In 1609, Spain and the Dutch Republic signed a Twelve Years Truce after waging war for more than forty years. In the running up to and during the ceasefire, the highest military commander Prince Maurice as well as orthodox Calvinists actively opposed efforts to forge a lasting peace. This anti-peace lobby tried to convince government authorities, and the people of the Netherlands in general, that the Spanish had a track record of not keeping their word and that they could, therefore, not be trusted.

To substantiate their claim of Spanish unreliability, anti-peace propagandists reduced the history of the Revolt against the Habsburg overlord Philip II of Spain to a selection of gruesome episodes in order to remind people of the cruelties Spanish rulers and their soldiers were capable of. The result was a historical canon: a relatively inclusive and non-confessional story aimed at convincing as many people as possible that the war should be resumed. But the inclusive character of this narrative was put to the test when new internal divisions compromised the unity of the Republic. Around 1610, a religious quarrel broke out about the reformed doctrine of double predestination between two professors of theology in Leiden: Jacobus Arminius and Franciscus Gomarus. The disagreement between the two men was ostensibly a matter for academics only, but in fact it almost dragged the state into civil war.

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The disagreement between these theologians was about predestination and human free will. Arminius believed that the doctrine of predestination allowed for the human initiative to reject God’s offer of salvation. Otherwise there was a risk that some people might mistakenly believe that God could be held accountable for human sin. For Gomarus, however, ideas of human involvement in the Lord’s gift were anathema because they impinged on His absolute sovereignty. This seems a very technical doctrinal discussion, yet A.Th. van Deursen has shown that in the struggles between the supporters of these two men, not only doctrinal but also political arguments were used. Developing this point further, Carolina Lenarduzzi found that propagandists from both opposition groups were the first to appropriate public memories of the Revolt on a large scale to conduct their political disagreements.

The political and religious conflicts in the Dutch Republic during the Twelve Years Truce (1609–21) thus involved a contest for the moral ownership of the communal past. Public memories of the Revolt in the 1560s, 70s and 80s that had been used to unite Netherlanders against the foreign enemy now became important weapons to eliminate opponents on the domestic political scene. I will build on Lenarduzzi’s work and assess how this shift from external to internal usage occurred. To do so, this chapter examines the ‘memory war’ between Arminian ‘Remonstrants’ and Gomarist ‘Counter-Remonstrants’ in the 1610s and offers an explanation of why canonical memories were time and again used as a rhetorical battleground on which opposing political factions carried out their disputes. The term ‘memory war’ used in this section of the volume refers to conflicts that are not themselves conflicts about the past but in which nonetheless the past is invoked to bolster arguments in the present. What this chapter will show is that when historical interpretations are used to support two contradictory agendas, a political disagreement can become also a conflict about the appropriation and correct reading of the past. An analysis of this phenomenon contributes to our understanding of why

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