

Biography of Jan Luiken

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The etcher and poet Jan Luiken (1649-1712) was born in Amsterdam one year after the Dutch Republic was officially recognized by Spain as an independent Republic. He lived during Holland's Golden Age of art and commerce, a time when the Calvinist Church was recognized as the official church (though not technically a state church) and Catholics and non-Calvinists Protestants were not

allowed to worship publicly. During his lifetime Luiken made about 3,336 etchings, most of which were made to illustrate nearly 500 books by other authors in a wide range of fields. Additionally, he wrote and illustrated one book of poetry and eleven "emblem books" wherein a symbolic image is paired with explanatory text, usually a pietistic/moralistic and didactic message. The Pitts Theology Library of Emory University holds copies of all but one of these emblem books.

Jan Luiken grew up in a household that was devout as well as intellectually curious. His father, Christopher, was a school teacher. He had published two small, but popular, pious books and he attended meetings of the Collegiants, a group that held intellectual discussions on a wide range of topics. After school and during his "wild years," Luiken and a group of friends met regularly at an inn to write poetry—his book of love poetry was published during this time. Following his marriage in 1672 at age 23, Luiken, who had not been baptized at birth, joined the Anabaptists; but soon turned away from the Church. Then shortly after 1673, he underwent a religious conversion. This conversion followed the sudden death of a friend, coupled with his immersion in the philosophy of Jacob Böhme, and learning of religious visions experienced by two women in and near Amsterdam. After ten years of marriage and the birth of five children, Luiken's wife died, whereupon he sold his family house and lived in rented quarters. Soon thereafter, his young pious housekeeper moved into his house. His son Casper (1672-1708), the only child to have survived into adulthood, collaborated with his father and became a well-known etcher in his own right. When Casper died at age 36, his widow and young son moved in with Luiken.

Luiken was described by his contemporaries as a pious, quiet and unassuming man. He practiced what he preached and gave most of his earnings away to the poor. During his lifetime Luiken worked for more than a hundred different publishers. His prints have remained popular up to the present. Up through the 18th century, his emblem books were published between three and seven times, and a number of them have been published in the 20th century also. His emblem books have recently kindled new scholarly attention. According to Stronks (2011) Luiken "set a new standard for Dutch illustrated religious literature which was based on the hybridization of Protestant and Catholic visual practices." Finally, the image of Jan Luiken above can be found on the outer wall of the Rijksmuseum in Amsterdam at the side of the Jan Luijkenstraat, which is located in the neighborhood where all streets are named after the most important artists of the Netherlands' Golden Age.

A more detailed account of the life and work of Jan Luiken follows this summary.

The Times of Jan Luiken

Jan Luiken was born in Amsterdam one year after the Dutch Republic was officially recognized as an independent nation by King Phillip II of Spain. The fight for independence by the united seven northern provinces of the Netherlands against Spain had lasted 80 years. The Peace of Munster in 1748 established both political independence and freedom of religion as far as conscience was concerned. At the Synod of Dordt, 1618-1619, the Calvinist (Reformed) Church had earlier been recognized as the official church, but not the state church and the Remonstrants' doctrines had been denounced. Members of the Catholic Church or of non-Reformed Protestant denominations were not allowed to worship openly. It was a time of "don't ask, don't tell" when hidden churches and private discussion groups were tolerated. The best known hidden Catholic church in Amsterdam is *Ons' Lieve Heer op Solder* (*Our Lord in the Attic*), a church seating 150 people, built on the top two floors of a 17th century canal house by Jan Hartman for his son, a Catholic priest. And in private discussion groups, such as the Collegiants, intellectuals discussed a broad range of topics—the philosopher Spinoza was a member of such a group near Leiden.

Luiken was born towards the end of the Golden Age—he was 20 years old when Rembrandt (1606-1669) died. During this period, Dutch trade, science, military prowess and art were among the most acclaimed in the world. Amsterdam was considered the richest city in Europe, with a rapidly expanding population (from 140,000 in 1647 to 205,000 in 1700). It was also a time when people speculated in tulips, a time and a culture characterized by Simon Schama (1997) as "the embarrassment of riches." The literacy rate of the Dutch Republic was considered to be the highest in Europe. A new Bible translation from Hebrew and Greek, commissioned by the government, had been published in 1637 as the "States" Bible. Until well into the 20th century this States Bible represented the only true version of God's Word for many Protestants. And for many children in the 17th and 18th centuries it was the one text from which they were taught proper Dutch.

The Life of Jan Luiken

Early Years. Jan Luiken was the youngest child of Casper Christoffels Luiken (1608-ca1668), who had moved from Essen and established himself in Amsterdam, and Hester Cores (1610-ca1667). Two years after his marriage in 1633, Casper bought a house in which the family lived for about 50 years in the Buiten Dommerstraat for *fl* 922 (about the equivalent today of \$14,141 although recently, the price of a house on that street—reflecting the escalation of home prices in the last half century—was listed as \$492,412). Jan Luiken's family was thoroughly middle class. Casper Luiken was a teacher who ran his own school. At the time of his marriage he belonged to the Reformed Church, but soon thereafter switched to the Remonstrants Brotherhood. He also attended meetings of the Collegiants, founded in 1646 by members of the Anabaptists and Remonstrants bodies. Casper, furthermore, published two popular books on the topics of the praise of mercy, charity, and neighborly love.

After finishing school, Jan Luiken worked briefly in the workshop of the painter Martinus Saeghmolen (d.1669), broke with his family's strong religious attitudes and joined a group of lively young men who called themselves *De Wijngaardranken* (The Vine Tendrils). They met regularly under the leadership of the innkeeper Jan Zoet in his inn *de Zoete Rust* (The Sweet Rest). Several members of this group wrote poetry—including Jan Luiken, who published a book of love poems under the title *De Duytse Lier*, 1671 (*The Dutch Lyre*). Luiken maintained life-long friendships with several members of this circle.

Marriage and Family Life. Jan Luiken married Maria den Oudens (who had some inherited capital) on March 20, 1672. The couple moved into the Luiken family home, which Jan bought in 1677 (he already owned one half and bought the other half for *fl* 500 from his deceased

brother's estate). After his marriage, he continued meeting with his old friends and remained under the influence of the circle of Collegiants, which had influenced his father and his older brother. On June 8, 1673, Jan Luiken, who had not been baptized at birth and did not belong to a church, joined the Anabaptists (*Vereenigde Doopsgezinde Gemeenten van het Lam en den Toren te Amsterdam*). He was never an avid member, however, and soon turned away from the Church.

Maria den Oudens died in 1682. During their 10-year marriage, they had five children, four of whom died in childhood. Luiken's surviving son Casper (1672-1708) was baptized as a Remonstrant and in his youth served with his father as an apprentice etcher. By the time Casper was 16-17 years old, he was sufficiently advanced to become his father's collaborator. Casper also became a well-known etcher in his own right (about 1187 etchings are attributed to him).

Shortly after the death of his wife (1682), Jan Luiken sold his house and moved into rented quarters. Soon thereafter, his young and devout housekeeper Annetie van Vliet (b. October 30 1657) moved in. She seems to have done an excellent job of keeping him and his affairs in order, which was very much appreciated by Luiken. Annetie shared Luiken's religious beliefs, Luiken mentioned her by name in numerous letters to his friends over the years, and Jan and Annetie made two wills in which each left half of his or her estate to the other. Jan also gave Annetie a copy of the first edition of *Het Menselyk Bedryf* (1694)—on the blank backsides of the images, Luiken had hand-written the text from his 1704 edition (this book is in the Luiken collection of the Amsterdam Museum). After Luiken's death, Annetie van Vliet kept in contact with his grandson, who wrote a poem to her in 1734 on the occasion of her 77th birthday.

Conversion in Jan Luiken's Religious Beliefs. Shortly after 1673 Luiken underwent a conversion in his religious beliefs as a result of several incidents: the sudden death of a member of his circle of friends; two recently reported visions; and his immersion in the philosophy of Jacob Böhme. In 1686 a Dutch translation was published of Part I of Böhme's *Theosophische Werke*, which contains Böhme's biography and the *Aurora*. The images of this book were etched by J. Mulder, probably from drawings by Jan Luiken, and the translation of this book from German has also been attributed to Jan Luiken.

In 1677, Luiken wrote an extremely pious description of an etching by C. de Decker of a vision that had appeared in October 1676 at the house of Jeske Claes in Amsterdam. Luiken subsequently visited the house to learn the particulars and to make a drawing of the room in which the apparition had taken place. Shortly thereafter, Luiken learned about a similar vision that had taken place several years earlier—the appearance of an angel to Grietje Claes, a widow living in Zaandam. Luiken also paid her a visit and made a sketch of her room. His second known etching depicts this vision, which appeared with a lengthy description of the vision under the title *De Genade Gods over Hollandt* (*The Mercy of God over Holland*) and with a 12-line poem. It is clear from both of Luiken's inscriptions that he was deeply moved by these supernatural happenings.

Jan Luiken's Later Life. Casper Luiken left for Neurenberg in what is now Germany, in 1699 and returned to Amsterdam in 1705. During that time, Jan Luiken resided from time to time outside Amsterdam, in Haarlem and Hoorn. During his son's absence, Jan wrote several letters to him expressing the wish that he would follow in his father's footsteps and turn to God just as he had listened to the admonition of his own father and had turned to God. Jan Luiken was back in Amsterdam in 1705 when his son returned and married at age 33. A few years later, Casper had a son, named Jan after his grandfather. Casper died on October 4, 1708. Jan Luiken wrote a poem commemorating the death of Casper, which is published in the 3rd ed. of his *Zedelyke en Stichtelyke Gezangen (Moral and Edifying Songs, 1709)*, in which he recounted his suffering when the beloved lamb [Casper] that had been born and entrusted to him turned from God and his joy when the lamb met him on the path of true virtue, leading to the Field of Salvation. After Casper's death, his widow and son moved in with Jan Luiken. After suffering a number of illnesses, Jan died on April 5, 1712, in the presence of his daughter-in-law and grandchild. The burial was arranged by his publisher Wed. P. Arentz and K. van der Sys (burial 4th class @ fl. 3, the lowest paid class).



Remembrances of Jan Luiken. Following his death, his portrait was etched by Pieter Sluiter (1675-1713) and published together with a six-line poem by Adriaan Spinniker (1676-1754).

The desire for God and good deeds, which burns in LUIKEN's heart
 Shown in his behavior, and etchings, and poetry,
 Spread thus its glow in the modest countenance,
 Which gaze made each aspire to share his way of living.
 Thou, who dost always view and read his work with
 pleasure,
 Look frequently at this face, as incentive for thy spirit.

(From *Des Menschen Begin, Midden en Einde*, 1758; collection of the Pitts Theology Library of Emory University.)

Luiken was described by his contemporaries as a pious, quiet, and unassuming man. "In his behavior he was quiet, grave and kind... Whoever saw him could see that he lived a sedate life. He loved solitary walks in nature...." (from *Des Menschen Begin, Midden en Einde*, 1758). In several instances clients came to pick up etchings and thought that they were dealing with a servant, whereas in fact they were helped by Luiken himself (Van Eeghen and Van der Kellen, 1905). He was very attached to his son Casper and to his grandson Jan, to whom he dedicated *Des Menschen Begin, Midden en Einde* with a poem and who was present when he died. He seemed to have given most of his earnings to the poor. Once when his housekeeper delivered a print to a publisher, she was given a 'tip' of fl 275 to use for her employer, because the publisher was certain that if Jan Luiken received that amount himself, he would give most of it away. Indeed, his estate was small: the total value amounted to fl 267.10—very little considering that he had had sold his house in 1685 for fl 1,350 (equivalent to about \$17,500 today) and that he was very productive until the end of his life. Items listed in his estate were some household goods, some kitchen utensils, a few items of clothing, some of his own prints and drawings,

some etching tools, fourteen books, an incomplete bible, van Braght's *Martyrs' Mirror* (the 2nd edition, which he illustrated) and *fl* 60.

The Work of Jan Luiken

Etchings. Luyken began his professional life as a painter, starting his training in 1667 at age 18 with the painter Martinus Saeghmolen, who died in 1669. Only a few paintings have been attributed to Luiken. Shortly thereafter, Luiken began using the etching needle with the help of the printmaker and draughtsman Coenraet Decker, who worked in Amsterdam between 1673 and 1685. Following is Luiken's etching of the etcher/engraver with his accompanying poem and scripture citation, from *The Spiegel van 't Menselyk Bedryf* (*The Mirror of Human Occupation*, 1730) in the Pitts Theology Library collection.

<p>DE PLAATSNYDER. 't Herstellen als 't vervallen, Dat komt van een op allen.</p>  <p>Een beeld, gewerkt in 't koper stof, Geeft duizend beelden van zich of: o Jezus Christus, hoog geprezen! Gy aller schoonste hemels beeld, Gy hebt 'er duizenden geteeld, Door afdruk van uw heilig wezen.</p>	<p>The Etcher/Engraver</p> <p>The restoration when it's worn, Transfers from one to all.</p> <p>An image, etched in the copper plate, Gives up a thousand images: Oh Jesus Christ, highly praised! Thou the most beautiful heavenly image, Thou hast engendered thousands, Through the imprint of thy holy being.</p> <p>One of the Scripture citations: Romans 5:17 For if, by the trespass of the one man, death reigned through that one man, how much more will those who receive God's abundant provision of grace and of the gift of righteousness reign in life through the one man, Jesus Christ!</p>
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About 3,336 prints are attributed to Jan Luiken, 36 of these jointly to Jan and Casper Luiken, in a period of 35 years, between 1677 and 1712. These images were made to illustrate nearly 500 books by other authors in a wide range of fields—biology, chemistry, geography, natural history, ancient history, shipbuilding, Biblical history, Dutch or world history, emblematic images, maps and every-day common topics. In addition, he illustrated twelve books which he authored himself.

According to Van Eeghen and Van der Kellen (1905), all of Luiken's prints were notable in the great care devoted to the images, whether the image was a plant or a butterfly or a large historical scene with hundreds of figures. In all of these he showed himself as a man of taste, spirit, and richness of thought. He was a master of his art, rendering accurately what he saw, as can be seen in *Het Menselyk Bedryf* (*The Human Occupation*). In large works, where he could use more imagination, even the smallest figures enforced the theme of the print and the lesser figures were grouped with the same care as the major figures. His mistakes and anachronisms

with respect to dress and architecture in his Biblical prints resulted from the little attention that was given by art historians or others to such matters in Luiken's time.

In his etching, Luiken used an etching needle nearly exclusively, although he occasionally used a burin. Even when the lines seemed to look like those made with a burin, on closer inspection they turned out to be made with an etching needle. He also made frequent use of burnishers, especially when portraying clouds, but he never used dry point.

Once Luiken's craft was fully developed, "everything is witty, the figures are firmly and sharply drawn; everything he imagines is put down with a quick hand, especially his smaller figures seem as if they are playfully etched in copper with an etching needle." In general his prints were totally original and his figures were rarely duplicated from one print to another. In the beginning of his career, he was occasionally inspired by other etchers, such as in *Jesus en de Ziel* (*Jesus and the Soul*, 1678), or his "inspiration" resulted from the publisher's wishes; but later in his career this happened rarely. Also in the beginning, he would occasionally make a few changes to a copper plate fashioned by another etcher, or he would make small changes to one of his own copper plates to use for a different illustration. Additionally, he was often asked to finish etchings made by other artists; generally his additions or changes concerned the background figures.

Luiken's known sketches were for the most part made with pen and ink, some were further worked with sepia ink, and only a very few were watercolors. Generally, Luiken's sketches were duplicated exactly on the copper plates. He was very well-versed in perspective. His drawings and sketches were usually the same size as the etchings but occasionally they were larger—as for instance with the sketches for *De Onwaardige Wereld* (*The Unworthy World*, 1710), of which several have been saved.

Poetry. Luiken wrote poetry from an early age. His first published poems were love poems and were published in 1671 under the title *De Duytse Lier* (*The Dutch Lyre*). The book is dedicated (not by name) to his future wife Maria den Oudens, who was known for her beautiful singing. In addition to *De Duytse Lier*, Luiken wrote and illustrated eleven emblem books—books in which each image is paired with an emblematic text, as seen in the example below.

Luiken was unique in that he both wrote the text and made the illustrations for his emblem books, all of which followed a similar format: a title, a one- or two-line motto, an image, followed by a poem and one or more scripture citations. Each book contained between 50 and 100 images. The images and text are inseparable, each informing the other and jointly inviting the reader to a further contemplation of the religious, moral and didactic message. In many instances he used images of everyday objects and situations to communicate his message. He urges the reader to direct his or her perception from the visual and earthly, but transient reality, to the intransient eternity. Below is an example of an emblem from *Des Menschen Begin, Midden en Einde* (1758) in the collection of the Pitts Theology Library of Emory University.

<p>MIDDEN EN EINDE. 13</p> <p>DE LOOPWAGEN.</p> <p>Vereift de zwakheid leunen, God geeft zyn ondersteunen.</p>  <p>Dus moet het Kindje leeren gaan, Wyl 't op zyn voerjes niet kan staan: Zo onderfchraagt ons ook de Heere, Op dat wy, als een zwak geftel, Niet vallen zouden in de Hel, Maar zo den gang ten Hemel leeren.</p> <p>L v-</p>	<p>The Walker</p> <p>When weakness demands leaning, God gives his support.</p> <p>Thus the little child must learn to walk, While on his little feet he cannot stand: So the Lord also supports us: So that, as a weak being, We should not fall into Hell, But learn the way to Heaven.</p> <p>One of the Scripture citations: Psalm 25: 8-10 Good and upright is the Lord; therefore he instructs sinners in his ways. He guides the humble in what is right and teaches them his way. All the ways of the Lord are loving and faithful toward those who keep the demands of his covenant.</p>
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Jan Luiken's Impact

During his lifetime Luiken worked for more than 100 different publishers. His prints have remained popular even in current times—prints from his emblem book *Het Menselyk Bedryf* (*The Human Occupation*, 1694) have been replicated on calendars, the wrapping paper of bakeries, tiles, plastic bags, etc. (Klaversma & Hannema, 1999, p. 11). Some of his religious prints were even copied on Chinese porcelain made for the European market in the mid 18th century (Jörg, 2002). Recently, prints or drawings made by Luiken for some of his emblem books have been used by Simon Schama in his exploration of the Dutch culture in the Golden Age (Schama, 1997) and by Donna Barnes to describe 17th-century Dutch daily life (Barnes, 1995).

Luiken's emblem books were reprinted between three and seven times until the end of the 18th century and a number were re-published by several publishers in the 20th century. Recently, his emblem books have kindled renewed scholarly attention—for instance, Vekeman (1995) analyzed the influence of Jacob Böhme on his writing; and Stronks (2011) in her recent book *Negotiating Differences: Word, Image and Religion in the Dutch Republic* suggested that Jan Luiken “set a new standard for Dutch illustrated religious literature which was based on the hybridization of Protestant and Catholic visual practices.” Finally, Luiken's image can be found on the outside wall of the Rijksmuseum in Amsterdam located on the Jan Luijkenstraat—in the neighborhood where all streets are named after the most important artists of the Netherlands' Golden Age.

Most of the material in the current biography has been drawn from the extensive biography of Luiken by Van Eeghen, P. & Van der Kellen, J. P. H. (1905).

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