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Pleading for diversity : the church Caspar Coolhaes wanted

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Chapter 8: The clergy: what makes a good preacher?

We continue to explore Coolhaes' ecclesiology by passing from his belief that civil government should foster, guard and guide the church, to the question of clergy. Good preachers are part of Coolhaes' ideal church. What he would like to get rid of, if he could, would be preachers who are not truly called - or are, as he would say, hypocritical.

Coolhaes was a critic of all church confessions, pointing out illogical or unbiblical practices or attitudes - a characteristic which he shared with other Spiritualists, latitudinarians, and "libertines." He criticized freely and frequently. His writings are full of points of criticism of all churches, especially the Reformed. Coolhaes leveled most of these criticisms against the clergy, the "church servants," a category including both preachers and elders. Preachers and elders, in his eyes, can perpetuate either truth or error, and teach biblical values or drive non-biblical practices. The visible church in his writings is not an abstract, theoretical institution. It is nothing more than a body of individuals, who are easily led (or led astray) by preachers.

Coolhaes' criticisms of certain preachers and elders are lengthy and repetitive. He is preoccupied with their errors. It is easy to become weary with his criticisms and miss what he says about good preachers. These positive points are clear in his writings, although they could easily be overlooked amidst the emotional floods of critical rhetoric he employs against those others he believes are in dangerous error. Nevertheless, it is important to understand that he believes that good preachers could and should exist. He exhorts those preachers and elders who are willing to follow his advice to lead the visible church in a biblical and sensitive way. In this chapter we will look first at his instructions for good preachers, and then at his main criticisms of other clergy.

Faithful servants

Coolhaes believes that good preachers exist in the visible churches: "But I do not say that there are not good preachers to be found – the Lord answered Elijah that there were still seven thousand who had not bowed the knee to Baal."¹ In defense of the office of preacher, he states that:

[Preachers] do well and serve their office faithfully if they preach the Word without adding or subtracting anything, and bring people to the Heavenly Jerusalem (who is Mother of us all). They are worthy of double honor.²

If Coolhaes had designed the sort of church he had wanted, therefore, he would have wanted good preachers in it, preaching the Word. But, he also would have been particular that clergy, both preachers and elders, either ordained or un-ordained, in any confession, would have specific spiritual qualifications for their ministries.

First, the lifestyle of preachers, elders, and even deacons must conform to biblical guidelines set out by Paul for bishops and deacons.³ Coolhaes said that the Apostolic Church chose preachers who were unimpeachable of life, who had long practiced godliness and were able to rule their own houses. To keep the Apostolic Church pure, no one was ordained hastily, so that no one shared in sin. The Holy Spirit wanted no one to be a deacon unless he had a good testimony and was full of the Holy Spirit and wisdom. So, Coolhaes reasoned, no church should call someone lightly to be a preacher or teacher, because church servants should be an example in their use of the Word, and in their lifestyle.⁴ Interestingly, many in Coolhaes' time thought that allowing unfit communicants to the Lord's Supper made the church "impure." Here Coolhaes, who as we will see believes in open communion, assigns the blame for a possibly impure church to impure clergy instead.

Second, preachers and elders must be called by God. When Coolhaes speaks of "call," he means three aspects: a subjective sense of assurance,⁵ correct preaching as a sign that one is truly called, and confirmation by a call by the secular government. All must be in place. No one has done any good in the church, Coolhaes maintains, unless he has been chosen and called – called as the Old Testament prophets were, as Jesus was, as John the Baptist and all the teachers in the New Testament were.⁶ This calling apparently can be absent at one point, but come to a preacher later. Coolhaes admits that he himself was guilty of "walking too soon," before being truly and properly sent by God. "We were all too fiery and had un-

1. Coolhaes, *Summa*, C2b.

2. Coolhaes, *Seeckere punten*, folios 2Aijv–Aijr.

3. 1 Tim. 3:1-13.

4. Coolhaes, *Toutzsteen*, article 7.

5. Coolhaes, *Seeckere punten*, folio 20Eiiijv.

6. Coolhaes, *Cort, waerachtich verhael*, 202.

ripened fervor, caring more for our own honor and profit, than that of God. I cannot deny that I was this way when I first came to the knowledge of the Gospel.”⁷

So, preachers must be preaching the Word actively, which will curb evil. One can stop something bad most easily in the beginning. The fire metaphor which Coolhaes and Coornhert both use appears again here. A village or a whole city can burn down, but it could have been put out easily when it was just a whisper of smoke. Preachers can blow it out by faithfully preaching. If not, evil increases. Coolhaes said, using a different metaphor, “Satan starts off being a prior, and ends up as the abbot.” But timely intervention is still possible, with faithful preaching of the Word.⁸

In addition, preachers must have the gifts for this teaching and preaching, including the gift of understanding the Word. Without these gifts, they will not succeed. This does not mean that they are expected to know the answers to all theological or biblical questions. In the Apostolic Church, Coolhaes maintains, preachers were selected who had gifts from God to teach, rebuke evil, and instruct gently those who opposed them.⁹ In his own life, we see that Coolhaes encouraged young, gifted preachers, especially those like himself who had come from the German Palatinate. Johannes Hallius lived in his house and was protected by him. We hear that Hallius preached well.¹⁰ Coolhaes also encouraged Jan Janszoon, a man with desire and gifts in preaching, to develop his gifts and be considered a preacher.¹¹ Furthermore, Coolhaes showed preaching ability to be important to him when he commented favorably on his colleague Hesper’s preaching, regardless of their conflict.¹²

He compares the preacher to the father of a family, who teaches the Ten Commandments, the Apostles’ Creed, the Lord’s Prayer, and the basics about baptism and communion to his children as soon as they can speak. This emphasis on these basics is reminiscent of a catechism – especially of Luther’s catechism, which includes the texts of the Commandments, Creed and Lord’s Prayer to be learned, more than the Genevan Catechism

7 Coolhaes, *Een christelijcke vermaninghe*, folio Aijj.

8. Coolhaes, *Een christelijcke vermaninghe*, folio Dijb; see also Coornhert, *Remonstrance*, Aijv–Aijr.

9. Coolhaes, *Toutzsteen*, article 7.

10. Coolhaes, *Apologia*, folio 36Jiiijv.

11. Coolhaes, *Breeder bericht*, folio 2r.

12. Coolhaes, *Breeder bericht*, folio 8r.

does. As children get older and more mature, the parents “sharpen” the teaching – in other words, explain the concepts. If the parents cannot do this, it is the office of the preachers. A preacher with a gift can explain his subject so well, that he is flexible and creative in teaching it:

In this teaching of the children, as well as in the explaining of the Scripture for older people, no one should be bound to a certain form of words, such as is done these days by all parties. For he would have to be a bad preacher, yes, even unworthy of his preacher’s office, who could not do it without special books and a special method.¹³

Coolhaes assumes that these gifts include the gift of biblical interpretation. While newcomers to faith, and children in understanding, cannot divine the meanings of all of Scripture, especially in places which should be understood allegorically, God has given some preachers and teachers a gift for this. However, even they receive the Spirit in only a limited amount, and cannot explain everything in the Bible.¹⁴

Lastly, preachers should show mercy, love and gentleness to those in sin or suffering. Such sinful or suffering people are in need of spiritual healing, and the good preacher or elder is engaged in the cure of souls, not in checking off points on lists of rules. Preachers have the authority to treat those who are spiritually sick, not according to their own opinions, not “with waters which we ourselves distill” (it is interesting to note the distilling reference and metaphor, since Coolhaes was just beginning his trade as a distiller of fortified wines and medicinal “waters” at the time he wrote it, as we saw in the biographical sketch) but instead with the oil of kindness which the Lord has given. It should be like a wine to cleanse their wounds, not a corrosive to “bite their flesh out.” Gentleness is often better than force. It is better to treat “visible swelling” with soft bandages – even though amputation is sometimes necessary to save a life.¹⁵ The visible church should seek to heal that which is sick or injured. Coolhaes means by this not just physical suffering, but also the persistent sinful practices or

13. “In deser leere van den kinderen, so wel als oock in der uytlegginghe der heyliger Godlicker Schrifture voor de bedaechde luyden, en mach voorwaer niemant, aen een sekere forme der woorden gebonden zijn, so hedensdaechs by alle partyen gedaen wort. Want hy moeste een slecht Predicant, jae ooc des Predicants-ampts niet waerdich zijn, die het selve niet en soude doen connen, sonder bysondere boecken, ende een bysondere manier van doen daer toe te hebben.” Coolhaes, *Cort, waerachtich verhael*, 81.

14. Coolhaes, *Seeckere punten*, folio 22Fij.

15. Coolhaes, *Sendtbrief*, folio Biiijr.

unrepentant natures which some of his critics would have condemned and treated more harshly.

False and hypocritical

Although Coolhaes fills many dozens, perhaps even hundreds, of pages with his criticism of clergy, his actual problems with them are few in number. First, he believes that many preachers and elders are hypocrites, and thus are false teachers – not truly called by God. Second, this can be seen in that they produce or revere human writings which they consider to be authoritative, so authoritative that these writings threaten the authority of Scripture. Third, they build a “new papacy” by consolidating their influence and authority through consistories, classes and synods. Fourth, they use the harsh and unbiblical method of excommunication as a discipline. Fifth, they argue about what he considers difficult and esoteric theological ideas, rather than teaching the basic Gospel. Ultimately, they are lacking in love, which for Coolhaes calls even their very conversion into doubt.

The term “hypocrite” is, of course, not at all unique to Coolhaes. It is a biblical idea, and then also has been used by many critical voices through the ages, including the Reformers. For Coolhaes, hypocrites were worse than those who are merely not called. They were much more destructive. The idea of hypocritical preachers bothers Coolhaes continually. He mentioned them in his earliest known writing, the “Glaubensbekenntniss” of 1571, in which he calls them “many false Christs; members of the Devil.”¹⁶ Later, after the Synod of Dordrecht in 1574, he reported that most of the preachers present were inexperienced. Others, he judged, were hypocrites – former priests or monks who, he says, had not left Catholicism – it had left them. Because people were poor and could no longer pay for Catholic services, these preachers turned to the Reform, he alleged. Like the untrustworthy manager of Luke 16 (“I cannot dig, and I am ashamed to beg”) they now were doing more damage with their preaching and the “reformation” of their churches than they ever did with their masses. Hearing mass was good for people, he said (a rare pro-Catholic statement from Coolhaes), but hearing the preaching of these preachers led to hate, party-spiritedness and many evils. Better that they had stayed priests and monks, than to preach the

16. Coolhaes, “Glaubensbekenntniss,” 6r.

Gospel but not be in the truth.¹⁷ These false teachings and the hate they produce was worse even than a plague. In a physical plague the bodies are destroyed, but with the plague of false teaching, the souls are also destroyed.¹⁸ This hate has produced war between Christians in every Christian country.¹⁹ Those whom God has not called or sent are driven by Satan (changed into an angel of light) to destroy the church of God.²⁰

By 1574, Coolhaes said, many artisans and tradespeople (he names clothes-makers, shoemakers, weavers, locksmiths, and so forth) had become preachers. He accuses them of not being truly called or converted, but of seeking an easy life and a salary, while appearing to be pious and zealous. Meanwhile, the martyrs of the earlier sixteenth-century persecutions – priests, monks, trades people, women and young people alike – had sacrificed their lives for the truth.²¹ Were these allegedly hypocritical preachers truly “saved?” Coolhaes is unclear on this, but maintains that if they have not been truly converted, they cannot preach true conversion.²² Sometimes he allows that they merely possessed a “mistaken zeal.”²³ Perhaps it would have been better if they had never been converted from Catholicism, since they have remained the old, sinful “Adam.”²⁴ Perhaps the Spirit of God had worked in them in vain, because with mistaken fervor they were making schisms – they will let the wolf and the lion (the Devil) back into the sheep pen (the visible church).²⁵ Although Coolhaes does not use the expression *ex opere operato*, he would surely disagree with it, in the sense that for him it is the spiritual condition of the preachers, not any ordination, which determines their effectiveness in ministry.

Other churches than the Reformed are not spared his criticism. He compares preachers of differing confessions to competing wine-merchants, calling out the value of their

17. Coolhaes, *Cort, waerachtich verhael*, 11-12.

18. Coolhaes, *Seeckere punten*, folio BB.

19. Coolhaes, *Seeckere punten*, folio Bijr.

20. Coolhaes, *Cort, waerachtich verhael*, 202.

21. Coolhaes, *Cort, waerachtich verhael*, 10-12, 33-34.

22. Coolhaes, *Een christelijcke vermaninghe*, folio Biiij.

23. “verkeerde ijver.” Coolhaes, *Een Christelijcke vermaninghe*, folio Aij.

24. Coolhaes, *Apologia*, folio 87iijv.

25. Coolhaes, *Een christelijcke vermaninghe*, folio Dijr.

masters' wines, not because they are the best wines, but because they want to be paid, all the while saying, "Look, here is Christ."²⁶

Coolhaes also criticizes the situation in the Roman Catholic Church. Candidates for the priesthood are not even asked about the virtues of the Holy Spirit which Paul requires for a bishop. Many are ordained who do things which attract slander and thus are contaminated. Also, in order to seem to be following Paul's injunction that a bishop be the husband of one wife, some Catholic unmarried priests have only one church, which they call "the wife of the teacher." However, other Catholic bishops sometimes have four, five, ten, or even twenty churches from which they receive a yearly pension.²⁷ The implication is that these Catholic clergy do not obey Paul's guidelines, but instead twist them in order to acquire more income.

Coolhaes believed in the virtue of the office of preacher. However, he criticized many preachers harshly. Was he anticlerical? Anticlericalism, before and during the Reformation, was a reaction against the power and corruptness of clergy. Violent actions on the part of laity often accompanied anticlerical feelings. Complaints were made against priests and monastics, often about their alleged lack of morality, honesty and godliness.²⁸ Anticlerical rhetoric was widespread, throughout the sixteenth century. For instance, Erasmus had been critical of clerics and deemphasized church rules and regulations. To him, a secular Christian could be as holy as a monk.²⁹ During Coolhaes' own time, Duifhuis of Utrecht, another outspoken critic, said that preachers used their learning "to monopolize spiritual authority." Duifhuis preferred to see himself as just one believer among many.³⁰ In the time after Coolhaes, the Collegiants, for whom he may have been one inspiration, opposed clergy, church discipline, and church authority.³¹

26. Coolhaes, *Cort, waerachtich verhael*, 10-12, 33-34. This is an allusion to Matt. 24:23, and a well-known reference, especially in the seventeenth century among Collegiants.

27. Coolhaes, *Toutzsteen*, article 7.

28. Hans-Jürgen Goertz, "Anticlericalism," trans. Michael G. Baylor, *OER*, vol. 1, 46-51.

29. J. Trapman, "'Erasmianism' in the Early Reformation in the Netherlands," in Mout, Snolinsky and Trapman, *Erasmianism*, 170.

30. Kaplan, *Calvinists and Libertines*, 93-95.

31. Jonathan I. Israel, "Spinoza and the Religious Radical Enlightenment," in *The Intellectual Consequences of Religious Heterodoxy, 1600-1750*, ed. Sarah Mortimer and John Robertson (Leiden: Brill, 2012), 182.

It is important here to define anticlericalism as it relates to Coolhaes. Anticlericalism can mean that all clerics are rejected. It can mean that the office of cleric is judged to be superfluous or even harmful. It can also mean that clerics are merely criticized. A helpful insight is that various historical examples of anticlericalism are not uniform:

At certain times [anticlericalism] limited its opposition to clericalism in the restricted sense, at others it spilled over into militant irreligion. On occasion it distinguished carefully between the secular clergy, which it claimed to hold in high regard, and the religious orders, against which it concentrated its fire. These differences make it possible to establish a sort of hierarchical scale, according to the intensity of the polemic and the passions involved...³²

So, in light of this hierarchy, it would be best to call Coolhaes' anticlericalism "restricted" or perhaps "limited." He maintained the importance of clergy, if they were "good," while deploring those he deemed hypocritical.

Coolhaes, like Erasmus and subsequent Reformers, encouraged the spiritual maturity and holiness of all members of the church, not just the clergy. However, unlike Duifhuis, he considered his calling and the calling of the preacher in general as a good and praiseworthy thing.³³ Coolhaes, in a sense, was anticlerical. He opposed the power of Reformed clergy, and spoke out against corruption. But he would not have condoned any sort of violent uprisings against preachers. He did not call them immoral, although some he did find lazy, and many he judged for being lacking in love.

Another question which arises, is this: did Coolhaes obsess over the "hypocrites" so much because of the conflicts he had with his colleagues, and because of bitterness over his excommunication? Perhaps, although it is difficult to say, since his earliest writings on this topic (the 1571 "Glaubensbekenntniss" and the 1580 *Apologia* and *Breeder bericht*, all before the excommunication) were composed in the heat of disputes, and are already defensive in posture.

Coolhaes could look past any sin except spiritual pride. Those who lived in what was considered a sinful way, or whose doctrinal understanding veered from what was considered correct, he was content to call merely immature. However, he had no sympathy for the Pharisical sins of pride and presumption on the part of the "hypocrites." In Coolhaes' eyes,

32. René Rémond, "Anticlericalism: Some Reflections by Way of Introduction," *European Studies Review* 13 (1983): 124.

33. For example: Coolhaes, *Apologia*, folio 16Diiijv. He is saddened by those who accuse him of gluttony and other sorts of worldiness, which would discredit both the Word and the office of preacher.

this disqualified them from the “true, invisible” church, in much the same way that in the eyes of many Calvinist preachers, the fleshly sins and doctrinal errors disqualified “sinners” and “heretics” from the visible church. It certainly did not help that those very preachers opposed him. In any event, however, spiritual pride runs counter to grace, a central Protestant tenet. Sinners elected and saved by grace have no room for boasting. So, for Coolhaes, there was one group of people for which he seems to hold out very little hope of redemption – the hypocrites.³⁴

More than the Bible

Coolhaes also criticized preachers for the creation and excessive use of “man-made” writings: confessions, catechisms and synodal decisions. He believed that in practice these were being revered above the Bible.

These writings were a part of increasing confessionalization. Many saw the process of confessionalization as positive and natural – one which would spread truth and do good in society. One’s confessional membership held great importance to most in the sixteenth century, who “thought in a strictly confessional way”³⁵ and saw those who did not as fanatics and extremists. This was no abstraction – many were so loyal to their confession that they were willing to suffer and die for it. Many *had* done so – whether Calvinists, Lutherans, Anabaptists or Catholics. So this was an almost-holy allegiance, “written with the blood and tears of family members and friends ... inviolable.”³⁶

At one point, early in his career as a preacher, Coolhaes had complained about the inattention of the congregation in church during the expounding of the catechism.³⁷ As time went on, however, catechisms and other writings themselves became his target. Coolhaes did not think much of confessional categories, and opposed most of these writings, which he alleged were becoming as important as Scripture to their adherents. Coornhert had called them “heathen gloss-books”³⁸ and objected to the Heidelberg Catechism in particular – a

34. This belief that they would not be redeemed is implied in *Concilatio*. See Coolhaes, *Concilatio*, Gij.

35. Cornelia Boer, *Hofpredikers van Prins Willem van Oranje, Jean Taffin en Pierre Loyseleur de Villiers* (The Hague: Martinus Nijhoff, 1952), 15.

36. Boer, *Hofpredikers*, 15.

37. These visits are mentioned by Van Dooren, “Caspar Coolhaes: het een en ander uit zijn leven,” 174.

“new monstrance in which the Calvinists want to incarcerate Christ.”³⁹ As Coornhert put it, these things, even the Heidelberg Catechism, were *landszaken* – issues which should concern the whole nation.⁴⁰

Coolhaes agrees with Coornhert. He states that commentaries and explanations by godly men have their usefulness, but only Scripture has the witness that gives life.⁴¹ Catechisms are superfluous, serving only to cause disputes.⁴² Ironically, Coolhaes uses another “human” document, the *Belgic Confession*, to attack them. The seventh article of the *Belgic Confession*, he notes, emphasizes the primacy of the Scripture and the inadequacy of human writings, regardless of how holy they are, how long they are, how old they are, or how their authors were persecuted. In his view, its seventh article should be understood to apply to all acts and decrees of councils, synods, consistories and classes, including the first article of the Synod of Dordrecht (1574) and all the ecclesiological meetings in Emden, Dordrecht, Middelburg, and Haarlem.⁴³

It was Dordrecht 1574 which angered him most. Article 39 forbids the preaching of the “Sunday Gospel” (the appointed lectionary Gospel reading). Article 42 prescribes the forms of prayer, Article 43 the Psalms and songs. Article 44 specifies the words for the prayer for noon, and the prayer for the sermon of the catechumens. Article 45 says what one may read or sing on Sundays – “canonical books.”⁴⁴ Article 47 would take from the government the responsibility for Sunday buying, selling, working, drinking, walking, and so forth, and put it on the preachers. Articles 48, 49 and 50 make prescriptions about organ-playing after the sermon and thanksgiving, about whether people may stay in the church after the service, and selling found items. Coolhaes compared this to Jesus’ saying that the scribes

38. Roobol, *Disputation by Decree*, 35, 37.

39. Kaplan, *Calvinists and Libertines*, 101.

40. The word “landszaken” is used for this reason in the original title of Marianne Roobol, “Landszaken: De godsdienstgesprekken tussen gereformeerde predikanten en D. V. Coornhert onder leiding van de Staten van Holland 1577-1583” (Amsterdam: Unpublished dissertation, University of Amsterdam, 2005), and discussed by her on pages 15-16. See also: Kaplan, *Calvinists and Libertines*, 101.

41. Coolhaes, *Seeckere punten*, folios 14Dijj–18Eij.

42. Coolhaes, *Cort, waerachtich verhael*, 53.

43. Kamphuis declares that Coolhaes appealed to this article in error. For Kamphuis’ reasoning that things revealed by God can be considered to be understood as under that word, see Kamphuis, *Kerkelijke besluitvaardigheid*, 54.

44. Coolhaes, *Cort, waerachtich verhael*, 93-94.

and Pharisees strain out a gnat, but swallow a camel;⁴⁵ in other words, that attention is paid to *minutiae*, but the essentials are being overlooked. Although Jesus and the Apostles preached in the temple, on the street, indeed anywhere that people gathered, he noted, Article 51 forbids open-air prayers and funeral sermons, even though, he mentioned, Scripture says that it is right to mourn. Article 53 forbids all holidays, except for those on Sundays – including Christmas and Easter, Ascension and Pentecost. Coolhaes went on to mention his objections to Article 54 against days of prayer and fasting, and to Article 90 which says that consistories and classes, rather than the government, may decide who is to travel to a synod.⁴⁶

This all mattered to Coolhaes because of his conviction of the authority of the Old and New Testaments over everyone, including preachers. The Prophets and Apostles (in other words, the writers of Scripture) received God’s Word directly, whereas contemporary human teachers receive it indirectly, mediated through the Prophets and Apostles.⁴⁷ If preachers preach the Ten Commandments, the listener hears Moses, and, by extension, God. But if they preach what Coolhaes would call “human opinion,” the listener does not hear God.⁴⁸ Such preachers have drastically overestimated their own call and gifts, convinced by Satan and by their own pride to think they have received prophetic and apostolic power and authority. Thinking they have this authority, and meaning well, they add to the Scripture their own catechisms, commentaries, laws, regulations and special doctrines. In doing this, they misuse the keys of the kingdom,⁴⁹ in other words, the prerogatives of the true Apostles and Prophets who were inspired to write the biblical texts.

Therefore, these human teachers should not be believed without discretion. A true teacher will not add or subtract anything from Scripture in his teaching. This “not-adding or subtracting” is the only true sign that the person is called and sent to the office of preaching/teaching. It is even a sign to the preacher himself of his vocation, in case he is in doubt.⁵⁰ The antichrist, on the other hand, puts himself in God’s temple by adding to or

45. Coolhaes, *Cort, waerachtich verhael*, 94-95. Matt. 23:24.

46. Coolhaes, *Cort, waerachtich verhael*, 97.

47. Coolhaes, *Seeckere punten*, 18Eij.

48. Coolhaes, *Seeckere punten*, folio 3Aiiij.

49. Coolhaes, *Een christelijcke vermaninghe*, folio Aiiij.

50. Coolhaes, *Seeckere punten*, Eb.

subtracting from God's Word, bringing in strange doctrine, constricting human conscience and denying Christian freedom.⁵¹

The preacher's context I: Order or power?

Synods, classes and consistories made up the Reformed Church system, which was often accused by Coolhaes and others of becoming a "new papacy"⁵² – a monolithic, inflexible, powerful, top-down structure, filled with rules and run by clergy. Coolhaes opposed synods and other Reformed organization, especially when the excuse for order was misused to gain power.

Early, scattered Reformed congregations, often under persecution, had found that they were able to remain connected via Calvinist church government – the "Presbyterian" system.⁵³ However, the Reformed love of order seemed to go deeper than mere necessity. According to Daneau, *Nihil pulchrius ordine*, "Nothing [is] as beautiful as order."⁵⁴ Calvinists took an "almost sensory pleasure" in order. Order is sacred, reflecting the order of God's creation. Disorder equals sin.⁵⁵ However, what many Calvinists called "disorder" is precisely what Coolhaes regarded as "Christian freedom." He was content in his early Leiden tenure to work within that Reformed system, but in time grew more and more critical of it.⁵⁶

Coolhaes cited misuse of this organizing impulse. When a tiny, new church is founded, an entire complement of elders and deacons is appointed, who flaunt their newly acquired office but have no idea what it means. Often these new elders do nothing but cause

51. Coolhaes, *Seeckere punten*, folio 21F.

52. Coolhaes, *Apologia*, folios 42 Lijv-Lijr. See Kamphuis' negative comments on Coolhaes on this point: Kamphuis, *Kerkelijke besluitvaardigheid*, 28-29.

53. Kaplan, *Calvinists and Libertines*, 39.

54. Fatio, *Nihil pulchrius ordine*.

55. Kaplan, *Calvinists and Libertines*, 44.

56. De Wildt, "Ambt, Doop en Avondmaal in de Oudste Leidse Kerkenraadsacta," 19. De Wildt opens his introduction to the translation of the Leiden *kerckenraadacta* with a quotation from Coolhaes that defends the work of the consistory ("The true religion cannot exist ... without the meeting of church servants... to speak and deal with church business," De Wildt, 19, my translation). This is a quotation from Coolhaes, *Apologia*, folio 61Qr, in which Coolhaes is laying forth his nuanced view that consistories are not "bad" but also need not meet frequently. Its use here as a foundational statement for the history of the Leiden church council of this period is ironic considering that Coolhaes would soon be writing even more negatively about consistories: quoting Gwalther and adding his own agreement that a consistory is unnecessary and even irrelevant in a city with Christian magistrates. Coolhaes, *Van de christelijke discipline ende excommunicatie*, 30.

disputes. If the preacher can do the visiting as well as the preaching himself, he may not need elders, or at least not so many.⁵⁷ New deacons may also be unnecessary. A problem may arise if the newly-appointed deacons are suddenly superseding those in that town who under the Catholic system were previously caring for the sick and poor. Not everything in the old Catholic system, he said, is inherently evil. *Abusus not tollit usum*: “Take the misuses away, and keep the right usages, remove the evil and keep the good.”⁵⁸

Much of the difficulty, Coolhaes maintains, is that the preachers and elders feel an excessive or misplaced zeal.⁵⁹ The “free” (post-Catholic) church has loaded the people with more rules than the Jews had in the Old, he says, and regards them more highly than the true law of God.⁶⁰ In other words, the acts, synods, and theology of the Reformed Church are no different than the papal councils and doctrines had been, and may be even more destructive in the future. People have scarcely had the time to use their freedom of conscience between the time of the old laws and regulations (i.e. before the Reformation) and the new ones (i.e. the Reformed rules).⁶¹

In Leiden, Coolhaes held consistory meetings only “when the need, usefulness or welfare of the church demands it,” rather than weekly.⁶² Classes should meet only when necessary, rather than every month or six weeks, and this was how he ran the Rijnland classis. Anything else, he claimed, would result in superstition, disputes, disunity, and even excessive eating and drinking.⁶³ During the Leiden “schisms,” Coolhaes declared himself willing to attend classical and synodical meetings, and even to be “corrected” from God’s

57. Kamphuis mentions Coolhaes’ views about “ruling elders.” The Leiden schisms were about the selection of elders; in Kamphuis’s view Coolhaes equates elders with preachers almost completely, which in practice eliminates the elders as a different category (Kamphuis, *Kerkelijke besluitvaardigheid*, 24). However, the very term *kerkdienaars* (a commonly-used term in this period) used for both preachers and elders implies this already. Reformed elders and preachers were in this sense really one group or category.

58. Coolhaes, *Apologia*, folios 25Gv–25Gr.

59. Coolhaes, *Apologia*, folio 41Lv.

60. Coolhaes, *Een christelijke vermaninghe*, folio B.

61. Coolhaes, *Een christelijke vermaninghe*, folio BB.

62. Coolhaes, *Apologia*, folio 62Qijr.

63. Coolhaes, *Apologia*, folio 63 Qijr.

Word, but would not bow to decisions made by classes and synods.⁶⁴ It seems likely, however, that others would have seen this as his way to keep control.

The Reformed clergy of the Netherlands worked hard to fashion their church out of whole cloth despite the war which raged around them. The Synods of Emden (1571), Dordrecht (provincial, 1574, 1578, and national, 1618-1619), and Middelburg (1581) were the basis for “the triumph of Calvinist church-order.”⁶⁵ Coolhaes, however, objected that these bodies use what he calls the “papist” method of creating a majority and voting down the minority who are born after the Spirit of the Lord and have received divine understanding.⁶⁶ Voting does not determine truth; more preachers do not make a decision more correct. Coolhaes cited the examples of Berengar of Tours and Jan Hus, who were unjustly condemned by majorities. The godly should not worry that they are not the majority, or keep looking for the “true church.” It is not the number of members which signifies the trueness of the church.⁶⁷

At the Middelburg Synod, Coolhaes stated his willingness to be convinced of any errors from God’s Word. But he would not accept a majority vote.⁶⁸ He complained through the character Theophilus in *Apologia*:

God’s Word commands us to be obedient to the government in all things that are not against God’s Word. But it does not command us to be obedient to five or six, ten or twenty, even one hundred or one thousand preachers, who come together and make statutes about something.⁶⁹

In *Sendtbrief* (1582), he complains that the Synod of Middelburg was not a lawful national Synod, because it was not called by the government or attended by its commissioners. Even had the Synod been legal, it would not have had authority over religious affairs or matters of

64. Coolhaes, *Breeder bericht*, folio 7v.

65. Van Gelderen, *The Political Thought of the Dutch Revolt*, 213; Duke, “The ambivalent face,” 127.

66. This view is also expressed by Jan van Hout and the Leiden magistrates in their 1579 *Advies*; article 8/23; see Overvoorde, “Advies,” 134.

67. Coolhaes, *Toutzsteen*, folio Bijjr.

68. Coolhaes, *Cort, waerachtich verhael*, 133, evidently quoting [Cornelisz?], *Cort eenvoudich ende waerachtich verhael*, 27.

69. “Gods woort ghebiet ons der Overheyt in allen dinghen die niet teghen Gods woort en strijden, ghehoorsaem te zijn. Maer het ghebiet ons niet dat waer vijf ofte ses, thien ofte twintich, ia hondert ofte duysent Predicanten te samen comen, ende wat statueeren, datmen dien even soude moeten ghehoorsaem zijn.” Coolhaes, *Apologia*, folio 48Miiijr.

conscience, because a majority, even of a hundred or a thousand, does not give authority; the truth of an idea must not be established by the abundance of supporters.⁷⁰

Also, synods and councils seemed underhanded to Coolhaes. They undermine the proper rule of the Christian government, and yet hide behind the secular government they claim not to need. Just as the high priest could not condemn anyone to death, Pilate had to become the executioner and kill Christ.⁷¹

However, Coolhaes admits that there could still be a place for synods. They should not be courts where people are judged, but occasions in which brothers could gather to confer in a friendly and egalitarian manner.⁷² Synods, councils, classes and consistories should handle church business exclusively, and gather with consent of or in response to the civil government.⁷³

Consistories, or church councils, should be strictly limited in terms of power. Coolhaes agreed with Erastian Rudolf Gwalther that where there is a Christian magistracy, a consistory or church council does not need to exist at all. There is no foundation for it in God's Word; it is problematic and not at all profitable.⁷⁴ Coolhaes and Gwalther were not alone in opposing consistories. Proposed church orders which would ban consistories had been suggested in May 1575 by court preacher Jean Taffin, who suggested in a letter to Arent Cornelisz that the States of Holland would add a clause to ban consistories completely in the

70. In the case of this idea, Rogge quotes Coolhaes as saying, "De veelheid van personen geeft geen gezag, want de waarheid moet niet uit de veelheid harer aanhangers bewezen worden." Rogge, *Caspar Janszoon Coolhaes*, I, 237. In *Sendtbrief*, the statement to which we refer in the text above, is similar but longer: "Want soudet daerom des te meer autoriteyts ende gheloof hebben, dattet een vergaderinghe is van velen, der waren dan hondert oft duysent, soo moest de waerheyt wt de veelheyt harer aenhangeren beweert werden: daer van is waer het teghendeel." See Coolhaes, *Sendtbrief*, Dij.

71. Coolhaes, *Van de christelijcke discipline ende excommunicatie*, 1611 edition, 3b–unpaginated 4v.

72. Kamphuis, who defends the Reformed *kerkverbond* and criticizes Coolhaes, says that to form a confession of faith requires synods and other gatherings which are authorized to make decisions. "Want symboolvorming vooronderstelt een *besluitvaardige* vergadering." Kamphuis, *Kerkelijke besluitvaardigheid*, 30.

73. Coolhaes, *Apologia*, folios 72Siiijv.

74. "Rodolphus Gwaltherus over het 5. Cap., Corint.5. schryft benefens anderen ooc dese navolgende woorden: inden welcken hy wel deuchtlic leert ende bewyset, dat inden Kercken daer een Christelicke Magistraet is, gheen Consistorium ofte Kercken-raet en behoort te wesen. Dat deselve gheenen grondt en heeft in Godes woort: ende daerom seer periculeus, maer nergens toe profijtelic sy." Coolhaes, *Van de Christelijcke discipline ende excommunicatie*, 1611, p. 30. In quoting Gwalther on this topic, Coolhaes is much more definite and negative about church councils than he was in the pre-excommunication *Apologia*, in which he admitted the value of church councils in some cases. See Coolhaes, *Apologia*, folios 62Qv, 63Qijv.

church order they were drafting. The preachers kept up their opposition to such a step. William of Orange was opposed to this politically, as it would take too much away from the church at a critical moment.⁷⁵ Later, in 1583, there was a new initiative to consider such a church order; however, it was never actually accomplished. Prince William seems to have been angered by the disagreements of the preachers and discouraged in his hopes for reconciliation with the Southern Netherlands by the more radical Calvinist elements.⁷⁶

Another important question is: who should be free to preach? Preaching by non-clergy threatened the power structure of the Reformed Church. Coolhaes believed that preaching and preachers must be “free” – the freedom of the individual preacher to preach as he has been enlightened by the Spirit, and the freedom of the listener to accept or reject that preaching according to the enlightenment which he or she experiences. In the Apostolic Church, prophecy was free.⁷⁷ Anyone thinking that they had the gift to prophesy on or to clarify the Scripture, prophesied or clarified the Scripture freely and frankly without contradiction. No one was forced to accept or believe it, but everyone tested⁷⁸ the message, ignored what they thought was not true, and kept the good.⁷⁹ To clarify, preaching, even by non-clergy, should be permitted. Coolhaes gives many biblical arguments for this. He believes that some preachers do not have these gifts, but preach and teach anyway.⁸⁰

But whoever has received the gift to explain Scripture is obliged to use it to serve his neighbor. Coolhaes says this repeatedly about himself. He continues to write, despite prohibition, because he believes that he must use the “talent” (*pondje*, from the parable of

75. Pettegree, “Coming to Terms with Victory,” 172.

76. Pettegree, “Coming to Terms with Victory,” 173.

77. In other words, preaching, the proclamation of the Word. Coolhaes does not use the word prophecy in a predictive sense. 1 Cor. 14:33; see Coolhaes, *Cort, waerachtich verhael*, 195.

78. “proefde.”

79. Coolhaes, *Toutzsteen*, article 4.

80. Summary of Coolhaes’ biblical arguments: Priscilla and Aquila, despite being tradesmen, explained the gospel to Apollos, the gifted preacher. Stephen and Philip were deacons, not preachers, but they had the gift of prophecy and were able to explain the gospel. Even if it was the Apostle Philip who preached to the eunuch, it is written that he was an evangelist and had four daughters who prophesied. 1 Corinthians 14 makes it clear that not only preachers have the gift of prophecy, and that no one is hindered in using their gift for the service of the church. Paul commands his readers not to quench the Spirit. Everyone should know what gifts he has been given, so that he can encourage them in himself and thus serve his neighbors.

talents) which he has been given.⁸¹ He was tempted to resign his office, but the example of Jeremiah encouraged him to persist; the Lord had after all called him to his office of preacher.⁸² Later we see Coolhaes persist in his “call,” writing and considering himself to be a teacher, albeit only in print, despite his defrocking.⁸³

It should be noted that these views resemble the later Collegiant movement, which can be traced from Warmond near Leiden after 1619, when a Remonstrant preacher Christian Sopingius was asked to leave his congregation. The congregation went on meeting secretly, discussing the Scripture readings, rather than listening to a sermon. Later, when preachers were offered to them, their leader Gijsbert van der Kodde encouraged them successfully to refuse one. To avoid the imposition of a preacher, they moved to nearby Rijnsburg (they were also called “Rijnsburgers”). It is logical that their movement, along with other Spiritualists and fringe groups, was begun after the Synod of Dordt, when many would have been disenchanted with Reformed dogma and strictures. Collegiants spread to other cities in the Dutch Republic throughout the seventeenth century. The Collegiants referred to their practice of open discussion of the Scriptures in their services as “free prophecy.” Congregants were free to add anything without rebuke during this portion of the service. At first it appears that they believed that the inspiration by which they discussed was proof of the Holy Spirit’s work among them; however, later in the seventeenth century, they began to emphasize the role of reason in their exercises.⁸⁴

It is tempting to wonder if Coolhaes, who defended free preaching and who preached in Warmond, may have been an influence on the later Collegiants. However, there are also significant differences. Coolhaes never advocated that kind of absolutely free, unstructured service. He never recommended that congregations go on without pastoral leadership, only that preaching should not be confined to those who were officially recognized as preachers. Also, although his criticism of the preachers around him was fiery, and the concept of “free preaching” and acceptance of non-clergy in the pulpit by Coolhaes are implicit criticisms of

81. Coolhaes, *Seeckere punten*, folios Fijv–Fiiijr.

82. Coolhaes, *Apologia*, folio 53Ov; see also Coolhaes, *Cort, waerachtich verhael*, 141-43.

83. Coolhaes, *Seeckere punten*, folio 10Cij.

84. Andrew C. Fix, *The Dutch Collegiants in the Early Enlightenment* (Princeton, NJ: Princeton University Press, 1991), 37-39, 164-66. See also Voogt, ““Anyone who can read may be a preacher,”” and J. C. van Slee, *De Rijnsburger Collegianten* (Haarlem: Bohn, 1895, reissued Utrecht: H & S, 1980).

ordained ministry, Coolhaes cannot be judged to be completely anticlerical. According to him, it was possible to be a good preacher, and good preachers are needed – preachers who are called, who preach the Word, and who teach and heal. These things, for Coolhaes, are what all preachers should know how to do.

The preacher's context II: Amputation and other discipline

To Coolhaes, many of the stricter Calvinist preachers did not display the love of Christ. They cared more about, as he would put it, the externals, which were not that important, than about invisible essentials. For instance, the first thesis of church order from the Synod of Middelburg directed that communicants must be examined by the church servants and sign their names before gaining access to the Lord's Table. In this, Coolhaes accuses the preachers of being less merciful than God, who does not remember the sins he has forgiven.⁸⁵ Coolhaes remarks that if it were possible, and the government in places was not so reasonable, the cruel preachers would set the "heretics," along with their wives and children, "out on the dike."⁸⁶ Intolerance and lack of love on the part of the preachers is not just another sin, but the evidence that they have not accepted the grace which would enable them to live in a Christian manner. Coolhaes defined a "good work" not so much as the initial decision of a person to follow Christ, but as continuing to live in a Christian manner. This means a loving and tolerant attitude; its absence is more evidence for him, as we saw above, that these preachers may not have been converted at all.

Further, such preachers want to use excommunication as Christian discipline. Some call excommunication "cutting off branches" which are not bearing fruit; we have seen that Coolhaes referred to excommunication as "amputation" from the Body of Christ.⁸⁷ Petrus Hackius, another Leiden preacher, experienced similar treatment. Hackius came after Coolhaes, in many ways in his footsteps, and was suspended for three years – the victim of the discipline he had opposed.⁸⁸ Even though we have seen above that in *Sendtbrief*, Coolhaes writes that "amputation is sometimes necessary to save a life,"⁸⁹ Coolhaes abhorred

85. Coolhaes, *Conciliatio*, Jijj.

86. Coolhaes, *Een christelijke vermaninghe*, folio Dijr.

87. Coolhaes, *Sendtbrief*, folio Biiijr.

88. Kooi, "Pharisees and Hypocrites," 276.

this practice, even before he experienced it himself. It removed the “sinner” from the church, when being in the church was, in Coolhaes’ opinion, the best place for the sinner to make his way back to God. This is very much what Coolhaes saw as the proper, positive ministry of preachers – healing a wound rather than amputating a limb,⁹⁰ as we saw earlier in this chapter.

The preacher’s context III: Education versus spiritual preparation

The place of learning and education for preachers is another area in which Coolhaes differs in opinion from many of his Reformed colleagues. Reformed Church practice in the manner of training prospective preachers in the sixteenth century meant either the apprenticing of a young man with an older preacher for practical training, or, increasingly, a course of higher theological education.⁹¹ Formal education was becoming more and more of a requirement in the Reformed Church throughout Coolhaes’ lifetime,⁹² but he did not think that it should be a requirement for preachers. On the other hand, he did insist that those who taught in the church should be more “learned” than those they teach, in the sense of being spiritually mature in their walk with God, and prepared, gifted and called for their office.⁹³

Except for his “foundation” of the Bible and Apostles’ Creed, Coolhaes does not want theological conformity and indoctrination into confessional theologies, whether informally or in schools or universities. He opposes the rule of most churches that a preacher must show this doctrinal conformity before being allowed access to the pulpit. He also is also against disputes between preachers, which increase discord and lack love, such as that between Arminius and Gomarus at Leiden University.⁹⁴ He reports that most churches believe that erudition and language proficiency (Hebrew, Greek, Latin) are needed to understand and explain Scripture. If churches accepted someone as a preacher who is inexperienced in

89. Coolhaes, *Sendtbrief*, folio Biiijr.

90. Coolhaes, *Sendtbrief*, folio Biiijr.

91. Karin Maag, “Preaching Practice: Reformed Students’ Sermons,” in Janse and Pitkin, *The Formation of Clerical and Confessional Identities*, 134-35.

92. Kaplan, *Calvinists and Libertines*, 54.

93. See Coornhert, *Justificatie*, folio Hiiij.

94. Coolhaes addressed this conflict in two letters to the theologians, which we discuss in depth in Chapter 5.

languages,⁹⁵ especially in the Lutheran and Reformed Churches, they do it reluctantly and only because of a shortage of preachers.⁹⁶

However, he does not proclaim that study is useless for a preacher, or for any Christian.⁹⁷ He desires his opponents to reason with him from Scripture; in other words, comparing verses and passages to prove points and correct one's view or the views of others.⁹⁸ This sounds as if he approved formal disputations, which were a feature of theological study, if they are based primarily on Scripture. His book *Toutzsteen* was written in something of a disputational style. But it is untrue, he feels, that one cannot understand the Scripture (at least insofar as is needed for salvation) without study, especially of the languages. If one has the Holy Spirit, one will be led into all truth, even if one knows no language but one's mother tongue. Many people can understand their mother tongue as well as foreign languages, but cannot understand spiritual things.⁹⁹ Those who go out to France, Italy, Spain, England, or Turkey to preach the gospel will want to learn the language of the people they teach. But in their own country, their mother tongue is enough.¹⁰⁰

This does not mean that Coolhaes thought that no preparation was necessary. Spiritual knowledge and experience formed an essential preparation. Study is important, but the importance is not just in the intellectual,

. . . but in the true essence, which exists not just in the letter, but also in the Spirit. No one can have true essential and living knowledge of a city or country or anything, just from reading or hearing it told about. Not just in the sight of it, but diligently going in and looking through it and industrious observation must be used. Otherwise, knowledge derived from reading or listening is a dead and vain thing to people. It is the same with the Holy Scripture.¹⁰¹

95. Perhaps some of the Calvinist tradesmen, who fled to the northern Netherlands from the southern Netherlands and France, were in his mind here.

96. Coolhaes, *Toutzsteen*, article 7.

97. Unfortunately, Coolhaes does not discuss the "hedge preachers" of 1566 anywhere; it would be interesting to know what he thought of their level of preparedness.

98. For example, at the Synod of Middelburg 1581-1582.

99. Coolhaes gives examples of Bible characters who probably knew only their mother tongue.

100. Coolhaes, *Toutzsteen*, article 7.

101. "Maer int waerachtighe wesen: Welcks, niet alleen in die letter, maer oock inden Gheest bestaet: Gelijck niemant van eene Stadt, lant, ofte wat het oock voor een dinck sy, ware wesentlijcke ende levendighe

Coolhaes in this emphasizes personal experience and investigation, with sincerity more important than knowledge:

And I would rather be ignorant with Nathaniel, a true Israelite in whom there is no deception, but who did not know that the prophets had foretold that Christ would be a Nazarene, than with the scribes who could show minutely where that same Christ would be born.¹⁰²

So, it is not enough to know only scriptural or doctrinal facts; one must have a true and essential knowledge which is experiential. One must learn from the Holy Spirit and have him open one's eyes of understanding. This emphasis on the Spirit harks back to his Spiritualist foundation. There exist two types of learned people: the *Schriftgelehrten* and the *Gottesgelehrten*. This distinction was also Schwenckfeld's teaching, and the teaching of many other Spiritualists. The former have "head knowledge" and have learned from men, whereas the latter are taught by God through experience, and live their knowledge out practically.¹⁰³

So preachers do not need formal education *per se*, but they do need to "study" in what Coolhaes called "the school of the Holy Spirit and the Cross." As preachers (and others) study longer in this "school," they will become more mature in spiritual things,¹⁰⁴ growing from "children," to "half-mature," to "adults" in faith.¹⁰⁵ Repentance is the key aspect of this education and includes a strong component of suffering. As he tells us in *Apologia*:

If I could have seen clearly, I would have seen that it was not God's will to go [for a visit to Deventer]. But I stayed here this year, was bravely sifted through the sieve, and studied further in the school of the cross to become even more broken, so that the Lord would make me more fit to serve him and my neighbors. For I consider that for all Christian people, especially those who will teach others, nothing is as necessary as

kennisse hebben can, alleen wt het lesen ofte hooren seggen ende vertellen; maer het gesicht, Ja niet alleen het gesicht, maer een vlytich in ende doorsien, met een naerstich opmercken, moet daer toe comen, Want anders is die kennisse, soomen wt het lesen ofte hooren seggen heft, een doodt ende ydel dinck, inden Menschen: Also ist ooc met die Godlijcke Schriftuer." Coolhaes, *Een christelijcke vermaninghe*, folios Biiij-Biiij.

102. "Ende ick soude liever met Nathanael een waer Israelijt, ende alles bedroechs vry zijnde, in onwetentheyd staen, des by den Propheten voorgheseyden woordts, dat Christus een Nazareer soude genoemt werden: als met den Schriftgeleerden op een minuyt weten te wijsen de plaetse, waer de selve Christus soude geboren werde." Coolhaes, *Sendtbrief*, folio Diiij.

103. Erb, "The Beginning and End," 83-84. See also Gilly, "Das Sprichwort 'Die Gelehrten die Verkehrten,'" 229-375.

104. Coolhaes, *Apologia*, folios 68Riiijr-69Sv.

105. Coolhaes, *Apologia*, folios 69 Sr-70 Sijv. Here he alludes again to 1 Cor. 3:10-15.

the cross and as setbacks; for the cross is the true school of the Holy Spirit for disciples.¹⁰⁶

This idea of spiritual development as a school is not unique in this period. For instance, Duifhuis also spoke of the concept of a school of the Holy Spirit.¹⁰⁷ Schwenckfeld's "School of Christ" (Christ is the schoolmaster, in the individual heart as well as with others)¹⁰⁸ is similar, as well as Coornhert's "Jacob's ladder" to perfection, although he relied more on effort than repentance.¹⁰⁹ David Joris, a Spiritualist so different from Coolhaes in so many ways, was nevertheless said to be "an inspired preacher but an obscure writer who paid special attention to the Holy Cross and the sufferings of Christ, and considered the sacraments of secondary importance."¹¹⁰ At least in this, some connection between Coolhaes and Joris' ideas may exist.

As Coolhaes wrote of this "school," its simplicity contrasts with a theological education that was more focused on the intellectually heavy doctrines of predestination and other theological topics which Reformed preachers were teaching. For Coolhaes, the preachers are putting the cart before the horse. A person who wants to learn to read and write must first learn the letters, then learn to spell, then learn to read, and finally learn to understand. In the same way, a student in the school of the Holy Spirit,¹¹¹ who desires to study under the one teacher, Christ Jesus, must climb four steps: admitting one's own sins, grieving over them, praying earnestly to the eternal God for forgiveness, and then, trusting in one's heart that God, because of grace, through Christ Jesus, has forgiven them, resolving to better one's life and live according to Christ's example – in other words, continuing to "hunger and thirst after righteousness." Without climbing these steps, and remaining on the

106. Coolhaes, *Apologia*, folio Aiiiijv.

107. Kaplan, *Calvinists and Libertines*, 96.

108. McLaughlin, *The Freedom of Spirit, Social Privilege, and Religious Dissent*, 175. For more about "Schwenckfeld and the "school of Christ," see Joachim Wach, *Types of Religious Experience, Christian and Non-Christian* (Chicago: Literary Licensing, LLC, 1951), 19.

109. Coolhaes, *Cort, waerachtich verhael*, 182-84. Coolhaes quotes Heb. 5:11-14; Those who are mature are able to eat solid food. For "the mature" he uses the word "perfect," *volmaeckt*. In contrast to Coornhert, who develops and explains his views of human perfectibility, this is the only place in all of Coolhaes' works in which even a hint of this idea can be found.

110. Woltjer and Mout, "Settlements: The Netherlands," 391.

111. Coolhaes, *Apologia*, folio Aiiiijv.

highest, all is lost.¹¹² Here we see again the emphasis on repentance, which we mentioned in the biographical sketch as typical of the synergist position.

For Coolhaes, Christian discipline is not excommunication or anything that preachers or elders can require; this “school” is the true discipline of the believer from God himself, including at times teaching, instruction, rebuke, and even sometimes physical punishment, poverty, terror, or need. For that reason, he feels, a church where God’s Word is preached cannot be said to be without discipline.¹¹³ In other words, God disciplines the church. Whereas before we saw how Coolhaes rejected the harsh discipline many preachers were employing, here we see what he would put in its place. Therefore, truly spiritual preachers are not always the most learned, but are those who have suffered much, endured many battles, and had victory in Christ. They have learned meekness and humility. They have learned to bear with evil and not speak back. They are, he thinks, a minority.¹¹⁴ The “rule of love,” which he describes as the gentle rebuke which one believer gives to another whom he sees is in need of it, is also a discipline which should be used between clergy and people alike.¹¹⁵

To sum up, there is no doubt as to Coolhaes’ views about what makes a good preacher, and what criticisms he had for preachers, elders and deacons. He was not completely anticlerical, since he believed that good preachers could and should exist in the visible church, but he criticized many preachers and elders for their hypocrisy, lack of call and giftedness, adherence to man-made writings, their drive for power through their organization, and their lack of mercy toward sinners. He disagreed with the way Christian discipline was mostly being done, feeling that true discipline comes both from God to the church and from the loving exhortation and even rebukes of one Christian to another. In the next chapter, we will continue to look at Coolhaes’ views about the visible and the invisible church, and especially about how the visible church should look – that it should be a diverse body, and that its members should possess Christian freedom. We will see that Coolhaes believed that such an open visible church would benefit the state politically, and its members spiritually.

112. Coolhaes, *Cort, waerachtich verhael*, 178-82.

113. Coolhaes, *Apologia*, folios 75Tijr–76Tijr.

114. Coolhaes, *Toutzsteen*, article 7.

115. Coolhaes, *Apologia*, 90Zija–90Zijr.