SOLOMON WRITING AND RESTING: TRADITION, WORDS AND IMAGES IN THE 1548 DUTCH “LOUVAIN BIBLE”*

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On 9 May 1546, the authorities of the Low Countries took a new step in their Bible politics. Fifty or so Dutch and French editions of the Bible were placed on the Index by the Louvain theologians. It is clear, however, that the imperial authorities and the Louvain Theological Faculty did not only want to forbid the ‘unreliable’ Bible translations in a negative way. Immediately after the publication of the Index, they entered into an agreement with the Louvain printer, Bartholomeus van Grave (or Gravius), with the intention of publishing new, authorized Catholic Bible translations, in both Dutch and French. More than ever, there was a demand for a translation of the Vulgate, which a few months earlier the Council of Trent had promulgated as the authentic Bible text of the Church. In addition, the version in question was to be stripped of all marginal notes. In 1548 the Dutch Louvain Bible was published by Van Grave. After giving some basic information about the Louvain Bible and the Vorsterman Bible, which the former was to replace, I will discuss the Louvain view on Scripture, tradition and vernacular Bible reading, that provides the foundation for the Louvain Bible-project. In the second part of my essay, I intend to shed light on the illustration program of the Bible in question and to consider how this program fits in with the Bible’s general conception. Moving from textual translation to visualization, I will consider in detail the picture representing Solomon Writing and Resting, before drawing some general conclusions about the relationship between text, paratext and images in such an official vernacular Bible edition.

The Louvain Bible: Scripture, Tradition and Vernacular Bible-reading

The translation the Louvain Bible offered was made by Nicolaus van Winghe (ca. 1495–1552), an Augustinian canon regular from the

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congregation of Windesheim, belonging to the monastery of Sint-Maartensdal in Louvain [Fig. 1]. The congregation was an exponent of the late development of the *Devotio Moderna* and had always cherished a biblical spirituality. This had been shaped through, amongst other things, the research undertaken for a purified Vulgate text, although Van Winghe was himself influenced by humanism and had developed a preference for the original Greek text. The canons of Windesheim had particularly distinguished themselves through their openness for Bible reading in the vernacular, and their *librarius* Johan Schutken (†1423) had already, around 1400, translated the Epistle and the Gospel readings (and probably the entire New Testament), in addition to the Psalms into the vernacular for the *laici spiritualia*. Nicolaus van Winghe in this way followed in the footsteps of his illustrious confrère when he, a century and a half later it is true, but with the same spirituality as foundation and with the blessing of the Louvain theologians.

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