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Venite et Videte: Art and Architecture in Brussels as Agents of Change during the Counter Reformation, c. 1609-1659

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Summary

Whenever we enter one of Belgium's many old churches we are being overwhelmed by grandiose baroque altarpieces, sculptures, and lavish architectural decorations in gold and marble. Most of these artworks originated in the first half of the seventeenth century, a period when the Southern Low Countries had hardly recovered from the religious crisis of the sixteenth century and were plagued by war, famine and disease. From a modern day perspective it seems hard to understand why people, under these circumstances, would spend so much effort and resources on something as "useless" and "superfluous" as art and architecture. However, the function of art and the place of religion in society in the Southern Netherlands during the Counter-Reformation were altogether different from our modern world.

It is a commonplace to say that the post-Revolt Southern Netherlands witnessed an overwhelming Catholic revival, and almost a cliché to explain this revival by pointing at the efforts of state and church in bringing back the religiously confused population to Catholicism. Art and architecture, as well as other visual media, are often attributed a central role in such a process of persuasion. Recent historical studies, however, have emphasized the intense fear of God that held Early Modern society in its grip, leading to a revision of the traditional view of the Counter Reformation as a top-down process. This revision has important implications for the history of art, as it challenges us to reconsider the notion of religious art and architecture during the Counter Reformation as rhetorical "propaganda".

In the present dissertation I approach the religious art patronage in the Catholic South from a perspective informed by recent developments in ethnography and anthropology. I propose to redefine the "baroque piety" of religious patronage that generated works of art and architecture not as a strategy to persuade (in a rhetorical way), but to negotiate with the divine in a continuous process of reconciliation, aiming to regain divine grace. Put in anthropological terms, works of art served as ritual interfaces to enter into negotiation with the divine. This negotiation with God took place within networks of social relations (nexuses) in which art and architecture functioned as agents of change (A. Gell 1998).

I will develop this thesis in a series of case studies of religious art patronage in the Habsburg court city of Brussels by analysing the "art nexus"

in which artworks were embedded and establishing the various types of agency implied in them, thus reconstructing the original function of artworks in their historical context. The thesis is divided thematically in three chapters, based on the traditional catholic distinction between three types of devotion, as established in the decree of the 25th session of the Council of Trent (1563). Like the Tridentine decree, which does not deal primarily with art but with how believers can establish contact with the divine, my thesis takes the devotional categories of saints, relics, and images as the point of departure for an investigation of case studies which are selected on the basis of their function as marker of change or transformation (according to contemporaries).

The introduction illustrates how people in seventeenth century Belgium experienced a situation of crisis, as in the case of the Siege of Valenciennes in 1656, and how they tried to influence the course of events through religious actions, which include the use of artworks. It perfectly illustrates the way art was made and functioned as a way to sway the divine.

The first chapter focuses on "the intercession and invocation of saints", examining the foundation of the Brussels Minim convent on the site of a former brothel (1621). The result of a complex exchange of interests between the monks, the city Magistrate, and the court, this event was propagated with a moralizing rhetoric of change, tapping into the widespread fears of the wrath of God over the sin of promiscuity. By invoking the Virgin Mary as patron, the various agents involved in the foundation hoped to muster support for a process of urban renewal. Because of lack of sufficient funding, however, the architectural project of a new church did not materialize as planned. Nonetheless, two cults were promoted at the monastery, each directed at a particular audience: that of the Holy Guardian Angel and of the Virgin of Loreto and her Holy House, replicating the sacred original in great detail. The case offers insights into how the monks and their patrons propagated the reform of sexual morals through the cult of saints and for what purpose.

The second chapter deals with "the legitimate use of images". It examines the altar of the confraternity of St. Dorothea in the Carmelite church (1640), which was decorated in the middle of winter by temporarily transforming it with a multitude of flowers, alluding to the Saint's miracle of having summoned flowers from heaven just before her martyrdom. I investigate how ornamenting the altar by means of innovative horticultural

techniques, through an international network of horticultural experts, was used to astonish the viewer as with a miracle, while calling forth the divine mission of the conquest of Nature by Man's ingenuity and so restoring the ideal of Eternal Spring. Moreover, by manipulating Art's greatest rival Nature, the altar was a part of Counter-Reformation preoccupations with the nature of religious art and illusion. The case makes clear that the spectacle (and the specific agency of flowers) not only highlighted the saint's conversion narrative and the patronage of its donor in various ways, but also implicitly addressed the doubts and concerns about religious images that had arisen during the reformation.

In the third chapter I discuss the "honour paid to relics". Thanks to the close ties of the Capuchin monk Carolus van Arenberg to the Holy See, the order obtained eight complete bodies of Early Christian martyrs from the Roman catacombs. While the relics were being transported to the Netherlands, a fitting new church was built (funded by the Arenberg family), to be promoted as "mausoleum" for these relics (1652). After a procession of *translatio*, they were displayed in an elaborate artistic setting, which nonetheless aimed to highlight the order's love of poverty. The case illustrates the various roles of this new cult and the art and architecture of the church in the political contexts of the court, the rivalries between the orders, and the emergence of Jansenism.

The in-depth examination of these three cases will show that studying the function of religious art and architecture in terms of agency reveals much about the complex processes of societal transformation and celestial reconciliation in which they played a central role.

Nederlandse Samenvatting

Bij het binnengaan van een van de vele oude Belgische kerken wordt de bezoeker overweldigd door grootse barokke altaarstukken, beeldhouwwerk en weelderige architecturale decoraties in goud en marmer. De meeste van deze kunstwerken stammen uit de eerste helft van de zeventiende eeuw, een tijd dat de Zuidelijke Nederlanden nauwelijks hersteld waren van de religieuze crisis van de zestiende eeuw en geplaagd werden door oorlog, hongersnood en ziekte. Vanuit een hedendaags perspectief lijkt het moeilijk voorstelbaar waarom mensen onder dergelijke omstandigheden zoveel moeite en middelen zouden besteden aan zoiets “nutteloos” en “overbodigs” als kunst en architectuur. Echter, de functie van kunst en de plaats van religie in de maatschappij van de Zuidelijke Nederlanden tijdens de contrareformatie waren totaal anders dan in onze moderne wereld.

Het is een gemeenplaats om te zeggen dat de Zuidelijke Nederlanden na de Opstand een overweldigende katholieke heropleving meemaakten, en bijna een cliché om deze revival te verklaren vanuit de inspanningen van kerk en staat om de religieus verwarde bevolking tot het katholicisme terug te brengen. Kunst en architectuur, evenals andere visuele middelen, wordt vaak een centrale rol toegekend in een dergelijk proces van overtuiging. Recente historische studies daarentegen, benadrukken de intense vrees voor God die de vroegmoderne maatschappij in haar greep hield, wat leidt tot een herziening van de traditionele kijk op de contrareformatie als een top-down proces. Deze revisie heeft belangrijke implicaties voor de kunstgeschiedschrijving, en dwingt ons de opvatting van religieuze kunst en architectuur tijdens de contrareformatie als retorische “propaganda” te heroverwegen.

In de voorliggende dissertatie wordt het religieuze kunstpatronage in het katholieke Zuiden benaderd vanuit een perspectief ontleend aan recente ontwikkelingen in etnografie en antropologie. Voorgesteld wordt om de “barokke vroomheid” die religieus kunst- en architectuurpatronage voortbracht te herdefinieren: namelijk niet als (retorische) overtuigingsstrategie, maar als strategie om te onderhandelen met het hogere in een voortdurend proces van verzoening, gericht op het herwinnen van de genade Gods. In antropologische termen gezegd, kunstwerken dienden als

rituele interfaces om in onderhandeling te gaan met het hogere. Deze onderhandeling met God vond plaats binnen netwerken van sociale relaties (nexuses) waarin kunst en architectuur functioneerden als “agents of change” (A. Gell 1998).

Deze these wordt ontwikkeld in een serie casussen van religieus kunstpatronage in de Habsburgse hofstad Brussel, door de “art nexus” te analyseren waarin kunstwerken waren ingebed en de verschillende soorten geimpliceerde agency vast te stellen, om zo de originele functie van kunstwerken in hun historische context te reconstrueren. Het proefschrift is thematisch ingedeeld in drie hoofdstukken, gebaseerd op het traditionele katholieke onderscheid in drie types devotie, zoals vastgesteld in het decreet van de 25^{e} sessie van het Concilie van Trente (1563). Evenals het tridentijnse decreet, dat niet primair op kunst betrekking heeft maar op hoe gelovigen contact kunnen leggen met het hogere, neemt mijn proefschrift de devotionele categoriën van heiligen, relieken en afbeeldingen als vertrekpunt voor het onderzoeken van casussen die zijn geselecteerd op basis van hun functie als aanduider van verandering of transformatie (in de ogen van tijdgenoten).

De inleiding laat zien hoe men in zeventiende-eeuws België een crisis ervoer, zoals het Beleg van Valenciennes in 1656, en hoe men de loop van gebeurtenissen trachtte te beinvloeden via religieuze acties, wat het gebruik van kunstwerken omvat. Het illustreert perfect dat kunstwerken en architectuur waren gemaakt en werden gebruikt om het hogere te bewegen.

Het eerste hoofdstuk focust op “de intercessie en aanroeping van heiligen”, en onderzoekt de stichting van het Brusselse miniemenklooster op de plaats van een voormalig bordeel (1621). Resultaat van een complexe uitwisseling van belangen tussen de monniken, de stadsmagistraat, en het hof, werd deze gebeurtenis uitgedragen met een moraliserende retoriek van verandering, die aanhaakte bij de wijdverspreide vrees voor de toorn Gods over de zonde van promiscuiteit. Door het aanroepen van de Maagd Maria als patrones, hoopten de verschillende bij de stichting betrokken actoren steun te vergaren voor een proces van stadsvernieuwing. Bij gebrek aan financiering kwam het architecturale project voor hun nieuwe kerk echter niet van de grond. Desondanks werden twee cultussen bevorderd in het klooster, elk gericht op een specifiek publiek: die van de Heilige Engelbewaarder en van de Maagd van Loreto en haar Heilig Huisje, waarvan het origineel in detail werd gerepliceerd. De casus biedt inzicht in de manier

waarop de monniken en hun weldoeners door middel van de heiligencultus hervorming van de sexuele moraal propageerden en met welk doel.

Het tweede hoofdstuk behandelt het “legitieme gebruik van afbeeldingen”. Het onderzoekt het altaar van de broederschap van Sint Dorothea in de kerk van de karmelieten of Lievevrouwbroers (1640), die midden in de winter werd gedecoreerd door haar tijdelijk te transformeren in een zee van bloemen, die verwees naar het wonder van de heilige die vlak voor haar marteldood bloemen uit de hemel ontving. Ik onderzoek hoe de versiering van het altaar met behulp van innovatieve horticulturele technieken, door middel van een internationaal netwerk van horticulturele experts, de beschouwer moest verbijsteren als een wonder, en de goddelijke missie van het bedwingen van de natuur door menselijk vernuft opriep, om zo het ideaal van de eeuwige lente te doen herleven. Bovendien, door het manipuleren van de natuur middels haar grootste rivaal kunst, was het onderdeel van de contrareformatorische preoccupatie met de aard van religieuze kunst en illusie. De casus maakt duidelijk dat het schouwspel (en de specifieke agency van bloemen) niet alleen het bekeringsverhaal van de heilige en het patronage van de opdrachtgever in de schijnwerpers zette, maar ook impliciet verwees naar de twijfels en zorgen omtrent religieuze afbeeldingen die voortvloeiden uit de reformatie.

In het derde hoofdstuk bespreek ik het “eerbetoon aan relieken”. Dankzij de goede betrekkingen van de kapucijner monnik Carolus van Aenberg met de Heilige Stoel, wist de orde de hand te leggen op acht complete lichamen van vroegchristelijke martelaren uit de romeinse katakomben. Toen de relieken naar de Nederlanden waren gebracht, werd een passende nieuwe kerk gebouwd (gefinancierd door de familie Arenberg) die werd gepromoot als “mausoleum” (1652). Na een processie van translatio werden de relieken getoond in een uitgebreide artistieke setting, die niettemin ten doel had om de armoedegelofte van de orde te benadrukken. De casus illustreert de verschillende functies van deze nieuwe cultus en de kunst en architectuur van de kerk in de politieke contexten van het hof, de rivaliteit tussen de ordes, en de opkomst van het Jansenisme.

Een diepgravend onderzoek van deze drie casussen laat zien dat het bestuderen van de functie van religieuze kunst en architectuur in termen van agency veel licht werpt op de complexe processen van maatschappelijke transformatie en verzoening met de hemel waarin zij een centrale rol speelden.

Abbreviations

ARAA	Algemeen Rijksarchief, Anderlecht
ARA	Algemeen Rijksarchief, Brussels (Ruisbroecstraat)
ASV	Archivio Segreto Vaticano
SAB	Stadsarchief, Brussels
KBR	Koninklijke Bibliotheek Albert I, Brussels
KMSKA	Koninklijk Museum voor Schone Kunsten, Antwerp
RMFAB	Royal Museums of Fine Arts of Belgium, Brussels

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Copenhagen, September 2014

Introduction

Whenever we enter one of Belgium's many old churches we are being overwhelmed by grandiose baroque altarpieces, sculptures, and lavish architectural decorations in gold and marble.[1] Most of these artworks originated in the first half of the seventeenth century, a period when the Southern Low Countries had hardly recovered from the religious crisis of the sixteenth century and were plagued by war, famine and disease. From a modern day perspective it seems hard to understand why people, under these circumstances, would spend so much effort and so many resources on something as "useless" and "superfluous" as art and architecture. However, the function of art and the place of religion in society in the Southern Netherlands during the Counter-Reformation were altogether different from those in our modern world.

The mindset of those who commissioned such splendid religious art in the midst of crisis may be illustrated by Rubens's painting *Saints Dominic, Francis, Catherine of Alexandria and other Saints invoking the intercession of the Holy Virgin Mary, to protect the world from Jesus' wrath* (1618-20) (*fig*. 1).[2] The painting, now in the Musée des Beaux-Arts in Lyon, was originally the high altarpiece of the Antwerp Dominican church.[3] It depicts a vision of the order's founder Saint Dominic, seeing a furious Christ holding three bolts of lightning, threatening to strike all sinners. Mary falls at his feet begging Him to save the world by invoking the missionary zeal of Saint Dominic and Saint Francis. In the painting the two saints spread their protecting arms over the globe, around which a snake – symbol of evil – coils.

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[1] Surveys are Paul Philippot et al., *L'architecture religieuse et la sculpture baroque dans les Pays-Bas méridionaux et la principauté de Liège 1600-1770* (Brussels: Editions Mardaga, 2003); Hans Vlieghe, *Flemish Art and Architecture, 1585-1700* (New Haven CT: Yale University Press, 1998); Horst Gerson and Engelbert Ter Kuile, *Art and Architecture in Belgium, 1600 to 1800* (Harmondsworth: Penguin Books, 1960).

[2] Wolfgang Heinrich Savelsberg, *Die Darstellung des Hl. Franziskus von Assisi in der flämischen Malerei und Graphik des späten 16. und des 17. Jahrhunderts* (Rome: Istituto Storico dei Cappuccini, 1992), 308–313; Hans Vlieghe, *Saints (Corpus Rubenianum Ludwig Burchard, 8)* (London: Phaidon, 1972), 88.

[3] See Jeffrey M. Muller, "Ruben's Altarpiece in the Antwerp Dominican Church: How Visitors and Guidebooks Saw It," in *Le Rubénisme En Europe Aux XVIIe et XVIIIe Siècles*, ed. Michèle-Caroline Heck (Turnhout, 2005), 69–82.

A painting like this may be seen as a typical example of the way art functioned as instrument of "propaganda" in the service of the Counter-Reformation, by visually emphasizing the need for saintly intercession, denied by the Protestants. At the same time, this work (and similar ones)[4] provides a compelling visual example of the intense fear of God that held early modern society in its grip, especially during times of distress. Any way you look at it, artworks like this had no neutral role, although its current display on a museum wall might suggest otherwise, because the museum presents it first and foremost as a specimen of Rubens' masterly brush. Neither should it be seen as a mere illustration of a long-gone mentality. I should rather like to ask: what can art do to people? How could it bring about change? And to which domains should we turn in order to understand this function of art in historical terms?

In 1923, Aby Warburg gave a lecture on the serpent ritual of the Hopi Indians, describing a dance in which the participants cast rattlesnakes in the sand.[5] As snakes resembled flashes of lightning, this gesture was part of a ceremony that was supposed to bring rain, and in which the snakes were treated as active agents (or intercessors in early modern Christian terminology). Interpreting the function of the Hopi ritual, Warburg coins the term "danced causality" (*getantzte Kausalität*).[6] Through sympathetic magic, the Hopi "turn objects of terror into means of control". I would argue that something similar happens in the painting of Rubens, and that Warburg asks for a wholly different way of looking at early modern religious art, which takes into account that artworks were "far from a static backdrop to private or public life but rather very much a part of the action".[7] This "action", whether it be Hopi rituals or early modern art patronage, often seems like

[4] E.g. Rubens' *The Intercession of the Virgin and St Francis deter the Wrath of Christ* (RMFAB inv. 160)

[5] Aby Warburg, "A Lecture on Serpent Ritual," *Journal of the Warburg Institute* 2, no. 4 (1939): 287.

[6] Ibid., 291. "Instinctively, for the unexplained effect, he [primitive man] substitutes the cause in its most real and most tangible shape. The masked dance is the danced law of causality". Warburg does not delimit his observations to non-western cultures: "The will to surrender in devotion is a nobler form of assuming a mask". See also the recent, much more complete edition in Aby Warburg, "Bilder Aus Dem Gebiet Der Pueblo-Indianer," in *Werke in Einem Band*, ed. Martin Treml, Sigrid Weigel, and Perdita Ladwig (Berlin: Suhrkamp, 2010), 524–66.

[7] Lydia Hamlett, "The Longinian Sublime, Effect and Affect in 'Baroque' British Visual Culture," in *Translations of the Sublime: The Early Modern Reception and Dissemination of Longinus' Peri Hupsous in Rhetoric, the Visual Arts, Architecture and the Theatre*, ed. Caroline van Eck (Leiden: Brill, 2012), 199.

irrational behaviour to our modern eyes, yet may be elucidated by an approach informed by Warburg's first steps towards an ethnography of art.

In this dissertation I start from the assumption that the pious anxiety over the wrath of God, which was of such central concern throughout the period, was one of the main motivations behind the religious donations and art commissions in the Southern Netherlands. As I will argue, works of art and architecture played a key role in processes of negotiation with the divine. In order to elucidate these processes, and to understand the role of art and architecture therein, I will examine in depth three different case studies of patrons intervening in the religious landscape of the Habsburg court city of Brussels with "acts of faith". In each case contemporaries expected art and architecture – and the objects and practices they involved – to bring about change. The transformative powers attributed to art and architecture are the central topic of my dissertation. These powers are what I term the agency of art and architecture.

My period of investigation starts roughly in 1609, when the Twelve Years Truce heralded a period of peace and relative prosperity during which travellers from the Protestant North were allowed (and encouraged) to visit the South.[8] It ends around 1659 after the conclusion of the Peace of the Pyrenees, which ended the Franco-Spanish war (1635-1659).[9]

The great historical and mental distance between our world and that of seventeenth-century Belgium calls for an extensive introduction, in which I will first of all present the contemporary notion of piety and provide a "thick description" of pious practises in the sense of Clifford Geertz: by putting this behaviour in context it will become meaningful to an outsider.[10] To understand the motivations and circumstances that informed actions, interventions and ultimately artworks and architecture during the period under consideration, one must have a clear sense of what was at stake and how contemporaries felt their problems were to be confronted.

---

[8] When in 1621 Archduke Albert died without progeny, the Netherlands fell back to the Spanish Crown under the act of Cession. At the same time the afflictions of war recommenced after failed negotiations for prolonging the Twelve Years Truce. The hostilities with the Dutch only ended at the Peace of Westphalia in 1648.

[9] Albeit to extremely unfavourable conditions for Spain and its Netherlands (or what remained of them).

[10] Clifford Geertz, "Thick Description: Toward an Interpretive Theory," in *The Interpretation of Cultures: Selected Essays* (New York: Basic Books, 1973), 1–32.

A unique and exceptionally detailed insight into the mid-seventeenth century religious and political train of thought and its implications is provided by the diary of Simon le Boucq, city secretary of Valenciennes in Hainault, kept during the siege of the city by the French in 1656.[11] Our story thus begins at the close of the period under consideration, when this mentality was no less alive than half a century earlier.

The battle of Valenciennes, 1656

Haes-op van Valencijn, ghy lichte Fransche Naty
Worpt u geweyr in 't slick en roept Don Ian om graty.
Be gone from Valenciennes, you wanton French nation
Throw your rifle in the mud and beg Don Juan for mercy.
(Popular song published in Antwerp in 1663).[12]

On June 15, 1656, the feast of Corpus Christi, an extraordinarily large French army of about 30,000 men surrounded and besieged the fortified city of Valenciennes, hoping to exhaust its defenders. Occupying a strategic position on the river Scheldt, Valenciennes constituted a key military bulwark and was considered to be the gateway to the North. Contemporary sources frequently stress that the fate of all of the Netherlands, North and South alike, depended on the outcome of the siege: if Valenciennes fell, the French would have free rein to push northward.[13] In what follows I will cite extensively from Le Boucq's day-to-day account of defensive measures and military events, as well as endless series of prayers, processions, and religious ceremonies that were staged in order to gain divine support for the city and its Spanish rulers. This reflected a mentality in which prayer was considered, according to one Spanish Jesuit and royal preacher, "a valiant arm to overcome our enemies, and no less powerful than the sword and the lance."[14] All the more so since the French had neglected the fact that the day at which they started their siege was the feast of Corpus Christi, at which

[11] Simon Le Boucq, *Récit du siège de Valenciennes en 1656 publié d'après le manuscrit original de S. Le Boucq, par M. Hénault.*, ed. Maurice Hénault (Valenciennes, 1889).
[12] Jan Baptist Halbos, *Vermaeckelycke Duytsche Liedekens met III. IV. V. Stemmen...* (Antwerp, 1663), 13 (song no. 4, composed by Philips van Steelant).
[13] Le Boucq, *Récit du siège de Valenciennes sn 1656 publié d'après le manuscrit original de S. Le Boucq, par M. Hénault.*, 153.
[14] J.H. Elliott, *The Count-Duke of Olivares: The Statesman in an Age of Decline* (New Haven; London: Yale University Press, 1986), 586; quoting from Francisco Aguado, *Exhortaciones varias dotrinales* (Madrid: Francisco Martinez, 1641).

occasion the community of Christians (as "body of Christ") used to show its coherence by presenting itself united.[15]

On the second day of the siege it was still business as usual in the city: the procession of St. Géry during the octave of the Sacrament (the eight days including and after Corpus Christi) went on as usual despite the siege. Le Boucq recounts that one day later, the city Magistrate discussed specific devotional measures:

> "A special council [was held], where it was first proposed that it was necessary to implore the divine assistance and succour of the glorious Virgin for our deliverance. And in which it was ordained as of tomorrow to hold a general procession in the church of Notre-Dame la Grande, where we would bring the image of Notre-Dame de Grâce from the church of Saint-Jacques, to be placed on the high altar during the mass, and afterwards be carried in procession with the coffin of the Royez [confraternity], all making a vow on behalf of the city, that in case of deliverance the latter [city] will present to the said image of Notre-Dame de Grâce a silver lamp of the value of six hundred florins."[16]

In order to enforce this vow, a general procession was held on this Sunday with "unspeakable devotion", and in the Notre-Dame la Grande a giant wax candle was placed on behalf of the city. They took the image of Notre-Dame de Grâce there during the offertory, and then to a series of other churches, and finally to St Jacques, where a prayer octave was held to implore the succours of the Virgin.[17] Clearly, for the city Magistrate the Virgin Mary was the first saint to call on when the city was in danger, and her miraculous image was the primary means to reach her. By means of urban ritual – taking the ancient cult object in procession to the city's main church and honouring it with masses, votive offerings and vows on behalf of the citizens – Mary's intercession was to be guaranteed.

Meanwhile, the surrounding land was inundated: a proven method to keep the enemy at bay, and the fortifications were reinforced by the city's priests and monks. In addition to making themselves useful with manual

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[15] Luc Racaut, *Hatred in Print: Catholic Propaganda and Protestant Identity during the French Wars of Religion* (Aldershot: Ashgate, 2002), 83.

[16] Le Boucq, *Récit du siège de Valenciennes en 1656 publié d'après le manuscrit original de S. Le Boucq, par M. Hénault.*, 83. All translations, unless otherwise indicated, are by the author.

[17] Ibid., 86–87. Le Boucq points out that though on this day the procession of the octave of the Sacrament was not done because of the general one (they did a small one in the cloister) on all the other days of the octave it was done as normally and with extraordinary devotion.

labour, the city's clergy also started a continuous prayer "estafette"; monks praying together for half a day in one church, and then handing the responsibility over to another, for as long as the siege would last.[18]

The French kept pestering the civic guards and tried to build a bridge over the swamps surrounding the city. Skirmishes between the besiegers and the besieged became ever more violent. On the twentieth, the Magistrate wrote a letter to the newly installed Governor and Captain General of the Spanish Netherlands, Don Juan José of Austria (1629-1679), natural son of the Spanish king Philip IV, urging him to come to the rescue. He replied within a few days that he would leave Brussels at once, "hoping on the mercy of God through the intercession of his Holy Mother".[19]

In addition, on June 25 the Lords Magistrates ordained to implore the help of the city's tutelary saints: Saint Saulve, "apostle of this town, which keeps his coffin," and Saint Gilles, its patron saint. Apparently these saints were considered particularly appropriate as intercessors (through their relics), because of their historical bond with the city, since they converted its population to Christianity in the eighth century. Therefore masses were sung, candles were burnt, and all of this "without saving on the music".

But this was still not deemed enough. On June 28, "The Magistrate ordained and had printed the following ordinance to implore divine assistance to our help":

> *"The Lords Magistrates of this city make known to all, that to move our God to mercy and to deliverance of the present siege by intercession of the holy Virgin, have decided to have celebrated on every day at nine the Holy Sacrifice of the solemn mass with music in the following churches: […]. Everyone is invited, by the Lords Magistrate, to present himself and contribute to this good work with vows and prayers."*[20]

One day later, on June 30, the French commenced the bombardment of the city. Le Boucq recounts how one bomb fell on the Jesuit church, which was full of faithful, but miraculously caused few casualties. On the first of July another procession was held, in which the priest celebrated and carried the Sacrament barefoot to implore heavenly assistance, followed by many people who went barefoot as well.[21]

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[18] Ibid., 89.
[19] Ibid., 103.
[20] Ibid., 110.
[21] Ibid., 115.

On July 4 the city received a letter from Don Juan, containing hardly more than a reassurance of his intention to rescue the city, and a request of the citizens to continue to pray for good success.[22] Then, on July 7 the city received another letter from Don Juan dated 5 July with a more specific demand:

> "[…] *with all the hope that this affair should veritably depend on the divine help, having in that place* [Valenciennes] *(as I am informed) the finger of the glorious St John, it would be very agreeable to me if the city made some offering in form of an anniversary of the day, on which by his intercession our Lord will be served to grant him the benefice of delivering this city from the great evils that would occur to him by its loss. And with that and the great value which the inhabitants make appear, I have no doubt that we will obtain the desired goal, God disposing this following his providence.*"[23]

It goes without saying that Saint John, as Don Juan's patron saint, was thought to have a unique intercessory power when it came to invoking celestial blessing over his military enterprises. To fulfil his request on July 8 the finger relic of Saint John was duly honoured with a procession headed by the city herald clothed in his coat of arms, and a promise was made, in case of deliverance, to continue this devotion every year. This was decided at a council of the Magistrates who also:

> "Authorised another time […] to have masses celebrated by all monasteries for our deliverance. This day the Magistrate had celebrated a solemn mass with music at the refuge of [the Abbey of] Fontenelle to the honour of the miraculous image of the Virgin reposing in that place. And subsequently by the abovementioned ordinance of the council, the Magistrate ordered to celebrate the masses hereafter declared and to start from tomorrow the 9th of the month and to continue every day throughout the siege, namely […]. Together 28 masses to celebrate every day, which was carried out with all possible devotion."[24]

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[22] Ibid., 122–123: "[…] en quoy je me confie que notre Seigneur nous donnerat le bon succès necessaire, come je le supplie. Et il conviendra aussi qu'on fache chez vous les prières à ce mesme effect. [...]."
[23] Ibid., 130–131.
[24] Ibid., 132.

A miraculous image like that of Fontenelle, normally kept in a nearby abbey but taken to the city for safety, was not neglected, as it was deemed a welcome and potentially powerful complement to the city's sacred hoard.

In spite of this, and of even more public prayers on Sunday 9 July, the French kept trying to blow up the city gates with gunpowder, and dug tunnels under its walls.[25] They had now persistently besieged and bombarded the city for almost a month, and the situation became untenable. Yet the citizens remained loyal to Spain and the commander of the garrison protecting the town, Don Francisco de Meneses refused to surrender. Meanwhile the citizens called for help with signs, such as fire on the belfry, and letters urging Don Juan to come to the recue. Tensions between the men in charge of the city's defence erupted; the city's governor the Duke of Bournonville[26] called Meneses (who was loved by the people), a fool. Following letters of Don Juan promising a prompt rescue, on July 14 the Magistrate ordered all religious houses both male and female "to double their prayers in order to be assisted by our good Lord."[27] Le Boucq very explicitly states what was at stake:

> "To implore the divine assistance the churches were open all night long and full of people who incessantly implored the intercession of the glorious Virgin and of the saints for being delivered from this siege and avoid the ruin that they were to suffer in case of the change of monarchy, fearing nothing more than to fall in the hands of that insolent French nation, who do not keep law, faith, nor promise, only making use of a pure libertinism and living in unbelief [*en athée*] and treating the people of the cities of their conquests worse than the Turks do, which made them so odious to us that we felt brought to the way of a desperate [suicide] rather than to fall into their hands. At eleven at night we started in all the abovementioned churches to celebrate masses; the Rev. Prelate de Hasnon celebrated in pontifical [garb] in his church of Notre-Dame la Grande and so did other persons, not saving on this occasion that had become so pressing."[28]

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[25] Ibid., 135.

[26] On Bournonville's patronage in Brussels, see Helena Bussers, "La famille de Bournonville et l'église des Carmes déchaussés à Bruxelles," *Bulletin des musées royaux d'art et d'histoire* no. 44 (1995): 113–124.

[27] Le Boucq, *Récit du siège de Valenciennes en 1656 publié d'après le manuscrit original de S. Le Boucq, par M. Hénault.*, 144–145.

[28] Ibid., 147: "Pour implorer l'assistence divine toutte la nuict les Eglises furent ouvertes et remply de people qui sans cesse imploroit l'intercession de la glorieuse Vierge et des sainctz pour

On 15 July "the churches remained open all night where the people did not fail to perform altogether extraordinary devotions".[29] Having arrived at Valenciennes, Don Juan's army and that of the Prince of Condé (a renegade French relative of the royal family in the service of Spain) prepared their offensive. Le Boucq notes that "the watchword of this army [of Condé] was « JESUS-MARIA », which was an omen of good success."[30]

Meanwhile in Brussels, the yearly Octave of another, particularly important "national" relic, the "Holy Sacrament of Miracle" was being celebrated. On the express orders of Don Juan, the prayers, processions and religious ceremonies held in its honour were to be put in the service of warding off the siege of Valenciennes. We will soon find out why this performance of urban ritual in the country's capital was deemed so important.

Finally, "when it was about 1.30 in the morning of July 16, the day of the solemnity of the Holy Sacrament of Miracles in Brussels, and the principal feast of Our Lady of Mount Carmel", four divisions of the Spanish army attacked the French camp by surprise.[31] By means of a series of well executed and brave cavalry charges, Don Juan managed to break through the enemy lines, forcing the French to withdraw hastily.[32] The Spanish army booked a resounding victory, avenging their defeat at Arras two years earlier. Valenciennes was relieved, and some 4,000 men were captured by the Spanish, among which were many officers of high rank, including the Marshall La Ferté.[33] Le Boucq describes the following events as follows:

> "His Highness [Don Juan] returned to the city at nine in the morning through the gate of Cambrai, and went into the church of Saint Jean to honour the relic of this saint, which he kissed three times, next he

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estre délivré de ce siège et éviter la ruine que leur eult causé le changement de monarchie, ne redoubtans rien plus que de tomber es mains de cette insolente nation françoise, qui ne gardent loy, foy, ny promesse, n'usant que d'un pur libertinage et vivans en athée et traîtant les peuples des villes de leur conquestes pire que ne font les Turcqs, ce qui nous les rendoit si odieux qu'on scent mis jusqu'en a la desespérade plutost que de tomber en leurs mains. Les douze heures de la nuict arrivé l'on comencea par toutes les susdites églises à célébrer messes ; le R. Prélat de Hasnon célébra en pontifical dans son église de N. Dame-la-Grande et ainsi des aultres personnes ne s'epargnoit en ceste occasion si pregnante."

[29] Ibid.

[30] Ibid., 148.

[31] Ibid., 149.

[32] Ignacio Ruiz Rodríguez, *Don Juan José de Austria en la monarquía Hispánica: entre la política, el poder y la intriga* (Madrid: Dykinson, 2007), 192.

[33] Jonathan I. Israel, *Conflicts of Empires : Spain, the Low Countries and the Struggle for World Supremacy, 1585-1713* (London: Hambledon Press, 1997), 140.

> heard the low mass during which we sung the Te Deum Laudamus, after which the said Highness left, the joint Magistrate saluted and congratulated him with his glorious victory, to which he told them: « Now well did I not fulfil my promise ».”[34]

It is obvious that Le Boucq does not attribute the victory to the military genius of Don Juan or his commanders; instead he is firmly convinced of the power of faith, and divine retribution:

> “Also our good God heard the prayers and delivered us from the great misfortune that was apparent to happen to this so catholic city and which ran the risk of being wasted by heresies, the chief and majority of the besieging army being infected by it, such a way that at all attacks and otherwise, they cried out after those of the city, that they would go implore the assistance of their “washerwoman” [*lavandière*] meaning the holy virgin, and other scandalous and damnable remarks, also God punishes them in such a way that one will have memory of it for several centuries.”[35]

The diary by Le Boucq reveals an almost chivalric concern for safekeeping the honour of the Virgin, and a genuine fear of the wrath of God in case his city would fall prey to the French blasphemers (as do many other contemporary accounts of the siege, all of which are conceived to an overwhelming extent in religious terms).[36] The relief of the siege was no less

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[34] Le Boucq, *Récit du siège de Valenciennes en 1656 publié d’après le manuscrit original de S. Le Boucq, par M. Hénault.*, 152: “[...] elle [S.A. Don Juan] rentra dans la ville sur les 9 heures du matin par la porte Cambrisienne, et alla descendre en l’église de S. Jean pour y honorer la Relicque dudit Sainct, laquelle il baisa par trois fois, puis il intendit la basse messe durant laquelle on chanta le « Te Deum Laudamus », lequel achevé sa dicte A. [Don Juan] sortant, le Magistrat en corps le saluèrent et félicitèrent de sa glorieuse victoire, à quoy il leur dict : « Or bien ne me suis-je pas acquité de ma promesse ».”

[35] Ibid., 147–148: “Les Eglises demeurèrent ouvertes toutte la nuict où le peuple ne mancquoit à faire des dévotions en tout extraordinaire. Aussi notre bon Dieu exaucea les prières et nous délivra du grand malheur qui estoit apparent arriver sur ceste ville tant catholique et qui couroit risque d’estre gasté des hérésies, le chef et pluspart de l’armée assiégeant en estant infecté, en sorte telle qu’à touttes attacques et aultrement, ils crioient après ceulx de la ville, qu’ils allassent implorer l’assistance de leur « lavandière » entendans de la vierge sacré, et aultres propos scandaleux et damnables, aussi Dieu les punit de telle sorte qu’on en aura mémoire de plusieurs siècles.”

[36] Examples are Jacques De Rantre, *Description véritable des choses plus mémorables arrivees pendant le siège de la ville de Valentiennes Valentianae fait par l’armée de France* (Valenciennes: Jean Boucher, 1656); Jean Baptiste Maldonado, *Palmae seu Valentiana victricibus armis Philippi Quarti Regis Catholici, Joannis Austriaci felicibus auspiciis ab obsidione Gallorum liberate* (Valenciennes: Jean Boucher, 1660); G. Ricart, *Triumphus Valencenensium ob solutam urbis suae obsidionem per expugnationem potentissimi Gallorum exercitus auspiciis Serenissimi Principis Ioannis Austriaci peractam 16 Iulii 1656*, n.d.

than a relief of this gripping anxiety, and a reaffirmation of the conviction that Spain and its Southern Netherlands were under divine grace.

Consequently, everywhere in the war-torn and impoverished Southern Netherlands the news of the victory was greeted with extraordinary public rejoicing: all sorts of festivities and thanksgiving ceremonies were held throughout the country.[37] A veritable torrent of poems, songs, artworks, prints, coins, and publications celebrated the victory, praising the unyielding burghers of Valenciennes and the military heroes of the army, and, last but not least, explained the events in terms of divine interference. It could not, so it was thought, be a coincidence that the siege (which had started on Sacrament Day, the feast of Corpus Christi) was lifted on the very day at which in Brussels the yearly procession of the Blessed Sacrament of Miracle was performed.

Making sense of Valenciennes

Events like those in Valenciennes are by some historians explained from the simplistic viewpoint that in times of war and distress the masses tend to turn to superstitious behaviour.[38] Yet how can we understand more profoundly the strange, in our modern eyes irrational behaviour of the people of Valenciennes? Why were the events so closely associated with the feast of the Blessed Sacrament of Miracles in Brussels? We can only understand why this procession was so important and closely connected to the military events by those who lived it, by recognizing that events like the Battle at Valenciennes were seen as part of the history of salvation. In this context, such events immediately acquired such a historical dimension because those involved incorporate a host of references, as is also shown by the invocation of protection of the city by the saints that Christianized it. Therefore I will now briefly summarize the history of the sacramental cult of Brussels and the meanings that were attached to (and the agency exerted by) the miraculous hosts and their procession.[39]

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[37] As may be expected, after the siege was lifted the citizens of Valenciennes fabricated a cavalcade of religious ceremonies of thanksgiving which I will not inflict on the reader. See Le Boucq.

[38] There is a growing awareness of the artificiality of distinctions between superstition and official belief. See John Edwards, "[Review Article:] The Priest, the Layman and the Historian: Religion in Early Modern Europe," *European History Quarterly* 17, no. 1 (1987): 87–93.

[39] Margit Thøfner, *A Common Art: Urban Ceremonial in Antwerp and Brussels during and after the Dutch Revolt* (Zwolle: Waanders, 2007), 255–275.

In 1369 a group of Jews were burnt at the stake in Brussels on the accusation of having stolen and defiled a number of consecrated hosts. According to tradition, the wafers had started to bleed miraculously after the Jews had stabbed them with knives.[40] Three of these hosts would then be brought to the collegiate church of St Michael and Gudule in a procession of *translatio*, where they would be venerated as relics, in the Blessed Sacrament of Miracles (*fig*. 2). An annual procession was instituted, reputedly by Duke Wenceslas and Duchess Joanna of Brabant, who had also given the Joyous Entry charter.[41] As it followed the same route as the Joyous Entry, it would remind the population of (arch)ducal legitimacy.[42] As successors of the dukes, the Habsburgs had always been closely associated with the cult, investing in the rebuilding of the chapel and donating stained-glass windows.[43] Because of these dynastic resonances the procession, which had only been of secondary importance (after the *Ommegang*), during the seventeenth century gradually became a great festival of state. The Archdukes Albert and Isabella played a key role in this.[44] As members of the House of Habsburg, they had a special devotion to the Eucharist, the *pietas eucharistica*, which went back as far as the 13th century Count Rudolph of Hapsburg, founder of the dynasty. According to legend, this ancestor had once lent his horse to a priest carrying the *viaticum* (a consecrated host reserved for the sacrament of the dying).[45] By this and other devotions, what came to be known as the *pietas Austriaca*, the House of Habsburg claimed to have obtained the divine mission to rule.[46]

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[40] Luc Dequeker, *Het Sacrament van Mirakel: Jodenhaat in de Middeleeuwen* (Leuven: Davidsfonds, 2000).

[41] Thøfner, *A Common Art: Urban Ceremonial in Antwerp and Brussels during and after the Dutch Revolt*, 258.

[42] Raingard Esser stresses the importance of joyous entries as: "political events which constituted, rather than merely confirmed, the relationship between ruler and ruled." Raingard Esser, *The Politics of Memory: The Writing of Partition in the Seventeenth-Century Low Countries* (Leiden: Brill, 2012), 304.

[43] Thøfner, *A Common Art: Urban Ceremonial in Antwerp and Brussels during and after the Dutch Revolt*, 259; Placide Lefèvre, "Offrandes princières faites en l'honneur d'une relique eucharistique à Bruxelles au XVII et au XVIII Siècle," *Bulletin des musées royaux d'art et d'histoire* (1937): 77–104.

[44] Thøfner, *A Common Art: Urban Ceremonial in Antwerp and Brussels during and after the Dutch Revolt*, 258. See also P. Quintens (ed.), *Brussel in feest: de ommegang en de meiboomplanting*, Brussels, 2000

[45] Archduke Albert would emulate his ancient forebear in this act of devotion whenever he had the chance.

[46] Luc Duerloo, "Pietas Albertina. Dynastieke Vroomheid En Herbouw van Het Vorstelijk Gezag," *BMGN* 112, no. 1 (1997): 1–18; Anna Coreth, *Pietas Austriaca: Österreichische Frömmigkeit im Barock*, 2nd ed. (Munich: Oldenbourg, 1982), 13–23; see also M. Ohara, "Rudolf

According to Thofner the cult also "helped to foster a shared militancy of dukes and city against the shared enemy (of Christ): the sacrilegious Jews". In emulation of their ancient forebears who had banished the Jews from Brabant, the archdukes banished all heretics by their decree of expulsion in 1609.[47] After all, the Protestants were guilty of a similar crime as the Jews: destroying Christ.[48] The history of the cult was rewritten by the Jesuit Franciscus Costerus in 1611, defending it against protestant writers who denied that the relics were real hosts, and arguing that doubting their veracity is to be considered an offence to the "princely city of Brussels" and its court, the rulers as well as the ruled.[49] Thus the cult was increasingly understood as a focal cult of a militantly catholic state battling with heresy, Jews, and so on, turning the Blessed Sacrament of Miracles into "a national relic of the Southern Low Countries, and the procession a ceremony of state if not yet of nation".[50]

Precisely this function as national relic, protecting the state from impious invaders, was miraculously performed on the eve of July 16, 1656. Even the Dutch newspaper *Hollantse Mercurius* mentioned the miracle, and the honour that was being paid to the Blessed Sacrament of Miracle in Brussels by putting the chronographic inscription "MIraCVLoso Deo" (1656) over the altar in the chapel of the Sacrament in the collegiate church of St Michael and Gudule (*fig*. 3, 4).[51]

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of Habsburg and the Priest: A Study in Iconography of the Counter-Reformation under the House of Habsburg," *Wiener Jahrbuch für Kunstgeschichte* 49 (1996): 91–135.

[47] The Infante Isabella Clara Eugenia, in turn, may have emulated her name saint Clara, who repulsed the infidels with the Eucharist. See Barbara Welzel, "Princeps Vidua, Mater Castrorum: The Iconography of Archduchess Isabella as Governor of the Netherlands," *Jaarboek Koninklijk Museum voor Schone Kunsten* (1999): 166–167.

[48] Thøfner, *A Common Art: Urban Ceremonial in Antwerp and Brussels during and after the Dutch Revolt*, 260.

[49] Ibid., 260–264; Franciscus Costerus, *Dialogue, Oft t'samen-sprekinge over de solemnele processie des H. Sacraments van Mirakel, jaerlijcks te Brussel ghehouden ende naemelijck in dit jaer 1610* (Brussels: Velpius, 1611).

[50] Thøfner, *A Common Art: Urban Ceremonial in Antwerp and Brussels during and after the Dutch Revolt*, 164.

[51] *Hollantse Mercurius*, 1656, p. 94: "Over dit slaen en ontsetten was de gantse Weerelt van Spagnien soo blije, datse God danckten en Don Jan, en al was men so geweldigh verarmt, de vreughdevuyren evenwel wierden aengesteken, de klocken geluyt, en de Taefelen gedeckt: te Madrid is den eersten Bode by Sijn Majesteyt Coninglijck vereert, selfs heeft den Spaensen Gesant D. Estafana de Gamara in 's Gravenhaeg oock gezegepraelt, (niet teghenstaende zijn Soon in den dienst des Coninghs was ghesneuvelt, beneffens Hendrick Verkest, een Boeren Soon uyt 't Lant van Waes, doch om zijn gau beleyt Mr. del Camp in dit ontset:) schenckende opentlijck den Wijn, en aen den Armen ettelijcke Contanten, etc. Men heeft te Brussel boven 't Sacrament dese Incarnatie gestelt: MIraCVLoso Deo. 1656."

The news of the victory at Valenciennes soon spread all over Europe, and the population of the Southern Netherlands celebrated (for more than a year) as they hoped the event would bring peace closer. Their joy was not only shared by the Dutch, but also by a large majority of the French population who hated Cardinal Mazarin for his belligerent politics.[52] The Battle of Valenciennes would prove to be the last great military victory of the Spanish empire, yet at the time it was seen as a historical turning point. The triumph was commemorated with brilliant historical medals, cast in gold, silver and bronze by the Brabant medallist Waterloos, which were to be worn around the neck with a ribbon (*fig*. 5).[53] On the front they showed an armoured portrait bust of Don Juan.[54] On the reverse, they depicted the reliquary of the Blessed Sacrament of Miracles containing the three hosts, accompanied by the following chronographic inscription: MIraCVLoso festo aDora. [worship it during this miraculous feast - 1656]. The medal leaves no doubt as to the cause of Don Juan's success: his miraculous victory was to be attributed to the virtue of the Blessed Sacrament of Miracle. In fact, a contemporary Spanish account of the events states that Don Juan expressly chose the eve of the feast as a propitious moment for the attack:

> "[…] and His Highness having chosen Saturday night, the eve of the Blessed Sacrament of Miracle, which fell on July 15 (which is one of the greatest and most worthy feasts of the Netherlands), for performing this resolution, […]"[55]

This was, however, a highly unusual decision: since the time of Albert and Isabella, who had greatly stimulated the cult, it was customary (or even mandatory) that the ruling governors of the Spanish Netherlands took part in the procession in Brussels: Archduke Albert would leave whatever military campaign he was in to attend it, and archduke Leopold-Wilhelm was known

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[52] An intercepted letter to G. Ratchliffe, Paris, 17 July 1656. "State Papers, 1656: July (2 of 6)," in *A Collection of the State Papers of John Thurloe. Vol. 5: May 1656-January 1657* (London, 1742), 187–200; see also Israel, *Conflicts of Empires: Spain, the Low Countries and the Struggle for World Supremacy, 1585-1713*, 108.

[53] Gerard van Loon, *Histoire métallique des XVII Provinces dses Pays-Bas, depuis l'abdication de Charles-Quint, jusqu'à la Paix de Bade en MDCCXVI* (The Hague, 1732), Vol. 2, 402–404. (first published in Dutch as Gerard van Loon, *Beschrijving der Nederlandsche Historiepenningen*, 4 vols., The Hague, 1723-31)

[54] Identified by the inscription: "Joannes Austriacus, Philippi IV Hispaniarum Regis Filius; Belgii Gubernator."

[55] "'Relación de la campaña del año 1656,'" in *Varias relaciones de los estados de Flandes: 1631 Á 1656, Madrid* (Madrid, 1880), 160: "[...] y habiendo elegido S.A. la noche del sábado, víspera del Santísimo Sacramento del Milagro, que se contaron 15 de Julio (que es una de las mayores y más dignas celebridades de los Países-Bajos), para poner por obra esta resolucion, [...]."

to do the same.[56] What was the reason for Don Juan to break with this longstanding tradition of *Pietas Austriaca*?

An account of the events by the canon and historian Antonius Sanderus (1584-1664) in his description of the Abbey of Grimbergen of 1659 stated that it was significant that the siege of Valenciennes had begun on June 15, the day of the feast of Corpus Christi when the Real Presence of Christ in the Eucharist was celebrated by carrying it in procession.[57] That the "not sufficiently Christian" French had started their aggression on this sacred day was very impious, and was bound to be miraculously retaliated on that other Sacramental feast, one month later.[58] What Sanderus seems to imply, is that the French timing of their laying siege to Valenciennes was to be considered an offense to Christ, comparable to the torturing of the hosts by the Jews in 1370.[59]

In the perception of the citizens of Valenciennes, such as Le Boucq, the victory was to be attributed primarily to the intercession of the Virgin Mary (*fig*. 12).[60] From the perspective of Don Juan, however, the city's devotion to the finger relic of his name saint may have been crucial, and on the level of states, the Brussels' devotion to the Blessed Sacrament of Miracle was promoted by the court as the decisive devotion. This may be

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[56] Thøfner, *A Common Art: Urban Ceremonial in Antwerp and Brussels during and after the Dutch Revolt*, 258: The archdukes always travelled to Brussels to take part in the procession, whether they were in the midst of a military campaign or enjoying their annual stay at the summer residence of Mariemont. See also Michel de Saint-Martin, *Relation d'un voyage fait en Flandres, Brabant, Hainaut, Artois, Cambresis, etc... en l'an 1661* (Caën: M. Yvon, 1667), 206; Jean De Boeck, *Vier-Honderd-Jaerig Jubilé van het Hoog-Weerdig en Alderheyligste Sacrament van Mirakel, berustende in de Collegiale en Parochiale Kercke van de HH. Michael en Gudula, binnen de Princelycke Stad Brussel* ... (Brussels: J. Vanden Berghen, 1770), 90.

[57] Antonius Sanderus, "Chorographia Sacra Abbatiae Grimbergensis," in *Chorographia Sacra Brabantiæ sive celebrivm aliqvot in ea provincia ecclesiarum et coenobiorum descriptio* (Brussels: Philippe Vleugart, 1659), 10.

[58] The opposite also occurred, for instance when the French defeated the Spanish at the Battle of Leucate in 1637 on the feast day of St Michael, King Louis XIII donated an altarpiece dedicated to the militant Archangel (depicted in veneration of the Virgin and Child) to the cathedral of Notre-Dame of Paris. See Klaus Bussmann and Heinz Schilling, *1648 : War and Peace in Europe, Vol I* (Münster: Veranstaltungsgesellschaft 350 Jahre Westfälischer Friede, 1998), 306–307.

[59] This interpretation of the events would subsequently be integrated into the litany of miracles attributed to the Sacrament of Miracles, was recounted in histories of the cult, and depicted in a painting of Don Juan kneeling in prayer at Valenciennes, donated to the shrine as late as the mid eighteenth-century on the occasion of its jubilee.
De Boeck, *Vier-Honderd-Jaerig Jubilé van het Hoog-Weerdig en Alderheyligste Sacrament van Mirakel, berustende in de collegiale en Parochiale Kercke van de HH. Michael en Gudula, binnen de Princelycke Stad Brussel* ..., 91–93.

[60] As evinced by countless publications, prints, songs, medals, etc.

illustrated by a painting by the court painter (and courtier)[61] David II Teniers (1610-1690), presently in Antwerp, commemorating the battle of Valenciennes in a highly significant way (*fig*. 8).[62] It depicts the besieged city from various perspectives simultaneously, seen through a heavy arched window of stone.[63] A birds-eye perspective (resembling a military map) shows the city amidst inundated lands, surrounded by the opposing armies of Don Juan and Condé on the one hand and Turenne and La Ferté on the other. At the top emerges an additional silhouette of the city, over which the Blessed Sacrament of Miracle[64] hovers amidst heavenly rays of light, beneath the Virgin and child enthroned, and surrounded by angels holding banners seized from the French (*fig*. 9, 10). The framing window is adorned with many trophies of war, the coats-of-arms of King Philip IV and Don Juan, and portrait medallions of the King, Don Juan, Condé and other commanders. In the middle, a white cloth is upheld below the bust of the King (probably meant to be inscribed) by statuettes of Minerva trampling down Discord, and Hercules whose "Leo Belgicus" devours the Gallic rooster (*fig.* 11).[65]

In the city hall of Valenciennes, the Magistrate had the victory depicted in a painting of gigantic proportions (362 x 775 cm) by the battle painter Peeter Snayers (1592-ca. 1667).[66] This lost painting is extensively

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[61] Teniers the Younger was *ayuda de camera* (chamberlain) of Archduke Leopold Wilhelm and Don Juan José of Austria. Hans Vlieghe, *David Teniers the Younger (1610-1690): a Biography* (Turnhout: Brepols, 2011), 102; Hans Vlieghe, "David II Teniers (1610-1690) en het hof van Aartshertog Leopold-Wilhelm en Don Juan van Oostenrijk, 1647-1659," *Gentse bijdragen tot de kunstgeschiedenis en oudheidkunde* 19 (1966): 123–148; see also Ellen Roegis, "Het hof van Don Juan José de Austria, landvoogd in de Habsburgse Nederlanden (1656-1658)" (University of Ghent, 2006).

[62] KMSKA, inv. 344 (177 x 205 cm). The painting was possibly an elaborated design for a tapestry. See the exhibition catalogue Paul Huvenne and Hans Devisscher, *De uitvinding van het landschap: van Patinir tot Rubens 1520-1650* (Antwerp: KMSKA, 2004), 270; see also Richard D. Leppert, "David Teniers the Younger and the Image of Music," *Jaarboek Koninklijk Museum Voor Schone Kunsten, Antwerpen* 10 (1978): 154.

[63] This is rather unusual and reminds of the plan of Brussels drawn up by Nicolaus van der Horst and published by Martin de Tailly as *Bruxella nobilissima Brabantiae civitas* in 1640.

[64] Misidentified in the exhibition catalogue *De uitvinding van het landschap* as "allegorical figure of Valenciennes".

[65] Le Boucq, *Récit du siège de Valenciennes en 1656 publié d'après le manuscrit original de S. Le Boucq, par M. Hénault.*, 173–174.

[66] This monumental work, unique in Snayers' oeuvre, was unfortunately destroyed in 1940, as confirmed to me by Leen Kelchtermans who prepares a monograph on the artist ("Between remembrance and glorification. A contextual study of Peter Snayers' (1592-1667) topographical battle paintings for the Habsburg elite") For the highly interesting history of this painting, of which no images survive, see Paul Foucart and Maurice Hénault, *Une toile de Pierre Snayers.* (Paris: E. Plon, 1895). From the hand of Snayers over 60 landscapes with battle scenes seen from

praised in a long laudatory poem on Snayers in *Het gulden Cabinet* of the Antwerp rhetorician Cornelis de Bie (1661),[67] who devotes more space to this painting than to any other picture in his book,[68] which was to herald a new period of bloom for the art of painting after the Peace of the Pyrenees.[69]

As I hope to have shown with this case in all its peculiar details, the complex of religious beliefs, cultic and devotional practices involving religious artifacts conducted by those involved and affected by the siege, informed their actions to a high degree. That this pious mentality was no eccentric conception adhered to only by radical Catholics, or pure propaganda, may be demonstrated by an intercepted letter from an English spy in Brussels, dated 12 August 1656:

> "It is no wonder the Spaniards should prosper at Valenciennes, there was such fasting, and praying, and processions generally held for so many days before the fight, and ladies of very good condition and tender sweet complexions going barefooted till the blood ran out."[70]

Thus many contemporaries were convinced of the power of religion to invoke celestial agency and effectuate change (especially if harsh devotions were performed by tender young ladies). The account by Le Boucq evinces the extent to which religious performances played a role throughout the events, and tellingly reveals the dynamics of piety that emerged between Don Juan and his loyal subjects. It is significant that, notwithstanding all the devotions practised at Valenciennes, in the eyes of those involved the "decisive" devotion took place in Brussels, and stemmed from the Austrian

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birds-eye view remain, depicting the Spanish military triumphs. He relied on topographical documentation like military maps, as he did not travel to the depicted locations. See Francine-Claire Legrand, *Les peintres Flamands de genre au XVIIe siècle* (Brussels: Meddens, 1963), 202, 266 (note 370); and Matthias Pfaffenbichler, "The Early Baroque Scene: From Depiction of Historical Events to Military Genre Painting," in *1648: War and Peace in Europe, Vol II*, ed. Klaus Bussmann and Heinz Schilling (Münster: Veranstaltungsgesellschaft 350 Jahre Westfälischer Friede, 1998), 495.

[67] Cornelis De Bie, *Het Gulden Cabinet van de Edel Vrij Schilder Const, inhoudende den Lof vande vermarste Schilders, Architecte, Beldthowers ende Plaetsnijders van deze eeuw* (Antwerp: Jan Meyssens, 1661), 223–224.

[68] As noted by Israel, *Conflicts of Empires: Spain, the Low Countries and the Struggle for World Supremacy, 1585-1713*, 140, note 125.

[69] See the forthcoming article by Sarah Moran "'The Right Hand of Pictura's Perfection': Cornelis de Bie's *Het Gulden Cabinet* and Antwerp Painting around 1660," *Nederlands Kunsthistorisch Jaarboek* (2014).

[70] An intercepted letter "to Mr. Copinger, at the widow Andrews, in Bedford-bury in Covent-garden", Brussels, 12 August 1656. "State Papers, 1656: August (1 of 7)," in *A Collection of the State Papers of John Thurloe, Volume 5: May 1656 - January 1657* (London, 1742), 258–271.

pietas eucharistica, the very origin of Habsburg power (and of the specific "agency" of the host-relic). This context produced a convincing miracle with national and international resonance, which legitimized the rule of the house of Habsburg over the Netherlands, as both rulers and ruled were blessed with divine grace as a result of their piety.

In the eyes of the French this was of course propaganda, but that does not exclude the actual belief of Catholics in the effects of their piety. It is significant that the French answer to the Spanish spin, after the fates had turned in French favour at their siege of St Ghislain[71] and the capture of La Capelle from the Spanish, was a medal with the text "Fortuna Redux" (Fortune recovered) and the image not of a relic but of the classical goddess of Fortune.[72]

The case of Valenciennes illustrates the prevalent contemporary notion of "piety as a way to influence God" in the Southern Netherlands. Curiously, it has not been comprehensively studied before, as historians consider the victory unimportant in light of the subsequent erosion of Spanish military power.[73] Yet the many artworks (*fig.* 7, 13) and literary works that were created in its aftermath provide ample material for studying the cultural assumptions and achievements of the Spanish Netherlands in this period and seem to beg for an ethnographic analysis.

What role did artworks play in this culture? The events in Valenciennes involved hardly anything that we would consider art (at least not from the period). Yet it is in this setting that the new works of art and architecture of the baroque functioned. The events in Valenciennes exemplify the roles Baroque religious art and architecture played: they were made not primarily to be admired for their artistic qualities, but to act.

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[71] For the Spanish spin on this event, see the pamphlet by the pastor of the Brussels Beguinage, Johannes Mytenus, *Ghislenopolis fortissime celerrimeqve expvgnata, Francisque violenter erepta per Serenissimum Principem Ioannem Avstriacvm, M. DC. LVII.XXIII. Martii. Levique carmine adumbrata* (Brussels: typis Guilielmi Scheybels, 1657).

[72] Loon, *Histoire métallique des XVII Provinces des Pays-Bas, depuis l'abdication de Charles-Quint, jusqu'à la Paix de Bade en MDCCXVI*, 404–405; on the use of event medaillons as a propaganda medium, see Bussmann and Schilling, *1648 : War and Peace in Europe, Vol I*, 64.

[73] See for instance Fernando González de León, *The Road to Rocroi: Class, Culture and Command in the Spanish Army of Flanders, 1567-1659* (Leiden: Brill, 2009), 344–345 focusing on the little attention for the victory at the court in Madrid, and the lack of reward received by Don Francisco de Meneses.

Come and see

> Come and see what the Lord has done, the desolations he has brought on the earth.
> He makes wars cease to the ends of the earth.
> He breaks the bow and shatters the spear; he burns the shields with fire.
> He says, "Be still, and know that I am God; I will be exalted among the nations,
> I will be exalted in the earth." (Psalm 46:8-10)[74]

Venite & videte: come and see! With these psalmist's words, the Antwerp Jesuit polemist Jan David invites all inhabitants of the rebellious Northern provinces to visit the churches of the Southern Netherlands, when the Twelve Years Truce in 1609 had made travelling across the frontline possible again. In a pamphlet entitled *Pass to exonerate the conscience to go watch the catholic churches and religion*, he encouraged Protestants to visit the Catholic cities, even if just out of curiosity.[75]

The potential Northern tourists were in for a surprise in the Southern Netherlands, where a lot had changed since 1585, when Antwerp and other major cities in the Southern Netherlands were conquered from the Calvinists by Spanish forces under the command of Alexander Farnese.[76] Following the emigration of a large part of their (Protestant) population to the North for religious and/or economic reasons, the Southern Netherlands had subsequently witnessed an overwhelming catholic resurgence.[77] To name just a few of the most conspicuous developments of the catholic revival: an extensive educational system was set up by the clergy, the number of vocations rose sharply, and laypersons subscribed *en masse* to religious confraternities, eagerly reading devotional books. They took part in pilgrimages, processions, and Marian cults; in brief: all the traditional Catholic practices that a large part of the population had rejected in the

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[74] Psalm 45:9-11 (Vulgate): "venite et videte opera Domini quae posuit prodigia super terram auferens bella usque ad finem terrae arcum conteret et confringet arma et scuta conburet in igne vacate et videte quoniam ego sum Deus exaltabor in gentibus exaltabor in terra."

[75] Divoda Jansen (pseudonym of Joannes David), *Vry-Gheleyde tot Ontlastinghe van Conscientie om de Catholiicke Kercken, ende Godsdienst te gaen bekiicken* (Antwerp: Joannes Trognetius, 1609).

[76] Frans Baudouin, "1585: de val van Antwerpen, ook een belangrijke datum voor de kunstgeschiedenis der Nederlanden," in *Herdenking Oranje*, 1985, 87–103.

[77] James D. Tracy, "With and without the Counter-Reformation," *The Catholic Historical Review* 71 (1985): 547–575; Alexandre Pasture, *La restauration religieuse aux Pays-Bas catholiques sous les archiducs Albert et Isabelle (1596-1633): principalement d'aprés les archives de la nonciature et de visite ad limina* (Leuven: Librairie Universitaire, 1925); H.J. Elias, *Kerk en staat in de Zuidelijke Nederlanden onder de regeering der Aartshertogen Albrecht en Isabella, (1598-1621)* (Antwerp: De Sikkel, 1931).

course of the sixteenth century.[78] And last but not least, the (re)building of churches, monasteries and the decoration of altars which had been ravished by warfare and iconoclasm was taken up energetically, especially during the reign of Archdukes Albert and Isabella (1598-1621).[79] All of this happened largely independently from internal attempts at ecclesiastical reform, and in spite of the fact that the implementation of the decrees of the Council of Trent (1545-1563)[80] was a very slow process.[81]

In a recent study Judith Pollmann elucidated how the catholic revival in the Southern Netherlands came about and what caused the consolidation of the newly confident mentality (and distinct identity) of Catholics.[82] Contrary to the traditional view of the Counter-Reformation as a top-down process, initiated and promoted by state and church, Pollmann showed how the catholic revival was to a great extent a "grassroots"-movement, driven by the local population – especially the urban elites and middle classes – in close collaboration with the (reformed) clergy and (new) religious orders.[83]

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[78] On pilgrimage guides, see Karen L. Bowen and Alfons K.L. Thijs, *Marian Pilgrimage Sites in Brabant: A Bibliography of Books Printed between 1600-1850* (Leuven: Peeters, 2008).

[79] Joris Snaet, *Reformatie versus Contrareformatie: de religieuze architectuur in de Noordelijke en Zuidelijke Nederlanden gedurende de 16de en 17de Eeuw*, Ph.Diss. (KU Leuven, 2009); Joris Snaet, "For the Greater Glory of God. Religious Architecture in the Low Countries 1560-1700," in *Unity and Discontinuity. Architectural Relationships between the Northern and Southern Low Countries (1530-1700)*, ed. Krista De Jonge and Koenraad Ottenheym (Turnhout: Brepols, 2007), 251–298; Krista De Jonge, *Bellissimi Ingegni, Grandissimo Splendore: studies over de religieuze architectuur in de Zuidelijke Nederlanden tijdens de 17de Eeuw*, ed. Krista De Jonge, Annemie De Vos, and Joris Snaet (Leuven: Universitaire Pers Leuven, 2000); Tine Meganck, "De kerkelijke architectuur van Wensel Cobergher (1557/61-1634) in het licht van zijn verblijf te Rome," *Verhandelingen van de Koninklijke Academie voor Wetenschappen, Letteren en Schone Kunsten van België. Klasse der Schone Kunsten* 60, no. 64 (1998); M.M. Thibaut de Maisières, *L'architecture religieuse à l'époque de Rubens* (Brussels, 1943); Jan H. Plantenga, *L'architecture religieuse dans l'ancien duché de Brabant depuis le règne des archiducs jusqu'au gouvernement Autrichien (1598-1713)* (The Hague: Martinus Nijhof, 1926); Paul Saintenoy, "L'art architectural sous Albert et Isabelle et les règles du Concile de Trente," *Revue Latine* (1922).

[80] For the history of the Council, see John W. O'Malley, *Trent: What Happened at the Council* (Cambridge MA: The Belknap Press of Harvard University Press, 2013); Hubert Jedin and Ernest Graf (tr.), *A History of the Council of Trent* (London: T. Nelson, 1957).

[81] In the post-revolt Southern Netherlands, bishops had their hands full trying to suppress clerical abuses, scandals and improper management of churches and church property. See Craig Harline and Eddy Put, *A Bishop's Tale: Mathias Hovius among his Flock in Seventeenth-Century Flanders* (New Haven CT: Yale University Press, 2000); Marie J. Marinus, "De Contrareformatie te Antwerpen, (1585-1676): kerkelijk leven in een grootstad," *Verhandelingen van de Koninklijke Academie voor Wetenschappen, Letteren en Schone Kunsten van België. Klasse der Letteren* 57, no. 155 (1995): chap. 2.

[82] Judith Pollmann, *Catholic Identity and the Revolt of the Netherlands, 1520-1635* (Oxford; New York: Oxford University Press, 2011).

[83] Ibid.; see also Michel Cloet, "De kerk en haar invloed," in *België in de 17de eeuw: de Spaanse Nederlanden en het prinsbisdom Luik*, ed. Paul Janssens (Gent: Snoeck, 2006), 11–62; Stephanus

In fact, these two views are not mutually exclusive, as top-down and bottom-up processes may coincide, and – as Pollmann suggests – the revival often came "from the middle".[84]

Pollmann convincingly argues that the main impetus behind the revival should be sought in the strongly held belief by Catholics that their own sinfulness and decadence had provoked the wrath of God over the country, much in the vein of what we have seen in Valenciennes.[85] Indeed, this numinous[86] worldview persisted throughout the disastrous seventeenth century and was even shared, for instance, by King Philip IV of Spain (1605-1665) who feared that "the sins, mistakes, and abominations of his subjects" had not only been the cause of "a large part of the evils, miseries, and afflictions with which Divine Justice had chastised the countries under his obeisance during the last war [with France]", but also of various other disasters that had happened to him personally, notably the death of several of his children.[87] For his subjects, the divine punishment manifested itself primarily in the form of heresy and war; as Pollmann points out, heresy was considered not as the cause, but as a result of impiety.[88] The offenses to God during the Revolt, such as iconoclasm, had to be expiated.[89] Therefore, it was considered to be of critical importance to seek ways "to restore the

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Axters, *Geschiedenis van de Vroomheid in de Nederlanden. Vol. IV: na Trente* (Antwerp: De Sikkel, 1960).

[84] For arguments in favour of a more emphatical top-down view, see Marinus, "De Contrareformatie te Antwerpen, (1585-1676): kerkelijk leven in een grootstad," 39, 52, 158–159; and Jeffrey M. Muller, "Communication visuelle et confessionalisation à Anvers au temps de la contre-réforme," *XVIIe Siècle: bulletin de la 'société d'etude du XVIIe Siècle'* 60, no. 3 (2008): 441–482.

[85] Pollmann, *Catholic Identity and the Revolt of the Netherlands, 1520-1635*, 57–67; See also Yolanda Rodríguez Pérez, *The Dutch Revolt through Spanish Eyes : Self and Other in Historical and Literary Texts of Golden Age Spain (c. 1548-1673)* (Oxford: Peter Lang, 2008).

[86] This term denotes the fearsome and fascinating power or presence of a divinity. See Rudolf Otto, *The Idea of the Holy: An Inquiry into the Non-Rational Factor in the Idea of the Divine and Its Relation to the Rational*, 3rd ed. (Oxford: Oxford University Press, 1958).

[87] Quoted in a letter of 1660 from the bishop of Ghent to the Governor General Caracena: Lucien Ceyssens, *La fin de la première période du Jansénisme: sources des années 1654-1660* (Brussels: Institut Historique Belge de Rome, 1963), 371; for a similar statement by Philip IV after the capture of Den Bosch in 1629, see J.H. Elliott, "Self-Perception and Decline in Early Seventeenth Century Spain," *Past and Present* no. 74 (1977): 47; or by by his favourite Olivares, see Elliott, *The Count-Duke of Olivares: The Statesman in an Age of Decline*, 590; see also René Vermeir, *In staat van oorlog: Filips IV en de Zuidelijke Nederlanden, 1629-1648* (Maastricht: Shaker Publishing, 2001), 269–275.

[88] Pollmann, *Catholic Identity and the Revolt of the Netherlands, 1520-1635*, 158.

[89] Barbara Diefendorf makes a similar argument in her study on the patronage of Parisian *dévots* after the religious wars. See Barbara B. Diefendorf, *From Penitence to Charity : Pious Women and the Catholic Reformation in Paris* (New York NY: New York University Press, 2004).

broken tie between God and his people".[90] This concern generated a "sacralisation discourse", which was the basis of the Catholic Revival and its "baroque piety".

Art as propaganda?

In *The Power of Images*, David Freedberg considers religious art as "a technology of eliciting (orthodox) devotional responses, which was the single greatest and most problematic concern of churchmen and patrons, while at the same time the capacity of art to inspire and transform the viewer was one of the most important weapons in the hands of the clergy".[91] The idea of Baroque art as rhetorical and effect-oriented (and as a result of implicit prejudice often rejected as insincere) has strongly defined the historiography of seventeenth-century art and architecture.[92] The style and iconography[93] of Catholic religious art after Trent have often been explained as a means to promote the Catholic faith and to triumphantly proclaim the Catholic doctrines in the face of Protestantism.[94] Many scholars (tacitly)

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[90] Pollmann, *Catholic Identity and the Revolt of the Netherlands, 1520-1635*, 131.

[91] David Freedberg, *The Power of Images: Studies in the History and Theory of Response* (Chicago; London: University of Chicago Press, 1989). This tension is also emphasized by Andrew Spicer and Will Coster, who consider sacred space "a meeting place between popular religion and the attempt to reorder that religion". Will Coster and Andrew Spicer, "Introduction: The Dimensions of Sacred Space," in *Sacred Space in Early Modern Europe*, ed. Will Coster and Andrew Spicer (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 2005), 3.

[92] Werner Weisbach, *Der Barock als Kunst der Gegenreformation* (Berlin: P. Cassirer, 1921); Federico Zeri, *Pittura e controriforma: l'arte senza tempo di Scipione da Gaeta* (Turin: Einaudi, 1957); Rudolf Wittkower and Irma B. Jaffé, eds., "Baroque Art: The Jesuit Contribution," in *Baroque Art: The Jesuit Contribution* (New York: Fordham University Press, 1972); Guilio Argan, *The Baroque Age, 1600-1700* (Geneva; New York: Skira; Rizzoli, 1989); Evonne Levy, *Propaganda and the Jesuit Baroque* (Berkeley CA: University of California Press, 2004); Gauvin A. Bailey, "´Le style jésuite n'existe pas´: Jesuit Corporate Culture and the Visual Arts," in *The Jesuits II: Cultures, Sciences, and the Arts, 1540-1773*, ed. John W. O'Malley and Johann B. Staudt (Toronto: Toronto University Press, 2006), 38–89; see also Joseph Braun, *Die Belgischen Jesuitenkirchen: ein Beitrag zur Geschichte des Kampfes zwischen Gotik und Renaissance* (Freiburg im Breisgau: Herder, 1907).

[93] Thomas L. Glen, *Rubens and the Counter Reformation: Studies in His Religious Paintings between 1609 and 1620* (New York: Garland, 1977); standard works are John B. Knipping, *De Iconografie van de Contra-Reformatie in de Nederlanden* (Hilversum: Brand, 1939); Émile Mâle, *L'art religieux de la fin du XVIe Siècle, du XVIIe siècle et du XVIIIe siècle: etude sur l'iconographie après le Concile de Trente* (Paris: Colin, 1951).

[94] Criticism of these attempts include David Freedberg, "Painting and the Counter Reformation in the Age of Rubens," in *The Age of Rubens*, ed. Peter C. Sutton (Boston: Museum of Fine Arts, 1993), 136; Gauvin Alexander Bailey, *Between Renaissance and Baroque : Jesuit Art in Rome, 1565-1610* (Toronto: Toronto University Press, 2003); Jeffrey Chipps Smith, *Sensuous Worship : Jesuits and the Art of the Early Catholic Reformation in Germany* (Princeton NJ: Princeton University Press, 2002); Jens Baumgarten, *Konfession, Bild Und Macht: Visualisierung als*

assume a top-down, institutional process of visual propaganda, largely initiated by the church and directed at an impressionable public.[95] As I will try to show in the following, there are several reasons for proposing a revision of these views.

Besides that what is presently considered as art (painting, sculpture, and architecture), a wide variety of means and (visual) media were employed in the post-Revolt efforts of recatholisation and confessionalisation.[96] According to Jeffrey Muller, this "massive campaign of visual persuasion" was the most important means of re-establishing the catholic faith in the Southern Netherlands.[97] The Jesuits in particular were very eager to use innovative means of indoctrination (visual as well as otherwise) in order to permeate every aspect of life with the true faith.[98] Muller speaks of "an unprecedented immediate communication of cause and effect to encourage a particular behaviour".[99]

Indeed, in the late sixteenth and early seventeenth centuries a wide range of publications emerged, testimonies of a flourishing and a highly sophisticated elite devotional visual culture. Various recent studies have contributed to our understanding of their function as aids to meditation and

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katholisches Herrschafts- und Disziplinierungskonzept in Rom und im Habsburgischen Schlesien (1560-1740) (Hamburg: Dölling und Galitz, 2004); Willibald Sauerländer, *Der katholische Rubens: Heilige und Märtyrer* (Munich: Beck, 2011); Christian Hecht, "Schöner Terror? Rubens als Maler der Gegenreformation [review of: Willibald Sauerländer, Der Katholische Rubens: Heilige Und Märtyrer, München: Beck, 2011]," *Kunstchronik* 65, no. 12 (2012): 588–592.

[95] See Levy, *Propaganda and the Jesuit Baroque*; Jeffrey Muller, "Review of: E. Levy, Propaganda and the Jesuit Baroque," *The Burlington Magazine* 148, no. 1238 (January 03, 2006): 344–45.

[96] Confessionalization in the sense of Reinhard, confession-building through social disciplining (by means of preaching, confession, promoting confraternities and catechizing). For the confessionalisation thesis, see Wolfgang Reinhard, "Gegenreformation Als Modernisierung? Prolegomena zu einer Theorie des konfessionellen Zeitalter," *Archiv für Reformationsgeschichte* 68 (1977): 226–252.

[97] I cite Muller from a draft of his article, Muller, "Communication visuelle et confessionalisation à Anvers au temps de la contre-réforme," 441.

[98] Jeffrey M. Muller, "Jesuits Uses of Art in the Province of Flanders," in *The Jesuits II: Cultures, Sciences, and the Arts, 1540-1773*, ed. John W. O'Malley (Toronto: Toronto University Press, 2006), 113–156; see also Ralph Dekoninck, *Ad Imaginem: statuts, fonctions et usages de l'image dans le littérature spirituelle jésuite du XVIIe siècle* (Geneva: Droz, 2005); Xander van Eck, "De Jezuïeten en het wervende wisselaltaarstuk," *De zeventiende eeuw* 14 (1998): 81–94; see also Bailey, *Between Renaissance and Baroque: Jesuit Art in Rome, 1565-1610*; Chipps Smith, *Sensuous Worship: Jesuits and the Art of the Early Catholic Reformation in Germany*.

[99] Draft of Muller, "Communication visuelle et confessionalisation à Anvers au temps de la contre-réforme," 447–448.

self-examination through combinations of image and text.[100] This evinces the traditional strategy against heresy as initially promoted by the church: individual penitence and humility.[101] A certain tension seems to exist between this urge for self-reflexion and the activistic spirit of militant Catholicism, between a top-down approach and a demonstrable hunger for the sacred from below.[102] May we infer a persuasive power from the sheer ubiquity of artworks during the Counter Reformation? Can we explain the surge in popularity of shrines by the patronage of the elite?

In response to the ongoing need for divine protection against the disasters that continued to strike the country (as a result of the wrath of God), the Virgin Mary emerged as the principal and "national" resort.[103] Her shrine at Scherpenheuvel on the immediate confessional frontline was erected by the archdukes in gratitude of a series of fortuitous military events against the rebellious North, and expressly conceived (by them) as a highly charged bulwark against heresy.[104] It would seem that such a project was

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[100] See Reindert Falkenburg, Walter S. Melion, and Todd Richardson, eds., *Image and Imagination of the Religious Self in Late Medieval and Early Modern Europe* (Turnhout: Brepols, 2007); Ralph Dekoninck and Agnès Guiderdoni-Bruslé, eds., *Emblemata Sacra: Rhétorique et herméneutique du discours sacré dans la littérature en images* (Turnhout: Brepols, 2007); Walter S. Melion, *The Meditative Art: Studies in the Northern devotional Print, 1550-1625* (Philadelphia PA: Saint Joseph's University Press, 2009); Walter S. Melion and Lee Palmer Wandel, eds., *Early Modern Eyes. Intersections 13* (Leiden: Brill, 2010); Karl Enenkel and Walter Melion, eds., *Meditatio: Refashioning the Self: Theory and Practice in Late Medieval and Early Modern Intellectual Culture, Intersections 17* (Leiden: Brill, 2011); Walter Melion, Ralph Dekoninck, and Agnès Guiderdoni-Bruslé, eds., *Ut Pictura Meditatio: The Meditative Image in Northern Art, 1500-1700. Proteus 4* (Turnhout: Brepols, 2012).

[101] Pollmann, *Catholic Identity and the Revolt of the Netherlands, 1520-1635*, 57–67.

[102] Howard Louthan argues that not just coercion but also various strategies of persuasion were used to convert heretical Bohemia after the catholic victory at the Battle of the White Mountain in 1621. Howard Louthan, *Converting Bohemia: Force and Persuasion in the Catholic Reformation* (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 2009).

[103] As illustrated by Annick Delfosse, "La vierge comme protectrice des Pays-Bas méridionaux dans les livrets de pèlerinage Marial au XVIIe Siècle," *Revue belge de philologie et d'histoire* 80, no. 4 (2002): 1225; Annick Delfosse, *La vierge « protectrice du Païs-Bas ». Instrumentalisations politiques et stratégies identitaires dans les Pays-Bas espagnols* (Turnhout: Brepols, 2005).

[104] In gratitude of a series of fortunate military events, the archdukes honoured the miraculous statue of Our Lady venerated here, right on the confessional frontline, with a grand new church (1607), replacing the old tree to which it was attached. The heptagonal baroque cupola-church, designed by Cobergher, formed the centre of a brand new seven-cornered fortified town, and was imbued in every imaginable way with Marian symbolism. The altars and decorations of the church not only referred to the Virgin (such as to her Seven Sorrows and Joys) but were also dedicated to militant saints as defenders of the faith and fighters of heresy. See Luc Duerloo and Marc Wingens, *Scherpenheuvel: het Jeruzalem van de Lage Landen* (Leuven: Davidsfonds, 2002); Luc Duerloo, "Scherpenheuven - Montaigu. Un sanctuaire pour une politique emblématique," *XVIIe Siècle: Bulletin de la "Société d"Etude du XVIIe siècle'* 60, no. 3 (2008):

conceived as a tool for religious propaganda. In light, however, of the alternative grass-roots image of the Catholic revival in the Southern Netherlands as evoked in studies like those of Pollmann, and the implications of the concomitant sacralisation discourse, questions arise as to who was actually trying to persuade whom, and by what means?

The case of Scherpenheuvel, which has been extensively studied, shows to what extent art and architecture were conceived as facilities for ritual performance. Its complex Marian symbolism does not seem to be devised primarily to have a rhetorical effect on the viewer, but as a votive church, it rather seems the instrument of a negotiation process with the divine. This is not to say that artworks and architecture were not to a great extent conceived (and perceived) in rhetorical terms (like any cultural expression of the time, at least by the educated elite).[105] However, it raises questions as to exactly how religious art functioned in its social context, and who were the protagonists. Did patrons and clergy primarily try to persuade fellow citizens or was "appeasing God" and thus restoring peace and prosperity more important? How did these two efforts relate?

Precisely because conversion and persuasion are such important topics in the historiography, the revision of the historical context invites us to rethink the function of religious art and architecture during the Counter Reformation. What was the function of art and architecture in efforts to counter the still slumbering threat of Protestant critique, especially if we consider the contested status of religious imagery among the prime target group of (ex- or covert) Protestants?[106]

423–39. see also Thøfner, *A Common Art: Urban Ceremonial in Antwerp and Brussels during and after the Dutch Revolt*, chap. 11; and Pieter Martens and Joris Snaet, "De mariale bedevaartskerk van Scherpenheuvel. Een onderzoek naar dynastieke relaties en de verspreiding van ontwerpen en denkbeelden over architectuur," *Bulltin KNOB* 89, no. 5/6 (1999): 214–248.

[105] Caroline van Eck, *Classical Rhetoric and the Visual Arts in Early Modern Europe* (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 2007). The mechanisms governing the function of images in the Early Modern period have been reconstructed on the basis of contemporary theories by C.P. Warnke. He distinguishes between images as sign and as symbol, divided in the rhetorical categories *figura*, *typus*, *simile*, *argumentum*, symbol, allegory, and emblem. See Heinen, *Rubens zwischen Predigt und Kunst: der Hochaltar für die Walburgenkirche in Antwerpen*, 159–163.

[106] Heinen points out that even the overtly propagandistic tapestry series *Triumph of the Eucharist*, commissioned from Rubens by the Infante Isabella for the monastery of the Descalzas Reales in Madrid, in gratitude of her victory on the Protestants at the Siege of Breda, 1625, has been shown by Wolfgang Brassat not to be anti-Protestant propaganda but must be seen in the context of inner-Catholic rivalry between the House of Habsburg and the Holy See (Pope Urban VIII). Ulrich Heinen, *Rubens zwischen Predigt und Kunst: der Hochaltar für die Walburgenkirche in Antwerpen* (Weimar: VDG, 1996), 29 referring to; Wolfgang Brassat,

Catholic theologians writing on art, like Paleotti and Molanus,[107] defended the use of religious images as means "to move men to proper obedience and subjection to God" by *persuading* the viewer (in a rhetorical way: to move, instruct, and delight)[108] to virtuous behaviour (penitence, willingness to suffer, charity, contempt for the world, etc.); virtues that are "instruments to unite men with God".[109] Paleotti in particular saw painters of sacred images as "silent preachers to the people" and "mute theologians".[110] Molanus stressed that artworks should not just be seen as "books for the illiterate" and the ignorant laity, but also for learned people and "spirituals", to which they may be useful and provoke tears.[111]

In his abovementioned pamphlet, the Jesuit Jan David explains in great detail how religious art was supposed to have a transformative effect on the viewer, even if he were a Calvinist: not by persuading, but by *seducing* him to piety.[112] Though Calvinists condemned Catholic art and rituals as "covert magic or deceit of the eye", David explained that "many hearts were moved by looking at images of saints, decorated churches, beautiful altars, and the properly arranged catholic religion, which […]

Tapisserien und Politik: Funktionen, Kontexte und Rezeption eines repräsentativen Mediums (Berlin: Mann, 1992), 220–222.

[107] Christian Hecht, *Katholische Bildertheologie der frühen Neuzeit: Studien zu Traktaten von Johannes Molanus, Gabriele Paleotti und anderen Autoren*, 2nd ed. (Berlin: Mann, 2012). See also Wolfgang Brassat, ed., "Bild-Rhetorik," in *Bild-Rhetorik (Rhetorik, Vol. 24)* (Tübingen: Niemeyer, 2005).

[108] Heinen, *Rubens zwischen Predigt und Kunst: der Hochaltar für die Walburgenkirche in Antwerpen*, 23. The coordination of *Bild-genuss*, *Bild-verstehen*, and *Bild-erleben* was problematic. Yet through their combination of rhetoric and affect (ethos and pathos), images were thought to be highly capable to effectuate *enargeia* or vividness.

[109] Gabriele Paleotti, *Discourse on Sacred and Profane Images (1582)*, ed. William McCuaig (tr.) (Los Angeles CA: Getty Research Institute, 2012), I, 334.

[110] Paleotti, *Discourse on Sacred and Profane Images (1582)*. According to Paleotti there are two ways to access images: via the intellect, or via affect/will. The first derives from a proper application of the rules of art, and a true depiction of events. The second is based on moving the senses and excite the spirit and devotion of the viewer. He distinguishes four types of viewers: painters, literates, illiterates and spirituals. The ideal way of receiving sacred images is through a unity of feeling and will. Heinen, *Rubens zwischen Predigt und Kunst: der Hochaltar für die Walburgenkirche in Antwerpen*, 32.

[111] Ibid., 36.

[112] On David, see L. Geerts van Roey and J. Andriessen, "Pater Joannes David s.j. (1546-1613)," *Ons geestelijk erf* 30 (1956): 113–155; and on his polemics with protestant ministers see W.J. 't Hof, "Willem Teellinck in het licht zijner geschriften, (6)," *Documentatieblad nadere Reformatie* 2, no. 2 (1978): 33–62; on his importance as emblematist, see Karel Porteman, *Emblematic Exhibitions (affixiones) at the Brussels Jesuit College (1630-1685): A Study of the Commemorative Manuscripts (Royal Library, Brussels)*, ed. Karel Porteman, Elly Cockx-Indestege, and Anna Simoni (Brussels; Turnhout: Royal Library; Brepols, 1996), 16–17.

sprang from God's inner movement".[113] Since, he argues, "the images of the saints are like clear mirrors of all purity, virtue, and holiness, and have a power to make their viewers their equal, which no corporeal mirror can".[114] What David proposes is virtually the opposite of idolatry: instead of equating images to the living (by attributing lifelike presence to them), the living are equated to the images (as they will imitate their virtuous example).

Clearly, there was a strong contemporary awareness of – and importance attached to – the transformative power or "agency" of artworks.[115] Yet, regardless of their seductive appeal, images were not necessarily the most effective means to reach those who were still suspicious toward religious images, or worse: covert Protestants. Catholics must have realized this, and alternative strategies were therefore devised in order to convert, convince, persuade, or seduce this public.

Sacred place and sacred history

According to the Jesuit Franciscus Costerus, the ancient roots of the church were by far the most convincing argument to win back heretics for Catholicism, since *by implication* Protestants condemned all their supposedly "idol-worshiping" ancestors to damnation.[116] Though Protestants countered the Catholic claim of historical continuity by claiming a continuity of Truth and Faith, and by promoting the recent Protestant achievements as fulfilments of Old Testament prophesies,[117] this was still a thought they may have found hard to digest. For the very same reason Catholics used every opportunity to stress the continuity of the Church and its traditions from the earliest days of Christendom onwards, and many contemporary publications

[113] Jansen (pseudonym of Joannes David), *Vry-Gheleyde tot Ontlastinghe van Conscientie om de Catholiicke Kercken, ende Godsdienst te gaen Bekiicken.*, 38

[114] Ibid., 82. See Barbara Haeger, "Rubens' 'Christ Triumphant over Sin and Death': Unveiling the Glory of God," in *Proceedings of the 2012 Lovis Corinth Colloquium*, ed. Walter Melion (Atlanta GA, 2013), 997. For the virtues expected from Counter Reformation saints, see the famous article by Peter Burke, "How to Be a Counter-Reformation Saint," in *The Historical Anthropology of Early Modern Italy. Essays on Perception and Communication* (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 1987), 48–62.

[115] Special emphasis is put on offering the viewer saintly role models. Paleotti refers to the Horatian maxim that seeing has a stronger impact on the soul than hearing. See Heinen, *Rubens zwischen Predigt und Kunst: der Hochaltar für die Walburgenkirche in Antwerpen*, 18–19.

[116] Pollmann, *Catholic Identity and the Revolt of the Netherlands, 1520-1635*, 147; referring to Franciscus Costerus, *Schildt der Catholijcken, teghen de Ketterijen: inhoudende de principaelste Gheschillen, die in onsen Tijden opgheresen zijn in t'Gelooue, met een oprechte Verclaeringe der Seluer* (Antwerp, 1606).

[117] See Bussmann and Schilling, *1648: War and Peace in Europe, Vol I*, 310.

like Wichmans' *Brabantia Mariana* (1632) and Sanderus' *Chorographia Sacra Brabantiae* (1659-1663) also emphasize the historical connectedness of the Church with the land and its people. I would argue that if we are to study Catholic "propaganda", we should focus first and foremost on Sanderus, who thus forms one of the most important sources of this study.[118]

The content of the *Chorographia Sacra Brabantiae* consists mostly of a compilation of texts, often derived directly from monastery chronicles and archival material.[119] Sanderus also sent questionnaires to local churches or monasteries (*interrogatorium*) asking for information about a range of topics, such as the history of the institution, its government, benefactors, decorations, library, feasts and ceremonies, cults, relics, as well as the potential miracles that had occurred locally. In order to realise his ambitious publishing project, which was conceived as early as 1635, Sanderus constantly tried to solicit financial support and patronage, yet often to little effect, and the project seems to have ruined him. Sanderus' persistence despite the lack of sufficient support suggests that he was driven by a higher cause. As has recently been argued by Raingard Esser, a strong cultural-political agenda underlies the publication.[120] The *Chorographia Sacra Brabantiae* epitomizes the post-tridentine historiographical tradition of "hagiographical" chorography, chartering sacred space and emphasizing the role of religious institutions in the country.[121] In every possible way, tradition and continuity are emphasized: by listing epitaphs of ancestors, names of clerics, important donors, foundations by the dukes of Brabant, local cults and saints, as well as important feasts. All of this is to prove the historical connectedness of the Church with the land and its people by presenting Brabant as a sacred land. While responding to a Catholic need for self-affirmation, this also provided valuable ammunition for the catholic

[118] Following on his magnum opus on Flanders, the *Flandria Illustrata* (1641-1644), this chorography describes the history and topography of Brabants religious houses and churches. It was published in Brussels between 1659 and 1663 by different printing houses (primarily Philippe Vleugaert), in two volumes of each ca. seven hundred pages in the large *plano* format. Many of the sixty-seven separate chapters contain extraordinarily large and detailed engravings by Lucas II Vorsterman, depicting the most important religious institutions of the Duchy.

[119] The chapters in Sanderus' Chorography vary greatly in length and structure, as the author relied largely on information provided by his informants. Jules de Saint-Genois, *Antoine Sanderus et ses écrits: une page de notre histoire littéraire au XVIIe siècle* (Ghent: De Busscher Frères, 1861), 6.

[120] Esser, *The Politics of Memory: The Writing of Partition in the Seventeenth-Century Low Countries*, 292.

[121] This tradition started in Brabant with Laurens van Haecht in 1612.

cause.[122] It did so by playing on what Adam Beaver calls a "deeply felt sense of determinism between landscape, history and nationhood".[123]

Recent art historical studies have shown how catholic art and architecture also explicitly harked back to the legacy of medieval and early Christian (local) traditions and cults, to enhance credibility and legitimacy of the catholic claims.[124] This was all part of a conscious strategy to connect the universality of the church with her local (ancient) roots, revaluing the sacredness of space and topography (denied by the Protestants).[125] The following two examples from Antwerp may serve to illustrate how this could be done.

In 1610 the rich merchant and art collector Cornelis van der Geest commissioned from Rubens, who had recently returned from Italy, a new triptych for the high altar of the Antwerp Burchtkerk. Studies by Cynthia Lawrence on the genesis of the triptych (*fig*. 14), which depicted the rare subject of *The raising of the Cross*, demonstrate to what extent it was adapted to its location – both by means of its physical staging in the church space, as well as by its conception as part of a coherent scheme evoking the

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[122] Raingard Esser recently argued that this implied a need for self-affirmation after the final recognition of independence of the United Provinces (and of their conquests in Brabant) at the Peace of Westphalia. See Esser, *The Politics of Memory: The Writing of Partition in the Seventeenth-Century Low Countries*, 291–317; Bowen and Thijs, *Marian Pilgrimage Sites in Brabant: A Bibliography of Books Printed between 1600-1850*.

[123] Adam G. Beaver, "From Jerusalem to Toledo: Replica, Landscape and the Nation in Renaissance Iberia," *Past & Present* 218, no. 1 (January 23, 2013): 88.

[124] E.g. Cynthia Lawrence, "Rubens's 'Raising of the Cross' in Context: The 'Early Christian' Past and the Evocation of the Sacred in Post-Tridentine Antwerp," in *Defining the Holy: Sacred Space in Medieval and Early Modern Europe*, ed. Andrew Spicer and Sarah Hamilton (Aldershot: Ashgate, 2008), 251–275; Barbara Haeger, "Rubens's Adoration of the Magi and the Program for the High Altar of St Michael's Abbey in Antwerp," *Simiolus: kunsthistorisch tijdschrift* 25, no. 1 (1997): 45–71; Anna C. Knaap, "Meditation, Ministry, and Visual Rhetoric in Peter Paul Ruben's Program for the Jesuit Church in Antwerp," in *The Jesuits II: Cultures, Sciences, and the Arts, 1540-1773*, ed. John William O'Malley and Johann Bernhardt Staudt (Toronto: Toronto University Press, 2006), 157–181.

[125] Simon Ditchfield, *Liturgy, Sanctity and History in Tridentine Italy: Pietro Maria Campi and the Preservation of the Particular* (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 1995); Simon Ditchfield, "What Was Sacred History? (Mostly Roman) Catholic Uses of the Christian Past after Trent," in *Sacred History: Uses of the Christian Past in the Renaissance World*, ed. Katherine Elliott van Liere, Simon Ditchfield, and Howard Louthan (Oxford: Oxford University Press, 2012); Anthony Grafton, "Church History in Early Modern Europe: Tradition and Innovation," in *Sacred History: Uses of the Christian Past in the Renaissance World*, ed. Katherine Elliott van Liere, Simon Ditchfield, and Howard Louthan (Oxford: Oxford University Press, 2012). See also Alexandra Walsham, *The Reformation of the Landscape: Religion, Identity, and Memory in Early Modern Britain and Ireland* (Oxford: Oxford University Press, 2012).

ancient history of the place.[126] In a crypt under the high altar, which had been destroyed during the Calvinist occupation, Saints Walburga and Eligius used to be venerated as the founders of the Christian faith in Antwerp. In the year 650 Eligius had supposedly preached here on a hill where the first church of the city would be built. Subsequently the eighth-century Walburga would spend her life as a hermit in a crypt on the same spot. Van der Geest sponsored an excavation to find this crypt, where miraculous healings were thought to occur, and had it restored. The new painting was placed in the exceptionally high chancel of the church, rising dramatically above a long flee of stairs, creating an impression of mount Golgotha on which Christ was crucified. The spatial setting thus powerfully enhanced the visual impact of the depicted subject of the raising of the Cross, which in turn referred to the history of the place as cradle of Antwerp's conversion to Christianity. In light of the recent recatholization of the city, Van der Geest's patronage of the Burchtkerk was a manifesto of Catholic assertiveness, intended to appeal on various levels to potential converts by combining the restoration of age-old popular devotions – and claiming their legitimacy by means of "archaeological" evidence – with an ingenious "theatrical" display of this claim, justifying it in reference to the Passion, by means of Rubens' monumental and moving art.[127]

Like Rubens' *Raising of the Cross*, his *Adoration of the Magi* for Saint Michael's Abbey in Antwerp (1622-24) (*fig*. 15) referred to local church history, as Barbara Haeger has shown.[128] The theme of the painting

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[126] Cynthia Lawrence, "Before The Raising of the Cross: The Origins of Rubens's Earliest Antwerp Altarpieces," *Art Bulletin* 81, no. 2 (1999): 267–296; Cynthia Lawrence, "Confronting Heresy in Post-Tridentine Antwerp. Coercion and Reconciliation as Opposing Strategies in Rubens' Real Presence in the Holy Sacrament," *Nederlandsch Kunsthistorisch Jaarboek* 55 (2004): 87 – 116; Lawrence, "Rubens's 'Raising of the Cross' in Context: The 'Early Christian' Past and the Evocation of the Sacred in Post-Tridentine Antwerp"; see also Marinus, "De Contrareformatie te Antwerpen, (1585-1676): kerkelijk leven in een grootstad," 247–248; Heinen, *Rubens zwischen Predigt und Kunst: der Hochaltar für die Walburgenkirche in Antwerpen*; John Rupert Martin, *Rubens: The Antwerp Altarpieces* (New York: Norton, 1969).

[127] Heinen, *Rubens zwischen Predigt und Kunst: der Hochaltar für die Walburgenkirche in Antwerpen*, 154. For the general public it offered a complex and affective visual sermon (exposition of coherence of Christ's forgiveness-plea, penance, and testimony as fruit of the sacrifice of the Cross), for the learned a supplementary learned excursus (punishment-*topoi* from classical mythology), for the spiritually inclined a traditional occasion for meditation (the seventh fall of Christ), for the inexperienced in art an easy to grasp and attractive image (variety, liveliness) and for art connoisseurs an artwork that conveyed very exigent and subtle art values (*contrapposto*, *scorcio*, proportion, style).

[128] Haeger, "Rubens's Adoration of the Magi and the Program for the High Altar of St Michael's Abbey in Antwerp"; Barbara Haeger, "Abbot Van Der Sterre and St. Michael's Abbey: The Restoration of Its Church, Its Image, and Its Place in Antwerp," in *Sponsors of the Past. Flemish*

represents the revelation of Christ's divinity to the gentiles, which explains its popularity during the Counter Reformation period.[129] The painting's mysterious morning gloom evokes the "dawn of a new age". Its original marble *aedicula* (architectural frame) was crowned by three sculptures of the Virgin Mary trampling a snake, symbol of original sin, the archangel Michael striking the fallen angel, representing evil, and Saint Norbertus trampling a heretic. Norbertus was not only the founder of the Norbertine or Premonstratensian order, but was also venerated as apostle of Antwerp because he had fought the local heresy of Tanchelm who, in the twelfth century, was accused of denying the real presence of Christ in the Eucharist. The Norbertine monks of Saint Michael's abbey must have thought of themselves as true followers of their medieval predecessor in fighting Protestant critique of the doctrine of Transubstantiation. The altar, erected in 1623 – exactly 500 years after the victory of Norbertus over Tanchelm – thus commemorated this historical event as well as the recent (or current, ongoing) triumph of Catholicism over heresy.

The cases in Antwerp may be interpreted as manifestations in art and architecture of the legitimacy claims which were, I contend, the central means of strengthening the ties between the faithful and the Church, in response to a need for self-affirmation and historical justification in the context of the history of salvation.[130] Even if this may be seen as propaganda, it was primarily so in competition with other churches or religious orders. This strategy to strengthen the bond of the population with the church was complemented by appeals to virtue, aiming to transform and unite individual believers with God. By thus sacralising society, gaining souls and reforming society along catholic lines by means of faith, the ultimate goal was to appease God so as to restore peace and prosperity. But we need only look back at the events in Valenciennes to realize that this is

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Art and Patronage, 1550-1700, ed. Hans Vlieghe and Katlijne Van der Stighelen (Turnhout: Brepols, 2005), 157–79; see also Valérie Herremans, "'Opus vere basilicum et stupendum': devotionele profilering en persoonlijk zielenheil: de inrichting van het hoogkoor van de Antwerpse Sint-Michielsabdij en de abten Matheus Irsselius (1541-1629) en Johannes Chrysostomus van der Sterre (1591-1652)," *Rubensbulletin* 2 (2008): 5–35; Heinen, *Rubens zwischen Predigt und Kunst: der Hochaltar für die Walburgenkirche in Antwerpen*.

[129] Replacing the more traditional scenes of the Birth of Christ.

[130] Xander van Eck argues that in the clandestine catholic churches in the Northern Netherlands, local traditions were highlighted through artworks in a similar way. See Xander van Eck, *Clandestine Splendor: Paintings for the Catholic Church in the Dutch Republic* (Zwolle: Waanders, 2008).

not the whole story, as believers interacted through religious art with its divine or saintly prototypes in a mutual way.

Moreover, the cases above illustrate only the intended effects, not the (unintended) effects achieved, which depended on the attitude and knowledge of the viewer.[131] What such viewer responses could entail in the context of the Counter Reformation may be illustrated by the following anecdote, involving the abovementioned altarpiece by Rubens for the Antwerp Dominican church (*fig*. 1). A protestant visitor to Antwerp in 1665 described in his travel account what happened after he made a derogatory remark to one of the monks about the "idols" in the church.[132] The monk responded to this insult by falling to his knees in front of the altar, striking his breast (meaning: "Oh Lord, have mercy on me a sinner"), crossing himself and saying "haec est mea religio, quid tu credis?" (this is my religion, what do you believe?) and after learning his visitor was a Protestant he turned to his brothers saying "o frates videte, hic habeo haereticum!" (O brothers look, here I have a heretic!).[133] Besides the evidently unintended response of the Protestant, the anecdote also illustrates the ostentatious performance of piety by the monk.[134] It is clear from his behaviour and gestures that the monk places himself at the base of the intercessory prayer ladder going all the way up from the saints to the Virgin to Christ, who might at any time strike down from heaven, as depicted vividly in the painting. Seen through the eyes of a protestant visitor, the situation demonstrates how a Catholic monk related to a religious artwork as if it was an active social agent in a system of religious performance.

Agents of change

The Counter-Reformation was primarily a movement to change society: through the cultivation of piety, God was to be placated. I would argue that

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[131] Heinen, *Rubens zwischen Predigt und Kunst: der Hochaltar für die Walburgenkirche in Antwerpen*, 32, 222 (note 264); see also Pamela M. Jones, *Altarpieces and Their Viewers in the Churches of Rome from Caravaggio to Guido Reni* (Aldershot: Ashgate, 2008). See also Michael Baxandall, *Painting and Experience in Fifteenth Century Italy: A Primer in the Social History of Pictorial Style*, 2nd ed. (Oxford: Oxford University Press, 1988).

[132] Muller, "Ruben's Altarpiece in the Antwerp Dominican Church: How Visitors and Guidebooks Saw It."

[133] Ibid., 72.

[134] Cf. Luke 18:13-14: "I tell you that this man, rather than the other, went home justified before God. For all those who exalt themselves will be humbled, and those who humble themselves will be exalted."

in the society of the Southern Netherlands during this period, art and architecture played a key role in such processes of change. The subject of this thesis is not art and architecture per se, but the ways in which they were used to act: on fellow Catholics, heretics and the divine itself. The perspective of this thesis is therefore, one might say, ethnographic, but unlike major recent studies on the anthropology and ethnography of art, it aims to understand in historical terms how those involved in commissioning works of art and architecture conceived of their agency, and to reconstruct the historical circumstances of these attempts to placate God by changing society through the instruments of art and architecture.

Although recent historical studies engage with these issues, I would argue that the implications of the "sacralisation discourse" for the history of art have not been sufficiently acknowledged. The dominant focus on rhetorical persuasion tells only part of the story: it tends to neglect the roles of Counter Reformation art and architecture as practice, as experience, as a means of sociability. In the context of the sacralisation disourse, these aspects were much more entangled than has hitherto been acknowledged.[135] Traditional art historical methods focusing on stylistic developments and iconography are not adequate to come to grips with the role of art in these transformative processes, as they offer no comprehensive analysis of the social context. Studies that do engage with the effects of art on the viewer often aim to make claims purporting to patronage or intertextuality.[136]

As I intend to understand the workings of art in its full complexity, I will approach the religious art patronage in the Catholic South from an ethnographical/anthropological perspective. This implies a focus on practices and how they were performed, and more specifically what they were meant to do (i.e. how religious art worked as a cultural practice). To better understand the original functions and intended effects of art and architecture, I use the three concepts agency, performance, and change as methodological

[135] Exceptions include Helen Hills, *Invisible City: The Architecture of Devotion in Seventeenth-Century Neapolitan Convents* (Oxford: Oxford University Press, 2004); Ulrike Strasser, *State of Virginity: Gender, Religion, and Politics in an Early Modern Catholic State* (Ann Arbor: The University of Michigan Press, 2004); Jeffrey M. Muller, "Confraternity and Art in the St Jacob's Church, Antwerp: A Case Study of the Altar of the Brotherhood of St Rochus," in *Concept, Design & Execution in Flemish Painting (1550-1700)*, ed. Hans Vlieghe and Arnout Balis (Turnhout: Brepols, 2000), 97–110.

[136] For a recent example, see Alexander Nagel and Christopher Wood, *Anachronic Renaissance* (New York: Zone, 2010).

tools. In what follows, I will discuss how each of these concepts is of use for my purpose, and how they interrelate.

Agency

It has long been acknowledged that religious art was not only meant to act on the viewer in a transformative way, patrons and viewers also expected to obtain effects *via* artworks (miracles, healings, indulgences, etc.).[137] Thus, more than just an instrument of visual communication, religious artworks facilitated a mutual relationship with a (divine) prototype. Frédéric Cousinié therefore considers high altar retables in seventeenth century Paris both in semiotic terms as "systems of images [indexes]" and as "relational objects" [interfaces] between man and God.[138] Precisely because of this relationality, an approach informed by anthropological methods is called for to fully understand the function of religious artworks and architecture in its historical context.[139]

In order to explore this (inter)active, dynamic function of art and architecture, I consider its "agency" in the sense of Alfred Gell's anthropological theory of art.[140] Gell conceives artworks as active agents in

[137] Hans Belting, *Bild und Kult: eine Geschichte des Bildes vor dem Zeitalter der Kunst* (Munich: Beck, 1990); translated as Hans Belting, *Likeness and Presence: A History of the Image before the Era of Art* (Chicago: University of Chicago Press, 1994). Belting discusses these aspects in a larger narrative on the changing function of artworks from medieval cult images to works of art in the modern sense, primarily valued for aesthetic reasons. On medieval conceptions and perceptions of materiality and agency, representation and divine presence in devotional objects, see Caroline Walker Bynum, *Christian Materiality: An Essay on Religion in Late Medieval Europe* (New York: Zone, 2011).

[138] In his study of the high altars of seventeenth century Paris, Cousinié considers the altar at the same time as « système d'objets » [exposing relics, images, holy sacrament], « système des signes » [the indexicality of these objects], and « système des relations » [mediation with the divine]. Frédéric Cousinié, *Le Saint des Saints: maîtres-autels et retables parisiens du XVIIe Siècle, Aix-en-Provence, 2006* (Aix-en-Provence: Publications de l'Université de Provence, 2006), 1–33.

[139] See also Howard Morphy and Morgan Perkins, "The Anthropology of Art: A Reflection on Its History and Contemporary Practice," in *The Anthropology of Art: A Reader* (Malden MA: Blackwell, 2006), 1–26.

[140] Alfred Gell, *Art and Agency: An Anthropological Theory* (Oxford: Clarendon Press, 1998); see also Robert Layton, "Art and Agency: A Reassessment," *Journal of the Royal Anthropological Institute* 9, no. 3 (2003): 447–463; and Robin Osborne and Jeremy Tanner, "Introduction: 'Art and Agency' and Art History," in *Art's Agency and Art History*, ed. Robin Osborne and Jeremy Tanner (Malden MA: Blackwell, 2007), 1–27; see also Michelle O'Malley, "Altarpieces and Agency: The Altarpiece of the Society of the Purification and Its 'Invisible Skein of Relations,'" *Art History: Journal of the Association of Art Historians* 28, no. 4 (2005): 416–441; Caroline van Eck, Joris J. van Gastel, and Elsje van Kessel, eds., *The Secret Lives of Artworks: Exploring the*

an "art nexus", the network of social relations in which they are embedded. For the analysis of such a network, Gell uses the concepts of agency, index, prototype, artist and recipients. Mapping this "network of intentionalities" (in the assumption that artworks are actively part of it) helps to identify the actors involved and to clarify the effects of their agency on the viewer or participant in the nexus.[141]

As theory, the art nexus helps to look at and rethink the function of artworks in a different, more comprehensive way, and describe it more consistently. As a heuristic technique or method, Gell's model helps to fully acknowledge the complexity of situations of patronage, and preserves from flattening or making them causal. For instance, it helps to avoid the common pitfalls of: 1) over-privileging the agency of the artist-genius, 2) oversimplifying models of patronage,[142] and 3) reducing Counter Reformation art to one-way propaganda.

Mapping the art nexus also heightens our awareness of how agents can change position and role, by illustrating the various possible directions of agency.[143] Thus Gell's model helps to ask more layered questions about interactions and functions of patronage. By looking into art's agency, my study shows how various seemingly antithetical intentions engage with one another in a perfectly contingent way.

Performance

Performance is an analytical tool to make sense of behaviour. It has often been noted that Early Modern people behaved in a "theatrical" way, displaying their social role to their "public".[144] Dissimilar to our modern concern for authentic conduct and honesty in social relations, Early Modern

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Boundaries between Art and Life (Leiden University Press, 2014), in particular the Introduction and essays by Ralph Dekoninck and Frédéric Cousinié.

[141] Caroline van Eck, "Living Statues: Alfred Gell's Art and Agency, Living Presence Response and the Sublime," *Art History* 33 (2010): 208–23; For the use of the concept of art nexus, see also the brilliant reconstruction of the "social lives" of paintings by Elsje van Kessel, "The Social Lives of Paintings in Sixteenth Century Venice" (Leiden University, 2011).

[142] Whitney Davis, "Abducting the Agency of Art," in *Art's Agency and Art History*, ed. Robin Osborne and Jeremy Tanner (Malden MA: Blackwell, 2007), 199–219.

[143] Agency can be mutual, for instance when a patron influences the artwork's agency while the artwork also influences the patron, and artist simultaneously influences the patron or public via the artwork.

[144] Kessel, "The Social Lives of Paintings in Sixteenth Century Venice," 16; referring to Edward Muir, *Civic Ritual in Renaissance Venice* (Princeton NJ: Princeton University Press, 1981). See also Edward Muir, *Ritual in Early Modern Europe*, 2nd ed. (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 2005).

societies expected a convincing performance of one's public persona, primarily valuing social factors such as appearance and honour.[145] In this context, religious art and architecture were to perform specific functions at the centre of rituals and ceremonies.

The rituals performed in Valenciennes, for instance, exemplify the importance of the concurrent practices of scripted theatrical behaviour (e.g. the "extraordinary devotion" of the citizens); magnificent display (music, liturgical vestments); treatment of sacred objects (miraculous images, relics); motion in time and space[146] as ritual "activation" of these objects (processions), and communal intercourse with the divine (prayer octaves, vows and donations *ex-voto*). It is important to realize that such performative events had much wider reverberations than we may tend to think.[147] Performances were not just events with a certain (symbolical) meaning, but may be seen as "constitutive actions", in the sense that they generated or constructed meaning and even reality.[148] This has for instance been illustrated in recent studies of religious architecture (focusing on rites of consecration[149] and pilgrimage[150]) and of the painted depictions of highly

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[145] Caroline van Eck and Stijn Bussels, "The Visual Arts and Theatre in Early Modern Europe," *Art History* 33 (2010): 208–23.

[146] Marc Boone and Martha C. Howell, "Introduction," in *The Power of Space in Late Medieval and Early Modern Europe* (Leuven: Brepols, 2013), 1–9.

[147] See Paul Arblaster, "Abraham Verhoeven and the Brussels Court: Isabel Clara Eugenia's Staple of News," in *Isabel Clara Eugenia: Female Sovereignty in the Courts of Madrid and Brussels*, ed. Cordula van Wyhe (London; Madrid: Paul Holberton Publishing; CEEH, 2011), 280–305; Paul Arblaster, *Antwerp & the World: Richard Verstegan and the International Culture of Catholic Reformation* (Leuven: Leuven University Press, 2004).

[148] Erika Fischer-Lichte, *The Transformative Power of Performance: A New Aesthetics* (London: Routledge, 2008); Erika Fischer-Lichte, "Einleitung: Theatralität als kulturelles Modell," in *Theatralität als Modell in den Kulturwissenschaften*, ed. Erika Fischer-Lichte (Tübingen; Basel: Francke, 2004), 7–26; see also Thøfner, *A Common Art: Urban Ceremonial in Antwerp and Brussels during and after the Dutch Revolt*; Esser, *The Politics of Memory: The Writing of Partition in the Seventeenth-Century Low Countries*, 304.

[149] Maarten Delbeke and Minou Schraven, "Foundation, Dedication and Consecration in Early Modern Europe. An Introduction," in *Foundation, Dedication and Consecration in Early Modern Europe*, ed. Maarten Delbeke and Minou Schraven (Leiden: Brill, 2012), 1–13; Dagmar Germonprez, "Foundation Rites in the Southern Netherlands: Constructing a Counterreformational Architecture," in *Foundation, Dedication and Consecration in Early Modern Europe*, ed. Maarten Delbeke and Minou Schraven (Leiden: Brill, 2012), 275–96; Anne-Françoise Morel and Dagmar Germonprez, "A Cornerstone in Architectural History: The Dedication of St. Peter's Abbey Church, Ghent, 1629," *Source: Notes in the History of Art* 31, no. 2 (2012): 15–21; Anne-Françoise Morel, "Glorious Temples or Babylonic Whores: The Architecture of Church Buildings in England 1603-1736 according to Consecration Sermons" (University of Ghent, 2011).

[150] Maarten Delbeke, "Miracle Books and Religious Architecture in the Southern Netherlands. The Case of Our Lady of Hanswijk in Mechelen," in *The Authority of the Word : Reflecting on Image and Text in Northern Europe, 1400-1700. Intersections 20*, ed. Celeste Brusati, Karl

performative urban rituals (such as the Brussels *Ommegang* of 1615 and Isabella's shooting of the popinjay).[151]

Whereas contemporary perceptions of the potential agency of the cult of the Blessed Sacrament of Miracle ultimately derived from the Austrian piety, this agency only gained pertinence by the blasphemous French timing of the siege on the feast of Corpus Christi, and was subsequently "activated" by means of civic ritual in a "national" context. This performative dynamic came about in an ongoing interaction between various agents (Don Juan, Magistrate, prelates, sacred objects, Virgin Mary), which may be described as a negotiation process in which the participants choose to adopt common rules, or their own, depending on their interests and the opportunities the situation offers.

Change

For Gell, art is "a system of action, intended to change the world rather than encode symbolic propositions about it".[152] Yet in early modern Europe, fostering change was easier said than done: every effort at reform met with resistance and amendments, and the lines between continuity and change are often blurred.[153] In this study, the thick historical layer is where (attempts to bring about) change may be located.

The example of Valenciennes shows that "pious performance" is not about consolidating a status quo, but is rather a matter of "trying out" various negotiating strategies in the transformative process of the sacralisation discourse. Apart from the obvious aim of the city's relief from the siege, these processes of negotiation aimed at lifting the wrath of God that caused it. The piety displayed at Valenciennes evinces a crisis of confidence: if Valenciennes fell, Spain and the Spanish Netherlands would fall out of

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Enenkel, and Walter S. Melion (Leiden: Brill, 2012), 559–85; Thøfner, *A Common Art: Urban Ceremonial in Antwerp and Brussels during and after the Dutch Revolt*, chap. 11.

[151] This performance was to affirm Isabella's status as Governess in case Albert would die without progeny, which had become inevitable at the time. See Sabine van Sprang, *Denijs Van Alsloot (Vers 1568? - 1625/26): peintre paysagiste au service de la cour des archiducs Albert et Isabelle (Pictura Nova)* (Leuven: Brepols, 2013); Margit Thøfner, "The Court in the City, the City in the Court: Denis van Alsloot's Depictions of the 1615 Brussels 'Ommegang,'" *Nederlands Kunsthistorisch Jaarboek* 49 (1998): 185–208.

[152] Gell, *Art and Agency: An Anthropological Theory*, 6.

[153] See Joseph Bergin, *Church, Society and Religious Change in France, 1580-1730* (New Haven CN; London: Yale University Press, 2009).

Divine Grace.[154] It is in this context that we should see the Counter-Reformatory efforts to promote personal virtue, conversion, and social disciplining, and the transformative function (agency) of art and architecture to these ends. Yet it is important to realize that contemporaries had a different awareness of society's malleability; they conceived and perceived *change* not exclusively as a result of human actions, but also as sign of God's plan with the people of the Netherlands. Salvation, the ultimate aim of change, was not visible to mortals in this life. Hence we cannot simply assess whether intended change actually materialized; instead, this dissertation sets out to identify under what circumstances, and by what kind of behaviour, change was understood by those involved to be made possible.

A French perspective on Flemish piety

A wealth of relevant ethnographic information, detailing intentions and effects of artworks, can be found in the travelogue of the French nobleman, priest and theologian Michel de Saint-Martin (1614-1687), who travelled to the Southern Netherlands in 1661.[155] In the preface of his book he explains that, rather than writing on subjects such as the landscape, climate, or "beautiful houses and magnificent churches" of the country, he will describe "the way of behaving of the people […] which will be my main purpose […]".[156] Saint-Martin writes that even though the Low Countries may be close to France, and not nearly as exotic as the non-European countries described in other, very popular travel accounts of the time, they may provide his home country with some good examples. Therefore, he is: "[…] particularly committed to note the conduct of these people, because this is what seemed to me most fitting to satisfy our reason, and I have among other things studied their virtuous actions, and their pious practises, […]".[157] Thus Saint-Martin focuses on rituals and how they were performed, rather than on art, yet along the way he provides valuable information on the intentions behind – and the effects and agency of – artworks.[158]

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[154] On this perception of events, see also Elliott, *The Count-Duke of Olivares: The Statesman in an Age of Decline*, 590.
[155] Saint-Martin, *Relation d'un voyage fait en Flandres, Brabant, Hainaut, Artois, Cambresis, etc... en l'an 1661*.
[156] Ibid., Preface: "[...] mais peu observent la manière d'agir des peuples. C'est dont je fais mon principal objet, [...]."
[157] Ibid., Preface.
[158] Ibid.

As he does not fail to emphasize, Saint-Martin moved in the highest administrative and intellectual circles of the Netherlands. He was for instance invited by the erudite humanist Gaspar Gevartius (1593-1666), city secretary of Antwerp and friend of Rubens – and editor of his *Pompa Introiti Ferdinandi* – to attend a party with Antonius Sanderus, author of the *Flandria Illustrata* and *Chorographia Sacra Brabantiae*, exactly during the time the latter was published.[159] These "men of letters, and those in the principal offices of handling affairs" were exactly the type of patrons, agents, and authors who initiated, devised, staged, and disseminated religious artistic interventions and performances. Therefore, Saint-Martin assures the reader, he is able to provide a true and first-hand account of "the spirit that animates these provinces, and that sets them in motion."[160]

I will now turn to Saint-Martin's extensive description of the "Octave of the Dead", a period of eight days of prayer starting on All Souls' Day [November], in the Brussels Jesuit church in the years 1659 to 1661.[161] The account of the celebrations provides a case in point of the social, cultural, religious, economic, or celestial transformations that artworks and ritual performances were capable of setting in motion.

Since 1660 the Jesuits, who frequently worked as confessors in the army, reserved the last three days of the octave for the soldiers who had fallen in the service of the Spanish King (before the Peace of the Pyrenees of 1659). Three solemn masses were sung on these days to the benefit of their souls in Purgatory. Saint-Martin recounts:

> "To give extra lustre to the event, they not only adorned the high altar of their church with velvet, and illuminated it together with the two side altars with a great number of candles, but on various places,

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[159] Ibid., 241: "Cet Autheur [Gevaerts] voulut bien m'inviter à un Festin, qu'il faisoit le jour de cette Feste [of H. Trinity, Antwerp, 1661] au Sieur Sanderus aussi Autheur, [...]."

[160] Ibid., Preface: "Je l'ay appris par ma propre experience dans la conversation des gens de lettres, et de ceux qui estoient dans les principaux emplois pour le maniment des affaires, avec lesquels je me suis entretenu sur toutes sortes de manières ; si bien que je puis assurer le Lecteur, que je luy fais voir en abregé comme l'âme qui anime ces Provinces, et qui leur donne le mouvement."

[161] Ibid., 108–113; on the Brussels Jesuits and their church (now lost), see Annemie de Vos, "Hofarchitect Jacques Francart En de Brusselse Jezuïtenkerk. Tussen Traditie En Vernieuwing.," *De Zeventiende Eeuw* 14, no. 1 (1998): 65–80; Lodewijk Brouwers, *De Jezuïeten te Brussel, 1586-1733, 1833* (Mechelen: Huis van Leliëndaal, n.d.); the interior of the church is represented in a painting, published in Joris Snaet and Claire Baisier, "Contrareformatie en barok. Traditie en vernieuwing in 17de-eeuwse kerkarchitectuur in de Nederlanden," *Gentse bijdragen tot de interieurgeschiedenis* 33 (2004): 23.

> representations of death made out of wax were displayed together with paintings that vividly expressed the pains suffered by the souls in Purgatory, which excited everyone to save them".[162]

The artworks were clearly devised in order to have an affective effect on the senses of the viewer, not in the last place through their life-like, or rather, death-like materiality.[163] Saint-Martin continues:

> "This feast happened with such magnificence that the whole city was delighted to see such an extraordinary decoration. The walls of the church were covered on every side with black drapery, one saw imperial eagles on top of the pillars, lions of Castile, crosses of Burgundy, the coats-of-arms of Kings, and Dukes, painted on gilded standards, which were kept in the archives of Brabant, and in the middle of the church was a superb mausoleum, very well lit, and made even more illustrious by the arms and escutcheons of Emperor Charles V, of John of Austria first Duke of Parma, and of the Marquis of Spinola."[164]

In 1660 these famous historical commanders were long dead, so why was their heraldry still displayed (and perceived) in such a prominent way? Was this a matter of dynastic logic or pedigree? Or did the heraldic devices exert a particular agency of national and military pride? It does seem to follow the conventions of Italian *theatrum sacrum* and princely funerary catafalques.[165] Saint-Martin continues to describe the ephemeral decorations of the high altar:

> "Art and painting contributed also to the embellishment of the altar in a very particular way: below was represented Purgatory, and on top the catafalque [*castrum doloris*], with the salutary warning of Tobias: *Super sepulturam justi panem tuum et vinum constitue* [Pour out thy bread and wine on the grave of the just (Tobias 4:18)]. On one side one saw a naval combat, on the other side one on land, and in the

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[162] Saint-Martin, *Relation d'un voyage fait en Flandres, Brabant, Hainaut, Artois, Cambresis, etc... en l'an 1661*, 104.

[163] On the materiality of such wax images of suffering souls in purgatory, see Christine Göttler, *Last Things: Art and the Religious Imagination in the Age of Reform* (Turnhout: Brepols, 2010), chap. 5; see also Christine Göttler, *Die Kunst des Fegefeuers nach der Reformation: kirchliche Schenkungen, Ablass und Almosen in Antwerpen und Bologna um 1600* (Mainz: P. von Zabern, 1996).

[164] Saint-Martin, *Relation d'un voyage fait en Flandres, Brabant, Hainaut, Artois, Cambresis, etc... en l'an 1661*, 109–110.

[165] See Minou Schraven, "Festive Funerals: Funeral Apparati in Early Modern Italy, Particularly in Rome (Ph.Diss.)" (Rijksuniversiteit Groningen, 2006).

> middle the Maccabee, who having collected twelve golden talents after the combat, sent one victim into Jerusalem, in order to sacrifice [it] in favour of those who were killed."[166]

The painting must have illustrated the episode from 2 Maccabees 12:39–48, in which Judas Maccabeus' troops found idolatrous charms on the bodies of slain Jewish warriors. To expiate their sin, he offered prayers and a monetary sacrifice. This passage was often used during the Counter-Reformation against the Protestants in order to justify the doctrine of purgatory and donations to it.[167] The way textual devices and images are here combined to bring across this message may be illustrative of the use of "emblematic" rhetorical discourse in which the Jesuits were particularly well trained.[168]

Saint-Martin also mentions how "the solemnity of this action" attracted the refugee (future) King Charles II of England and his brother the Duke of York (the future James II) who happened to stay in Brussels at the time.[169]

> "In the evening the Holy Sacrament was carried in procession, and the same confessors [of the army] were in surplice, and the Marques of Caracena, Governor of the Netherlands, followed by the principal officers of the army, and all the captains bearing torches. There was also a funerary apparatus erected full of statues in honour of the nobility. This devotion edified the attending prelates and officers of the army so much, that they gave to perpetuity the necessary rents to cover the expense, which provided the means to have good music performed, and beautiful decorations in the church every year, in which these peoples [of the Netherlands] succeeded very well."

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[166] Saint-Martin, *Relation d'un voyage fait en Flandres, Brabant, Hainaut, Artois, Cambresis, etc... en l'an 1661*, 111.

[167] Rubens painted the scene of Judah Maccabee praying for the dead for the Chapel of the Dead in the cathedral of Tournai. See Christine Göttler, "Saintly Patronage: Peter Paul Rubens and Bishop Maximilian Villain de Gand in the Cathedral of Tournai," in *Sponsors of the Past. Flemish Art and Patronage, 1550-1700*, ed. Katlijne van der Stighelen and Hans Vlieghe (Turnhout: Brepols, 2005), 135–157.

[168] See Porteman, *Emblematic Exhibitions (affixiones) at the Brussels Jesuit College (1630-1685): A Study of the Commemorative Manuscripts (Royal Library, Brussels)*.

[169] On his stay in Brussels in November 1659, see Ernest Gossart, *L'auberge des Princes en exil: anecdotes de la cour de Bruxelles au XVIIe siècle* (Brussels, 1943), 137–144, 185–191; and in Antwerp, see Ursula Härting, "'A Small Entertainment' für König Karl II. im Rubenshaus," in *Munuscula Amicorum: Contributions on Rubens and His Context in Honour of Hans Vlieghe, 1*, ed. Katlijne van der Stighelen (Turnhout: Brepols, 2006), 331–39.

Devotional performance and art are here avowedly and unapologetically presented as tools for fundraising. With success, since:

> "The next year there was even more pomp than the first; since the church was not just wrapped in black with bands of velvet, but in addition the ornamentation of the high altar ravished everybody: from top to bottom rose a beautiful machine with five perspectives.[170] On one side the soldier combated generously under the conduct of St James, and on the other for having served faithfully in arms, he won this praise: *Bonum certamen certavi, cursum consummavi, fidem servavi, de reliquo, etc.* [I have fought the good fight, I have finished my course, I have kept the faith: Henceforth there is laid up for me a crown of righteousness (2 Timothy 4:7-8)]. Below, one saw the bloodshed of those who were massacred, and on top in a very well represented heaven, the Crown of Justice, with which the brave soldiers were rewarded. In the middle the just Judge had them expiate the rest of their crimes by means of various penalties, and sent them in the company of angels by the merit of the suffrages of the living."[171]

The case of the Brussels Octave of the Dead, with all its ramifications outlined here, therefore illustrates how art works function as part of ritual practices intended to influence the heavens. Despite their different nature, and the variety of aspects they offer for interpretation (such as their pedigree, patronage, sensory delight, affective horror or rhetorical discourse), they share what may best be termed "agency". Since agency exists by the virtue of the objects that exercise it, they will be the primary subjects of my investigations. In the following chapters we will see how religious artefacts function as material agents of change.

That the material artefacts have not been preserved in this case is no obstacle: Saint-Martin's "proto-ethnographic" account of the Octave of the Dead in Brussels sheds light on how artworks were intended to function, and describes their effects from a foreign, but informed perspective. It describes and interprets the mechanisms of pious behaviour and the art patronage that goes with it. The existing literature on the Jesuits usually emphasizes the rhetorical aspects of their use of art and architecture, yet this case exemplifies that the role of art was not purely instrumental, as studies of patronage, or of art as expression of religion would have us believe. Instead,

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[170] Saint-Martin, *Relation d'un voyage fait en Flandres, Brabant, Hainaut, Artois, Cambresis, etc... en l'an 1661*, 111–112.
[171] Ibid., 113.

it highlights the tension, or boundary, between the believer and the divine. The artworks exerted various types of agency on the viewer: inciting to prayer, inciting to make donations, claiming legitimacy, appealing to virtue, warning for the brevity of life and the need for salvation, etc., but the viewers and patrons also actively participated (performed) as agents in the process of saving souls from Purgatory. In this context artworks functioned as machines to obtain grace: they were both the result of, and at the same time engendered, a heightened level of piety in the population. This piety, in turn, was considered both the result, and the primary cause, of a heightened level of Divine Grace over the country.

Brussels as a centre of Counter-Reformation patronage

> "[…] the prosecution […] will stop, Madam, a torrent of misfortune that menaces your blessed City, and will make her enter in grace with God to receive upon her, like upon all your Catholic Provinces, the heavenly blessings."[172]

Both historians and art historians of the seventeenth century Southern Netherlands have traditionally focused on Antwerp as the centre of art production, as many of the "great names" lived and worked here, and as the centre of the Counter-Reformation. Being the most northern catholic city in Europe after the Spanish *reconquista*, just a stone's throw away from the rebel territories, and triumphantly surmounting its openly Calvinist past, it was promoted as bulwark of Catholicism.[173] The altarpieces by Rubens described above might be typical of Antwerp, where, in light of the city's history and its proximity to the Protestant North, the catholic religion was most likely to be contested.

The role of the court city of Brussels as nerve centre of the arts and the Counter Reformation has received much less scholarly attention.[174] This may

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[172] Charles Gambart, *Chariot mystique du nouveau Elie, touchant la vie exemplaire, & glorieuse mort du Reverend Pere Du Vivier, Provincial des Peres Minimes des Païs-Bas, & Basse Alemaigne, & Predicateur Ordinaire de Leurs Altesses Serenissimes. Sur le modele du Grand Prophet* (Brussels: Goddefroy Schoevarts, 1630), 159.

[173] Alphons Thijs, *Van geuzenstad tot katholiek bolwerk: maatschappelijke betekenis van de kerk in contrareformatorisch Antwerpen* (Turnhout: Brepols, 1990); Marinus, "De Contrareformatie te Antwerpen, (1585-1676): kerkelijk leven in een grootstad"; Arblaster, *Antwerp & the World: Richard Verstegan and the International Culture of Catholic Reformation*.

[174] Notable exceptions include Claudia Banz, *Höfisches Mäzenatentum in Brüssel: Kardinal Antoine Perrenot de Granvelle (1517-1586) und die Erzherzöge Albrecht (1559-1621) und Isabella (1566-1633)* (Berlin: Mann, 2000); Paul Saintenoy, *Les arts et les artistes à la cour de Bruxelles* (Brussels: Palais des Académies, 1931); Marcel De Maeyer, *Albrecht en Isabella en de*

be partially explained by the partisan political situation in Belgium and the focus of historians of Brussels on the French Revolution and the Enlightenment period, which have left a strong mark on the city and its historiography[175] up to today. The lack of art historical attention may be due to the fact that many historical buildings, churches, artworks and archives have been lost.[176] However, a major artistic innovation such as Rubens' design for the first portico-retable at the Kapellekerk in 1617 was disseminated from Brussels,[177] and the city's role as centre of tapestry production warranted a position as a hub of international artistic exchange.[178]

The contemporary importance of Brussels is manifest; besides being the second largest city after Antwerp and the administrative and political centre of the Southern Netherlands it was also a court residence: where patronage was distributed and (would-be) nobles strived to obtain courtly favours. It is hard to overestimate the splendour or the Brussels court during the reign of the archdukes, and to various degrees that of their successors.

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schilderkunst: bijdrage tot de geschiedenis van de XVIIe eeuwse schilderkunst in de Zuidelijke Nederlanden (Brussels: Paleis der Academiën, 1955); Sabine van Sprang, "Les peintres à la cour d'Albert et Isabelle: une tentative de classification," in *Sponsors of the Past. Flemish Art and Patronage, 1550-1700*, ed. Hans Vlieghe and Katlijne Van der Stighelen (Turnhout: Brepols, 2005), 37–46; Sabine van Sprang, "Rubens en Brussel, een meer dan hoffelijke relatie," in *Rubens: een genie aan het werk*, ed. Joost Vander Auwera (Tielt: Lannoo, 2007), 12–17; Veerle de Laet, "Brussel binnenskamers: kunst- en luxebezit in het spanningsveld tussen hof en stad, 1600-1735" (KU Leuven, 2011); Katlijne van der Stighelen, Leen Kelchtermans, and Koenraad Brosens, eds., "Embracing Brussels: Art and Culture in the Court City, 1600-1800," in *Embracing Brussels: Art and Culture in the Court City, 1600-1800* (Turnhout: Brepols, 2013).

[175] The standard work on the city remains Alexandre Henne and Alphonse Wauters, *Histoire de La Ville de Bruxelles*, ed. Mina Martens (Brussels: Culture et Civilisation, 1968); re-edition of the original three-volume Alexandre Henne and Alphonse Wauters, *Histoire de la ville de Bruxelles* (Brussels: Librairie Encyclopédique de Perichon, 1845).

[176] The city centre was heavily damaged in the French bombardment (1695), and the urban fabric underwent drastic changes as a result of the construction of the boulevard Anspach (1868-71) and the North-South railway connection (1935-52). The disbanding of religious orders during the Austrian and French periods (1777, 1794-1815) resulted in further demolition of churches and monasteries and the confiscation and sale of their artworks. For the bombardment, see Luc Janssens, "'Baeckens om naer te schieten': schade aan de religieuze instellingen ten gevolge van het bombardement van 13-15 Augustus 1695," in *Rond het bombardement van Brussel van 1695: verwoesting en wederopstanding*, ed. Arlette Smolart-Meynart (Brussels: Gemeentekrediet, 1997), 41–50; Maurice Culot, *Le bombardement de Bruxelles par Louis XIV et la reconstruction qui s'en suivit, 1695-1700* (Brussels: Aux archives d'architecture moderne, 1992); for the Austrian and French periods, see Christophe Loir, *La sécularisation des oeuvres d'art dans le Brabant (1773-1842): la création du musée de Bruxelles* (Brussels: Editions de l'Université de Bruxelles, 1998).

[177] Valérie Herremans, "'Eenen loffelycken ende hoffelycken Aultaer': Retabelplastiek in de Zuidelijke Nederlanden ca. 1585-1685" (Vrije Universiteit Brussel, 2007), 153; For an extensive study of this altar, see Bettina Baumgärtel, *Himmlisch, Herrlich, Höfisch: Peter Paul Rubens, Johann Wilhelm von der Pfalz, Anna Maria Luisa de' Medici* (Leipzig: Seemann, 2008).

[178] On the Brussels tapestry production, see the work of Koenraad Brosens.

Foreign visitors to Brussels never failed to note the sheer number of nobles who paraded around town in their coaches, surrounded by servants, and performing gallantries, not in the last place in the city's many churches.[179] In the midst of this worldly magnificence, religious orders in turn endeavoured to showcase their own exemplary and ascetic lives… and thereby solicit patronage and religious donations.[180]

Brussels was also the most important ecclesiastical centre of the country. Though the archbishop resided officially in Malines, he would spend at least half of the year in Brussels.[181] The papal nuncio (later internuncio) also resided at the Brussels court. Most religious orders had their main establishment in Brussels and various prominent and ancient abbeys were located around the city. Among the monks affiliated to these institutions were some of the closest advisors to the archdukes[182] as well as other Habsburg rulers, and some were members of state councils. Rivalry among orders was often "fought out" in Brussels and the processions and festivals they organized here drew visitors from far and wide.

Yet the most important reason we should reconsider the role of Brussels and its court during the Counter Reformation as a field of (art) historical inquiry is because the Counter Reformation implies such a strong interweaving of political, religious, and historical interests and arguments. This was especially so for the Habsburg frame of mind with its religious conception of state and "sacral rulership".[183] Whereas in the sixteenth century the Habsburg regime had tried to enforce the catholic faith and obedience to the prince with violence, Pollmann notes how in the

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[179] See Claire Baisier, "De documentaire waarde van de kerkinterieurs van de Antwerpse School in de Spaanse Tijd" (KU Leuven, 2008).

[180] However, financial support for the orders was even more generous in the commercial centre of Antwerp. Marinus, "De Contrareformatie te Antwerpen, (1585-1676): kerkelijk leven in een grootstad," 160.

[181] Archbishops Jacob Boonen, in office throughout our period, and bishop Antoon Triest of Ghent often acted as influential intermediaries between the *ministère espagnol* and the local administrative bodies. See Vermeir, *In staat van oorlog: Filips IV en de Zuidelijke Nederlanden, 1629-1648*, 210–212.

[182] Such as the Franciscan confessor to Isabella, fray Andrès de Soto; the Dominican confessor to Albert, fray Iñigo de Brizuela; and the French court preacher dom Bernard de Montgaillard.

[183] Krista de Jonge, "'T Hof van Brabant' als symbool van de Spaanse hofhouding in de Lage Landen," *Bulletin KNOB* 98, no. 5/6 (1999): 183 – 198; On sacred monarchy, see Marc Léopold Benjamin Bloch, *The Royal Touch: Sacred Monarchy and Scrofula in England and France* (London: Routledge and Kegan Paul, 1973); For the history of the notion of sacerdotal kingship, see Sergio Bertelli, "Rex et Sacerdos: The Holiness of the King in European Civilization," in *Iconography, Propaganda, and Legitimation*, ed. Allan Ellenius (Oxford: Clarendon Press, 1998), 123–45.

seventeenth century the regime employed its catholicity instead as a "selling point" (implying a demand for this from the population).[184] The fervent Habsburg Catholicism was not only played out against the Dutch: the Southern Netherlands became a refuge (or even: sanctuary) of radical Catholics from England and France.[185]

Within the vast range of devotions the archducal pair cultivated, they had a special preference for the Eucharist (for reasons discussed above), the cult of their saintly forebears (and their relics – stressing dynastic and seigniorial continuity), and (miraculous statues of) the Virgin Mary (especially since her miraculous intervention in the Battle of Lepanto in 1571). Various recent studies point out how this "carefully considered system" of devotions was to legitimize the archducal government with religious arguments, help to conceal their limited sovereignty, and provide their dynasty with a sacral aura.[186] Yet these were more than just political instruments: in the Habsburg conception of state, religious and political motives were virtually identical.[187] They believed, like the population, that the dissemination of exemplary catholic virtues and ardent devotion was a powerful means to overcome the evils of heresy and rebellion, and to bring

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[184] Pollmann, *Catholic Identity and the Revolt of the Netherlands, 1520-1635*, 5–6, 161–170; Anne-Laure Van Bruaene, "The Habsburg Theatre State: Court, City and the Performance of Identity in the Early Modern Southern Low Countries," in *Networks, Regions and Nations : Shaping Identities in the Low Countries, 1300-1650*, ed. Robert Stein and Judith Pollmann (Leiden: Brill, 2010), 131–49; Thøfner, *A Common Art: Urban Ceremonial in Antwerp and Brussels during and after the Dutch Revolt*; Duerloo, "Pietas Albertina. Dynastieke Vroomheid En Herbouw van Het Vorstelijk Gezag."

[185] To the dismay of for instance the English, numerous English monasteries were founded all over the country, strongly favoured by the Archdukes. See Imran Uddin, "William Trumbull: A Jacobean Diplomat at the Court of the Archdukes in Brussels, 1605/9-1625" (KULeuven, 2006), 140–154.

[186] Luc Duerloo, "Archiducal Piety and Habsburger Power," in *Albert & Isabella, 1598-1621: Essays*, ed. Werner Thomas and Luc Duerloo (Turnhout: Brepols, 1998), 267–83; Werner Thomas, "Andromeda Unbound. The Reign of Albert and Isabella in the Southern. Netherlands, 1548-1621," in *Albert & Isabella, 1598-1621: Essays* (Turnhout: Brepols, 1998), 1–13; Eddy Put, "Les Archiducs et La Réforme Catholique: Champs D'action et Limites Politiques," in *Albert & Isabella, 1598-1621: Essays* (Turnhout: Brepols, 1998), 255–67; Duerloo, "Pietas Albertina. Dynastieke vroomheid en herbouw van het vorstelijk gezag"; Delfosse, *La Vierge « protectrice du Païs-Bas »*; Cordula van Wyhe, "Piety and Politics in the Royal Convent of Discalced Carmelite Nuns in Brussels 1607-1646," *Revue d'histoire ecclésiastique de Belgique* 100, no. 1 (2005): 457–87.

[187] Luc Duerloo, *Dynasty and Piety : Archduke Albert (1598-1621) and Habsburg Political Culture in an Age of Religious Wars* (Farnham: Ashgate, 2012).

back the Northern provinces under their – legitimate and divinely sanctioned – rule.[188]

Indeed, one of the most important trumps in the strife with the Dutch was the archducal claim of legitimacy as "natural princes" of all seventeen provinces of the Netherlands, not just the ten remaining under Spanish rule.[189] Northerners and Southerners alike saw the "princely city" of Brussels as court residence, as it had been the seat of the Dukes of Burgundy.[190] Therefore the archdukes did not miss a chance to uphold the prestige of their court, receiving foreign nobles and (political/religious) refugees with all due honour and pomp, making Brussels a veritable "auberge des princes en exil"[191] in a "Habsburg theatre-state".[192]

But the archducal court in Brussels was not just any court; it was conceived as *aula sacra* (sacred court).[193] The archducal household was modelled on the Spanish example, resembling a monastery, in which male and female courtiers were strictly separated.[194] In emulation of the royal convent of the Descalzas Reales in Madrid, the Infanta had a distinguished group of Theresian nuns, disciples of St Theresa, brought over from Spain to found a convent in Brussels to which she had privileged access from her

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[188] Pollmann, *Catholic Identity and the Revolt of the Netherlands, 1520-1635*, 168–170; Duerloo and Wingens, *Scherpenheuvel: Het Jeruzalem van de Lage Landen*, 62–63.

[189] Jozef Andriessen, *De Jezuïeten en het samenhorigheidsbesef der Nederlanden 1585-1648* (Antwerpen: De Nederlandsche Boekhandel, 1957).

[190] Raymond van Uytven and Andries van den Abeele, *Geschiedenis van Brabant: van het hertogdom tot heden* (Zwolle; Leuven: Waanders; Davidsfonds, 2011).

[191] Gossart, *L'auberge des princes en exil: anecdotes de la cour de Bruxelles au XVIIe siècle*; see also Paul Henrard, *Marie de Médicis dans les Pays-Bas 1631-38* (Paris: Baudry, 1876).

[192] Van Bruaene, "The Habsburg Theatre State: Court, City and the Performance of Identity in the Early Modern Southern Low Countries"; Elodie Lecuppre-Desjardin, *La ville des cérémonies: essai sur la communication politique dans les anciens Pays-Bas bourguignons* (Turnhout: Brepols, 2004); Peter Arnade, *Realms of Ritual: Burgundian Ceremony and Civic Life in Late Medieval Ghent* (Ithaca NY: Cornell University Press, 1996); J. Landwehr, *Splendid Ceremonies. State Entries and Royal Funerals in the Low Countries, 1515-1791. A Bibliography* (Nieuwkoop-Leiden, 1971).

[193] See especially Albert's *vita*, aiming at his canonization, by his almoner and librarian, the Antwerp canon and church historian Aubert Le Mire : Aubertus Miræus, *De vita Alberti Pii, sapientis, prudentis Belgarum principis commentarius* (Antwerp: Plantin, 1622).

[194] Courtiers who broke this rule faced penalty of death. See Dries Raeymaekers, "In dienst van de dynastie: adel uit Noord en Zuid aan het hof van de Aartshertogen," in *Het verdeelde huis: de nederlandse adel tussen Opstand en reconciliatie*, ed. Luc Duerloo and Liesbeth De Frenne (Maastricht: Shaker Publishing, 2011), 96; on the political functions of the piety at the court of the Infante, see Birgit Houben, *Wisselende gedaanten: het hof en de hofhouding van de landvoogden Isabella Clara Eugenia (1621-1633) en de Kardinaal-Infant Don Fernando van Oostenrijk (1634-1641) te Brussel*, Ph.Diss (University of Ghent, 2009), 131–170.

adjoining quarters in the Coudenberg palace.[195] As Cordula van Wyhe argues, "In this respect, the Brussels court was a political arena where change was not only affected through prayer, but through Ana [de Jesus, a prominent Theresian nun]'s counselling of the Infanta."[196]

In the *pietatis orchestra* (dancing floor of piety)[197] or *pietatis asylum*[198] of the Brussels court, nobles were encouraged to imitate the pious model of the archdukes, not only by excelling in pious behaviour and religious patronage, but also to choose the religious life.[199] This monastic ideal was based on a strong belief in the God-given rule of the House of Habsburg, which built on medieval notions of sacral kingship (in fact, the archdukes aspired to have their dukedom elevated to a Kingdom of Burgundy).[200] Even after the archdukes died, this notion remained alive: the subsequent governors propagated a historical and quasi-religious "cult" around the persona and government of the archdukes.[201]

All this suggests that the prestige of the Brussels court (regardless of its real power) offered patrons – throughout the period under consideration – a unique "potential" of increasing the range of their efforts, as exemplified by the impact of the procession of the Blessed Sacrament of Miracle in 1656. Therefore I have selected a series of case studies of religious patronage in Brussels by the court or courtiers, which aimed at social, cultural, or

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[195] Wyhe, "Piety and Politics in the Royal Convent of Discalced Carmelite Nuns in Brussels 1607-1646"; Meganck, "De kerkelijke architectuur van Wensel Cobergher (1557/61-1634) in het licht van zijn verblijf te Rome," 32–51; Charles Terlinden, "Le Carmel Royal de Bruxelles, 1607-1957," *Cahiers bruxellois* 2, no. 2 (1957): 11–35; Pasture, *La restauration religieuse aux Pays-Bas catholiques sous les archiducs Albert et Isabelle (1596-1633)*, 8.

[196] Wyhe, "Piety and Politics in the Royal Convent of Discalced Carmelite Nuns in Brussels 1607-1646," 471.

[197] Ibid., 472. citing Laurentius Beyerlinck's *laudatio* of Archduke Albert, 1621

[198] Houben, *Wisselende gedaanten: het hof en de hofhouding van de landvoogden Isabella Clara Eugenia (1621-1633) en de Kardinaal-Infant Don Fernando van Oostenrijk (1634-1641) te Brussel*, 137 citing F. Capronius' laudatio of the Infante Isabella, 1634.

[199] Duerloo, *Dynasty and Piety: Archduke Albert (1598-1621) and Habsburg Political Culture in an Age of Religious Wars*, 90–102; See also Dries Raeymaekers, *"Siempre un pie en palacio." Het hof en de hofhouding van de Aartshertogen Albrecht En Isabella, 1598-1621*, Ph.Diss (KU Leuven, 2009); Houben, *Wisselende gedaanten: het hof en de hofhouding van de landvoogden Isabella Clara Eugenia (1621-1633) en de Kardinaal-Infant Don Fernando van Oostenrijk (1634-1641) te Brussel*; see also Marie de Villermont, *L'Infante Isabelle: Gouvernante des Pays-Bas* (Tamines; Paris: Duculot-Roulin; François, 1912).

[200] Duerloo, *Dynasty and Piety: Archduke Albert (1598-1621) and Habsburg Political Culture in an Age of Religious Wars*, 249–251.

[201] Welzel, "Princeps Vidua, Mater Castrorum: The Iconography of Archduchess Isabella as Governor of the Netherlands"; Delfosse, "La Vierge comme protectrice des Pays-Bas méridionaux dans les livrets de pèlerinage Marial au XVIIe siècle," 1237–1238; W. Waterschoot, "Eenheid van kerk en staat bij de intrede van Kardinaal-Infant Ferdinand," *De Zeventiende Eeuw* 5 (1989): 21–28.

religious transformation. The role of Brussels as stage of religious performance and agency is most clearly demonstrated by means of the artistic and architectural performances that were created on the commission of various actors of the court nobility and the administrative elite, and offers and alternative to the well-studied mercantile elites of Antwerp. The urban society surrounding the court offers a unique possibility to study the mechanisms of the political-religious agenda of the court, which was primarily communicated, or rather performed, by means of the visual arts.[202]

Objectives

As I have tried to show in the previous paragraphs, the revised view on the history of the Catholic Revival in the Southern Netherlands has important implications for the history of art. The god-fearing impetus for the catholic revival suggests we have to reconsider the traditional view of religious art and architecture during the Counter Reformation as persuasive, and hence mainly in rhetorical terms. Therefore, I propose to redefine the "baroque piety" of religious patronage that generated works of art and architecture not as a strategy to persuade (in a rhetorical way), but to negotiate. That is, to negotiate with the divine in a continuous process of reconciliation, aiming to regain the Divine Grace by which the Netherlands were thought to have once been blessed. This negotiation with God took place within networks of social relations (nexuses) in which art and architecture functioned as agents of change.

I will develop this thesis in a series of case studies of religious art patronage in the city of Brussels. This is, however, not a social history of Brussels or of the Counter-Reformation. It therefore necessarirly leaves out a multitude of potential case studies (e.g. parish churches, female convents, non-regular orders, hospitals, etc.), and focuses instead on three instances of religious patronages that immediately intervened in the religious landscape of Brussels as "acts of faith" in a specific transformative momentum. These studies were guided by the art nexus in which artworks were embedded, but their genre is that of the thick description. They establish the various types of agency implied in them, thus reconstructing the original function of artworks in their historical context. I make use of a wide range of sources, published

[202] Duerloo considers the visual arts the most important means of communicating the political-devotional messages of the archdukes. Duerloo, "Pietas Albertina. Dynastieke vroomheid en herbouw van het vorstelijk gezag," 13.

and unpublished, and not just those of traditional art history (paintings, prints, art criticism), to put artworks in their original context and reconstruct their viewing audiences.

The method of Gell implies that, instead of selecting (artworks as) case studies because of their aesthetic value, or the appreciation they received in the culture that produced them, I depart from historical situations of crisis in which the actors involved felt the need to use artefacts to achieve a change in the situation. Three significant case studies are assembled in which different types of nexuses emerge. In consideration of the decisive influence of individual patrons on religious foundations, the cases focus alternatively on the patronage of an émigrée widow of a radical French *Ligueur*, lady of honour to the Infanta; of a counsellor from the *noblesse de robe*, honoured with the *habito* of Santiago; and of a monk from the most prominent (yet disgraced) noble family at the Brussels court.[203] They each decided to patronize male religious orders, whose contribution to the Counter Reformation and Catholic Reform is thought to have been crucial.[204]

These three cases were most innovative, both for contemporaries, and with regard to the current state of research: the first has not been studied, the second only cursory, and the third only from the perspective of the history of the order and person of the patron. Each of these cases shows a great degree of complexity, which I intend to examine in detail. By zooming in on these cases and contextualizing them (nearly) exhaustively, I intend to throw new light on the complex ways artworks and buildings acted on their viewers, and on the divine.

[203] In Brussels patronage was done mostly by the administrative elite and robe nobility (as compared to Antwerp, where more prestigious private chapels were founded by patrons belonging to the city's commercial elite). Patronage by the high nobility usually concentrated on parish churches (or monasteries) in their (main) rural seats, as they did not need to affirm their social status and had an "international" rather than a national outlook. See Léon Lock, "Die Thurn und Taxis in Brüssel. Ihre Gedenkkappelle, Grabmonumente und der Internazionalismus ihrer Strategien sozialer Differenzierung," in *Grab - Kult - Memoria. Studien zur gesellschaftlichen Funktion von Erinnerung*, ed. Carolin Behrmann, Arne Karsten, and Philipp Zitzlsperger (Cologne: Böhlau, 2007), 209–210.

[204] Marinus, "De Contrareformatie te Antwerpen, (1585-1676): kerkelijk leven in een grootstad," 154.

Set up of the book

The thesis is divided thematically[205] in three chapters, based on the traditional catholic distinction between three types of devotion, as established in the decree of the 25th session of the Council of Trent (1563): *on the intercession and invocation of saints, the honour paid to relics, and the legitimate use of images*.[206] The Tridentine decree does not deal primarily with art, but with how believers can establish contact with the divine. In the same vein, my thesis takes these devotional categories of saints, relics and images – which frequently overlap – as point of departure for an investigation of case studies, which are selected on the basis of their function as marker of change or transformation, according to contemporaries. Each chapter interprets artworks and their transformative agency in light of the art nexus of which they formed the centre.

In the first chapter I focus on "the intercession and invocation of saints." I will examine the foundation of the Minim convent on the site of a former brothel (1621). The result of a complex exchange of interests between the monks, the city Magistrate, and the court, this event was propagated with a moralizing rhetoric of change, tapping into the widespread fears of the wrath of God over the sin of promiscuity. By invoking the Virgin Mary as patron, the various agents involved in the foundation hoped to muster support for a process of urban renewal. By lack of sufficient funding, however, the architectural project of a new church did not materialize as planned. Nonetheless, specific cults were promoted at the monastery, each directed at a particular audience: that of the Holy Guardian Angel and of the Virgin of Loreto and her Holy House, replicating the sacred original in great detail. How did the monks and their patrons propagate sexual morals through the cult of saints and for what purpose?

The second chapter deals with "the legitimate use of images". The chapter examines the altar of the confraternity of St. Dorothea in the Carmelite church (1640), which was decorated in the middle of winter by temporarily transforming it with a multitude of flowers, alluding to the Saint's miracle of having summoned flowers from heaven just before her

[205] Instead of chronologically, as I do not primarily intend to make arguments pertaining to historical developments of continuity and change.

[206] Translation published in Marcia B. Hall, *The Sacred Image in the Age of Art : Titian, Tintoretto, Barocci, El Greco, Caravaggio* (New Haven; London: Yale University Press, 2011), 271–272; see also John W. O'Malley, "Introduction," in *Trent and All That: Renaming Catholicism in the Early Modern Era* (Cambridge MA: Harvard University Press, 2000), 1–15.

martyrdom. I will investigate how ornamenting the altar by means of innovative horticultural techniques (through an international network of horticultural experts) was to astonish the viewer as a miracle, while calling forth (the divine mission of) the conquest of Nature by Man's ingenuity and so restoring the ideal of Eternal Spring. Moreover, by manipulating Art's greatest rival Nature, it engaged in Counter-Reformation discourses on the nature of religious art and illusion. Was the spectacle, and the specific agency of flowers, to highlight just the Saint's conversion-narrative, or did it also implicitly address the doubts and concerns about religious images that had arisen during the reformation?

In the third chapter I discuss the "honour paid to relics". Thanks to the close ties of the Capuchin monk Carolus van Arenberg to the Holy See, the order got hold of eight complete bodies of Early Christian martyrs from the Roman catacombs. While the relics were being translated to the Netherlands, a fitting new church was built, funded by the Arenberg family, to be promoted as "mausoleum" for these relics (1652). After a procession of *translatio*, they were displayed in an elaborate artistic setting, which nonetheless aimed to highlight the order's love of poverty. What role did this new cult and the art and architecture of the church play in the political contexts of the court, the rivalries between the orders, and the emergence of Jansenism?

Taken together, these chapters will not only provide an abundance of new material, findings, interpretations, and insights, but also show that seventeenth century Brussels was the locus for many performative interventions of religious patronage in which art and architecture functioned as agents of change, with a relevance that goes well beyond the concerns of art history.

Chapter I – The Minim Friars and the Intercession and Invocation of the Saints

Decree of the 25th session of the Council of Trent:

> The holy Synod enjoins on all bishops, and others who sustain the office and charge of teaching, that, […] they especially instruct the faithful diligently concerning the intercession and invocation of saints; the honour (paid) to relics; and the legitimate use of images: teaching them, that the saints, who reign together with Christ, offer up their own prayers to God for men; that it is good and useful suppliantly to invoke them, and to have recourse to their prayers, aid, (and) help for obtaining benefits from God, through His Son, Jesus Christ our Lord, who is our alone Redeemer and Saviour; but that they think impiously, who deny that the saints, who enjoy eternal happiness in heaven, are to be invocated; or who assert either that they do not pray for men; or, that the invocation of them to pray for each of us even in particular, is idolatry; or, that it is repugnant to the word of God; and is opposed to the honour of *the one mediator of God and men, Christ Jesus*; or, that it is foolish to supplicate, vocally, or mentally, those who reign in heaven.[207]

In their attempt to restore Habsburg authority and Catholic piety in the Low Countries after the religious troubles of the sixteenth century, the archdukes Albert and Isabella gave the impetus to founding or endowing convents all over the Southern Netherlands. Even the archducal court in Brussels was modeled after monastic examples: as we have seen in the introduction, this was to underscore the God-given nature of the Habsburg rule. This image of the "holy court of Brussels" also acted as an example for society at large. However, while courtiers avidly imitated archducal piety, the reality of seventeenth-century city life often deviated from these courtly ideals. In Brussels, citizens complained to the magistrate about the lascivious and immoral scenes that occurred daily in the city's streets, which were thought to inflame the wrath of the Lord. When in 1616 a community of monks of the ascetic Minim order settled in the ill-reputed Bovendal-quarter of Brussels, the tide was to be turned. Supported by the court nobility, and

[207] *The Canons and Decrees of the Sacred and Œcumenical Council of Trent, Celebrated Under the Sovereign Pontiffs, Paul III., Julius III., and Pius IV. Translated by J. Waterworth.*, 233–234.

especially by the community of French exiles at the archducal court, they founded their monastery on the site of a former brothel.[208]

The Catholic preoccupation with sexual repression, especially during the period of the Counter Reformation, is something of a commonplace, as is the emphasis on the role of the elite in the expansion of religious infrastructure. Yet in this chapter I will examine the particular case of the Minim foundation in order to elucidate the function of urban intervention in the broad Counter-Reformation efforts to effect societal change, conceived not as an end in itself, but as a way of repairing relations with God. What was the agenda of the monks and their patrons, and what role did art and architecture play in their implementation?

To answer these questions, I will first discuss the introduction of the Minims in Brussels and their main patrons. Secondly, I will examine the textual accounts of the foundation ceremony of the new convent. I will then present a variety of sources relating to prostitution in the convent's vicinity, and discuss the events, actions and viewpoints of different groups prior and consecutive to the ceremony of laying the first stone, and the function of the cults promoted at the church. I will argue that the dissemination of good Christian behavior through the foundation of this convent resulted from a complex exchange of interests, in which the archducal court played a seminal role.

Founding a new convent

Founding a new religious house in the city of Brussels was no small feat. Before any religious community could settle, they needed the authorization of a litany of authorities. Since 1296, express approbation was needed from the Duke of Brabant, the Chapter of Saint Gudule, and the city's aldermen or *schepenen*.[209] In addition, assent was needed from the archbishop, the general and provincial superiors of the order, and the Holy See by means of the apostolic nuncio. The foundation of mendicant orders in particular was often strongly opposed by the common folk and rivaling orders, fearing the detrimental effects of begging and the unfair competition of exemptions.

[208] For the Bovendael quarter, see Henne and Wauters, *Histoire de la ville de Bruxelles*, 1845, vol. 3; 418–424; *Bouwen door de eeuwen heen in Brussel: inventaris van het cultuurbezit in België. Deel Brussel, Volume 1, Part 2* (Liège: Editions Mardaga, 1993), 421–423.

[209] Jacques van Wijnendaele, *Promenades dans les couvents et abbayes de Bruxelles* (Brussels: Éditions Racine, 2007), 49.

Proponents of foundations were mostly nobles and notables, while those in power, the prince or governor and the magistrate were often divided.[210] The Minim convent would turn out to be the last mendicant settlement to be allowed in Brussels and only on the strict condition that the monks would not harass the population by begging for money.[211]

Moreover most new religious houses founded in Brussels after 1585 had great difficulties finding a place to settle permanently.[212] The Capuchins founded their convent in 1586 in a remote backstreet, while the Jesuits led a nomadic existence from 1586 until their college finally opened in 1604 after tremendous difficulties finding suitable accommodation. The prototypical reformed Spanish order of Discalced Carmelite or Theresian nuns had been able to circumvent such troubles, since the Archdukes, who had invited them to the Netherlands, put a part of their palace gardens at their disposal for building a convent (1607-1611), which would be known as the "Carmel royal".[213] Their mother-superior Anne de Jesus, companion of St Theresa of Avila, had tried to bring the male branch of the Spanish Discalced Carmelites to Brussels as well, but these refused to expand beyond the territory of Spain.[214] Therefore Pope Paul V sent six Italian Discalced Carmelites to Brussels in 1610, led by the famous Thomas of Jesus. These monks were first lodged at the refuge of the Abbey of Orval by its French abbot, the famous court preacher Bernard de Montgaillard (1563-1628). The foundation was financed primarily by the most prominent court nobles and military commanders.[215] The Archdukes designated a controversial plot of

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[210] Marinus, "De Contrareformatie te Antwerpen, (1585-1676): kerkelijk leven in een grootstad," 73.

[211] During the periods before and after the reign of the Archdukes (1599-1621), the ducal power was transferred to the King of Spain, which immensely complicated the authorization process, requiring assent from the governor, the Council of State, the Privy Council, and the States of Brabant. This may explain why no new mendicant convents were founded after 1621.

[212] Luc Janssens, "Kloosterinplantingen," in *Het gewest Brussel: van de oude dorpen tot de stad van nu*, ed. Arlette Smolar-Meynart and Jean Stengers (Brussels: Gemeentekrediet, 1989), 146–61.

[213] See Terlinden, "Le Carmel Royal de Bruxelles, 1607-1957."

[214] See Marie-Anne de Jésus, *Anne de Jésus: fondatrice du Carmel en France et en Belgique* (Nouan-le-Fuzelier: Éditions du Lion de Juda, 1988).

[215] I.e. Rodrigo Niño y Lasso, Count of Añover; Charles-Bonaventura de Longueval, Count of Bucquoy; and Octavio Visconti, Count of Gamalerio; the famous commander of the Spanish army Marquess Ambrogio Spinola (1569-1630), and Charles-Alexandre, Duke of Croÿ-Havré (1581-1624). Also, contributions were made by Albert and Isabella; Louis de Velasco, Count of Salazar; the Counts of Tassis; and Franciscus Paz. Chapels and altars were founded by, inter alia, the Polish "palatine" Refradofsky (altar of St Joseph); Magdalena of Egmont, Princess of Chimay (altar of St Onophrius); and Hélène de Sermoise (altar of St Stephen). In addition there were tombs of the Arenberg and Bournonville families. Antonius Sanderus, *Antonii Sanderi presbyteri*

land for the convent to be built (1610-1614): the site of the former Culemborg palace, where during the troubles in 1566 the Compromise of the Nobles against the Spanish rule had been signed.[216] On the orders of the Council of Troubles, over which the Duke of Alva presided, the palace had been razed and the place was subsequently "excorcized" by sprinkling salt on the ground.[217] A monumental column was erected in its place as a warning sign, with the condition that no house should ever be built there.[218] This column was again demolished during the protestant occupation of the city (1579-1585). Up till the eighteenth century the highly charged history of the site was kept alive by the monks, who pointed out to visitors that on the site of the pond, which they avoided, the cursed conspiracy had taken place.[219] It could be asked whether the overwhelming contribution by court nobles, primarily of the Spanish "hawk" faction, to the foundation may perhaps be seen as a "new compromise of nobles", in which the agency of the situation was reversed by repeating it with new actors. However that may be, the fact that the site was contested made it suitable for founding a convent, while adding to a perception of "agency of change". The Minim convent was to inhabit a similarly undesired and controversial location as the Discalced Carmelites, however of a quite different nature.

Chorographia Sacra Brabantiae, sive celebrium aliquot in ea provincia abbatiarum, coenobiorum, monasteriorum, ecclesiarum, piarumque fundationum descriptio... et imaginibus aeneis illustrata. Tomus secundus, ed. Jacques Le Roy (The Hague: Christiaan van Lom, 1727), 343–346; Henne and Wauters, *Histoire de la ville de Bruxelles*, 1968, vol. 4; 8–9. On the powerful position of Añover, see Raeymaekers, *"Siempre un pie en palacio." Het hof en de hofhouding van de aartshertogen Albrecht en Isabella, 1598-1621*, chap. 6.

[216] Twelve nobles contributed to drafting the petition, more than thousand nobles signed it. On 5 April it was offered to the Governess Margareth of Parma. On 8 April a great banquet took place which initiated the Geuzen movement. See Peter Arnade, *Beggars, Iconoclasts, and Civic Patriots: The Political Culture of the Dutch Revolt* (Ithaca NY: Cornell University Press, 2008), 50–89.

[217] See the forthcoming dissertation by Jasper van der Steen, "Memory Wars in the Low Countries, 1566-1700" (University of Leiden).

[218] On 28 May 1568 the Duke of Alva ordered the Culemburg palace to be demolished. The column erected in its place contained a Latin inscription with the following meaning: "Under the reign of Philip II, very Catholic King of Spain, don Ferdinand Alvarez de Toledo, Duke of Alva, Governor of the Netherlands, had the house that stood in this place demolished to the ground, because there was a conspiration against the Roman Catholic church and His Majesty, in the year 1568". Walter d'Hoore, *Het Egmont-Arenbergpaleis te Brussel* (Tielt: Lannoo, 1991), 24–25; Edouard Laloire, *Histoire des deux hotels d'Egmont et du palais d'Arenberg (1383-1910)* (Brussels: Van Muysewinkel, 1952), 184–185.

[219] Gerard van Loon, *Beschryving der Nederlandsche historipenningen, Vol. 1* (The Hague: Christiaan van Lom, 1723), 115.

French exiles and the introduction of the Minims in Brussels

The friars of Saint Francis of Paola, popularly called Minims (the least of the faithful) were an order based on Franciscan spirituality founded in the late fifteenth century. The order distinguished itself by an extremely austere lifestyle, with permanent fasting (no meat, eggs, cheese or any dairy products). Having "charity" as their motto the Minim friars devoted themselves to the care of the outcasts of society: thieves, prisoners, children of prostitutes etc, and they were highly esteemed for their preaching. The order was especially popular in France, where its founder Saint Francis of Paola (1418-1507) (*fig*. 16) had spent the last 25 years of his life at court on the invitation of the French king Louis XI, and his successors Charles VIII, and Louis XII.[220] The future king François I was supposedly named after St Francis of Paola, after the saint had prophesized to his pregnant mother Louise de Savoy that she would give birth to a king of France. When Louis XII died without a male heir in 1515 this prophecy became true. The Infanta Isabella descended from this King through her mother Elisabeth of Valois.

Politically, the Minim order would in the seventeenth century become closely attached to the French Crown, and its obedience to the Most Christian King often took precedence over that to the Papal authority. In Rome the order was deployed as an extension of "gallican" or French national interests.[221] Many Minims cultivated learning and some of them greatly contributed to the scientific revolution of the seventeenth century, such as the mathematician and "father of acoustics" Marin Mersenne (1588-1648), a close friend of René Descartes, and his student the mathematician and painter Jean-François Niceron[222] (1613-1646), who specialized in optics and anamorphic art (*fig*. 17-19).[223]

The first Minim convent in the Netherlands was founded in Antwerp in 1614, by a group of Scottish Minims under the patronage of the Genoese

[220] P.J.S. Whitmore, *The Order of Minims in Seventeenth-Century France* (The Hague: Martinus Nijhoff, 1967), 3–4.
[221] Ibid., 100.
[222] Niceron's principal work is Jean François Niceron, *La perspective curieuse, ou magie artificielle des effets merveilleux: de l'optique, catoptrique, dioptrique* ... (Paris: Pierre Billaine, 1638); on Niceron, see Whitmore, *The Order of Minims in Seventeenth-Century France*, 155–162; Agostino De Rosa, *Jean François Nicéron. Perspective, Catoptric and Artificial Magic* (Rome: Aracne edizioni, 2013); Kirsti Andersen, *The Geometry of an Art: The History of the Mathematical Theory of Perspective from Alberti to Monge* (New York: Springer, 2007), 452–456.
[223] For publications by Belgian Minims, see Carlo De Clercq, "Oeuvres imprimées des Minimes de la province Belge, 4," *De Gulden Passer*, no. 1–2 (1961): 174–75.

merchant Agostino Balbi.[224] However, the Archdukes were displeased with the Scots because some of them had supposedly "once lived licentiously".[225] Soon, a new group of Minims was invited from France. The above-mentioned Bernard de Montgaillard, abbot of Orval (*fig*. 20), was instrumental in introducing these French Minims to Brussels.[226] This prominent member of the French community of ex-Ligueurs, or radical catholic militants, at the Brussels court had once been confessor to the French King Henry III and Catherine de Medicis (grandmother of the Infanta Isabella), and became the favourite preacher of Archduke Albert. Montgaillard drew large crowds and was famous for his ability to convert great numbers of Protestants.[227]

During the religious troubles of the late sixteenth century in France, the Catholic League was a radical group of catholic militants, who wished to extirpate Protestantism in France and who opposed the "politiques", who had a more conciliatory stance.[228] Members of the League were fiercely opposed to this laxity, and developed a fundamentally different concept of the relation between church and state. Whereas "politiques" strove towards a "church within the state", the "ligueurs" could only conceive of a "state within the church".[229] This may seem like a matter of nuance, but it was of major importance to them, since they conceived of the Monarchy as an adumbration of the Heavenly Kingdom, where Christ was king. The league's political-religious ideals were most closely reflected by the conception of

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[224] Marinus, "De Contrareformatie te Antwerpen, (1585-1676): kerkelijk leven in een grootstad," 178–179.

[225] I.e. John Brown or Joannes Bruno Scotus (1569-1645) and John Francis Maitland or Metellano (+1625). Brown was fluent in Eastern languages and taught Hebrew in Avignon and Paris. With his sermons, he managed to convert many Jews to Catholicism. However he was illregarded by the Infanta and the French Minims. Bernard de Meester de Ravestein, *Correspondance du nonce Giovanni-Francesco Guidi di Bagno: (1621-1627)* (Brussels: Palais des Académies, 1938), 225–226.

[226] See Paul Bergmans, "Montgaillard," *Biographie Nationale* 15 (1899): 169–74.

[227] Ibid., 170.

[228] Mack P. Holt, *The French Wars of Religion, 1562-1629* (New York, 1995), 149–150; see also the monumental two volume study by Denis Crouzet, *Les guerriers de Dieu: La violence au temps des troubles de religion (vers 1525-Vers 1610)* (Seyssel: Champ Vallon, 1990); and Racaut, *Hatred in Print: Catholic Propaganda and Protestant Identity during the French Wars of Religion*.

[229] The concerns of the ligueurs in exile were the following: 1) Loyalty to religion (its defense is a categorical imperative and a question of justice), 2) Loyalty to the monarchy (on the condition that the prince is loyal to faith and pope, from which he derives legitimacy), 3) Anti-war (in the Thirty Years War they strive for peace with the Empire/Spain). For them, there were two types of society: natural and monstruous. They aim not to disturb the order, but to restore it. Robert Descimon and José J. Ruiz Ibanez, *Les ligueurs de l'exil: le refuge catholique français après 1594* (Seyssel: Champ Vallon, 2005), 255–256.

monarchy and state as promoted by the Habsburgs. During the conflict the Spanish King Philip II had supported the cause of the League, and their staunch catholic ideas of state resulted in the logical conclusion that it would be better to betray country and king, than the True Faith.

In 1589 their adversary Henry IV ascended the French throne, who was not only a member of the Bourbon branch of the royal family, but a Calvinist who had converted to Catholicism to become king ("Paris vaut bien une messe"). In the ensuing four years of war the League was mostly defeated. Especially after the Edict of Nantes in 1598, which granted Protestants some degree of religious freedom, many "ligueurs" chose a voluntary exile in the Spanish Netherlands. Refusing to serve a King who they considered a heretic, some ligueurs had even supported claims of the Spanish Infanta Isabella, whose mother was a Valois, on the throne of France.[230] Consequently a large number of ex-ligueurs gathered around the court of the Archdukes, choosing to serve their hoped-for queen at her court in Brussels. The most prominent of these French exiles was Charles de Lorraine, duke of Aumale (1555-1631), who had fled France after being accused of a plot against Henry IV.[231] His residence, the former palace of Granvelle, formed the centre of the French community in Brussels. As a member of the Guise family, a younger branch of the House of Lorraine, which claimed descendance from Charlemagne and therefore rights on the French throne, Aumale had once been a marriage candidate for the Infanta Isabella (as projected King and Queen of France). He therefore had a special position at the court of the Archdukes.[232] In 1615 Aumale founded a Minim convent nearby his palace in Anderlecht, close to Brussels.[233]

The new Minim convent of Anderlecht would act as springboard to the city of Brussels. Shortly after its foundation, the monks write to the Brussels magistrate that they have been "called to the city of Brussels by several

[230] Isabella was however betrothed to her cousin Albert at the deathbed of her father in 1598, with the Spanish Netherlands as dowry.
[231] A.M. van den Haute, "Le duc Charles d'Aumale et l'installation des pères Minimes dans la région bruxelloise," *Le patriote illustré* 65, no. 26 (1950): 772–.
[232] It is often thought he betrothed his eldest daughter Marie to Ambrogio Spinola, but this is not sure. Descimon and Ruiz Ibanez, *Les ligueurs de l'exil: le refuge catholique français après 1594*, 227.
[233] Ibid., 230; on this monastery, see Marcel Jacobs, *Anderlecht anno 1775* (Brussels, 1993), 264–270.

devote persons, in order to preach, hear confessions and visit the sick".[234] However, they complained that because of the great distance and bad roads during the winter season, the monks were often forced to stay in the city overnight, either with friends or "in public hostels of little convenience and decency to their profession". Therefore they pleaded to be allowed to found a permanent convent in the city. The Minims obtained this permission in April 1616, when a group of supporters pledged to fund the convent. Bernard de Montgaillard led this group of supporters. On the request of the magistrate, Montgaillard accommodated his house as lodging for the monks for three years while they had not yet found a permanent place in the city,[235] and in the convent's foundation act (24 April 1616) he is mentioned as the "principal and first motive to call and introduce the order of Saint Francis of Paola in Brussels, and to bring the monks to preach there".[236]

The newly introduced group of distinguished French preachers was an immediate success at the archducal court.[237] Their eloquence in French must have appealed to the French exiles as well as to the indigenous, mostly French-speaking nobility, by providing a complement to the predominantly Spanish and Italian court preachers.[238] According to Sanderus the French Minim Jean le Sauvage first preached in the church of the Discalced Carmelites, which was quite large, yet the crowds that gathered to hear his sermons were four times larger than the church could contain.[239] As we shall see, the reason for this great public acclaim was the insistence of the monks on the relation between voluptuousness and heresy. Their preaching against fleshly sins held the promise of countering the Reformation, and repairing the ties with heaven.[240]

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[234] ARAA, Eccl. Arch., 12037, 9 April 1616: authorisation of magistrate to found minim convent in Brussels, in reaction to petition (copy of 11 February 1618). See Henne and Wauters, *Histoire de la ville de Bruxelles*, 1845, vol. 3; 418–425.

[235] ARAA, Eccl. Arch., 12118, 20 April 1616: request magistrate to B. de Montgaillard.

[236] ARAA, Eccl. Arch., 12074, 24 April 1616, f. 1recto

[237] The popularity of the Minims may also be inferred from the fact that on 15 June 1628, Archbishop Jacques Boonen issued a decree against beggars who passed themselves off as Minims by wearing the Minim habit. AAMB, *Archiepiscopalia Mechliniensia*, reg. 11, f. 90recto.

[238] E.g. the Franciscans, Dominicans, and Discalced Carmelites.

[239] Antonius Sanderus, "Coenobium Bruxellense Ordinis PP. Minimorum S. Francisci de Paula, brevi chorographia et imagine aenea illustratum," in *Chorographia Sacra Brabantiae, Vol. 3*, 2nd ed. (The Hague: Christiaan van Lom, 1727), 44. The rare first edition of Sanderus' description of the Minim convent was published in Brussels in 1662 by Peter de Dobbeleer. I will here use the edition of 1727.

[240] This argument is also used in the only surviving sermon of Bernard de Montgaillard, *Le soleil eclipsé, ou discours sur la vie et mort du Serenissime Archiduc Albert* (Brussels: Hubert Anthoine, 1622), 77.

The principal patron of the Brussels Minim convent was Hélène de Sermoise, widow of Nicolas de Rieux, a noted "Ligueur" who had been executed after the victory of Henry IV in 1594.[241] After this tragic event Hélène de Sermoise emigrated to the Habsburg Netherlands.[242] Even though her late husband was completely rehabilitated by King Henry IV, she chose to live in Brussels, in her own words, "so she would not live there where her husband had found an ignominious death and where she was victim of persecution by his enemies".[243] At the Brussels court, Hélène de Sermoise was welcomed heartily: she obtained a pension from the Spanish king as well as the honour to serve the Infanta Isabella as a lady in waiting (*dueña de honor*).[244] She was open-handed with religious patronage of the Brussels Augustinians in 1609 (through the agency of Bernard de Montgaillard),[245] and in 1614 she donated a private chapel dedicated to her patron St Stephen, with a painting in a golden frame, in the new church of the Discalced Carmelites.[246]

Probably on the counsel of Montgaillard, and inspired by the example of Aumale, Hélène de Sermoise in 1616 donated the large sum of 16,000 guilders to build a Minim convent in Brussels, on the condition that she would be honoured as its founder.[247] Thus she gave her piety a lasting form,

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[241] Nicolas de Rieux had been governor of Laudun and the castle of Pierrefonds during the French religious troubles. He was executed in Compiègne in 1594. On the heroic deeds of Nicolas de Rieux and his rehabilitation by Henri IV, see Stanislas Prioux, "Communication sur le sieur de Rieux, ligueur, et sur la réhabilitation de sa mémoire par Henri IV," in *Memoires lus à la Sorbonne: histoire, philologie et sciences morales* (Paris: Impr. impériale, 1864), 159–71.

[242] She arrived in the Netherlands in 1595. Descimon and Ruiz Ibanez, *Les ligueurs de l'exil: le refuge catholique français après 1594*, 83.

[243] ARAA, Eccl. Arch., 12076, 24 October 1620: testament of H. de Sermoise.

[244] I have not found her in the study on the household of Isabella as Governess of Birgit Houben, however the documentation on which this study is based is not complete. Houben, *Wisselende gedaanten: het hof en de hofhouding van de landvoogden Isabella Clara Eugenia (1621-1633) en de Kardinaal-Infant Don Fernando van Oostenrijk (1634-1641) te Brussel*. As of 1598, a source reports that "she lived together as friends with Madame de Barbançon", another noblewoman at the Brussels court. Descimon and Ruiz Ibanez, *Les ligueurs de l'exil: le refuge catholique français après 1594*, 83.

[245] ARAA, Eccl. Arch., 12075, 24 November 1609.

[246] ARAA, Eccl. Arch., 12075, 22 November 1614.

[247] ARAA, Eccl. Arch., 12104, 29 April 1616: foundation act of the Minim convent by an anonymous benefactor (=Hélène de Sermoise). The convent was to be equipped for 6 monks during her life and 10 after her death. Sanderus mentions 23 June 1616 as the date of foundation. Sanderus, "Coenobium Bruxellense Ordinis PP. Minimorum S. Francisci de Paula," 40–41. On 25 July 1620 the provincial chapter of the Minims granted patent for the foundation of H. de Sermoise. On the influence of the Duke of Aumale, see Descimon and Ruiz Ibanez, *Les ligueurs de l'exil: le refuge catholique français après 1594*, 230.

much analogous to the pious women or *dévots* who founded reformed convents in Paris around the same time.[248] Yet according to the foundation act, "She, for several good reasons, does not wish that it is presently known that she is foundress of the Minim Friars […]".[249] The Minim chronicler Lanovius also mentions that "for many years we restrained ourselves by suppressing the Foundress' name, the disclosure of which she had declared strictly forbidden."[250] Sanderus adds that this was a sign of her typically female virtues of humility and modesty,[251] yet she may also have had strategic motives, for instance in dealing with landowners.[252]

The founding act stipulated that the church and its high altar were to be consecrated to Our Lady and the protomartyr St Stephen, because of Hélène de Sermoise's special devotion to these saints.[253] She also founded a mass in honour of St Helen. Her last will was recorded on 23 June 1622.[254] Since the Minim friars had not yet reached an agreement with the authorities (i.e. the chapter of St Gudule) on burials in their church, she founded a burial chapel in the parish church of the nobility, Our Lady ter Zavel (Sablon), just in case.[255] Hélène de Sermoise passed away on 24 October 1623,[256] shortly after an agreement had been reached with St Gudule.[257] So she was buried in

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[248] See Diefendorf, *From Penitence to Charity: Pious Women and the Catholic Reformation in Paris*.

[249] ARAA, Eccl. Arch., 12074

[250] Franciscus Lanovius, *Chronicon Generale Ordinis Minimorum* (Paris: Sebastien Cramoisy, 1635), 480. "[...] ad annos plures nostri se continuerunt, suppresso interim Fundatricis nomine quod ipsa enunciari serio vetuerat."

[251] Sanderus, "Coenobium Bruxellense Ordinis PP. Minimorum S. Francisci de Paula," 41. "[…] suppresso interim Fundatricis nomine, quod enuntiari pro sua humilitate modestiaque serio ipsa inhibuerat." The practice of these virtues was encouraged in the circle of court ladies in the retinue of the Infanta, to which Hélène de Sermoise belonged (see Jean Terrier, *Portraicts des SS vertus de la Vierge: contemplées par feue S.A.S.M. Isabelle Clere Eugenie Infante d'Espagne*, ed. Cordula van Wyhe (Glasgow: Department of French, University of Glasgow, 2002). Another court lady, Marguerite de Lalaing, countess of Berlaymont, founded a convent for noble girls in 1626/27. See J. Schrygens, *Berlaymont: le cloistre de la Reyne de tous les Saints* (Brussels: Albert de Wit, 1928).

[252] Or perhaps Hélène de Sermoise wanted to let the entire honour of the religious foundation go to the Archdukes, who were to place the first stone of the new convent in 1621.

[253] ARAA, Eccl. Arch., 12074; Lanovius, *Chronicon Generale Ordinis Minimorum*, 481. "Nomen inditum à B. *Virgine* ac S. *Stephano* protomartyre, pro Fundatricis voto et pacto.

[254] ARAA, Eccl. Arch., 12076, 23 June 1622: testament H. de Sermoise.

[255] ARAA, Eccl. Arch., 12075.

[256] ARAA, Eccl. Arch., 12077; Sanderus, "Coenobium Bruxellense Ordinis PP. Minimorum S. Francisci de Paula," 42.

[257] Antoine Lefebvre, "Chronique du couvent des Minimes (KBR Ms. III 1338)," 1730, f. 2recto.

her own Minim church, dressed in the Minim habit, after obsequies that according to the chronicler Lanovius "defied description."[258]

Another French exile kindly disposed towards the Minims was Julien le Goix, a close friend of Hélène de Sermoise and chaplain in the church of the Carmelite nuns. As holder of an "office d'élu" as royal Counsellor in Paris, he seems to have played a role in the Paris uprising of 1588, the "Day of the Barricades", which was secretly coordinated in detail by the ambassador of Philip II, Bernardino de Mendoza.[259] Like Hélène de Sermoise, Julien le Goix also received a pension from the Spanish King, presumably in gratitude for services rendered to Spain. According to his will of 1616,[260]

> "[…] he had often risked his life, estate, and goods defending the Church during the religious troubles in France, and especially in Paris, where he was born and from where he had rather left, retreating to the Netherlands, than to bend ever so slightly to anything, that might offend the integrity of his faith, the right and respect of the true religion, or the duty of his conscience."[261]

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[258] Lanovius, *Chronicon Generale Ordinis Minimorum*, 481.

[259] See De Lamar Jensen, *Diplomacy and Dogmatism: Bernardino de Mendoza and the French Catholic League* (Cambridge MA: Harvard University Press, 1964).

[260] ARAA, Eccl. Arch., 12172, 26 September 1616: testament of J. Le Goix, designating the Brussels Minims as his sole heirs. The documents left by Julien le Goix contain many important pieces pertaining to (his role in) the French religious wars. The content of his will was not revealed until his death in 1625. Lanovius, *Chronicon Generale Ordinis Minimorum*, 480. ARAA, Eccl. Arch., 12081: house of mourning 1625

[261] ARAA, Eccl. Arch., 12172, 26 September 1616: testament of J. Le Goix. « Comparant en sa personne Monsieur Julien le Goix cidevant eslue Conseiller du Roy en l'eslection de Paris, Quartenier d'icelle ville, et à pnt pbre [à present presbyter], lequel poussé de longtemps d'une sainte inspiration de pourvueoir au bien et repos de son Ame, et disposer de ses biens et moyens à l'honneur et gloire de Dieu, à l'etretien du Culte et service de la foy, et Religion de l'Eglise Catholique Apostolique et Romaine, pour le soustien et deffence de laquelle il a souvent exposé sa vie, ses estate et biens pendant les troubles et persecutions de l'Eglise en france, et speciallement en la ville de Paris, d'ou il est natif, et d'ou il a mieux aymé sortir, et se refugier aux pays bas, que flechir tant soit peu a chose aulcune, qui peult offenser ny l'integrité de sa foy, ny le bien et respect de la vraye religion, ny le debvoir de sa conscience : desirant que du reste de sesdites biens, qui luy sont demeuréz du naufrage, la meilleure partie soit employée et offerte à Dieu pour faire une fondation a perpetuité, à son nom et intention pour le bien de son Ame, et pour la remission de celles des honorables personnes le Sieur Pierre le Goix Seigneur de la Court du Pontyblon [Pont-Yblon], et Dame Marguerite le Conte, iadis ses feuz pere et mere, de sa bien-aymée seur [...] »

Julien le Goix was ordained priest in Antwerp in 1609.[262] Le Goix was member of the third order of Minims and founded a chapel in honour of St. Francis of Paola in 1624, in which he was buried in 1625.[263]

Curiously, we have no clear evidence of patronage of the Brussels Minims by the entourage of the royal French exiles, Queen Marie de Medicis and her younger son, Gaston d'Orleans, who fled to Brussels in 1631. The frivolous manners and predilection for courtly love of these French courtiers met with some inconvenience at the stern and sacred court of the Infanta.[264] Their apparent lack of engagement with the austere French Minims may perhaps also be explained by the close ties of the monks and their ex-ligueur patrons with the rivaling Guise family.

The support of the court

First established in Brussels, the Minim friars were lodged in one of the two houses of Hélène de Sermoise, the former house of the famous sixteenth century anatomist Andreas Vesalius (1514-1564). But in order to settle permanently, and to build the convent and church for which they had received her rich donation, they needed adjacent property. This turned out to be difficult, although between 1617 and 1620 prominent courtiers made several important financial donations.[265] Like the Antwerp Minims, the friars in Brussels received little or no subsidy from the city Magistrate.[266] Neither do the Archdukes seem to have contributed financially, but they supported

[262] J. van den Nieuwenhuizen, "De wijdingsregisters van het bisdom Antwerpen (1570-1611)" (Antwerp: Kathedraalarchief Antwerpen, 2008), 205, http://www.provant.be/binaries/Wijdingsregisters_bisdomAntwerpen_1570_1611_V_2_tcm7-63281.pdf.

[263] ARAA, Eccl. Arch., 12172, act of 13 May 1624. Founding a chapel costed 1,600 guilders.

[264] Cordula van Wyhe, "Between Chastity and Passion: The Impact of the French Exiles on the Cult of Courtly Love at the Brussels Court in the 1630s," in *Passion, Affekt und Leidenschaft in der frühen Neuzeit, Wolfenbütteler Arbeiten zur Barockforschung, Vol. II*, ed. Johann A. Steiger and Ralph G. Bogner (Wiesbaden: Harrassowitz, 2005), 951–80; see also Henrard, *Marie de Médicis dans les Pays-Bas 1631-38*.

[265] I.e. Charles-Bonaventure de Longueval, Count of Bucquoy (1571-1621), confidant of Albert and right hand of Spinola, who died as a hero on the battlefield during the Thirty Years War (ARAA, Eccl. Arch., 12096. April 1617, donation); François de Rye, doyen de Besançon (1566-1637), first almoner of the Archdukes and from 1623 archbishop of Caesarea (ARAA, Eccl. Arch., 12097, 26 May 1618, promise of donation); Claude de Rye, baron de Balençon and *gentilhombre da cámara* (ARAA, Eccl. Arch., 12098, 1619, donation of 1600 guilders for food of the monks); and Ernest Woislawski (Boislafski), *ayuda da cámara* (ARAA, Eccl. Arch., 12099, 1619, foundation of a mass for the late Jacques Touchart, also *Ayuda de chambre de leurs Altesses*).

[266] Marinus, "De Contrareformatie te Antwerpen, (1585-1676): kerkelijk leven in een grootstad," 81.

the Minims by other means of patronage such as giving authorizations, pressing secular and ecclesiastical authorities to cooperate, and mustering support among courtiers.[267]

In late 1619 or early 1620,[268] a fundraising was held at court in which individual courtiers could subscribe to give alms for acquiring the "site of a church for the Minim friars".[269] This list, drawn in Spanish, survives and includes all the great as well as many minor names of officials in the Archducal household. Some nobles gave away "un tercio", one third of their court salary, and Jean de Croÿ, Count of Solre even gave two third.[270] Together they raised 5,300 guilders, a very high amount, which was however barely enough to buy the needed property: a brothel on Blaesstraat on the offset of the notorious Bovendal street (*fig*. 21, 22). That the Minims and their patrons nonetheless had faith in the enterprise is shown by the fact that Bernard de Montgaillard on 24 January 1620 donates money for the foundation of a chapel in the church to be built.[271] Eventually in 1622 it came to a settlement with the brewer's widow, a tough negotiator who owned five little houses, which obstructed the building plans, after intervention by the Magistrate and the Council of Brabant.[272]

The foundation ceremony of 1621

Even before all the property needed was acquired, a great foundation ceremony was mounted to consecrate the fundaments of the church by

[267] ARAA, Eccl. Arch., 12038, 13 June 1617: authorisation Archbishop Hovius. ARAA, Eccl. Arch., 12120, 20 June 1617: patent archdukes to acquire land for constructing convents in Brussels and Anderlecht. ARAA, Eccl. Arch., 12119, 19 December 1617: "droit de mutation" for a house owned by the princess of Mansfelt, in favour of convent. ARAA, Eccl. Arch., 12063, 7 April 1618: authorisation archdukes for Minims to settle anywhere in the country.

[268] It may be significant that this fundraising took place shortly after the Archdukes had repressed the opposition of the Nine Nations (artisan guilds) against taxation and repression by the Spanish army, an uprising known as "guerre du gigot". See Karin van Honacker, "Reorganisatie in Brussel of de strijd om de privileges. Het conflict tussen de ambachten en de aartshertogen van 1619," *Bijdragen tot de geschiedenis* 73 (1990): 299–313.

[269] ARAA, Eccl. Arch., 12171: "Las personas que dan limosna para comprar sitio para fabricar yglesia para los padres minimos"

[270] I am indebted to Luc Duerloo and Dries Raeymaekers for helping me to make sense of this document. For the household of the Archdukes Albert and Isabella, see Raeymaekers, *"Siempre un pie en palacio." Het hof en de hofhouding van de aartshertogen Albrecht en Isabella, 1598-1621*.

[271] ARAA, Eccl. Arch., 12173. 24 January 1620, foundation of chapel dedicated to St. Bernard by Bernard de Montgaillard, Abbot of Orval. On 2 May 1623 Montgaillard makes another donation of 1,600 guilders.

[272] ARAA, Eccl. Arch., 12121.

means of the traditional laying of the first stone.[273] On 6 April 1621 the court and the city convened for this ritual. At this occasion, special reference was made to the particular circumstance of replacing a brothel by a convent. The ceremony is described in the chronicle of the order by the French Minim Lanovius of 1635,[274] which was paraphrased and expanded by Antonius Sanderus in his chorography of the convent of 1662.[275] Both texts lay great emphasis on the depraved origin of the place. Lanovius stresses the great expenses and difficulties the monks had to overcome to acquire a house that was "certainly large and spacious, yet filthy and infamous as a public brothel […]", and how the "good people" rejoiced over the ejection of the "impure scum" and the erection of an "august sanctuary" in its place. In the paraphrase by Sanderus:

> "[...] after the Fathers had had a housing need there […], they bought themselves a house, which was certainly large and spacious, yet filthy and infamous as a public brothel, and it cost them grave expenses and (not surprisingly) the greatest difficulties to acquire it. As soon as the impure scum was thrown out (to the joy of all good people), out of piety they erected an august sanctuary. When the infect halls had been destroyed, they began to prepare the place for its destination as a religious domicile and sacred building [*sacra aedes*] in 1621, and digging out the foundations of a church, of which the first stone was laid by the Most Serene Infanta Isabella Clara Eugenia, and the 6th of April was selected and determined for this occasion by the Archduke Albert, who predicted it would be a clear day between rain and storm, the last opportunity for him to leave the palace, which prophesy of the pious Prince would prove to be true, as affirmed by the events. Laying the stone in the foundation (by the Princes, assisted by the court and innumerable masses of people) the solemn rite was blessed by the very distinguished and honourable Lucius Sanseverino, Archbishop of

[273] On rituals of consecration and dedication, see Delbeke and Schraven, "Foundation, Dedication and Consecration in Early Modern Europe. An Introduction"; Germonprez, "Foundation Rites in the Southern Netherlands: Constructing a Counterreformational Architecture"; Morel and Germonprez, "A Cornerstone in Architectural History: The Dedication of St. Peter's Abbey Church, Ghent, 1629"; Morel, "Glorious Temples or Babylonic Whores: The Architecture of Church Buildings in England 1603-1736 according to Consecration Sermons."
[274] Lanovius, *Chronicon Generale Ordinis Minimorum*, 480–481.
[275] Sanderus, "Coenobium Bruxellense Ordinis PP. Minimorum S. Francisci de Paula," 42.

Salerno, apostolic envoy (nuncio) who was afterwards created cardinal by pope Gregory XV."[276]

Sanderus than adds the inscription on the first stone (not found in Lanovius), which reads as follows:

Quae fuerant Veneris, nunc fiunt Virginis aedes

[Where used to be the shrine of Venus, will now be that of the Virgin][277]

It should be pointed out that an inscription on a foundation stone like this, though cited in Sanderus' chorography of the convent, was not visible on the façade of the building and therefore not primarily intended for human eyes, but rather for the allseeing eye of God.

Sanderus proceeds to cite another poem, which he must have noted down when he visited the convent, as it is not found in Lanovius either:

"Which inscription (of which I wrote this) may be explained by these verses from the monastery of the fathers:

Behold where lascivious Cupid shook his arrows

(arrows, through which body and soul perished in a loathsome way.)

Behold here now triumphs Jesus through his virginal love;

What used to belong to Venus, now only belongs to the Virgin.

Before the impious arrows gave death, now the pious arrows give life;

Arrows through which the body glows with a chaste love.

What before from unclean veins with a profusion of blood

became dirty through crime, is now made a milk white road.

Venus is now the Virgin Mary, Cupid has become Christ;

His bow will strike our veins

Happy bows, happy darts, happy

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[276] Ibid. "Verùm posteaquam in ea, cujus supra memini, domo aliquandiu Patres egissent, aream ipsi domui inferiorem, amplam certè ac spatiosam ast publico lustro foedam et infamem, gravibus expensis, summisque (quod facile est conjicere) difficultatibus sibi comparârunt; ut exactà impurissimâ faece (quod boni omnes gestiebant) augustum pietatis Sacrarium excitarent. Disjectis ergo foetidis fornicibus, locus Religioso domicilio et Sacrae Aedi anno 1621 coepit designari, effossisque Ecclesiae fundamentis, primarius in ea lapis à Serenissima Infanta D. Isabella Clara Eugenia missus est, delectâ statutâque ad id die VI mensis Aprilis ab Archiduce Alberto, qui in pluvia tempestate serenam eam diem fore, sibique postremam quâ posset Palatio egredi, pientissimus Princeps divino quodam afflatu praedicebat, ut eventus comprobavit.
Mittendum in fundamenta lapidem (assistentibus cum Aula sua et innumera populi multitudine, Principibus) solemni ritu benedixit Illustrissimus et Reverendissimus D. Lucius Sanseverinas, Archiepiscopus Salernitanus, per Belgium Nuntius Apostolicus ac postmodum S. R. E. Cardinalis à Gregorio XV creatus."

[277] Ibid.

You, whoever does not receive the flames from elsewhere.[278]

The last sentence is in all likelihood a reference to what was known (depending on one's perspective) as the Spanish or French disease: syphilis.

After citing this poem Sanderus takes up the description by Lanovius, proceeding to mention how the Spanish ambassador Alfonso de la Cueva and a large delegation of the city magistrates were congratulated with the "common good, of very religious men having removed this public shame from this bad place, and having consecrated this neighbourhood of scoundrels to the holy cult."[279]

The aggressive rhetoric of both texts clearly marks the rite of laying the first stone as a ritual in which all strata of society convene to witness the "exorcism" and intended transformation of a place that was polluted with sin. In the account by Sanderus, published fourty years after the event, material is added which interprets the event in terms of the invocation of the Virgin Mary. After all, the event celebrated the dedication of the church to Our Lady and St Stephen, yet the Virgin Mary was most suited to embody the transition of impurity to purity. During the Middle Ages, Marian churches were built on the sites of burnt down synagogues to put these places firmly under the protection of the patroness of the True Faith of Catholicism. Similarly, the Jesuit church in Ghent was founded in 1609 on the site of a house where a notorious heretic used to live.[280]

Rituals such as these, and the collective invocations of the Holy Virgin in Antwerp (1587) and Brussels (1625) may be seen as performances by means of which a societal change is constituted.[281] They also bear much in

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[278] Ibid. Poem in the Minim convent: "En ubi lascivus vibrabat tela Cupido/(Tela, quibus corpus foedè animusque perit.)/En hic virgineo nunc Jesus amore triumphat;/Virginis est, Veneris quod fuit ante, solum./Inpia mortem olim, nunc dant pia spicula vitam;/Spicula queis casto corpus amore calet./Quae quondam ex spurcis profuso sanguine venis./Crimine sorduerat, lactea facta via est./Virgo Maria Venus nunc est, Christusque Cupido;/In nostros artus illius arcus eat./Felices arcus, Felicia spicula, felix/Tu quisquis flammas non aliunde capis."

[279] Ibid. "[…] communi bono congratulabantur, quod publicum dedecus ab infami eo loco viri Religiosissimi amolirentur, et probrosam aream divino cultui inaugurarent."

[280] In 1591 the Jesuit College took residence in the Hof van Veere, the former house of the radical Calvinist Jan van Hembyse (1513-1584). The first stone of the Jesuit church of St Livinus was laid in 1609. Germonprez, "Foundation Rites in the Southern Netherlands: Constructing a Counterreformational Architecture," 292.

[281] In Antwerp, where the citizens had rebelled so openly against the Spanish king and catholic faith, the entire city was consecrated to the Virgin Mary in a solemn ceremony that was organized by the Jesuits (i.e. their Marian sodality) in 1587. On this occasion the city's mascot, a statue of the legendary local hero Brabo crowning the gable of the city hall was replaced by a statue of the Immaculate Virgin, as a sign of triumph over Protestant heresy and local pride. In Brussels a similar ceremony was held in 1625 when the Infanta Isabella, in her capacity as Governess

common with the rituals of exorcism performed in Rome during the pontificate of Sixtus V, in which Egyptian obelisks were replaced and "Christianized", thus creating a "symbolical topography" and marking a triumph over paganism (while implicitly recognizing the value of paganism as precursor of Christianity).[282] In the case of the Brussels Minim foundation, the opposition of Venus to Mary lent the event a distinct rhetorical poignancy. What were the intended aims of this strategy? In order to better understand this, I will now take a closer look at the problem of prostitution in Brussels.

The problem of prostitution

During the Middle Ages, prostitution was widely seen as a necessary evil, which was tolerated in order to prevent worse, such as the rape of honorable women. According to Saint Thomas Aquinas, "prostitution in towns is like the sewer in a palace; take away the sewers and the palace becomes an impure and stinking place".[283] Therefore, city governments did not criminalize prostitution, though they usually tried to contain it within certain areas. However, as urbanization continued, concerned citizens would increasingly complain of the pernicious influences it had on their children, and of related problems such as drunkenness, violence, or theft.[284]

During the religious troubles in the Netherlands, the Calvinists closed brothels and banned adultery in every city they controlled.[285] After the Catholic reconquest in 1585, Protestants would continue to blame Catholics

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representing the King of Spain, placed an image of Maria Pacis (Our Lady of Peace) on the façade of the Broodhuis or Maison du Roy opposite the city hall, invoking the protection of the Virgin over the city and the country against plague, hunger and war. Yet, in the context of the resumed war with the Republic after the expiration of the Twelve Years Truce (1609-1621), this ceremony had a completely different set of meanings. In the play they staged for the occasion, the Jesuits presented Isabella as a new Ark of Covenant. See Annick Delfosse, *La Vierge « Protectrice du Païs-Bas ». Instrumentalisations politiques et stratégies identitaires dans les Pays-Bas espagnols* (Turnhout: Brepols, 2005), chap. 1.

[282] Michael W. Cole, "Perpetual Exorcism in Sistine Rome," in *The Idol in the Age of Art: Objects, Devotions and the Early Modern World*, ed. Michael W. Cole and Rebecca Zorach (Farnham: Ashgate, 2009), 57–76.

[283] Ptolemy of Lucca and Thomas Aquinas, *On the Government of Rulers (De Regimine Principum)*, ed. James M. Blythe (Philadelphia PA: University of Pennsylvania Press, 1997), (Opuscula XX), lib. iv, cap. XIV.

[284] Paul de Win, *De schandstraffen in het wereldlijk strafrecht in de Zuidelijke Nederlanden van de middeleeuwen tot de Franse tijd bestudeerd in europees perspectief* (Brussels: Paleis der Academiën, 1991), 140.

[285] Thijs, *Van geuzenstad tot katholiek bolwerk: maatschappelijke betekenis van de kerk in contrareformatorisch Antwerpen*, 136–139.

for the traditional policy of (limited) tolerance.[286] To counter this criticism the Brussels magistrate issued a series of ordinances aiming to get the prostitution under control, but what was exactly the problem? In 1589 it was proclaimed that: "all house owners, who have let their house to anyone who keeps house nastily and scandalously, with whores or otherwise, except in the usual places that have been traditionally from old times been known as such, will have to make [these prostitutes] move out at once or at latest within eight days […]".[287] This is clearly a traditional measure of containment; the prostitutes themselves are not persecuted. Fines are imposed on the house owners,[288] and more severe punishments are reserved for those who act as pimps or procuresses: at the first offence they will be put on the scaffold, the second time they will be whipped and banished from the city's territory. Rather than repression, the central concern was the prevention of seduction into impurity, and its facilitation.

In 1595 another resolution was proclaimed, this time directed at additional categories of people who are involved in the prostitution business.[289] In this bill the magistrate also emphasized that "impurity like adultery and fornication" are to be held responsible for the disasters that strike the country, a direct result of calling down the wrath of God over adultery. To take away the causes of this divine anger, the city government advised prayer and good works, while at the same time proclaiming new penalties for adultery. Very high fines were distributed to married men who frequent brothels at daytime, "under the guise of just drinking a pint of beer".[290] At the third offense they were to be put on the scaffold and banished. It should be noted that not prostitution *as such* was thought to invoke the fury of God, but adultery and fornication by married people, as well as the luring of honourable women into unchastity. Therefore, containment was the central objective of government policies.

As we will see, this containment policy was taken up very literally. In early modern cities, rich and poor did not live in separate quarters. Usually,

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[286] Marinus, "De Contrareformatie te Antwerpen, (1585-1676): kerkelijk leven in een grootstad," 51–52, 72.
[287] "Het Groen Correctie-Boeck 1588-1597 (SAB Inv. XVIII)," n.d., f. 39recto–verso.
[288] The proceeds of which were to be divided equally among the lord, the city and the informer.
[289] F. Vanhemelryck, "De criminaliteit in de ammanie van Brussel van de late middeleeuwen tot het einde van het ancien regime (1404-1789)," *Verhandelingen van de Koninklijke Academie voor Wetenschappen, Letteren en Schone Kunsten van België. Klasse der Letteren* 43, no. 97 (1981): 157.
[290] Ibid.

the rich lived in straight, wide streets and the poor in narrow winding alleys.[291] This distinction can be seen clearly in the very detailed map of Brussels that was published by Martin de Tailly in 1640 (*fig*. 21). The straight street (Hoogstraat) with tall houses of well-to-do citizens contrasts sharply with the two side streets (Sweertstraat and Wayerstraat) where prostitution had traditionally been tolerated. The measures and penalties indicate that the government tolerated prostitution, as long as it remained within the boundaries of these bad streets. Yet these measures had little impact, and two years later (in 1597) the problem of adultery seemed to have only become worse, "each day inflaming the wrath of the Lord over this city even more".[292] In a new resolution by the Magistrate it is stated that:

> It is noted that the prostitutes living in the Bovendal quarter and in the Sweertstraat near the Hoogstraat within this city, are presenting themselves daily in large numbers in the latter street, showing and committing many inappropriate and indecent [acts], to the great disgrace and confusion of all people of honour, who pass through the aforementioned street, being a matter of very bad example and intolerable in such an open and straight street as is the aforementioned Hoogstraat, […][293]

Neighbours and passers-by complained about prostitutes soliciting, insulting and harassing honourable citizens. Fearing for the public image of their street and depreciation of their property, residents of the Hoogstraat forced the magistrate to take action once again. Thus, the lords decided to physically close off the two notorious alleys, expressly banning the prostitutes from the Hoogstraat. The newly constructed gates between these alleys and the Hoogstraat were opened and closed every morning and night by an officer.[294]

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[291] See Riitta Laitinen, *Cultural History of Early Modern European Streets* (Leiden; Boston: Brill, 2009).

[292] "Het Groen Correctie-Boeck 1588-1597 (SAB Inv. XVIII)," f. 508recto.

[293] Ibid., f. 507verso. "Alzoe men bevindt dat die lichte vrouwen woonende soe opt Bavendal als int Sweertstraetken neffens der Hoochstraate binnen deser stadt, hen daghelijckx opde selve strate in grooten getale zyn presenterende, thoonende ende bedryvende aldaer vele ongeschictheden ende onbetamelyckheden tot grooten schandale ende confusie van allen lieden van eeren, lancx den voirseide strate passerende, wesend een saeke van zeer quaden exempele ende nyet te tolereren in een alzulcken oepene rechte straete als is de voirseide hoochstraete, [...]"

[294] Mina Martens, *Histoire de Bruxelles* (Toulouse: Privat, 1976), 218; Henne and Wauters, *Histoire de la ville de Bruxelles*, 1845, 422; the officer, Jean Walschaert, was also active in the chamber of rhetoric Den Boeck. See Anne-Laure van Bruaene, *Om beters wille: rederijkerskamers en de stedelijke cultuur in de Zuidelijke Nederlanden (1400-1650)* (Amsterdam: Amsterdam University Press, 2008), 296, note 60.

A new start?

When on 6 April 1621 the Minim convent was solemnly founded at the site of a former brothel, this was an intervention of a very different nature. In a symbolically charged consecration rite, the Minim Friars, their benefactors, the Archdukes and the Magistrate, and foreign and ecclesiastical dignitaries (the Spanish ambassador de la Cueva, nuncio Sanseverino)[295] joined forces to make the convent foundation a statement of triumph over the evils that had taken place here. However, the real triumph still had to be earned. Therefore, the new inhabitants had to present themselves and their courtly patrons as antagonists of the whoremongers. This strategy was aimed particularly at the Magistrate, on which they heavily depended for authorisations, and at the court, for its donations. The perspective of the recommencement of the war after the expiration of the Twelve Years Truce in autumn 1621 must have made it all the more urgent to try to repel the wrath of God through a pious foundation such as this.

Shortly after the ceremony, the friars asked the magistrate to intervene in a dispute with a brewer's widow over the price of five little houses that still obstructed their building plans. They stress their noble intentions by saying that: "in order to even better effectuate their good plan […] they have chosen a very isolated place which has for a long time been very profane, […]".[296] The friars call to mind the laying of the first stone by the Archdukes and repeatedly refer to the "public benefit" of building a church "in a place that has been that profane".

The monks finally acquired the necessary property in 1622, and also received a large area of land for the convent garden from the Duke of Bournonville, who lived in the former Mansfelt palace on Wollendries, in the "good part" of the neighbourhood.[297] However, they were to be faced with another setback. The foundation ceremony had indeed turned out to be

[295] But in the absence of the new Archbishop Jacques Boonen (perhaps because he was not yet installed officially).

[296] ARAA, Eccl. Arch., 12121

[297] ARAA, Eccl. Arch., 12100, 20 September 1622: donation of land by the Duke of Bournonville (perhaps the "130 roeden landt" as mentioned in the convent chronicle by Lefebvre, "Chronique Du Couvent Des Minimes (KBR Ms. III 1338)," f. 4verso.) Sanderus, "Coenobium Bruxellense Ordinis PP. Minimorum S. Francisci de Paula," 49. On the Bournonvilles, see Marie de Villermont, *Grands seigneurs d'autrefois. Le duc et la duchesse de Bournonville et la cour de Bruxelles* (Brussels: Meester, 1904). Alexandre de Bournonville was the heroic governor of Valenciennes during the siege of 1656; another example of a military commander who patronized (and was interred in) the church of the Discalced Carmelites. See Bussers, "La famille de Bournonville et l'église des Carmes déchaussés à Bruxelles."

the last public appearance of the Archduke, who died 13 July 1621, as Sanderus (and also the nuncio)[298] did not fail to mention:

> "*Death, which knocks at the doors of all alike, be it the hovels of the poor or the towers of kings*[299], befell very cruelly on our matters, since that by all means best Prince and father (to whom we are devoted) was snatched away from the living on the 13th of July […], to the utmost grief of all, and indeed in this public grief the hands were withdrawn from the works, especially to the detriment of the roof, and not before the year 1624 were the works resumed, doubtlessly while our foundress, lady Hélène de Sermoise who had passed away, had legated means for that cause."[300]

From this time the work proceeded very quickly, and the convent building soon surpassed all others in height.[301] The building consisted of a massive block around a courtyard, sharply contrasting with the surrounding shacks (*fig*. 21). It would include a large refectory of a hundred feet in length, decorated with a cycle of stained glass windows by Abraham van Diepenbeek illustrating the life of St Francis of Paola.[302] Above this room

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[298] ASV, *Barberini Latini*, 6810, f. 91recto. De Vecchi, in a letter to Rome, 10 April 1621: "Il serenissimo Arciduca essendo passato bene della gotta questi giorni, è intervenuto sempre a I Divini officij, nella pnto settimana mag.e e martedi prossimo passato le loro AA. posero la prima pietra della chiesa, che nuovamente si [l]à da edificare in questa villa dai religiosi di S. Francesco di Paula." ("The most serene Archduke having been well with his gout over the last days, attended always the Divine Offices, […] and last Tuesday their Highnesses laid the first stone of the church, which is newly to be built up in this city by the religious of St Francis of Paola.")

[299] Horace *Odes*, 1.4.13-14

[300] Sanderus, "Coenobium Bruxellense Ordinis PP. Minimorum S. Francisci de Paula," 42. "At mors, quae aequo pulsat pede pauperum tabernas Regumque turres, importuna rebus nostris accidit, ipse quippe optimus Princeps, et Patrum (ut asservimus) apprime studiosus, ad XIII. Julii proximè sequentis (prout animus praesagierat) è vivis eripitur summon omnium luctu, adeoque in publico illo dolore manus ab opera amovenda fuit, cui praecipuum columen erat sublatum; nec ante annum 1624. manus operi denuò admota fuit, dum nimirum Illustrissima D. Helena Fundatrix ad eam causam bona sua moriens legâsset." Compare Lanovius, *Chronicon Generale Ordinis Minimorum*, 481. "Importune autem rebus nostri accidit, ut ipse optimus Princeps et nostrorum apprime studiosus, prout praesagierat animus, ad XIII. Mensis Julij proxime insequentis de medio tolleretur, in illo enim publico luctu destituendum opus fuit cui pracipuum columen erat subductum, nec ante annum 1624 repetitum fuit, postquam scilicet *Helena* Fundatrix ad eam rem bona sua moriens legavit."

[301] Sanderus, "Coenobium Bruxellense Ordinis PP. Minimorum S. Francisci de Paula," 42. "Resumptum itaque opus, brevi ad altitudinem assurrexit, ut alterum vix huic par coenobium inveniatur, supposita tamen (quam hac pace meditantur) templi structura." Compare Lanovius, *Chronicon Generale Ordinis Minimorum*, 481. "Denuo post haec resumptum opus brevi ad eam amplitudinem assurrexit et magnificentiam, ut in paucis par huic Coenobium inveniatur."

[302] Henne and Wauters, *Histoire de la ville de Bruxelles*, 1845, vol. 3; 420. Also, three tapestries from the convent are mentioned in Jean Le Mayeur, *La gloire Belgique, poème national en dix chants, suivis de remarques historiques sur tour ce qui fait connaître cette gloire, depuis l'origine de la nation jusqu'aujourd'hui* (Louvain: Vanlinthout et Vandenzande, 1830), 408. "Moise sauvé

was an equally large library. In 1630 the convent was ready to be inhabited, and on 15 January 1632 Archbishop Boonen consecrated the high altar of the church;[303] on 4 December 1633 the Provincial of the Flemish Minims, Balthasar d'Avila, consecrated the convent building.[304] The only element of their ambitious program which was not realized were the projected side chapels, to be sold to private families. We will now turn to the reasons for this.

Urban renewal

The Minims acquired much of the property in the vicinity of the convent, yet this was burdened with charges. Requesting amortisation, they pointed out the difficult market conditions for letting out these houses, since they were too remote, and the streets where they are situated were "too well known for having been formerly the centre of dissolute behaviour and the most glaring debauchery."[305] In case they would be forced to sell them, it was to be feared that,

> "[…] the neighbourhood will again be infected and the number of haunts for the wretched will only increase, as the buyers care very little to whom they let, provided they make a good profit. Instead the supplicants through religion and by attentiveness to keep away and even to eradicate as much as they can, these sorts of debauches, which tear apart the bosom of families, and disturb the public peace, will not fail to see after, even at the expense of their own temporal interest, the choice of well known and reputed tenants, even to the extent of watching over their behaviour."[306]

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des eaux, Josué combattant les Amalécites, l´adoration du veau d´or, servant de décoration dans l´église des Minimes de Bruxelles. Fabrique de Vanderborgt de cette ville."

[303] AAMB, *Acta episcopalia*, Boonen, f. 185recto. 15 January 1632: "Minim. Brux. [...] dedicatus Altari in Sapello Monasterii Minimorum in honorem Dominici Sepulchri, inclusis eides Reliquiis M.rus a Sanctus Theodorus, et Sancte Ursulae."

[304] Lefebvre, "Chronique du couvent des Minimes (KBR Ms. III 1338)," f. 3recto. "Het lichaem van S. Pia, en de reliquien van de H.H. Martelaeren Pius, en Alexander sijn solemnelijck in onse kercke ghestelt in het jaer 1653. Fol. 189verso. Wij hebben de selve ghehaelt met processie uijt de collegiale kercke van SS. Michael, en Gudula."

[305] ARAA, Eccl. Arch., 12140, f. 1verso: "Si on leur accorde l'amortissement persone ne poura imaginer qu'il leur soit possible de les louer a des negotians tels qu'ils puissent etre ; elles sont trop ecartées, et les rues trop connues pour avoir eté ci devant le centre du libertinage et de la debauche la plus criante,

[306] Ibid.: de façon qu'en cas qu'ils fussent obligés de les vendre il y auroit tout lieu, de craindre que ces cantons ne s'infectent de nouveau et n'augmentent le nombre des receptacle des malheureuses parce que tels acquereurs s'embarasseroit[ent fort] peu a qui les louer, pourvu d'en

The Minims also point out that "the majority [of the houses] will serve to cover their convent with insults from the tenants to which the supplicants would be subjected if other parties should gain possession."[307] In 1625 the Minims were granted amortisation of the houses by the States of Brabant in name of King Philip IV.[308] In the subsequent decades, they acquired a large part of the terrain opposite their convent, building twenty-nine small houses, "in place of taverns that used to serve as refuge to thieves and people of bad life, who gave scandal there and made use of the convenience to bother passers-by."[309] Slowly but steadily, the hotbeds of vice were bought out and replaced by honest tenants.[310]

Also, in order to enable people of quality to reach their church without having to traverse the ill-famed streets surrounding the convent, the monks wished to develop a new street connecting the main entrance of the church to the elegant Hoogstraat. They were granted permission to do so from the chapter of St Gudule in 1626, but lacked sufficient resources to build, and as nobody else was interested, the plan remained unrealized.[311]

Meanwhile, the excesses taking place in the neighbourhood continued. In a "bill considering arsonists, murderers and vagabonds" of 1626, it is stated that "it is forbidden for the officers of the Bailiff of Brabant and the Provost General, to exploit any Cabarets or Taverns or to dwell in the Bovendael quarter, at the penalty of being deprived of their position and salary."[312]Apparently these officers were involved in the illicit businesses that still thrived in the neighbourhood at that time.

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tirer bon interest, au lieu que les supplians par religion et par etat attentifs a eloigner et meme a extirper autant qu'il leur est possible, ces sortes de debauches, qui dechirent le sein des familles, et troublent le repos public, ne discontinueront de s'attacher, aux depens meme de leur interest temporel, au choix des locateurs connus et bien famés, etant meme a portée de veiller sur le comportement [des locataires]

[307] Ibid.: [...] a cause que la plupart sert à couvrir leur couvent des insultes des locataires auxquels ils seroient exposés si d'autres que les remontrans en avoient la propriété, [...]"

[308] Ibid., f. 2recto.

[309] Henne and Wauters, *Histoire de la ville de Bruxelles*, 1845, vol. 3; 423. "à la place de redoutes qui servoient de refuge à des voleurs et gens de mauvaise vie, qui y donnoient scandale et s'y ménageoient la facilité d'inquiéter les passants. Nous extrayons ce fait d'une requête par laquelle ils demandèrent, en 1754, l'amortissement de ces propriétés, en alléguent que tous leurs revenus ne montaient qu'à 1400 florins, et que si ces maisons passaient en d'autres mains, elles incommoderaient leur couvent."

[310] The area to the south of the convent was parcelled in 1642 when *le concierge de la cour* Laurentius de Bruyn sold an enormous terrain in forty parcels. Ibid., vol 3; 423.

[311] Lefebvre, "Chronique du couvent des Minimes (KBR Ms. III 1338)," f. 2recto.

[312] Antonius Anselmo, *Placcaeten ende ordonnantien vande Hertoghen van Brabant, Princen van dese Neder-Landen, Vol. 1* (Antwerp: Hendrick Aertssens, 1648), 465. "Placcaet, raeckende de Brandtstichters, Moordenaers en Vagabonden, Art. 14" (26 februari 1626)

In 1638 the Minim chapter made the resolution to start building side chapels to the church, for which the fundaments had already been laid.[313] The same resolution is reiterated in 1652, a result of the donation of a private chapel by the testament of the Marquess and Marchioness of St Martin, of which we will hear more below. However in 1655, through lack of alms for the new side chapels, everything that had been built was again demolished, in order to use the stones for something else.[314] The ambitious architectural project had more or less failed.[315]

The Minim friar Philibert Bressand eventually rebuilt the half-finished church from 1700-1715 on a central plan in a stern neo-classical style.[316] This church still exists as St Jan en Stefaan ter Minimen. Together with the convent its appearance is rendered in the print accompanying the second edition of Sanderus of 1727 (*fig*. 23). In the absence of detailed contemporary images or plans of the pre-1700 church, it is impossible to say anything about its appearance or plan, except that it had a nave and that side chapels were projected. In 1796, the French revolutionaries closed the church and convent.[317] The convent was later turned into a jail, and has been demolished in the nineteenth century during the construction of the Poelaertplein. Photos of the demolition show a very austere building with small windows (*fig*. 25-29).

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[313] Lefebvre, "Chronique du couvent des Minimes (KBR Ms. III 1338)," f. 2verso. "Item in het jaer 1638 heeftmen gheresolveert in het capittel te bouwen op de fondamenten van onse nieuwe kercke, die omtrent 17 jaeren te voren gheweijdt waeren [1621], en daer volghens de oude teeckeninghe van beijde de kanten souden capellen in ghekomen hebben; maer dit is achterghebleven, onghetwijfelt bij ghebreck van gelt. Fol. 124.

[314] Ibid.: De selve resolutie is wederom ghenomen 1652, Fol. 177. en in het jaer 1655, om datter gheene aelmoessen en quaemen om voort te bouwen, is alles datter ghemetst was afghebroken om de careelen op een ander te ghebruijcken." According to Lefebvre, the stones were reused at the ceremony of laying the first stone of the new church in 1700.

[315] Other religious foundations often also took decades to be completed. See Krista De Jonge and Annemie De Vos, "Architectuur ten tijde van de aartshertogen: het hof achterna," in *"Bellissimi ingegni, grandissimo splendore". Religieuze architectuur in de Zuidelijke Nederlanden tijdens de 17de eeuw*, ed. Krista de Jonge, Annemie de Vos, and Joris Snaet (Leuven: Leuven University Press, 2000), 11–42.

[316] The first stone of the new church was laid on 8 November 1700 by Governor Maximilian Emmanuel of Bavaria. See Henne and Wauters, *Histoire de la ville de Bruxelles*, 1845, vol. 3; 420; Lefebvre, "Chronique du couvent des Minimes (KBR Ms. III 1338)"; Sanderus, "Coenobium Bruxellense Ordinis PP. Minimorum S. Francisci de Paula," 53.

[317] The convent was closed on 3 November 1796. See Henne and Wauters, *Histoire de la ville de Bruxelles*, 1845, vol. 3; 421.

Abstinence and conversion

Given traditional anti-clerical suspicions towards monks and their walk of life, the Minims had to carefully guard their public image. Yet from all monastic orders the Minims were arguably the most resilient to the risk of sexual sinning. As the consumption of meat was thought to induce carnal desires, the Minims with their vegan diet practised a "perpetual Lent" aimed to curb their passions. This was all the more important in the case of Brussels, where their convent was implanted in the most tempting of surroundings.

In this respect, the Brussels Minim convent resembled contemplative female convents, which were looked upon with great anxiety during the Counter-Reformation period and were subjected to increasingly strict observance of *clausura*. Recent studies have shown how cloistered nuns often engaged in intricate negotiating strategies with their (male) superiors, reinforcing (the image of) enclosure, countering criticism, and mustering support by means of (symbolic) architectural interventions such as raising walls and monitoring gates and grilles.[318] However, the aims of female claustration were often not so much to restrict contact with men per se, but rather to limit contact with family members in order to eliminate socio-economic distinctions among nuns.[319]

The Brussels Minims were faced with a different problem and took extensive architectural measures to minimize their exposure to their surroundings. When in 1628 their new convent on the notorious Bovendal street was nearly finished and ready to be inhabited, the Minims complained to the Infanta Isabella about their neighbours, asking her to intervene with the magistrate. The Infanta therefore requested the magistrate to "close off the Bovendal quarter by building a wall as long as should please the lords".[320] The joint request was granted and a wall seems to have been built along the length of the street (*fig*. 22), effectively completing the process of

[318] See for instance Helen Hills, *Invisible city: the architecture of devotion in seventeenth-century Neapolitan convents* (Oxford: Oxford University Press, 2004); Sarah Joan Moran, "Unconventual Women: Religion, Politics, and Image in the Court Beguinages of the Low Countries, 1585-1713" (Brown University, 2010).

[319] See Craig Harline, *The Burdens of Sister Margaret: Inside a Seventeenth-Century Convent*, 2nd ed. (New Haven CT: Yale University Press, 2000); Diefendorf, *From Penitence to Charity: Pious Women and the Catholic Reformation in Paris*.

[320] "Index Resolutien Tot 1630 (SAB, Inv. 410)," n.d., f. 25recto. "op het versoeck ende brief van Sijne hoogheijt ordonneert het magistraet ende op het beclagh van de PP. Minimen dat het Bovendal soude afgeloten worden met eenen muer soo lange als die heren soude gelieven. Res. 12 octobris 1628, den brief staet naer de resolutie, 28 septembris 1628."

containment (or even ghetto-formation) that had been started in 1597, when gates were installed between the Hoogstraat and two adjacent alleys. Just like the good citizens of the Hoogstraat, the monks wished to protect themselves from the lascivious goings-on in the street, and from the insults that went with it, while bolstering their public image. The next year, the Minims even obtained permission to dig a tunnel under the street to pass quietly to their land across the street where they would build a brewery (*fig*. 22-24).[321] The monks thus bypassed the confinement of their neighbours.[322]

These physical demarcations should be seen in the context of the monk's ascetism and the spiritual purposes they aimed to achieve. Through the performance of abstinence and corporal mortification, both male and female religious persons tried to attain a status of holiness, which would enable them to take a mediating position between heaven and earth. The prostitution at Bovendal was at once a great boon and the greatest threat to this aim of spiritual leadership. St Francis of Paola had shunned the company of women, and taught his disciples to "flee from them like serpents". He often said: "money and women draw to concupiscence, and burn the servants of God like nothing else"[323]

As role models, the Minims aspired to act as agents between society and God, an inherently two-way process of effectuating change in society (both the physical process of urban renewal and converting individual sinners) as well as pleading with God for forgiveness of sinners, through prayer and penitence. The asceticism they performed, and the pious support of it by the Magistrate and the court, acquired even more pertinence and purpose in response to the divine punishment of war. How closely the example of the monks' asceticism and the political agenda of the Brussels court were related may be illustrated by the following event.

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[321] "Index Resolutien Tot 1630 (SAB, Inv. 410)," n.d., f. 25verso. "permissie aen de minimen te wercken onder de straete. Res. 19 juli 1629." and Lefebvre, "Chronique du couvent des Minimes (KBR Ms. III 1338)," f. 2recto.

[322] Sanderus, "Coenobium Bruxellense Ordinis PP. Minimorum S. Francisci de Paula," 49. "quod viam subterraneam, qua è Conventu ad hortos ab altera plateae parte sitos iretur, fieri benevole permiserit; quod nuper viam, qua e plateae ad Templum itur, lapidibus sterni curaverit, quod denique probos hosce Religiosos vitae et victus austeritate omnibus aliis rigidiores, paterno semper affectu (utpote Civitatis filios) amplexus fuerit."

[323] Claude du Vivier, *Vie et miracles de Saint François de Paule, instituteur de l'ordre des pères Minimes, recueillie et composée par Le R.P. Claude du Vivier* (Douai: B. Bellère, 1622), 628.

On 24 May 1623, the Minims booked a great success. Upon hearing the sermons of the Minim friar Mathieu Martin during Lent, and as a result of a subsequent series of discussions with the monk, the Lutheran nobleman Rudolph Maximilian, Duke of Sachsen-Lauenburg (1596-1647) converted to Catholicism.[324] The young duke, who had served for several years as a colonel in mercenary armies of Catholics princes, publicly denounced his old faith on May 26 in the hands of the Papal nuncio Giovanni-Francesco Guidi di Bagno, witnessed by many courtiers including his comrades in arms Ambrogio Spinola,[325] Octavio Visconti,[326] and Petro de Medici,[327] and confirmed his resolution the next day by letter to the Pope.[328] Although Rudolph Maximilian was not a ruling Duke, as he and his brothers had renounced in a succession agreement of 1619 in favour of their older half-brother August, in the context of the outbreak of the Thirty Years War (1618-1648) and the current principle "*cuius regio, eius religio*" (whose realm, whose religion), contemporaries must have looked at his conversion with Argus eyes. In the Thirty Years War, Rudolph Maximilian would continue to fight in imperial service (on the side of the Catholic League) as "Generalfeldzugmeister" under Albrecht von Wallenstein.[329]

A year after the event, Martin published a book on the "felicitous and much desired" conversion, entitled *Triomphe de la Verité*, expounding his arguments in favour of the Catholic faith in the form of a dialogue of more than four hundred pages in which Christ as father instructs his child (*fig*.

[324] Sanderus, "Coenobium Bruxellense Ordinis PP. Minimorum S. Francisci de Paula," 45–46.
[325] Marquess, General of the Spanish army in the Netherlands.
[326] Count of Gamalerio, Grand Esquire of the Infanta Isabella. He died in 1632 and was buried in the Minim church.
[327] Colonel in the Spanish army.
[328] Ibid., 45. "attamen à decem ferme annis, quibus me Sacrae Majestatis Imperatoris mei causa tuendae per varior bellorum occursus adiunxi, placuit ei qui me segregavit ab utero matris meae infinitos misericordiae suae thesauros paulatim elargiri. Ex ipso enim Catholicorum Christi fidelium convictu, viso etiam Sanctae Ecclesiae optime constituto ordine coepi nonnihil anteactae vitae fastidij concipere; quousque tandem in hanc Serenissimae Hispaniarum Infantis aulam obsequia mea causae publicae praestiturus, adveniens, ita omnia pietatis et religionis plena conspexi, ut me terram pro Paradiso commutasse existimarem: inibi autem, praeter alia quae me plurimum commoverunt et confirmarunt, frequens interfui publicis concionibus, quae per quadragesimam in Ecclesia Patrum Ordinis Minimorum à R.P. Matheo Martin eiusdem Ordinis disertissimo tota hac Curia concurrente habebantur. Huius Patris ministerio erumpentibus saepe lacrymis tanta vi rapiebar à Domino misericordiam Patre ut amplius differre non possem, quin me ab haeresi ad sanem fidem convertem."
[329] http://www.30jaehrigerkrieg.de/sachsen-lauenburg-rudolf-maximilian-herzog-von-2/

30).[330] In the final and decisive chapters of the *Triomphe de la Verité*, Martin unequivocally argues that the "voluptuous life" and indulgence in carnal desires are the primary causes of heresy.[331] Quoting from a wide range of sources,[332] he reasons that "lust prevents a soul from turning to God, puts the faculties of the soul in disorder, both in practical as well as speculative actions, and leads to idolatry and heresy, to culminate in atheism."[333] This message is corroborated by crafty use of Biblical citations (from St Paul, and thus appealing to Protestants) such as "He who unites himself with a prostitute is one with her in body" – and consequently one in spirit, by agency of the carnal pleasure – "but whoever is united with the Lord is one with him in spirit" – by means of spiritual love (1 Corinthians 6:16).[334] This insistence that indulging in carnal desires leads to heresy, promoted by the Minims in their court sermons, must have been the main reason why the court was so interested in them: they promised to offer an effective strategy to counter the Reformation, and to appease God.[335]

The fervent preaching of the Minims against fleshly sins also led to them being put under close scrutiny. The Holy See wanted a group of Scottish Minims to establish a convent in the Netherlands to coordinate and prepare the Scottish mission. The Infanta however opposed this on account of the ill reputation of some of the Scots.[336] This is remarkable if we consider the strong support of the Archdukes to religious foundations of English

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[330] Mathieu Martin, *Triomphe de la Vérité en l'heureuse et tant désirée conversion de monseigneur Rudolphe Maximilien, duc de Saxe, Angrie et Wesphalie* (Antwerp: P. et J. Beller, 1624).

[331] Ibid., 394–433. Part 3, Chapter 9: *Pourquoy l'on voit auiourd'huy si peu d'heretiques se convertir à Dieu, que la volupté en est la seule cause*. Chapter 10: *Du desordre qui provient de la vie voluptueuse es actions speculatives de l'entendement*. Chapter 11: *Comme l'Incontinence dispose l'ame à perdre la foy, et l'introduite à l'heresie*. Chapter 12 : *Comme cette vie luxurieuse et Epicurienne porte l'ame à l'Atheisme*. Chapter 13: *Comme il est difficile, et quasi impossible de convertir un heretique*.

[332] Martin quotes from a variety of sources, including classical works, Luther, and Calvin. His linking of voluptuousness and heresy derives mostly from St Jerome's Letter 133 to Ctesiphon, 1 Timothy 4, 2 Timothy 3, and 2 Peter 2.

[333] Ibid., Index.

[334] Ibid., 424.

[335] This Catholic reproach at the address of Calvinists was typical for France, whereas in Germany, Protestants ridiculed Catholics for having loose morals. Racaut, *Hatred in Print : Catholic Propaganda and Protestant Identity during the French Wars of Religion*, 131.

[336] Meester de Ravestein, *Correspondance du nonce Giovanni-Francesco Guidi di Bagno: (1621-1627)*, 242, 388–389, 404, 433, 448.

convents in their territories.[337] However, in the case of the Brussels foundation the stakes were high, and no mishaps could be permitted to happen. A violent struggle emerged from 1621 to 1624 between the French and the Scottish Minims over the control over the Flemish province. The French Minims at Brussels persecuted and imprisoned the Scots, and got away with this since they were, according to the nuncio, protected by the government because they enjoyed the favour of "certain devote ladies, friends of the Infanta".[338] Hélène de Sermoise must have been one of these ladies.

The nunciature also reported that Isabella had in 1629 chased a certain Minim father Dorothee from Brussels, which once again suggests that in spite of her great favour, Isabella implemented a policy of zero tolerance when monks failed to live up to their vows.[339] As we will see in the next section, the Minims could only applaud such an approach, for pressing reasons.

A radical approach: the funeral sermon for Claude du Vivier

The year 1629 was a catastrophic year for the South; 's-Hertogenbosch, one of the most important cities of Brabant was captured by the Dutch, and the public discontent about this misfortune led to a near uprising.[340] Clearly, these setbacks were to be attributed to the wrath of God. Therefore, on 2 December 1629 the Holy Sacrament was carried in procession to the Minim church by François de Rye, Archbishop of Caesarea[341], Grand Chaplain and Grand Almoner of the Infanta Isabella.[342] A solemn mass was sung in the presence of the Infanta and the entire nobility, and the Minim provincial and

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[337] See Uddin, "William Trumbull: A Jacobean Diplomat at the Court of the Archdukes in Brussels, 1605/9-1625," 140–154.

[338] Meester de Ravestein, *Correspondance du nonce Giovanni-Francesco Guidi di Bagno: (1621-1627)*, 404. Brussels, 30 December 1623, Bagno to Propaganda Fide.

[339] Joseph Lefèvre, *Documents relatifs à la juridiction des nonces et internonces des Pays-Bas pendant le régime espagnol (1596-1706)* (Brussels: Palais des Académies, 1942), 120. Brussels, 6 February 1641, Stravius to the Counsellors of the Privy Council.

[340] Vermeir, *In staat van oorlog: Filips IV en de Zuidelijke Nederlanden, 1629-1648*, 11–42.

[341] François de Rye, doyen de Besançon (1566-1637) first almoner of the Archdukes, grand chaplain of Isabella.

[342] Lefebvre, "Chronique du couvent des Minimes (KBR Ms. III 1338)," f. 2recto. referring to Philippe de Mesemacre, provincial de Belgique (1666) (+1680) See Philippe de Mesemacre and Nicolas de Rache, *R.P. Philippi de Mesemacre Ordinis Minimorum in Belgio Prouincialis Oratiuncula, habita ad Reuerendissimum Patrem Rmum. P. Balthasarem d'Avila ejusdem Ordinis ex-Generalem jubilem ab ingressu Religionis annum agentem & celebrantem Insulis die XVIII. Julij*, 1666.

court preacher Claude du Vivier commenced Advent.[343] This moment in the liturgical year had an eschatological overtone, as it purported commemorating the first coming of Christ at Christmas while reminding of His second coming.

When Claude du Vivier died the next year, corrector (prior) Charles Gambart[344] held a funeral oration addressed to the Infanta Isabella, in which the defunct monk was celebrated as the new Elijah (*fig*. 31).[345] By comparing him to the Old-Testament prophet, father Du Vivier's frequent admonitions against concupiscent vices were framed once more in an eschatological context, as Malachi 4:5 states "Behold, I will send you Elijah the prophet before the great and terrible day of the Lord comes." The dedication to the Infanta recalls that "the voice of the LORD strikes with flashes of lightning [Psalm 29:7], a voice that has manifested his generous activity among the flames of the fire of concupiscence, dismissing and dispelling the hearts of prophane and illicit loves […]."[346] Du Vivier is praised for his chastity and his lifelong virginity and compared to an angel.[347] A recurrent theme throughout the oration is the phrase "*A facie peccati collectus est justus*: the just has been taken from the face of sin and malice, namely impurity."[348] The

[343] In 1629 Claude du Vivier was in trouble. The Vatican had demanded him to repeal his controversial opinion on the lineage of St Francis of Paola as published in his books on the life of the saint (1609, 1622, and in spite of prohibitions 1626). Upon refusing this he was summoned to Rome (1627), but he excused himself on account of his age. When he was subsequently elected for the general chapter meeting in Barcelona (1629), Rome forbade him to go (Congregation of Regulars). I would like to thank Dries Raeymaekers for bringing this to my attention. See Lucienne van Meerbeeck, *Correspondance du nonce Fabio de Lagonissa, Archevêque de Conza (1627-1634)* (Brussels: Institut Historique Belge de Rome, 1966), 124–125, 144–145.

[344] F.C.G.M. = frater Carolus Gambart minimus. http://minimospedia.wikispaces.com/DU+VIVIER,+Claude

[345] Gambart, *Chariot mystique du nouveau Elie, touchant la vie exemplaire, & glorieuse mort du Reverend Pere Du Vivier, Provincial des Peres Minimes des Païs-Bas, & Basse Alemaigne, & Predicateur Ordinaire de Leurs Altesses Serenissimes. Sur le modele du grand Prophet*.

[346] Ibid., dedication: "[...] *vox Domini intercidentis flammam ignis*, voix qui à faict paroistre son activité genereuse parmy les flammes du feu de la concupiscence escartant, & dissipant des coeurs les amours prophanes, & illicittes pour y plaçer l'amour de Dieu, & le desir des choses celestes, verité aussy claire que le jour, averée par tous ceux de vostre Court tant Ecclesiastiques que Seculiers qui ont eu le bien de l'entendre prescher avec admiration, & edification."

[347] Ibid., 27–28. "La chasteté est une vertu qui reprime les voluptés impures de la chair : Cest une vertu du Ciel, & et les Anges en terre, & dans ce Royaume de mortalité, plante l'Image & les Tiltres de l'immortalité, n'estimerez vous pas un Ange, celuy qui tout le temps de sa vie a gardé sa premiere pureté baptismalle?"

[348] Ibid., 50–51. "Le juste a esté enlevé de devant la face du peché & de la malice ; a sçavoir de l'impureté, car ces 4. vertus susdites [chastity, modesty, temperance, prudence] combattent directement contre ce vice detestable, & infernal, lequel pour le present semble paroistre a face decouverte sans honte & sans vergogne ; vice miserable, lequel regne en ce siecle si prodigieusement qu'il semble ne vouloir faire qu'un Element de feu du reste de l'univers :

oration contains numerous references to Du Vivier's ferocious preaching against impurity: "a miserable sin that thrives at present so openly and shamelessly; which reigns in this age so prodigiously […] that Asmodeus (demon of Lust) triumphs today, Messieurs:"

> […] you have been ear-witnesses having heard several times in his learned and devout preaching, how he abhorred that vice of impurity, having admonished you that your youth took the wide road of Hell, and that most of your domestic servants, Messieurs, are losing themselves in these infamous places that environ our Religious House. It is in this place of perdition where so many souls shipwreck, charging themselves with vices and infamy, which they will dump within your noble and honourable families for receiving in brief the sentence and punishment of the divine justice if you do not put order in there. For how may a house of grace and heavenly benediction prosper, if it has such miserable domestics! It is in this place forever detestable, that one hears a thousand blasphemies and denials of God, that drunkenness thrives, that treacheries and thefts are practised, that murders are custom.[349]

Thus Gambart makes clear to his noble public how the vices of their subjects would taint their own God-given superiority.[350] If the early modern state was regarded as a monarch's household, this text may be an example of how the Habsburg concept of "Aula sacra" applies equally to the scale of noble

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Asmodée triomphe aujourdhuy, Messieurs, & monstre ces Chariots couverts de l'Auriers de la *Chasteté*, de la *Temperance*, & de la *Modestie*, ou estes vous Reverend Pere pour y mettre remede par vostre parolle vive & efficace?"

[349] Ibid., 57–58. "[...], pour les parolles, vous en estes tesmoigns auriculaires ayans entendus plusieurs fois en ses doctes & devottes predications, comment il aborroit ce vice d'impureté, vous ayant remonstré que toute vostre jeunesse prenoit le grand chemin de l'Enfer, & que la plus part de vos Serviteurs domestiques, Messieurs, se perdoient en ces lieux infames qui avoisinnent nostre Maison Religieuse. C'est en ce lieu de perdition que tant d'Ames font naufrage, lesquelles se chargeans de vices & d'infamie, les vont d'eschargers dedans vos nobles & honorables familles pour en recevoir en bref de la Divine justice la peine & la punition si vous n'y mettes ordre. Car comme quoy peut prosperer une maison de grace & benediction du Ciel, laquelle à de tels & si malheureuses domestiques ! C'est en ce lieu a jamais detestable, que s'entendent mille blasphemes & renyemens de Dieu, ou les yvroigneries n'en bougent, les trahysons, & volleries s'y pratiquent, les meurtres s'y font d'ordinaire."

[350] Or in the case of the House of Arenberg: sovereignty. See Mirella Marini, "Interlocking Dynasties: Netwerking En Huwelijkspolitiek van de Familie Arenberg Tijdens de Opstand," in *Het verdeelde huis: de Nederlandse adel tussen Opstand en reconciliatie*, ed. Luc Duerloo and Liesbeth De Frenne (Maastricht: Shaker Publishing, 2011), 63; Luc Duerloo, "La Maison d'Arenberg dans les Pays-Bas Habsbourgeois," in *La Maison d'Arenberg en Wallonie, à Bruxelles et au G.-D. de Luxembourg depuis le XIVe siècle: contribution à l'histoire d'une famille princière*, ed. Jean-Marie Duvosquel and Denis Morsa (Enghien: Fondation d'Arenberg, 2011), 74.

households.[351] Gambart continues his tirade, now personally addressing the Infanta:

> For extreme diseases, extreme remedies are appropriate, says *Hippocrates*. Only the singular power and authority of command of your Most Serene Highness may bring remedy, by ordering if it pleases her, her officers to chase beyond the borders of her devout city of Brussels those landfills, such forsaken girls who are murderesses of bodies and souls, to the great scandal of good people, and to the detriment of our Religious House, which blushes of shame at the sight of such a neighbourhood. I have received, Madam, this commission from your most humble monk and regular preacher of Your Highness, Reverend Father Du Vivier, shortly before his death, who ordered me to make the prosecution swift and accurate, which will stop, Madam, a torrent of misfortune that menaces your blessed City, and will make her enter in grace with God to receive upon her, like upon all your Catholic Provinces, the heavenly blessings.[352]

The text shows to what extent the Minim friars (rhetorically) relied on the court in their efforts of sacralising society. While claiming to "serve the common good" towards the city magistrate, they now presented themselves as victims rather than charitable missionaries. Their complaints to the Infanta about their vicious surroundings might primarily be a rhetorical instrument to showcase their own exemplary virtue, standing firm in the face of seduction, to foster goodwill in courtly circles. And though a text like this funeral oration should surely not be taken at face value, it is worth noting the shift in focus when the monks argue that the prostitutes themselves should be chased away (instead of their pimps – and rather than licentious monks).

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[351] Cf. Norbert Elias, *The Court Society* (Oxford: Blackwell, 1983).

[352] Gambart, *Chariot mystique du nouveau Elie*, f. 58–59. "Au grandes maladies, il y faut apporter les grands remedes, *dit Hypocrate*. Il ny à que la seule puissance & Auctorité du commandement de vostre A.S. qui y puisse apporter remede commandant s'il luy plaist a ses Officiers de chasser hors les confins de sa devotte Ville de Bruxelles ces voyriés, de telles filles abandonnées qui sont meurtrieres des corps & des Ames au grand scandale de Gens de bien, & au prejudice de nostre Maison Religieuse laquelle rougit de honte a l'aspect d'un tel voisinage. Iay reçue, Madame, cette commission de vostre tres-humble Religieux & Predicateur ordinaire de vostre A. le Reverend Pere du *Vivier*, peu de temps avant sa mort qui m'a commandé d'en faire la poursuite prompte & exacte, ce sera empecher, Madame, un torrent de malheur qui menace vostre benitte Ville, & la faire entrer en grace avec Dieu pour recevoir sur icelles, comme sur toutes vos Catholiques Provinces, les benedictions celestes."

Meanwhile, the need for Christian charity also spurred initiatives to help prostitutes leave their trade behind.[353] In Brussels a house of correction for repentant sinners, the penitents of Mary Magdalene or Madelonnette sisters in the convent of Bethanie had existed since 1506.[354] As was often the case, such institutions also accepted women who were in trouble for other reasons, and turned into regular convents over time.[355] In 1647 the chapel of the Holy Cross, a new reformatory for prostitutes was founded by "fille dévote" Anne de Greve (+1692), member of the third order of St Dominic, and the prior of the Dominican convent Ambrosius Druwé (+1665).[356] The Minims do not seem to have been involved in such initiatives. But the Minims did not primarily intend to reform prostitutes, instead, they aimed at converting their potential clients.[357]

So far, it may be concluded that the Minims held an ambiguous position playing alternatively active or passive roles, depending on the situation in which they found themselves and whom they had to deal with. Their sermons against adultery met with acclaim as they promised to counter heresy and appease God. Supported by French exiles like Montgaillard and Sermoise, and capitalizing on the concerns of the citizens and the court over the wrath of God, they managed to get a foothold in Brussels. The awkward place of their convent proved to be both a curse and a blessing; extensive measures had to be taken to sanitize their neighbourhood, while protecting

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[353] For prostitution in seventeenth century Spain, see Mary E. Perry, "Magdalens and Jezebels in Counter-Reformation Spain," in *Culture and Control in Counter-Reformation Spain*, ed. Anne J Cruz and Mary E. Perry (Minneapolis; Oxford: University of Minnesota Press, 1992), 124–44.

[354] Compare Pamela Jones' study of Guercino's *Penitent Magdalene* for the Augustinian convent of S. Maria Maddalena delle convertite (for reformed prostitutes) in Rome. Jones, *Altarpieces and Their Viewers in the Churches of Rome from Caravaggio to Guido Reni*, chap. 4.

[355] Auguste Imbert and Benjamin-Louis Bellet, *Tablettes bruxelloises ou usages, moeurs et coutumes de Bruxelles* (Brussels: Galaud, 1828), 123–125; Henne and Wauters, *Histoire de la ville de Bruxelles*, 1845, vol. 3; 138–140; Jacques van Wijnendaele, "Un couvent pour prostituées repenties, rue du Fripiers à Bruxelles," *La revue d'histoire de Bruxelles*, n.d., http://www.jacquesvanwijnendaele.be; Paulette Pieyns-Rigo, "Penitentes de Sainte-Marie-Madeleine," in *Monasticon belge IV, Brabant, Vol. 5* (Liège, 1971), 1187–1200.

[356] Théodore Augustin Mann, *Abrégé de l'histoire ecclésiastique, civile et naturelle de la ville de Bruxelles, et de ses environs: avec la description de ce qui s'y trouve de plus remarquable* (Brussels: Lemaire, 1785), 176; see also Franciscus B. Moulaert, *Levenschets van Fr. Ambrosius Druwé* (Leuven: Karel Peeters, 1864), 24–25; Charles Pergameni, *Les archives historiques de la ville de Bruxelles: notices et inventaires* (B: Wauthoz-Legrand, 1943), 167, 169. The initiative was supported by Archbishop Boonen, and Hendrik Calenus, dean and vicar-general. Lucien Ceyssens, "Boonen, Jacobus," *Nationaal Biografisch Woordenboek* II (1966): 79.

[357] According to the Tuscan traveller Roberto Pucci who visited Brussels in 1657, prostitutes were no longer tolerated and severely punished. This account may however be based on second hand information. Mario Battistini, "Voyageurs Toscans En Flandre, Pendant le XVIIe Siècle," *De gulden passer* 13, no. 1 (1935): 120.

themselves from it, physically and symbolically, by means of walls and tunnels. Lack of money (and a salable offer) hindered the realization of the projected chapels. Yet noble patrons continued to flock to the church, especially in times of (military) misfortune.

The cults at the convent

Sanderus begins his description of the Minim convent as follows: "Among those monasteries, that flourish out of love of religion and piety, and outstanding public services, should be considered especially that of Saint Francis of Paola […]"[358] The next few paragraphs will discuss the most important and most popular cults promoted at the convent, to arrive at a better understanding of their function in the context of moral change. These are the cults of St Francis of Paola, the Holy Guardian Angel, and Our Lady of Loreto. Of course there were more cults at the church (most of which mentioned previously), but they seem mainly associated to private chapels where they primarily served the individual devotional purposes of their patrons, whereas the cults described here had a wider societal resonance within the Minim's agenda of change.

The cult of St Francis of Paola

The signature cult introduced by the Minims in the Netherlands (where it was previously unknown) was that of their order's founder St Francis of Paola.[359] The veneration of the saint was promoted by the Minims, and especially through father Claude du Vivier and his writings, as remedy for a wide array of ailments. It was especially known to be effective for married couples failing to produce offspring.[360] As mentioned previously, the chapel

[358] Sanderus, "Coenobium Bruxellense Ordinis PP. Minimorum S. Francisci de Paula," 40. "Inter ea quae religionis ac pietatis studio, publicisque praestandis obsequiis florentia nunc Bruxellis extant Caenobia, videre est splendidum illud augustumque, iam pridem aedificare caeptum, Sancti Francisci de Paula."

[359] Ibid., 41. "Inter haec de condendo quandoque sub titulo S.P. Francisci de Paula Sacello pactus est Vir Clarissimo et R.P. Julianos le Goix, Sacerdos et Consiliarius Parisinus morum et vitae integritate ac doctrinam spectatissimus, et praefati Ordinis Tertiarius : quod quidem Sacellum singulis jam quibusque sextis feriis magna magnatum et populi devotione frequentatur, ubi Sanctissimi hujus Patriarchae meritis et intercessione fisi, in necessitatibus suis miraculose saepissime exaudiuntur, et coelestia consequuntur auxilia fideles : mulieres speciatim, quae plures in statu conjugali annos absque ullo foetu versatae, foecunditatis gratiam à Deo implorant et impetrant."

[360] Vivier, *Vie et miracles de Saint François de Paule*, 533.

of the saint had been founded by Julien le Goix at an early stage, and by the time Sanderus writes (1662) many paintings and votive gifts bore witness to the effectiveness of the cult. According to the art guide of the eighteenth century painter Mensaert of 1763 the church possessed a painting of St Francis of Paola by Jan Lievens (1609-1674).[361]

Two miracles are mentioned by Sanderus as particularly famous. Count John of Nassau, who had changed from Lutheran to Catholic in 1613, and his wife Ernestine, Princess of Ligne, had already had four daughters (two of which had died) and invoked St Francis of Paola hoping to be blessed with a male heir.[362] The couple probably attended the celebration of the feast of St Francis of Paola on 2 April 1626, when a sung mass with sermon was held in the Minim church in the presence of the Infanta Isabella.[363] Nine months later, in 1627 they received a boy,[364] and in thanksgiving they founded the Minim convent of Louvain.[365] Needless to say, tales of such miracles spread rapidly in courtly circles and reverberated for decades in family networks.

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[361] Guillaume Pierre Mensaert, *Le peintre amateur et curieux, ou description générale des tableaux des plus habiles maîtres, qui font l'ornement des églises, convents ... & cabinets particuliers dans l'étendue des Pays-Bas Autrichiens* (Brussels: P. de Bast, 1763), 108. "Le tableau qui représente le martyre de Saint Etienne, est peint par *Jean van Orlay*, ainsi que celui de la Confrérie de l'Ange Gardien ; celui de Saint François de Paule, est peint par *Jean Livens*. Dans la Chapelle de Saint François de Sales ; ce Saint est peint sur l'Autel dans un tableau par *Erasme Quilin*." On Jan Lievens, who lived and worked in Antwerp from 1635 to 1644, see Hans Schneider, *Jan Lievens: sein Leben und seine Werke*, 2nd ed. (Amsterdam: Israel, 1973).

[362] Sanderus, "Coenobium Bruxellense Ordinis PP. Minimorum S. Francisci de Paula," 41. "Celeberrima sunt quae inter tot miracula recensentur, duo : alterum Exellentissimi Domini Comitis Joannis Nassovii, ejusque Exellentissimae Dominae Conjugis Ernestinae ex Principibus de Ligne votum ; is siquidem pientissimus Comes, è Lutherana haeresi ad fidem et Ecclesiam Catholicam conversus, cum dominia bonaque sua ad haereticos (è quibus oriundus erat) defectu prolis masculae revolvenda videret, agente R. Adm. Patre Claudio du Vivier, (de quo mox) prolis masculae gratiam, adhibito S. P. Francisco de Paula patrono et intercessore, repetitis precibus una cum Exellentissima conjuge à Deo efflagitabat ; sese (positam gratiae petitae impetratione) ad P.P. Minimorum Conventum loco commodo fundandum obligantes : audivit et exaudivit non minus justam, quam piam tantorum Magnatum supplicationem Deus, ita ut nono post mense masculam prolem praeclarissimis naturae gratiaque donis conspicuam Illustrissima Domina Comitissa peperit ; ea est Illustrissimus et Excellentissimus Dominus Franciscus Joannes Desiderius modo Princeps Nassovius, Regius Aurei Velleris Eques, armatae Germanorum Cohortis Colonellus etc. Parentes verbo votoque steterunt, et Lovanii […] conventum fundavere."

[363] Meester de Ravestein, *Correspondance du nonce Giovanni-Francesco Guidi di Bagno: (1621-1627)*, 727. 1527, Brussels, 4 April 1626, Bagno to Francesco Barberini.

[364] The child was named after St Francis of Paola, Johan Frans Desideratus of Nassau (1627-1699), and became knight in the order of the Golden Fleece and colonel in the German army.

[365] Founded in 1639. See Antonius Sanderus, *Le Grand Theatre Sacré du duché de Brabant, contenant la description generale & historique de l'église metropolitaine de Malines & toutes les autres églises cathedrales ... & autres fondations religieuses, qui se trouvent dans l'archevêché de Maline*, ed. Jacques Le Roy (The Hague: Christiaan van Lom, 1729), 129–130.

Around 1650 another, related miracle occurred when, against all odds, more than twenty years after her first marriage that remained without progeny,[366] the noble lady Albertine Marie de La Baume (related through her mother and her late husband to the Nassau-De Ligne couple) had a child from her second husband,[367] Charles François de La Baume, marquis de Saint-Martin-le-Châtel (1611-1688).[368] Although the child died in 1651, sixteen months after its birth,[369] the Marquis and his wife decide to found a family chapel in the church by testament in 1652 (which was effectuated upon her death in 1663).[370] The ramifications of these events will become clear in what follows.

The confraternity of the Holy Guardian Angel

The monks also propagated the cult of the Holy Guardian Angel, recourse against the temptation of (fleshly) sins. The moral substance of this devotion may be illustrated by a painting by Jan Steen depicting the biblical story of Sarah and Tobias (*fig*. 32).[371] These newlyweds were plagued by the demon of lust, who threatened to kill Tobias on their wedding night, just as he had done to Sarah's seven previous bridegrooms. When Tobias promised to God that he would love Sarah in pious sincerity, not just out of lust, the archangel Raphael killed the demon. This and other Biblical (Old Testament) stories, e.g. Lot and his daughters being led away from burning Sodom, supported the conviction that angels helped potential sinners to keep on the right track, while the New Testament offered points of reference for the idea that little children in particular enjoyed angelic protection.

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[366] Albertine Marie de la Baume had first been married in 1625 to Ernst Christoph of Ostfriesland, Count of Rietberg (±1602-1640).

[367] They married on 29 November 1642.

[368] Sanderus, "Coenobium Bruxellense Ordinis PP. Minimorum S. Francisci de Paula," 41. "Alterum miraculum accidit Exellentissimae et Illustrissimae D. Albertae Mariae à Bauma Marchionissiae Sancti Martini, quae cum viginti omnino annos secondo viro maritata, nullam editam prole, exegissit, ad divinam opem confugit, patronum S.P. Franciscum Paulanum adhibuit, gratiam nihil in fide haesitans postulavit et obtinuit. Gratiarum (quas plurimi alii impetrarunt) mentionem, ne prolixus sim, praetermitto ; fidem illarum publicam faciunt appensa ibidem anathemata et picturae."

[369] François Lambert André de la Baume. See Sanderus, *Le Grand Theatre Sacré du duché de Brabant*, 275.

[370] ARAA, Eccl. Arch., 12085, extract of 18 February 1663 from testament Marquis en Marchioness de St.-Martin, 16 June 1652 (donation of 16,000 florins).

[371] This painting, reassembled from two separated halves, is presently in the collection of museum Bredius, The Hague.

On 3 October 1635 a confraternity was founded in order to engage laypeople in this devotion.[372] The devotion soon spread to other Minim convents across the country, and in 1636 Pope Urban VIII confirms the confraternity with a bull and indulgences, and a booklet with rules and prayers is published by the printer of the court (*fig*. 33).[373] This publication contains a morning prayer to the Holy Guardian Angel, thanking him for letting the supplicant: "[…] escape from the traps, laid for me by the devil; pull me out of the occasion of sin, and do not permit that I shall anger my God today, but that under your protection neither the Devil, nor the World, nor the Flesh obtain any power over me […]."[374] In the evening prayer the angel is asked to "[…] guard for me while I sleep, turn from my spirit all the temptations of the night, and the impure fantasies, free me from the malice of the ghost of darkness […]"[375]

In 1645 two chapels are constructed "in the wall against the church, where formerly also a chapel of Our Lady had been."[376] One is dedicated to St Francis of Paola, the other to the Holy Guardian Angel. We know little of the artworks in the pre-1700 version of the church, let alone at the time Sanderus published his chorography (1662).[377] Mensaert, who writes a hundred years later, mentions a painting in the church by Gaspar de Crayer (1584-1669) of the Holy Guardian Angel guiding "a young Count of

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[372] AAMB, *Archiepicopalia Mechliniensia*, reg. 11, fol. 153recto-verso.

[373] Lefebvre, "Chronique du couvent des Minimes (KBR Ms. III 1338)," f. 3recto; see also ARAA, Eccl. Arch., 12174: *Reghels, ende aflaeten van het Broederschap van den H. Enghel Bewaerder, op-gherecht in de kercken der PP. Minimen in Nederlandt* (Brussels: P. de Bast, 1636).

[374] Ibid., 21–22. "[…] en de stricken ontgaen, die my gheleyt worden van den duyvel: treckt my uyt de gelegentheydt van de sonde, ende en laet niet toe dat ick desen dagh mynen Godt vergrammen: maer dat onder uwe bescherminghe nogh den Duyvel, noch de Weirelt, noch het Vleesch eenigh vermoghen over my kryghen [...]"

[375] Ibid., 22. "waeckt voor my terwylen dat ick slape, keert van mynen geest alle de bekoringhe van den nacht, en de onsuyvere inbeeldinghen, bevrydt my van de boosheydt van den gheest der duysternissen [...]"

[376] Lefebvre, "Chronique du couvent des Minimes (KBR Ms. III 1338)," f. 3recto. "sijn de capellen van O.H. Vaeder, en van den H. Enghel Bewaerder ghemaeckt in den pandt teghen den muer van onse oude kercke (waer langhs men daer inquam) sijnde van te voren daer oock een capelleken van Onse Lieve Vrouwe." In 1646 it is decided to perform the litany of the Angels on Sundays instead of the prescribed tuesdays: "De litanie van de H. Enghelen, die wij alle dijnsdaeghen plochten te singhen wort in het jaer 1646 ghestelt te singhen op de sondaeghen, om datter dan meer volck quam. Dit gheschiede ter oorsaecke van het Broederschap van den H. Enghel Bewaerder, dat in onse kercke opgherecht was van het jaer 1636."

[377] Two altarpieces by Jean van Orley (1665-1735) presently in the church probably date from the eighteenth century.

Enghien and his sister".[378] This description corresponds rather closely to a painting by Gaspar de Crayer, presently in the City Hall of Leuven (*fig*. 34, 35).[379] It depicts the Guardian Angel leading two children towards Christ who appears in the clouds. A third richly dressed child stands to the left, holding a crucifix with a rosary and a book. Behind his back emerges a demon from the dark.

But who was the Count of Enghien, a county that had been elevated to a duchy-peerage in 1566, shortly before the title became extinct?[380] From his birth in 1621 until his father's death in 1646 the title Duke of Enghien was held by Louis II de Bourbon, Prince of Condé, also known as "le Grand Condé". Condé stayed in the Netherlands from 1652 to 1659 fighting, as we have seen, for the Spanish King. His son Henri Jules de Bourbon was born in 1643, and held the title from 1646 when his father became Prince. He was brought up in Brussels from the age of nine to sixteen.[381] Two other children were born in this period, both of whom died young: Louis (1652-1653) and a girl of which the name is not known (1657-1660).[382] Could the children depicted in De Crayer's altarpiece be Henri Jules and his two siblings? The age of the children corresponds to the approximate dating of the painting (1659), if we take into account the possibility that one or two of the depicted children are no longer alive. It is very well conceivable that the young prince Henri Jules (and/or his father) was a member of the confraternity of the Holy Guardian Angel, and/or that Condé upon leaving the Netherlands as a result of the Treaty of the Pyrenees in 1659 would donate such a painting to the

[378] Mensaert, *Le peintre amateur et curieux*, 108. "Dans leur Chapitre, on voit sur l'Autel, la copie de ce fameux Crucifix, peint par *Giotto*, qui coûta la vie à son modele, lorsque ce Peintre peignit ce tableau. Vis-à-vis de cet Autel, on voit un Ange Gardien, qui conduit le jeune Comte d'Enguien et sa soeur par la main. Il est peint par *G. De Crayer*."

[379] KIK-IRPA object number 114560. Hans Vlieghe, *Gaspar de Crayer, sa vie et ses oeuvres* (Brussels: Arcade, 1972), 243 (A230), fig. 217. The painting may have ended up in Leuven after the French Revolution. In the present Minim church a somewhat similar painting is conserved, showing only one child, signed Jan Cossiers and dated 1661 (KIK-IRPA object number 20014348). Both paintings seem to be modeled after the famous *Guardian Angel* by Pietro da Cortona, donated by the artist to Pope Alexander VII in 1656 upon receiving knighthood. See Jörg Martin Merz, *Pietro da Cortona: der Aufstieg zum führenden Maler im barocken Rom* (Tübingen: Wasmuth, 1991).

[380] The title was first conferred on Louis, Duke of Enghien (1530-1569). At his death the title became extinct, yet from 1569 to 1689 it was held by eldest son of the Prince of Condé.

[381] See Henri Chérot, *Le fils du Grand Condé: Henry Jules de Bourbon, duc d'Enghien: son éducation en France et en Belgique* (Brussels: Vromant, 1894).

[382] http://fr.wikipedia.org/wiki/Louis_II_de_Bourbon-Condé

French Minims in Brussels, for the salvation of his dead children that he had to leave behind.[383]

The Santa Casa of Loreto in Brussels

From shortly after its foundation, the Brussels Minim convent hosted a cult of Our Lady of Loreto.[384] A Loreto-chapel or hermitage was founded in 1623 and gained its most distinctive features only in 1659. In what follows, I will examine the function(s) of the cult, the texts in which it is described, and the various audiences that engaged with it. To what extent was this specific cult employed as a catalyst of moral change in the near vicinity of the Minim convent?[385]

The shrine of the Santa Casa in Loreto, Italy was the foremost Marian pilgrimage site in Europe (*fig*. 36-38). Here, a little brick structure was venerated as the Holy Family's sacred dwelling, in which the Virgin Mary had been born. After the Saracens conquered the Holy Land in the thirteenth century, the house had miraculously been transported by angels from Nazareth to the Adriatic coast, where it settled down on various locations before settling permanently in Loreto in Italy, where Kings and Popes bestowed precious votive offerings on the shrine of the "Holy House". A magnificent basilica was built over it in the sixteenth century, and it was clad with an elaborately sculpted marble casing by a team of artists under the direction of Donato Bramante and Jacopo Sansovino (*fig*. 37).[386] The interior of the house, however, was left unaltered as the humble brick space in which the Virgin was born (*fig*. 38).

The cult of Our Lady of Loreto centred on the belief that in the Holy House the Annunciation had taken place. This fostered a great devotion with

[383] Vlieghe does not merit the painting more than a few lines, and rightly puts a (?) behind the confusing title Count of Enghien. Mensaert (presumedly) saw the painting in the church before its artworks were dispersed during the French Period, and may have derived his identification of the depicted children from an inscription or from oral tradition by the monks. More research into the provenance of the Leuven painting is needed to provide conclusive answers.

[384] André Ver Elst, "De Miniemen en O.L. Vrouw van Loreto te Brussel," *Eigen schoon en de Brabander* 46 (1963): 131–40.

[385] The nineteenth-century city historians Alexandre Henne and Alphonse Wauters conflated Sanderus' account of the convent's foundation ceremony in 1621 with the description of the Loreto-chapel in 1662, creating the false suggestion that this was the case from the start. Henne and Wauters, *Histoire de la ville de Bruxelles*, 1845, vol. 3; 419.

[386] See Kathleen Weil-Garris, *The Santa Casa di Loreto: problems in Cinquecento sculpture* (New York: Garland, 1977).

women who wanted to become pregnant. For instance in 1609 Albert and Isabella donate a magnificent cloak to Our Lady of Loreto, probably as a last resort for their infertility, which had great constitutional implications, as the sovereignty of the Netherlands would return to the Spanish Crown if one of them died without progeny.[387]

At the same time, the miracle of the Annunciation constituted the epitome of purity and chastity. But most importantly, the Santa Casa was venerated as the historical place *where the word became flesh* (John 1:14).[388] This belief had a whole series of theological implications, not in the last place because it embodied the anti-Protestant argument of material proof of the truth of Catholicism (i.c. Mary's role in salvation). The Holy House was at once relic and reliquary, as the place where salvation history had materialized and Catholic truth had been manifested. The site of the Incarnation, it was the place where God became human to save us from our sins, and as the house where the Virgin was born without the stain of original sin, no place on earth could be considered more holy.[389]

Therefore, during the seventeenth century the cult of Our Lady of Loreto and the associated Lauretan Litany would spread rapidly throughout the catholic world, giving birth to replicas of the miraculous image of the Virgin, as well as of the Holy House itself. Loreto-chapels and sometimes even exact Casa Santa-replicas were often erected by patrons who had travelled to the miraculous shrine at Loreto in Italy and wished to be reminded of that special experience at home and to fulfil a vow they had made to the Holy Virgin. The cult of the Lauretan Virgin was also embraced at an early stage in the Spanish Netherlands. For instance the Antwerp patrician Jean de Gaverelles, who had visited Loreto during his grand tour in Italy, founded a chapel in honour of the Virgin under the title of "Rosa Mystica" (derived from the litany of Loreto) in the new Discalced Carmelite convent in Antwerp in 1615, thus creating one of the first "Loreto-chapels" in the Netherlands.[390]

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[387] Augustinus Wichmans, *Brabantia Mariana Tripartita* (Antwerp: Joannes Cnobbaert, 1632), 242.

[388] An inscription on the chapel read: *Quo verbum caro factum est*.

[389] Marie-Élizabeth Ducreux, "La Santa Casa dans l'espace Marial Habsbourgeois au XVIIe siècle," *Les cahiers du centre de recherches historiques* 41 (January 25, 2008): 39–71.

[390] Bert Timmermans, *Patronen van patronage in het zeventiende-eeuwse Antwerpen: een elite als actor binnen een kunstwereld* (Amsterdam: Aksant, 2008), 114. For the inscription on the first stone and its explanation, see: http://users.telenet.be/leopold.winckelmans/inscript/verklar2.htm

The House of Habsburg had always cultivated a singular devotion to the Virgin Mary, and ever since the defeat of the Turks at the Battle of Lepanto by Don Juan of Austria in 1571, supposedly obtained through the invocation of the Immaculate Virgin, the Marian cult had gained a strong political and military dimension.[391] When Ferdinand II of Styria visited the shrine of the Holy House in Loreto in 1598 he had vowed to the Virgin to expel all heretic preachers from the lands under his dominion, which he did.[392] Twenty years later he was "miraculously" elected Holy Roman Emperor (1619–1637), and naturally this was considered to be through the intervention of Mary. After the Catholic victory at the Battle of the White Mountain in 1620, which was attributed to the Virgin, and gave rise to the new cult of Our Lady of Victories, Ferdinand and his successors raised her to the rank of "generalissima" of their armies.[393] The Emperor and his entourage greatly stimulated the cult of Our Lady of Loreto and after 1620 a great many Loreto chapels were built by noble patrons in the Austrian Habsburg lands, as well as in the recently conquered and to-be-catholicized Bohemia.[394]

The Counter-Reformation significance of the cult derived also from the miraculous *translatio* of the shrine from the Holy Land after its occupation by the infidels. Protestants were regarded as the new infidels and the fight against heresy as a new crusade. Moreover, according to tradition the Holy House had first landed in Croatia, and moved to two other places before finally settling across the Adriatic in Loreto. This was explained by the dissatisfaction of the Virgin with the piety displayed at the former locations, which implied that founding a Loreto-replica was an act of performance, constituting a similar degree of piety as performed at the original sanctuary, to the satisfaction of Our Lady. The mobility and formal replicability of the cult of Loreto thus imbued it with a unique capacity of "sanctifying" geographical space on various levels. Its apotropaic agency is reflected in contemporary perceptions, in which effects of dispelling heresy

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[391] Delfosse, *La Vierge « Protectrice du Païs-Bas »*, 228.

[392] Bridget Heal, "Mary 'Triumphant over Demons and Also Heretics': Religious Symbols and Confessional Uniformity in Catholic Germany," in *Diversity & Dissent: Negotiating Religious Difference in Central Europe, 1500-1800*, ed. Howard Louthan, Gary B. Cohen, and Franz A. J. Szabo (New York: Berghahn Books, 2011), 153–72.

[393] Delfosse, *La Vierge « Protectrice du Païs-Bas »*, 228.

[394] Ducreux, "La Santa Casa dans l'espace Marial Habsbourgeois au XVIIe siècle"; Franz Matsche, "Gegenreformatorische Architekturpolitik: Casa-Santa-Kopien und Habsburger Loreto-Kult nach 1620," *Jahrbuch für Volkskunde* 1 (1978): 81–118.

and other evil from the near vicinity of Loreto-shrines are attributed to the cult.[395] The indispensable function of Our Lady of Loreto as *mediatrix coeli et terrae* is clearly illustrated by an engraving from Gumppenberg, showing the Holy House floating between heaven and earth, accompanied by the text *ne pereat* (may [the world] not perish) and *ne feriat* (may [heaven] not strike) (*fig*. 39).

In their fight against heresy in general, and the war with the rebellious Northern provinces in particular, Albert and Isabella put their trust above all in the protection of Our Lady of Scherpenheuvel.[396] Yet even during the Truce (1609-1621), the Archdukes and their courtiers were deeply involved in the Thirty Years War (1618-1648) in Germany, with nobles like Bucquoy, Tilly, Spinola, and the above mentioned Duke of Saxony playing leading military roles.[397] As we have seen, military officers like these were committed patrons of reformed orders like the Discalced Carmelites and the Minims in Brussels, especially in the period immediately before the outbreak of the war, during which they still resided in Brussels. It is in these convents that we find the earliest examples of chapels, or rather hermitages, dedicated to Our Lady of Loreto.[398]

Following the recommendations of St Theresa of Avilá, the garden of the Brussels convent of Discalced Carmelite nuns (founded 1607) included three hermitages, one of which was dedicated to Our Lady of Loreto.[399] This reflected a return to the original Carmelite ideal of withdrawing as hermits in the desert to contemplate mysteries of the faith.[400] The convent of the Discalced Carmelite monks (founded 1610) was also equipped with a hermitage, and in a forest near Namur the archdukes had founded in 1618-1619 an entire complex of hermitages for the Discalced Carmelites, in an enclosed terrain named the Holy Desert of Marlagne (built on the initiative

[395] Ibid., 109–110.
[396] Duerloo, "Pietas Albertina. Dynastieke vroomheid en herbouw van het vorstelijk gezag," 7.
[397] See Duerloo, *Dynasty and Piety: Archduke Albert (1598-1621) and Habsburg Political Culture in an Age of Religious Wars*.
[398] Delfosse, *La Vierge « Protectrice du Païs-Bas »*, 122.
[399] The other two were dedicated to Christ and John the Baptist. See Joris Snaet, "Isabel Clara Eugenia and the Capuchin Monastery at Tervuren," in *Isabel Clara Eugenia: Female Sovereignty in the Courts of Madrid and Brussels*, ed. Cordula van Wyhe (London; Madrid: Paul Holberton Publishing; CEEH, 2011), 368, 379 (note 43); Meganck, "De kerkelijke architectuur van Wensel Cobergher (1557/61-1634) in het licht van zijn verblijf te Rome," 156–160.
[400] Trevor Johnson, "Gardening for God: Carmelite Deserts and the Sacralisation of Natural Space in Counter-Reformation Spain," in *Sacred Space in Early Modern Europe*, ed. W. Coster (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 2005), 193–210.

of Thomas of Jesus).[401] Another early example is the chapel and hermitage at the monastery of Groenendael outside Brussels, of which the Infanta Isabella placed the first stone in 1622 (*fig*. 25). This happened shortly after the bones of the fourteenth century mystic Jan van Ruusbroec had been reburied at the monastery with the intention to foster his beatification.[402] The chapel was dedicated to Our Lady of Loreto and was built next to the linden tree under which Ruusbroec used to sit and write his mystical literature, and immediately drew large numbers of pilgrims. In 1626 the Holy See proclaimed Ruusbroec "Blessed".

Not just the religious retreated in hermitages, but also their patrons, as we know that the Infanta Isabella had a hermitage built for herself at the Capuchin monastery near her castle in Tervuren (c. 1627), where she would pray for a few hours or sometimes for a few days, in preparation of religious feasts.[403] In much the same vein, the chapter of the Brussels Minims decided in 1623, when the church and convent were still under construction, to build a little chapel with a cell on the extremity of the convent garden. This information is derived from the manuscript chronicle of the Minim convent, written in 1730 by the convent's corrector Anton Lefevre, who based himself on archival material that has probably been lost.[404] According to Lefevre, the place of reclusion was funded by an anonymous benefactor, and was called the "hermitage". By withdrawing for a certain period in the hermitage, the monks (or their patrons) imitated St Francis of Paola, founder of the order, who had also been a hermit in the wilderness from the age of fourteen to

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[401] F. Courtroy, "Les Archiducs Albert et Isabella au désert de Marlagne," *Namurcum, Chronique de la société archéologique de Namur* XVIII (1941): 44–48; see also Sanderus, *Chorographia Sacra Brabantiae, tomus secundus*, 244.

[402] From 7-8 November 1622 the remains of the fourteenth-century mystic Jan van Ruusbroec were excavated in the monastery of Rooklooster in the Zoniënwoud forest near Brussels by Archbishop Jacques Boonen and interred in the Trinity chapel of the nearby priory of Groenendael. Here, next to what was known as the linden tree of Ruusbroec the Infanta Isabella laid the first stone of a Loreto-chapel on 17 November 1622. See Wichmans, *Brabantia Mariana Tripartita*, 804–806.

[403] Snaet, "Isabel Clara Eugenia and the Capuchin Monastery at Tervuren," 367–370; for Cardinal's hermitages in Rome, see Arnold Alexander Witte, *The Artful Hermitage: The Palazzetto Farnese as a Counter-Reformation Diaeta* (Rome: "L'Erma" di Bretschneider, 2008).

[404] Lefebvre, "Chronique du couvent des Minimes (KBR Ms. III 1338)," f. 1verso. "In het jaer 1623 is er in het capittel besloten gheweest een capelleken met eene celle te bouwen, alsdan op het eijnde, nu in het midden van onsen hof, het welck onse PP. noch in het groot huijs van Vesalius woonende, de heremitagie noemden. Alles is bekostight door eenen onghenoemden weldoender. Siet den boeck van de Acten Capitulair op het 32 bladt, ghelijck oock voor alle de volghende cijffers, waer in gheene mentie ghemaeckt en wordt van de index van de archive. In dit capelleken is een beeldt van Onse Lieve Vrouwe van Lauretten ghestelt gheweest, dat veel volck quam vereeren; […]"

nineteen (*fig*. 16).[405] The chapel is rendered in the engraving of the convent and church from the Sanderus edition of 1727 (*fig*. 23). It appears as a typical hermitage-cum-chapel such as the one at Groenendael (*fig*. 40), and it is difficult to say if it possessed any distinctive "Lauretan" architectural qualities, let alone exact measurements. Yet if it had, this would probably have been communicated by the sources.

We do not know when, but most likely before 1630, a sculpted image of Our Lady of Loreto was placed in the chapel, which was soon venerated by a great number of people, especially women (*fig*. 41).[406] When the monks moved into their new convent in 1630, they enclosed the chapel by a wall that prevented the women to enter. Unhappy with this situation, some women instantly requested that the monks should build a second wall, thus creating a passage onto the street, to be closed at night with a door.[407] The monks obeyed to this request, until a new altar of Our Lady was erected inside their convent.[408] In 1640 a wall was built along the street across the hermitage and chapel, and the two convent gardens were joined into one large garden, at which time they walled up this entrance, which put an end to the women passing through.[409]

Some years later, in 1647 the Minims erected a confraternity of Our Lady of Loreto.[410] The history of the Loreto cult is recounted in the catechistic brochure for members of the confraternity, published in 1671 by the Brussels Minim friar Adrianus Houtmans, entitled *Spiritual Academy of*

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[405] Vivier, *Vie et miracles de Saint François de Paule*, 29–31.

[406] Lefebvre, "Chronique du couvent des Minimes (KBR Ms. III 1338)," f. 1verso.

[407] Ibid. "maer als wij beneden in ons teghenwoordigh clooster sijn komen woonen, hebben wij dit capelleken in onsen muer ghesloten, waer door de vrouw-persoonen daer niet meer en [doorgekrast: konden] moechten inkomen; uijt welcker oorsaecke eenighe mevrouwen ons instantelijck versoecht hebben van noch eenen muer te trecken aen den anderen kant van het capelleken tot teghen de straet, en tusschen die 2 mueren eene duere te hanghen, die wij savonts souden konnen toesluijten, en smorghens weder openen; hetwelck wij ghedaen hebben in het jaer 1630."

[408] According to Lefevre in the place where in the new, post 1715 church the sacristy is located. Ibid., f. 4recto.

[409] Ibid., f. 3recto. "1640 is den muer van onsen hof teghen de straet recht over het capelleken ghebouwt. Fol. 134. en gheheel den hoeck van den selven tot het eijnde van onsen bovensten hof teghen dien van Bournonville het jaer daernaer. Daerenboven is den muer afghebroken, die tusschen beije onse 2 hoven was, en diens-volghens moet dan de poort aen de straet toeghemetst sijn, waer langhs de vrouw-persoonen naer het capelleken quaemen."

[410] On 18 October 1648 Archbishop Jacques Boonen prescribes its statutes. *La confrérie de N.-D. de Lorette en l'église des SS. Jean et Etienne (Minimes) a Bruxelles (1648-1898)* (Brussels, 1898), 29.

the Most Holy Virgin.[411] In the tradition of Mathieu Martin's *Triomphe de la Verité*, in which Christ acts as narrator, the Spiritual Academy relates the story of the Holy House in detail by mouth of no other than the Virgin Mary. With regard to the cult in Brussels, the Holy Virgin claims that "some of her children of the Minim order […] after having seen the miracles performed by her Son, through her intercession, at Loreto, got the desire to erect a chapel in their convent in Brussels with the same dimensions, width, length, thickness, and height of the walls, and manner" of the original.[412]

This idea should be seen as part of a long tradition of devotional draughtsmanship in the context of pilgrimage, based on the notion that "sacred measurements" ought in themselves to be considered relics, and were endowed with the same agency as the object or building from which they derived.[413] Replicating shrines from the Holy Land was often used as a device to expiate guilt and purify terrain recovered on infidels.

According to Houtmans, the monks also had an image of Our Lady of Loreto (probably the same image as mentioned above) sculpted from the wood of the miraculous, supposedly six-hundred-year-old oak of St Guido, patron saint of Anderlecht near Brussels.[414] The oak of St Guido was felled in 1633, at which occasion the monks may have obtained a piece of its wood, perhaps through their brothers of the Minim convent in Anderlecht.[415] In

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[411] Adrianus Houtmans, *Gheestelycke Academie van de Alderheylighste Maget Maria* (Brussels: Gielis Stryckwant, 1671).

[412] Ibid., 97. "De groote devotie die tot *Lauretten* gheschiedt in myn H. Huysken, considererende sommighe van myn kinderen der *Minimen Order*, die de liefde ende *Charitas* voor hunne wapen hebben, ende eenighe onder hun ghesien hebbende die wonderlycke werken die mijnen Sone door mijne Voorspraecke daer doet, hebben een begeerte ende devotie ghekreghen om een Capelle doen te bouwen in hun Clooster tot *Brussel*, op de selve grootte, breedde, lenghde, dickte, ende hooghde van Mueren, ende maniere ghelyck myn Huysken tot *Laurette* is.

[413] Beaver, "From Jerusalem to Toledo: Replica, Landscape and the Nation in Renaissance Iberia," 75–76. According to Beaver "measurement was not an indifferent fact used to build the replica; if anything, the replica was an indifferent edifice which served to house [or physically embody] the measurement." This logic applied to replicated shrines as to relics. See also Nagel and Wood, *Anachronic Renaissance*.

[414] Houtmans, *Gheestelycke Academie van de Alderheylighste Maget Maria*, 97. "Sy hebben oock doen snyden een Beelt van het Miraculeus hout van den Eycken Boom van *S. Guido*, Patroon van *Anderlecht by Brussel*, ende dat op de maniere gelyck het myne is, d'welck den *H. Evanghelist Lucas* heeft ghesneden, ende hetwelcke d'Apostelen in dese Capelle hebben ghestelt, ghelyck de selve Religieusen oock dit Beelt hebben ghestelt in hunne Capelle die sy ghegheven hebben den Naem van *Lauretten*, alwaer mynen Lieven Sone my seer vereert met vele wonderlijcke wercken te doen, ende ghehoor te gheven aen die my daer aen-roepen."

[415] "Légendes de chez nous (XIX). Le chêne légendaire d'Anderlecht," *Le patriote illustré* 69, no. 25 (1953): 793. See also Wichmans, *Brabantia Mariana Tripartita*, 948; Arnould de Raisse, *Hierogazophylacium Belgicum sive Thesaurus Sacrarum Reliquiarum Belgii* (Douai: G. Pinchon, 1628), chap. 59.

addition to the miracle-working material of which the image consisted, it also possessed the same form as the miraculous cult image that was venerated in the shrine of Loreto, Italy (*fig*. 42). This image was held to be a "true effigy" or *vera icon*, made after life by the Evangelist Luke and placed in the Holy House by the apostles.[416] Houtmans suggests that by adorning their hermitage with this image, the monks imitated the apostles.

A membership book of the confraternity of Our Lady of Loreto seems to have existed as of 1634, however the precise origin of the Loreto cult in the Brussels Minim church remains shrouded in mystery.[417] The account by Houtmans is a catechism for members of the confraternity, and speaks about the erection of the confraternity in 1647 or the preceding period only in very general terms. If the image of Our Lady of Loreto was the initial reason for the popular devotion since the 1620's, as suggested by Lefevre, was this the same image as described by Houtmans, and which is still venerated in the church at present?[418] And was the hermitage – or any other chapel at the convent before 1660 – deliberately conceived as a Santa Casa replica? We do not know, but is seems unlikely.

According to Houtmans the first and principal promoter of the cult of Our Lady of Loreto was the Minim friar Amandus Kerchof.[419] Houtmans'

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[416] In order to create this likeness the wood may have been sent to Loreto in Italy to have it sculpted after the original, which was considered St Luke's plastic masterpiece. See Hecht, *Katholische Bildertheologie der frühen Neuzeit: Studien zu Traktaten von Johannes Molanus, Gabriele Paleotti und anderen Autoren*, 96–103; Belting, *Likeness and Presence: A History of the Image before the Era of Art*, 47–77.

[417] Ver Elst, "De Miniemen en O.L. Vrouw van Loreto te Brussel," 138.

[418] KIK-IRPA object number 20014361 (dated 1641-1660).

[419] Houtmans, *Gheestelycke Academie van de Alderheylighste Maget Maria*, 98–101. "Den eersten ende principaelsten die ghevrocht heeft tot dese vervoordeinghe van dit devoot Broederschap is gheweest mijnen Lief-hebber *Pater Amandus Kerchof*, die vercosen zijnde van den *Marcgraef St. Martin*, die doen tot Brussel was, om te voldoen een belofte die hy my hadde ghedaen, ende hunne offerhande my te draghen tot *Lauretten*, het welcke hy met groote devotie heeft volbraght, niet teghen-staende hy den Oversten alsdoen van het Clooster van *Brussel* was, hebbende [p. 99] meer affectie om met dese occasie sijn devotie in mijn H. Huysken gaen te doen, oft te bethoonen, ende dese myne H. Plaetse gaen te dien, als te gouverneren sijn Religieusen ende Convent.

Den goeden voornoemden Pater zynde met zynen Mede-ghesellen van *Lauretten* naer Roome ghegaen, hadde daer ghesien ende hooren spreken van de groote devotien, ende goede wercken die daer wierden ghedaen van mijne Mede-broeders van het Arts-broederschap de *Confalonis*, inghestelt in de stadt van Roomen in't jaer 1273. door mijnen grooten Lief-hebber den *H. Bonaventura* in mijne Kercke genoemt *Maria major*, aen het welcke Broederschap door diversche ende verscheyde *Pausen* zijn ghegunt groote Aflaten ende Privilegien, doende daeromme by sijn Heyligheyt *Paus Alexander den VII*. groote neerstigheydt om moghen het Broederschap van Brussel t'samen te voeghen, ende vereenighen met dit Arts-broederschap ende te ghenieten de selve gratien, Privilegien ende Aflaten, het welcke den Stadt-houder van mijnen Sone *Iesu Christi* hier op der aerde hem heeft liberaerlijck vergunt. Maer al eere hy daer van tot Brussel de Bulle

story starts around 1650 when the miraculous pregnancy of the Albertine Marie de la Baume, Marchioness of St-Martin had occurred. While Sanderus ascribed the miracle to the intercession of St Francis of Paola instead of Mary's, Houtmans only mentions that the couple had made a vow to the Virgin Mary, and that Amandus Kerkckhof was chosen to fulfil this vow and to carry their offering to Loreto in Italy. In spite of the fact that he was at the time corrector (in 1651 and 1654), Kerckhof preferred to honour the Virgin to governing his convent. The monk and his companions completed the task with great devotion, and continued their journey to Rome, where they heard about the Archconfraternity of the Gonfalone.[420] This confraternity enjoyed great indulgences and privileges, from which similar confraternities could also benefit by means of affiliation. Therefore Kerckhof petitioned with Pope Alexander VII for the Brussels Loreto-confraternity to be granted aggregation.[421] Thanks to the good reputation in Rome of the General of the Minim Order Balthasar d'Avila, who had twenty years earlier as Provincial consecrated the Brussels Minim convent and who was also Provisor of the Archconfraternity, this request was authorized in 1658 by Cardinal Francesco Barberini, protector of the Archconfraternity, shortly after Kerckhof had died.[422] To celebrate this achievement, a solemn procession was organized in which the wife of the Governor General, the Marquess of Caracena, and her ladies of honour played a prominent role.[423]

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hadde ontfanghen, die in het jaer 1658. op den 26. dagh van December door sijn heyligheyt was ge-expedieert, soo heeft hem mijnen Sone van deser werelt gehaelt."

[420] A group of white penitents founded in 1263 by St Bonaventure in the church of Santa Maria Maggiore in Rome. On the Archconfraternity of the Gonfalone, see Barbara Wisch and Nerida Newbigin, *Acting on Faith: The Confraternity of the Gonfalone in Renaissance Rome* (Philadelphia PA: Saint Joseph's University Press, 2012).

[421] ARAA, Eccl. Arch., 12175, petition of 12 April 1658.

[422] ARAA, Eccl. Arch., 12175, aggregation on 26 December 1658 (including the indulgences by Urban VIII d. 23 May 1633). Archbishop Andreas Creusen gave his authorization on 28 May 1659.

[423] Houtmans, *Gheestelycke Academie van de Alderheylighste Maget Maria*, 99–101. "Den Oversten die in sijne plaetse gouverneerde, dese Bulle ontfanghen hebbende, soo isser gheordonneert gheweest, datmen tot verheffinghe van mijn Broederschap binnen de Princelijcke Stadt van *Brussel* in-ghestelt, ende tot danck-segginghe van dese gratie, een solemnele Processie soude in-stellen ende houden, ghelijck het met groote Feeste ende extraordinarissche Triomphe is gheschiedt, want veel duysende Persoonen sijnder ghecomen, om mijn miraculeus Beeldt te vereeren, ende t'selve te vergheselschappen met licht, zijnde op den wegh veel schoone ende rycke Autaeren ghemaeckt ende ghestelt, om het Hooghweerdigh H. Sacrement op te rusten.
Het was een ghenuchte voor de Borgerye ende Mede-gaenders te hooren het geclanck der Trompetten, Cymbalen ende andere Instrumenten van Musieck, die in sommighe Huysen speelden, ter wylen den omganck gheschiedde, andere losten menichte van geschut, ende vier-wercken, &c. Maer het ghene d'eere van dese Feeste was vermeerderende, is gheweest, dat Mevrouwe de Marcgravinne, Vrouwe van sijn Excellentie der Gouverneur doen ter tydt van

Then, on 22 May 1660 the first stone was laid for a new Loreto chapel by "syndicus" of the convent Aegidius Gerardi.[424] This chapel, we know with certainty, was built exactly according to the length, breadth and depth of the Holy House of Loreto in Italy. These dimensions had (supposedly)[425] been published as *Ichnographia* by the Bavarian Jesuit Bachamer in 1625, and were widely disseminated from 1657 through the Marian Atlases of the German Jesuit Wilhelm Gumppenberg.[426] Because of the inclination of some of the Minims for mathematics, they may have been particularly interested in ichnography and exact dimensions. An inscription on the chapel designated it as "exact representation of the sacred House of Loreto, in which the Word was made flesh."[427] Anticipating an immediate success, quite unlike when they first built the hermitage, the Minims placed a grille in the wall around the churchyard so that even when the convent precinct was closed, passers-by could see and venerate a large cross and the Loreto chapel.[428]

What was the agency of the Brussels Casa Santa copy? In addition to seeing the image of the Lauretan Virgin, which by virtue of its form and

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Nederlandt ende Spaens-bourgoignien den Marquis de Caracena haere staet-Iouffvrouwen den dagh te vorens hadde ghesonden, om myn beeldt te vercieren met haere costelijcke Iuweelen, Diamanten ende andere Ghesteenten ghe-estimeert wel op 40,000. oft 50,000. guldens, alsoo dat de Croone die mijn beeldt op het hooft hadde, ende den Rock was blinckende van de costelijcke Ghesteenten, doende oock vier van haere Pagien met witte Wasse flambeelen het selve beeldt vergheselschappen."

[424] Lefebvre, "Chronique du couvent des Minimes (KBR Ms. III 1338)," f. 3verso. ARAA, Eccl. Arch. 12178, inscription on the first stone: "Pro singulari suo in Beatissimam Virginem/Lauretanam affectu ac Devotione/Ornatissimus Vir/Dns. Aegidius Gerdardi/Huius Conventus Syndicus optime meritus/primum hunc Lapidem in sacelli dictae B. Mariae Virginis Lauretanae/Consecrandi extructione posuit 22. May An. 1660"

[425] At least according to Gumppenberg, however, Ducreux has not been able to find it. Ducreux, "La Santa Casa dans l'espace Marial Habsbourgeois au XVIIe siècle," n. 109.

[426] Wilhelm Gumppenberg, *Idea Atlantis Mariani* (Trent: Carolus Zanetti, 1655); and the first edition of his Marian Atlas, which appeared in three volumes between 1657 and 1659: Guilielmus Gumppenberg, *Atlas Marianvs, sive De Imaginibvs Deiparæ per Orbem Christianvm Miracvlosis* (Munich: Lucas Straub, 1657).

[427] Sanderus, "Coenobium Bruxellense Ordinis PP. Minimorum S. Francisci de Paula," 43. The inscription in Latin: "Exacta representatio/saCrae DoMVs s. LaVretanae, (=1660)/in qua/verbum caro factum est." See also James Hilton, *Chronograms: 5000 and More in Number Exerpted out of Various Authors* (London, 1882), 259, http://www.archive.org/stream/ chronograms5000m00hilt. Hilton adds "And this, probably the date of some repairs: DoMVnCVLae LaVretanae. (=1715) i.e. The little house of Loreto."

[428] Lefebvre, "Chronique du couvent des Minimes (KBR Ms. III 1338)," f. 3verso. "In hetselve jaer fol. 303verso heeft den Eerw. P. Aegidius Machart eene ijsere traelie besorght, om de selve te doen setten in eenen kant van den muer, die ons kerckhof (nu onse kercke) afsloot van de straete, om dat de passanten het groot cruijs, dat op de plaetse daer nu den grooten autaer is, nieuwelijckx was opgherecht, en de capelle van Lauretten souden konnen sien als de deure ghesloten was."

material possessed miraculous and apostolic qualities, the visitor to the chapel could be absolutely certain that he or she was having a similar experience as pilgrims to Loreto: that is, to be in the holiest place on earth, where the most central mysteries of the history of salvation had actually taken *place*. Houtmans opposes the Holy House to the magnificent Temple of Solomon, which was according to Scripture built in a miraculous way without intervention of base manual labour. The Virgin's Holy House instead was a humble abode, made by human hands from lowly materials. As opposed to Salomon's temple, it featured no art, no costly materials, but the mere miracle and rich gift of the God-turned-human, making salvation possible for all.[429] This could only have a deeply transformative effect on the viewer, according to Houtmans (by mouth of Mary):

> "You, dear brothers who have visited and seen my holy chapel at Loreto, can attest, that when you enter this Holy House you find yourself so changed and excited in devotion, with the desire to serve me better henceforth, that you are not ashamed to instantly go throw yourself at the feet of a confessor to dispose of your sins by genuine contrition and make a good confession, with the intention to better yourself henceforth, and start a new life; and those who have been there get soon the desire to return."[430]

This rhetoric of change is elaborated upon by examples, and great emphasis is laid on the power of communal prayer (in the context of the confraternity), exemplified by citing Genesis 18:26 "And the Lord said: If I find in Sodom fifty righteous within the city, then I will spare all the place for their sakes."[431] Thus, it is implied, by subscribing to the Loreto confraternity, one

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[429] Houtmans, *Gheestelycke Academie van de Alderheylighste Maget Maria*, 20–21. "Maer myn Kamerken is eerwerdigh gheworden op dese maniere meer als eene andere plaetse des [p. 21] gheheelen werelt, niet ter oorsake van den wonderlijcken oft costelijcken bouw, die alleenlijck van slechte materie, ende ghemeyne wreck lieden was gemaeckt tot Nazaretten, maer om de groote ende menighvuldighe mirakelen die daer inne syn geschiedt. Want wat meerder mirakel heeft Godt oyt ghedaen als in dit Kamerken, in dese goddelijcke Capelle, *daer het woordt vleesch gheworden is*. [...]"

[430] Ibid., 28. "Ghy-lieden beminde Mede-broeders die dese mijne H. Capelle tot Lauretten hebt besocht ende ghesien, cont ghetuyghen, dat soo wanneer ghy in dit H. Huysken comt u selven soo verandert vindt ende ontsteken in devotie, met begheerte van my voordaen beter te dienen, dat ghy niet beschaemt en zijt terstonts u gaen te werpen voor de voeten van eenen Bicht-vader om uwe sonden door een opprecht berouw ende goede bichte af te legghen, met een goet propoost van sich voordaen te beteren, ende een ander leven aen te nemen; ende die daer eens heeft geweest, kryght altoos begheerte om noch weder te keeren."

[431] Ibid., 109–110. "[...] want het is seker dat het ghebedt dat van veel wordt ghesproken van meerder cracht is als van eenen in't besonder, [...]. Men heeft hier van een groote proeve in de heyliche Schrifture alwaer wordt verhaelt, dat hebbende Godt sich voor-ghenomen de Stadt van

could contribute significantly to warding off the wrath of God over Brussels, and especially the sinful neighbourhood of Bovendal…

It may therefore come as no surprise that during the later seventeenth century, when the Southern Netherlands were incessantly plagued by military invasions, culminating in the bombardment of Brussels in 1695, the confraternity continued to flourish. Since all members were required to make the pilgrimage at least once in their life, the confraternity also became something of a society for people who had travelled to Italy.[432] The chronicler Lefevre recounts how the Loreto-chapel was miraculously saved during the bombardment of 1695, thanks to a statue of St Francis of Paola which he had placed there.[433] When the church was rebuilt from 1700 to 1715, the chapel was rebuilt on a different location, resembling the original even closer.[434] Great festivities took place in 1709 and 1759 in celebration of the 50th and 100th jubilee of the confraternity.[435] At present, the eighteenth-century version of the chapel survives in the church, albeit stripped of most of its decorations during the French Revolution. Today the Virgin of Loreto has taken on a new role as patron saint of aviation.

Conclusion

As a result of the Protestant critique on the Catholic laxity towards adultery, the prostitution at Bovendal, which had traditionally been tolerated within this area, increasingly became looked upon as a problem. The city magistrate took a series of measures aimed at containment of the prostitution in order to curtail the adultery that was thought to provoke the wrath of God. At the same time, the circle of French ex-ligueurs around the duke of Aumale and Montgaillard, in voluntary exile at the court of the Archdukes, sought to bring the Minims to Brussels as French counterpart to the recently

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Sodoma te niet te doen, om de boosheydt die daer inne geschiedde, d'welck den *Patriarch Abraham* ghehoort hebbende, heeft beginnen nacht ende dagh te bidden om de gramschap Godts te stillen, ende dit quaedt van dese Afgodene dienaers af te keeren. Godt aensiende de traenen van desen synen goeden vrient antwoorde hem, dat soo wanneer hy coste in de Stadt 50. oft 40. jae thien goede ende rechtveerdighe menschen vinden, dat hy het Sweert sijnder justitie in de schee soude steken, ende van *Sodoma* in gratie nemen. *Si invenero in Sodomis 50. justos in medio civitatis, dimittam omni loco propter eos*. O wonderbaere effecten ende sterckheydt van een ghemeyn ghebedt!"

[432] According to a publication by the confraternity of 1696, more than 170 members had made the pilgrimage to Loreto. Ver Elst, "De Miniemen en O.L. Vrouw van Loreto te Brussel," 138.

[433] Lefebvre, "Chronique du couvent des Minimes (KBR Ms. III 1338)," f. 5verso–6verso.

[434] Ibid., f. 3verso.

[435] Ver Elst, "De Miniemen en O.L. Vrouw van Loreto te Brussel," 138.

introduced Spanish and Italian reformed orders. The fervent preaching of the monks against fleshly sins, along with their ascetic lifestyle, met with great acclaim. By promoting piety and Christian morals, while linking sexual vice to heresy, the monks promised to counter Protestantism.

When the war was about to recommence after the Truce, the Minims successfully capitalized on the concerns about the wrath of God in order to gain the necessary momentum and support to get a permanent foothold in Brussels. With the triumphant gesture of laying the first stone of the new convent on the site of a brothel, the different parties involved in the city's public life [court, magistrate, royal and ecclesiastical dignitaries] excorcized the "false idol" Venus and re-consecrated the neighborhood to the Virgin Mary. The ceremony was performative in that it constituted a new reality, even before the necessary land had been acquired: the monks anticipated change, trusting in providence. Crucial in this respect was the agency of the first stone: directed at heaven by invoking the intercession of the Virgin to repell the wrath of God.

The monks proposed a remedy, not only by the implantation of their convent as a beacon of moral rectitude in the middle of this vicious territory, but also promised to bring about change by means of social disciplining and control. At the same time they presented themselves also as (heroic) victims, urging the authorities to go beyond the usual policy of containment and actively prosecute the prostitutes. This rhetoric was heightened in reaction to crisis (1629), when sanctification was once again presented as antidote to the wrath of God. How can we make sense of the apparently conflicting and ambiguous intentions and strategies of the monks? Did the Minims play an active role in relation to their neighbourhood, or did the latter act on them?

The walls, tunnel, and the austere style of the convent building not only separated the monks from the prostitutes, but also drew attention to that separation. Together with their extraordinary asceticism, these architectural interventions enabled the monks to lay claim on a status of holiness and virtuous role models. The success of this strategy is demonstrated by the conversion of the Duke of Saxony and its promotion by the subsequent publication of the *Triomphe de la Verité*. However, the bad location of the convent led to insufficient alms and the artistic agenda of the church project more or less ran ashore: not all the projected side chapels could be realized as the chapel foundations were charged with debt, and the Minims had little

choice but to give priority to urban redevelopment and social control in order to break this vicious circle.

The founding of a hermitage in the garden facilitated private devotion by the monks and an anonymous patron. Yet the statue of Our Lady of Loreto soon became the principal object of popular devotion by women, about which the monks were uneasy as it led to an infringement of their seclusion. The monks tried to keep control over the cult by replacing the statue to a new chapel, erecting a confraternity in her honour, and by bolstering its anti-adultery agency by means of the poem cited in Sanderus. In addition, they erected a confraternity of the Holy Guardian Angel, addressing and disciplining potentially adulterous young men, while the cult of St Francis of Paola fostered the occurrence of pregnancy-miracles.

Of the various strategies to effectuate moral change, the Santa Casa replica seems to have been the most successful. By means of replicating sacred space, its virtual architecture exercised a strong agency: the awareness of being present inside the holy house put the believer “in place” of the Virgin. This comparative confrontation was to lead the believer to humility, penitence, conversion, and transformation.

Chapter II – The Calced Carmelites and the Legitimate Use of Images

Decree of the 25th session of the Council of Trent:

> Moreover, that the images of Christ, of the Virgin Mother of God, and of the other saints, are to be had and retained particularly in temples, and that due honour and veneration are to be given them; not that any divinity, or virtue, is believed to be in them, on account of which they are to be worshipped; or that anything is to be asked of them; or, that trust is to be reposed in images, as was of old done by the Gentiles who placed their hope in idols; but because the honour which is shown them is referred to the prototypes which those images represent; in such wise that by the images which we kiss, and before which we uncover the head, and prostrate ourselves, we adore Christ; and we venerate the saints, whose similitude they bear: as, by the decrees of Councils, and especially of the second Synod of Nicaea, has been defined against the opponents of images.[436]

In this chapter, I will deal with the high altar of the richly decorated Brussels Carmelite church (*fig*. 44).[437] Although the church and its many artworks were completely destroyed during the French bombardment of Brussels in 1695,[438] the appearance of this high altar is passed on in a splendid engraving of 1640 (*fig*. 47) and described by Sanderus in 1660. Both sources give a vivid impression of the altar as it was decorated during the yearly feast of Saint Dorothea of Caesarea on the sixth of February. On this occasion, the provost of the newly erected confraternity of St. Dorothea decorated the altar with an elaborate ensemble of architecture, sculpture, paintings, and a liturgical apparatus. In addition, the altar and the surrounding space would temporarily be transformed by a multitude of flowers, artificial and real, alluding to the Saint's miracle of having summoned flowers from heaven just before her martyrdom, in the very midst

[436] *The Canons and Decrees of the Sacred and Œcumenical Council of Trent, Celebrated Under the Sovereign Pontiffs, Paul III., Julius III., and Pius IV. Translated by J. Waterworth.*, 234–235.

[437] The current case study was based on the founding article on the church by Nora De Poorter, "Verloren werk van De Crayer en Rubens van naderbij bekeken: de altaarschilderijen van de Brusselse Lieve-Vrouwebroeders," in *Munuscula Amicorum: Contributions on Rubens and His Context in Honour of Hans Vlieghe, 2*, ed. Katlijne van der Stighelen (Turnhout: Brepols, 2006), 311–29.

[438] See Janssens, "'Baeckens om naer te schieten': schade aan de religieuze instellingen ten gevolge van het bombardement van 13-15 Augustus 1695."

of winter. Besides glorifying the saint, who was venerated as patron of garden-owners, these artistic interventions also highlighted the piety of their patron, and drew large numbers to the Carmelite monastery.

As I will set out to demonstrate, the flower-festival in the Carmelite church (and the function of religious art in it) may best be understood if approached in terms of agency and performance. By means of an examination of the specific cultural and historical context of the flower feast I will put a different light on the intended and perceived effects of the altar's decorations.

First I will describe the context of the altar: the Carmelite order, its convent and church in Brussels and the networks of patronage of artworks in the church. Next I will discuss the visual and textual sources on the altar and feast of St Dorothea, and the information that may be derived from them. The discussion of the altar and the people involved with it follows the structure of the art nexus (prototype, artist, index, recipient). I will then place the cult of St Dorothea in the wider European context of Early Modern gardening culture and "horticultural exchange". By means of advanced techniques of flower cultivation and greenhouses, the contest between Art and Nature evoked the Saint's miracle, and resulted in the restoration of the classical ideal of Eternal Spring. Finally, I will return to the specific intentions of the patron, and to the various types of agency the altar retable exerted on the beholder.

The order of Calced Carmelites

As an old and established religious house in Brussels, the Carmelite convent was a venerable institution. A mendicant contemplative order with a special devotion to the Virgin Mary, the Brothers of Our Lady of Mount Carmel, known locally as Lieve-vrouwbroers, had flourished especially in the fourteenth century. In rivalry with other mendicant orders like the Franciscans and Dominicans, who prided themselves on being founded by prominent saints like St Francis of Assisi and St Dominic, the Carmelite Friars traced their origins back to a pre-Christian community of hermits on

Mount Carmel. There, their patron the Biblical prophet Elijah[439] had brought back the people of Israel to the faith of their ancestors (*fig*. 43).[440]

When in the thirteenth century the monks were driven out of the Holy Land by the Saracens they spread out all over Europe. Their rule, given to them by St Albert, patriarch of Jerusalem in 1209, was confirmed by the pope in 1226. As the oldest convent of this order in Brabant, the Brussels convent had been founded as early as 1249 by Duke Henry III of Brabant, under the order's famous general, the Scot Simon Stock. In 1251 this future saint would experience a vision in which he received the Holy Scapular from the hands of the Virgin Mary. This unique sacramental was worn by members of the eponymous confraternity founded by him and became immensely popular during the late medieval period, as it promised the wearer certain Salvation.

The Brussels convent had been particularly favoured by Duchess Johanna of Brabant (1322-1406). This "last Duchess of Brabant" lay buried in the chancel of the church under a magnificent gothic funerary monument. The subsequent period of Burgundian rule had hardly been less bountiful for the Carmelites.[441] On 23 January 1501 the church had hosted the illustrious sixteenth chapter meeting of the Order of the Golden Fleece in which Duke Philip the Fair created seven knights, amongst whom his one year-old son, the future Emperor Charles V.[442] This token of noble inhabitancy and Burgundian heritage was proudly displayed in the heraldic shields above the choir stalls. In the refectory of their convent the monks retained a triptych from the hand of their city's most famous painter, Rogier van der Weyden (ca. 1400-1464), donated by one of the Knights of the order.[443] In addition to

[439] As we have seen in chapter 1, the Minims also like to compare their corrector Claude du Vivier to this prophet.

[440] This claim was categorically refuted by Cesare Baronius in the sixth volume of his *Annales ecclesiastici* in 1595. See P. Jean de la Croix, "La glorification de l'Eucharistie de Rubens et les Carmes," *Metropolitan Museum Journal* 2 (1969): 179–95.

[441] Notwithstanding that the convent fell in disgrace during the reign of Philip the Good ca. 1430, after the monks had given shelter to the renegade imposter Jean Belle. Alfred d'Hoop, *Inventaire général des archives ecclésiastiques du Brabant. Tome IV: couvents et prieurés, béguinages, commanderies* (Brussels: Stevens, 1929), 30–31.

[442] The Order of the Golden Fleece, instituted in 1430 by Duke Philip the Good (1396-1467), was the most prestigious military order in the duchy of Burgundy and in succession the kingdom of Spain.

[443] The central panel depicted a Virgin and Child crowned by angels, the side panels a Carmelite and a knight in the order of the Golden Fleece in adoration. It was dated 1446.

all these riches, the monks could also pride themselves on housing one of the greatest libraries in the southern Netherlands.[444]

However, all that glitters is not gold. During the Calvinist republic (1577-1585), when the city was led by the fearsome Calvinist governor Olivier Van den Tempel, the Carmelites had been faced with great difficulties and dilemmas. Although the church escaped from pillaging thanks to the friendship between their prior and one of Van den Tempel's officers, the Governor Archduke Matthias soon asked, and then commanded, the monks to cede part of their church to the Calvinists. This was of course an onerous demand, not in the last place because of conflicting liturgies. In order for the monks to perform their Divine Office without disturbing or being disturbed by the sermons of the Calvinists, they built a wall from floor to vault separating the chancel from the rest of the church, according to Sanderus, "so as to separate piety and impiety, faith and heresy as far as possible (whilst it could not be farther)."[445] And as if this was not enough, the monks also had to cope with lodging a group of rude and greedy soldiers. Eventually in 1581 the monks were expelled and fled to Germany and Enghien. When they returned to their ravished and profaned church in 1585, it was purified and provided with some provisional decorations. In the following decades, and especially under the long priorate of Ferdinand de St Victor from 1603 to 1619 the monastery was greatly expanded and redecorated.[446]

This period came abruptly to an end in 1619, when a visitation of the monastery turned into a riot, causing great scandal. Prior Ferdinand de St Victor, who had also been provincial from 1609 wanted to remain in power against the wish of twelve of his subordinates. On Easter (9 April 1619) the monks convoked the people by ringing the bell, and stirred them up against their superior.[447] But the provincial was not impressed by the public

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[444] The inventory of this library has been misidentified by Saintenoy as *Index librorum convente bruxellensis fratrum carmelitorum*, par Père Placide de Sainte Thérèse. Yet this must be the library of the Discalced Carmelites, since father Placide belonged to that order. Paul Saintenoy, "Un architecte bruxellois inconnu: le Frère Macaire Borlere de l'ordre du Carmel," *Bulletin des commissions royales d'art et d'archéologie* 2 (1924): 124–125.

[445] Antonius Sanderus, "Chorographia Sacra Carmeli Bruxellensis," in *Chorographia Sacra Brabantiæ* (Brussels: Philippe Vleugart, 1660), 11.

[446] Ibid., 40.

[447] The event happened in the tumultuous year 1619, during which also the artisan guilds of the Nine Nations voiced their disgruntlement over taxation and repression in the "guerre du gigot". See Honacker, "Reorganisatie in Brussel of de strijd om de privileges. Het conflict tussen de ambachten en de aartshertogen van 1619"; Karin Honacker, *Lokaal verzet en oproer in de 17de en*

indignation; and the public outrage soon turned against the monks and the papal nuncio Lucio Morra, who would hastily return to Italy.[448] By intervention of Archduke Albert, however, Ferdinand de St Victor was expelled because of his "scandalous lifestyle".[449] The Council of Brabant as well wanted to interfere in the conflict, claiming jurisdiction over the laypeople involved, by means of the chef-president of the Secret Council, Engelbert Maes, who lived nearby the convent.[450]

The erupting tensions revealed the fact that the Carmelites had long been accustomed to take a very liberal interpretation of their rule.[451] In spite of being an order of mendicant "hermits", they led a rather comfortable lifestyle, and the boundaries between the civic public life and the convent were often blurred. Integrated as they were in Brussels society, many of them being members of distinguished families, they took part in worldly festivities like exuberant banquets, where they drank too much, and many took over the bad habit of smoking pipe, even doing so in public.[452] In defiance of the nascent climate of Counter Reformation religious fervour and Catholic Reform in general, and the rapid rise of the competing reformed branch of Discalced Carmelites[453] in particular, the monks refused to better their ways. To make things worse, the "perverse and scandalous lifestyle" of Ferdinand de St Victor had been the subject of various Dutch pamphlets which still circulated in 1638.[454]

The Belgian Carmelite province came to be divided in two factions; proponents of the reform led by Martinus de Hooghe, and its opponents

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18de eeuw: collectieve acties tegen het centraal gezag in Brussel, Antwerpen en Leuven (Kortrijk-Heule: UGA, 1994).

[448] Henne and Wauters, *Histoire de la ville de Bruxelles*, 1968, vols. 3, 156; referring to Ms. KBR 7047: Petrus de Wael or Wallius, *Collectanea rerum gestarum et eventuum Carthusiae Bruxellensis, cum aliis externis tum Patriae tum Ordinis, Vol. IV*, 1652, 7–8. Till 1618 the papal nuncio resided near, but not in the Carmelite convent.

[449] Ferdinand de St Victor was exiled by order of Archduke Albert and Cardinal-Protector of the Carmelites, Giovanni Garzia Millini (cardinal 1606-1629). In 1624 he was sent to Rome. See Meester de Ravestein, *Correspondance du nonce Giovanni-Francesco Guidi di Bagno: (1621-1627)*, 30–31, 464; Wilfrid Brulez, *Correspondance de Richard Pauli-Stravius (1634-1642)* (Brussels: Institut Historique Belge de Rome, 1955), 301.

[450] Lucienne Meerbeeck, *Correspondance des nonces Gesualdo, Morra, Sanseverino, avec la secrétairerie d'état Pontificale (1615-1621)* (Brussels: Palais des Académies, 1937), 368.

[451] Pasture, *La restauration religieuse aux Pays-Bas catholiques sous les archiducs Albert et Isabelle (1596-1633)*, 302–305.

[452] Brulez, *Correspondance de Richard Pauli-Stravius (1634-1642)*, 335.

[453] The reform introduced by Theresa of Avila and John of the Cross had led to a scission in 1593.

[454] Ibid., 300–301. This is also mentionned by the Carthusian chronicler De Wael. I have not been able to retrieve such pamphlets.

headed by Livinus Canisius.[455] This struggle continued for more than twenty-six years (1623-1649), during which period repeated attempts at reform by the order's superiors failed due to the rebelling monks' machinations.[456] Yet the reform was strongly supported and closely monitored by the Infante Isabella, who insisted on a return to total observance.[457] Only in 1633, the year of her death, the observance of Touraine was introduced in the Brussels convent by provincial Martinus de Hooghe (+1637) and prior Livinus à SS. Trinitate (+1641).[458] This reform emphasized silent (interior) prayer and rehabilitated poverty, renunciation, and seclusion, and meant a radical break away from the order's social standing and the heretofore cultivated tradition of learning and humanism.[459]

Nonetheless, the former prior Ferdinand de St Victor kept intriguing and in 1638 the representative of the Holy See, Richard Pauli-Stravius once again complained to Cardinal Francesco Barberini in Rome how "in the convents the old abuses and excesses reappear, of which the faith has suffered so much in the Low Countries."[460] In 1641 the monks turned to the

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[455] See Stephan Panzer, *Observanz und Reform in der Belgischen Karmelitenprovinz, 1623-1649: "Pour parvenir à un parfait rétablissement de la discipline régulière"* (Rome: Edizioni Carmelitane, 2006); see also Irenaeus Rosier, *Biographisch & bibliographisch overzicht van de vroomheid in de Nederlandse Carmel van 1235 tot het midden der achttiende eeuw* (Tielt: Lannoo, 1950), 93–95, 104, 107–108, 111.

[456] General Teodoro Straccio (1632-1642) was not elected, but appointed by the Holy See. Joachim Smet, *I Carmelitani, Vol. III/A* (Rome: Edizioni Carmelitane, 1996), 25–29. Straccio issued a new rule: Richard Ruquelot, *Regula et constitutiones Fratrum Beatas Dei Genitricis Mariae de Monte Carmelo antiquae observantiae, a Urbano Papa VIII confirmatae, auctoritate R.P. Theodori Stratii in lucem editae* ... (Cahors: J. Dalvy, 1637); and an "instruction" to which there was much opposition within the order: Theodorus Stratius, *Instructio pro Fratribus Carmelitis antiquae observantiae regularis, quo, sciscitantibus de indulgentiis confratrum Scapularis, & visitantium ecclesias sui Ordinis respondere sciant*, 1640.

[457] Meester de Ravestein, *Correspondance du nonce Giovanni-Francesco Guidi di Bagno: (1621-1627)*, 793–794, 799, 801. Bagno to Spada, 14 November 1626: the prior of Valenciennes is dismissed. Instead of mounting a new election, the provincial moved to Valenciennes. Bagno to general of the Carmelites, 22 November 1626: The Infante is furious, the provincial will have to justify his action in person. The Infante demands sending monks from Touraine to Valenciennes to introduce reform. Bagno to Spada, 5 December 1626: ask provincial of Touraine to send four religious to Valenciennes to introduce reform. Bagno to general of the Carmelites, 12 December 1626: the provincial has hardly been able to justify himself in front of the nuncio, but Bagno has nonetheless tried to safeguard the prestige of this monk in front of the Infante.

[458] Sanderus, "Chorographia Sacra Carmeli Bruxellensis," 40.

[459] Rosier, *Biographisch & bibliographisch overzicht van de vroomheid in de Nederlandse Carmel van 1235 tot het midden der achttiende eeuw*, 201–204.

[460] Brulez, *Correspondance de Richard Pauli-Stravius (1634-1642)*, 334. "As of old all scandals of the Carmelites stemmed from the fact that they went to eat and drink in the houses of laypeople, De Hoghe has forbidden that on penalty of mortal sin; the new provincial lifted the prohibition and the drinking sessions and scandals recommence. He has also revoked the statutes of the reform prohibiting the monks to enter in each others cells or talk with each other while

Council of Brabant to petition against jurisdiction by the internuncio in their elections.[461] Stravius and Archbishop Jacques Boonen urge the authorities in Rome to counteract the election of the ill-reputed Livinius Canisius to provincial, but to no avail.[462] The conflicts regarding the jurisdiction over the Carmelites escalated in 1646 when the new internuncio Antonio Bichi threatened the bailiff of the Council of Brabant with violence,[463] and culminated in 1649 (this time in a conflict regarding the Augustinians, another ill-disciplined order) when the bailiff headed toward the internuncio accompanied by soldiers, to storm a completely barricaded nunciature.[464]

Stephan Panzer's study of the Carmelite reform makes clear that an established order like this was not just (or not primarily) an agent of the Counter-Reformation, Catholic Reform, and confessionalization of the population, but rather the subject of it.[465] As I will try to show in the next paragraph the patronage of altarpieces in their church in Brussels should be seen in this context.

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warming them to the fire; he has abolished the custom to kneel at the refectory before sitting at the table, as well as that of the non-priestly monks to wash the dished often, for their greater mortification. Furthermore, he has transferred the [professorat] to the convent of Valenciennes, where he has allowed monks of scandalous lifestyle. He has thus destroyed the reform to the introduction of which Stravius, the two archbishops and several good monks have worked for eight or ten years."

[461] Lefèvre, *Documents relatifs à la juridiction des nonces et internonces des Pays-Bas pendant le régime espagnol (1596-1706)*, 128.

[462] Brulez, *Correspondance de Richard Pauli-Stravius (1634-1642)*, 530, 534.

[463] Lefèvre, *Documents relatifs à la juridiction des nonces et internonces des Pays-Bas pendant le régime espagnol (1596-1706)*, 145. "Report of the Bailiff of the Council of Brabant, P. Christyn, Brussels, 15 January 1646: [P. Christyn] went to the house of the Internuncio, bringing ordinances of the Council of 22 December 1645 and 12 January 1646, concerning the request of the Carmelites. He has read the documents aloud. The roman diplomat has asked who the signers were. It has been answered that it were the chancellor and a secretary. The Internuncio has grabbed the bailiff by his right arm, in which the latter held the stick with the royal coat of arms, wanting to take away the stick. He called two of his servants who got onto the bailiff, a stick in the hand. He ordered them to hit the bailiff. The latter reached the door. Then the Internuncio told him that he was only to inform the counsellors that they should refrain from any interference in the ecclesiastical jurisdiction. He added that, if the bailiff would present himself again at his door with similar orders of the Council, he would knock him out. He menaced him with his finger."

[464] Bart Wauters, *De controverse rond de jurisdictie van de nuntius: het placet op de geloofsbrieven van Spinelli, Valenti-Gonzaga, Tempi en Crivelli, 1725-1749* (Leuven: Leuven University Press, 2001), 61–62.

[465] Monika Gussone, "[review Of] S. Panzer, Observanz und Reform in der Belgischen Karmelitenprovinz, 1623-1649," *Annalen des historischen Vereins für den Niederrhein, insbesondere das alte Erzbistum Köln* 211 (2008): 340–42.

The monastery and church

In the bombardment of Brussels by the French Marshall Villeroy in 1695 the convent and church of the Carmelites and its artworks were completely destroyed, as well as its archives.[466] The complex was rebuilt but demolished again during the French period in 1797.[467] Most information we have on the convent as it was during the seventeenth century derives from the description in Sanderus' *Chorographia sacra Carmeli Bruxellensis* of 1660 and the accompanying engraving by Lucas II Vorsterman after Jacob van Werden (*fig*. 44).[468] The engraving must depict the situation before in 1661 some of the dilapidating convent buildings were rebuilt.[469] In 1659 the monks had started with the perilous task to demolish the old cloister, which was on the verge of collapse.[470] This succeeded without problems and in 1661 the Governor General, the Marquess of Caracena laid the first stone for the new convent.[471] The architect involved may have been the Carmelite friar Macarius à Jerusalem, who also designed the conspicuous bell tower on the roof of the church (*fig*. 44, 46).[472]

During the rebuilding campaign of c. 1660 the church was probably left untouched, as Sanderus and other contemporary sources make no mention of anything out of the ordinary.[473] The plain gothic structure dated from the thirteenth century and had been significantly enlarged in the mid-fifteenth-century on the plan of a Latin cross, adding two transepts and two aisles flanking the front of the nave (*fig*. 44, 45). Receding from the

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[466] De Poorter, "Verloren werk van De Crayer en Rubens van naderbij bekeken: de altaarschilderijen van de Brusselse Lieve-Vrouwebroeders," 311. See also Gerrit vanden Bosch, "Monasticon van de geschoeide karmelieten en de geschoeide karmelietessen in de Zuidelijke Nederlanden en het Prinsbisdom Luik, 1," in *Bibliografische inleiding tot de Belgische kloostergeschiedenis vóór 1796, Vol. 45* (Brussels: Algemeen Rijksarchief, 2001).

[467] Little remains of it today apart from the house on the corner of the Lievevrouwbroerstraat/Stoofstraat, visible on the engraving in Sanderus. *Bouwen door de eeuwen heen in Brussel: inventaris van het cultuurbezit in België. Deel Brussel, Volume 1, Part 2*, 354.

[468] Friedrich W.H. Hollstein, *The New Hollstein Dutch & Flemish Etchings, Engravings and Woodcuts, 1450-1700* (Amsterdam; etc: Van Poll, 1993), vols. LII, 29; XLII, 157, no. 123.

[469] C. Leurs, "Enkele verdwenen kerken te Brussel," *Gentse bijdragen tot de kunstgeschiedenis en de oudheidkunde* 17 (1957): 108–109.

[470] Sanderus, "Chorographia Sacra Carmeli Bruxellensis," 40. (under prior R.P. *Vincentius à Nativitate B.V. Mariae*)

[471] Henne and Wauters, *Histoire de la ville de Bruxelles*, 1845, Vol. 3; 158; note 4. (referring to *Geschiedenissen van Brussel*, KBR mss. 11.639-41)

[472] Saintenoy, "Un architecte bruxellois inconnu: le Frère Macaire Borlere de l'ordre du Carmel," 124.

[473] E.g. the English adventurer John Skippon who visited the church in 1663. Phillip Skippon, "An Account of a Journey Made Thro' Part of the Low-Countries, Germany, Italy and France (1663)," in *A Collection of Voyages and Travels, Vol. 6*, ed. Awnsham Churchill (London, 1745), 373.

alignment of the street, the church was mostly hidden from sight by the surrounding houses.

In accordance with the fervent Carmelite Marian devotion, the church was consecrated to the Virgin Mary. The high altar in the monk's choir must therefore also have been dedicated to this saint. By 1660, the church contained three chapels[474] and seven altars[475] hosting six confraternities.[476] One of these, the confraternity of St Anne, was the confraternity of "procureurs", a profession somewhat comparable to lawyers.[477] Its long-established chapel was decorated with an altarpiece by Rubens, which must have been one of the first he painted upon his return from Italy in 1609. As pointed out by De Poorter, the Carmelites had a special devotion to St Anne because according to legend, Anne and Joachim had taken the young Virgin Mary on a visit to the hermits of Mount Carmel.[478]

It may be significant that many of the artworks and religious foundations mentioned by Sanderus date from after the reform of 1633. As from that date it appears patrons were more inclined to make considerable donations to the convent. One of the principal reformers, Livinius à SS Trinitate, erected the confraternity of St Carlo Borromeo, the prototypical post-Tridentine archbishop of Milan (and Cardinal-protector of the Carmelite order during his lifetime) who was also venerated as a plague saint, during

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[474] Dedicated to the Visitation of Our Lady (an appendix to the left transept); to St Anne (left transept); and to the Holy Scapular (an appendix the end of the right transept). The chapel of the Visitation of Our Lady was founded in 1389 by an eponymous confraternity and rebuilt in 1481. It housed a miraculous alabaster image of the Virgin, known locally as *OLV ter Meesen*. The chapel of St Anne was decorated with bronze columns and Rubens' *St Anne instructing the Virgin*, an early work by the master probably painted after his return from Italy in 1609. See De Poorter, "Verloren Werk van De Crayer En Rubens van Naderbij Bekeken: De Altaarschilderijen van de Brusselse Lieve-Vrouwebroeders."

[475] Sanderus, "Chorographia Sacra Carmeli Bruxellensis," 14. "This church has seven altars (which is wonderfully in harmony with the seven clans [lineages] of Brussels)." The high altar was consecrated to the Virgin Mary (but contained an altarpiece by Gaspar de Crayer depicting St Dorothea); the other altars were consecrated to St Simon Stock (altarpiece by an unknown painter); to the Visitation of Our Lady (alabaster cult image); to St Anne (altarpiece by Rubens); to St Carolus Borromeo (altarpiece by Jan Janssens); to St Barbara; and to St Catherine (altarpieces by De Crayer). On Rubens' St Anne, see De Poorter, "Verloren werk van De Crayer en Rubens van naderbij bekeken: de altaarschilderijen van de Brusselse Lieve-Vrouwebroeders," 319–324.

[476] First of all the confraternity of the Holy Scapular; then that of the Visitation of Our Lady (founded 1389); of St Anne; of St Barbara (founded 1462); of St Dorothea (founded 1640?); and of St Carolus Borromeo (founded 1636).

[477] Ibid., 319; 329, note 32. Masius, who belonged to the class of jurists who held central administrative positions in the era of Roose, may have been a member.

[478] Ibid., 324; 329, note 42; Cécile Emond, *L'iconographie carmélitaine dans les anciens Pays-Bas méridionaux* (Brussels: Paleis der Academiën, 1989), 91–97.

the plague epidemic of 1636. Archbishop Jacques Boonen was a great promoter of St Carlo Borromeo (canonized 1610),[479] and the altar was consecrated by him in 1637. It was decorated with an altarpiece by Jan Janssens depicting *St Carlo Borromeo kneeling in prayer*, donated by the "apostolic pronuncio" Richard Pauli-Stravius.

At this point we need to ask, who was Stravius? After the death of the Infante Isabella in 1633, the apostolic nunciature in Brussels had become vacant and the administrator Stravius was charged with handling the affairs of the Holy See in the Netherlands. When the installation of Cardinal-Infant Ferdinand as Governor General in 1634 warranted the appointment of a new nuncio, the designated candidate Lelio Falconieri who arrived in Brussels in 1635 had faced non-recognition by the Brussels government. During the Francophile papacy of Urban VIII Barberini, the Brussels nunciature was increasingly considered an exponent of French influence, and therefore the powerful president of the Privy Council Pieter Roose (and the government in Madrid and the Cardinal-Infant Ferdinand)[480] did not need a papal legate with full powers, and thus after much legal diversions Falconieri returned empty-handed to Rome in 1637.[481] Meanwhile the incompetent Stravius[482] had usurped the title of pronuncio or internuncio, and in the diplomatic vacuum the Vatican could not get rid of him, until he was finally sidetracked in 1642.[483] To the chagrin of the local clergy, Stravius interfered in matters beyond his jurisdiction such as the reform of the Carmelites. The ambitious Stravius was greatly frustrated by the persistent failures to reform the Carmelites, and especially by the lack of support from Rome. His patronage of the altar of St Carlo Borromeo in the Carmelite church, founded by one of the reform's leaders, may perhaps be seen as a gesture of approval or encouragement of the reform by Stravius and Boonen, since, besides facilitating popular (and probably lucrative) devotion to this plague saint, it

[479] "Jacob Boonen" in *Nationaal Biografisch Woordenboek*, II, 78

[480] René Vermeir, "Les limites de la monarchie composée: Pierre Roose, factotum du Comte-Duc d'Olivares aux Pays-Bas espagnols," *XVIIe Siècle : Bulletin de La "Société d"Etude Du XVIIe Siècle'* 60, no. 3 (2008): 495–518.

[481] As from the nunciature of Fabio Lagonissa in 1627, Madrid saw the Brussels nunciature as an undesirable extension of French influence. See René Vermeir, "The Infanta Isabel Clara Eugenia and the Papal Court, 1621-33," in *Isabel Clara Eugenia: Female Sovereignty in the Courts of Madrid and Brussels*, ed. Cordula van Wyhe (London; Madrid: Paul Holberton Publishing; CEEH, 2011), 332–51.

[482] Vermeir, *In Staat van Oorlog: Filips IV En de Zuidelijke Nederlanden, 1629-1648*, 230–232.

[483] Wauters, *De Controverse Rond de Jurisdictie van de Nuntius: Het Placet Op de Geloofsbrieven van Spinelli, Valenti-Gonzaga, Tempi En Crivelli, 1725-1749*, 48–57.

also reminded the monks of the virtuous example of Borromeo the pre-eminent reformist bishop. Among the first prominent members of the confraternity was also Cornelius Jansenius, bishop of Ypres and author of the *Augustinus*, the book that was to provoke the Jansenist controversy.[484] Ironically, at this altar Stravius was ordained titular bishop of Dionysias in 1642; a promotion he hoped would enforce his position as internuncio, yet which soon turned out to be frame-up to discharge him.[485]

In roughly the same period as the altar of St Carlo Borromeo, the existing chapel of Our Lady of the Scapular, ensign of the Carmelite order was magnificently rebuilt, at the expense of Albert Prudhomme, prefect of the Mount of Piety.[486] According to Sanderus this chapel with its marble cladding and an exquisite inlaid floor had hardly any equal in Brussels, and was to be considered one of the most beautiful chapels in Belgium.[487] Consecrated in 1639, its altarpiece depicted *St Simon Stock receiving the Holy Scapular from the hands of the Virgin* by an unknown painter. In 1651 the confraternity would stage extensive festivities to celebrate the four-hundredth jubilee of the Virgin's salvation gift.

In this context of politically charged and artistically magnificent patronage we have to situate the donation of the new high altar of the convent church in 1640 by Jan Baptist Maes (son of Engelbert Maes), as first provost of the newly erected confraternity of St Dorothea. The altar was situated in the monk's choir or chancel, behind the nave which had been made into a Calvinist place of worship during Calvinist occupation (*fig*. 45). Sanderus describes how after the rood screen had been destroyed (to build the separating wall), both the altars of St Barbara and St Catherine were

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[484] Daniel à Virgine Maria, *Speculum Carmelitanum, Sive Historia Eliani Ordinis Fratrum Beatissimae Virginis Mariae de Monte Carmelo, Volume 4* (Antwerp: Michaelis Knobbari, 1680), 752.

[485] 2 February 1642. According to Henne and Wauters, Stravius founded an altar of the Holy Cross in the church in 1642, which Sanderus and other sources fail to mention. They seem to have misinterpreted Sanderus' passage on the altar of St Carolus Borromeo. Henne and Wauters, *Histoire de la ville de Bruxelles*, 1845, vol. 3; 157.

[486] The first Mount of Piety was founded in Brussels in 1618. Ibid., 157; for the Mounts of Piety, see Paul Soetaert, *De Bergen van Barmhartigheid in de Spaanse, de Oostenrijkse en de Franse Nederlanden (1618-1795)* (Brussels: Gemeentekrediet, 1986).

[487] Sanderus, "Chorographia Sacra Carmeli Bruxellensis," 16–25. Sadly, no images of the chapel seem to have survived and we do not know who the architect was. However, the fact that it was commissioned by the provost of the Brussels Mount of Piety might suggest a possible involvement of the founder of these banks, Wenceslas Cobergher (1557-1634) who was also court architect, or his son-in-law Jacques Francart (1583-1651).

moved to a better location and provided with altarpieces by De Crayer. New marble columns, separating the nave from the chancel, took the place of the destroyed rood screen, and upon entering the chancel it was now as if you entered another church.[488] In the midst of this chancel, before the high altar, was the famous monument of Johanna of Brabant, as also described by the English adventurer John Skippon who visited the church in 1663.[489] In addition, as of 1657 the monks also displayed a copy of the miraculous image of Our Lady of Naples, supposedly the first image ever venerated by the Carmelites, painted by St Luke and brought by them from the Holy Land.[490]

From the preceding it may be concluded that the Carmelites were patronized by a rather different network of patrons than the newly imported reformed orders like the Discalced Carmelites and the Minims. Whereas the latter were patronized by the high nobility of the court, and especially its circle of military commanders, the Calced Carmelites enjoyed the favour of patricians and the *noblesse de robe* or administrative elite. One reason for this difference is economic: the foundation of a new convent was extremely costly and thus reserved to wealthy high nobles or Antwerp merchant-bankers. The robe nobility rarely had this opportunity, and they usually confined themselves to the patronage of altars, chapels and confraternities in the churches of established local orders and parish churches. But in the case of the Brussels Carmelites, this patronage was seemingly tied to the reform of the convent.

The print of 1640

The large folio-print depicting the altar (*fig*. 47)[491] by Abraham Santvoort[492] after Alexander van Fornenbergh[493] is a remarkable visual source, most

[488] Ibid., 14. "destructi odaei locum marmoreae columnae, quae chorum ab anteriore ecclesia separant, occuparunt; quod uti mutationis, ita commendationis et ornamenti tantum huic affert ecclesiae, ut et introeuntibus quasi altera esse videatur." Barbara Haeger has demonstrated how the rood screen of St Michael's abbey in Antwerp symbolically displayed the transition from church militant to church triumphant. See Barbara Haeger, "The Choir Screen at St. Michael's Abbey in Anwerp: Gateway to the Heavenly Jerusalem," in *Munuscula Amicorum. Contributions of Rubens and His Colleagues in Honour of Hans Vlieghe*, ed. Katlijne van der Stighelen (Turnhout: Brepols, 2006), 527–48.

[489] Skippon, "An Account of a Journey Made Thro' Part of the Low-Countries, Germany, Italy and France (1663)," 373.

[490] Needless to say, such an image was a trump in the idolatry-discourse.

[491] Etching and burin, 325 x 235 mm. Hollstein, *The New Hollstein Dutch & Flemish Etchings, Engravings and Woodcuts, 1450-1700*, vols. XXIII, 181, no. 8.

likely created to commemorate the new high altar and its altarpiece by Gaspar de Crayer, as well as its patronage by Jan Baptist Maes or Masius.[494] Significantly, the two techniques of engraving and etching are used side by side: the more subtle technique of etching is reserved for rendering the two paintings depicting Dorothea's martyrdom and glorification, while the rest of the architectural décor and figures are engraved by burin. This evinces a strong concern for rendering the altar as truthful as possible, by creating a visual demarcation between the realms of physical reality and painted surface.

The print shows very clearly that the altar consisted of two painted scenes, one above the other, within an architectural frame recalling a triumphal arch. On top of it are inscribed heraldic, chronographic and devotional messages referring to the patron and the saint. Furthermore, we see two arches resembling "arbours", containing (painted?) vegetation and fountains, perhaps referring to the Fountain of Elijah of the Carmelite tradition, all sorts of flower-decorations, and tapestries with additional scenes adorning the walls, partially covering the windows.

Within this liturgical setting, we see people acting as if on a stage, in front of the altar where the Eucharist is exposed. The print thus not only gives a vivid impression of what the festively decorated altar looked like, but also how churchgoers behaved in front of it, or how they wanted to be depicted in front of it. As their fashionable dress seems to indicate, most of them were members of the confraternity. We also see pious women kneeling in front of the altar, and an acolyte helping a monk to deck it with flower

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[492] According to Nora de Poorter this might be Abraham Dircksz. Santvoort (+1669), and certainly the same engraver who also made the Plan de Tailly in 1640. De Poorter, "Verloren werk van De Crayer en Rubens van naderbij bekeken: de altaarschilderijen van de Brusselse Lieve-Vrouwebroeders," 327; referring to Louis Lebeer, "Recherches relatives au plan de Bruxelles de 1640 et de 1748 dit plan de Tailly," *Annales de la société royale d'archéologie de Bruxelles* XLVIII (1948): 184; Henri Hymans, "Abraham Santvoort," *Biographie Nationale*, n.d., 379–81; Hollstein, *The New Hollstein Dutch & Flemish Etchings, Engravings and Woodcuts, 1450-1700*, vols. XXIII, 177–188.

[493] Alexander van Fornenbergh (active 1621-1663) was a gentleman-artist who worked as a draughtsman, painter, and restorer of paintings, actor, and poet. He published a biography of the in the seventeenth century much appreciated "last Flemish primitive" Quinten Matsys in 1658. See De Poorter, "Verloren werk van De Crayer en Rubens van naderbij bekeken: de altaarschilderijen van de Brusselse Lieve-Vrouwebroeders," 327; on Fornenbergh, see also David Freedberg, "Fame, Convention and Insight on the Relevance of Fornenbergh and Gerbier," *The Ringling Museum of Art Journal* 1 (1983): 236–59.

[494] I have not been able to find more than one copy of the print by Fornenbergh (kept in the print room of the KBR, Brussels). However it is quite possible that copies were sent to Spain or Italy, or even to the Northern Netherlands.

vases. The print shows to what extent churches were used as meeting places,[495] in which dogs and children were running free, and in which men and women performed courteous gallantries.[496] The monks, however, are modestly withdrawn to the sides of the space.

Let us now look at this liturgical setting in more detail. The actual altar is reached by six steps, covered by a tapestry with flower-motif. The altar itself is decked with an antependium with, again, a flower motif. On the altar-table, vases with flowers alternate with burning candles, while in the middle, the consecrated host is exposed in a transparent monstrance. A monk, making a gesture of admiration, is assisted by an altar boy holding two additional flower vases. To the sides of the steps, two rusticated doors lead to the monk's sacristy. On top of this structure are railed balconies, supporting flower vases, and in between every baluster of the railing we see a tulip. To each side of the steps, the balusters serve to support pots with real, fruit-bearing orange trees.

The architecture of the altar is remarkable in a number of ways. Based on the classical triumphal arch motif, it basically consists of a two-dimensional facade-architecture, except for the balconies to the altar's sides, which are truly protruding. The superimposition of two paintings in an architectural frame goes back to Italian[497] and French[498] examples, but was fairly new at the time in Flanders.[499] It is primarily in its exceptional dimensions, filling the entire east end of the chancel, that the altar also recalls Spanish examples.[500] This may reflect recommendations by

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[495] Marinus, "De Contrareformatie te Antwerpen, (1585-1676): kerkelijk leven in een grootstad," 214–215.

[496] See for instance Joseph Cuvelier, "Voyage du Cardinal Rossetti en Belgique (1641)," *Bulletins de la Classe des Lettres et des Sciences Morales et Politiques* XIII (1927): 13–38; Baisier, "De documentaire waarde van de kerkinterieurs van de Antwerpse school in de Spaanse tijd," [???]; Laet, "Brussel binnenskamers: kunst- en luxebezit in het spanningsveld tussen hof en stad, 1600-1735."

[497] See C. Cresti, C. De Benedictis, and A. Forlani Tempesti, *Altari nella Controriforma* (Florence: Pontecorboli, 1995); Louise Rice, *The Altars and Altarpieces of New St. Peter's: Outfitting the Basilica, 1621-1666* (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 1997).

[498] See Cousinié, *Le Saint des Saints: maîtres-autels et retables parisiens du XVIIe siècle.*

[499] See Herremans, "'Eenen loffelycken ende hoffelycken aultaer': retabelplastiek in de Zuidelijke Nederlanden ca. 1585-1685," chap. 2; see also Ulrich Becker, *Studien zum flämischen Altarbau im 17. und 18. Jahrhundert* (Brussels: Koninklijke Academie voor Wetenschappen, Letteren en Schone Kunsten van België, 1990).

[500] E.g. the high altar of the church of Santo Domingo el Antiguo, Toledo, by El Greco (1577)

Counterreformation churchmen like Carlo Borromeo, who advised to aim for a strong focus on the high altar from the nave.[501]

The altar's Ionic columns are in accord with architectural theories of decorum, where this order was considered appropriate for virgin Saints.[502] They are decorated with twisting flower garlands as if they were "solomonic" (spiraling) columns. One of the most conspicuous architectural features of the altar retable is the "stacking" of no less than three entablatures, where one would be customary. This provided ample space for more (flower) ornament and gave the structure an elongated, stretched appearance (perhaps to fit its classical proportions in the framework of a gothic church?).[503] In place of friezes the artist placed cartouches, angels' heads, fruit-garlands and balusters. On either side of the elaborately decorated gable, candles, sphinxes, obelisks and angels holding wreaths and palm branches competed for the viewer's attention. The obelisks are topped by cartouches with monograms of the name "Dorothea", that is all the letters of her name in one symbol (impossible to read, and probably intended for divine rather ttan human eyes).[504] It must be noted that pagan symbols of Eternity like sphinxes and obelisks, derived from classical funerary monuments, were not very customary as decorations on altars:[505] instead, they form typical features of contemporary garden design, see for instance the depictions of gardens by Vredeman de Vries (*fig*. 54).[506] Balusters were

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[501] See Carlo Borromeo and Evelyn C. Voelker (tr), *Charles Borromeo's Instructiones Fabricae et Supellectilis Ecclesiasticae, 1577: A Translation with Commentary and Analysis* (Ann Arbor: UMI Dissertation Services, 1998).

[502] Significantly, in a print by Hendrick Hondius after Hans Vredeman de Vries, from the series of the Five Senses, the Ionic order was connected to the sense of smell (Odor). I should like to thank Joost Vander Auwera for this observation.

[503] Philippot et al., *L'architecture religieuse et la sculpture baroques dans les Pays-Bas méridionaux et la principauté de Liège 1600-1770*, chap. 33 compares it to the altar of St Ursula by Theodoor van Loon in the Brussels beguinage church of 1626. For this altar, see; Eelco Nagelsmit, "Miracles Made to Measure: Theodoor van Loon's Altarpieces for the Brussels Grand Beguinage," in *Embracing Brussels: Art and Culture in the Court City, 1600-1800*, ed. Leen Kelchtermans, Katlijne Van der Stighelen, and Koenraad Brosens (Turnhout: Brepols, 2013), 169–80; for possible influences derived from Italian engravings, see Annik Pardailhe-Galabrun, "Gravures et retables aux XVIIe et XVIIIe siècles," in *Etudes européennes: mélanges offerts a Victor L. Tapié* (Paris: Presses Universitaires de France, 1973), 53–64.

[504] Research by Joost Vander Auwera and others has shown that in altarpieces from the Rubens workshop the upper registers were often more intensively retouched and corrected by the master, possibly in light of the proximity to (the eye of) God.

[505] See Herremans, "'Eenen loffelycken ende hoffelycken aultaer': retabelplastiek in de Zuidelijke Nederlanden ca. 1585-1685."

[506] Peter Fuhring, *De wereld is een tuin: Hans Vredeman de Vries en de tuinkunst van de Renaissance (Exh. Cat. Rubenshuis, Antwerpen, 15 September-8 December 2002)*, ed. Peter Fuhring, Krista De Jonge, and Pim Lukkenaar (Gent; Amsterdam: Ludion, 2002).

also common features of garden design, and as railings that usually secluded altars from the church nave, which were appropriately called *altaartuin* (altar-garden).

The architectural structure was crowned by an open gable, the centre of which was occupied by the blazon of the patron Jan Baptist Masius, mounted on an enormous scallop with the cross of St James, showcasing his membership of the prestigious Spanish Order of Santiago. A pedestal provided foothold for the Christ child, blessing and holding a globe in the midst of rays of light. This is one of the few instances in which the iconography of the altar could be seen as specifically Carmelite: the monks had a special devotion to the Child Jesus (naturally, they were early converts). It may also be seen as yet another and ultimate flower-motif, considering the biblical references to Jesus as Lily of the Valley, and Flower of the Field.[507]

The cartouche with the text: "JESUS DOROTHEAE AMASIUS" stresses the perpetual bond between Dorothea and Jesus, her lover, while at the same time playing on the name of the patron Masius.[508] Another text on the banderol above the altar uses the same pun on his name to identify the date of construction: "sanCtae Dorotheae VIrgInI eXtrVXIt aMasIVs" i.e. "A lover [Masius] of the Virgin Saint Dorothea had it constructed in 1640". As this interpretation is solely derived from the visual source of the print, let us now turn to the actual altar and its function.

The altar: its uses and agency

The altar fulfilled various functions simultaneously: it was first of all the high altar of the Carmelites, situated in their chancel which laypeople were not allowed to enter, at least not during the Liturgy of the Hours. High altars of churches were usually the responsibility of the congregation, and in the case of convent churches this was the congregation of monks. Rubens' *Adoration of the Magi* for Saint Michael's Abbey in Antwerp (1622-24) discussed in the introduction, was an institutional commission in celebration of a five hundred year jubilee, commissioned by the abbot after the abbey had recently been reformed. The Norbertine abbey could finance this from

[507] Song of Solomon 2:2

[508] As noted by De Poorter this must have been a temporary device, highlighting the patron. De Poorter, "Verloren werk van De Crayer en Rubens van naderbij bekeken: de altaarschilderijen van de Brusselse Lieve-Vrouwebroeders," 315.

their extensive holdings, yet the Carmelites were a mendicant order and thus relied on private donations. This opened up possibilities for laypeople to patronize such high altars, as in the case of the Antwerp Carmelite church, which will be discussed below. In Brussels, the high altar had a secondary role as confraternity altar, but this use was probably limited to the feast of the saint on 6 February and perhaps at occasions such as funerary masses for its deceased members (usually celebrated on 7 February).[509] Thirdly, the altar must have had a specific devotional function in service of its patron. At this point it seems justified to ask the more general question: what does a (high) altarpiece do?

As an element of the economy of salvation (*sacrum commercium*), the patronage of altarpieces was motivated first and foremost by the traditional need for *commemoria*: the commemoration of the dead through institutionalized religious services, and the fear of Salvation, or the hope for atonement of sins and relief from the soul's stay in purgatory.[510] The main function of painting and sculpture herein was to prompt the viewer to devout feelings and prayer for the soul of the (deceased) donor(s), and to arouse in the viewer – in the first place the celebrating priest – the desired devotional mindset for receiving the Eucharist. In other words, art contributed to a worthy setting for the sacrifice of the Mass,[511] rather than promoting the general aim of gaining credit with God and contemporaries (advancement of social status and [family] prestige).[512] The function of altarpieces was threefold: firstly liturgical, i.e. salvation of the soul of the patron (beneficiary of private masses) through the sacrament of the Eucharist; secondly devotional, i.e. intercession for the supplicant through prayer to tutelary saint(s), e.g. via indulgences;[513] and thirdly didactic, i.e. by means of visual

[509] According to the statutes of the confraternity in Ghent. Matthias Dewanckele, "Ontwikkeling van de bloemencultuur in de Gentse regio 1500 - 1900" (University of Ghent, 2007), 49–50.
[510] Göttler, *Die Kunst des Fegefeuers nach der Reformation: kirchliche Schenkungen, Ablass und Almosen in Antwerpen und Bologna um 1600*; see also Dieter Geuenich, *Memoria in der Gesellschaft des Mittelalters* (Göttingen: Vandenhoeck & Ruprecht, 1994); John Bossy, *Christianity in the West, 1400-1700* (Oxford: Oxford University Press, 1985). As the celebration of (perpetual) masses benefited the entire community, their foundation was also considered as an act of charity.
[511] Moran, "Unconventual Women: Religion, Politics, and Image in the Court Beguinages of the Low Countries, 1585-1713," 236.
[512] As often (over)emphasized by art historical scholarship.
[513] Bert Treffers, "The Arts and Craft of Sainthood: New Orders, New Saints, New Altarpieces," in *The Genius of Rome, 1592-1623*, ed. Beverly L. Brown (London: Royal Academy of Arts, 2001), 340–71; Bert Treffers, *Een hemel op aarde: extase in de Romeinse barok* (Nijmegen:

communication,[514] but also through what may be described as transformative agency.[515] This will become clear in what follows.

Saint Dorothea

In the year 304, under the persecution of the Roman emperor Diocletian, the virgin Dorothea of Caesarea (Kayseri in modern Turkey) was supposed to have had the honour of being the first female Christian martyr to be decapitated at the age of twelve. Since the Middle Ages St Dorothea was venerated as a patron saint of gardeners.[516] The story of her martyrdom was regularly recounted in collections of lives of the saints and depicted in altarpieces, especially in the Netherlands and Germany.[517] For reasons that will shortly be discussed in detail, however, around 1640 the Southern Netherlands witnessed the sudden emergence of this saint as a subject of artworks, literature, poetry, plays, and the erection of confraternities in her honour (*fig*. 67). An early example of the rising interest for the saint in (elite) circles of gardening enthusiasts is the publication of a collection of poems by Jean Franeau, *Jardin d'hyver: ou Cabinet des Fleurs* in 1616, of which the title page depicts the saint and her tormentor Theophilus (*fig*. 66).[518] Though the veneration of St Dorothea was in no way specific for the Carmelites, and the altar in Brussels is the only instance in the Carmelite-related iconography,[519] the order was known as bent on miracles (*mirakelzuchtig*).[520]

St Dorothea was not the first to be at the centre of a similar art nexus (*fig*. 25). In response to Protestant iconoclasm, the Italian art collector and catholic reformer Cardinal Federico Borromeo (cousin of Carlo Borromeo) commissioned Jan Breughel around 1609 to make a *Madonna in a Garland*

SUN, 1995); Ulrich Heinen and Andreas Thielemann, *Rubens passioni: Kultur der Leidenschaften im Barock* (Göttingen: Vandenhoeck & Ruprecht, 2001).

[514] Heinen, *Rubens zwischen Predigt und Kunst: der Hochaltar für die Walburgenkirche in Antwerpen*.

[515] O'Malley, "Altarpieces and Agency: The Altarpiece of the Society of the Purification and Its 'Invisible Skein of Relations.'"

[516] E. Wimmer and G. Binding, "Dorothea," in *Lexicon Des Mittelalters, Vol. 3* (Munich: Artemis, 1986), 1318–19.

[517] See for instance Nagelsmit, "Miracles Made to Measure: Theodoor van Loon's Altarpieces for the Brussels Grand Beguinage."

[518] Jean Franeau, *Jardin d'hyver: ou cabinet des fleurs, contenant en XXVI élégies les plus rares et signalez fleurons des plus fleurissans parterres* (Douai: Pierre Borremans, 1616), 179.

[519] See Emond, *L'iconographie carmélitaine dans les anciens Pays-Bas méridionaux*.

[520] Marinus, "De Contrareformatie te Antwerpen, (1585-1676): kerkelijk leven in een grootstad," 191.

of Flowers (*fig*. 57).[521] By commissioning this small painting on copper (the first in a long tradition), Borromeo wished to pay homage to all the images of the Virgin that had suffered from iconoclastic violence during the Revolt.[522] This act of devotional image making may be regarded as a typical example of what Gell called animacy,[523] attributing qualities or treating inanimate artefacts as if they are living beings, capable of sense perception and emotion, in which compensatory veneration (*hyperdulia*) is lavished on the prototype. Thus, Borromeo invented the so-called "Flower garland"-genre, a new type of (private) devotional image, of highly naturalistic depictions of flowers around a sacred image, which became very popular in the Southern Low Countries in the early seventeenth century.[524] A painting by Ambrosius II Bosschaert juxtaposes the flower garland to a devotional image of St Dorothea (*fig*. 58).

In her recent study on the genre of Flemish flower garland paintings, Susan Merriam interprets them as answers to the "pressing concerns about the status of the image as a form of truth in the Counter-Reformation culture of seventeenth century Flanders."[525] She argues how the paintings constituted a "unique amalgam of the observed world and devotional image", engaging their viewers in contemplation of "the nature of illusion".[526] She situates the pictures in discourses on images as life-like records of the seen world; as deceptive or delightful seductions (countering the Protestant critique of religious images as "deceiving and tricking the eye"); and as miraculous products of divine agency.[527] Furthermore, the paintings may be seen as explorations of the boundary between Art and Nature, evoking the classical topos of the contest or *paragone* between Art and Nature, as famously described by Pliny in the story of Zeuxis and

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[521] Paul Eeckhout, "Petit historique des tableaux de fleurs du XVIe au XVIIe siècle," in *L'empire de Flore: histoire et représentation des fleurs en Europe du XVIe au XIXe siècle*, ed. Sabine van Sprang (Brussels: La Renaissance du Livre, 1996), 261–88.
[522] Susan Merriam, *Seventeenth-Century Flemish Garland Paintings : Still Life, Vision, and the Devotional Image* (Farnham: Ashgate, 2012), 2.
[523] Gell, *Art and Agency: An Anthropological Theory*, 17–19.
[524] Marie-Louise Hairs and Dominique Finet, *Les peintres flamands de fleurs au XVIIe siècle*, 2nd ed. (Brussels: Lefebvre et Gillet, 1985); see also Paul Taylor, *Dutch Flower Painting: 1600-1720* (New Haven; London: Yale University Press, 1995).
[525] Merriam, *Seventeenth-Century Flemish Garland Paintings: Still Life, Vision, and the Devotional Image*.
[526] Ibid., 147.
[527] Ibid., 10. See also Stuart Clark, *Vanities of the Eye: Vision in Early Modern European Culture* (Oxford: Oxford University Press, 2007).

Parrhasius.[528] This is illustrated by Borromeo's praise of his flower paintings by paraphrasing Horace's *Ode to Spring*:

> "When winter encumbers and restricts everything with ice, I have enjoyed from sight – and even imagined odour, if not real – artificial flowers […] expressed in painting […]"[529]

He states that these flowers may even be found to be superior to the real versions, because their beautiful appearance is "not fleeting, as some of the flowers that are found (in nature), but stable and very endurable".[530] According to Borromeo, paintings of God-given things were most suitable for devotion, since they displayed both the Creator's agency and human skill. Based on these principles, Federico Borromeo tried to reinvigorate sacred imagery by founding an academy in Milan between 1620 and 1625.[531]

In his correspondence with Breughel, Borromeo compared one of the artist's delicate miniaturist flower garland paintings to a triumphal arch, to which it would be equal in value.[532] Of course this was just a rhetorical hyperbole, but Borromeo's suggestion could take on a very literal form. As we will see, the highly charged devotional function of flower garland paintings and their place in the discourse on sacred images was taken to another level when similar concerns were put in practise in the context of a sacred feast in honour of St Dorothea.

Gaspar de Crayer and his altarpiece

The central painting in the print, set within the "gate" of the triumphal arch right above the altar shows the theme of Saint Dorothea's martyrdom, and was painted by Gaspar de Crayer (*fig*. 47). This altarpiece is described in Sanderus' account of the artworks in the church (1660):

> "First and foremost the high altar in the chancel, presently the sanctuary of the Holy virgin and martyr Dorothea, patron saint of

[528] Derived from Theophrastus, *Enquiry into Plants* (keeper of Aristotle's botanic garden); and Pliny, *The Natural History*.
[529] Merriam, *Seventeenth-Century Flemish Garland Paintings: Still Life, Vision, and the Devotional Image*, 23.
[530] Pamela M. Jones, *Federico Borromeo and the Ambrosiana: Art Patronage and Reform in Seventeenth-Century Milan* (Cambridge MA: Harvard University Press, 1993), 81.
[531] Jones, *Federico Borromeo and the Ambrosiana: Art Patronage and Reform in Seventeenth-Century Milan*.
[532] Göttler, *Last Things: Art and the Religious Imagination in the Age of Reform*, 386; David Freedberg, "The Origins and Rise of the Flemish Madonnas in Flower Garlands. Decoration and Devotion," *Münchner Jahrbuch Der Bildenden Kunst* XXXII (1981): 120–121.

flower-lovers or gardeners, or even (to use a more common term) florists, containing a painting wherein the saint is seen, placed under the sword of her slayer, and sent from heaven a basket full of tributes of flowering spring, and fragrant fruits of autumn, to a certain Theophilus, who had teasingly asked this from the virgin, who during the torture visibly with a blushing [blooming] face directed her spirit towards heaven, which brought it. De Crayer, citizen of Brussels famous by his brush, painted this."[533]

As of 1635 Gaspar de Crayer (*fig*. 52) was appointed court painter to the governor of the Spanish Netherlands, the Cardinal-Infante Ferdinand of Austria (*fig*. 53).[534] He worked with a large studio in Brussels and received countless commissions for altarpieces and portraits throughout the Netherlands and abroad. Though considered by modern art historians as a capable but somewhat unoriginal follower of Rubens, contemporaries regarded De Crayer as one of the most important painters in the Southern Low Countries after Rubens's death in 1640.

The composition of his paintings for the altar of St Dorothea, lost in the bombardment, has survived in several forms: besides the print, in a drawing in Ghent (*fig*. 49),[535] and in a smaller painting by De Crayer of the *Martyrdom of St Dorothea*, described in nineteenth century collections and assumed to be lost by Vlieghe. This painting showed up on the art market in 2003 and is presently in an American private collection (*fig*. 51).[536] Possibly a *ricordo*, or record for the workshop, it gives a vivid impression of the

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[533] Sanderus, "Chorographia Sacra Carmeli Bruxellensis," 14. "Septem haec Ecclesia (quod & cum Septenario Bruxellensi admirando conspirat) habet Altaria. Primum summumque in Choro, nunc S. Virgini & Martyri DOROTHEAE Anthophilorum, sive Hortensiorum, aut etiam (ut vulgari magis vocabulo utar) Floristarum Patronae sacrum, picturam continet, ubi Sancta haec cernitur sub ipso Carnicis gladio constituta, missum sibi è coelo ipsis floridi veris honoribus, & olentibus autumni fructibus plenum calathum, ad Theophilum quemdam, qui illos Virginem, inter tormenta floreo vultu conspicuam, nugabundè rogaverat, per coelicum, qui attulerat, destinans Genium. Pinxit clarus penicillo, civis Bruxellensis Crayerius."

[534] De Maeyer, *Albrecht en Isabella en de schilderkunst: bijdrage tot de geschiedenis van de XVIIe eeuwse schilderkunst in de Zuidelijke Nederlanden*, 403.

[535] Museum of Fine Arts, Ghent, inv. 1950-W6. Vlieghe, *Gaspar de Crayer, sa vie et ses oeuvres*, no. A225, fig. 210; De Poorter, "Verloren werk van De Crayer en Rubens van naderbij bekeken: de altaarschilderijen van de Brusselse Lieve-Vrouwebroeders," 328, note 21.

[536] Oil on canvas, dimensions ca. 172 x 132 cm. Auction Christie's London, April 9, 2003, lot 7. Private collection, USA. De earliest provenance is the collection of Dominique Bernard Clemens, mayor of Ghent, from which it was sold at auction in 1788. Vlieghe, *Gaspar de Crayer, sa vie et ses oeuvres*, 240; cat. A226.

Ibid., no. A226.

painterly quality of the original altarpiece.[537] Hans Vlieghe distinguishes several stylistic periods in the artist's oeuvre, and notes that from 1638 his colour planes are less abruptly separated and shadows are better handled, putting the accent on the fluidity of colours.[538] The painting clearly exemplifies the qualities noted by Vlieghe in De Crayer's work from the period around 1640.

On a round stone base or scaffold, surrounded by onlookers, the virgin Dorothea is kneeling, her hands bound. To her right are two figures on horseback, holding the Roman imperial banner and standards. The one in the front is the emperor Diocletian, wearing a mantle trimmed with fur of a lion, tiger, or panther, and some sort of mitre with a high plume. He hands the death warrant to the executioner, who wears a turban and a moustache. The way these figures are dressed "others" them by evoking the contemporary image of "the Turk" as archetypical non-Christian. The executioner holds the girl by her hair, and raises the sword that is about to hit her bare neck. Yet Dorothea has her eyes fixed on heaven, and her head already emanates a slight halo. On the left foreground, two turbaned men are discussing the scene in front of them. The person in the red fur-trimmed cloak must be Theophilus, the secretary of the judge, who mockingly asked Dorothea to send him some apples and roses from the garden of her bridegroom, Jesus Christ.[539] Without hesitation Dorothea granted this request, and just before the sword hits her, an angel with a basket of fruit and roses emerges from the sky. A young figure behind the scaffold seems the only one who sees the angel. While talking to the other man Theophilus makes a rhetorical gesture, indicating that he now recognizes Dorothea's sanctity after witnessing the miraculous basket of flowers and fruit. This caused his conversion to Christianity, and soon after he would be martyred as well.

Besides the print after Fornenbergh and the painting, a drawing or preparatory sketch has survived (*fig*. 49). In her book *Severed Heads:*

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[537] Described in the auction catalogue as *modello* or oil sketch, it is too large and too finished compared to other *modelli* by De Crayer, yet too small for being the altarpiece depicted in the print. From the print, Nora de Poorter deduces that the painting on the high altar must have been over three meters in height, a usual format for De Crayer's altarpieces. De Poorter, "Verloren werk van De Crayer en Rubens van naderbij bekeken: de altaarschilderijen van de Brusselse Lieve-Vrouwebroeders," 328, note 22. Joost Vander Auwera kindly suggested to me that the painting may be a *ricordo* on the standard format of "dobbelen doeck".

[538] Vlieghe, *Gaspar de Crayer, sa vie et ses oeuvres*, 68–71.

[539] In reference to Christ's appearance as a gardener after the Resurrection.

Capital Visions, on the cultural fascination for decapitations, Julia Kristeva praises De Crayer's drawing as follows:

> "But it is De Crayer, lover of so many martyrs, who seems the most sensitive to the pain of Christianity's first decapitated female: he lets Dorothea melt under his pen, like a snowman who succumbs to the spring sunshine. As if decapitation drained the woman of all her substance, letting the drawing fill up with the heavy bodies of men and beasts… Counterpart to Salome, Dorothea inspired the gardens of tortures, [their blood spattering later Romanticism, and French as well as English symbolism, especially the poems of Swinburne.]"[540]

Kristeva may not have known the print or the painting, but these very much corroborate her observations on the quality of the drawing, especially with regard to the comparison of the saint with a snowman.

Unlike in the other two versions, the print shows the Virgin Mary hovering on a cloud with the Christ child on her lap, about to welcome Dorothea to heaven. This must have been an alteration required by the Carmelite monks, since their high altar was dedicated to Our Lady.[541] The final altarpiece as represented by Fornenbergh furthermore differs from the earlier versions in that a barking dog in front of the scaffold, after having been replaced to the side in the painting has disappeared altogether. This may reflect the insistence of the Council of Trent and Paleotti on *sanctimonia*, that is, the avoidance of everything superfluous. Sacred images were to depict exclusively holy things, and no unholy things that might distract from, or offend the viewer's effort to achieve spiritual holiness.[542] In this context, the dog may have been considered indecorous for an altarpiece.

The upper painting is only known from the print (*fig*. 47, 50). Here, the Saint is glorified as she is being welcomed amidst clouds in heaven by a boy with a bright halo (Jesus?) holding a basket of flowers. In this mystical setting, it is remarkable to see her wearing a corselet.

Finally, De Crayer also painted another painting of *St Dorothea with a basket of flowers and an angel* (*fig*. 72).[543] It depicts the richly dressed saint

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[540] Julia Kristeva, *The Severed Head: Capital Visions* (New York: Columbia University Press, 2013), chap. 6.

[541] Moreover, the guidelines for religious art as set out by the Provincial Council of Malines prescribed that high altars must contain an image of Mary or Christ.

[542] Heinen, *Rubens zwischen Predigt und Kunst: der Hochaltar für die Walburgenkirche in Antwerpen*, 34.

[543] Oil on canvas, dimensions 239.5 by 177 cm. Auction Sothebys Amsterdam, December 17, 2008, lot 16.

in front of a solomonic column and behind a baluster, through with the angel seductively puts his foot. The saint is holding a rose and grabs an apple. Although the origin of this painting is unknown,[544] Vlieghe dates it in the 1640s, and it thus seems likely that the creation of this painting is related to a confraternity of St Dorothea, as is the *St Dorothea in a flower garland* by Bosschaert. The subject matter and dimensions indicate a religious function, though not necessarily as an altarpiece.

The feast of St Dorothea described by Sanderus

A unique perspective on the cult of St Dorothea in the church is provided by the description of the confraternities in the church by Sanderus.[545] This text describes the altar and the yearly feast of St Dorothy poetically, and provides a detailed account of its patronage by Masius and of the effects of the decorations on the viewer:

> "[…] here, the flower-Goddess of the Christians, patroness of gardeners [*Hortensiorum*] and protectress of flower-lovers [*Anthophiliae*][546], the holy virgin Dorothea, is venerated by the citizens of Brussels. Behold, when the yearly feast of the saint returns:[547]
>
> *When now the grim winter from the north shudders his wings,*
> *and the meadows whiten with hoar-frost*[548] [paraphrase of Horace's Ode to spring][549]

[544] According to the Sothebys website "It has been suggested that the painting might have belonged to the Count of Mailly-Nesle, Marquis de Rubempre, Prince d'Orange [1744-1810] who left it to his only daughter Adelheid who married Duke Louis d'Arenberg."

[545] Sanderus refers to it as a "sodalitio", instead of a confraternity, which suggests that it was an elite club to which not just anyone could subscribe. Sanderus, "Chorographia Sacra Carmeli Bruxellensis."

[546] Nora de Poorter remarks that in the leaflet of the Dorothea-feast in the church of St Goriks in 1686 a series of poetical equivalents for the term "Anthophili" is found: *Bloem-lievenden*, *Bloem-iveraers*, and *Bloem-vrienden* (flower-amateurs, flower-zealots, and flower-friends). De Poorter, "Verloren Werk van De Crayer En Rubens van Naderbij Bekeken: De Altaarschilderijen van de Brusselse Lieve-Vrouwebroeders," 328, note 20.

[547] Sanderus, "Chorographia Sacra Carmeli Bruxellensis," 25. "[…] Christianorum hic Floram, Hortensiorum Patronam, & Anthophiliae Praesidem S. Virginem DOROTHEAM venerantur Bruxellenses. Videas hic recurrente annuo Divae natali,"

[548] Ibid. "*Cum jam tristis hyems Aquilonis inhorruit alis,/Et prata canis albicant pruinis,*"

[549] Horace, *Odes* I, 4: "solvitur acris hiems grata vice veris et Favoni/trahuntque siccas machinae carinas,/ac neque iam stabulis gaudet pecus aut arator igni/nec prata canis albicant pruinis." [Harsh winter is melting away in the welcome change to spring & zephyrs/Winches are pulling down dry-bottomed ships/The cattle no longer like the steading/the ploughman does not hug the fire/And meadows are not white with hoar-frost.]

that spring itself *blooms*, and on the altar of Dorothea the *flowers* scent the air and smell, which *Flora* [Goddess of flowers] herself admires, and Brussels hardly believed it until she saw it."

Sanderus points out that he saw the festival during a year in which Jan Baptist Masius was provost of the Dorothean sodality (1659, for the third time).[550]

> "I not only believed, but *saw* how February was turned into May, [that] the sacred altar of the Saint of flowers started to bloom. From the flowers of spring there was astonishment, as well as from false [flowers]. Of changing-coloured silk they displayed artifice, and emulated nature; and while the eyes of the spectators, attracted by the real [flowers] wondered, they found the artificial ones, which amazed [them]."[551]

He proceeds by citing a Poet who saw it and, excited by the smell, explained it as follows:[552]

> *In a peaceful duel, Nature and Art strive simultaneously*
> *with depictions of flowers, one rivalling the other,*
> *deceiving the gaze of the spectator with a false image:*
> *and not less beautifully* [Natura] *in this unfavourable time*
> *luxuriantly displays her wealth without deceit of the viewers*
> *Who could count the varieties, food for the eyes, and forms,*
> *of daffodils, violets, hyacinths, lilies, and tulips*
> *with thousand flames and anemones of thousand shapes.*[553]

Sanderus mentions the use of artificial flowers made of silk,[554] as well as real flowers, and it is worth noting that all of the flowers named in the poem are

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[550] Ibid., 26, see note X.

[551] Ibid., 25. "ipsum *florere* ver, & in DOROTHEAE altari halare & olere *flores*, quos ipsa *Flora* miretur, & ipsa, dum vidit, vix credidit Bruxella. Vidi hoc anno, dum *Dorotheani* hujus Collegii Princeps erat Per-illustris Dominus IOANNES BAPTISTA MASIUS; vidi, & Februarium in Maium esse mutatum tantùm non putavi, adeò floribus sacrum DIVAE altare vernabat. A veris erat hic stupor floribus : erat & à fictis. E versicolore illi facti serico artem ostentabant, aemulabantur naturam; &, dum spectantium oculi à veris allecti mirantur, inveniunt in fictis, quod stupeant."

[552] Ibid. "Adduco Poëtam, qui vidit, & odore excitatus sic explicans accinuit:

[553] Ibid. *Contendunt placidô Matura duellô/Arsque simul pictos haec, illius aemula, Florum/Illudens aciem spectantis imagine falsâ:/Nec minùs ista suas alieno tempore bellè/Luxurians ostentat opes sine fraude tuentûm./Quis numeret varias, oculorum pabula, formas/Narcissos, Violas, Hyacinthos, Lilia, mille/Flammarum Tulipas, Anemônum mille figures*"

[554] On artificial flowers, see Charlotte Paludan, "Les fleurs artificiels ou l'art de la vraisemblance," in *L'empire de Flore*, ed. Sabine van Sprang (Brussels: La Renaissance du Livre, 1996), 209–17. Mention should also be made of the tradition of decorating altars with artificial flowers in general, and the specific tradition of private devotional "hofjes" or "horti conclusi" in

bulb flowers, which could actually have been made to bear flower in early February. He then quotes a chronogram (which must have been displayed on the altar), indicating both the author of the "*flowering* winter" and the year in which it took place:[555]

Istos tIbI fLores, Dorothea, CarpIt MasIVs [= 1659]

[O Dorothea, Masius gathers these flowers for thee.][556]

In the next passage it is explained that Masius not only "picked and showed" these flowers, but that he took his "flowering devotion" a step further; as he wished to honour the saint not only by means of an ephemeral exhibition but also in a more enduring way. For this reason he donated two antependia for the altar with flower ornaments in gold embroidery, as well as liturgical vestments for the priest and his acolytes, equally with gold-embroidered flower motif. Thus, he took care that not only during his term as provost, but on all subsequent feasts of the saint, her altar would seem entirely flowering. The poet was once again touched:[557]

Heaping the altars with new gifts
On top, he adds ornaments that must equal
the prior treasures in that place.[558]

The flower miracle of Saint Dorothea and its evocation by the *Floralia*[559] on the altar in the Brussels Carmelite church are here described in terms of the

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female convents. See Paul Vandenbroeck, *Hooglied: de beeldwereld van religieuze vrouwen in de Zuidelijke Nederlanden, vanaf de 13de Eeuw* (Brussels: Vereniging voor Tentoonstellingen Paleis voor Schone Kunsten, 1994), 91–104; see also Paul Vandenbroeck, "À qui les fleurs? Quelques réflexions sur l'image de la femme en Occident," in *L'empire de Flore*, ed. Sabine van Sprang (Brussels: La Renaissance du Livre, 1996), 336–44.

[555] Sanderus, "Chorographia Sacra Carmeli Bruxellensis," 25. "Authorem *florentis* sic Brumae jam dixi, sed eumdem hoc etiam indicat Chronicon"

[556] Hilton, *Chronograms: 5000 and More in Number Exerpted out of Various Authors*, 259.

[557] Sanderus, "Chorographia Sacra Carmeli Bruxellensis," 25–26. "Istos carpsit, & ostentavit MASIUS; sed quo ulteriùs pergeret, florida invenit devotio. Ut namque fluxo & transeunte *Florum* ostento fuerat veneratus Dorotheam; ita stabili & duraturo venerari voluit, sed & hoc *floreo* monumento. Duo altaris *florea* velamenta (antependia vocant) opere phrygionico facta aliàs DIVAE obtulerat: nunc, ut nihil non *floreum* isto Anthophiliae festo conspiceretur, *floreis* etiam vestibus mystam ejusque ministros induit: Casulam & tunicellas *floribus* phrygionum acu ad naturae aemulationem factis plenas, curavit, obtulit, donavit, ut non modo tunc, sed omni deinceps tempore, in DOROTHEAE festo, altare ejus omninò *floreum* videretur. Tangit jam tactus Poëta."

[558] Ibid., 26. "*Cumulatque novis Altaria donis/Insuper, & gazis aequanda prioribus addit/Ornamenta loco*."

[559] Ibid. "Sic varia Bruxellis *floret* pietas, sic florens MASII elucet cultus, & ad militiae S. Iacobi Equitis, Toparchae in Laken/Steen-kercken &c. Consiliarij Regij, aliarumque dignitatum titulum, DOROTHEANAE *Devotionis* super-addit signum. Macte, hac tua virtute, MASI, hac tua in *Christianorum Floram* DOROTHEAM devotione. Non potest non *florere* hoc Hortensiorum & Anthophilorum Collegium, quod te tertiùm jam habito Principe tanta impensi cultus videt exempla, tot relicta Ecclesiae numerat monumenta. *Dorotheanum* hoc *Sodalitium* sic quotannis in

classical topos of the contest or *paragone* between Art and Nature, and equated to Nature's plenitude.

The sense of wonder created by the festival suggests that it may best be interpreted as a performance, which constituted a reality, and from which agency of change was deduced. In the words of Erika Fischer-Lichte,

> "When the ordinary becomes conspicuous, when dichotomies collapse and things turn into their opposites, the spectators perceive the world as "enchanted". Through this enchantment the spectators are transformed."[560]

Jan Baptist Masius

Both the print of 1640 and the text of 1660 indicate that Jan Baptist Masius was the instigator behind the floral splendour on the high altar of the Brussels Carmelites. In 1640, 1659 and a third unknown year in between, Masius was principal or provost of the confraternity of St Dorothea. It is probably in 1640 that this confraternity was established in the Carmelite church, nearby his house and thus probably the church he frequented most. As a jurist, Masius may also have been a member of the confraternity of St Anne in the church. As provost of the confraternity of St Dorothea, Masius had the honour to attend to (and pay for) the altar's decoration. This usually pertained to delivering flowers and flower decorations on the saint's feast, but as he was the first provost, he also had to commission a new altarpiece and its architectural framing, a costly endeavour. What motivated Masius to do this? To answer this question, we need to know more about him and his background, as well as that of the confraternity.

Jan Baptist Maes or Masius (1586-1667) was a scion of a well-respected family of the robe nobility, dedicated to civil service for many generations.[561] As the only son of Engelbert Maes (1545-1630), who had been president of the Privy Council[562] and attorney in the Council of State,

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hoc *Carmelo* devotionis odores offert, uniusque impensis, qui anno illo Collegij Princeps dicitur, solemnia S. DOROTHEAE *Floralia* celebrantur. Sed ab amoena hac ad sacram aliam Confraternitatem calamus avocandus est."

[560] Fischer-Lichte, *The Transformative Power of Performance: A New Aesthetics*, 180.

[561] Jan Baptist Maes had two sisters, Helena Maes and Adriana Maes (1595-1645), both of whom married scions of the Antwerp bankers' family Della Faille. The children of Jean de la Faille, baron of Nevele, and Jan Baptist's sister Adriana Maes would be his heirs.

[562] From 1614. Björn Volckaert, "De leden van de Geheime Raad der Zuidelijke Nederlanden onder het bewind van de Aartshertogen en Filips IV, 1609-1653. Een prosopografische studie" (University of Ghent, 2004). See also Houben, *Wisselende gedaanten: het hof en de hofhouding*

and the Antwerp noblewoman Pauline Schoyte (ca. 1553-1618), he was fated for a public career.[563] Jan Baptist held important seats in the administration of the Southern Netherlands throughout his long career, which spans the entire period covered by this study. The Archdukes had appointed him chamberlain (*gentilhomme de la Maison des Archiducs*) at their court.[564] As counsellor in the Council of Finance (one of the three Collateral Councils)[565] and "first commissioner of the domains and the finance of the King in the Netherlands" he acted as the primary official dealing with the state finances.[566] In addition, he also long held the positions of "superintendent of the recruitment of personnel of His Majesty" and of keeper of the charter of Flanders.[567] As head of the Council of Finance, Masius had the responsibility for the large scale sale or pawning of crown domains by the Cardinal-Infant Ferdinand between 1638-1641 and don Francisco de Melo (1641-1644),[568] as well as the 1645 "donativo" initiated by bishops Boonen and Triest to finance the war efforts.[569]

On 21 October 1615 Jan Baptist Maes married Anna de Blasere (before 1592-1650), daughter of a Ghent patrician. The couple possessed

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van de landvoogden Isabella Clara Eugenia (1621-1633) en de Kardinaal-Infant Don Fernando van Oostenrijk (1634-1641) te Brussel, XXXVII.

[563] On Engelbert Maes, see Joseph Lefevre, "Engelbert Maes," *Biographie Nationale* 37 (1972): 566–68; see also Joseph Lefevre, *Documents concernant le recrutement de la haute magistrature dans les Pays-Bas: sous le régime espagnol: 1555-1700* (Brussels: Commission royale d'histoire, Palais des Académies, 1975).

[564] Volckaert, "De leden van de Geheime Raad der Zuidelijke Nederlanden onder het bewind van de Aartshertogen en Filips IV, 1609-1653. Een prosopografische studie."

[565] H. Coppens and M. Baelde, "De Raad van Financiën," in *De centrale overheidsinstellingen van de Habsburgse Nederlanden (1482-1795)*, ed. Aerts et al. (Brussels: Algemeen Rijksarchief, 1994), 497–520.

[566] See Jan Art and Marc Boone, eds., *Inleiding tot de lokale geschiedenis van de 12de tot de 18e eeuw* (Gent: Mens & Cultuur, 2004), 111. His function was described as « Conseiller et Commis des Domaines et Finance du Roi aux Pays-Bas » or « Eersten commis van de domeinen ende financien van Sijne Koninghlijcke Majesteyt etc » or « consiliarius et advocatus fiscalis » or « conciliarius et fisci patronus ». See Lodovico Guicciardini, *Belgium Universum: seu omnium Inferioris Germaniae regionum accurata descriptio, tabulis geographicis tam Provinciarum quam Urbium praecipuarum, nec non & additamentis nonnullis plurimum aucta & illustrata* (Amsterdam: Janssonius, 1646), 49; Antonius Sanderus, *De eminentoribus quibusdam Catholici Regis in Belgio Conciliis dissertatiuncula* (Brussels: Philippum Vleugartium, 1659), 10, 15.

[567] In the former function he remained for eighteen years, the latter thirty-two. See Volckaert, "De leden van de Geheime Raad der Zuidelijke Nederlanden onder het bewind van de Aartshertogen en Filips IV, 1609-1653. Een prosopografische studie."

[568] Vermeir, *In staat van oorlog: Filips IV en de Zuidelijke Nederlanden, 1629-1648*, 216–217, 221. In 1636-1637 Ferdinand and the king of Spain push for a Spaniard in the Council of Finance, but Roose objects. In the subsequent years, the sale of crown domains takes off.

[569] Ibid., 282.

several fiefs; Jan Baptist bore the titles of Lord of Steenkercken, Laeken,[570] Diependael, etc.[571] In 1616 the Castle of Cantecroy near Antwerp was bought as well by Jan Baptist Maes from the heirs of Cardinal Antoine Perrenot de Granvelle. After the departure of Granvelle to Naples, where he became Viceroy in 1570, the castle had been heavily fortified by the troops of Alva, and proved a tough nut to crack for the rebels of Antwerp. Because Maes had debts to the city of Antwerp, its Magistrate used this occasion to tear down all fortifications of the castle. In 1627 Maes was forced to sell Cantecroy to the rich (*converso*) Portuguese merchant Philip de Godines, "receiver of Finances of His Majesty in the quarter of Antwerp" (so a close colleague of Maes).[572] One year later, in Antwerp in 1628, Maes was granted the honour of knighthood in the exclusive Castilian military order of Santiago, which few non-Spanish attained, and which required not only a high degree of noble ancestry, but also an irreproachable Catholicity of this ancestry (*limpieza de sangre*, or cleanliness of blood).[573] This is something that Philip de Godines could certainly not pretend. Perhaps, the grant of the knighthood of Santiago was some sort of compensation for the loss of the castle and titles to a *converso* Jew, a move that would have repaired Masius' loss of status and precedence at court.

A unique medal issued by Jan Baptist Masius in 1648 shows a winged figure flying between the sun and the sea (*fig*. 55).[574] It would seem to represent Icarus, but the figure looks like an old man wearing a beard. This image is accompanied by Masius' personal devise *Medio tutissimis ibis* (You will go [most] safely by the middle way), derived from Ovid's

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[570] Through his mother Pauline Schoyte and her mother Adriana van Kets. See Arthur Cosyn, "Les anciennes seigneuries de Laeken," *Annales de la société royale d'archéologie de Bruxelles* 30 (1921): 39–40.

[571] *Nobiliaire*, 1269-1270; *Théatre sacré de Brabant*, 4, 1, part II, p. 190

[572] On 17 April 1627 the castle of Cantecroy (including the associated titles) is sold to Filips de Godines via Peeter de Bruyn for the amount of 36,400 Rijnse gulden. http://www.tenboome.webruimtehosting.net/tenboome/paginas/jaarboek%201993-1994/enkele_raakpunten_tussen_boom_en.htm

[573] Vicente Vignau y Ballester, *Índice de pruebas de los Caballeros que han vestido el hábito de Santiago desde el año 1501 hasta la fecha* (Madrid: M. Tello, 1901), 204; for the order of Santiago, see René Vermeir, "De (Zuid-)Nederlandse aristocratie en de vorming van een transnationale elite in de Spaans-Habsburgse samengestelde Staat," in *Werken aan de stad: stedelijke actoren en structuren in de Zuidelijke Nederlanden 1500-1900: liber alumnorum Catharina Lis en Hugo Soly*, ed. Margot De Koster (Brussels: VUBPress, 2011), 291–309; L.P. Wright, "The Military Orders in Sixteenth and Seventeenth Century Spanish Society. The Institutional Embodiment of a Historical Tradition," *Past and Present* 43 (1969): 34–70.

[574] R. Chalon, "Une médaille inconnu à Van Loon - Jean Baptiste Maes," *Revue de la numismatique belge* XXIV, no. 4 (1868): 145–47.

Metamorphoses. Apollo used these words to warn his son Phaeton while handing over the direction of the sun chariot to him.[575] The same devise also figures in Masius' richly decorated *ex-libris* (or *ex-dono*), in combination with his coat-of-arms and the insignia of the Order of Santiago.[576]

In Brussels, Jan Baptist Maes and his wife lived in the house he inherited from his father Engelbert in 1630, situated near the Carmelite convent, which they enlarged and redecorated. Later known as Huis van Limminghe this was a mansion built around a courtyard, the largest in the neighbourhood around the Eikstraat, as can be seen on the map by Martin de Tailly of 1640 (*fig*. 63).[577] The house was richly decorated with large paintings, such as a chimneypiece by the Brussels painter of fires Daniel van Heil (pupil of Gaspar de Crayer and brother of the architect Leon van Heil, who would later design the Maes-chapel in St Gudule, and two works by Jacques d'Arthois).[578] That Masius was a genuine art lover is furthermore suggested by the fact that he bought five (relatively modest) works at the sale of Rubens' estate.[579] Also, his library contained a copy of Carlo Ridolfi's *Le meraviglie dell'arte* (Venice, 1648).[580]

The house of Masius also included a large and magnificent garden with tubs, balusters and porticoes in blue stone, as well as a "grande sale orangere au jardin", a beautiful and large orangery provided with a boiler.[581] On 28 January 1640, shortly before the first feast of St Dorothea, Maes obtained the right to have a private water junction with the city's newly created water pipe, to supply his garden and the fountains in it.[582] This exclusive privilege must have lent him much prestige among the already

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[575] Ovid, *Metamorphoses* 2.137, the story of Phaeton. After this warning of Daedalos to his son Icarus, Phoebus Apollo warns his son Phaeton in equal terms.

[576] Benjamin Linnig, *Bibliothèques & ex-libris d'amateurs belges aux XVIIe, XVIIIe et XIXe siècles.* (Paris: H. Daragon, 1906), 93–94.

[577] André Vanrie and Anne Buyle, "Van herenhuis de Limminghe tot zetel van het Brussels Parlement (1700-1996)," in *De zetel van het Brussels Parlement: historische studie, 1700 - 2000* (Brussels: Brusselse Hoofdstedelijke Raad, 2000), 9.

[578] Ibid.

[579] These included hunting scenes (with satyrs and nymphs) and an unfinished version of the Garden of Love. De Poorter, "Verloren werk van De Crayer en Rubens van naderbij bekeken: de altaarschilderijen van de Brusselse Lieve-Vrouwebroeders," 318, 328, note 24.

[580] Carlo Ridolfi, *Le maraviglie dell'arte, ouero le vite de gl'illustri pittori Veneti e dello Stato: oue sono raccolte le opere insigni, i costumi e i ritratti loro* (Venice: Gio: Battista Sgaua, 1648). The book, with Masius' *ex libris,* was offered online by an Antwerp bookseller.

[581] Vanrie and Buyle, "Van herenhuis de Limminghe tot zetel van het Brussels Parlement (1700-1996)," 10.

[582] Ibid., 12–13.

very select crowd of garden-owning citizens, by enabling him to take the flower cultivation in his garden to a higher level.

The confraternity of garden lovers

The confraternity of St Dorothea in the Brussels Carmelite church is a case in point of the idea that the rise of sodalities in Early Modern Flanders was as much a matter of devotion as it was an instrument of social distinction and elite formation.[583] The strong commitment of individuals to the altar of their guild, confraternity or family and the associated spirit of parochialism ("hokjesgeest") has been frequently stressed.[584] But what is often overlooked in scholarschip is how the specific form of piety chosen by their members functioned as an instrument of facification, both among members and in their relation with the divine.

Besides collecting art and curiosities, wealthy and noble citizens in seventeenth century Europe often tried to trump each other with exquisite gardens. Their property not only contained the traditional orchards and gardens for growing vegetables, but often also a "secret garden" (*giardino segreto*) where the most valuable and rare species of flowers were kept (see *fig*. 54: Vredeman de Vries).[585] Rather than just decorative gardens, these "floral collections" should be seen in the context of the contemporary culture of the *studiolo* or *Wunderkammer* (cabinets of curiosities) in which curious and exotic objects from nature (*naturalia*) and man-made wonders (*artificialia*) were displayed with a strong concern for classification and taxonomy, so as to represent microcosm and macrocosm.[586] The Netherlands

[583] Marinus, "De Contrareformatie te Antwerpen, (1585-1676): kerkelijk leven in een grootstad," 255–272; see also Barbara Wisch and Diane Ahl, *Confraternities and the Visual Arts in Renaissance Italy: Ritual, Spectacle, Image* (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 2000); Ronald F.E. Weissman, *Ritual Brotherhood in Renaissance Florence* (New York: Academic Press, 1982); Bernard Dompnier and Paolo Vismara, eds., *Confréries et dévotions dans la catholicité moderne (mi-XVe - dèbut XIXe siècle)* (Rome: École française de Rome, 2008).

[584] Marinus, "De Contrareformatie te Antwerpen, (1585-1676): kerkelijk leven in een grootstad"; Floris Prims, "Antwerpse altaarstudiën: een overzicht," *Bijdragen tot de geschiedenis* 30 (1939): 200–249.

[585] See Fuhring, *De wereld is een tuin: Hans Vredeman de Vries en de tuinkunst van de Renaissance (Exh. Cat. Rubenshuis, Antwerpen, 15 September-8 December 2002)*; Ada Segre, "Le retour de flore: naissance et evolution des jardins de fleurs de 1550 à 1650," in *L'empire de Flore*, ed. Sabine van Sprang (Brussels: La Renaissance du Livre, 1996), 174–93.

[586] Claudia Swan, "Les fleurs comme 'curiosa,'" in *L'empire de Flore*, ed. Sabine van Sprang (Brussels: La Renaissance du Livre, 1996), 86–99; an example in Brussels of a cabinet of curiosities that was connected to a "secret garden" was the exquisite garden of the palace of the

had long been on the forefront of creating and disseminating botanical knowledge,[587] at a time when botany was considered equivalent to the modern day conception of "big science".[588] Garden owners often considered themselves *savants* or *virtuosi*, and corresponded with fellow enthusiasts all over the world, sending each other seeds and cuttings of rare and exotic plants, for example from the New World. They considered it a challenge to keep these treasures alive and went to great lengths to protect them from cold. As we will see, the continuous quest for ways of protecting precious plants from the cold winters in the Netherlands led to important technological advances, which were eagerly adopted abroad, for instance in Italy.

Artistic ideas with regard to garden design were also disseminated from the Netherlands to Italy, such as the concept of geometrical flower beds.[589] This typical feature of baroque garden design is often interpreted as an example of the Early Modern preoccupation with exerting control over nature, yet was also conceived as a bearer of symbolic meaning.[590] The related idea of paragone between Art and Nature, exemplified by the description of the feast of St Dorothea by Sanderus, must be seen against the background of traditional (Medieval) ideas about the restoration of the Garden of Eden, and the poetical quest for recovery of a *ver perpetuum* (eternal spring).[591] Moreover, studying the "Book of Nature" was seen as a

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noble Bournonville family. See C. De Maegd, "Een Zeventiende-Eeuws huis met tuinen op de Wollendries te Brussel," *Monumenten en landschappen* XVI, no. 1 (1997): 8–48.

[587] See W. Backer, *De botanica in de Zuidelijke Nederlanden: (einde 15de Eeuw-Ca. 1650)* (Antwerp: Snoeck-Ducaju, 1993).

[588] Harold J. Cook, "Handel in kennis: natuurlijke historie als de 'Big Science' van de Zeventiende Eeuw," in *Bloeiende kennis: groene ontdekkingen in de Gouden Eeuw*, ed. Esther van Gelder and Francisca W. van Heertum (Hilversum: Verloren, 2012), 23–34.

[589] Peter Davidson, "The Jesuit Garden," in *The Jesuits II: Cultures, Sciences, and the Arts, 1540-1773*, ed. John W. O'Malley and Johann Bernhardt Staudt (Toronto: Toronto University Press, 2006), 101; influential was the publication of Hans Vredeman de Vries, *Hortorum Viridariorumque Elegantes et Multiplicis Formae, ad architectonicae artis normam affabrè* (Antwerp: Philips Galle, 1583); on Vredeman de Vries, see Fuhring, *De wereld is een tuin: Hans Vredeman de Vries en de tuinkunst van de Renaissance (Exh. Cat. Rubenshuis, Antwerpen, 15 September-8 December 2002)*; Christopher P. Heuer, *The City Rehearsed: Object, Architecture and Print in the Worlds of Hans Vredeman de Vries* (London: Routledge, 2009).

[590] Davidson, "The Jesuit Garden," 94–105, referring to Giovanni Battista Ferrari, *De Florum Cultura Libri IV* (Rome: Stephanus Paulinus, 1633).

[591] By reassembling the different species of flora, scattered as a result of the Fall. See John Prest, *The Garden of Eden: The Botanic Garden and the Re-Creation of Paradise* (New Haven CT: Yale University Press, 1981); see also Christiane Lauterbach, *Gärten der Musen und Grazien: Mensch und Natur im Niederländischen Humanistengarten 1522-1655* (Munich; Berlin: Deutscher Kunstverlag, 2004), 222–230; Leo Wuyts, "Des fleurs pour la foi, l'amour et la mort," in *L'empire de Flore*, ed. Sabine van Sprang (Brussels: La Renaissance du Livre, 1996), 221–223.

way to know God,[592] for instance by the neo-stoic Justus Lipsius: "what is Nature else […] but God and a divine power infused into the whole world and every part of the world?" According to Stoic philosophy, which "made the world into a God", contemplating the universe "turned the mind from earthly matters to things divine".[593] This notion is also reflected in the strong interest of the Jesuits for gardens as "meditational landscapes",[594] and as we have seen, the "sacred deserts" of the Discalced Carmelites,[595] which both combined allegorical, memorative, emblematic, and meditational traditions.[596]

As ephemeral wonders of nature and metaphorical "crown of Creation" flowers were contemplated and admired within a classical frame of references, evoking poetic eulogies, such as the ones published in Franeau's *Jardin d'hyver*.[597] Their aesthetic answered to the contemporary love of variety and contrast[598] that paid particular attention to the bizarre and the transformative.[599] For the latter reasons, bulb flowers and tulips were

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This should be seen in the wider context of the renaissance idea of a return of the Golden Age. See Harry Levin, *The Myth of the Golden Age in the Renaissance*, reprint (New York: Oxford University Press, 1969).

[592] See Eric Jorink, *Reading the Book of Nature in the Dutch Golden Age, 1575-1715* (Leiden: Brill, 2010).

[593] Quoted in Thijs Weststeijn, "Idols and Ideals in the Rise of Netherlandisch Art Theory," in *Art after Iconoclasm: Painting in the Netherlands from 1566-1585*, ed. Koenraad Jonckheere and Ruben Suykerbuyk (Leuven: Brepols, 2012), 121–122. [based on Rom. 1:20] For an attenuation of the importance of Early Modern notions of the Book of Nature, see Paul Taylor, "Images de fleurs, images de Dieu? Méditations sur la nature au XVIIe siècle," in *L'empire de Flore*, ed. Sabine van Sprang (Brussels: La Renaissance du Livre, 1996), 253.

[594] For instance in the Roman novitiate of Sant'Andrea al Quirinale, described by Louis Richeôme in *La peinture spirituelle* of 1611, and in the eclectic writings on gardens of Giovan Battista Ferrari, of which more below. The overseas missionary work of the Jesuits provided them with a worldwide horticultural and botanical network. See Davidson, "The Jesuit Garden."

[595] See Johnson, "Gardening for God: Carmelite Deserts and the Sacralisation of Natural Space in Counter-Reformation Spain."

[596] Davidson, "The Jesuit Garden," 89.

[597] Claudia Swan, "Les fleurs comme 'curiosa,'" in *L'empire de Flore*, ed. Sabine van Sprang (Brussels: La Renaissance du Livre, 1996), 86–99. Flowers could also refer to Christ as part of the Holy Trinity, where God the father was seen as the plant, and the Holy Spirit as the fruit. See Wuyts, "Des fleurs pour la foi, l'amour et la mort." The Song of Songs and the Loretan Litary provided endless possibilities to praise the virtues of the Virgin Mary by means of references to flowers. See Jean Franeau, *Jardin d'hyver: ou cabinet des fleurs, contenant en XXVI elégies les plus rares et signalez fleurons des plus fleurissans parterres* (Douai: Pierre Borremans, 1616).

[598] H.V.S. Odgen, "The Principles of Variety and Contrast in Seventeenth-Century Aesthetics, and Milton's Poetry," *Journal of the History of Ideas* 10, no. 2 (1949): 159–82.

[599] Flowers were often brought in relation to the stories of Ovid's *Metamorphoses*. On the history of botanical illustrations, which often focused on the extraordinary, see Christian Coppens, "Des Livres Pour Les Fleurs, Des Fleurs Pour Des Hommes. Illustrations Botaniques Du XVIe Au XIX Siècle," in *L'empire de Flore*, ed. Sabine van Sprang (Brussels: La Renaissance du Livre, 1996), 28–54.

especially coveted. The fact that tulips often unexpectedly produced flowers with flame-patterns in various colours even led to the attribution of magical and alchemical qualities to the plants.

The desire for rare species of tulips among elite collectors resulted in private auctions where single bulbs were sometimes sold for small fortunes. In the 1630s the dramatic gains made in this trade led to a speculation bubble, known as tulip mania, which culminated in the famous crash of 1637.[600] This event was not confined to Dutch cities like Haarlem and Alkmaar but had repercussions in Flanders as well, especially in Brussels, a traditional centre of the trade in exotic flowers.[601] Though the tulip crash did not lead to an economic crisis, as is often assumed, it did provoke public commotion, expressed in many satirical pamphlets and songs (*fig*. 59). The pamphlets in the Protestant North focus on the worship of the "false idol" of the classical goddess Flora, and hinge strongly on the Calvinist sense of guilt over the sin of greed.[602] That it was also a hot topic (of ridicule) in the Southern Netherlands is shown by Jan Breughel the Younger's *Satire on the Tulip Mania* of c. 1640, a typical *singerie* or monkey piece (*fig*. 60).

It may come as no surprise that the tulip crash had caused animosity among the small circle of wealthy flower collectors. According to the "Dutch gardener" Hendrik van Oosten, who published in 1703 the eponymous gardening manual (a bestseller translated in three languages), the crash of 1637 had caused considerable mistrust at private sellings in Flanders:

> "because this could not be done without Animosities thereupon the Flemish Florists erected a Fraternity in the Cities; and took St. Dorothea to be their Patroness and the Syndicus to be Judge of the Differences, that might arise by their Truckering; and he to add more

[600] See Anne Goldgar, "Tulpenmanie: wie bepaalt de waarde van de tulp?," in *Bloeiende kennis: groene ontdekkingen in de Gouden Eeuw*, ed. Esther van Gelder and Francisca W. van Heertum (Hilversum: Verloren, 2012), 63–73; Anne Goldgar, *Tulipmania: Money, Honor, and Knowledge in the Dutch Golden Age* (Chicago: University of Chicago Press, 2007); Mike Dash, *Tulipomania: The Story of the World's Most Coveted Flower and the Extraordinary Passions It Aroused* (London: Gollancz, 1999); Wybe Kuitert, "La fleur, objet de spéculation au XIIe siècle: la tulipomanie," in *L'empire de Flore*, ed. Sabine van Sprang (Brussels: La Renaissance du Livre, 1996), 100–114; Ernst Heinrich Krelage, *Bloemenspeculatie in Nederland: de Tulpomanie van 1636-'37 en de hyacintenhandel 1720-'36* (Amsterdam: Van Kampen, 1942).

[601] Anne Goldgar, "Tulpenmanie: wie bepaalt de waarde van de tulp?," in *Bloeiende kennis: groene ontdekkingen in de Gouden Eeuw*, ed. Esther van Gelder and Francisca W. van Heertum (Hilversum: Verloren, 2012), 63–73. Also in the Northern Netherlands, tulip markets were held around 6 February.

[602] See Ernst Heinrich Krelage, *De pamfletten van den tulpenwindhandel, 1636-1637* (The Hague: Nijhoff, 1942).

> Authority to it called in four of the Chief of the Brotherhood and this was the Occasion of the sweet Conversation of the Brothers and brought them into great esteem. The Dutch keep in this Matter another Rule; they meet together on a certain Day, when tulips are in their full bloom and choose after having seen the chief Gardens of the Florists, and taken a friendly and frugal dinner together, one of the Company to be Judge of the Differences that might arise about Flowers in the Year."[603]

Indeed, around 1640 confraternities of St Dorothea were erected in several Flemish cities: as shown by the print in Brussels in 1640 and in Antwerp in 1641 (or before?). In 1647/48 Bishop Antonius Triest of Ghent, famous for the gardens of his villa Belvedere (named after the Vatican Belvedere)[604] (*fig*. 70) erected a confraternity of St Dorothea in St Michael's church in Ghent, together with his fellow garden enthusiast Willem de Blasere, Masius' brother-in-law.[605] A similar milieu of garden lovers must have gravitated in Brussels around Jan Baptist Masius who, we may surmise, as jurist and public dignitary in charge of the state finances, was an obvious candidate to be a judge in conflicts regarding private flower sales.

What did the members of a Dorothea-confraternity actually do? In the case of Brussels not much information has survived, but we do have detailed accounts of the activities of the confraternities of Ghent and Bruges (erected 1651).[606] These were exclusive clubs of about twelve prominent men. The members came together twice a year: firstly on the Saint's feast in February, when the altar was decorated with flowers and the members attended a mass,

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[603] Hendrik van Oosten, *The Dutch Gardener: Or, The Compleat Florist: Containing, the Most Successful Method of Cultivating All Sorts of Flowers; the Planting, Dressing and Pruning of All Manner of Fruit-Trees. Together with a Particular Account of the Nursing of Lemon and Orang* (Printed for D. Midwinter, 1711), 161.

[604] Antonius Sanderus, *Flandria Illustrata, Vol. I* (Cologne: Cornelius ab Egmond, 1641), 129. *Ghendtsche Tydinghen*, 1982/5/247-249 (i); 2007/3/147; 2007/4/215; 2007/5/291, 2009/5/315

[605] Michel Cloet, *Het bisdom Gent (1559-1991): vier eeuwen geschiedenis* (Ghent: Werkgroep De geschiedenis van het bisdom Gent, 1991), 75; Ray Matthijs, *Iconografie van bisschop Triest* (Ghent: Vanmelle, 1939), 33–34; see also Dewanckele, "Ontwikkeling van de bloemencultuur in de Gentse regio 1500 - 1900," 44–53.

[606] A. Vandewalle, "De bloemlievende Broederschap van de H. Dorothea te Brugge 1651-1784," *Het Brugse ommeland*, no. 4 (1979): 259–66; A. Vandewalle, "Hoogstaande bloemenliefhebbers in het Brugse, 1651-1784," *Biekorf*, 1980, 89–92; A. Vandewalle and W. Le Loup, "Ongekend werk van Jan Garemijn in het confrerieboek van de H. Dorothea," *Handelingen van het genootschap voor geschiedenis te Brugge* 117 (1980): 179–87. I would like to thank Jan d'Hondt of the Stadsarchief Brugge for kindly sending me these publications. See also Andries van den Abeele, "Andries van den Bogaerde (1726-1799): politiek, botanica en grootgrondbezit in Brugge en omgeving tijdens de 18de eeuw," *Handelingen van het genootschap voor geschiedenis te Brugge*, 2002, 80–124.

after which they elected a new board. A copious banquet would follow. In May, the so-called "Dorotheans" came together again to visit each other's gardens, from each of which they picked the two most beautiful flowers they could find. These flowers were subsequently auctioned at another festive banquet. There was often an element of competition,[607] and in Ghent a jury of four was appointed by the city's Aldermen to decide in conflicts regarding flower trade and cultivation.[608] In Antwerp the (erection of a) confraternity of St Dorothea in 1641 even occasioned putting on a play with songs, *Dorothea Maghet ende Martelersse*, based on the life of the saint and performed by the youth of the parish of St George (*fig*. 61).[609] Probably written and composed by the parish priest Guilelmus Bolognino (1590-1669), a violent anti-Protestant writer, the sacred play was dedicated to the alderman Jacob van Eyck, dean of the confraternity.

All the cases mentioned above seem to have been closed confraternities (sodalities) of the elite, limited to a maximum of twelve (male) members and by invitation only.[610] Later in the century similar confraternities were erected in the same cities, probably to cater to different (less elitist) groups of florists and gardeners and/or to host those who were not admitted to the closed confraternities.[611] What they all shared was the tradition to decorate their altars with flowers on 6 February, and to publish devotional broadsheets for the occassion.[612]

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[607] Davit Tarver and Brent Elliott, "Des fleuristes aux sociétés horticoles: histoire des expositions florales," in *L'empire de Flore*, ed. Sabine van Sprang (Brussels: La Renaissance du Livre, 1996), 115–47.

[608] Dewanckele, "Ontwikkeling van de bloemencultuur in de Gentse regio 1500 - 1900," 50.

[609] Ingeborg De Cooman, "Van podium naar liedboek. Guilelmus Bolognino en de toneelliederen in 'Dorothea Maeghet ende Marteleresse' (1641)," *De Zeventiende Eeuw* 19 (2003): 212–25.

[610] Timmermans, *Patronen van patronage in het zeventiende-eeuwse Antwerpen*, 114–116.

[611] Similar confraternities of St Dorothea were erected in other churches in Brussels: in the Kapellekerk (actum 17 September 1658, statutes 7 February 1661, authorized by Archbishop Andreas Creusen and confirmed by Pope Alexander VII in 1664) and in St Goriks. The former was closed and consisted of ca. 12 high-ranking members. The latter was probably more open and served a more middle class social stratum, as its provost was the printer Gillis Strykwant. The archives of the successor to the confraternity in the Kapellekerk, the *Société Royale Linnéenne et de Flore de Bruxelles* (1640-1970), consisting of 13 meters, have been deposed in the Brussels city archive in 1925 and 2007 (SAB, Archives Historiques no. 3811). It includes its book of members (SAB, Archives Historiques no. 3812), the richly decorated Livre d'Or, which was dressed up in 1700 after it had been destroyed by fire (in the bombardment of 1695?) http://fr.wikipedia.org/wiki/Société_royale_de_Flore_de_Bruxelles

[612] Two of these confraternities' publications have survived: "Winter-Lente-Bloemen. Toe-geheylight aen de onverwinnelyckste Christi Martelaresse, uyt-muntenste ende heylighste *Maeghden-Bloem* DOROTHEA, Door de *Bloem-lievende* haren Feest-dagh vierende binnen de Princelycke Stadt Brussel, in de Parochiale Kercke van den HEYLIGHEN GAUGERICUS. Op den sesden Februarii 1686... , Tot Brussel, by Gielis Stryckwant..."; and: "Lof-galmende rym-

The specifically Flemish association between the elite gardening culture and the cult of St Dorothea may be explained by the emphasis put on the role of the figure of Theophilus. The story from the Golden Legend (obviously rejected in the North) describes this figure as a "secretary of the judge", lawyer or *notario*. This figure is also put to the fore as the addressee of a fictive letter by St Dorothea in the Lille Jesuit Jean Vincart's *Sacrarum Heroidum Epistolae* of 1640, and figures in the accompanying emblematic "symbolum" (*fig*. 65).[613] Theophilo's conversion to Christianity was emulated by the erection of confraternities that were to promote concord among its members. Pious devotion was the means of choice to prevent quarrels in light of the recent tulip mania and its aftermath, a "flower miracle" in its own right, which was in the Southern Netherlands probably interpreted as a (warning) sign of the wrath of God, to be answered by means of piety.

The fruit of promise

Besides tulips, among the most costly and highly regarded plants were orange trees. In Early Modern (Northern) Europe, oranges were more than just an exotic fruit. In addition to being an object of luxury, taking pride of place in contemporary table culture, and generating a vivid trade, citrus fruits also evoked a wide range of symbolical connotations. Prized as the "fruit of promise" of classical Hesperidean myths,[614] citrus fruits called forth images of paradise, eternal life, and salvation.[615] The Hesperides, a mythical sisterhood of nymphs, were thought to tend a paradisiacal garden on the end

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dicht ofte Trophé der bloemen op-gerecht ter eeren vande heylige maghet ende martelaeresse Dorothea in de parochiale kercke van Onse Lieve Vrouwe ter Cappelle binnen de princelycke stadt Brussel, op den sesden februarii 1734"

[613] Jean Vincart, *Sacrarum Heroidum Epistolae* (Tournai: Adrianus Quinque, 1640), 36–44.

[614] Yasmin Doosry, "Die goldenen Äpfel der Hesperiden: antike Mythen und ihre bildlichen Spuren," in *Die Frucht Der Verheißung : Zitrusfrüchte in Kunst Und Kultur*, ed. Yasmin Doosry, Christiane Lauterbach, and Johannes Pommeranz (Nürnberg: Germanischen Nationalmuseum, 2011), 27–67; see also Pia Rudolph, "[Review Of] Yasmin Doosry, Christiane Lauterbach, Johannes Pommeranz: *Die Frucht der Verheißung. Zitrusfrüchte in Kunst und Kultur*, Nürnberg 2011," *H-ArtHist*, 2012, http://arthist.net/reviews/4354.

[615] Compare: tradition to put citrus fruit in grave. Ulrike Neurath-Sippel, "Zitrusfrüchte im Totenbrauchtum," in *Die Frucht der Verheißung: Zitrusfrüchte in Kunst und Kultur*, ed. Yasmin Doosry, Christiane Lauterbach, and Johannes Pommeranz (Nürnberg: Germanischen Nationalmuseum, 2011), 121–31.

of the earth where golden apples grew, holding magical powers.[616] In emulation of related classical myths such as the Judgement of Paris, oranges and orange-blossom were much sought after as wedding gifts and beauty prizes.[617] At the same time oranges could also refer to the forbidden fruit of Adam's apple and the associated hope for paradise.[618] Oranges therefore often figured prominently in portraits[619] and still-lives,[620] and were equally popular in religious artworks, for citrus plants held the distinctive feature of bearing blossom and fruit at the same time, making them the ideal attribute of the Virgin Mary; and, because of her basket of flowers and fruits, equally of St Dorothea.[621]

Incapable of surviving frost, orange trees were necessarily cultivated in pots, so that they could be brought to orangeries during the winter season (*fig*. 71).[622] Such orangeries would become immensely popular in seventeenth and eighteenth century garden culture, and were more than just a technological innovation. Orangeries were regarded as magical devices, linked to "the ideal of classical antiquity and of the mythical Garden of the Hesperides where trees bearing golden apples flourish."[623] More than anything else, they represented "the holistic symbiosis of Art and Nature, of

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[616] "Der antike Mythos hatte die Hesperidengärten am äussersten Ende der bekannten Welt gesucht und ihnen damit die Bedeutung eines unerreichbaren, paradiesischen Ortes verliehen." Doosry, "Die goldenen Äpfel der Hesperiden: antike Mythen und ihre bildlichen Spuren," 63.

[617] Wuyts, "Des fleurs pour la foi, l'amour et la mort."

[618] Christiane Lauterbach, "Adams Apfel. Zitrusfrüchte in der christlichen und jüdischen Kunst," in *Die Frucht der Verheißung: Zitrusfrüchte in Kunst und Kultur*, ed. Yasmin Doosry, Christiane Lauterbach, and Johannes Pommeranz (Nürnberg: Germanischen Nationalmuseum, 2011), 107; Davidson, "The Jesuit Garden," 94, referring to Giovanni Baptista Ferrari, *Hesperides sive de Malorum Aureorum Cultura et Usu Libri Quatuor* (Rome: Hermannus Scheus, 1646).

[619] Ekaterini Kempertzi, "Soziale Distinktion, Hoffnung und Leid, paradiesische Gefilde. Zitrusfrüchte als Bedeutungsträger im Porträt," in *Die Frucht der Verheißung: Zitrusfrüchte in Kunst und Kultur*, ed. Yasmin Doosry, Christiane Lauterbach, and Johannes Pommeranz (Nürnberg: Germanischen Nationalmuseum, 2011), 137–59.

[620] Regina Deckers, "Meisterwercke der Natur. Zitronenfrüchten in Stilleben," in *Die Frucht der Verheißung: Zitrusfrüchte in Kunst und Kultur*, ed. Yasmin Doosry, Christiane Lauterbach, and Johannes Pommeranz (Nürnberg: Germanischen Nationalmuseum, 2011), 171–99.

[621] The blossoms were to symbolize the virginity of Mary, the fruit her pure motherhood.

[622] Helmut-Eberhard Paulus, "Das Bild der Orangerie in der Mitte Europas, vermittelt durch Architekturtraktate des 16. bis 18. Jahrhunderts," in *Die Frucht der Verheißung: Zitrusfrüchte in Kunst und Kultur*, ed. Yasmin Doosry, Christiane Lauterbach, and Johannes Pommeranz (Nürnberg: Germanischen Nationalmuseum, 2011), 271–305.

[623] The seventeenth century witnessed the emergence of a literary genre known as "Hesperides-literature". See Johannes Pommeranz, "Von »Adams Paumen« Und »Citrin Epffel«. Zu Zitrusgewächsen in Deutschen Pflanzenbüchern der Frühen Neuzeit," in *Die Frucht der Verheißung: Zitrusfrüchte in Kunst und Kultur*, ed. Yasmin Doosry, Christiane Lauterbach, and Johannes Pommeranz (Nürnberg: Germanischen Nationalmuseum, 2011), 205–33.

garden and architecture, of plants and metaphorical significance", and thus not only pleased the eyes, but also stimulated the mind.[624]

Masius' brother-in-law, the Ghent alderman Willem de Blasere (before 1592-1653, *fig*. 62) was one of the pioneers in the construction of greenhouses; as one of the first in the Netherlands he had built a heated and fenestrated winter garden of 100 feet (75 m.) in length in the garden of his castle of Hellebuys at Afsnee in East-Flanders.[625] Word of these developments also reached the horticultural centre of Rome, where the members of the emerging scientific community did research in the magnificent gardens of their patrons.[626] One of them was Giovan Battista Ferrari (1583-1655), a learned Jesuit from Siena who became horticultural advisor to the Barberini family. After publishing *De Florum Cultura* in 1633, in which he recounts every detail of the gardening culture of the great noble families of Rome (strongly influenced by innovations from the Netherlands),[627] he published in 1646 the *Hesperides*, a uniquely sumptuous, encyclopaedic book on all sorts of citrus fruits.[628] As an ultimate example of the contemporary notion of gardens as *loci* of curiosity, it took its lead from the approach to natural history of Ulisse Aldrovandi, combining literature, art, mythology, etymology, ethnography, and botany in a way that according to Freedberg had never been done before.[629] The book contained spectacularly detailed illustrations of fruits by the Flemish artist Cornelis Bloemaert, magnificent plates depicting orangeries, and allegorical plates by the very best roman artists of the time (*fig*. 68).[630] It was based on the collected notes and correspondence of the erudite Cassiano del Pozzo (1588-

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[624] Paulus, "Das Bild der Orangerie in der Mitte Europas, vermittelt durch Architekturtraktate des 16. bis 18. Jahrhunderts," 271.

[625] René de Herdt, "Les Floralies gantoises, un modèle prestigieux," in *L'empire de Flore*, ed. Sabine van Sprang (Brussels: La Renaissance du Livre, 1996), 138; see also René de Herdt, *Gentse Floraliën: sierteelt in Vlaanderen* (Gent: Stichting Mens en Kultuur, 1990); Matthijs, *Iconografie van bisschop Triest*, 33.

[626] See David Freedberg, *The Eye of the Lynx : Galileo, His Friends, and the Beginnings of Modern Natural History* (Chicago: University of Chicago Press, 2002); see also Witte, *The Artful Hermitage: The Palazzetto Farnese as a Counter-Reformation Diaeta*. [see esp. p. 173-211]

[627] Davidson, "The Jesuit Garden," 94, referring to Ferrari, *De Florum Cultura Libri IV*.

[628] Ferrari, *Hesperides sive de Malorum Aureorum Cultura et Usu Libri Quatuor*, 1646. The book was compiled between 1635 and 1640. See David Freedberg, "Cassiano, Ferrari and Their Drawings of Citrus Fruit," in *Citrus Fruit. The Paper Museum of Cassiano Dal Pozzo: A Catalogue Raisonné: Series B - Natural History, Part One*, ed. David Freedberg and Enrico Baldini (London: Harvey Miller, 1997), 50–57.

[629] Ibid., 60.

[630] I.e. Pietro da Cortona, Francesco Albani, Nicolas Poussin, Giovanni Lanfranco, Guido Reni, Andrea Sacchi, Giovanni Francesco Romanelli, and Domenico Zampieri, called Domenichino.

1657)[631] with whom Ferrari closely collaborated[632] in the famous Roman learned society of the Accademia del Lincei.[633] The wide-ranging network of these men included Willem de Blasere, who is credited in the book with important achievements in the field of orange-cultivation.[634] Ferrari recounts how:

> "By diligence, these rare trees have been brought up there [in Belgium], in spite of nature's opposition […]. We should admire Willem de Blasere […] even more, since […] he imported orange trees from Italy, and also grew his own plants from seeds […] and succeeded, by means of grafting, in improving them and adjusting them to the cold weather of Belgium […]. In October, he brings his trees to the winter garden, and when it starts to freeze, this greenhouse is gently heated with coal from Liege […]"[635]

The book furthermore illustrates the pots that Willem de Blasere used to grow his orange trees in (*fig*. 69). With a typical flourish of rhetoric, Ferrari concludes by noting that De Blasere had "thus turned his delicate and haughty Italian guests into […] plain Belgian daughters."

The print of 1640 prominently shows two pots with fruit-bearing orange trees on the balusters to each side of the steps to the altar, showing that De Blasere's achievement was put in the service of his brother in law's newly created confraternity (*fig*. 47).

The intentions of the patron

Let us return to the question why so much effort was put in the feast of Dorothea. Jan Baptist Maes was his father's only son and by 1640 it had become clear that his marriage would remain childless.[636] By 1627 three

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[631] Francesco Solinas, *I segreti di un collezionista: le straordinarie raccolte di Cassiano dal Pozzo 1588-1657* (Rome: De Luca, 2001). See also the forthcoming book on Dal Pozzo by Francesco Solinas.

[632] Freedberg, "Cassiano, Ferrari and Their Drawings of Citrus Fruit"; see also David Freedberg, "From Hebrew and Gardens to Oranges and Lemons," in *Cassiano Dal Pozzo: atti del seminario internazionale di studi*, ed. Francesco Solinas (Rome: De Luca, 1989), 37–72.

[633] On the Accademia dei Lincei, see Irene Baldriga, *L'occhio della Lince: i primi Lincei tra arte, scienza e collezionismo (1603-1630)* (Rome: Accademia Nazionale dei Lincei, 2002).

[634] See also Bénédicte and Michel Bachès, "La culture des agrumes," *Homme et plantes* 37 (2001): 34.

[635] Giovanni Baptista Ferrari, *Hesperides sive de Malorum Aureorum Cultura et Usu Libri Quatuor* (Rome: Hermannus Scheus, 1646), chap. 139–141.

[636] In 1640 Anne de Blasere was 48 years old.

daughters had been born, of which one had died,[637] (the other two must have died between 1627 and 1640) and a son died in 1636.[638] This indicates that Masius must have had an avid concern for his Salvation and that of his ancestors. Without progeny or direct relatives who could pray for their souls in purgatory after death, this disadvantage would need to be compensated by purchasing additional institutionalized prayer services and masses, to the exclusive benefit of their "orphaned" souls. This concern is also reflected in his sumptuous rebuilding of the chapel of St Mary Magdalene in the collegiate church of Saint Gudule, where his parents had been buried, after the chapter had given authorization to do so in 1649.[639] Jan Baptist Maes and his wife would equally find their last resting place in this domed octagonal chapel, situated behind the chancel on the ambulatory, built by the Brussels architect Leon van Heil the Elder in 1665 (completed 1678) as an appendix to the most prestigious church of the city (*fig*. 64).[640] Unlike in Italy, where anyone who could afford it strove to found a private chapel, these were a rare phenomenon in the Southern Netherlands, where patronage over an altar in the vicinity of which where one was buried was usually shared.[641] Pressing concerns over one's salvation and that of one's ancestors, however, as in the present case where a branch of the Maes family would die off, could prompt such an endeavour.[642]

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[637] As mentioned in the dedication to Anna de Blasere in Jacob Heyndricx, *Philadelphia oft Gheestelycken Minnestrick* (Ghent: Ioos Dooms, 1627); another publication dedicated to Anna de Blasere was entitled "Comfort of the Scrupulous", by the Ghent dominican Aegidius de Lallaing, *Den Troost der Scrupuleuse, dat is Gheestelyck Medicijn-Boecksken, in-houdende vele troostelijcke Remedien teghen de zwaergheestighe sorgelijcke Sieckte der Scrupuleusheyt* (Brussels: Guilliam Scheybels, 1647).

[638] 9 November 1636

[639] Paul de Ridder and Andrée Alexandre, *De kathedraal van Sint-Michiel en Sint-Goedele, Brussel* (Tielt: Lannoo, 2001); Henri Velge, *La collégiale des Saints Michel & Gudule à Bruxelles* (Brussels: Librairie Albert Dewit, 1925), 86. See also Paul de Ridder, *Inventaris van het oud-archief van de Kapittelkerk van Sint-Michiel en Sint-Goedele te Brussel* (Brussels: Algemeen Rijksarchief, 1987), 120, 472–474.

[640] See ARAA, Eccl. Arch., St Gudule: Testament of 23 December 1665, Brussels. Notary F. Vandale.

[641] Notable exceptions include the Houtappel-chapel in the Antwerp Jesuit church (present church of St Carolus Borromeo), the Chapel of St Ursula in the Brussels Zavelkerk by the De la Tour et Tassis family, and the Maes chapel in St Gudule, Brussels.

[642] The epitaph in the chapel of St Mary Magdalene in St Gudule reads: "DOM Aeternae memoriae Joannis Baptista Maes Equitis Ords Miltaris St Jacobi, Toparchae de Steenkerck Engleberti equitis Sanctioris Regii Senatus Praesidis a Consilio status & dnae Paulinae Schoyte fillii.. obiit 27 juniii Ao 1667 Aetatis LXXXI.. Quartiers Maes Merle Tassis Wachtedonck et Schoyte van Mechelen Van Kets Sombeeke." Josse Ange Rombaut, *Het Verheerlykt of Opgehelderd Brussel: zynde, eene historische en chronologische Beschryvinge van den vorigen ende tegenwoordigen Staet dezer Stad* (Brussels: Pauwels, 1777), 93. See also Joseph van den

The decorations of the altar of St Dorothea would lend Masius prestige and an opportunity to display his piety as well as his coat-of-arms and (puns on) his name in a high-profile church setting. The altar in the Carmelite church must have functioned primarily in the context of prayers for the soul of the donor who, in return for his generosity, probably received a patent of the Carmelite order promising the inclusion of such prayers in the order's liturgy (which was considered to be a highly effective means of salvation).[643]

At this point, we should make a brief excursus to Antwerp.[644] Masius' colleague and successor as Lord of Cantecroy, Philip de Godines, had died in 1633 leaving ten thousand guilders for a new high altar of the Antwerp church of the Calced Carmelites. In 1637/1638, when the Antwerp Carmelite convent was reformed (as one of the last in the Province), Godines' widow Sibylla van den Berge fulfilled her late husband's bequest by commissioning a spectacular new high altar, with a painting designed by Rubens (but executed by Gerard Seghers in 1634) in an architectural frame designed by Rubens and executed by Jan van Mildert in the most precious types of marble.[645] The painting has not been preserved but a *modello* by Rubens has, often entitled *Triumph of the Eucharist* (*fig*. 56).[646] It depicted the unique subject of Christ triumphing over sin and death "as high priest of the New Law and author of the Eucharist", among high priest Melchisedech and the prophet Elijah, the Apostle St Paul and St Cyrillus, patriarch of Alexandria (all of whom had prefigured or promoted the Eucharist, and all of whom were considered Carmelites by the Carmelites).[647] The painting thus emphasized both the ancient (pre-Christian, Jewish) lineage of the order, its role in the veneration of the Eucharist, and the perfect Catholicity and devotion to the Eucharist of their patron, who descended from converted Jews.

Leene, *Le Théâtre de la Noblesse du Brabant représentant les Érections des Terres, Seigneuries, et Noms des Personnes, et des Familles titrées, les Créations des Chevaleries, et Octroys des Marques d'honneur et de Noblesse* (Liège: Jean Francois Broncaert, 1705).

[643] Possibly, Masius intended to be buried in the vicinity of the altar of St Dorothea in the Carmelite church, before he in 1649 received authorization to rebuild the chapel of St Mary Magdalen in St Gudule.

[644] Marinus, "De Contrareformatie te Antwerpen, (1585-1676): kerkelijk leven in een grootstad," 190–194.

[645] Croix, "La glorification de l'Eucharistie de Rubens et les Carmes."

[646] New York, Metropolitan Museum, Inv. 37.160.12

[647] See Haeger, "Rubens' 'Christ Triumphant over Sin and Death': Unveiling the Glory of God." (especially 981-994).

It is hard to substantiate, but very tempting to suggest, that Maes' donation to the Brussels Carmelites should be seen as emulation of the patronage of Philip de Godines in Antwerp. Although Masius may not have been able to spend as much money on marble as the arriviste Antwerp merchant, his (brother in law's) knowledge of flower and orange cultivation enabled him to create a spectacular and compelling altar nonetheless. Also, he did not fail to proudly display, and disseminate through the print and other means, the insignia of the order of Santiago to which he belonged, and which underlined the impeccable nobility and Catholicity of his ancestry, compensating the loss of his title.

Conclusion

How to make sense of all these different possible functions and "agencies" of the altar and the print depicting it? Following Alfred Gell, we may look at the altar as a collection of "man-traps", by which different types of users/viewers are caught according to their specific characteristics or pattern of behaviour.[648]

The monks, first of all, were reminded by means of inscriptions and coats-of-arms of their obligation to pray for the souls of Maes and his wife and their noble, Catholic ancestors, who had serious reasons to worry about their salvation by lack of progeny. Masius and his wife inscribed their presence into the choir, center of the Liturgy of the Hours and the Divine Office, where the last Duchess of Brabant was prominently buried as well. With this patronage Masius also contributed to, or condoned, the reform of the Carmelites which was so ardently desired by the court in light of the general aims of the Catholic Reform, and more specifically considering the bad press of the order.

The members of the confraternity, which was erected at least partly to temper discords in the wake of the tulip crash, were in turn reminded by means of the paintings, decorations, flowers, and fruits, of the virtuous examples of Dorothea and especially Theophilus, who after his initial arrogant harassing of the saint and subsequent conversion by means of a miracle, both sacrificed themselves to Christ. This virtuous example

[648] Alfred Gell, "Vogel's Net. Traps as Artworks and Artworks as Traps," *Journal of Material Culture* 1, no. 1 (1996): 15–38.

promoted the antithesis of the idolatrous worship of the godess Flora and the concomitant vice of greed.

By turning his brother in law's knowledge of the cultivation of his famously flourishing orange trees into a spectacle of devotion, Masius created a new type of devotion and set an example in Church decoration which would be widely imitated, and lives on up to this day in the prestigious flower exhibitions of the Floraliën in Ghent.[649] The example of the devotion to St Dorothea was set in the court city of Brussels, where crucial agents of the Counter Reformation gathered (like in Rome or Borromean Milan). Here, the classical *topos* of the contest between Art and Nature was evoked in a magnificent display in which Nature was tamed, and emulated by Art, while artworks were adorned by Nature herself. Enhanced by means of flower bulbs and greenhouses, Art and Nature in contest thus succeeded in reproducing the Saint's miracle of flowers growing in mid-winter, and in the evocation of Eternal Spring and paradise, which the Saints had gained. By putting this literally before their eyes, the ornamentation of the altar with flowers and fruits was to astonish the viewer as a miracle. Even in the print, the intricate use of different printing techniques evinces a concern for creating a visual demarcation between the realms of physical reality and painted surface, emphasizing the realness of the flowers. By calling forth the divine mission of the conquest of Nature by Man's ingenuity, the general public was furthermore edified, as both nature and art signified God's greatness.

[649] The confraternities of St Dorothea were often turned in horticultural Societies of Flora in the eighteenth century, which lied at the basis of the Floraliën in Ghent. See René de Herdt and Particia de Corte, *Fine fleur: Floralies gantoises & art floral* (Tielt: Lannoo, 2005), 12.

Chapter III: The Capuchins and the Honour Paid to Relics

Decree of the 25th session of the Council of Trent:

> Also, that the holy bodies of holy martyrs, and of others now living with Christ, – which bodies were the living members of Christ, and *the temple of the Holy Ghost*, and which are by Him to be raised unto eternal life, and to be glorified, – are to be venerated by the faithful; through which (bodies) many benefits are bestowed by God on men; so that they who affirm that veneration and honour are not due to the relics of saints; or, that these, and other sacred monuments, are uselessly honoured by the faithful; and that the places dedicated to the memories of the saints are in vain visited with the view of obtaining their aid; are wholly to be condemned, as the Church has already long since condemned, and now also condemns them.[650]

In the jubilee year of 1650 the prominent Capuchin friar and provincial of the order Father Carolus of Brussels (or Carolus van Arenberg, *fig*. 73) returned from a general chapter meeting in Rome. He brought with him a great prize: no less than nine complete bodies of Early Christian martyrs from the Roman catacombs. With the large bequest that his mother Anne de Croÿ had left the order, a fitting new church was to be built where the relics would be displayed for veneration (*fig*. 75). The new church was built very quickly and in 1652 a magnificent procession was organized to give a strong impetus to the new cult.[651]

What was the context of this unparalleled event, and to what ends was it staged? What was the function of art and architecture in the new church? To answer these questions, I will first treat the veneration of relics, the phenomenon of catacomb saints and their potential agency. Next I will discuss the Capuchins and the role of Carolus in the order and at court. I will then inquire into the events surrounding the rebuilding of the church and convent, the art and architecture that was employed, and its function in the processes of change or transformation. The Capuchins strictly observed the Franciscan poverty rule, which prohibited any display of wealth and

[650] *The Canons and Decrees of the Sacred and Œcumenical Council of Trent, Celebrated Under the Sovereign Pontiffs, Paul III., Julius III., and Pius IV. Translated by J. Waterworth.*, 234.
[651] Henne and Wauters, *Histoire de la ville de Bruxelles*, 1845, vol. 3, 435-436.

unnecessary ornament. Yet artworks did play a very important role in the new church, and this enables us to examine rather precisely when, why, and how art and architecture were used, and under what circumstances it was not employed.

The Capuchins

In early seventeenth century Flanders, Franciscan spirituality was on the rise. The Franciscan ideals of poverty, charitable works and inner conversion of the self were ideally suited to the need of the Counter Reformation church to appeal to a population that was partly still feeling anticlerical and sympathetic to the Protestant cause. The archdukes had strongly supported the Franciscans and Isabella's confessor Andrés de Soto (+1625), a Spanish Franciscan from the convent in Brussels was almost considered a saint at court.[652] After the death of archduke Albrecht in 1621, Isabella took the habit of the Third Order of St. Francis.

The Italian reformed branch of the Franciscans, the Capuchins, had been introduced to the Netherlands by Alessandro Farnese, and soon established convents in all major cities.[653] Naturally, a certain degree of rivalry between the Franciscans and the Capuchins was to arise. The Capuchins ardently claimed that unlike the Franciscans, they rigorously followed the (second) rule of St Francis (1223), which was thought to have been confirmed by Christ himself in a vision that St Francis had at Fonte Colombo, in which the Saviour admonished him to follow this rule *ad litteram, ad litteram, ad litteram, et sine glossa, sine glossa, sine glossa* (to the letter [x3] and without gloss [x3]).[654] The Capuchins were known for their simple, folksy pathos,[655] and promoted the faith *verbo et exemplo*, by word and example.[656] Their church in Rome on the Via Veneto features a crypt decorated with countless bones and skulls, reminding the faithful of

[652] See Cordula van Wyhe, "Court and Convent: The Infanta Isabella and Her Franciscan Confessor André de Soto," *Sixteenth Century Journal* 35, no. 2 (2004): 411–47.
[653] Marinus, "De Contrareformatie te Antwerpen, (1585-1676): kerkelijk leven in een grootstad," 172–175.
[654] Servus Gieben, "La predicazione e la propaganda dei Cappuccini attraverso l'immagine," in *Girolamo Mautini da Narni e l'ordine dei Cappuccini fra '500 e '600*, ed. Vincenzo Criscuolo (Rome: Isituto Storico dei Cappuccini, 1998), 424.
[655] Axters, *Geschiedenis van de vroomheid in de Nederlanden. Vol. IV: Na Trente*, 53.
[656] For the origins of this attitude, see Caroline Walker Bynum, *Docere Verbo et Exemplo: An Aspect of Twelfth-Century Spirituality* (Missoula, Mont: Scholars Press, 1979).

death, while in Vienna as of 1633 Habsburg Emperors chose to be buried in the Kapuzinergruft.

The cult of relics

The most effective way to achieve contact with the saints was through visiting the place where they had been martyred and by venerating the remnants of their earthly existence: their bones and bodily remains and material objects such as clothes or possessions.[657] During the Middle Ages communities invested different meanings and values in these relics, which often formed the "backbone" of their society.[658] The discovery, acquisition or theft of relics (*furta sacra*) sanctified a territory, turning its inhabitants into a chosen people.[659]

Like sacred images, relics were attacked in the sixteenth century religious troubles as a result of the Protestant critique on the cult of saints. Many relics disappeared during the iconoclastic rages, either because they were destroyed or because they were taken away to safer places. After the Council of Trent had approved the cult of relics in 1563, the Spanish King Philip II gathered an enormous collection of nearly 7500 relics, "repatriating" every saint that was historically related to his territories, and protecting them from desecration by heretics.[660] This collection was donated to the royal monastery of San Lorenzo at the Escorial, which was conceived as a "Noah's Ark" for relics.[661] The collection was housed in hundreds of reliquaries after designs by Juan de Herrera distributed all over the monastery and the basilica.[662] Fully aware of the doubtful veracity of many relics, Philip II said: "They won't fool us; we don't lose our merit before God by revering his saints in bones, even if the bones are not theirs".[663]

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[657] Angenendt, *Heilige und Reliquien: Die Geschichte ihres Kultes vom frühen Christentum bis zur Gegenwart*, 149–166.

[658] Peter Brown, *The Cult of the Saints: Its Rise and Function in Latin Christianity* (Chicago: The University of Chicago Press, 1982), 86–105; see also Patrick J. Geary, *Furta Sacra: Thefts of Relics in the Central Middle Ages* (Princeton NJ: Princeton University Press, 1990), 3–27.

[659] Brown, *The Cult of the Saints*, 92; on furtae sacrae, see Geary, *Furta Sacra: Thefts of Relics in the Central Middle Ages*.

[660] Guy Lazure, "Possessing the Sacred: Monarchy and Identity in Philip II's Relic Collection at the Escorial," *Renaissance Quarterly* 60, no. 1 (2007): 58–93.

[661] Ibid., 72.

[662] See Rosemarie Mulcahy, *The Decoration of the Royal Basilica of El Escorial* (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 1994).

[663] Cited in Lazure, "Possessing the Sacred: Monarchy and Identity in Philip II's Relic Collection at the Escorial," 60. On his deathbed the King had himself surrounded with his most precious

When the Catholics regained control over the Southern Netherlands in 1585, the demand for new relics to replace the lost ones skyrocketed. Luckily, the enormous relic reservoirs of Cologne (St Ursula and her eleven thousand companions) and Trier (St Maurice and his Theban legion) provided ample material.[664] More specific relics were highly coveted. The archdukes Albert and Isabella, equally avid collectors of relics as their father and uncle, Philip II, managed to get hold of relics of virtually every saint on the Roman Catholic calendar. They sent agents abroad with the express purpose of acquiring distinct relics, especially of their own saintly forebears, both for their private collection as well as for public veneration.[665]

During the Twelve Year's Truce secret excavations were done in the Protestant North to recover the relics of the Martyrs of Gorcum. These nineteen clerics, eleven of whom were Franciscan monks, mostly from Gorinchem (Gorcum), had been hanged by the Geuzen in Den Briel in 1572 while trying to protect a Eucharistic host from desecration. This host, which miraculously started to bleed after being trampled on by a spiked boot, was miraculously saved and given to Philip II in 1594. It has ever since been venerated as the Escorial's most important relic, known as the *Sagrada Forma*.[666] Some of the remains of the martyrs of Gorcum were smuggled to Brussels during the Truce.[667] Although the procedure of possible beatification and canonization of these would-be saints was still in an early stage, in 1618 the relics of the eleven Franciscan martyrs were paraded

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relics for him to kiss and touch, while the Infante Isabella kept him from dropping off by pretending his relics were taken away from him, after which the King would startle. Ibid., 58–59.

[664] These abundantly available relics were considered no less holy than those of any other individual saint, yet because of their wide dissemination they had a rather generic agency and did not draw any special veneration or masses of pilgrims. See Alphonse Dupront, *Du Sacré: Croisades et Pèlerinages, Images et Langages* (Paris: Gallimard, 1987). On the shrine of St Ursula in Cologne, see Scott B. Montgomery, *St. Ursula and the Eleven Thousand Virgins of Cologne: Relics, Reliquaries and the Visual Culture of Group Sanctity in Late Medieval Europe* (Oxford: Peter Lang, 2009).

[665] For instance in 1612, the (supposed) relics of St Albert of Louvain and St Elisabeth of Hungary were translated to the Brussels convent of Discalced Carmelite nuns. Patron saints and forebears of the Archdukes Albert and Isabella, the relics were displayed for veneration and provided with altarpieces by Theodoor van Loon, which are still kept in the Brussels convent of Discalced Carmelite nuns. See Duerloo, "Pietas Albertina. Dynastieke Vroomheid En Herbouw van Het Vorstelijk Gezag"; Wyhe, "Court and Convent: The Infanta Isabella and Her Franciscan Confessor André de Soto."

[666] Henry Kamen, *The Escorial: Art and Power in the Renaissance* (New Haven CT: Yale University Press, 2010), 203.

[667] Guilielmus Estius, *Histoire des Martyrs de Gorcom* (Douai: Marc Wyon, 1618).

around Brussels in a magnificent *translatio*-procession.[668] Preceded by high-ranking prelates, the archdukes and their whole court, and a train of more than five-thousand people holding burning candles, the two reliquary chests, beautifully decorated with images representing the martyrs *ad vivum* (as they had looked during life)[669], were carried to the Franciscan convent.[670] The creation of this cult of martyrdom, and the instigation for canonization of these "athletes of the faith" by the Franciscan order, seems to have been both a propagandistic event against the United Provinces as well as a part of the archducal politics of amassing sacral power within their territories, and thus also had an apotropaic function.[671] The cult remained very much alive throughout the seventeenth century, and gave rise to many artworks, such as series of portraits in flower garlands by Teniers and Gyssaerts from 1676.[672]

Catacomb Saints

In 1578 the so-called catacombs of St Priscilla were accidentally rediscovered near the Via Salaria just outside Rome. It soon turned out that this was just one of many extensive networks of subterranean corridors full of late antique burial tombs that surrounded the city. During the 2nd-6th centuries many Romans had been buried here, especially from the emerging Christian population. The implications of the discovery were not immediately recognized but one man, Antonio Bosio (1575-1629), undertook the vast task to localize and systematically explore catacombs all around Rome. His magnum opus on the subject, *Roma Sotteranea*, was

[668] An octave was held from 18-29 October 1618. See Antonius Sanderus, "Chorographia Sacra Conventus Bruxellensis PP. Minorum," in *Chorographia Sacra Brabantiæ* (Brussels: Philippe Vleugart, 1662).

[669] The portraits were made in the year after their martyrdom by Jean Thibaut Dierckx, painter of Gorcum. E.H.J. Reusens, *Iconographie des Bienheureux Martyrs de Gorcum: Ornée de six beaux portraits*, ed. Peeters (Leuven, 1867), 9–11. See Johannes Boener, *Veræ ad vivum effigies BB. Martyrum Gorcomiensium*, 2nd ed. ('s Hertogenbosch: Antonius Scheffer, 1623). On religious images *ad vivum*, see Ralph Dekoninck, "'Ad Vivum': Pictorial and Spiritual Imitation in the Allegory of the Pictura Sacra by Fans Francken II," in *Ut Pictura Meditatio: The Meditative Image in Northern Art, 1500-1700. Proteus 4*, ed. Walter S. Melion, Ralph Dekoninck, and Agnes Guiderdoni-Bruslé (Turnhout: Brepols, 2012).

[670] Antonius Sanderus, "Chorographia Sacra Conventus Bruxellensis PP. Minorum," 61., referring to: Cornelius Thielmannus, *Seraphische historie van het leven des alderheylichste vader S. Francisci van Assysien: ende van die heylige mannen ende vrouvven... item van die glorieuse martyrie der HH. Martelaren van Japonien*, Louvain, 1628

[671] Pollmann, *Catholic Identity and the Revolt of the Netherlands, 1520-1635*, 165.

[672] See Júlia Tátrai, "The Beatified Martyrs of Gorcum: A Series of Paintings by David Teniers the Younger and Wouter Gysaerts," in *Geest En Gratie: Essays Presented to Ildiko Ember on Her Seventieth Birthday*, ed. Orsolya Radványi (Budapest: Szépművészeti Múzeum, 2012), 26–33.

published posthumously in 1632.[673] Bosio's interest in the catacombs was focused on the presumed presence of bodies of Early Christian saints, an interest that ran parallel with the study and revaluation of the history of Early Christianity by Counter-Reformation churchmen like Gabriele Paleotti and Cesare Baronio.[674]

It can hardly be overestimated what thrill the discovery of the catacombs must have caused. The many ancient frescos in the catacombs brought the Early Christians to life, literally putting them in front of the eyes of the beholder, while inscriptions sometimes provided information such as their names, and their professions.[675] In short: it was a historical sensation. The frescos moreover proved the use of sacred images by the Early Christians.[676]

In the course of the seventeenth century the catacombs would be mined for relics, and a bustling trade emerged in human remains, under the auspices of (but not entirely under control of) the church.[677] This practice would continue well into the nineteenth century. The catacomb saints thus became a major export product: many ended up in overseas missionary lands, or in territories which had recently been conquered on the Protestants,

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[673] Antonio Bosio, Giovanni Severano, and Carlo Aldobrandino, *Roma Sotterranea: Opera Postuma* (Rome, 1632); but he was not the only one, see for instance Irina Oryshkevich, "Cultural History in the Catacombs: Early Christian Art and Macarius's Hagioglypta," in *Sacred History: Uses of the Christian Past in the Renaissance World*, ed. Katherine Elliott van Liere, Simon Ditchfield, and Howard Louthan (Oxford: Oxford University Press, 2012).

[674] Giuseppe Antonio Guazzelli, "Cesare Baronio and the Roman Catholic Vision of the Early Church," in *Sacred History: Uses of the Christian Past in the Renaissance World*, ed. Katherine Elliott van Liere, Simon Ditchfield, and Howard Louthan (Oxford: Oxford University Press, 2012); W. Wischmeyer, "Die Entstehung der christlichen Archäologie im Rom der Gegenreformation," *Zeitschrift für Kirchengeschichte* 89 (1978): 136–49; for the artistc consequences, see Romeo De Maio, *Baronio e l'arte: atti del convegno internazionale di studi, Sora 10-13 Ottobre 1984* (Sora: Centro di studi Sorani "Vincenzo Patriarca," 1985).

[675] See Danilo Mazzoleni, "III: Die Inschriften in den Römischen Katakomben," in *Roms christliche Katakomben: Geschichte, Bilderwelt, Inschriften*, ed. Vincenzo Fiocchi Nicolai, Fabrizio Bisconti, and Danilo Mazzoleni (Regensburg: Schnell & Steiner, 1998), 147–85.

[676] Klaus-Dieter Dorsch and Hans Reinhard Seeliger, *Römische Katakombenmalereien im Spiegel des Photoarchivs Parker: Dokumentation von Zustand und Erhaltung, 1864-1994* (Münster: Aschendorff, 2000), 150–172.

[677] Hansjakob Achermann, *Die Katakombenheiligen und ihre Translationen in der Schweizerischen Quart des Bistums Konstanz* (Stans: Verlag Historischer Verein Nidwalden, 1979); Philip Mark Soergel, *Wondrous in His Saints: Counter-Reformation Propaganda in Bavaria* (Berkeley: University of California Press, 1993); Simon Ditchfield, "Martyrs on the Move: Relics as Vindicators of Local Diversity in the Tridentine Church," *Studies in Church History* 30 (1993): 283–94; Trevor Johnson, "Holy Fabrications: The Catacomb Saints and the Counter-Reformation in Bavaria," *Journal of Ecclesiastical History* 47, no. 2 (1996): 274–97; Simon Ditchfield, "Thinking with the Saints: Sanctity and Society in the Early Modern World," *Critical Enquiry* 35, no. 3 (2009): 552–84.

such as Bavaria, which as a result of the Thirty Years War suffered from a "relic vacuum".[678] The saints seem to have been especially popular on the immediate border with protestant territories. In his study of translations of catacomb saints in Catholic Switzerland, Achermann even suggests that there was a tendency to erect "a defensive wall of interceding martyrs against reformed Zürich".[679] This, in turn, reflected the contemporary idea that ancient Rome had submitted to Christianity after having been "besieged" by Early Christian martyrs in the surrounding catacombs.[680]

The need for saintly intercession was not the only reason for bringing these roman relics to the confessional frontline. Actually, they were also employed for propagandistic purposes. Key themes in the (newly fashioned) vitae of catacomb saints are their antiquity, martyrdom, and roman provenance. As Johnson points out, the discovery of the catacomb saints "gave precious ammunition to the roman cause", because it symbolized the continuity of the catholic tradition from its heroic early centuries onwards, and even Protestants had to admit that this early period was "incontrovertibly pure". In addition, the "aura of antiquity" of this period stood in stark contrast to the suspect "novelty" of the Reformation. Finally, the martyrs could be presented as models of Christian stoicism, a virtue appealing as much to Catholics as to Protestants.[681]

Already during the Early Counter-Reformation in Antwerp the redecoration of guild altars frequently involved gruesome and graphic depictions of martyrdom, evincing a rising interest in martyrs' steadfastness in the faith in the face of violence, as is also borne witness by contemporary publications detailing their sufferings.[682] But unlike images, the actual relics of saints and especially martyrs were more than just interfaces between the believer and God: they *contained* the divine, and as physically present

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[678] Johnson, "Holy Fabrications: The Catacomb Saints and the Counter-Reformation in Bavaria," 277.

[679] Achermann, *Die Katakombenheiligen und ihre Translationen in der Schweizerischen Quart des Bistums Konstanz*, 47.

[680] Genoveffa Palumbo, "'L'assedio delle reliquie' alla città di Roma. Le reliquie oltre la devozione nello sguardo dei pellegrini," *Roma moderna e contemporanea: rivista interdisciplinare di storia* 5 (1997): 377–403.

[681] Johnson, "Holy Fabrications: The Catacomb Saints and the Counter-Reformation in Bavaria," 280.

[682] David Freedberg, "The Representation of Martyrdoms during the Early Counter-Reformation in Antwerp," *The Burlington Magazine* 118 (1986): 128–38. Freedberg refers to a.o. Surius' *De probatis sanctorum historiis* (1570-1574), Baronio's *Martyrologium* (1588), and Antonio Gallonio, *Trattato de gli Instrumenti di Martirio e delle varie Maniere di martoriare usate da' Gentili contro Christiani* (Rome: A. and G. Donangeli, 1591).

examples of steadfast faith they represented the opposite of idolatry, heresy, confusion and doubt. Moreover, believers attached great value to the completeness of catacomb saints, as contemporaries consistently described them not as "relics" but as "holy bodies". Because of their form and function, Johnson considers catacomb martyrs a distinct category of relics, unrivalled in their resonance (as Johnson puts it, I would rather call it agency). The "individual holy personality" of the saint might be expressed by reference to the peculiarities of their martyrdom (if known) to increase their "resonance".[683] As a result of their unique presence in one place only, they had the potential of attracting pilgrimage. All these factors must have played a role when in 1652 a parade of holy bodies entered Brussels to find a new resting place in the brand new Capuchin church.

The procession to the new church

On 22 July 1652 the martyrs were transferred to the newly built and consecrated Capuchin church in a festive procession of *translatio*.[684] This practice of ceremonially replacing relics to a new site was an ancient one, which had more recently also been instigated and promoted by Counter-Reformation bishops like Carlo Borromeo and Gabriele Paleotti. These Italian churchmen harked back to Early Christian forerunners like St. Ambrose, referring to the saintly bodies as "trophies".[685] The *translatio*-processions of Early Christianity were modelled after triumphal marches and this comparison gained new pertinence in the early modern period, e.g. in 1597 when Cardinal Cesare Baronio had the bodies of Saints Nereo and Achilleo translated to his titular Basilica in Rome.[686] Translating relics was thus an intervention in sacred topography as well as in the history of Salvation, and in this case it repeated the procession of 1618 with the Martyrs of Gorcum.

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[683] Johnson, "Holy Fabrications: The Catacomb Saints and the Counter-Reformation in Bavaria," 288.

[684] On processions in the early modern Netherlands, see Marinus, "De Contrareformatie te Antwerpen, (1585-1676): kerkelijk leven in een grootstad," 273–277; Lecuppre-Desjardin, *La ville des cérémonies: essai sur la communication politique dans les anciens Pays-Bas bourguignons*, 86–97.

[685] Schraven, "Festive Funerals : Funeral Apparati in Early Modern Italy, Particularly in Rome (Ph.Diss.)," chap. 4, 30. See also Bailey, *Between Renaissance and Baroque: Jesuit Art in Rome, 1565-1610*, 172–173.

[686] Richard Krautheimer, "A Christian Triumph in 1597," in *Essays in the History of Art Presented to Rudolf Wittkower*, ed. D. Fraser, H. Hibbard, and M. Lewine (London, 1967), vol. 2; 174–178.

The Brussels *translatio* took place on 22 July 1652; the feast of St Mary Magdalen, which concurred with the octave of the Blessed Sacrament of Miracle, the most important religious feast in Brussels.[687] It must have been a conscious decision to relate the feast of the martyrs to that of the miraculous hosts, which were venerated as the primary national relics and recourse in times of need (as we have seen in the introduction). Around the same time (1652) the new reliquary altar of the Blessed Sacrament of Miracle had been erected in the collegiate church of St Gudule (*figs*. 3, 4). This altar, commissioned from court architect Jacques Francart by Archbishop Boonen as executor of the will of the Infante Isabella, was to display the enormous collection of relics bequeathed by the archdukes.[688]

Sanderus recounts how, on the day before the celebrations, the chests were brought to the collegiate church of St Gudule and displayed in the nave of the church, in front of the rood screen on a beautifully decorated square scaffold.[689] The festive ceremony commenced with a sermon and solemn Mass, sung by Pratz, deacon of St Gudule and almoner of the army. After noon, Vespers were sung, next a sermon by a Capuchin and after lauds the procession took off. The four mendicant orders took part (Dominicans, Franciscans, Carmelites, and Augustinians) as well as the Bogards and Minims. Of every order four monks bore a chest, each being preceded by a few students of the Jesuit College, beautifully dressed and holding torches and bearing standards with the names of the saint in big characters (as well as fitting poems, anagrams and puns, in Latin, Dutch and French).[690] The Capuchins followed the other orders and also bore a relic chest, and lastly the canons of St Gudule whose deacon Pratz closed the procession holding a reliquary in his hands.

The streets were strewed with flowers and greenery, the houses adorned with flowers, festoons, paintings, and tapestries. Especially the

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[687] In remembrance of the miraculous bleeding of three hosts which were allegedly stolen and pierced with knives by Jews in the fourteenth century (see Prologue).

[688] Anne van Ypersele de Strihou, *Le trésor de la cathédrale des Saints Michel et Gudule à Bruxelles* (Brussels: la Cathédrale, 2000), 172; De Maeyer, *Albrecht en Isabella en de schilderkunst: bijdrage tot de geschiedenis van de XVIIe eeuwse schilderkunst in de Zuidelijke Nederlanden*, 401–402. During the French revolution the altar and its ornaments were destroyed. See also Duerloo, "Pietas Albertina. Dynastieke vroomheid en herbouw van het vorstelijk gezag," 3–4; Duerloo, "Archiducal Piety and Habsburger Power," 268.

[689] Antonius Sanderus, "Chorographia Sacra Coenobii PP. Capucinorum Bruxellensis," in *Chorographia Sacra Brabantiæ* (Brussels: Philippe Vleugart, 1662), 35. "in pegmate quadrato pulchre ornato"

[690] Reproduced in Pierre Kints, *Mausolaeum SS. Martyrum Ecclesiae FF. Minori S. Francisci Capucinorum Bruxellis* (Brussels: Pieter Kints, 1652).

Jesuit College was beautifully decorated, as they had enthusiastically supported the festivities. The entire magistrature partook in the procession with burning torches. According to Sanderus, the streets were so crowded that the procession could barely find its way through the masses. When the procession entered the Capuchin church, in which only clerics and notables were allowed to enter, trumpets and drums sounded triumphantly. At this moment, the chests were placed on the altars in the church, the final destination of the martyrs. That is, all except one: the body of St Genesius was donated to the Duke of Arenberg, who was to offer it to the King of Spain.[691]

Three cannons on the city walls each fired three shots of joy. From nine to ten in the evening the big storm-bell sounded, and during this time burning lanterns hung on St Michael's tower. The neighbours of the friars made fires of joy, and every day there was firework, since the celebrations continued for a whole octave (eight days, one feast day for every martyr); every day there was a solemn Mass and lauds.

The account of the events by Sanderus follows the usual pattern: the popular involvement with the ceremony as well as the commitment of clergy, court and civic elite are emphasized. It evokes a harmonious image of a society that is united in its devotion to the new saints. However, not everybody seems to have applauded the events: Archduke Leopold-Wilhelm was not present, and according to Hildebrand it had taken a lot of effort and begging to get the mendicant orders to join in the procession, as they would have preferred to keep their distance from the ceremony.[692] This lack of enthusiasm may be explained by the rivalry among the orders, especially between the Recollect Franciscans and the Capuchins, who both claimed to keep true to the Franciscan ideal. The Jesuits, however, who are often regarded as counterparts and rivals of the Capuchins in the Counter-Reformatory religious landscape, were very enthusiastic in their support.[693] This may be seen against the background of the Jansenist controversy, which reached its zenith around exactly this time.[694]

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[691] Ibid. last page.
[692] Hildebrand (Jules Raes), *De Kapucijnen in de Nederlanden en het prinsbisdom Luik, Vol. V* (Antwerp: Archief der Kapucijnen, 1950), 49.
[693] Ibid.
[694] H. Houtman-Desmedt, "De Zuidelijke Nederlanden na de Vrede van Munster 1648-1678," in *Algemene geschiedenis der Nederlanden, Vol. 8*, ed. D.P. Blok (Haarlem: Fibula-Van Dishoeck,

As a result of this controversy, the church was not consecrated by Archbishop Boonen, as required, but by the apostolic vicar to the United Provinces Jacob de la Torre, titular Archbishop of Ephesus. He replaced the archbishop, who had been put under disciplinary measures on accusations of Jansenism. In 1651 Boonen and Triest, both sympathizing with the Jansenist cause, had been summoned to Rome in order to explain why they refused to enforce papal measures of curbing the spread of this doctrinal fallacy and to clarify their position on matters of predestination and Divine grace. Boonen refused to make the journey on jurisdictional grounds.[695] He was however put under house arrest and could therefore not perform the consecration ceremony of the new Capuchin church, nor lead the subsequent procession of *translatio* of the martyrs. Some at least must have considered this painful situation a dissonant in the otherwise joyous festivities.

Moreover, shortly before, Internuncio Bichi had made himself impossible in the Netherlands by crossing the archduke (cassating his cassation of an anti-Jansenist measure from Rome), and was recalled to Rome, to be replaced by the equally anti-Jansenist Andrea Mangelli.[696] In the report that the new internuncio sent to the Vatican on 27 July it is carefully noted that the consecration ritual had been performed by De la Torre, and that the Duke of Arenberg and his uncle Father Carolus were the initiators of the procession.[697]

1979), 297–307; see also Lucien Ceyssens, "Les progrès de l'antijansénisme aux Pays-Bas (1647-1656)," *Jansenistica Minora* 7 (1962).

[695] See Wauters, *De controverse rond de jurisdictie van de nuntius: het Placet op de geloofsbrieven van Spinelli, Valenti-Gonzaga, Tempi en Crivelli, 1725-1749*, 62–65.

[696] Ibid., 63.

[697] ASV, Segretario Stato, Nunziatura di Fiandra, Lettere dell'Internunzio di Brusselles del 1652. Abb.e Bichi e Abb.e Mangelli, 27 July 1652: "Essendo hormai ridotta a perfettione la fabrica della nuova chiesa di PP. Cappuccini di questa città, fu consecrata la settimana passata da Monsignore Arcivescovo d'Efeso, e lunedi sera furono processionalmente portati allamed.a dalla chiesa di Santa Gudula otto corpi di SS. Martiri che con permissione di Sede Santa sono stati portati qua da Roma dal P. d'Arembergh zio del Duca di questo cognome e Provinciale della sua religione, grandissimo era il concorso di cittadini, é forastieri per honorare, e veder questa solennità come cosa insolita, é per celebrarla maggiormente fu sparato il canone, é la meschetaria di tutta la borghesia." Andrea Mangelli arrived in Brussels on or before 15 June, but Bichi stayed until Mangelli had received an act of admission. Bichi left on 22 June. Lucien Ceyssens, *La première bulle contre Jansénius : sources relatives à son histoire, (1644-1653), Vol. 2* (Brussels: Institut Historique Belge de Rome, 1962), 368, 376; see also Andrea Mangelli, *La correspondance d'Andrea Mangelli, internonce aux Pays-Bas (1652-1655)*, ed. Lambert (Henri) Vos (Brussels; Rome: Institut Historique Belge de Rome, 1993).

Kints's Mausolaeum

A significant medium that helped shape the new cult was the booklet printed by Pieter Kints, *Mausolaeum SS. Martyrum* (Brussels, 1652).[698] This rather unique type of devotional publication appears to be something like an advertisement brochure for the martyrs' cult. Its frontispiece depicts a richly decorated tomb, surmounted by a cartouche flanked by a male and a female herm (*fig*. 79). Behind the tomb we see trophies consisting of a variety of instruments of martyrdom, and the herms are holding trumpets (denoting fame) and a laurel wreath (crown of martyrdom). The cartouche is topped by eight palm leaves and seven more wreaths, thus one of each for all eight saints.

The introductory texts consist of a dedication, an *ad lectorem*, a *Praeludium* and an approval by Sanderus, who was censor at the time. What follows is a collection of prints, made especially for the occasion, with accompanying epigrammatic poems. Kints' dedication to the city magistrate as patrons and *maecenates* (dd. 12 November 1652) expresses what hopes are invested in the new cult:

> "Inasmuch as this city of Brussels, genius of the nation, of pleasant purity of the air, from plague, famine and war, with the help of the celestial kindness, we may hope to liberate. Let it thus vow, and be prayed with all our souls."[699]

Protection of the city and its population must have been the primary motive for the city administration to support the cult and fund its publicity.

This imploratory tenor may be brought in relation with the dedication of the new church to Maria Pacis. After all, in 1625 an image of this manifestation of the Virgin Mary had been installed on the façade of the Broodhuis on the Grote Markt by archduchess Isabella with great pomp, accompanied by an inscription with exactly the same plea.[700] The consecration of the new Capuchin church may thus be seen as a renewal of this vow, and an act of thanksgiving after peace with the United Provinces had been achieved in 1648. However, the war with France continued, albeit on a low ebb because of the Fronde.

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[698] Kints, *Mausolaeum SS. Martyrum Ecclesiae FF. Minori S. Francisci Capucinorum Bruxellis*.
[699] Ibid. "Utpote quae urbem Bruxellensem, genio gentis, puritate aëris amoenam, à peste, fame et bello, caelestis benignitatis ope, liberatura speremus. Ita vovet, et totis animis apprecatur."
[700] Delfosse, *La Vierge « Protectrice du Païs-Bas »*; Thøfner, *A Common Art: Urban Ceremonial in Antwerp and Brussels during and after the Dutch Revolt*, 318–319.

In its introduction to the reader, Kints explicitly stressed the "veracity" of the martyrs:

> "[W]hose names are not, as is often the case, imposed on them or christened, but were [found] incised on their very stone monuments, [as found] in the presence of seven witnesses who were called for this same purpose, […] since it was known that to the Belgians this was more acceptable."[701]

Adding to the credibility and historical sensation of the martyrs, the full text of the Early Christian martyr (+258) St. Cyprian's *Exhortation to the martyrs* was included as a prelude.[702]

In the subsequent series of twelve plates (copper engravings) by J. van Troyen, the martyrs are depicted – each with their "evidence-based" instrument of martyrdom – complemented with the poems and banners that were carried in the procession (*fig*. 82, 84, 86).[703] These poems in Latin, French, and Dutch were probably written by the students of the Jesuit

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[701] Kints, *Mausolaeum SS. Martyrum Ecclesiae FF. Minori S. Francisci Capucinorum Bruxellis*. "[Q]uorum nomina non, ut quandoque fieri solet, iis imposita sunt, aut baptizata, sed eorumdem lapideis monumentis incisa, coram septem testibus in eumdem finem vocatis reperta sunt, quae Adm. R.P. Carolus Bruxellensis, potestate ad hoc à Summo Pontifice accepta, è coemiterio Priscillae, tamquam quae Belgis nota, gratiora essent, extraxit."

[702] This saint and bishop, of whom many writings are extant, died a martyr in Carthage in 258 AD. He writes the following (Cyprianus, Lib. 2. Epist. 6): "How can I find the words to praise you, most courageous brethren? How can I compose a speech worthy of the strength of your heart and your perseverance in faith? You endured questioning by the cruellest tortures right through to the glorious end. You did not yield to suffering, but the sufferings yielded to you. The tortures did not bring the end of your torment, but the crown of martyrdom did. The intensification of the tortures went on and on, not to break down the steadfast faith but to send the men of God the sooner to their Lord. The crowds who were present wondered as they saw the heavenly battle of God, Christ's spiritual battle, as they saw his servants standing with free voices and undamaged minds, strong with divine strength. They were deprived, it is true, of the weapons of this world, but they were armed with the arms of faith. Tortured they stood, yet stronger than their torturers. Their limbs, beaten and torn as they were, still defeated the instruments that had beaten and torn them. The cruellest beatings, repeatedly administered, could not overcome their ineradicable faith, even when their very entrails were torn open and at length the servants of God had no limbs left to be beaten, but only wounds. Blood was flowing that might quench the flames of persecution, that might subdue the fires of Gehenna [Hell] itself. What a spectacle that was for the Lord – how sublime, how great, how acceptable to the eyes of God because it showed the allegiance and devotion of his soldiers! As the Psalms say, when the Holy Spirit speaks to us and warns us: *Precious in the sight of the Lord is the death of his faithful*. Precious is the death that has bought immortality at the cost of its blood and received the crown of God as the consummation of its virtues! How Christ rejoiced! How willingly he fought and conquered in such servants, protecting their faith and giving to the believers all that they needed! He was present at his own battle, he lifted up his champions, the proclaimers of his name, he gave them strength and new spirit. And he who once conquered death for us still and always conquers it within us."

[703] Jan van Troyen (ca. 1610-after 1670/71) was an engraver and etcher, known especially for his plates for the *Theatrum Pictorium*, the illustrated catalogue of the art collection of archduke Leopold-Wilhelm, by David Teniers the younger.

College, and each poem is provided with the initials of its maker. The Jesuits used to train their students to create epigrams alluding to sacred events, using *emblemata*, rebuses, anagrams, chronograms etc. that displayed as well as engendered ingenuity and piety. The results of these exercises were exposed once a year when the College held an exhibition of *affixiones* (emblematic "posters"), or on feast days such as the procession of martyrs.[704]

The poems for the Capuchin procession must be seen as products of this educational culture. Though the poems do not stand out in literary quality and merely praise the saints for their steadfastness in the faith, they do make perspicuous references to the way in which the respective saint had been martyred, in keeping with the plates and Kints' explicit mention of the saint's historical veracity.[705] The play with the saints' names by means of anagrams exemplifies to what extent the actual knowledge of their names was valued: a name could become emblematic, signifying a metaphysical conceit.[706] The poems as well as the engravings consequently refer to the same instruments of martyrdom, professions, and/or circumstances under which the saints were martyred. Apparently, great importance was attached to these "personalia", as the poems that glorify the saints are all about punning on their names, and on other facts derived from their original tombs.

All of this contributed to evoke pious "memories" of the saints. For instance St Genesius, whose body was to be sent to the Spanish King, had according to the historical evidence on his tomb been an actor (*mimus*) during his life. This saint was the only one who figured in Baronius' Martyrology (25 August).[707] Another possible reason why Carolus and the duke of Arenberg reserved this particular saint for the king was Philip IV's well-known love of theatre. After all, the king had even recognized his natural son from the actress María Calderón: Don Juan José of Austria, who

[704] See Porteman, *Emblematic Exhibitions (affixiones) at the Brussels Jesuit College (1630-1685): A Study of the Commemorative Manuscripts (Royal Library, Brussels).*

[705] The saints are treated in the following order: S. AGAPITUS anagramma APTUS AGIS, S. FLORENTIUS Martyr., S. BEATRIX, S. BASILIUS, S. DOROTHEA anagramma THEODORA, S. GREGORIUS, S. AURELIA, S. BENEDICTUS, S. GENESIUS.

[706] See Maarten Delbeke, "The Revelatory Function of the Image-Text: The Prophecies of S. Malachy during and after the Papacy of Alexander VII Chigi," *Studi Seicenteschi* XLVI (2005): 229–56; see also Walter S. Melion, Celeste Brusati, and Karl E. Enenkel, "Introduction: Scriptural Authority in Word and Image," in *The Authority of the Word : Reflecting on Image and Text in Northern Europe, 1400-1700. Intersections 20*, ed. Walter S. Melion, Celeste Brusati, and Karl E. Enenkel (Leiden: Brill, 2012), 1–46.

[707] Sanderus, "Chorographia Sacra Coenobii PP. Capucinorum Bruxellensis," 34; referring to Cesare Baronio, *Martyrologium Romanum* (Rome: Dominicus Basa, 1586), 384.

would be sent to the Netherlands as Governor in 1656 to rescue Valenciennes, as we have seen.

Carolus van Arenberg

Since its establishment in the Netherlands in 1585 the Capuchin order had been supported and patronized by the Arenberg family, nobles of the highest rank.[708] The family had a great devotion to capuchin saints and rituals, and even believed that St Francis was responsible for a series of miracles that had occurred in the family.[709] Especially the immensely rich Anne de Croÿ, duchess of Aarschot (1564-1635) and wife of Charles of Arenberg strongly favoured the Capuchins.[710] In her country seat Enghien (Edingen) she founded a monastery from 1615 onwards that would serve as the family's tomb for centuries.[711] However, when her third son Antoon announced his intention to renounce his worldly status as one of the highest-ranking young nobles at the Brussels court[712] in order to join the ascetic order, she objected strongly.[713] It must be stressed that for the wealthy court aristocracy it was considered even more praiseworthy to deny all worldly pleasures than for other citizens. Despite his mother's resistance Antoon persevered and when he entered the order in 1616 he adopted the name Carolus of Brussels.[714]

Father Carolus established his reputation after the Italian Capuchin Hyacinthus of Casale had erected the aristocratic confraternity of the Passion. On Good Friday of 1624, Hyacinthus organized a flagellant procession in which many Spanish nobles participated, beating themselves

[708] Marini, "Interlocking Dynasties: netwerking en huwelijkspolitiek van de familie Arenberg tijdens de Opstand," 53.
[709] AOC, Leuven, no. 7572, "Miracles de N.P. S. François advenus à la famille du comte d'Arenberg"
[710] On Anne de Croÿ, see Marini, "Interlocking Dynasties: netwerking en huwelijkspolitiek van de familie Arenberg tijdens de Opstand"; Mirella Marini, "Female Authority in the Pietas Nobilita: Habsburg Allegiance during the Dutch Revolt," *Dutch Crossing* 34, no. 1 (2010): 5–24; Mirella Marini, "Anna van Croÿ (1564-1635): Een Spilfiguur in de Arenberggeschiedenis," in *Arenberger Frauen: Fürstinnen, Herzoginnen, Ratgeberinnen, Mütter*, ed. Peter Neu (Koblenz: Landesarchivverwaltung Rheinland-Pfalz, 2006), 84–109.
[711] *Een stad en een geslacht: Edingen en Arenberg 1607-1635* (Brussels: KU Leuven, 1994), 94.
[712] Antoon was *gentilhombre de la Cámera* of Archduke Albert in 1615. Père Frédégand Callaey d'Anvers, *La vie religieuse et familiale en Belgique au XVIIe siècle. Étude sur le Père Charles d'Arenberg, Frère-Mineur Capucin (1593-1669)* (Paris; Rome: Librairie Saint-François, 1919), 88–109; see also Raeymaekers, "In dienst van de dynastie: adel uit Noord en Zuid aan het hof van de aartshertogen," 95.
[713] Extensively described in Callaey d'Anvers, *La vie religieuse et familiale en Belgique au XVIIe siècle*, 110–136.
[714] In 1624 he was followed by his brother Eugeen.

till the blood ran out, and Hyacinthus put a crown of thorns on his head. The court had been scandalized by this outrageous manifestation of piety, and its bad reception led the Infante Isabella the next year to ask Carolus, who had a better feeling for the local religious sentiments.

Father Carolus was to become an important figure in the order and at court, who despite the opposition of powerful enemies did all he could to safeguard his religion, promote the honour of his family, and enforce the rule of his order. During his religious life he was active as a diplomat and as the architect of the famous park of his family residence in Enghien,[715] and published on a wide range of subjects, including religious works such as the history of the Franciscan order[716] and also on history, genealogy and heraldry, mostly of his family.[717] Near the archducal castle of Tervuren Carolus founded a Capuchin convent (1627) that was to function as a seminary for novices, and where the Infante Isabella disposed of a private hermitage (see chapter 1).[718]

Carolus' fate turned when in 1633 the Conspiracy of the Nobles was betrayed,[719] in which his brother Philip, duke of Aarschot was accused to have played an important role.[720] Carolus was suspected of quietly supporting this attempt to overthrow the Spanish rule of the Southern Netherlands.[721] The increasing centralism and absolutism of the Spanish King, justified as rule by the grace of God, was distrusted by the high nobility. They saw the curbing of their power as an infringement of their

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[715] Realized between 1630 and 1665, this was one of the most famous baroque gardens in Europe. The castle has been demolished but the gardens have been restored. In its centre stands the "Pavillon des Sept Étoiles", a fourteen-angle "greek temple", designed around 1650 by Carolus van Arenberg as an astronomical observatory. Ibid., 303–315.

[716] Ibid., 316–348; Venantius à Lisle-en-Rigault, "Les ouvrages Franciscains du P. Charles d'Arenberg, O.M.Cap. 1593-1669," *Analecta Ordinis Minorum Capuccinorum* XXXIV (1918): 134–44.

[717] Most notably the manuscript *Marques des Grandeurs et Splendeurs de la Maison d'Arenberg*, 1660 (Arenberg Archives, Enghien). Carolus claimed (1663) to descend from Charlemagne through sixteen different branches, and therefore demanded for his family the same treatment as members of sovereign dynasties. Duerloo, "La Maison d'Arenberg dans les Pays-Bas Habsbourgeois," 78.

[718] Snaet, "Isabel Clara Eugenia and the Capuchin Monastery at Tervuren"; the role of Carolus is emphasized in Wichmans, *Brabantia Mariana Tripartita*, 802.

[719] By Balthasar Gerbier, for the sum of 20,000 écus. Callaey d'Anvers, *La vie religieuse et familiale en Belgique au XVIIe siècle*, 217.

[720] Without sentence, Philip, duke of Aarschot died imprisoned in Madrid in 1640. Ibid., 204–236. On the conspiracy of nobles, see also Vermeir, "De (Zuid-)Nederlandse aristocratie en de vorming van een transnationale elite in de Spaans-Habsburgse samengestelde staat."

[721] See Hildebrand (Jules Raes), *De Kapucijnen in de Nederlanden en het prinsbisdom Luik, Vol. VI* (Antwerp: Archief der Kapucijnen, 1951), 275–332; Callaey d'Anvers, *La vie religieuse et familiale en Belgique au XVIIe siècle*, 237–278.

feudal rights and a dishonourable breach of promise.[722] Especially the House of Arenberg, who were sovereign princes of the Empire and therefore had a broad international outlook, resented this development.[723]

In fact, at the negotiations in Maastricht in 1632 the duke and his brother had only aimed to achieve a truce, which was widely desired, not in the last place to safeguard the Catholic religion in the South. The public opinion changed in 1635 with the alliance between France (Richelieu) and the Republic (Frederick Henry), which was widely condemned in the Southern Netherlands as a subordination of religion to politics.[724]

Sent from Madrid to enforce Spanish rule in the wake of the conspiracy, the powerful president of the Secret Council Pieter Roose tried to thwart Carolus' election in the provincial Definitorium[725], fearing that he would conspire against Spain from France or Rome, or send Capuchin missionaries to Holland, which was considered as a covert means to mobilize Dutch Catholics against Spanish rule in the South.[726] Nonetheless, Carolus was elected in 1636, to the dissatisfaction of Roose. During a stay in Rome to attend the general chapter of the order in 1637, Carolus was exiled from Spanish territory.[727] He spent some years in Rome, and later Cologne, where he published his monumental study on Franciscan saints in 1642, the richly illustrated *Flores Seraphici*, which would be frequently reedited.[728] In Cologne he became close friends with the Papal nuncio Fabio Chigi, who would later become Pope Alexander VII (pontificate 1655-1667). They discussed important matters such as the Capuchin mission in Holland, the peace negotiations between the world powers, and the condemnation of Cornelius Jansenius' posthumously published *Augustinus* (1640) on the famous church father by the Papal bull *In eminenti* (1642).[729]

In the Netherlands there was a strong opposition against this bull, especially by Archbishop Boonen, bishop Triest of Ghent, the Norbertine abbots, the Oratorians, and Pieter Roose, who insisted that a royal *placet* was

[722] Duerloo, "La Maison d'Arenberg dans les Pays-Bas Habsbourgeois," 70.
[723] Ibid., 74.
[724] Jan Roegiers, "De universiteiten in de Zuidelijke Nederlanden," *De Zeventiende Eeuw* 13, no. 1 (1997): 229.
[725] The Definitorium consisted of four assistants (definitors) to the Provincial superior.
[726] Callaey d'Anvers, *La vie religieuse et familiale en Belgique au XVIIe siècle*, 239–240.
[727] Ibid., 241.
[728] Gieben, "La predicazione e la propaganda dei Cappuccini attraverso l'immagine," 429–431.
[729] Callaey d'Anvers, *La vie religieuse et familiale en Belgique au XVIIe siècle*, 242.

required.[730] The Jesuits in turn, who considered the book an attack on their honour, were audacious supporters of the papal condemnation of what was to become known as Jansenism, a theological movement that emphasized the need for Divine Grace and predestination. From the beginning Carolus submitted to the promulgations of the Holy See, estranging himself from some of his friends such as Boonen and Triest, and further fuelling the animosity of Roose.[731]

After five years of exile, during which his brother Philip had died imprisoned in Madrid (1640) without sentence, Carolus was finally allowed to return to the Netherlands in 1643,[732] where he retreated for some time in the former hermitage of Isabella at Tervuren.[733] As Definitor, Carolus now had to enforce the measure from the Holy See in 1643 by which the Capuchin missionaries had to withdraw from the United Provinces.[734] In 1646 Carolus tried in vain to convince Hendrik Calenus, the Jansenist vicar-general who had published the *Augustinus*, to accept the bull of Urban VIII. This suggests that Carolus, though he took the side of Rome, was seen as impartial in the conflict around Jansenism.

But the controversy around the person and family of Carolus did not end. His main antagonists were the Spanish brothers Marcellianus and Heliodorus de Barea, both Capuchins and popular court preachers.[735] Having been expelled by the Infante Isabella twice (1629 and 1631) because of scandals, they returned to the Netherlands after her death and lived in Brussels since 1641. They became close friends of Roose and after 1644 (when Roose lost favour) of Governor General Castelrodrigo, and were involved in peace negotiations with the United Provinces in 1645. After having successfully organized a campaign for financing the war, they were practically inviolable and refused to obey to the order's rule, evading the authority of its provincial and general superiors. Without consent of the Definitorium they were sent on a diplomatic mission to Madrid by

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[730] Ibid., 250; see also Lucien Ceyssens, *La première bulle contre Jansénius: sources relatives à son histoire, (1644-1653), Vols. 1 and 2*. (Brussels: Institut Historique Belge de Rome, 1961).
[731] Callaey d'Anvers, *La vie religieuse et familiale en Belgique au XVIIe siècle*, 251.
[732] At this time, his nephew Philippe-François (1625-1674), who resided at the Spanish court, was to marry the Spanish Mary-Magdalene of Borgia. Ibid., 247.
[733] Ibid., 250.
[734] Ibid. On the Dutch mission, see also Hildebrand (Jules Raes), *De Kapucijnen in de Nederlanden en het prinsbisdom Luik, Vol. IX* (Antwerp: Archief der Kapucijnen, 1955), 603 and further.
[735] Lucien Ceyssens, *Marcellien et Héliodore de Barea en face du Jansénisme* (Malines: Imprimerie St. François, 1959), 4.

Castelrodrigo in 1646-1647. In vain, Carolus tried to call the Barea brothers to order.

In early 1647 Roose and his allies spread a libel presenting Carolus as the greatest enemy of Spain.[736] A council held in Madrid (30 June 1647) decided to have Philip IV ask the Spanish ambassador in Rome, the count of Oñate, to inform the pope about the supposed political enmeshment of the Capuchins and to convince him to nominate a neutral general (instead of Carolus).[737] In Brussels, the hostility towards Carolus instigated by the brothers grew by the day. This should perhaps be seen in relation to the simultaneous negotiations in Münster for the Treaty of Westphalia, closed in May 1648 between Spain and the United Provinces, ending the Eighty Years War and lending formal recognition to Dutch sovereignty by Spain. As papal nuncio in Cologne, Carolus' friend Fabio Chigi took part in the negotiations.

When in 1648 all regulars were required to sign a declaration of anti-Jansenism, the Barea-brothers as friends of Roose attempted to avoid this. At this very same time, it was decided to send a general visitor to the Flemish province to investigate the brothers De Barea and Carolus to put and end to the strife within the order. This official, Louis de Saragossa, soon decided that the brothers De Barea were culpable of imposture and calumny, and ordered them to publicly demand pardon from Carolus, in addition to other penalties.[738] But instead of submitting, they sought recourse with the new governor, Archduke Leopold-Wilhelm and the Internuncio Antonio Bichi, both fervent anti-Jansenists, who lent them a ready ear.[739] Fearing to lose their support and their position as court preachers, the Barea-brothers now opportunistically signed the anti-Jansenism formula, thus turning 180 degrees in the emerging Jansenist controversy.[740]

Subsequently in 1649 Archduke Leopold-Wilhelm tried to expel Carolus, and Internuncio Bichi suspended the powers of the Capuchin visitor, after which the Capuchins appeal against him (Bichi) at the Council of Brabant.[741] The Council was already ill disposed towards to Internuncio because of his interference in matters of regulars and his anti-Jansenist zeal,

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[736] Callaey d'Anvers, *La vie religieuse et familiale en Belgique au XVIIe siècle*, 252–253.
[737] Ibid., 257.
[738] Ibid., 258.
[739] Ceyssens, *La première bulle contre Jansénius: sources relatives à son histoire, (1644-1653), Vol. 1*, 691, 695, 702, 706, 709.
[740] Ceyssens, *Marcellien et Héliodore de Barea en face du Jansénisme*, 7.
[741] From this, great troubles between the Internuncio and the Council would result (see chapter 2). Ibid., 8, note 14.

and now gave orders to break into his residence and pillage it, after which Bichi excommunicated the Council.[742] He incessantly wrote to Panciroli, secretary of State of the Holy See, pointing out that the Barea-brothers were innocent victims of Carolus. Despite these protests, the Holy See called Bichi to the order and forbade him to meddle in the Capuchin visitation any more.[743] Bichi persisted and communicated that Carolus, now Provincial, aspired to be elected general of the order in the next general chapter in Rome in 1650, which should be prevented at all cost because of his rancorous character, having threatened him (Bichi) to harm him through his powerful connections.[744] In spite of Bichi's suspicions, when Carolus attended the order's General Chapter in Rome he provoked astonishment by consistently denying the honour of the generalate, yet was nonetheless elected in the general Definitorium.[745]

In Rome in the Jubilee year 1650, Carolus was received most favourably by the hispanophile Pope Innocent X. The pope gave him a precious gold pectoral cross containing a relic of the Holy Cross, and encouraged by this papal benevolence, Carolus asked for permission to dig for some bodies of martyrs in the catacombs, in order have them venerated in his homeland.[746] Having been granted this permission Carolus and his secretary Franciscus Maria of Antwerp, together with a few others, descended into the catacombs of Saint Priscilla. They found many ancient bodies in the graves, and though at the time each body from the catacombs was considered potentially holy, these anonymous "saints" were discarded. They kept on searching for several months, until they had found nine graves that were not only provided with signs of martyrdom (as such were considered depictions of palm leaves, etc.) but also with inscriptions of the name of the saint.[747] These graves were opened and nine complete bodies were taken out. Each body was packed in a separate wooden chest and sealed off. On 27 February 1650, Alessandro Vittrici, bishop of Alatri and supervisor of the catacomb saint production, gave an official declaration of authenticity and everything was sent to Brussels. On his way back from

[742] Callaey d'Anvers, *La vie religieuse et familiale en Belgique au XVIIe siècle*, 260–261.
[743] Ibid., 264.
[744] Ceyssens, *La première bulle contre Jansénius: sources relatives à son histoire, (1644-1653), Vol. 2*, 18–19, 38–39.
[745] Callaey d'Anvers, *La vie religieuse et familiale en Belgique au XVIIe siècle*, 266.
[746] Ibid., 286.
[747] The names were Agapit, Florentius, Basilius, Gregorius, Benedictus, Beatrix, Aurelia, Dorothea and her child, and Genesius.

Rome, father Carolus obtained many more relics from Xanten, Cologne and Trier.

Meanwhile the Barea-brothers continued to defame Carolus and keep him from returning to Flanders.[748] They spread the rumour that Carolus had been forbidden to return to Flanders, which was soon exposed as a lie by Oñate, the Spanish ambassador in Rome, and this was confirmed by Carolus' friend Fabio Chigi, who was called to Rome in 1651.[749] The Barea-brothers were expelled and summoned to Rome in 1654, which they successfully evaded with the help of their friends, though they were eventually forced to change order in 1657 by Alexander VII (Fabio Chigi).

The new church and convent

After its foundation in 1587, the Brussels Capuchin monastery had been expanded step by step in a haphazard way, which led to a chaotic and poorly constructed set of buildings. When in 1635 Anne de Croÿ, mother of Carolus van Arenberg, promised to donate the tremendous sum of 30,000 guilders by testament for the rebuilding of the convent, plans were made to make a new start.[750] Some proposed to build a new convent on a different location, others preferred to rebuild on the original site, and many objected to the destruction of buildings which were still in good shape, as this was contrary to the Franciscan ideal of poverty. This discussion continued for fifteen years, yet upon his return from Rome in late 1650, Carolus was anxious to rebuild the monastery and especially to build a new church, to have the relics venerated by the faithful.[751] On 4 December 1650 the Definitorium finally decided to rebuild on the same spot in a most radical way: adjacent properties were acquired and all existing buildings (convent and church) were to be demolished to make space for a completely new complex. This decision

[748] See ibid., 237–278; Ceyssens, *Marcellien et Héliodore de Barea en face du Jansénisme*.

[749] Callaey d'Anvers, *La vie religieuse et familiale en Belgique au XVIIe siècle*, 268; see also Fabio Chigi, *La nunziatura di Fabio Chigi (1640-1651)*, ed. Vlastimil Kybal and Giovanni Incisa della Rocchetta (Rome: Biblioteca Vallicelliana, 1943); Aimé Legrand and Lucien Ceyssens, *La correspondance antijanséniste de Fabio Chigi nonce à Cologne plus tard Pape Alexandre VII* (Rome: Institut Hilstorique Belge de Rome, 1957).

[750] Another important donation was made by the unmarried Antwerp merchant Cornelius Lantschot. Hildebrand (Jules Raes), *De Kapucijnen in de Nederlanden en het prinsbisdom Luik, Vol. V*, 43.

[751] Sanderus, "Chorographia Sacra Coenobii PP. Capucinorum Bruxellensis," 35.

must have been triggered to great extent by the need to give due honour to the roman relics which Carolus had obtained.[752]

As we have seen, the final plans for rebuilding the Brussels monastery were made in the midst of intrigues within the Capuchin order and at court, and escalating dissensions within the church. Yet, in spite of his hostility towards the Arenberg monk, Archduke Leopold Wilhelm took the invitation of Carolus and his nephew Philippe-François, duke of Arenberg (1625-1674), to lay the first stone of the new convent.[753] This solemn festivity took place on 20 March 1651. In August of the same year, the magistrate granted a request of the monks to contribute 1,000 patacons and 3,000 rijnsguldens, not only because the new building would be a great ornament to the city, but also "because the church and the religious services held in it will be of great benefit to the community".[754] The patronage of the city magistrates is also exemplified by the dedication and frontispiece on the second page of Kints's *Mausolaeum* (*fig.* 80).

Before any worship of the saints could be allowed, all relics had to be approved by the Archbishop Jacob Boonen, in whose presence the chests were opened. The relics from Rome were approved in Brussels on March 2, 1652, and a forty day indulgence was granted to all those who would come to venerate them. To Carolus' dismay, some pieces had been alienated before the relics were installed or even approved by the archbishop. When he heard of this he complained to Rome and on July 10, 1652 the Holy See prohibited the alienation of relics from the Brussels Capuchin convent by

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[752] Father Carolus may as well have had the example of St Fancis in mind. According to Franciscan tradition, Christ spoke to St Francis at the ruinous church of San Damiano in 1205, when a crucifix came to life and ordered him to rebuild it with the words: "Francis, don't you see my house is crumbling apart? Go, then, and restore it!" Francis then took up the restoration of the church building as well as the Church in general.

[753] Callaey d'Anvers, *La vie religieuse et familiale en Belgique au XVIIe siècle*, 282; Hildebrand (Jules Raes), *De Kapucijnen in de Nederlanden en het prinsbisdom Luik, Vol. V*, 41. On this, see also Hildebrand (Jules Raes), "De Franciskaanse boom," *Franciscaans Leven* 36 (1953): 4–13.

[754] SAB - liasse 796 - ordres religieux, 10 capucins. 16 August 1651: "Die heeren Borgmeestere, Schepenen, Tresoriers, Rentmeesteren ende […] deser stadt, besloten hebben opde requeste geputeerd bij die paters Capucinen der selver stadt ten eijnde van een […] aelmoesse ende assistentie tot het volmaecken van hunnen begonsten bouw, ende considererende dat die kercke ende bouw bij hen begonst niet alleen erg en sullen strecken tot een notable verciersel deser stadt, ende dat die voorseide kercke bij die voorseide paters soe is gestelt dat die publiecke straete ende erffve wel wijder ende grooter sal vallen als sij te vorens is geweest, maer dat oock de voorseide kercke ende goddelijke dienst daer inne te doen sal strecken groot gerieff van geheele gemeijnte, dat oock die voorseide paters professie maecken van eene besundere armoede aen gemeijnte niet moijelijck en sijn, ende dat aen andere voorseide […] ordes tot het opmaecken van hunne kercken ofte cloosters van stadtswegen notable assistentie sijn gedaen."

penalty of excommunication and seizure of voting power.[755] At the same time, indulgences were lent to devotees of the seven altars in the church.[756]

The architecture of poverty

Work proceeded very quickly and the new church was completed and fully furnished when on 14 July 1652 it was consecrated to Our Lady of Peace (the former church had been consecrated to St Francis). The monastery building was finished in November 1652 and by 1653 it was ready to be inhabited by the monks. The building made a big impression on the population, who came in large numbers to see it when after its completion the doors were opened to the public for several days. A veritable model-convent of unprecedented dimensions had arisen: fit to serve a large city and to perform the central function of housing the Father Provincial and hosting provincial chapter meetings.[757] The chancel could accommodate fifty choir monks. Unusually, the convent was to have two storeys, with seventy cells, twenty guestrooms, and twelve rooms for the sick and six jail cells. The refectory would accommodate ninety monks. In his description of the convent, Sanderus (1662) gives it pride of place as one of the most prominent monasteries of Brussels.[758] He praises the architecture of the building as "convenient, and not inelegant, but simple and without splendour as their rule prescribes".[759]

At present, nothing remains of the Brussels Capuchin convent but the name of a street. The monastery was abolished in 1796,[760] and the church and convent were demolished in 1803-1804 in order to make place for housing and a new street. At this time, a detailed plan was made of the convent (*fig*. 76).[761] In addition to this source, a large copper engraving in Sanderus depicts the convent and its church in great detail from a bird's eye perspective (*fig*. 75). Both sources provide a clear account of the

[755] *Commentarium sive Chronographia Sacra Monasterii Fratrum-Minorum Sti. Francisci Capucinorum Bruxellensis*, 1874, 26. (referring to Bullarium OFM Cap. 4, 92).
[756] Hildebrand (Jules Raes), *De Kapucijnen in de Nederlanden en het prinsbisdom Luik, Vol. V*, 47. (referring to Bullarium OFM Cap. 9, 118).
[757] Ibid., 35–44.
[758]Sanderus, "Chorographia Sacra Coenobii PP. Capucinorum Bruxellensis," 33–37; Repeated by Louis Hymans : « le plus beau couvent du capitale » *Bruxelles à travers les ages, Vol. 1* (Brussels: Bruylant-Christophe et Cie, 1882), 411.
[759] Sanderus, "Chorographia Sacra Coenobii PP. Capucinorum Bruxellensis," 33.
[760] Callaey d'Anvers, *La vie religieuse et familiale en Belgique au XVIIe siècle*, 285.
[761] ARA, kaarten en plannen, ms. inventory, 3: R. Nivoy, *Plan of the Capuchin convent in Brussels.*

architectural layout of the building and its dimensions. This has made it possible to tentatively reconstruct the church building, and thus partially evoke the impression it must have made on the viewer (*fig*. 90).[762] Especially if some of the still existing artworks are put back in their original place, a vivid image of the church interior emerges (*fig*. 91, 92).

Whereas the old church was tucked away in a narrow side street of the Hoogstraat (near the Minim convent, but on the other side), the new church had its entrance on the desired Hoogstraat, receding somewhat from it and prominently facing the notorious Wayerstraat. It was built in brick, though the "active parts" in the façade were accentuated in sandstone.[763] Above the entrance was a niche with a sculpture, probably of Our Lady of Peace. In the top of the pointed gable, a curvilinear triangle added to the overall impression of gothic reminiscence.[764] The seven-bay nave alternated between deep bays with large round-arched windows and narrow buttressed ones, providing a very light interior.

The interior of the church consisted of two parts: a high and broad rectangular nave with a barrel vault, 118 feet in length (c. 33 meters), indenting to a narrower chancel, which was separated in two parts by a wall and the high altar, behind which the secluded choir for the monks was situated. Transverse to and opening into the nave were six lower side chapels, three to either side, and in between these chapels were small rooms for storing liturgical vestments.

Although it is sometimes suggested that the church and convent were designed by another architect,[765] according to Sanderus' description, published during Carolus' lifetime, the plan of the building was "conceived, formed and drawn" by Father Carolus, who was knowledgeable in architecture, and he had the plan accorded by four other architects or *fabricerii* (builders)[766] of the order, the sloping site being a special challenge.[767] After having been Provincial for three years, the order's

[762] Of the dimensions of the church only its height is unknown. I used Google Sketchup to create a virtual reconstruction in which the artworks are plotted.
[763] Leurs, "Enkele verdwenen kerken te Brussel," 109–111.
[764] See Snaet and Baisier, "Contrareformatie en barok. Traditie en vernieuwing in 17de-eeuwse kerkarchitectuur in de Nederlanden"; Snaet, "Isabel Clara Eugenia and the Capuchin Monastery at Tervuren."
[765] See Saintenoy, "Un architecte bruxellois inconnu: Le Frère Macaire Borlere de l'ordre du Carmel," 123.
[766] This was required by the order's constitution of 1577.
[767] Sanderus, "Chorographia Sacra Coenobii PP. Capucinorum Bruxellensis," 35. "Ad quae ipsemet [Carolus] ipsius fabricae prototypon concepit, formavit, delineavit."

protocol prescribed that Carolus should be exempt from all prelature in 1652, allowing him to spend all of his time on the building project and commissioning artworks for it.[768] However, as to the design of the new church, little artistic freedom was allowed: the Capuchins rigidly adhered to a very simple and modest basic scheme for all their new churches, and strict procedures governed the building process.[769] The Brussels church was no exception: its layout was similar to other Capuchin churches in the Netherlands, though on a much larger scale: instead of one, two, or in the case of Antwerp four side chapels, the Brussels church had six side chapels. What was the reason for this leap in scale?

The wide nave of the church could have accommodated large audiences. However, there is little evidence to suggest that it did. The Capuchins were popular preachers, yet the rarely preached in their own churches.[770] Instead, they deemed it more useful to go out and preach in parish churches and on the streets, to address those who would not come to hear them on their own initiative. This preoccupation may be illustrated by a (scoffing) engraving by Jan Luyken, showing a barefoot monk preaching in the open air, in front of an inn where a Protestant minister was lodged (*fig*. 74). Neither did the Capuchins use their church to hear confession. In contrast to the Jesuits, whose churches were full of confessionals to facilitate their insistence on frequent communion, Capuchins hardly every administered confession to laypeople, which was considered a rare privilege.[771] Finally, the Capuchins did not erect or accommodate confraternities in their churches. In fact they seemed to have had little or no intention to lure people into their church at all, if it were not for the cult of martyrs.

The Capuchins did, however, make clever use of art and architecture to bring their message across.[772] Indeed, according to Sanderus, the

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[768] Hildebrand (Jules Raes), *De Kapucijnen in de Nederlanden en het prinsbisdom Luik, Vol. VI*, 320.
[769] See Gerlach, "De architectuur der Capucijnen," *Franciscaans Leven* 38 (1955): 17–28, 47–53, 73–86, 110–20; Hildebrand (Jules Raes), *De Kapucijnen in de Nederlanden en het prinsbisdom Luik, Vols. V*; *VIII* (Antwerp: Archief der Kapucijnen, 1954), 170 and further.
[770] Hildebrand (Jules Raes), *De Kapucijnen in de Nederlanden en het prinsbisdom Luik, Vol. IX*, 401 and further.
[771] Ibid., 442–466. On the subject of confession, see Wietse de Boer, *The Conquest of the Soul: Confession, Discipline, and Public Order in Counter-Reformation Milan* (Leiden: Brill, 2000).
[772] See Gieben, "La predicazione e la propaganda dei Cappuccini attraverso l'immagine."

architectural layout of the church was a direct consequence of the necessity to display the holy bodies from Rome:

> "In order to have the structure [building] match the honour and glory of the Saints and Martyrs, whose bodies and holy remains would be deposited in the church (*Templo*), and be worshiped by all the pious, thus seven altars were erected in it; of course the high altar and to each side of the church three chapels, each with its proper altar, on which altars the bodies of the martyrs are placed in tombs, or enclosed in precious chests, while two are placed on the high altar next to the colossal image [Rubens' *Lamentation with S. Francis*] on either side of the tabernacle of the venerable Sacrament."[773]

All this suggests that the unusual scale and layout of the church was intended exclusively to provide a honourable setting for the veneration of the martyrs. Conversely, one could also argue that the martyrs were brought to Brussels because the Capuchins lacked other means to draw people to their church.[774]

Indeed, the interior of the church lacked architectural ornamentation, supporting the Capuchin ideal of "docere verbo et exemplo" (teaching by word and example). Much stress is laid on the conspicuous sobriety of the church by Sanderus, who repeatedly praises the successful way in which the building conforms to the spirit of the Capuchin order:

> "The architecture of this church stands out, especially in its brightness and whiteness and in the equally careful harmony of the structure, from which is absent all ornament, which they completely mistrust, and one should admire the highest poverty and simplicity of the Minorites, or Franciscans."[775]

When the Italian Count Alessandro Segni visited Brussels in 1666, he noted in his travel diary that the church was "quite beautiful and pure, whitewashed all over."[776] The near absence of architectural ornament or

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[773] Sanderus, "Chorographia Sacra Coenobii PP. Capucinorum Bruxellensis," 35.

[774] As they did in other places, like Prague. See Howard Louthan, "Tongues, Toes, and Bones: Remembering Saints in Early Modern Bohemia," *Past & Present* 206, no. Supplement 5 (July 21, 2010): 177.

[775] Sanderus, "Chorographia Sacra Coenobii PP. Capucinorum Bruxellensis," 37. "Architectura ecclesiae hujus eminet, specialiter in nitore et candore atque in solerti pariter structurae concinnitate, ex quibus ille totius operis decor quem cuncti suspiciunt et admirantur in altissima paupertate et simplicitate Minoritana, seu Franciscana."

[776] Mario Battistini, "Le voyage en Belgique du comte Alexandre Segni de Florence en 1666," *Bulletin de l'institut histoque belge de Rome* 21 (1941): 112. Segni, Tuesday 15 June 1666: "assai bella e pura imbiancata per tutto".

decorative furniture did, however, provide ample space for paintings, and this is indeed what the walls of the church were covered with. Not just any paintings, but very particular altarpieces and images of the martyrs and specific Franciscan and Capuchin saints, which highlighted and sometimes expressly contrasted modes of saintliness. These will be discussed below.

Altarpieces and prototypes

Despite the prescribed sobriety of the Capuchin churches, they were often provided with paintings by great artists, especially in the Southern Netherlands. This was not considered contrary to poverty and simplicity, as St Francis had already condoned the use of rich liturgical furnishings.[777] In 1594 it is noted that the ideal of simplicity should not be exaggerated, in light of the many Protestants who were still in the country: the Capuchins feared being accused of iconoclastic tendencies. However, in 1617 the minister general of the order complains with the provincial definitorium about the expensive new high altarpieces in Antwerp, Lille, Cambrai (all by Rubens), and Enghien by Servaes de Coelx, with portraits of the complete Arenberg family.[778] As the capuchins only allowed frames in wood, the painting in Enghien, site of the Arenberg family tomb, was framed by an exquisite *aedicula* of carved and inlaid ebony.

In travel accounts and guidebooks from the seventeenth and eighteenth centuries the Brussels Capuchin church is often praised as "a cabinet of fine arts".[779] After the church had been looted by the French, who took some of the best paintings to Paris for the Musée Napoleon, the church was demolished. After 1814 many of the church's paintings were acquired by the newly founded Museum of Fine Arts in Brussels, which also managed to recover some of the stolen works from Paris, yet a great many

[777] Hildebrand (Jules Raes), "Rubens chez les Capucins: un témoignage de 1617," *Études Franciscaines* 47 (1935): 726–29.
[778] Ibid.; see also Landelin Hoffmans, *Les portraits des d'Aremberg dans les tableaux religieux des XVIIe et XVIIIe siècles à Enghien* (Enghien: Delwarde, 1941).
[779] Erik Duverger and Lori van Biervliet, eds., *Beschrijvinge: een eerste Nederlandstalige gids voor kunstminnaars in Brabant en Vlaanderen (1751-1753)* (Brussels: Facultés universitaires Saint-Louis, 1998), 29.

disappeared.[780] Some of the relics were transferred to the Minim church in 1814 and 1818.[781]

Unlike the Minim church with its faltering construction of privately patronized side chapels, the Capuchin church was built at once, mostly financed by the Arenberg legacy. All the new altarpieces were donated by the Duke of Arenberg as realization of a single scheme, a rather unique circumstance, only comparable to the outfitting of the Basilica of Our Lady at Scherpenheuvel by the Archdukes (or perhaps the Escorial or St Peter's basilica).[782]

For the high altar of the new church, however, the Capuchins reused the cherished *Pietà with St Francis* by Rubens and his workshop (possibly including Van Dijck), (*fig*. 77), which had been donated by Alexander of Arenberg, Prince of Chimay (brother of Father Carolus) at the occasion of the consecration of the former church in 1620.[783] The originally rectangular painting was enlarged on all sides and provided with an arched top (*fig*. 78).[784] This may have been done in order to accommodate it to its new setting in the new and larger church.[785]

As Wolfgang Savelsberg has shown in his study of the iconography of St Francis in sixteenth and seventeenth century Flemish art, the image of this saint was an influential instrument of the Counter Reformation.[786] Whereas the saint was rarely treated as autonomous subject in the pre-reformation period, after 1585 and especially during the first decades of the seventeenth

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[780] See Loir, *La sécularisation des oeuvres d'art dans le Brabant (1773-1842): la création du musée de Bruxelles*.

[781] See http://theo.kuleuven.be/en/research/research_units/ru_church/ru_church_capuchins/main-pages/index-archive-acb-i

[782] Rice, *The Altars and Altarpieces of New St. Peter's : Outfitting the Basilica, 1621-1666*.

[783] Brussels, KMSKB, inv. 380 [164]. See J. Richard Judson, "Rubens: The Passion of Christ," in *CRLB, VI* (London: Harvey Miller, 2000); Savelsberg, *Die Darstellung des Hl. Franziskus von Assisi in der flämischen Malerei und Graphik des späten 16. und des 17. Jahrhunderts*, 223–225; see also Sprang, "Rubens en Brussel, een meer dan hoffelijke relatie," 15; Hildebrand (Jules Raes), *De Kapucijnen in de Nederlanden en het prinsbisdom Luik, Vol. V*, 50. The painting as well as its frame had cost 1000 guilders. At the same time also an altar of St Anne was consecrated, probably donated by Anne de Croÿ.

[784] This can be seen in two engravings of 1628 after the original by Paulus Pontius and Schelte à Bolswert. See Savelsberg, *Die Darstellung des Hl. Franziskus von Assisi in der flämischen Malerei und Graphik des späten 16. und des 17. Jahrhunderts*, 225.

[785] Technical research might help to answer this question.

[786] Savelsberg, *Die Darstellung Des Hl. Franziskus von Assisi in der flämischen Malerei und Graphik des späten 16. und des 17. Jahrhunderts*; see also S. Prosperi Valenti Rodinò, *L'immagine di San Francesco nella Controriforma: Roma calcografia, 9 Dicembre 1982 - 13 Febbraio 1983* (Rome: Quasar, 1983).

century, the number of depictions of St Francis rose sharply. Flemish artists, most notably Rubens and Van Dyck, created new formulations of the theme, expressly focusing on the saint's mystical union with God, e.g. as expressed in his stigmatisation. The "uncompromisingly evangelical" St Francis was one of the most convincing models of Christian life, and for this reason his image was ideally suited to serve the "propagandistic" purposes of the Counter Reformation church in Flanders. Therefore, rather than depicting the miracles of the saint, artists drew the attention of the viewer to the moment in which Francis had experienced an inner conversion by means of his love of God. As we will see, the artworks from the Brussels Capuchin church provide salient examples of this visual strategy.

As was usual in Capuchin churches, the choir of the monks was closed off from the nave by a wall. In order to allow for the monks to hear the bell of the Sacrament, and for the laypeople to hear the singing of the monks, two openings on either side of the high altar would be the only connection between the two spaces. Often, choir shutters were used to close these "windows".[787] For the capuchin church of Antwerp, Rubens and his workshop had painted shutters with the Apostles Peter and Paul standing in arches and in Lille the two shutters figured saints Francis and Bonaventura, standing against a plain sky on a painted stone wall, thus creating the illusion that the saints stood in real window-openings.[788] These examples were followed around 1631 in Brussels, where Antoon van Dyck painted life-size figures of *Saint Francis receiving the Stigmata* and *The vision of Saint Felix of Cantalice* (*fig*. 77).[789] These shutters were equally reused in the new church in Brussels and amplified on all sides.[790]

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[787] Savelsberg, *Die Darstellung des Hl. Franziskus von Assisi in der flämischen Malerei und Graphik des späten 16. und des 17. Jahrhunderts*.
[788] Ibid., 255 (cat. 99); 286–288 (cat. 127).
[789] KMSKB, Brussels, inv. 165 [214], 166 [213]. See J. Destrée, "Le bienheureux Félix de Cantalice d'Antoine van Dyck," *Annales de la société royale d'archéologie de Bruxelles* XXX (1921): 121–31; P. Gerlach, "St Antonius of St Felix: de Minderbroeder van A. Van Dyck uit het Brusselsch museum," *De kunst der Nederlanden* 1, no. 3 (1930): 107–11; Hildebrand (Jules Raes), *De Kapucijnen in de Nederlanden en het prinsbisdom Luik, Vol. V*, 50–51; Savelsberg, *Die Darstellung des Hl. Franziskus von Assisi in der flämischen Malerei und Graphik des späten 16. und des 17. Jahrhunderts*, 287–289; John Douglas Steward, "Thomas Willeboirts Bosschaert and Pieter Thijs: A Tale of Two Tangled Antwerp Painters; with an Excursus on Van Dyck's Saint Felix of Cantalice," in *Van Dyck 1599-1999. Conjectures and Refutations* (Turnhout: Brepols, 2001), 271–88.
[790] Dimensions: 191 x 88 cm, originally c. 169 x 70 cm.

The chests containing the two martyrs St Agapitus and St Florentius were exposed on (or near) the high altar in the east end of the church, and the paintings by Gaspar de Crayer from the church that depict them strongly resemble Van Dyck's choir shutters: figures standing on a wall against the sky, in close gestural relation to the high altar (*fig*. 81).[791]

To the left must have been displayed the figure of *Saint Agapitus*.[792] The painting shows a three-quarter profile of an older bearded man in a blue toga, standing on a platform and set off to a cloudy sky. Agapitus touches his chest with his left hand and gazes upwards to the right, where the high altar was, while holding a palm (symbol of victory) in his right hand. Next to him we see classical roman fasces: an axe surrounded by rods, a roman symbol of judicial power, leaning to a presumed wall (not painted, but physically present in the church). The fasces are here presented as a reference to his martyrdom and may have been derived from a symbol on his grave in the catacombs.

The setting of De Crayer's *Saint Florentius*[793] is the same as its counterpart Agapitus, but Florentius is depicted as a young roman soldier wearing a purple cuirass and a red cape. Facing left, his pose is a *contrapposto*, his left hand held up in an asking gesture while his right hand holds the martyr's palm. On the platform beneath his feet lies a burning torch, referring to his presumed martyrdom by fire, possibly also derived from a symbol found on his grave. The Classical roman style and dress of both figures refers consciously to the roman provenance of the bodies. Both paintings are clearly made to be integrated in the surrounding architecture following the example Rubens-Van Dyck, and were probably used as new choir shutters. Thus the former shutters by Van Dyck, depicting the confessors St Francis and St Felix, would probably have turned sides (now facing the monks' choir), leaving the front to De Crayer's martyrs, witnesses to the Faith.[794]

The six side chapels housed the remaining saints: the three male martyrs Basilius, Gregorius, and Benedictus to the right (Epistle) side and

[791] Dimensions: 225 x 123 cm, enlarged with 7 cm on three sides = 218 x 109 cm.
[792] KMSKB, Brussels, inv. 136 [63]. Vlieghe, *Gaspar de Crayer, sa vie et ses oeuvres*, 190 Cat. A 143.
[793] KMSKB, Brussels, inv. 137 [62]. Ibid., 190–191 Cat. A 144.
[794] This is a conjecture, as the descriptions of the church are not detailed enough to establish whether the Van Dyck's and De Crayer's were on the front or the back of the shutters.

the female martyrs Beatrix and her child, Dorothea, and Aurelia to the left (Gospel) side. According to Pacificus of Kales (Calais), who visited the church in 1720, in each of the six side chapels were magnificent chests containing Saint's bodies "in place of altar tables".[795] The chests probably had a double function of tombs and reliquary altars or *reliquaria*,[796] displaying the saints for veneration to the public in a way that may have resembled the Italian-style *confessio*-altar, highly current at the time in Rome (*fig*. 89).[797]

Each side chapel featured an altarpiece by a different artist, all of whom ranked among the best available painters of the time. These were respectively Thomas Willeboirts Bosschaert, Cornelis Schut, Pieter I Thijs, Gillis Backereel, Jan I van Daelen, and Antoon van den Heuvele. Time restraints and incitement to competition are possible reasons for asking so many different painters.[798] I have been able to retrace three of the originally six paintings: Willeboirts' *Martyrdom of St Basilius with St Anthony*, Thys' *Martyrdom of St Benedictus with Felix of Cantalice*, and Van den Heuvele's *Martyrdom of St Aurelia*. These three paintings, which must all have been painted in or before 1652, will be discussed below.

It is telling that all paintings of martyrs from the church that I retraced depict a specific instrument of martyrdom or torture, consistent with the texts in Kints' *Mausoleum*, and probably derived from original signs found on the tombs in the catacombs. This was not just a rhetorical strategy, but may also have been intended as agency directed at God.

The first chapel to the left was decorated with the *Martyrdom of St Aurelia* by Antoon van den Heuvele (c. 1600-1677) (*fig*. 87).[799] Wearing a

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[795] BKP [Bry-sur-Marne], Ms. 1356, f. 134: "Il y a six chapelles; […] dans chacune, au lieu du tableau [meaning table?] d'autel, c'est une châsse magnifique renfermant un corps saint [...] Il y a deux belles châsses au haut du maitre-autel ; le tableau est au milieu [...]."

[796] See Arnold Angenendt, *Heilige und Reliquien: die Geschichte ihres Kultes vom frühen Christentum bis zur Gegenwart* (Munich: Beck, 1994), 176–179; Joseph Braun, *Der christliche Altar in seiner geschichtlichen Entwicklung* (Munich: Widmann, 1924), vol. 2; 572.

[797] See for instance Maryvelma Smith O'Neil, "Stefano Maderno's 'Saint Cecilia,'" *Antologia di Belle Arti* 25/26 (1985): 9–21.

[798] Compare: the rosary cycle in the church of the Antwerp Dominicans. See Caprice Jakumeit-Pietschmann, *Künstlerkonkurrenz in Antwerpen zu Beginn des 17. Jahrhunderts: Janssen, Jordaens & Rubens* (Weimar: VDG, 2010), 87–93.

[799] Town hall, Berlare, on permanent loan from the collection of the KMSKB, inv. 203. Thieme-Beckers, "Antoon van den Heuvele," *Algemeines Künstlerlexicon* 17 (n.d.): 11. The only study of Van den Heuvele is "Antoon van den Heuvel. Zijn leven," *Gentse Bijdragen tot de kunstgeschiedenis* 12 (1950): 286–313. According to a document in the Arenberg archive, Enghien, the altarpiece in the parish church of Enghien on which Anne de Croÿ is depicted as

blue tunic over a beige skirt and a purple scarf around her waist, Aurelia is lying dead on the ground with the end of a broken lance pierced through her chest. Behind her stands a soldier holding the rest of the giant lance upright in his left hand, pointing with the right at the woman he just killed, showing his victim to a woman and child, who turn away in horror. The woman makes a repellent gesture and holds the fleeing child by the hand while looking away with sadness.[800] Behind them, two pagan priests witness the event, one looking down at the dead body, the other looking up to see two angels rushing down with a palm and a wreath of laurel. In the left middle ground we see a statue of a pagan god on a garlanded pedestal, on the right classical roman ruins, opening op to a landscape in the distance. This composition seems to be derived from Titian's *Martyrdom of St Lawrence*. The sky above the temple ruins is ominously dark. The somewhat boorish style of the figures, typical of Van den Heuvele, contrasts with the classical, "courtly" elegance of Thijs and Willeboirts.

The third chapel to the right housed *Martyrdom of St Basilius with St Anthony of Padua* by Thomas Willeboirts Bosschaert (1613–1654) (*fig*. 83).[801] In his monograph on Willeboirts, Heinrich convincingly proves the provenance of this painting from the Brussels Capuchin church and justly dismisses all claims that it should be attributed to Pieter Thijs or Van Dyck on stylistic grounds.[802] However, he misidentifies the main protagonist of the painting as St Basilius of Caesarea; instead it must be taken as a representation of the newly excavated catacomb saint named Basilius,

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donor, was painted by Antoon van den Heuvele instead of Gaspar de Crayer to which it is sometimes attributed. I would like to thank Mirella Marini for showing me this document.

[800] Propably a motif derived from Raphael's fresco in the Vatican *Stanze*, the *Fire in the Borgo*.

[801] Fondation Coppée, Brussels. See John Douglas Steward, "Pieter Thijs (1624-77). Recovering a 'scarcely Known' Antwerp Painter," *Apollo*, 1997, 37–43; Steward, "Thomas Willeboirts Bosschaert and Pieter Thijs: A Tale of Two Tangled Antwerp Painters; with an Excursus on Van Dyck's Saint Felix of Cantalice"; Axel Heinrich, *Thomas Willeboirts Bosschaert (1613/14-1654): ein flämischer Nachfolger Van Dycks* (Turnhout: Brepols, 2003), 252–253; Jahel Sanzsalazar, "Peter Thijs: A Preparatory Drawing Identified for The Martyrdom of Saint Benedict with Saint Felix of Cantalice," *Delineavit et Sculpsit* 33 (2010): 25–29.

[802] For attributions to Thijs, see Arnout Balis, "Van Dyck: Some Problems of Attribution," in *Van Dyck 350 (Studies in the History of Art, 46. Center for Advanced Study in the Visual Arts. Symposium Papers, XXVI)*, ed. Susan J. Barnes and Arthur K. Wheelock (Washington DC: National Gallery of Art, 1994), 181–85; Steward, "Pieter Thijs (1624-77). Recovering a 'scarcely Known' Antwerp Painter"; Steward, "Thomas Willeboirts Bosschaert and Pieter Thijs: A Tale of Two Tangled Antwerp Painters; with an Excursus on Van Dyck's Saint Felix of Cantalice"; Sanzsalazar, "Peter Thijs: A Preparatory Drawing Identified for The Martyrdom of Saint Benedict with Saint Felix of Cantalice." In Ms. Bruges (p. 30) the painting is considered a Van Dyck and the best work in the church.

brought to Belgium by father Carolus. In addition to the martyr, the Franciscan confessor St Anthony of Padua (1195–1231) is depicted.

The kneeling figure of the young Basilius is facing the viewer with a naked torso, his arms spread out in a helpless gesture and his eyes looking longingly heavenward, while the executioner behind him is tightening the rope around his neck with which he is about to be strangled. Three angels rush down from heaven with a crown of roses as a sign of his impending martyrdom.[803] Douglas Steward notes that the head of Basilius is modelled after the *Dying Alexander*, a classical sculpture in the Uffizi, of which the artist must have made drawings.[804]

On the right side of the painting we see the standing figure of St Anthony in front of an altar with a candlestick on top, revealed by a drawn curtain in the right top corner of the painting. St Anthony is manifestly dressed as a Capuchin in a brown habit with a pointed hood, wearing a beard and showing a bare foot, and pending on his waist is a chaplet with a cross and a skull. While touching his chest with his left hand, in his right hand the saint is holding a book on which the baby Jesus sits, who is holding a lily (sign of purity) and blessing the saint. This event is described in the "liber miraculorum" recounting how at the end of his life St Anthony had withdrawn in a quiet room of the house where he was guest in order to study and contemplate.[805] His host spied on him through a keyhole and observed how the saint was holding a joyful baby in his arms. In the painting, the viewer is thus put in the position of the spying host, witnessing both martyrdom and miracle at once.

The first chapel to the right featured the *Martyrdom of St Benedictus with St Felix of Cantalice* by Pieter I Thijs (1624?–1677) (*fig*. 85).[806] As in

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[803] A preparatory drawing for these angels is kept in the Royal collection at Windsor. See Heinrich, *Thomas Willeboirts Bosschaert (1613/14-1654): ein flämischer Nachfolger Van Dycks*, 254.

[804] Steward, "Pieter Thijs (1624-77). Recovering a 'scarcely Known' Antwerp Painter," 41.

[805] *Liber miraculorum*, 22, 1-8

[806] KMSKB, Brussels, inv. 523 [194]. Fetis, catalogue 1889, cat. 471 ; Destrée, "Le Bienheureux Félix de Cantalice d'Antoine van Dyck," 130; Gerlach, "St Antonius of St Felix: de Minderbroeder van A. Van Dyck uit het Brusselsch museum," 107–111. M.L. Hairs, *Dans le sillage de Rubens. Les peintres d'histoire anversois au XVIIe siecle*, Liege, 1977, p. 273 ; D. Maufort, *De Antwerpse kunstschilder Peeter Thijs de Oude. Een benadering aan de hand van zijn historiestukken* (unpublished Ph.Diss. KU Leuven), 1986, p. 40, cat. 8-1 ; H. Vlieghe, "Thoughts on Van Dyck's early fame and influence in Flanders", in S.J. Barnes, A.K. Wheelock, Jr. (eds.), *Van Dyck 350 (Studies in the History of Art, Center for Advanced Studies in Visual Arts)*, vol. 46 (1994), p. 214-215 ; A. Balis, "Van Dyck: Some Problems of Attribution", in Barnes and

the painting of St Basilius, two unrelated saints are depicted: the catacomb-martyr named Benedict (not St Benedict of Nurcia) as well as a nearly contemporary saint from the Capuchin order, St Felix of Cantalice (1515-1587), who was beatified in 1625 as first Capuchin, and canonized in 1712.

The handsome young martyr is depicted kneeling on one leg, his waist covered with red drapery, at the moment when the executioner behind him pulls his long hairs and pierces his side with a sword. The saint stretches out his arms in despair, looking at heaven, from which angels descend with a palm.[807] Behind him, various figures witness the event, amongst which a soldier. On the left side of the painting we see the standing figure of St Felix of Cantalice as an old bearded man, looking at heaven with a halo of light around his head. He wears a Capuchin habit and sandals and carries his attribute, a bag for collecting bread, over his right shoulder, while holding a chaplet with a pending cross in his left hand. Looking up to him are two children, who appear to grab the cross (Felix was known as a friend of children). One of the angels in the sky comes towards him with a branch of lilies.

The combination of two completely unrelated stories – of martyrdom and extasy – in seemingly unified compositions is remarkable, yet does not come across as too unconvincing or awkward, although Heinrich argues that this is unparalleled in Flemish art.[808] What could be the reason for such a novelty?

Probably, the Capuchins had not counted on receiving eight holy bodies from Rome when they made the initial plans for the new church. The preceding church had just three altars, the high altar was dedicated to St Francis and two side altars were dedicated to the Holy Virgin and St

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Wheelock (1994), 181-185; Steward, "Pieter Thijs (1624-77). Recovering a 'scarcely Known' Antwerp Painter"; Steward, "Thomas Willeboirts Bosschaert and Pieter Thijs: A Tale of Two Tangled Antwerp Painters; with an Excursus on Van Dyck's Saint Felix of Cantalice"; Sanzsalazar, "Peter Thijs: A Preparatory Drawing Identified for The Martyrdom of Saint Benedict with Saint Felix of Cantalice."

[807] Jahel Sanzsalazar points at the Laocöon as possible source of inspiration for the pathetic posture of the martyr. Ibid., 26.

[808] Heinrich, *Thomas Willeboirts Bosschaert (1613/14-1654): ein flämischer Nachfolger Van Dycks*, 90.: "Derart verfuhr auch Thys mit seinem Heiligenpaar, was zwangsläufig eine Einflussnahme in der konzeptionellen Gestaltung durch den als Auftraggeber verantwortlichen P. Carolus von Arenberg voraussetzt. Die Präsentation inhaltlich unabhängiger Einzelhandlungen in der vorliegenden Form ist als Bildgedanke in de flämishen Malerei ohne Paralelle."

Anne.[809] In addition to these, they may have wanted to honour saints Anthony of Padua and Felix of Cantalice with an altar in the new church.[810] The Capuchin church in Antwerp had five altars, of which the four side altars were equally dedicated to saints Francis, Felix, Anthony, and Our Lady. The new scheme of depicting eight martyrs on seven altars, of which four were already taken by other saints (Francis, Anthony, Felix, Our Lady), must have provided a challenge. The capuchins had to make sure that the new martyrs would not overshadow their own saints (and image of holiness).

Both altarpieces by Thijs and Willeboirts are unique in their conflation of two separate events/prototypes in a single composition, highlighting and at the same time expressly juxtaposing saintliness by martyrdom and saintliness by confession. In the two still existing altarpieces by Thijs and Willeboirts, the "double bills" were successfully integrated. The saints' attributes give a clear message to the viewer: martyrs get the palm and rose crown (of victory, for their faith), confessors get the lily (of purity). Their postures are also clearly different, whereas the scenes of martyrdom are rendered with pathos and drama by depicting them according to the scheme of a "heroic portrait", the figures of the confessors are depicted as being in a visionary rapture.

The two paintings make one thing abundantly clear: though both ways of reaching heaven are equivalent, they each require a specific type of engagement. The viewer is invited, or being challenged, (almost forced) to commit to both attitudes simultaneously. A similar approach was highly current in contemporary devotional treatises, such as the writings of St. Theresa of Avila, which centred on her sensory conflation of confession and martyrdom. Though S. Theresa was not martyred, her love of Christ was so strong that she suffered a sweet pain as if she had.[811] The conception of martyrdom without actually being martyred also pertained to St Francis, as the Jesuit Jean Crasset argues in his *Considérations chrétiennes* of 1683.[812]

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[809] Because the patron of the latter altar was Saint Anne, Hildebrand suspects that it was funded by Anne de Croÿ. Hildebrand (Jules Raes), *De Kapucijnen in de Nederlanden en het prinsbisdom Luik, Vol. V*, 36.

[810] Felix of Cantalice was beatified in 1625, as the first Capuchin to be raised to the honour of the altars.

[811] As may be illustrated by Bernini's *St. Theresa* in the Cornaro chapel in S.M. della Vittoria in Rome.

[812] Joannes Crasset, *Christelycke Bemerckingen*, Ghent, 1776, p. 260-269 [first edition: Jean Crasset, *Considérations Chrétiennes*, Paris, 1683] Crasset sums up the following arguments why St. Francis should be considered a martyr: all derived from his zeal and love. With his zealous desire to become a martyr he fought the three enemies of the church: idolaters, heretics, and lax

The contemporary church historian Michelangelo Lualdi stated: "when [the martyrs] manifest themselves in the world, then idolatry is undone, and hell is defeated." This antithesis of the martyred body versus the idol lay at the basis of the new cult.[813] When Sanderus published his description of the Capuchin church in 1662, the cult of the Roman martyrs may be regarded as a success, as he writes:

> "But considering that it should also not be passed in silence here, that I have been told by very worthy men of faith, that the veneration and the worship of these saints, of which the bodies are kept in this church, from day to day increases to catch not only singularities, but even signs of spiritual and physical miracles, and its benefits become ever more clear."[814]

Ancient icons

Finally, the walls of the church were adorned by a series of twenty large paintings by Gillis Backereel of c. 1660 depicting life-size Franciscan saints in landscapes (*fig*. 93, 94).[815] These images were based on thirteenth and fourteenth century fresco's, mostly from Franciscan convents in Italy and Germany, of which Carolus had made copies during his travels (*fig*. 95). His particular interest in early Franciscan depictions was based on their documentary value with regard to the history of Franciscan dress (i.e. sandals, beards, pointed hoods), a topic of controversy with competing Franciscan orders like the observant and recollect Franciscans. Therefore, each painting was provided with a description stating its date, the artist and the place where the original artwork was to be found.

Catholics. He tried to convert the Sultan, chief idolater. He instituted a religious order to fight the Albigensian heresy. He restored the morals of bad Catholics by his ascetic and penitential lifestyle. He destroyed the idols of the world: the honour, the riches and the pleasures. His love made him a martyr as he received the stigmata of Christ. No worldly tyrant martyred him, but he was crucified by the love of Christ.

[813] Maarten Delbeke, "'For We Are Made a Spectacle unto the World, and to Angels, and to Men': Alessandro Algardi's Beheading of Saint Paul and the Theatricality of Martyrdom," in *Critical Perspectives on Roman Baroque Sculpture*, ed. Anthony Colantuono and Steven F. Ostrow (University Park PA: Penn State University Press, 2014)(forthcoming).

[814] Sanderus, "Chorographia Sacra Coenobii PP. Capucinorum Bruxellensis," 36. "Caeterum, quod hoc etiam taceri loco minime debet, a viris fide dignitissimis mihi relatum, horum venerationem, cultumque Sanctorum, quorum in hac Ecclesia corpora asservantur, in dies augmenta singularia capere non tantum, sed miraculis etiam spiritualibusque ac corporalibus signis, atque beneficiis fieri clariora."

[815] Duverger and Biervliet, *Beschrijvinge: een eerste Nederlandstalige gids voor kunstminnaars in Brabant en Vlaanderen (1751-1753)*, 29.

Since writing on the subject of Franciscan dress was banned on July 10, 1658, and his monolithic four-volume book on these and other subjects, the *Clypeus*, had to remain unpublished,[816] Carolus tried to deploy visual evidence to make his point, by means of the series of twenty life-size paintings by Backereel covering the walls of the order's main church in the Netherlands, and in the form of a print series entitled *Icones antiquae* (1666). Carolus thus used his church as a vast showcase for his opinion in the controversy with the Franciscans.

Three paintings which are presently in Antwerp: *St Francis preaching to the birds*[817] and *St Louis of Toulouse despising the bishop's mitre* (incorrectly identified as St Jacopo della Marche)[818] in St Jacob's church and *St Felix of Cantalice* in the cathedral of Our Lady, were most probably part of the series in Brussels and must have been dispersed after the demolition of the Brussels Capuchin church.[819] The three extant paintings are of superior quality, showing monumental figures in minutely painted landscapes, and featuring the rich colouring for which Gillis Backereel was famous. However, as far as the paintings have been deemed worthy of attention at all, they have been dismissed for the rigid and hieratic style of their figures, which should come as no surprise as they are deliberate copies after medieval frescos.[820] When the church still existed and the monks received visitors, however, their illustrative function with regard to the dress-question was clear. When the Florentine count Alessandro Segni visited the church in 1666, he notes:

> "There are as decoration various pictures representing portraits of St Francis and St Anthony, with hoods [sic], and in the inscriptions it

[816] Carolus van Arenberg, *Clypeus Seraphicus* (unpblished ms., Maurits Sabbe library, Leuven). See Gieben, "La predicazione e la propaganda dei Cappuccini attraverso l'immagine"; Callaey d'Anvers, *La vie religieuse et familiale en Belgique au XVIIe siècle*, 336.

[817] Savelsberg, *Die Darstellung des Hl. Franziskus von Assisi in der flämischen Malerei und Graphik des späten 16. und des 17. Jahrhunderts*, 335–336 (cat. 179).

[818] The painting has the exact same composition as "S. Ludovici episcopus" in Carolus' *Icones Antiquae*. See figure 94.

[819] Both paintings were donated in to St Jacob's church in Antwerp in 1866 by the Antwerp printer Philippe Ville as part of a newly created "triptych" with Theodoor Rombouts' *Mystical marriage of St Catharine* as centrepiece. See Stefaan Grieten and J. Bungeneers, eds., "De Onze-Lieve-Vrouwekathedraal van Antwerpen. Kunstpatrimonium van het ancien régime," in *Inventaris van het kunstpatrimonium van de provincie Antwerpen, Deel 3* (Turnhout, 1996), 423–424 (cat. 973).

[820] Peter Eyskens, "St Felix van Cantalice door Gillis Backereel," ? ? (n.d.): 12–14.

reads where they come from. Among the others there is one, copied from the painting by Giotto, which is in Santa Croce in Florence."[821]

It appears that Carolus, having dealt with internal struggle within the Capuchin order for most of his life, after the church was completed diverted attention to the "external" threat of the Franciscans, perhaps in order to gain support and close the ranks. His experience with the sacred archaeology in Rome, by Bosio and others, led him to develop a similar attitude toward the visual remnants of the history of his order, which provided material to make historical claims for political purposes. In this light, we may also see Backereel's *St Louis of Toulouse despising the bishop's mitre* as allusion to Carolus' humble refusal of the generalate of the Capuchin order, and reportedly also of the Cardinal's hat.

Conclusion

The Brussels Capuchin church had a wide variety of functions and meanings. Its undecorated white washed walls provided a canvas on which different stories could be projected according to different contexts. Incorporating remnants of older or competing programs, it represented a compromise, exercizing different types of agency.

As we have seen, the new Capuchin church was conceived and promoted as a "mausoleum" to the holy bodies from Rome. This message, to be taken very literally, was brought across in the *translatio* procession and the publication by Kints, and was enhanced visually in the church by means of precious reliquary chests and altarpieces depicting the martyrdom of the saints. Text and image emphasized the historical authenticity of the martyrs: their names, occupations and instruments of martyrdom, as found on their tombs, were to support the credibility of the new cult since it was known that the Belgian population (possibly including the Dutch) was sceptical, notwithstanding the fact that martyred bodies in general were considered very convincing.

Around mid-century the unity of the Roman church in the Southern Netherlands was under threat. Capuchins like the Barea brothers had played

[821] A. Segni, tuesday 15 june 1666: "Sentimmo la messa a' Cappuccini, chiesa assai bella e pura imbiancata per tutto. Vi sono per ornamento varie pitture rappresentanti ritratti di S. Francesco e di S. Antonio, col cappuccio, e vi si legge l'iscrizione donde son cavati. Tra gli altri ve n'è uno, copiato dalle pitture di Giotto, che son in Santa Croce di Firenze." Battistini, "Le voyage en Belgique du comte Alexandre Segni de Florence en 1666," 112.

a role in this, even though they had changed allegiance. The endeavour of Carolus to bring a host of new martyrs to Brussels may be interpreted as a gesture of adjuring the tensions within the order and the church. Moreover, Carolus wanted to put an end to his and his family's defamation, and demonstrate his adherence to the Spanish crown (while stressing the sovereignty of the House of Arenberg). The roman catacomb saints had the potential of drawing masses of pilgrims to their new church, perform miracles, and generate an intense devotional dynamic, especially since pilgrimage from the North had become much easier after 1648.[822]

In imitation of St Francis, Carolus van Arenberg had shed his worldly honour and riches. Yet his family's patronage of the Capuchin order had enabled him to realize an ambitious artistic agenda. With the new church, the roman martyrs, and the artworks depicting them, the Capuchins aimed to engender a transformative experience in the viewer, centring on the conflation of martyrdom and confession. The art and architecture they employed – devoid of any display of wealth and unnecessary ornament – expressed the *altissima paupertate* of the Capuchin/Franciscan poverty rule. Thus, by means of steadfastness in faith, and (substitute) martyrdom by suffering, the idols of the world would be destroyed, and hell defeated.

Yet this patronage was also highly political, in a time and place where political, religious, and dynastical interests were completely interwined. In this light, a few conjectural remarks may be made with regards to the perspective of the Arenberg family. A few years earlier Thijs and Willeboirts had both worked for what was by all standards the most prestigious art commission of the time in the Netherlands, the Oranjezaal at Huis ten Bosch in The Hague (1648-1652). This central hall of the palace Huis ten Bosch in The Hague was redecorated on the commission of Amalia van Solms (1602-1675) dowager of Frederick Henry of Orange-Nassau (1584-1647), the stadholder and general of the Republic's army, who famously captured 's-Hertogenbosch in 1629 and Maastricht in 1632; where Philip and Carolus van Arenberg had been involved in the subsequent negotiations, and as a result of which they lost favour. After the death of her husband Amalia wished to commemorate him by means of a painterly apotheosis, conceived

[822] Marc Wingens, "Op zoek naar aards en hemels heil. De bedevaart van katholieke Nederlanders na 1648," *De Zeventiende Eeuw* 13, no. 1 (1997): 273–82.

as a "mausoleum".[823] The iconographic programme was devised by Constantijn Huygens and executed under direction of Jacob van Campen by the best (Flemish) artists of the time, most notably Jacob Jordaens, who would turn Calvinist in 1650.[824] Upon consultation by Huygens in 1648, the famous Gaspar de Crayer declined the commission, as Huygens suspected because he considered the subject, *Frederick Henry and Maurits of Orange as generals at the Battle of Nieuwpoort*, "too Huguenot and Orangist to be painted in Brussels".[825] Indeed, the artistic glorification of the Prince of Orange must have been looked upon with disapproval in the South, and especially in circles around the House of Arenberg, archenemies of the Oranges. What is more, according to a secret clause of the Treaty of Westphalia in 1648, the duke of Arenberg (Philippe-François) had to cede the barony of Zevenbergen to no other than Amalia van Solms, in return for a sum of 120,000 guilders. The duke was not involved in this agreement at all, and as he did not get paid anything, the Spanish treasury being empty, after two years he was forced to sell the domains that were given him as security by the king of Spain.[826] It is tempting to suggest that the artistic glorification of the Roman martyrs in the Brussels Capuchin church-mausoleum, executed by many of the painters who had worked in the Oranjezaal, was the Catholic answer to the profane Oranjezaal mausoleum for Frederick Henry, and the Arenberg's answer to the Habsburg's buying of peace from Amalia van Solms at their expense. The latter transaction may be seen in the context of the reconciliation of the House of Arenberg with the Spanish crown, and the translation of martyrs to Brussels by Carolus was to validate this reconciliation, while facilitating a continuation of the process of celestial reconciliation of the Southern Netherlands through piety, for which the Brussels court was the main platform.

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[823] Peter van der Ploeg and Carola Vermeeren, *Vorstelijk verzameld: de Kunstcollectie van Frederik Hendrik en Amalia* (Zwolle: Waanders, 1997), 47. On the Oranjezaal, see Margriet van Eikema Hommes and Elmer Kolfin, *De Oranjezaal in Huis ten Bosch: een zaal uit loutere liefde* (Zwolle: Waanders, 2013); Hanna Peter-Raupp, *Die Ikonographie des Oranjezaal* (Hildesheim; New York: Georg Olms, 1980).

[824] Twelve artists were involved, including Theodoor van Thulden, Thomas Willeboirts Bosschaert, Pieter Thijs, and Gonzales Coques. See J.G. van Gelder, "De schilders van de Oranjezaal," *Nederlands Kunsthistorisch Jaarboek* 2–3 (1948).

[825] Inge Broekman, "Constantijn Huygens, de kunst en het hof" (University of Amsterdam (UvA), 2010), 145.

[826] Jean-Pierre Tytgat, "Les possessions de la Maison d'Arenberg dans les anciens Pays-Bas et en France," in *La Maison d'Arenberg en Wallonie, à Bruxelles et au G.-D. de Luxembourg depuis le XIVe siècle: contribution à l'histoire d'une famille princière*, ed. Jean-Marie Duvosquel and Denis Morsa (Enghien: Fondation d'Arenberg, 2011), 122 and ibid, 224.

Conclusion

XLIV.	
Victorielied op het ontset van Valencyn.[827] (anno 1656)	Victory song on the relief of Valenciennes
[...]	
Lof sijn hoocheyt, met prins de Condé:	Praise his highness, with the prince of Condé:
Caracen die oock verwon,	Caracena who also prevailed,
Prins de Ligne, en duc d'Aerschot mé.	Prince of Ligne, and duke of Aarschot as well
Wittenberg, Hennin, Trelon,	[counts of] Wittenberg, Hennin, Trelon
Vromen Hans Verkeest,	Pious Hans Verkest,[828]
Die daer vocht om 't meest,	Who fought to be the most,
En met eeren waeght sijn bloet.	And with honour ventured his blood.
Geeft dan Godt den Heer	Render then to God the Lord
Lof, prijs en al d'eer,	Laud, praise and all the honour,
Die het suer soo keert in soet!	Who thus turns the acid into sweetness!

"Render laud, praise, and all honour to God, who turns sour into sweet!" The Dutch saying "after sour will be sweet" is still used widely today, for instance by politicians when introducing painful measures. Probably deriving from the (Calvinist!) rimed version of Psalm 77[829], it refers directly to the hope for better times after the wrath of God has been exercised: come and see!

For the noblemen of seventeenth century Brussels, who had put their trust in God during the siege of Valenciennes and distinguished themselves with their bravery and loyalty to Spain, such as the dukes of Aarschot-Arenberg and Bournonville, the rewards were abundant: Arenberg was appointed general and later governor[830], Bournonville received the title of

[827] J.F. Willems, ed., *Oude Vlaemsche Liederen* (Ghent: Gyselynck, 1848), 101–103.

[828] Hans (or Hendrik) Verkest, a farmer's son who was made Field Marshall-General (Maestro de campo) of the Spanish cavalry, died in the battle and was hailed as the hero of Valenciennes.

[829] *Statenvertaling*: "Zou God Zijn gena vergeten?/Nooit meer van ontferming weten?/Heeft Hij Zijn barmhartigheen/Door Zijn gramschap afgesneen?"/'k Zei daarna; "Dit krenkt mij 't leven,/Maar God zal verandring geven;/d'Allerhoogste maakt het goed;/Na het zure geeft Hij 't zoet."

[830] Philippe-François d'Arenberg acquired much honour at the Battle of Valenciennes; as one of the first to break through the French lines, he was shot though his hat. In gratitude of his service he was promoted by Philip IV to general on 17 August 1656. In 1660 he was nominated ca general of the Flemish navy, and in 1663 grand bailiff and governor and general of Hai "Philippe-François d'Arenberg," *Biographie Nationale* 1 (1866): 406–9.

prince.[831] Four years earlier, as we have seen, the duke of Arenberg had donated eight altarpieces for the Brussels Capuchin church, and in celebration of the victory his uncle Father Carolus now staged another magnificent procession with the eight Roman martyrs. Always keen to promote the honour of his family and his order, Carolus went to great lengths to make sure that the Capuchin procession of thanksgiving outshone all others.[832] It illustrates once more to what extent the relics of the saints were seen as active agents in imploring divine protection and it shows, together with the poem cited above, how closely aristocratic and military honour were conceived in relation to piety.

The city of Brussels differed from other cities in the Southern Netherlands, in the sense that it offered a unique platform for patrons to exhibit their piety in the context of a sacred court, under the auspices of the pious and divinely ordained Habsburg rulers, who represented and performed the heavenly order on earth. The frequent interference of the Infante Isabella in matters of the regular orders evinces a strong concern for keeping up this image, not in the last place in order to implore celestial benediction.

All three case studies show how religious and political motives did not just align but were virtually identical during the period of the Counterreformation. In this society individuals and groups tried to pursue their interests unscrupulously and often strongly resisted change. The continuous intrigues of the clergy show just how difficult it was for the ecclesiastical authorities to maintain discipline, let alone achieve reform, or any change for the better. Yet the belief in the power of visual imagery and architecture to transform the viewer was immense. Not only and primarily by triumphantly proclaiming doctrinal truth, but through playing on the viewer's awareness of his/her (humble) position in relation to a divine prototype, and within the temporal frame of the history of salvation: by pointing out legitimacy claims (in response to an underlying crisis of legitimacy) and by appealing to virtue (thus transcending religious divide). Artworks were not only intended to promote change in behavior, but also to

[831] Alexandre II de Bournonville received the title of prince, dd. 12 September 1656 by Philip IV as reward for his role in defending Valenciennes. Alphonse Wauters, *Histoire des environs de Bruxelles, ou description historique des localités qui formaient autrefois l'ammanie de cette ville* (Brussels: Vanderauwera, 1851), 119.
[832] Callaey d'Anvers, *La vie religieuse et familiale en Belgique au XVIIe siècle*, 291–293.

enter into negotiation with the divine. These were two sides of the same medal. The motto of the Minim Mathieu Martin's *Triomphe de la Verité*: "consolation des catholiques, confusion des héretiques" is telling, as it expresses both hope and fear: also many Catholics were confused, and in need of consolation. After iconoclasm, the attribution of agency to artworks was no longer self-evident. One way of countering the Protestant critique on the cult of saints and the veneration of relics and images was by redirecting attention toward metaphorical rather than physical idols.

Thus, in chapter I we encountered the protecting Virgin Mary as a patron of change, taking the place of the false idol Venus. The Minims offered models of vanquishing the idols of the World in order to preclude sins and heresy, and thus aimed to repel the Wrath of God. This fear of divine anger partly motivated and generated the patronage of art and architecture, which was intended to intervene in society, as well as in heaven. With the flower festival in chapter II, Jan Baptist Masius taught his contemporaries that instead of worshiping the false idol Flora (i.e. money and speculation), the members of the confraternity followed the example of the stoical St Dorothea and Theophilus, the cynic-turned-saint. For them, the divine wrath had already been executed in the form of the tulip crash (and perhaps the death of their children), and was to be answered by piety. Chapter III showed how Carolus van Arenberg did all he could to safeguard his religion, promote the honour of his family, enforce the rule of his order, in spite of great difficulties and resistance. For him, the wrath of God manifested itself in the loss of royal favour of his family. Only after he obtained the Roman relics, the necessary momentum was achieved to put his mother's great legacy to use, and intervene in the sacred landscape of Brussels in order to implore grace.

The diversity of sources on which this study is based invites to reflect on the ways in which artworks may be properly contextualized. A thick description of the historical situation in which they were meant to function is necessarily limited in scope and bound to the availability of sources. Yet again, in each case this contextual approach through the lens of the art nexus resulted in unexpected, "collateral" findings, which would not have been made if traditional methods had been applied, since they do not put equal emphasis on the various actors in their mutual social relations.

The manuscript archival sources of wills, donations, pious foundations, and authorizations, which formed the basis of chapter I provided a revealing glimpse into the intentions and expectations of individual patrons. The complementary government ordinances showed the anxieties of contemporaries and the way society tried to deal with them. The sermons and cathechisms by the monks threw light on the rhetoric they used to compel their audiences and influence their behaviour. The propagandistic chorography by Sanderus highlighted the good intentions of the monks, their patrons, and the beneficial influence of the Minim foundation on its surroundings, as well as the miraculous effects believers could expect from their devotion. And last but not least, images and descriptions of prints, paintings, and buildings helped to gain insight into the imaginary conceits and spatial settings of the artistic and architectural interventions. Together they provide a comprehensive image of their transformative agency. In the process, we discovered the existence of what was probably a donation by a supremely prominent patron: the prince of Condé, and identified the depicted figures as his children.

In light of the ambiguity of the Minims' seemingly contradictory intentions, the Santa Casa replica was the most effective instrument of change: it displayed no art, just the mere miracle of the Incarnation. Its spatial mobility and formal reproducibility mobilized piety through the agency of space. The resulting sanctification promised an antidote to the wrath of God. Looking at this situation in terms of agency reveals more complex historical realities and processes than an approach in terms of rhetoric or propaganda would. Within the nexus of social relations, the monks found a place where they could be indemnified from the social and spatial context and at the same time act as agents in it. Thus, approaching the historical sources from the perspective of agency helps to elucidate, rather than flatten and simplify historical processes of change.

In chapter II the vicissitudes of the Carmelite order and the description of the church and feast by Sanderus provided the point of departure for an examination of the intended reception of the altar decorations, which are put vividly before the eyes by means of prints, drawings, and paintings. We redisovered a ricordo of a lost altarpiece in a private collection, and managed to connect it to an international network of horticultural proto-science within the republic of letters, as well as to contemporary historical events like the

tulip crash, and to the parallel patronage of *converso* patricians in Antwerp. By contextualizing the textual and visual sources with related sources like inventories, pamplets, plays, confraternity books and contemporary publications on horticulture, as well as documentation about the patron, it became possible to reframe and reinterpret his patronage as a particularly rich and layered example of the multiple functions of art in the context of devotion and pious behaviour.

As I hope to have shown, collecting art or flowers was no disinterested hobby; religious patronage even less so. The miraculous flowers indicated the reward for unshakable faith: paradise and Eternal Spring. Less durable, but more salient than the paintings by De Crayer, this agency of the altar was exterted especially by the flowers and oranges, through sensory wonder, as the eyewitness account of Sanderus indicates. Instead of being a delightfully seductive, yet "deceptive and treacherous" illusion, as Protestant critics accused painting of being, these flowers were miraculous but nonetheless real. The other possible functions and agencies of the altar, relating to the particular concerns of the monks, the confraternity, and the patron, are not in opposition with this; on the contrary, considering the altar as the centre of different art nexuses shows their mutual coherence and contingency. Following Alfred Gell, we may look at the altar as a collection of "man-traps", by which different types of viewers are caught according to their specific characteristics or pattern of behaviour.

Finally, the case of chapter III used the well-documented history of the Capuchin order and the political agenda of the patron as entry into the complex of architectural and artistic interventions that took place in the context of the translation of relics from Rome to Brussels. We rediscovered altarpieces and other paintings from a lost church, established their place in it, and reconstructed and reinterpreted their function in it, while relating this function to the international political agendas of the patron. The combination of visual and textual sources all pointed at the concern to provide credible and tangible proof of the validity of the newly instituted cult, to frame it in existing models of sainthood, while exemplifying the necessity of staying true to the order's ideals of poverty and humility.

The building and artworks reflected primarily one concern: *to invoke* the intercession of the saints, *by honouring* their relics, *through the legitimate use* of images. Thus, it shows how the cult of saints, the

veneration of relics and images were fully intertwined. Just like the sacred measurements of the Loreto chapel, the historical "facts" of text and image found on the martyrs' tombs not only legitimized the cult, but functioned as "relics" in and of themselves. Artworks depicting these histories legitimized the relics, while the relics legitimized the use of art. At the same time the depicted confessors (officially canonized) legitimized the martyrs, and the martyrs legitimized the confessors, which legitimized the monks and ultimately the Arenberg family. Finally, the overtly displayed poverty of the capuchins legitimized the use art and architecture for these purposes.

As magnificent as some of the art of the Counter Reformation may be, it rarely aimed to convert viewers by means of visual beauty. Instead, my research suggests that the merits of Counter-Reformation art and architecture as conceived by those who commissioned and used these works of art, lay outside the artistic domain. The primary concern of patrons, in light of which we may also see aesthetic qualities, was art's agency of change. Although it is impossible to measure this change, the agency-perspective has challenged us to look anew at the art of the Counter Reformation, and reconsider its function in historical terms. The artworks and buildings in this thesis ran parallel to, yet defied the canon, reshifting the focus to a different role of art, as part of a larger system of pious behaviour in which aesthetic values are taking a less central place.

As I hope to have shown in this thesis, the religious performances that were staged in Counter Reformation Brussels are more than just curious reminiscences of a distant past, and their interest to us goes well beyond that of local history. The way people tried to influence their fate through these acts of faith can teach us a lot about the human fears, hopes and aspirations that are still very much alive in today's society. The people of seventeenth century Brussels seem to have been confident that their religious patronage had the desired effect, if not in the present, then at least *sub specie aeternitatis*, as this poem by the Italian physician Jean André Moniglia who visited Brussels in 1668 indicates:[833]

[833] Battistini, "Le voyage en Belgique du comte Alexandre Segni de Florence en 1666," 95.

Di quivi ci partimmo addirritura
nel convento de' Padri Gesuiti
fatto con nobilissima struttura.

La Chiesa è maestosa, e son guarniti
gl'altari riccamente ed in cantina
han vini di più sorte e saporiti.

Ne i chiostri per delizia si cammina
in osservar pitture e nelle scuole
spiegano all'uso lor buona dottrina.

Mentre il Rettor con placide parole
meco venia trattando ivi discerno
vago giardino esposto ai rai del sole.

Mi rassembrò benchè di mezzo inverno
pien di fior, pien di fronde e pien di frutto
di bella primavera onore eterno.

Ed ancorch'il paese sia destrutto
Per loro è delizioso, in conclusione,
Gli buoni Padri stanno ben per tutto.

From thence we departed straight on
into the convent of the Jesuits
built as a most noble structure.

The church is majestic, and adorned
richly are the altars and in the cellar
they have a wide variety of tasty wines.

In the cloisters to delight we walk
looking at paintings and in the schools
they explain to use their good doctrine.

While the Rector with calm words
bids me welcome, there I discern a
fair garden exposed to the rays of the sun.

To me it looks to be though mid-winter
full of flowers, of leaves and of fruit
of beautiful springtime's eternal honour.

And even though the country is destroyed
For them it is delicious, in conclusion,
The good Fathers are well provided.

Aby Warburg's motto, adapted from Goethe's *Faust*, goes: "Es ist ein altes Buch zu blättern, Athen – Oraibi – alles Vettern" (It is an old story: Athens, Oraibi, all are cousins); the primitive Hopi and classical Greece are kindred. As the serpent ritual is a danced causality, the representative of spring is a representative of the causality of sacred history. Those who do not believe it are invited to come and see.

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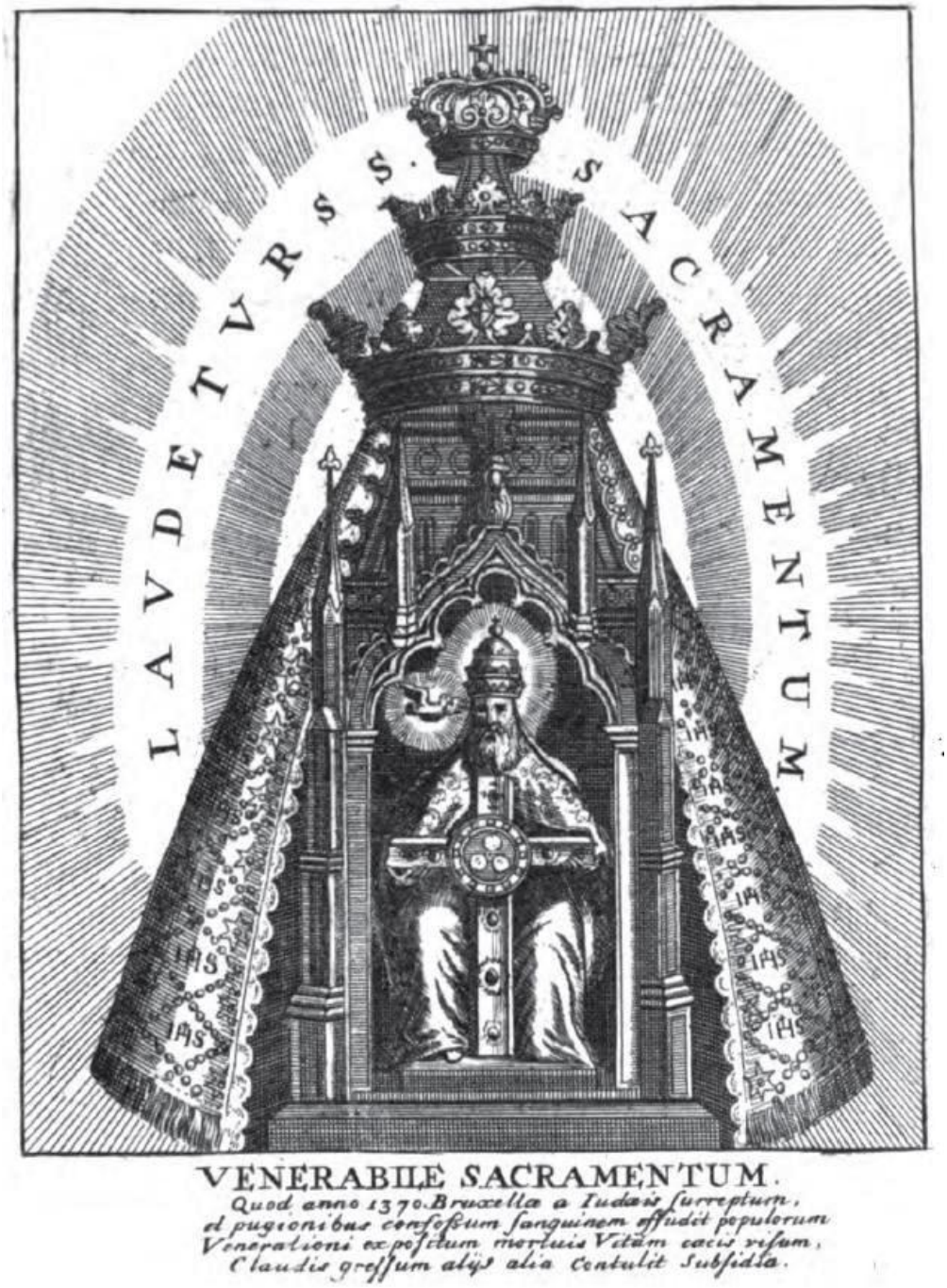
Curriculum Vitae

Eelco Nagelsmit was born on 8 May 1982 in Leiderdorp. After growing up in Emmen, where I completed my pre-university education at the Esdal College, I studied from 2000 to 2006 in Groningen. Here I started Architecture School at the Hanzehogeschool, switched to Law School at the Rijksuniversiteit, followed by Art and Architectural History. After completing my Bachelor I continued with a research Master (Mphil) at the University of Leiden. This comprised spending a period of ten months in Brussels where I did a research internship at the Royal Museums of Fine Arts of Belgium. This led to a thesis entitled "Art and Patronage at the Brussels Beguinage during the Catholic Reformation, ca. 1610-1640". In 2009 I started as a PhD candidate at the Universities of Leiden and Ghent, in a project funded by the FWO. While in Leiden and Ghent, I taught classes and gave guest lectures. I delivered papers at various international conferences. In 2011, I co-organized the international conference *Proportional Systems in the History of Architecture* at Leiden. Among my publications are essays in edited volumes by Brill (*Intersections*) and Brepols (*Museums at the Crossroads*), and an article in the *Journal of Early Modern Christianity* is forthcoming. As of December 2013 I am working as a Postdoctoral Felllow at the University of Copenhagen in the project *SOLITUDES: Withdrawal and Engagement in the Long Seventeenth Century*.

Illustrations

Illustrations to the Introduction

Figure 1: Peter Paul Rubens, *Saints Dominic, Francis, Catherine and other Saints invoking the intercession of the Holy Virgin Mary, to protect the world from Jesus' wrath*, 1618-1620. Musée des Beaux-Arts, Lyon.



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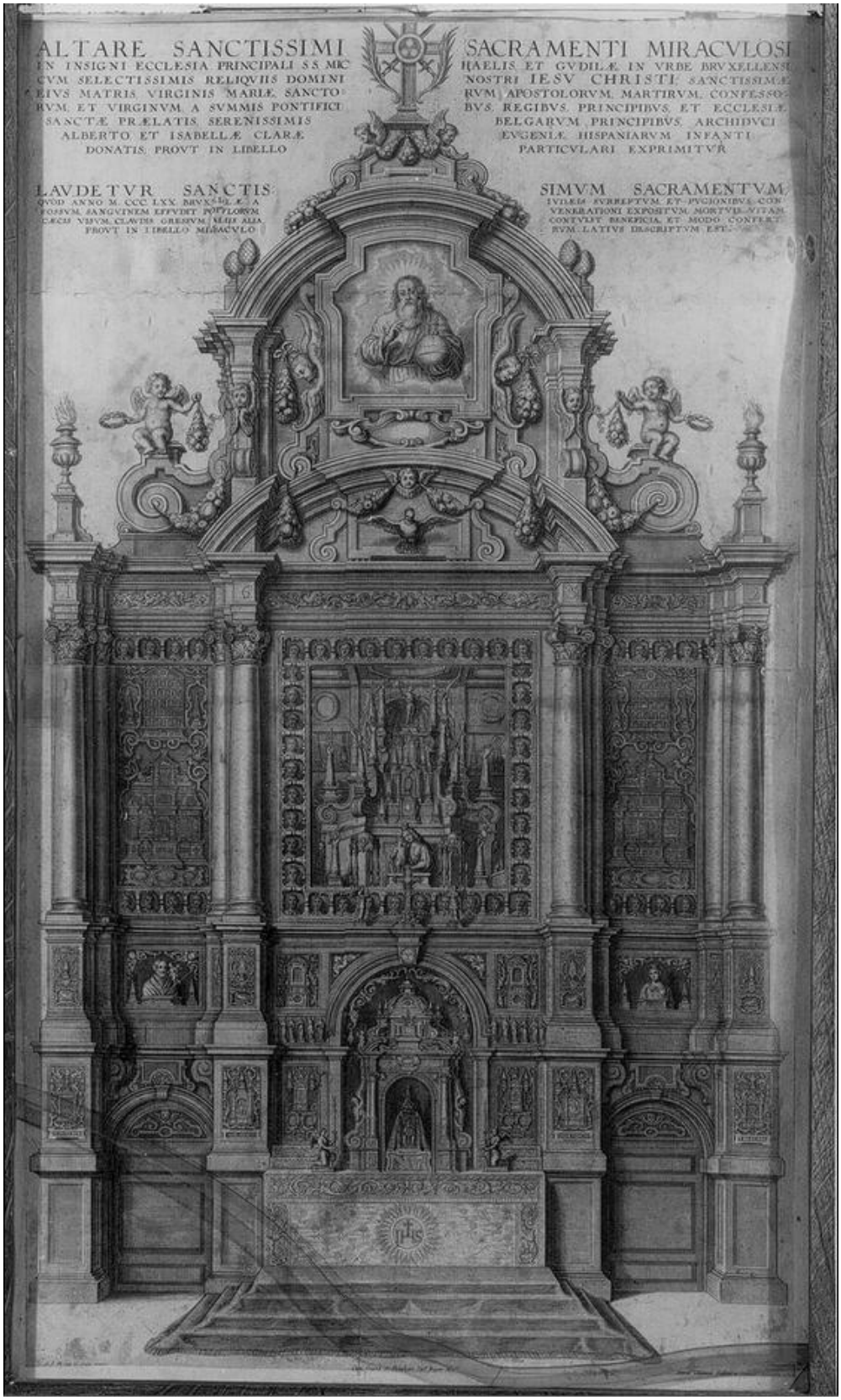

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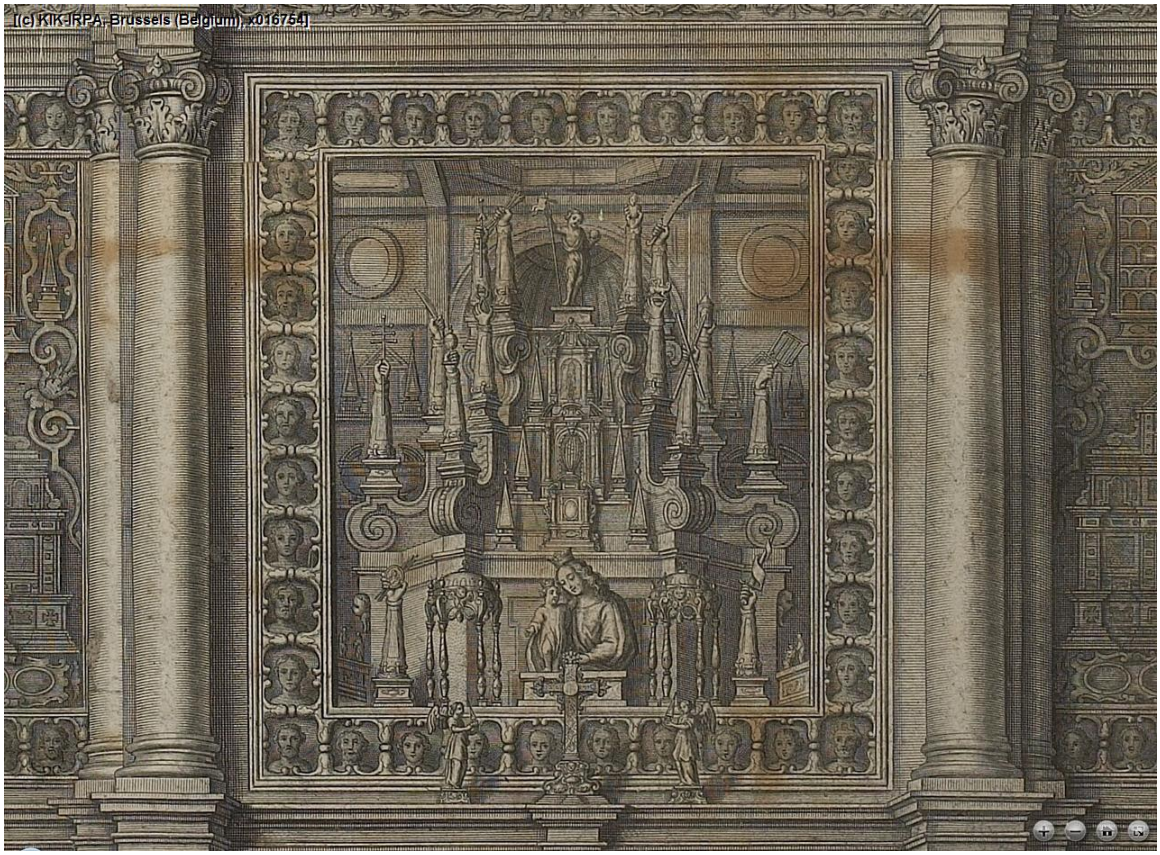

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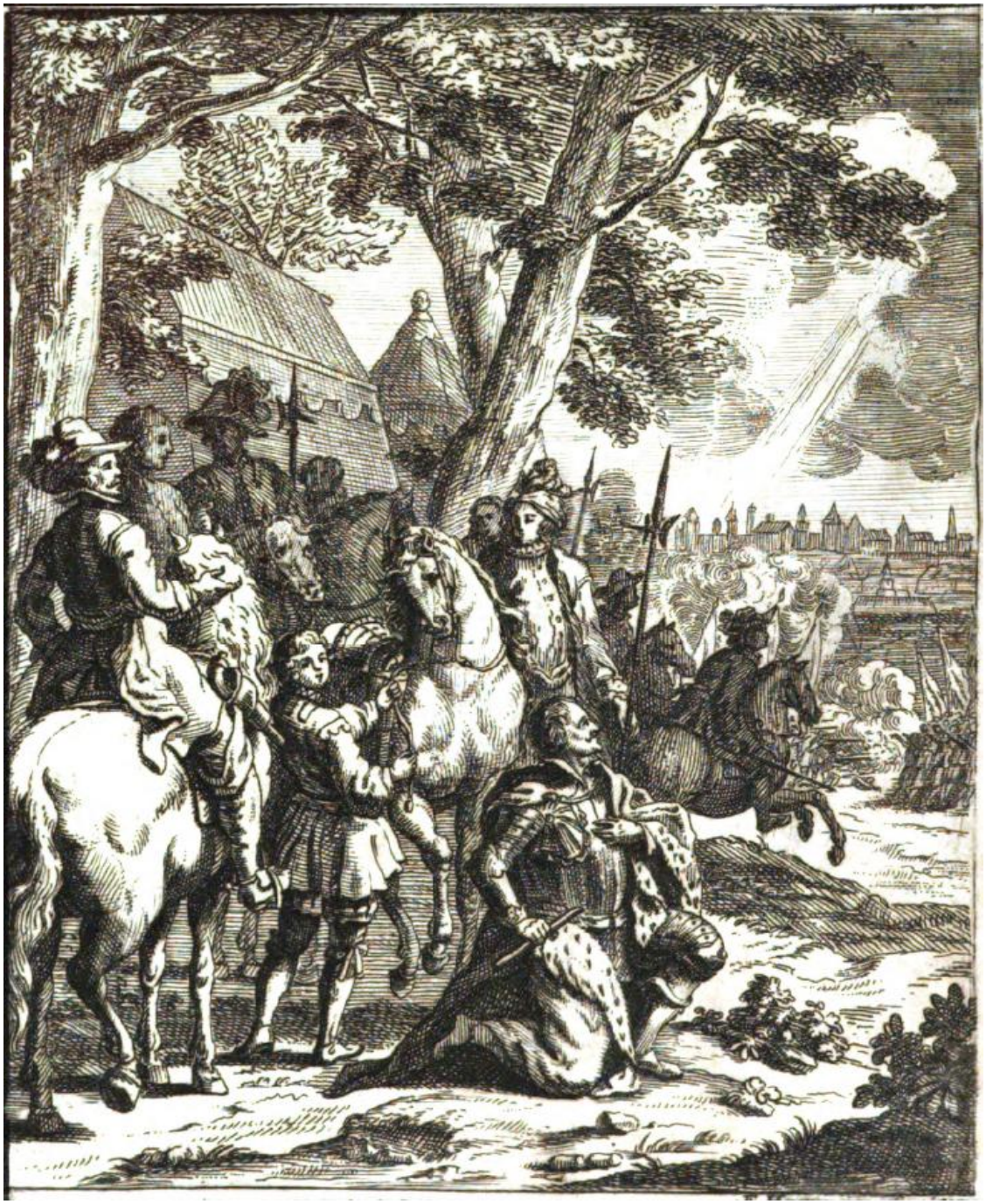

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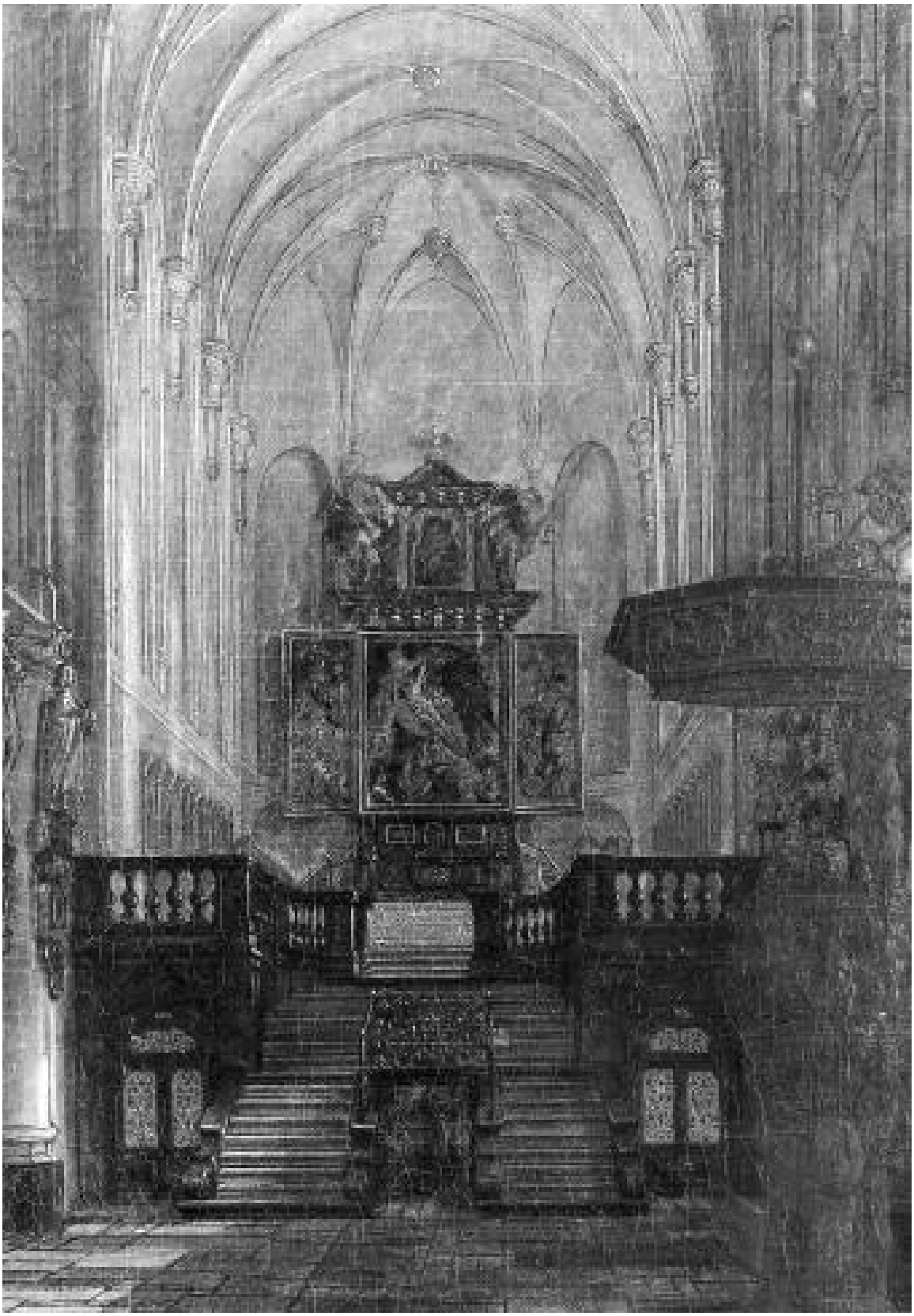

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Figure 20: Schelte à Bolswert, engraving of Bernard de Montgaillard, from J.F. Foppens, Bibliotheca Belgica.

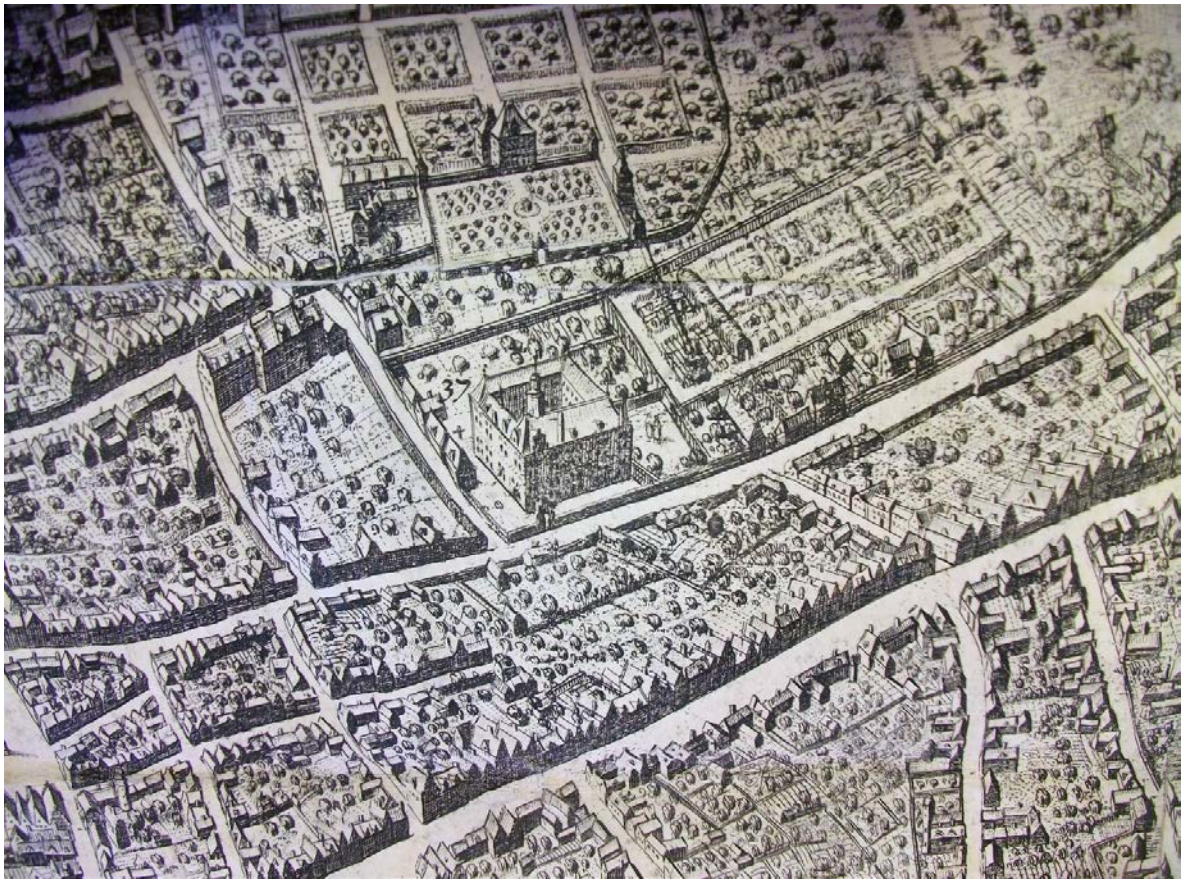


Figure 21: Plan of Brussels by Martin de Tailly, 1640. Detail showing Hoogstraat, Bovendal, Sweertstraat and the Minim convent.

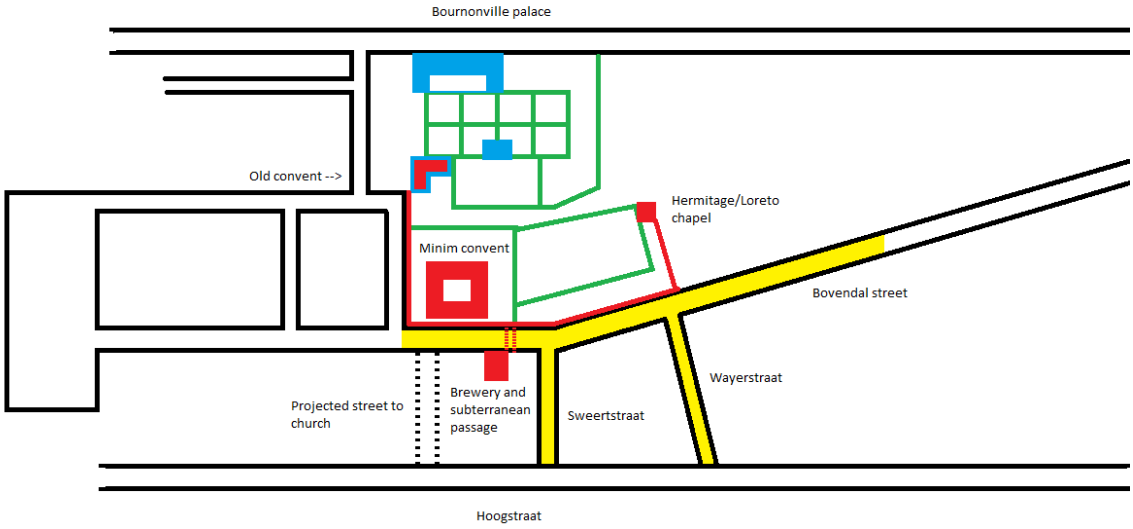
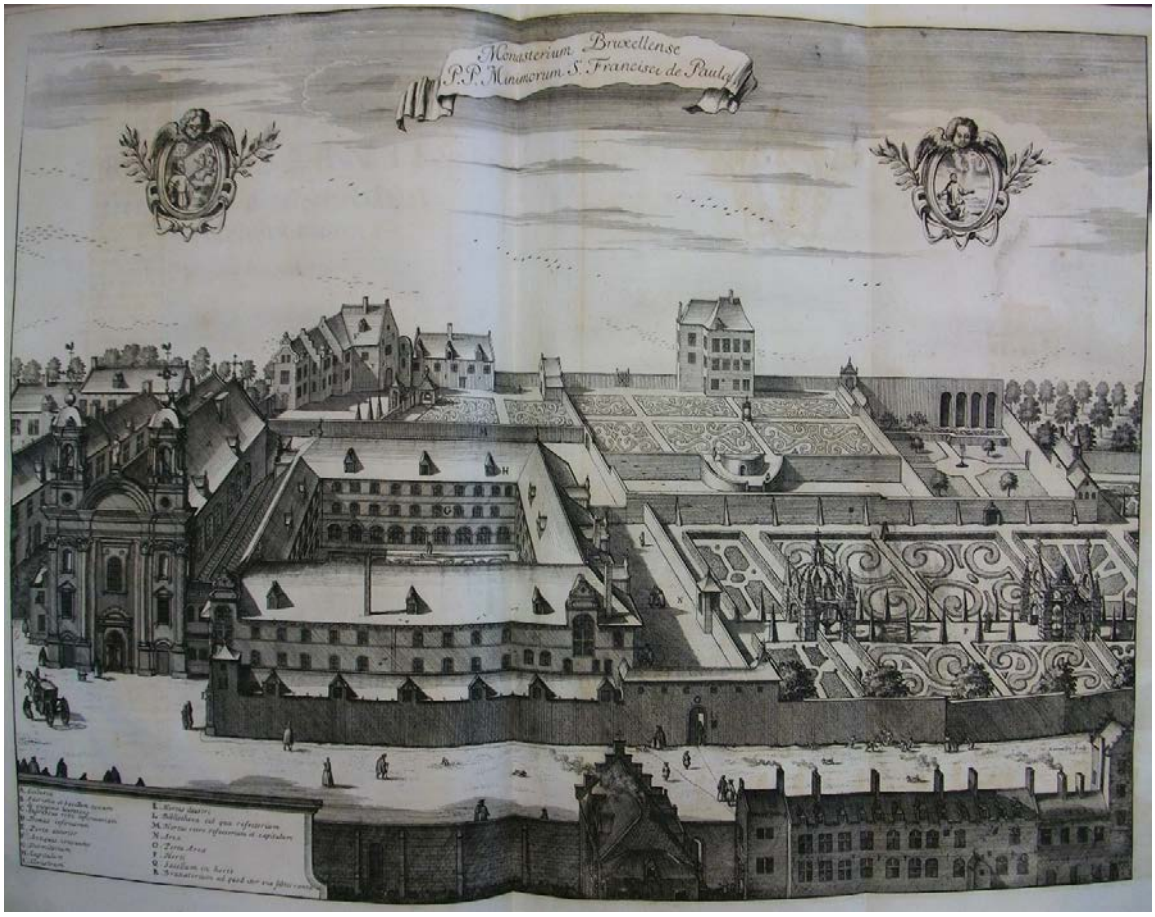


Figure 22: Schematic rendering of the neighbourhood around Bovendal. Minim convent (red), prostitution area (yellow), Bournonville palace (blue).



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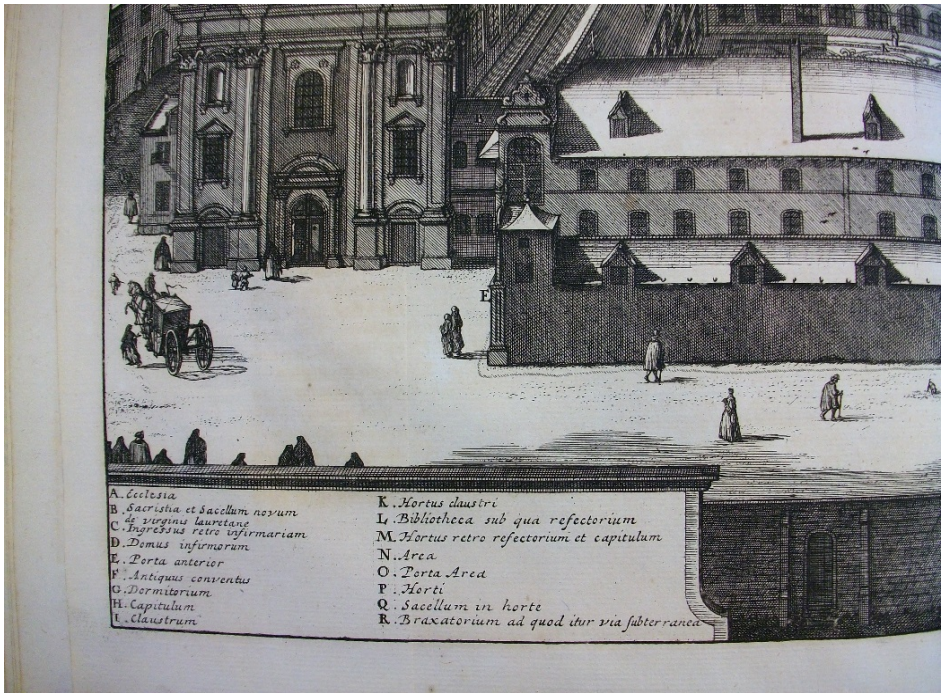

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Figures 26, 28: Former Minim convent during demolition (photo KIK-IRPA).

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Figure 28: Frontispiece of Mathieu Martin, *Triomphe de la Verité*, 1624 (photo Rijksmuseum).

A LA
SERENISSIME PRINCESSE
MADAME
ISABELLE
CLAIRE EVGENIE
INFANTE
D'ESPAIGNE.

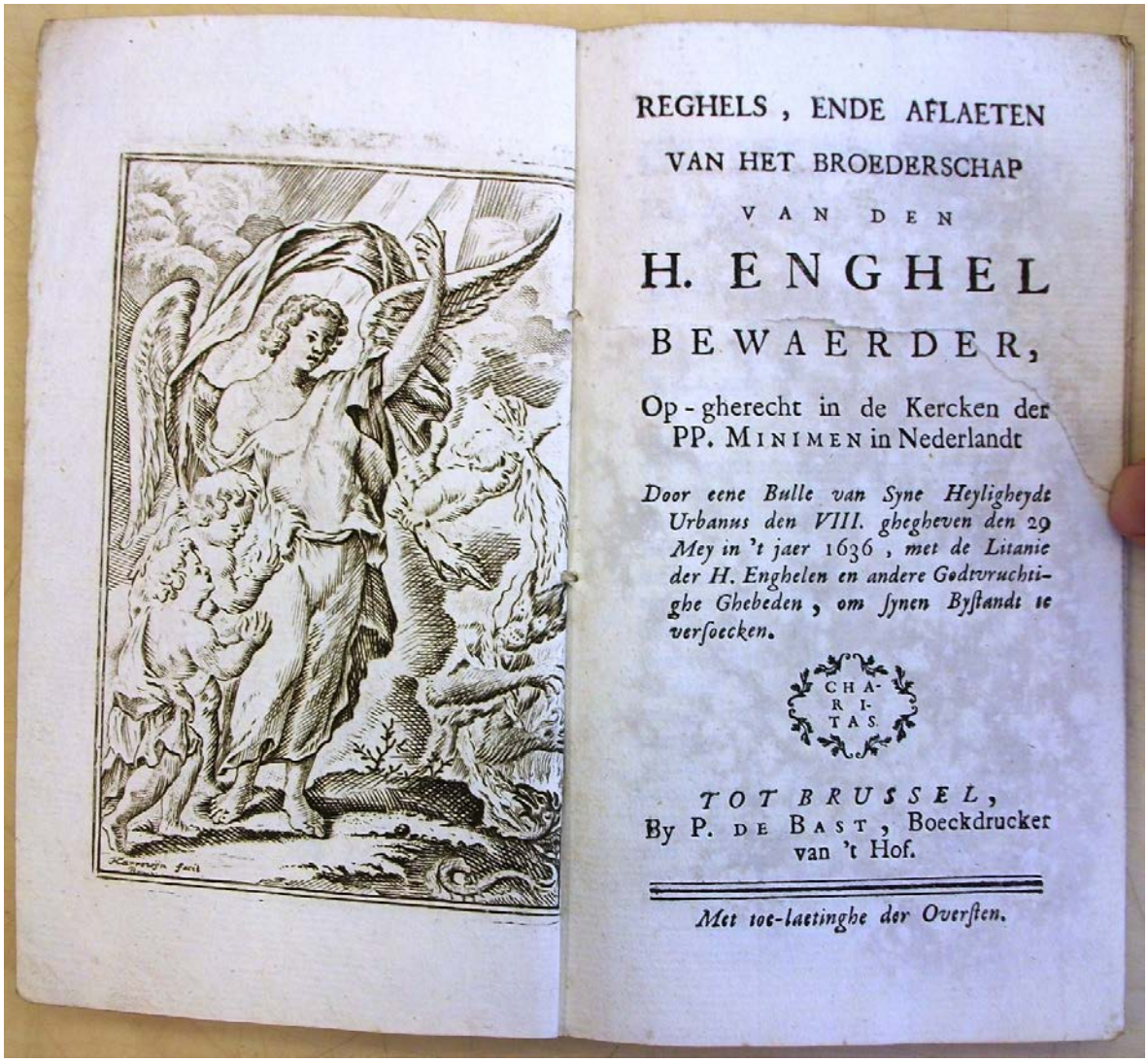
MADAME,

Les justes & pytoiables ressentimens que V. A. a faict paroistre aux premiers aduertissemens qu'elle a reçeüe de la glorieuse mort de son tres fidel & tres obeissant Predicateur & Religieux, le Reuerend Pere Claude du Viuier,

A 2 par

Figure 29: Frontispiece of Gambart's funerary oration for Claude du Vivier, entitled *Chariot mystique du nouveau Elie*, 1630 (photo KBR).

Figure 30: Jan Steen, *Sarah and Tobias in thanksgiving prayer after the Holy Guardian Angel exorcized Asmodeus, demon of Lust*, c. 1667. Museum Bredius, The Hague.



REGHELS, ENDE AFLAETEN
VAN HET BROEDERSCHAP
VAN DEN
H. ENGHEL
BEWAERDER,
Op-gherecht in de Kercken der PP. MINIMEN in Nederlandt

Door eene Bulle van Syne Heyligheydt Urbanus den VIII. ghegheven den 29 Mey in 't jaer 1636, met de Litanie der H. Enghelen en andere Godtvruchtighe Ghebeden, om Synen Bystandt te versoecken.

CHA-
RI-
TAS

TOT BRUSSEL,
By P. DE BAST, Boeckdrucker van 't Hof.

Met toe-laetinghe der Oversten.

Figure 31: Frontispiece of the confraternity booklet of the Holy Guardian Angel, 1636.

Figure 32: Gaspar de Crayer, Holy Guardian Angel leading a young Duke of Enghien and his siblings towards Christ. City hall, Leuven (photo M – Museum Leuven).

Figure 33: Detail of fig. 34 (photo KIK-IRPA).

Figure 34: Devotional print of the confraternity of Our Lady of Loreto, showing the town of Loreto, Italy. Minim church, Brussels (photo KIK-IRPA).

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Figure 36: Interior of the Casa Santa. Basilica of Our Lady, Loreto, Italy.

Figure 37: Woodcut from Gumppenberg's *Atlas Marianus*, 1657. The Holy House as *mediatrix coeli et terrae*.

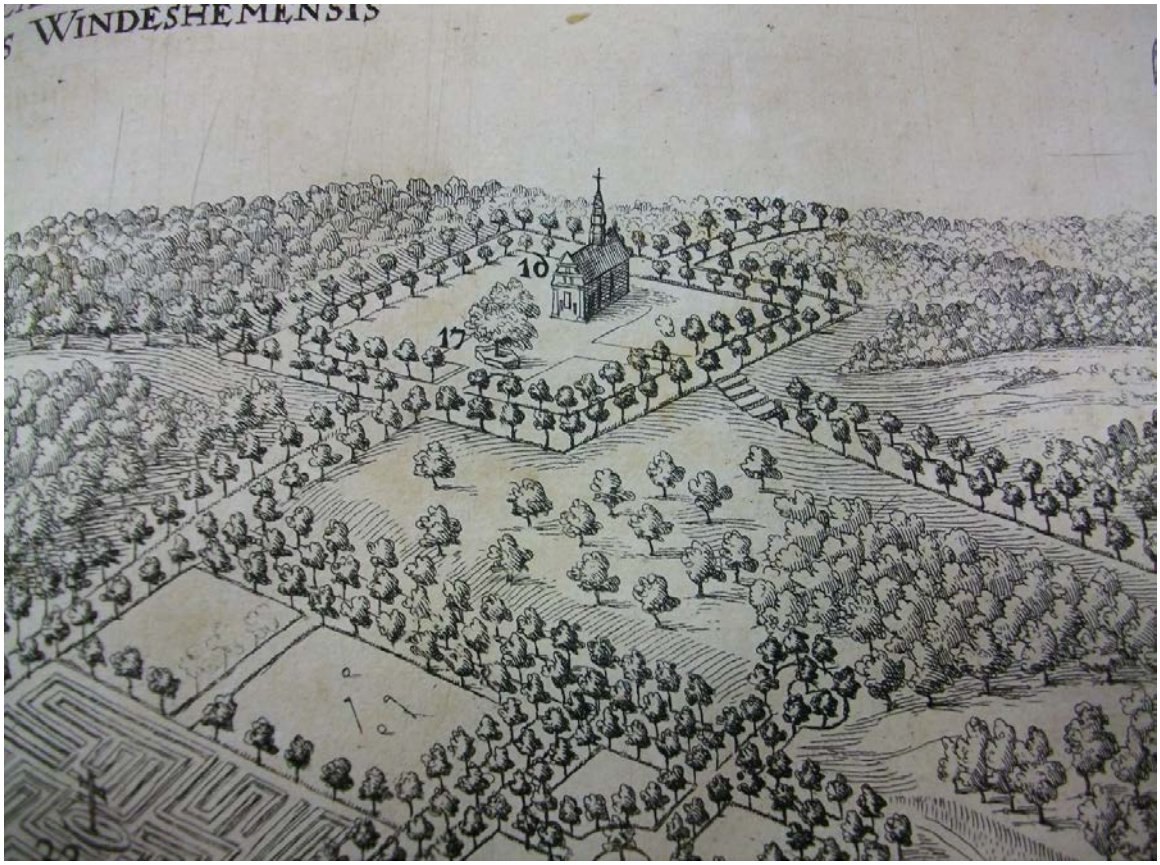

Figure 38: The hermitage of Our Lady of Loreto and the tree of Ruusbroec at the monastery of Groenendael. From Sanderus.

Figure 39: Cult image of Our Lady of Loreto, Minim church, Brussels (photo KIK-IRPA).

Figure 40: Our Lady of Loreto, from Gumppenberg's *Atlas Marianus* (right).

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Figure 41: Impresa of the Order of Our Lady of Mount Carmel, from Sanderus.

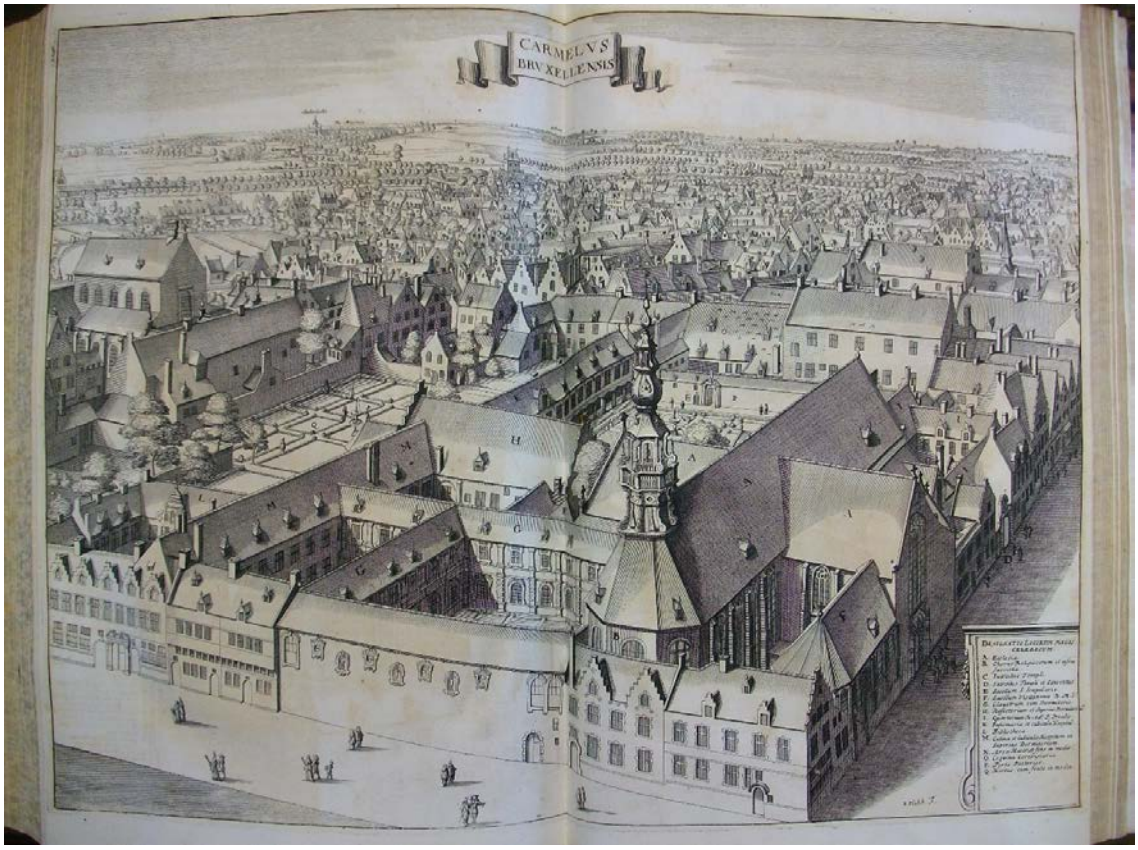

Figure 42: Reinier Blockhuizen after Lucas II Vorsterman after Jacob van Werden, the Brussels convent of the Calced Carmelites, from Sanderus.

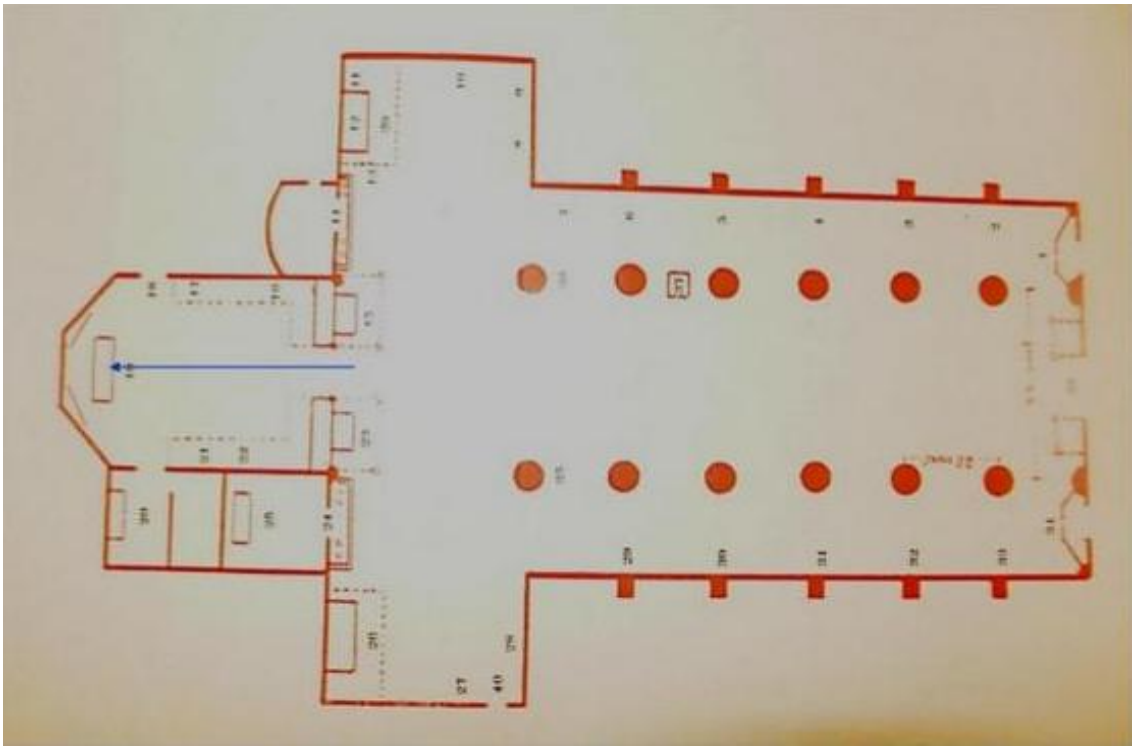

Figure 43: compare: plan of the Antwerp church of the Calced Carmelites, from J. de Bosschere, De kerken van Antwerpen (photo J. Vander Auwera).

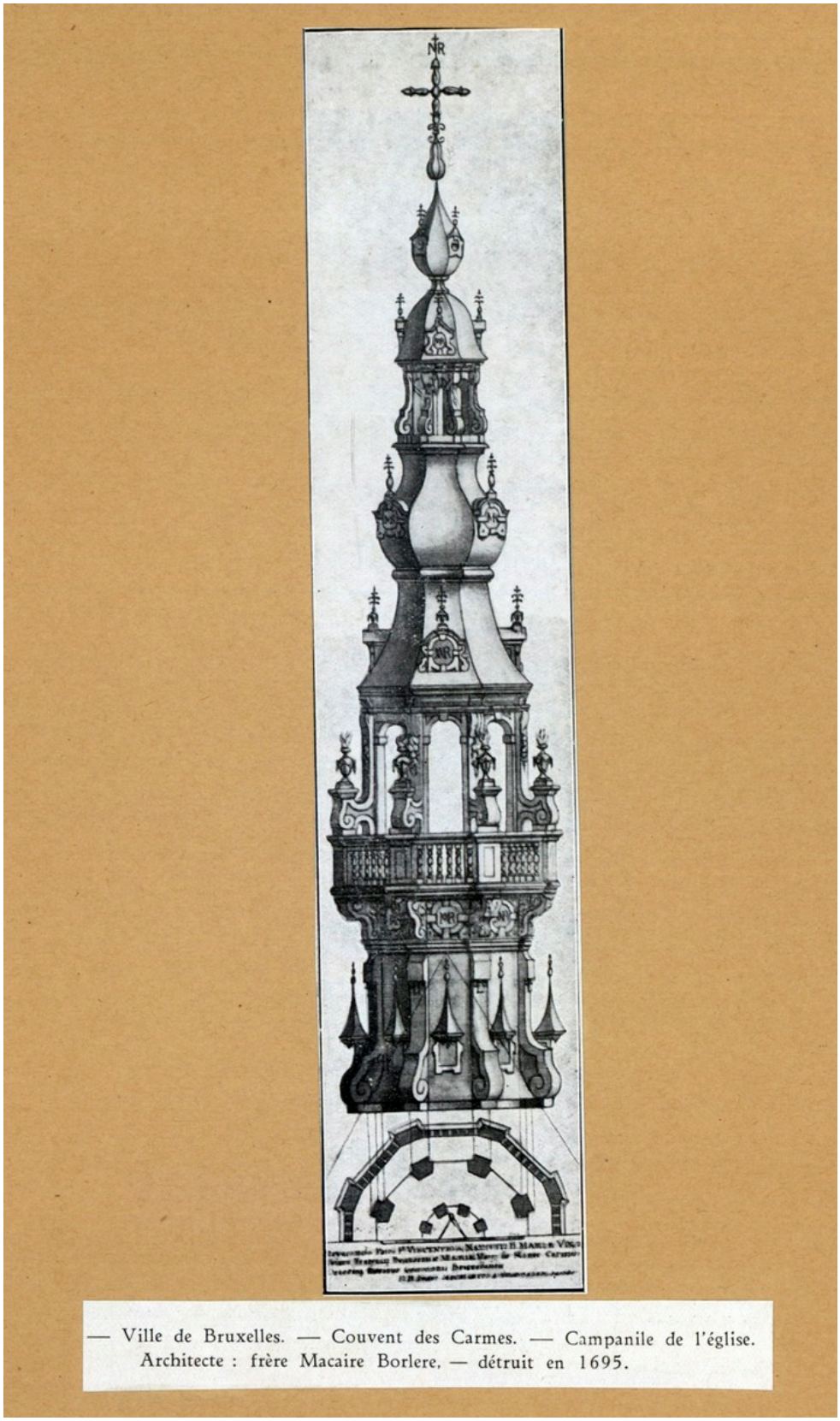

Figure 44: Macarius à Jerusalem or Borlere, drawing of the bell tower of the church of the Calced Carmelites, Brussels. Collection UGent.

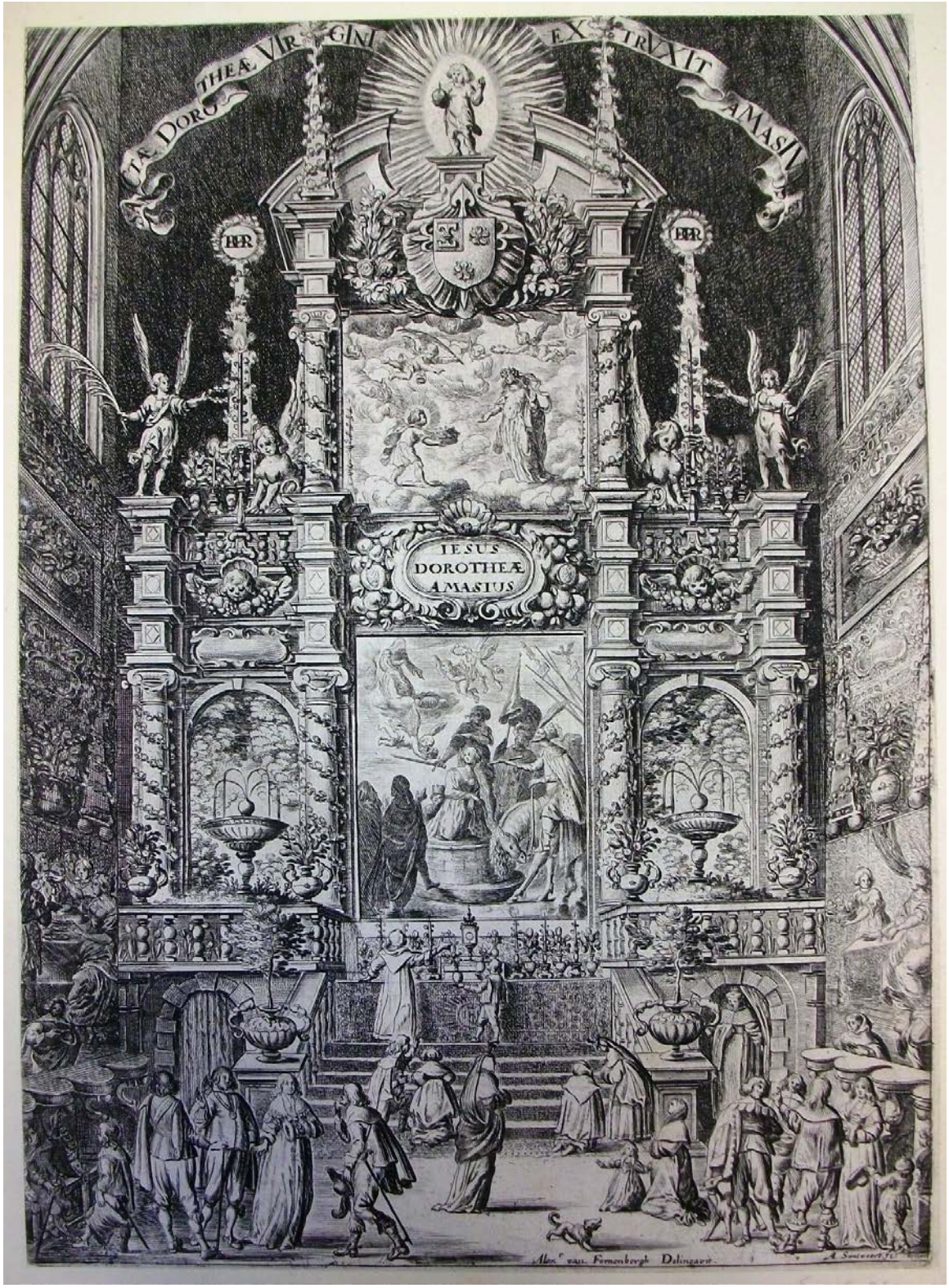

Figure 45: Abraham Santvoort after Alexander van Fornenberg, the high altar of the Brussels church of the Calced Carmelites during the feast of St Dorothea, 1640. Mixed technique (etching and burin). Prentenkabinet KBR, Brussels.

Figure 46: Detail of fig. 47 (etching).

Figure 47: Gaspar de Crayer, *Martyrdom of St Dorothea*, drawing. Museum of Fine Art, Ghent.

Figure 48: Detail of fig. 47, glorification of St Dorothea. Etching.

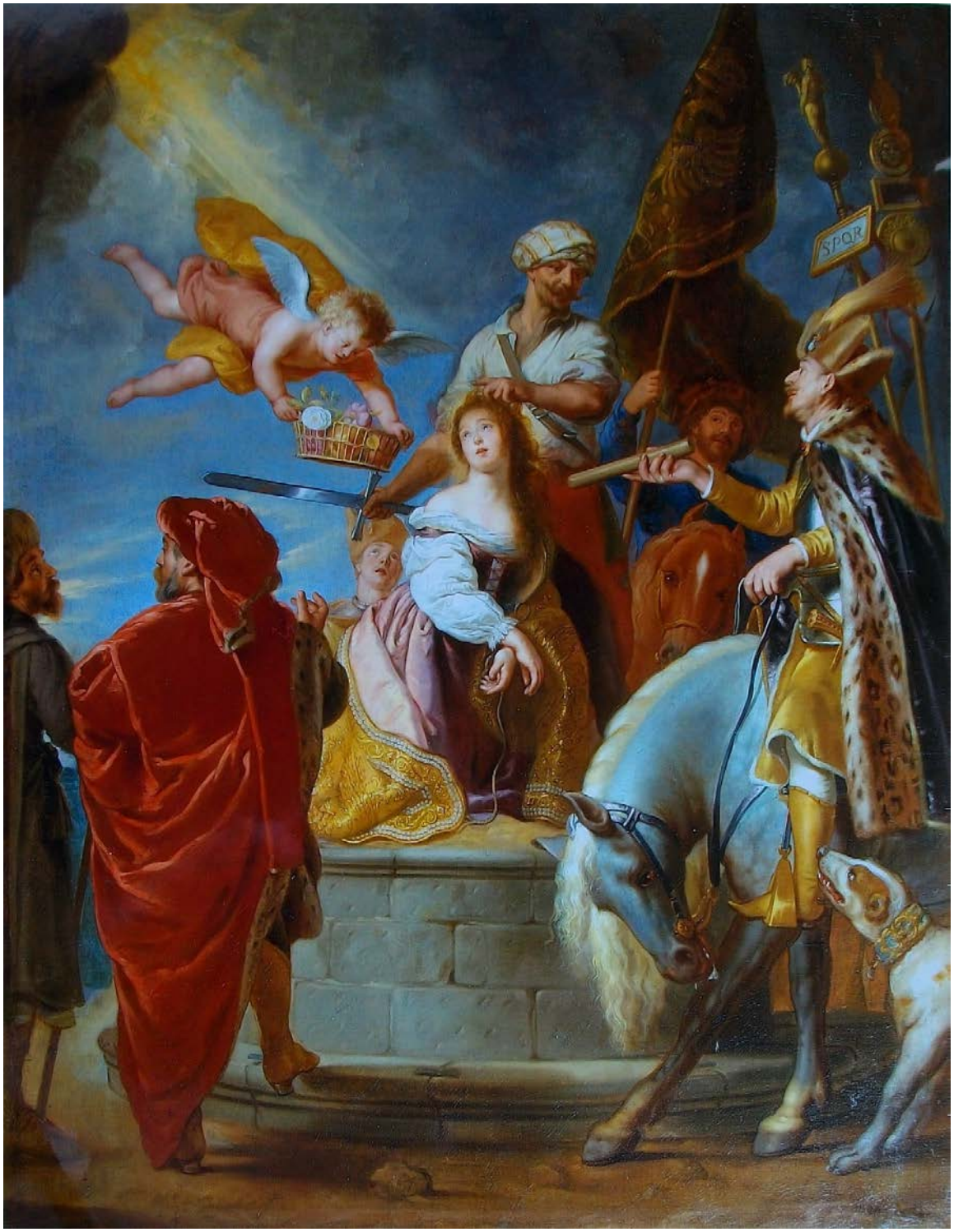

Figure 49: Gaspar de Crayer, ricordo (?) of the *Martyrdom of St Dorothea*, c. 1639. Oil on canvas, private collection, USA.

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Figure 51: Gaspar de Crayer, Cardinal-Infante Ferdinand of Austria, 1639. Prado, Madrid.

Figure 52: Hans Vredeman de Vries, *Lazarus before the palace of a rich man* (detail), Rijksmuseum, Amsterdam.

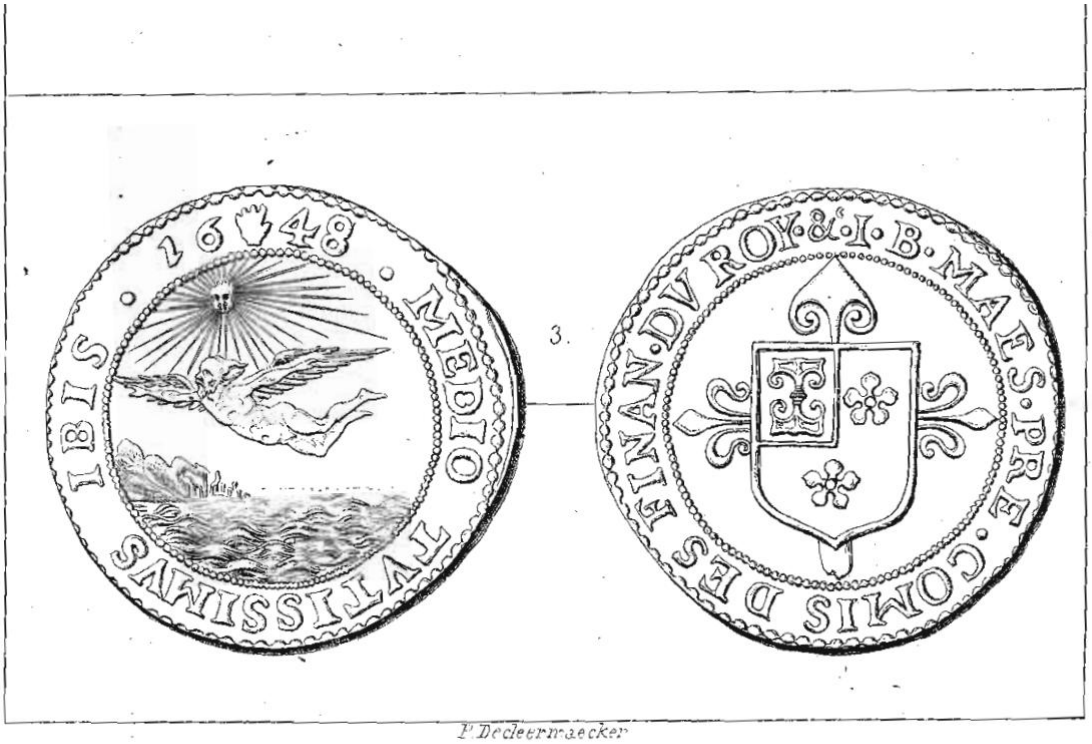


Figure 53: Unique medal, displaying the coat-of-arms of Jan Baptist Maes and his devise "medio tutissimus ibis", 1648.

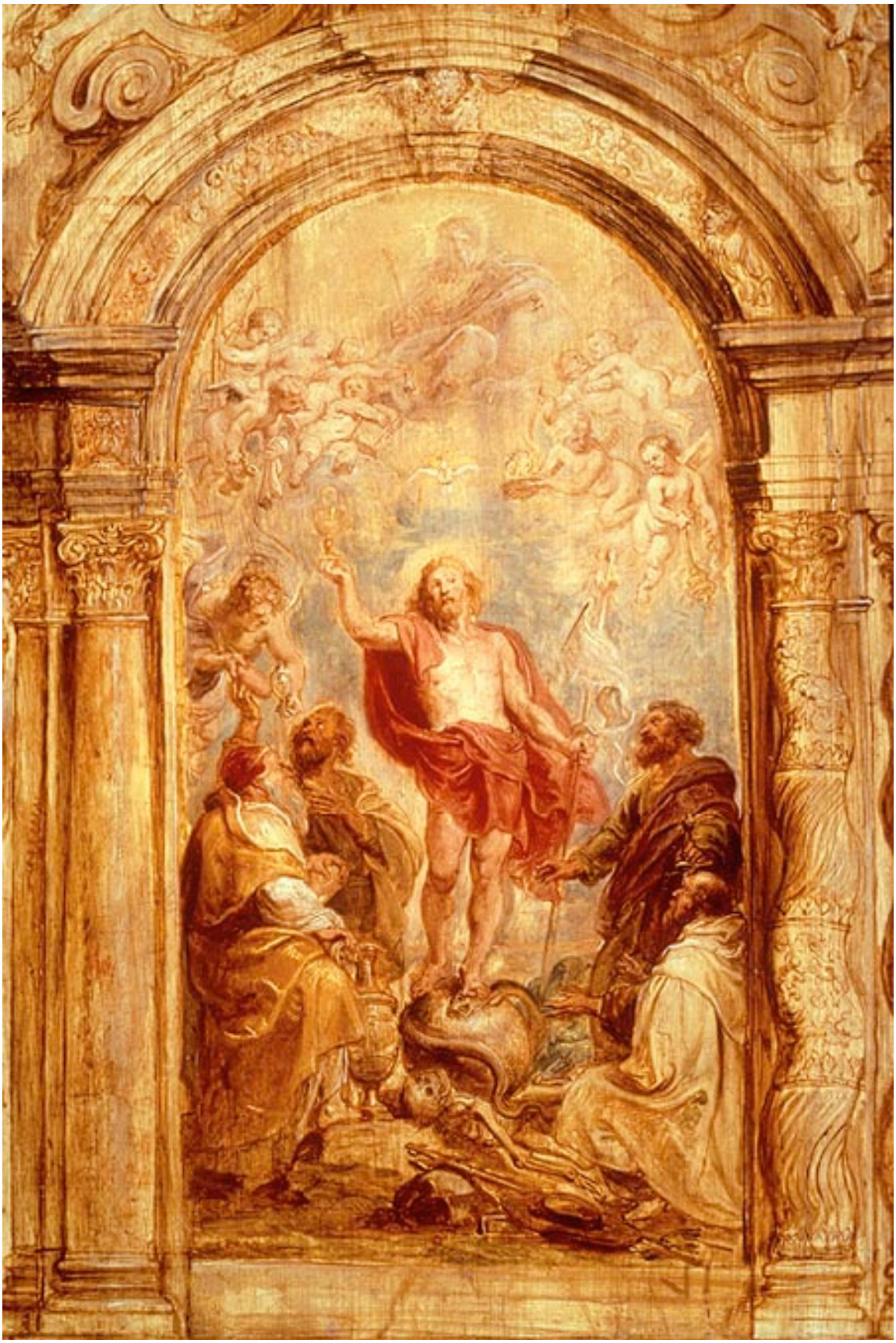


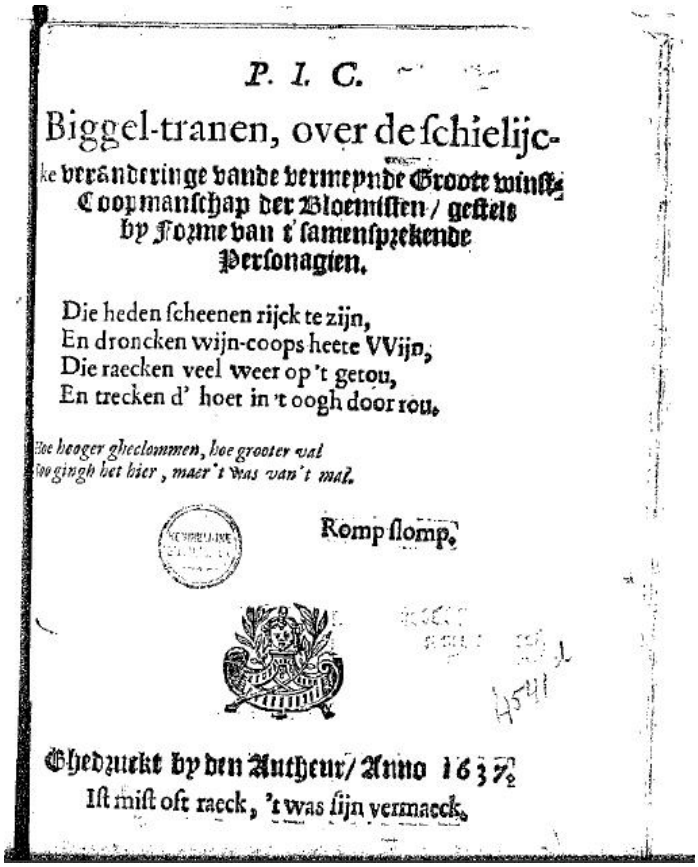
Figure 54: Peter Paul Rubens, modello for the high altar of the Antwerp Carmelite church, depicting the Triumph of the Eucharist over sin and death, c. 1630. Metropolitan Museum, New York.

Figure 55: Jan Breughel, *Flower garland with Madonna, Child Jesus and John the Baptist*, 1606. Ambrosiana, Milan.

Figure 56: Abrosius II Bosschaert, Saint Dorothea in a flower garland, 1640. Museum of Fine Art, Antwerp.

Trooſt-Brief,
AEN ALLE
Bedroefde Bloemmiſten/
die treuren over 't ſterven oft 't overlijden
VAN
FLORA.
Goddinne der Floriſten.

TOT HAERLEM.
Gedruct by Hans Paſſchiers van Weſbuſch, Boeck-drucker op 't Marckt-veldt/tuden beſlagen Bijbel/ 1637.



P. I. C.

Biggel-tranen, over de ſchielijcke veranderinge vande vermeynde Groote winſt-Coopmanſchap der Bloemiſten/ geſtelt by forme van t' ſamenſprekende Perſonagien.

Die heden ſcheenen rijck te zijn,
En droncken wijn-coops heete VVijn,
Die raecken veel weer op 't getou,
En trecken d' hoet in 't oogh door rou.

Hoe heoger gheclommen, hoe grooter val
Hoogingh het hier, maer 't was van 't mal.

Romp ſlomp.

Ghedruckt by den Autheur/ Anno 1637.
Iſt miſt oft raeck, 't was ſijn vermaeck.

Figure 57: Satirical pamphlets on the tulip mania, 1637.

Figure 58: Jan Breughel the Younger, Satire on the Tulip Mania (singerie), 1640. Frans Hals museum, Haarlem.

Description from the website of the Frans Hals museum:

> "One monkey points to flowering tulips while another brandishes a tulip and a moneybag. This is how artist Jan Brueghel indicates that this painting is about the tulip trade. A sale is concluded by hand-clapping. Bulbs are weighed, money is counted, a lavish business dinner is savoured. The monkey on the left has a list of names of expensive tulips. The sword at his side is a status symbol. Farther back, a monkey sits like a nobleman astride a horse. Another in the mid-foreground is drawing up a bill of sale. The owl on his shoulder symbolises folly. Brueghel is ridiculing tulip mania by depicting the speculators as brainless monkeys. The painting also shows what happened when the tulip trade crashed: a monkey on the right urinates on the - now worthless - tulips. Behind him a speculator who has run up debts is being brought before the magistrate. A monkey sits weeping in the dock and in the centre at the back a disappointed buyer is wielding his fists. At the back to the right a speculator is even being carried to his grave."

DOROTHEA

Maeghet ende Martelersse,

Speelwijs Verthoont

Door de Ionckheyt van de Parochie van

S. IORIS.

Met verscheyde Sheerstelijcke Liedekens/

ende een van S. Dorothea.

TOE-GHE-EYGENT

Aen den seer Wijsen, Voorsienighen ende Wel-ghelecrden

HEER

IYR HEER IAQVES VAN EYCK Schepen deser Stadt van Antwerpen, ende Deken van de Edele ende seer treffelijcke Coofrerie van de selve H. DOROTHEA.

T'ANTWERPEN,

By Jacob Mesens / op de Lombaerde veste / inden gulden Bijbel / Anno 1641.

8° ytk 66553

Figure 59: Title page of the play 'Dorothea Maghet ende Martelersse', Antwerp 1641.

Figure 60: Crispijn van de Passe (II), Portrait medaillon of Willem de Blasere, 1633. Rijksmuseum, Amsterdam.

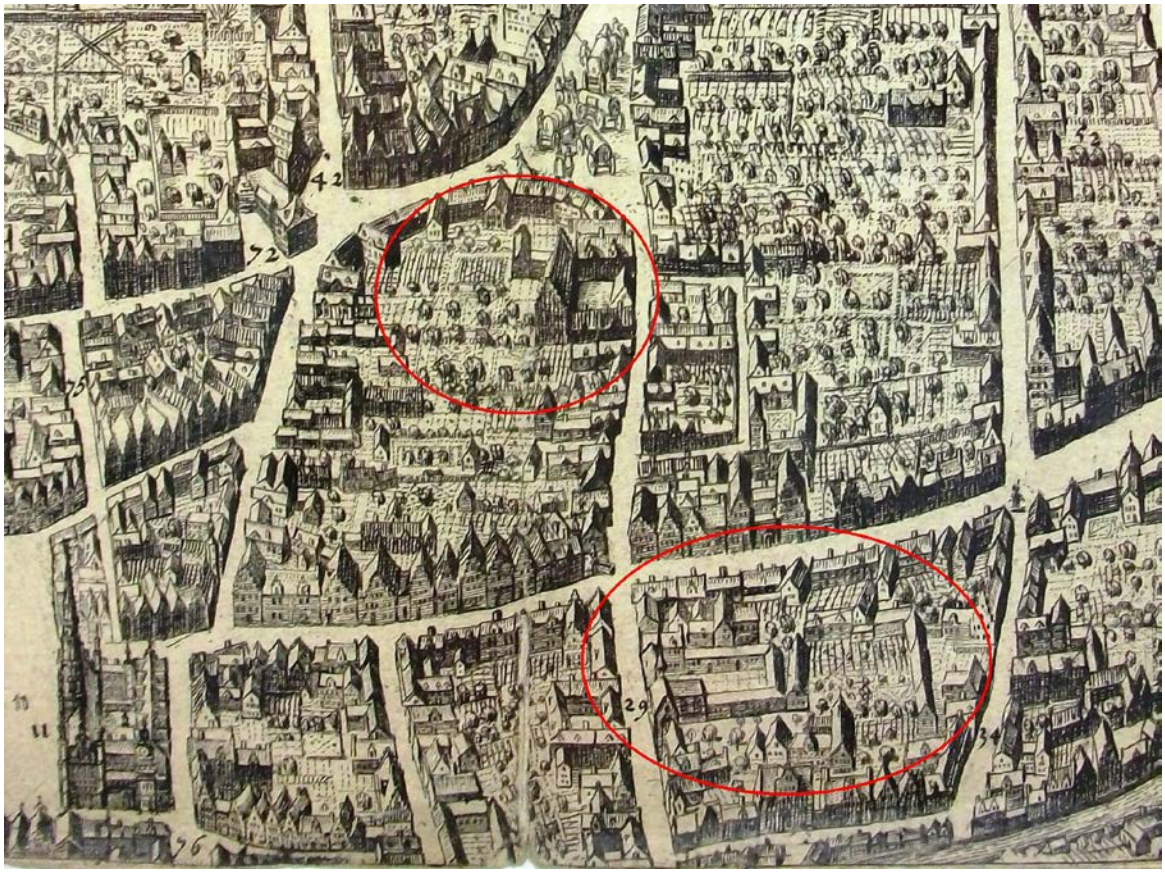


Figure 61: Plan of Brussels by Martin de Tailly, 1640. Detail showing the house of Masius and the convent of the Calced Carmelites (foreground). Prentenkabinet, University of Leiden.

Figure 62: Leon van Heil, interior of the Magdalen- or Maes-chapel, 1665-1678. St Gudule, Brussels.

Figure 63: Pierre Rucholle, emblem from Jean Vincart, *Sacrarum Heroidum Epistolae* (Tournai, Adrianus Quinque, 1640), 37. The lawyer Theophilus receiving flowers from an angel.

Accompanying text:

> "Theophilus ad oblatam rosam sine mera in Dorotheae fidem concedit, ex Fuco mutates quasi in Apem; quam scripsit Plinius liber 21 caput 11 rosis maxime allici et delectari.
> - Tantus utrinque Urget mellis amor."
>
> [Upon the offered roses Theophilus conceded without delay in the faith of Dorothea, changed from colouring as the bee, of which Pliny wrote in book 21 chapter 11 that roses attracted and delighted them the most.
> - So much both sides pursue the love of honey.]

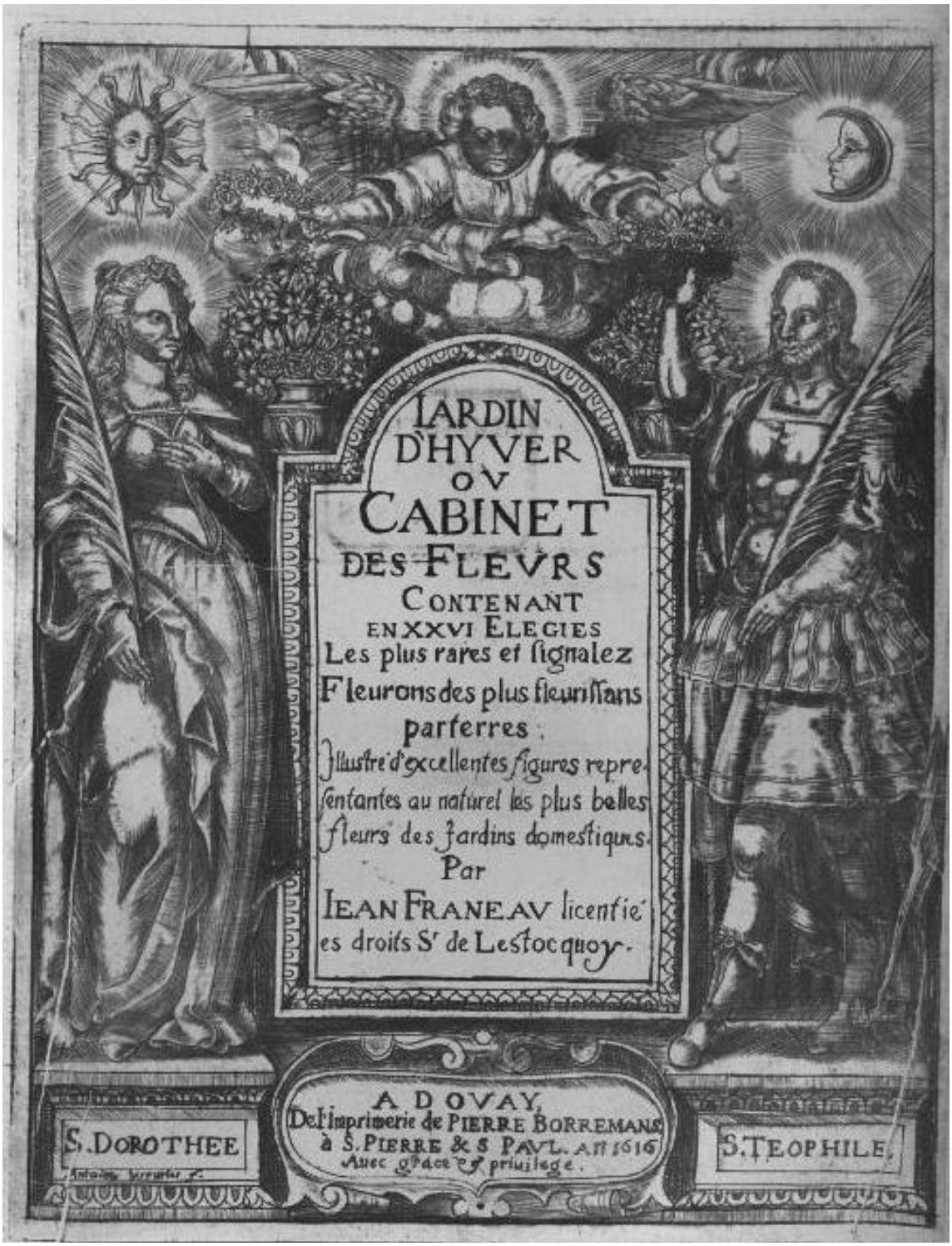


Figure 64: Frontispiece of Jean Franeau, *Jardin d'hyver, ou cabinet des fleurs* (Douai: Pierre Borremans, 1616).

Figure 65: Cornelis Galle (II) after Antoon van Dyck, Saint Dorothea, c. 1640. Prentenkabinet KBR, Brussels.

Figure 66: Friedrich Greuter after Pietro da Cortona, frontispiece of Giovanni Baptista Ferrari, *Hesperides*, (Rome: Hermannus Scheus, 1646).

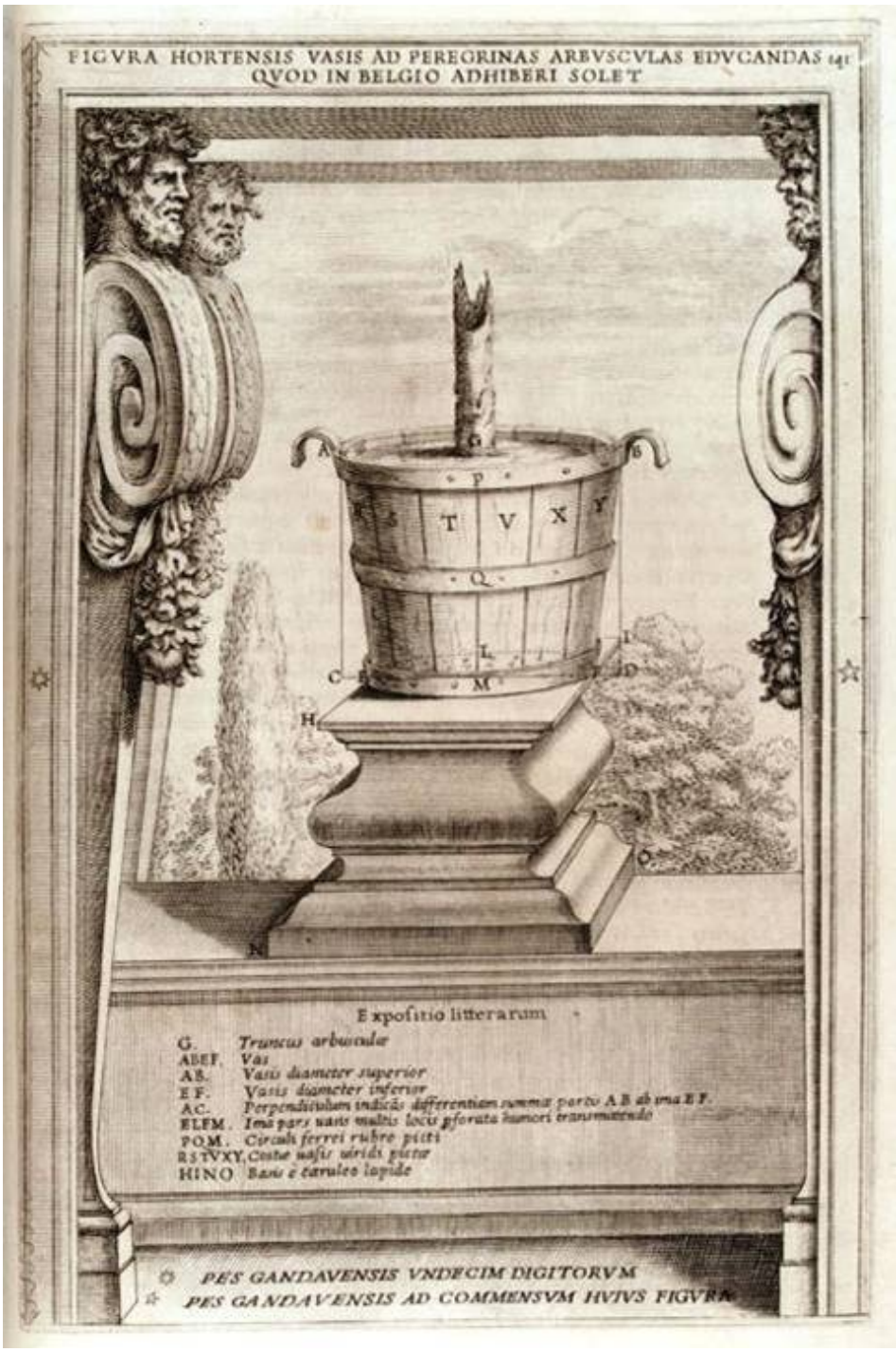


Figure 67: Willem de Blasere's invention of a tub for orange trees. From Ferrari.

Figure 68: Antonius Triest's villa 'Belvedere' near Ghent. From Sanderus' *Flandria Illustrata*, Vol. 1 (Cologne: Cornelius ab Egmond, 1641), 129.

Figure 69: Winter garden or orangerie, from J. Commelin, 1676.

Figure 70: Gaspar de Crayer, *Saint Dorothea and the angel*, 1640 (photo Sothebys).

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Figure 71: Paulus Pontius after Abraham van Diepenbeek, Carolus van Arenberg.

Figure 72: Jan Luyken, *Miraculous sermon of a barefoot monk*, 1696. Amsterdam Museum.

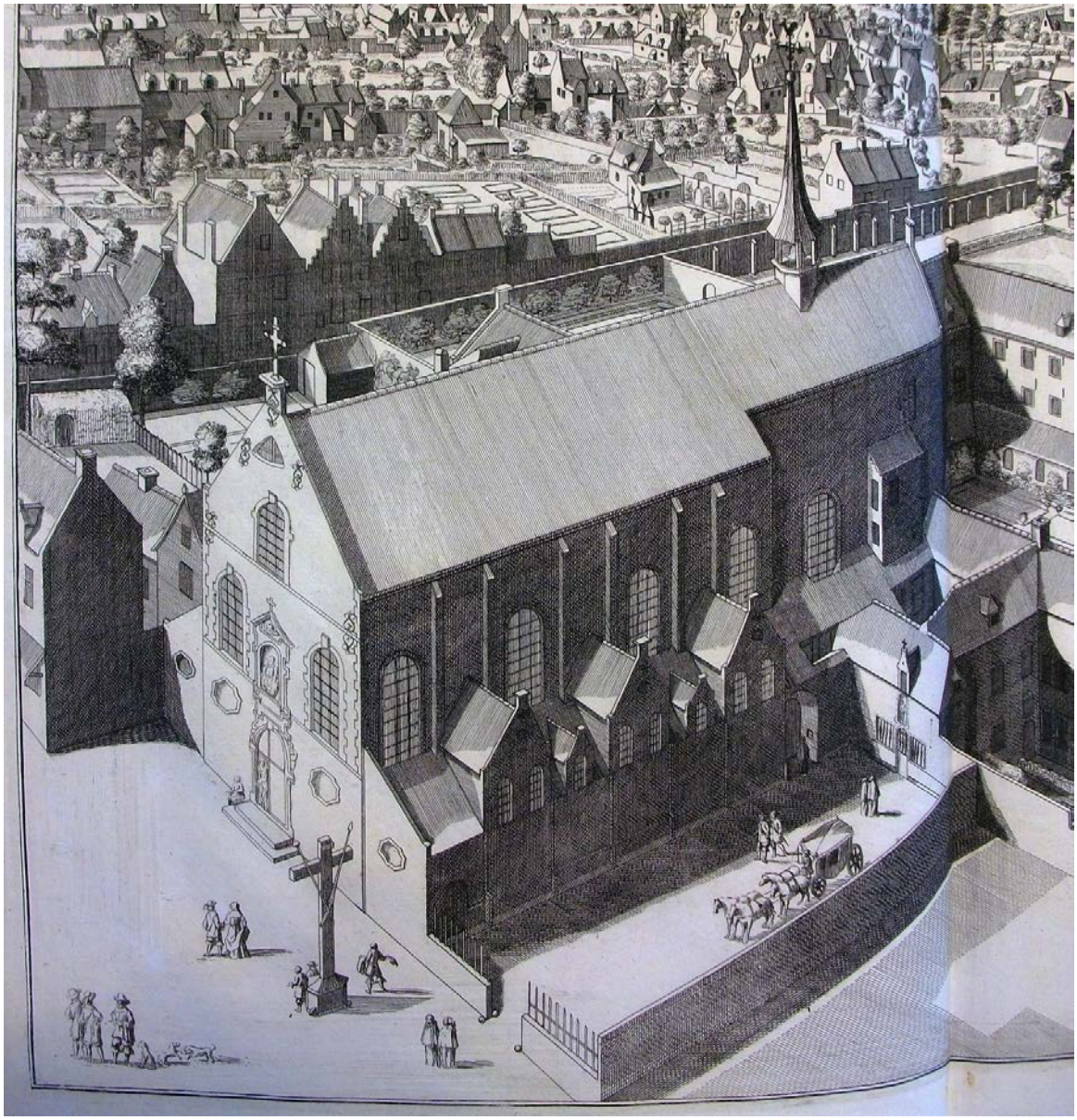


Figure 73: Lucas II Vorsterman after Jan van Werden, the Brussels Capuchin church and convent (detail, showing the church). From Sanderus.

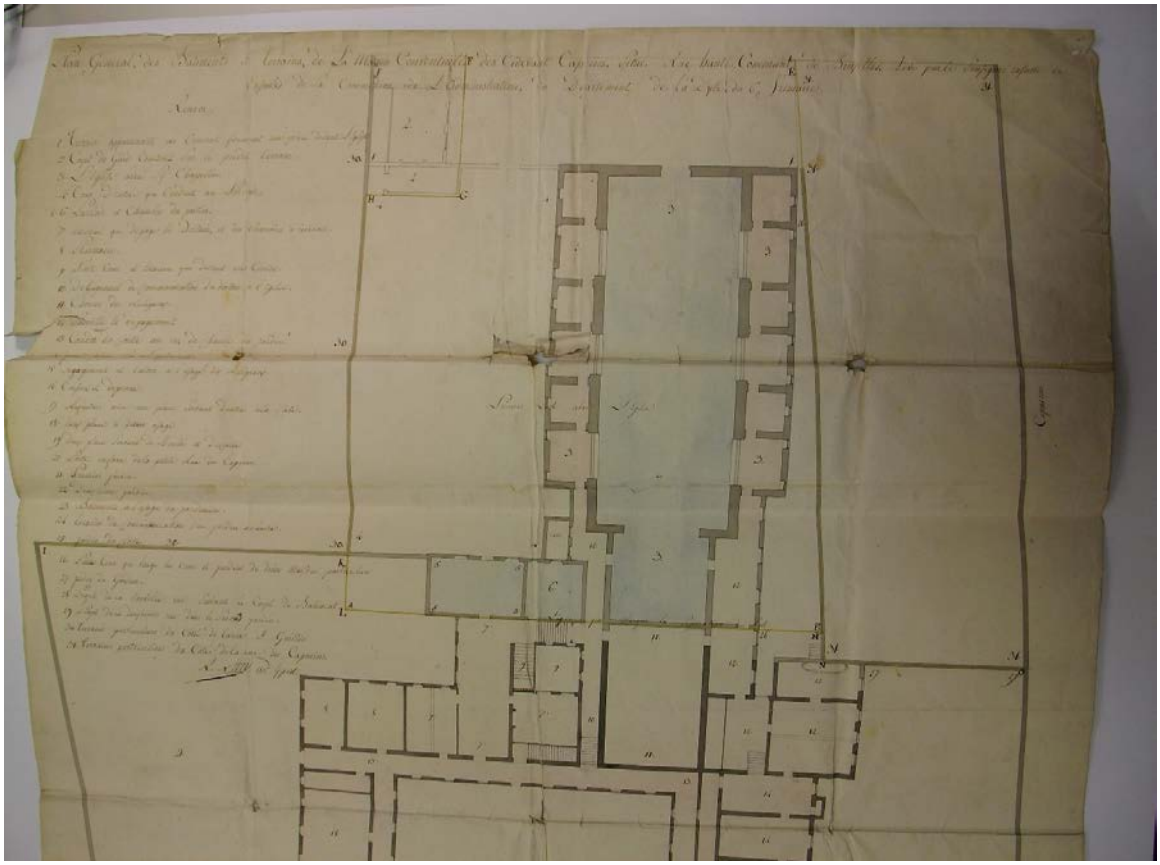


Figure 74: R. Nivoy, plan of the Capuchin convent in Brussels, 1804. Coloured drawing (detail). ARA, Kaarten en plannen, manuscript inventory, 3.

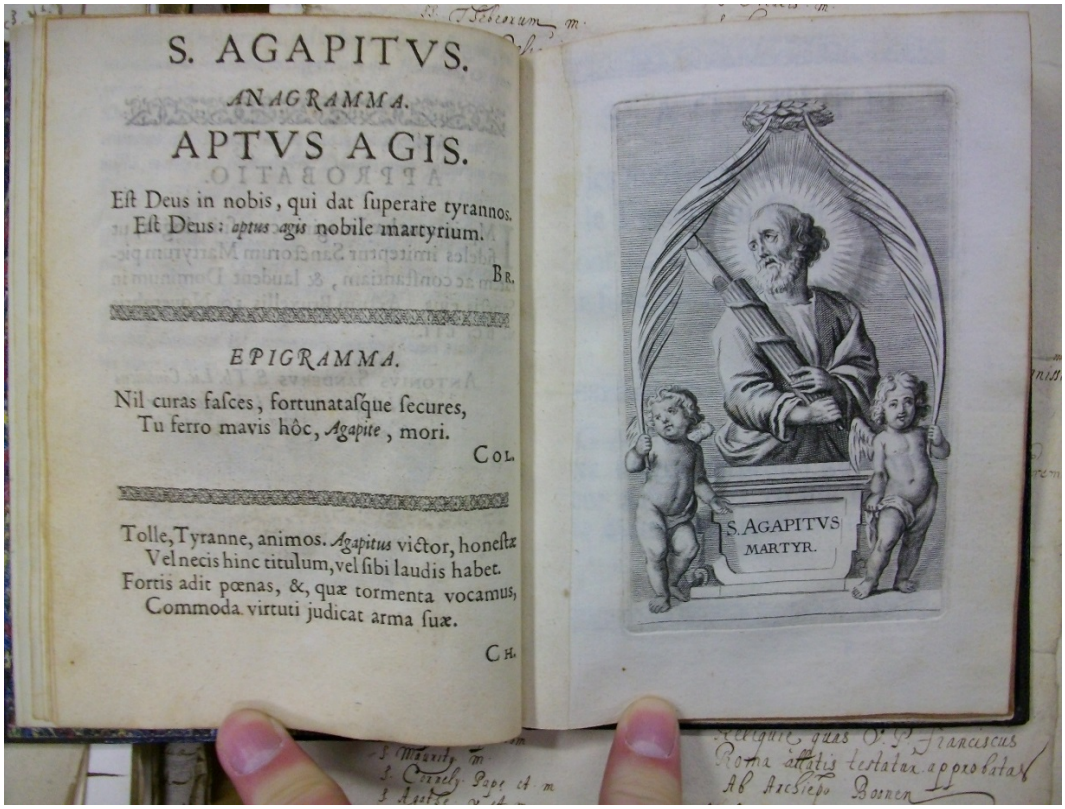
Figure 75: Peter Paul Rubens and workshop, *Pietà with St Francis* (centre), 1620. Detail showing the original shape. RMFAB, Brussels.
Antoon van Dyck, *St Francis receiving the Stigmata* (left), *Vision of St Felix of Cantalice* (right), c. 1631. RMFAB, Brussels.

Figure 76: Peter Paul Rubens and workshop, *Pietà with St Francis*, 1620 (enlarged version). RMFAB, Brussels.

Figure 77: Jan van Troyen, frontispiece of Pierre Kints' *Mausolaeum SS Martyrum*, 1652.

Figure 78: Second page of Pierre Kints.

Figure 79: Gaspar de Crayer, *St Agapit* (left) and *St Florentius* (right), 1652. RMFAB, Brussels (photo KIK-IRPA).



S. AGAPITVS.

ANAGRAMMA.

APTVS AGIS.

Est Deus in nobis, qui dat superare tyrannos.
Est Deus: *aptus agis* nobile martyrium.

BR.

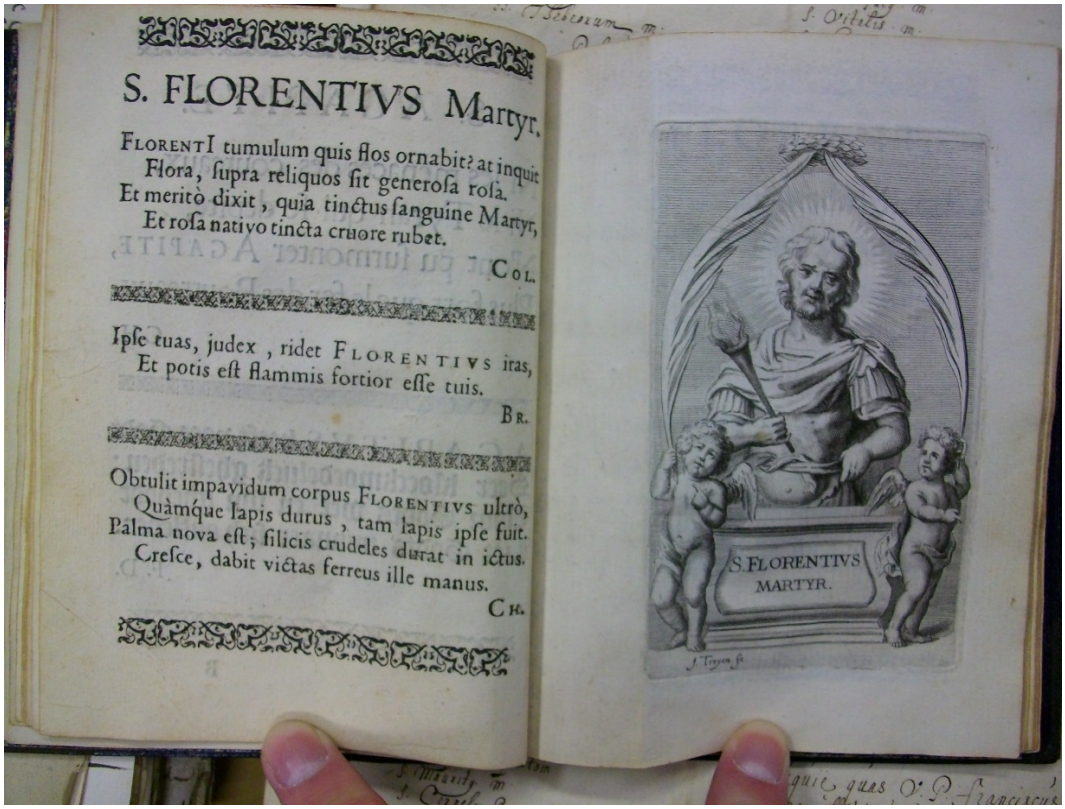
EPIGRAMMA.

Nil curas fasces, fortunatasque secures,
Tu ferro mavis hôc, *Agapite*, mori.

COL.

Tolle, Tyranne, animos. *Agapitus* victor, honestæ
Vel necis hinc titulum, vel sibi laudis habet.
Fortis adit pœnas, &, quæ tormenta vocamus,
Commoda virtuti judicat arma suæ.

CH.



S. FLORENTIVS Martyr.

FLORENTI tumulum quis flos ornabit? at inquit
Flora, supra reliquos sit generosa rosa.
Et meritò dixit, quia tinctus sanguine Martyr,
Et rosa nativo tincta cruore rubet.

COL.

Ipse tuas, judex, ridet FLORENTIVS iras,
Et potis est flammis fortior esse tuis.

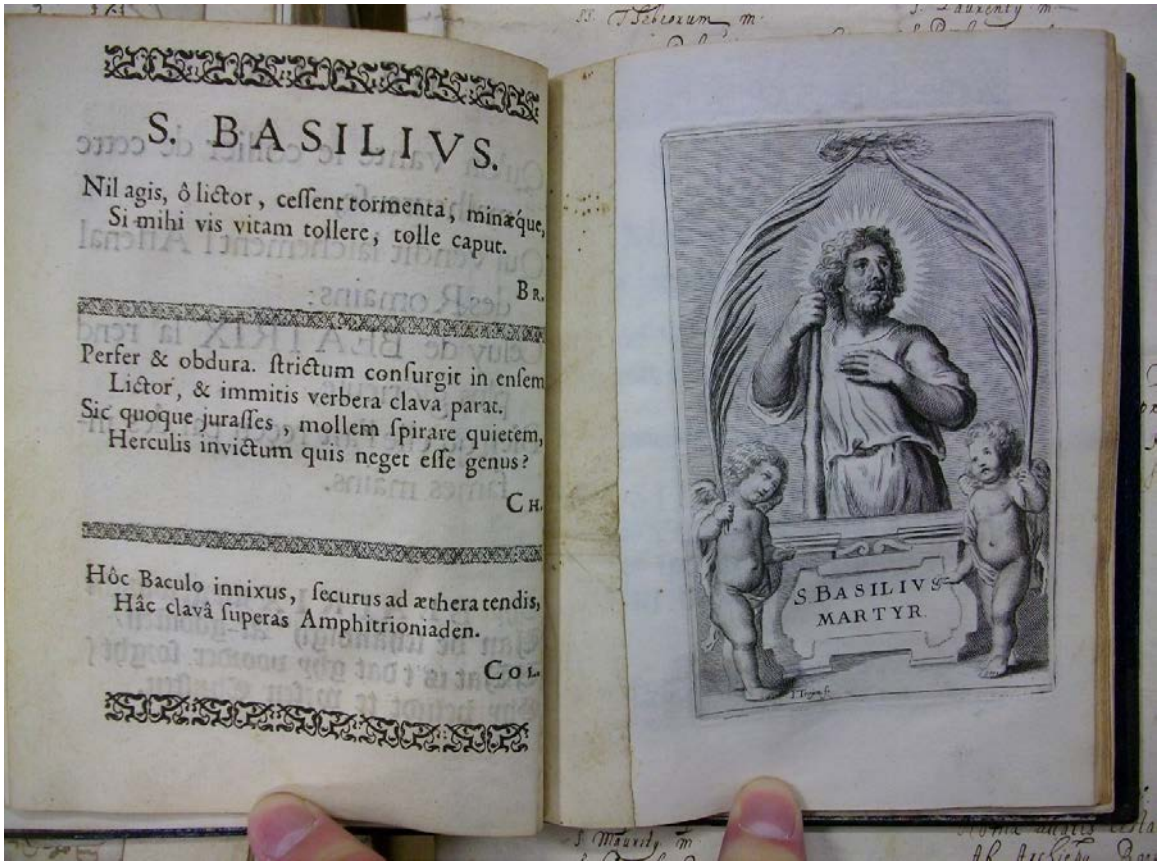
BR.

Obtulit impavidum corpus FLORENTIVS ultrò,
Quàmque lapis durus, tam lapis ipse fuit.
Palma nova est; silicis crudeles durat in ictus.
Cresce, dabit victas ferreus ille manus.

CH.

Figure 80: From Pierre Kints. Maurits Sabbe library, KU Leuven.

Figure 81: Thomas Willeboirts Bosschaert, *Martyrdom of St Basilius with St Anthony*, 1652. Fondation Coppée, Brussels.



S. BASILIVS.

Nil agis, ô lictor, cessent tormenta, minæque,
Si mihi vis vitam tollere, tolle caput.

BR.

Perfer & obdura. strictum consurgit in ensem
Lictor, & immitis verbera clava parat.
Sic quoque jurasses, mollem spirare quietem,
Herculis invictum quis neget esse genus?

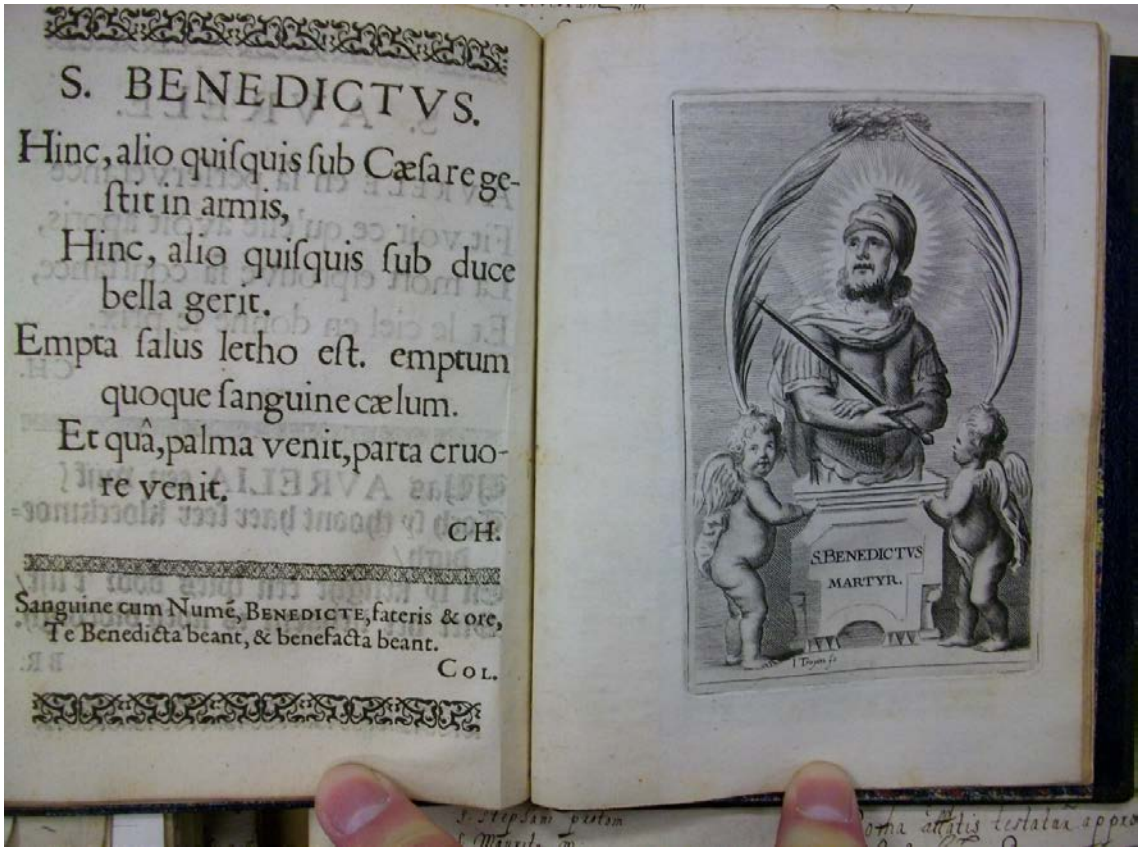
CH.

Hôc Baculo innixus, securus ad æthera tendis,
Hâc clavâ superas Amphitrioniaden.

COL.

Figure 82: From Pierre Kints.

Figure 83: Pieter Thijs, *Martyrdom of St Benedictus with St Felix of Cantalice*, 1652. RMFAB, Brussels (photo KIK-IRPA)



S. BENEDICTVS.

Hinc, alio quiſquis ſub Cæſare geſtit in armis,
Hinc, alio quiſquis ſub duce bella gerit.
Empta ſalus letho eſt. emptum quoque ſanguine cælum.
Et quâ, palma venit, parta cruore venit.

CH.

Sanguine cum Numé, BENEDICTE, fateris & ore,
Te Benedicta beant, & benefacta beant.

COL.

Figure 84: From Pierre Kints.

Figure 85: Antoon van den Heuvele, *Martyrdom of St Aurelia*, 1652. RMFAB, Brussels (on permanent loan to the town hall of Berlare).

S. AVRELIA.

Aurea ſaturni dixerunt ſæcula vates.
Fallor, an & nobis Aurea virgo dabit?
Dicite mutato nunc nomine, dicite vates,
Aurea (ſic ſpondet) ſæcula virgo feret.

CH.

O felix telum! reſtat poſt vulnera merces,
Te dignam dabit hoc, AVRELIA, aureolam.

COL.

S. AVRELIA
MARTYR.

Figure 86: From Pierre Kints.

Figure 87: Jan van Troyen, reliquary altar in the Brussels Capuchin church, from Pierre Kints.

Figure 88: Tentative reconstruction of the Brussels Capuchin church. By author (Google Sketchup).

Figure 89: Tentative reconstruction of the interior of the church. By author (Google Sketchup).

Figure 90: Tentative reconstruction of the interior: a side chapel. By author (Google Sketchup).

Figure 91: Engraving of St Francis preaching to the birds, from Carolus van Arenberg, *Icones antiquae*, 1666 (left).
Gillis Backereel, *St Francis preaching to the birds*, St Jacob's church, Antwerp (right).

Figure 92: Engraving of St Louis of Toulouse, from Carolus van Arenberg, *Icones antiquae*, 1666 (left).
Gillis Backereel, *St Louis of Toulouse despising the bishop's mitre*. St Jacob's church, Antwerp (right).

Figure 93: St Louis of Toulouse on a fresco of 1340 in the church of Santa Maria Maggiore, Bergamo.