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Chapter 4 Bruges: the city and its churches

4.1 International trading centre

The history of Bruges is much longer than that of Delft. The oldest mention of the city of Bruges is in an official document in a text from the Sint-Baafsabdij of Ghent dated shortly after 851. Archaeological research in the last decades of the twentieth century has shown us that the origins of Bruges go back much further, at least to the first centuries of the Christian era, when the Romans inhabited the territory.³¹³ By the time the first inhabitants settled on the shores of what was to become the town of Delft, Bruges already had a small harbour and was trading intensively with England, especially in wool. The textile industry was flourishing.

The Hanseatic League (Hanse) dates from this period.³¹⁴ The Hanse started as a merchant guild with the purpose of stimulating trade and increasing profit. It connected cities in Germany (like Dortmund, Munster and Cologne) with the rest of Europe. The Hanse grew into a very powerful economic, social and cultural organisation in northern Europe, which had offices in the countries along the coastal area from northern France to Estonia. Bruges was one of the first four great trading posts, after London, Bergen (Norway) and Novgorod (Russia) and remained one of the leading towns at least until the end of the fifteenth century.³¹⁵

Because of the city's prominent position in an international network, many foreigners came to Bruges and took up residence there. First there were the Germans, followed by the English, French (especially from northern France), Portuguese, Spanish (especially from Barcelona, Valencia, Mallorca, Burgos), Italian (especially from Lucca, Genoa, Florence, Milan, Venice) and Scottish merchants.³¹⁶ In the fourteenth century, Bruges was the most thriving city of Flanders, with about 42,000-45,000 inhabitants. Only Ghent, Paris and three north Italian cities had a larger population.³¹⁷ As an international trading centre, Bruges offered a platform for bankers, money-changers, granters of credit, brokers and hoteliers. The last two at that time were almost always united in one person. The exchange (Bourse, Dutch

³¹³ Ryckaert/Vandewalle/D'Hondt/Geirnaert/Vandamme 1999, pp. 13-18.

³¹⁴ Geirnaert/Vandamme 1996, pp. 12 and 24-26.

³¹⁵ Vandewalle 2002b, pp. 11-14.

³¹⁶ Vandewalle 2002b, pp. 27-62.

³¹⁷ Ryckaert/Vandewalle/D'Hondt/Geirnaert/Vandamme 1999, pp. 42-43.

beurs) practically originated in Bruges (together with Barcelona and north Italian cities), and is named after the Van der Beurse family. This family had an inn situated on a square named after them, the *Beursplein*, where trade was very lively. Already in 1400 there was a structural and well organised money market.³¹⁸

4.2 Burgundy

Because Bruges had become an international trading centre, it had – as opposed to other cities – an extensive middle class of tradesmen with a large variety of activities.³¹⁹ By the mid-14th century, 25 per cent of the inhabitants worked in the textile industry, 38 per cent earned their living in the crafts oriented towards local needs (building industry, food industry, clothing industry) and 20 per cent made a living from trade.³²⁰

At the end of the century, the political situation changed. In 1384 Count Louis II of Flanders (Lodewijk van Male) died. His only heiress, Margaretha van Male, had married Philip the Bold of Burgundy and therefore the County of Flanders came under the rule of the duke of Burgundy. The dukes of Burgundy did not reside in Bruges at that time. Later, Philip the Good (reigned 1419-1467) and Mary of Burgundy (reigned 1477-1482) both chose Bruges as their main residence, although they spent most of their time in other residencies. Their accommodation became the Prinsenhof, situated on a large ground between the Moerstraat, Gheerwijnstraat, Noordzandstraat and Ontvangersstraat, and which they transformed into a luxurious palace.³²¹

The frequent presence of the Burgundian court attracted many highly qualified artists and was very stimulating for the Bruges economy, which was already flourishing. The painters Jan van Eyck, Petrus Christus and Hans Memling (the so-called Flemish Primitives) and many anonymous artists all benefited from the reputation of Bruges as an international metropolis which had a large potential of patrons in Bruges and abroad. Luxury was the new fashion: painters, silver- and goldsmiths, illuminators like Simon Bening and Willem Vrelant (of the so-called Ghent-Bruges style), producers of luxurious manuscripts (like books of hours),

³¹⁸ Geirnaert/Vandamme 1996, pp. 12 and 34-35;

Ryckaert/Vandewalle/D'Hondt/Geirnaert/Vandamme 1999, pp. 78-79 and 82-83.

³¹⁹ On this early period in general, see also Murray 2005.

³²⁰ Ryckaert/Vandewalle/D'Hondt/Geirnaert/Vandamme 1999, pp. 42-43 and 70-72.

³²¹ Ryckaert 1991, p. 165; Ryckaert/Vandewalle/D'Hondt/Geirnaert/Vandamme 1999, pp. 45-47.

people from the fashion industry and singers and composers all wanted to work in Bruges. The middle class also took advantage of the situation: their income increased spectacularly.³²² And although this all seems very materialistic, spiritual life was not forgotten.

4.3 Churches and convents

The city of Bruges belonged to the diocese of Tournai (Doornik).³²³ The Christianization of the area around Bruges probably began in the seventh century.³²⁴ The oldest church is Sint-Salvator and was founded in the middle of the 9th century as an annex to the nearby (country) parish of Snelleghem, or – more precisely – to another annex of the parish of Snelleghem, namely the parish of St Michael. The church became independent before 988. Soon after the foundation of Sint-Salvator, the Onze-Lieve-Vrouwekerk (today Onthaalkerk Onze-Lieve-Vrouw) was founded from the nearby parish of Sijsele. The Onze-Lieve-Vrouwekerk became autonomous before 1089. In 1091 the church reached the status of collegiate church. A third place of worship was a chapel dedicated to Sint-Walburga (not to be confused with today's Walburgakerk), which served as the chapel of the count of Flanders. In the 10th century, count Arnulf I of Flanders had a church built close to his castle (*burcht*, on the place nowadays known as the Burg), dedicated to Our Lady and Sint-Donaas, soon to be the first collegiate church in town and dedicated to Sint-Donaas alone. The church also functioned as a parish church, but only for the people living and working within the walls of the castle.³²⁵

Around 1100 there were more (smaller) churches and chapels in Bruges, dedicated to St Christopher, St Amand, St John and St Peter.³²⁶ Around the middle of the 12th century, Diederik van de Elzas, Count of Flanders, had his own chapel built, the Sint-Basiliuskapel. A second chapel was built above it, in honour of the relic of the Holy Blood (a drop of blood of Christ) that was brought to Bruges from

³²² Ryckaert/Vandewalle/D'Hondt/Geirnaert/Vandamme 1999, pp. 103-107; Geirnaert/Vandamme 1996, pp. 44-45.

³²³ See on the medieval parishes in the diocese of Tournai: Vleeschouwers-van Melkebeek 1993.

³²⁴ Rau 1987, volume 1, p. 9.

³²⁵ Rau 1987, volume 1, pp. 9-10; Ryckaert 1991, volume 2, pp. 50-56; Ryckaert/Vandewalle/D'Hondt/Geirnaert/Vandamme 1999, pp. 24-27, 90; Vermeersch 1999.

³²⁶ Ryckaert/Vandewalle/D'Hondt/Geirnaert/Vandamme 1999, pp. 89-90.

Constantinople in the first half of the 13th century.³²⁷ Between 1239 and 1241 three new parishes were founded: Sint-Walburga (around the former count's Walpurga chapel) and Sint-Jacob, both separated from the Sint-Salvatorkerk, and Sint-Gilliskerk, a division from Onze-Lieve-Vrouw. A few decades later, in 1297, the parish of Sint-Kathelijne was split off from Onze-Lieve-Vrouw. Two centuries later, in 1497, a church dedicated to St Anne was built; it was an annex of Sint-Kruis, nowadays a borough of Bruges, but only from 1668 onwards an autonomous church. Finally, the beguines in the beguinage *ten Wijngaard* had their own church and formed their own independent parish from 1244-1245 onwards.³²⁸

Although only Sint-Donaas and Onze-Lieve-Vrouw were officially collegiate churches, the churches of Sint-Salvator, Sint-Jacob and Sint-Gillis had – as we will see later – a *zeven-getijdencollege*, a college of the seven canonical hours, in Bruges called *Commuun*.³²⁹ On 27 September 1501, Sint-Salvator achieved the status of a collegiate church.³³⁰

In addition to the parish and collegiate churches, there were convents in Bruges where people could attend services. From the 13th century onwards, six male and two female mendicant orders found their way to Bruges.³³¹ Because of the international character of their orders, the conventuals were popular with the many foreigners who resided in Bruges. Almost every foreign *natie* (merchant association) had – besides its own house – its own altar or chapel in a church. The conventuals hosted many of them: the Germans, Catalans, English and Scots went to the Carmelites; Augustinians housed the merchants from Venice, Lucca and Genoa; the Franciscans accommodated traders from Florence, Castile and Biscay and the Dominicans lodged the Portuguese merchants.³³²

³²⁷ Ryckaert/Vandewalle/D'Hondt/Geirnaert/Vandamme 1999, pp. 103-107; Geirnaert/Vandamme 1996, pp. 14 and 97.

³²⁸ Rau 1987, volume 1, pp. 10-12; Ryckaert 1991, volume 2, pp. 83-89 and 206-218; Ryckaert/Vandewalle/D'Hondt/Geirnaert/Vandamme 1999, pp. 92-94.

³²⁹ Ryckaert/Vandewalle/D'Hondt/Geirnaert/Vandamme 1999, pp. 95. See on the *Commuun* in Sint-Gilles, Sint-Jacob and Sint-Walburga: Declerck 1971. Declerck emphasizes that the *communitas chori* (*Commuuns*) already existed in the churches of Sint-Gilles, Sint-Jacob and Sint-Walburga before the singing of the seven canonical hours was officially founded in those churches. However, in the 16th century, the *Commuun* is equal to the group of people singing the seven canonical hours.

³³⁰ Dewitte 1967, p. 8; Dewitte 2000, p. 262.

³³¹ Ryckaert 1991, volume 2, pp. 83-86; Geirnaert/Vandamme 1996, p. 28; Ryckaert/Vandewalle/D'Hondt/Geirnaert/Vandamme 1999, pp. 92-93.

³³² Ryckaert/Vandewalle/D'Hondt/Geirnaert/Vandamme 1999, pp. 77-82, 93; Vandewalle 2002b, pp. 34-39.

The Bruges churches benefited from the economic growth of the city. In the 15th century, all churches were enlarged and/or their interiors were embellished. Guilds, religious confraternities, individuals, foreign *naties* and private merchants all invested in the religious buildings and their interiors. Nowadays many medieval art treasures have been preserved.³³³ For example, the Sint-Salvatorkerk still houses the choir stalls dating from the second quarter of the 15th century, and above them the escutcheons of the knights of the Order of the Golden Fleece from 1478. The Order also held a meeting in the church of Onze-Lieve-Vrouw in 1468, and the escutcheons of that meeting are still kept in the church today.³³⁴ Onze-Lieve-Vrouw also houses the tomb of Mary of Burgundy (1502; she had died in 1482) in the choir of the church. The tombs are best seen from the private chapel of Lodewijk van Gruuthuse, which was incorporated in his house and the church in 1472.³³⁵ Many paintings were ordered for churches in Bruges too. A beautiful example is the painting that canon Joris van der Paele ordered from Jan van Eyck in 1434. The painting – of the Madonna and the canon himself with St Donatian and St George (Sint-Joris) – was meant to be placed above his grave in the Sint-Donaaskerk and was completed in 1436.³³⁶ Other paintings that originated in Bruges were not meant to adorn the Bruges churches, but were intended for export, ordered by the merchants who resided in Bruges for their home towns. In the 1470s, for example, the Strozzi family exported several Flemish paintings to Italy via the Medici bank in Bruges (in the former Hof Bladelin). That the Bruges and Flemish paintings were already seen as very important pieces of art is proven by the story of a Memling painting. In 1467 the manager of the Medici bank in Bruges, Angelo Tani, ordered an altarpiece from Hans Memling (a Last Judgement) for a chapel recently renovated by the Medici in Badia Fiesolana (near Florence). When the painting was shipped to Italy in 1473, the ship was hijacked by shippers from Danzig (Gdańsk) as a retaliation in a commercial conflict, and transported to the Marian church there.³³⁷ Sometimes a former Bruges citizen reciprocated. Today the Onze-Lieve-Vrouwekerk still has a marble sculpture of a Madonna with child by Michelangelo. It was imported from Italy by the Bruges

³³³ Because the subject of this book is Gheerkin de Hondt, who worked in the Sint-Jacobskerk, only this church will be discussed at length (see below). From the other churches only a few examples are given here.

³³⁴ See on the Order of the Golden Fleece (founded by Philip the Good in 1430 in Bruges): Marti/Borchert/Keck 2009, pp. 186-193.

³³⁵ Geirnaert/Vandamme 1996, pp. 60-65.

³³⁶ Ryckaert/Vandewalle/D'Hondt/Geirnaert/Vandamme 1999, pp. 102, 104. The painting is nowadays in the Groeningemuseum in Bruges.

³³⁷ Borchert 2002, pp. 138-145; Vermeersch 1992, pp. 16-17. The painting is now in Gdańsk, National Museum (Muzeum Narodowe).

merchant Jan Mouscron (or Moskroen), who resided in Italy and donated the sculpture to the church in 1514.³³⁸

4.4 Welfare

All those wealthy citizens did think of their less fortunate fellow townsmen. Care for the poor, ill and old people was not forgotten. In Bruges, there were several ways the needy were supported. First of all, there were the churches, where rich parishioners remembered the poor in foundations. Poor relief was almost always an element in the memorial services founded by a person or his heirs after someone's death. This poor relief usually existed of so-called *armendiszen* or poor tables.³³⁹ The *Dis* was usually one of the three administrative organisations of a church, besides the church fabric (responsible for the church building) and the *Commuun* (responsible for the liturgy).³⁴⁰ The principle of *Dissen* probably originated in the 11th century, when regular church care for the poor had declined. With the rise of cities, citizens started to take responsibility for all kinds of matters, and therefore also with poor relief. These charitable institutions all worked in their own parish, but sometimes foundations obliged a *Dis* to give help to the poor in another district. The *Dissen* literally set tables for the poor in the church (usually close to an entrance), and served them bread, butter, meat and other things like clothes (together called *provenen*). The poor³⁴¹ had received a so-called *teken* from the *Dis* (a token, in practice a leaden seal showing to how many *provenen* one poor person was entitled) which they could exchange for food and other things. Sometimes the *Dis* even paid for a funeral. The money to buy the goods was provided by the foundations made by parishioners. Therefore, the goods were almost always served after a memorial service in which the deceased donor was remembered.

³³⁸ Van Zeir 2002, pp. 81-82.

³³⁹ Also called *Disch van den scamelen huusweken*, *Mensa pauperum*, *Table des pauvres*, *Dissen* or *Tafels van de Heilige Geest* (tables of the Holy Spirit); see Van Zeir 1960, p. 105.

³⁴⁰ See on the Bruges *Dissen*: Van Zeir 1960. In Delft the *Dismeesters* are called *Heilige Geestmeesters*, there the *Commuun* is called *zeven-getijdencollege*.

³⁴¹ P. van Zeir defines the *armen huusweken* as all citizens who were so poor they couldn't take care of themselves: the unemployed, infirm, sick, elderly, widows, new mothers, large families, priests, et cetera who were at home.

Rich members of the Bruges community also founded almshouses (*godshuizen*³⁴²), where elderly people could live. They were small one-room houses, often built in groups around a inner garden. Good examples are the houses financed by Donaes de Moor (Boeveriestraat).³⁴³ The houses were administered by the heirs of the founder or by the masters of the *Dis* of a church. These almshouses were not only initiated by private persons, they were also built by the guilds and crafts for their elderly members. Many of them still exist today, although of course adjusted to modern living.³⁴⁴

For needy people, there was the Sint-Janshospitaal (hospital of St John), of which the oldest mention dates from January 1188, when a hospital rule was made. In the first centuries, the hospital was not just for the sick, but also for travellers, elderly people, pilgrims and homeless people.³⁴⁵ Parallel to the growth of Bruges, the number of charitable institutions increased. The Heilige-Geesthuis, the Potteriehospitaal, a house for the blind (house of the *Blindekens*), a house for the insane (*dulhuis* or *Sint-Hubrechts-ten-Dullen*), a leper house (Magdalenaleprozerie) and the *passantenhuizen* (houses especially for the homeless, pilgrims and poor travellers, for example Sint-Juliaans) were founded. They had in common that they all were the result of private initiatives.³⁴⁶

4.5 The Sint-Jacobskerk³⁴⁷

As an effect of individual initiatives, by the end of the 15th century the Sint-Jacobskerk was a particularly rich church. The original small chapel was eventually extended to a hall church, which reached its final form in 1476.

³⁴² As we shall see in the chapters on 's-Hertogenbosch, the word *godshuis* seems to have a different meaning in Bruges than it has in 's-Hertogenbosch. In Bruges it means house for the old and needy, in 's-Hertogenbosch a *godshuis* has the more general meaning of an organisation that puts into practice charity (Kappelhof 1981, p. 41, note 2).

³⁴³ The houses still stand, nos. 52-76 (Martens 1992a, p. 266).

³⁴⁴ Ryckaert/Vandewalle/D'Hondt/Geirnaert/Vandamme 1999, p. 57. The almshouses that still exist are shown in a map on page 219 of Ryckaert 1991, volume 2.

³⁴⁵ Maréchal 1999; Ryckaert/Vandewalle/D'Hondt/Geirnaert/Vandamme 1999, pp. 54-57; Geirnaert/Vandamme 1996, pp. 40-41; Smets 2001.

³⁴⁶ Ryckaert/Vandewalle/D'Hondt/Geirnaert/Vandamme 1999, pp. 54-57.

³⁴⁷ Unless otherwise stated, the paragraphs on Sint-Jacobs are based on: Rombauts 1986, volume I, pp. 8-33; Rotsaert 1975, pp. 122-135; Ryckaert 1991, volume 2, p. 211; Rau 1987, volume 1, p. 11; Jacobs 1997, pp. 126-129; Van Zeir 2002, pp. 26-40; Martens 1992a, pp. 262-290.

The tower of the church was equipped with bells. We have no any information on the old bells, but the accounts of the church fabric of 1525 onwards show us that a new set of bells was ordered in that year.³⁴⁸ Three old bells were reused (among them probably one called Anna) and four new bells were founded and were solemnly dedicated on 10 December: Jacobus Maior (ut), Petrus (fa), Adriaen (mi) and Johannes (la). During the ceremony, the *ghezellen van de musyke* (singers of polyphony) of the church sang. Two years later, in 1527, the church fabric ordered four new small bells, called Philippus, Katharina, Ursula and Magdalena. These bells were dedicated on 30 May.

In the 14th and 15th centuries, many foreign merchants came to live in the parish, and the Prinsenhof (the Burgundian palace) was built in the area. Several trades had their own altars and/or chapels in Sint-Jacobs, for example the *beenhouwers* (butchers), *grauwwerkers* (furriers) and *tauwers* (tanners), *barbiers en chirurgijns* (barber-surgeons; dedicated to their patrons Cosmas and Damian), *kuipers* (coopers, barrel-makers; dedicated to Saint Leonard), *tegeldekkersknappen* (tiler/slater lads), *mutsereders* (hat makers), *schoeboeters* (shoe repairmen), *stoeldraaiers* (chair makers) and *waslichtmakers* (wax candle makers).³⁴⁹

Money was no problem for most of the parishioners and they generously donated to their church.³⁵⁰ Among the donors were the later duke Charles the Bold, Tommaso Portinari (manager of the Medici bank in Bruges) and the local elite, among them Donaes de Moor and his wife Adriane de Vos, the Bitebloc family, the De Gros family, the Haghelsteen family, the Moreel family, the Van der Bieze family and the Agnelli family. The Sint-Jacobskerk also housed confraternities. One of the most prominent ones was the Confraternity of the Presentation of the Blessed Virgin Mary, founded in 1499 by Jan Bertijn. From 1508 onwards the confraternity had its own altar and the feast of the Presentation (21 November) was celebrated officially and solemnly in the church.³⁵¹

The interior of the church was constantly being embellished. The high altar for the new presbytery was financed by Donaes de Moor.³⁵² Together with the secretary of the Burgundian duke – Willem Haultin – Donaes financed the choir stalls in the presbytery. Donaes and his wife Adriane de Vos were also the benefactors of a small

³⁴⁸ Completely reproduced in Rotsaert 1962. This paragraph is based on the article by Rotsaert: see there for transcriptions of the account items.

³⁴⁹ See also RAB 88, No. 27, Rekening kerkfabriek 1538, especially the item *Ander ontfaenc van gheluden van feesten ende meessen inde voors. kercke ghedaen, binnen desen jare ende dat by maenden* (fol. 370v onwards).

³⁵⁰ See § 5.5 and Appendix 8.

³⁵¹ I will return to this confraternity in § 5.5.3.3 and § 5.9.

³⁵² See on Donaes de Moor § 5.5.3.2.

chapel behind the new presbytery. The altar there was provided with a Lamentation triptych by the Master of the St Lucy Legend.³⁵³ This Master owes his name to a triptych of the Legend of St Lucy dated around 1480, of which the middle panel is still in the Sint-Jacobskerk today. The painting shows the city of Bruges, with the tower of Onze-Lieve-Vrouw and the belfry.

Some paintings that are now very famous adorned the Sint-Jacobskerk in the 15th and 16th century. A few of them still are in the church, like the Coronation of the Virgin by Albert Cornelis. Of this painting, too, only the middle panel survives. The painting was ordered by the St Francis Guild (the trade of the wool shearers and wool fullers) in 1517 and was finally delivered in 1522.³⁵⁴ A painting by the Master of the Holy Blood, also dating from the first quarter of the 16th century, is in the Sint-Jacobskerk today, but was possibly made for the church of the Franciscans. The panels show us scenes with the adoration of the Virgin, St John the Evangelist on Patmos, Ecce Homo, Mary, John and Francis, and Augustus and the Tiburtine Sibyl.³⁵⁵ Another triptych in the Sint-Jacobskerk was painted by Lanceloot Blondeel and is dated 1523. It concerns the lives of SS Cosmas and Damian, but it remains unclear if it was originally made for the Sint-Jacobskerk.³⁵⁶ Disagreement exists about whether two altar pieces – one by Rogier van der Weyden and one by Hugo van der Goes – were in the church; it even is a mystery what the subject was.³⁵⁷

A number of paintings that once were in the church, now are in museums all over the world. One of them is the triptych of Saint Christopher with SS Giles and Maurus that was commissioned by Willem Moreel from Hans Memling (delivered 1484) and is now in the Groeningemuseum in Bruges.³⁵⁸ The Agnelli family also ordered a painting for their altar in the Sint-Jacobskerk, probably a retable of Saint John the Baptist. A triptych commissioned by Tommaso Portinari from Hugo van der Goes is now in the Uffizi in Florence. It is not certain if the panels were meant for the Portinari chapel in the Sint-Jacobskerk (built in 1474), or if they were ordered for Portinari's home town Florence in the first place. Another exclusive piece of art connected with Portinari is the so-called *Rondo* or medaillon by Luca della Robbia that today hangs near the chapel of Ferry de Gros in the Sint-Jacobskerk. The

³⁵³ Andriessen 2002, p. 233, note 31. See also Bloxam/Bull 2010, pp. 111-125.

³⁵⁴ See on this painting in particular: Martens 1998, volume II, pp. 85-86.

³⁵⁵ See on this painting in particular: Martens 1998, volume II, pp. 52-53.

³⁵⁶ See on this painting in particular: Martens 1998, volume II, pp. 108-110. Jacobs states that it was ordered by the guild of the barber-surgeons in 1533 (Jacobs 1997, p. 126).

³⁵⁷ See on this topic especially: Martens 1992a, pp. 266-278.

³⁵⁸ Martens 1992a, pp. 280-287. See on this triptych also: Ryckaert/Vandewalle/D'Hondt/Geirnaert/Vandamme 1999, p. 111.

enamelled, colourful terracotta shows a portrait of the Virgin with Child and is dated in the second half of the 15th century.³⁵⁹

The De Gros chapel originally had a small diptych painted by Rogier van der Weyden (1460-1464), showing us a Madonna with Child on one panel (today in the Musée des beaux Arts in Tournai) and Jean de Gros on the other (today in the Art Institute in Chicago).³⁶⁰ The chapel still has the remarkable grave monument with three recumbent polychrome sculptures that Ferry de Gros had made for his first wife Philippine Wielant († 1521), his second wife Françoise d'Ailly († 1530) and himself († 1544). These graves are unique; in the Sint-Jacobskerk it was more common at that time to have a copper memorial slab made.³⁶¹ Today the Sint-Jacobskerk has a small but rich collection of those copper plates from the 14th, 15th and 16th centuries, a speciality of Flanders.³⁶²

A last important aspect in the medieval Sint-Jacobskerk is the organ.³⁶³ Although it seems logical to assume that the church had at least one organ from the early days onwards, we only know for sure that in 1450 there was an organ on the rood loft and a positive. In 1520 a Jooris de Bus was asked to build a positive and a small organ with wooden pipes. Because the rood loft was renovated around that time, the great organ was taken off the wall and stored at De Bus's home. When the great organ was replaced, the positive was taken back by De Bus. A pattern for a complete new organ was drawn, but in the end – after advice from an Antwerp organ builder – the new organ was not commissioned. The old organ would last until 1553, when a new one was bought. In the meantime, Jooris de Bus and the bell ringer were paid to maintain the old organ.³⁶⁴

³⁵⁹ Martens 1998, volume II, p. 217 and Martens 1992a, pp. 287-288. See on the Della Robbia sculptures in general: Domestici 1992; Alloin 2002.

³⁶⁰ See also on this painting: Huet 2009.

³⁶¹ Vandenberghe 1992.

³⁶² See on graves in the Sint-Jacobskerk in general: D'hondt/Vandamme 2003, with a very large section on the Sint-Jacobskerk, pp. 8-43. An important but unfortunately incomplete study is by Rotsaert 1977/1978/1979/1980. The problem with this last study is that it is often unclear from which sources Rotsaert took his information.

³⁶³ Based on Dewitte 1971, pp. 342-344.

³⁶⁴ RAB 88, No. 27, Rekening Kerkfabriek 1533, fol. 239v, and 1538, fol. 387r.

4.6 Music and liturgy in the churches

In all churches, music played an important role during the liturgy. Alfons Dewitte has written a series of articles in which he gives facts and figures on *zangmeesters*,³⁶⁵ composers, the music, organists and organs in the churches of Sint-Donaas,³⁶⁶ Sint-Salvator,³⁶⁷ Onze-Lieve-Vrouw,³⁶⁸ Sint-Gillis³⁶⁹ and Sint-Jacob.³⁷⁰ The information given by Dewitte was drawn from the archives of the churches, mainly the accounts.³⁷¹ Dewitte's articles in turn were the basis for Pieter Andriessen's overview of music and musicians in Bruges churches.³⁷²

All churches had professional singers, choirboys and organists at their disposal from the 14th century onwards. The wealth the city of Bruges had acquired certainly was visible in its musical life: many nowadays famous Renaissance composers found their way to Bruges as *zangmeester* from the 15th century onwards. The most famous ones worked for Sint-Donaas. The major church in town attracted composers like Jacob Obrecht (1485-1487, 1488-1491, 1498-1500), Lupus Hellinck (1523-1541) and Jacobus Clemens non Papa (1544-1545). The church also had prebends that were in the hands of Guillaume Dufay, Gilles Binchois and Gilles Joye.³⁷³ Sint-Donaas was not the only church where great composers worked. Sint-Salvator also had *zangmeesters* we still know as composers today: Antoine Busnoys (before November 1492), Johannes de Hollande (1538-1541) and Andreas Pevernage (1563). The most famous composer of the Onze-Lieve-Vrouwekerk is Lupus Hellinck (1521-1523), whose main career was later at Sint-Donaas. The rich parish of Sint-Jacob also managed to attract composers of whom we still have compositions today: Benedictus Appenzeller (1518-1519),³⁷⁴ Antonius Barbe (1520-1528), Gheerkin de Hondt (1532-

³⁶⁵ Dewitte restricts himself to the *zangmeesters*, except for the church of Onze-Lieve-Vrouw. In the 1990s, the Alamire Foundation undertook research on all singers in the collegiate churches, but this research remains unpublished.

³⁶⁶ Dewitte 1974, Dewitte 1973.

³⁶⁷ Dewitte 1998a, Dewitte 1998b, Dewitte 1967. See also Van de Castele/Van der Straten 1870.

³⁶⁸ Dewitte 1997a, Dewitte 1970, Dewitte 1962.

³⁶⁹ Dewitte 1977.

³⁷⁰ Dewitte 1971.

³⁷¹ Sint-Walburga is missing in this series, since the archives of that church were not available to Dewitte at that time (Dewitte 1974, p. 129).

³⁷² Andriessen 2002, pp. 119-319. The paragraphs on the Bruges churches other than Sint-Jacobs are based on Andriessen's book and on the articles by Dewitte.

³⁷³ As we have already seen in § 2.2, Gilles Joye was parish priest of the Oude Kerk in Delft.

³⁷⁴ On Appenzeller: Thompson 1975, Thompson 1978/1979 and Thompson 1984. Two references have been overlooked: *Benedictus Appelselders zancmeester* was fired on 10

1539), Eustachius Barbion (1541-1543) and Andreas Pevernage (1580-1584?) all served the church as *zangmeester*. The Sint-Jacobskerk may be seen as the second most important musical centre after Sint-Donaas, especially in the 16th century.³⁷⁵ In the Sint-Gilleskerk Jean Richafort was *zangmeester* twice (1543-1544 and 1548-1550). Striking is that several *zangmeesters* changed church, some even more than once. The typical Bruges composer Petrus (Pierkin) de Raedt changed from Onze-Lieve-Vrouw (1514-1517) to Sint-Donaas (1520-1523) and back again to Onze-Lieve-Vrouw (1525-1526). Another example is Johannes de Hollande, who in 1541 exchanged Sint-Salvator for Sint-Donaas.³⁷⁶ Not all changes were to be seen as promotions: it looks like the work atmosphere in the church (colleagues, remunerations, et cetera) and availability of positions was just as important.

The *zangmeesters* had the direction of about four to eight professional adult singers (depending on the church, many of them were also priests) and four to eight choirboys. The musical and liturgical instruction of the choirboys was often shared with a schoolmaster. The musicians in the churches were responsible for the daily liturgy, for special feasts and for commemorations specified in foundations. Sint-Donaas and Onze-Lieve-Vrouw were collegiate churches, as was Sint-Salvator from 1501 onwards. Other churches had a *communitas chori*, in Flemish/Dutch called *Commuun* or *zevengetijden-college*: Sint-Jacob (founded 27 September 1424), Sint-Gilles (from around 1453 onwards) and Sint-Walburga (before 1425). Therefore, in all six churches the seven canonical hours were sung every day.³⁷⁷

One of the churches for which we have the foundation act for singing the seven canonical hours is the Sint-Jacobskerk.³⁷⁸ On 27 September 1424 the bishop of Tournai permitted the parish priest and church and *Dis* masters to have the seven canonical hours sung daily, as it was already done in the churches of Sint-Donaas, Onze Lieve Vrouw and Sint-Salvator. The request from the leaders of the church confirms that the parish was already on its way to singing the canonical hours in a more or less daily routine, depending, of course, on foundations by the parishioners. As the charter shows, in 1424 the seven canonical hours were not yet founded for

July 1519 (RAB 88, No. 237, fol. LXXXr; also in Gabriëls 2010²); *Benedictus Appelscelders* is also mentioned in a foundation dated 3 April 1519 (Inv. no. 237, fol. LXXXv).

³⁷⁵ Also stated by Dewitte 1970, pp. 112-113 and by Andriessen 2002, p. 200.

³⁷⁶ A wonderful schedule of these changes is given by Andriessen 2002, pp. 216-219, as part of a survey of *zangmeesters* in Sint-Donaas, Sint-Salvator, Onze-Lieve-Vrouw, Sint-Jacob and Sint-Gilles.

³⁷⁷ See on the Bruges *Communuens* in Sint-Gilles, Sint-Jacob and Sint-Walburga: Declerck 1971.

³⁷⁸ This paragraph is based on Declerck 1971, pp. 126-136 and 152-167.

every day of the week. But around 1450 that had been accomplished. The text of the ratification of 1424 by Bishop Jean de Thoisy of the articles of association of the seven canonical hours has survived.³⁷⁹ Summarizing the relevant items for this book, it tell us the following:

- ✚ The *Commuun* consists of one parish priest, ten priests and four vicars.
- ✚ The four vicars are the sexton of the church, the schoolmaster, the assistant schoolmaster and the cantor, the last one instructing the children how to sing.³⁸⁰
- ✚ The parish priest will receive a remuneration of two parts, the priests of one part and the vicars of half a part. However, if the parish priest is not present himself, his substitute will receive one part, like each of the ten priests.
- ✚ To prevent absenteeism, the members of the *Commuun* are not allowed to serve in other churches for more than two masses a week.
- ✚ The members of the *Commuun* have to sing the seven canonical hours – Matins, Prime, Terce, Sext (called *Middach*), None, Vespers and Compline plus a High Mass – for every day of the week that they have been financed.
- ✚ The members of the *Commuun* have to sing the seven psalms during Lent, with the litany, prayer and offertory.
- ✚ On all feasts and Sundays and other festive days a High Mass is to be celebrated by a dean, deacon and subdeacon and a cantor (*zangmeester*).
- ✚ In addition to the seven canonical hours memorial services will be sung and a Mass for Our Lady on Saturdays.
- ✚ The parish priest, church and *Dis* masters are responsible for the appointment and dismissal of the members of the *Commuun*. They also appoint a scribe or *tafeldragher* who will keep attendance lists. The *tafeldragher* will pay the members of the *Commuun* every month, according to their presence.
- ✚ The members of the *Commuun* will receive together 20 *schellingen parisis* for every day they sing the seven canonical hours and the High Mass.
- ✚ If a person wants to have his/her grave in the presbytery, he/she has to pay 4 *schellingen groten* every year in hereditary rent-charge to have his memorial service celebrated every year. For other places in the church different rates are charged: for the chapel of Sint-Jacob 3 *schellingen groot* and 4 *denarii* (pennies), for the other chapels 3 shillings groat and for the *voorkercke* (vestibule) 2 shillings groat and 6 pennies.

³⁷⁹ OCMW-B, *Cartularium Communitatis Sint-Jacobskerk*, f. 1r-5v. According to Declerck, copies are also in Tournai, Rijksarchief, Fonds oud-Bisdom Doornik, Cart. 71, f. 78v-79r; Cart. 73, fol. 67r-68v; Cart. 75, fol. 82r-83r.

³⁸⁰ In Bruges the term *cantor* (*cantere*) was used to indicate the *zangmeester* (according to RAB 88, No. 237, fol. XXJv).

The charter mentions that everyone who wants to be buried in the church is obliged to make a foundation for a memorial service. This was also common practice in the other Bruges churches. All churches had wealthy parishioners who made foundations. In addition to the memorial services, they were made to add lustre to the already existing seven canonical hours or feasts or for the celebration of new feasts. Some of those foundations required polyphony, as we shall see later in Chapter 5. Special foundations were made for plays. From the 14th century onwards payments occur in most of the church accounts for plays at Christmas, the feast of the boy bishop (28 December), Epiphany, Palm Sunday, Easter, and the Golden Mass (in the Ember Days in Advent). Processions too were often held in all churches.

It seems that musical life in the Bruges churches was more or less the same – more or less, because one church was richer than the other and they all made their own rules. But we find the principle of daily liturgy performed with professional singers in all churches. All church accounts also show payments for written music. But according to Alfons Dewitte, one of the churches stands head and shoulders above the rest: Sint-Donaas. None of the churches commissioned as many music and liturgical books as Sint-Donaas. Already in the 15th century the singers of that church had at least one hundred new masses and twenty new motets at their disposal. In the 16th century the production is less, but still impressive: seventy-seven new masses. Among the composers are nowadays famous ones like Johannes Ockeghem, Jacob Obrecht and Lupus Hellinck, the last two being *zangmeesters* of Sint-Donaas. In 1559, six large choirbooks are mentioned, altogether containing about four hundred motets. Unfortunately, almost the entire collection was destroyed between 1580 and 1584 when the city was ruled by a Calvinist administration. The church itself suffered the same fate: it was demolished between 1799 and 1802, during the French period of government.³⁸¹

The last element of religious life in the medieval churches of Bruges to be discussed here briefly is education.³⁸² The oldest mention of a school is that of Sint-Donaas in 1127. The archives of the church of Sint-Salvator show us the next school, but it remains unclear if these two schools were permanent or depended on an available teacher. But a few centuries later, all the other churches seem to have followed this example and from the beginning of the 16th century onwards they all have schools. Children in need of education could also go to convents. From the

³⁸¹ Rau 1987-1989, volume 1, p. 12; Van Zeir 2002, p. 13. The foundation of the church is nowadays visible as part of the basement of the Crown Plaza Hotel.

³⁸² This paragraph is based on Dewitte 1972a. This article also gives ample information on the educational programmes in the different types of schools. For the single churches see Dewitte's articles on those.

same period (around 1506) date the schools for poor children. The city of Bruges itself was rather late in establishing a school: only in 1512-1513 was the first Latin School founded. As we have seen, in Delft the first Latin school was founded in 1342, but there it was attached to the Oude and Nieuwe Kerk. Remarkable in Bruges is the existence of quite a few highly educated private teachers. But then again it is not that remarkable, considering the important international position and rich citizens Bruges had.

4.7 Decline of trade³⁸³

Around 1450, Bruges was a very wealthy city. International trade was in full bloom and the town housed many rich people. The economy was flourishing. Citizens of Bruges did have to work hard to reach that status, but it did not go smoothly. In the Middle Ages, Bruges was also a cradle of social unrest. Once every twenty to thirty years, there was some sort of conflict, which might be between the citizens and the authorities (for example in 1436-38 against the duke of Burgundy) or between social groups.³⁸⁴

At the end of the 15th century another serious conflict arose between the Bruges citizens and the duchy of Burgundy. In 1482 the duchess Mary of Burgundy unfortunately died after she had fallen from her horse. Her husband, Maximilian I of Habsburg, became regent for their four-year-old son Philip the Fair. This was the direct occasion for another battle for power between the great Flemish towns and Maximilian, which ended in a defeat for Bruges in 1490; the power of the city was broken permanently.³⁸⁵

In the meantime, the city of Antwerp had grown into a major trading city. In contrast to Bruges, Antwerp had built up a different trading system, with less regulation and fewer restrictions. Where the foreign traders had first been protected by the Bruges rules, they now felt restricted by them.³⁸⁶ Moreover, Antwerp had better access to the sea than Bruges. In Bruges large seaworthy ships never had the possibility to reach the city centre: their contents had to be unloaded on smaller ships in the outer ports of Bruges (mainly Sluis and Damme). At the same time, the Zwin suffered from the effort to acquire more land by creating polders and as a

³⁸³ See in general on this subject: Blockmans 1998.

³⁸⁴ Ryckaert/Vandewalle/D'Hondt/Geirnaert/Vandamme 1999, p. 49.

³⁸⁵ Ryckaert/Vandewalle/D'Hondt/Geirnaert/Vandamme 1999, p. 52; Wellens 1965.

³⁸⁶ Ryckaert/Vandewalle/D'Hondt/Geirnaert/Vandamme 1999, pp. 84-85.

consequence had started to silt up. Bruges tried everything to keep the harbour accessible, but finally failed.³⁸⁷

As if this were not enough to suffer, Maximilian had instructed the foreign traders in Bruges to leave the city in 1484, by way of sanction against the rebellious city. At first, they responded to his command only sporadically. Therefore, he changed his request to an order for the merchant associations to leave Bruges. Antwerp was the most logical place to divert to and this was done. Bruges tried in every way possible to get the traders back, but the damage was done.³⁸⁸

While the role of leading trading town of the Low Countries had switched from Bruges to Antwerp around 1500, it did not mean that Bruges in all respects became a lesser place than it had previously been. The wages of the craftsmen still remained at the highest level of the Low Countries and the prosperity that had been carefully built up during the previous centuries continued. A huge capital had been accumulated in Bruges, and although rich people left the city, others stayed. The city continued to play an important role in international trade. Bruges craftsmen and tradesmen were highly educated and art, culture and religious life continued flourishing as before. Politically, however, Bruges no longer played an important role. The young Charles V received a warm welcome at his Joyous Entry in 1515. The message expressed in the pageantry showed the hope of a revival.³⁸⁹

As for the foreign merchant associations: not everyone left Bruges for Antwerp. The Spanish traders in particular stayed in Bruges. In 1540, Charles V came to help: he determined that wool (Spanish, English and Scottish) was to be traded in Bruges. The reason for this was simple: Charles wanted to create some economic balance between his districts. Therefore he decided to support the textile industry in Flanders. Other specialities of Bruges that remained were painting (for example Pieter Pourbus), manuscript production (Simon Bening and his workshop), the silversmith and goldsmith trade and tapestry. New was bobbin lace.³⁹⁰ Bruges also became a meeting place for humanists like Erasmus, Thomas More and Juan Luis Vives. Erasmus even called Bruges the Athens of the North.³⁹¹

³⁸⁷ Ryckaert/Vandewalle/D'Hondt/Geirnaert/Vandamme 1999, p. 65.

³⁸⁸ Ryckaert/Vandewalle/D'Hondt/Geirnaert/Vandamme 1999, p. 85.

³⁸⁹ Ryckaert/Vandewalle/D'Hondt/Geirnaert/Vandamme 1999, pp. 115-118.

³⁹⁰ Ryckaert/Vandewalle/D'Hondt/Geirnaert/Vandamme 1999, pp. 120-127.

³⁹¹ Martens 1998, volume I, pp. 35-36; Dewitte 1987. See on humanism in Bruges in the 16th century: Martens 1992b.

4.8 The 1530s

Although Bruges had lost its prominent position of first trading city of the Low Countries, in the first half of the 16th century it still continued to radiate the glory of its rich past.³⁹² In the 1530s Bruges was visited at least three times by its governess Mary of Hungary, in August 1532, in September 1534 and in August 1537. We know of these visits because the city accounts mention wine for the governess and her retinue.³⁹³

A special category of expenditure by the city government in the 1530s in the scope of this book are the expenses for music-related activities. First, there are the processions. There were two categories: the general processions and the Holy Blood procession. The general processions could be held on any occasion, for example to pray for relief from bad weather or an outbreak of disease, or to celebrate a triumph of the emperor. These processions started from one of the Bruges churches or convents. The city paid for the sermons that the conventuals held during the processions.³⁹⁴ We do not find any payments to musicians and/or singers in these items.³⁹⁵

Second, and more important, there was the yearly procession of the relic of the Holy Blood. It was held on 3 May, the feast of the Invention of the Holy Cross, which fell in the middle of the annual fair (23 April to 22 May).³⁹⁶ The city of Bruges organised the procession, in which many participated: convents, churches, trades, confraternities, Bruges citizens and of course the city government itself. If polyphony was sung, we do not know about it,³⁹⁷ but chant was definitely sung during the

³⁹² Blockmans 1998, p. 32.

³⁹³ SAB, OA, Inv. no. 216, Rekening 1532/33, fol. CVIIJv, Rekening 1534/35, fol. LXXXv, Rekening 1536/37, fol. LXXXIXr.

³⁹⁴ For example: SAB, OA, Inv. no. 216, rekening 1531/32, fol. CVJr (January 1532), CVIJv-CXJv (21-07-1532); rekening 1532/33, fol. CVIJv (10-11-1532), fol. CVIIJr (May 1533); rekening 1533/34, fol. LXXXVJr (26-07-1534); rekening 1534/35, fol. LXXXIIIJr (28-02-1535); rekening 1535/36, fol. LXXXIIJr (05-09-1535), fol. LXXXVv (12-03-1536), fol. LXXXVIJr (12-06-1536); rekening 1537/38, fol. LXXXIIJv (20-01-1538), fol. LXXXIIIJr (25-11-1537), fol. LXXXVv (16-05-1538), fol. LXXXVIJr (19-07-1538), fol. LXXXVIJv-LXXXIIJr (12-08-1538); rekening 1538/39, fol. XCIJv (31-07-1539); rekening 1539/40, fol. LXXIXr (28-10-1539), fol. LXXXJr (16-11-1539).

³⁹⁵ Andriessen states that singers were part of the processions and he is probably right (Andriessen 2002, pp. 43-44).

³⁹⁶ Andriessen 2002, pp. 45-46; Ryckaert/Vandewalle/D'Hondt/Geirnaert/Vandamme 1999, p. 97.

³⁹⁷ Jacob Obrecht's Holy Blood motet *O preciosissime sanguis* was probably sung in the chapel of the Holy Blood (the Sint-Basiliuskapel), but perhaps also during the

procession. We know that from two manuscripts of the beguines that have come down to us.³⁹⁸ The city accounts of the 1530s mention payments to people involved with the organisation of a play: *tspel vanden helighen bloede*. For this play, paintings were made. Furthermore, the story of *De Vier Heemskinderen* (the four sons of Duke Aymon) and King Charles was depicted. In 1534 five jerkins and five pairs of shoes were ordered for this play;³⁹⁹ other years show us payments for the maintenance of the four suits of armour.⁴⁰⁰

The city's expenditures also show us that some musicians were paid a fixed amount of money every year for their services and uniforms.⁴⁰¹ First there was the bell ringer. He received 15 Flemish shillings every year for his uniform. Furthermore, the city paid the bell ringer for ringing the bells of the city hall for special occasions.⁴⁰² Second, there were the city trumpeters, two in the 1530s, who received 5 Flemish pounds each a year (to be paid in October and April), for being on guard at the town hall and blowing a signal every hour. They also received 1 Flemish pound a year for their clothing.⁴⁰³ Third, the city had a group of minstrels,⁴⁰⁴ that received an amount of 1 Flemish pound each for their clothing. The group counted five to six men.⁴⁰⁵ Their annual salary was not stable during the 1530s: it was reduced from 34 Flemish pounds a year for the entire group in 1532 to 26 Flemish pounds a year in 1533.⁴⁰⁶ In 1536/37 it was raised to 28 pounds a year for the entire group, which means a little more than 5 and a half Flemish pounds each.⁴⁰⁷ A certain Jan vander Schuere received an extra payment of 2 Flemish pounds in the year 1539/40,

procession (Andriessen 2002, p. 238). The Holy Blood did also inspire Adriaen Willaert to compose his motet *Laus tibi sacra rubens* for the Sint-Basiliuskerk, where it was first performed on 22 November 1542 (<http://www.adriaenwillaert.be>, accessed June 2014).

³⁹⁸ Haggh 2009; Andriessen 2002, p. 45; Strohm 1990², pp. 5-6. See on processional manuscripts related to Bruges also Huglo 1999, volume I, pp. 46-47 and 64, volume II, pp. 468-469, 477 and 501-502.

³⁹⁹ SAB, OA, Inv. no. 216, rekening 1533/34, fol. LXXXIIJr.

⁴⁰⁰ Except for the year 1537, see SAB, OA, Inv. no. 216, rekening 1536/37, fol. LXXXIIJr.

⁴⁰¹ On instrumental music in Bruges in general: Polk 2005, pp. 75-77.

⁴⁰² For example on the day of the renewal of the city government (*vermaken vander wet*) at the first of September (for example SAB, OA, Inv. no. 216, rekening 1531/32, fol. XVIIJv) and the day of the procession of the Holy Blood (for example SAB, OA, Inv. no. 216, rekening 1532/33, fol. CIIJv).

⁴⁰³ For example SAB, OA, Inv. no. 216, rekening 1537/38, fol. LIJr and LXXXVr.

⁴⁰⁴ See on the Bruges minstrels and their tasks Andriessen 2002, pp. 55-91.

⁴⁰⁵ Six in 1531/32 (SAB, OA, Inv. no. 216, rekening 1531/32, fol. LXXIIJr), from then on until at least the account of 1539/40 five.

⁴⁰⁶ SAB, OA, Inv. no. 216, Rekening 1532/33, fol. LXXVr.

⁴⁰⁷ SAB, OA, Inv. no. 216, Rekening 1536/37, fol. LIIJr.

for special services that are not further specified. Shortly thereafter he must have died, since his widow received an extra payment of 1 and a half Flemish pounds because of his long service to the city and because he did not leave his widow any goods.⁴⁰⁸ The minstrels were united in a guild and even had their own school from the late 13th century onwards.⁴⁰⁹

A fourth musical servant of the city was the carillon player. The *halle* (the market hall) had a tower, called the *Belfort* (belfry).⁴¹⁰ In this tower hung a carillon, which was renewed in 1528.⁴¹¹ Shortly thereafter, the city account of 1532/33 mentions a payment to a certain priest – Adriaen vander Sluus – for playing on the carillon on *mesavende* (the evenings before feasts).⁴¹² A year later he is paid the same amount of money for playing on Sundays and feasts.⁴¹³ Several payments concerning the carillon follow, even for expanding the number of bells.⁴¹⁴ We are not informed on the repertory that was performed on the carillon, but considering the fact that was played on evenings before a Mass, Sundays and feasts, it probably was religious music.

Last, but not least, we have to mention the musicians of Sint-Donaas in the list of music-related expenditures of the city government. The cantor, singers, organist and bellows blower were paid 20 Flemish pounds every year to sing the *Salve*, every evening.⁴¹⁵ According to Reinhard Strohm, this was a public concert, sung after *Compline* in the church of Sint-Donaas.⁴¹⁶

When Gheerkin de Hondt came to Bruges in 1532 to become *zangmeester* of the Sint-Jacobskerk, he entered a city that was still flourishing in various ways. The town he had just left – Delft – only had two parish churches, whereas Bruges had three collegiate churches and at least three prominent parish churches. Where Delft had about 12,000 inhabitants and mainly had a regional function, the metropolis of

⁴⁰⁸ SAB, OA, Inv. no. 216, Rekening 1539/40, fol. LXXXIJr and fol. LXXXIXv.

⁴⁰⁹ Dewitte 1972a, p. 154 and Dewitte 1974, pp. 133-134. It is not clear whether this was a real school, or the regular education expected to be offered by the guild.

⁴¹⁰ See on the history of the Bruges belfry: Dacquin/Formesyn 1984. A very short version is given by Ryckaert 1991, volume 2, p. 160.

⁴¹¹ Dacquin/Formesyn 1984, pp. 24 and 43.

⁴¹² SAB, OA, Inv. no. 216, Rekening 1532/33, fol. CIXr.

⁴¹³ SAB, OA, Inv. no. 216, Rekening 1533/34, fol. LXXXVJv.

⁴¹⁴ SAB, OA, Inv. no. 216, Stadsrekening 1534-35, fol. LXXXVIJv; SAB, OA, Inv. no. 216, Stadsrekening 1536/37, fol. LXXr; SAB, OA, Inv. no. 216, Stadsrekening 1537/38, fol. LXVJr; SAB, OA, Inv. no. 216, Stadsrekening 1537/38, fol. LXXXVIJv.

⁴¹⁵ For example SAB, OA, Inv. no. 216, rekening 1538/39, fol. LXXXr.

⁴¹⁶ Strohm 1990², p. 39.

Bruges housed about 42,000 people, among them many foreigners from countries all over Europe. The cultural climate was still at its peak, certainly also musically speaking. A large group of professional *zangmeesters*, singers and musicians in general created a warm nest for every musician who wanted to exercise his profession at a very high level. The rise of protestantism was hardly successful in the Bruges community,⁴¹⁷ contrary to Delft, where it had already made inroads in the 1520s. Therefore the very vivid Catholic life, with all its pomp and circumstance and its incredibly rich musical climate, made Bruges a town that many musicians wanted to work in.

⁴¹⁷ Ryckaert/Vandewalle/D'Hondt/Geirnaert/Vandamme 1999, pp. 136-139; Geirnaert/Vandamme 1996, pp. 74-75. The iconoclastic fury of 1566 hardly hit Bruges, although the interior of the church of Sint-Jacob was heavily damaged (Rombauts 1986, volume I, p. 13). Unlike Delft, Bruges passed into the new religion only for a very short period of time (1578-1584), before the city was subdued by the Spanish army and became Catholic again.