



Caroline Payen, ***Aux confins du Hainaut, de la Flandre et du Brabant: Le Bailliage d'Enghien dans la tourmente iconoclaste, 1566-1576: Étude de la répression des troubles religieux à la lumière des archives du conseil des troubles et des comptes de confiscation*** (Heule: UGA, 2013, 238 pp., ISBN 978 90 8977 272 5).

Payen's book is a meticulously argued study of the local impact (in the city of Enghien) of the repression of the Calvinist movement following the Iconoclast Fury of 1566. Payen argues from a thorough and critical reading of the literature (be it largely confined to books and articles in French) and from a systematic use of the most important available archival documentation created by the institutions of the repression: the regional Counsel of Hainault, which initiated and largely co-ordinated the repressive actions and the Counsel of Troubles (known historically as the Blood Counsel). One of Payen's interesting lines of argumentation is that the involvement of the Counsel of Troubles was largely that of an overseer and administrator; the real work of persecution was carried out locally, largely by the Counsel of Hainault (96). Her study adds to the growing body of literature in recent decades that thoroughly undermines the old narrative of a 'Spanish oppression'. On the one hand, she shows the thoroughness of investigations as well as the politics of moderation and reconciliation, which were enacted by the Duke of Alba in 1570, only four years after the repression of the rebellion began. On the other hand, Payen's work provides further indications that the repression was dependent on strong local and regional support. Far from being executed by foreign oppressors, it was initiated from the start by local and regional authorities. They must have profited from a wide network of local informants, and they met with no apparent resistance. At least, this was the case in Enghien, but it seems to me that Enghien in that respect exemplifies a general pattern. That pattern also fits nicely with the lack of popular, non-sectarian, resistance against the persecution of heretics before 1566 (even though the persistent master narrative of the so-called tolerant Low Countries has long presented it differently). In fact, the figurehead of the repression in Hainault was Philippe de Noircarmes, vice-president of the Counsel of Troubles, and president of the Counsel of Hainault.

The thoroughness of the investigation and examination of suspects is evident from what the sources show about the careful procedures of interrogations and examinations of informants and suspects, and the deliberation on the often conflicting evidence (93), all in line with the ancient customs of the land. What the sources allow to

be said about the use of torture exemplifies the approach of the authorities in charge of the prosecution. Torture, Payen claims, was never used systematically, but only in very specific cases, and after careful justification (91). Moderation too was a traditional approach developed over the course of the sixteenth century in the persecution of heretics. Moderation meant the local precision of the application of the edicts, a rule explicitly stated in the edicts of the 1550s (98-99). Payen also stresses the reactive nature of new edicts that were mostly issued as a response to specific events or developments. In 1564, 1565, and 1566, edicts issued in the name of King Philip II allow for moderation in specific instances (in the case of repentance, and in the case of women (sic), children and 'simple folk') and even general pardons. In short, Payen stresses that the principle behind the edicts allowed for a contextual rather than a rigorous application.

The local and regional repression in Enghien took a moderate toll, even though relatively high in comparison with larger cities such as Ghent (170 investigations in a city of about 60,000). Of Payen's list of 112 people investigated in the city and bailliage of Enghien (of 3,348 families) 35 were executed, two were condemned to the galleys and 44 were banished for life (but many of them returned after the general pardons of 1570 and 1576). Of the 35, only three were condemned for heresy, the others for rebellion and other forms of transgression of the edicts, such as participating in conventicles, attending sermons, iconoclasm, and assisting in the troubles or signing rebellious petitions. Here too, the evidence shows moderation and contextualization in the persecution of those held responsible for the events of 1566. The full weight of the persecution also did not fall upon the opinions of heretics, but upon those taking part in what were considered acts of rebellion and sedition. Payen contextualizes the persecution in Enghien by referring to the recent work on pardons and reconciliation strategies by Goossens, Soen and others. She also points to the noteworthy fact that the first pardon was already issued in 1568 and re-issued in 1569, by the Duke of Alba, be it only for repentant signatories of the *Compromis* of the Nobles. The general pardon of 1570 was re-issued in 1572-1573-1574 (127-128). By referring to such a (historical and historiographical) context, Payen adds to the mounting evidence that calls for a fundamental revision of the received views on the causes of the Troubles in the Netherlands. Interestingly, her ambivalent conclusions concerning the role of Calvinism, on the one hand, and of Catholic communities and active loyalist networks, on the other, still largely reflect the old master narrative, even though her own results provide sufficient material for an alternative attempt. Such an alternative history of course will only be effective if grounded in an investigation of a variety of well-documented local contexts, carried out with the painstaking care that characterizes Payen's study.

The meticulous nature of her research and argumentation has two flaws that together have prevented Payen from drawing larger and bolder conclusions. As a result, and despite some careful revisionism of the perceived 'tyrannical' and 'Spanish-foreign' nature of the suppression of the 1566 movement, her work, like so many other recent studies, fails to address the fundamental problems in the narratives of the rise of

Calvinism and the Troubles. Instead of a hesitant and redundant repetition of conclusions based on her own study, Payen could have fleshed out in more detail the nature of the movement that was repressed, for which her evidence provides some interesting clues. She might have taken aim at largely unfounded views concerning the social and ideological make-up of the various groups. She remains uncritical of the received, but highly unspecific, view which holds that the majority of the inhabitants of the Low Countries were religiously in-between, and uses this view to criticize Van Uytven's near-identification of Iconoclasts and Calvinists (15). Given the specific nature of the charges against the 112 of Enghien (which focus on acts, not on opinions), it is unjustified to distinguish sharply between Calvinists and Iconoclasts. If we abstract from the specific categories of persecution and cross the findings of (relatively) recent studies (Marnef, Rooze-Stouthamer) showing a strong link between Iconoclasm and organized Calvinism with Payen's own evidence, her criticism of Van Uytven becomes particularly unconvincing (106-107, 114-115, 121).

Instead, the links between Iconoclasts, those attending conventicles, and the 61 petitioners requesting the parish church for Calvinist services (a few days before those of Antwerp and Ghent did the same) suggest that the movement of 1566 in Enghien was largely Calvinist in nature. It allows us to speculate that most of the 112 were indeed part of a Calvinist movement that at least from 1564 onwards had increasingly become political. In fact, four of the 112 accused of all three of the above charges were of relatively high social standing, which suggests that they were the local ringleaders (116) linking all three forms of rebellion, which points to a coordinated form of organization. The political nature of Enghien's Calvinism is suggested by two other observations: the bailiff of Enghien was appointed by the Lord of Enghien, Henri de Navarre, one of the Calvinist leaders of France. The rebellious nature of the movement is also exemplified in the failed attempt by Charles van der Noot and Jean de Mol (both noblemen from the Enghien region, signatories of the *Compromis*, and quite possibly Calvinists) and three of their cousins to take Brussels by surprise with 500 horsemen and 2,000 foot soldiers, and take prisoner the Duke of Alba and the members of the Counsel of Troubles, on April 16, 1568. As Payen points out, Van der Noot had been one of the leaders of the *Compromis*, which had been supported by the Calvinist or Reformed consistories (117-119). Payen's discussion of the role of Calvinism reminds us that we are in need of a much more thorough investigation of the political nature of the 'Reformed' Churches from their rise in the Low Countries in the 1550s through the early years of the Troubles, including the role of 'foreign' influences from Switzerland, France, Germany (Heidelberg, Emden) and England (London) in the organization of a highly politicized insurgency movement. It seems to me that it was those from Enghien who engaged in this movement and its actions that were prosecuted in the 1560s (interestingly, as rebels rather than as heretics). However, as they say, further research is required, for which Payen's careful work has expanded the basis.

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