Reformation, Revolt and Civil War in France and the Netherlands 1555-1585

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Introduction

The two most prolonged and bloodiest internal conflicts to disrupt Europe in the second half of the sixteenth century, the French Wars of Religion and the Revolt of the Netherlands, displayed striking similarities. In both France and the Netherlands, the rapid development of a Calvinist movement militating aggressively for a reform of Church and society divided local communities and highlighted the explosive issues of how Church life was to be structured and whether or not toleration might be granted to more than one Christian confession, just as changes at the centre of power — in France, the death of king Henry II and his succession by three young sickly children; in the Netherlands, the departure of the sovereign lord Philip II to the distant plateaus of Castile — created uncertainty about the royal will. The situation was further aggravated by the apparent monopolization of the king's ear at moments by mistrusted favourites, whose influence aroused the jealousy of other great lords and provoked opposition. Although the rulers of the two countries responded differently to the emergence of religious division, with the French crown attempting to pacify the situation by granting rights of worship to the 'new religion' while Philip II sought to stamp out all forms of heresy, the initial attempts to contain the crisis failed. A concatenation of civil wars followed, variously mixing elements of aristocratic conjuration and Old Testament holy war. In the course of the wars, the opposition groups seized control of a portion of the country and improvised their own government, building upon the framework of pre-existing institutions. Not only were these conflicts similar in many ways; they were linked. Philip II sent troops to aid the royalist and Catholic forces in France as early as the First Civil War in 1562. The leader of the Netherlands opposition, William of Orange, signed a formal alliance with the two chief aristocratic protectors of the French Protestant movement, the prince of Condé and the admiral Coligny, in 1568. William's brother, Louis of Nassau, fought alongside the Huguenots during France's Second and Third Civil Wars, while the Huguenots in turn provided assistance for William's incursions into the Low Countries in 1568 and 1572. The Reformed Churches of France and the Netherlands signed one another's confessions of faith and sent delegates to each other's synods and assemblies.

Despite the important similarities and connections between the events in the two countries, the outcome of the conflicts was very different. The provinces of the Netherlands that confederated against what was initially cast as the tyranny of the king's evil advisors were ultimately led to renounce the king himself and to proclaim

their independence. In the long, two-act struggle that followed, the more northerly of these provinces successfully resisted all attempts to subjugate them anew and became in time the independent republic of the United Provinces. In France, the crown's willingness to end each civil war on terms that granted the Reformed some measure of religious toleration and military protection ensured that any parallel dynamic toward a breakaway movement of regional independence did not outlast each civil war. The French state did not fragment. Instead, the Protestants gained legal recognition as a tolerated minority within a monarchy whose already powerful absolutist political traditions were reinforced by the bitter experience of civil war.

Because the outcome of the events was so different, they in turn came to be construed very differently in the relevant national historiographies. For the Dutch and Belgians, the events of the later sixteenth century became the critical moment of each nation's foundation. Most Dutch historians, as well as liberal Belgians, identified with those who fought against great odds to throw off the yoke of foreign tyranny. They presented the Revolt as a stirring saga of national liberation, while seeking to demonstrate according to their different political and religious orientations how the events of this period defined national traditions that offered them an honourable place in the national community. Catholic historians in Belgium hailed those who demonstrated their loyalty to region, church, and king. Only the 'Great Netherlands' historians, who deplored the rupture between north and south, inclined to a more tragic view of the Revolt. From the perspective of a unified French nation, on the other hand, the Wars of Religion were consistently depicted as a national tragedy. As the most searing and destructive crisis between the Hundred Years' War and the Revolution, they became an object lesson in the horrors of fratricidal division, successively evoked by historians of the Bourbon dynasty to demonstrate the danger of 'monarchomach' theories, by Catholic and conservative historians to prove the seditious and antinational character of Protestant heresy, and by Enlightenment and republican historians to show the danger of religious 'fanaticism'. Only the Huguenots were regularly cast in a more heroic light, by Protestants commemorating their ancestors' struggle for their faith and by those on the left who saw them as a minority fighting to survive, but this often involved its own heavy baggage of anachronism.[1]

In recent generations, the influence of cruder forms of nationalism and presentism has waned in historical scholarship, and historical research has become increasingly internationalized. As this has happened, the differences between accounts of the Dutch Revolt and of the French Wars of Religion have become attenuated. Still, even in this age of growing European integration, most historical scholarship continues to be done within the parameters of nation- or problem-specific historiographic traditions. Even when these traditions weaken, their influence rarely disappears. Would-be revisionists may seek to smash them, but their influence lives on in the ghost images shaping the direction of the revisionists' blows. The historiography of the French Wars of Religion and of the Dutch Revolt have largely developed in isolation from one another, with historians who work on each of these subjects engaged above all in a dialogue with their predecessors in the field.

[1] Nicholls, 'Social History'.

To be sure, the isolation has not been complete. A few historians have noted and explored the evident similarities and intriguing contrasts between them. Dutch historians have been more inclined toward this exercise than their French colleagues, as might be expected from the inhabitants of the smaller of the two countries, and a land with far less confidence in the importance of its own national history. English historians reflecting upon the history of the continent in an integrated fashion have also called attention to certain parallels and connections between the events in France and the Netherlands.[2]

An intriguing early attempt to compare and contrast the French Wars of Religion and the Dutch Revolt was made by H.A. Enno van Gelder, in a little known but still stimulating essay read before the Dutch historical assocation, the Historisch Genootschap, in 1930.[3] Inspired by Henri Pirenne's and Henri Sée's recent proclamations that the comparative method permitted history to approximate the techniques of the natural sciences, Enno van Gelder spelled out the evident similarities between the events in France and the Netherlands between 1560 and 1580, taking an early jab at the heroic depiction of the Dutch Revolt as a struggle for national liberation with his willingness to call it a civil war comparable to the French. He then explored what he saw as the central issue raised by this comparison: why the rebels in the Dutch provinces persisted in fighting for their breakaway state, while the French Protestants were willing at the end of each civil war to accept anew the authority of their lawful sovereign. He attributed this primarily to three critical differences: (1.) the Netherlands was a more urbanized region and cities proved to be where Protestantism took its deepest root, so the Protestant cause was stronger relative to the Catholic in the Netherlands than in France; (2.) the central state was more powerful in France, with greater control over the Church and stronger ties to the bourgeoisie, thanks to the existence of numerous offices that attracted the ambitions of the leading urban families; hence the rebels were less inclined and less able to break away from the state; and (3.) as a result of the early deaths of both Condé and Coligny, the French opposition lacked a leader with the charisma and political acumen of William of Orange, who so successfully guided the Dutch movement for independence.

These questions were taken up again in 1995 by Henk van Nierop in an essay in a collective volume examining the Dutch Republic in comparative perspective.[4] While noting many of the parallels between the history of the two countries observed by Enno van Gelder, he also underscored certain critical differences, both in the size and timing of the rise of the Calvinist movement, which swelled more powerfully and more rapidly in France, and in the strength of the Catholic response, which likewise was more powerful in France. His explanation of the different outcome of the conflicts underscored two structural differences that Enno van Gelder neglected. First, the Netherlands was a less thoroughly integrated agglomeration of provinces than France, and just one part of a larger 'composite monarchy' whose ruler was absent for the entire period from 1559 onward. It was thus more prone to fission than was

[2] E.g. Koenigsberger, 'Organization'; Koenigsberger, 'Western Europe'; Elliott, *Europe Divided.*
[3] Van Gelder, 'Historiese vergelijking'.
[4] Van Nierop, 'Similar Problems'.

France, which had a longer tradition of thinking of itself as a single political unit and a king who could make himself directly available to his subjects. Second, the urban magistrates of the more decentralized Low Countries had more political experience than their counterparts in the Protestant controlled regions of France and were thus more capable of organizing, financing, and directing a successful war of national liberation.

At almost precisely the same time, J.J. Woltjer used the comparison between France and the Netherlands in a different manner: to highlight in detail one major difference between the events in the two regions, and thus to call attention to distinctive aspects of each country's history deserving of explanation.[5] Examining the pattern of religious violence in the two countries, he underscored a contrast that Enno van Gelder and Van Nierop also noted, namely that the French Catholics rallied vigorously to the defense of their sacred objects when these came under Calvinist attack and initiated much of the religious violence in that country, while the great majority of Catholic Netherlanders stood by passively during the iconoclasm there. His explanation of this difference attributed it to stronger pre-existing social tensions in France (a claim many Belgian historians might contest)[6]; the more successful establishment of a state monopoly of violence in the Netherlands; and, most importantly, differences in the character of Catholic religious culture in the two lands. Under the influence of the *devotio moderna*, he suggested, Catholic piety in the Low Countries was more inward and more focussed on symbols such as the Man of Sorrows, rather than on the cult of the Holy Sacrament which inspired so passionate a defense in France.

This volume was conceived as an extension of the comparative reflections begun by these historians. After an opening essay on the recent historiography of the Wars of Religion and the Dutch Revolt, it takes the form of paired essays, one devoted to France and the other to the Netherlands, exploring in a single national context a theme or problem common to the history of both countries.[7] At the end of the twentieth century, the lure of modelling historical methods on those of the natural sciences entices historians less than it did the generation of Pirenne, Sée, and Enno van Gelder. Systematic comparison nonetheless remains a powerful weapon in the

[5] Woltjer, 'Geweld/Violence'.

[6] There is a long tradition in Belgian historiography of linking both the iconoclasm of 1566 and the eventual return of the southern provinces to obedience to Spain to social tensions. See e.g. Pirenne, *Histoire de Belgique*; Van der Wee, 'Economie'.

[7] Like Van Gelder's essay, the volume confines its attention to the initial decades of the Wars of Religion and the Dutch Revolt, when the parallels and contrasts between events in the two countries were clearest and most striking. After 1584, the emergence of the Protestant Henri de Navarre as the heir apparent to the throne of France created a situation that had no analogue in the Low Countries. Two different kinds of religious wars troubled the internal stability of European countries in the sixteenth and seventeenth centuries: those sparked when a new form of religion whose members were convinced that the old form was hopelessly corrupt and needed to be swept away first gained powerful support in a region and destabilized the pre-existing religious situation, and those precipitated when rulers or potential rulers of a different faith from a majority of their subjects provoked opposition inspired by fear that they would seek to alter the ancestral religion. The conflicts in France between 1562 and 1598 are usually lumped together as a single set of conflicts, but the label 'the Wars of Religion' hides a shift in 1584 from religious wars of the first kind to religious wars of the second kind. What might be called 'the crisis of the Bourbon succession' of 1584-1598 had stronger parallels to Britain's Exclusion Crisis and Glorious Revolution than to anything in the history of the Low Countries.

historian's arsenal. The attentive comparison of parallel phenomena in different lands can reveal shared traits and thus contribute to building more reliable characterizations of trans-national movements or social formations, whether the subject be Calvinism in sixteenth-century Europe or slave systems in the Americas. It can reveal aspects of these phenomena distinctive to each country and thus in need of explanation. And it can serve as a technique for heightening historians' awareness of the blindnesses and peculiarities of individual national historiographies, thereby suggesting fruitful areas for future investigation.

This last consideration weighed particularly heavily with the editors of this volume. From the outset, one of their chief goals was to promote the deparochialization of each national specialization. With that end in mind, they organized the volume and the conference that gave rise to it as something of an experiment in international collaboration. The essays that follow were first presented at a conference held in Amsterdam from 29 to 31 October 1997 under the auspices of the Dutch Royal Academy of Sciences. Seven themes or problems that seemed to lend themselves particularly well to the comparative investigation of the French and Netherlandish cases were initially defined:

— the dynamics of Calvinist militancy
— the situation of the nobility
— political culture and mobilization
— Catholicism and resistance to the Reformation
— middle groups and their politics
— the response of the monarchy
— from localized militancy to sustained military insurrection.

Leading specialists on the history of each country were then invited to prepare essays on these subjects, with an effort being made to involve historians of different outlooks, national backgrounds, and generations. The two people assigned to each theme were invited to contact one another if they chose, so that their papers might explore parallel issues in a manner that could facilitate the drawing of comparisons at the conference. Two other specialists — again, if possible, of differing national and methodological backgrounds — were invited to comment on each pair of papers and to develop any reflections that these suggested to them. It was hoped that the confrontation of historians of different outlooks, historiographic traditions, and specific areas of expertise would strike sparks and generate new insights in the course of the conference. The authors then had several months to revise their papers in light of the comments and conference discussions.

Readers may judge for themselves the success of this experiment. They will see that, as always in a scholarly conference, the participants chose different routes to a common goal. Some elected to present important new research findings on specific aspects of the broad theme they were invited to address. Others offered an interpretive synthesis of a wider range of matters. Still others zeroed in on a moment within the longer period that they had been asked to consider in order to explore a problem or a turning point they considered particularly revealing. The differences in the way

in which certain pairs of historians chose to address their common subject proved to be among the most revealing aspects of the conference, for they served to exemplify the different historiographic approaches long dominant or currently in vogue in one country or another, and to suggest different ways in which the same problems might be approached.

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This introduction cannot hope to draw attention to all of the original and important features of the essays that follow. To further the volume's comparatist ambitions, it will simply try to set each pair of essays in historiographic context and to suggest a few of the insights that emerge from the paired comparisons.

The volume opens with Nicolette Mout's survey of recent historical writing about the Wars of Religion and the Dutch Revolt. Despite the eclipse of older nationalist and confessional interpretations, she shows that differences persist in the aspects of these two events that historians have chosen to explore and the way in which they view certain questions. Historians of the early Reformation in France have been less attracted to the memorialistic recovery of the ideas, sufferings, and institutional initiatives of the different varieties of early reformers than their counterparts working on the Netherlands, and have instead focussed more on the question of who became Protestant and why. Historians of the Netherlands were quicker to draw attention to the existence and importance of that fraction of the population attached neither to the Reformed Church nor militant Catholicism, but whose political choices were often critical for the course of events. By contrast, historians of France have undertaken more local studies of individual communities and more biographies of leading actors in the events. They also have a far richer tradition of study of the political thought of the era.

The first pair of essays, by myself and Guido Marnef, explores a subject that traditionally has been treated very differently by historians of France and the Low Countries: the aspirations and actions of the Calvinists, whose quest for a broad renewal of church and society was one of the fundamental precipitants of conflict in both countries. Dutch and Belgian historians were long prepared to see the Calvinists either as the militant heroes in the liberation struggle of a fundamentally Protestant nation, or as the militant 'fanatics' whose impetuous pursuit of their particular religious concerns destabilized promising alliances of much of the region around moderate religio-political settlements, drove the Southern Netherlands back into the arms of the Habsburgs, and sought to impose upon the North a new religious settlement desired by only a tiny fraction of the population. The historiography of this region thus consistently depicts the Calvinists as pursuing their goals with a radical disregard for established authority and negotiated settlements. In France, by contrast, the Protestants sought from the eve of the Civil Wars onward to deny the repeated accusations of their Catholic enemies that they were seditious. They also took care conscientiously to compile documentation about the events of the era, which they selected with an eye to showing that they were loyal subjects of the crown. At the moment when the country's modern historiography took shape under the Third

Republic, the superior quality of the early Protestant histories and source compilations to anything emanating from the Catholic side combined with the tendency of republican historians to sympathize with the Protestants to enshrine in the history books a view of these years largely in keeping with the early Huguenot presentation of these years. This asserted that the wars were born less of religious considerations than from the political ambitions of the great nobility and their rivalries at the court of Henry II. The recent trend of historical work on the Wars of Religion has been to 'put religion back in' to the wars and to assert the 'revolutionary' character of the Protestant movement, but this revisionism to date has only sapped some of the foundations of the older view.[8]

My essay reexamines the ambitions and actions of those drawn to the French Protestant movement in its initial period of expansion. It further supports the recent tendency to emphasize the force of religious concerns in provoking the conflicts in France, since it shows the Reformed moving aggressively to change the religious order of a number of towns in southern France even before the outbreak of the Wars of Religion and reveals that the para-military system instituted by the Huguenots came to be more tightly controlled by the hierarchy of church synods and assemblies as the onset of the Civil Wars approached, rather than falling increasingly under the control of the nobility as previous accounts claimed. It also offers a reconstruction of the precise actions taken by the Huguenots in furtherance of their ambitions that permits direct comparisons with the actions and ambitions of their coreligionists in the Netherlands that Marnef likewise takes pains to delineate.

Perhaps the strongest impression conveyed by the comparison between these two essays is the extent of the similarities between the Calvinist movements in the two countries, even if, as is well known, the direct links between the French Reformed Churches and Calvin in Geneva were far more substantial than those connecting the churches in the Low Countries to the great Calvinist city on a hill. (The churches of the Low Countries looked more to Emden or London for direction.) In both countries, the Reformed sought not merely toleration for their own services, but acted aggressively to close Catholic religious houses and end the mass whenever their local strength permitted it. Both Churches debated the same issues about the limits of permissible resistance when facing persecution. In both, groups of believers often forced the issue by going beyond the limits initially endorsed by the official institutions and ministers of Church. At the same time, the Churches in the Low Countries do appear to have been more radical on one point: many churches' consistories played a central role in organizing the iconoclasm of 1566, while the French consistories generally shrank back from openly endorsing the iconoclasm that occurred in that country in 1561-1562.

The comparison between the French and Dutch cases also confirms the important differences in the speed of the Calvinist movement's growth in the two countries previously noted by Woltjer and Van Nierop. In France, upwards of a thousand Reformed congregations may have been founded by 1562. The Protestants already represented a majority of the population of some cities and had implemented local

[8] Holt, 'Putting Religion Back'; Crouzet, *Guerriers de Dieu*, part 2.

reformations in a few. The different churches of the realm were knit together by a formal hierarchy of synods that had established mechanisms for raising troops collectively. In the Netherlands, by contrast, scarcely more than a dozen congregations with organized consistories existed at the beginning of the 'Wonderyear' of 1566, even though the first 'churches under the cross' were formed at the same time as those in France. During the Wonderyear the Low Countries churches scrambled to create a system of political and military coordination comparable to the one that existed in France by the beginning of 1562. Moving more aggressively from a position of greater original weakness, they came to grief far more completely than their French counterparts. Instead of achieving the military standoff that the French Huguenots managed in the First Civil War, their initial giddy moment of expansion ended in defeat, repression, and exile. It was extremely fortunate for the movement that Philip II's subsequent policy of harsh punishment and the aggressive introduction of political novelties by his new lieutenant in the Netherlands, the duke of Alba, created the conditions favourable to a successful invasion and rising in 1572. The new political realities of the subsequent years once again provided the Calvinists the opportunity to pursue their persistent dream of a new religious order. Riding into a position of ascendancy on the strength of their alliance with the military forces of the Beggars in the towns of Holland and Zeeland, they were nonetheless still only a small minority of the population — in contrast to the situation of the Huguenots in their greatest strongholds in the same years. They consequently had to make compromises with the ruling regents about the nature of the new Church order, such as accepting that all inhabitants of the towns in question would not be required to attend Reformed services or subject themselves to Church discipline, that departed significantly from the course followed in the Protestant towns of France — or before that in Geneva or Scotland. The highly unique relationship negotiated between the legally privileged church and the socio-political order in the Northern Netherlands in the course of the Dutch Revolt was probably first and foremost the result of the relative numerical weakness of the Reformed cause.[9]

The next pair of essays, by Jean-Marie Constant and Van Nierop, examines the second major development of the period following the Peace of Cateau-Cambrésis that generated the political crises that struck both lands: the disaffection of a substantial fraction of the nobility. Here the authors choose different foci. Constant looks at just one fraction of the nobility, those who cast their lot with the Reformed Church. Synthesizing a considerable amount of recent research, much of it his own and that of his students, he offers the first comprehensive overview of the Protestant nobility in France during this period. Van Nierop, by contrast, looks at the entire Second Estate in the Netherlands. After reminding readers of the very substantial power of the Low Countries grandees, whose wealth and political influence was built on nearly

[9] On relations between church and state in the young Dutch Republic, see above all Schilling, 'Religion and Society'; Spaans, *Haarlem*; Kaplan, *Calvinists and Libertines*. Duke, 'Ambivalent Face' reverses the flow of the causality I suggest here, attributing the small size of the Reformed Churches in the North to their early history as gathered churches in exile and their consequent strictness about whom to admit to communion. It is not clear that they were unusually rigorous in their disciplinary practices or standards for admission to communion in comparison with other Reformed Churches.

identical foundations to those of the leading French noblemen, he surveys the political behaviour of the nobility as a whole and the relationship of this political elite to the Reformed Church over the course of the Revolt.

The different foci chosen by these two authors may be related to the different relationship between noble opposition and the Protestant cause in the two territories. As the comparison between the two cases reveals, a far higher percentage of French noblemen and noblewomen joined the Reformed Churches in their early years than did their counterparts across the border — a contrast whose elucidation is one of the chief concerns of the two essays. At the same time, an autonomous movement of noble disaffection with Philip II, his regent Margaret of Parma, and the cardinal Granvelle, developed independently of the religious issue with greater power in the Netherlands than was the case in France. Consequently, focussing upon the relationship between the crown and the nobility as a whole is more important for the Netherlands than for France in order to understand the dynamic that led to civil war. Constant's striking refusal to return once again to the old story of the rivalries between the Guises, the Montmorencys, and the Bourbons, and to examine instead those noblemen tied directly to the Protestant movement, may also suggest the extent to which historians of France have now lost faith in the view of the Wars of Religion as struggles between aristocratic *clientelae*. Recent work on the nature of clientage in this era has indeed suggested that patron-client links determined noble political or religious choice less than once was thought.[10]

This impression of a contrast in the relative importance of the religious and political or 'constitutional' issues in the French and Netherlandish cases is reinforced by the next pair of essays, on the themes and processes of political mobilization, by Denis Crouzet and Alastair Duke. Although the Burgundian state was born of a cadet line of the Valois dynasty, with the result that the governing institutions of France and the Netherlands displayed numerous similarities, important contrasts also characterized the longstanding political traditions of the two regions. These contrasts may in turn account for certain of the differences discernable in the history of the two polities in the later sixteenth century. As Colette Beaune has shown, the precocious development of a form of national identity in late medieval France was bound up with myths that linked the survival and prosperity of the country to the ruling dynasty's exemplary fidelity in protecting it against heresy. From 1215 onward, the country's 'Most Christian' kings swore in their coronation oaths to act diligently to expel heresy from the land.[11] The vigorous Catholic opposition to the rise of Protestantism and angry rejection of the first royal edicts granting toleration to Reformed worship was connected to this tradition, which preachers and theologians evoked in urging crowd action against the heretics if the crown abdicated its responsibility to keep the country pure of their taint.[12] In the Low Countries, by contrast, the great documents in which the ruling prince expressed a contractual obligation to his subjects were the charters of privilege renewed with each constituent county, duchy, or

[10] Neuschel, *Word of Honor*, 31-4, 38-68.
[11] Beaune, *Naissance*, esp. 207-16; Jackson, *Vive le Roi*, 58.
[12] Diefendorf, *Beneath the Cross*, 61

lordship at the time of the sovereign's accession, of which the '*Joyeuse Entrée*' of Brabant was the most celebrated. Although a sense of belonging to a common Netherlandish polity had developed by the late fifteenth century — so much so that certain documents invoke '*Nederland*' in the singular rather than the plural[13] — attachment to provincial privileges and institutions ran deeper here. Furthermore, the privileges of the individual territories generally included the right of inhabitants to be tried before local courts. Charles V's and Philip II's inquisitorial officials challenged this privilege in their efforts to bring heretics to trial. As a result, the fight against heresy came to be associated with the violation of cherished political rights, where in France it was associated with longstanding national traditions and the defense of the country's welfare.

Both Crouzet and Duke focus on the methods of political mobilization that the opposition groups used to rally support for their cause in the opening phase of the crisis in each country. In keeping with the recent enthusiasm in France for a philosophical history of politics centered on the analysis of political language, Crouzet builds his investigation around the analysis of the internal logic of the opposition pamphlets from the first phase of the religious wars. Even though certain of these tracts advance predominantly political/constitutional arguments similar to those that soon would be expressed in the Low Countries against Granvelle, denouncing the illegal usurpation of authority by the dukes of Guise or the Triumvirate, Crouzet suggests that such arguments represented an effort by the Protestant authors of these pamphlets to rally support from the widest possible constituency. These tracts were just one component of a larger corpus of Protestant statements from this period, within which constitutional arguments justifying resistance to wicked councillors who had established their domination in violation of the laws that properly governed situations of youthful kings coexisted with more radical theories suggesting the legitimacy of tyrannicide. An oscillation can be discerned between these two poles, and Crouzet suggests that this oscillation was determined by tactical considerations and by the belief that dissimulation of one's true aims was occasionally permissible in order to advance a godly cause, especially since the determination of affairs ultimately rested in God's hands, who would reveal by the outcome of events whether or not He believed that a certain cause was justified. Crouzet's essay is a stimulating restatement and extension of the argument he first advanced about the revolutionary character of the French Calvinist movement in his *Guerriers de Dieu*. It once more suggests that the religious issues were primordial in the French context.

Where Crouzet examines the content of Calvinist argumentation, Duke looks at the practices used by the opposition movement to rally support in the Netherlands at specific moments and situations, as well as at the media that they employed. His vivid essay reveals that these were strikingly varied. The great nobles who leagued together against Granvelle in 1562 not only commissioned handbills against him that were posted throughout the streets, but also adopted and wore a variety of emblems. Badges and medallions of the cause gained even wider circulation in the 1565-1566 Compromise of the Nobility, whose leaders displayed a flair for public demonstra-

[13] De Schepper, *Belgium Nostrum*, 5-6.

tions and made clever use of all of the print media of the era, including satirical engravings. While proclaiming their loyalty to the king, the opposition propaganda pilloried Granvelle and Margaret of Parma and warned darkly of a clerical plot to introduce a Spanish Inquisition and enslave the nobility. The active courting of public opinion and clever use of themes and symbols of wide resonance garnered considerable popular support for these opposition movements born in noble ranks. Here we see a movement of political and constitutional opposition developing in the public arena and rallying wide support independently of the Reformed cause in a manner that seems to lack any parallel in France in the first years of the Civil Wars. Certain of the themes of the political opposition in the Netherlands would subsequently cross the border into France, notably the fear of attempts to reduce the nobility to a 'Turkish' slavery, just as the resistance theories of the French Calvinists subsequently awakened echoes in the Netherlands. The initial mix of religious and political opposition nonetheless appears to have been different in the two lands.

As previous comparative studies of the French Wars of Religion and the Dutch Revolt have already noted, one of the most striking differences between the two is that conflict in France was often initiated by the Catholic majority, while in the Netherlands the Catholics rarely raised a finger at critical moments to defend their sacred objects or rights of worship, with the militia leaders of Middelburg famously declaring in 1566, 'We will not fight for church, pope, or monks.' The next pair of essays, by Marc Venard and Joke Spaans, looks at the character of Catholic religious practice in the two lands and the contrasting ways in which those still loyal to the Roman church responded to the surge of Calvinist militancy. The history of fidelity to traditional Catholicism in these years was long neglected by historians, who naturally turned their attention first to what seemed to be the headline events of the period's religious history: the emergence and dissemination of the multiple varieties of evangelical and Protestant belief. Neglect no longer characterizes the French situation, however. Both the concern to understand the passion of the crowds that engaged in violence against their Protestant neighbours and the recognition that the French Counter-Reformation cannot be understood without attention to the later sixteenth century have recently inspired pathbreaking investigations of Catholic religious life in this period. Venard synthesizes the fruits of this research — once again, much of it his own and that of his students — into a detailed account of the militant rallying of large parts of the population to the symbols of the faith, the central themes around which these people rallied, and the relationship between this popular reaction and the novel spiritual and disciplinary concerns of the episcopate and the religious orders.

With far less recent work on Catholic religious life in the Netherlands between 1560 and 1585 to build upon, Spaans takes her essay in a different direction. Noting the resignation of most Dutch Catholics to Protestant attacks on their doctrine and sacred objects, she further observes that they perceived these attacks to be driven by political ambition rather than religious conviction. This prompts her to develop a challenging interpretation of the larger question of the relationship between religion and politics in this era. Recent historians have been far too naive in their inclination to perceive the crowd violence and civil strife of this period as above all the expres-

sion of widely shared and deeply conflicting religious beliefs, she suggests; political motives and the controlling hand of the great nobility lay behind the agitation. Furthermore, she argues, what German historians call the process of 'confessionalization' — the inculcation of commitment to specific programs of religious doctrine and a strong sense of identification with a particular brand of Christianity — was the indispensable prelude for religion to serve as a powerful political rallying cry in the early modern centuries. This had not yet proceeded sufficiently far by the 1560s for religion to exercise the kind of influence that too many historians of this period wish to attribute to it. Her essay thus offers a sharp challenge to the recent historiographic tendency to 'put religion back into' the wars of religion — and indeed to the assumptions governing many of the other essays in this volume.

However readers judge Spaans' argument, they may still wonder if mendicant preachers in the Low Countries sought to rally crowds to the defense of the faith and its symbols like their French counterparts discussed by Venard, if confraternities enrolled thousands in their defense like the French associations of the Holy Spirit or the Blessed Sacrament, and more generally if attachment to traditional Catholic practices and symbols remained as strong in the Low Countries as it appears to have done in France. The most recent studies of individual communities during the early phases of the Dutch Revolt do not provide evidence of active mendicant preaching or militant confraternities that sought to rally the populace around the defense of the Roman Church and its practices.[14] This may, however, simply be another case of historians failing to record phenomena they have not been taught to look for. Meanwhile, the history of the early Reformation in the two regions displays noteworthy differences. Because of the close economic relations and porous linguistic boundary between the Netherlands and Germany, considerably more early evangelical propaganda came into the Low Countries than into France in the first decades of the Reformation.[15] Lutheran, Anabaptist and spiritualist ideas all gained far wider diffusion than in France, and their corrosive effect on traditional Catholic practice was reinforced by a powerful native current of 'sacramentarian' scepticism about the real presence that predated the Reformation in certain portions of the region — a point of considerable importance for comparisons with France, since the Holy Sacrament was one of the symbols around which France's Catholics rallied most strongly. At the same time, the growth of organized Protestantism was opposed by far harsher state repression of heresy in the Netherlands than in France. Indeed, nowhere else in Europe was as high a percentage of the population sent to the stake for heresy as in the Netherlands.[16] It might be thought that this combination of greater exposure to Protestant ideas with the horrifying spectacle of numerous executions for heresy would have bred greater general alienation from the rituals and beliefs of the Roman church in the Netherlands than in France, but this hypothesis cannot be confirmed in the present state of our knowledge. A few pioneering studies have noted a sharp decline between 1520 and

[14] Duplessis, *Lille*; Steen, *Chronicle of Conflict*; De le Barre, *Time of Troubles*; Hibben, *Gouda*.
[15] Despite the far greater number of French speakers than Dutch speakers, 58 editions of works by Luther are known to have appeared in Dutch during Luther's lifetime, as opposed to just 22 in French. Moeller, 'Luther in Europe', 236.
[16] Monter, 'Heresy Executions', 49; pp. 89-90 below.

1570 in the number of Netherlanders choosing the monastic life and in the percentage of testators commissioning masses for their soul or making other gestures of traditional Catholic piety. However, as Woltjer already noted, French figures about these matters also tend sharply downward during these years.[17] Any attempt at a more precise statistical comparison of the extent of abandonment of traditional practices is thwarted (as is so often the case when attempting interregional or international comparisons) by the fact that the different local studies do not provide exactly comparable data or employ similar chronological divisions. More systematic comparative study is clearly needed before we can declare with any confidence that the population of the Netherlands had grown more widely disenchanted with the doctrines and practices of the Catholic church than had the French. For now, the relative absence of militant support for the Catholic cause in the Low Countries must be attributed to some combination of the distinctive character of Catholic piety in the region, the manner in which its experience of the early Reformation seemed to set the cause of 'church, pope, and monks' at odds with the traditions and welfare of the community, and the lack of the association between the national welfare and the purity of the kingdom from heresy that helped legitimize anti-Protestant violence in France. The history of Catholic religious practice and of the response of the religious orders and theologians to the rise of heresy in the Netherlands between 1520 and 1585 meanwhile are areas where further research is likely to have a particularly rich payoff.

The different history of the early Reformation in France and the Netherlands also provides much of the context for understanding the relative importance of middle groups in both areas during the conflicts of the later sixteenth century. These middle groups are the subject of the next pair of essays, by Mario Turchetti and Juliaan Woltjer. If, unlike the preceding subject, this is a topic that historians of the Low Countries have pursued more intensively than their counterparts working on France, this is in part because the presence of a wider range of Protestant and evangelical currents in the religious landscape of the region made it evident to them from early on that an important fraction of the population was linked neither to the Reformed cause nor to militant Catholicism. A major landmark of scholarship also directed their attention toward the importance of this theme: Woltjer's powerful 1962 study of Friesland.[18] This detected five broad religious groups or tendencies in the province: (1.) partisans of a Counter-Reformation along Tridentine lines; (2.) those attached to the traditional practices of the local Catholic Church but opposed to any major institutional reform or reorganization; (3.) partisans of a modification of traditional practices along Protestant lines who were nonetheless unwilling to break with the Church; (4.) Anabaptists; and (5.) Protestants willing to break with the established Church and to join the new Reformed Churches when they took shape. The book's achievement was to show that the story of the Revolt in the localities could be considerably clarified by organizing the narrative around the varying success of the relatively small but aggressively militant first and fifth groups in winning or losing the

[17] Post, 'Roeping'; Mols, 'Friezen', esp. 61-4; Goudriaan, 'Einde van de Middeleeuwen', 70; Verhoeven, *Devotie en negotie*, 162-5; Hoffman, *Church and Community*, 21-30; Dolan, *Entre tours et clochers*, 37; Benedict, 'Catholic Response', 187; Woltjer, 'Geweld/Violence', 43.
[18] Woltjer, *Friesland in Hervormingstijd.*

support of the broad middle groups. In his essay here, Woltjer returns to this subject, reflecting upon the character and adequacy of the loose category 'middle groups', seeking to suggest some of the reasons for their importance in the region, and demonstrating the moments when the reaction of these groups to either the heresy-hunting and privilege-overriding policies of Philip II and his local agents, or to the audacity and disregard of attempted religious peaces of the Calvinist minority, was critical in driving the course of events in one direction or another.

Although historians of France long believed that they could discern the emergence after 1572 of a 'politique' middle way between the increasingly radicalized Calvinist movement and the intransigence of the emerging Catholic League, for the years 1560-1572 their attention was so concentrated on the widening religious schism and the doings of the Guises, Bourbons, and Montmorencys that Turchetti's 1984 study of Francois Baudouin and the '*moyenneurs*' came as a revelation, with its detailed reconstruction of the ultimately vain efforts of a network of eirenic jurists and theologians to promote the reunification of all Frenchmen in a single broad Church and thereby to prevent the outbreak of the religious wars.[19] Turchetti's contribution to this volume picks up the story of the different programs advanced on the eve of the religious wars to resolve peacefully the problems created by the emergence of two rival churches, some involving attempts to negotiate a reunification of the churches and others their mutual toleration, and explores their evolution over the subsequent years. His source-based approach throws cold water on the view that a coherent politique 'party' emerged after 1572 — the word 'politique' was a vague term of opprobrium already in use prior to 1572 — while showing just where the program of actually existing political groupings often designated by this term stood in relation to the programs of earlier moyenneurs.

Political manifestos calling for negotiated settlements and religious toleration enable us to speak of middle ways, but determining just how wide an echo these manifestos awakened and to whom they appealed remains difficult. In France, groups can be discovered in certain localities that appealed to both sides to put down their arms and tried to broker local peaces during the civil wars, as a group spearheaded by members of the Cour des Aides attempted to do in Montpellier in 1562.[20] At moments of renewed warfare, agreements were drawn up in a number of small towns in which both Catholics and Protestants swore to continue to live together in love and concord, to permit the exercise of both faiths despite any orders to the contrary, and to share the defense of the community against external enemies.[21] Such efforts nonetheless appear to have been considerably more localized than the comparable initiatives in the Low Countries that produced such accords as the 1576 Pacification of Ghent or the 1578 *Religievrede*, just as the place of appeals to principles of toleration or liberty of conscience in the French political literature seems considerably more limited than in the Dutch.[22] Although middle groups existed in

[19] Turchetti, *Concordia o tolleranza?*
[20] Philippi, 'Troubles', 68-9; Guiraud (ed.), *Réforme à Montpellier*, 245.
[21] Venard, *Réforme protestante*, 539-40; Christin, *Paix de religion*, 122. For another such agreement (Saint-Affrique 14 September 1572): Archives Nationales, TT 268 (1), piece 369+.
[22] See e.g. Ubachs, 'Nederlandse religievrede'; Van Gelderen, *Political Thought*, esp. ch. 6.

both countries, political initiatives in support of peace could not rally as much support in France.

If the middle was indeed smaller in France than in the Netherlands, then it becomes particularly tragic, and at least superficially puzzling, that the kings of France sought a middle way to solve the religious crisis in their country, while Philip II aggressively championed the unconditional eradication of heresy. The next essays, by Olivier Christin and the team of Fernando González de León and Geoffrey Parker, explores why each crown chose the policy that it did. Here once again the authors adopt contrasting approaches. Like Crouzet and Turchetti, Christin concentrates on political language. He also focusses his essay on a few critical years: those between 1560 and 1563, when the French crown broke dramatically with its centuries old tradition of defending the kingdom from heresy, and showed itself willing to accept the existence of two religions in the country. The fundamental question that he seeks to resolve is how such a policy could be given intellectual legitimation and even made to further the traditional pretentions of France's kings to exercise a plenitude of power, at a time when these were under challenge. He identifies certain currents in the political and legal thinking of the era that gave the chancellor Michel de L'Hospital and his allies the intellectual resources to justify such a striking departure from national traditions. His analysis of the policies followed during these crucial years by Catherine de Medici, de L'Hospital, and the other leading voices at the center of power also highlights several points of considerable significance for the comparative questions being emphasized here. Perhaps most noteworthy is his observation that by working to separate the question of religion from that of the political order, and by cultivating the support of as wide a spectrum of nobles as possible, Catherine and those around her prevented the development of a situation such as that which would later prove so fateful in the Netherlands, where the high aristocracy of the region was alienated from the government, the government was perceived to be violating the traditional rights and privileges of the land, and the rebels were consequently able to depict themselves as the defenders of the motherland against foreign tyranny. The Huguenots attempted to do the same during the brief reign of Francis II, focussing their propaganda against the 'foreign' house of Lorraine and its unlawful authority over the young king, but Catherine soon ended that house's domination of the distribution of high offices,[23] courted the nobility through frequent grants of membership in the honorific Order of Saint Michael, and by granting toleration to the Protestants created a situation where their subsequent uprisings appeared to most of the population as disloyalty and sedition, no matter how insistently they protested that they had only taken up arms to protect themselves and the king.

In their examination of the contrasting political course followed by Philip II, González de León and Parker survey a longer time span and focus on the strategic considerations dictating Philip's political choices and on the play of factions at his court. It is obvious that one of the central differences between the Netherlands and France in this period is that the Netherlands was just one part of a larger composite monarchy. Their essay spells out the range of issues with which Philip II had to grapple as

[23] See here Harding, *Anatomy*, 31-5.

the ruler of multiple kingdoms and seeks to identify the overall strategy that governed his response to events in the Netherlands, within the context of his many concerns. Philip evidently considered the defense of his ancestral possessions in the Low Countries a lower priority than defending his Mediterranean possessions from the Ottomans and asserting his claim to the Portuguese inheritance. His inability to focus more than a fraction of his resources on subduing the Dutch Revolt was a reason for its success that historians of the Netherlands have often been reluctant to acknowledge. At the same time, defending the purity of his lands from the taint of heresy remained a lodestone of his policy, despite the urging of his Austrian cousin Maximilian II that he consider a policy of toleration. Time and again — in 1566, 1577, 1579, 1589, and 1598 — Philip refused to concede rights of worship to the Protestants comparable to those granted by Charles IX and Henry III in France, even though it now seems with hindsight that these were all moments when he might have been able to end the political crisis in the Netherlands by doing so. Parker and González de León suggest that his decisions become more comprehensible when viewed within the context of the full range of obligations bearing down on him. It is also clear that his physical distance from, and growing mistrust of, the great noblemen of the Netherlands whose contact with the religious situation there made many of them receptive to the possibility of tolerating multiple religions, cut him off from one possible conduit by which arguments in favour of such a policy might have come to influence him.

The contrasting focus of these two essays stems in part from the available documentation. The archives at Simancas abound in *consultas* and council minutes that inform us about the considerations shaping Philip's decisions with a degree of precision that simply cannot be matched for France. At the same time, the different foci of these two essays serve to highlight questions and approaches to which historians of the other country might fruitfully pay more attention. Further study of political thought in the entourage of Philip II at this time, comparable to the distinguished tradition of study of the history of political thought in later sixteenth-century France, might illuminate how wide a range of opinions was expressed in this milieu about the issue of tolerating more than one religion, and whether Philip II followed the path he did because toleration was literally unjustifiable within the mental universe of his court, or because specific strategic or ideological considerations seemed to him to argue against such a course. For France, more attention to the resources that the crown commanded and the restraints that it imposed upon itself concerning the use of force against internal enemies, comparable to the attention Parker and González de León accord to these matters in their essay, might further illuminate the policies followed by Catherine de Medici and her sons. French royal policy in fact passed through a number of oscillations to which Christin only alludes. From 1568 to 1570 and then from 1572 to 1576-1577, Protestant worship was outlawed in most or all of the country and the crown tried to force its subjects back into the Catholic Church. Here, the recent study by James Wood of the royal army and French royal military policy from 1562 to 1576 offers a valuable complement to Christin's article, for it shows why the crown never crushed Protestant resistance so completely that it could make these interdictions of Reformed worship stick, despite the superiority of its

armies in both numbers and artillery to any force that the Huguenots could raise. In part this was because the peacetime dispersal of the royal army among garrisons that were located near the country's borders in order to defend it against foreign attack left the cities of the interior vulnerable to surprise at the outset of each civil war, affording the Protestants strongholds from which to fight. In part it was because the First Civil War of 1562-1563 took the lives of so many leading noblemen that Catherine and her sons subsequently avoided engaging their cavalry in pitched battles against the Huguenots lest the country's military leadership be decimated and its external security endangered. In part this was because the crown lacked the fiscal resources to keep an army in the field long enough to finish the job of defeating the Huguenots without inflicting unacceptable levels of devastation on the civilian population.[24] Recognition of these limits on its ability to end the religious divisions by force must also have contributed to the crown's acceptance of religious toleration.

The issue of the crown's resource limits in its battles with its internal enemies in turn focusses attention on the related matter of how relatively small groups of rebels were able for their part to wage war against two most powerful rulers of Europe long enough for the Huguenots to extract renewed rights of worship at the end of each civil war and for the Beggars permanently to detach the seven northern provinces of the Low Countries from Spanish rule. The rebel armies in both cases were composed of an amalgam of gentlemen from the retinues and ordinance companies of the cause's noble leaders, of troops raised internally for each conflict, and of contingents supplied by foreign princes who intervened out of a combination of religious solidarity and strategic interest. The money that kept these armies in the field was cobbled together from contributions from the Reformed churches, from taxes and loans raised on the areas under their control, from the seized revenue of the church and the lands of political opponents who had fled, from contributions from the great aristocratic champions, and from foreign subsidies. It was raised and disbursed by either the administrative agencies that already existed in the provinces (or fractions thereof) taken over by the rebels, or by special committees jerry built for the purpose. While studies of the administrative, military, financial, and especially diplomatic histories of the rebel causes are not entirely lacking, these remain among the least well understood aspect of both the Wars of Religion and the Revolt of the Netherlands. As a result, this volume's last two essays, devoted to these topics, move into some of the least well charted waters.

Mark Greengrass's study of the Protestant party in France contains two parts. The first pulls together fragmentary and widely scattered bits of evidence to offer the first synthetic overview of how the cause financed its military effort. The second takes up the so-called 'Huguenot state within a state' that Jean Delumeau christened 'the United Provinces of the Midi' — one instance where French historians have suggested analogies with the Low Countries — to offer us the most vivid and precise description yet available of the development and inner workings of the bodies that organized the war effort. Extending Michel Peronnet's critique of the interpretation implicit in the phrase 'United Provinces of the Midi',[25] he shows that these bodies

[24] Wood, *King's Army*.
[25] Péronnet, 'République'.

should not be seen as expressions of a proto-republicanism that both hostile contemporaries and sympathetic twentieth-century historians have wanted to see within the Protestant movement, nor were they in any way modelled on Dutch precedents. On the contrary, their origins can be traced to the pragmatic innovations introduced by the cause as early as 1562, when all of the cause's public declarations emphasized its fidelity to the crown. In the wake of the Saint Bartholomew's Massacre, at least one Huguenot pamphlet suggested that a king as perfidious as Charles IX could not be trusted and that it might be better to seek another ruler,[26] but I am not aware of any evidence that the various Huguenot assemblies ever seriously considered renouncing their allegiance to the throne, as their Dutch counterparts did in 1581. Even the republicanism of the United Provinces was a republicanism *malgré lui*, a political option chosen only after it proved impossible to attract another monarch to take Philip II's place, and weakly theorized until well into the seventeenth century.

Nobody has recently done more to illuminate the institutional developments that paved the way for the Dutch Revolt than James D. Tracy, whose latest books include studies of both the maturation of the States of Holland under Charles V and the financial system that this body developed during these years that permitted it to float highly creditworthy bonds or *renten* secured against the revenue of a variety of excise taxes.[27] These developments were in turn critical for the Dutch rebels' successful battle against Philip II since, when Holland became the great redoubt from which the struggle for indepedence was waged from 1572 onward, its States provided much of the organization and more than half of the money needed for this effort. Tracy's essay in this volume takes up an aspect of the financial history of the Revolt itself: the way in which the States managed to use religious and exile property to shore up its credit when it came under its greatest strain during the first twelve years of the Revolt. It is a measure of the States' achievement that not only was it able to float loans throughout the conflict; it reduced the interest that it had to pay from 30-40 per cent in 1575 to 6.25-8.33 per cent in the late 1580s.

With their strength concentrated heavily in the south of France where provincial representative bodies were particularly strong, the Huguenots also used regional representative institutions and their systems of tax collection to raise funds for their war efforts, but no French estates had developed a bonding capacity similar to that of the States of Holland, so this was not a resource the French Protestants could utilize. This was just one of the ways in which the Huguenot cause lacked the financial instruments on which the Beggars could draw. Greengrass highlights other absences as well. The French pattern of short, intermittent wars prevented the Huguenots from ever developing a stable system for exploiting seized church or emigré property. The per capita tax burden was traditionally low in the regions they controlled. Their towns lacked merchant-bankers with international contacts who could transfer payments to foreign mercenary captains. Yet in the end, the Huguenots were always able to assemble troops enough to hold onto key strongholds and to preserve certain rights of worship at each peace. What the comparison between the French and Dutch cases

[26] Kingdon, *Myths*, 76.
[27] Tracy, *Financial Revolution*; Tracy, *Holland under Habsburg Rule*.

in this domain seems to suggest is less the significance of these absences for the outcome of events in France than the importance of their presence for the ultimate, quite remarkable, success of the Dutch rebels. The years immediately after the scattering of the Reformed Churches and Beggar sympathizers in 1567 were perhaps bleaker for the partisans of these causes than any situation the Huguenots ever faced in France. Only a feeble guerilla effort supported by a few West Flanders and refugee churches, privateering efforts that exploited the haven offered by the Huguenot stronghold of La Rochelle, and above all William of Orange's ability to raise troops and diplomatic support from the refuge of his landed possessions outside the Netherlands kept the opposition alive.[28] But once the Beggars overran most of Zeeland and Holland, they not only controlled a region that was exceptionally hard to reconquer because of its location and topography, as Pieter Geyl so famously stressed long ago. They also controlled a regional set of political institutions with exceptional credit resources and growing experience in self-government. These alone would hardly have permitted the cause to hold out and ultimately triumph against the vast resources of the Spanish monarchy had Philip II directed all of these resources against it. But given the multiple responsibilities and concerns with which that overburdened sovereign had to grapple, and given the policy choices he made, they provided just enough of a foundation for the cause ultimately to grow into a full fledged, successful movement of independence.

The evidence provided in these essays, set in the context of recent scholarship on these events, thus appears to add up to the following comparative insights, that I shall set forth as seven theses.

1. The aims and actions of the Reformed Protestants in France and the Netherlands were virtually identical, but in the face of weaker repression the Reformed established a position of political strength more rapidly in France, with many more churches, numerical dominance in a number of communities, a larger number of noble, especially high noble, converts, and mechanisms in place for raising troops well before the onset of civil war.

2. The Catholic reaction was also stronger in France, the result of different experiences of the earlier phases of the Reformation, different patterns of Catholic devotion, a stronger belief in the crown's obligation to keep the country pure of heresy that could be invoked to legitimate crowd violence in pursuit of this aim when the crown appeared to default on this obligation, and perhaps a greater falling away from traditional Catholic beliefs and practices in the Netherlands.

3. While the perception that certain favourites exercised excessive influence over the king existed at moments in both countries, Catherine de Medici's efforts to avoid the monopolization of patronage by any one family and to court the support of all of the most powerful noblemen prevented aristocratic discontent from coalescing into the sort of organized movements found in the Netherlands in the 1560s.

4. Leading royal councillors such as Michel de L'Hospital quickly formulated a justification for religious toleration in France that was embraced by the crown, but

[28] On the organization of opposition in this period, see Backhouse, 'Guerilla War'; De Meij, *Watergeuzen*; Van der Hoeven, *Exercise of Arms*, 57-67, 153-95.

the attempts to legislate such a solution to the religious crisis could not initially succeed in the face of the fundamental hostility of both extremes to such a policy and the relative weakness of the middle. The ruler of the Netherlands, in contrast, was far away in Castile and thus cut off from the arguments of the Netherlandish nobles supporting a measure of toleration. He consistently refused to tolerate heresy in his lands, whether from policy calculations or because this was simply unthinkable in the milieu around him at court, even though such a policy might have provided the solution to the crisis in the Netherlands at certain moments because of the broader middle there.

5. In these two hierarchical societies, attachment to the sovereign lord was powerful and not easily ruptured. Powerful voices in the political nation might advocate a greater role for the Estates, a noble council, or a sort of confederation among cities and regions, but they were extremely reluctant to renounce their loyalty to their king and more reluctant yet to envisage doing away with kings altogether. If the Beggars were finally moved to these latter steps while the Huguenots were not, this was because Philip II was consistently unreceptive to their petitions and because of the more highly developed sense in the Netherlands that contractual privileges limited royal authority.

6. The Huguenots initially commanded greater political strength than the Beggars, and their ability to raise troops, seize critical cities at the outset of each conflict, and tap the tax-collecting machinery of the *pays d'états* of the Midi combined with the crown's financial limitations and unwillingness to engage its cavalry in all-out campaigns against them ensured that they were always able to fight their opponents to enough of a standstill to extract renewed concessions of toleration at the end of each conflict. Once the Beggars gained control of Holland, however, they commanded a region whose combination of exceptional defensibility and a provincial system of government of considerable maturity and highly developed financial capabilities permitted them to mount a still more sustained political resistance.

7. The United Provinces's ultimate conquest of independence was also facilitated by the fact that the Netherlands formed just one part of a composite monarchy whose ruler made the reconquest of his territories in the Netherlands a relatively low priority. One sign of this low priority, and one final connection between the events in France and the Netherlands, was Philip II's diversion of many of his troops from the Netherlands to France during the battle for the Bourbon succession after 1588, which interrupted Parma's reconquering advance and gave the United Provinces a respite that was critical for their success in their independence struggle.

These theses, of course, should be understood as provisional conclusions inviting modification and refinement rather than definitive statements of firmly established points. Many also suggest further questions for investigation, such as why the middle parties were stronger in the Netherlands, or what Philip II thought of the French crown's attempts at religious accomodation and why he never was inspired to imitate them.

While these theses may summarize some of the largest comparative insights that emerge from the collective exercise attempted here, they hardly exhaust the lessons of this volume. The essays that follow all offer original discoveries, challenging