

The Bible and the Literary Arts among Dutch Mennonites and Doopsgezinden, 1600–1740

Piet Visser, *Vrije Universiteit Amsterdam*

Since the early 1970s a remarkable genesis and growth of Mennonite contributions to modern and postmodern art and culture can be observed.¹ This so-called “Mennonite miracle”² is contextually defined by a liberating and deliberate crossing of the borders of age-old religiously and culturally binary perceptions about being “in the world, but not of the world.” It is about challenging and redefining identity based on the Anabaptist/Mennonite religious tradition of history, language, culture, and ethnicity within North American pluralistic, mainstream society and culture.³

Some three centuries earlier, a comparable cultural renaissance occurred in the Low Countries where Mennonite cultural production flourished amid acculturation and education. The Dutch transformation happened as soon as the persecution of Anabaptists and Mennonites, predominantly living in urban areas, came to an end in 1579 and the new Dutch Republic was established. Within one generation Mennonite and Doopsgezind⁴ literary and visual artists entered the cultural stage of what soon would be called the Dutch “Golden Age.”⁵ Unlike their North American progeny, the Dutch ancestors held no sense of a distinct “Mennonite ethnicity” since they lived among other Dutch folks. Nor did they use languages that differed from the local language, a practice common among subsequent Mennonites with a tradition of migration. Mainstays in North American Mennonite writing include explorations of personal

matters involving challenges to family and community loyalties, shunning, voluntarily leaving the church, violence, abuse, male domination, and, more recently, the quests for sexuality and gender identities.⁶ Conversely, an almost total absence of the relevance of the Bible for everyday life can be observed in the contemporary North American scope of artistic topics, themes, and motives. This marks a profound difference from the literary motivation and orientation of the Dutch Mennonites and Doopsgezinden of the seventeenth and eighteenth centuries: the Bible, particularly the Gospel, dominated everyday life, artistic panel, canvas, and literary printed page. Although fully aware of their marginalized social position and their religious minority position relative to Dutch Calvinist orthodoxy, the Doopsgezinden deliberately and pragmatically manifested themselves as mainstream fellow Christians. While the topic of Mennonitism played little role in Dutch Mennonite authors' works, Bible stories and themes of Christian morality, relevant to society at large, lay at the core of much of their literary innovation.

The remarkable Dutch story of Mennonite and Doopsgezind involvement with the visual and literary arts remains unwritten.⁷ Yet the seventeenth-century Mennonites and Doopsgezinden, genuine "people of the Word," left a noteworthy footprint on the mainstream literature of the "Golden Age." They exposed their traditional Christocentric biblicism in such an innovative way that their poetic output was appreciated at large. This article explores just one aspect of that story.

In the first section of this study, the relevance of the Bible in Doopsgezind family life is demonstrated through Rembrandt's iconic portrait of the well-known Anslo couple from Amsterdam. The work highlights their appreciation of (biblical) art. The next section deals with one of the founders of Dutch Renaissance art, the orthodox Mennonite, promoter of classical antiquity, painter, and poet Karel van Mander. The third part takes a closer look at the poets Reyer Anslo and Joost van den Vondel, who both left the Doopsgezinden and joined the Roman Catholic church. Vondel, considered by many as the greatest among Dutch writers, was the inventor of Renaissance biblical drama. Despite his conversion, Vondel remained loyal to his Mennonite roots. The last section rounds off the analysis on Vondel by introducing Claas Bruin, a now forgotten poet and playwright who re-invented the Vondelian Biblical drama after its ban from public stage.

A Challenging yet Fruitful Climate for Doopsgezind/Mennonite Creativity

To understand why and how the socio-economic, cultural, and religious circumstances of the Low Countries were so inviting for minorities like the Mennonites and Doopsgezinden it is necessary to provide an explanatory sketch of the remarkable Dutch story of assimilation and emancipation. The historical context involved general acceptance and appreciation of Mennonites as part of Dutch cultural life. This was distinct from the separation and isolation which were so typical of Mennonite settlement experiences elsewhere in world. With the founding of the Protestant Dutch Republic and granting of freedom of conscience in 1579, there was an end to the gruesome persecution carried out by the king of Spain and the Church of Rome. This had included countless executions and triggered mass refugee migration.⁸ Unlike elsewhere in Reformation Europe, the Dutch Revolt and formation of the new Republic of the seven free provinces of the Netherlands did not simply replace the former supremacy of Roman Catholicism with a new Lutheran or Calvinist state religion. The new law decreed the “privileged” Dutch Reformed Church had to tolerate all other persuasions, even the disgraced Church of Rome, Judaism, and Anabaptism. Despite the disapproval of Calvinists, religious pluralism would mark the young republic. When necessary, the national government granted toleration of the competing, yet practically “second-class,” minorities including the Mennonites and Doopsgezinden, who, until the 1670s, were branded as heretics by Calvinist orthodoxy.

A climate of pluralistic permissiveness and acceptance of large numbers of immigrants from the southern Netherlands (now Flanders) and elsewhere as well as economic and military successes culminated in the cultural foundations for the Dutch “Golden Age.” This era gave rise to an innovative climate of Dutch Renaissance architecture and sculpture and an unprecedented eruption of high-quality artistic creativity in the literary and visual arts. In the Netherlands, neither the church, king, nor gentry were patrons of art. Instead, Protestant patricians and the newly rich (so-called “burghers”) in these urban Dutch centres of trade and industry cultivated and consumed art and literature in massive quantities.

The relatively free and industrious Mennonites and Doopsgezinden contributed significantly to this nationwide prosperity. Unlike elsewhere in predominantly rural Mennonite Europe, the major Doopsgezind communities of the Netherlands were concentrated in urban areas, main ports, and near centres of industry. They too would enter their “Golden Age” by embracing and enhancing

cultural and intellectual challenges and opportunities. Pragmatic enough to adjust to those new circumstances while maintaining the core of their beliefs, most Mennonite/Doopsgezind groups gradually dispensed with outdated views and practices, like rules against *buitentrouw* (marriage of congregation members to non-Mennonites) and strict church discipline. The Waterlanders were the first denomination to leave Menno's orthodoxy behind. Nevertheless, they maintained adult baptism, pacifism, and the rejection of swearing oaths, while honesty, sobriety, and a strong work ethic still remained hallmarks of Doopsgezind identity. Since they had no access to political, military, or academic careers, most Mennonites and Doopsgezinden made their living in handicrafts and business. Several entrepreneurial families were active in the food, fishing, and textile industries or in shipping and building. Within one or two generations they would make fortunes and join the echelons of the "newly rich" to become patrons of the arts. Additionally, a growing number of Doopsgezinden played a major role in printing and publishing, and were overrepresented as painters and poets.⁹

The vast cultural and socio-intellectual divide between the Dutch Doopsgezinden and the rest of the Mennonite world was already established by the late sixteenth and early seventeenth centuries.¹⁰ These worlds would later grow even further apart as the Doopsgezinden embraced the Enlightenment. Originating in England, France, and Germany, this rational academic awakening ignited not only the intellectual but also the political awareness of the Doopsgezinden.¹¹ They became active in the (French) revolutionary Batavian Republic (1795–1806). In 1735, they founded the Amsterdam Seminary, the most modern theological training centre of the Netherlands for decades to come. In many other fields, they took a lead role in a variety of intellectual and cultural initiatives. They founded national magazines for public debate and translated and published large numbers of foreign tracts and treatises in order to promote and popularize enlightened ideas. They also established nationwide social societies and a school system for the improvement of the poor and the working classes.¹² In this way, the Doopsgezinden became the true "silent in the land." They abandoned their Mennonite exclusivity while acting on the wings of unconditional toleration and rational liberalism. They worked not only for the benefit of the Dutch nation and their fellow citizens but also came to the relief of their conservative brethren persecuted elsewhere in Europe.¹³

The Rembrandt–Anslo Connection: Devout Demands Challenging Genius

My favourite Rembrandt painting, on display at the Gemäldegalerie (one of the museums of the Staatliche Museen in Berlin, Germany), is a huge canvas (176 × 210 cm), completed in 1641, which magnificently demonstrates the Dutch master’s unsurpassed light and shadow game in a scene of Doopsgezind devotion.¹⁴



Figure 1. “The Mennonite Preacher Anslo and his Wife.” Oil on canvas by Rembrandt (1641). Courtesy of the Staatliche Museen zu Berlin, Gemäldegalerie / Christoph Schmidt (cat. no. 828L).

He captures two well-off people—notice their modest but costly black silk and brown fur garments—in a moment of intimacy. Depicted here are Cornelis Claesz Anslo (1592–1646), an Amsterdam silk and cloth merchant and a preacher (*leraar*) of the Waterlanders, one of the eight local Mennonite congregations, with his spouse Aeltje Gerrits Schouten (1589–1657).¹⁵ Viewers of the painting must feel like “voyeurs” who catch a glimpse of the couple’s private moment of religious intimacy. The main character, the talking husband, refers to the open book with his left hand while admonishing his spouse, who, in a pose of thoughtful listening, meekly sits with

her eager eyes focused on that very same book, the Bible.¹⁶ From outside the frame of the painting the mysterious light from the left enlightens the divine enactment between the printed source, the guiding hand, the explanatory face of Cornelis and the receptive face of Aeltje. That the pastor is in an act of admonishing his spouse is supported by the extinguished candle, which emblematically symbolizes the so-called *correctio fraterna*, or “brotherly admonition,” and makes this double-portrait unique in Dutch art.

The artist’s commission from around 1640 became a real challenge of freezing speech into paint. This is apparent as Rembrandt had made three different preliminary studies of Anslø sitting in varying ways behind a table covered with books. In preparation for the commission, Rembrandt made two portraits in red chalk, pen, and wash (dated 1640), and a drawing of which only an etching from 1641 has survived.¹⁷ What is striking are the elements that suggest dichotomy in this painting, reflecting the strong tendency of Dutch Anabaptists (and of the Waterlanders in particular) to embrace Spiritualism.¹⁸ This dichotomy is supported by the contrast between lightness and darkness, the abundant shining light although the candle has just been extinguished, the printed words of the Bible which are invisible and cannot be read by the viewer, the voice of Cornelis which cannot be heard, and the listening Aeltje with her ears covered by a bonnet. Speaking of juxtapositions, Rembrandt expert Ernst van de Wetering considers this painting one of the artist’s most ambitious and extraordinary projects:

As such, the composition of this monumental painting is unusual, especially the positions of the two characters: not only within the total space of the image, but also in their interconnectedness. The left half of the composition includes a rather complicated still life of books and a chandelier on a table, covered with a Persian rug. Rembrandt’s surprising innovation is the close position of the two portrayed persons . . . in the other half of the composition. . . . When focusing on the lighting of the characters, then Rembrandt’s dilemma concerning the Anslø painting becomes clear. . . . Aeltje’s face is positioned in full light, whereas, in contrast, the face of the main character of the painting, Cornelis Anslø, is mainly hidden in shadow.

As Van de Wetering concludes, all of this points to Rembrandt’s constant consultation with Anslø throughout.¹⁹ Undoubtedly, the frequent dialogue between the artist and his commissioner would not have been restricted to Aeltje’s position on the painting. Their negotiations would have entailed the relevance of facial light and shadow and the Doopsgezind preference of other religious dichotomies, especially those prevalent in Waterlander Spiritualist circles. That

Anslo favoured those views became apparent during his ministry in the years 1625–1627. At that time, in Anslo’s church, *by de Toren* (near the Tower), a controversy occurred between a smaller faction cherishing Socinian ideas (led by the younger pastor Nittert Obbesz) and a majority favouring Spiritualism (led by the “father” of the Waterlanders, the Alkmaar elder Hans de Ries).²⁰ The Obbesz party claimed the exclusive relevance of the written Word of God whereas the De Ries party—acknowledging both the outer and the inner Word—stressed the unwritten Word of God. Rather than literal biblicalism, they valued the immediate effects of the Holy Spirit, that is, the inner guidance by the Holy Spirit and the Word which had become flesh: Jesus Christ. Or in the words of Hans de Ries:

The inward enlightenment of the mind is being wrought in the inner person by Christ, who is the true light, in collaboration with the H. Spirit. This coincides not only with an open mind and will, but also with the love of God and the power of the H. Spirit to observe Christ’s commandments. These are all characteristics of rebirth, and where these virtues exist, there is the reborn person.²¹

In one of the pamphlets written by Anslo in 1626 to clarify his mildly Spiritualistic stance in the actual conflict, he explains:

Now one may hear how the Holy Spirit confirms the teachings of our ministers, stating that Jesus Christ is the true Word of God, which existed right from the beginning, and created all things, a Word in which life and light exist, from whom all believers receive their lives and the light of their souls—that Word of God which became flesh, full of mercy and truth.

After quoting three passages from John 1:1, Rev. 19:11, and Rev. 19:13, Anslo continues:

These three witnesses . . . confirm most clearly that Jesus Christ is the eternal Son of God, the true Word of life, full of life, light, mercy, and truth. Apart from this, there are also the Holy Literal Scriptures, the written Word of God, which had been preached and written in former times.²²

Is it not the Rembrandtesque light of “the true Word of life, full of life, light, mercy, and truth” transmitted by Cornelis’s voice, that fully enlightens the face of Aeltje? Further examples of dichotomy can be detected in the work, such as the “outer Word” and the “inner Word,” and the Law of Moses of the Old Testament and the New Testament “law” of the Gospel, the old text and the new true Word of God. It seems as if Rembrandt—on commission—visualized the

invisibility of the Holy Spirit by marking the divine light of life nourishing the lives of all reborn believers and lighting their souls, flesh, and spirit! This unique portrait of an exemplary Doopsgezind couple, a successful businessman and esteemed preacher²³ admonishing his eager spouse and devout mother of eight, also seems to reflect the invisible church of Christ and his bride in the privacy of family life.

The Anslos and the Arts

It seems that in commissioning Rembrandt to create this very large yet intimate depiction of the Waterlander way of life, the aging Anso husband and wife wished to mark the blessings which had accrued to them in material and immaterial ways. Art historian Stephanie Dickey notes the 1641 painting coincided with two private milestones: the celebration of their thirtieth wedding year and their removal from the Rokin to a newly built house on Oudezijds Achterburgwal in 1641–1642. The new painting was likely intended to be hung above the mantelpiece.²⁴ However, another family milestone, not observed by Dickey, may have also motivated the creation of this portrait, as a commemoration of the parents' successful religious upbringing of their children. During the years 1632–1640 almost all of their children had received adult baptism.²⁵ This was the case with the only son, Gerbrandt, and six of their seven daughters: Aeltje, Theuntje, Grietje, Waijntje, Lysbetje (Elisabeth), and Maritje (Maria), whose baptism took place on December 16, 1640.²⁶ If “the painting celebrates the shared faith at the heart of Mennonite marriage,” as Dickey correctly observes,²⁷ then I would suggest that successfully raising all children in that same faith tradition (with credit to mother Aeltje) might have been at the back of their minds when they invited Rembrandt to accept the commission. All the children also found marriage partners from the same Waterlander background.²⁸ The seventh daughter, Hilletje, or Hillegond, was baptized in 1643. In the meantime, Grietje, who remained unmarried, must have died quite young, between 1641 and 1643, and the only son, Gerbrandt, the business partner of his father Cornelis Claesz, also died at an early age in April 1643.²⁹

Rembrandt's talented rendering of this couple in a spiritually frozen frame of devout dialogue also struck the poet and friend of the family Joost van den Vondel. Vondel and Anso had been elected deacons of the Waterlander congregation in 1616. However, during the previously mentioned dispute about Socinianism and Spiritualism, Vondel sided with the Nittert Obbesz party and opposed the

more lenient views of Anslo.³⁰ Over time Joost van den Vondel, whose literary star rose far above the Doopsgezind skies, felt less at ease with the quarrelsome climate of his brotherhood. In consequence, around 1641, he converted to the once dominant, but now, in the Dutch Calvinist republic, dissenting Roman Catholic church.³¹ Around this time Vondel composed a quatrain which served as a caption under the 1641 Rembrandt portrait etching of Anslo:

Ay, Rembrandt, paint *Cornelis'* voice,
The visible part is the least of him
The invisible can only be known through the ears.
He who would see *Anslo* must hear him.³²

Even within the four lines of this tiny Vondel poem the Doopsgezind fascination with dichotomy is evident by visualizing invisibility and the supremacy of listening to the spoken word as the two main themes!

No doubt the Bible played a prominent role in the lives of other Anslo family members as well. For instance, their only son, Gerbrandt Cornelisz Anslo (1612–1643), was a business partner in the cloth trade of his father but also gained renown for his Hebrew scholarship. He studied with the famous Jewish Torah and Talmud scholar and publisher Menasseh ben Israel, who became a close friend. In 1636, Gerbrandt wrote a poetic dedication in Hebrew for one of Menasseh's studies in Latin, *De Resurrectione Mortuorum*. In turn, Menasseh dedicated the introduction of a tract published in 1642 "ad praestantissimum Gerebrandum Anslo." Gerbrandt also gave financial support to Hebrew students. After his death in 1643, Gerbrandt's library, including books and manuscripts in Greek, Latin, and Hebrew, as well as in Turkish, Persian, and Arabic, were acquired by the University of Utrecht.³³

In 1636, on the occasion of Gerbrandt's marriage to Abigael Schouten from nearby Weesp, who was the daughter of the town's richest citizen, beer brewer Laurens Cornelisz Schouten, Joost van de Vondel wrote the wedding poem "De bruyloft van Cana" (The wedding at Cana). Abigael's father had been a deacon when both Vondel and her father-in-law Anslo served the Waterlander church board. Toward the end of the poem, Vondel refers to Gerbrandt's hunger for (religious) education and wisdom supplied by the holy books:

Let GARBRANT be a mirror of virtue
For his appended ABIGEL,
Presenting at the right time

What he read in the books
 What he learned from the silent voices.
 What he brought forward from the
 Sanctuaries of true wisdom,
 Which he had looked for with vigour and labour.³⁴

Wedding Poetry: The Pioneering Role of Karel van Mander and the Poems of Vondel

This particularly Christian variant of Dutch Renaissance wedding poetry, or *epithalamia*, originated among Dutch Mennonites and became very popular with them and others. The introduction of the *epithalamium* as a genre in Dutch literature initially came from the creative mind of the Mennonite poet and painter Karel van Mander (1548–1606). The production of wedding poems and other types of occasional poetry became a cultural interest of “Golden Age” elites. The significant appreciation for this genre among well-off Doopsgezinden is a socio-cultural phenomenon that needs further research.³⁵ Like most Dutch Renaissance artistic and literary genres and subjects, it had its roots in classical antiquity. This poetry made use of bucolic tropes and offered up praise of mythological deities including Venus, Juno *Pronuba*, Hymen, Thalassa, and Cupid. In 1599, Karel van Mander, a Flemish refugee who had settled in Haarlem, was the first to present a wedding poem in Dutch literary art by way of *aemulatio*.³⁶ Van Mander is generally considered the most celebrated Dutch Renaissance art theorist.³⁷ Even as an orthodox Mennonite poet, he demonstrated his innovative, unorthodox intellect time and again, as when, for instance, introduced the first “musical” in Dutch, entitled *Bethlehem Dat is het Broodhuys* (Bethlehem, or the House of Bread), in 1605. The work, consisting of sixteen hymns, envisions Christ’s birth from the perspective of nine shepherds. The composition is quite complicated since the hymns not only include a reflection on Christ’s coming and meaning for mankind but also provide a summary of biblical history up to the destruction of Jerusalem, including Jeremiah’s Lamentations. Although some genetic reminiscence of Virgil’s *Eclogae* may be apparent, there is no doubt that this creation of yet another genre of biblical poetry in Dutch literary art was unprecedented.³⁸

It should not come as a surprise that this artistic genius and authentic Bible user, Karel van Mander, again acted as a literary innovator when he transformed the classical setting of the *epithalamium* into genuine biblical, Christian lyrics.³⁹ This Christianizing *aemulatio* of the heathen entourage from antiquity was also applied by Vondel—no doubt inspired by Van Mander—when he wrote the

1636 wedding poem for Gerbrandt Anslo and Abigael Schouten. The introductory lines of the poem offer a sense of its tone and the blend of antique and Christian characteristics:

Who better than the great Hymen
Can glue together hearts,
But he, coming down from heaven's womb,
Who was invited at Cana.
He did not come with shining torch,
But edified with his wandering.
Which radiated upon mankind
Like a star at night.⁴⁰

Again the Doopsgezind awareness of dichotomy is evident in the opposing darkness and light, literal and spiritual illumination, and, particularly, in the supremacy of Christ over the Greek god of marriage, Hymen.⁴¹ When in 1658 Gerbrandt's daughter Alida Anslo married Michiel Blok, Joost van den Vondel once again wrote a Christian epithalamium, this time featuring Joseph's wedding to Potiphar's daughter, Asenath.⁴² Remarkably, Vondel, who produced more than fifty wedding poems during his career, composed only five Christian epithalamia—all at the request of Doopsgezind commissioners!⁴³ He also composed wedding poetry for Doopsgezinden without either Christian or mythological references, including the sonnet he composed for the 1620 marriage of Aechtjen Anthonis and Lambert Jacobsz, a well-known painter and Waterlander preacher from Leeuwarden (Friesland).⁴⁴ Another example comes from 1649, when he wrote a poem on the occasion of the first marriage of Agnes Block to Vondel's cousin Hans de Wolff.⁴⁵ By contrast, on the occasion of Agnes Block's second marriage to Sybrand de Flines in 1674, Vondel composed verse focused on the theme of the marriage of the Lamb of God—thereby playing with similarities between Agnes and *Agnus Dei*.⁴⁶

Reyer Anslo's Biblical Poetry

To demonstrate that the Bible-loving Anslo family also appreciated the more fashionable, poetic scenery of antiquity, I turn to Reyer Anslo (1626–1669), a son of Cornelis Claesz Anslo's brother, Reyer Claesz. When his niece Elisabeth (Lysbetje) Cornelis Anslo married the Leiden cloth merchant Abraham Hennebo in 1641, the fifteen-year-old nephew Reyer composed an epithalamium in classical style:

Descend, Hymen, down to earth, and watch this bridal feast
 Decorate it with your visit, and therefore leave your throne.
 Melt two bodies into one, and make it so that man and wife
 Will be united into one soul . . .⁴⁷

A parade of deities—Calisto, Juno, Eros, Orpheus, Venus, Cupid, Phoebe, Urania, Mercury, Clio, and several more—march rather primitively along the lyrics of adolescent exhibitionism. In 1644, Reyer wrote another wedding poem of 162 stanzas for his younger sister Ryckje Anslø, who married François van der Schagen, a medical doctor and minister in the Waterlander church. Despite the serious responsibility of his brother-in-law for shepherding his Doopsgezind flock, the epithalamium, now more mature in poetic skill, still breathed the world of antiquity, even explicitly referring to the erotic prospects of the honeymoon!⁴⁸

Martyrdom, a prominent aspect of the Anabaptist tradition, was also cherished by Reyer Anslø. In 1646 he published a long epic poem of 892 alexandrines,⁴⁹ entitled *Martelkroon van Steven, De eerste Martelaar* (Crown of martyrdom of Stephen, the first martyr).⁵⁰ Gradually Reyer became a poet of some renown. His 1649 tragedy *Parysche Bruiloft* (The Parisian wedding), dealing with the Massacre of St. Bartholomew, was performed at the Amsterdam Theatre with great success, its positive reception confirmed by the nine reprints of the printed version of the tragedy.⁵¹ Even more popular was Reyer's production of 231 quatrains for the first Dutch edition of a famous volume of biblical prints by the Swiss master Matthaeus Merian, *Icones Biblicae* (1648). This contribution to the Dutch version of Merian's popular work came at the request of the Amsterdam publisher and printmaker Cornelis Danckertsz, whose edition of the book would soon come into competition with that of another Amsterdam publisher, the firm of Claes Jansz Visscher. Both publishers intended these volumes primarily for a general (Protestant) market. The Dutch Merian volume not only included over 230 beautifully designed half-page Bible scenes and the quatrains by Anslø but also similar captions in German, French, English, and Latin in different typeface. In subsequent editions, each scene added anonymous explanatory prose from the pen of the Doopsgezind author Jan Philipsz Schabaelje.⁵² The quatrain associated with the print of "The curing of Naaman's leprosy by washing seven times in the Jordan" (2 Kings 5:10) is a specimen of Reyer Anslø's poetical power to clarify the biblical engravings:

First, Naaman, let your faith go into the water,
 Before you immerse into the glass of God's Jordan.

Water washes the body. The soul is purified
By true faith in God's lakes of grace.

This offers a confession-in-a-nutshell of adult baptism matching the interpretation at the end of Schabaelje's prose text: "Leprosy of the soul regards us all; the cleaning cannot be achieved by ourselves, nor by others, but only in the pure water of Jesus Christ's blood. Only Thou, oh Lord, when ready, can cleanse us."⁵³

From these last lines, it becomes apparent that Protestants, especially the Anabaptists and Doopsgezinden, were consistent in their application of scriptural authority and the supremacy of the New Testament over the Old Testament. The discontinuity between these is bridged by a Christocentric understanding of the Old Testament. Already for Menno Simons it was clear that the Old Testament provided "figures" which pointed at, or foreshadowed, Christ's acts and suffering. Appreciation of the Old Testament was primarily rooted in its edifying and didactic powers. Since the times of the Law of Moses had passed, Anabaptism emphasized the Gospel as the blueprint for Christian life.⁵⁴

These editions of Merian's book from the competing printshops of Danckertsz and Visscher, displaying the literary talents of two Doopsgezind authors, were appreciated by a wide audience and also fit the cultural taste of the Dutch Doopsgezind elites, including the Anslø family. Yet, their preoccupation with the Bible did not guarantee allegiance to the Anabaptist tradition. On the contrary, from 1650 forward, seemingly in the footsteps of his poetic peer, Joost van den Vondel, Reyer Anslø too would spend the rest of his life as a Roman Catholic. His conversion occurred on a trip to Italy. In Rome, he even entered the clergy as a secretary to Cardinal Capponi. Pope Innocent X rewarded him with a gold medal for his literary achievements. Reyer died in Perugia, in 1669, at the age of forty-three.⁵⁵

A Doopsgezind Stage for Biblical Drama: Joost van den Vondel

The importance of the Bible in Dutch Doopsgezind literature can best be demonstrated by studying the genre of biblical drama. This genre was introduced by Joost van den Vondel. Fifty years later, after a drastic change in performing policy at the Amsterdam Theatre banned biblical tragedy from stage (see below), this "all-Doopsgezind-literary-favourite" was reinvented by Claas Bruin.

Restricting this analysis to two individuals does not do justice to the literary output of so many other poets and playwrights of Doopsgezind origin. Authors like Joannes Antonides van der Goes

(1647–1684) (generally considered to be Vondel’s successor, but who died at the early age of thirty-seven), Jan Luyken (1649–1712) (the successful illustrator and author of pious poetry), and Pieter Langendijk (1683–1756) (a prolific playwright of comedies and occasional poetry) are just a few of the Doopsgezind writers who achieved national renown.⁵⁶ Joachim Oudaan (1628–1692) was also a widely esteemed poet, whose religious epic *Uytbreyding over het Boek Job* (1672; Elaboration on the Book of Job) has also been qualified “as a showpiece of Mennonite literature” based on its didactic qualities. This volume of 246 pages is a poetic adaptation of all verses from the forty-two chapters of Job; it culminates in a “spiritual interpretation of Job as the foreshadowing of Christ, and in a forceful appeal to follow Him.”⁵⁷ Oudaan had been inspired by Dirck Raphaelsz Camphuysen’s *Uytbreyding over De Psalmen des Propheten Davids* (1630; Elaboration on the Psalms of Prophet David).⁵⁸ Camphuysen (1589–1627) was born and raised in a Doopsgezind family. As a dissident Dutch Reformed theologian and poet, Camphuysen was famed as a hymn writer. His hymnbook *Stichtelycke Rymen* (1624; Edifying rhymes) was widely read within Collegiant, Doopsgezind, and Remonstrant circles of the seventeenth and eighteenth centuries.⁵⁹

It was the “Prince of Poets” of “Golden Age” Renaissance literature, the author Joost van den Vondel (1587–1679) who, as the first Doopsgezind and later Roman Catholic, introduced the genre of biblical drama in the Netherlands and would bring it to its peak. Vondel’s conversion around 1641 caused public indignation and continues to inspire a variety of interpretations by scholars of Dutch literary history. The view of Wisse A. P. Smit (1935), a Vondel authority, is still generally accepted:

All his life Vondel’s Doopsgezind persuasion remained the core of his belief. Much of what has been labelled as Roman Catholic is in essence purely Anabaptist. His most famous dramas have strong Anabaptist features. I am even convinced that he turned Roman Catholic because in the Catholic church—apart from differences of principle—he found the purest fulfillment of his Mennonite ideal!⁶⁰

Apart from hundreds of smaller and longer poems, Vondel wrote thirty-three dramas, many original and others translated from Latin and Greek.⁶¹ Drama (*treurspel*) was considered the top rank of Renaissance literary art.⁶² Vondel was also a great connoisseur and innovative theorist of French, Latin, and classical Greek drama, outlining how to study these genres and emulate its best works. It is clear he used “their formal structures almost exclusively for the purpose of conveying content that was biblical and Christian.”⁶³

Vondel's first play was *Het Pascha ofte de Verlossinghe Israels wt Egypten* (1610, published in 1612; Passover, or Israel's liberation from Egypt). It had a separate epilogue that compared the exodus from Egypt with the liberation of the Dutch Republic from Spanish rule. Readers and audiences would have understood that Moses represented Jesus Christ, saviour of all true believers.⁶⁴ His second play, in 1620, was *Hierusalem Verwoest* (Jerusalem destroyed).


H I E R V S A L E M
Verwoest.
T R E V R S P E L .
Dey Jodey tot naedenckey, dey Christeney
tot Scaerschoussingh als op het tooneel
Goozgestelt
Door I. V. VONDELEN.
MAT. XXIII.
Siet uw huys word u woest gelaten.

Vrg: in *Aeneas* I. Boeck.
Hier zyn de tranen van ons smert,
En d'ongevallen roeren 't hert.
T' A M S T E L D A M,
Dooz Dirck Pietersz. Boeckverkooper op 't Water/
inde witte Perse / recht over de Hozenmerck.
ANNO 1620.

Figure 2. Title page of Vondel's second biblical drama, *Jerusalem Destroyed* (1620). The picture of the laurelled soldier is the logo of the Amsterdam publisher Dirck Pietersz.

Its subtitle read: “Den Joden tot naedencken, den Christenen tot Waerschouwingh” (For the Jews to contemplate; a warning for Christians) and implies that Christocentric didactics were most important. For that same reason Vondel expressed the primacy of this sacred, biblical story over an emulation of, for instance, the classical Trojan dramas by Seneca and Euripides.⁶⁵

Vondel had early mastered French and Latin in order to study and translate classical poetry and drama by Du Bartas, Seneca, Virgil, and Aristotle. As a result, he published one of the first specimens of a biblical epic poem, *De Heerlyckheyd van Salomon* (1620; The magnificence of Solomon), comprised of 1,272 verses. It was, in fact, a Dutch adaptation of a part of the fourth day of the famous epic poem *La Seconde Sepmaine* (1584) by the Huguenot poet Guillaume de Salluste du Bartas. In the introduction, Vondel refers to Solomon’s wedding with Pharaoh’s daughter, which comprises a larger meaning of the hidden unity of Christ and his bride, the church.⁶⁶

Unlike other major contemporary playwrights, after his conversion to Roman Catholicism, Vondel’s Doopsgezind fascination for biblical subjects, especially in drama, intensified. Around the time of his switching pews he even wrote four biblical dramas. Two of them dealt with the exemplary history of Joseph.⁶⁷ These were plays loaded with Christocentric didactics, focused on themes like change of fortune and the hard choices of individuals struggling with moral dilemmas based on free will.⁶⁸ Vondel had produced a play about Joseph several years earlier, *Iosef of Sofompaneas* (1635), a translation from Neo-Latin of a play by the scholar Hugo de Groot. In 1640, he created two of his own, *Joseph in Dothan* and *Joseph in Egypte*. These tragedies are generally regarded as among the best of Vondel’s classically inspired dramas. They would become real blockbusters for the Amsterdam Theatre.⁶⁹ His 1648 drama on King Solomon, whose weakness causes his downfall, also attracted large audiences. Between 1650 and 1659, the *Salomon* tragedy enjoyed more than thirty performances. One of Vondel’s most important biblical tragedies was *Jephtha* (1659). Contemporary playwrights considered this play to be a superb specimen of Aristotelian drama as well as a true *aemulatio* of the Scottish scholar George Buchanan’s Latin *Jephtes, sive Votum* (1557; Jephtha, or the vow). This moving story from Judges 11:29–40 dramatically centres around the psychological and emotional reversal from reckless pride to sacrifice and finally to the agonizing pain of sorrow when the foolish father sacrifices his only daughter. Dutch literary historians appreciate Vondel’s *Jephtha* not only as the pinnacle of his skill as an author of biblical drama but of his dramatic talent as such.⁷⁰

After *Jephta*, Joost van den Vondel, who died in 1679, wrote another five biblical dramas. However, these garnered less appreciation as a result of changing drama conventions favouring the so-called French classicist style. He wrote two tragedies on King David (1660), one on Samson's humiliation and revenge (1660), one about Adam's expulsion and exile (1664), and, at the age of eighty, he wrote his final biblical tragedy, *Noah, of de Ondergang der eerste weerelt* (1667; Noah, or the downfall of the first world).⁷¹

In a way, Joost van den Vondel actually ignited the negative trend of banning the Bible from stage. In 1654, his drama *Lucifer*, staged in heaven and dealing with the fall and redemption of angels and humans, caused great disapproval. Protests from the Calvinist clergy—opponents of theatre by definition—instigated a prohibition of both the performance of the play and its publication. At least one thousand copies were destroyed, with the only result that within a year seven new editions came from Amsterdam presses.⁷² Yet this was the beginning of the end, as the appreciation of biblical tragedies gradually diminished. In 1677, a new board of the Amsterdam Theatre established a policy that resulted in the abolition of the Bible, theology, and disputable religious matters from the stage. This drastic change seemed a victory for Calvinist orthodoxy. However, the true motivation came from the Enlightenment. Following ideas of Spinoza and others, the theatre board was of the opinion that exegesis and dispute of biblical topics did not belong on a grand platform of fine culture but was rather suited for an academic stage, where rational analysis of the Bible and modern theology challenged the heritage of traditional belief in divine revelation.⁷³

Claas Bruin: *Zeede-dichten*, the Bible, and Drama Without a Stage

To complete this story of Doopsgezind commitment to Biblical drama, the fully forgotten glory of the once “allover highly esteemed” Amsterdam poet Claas Bruin (1671–1732) needs some rehabilitation. In his day he enjoyed general appreciation, as witnessed from the first quatrain of a laudatory sonnet introducing his posthumously collected poetry:

Oh tireless Bruin, radiating by the fire of Pentecost!
Do you, again, caress our hearts by art eager ears?
Or is it the echo of the glorious choruses of Angels,
Entertaining your Heavenly singing, age in, age out?⁷⁴

Very little is known about his personal life. Claas Cornelisz Bruin was born in Amsterdam in 1671 and raised in a conservative Mennonite family that belonged to a branch of the Old Frisians known as the “Jan Jacobsz People,” who gathered in a simple, hidden church at Bloemstraat in downtown Amsterdam.⁷⁵ Claas was the eldest of six children of Neeltje Hessels and Cornelis Claesz Bruin, a wheat dealer and a pastor of his congregation. Remarkably enough, Claas left his family church in April 1701 in order to become a member of the Lamist congregation which met in the still-existing Singelkerk of Amsterdam.⁷⁶ Why he joined this liberal congregation with a membership of some two thousand people is unknown. The Lamists’ spiritual and intellectual climate was open-minded and tolerant, as represented by their most influential leader, Galenus Abrahamsz (1622–1706).⁷⁷ His church collaborated with the separated Dutch Reformed minority known as the Remonstrants. Between Abrahamsz’s death and the foundation of the Amsterdam Doopsgezind Seminary in 1735, a majority of Lamist theology students were trained at the Remonstrant Seminary. In this atmosphere of moderate free-thinkers, Enlightenment ideas could flourish.⁷⁸

Initially, Claas Bruin had made some efforts to climb the pulpit of his home church, but he was never ordained. By profession he was an accountant all his life, and most likely worked for a Doopsgezind firm. Judging from the considerable quantity of his literary output, he had an abundance of spare time.⁷⁹ His bibliography includes fifty-four printed titles, although half of that number were smaller publications of occasional poetry, which comprised, on average, eight to sixteen pages.⁸⁰ His 1697 debut—significant in terms of his biblical and edifying focus throughout his poetic career—was entitled *Uitbreiding over den Sestienden Psalm* (Adaptation of Psalm Sixteen). It came from the press of the Lamist publisher Bar-end Visser.⁸¹

Occasional Poetry and “Arcadias”

Like so many other poets, Bruin wrote several occasional poems, not exclusively for a Doopsgezind and Remonstrant clientele, but also for local and national audiences. For instance, in 1731, he composed a poem in three columns on an illustrated broadside to commemorate the success of the national fundraising of 300,000 guilders for the persecuted Waldensians in Piedmont, Italy. The fundraiser was organized by the Dutch Reformed Church.⁸²

Richly illustrated topographical books were another fashionable genre. These poetic travel guides and descriptions of scenic areas

and their highlights, including castles, mansions, churches, and monasteries, were often commissioned by well-off Doopsgezind owners of country estates and collectors of art. As such, this patronage milieu can even be considered to have been an important catalyst in the development of the genre.⁸³ These topographical books included so-called *hofdichten* (estate poems) that harked back to Virgil's *Georgica*, in which the beauties of the classical landscapes from Arcadia were praised in dialogues by wandering admirers. The content echoed modern insights from physico-theology, which Isaac Newton had set in motion, and which stressed the omnipresence of God's almighty power in the features and the laws of nature. Opposing Cartesianism, the Doopsgezinden of the Enlightenment, particularly Jan van Westerhoven Jr. (1685) and Lambert ten Kate (1715), embraced these views.⁸⁴ Claas Bruin composed *Kleefsche en Zuid-Hollandse Arkadia* (1716; Arcadia of Cleves and South Holland), as well as *Noord-Hollandse Arkadia* (Arcadia of North Holland), published posthumously in 1732. The descriptions were based on actual outings by a small company hosted by the commissioner in his coach.⁸⁵

The most prestigious work in this topographical genre was Bruin's 1719 epic poem *Speelreis langs de Vechtstroom* (A joyful journey along the Vecht River), published as a folio-size coffee table book containing ninety-eight half-page engravings by Daniel Stopendaal of the Vecht River area, whose banks were covered with some thirty fancy mansions and summer residences of the most well-off families from Amsterdam, including nine estates owned by Doopsgezinden.⁸⁶ This expensive volume was designed for a high-end market. Most likely its initiator and main sponsor was Anthony van Hoek, a Doopsgezind businessman and owner of the estate Ouderhoek.⁸⁷ The work concludes with Bruin admonishing both his readers and the estate owners to contemplate God's presence in all things and beings of creation.

Zeede-dichten and Scriptural Poetry

In the majority of Bruin's literary works, the Christian morals are omnipresent. Therefore he did not create just poetry, but, in his own words, *zeede-dichten* (morally edifying poems), based on Christian teachings and using a clear, scripturally inspired idiom and style. Between 1707 and 1741, he wrote hundreds of poems published in seven volumes.⁸⁸ They include hymns, laudatory and other occasional poems, epic poems on biblical heroes, like Abraham, Joseph, and David as well as Old and New Testament women. He also composed scriptural aphorisms (*zede-spreuken*), and scriptural

reflections (*Schriftuurlyke bedenkingen*). One of these from 1721, “Het recht gebruik der Poëzy,” is about the essence of poetry, and states:

The need for Poetry should originate from passionate will
 To satisfy the soul, which conscience with joy and rest may fill,
 By means of themes containing all those precious things
 Such is the philosophy of virtue: how volatile life swings,
 All characteristics of God, and the most necessary wise policies,
 The commemoration of death and heavenly glories,
 And how the One Above always shines in his creations,
 To strengthen true faith and piety in the hearts of all nations.⁸⁹

God’s omnipotence is everywhere: in the sky, stars, flora, fauna, nature, and in mankind. Even in ancient paganism—at least, when applied decently—you may also find Christian truth and divine beauty. All this should be poetically shaped in the sacred words, style, and expressions from scripture.

Thou shall speak—it is your duty—the tongue of Canaan:
 Including honour, virtue, distinction, morality, and so on,
 Based on God’s law, and the pure light of Reason.
 When your Poetry gets ignited, and nurtured, without limit,
 By the unquenchable radiance of the Heavenly spirit,
 Then you may flourish amidst converted species, relentlessly!
 Then your soul will be outpoured with joy, so endlessly!
 Particularly, when virtue, which you show to all kind,
 Sincere and selflessly inhabits your heart and mind.
 Oh, what a redemption—you won’t regret, nay never—
 May you receive in the City of Peace, forever!⁹⁰

He also demonstrated this “Doopsgezind” poetic program in four volumes of explanatory scriptural poetry elucidating older, but still popular books of biblical prints. These include one previously referenced one, the famous Merian series with its (likely by then somewhat outdated) Anslø and Schabaelje contributions. Dating from the 1720s but published no sooner than 1740, his *Bybelsche Tafereelen des Ouden en Nieuwen Testaments* (1740; Biblical scenes of the Old and New Testaments), includes 215 Merian engravings.⁹¹ In 1722, the *Tafereelen der Eerste Christenen* (Scenes about the first Christians) came from the Doopsgezind Visscher press. These were based on 92 prints by Jan Luyken and elucidated by poems by Bruin in collaboration with his famous Doopsgezind literary friend from Haarlem, Pieter Langendijk.⁹² In 1727, in a smaller octavo size, his main publisher and Doopsgezind minister, Marten Schagen, published Bruin’s *Dichtmaatige Gedachten over Honderdvvyvenvyftig*

Bybelsche Printverbeeldingen (Poetical thoughts about one hundred and fifty-five biblical prints), which included copies of Merian prints.⁹³ Also from the Schagen shop came Bruin's *Veertig Samen- en Alleenspraken uit het Nieuwe Verbond* (1729; Forty dialogues and monologues from the New Covenant), including edifying dialogues of some eight pages in forty sections, with each section introduced by a beautiful double-page New Testament vignette by Jan Luyken.⁹⁴ In general, Bruin's edifying poetry was well appreciated. His volumes were also used as "prize books," in a tradition during the period from 1660 and 1860, particularly in urban Doopsgezind congregations, of awarding edifying books to the young adolescents who had finished their catechism classes during the winter season.⁹⁵

Biblical Drama

Like Vondel, the master *par excellence* of the most esteemed genre of literary art, Claas Bruin also channeled his talents to compose serious drama. Indeed, Claas Bruin's literary fame was also due to his success as the playwright of nine tragedies dealing with episodes from either national history or from antiquity. However, he did so in a different eighteenth-century dramaturgical setting favouring French classicism.⁹⁶ Most of his dramas were performed at the Amsterdam Theatre. Alongside the three unities of theatre—time, space, and action—French classicism also prescribed poetic justice. This required virtues to be rewarded and vices to be punished.⁹⁷ For example, in a blockbuster 1722 tragedy by Bruin, the plot of the story from Greek antiquity centres on the Theban field marshal and politician, Epaminondas.⁹⁸ Attacked by evil conspirators using lies and treason, fraud and demagogy, Epaminondas survives as the champion of virtue. He is a true patriot—God-fearing, with a strong sense of duty and sacrifice and in control of all his passions. The dichotomy of good and evil structures the five parts of the drama. Even when the risks of dying are high, Epaminondas calmly relies on his innocence, his peace of mind, and the omniscience of the gods. Seen from a Mennonite perspective it seems like the mystical, Anabaptist notion of *Gelassenheit* (yieldedness), whereby not only Christ's suffering, or that of Mennonite martyrs, but also the patient endurance of this Theban heathen should be understood as a specimen of Christian righteousness and providence!⁹⁹ Bruin's most successful play on the Amsterdam stage, for many decades, was his 1721 tragedy about the assassination of Prince William I, leader of the Dutch Revolt against Spain, in 1584.¹⁰⁰

Despite the fact that since the late 1670s the Bible was banned from the Amsterdam stage, Claas Bruin—in this respect a true

Doopsgezind as well as a literary heir of Joost van den Vondel¹⁰¹—composed no fewer than twelve biblical dramas, although they were never performed. Bruin was of the opinion that the Bible was the best source of edifying histories. He believed it was the dramatist's responsibility to supply not mere diversion, but also the *Godlyke Waarheid*, that is, Divine Truth. He wrote:

When I read the books of Moses [the Pentateuch], of Joshua, the books of Samuel, Kings, Chronicles, and [the apocryphal] Maccabees, I always get struck by amazement over the wealth of subjects, the uniqueness of cases, the transformation of situations, the refinement of reasoning, and the power of moral teachings. What is more: these are incomparable with all other worldly acts and events.¹⁰²

Bruin's eagerness to bring the Bible on stage becomes apparent from an early drama from 1708, initially entitled *De Vriendschap van David en Jonathan*. The drama is based on 2 Samuel 1 and the friendship of David and King Saul's son, Jonathan. The regents of the Schouwburg insisted Bruin change the setting and its *dramatis personae*. To accomplish this, Bruin had to alter the names and modify some situations in order to keep the stage clear of biblical matters. In 1715, this classically modified drama, now entitled *Spiegel van Edelmoedige Vriendschap* (Mirror of noble friendship) appeared for the first time. It enjoyed a run of several shows. The play had become a tragedy about *amicitia perfecta*, the ideal friendship between Abdaran and his brother-in-law Sobi in the Phoenician town of Sidon, during the reign of King Hiram, father of Abdaran!¹⁰³ Despite the discouraging atmosphere, Bruin dramatized even more biblical subjects, including six tragedies from the Old Testament that collectively came to light in 1724 in a volume entitled *Bybelsche Toonneelpoëzy* (Biblical drama). They include the stories of Abraham's sacrifice (Gen. 22), Moses's exodus from Egypt (Ex. 12:37), David's generosity toward Saul (1 Sam. 26), the penalty of David's pride (2 Sam. 24), and the rescue of Shadrach, Meshach, and Abednego from the furnace (Dan. 3:16). One drama, about the death of Saul (1 Sam. 31), was a poetic adaptation of an anonymous prose translation of a French drama (1640) by Pierre du Ryer (ca. 1606–1658). However, with no prospect of performing them in the theatres, these dramas were intended for reading only. Bruin pragmatically adapted to the theatrical climate of the day. He wrote, "Given my highest esteem for Scriptural Plays, I am of the opinion not to perform them on stage, since that, I am convinced, would be in many respects throwing to the dogs what is sacred, and throwing pearls to the swine!"¹⁰⁴



Figure 3. Frontispiece of Bruin's *Biblical Drama*, published by the Doopsgezind bookseller Marten Schagen (1724). Engraving and design by Jan Caspar Philips.

This type of Old Testament reading drama was rather exceptional but not unique.¹⁰⁵ Truly rare were Bruin's six New Testament tragedies about the life of the Apostle Paul published posthumously in 1734 by coreligionist Marten Schagen.¹⁰⁶ It is not daring to consider this particular New Testament drama genre as a specific Doopsgezind invention. In contrast to the Old Testament drama tradition originating from a (Roman Catholic) Neo-Latin setting, New Testament plays were almost nonexistent in the Protestant Dutch Republic. In this respect, Claas Bruin had only two predecessors, both of Doopsgezind origin, of whom he must have been aware.

In 1680 *Christus Lydende, en verheerlykt* (Christ's suffering and glorification) appeared on the market. The author was surgeon and poet Petrus Langedult (1640–1677), who was a Flemish Doopsgezind and Collegiant from Haarlem.¹⁰⁷ His volume includes three dramas, still in late Renaissance tragedy style. Most interesting is the introduction, with its cunning defense of these exceptional dramas against the rigid views of both Dutch Reformed orthodoxy and the Jesuits. Preferring biblical drama, including the Gospel, on stage, Langedult reassures his readers that these three plays are intended as reading dramas only. Nobody except those full of hate, bias, and prejudice, he writes, will dare to criticize them, because “this matter is the very best and the most divine” a plea that Bruin would later repeat.¹⁰⁸ Eight years later, in 1688, an Amsterdam Doopsgezind poet from Bruin's Lamist congregation, Karel Verlove (1630–1710), published a reading tragedy on the first Christian martyr entitled *Stéfanus, eerste Khristen Bloedgetuyge* (Stephen, the first Christian blood witness). Unlike Langedult, Verlove felt no urge to explain his tragedy, although judging from the one-page introductory poem, it is evident that even this small text is firmly embedded in the context of the actual drama debates. He simply asks his critics to judge the play with reason instead of emotion—yet he indicates that he disapproves of the modern French fashions of Racine and Corneille. This play needs to be performed “on the inner stage of your attention.”¹⁰⁹

Publisher Marten Schagen described Bruin's Paul plays as *dichtschilderijen* (paintings in poetry). He pointed to Joost van den Vondel, who used his divine talent in praise of the glory of the Creator and for the edifying benefit of his audience. Schagen came to the conclusion that Bruin, “onzen afgesturven Puikdichter” (our deceased, first-rate poet), also utilized his Christian urge to sanctify the art of poetry. However, likely due to some literary sensitivities, Claas Bruin did have a preference for labelling his Pauline tragedies as *verhandelingen* (discourses), instead of simply as plays or dramas, which Schagen would have preferred. Be that as it may, the reader was presented with the following episodes: Saul's

“blindness” (Acts 9:1), his conversion (Acts 9:3), his works among the Gentiles (Acts 13:6), his imprisonment at Philippi (Acts. 16:20), his discussion with Felix and Drusilla (Acts 24:24), and finally his death by torture (2 Tim. 4:6).

Conclusion

Whether these plays were read aloud, savoured in silence, or performed by amateur family-run companies in the private spaces of urban canal houses, country mansions, or rural French-style cultivated Arcadic gardens cannot be confirmed with certainty, but their enjoyment in each of these contexts is also not implausible. We only know of performances by private societies.¹¹⁰ This paper illuminates an artistic need to embrace the Bible with great concern and creativity that resulted in a variety of literary innovations and prolific biblically oriented literary output by Doopsgezind writers from the “Golden Age.” Although they originated from a small religious minority (a tolerated sect), they nevertheless participated in mainstream culture. Furthermore, they actively shaped the culture of the age by working around and within the dominant culture. In this respect, they successfully adapted literary genres and even introduced new ones. There is still much to consider regarding the Doopsgezind assimilation processes within the history of Dutch literature on the one hand, and, on the other, the transformation of Doopsgezind/Mennonite identities over time in the Netherlands and elsewhere.

Whatever the outcome of further research may be, for the moment I like to consider the literary products of artistic biblicism (or scriptural artistry?) simply as “literary art by Doopsgezinden,” instead of “Doopsgezind literary art.” In the pluralistic Dutch setting, poets of national renown like Van Mander, Anslo, Vondel, and Bruin were pragmatic enough not to include any specific, partisan Mennonite or Doopsgezind features or views in their writing. For instance, there was no emphasis on adult baptism, pacifism, the rejection of swearing oaths, and the like. But was not this lenient, permissive mentality also a Doopsgezind hallmark? Doopsgezinden of the seventeenth and eighteenth centuries had no urge to cherish or cultivate a special, separate group identity because they longed for freedom and equality, including artistic recognition and inclusion in the mainstream culture and society of the Dutch Republic—which they convincingly achieved!

At the same time, there was an awareness within Doopsgezind circles of the religious affinities of their writers and poets and that

this mattered. For example, when a literary hero died, the deceased was hailed as “one of us,” as Sybrand Feitema demonstrated in his elegy for Class Bruin—a sense of identity did exist:

Oh Menno’s mourning Church, who descends
 In a stream of tears to your Arch-poet’s grave,
 Your BRUIN, who us a wealth of poems gave
 Which nourished you with rich food from heaven!
 Grieve your Phoenix’s ashes, while the Saviour’s
 Glow of love (for whose glory he spent his splendid shine,
 And, while dying, eternally lives in sparks Divine)
 Removes the excessive sorrow from your mind!
 Your Christian Epictetus, relieved from body’s burden,
 Has spiritually not forgotten your descendants
 But portrays himself vividly in Moral painting.
 Watch how his sacred fire radiates in Biblical elegy,
 Causing the awakening of sinners from deep lethargy,
 While caressing pious hearts with angels’ poetry.¹¹¹

Notes

- ¹ I thank Dr. Nina Schroeder for correcting and improving the English version of this article. All the original Dutch equivalents of the English quotes can be found in the adapted Dutch version of this article in *Doopsgezinde Bijdragen* 48 (2022): 45–94 (see the references in footnotes 19, 21, 22, 32, 34, 40, 47, 60, 74, 89, 90, 102, 104, and 111). See, for instance, Hilde Froese Tiessen, “The Role of Art and Literature in Mennonite Self-Understanding” in *Mennonite Identity: Historical and Contemporary Perspectives*, ed. Calvin Wall Redekop and Samuel J. Steiner (New York: University Press of America, 1988), 235–252 (as well as many other important contributions by this prolific scholar); John D. Roth and Ervin Beck, eds., *Migrant Muses: Mennonite/s Writing in the U.S.* (Goshen, IN: Mennonite Historical Society, 1998); and the recent, most intriguing scholarly, yet very personal eye-witness reflection on “Mennonite Art” in Magdalene Redekop, *Making Believe: Questions About Mennonites and Art* (Winnipeg: University of Manitoba Press, 2020).
- ² This label was first used by the founding editor of the literary magazine *Prairie Fire*, Andris Taskans, in 2005; see Redekop, *Making Believe*, 3–8.
- ³ This cultural “outing” was even theologically grounded by Duane K. Friesen, *Artists, Citizens, Philosophers Seeking the Peace of the City: An Anabaptist Theology of Culture* (Scottsdale, PA: Herald Press, 2000).
- ⁴ To do justice to the Dutch situation, a distinction should be made between “Doopsgezind” (plural “Doopsgezinden”) and “Mennonite.” “Doopsgezinden” refers to the liberal version of Anabaptism; the label “Mennonieten” / “Mennisten” was restricted to conservative, orthodox Mennonitism, and disappeared into oblivion in the course of the eighteenth century. Ever since, Doopsgezinden remains the generally accepted title for Dutch Mennonites.

- ⁵ Since 2019, the general term “Golden Age” has been criticized. When applicable, I use the term Golden Age in quotation marks in a restricted art-historical sense to refer only to the era of artistic highlights.
- ⁶ Ervin Beck’s identification of “outstanding archetypes in Mennonite literature . . . that are embodied in more or less well-known visual images from traditional Mennonite culture” is an oversimplification of this literary history. These archetypes had no relevance whatsoever for the seventeenth-century Doopsgezind renaissance. Cf. Ervin Beck, “The Signifying Menno: Mennonite Archetypes for Authors and Critics,” in Roth and Beck, *Migrant Muses*, 50.
- ⁷ See also Redekop, *Making Believe*, 264. I have always dreamt to write such a study. Over the years I have collected some three thousand books for that purpose, primary and secondary sources, but now I have to admit that I am running out of time. Nevertheless, I hope that in near future this challenge should be taken up by younger scholars in the field, like, for instance, Dr. Nina Schroeder, an excellent art historian working in the field of Mennonite studies. Apart from her PhD dissertation, “Heretics and Martyrs: Picturing Early Anabaptism in Visual Culture of the Dutch Republic” (PhD diss., Queen’s University, 2018), she researches and publishes in the fields of Dutch Golden Age painting, early modern print history, and Mennonite and Doopsgezind social networks within the Dutch art marketplace.
- ⁸ This paragraph is based on Piet Visser, “Mennonites and Doopsgezinden in the Netherlands, 1535–1700,” in *A Companion to Anabaptism and Spiritualism, 1521–1700*, ed. John D. Roth and James M. Stayer (Leiden, Brill, 2007), 299–345 (esp. 311–331); and Maarten Prak, “Rembrandt’s Amsterdam” in *Rembrandt in Amsterdam: Creativity and Competition*, ed. Stephanie S. Dickey and Jochen Sander (New Haven, CT: Yale University Press, 2021), 63–79.
- ⁹ See, for instance, Alastair Hamilton, Sjouke Voolstra, and Piet Visser, eds., *From Martyr to Muppy: A Historical Introduction to Assimilation Processes of a Religious Minority in the Netherlands: the Mennonite* (Amsterdam: Amsterdam University Press, 1994), part 2, 65–156; Piet Visser, “Blasphemous and Pernicious: The Role of Printers and Booksellers in the Spread of Dissident Religious and Philosophical Ideas in the Netherlands in the Second Half of the Seventeenth Century,” *Quaerendo* 26, no. 4 (1996): 303–326.
- ¹⁰ Mary S. Sprunger, “A Mennonite Capitalist Ethic in the Dutch Golden Age: Weber Revisited”, in *European Mennonites and the Challenge of Modernity over Five Centuries: Contributors, Detractors, and Adapters*, ed. Mark Jantzen, Mary S. Sprunger and John D. Thiesen (North Newton, KS: Bethel College, 2016), 51–70.
- ¹¹ See Andrew C. Fix, *Prophecy and Reason: The Dutch Collegiants in the Early Enlightenment* (Princeton, NJ: Princeton University Press, 1991); Michael Driedger, “An Article Missing from the Mennonite Encyclopedia: ‘The Enlightenment in the Netherlands’,” in *Commoners and Community: Essays in Honour of Werner O. Packull*, ed. C. Arnold Snyder (Kitchener, ON: Pandora Press, 2002), 101–120; Michael Driedger, “Spinoza and the Boundary Zones of Religious Interaction,” *The Conrad Grebel Review* 25, no. 3 (2007): 21–28; Ernst Hamm, “Mennonite Centres of Accumulation: Martyrs and Instruments”, in *Centres and Cycles of Accumulation in and Around the Netherlands during the Early Modern Period*, ed. Lissa Roberts (Zurich: Lit Verlag, 2011), 205–230; Yme Kuiper, “Mennonites and Politics in Late Eighteenth-

- Century Friesland”, in *Religious Minorities and Cultural Diversity in the Dutch Republic: Studies Presented to Piet Visser on the Occasion of his 65th Birthday*, ed. August den Hollander, Alex Noord, Mirjam van Veen, Anna Voolstra (Leiden: Brill, 2014), 249–267. See also Gary W. Waite and Mike Driedger, “From ‘the Radical Reformation’ to ‘the Radical Enlightenment?’ The Specter and Complexities of Spiritualism in Early Modern England, Germany, and the Low Countries,” introduction to special issue of *Church History and Religious Culture* 101 (2021): 135–166.
- ¹² Piet Visser, *Keurige kettens: De Nederlandse doopsgezinden in de eeuw van de Verlichting. Rede uitgesproken bij de aanvaarding van het ambt van hoogleraar Geschiedenis van het Doperdom en aanverwante stromingen aan de faculteit der Godgeleerdheid van de Vrije Universiteit Amsterdam op 6 februari 2004* (Amsterdam: Vrije Universiteit, 2004).
- ¹³ Diether Götz Lichdi, “An Overview of Anabaptist-Mennonite History, 1525–1800” in *Testing Faith and Tradition*, Global Mennonite History Series: Europe, ed. John A. Lapp and C. Arnold Snyder (Intercourse, PA: Good Books, 2006), 21–24. During the seventeenth and eighteenth centuries the wealthy Dutch Doopsgezinden and their Fund for Foreign Needs generously helped their troubled Mennonite brethren in Slovakia, West Prussia, Switzerland, and the Palatinate. The well-off Dutch not only created a gateway for the German and Swiss Mennonite refugees to Pennsylvania but also contributed to relief of other Protestant groups like the Waldenses in northern Italy and the Huguenots who were expelled from France in 1685.
- ¹⁴ I am not interested in labelling Rembrandt as either a crypto-Mennonite or an open-minded religious person with overt Doopsgezind/Mennonite sympathies. Rembrandt was, officially at least, a member of the Dutch Reformed Church. His name does not pop up in any of the archival sources of the various Mennonite/Doopsgezind branches in Amsterdam. Rembrandt should be considered a Protestant, “but one who remained independent of any particular confessional orientation or system.” See Charles M. Rosenberg, *Rembrandt’s Religious Prints: The Feddersen collection at the Snite Museum of Art* (Bloomington: Indiana University Press, 2017) 13–14.
- ¹⁵ J. Bruyn et al., *A Corpus of Rembrandt Paintings*, vol. 3, 1635–1642 (Dordrecht: Martinus Nijhoff Publishers, 1989), cat. nr. 143, 403–415. Rembrandt made this portrait of the Doopsgezind couple against a backdrop of a recent business loan of 1,000 guilders from Anslo’s church to Hendrick Uyenburgh, the art dealer and Rembrandt’s friend and former employer.
- ¹⁶ At closer look we can discern two brass corner pieces on both covers as well as a brass clamp on the back cover. This was the fashion of leather or vellum bindings of Dutch Bibles.
- ¹⁷ “Drawings like this are exceptional as a preparation for his painted portraits, and the same is true of drawings for etched portraits. Possibly both drawings were done in advance at Anslo’s request, in order to give him an idea of what Rembrandt was intending”. Bruyn et al., *Corpus of Rembrandt Paintings*, 3:410–411. Then there is the assumption that also the rediscovered portrait of a “Lighting study of a woman with bonnet” was painted in preparation of the Anslo portrait. Ernst van den Wetering, “Rembrandts olieverfstudies: nieuw licht op een oud probleem,” in *Rembrandt: Zoektocht van een genie*, ed. Ernst van den Wetering and Bob van den Boogert (Amsterdam: Museum Het Rembrandthuis, 2006), 195.

- ¹⁸ Piet Visser, *Broeders in de Geest: De doopsgezinde bijdragen van Dierick en Jan Philipsz. Schabaelje tot de Nederlandse stichtelijke literatuur in de zeventiende eeuw*, Deventer Studiën 7 (Deventer: Sub Rosa, 1988), 2 vols., 1:120–122. For the characteristics of Spiritualism, see Geoffrey Dipple, “The Spiritualist Anabaptists,” in Roth and Stayer, *Companion to Anabaptism and Spiritualism*, 256–297 (esp. 291–294).
- ¹⁹ Van den Wetering and Van den Boogert, *Rembrandt*, 195–196.
- ²⁰ See for Anso’s involvement with the Obbesz–De Ries controversy, as well as for an analysis of this double portrait, the excellent interpretation of Stephanie S. Dickey, *Rembrandt: Portraits in Print* (Amsterdam: John Benjamins Publishing Co., 2004), 50–52.
- ²¹ Hans de Ries, *Ontdeckinghe der dwalingen, misduydinghen der H. Schrift ende verscheyden mis-slagen, begrepen in seecker Boeck, ghenaeamt Raech-besem* (Hoorn: Jan Jansz van Rhijn, 1627), 272–273.
- ²² [Cornelis Claesz Anso], *Dialogvs Ofte T’samen-sprekinghe, tusschen een Waerheydt-soeckende Neutralist, ghenaeamt Vrederick, ende een Waterlantsche Broeder: Waer inne kortelijck ende naecktelijck wordt verthoont, het verschil, ontstaen tusschen de Leeraren der vereenighder Gemeeynten, ende Nittert Obbessz. Aengaende ’t Woord Godts ende den aenkleven van dien* (Hoorn: Jan Jansz van Rhijn, 1626), 6–7. Together with his colleagues Reynier Wybrantsz and Pieter Andriesz, Anso was also a co-author of *Apolo-gia ofte Verantwoordinghe, in . . . oprecht verhael van de geleghentheydt der saken tusschen de Leeraers en Dienaers . . . en Nittert Obbis* (Hoorn: Jan Jansz van Rhijn, 1626). Cf. Global Anabaptist Mennonite Encyclopedia Online, s.v. “Anso, Cornelis Claesz (1592–1646),” by Karel Vos and Samuel J. Steiner, [https://gameo.org/index.php?title=Anso,_Cornelis_Claesz_\(1592-1646\)&oldid=165752](https://gameo.org/index.php?title=Anso,_Cornelis_Claesz_(1592-1646)&oldid=165752)
- ²³ In 1617 Cornelis Claesz Anso had accepted the call of his Waterlander congregation to become a preacher. He followed the footsteps of his father Claes Claesz Anso (1555–1632), who in 1616 had founded a home for elderly women from all religious backgrounds; the Anso Hofje as an institution still exists today, in a partly renovated and rebuilt setting at 1e Ege-lantiersdwarstraat 1–5, Amsterdam. In 1624 Cornelis was appointed minister in “full service,” allowing him to administer baptism and the Lord’s Supper.
- ²⁴ Dickey, *Rembrandt: Portraits*, 46.
- ²⁵ The baptismal records are included in the minutes of the church board, in the Stadsarchief Amsterdam (hereafter SAA), entry 1120: “Gemeente Bij de Toren (Waterlanders 1605–1668),” Inv. nr. 117: *Memoriael van de handelingen in de Gemeente – A*.” See also H. H. Knippenberg, *Reyer Anso zijn leven en letterkundig werk* (Amsterdam: E. van der Vecht, 1913), 15.
- ²⁶ Generally baptismal candidates were between 18 and 25 years old. SAA 1120, Inv. 117: on Dec. 17, 1632, Gerbrandt was baptized (fol. 57r), on Dec. 17, 1634, Aeltje (fol. 58v), on Dec. 16, 1635, Theuntje (fol. 59v), and on Mar. 13, 1639, Grietje, all four by senior pastor Reynier Wybrantsz; on Dec. 11, 1639, the baptism of Waijntje took place (fol. 65v), and on May 28, 1640, Lysbetje (fol. 66v), both by Denijs van der Schuere; on Dec. 16, 1640, Maritje (fol. 68r), and finally on Feb. 22, 1643, Hillegont, both by Jacob Cornelisz [van Dalen]. See also Knippenberg, *Reyer Anso*, 16–18.
- ²⁷ Dickey, *Rembrandt: Portraits*, 47.

- ²⁸ The marriage registrations at the Amsterdam City Hall are trackable through the indexes of the SAA database (<https://archieff.amsterdam>), which includes digitized sources. The marriages are also listed by Knippenberg, *Reyer Anslø*, 15–16. On Mar. 20, 1636, Gerbrandt Cornelisz Anslø's marriage was registered with the well-off Abigael Schouten from Weesp. On Feb. 3, 1637, followed the first marriage of Aeltje Cornelis Anslø to Guillebert Claes, who died at a young age; on Nov. 16, 1646, she entered a second marriage with the surgeon Josephus Drew (or Drewe), a former English Brownist refugee who in 1641 had become a preacher in Anslø's Waterlander church. On Nov. 12, 1637, Theuntje Cornelis Anslø registered her marriage with Jan Claesz Del from Weesp; on Jan. 9, 1641, Lysbetje (Elisabeth) Cornelis Anslø with Abraham Hennebo; and on Apr. 25, 1641, Wajntje Cornelis Anslø with Jacques Hennebo—both Doopsgezind Hennebos lived in Leiden and were involved in the cloth business. On Sept. 5, 1642, Maritje (Maria) Cornelis Anslø registered her marriage with Anselmus Hartsen, who was the shop assistant of Maritje's brother Gerbrandt. And finally, on Mar. 17, 1644, the first marriage was registered of Hillegont Anslø and Steffen Schellinger—however, the registration of her second marriage on July 25, 1659, with Michiel Hartogh, a bookseller, was inscribed in the records of the Dutch Reformed Church, indicating that she had likely left the Waterlander congregation. For the Leiden Hennebo family see Gerard Schelvis and Kees van der Vloed, *Jenever en wind: Leven, werk en wereld van Robert Hennebo (1686–1737)* (Hilversum: Verloren, 2008), 12–14.
- ²⁹ Knippenberg, *Reyer Anslø*, 15; *Nieuw Nederlandsch Biografisch Woordenboek* (hereafter *NNBW*; digitized version at <https://resources.huysgens.knaw.nl/retroboeken/nnbw/>), vol. 9, s.v. "Anslø, Gerbrandt," by H. F. Wijnman.
- ³⁰ Piet Calis, *Vondel: Het verhaal van zijn leven (1587–1679)* (Amsterdam: J. M. Meulenhoff, 2008) 86–87, 118–122.
- ³¹ Calis, *Vondel*, 200–204; Dickey, *Rembrandt: Portraits*, 59–61.
- ³² From Dickey, *Rembrandt: Portraits*, 57, 249, plate 61. Around the same time the Amsterdam printmaker and publisher Salomon Saverij (also a Waterlander Doopsgezind church member) distributed copies of the Rembrandt etching not only including the quatrain by Joost van den Vondel but also an eight-line Latin caption by the famous humanist scholar Caspar Barlaeus.
- ³³ *NNBW*, vol. 9, s.v. "Anslø, Gerbrandt"; Adri Offenbergh, *Menasseh ben Israel (1604–1657)* (Amsterdam: Menasseh ben Israel Instituut, 2011), 22. Gerbrandt Anslø privately sponsored the academic training of the esteemed Hebraist George Gentius. Some Latin translations by Gentius of the post-Talmudic writings of the famed rabbi Maimonides, including his *Mishneh Torah*, were dedicated to his *mæcenas* (benefactor) Anslø. Other Christian-Jewish studies contain dedications to Gerbrandt Anslø, written and translated by the German Orientalist Johann Stephan Rittangel, who had stayed in the Dutch Republic in 1641–1642 with the financial support of Anslø. Rittangel was a controversial member of the so-called Hartlib circle of Spiritualists and heterodox philosophers and theologians. See Ernestine G. E. van der Wall, "Johann Stephan Rittangel's Stay in the Dutch Republic (1641–1642)" in *Jewish-Christian Relations in the Seventeenth Century: Studies and Documents*, ed. Johannes van den Berg and Ernestine G. E. van der Wall (Dordrecht: Kluwer Academic Publishers, 1988), 119–134 (esp. 120–123). Noteworthy is also the Doopsgezind involvement with another project under supervision of Menasseh ben Israel after Gerbrandt's death, the 1646 publication of 4,000 copies

of a vocalized *Mishnah*, which was financed by four Waterlander merchants, including Arent Dircksz Bosch and Ameldonck Leeuw. However, this investment project became a total failure due to disappointing sales numbers. Francesco Quatrini, *Adam Boreel (1602–1665): A Collegiant’s Attempt to Reform Christianity* (Leiden: Brill, 2021), 65–68.

- ³⁴ Joost van den Vondel, *De Werken van Vondel: Volledige en Geïllustreerde Tekstuitgave in Tien Deelen*, ed. J. F. M. Sterck, 10 vols. (Amsterdam: Maatschappij voor Goede en Goedkoope Lectuur, 1927–1937), 3:485. In 1642, the couple built a beautiful mansion south of Weesp, at the crossing of three rivers, which therefore had the name of “Driemondt.” The house was sold by his widow in 1647, who the previous year had married Dr. Johannes Verlaen (1622–ca. 1668), by profession a surgeon as well as a minister of the Waterlander congregation “Near the Tower.” Verlaen was also a scholar of Arabic and Persian. *NNBW*, vol. 9, s.v. “Verlaen, Dr. Johannes,” by H. F. Wijnman.
- ³⁵ In 1993, I made a preliminary inventory of occasional poetry based on two collections of the Amsterdam University Library and the Provincial Library of Middelburg, covering the years 1678–1707, totalling 371 titles. At least 70% had been commissioned by Doopsgezind families (two-thirds were finely printed booklets with wedding poetry). The most productive author was the Doopsgezind poet and hymnwriter Anthony Jansen van der Goes (ca. 1625–1699); other favourite Doopsgezind poets included Claas Bruin, Jan Bredenburg, Adriaan Spinniker, and Pieter Langendijk. Piet Visser, “Anthony Janssen Gelegenheidsdichten (22-03-1678 t/m 23-04-1699)” (Amsterdam: Doopsgezinde Bibliotheek, 1993) and “Inhoudsoverzicht van twee convoluten met 185 gelegenheidsgedichten uit de jaren 1687–1707” (Amsterdam: Universiteitsbibliotheek, 1993)—two typescripts, available through the Doopsgezinde Bibliotheek, Allard Pierson, Amsterdam University. The Royal Library at The Hague holds the largest collection, with 4,000 titles; see database “Gelegenheidsdichten tot 1800”.
- ³⁶ See M. A. Schenkeveld-van der Dussen, “Christus, Hymenaeus of de ‘Teelzucht,’” in *In de boeken, met de geest: Vijftien studies van M. A. Schenkeveld-van der Dussen over vroegmoderne Nederlandse literatuur, uitgegeven bij haar afscheid als hoogleraar van de Universiteit Utrecht op 31 oktober 2002*, ed. A. J. Gelderblom et al., (Amsterdam: Amsterdam University Press, 2002), 61. Van Mander was likely inspired by a French source. *Aemulatio* was the artistic endeavour to exceed an example from antiquity or other origin. According to Dutch Renaissance art theory, young artists including painters and poets trained their technique and style skills in a three-stage process in order to exceed the artistic highlights and examples from antiquity in their contemporary art, including imitation (*imitatio*), translation and interpretation (*translatio*), and emulation (*aemulatio*). Jeroen Jansen, “Anders of beter: Emulatie in de renaissance literatuurtheorie,” *De zeventiende eeuw* 21 (2005): 181–195.
- ³⁷ Karel van Mander (1548–1606) belonged to the Old Flemish Mennonites. His *Schilder-boeck* (1604; Book on the art of painting) is a formative work for art theory, instructing young painters and poets how to apply classical subjects and themes. He also translated works from antiquity and humanist Italy into Dutch, like, for instance, works of Virgil from Latin, Homer’s *Iliad* from French, and Benzoni’s *Historia del mundo nuovo* (1565) from Italian. Also important was his study of Ovid’s *Metamorphosis*, which, again, served as a source of instruction for painters and poets on how to understand and apply

- classical imagery and symbolism. Apart from prose texts, including a translation from French of a tract by Dirck Philipsz (1602), he wrote some 270 Mennonite hymns, including biblical wedding hymns, which were collected in 1605 in a volume entitled *De Gulden Harpe* (The golden harp). See his biography and bibliography in Karel van Mander, *The Lives of the Illustrious Netherlandish and German Painters: Preceded by the Lineage, Circumstances and Place of Birth, Life and Works of Karel van Mander, Painter and Poet and likewise his Death and Burial*, ed. Hessel Miedema, vol. 2 (Doornspijk: Davaco, 1995): 11–168.
- ³⁸ P. E. L. Verkuyl, ed., *Karel van Mander Bethlehem dat is het Broodhuys* (Groningen: Wolters-Noordhoff, 1985). See p. 25 for Van Mander's pioneering role in this respect. The first edition was included in the hymnbook *Gulden Harpe* (1605), and a separate edition posthumously appeared in 1613, with reprints in 1626, 1627, 1640, 1643, 1656, and 1709.
- ³⁹ Schenkeveld-van der Dussen, "Christus," 59–74 (esp. 61–62).
- ⁴⁰ *Werken van Vondel*, 3:484.
- ⁴¹ Hymen was a young god, carrying a torch, who descended from the Helicon as soon as the evening star rose, in order to bring the bride to her bridegroom. Schenkeveld-van der Dussen, "Christus," 65–67. Of course, applying juxtaposition is also a matter of poetic gift, one of several style tools of the literary artist.
- ⁴² *Werken van Vondel*, 8:645–647; Schenkeveld-van der Dussen, "Christus," 67.
- ⁴³ Schenkeveld-van der Dussen, "Christus," 67–68.
- ⁴⁴ *Werken van Vondel*, 2:397; Schenkeveld-van der Dussen, "Christus," 74n30. Lambert Jacobsz was an artist of renown, in whose Leeuwarden workshop young artists were trained; among these artists were the Doopsgezind painters Jacob Backer and Govert Flinck.
- ⁴⁵ *Werken van Vondel*, 5:458–460.
- ⁴⁶ Schenkeveld-van der Dussen, "Christus," 67; *Werken van Vondel*, 10:667. Agnes was an independent and well-off woman, who was known far and wide for her botanical skills. Her nature and art collections at her country estate Vijverhof were marvelled at by many prominent guests. See Piet Visser and Mary S. Sprunger, *Menno Simons. Places, Portraits and Progeny*, trans. Gary K. Waite (Altona, MB: Friesens, 1996), 153.
- ⁴⁷ Anso Reyer, *Bruylofts-Eer-Gaef, Aen den Eersamen Abraham Hennebo, En d' Eerbaere Elisabet Cornelis Anso: In d' Echte versaemt den 3. Februarij 1641 In Amsterdam* (Amsterdam: Denijs Verschuere, 1641), A2r. Note that publisher Denijs Verschuere was also a preacher of Reyer's Waterlander congregation, who would baptize Reyer on Dec. 16, 1646. Knippenberg, *Reyer Anso*, 23.
- ⁴⁸ Reyer Anso, *Zangh Ter Bruyloft van Francois vander Schagen, Doctor der Medicyne, En Ryckje Anso: Getrouwt in Amsterdam den 27 in Lentemaendt* (Amsterdam: Denijs Verschuere, 1644).
- ⁴⁹ An alexandrine is a distinct type of verse with a metrical structure consisting of two half-lines of six syllables each, separated by a *caesura*, a metrical pause. The Dutch alexandrine, including six *jambes* (from Greek antiquity), is likely of French origin.
- ⁵⁰ The quarto-size booklet was published in Amsterdam by Abraham van Wees. The poem was dedicated to his headmaster at the Amsterdam Grammar School, Adrianus Junius. The poem is discussed as an example of Mennonite religious thought by Knippenberg, *Reyer Anso*, 56–63. In the introduction to

the second edition of Hans de Ries's martyrology, *Martelaers Spiegel der Werelose Christenen t'zedert Ao. 1524* (Haarlem: Hans Passchiers van Wesbusch, 1631), 33–34. There is an elaborate description of Stephen's martyrdom based on Acts 6:8–15 and 7:1–60. Also, the image at the top of the engraved title page depicts the stoning of Stephen.

⁵¹ See the modern text edition of Reyer Anslø, *Parysche Bruiloft Treurspel: Van inleiding en aantekeningen voorzien*, ed. H. H. Knippenberg (Zwolle: E. J. Tjeenk Willink, 1958).

⁵² Likely on purpose, and/or for the sake of commercial neutrality, Schabaelje's and Anslø's names were omitted from the introductions to the books. Knippenberg erroneously believed that the non-Dutch poems were also written by Anslø. For the unravelling of the puzzling Merian printing history in the Netherlands see Piet Visser, "Schabaliana II: Een tweede bibliografische naogst van het werk van Jan Philipsz Schabaelje," *Doopsgezinde Bijdragen* 48 (2022): 127–186 (esp.151–162).

⁵³ Matthaeus Merian, *Historiae Sacrae Veteris et Novi Testamenti: Bybelsche Figuren Vertoonende de Voornaemste Historien der Heylighen Schrifture* (Amsterdam: Nicolaes Visscher, ca. 1652), quarto-oblong edition, p. 213v–214r (text page LX, print nr. 60). The likely Doopsgezind twist is more striking when the Anslø version is compared with its German and English counterparts (on the same page). See also Knippenberg, *Reyer Anslø*, 51.

⁵⁴ C. Arnold Snyder, *Anabaptist History and Theology: An Introduction* (Kitchener, ON: Pandora Press, 1995), 211–215.

⁵⁵ Knippenberg, *Parysche*, 15–19. Jan Philipsz Schabaelje's fiancé, Judith Lubberts, who was a hymnologist, also became a convert to Roman Catholicism, as soon as she had been banned by the Alkmaar Waterlanders, around 1631. This phenomenon of seventeenth-century Dutch Doopsgezind conversos to the Church of Rome is worth further study, since several more cases can be detected in archival sources.

⁵⁶ See the listing of some one hundred pre-1800 writers in Piet Visser, "Aspects of Social Criticism and Cultural Assimilation: The Mennonite Image in Literature and Self-Criticism of Literary Mennonitism" in Hamilton, Voolstra, and Visser, *From Martyr to Muppy*, 82.

⁵⁷ Marijke Spies, "Mennonites and literature in the seventeenth century" in Hamilton, Voolstra, and Visser, *From Martyr to Muppy*, 96.

⁵⁸ Joachim Oudaan, *Uyt-breiding over het Boek Jobs: In verscheyde Dichtmaat* (Rotterdam: Isaac Naeranus, 1672), *5r. The literary examples which he felt challenged to emulate (ibid., *4v), had been the Neo-Latin *In librum Iob paraphrasis poetica* (Lyon, 1615), by the Portuguese poet Joannes Mellius de Sousa, and the *Sainctes Méditations . . . sur Job* (1609) in prose, by the French philosopher Guillaume du Vair. It should not come as a surprise that Oudaan, a life-long Collegiant, had found exegetic support in the Socinian analysis of Daniel de Breen, *Verklaring over het boek des. H. Jobs* (Amsterdam: Daniel Bakkamude, 1666); J. Melles, *Joachim Oudaan: Heraut der verdraagzaamheid, 1628–1692* (Utrecht: Kemink & Zoon, 1958), 81.

⁵⁹ Riet Schenkeveld-van der Dussen, *Een platina liedboek uit de Gouden Eeuw: Dirck Raphaelszoon Camphuysen, Remonstrant en Doopsgezind* (Amsterdam: Uitgeverij Meinema & Algemene Doopsgezinde Sociëteit, en de Remonstrantse Broederschap, 2012), 67–69.

⁶⁰ W. A. P. Smit, "Vondel en zijn bekering," *De Nieuwe Taalgids* 29 (1935): 254–267; quotation on 254–255. See also the relevant study of this conversion,

- Judith Pollmann, "Vondel's Religion," in *Joost van den Vondel (1587–1679): Dutch playwright in the Golden Age*, ed. Jan Bloemendal and Frans-Willem Korsten (Leiden: Brill, 2012), 85–100, (esp. 99–100).
- ⁶¹ The scholarly edition of his collected works includes ten volumes, a still valuable source; see n. 34.
- ⁶² For the relevance of Renaissance drama, its Horatian principles, and its function for the audience (*nut en vermaak*, usefulness and recreation), see Anna Sophia de Haas, "De wetten van het treurspel: Over ernstig toneel in Nederland, 1700–1772" (PhD diss., University of Amsterdam, 1997). See also Anna de Haas, *De wetten van het treurspel: Over ernstig toneel in Nederland, 1700–1772* (Hilversum: Verloren, 1998), 13–19.
- ⁶³ This Vondel section is mainly based on Eddy Grootes and Riet Schenkeveld-van der Dussen, "Vondel's Dramas: A Chronological Survey," in Bloemendal and Korsten, *Joost van den Vondel*, 1–6. The best survey of Vondel's biblical drama is supplied by Mieke B. Smits-Veldt, *Het Nederlandse renaissance-toneel* (Utrecht: HES Uitgevers, 1991), 75–100. Initially Vondel's early plays were performed in the so-called Chambers of Rhetoric; as of 1637 the newly built Amsterdamsche Schouwburg (Amsterdam Theatre) on Keizersgracht was the place to attract larger audiences for daily performances. On the occasion of its opening in January 1638, Vondel wrote a tragedy about a hero from the history of Amsterdam, *Gysbreght van Aemstel*. Since then, the performance of *Gysbreght* marked the Schouwburg's New Year festivities annually up until the roaring 1960s! Although Calvinist Reformed orthodoxy—unlike the Doopsgezinden—opposed the "worldly pleasures" of the performing arts, successive city governments practiced a more permissive policy, under the condition that all commercial revenues of the daily shows would be used to benefit the city's poor, including orphans and single senior citizens.
- ⁶⁴ W. A. P. Smit, *Van Pascha tot Noah: Een verkenning van Vondels drama's naar continuïteit en ontwikkeling in hun grondmotief en structuur*, 3 vols. (Zwolle: Uitgevers-Maatschappij W. E. J. Tjeenk Willink, 1956–1962), 1:46–51.
- ⁶⁵ Smit, *Van Pascha tot Noah*, 1:64–66.
- ⁶⁶ That same production year, 1620, Vondel also published an illustrated volume entitled *De Helden Godes des Ouwden Verbonds* (God's heroes of the 1d Covenant) including thirty-eight epic poems elucidating engraved portraits of Old Testament heroes by Crispijn van den Broek, from Adam to the apocryphal Judas Maccabaeus. In the instruction for the reader the author expresses the traditional Doopsgezind view that since Christ's death the shadows of the (Mosaic) Law have been set aside by the light of the Gospel. "When I see the fall of the first, earthly Adam, then I think of the other, heavenly [Adam], who consistent . . . with his justice and promise, has helped fallen mankind to its feet." *Werken van Vondel*, 2:309.
- ⁶⁷ The other two plays were *Gebroeders* (1640), about David and Saul (based on 2 Sam. 21:1–14), performed almost annually from 1641 to 1659, and *Peter en Pauwels* (1641), about the trial and martyrdom of Peter and Paul and the triumph of Christianity over Roman paganism. Although this latter drama was rather a Christian-historic than a biblical drama, it was considered Vondel's most Roman Catholic play. For reasons unknown it was never performed. See Grootes and Schenkeveld-van der Dussen, "Vondel's Dramas," 3; Smit, *Van Pascha tot Noah*, 1:265–302, 386–411.

- ⁶⁸ For the Doopsgezind theological theme of free will in Vondel's dramas, see J. W. H. Konst, *Determinatie en vrije wil in de Nederlandse tragedie van de zeventiende eeuw* (Amsterdam: Koninklijke Nederlandse Akademie van Wetenschappen, 2014), 17–21.
- ⁶⁹ Smits-Veldt, *Het Nederlandse*, 90–98; F. R. E. Blom, *Podium van Europa: creativiteit en ondernemen in de Amsterdamse Schouwburg van zeventiende eeuw* (Amsterdam: Em. Querido's Uitgeverij, 2021), 127–154. For his *Joseph in Dothan* drama, Vondel had been inspired by a moving painting depicting the mourning father Jacob, who received Joseph's robe dipped in the blood of a goat (Gen. 37:32–33). This scene had been painted in 1618 by the Doopsgezind artist Jan Pynas (now in the State Hermitage Museum, Saint Petersburg).
- ⁷⁰ Smits-Veldt, *Het Nederlandse*, 96–98; Smit, *Van Pascha tot Noah*, 2:240–379; Grootes and Schenkeveld-van der Dussen, "Vondel's Dramas," 4–5.
- ⁷¹ Smit, *Van Pascha tot Noah*, resp. 3:9–58, 59–111, 112–168, 346–431, and 507–568.
- ⁷² Grootes and Schenkeveld-van der Dussen, "Vondel's Dramas," 4–5; Smit, Smit, *Van Pascha tot Noah*, 2:54–180. Leendert F. Groenendijk, "De Nadere Reformatie en het toneel," *De Zeventiende Eeuw* 5 (1989): 141–153. This was actually not the first time that Vondel ran into trouble. At the beginning of his career, during the years 1609–1621, Vondel, like so many Doopsgezinden, sided with the Remonstrants (a separate branch of liberal Dutch Reformed) in their failed battle against Calvinist orthodoxy. This was not simply a matter of religious schism, but also of political controversy resulting in a brutal seizure of power by Prince Maurice of Orange, at the expense of his opponent, Johan van Oldenbarnevelt, the grand pensionary of state, who was executed. Vondel arranged this conflict into a Greek drama about Ulysses (Prince Maurice) and his opponent, *Palamedes, of vermoorde onnoselheydt* (1625) (*Palamedes, or killed innocence*). Vondel was given a heavy fine (compensated by his admirers), while the destruction of the printed copies of the play caused illegal presses to produce several new editions.
- ⁷³ Blom, *Podium van Europa*, 416–419; De Haas, *De wetten van het treurspel*, 221–226.
- ⁷⁴ Claas Bruin, *Verzameling der Overgeblevene Bybel- Zede- en Mengel Poëzy van den Beroemden Dichter Claas Bruin* [A collection of the remaining Bible, moral and miscellaneous poetry of the famous poet Claas Bruin] (Amsterdam: Gerrit Tielenburg, 1741). This collection was edited by Bruin's friend Simon Doekes, a wine merchant and poet. The quotations are from Doekes's preface and from the laudatory sonnet by Lucas Pater, resp. pp. *6r, and *8r. *NNBW*, vol. 6, s.v. "Bruin, Claas," by H. Brugmans. Since the early nineteenth century Bruin's literary star has faded. See, for instance, the section on Bruin in the authoritative Dutch literary history handbook by Jan te Winkel, *De Ontwikkelingsgang der Nederlandsche Letterkunde*, 2nd ed., vol. 3 (Haarlem: Erven F. Bohn, 1924), 54–57. The most recent study of Bruin's non-biblical dramas is Jan Konst, "De schuld is zwaar, de straf rechtmatig': Poëtische gerechtigheid in de niet-bijbelse treurspelen van Claas Bruin (1671–1732)," *Documentatieblad werkgroep Achttiende eeuw* 29 (1997): 141–153.
- ⁷⁵ There are two drawings (in pen and wash) of this church by the Doopsgezind artist Cornelis Pronk (1729). P. Biesboer "Catalogus," in *Pronk met Pen en Penseel: Cornelis Pronk (1691–1759) tekent Noord-Holland*, ed. L.

- Kooijmans, E. A. de Jong, and H. M. Brokken (Amsterdam: De Bataafsche Leeuw, 1997), nr. 10. Around 1730 they were engraved by Caspar Philips Jacobs.
- ⁷⁶ SAA, entry 1120: Church minutes “Near the Lamb and the Tower,” D (1683–1741), inv. nr. 175, p. 189: Apr. 21, 1701.
- ⁷⁷ Fix, *Prophecy and Reason*, 41–46, 84–113, 189–192. Claas Bruin composed a memorial poem for Galenus’s death (1706).
- ⁷⁸ Driedger, “Enlightenment in the Netherlands”; Jaap Brüsewitz, “‘Tot de aankweek van leeraren’: De predikantsopleidingen van de Doopsgezinden, ca. 1680–1811,” *Doopsgezinde Bijdragen* 11 (1985): 12–18.
- ⁷⁹ See his biography in Jan Wagenaar, *Amsterdam in zyne Opkomst, Aanwas, Geschiedenissen . . . en Regeeringe Beschreeven* (Amsterdam: Yntema & Tieboel, 1768), section 11, 393–394.
- ⁸⁰ These data are derived from the Short-Title Catalogue of the Netherlands (STCN) of the Royal Library, The Hague.
- ⁸¹ Barend Visscher ran a publishing house from 1687 until 1706. Before Bruin’s 1701 request was accepted to become a church member of the Lamist congregation, the church board first had to investigate some rumours about a conflict with this publisher, which, however, caused no delay.
- ⁸² Claas Bruin, *Ter Gedachtenisse, en Roem van Hollands Liefdadige . . . Collecte . . . voor de verdrevene Piemontoisen* (Amsterdam: Gerrit Bos, 1731). He further made occasional poems on a sudden storm (1703), a devastating flooding in the winter of 1717, and the ordination of an Amsterdam burgo-master (1718). Some twenty occasional poems have survived as separate prints; dozens and dozens more can be found in his volumes of collected poetry.
- ⁸³ Pieter Jan Klapwijk, “Topografie in literair perspectief,” in Kooijmans, De Jong, and Brokken, *Pronk met Pen en Penseel*, 135. Noteworthy is the relatively high number of eighteenth-century Doopsgezind art collectors, including families like, for instance, Bisschop, De Bosch, Brants, Feitama, De Haas, Van Halen, Ten Kate, Kops, Maarseveen, Van Mollem, De Neufville, Rutgers, Schoemaker, Stijl, etc. They seemed to have a preference for art on paper (drawings, etchings, etc.) instead of paintings. Michiel C. Plomp, *Hartstochtelijk Verzameld: 18de-eeuwse Hollandse verzamelaars van tekeningen en hun collecties* (Bussum: Uitgeverij Thoth, 2001), 63–64; Yme Kuiper and Harm Nijboer, “Between Frugality and Civility: Dutch Mennonites and Their Taste for the ‘World of Art’ in the Eighteenth Century,” *Journal of Mennonite Studies* 27 (2009): 75–92. Groundbreaking for the relationship of nature and Doopsgezind art and art-collecting is the study of Nina Schroeder, “‘Parks magnificent as paradise’: Nature and Visual Art among the Mennonites of the Early Modern Dutch Republic,” *Journal of Mennonite Studies* 35 (2017): 11–39.
- ⁸⁴ Jan Westerhoven Jr., a pastor from Haarlem, was the author of *Den Schepper Verheerlyckt in de Schepselen* (1685) (The Creator glorified in his creations), which had several reprints; Lambert Hermansz ten Kate, an Amsterdam pensioner by profession, scholar of linguistics, art theorist and art collector, wrote *Den Schepper en zyn Bestier te kennen in Zyne Schepselen: Volgens het Licht der Reden en Wiskonst* (1716) (How to discover the Creator and his Reign in his creations, according the Light of Reason and Mathematics). See Schroeder, “Nature and Visual Art,” 18–23; Klapwijk, “Topografie in literair perspectief,” 136.

- ⁸⁵ Remarkably enough, the books include several accounts of the former Roman Catholic, now Dutch Reformed churches that the company visited, but Bruin ignored the Doopsgezind worship places! Not only because the books aimed at a general audience, but likely also because those rather austere, hidden, barn-like buildings did not arouse great poetic enthusiasm. The only exception, in the *Noord-Hollandse Arkadia*, was the Doopsgezind church of De Rijk—not in the text, but in one of the fifty illustrations by Abraham Zeeman, opposite p. 78.
- ⁸⁶ Andries De Leth, ed., *De Zegepraalende Vecht: Vertoonende verscheide Gesichten van Lustplaatsen, Heeren Huysen en Dorpen . . . La Triomphante Riviere de Vecht, Remonstrant diverses Vuës des Lieux de Plaisances & Maisons Seigneurales & Villages* (Amsterdam: Wed. Nicolaus Visscher, 1719). Another specimen of an estate poem of some 160 pages was Bruin's *Lustplaats Soelen* (Amsterdam: Marten Schagen, 1723), in celebration of the country seat west of Amsterdam owned by the Lutheran confectioner Christoffel Beudeker. See Bert Gerlagh, "Het leven van Cornelis Prock," in Kooijmans, De Jong, Brokken, *Pronk met Pen en Penseel*, 49–50.
- ⁸⁷ Anthony van Hoek's modest *maecenas* role is indicated by Ludolph Smids's laudatory poem on Van Hoek in the preface of De Leth, *De Zegepraalende*, 9–10; also Bruin's *Speelreis* of 980 verse lines has a separate poetic dedication (in italics) in honour of Van Hoek, 19–23, while the number of six "Ouderhoek" scenes by Stopendaal exceeds the average number. Three times Van Hoek hosted Czar Peter the Great while he visited the Netherlands. See also Kees Smit, *Pieter Langendijk* (Hilversum: Verloren, 2000) 45–46.
- ⁸⁸ *Zedelyke mengel-dichten* (1707); *Aandachtige bespiegelingen* (1712); *Zeededichten*, vol. 1 (1713; 3 eds. in 1721, 1741 and 1742); *Zede-dichten*, vol. 2 (1726); *Uitbreiding, over honderd leerzaame zinnebeelden* (1722); *Aanmerkingen, op Otto van Veens Zinnebeelden der goddelyke liefde* (1726), and a posthumous poetry collection, *Verzameling der overgeblevene bybel-zedene mengelpoëzy* (1741).
- ⁸⁹ From the appendix ("Byvoegsel") of Claas Bruin, *Zededichten*, 2nd ed. (1721), 1:47–52, entitled "Het Recht Gebruik Der Poëzy, Aan De Dichters Deezer Eeuwe" (The right application of poetry, to the poets of this century), which he finished in 1719 (p. 48).
- ⁹⁰ Bruin, *Zededichten* (1721), 1:52.
- ⁹¹ Claas Bruin and W. R. A., *Bybelsche Tafereelen des Ouden en Nieuwen Testaments: Uitgebreid en Historisch beschreven . . . En Berymt* (Amsterdam: Erven J. Ratelband en Comp. & Hermanus Uytwerf, 1740). The volume contains 432 pages with a fancy titlepage in red. It has the plates of the earlier Danckertsz editions; cf. Wilco C. Poortman, *Bijbel en Prent* ('s-Gravenhage: Uitgeverij Boekencentrum, 1986), 85. The publishers had bought the manuscript from the heirs of the Amsterdam printer Pieter (II) Rotterdam, active 1714–1725, who had been unable to complete this project. Bruin's captions under the scenes count twenty-two alexandrines. The author of the accompanying prose texts on the opposite pages, W. R. A., cannot be identified.
- ⁹² This volume has an attractive title page, printed in red and black. It was intentionally marketed for art collectors—exactly the same volume also appeared under the different title *Jan Luikens Kunstafereelen der Eerste Christenen* (Jan Luykens's art scenes of the first Christians). It was published by the widow of Barend Visscher (see footnote 81), while her successors, sons Jan and Evert Visscher, were the authors of the preface. Bruin made the six-

- line captions, Langendijk the longer, opposing poems. See Smit, *Pieter Langendijk*, 191–193. Originally, Luyken had designed these prints for the two folio volumes of Gottfried Arnold's *Waare Afbeelding Der Eerste Christenen* (1700–1701). Nel Klaversma and Kiki Hannema, *Jan en Casper Luyken te boek gesteld: Catalogus van de boekencollectie Van Eeghen in het Amsterdams Historisch Museum* (Hilversum: Uitgeverij Verloren, 1999), nr. 813, cf. nrs. 63 and 64.
- ⁹³ The smaller Merian prints had been copied by Cornelis (II) Danckertsz in 1689 after French originals. Poortman, *Bijbel en Prent*, 68. However, eight were done by the presumably Doopsgezind female engraver, Anna Folkema. Anna de Haas, “Anna en Fopje Folkema, prentenmaaksters in de achttiende eeuw,” *De Boekenwereld* 29, no. 3 (2013): 22–27; “De kunstzinnige familie Folkema te Dokkum” [The artistic Folkema family in Dokkum], <https://www.hvnf.nl/2015/12/de-kunstzinnige-familie-folkema-te-dokkum/>. There are one hundred Old and fifty-five New Testament scenes, with the Bruin poetry (“edifying mirrors for the soul”) on the opposite pages.
- ⁹⁴ Originally Jan Luyken made these vignette designs in 1700; they were included in the famous print Bible published by Pieter Mortier. Klaversma and Hannema, *Jan en Casper Luyken*, nr. 306.
- ⁹⁵ See, for instance, A. M. L. Hajenius, *Dopers in de Domstad: Geschiedenis van de Doopsgezinde Gemeente Utrecht, 1639–1939* (Hilversum: Verloren, 2003), 261–263 (appendix 15), listing six Bruin titles between 1713 and 1815. Mainly the well-off urban congregations in other cities like Amsterdam, Haarlem, Harlingen, Leeuwarden, Leiden, Rotterdam, and those from the industry region along the Zaan River near Amsterdam employed this costly book reward system.
- ⁹⁶ The following section is based on Jan Konst, “‘De schuld is zwaar, de straf rechtmatig’ Poëtische gerechtigheid in de niet-bijbelse treurspelen van Claas Bruin (1671–1732),” *De achttiende eeuw* 29 (1997): 141–153. For French classicism as the dominant theory for Dutch drama, see De Haas, *De wetten van het treurspel*, 49–58, and *passim*.
- ⁹⁷ According to Pierre Corneille – together with Jean Racine one of the main inspirators of Dutch drama theory in the years ca. 1670–1730—the dramatist needed to achieve *pleine joie*, that is, “entire satisfaction/joy,” with his audience. Konst, “De schuld is zwaar,” 144–145.
- ⁹⁸ Claas Bruin, *De Grootmoedigheid van Epaminondas, Veldheer der Thebaanen* [The magnanimity of Epaminondas, general of the Thebans] (1722); Konst, “De schuld is zwaar,” 146–152.
- ⁹⁹ In the introduction of the drama, Bruin even describes the classical hero as a Christian model, demonstrating “Christian magnanimity,” from whom the modern “would-be Christians” should learn a lesson about righteousness. Konst, “De schuld is zwaar,” 150.
- ¹⁰⁰ Claas Bruin, *De Dood van Willem den Eersten, Prins van Oranje* (1721, 1726, 1746, and 1781). Bruin portrays William of Orange as the champion of freedom. Of course, freedom for the Dutch Republic, including religious toleration, was also relevant for the (relative) freedom experienced by the Dutch Mennonites and Doopsgezinden—though Bruin leaves this unmentioned in his play. For an analysis of this drama see L. Strenghtolt, “Een 18de-eeuws treurspel over de dood van Willem van Oranje,” *De Nieuwe Taalgids* 57 (1964): 378–392.

- ¹⁰¹ As far as biblical drama was concerned, contemporaries always simultaneously mentioned both playwrights: De Haas, *De wetten van het treurspel*, 228
- ¹⁰² From the preface of Claas Bruin, *Bybelsche Toonneelpoëzy* (Amsterdam: Marten Schagen, 1724), *5r. He subsequently expresses his criticism, even dismay, over the “general neglect and repudiation of this most precious gem, Scripture, this banquet for the soul, particularly in the literary scene, where the stinking, wicked dirt of poetic fornication nowadays seems to be the greatest attraction.” De Haas, *De wetten van het treurspel*, 226–228.
- ¹⁰³ J. A. Worp, *Geschiedenis van het drama en van het tooneel in Nederland*, vol. 2 (Rotterdam: Fa. Langerveld, repr. ca. 1972), 137; Konst, “De schuld is zwaar,” 141–142; De Haas, *De wetten van het treurspel*, 230.
- ¹⁰⁴ Bruin, *Bybelsche Toonneelpoëzy*, in the preface “to the modest reader,” *5v. Also in De Haas, *De wetten van het treurspel*, 228.
- ¹⁰⁵ De Haas, *De wetten van het treurspel*, 226.
- ¹⁰⁶ Claas Bruin, *Het Leven van den Apostel Paulus, in Dichtmaat Afgebeeld* [Life of the Apostle Paul, portrayed in metric rhyme] (1734). Schagen, also the editor of this volume, dedicated the book to their mutual friend, the Amsterdam art and book collector Warner Lulofs, a Doopsgezind wheat and dairy dealer who also owned several of Bruin’s manuscripts. J. Z. Kannegieter, *Geschiedenis van de vroegere Quakergemeenschap te Amsterdam 1656 tot begin negentiende eeuw* (Amsterdam: Scheltema & Holkema NV, 1971): 154–155.
- ¹⁰⁷ *NNBW*, vol. 5, s.v. “Langedult, Petrus,” by H. J. A. Ruys.
- ¹⁰⁸ Petrus Langedult, *Christus Lydende, en verheerlykt: Het allerheylsaamste Treur-spel* (Haarlem: Symon Swart, 1680; repr. 1684 and 1714), *2r–*8r; quotation on *7r. It is noteworthy that Claas Bruin in the introduction of his 1724 collection of Old Testament dramas (*Bybelsche Toonneelpoëzy*, *5v) copied from Langedult almost the same turn of phrase (*7r)! Cf. De Haas, “De wetten van het treurspel,” 227n34. No doubt Langedult’s Collegiant attitude of liberty and toleration played an important role when theological questions arose: he respected all sects and denominations and their views. Yet with regard to poetic form, his application of *reien*, conclusive choirs, was somewhat old-fashioned. On the other hand, it was most remarkable that he had rhymed the poetic *rei* texts to classical violin music of Italian origin, by composers like Gasparo Casati (21, 74), Giovanni Rovetta (76), Mario Capuana (132), Fra Sisto Reina (182), and Antonio Crosso (214).
- ¹⁰⁹ Karel Verlove, *Stéfanus Eerste Christen Bloedgetuyge* (Amsterdam: Jan ten Hoorn, 1688), p. A3r. The book has a frontispiece by Jan Luyken. *NNBW*, vol. 4., “Verloove, Karel,” by H. J. A. Ruys. Had he been inspired by the epic poem of Stephen’s stoning (1646) by Reyer Anslo (n. 50)?
- ¹¹⁰ See the examples of De Haas, *De wetten van het treurspel*, 231–232.
- ¹¹¹ A sonnet by Sybrand Feitama (1694–1758), entitled “Ter gedachtenis van den voortreffelyken Zededichter Claas Bruin” (In memory of the excellent moral poet Claas Bruin), in the appendix “Lyk-plichten” at the end of Bruin’s *Verzameling der overgeblevene Bybel- Zede- en Mengelpoëzy* (1741), 2D5v-6r. The poem is signed with the Feitama motto “Studio Fovetur Ingenium” (Intellect is cultivated by practice). Feitama was born and raised in a Doopsgezind family from Harlingen (Friesland). He soon moved to Amsterdam. After his theology study had failed, he became an apprentice of Claas Bruin; later in life he would gain renown as an art collector, a translator of French literature, and a prolific playwright of French classicist dramas. *NNBW*, vol. 1, “Feitama (Sybrand) Jr.,” by C. H. Ebbing Wubben.