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THE ALPHEN PIG WAR

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The print discussed in this article is to be found [here](#).]

In his introduction to the companion volume to the exhibition *Iconoclash*, Bruno Latour presents us with a video-still of a handful of men frantically hacking away at the protective casing around a religious relic. It is a picture that can be read in different ways. It looks like vandalism, but actually these are firemen, trying to rescue an object of veneration from a burning cathedral.¹ He calls this picture a typical example of iconoclash, described by him as ambiguous violence against a holy image, that often seems destructive but is constructive at heart and which, in the end, often produces a new icon from the debris of the old.

Much of popular culture works on the principles of iconoclash. Rebelling time and again against vested authorities, time-hallowed images, concepts and styles are taken apart, plagiarised, paraphrased, satirized, inverted, or all of the above to be reassembled into new dictates of fashion. Religion, which concerns us here, is not immune to the refashioning of its sacred truths, nor are the authoritative models of science or the established conventions of art safe from popular reinvention. Seventeenth century satirical prints on religion provide an example of this mechanism. They hold up a distorting mirror to the religious establishment, with an eye to its destruction and the emergence of new orthodoxies.

A picture full of sound and fury

We see the garden of a country house. Two men wearing city clothes and hats are fighting off a troop of pigs, which have overrun a third man. He lies prone at the foot of a tree dominating the foreground. The pigfighters are using garden implements, although a sword and a gun lie casually at their feet, in the company of a book, an overturned wine-mug and a clay pipe. Some pigs are resisting, but most are in retreat, and some have fallen, wounded and bleeding. The fleeing pigs overturn some already damaged fences and a rough table with another mug, a pipe and a wine-jug. A

¹ Bruno Latour. 'What is Iconoclash? or is there a world beyond the image wars?', in: Bruno Latour and Peter Weibel, *Iconoclash. Beyond the image wars in science, religion and art*, Karlsruhe, Zentrum für Kunst und Medientechnologie, 2002, p. 15.

sizeable wine-keg with a jug ready to be filled next to it suggests that some serious drinking has been interrupted. A covered horse-drawn cart is standing by at the far right side of the picture.

The inhabitants of the house keep their distance; yet do have a share in the goings-on. A man leans out of one of the windows with yet another wine-jug, as if asking it to be filled towards the pigfighters, who are of course too busy to notice. At the corner of the house another man, half hidden behind the tree in the foreground, fires a musket at two tiny male figures in the distant meadow, behind a flock of placidly grazing sheep and against the backdrop of a church spire rising above a dense clump of trees in full summer foliage, hiding a town or village. One of the two seems to stumble and the other raises his arms as if in distress or anger.²

If the disturbing signs of deadly violence had not already alerted us, the caption of the picture and the attendant rhymed dialogue would have pointed out that we do not witness some innocent rural leisure activities. What is depicted is alternatively designated as *Fratricide near Alphen* or *Pig War*. The three drinking buddies fighting off the pigs are described as Reformed ministers, interrupted in their review of some of the controversial theological positions of their time, the second half of the seventeenth century. The dialogue suggests that they unleashed the passions, aroused in their discussions and stimulated by drink and tobacco, on some pigs innocently stumbling in, acting against the beasts as if they were the biblical Gadarene swine possessed by evil spirits. The dialogue also features the owner of the pigs, demanding compensation for the killing of some of his animals, and a tax collector who comes to collect the dues on slaughter. In the end, however, no damages are paid as a lawyer who had been drinking with the ministers, argues that all claims are legally invalid. The ministers go scot-free and will return to pasture their flocks.

A church divided

But what do we see? The picture presents itself as a cartoon, in which a local incident is satirized. The incident is localized in space and time: the village of Alphen aan den Rijn, in the somewhat enigmatic ‘first year of our Spiritual Tribulation’. Although at first it appears to poke fun at village ministers, making fools of themselves while in their cups, the printed dialogue that accompanies the picture hints at something more serious. It suggests a local theological controversy that fits the wider context of the theologico-political situation in the last quarter of the seventeenth century.

In fact, such a controversy occurred, and it had consequences that reverberated far beyond Alphen aan den Rijn.³ In 1682 one Adriaan Bouman, a Voetian minister, was

² This print is described in Frederik Muller, *De Nederlandsche geschiedenis in platen. Beredeneerde beschrijving van Nederlandse historieplaten, zinneprenten en historische kaarten* [print collection at the Rijksprentenkabinet in Amsterdam], 4 vols., Amsterdam 1863-1882, inv. nr. 2599, vol. 1, p. 395-396, and in G. van Rijn, *Atlas van Stolk. Katalogus der Historie-, Spot- en Zinneprenten betreffende de Geschiedenis der Nederlanden* [print collection at the Museum Schielandhuis, Rotterdam], 10 vols., Amsterdam 1895-1931, nr. 2612, vol. III, p. 148-151.

³ All this is work in progress. The following touches upon the highlights only. So far the extent of the conflict was unknown. Cf. Pieter Plemper, *Beschryving van de heerlijkheid en het dorp Alphen aan den Ryn. D'aaloude herkomst ... en zyne huidendaagze gelegenheid. Doorwrocht met een voegzaame schets van het Heemraadschap van Rynland*, Leiden 1714, 261; W.M.C. Regt, *Gedenkboek ter*

appointed in Alphen in a somewhat irregular procedure. The Alphen consistory had for some years been deeply divided between Coccejans and Voetians, two opposing schools of academic theology. Both adhered to Reformed orthodoxy, but for the Voetians the focus of their theology was a defence of the truths of the confession of faith along Aristotelian lines, whereas the Coccejans experimented with newer philosophies which stimulated innovative biblical exegesis. Coccejans were divided over the application of Cartesian philosophy to theological questions. The lively academic disputes that this produced were relatively harmless in themselves. Political patronage for one or the other theological school could, however, draw the Reformed church into the omnipresent factionalism of the time, and exacerbate it in turn — which was what happened in the reign of stadtholder William III.

The invasion of the Republic by France, England, Munster and Cologne in 1672 had led to the elevation of Prince William III of Orange to the position of stadtholder. From 1674 he consolidated the power won by his brilliant military successes with the help of the Voetian party in the public Church. Their support, strengthened by his favour and patronage, helped him break the power of the regents of the previous stadtholderless regime, who by and large favoured the Coccejan school. Throughout the Republic, these were years of unprecedented and bitter polarization, both in politics and in the Church, in villages like Alphen as well as in the big cities.⁴

After 1672 the election of ministers became a highly contested issue in Alphen. Twice the Coccejans won a narrow victory over the Voetians. With the appointment of Bouman in 1682 the tables were turned, not, it appears, without intense machinations on both sides. In this matter, the Voetians had the support of the *ambachtsheer*, the local lord. This gentleman was a Catholic, but under the Dutch constitution enjoyed the right to approve or veto the choice of the consistory in the appointment of Reformed ministers for his village. Catholics and dissenters in general looked upon the stadtholders from the House of Orange as the protectors of their interest against the regent party. Consequently, the *ambachtsheer* was a bulwark of support for the Voetian party in Alphen and for its minister.⁵

Soon after his appointment the reverend Bouman became embroiled in scandal over his personal conduct. It was said he spread slanderous rumours about an adulterous affair between the wife of the sheriff and the physician Bilderbeek. Ladies who came to pay Bouman's wife a lying-in visit at his house had their caps pulled off by him and thrown into the fire. He had been involved in drunken brawls. Also, it had

gelegenheid van het 350-jarig bestaan der Nederlands Hervormde gemeente te Alphen aan den Rijn, z.j. 1932, p. 74-75.

⁴ Jonathan I. Israel, *The Dutch Republic. Its Rise, Greatness and Fall 1477-1806*, Oxford 1995, 807-815.

⁵ For the appointments see Streekarchief Rijnlands Midden (= SARM) Alphen aan den Rijn, Archives Dutch Reformed Church: Minutes of the Alphen consistory, cat. nr. 156; National Archives (=NA), The Hague, Archives Classis Woerden en Overijssel: Resolutions classis, cat. nr. 10; Minutes of deputies of the classis, cat. nr. 28; Register of appointments, cat. nr. 31; Index synodal resolutions, cat. nr. 49. For general histories of Alphen cf. *Hedendaagsche historie, of tegenwoordige staat van alle volkeren*, 39 vols., Amsterdam 1729-1803, vol. 16 (1746). More recent: Henk Dinkelaar, Frits de Wilde, Jan van Zwieten (eds.), *Volk op viersprong. Acht verhalen over het verleden, om het heden van Alphen te verstaan*, [Stichting Rijnlandse Historiën], Alphen aan den Rijn 1988; specifically on wartime conditions Jan van Es, *Limes en linie. Twintig eeuwen verdedigingswerken tussen de Oude Rijn en de Hollandse IJssel*, [Stichts-Hollandsche Bijdragen 31], z.p. 2004, 50-62.

become known that in his final examination before he could be ordained, his knowledge of Scripture had been found wanting. He had passed nonetheless, presumably as a result of some form of favouritism, but had been admonished to humility and further study. In a previous posting he had had an altercation with a Coccejan candidate for the ministry, one Cornelis Lens. He had accused Lens of unorthodoxy, but had been compelled by ecclesiastical authorities to apologize. This enforced humiliation obviously rankled, for in Alphen he had named his dog Cornelis Lens, and had taught it some 'Coccejan tricks'. All of this was considered conduct unbecoming in a minister.⁶

Worse, his pastoral style appears to have fallen short of the standards set by his predecessors. These had preached not only on Sundays, but also every Wednesday. This was unusual in a village church. The local elite had cherished this preaching schedule, which had raised their village church a notch above the surrounding parishes, and had given Alphen's church life a quasi-urban distinction.⁷ Churchwardens had consented to pay their minister an extra allowance in recognition of his efforts. Bouman, however, preached the customary weekday sermons only during the winter season, and had dropped them during the summer months.

Ary van Loendersloot, one of the Alphen churchwardens, and in this capacity responsible for the finances of the church, suspected that Bouman had committed fraud with his letter of appointment, and changed the description of the duties of an Alphen minister. Van Loendersloot was understandably annoyed that Bouman claimed the allowance, but refused to deliver the goods and preach the weekday sermons all year round, diminishing the standing of the church of Alphen. When the consistory ignored his complaints, Van Loendersloot had publicly accused him of dereliction of duty, and openly called him a crook. Bouman hit back viciously, high-handedly citing him before the bailiff of Rijnland, who had Van Loendersloot convicted for slander. One of the judges in this case was an alderman of Alphen, and member of the Voetian party that backed the minister. Van Loendersloot had to make his apologies to Bouman, formally and publicly, and was moreover fined the hefty sum of 1000 guilders, to be paid into the village poor fund. Bouman gloated over this triumph of his party and the humiliation of his opponent.⁸

The pigs attack

The churchwarden did not leave it at this. He was unable to prove his allegations, not having access to the original letter of appointment, which was in Bouman's keeping, or to the minutes of the classis, or regional ecclesiastical board of Woerden and Midden-Rijnland, that had issued the letter. Oral testimony from ex-elders and ex-deacons who had been involved in Bouman's call to Alphen convinced him of the truth of his suspicions. They were, moreover, shared by his successor in office and others in the congregation, who brought their grievances before the consistory. The minister denied their allegations, and the current elders and deacons closed ranks with him. Early in 1685 they excluded the malcontents from partaking in the Lord's

⁶ NA, Archive Hof van Holland: Criminal papers, cat. nr. 5343.10 (1685)

⁷ The 'urban' pretensions of Alphen are nicely illustrated by the publication of Plemper's *Beschryving*, which fits the Renaissance genre of laudatory urban histories.

⁸ NA, Archive Hof van Holland: Criminal papers, cat. nr. 5343.10 (1686).

Supper. The consistory was by now firmly under Voetian control. Together with the sheriff, Dirk Roosenboom, and the village council they constituted a formidable power base for Bouman in Alphen.

The malcontent members, however, appealed to the classis Woerden. In the Dutch Reformed Church the classis functioned a regional ecclesiastical court of appeal. Formally the classis was not authorized to hear an appeal before the local consistory had first given a verdict, which the Alphen consistory refused to do. It considered the malcontents merely obstinate, and kept their case pending, expecting them to give up sooner or later and reconcile themselves with Bouman. In this case, however, the classis saw reasons to intervene. And over this point of ecclesiastical law matters spun out of hand. The malcontent church members found support with the classis, but the minister and the consistory, with the tacit support of the local magistrate and the *ambachtsheer*, enlisted the legal aid of the Provincial Court of Justice (*Hof van Holland*) to deny the authority of the classis as long as the consistory had not given a verdict. The classis, however, considered the matter of the alleged forgery of the letter of appointment a purely ecclesiastical matter, on which an investigation was definitely in order. An attorney, one George Roosenboom, one of a tribe of Roosenbooms in the legal profession, was hired to represent both the classis and the malcontents. He pleaded their case before the Provincial Court, and obtained permission for an official investigation into the terms of Bouman's contract, as long as this fell short of formal censure of the minister.⁹

On July 6th, 1685, deputies from the classis convened in the village church to investigate the rumoured discrepancies between the versions of Bouman's letter of appointment in the original letter, the copy in the consistory records and its registration in their own administration. At this occasion the festering conflict spectacularly erupted. The minister tergiversated, claiming to have lent the letter of appointment to the sheriff, who had taken it with him to The Hague. His condescending attitude only increased the deputies' annoyance with his lack of cooperation. When they found their usefulness and their patience at an end, and made ready to depart, however, they found their exit barred and themselves physically threatened by an angry mob supporting the minister. The people ordered them to hand over the minutes of their meeting, which contained the charges against the minister, and when these turned out not to be to their liking, dictated others, forcing the secretary to rewrite several times. The deputies were glad to escape unharmed.¹⁰

All this was manifestly a case of riot and sedition, and a week later, on July 13, at half past five in the morning, a heavy delegation from the Provincial Court, assisted by the Attorney General, left The Hague by coach to investigate. By nine o'clock the men installed themselves in a local tavern to hear witnesses. They were very thorough. The deputies of the classis, who were ministers of the established church, and thus public officials, had been verbally abused and physically threatened while on an official

⁹ NA, Archive Classis Woerden en Overrijnland: Resolutions classis, cat nr. 10, p. 171 (3 juni 1685), NA, Archive Hof van Holland: Criminal papers, cat. nr. 5341.19 (1685).

¹⁰ NA, Archive classis Woerden en Overrijnland: Minutes of deputies of the classis, cat. nr. 28, p. 143-145 (9 juli 1685); Archive Hof van Holland: Criminal Papers, cat. nr. 5341.5 (1685), cat. nr. 5343.10 (1686).

mission for the ecclesiastical authorities. The villagers had taken the law into their own hands. Worse, Bouman had been their accomplice. Not only had he obstructed the lawful investigations of the deputies, villagers also attested that he and the village magistrates had orchestrated the whole thing, inciting the crowd to go and raise hell in the church. Afterwards a celebration party had been held on the porch of Bouman's house, at which the minutes wrung from the deputies' secretary had been read. The minister had treated all comers to wine.

Parties spent the rest of the year 1685 and most of 1686 producing and investigating evidence. The Provincial Court heard more witnesses and interrogated suspects. By October 1685 the classis had managed to get all the requisite documentation, and it convened in full session finally to establish the truth or untruth of Bouman's alleged forgery. Bouman, present as a full member of the classis, fumed at this and again threatened legal action, but he was forced to leave the room while the classis discussed his case. Finally the classis noted the differences between the two copies of Bouman's contract, which proved to be small but significant, concerning the contested issue of the weekday sermons. In his original contract it was stated as his duty to deliver the weekday sermons 'faithfully, in accordance with the custom of his predecessors in office'. Apparently Bouman had left out this clause, thus changing the meaning of the original letter and creating a loophole for dropping the weekday sermons in summer. The classis recorded the differences in its minutes, but could not take the matter any further under the restrictions set by the Provincial Court.¹¹

Meanwhile discontent smouldered on in the congregation of Alphen. Throughout 1686 isolated complaints from church members, who found themselves passed over in the house-visitations preceding the celebration of the Lord's Supper, reached the classis, but were relegated to the consistory.¹² By the end of the year, in the streets of Alphen the troubles had again reached the point of riot. On the 7th of October, during the annual fair of nearby Hazerswoude, in an Alphen tavern a 'vile ditty' was sung, in which several prominent persons were held up for ridicule. Among the singers were some of the persons the Provincial Court held to be instigators of the riot in the church of Alphen in the summer of the previous year, and the main target of criticism was yet another Roosenboom, a councillor of the Provincial Court.

This councillor is hard to identify, but must have been one of three brothers Roosenboom who held high offices in the Provincial Court, the Supreme Court and the administration of the province of Holland in general. At least one of them was a very close confidant of stadtholder William III.¹³ The 'ditty' sung at the Hazerswoude fair suggested that this Roosenboom had incited the lynching of Grand Pensionary Johan de Witt and his brother by a mob on the so-called Green Sod in The Hague in 1672. This was an area politically so sensitive, that none of the authorities wanted to go there. Early November four of the singers: two aldermen, a master shipbuilder and the maid of the Alphen sheriff, were arrested, late at night. They were put in custody

¹¹ NA, Archive Classis Woerden and Overrijnland: Resolutions classis, inv. nr. 10, p. 185-187 (Oct. 9, 1685).

¹² NA, Archive Classis Woerden and Overrijnland: Resolutions classis, inv. nr. 10, p. 196, 204, 209 (April 16, June 24, October 1st, 1686)

¹³ J.H. Hora Siccama, *Aanteekeningen en verbeteringen op het register op de journalen van Constantijn Huygens den zoon*, Amsterdam 1915, 592-594.

in The Hague, to be released on bail after a month. During their incarceration the reverend Bouman was also cited before the Provincial Court. The formal proceedings would drag all through the first half of 1687.¹⁴

All this did not end the unrest in Alphen. Discord brewed in gatherings on street corners and in taverns. People called each other names, spread malicious rumours and also incited their children to harass those of the other party by following them on the streets, shouting insults and taunting them with satirical songs. The Provincial Court issued an order to end all public disturbances or face the penalties for libel and public disorder, and had it signed by its president, stadtholder William III himself.¹⁵ Meanwhile Bouman and his associates in the consistory visited those ex-members of the consistory who had testified before the commissioners of the Provincial Court, and tried to manipulate them into retracting their testimony. They used a mixture of sweet-tongued pleading for a return to harmony and outright bullying. One of these men was plied with spiked wine into such a drunken stupor that afterwards he did not know whether or not he had given in.¹⁶

The Attorney General was not impressed by Bouman's defence. The minister was charged with forgery in the case of this letter of appointment, of obstruction of proper ecclesiastical procedure and incitement to riot. The sentence demanded was suspension from office, exclusion from any public office or service in Holland, Zeeland and West-Friesland for life, a heavy fine and payment of all the legal costs made in his case.¹⁷

The bitterness of the strife over these years was such that it produced contradicting testimonies, and is hard to determine to what extent Bouman was responsible. It is quite possible, as the Attorney General himself noted, that the Voetians in the consistory and the magistrate had wanted their Voetian candidate so badly that they were prepared to forego the weekday sermons and pay Bouman the extra allowance nonetheless, and that there had indeed been some form of contract to that effect to which the lord of Alphen had given his consent. Neither the consistory records, nor those of the classis, however, contained any proof that competent church authorities had approved of this agreement, and those who had been in office at the time of his installation in Alphen unanimously denied any knowledge of such an approval. It may well be that the minister had so much trusted the power of his political patrons, that he had considered himself exempt from the observance of formal ecclesiastical procedure. In the spirit of the Latin adage *stultibus non succurritur* — or: the law does not condone stupidity, the Attorney General considered this question irrelevant.

A large number of malcontent church members now asked the classis to suspend Bouman from office pending the trial. This request was manifestly justified. The consistory and its supporters in the local magistracy and in the manor, however, rallied support from the highest quarters available to them, in order to avert Bouman's

¹⁴ NA, Archives Hof van Holland: Calendar of hearings in criminal cases, cat. nr. 5812 (unpaginated) (Febr. 18 and 25, March 12 and 20, April 8 and 15, June 3 and 10 1687); Criminal papers, cat. nr. 5349.28 (1688), cat. nr. 5353.19 (1689),

¹⁵ NA, Archives Hof van Holland: Resolutions, inv. nr. 98, p. 249-250 (Nov. 29, 1686, to be published in Alphen Dec. 1st, 1686). Printed as a fly-leaf, headed *Waerschouwing*, in Knuttel 12534.

¹⁶ NA, Archives Hof van Holland: Criminal papers, cat. nr. 5353.13 (1689).

¹⁷ NA, Archive Hof van Holland: Criminal Papers, cat. nr. 5343.10 (1686).

suspension. They managed to obtain a writ from the Supreme Court (*Hoge Raad*), denying the Provincial Court jurisdiction over a matter that had not first been adjudicated by the local consistory.¹⁸ Consequently the Supreme Court and the Provincial Court became embroiled in a highly complicated and emotionally charged dispute over precedence.

This was something utterly unheard of, and for which the instructions of the Courts did not provide — in short an impossible problem for the highest echelon of the judicial system, and all that over the duties of a village minister. Of course these were not in itself the cause of this clash of jurisdictions. The whole conflict turned around factional strife between a Voetian-Orangist and a Coccejian-anti-Orangist faction, in the Republic at large. Already before the appointment of Bouman in 1682, however, stadtholder William III had abandoned his earlier exclusive support for the Voetians. From the late 1670s onwards he strove to balance the theologico-political blocs. In 1687 he was already contemplating the invasion of England for which he needed support from a united country. The appeals of the opposing factions in the conflict at Alphen to the high courts of justice pitted against each other the Provincial Court, presided over by the stadtholder himself, and the Supreme Court, apparently dominated at this point by councillors from Amsterdam, a city that habitually opposed the stadtholder, creating a new opposition.

Stadtholder William III of Orange himself now personally stepped in to pacify the situation. He effectively ordered all parties to back off, forget their claims and destroy all their files. These high-handed orders may well have been the only way to cut through this unwholesome knot and save face all around. Nobody was to be held accountable, and the contesting parties were left to themselves, to lick their wounds and somehow bear with each other.

The order to destroy the files was only partially obeyed. Local records that could be expected to shed light on the root of this conflict are either very scanty or altogether missing. In the records of consistory and classis in some cases obviously nothing was recorded in the first place, in others documents have not been inserted into the records, leaving blank pages, or have been deliberately destroyed. The Provincial Court retained some of its files, if only because Bouman and his associates tried during the next few years, to clear their names. These are, however, in considerable disarray and dispersed over several portfolios. Some documents that according to inventories have survived, have not been found (yet).

The clash between the two high courts of justice caused a considerable stir. The periodical *Hollandtsche Mercurius* published a lengthy report, extensively spelling out the legal complications and publishing extracts from the correspondence between the parties involved. At the same time it kept piously silent on the original cause that had provoked all this. The press thus strictly obeyed the injunctions of the stadtholder.¹⁹ The producer of our print did not. He published his views on the troubles in Alphen, but to evade censorship he did so anonymously. He moreover

¹⁸ NA, Archive classis Woerden en Overrijnland: Resolutions classis, cat. nr. 10, p. 219-228 (4 and 26 March 1687). The requests and writs are mentioned here, but the classis was forbidden under the previous court order to insert the actual texts of these documents.

¹⁹ *Hollandtsche Mercurius* (1687), p. 162-171.

veiled his message in dense metaphor, both in the pictorial language of the print and in the accompanying text. And he was not the only one to do so. Adriaan Bouman's case provoked poems that circulated in manuscript, and a pamphlet — all of them anonymous and 'encrypted', their meaning accessible only to those 'in the know'. Unlike the *Hollandtsche Mercurius*, they did not treat what had happened in Alphen as an item of news, as history, but as a moral lesson, a subject for contemplation. They chose satirical print, prose and poetry as their medium — genres which were well developed in seventeenth-century Dutch culture.

The root of the problem

Let us look at the satirical poems first, as they provide one of the keys to connect the print of the 'Alphen pig war' to the case of Adriaan Bouman and the collision between the two courts of law. I have found two, one in Dutch and one in Latin. The Dutch poem is named *Varckemoort*, or 'The Murder of the Pigs'. Couplets in which the spirits of dead pigs lament their murder alternate with rhymed 'responses' that suggest that their death was caused by factional strife over an appointment. The murder is blamed on theologians who had been drinking, conspiring to get their candidate appointed and discussing an anti-Socinian book written by one of them. This heady mixture had incited the plotters to kill the poor pigs on sight, which in turn had led to an altercation with a clerk over the meat excise. No mention at all is made of Alphen. The poem claims to be printed 'next to the Chapel, under the Rose-tree'. In the end the pigs ask for memorial masses for their souls, but the 'responses' make it clear that the chances they will obtain their request are slight.²⁰ The Latin poem bears the title *Pugna concionatorum quorundam cum porcis*. It has essentially the same story line, but in a less 'spiritist' vein, as it does not feature the spirits of the dead pigs or their plea for memorial masses.²¹

The poems evidently speak the same language as our print, and refer to the same facts. The only obvious connection of the poems to Alphen, however, is the similarity in imagery. When the Dutch poem locates the murder of the pigs 'next to the Chapel', this may refer to the fact that the Catholic *ambachtsheer* of Alphen, who protected the minister, maintained a chapel in his manor, which may have been the place of worship of Catholics from Alphen and its surrounding countryside — we know his heirs made the chapel available to Catholic parishioners.²² The adjacent 'Rose-tree' could be a pun on the names of the Alphen notary and sheriff Dirck Roosenboom or the eponymous councillor in the Provincial Court who was so cruelly mocked in a slanderous ditty.

Remarkably both poems are dated 1674. The Dutch poem elaborates on this date and claims to be written '*In 't worteljaer 1674*', which translates as 'in the year of the root', or 'of the carrot'. This is problematic, as the poems and the print must refer to the problems surrounding Adriaan Bouman, which started with his appointment in

²⁰ 'Varckemoort. Of de Dwalende, Clagende Varckens-geesten over haer ontydige Doodt. Met de antwoorden van die geene, aan wien sij haere clachten sijn offererende. Gedruckt in 't worteljaer 1674 met kwibbelige letters naest de Capel, onder de Roseboom'. In: Van Rijn, *Atlas van Stolk*, 149-151.

²¹ Handwritten on the copy of the pamphlet *Missive aen een seker Heer N.N. Inhoudende een verantwoordinge voor de eere van eenige Personen wegens een versierden Verken-strijt op een dorp by Alphen*, no place, no date, in the Koninklijke Bibliotheek in The Hague under shelfnr. Knuttel 11255.

²² De Regt, 350 *Jarig bestaan*, p. 53.

1682 and came to such a spectacular head in the clash between the two high courts in 1687. The print does not bear a date, except for the enigmatic ‘first year of the new Spiritual Tribulation’. If we take all these mystifications around the date of the Alphen Pig War together, we get a ‘root year 1674’. The year 1674 could be taken as the starting point of a development that ended in the standoff between the Provincial Court and the Supreme Court in 1687, and of a nation-wide ‘Spiritual Tribulation’. In 1674 stadtholder William III started his ruthless exploitation of factional divisions among the regent class. His policy of favouring the Voetian faction in the Reformed Church led to deep divisions in the public Church as a whole. His power play was at the root of the development that brought to his pulpit the minister whose alleged criminal conduct had caused such mayhem in the judicial system of Holland. If the policies of stadtholder William III were thus seen as underlying the Pig War, then designating 1674 as the year of the root — or the carrot — does make sense, and the vividly orange colour of carrots reinforces the pun.

The significance of the picture

Against this background it is now possible to read our picture. The pigs stand for the malcontents in the Alphen congregation. They attack their minister, and are fought off by his powerful friends in the consistory, the magistrate and the manor. The minister falls on his face, but is basically unharmed. The congregation suffers, just like the pigs that bleed and die. Church members should not act like these pigs, and should not attack their minister. They ought to be like the placid sheep, peacefully grazing. But for that sheep need a shepherd, who leads and protects them. Bad shepherds risk being overrun by pigs. Sheep and pigs can be taken as either both faces of the congregation, or as representations of supporters and opponents of the minister. A minister who is not a pastor, but who foments division in his congregation, allows evil spirits to wreak havoc in his flock, like the evil spirits that possessed the Gadarene swine of the Gospel. The covered horse-drawn cart reinforces the image of ecclesiastical conflict. It is a nightsoil cart, and figures repeatedly on prints referring to theological conflicts, notably the Arminian Troubles during the Twelve Year Truce (1609-1621), where it carries off the defeated Arminians to the dunghill of history. Here it stands ready to perform the same service to whoever will lose this Pig War.

The battle takes place in the garden of a country manor, referring to the role the *ambachtsheer* played in the background. The powerful friends use garden implements against the pigs, not the weapons that properly belong to the maintenance of order: the sword and the gun. The gun is used, with deadly accuracy, in internecine strife. The minister’s powerful friends, the Alphen magistrate and consistory, and their supporters in the Supreme Court, attack the classis and the Provincial Court. The latter are the tiny figures in the background, the men who come running across the field, to rescue the pigs. The troubles in Alphen were not just a Pig War, that is a rising of a congregation against those placed in authority above them, but first and foremost a Fratricide. The authorities, in using instruments of aggression not fit for the purpose of keeping order, in trying to suppress proper ecclesiastical procedures in church conflicts by a creative use of the law, end up fighting each other.

The tree in the foreground has a curious rosette halfway up the trunk. It is a rose-tree, or in Dutch: a *Roosenboom*, the name of several of the lawyers involved in the legal wrangles. The rose-tree then may symbolize the due process of law, which should

uphold and protect proper authority and order. In the Alphen case, the law neither protected the minister nor his flock, but was used as a cover for internecine strife between authorities — it half hides the man with the musket. In the end nobody wins: the table in the garden, where people should seek each other's company, drink, smoke and talk shop, and in the case of well-educated people, should amicably resolve the urgent problems of their times,²³ is overturned.

The sting of the picture is in the sword that lies at the foot of the tree, unused. Unlike the gun, which is the weapon of the soldier under orders, the sword is the emblem of those giving the orders, the nobility and ultimately the sovereign. The stadtholder had made an end to the crisis caused by the Alphen troubles, and order had been restored, but had the sword of authority really solved the problems underlying this crisis, was it used to full effect? As the accompanying text and the poems indicate: the Pig War had ended in slaughter of the pigs, or disruption in the community, but nobody had been made to pay for the damage. No meat excise was paid, and no memorial masses were sung. The minister, whose lack of respect for ecclesiastical ordinances had been the cause of dissension, could keep his position, with the support of the authorities. The congregation had to learn to live with its divisions. Factional division itself was not resolved.

The Alphen Pig War has to be read against the backdrop of the religio-political policies of stadtholder William III. By the mid-1680s he had changed his strategy. Instead of favouring the Voetian bloc, he forced the opposing factions to share power. In this way strife had everywhere been contained by strictly regulating their venues of power and influence, both in civil government and in the Church, through formal agreements towards equal representation of both factions in the so-called *contracten van correspondentie*.²⁴ Politically this worked, but the question remained whether religious divisions, which were part and parcel of the new political regime, could not again arouse passions that in turn could upset this arrangement. Should one leave the theologians a free rein in theological school-formation, with its potentially divisive political consequences, or should they be limited strictly to their place in a well-ordered Republic: pasturing their flocks within the boundaries set by confession and ecclesiastical ordinances, which were in turn maintained by the power of the State? In the Alphen Pig War the minister had been allowed to become part of the leading political faction of his village, and the staunch support of the political elite had impeded the correction of his alleged abuses of office through ecclesiastical channels. This disregard of the separation between ecclesiastical and secular jurisdictions, and the resulting clash of authorities, had escalated beyond all measure and threatened the proper working of the judicial system at the highest level.

At an earlier occasion the stadtholder had acted more decisively: when in 1676 the politically inspired appointment of a Coccejian minister in Middelburg, against the wishes of the church, had led to violent disturbance, he had personally intervened,

²³ Cf. W. Bergsma, 'Een geleerde en zijn tuin. Over de vriendschap tussen Lubbertus en Vulcanius', *De zeventiende eeuw* 20 (2004) 96-121.

²⁴ Israel, *Dutch Republic*, 837-840.

dismissed the minister and purged the magistrate.²⁵ This was still part of his initial strategy of breaking the Coccejian ascendancy. In the 1680s he strove for balance between the Coccejans and the Voetians, and had denied both Alphen factions a victory. Parties had been ordered to ignore their grievances, and peace had been enforced. But the evil spirits that had taken possession of the Alphen pigs — were they also exorcised, or were they left to wreak further havoc?

Riddles within riddles

The picture can be made to yield its meaning, but only by breaking through thick layers of allusion and metaphor. It is like a greased pig, hard to get a grip on. Its meaning can be seen only by those who already know in considerable detail what the picture refers to. The only element that ties it to the commotion around the minister of Alphen is the toponym in the caption of the print. The printed dialogue is as enigmatic as the print itself. The poems that circulated in manuscript bore the date 1674, which pointed away from the time of the event, and were an enigma in themselves.

This obfuscation was itself the subject of a pamphlet that must have appeared around the same time as the print. It adds another layer of mystification, while posing as an explanation to the riddle of the Pig War. It is, of course, also anonymous, and no date or place of publication is given. The pamphlet refers to poems, both in Dutch and in Latin, and engraved prints, that satirized ministers and other honourable persons as if they were drunkards, slanderers and prone to unrestrained attacks on innocent pigs. The author claims to have been present at the occasion described in these poems and prints, and that nothing untoward had happened at all. A minister had invited some guests for a decent meal, which had been interrupted by pigs breaking into his garden. Some of the guests had tried to shy the beasts away with their linen napkins. As this did not have the desired effect, one had taken an innocuous gardening tool, and had tried to push the pigs away with the wooden handle. One of the pigs inadvertently got hit on the nose and died of fright, another had been slightly wounded in the leg, and that really was all that had happened. The author then rails at slanderous folk, who would stop at nothing to rob distinguished persons of their honour. The libellous texts and prints have distorted the time, the persons involved and the facts.

The anonymous author is entirely right here, as the persons and the facts are an allegorization. As has been indicated above, the dating of poems and print is fictitious. According to the pamphlet, however, the time is erroneously given as Whitsuntide (the text accompanying our picture mentions '*een heylige Pinxter*'), which, on the contrary, does have a basis in fact, as the final showdown between Provincial Court and Supreme Court was scheduled for that day. The author thus shows that he is entirely familiar with what happened in Alphen. This pamphlet appears to be a curious mixture of truth and fiction, defending the literal truth of what is evidently a metaphor, and presenting truths as if they were evident lies.

However, having come this far, do we really grasp the significance of the entire affair? Some ramifications remain wholly obscure. It is clear that the *ambachtsheer* of

²⁵ Israel, *Dutch Republic*, 819-820; M. van der Bijl, *Idee en interest. Voorgeschiedenis, verloop en achtergronden van de politieke twisten in Zeeland en vooral in Middelburg tussen 1702 en 1715, Groningen 1981*, 25-26; cf. Chapter 5.

Alphen was involved, but he seems to hide entirely behind his sheriff Dirck Roosenboom. The latter's maid was charged with her involvement in the riot in the church and the slander of councillor Roosenboom of the Provincial Court, but the question whether the maid acted with her employer's consent or against his wishes never came up. Councillor Roosenboom of the Provincial Court, who was slandered in the ditty sung by Bouman's fiercest supporters, does not even have a first name. The Attorney General suspected that this man was involved in the shady negotiations that took place, previous to Bouman's installation in Alphen, between the minister, the village magistrates and the lord, by which Bouman was to be allotted the supplement to his salary while being relieved from the weekday sermons during the summer season, for which the supplement had been given to his predecessors in office. The Attorney General noted, however, that, even in the interrogations of Bouman, Roosenboom's name was never mentioned.

Apparently the involvement of these high-placed persons was strictly off limits. The literally had to be kept out of the picture. To preserve their honour inviolate, they were untouchable by all public media, be it pamphlet, poem, emblem or print. The root of the problem was left alone. The Provincial Court, which from the beginning of the affair had supported the Orangist faction in Alphen, in the end, prosecuted its hottest heads. This does not mean it changed allegiances. It consistently upheld the status quo. At first it maintained the authority of the consistory against the pretensions of the classis by a strict interpretation of ecclesiastical procedure. After the riot in the church it called to account those who, in an overestimation of the extent to which their political patrons were prepared to cover their actions, had perturbed the public peace and, perhaps even more importantly, had dared to attack or pervert vested authority, political and ecclesiastical.

Iconoclash

What we have here is a satirical print on a theologico-political conflict. It shows a violent scene. Superficially we see the disruption of academic theological discussion by the uninitiated, depicted as pigs. Beneath the surface we find far deeper layers of significance, all equally violent, involving personal animosities, factionalism in a local community, and nationwide political and ecclesiastical strife, against the backdrop of international conflict. The print itself attacks the religio-political status quo, and seems to advocate a new equilibrium, in which the 'spiritual tribulation' can be laid to rest. It is bent on destruction in a constructive way, but also very circumspectly, and its deeper meaning is even formally denied in a pamphlet.²⁶

Satirical prints were not exactly rare in the Dutch Golden Age, nor were satirical pamphlets or poetry. Official censorship enforced certain prohibitions, however. It was officially forbidden to publish slander, in any way. Placards to this effect were regularly renewed, and from 1686 included cartoons as well as written publications.²⁷ This legislation alone testifies to a lively production, and the museum collections of historical prints contain many examples. Satirical prints on vested authorities were, however, very sensitive, and representations of religion or the Church are especially

²⁶ Cf. Latour, 'What is iconoclash?', 17.

²⁷ Ingrid Weekhout, *Boekencensuur in de Noordelijke Nederlanden. Een verkennend onderzoek naar de vrijheid van drukpers in de zeventiende eeuw* [IJKpunt 1650], Den Haag, Sdu Uitgevers, 1998, 84-86.

rare for the later seventeenth century.²⁸ The Reformation in the sixteenth century spawned a flood of satirical prints, and quite a number appeared concerning the Arminian controversies. The later seventeenth century also witnessed serious conflicts, both doctrinal and ecclesiological, in all of the major confessions, which have elicited ample comment in polemical and satirical pamphlets, but have left no comparable pictorial record.

We do have pictures of church buildings, especially the public churches, both exterior and interior views. We have biblical scenes and, in the Catholic sphere, saints. We have portraits of clergymen, galore. Books for ecclesiastical or devotional use, or treating religious subjects in some other way, often show allegories on religion or the Church, personified on their title pages, as a modestly dressed woman, sitting on a rock, embracing the foot of the Cross, holding an open Bible, an anchor at her feet, hovering doves, with trampled demons or beams of light as optional extras. In short, what we have are pictures underpinning normative religion, showing the authorized places of worship, the clerical figures of authority, religious heroes and the personification of what religion ought to be. This is even true of the cartoons on the Arminian controversies. It has been demonstrated that all of these appeared after the Arminian faction had been defeated and officially condemned. These cartoons thus functioned as a public confirmation of the Counter-remonstrants' victory.²⁹

Recently we have seen that, to the present day, the immediacy of images makes them far more sensitive than the printed word. Cartoons, by their very ambiguity, are easily manipulated.³⁰ In the so-called confessional age formidable obstacles had to be overcome before authoritative religion, or any authority, could be criticized in pictures. The monopoly and prerogatives of the established religion were maintained by the power of the state. Contradiction of the tenets of the established church, whether in its doctrine or ecclesiastical ordinances, was a punishable offence. Even in the Dutch Republic censorship repressed open criticism of the public church. Only qualified theologians, those who were appointed to teach at a university and ordained ministers, were authorized to discuss theological matters. Professors had some measure of academic freedom, but ministers were held to remain within the limits set by the confession of their church, and for everything they published they had to obtain the approbation of their classis.

The faithful were allowed and even stimulated to study the foundations of their faith in Scripture, but only with the help of approved literature and preferably under the supervision of an ordained minister or a lay teacher who was authorized by the consistory. The latter was only allowed to explain the catechism or some other approved theological primer, but could not expound Scripture or doctrine. Difficult questions had to be relegated to a minister. Both contradiction from outsiders and free discussion among insiders were thus severely limited. Pamphlets did comment on theological controversies, despite these limitations, but unqualified authors could only

²⁸ See Muller, *Catalogus*, p. 126.

²⁹ Israel, *The Dutch Republic*, p. 439.

³⁰ At the end of January 2006 cartoons of the Prophet Muhammad published the previous year in a Danish newspaper caused violent indignation worldwide.

publish their views anonymously — and pamphlets were rarely illustrated.³¹ Not only did the conditions of the confessional state leave little room for prints satirizing aspects of the established church. In fact, even cartoons on tolerated churches are rare.

The print on the Alphen Pig War belongs to a little cluster of satirical-moralistic images, published in the last quarter of the seventeenth century, and probably originating in the circles of the ‘radical enlightenment’.³² They illustrate contemporary perceptions of ‘what religion should be’ — and what it was in practice. Their content is not unlike some of the pamphlets, emblemata, poems, novels or commemorative medals published on the same issues. These emblemata always combined a picture with a poem. The picture was usually a variation on a well-known image, and in combination with the text it presented a moral conundrum on personal conduct (often in matters of love), piety and social ethics. They were highly valued among the literate as intellectual riddles and conversation pieces.³³

Our picture, with its allusion to the biblical story of the Gadarene swine, fits this format, and is to be taken as an emblem, rather than as a cartoon in the modern sense. It is an indictment of the way religion had proved able to embarrass and upset political authority, and thereby order — an abuse of religion the Enlightenment would come to designate as ‘fanaticism’. The print was not designed for a broadly popular audience, but for an erudite lay audience. It’s meaning was skilfully hidden, so that only those with inside knowledge would get its message. It offers food for thought, invites contemplation of an enigma, in the learned emblematic tradition that was fully developed and richly flourishing in the Dutch Golden Age. It presents its viewers with a riddle. How is the sword at the foot of the tree to be used? It suggests that the sovereign was entitled, even morally compelled to intervene in matters theological to prevent a crisis like the Alphen Pig War. It confronts the viewer with conflicting images of peace and conflict, of order and disorder, of clerical fanaticism and the duties of enlightened sovereigns.

If it were published in 1687, it would thus question the religious policies of an autocratically inclined stadtholder and the proper chains of command at the highest levels of the complicated decentralized structure of the Dutch Republic. These were not subjects considered fit for public discussion and certainly not for popular prints. It could also have been published somewhat later, after stadtholder William III had come to the throne of England and had shifted the focus of his attention to the wider European balance of power, as a comment on the 1694 resolution by the States of Holland ‘towards the peace of the Church’.³⁴ The States made this resolution at a moment when again theological controversies threatened to trigger political crisis. It strictly limited theologians in their public teaching to the essentials of the Reformed faith on which they all agreed, a step towards the ‘reasonable religion’ of the enlightened eighteenth century.

³¹ Cf. Peter van Rooden, ‘De communicatieve ruimten van de Nijkerker beroeringen’, in Joke Spaans, ed., *Een golf van beroering. De omstreden religieuze opwekking in Nederland in het midden van de achttiende eeuw*, Hilversum 2001, 125-151.

³² As described and analysed in Jonathan I. Israel, *Radical Enlightenment. Philosophy and the making of modernity 1650-1750*, Oxford, Oxford University Press, 2001.

³³ Cf. Eddy de Jongh, *Kwesties van betekenis. Thema en motief in de Nederlandse schilderkunst van de zeventiende eeuw*, Leiden 1995.

³⁴ Published in *Europische Mercurius* (1694), 302-304.

The print of the Alphen Pig War would then commend this resolution as a salutary intervention of state power in matters theological, a proper use of the sword at the foot of the tree. In this way the print would be, like those on the Arminian controversy earlier, published after the fact and as the proclamation and defence of the then current religious regime. Either way it invites rethinking religious identities. All this makes our picture an interesting link in the development from allegory to cartoon, and at the same time shows how representation of religious themes was circumscribed in the early modern period. The popular religious cartoon had to await the eighteenth century, when William Hogarth pioneered it.³⁵

³⁵ See for an interesting comparison between early modern allegory and cartoon Bernhard Lang, *Sacred Games. A History of Christian Worship*, New Haven & London 1997, 167-171.