



## **Looking beyond Confessional Boundaries: Discourse of Religious Tolerance in Prints by Dirck Volkertsz. Coornhert and Adriaan de Weert**

Barbara A. Kaminska

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Résumé de l'article

Cet article examine une série de gravures intitulée *The Moral Decline of the Clergy, or the Root of the Dutch Revolt and the Iconoclastic Fury*, conçue par Dirck Volkertsz. Coornhert et Adriaan de Weert. Cette série a été publiée au début des années 1570 à Cologne, où de nombreux flamands, y compris Coornhert et De Weert, ont fuit le règne de terreur du duc d'Alva. Toutefois, puisque l'une des gravures a été mentionnée dans un débat théologique public à Leyde en 1578, ces images ont dû circuler aussi aux Pays-Bas. En traitant à la fois de la corruption croissante du clergé catholique et des origines de la révolte néerlandaise, cette série de gravures a relevé des débats religieux et politiques de l'époque. Cette étude se concentre sur leurs multiples significations confessionnelles. En effet, en brouillant les limites confessionnelles, les gravures pouvaient être lues en fonction de différentes doctrines, et donc avoir du succès autant auprès des catholiques érasmiens, des chrétiens évangéliques, des calvinistes qu'auprès des nombreux sympathisants du mouvement de la Réforme hésitant à adopter une confession en particulier. La signification ouverte de la série était en phase avec son époque qui considérait l'image comme un objet discursif appelant une réponse engagée de la part de l'observateur, et reflétait l'éclectisme de la Réforme au Pays-Bas. Cependant, cette polyvalence de signification était aussi chargée politiquement, puisqu'elle allait dans le même sens que le plaidoyer de Guillaume d'Orange pour la liberté de culte et son interprétation de la rébellion contre la domination espagnole comme une lutte nationale pour l'indépendance plutôt que comme une croisade. En outre, étant donné que le principal public de la série de gravures était composé d'immigrants flamands et de natifs catholiques de Cologne, ces gravures ont également justifié à l'intention de ces derniers la présence des immigrants flamands. En conséquence, cet article discute dans un deuxième temps de cette série de gravures dans le contexte de l'apologie de la révolte néerlandaise et de la crise iconoclaste (Beeldenstorm).

# Looking beyond Confessional Boundaries: Discourse of Religious Tolerance in Prints by Dirck Volkertsz. Coornhert and Adriaan de Weert<sup>1</sup>

BARBARA A. KAMINSKA

University of California, Santa Barbara

*Cet article examine une série de gravures intitulée The Moral Decline of the Clergy, or the Root of the Dutch Revolt and the Iconoclastic Fury, conçue par Dirck Volkertsz. Coornhert et Adriaan de Weert. Cette série a été publiée au début des années 1570 à Cologne, où de nombreux flamands, y compris Coornhert et De Weert, ont fuit le règne de terreur du duc d'Alva. Toutefois, puisque l'une des gravures a été mentionnée dans un débat théologique public à Leyde en 1578, ces images ont dû circuler aussi aux Pays-Bas. En traitant à la fois de la corruption croissante du clergé catholique et des origines de la révolte néerlandaise, cette série de gravures a relevé des débats religieux et politiques de l'époque. Cette étude se concentre sur leurs multiples significations confessionnelles. En effet, en brouillant les limites confessionnelles, les gravures pouvaient être lues en fonction de différentes doctrines, et donc avoir du succès autant auprès des catholiques érasmiens, des chrétiens évangéliques, des calvinistes qu'auprès des nombreux sympathisants du mouvement de la Réforme hésitant à adopter une confession en particulier. La signification ouverte de la série était en phase avec son époque qui considérait l'image comme un objet discursif appelant une réponse engagée de la part de l'observateur, et reflétait l'éclectisme de la Réforme au Pays-Bas. Cependant, cette polyvalence de signification était aussi chargée politiquement, puisqu'elle allait dans le même sens que le plaidoyer de Guillaume d'Orange pour la liberté de culte et son interprétation de la rébellion contre la domination espagnole comme une lutte nationale pour l'indépendance plutôt que comme une croisade. En outre, étant donné que le principal public de la série de gravures était composé d'immigrants flamands et de natifs catholiques de Cologne, ces gravures ont également justifié à l'intention de ces derniers la présence des immigrants flamands. En conséquence, cet article discute dans un deuxième temps de cette série de gravures dans le contexte de l'apologie de la révolte néerlandaise et de la crise iconoclaste (Beeldenstorm).*

## Introduction

On April 14–15, 1578, several hundred people gathered in Leiden to witness a debate between the humanist, theologian, poet, and engraver Dirck Volkertsz. Coornhert and two Calvinist theologians, Arend Cornelisz and Reinier Donteclock. Supervised by the States of Holland, the adversaries discussed whether the Reformed Church should be considered a true church. Even though Coornhert initiated the debate, he later complained that over its course he was increasingly treated as a potential schismatic being tried by the Inquisition.<sup>2</sup> One piece of evidence raised by Cornelisz and Donteclock was “a copper image in which Coornhert showed Martin Luther holding a torch” (fig. 9).<sup>3</sup> Noting that the torch symbolized Scripture as the means by which Luther revealed the papacy’s deceit, they concluded that Coornhert approved of the Augsburg Confession. In his response, Coornhert acknowledged he had authored the image and admitted that he believed Luther to have openly exposed the abuses of the Catholic Church. Nonetheless, he refuted the accusation of supporting Evangelicals.<sup>4</sup>

In this essay, I argue that religious images such as the print invoked in the disputation and others created and circulated in the second half of the sixteenth century among Netherlandish viewers should be understood as discursive, hermeneutically open-ended objects. In response to the fluid sectarian situation in the Low Countries, they accommodated varying doctrines and were therefore potentially marketable to confessionally diversified audiences. These images served to spur discussion and acted as a focal point of private and public conversations, thus playing an active role in shaping contemporary religious, social, and political discourses.

The Leiden disputation was the first of three debates initiated by Dirck Volkertsz. Coornhert and devoted to the question of which church should be preferred in the new state: the Catholic or the Reformed. With such a choice, and two Reformed ministers as opponents, the mention of the Augsburg Confession and a preference given to it over Calvinism could hardly have been welcomed in the discussion. The second debate took place in 1579 in Haarlem and the third in The Hague in 1583; however, the one in Leiden is regarded as the most important.<sup>5</sup> Coornhert held different civic offices throughout his life but was primarily known as a poet and playwright. He was the author of vernacular plays and a translator of classical drama, he wrote philosophical and theological

treatises, and he also worked as an engraver. Such a broad range of interests and professional activities connected him to leading contemporary artists, statesmen, and humanists. Coornhert's adversaries, Arend Cornelisz and Reinier Donteclock, were university-trained theologians involved in the codification of doctrine and designing the ecclesiastical structure of the new congregations in the United Provinces. In addition to the main question—what were the features of a true church and which one should be favoured—Coornhert wanted to discuss theological concepts of justification and perfectibility, as well as a much more pressing and pragmatic topic: the issue of freedom of worship in the nascent state and the persecution of religious dissenters. To Coornhert's great disappointment, this last topic was ultimately omitted by his adversaries.<sup>6</sup> Their refusal to include it in the disputation could have been, as I propose later in this essay, one of the reasons why they did not invoke any other prints from the series to which the image of Martin Luther belonged. Needless to say, the sides did not reach agreement on any of the questions raised, adding to Coornhert's reputation as a freethinker and schismatic who distanced himself from any official doctrine.<sup>7</sup>

Coornhert, Cornelisz, and Donteclock were all involved in both the civic and the religious life of the new Republic. The sponsorship and supervision of the debate by the States confirmed the integral relationship between these two spheres in the public forum. The prominence and theme of the debate make the deployment of a printed image as evidence quite surprising, to say the least. However, this event testifies to the importance of images in public discourse and illustrates that their power to shape that discourse should be taken seriously.

Coornhert designed this engraving a few years earlier as one of a series of twelve images entitled *The Moral Decline of the Clergy, or the Root of the Dutch Revolt and the Iconoclastic Fury*.<sup>8</sup> He collaborated with Adriaan de Weert, painter and engraver, while both were taking refuge in Cologne from the Duke of Alva's reign of terror, which I discuss later in this essay.<sup>9</sup> In the early 1560s, relations between the Spanish administration in the Low Countries and local governments were becoming increasingly tense. Netherlandish subjects of the Habsburgs were particularly concerned about Philip II's extreme Catholicism and the persecution of religious dissenters. In addition to the freedom of worship per se, this was also regarded as a threat to the local economy and, consequently, the overall well-being of the community, since foreign merchants living in Antwerp warned the authorities they would leave the city if order

was not restored.<sup>10</sup> Between 1562 and 1566, local officials and Brabant nobles drafted three petitions to Margaret of Parma, sister of Philip II and governess of the Spanish Netherlands in the years 1559–67, requesting moderation in religious politics and the suspension of anti-dissent placards. Finally in April 1566, Margaret agreed to pass the last remonstrance to her brother Philip II for his verdict and meanwhile allowed Lutheran and Calvinist ministers to preach outside the city walls. This so-called hedge preaching attracted thousands of listeners, most of whom still attended Catholic service but were interested in the new doctrines and could for the first time learn about them legally. However, as eye witnesses noted, the sermons of Reformed preachers gradually became occasions for expressing anti-government sentiments and threatening the governess; furthermore, many listeners showed up to the meetings armed.<sup>11</sup> The opposition against the Habsburgs and the Roman Catholic Church did not weaken; rather, the problems intensified, leading to iconoclastic riots in August and September 1566. The unrest continued, with some citizens supporting the Spaniards and others joining the rebels. The latter were ultimately defeated in August 1567 by Fernando Alvarez de Toledo, Duke of Alva. On September 5, 1567, the duke established the Council of Troubles, soon to be nicknamed the Council of Blood, to put on trial and punish those involved in riots and who opposed the central governments. Many were executed, and others fled into exile. One of the primary destinations of the emigrants was Cologne—in the years 1565–71 their population in Cologne is estimated to be around at 2,000, approximately five percent of the city's population.<sup>12</sup> Cologne was a lively commercial centre with strong ties to Antwerp, a well-established printing industry, and a patriciate with the financial means to invest in the visual arts. Even though the city remained Catholic, the measures instituted against religious dissenters, particularly Lutherans, were relatively moderate.<sup>13</sup> Therefore, it was a perfect refuge for artists such as Coornhert's collaborator, Adriaan de Weert, a native of Brussels, who as a Lutheran emigrated from the Low Countries in 1566. Unlike Coornhert, however, he never returned, and died in Cologne in 1590.

*The Moral Decline* was thus designed and first published outside the Low Countries. Nonetheless, its primary audience was Netherlandish, considering all the immigrants in Cologne. As I argue in greater detail below, since the emigrants remained a confessionally diversified group, the series may have functioned as an instrument of sectarian and national reconciliation. This does

not discount the possibility that the series also found a viewership among the native citizenry of Cologne. While the city council acknowledged the economic advantages of housing Flemish refugees, they were often regarded with reservation and on occasion with hostility. This was a consequence of the reputation they bore as violent rioters and rebels against their king, whether or not they had actually participated in the 1566 iconoclasm. Hence, any visual or written commentary on the events in the Low Countries that circulated in Cologne also served as an apology for the immigrants and an opportunity to explain that it was the Spanish administration and its harsh politics that were responsible for the conflict, while their Flemish subjects were innocent victims who should therefore not be blamed. This becomes evident in texts published in Cologne in the later 1560s and 1570s, which I discuss below in reference to a political interpretation of the series as illustrating the origins of the Revolt.

As pointed out by the Calvinist ministers during the debate in Leiden, the print indeed shows Martin Luther holding in his right hand a burning torch inscribed “*Testimonium Scripturae*.” With his left hand, the Reformer lifts the papal cloak, uncovering devil-like hands and legs, a jackal, a wolf, a scorpion, and a snake. This horrifying spectacle is witnessed by the three-headed personification of *Vulgus* (the People) standing in front of the pope’s throne.<sup>14</sup> Labelled *Abusus*, the papal tiara leaves no doubt about the true nature of its wearer. The scene is echoed in the background: the personification of the People observes Erasmus of Rotterdam removing a monk’s cap from a wolf. On the right side one can see a simple man leaning on a shovel as he reads the Bible for himself, acting as a counterpart to the pope whose deceit is being revealed with the biblical testimony by Luther. The Leiden disputation provides truly unique circumstantial evidence concerning contemporary approaches to such images. In the course of the debate, both sides used the same image to construct very different arguments and defend their respective positions. For Cornelisz and Donteclock it testified to Coornhert’s pro-Lutheran sympathies, while Coornhert insisted that it only showed his support for reforming the corrupted Roman Church through Scripture. If we consider the topic of the disputation and look more carefully at the issues that separated Coornhert from the Calvinists, the deployment of the engraving in the disputation was quite sophisticated. As mentioned above, although Coornhert no longer participated in Catholic rituals, he still regarded the Roman Catholic Church as the one and only true church. As he pointed out to Cornelisz,

...the Roman church is a true, but deformed, church, and the ministers' church is a false church without substance (...): in appearance reformed, but in truth a nonexisting and chimerical church. And in that case, would not the Roman Catholics have the substance of a true church, but without its form, and those who call themselves Reformed a form of the true church, but without substance?<sup>15</sup>

The complexity of Coornhert's reasoning left the ministers perplexed; in response, they cleverly utilized the engraving of Luther to twist the subtlety of their adversary's position into potential heresy and thereby placed Coornhert in a dilemma about how to defend himself. The States had forbidden either side to discuss the writings of Jean Calvin, the founder of the Reformed movement, or Theodore Beza, Calvin's student, close collaborator and ultimate successor. Coornhert needed to distance his printed image from Calvin's and Beza's theology, but he could not cite them. This created somewhat of a paradox, since Coornhert's major criticism against the Reformed doctrine and the reason why he concluded that the Reformed Church lacked substance was the lack of scriptural basis of Calvin's and Beza's writings. Cornelisz and Donteclock, however, refused to acknowledge this shortcoming of the confession's founding fathers. Coornhert was held responsible for the image in which the deceit and abuses of the Roman Catholic Church were revealed by juxtaposition with the biblical testimony, the ultimate source determining Christian faith and values, and the one that decided about the theological inferiority of Calvinism. The print featured Martin Luther as the one who began the reform of the Church based on Scripture, but not necessarily the one unconditionally supported by Coornhert. However, this argument, and Coornhert's claim that overall he was not in favour of the Lutheran Church, remained unsubstantiated if he could not demonstrate the mistakes of Calvin and Beza.

The use of this print in the Leiden disputation clearly indicates the active role played by the visual arts in shaping political and religious discourse in the early modern Low Countries. It was invoked in the course of a polemical debate intended, at least from Coornhert's perspective, to define a "true" and indeed Catholic church in the face of scriptural and theological arguments advanced by the various confessions.<sup>16</sup> Since the disputation was sponsored by the States, it also, directly or indirectly, served to define the relationship between political and ecclesiastical authority. As I argue, the Coornhert and De Weert engraving

itself shared this polemical character and invited discussion of precisely the issues raised by the adversaries in the debate. While the Reformed ministers sought to establish a single, normative interpretation of the print to support their accusations, the image itself was polyvalent and offered its audience the possibility of constructing differently inflected interpretations. This effect was amplified by the fact that the print belonged to a cycle of twelve interdependent images.<sup>17</sup> The format encouraged viewers to form open-ended associations across the series and thereby actively create their own narratives. The results for each viewer depended on a number of factors, from educational background, social rank, and profession, to confessional identity, visual literacy, and political sympathies. A period testimony to this habit of looking polyvalently at images is provided by the theoretical introductions to the Neo-Latin emblem books by Johannes Sambucus (Antwerp, 1564) and Hadrianus Junius (Antwerp, 1565). Codifying existing practices, both authors emphasized the necessity of the reader's intellectual effort in order to "discover" the emblems' meanings.<sup>18</sup> It was precisely this requisite effort that made the genre all the more enjoyable for its audience. The pictorial and textual material of emblems did not provide a self-contained, predetermined argument. Instead, it activated the memory of the beholder who could then refer the emblem to his or her knowledge of arts, theology, philosophy, etc., as appropriate, and use the emblem for his or her own purposes by constructing a personal argument, which was, nevertheless, validated by broader references.<sup>19</sup> In her book on sixteenth-century religious emblems in France, Alison Adams describes how emblems construct "webs of allusion"; I label this early modern approach to images as an "emblematic strategy" and propose an approach to the print series predicated on such a mode of looking.<sup>20</sup>

By combining two subjects—the growing corruption of the Catholic clergy and the origins of the Dutch Revolt—the prints engaged with two of the most fraught religious and political discourses of the period. Encompassing multivalent confessional meanings and blurring sectarian boundaries, the images accommodated different doctrines, potentially spurring the interest of Erasmian Catholics, Evangelicals, and Calvinists, as well as a large group sympathizing with the Reform movement in general but still hesitant in their support for a specific confession.<sup>21</sup> The open-endedness of the cycle thus echoed the character of the Reformation in the Low Countries.<sup>22</sup> However, it was also politically determined, as it aligned with William of Orange's plea for freedom



of worship. William I, Prince of Orange, also known as William the Silent, started his political career at the court of Margaret of Parma. Dissatisfied with the Habsburgs' attempts to strengthen their power and the influence of the central government in the Low Countries, and unhappy with their harsh policies against religious dissent, including the installation of the Inquisition, William became one of the most prominent figures in the local opposition against the Spaniards. Forced to leave the country in April 1567, in the early 1570s William led a successful military campaign against Habsburg rule and in 1572 became the first Stadholder of the Northern Provinces. William's family estate and birthplace was in Nassau in The Palatinate of Rhine; he had therefore been raised as a Lutheran. Later in his life he joined the Reformed Church. However, throughout the conflict with the Habsburgs he emphasized that the rebellion should be understood as a national fight for independence that should unite all citizens, regardless of their sectarian sympathies. From his perspective, turning the revolt into a religious crusade would have disastrous effects, creating social divisions precisely at the moment when unity was most needed. With an audience consisting primarily of Flemish immigrants and native inhabitants of Catholic Cologne, the print series justified the presence of the former in the eyes of the latter. Therefore, it should also be counted among contemporary apologies for the Iconoclastic Fury and the Revolt, and I turn to such an understanding of the prints in the last section of this essay.

### **Between allegory and historical exemplum: visualizing the roots of the Dutch Revolt**

*The Moral Decline of the Clergy, or the Root of the Dutch Revolt and the Iconoclastic Fury* by Coornhert and De Weert combines allegorical and historically-specific imagery into a sequential chain of cause and effect that explains the reasons for dissatisfaction with the church and offers an apology for the iconoclastic riots and religious rebellion. Each scene is supplemented by short inscriptions in Latin, Dutch, and French; neutrally phrased, they identify the subject of the image without imposing any specific reading on the beholder. The visual complexity of the series encompasses multilevel relationships among the prints, a semiotic correspondence between foreground and background scenes, and the repetition and transformation of specific motifs

and figures—and combines all of these with textual commentary. This level of complexity requires that we begin the analysis of the cycle with a close scrutiny of the images.

Two initial plates depict the harmonious growth of a pious society.<sup>23</sup> The central personification in the first print is Piety, barefoot and modestly dressed, holding a flame in her right hand and giving alms to a man sitting on the ground to her left (fig. 1). The background is divided into two parts, with a view of a chamber inside which a man is comforting the sick to the right, and three men are diligently weaving a receptacle or a basket to the left. As the inscription informs us, “Piety serves God and man and earns her bread.” This state of happiness, with everyone devoted to work and performance of good deeds, continues in the second print (fig. 2). Those who were following the evangelical commandment of love are now rewarded for their faithfulness: a visitor consoling the sick receives a sack of money, and a crowned ruler hands a privilege to the industrious labourers. The setting remains the same, but the personification of Piety is replaced by the female figure of Favour. In her hands she is holding emblematic hearts, one with a sceptre and one with a shovel. These attributes indicate that she is presiding over both kings and common people. The verses confirm the universality of her supervision: “A virtuous life bears fruit for small and great.”

The purse and the charter introduced as a just reward in the second plate become attributes of Wealth and Power (*Divitiae Potentiaque*), the central personification in the third image of the cycle (fig. 3). The composition is again divided into two parts: while on the left people continue their hard work building a city whose growth was promised by the privilege, the indoor scene on the right features the pope with a kneeling emperor who is about to kiss the pope’s slippers in a ritual gesture of obedience. Prints 1 and 2 emphasize spiritual values; print 3 gives a relatively more prominent position to earthly goods. However, the text beneath—“The favour of prince and public secures wealth and power”—gives reassurance of their just character and origin. It is not until the next, fourth plate that one recognizes the consequences of the improper use of money and power: it corrupts the clergy and leads to the introduction of the Pleasures of Flesh (*Delitiae Carnis*) into the cloisters (fig. 4). They are embodied by Venus accompanied by Cupid and Bacchus, identifying these Pleasures (or Carnal Desires) as sex and alcohol. Now both background scenes are explicitly negative: to the left, a monk is hunting a deer in a forest and to the right another

friar indulges himself in feasting with a (partly undressed) woman at his side, committing the sins of gluttony and carnal lust. First and foremost, the hunting scene accuses the clergy of neglecting their spiritual duties in favour of mundane entertainments. We need to remember, however, that hunting privileges were strictly limited in early modern Europe to aristocracy and royalty owning the land. Hence, the scene also confirms the alliance of secular and ecclesiastic estates or, alternatively, can suggest the further territorial and financial growth of the Catholic Church.

Corrupted first by Wealth and then by the Carnal Desires that Riches bring, the monastics depicted in print 4 have abandoned their vocation. In the fifth print, this leads to the triumphant procession in which Sex and Alcohol are definitively carried to the enormous church complex, juxtaposed with humble cottages outside its walls (fig. 5). In the foreground is featured the personification of Piety introduced in the first image. As the clergy turn away from her, Piety is being strangled by Lust with the help of Bacchus/Wine. On the left, her dead corpse is already laid in the grave which compositionally acts as a counterpart to the procession at right. The inscription identifies Piety's murderer as her grandchild; this raises the question of who is the child of Piety and mother of Lust. From the third and the fourth plate we can conclude that it is *Divitiae Potentiaque*. Having acquired Wealth and Power, the Church gained means to enjoy mundane entertainments, which it should avoid, and eventually became overcome with Lust. Hence, there is an explicit causal relationship between Wealth, Power, and Lust.

Since Piety is no longer present in the Church, in the sixth print her place is taken by Hypocrisy (fig. 6). While she resembles Piety, a chalice with a turd now substitutes for Piety's flame, and Hypocrisy wears shoes as opposed to the barefoot virtue.<sup>24</sup> Furthermore, whereas true Piety does not need any external attributes of devotion, her false counterpart carries a rosary. The Dutch text calls Hypocrisy *Scijn-Doecht* (False Virtue). The concept of falsity is embodied in the monkey that she carries on her back and in the wolf in sheep's clothing symbolizing false prophets according to Matthew 7:15: "Beware of false prophets, who come in the clothing of sheep, but inwardly they are ravening wolves." What makes this detail particularly interesting is the action performed by the false prophet: he is putting a monk's cap on the figure with hooved feet. The falsity and illegitimacy of the Catholic Church are presented as absolute: corrupted (and devilish) monks are aided and supervised by False Prophets

who serve the Antichrist, according to both the Book of Revelation and period propaganda. On the other side of Hypocrisy, a female figure hands an object resembling a stone or casket to a scholar sitting under a tree, the meaning of which remains mysterious.<sup>25</sup>

The seventh scene of the cycle is accompanied by an inscription according to which False Virtue has replaced Piety (fig. 7). Consequently, False Virtue brings Seduction, who is followed by the People. Seduction (or Temptation) is depicted as an ugly female figure, with glasses on her face and a string coming out of her mouth on which more pairs of spectacles and masks, attributes of deceit, are hanging. The other end of this string is held by the three-headed male figure labelled *Vulgus*, who will reappear in the print discussed in the Leiden debate. With covered eyes, the People cannot see that they are being pulled into a deep hole into which Seduction herself has just begun to fall. Scenes in the background illustrate different religious practices promoted by the Catholic Church, but questioned by reformers, such as worship of images, pilgrimages, and processions. As depicted by De Weert and Coornhert, these are means of deceiving common people. Seduction leads to Ignorance, the subject of the eighth image (fig. 8). The personification in print 8 is very different from those featured in earlier images: Ignorance is depicted as an eyeless head whose mouth emits a dark cloud that envelops the entire composition, obscuring the personification of *Pax Falsa*, as well as the landscape with cottages to the right, and the church interior to the left. Hence, the blindness of Ignorance masks the falsity of peace. False Peace lies asleep on an unstable altar installed on a disproportionately thin pole and decorated with what at first glance seem to be *ex votos*, but which upon closer inspection turn out to be dismembered limbs, weapons, and instruments of torture, and even a miniature corpse of a hanged man at the left. False Peace thus rests upon a very unstable base of terror and persecution. Simultaneously, despite this gruesome and fragile foundation, *Pax Falsa* is being elevated, casting her shadow over the land.

According to the Latin verses beneath the next, ninth plate, the one invoked in the Leiden disputation, the darkness of Ignorance conceals not only the falsehood of peace, but also the abuse of the Catholic clergy (fig. 9). The abuse revealed by Luther is not limited, however, to the Church only. In the tenth print, personified Abuse accompanies the Spanish Inquisition and a civic ruler, specifically the emperor from the third image (fig. 10). Abuse tries to hide his true character beneath a mask and a loose gown that cannot conceal

his taloned hands and feet. The ruthless nature of the Spanish Inquisition, on the other hand, is entirely exposed. Her attributes—a sword, a burning torch, a rope, and a press in which she crushes Christ’s heart—identify her as a particularly cruel and false agent of the Catholic Church, who in the name of religion persecutes innocent Christians and kills Christ himself. Together with Abuse, she convinces the emperor to implement this murderous policy. According to the Latin verses, the emperor willingly listens to both Abuse’s and Inquisition’s advice. The disastrous effects of their collaboration are graphically depicted in the eleventh plate (fig. 11). The central personification of Persecution stabs a baby in its mother’s arms (the nimbus around the child’s head indicates its innocence and martyrdom) while other executioners drown, burn at the stake, hang, and behead dozens of men and women. Once again, as in the earlier print, the persecution of Christ’s flock, as the Dutch inscription calls them, is equivalent to persecuting Christ himself.

The massive scale and particular cruelty of Persecution finally leads the oppressed people to rebellion, as represented in the twelfth, final print of the series (fig. 12). The Rebellion is depicted as a figure split above the waist into two bodies, male and female, fighting with each other. The composition is once again divided into a landscape on the left and a view of a church on the right. However, this time events occurring on both sides are quite similar: monks and nuns are being expelled from an enormous cloister and images are taken down and destroyed. On the one hand, the growing corruption of the Catholic Church, its hypocrisy, and terror justify the iconoclasts’ actions to the viewer; on the other hand, the personification of the Rebellion leads one to doubt whether the means by which they choose to free themselves from the tyranny of the clergy are the right ones.

The series as a whole can be read as a sequence moving from allegory to history. To briefly summarize the cycle, it starts with *Man Piously Doing his Duty* (print 1), continues with *Man Rewarded for his Piety* (print 2), *Wealth and Power Making their Entry into Society* (print 3), *Wealth Bringing Sex and Alcohol into the Cloisters* (print 4), *Sex and Alcohol Strangling Piety* (print 5), *Hypocrisy Replacing Piety* (print 6), *Deceit Bringing the People to Ruin* (print 7), *Ignorance Concealing the Falsehood of Peace* (print 8), *Martin Luther Revealing the Deceit of the Catholic Clergy* (print 9), *Corrupt Rulers and the Spanish Inquisition Committing Murder* (print 10), and *Innocent Christians Persecuted* (print 11), and ends with *The Rebellious People Destroying the Icons and Chasing Away the*

*Clergy* (print 12).<sup>26</sup> The initial eight plates constitute an allegorical narrative—a viewer observes the beneficial outcome of a pious life which later gets corrupted by Wealth and Power and the Pleasures of Flesh, Sex, and Alcohol. The universal admonition offered by the graphic depiction of the negative effects of this decline in the first eight plates is followed by four images referencing the contemporaneous religious turmoil: the reform initiated by Erasmus and Luther, the corruption of civic rulers by misuse and the Inquisition, the religious persecution of innocent Christians, and the Iconoclasm of 1566. By beginning the series with a set of explicitly allegorical images, Coornhert and De Weert effectively turned the later, historically specific images into negative exempla of the results of the abuse of power and violation of religious freedom. This endowed contemporary events in the Low Countries with a universal meaning, a warning for other societies and rulers, both civic and ecclesiastic. In turn, the allegorization of the rebellion reinforced its legitimacy.

Additionally, we can read the series as moving from cause to effect. In this case the fundamental question was the one presented to the viewer in the first three prints: how should one use Wealth and Power? The next six prints show what happens if one makes the wrong decision and chooses earthly advancement over virtue, approaching it as an end in itself. Initially, the *Divitiae Potentiaque* are neutral, the just rewards for a pious life that lead to the growth of a city. But they become a means of corruption, giving birth to the Pleasures of Flesh (print 4), which murder Piety (print 5) and introduce False Virtue (print 6). She, in turn, brings Seduction, which ultimately ruins People (print 7) who can no longer recognize their condition because of the darkness spread by Ignorance (print 8). This darkness conceals the abuse of the Catholic Church, which Martin Luther reveals with the light of God's word (print 9). We encounter thus a causal sequence in which Wealth and Power is followed by Pleasures of Flesh, Hypocrisy (False Virtue), Seduction, and eventually Ignorance. Since all plates from 4 to 9 refer to the Catholic clergy, Coornhert and De Weert indicate that it was the clergy who made the wrong use of *Divitiae Potentiaque*. However, the third print in which they first ask a viewer to make their own choice features also a civic ruler; the juxtaposition of plates 9 and 10 suggests then that Luther's reform and revelation of the abuse of the Catholic Church would have had beneficial consequences for secular government as well. But the Church rejects this chance and, rather than accept Luther's doctrine, continues to listen to the false advice of the Spanish Inquisition (print 10) and

exercises violent religious persecution (print 11), eventually causing a civil war (print 12). Renouncing a pious and unworldly life thus has profoundly serious consequences that affect both individuals and the entire nation. What is even worse, those who suffer do not—and cannot—know the source of their deplorable state, as the growing corruption of the clergy has made them ignorant and blind. Thus, the only remedy is religious reform.

As moral decline continues and its effects grow ever more disastrous, the pictorial language of the series becomes increasingly dramatic in parallel. De Weert and Coornhert explored the ability of the visual medium to emphasize contemporary turmoil in different ways. First, the use of violent shading in the eighth print renders it very difficult to approach and decipher, enacting its topic, Ignorance concealing truth. The image requires a viewer to look very closely, to break through the darkness/shading spread by Ignorance in order to see what is really happening. Second, in the later plates, and especially in the ninth and eleventh, De Weert and Coornhert introduced particularly bold lines and strong contrasts between light and dark. Third, they juxtaposed the standard repertory of denigrating depictions of Catholic clergy, such as their drunkenness (print 4), the monk with devil's hooves (print 6), and the monstrous body of the pope (print 9) with even more provocative and novel iconographic elements: for example, disturbing personifications of *Persecutio* (print 11) and *Seditio* (print 12). These unusual and original motifs appear only in the later plates, enhancing the correlation between the increasingly turbulent situation in the Low Countries that the series depicts and the pictorial means through which it does so. Finally, the controversial visual language of the prints is supplemented by the complexity—and often also by the ambiguity—of the narrative of both individual images (as, for example, in plates 3, 8, and 12) and across the series. In addition to establishing a direct link between subject matter, iconography, and style, all these features strengthened the discursive nature of prints and profoundly engaged beholders in their interpretation.

The linked sequence of allegorical scenes, paired with religious and political events in one series, was a familiar construct for Coornhert and De Weert's fellow refugees from Antwerp. In their hometown they witnessed devotional processions (*ommegangen*) organized annually on four major holidays: the Feasts of the Circumcision, the Assumption, Saint George, and Corpus Christi. These broadly accessible ephemeral events combined several allegorical tableaux (*punten*) in a complex, open-ended argument presented to the public.

*Ommegangen* on the Feasts of the Circumcision and the Assumption were comprised of two parts: a set of seven religious and seven mythological floats representing the origins, virtues, and strengths of Antwerp, labelled as “old” (*oude punten*) as they remained unchanged and were reused in every procession, and new tableaux designed specifically for the concrete *ommegang*, related to political and moral circumstances.<sup>27</sup> Therefore, while they integrated two aspects of the community’s identity—civic and religious—they also aimed at addressing current anxieties and celebrating successes of Antwerp.<sup>28</sup> The elaborate visual language and highly sophisticated humanistic references of the pageantries encouraged an intellectual dialogue between the events and the beholder. Coornhert would have been familiar with these processions particularly through Maarten van Heemskerck (with whom he collaborated from the late 1540s through the 1550s), who in 1564 designed the *Cycle of the Vicissitudes of Human Affairs*, a series of nine prints based on the pageantry for the 1561 Feast of the Circumcision. Heemskerck’s project is just one example of the genre of printed processions developed between 1559 and 1585 by a number of artists: Ambrosius Franckert, Hans Vredeman de Vries, Gerard van Groeningen, and others. It shared the format and the edifying function of maintaining a harmonious community with the actual spectacles and formed a direct link between the two forms of visual communication.<sup>29</sup> Both led viewers through an allegorical sequence of tableaux, requiring them to recognize the interdependence of images in the process of interpretation.<sup>30</sup> The sequence of tableaux in *ommegangen* framed an argument to be constructed by the audience, without strictly predetermining it. The complexity of allegorical, historical, iconographic, semiotic, and visual allusions allowed for further reflection and encouraged beholders to establish connections among the scenes beyond their immediate juxtapositions, and to engage in civic discourse and debate.

A viewer familiar with actual *ommegangen* and with images of processions with no real-life precedent may have recognized the same strategy in De Weert and Coornhert’s series and searched for clues relating the prints to each other. For example, the scene in *Hypocrisy Replacing Piety*, with the wolf in sheep’s clothing putting on (or removing) a monk’s cap on the figure to his right, is concluded by the depiction of Erasmus revealing the wolf hiding beneath a friar’s cloak, but the viewer must draw the connection from the sixth to the ninth print to discover this link. Similarly, Hypocrisy bearing the pile of excrement relates visually and conceptually to the personification of Piety



holding aloft a flame in the first engraving; as I suggested above, the difference between the two is rather subtle, warning the viewer how closely false may resemble true piety.

De Weert and Coornhert employed another visual strategy to make connections across the series, namely, they repeated some of the figures in non-consecutive order. For instance, the three-headed personification of *Vulgus* first appears in the seventh print, blind and pulled by *Seductio* into an abyss, only to regain his sight thanks to Erasmus and Luther in the ninth print. The distinction thus made is between dishonest Catholic clergy who blind the People to the truth and the honest reformers who open their eyes. Another example is the emperor who in the third image is shown kneeling in obeisance at the foot of the pope and is featured again in the tenth engraving. Enthroned, he now listens to Abuse and Spanish Inquisition, who persuade him to murder his subjects. While the inscriptions indicate that these two false counsellors are behind the persecution shown in the next image, they also confirm the ruler's willingness to follow their advice. The third and tenth prints explore therefore the relationship between civic and ecclesiastic authorities; the reappearance of the emperor encourages an interpretation condemning the submissiveness of the former to the latter, while the generally positive overtone of the third print—with its depiction of a harmoniously developing city supported by the favour of both prince and people—invites the beholder to advance a discursive argument on the nature of the proper relationship between church and state. The scene of the emperor kissing the pope's slipper resurrects rather than resolves the old Investiture Controversy, and the tenth print leaves no doubt that the outcome of this act of obedience can only be negative. Moving back from the tenth to the third scene, the viewer begins to understand that contemporary political troubles have their source in the improper subjugation of the state to the church: having gained Wealth and Power, the church (pope) could impose its authority upon the state (emperor). As the Catholic Church became corrupted by worldly pleasures and replaced Piety with Hypocrisy, it exerted a negative influence upon the secular government. For that matter, the reappearance of the emperor in the tenth engraving is as important as the omission of any signs of civic power in prints 4 through 9, with their emphasis on the gradual moral decline of the Catholic clergy and the impact this has on the Common People. On the one hand, the secular rulers do not participate in this process; on the other, because of their submissiveness to the pope, they do nothing to prevent

it and ultimately fall victim to the false advice of the Church and abuse their own rights and privileges.

The figure of the civic ruler in the two plates is identified as the emperor by the emblem with the double-headed eagle on his coat; however, the crown he is wearing is that of the King of Germans, not of the Holy Roman Emperor. There was an iconographic precedent for such a representation in sixteenth-century German and Netherlandish graphic arts, as evidenced by the image of *Charles V Enthroned* by Niklas Stoer from his 1544 series *Emperor and the Seven Electors*,<sup>31</sup> and a decade later in *The Victories of Charles V*.<sup>32</sup> The latter was an extremely popular series of twelve prints designed by Coornhert and Maarten van Heemskerck, first published in 1556 in Antwerp by Hieronymus Cock, who dedicated it to Philip II.<sup>33</sup> Charles is depicted in the *Moral Decline of the Clergy* cycle wearing the same crown as in Stoer's print, but only in the four plates which refer to his triumphs over German princes during the Schmalkaldic War: *Charles V Inspecting Troops near Ingolstadt*; *The Surrender of John Frederick, Elector of Saxony, after the Battle of Mühlberg*; *The Submission of the Cities of Germany*; and *The Submission of Philip, Landgrave of Hesse*.<sup>34</sup> Portraying Charles V as De Weert and Coornhert did in the third and the tenth print of *The Moral Decline* was thus reserved for images that confirmed his authority over German territories. In addition, the visual link to depictions of Charles as the victor in the War against the Electors, thanks to the alliance with Pope Paul III, allows for a more historically-specific interpretation of the third plate. Overall, the chosen iconography was particularly relevant for the series first published in Cologne and intended as an apology for the Dutch Revolt, the revolt against the Habsburgs.

The criticism expressed in the third and the tenth print is ostensibly directed only at the Catholic Church and the Habsburgs. However, since the Leiden debate was sponsored and supervised by the States of Holland, it raised the possibility of similarly questioning the relation between political and ecclesiastical authority within the country. Cornelisz and Donteclock wanted to avoid raising this potentially troubling issue, which was yet another reason to omit the rest of the series in the disputation. According to Coornhert, the attitude of the Reformed church towards this relationship was indeed not much different from that represented by the Catholic clergy.<sup>35</sup> Even if Coornhert's judgment was radical and not entirely fair from both state and ecclesiastical perspectives,

the third and the tenth prints demanded that viewers considered their own position about these issues.

The preceding examples of visual persuasion employed by De Weert and Coornhert demonstrate the variety of means through which they built connections between images in the series format. They reused the same motifs, introduced slight alterations of the compositional schemes as well as of the allegorical figures, and developed the narration of the background scenes in relation to each other rather than to the main scene. Those mechanisms constitute what I termed emblematic strategies: they activated the viewer's memory of specific details in other images within the cycle, reinforcing the causal relationships between depicted scenes. In addition, they also pointed beyond the series, relying on beholders' awareness of, for example, the iconography of Charles V and the history of the Investiture Controversy, as in the last described case. Audiences without such knowledge could have still appreciated, recognized, and reconstructed the narrative sequence of events; however, the broader their potential associations were, the more profound a reading they could have developed. With this premise in mind, in my discussion of the confessional polyvalence of prints I further argue that the artists' inventiveness in visual persuasion helped to accommodate different sectarian doctrines and established the cycle as a kind of non-confessional theological tract.

### **Accommodating confessional diversity in the De Weert–Coornhert series**

The religious polyvalence of the series raises the question of what precisely it had to offer to a confessionally diverse audience. Erasmian Catholics, those interested in reform from within, were a demographically significant group of potential viewers and as such are directly addressed. Erasmus appears in the background of the ninth print of the cycle as the person who reveals the hypocrisy of the clergy or, to be more precise, of the monastics: the scene of unmasking a wolf by removing the monk's cap it was wearing can be regarded as an almost literal depiction of his famous dictum, "Monachatus non est pietas." The eighth print, *Deceit Bringing the People to Ruin*, uses an arguably more nuanced, compositionally sophisticated and demanding strategy to comment more thoroughly on the humanist's vision of Christianity. The procession bearing the statue of Venus into the church resonates with the fourth and fifth prints depicting earthly delights entering the cloisters. However, the juxtaposition

of Venus with the pilgrim praying in front of the image of the Virgin Mary evokes Erasmus's discussion of the relationship between the Christian cult and heathen practices. Erasmus noted disapprovingly that religious processions of saints or relics were descended from pagan festivities. Other practices that he considered equally improper were pilgrimages, genuflection, veneration of images, and lighting candles in the church.<sup>36</sup> These are all depicted in the print, offering a comprehensive overview of Erasmus's proscriptive teachings. The emptiness of external displays of Christian devotion was the theme of the sixth image depicting Hypocrisy replacing Piety: Hypocrisy's rosary was a false virtue (*Scijn-Doecht*), while true Piety required no outward attributes. Learned viewers could have found these sentiments expressed in vernacular lay treatises of the period: e.g., Cornelis van der Heyden's *Corte Instructie ende onderwys* (1545) and Jan Gerritsz. Verstege's *Der Leken Wechwyser* (1554), which in turn were based on the teachings of the Swiss reformers, most notably Heinrich Bullinger.

The seventh print posed the question whether the viewer thrown between the Scylla of the corrupted Catholic clergy and the Charybdis of the "conflicting visions of the Reform"<sup>37</sup> was left no choice but to withdraw from institutional religion altogether as represented by the man walking away from the church. He does not reappear in any of the following engravings. Did he make the right decision and escape persecution? Or did his apprehensive attitude diminish the hope for a true reformation of and reconciliation within the Church? De Weert and Coornhert do not answer these questions directly; instead, they subtly weave their "webs of allusion" to actively engage viewers in the interpretation of the image. Just as readers of emblem books compared individual emblems with others in the same volume and used their prior knowledge to solve the questions raised by individual emblems, so beholders of *The Moral Decline* were invited to navigate among plates looking for common threads and clues, while also resorting to contemporary confessional debates to formulate their own position.

The very format of the series thus accommodated a diversity of attitudes. The interconnectedness of the images allowed for constructing complex and nuanced argument, responding to the expectations of the learned audience. These strategies of visual persuasion were congruent with widely accessible ephemeral events in which each tableau could only be fully understood when framed by the entire spectacle and related by the audience to other images. As

we have seen, in the case of the *Moral Decline*, the multivalent quality of individual images was largely determined by their correspondence to other prints in this series. Hence, by deliberately isolating the depiction of Martin Luther, Donteclock and Cornelisz diminished Coornhert's chances for an effective defense. He argued that he merely respected Luther for his reaction against the abuses of Rome and his focus on the Bible, without subscribing to the establishment of an Evangelical church; however, without the contextual evidence provided by the series and its emphasis on the corruption of the Catholic clergy, his argument was weakened.

I discussed above how the third and the tenth print were potentially too dangerous to be quoted in the Leiden disputation because they addressed the relationship between secular and ecclesiastic authority. Three prints—8, 10, and 11—introduced a similarly troublesome subject, i.e., religious persecution. As I have already mentioned, when first proposing the public debate, this was one of the main issues that Coornhert wanted to discuss. However, the States and the ministers kept deferring the topic. In the end, it was not raised at all, leaving Coornhert bitter and disillusioned about the politics of the new Republic and the relation between civic and ecclesiastic authorities. Therefore, in terms of the role of images in period religious and political discourse, the omission of the rest of the series proves to be as significant as the invocation of the particular image.

The ninth engraving was deliberately singled out by the Calvinist Ministers to accuse Coornhert of Lutheran sympathies. The opening four prints of the series represent a much more advanced representation of Luther's doctrine. It included the concept of *adiaphora*, a philosophical category first introduced in Antiquity by Stoics. It referred to things which in their substance were morally neutral. Only through their usage can they be either good or bad, which is how they gain an ethical value. When applied to theology, *adiaphora* designates matters indifferent and inessential to salvation, neither mandated nor forbidden, with no predetermined positive or sinful consequences. Luther counted money and power among them. In the initial allegory of Piety in the first print, in which she is giving alms to the poor, a person in the background on the right consoles the sick, while three men on the left diligently weave. All are devoted to the tasks they are performing. The following print shows how Favour justly rewards them for their deeds, which can be related to specific fragments of the New Testament: the twenty-fifth chapter of Matthew's gospel on the Works of

Mercy (especially verses 35, “I was sick and you looked after me,” and 40, “Truly I tell you, whatever you did for one of the least of these brothers and sisters of mine, you did for me”), together with the preceding parable of the bags of gold (“Well done, good and faithful servant! You have been faithful with a few things; I will put you in charge of many things”) and a related passage from Luke: “Whoever can be trusted with very little can also be trusted with much” (Luke 16:10).<sup>38</sup> Seals attached to the privilege handed here to diligent labourers indicate that this is a constitutional document. In the Netherlandish context it can be identified even more specifically as the Joyous Entry of Brabant (*Blijde Inkomst*), to which every Duke of Brabant from 1356 on was required to swear an oath in order to become a legitimate ruler, with Charles V taking his in 1515 and Philip in 1549.<sup>39</sup> As I discuss in greater detail in the next section of this article, the Joyous Entry was a constitutional document that secured the freedom and privileges of citizens, protecting them from unjust rule and tyranny of sovereigns, and limiting the influence of the central government; De Weert’s and Coornhert’s contemporaries understood it as “the bedrock of liberty.”<sup>40</sup> Together with the sack of money, the document becomes an attribute of *Divitiae Potentiaque*, and the image of a town on it is correlated with a harmonious development of an actual city. At this point wealth and power guarantee a peaceful growth of the society, exemplifying good usage of these worldly gains. But the fourth engraving proves that they can just as easily corrupt those who enjoy them: it is Wealth that introduces sex and alcohol into the cloisters. The clergy willingly indulge in these mundane entertainments and pleasures, neglecting tasks of salvation of both their charges and themselves. All the disasters depicted in the following prints have their origin in this improper use of money and power. A viewer of the series is given an alternative: one either respects wealth and privileges for the communal prosperity they help to achieve, or abuses them, thus converting them into a destructive force that brings both the individual and the community to ruin.

As illustrated by De Weert and Coornhert, the concept of *adiaphora* corresponds to the most fundamental premise of Luther’s doctrine: justification by faith alone. The Evangelical belief that a man is saved by Christ’s grace and one’s faith in Him further undermines the idea of *Werkheiligkeit* (sanctification by works). In the 1520 *Sermon von den guten Werken*, Luther rejected as unscriptural and blasphemous the idea that a man can redeem himself through his own good works. True faith may indeed inspire good deeds and make all the actions

of a devoted Christian worthy, but for Luther the notion that these works in and of themselves could lead to salvation was false. The first four prints of the series thus present a polemical argument on the relativity of being rewarded for one's pious works. On the one hand, this complies with several passages of the Bible: the Latin inscription in the first engraving informs us that "Piety serves God and Man and earns her bread." On the other hand, good deeds should not be motivated by the hope for personal gain, be it worldly rewards (in this case, wealth and privileges) or eternal life. For a Lutheran viewer the former may potentially become a source of corruption, but are not necessarily so. This liminal moment is illustrated in the third print: on the one hand, power and riches enable the construction of a city by harmoniously collaborating workers, but on the other, particularly in the light of the later images and events, the scene of kissing the pope's slipper can be regarded as unduly submitting to the Church on social matters, which leads to disastrous effects. De Weert's and Coornhert's discursive approach to the question of good works corresponds to the period controversy over the verses on works of mercy from the Gospel of Matthew quoted above. Thus, the opening depiction of a man visiting the sick in the first print simultaneously stands as a synecdoche of this parable alluding to contemporary debates and encouraging reflection and discussion based upon the beholders' knowledge of the Bible, theology, philosophy, and also the period's socio-religious discourses.

In addition to money and power, Luther also considered images as a "matter of indifference." In his third *Invocavit* sermon he preached that images were unnecessary and Christians were free to own them or not. What constituted a real danger were their veneration and the belief that bequests to the church constituted good works. However, since people who destroyed religious images also understood their actions to be sanctifying acts, iconoclasm belonged to the same false category of *Werkheiligkeit*. The actions of image-breakers and image-worshippers were thus founded upon the same sinful premise of individual self-sanctification.<sup>41</sup> Since the final print pairs iconoclasm with a fratricidal war, from a Lutheran perspective it condemned the destruction of art as misguided and not part of the true reform of the Church; consequently, the entire cycle presented a printed application of Luther's doctrine to current events.<sup>42</sup>

The cycle's evocation of Luther's indifference toward images raises another question: What kind of comment does it make on the print medium that conveys it? The iconography of the series points in a number of ways toward the

role of images, their potential dangers, and the importance of visual exegesis.<sup>43</sup> It further emphasizes the self-consciousness of the viewing process and pairs it, in the eyes of a learned audience, with the status of images as *adiaphora*. Hence, through the juxtaposition of subject matter and function—as both an eclectic, polemical theological tract and an apology for the Dutch Revolt—the prints themselves enact the difference between the proper and improper use of images. If so, what kind of comment does the series offer on image-making and the role of image-makers, De Weert and Coornhert among them? The growing anti-image sentiment threatened artists' profession and source of income, and rendered their confessional position particularly problematic. While many artists sympathized with the reform movement and had to leave the Low Countries in the 1570s and 1580s, they also disapproved of the iconoclastic riots.<sup>44</sup> One way to find a viable balance amid the religious and image controversies was to distinguish clearly between the abuses of religious works of art, and artistic production and talent per se as gifts of God. A succinct, yet very important, example of this strategy is provided by a prologue to the second *Apostle Play* (drama based on the Acts of the Apostles) by Willem van Haecht, written about 1562 and performed in 1564 and 1565 in Antwerp.<sup>45</sup> Van Haecht was the leader of the city's chamber of rhetoric, *De Violieren*, which had been incorporated with the Guild of Saint Luke at the end of the fifteenth century. Therefore, it is a period testimony concerning the making of images by the group of people most vitally interested in formulating and conveying to the public their position on the question. The opening dialogue features two persons, a painter and a spectator named Ingenious and Blind (*Vernuft en Blint*). As the painter adds finishing touches to the scenery, the spectator accuses him of making images forbidden by God. The artist defends himself by quoting Old Testament instances in which God actually commanded their creation: the Brazen Serpent, cherubs on the Ark, and the decoration of Solomon's Temple. The painter further distinguishes between idolatry and the function of images as decoration, which is exactly what he is working on while arguing with his radical opponent in front of the audience gathered to see the play.

We thus encounter a situation quite similar to the Leiden disputation: an image and, in the case of van Haecht's play, the act of making an image were formulated as a theological viewpoint not only to the participants in the debate but to the public at large. To dispel all doubts about his position, the painter finally observes that his artistic talent must have been given to him for



a purpose, and that God who sees the secrets of his heart knows that he would never wish his images, which are merely material things, to be worshipped. The artist makes a very clear public statement about his profession, his own humble status, and that of his works in an effort to convince potential clients and patrons in the audience about the validity of images. Nevertheless, as I observed above in reference to the Leiden disputation, the prologue suggests yet one more thing: however humble, images can act as self-standing evidence in religious discussions. An artist produces objects promoting reflection and debate. This is his proper role and van Haecht is explicit about defining a difference between discursive functions of religious art and idolatry. Since I am proposing that *The Moral Decline* encouraged beholders to construct their own narratives and arguments based on the provided visual material, the very act of viewing of the series places the beholder in the position advocated in the *Apostle Play*.

The print series' visual engagement with the concept of moral neutrality paralleled the contemporaneous *adiaphora* controversy among the Evangelicals and the Reformed. I discussed the Lutheran response above; however, the series accommodated also the Calvinist position. Calvin and his followers rejected the concept of moral neutrality in their theology and argued that because of corrupted human nature "matters of indifference" were in fact not indifferent at all and would always lead to sin. Hence, as illustrated by the series, the events of the 1560s were an inevitable consequence of the moral decline caused by money and power. More specifically, this was proven in the fifth print, which introduced Lust as the granddaughter of Piety and daughter of Wealth and Power.

At the time the prints were designed, most inhabitants of the Low Countries remained hesitant about leaving the Catholic Church and joining a specific Protestant congregation. Nevertheless, intrigued by the new doctrines, they eagerly participated in religious debate and had the knowledge necessary to recognize the sectarian polyvalence of the images.<sup>46</sup> This quality not only responded to the intellectual and spiritual expectations of the audience, it also served a political purpose. Throughout his military campaign, William of Orange espoused religious tolerance and the overcoming of sectarian boundaries for the sake of the struggle for independence. However, each province had its own confessional preferences. Since the situation in Cologne was quite similar—Flemings remained a confessionally diversified group also in exile—the

theological flexibility of the series helped to reconcile them both in the Low Countries and abroad.

***Gonste van prins en volck teelt rijcdom en machte: the series as  
an apology for the Dutch Revolt***

De Weert and Coornhert's series was thus politically oriented and its sombre tone resonated with the unsettled climate of the mid-sixteenth century Low Countries. Philip II's extreme Catholicism and persecution of heretics created a growing tension between the Spanish administration and its subjects. Brabant nobles were particularly concerned about Habsburg plans for reforming the territorial structure of the Catholic Church in the Low Countries and establishing new bishoprics, particularly in Antwerp. Two of the canons there were supposed to be pontifical inquisitors, which effectively would have meant installing the Inquisition in the city.<sup>47</sup> According to the nobles this, in turn, would have led to a significant loss of all the civic privileges and freedoms, already seriously restrained by numerous religious placards. Antwerp citizens were especially concerned about the law which reserved the right to try citizens accused of heresy for the local *Vierschaar* composed of the city's sheriff and the aldermen.<sup>48</sup> This was not only a question of religious tolerance and freedom of worship per se: according to the magistrates of Antwerp and the deputies to the States of Brabant, the moderation of policy in all matters was necessary to maintain peace and prosperity in the "community of commerce," inhabited by several different nations and trading with the known world.<sup>49</sup> In Antwerp, religious, political, and socioeconomic discourses were inseparable and their interdependence constantly underlined, as in the case of *ommegangen* with their combination of old and new floats, civic and religious in content.

As a result of the increasing threats to the liberty of religion, commerce, and the autonomy of the local government, society faced the question of whether the imperative of obedience towards the king always remained absolute or whether under exceptional circumstances it could be revoked. In the late 1550s and early 1560s, statesmen, jurists, and theologians still differed in their opinions on this issue. To quote just a few of the most influential voices, Willem Gnapheus maintained that resistance was entirely forbidden in any situation as public authorities were ordained by God;<sup>50</sup> Petrus Dathenus shared his stance as applied to private persons, but made a distinction between them and local

government (*magistratus inferiores*) whose primary responsibility was to protect its subjects. Therefore, in the event of tyrannical orders issued by central authorities it was lawful to rebel against them.<sup>51</sup> Finally, the 1561 *Confessio Belgica*, the first confession of faith accepted by the Dutch Reformed churches, admonished its members that resisting civic government meant resisting God's ordinance. In turn, secular rulers should not abuse their power in any way that went against God's commandments.<sup>52</sup> According to the historian Martin van Gelderen, the solution suggested in the *Confessio Belgica* summarizes the variety of positions taken in the early 1560s: one must "obey political authority in all matters which were not in conflict with God's word."<sup>53</sup> However, soon after the *Confessio* was formulated, the outbreak of the Iconoclastic Fury, the arrival of the Duke of Alva, and finally the campaign of William of Orange changed the course of this debate, and the choice between non-resistance and civic disobedience became irrelevant. Instead, the operative question became how to justify not merely the protest, but also the armed rebellion against Philip II and his divinely established political order.<sup>54</sup> It was this question and its possible answers that informed De Weert and Coornhert's series.

Many apologists, including William of Orange and his advisor, the theologian, poet, and statesman Philips Marnix van St. Aldegonde, argued that the revolt was not truly an act of disobedience against royal authority. Rather, they presented Philip II as a simple man misguided by false counsellors: most notably, Cardinal Antoine Perrenot de Granvelle. Granvelle was indeed an adviser to Philip II, and earlier to Emperor Charles V, when he was involved prominently in resolving the confessional conflicts in the German territories. In 1559 he was appointed the prime minister to the governess Margaret of Parma, and a year later became the archbishop of Mechelen. Extremely unpopular because of his harsh anti-Protestant policies, Granvelle retired from both functions in 1564 and returned to his native Franche-Comté. Nevertheless, in the collective memory of Netherlandish society he remained one of the most hated representatives of the Spanish administration, epitomizing their ultra-Catholic ideology and religious persecution. Some pamphleteers talked about a "threefold papacy" formed by the "Spanish Pope" Granvelle, the Roman pope, and, as "the pope of France," Henry I, Duke of Guise, one of the leaders of the Catholic faction in the French Wars of Religion, presumably responsible for the 1572 St. Bartholomew's Day massacre.<sup>55</sup> According to the 1560s pamphlets, this cunning and cruel triumvirate was corrupted by the desire for power and

sought only their private gain, using Philip as an ignorant pawn in the plot to achieve dominance over Europe. They were the real target of the armed Dutch resistance. Thus, the ostensibly rebellious citizens of the Low Countries in fact defended the king and his just and divinely ordained authority.

This argument was echoed by the depiction of *Abusus* and *Inquisitio Hispanica* advising a ruler in the tenth print. Their counsel leads to the ruthless religious persecution depicted in the next image. According to the Dutch nobility, it was again Cardinal Granvelle who most ardently supported the installation of the Inquisition in the Netherlands. As I noted, the Holy Office was regarded as the greatest threat to the freedom and prosperity of the nation. In the previously referenced petitions drafted to Margaret of Parma, her Netherlandish subjects urged her to suspend the Inquisition and the execution of placards against the “heretics.” In the eyes of the nobles, the placards violated the guaranteed liberty of her Dutch subjects, who should be tried by the local *Vierschaar* rather than the Inquisition. Any sentence imposed and exercised by ecclesiastic court was thus illegal. Margaret agreed to pass their requests to Philip II. However, as events of 1566 and 1567 (described above) showed, this was a short-lived compromise rather than a true change of course in the Habsburgs’ politics toward Brabant. With the arrival of Duke of Alva and the creation of the Council of Troubles, it turned out to have been a false peace, such as the one depicted in the eighth print, lying asleep on a bed atop the dismembered limbs of the victims of the persecution. Only the ignorant could have been blinded and quieted by it.<sup>56</sup> As the ninth print demonstrates, since Erasmus and Luther had revealed the hypocrisy of the Roman church, the major proponent of *Pax Falsa*, the People would not have accepted it for long. The later disasters were thus unavoidable.

According to apologists keen on conspiracy theories, Granvelle’s master plan included turning the Low Countries into a kingdom, thus destroying the ancient political order guaranteed by the privileges and the constitutional *Blijde Inkomst*.<sup>57</sup> I suggested above that the document depicted in the second and third print can be specifically identified with the Joyous Entry of Brabant. It protected inhabitants of the Low Countries against arbitrary and unjust rule, and emphasized the importance of freedom and civic rights. It also limited the power of the central government in favour of the States of Brabant and decisions made at the local level, in provinces and towns, aiming at achieving the “ideal of self-governing independence.”<sup>58</sup> As illustrated by De Weert

and Coornhert, the privileges guaranteed in this constitutional document were historically grounded. Faithful citizens “earned” and fully deserved them, and the correlation of the city depicted on the document and the one shown being constructed further confirms this (beneficial) causal relationship. Therefore, the privileges could not be abused and taken away from society. In addition, the inscription beneath the third engraving informed the viewer that it was the favour of a prince that secured wealth and power. The privileges had beneficial effects for both sides of the contract and guaranteed the harmony of their relationship. However, the *Blijde Inkomst* included a clause that addressed the course subjects could take in case the prince transgressed their rights. The 58<sup>th</sup> article (*verzetsartikel*) permitted citizens to disobey in case the sovereign abused the negotiated contract, and to “refuse him their services until he repairs his ways.”<sup>59</sup> In the late 1560s and 1570s, this article provided apologists of the Revolt with a perfect argument that dispelled all doubts expressed by earlier authors: since Philip II violated the liberty and privileges of the Low Countries through religious persecution and the installation of the Inquisition, he effectively broke his oath, giving his subjects the right to rebel against him. In other words, when the prince no longer secured the peace and prosperity of society, resistance was legally authorized. To support this claim, De Weert and Coornhert provided a compound, if in the end rather straightforward, explanation of the origins of the privileges in the sequence of the first three prints. The later scenes exposed multiple ways in which they were abused by ecclesiastic authorities. Since the civic government was shown in these to be fully subordinated to the Church and to eagerly follow its advice even if it harmed the subjects, it participated in the Church’s misdemeanours. As noted earlier, the initial images are allegorical, hence, the social and political order they presented was a universal one, and the *Blijde Inkomst* one of its guarantees. By violating this document, the Habsburgs in fact trespassed against natural law. The question the apologists debated in the 1550s and 1560s—how to justify the protest against the divinely established political order—became inverted. It was precisely because the divine order was violated that the rebellion was necessary. This interpretation of the *Blijde Inkomst* and the *verzetsartikel* in particular was developed most significantly in the 1570s by jurists in Cologne, the period and place where the first edition of De Weert and Coornhert’s series was printed.<sup>60</sup> The text of the document was readily available in Cologne since it had been published in 1565 and 1566 by Godfried Hertshorn (Cervicornus), a printer with close ties to Antwerp and a

friend of Philips van Wesenbeke, brother of Jacob, the city secretary.<sup>61</sup> The very act of publishing the full text of the *Blijde Inkomst* could already be regarded as an apology for the current events in the Low Countries. Together with the ongoing debate on Article 58's status as natural law, it made the expatriate community in Cologne a perfect audience for the prints designed by Coornhert and De Weert.

While the *Moral Decline of the Clergy* did not provide a pictorial equivalent of the *Blijde Inkomst* or of any of the other documents discussed above, those texts created a framework within which the images were understood. De Weert and Coornhert introduced visual synecdoches of the apologists' arguments and relied on the beholder's ability to deepen the discourse and to express his or her own opinion. For example, following the argument developed in prints 3 and 10 on the growth of the Church's power and its imposition on the state, which I discussed earlier, one might have asked whether Philip II was indeed only misled by false advisors, or if he was personally responsible for all the calamities in the Low Countries. Further, which of the two, in the light of actual events, was the position truly advocated and held by Marnix van St Aldegonde and William of Orange? Finally, who should one have supported? By providing material for a debate rather than a direct answer to it (in other words, open-ended allusions rather than finished declamations) the images referred viewers to written apologies and encouraged their more profound exegesis, inspiring them to broaden their knowledge of the subject and to take a personal stance on the revolt. Therefore, the series helped to develop a sense of historical awareness and national identity indispensable for forging a civic community. This, in turn, was necessary for the rebellion against Spanish rule to be successful. Given the initial date of publication, the series at once provided a defence of the revolt for the citizens of the Low Countries, both at home and in exile; justified their presence in German cities, particularly Cologne; and argued for the nation's reconciliation and unification. Therefore, not only their confessional polyvalence, but also a broad political message and potential usage made the prints suitable for different markets and nationally diverse clientele. The events which followed—the 1576 Pacification of Ghent, the 1579 Union of Utrecht, and the division of the Low Countries into the Spanish Netherlands to the South and the Dutch Republic to the North—added to the prints an actual historical conclusion. Meanwhile, they left a viewer with the twelfth image to evaluate the dynamically changing situation of society.

## Conclusion

The last print depicts the personification of *Seditio* (Rebellion) as a monstrously deformed figure split above the waist into two bodies, male and female. These opposing parts fight each other violently not recognizing that, in fact, they form a single organism. No matter who prevails, both will perish. This disturbing vision evokes the war which eventually forced thousands into exile and the sectarian divisions that tore apart the nation.<sup>62</sup> It confronted the viewer with the question of whether this tragic national schism could be overcome. The answer to this question is provided by the polemical character of the series and the polyvalence of visual imagery. As they demanded the beholder's engaged response, the prints became activated through the process of interpretation. Viewers were encouraged to ponder the causes of the religious and political troubles of the Low Countries and possible ways to alleviate their disastrous effects. Ideally, the series and its usage as a focal point for discussion would not only have proposed but indeed helped enact religious tolerance as a remedy for the conflict. De Weert and Coornhert's confessionally multivalent designs relied upon their viewer's skills at emblematic exegesis in order to promote freedom of conscience and religious worship as a means of establishing peace. The production and reception of images perfectly paralleled and supplemented each other. Recent disasters became a negative exemplum of the abuse of this liberty while the region still suffered the consequences of the harsh politics of the Habsburgs. Internal, confessionally-based conflicts exacerbated the social impact. Ironically, the Leiden disputation revealed and performed exactly these animosities. It proved that the open-endedness of the print cycle and images in general were vulnerable to manipulation. The ideal envisioned by De Weert and Coornhert was trivialized and inverted. However, as this was a deliberate move on the side of Cornelisz and Donteclock, I believe it tells as much about the role of images in shaping public discourse in the new Republic as it does about its political, confessional, and social conditions.

## Notes

1. I would like to thank Prof. Mark A. Meadow, Prof. Jeanette Favrot Peterson, and my colleagues from the University of California, Santa Barbara for their insightful

comments, inspiring suggestions and curious questions. Without their help this article would not have been possible.

2. Gerrit Voogt, *Constraint on Trial: Dirk Volckertsz Coornhert and Religious Freedom* (Kirksville, MO: Truman State University Press, 2000), p. 181.
3. Ilja Veldman, *De Wereld tussen Goed en Kwaad. Late Prenten van Coornhert* ('s-Gravenhage: SDU, 1990), p. 20.
4. In this article I use interchangeably the terms “Evangelicals,” “Augsburg Confession,” “Lutheran confession,” and “Lutherans” for the Protestant movement initiated by Martin Luther, whose primary confession of faith was established in 1530 at the Diet of Augsburg. The terms “Calvinists,” “Reformed,” and “Reformed Church” designate, on the other hand, Protestants who followed teachings of John Calvin.
5. Voogt, pp. 185–97.
6. Voogt, p. 181.
7. Voogt, pp. 183–85.
8. F. W. H. Hollstein, *Dutch and Flemish Engravings and Woodcuts ca. 1450–1700*, Vol. 4 (Amsterdam: M. Hertzberger, 1957), p. 230, nos. 171–82. The series was designed and first published in Cologne between 1572 and 1576, but no impressions from the original edition have survived. The Leiden debate thus provides unique circumstantial evidence that the series was already known at that time in the Low Countries. Possibly Coornhert brought the plates or a set of impressions with him upon his return from exile in 1576, as the series was reissued in 1604 in Amsterdam by Hendrick Hondius. It is his (first known) edition that I am referring to in my article. All the prints in this edition are numbered and supplemented with Latin, Dutch, and French inscriptions. However, any discussion as to whether the same verses were already composed and included by De Weert and Coornhert, and whether Hondius followed the sequence established by them or made any changes to the order of images, must remain speculative due to the lack of any archival evidence on the original series. To my knowledge, *The Moral Decline of the Clergy, or the Root of the Dutch Revolt* has been discussed by only two authors: Ilja M. Veldman and James Tanis. Veldman made an important contribution to establishing the provenance of the prints, their circulation, and their role as exegesis and commentary on historical events, in which the boundaries between religion and politics get blurred (though the political aspect is more prominent in Veldman's discussion). By relating the prints to the poetic oeuvre of Coornhert, as well as to his and De Weert's biographies, she emphasized the role of their personal beliefs



in designing the iconography of the prints, which she studied and explained very thoroughly. Veldman also was the first to make the connection between the ninth print from the series and the Leiden disputation. Building upon her research, my essay proposes an alternative reading of the interpretation of images as a polyvalent, eclectic theological tract intended to accommodate confessionally diversified viewers, while the political content of the series was simultaneously aimed at uniting them as a nation. See Veldman, *Wereld* and Ilja M. Veldman, "Convictions and Polemics: Protestant Imagery in the 16<sup>th</sup> Century," in *Images for the Eye and Soul: Function and Meaning in Netherlandish Prints (1450–1650)*, ed. Ilja M. Veldman (Leiden: Primavera Pers, 2006), pp. 91–117. James Tanis expanded on Veldman's iconographic study of the images, and situated and juxtaposed them with other contemporary prints within the context of the early visual propaganda of the Dutch Revolt. Tanis discussed *The Moral Decline* as an anti-Catholic series, underlining that its criticism was directed against the ecclesiology rather than the theology of the Roman Catholic Church. I find this distinction particularly valuable in the context of the Leiden disputation: Coornhert acknowledged his authorship of the image criticizing the Catholic clergy, while also arguing that the Roman Catholic Church remained the only true church. See James Tanis and Daniel Horst, *De Tweedracht Verbeeld/Images of Discord: Prentkunst als propaganda aan het begin van de Tachtigjarige Oorlog/A graphic interpretation of the opening decades of the Eighty Years' War* (Grand Rapids: Bryn Mawr College Library, 1993); and James Tanis, "Netherlandish Reformed Traditions in Graphic Arts, 1550–1630," in *Seeing beyond the Word: Visual Arts and the Calvinist Tradition*, ed. P. Corby Finney (Grand Rapids, MI/Cambridge, UK: William B. Eerdmans Publishing Company, 1999), pp. 369–96.

9. The first print identifies De Weert as the inventor ("A. de Weert Invent.") and Coornhert as the engraver ("DVC f"). However, as established by Veldman, Coornhert can be also held responsible for the iconography of plates made in collaboration with De Weert, and Coornhert's own testimony in the Leiden debate further confirms his role as co-inventor. Veldman, *Wereld*, pp. 19–20. In addition, the same model of artistic cooperation in which Coornhert both engraved the prints and developed their subjects, characterized his professional relationship with Maarten van Heemskerck in the years 1548–59. See Ilja Veldman, *Maarten van Heemskerck and Dutch Humanism in the Sixteenth Century* (Maarsse: Gary Schwartz, 1977).

10. An Kint, *The Community of Commerce: Social Relations in Sixteenth-Century Antwerp* (PhD diss., Columbia University, 1996), p. 243.
11. For contemporary accounts of the hedge preaching and the beginning of the Dutch Revolt, see John William Burgon, *The Life and Times of Sir Thomas Gresham* (London: R. Jennings, 1839); Geeraard Bertrijn, *Chronijck der stad Antwerpen*, ed. Gustaaf van Havre (Antwerp: Kockx, 1879); Marcus van Vaernewijck, *Van die beroerlicke tijden in die Nederlanden en voornamelijk in Ghendt, 1566–1568*, ed. Ferdinand Vanderhaeghen (Gent: Drukkerij van C. Annoot-Braeckman, 1881); Godevaert van Haecht, *De kroniek van Godevaert van Haecht over de troebelen van 1565 tot 1574 te Antwerpen en elders*, ed. Rob van Roosbroeck (Antwerpen: De Sikkel, 1929–1930).
12. Ilja M. Veldman. “Keulen als toevluchtsoord voor Nederlandse kunstenaars (1567–1612),” *Oud Holland* 107 (1993), p. 36.
13. Veldman, “Keulen als toevluchtsoord,” pp. 34–58.
14. When capitalized, the nouns (e.g. People, Wealth, Power, Sex, Alcohol, Carnal Desires) refer to personifications depicted in the prints.
15. Dirck Volkertsz. Coornhert, *Van de Leydtsche Disputatie*, fol. Clxix A. Cited in Voogt, p. 183.
16. In my use of the term “polemic” I follow Miriam Chrisman who defined it as a dialogue in which opponents present and maintain controversial arguments. The distinctive quality of polemic as opposed to propaganda is then its quality of interchange. Miriam Chrisman, “From Polemic to Propaganda: The Development of Mass Persuasion in the Late Sixteenth Century,” *Archiv für Reformationsgeschichte* 73 (1982), pp. 175–95.
17. To my knowledge, in the Leiden Disputation only the print showing Martin Luther was invoked.
18. Johannes Sambucus, *Emblemata, Cum Aliquot Nummis Antiqui Operis* (Antwerp: Christophe Plantin, 1564) and Hadrianus Junius, *Medici Emblemata* (Antwerp: Christophe Plantin, 1565). Introductions to both volumes were translated into the vernacular and published in Antwerp by Marcus Antonius Gillis: *Emblemata I. Smabuci. In Nederlantsche tale ghetrouwelick overgheset* (Antwerp: Christoph Plantin, 1566) and *Emblemata Adrianii Iunii Medici, overgheset in Nederlantsche tale* (Antwerp: Christoph Plantin, 1567).
19. A similar understanding of the viewing process informs Mark Meadow’s interpretation of Pieter Bruegel the Elder’s *Netherlandish Proverbs*; see Mark Meadow,

*Pieter Bruegel the Elder's Netherlandish Proverbs and the Practice of Rhetoric* (Zwolle: Waanders Publishers, 2002).

20. Alison Adams, *Webs of Allusion: French Protestant Emblem Books of the Sixteenth Century* (Genève: Droz, 2003).
21. The moment in which the Leiden disputation took place is particularly interesting as it marks the beginning of the confessionalization processes in the Low Countries. Official Protestant churches began to emerge in the Low Countries only in the later 1570s, so the audience of *Moral Decline of the Clergy* would, at least nominally, have been exclusively Catholic, though their sympathies may have ranged from Erasmian to Calvinist. Dissatisfaction with the Roman church, or, as Coornhert's response to Cornelisz and Donteclock indicated, with its ecclesiology rather than theology, was the only limitation to the open-endedness of the series. Coornhert and De Weert's series fit within growing period expectations of religious imagery that promoted intellectually stimulating discussion and debate, which is the subject of my forthcoming doctoral dissertation, *Patterns of Discourse: Cultural Transformation and Religious Imagery in Mid-sixteenth Century Antwerp*.
22. For an overview of the history of the Reform movement in the Low Countries, see Wiebe Bergsma, "The Low Countries," in *The Reformation in National Context*, ed. Bob Scribner, Roy Porter, and Mikuláš Teich (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 1994), pp. 67–78; Alastair Duke, *Reformation and Revolt in the Low Countries* (London: Hambledon Continuum, 2003); Alastair Duke, "The Netherlands," in *The Early Reformation in Europe*, ed. Andrew Pettegree (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 1992), pp. 142–65; Guido Marnef, *Antwerp in the Age of Reformation: Underground Protestantism in Commercial Metropolis 1550–1577* (Baltimore: Johns Hopkins University Press, 1996); Guido Marnef, "The Netherlands," in *The Reformation World*, ed. Andrew Pettegree (London and New York: Routledge, 2000), pp. 344–64.
23. Throughout this paper, I use the words "plate" and "print" interchangeably.
24. Tanis suggested that Hypocrisy is actually wearing a nun's garment, in *Images of Discord*, p. 17.
25. This object does not resemble any other attribute depicted in the series and I was not able to identify its meaning. It is possible that the scene alludes to a contemporary proverb or theatrical play; however, I have not come across a similar motif in period visual arts.
26. In assigning the prints those titles, I follow James Tanis's identification; see Tanis, *Images of Discord*.

27. The program of *ommegangen* was described in the booklets printed for those occasions. Seven such pamphlets from the years 1559–66 survived, all published by Hans de Laet in Antwerp: *Ordinantie van den Besnijdenis Ommeganck, van desen teghenwoordighen Jare. M.D. ende LIX*; *Ordinancie, Inhoudende de Poincten vanden Heylighen Besnijdenis Ommeganck der Stadt van Antwerpen, gheschiet inden Jare M.D.LXI*; *Ordinancie, Inhoudende de Poincten vanden Heylighen Besnydenis Ommeganck (ged. 24 Mei) der Stadt van Antwerpen / gheschiet inden Jare M.D.LXII*; *Ordinantie van de nieu Punten van onser Vrouwen Ommeghanck half Oogst 1563*; *Ordinantie inhoudende de nieu poincten van den heyligen besnijdenis ommeganck, der stadt van Antvverpen, gheschiet inden iare. 1564*; *Ordinantie, Inhoudende die Oude en Nieuwe Poincten, van onser Vrouwen Ommeganck, der Stadt van Antwerpen, gheschiet inden Iare 1564*; *Ordonantie, inhoudende de nievv Poincten van den Ommeganck half Oogst, Anno 1566, ghenaeempt den Tijd present*.
28. For example, new floats designed for the 1559 Circumcision procession celebrated signing the peace treaty at Cateau-Cambrésis between Henry II and Philip II. For Antwerp, the treaty and the end of war between France and Spain raised the hope that the Habsburgs would revoke additional taxes introduced in the city to finance the military campaign. The 1566 floats, on the other hand, addressed growing religious and social unrest in the city. See note 27 for the exact bibliographic reference to programs of those processions.
29. Emily Peters, “*Den gheheelen loop des weerelts*” (*The whole course of the world*): *Printed Processions and the Theater of Identity in Antwerp during the Dutch Revolt* (PhD diss., University of California, Santa Barbara, 2005).
30. Peters, p. 4.
31. Walter L. Strauss, *The Illustrated Bartsch*, vol. 13. *German Masters of the Sixteenth Century*. Erhard Schoen, Niklaes Stoer (New York: Abaris Books, 1984), p. 637, no. 051 (b).
32. Bart Rosier, “The Victories of Charles V: A Series of Prints by Maarten van Heemskerck, 1555–56,” *Simiolus* 20 (1990–91), pp. 24–38.
33. The series had seven editions between 1556 and 1640. The second and third edition included verses in Spanish and French along the Latin ones.
34. *The Illustrated Bartsch*, vol. 55, pp. 250–53, nos. 070.9–070.12.
35. Voogt, pp. 184–85.
36. See Erasmus, *Stultitiae laus* (Basel: Johann Froben, 1515).
37. Miriam Chrisman, *Conflicting Visions of Reform: German Lay Propaganda Pamphlets, 1519–1530* (Atlantic Highlands, NJ: Humanities Press, 1996).

38. The biblical citations are from the Douay-Rheims version.
39. For the discussion of Philip's oath and his joyous entry into Antwerp, see Mark Meadow, "Ritual and Civic Identity in Philip II's 1549 Antwerp *Blijde Incompst*," *Nederlands Kunsthistorisch Jaarboek* 49 (1998), pp. 37–67.
40. Peter Arnade, *Beggars, Iconoclasts, and Civic Patriots: The Political Culture of the Dutch Revolt* (Ithaca: Cornell University Press, 2008), p. 76.
41. For an overview of Luther's approach towards religious images, see Margarete Stirm, *Die Bilderfrage der Reformation* (Gütersloh: Verlagshaus Gerd Mohn, 1977); Rosemarie Bergmann, "A *tröstlich pictura*: Luther's Attitude in the Question of Images," *Renaissance and Reformation/Renaissance et Réforme* 5 (1981), pp. 15–25; Sergiusz Michalski, *The Reformation and the Visual Arts: The Protestant Image Question in Western and Eastern Europe* (London; New York: Routledge, 1993); Joseph Koerner, *Reformation of the Image* (London: Reaktion, 2004).
42. However, since these negative sentiments towards the 1566 iconoclasm were not limited to Lutherans we need not assume this to be an exclusively Lutheran response.
43. See the blinded personification of *Vulgus* in the seventh print which regains sight in the ninth engraving, the blind *Ignorantia* in the eighth image, and the overall idea expressed in the series of revealing versus concealing the truth, which becomes highlighted in the sixth, eighth, and ninth prints.
44. For example, Karel van Mander, who witnessed iconoclasm as a young artist and apprentice of Lucas de Heere in Ghent, was a Mennonite, but who in his *Het Schilderboeck* (Haarlem & Alkmaar, 1604) called the 1566 image-breaking a senseless violence and vandalism, which had nothing to do with true religion. In addition to Cologne, another popular destination for emigrant artists from Flanders was Frankenthal in The Palatinate of Rhine. Many painters and weavers who settled there were Calvinists. See Edgar J. Hurkey, *Kunst, Kommerz, Glaubenskampf: Frankenthal Um 1600* (Worms: Wernersche Verlagsgesellschaft, 1995). The Fall of Antwerp in 1585 resulted in further emigration of artists to the Northern Provinces, and mostly Amsterdam.
45. C. G. N. de Vooy, "Apostelspelen in de Rederijkerstijd," *Mededeelingen der Koninklijke Akademie van Wetenschappen, Afdeling Letterkunde* 65 (1928), pp. 153–97; Keith Moxey, *Pieter Aertsen, Joachim Beuckelaer, and the Rise of Secular Painting in the Context of Reformation* (New York–London: Garland Publishing, 1977), pp. 161–63.

46. The hedge preaching outside Brabant and Flemish cities in 1566 and 1567, which I mentioned earlier in this paper, attracted thousands, but only a tiny fraction identified themselves as Calvinists. Similarly, the Leiden disputation was attended by several hundred people.
47. Margaret Carroll, *Painting and Politics in Northern Europe: Van Eyck, Bruegel Rubens and Their Contemporaries* (University Park, PA: Pennsylvania State University Press, 2008), p. 84.
48. Marnef, *Antwerp*, p. 19. For a detailed explanation of Antwerp's status and respective competencies of central and local government, see Marnef, *Antwerp*, pp. 14–22.
49. Kint, *The Community of Commerce*, passim.
50. Wilhelmum Gnapheum, *Tobias ende Lazarus mit grooter neersticheyt ghecorrigeert verbeteret, ende in die Dialogus oft t'samen sprekinghe, onderscheydelicken ghedeelt, all krancken, bedroefden, ende eenvoudighe menschen seer profytelick om te lesen* (Emden, 1557), fol. A2.
51. Petrus Dathenus, *Een christelijcke verantwoordinghe op die disputatie, ghehouden binnen Oudenaerde, tusschen M. Adriaen Hamstadt, ende Jan Daelman beschreven met onwaerheyt, ende uutghegeven door Jan Daelman voorseyt*, 2nd. edn. (Antwerp, 1582), fol. 6.
52. Guy de Brès (?), *Faicté d'un commun accord par les fidèles qui conuersent és Pays-Bas, lesquels desirent viure selon la pureté de l'Euangile de Seigneur Iesus Christ* (Rouen, 1561).
53. Martin van Gelderen, *The Political Thought of the Dutch Revolt, 1555–1590* (Cambridge; New York: Cambridge University Press, 1992), p. 81.
54. For an overview of these texts, see Geoffrey Parker, *The Dutch Revolt* (London; New York: Penguin Books, 1988); Gelderen, *Political Thought*; Martin van Gelderen, *The Dutch Revolt* (Cambridge; New York: Cambridge University Press, 1993).
55. Gelderen, *Political Thought*, p. 98.
56. The print can also make a more general allusion to the superficially peaceful relationship between the Habsburgs and their Dutch subjects, and the fragile balance of power between central government and local authorities. However, it also seems likely that in the original edition this print was introduced later in the cycle. Finally, given the discursive nature of the images by De Weert and Coornhert, viewers in the 1570s might have also related it to the Council of Troubles even if such an interpretation did not match the chronological development of events as presented by the series.

57. Anonymous (Philips Marnix van St. Aldegonde?), *Libellus supplex Imperatoriae Maiestati*, 1570 and the English translation *A Defence and true Declaration of the things lately done in the lowe Countrey whereby may easily be seen to whom all the beginning and cause of the late troubles and calamities is to be imputed*, 1571.
58. Gelderen, *Dutch Revolt*, p. xiv.
59. Gelderen, *Political Thought*, p. 115. For the use of the *Blijde Inkomste* in the apologies for the Dutch Revolt, see A. C. J. Vrankrijker, "Het beroep op de Blyde Incomste en andere privileges in Brabant tegen de inquisitie en de nieuwe bisdommen in de XVIe eeuw," *Historisch Tijdschrift* 16 (1936), pp. 101–37; P. A. M. Geurts, "Het beroep op de Blijde Inkomste in de pamfletten uit de Tachtigjarige Oorlog," *Standen en Landen* 16 (1958), pp. 3–15; H. de la Fontaine Verwey, "De Blijde Inkomst en de opstand tegen Philips II," in Fontaine Verwey, *Uit de wereld van het boek. Humanisten, dweepers en rebellen in de zestiende eeuw* (Amsterdam, 1975), pp. 113–32. In 1573 and 1574 apologists of the revolt advanced an argument that *Blijde Inkomst* applied to all provinces of the Low Countries, meaning that all shared the same right to disobey the duke if he violates the privileges (Fontaine Verwey, p. 121).
60. Fontaine Verwey, pp. 124–28.
61. Fontaine Verwey, p. 119. The *Blijde Inkomst* was published for the first time in the Dutch Provinces in 1574 in Delft, the seat of the States of Holland.
62. By later sixteenth- and seventeenth-century audiences, it might have been specifically, if anachronistically, interpreted as a representation of the 1579 Union of Utrecht and the formal division of the Low Countries.



Figure 1. *Man Piously Doing his Duty*. Collection Rijksmuseum, Amsterdam



Figure 2. *Man Rewarded for his Piety*. Collection Rijksmuseum, Amsterdam





Figure 3. *Wealth and Power Making their Entry into Society*. Collection Rijksmuseum, Amsterdam



Figure 4. *Wealth Bringing Sex and Alcohol into the Cloisters*. Collection Rijksmuseum, Amsterdam



Figure 5. Sex and Alcohol Strangling Piety. Collection Rijksmuseum, Amsterdam



Figure 6. Hypocrisy Replacing Piety. Collection Rijksmuseum, Amsterdam



Figure 7. Deceit Bringing the People to Ruin. Collection Rijksmuseum, Amsterdam



Figure 8. Ignorance Concealing the Falsehood of Peace. Collection Rijksmuseum, Amsterdam



Figure 9. Martin Luther Revealing the Deceit of the Catholic Clergy. Collection Rijksmuseum, Amsterdam



Figure 10. Corrupt Rulers and the Spanish Inquisition Committing Murder. Collection Rijksmuseum, Amsterdam



Figure 11. *Innocent Christians Persecuted*. Collection Rijksmuseum, Amsterdam



Figure 12. *The Rebellious People Destroying the Icons and Chasing Away the Clergy*.  
Collection Rijksmuseum, Amsterdam