COUNTERING THE REFORMATION IN FRANCE AND THE NETHERLANDS: CLERICAL LEADERSHIP AND CATHOLIC VIOLENCE 1560–1585*

On 2 September 1572, the city of Antwerp was awash with rumours that ‘the soldiers and Spaniards and Italians might commit murder like in Paris’. Just over a week had elapsed since the Feast of St Bartholomew. Three thousand Huguenots had died in Paris, and in the French provinces the killing was still going on. But, as the Lutheran chronicler Godevaert van Haecht noted, Antwerp was not Paris: ‘In Paris, the citizens have turned on each other, and although the people here, too, were diverse in religion, they trusted that nothing like that would happen, unless it were done by the foreigners’.¹ Six years earlier, in the annus mirabilis of 1566, the Calvinist public prosecutor of the city of Tournai, Pasquier de le Barre, had also remarked on this contrast between France and the Netherlands. In the Low Countries, he noted, Calvinists who left town to attend a clandestine prèche — an open-air sermon — had nothing to fear: ‘the other workers gave them no hindrance, nor did they pour forth insults or sharp words, which was much the contrary of what happened to them [in France] where similar prèches were held in the fields and outside the cities’.²

¹ I am most grateful to Alastair Duke, Benjamin Kaplan, Henk van Nierop and Thijs Pollmann for their useful comments on earlier drafts of this article. They, together with Anne-Laure Van Bruaene, Guido Marnef, Andrew Pettegree, René Vermeir and Alexander Wilkinson, have also been a constant source of references and practical advice. Audiences in Cambridge, St Andrews and Amsterdam to whom I presented some of my ideas on this topic offered stimulating comments. Support from the British Academy allowed me to do research in Belgium, which was undertaken during a period of leave generously financed by the Research Development Fund of the University of Oxford and the Rosalind, Countess of Carlisle Fund of Somerville College.


— De kroniek van Godevaert van Haecht over de troebelen van 1565 tot 1574 te Antwerpen en elders, ed. Rob. van Roosbroeck, 2 pts (Antwerp, 1929), pt 2, 211.

The contrast is puzzling, since in other respects the parallels between the situations in France and the Netherlands were really quite remarkable. Only a few years later than in France, Calvinism in the Netherlands had suddenly begun to manifest itself openly. As in France, it spread rapidly and from below, gaining the support of a vocal minority of the population, lesser nobles and rich city dwellers as well as artisans. As in France, the number of executions had dwindled as the number of heretics had grown. And as in France, the Protestant pressure for toleration was mounting. Moreover, Calvinist behaviour in the Netherlands was no less provocative than it was in France. Throughout the 1560s and 1570s Calvinists in the Habsburg Netherlands behaved much the same as their French counterparts had been doing since the late 1550s. In the early 1560s there were nightly chanteries — demonstrations by psalm-singing crowds — in Tournai and Valenciennes, and prêches in the countryside. In 1566 a month of iconoclastic violence shattered the interiors of churches in much of the Habsburg Netherlands; in Tournai and Valenciennes, Calvinists seized power for a time. In 1572 and 1573 the rebel armies in Holland and Zeeland killed priests, plundered convents and mocked the sacraments; church property was requisitioned, and from 1573 Catholic worship was outlawed there. Between 1577 and 1585 Calvinists in Antwerp, Ghent, Bruges, Ypres and Brussels disturbed processions, burned books, broke images, expelled priests and eventually banned Catholic worship altogether. Yet, whereas Calvinists in France


5 On Calvinist violence in the Netherlands, see, for example, Crew, Calvinist Preaching and Iconoclasm in the Netherlands; Alastair Duke, ‘De Calvinisten en de
met with Catholic outrage, with gruesome violence on the streets, with mutilation of corpses and mass demonstrations, with lynchings, drownings and mock trials, Catholic lay people in the Netherlands were almost completely passive in their response to Reformed activism. This article seeks to examine why this should have been the case.

The contrast between France and the Netherlands has been brought into sharper focus by recent developments in the historiography of France. In 1973 Natalie Zemon Davis published her famous article on ‘The Rites of Violence’ in the French Wars of Religion, which initiated a radical change in historical thought about the civil wars that plagued France between 1562 and 1598. Davis was aiming primarily to argue that there was a rationale behind the seemingly senseless and bizarre episodes of collective popular religious violence which abounded in the Wars of Religion. However, in the process of explaining how French religious rioters had used an existing, and meaningful, cultural vocabulary of ritual popular violence, she highlighted by implication a point that at that time was rarely made: namely, that the Wars of Religion were about religion. That is, that religion was not simply the cloak under which both sides in the French Wars of Religion had been hiding their political or socio-economic ambitions, as several generations of historians had been arguing, but that religion itself, the duality between the ‘sacred’ and the ‘profane’, was at the heart of the conflict. Davis’s article was the beginning of a major reorientation in the history of the Wars of Religion, and in the last thirty years historians such as Denis Crouzet, Olivier Christin, Philip Benedict, Barbara

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“paapse beeldendienst”: de denkwereld van de beeldenstormers in 1566’, in M. Bruggeman (ed.), Mensen van de nieuwe tijd: een liber amicorum voor A. Th. van Deursen (Amsterdam, 1996); H. A. Enno van Gelder, Revolutionnaire Reformatie: de vestiging van de Gereformeerde Kerk in de Nederlandse gevesten gedurende de eerste jaren van de Opstand tegen Filips II, 1575–1585 (Amsterdam, 1943); Henk van Nierop, Het verrad van het Noorderkwartier: oorlog, terreur en recht in de Nederlandse Opstand (Amsterdam, 1999); Guido Marnef, Het Calvinistisch bewind te Mechelen, 1580–85 (Heule, 1987); Johan Decavele (ed.), Het eind van een rebelse droom: opstellen over het calvinistisch bewind te Gent (1577–1584) en de terugkeer van de stad onder de gehoorzaamheid van de koning van Spanje (17 september 1584) (Ghent, 1984).

Diefendorf and Mack Holt have rewritten the history of the wars as a history of the struggle for the sacred as well as for the kingdom of France.\(^7\)

This historiography has argued that the Edicts of Pacification, with which the French crown repeatedly tried to resolve the religious divisions, had little chance of success, because — unlike the crown and part of the ruling elites — most French Catholics found the thought of tolerating the Reformed religion completely unacceptable. The Calvinists were considered to be infringing on the traditional and sacred unity of the community of believers, the ‘body social’, that reaffirmed its unity in the Mass, and clung in particular to the transubstantiation of the Host. Protestants who were separating themselves from this community, and who rejected the theology of the Mass, were considered to be polluting society, which might expect divine punishment for their presence unless it purged itself of them. Since the crown and other authorities were not being active enough in their persecution of the heretics, Catholic crowds took justice into their own hands and hounded the Protestants out of the community.

Behind the broad consensus on the primacy of religion that has begun to emerge there are significant differences in the way scholars account for the eruptions of Catholic violence. Scholars like Diefendorf and Holt, inspired by John Bossy’s idea that sixteenth-century believers thought of religion as a ‘body of believers’, rather than as a ‘body of beliefs’, emphasize that Catholics were defending a traditional world order, and a traditional religion, against the innovations of the Protestants.\(^8\) Denis Crouzet, on the other hand, sees both Catholic and Protestant violence as a fundamentally new response to a profound and shared concern about the state of the world. In his *Les Guerriers de Dieu* he argued that the violence must be seen as the culmination of a deep apocalyptic anxiety in French culture that had developed for decades before the violence erupted. Calvinism,

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in his view, offered anguished believers an answer to their fears by creating a new concept of providential order, in which the world was ‘desacralized’. For Catholics, on the other hand, such a rejection of the sacred became the most visible symptom of the chaos and evil which God demanded they should fight to avert His judgement. Only after the violent eruptions of the 1560s and their gruesome culmination in 1572 did the responses begin to change. Sacred violence, exemplified by the crown’s involvement in the St Bartholomew’s massacre, lost its respectability.9

Crouzet’s argument has the advantage that it can also account for the emergence of Calvinism — if Calvinism was as socially ‘unthinkable’ as some scholars have claimed, it becomes difficult to explain how anyone in France could have become a Protestant at all. It also accounts in a more satisfactory manner for the chronology of the violence. But critics are at the same time in agreement that Crouzet overstates his case. Larissa Taylor, for instance, argues that the apocalyptic fervour of French Catholic preaching had been much greater in the fifteenth century than around 1550, and she has also shown that one of Crouzet’s great prophets of doom, François le Picart, actually balanced his prophesies with messages of confidence and hope.10

Both approaches, however, also raise another problem. By postulating the inevitability of religious violence, they signal fail to account for different patterns that we see outside France. There were many places in Reformation Europe where people of different faiths had to live together: in the biconfessional cities of Germany, for instance, or in Poland, Bohemia and Moravia. In the sixteenth century, at least, they usually managed to do so without the violent popular conflict that was so obvious in France between 1560 and 1572. Moreover, outside France, popular violence by Catholics was very rare. In England, the northern rebel movement known as the Pilgrimage of Grace in 1536 rose in violent protest against the religious reforms introduced by Henry VIII, while in 1549, too, some English believers revolted

9 Denis Crouzet, Les Guerriers de Dieu: la violence au temps des troubles de religion, vers 1525-vers 1610, 2 vols. (Seyssel, 1990), i. He further developed these ideas in Denis Crouzet, La Nuit de Saint-Barthélemy: un rêve perdu de la Renaissance (Paris, 1994).

against Protestant reforms, though these rebellions had quickly been put down. In Germany, Catholic lay people appear to have done little to resist Protestant agitation. Although apocalyptic and millenarian ideas had been rife in the Holy Roman Empire in the 1520s and 1530s, and had played a key role in the emergence of Protestantism, Catholic crowds had not responded with popular violence. Some historians have pointed to the specific properties of Calvinism, and argue that the particular Calvinist position on the Eucharist was much more offensive to Catholics than the Lutheran one. This might then also account for the fact that French Protestant activism before the 1550s had only rarely triggered popular violence. But even this solution, of course, fails to explain why in the Netherlands (or in Scotland, for that matter) the emergence of Calvinism did not elicit the same Catholic response as it did in France.

I

In the past decade or so, Dutch scholars have considered a number of possible explanations for the ‘passivity’ of Netherlandish Catholics. First, they have pointed out that the political context in which Calvinists began to manifest themselves in France was quite different from that in the Netherlands. In France, much of the violence was the product of the power vacuum that emerged after the death of the French King Henry II in a jousting accident in 1559, leaving only his young sons to succeed him. Henry’s widow Catherine de Medici was faced with the unenviable task of controlling both the growing religious divisions and the opposing noble factions that espoused them. Initially the Catholic family of Guise was able to dominate, but after the death of her eldest son, Francis II, in 1560, Catherine declared herself regent for the young Charles IX. The crown

11 Taylor, Heresy and Orthodoxy in Sixteenth-Century Paris, 201, notes that much of the pamphlet material Crouzet discussed originated in Germany and Flanders.

12 Woltjer, ‘Geweld tijdens de godsdienstoorlogen in Frankrijk en de Nederlanden’; Van Nierop, ‘Similar Problems, Different Outcomes’; Joke Spaans, ‘Catholicism and Resistance to the Reformation in the Northern Netherlands’, in Benedict et al. (eds.), Reformations, Revolt and Civil War in France and the Netherlands; see also Benedict’s introduction to this volume. Crew, Calvinist Preaching and Iconoclasm in the Netherlands, esp. 159, argued that Catholics remained passive because they were not sure whether the authorities supported the Calvinists. In the light of the tendency of French Catholics to act in lieu of the authorities, that explanation no longer seems very persuasive.
was heavily in debt, and could not suppress unruly nobles by force. Under the influence of moderate advisers like Michel de l'Hôpital, Catherine therefore decided that reconciliation or, failing that, some form of toleration, was the only viable option for the kingdom. Her first Edict of Pacification, issued in January 1562, was granted reluctantly and was intended as an interim measure, but that did not make it any more acceptable or easier to implement. What had been intended as a measure to limit the violence actually ended up fuelling it. Angry crowds as well as indignant crown officials were forcing the crown to live up to the motto *Un roi, un loi, une foy* — one king, one law, one faith. By 1598 the French had fought eight religious wars.

In the Netherlands, by contrast, the suggestion that toleration might resolve the problem of heresy did not come from the crown but from its subjects. Charles V and Philip II continually harped on about the need to extirpate heresy in their Netherlandish possessions. The Netherlands had by far the most repressive anti-heresy legislation in Europe — between 1523 and 1566 at least 1,300 people had been executed, and thousands more had been indicted, fined or banished. These punitive measures had sometimes been welcomed by the elites — the large majority of death penalties followed the Anabaptist unrest of the 1530s, which in Amsterdam had involved an attempted political coup, and which in Münster, just over the Netherlandish borders, had led to outright disaster. Yet magistrates had come to recognize that there was a clear difference between the seditious Anabaptists and respectable dissenters, who counted many a bourgeois amongst them. For instance, many *rederijkerskamers* (the poetic societies that thrived in the urban communities of the Netherlands and whose membership included members of the elite as well as artisans) openly performed plays and poems with an evangelical message.15

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It was not until the 1550s that Calvinism began to exert a
definite influence on at least some of these dissenters, and even by
1566 there were large parts of the Netherlands that had never
seen any trained Calvinist ministers. Even so, committed Catholics
were perfectly aware that there were many heretics about and
that, despite the crown’s good intentions, the implementation
of government policy was hardly satisfactory. Everybody knew
that urban magistrates were lax in enforcing the legislation
against mainstream evangelicals and, except in the province of
Flanders which had a very active inquisitor, by the late 1550s
executions had all but ceased.16

What were undeniably different royal policies therefore created
quite similar situations on the ground. From a local perspective it
is not at all clear why committed Catholics in 1560s Antwerp or
Tournai should have felt any differently about their magistrates’
attitude to heresy than did the Catholics of Lyon or Rouen. More-
over, for most of 1566 it seemed likely that the Netherlands, too,
were going to get a form of toleration. With the tacit sanction of
the high nobility, a group of several hundred lesser nobles in April
1566 intimidated the Habsburg governor, Margaret of Parma,
into suspending the heresy legislation, thereby effectively opening
the door to allowing Protestant worship. Soon thousands flocked
to the open-air sermons that ever-bolder Calvinist preachers
organized outside the cities. During the long hot summer that
culminated in the outbreak of iconoclasm in August 1566, the
Reformed often claimed that their actions and demands were
‘authorized’ by the nobles, and for some months after the
iconoclasm forms of ‘religious peace’ were piloted in various
Netherlandish cities. The grandees joined forces with the Brussels
government to restore order after the iconoclasm, but because
this often involved compromise with the Calvinists, they were
undoubtedly complicit in policies that directly contravened those
of the crown. It was partly for this reason that the royal enforcer,
the duke of Alba, who was eventually dispatched by Philip II to
restore order, was to take the unprecedented step of trying and
executing a number of the most prominent nobles in the land.17

16 Duke, Reformation and Revolt in the Low Countries, 154–6.
17 Crew, Calvinist Preaching and Iconoclasm in the Netherlands; Henk van Nierop,
‘The Nobility and the Revolt of the Netherlands: Between Church and King, and
Protestantism and Privileges’, in Benedict et al. (eds.), Reformation, Revolt and Civil
War in France and the Netherlands.
The nobles' confidence that edicts of toleration were the answer to the rise of Calvinism was, as Henk van Nierop has pointed out, based on the idea that the repressive policies of the crown had become a European anomaly. England and Scotland had adopted Protestantism. The Peace of Augsburg of 1555 had created a form of religious coexistence in the Holy Roman Empire; the Edicts of Pacification offered a form of toleration in France. Interestingly, the nobles' belief that toleration could work was not dented by the events that had been unfolding all over France in 1561 and 1562; they were apparently confident that the problem of popular Catholic militancy simply did not exist in the Netherlands. They knew that the demand to abolish the placards against heresy came as part of an opposition package with which many people, Catholics as well as Protestants, could identify. Their concerns focused on crown innovations: a fear that Philip II aimed to introduce the 'Spanish Inquisition', and a sense that he was not respecting 'privileges' and was ignoring local elites. But if this joint political agenda goes a long way to explain why Catholics did not resist the Calvinists in the summer of 1566, it does not account for the fact that toleration became part of the political agenda without triggering the emergence of a group of Catholic militants, as it did in France. In other words, the political context alone cannot explain the Catholic response, because that context was also the product of Catholic passivity.

Moreover, we need to ask why Catholics were to remain so passive throughout the 1570s and 1580s. The memories of Calvinist aggression probably paled rapidly under the awfulness of the duke of Alba's retribution, and this may also explain why there was little Catholic opposition to the religious violence of Calvinists in Holland and Zeeland in 1572–3. Even so, by the later 1570s it could be expected that Catholics had learned their lesson. When all the other provinces joined in the Revolt in 1576, mainly with the aim of getting rid of the mutinying Spanish troops, it was agreed that all provinces except Holland and Zeeland would remain Catholic. Yet, when Calvinist minorities in Flanders and

18 Van Nierop, 'Nobility and the Revolt of the Netherlands', 88.
19 Urban authorities also worried more about Calvinists than about Catholics: see, for example, De kroniek van Godevaert van Haecht, ed. Van Roosbroeck, pt 1, 99.
21 Van Nierop, 'Similar Problems, Different Outcomes'.
Brabant broke this agreement and established regimes that first subjected Catholics to much harassment and later effectively outlawed all Catholic worship, lay Catholics again did no more than offer passive resistance. Admittedly, Calvinist activism rapidly undermined rebel solidarity, and led to the decision of the Walloon provinces to reaffirm their loyalty to the crown. However, at no point could it be said that it was Netherlandish Catholics who were sabotaging the experiments with ‘religious peace’, as their French counterparts had done.

It may seem tempting to explain Catholic behaviour with reference to the cultural climate that existed in the Netherlands. As contemporaries themselves noted, in an urbanized society that depended on trade, intolerance threatened prosperity. Traditionally, scholars have also made much of the ‘Erasmian’ legacy in Netherlandish culture. Erasmus’ critical, reformist Catholicism, and his distaste for the forcing of consciences were certainly influential in the Netherlands. Even so, ‘Erasmianism’, for all its popularity among scholars, is actually a poorly defined concept with dubious explanatory power. Moreover, given that neither the Erasmian legacy in Netherlandish culture nor considerations of trade stopped the emergence of a militant, violent Calvinist minority, it is difficult to see how such cultural features can account for the lack of popular Catholic violence in the Netherlands.

Some Dutch scholars have instead considered the idea that Netherlandish Catholics simply did not care that much about traditional religion. It has been suggested that Netherlandish believers were perhaps less committed to eucharistic piety than their French counterparts. In later decades, many people in the Netherlands were indeed remarkably uninterested in access to the Eucharist; probably only half the adults in the Dutch Republic in 1620 were communicant members of a church. Yet the

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24 Spaans, ‘Catholicism and Resistance to the Reformation in the Northern Netherlands’; Woltjer, ‘Geweld tijdens de godsdienstoorlogen in Frankrijk en de Nederlanden’ On communion in the seventeenth century, see Joke Spaans, *Haarlem* (cont. on p. 93)
existence of many confraternities and processions devoted to the Eucharist suggests that in the mid sixteenth century eucharistic piety was still as prominent in Netherlandish Catholicism as it was elsewhere. There is clearer evidence that many people in the Low Countries sympathized with at least part of the evangelical message, and were perhaps less concerned than they used to be with church rituals and other externals. The Reformers’ appeal to Scripture resonated strongly in a culture that was exceptionally literate, that was permeated by enormous respect for scriptural knowledge, and that cherished a strong tradition of vernacular scripture reading. Even the few Catholic lay people who openly polemized with the Protestants were clearly proud of their own schriftuurlijkheid (familiarity with the Scriptures).

But did this also mean that Calvinist activism left them unperturbed? Quite a few Catholic lay people, especially in the southern provinces, kept a record of contemporary events. In Tournai, the beer-porter Nicolas Soldoyer had been writing about what he called the ‘satellites of Satan’ for some time before the iconoclasm erupted; others took up the pen in direct response to Calvinist aggression. A week after the image-breaking

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26 Duke, Reformation and Revolt in the Low Countries, 8–11; Guido Marnef, Antwerp in the Age of Reformation: Underground Protestantism in a Commercial Metropolis, 1550–1577, trans. J. C. Grayson (Baltimore and London, 1996), 48–56; Post, Kerkelijke verhoudingen in Nederland, 145–85; J. J. Woltjer, Friesland in Hervormings-tijd (Leiden, 1962); Johan Decavele, De dageraad van de Reformatie in Vlaanderen (1520–1565) (Brussels, 1975). In Reynier Pouwelsz, Tspel van de Christenkercke, ed. G. A. Brands (Utrecht, 1921), a female character called ‘true scriptural proof’ holds out against the advances of ‘self love’, the son of heresy. Anna Bijns, Het yerste boeck inhoudende veel soone constige refereynen vol schrifturen ende doctrinen . . . (Antwerp, [1548]), also used schrifturen to argue against the heretics. For this tradition, see also Anne-Laure van Bruaene, ‘In principio erat verbum: Drama, Devotion, Reformation and Urban Association in the Low Countries’, in Christopher Black and Pamela Gravestock (eds.), Early Modern Confraternities in Europe and the Americas: International and Interdisciplinary Perspectives, forthcoming; Duke, Reformation and Revolt in the Low Countries, 54, notes that the label ‘evangelical’ was initially used by Catholics too and was monopolized only gradually by the Protestants.
in Ghent, the cloth merchant Cornelis van Campene, for example, began to write a detailed account of recent events, furiously complaining that the ‘cancer of heresy’ was spreading everywhere, and that ‘justice was asleep’.27

The moderate Catholic Marcus van Vaernewijck, author of the most extensive and most fascinating of these accounts, noted that the iconoclasm left many Ghent Catholics

so astonished, terrified and shocked by the new, great and wondrous changes that seemed about to happen that they said ‘[yet] the heavens are unchanged’, as if they found it unintelligible that God failed to display notable signs in the skies, just as if He had been asleep . . . Others became sick; others, men and women, lay in their beds at night sighing and weeping, wringing their hands.28

It was one thing for Catholics to find ‘externals’ and ritual less important than piety and charity, but quite another to see Calvinists shatter crosses and images, trample on the Host, and mock the Virgin Mary. In Antwerp, Van Haecht reported how distressed Catholics were to see the damaged images; as soon as they had regained access to the churches many people offered money to pay for repairs and replacements in the ravaged buildings. And in Ypres, the corn inspector Augustijn van Hernighem reported that Catholics flocked to the sermons that Bishop Rijthoven preached in September and October 1566, in outright competition with the Calvinist preachers.29

Yet if there is thus clear, if anecdotal, evidence that Catholics were not indifferent to iconoclasm and Calvinist aggression, even the angriest Catholic chroniclers do not report that they themselves or anyone near them considered taking action to stop the

27 Mémores de Pasquier de le Barre et de Nicolas Soldoyer, ed. Pinchart, ii, 241, 247; Dagboek van Cornelis en Philip van Campene behelzende het verhaal der merkwaardigste gebeurtenissen voorgevallen te Gent, sedert het begin der godsdienstberoerten tot den 15e april 1571, ed. F. de Potter (Ghent, 2001), 1–4. Not all such texts survive, as, for example, the one mentioned in a deposition to the Council of Troubles in Nijmegen: see Corpus iconoclasticum: documenten over den Beeldenstorm van 1566 in de Boergondische monarchie, ii, Nijmegen, ed. F. van Hoeck (Tilburg, 1929), 285.
28 Marcus van Vaernewijck, Van die beroerlicke tijden in die Nederlanden en voornamelijk in Ghendt, 1566–1568, ed. Ferdinand Vanderhaeghen, 5 vols. (Ghent, 1872–81), i, 188.
29 Augustijn van Hernighem, Eerste bouck van beschrijvinghe van alle geschiedene, 1562–1572, ed. A. L. E. Verheyden (Brussels, 1978), 27–35; De kroniek van Godevaert van Haecht, ed. Van Roosbroeck, pt 1, 103, 106. See also Dagboek van Jan de Pottre, 1549–1620, [ed. Baron de Saint-Genois] (Ghent, 1861); for Catholic comments on later stages of the Revolt, see Guillaume Weydts, Chronique Flamande, 1571–1584, ed. Émile Varenbergh (Ghent, 1869).
Reformed. From other sources, we know that there was some resistance, especially in Walloon Flanders. In late August 1566 a group of women in Lille made a citizens’ arrest of a man they suspected of being an iconoclast. Pasquier de le Barre heard rumours that Lille Catholics had also attacked the homes of Calvinists who had recently had their children baptized by a Reformed preacher. In a scene very reminiscent of events in France, ‘four of the children were seized by the mob and, despite the pleas of their parents, were carried to the churches where, with great fanfare and the ringing of bells, they were baptized according to the Roman rite by priests who were awaiting their arrival’.30 In the city of Hoorn, in Holland, Catholics saw off iconoclasts by pelting them with mud and stones, and in the Tournai countryside, the bailiff of the abbey of Marchiennes found Catholic villagers ready to help him defeat a band of iconoclasts.31

As a rule, however, Catholic resistance was much more low-key. In Bruges, Catholics covered a bridge with so much dirt that the Calvinists who had to cross when returning from the site where they were erecting their temple were up to their knees in it. The villagers of Nederweert in Limburg shouted—or rather sang—down the Calvinist minister whom their seigneur’s wife tried to impose on them with a contrafactum to a traditional Easter hymn:

Christ is risen
The Devil has entered the pulpit
So we should all feel sorrow
May Christ comfort us
Kyrie Eleison

In December 1566 Amsterdam Catholics paid four bargemen to mock the Calvinist communion service in the church where the Calvinists were celebrating their first Lord’s Supper. The

30 Mémoires de Pasquier de le Barre et de Nicolas Soldoyer, ed. Pinchart, i, 216–17. This may have been Calvinist scaremongering, but the Lille magistrate admitted to concerned Tournai Protestants that they had been unable to control the anger of la commune against the Reformed: see Robert S. DuPlessis, Lille and the Dutch Revolt: Urban Stability in an Era of Revolution, 1500–1582 (Cambridge, 1991), 218–28; A. L. E. Verheyden, ‘La Chronique de Pierre Gaiffier’, Bulletin de la commission royale d’histoire, cxxix (1954), 78–83.

31 For examples of villagers resisting the iconoclasts near St-Omer and Lille, see J. Scheerder, De Beeldenstorm (Bussum, 1974), 20, 35; in Helmond, the local nobleman intervened: ibid., 68. On Hoorn, see Duke, Reformation and Revolt in the Low Countries, 134.
men passed round a flask of beer, singing, 'Let the cup go round, go round, hey ho!, go round. Tom, Dick and Harry will get the cup'. But when they were summoned to leave the church, they duly did so. And this is what seems to have been the pattern almost anywhere. Catholics were feeling angry, but rarely did that spur them on to active resistance, let alone the violence that we see in France.

II

What could have driven angry Catholics to start taking violent action? There is one important factor that those examining the situation in the Netherlands have not yet considered: the behaviour of the clergy. That oversight is not entirely surprising. Natalie Zemon Davis's point in 1973 was to stress the agency of crowds and the rationale behind collective violence in the French Wars of Religion, and the emphasis in the literature has been very much on the 'popular' nature of the violence. Yet even Davis had highlighted the crucial role of the clergy in the emergence of religious riots in France, and in the growing body of recent scholarship there is much evidence to suggest that Catholic militancy in France benefited from the support of precisely those people from whom we might expect it to have come: Catholic clergymen. The penitential confraternities that were explicitly aiming to fight heresy were formed under clerical leadership, and often, as in Toulouse for instance, by competing religious orders. Both in Paris and in provincial towns, preachers tried to distinguish themselves by radical preaching, and in countless riots they led their parishioners into violent action.

32 De kroniek van Godewaert van Haacht, ed. Van Roosbroeck, pt 1, 121; Kronijk uit het klooster Maria-Wijngaard te Woer, 1442–1587, gevolgd door eene bijdrage tot die kronijk op het jaar 1566 en een vijftal stukken betrekkelijk de hervorming te Woer, ed. Ch. Creemers (Roermond, 1875), 37, 81; ‘Antekeningen, gedaen van Broer Hendrik van Biesten: nieuwe mare dat geschiet is binnen Amsterdam zedert het jaere 1534’, De Dietsche warande, vii (1866), 537–9.

Garrison-Éstèbe, Diefendorf, Crouzet and Taylor have shown how important the role of preachers was in inciting violence.\footnote{Janine Estebe, Tocsin pour un massacre: la saison des Saint-Barthélémy (Paris, 1975 edn); Barbara Diefendorf, 'Simon Vigor: A Radical Preacher in Sixteenth-Century Paris', Sixteenth Century Jl, xviii (1987); Crouzet, Les Guerriers de Dieu, i; Larissa Taylor, 'Dangerous Vocations: Preaching in France in the Late Middle Ages and Reformations', in Larissa Taylor (ed.), Preachers and People in the Reformations and Early Modern Period (Leiden, 2000).}

From the mid 1550s French clergymen also wrote many angry vernacular tracts against the heretics, warning Catholics that Protestants indulged in sodomy, incest and ritual murder as well as insurrection. Recent studies have been bringing to light both how numerous these texts were, and how effective Catholic polemists in France were in using the printing press. What little evidence there is for Catholic violence elsewhere in Europe also supports the notion of a crucial role for clergymen; clerical agitation was vital in the Pilgrimage of Grace, for instance.\footnote{On published polemics, see G. Wylie Sypher, ‘“Faisant ce qu’il leur vient à plaisir”: The Image of Protestantism in French Catholic Polemic on the Eve of the Religious Wars’, Sixteenth Century Jl, xi (1980). Francis M. Higman, Piety and the People: Religious Printing in French, 1511–1551 (Aldershot, 1996), and Luc Racaut, Hatred in Print: Catholic Propaganda and Protestant Identity during the French Wars of Religion (Aldershot, 2002), have shown that the volume of Catholic publications was higher than Sypher assumed. On the role of clergy in England, see C. S. L. Davies, ‘Popular Religion and the Pilgrimage of Grace’, in Anthony Fletcher and John Stevenson (eds.), Order and Disorder in Early Modern England (Cambridge, 1985).}

It is, therefore, not surprising to find some priests involved in the few violent Catholic incidents that happened in the Netherlands. Priests in Lille had apparently encouraged the crowd to bring them the Calvinist infants for ‘re-baptism’, and in Nederweert the local priest headed the villagers’ protest against the Calvinist preacher. In the early summer of 1566, Marcus van Vaernewijck noted that a few Ghent priests ‘had mouths full of blood’ when they called for an end to the prêches, and took it upon themselves to call the magistrates and even the common man to arms (although apparently they did not suggest that the common man should disobey the magistrate). There was, of course, no guarantee that clerical calls would be heeded. ‘Men of honour and sense’, Van Vaernewijck maintained, rejected clerical demands for violent action, arguing that these might simply anger the Calvinists and lead to escalations like those in France — in any case, most of those attending the prêches were misled, rather than evil. Yet that violent incidents in the Netherlands
seem to have been few and far between was probably not only because Catholic ‘men of honour and sense’ ignored the calls to violence from their priests, but also because such calls appear to have been much rarer than they were in France.

Van Vaernewijck’s account offers an interesting analysis of the strategies that Netherlandish clerics had adopted to deal with the problem of heresy. He clearly approved of some of these. Thus, he noted that throughout the summer of 1566 two Catholic preachers in Ghent, a Dominican and an Augustinian, began to draw large crowds. Although the daily sermons of the latter started at 7 a.m., well into the working day, even poor people and small artisans attended in large numbers. They were so interested, Van Vaernewijck thought, because things were now being preached ‘that were rarely or never taught in public’. As a rule priests had deemed it better ‘to teach the common man how to lead a good, honest and edifying life, than to explain the issues of faith, which are hard to understand’. This was probably just as well, he added, since, ‘frankly’, many preachers were not learned enough to be a match for the ‘ever-studious heretics’.

Books could have remedied this problem, Van Vaernewijck thought, but he was concerned that there was a lack of Catholic material in print. While the heretics wrote and printed day and night, he complained, ‘for [the clergy] it is too much trouble to write even a small book’. When clerics wrote serious refutations of heresy, they did so in Latin, ‘feeding those who were least hungry’. There had been a few vernacular books, he admitted, but most priests grossly underestimated ordinary people’s understanding, so that some of their writings were too aggressive, and others much too childish; heretics responded to such primitive arguments ‘four times as vigorously’, and threw the books into the fire, whilst Catholics were afraid to press their priests out of fear of being accused of heresy.

Was Van Vaernewijck right? Establishing the precise content of sermons before 1566 is problematic, and would require more extensive research than could be undertaken in the context of this article. However, the recent completion of Dutch and Belgian inventories of sixteenth-century printed books has

36 Van Vaernewijck, Van die beroerliche tijden in die Nederlanden, i, 21–2, 48–9.
37 Ibid., 50–3.
made it possible to gain a good insight into printed Catholic polemic in the Low Countries, and offers an opportunity to test Van Vaernewijck's impressions. At first sight his claim that priests did not write and publish seems exaggerated. There were old classics on offer as well as many vernacular bibles and other new vernacular religious books. But, while there was plenty of devotional material available, closer scrutiny confirms that lay readers could actually find little in such texts that would help them to counter Protestant arguments. Prologues sometimes claimed that in the current climate the work would be particularly welcome as an antidote to heresy, but authors did little to flesh this out. Frans Vervoort's book Dat Vyants net (The Snares of the Enemy) of 1561, for instance, was much more explicit about witchcraft than it was about Protestant heresy. Even books with a self-proclaimed polemical agenda did not dwell that much on what heresy actually involved. De schat des kersten gheloofs (The Treasury of the Christian Faith) of 1539, written by Frans Titelmans, brother of the Inquisitor of Flanders, had as its stated aim the countering of heresy, but it did not do so by explaining what was, or was not, heretical. Rather, in the introduction he suggested that good books would automatically make evil books redundant. Some later catechetical texts like those of the famous Bruges Franciscan preacher Brother Cornelis Adriaensz, who was renowned for his strong views on heresy, were more clearly countering heretical ideas, but they did so implicitly. In his commentary from the 1550s on the First Commandment, for instance, Brother Cornelis gave some arguments


39 For example François Amelry, Een dyalogus oft tsamensprekinge van die kersten siele ende haer schoelovrouwe Schriftuercly onderwijs (Antwerp, 1551); Anon., Evangelse Peerele (Antwerp, 1535); Frans Vervoort, Dat Vyants net der booser wercken (Antwerp, 1561); Frans Vervoort, Dit is het boeck vanden heylijhen sacramente ghenoempt De Pane Angelorum (Mechelen, n.d.).
as to why Christians should venerate saints, yet he did not spell out which ideas exactly he was trying to fight.\footnote{40}

From the early 1560s the problem of heresy was undoubtedly receiving more attention from Netherlandish authors, even if the number of publications was much smaller than in France. Yet Van Vaernewijck was correct to state that until 1566 indigenous clerical writers, whilst increasingly active in developing and refining their anti-Calvinist polemics, wrote almost exclusively in Latin, for an audience of other priests and theologians.\footnote{41} The few vernacular texts published in the Netherlands that were explicitly polemical in content, and that were prepared to take on Protestant arguments, mostly originated in France.\footnote{42}

Van Vaernewijck was not the only Netherlandish Catholic who felt that this failure to defend the faith in vernacular print

\footnote{40}Franciscus Titelmans, De schat des kersten gheloofs (Antwerp, 1539); Vervoort, 
\textit{Dat vyants net der booser wercken}; Cornelis Adriaensz [van Dordrecht], 
\textit{De seven sacramenten wygeleeyt ende openbaerlyck te Brugge gehrepect by B. Cornelis van Dordrecht minderbroeder nu ter tyt lesere binnen den Convente aldaer} (Bruges, 1556); Cornelis Adriaensz [van Dordrecht], 
\textit{De Spelghel der tien gheboden huughtgeleijt bij B. Cornelis van Dordrecht, predikant int convent vianden minrebroeders binnen der stede van Brugge} (Bruges, [1554]). Guydo de Buysson associated the rise of heresy directly with the end of time. Yet the relevance of his work was questionable; he spent his polemical energies on combating atheism and those ‘Anabaptists’ who denied the humanity of Christ. See Guydo de Buysson, 
\textit{Van die meinschelicheit Jesu Christi teghen die Anabaptisten en andere vijanden ons heeren} (Ghent, 1555); Guydo de Buysson, 
\textit{Apoloogius oft bescherminghe des christelijken ghelooven teghens die heretiken ende vianden Gods, de welche openbaerlick loochen God haerlieder schepper . . .} (Ghent, [1555]).

\footnote{41}Many of these Latin works were dedicated to the relationship between modern and ancient heresies, and are discussed in Pontianus Polman, 
\textit{L’Elément historique dans la controverse religieuse du XVIe siècle} (Gembloux, 1932). One rare indigenous example was Jan vanden Bundere, 
\textit{Den scilt des gheloofs} (Ghent, 1557), translated from the Latin edition of the year before.

\footnote{42}For example Peeter Dore, 
\textit{Die collegie der wijsheijt, ghefundert ende ghesticht in die universiteit der duuchden in die welche ter scholen ghegaen heeft Maria Magdalena, die disciplinme ende Apostolinne Christi Jesu} (Antwerp, [1555]); S. Fontaine, 
\textit{Histoire Catholique de nostre temps touchant l’estat de la religion Chrestienne contre l’histoire de Jean Sleidan} (Antwerp, 1558). See also Charles Choquart, 
\textit{Epistre a Monseigneur de Montpenstier touchant l’estat de la religion Chrestienne} (Antwerp, 1561); Gentiaen Hervet, 
\textit{Eenen sentbrief oft christelijc vermaen totter christelijcker gemeente} (Antwerp, 1561); 
\textit{Oraite van de doorluchtigste ende eerweerdighen Heere mijn Heere die Cardinael van Lorreyne} (Antwerp, 1562); 
Lowys de Perussis, 
\textit{Die hystorye van de orlogen geschiedt in Vranckrijk in Provences ende Tgraefschap van Venayscin tusschen de Catholycke ende diemen noempt Hughenoysen} (Antwerp, 1564). From Germany came 
Aelbertus Noviocampus, 
had left the laity exposed. In the 1540s the Antwerp schoolmistress and best-selling poet Anna Bijns had complained:

When I let my eye dwell upon the various estates, I am amazed that there are so many learned men today who do almost nothing to resist Luther's arrogant teachings . . . and however much I try, one person can't make a dance. Heretics may note my work, but they make fun of it, thinking it's just woman's work . . . So put your mind to it, priest, as a brave champion, take up the pen, and it will easily have an impact. You have been appointed watchman, let your trumpet sound, seeing the enemies surrounding the people of God. I have the will, but I can't do it.43

Other concerned lay people had tried to step into the breach themselves. In 1563 a minor Antwerp official called Jan vanden Bosch took the unusual step of publishing a Dutch translation of an anti-Protestant tract entitled Scopus Biblicus. In his dedication to the 'overseers of the poor and merchants of Antwerp', he argued that it was extremely important for children to learn how to understand Scripture; not literally, as the heretics were doing, but also allegorically, and tropologically, and in full awareness of the teachings of the Church. Although he hastened to add that youngsters would undoubtedly benefit from sermons, which they should certainly attend, he thought the Scopus Biblicus would be a useful supplement.44

Lay people were so keen for more instruction about heresy because they knew they could not escape the subject when talking to their neighbours, friends and fellow citizens, in the countless conversations about religion that took place in markets and in taverns, on the roads and in social gatherings. In such discussions Catholics had not found it easy to hold their own. As Van Vaernewijck observed,

The heretics have for ten or twenty years been busy learning the means by which, if one or other argument is used against them, they should respond and counter the attack . . . But a Catholic person comes, to be sure, with true doctrine, but not with the right knowledge or the arguments that can serve to respond to this — like someone who is trying to fight a fire with a sword.45

For this reason, the sermons that Ghent's Catholics so eagerly started to attend in the summer of 1566 were a welcome innovation that was also followed up elsewhere. In the wake of the

43 Anna Bijns, Referienen, ed. A. Bogaers and W. L. van Helten, 3 bks in 1 (Rotterdam, 1875), bk 2, no. 24, p. 178.
44 Noviocampus, Het geheel begrijp des volcomen verstants der heyligher Schriftueren des Oude ende nieuwe Testaments.
45 Van Vaernewijck, Van die beroerlicke tijden in die Nederlanten, i, 242–3.
iconoclasm other diarists also commented on the enthusiasm with which lay Catholics flocked to sermons that offered detailed arguments and explanations to counter those of the Protestants.\(^{46}\)

However, if Van Vaernewijck was right in saying that the clergy had done little to supply their flocks with detailed arguments against the heretics before, that probably was not just because of their laziness and complacency, as he suggested. Many priests had doubts about the wisdom of educating people about heresy, or of asking them to stand up for the faith. A good illustration of their attitude can be found in the Dutch translation of a popular French polemical book, Nicolas Grenier's *Le Bouclier de la Foy*, that was published in both French (1549) and Dutch (1551), and reprinted regularly afterwards. This lengthy dialogue between a heretic and a Catholic traveller took the reader from one contentious doctrinal point to another, until the heretic was ready to turn his back on the road to Babylon and head for Jerusalem instead. But its translator, Friar Claes Zeghers of Bruges, was keen to stress that his work was not intended to encourage lay people to try their hand at such discussions themselves. In the prologue that he added to his Dutch translation in 1551 he warned that the book was meant as a 'shield' rather than as a 'sword':

> I am not publishing this bouclier or shield so that ordinary common Christians or ordinary male or female persons should learn with or from this book how to dispute, struggle, quarrel and fight against the heretics and Lutherans, their enemies, since they are prohibited from doing so by the Mandate of His Imperial Majesty, because one gains nothing from debating and arguing with such folk.\(^{47}\)

The Emperor's Edicts of 1550 had indeed banned both public and private discussions of Scripture by anyone who was not a theologian — which may be one reason why many Netherlandish priests were reluctant to talk about heresy in any detail to their flocks.\(^{48}\) In the early 1520s mendicants had been forbidden

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\(^{46}\) Philip van Campene, who continued the diary after the death of his brother Cornelis in 1567, constantly noted details of sermons, for example *Dagboek van Cornelis en Philip van Campene*, ed. de Potter, 87, 91, 94–5, 99, 107, 112–13, 124. See also Soldoye's comments in *Mémoires de Pasquier de le Barre et de Nicolas Soldoyer*, ed. Pinchart, ii, 337.


\(^{48}\) *Ordonnancie end edict des keysers Kaerle die V int jaar MCCCCCL om textirperen ende te ryeten te brengen die secten ende errueren . . .* (Leuven, 1550), p. Aiii. In the 1550s a papal ban on the reading of Protestant books had caused confusion even
to mention Luther in their sermons, on the grounds that this encouraged the spread of his ideas, whilst a translation of one of Eck's anti-Lutheran diatribes had also been suppressed. Although we know that not all priests heeded such bans, it was clearly not the norm for them to discuss heresy in any detail. As late as 1567, Jacob van de Velde, the translator of a Latin work by Bishop Willem Lindanus, felt he had to write pages and pages justifying the need for a translation. Judging by the introductory remarks to his dialogue of 1568 on the Eucharist, the Franciscan Provincial Peter Regis could only barely bring himself to speak of such mysteries to lay people; only the exceptional recent developments warranted it. Reform, in the eyes of many clergy, was an internal matter; the less lay people knew about heresy the better. No wonder there was a strand in Catholic lay opinion in 1566, as Van Vaernewijck tells us, that regarded the Reformation as a clerical problem which did not concern lay people. Since most of the preachers were apostate priests, the clergy should just be left to sort the matter out among themselves.

The clerical qualms about harnessing the laity against heretical teachings were not unique to the Netherlands. It is well known that Catholics in Reformation Germany lagged far behind their Protestant counterparts in the production of pamphlets, broadsheets and prints that informed the public about the schism in the Church. French priests, too, had initially been reluctant to write in the vernacular, but by the 1550s they had definitely come to change their minds on this issue. Thus, even while in among the Jesuits, who had a papal dispensation to study heretical works: see John W. O'Malley, The First Jesuits (Cambridge, Mass., and London, 1993), 279–80.

49 Duke, Reformation and Revolt in the Low Countries, 32.

50 On anti-heretical preaching in West Friesland, see B. Voets, 'De hervorming in West-Friesland', Nederlands archief voor kerkgeschiedenis, xxxv (1946–7), 219–20; xxxvi (1948), 28–9; Willem Lindanus, Een claer betoogh vanden oorsprong der Lutherie (Bruges, 1567); Peeter Regis, Discours op die maniere van een disputatie tusschen een Catholijcke ende een Calviniste, inshoudende vier groote secreten van het sacrament des autaers (Leuven, 1568).

51 Van Vaernewijck, Van die beroerlicke tijden in die Nederlanden, i, 10, 20–3.


53 Francis M. Higman, "Il serait trop plus decent répondre en latin": les Controversistes catholiques du XVIe siècle face aux écrits réformés; in Marie Thérèse Jones-Davies (ed.), Langues et nations au temps de la Renaissance (Paris, 1991); Racaut, Hatred in Print, 7–22.
the Netherlands the work of Bishop Willem Lindanus was still only available in Latin, priests in Paris were already translating and publishing it in French. And while Netherlandish clerics could not yet bring themselves to speak of heresy to lay people, the French priest Artus Désiré had published a pamphlet in which a shepherdess and a swineherd defeated John Calvin in debate.54

III

Why had Netherlandish priests not been making the same leap as those in France? One reason may have been that so much of the Calvinist challenge in the Netherlands came in the form of ephemera — songs, prints, ballads, refrains thatmocked the Church — rather than in the shape of large numbers of printed books that were written by identifiable theologians.55 Secondly, since the government’s diagnosis of the problem of heresy also focused on abuses within the Church, it was perhaps obvious for Catholic reformists to focus on influencing and educating priests first. The growing number of Latin polemical texts in the early 1560s, as well as early initiatives to offer advice to parish priests, seem to point in that direction.56 But recent scholarship suggests that in France, too, initial Catholic responses to the Calvinist onslaught had actually been rather despondent. Marc Venard argues that we may need to see the radicalization of French Catholics from the late 1550s against the backdrop of two new developments within the French Church: first, the growing influence of the new Jesuit order, and secondly, the influence of new ideas on Catholic reform among part of the French clergy.57

56 Francois Richardot, Ordonnancien voor de Prochiens ende Regeerders der Prochierskercken gelegen onder het bisdom van Atrecht, aengaende diversche saken dienende tot haertieden officien . . . (Antwerp, 1562).
While there had been Jesuits in France long before 1563, when the order was given official permission to settle, until the mid 1570s there were only a few Jesuits in the Habsburg Netherlands. The Jesuit community in Antwerp was potentially important, but it consisted of Italians and Spaniards who were primarily serving their own language communities. The only other place where Jesuits had settled permanently by 1566 was in Tournai. They had clearly been unable to stop the Calvinist tide there, but if we are to believe de le Barre that was not for want of trying. He noted in July 1566 that a number of merchants had presented themselves to the magistrates of Tournai to complain that recently a Jesuit, not content with spreading his usual scandalous and seditious opinions, had dared to attack the magistrates, saying they were evil renegades because they endured the presence of sermons and assemblies. He added that the people should follow the magistrates around crying *Au Renard! Au Renard!* (Traitor! Traitor!), a cry which served as a signal in the French realm for the sack and murder of many good men.58

How much difference a larger Jesuit input could have made in the Netherlandish situation is suggested by the example of Nijmegen in Gelre, the only Netherlandish town where Protestant activity met with a popular Catholic uprising. In November 1565, Nijmegen received a visit from Petrus Canisius SJ, already famous for his catechism, who had come both to see his large family in the city and to try to kickstart negotiations with the local authorities about the establishing of an official branch of the Society. The Jesuits in nearby Cologne had been working towards this aim for over a decade; in Nijmegen, relatives of Canisius and of Hendrik Denijs, another Jesuit with Nijmegen roots, had been offering land and money. The order had also made many friends among the canons of St Steven's church, where Canisius and his mother had set up a fund for the poor. Canisius used his visit to preach and to talk to a number of people about heresy, notably to the dean of St Steven’s and to the rector of the Latin school. Before his departure he reputedly made his sisters and

their children swear an oath that they would remain loyal to the Church.59

Interestingly, it was precisely among Canisius’ contacts in the city that we find the Catholics who in September 1566 began to mobilize resistance against the Protestants and against the attempt of the Nijmegen authorities to draft an ‘accord’ that would legislate for a form of religious coexistence in the city. Dirk Canis, a kinsman of Canisius, drafted a petition that the Masters of the Guilds presented to the burgomasters to protest against the presence of Reformed preachers in the town. In his capacity as churchwarden, Canis was also the person to organize the armed band of vigilantes that took it upon itself to guard St Steven’s church, in defiance of the urban authorities. The rector of the Latin school and his staff, in the meantime, had taken a joint vow that they would defend the faith, and defied the town councillor who urged them to stop teaching the catechism (perhaps that of Canisius himself). After the breaking of a few images outside the churches, the school became the venue where angry Catholics gathered to hatch a plan of action.60

Like their French counterparts, the rebel Catholics of Nijmegen used a traditional repertoire of action to make their points, and one that closely mirrored that of the authorities. On 26 September they forced burgomaster Touman to hand over the banner that traditionally served to gather the citizens in time of danger, carried that to the market square, and brought out the clubs that were Nijmegen’s ritual weapon of choice. Catholic women broke into St Jan’s church, carried out the pulpit that had been made for the Calvinist preachers, and burned it on the ‘blue stone’ that was traditionally used for executions. No bloodshed was required; the Reformed preacher fled town, and those magistrates who had supported tolerating the Calvinists were forced to resign.61

59 F. van Hoeck, De Jezuïeten te Nijmegen: schets der werkzaamheden van de Sociëteit van Jezus te Nijmegen, in verband met de godsdienstige en staatkundige geschiedenis der stad (‘s-Hertogenbosch, 1921). I am very grateful to Henk van Nierop for pointing me to the Nijmegen example.
60 Corpus iconoclasticum, ii, ed. Van Hoeck, 195–213.
61 Ibid., 198–213. Maarten Hageman, Het kwade exemplar van Gelre: de stad Nijmegen, de beeldenstorm en de Raad van Beroerten, 1566–68 (Nijmegen, 2005), 211, 218, emphasizes the role of Gelre’s stadhouder Megen in orchestrating the coup of 26 September.
In Nijmegen Jesuit activity had thus apparently created the leadership that was required for the mobilization of a wider group of people first to petition, later to circumvent, and finally to defy the local authorities. A similar example comes from the town of Culemborg. Catholic resistance there never became violent, yet it seems no accident that it was a close friend of the Jesuit Hezius, Melchior van Culemborg, who emerged as the leader of a group of seventy prominent citizens who in 1566 petitioned the count of Culemborg to suppress the prêches and maintain the placards. However, even if these examples suggest that Jesuits could play a crucial role in radicalizing Catholics and mobilizing them against the Reformed, we cannot simply explain the lack of violence elsewhere in the Netherlands by referring to the absence of Jesuits. In France, the Jesuits were important but they had not been the first or only clergymen to preach active resistance to the Protestants. The catalyst for the radicalization of the French priests had come from Catholic reformist circles, especially those associated with Cardinal Guise. And even if there were not many Jesuits in the Netherlands, the Low Countries certainly possessed their share of well-educated reformist priests.

In the autumn of 1566, it was a small group of these reformist Netherlandish clergymen who seemed finally ready to emulate their French colleagues, and now initiated a sudden flurry of vernacular publications. A range of works of French polemicists was issued in the Low Countries or translated into Dutch, some of the Latin polemics now appeared in translation, and

62 O. J. de Jong, De reformatie in Culemborg (Assen, 1957), 38–57. They had their petition printed in Leuven as Nieuwe tijdinghe van die van Culemborch. Item: die suplicatie van die adelen Raet ende van der borgheren van Culemborch (Leuven, 1566).
64 René Benoist, Een Catholic tractaet vande Beelden en het gebruyck dier selver genomen uut de heylighe schrifturen, ende oude leeraers der kerchen (Antwerp, 1567); Anthoine Duval, Le Mirouer des calvinistes et armure des chrestiens pour rembarrer les lutheriens et nouveaux evangelistes de Geneve (Antwerp, 1566); Claude de Saintes, Discours ofte corte enarratie op die beroovinghe der Catholycker kercken geschiet door die oude ketteren ende nieuwe Calvinisten van onser tijden (Leuven, 1567).
65 For example Stanislaus Hosius, Dialogus dats een tsamecountinge van twee personen, de eene genoemt Harpagus ende dander Arator . . . (Antwerp, 1567); Willem Lindanus, Cort onderwijis teghen de confessie . . . in Antwerpen ([Leuven?], 1567); Lindanus, Een claer betoogh vanden oorsprong der Lutherie; Vincentius Lirinensis, Een seer schoon boecxken van die outdheyt ende de waerheyt des ghemeene Christen gheloofs teghen die godloose nieuwicheyt alder ketterijen, trans. Petrus Opmeer (Leuven, 1566); Cunerus Petri, Tractaet vant hoochwaerdich Sacrament des Autaers (Leuven, 1567).
there were quite a few new works. Bishop Richardot of Arras preached on images and the Eucharist and had his sermons published in both French and Dutch. Netherlandish priests also began to respond in vernacular print to the clandestine writings of Protestant authors. They were now explicitly engaging with heretical arguments, agreeing, for instance, that all supporting evidence would be taken from Scripture and from those councils in the early Church whose authority the Protestants accepted. Lay people encouraged them in their polemical efforts. It was a Douai town councillor who gave Ian Letailleur the idea to ‘ghostwrite’ a dialogue for Bishop Richardot. Using notes on proceedings with a recent Protestant prisoner, Letailleur allowed Richardot to ‘star’ as the interrogating priest in a dialogue in which, in evident variation on the interrogation scenes of Protestant martyrlogies, the prisoner was persuaded to abjure.

The authors in this group, Willem Lindanus, François Richardot, Cornelis Jansenius, Cunerus Petri, Petrus Curtius, Theodore Maelcote, and their protectors, like the Leuven professor Michael Baius, formed a small but highly qualified set, very motivated and energetic, closely interlinked through patronage relationships and shared experiences as students or teachers at the University of Leuven. They seem to have

66 Theodoricus Maelcote, *Een christelijk onderwijs ende instructie van den dienst der Messen, te weten van wie en wanneer de misse is ingehestelt* (Leuven, 1567); Theodoricus Maelcote, *Een wareachtich bewijs van Martinus Lutherus wanchelbaerheit ende onstantvastigheit int geloove* (Leuven, 1567); Arnoldus Meermannus, *Vanden heylighen, weerdigen, alderhoochsten Sacrament des Autaers . . .* (Antwerp, 1567); Arnoldus Meermannus, *Missive ofte sendtbrief . . . op desen quaden tijdt* (Leuven, 1567); Regis, *Discours op die maniere van een disputatie tusschen een Catholickhe ende een Calviniste.*


68 Cornelis Jansenius, *Een corte confutatie of wederlegginghe geschreven teghen een ketters boeckten ghenaemt Corte Belijinghe des Geloofs* (Leuven, 1567); Cornelius Jansenius, *Refutatie ofen wederlegginghe teghen een ketters boeckten, gheneituteert Het oude Christen geloove teghen die nieuwe dolinghe der Papisten* (Leuven, 1567); Lindanus, *Cort onderwijs teghen de confessie; François Vanden Velde, Cort bewijs des dwalinghen valscheden ende misbruyccken in die belijinghe der Calvinisten menichfuldelijck verspreijt* (Leuven, 1567). An earlier example is the translation of Joannes Bunderius [Jan vanden Bundere], *Scutum fidei orthodoxae adversus venenosa tela . . . Veluani, fidem, sacramenta, ritumque ecclesiasticum explodere contendentis* (Ghent, 1556), which had appeared in 1557.

69 Letailleur explained all this in his introduction. The book appeared as *Disputatie ghehouden tusschen den eerweerdighen Meester François Richardot bisschop van Airecht ende eene ghevanghenen van Douay aengaende die principale punten des gheloofs* (Leuven, 1567).
co-operated; they used the same publishers and constantly gave the ‘approbations’ for each other’s books, as well as for the regulars who now became active in polemics, like the Franciscans Peter Regis, Arnoldus Meermannus and Hendrik Pippinck, and the Augustinian Jacob van de Velde.\textsuperscript{70}

In some respects, these priests followed closely in French footsteps. Their new emphasis on educating lay people about heresy was not unique — French priests, too, had moved in that direction, and the Decrees of Trent also encouraged this.\textsuperscript{71} As in France, some Catholic authors in the Netherlands were interpreting the rise of Protestantism as a sign of the approaching end of time.\textsuperscript{72} And, in conjunction with the move to educate Catholics, there was also a strong penitential drive. Sermons that were preached during processions in 1567 and 1568 were urging all the faithful to pray to God to avert His wrath, which had given rise to so much dissension in the land. Heresy was God’s punishment for collective sin and collective disobedience, and it required atonement from all members of society.\textsuperscript{73}

This penitential interpretation was not new — it had probably already dominated much anti-heretical preaching before 1566. Bijns’s poems from the 1540s, for instance, were very much informed by the conviction that heresy was a punishment sent by God. From their private writings, too, it is evident that many clerics were prone to see heresy and the Revolt as God’s punishment for sin, not least clerical sin. Brother Wouter Jacobsz, prior of the Augustinians of Gouda, saw the war and the suffering as a form of divine retribution. The nuns of Weert noted sign after sign in the skies, while the anonymous nun chronicling events in

\textsuperscript{70} Een corte confutatie appeared anonymously with an approbation of Lindanus and Bais. Cornelis Jansenius, future bishop and himself responsible for the approbation of Jacob van de Velde’s translation of one of Lindanus’ works, later admitted to its authorship. Future bishop Cunerus Petri, who published two polemical works himself, was involved in the approbations of works by the Franciscan Meermannus and the young Leuven scholar Maelcote, as well as those of French authors like de Sainctes. Bais gave his imprimatur to the sermons of Bishop Richardot. Future bishop Ruard Tapper and Bishop Rijthoven also provided approbations, whilst the latter was also the dedicatee of one work.


\textsuperscript{72} Meermannus, \textit{Missive ofte sendbrief . . . op desen quaden tijdt}; Vanden Velde, \textit{Cort bewijs der dwalinghen valscheden ende misbruycken in die belijdinghe der Calvinisten menichfuldelijck verspreijt}.

\textsuperscript{73} \textit{Dagboek van Cornelis en Philip van Campene}, ed. de Potter, 87, 92, 99, 152, 160.
Den Bosch lamented the sins that had sent God’s punishments throughout the land.\textsuperscript{74} The message was reiterated in sermons and plays, and was clearly accepted by many lay people. Lay writers like Philip van Campene in the 1560s, the young Jan Moretus in Antwerp in the 1570s, and the Brussels poet Katherina Boudewyns in the 1580s all echo the same message: heresy was a punishment for the sins of a decadent society.\textsuperscript{75}

In France, too, much anti-heretical preaching was penitential, but there the drive for penitence had been transformed into an aggressive message, urging people to take collective action against the heretics as a form of atonement. In the Netherlands, by contrast, believers were taught to focus on their own shortcomings rather than to try and root out those of others. In response to the iconoclasm the Franciscan Hendrik Pippinck, for example, published a new collection of Anna Bijns’s poems in 1567. Whilst he pointedly suggested that the poems should serve to warn ‘all spiritual prelates and princes, rulers of the land, that they should keep watch and rescue the Christian sheep from all enemies’, his introduction mainly emphasized that recent events should move ‘all to lament their sins, because God sends these trials, like a father punishes his child, not to destroy us, but in order to convert us and make us better ourselves’. Obedience to God, to the Church and to the authorities, was the Christian watchword.\textsuperscript{76}

The clerical drive for penitence that accelerated in 1567 thus did not result in a call for joint action. It took until the mid 1580s

\textsuperscript{74} Dagboek van broeder Wouter Jacobsz. (Gualtherus Jacobi Masius): Amsterdam, 1572–1578, en Montfoort, 1578–1579, ed. I. H. van Eeghen, 2 vols. (Groningen, 1959), i, 3–4, 8, 14–17; Kronijk uit het klooster Maria-Wijngaard, ed. Creemers, 18, 35–6, 45, 65, 71–2, 74; Kroniek eener kloosterzuster van het voormalig Boische klooster ‘Marienburg’ over de troebelen te ’s Hertogenbosch e.e. in de jaren 1566–1575, ed. H. van Alfen (Den Bosch, 1931), pp. vi–vii, 12, 23.

\textsuperscript{75} Dagboek van Cornelis en Philip van Campene, ed. de Potter, esp. 138–9, 152; for Moretus, see the New Year’s poem to his mother from 1577 that is on display in the Museum Plantin-Moretus in Antwerp; see also Katherina Boudewyns, Het priëelken der gheestelyker wellusten, ed. Hermance van Belle (Antwerp, 1927).

\textsuperscript{76} On France, see Philip Benedict, Rouen during the Wars of Religion (Cambridge, 1981), ch. 8; Crouzet, Les Guerriers de Dieu, i, 212–17; Hendrik Pippinck’s introduction in Bijns, Referineen, ed. Bogaers and Van Helten, bk 3, pp. 217, 198. Very similar arguments in Lindanus, Cort onderwijs teghen de confessie; Meermannus, Missive ofte sendtbrief. . . op dese quaden tijden; Vanden Velde, Cort beteii der dwalinghen valschden ende misbruycchen in die belijdinghe der Calvinisten menichfuldelijck verspreijt; Jan Hesselius, Een schoone ghebet . . . waer in dat van Godt den vader aenghaende het Sacra
tement des outaers een vroom sterk gheloove begheert ende versoht woort (Leuven, 1567).
before Netherlandish priests began to found the anti-heretical penitential confraternities that clerics in France had been promoting since the 1560s. Instead of inciting people to act in coalition with their clergy, each order in society was urged to contemplate and right its own sins — to 'carry their own pack' and 'weed their own garden', as Anna Bijns put it. Nor did clerics take on the authorities themselves. Certainly priests lamented that people had failed to listen to their warnings. Some authors dedicated their texts to the magistrates of those cities, like Aalst and Bruges, that had escaped iconoclasm, and praised them for their decisive action; the magistrates of Hulst were even congratulated for having limited the scale of the image-breaking. But that was as provocative as it got.

IV

The restraint of the Netherlandish clergy may have reflected a difference in intellectual outlook. The emphasis on a 'moral' reading of the problem of heresy, and the suggestion that personal piety should be its solution, not only reflected time-honoured mendicant teaching but also chimed well with the humanist Christianity in which these reformers had been educated. Both Catholics and Protestants in the Netherlands were very much wedded to arguing through and with Scripture, and clerics were no exception to this. On the other hand, French priests could refer back to a strong cultural legacy that identified their 'most Christian' kingdom with the struggle against heresy.

77 On these confraternities, see, for example, J. Andriessen, De Jezuïeten en het samenhorigheidsbesef der Nederlanden, 1585–1648 (Antwerp, 1957), 134–5. For France, see Harding, 'Mobilization of Confraternities against the Reformation'.

78 Bijns, Referèinen, ed. Bogaers and Van Helten, esp. bk 1, no. 9, pp. 29–32; bk 2, no. 20, pp. 169–72. On the idea of order-specific sins, see František Graus, 'The Church and its Critics in Time of Crisis', in Peter A. Dykema and Heiko A. Oberman (eds.), Anticlericalism in Late Medieval and Early Modern Europe (Leiden, 1994). This was also the initial response of many Jesuits: see O'Malley, First Jesuits, 377.

79 Jansenius, Refutation of the Heretic Books, reprinted in Het oude Christen gheloove teghen de nieuwe dolinghe der Papisten; Lindanus, Een claren betoogh vanden oorsprong der Lutherie; Meermannus, Vanden heylighen, weerdigen, alderhoochsten Sacrament des Autaers . . .

80 Colette Beaune, The Birth of an Ideology: Myths and Symbols of Nation in Late-Medieval France (Berkeley and Oxford, 1991), ch. 6; Spaans, 'Catholicism and Resistance to the Reformation in the Northern Netherlands'.
The Netherlands had been only recently politically united, and could not boast such a special relationship with God.

Yet the enthusiasm with which some Netherlandish priests sponsored the translations of the much more aggressive writings of their French colleagues suggests that intellectual differences alone cannot explain why the approach of the Catholic reformist clergy in the Netherlands should have been so much more placid than in France. And by taking a closer look at this group of reforming priests, we can also discern some evident political reasons for their restraint. Whatever their merits and learning, the fact of the matter was that almost all priests associated with Catholic reform and the polemical drive of 1566 were also associated with a deeply unpopular project: King Philip II's new bishopric scheme and its alleged architect, Cardinal Granvelle.

In 1559 Philip II had finally achieved what had been a Habsburg ambition for several decades: he managed to do something about the archaic diocesan structure of the Netherlands. The plan to create fourteen new bishoprics and one new archbishopric in the Low Countries was eminently sensible, and a vital condition for reform of the Church. Philip II explicitly linked this plan to Catholic reform; it provided for the formation of chapters that would each have at least nine university-trained priests attached to them, six of whom were to be doctors in theology and law, who would also act as papal and episcopal inquisitors. Most of the first bishops were highly trained and active churchmen, who were keen proponents of reform.

Yet the plan had one important weakness — to endow the bishops and new canons it was necessary to appropriate existing clerical wealth. The proposed solution for financing the scheme was to turn to the wealthy abbeys, which were expected to fund the stipends in return for some concessions. Whereas one or two of the new bishops were quickly accepted, and negotiations about endowments and jurisdictions in some cases proved successful, there were endless delays and squabbles elsewhere. Most importantly, this was the case in Brabant, where the three powerful abbeys resisted the incorporation with tooth and nail. The conflict

81 Previously, much of the Netherlands came under the authority of bishops and archbishops outside the Habsburg territories — in Cologne, Münster and Reims, for instance: see M. Dierickx, De oprichting der nieuwe bisdommen onder Filips II, 1559–1570 (Utrecht, 1950).
in Brabant had important political dimensions, since the abbots were the most prominent representatives of Brabant’s Provincial Estates, and this role would now be taken over by the bishops. The Habsburgs’ key adviser in the Low Countries, Granvelle, not only became archbishop of Mechelen, which made him one of the most powerful men in the Brabant estates, but was also awarded a Cardinal’s hat, and as ‘primate’ of the Netherlandish Church would gain precedence in the Council of State.

It was the scheme for the new bishoprics that set the nobles on a collision course with Granvelle, whom they managed to have recalled in 1564, although he retained his post as archbishop of Mechelen. But just as important was the fact that this general overhaul of the Church antagonized and preoccupied a large number of the most prominent clergy in the land at the very moment when the Calvinist threat was mounting. Even those who did not lose out financially still stood to lose authority. The canons of Utrecht had to cede the jurisdiction over large areas in Holland and Gelderland — and it was that, rather than the tide of Protestant reform, that exercised them. There was outright hostility between the bishop of Tournai, who lost most of his diocese, and the crown. None of the north-eastern provinces proved willing to accept their bishops, and in some of the other areas nominees died without being replaced, so that Antwerp, for instance, remained without a bishop until 1570. There, even the canons of the ravaged Church of Our Lady in 1567 still disputed episcopal rights to visit them, whilst one Brabant abbot, Thomas van Tielt, justified his apostasy to Calvinism in 1567 with explicit reference to his anger over the incorporation of his abbey by the episcopal ‘wolves’.

The fallout from the episcopal reform plan was therefore tremendous. It distracted important parts of the Church from the more fundamental threats posed by Calvinism. Moreover, it tied the Catholic reformist priests, and especially the new bishops,

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82 As is evident from the documents published in Documents inédits sur l’érection des nouveaux diocèses aux Pays-Bas (1521–1570), ed. Michel Dierickx, 3 vols. (Brussels, 1960).
83 Dierickx, De oprichting der nieuwe bisdommen onder Filips II, 133.
84 De le Barre, Time of Troubles in the Low Countries, ed. and trans. Steen, 14.
85 Alba finally forced the settlement of these disputes: see M. Dierickx, ‘Nieuwe gegevens over het bestuur van de hertog van Alva in de Nederlanden’, Bijdragen voor de geschiedenis der Nederlanden, xviii (1963), 177–81; Crew, Calvinist Preaching and Iconoclasm in the Netherlands, 112.
closely to the Inquisition, and to a strategy for combating heresy which, as in France, had been tested but that had signally failed to achieve its end. This made the bishops very vulnerable. Six of them had by 1566 not yet managed to take up their posts, and even those who had been installed had to struggle for recognition. In 1562 the installation of Bishop Sonnius of Den Bosch, for instance, was boycotted by the guilds, confraternities and civic militia, who were indignant that the Third Estate had not been consulted about the scheme.86

All over Europe Catholic bishops found that to introduce reform was a complex matter that clashed with many vested clerical interests. Many clerics were well ensconced within local elites, and could call upon secular support in their opposition to reform, so that it was vital for bishops to maintain good relations with the local authorities. The new Netherlandish bishops had even less room for manoeuvre than their peers elsewhere. Having acquired their positions at the price of enormous clerical opposition, their only hope of imposing unpopular reforms was to muster all the local support they could get. They were thus hardly in a position to start challenging the doctrinal commitment of powerful local politicians.87 In itself, episcopal leadership was not a precondition for Catholic militance. In France, quite a few bishops had converted to Calvinism, and many others did precious little to further Catholic reform. Yet precisely because Philip and Granvelle consciously recruited reformist, qualified priests to fill a large number of religious posts all at once, almost anyone in the Netherlands who might have developed the sort of militant stance that French priests pioneered was hamstrung by a connection with the bishopric scheme.88

86 Dierickx, _De oprichting der nieuwe bisdommen onder Filips II_, 140; C. Rooze-Stouthamer, _Hervorming in Zeeland (ca. 1520–1572)_ (Goes, 1996), 184–96.
87 Craig E. Harline and Eddy Put, _A Bishop's Tale: Mathias Hovius among his Flock in Seventeenth-Century Flanders_ (New Haven, 2000), for instance, chart the many difficulties encountered by a Catholic reformist bishop of unquestioned authority and much greater political clout.
88 Priests who opposed the scheme were silenced. Thus Cardinal Granvelle in 1563 banned the Carmelite Petrus Lupus of Mechelen from preaching because he had spoken out against the bishopric scheme. After the iconoclasm, Lupus decided to ignore the ban and took to the Cathedral pulpit to preach against the heretics. Granvelle's representative, Morillon, seemed genuinely surprised that he turned out to be an effective preacher against heresy, and continued to regard him with suspicion.

(cont. on p. 115)
The religious orders were probably not much better placed to challenge the local authorities than the bishops. One reason why few Jesuits had settled in the Netherlands is that local governments were reluctant to admit yet another group of privileged and tax-exempt residents, while the other religious orders feared their competing claim on local purses and patronage. In many Netherlandish cities the Franciscans and Dominicans were at constant loggerheads with otherwise perfectly orthodox town councils over tax exemptions, which were also deeply resented by the population. In 1525 in Den Bosch there had even been anti-Franciscan riots. Mendicants also clashed with the authorities about charity and schooling. Thus even a devout Catholic like the cloth merchant Zeger van Male, who in the 1590s was to write a ‘lament’ about the Reformation, was angered in the 1550s by Observants’ attempts to sabotage Bruges’ impressive charity school, because it competed with them for gifts from the citizenry. The position of the mendicants had further deteriorated with the changing intellectual climate. From the 1520s Netherlandish cities and courts were run by men who had been brought up on Erasmus’ satires against the mendicants. Franciscans were mocked in rederijker plays and in lampoons; their involvement with the inquisitions brought even more opprobrium. Mendicant preaching against heresy and co-operation with the Inquisition turned mendicants into prime targets for Calvinist attacks, but they were also often the subject of Catholic criticism; even the Brussels authorities tended to blame the spread of heresy on preachers who were not doing their jobs.

(n. 88 cont.)


89 Alfred Poncelet, Histoire de la Compagnie de Jésus dans les anciens Pays-Bas, 2 vols. (Brussels, 1927–8), i.

90 Duke, Reformation and Revolt in the Low Countries, 35, 81–5; James D. Tracy, ‘Elements of Anticlerical Sentiment in the Province of Holland under Charles V’, in Dykema and Oberman (eds.), Anticlericalism in Late Medieval and Early Modern Europe. For some examples, see Post, Kerkelijke verhoudingen in Nederland, 205–25.


92 Duke, Reformation and Revolt in the Low Countries, 81–5.
Mendicants had not always had a good press in France either. However, whereas in France mendicants seized upon heresy to demonstrate their indispensability and raise their profile among the lay people, the Netherlands mendicants failed to grasp this opportunity. A recent study suggests that the Studium Generale in Paris played an important role in mobilizing Franciscans — so it may well be that it was the lack of such a centre in the Netherlands that prohibited a more effective response. Even after 1585, when a vigorous Counter-Reformation began in the Southern Netherlands, the Observants were completely sidelined by the Jesuits and the newly arrived Capuchins; their fortunes did not revive until the seventeenth century. Although more research is needed to explain their weakness, there can be little doubt that the Observants were even more vulnerable than those associated with the bishopric scheme. To engage in seditious preaching about the laxity of the local authorities would have been suicidal. And so these priests did not dare criticize the authorities, or at least did not do so openly. They did preach against heresy, of course, but they chose to do so in a penitential mode that emphasized the need for obedience rather than for action.

The arrival of the duke of Alba and his army in August 1567 should have put an end to clerical worries. In some ways Alba did indeed pave the way for Catholic reform. He ensured, for instance, that all bishops could take up their seats. In Walloon Flanders, the new university of Douai could become a centre for Catholic orthodoxy, and by the late 1570s Walloon Flanders had certainly become one of the few areas where Counter-Reformation Catholicism had taken hold. Yet elsewhere Catholic gains rapidly turned into losses. The campaign of the Catholic reformist priests ran into trouble when Michael Baius was condemned for heresy in 1567; Catholic hardliners took an increasingly dim view of pandering to heretical sensitivities in discussions. Rather than argue with heretics about Scripture, they thought that the authority of the Church should be

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94 Dierickx, ‘Nieuwe gegevens over het bestuur van de hertog van Alva in de Nederlanden’.
emphasized. In the meantime, initial satisfaction among lay Catholics about the ‘justice’ being done turned to disgust. The executions of Counts Egmont and Hoorne shocked Catholics everywhere. While Nicolas Soldoyer in Tournai noted the details of every execution with grim satisfaction, other diarists soon thought things were getting out of hand. In Ghent Philip van Campene was appalled when a couple were arrested because their child had been found playing with a broken saint’s image. Catholic families who had encouraged relatives to return and give themselves up were horrified to find that they had effectively asked them to sign their own death warrants. Confiscations also caused anger; since all the goods of the condemned were sequestered, in contravention of traditional urban privileges, their families often suffered with them. And the fervent Catholicism of the Spanish soldiers brought in by Alba did nothing to inspire the local population — quite the reverse.

Things might conceivably still have worked out differently had the duke of Alba not disliked Jesuits. Under the influence of the Jesuits’ arch-enemy, the Dominican Melchor Cano, Alba and his wife had taken against the Society during Alba’s spell as viceroy of Naples in the 1550s. In 1570 he refused the Jesuits permission officially to relocate from Tournai to Antwerp, arguing that their persistent threats to royal authority made them a great ‘hazard’ in the Netherlands. In Antwerp they had already ‘murmured about the justice being done there’ and they apparently also joined the population in protest against new taxes. As a consequence, the Jesuits had to keep a low profile; they published only rather inane devotional tracts, and made little impact before 1575, when Alba’s successor Requesens called upon them for help to counter heresy. They made an energetic start, but, being surrounded by mutinying Spanish armies, there

96 Van Vaernewijck, Van die beroerlicke tijden in die Nederlanden, iv, 271–2.
97 Dagboek van Jan de Pottre, [ed. de Saint-Genois], 29–30; Dagboek van Cornelis en Philip van Campene, ed. de Potter, 114–15, 121–3, 214; Van Hernighem, Eerste bouck van beschrijvinqhe van alle geschiedenesse, 88–9; Kroniek eener kloosterzuster, ed. Van Alfen, 24.
was little they could achieve until the duke of Parma's victory at Antwerp in 1585 had finalized the reconquest of the Southern Provinces. By then Catholics in the new Dutch Republic had lost their right to worship; they were not to regain it until the late eighteenth century.

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Catholics in the Habsburg Netherlands were no less angry or shocked than their French counterparts at the religious revolt that erupted in the 1560s. Unlike the French, they could look to their prince as a mainstay for the Catholic cause, but just as in France, the crown was not capable of delivering orthodoxy on the ground. In 1566, Catholics had equal reason to feel that local authorities were abandoning traditional religion and were giving in to the Calvinists, who in the Netherlands manifested themselves as aggressively as their French equivalents. Yet whereas in France the clergy called upon the laity to rescue the Church and to force the authorities into line, Netherlandish priests were reluctant to do so. Although the latter spoke out against heresy, they actually discouraged lay Catholics from taking any responsibility for combating it. Both the secular authorities and the priests feared that to discuss heresy in sermons might tempt the laity into adopting it. Rather than to 'other' the heretics, as priests were increasingly doing in France, they stuck to a discourse that treated heresy as a moral rather than as a doctrinal problem, as God's punishment for collective sin. Rather than to right the sins of the Protestants, they urged believers to obey and to contemplate their own sins.

In 1566 Netherlandish priests could have adopted the strategies of their French counterparts, but although they finally started to publish in the vernacular and to address the issue of heresy in a different manner, their strategy continued to differ from that of the radical French clergy. This may have reflected a difference in intellectual outlook but there were also important political reasons for the restraint of the Dutch clergy. The mendicants were not in a position to challenge urban elites, and

the bishopric scheme soured relationships between Catholic reformist clergy and their clerical charges to the point where most reformists could not afford to make more enemies, and so carefully avoided taking on the local authorities. The Jesuit order, finally, penetrated the Netherlands late and slowly, and the suspicion of the authorities, especially the duke of Alba, also delayed its impact.

Yet the key contention of this article is not simply that there is something uniquely 'Netherlandish' or contingent about the way in which Catholics in the Low Countries responded to the rise of Calvinism. Rather, it is an invitation to revisit the notion that violence was the inevitable, natural outcome of the confrontation between traditional religion and Protestant activism, as historians of France have sometimes suggested. Even in the sixteenth century it took more than the existence of religious difference to make people start lynching their neighbours, and there was much that militated against a violent popular response to the rise of Protestantism. In societies where Protestantism emerged from below, Catholics knew many of the dissenters as respectable members of their communities. Since everyone agreed that the Church was in need of reform, many Catholics conceded the possibility that there might be 'something', at least, in the new ideas. Steadfast Protestant martyrdoms often made a deep impression on Catholics. And even when Protestants became aggressive and violent, the fact that God himself seemed to be 'asleep' while sacrileges were being committed was just as likely to cause confusion as it was to trigger revenge. Catholic clergy, in the meantime, tended to insist that the crisis in the Church was an internal matter that had to be resolved within their own ranks. Since they blamed the Protestant Reformers for allowing the laity to meddle in matters that were beyond them, their instinct was to discourage action by lay people rather than to give them an incentive in the fight for the Church's survival. Moreover, as soon as reform or toleration were imposed from above, resistance was undeniably seditious, and lay people did not necessarily find support for such sedition within the clergy. Even when they saw their livelihoods under threat, churchmen

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were often too dependent on lay and clerical patrons to dare to risk taking on the authorities.

To emphasize that the emergence of Catholic violence depended on clerical leadership, as I have done here, therefore, does not imply that lay Catholics showed 'blind' deference to the clergy — quite the reverse. The comparison between France and the Netherlands suggests that the price for the engagement of Catholic lay people was the admission that their input was instrumental to the Church’s survival. Catholic violence in France was not an instinctive response in defence of traditional religion, but was the outcome of the new and innovative strategies by which some French priests had begun to fight heresy. Critical to this was their promoting of what we might call a counter-reformation of the common man. Of course no Catholic priest in France suggested that there could be a priesthood of all believers. Nevertheless, several scholars have pointed out how many French Catholic polemicists glorified the true faith of the 'simple' believer, as opposed to the pretentious lay learning of the Calvinists. While believers in the Netherlands were urged to go home and contemplate their sins, from the late 1550s the French laity were told by a growing number of preachers that they were needed, that without their interference all would be lost. They could now make a contribution to the fight against heresy, not just by dealing with their own sins, but by righting those of the heretics, the elites and parts of the clerical establishment. Euan Cameron has argued that one of the main reasons for the appeal of Protestantism was that it 'flattered' the lay people. The Catholic preachers who told the crowds that the kingdom of France would go under without their intervention were, at last, offering French Catholics a message of equivalent appeal — to devastating effect.

Instituut voor Geschiedenis, Leiden

Judith Pollmann