



Joke Spaans, ***Graphic Satire and Religious Change: The Dutch Republic, 1676-1707*** (Brill's Series in Church History 53, Religious History and Culture Series 5; Leiden, Boston: Brill, 2011, xii + 288 pp., ISBN 978 90 04 20669 4).

In *Graphic Satire and Religious Change* Joke Spaans examines the relationship between religious culture and the religious image during a period of secular and spiritual upheaval. The setting for her analysis is the Dutch Republic from the years 1676 to 1707, when Reformation Protestantism in the strict sense was being supplanted by 'Enlightened religion' and the formal truths of the confessionalisation era were beginning to lose their purchase. The imagery of this period drew from a rich semiotic field, where not only knowledge of Scripture and the basic articles of the faith but *inter alia* history, politics, antiquity, popular culture, demonology, proverbial knowledge, and common metaphors came into play. It was also an age with a growing audience, where graphic satire might be captured in print, paintings, medals, or the scenery and costumes of public performance, each a part of what Spaans terms 'elements in a variegated mediascape' (4). Moreover, all of this must be understood against the backdrop of the Republic's history during these years. Not only did the French invasions and the related struggles between the supporters of the Prince of Orange and the regents create profound political domestic instability, but the very public religious quarrel (albeit with deep political roots) between the Voetians and the Cocceians, joined by the intellectual infighting brought about by the impact of Cartesianism, polarized Dutch society and provided ample ammunition for dissent. This was the complex setting for a series of public quarrels that were partly played out by way of graphic satire.

In order to tease out the meaning of the imagery Spaans analyses the individual elements in turn, from allegorical figures and proverbial images to quite specific references, such as a possible allusion to the doorkeeper of the New Church in Amsterdam. While working at this level the analysis also takes in the composition as a whole and draws broader conclusions about the prints themselves, which, roughly speaking, are approached with three perspectives in mind: First, what was the nature of composition? Second, what was the impact on the audience? And third, what do the images say about religious culture in the Dutch Republic at the time? In addition to these semiotic issues Spaans also draws broader conclusions about religious change in general and the gradual shifts in language and perception. The case studies themselves, however,

are quite specific to time and place and many of the episodes they relate will only be familiar to historians of the Dutch Republic. Chapter 2, for instance, opens with a discussion of the Momma Affair, a conflict between Cocceians and Voetians over the election of Wilhelmus Momma to the Middelburg church in 1676. Although seemingly an ecclesiastical issue, it effected an interweaving of power and politics that pitched the Orangists against the Loevesteiners (republicans), set the classis against the magistracy and States of Zeeland, called upon local family loyalties and memories of the Arminian conflicts, and eventually led to the intervention of William III. The entire conflict was captured in a series of detailed graphic prints, which Spaans very skilfully deciphers by drawing on a wealth of historical knowledge, ranging from high theology to local gossip. Other case studies follow, including the debate surrounding the clerical appointment to the Lutheran church in Amsterdam, the millenarianism of Johannes Rothé, the Alphen Pig War (another controversy over a clerical appointment rooted in the Voetian/Cocceian divide), reflections in the Bekker affair and the impact of the *Life of Philopater*, and a survey of the sophisticated plates in Romeyn de Hooghe's *Hieroglyphica*, which unlike the other images was less a form of topical commentary than an extended critique of religion from the Chaldeans to the modern age.

With the discussion of de Hooghe's *Hieroglyphica* in the final chapter the book enters new territory, for these images were not only directed at a *cause célèbre* like the Momma Affair or the Alphen Pig War. Nevertheless, they do touch on issues that run throughout the text, namely Spaans' tendency to look beyond the specifics of the debates – which, she concedes, were sometimes 'picture puzzles for the initiated' (133) – and point up the signs and shifts of a new religious sensibility that we might equate with the 'Enlightenment religion' mentioned at the start of the work. In these densely packed iconographic landscapes, she suggests, there were not just local caricatures, theological signposts, and proverbial foxtails but the foundations of a new type of religious dialogue that was rethinking the authority of the clergy, the place of the traditional hierarchies, and the foundations and the practice of public religion – in short, what religion 'ought to be' (240). Noticeably absent in the prints was any mention of rationalism or tolerance, but there was enough space in the imagery for the formulation of 'viable answers to the dilemmas upon which the makers of our satirical prints playfully invited the serious reflection of their audience' (248). As Spaans makes clear, emblematic graphic satire of the seventeenth century could work at these different levels, straddling the line between traditional pamphlet works and clandestine literature (250). The ability to identify this line and unpack the surrounding imagery with the appropriate nuance and skill is a fine art, not only reliant on broad historical and theological learning but an ear for the subtle voices of the past. Spaans has done a brilliant job of unlocking the levels of meaning behind these sources and bringing the histories to life. *Graphic Satire and Religious Change* is scholarship of the highest quality. It deserves a wide readership.

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