PART ONE

INTRODUCTION
In the Dutch Republic, people with seemingly irreconcilable beliefs coexisted peacefully, as almost nowhere else in early modern Western Europe. The specific dynamics of the various groups of people, and the manner in which they constituted peaceful coexistence in the seventeenth and eighteenth centuries, form the subject of this book. The illustrated religious literature produced by authors and publishers from different denominations is used to determine their multilateral relations. These works are perceived as responses to opinions and cultural sensibilities and as representations of identities. The combination of word, image and religion in the early modern era—with the radical Protestant breaking of images still fresh in people’s memory—proved to be a cultural battlefield: differences and similarities defining the groups’ identities were kept under close watch, and attempts at conciliation did not go unnoticed. In Dutch illustrated religious literature, processes of appropriation of textual and visual elements therefore allow us a close look at processes of identity formation. A small case study will serve to demonstrate this book’s purpose and approach.

The Case of Willem Teellinck

In 1622, a devotional treatise entitled *Ecce Homo, ofte ooghen-salve voor die noch sitten in blintheydt des ghemoedts* [Ecce Homo, or eye-salve for those who still sit in the blindness of their hearts] was published in the Republic, written by the Dutch Reformed minister Willem Teellinck.1 With the publication of the treatise, Teellinck displayed a surprising

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1 The term ‘Dutch’ will henceforth be used to indicate volumes with Dutch texts published in what was then the Northern Netherlands. During the Eighty Years’ War against Spain (1568–1648), the Northern Netherlands united themselves into the Dutch Republic of the United Provinces (referred to as the Republic in the rest of this book). This resulted in the separation of the Northern and Southern Netherlands, as the southern provinces remained loyal to Spain and thus acquired the name Spanish Netherlands. The term ‘Low Countries’ will be used to indicate the combined Southern and Northern Netherlands.