

«FOR THERE IS NO POWER BUT OF GOD»:
DIPTYCH OF PHILIP II AND CHRIST (1568)
AND HABSBURG PRINTED PROPAGANDA

Rachel Wise

ABSTRACT

This article examines one of the few prints taking up the Spanish Habsburg cause during the early years of the Eighty Years' War: *Diptych of Christ and Philip II* (1568), presumably engraved by Johannes Wierix. Because prints were less commonly used by the royalist side to distribute their propaganda in the Low Countries, this engraving offers a singular view into what the medium afforded them. Examined against the backdrop of iconoclasm, the engraving puts forward a multi-faceted argument about the protection of King Philip II and devotional objects as well as the sacralization of the king and the preservation of the Catholic faith.

KEYWORDS: King Philip II of Spain, Eighty Years' War, Printed Propaganda, Armor, Spanish Habsburgs

«For there is no power but of God»: il Dittico con Filippo II e Cristo (1568)
e la propaganda a stampa degli Asburgo spagnoli

ABSTRACT

L'articolo esamina una delle poche stampe che sostengono la causa degli Asburgo spagnoli durante i primi anni della Guerra degli Ottant'anni: il *Dittico con Cristo e Filippo II* (1568), inciso da Johannes Wierix. Considerato che le stampe erano impiegate con molta meno frequenza dal partito realista, al fine di distribuire idee circa la propaganda spagnola nei Paesi Bassi, la presente incisione offre una visione singolare di quanto il mezzo grafico consentisse di diffondere. Esaminata nel quadro dell'iconoclastia divampata al tempo, l'incisione si fa carico di dispiegare una polisemica argomentazione: il patrocinio garantito dallo stesso Filippo II e dagli oggetti devozionali a lui connessi, come pure la sacralità del sovrano e la sua missione di preservare la fede cattolica.

PAROLE CHIAVE: Filippo II, Guerra degli Ottant'anni, Propaganda a stampa, armatura, Asburgo spagnoli

In the very year that marked the inception of the Eighty Years' War (1568), an engraving boldly portraying King Philip II in a diptych, face-to-face with Christ, was published in Antwerp [fig. 1]. Under the burin of Johannes Wierix, the black and white image starkly laid out the royalist cause: the divine power of King Philip II and the assertion of Catholic unity over Protestant rebelling. The moment was ripe: two years prior in 1566, the Iconoclastic Fury had swept across the Low Countries, where Protestant rebels took hammers to Catholic devotional objects they deemed sacrilegious substitutes for God. The conflict evolved into a fight between the Northern rebels, commanded by William of Orange (1533-1584), and the Catholic Spanish Habsburgs, loyal to King Philip II of Spain (1527-1598). Insurgents and royalists warred over land, religion, taxation, and governmental control. With the Act of Abjuration in 1581, however, Northern provinces officially declared independence from King Philip II and broke away from the Southern Habsburg provinces; it was not until 1648 with the Peace of Münster that the war came to an official end, dividing the Low Countries into the Dutch Republic and the Habsburg-ruled Southern Netherlands¹.

¹ The history of the Revolt has been the subject of many fine studies. See, for instance: M. VAN GELDEREN, *The Political Thought of the Dutch Revolt*, Cambridge, Cambridge University Press, 1992; G. PARKER, *The Dutch Revolt*, rev. ed.,

These decades' long conflict has been termed the first "paper war"—referring not just to the barrage of pamphlets that flooded the Northern and Southern Netherlands but also to the prodigious production of prints, in the form of propaganda and documentary works narrating the events of the war, primarily from the side of the Northern rebels². The first major consequence of the Iconoclastic Fury was the lift that it gave to printmaking³. As a flat, ephemeral object, the print was not the usual target of iconoclasts⁴, who usually bludgeoned three-dimensional images and sculpture in the round, which presented more persuasively as idols⁵. By nature, prints are distanced from the image they replicate, perhaps offering a type of protection against any incendiary power of the image they reproduce.

War and printmaking, thus, forged a generative relationship⁶. Yet the circumstances under which prints were utilized and censored differed between the rebels and the Catholic Southern Netherlands. Despite the extensive number of successful print publishing houses in Antwerp, in the Southern Netherlands prints were deemed suspicious by the authorities, due to their libelous content.

Beginning in 1558, King Philip II required the St. Luke's Guild of Antwerp to halt the publishing of inflammatory content, and Margaret of Parma (1522–1586), the governor of the Netherlands, put forward an edict of May 28, 1567, decrying printers who had circumvented governmental requirements in producing scandalous books, prints, treatises, and songs⁷. The Duke of Alva (1507–1582), a deputy sent by King Philip II to rein in the heretics, tightened the restrictions the following year in 1568: his edict forbade material that could "spoil, seduce or corrupt the people"⁸. With these new directives, printmakers were required to seek authorization from their bishop attesting to their faith to operate. The edict authorized punishment and death to any individual involved in print

London, Penguin Books, 2002; G. DARBY (ed.), *The Origins and Development of the Dutch Revolt*, London; New York, Routledge, 2001; and P.J. ARNADE, *Beggars, Iconoclasts, and Civic Patriots: The Political Culture of the Dutch Revolt*, Ithaca, Cornell University Press, 2008.

² F.E. BEEMON, *Images of Philip II in the Dutch Revolt: Solomon, Shepherd, or Tyrant*, «Dutch Crossing», 23, 2 (1999), pp. 56–79 (56). D. HORST, *De Opstand in zwart wit: Propagandaprenten uit de Nederlandse Opstand (1566–1584)*, Zutphen, Walburg Pers, 2003, p. 18. The term "paper war" was first used by P.A.M. GEURTS, in *De Nederlandse Opstand in de Pamfletten 1566–1584*, Utrecht, H&S, 1983, p. vii and is quoted in M.A. BASS, *Insect Artifice: Nature and Art in the Dutch Revolt*, Princeton, Princeton University Press, 2019, p. 6, n28. Most recently, the Krannert Art Museum's excellent exhibition "Fake News & Lying Pictures: Political Prints in the Dutch Republic" and accompanying publication focused on Northern political works: M. WARREN (ed.), *Paper Knives, Paper Crowns: Political Prints in the Dutch Republic*, exh. cat., Champaign, IL, Krannert Art Museum, University of Illinois Urbana-Champaign, 2002.

³ D. FREDBERG, *Art after Iconoclasm: Painting in the Netherlands between 1566 and 1585*, in J. KOENRAAD, R. SUYKERBUYK (eds.), *Art After Iconoclasm: Painting in the Netherlands Between 1566 and 1585*, Turnhout, Brepols, 2012, pp. 21–49 (41). He also credits Hieronymus Cock's and Volcxken Diericx's profitable Four Winds publishing house, which allowed for an environment where engravers could criticize the Revolt. J. VAN DER STOCK, *Hieronymus Cock and Volcxken Diericx: Print Publishers in Antwerp*, in J. VAN GRIEKEN, G. LUIJTEN, J. VAN DER STOCK (eds.), *Hieronymus Cock: The Renaissance in Print*, exh. cat., New Haven, Yale University Press, 2013, pp. 14–21; C. GÖTTLER, B. RAMAKERS, J. WOODALL, *Trading Values in Early Modern Antwerp*, Leiden, Brill, 2014.

⁴ James Clifton does note that in some later states of religious prints the depiction of God has been removed. J. CLIFTON, W.S. MELION (eds.), *Scripture for the Eyes: Bible Illustration in Netherlandish Prints of the Sixteenth Century*, exh. cat., New York, Museum of Biblical Arts, 2009, p. 12.

⁵ M. GAUDIO, *Engraving the Savage: The New World and Techniques of Civilization*, Minneapolis, University of Minnesota Press, 2008, p. 97.

⁶ For printmaking and war, see L.M. SCATTONE, *Introduction*, in J. CLIFTON, L.M. SCATTONE (eds.), *Plains of Mars: European War Prints, 1500–1825*, exh. cat., New Haven, Yale University Press, 2008, p. 2.

⁷ J. VAN DER STOCK, *Printing Images in Antwerp: The Introduction of Printmaking in a City, Fifteenth Century to 1585*, Rotterdam, Sound & Vision, 1998, pp. 181–182. G. MARNEF, *Repressie en censuur in het Antwerps boekbedrijf, 1567–1576*, «De Zeventiende Eeuw», 8 (1992), pp. 222–227.

⁸ M. STENSLAND, *Habsburg Communication in the Dutch Revolt*, Amsterdam, Amsterdam University Press, 2012, p. 37.

production: designers, engravers, publishers, sellers, and owners⁹. Citizens were asked to report any violations of the censorship laws, and Alva called for the burning of the seditious materials so that “the memory of it be lost and extinguished”¹⁰. The censorship was an iconoclasm itself, though from the other side of the divide, for as David Freedberg writes, “every act of censorship is also an act of iconoclasm”¹¹. The attacks on images, from both rebels and royalists, proved the potent political power of works of art. Prints with content legitimizing the Habsburg and Counter-Reformation were rarer but, of course, deemed acceptable.

The Iconoclastic Fury and the onslaught of political and religious persecution landed a devastating blow to Southern graphic artists: around 150 bookmakers and printers migrated North, chiefly after 1585, to avoid censorship edicts, penalties, and threat of death¹². With the influx of skilled Southern Netherlandish émigrés, the Northern print tradition bloomed and became the center of print publication. Most Revolt print scholarship has focused on the rebels’ production, while far fewer studies have analyzed the Catholic Habsburg print production in the Southern Netherlands¹³.

This article focuses on one of the few prints taking up the Spanish Habsburg cause in the early years of the war: *Diptych of Christ and Philip II* (1568) [fig. 1], depicting the devout Spanish king and Jesus Christ face-to-face¹⁴. With didactic explicitness, the engraving solidifies the Spanish king’s royal and religious prerogative through replicating a devotional image. Portrayed as bust-length portraits in a tabernacle-like structure¹⁵, both kings, eye-to-eye, mirror each other as two spiritual effigies in a diptych¹⁶. This article queries how Habsburg loyalists employed an art medium, dominated by the rebels, to their advantage, and how the medium afforded the royalists a multi-

⁹ *Ibidem*; D. HORST, *Opstand*, cit., p. 32.

¹⁰ STENSLAND, *Habsburg*, cit., p. 37, n83. *Placcart et ordonnance, contre ceulx qui composent, controuuent, sement, diuulgent, impriment, mettent en lumiere, ou tiennent soubz eulx, aucuns libelz, articles, ou escriptz fameux, schandaleux, ou seditieux, ou font courre mauuais bruits & mensongiers*, Brussels, par Michiel de Hamont, 1568, (BT 2523), A3v.

¹¹ D. FREEDBERG, *The Fear of Art: How Censorship Becomes Iconoclasm*, «Social Research», 83, 1 (2016), p. 67.

¹² C. RASTERHOFF, *Painting and Publishing as Cultural Industries: The Fabric of Creativity in the Dutch Republic, 1580-1800*, Amsterdam, Amsterdam University Press, 2017, pp. 36-39; J. BRIELS, *Zuidnederlandse Boekdrukkers en Boekverkoopers in de Republiek der Verenigde Nederlanden Omstreeks 1570-1630*, Nieuwkoop, B. de Graaf, 1974; G. MARNEF, *Repressie en censuur in het Antwerps boekbedrijf, 1567-1576*, cit., pp. 222-227; N. ORENSTEIN et al., *Print Publishers in the Netherlands, 1580-1620*, in G. LUIJTEN, A. VAN SUCHTELEN (eds.), *Dawn of the Golden Age: Northern Netherlandish Art, 1580-1620*, Zwolle, Waanders, 1993, pp. 175-177.

¹³ For two recent studies on Habsburg prints in the Southern Netherlands, see R. ADAM, R. DE MARCO, M. WALSBY (eds.), *Books and Prints at the Heart of the Catholic Reformation in the Low Countries (16th-17th centuries)*, Leiden, 2023, p. 1, n2-3 and M. STENSLAND, *Habsburg Communication*, cit., pp. 36-44. Cfr. I.M. VELDMAN, *Convictions and Polemics: Protestant Imagery in the 16th century*, in EADEM, *Images for the Eye and Soul, Function and Meaning in Netherlandish Prints (1450-1650)*, Leiden, Primavera Pers, 2006, pp. 91-117.

¹⁴ Z. VAN RUYVEN-ZEMEN, M. LEESBERG (compilers), J. VAN DER STOCK, M. LEESBERG (eds.), *The New Hollstein Dutch & Flemish Etchings, Engravings and Woodcuts 1450-1700*, (Wierix) IX, Rotterdam, Sound & Vision Publishers, 2004, no. 1919.

¹⁵ E. KOCH, *Being Like Jesus and Mary*, in M. KERN, K. KRÜGER (eds.), *Transcultural Imaginations of the Sacred*, Leiden; Boston, Brill, 2019, p. 214. It is also referred to as a portable altar by F. BOUZA, in *Imagen y propaganda capítulos de historia cultural del reinado de Felipe II*, Madrid, Akal Ediciones, Tres Cantos, 1998, p. 142.

¹⁶ This engraving has been discussed or briefly mentioned in the following publications: S. GROENVELD et al., *Ketters en papen onder Filips II*, exh. cat., Utrecht, Rijksmuseum Het Catharijneconvent, 1986, pp. 18-19, cat. 4; F. BOUZA, in *Imagen y propaganda*, cit., p. 142; F.J. BOUZA-ÁLVAREZ, M.-J. TUPET, *Monarchie en Lettres d'imprimerie. Typographie et propagande au temps de Philip II*, «Revue d'histoire modern et contemporaine», 41, 2 (1994), pp. 212-213; F.C. CREMADES (ed.), *Felipe II un monarca y su época. Un príncipe del renacimiento*, exh. cat., Madrid, Sociedad Estatal para la Conmemoración de los Centenarios de Felipe II y Carlos V, 1998, cat. 200; D. HORST, *Opstand*, cit., pp. 52-56; F.E. BEEMON, *Images of Philip II*, cit., p. 59; R. MULCAHY, *Philip II of Spain, Patron of the Arts*, Dublin, Four Courts Press, 2004, pp. 58-59; M. STENSLAND, *Habsburg Communication in the Dutch Revolt*, cit., pp. 40-44; E. KOCH, *Being Like Jesus and Mary*, cit., p. 214.

faceted argument about the sacralization of the Spanish king. Indeed, the print medium itself proffers an argument about preservation: the preservation of Philip II as overlord of the Netherlands, the preservation of Catholicism in the Low Countries, and the preservation of the devotional object it depicts. Rare and direct, the engraving defends the king against slander and implies through the metaphor of imprinting that Philip's policies and authority are an impression of God's.

Authorship and Design

Two states of the print are known, though there has been confusion and repeated errors in the scholarship concerning authorship. The first state is a proof and carries the signatures of Angelo Speeck, an unknown Flemish draughtsman¹⁷, as designer and Johannes Wierix as publisher. It is presumed that another state, which has not been traced, would have contained Speeck's signature and the full text¹⁸. In the only other known state, text has been added in the cartouche, and a new signature appears at the bottom: Hans Lieftrinck's (I or II) in placement of Speeck's. The Lieftrincks were successful Flemish publishers working in Antwerp¹⁹. Yet, as pointed out in the recently published Lieftrinck Hollstein volume, Hans Lieftrinck I/II did not engrave plates, so they likely came into possession of the copperplate sometime after the second state and functioned only as publisher of this third state²⁰. It would have been Johannes Wierix, then, who cut the plate after Speeck's design. An overview of the scholarship on this print proves a repeated error: many authors have mistaken Johannes Wierix's signature for that of his brother Hieronymus's²¹. Johannes Wierix made prints for both sides of the divide before the fall of Antwerp in 1585, after which he became devoutly Catholic in his print production. The motivations of Speeck remain unknown.

In the later state, the cartouche has been filled with two scriptural verses (Proverbs 21:1; 1 Peter 2:13-14): «The King's heart is under the Lord's hand and he turns it wherever he will» and «Submit yourselves to every ordinance of man for the Lord's sake: whether it be to the King, as supreme; or unto governors, as unto them that are sent by him for the punishment of evildoers, and for the praise of them that do well. For so is the will of God». In sum, the inscriptions promote Philip as a faithful servant to God and, therefore, as a ruler who should be obeyed²². Printed in 1568, the engraving was made the year after the Duke of Alva took control in Antwerp and oversaw the executions of the well-respected noblemen Counts Egmont and Hoorne. He ordered the trials of twelve thousand "heretics" and presided over the capital punishment of over one thousand Reformist sympathizers. It was thus largely King Philip II's deputy, the Duke of Alva, who attracted the rebels' ire at this early stage of the Eighty Years' War²³. The print, nevertheless, implicitly defends these unpopular policies

¹⁷ The signature "Angelo Speeck AVTORE" also appears on Frans Menton's engraving, *A Couple Surprised by Death* (British Museum, 1928,0313.183). D.P. ZANI, *Enciclopedia metodica critico-ragionata delle belle arti dell'abate*, vol. XVII, part I, Parma, Dalla Tipografia Ducale, p. 353.

¹⁸ J. LUYCKX (comp.), H. LEEFLANG (ed.), *The New Hollstein Dutch & Flemish Etchings, Engravings and Woodcuts 1450-1700*, (The Lieftrinck Dynasty), part I, Ouderkerk aan den IJssel, Sound & Vision Publishers, p. 158.

¹⁹ For the Lieftrincks and their publishing industry, see D. LANDAU, P. PARSHALL, *The Renaissance Print, 1470-1550*, New Haven, Yale University Press, 1994, pp. 220-223.

²⁰ J. LUYCKX (comp.), H. LEEFLANG (ed.), *Lieftrinck Dynasty*, Part I, cit., p. 158.

²¹ Hieronymus Wierix is credited, for example, in the following publications: F.E. BEEMON, *Images of Philip II*, cit., 59; F. BOUZA, *Imagen y propaganda*, cit., 142; F.C. CREMADES (ed.), *Felipe II un monarca y su época. Un príncipe del renacimiento*, cit., cat. 200.

²² The political rhetoric of "absolute sovereign" was codified in the sixteenth-century writings of Jean Bodin. See J. BODIN, *Les six livres de la république*, Lyon, Par Jacques du Puys, 1580.

²³ D. HORST, *De Opstand*, cit., pp. 54-55. As van Gelderen notes, in the early years of the Revolt, William of Orange

as being sanctioned by God, for Alva was directed by Philip to punish the evildoers.

The engraving offers more scripture to contextualize its imagery from the Apostle Paul, who is represented in the oval above the portraits. He emphatically points to his own verse, lettered along the edge of the pediment above Christ: «For there is no power but of God»²⁴. The verse is drawn from Paul's letter to the Romans, which puts forward the argument that because God has endowed the king with power, the guilty will be damned, and the good will be praised²⁵. Paul's text additionally emphasizes the king's punitive role (Romans 13:4): «for he beareth not the sword in vain: for he is the minister of God, a revenger to execute wrath upon him that doeth evil». Philip II is, therefore, presented as a man with vengeance against those who disobey God. In the context of the Low Countries, the Protestant sympathizers and those opposed to heresy laws would be the subject of his ire.

Beneath Christ and Philip, the text becomes pithy and device-like: «Fear God»²⁶ under Christ, and below Philip is the text «Honor the King»²⁷. Exegetically, the inscriptions put forth justification for King Philip's claim to rulership and assert that obeying God amounts to supporting King Philip II²⁸. Text and image elevate the Spanish ruler to a godly level. Philip was believed to be an incarnation of God by members of his court²⁹, who thought that God «made kings his vicars on earth»³⁰. Philip II felt, as van Gelderen has argued, that keeping Catholicism the religion of the entirety of his lands was paramount³¹. To a Habsburg mindset, the diptych's pairing of Christ and Philip was not sacrilegious but part of their ideology of rulership—that the king was chosen by God as protector of Catholicism and executor of law. Philip II's propaganda, after all, was to put himself forward as «the right hand of the Father»³². As Mulcahy has noted, the joining of the spiritual and royal realms in the print finds parallel in Jacopo da Trezzo's tabernacle of the high altar of the Holy Sacrament in the

attempted to defend Philip II: M.VAN GELDEREN, *The Political Thought of the Dutch Revolt, 1555-1590*, cit., p. 122.

²⁴ Romans 13:1.

²⁵ «Let every soul be subject unto the higher powers. For there is no power but of God: the powers that be are ordained of God. Whosoever therefore resisteth the power, resisteth the ordinance of God: and they that resist shall receive to themselves damnation. For rulers are not a terror to good works, but to the evil. Wilt thou then not be afraid of the power? Do that which is good, and thou shalt have praise of the same: For he is the minister of God to thee for good. But if thou do that which is evil, be afraid; for he beareth not the sword in vain: for he is the minister of God, a revenger to execute wrath upon him that doeth evil». Romans 13:1-4.

²⁶ Romans 13:1

²⁷ Peter 2:17.

²⁸ The allegiance of Philip to God is briefly discussed in M. STENSLAND, *Habsburg Communication*, cit., pp. 40-41. G. PARKER, *Imprudent King: A New Life of Philip II*, New Haven, Yale University Press, 2014; M.-E. DUCREUX, *Dévotion et légitimation: patronages sacrés dans l'Europe des Habsbourg*, Liège, Presses universitaires de Liège, 2016.

²⁹ E.E. BEEMON, *Images of Philip II*, cit., p. 59. As noted by Martin van Gelderen, Philip II's adherence to absolute monarchy aligned with those of the Burgundian dukes, who also felt their political power stemmed directly from God. M.VAN GELDEREN, *The Political Thought of the Dutch Revolt, 1555-1590*, cit., pp. 30-31.

³⁰ E.E. BEEMON, *Images of Philip II*, cit., p. 59. H. KAMEN, *Philip of Spain*, Yale, Yale University Press, 1997, p. 227.

³¹ M.VAN GELDEREN, *The Political Thought*, cit., p. 32. Philip II's mixture of piety and politics is reflected in the *Pietas Austriaca*, or Austrian Habsburg sovereigns' marriage of state with devotion to the Eucharist and Virgin, as well as trust in the Holy Cross and veneration of saints. Much has been written on the *Pietas Austriaca*, with key sources including: A. CORETH, *Pietas Austriaca*, trans. W.D. BOWMAN, A.M. LEITGEB, West Lafayette, Indiana, Purdue University Press, 2004; M.-E. DUCREUX, *Emperors, Kingdoms, Territories: Multiple Versions of the "Pietas Austriaca"?*, «The Catholic Historical Review», 92, 2 (2011), pp. 276-304.

³² F.J. BOUZA-ÁLVAREZ, M.-J. TUPET, *Monarchie en Lettres d'imprimerie. Typographie et propagande au temps de Philip II*, cit., p. 210.

Church of San Lorenzo de Real de El Escorial, where Philip's name is added to that of Christ's³³. Moreover, the divine rule is possibly realized in the sphere engulfed in flames surmounting the pediment, perhaps signifying the *cruciger*—the Christian symbol of authority bestowed from Christ to Philip.

Two ornamental sphinxes are posed diagonally on the sides of the pediment. Often included in grotesque ornamentation, the sphinx carried an ambivalent meaning³⁴. As argued by Chris Askholt Hammeken and Maria Fabricius Hansen, early modern ornamental framework served as a “precondition” for the central content of the work, and here the decorative sphinxes could signal divine power³⁵. In Hadrianus Junius's *Emblemata* of 1565, the dual nature of the sphinx is explained in the following terms: «Love and fear God»³⁶. The duality underscores the statements printed below Christ and Philip: «Fear God» and «Honor the King», and the joint version of power represented by the two halves of the diptych, delineated by a sphinx on each side. A loving and protecting God and ruler is matched by an avenger, dressed for battle and to conquer a rebelling faction in the Low Countries³⁷. Together, both text and ornament articulate Philip II's right to rule and right for subjects to obey him.

Protective Armor

In supplying the Habsburg regime with justification for the treatment of the heretical rebels, the engraving also advocates against the slanderous print censored by the regime. Instead, the print proffers a different use of the printmaking medium, one that straddles a political and devotional function.

King Philip II is placed on the right side of the diptych, a position normally reserved for the Virgin Mary, so that he assumes the additional role of intercessor for the Low Countries people³⁸. Dressed in armor, distinguished by its decorative, vine-like motif in bands on the pauldrons, his posture and costume resemble Leon Leoni's bronze bust of the king from before 1556 [fig. 2]³⁹. Although the Leoni⁴⁰ bust wears armor with an etched collar and crucifix on the breastplate, the

³³ R. MULCAHY, *Philip II of Spain, Patron of the Arts*, cit., p. 59. C.P.M. BROWN et al., *Philip and the Escorial: Technology and the Representation*, exh. cat., Providence, Rhode Island, Brown University, 1990, cat. 9. Philip II could see the altar from his bedroom. See also: A. PÉREZ DE TUDELA, *Ceremonial, usos y exposición de las reliquias del Real Monasterio de San Lorenzo de El Escorial en tiempos de Felipe II*, in L.E. ALCALÁ, J.L. GONZÁLEZ GARCÍA, *Spolia sancta: reliquias y arte entre el Viejo y el Nuevo Mundo*, Madrid, Akal, pp. 191-208.

³⁴ S. COHEN, *Animals as Disguised Symbols in Renaissance Art*, Leiden; Boston, Brill, 2008, p. 248.

³⁵ C. HAMMEKEN, M.F. HANSEN, *Introduction*, in C. HAMMEKEN, M.F. HANSEN (eds.), *Ornament and Monstrosity in Early Modern Art*, Amsterdam, Amsterdam University Press, 2019, p. 13.

³⁶ First noted in M. ASTON, *The King's Bedpost: Reformation and Iconography in a Tudor Group Portrait*, Cambridge, Cambridge University Press, 1993, p. 86, n95. H. JUNIUS, *Emblemata*, Antwerp, 1565, XLII. Translation provided in P. GOODRICH, *Legal Emblems and the Art of Law: Obiter Depicta as the Vision of Governance*, Cambridge, Cambridge University Press, p. 32.

³⁷ The renaissance sculptor Donatello, moreover, featured sphinxes in the Madonna's throne of wisdom.

³⁸ D. HORST, *Opstand*, cit., p. 54. See also R. MULCAHY, *Phillip II*, cit., pp. 58-59.

³⁹ The breastplate of the armor is additionally etched with the Woman of the Apocalypse. Philip II is likely wearing the same armor in a portrait at the Royal Museums Greenwich by an unknown artist, (BHC2951). For militaristic associations with the Apocalyptic Virgin and its variants, including the Virgin of Guadalupe, see L. SILVER, *Full of Grace: Mariolatry in Post-Reformation Germany*, in M.W. COLE, R.E. ZORACH (eds.), *The Idol in the Age of Art*, Burlington, Ashgate, 2009, pp. 289-315.

⁴⁰ K. HELMSTUTLER DI DIO, *Leone Leoni's Portrait Busts of the Habsburgs and the Taste for Sculpture in Spain*, in EADEM, *Leone Leoni and the Status of the Artist at the End of the Renaissance*, Farnham, Ashgate, 2011, pp. 46-55.

more simplified dress of Philip in the diptych recalls its basic design elements. In 1557, Antonius Mor, at the court in Brussels, painted Philip II in regalia for the Battle of San Quentin, where Spanish troops delivered victory over the French. In truth, Philip II did not appear on the battlefield, but Mor's fictionalized painting credited victory to the king's militaristic and royal power⁴¹. Indeed, Philip II was portrayed in armor by some of the most well-respected artists of the era, including Titian, Mor, and Leoni⁴². Considered some of his most luxurious and expensive objects, the king's armor functioned as a tangible sign of his power⁴³. Armor, moreover, was endowed with the history of chivalry and, specifically, of defending Christianity⁴⁴. In the context of contemporary politics, the armor in the diptych is a signifier of King Philip's defense of Catholicism from attacks by Protestantism. Philip II's hard, gleaming armor, fitted to the top of his neck, stands in contrast to Christ's attire: a plain, soft tunic, exposing his neck. Philip II is, therefore, staged as an able-bodied protector and defender of Christ.

Hung around the Spanish king's neck, his chain, or "potence", of the Order of the Golden Fleece signifies his membership in and fidelity to the highest chivalric order of Christianity and functions as a symbol of his holy crusade to defend Christ⁴⁵. Members of the Order wore a collar hung with a golden ram, representing the "Golden Fleece" of Jason, which also stood as a symbol of the resurrection: the mystical Lamb of God, who appears across the diptych as the realized Christ. The "potence" was the most frequently used signifier for the Habsburg monarchy, and armorers even incorporated it into royals' armor, as in the case of Leon Leoni's bust (although in the diptych, the chain is markedly separate from Philip's suit)⁴⁶.

Besides bringing war to mind, the king's armor⁴⁷ also recalls the bond between intaglio printmaking and armor production: the technique of etching metal plates originated in armor workshops⁴⁸. Underscoring the connection between armor and ornamental prints, the patterned design of the armor is enlarged and matched in the pediment and at the bases of the diptych's Corinthian columns, where organic, vine-like motifs likewise fill the structure. Scroll-like lines are also employed to ornament the base of the diptych and the cartouche, creating rhyme between the design of the armor and the decoration of the devotional structure. The choice to decorate the tabernacle structure like the armor materially equates the devotional object with the protective metal suit, visually recalling the shared intaglio processes but also associating the engraving itself with the properties of armor and, therefore, the protective qualities of the image.

Indeed, like armor, the engraving preserves the king's image against seditious pamphlets and prints

⁴¹ R. MULCAHY, *Philip II of Spain*, cit., p. 11.

⁴² See also: A. PÉREZ DE TUDELA, *Las copias de los retratos de Antonio Moro durante su segunda estancia en España (1559-1561)*, in E. LAMAS, D. GARCÍA CUETO (eds.), *Copies of Flemish Masters in the Hispanic World (1500-1700): "Flandes" by Substitution*, Turnhout, Brepols, 2021, pp. 113-133; J. WOODALL, *Anthonis Mor: Art and Authority*, Leiden; Boston, Brill, 2016; D. BODART, *Pouvoirs du portrait sous les Habsbourg d'Espagne*, Paris, CTHS, 2011.

⁴³ Á. SOLER DEL CAMPO, *The Art of Power: Royal Armor and Portraits from Imperial Spain*, exh. cat., Madrid, Sociedad Estatal para la Acción Cultural Exterior, 2009, p. 15.

⁴⁴ *Ibidem*. p. 81; see also: B.K. FRIEDER, *Chivalry and the Perfect Prince: Tournaments, Art, and Armor at the Spanish Habsburg Court, 1504-1605*, Kirksville, MO, Truman State Univ. Press, 2008.

⁴⁵ From 1556, Philip II was fourth Sovereign Head of the Golden Fleece. See H. PAUWELS, *Het gulden vlies: vijf eeuwen kunst en geschiedenis*, exh. cat., Bruges, Stadsbestuur Brugge, 1962, p. 40. See also: F. CHECA CREMADES, *La Orden del Toisón de Oro y sus soberanos (1430-2011)*, exh. cat., Madrid, Fundación Carlos de Amberes, 2011.

⁴⁶ B.K. FRIEDER, *Chivalry and the Perfect Prince*, cit., p. 68.

⁴⁷ On Philip II's armor, see *Ibidem*.

⁴⁸ Briefly, see N.M. ORENSTEIN, A. STIJNMAN, *Bitten with Spirit: Etching Materials and Techniques in the Sixteenth Century*, in C. JENKINS, N.M. ORENSTEIN, F. SPIRA (eds.), *The Renaissance of Etching*, exh. cat., New Haven, Yale University Press, 2019, pp. 15, 17.

and honors it through presentation in a religious structure surrounded with text asserting his divine authority and promise to defend the faith. By nature of its medium, the engraving also can be interpreted as a protection against iconoclasm: distancing the actual tabernacle—an “idol” to a Protestant mind—by representing it at remove as a paper impression of the actual object. In other words, the engraving does not purport to be the actual holy sculpture itself: it is a mere replication of the tabernacle. This protection of Habsburg ideology and Roman Catholicism finds similitude in Philip II’s own defense of the Church and Spanish empire.

Graven Image

This engraved image is a graven image: the print could be a copy of, or inspired by, a personal diptych owned by Philip II, though there is no evidence to confirm this theory. Still, the print presents as the indexical trace of a real or imagined royal matrix of the Spanish king’s devotion to Christ and his assumption of godly rulership. Moreover, the figures of Christ and Philip are portrayed themselves as images—prints, or possibly paintings—set against the architectural frame of the diptych. Facing one another, Philip appears as the mirror image of Christ, as if he is an impression of Christ’s face. This kingly replication argues for Philip as an incarnation of God.

The imprinting metaphor is further evidenced by the golden ram, which hangs in reverse from Philip’s neck, the head notably turned to the right, not the left. This could imply that the figure of Philip was copied (perhaps from the Leone Leoni sculpture) without reversing it for the print composition, but it also symbolically suggests that the ram is a literal impression of the image of Christ, who appears across the diptych. This diptych would have been considered iconoclastic fodder for its representation of God. Printed two years after the Fury, it reinstates, with the approving imprint of Philip II, the primacy of depictions of God and, more specifically, personalized devotional objects.

The composition of the engraving is inspired by the fifteenth-century tradition of the devotional portrait diptych, where the devotee is portrayed on one wing and the Virgin and Child on the other—allowing a spiritual dialogue between owner and holy figures⁴⁹. Yet, Philip’s print also has roots in consular diptychs made to celebrate the political power of the Roman consul’s position⁵⁰. Reproducing this political and devotional tabernacle, the print demands the viewer to both recognize the print reproductive impression of Christ to Philip and participate in and revere Philip’s personal devotion to Christ while also offering political devotion to their secular king⁵¹.

Royalist Prints

Two more royalist engravings, uniting God and Philip II, likewise portray the Spanish king’ divine authority. Produced after the diptych, their existence is indicative of the compelling arguments, visualization, and appeal of the Wierix print in the Antwerp market. While they stress the godly sanctioned power of secular rulers, they do not imitate a devotional object, nor do they represent the heavenly and secular rulers as images. Instead, they narrativize the encounter between Christ and

⁴⁹ For the history of this tradition, see J. O. HAND, C. A. METZGER, R. SPRONK (eds.), *Prayers and Portraits: Unfolding the Netherlandish Diptych*, New Haven, Yale University Press, 2006.

⁵⁰ L. GELFAND, *The Devotional Portrait Diptych and the Manuscript Tradition*, in J. O. HAND, R. SPRONK (eds.), *Essays in Context: Unfolding the Netherlandish Diptych*, New Haven, Yale University Press, 2006, p. 48.

⁵¹ For the authority of King Philip II, see P. K. MONOD, *The Power of Kings: Monarchy and Religion in Europe 1589-1715*, New Haven, Yale University Press, 1999, p. 59.

Philip.

In Pieter Nagel's *Christ and Philip II* (1569) [fig. 3], the Habsburg king and Christ share the *globus cruciger*, or "cross-bearing orb," together, while a haloed Christ extends his hand in the gesture of blessing; Philip gazes towards Christ in profile, recalling his profile portrait struck and engraved on medals and coins. His coat of arms is displaced just over his shoulder, like a secularized nimbus to match Christ's halo. The divine and earthly kings are the same height, but Philip is portrayed closer to the viewer, holding his sword at-the-ready, making clear his role as intercessor for the Low Countries and defender of Christianity and his people. A symbol of Christ's dominion of the world, the orb likewise signifies Philip's authority and dominion over the Spanish Empire⁵². The inscription below states that Philip obeys heavenly laws: «You are Philip who will subject the world to the laws of Christ—may the honor of the faith prevail and may you serve justice and peace—and protect the people and obey the holy laws of the ancestors». Produced only one year after the diptych engraving, Nagel's print likewise promotes the Spanish king as the counterpart to Christ, but the diptych stands apart in its persuasive visual rhetoric about protection and preservation.

The theme endured into the next decade when Johannes Wierix engraved another pro-royalist print: *Christ Gives the Symbols of Power to Philip II and Pope Gregory XIII* (1572–1580) [fig. 4]⁵³. Christ again presents the orb with the sword and olive branch to the king, but here also the pope, and blesses them. The king's crown and scepter and the pope's tiara and keys of the church sit on the altar before the two leaders, signaling the domains of their power. Positioned as the central object of the print, the globe is held aloft by all three men, indicating their respect and honor for the Church. Although the realm of Christian government and the world are divided in this print between Philip and Pope Gregory, they are presented as a pair, who rule together in a joint enterprise⁵⁴. The same inscription from the diptych appears at the base of the image: «Fear God, honor the King». In the bottom right, 2 Samuel 15: 21, though misattributed as 2 Kings, puts forward the oath of a believing viewer, king, and pope: «As the Lord lives, your life upon it, wherever you may be, in life or in death, I, your servant will be there». Near the foot of King Philip II, a pyramid engraved with the words «The Undefeated Catholic Faith», didactically indicates the preservation of the Catholic church through the power and authority held by the three figures. The renaissance humanist Christophe Plantin (1520–1589)⁵⁵, who was a successful printer and publisher in Antwerp, penned verses about his interpretation of the engraving. His exposition on the print led Daniel Horst to suggest that Plantin might have been involved in the making of this plate⁵⁶. Plantin's interpretation distills the print to the theme of divine authority and obedience, as his last line states: «And to God, and to the King, everyone must obey»⁵⁷.

⁵² Translation in M. STENSLAND, *Habsburg Communication*, cit., p. 42.

⁵³ J. CLIFTON, W.S. MELION (eds.), *Scripture for the Eyes*, cit., p. 196, no. 52. In addition, the print also proved to be further mobile and strategic in distributing imperial ideology in the transatlantic dimension of the Viceroyalty of New Spain, as it was used in José de la Mota's painting, *Christ Entrusting the World to the Pope and King of Spain* (1721, Gallery of Colonial Art, Collection of Felipe, Ana y Andrés Siegel, Mexico City). See: V. MÍNGUEZ CORNELLES, "Sine fine": *Dieu, les Habsbourg et la transmission des insignes du pouvoir au XVIe siècle*, in F. COUSINIÉ, A. LEMOINE, M. VIROL (eds.), *Soleils baroques: la gloire de Dieu et des Princes en représentation dans l'Europe moderne*, Conference proceedings (Rome; Rouen), Paris, Somogy éditions d'art, 2018, pp. 367–389 (379).

⁵⁴ D. HORST, *Opstand*, cit., p. 54.

⁵⁵ K.L. BOWEN, *Christopher Plantin and Engraved Book Illustrations in Sixteenth-century Europe*, Cambridge, Mass., Cambridge Univ. Press, 2008; D. IMHOF, *The Plantin Book Trade and the Supply of Art Objects on the Spanish Elite*, in D. VAN HEESCH, R. JANSSEN, J. VAN DER STOCK (eds.), *Netherlandish Art and Luxury Goods in Renaissance Spain*, London; Turnhout, Harvey Miller Publishers, 2018, pp. 107–121.

⁵⁶ F. BOUZA, *Imagen y propaganda*, cit., p. 17; D. HORST, *Opstand*, cit., p. 55.

⁵⁷ Translation my own. See F. BOUZA, *Imagen y propaganda*, cit., p. 17 for full text.

But everyone did not. The Wierix print proved potent, for it inspired a rebel response in Theodoor de Bry's c. 1576 engraving, *William of Orange Kneels Before Christ* [fig. 5]⁵⁸. Here the figures of King Philip II and Pope Gregory XIII appear in benediction before another orb, but one presented by the devil and filled with scenes of sin. On the left, William of Orange also kneels; but in contrast, he has turned away from the world and prays in the same posture to Christ for peace and the freedom of worship. Christ responds that sin is the root of harm and that the evildoers shall be punished. The manipulation and mocking of the trope and visualization of Philip II's royal prerogative indicates that the Wierix engravings were known in the Antwerp print market and had made enough of an impact to muster a response.

Conclusion

It is unclear whether the trio of royalist engravings were commissioned or sold freely on the market⁵⁹. Whether printed under the order of Philip or the Duke of Alva, the prints advertised the king's position to a far larger group of people than an allegorical painting ever could⁶⁰. Against the backdrop of censorship laws and the flood of rebel propaganda, these prints exemplify an ideal articulation of Habsburg political and religious ideology. In place of satire, violent images, or documentary siege maps, these engravings rely on the faces of Christ and Philip to make their argument.

Ebba Koch has even suggested that the diptych engraving might have been circulated by Jesuits at the Mughal court, aggrandizing King Philip's protection of the Catholic church within the Spanish empire⁶¹. The Latin texts would have limited the audience of the prints, which stand in contrast to the vernacular language used in rebel propaganda to appeal to a wider base of individuals. Because of the reliance on Latin, Daniel Horst contends that these royalist prints were not intended to persuade a wide array of people but rather maintain the loyalist opinions of an educated elite⁶². While this may well be true, the fact that Theodoor de Bry made a mocking print in response is evidence that these prints might also have had wider appeal and reach. At their core, these engravings offer a fervent example of kingly authority and devotion and agitation for maintaining the status quo of Philip as overlord⁶³.

Because prints were rarely used by Habsburgs to distribute their propaganda in the Low Countries, these engravings offer singular views into the logic of Habsburg ideology and, in particular, the diptych engraving. This print stands alone in its self-reflexive representation of godly power, drawing upon the nature of the medium to prove its point. Daring in its representation of an "idolatrous image," the reproductive medium distances the tabernacle matrix while also circulating Philip's personal devotional image, real or imagined, to the Southern Netherlandish public. The theme of protection permeates the rendering, from Philip's etched armor to his "potence" and symbol of chivalry to the engraving and its power, in order to both represent the king and preserve and protect his image. The king is rendered as a mirror image, an "impression" of Christ, supplying visual evidence for acknowledging the king as an incarnation of Christ. As a flimsy ephemeral print, Philip's personalized political and devotional object is protected by reproduction and the nature of

⁵⁸ D. HORST, *Opstand*, cit., pp. 190–193. Note that while the print certainly satirizes King Philip II and the pope, it tempers the criticism with a caption that declares that all parties wish for peace.

⁵⁹ M. STENSLAND, *Habsburg Communication*, cit., p. 43.

⁶⁰ F. BOUZA, *Imagen y propaganda*, cit., p. 143.

⁶¹ E. KOCH, *Being Like Jesus and Mary*, cit., p. 215.

⁶² D. HORST, *Opstand*, cit., p. 59.

⁶³ *Ibidem*, p. 54.

«FOR THERE IS NO POWER BUT OF GOD»

the medium, defending the object it reproduces but also the king and Catholicism.



1. Hans Liefrinck I or II (presumed publisher),
Johannes Wierix (presumed engraver):
Diptych with Christ and Philip II
Brussels, Koninklijke Bibliotheek van België, inv. no. S.I 23104
(© Koninklijke Bibliotheek van België)

«FOR THERE IS NO POWER BUT OF GOD»



2. Leone Leoni: *Philip II of Spain*
London, Royal Collection Trust, inv. no. RCIN 35323
(© His Majesty King Charles III 2023)



3. Pieter Nagel: *Philip II Receiving the Globe from Christ*
Paris, Bibliothèque nationale de France, Department of Prints and
Photography, inv. no. N 2, Philippe II (Roi d'Espagne), II, D 236592
(© Bibliothèque nationale de France)

«FOR THERE IS NO POWER BUT OF GOD»



4. Johannes Wierix (engraver), Ambrosius Francken (designer), Willem van Haecht (publisher): *Christ Gives the Symbols of Power to Philip II and Pope Gregory XIII*

London, British Museum, inv. no. 1943,0128.1
(© The Trustees of the British Museum)



5. Theodoor de Bry: *William of Orange Kneels before Christ*
Dordrecht, Huis Van Gijn, inv. no. VG608
(© Atlas Van Gijn)