

DONALD R. KELLEY

# François Hotman

*A Revolutionary's Ordeal*



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FRANÇOIS HOTMAN



# François Hotman

A REVOLUTIONARY'S ORDEAL

BY DONALD R. KELLEY

PRINCETON UNIVERSITY PRESS

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*This book is for (and in no small measure by):*

Ralph Giesey

Julian Franklin

John Salmon

*“Tous pour un, un pour tous.”*



## PREFACE

“L’art de fronder, bouleverser les états, est d’ébranler les coutumes établies, en sondant jusque dans leur source, pour marquer leur défaut d’autorité et de justice. Il faut, dit on, recourir aux lois fondamentales et primitives de l’état, qui une coutume injuste a abolies. C’est une jeu sûr pour tout perdre. . . .” Pascal, *Pensées*, I, ii, 9

FRANÇOIS HOTMAN was one of the first modern revolutionaries. I say this with some apprehension, having like most historians been instilled with inhibitions about such flagrant anachronisms. And yet what else is the writing of history, especially the history of an alien and refractory period like the sixteenth century, but the translation of vanished styles of life and modes of thought into currently comprehensible terms—that is, the calculated and critical use of anachronism? In any case there are times when even the most cautious author may be permitted to suggest the universal significance of his particular subject, and I prefer to record my impression at the outset, where it may be admired or despised at once and so put aside, rather than to insert it surreptitiously into the story itself. At least I will be able to avoid that congenital failing of historians, under-simplification.

Standing in the mainstream of the European revolutionary tradition, Hotman should be better known than he is. Born just as Lutheranism was being transformed into a political force, he lived through, helped to shape, and reflected upon one of the most tumultuous periods in European history. He combined in almost equal measure the active and contemplative life. A prodigy who was a published author before he was twenty, he became one of the most respected scholars of his age. A protégé and collaborator of Calvin, on the other hand, he became deeply involved in ecclesiastical politics, Huguenot diplomacy, and



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eventually conspiracy. By the time he was forty, he had reached the peak of both careers. But then came a sharp reversal of fortune: the massacre of St. Bartholomew was a pivotal event not only of the civil wars in France but also of Hotman's life. It did not create but it did confirm his rebellious stance by sending him into permanent exile. His uprooted condition, reinforced by his fundamentalist religious convictions, led him precisely to the attitude referred to by Pascal, the desire "to return to the fundamental and primitive laws of the state"—and he indeed ended up by losing everything.

"Revolutionary" is a fighting word, and no doubt qualifications must be made. I would not want to speak, for example, of a "revolutionary spirit of the French nobility" stemming from Merovingian times, as did one early nineteenth-century apologist, nor even of "the origins of the French revolution in the 16th century," as did another. But I would maintain that Hotman's particular response to his dilemma resulted in attitudes, arguments, and patterns of behavior essential to the phenomenon of social and political revolution in general. How else, in any case, can one humanly characterize a man who was a "rebel" by instinct as well as by indictment of contemporaries? For Hotman entered into revolt not only against the faith of his family and the authority of his father but also against the laws and eventually against the government of his country. How else characterize a man who was an almost compulsive intriguer? For Hotman voluntarily joined not only an outlawed and exiled community but also an organized opposition party and eventually more than one conspiracy aimed at giving this party control over the government. How else, finally, characterize a man who, though a universally respected academic scholar, became one of the leading ideologists of this party? For throughout his life Hotman sought to justify his subversive conduct by propaganda which vacillated between the most scurrilous invective and the most elevated appeals to legal principle and historical tradition.

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"Universal significance," too, may be a somewhat provocative phrase. What I mean is partly the psychological and perhaps anthropological characteristics which a man may share with other men outside his own time, and partly the quality of a man's work which allows him to speak to men living in other ages besides his own. And so, especially in his best-selling *Franco-Gallia*, Hotman has done, though he might well be surprised at the message received by some of his posterity. The most striking interpretation was perhaps that of Michelet, who celebrated this "profound, true, and illuminating book" as revealing "the identity of barbaric liberty with modern liberty" and restoring "the historical consciousness of France." However old-fashioned, this is a most appropriate way of putting the case because it suggests that Hotman's success in transcending his age was the result of having his eyes at once on the past and on the future. That the objects of his gaze were a most ancient and indeed immemorial past and a highly idealized and indeed utopian future—that Hotman was, in other words, both a fundamentalist and a utopian—accounts for his extraordinary radicalism.

In all ages, of course, there have been radicals: young men who react to the world with impatient idealism; bitter men who seek satisfaction from the subverting of established order; ignorant men who want to reshape the world in their own image; saintly men who hope to save the world from itself. Hotman was none of these, although at one time or another he displayed the features of each. Essentially he was a learned and responsible man with a great respect for tradition and no sympathy for innovations of any sort. But at the same time, he was a man with a mission, capable of the most intense fanaticism. His demands and his hopes were extravagant, his criticisms uncompromisingly moralistic, and he never hesitated to sacrifice his position for the sake of his "cause," which was to recover a lost innocence in political as well as religious terms, and to establish a community on this basis. That Hotman could not conceive

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of such an ideal except in the context of his own country and inherited position accounts for his revolutionary stance.

The source of Hotman's subversive character, then, lay both in his personality and in his life-situation, and here we find a number of paradoxes. If Hotman was a man who had deliberately run away from an orthodox and authoritarian father, he was also an extraordinarily devoted disciple of an even more authoritarian adopted "father" (as he called Calvin). If he was an embittered exile with an almost total allegiance to a "seditious" party, he was also a sentimental patriot, unable to give up either his national or his familial legacy. If he was an idealist practically incapable of compromise, he was also a man of action with a full appreciation of the dangers as well as the delights of power, a Machiavellian (though the notion would have appalled him) as well as a utopian, and personally, it should be added, not without a certain unscrupulous ambition. Basically his purpose was not so much to change the world, it may be inferred, as to insure the existence of his party (and so his own future). The difficulty was that the existence of this party ran absolutely counter to the values of the established society of his time. Ultimately, it was circumstance as much as conviction which led Hotman to his position.

Yet has this not normally been the case in the history of thought, especially of political thought? Even in ages when pure reason has provided the style of discourse, political ideologies have been fashioned more by the force of events than by argument from logical premises, and indeed have arisen from the ruins of unquestioned premises which events have made obsolete or irrelevant. "Nihil in intellectu," runs the Aristotelian maxim, "quod non fuerit prius in sensu"—or as the old Marxian saw has it, life determines consciousness, not consciousness life. This was certainly true of Hotman, whose views of political resistance, though formulated in the most conventional legal and historical terms, were the product of an insoluble dilemma: the conflict between an old orthodoxy that postulated religious uni-

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formity and a new ideology that, outside its Genevan headquarters at least, demanded "liberty of conscience." This was an explosive combination, and Hotman was one of the first and most persistent of those ready to ignite it. Ministers of the faith could pretend not to see this dilemma, but Hotman, trained as a lawyer, could not avoid facing it. So he found his revolutionary calling.

There are other reasons for an examination of Hotman's life. If he was not the greatest jurist of his age (the most heroic age of modern jurisprudence), he was surpassed by no more than two or three contemporaries, and for sheer versatility he was matched by none. Hotman also gained distinction as a teacher, a classical scholar, a dialectician, and to some extent as a theologian. If Hotman could not claim to be a statesman, he did advise or represent some of the major figures of his day, including Antoine and Henry of Navarre, Louis and Henry of Condé, Calvin, Beza, and such German princes as Philip and William of Hesse and the Elector Palatine Friedrich III; and he was one of the most prolific and effective propagandists of his age. If he was not the most successful diplomat among his contemporaries, few could claim experience as wide and varied, and certainly none commented more voluminously and acutely on the events of the civil wars than Hotman, whose letters and journalistic reports as well as published books constitute a primary source of inestimable value. For this reason, as well as for his pioneering researches into early French history, Hotman also ranks as one of the most able historians of the sixteenth century.

But I do not offer these items as justifications. What in fact decided me to undertake this biography was simply the belief that Hotman's life, suitably described in the context of his age, would make an uncommonly interesting story (though sometimes, I must confess, writing it has been a bit like taking a few buttons and sewing a coat on them—or alternately, cutting a somewhat arbitrary pattern out of a superabundance of material). Following Hotman around Eu-

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rope and turning over his literary remains and relics in dozens of libraries and archives in a half-dozen countries has not increased my affection for the man, but it has reinforced this original belief. Whether the story has relevance as well as interest—*utilitas* as well as *voluptas*, as Hotman would have put it—is for others to judge. In any case, Hotman does offer a somewhat novel angle of vision from which to view the upheavals of his time. For one thing, he was a striking representative of a new type of individual—an “intellectual” we may anachronistically call him—who not only was conscious of and helped to shape history through his polemic, but who contributed much to our own interpretation of the sixteenth century through his more considered writings. For another thing, he represented both a class expropriated because of its convictions and an exile community instrumental in preparing the way for civil war and in creating the means to continue it.

For Hotman these circumstances brought only tragedy; for us they may provide various insights not easily available to the general historian or to the biographer of figures that are “major” according to standards of status which were accepted in the sixteenth century. Through his eyes, for example, we can see something of the motives of a disaffected generation which was to bring about, as well as to live through, one of the most demoralizing and destructive civil wars in history. We can see the role of the university in captivating, indoctrinating, and organizing members of this generation, and in providing both an institutional and an ideological basis for political resistance. And we can see, in the intrigues, laments, quarrels, and belligerent applications of book-learning of intellectuals, some of the ways in which a resistance movement takes shape, gains momentum, and becomes self-conscious. In short, we can see—in the particular terms of sixteenth-century religion and politics (and these terms will become very particular indeed)—the makings of a revolution, or at least of a revolutionary.

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THIS book has received support and constructive criticism from many quarters. A fellowship from the American Council of Learned Societies made possible a year's travel in Europe (the itinerary of which is reflected in the list of libraries and archives at the end of the book), while the incomparable facilities and environment of the Institute for Advanced Study in Princeton gave me the time and incentive to assemble the material thus gathered. Other related researches were supported by the American Philosophical Society, the Folger Shakespeare Library, and by grants from the State University of New York at Binghamton. On the personal side I have equally profound debts. First to those who read major portions of the manuscript: Felix Gilbert, Ralph Giesey, Julian Franklin, John Salmon, Samuel Kinser, and Fritz Stern; next to those who offered various types of assistance in the course of the undertaking: Guido Kisch, Alain Dufour, Olivier Fatio, Natalie Davis, I. L. Leeb, Rigo Mignani, Richard Jackson, and librarians and archivists too numerous to mention; again to my two teachers most responsible for the turn my interests have taken, Paul O. Kristeller and the late Garrett Mattingly; and finally to Nancy and John Reed Kelley, who made the long trek with me and who also have had difficulty telling the good guys from the bad guys in this story. Most important has been the ever-present counsel of my three fellow Hotmaniacs, to whom the book is dedicated and whom I think of as the Athos, Porthos, and Aramis of this enterprise. We have our little differences (and not the least about Hotman); but we ride the same roads, fight the same outlandish battles, and enjoy the same cuisine.

*24 August 1971*  
*Princeton, N. J.*



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FRANÇOIS HOTMAN



## I. INTRODUCTION: AN AGE OF REVIVAL

"If only Luther would be still!" Melancthon

EUROPE, 1525

THE GREAT news of the year was the defeat of the French by the imperial army at Pavia. The epic struggle of the Hapsburg and Valois giants had ended on an unheroic note, and with Francis I languishing in a Spanish prison, only his "life and honor" intact, observers hardly knew what to expect. Charles V was not only without peer, he was without rival. There were ominous signs, it is true, in Germany, where the more resentful princes were in the process of forming an alliance to protect their hard-won liberties. But Charles' Spanish kingdoms were peaceful, he was on good terms with his uncle, Henry VIII of England, and above all he was master in Italy. What would be the result of this unprecedented imbalance of power?

According to one old hand at the business of political forecasting, there were only two real alternatives. Either the Emperor would keep the King in his possession, Machiavelli told his old friend Guicciardini, or else the King would be freed and would respect the terms of the treaty.<sup>1</sup> The third possibility, that the King, once freed, would go back on his word, Machiavelli dismissed as altogether too Machiavellian. So did Charles, who still clung to the old chivalric code. But Francis had no such inhibitions. He preferred the example of Louis XI to that of Louis IX, and to the scandal of Christendom and of Christendom's Emperor, he chose his advantage above his "honor." He agreed to the Treaty of Madrid just long enough to secure his own freedom.

<sup>1</sup> To Guicciardini, 15 Mar. 1526.

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Political predictions are hazardous at best, but Machiavelli's analysis was faulty in a more fundamental way than merely failing to guess which way the French King would jump. He had acquired his education, and lost his illusions, in the earlier stages of these Italian wars, and he looked at the most recent scenes with the same eyes. He sought, and so of course he found, the same objectives, the same motives, and the same tricks. Like most men brought up in the Italian school of diplomacy, he assumed that the game of politics, though superficially shifting, was basically constant; the players changed but the rules remained in force. Since the election of Charles as Emperor six years before, the game had no doubt been simplified, the field reduced from a small-scale free-for-all to a large-scale duel. But this changed the pattern, not the substance, of politics. The shady maneuvering surrounding the imperial election and the subsequent conduct of the war only confirmed Machiavelli's opinion, and not even an upset like Pavia could change it.

It is hard to see how he could have been more mistaken. Already coming into play was a new factor which would make the old rules obsolete and confound the calculations of the cynical and the chivalric alike. With the coming of Lutheranism the crusading spirit was restored to European politics, this time turned inwardly, and in its wake appeared all the idealism and fanaticism, all the proselytizing zeal and savage reprisals, all the religious vision and moral blindness that this tradition implied. Increasingly, dynastic rivalry was shaped by national sentiment and religious commitment, and the involvement of all classes of society added a dimension to politics which Machiavelli was ill-prepared to recognize. Not that he overlooked the force of nationality, but it seemed to him so fragmented and subject to dynastic ambition that he did not take it seriously. Nor was he blind to the significance of religion; on the contrary, he regarded it as a primary source of political strength and popular morale. But its role in statecraft was ancillary: it was

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not a compass but only another sail, or perhaps an anchor, on the ship of state. Politics was a matter for professionals like himself.

Guicciardini could not have agreed more. Looking back over these troubled years, he could not fail to notice the banning of Luther, but he saw it only as a minor factor in the rapprochement between the Emperor and the Pope. Even later, when Luther's noxious doctrines were obviously getting out of hand, Guicciardini was content to treat them as mere "pretexts" for more concrete (and more comprehensible) designs.<sup>2</sup> Such were the assumptions of the generation of 1494—of the men whose political consciousness was shaped by the struggles for Italy following the invasion by Charles VIII.

It is not only in the twentieth century that men have proclaimed "the end of ideology." This was the message, too, of Machiavelli and of Guicciardini and the unconscious assumption of most men of affairs, including both Francis I and Charles V. Nor was this attitude without foundation: the diplomatic "game at chess" and the selective application of military force—the ways of the fox and the lion—had become a way of life in this generation. Ideals, when they were not pretexts, were dreams; idealists, when they were not hypocrites, were martyrs (like Savonarola); and history was made by men who knew better.

Yet generations have a way of turning things about. Where Machiavelli went astray was in trying to elevate an historical insight (or a professional reflex) into a metaphysical principle, that is, in identifying a political style with the human condition. The very sharpness of his focus blinded him to a revolution that was taking place before his eyes, a revolution all the harder to detect because it came, at least in part, from below. What he saw as a monkish quarrel was in fact a movement not only to reform the ecclesiastical establishment, which was subversive enough, but actually to remake the world in the image of primitive Christianity.

<sup>2</sup> Guicciardini, *Storia d'Italia*, xiv, 1.

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The novelty of this arose not from the goal itself, which had been professed by reformers of all sorts for centuries, but rather from the explosive encounter between inherited power struggles and a doctrine possessing an enormous reserve of popular support and fired by a wide range of discontents and ambitions. The return of ideology—and of martyrdom—to the European scene marked the end of “the age of Machiavelli.”

Setting a new style of politics, Lutheranism also created a new view of the past. The revival of ecclesiastical history promoted by German Protestants was much more than a deplorable reaction to the general “secularization” of historical studies, as it has so often been represented; it was also a necessary result of the conviction that history could not be grasped without paying attention to religious ideas and institutions. History may not have become eschatological, but eschatology was very definitely having an effect upon history.

Thus, when Johann Sleidan, the first and best of Protestant historians, set out to explain the character of his age, he found it necessary to make his book a twofold commentary on both the state and religion.<sup>3</sup> He was obviously no Guicciardini. He did not organize his materials well, he offered few penetrating analyses of policies or of personalities, and toward the heroes of his story he was credulous to the point of hagiography. What he did provide, however, was a perspective from which the disorders of the sixteenth century were intelligible. Without neglecting the old drum-and-trumpet history or the new diplomatic history entirely (for he realized that political habits persisted), he devoted most of his narrative to the rise and spread of Protestantism. He opened his story not with the spring of 1494 but with All Saints' Eve of 1517, and he widened his view in order to take in people of all classes. This was not because Sleidan was a better historian than Guicciardini or Machia-

<sup>3</sup> Sleidan, *De Statu religionis et republicae . . . commentarii* (Strasbourg, 1556), esp. Ch. III.

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velli, but because he realized that religion had come to occupy the center of the stage and that "those of the religion" had joined the politicians as makers of history.

This transformation of politics produced by social upheaval cannot be understood apart from the intellectual revival which was reaching maturity in the sixteenth century. If political leaders continued to figure most prominently in the explosions to come, it was the intellectuals who had set the powder train. The prime mover, indeed the patron saint of "intellectuals" down to the present day, was Erasmus, who indeed accomplished a kind of revolution—not so much in the muckraking satires of the Roman church, for this sort of thing had long been a staple of light literature and of heavy sermons; but rather in his philological and historical examination of the Bible. In his *Novum Instrumentum* of 1516 Erasmus, rejecting the hermetic and hierocratic learning of university men, had violated the monopoly of professional theologians. Worse, by declaring the independence of the "grammatical" method, he had broken the hegemony of theology itself and generally cast doubt upon the transcendental claims of the papacy. In the words of Martin Bucer, it was Erasmus who laid the egg that Luther hatched and—to extend this homely metaphor—that went into the making of a dish never intended by either. But of course it took men of very different purpose, then as now, to appreciate the destructive preliminaries necessary for the creation of an omelette.

Yet even Erasmus did not quite move history by intellect alone (any more than Luther did by faith alone). If he lacked power and wealth, he did have two most effective allies whose impact was just beginning to be felt. The first of these was the printing press. "The restitution and perpetuation of antiquity," as one enthusiast called it,<sup>4</sup> the art of printing was also becoming a potent force in shaping the future. To it not only Erasmus but Luther and Calvin owed much of their success. Whether grinding out ponderous

<sup>4</sup> Guillaume Budé, *De l'Institution du prince* (Paris, 1547), p. 63.



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treatises, popular booklets, or inflammatory "placards," the printing press was a terrible weapon that provoked terrible retribution, which included not only an almost totalitarian censorship but also capital punishment. (In this age of ideology the gibbet was almost as appropriate a symbol as the printing press itself.)

Second and no less significant for the propagation of the Protestant faith was the establishment of new schools, or the reformation of old ones. Here, too, the Lutheran movement was building upon humanist foundations, combining religious indoctrination with liberal education in the classical fashion. Born in the university, Lutheranism would depend for its survival on the university, since it was here that the next generation would be enlisted and new leaders trained. The threat to orthodoxy posed by the schools was also recognized by the authorities; but the attempt to set up controls of education, like censorship of books, was usually more effective in calling attention to new ideas than in suppressing them.

"Ideology" implies not only a coherent and persuasive set of ideas but a segment of society receptive to these ideas. The growing instability and insecurity of sixteenth-century life, the dissolution of social ties and economic guarantees which accompanied urbanization, and the introduction of new modes of production and distribution provided just the conditions for the accommodation of Protestantism as a permanent force. Not that this meant, at least to begin with, a specific correlation between Protestant doctrines and the commercial classes. Outside of the intellectual community, in fact, it was the lower classes that were first attracted to the new opinions. Within Germany the most susceptible group was the peasantry; elsewhere it was the artisans, who were coming to constitute, though sporadically, a troublesome urban proletariat. As late as 1534, Francis I could attribute "Lutheran" error largely to "people of low status and lower understanding."<sup>5</sup>

<sup>5</sup> Bulaeus, VI, 252-53. Full citation for this and other general sources

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By this time, it is true, the King's information was somewhat out of date. The middle classes were thoroughly infected, and nearly fifty towns were noticeably touched by heresy. The leading propagators of the "so-called reformed religion" naturally came first from the clergy, especially from the regular clergy, but increasingly they were joined by laymen, including schoolmasters, printers, and—most notoriously of all—lawyers. Last to be converted were the nobles. Within a generation after the infiltration of Lutheranism into France, heresy had acquired a nation-wide organization, a foothold in the feudal establishment, growing support from outside France itself, and consequently an unprecedented political significance.

For Europe in general these were the augurs of political change in the second quarter of the sixteenth century: a legacy of destructive wars and petty feuds; a rising wave of religious protest and national enthusiasm; a large number of malcontents ready to accept a cause which might console them for the status or security they lacked; technical means for reaching such people through propaganda or education; and finally the decline or discrediting of institutions, whether in support of Christian unity or balance-of-power politics, which might check these tendencies. In these converging forces some perceptive observers, even at that time, could see the makings of disaster.

### FRANCE, MIDSUMMER 1524

The climate of opinion is best expressed by this entry which appears in the diary of a middle-class citizen of Paris:

At this time it was believed that the Kingdom of France was suffering all the torments that God customarily visits upon a people with whom He is angry. First came wars . . . , which had started in the year 1520 and which have

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may be found in the list of Abbreviations for Major Published Sources, pp. 349-51.

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lasted ever since. Then came famine, plague, especially in 1519 and 1522, and then great floods, storms, and earthquakes in many countries. Then internal seditions, that is, prince against prince, as the King of France against M. de Bourbon and other great persons. Finally, and worst of all, the errors and poisonous doctrines of Luther, together with disturbances, pillages, and extortions from the people, who are threatened on every side with taxes and thefts by soldiers. Afterwards came the terrible and universal misfortune to the crops sown in the kingdom because of the frosts of the previous winter. Then the conspiracy of foreign enemies to burn and to despoil the good cities of the kingdom. So both the rich and the poor have good reason to wonder if they will ever have peace or anyone to care for the kingdom.<sup>6</sup>

It was into such a world—a world of intellectual revival and religious reform, of moral revulsion and (at least potentially) social revolution—that François Hotman was born.

<sup>6</sup> Nicolas Versoris, *Livre de raison*, ed. G. Fagniez (Paris, 1885), p. 135.

## II. THE MAKING OF A PROTESTANT

PARIS, 1524-1548

“Bon jurisconsulte, mauvais chrestien.” Brantôme  
(sixteenth-century proverb)

PARIS, THURSDAY, 23 AUGUST 1524  
(SAINT BARTHOLOMEW'S EVE)

IT HAD been a hot, troubled, plague-threatened summer. The war with the Emperor was not going at all well. The shock of the Constable Bourbon's treason was still fresh. Just two weeks earlier, his chancellor had been taken to the Bastille, and at this very moment the Constable himself was leading an attack against the walls of Marseille. In the city there had been an alarming increase in brigandage, owing to bands of hoodlums roving the streets.<sup>1</sup> Warnings went out to tavern keepers and to police sergeants, who were forbidden to drink with these bad boys, these *mauvais garçons*. Some vagrants were expelled from the city. In June a panic had been started by news of a disastrous fire in Troyes, allegedly set by secret enemies of the realm. These incendiaries might be anywhere, it was suspected, and the authorities were disturbed enough to ban the customary street fires, to impose a nine o'clock curfew, to throw a group of noisy Germans into prison for a short time, and to execute at least two hapless transients. These simmering fears were intensified, of course, by the growing menace of heresy, which the government had been tracking down for the past year.

<sup>1</sup> Versoris, *Livre de raison*, p. 140; *Journal d'un bourgeois de Paris*, ed. L. Lalanne (Paris, 1854), p. 199; Pierre Driart, *Chronique parisienne*, ed. F. Bournois (Paris, 1893), p. 93; *Chronique du roy Francoys*, ed. G. Guiffrey (Paris, 1860), p. 33; *Registre des délibérations du Bureau de la ville de Paris*, 1, ed. F. Bonnardot (Paris, 1883), 275 (10 June).

## MAKING OF A PROTESTANT

Altogether these were uneasy times, but for at least one man they were happy times as well. Pierre Hotman, Sieur de Villiers-Saint-Paul and advocate in the Parlement of Paris, could look with satisfaction on his commission, signed just two months earlier by the King, as lieutenant-general of waters and forests.<sup>2</sup> And on this particular day he could rejoice in the birth of his first child.

François Hotman, born into the feudal and office-holding nobility, obviously had a vital stake in the French establishment. Throughout his life he was unreservedly and irreversibly a French gentleman, a partisan of the monarchy and its institutions. Yet his heritage was Germanic as well as bourgeois, and his instincts as well as his destiny were bound up with the land of his forebears. His grandfather Lambert, son of Gerard, was a Silesian burger who had come to France with Duke Engelbert of Cleves and had settled there after 1470. Hotman himself maintained some relations with the German side of his family, the "Hottmanns," who were still flourishing, Bayle assures us, during the seventeenth century in the Silesian capital of Breslau. In France there were four main branches of the family, all derived from Lambert, who died in 1514, leaving eight children.<sup>3</sup> Of these a few went into the church, more into the magistracy.

François' father, Pierre, the fifth son of Lambert, enjoyed a successful legal career. He spent twenty years at the "marble table," that is, in the jurisdiction of waters and forests, performing valuable services of "reformation," which is to say of augmenting royal privilege. In 1544 he was rewarded

<sup>2</sup> *Catalogue des actes de François Ier* (Paris, 1887-1908), I, 582; IV, 699; VI, 278, 421, 436, 480.

<sup>3</sup> Paris AN, M.M. 818, 53; Y. 91, 1872 and 103; BN Fr, *Mélanges de Colbert*, 80, f. 79; cf. *Dictionnaire de la noblesse*. Letters to "Marcus Othman a Rakowitz" of Breslau and to William Stuckius (Ep 41, 171). There are numerous permutations and combinations of the spelling of "Hotman," or "Hotoman," or (Latinized) "Hotomanus"—with or without the *H*, with one or two *t*'s (or a *th*) and/or two *n*'s. For a short genealogy see Appendix I.

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with the charge of Conseiller in the Parlement of Paris, and he continued to carry out his duties with unswerving loyalty both to his King and to his King's faith. He died in 1555, leaving his widow Paule (née de Marle) and eleven children, six of them sons, and a substantial estate which included at least two houses within Paris and certain lands in the Ile-de-France.

Such was François Hotman's legacy. As eldest son he was expected to inherit both his father's fief and his office and of course to follow the legal career planned for him. Given his strong sense of family and property, this was certainly the most natural course. Yet it turned out otherwise. Before succeeding to his patrimony or even settling into a profession, Hotman fled from his family. Time and again he turned away from his homeland, taking up the life of adventurer, vagrant scholar, part-time diplomat, and conspirator, eventually to die in an alien German city whose language, despite his antecedents and sympathies, he did not fully understand and whose faith he could not accept. Why he chose this fate is the central problem of his life.

The fires which heralded Hotman's birth were prognostics of his future career. At the same time, they were advance warnings of a more general conflagration which, like the Hotman family itself, had its source in Germany. Scarcely three years before, Luther had taken his obstinate and archetypal stand and recently had come out of his place of hiding at the Wartburg to join his impatient comrades at Wittenberg. Chief among these was Philip Melanchthon, whom Hotman would encounter more than once in later years. News of the recent peasant uprisings in southern Germany had shocked public opinion in Europe, and although Luther disclaimed all responsibility, his critics, including the French King as well as the Emperor Charles V and Henry VIII of England, were hardly to be persuaded of this. The question of guilt apart, it may be suggested that Luther had neither the interest nor the intellectual means to grasp the social and political consequences

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of his act. He was not alone in his ignorance, of course, for these consequences were, and indeed still are, incalculable. What he had done was not only to confound old patterns of belief but also to deepen and eventually to make irreconcilable long-standing political rivalries. Not only did he hasten the coming of that fate most dreaded by Christians, religious schism, but he also prepared the ground for that condition which to ancients and moderns alike has been the political equivalent of death—civil war. Many men have sought to change the world; no man has done this quite so profoundly, so permanently, and at the same time so inadvertently as Luther. But he did not live to see the full fury of the storm he had provoked. It was Hotman's generation that was to reap the whirlwind.

In France, although the storm itself was a long time in coming, the winds of Lutheran doctrine were felt almost at once. To most would-be reformers, including Erasmus' great rival Lefèvre d'Étaples and one of Hotman's future patrons, Guillaume Farel, these winds seemed refreshing, even life-giving. To the ecclesiastical authorities, on the other hand, they brought an odor not only of heresy but of sedition. Even before the Diet of Worms, the Sorbonne had condemned Lutheran ideas and had been supported by the Parlement of Paris. The reactions of these august bodies, spurred intermittently by the King, seemed to serve better as a measure of than as a deterrent to heresy. The contagion spread rapidly not only through sermons, popular songs, and subversive literature, but also through the spectacular publicity provided by burning heretics. There could hardly be a more effective way to advertise a cause. More than any other act, martyrdom represented a direct "imitation of Christ" and, like the more passive forms of Christian humanism, an attempt to return to the values of antiquity. "The blood of martyrs is the seed of the church," quoted by all sixteenth-century martyrologists, was a principle believed no less fervidly by Protestants than by their early Christian models.

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It was just a year before Hotman's birth that Parisians had gathered to watch the first of such spectacles, the cynosure of which was Jean Vallière, a self-styled hermit. Burning along with him in the Place de Notre-Dame was a pile of books that had been found in the possession of a more distinguished trouble-maker, Louis Berquin, who was Luther's first notable French disciple.<sup>4</sup> This was Berquin's first brush with the law but not his last. Less than six years later, despite the support of the King's sister Marguerite de Navarre, he followed his books into the flames in the Place de Grève, and the French reformers had their first great martyr.

If Hotman did not witness this event, he had many chances to watch other executions during the next decade. To visit one of the most popular sites for these affairs, Hotman had only to walk a few steps down his block, the little Rue de Bièvre, to the Place Maubert. This was the place where the King sometimes enjoyed symbolic little plays staged for his benefit. This was the place, too, where university students could most conveniently attend executions staged (at least in part) for their benefit. Where today stands the statue of another "martyr of the Renaissance," Etienne Dolet, burned in 1546, was in Hotman's time a gibbet.<sup>5</sup> He must have passed it dozens of times on his way to classes or coming back from the booksellers on the Rue St.-Jacques. Whatever his youthful contact with the phenomenon, he was certainly deeply affected by the psychology of martyrdom. He saw more than one of his friends received into the tradition of martyrs and at times expected some such fate himself.

<sup>4</sup> *Journal d'un bourgeois*, p. 169; Versoris, *Livre de raison*, p. 122; Driart, *chronique parisienne*, p. 78. Cf. John Vienot, *Promenades à travers le Paris des martyrs 1523-1559* (Paris, 1913), and Pierre Champion, *Paris au temps de la Renaissance* (Paris, 1935).

<sup>5</sup> The gibbet appears, e.g., in the maps of Paris made by Josse de Reveau (1575) and by Truchet and Hoyau (mid-sixteenth century); it remained at least from 1520 to 1609.



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When Hotman was ten years old, the fortunes of French Protestantism reached a turning point. This was in 1534, "the year of the placards." During the fall a certain Feret, apprentice to the King's apothecary, had broadsides printed in Neuchâtel "against the abuse of the Mass and popish inventions."<sup>6</sup> They were posted all over the city and surely in Hotman's neighborhood (where in the 1960's could be seen posters of a student revolutionary group, the "Etienne Dolet" club). In itself, of course, there was nothing new in distributing placards; the Germans had been doing it for years. But King Francis I, "father of letters" as he might be to some, felt most uncordial toward some of the new uses to which printing was being put; and this time, in any case, the French mischief-makers had gone too far. They fastened a placard to the door of the royal bedchamber in the castle of Amboise and even placed one in the bowl where Francis left his handkerchief. To disturb the peace of the kingdom was criminal; to disturb that of the King himself was treasonable. The display of royal temper the following morning can be imagined. It was magnificent and grew with the telling. Defenders of law and order everywhere were shocked, and even Lutherans sympathized with the King. Among other casualties of this affair was Melanchthon's conciliatory mission to France, which had been planned for the summer but which now would never take place.

Whether this encounter furnished the cause or merely the occasion, the reaction of the King was, or at least should have been, unmistakable. On Wednesday, 13 January 1535, he sent an edict to the Parlement forbidding further practice of the art of printing, though afterward he agreed not to enforce this absurd directive. On the following Tuesday,

<sup>6</sup> Crespin, I, 297; Sleidan, *De Statu religionis*, p. 253; *Chronique du roy Francoys*, p. 110; *Registre des délibérations . . .*, II, ed. A. Tuetey (Paris, 1886), 192 (19 and 34 Oct.); Florimond de Raemond, *Histoire de la naissance, progres et decadence de l'heresie de ce siecle* (Rouen, 1648), p. 859. Cf. Lucien Febvre, *Au Coeur religieux du XVIe siècle* (Paris, 1957), pp. 162-71.

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carrying a burning torch, he walked through the streets of Paris, leading a procession which included the Cardinal of Lorraine and representatives of the monastic orders as well as both of his sons and the princes of the blood. After a spectacular Mass he vowed punishment for the so-called "Lutherans," and indeed the festivities were concluded with the burning of six of the culprits. Like Berquin, this new crop of martyrs died with fortitude, as we are told by their chroniclers Jean Crespin and Johann Sleidan—who both later became friends and colleagues of Hotman.<sup>7</sup> The tongues of some were pierced to prevent them from offering any last-minute advice; the hands of some were also cut off. But this was an ironic as well as a vicious kind of symbolism: the French Reformation as a whole was neither silenced nor disarmed. And if afterwards it became a basically underground movement, this by no means made it less attractive, or less accessible, to venturesome young men like Hotman.

### PARIS, LATIN QUARTER, 1536

It was the passing of an age, or so it seems in retrospect. The last voices of the older generation—the pre-Lutheran generation—were silenced. Both Erasmus and Lefèvre d'Étaples died this year, while their great colleague Guillaume Budé had published his last book the year before and would live his remaining four years in taciturn and disapproving silence. Meanwhile, a new generation was appearing to take up and to transform the ideal of Christian humanism which these older men, each in his own way, had championed. Two of the most prominent of Hotman's future comrades—Petrus Ramus and Jean Calvin—were just making their mark upon the republic of letters. In this year Ramus defended his notorious (as it may seem to us) master's thesis denying the authority of Aristotle ("that every-

<sup>7</sup> Gilles Corrozet, *Les Antiquitez de Paris* (Paris, 1586), f. 157.

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thing Aristotle wrote was false”), and Calvin published his *Institution of Christian Religion*, a book which was, whatever its author’s intentions and whatever our intellectual tastes, the most revolutionary publication of that century. Calvin had finished the work the previous summer and, from his exile in Basel, had dedicated it to Francis I, who as “father of letters” and as Charles V’s chief rival still seemed the best hope for reform. It was precisely on Hotman’s eleventh birthday, as it happened, that Calvin signed this dedicatory epistle to the book that, more than any other, would determine the course of his life. Altogether it was an auspicious if perilous time for a young boy, a prodigy by the standards even of that prodigious century, to begin his studies at the University of Paris.

Like Calvin, Hotman was from beginning to end a humanist, a devotee of the best traditions and achievements of the Renaissance. His very first recorded statements were in praise of Greek and Latin literature and their essential harmony, while among his very last words, made in exile, when he was ill and at the point of despair, was the Senecan warning that “Life without letters is death.”<sup>8</sup> Indeed Hotman’s enthusiasm for “good letters” was only slightly less intense than his enthusiasm for “true religion,” and he never seemed to feel uneasy about the conflicting claims of Cicero and of Christ. For him both were vital parts of the “new learning,” according to the new meaning acquired by the conventional humanist phrase. By contrast Budé, though the greatest of French “humanists” and a sharp critic of the papacy, felt increasingly ambivalent toward classical literature. The cocksure attitude of men like Calvin, Ramus, and Hotman is one of the most conspicuous signs of a conflict between generations at this time.

There were others. Like Erasmus, for example, Budé had

<sup>8</sup> Prefaces to *Tabulae de crimibus*, “Lectori,” 1 May 1543, and to *Batrachomyomachia*, “Matthaeo Paillarto avunculo et Mecoenati suo,” 13 Nov. 1543; “Album amicorum 1589-1593” of Rolandus de Weert, Antwerp (Leiden, MS Ltk, 1077, p. 20).

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very old-fashioned ideas about the role of letters: it was to enlighten, not to enflame. The "new learning" of the reformers was something utterly different from that which had excited him in his youth, and he turned against Luther even before Erasmus did. What is more, having been appointed a Maître des Requêtes in 1522, Budé became increasingly committed to royal policy and alienated from popular causes. As one of Berquin's judges he had pleaded with him, as one man of learning to another, to recant—but not with the King to reconsider the sentence.<sup>9</sup> The sorriest performance of all was his last work, in which he gave up "philology" for "philothery" and completed his symbolic "transition from Hellenism to Christianity." The major distinction of this tedious sermon, which justified the King's persecutions of the "rebels" who had staged the affair of the placards, was that it helped to provoke the classic counter-statement of the reforming party, Calvin's *Institution*. It is ironic that in later years Calvin welcomed to Geneva Budé's widow and three of his children, who fled to escape just such persecution and to join the "rebels." They settled just a few doors from Calvin, and at least two of the sons Hotman numbered among his close friends.

To Hotman the elder Budé was "a man . . . that loved his country . . . , though he knew not yet fully what difference there was between Christ and antichrist." Yet he was much more than this; he was also the true founder of that tradition of French humanism in which Hotman was to assume so distinguished a place, and it is a measure of his achievement that Protestants continued to honor his memory, as they did that of Erasmus. Budé was justified in his claim to be a "pioneer."<sup>10</sup> He could remember the time when a man

<sup>9</sup> Crespin, I, 285. Budé, *De Transitu hellenismi ad christianismum* (Paris, 1535), published by Robert Estienne; cf. Joseph Bohatec, *Budé und Calvin* (Graz, 1950), and Daniel Penham's edition and translation (unpub. diss., Columbia, 1954).

<sup>10</sup> To Dreux Budé, 24 Dec. 1520, *Epistolae posteriores* (Paris, 1522), f. 102<sup>v</sup>. Cf. Hotman, *Brutum Fulmen*, p. 111.

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had to blaze his own trail through the classics, without the help of dictionaries or commentaries. Nowadays (1522), he told his son, antiquity was accessible to anyone. To that circumstance no one had contributed more than Budé himself. His philological work on the Greek language and on Roman law made him, for most scholars, at least in France, Erasmus' superior. But even more significant than his published work, in the popular mind at any rate, was his success in persuading Francis I to establish, during the 1530's, the professorships in Latin, Greek, and Hebrew which became the nucleus of the Collège Royal, later the Collège de France.

Much was made in these years of this academy. Some fanciful authors found further reason for proclaiming Paris to be the new Athens; others rejoiced in the fact that grammarians were, in Erasmian style, taking the opportunity to trespass upon scriptures, the private preserve of theologians. To Protestants in particular the "Trilingue" seemed to constitute a rebuke to the "ignorant Sorbonne," as Clement Marot had the temerity to tell the King—

ignorant, indeed, to be the enemy  
of the noble three-tongued academy  
which you have erected. . . .<sup>11</sup>

To many Protestants this institutional embodiment of the new learning was a sign that the King might eventually be won over to their cause.

Whether or not Hotman, like Calvin and Ramus, profited from the lectures of these regius professors, he was most probably attending the University of Paris by 1536. He certainly did not have far to go—only from the Rue de Bièvre, across the Place Maubert, down the Rue St.-Jacques, then

<sup>11</sup> Marot, "Epitre au Roy, du temps de son exile a Ferrare," lines 40-43:

". . . L'ignorant Sorbonne;  
Bien ignorante elle est d'estre enemie  
De la Trilingue et noble Academie  
Qu'as erigee . . . ."

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as now lined with bookshops and student meeting places, to the Rue Fromontel, where he was attached to the Collège du Plessis as a "martinet," which meant in effect that he lived at home. In this fourteenth-century establishment, which had a chapel, a court, and a garden as well as a hostel and two houses in the Rue St.-Jacques, Hotman learned the rudiments of Latin, Greek, and perhaps Hebrew.<sup>12</sup> This was not on the order of Budé's academy, of course. The humanist character of the curriculum may have been increased by the decision taken the previous year which placed teachers of grammar and rhetoric on an equal footing with the philosophers; but in most ways the course followed by Hotman was remarkably conservative. In three centuries and more, it seems, things had changed very little. There were the same jealous quarrels between faculties, especially between liberal arts and canon law, and grammarians were periodically warned not to invade the domain of the dialecticians. Despite Ramus' assault, Aristotle remained the principal text, and Ramus himself was living proof that the aim of instruction was less to inspire eloquence than to promote, as a statute of 1533 put it, "alacrity in argument."<sup>13</sup> Here it was, in any case, that Hotman began to acquire that mastery both of classical languages that would adorn all of his work and also of dialectic that he would put to more practical use in his various legal and literary conflicts.

As always, things were more exciting, and perhaps more instructive, outside the classroom. In the sixteenth century the university was a world in itself and almost as cosmopolitan and as highly charged as Europe as a whole. There were between 16,000 and 20,000 students, a Venetian ambassador estimated in 1546, though a large proportion of these were no doubt unmatriculated hangers-on and trouble-makers. The university also harbored many Lutherans,

<sup>12</sup> Johann Sturm to Hotman, May 1561 (Strasbourg AST, No. 163, f. 63<sup>r</sup>); cf. Ch. V, n. 11 below.

<sup>13</sup> Bulaeus, VI, 247; cf. Crevier, *Histoire de l'Université de Paris* (Paris, 1761), V, 286.

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both real (especially in the German "nation") and imagined, and a few Zwinglians as well. In 1533 the government had tried to bring some order into this chaos by laying down stricter rules for both masters and students. Degrees were to be granted only to those who faithfully attended lectures—and of course paid their fees—and vagabonds were to be reported. Preceptors were not to frequent taverns or theaters or even to play ball. Most important, "the impudent books of the heretics" were to be banned, and younger students were to be privately interrogated if such books were found in their possession.<sup>14</sup> So from a very early age Hotman became familiar with, if not reconciled to, the practice of official censorship of unorthodox ideas.

This particular edict hardly increased the King's popularity among the young, though it did provide a certain amount of amusement. Later it was derived by Theodore Beza as the "edict of beards," because it frowned not only upon the "new opinions" but also upon long whiskers (*prolixa barba*). (It is perhaps more than footnote in the history of fashion that, in contrast to the clean-shaven Erasmus and Budé, the younger generation, including Calvin, Beza, and Hotman himself, affected full beards; and it is interesting to note that Hotman's own brother Antoine later wrote a learned essay "in praise of beards.") In general, of course, there was nothing new in such generational disagreement, especially in universities, where "ancients" and "moderns" of one sort or another had often fought. Nature herself, as Ramus wrote some twenty years later, decreed that "as age is miserly and sour, so youth is free and abandoned to their pleasure"; and the university, students as well as faculty, should not be condemned as revolutionary (*seditieuse et rebelle*) on account of its liberties.<sup>15</sup> But giv-

<sup>14</sup> Bulaeus, VI, 247-49; Beza to Maclou Popon, 7 May 1542; cf. his satire of Pierre Lizet, who championed the edict, in *Le Passavant* [1553], trans. I. Liseux (Paris, 1875), p. 23; Antoine Hotman, *Dialogus de barba* (Op I<sup>2</sup>, 451). Alberi, I, 226.

<sup>15</sup> *Harangue touchant ce qu'on fait les deputez de l'Université de Paris envers le roy* (Paris, 1557), ff. 8<sup>r</sup>, 11<sup>v</sup>.

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en the doctrinal upheavals of the age, these liberties were precisely what the French government could not afford to tolerate during Hotman's generation. In a number of ways, then, the most ineradicable lines were being drawn between the young and the old, and the university in general was becoming a kind of miniature battleground which would later be extended to all of society.

After the affair of the placards still more severe measures were taken, especially in the attempt to censor books, and there were several scandalous heresy trials. At one point, in the spring of 1535, the King himself came to the university to speak. "As subject to subject," he praised it as successor to Athens, but as king he thundered against the malignant growth of heresy within its walls. "I pray that you and all my subjects," he concluded, "be careful not only of yourselves but also of your family and especially of the children, and see that they are well instructed and indoctrinated [*indoctriner*] so that they do not fall into evil and forbidden opinions."<sup>16</sup> It was not long before Francis also called upon all of his magistrates, including Hotman's father, to take an active part in rooting out this alien growth. And so from this time on the French Protestant became, more or less officially, a foreigner in his own land.

What impression did these events have upon the young Hotman? With regard to certain fundamental though very general behavioral patterns—distrust of and clandestine opposition to authority, sense of community with those subjected to it, and a youthful enthusiasm for the dynamic ideas binding this community together—these happenings were no doubt formative in many ways. Looking back over this period, or hearing about it from Calvin, or reading about it in the pages of Crespin or Sleidan, Hotman took the view that it represented the beginning of another Babylonian captivity, with Calvin playing the role of Moses (though a Moses, to be sure, who reached the promised land in advance of most of his people). But he was prob-

<sup>16</sup> Bulaeus, VI, 252-53.