Peasants' War in Waldshut and environs: a structural analysis', Archiv für Reformationsgeschichte, 69, 1978, 81-102 and 70, 1979, 140-168.

***58:** Scott asserts that Zwingli was forced to endorse the payment of tithes as the city of Zurich, whose political support was much needed, controlled the administration of tithes and benefices.

***59:** Tom Scott, Freiburg and the Breisgau - Town-country relations in the age of the Reformation and the Peasants' War, 1986.

***60:** In his major historiographical review of the Peasants' War, in The Historical Journal, XXII, 2-3, 1979, 693-720, 721-730, and especially the second part, Scott propounds the best yet critique of Blickle's theory: to him, the greatest weakness of the German historian is his overexaggeration of the power of ideology to overcome the social differences and the frequently bitter economic competition between town and country: 'Blickle is so committed to a political-ideological interpretation of the Peasants' War which analyses the revolt deductively in terms of its aims and programmes rather than inductively in terms of structural circumstances and internal dynamic, that he fails to grasp the complexities and contradictions of alliances between peasants and burghers' [p. 957]. Another valid point of Scott's critique refers to Blickle's categorisation of the divergent stands of the commons of the Landsstädte and the Reichsstädte towards the rebellious peasants. Scott

maintains that, in fact, it was the divergent nature of the relationship of the peasant-burgher towns as well as of the larger commercial and industrial centres with their hinterland that shaped their respective policies towards a prospective alliance with the rebels [p. 958].

*61: Paul Russell, Lay Theology in the Reformation - Popular pamphleteers in Southwestern Germany, 1521-1525, 1986.

*62: This particular argument was raised in my discussion with Dr. Scribner in Cambridge, on June 24, 1987. It is generally from this discussion that I was able to draw my final conclusions with reference to the Blickle thesis. Interestingly enough, Scott maintains that even Muntzer, the revolutionary figure *par excellence* in Marxist historiography, ultimately failed to 'articulate, legitimate and advocate the wider social, economic and political demands of the common people'. To Scott, Müntzer's revolution was aiming at attaining the true faith and Christ's kingdom on earth and that presupposed 'the conquering of all "creaturely", worldly desires'. Tom Scott, 'The Volksreformation of Thomas Müntzer in Allstedt and Mulhausen', Journal of Ecclesiastical History, vol. 24, 2, 1983, 194-213, citation from p. 213.

*63: Bob Scribner, The German Reformation, 1986, p. 40. The ideal of the communal Reformation was mortally wounded following the suppression of the peasant rebellion, despite sporadic attempts by some guilds to press for a redistribution of civic power and common wealth; Tom

Scott, 'The Peasants' War - A Historiographical Review', The Historical Journal, 22, 4, 1979, pp. 963-964. In this sense, the communal Reformation, based on the concept of the priesthood of all believers and the right of the community to self-determination was indeed 'the lost religion' of Reformation history, as pointed to me by Dr. Scribner.

***64:** 'Reform' in its broad sense, encompassing all aspects of civic life and administration; 'Reformation' as the doctrinal body behind the movement.

***65:** Bob Scribner, The German Reformation, p. 53.

***66:** Since the days that Moeller's pioneering study opened the chapter of the urban Reformation, too much attention has been paid to the large Imperial Cities which as we have already seen constituted a minority in the German urban world: around eighty in approximately 2,000 towns. Certainly, one could argue that Strasbourg, Augsburg or Nuremberg were more 'urban' in comparison with Waldshut, but their study by no means exhausts the examination of the phenomenon. Rather, it points to its methodological limitations; as A. G. Dickens has remarked in The German Nation and Martin Luther, the typical German town had an average population of between 500 and 2,000 inhabitants and its character was most frequently semirural. Subsequently, the examination of the 'urban' Reformation in this special category of German towns will reveal other aspects of the broader impact of the Reformation on German urban and rural societies; it will also illuminate dimensions of the relationship between town and country

that have been so far neglected or underestimated; for further comments, see Chapter 5.

Having presented the original contributions of Scribner and Roper on the position of urban youth and women in the German Reformation commune, it is worth adding to the above considerations the need for the enrichment of the historical sociology of urban Reformation movements with a detailed examination of the engagement of non-institutionalised groups in the evangelical movements - that is, of groups like the youth and women, officially excluded from civic life but who, nevertheless, contributed greatly to the establishment of the Reformation. That means to stress the need for a historical sociology of the Reformation moving beyond the official institutional stratification of urban societies.

*67: Bob Scribner, 'Practice and principle in the German towns: preachers and people' in P. N. Brooks ed., Reformation principle and practice - essays in honour of A. G. Dickens, 1980.

*68: The available rich selection of monographs on various preachers active in the German towns reveals numerous cases of illuminated men, sufficiently equipped to promote the interests and enhance the aspirations of the citizenry; see, for example, the interesting analysis of the contribution of Wenzeslaus Linck as a preacher, by Charles Daniel jr, 'Hard work, Good work, and School work: an analysis of Wenzeslaus Linck's conception of civic responsibility' in L. P. Buck & J. W. Zophy eds., The Social

History of the Reformation, 1972, pp. 41-49. Dr. Scribner is also currently enriching his original list with additional information covering a wider number of preachers, again, on a national scale, in preparation for his forthcoming book on the German Reformation movement.

Notes to Chapter 4

*1: 'The French urban communities prior to the Reformation', above, chapter 2, p. 146.

*2: The available sources use highly confusing terminology on theological and confessional matters, confusion manifested in contemporary denunciations of heretics- for instance, Florimond de Raemonde calls Lefèvre d'Etaples, Farel and Roussel 'Lutheran Zwinglians', as well as in official persecution lists which were not always compiled on the grounds of solid proof of the heretical persuasions of the accused. See D.Nicholls, 'The Nature of Popular Heresy in France, 1500-1542', The Historical Journal, 26, 2, 1983, 261-275, pp. 262-263.

*3: D. Nicholls, 'The nature of popular heresy in France', p. 262.

*4 : The general framework of the relationships of the Catholic Church with the state, the ruling elites and the urban commons was already outlined above, in chapter 2. It is worth noting here that the open clash between royal and ecclesiastical authorities as well as the considerable difficulties that the French monarchy had to face in the implementation of its decisions on urban magistrates proud of their autonomy and zealous defenders of the cities' rights, provided valuable breathing space for religious dissent as it greatly reduced the amount of social control exerted on dissenting citizens by regional and royal authorities. As will be seen in section 3 of this chapter, as with the German urban Reformation movement, the development of the

Reformation in the French cities clearly depended on the state of hierarchical relationships between authority and individual, king and city. See the presentation of the relevant formulations by Scribner concerning Cologne, above, chapter 3, pp. 184-185.

*5 : Besides the obvious differentiation between the urban elites and the artisan and popular masses examined above, in chapter 2, it has to be noted that even in the interior of a social group the possibility of adopting a common dissenting stand towards Catholicism and the Church was usually meagre. For example, Chevalier's investigations on the society of Tours in the period prior to the emergence of Calvinism have shown that the bourgeoisie was divided on the question of ecclesiastical reform. Due to their individualistic religious stand, most citizens were not greatly interested in reforming the ecclesiastical institution; they considered this to be exclusively an affair of the state; furthermore, the middle class of the 'honourables' had a negative view of the royal attempt of ecclesiastical reform, contrary to the members of the 'grandes familles' , loyal servants of the crown and subsequently, overzealous religious reformers. B. Chevalier, Tours Ville Royale, pp. 548-551. George Huppert has also shown that the overall education of the 'gentry', their humanist inclinations and, especially, their heavy engagement in ecclesiastical affairs through the acquisition of benefices made them an eager audience for the ideas of ecclesiastical reform, but certainly not

of the Reformation as it was shaped following the Peasants' War in Germany: 'these men of Luther's generation made a natural distinction between the worldly church and true piety... The troublemakers in the kingdom, like the peasants in Germany, were dangerous from the gentry's perspective not because they had allegedly evangelical doctrines but, on the contrary, because "adding their own opinions and errors", they misunderstood the Gospel, misunderstood even Luther'. G. Huppert, Les Bourgeois Gentilshommes, p. 154. Thus, it is clear that religious dissent in early sixteenth-century France was neither homogeneous and solid nor was it necessarily 'Protestant' in the sense of being 'possessed by a desire for renewal which was strong enough to lead to an actual break with the Catholic Church': R. Mandrou, Introduction to Modern France 1500-1640, pp. 201-202. The only case of massive though totally isolated heresy was that of the Vaudois in the hills of Provence and the Comtat Vénaisin: Nicholls, 'The nature of popular heresy', p. 265.

*6 : E. Le Roy Ladurie, The Peasants of Languedoc, pp. 149-150. Ladurie's own investigations on the Languedoc region have revealed a geographical pattern of Huguenots almost identical to the geographical pattern of the spread of the French language, namely the Rhône - Cévennes - Bas Languedoc triangle, the only French-speaking part of the region in the early 1550s.

*7 : D. Nicholls, 'The nature of Popular Heresy in France, 1520-1542', pp. 265-266. A closer look at the circulation of

Protestant propaganda during the early phase of Protestant publications (1521-1540) will however reveal the weakness of the infiltrators as well as the incompetence of their persecutors to permanently silence them. From 1517 to 1521 when the *Determinatio* of the Sorbonne condemned Luther, Lutheran tracts were readily available in France. In a letter to Luther, the Basel-based printer Froben mentioned 600 copies of his work already sent to France and Spain and, surprisingly, well received by the Sorbonne. However, all these tracts were in Latin and there is no evidence of French translation of Luther and Melanchthon in 1521, despite the rumour.

In 1523, the French translation of the New Testament by Jacques Lefèvre d' Etaples literally opened the era of 'reformist' publication, being republished four times between 1523 and 1525 and eleven more during the following decade. The New Testament was followed by the *Psautier* (1524,1525,1531), the Old Testament (1528) and the entire Bible published in Anvers in 1530-1534. Following the condemnation of Lefevre's Bible by the Sorbonne, the evangelical tracts were enriched with biblical extracts and short explanatory treatises written by Lefevre and his team; these were followed by short expositions of the gospels and liturgical tracts. In 1525, the French translation of the *Pater* and the *Credo*, translated by Farel and partly by Luther appeared in Paris. This was the base for the immensely popular *Livre de vraie et parfaicte oraison* (1528) which was

republished fourteen times before 1550.

Translations of the Bible, expositions of doctrinal and liturgical tracts, short explanatory treatises for the laity, these were the main features of the early Protestant publications. Also, throughout this phase, the evangelicals refrained from publishing the more polemic tracts of Luther, in order to avoid the wrath of the Sorbonne. They had every reason to do so because, at this stage, all printing activity of the evangelical group came from a minuscule group of printers, whom they could not afford to sacrifice. Francis Higman, 'Le Lévain de l' Evangile', Histoire de l' Edition Française. I. Le livre conquérant - Du Moyen Age au milieu du XVI^e siècle, 1982, H. J. Martin & R. Chartier eds., pp. 305-307.

*8: Henry Heller, 'Famine, revolt and heresy at Meaux, 1521-1525', Archiv für Reformationsgeschichte, 68, 1977, 133-157.

*9: Briçonnet's policies were heavily criticised by the reactionary upper echelons of the ecclesiastical hierarchy. Furthermore, the inner division of the Gallican Church between those who, like the bishop of Meaux, adhered to the authority of the Gospel as the sole principle of ecclesiastical reform and those adhering to the traditional principle of the ultimate authority of the Church to regulate its own affairs, further facilitated the dissemination of Protestant ideas. Francis Higman, ' Le levain de l' Evangile', p. 308.

***10:** See, for example, L. Febvre's elaboration in his Life in Renaissance France, and, mainly, Au cœur religieux du XVI^e siècle. Ladurie's formulations on the two parallel revolutions in early modern French mental attitudes are characteristic of this tendency.

***11:** Pierre Chaunu, 'Niveaux de culture et Réforme', Bulletin de l' Histoire du Protestantisme Français, 1972, 305-325.

***12:** see above, p. 138, chapter 2.

***13:** David Nicholl's caustic - but , in our view, very successful - critique of Chaunu's work provides us with a valuable juxtaposition of the **Annales'** approach with the long-standing self-admiration of the official French Protestant Historiography. D. Nicholls, 'The Social History of the French Reformation: Ideology, Confession and Culture', Social History, 9, 1, January 1984, 25-43, esp. pp. 39-40.

***14:** D. Nicholls, 'The nature of popular heresy in France, 1520-1542', p. 273.

***15:** V. Chomel, 'Pouvoir royal et croissance urbaine', Histoire de Grenoble, 1976, p. 113.

***16:** R. Gascon, Grand commerce et vie urbaine au XVI^e siècle - Lyon et ses marchands , 1971, p. 463.

***17:** D. Nicholls, 'Social change and early Protestantism in France: Normandy 1520-1562', European Studies Review, 10, 1980, 279-308, esp. pp. 290-292. For example, in Rouen, the Relation des troubles excités par les Calvinistes dans la ville de Rouen

written by a cathedral priest in the late 1530s speaks of an early Protestant community mainly composed of members of the more skilled crafts and trades: Henry Heller, The conquest of poverty - the Calvinist revolt in 16th-century France, 1986, 'The death of trade - Conards and heretics at Rouen, 1542', pp.14-15. The question of the proximity of the artisan mentality or work ethics with the Protestant spirit will be discussed in the fourth section of the chapter.

***18:** Henry Heller, The conquest of poverty, pp. 53-54.

***19:** In fact, one can safely assume that French Protestantism was an urban event right from its inception, as the bulk of recent research on the dissemination of Protestantism in the country has established a pattern of geographical expansion which barely affected the isolated, mountainous communities and remote villages. Subsequently, geography and the presence of Catholic seigneurs were amongst the multitude of factors that prevented Protestantism from gaining a large peasant audience. For example, in the Lower Languedoc region and specifically in that of the diocese of Nîmes, it appears that, after being exported from the towns, Protestantism was able to slowly gain ground in the valleys without managing to affect the higher based localities and isolated places like St. Martial; also, in the valley of Arre, Calvinism spread along the river Vigan, whereas localities situated at a higher altitude remained Catholic: R. Sauzet, 'Le Réfus de la Réforme Protestante- La fidélité

Catholique en Bas - Languedoc Calviniste', Les Réformes. Enracinement socioculturel. XXVe colloque international d'études humanistes, Tours, 1er - 13 Juillet 1982, pp. 358-359.

***20:** D. Nicholls, 'Social change and early Protestantism in France'.

***21:** See above, chapter 1, note 10. As we shall see below, in section 4 and especially in part III, a broad parallel can be drawn between the German and the French urban Reformation movements with reference to the response of each of their constituent groups to the Protestant appeal; as already shown in chapter 1, section 2a, that response depended on the perception of reform and Reformation as prospects, directly stemming from their particular socioeconomic and political status as well as their mental outlook.

***22:** R. Gascon, Grand commerce et vie urbaine, pp. 473-477.

***23:** Henry Heller, The conquest of poverty.

***24:** Heller, The conquest of poverty, chapter three, 'The Protestantism of the notables: Heresy in the College of Agen'.

***25:** Among other things, we have to bear in mind that, as in Germany, French Protestantism did not emerge and develop simultaneously and homogeneously in all French urban centres. The immense diversity of the sixteenth-century French cultural, political and economic landscape, although less profound than the German case, simply did not allow such a course of events to take place. With regards to the initial phase of expansion of the

French Protestant movement we can draw a broad outline from D. Nicholl's remarks on the evolution of French Protestantism on a national scale: in Picardy, Protestantism followed the steps of its Norman counterpart, as the fortunes of the Reformation were linked with the regional economic development and level of culture; still, a less dynamic economy and the systematic repression exerted by the Parlement meant that Picard Protestantism managed to recruit considerably fewer people from all classes. In the Ile - de - France region east of Normandy, Protestantism was a predominantly urban phenomenon, as shown by the refugees in Geneva from Paris, Meaux, Beauvais, Senlis and other towns of the region. Between 1555 and 1562 French Protestantism was controlled by the bourgeois while having an artisan base; the rural countryside appears to have been little affected. Brittany, socio-economically quite similar to Lower Normandy - due to the prevalence of the *bocage* system - and with its own brand of Catholicism based on local saints and shrines, was a difficult area for Protestantism, apart from the commercial and industrial port of Nantes which had a Protestant population of the size of Rouen's. In Champagne, a poor area but still a crossroad of commercial traffic and new ideas, the provincial capital, Troyes, had numerous Protestants. The local Protestant community was characterized by 'the willingness of Protestant artisans to take risks contrasted with the discretion of

bourgeois converts'. South of the Loire, Protestantism was identified with the larger cities such as Poitiers, La Rochelle and Lyon but not Bordeaux and Toulouse. In Languedoc, Protestantism was transmitted from town to countryside; towns like Nîmes and Montpellier had powerful Protestant minorities, and Protestantism was greatly helped by the protection offered by local nobles. The striking feature of Montpellier's case was the socio-confessional confrontation between the Catholic rural labourers and the Protestant artisans and bourgeois. On the contrary, the prosperous independent peasantry of the Cévennes massively adhered to the Calvinist cause 'irrespective of the attitudes of the nobility'. D. Nicholls, 'Social change and early Protestantism in France', pp. 280-292.

***26:** D. Nicholls, 'The nature of popular heresy in France, 1520-1542', p. 275. Also, D. Nicholls, 'Social change and early Protestantism', p. 286

***27:** Philip Benedict, Rouen during the Wars of Religion, 1981, pp. 49-50. See chapter 2, pp. 120-122.

***28:** In the following section we shall take a closer look at the sociology of Rouen's Protestant camp. With regards to the present stage of our discussion, it suffices to note that Rouen's governing elites, namely the officeholders appear proportionately underrepresented in the Huguenot camp. On the other hand, Calvinism's appeal to the merchants and artisans was not a homogeneous one. Thus, in their bid for supremacy, Rouen's

Protestants were fundamentally too weak to alter drastically the political landscape to their advantage. It is also worth adding as a general conclusion that the failure of Rouen's Protestants to establish a firm grip of the urban hierarchical system but also of the social body is an obvious parallel to the case of Cologne as examined by Scribner: chapter 1, pp.184-185. In fact, Benedict draws the same parallel and one can suggest that the overall juxtaposition of the evolution of the German and French urban Reformation movements tends to certify the great dependence of Protestantism upon its ability to break the sociopolitical control exerted by hostile governments over the urban communities.

*29: P. France, 'Les Protestants à Grenoble au XVI^e siècle', Cahiers d' Histoire, III, 1962, 319-331, esp. pp. 326-328.

*30: Richard Gascon, Grand Commerce et vie urbaine au XVI^e siècle, Tome 2, p. 478.

*31: For example, a subject of long-standing controversy, the subordination of ecclesiastical justice to the city's 'justice ordinaire' was finally resolved in the years 1562-3, though not entirely to the advantage of Lyon's civic authorities. In their struggle with the archbishop, Lyon's Calvinist consuls exploited the differences between the king and the Church by accusing the clergy of defying royal justice. On April 22, 1562 the right of administering justice was removed from the clergy on royal orders; but instead of being assimilated to the 'justice

ordinaire' it was taken over by the royal 'Sénéchaussée'. Gascon, Grand commerce et vie urbaine, pp. 489-490.

***32:** Arlette Jouanna, 'La première domination des réformés à Montpellier, 1561-1563' in: Les Réformes - Enracinement socioculturel.

***33:** Toulouse's staunch Catholicism was not the product of religious bigotry or of lust for blood and oppression, an image that contemporary Calvinists, including their leader, were too keen to establish. According to Raymond Mentzer jr., the 'parlementaires' of Toulouse opposed Calvinism mainly on social and political grounds rather than doctrinal ones. To them, Calvinism in the 1560s had become synonymous with sedition and was inevitably treated as a national threat of enormous dimensions: 'Protestantism threatened the basic stability of the kingdom. For an institution charged with the minimalization of conflict within society the problem was far greater than a simple matter of doctrinal dissent'. R. Mentzer jr., 'Calvinist propaganda and the Parlement of Toulouse', Archiv für Reformationsgeschichte, 68, 1977, 268-283, p. 282.

***34:** Besides their major political dilemma vis - à - vis a Catholic monarch, Montpellier's Calvinist rulers were also being undermined by inner social divisions which resulted in an open confrontation of the radical and moderate wings of the movement. See below, section 4.

***35:** Judith Pugh Meyer, 'La Rochelle and the failure of the

French Reformation', Sixteenth Century Journal, XV, 2, 1984.

*36: Chapter 2, pp. 130-131.

*37: Thus, the list of 2,150 Calvinist churches drawn under de Coligny's orders appears to have been an instrument of political pressure rather than an accurate depiction of the situation and overall size of the Protestant camp. Mark Greengrass, The French Reformation, 1987, p. 43. Equally, a juxtaposition of the lists of alleged Protestants of Toulouse, Grenoble and Rouen leads Joan Davies to conclude that the curious fact that 'conseillers' and 'parlementaires' appear in sizeable groups in some lists while they are almost totally absent from others is an obvious manifestation of political manipulation. Some humanist councillors may have been denounced as heretics because of personal rivalries and political feuds within the urban elites. Joan Davies, 'Persecution and Protestantism - Toulouse 1562-1575', The Historical Journal, 22, 1979, pp. 49-50.

*38: Gascon, Grand commerce et vie urbaine

*39: Chapter 2, p. 126.

*40: N. Z. Davis, 'Strikes and Salvation at Lyons', Archiv fur Reformationsgeschichte, 56, 1965, 48-64; see, also, chapter 2, pp.100-101.

*41: N. Z. Davis, 'The sacred and the body social in sixteenth-century Lyons', Past & Present, 90, 1981, 40-70, p. 48.

*42: P. Benedict, Rouen during the wars of religion, 1981.

*43: This view is however contested by Henry Heller who

maintains that Benedict has largely underestimated the involvement of the lower 'proletarian' artisan ranks in Rouen's Protestant movement. Heller draws evidence from the suburban parish of Saint-Gervais, not used by Benedict in his own research; the suburb, inhabited by numerous 'tisserands' was a dynamic stronghold of Protestantism. Henry Heller, 'Les artisans au début de la Réforme: Hommage à Henri Hauser', Les Réformes - Enracinement socioculturel, pp. 140-141, esp. footnote no. 47.

***44:** E. Le Roy Ladurie, The Peasants of Languedoc, 1974.

***45:** Characteristically enough, Ladurie's total identification of Protestantism with the advanced groups of the urban communities does not inhibit him from tackling the obvious paradox of massive Protestant success in the rural communities of the Cévennes. In this case he maintains that the Reformed ideals, disseminated by Huguenot artisans and cobblers, affected mainly the top of the peasant hierarchical pyramid and gradually reached the humble base by means of the authoritarian and patriarchal structures of the rural communities of Cévennes and its surrounding valleys. Furthermore, he asserts that the adherence of the peasants to the Reformation presupposed their total alienation, namely the loss of their 'mystical' and 'irrational' character through a process of bourgeoisification. Ladurie, The Peasants of Languedoc, pp.164-171. For all its merits and indisputable appeal as an interpretive model, Ladurie's thesis can barely serve as a basis for generalisations

on the appeal of the Reformation in urban and rural societies. We need only bring to mind Strasbourg's gardeners' guild, the most dynamic and radical protagonist of the urban Reformation movement to make ourselves fully aware of the inflexibility of such an interpretation.

***46:** A. Jouanna, 'La première domination des Réformés à Montpellier'

***47:** Ladurie, The peasants of Languedoc, p.171.

***48:** J. Davies, 'Persecution and Protestantism'.

***49:** In the period between 1510 and 1560, 1069 persons were accused of heresy; of them, 6 % died at the stake and 2 - 3 % were subjected to torture, something that cannot compare with the persecution in Paris where, roughly during the same period, 7 % of the suspected Huguenots were executed and 10 % underwent torture. R. Mentzer jr., 'Calvinist propaganda and the Parlement of Toulouse', pp. 280-281. Although this refers to an earlier period, before the Protestant coup, it can be used as a counter argument quite safely, unless we suppose that the intensification of persecution following 1562 brought about a massive slaughter of the Huguenot artisans.

***50:** This is verified by the creation of a Protestant 'Chambre de l' Edict' with jurisdiction over Languedoc in 1579; to the Protestant minority within Toulouse's Parlement, this chamber was essentially a court of appeal for those of their brothers who felt they would receive an unfair treatment by the Parlement. R.

Mentzer, 'Calvinist propaganda and the Parlement of Toulouse', p. 270.

***51:** D. Richet, 'Aspects socioculturels des conflits religieux à Paris dans la seconde moitié du XVI^e siècle', Annales ESC, 32, 4, 1977, 764-789.

***52:** Richet cites two documents, the first concerning thirty-nine 'conseillers au parlement' suspected of heresy in 1562 and the second 'parlementaires' who were called to make a 'profession de foi' again in 1562; the over-exaggerating tone of the first document attests to other motives of denunciation of Protestants apart from the strictly religious ones; as for the second, its unreliability lies in the fact that amongst those who publicly declared their Catholic faith there were persuaded Protestants, like the already mentioned 'prévôt des marchands' and other prominent Parisians. Richet, 'aspects socio-culturels des conflits religieux', p. 768.

***53:** Maryelise Suffern - Lamet, 'French Protestants in a position of strength - the early years of the Reformation in Caen, 1558-1568' Sixteenth Century Journal, IX, 3, 1978.

***54:** Marc Vénard, 'Les Protestants du Comtat Venaissin au temps des premières guerres de religion', Actes du Colloque: L'Amiral de Coligny et son temps, 1974. In the north of the region, Protestant success in recruiting the masses varied from a respectable 7 % of the families of Valréas to the impressive 31 % in Serignan; on the contrary, in the south no more than ar

average 2 % of families was converted. pp. 287-289.

***55:** The social composition of the Protestant camp in Valréas, a small textile centre with the largest list of condemned Huguenots (114 persons) is as follows: 19,7 % notables (seigneurs, grands bourgeois, advocates, notaries, councillors), 42,2 % craftsmen, 35,2 % non-qualified workers and a mere 2,8% agricultural labourers; to Vénard, the characteristically low representation of the rural population was the rule for the entire kingdom.

***56:** Janine Garrisson, Protestants du Midi. 1559-1598, 1980; indeed, the greatest weakness of an otherwise extremely valuable book lies in the author's interpretive approach; a persuaded Protestant herself, Janine Garrisson writes an 'internal history of Protestantism', as D. Nicholls rightly remarks in 'The Social History of the French Reformation', p.39. Her theoretical a priori concerning the 'values' and 'norms' of the southern Protestants are less than satisfactory in explaining the ultimate failure of Protestantism even in a region which had appeared the most favourable for the emergence of a Huguenot state. For an articulate critique see Nicholls, 'The Social History of the French Reformation', pp. 35-39.

***57:** The geographical limits of the region studied by Garrisson are the Rhône and the Atlantic, and Auvergne and Bas-Languedoc.

***58:** In fact, the examination of the cultural diffusion of Protestantism in the French urban centres presents us with a

multifaced, complex propaganda mechanism that not only moved with the times, reshaping its content and slogans but, equally, was meant to appeal to a social spectrum as wide as possible. With reference to the dissemination of Protestantism by print, Donald Kelley's examination of the evolution of propaganda pamphlets and broadsheets throughout the Reformation crisis in France is quite illuminating of the above mentioned features: religious propaganda pamphlets in early sixteenth-century France were a miscellaneous lot, ranging from mystical tracts to aggressive rhetoric, biblical commentaries, instructions on matters of faith and piety, scathing assaults on the agents of the antichrist - that is, the Pope and the Sorbonne etc. The inflammatory broadsheets of 1534 reveal according to Kelley the adoption by the French Reformed propagandists - such as Lambert, De Coct and Farel - of the aggressive popular rhetoric initiated by Luther.

As for their stylistic expressions, the pamphlets were initially impregnated with sarcasm and humour, as shown for instance in the youthful work of Beza against the abbot Lizet. The second major form of expression was the pseudograph - that is, fake documents attributed to the other side - that became especially prevalent in the wars of religion. A third expression was the personification of the clash of confessions: the Cardinal of Lorraine, 'The Tiger of France' and Catherine de Medici, 'the whore', were the favourite targets of Huguenot propaganda,

depicted as incarnations of evil. A fourth feature of the propaganda pamphlets was their historical content and didactic purpose: a Huguenot reconstruction of history was deemed necessary in the ferocious ideological war against Catholicism and, later, the state. It started off with the fabrication of Huguenot heroes and the enumeration of past evils that had afflicted true religion and culminated in the Protestant martyrology of mid-sixteenth century.

As the prospect of civil war became clear-cut, the pamphleteers concentrated on accounts and analyses of major events - such as battles, plots or massacres - and, gradually, with legal and political issues like 'legitimacy', 'authority' and 'tyranny'. In fact from 1559 onwards, the legal-political dimension prevailed over the theological in the majority of the pamphlets, something exemplified by Hotman, the man who started with an essay on 'the state of the primitive Church' to end up as the most notorious polemicist of the civil war years. The 1560s were marked by the openness of the pamphlet literature, whose 'declarations', 'requests', 'warnings' and 'supplications' raised political and legal issues barely disguised as theological treatises. Following the massacre of Vassy in 1562, Huguenot pamphlet literature produced numerous tracts of counter-legislation to that issued by the crown. This again ascribed to the overall tendency of French pamphlet literature to move beyond theological dispute and acquire a legal and political

dimension; in other words, to become a propaganda instrument as it is envisaged today. D. Kelley, The beginning of ideology, 1981, pp. 247-250.

The growing awareness on the part of mid-sixteenth-century Frenchmen of the enormous potential of the printed book or pamphlet in the confessional war was epitomized in the famous appeal of Ronsard: 'as it is by books that the enemy seduces the people who wrongly follow him, we must confront him disputing through books, attack him with books, respond to him with books': Discours des misères de ce temps: Elegie a Guillaume des Antels, 1560, verses 19-22; cited by Genevieve Guilleminot, 'La polémique en 1561: Les règles du jeu', Le Pamphlet en France au XVIe siècle, 1983, pp. 47-48.

A major advantage of the Calvinist printed propaganda was the use of the French language, something that made it accessible to a wide audience from all strata of urban society. On their part, the Catholic polemicists of early sixteenth century were mainly theologians, writing in Latin and implementing the rules of rhetorics in the exposition of their theses. The fact that besides the great and powerful of the world, propaganda mainly focused on the many and humble, soon obliged the Catholic authors to join their opponents in writing in French. A characteristic example is that of the inquisitor Antoine de Mouclus who, in 1560, regretted having composed his 'Response a quelque apologie' in French; as he pointed out to his colleagues

this was obligatory since his thesis responded to a Protestant tract in French: Guilleminot, 'La polémique en 1561', pp. 53-55.

The use of French enabled the Huguenot minority to bid dynamically for control of the public opinion which, in a state of civil war, was probably the most crucial issue. As H. Carrier puts it, 'the pamphlet has a twofold relationship with public opinion: On the one hand it allows it to express itself, reflecting it as a mirror and feeding itself on it; on the other, it influences public opinion, feeds it on its part, moulds it'. That is why the religious wars in France saw a dissemination of pamphlet literature to all strata of urban societies, even those who were barely interested in theological controversies. Thus, one can maintain that pamphlet literature accelerated the spread of French language which it nevertheless needed as a vehicle in its attempt to consolidate its message in the French people. Henri Carrier, 'Conclusion: Pour une définition du pamphlet: Constantes du genre et caractéristiques originales des textes polémiques du XVI^e siècle', Le pamphlet en France au XVI^e siècle, pp. 129-130.

Besides the printed forms of Protestant propaganda, there were also other, oral and visual, especially appealing to the urban masses: plays and farces, pictorial collections, all contributed in attracting the lower urban social ranks to the Protestant cause. See, for instance, H. Heller's analysis of the theatrical farce 'L'Eglise, Noblesse et Pauvreté qui font la Lessive. Moralité nouvelle à trois personnages', performed at the

1542 carnival of Rouen, devoted to the 'death of trade'. H. Heller, The Conquest of poverty, pp. 6-12, 14-20.

***59:** At this point, Garrison's stress on the force of socio-cultural and religious coercion of those urban societies recalls the similar situation in Cologne, whose **Gaffel** constitution and the corresponding high degree of control of the guilds by the authorities had made it literally impossible for Protestantism to gain new recruits, acquire its own social space. See chapter 1, pp. 184-185.

***60:** Mark Greengrass, The French Reformation, pp. 55-56.

***61:** D. R. Kelley, The beginning of ideology - consciousness and society in the French Reformation, p. 340.

***62:** B. Chevalier, Les Bonnes villes de France, pp. 303-306. Chevalier's stress of the role of Protestantism in the breach of urban cultural consensus appears to be dangerously flirting with Muchembled's misleading generalisations. However, the obvious failure of Protestantism to recruit the lower social groups points to the fact that, to them, it formed part of an alien culture, a worldview which they could not envisage as serving their proper needs and aspirations.

***63:** A. N. Galpern, The Religions of the people in sixteenth-century Champagne, 1976, pp. 124-130. For the attitude of the bourgeoisie see G. Huppert, Les bourgeois gentilshommes, pp. 153-155.

***64:** D. Nicholls, 'Social change and early Protestantism in

France'. The affair Morelli, where the entire Calvinist ecclesiastical institution was challenged by an alternative ecclesia populus of alleged anabaptist affiliations was not the only major form of dissent that shattered the French Calvinist church. Numerous other incidents, indirect influences of Morelli or individual cases of doctrinal divergence were the preoccupation of a series of national synods. Between 1562 and 1601, sixty-five pastors - representing a tenth of the entire Calvinist pastoral community - were expelled from the Church on the grounds of grievous errors, misconduct and numerous other charges. Janine Garrisson, Protestants du Midi , pp. 143-145.

*65: D. Kelley, The beginning of ideology. pp. 342-343.

*66: It is at this particular point that Garrisson's approach is greatly marred by her overwhelming devotion to the French Protestant cause. In the concluding part of her book she takes it for granted that the Protestants of the south had actually managed to construct a viable political alternative to the monarchical power, based on de-centralization, regional institutions and self-government for the local communities. What appears to be closer to historical realities, however, is that the Huguenots' emphasis on local independence and regional autonomy was the direct product of their failure to subdue the crown. To the majority of the historians of the French Reformation there is nothing to suggest that, if successful - that

is, if they had the king on their side, the Protestants would proceed with decentralization. This view appears even in the introduction of Garrison's book: J. Garrison, Protestants du Midi, pp. 336-337 and p. 5 of the introduction. See the excellent critique by D. Nicholls in his 'The social history of the French Reformation', p. 36.

*67: In fact, as D. Kelley rightly stresses, Huguenotism was forced by the negative course of events to espouse forms of organisation that it theoretically condemned and opposed: 'The "pure faith", the "true Church" of the Huguenots itself developed a complex and corruptible institutional base, and it assumed an increasingly threatening form through the agency of the same legislative tradition which had originally intended to "exterminate" it. The "primitive constitution" and pristine legal and social tradition reconstructed by Hotman were not only ideals but also instruments of partisan propaganda, and very flexible ones at that. And as for "popular government", this was in social terms even more of a covering fiction for particular and very "political" interest groups' : D. Kelley, The beginning of ideology, p. 343.

*1: Roughly speaking, this has been the view that interpreted the Reformation crisis as the culmination and major manifestation of the "eternal Reformation principle" in the specific time, place and personality that was the 16th century, Germany and Martin Luther. With its excessive stress on Luther as the protagonist of the drama, the quasi-prophetic figure that was endowed with the will and divine charisma to restore purity in the christian faith, this view was indeed a Luther cult, as its entire argumentation and conceptual backbone were drawn from theology rather than history. See T. Brady jr., " 'The Social History of the Reformation', between 'romantic idealism' and 'sociologism' - A Reply", in: W. Mommsen, P. Alter & B. Scribner eds., The Urban Classes, the Nobility and the Reformation - Studies on the Social History of the Reformation in England and Germany, 1979, pp. 41-42.

*2: Apart from the previous discussion in the thesis, see also Yves-Marie Bérce', Revolt and Revolution in Early Modern Europe, 1987, pp. 40-41 and Jan de Vries, European Urbanization 1500-1800, 1984, pp. 256-257.

*3: T. Brady, "The Social history of the Reformation...", p. 43.

*4: See pp. 171-3 and 174-87 of the thesis; also, Hans Christoph Rublack, "Is there a 'new history' of the Urban Reformation?" p. 125. As noted in the examination of the urban Reformation in Germany, this relationship actually

entailed the intervention of the civic authorities and their acquisition of the leading role in the Reformation process, something that reverses Moeller's statement that the Reformation was never the work of a council. Immediately after its vague and confusing heyday, it had become evident to the German oligarchs that the Reformation should be placed under their total leadership and control, otherwise it would lead to truly chaotic situations.

*5: See pp. 167-169 and 260-261 of the thesis.

*6: See pp. 235 of the thesis, Scribner, 'The Reformation...', p495

*7: Hans Christoph Rublack, "Is there a 'new history' of the urban Reformation?", p.130; also, above, pp. 178-179, 208-210

*1: G. Strauss, Law, Resistance and the State - the opposition to Roman Law in Reformation Germany, 1986, p. 199.

*2: H. C. Rublack, 'Is there a "new history" of the urban Reformation?' in E. Kouri & T. Scott, eds., Politics and Society in Reformation Europe, 1987, p. 132. Rublack's emphasis on the crisis of authority of the Reformation urban regimes makes him allude to the second, external, political reading of the Reformation, namely the desperate struggle of the urban ruling bodies to preserve their autonomous authority in the face of the Emperor and, mainly, the territorial princes.

*3: Indeed, a social history of religion has only recently emerged as a viable field of research. See the illuminating comment of K. von Greyerz in his introduction to Religion and Society in Early Modern Europe, 1500-1800, 1984.

*4: Steven Ozment should be an obvious additional reference here; still, his oversimplistic depiction of the liberating effect of the contact of early Protestantism with the urban social groups finally follows the line of Moeller whom the American cultural historian accuses of sociologism. See above, pp. 227-229.

*5: For a concise review of the evolution of the historiography of the Reformation in France see D. Nicholls, 'The Social History of the French Reformation: Ideology, Confession and Culture', Social History, 9, 1, 1984, esp. pp.

33-35.

*6: D. Nicholls, 'The Social History of the French Reformation', p. 43. For the latest critique of the acculturation thesis, see Bob Scribner, 'Popular Politics and Cultural Conflict in Early Modern Europe', European History Quarterly, 18, 1, 1988, pp. 71-74.

*7: A. G. Dickens has called for the historians' attention on that particular aspect of the urban Reformation as early as 1974: The German Nation and Martin Luther, pp. 177-178. This point has also been raised by Dr. Scribner during our discussion in Clare College, Cambridge on June 24, 1987; Dr. Scribner's forthcoming book on the German Reformation movement draws heavily on statistics dealing with these particular urban settlements.

*8: J. de Vries, European Urbanization, 1500-1800, 1984, p. 255.

*9: Bob Scribner, 'Understanding Early Modern Europe', Review Article, The Historical Journal, 30, 3, 1987, 743-758, p. 755. David Nicholls, 'Social History of the French Reformation', p. 41.

*10: The obvious difference between the two historians is that Blickle draws a line parallel to the Marxist concept of the 'early bourgeois revolution', whereas Heller's depiction of the 'betrayal' of the French bourgeois Calvinists seems to be espousing it entirely. Henry Heller, The Conquest of Poverty - The Calvinist Revolt in Sixteenth-century France, 1986, pp. 234-240, esp. pp. 241-247, 258.

*11: D. Nicholls, 'Social History of the French Reformation', p. 42. In fact the complexity of the urban Reformation as a historical 'event' and the gravity of its position as a distinct phenomenon of the early modern times calls for expansion into neighbouring fields of historical interest; as J. de Vries has recently pointed out, the urban Reformation can be viewed as a principal part of the process of urbanization of European cities, namely, through its intersection with state building and the recession both of the Church as a worldly power and of late medieval urban autonomy and particularism with regards to princely or royal power; Jan de Vries, European Urbanization, pp. 256-257. Viewed internally, urban Reformation processes can bring together cultural anthropologists, social and cultural historians and, equally, Marxist and non-Marxist historiography, principally around the Gramscian concept of **social and cultural hegemony and integration** that in many ways constitutes a link between the socio-economic causation of traditional Marxism and the analysis of the multiple manifestations of the 'ideological superstructure' undertaken by cultural historians but also by the neomarxists. The concepts of **consent**, of **integration** and **consciousness** are clearly valuable in an interpretation that seeks to explain civic conflict and tension in the early modern urban world without segregating 'ideological forces' from the 'fundamental' socio-economic relationships. For an outline of the Gramscian concept of hegemony, see Joseph

Femia, Gramsci's Political Thought: Hegemony, Consciousness and the Revolutionary Process, 1981, esp. pp. 35-45. This point of view has been expressed by Dr. Scribner during our discussion in Cambridge and is equally propounded by Georg Iggers in his study of the evolution of western historiography from the 1970s onwards: G. Iggers, New Directions in European Historiography, 1984, pp. 204-205. But even within the confines of social history of religion - much needed successor to traditional theological disputes over the Reformation - the examination of the urban Reformation necessitates a parallel study of religious heterodoxy and of the political theologies of organised Protestantism, as D. Nicholls and H. C. Rublack argue in their above mentioned articles.

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