temporary artists of the same subject, identification of patronage, if known, and a discussion of the larger cultural context in which the works of art were produced. After one reads the catalogue entries and admires the beautiful reproductions of the exhibited paintings, one wonders out of scholarly curiosity what were the determining criteria for the selection of these 35 stunning paintings for this important exhibition, as opposed to other works from Dou’s oeuvre.

_Gerrit Dou (1613-1675): Master Painter in the Age of Rembrandt_ offers the specialist in seventeenth-century studies a long overdue, in-depth look at a Dutch artist whose dazzling paintings were revered in his own day and whose reputation has been justly resuscitated since the middle of the twentieth century. At the same time, the scholarly essays, catalogue entries, and bibliography also provide the reader a welcome overview of the current research on seventeenth-century Dutch genre imagery in general.


Despite the chronological breadth of its title, this study interprets select images from the Old and New Testaments by Rembrandt from around 1655 in light of philosemitism. Combining evidence from the study of history, theology, art, and philosophy, Zell proposes that Rembrandt expounds a Protestant view that seriously re-affirms the Old Testament as the basis for Christian salvation. His study builds upon the firm ground laid by Christian Tümpel and Henri van de Waal, and other outstanding scholars including Julius S. Held, Franz Landsberger, Erwin Panofsky, and Shelley Perlove. Their studies have generally presented Rembrandt’s relationship to the Jews as one of mutual sympathy and kindred ethical and spiritual values. Zell revises this point of view in light of a nuanced reading of broad cultural is-
sues, and a careful analysis of the contacts between Menasseh ben Israel and the leading theologians of Amsterdam, including Isaac Vossius, Gerbrandt Anslo, Caspar Barlaeus, Paul Felgenhaur, and Petrus Serrarius. Zell emphasizes that the Protestant leaders in Amsterdam gave the Jews a fragile and conditional acceptance, predicated on the hope that the Jews would recognize Christ as their savior.

Chapter One considers the Amsterdam Sephardic Jews as patrons and collectors of art, and surveys their attitudes toward representational imagery. The relatively few extant Dutch representations of Jewish ceremonies and portraits of prominent Amsterdam rabbis are fairly well known. Less familiar are the art collections of several wealthy Dutch Jews. Although the surviving documentation makes it difficult to generalize, clearly some members of this group collected paintings of religious and secular subjects. To varying degrees, this group maintained its character as a separate cultural entity within the broader Dutch milieu, but overall it identified with the majority culture in which its members lived (32). From the little surviving evidence, it is likely that these Jews would have been sympathetic toward the art of Rembrandt and his pupils, although only one is known to collect Rembrandt’s art.

Chapter Two examines the seventeenth-century Amsterdam attitudes toward the Jews and their distinctive landmarks, including the cemetery at the Ouderkerk, made famous by Jacob van Ruisdael. Non-Jewish visitors to Amsterdam regarded the Jewish cemetery and synagogues as exotic or unique to the city. Representations of the Sephardi synagogue and literary descriptions of Amsterdam Jewry presented their subjects for the non-Jewish audience. Rembrandt’s position as portrayer of Jews, Zell shows, is far more complicated. For example, early in the study of Rembrandt’s prints, owners, and cataloguers gave some of these works Jewish titles that endured, even when proven doubtful. Thus, The Little Jewish Bride is now considered a study of Saskia as St. Catherine, and the oddly named Great Jewish Bride should bear a more plausible title, such as Esther (41). Some of Rembrandt’s
paintings of men in odd hats were traditionally associated with Jews; Zell investigated these types of costume and determined that these paintings may indeed represent Polish Jews (47). With respect to Rembrandt’s heads often identified as representing Jewish types, including several heads of Christ, the critical attitudes become complicated from the time of Rembrandt onward. On the one hand, Rembrandt may have sought accuracy in his rendering of the features of Christ, and therefore regarded Jewish types as more authentic likenesses of Christ. On the other hand, a Jewish model, by definition, rejected Christ as the savior, and so an artist portraying the bearer of the new dispensation might want to avoid visual analogies between Jesus and the Jews. Zell cites a poem by Rembrandt’s contemporary Jan Vos, who formulated this perceived contradiction between rendering Christ as a Jew, and imbuing the same rendition with the values of Christ. Zell is thus led to conclude: “Using a Jewish model... for a portrait of the Christian Savior did not meet with unanimous approval among Rembrandt’s contemporaries” (57).

Chapter Three examines Rembrandt’s relationship with Menasseh ben Israel, the Portuguese rabbi who was the “representative of European Judaism” to the Protestant intellectual world. As the first Jew to have a sustained dialogue with the Amsterdam Christians, Menasseh ben Israel occupies a crucial position in Dutch theological circles. Zell, like others before him, however, stresses that Menasseh’s ideas were not accepted by the Amsterdam Jewish community; his acclaim lay outside it. Rembrandt evidently knew Menasseh as early as the 1630s, but the main artistic legacy of their relationship consists of four etchings that he made to illustrate the rabbi’s book, _La Piedra gloriosa_ of 1655. The iconography of the etchings implies an exceptional case insofar as the patron must have carefully guided the artist’s invention. Verbal instructions must be presumed, since no written record survives and it is unlikely that Rembrandt read Spanish. Zell situates both Rembrandt and Menasseh within the primarily Christian Amsterdam circles of philosemitic millenarianism, which main-
tained that a future harmony between Jews and Christians would exist in a coming messianic age.

Chapters Four and Five concern two small etched series, one vertical and one horizontal, both of the mid1650s, in which Rembrandt depicted the life of Christ. In both series, the theme is the establishment and renewal of the covenant, which Zell explains in terms of Amsterdam philosemitism. Chapter 6 concerns how Rembrandt interpreted the Old Testament in terms of Christian salvation, in two very different works: a grand painting, *Jacob Blessing the Sons of Joseph*, and an etching, *Abraham Entertaining the Angels*, both of 1656.

In his presentation of the case studies of Rembrandt’s imagery and foremost religious issues, Zell has elucidated important aspects of Rembrandt’s faith and oeuvre, and made a major contribution to the histories of art and religion. To readers interested in pursuing additional aspects of his topic, several other recent studies may be mentioned. Shelley Perlove’s recent essay on the critical responses, between 1800 and 1945, to Rembrandt’s representations of figures that writers identified as Jewish, reminds us that the history of collecting Rembrandt’s works is inseparable from the often subjective labeling of his images (*Dutch Crossing* 25 [Winter 2001]). Two publications, outside the scope of Zell’s study but generally supporting its premises, concern the earlier generation of artists and scholars who helped shape Rembrandt’s intellectual milieu: Christine Goettler’s essay on Rubens’ *The Circumcision of Jesus* (“‘Nomen mirificum,’ Rubens’ Beschneidung Jesu für den Hochaltar der Jesuitenkirche in Genua,” in *Zeitsprünge: Forschungen zur Frühen Neuzeit*, special issue: *Aspekte der Gegenreformation*, ed. V. von Flemming, 1 [1997]: 796-844), and Peter T. van Roojen’s study of Hebrew scholarship in Leiden (*Theology, Biblical Scholarship and Rabbinical Studies in the Seventeenth Century* [Leiden: E. J. Brill, 1989]).