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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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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: Istituto 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

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

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 Brabantiae* (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 alderheyligste 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,

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 artistic 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

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 “trophyies”.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.

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 strewn with flowers and greenery, the houses adorned with flowers, festoons, paintings, and tapestries. Especially the

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. Capucinatorum Bruxellensis,” in *Chorographia Sacra Brabantiae* (Brussels: Philippe Vleugart, 1662), 35. “in pegmate quadrato pulchre ornato”

⁶⁹⁰ Reproduced in Pierre Kints, *Mausolaeum SS. Martyrum Ecclesiae FF. Minori S. Francisci Capucinatorum 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

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 Bruxelles 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 lunedì 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 Mausolaenum

A significant medium that helped shape the new cult was the booklet printed by Pieter Kints, *Mausolaenum 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.

⁶⁹⁸ Kints, *Mausolaenum SS. Martyrum Ecclesiae FF. Minori S. Francisci Capucinatorum 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

⁷⁰¹ Kints, *Mausolaeum SS. Martyrum Ecclesiae FF. Minori S. Francisci Capucinatorum Bruxellis*. “[Q]uorum nomina non, ut quandoque fieri solet, iis imposita sunt, aut baptizata, sed eorumdem lapideis monumentis incisa, coram septem testibus in eundem 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. Capucinatorum 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 court⁷¹² 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 Nobilitas: 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 *gentilhomme de la Cámara* 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 Eugene.

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 order⁷¹⁶ 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

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 Definitorium⁷²⁵, 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

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 an 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 the Internuncio because of his interference in matters of regulars and his anti-Jansenist zeal,

⁷³⁶ Callaey d'Anvers, *La vie religieuse et familiale en Belgique au XVII^e 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 Ceysens, *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 Historique 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. Capucinatorum 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

⁷⁵² Father Carolus may as well have had the example of St Francis 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 publiceke 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 besondere armoede aen gemeijnte niet moijelijck en sijn, ende dat aen andere voorseide [...] ordes tot het opmaecken van hunne kercken ofte cloosters van stadswegen 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 Capucinatorum 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. Capucinatorum 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. Capucinatorum 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. Capucinatorum Bruxellensis,” 35. “Ad quae ipsemet [Carolus] ipsius fabricae prototypum 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 they 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 ever 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

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

⁷⁷³ Sanderus, “Chorographia Sacra Coenobii PP. Capucinatorum 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. Capucinatorum Bruxellensis,” 37. “Architectura ecclesiae hujus eminent, 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 historique 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’Arenberg 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

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

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 Basilus 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

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 up 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 Heuvel, contrasts with the classical, "courtly" elegance of Thijs and Willeboirts.

The third chapel to the right housed *Martyrdom of St Basilus 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 Basilus of Caesarea; instead it must be taken as a representation of the newly excavated catacomb saint named Basilus,

donor, was painted by Antoon van den Heuvel instead of Gaspar de Crayer to which it is sometimes attributed. I would like to thank Mirella Marini for showing me this document.

⁸⁰⁰ Probably a motif derived from Raphael's fresco in the Vatican *Stanza*, 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

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 anversoises au XVIIe siècle*, 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 Basilus, two unrelated saints are depicted: the catacomb-martyr named Benedict (not St Benedict of Nursia) 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

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 der flämischen Malerei ohne Parallele.”

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

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. Capucinatorum 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* (unpublished ms., Maurits Sabbe library, Leuven). See Gieben, “La predication 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, exercising 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 intertwined. 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.

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.