FRANCE AND THE NETHERLANDS:
THE INTERLOCKING OF TWO RELIGIOUS
CULTURES IN PRINT DURING THE ERA
OF THE RELIGIOUS WARS

ANDREW PETTEGREE
St Andrews

The convulsions that afflicted the western Catholic Church in the wake of the Protestant Reformation were especially intense in France and the Netherlands. Luther's movement, it is now clear, would find its most enduring home in the parts of central and eastern Europe where the cultural connections with Luther's German heartlands were particularly close. But in the euphoric opening decade when Luther's protest first became a movement, the reformer and his German colleagues had high hopes of the rich, populous and heavily urbanised lands to the west. In both, for rather different reasons, these initial hopes would be dashed. In France, evangelicals and reform-minded churchmen invested great hopes in a king, Francis I, who certainly valued the new learning, even if his instinctive loyalty to Catholicism was never seriously in doubt. In the Netherlands, a promising popular movement was extinguished through the determined opposition of the Emperor, Charles V, whose authority was nowhere more firmly applied to combat heresy than in his hereditary Burgundian lands. In neither case would the Lutheran Reformation put down the institutional roots that proved possible when the state power was enlisted in its support. The Reformation was thwarted, turned back and for a time submerged. But in both lands it would re-emerge with violence and dynamic energy in the second half of the century.

With the rise of Calvinism Protestant movements in France and the Netherlands took on a new vigour. The momentum of events

1 Francis Higman, _La diffusion de la réforme en France, 1520-1565_ (Geneva, 1992); Higman, _Censorship and the Sorbonne_ (Geneva, 1979); R.J. Knecht, _Francis I_ (Cambridge, 1982).
increased very markedly, not least because, for the first time, events in the two lands seemed to move in tandem. Calvinist churches, emerging from the shadows, became in both cases entwined with discontented and alienated elements of the local elites keen to challenge the efficacy of persecution as an instrument of policy. Demonstrations, riot, rebellion and ultimately war ensued.

The interconnected nature of these two parallel crises has often been remarked. The insurgent churches and rebellious nobles in both lands took courage from developments across the border. Connections of family, affinity and mutual esteem reinforced the obvious mutual interest. As events moved towards a decisive confrontation the flow of men, materials and mutual support became more intense; once battle was joined it was obvious to the leaders of both parties in both countries that events across the border could decisively influence the outcome of the conflict closer to home.

It is hardly surprising that this intermingling of events found its echo in print. Both France and the Netherlands could boast a robust and highly sophisticated print culture. The publishing industries of Paris, Lyon and Antwerp played an established role in the international commerce of ideas, not least through a vibrant Latin trade. Both France and the Netherlands were also well underway towards establishing a broad-based reading public. The political convulsions that engulfed the two lands inevitably intensified the hunger for information and opinion. It is hardly surprising that the resources of the print industry should be applied to satisfy this need. What has never before been systematically investigated is the way in which this relationship — the mutual hunger for news, the mutual borrowings of the religious movements in the two lands — was reflected in the developing print culture.

The work presented here is an attempt to open up what proves to be an exceptionally rich field of study. It draws upon both recently completed and ongoing bibliographical projects. In the process it

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