REMBRANDT AND THE DUTCH CATHOLICS

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The Dutch Republic of the seventeenth century was a rich stew of religious groups,[1] including: the Reformed (Calvinist) Church, Remonstrants (Arminians), Mennonites (Anabaptists), Lutherans, Socinians, Collegiants, Quakers, Jews, and Catholics, among others. [2] But their encompassing cauldron, at times, heated up in fierce dissension, which led to discord not only between, but also within Protestant denominations.[3] One major clash of religious beliefs within the Reformed (Calvinist) Church, the official church of the Republic, led in 1619 to the expulsion of a splinter group, the Remonstrants, from its ranks.[4] The strict Calvinists of the Reformed Church declared the Remonstrants heretics, confiscated their property, and sent their ministers into exile-- among them Johannes Wtenbogaert, one of the founders of the Remonstrant church, portrayed in a painting and etching (1635) by Rembrandt.[5] Socinians, the "heretical" religious group from Poland who disavowed the Trinity and opposed the divinity of Christ, were also the object of religious repression in Holland. Anti-Trinitarianism gained followers in Holland, especially in the late 1640s and 1650s, when Polish and German Socinians came to Amsterdam to escape persecution. Soon a number of Socinian publications appeared in Dutch, and shortly thereafter other groups, such as the Collegiants and Mennonites, were strongly suspected of this anti-Trinitarian "sickness," which was called the most pernicious and "Jewish" of all Christian heresies.[6] The States of Holland restricted Collegiant meetings in Amsterdam for this reason in 1652 and 1654, but their gatherings resumed in full force in 1655.

Religious conflicts like these, however, diverted attention from a major religious minority in the Dutch Republic, the Catholics, who were nonetheless considered dangerously subversive from a religious as well as political perspective. Orthodox

members of the Reformed Church viewed Catholics as "idolatrous" heretics who corrupted the true faith and posed a threat as allies of the Dutch enemy, Catholic Spain.[7]

During the war with Spain, ca. 1578/79, the Calvinists (Reformed Church) confiscated Catholic churches and denuded them of all religious objects--paintings, sculpture, stained glass, and altars--in accordance with Calvinist proscriptions on religious imagery. While the Dutch Republic protected the Calvinist Reformed Church and paid the salaries of its ministers, Calvinism was not as powerful as other state religions in the early modern period. The Dutch were not required to become members of the church or attend services, as was the custom in Spain, where Roman Catholicism demanded religious conformity. This policy enabled other religions, including even Roman Catholicism, to continue to exist within the Dutch Republic, but within prescribed limits.

Catholic worship was officially outlawed in the Dutch Republic since 1581, although the injunction was not actually enforced by legal authorities. Yet the Reformed Church condemned Roman Catholicism in harsh edicts issued by church councils, and in vituperative sermons delivered from the pulpit. Catholic ceremonies, which focused upon the public worship of painted and sculpted images, were harshly condemned by the Reformed Church. In 1644 the Reformed consistory of Amsterdam entreated city officials to restrict Catholic worship and cleanse the city of "idolatry." Such church opposition, however, produced little result.[8] Priests dedicated to the Holland Mission (the Catholic Church in the Dutch Republic) still administered Roman rites to Catholics, who routinely gathered for worship in private houses. While their gathering places were anything but secret, Catholics made every effort to play down the existence of their so-called clandestine churches (*schuilkerken*). Those churches were hidden behind plain house facades. Despite these restrictions some of these buildings were quite grand in scale inside, such as the famous *schuilkerk, Ons' Lieve Heer op Solder* (Our Lord in the Attic), which still exists today as a museum in Amsterdam. Catholic congregants throughout the Dutch Republic were compelled to pay dearly for the privilege of worship by bribing local officials. Roman Catholicism nonetheless flourished throughout the seventeenth century. By 1635 Catholics numbered 14,000 in Amsterdam, with 56

schuilkerken, and by 1656 their numbers reached 30,000, comprising 20% of the city's inhabitants.[9] Two large Franciscan churches were situated near Rembrandt's house on Sint Antoniebreestraat, and by 1652 two thousand worshippers could assemble there.[10]

Rembrandt could not have been opposed to Roman Catholics, since some family members and his own painting masters, Jacob Isaacsz van Swanenburg and Pieter Lastman, were members of this religion. The artist had Catholic patrons like the naval architect, Jan Rijcksen, and his wife, for whom he painted a double portrait in 1633 (Buckingham Palace, London; Bredius 408). Roman Catholic preachers count among Rembrandt's admirers and collectors, including: the Utrecht canon Nicolaes Meyer; the French abbot Michel de Marolles; the German Benedictine Gabriel Bucelinus; and a deacon from Eindhoven, Joannes Crisostomus de Backer.[11] Rembrandt's religious prints would also have appealed to these collectors. Most interestingly, the Dutch artist produced religious subjects that treat traditional Catholic imagery, among them etchings: *Death of the Virgin* (Fig. 1; 1639, B. 99); *Virgin and Child in the Clouds* (Fig. 4; 1641, B. 61); and *Virgin with the Instruments of the Passion* (Fig. 6; 1652, B. 85). The study of these works offers insights concerning how Rembrandt may have navigated his way through varied religious groups and their differences in the Dutch Republic.

Rembrandt's most ambitious Roman Catholic subject is the large etching, *Death of the Virgin* (Fig. 1; 1639, etching, B. 99), which portrays Mary's good death, in the company of the apostles and others. The subject, not described in the Bible, instead derives chiefly from Jacobus da Voragine's thirteenth-century *Golden Legend*, which gives a full account of the miraculous events of Mary's painless death, and her final glorification through her bodily Assumption to Heaven (celebrated as a Catholic feast day August 15). [12] In the *Golden Legend*, ascribed to John the Evangelist, an angel came to Mary with a second annunciation that she would die soon. At the Virgin's request, the divine messenger arranged for the apostles to convene miraculously at her deathbed from wherever they were preaching in the world. St. John arrived first, followed by the other disciples, and "Jesus came with the ranks of the angels, the troop of the patriarchs, the host of the martyrs, the army of the confessors, and the choir of the virgins."[13]

In Rembrandt's formulation, the dying figure of Mary lies on a raised canopied bed, set at a slightly oblique angle.[14] Elderly, weary, and on the very threshold of death, she is surrounded by many men and women, including apostles. Some of the figures may be identified as Christ's disciples. The bearded old man, who performs an act of love and charity by adjusting the Virgin's pillow and wiping her mouth to comfort her, may be St. Paul, who is mentioned as present in the legend, and whose identification is reinforced by his famous advocacy of charity (1 Corinthians 13:13): "And now abideth faith, hope, charity, these three; but the greatest of these is charity." The young man with outstretched arms at the right must be John the Evangelist, the supposed author of this account and the youngest of the apostles. Arrayed in a tall, turban-like miter and priestly robes, St. Peter stands in contemplative attendance at Mary's bedside. Among the others present are: a tonsured acolyte holding a tall staff near Peter; a doctor who takes Mary's pulse; some women, who either grieve near the bed or gossip on the steps; a turbaned figure, who turns from reading a large book to gaze upon Mary; and two men at the right, who emerge from a parted curtain, one shrouded in darkness, the other bathed in light.

Unseen by the figures below, a glory of angels floats within billowing clouds in the upper reaches of the high bedchamber. The largest among them may be the heavenly messenger who announced and orchestrated her death.[15] He is present as "stage director," watching the scene below to make sure Mary has the ideal death she requested. Executed with unprecedented freedom, Rembrandt's swirling lines evoke the powerful celestial presence invading the room and offer a counterpoint to the precisely drawn forms in the earthly zone.[16]

Rembrandt's *Death of the Virgin* was influenced by a number of visual antecedents, among them, Dürer's woodcuts of the *Death of the Virgin* of 1510 (B. 93) and *The Birth of Mary* (B. 80) both from the series, *Life of the Virgin*, which Rembrandt may have owned, since he purchased Dürer prints in 1638.[17] Other sources are the stained-glass window of the *Death of the Virgin* from the Oude Kerk (Old Church) in Amsterdam, designed by Dirk Pietersz Crabeth;[18] and Philip Galle's engraving after Pieter Bruegel the Elder's grisaille of ca. 1564, *Death of the Virgin*.[19] Rembrandt adapted the priestly figure of St. Peter in a miter and the figure holding a tall standard from

Dürer's woodcut of the *Death of the Virgin*, and took from Crabeth the figure reading from a large tome in the foreground, as well as the clouds above the canopy. The angel who floats in a heavenly cloud and looks down upon the scene in Dürer's *Birth of Mary* is the model for Rembrandt's celestial messenger. Other elements in Rembrandt's etching are borrowed from Galle's print after Bruegel: the curtained right wall; the figure, in this case a woman, adjusting the Virgin's pillow; and the expansion of the number and variety of attendants at the bedside to include more than just the apostles. When compared with these other portrayals of Mary, Rembrandt's figure seems humble and weary.

While Rembrandt clearly drew upon a number of graphic sources to create his own formulation, his interpretation of the subject is unique in fundamental ways. Perhaps to render the subject less Roman Catholic, the artist avoided elements associated with rituals, such as the pail and aspergillum (for sprinkling oil on the dying figure), the crosses, and the candles. By contrast, St. Peter in Dürer's *Death of the Virgin* sprinkles Mary with the oil of unction, and another figure beside him assists by holding the pail with the oil. The pail and aspergillum, used for the Catholic rite of unction, also appear on the chest at the base of the bed in the Galle engraving after Bruegel.[20] Crosses and candles are especially prevalent in both the Dürer and the Galle versions, but Rembrandt, like Crabeth, avoided the cross. In other works of art as well Rembrandt avoided overtly Catholic elements. While he made a drawing after a print of Leonardo's *Last Supper*, Rembrandt did not portray that subject in his prints or paintings, perhaps because the subject was linked to the rite of the Roman Catholic Mass; for the same reason he did not include an altar in his etching of *The Circumcision: Small Plate* (1630, B. 48), and he omitted the chalice in *The Agony in the Garden* (1655/57, etching, B. 75).

Rembrandt, however, includes other elements in his etching of the *Death of the* Virgin that are unusual within the visual tradition. The tall staff held by the acolyte terminates in a snake-like form, reminiscent of the brazen serpent of Moses (cf. Numbers 21: 6-9). This type of rod is held by the Temple high priests in such etchings by Rembrandt as *The Circumcision: Small Plate* (1630, B. 48), *Christ Driving the Money Changers from the* Temple (Fig. 2; 1635, B. 69), and *Peter and John at the Temple Gate* (1659, etching, B. 94). It is also noteworthy that a figure hands a candle to the dying

Virgin in all the other prints of the *Death of the Virgin* discussed here, but not in Rembrandt's interpretation of Mary's death. Perhaps the Dutch artist was aware of Protestant antipathy to the use of candles in funerals. Calvinists in 1645 bitterly complained that tapers were employed for obsequies, and warned of the dangers of falling into habits of "popery."[21]

Rembrandt's interpretation especially stresses the significance of the deathbed scene, as Christian Tümpel has suggested.[22] Mary's ideal departure from life would easily serve as a model of a good death for Roman Catholics and Protestants alike. Images directly associated with the *ars moriendi* tradition (the art of dying well), such as the fifteenth-century German print by the Master E.S., *Final Triumph over all Temptations*, offer a model of a good death by showing a dying man meditating on a crucifix and holding a taper in his hand.[23] While Rembrandt's image of the Virgin's death includes neither a cross nor a candle, Galle's print after Bruegel shows both, with Mary gazing at a crucifix propped up at the base of the bed. Protestant catalogs of martyrs, funeral sermons, and spiritual biographies all placed great emphasis upon the good death as the culmination of an exemplary Christian life. As advocated by Johannes Boekholts, and other Dutch Pietists, Christians were warned to ruminate upon death throughout life and to remember that a good Christian life goes hand in hand with a good death.[24] These Pietists were part of the *Nadere Reformatie* (Later Reformation), which sought to elevate the morals of society through religious reform. Another aspect of this thanatology involves the benefits of properly witnessing death, as a consolation to the bereaved and as a necessary contemplation for the living.[25]

Rembrandt expressly evokes the power of witnessing death in his etching of the Virgin's demise. He presents Mary's deathbed scene as an arena of faith, which severely tests the religious beliefs of its witnesses. The overarching theme of faith is inferred in the print by the "brazen serpent," which relates to an Old Testament trial of faith, when Moses held up the staff to his people, and those who gazed upon it were healed, the others condemned to death (Numbers 21: 6-9). The tonsured male who upholds the rod looks like a *klopje broeder*, a contemporary Dutch Catholic priest who administered the sacraments to his people. Gathered about the Virgin, the figures in Rembrandt's etching

display a diversity of reactions. The doctor is merely pragmatic in taking her pulse to determine the moment of death. Some women weep at the bedside, but the two women on the steps are focused more on conversing among themselves than on Mary. The bearded man, perhaps St. Paul, responds with tender solicitation. A model of piety, St. Peter stands at the bedside in a state of deep contemplation. His engagement with death is echoed on a different level by the turbaned scholar in the foreground, who momentarily sets aside his reading glasses and his study of Scripture to witness this significant death in person as a revelation.

This figure with a large book before him recalls Rembrandt's Temple scholars in earlier works like *The Repentant Judas Returning the Thirty Pieces of Silver to the Chief Priests and Elders* (1629, oil, Bred. 539a) and *Christ Disputing with the Doctors: Small Plate* (1630, etching, B. 66). Perhaps Rembrandt's scholar in *Death of the Virgin* was intended to evoke Judaism and its emphasis upon the Law of the Old Testament. In another work by Rembrandt, *The Holy Family*, Mary's Jewish mother also removes her glasses to turn away from the Bible to contemplate, in this case, the actuality of the infant Christ (1640, oil, Paris, Louvre, Bred. 563). The two figures who emerge from the curtain at the right in Rembrandt's *Death of the Virgin* may also invoke Judaism; the turbaned figure in the light may be a Jew undergoing conversion to Christianity, while the unhappy man in darkness, wearing an eastern European fur hat, may still be an "unenlightened" Jew.

The most moving witness in Rembrandt's *Death of the Virgin*, however, is St. John, whose outstretched gesture conveys his intense engagement with Mary's death and the Crucifixion. In the moment of Christ's death, Jesus instructed John to take good care of his mother, so the apostle's personal involvement with her is grounded in this event (John 19:26-27). John's open arms in the *Death of the Virgin* also anticipate his passionate response to Christ's death in Rembrandt's late etching, *Three Crosses*, where the grieving disciple stands to the right of the Cross, his arms mirroring the crucified Christ (Fig. 3; B. 78, IV).

Rembrandt also invites the beholder to become a witness to Mary's death. The empty chair in the lower right, later darkened with drypoint, and the unencumbered, light-

filled pathway leading to the foot of the bed, together invite the viewer to enter this space and contemplate her pious death.

A popular print that went through multiple printings during Rembrandt's lifetime, the *Death of the Virgin* is more inclusive than exclusive in its appeal. It offers an ecumenical reading of a traditional Catholic subject by including all types of figures, in addition to the tonsured priest. Perhaps to accommodate Protestants, it downplays ritual and avoids the Catholic glorification of Mary by portraying her as tired and humble.[26] More importantly, Rembrandt presents the deathbed scene as a trial of faith, which tests the witnesses' beliefs in Christ's redemption of humankind.[27]

Another traditional Catholic subject by Rembrandt, *Virgin and Child in the Clouds* portrays Mary as a coarse-featured, humble mother, who firmly cradles her child within her clasped hands (Fig. 4; 1641, etching, B. 61). Her withdrawn, melancholic mood strikes a counterpoint to the serene and contented Christ child, who lies comfortably within a nest of voluminous drapery on her lap. He looks tenderly out of the print to make eye contact with the beholder; his knowing gaze seems to reassure the viewer that he is the hoped-for savior. With her head tilted to one side in a reverie of sadness, Mary rests her weighty body on a bank of dark, stormy clouds evoking, perhaps, the turmoil of the Passion. The cloud supporting her seems as solid as a mound of earth, but assumes a menacing shape at the right, where it fills the space left empty by her positioning to the left of center.

This subject, which traditionally glorifies Mary as Queen of Heaven by showing her in the clouds, could reasonably be construed as Catholic, since this type of devotional imagery was extremely popular among Roman Catholics.[28] Such prints routinely served as aides for meditations and prayers directed to the Virgin, and may also allude in a more indirect manner to the popular Roman Catholic themes of Mary's Assumption and the Immaculate Conception. Surely this type of subject matter would have been very appealing to Catholics. Yet what would Protestants think of such a subject, especially as portrayed by Rembrandt? Calvin's position on Mary offers the key to addressing this question.

The Swiss reformer clearly emphasized Mary's humility in his discussions of two episodes from the Virgin's life: the Annunciation, in which Gabriel greets Mary and announces she will conceive the savior (Luke 1:30-38); and the Visitation, when Elizabeth, with John the Baptist still in her womb, comes to visit her pregnant cousin Mary and praises her "above all women" (Luke 1: 43-48).[29] Calvin emphasized that the Virgin found divine favor not because of merit, but because of God's grace. Mary deserves praise because she yielded to God's plan in faith and declared herself to be nothing. The reformer makes it clear that the Virgin was lowly, though chosen by God, and should not be honored as queen, above Christ, which was an abuse committed by Roman Catholics (1: 48). He also despised the Roman Catholic Hail Mary prayers of Marian worship, whose words derived from Gabriel's greeting of the Virgin during the Annunciation; this may explain why Rembrandt also avoided this subject in his religious prints and paintings.

Despite a Protestant reluctance to exalt Mary, certain aspects of the artist's interpretation suggest this image might have been suitable for Protestants as well as Catholics. This point may be best explored by comparing Rembrandt's print with an etching of the same subject by the Italian artist, Federico Barocci, (Fig. 5; ca. 1570-80, B. 2), which plainly influenced the Dutch artist.[30]

Barocci portrays Mary as an elegant queen of heaven, proudly holding her beautiful son, who sweetly offers a gesture of blessing to the beholder. Gracefully floating on a billowing, white cloud, the Virgin is positioned high in the composition, her lovely head encircled by bright haloes and long rays of light that encompass nearly half the print. Rembrandt's figure of Mary, on the other hand, is stocky and earthy, and occupies the lower part of the etching. Her extreme lowliness and humility are wholly consistent with Calvin's description of Mary's nature. While she appears before a light sky, Christ's mother has no obvious haloes about her head.[31] A cherubic head, drawn earlier on the plate, is still visible in the print, where it appears upside down, nearly obscured by the hatching on the Virgin's knee.[32] Rembrandt must have begun with the idea of including cherubs, as in the Barocci print, but then changed his mind and turned the plate around. Interestingly enough, long rays of divine light emanate from Christ's head. One is

reminded here of Calvin's interdiction regarding the elevation of Mary above Christ. In Rembrandt's etching Jesus alone glows with intense divine light in the form of long rays emanating from him.

While Barocci's Mary is ebullient, Rembrandt's is mournful. In emphasizing her sadness, the Dutch artist effectively downplays her exaltation, focusing instead on the Virgin's grief, prophesied by Simeon in Christ's Presentation in the Temple.[33] The elderly Simeon in this biblical event informed Mary: "Yes, a sword will pierce through your own soul also, that the thoughts of many hearts may be revealed." (Luke 2: 35) By emphasizing Mary's suffering, the artist underscored the role of prophetic fulfillment in *The Virgin and Child in the Clouds*. This is typical of Rembrandt's approach to the Bible in general.[34] The artist frequently adduces the role of prophecy, by tying together different Scriptural moments into a cohesive narrative. In this particular instance he connects the subject of the Virgin and Child in the Clouds, which is not biblical, with an earlier Scriptural episode that occupied his attention over the course of his entire career, The Presentation of Christ in the Temple.

Another etching that may be ostensibly associated with Catholic imagery is Rembrandt's *Virgin with the Instruments of the Passion* (Fig. 6; 1652, etching, B. 85), a work that has not been much exhibited or discussed.[35] The morose figure of Mary appears half-length before a stone ledge, where the nails, crown of thorns, and a cloth of the crucifixion are set before her.[36] Lines of drypoint add weight to the folds of the Virgin's veil and darken the shadows, adding expressive as well as physical heaviness to the image. With its cracks, crevices, and bits of foliage, the stone wall behind her suggests a cave-like, tomb setting. Her left hand pathetically fingers the cloth before her, but her right hand is raised in horror as she reacts to the wrenching scene she witnesses at the right, beyond the limits of the print. The beholder cannot see, but can only imagine what Mary sees at this moment.

The presence of the relics of the Passion in this print may, at first glance, suggest an exclusively Catholic clientele for this work, since Roman Catholics worshipped relics, and Protestants bitterly condemned their use. Calvin wrote a treatise on relics, in which he berated the honoring and accumulation of relics as superstitious, idolatrous, and

conducive to fraud.[37] Those who seek to acquire relics, he said, neglect to possess Christ in spirit.

While Rembrandt's etching could be understood as affirming the role of relics in religious devotion, the print also lends itself to an alternative reading, closer in spirit to Calvin. Rembrandt's grieving Virgin lacks a halo and does not worship the relics before her, since her attention is riveted on the scene at the right.[38] As argued by Arthur Wheelock, this figure strongly resembles a Mater Dolorosa (Mother of Sorrows), as in Rembrandt's later painting, *Virgin of Sorrows* of 1661 (Epinal, France, Musée des Vosges, Bred. 397).[39] The etching's tomb-like setting also suggests that the image is a vignette extracted from a larger scene of Christ's Entombment. Interestingly, Mary in the etching resembles the mourning figure of the Virgin, seated in the lower right of the sepulchral cave in Rembrandt's *Entombment of Christ*, executed for the Passion series of Frederik Hendrik (1639, canvas, Munich, Alte Pinakothek, Bred. 560).[40] Mary, in essence, stands apart from the central scene of the entombment in the print, absorbed in her own private grief, much like the Virgin, St. John, and the two Marys on the foreground hillside in Pieter Bruegel the Elder's *The Procession to Calvary* (signed and dated 1564, panel, Vienna, Kunsthistorisches Museum).[41] As a fragment or extract of a larger biblical narrative, Rembrandt's etching anticipates his later painting, *The Condemnation of Haman* (1660, St. Petersburg, Hermitage, Bred. 531), where only three figures, shown up close, suggest a narrative context that is ambiguous. This same emotive, single-figure condensation already lay at the heart of many late medieval *Andachtsbilder* (devotional images), such as the Man of Sorrows, excerpted as well from the Passion narrative.[42]

Though most of Rembrandt's religious prints went to unknown destinations, Rembrandt's documented patrons include Calvinists, Remonstrants, Quakers, Mennonites (including Waterlander Mennonites), Jews, as well as Catholics. Reconciling their own theological differences and conflicts would never have been possible for any artist, but over the course of a career Rembrandt produced images that evaded or compromised contested matters. In the artist's interpretations of such typical Catholic subjects as *Death of the Virgin* (Fig. 1); *Virgin and Christ Child in the Clouds* (Fig. 4); and *Virgin Mary*

with the Instruments of the Passion (Fig. 6), Rembrandt re-conceptualized the iconography of these works, making them palatable to Protestants as well as Roman Catholics. Such alterations may have been done to invoke ecumenical ideals, but also to make his prints marketable within the pluralistic, religious society of the Dutch Republic.

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Figure 1: Rembrandt, *Death of the Virgin*, 1639, etching, 39.3 x 31.3 cm. B. 99.

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Figure 3: Rembrandt, *Three Crosses*, ca. 1653-55, drypoint, 38.4 x 45 cm. B.78, fourth state.

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Figure 6: Rembrandt, *Virgin Mary with the Instruments of the Passion*, 1652, etching, 11 x 8.9 cm. B. 85. Munich, Alte Pinakothek, Bayerische Staatsgemäldesammlungen.

Notes

[1] This article is extracted from the book-length study, Shelley Perlove and Larry Silver, *Rembrandt's Faith: Church and Temple in the Dutch Golden Age* (University Park, Penn State University Press), scheduled for publication September 2008. *Rembrandt's Faith* is the first book-length, art historical study exclusively devoted to Rembrandt's religious imagery from his entire career, in all media. The more than two hundred works of art discussed in this book are arranged by subject matter to demonstrate Rembrandt's varied interpretations of religious narratives over time. It is well known that the artist drew upon a wide range of graphic material from the sixteenth and seventeenth centuries in his paintings, drawings and prints, but in every instance, he brought remarkable, new ideas to these religious interpretations. Rembrandt's innovations within this tradition are the very springboard of this close, extensive analysis that places these works within the rich cultural and political context of the Dutch Golden Age.

[2] Giovanni Battista Stoppa noted the following Christian sects in the Dutch Republic in 1673: Reformed, Roman Catholic, Lutheran, Brownists, Independents, Arminians, Anabaptists, Socinians, Arrians, Enthusiasts, Quakers, Borellists, Muscovites, Libertines, and others. See Giovanni Battista Stoppa, *The Religion of the Dutch represented in several letters from a Protestant Officer in the French army, to a pastor, and professor of divinity, at Berne in Swisserland,* 2nd ed., trans. J.D. Kidwelly (London: printed for Samuel Heyrick, 1681), 14.

[3] Joke Spaans claims there was little violent religious conflict in the Dutch Republic after the Reformation. See Joke Spaans, "Violent Dreams, Peaceful Coexistence: On the Absence of Religious Violence in the Dutch Republic," *De Zeventiende Eeuw* 18 (2003): 157, also Judith Pollmann, "The Bond of Christian Piety: The Individual Practice of Tolerance and Intolerance in the Dutch Republic," in *Calvinism and Religious Toleration in the Dutch Golden Age,* ed. Ronnie Po-Chia Hsia and Henk Van Nierop (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 2002), 57.

[4] The religious conflict between the Remonstrants, a group within the Calvinist Reformed Church that challenged the doctrine of Predestination led to their expulsion from the Reformed Church at the Synod of Dordrecht (Dort) in 1618/19. For the Synod of Dordrecht (Dort), 1618-19, see Jonathan Israel, *The Dutch Republic. Its Rise, Greatness, and Fall 1477-1806* (Oxford: Clarendon Press, 1995), 460-61.

[5] On the portraits, Perlove and Silver, *Rembrandt's Faith*, and Stephanie Dickey, *Rembrandt: Portraits in Print.* (Amsterdam; Philadelphia: John Benjamins Publishing Company, 2004), 35-42.

[6] Jonathan Israel, *Republic*, 911, citing A. Eekhof, *De theologische faculteit te Leiden in de 17e eeuw*, Utrecht, 1921, 65, 249**.**

[7] For Catholics in the Dutch Republic: Christine Kooi, "A Serpent in the Bosom of our Dear Fatherland: Reformed Reaction to the Holland Mission in the Seventeenth Century," in *The Low Countries as a Crossroads of Religious Beliefs,* ed. Arie-Jan Gelderblom, Jan L. De Jong, Marc Van Vaeck (Leiden: Brill, 2004), 165-76; Arie van Deursen, "Church and City Government in Amsterdam," in *Rome, Amsterdam: Two Growing Cities in Seventeenth-Century Europe,* ed. Peter van Kessel and Elisja Schulte (Amsterdam: Amsterdam University Press, 1997), 174-5.

[8] The Regents preferred to have peace in religion, Deursen, "Church and City Government in Amsterdam," 175-79.

[9] Israel, *Dutch Republic*, 378 and 640.

[10] Valerie Hedquist, "Rembrandt and the Franciscans of Amsterdam," *Dutch Crossing: A Journal of Low Country Studies* Summer (1994): 20-49.

[11] Gary Schwartz, *The Rembrandt Book* (New York: Abrams, 2006), 191.

[12] Jacobus de Voragine, *The Golden Legend*, trans. Granger Ryan and Helmut Ripperger (New York: Arno Press, 1969), 449-65.

[13] Jacobus da Voragine, *The Golden Legend*, 451.

[14] Colin Campbell notes that Rembrandt started an earlier version of the *Death of the Virgin* by drawing an angel's wings on a plate that he later used for the *Three Trees* of 1643 (B. 212). Colin Campbell, "Rembrandts etsen *Het sterfbed van Maria* en *De drie bomen," De Kroniek van het Rembrandthuis* 32 (1980): 10-12, 23-29.

[15] This angel is identified as the one who announces the Virgin's death, catalogue entry by Marijn Schapelhouman, in Erik Hinterding, Ger Luijten and Martin Royalton-Kisch, *Rembrandt the Printmaker*, exh. cat. (London: British Museum Press, 2000), 162.

[16] Christopher White, *Rembrandt as an Etcher. A Study of the Artist at Work*, 2nd ed. (New Haven: Yale University Press, 1999), 41.

[17] Campbell, "Rembrandts etsen *Het sterfbed van Maria* en *De drie bomen*," 4-5. Rembrandt bought Dürer prints at an auction at an estate sale on 9 February 1638, Walter L. Strauss and others, *The Rembrandt Documents* (New York: Abaris Books, 1979), no. 1638/2. Another possible influence was Martin Schongauer's engraving, *Death of the Virgin* (ca. 1475, B. 33), which had a great impact on Dürer's woodcut of the same subject.

[18] Dürer's woodcut of the *Birth of Mary*, and Crabeth's preparatory drawing for the window, preserved in the Rijksmuseum, are reproduced in White, *Rembrandt as an Etcher*, 43.

[19] Peter Van der Coelen recently did a similar comparison, after we had done ours; see Peter Van der Coelen, *Rembrandts passie*, exh. cat. (Rotterdam: Museum Boijmans Van Beuningen, 2006), 172-74, nos.97-99. For an excellent study of Bruegel's *Death of the Virgin*, which does not consider Rembrandt's interpretation, Walter Melion, "*'Ego enim quasi obdormivi'*: Salvation and Blessed Sleep in Philip Galle's *Death of the Virgin* after Pieter Bruegel," *Nederlands Kunsthistorisch Jaarboek* 47 (1996): 14-53.

[20] Melion, "'Ego enim quasi obdormivi'," 17.

[21] Kooi, "A Serpent in the Bosom of our Dear Fatherland," 171-73.

[22] Christian Tümpel and Astrid Tümpel, *Rembrandt legt die Bibel aus*, exh. cat. (Berlin: Kupferstichkabinett der Staatlichen Museen Preussischer Kulturbesitz, 1970), no. 127.

[23] For a reproduction of this print and a discussion of the *ars moriendi* and Bernini's Blessed Ludovica Albertoni, Shelley Perlove, *Bernini and the Idealization of Death. The Blessed Ludovica Albertoni and the Altieri Chapel* (University Park: The Pennsylvania State University Press, 1990), 48-49, 80 nn. 26, pl. 48. The most exhaustive study of the *ars moriendi* tradition is Clifton Olds, "Ars moriendi: a study of the form and content of fifteenth-century illustrations of the art of dying" (Ph.D. dissertation, University of Pennsylvania, 1966).

[24] Johannes Boekholts was the author of *Den weg des levens door de overdenkinge des doots* (The way of life for the reflection on death), which appeared in 1688 (reprint *uit het gereformeerd Piëtisme*, Amsterdam). Other Dutch Pietists who focused upon the good death include: Henricus van Rijp, Guiljelmus Saldenus, Florentius Costerus, and Jacob Jansz Graswinckel, among others. These Pietists were allied with the *Nadere Reformatie* movement, which sought to use religion to reform society. For an excellent discussion of the good death in Dutch Protestant culture, John Exalto, *Gereformeerde heiligen. De religeuze exempeltraditie in vroegmodern Nederland* (Nijmegen: Vantilt, 2005), 187-90.

[25] Exalto, *Gereformeerde heiligen*, 88.

[26] An eighteenth-century French author and collector, Dezallier d' Argenville, referred to the figure of Mary in this print as St. Anne, Schapelhouman in Hinterding and others, *Rembrandt the Printmaker*, 164.

[27] Schapelhouman in Hinterding also doubts that the etching was designed solely for Catholics. Hinterding and others, *Rembrandt the Printmaker,* 162.

[28] Walter Melion has done pioneering work on the devotional function of images of the Virgin. Among his many publications, in addition to the study of Galle's *Death of the Virgin* engraving, cited above (n. 19): *The Art of Vision in Jerome Nadal's "Adnotationes et meditations in Evangelia,"* volume 1 of *Jerome Nadal, "Annotations and Meditations on the Liturgical Gospels,"* translated by F. Homann (Philadelphia: Saint Joseph's University Press, 2003); "Piety and Pictorial Manner in Hendrick Golzius's *Early Life of the Virgin,"* in G. Harcourt, ed., *Hendrick Goltzius and the Classical Tradition* [exh.cat., Fisher Gallery, University of. Southern California, Los Angeles] (Los Angeles, 1992): 44-51.

[29] John Calvin, *Commentary on a Harmony of the Evangelists, Matthew, Mark, and Luke*, vol. 1, trans. William Pringel (Edinburgh: Calvin Translation Society, 1845), 34-47, 49-55.

[30] Rembrandt owned etchings by Barocci. Ben Broos establishes the Barocci print as a source, but also mentions Dürer's *Madonna on the Crescent Moon* on the title page of *Life of the Virgin*, and a print by Jan van de Velde after a design by Willem Buytewech, *Index to Formal Sources of Rembrandt's Art* (Maarsen: Schwartz Publications, 1977), 75-76.

[31] There are some lightly etched lines about her head suggesting rays of light, but they are not very obvious, as in Barocci's print.

[32] This cherubic head is rightly referred to as a "false start," Erik Hinterding and others, *Rembrandt the Printmaker,* 193.

[33] Late medieval devotions featured a focus on the Seven Sorrows of the Virgin; see Carole Schuler, "The Seven Sorrows of the Virgin: Popular Culture and Cultic Imagery in Pre-Reformation Europe," *Simiolus* 21 (1992): 5-28.

[34] As revealed in Perlove and Silver, *Rembrandt's Faith*, forthcoming.

[35] See discussion of this print in Julia Lloyd Williams, *Rembrandt's Women*, exh. cat. (Edinburgh: National Gallery, 2001), 200.

[36] In describing this etching in 1796, Daniel Daulby stated that Mary muses over the "memorials of our Lord's passion." See Daniel Daulby, *A Descriptive Catalogue of the Works of Rembrandt, and of his Scholars Bol, Livens, and Van Vliet* … (Liverpool: J.M. Creery, 1796), 65.

[37] John Calvin, *A Treatise on Relics or The Miraculous Images, as well as other superstitions of the Roman Catholic and Russo-Greek Churches,* trans. Valerian Krasincki (Edinburgh: Johnstone and Hunter, 1854), 217-19.

[38] Rembrandt's etching is very different from Lucas van Leyden's woodcut of ca. 1520, *The Virgin with the Rosary*, which shows Mary with a large halo about her head, standing in an apse-like interior, with rosary beads on the ledge before her.

[39] Arthur Wheelock, *Rembrandt's Late Religious Portraits*, exh. cat. (Washington D.C.: National Gallery of Art, 2005), 118-19.

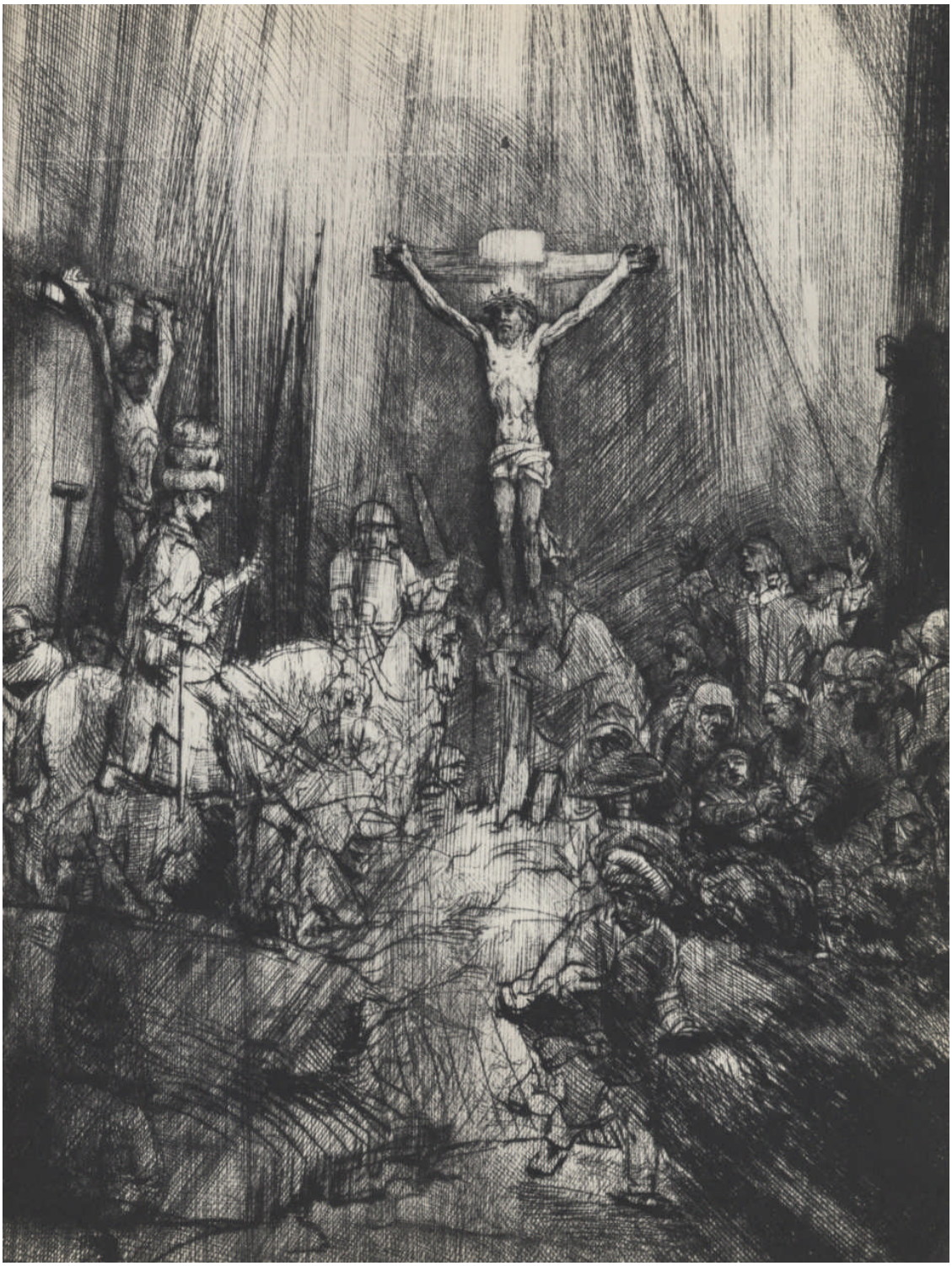
[40] Two Rembrandt drawings are connected with the painting of the Entombment, Benesch 152 and 153. The former shows isolated, veiled, grieving women, Josua Bruyn and others, *A Corpus of Rembrandt Paintings,* vol. 1. (The Hague: Nijhoff, 1982-89), 276, notes 5 and 6. Benesch 152 is illustrated in Gary Schwartz, *Rembrandt, his Life, his Paintings* (London: Viking, 1985), 114.

[41] Illustrated in Wolfgang Stechow, *Pieter Bruegel the Elder* (New York: Harry N. Abrams, 1990), 79.

[42] The classic study of the Man of Sorrows is Erwin Panofsky, "'Imago Pietatis': Ein Beitrag zur Typen-geschichte des "Schmerzensmanns' und der "Maria Mediatrix'," in *Festschrift für Max. J. Friedländer zum 60. Geburtstag* (Leipzig: Seeman, 1927), 261-308; more generally on the subject of *Andachtsbilder*, Sixten Ringbom, "The Devotional Image," in *Icon to Narrative: The Rise of the Dramatic Close-up in Fifteenth-Century Devotional Painting*, 2nd ed. (Doornspijk: Davaco, 1984).

Perlove/Silver, Fig. 1

Perlove/Silver, Fig. 2



Perlove/Silver, Fig. 3

Perlove/Silver, Fig. 4

Perlove/Silver, Fig. 5

Perlove/Silver, Fig. 6