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Vernacular Bible Reading in the Seventeenth-Century Netherlands. A Confrontation between Jansenist Defenders and Anti-Jansenist Opponents

Els Agten

This essay aims to explore the question of whether Catholics in the Catholic Netherlands[1] were allowed to read vernacular Bibles during the seventeenth century.[2] Opinions about whether the reading of vernacular Bibles was allowed differed greatly, and the issue was most prominent in the discussions between the Jansenist defenders of the practice and their anti-Jansenist opponents.[3] The Jansenist controversy and the later schism of 1723 were profoundly influenced by the politico-religious situation in the Netherlands. On 26 July 1581, the Seven United Provinces in the North, which in 1648 under the Peace of Westphalia would be recognised as the Dutch Republic, withdrew from the authority of Philip II of Spain by signing the *Plakkaat van Verlatinghe* or Act of Abjuration. Henceforth, the northern part of the Netherlands became a predominantly Protestant nation, although its population included a considerable minority of Catholics who met in clandestine churches, often in barns and attics. The southern part, the Spanish Low Countries, remained under Spanish rule and stayed Catholic. Confronted with this situation, and particularly with the acute shortage of priests in the North, in 1592 Pope Clement VIII (1592–1605)

[1] Following Judith Pollmann, the terms Low Countries and Netherlands will be used to refer to the areas that currently fall within the Netherlands, Belgium, Luxemburg and a part of Northern France. See Judith Pollmann, *Catholic Identity and the Revolt of the Netherlands, 1520–1635* (Oxford: University Press, 2011). – I would like to thank Mieke Vanhengel and Fons Tuyaerts for their translation help.

[2] The article offers a summary of my doctoral thesis, *"Meint gy dat gy ook wel verstaet, het gene gy leest?" The Catholic Church and the Dutch Bible: From the Council of Trent to the Jansenist Controversy (1564–1733)* (Louvain 2014), which was supervised by Prof. Dr Wim François and Prof. Dr Mathijs Lamberigts. For a short animated film that summarises my dissertation, see http://vimeo.com/97723785.

[3] This essay uses the terms "Jansenist" and "anti-Jansenist" in order to identify the different factions under study, recognising that this runs the risk of falling into an antithetical paradigm. It suggests that the well-established dichotomy between Jansenist and anti-Jansenist might be overcome by instead distinguishing between defenders and opponents of vernacular Bible reading.

declared the Northern Low Countries a mission area. The Catholic ministry, conducted under the guidance of a vicar apostolic, was described in the documents of the Roman Curia as the *Missio Hollandica* or Dutch mission. During the seventeenth century, the position of the Catholic Church in the Dutch Republic was at stake in the struggle between the regular and the secular clergy. This struggle was linked with the Jansenist controversy as a consequence of which many Jansenists fled the persecutions in the Southern Netherlands and found refuge in the more tolerant Dutch Republic.

This essay consists of three parts. The first describes two key arguments that dominated seventeenth-century discussions on vernacular Bible reading in the Low Countries. First, the interpretation and the implementation of the *Regula Quarta,* one of the ten rules defining Catholic book censorship contained in the Tridentine Index of forbidden books (1564), will be considered. Second, the influence of the seventeenth-century Bible translation project of the *Messieurs* of Port-Royal, and in particular their French *Nouveau Testament de Mons* (1667), will be discussed. The viewpoints of six stakeholders in the debates are then explored. The second part presents the ideas of three vehement opponents of vernacular Bible reading in the seventeenth-century Netherlands, the Jesuit Cornelius Hazart, the Dominican Martinus Harney, and the Louvain professor Martinus Steyaert. The final part focuses on the lives, ideas and works of three Bible translators who are generally considered to be Jansenists (Aegidius de Witte, Andreas van der Schuur and Philippus Laurentius Verhulst), and compares their New Testament translations through a case study of the letter of Saint Paul to the Ephesians 3:20.

1. Two key arguments: the *Regula Quarta* (1564) and the *Nouveau Testament de Mons* (1667)

From the sixteenth century, religious debates in Western Europe were dominated by the question of the legitimacy of vernacular Bible translations. Both humanists and reformers were in favour of a direct reading of Scripture as a basis for much-needed ecclesiastical reform. Luther, Calvin and other Protestant reformers considered the Bible to be the only reliable source of authority, overriding Catholic teachings, doctrines and customs. Thanks to the invention of the printing press and the appearance of Protestant vernacular Bible translations, the Bible became directly accessible to readers or listeners without the mediation of priests or preachers. Con-

fronted with these "heretical" Bible translations, the Catholic Church sought to suppress personal reading and interpretation of the Bible. At the same time, the Catholic Church undertook a comprehensive project of revival and transformation in order to reassert its position and authority. The long-awaited Council of Trent (1545–1563) constituted an important catalyst in this process of Catholic Reform. The conciliar agenda was dominated by two important aims: the formulation of an appropriate response to the doctrinal issues raised by the Protestant reformers, and the countering of the numerous abuses of the discipline and of the inner life of the Church that had developed.

The question of the validity of vernacular Bible reading was first tackled during the debates preceding the fourth session of the Council of Trent (1546), which considered biblical matters.[4] However, defenders and opponents of Bible reading in the vernacular could not reach an agreement and the Council consequently did not pronounce on the matter.[5] Decision in this regard remained with the local authorities who continued to regulate practice according to local tradition.

In 1564 Pope Pius IV (1559–1564) broke the conciliar silence with regard to vernacular Bible reading when he published the Tridentine Index of forbidden books. This catalogue included ten rules, also known as the

[4] For the discussions of Bible reading in the vernacular at Trent see, amongst others, Sergio Fernández López, *Lectura y prohibición de la Biblia en lengua vulgar: defensores y detractores* (León: Universidad de León, 2003), 161–178; Robert E. McNally, "The Council of Trent and Vernacular Bibles", *Theological Studies* 27 (1966) 204–227; Leopold Lentner, *Volkssprache und Sakralsprache: Geschichte einer Lebensfrage bis zum Ende des Konzils von Trient* (Vienna: Herder, 1964), 237–264.

[5] The debates and discussions on the biblical question resulted in the drafting of two decrees that were promulgated during the Fourth Session of the Council on 8 April 1546. In the first decree, the Council fathers discussed the relation between Scripture and apostolic tradition, distinguishing two channels of communication through which the Gospel, was transmitted: Scripture and the apostolic tradition. The second decree, also described as the Vulgate decree, dealt with the edition and use of the sacred books. The Council fathers declared that of all the Latin editions in circulation, the Vulgate must be held to be the authentic version for public readings, disputations, sermons and expositions. John O'Malley emphasises in this regard that the drafting committee did not intend to suppress other Latin versions, although the decree was soon interpreted that way. See John W. O'Malley, *Trent. What Happened at the Council* (Cambridge, MA – London: Belknap Press of Harvard University Press, 2013), 98.

Regulae Indicis (Rules of the Index) or Tridentine rules, that were considered as the principles of Catholic book censorship and book policy. The *Regula Quarta* or fourth rule allowed the reading of vernacular Bibles by the laity if this was expected to lead to an increase in faith and piety in the individual believer who requested it, and if this believer had both taken advice from the parish priest or father confessor and obtained written permission from the local bishop or inquisitor.[6]

The *Regula Quarta* was included not only in Roman indices but also in the local catalogues of forbidden books that were printed in the Netherlands in the second half of the sixteenth century. During the sixteenth and seventeenth centuries, observance of the *Regula Quarta* was also regularly required by the decrees of the provincial councils and by the diocesan synods organised by archbishops and bishops in the three newly created ecclesiastical provinces of the Netherlands Cambrai, Mechlin and Utrecht, to implement Trent's decisions in local churches. However, it proved well-nigh impossible to promulgate the Tridentine decrees in the ecclesiastical province of Utrecht in the North, precisely because of the Revolt, the successful rise of Protestantism and the fact that Protestant vernacular Bibles were fairly freely available.[7]

The question of the legitimacy of vernacular Bible translations and the validity of the *Regula Quarta* reappeared in the second half of the seventeenth century, this time in the context of the Jansenist controversy. Although the Jansenists are usually associated with theological debates on grace, free will and predestination, they were also known as advocates of vernacular Bible reading. They were particularly inspired by the method of positive theology, which was based on a historical and philological approach of Scripture and the other sources of revelation including the writings of the Church fathers, Augustine in particular. In the latter part of the sixteenth century, the Augustinian method, opposed to the method of scholasticism, gained importance in Louvain and proved to be an impor-

[6] For the Latin text of the decree, see Jésus M. De Bujanda et al. (eds), *Index de Rome 1557, 1559, 1564: Les premiers index romains et l'index du Concile de Trente* (Index des livres interdits 8; Sherbrooke: Université de Sherbrooke, 1990), 815.

[7] For an overview of the reception of Trent's *Regula Quarta* in the Low Countries, see Els Agten/Wim François, "The Reception of Trent's Regula Quarta (1564) and Vernacular Bible Reading in the Low Countries", *Trajecta* 24/1 (2015) 33–60.

tant aid in the struggles against Protestantism.[8] The Jansenists not only studied the writings of the Church Fathers, but also the liturgical practice of the early Church, rediscovering the role of the laity in the liturgical life of the Church, and subsequently seeking to grant lay people access to translations of the Bible and of liturgical texts. The so-called *Messieurs de Port-Royal* were also important defenders of Jansenist ideas on Bible reading. Between 1653 and 1708, they undertook a major Bible translation project, through which they wanted to spread a new ideal of spiritual devotion among the laity.[9] They considered Bible reading a right and an obligation for everyone, lay people and women included. Their translations marked the beginning of a new era in the perception of vernacular Bible reading, making vernacular Bibles widely available to Catholics and thus signifying a break with the restrictive Tridentine rules concerning vernacular Bible reading, especially the *Regula Quarta*.[10] One of the main objectives of the *Messieurs* was to bring the Bible to the people by providing them with direct access to the biblical texts in their own language. The reading of the Bible, and especially of the New Testament, was not simply a right, but an obligation for everybody.[11]

A milestone in the undertaking of Port-Royal was the publication of the *Nouveau Testament de Mons* in 1667. This French translation of the New Testament, which was a joint undertaking of several *Messieurs de Port-Royal,* including Antoine Lemaistre (1608–1658), his brother Louis-Isaac Lemaistre de Sacy (1613–1684), Antoine Arnauld (1612–1694), Pierre Nicole (1625–1695) and Blaise Pascal (1623–1662), proved influen-

[8] Wim François, "Augustine and the Golden Age of Biblical Scholarship in Louvain (1550–1650)", in: Bruce Gordon et al. (eds), *Shaping the Bible in the Reformation: Books, Scholars and their Readers in the Sixteenth Century* (Leiden: Brill, 2012), 235–289; Jan Roegiers, "Le jansénisme de Louvain à la fin du XVIIe siècle", in: Guido Cooman et al. (eds), *Zeger-Bernard Van Espen at the Crossroads of Canon Law, History, Theology and Church-State Relations* (BETL 170; Louvain: Peeters, 2003), 1–17.

[9] Philippe Sellier, *Port-Royal et la littérature,* vol. 2: *Le siècle de Saint Augustin, La Rochefoucauld, Mme de Lafayette, Sacy, Racine* (Lumière classique 34; Paris: Champion, 2012), 147–159.

[10] Ellen Weaver, "Scripture and Liturgy for the Laity: The Jansenist Case for Translation", *Worship* 59 (1985) 510–521: 510–511.

[11] Bernard Chédozeau, *Port-Royal et la Bible: un siècle d'or de la Bible en France, 1650–1708* (Paris: Nolin, 2007), 368–388; Denise Leduc-Fayette, "Lire l'Écriture Sainte: un 'droit'?", *Chroniques de Port-Royal* 44 (1995) 97–112: 99–100.

tial for the production of new Dutch Bible translations in the Netherlands. The Mons translation was based on the Greek text of the Bible and the Latin Vulgate, completed by reference to interpretations offered by the Latin and Greek Church fathers and to the variant readings of existing Latin and French translations. However, the translation did not find approval in France, and the *Messieurs* therefore turned to the Spanish Low Countries, where there was a more favourable attitude towards the translation.

According to the information on its title page the *Nouveau Testament de Mons* was published in 1667 in Mons (*Bergen* in Dutch), in Hainaut, by printer Gaspard Migeot. This was, however, a false printing address, and the translation was actually printed in Amsterdam by Daniel Elzevier. During the first six months more than 5,000 copies were sold and it was reprinted several times during the seventeenth century and long thereafter. The fact that Humbertus Guilielmus de Precipiano (1627–1711), Archbishop of Mechlin (1690–1711), reacted vehemently against the Mons translation might indicate that the translation was circulating in the Spanish part of the Low Countries.[12] In addition, the translation was sent for judgment to the Holy See in Rome and was twice condemned: by Clement IX in 1668 and by Innocent XI in 1679.[13]

2. Three opponents of vernacular Bible reading in the Southern Low Countries

The new translation ideal of Port-Royal and the subsequent translations were met with distrust in the Catholic Spanish Low Countries. This section discusses the ideas and works of three vehement anti-Jansenist opponents of vernacular Bible reading who worked in the South, namely the Flemish Jesuit and controversialist Cornelius Hazart, the Dominican Martinus Harney and the Louvain professor Martinus Steyaert. Each of these three men discussed a different aspect of the (non)permissibility of ver-

[12] Petrus Franciscus Xaverius De Ram, *Synodicon Belgicum sive acta omnium ecclesiarum Belgii a celebrato concilio Tridentino usque ad concordatum anni 1801* (Mechlin: Hanicq, 1828), vol. 1, 91–92.

[13] Béatrice Mairé/François Dupuigrenet Desroussilles, "Contrefaçons des éditions bibliques de Port-Royal: le Nouveau Testament de Mons (1667–1710) et la Bible 'avec les grandes explications' (1678–1698)", in: François Moureau (ed.), *Les presses grises: la contrefaçon du livre (XVIe–XIXe siècles)* (Paris: Aux amateurs de livres, 1988), 171–201.

nacular Bible reading in their writings. In this context, it is also important to point to the influence of de Precipiano, the Archbishop of Mechlin, who was known as a vehement anti-Jansenist and favoured a strict interpretation of the *Regula Quarta*.[14]

The Flemish Jesuit and controversialist Cornelius Hazart (1617–1690),[15] also known under the pseudonym Antonius Suivius, spent most of his life as a preacher in Antwerp. He was one of the most important voices in the struggle against the Reformation in the Low Countries, and particularly against the Calvinists. In his capacity of preacher *de controversiis* he preached weekly sermons on controversial questions, attended by both Catholics and Calvinists. Additionally, between 1657 and 1688 Hazart wrote nearly 80 works, most of them in Dutch, on various controversial topics such as the real presence of Christ in the Blessed Sacrament or the infallibility of the Pope, but also on vernacular Bible reading by the laity. The main goal of Hazart's works consisted in the defence of the Catholic faith by criticising Protestant doctrines and attacking Calvinist ministers. However, his judgement of historical facts often left much to be desired and he seems to have lacked a critical spirit.

Hazart was also known as an opponent of Jansenism, which he considered Calvinism in disguise. As van Gennip observes, he took particular offence at the Jansenist secular priests in the Republic and their rigorous theological ideas concerning private confession, grace, penance, Communion, and their view that reading in the vernacular might benefit the laity.[16] Around 1685, Hazart entered into a controversy with Johannes van Neercassel on the topic of vernacular Bible reading. Van Neercassel (1626–1686), vicar apostolic of the *Missio Hollandica* (1663–1686), bishop of Castorie *in partibus infidelium* (1662–1686) and a contemporary of de Precipiano (1627–1711), excelled in his exegetical knowledge of the Bible and was an ardent advocate of vernacular Bible reading. Both van

[14] Carlo de Clercq, *Cinq archevêques de Malines* (Paris: Letouzey et Ané, 1974), vol. 1, 122–123; Franz Heinrich Reusch, *Der Index der verbotenen Bücher. Ein Beitrag zur Kirchen- und Literaturgeschichte* (Bonn: Cohen, 1883–85), 2 vols: vol. 2.1 (1885), 855–856; De Ram, *Synodicon,* vol. 1 (as note 12), 571–577; 626–627; vol. 2, 391–417.

[15] More information on Hazart and his works can be found in Joep van Gennip, "Cornelius Hazart S.J. and the Jansenist Controversies, 1682–1690", in: Robertus Faesen et al. (eds), *The Jesuits of the Low Countries: Identity and Impact (1540–1773)* (BETL 251; Louvain: Peeters, 2012), 177–196.

[16] Ibid., 177–178.

Neercassel and Harzart exchanged several pamphlets and treatises that were characterised by two important themes.[17] First, they were both opposed to the Protestants and their ideas on vernacular Bible reading by the laity. Although van Neercassel was on friendly terms with the Protestants, he reacted against their *sola scriptura*-principle and their method of reading Scripture, which he believed relied solely on human reason and took no account of tradition. At the same time, van Neercassel was adamant that the Council of Trent had not forbidden vernacular Bible reading, contrary to Protestant allegations. Hazart reacted against the Protestants because they had translated the Bible into the vernacular and had permitted everyone – even women – to read it. For Hazart, the Protestants' methods of reading the Bible lay at the roots of their heresies. Later, he directed the same accusations at the Jansenists. Secondly, Hazart and van Neercassel dealt with the distinction between reading and interpreting Scripture. Hazart emphasised that the fact that someone could read the Bible did not imply that that person would properly understand the biblical message. Therefore, it was better if lay people simply did not read the Bible. Van Neercassel, in contrast, argued that everyone should be allowed to read the Bible but that the task of explaining Scripture must be left to skilled preachers and teachers.

In the Faculty of Theology at Louvain, discussions also took place concerning the permissibility of vernacular Bible reading. The Dominican Martinus Harney (1634–1704) and the Louvain professor Martinus Steyaert (1647–1701) strongly emphasised the ban on vernacular Bible reading by the laity. These two men were good friends and appear initially to have been known as theologians with Jansenist sympathies before becoming vehement anti-Jansenists. They probably realised that an anti-Jansenist stand, similar to that taken by Archbishop de Precipiano, would help them in climbing the career ladder at Louvain University. A study of twelve letters exchanged between Harney and the Louvain theologian François van Vianen has showed that in the mid-1670s, he not only sympathised with the Louvain Jansenists (although he was based in Rome at the time), but

[17] For an elaborate discussion of the controversy, see Els Agten, "The Impetus of the Jansenist Milieus in France and the Low Countries to Bible Reading in the Vernacular", in: Dominik Burkard et al. (eds), *Der Jansenismus – eine "katholische Häresie"? Das Ringen um Gnade, Rechtfertigung und die Autorität Augustins in der frühen Neuzeit* (Reformationsgeschichtliche Studien und Texte 159; Münster: Aschendorff, 2014), 311–347.

that he also was a rigorist and an opponent of moral laxity and Molinism.[18] The reasons for Harney's conversion to the anti-Jansenist camp remain a matter for conjecture due to the lack of sources. Similarly, Steyaert's early works were considered rigorist and around 1677 he had good contacts with Arnauld and some of the other *Messieurs* of Port-Royal; indeed his attachment to the ideas of some Jansenist professors, convinced the authorities in Rome that Steyaert had Jansenist sympathies. Steyaert always maintained that his conversion to the anti-Jansenist camp was a matter of obedience to the Pope and was not in contradiction with the Louvain doctrine.[19]

Although Harney was professor of theology in his order and Steyaert worked as professor of scholastic theology, they both showed interest in the topic of vernacular Bible reading by the laity. This may reflect the fact that the classes of the then professor of Sacred Scriptures anti-Jansenist Nicolas Du Bois (1620–1696) left much to be desired. Du Bois, who held the Regius Professorship of Sacred Scriptures at the Louvain Theology Faculty from 1654 until 1696 was a jurist who had obtained a licence in theology in Douai on the basis of false documents. Harney's and Steyaert's works dating from after their conversion to the anti-Jansenist camp complemented each other. The more general discussions on the *Nouveau Testament de Mons* and the *Regula Quarta* were covered by Harney in three works, one in Dutch and two in Latin, published in 1686, 1689 and 1693 respectively.[20] These three works were dedicated to Archbishop de Precipiano and directed against Arnauld. Steyaert published a tripartite Latin treatise in 1693 that contained 235 rules as a practical guideline to facilitate the reading of the Bible.[21]

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[18] Lucianus Ceyssens, "Correspondance romaine du P. Martin Harney, dominicain belge avec François van Vianen, professeur à l'université de Louvain (1673–75)", *Archivum fratrum praedicatorum* 18 (1948) 303–326.

[19] Lucianus Ceyssens, "Steyaert, Martinus", *Nationaal Biografisch Woordenboek* 6 (1974) 897–910.

[20] Martinus Harney, *Redelycke gehoorsaemheyt der Catholycke Nederlanden in het lesen der H. Schrifture in ghemeyne taele (...),* (Antwerp: Hendrick van Dunwalt, 1686); idem, *De lectione gallicae translationis Novi Testamenti (...)* (Louvain: Joannes Sassenus, 1689); idem, *De S. Scriptura linguis vulgaribus legenda (...)* (Louvain: Henricus van Overbeke, 1693).

[21] Martinus Steyaert, *Regulae legendi et intelligendi scripturam sacram (...)* (Louvain: Petus De Vaddere, 1693). For an analysis of this work, see Els Agten, "Martinus Steyaert and His 235 Rules for Reading Scripture in Seventeenth-Century Louvain", *Revue d'Histoire Ecclésiastique* 108 (2013) 780–808.

Harney aimed to defend the validity of the *Regula Quarta* by demonstrating that this rule was reasonably obeyed in the Low Countries, contrary to the allegations of his opponents, particularly Arnauld and van Neercassel. Moreover, Harney was in favour of a strict interpretation of the *Regula Quarta*. For the most part, the picture painted by his treatises corresponds with the findings of recent historical research, particularly his description of the implementation of the *Regula Quarta*.[22] In addition, Harney denounced the *Nouveau Testament de Mons* and targeted its presumed author, Arnauld, in a vehement reaction which seems to demonstrate that the French translation was not only popular and wide-spread in France, but also in the Low Countries.[23] Moreover, the fact that Harney often referred to the papal condemnations of this translation may point to his respect for the papal authority and hierarchy.

The first and last parts of Steyaert's tripartite treatise were copies of earlier works. In the first part, Steyaert drew on the labours of the Spanish theologian and monk Francisco Ruiz de Valladolid (ca. 1480–1546) whose 1546 treatise *Regulae intelligendi scripturas sacras* consisted of 235 rules and was intended to facilitate the reading of the Bible. In the second part of his work Steyaert provided a compendium in which he proposed a reinterpretation of a selection of these 235 rules and some additional explanations. This compendium was composed of 12 lessons or *lectiones* which together contained 80 rules. Each lesson dealt with a specific aspect of the Bible, and it is possible that this work was a rendering of the classes Steyaert taught as a professor at the Louvain Faculty of Theology. Steyaert's compendium drew on the works of an unidentified contemporary theologian, but also on Augustine's *De doctrina Christiana*.[24] He completed his treatise with an annotated list of apparent contradictions in the Bible. This third part of the treatise was a copy of the *Αντιλογιαι [Antilogiae]* by Domenico Magri (1604–1672), first published in Venice in 1645. Steyaert's main objective was to guide readers in their study of the Bible and to encourage an inner fascination and enthusiasm for the biblical message. He explicitly stated that his work was designed for theologians and not for

[22] Agten/François, "The Reception of Trent's Regula Quarta (1564)" (as note 7), 33–60.

[23] Chédozeau, *Port-Royal et la Bible* (as note 11), 346.

[24] Steyaert stated in the preface to the *Compendium:* "(...) partim ex Manuscriptis unius e Theologis nostris nuper hic mortui, partim ex libris *S. Augustini* de Doct. Christ.". Steyaert, *Regulae legendi* (as note 21), 183.

the laity, but he deemed it particularly useful for young ordinands in their study of the Bible. The teaching and preaching of the Bible were the tasks of the clergy and subject to strict regulations, and the laity were to read the Bible not on their own, but through the mediation of a trained clergyman. Besides this treatise, Steyaert also published writings against the publication of the *Nouveau Testament de Mons* and against de Witte's New Testament translation, which will be discussed in the following section.

To conclude, the anti-Jansenist opponents of vernacular Bible reading allowed lay people to read the sacred texts only within the strict framework of the Tridentine rules, and in particular of the *Regula Quarta,* which they viewed as valid. That is, lay people were allowed to read the sacred texts on the explicit condition that they had both the capacity to do so and the individual written permission of the ordinary. Harney and Steyaert emphasised that the Bible had to be mediated to the laity through the medium of well-educated priests and preachers, in order to discourage the laity from asking permission to read the vernacular Bible.

3. Three defenders of vernacular Bible reading in the Northern Low Countries

The controversy between opponents and defenders of vernacular Bible reading in the Low Countries was not restricted to theoretical treatises. The translation activity of Port-Royal gave a powerful impetus to the production and promotion of Catholic Dutch Bible translations, particularly at the turn of the eighteenth century. The Dutch Moerentorf Bible of 1599, once considered the standard text for the Catholic faithful, no longer met expected stylistic standards and was considered outdated.[25] Catholics in the Northern Protestant Netherlands needed translations which would strengthen and confirm their Catholic confessional identity in the confrontation with Reformed Protestantism. Three translators, Aegidius de Witte, Andreas van der Schuur,[26] and Philippus Laurentius Verhulst, published Bible translations under the aegis of the vicar apostolic van Neercassel

[25] Wim François, "Die volkssprachliche Bibel in den Niederlanden des 16. Jahrhunderts. Zwischen Antwerpener Buchdruckern und Löwener Buchzensoren", *Zeitschrift für Kirchengeschichte* 120 (2009) 187–214: 212–213.

[26] The 1697 New Testament translation by de Witte and the 1698 New Testament translation by van der Schuur are often confused in library catalogues and reference works, but are in fact two quite separate works.

(discussed above) and the two French Jansenists Antoine Arnauld and Pasquier Quesnel (1634–1719). All three translators had studied in Louvain in the Catholic Spanish Low Countries but subsequently moved to the Northern Netherlands, in some cases by choice, in others because they had been forced into exile. Their translations were soon labelled as Jansenist-inspired, not only because they reflected the translation principles of Port-Royal, but also because they showed some affinities with the *Nouveau Testament de Mons,* as will be discussed below. As well as their Bible translations, the three translators also expressed their ideas and thoughts on vernacular Bible reading and the invalidity of the *Regula Quarta* in several tracts and treatises, often directed explicitly against the ideas of Harney and Steyaert. This section will consider the background and the works of the three translators.

3.1 Aegidius de Witte

Aegidius (Gilles) de Witte (1648–1721)[27] studied philosophy and theology in Louvain, where he developed a solid friendship with the later anti-Jansenist Martinus Steyaert. After his studies de Witte went to Paris, hoping to deepen his knowledge of the teachings of Port-Royal; there he became friends with his preceptor Antoine Arnauld. His time in Paris convinced de Witte that the doctrine of Augustine should be the foundation of the Catholic faith. In 1679 he was ordained a priest. Five years later, on 16 January 1684, de Witte was appointed pastor and dean of the Church of Our Lady in Mechlin. By then he was already considered a rabid and headstrong Jansenist polemicist by his adversaries, not least because he endorsed van Neercassel's point of view that (vernacular) Bible reading would strengthen the faith, while at the same time considering the 1599 Moerentorf Bible to be outmoded. His views led de Witte to compose a new vernacular Bible translation, based not exclusively on the Vulgate, but also on the *Nouveau Testament de Mons.* However, in around 1690 when he asked permission to print a first version of his New Testament transla-

[27] For more information on de Witte and his New Testament translation, see Els Agten, "The Condemnation of Jansenist Vernacular Bibles in the Low Countries. The Case of Aegidius de Witte (1648–1721)", *Ephemerides Theologicae Lovanienses* 91 (2015) 271–280; Bastiaan Adriaan van Kleef, "Aegidius de Witte 1648–1721", *IKZ* 51 (1961) 30–56, 95–127, 155–188; 52 (1962) 1–24, 103–106.

tion, de Precipiano, who had recently become Archbishop of Mechlin, refused the request and went on to issue a decree in the following year that forbade vernacular Bible reading.[28] In this decree de Precipiano not only insisted on a strict observance of the *Regula Quarta* but also prohibited the French *Nouveau Testament de Mons* and the Missal in the vernacular. This decree and the subsequent opposition to it by the Mechlin clergy mark the beginning of a well-documented controversy between de Witte and de Precipiano, which focused, among other issues, on the status of the Mons translation. In 1691, de Witte resigned from his office as pastor and dean of Mechlin on the basis that he could not in conscience uphold the measures restricting vernacular Bible reading. Towards the end of 1693 he went into exile in Utrecht, where he joined his fellow translator Andreas van der Schuur. During his time in Utrecht, de Witte was a prolific author of polemical writings on various topics, and his stay also resulted in a complete Dutch Bible translation, published in 1717. De Witte died on 7 April 1721 and was buried in Warmond.

De Witte's Dutch translation of the New Testament was published anonymously in two volumes in "Emmerik" by Florentius Abbema in 1696.[29] This was a false printing address, in that Abbema actually worked in Utrecht, although Emmerik at that time fell under the ecclesiastical jurisdiction of Utrecht. The title page claims that this translation is "in den Franschen Bijbel", that is, that it was based on the *Nouveau Testament de Mons*. In a foreword de Witte presented the New Testament both as the fulfilment of the Old, and as a useful rule of faith. He also discussed the original language of the New Testament (i. e. Greek) and considered subsequent translations into various languages. The basis for his Dutch translation was the Latin text of the Vulgate. De Witte supplemented his Dutch translation with marginal annotations that contained translated variant readings from the Greek. In this way, de Witte was able to respect the Tridentine assertion of the Vulgate's authenticity.

Despite this, de Witte's New Testament translation was strongly criticised by the opponents of vernacular Bible reading, including, amongst

[28] The complete text of this decree can be found in De Ram, *Synodicon,* vol. 1 (as note 12), 571–574.

[29] Aegidius de Witte, *Het Nieuwe Testament van onsen Heere Jesus, met korte verklaringen op de duystere plaetsen; een chronycke van het leven onses saligmakers en van de wercken der apostelen* (Emmerik: Florentius Abbema, 1696), 2 vols.

others, his former friend Steyaert, and was officially condemned by Pope Clement XI on 22 June 1712, after the promulgation of a decree on 10 September 1709. Four reasons for condemning the translation can be indicated: its anonymous character; the fact that the translation deviated too much from the Vulgate and drew on the *Nouveau Testament de Mons;* the inclusion of passages that were considered to favour "Jansenist" doctrines; and the transgression of the Tridentine regulations concerning vernacular Bible reading, particularly the *Regula Quarta.* In response, de Witte refuted the allegations of his opponents in various polemical works.[30]

De Witte also published translations of the Psalms (1697), of the books Proverbs, Ecclesiastes, Wisdom and Sirach (1702), and of the Pentateuch (1709). Finally, in 1717, his complete Bible translation appeared in two volumes without official approval from the diocesan authorities in Utrecht.[31] In the preface de Witte emphasised that the specificities of each language meant that it was impossible to make a good word-to-word translation from one language into another. For some Hebrew words, for instance, it was very hard to find an appropriate Dutch equivalent. Here too, the Latin Vulgate constituted the starting point of the translation, but de Witte also argued that the Hebrew of the Old Testament, the Greek of the New Testament and the Latin Vulgate were all imperfect and included errors. This time, de Witte did not include a reference to the *Nouveau Testament de Mons* on the title page, although (apart from some minor spelling corrections) the New Testament translation reproduced the 1696 version.

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[30] Aegidius de Witte, *Korte Bemercking op het tegenwoordigh Boeck-Verbieden, door eenen Liefhebber van de Waerheydt* (s.l.: s.n., 1690); idem, *Samen-spraek tusschen eenen Parochiant van onse L. Vrouwe Kerck tot Mechelen ende eenen Theologant Aengegaen den 20. Maert 1691* (Cologne: Peeter van Metternich, 1691); idem, *Tweede Samen-spraek tusschen eenen parochiant van onse L. Vrouwe Kerck tot Mechelen, eenen Theologant, en eenen Doctoor in de Medecyne* (s.l.: s.n., 1690); idem, *Derde Samen-spraek tusschen eenen Parochiant van O.L. Vrouwe Kerck tot Mechelen, en eenen Theologant* (s.l.: s.n., 1690); idem, *Vierde Samen-spraek tusschen eenen Parochiant van onse lieve Vrouwe kerck tot Mechelen, ende eenen Theologant, gehouden den 11 Mey 1691* (s.l.: s.n., 1691); idem [= Alethophilo Onitrama], *Provocatio ad Ex. P. Martinum Harney pro lectione S. Scripturae in linguis vulgaribus* (s.l.: s.n., 1690/1691).

[31] Aegidius de Witte, *De geheele H. Schriftuur: behelsende alle de boeken, de welke in "t algemein Concilie van Trenten voor canonyke zyn goedt-gekeurdt. Nieuwe overzettinge in de Nederlandsche tael: met korte verklaringen op de duystere plaetsen* (Utrecht: Theodorus van den Eynden, 1717), 2 vols.

The polemics surrounding de Witte's New Testament, which was reprinted in 1698 and 1702, do not seem to have influenced his further works. Although his 1697 translation of the book of Psalms was also subject to heavy criticism, it was never condemned and was reprinted several times. Similarly, de Witte's Old Testament translation, contained in his 1717 Bible, was never condemned and was even used in other publications, for instance in an early eighteenth century book of pericopes for the entire liturgical year that was used in Roman-Catholic milieus. This book was intended to help the laity to prepare for, follow and reflect on the liturgical readings, and even some parts of the liturgy; it assumed that further clarification would be given by a competent preacher.[32]

3.2 Andreas van der Schuur

Around 1685, some five years before de Witte undertook his translation project, vicar apostolic van Neercassel entrusted his former secretary Andreas van der Schuur (1656–1719)[33] with the task of composing a new and complete Dutch Bible translation. Like his friend de Witte, van der Schuur, born in Gorcum, was trained as a priest in Louvain. After obtaining his licentiate in theology in Louvain, he returned to the Northern Low Countries, where he held several ecclesiastical offices before he started working on his vernacular Bible translation. In 1689 his translation of the Gospels was completed, followed by translations of the Psalms, Acts, the Epistles and Revelation (1692). The complete translation of the New Testament was published in 1698, and reprinted in 1705. Van der Schuur's Dutch rendering of the Pentateuch appeared in 1715 and was followed by the translation of Joshua, Judges, Ruth and the four books of Kings in 1717. However, van der Schuur died in 1719 without completing his translation project.

Van der Schuur, known for his excellent knowledge of Latin, was also a poet and translator of poetry. Moreover, he was a polemicist, writing treatises on many topics, including vernacular Bible reading, which he

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[32] Bernard Alfrink, "Over Nederlandsche Pericopenvertalingen", *Studia Catholica* 12 (1936) 200–218: 204–218.

[33] Biographical information on van der Schuur can be found in: Koenraad Ouwens, "De oud-katholieke vertalingen", in: Alfons W.G. Jaakke et al. (eds), *Om een verstaanbare bijbel* (Haarlem: Nederlands Bijbelgenootschap, 1990), 137–151: 143–145; Pontianus Polman, *Katholiek Nederland in de achttiende eeuw* (Hilversum: Brand, 1968), 3 vols: vol. 1, 343–344.

considered an obligation for all the faithful, including women. He was involved in a controversy with Harney and he also reacted against the decrees of Archbishop de Precipiano, arguing that the *Regula Quarta* was a temporary measure that had been issued as a reaction against the assertions of the Protestants but was no longer valid.

In 1725, two years after the schism of Utrecht, the Delft bookseller Hendrick van Rhijn (1660–1732)[34] continued van der Schuur's translation work at the request of Archbishop Cornelius Johannes Barchman Wuytiers (1692–1733; archbishop 1725–33), who succeeded Cornelius Steenoven. The complete van der Schuur-van Rhijn Bible translation was published in Utrecht in 1732.[35] In his approval of this work, which was dated 31 May 1732 and addressed to the Catholics of the United Provinces, Archbishop Barchman Wuytiers observed that the Bible translation was long-awaited and urgently needed, a treasure that would enrich the Catholic Church throughout the Northern Netherlands. Its title page affirmed that the van der Schuur-van Rhijn translation was based on the Latin Vulgate, but in order to clarify the meaning of obscure and unclear passages, the translation contained short notes that were based on the works of authoritative scholars. The three-chapter preface to the Old Testament took the form of a general instruction on the reading of Scripture, first showing that Bible reading was both useful and beneficial, so long as the reader had the right disposition, then defining the necessary prerequisites for reading Scripture successfully, which included education and preparation, but also the help of a preceptor or mediator. The final chapter discussed the difference between the literal and the spiritual sense of Scripture, and presented the Old Testament as a prefiguration of the New Testament. In the shorter two-page introduction to the New Testament, the author again considered the relationship between the Old and New Testaments, affirming that the books of the Old Testament were filled with references to Christ and the New Covenant.

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[34] In the older literature, Hendrick van Rhijn is often mistakenly called Hugo, probably a confusion with Hugo van Heussen whose works he translated into Dutch. Biographical information on Hendrick van Rhijn can be found in Ouwens, *Vertalingen* (as note 33), 145; Polman, *Katholiek Nederland,* vol. 1 (as note 33), 110, 119, 244.

[35] Andreas van der Schuur/Hendrick van Rhijn, *Biblia sacra, dat is, de H. Schrift-uer van het Oude, en het Nieuwe Testament (...) met korte verklaringen op duistere plaetzen* (Utrecht: Cornelius Guillielmus le Febvre, 1732).

It is not the case (contra Franz Heinrich Reusch and Bernard Alfrink) that Rome condemned the van der Schuur-van Rhijn translation.[36] Commissioned by van Neercassel and later completed at the request of Barchman Wuytiers, the 1732 Bible translation became the standard Bible of the Church of Utrecht and was reprinted in 1743 and 1770. Separate editions of the Psalms and the New Testament were also reprinted several times.

3.3 Philippus Laurentius Verhulst

Philippus Laurentius Verhulst (1690–1753),[37] also known as L. Zeelander or P. H. Vlaming, undertook a Dutch translation of the New Testament at the beginning of the eighteenth century. Verhulst studied philosophy in Louvain and theology in the diocesan seminary of Ghent and in Louvain. In 1707, on the occasion of his tonsure, Verhulst signed the anti-Jansenist Form of Pope Alexander VII, which explicitly stipulated that five propositions, extracted from Jansenius' *Augustinus,* were to be considered heretical and that they had been meant in this sense by Jansenius.[38] A few years later, however, Verhulst began to regret his signature, as he confessed,

[36] Reusch, *Index,* vol. 2.1 (as note 14), 853; Alfrink, *Pericopenvertalingen* (as note 32), 216; *Appendix Novissima ad Indicem librorum prohibitorum Ab Anno M.DCC.IV usque ad totum mensem Martii M.DCC.XVI.* (Juxta Exemplar Romanum; Prague: Josephus Antonius Schilhart, 1726), 25–26.

[37] Biographical information on Verhulst can be retrieved from Ouwens, *Vertalingen* (as note 33), 145–146; Polman, *Katholiek Nederland,* vol. 1 (as note 33), 344; Emile Jacques, "Un curieux foyer de jansénisme à Diest (Brabant)", *Revue d'histoire ecclésiastique* 82 (1987) 5–27: 21–24.

[38] The five propositions, supposed to have been taken from the *Augustinus,* are the following: (1) It is impossible to keep several commands of God because despite the will and best efforts of just men, they lack the grace that makes obedience possible; (2) In the state of man's fallen nature, he cannot resist interior grace; (3) To be deserving or undeserving in a state of fallen nature, it is not necessary that man possesses a freedom exempt from inner necessity; it suffices that his freedom of choice be exempt from restraint; (4) Semi-Pelagians admitted the necessity of an inner grace preceding every particular action and for faith to exist; they were heretical for stating that the human will could resist or obey this grace as it wished; (5) It is semi-Pelagian to say that Christ died and offered His blood to cover the sins of all humanity. See Brian E. Strayer, *Suffering Saints: Jansensists and Convulsionnaires in France, 1640–1799* (Eastbourne: Sussex Academic Press, 2008), 68.

conscience-stricken, in several letters to Quesnel.[39] In consequence, Verhulst received no further ordination or academic degree.

Like de Witte and van der Schuur, Verhulst wrote several polemical works, in both Latin and Dutch, and engaged in the theological controversies of his time against the Jesuits and the papal bull *Unigenitus* (1713). In 1716 Verhulst was appointed rector of the Latin school of Diest. During his time there he published in Antwerp, under his own name, a Dutch translation of the New Testament.[40] In 1723, the year of the Utrecht schism, Verhulst had to resign his rectorship because of the position he had taken against *Unigenitus.* He returned to Louvain, where he found refuge with a group of convinced Jansenists. By 1729 Verhulst and twelve opponents of *Unigenitus,* all members of the Louvain University, had been excluded from the University by decree of its rector. The majority of this group, including Verhulst, fled to the Northern Low Countries. Verhulst eventually found a post at the Amersfoort seminary, where from 1736 until his death on 15 June 1753, he taught theology, initially together with Nicolas Le Gros (1675–1751) and after the latter's death as his successor.[41]

According to the information on its title page, Verhulst's New Testament translation was based on the Vulgate, although the translation clearly also draws on the *Nouveau Testament de Mons.* In an admonition to the reader Verhulst reported that several theologians and doctors of Louvain University had examined the translation. Unlike the translations of de Witte and van der Schuur-van Rhijn, however, the Verhulst translation was not preceded by an elaborate preface. Verhulst addressed himself to the reader through his admonition and in a short note, and provided practical information about the chapter division, the notes and comments in the margins and the used abbreviations. His view of the *Regula Quarta* can be retrieved from his 1741 work, *De drie hoofdgeschillen tusschen de Rooms-Catholyken,* in which he affirmed that not all Catholics had submitted blindly to this stipulation; he was particularly critical of the need to apply

[39] For an overview of these letters, see Els Agten, "Pasquier Quesnel et la traduction de la Bible en langue vernaculaire en Hollande. La situation avant et après le choc de l'Unigenitus", *Chroniques de Port-Royal* 64 (2014), 49–66: 65–66.

[40] Philippus Laurentius Verhulst, *Het Nieuw Testament van onzen here Jesus Christus* (Antwerp: Franciscus Muller, 1717).

[41] Fred Smit, "Präsidenten, Professoren und Präfekten am altkatholischen Priesterseminar in Amersfoort während der Jahre 1723 bis 1823", *IKZ* 73 (1983) 246–260: 255.

for written permission to read a vernacular Bible, even in translations which had been undertaken and approved by good Catholics, and of the fact that this permission was often very hard to obtain.[42] Verhulst's New Testament translation was reprinted a number of times into the twentieth century.[43] In addition, the early eighteenth-century Catholic pericope book discussed above uses Verhulst's translation for the New Testament passages.

3.4 The character of the New Testament translations of de Witte, van der Schuur and Verhulst

De Witte, van der Schuur and Verhulst shared an objective: they wanted to make the Bible, and in particular the New Testament, accessible for all faithful. Their endeavours resulted in three Dutch translations that all related differently to the Vulgate and to the *Nouveau Testament de Mons*. A case study is here offered to show both the Jansenist character of these translations and the influence of the Mons translation.

In the New Revised Standard Version, Eph 3:20 reads: "Now to him who by the power at work within us is able to accomplish abundantly far more than all we can ask or imagine." The key point is the power of God at work within us. This is generally interpreted as relating to grace and free will, and specifically the relation between sufficient grace *(gratia sufficiens)* and efficacious grace *(gratia efficax)*. This text therefore relates to one of the points at issue between the Jansenists and their opponents, principally the Jesuits, the question of God's grace and its efficaciousness in relation to the capacities of human freedom and free will. The Jesuits held an optimistic concept of human free will, drawn mainly from the ideas of Luis de Molina SJ (1535–1600) and Leonard Lessius SJ (1554–1623), who emphasised the important role of free will in the process of achieving salvation. In this reading, by virtue of Christ's redemptive passion and death, humankind received a grace from God which was sufficient to do good works *(gratia sufficiens)*, but which only became efficacious through

[42] Philippus Laurentius Verhulst, *De drie hoofdgeschillen tusschen de Rooms-Catholyken, wegens het Formulier tegen Jansénius, wegens de Bulle Unigenitus, wegens het Aerts-Bisdom van Utrecht, opgehelderd* (Utrecht: Henricus Spruyt, 1741), vol. 1, xliv–lxxvi.

[43] Reprints appeared in 1721, 1825, 1836, 1837, 1838, 1854, 1865, 1868 and 1877.

the assent of an individual's free will. If someone withheld this consent, the grace remained inefficacious *(gratia inefficax)* and was reduced to "merely sufficient grace" *(gratia mere sufficiens).* Consequently, for Molina and Lessius, predestination meant only that God had preordained people for eternal salvation *post praevisa merita,* that is, after their cooperation to the work of salvation, which God has foreseen. The Jansenists had a different idea of sufficient grace, to the extent that they were even suspected of denying that this type of grace existed. They taught that the grace of God, who was omnipotent, was infallibly and irresistibly efficacious *(gratia efficax).* This efficacious grace was necessary because of the fundamental incapacity of human beings to contribute to their salvation and was only effective in those whom God had predestined for salvation for all eternity, without taking into account any (possible) human cooperation *(praedestinatio ante praevisa merita).* This *gratia efficax* not only gave individuals the capacity to do good, but also moved their ability and action *(posse* and *agere).* In addition, God's gift of grace was depicted as irresistible, another doctrine generally considered to be Jansenist.[44] It goes without saying that this theology was suspected of undermining the freedom of human will to such a degree that free will appeared to be completely eliminated.

The various renderings of Eph 3:20 by the Jansenist translators illustrate their approach to these questions.

	Eph 3:20
Greek New Testament	Τῷ δὲ δυναμένῳ ὑπὲρ πάντα ποιῆσαι ὑπερεκπερισσοῦ ὧν αἰτούμεθα ἢ νοοῦμεν κατὰ τὴν δύναμιν τὴν ἐνεργουμένην ἐν ἡμῖν
Vulgata Clementina (1592)	Ei autem, qui potens est omnia facere superabundanter quam petimus aut intelligimus, secundum virtutem, quæ **operatur** in nobis.

[44] Michael C. Thomsett, *Heresy in the Roman Catholic Church: A History* (Jefferson, NC: McFarland, 2011), 213–215; Mathieu G. Spiertz, "Jansenisme in en rond de Nederlanden 1640–1690", *Trajecta* 1 (1992) 144–167: 145–149; Lucianus Ceyssens, "Diepere gronden van het jansenisme", *Tijdschrift voor Theologie* 6 (1966) 395–420.

	Eph 3:20
Moerentorf translation (1599)	Maer de*n* gene*n* die machtich is alle dinge*n* te doen overvloedelijcker dan wy begeere*n* oft verstaen na de cracht die in ons werct.
Nouveau Testament de Mons (1667)	Que celuy qui par la puissance qui **agit** en nous **avec efficace** peut faire infiniment plus que tout ce que nous demandons & tout ce que nous pensons.
De Witte (1696)	Voorders aen hem, die volgens de kracht, die hy in ons **uytwerckt,** veel meer machtigh is te doen, als al het gene wy versoecken of dencken,
Verhulst (1717)	Ondertusschen, aen hem, die magtig is door de kragt, die in ons **werkt,** veel meer te doen als al wat wy begeeren oft denken.
Van der Schuur-Van Rhijn (1732)	Ondertusschen zy hem[q] die magtig is, door de kragt die in ons **werkt,** veel meer te doen dan al wat wy begeeren of denken, [q] Rom. 16,25

It seems that the translators of the *Nouveau Testament de Mons* highlighted the *gratia efficax* in their translation by adding the term "avec efficace" (efficaciously), which was not included in the Vulgate. Opponents of the Mons translation concluded that the translators had added this term or derivations thereof to this and other instances that dealt with grace, for instance Phil 2:13, 1 Thess 2:13 or 2 Thess 2:11, because they, most probably, wanted to contest the doctrine of the Church that admitted the presence of sufficient grace *(gratia sufficiens)* for all.

De Witte followed the translators of Mons, although he did not provide a literal translation of the French "avec efficace", but used the verb "uytwerkt", having the connotation of working efficaciously. Both Verhulst and van der Schuur-van Rhijn followed the Vulgate, translating *operatur* as "werkt" (worked).

This very limited case study illustrates the way in which de Witte frequently made use of the condemned *Nouveau Testament de Mons* and took over its emphasis on the *gratia efficax*. The translations of Verhulst and van der Schuur-van Rhijn seem to be more faithful to the Vulgate. They appear to have used the Mons translation to a lesser degree.

4. Concluding remarks

Were Catholics in the Catholic Netherlands allowed to read vernacular Bibles in the long seventeenth century? The answer to this question seems ambiguous: yes and no. Two key arguments influenced the debates, namely, on the one hand, the discussions on the interpretation and the validity of the *Regula Quarta* of the Tridentine Index of forbidden books (1564) and, on the other, the commotion around the French *Nouveau Testament de Mons* (1667), which formed part of the Port-Royal Bible translation project. The *Regula Quarta* authorised the reading of vernacular biblical texts by lay people if the Catholic Tradition deemed them capable and if they had obtained explicit, personal, written permission from the bishop or inquisitor after seeking advice from their parish priest or confessor. However, the interpretation and implementation of this rule gave rise to discussion and debate in the Low Countries during the seventeenth century. The *Messieurs* of Port-Royal propagated an alternative, contestable translation ideal in the *Nouveau Testament de Mons:* all faithful should read the Bible in the vernacular, laity and women included. This was a source of great annoyance to the opponents of the practice.

The Jesuit Cornelius Hazart, the Dominican Martinus Harney and the Louvain professor Martinus Steyaert, all considered anti-Jansenist, although both Harney and Steyaert had previously been known as Jansenist, were in favour of a strict interpretation of the *Regula Quarta* within the framework of the Tridentine rules and responded negatively to the Mons translation. In their view the laity should be allowed to read vernacular Bibles only when they were deemed capable of doing so and had obtained written permission from the local bishop or inquisitor. In other words, the anti-Jansenists did not recommend vernacular Bible reading. They proposed that the Bible should be presented to the laity through the mediation of well-educated priests and preachers, hoping that this would discourage the laity from asking permission to read the vernacular Bible. Lay people should come to the church to learn about Scripture and were not supposed to read the Bible at home. This position particularly reflected the situation in the Southern part of the Low Countries.

In the North, in contrast, Catholics had freer access to the Bible, even at home. Indeed, due to the confrontation with Protestantism the Bible was considered an important means to reinforce the position and the identity of Catholics. Consequently, the Bible translators Aegidius de Witte, Andreas van der Schuur and Philippus Laurentius Verhulst all argued that

Catholics in the Netherlands were allowed to read vernacular Bibles. They considered the *Regula Quarta* to be a temporary measure arising from very specific circumstances, namely the rise of unreliable Protestant vernacular Bible translations. However, almost 130 years later these specific circumstances had disappeared and this rule was no longer valid. Consequently, they defended the Jansenist stance that Bible reading was a right, or even a moral obligation, for every layperson, women included. The translators therefore proposed to make the Bible, and particularly the New Testament, accessible to the laity, although they emphasised that it should be interpreted with the help of pastors and preachers. In spite of these opposing viewpoints, the authorities in Rome only explicitly condemned de Witte's 1696 New Testament translation.

This essay makes clear that the position with regard to the practice of vernacular Bible reading could function as an additional criterion for the definition of the established dichotomy Jansenist and anti-Jansenist. However, it remains important to take into consideration the individual's position and their involvement in specific debates, and it can be seen that there was a spectrum of opponents and advocates of vernacular Bible reading. Further research is needed to explore the nuances of these positions.

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Zusammenfassung

Die zentrale Frage in diesem Artikel ist, ob Katholiken in den Niederlanden im 17. Jahrhundert die Bibel in der Volkssprache lesen durften oder nicht. Die Meinungen darüber, ob eine volkssprachliche Bibelübersetzung zulässig sei, klafften weit auseinander. Die sogenannten «Jansenisten» entpuppten sich als leidenschaftliche Verfechter, während die «Anti-Jansenisten» eine derartige Praxis dezidiert ablehnten. Der Artikel besteht aus drei Teilen. Im ersten Teil werden zwei für diese Auseinandersetzung bestimmende Schlüsselargumente unter die Lupe genommen: die *Regula Quarta* (1564) und die französische Übersetzung des Neuen Testaments (1667) der *Messieurs von Port-Royal.* Anschliessend werden die Standpunkte der sechs Protagonisten der Auseinandersetzungen behandelt. Im zweiten Teil werden die Vorstellungen der drei anti-«jansenistischen» Gegner der Bibelübersetzung in der Volkssprache erörtert, nämlich die des Jesuiten Cornelius Hazart, des Dominikaners Martinus Harney und des Löwener Professors Martinus Steyaert. Im dritten Teil werden Leben, Vorstellungen und Werke von drei «jansenistischen» Bibelübersetzern besprochen, und zwar Aegidius de Witte, Andreas van der Schuur und Philippus Laurentius Verhulst. Zum Schluss wird anhand eines Fallbeispiels (über Eph 3,20) dargelegt, weshalb diese Übersetzungen als «jansenistisch» galten.