CHAPTER FIVE

THE BARE FEET OF ST. AUGUSTINE, OR: THE POWER OF RELIGIOUS IMAGES

Introduction

The real influence of the religious image is a phenomenon no longer easily accepted or understood. Even art historians, studying the greater or lesser religious art of earlier times, often seem baffled when trying to convey the actual function and significance of the frescoes, paintings and sculpture that used to adorn the walls of chapels and churches all over Christendom. We seem to have lost the key to the mentality that once invested these objects—form and content—with a function, with a message and, thus, with influence and power. If we want to understand this influence, we have to accept that language is both verbal and visual.

Consequently, a historian has to read visual material—more specifically those products we commonly term ‘art’—as evidence both of messages intended and of messages received. People, and specifically people in Europe’s so-called Middle Ages, have always realized that the (religious) image was created to interact with the viewer, to carry a message and, thus, induce change. However, even if we assume that, quite often, donors or the artists they employed may have had definite intentions, we are confronted with the problem that, equally often, the

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1 It is a pleasure to acknowledge the critical help of some friends and colleagues, who read and commented upon the text: Prof. Dr. John B. Scott of Rutgers University and Prof. Dr. E.-J. Zurcher of Leyden University.


image created is our main, sometimes even only evidence. Moreover, we should be conscious of the fact that even though well defined and intentional, the image yet may not have produced the desired effect within the chosen group of viewers. If it was a religious image, conceived as a traditional, stylised icon, it may have been read in terms of a particular context of scriptural, theological or historical significance. If, however, it was couched in a wider vocabulary, both artistically and as to content—even though that, too, may have been governed by quite definite conventions—the multi-va-lence of the message increases, and with it the interpreter’s problems.4

The location of the case I propose to study here is Mediterranean Europe, rather in the Braudelian sense: Italy, Spain, the South of France, even Austria. The milieu in which it is situated is the Augustinian Order and, of course, the Roman Catholic world at large. The time is the pontificate of Urban VIII, i.e. the period of 1623 to 1644. Yet, the ‘case’ of the Bare Feet originated in the late 16th century, when part of the venerable Augustinian Order decided to reform its way of life and, with it, the way it chose to represent its saints. It lasted well into the 18th century. The main sources are nearly one thousand folios of assorted documents—memoranda, letters, papal briefs, the records of lawsuits, et cetera—illustrating a battle over religious images between two branches of the Augustinians.5

Prehistory

In the year of the Lord 1256, the numerous independent congregations that all over Europe adhered to the rule of St. Augustine, decided upon a ‘Grand Union’ and appealed to the pope to be constituted a veritable religious Order alongside the Benedictines, the Dominicans and the Franciscans. The new ‘Order of the Hermits of St. Augus-

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5 The manuscripts that form the basis of this chapter are preserved in the archives of the Barefoot Augustinians in the Archivio di Stato at Rome. The documents seem to have formed a file on the case of the images. However, there is no real system in them; some stretches of single sheets have been paginated or foliated, but many documents are not even numbered consecutively. When a particular document could be somehow identified, it has been referred to as: Archivio di Stato di Roma (= ASR), Archivio degli Agostiniani Scalzi (= AAS), 129, followed by either a page or a folio number, or the title of the document.
tine’ soon experienced an enormous expansion: from 17 provinces with 12,000 members in 1295 it grew to encompass 40 provinces with 30,000 members in 1450. The addition, in 1401, of a ‘Third Order’, i.e. a lay congregation, with members both male and female, considerably strengthened its already impressive power in European society. Yet, like most Orders, it periodically went through a crisis, mostly caused by tendencies of declining religious fervour and discipline, which would then be countered by reformers who set out to combat such tendencies.6

In the late 16th century, the Spanish province of the Augustinians experienced a surge of reformist movements, perhaps inspired by the fervour of Theresa of Avila, who in the 1570’s described the first two unshod members of her Carmelite Order as men who, entirely bare-footed, walked endless distances through the snow to bring the Faith to those villages which were without any religious instruction.7 The new vigour amongst the Augustinians culminated in the provincial chapter held in Toledo in 1588, where Fathers Tommaso Alvarez di Gesù and Luigi de Leon presented their ideas for a more rigorous way of life, to counter the moral and material laxity that had crept into many monasteries. Within a year, the movement spread to Italy, and when in 1592 the hundredth general chapter was held in Rome, it was decided that the abuses rampant all over Italy, too, required the Order’s many Italian foundations to consider whether they should not revert to a purer way of life as well. The reigning pope, Clement VIII, was enthusiastic indeed, and gave the movement his full support. What happened next is described in detail by the movement’s first chronicler, Father Epifanio di San Girolamo.8

The first Italian monastery to embrace the new spirit was a Neapolitan one—i.e. in the Spanish-dominated ‘Regno’—where Father Antonio Diaz realized the reformists’ main ideas, viz. the renunciation of

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7 The episode is recounted in: J. Smet, *I Carmelitani*, II (Rome 1990), 91.
8 For the first years, this text is fundamental: Rome, Archivio Generale degli Agostiniani Scalzi, Mss., *Croniche et origine della Congregazione dei Padri Scalzi Agostiniani d’Italia*. A mine of information is the chronicle of Father Bartolomeo da Santa Claudia, *Lustri storali de Scalzi Agostiniani Eremiti della Congregazione d’Italia, e Germania … dedicati all’… Imperatore Leopoldo Primo* (Milan 1700), which is especially rich from the 1620’s onwards. To be cited as: *Lustri*. Obviously, both these early records, however revealing and precious, and the modern history of the Unshod Augustinians: G.M. Raimondi, AS, *Gli Augustiniani Scalzi* (Genoa 1955), must be used with care. What follows is my interpretation of their information.
all material comfort and the strict adherence to those monastic customs that were believed to be sanctioned by the traditions of the early Church.

Already in 1593, the father-general of the Order officially approved the “Congregatio Fratrum Discalceatorum Ordinis Sancti Augustini” as a separate entity; by that time, they were mainly recognizable by the fact that they went about unshod.

In 1594, the inmates of the Augustinian convents of St. Peter-cum-St. Mark, and of St. Paul’s, both in Rome, felt that their way of life, too, bore little resemblance to what they perceived to be the intentions of their founder. Therefore, they decided to implement the Neapolitan reform as well and henceforth adhere strictly to the rule, dispensing with the frivolities of choral music, observing Friday fasting, keeping the discipline on the second, fourth and sixth day of the week, as well as, by way of an outward manifestation, once again garbing themselves in a very simple habit and enforcing the tonsure. Consequently, led by Father Agostino Maria della Santissima Trinità these Roman convents went over to the reformed branch. In 1597, when Father Agostino Maria was nominated vicar-general of the reform movement, he could count ten reformed monasteries all over Italy. Introducing the short robe of rough-spun cloth with the narrow sleeves, as well as replacing the shallow round hat traditionally worn by the Augustinians by a high, conical hat and at the same time greatly shortening the long beard, he made his brethren conspicuous. Such activities as tirelessly visiting the terminally ill and doling out bread among the poor soon made them popular. Yet, the initial enthusiasm of many fathers must have waned when they experienced the obvious rigours of the new way of life. Various influential Augustinians who first had fervently embraced the reform, now backed out, and a number of convents retracted as well. A split in the Order was inevitable.

In the meantime, Father Agostino Maria had recognized that in order to keep its momentum, the reformist branch needed a fixed set of constitutions circumscribing and ensuring its own, new identity. A draft text was made in 1595, discussed by various bodies within the Congregation of the Discalced Augustinians during the following years and accepted by the father-general of the Order in 1599. In that year, too, Pope Clement appointed one of his trusted advisers, the

9 ASR, AAS, 129, pp. 597–640 give a rather garbled version of the entire episode.
10 Lustri, o.c., 7, 14.
unshod Carmelite Father Pietro della Madre di Dio, to the new position of ‘apostolic superintendent of the Order of unshod and reformed Augustinian friars’. Father Pietro reigned with an iron hand till his death in 1608. It seems his efforts to monopolize power and, moreover, to reunite the Spanish and Italian reformed Augustinians with the main body of the Order met with various, not altogether positive responses. Among the old Augustinians, opposition to the new branch’s increasing visibility grew steadily, but in 1610 Pope Paul V, repeating decrees already made by Clement VIII in 1599 and 1604, did admit the reformed constitutions and officially sanctioned the authority of the vicar-general.11

This virtually established the group of ‘Protestants’ as they were termed as an independent branch of the Order of the Hermits of Saint Augustine.12 The traditionalists as they themselves claimed to be, henceforth were known by the name of “Agostiniani riformati” or—going as they went barefoot, only, which, however, in most cases meant besandaled—as Agostiniani scalzi, the ‘unshod ones’. I will therefore refer to them as Scalzi. The non-reformed monks continued to be designated as Agostiniani conventuali or eremitani, their traditional name, although to many contemporaries their way of life did not exactly recall the image of a hermit. Therefore, I will name them Conventuals.

The only faculty still remaining to the father-general of the Augustinian Order, who always belonged to the older branch, was the appointment of a procurator-general, empowered every sixth year to act as visitor over the younger congregation. Still, on the occasion of such major festivities as the annual procession of the Madonna reputedly painted by St Luke that was one of the treasures of the Roman church of the older branch, the “riformati” dutifully followed the “conventuali” in their splendid progress through the ward.13

An outline of the case

In the course of this process of reform, an argument arose over the question whether or not St. Augustine and the other saints of the Order that bore his name could, or even should be represented barefooted—

11 ASR, AAS, 129, pp. 70–73.
12 For the following paragraph: ASR, AAS, 129, pp. 597–640.
13 Gigli, Diario, o.c., 172.
which could be besandaled or not—and in a hermit’s garb. The seeming futility of the question is belied by the emotions it continued to stir up in large parts of Mediterranean Europe till the end of the 17th and the beginning of the 18th century, when decisions of Pope Innocent XI, in 1683, and Pope Clement XI, in 1717, finally settled the dispute that had been the outward manifestation of a deep-rooted and complex problem, that manifested forces both of continuity and of change. This struggle, lasting for almost a century, was punctuated by a number of acute crises.

In 1613, a first, small conflict foreboded the complexity of the later issues. The Capuchins, a branch of the Franciscan Order, brought the Scalzi to court because they had adopted the cone-shaped hat traditionally used by the older Order: this would rob them of their distinction, with all ensuing problems for their status with the general public. The two cardinals appointed to deal with the issue soon found out what had happened.

In the late 1590’s, Father Agostino Maria, visiting the sacristan of St. Peter’s, was struck by an old painting of St. Augustine on the wall of his office. In it, the saint wore a high, conical hat. Hence, Father Agostino Maria immediately decreed that the reformed Augustinians should adopt it as well; its usage soon spread among the Scalzi all over Italy. Now, the cardinals asked the Capuchin plaintiff whether he could describe the difference between the habit of his Order, and the garb of the Scalzi. Rather foolishly, the man eagerly proceeded to give a detailed description of the differences, including the fact that his hat was considerably higher than his opponent’s. One almost can imagine the serene smiles on the faces of their Eminencies: this had been easy. They decreed that the Capuchins, instead of creating unnecessary scandal, should refrain from stirring up disorder, and asked the Scalzi to consider slightly diminishing the height of their hats; this implicit order was complied with during the general chapter of 1615, when a maximum height of 33 centimetres was adopted.

But whereas this had been an easy victory, things soon got more difficult. In 1615, the Scalzi opened a new monastery, and adjacent church, on the prestigious Roman Corso, dedicated to Jesus and Mary. This

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14 ASR, AAS, 129, pp. 68–69 sum up the argument.
15 Lustri, o.c., 5, 67.
16 Lustri, o.c., 97.
may have fired the Conventuals’ jealousy. For in the same year, the cardinal-vicar of Rome, Garzia Millini, was confronted with a plea of the Conventuals—informed by the visitor—who asked for a ruling forbidding the Scalzi to ‘depict and sculpt’ the images of St. Augustine and the other Augustinian saints barefoot and in a reformed habit.\textsuperscript{17} The Scalzi, however, argued that not only did they not violate the canons of the Council of Trent, which had been cited by the Conventuals, they also followed a centuries’ old iconographical tradition. Dozens of letters and petitions from all over Italy, as well as from Spain, poured into Millini’s office in support of either contestant.\textsuperscript{18} Cardinal Millini finally judged that the case had better be suspended.

So was a later one, brought before the ecclesiastical courts in 1620, although by then the accusations were more serious. For now the Conventuals maintained that the constitutions of the Scalzi were invalid and, moreover, that their decision to follow the teachings of St. Thomas Aquinas in everything but his opinion on the Immaculate Conception went against received wisdom in the Church, since they emphatically did state that the Virgin had been conceived free of original sin—on this issue the Scalzi held with St. Augustine.

Problems really started in the pontificate of Urban VIII. In the 1620’s and the early 1630’s, various onslaughts by the Conventuals on the position of the Scalzi were warded off, and various successes booked. Thus, Pope Urban, acting against the Conventuals’ vociferous protests, allowed the Scalzi to carry their own, distinctive cross in public processions that, obviously, increased their profile amidst the proliferation of religious Orders who participated in such ceremonies.\textsuperscript{19} This created an uproar, but, apparently, after some deliberations a semblance of quiet returned: on behalf of the Pope, Cardinal Francesco Barberini wrote to the father-general of the Scalzi to express his joy and confer the papal blessing.\textsuperscript{20} Also, in 1630, Urban recognised the Scalzi’s constitutions, which had been promulgated in 1620. One of the stipulations in the text was that the fathers would not wear shoes, “caligas”, but go about “nudipedes”, which, basically, meant in ‘sandals, after the manner of the Apostles’.\textsuperscript{21}

\textsuperscript{17} \textit{ASR, AAS}, 129, p. 465 sqq.
\textsuperscript{18} \textit{ASR, AAS}, 129, pp. 39–40 passim.
\textsuperscript{19} Lustri, o.c., 320.
\textsuperscript{20} \textit{BAV, BL}, Vol. 6260, f. 141r–v, 12 July 1629.
\textsuperscript{21} The manuscript text is in: \textit{ASR, AS}, Vol. 130. The text, first printed in 1622, was now reprinted: \textit{Constitutiones Fratrum Eremitarum Discalceatorum Sancti Augustini Italae} (Rome 1632). For the shoes: Pars prima, caput XII–II.
However, in 1637, a friar of the Scalzi-branch published an engraving of St. Nicholas of Tolentino based on the saint’s picture that, at that time, seems to have adorned the main altar of the eponymous Roman church at Capo le Case; apparently, it showed the Saint bare-footed, and added an inscription which read ‘St. Nicholas of Tolentino, barefooted hermit of St. Augustine’. The Conventuals immediately protested, arguing the public was misled by the suggestion that the original painting was identical to the engraving. Upon request, the *Maestro del Sacro Palazzo*, the papal chamberlain and chief censor, ordered that distribution of the engraving be stopped. The Conventuals were not satisfied, however, and asked for a decree of the Congregation of Rites to ban all images that represented Augustinian saints in a reformed habit.

As was normal procedure in each of the fourteen congregations, or ministries, that administered the Papal States and the Church, a cardinal of the Rites’ Congregation was asked to prepare a memorial about the case at hand. On the basis of a dossier compiled by Cardinal Verospi, the members of the Congregation then proceeded with their deliberations. The absence of the gouty Cardinal Pio at the final, voting session on December 19, 1637 resulted in a decision favouring the Conventuals, which was then routinely confirmed by Pope Urban on January 23, 1638.22 Furious, the Scalzi, who had not been heard at all, now asked that the decree be revoked, a request that was granted on March 13, 1638. It is unclear whether this strange sequence of at least seemingly contradictory decisions was due to Urban’s personal interference, once he had realized what was at stake, ideologically speaking. However, such a possibility cannot be ruled out.

Undeniably, from the beginning, Urban and his nephew Francesco had shown the Scalzi their favour. True, their first sympathies must have lain with the Franciscans and, more specifically, with the most severe branch of that order, the Capuchins, who were unshod and wore sandals as well. The Barberini family had a long tradition of naming their male offspring Francesco or Antonio, and in the Pope’s own generation his brother, Cardinal Antonio the Elder, was a Capuchin, much revered by Urban for his ascetic way of life in the wake of the barefooted St. Francis, whom he also held up as the ideal of human behaviour in his poems.23 This fact was well known; indeed, one of the

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22 *ASR, AAS*, 129, p. 547 sqq.
few letters from Urban’s private epistolary to be published during his lifetime was an admiring letter to his brother, dating from the earliest days of his pontificate, in which he lauded those who adhered to a strict interpretation of the Franciscan discipline, which, he wrote, offered him great consolation. Significantly, the letter was published in Cologne in 1640, with a long tract *De vera habitus forma a seraphico B.P. Francisco instituta demonstrationes XI figuris aereis ad Urbanum VIII Pont. Max.*, by the definer-general of the Capuchins, which exactly mirrors the arguments put forward by the Scalzi in these years. Among the papal poems published in Rome was a text expressing the Pope’s admiration for the virtues of the Capuchins, through the vision of a young man about to enter the novitiate.

Also, in St. Peter’s, Urban continued the dedication of the *Capella del Coro* to Sts. Francis, Anthony and the Immaculate Conception originally willed by Pope Sixtus V. Young Francesco, too, was known to appreciate those branches of the Franciscan order that kept to the narrow road. Being the protector of the English Catholic Church, he may well have remembered that the English Franciscans, who at that time went unshod, were expelled from the kingdom of Henry VIII because they objected to his divorce plans.

All these ideas and actions of the most important members of the Barberini family were mirrored, as it were, in the life style and principles of the Augustinian Scalzi who could be seen to adhere to a life that was, so to say, proto-Franciscan. The learned Lucas Holstenius, Cardinal Barberini’s librarian, solicited either by the Pope or his nephew, informed them that, though St. Augustine never formulated any clear rules, a study of the relevant sources showed that the unshod tradition had existed in the Augustinian Order right from its beginnings in North Africa. Therefore, we may assume the Scalzi could be well assured at least of Urban’s tacit approval and, in various instances, of his open support of their way of life, especially when they professed their humility and poverty, and used their naked feet as the expression of it. Their avowed preference for the notion of the Immaculate Conception will have done them no disservice, either, given the Pope’s well-

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24 *Exemplum epistolae D.N. papae Urbani VIII ad ... Antonium Barberinum* (Cologne 1640). Perhaps, however, the letter had been originally published in Fribourg, 1628 or 1629, to accompany Father Bonito Cambasson’s history of the unshod Capuchins.


known devotion to this specific cause. Hence the Pope, having given proper thought to the case, may well have welcomed the visual expression of these virtues as advertised in the images of the Scalzi.

However, neither the decree nor its subsequent revocation were formally registered and properly promulgated. Soon, the vicar-general of the Scalzi pointed out the highly unsatisfactory situation that now ensued, since both parties publicly claimed their right, thereby confusing and scandalizing the faithful. On Sicily, the Conventuals even asked the help of the secular authorities to forcefully introduce the January 1638-decree. The Scalzi now decided to formally petition the cardinal-secretary of State, the same Francesco Barberini.27 They were successful, for he ordered the Congregation of Rites to seek a compromise, which resulted in a papal breve of August 7, 1638, imposing a silentium on both contestants—which effectively left the Scalzi free to continue to paint their images the way they liked.

However, on August 19, 1641, the recently established French branch of the Scalzi asked the Congregation of the Bishops and the Regular Clergy to validate their new constitutions—which had been accepted by Urban in 1635—as well as allowing them to publicize their saints according to their own wish, apparently irrespective of custom and tradition. When the Congregation decided favourably, Urban issued a brief to confirm it: in his Divinae maiestatis providentia, the Pope now formally allowed the Scalzi-paintings and other images, included the printed ones. This, of course, was rather odd, in view of the preceding 1637-decision and its subsequent papal confirmation of January 1638, as well as the final silentium. It may be an indication that communication between the various departments of papal government was not optimal and that, as a result, consistency of legislation was not always ensured.

Still, the 1641-brief, immediately contested by the Conventuals, nevertheless was reconfirmed on several occasions by the Congregation of the Bishops and the Regular Clergy, e.g. on March 17, 1645. All ten of France’s “Parlements” acknowledged it, too.

In the same period the Holy Roman Emperor, Ferdinand III, and his second wife, the Empress Eleonora, who was an Italian princess, decided to take action. In 1638, Ferdinand had shown his favour to the Scalzi when he accepted their constitutions.28 Now, he wrote to Francesco Barberini, making it abundantly clear that he and his wife

27 Lustri, o.c., 488.
would not condone any change in the paintings of Scalzi-saints that now adorned the churches and chapels of their realms. The Cardinal talked to his uncle, and the Pope reconfirmed his 1641-brief.29

In 1647, several years after Urban’s death, the Conventuals moved to act again, and asked the Auditor Camerae, the Judge of the Apostolic Chamber, to effectuate the original decree of December 1637. This was a shrewd move, introducing an influential outsider into the debate, whose judicial powers were such that he might overrule the Congregation of the Bishops. Indeed, the ‘Court of the Auditor’ was one of the oldest institutions in the Papal States; moreover, its main tasks were in a field central to the functioning of the Papal States and the Curia, the field of finance. It will soon become clear the discussion about the Augustinian images had its economic side as well.

A bit desperate, the Scalzi decided to address the new pope, Innocent X directly, asking him to order the Congregation of Rites to hear them and then effectuate the silentium of 1638. Innocent ruled that the auditor, who meanwhile had validated the Conventuals’ arguments, should leave the case to the Congregation. Cardinal Franciotti, appointed to advise on the case, soon discovered the strange discrepancies between the 1638- and the 1641-brief, but already the Conventuals had started to try and have the 1637-decree effectuated.

The French and Spanish Scalzi, however, now decided to throw in their lot with their Italian brethren, launching a veritable publicity campaign with the publication of such well-documented tracts and histories as Charles Moreau’s Thesis apologetica pro D. Augustino doctrina, statu, et habitu monachali, regula aliisque ad statum eius pertinentibus (Paris 1645), his Vindiciae quadripartita pro D. Augustino (Antwerp 1650) and the Sacra eremus augustiniana in qua duobus libris breviter … de vera institutione ac felici progressu fratrum heremitarum discalceatorum ordinis Sancti Augustini differitur, eosque veros esse Sancti Augustini filios et reformatos demonstratur, written by Father Maurice de la Mère de Dieu and published in 1658.30 Now, things really got muddled. As the case seemed legally and politically insoluble, Innocent decided to intervene and once again impose a silentium. This, apparently, scared the Conventuals for they decided to keep a low profile, probably on account of the widespread and very damaging scandal aroused by the affair.31

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29 Lustri, o.c., 488.
30 It was published in Cambery. To be cited as: Sacra eremus.
Silence of sorts was, indeed, observed till emotions flared up again in the early seventies. Discovering that the document containing the 1648-silentium had not been properly registered, in 1674, the Lombardy congregation of the Conventual branch felt bold enough to ask the episcopal court of Cremona to execute both the decree of 1637 and the papal brief of January 1638, in order that some frescoes in the church of St. Ilario, depicting St. Augustine in reformed habit, might be repainted.32 Rome’s authority was invoked again, with the Conventuals once more appealing to the auditor, while the Scalzi, in high rage, went to the Congregation of Rites, who decided to overrule their bureaucratic opponent. We should not forget that the officials involved probably were all too eager to secure a case for their own court, as money, prestige and power were at stake.

But then a bureaucratic problem turned up once more. The original January 1638-brief of Pope Urban, in favour of the Conventuals, could not be found in the Secretariat of the Papal Briefs, where it should have been filed. The Conventuals did produce copies, but not having been authenticated by the papal chancellery they could not be accepted as evidence. This considerably damaged the Conventuals’ claims. However, after several months both the original brief and, even worse for the Scalzi, an official rescript registering the decree, did turn up. Though the Scalzi accused them of all sorts of legal hanky-panky, the Conventuals obtained a verdict through which the 1637-decree and the subsequent brief of January 1638 were made operative, now.

Overjoyed because their point of view finally prevailed, the Conventuals started having Scalzi images removed.33 Nevertheless, they soon discovered there was not yet reason for great joy, because this decision only formally ended the 1637-case. The Congregation of Rites continued to examine the Scalzi’s 1638-petition that the decree and the brief be officially revoked. Chaos ruled, as nobody knew whether a Europe-wide surge of iconoclasm was now called for, or not.34

As the case dragged on, the reigning Pope, Clement X, died, and, in 1676, a new one, Innocent XI, was elected. Hoping to profit from the new situation, the Reformed Augustinians, now backed by the Spanish ambassador, tried to get the decree formally rescinded, meanwhile backing up their campaign with the help of various tracts extolling the

32 ASR, AAS, 129, pp. 468–476.
33 A summary of this particular case: ASR, AAS, 129, pp. 553–592.
34 ASR, AAS, 129, p. 414 sqq.
virtues of those men who had followed their way of life. The new Pope commanded his nephew, the Cardinal-Padre Camillo Altieri to try and reach a compromise between the Order’s two branches. As the Conventuals proved unamenable to suggestions, refusing to budge even an inch, Innocent finally decided to side with the Scalzi. With his motu proprio, he overruled all previous decisions of the various departments of papal bureaucracy. An ‘eternal silence’ was imposed that, whatever the validity of the various arguments in the case, left the Scalzi free to pursue their own policy and use their own images to instruct and influence the faithful and establish their power. Roma locuta, causa finita—or was it?

We do not really know. The dossier I have reconstructed to form the basis of this chapter only covers the period of the 1590’s to the 1680’s, with some records going back to the fourteenth century. It does give some glimpses of the later history of the case, viz. the papal reconfirmations of the final decree of Innocent XI. However, it also holds some other documents, pertaining to the 18th century, which seem to indicate that the influence of the image, especially in its supposed and purported exemplary function, was still considered a power and, therefore, a problem.

The legal foundations of the case against the new image

Right from the beginning, the discussion was drawn into the legal sphere; we therefore should discover the Canon Law arguments that were adduced for and against the depiction of bare-footed Augustinian saints.

When the procurator-general of the Conventuals first dragged the case to court in 1615, he produced a variety of objections that well illustrate the complexity of the matter. Summarising his arguments, the essence of his reasoning was that the Scalzi-images were untraditional and therefore new, and that their meaning did not follow sacred history and was, therefore, false; on both accounts, the pertinent rulings of the

35 E.g. Th. a Iesu, Virorum illustrium arctioris discalceatorum instituti, divi Augustini ordine athletarum exegesis summario (Prague 1674). Cfr. I. Barbagallo, Togliti i calzari...la terra che calpesti e santa. La spiritualità degli Agostiniani Scalzi (Frosinone 1978).
36 Viz. a six-sheet memorandum of the early 18th century preserved in folder 4 of ASR, AAS, 129.
 Council of Trent were violated, i.e. precisely the rulings that were of vital importance for the development of the visual arts in the Counter-Reformation, Baroque period. Attempting to purge the Church of abuses, many 16th-century Protestants came near to denying altogether the value, nay even the moral and religious acceptability of any kind of religious art. Images and paintings only resulted in idolatry; excessive decoration as well as festive ritual were manifestations of sinful worldliness. In the course of the many years during which the Council sat at Trent, the Roman Catholic Church chose to mount the attack, on the one hand strengthening its traditional doctrine and on the other developing new methods both to combat Protestantism and to bolster up the morale of its own flock. Amongst other things, it became necessary to redefine the function of sacred images by posing that, far from being idolatrous, they were essential as an incitement to piety, a means towards salvation.

In the 25th and last session of the Council, in December 1563, the decree De Invocatione et Veneracione Reliquiarum, Sanctorum et Imaginum was passed which, essentially, decided ‘that the images of Christ, of the Virgin Mother of God, and of the other Saints, are to be had and retained, particularly in churches’, not because of any divinity or virtue in the objects themselves, but because they refer to prototypes, representing Christ, the Virgin and the saints. It should be noted here that in voicing these ideas, Trent went back all the way to the year 325 AD, to the Council of Nicea, where it had been stated that sacred images were not to be venerated for their own sake, but should serve as a means to instigate the faithful to the virtues shown by the saints; as for the effectiveness of an image, it was appreciated to function as a visual text, much as a verbal one might do.

The bishops, the principal authorities called upon to implement the Tridentine decrees, were admonished to instruct their flock in the stories of the mysteries of Redemption, presenting them in sermons but also in paintings or other appropriate images. As mnemonic devices, the latter would help the faithful to remember these stories, to follow

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the salutary examples set before their eyes, to continually revolve in
their mind the articles of the Faith and, thus, adore God and cultivate
piety.

Having taken this position, the Church of Rome now was to make
sure that religious art would not incite idolatry in the Roman Catholics,
nor give a weapon to the Protestants. Anything even hinting at heresy,
secularism, profanity or indecency had to be avoided at all cost.
Therefore, the Council decided that ‘no image shall be set up which is sugges-
tive of false doctrine or which may furnish an occasion of dangerous
error in the uneducated’, and later that ‘no one be allowed to place
(…) any unusual image in any place or church (…) unless it has been
approved by the bishop.’

These in part ‘iconologic’ decrees obviously were the result of the
Roman Catholic Church’s policy to retain and even strengthen its
power. Indeed, they had no basis in a theory of art in the strict sense,
although the issues involved had been discussed already in the 8th and
9th centuries and had been written about by St. Thomas Aquinas as
well. Yet, per force they now became the basis of such a theory—
or should one say a theology?—of art, viz. a body of ideas and rules
that from now on necessarily governed the production of all artists
for whom the Church and a profoundly religious laity were the only
patrons.

Both during the years of Trent and afterwards, a number of authors,
amongst them such Church dignitaries as the saintly Carlo Borromeo
(1538–1584), cardinal-archbishop of Milan, and Gabriele Paleotti (1522–
1597), cardinal-archbishop of Bologna, codified and published the deci-
sions of the council, commenting and elaborating upon them. Thus,
a series of treatises came into being, also embodying the new doctrine
as applicable to art, beginning with Giovanni Andrea Gilio’s Dialogo nel
quale si ragiona degli errori e degli abusi de’pittori circa l’istorie, of 1564,41
and Johannes Molanus’ De picturis et imaginibus sacrís, published in Louvain in
1570 and, considerably enlarged, again in 1594 as De historia SS. imaginum
et picturarum, and culminating in the text that bears Paleotti’s name.42

Basing their arguments on the decrees of Trent, the early 17th-
century Augustinian Conventuals felt43 they were in a position to insti-

41 This text has been published in: P. Barocchi, ed., Trattati d’arte del Cinquecento fra
Manierismo e Controriforma, II (Bari 1961), 1–115.
42 G. Paleotti, Discorso intorno alle imagini sacre (Bologna 1582).
43 E.g. a document ca. 1619: ASR, AAS, 129, pp. 19–21.
gate legal action against the new images introduced in the Scalzi churches, precisely because these could be represented and condemned as being new, that is: not traditional, and false, that is: incorrect within the strict limits imposed by biblical or theological orthodoxy and, on another plane, historical factualness. However, to provide legal evidence of any of these accusations was not exactly easy because most of these contentions obviously could not be proven within strictly legal confines at all, but touched upon a range of other, wider issues.

The historical reality of the new image

During the 17th century, the discussion generated by the issue of the bare feet of St. Augustine also developed into something of a debate on the possibility and the means to obtain knowledge about the past, viz. the question whether one could with certainty know if St. Augustine had walked barefooted and in sandals, or not. It was inevitable that tradition itself, as embodied in the visual and verbal representations of the Augustinian saints produced over the ages, should be cited as proof of the historical factualness or falsehood of the new image, as its acceptance according to the tenets of Trent depended upon it. This approach, though an important sign of a growing historical consciousness, and yielding a large amount of fascinating data, could not, in the end, conclusively stop the debate, the more so as people must have realized that a methodological or perhaps even epistemological problem was at stake, here.

Mostly, defenders of the new image turned to texts documenting St. Augustine’s life to find the proofs they needed. As the saint, in his own writings, had repeatedly indicated he wished his followers to live like Jesus’ disciples, to become part of the Apostolic tradition, one should turn to Holy Scripture for further evidence. Reading such passages as, e.g., Luke: 10,4, Mark: 6,9 or Matthew: 10,10 one would find that the Apostles went barefooted, wore sandals only and eschewed wide robes. Had not John the Baptist said that he was not worthy to untie the laces of Christ’s sandals?—a saying that should be taken literally rather than

44 E.g. ASR, AAS, 129, pp. 56–58.
45 A series of memoranda, all ca. 1638: ASR, AAS, 129, pp. 125–138; 277–297. Most of the arguments used also can be found in: Sacra eremus, o.c., 381–389, as well as in: Eustachio a San Ubaldo, Quodlibeta regularia (Milan 1691), 196–226.
metaphorically, as some of the Church Fathers had held. The story of Mary Magdalene’s conversion also was felt to show that the Messiah had walked in sandals. Of course, Jesus, in his turn, only followed Old Testamentary practice, another writer added, as the Jewish priests always performed the ritual sacrifices in the Temple barefooted; when King David wanted to show repentance, he, too, unshod his feet.

As for St. Augustine himself, though it seemed indubitable that he did wear sandals for at least three years of his life, the interpretation of his rule on this very point was not easy. Using his own writings and the many vitae written over the ages, one could not, apparently, deduce what exactly constituted his preference. The fact that the saint’s life had known three distinct phases and that one had to assume that during each of them his dress was different, complicated matters even more. As a hermit, pondering on and showing repentance of his former debauchery, Augustine wore a cloak of coarse cloth, and sandals. As a coenobite and after being ordained a priest, he might have worn shoes—or not, for as his twenty-second sermon indicates, he certainly did wear them but he also preferred to go barefoot when he felt he had to do penance. As to his footwear and clothing after he had become a bishop, again uncertainty reigned: the possible combinations, viz. of a bishop’s pontifical dress with or without shoes, or of a monk’s habit with mitre and pluvial all occurred—that is: in the many icons depicting the saint.

From this uncertainty over both the use and the interpretation of sources, the discussion often wandered off to other issues. Authorities like Tertullian and St. John Chrysostomos were cited to prove, respectively, that at least in North Africa, all Christians wore sandals, because, in fact, everyone normally wore them, and that all monks went barefoot in sandals, too, adopting shoes only if necessary for reasons of infirmity; in the 1670’s, the Scalzi tried to find evidence that in the year 451 AD, barefooted monks from North Africa, clad in black, had attended the Council of Chalcedon. Citing early hymns used in the Augustinian liturgy, they pointed to texts that clearly referred to the barefootedness of Augustinian saints as well. Other writers even used ancient Arab sources about the outward appearance of early Christian monks.


\[\text{\footnotesize 47 ASR, AAS, 129, p. 474.}\]
The Conventuals, ignoring the evidence of their founder’s hermit life, stressed the fact that as a coenobite he wore a wide mantle and, perhaps, even shoes. This had become the basis of the Augustinian habit as it was adopted in the Middle Ages, in accordance with the orders of Pope Gregory IX. Thus sanctioned by tradition, any change only would lead to confusion. They also posed the impropriety of a combination of monachal and episcopal dress and therefore concluded to its historical improbability. Finally, they cited Sermon 42, wherein St Augustine declares that those who wish to follow him should be given shoes. Others, however, realized this might be rather too facile an explanation; introducing semantics, they asked whether the Latin word *calceamenta*, interpreted within the context of contemporary North African society as described in, e.g., the writings of St. Bonaventura, should not be understood to mean sandals, with laces that closed around the ankles and calves instead of, anachronistically, as ‘modern’ shoes.

For the Scalzi, the accumulated evidence as cited above was sufficient to warrant their claim that far from being ‘false’, their image of Order’s founder was historically entirely accurate; as it was also confirmed by the pictorial tradition, the Conventuals’ charges that they violated the decrees of Trent should be considered invalid.

Though a new awareness of the past becomes manifest in these discussions about the Augustinian image, in the end the contestants must have realized that the great book of history, even if read with care and acuity, did not offer solutions to contemporary problems; as always, following the line of historical enquiry became futile precisely because, quite anachronistically, it was supposed to produce unambiguous proof for or against the contemporary, 17th-century use of the new image. Other arguments had to be adduced, more influential and powerful than those derived from the realm of scholarship.

*The tradition of Augustinian iconography and the new image*

Conducting a comprehensive search for all the published specimens of and material on Augustinian art seems a proper way to discover the actual form the image of the Augustinian saints has taken over the centuries, and thus to determine the position of the ‘new icons’ vis-à-vis tradition. Although, on the one hand, the body of publications on engravings, frescoes and other paintings with an Augustinian iconog-
raphy is quite impressive, on the other hand one has to bear in mind that it mainly covers the Italian peninsula from the Middle Ages to the 17th century, as well as part of France and the German countries. Of the significant material known to exist in, for example, the Iberian world, including the American and Asian colonies, or in Flanders and the rest of Catholic Northern Europe, with a few exceptions nothing has been published. It has been noted, however, that unlike in Mediterranean Europe, in those regions the Augustinian iconography shows an interesting proliferation of allegories and miracles, ecstasies and visions. This may suggest that in countries where conversion or re-conversion were the main tasks of the Roman Catholic Church, a different need may have created a different vocabulary and imagery.

It also should be noted that no 20th-century art historian—or other author for that matter—even seems to have touched upon the question which divided the Augustinian order during the 17th century. Looking at the earliest known image of St. Augustine, a late-sixth-century fresco in the library of Pope Gregory the Great in the Lateran Palace which shows the saint as a scholar, clearly barefooted in his sandals, it is amazing to read the description of the painting in a publication devoted to it in 1931, which states that the saint wears shoes, obviously because the author reasons on the basis of an iconographical prejudice which holds that Roman scholars always wore them.

Prior to the 14th century, the thematic range of Augustinian iconography was rather limited—the saint mostly was depicted reading.


To study the problem, one must, of course, also use the data collected in: G. Kaftal, Saints in Italian Art. Iconography of the Saints in Tuscan Painting (Florence 1952); Id., Saints in Italian Art. Iconography of the Saints in Central and South Italian Schools of Painting (Florence 1965); Id., Saints in Italian Art. Iconography of the Saints in the Painting of North East Italy (Florence 1978); Id., Saints in Italian Art. Iconography of the Saints in the Painting of North West Italy (Florence 1985).

preaching or debating, in the act of receiving a vision, or of giving his rule. With the flourishing of the Augustinian hermits in the 14th century, the iconographical vocabulary was considerably enlarged; scenes from Augustine’s life were now depicted as well, partly based on data culled from such well-known and on the whole trustworthy sources as Possidius’ *Vita*, and the saint’s own *Confessiones*, but increasingly also from the *Legenda Aurea* and the apocryphal sermons *Ad fratres in heremo*.50

Surveying the great cycles painted in Italy in the 14th century at Fabriano, Padua and Pavia, and in the 15th century at Cremona, San Gimignano and Lecceto,51 one has to conclude that, mostly, the saint’s feet are not visible at all—although at the hermitage of Lecceto, both shod and unshod representations dating from the 15th century can be found even today.52 Often, however, St. Augustine is depicted fully shod, as in Benozzo Gozzoli’s 1465 San Gimignano-cycle that follows the ‘Confessions’.53 Quite probably, Gozzoli adhered to a regional tradition because in Tuscany—where, ironically and significantly, the saint was the patron of the cobblers’ and leather workers’ guild—he often is represented as a bishop, with proper shoes. During the 16th and 17th centuries, in West and Northern Europe, series of engravings were published which show no consistent imagery, either: one often finds the Saint represented as a monk, but then he may be entirely barefooted, sandaled or even fully shod.

Whereas the above represents a modern historian’s attempt at a survey of Augustinian iconography, it has to be noted that the heat of the discussions in the 17th century generated its own collection of iconographical data, resulting in a quite remarkable series of descriptions of Augustinian images that now are lost but at that time could still be seen in the South European provinces of the Order; this series is the more remarkable as the verbal descriptions often were accompanied by pencil or ink drawings, admittedly rather crude, that, too, have survived in the archival dossiers examined.54

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52 A recent documentation is: C. Alessi, a.o. eds., *Lecceto e gli eremi agostiniani in terra di Siena* (Siena 1990), 190–191; 222–223.
54 All these data are gathered in folder nr. 3 of: *ASR, AAS*, 129.
This quest for iconographical proof of the Scalzi’s point of view was started in 1618, when all over Catholic Europe the Scalzi supporters were asked to send in descriptions of the images of Augustinian saints locally revered, preferably accompanied by a drawing. Material continued to accumulate until the 1670’s.

A number of early instances where Christ and the Apostles are represented barefooted are cited—such as the images at the top of the Scala sancta near St. John Lateran, or the mosaics depicting Christ, Mary and the disciples in the tribuna of Sta Maria Maggiore. Father Agostino Maria, who had first adopted the conical hat when he saw the old painting in his friend’s Vatican office, also reasoned that it had to be a very traditional item because even nowadays the poor of North Africa wore such caps. Of course, important proof was provided by the very old alabaster shrine in Pavia that dated from the year 722 AD and contained Augustine’s relics: the sculpture shows the saint with the typical Scalzi headdress. The authenticity of this image now was corroborated by the bishop of Pavia, who wrote about it to Rome. With equal relish, the very old St. John Lateran fresco is mentioned, where the saint wears sandals only. Generally speaking, however, unless other evidence was available, no real effort was made to improve the quality of the proof by ordering the visual material according to its chronology. Yet, some informants did stress the venerable age of the objects they brought to Rome’s attention, sometimes even asking an expert on ancient paintings to declare that the position and technique of certain frescoes indicated they were ‘at least two hundred years old’.

From Spain, the cycle of paintings in the Descalzados-monastery of the Escorial was cited. In France, frescoes in the chapel of St. Anne in the church of St. Augustine at Toulouse show the saint as a bishop, but with sandals; they even show St. Jerome as a cardinal, once again with sandals—as in Rome itself, the Counter-Reformation saint par excellence, St. Charles Borromeo, in his church of San Carlo ai Catinari, is to be seen in his cardinal’s robes, and yet barefooted. Indeed, the iconography of San Carlo often tended to stress this aspect of humility by having an acolyte lifting up the hem of his master’s robe, for all the world to see he was ‘nudipedic’.

55 Lustri, o.c., 5.
56 ASR, AAS, 129, a notarial document dated 16 April 1624.
57 ASR, AAS, 129, a notarial document dated 31 August 1619.
58 I would like to thank Dr. Louise Rice, who kindly drew my attention to this phenomenon.
All over Italy, of course, examples abounded. Most frequently cited was the cloister of the Milanese convent of St. Mark that had a cycle of Augustinian saints depicted as Scalzi. Another impressive series was the one already mentioned in the church of St. John of the Augustinian monastery at Carbonara, near Naples—a series since destroyed. A number of witnesses produced written proof of the extensive number of 23 Augustinian hermits depicted there in 1433, several of who were Scalzi in every aspect. A number of pious people referring to themselves as ‘impartial witnesses’ described the great fresco-cycle in the Tuscan monastery of Lecceto as proof of the Scalzi-view as well.

A great many other examples were given, from all over Italy, not only of St. Augustine but also of Monica, Alypius and other contemporaries and followers of the patron saint, all in reformed habit, as well as of such later Augustinian saints as St. William of Aquitaine and St. Nicholas of Tolentino. Quite often, public notaries vouched for the exactness of the verbal descriptions or at least confirmed the fact that witnesses had come on their own account to deposit their testimonies. Although the background of the persons who testify on the Scalzi’s behalf is not always mentioned, one often—as at Fermo—gets a glimpse of considerable groups of well-to-do citizens expressing their honest concern over the future of their favourite devotion, the fulcrum of their religious and civic life.

Of course, Augustinian iconography was not only characterized by the persons of its saints. Besides the items of their outward apparel, an artist, referring to the biographies of the saints, could use a great many attributes to enhance the image’s meaning. For the patron saint himself, some twelve elements formed the standard repertoire—among them a chalice, a heart, a dove, a shell, but also a child, a crowd, etcetera. In Rome, even twenty-two different attributes were accepted as part of the Augustinian iconographical canon. St. Monica had her own symbols, amongst which the name of Jesus, tears, and of course, the famous wimple and cincture, and so did the other saints.

Yet, it has to be doubted whether the public at large, looking at the Augustinian images, always was able to ‘read’ these in the way

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59 ASR, AAS, 129, notarial documents dated 1638.
60 E.g.: A. Frigerio, Vita Gloriosissima e miracoli excelsi del beato confessore Nicola da Tolentino (Milan 1603); L. Torelli, Ristretto delle Vite degli Uomini e delle Donne Illustri in Santità (...) dell’Ordine Agostiniano (Bologna 1647), et cetera.
intended. Surely, the finer points of the messages mediated by these attributes must have escaped many, as it called for a considerable knowledge of theology, Church history and of the mostly apocryphal episodes from the lives of the Augustinian saints that often formed the subject matter of the images. The fact that each of the various attributes had several different symbolic values, not only makes a complete understanding on the viewers’ part less than likely, but also should warn us not to indulge in iconological over-speculation. Consequently, one may assume that the people involved in this iconomachia were very much aware of the fact that the general public might well be more easily influenced by such unequivocal characteristics as bare or shod feet, or a simple garb that proclaimed poverty and humility.

Therefore, I was surprised to note that two of the most obvious cases that might have been adduced to strengthen the Scalzi’s point of view were not cited even once: the bare feet in Caravaggio’s *Madonna di Loreto*—admittedly, not the feet of a saint, but of a pilgrim—and the bare feet of another pilgrim, in a painting by Lanfranco, where the pilgrim reveals himself to be Christ, and where the person washing his feet is Saint Augustine himself, both paintings, moreover, exposed in what might be termed the enemy’s fort, viz. in the main church of the Conventual Augustinians!

*The new image: symbol, meaning and function*

An important point has to be discussed now, the more so as historiography has entirely ignored it hitherto: the question of the relation between form and function in these various examples of Augustinian iconography. Many of the cycles mentioned above adorned the walls of cloisters in Augustinian monasteries; they obviously functioned within the Order only, mediating and internalizing values within the body of the Augustinians themselves. Others decorated more public spaces, such as chapels and churches where the image provided insight to the faithful, sometimes even, like the great cycle of San Gimignano, functioning as a ‘poor man’s bible’ or as his introduction to theology, Church history and tradition.

From the beginning of the dispute there were those who insisted that no great importance should be attached to the historical factuality of the new iconography. One of the most vociferous ideologues of the Scalzi, Fra Basilio della Santissima Trinità, wrote a learned treatise
arguing that through the ages saints had been depicted not according to any reality and, consequently, historically accurate, but in such a way that symbolic significatio would be realized; this aimed at the presentation of the ideals and virtues which these saints stood for. Of course, God was not a dove, angels did not have wings, Mary’s breast was not really pierced by seven arrows, the keys of St. Peter were not real keys meant to open real doors, and so on. When the saints in Paradise were shown as ideally beautiful people, or when demons in Hell, who had no body at all, were depicted as malformed creatures or hideous beasts, it was only to convey their state of mind—blissful happiness or utter depravity.

Actually, Fra Basilio poses, all these things do not represent nature and reality but carry a deeper meaning. Thus, nudity, whether of the feet only or the entire body, is meant to show such virtues as humility and repentance, or chastity, simplicity and sanctity. In the image, it is the meaning that counts, not the form, it is the intention and the action that it should instigate that are important, not the material representation.

While not all who wrote in defence of the Scalzi showed this amount of perspicacity, which to some traditionalists may have sounded very much like free thinking, most did grasp the difference between form, symbol and meaning. Following Fra Basilio, many felt that the virtues of humility, poverty and asceticism as symbolized in the images of the Augustinian saints primarily intended to create a maximum of edification and emulation among the believers, to lead them towards the mysteries of the Faith. However, to be really effective, the example as formalized and symbolized in the image first had to be realized by those who professed the rule propagated by the images’ subjects, the Augustinian saints.

Thus, all through the 17th century, the discussion about the acceptability of the barefooted image had a bearing upon the actual lifestyle of the Scalzi, as well as upon the way their actions and behaviour were meant to impress the society they lived in and sought to influ-
ence. From the decisions of the general chapters of 1612 and 1638, it appears that the Scalzi were aware of the fact that the discipline of their group could and should also depend upon small things. Hence the simple rules about barefootedness, the wearing of sandal, the width of the tonsure—between two and two-and-a-half fingers—, the cut of the habit all were seen to affect the behaviour of the members of the Order, the way they visualized the discipline inherent in the Augustinian Rule and, therefore, the example they set to themselves and to the wider community.

This was particularly important as the Augustinians attached great weight to their educational activities. Whether or not the many pupils who flocked to their houses chose to enter the Order and, perhaps, the priesthood, they were bound to be deeply influenced by the teaching they received and the example that was given to them. Without education, society would not function properly; without discipline, education could not fulfil its task. Discipline would only be effective if all involved, but, primarily, the teachers and everyone living in a given Augustinian convent, adhered to it, by showing it in their private as well as in their public behaviour. Therefore, an exemplary way of life, manifest in such details as the bare feet, should be a criterion in the selection of the Order’s novice masters and teachers.

A number of decrees of Clement VIII, Urban VIII, Innocent X, Alexander VII and, finally, of Innocent XII, in 1695, all emphasized the importance of discipline—up to such points as the proper pose, bearing and gesticulation during services—for the mind and mentality of the Order’s members, and for the impact of their example on others. Thus, a steadily growing body of rules was created, governing all aspects of the relation between senior and junior monks, and between the monks as a group and the novices, forbidding, e.g., such things as a visit from a student to the cell of his professor: if necessary at all, the pupil should remain in the corridor and address his teacher from outside, while the cell door remained open. The discipline of which these rules were the outcome and which was stipulated in these decrees, was to be symbolized in the images of the Order’s saints: the virtues of asceticism, poverty and humility would immediately appear from their bare feet.

From the late 14th century onwards, the Augustinians used a variety of means to spread the cult of their saints and, more specifically, of their founder, employing all instruments of propaganda then available. St. Augustine became the patron of a great many new churches,
and elaborate ceremonies were staged in his honour.\textsuperscript{64} The saint even took the place of the Virgin in the sacred music sung by the companies of \textit{laudesi}, the lay-singers attached to Augustinian foundations.\textsuperscript{65} When printing became an ever more important vehicle of communication and socio-cultural persuasion, the great scholarly industry that had grown up around Augustine’s works culminated in their codification by Fra Bartholomew of Urbino who compiled the \textit{Milleloquium Sancti Augustini}, that went through a great many impressions.\textsuperscript{66} In the 16th century, the Rule, the Sermons and the Confessions, translated into the vernacular, reached the public in a number of editions, often profusely illustrated for effective use among wide strata of society.\textsuperscript{67} \textit{Vitae} of Sts. Augustine, Monica and Nicholas of Tolentino were published, lavishly embroidered with legends and stories of spectacular miracles. Yet, such printed texts only would influence the smaller part of the believers, most of whom remained illiterate until well into the 19th century. Still, there existed a fruitful interaction between the printed and the parallel oral tradition. For of course, all this material also was used in the sermons that were preached in the Augustinian churches, sermons that, in their turn, often appeared in print as well. Though it seems highly likely that the monks delivering these sermons would, in both word and gesture, refer to the pictorial cycles adorning the walls of the Order’s churches, to ensure that the verbal and the visual text would complement one another, as the Nicean fathers had stipulated already, I have not come across any eye-witness accounts of such occasions. In the end, the actual influence or power of the image on the mentality of a past society must escape historical reconstruction.

Obviously, there were those who posed the question ‘whether the habit makes the monk’, asking themselves and their superiors if emphasis should not rather fall on an endeavour to put into action the essence of the virtues that were being preached and pictorially presented. They stated it was futile, nay even a shame to spend so much emotion dis-

\textsuperscript{64} D. Esteban, ‘De festis et ritibus sacris Ordinis Eremitarum S.P. Augustini’, in: \textit{Analecta Augustiniana}, 16 (1937/38), pp. 6–11.
\textsuperscript{67} P. Cherubelli, \textit{Le edizioni volgari delle opere di S. Agostino nella Rinascità} (Florence 1940).
cussing the formalities of what were, after all, externals only, the more so as it profoundly scandalized the general public. However, the consensus among the Reformed Augustinians seems to have been that they had to live up to their icons, to make the image, so to say, incarnate. They had to function as living examples, alongside the saints whose images visualized the qualities and values they sought to impose upon society: humility, sobriety, poverty even, a return to the ideals of the early Christian Church as advocated by Trent.

The fact that this specific war of ideas was largely waged within the Augustinian Order should not blind us to another fact, viz. that it was part of the wider debate surrounding the post-Tridentine missionary movement that reactivated Christianity both in Europe and in the overseas colonies that were of a Roman Catholic persuasion.

Indeed, missionary strategies were discussed widely. Was it enough to convert the heathen through the sacred, magic act of baptism, as the first missionaries had done in their campaign to christianize Europe’s peripheries in the early centuries of the Christian era, and as they still did in the colonies? Or should conversion be effectuated at a deeper level, after the tenets of the Faith had been properly taught, and, moreover, the morals that would ensure a Christian way of life had been interiorized as well? Which means would best serve these complex ends, especially among the illiterate, the idioi, both overseas and in Europe? Should one use the word, only, which reached man’s intellect, or also the image, that reached his heart, through his imagination?

The Franciscans who, in the 1520’s, had first crossed the Atlantic to begin their missionary work among the native Mexicans made use of engraved pictures to drive home their message, both in churches and in schools. One of them, the Mexican missionary Diego Valades, in 1579 published a book based on his experiences in the Indies, his Rhetorica christiana ad concinandi, et orandi usum accommodata, in Perugia. It became widely famous as a handbook to be used in all kind of situations wherein conversion was at stake and the power of words, sounds and images could be exploited. For whereas the word, especially the written word, appealed to reason, the life of the intellect, the image—as well as music—unleashed fantasy, and, hence, was the perfect means to

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influence the life of the senses which, especially among those who had little or no education, was the only basis whereon to build some kind of religious understanding.

From the end of the 16th century onwards, the Jesuits, quickly becoming the Order specialising in missionary work both within and without Europe, recognized the image as the perfect language to convince and convert the illiterate. Indeed, Saint Ignatius deemed pictures the prime vehicles to show both the *res corporea* and the *res incorporea*. But so did the policy-makers of other Orders, engaged either in the re-conversion of Protestants to the true faith of the Mother Church—not surprisingly, Molanus’s above-mentioned fundamental tract about the use of sacred images did appear precisely after the fierce wave of iconoclasm that hit Flanders in the 1560’s—, or in the equally arduous task of keeping their own flock from going astray. And so, it seems, did the Augustinians themselves, what with one branch of the Order vilifying and seeking to disempower the other, with all consequences doctrinal and financial. The need to employ every means available was all the greater because by now the Church, and more specifically that part of the clergy who made the teaching of the poor their special task, had become fully aware of the fact that, especially in the remoter parts of the countryside, Christianity was only a varnish, barely covering a world of beliefs that to Rome were utterly pagan.

Yet a discussion continued, viz. whether the image was a source of pleasure, of delectation, only, or if it was an autonomous vehicle that would lead to wisdom, and to the Faith. Moreover, some held that the rhetorical, theatrical strategies involved in pictorial representation were means to an end, only, to be used prudently and sparingly. Others held a different opinion. In the *Dottrina christiana* of Gianlorenzo Romano, S.J., the essentials of the Faith basically were represented in simple but yet speaking images, captioned by a few words, only.

Consequently, in the first decades of the 17th century, a broad spectrum of strategies evolved. It resulted in learned discussions about the meaning of arcane words and images, exemplified in the neo-Platonic cult of the stars and in the search for the hieroglyphs—essentially an elite phenomenon; it also resulted in the production of simple images and the use of bold rhetorical stratagems for the edification and education of the masses. Yet, both esoteric speculation and such phenomena as the ‘poor man’s engravings’ and the ‘little saints’ were closely scrutinized by the Inquisition which feared that the cause of orthodoxy might be at stake, here.
The economic and financial significance of the new image

The first indication that a struggle for economic and financial power was a major, though hidden motive behind the Conventuals’ initial action and the reaction of the Scalzi can be found in the procurator-general’s court plea of 1615. In it, he mentions the fact that the Scalzi had instituted several ‘Companies of the Cincture of St. Monica’ that created an institutional and social context for a new devotion around the Augustinian saints, with sermons, blessings and a monthly procession. According to the procurator, Clement VIII had authorized the foundation of only one such confraternity—we may, of course, assume that there was a sorority as well—which made the other ones a fraud, a means to deceive the people. The Conventuals also spread a rumour that the relics of St. Monica, around which this new devotion centred, were false.

The Scalzi professed themselves shocked by the latter part of this accusation. To defend themselves, they invoked the privileges accorded to the Augustinian Order, theirs to enjoy as much as by the Conventuals. Actually, a papal faculty of October 12, 1613 spoke of sodalitates, of confraternities, without posing any limit to their number. In the course of the 17th century, the membership of these ‘Fraternities of the Cincture’ brought with it a gigantic mass of indulgences. Indeed, when asked by the Spanish ambassador what indulgences to choose, Pope Clement X himself is reported to have said: ‘Take the Cincture of St. Augustine, for it carries with it everything’.

Of course, what we should realize is that these devotions, organized in such a way, did generate quite a bit of money from alms and other gifts. This could be used to take care of the cost of a number of regular tasks of the Augustinian churches, such as, perhaps, certain festivities and everything connected with them; these, in their turn, served to attract a good many people who, with their gifts, enriched the Order.

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69 ASR, AAS, 129, pp. 2–3.
70 Bullae Summum Pontificum … ad Augustinienses exceleatos spectantia (Rome 1742), 14.
71 According to: F.M. Capriola, San Agostino e i suoi eremiti, specialmente di San Giovanni a Carbonara in Napoli (Sienna 1887), 108–119.
72 This, of course, was normal practice all over Christendom; cfr.: P.J.A.N. Rietbergen, ‘Koloniale Caritas en Curiale Bureaucratie. De Broederschap van het Allerheiligst Sacramento in de kathedraal van Mexico, 1538–1688’, in: Tijdschrift voor Geschiedenis, 98 (1985), 1–23.
even more. Urban’s decision of 1636 to allow the Scalzi to carry their own cross in processions, undoubtedly must have brought financial benefits as well.

As the struggle continued and the pressure of the Conventuals increased, the fact that other motives than devotional and religious ones were involved, emerged ever more clearly, although, of course, none of this was ever explicitly stated. The Scalzi indicated that their reformed way of life, as symbolized in the new image, should be adopted by the entire Order, as the Conventuals spent a lot of money on their wide, rather luxurious habits, their shoes, et cetera; would not that serve to clothe a great number of poor religious persons? They also fulminated against the threat uttered by the Conventuals to use, if necessary, the entire capital of the Order to destroy the new icons.

In the critical year 1637, the Scalzi of Sicily furiously reacted against the chaos, citing groups of monks belonging to other Orders who now donned their particular habit to easily collect a great amount of alms—incidentally an obvious indication of the Scalzi’s popularity, religious as well as financial. And when, also in 1637, the Conventuals sought the suppression of one Scalzi-image—the much-maligned engraving of St. Nicholas of Tolentino—we should be aware that the ban would, of course, extend to the printing of all sorts of illustrated pious tracts or other devotionalia, no mean source of income for either contestant. For already from 1629 onwards, printed pictures of Augustinian saints in Scalzi-habit had circulated widely, as, e.g., in Naples and Prague.

No wonder Urban’s 1641-brief, allowing the French Scalzi to paint and print their images as they liked, was such an important event. Also, it created a new industry and new income.

Another papal brief of the same year, which allowed the Scalzi to have the bodies of those who wished to be buried in their churches brought thereto immediately, instead of having them carried to the parish church first, must have cost many a parish priest a good part of his earnings, while, on the other hand, considerably strengthening the Scalzi’s financial position.

During the crisis of 1674, the Scalzi adduced they would experience a significant loss of vocations if, due to an adverse papal decision,
their reformed way of life would have to be abolished. As, by then, in Italy alone some 69 monasteries were involved, the magnitude of the problem in all its aspects becomes quite clear.

Again, in 1676, the Scalzi indicate what repercussions large-scale iconoclasm would have. In the lands of the Habsburgs, Spain and the Empire, as well as in France, where, according to them, the barefooted version was commonly accepted, repainting the images would result in a huge scandal, an outcry amongst the faithful who had underlined their devotion and their vows with material gifts as well.\(^{76}\) When the Congregation of Rites finally published its decree against the Scalzi-images, one of the ways the monks voiced their dismay was to cite their poverty. Since their churches had been richly decorated by devout and powerful patrons, any changes would not only enrage these influential protectors, but also result in huge costs which the Augustinian houses could not possibly bear.\(^{77}\) In their subsequent appeal to the pope, the Scalzi openly admitted that a forced reform of their way of life, their devotions and their images would ruin them, as it would almost certainly reduce to nil the income from alms upon which they largely depended. After Pope Clement X had decided not to endorse the Congregation’s decree, the Scalzi, emboldened and, obviously trying to cash in on their victory, asked his successor for a brief that would establish the amount of indulgences the confraternities and sororities of Monica’s girdle were allowed to grant—without mentioning that this, of course, was another important source of income.

**Power politics and the new image**

It is strange that up till now scarcely anybody has noticed that the very fact of the existence of the *Agostiniani Scalzi* and, indeed, of the Battle of the Bare Feet, can be explained from the change of mentality brought about by the Catholic Reform movement of which, e.g., the Jesuit Order was a child as well. As has been shown above, even before the two Roman monasteries decided to adopt a new way of life that, to them, seemed more in keeping with the original ideas and life-style

\(^{76}\) ASR, AAS, 129, pp. 138–139.

\(^{77}\) ASR, AAS, 129, pp. 494, 497–500.
of St. Augustine and his followers, in the 1580’s a group among the Spanish Augustinians had given the example, which in the next decade was followed in Rome.\(^7^8\)

Even more remarkable than this omission in the Augustinian and general historiography is the fact that the Reformed Augustinians do not seem to have played a role in the complicated tangle of Italian politics where such states as, for example, the Republic of Venice, were all too eager to take up any novelty if they thought it might irritate the papacy. Only at the end of the struggle do we get a clearer idea of the Italian partisans of the Scalzi.

In December 1674, an impressive number of bishops and cardinals, as well as members of the nobility, wrote in support of the Scalzi. Among them were several highborn ladies.\(^7^9\) Incidentally, it seems that, quite often, the reformed branches of religious Orders enjoyed aristocratic female support, perhaps because the increasing lack of opportunities and an inevitably heightened sense of the artificiality of their existence led women of this class to a vision of a life of simplicity and devotion to a higher cause, or, conversely, the rise of a new devotion gave them a much-wished for chance to establish their own networks of patronage, and hence, power.

However, in the other Roman Catholic countries the Augustinian iconomachia did generate considerable political attention. One may assume this was precisely because most Catholic princes eagerly grasped each new occasion to strengthen their own position within the Roman Catholic Church of their state through the support of initiatives and groups that might bolster up the confidence of the faithful. In doing so, they also hoped to combat the possibly disrupting forces of heresy in their own country. Equally important, however, must have been their wish to counterbalance the efforts of Rome to increase its authority, a policy that made itself felt in the first decades of the 17th century.

In Spain, where the entire Catholic Reform movement was strongly supported by the royal family, the wife of Philip III had founded a monastery of Agostinianos Descalzados in the Escorial palace; as mentioned above, its cloister was adorned with representations of barefoot Augustinian saints.\(^8^0\) Generally speaking, the Scalzi in Spain wielded

\(^7^8\) *ASR, AAS*, 129, p. 35, a document ca. 1619.
\(^7^9\) *ASR, AAS*, 129, p. 444, sqq.
\(^8^0\) *ASR, AAS*, 129, p. 67, a document ca. 1619.
great influence. The very fact that they were among the first to come to the help of their Roman brethren obviously relates to their wish to keep that power by forging coalitions all over Christendom.

In France, the reformation among the Augustinians was very successful, too. It had started already around 1600, when many French Augustinians adopted the Scalzi way of life. Pope Paul V, I feel, must have seen interesting possibilities to use their renewed fervour for the re-conversion of this realm, whose fidelity to Rome had been endangered greatly by the rise of the Huguenots. From then on, the Scalzi received every possible royal support—after all, Queen Anne, the wife of Louis XIII, was a Spanish-Habsburg princess. In the 1620’s, she made the Scalzi Father Francois Amet de St. Jérome her confessor, while her husband, to celebrate the victory over the Huguenots, founded the great Scalzi monastery of Nôtre Dame de Victoire.81 In 1628, the French branch of the Scalzi became virtually independent of Rome, with its own constitutions, recognised by Pope Urban in 1635.

In 1637, when the Italian Scalzi got into trouble again, the French threw in their weight, asking the Congregation of Rites to be accepted as a party on account of the fact that their principal interests were at stake as well. It seems quite likely that royal backing enabled the French reformed Augustinians to ask Urban VIII to concede to them the very privileges the Italians were now defending. When the Pope, apparently unconscious of the contradiction, did issue his 1641-breve, this greatly complicated matters for the rest of the century, although the Scalzi never lost an opportunity to point out and exploit this discrepancy.

In 1641, the French Scalzi went on to establish a mission in North Africa, significantly near Hippo, their founder’s birthplace;82 soon named “Le bastion de France”, this house obviously served the French commercial and political interests in the area—already, there were those in France who contemplated conquering this economically and militarily vital region; at the same time the foundation cannot have been displeasing to Rome, either, what with Pope Urban and Cardinal Francesco being fervent advocates of the spreading of the Faith in foreign parts, especially around the Mediterranean.83

81 Sacra eremus, o.c., 173 sqq., 2140220.
82 On its foundation: Sacra eremus, o.c., 229–238.
Meanwhile, in 1623, two Reformed Augustinians from Italy had crossed the Alps to settle in Prague. Soon, Emperor Ferdinand II realised their missionary potential in a kingdom that still shook from disruptive religious wars. A few years later, the Scalzi moved to Vienna. There, they were put in possession of the once-famous Augustinian convent attached to the imperial Hofburg, which lately had fallen into disrespect. In a very short time, the Scalzi made a success of themselves, turning the church of the monastery into a centre of imperial religious pageantry, especially after the building, in it, of a copy of the Shrine of the Virgin of Loreto, erected by Ferdinand after his victory over the Bohemians. In short, in Vienna, too, the Reformed Augustinians enjoyed the favour of the emperors, as well as, it should be added, of the emperors’ favourites. From 1639 onwards, the two Eckembergh princes, uncle and nephew—who, in the 1630’s, has been sent to Rome to represent their masters, Ferdinand II and Ferdinand III, respectively, before Pope Urban—erected a Scalzi-monastery in Ljubljana.

In view of the imperial favour it was inevitable that a crisis started building up when the Congregation of Rites began to issue orders against the Scalzi, which were sent to France, the German countries and Spain. The fact that in various towns of the Habsburg states the Conventuals actually started to repaint all images showing traces of Scalzi-influence, considerably exacerbated public opinion. We may safely assume that, if for no other reason than the possibility of public disorder, the secular authorities were not pleased at all.

Rome now felt the anger of Emperor Ferdinand III who from 1638 onwards intimated he would not countenance the scandal that might result from a suppression of the Scalzi-images. Rome also was confronted with the interference of the Empress Eleonora. In 1648, she commanded the imperial ambassador at the Curia, Prince Savelli, to inform Pope Innocent X of the displeasure she and Her House would feel if the Scalzi-icons would be abolished; indeed, that was the main reason why Innocent then asked the Congregation of Rites to stop pro-

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84 Lustri, o.c., 205–211.
86 Lustri, o.c., 334–335.
87 ASR, AAS, 129, p. 424, sqq.
ceedings against the Scalzi, announcing the situation only could be resolved through the imposition of a *silentium*.88

In the 1670’s, the emperor himself, now Leopold I, asked several members of the imperial party in the College of Cardinals, such as Cardinals Altieri, Facchinetti and Pio, to intervene on behalf of the Scalzi, indicating that on no account would he tolerate that in his widespread states their images be broken or repainted. Cardinal Pio, in his turn, advised the Scalzi to ask their German colleagues to petition to the emperor as well, as he might then use this as a pretext to interrogate the papal nuncio on this point—who, of course, then could not help but alarm the Curia to the imperial displeasure. The Spanish ambassador to the Holy See, the Count of Melgar, also addressed the pope on the Scalzi’s behalf.89

Emboldened by this support, the Scalzi then planned to petition Pope Clement X for their branch of the Augustinian Order to be made entirely independent of the Conventuals, citing other examples of such a construction in the Capuchin and Carmelite branches of the Franciscan Order. The present vicar-general could *de iure* assume the title and, more important, the functions of a father-general which, *de facto*, he exercised already. The general chapter of the Italian Scalzi even might extend its suzerainty over the Reformed Augustinians in France, Portugal and Spain—after some mutual deliberations, of course.90 Apart from the fact that the Italian branch obviously was seeking to increase its own status and power—quite probably unbeknownst to the other Congregations—we once again find the Scalzi using their friends in high places: the petition to the pope was to be seconded not only by the emperor but also by other ‘absolute princes’ involved.

Last, but not least, one should realize that for the popes, too, power was at stake, though, of course, this was never mentioned. First of all, it should be noted that the various decrees of a *silentium* imposed by successive popes apparently were not really effective, given the fact that, each time, the discussion did flare up again, lasting well nigh a century. It is an unambiguous indication of the limits of papal power. Obviously, the seemingly strict rules established for religious art by the Council of Trent did not prevent such fierce disputes, nor were they instrumental in providing a solution for them. Moreover, we must assume that the

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88 *ASR, AAS*, 129, pp. 539–540.
89 *ASR, AAS*, 129, pp. 490–491.
90 *ASR, AAS*, 129, p. 617 sqq.
Roman pontiffs, whatever their private opinions, were not at all happy with the Augustinian icon battle, as it provided fresh arguments to the Protestants, fuelling their age-old criticism against the phenomenon of icon ‘worship’. Indeed, in their pleas the Scalzi themselves, quite cleverly and quite openly, exploited Rome’s fear on this point.91 Of course, this fear was not abating: in the 17th century, the popes felt part of their erstwhile power slip from their hands, due not only to the growing authority claimed by the European kings and princes but also to the disastrous results of the Peace of Westphalia for the religious authority of Rome in the Holy Roman Empire: the existence of Protestant states was now openly acknowledged.92 Hence, they could well do without the counterproductive propaganda the battle of the images caused.

On another plane of power politics, one should interpret the vacillating attitudes of Urban VIII and Innocent X. The Barberini-pope, I think, must have been influenced in his decision to impose the 1638-silentium by the stern words of Emperor Ferdinand; three years later, he may well have given in to the French Scalzi both because he basically admired the Scalzi’s vision, and, indeed, had given them a great many privileges, and because he could not very well afford to antagonize the French king whose military and political support he needed to keep whatever power he still had in the German states.93

As indicated above, the Pamphilij-pope imposed the 1648-silentium quite obviously because he could not ignore the House of Habsburg’s wishes, for the very same reasons.

Finally, Innocent XI settled the case for what I believe to have been political considerations as well. When he ascended the papal throne, someone who according to most historians scrupulously upheld moral standards attained the highest office in the Roman Catholic Church.94 His actions, in his capital, his states and his Church, were those of a man who planned to reform his subjects’ life both in its religious

91 ASR, AAS, 129, p. 24, a document ca. 1619.
and its profane aspects. This undoubtedly explains why the Reformed Augustinians, who professed a sober way of life and used the images of their saints to influence the public in this direction, found a willing ear when they asked for his support. The decree of eternal silence which the Scalzi obtained not only left them free to pursue their ideas and ideals, it also was consistent with Innocent’s own policy and supported his authority, thus increasing his power.

Surveying the episode in retrospect, it seems that whatever the final verdicts in the various cases brought against the Scalzi during the 17th century, the successive popes mostly let their judgement be guided by considerations of religious politics and power, rather than by Canonical-legal or, for that matter, aesthetic arguments.

**Conclusion**

Indubitably, the two branches of the Augustinian Order who, in the 17th century, got into conflict over the way their saints should be represented already knew the truth of what, some three centuries later, Wittgenstein said when he formulated his famous dictum that who masters language is master of all. The Augustinians were vividly aware of the fact that images were visual language, and, therefore, instruments of power. They also knew this power as it was understood by later scholars: as a force directing desire, educating feeling, producing knowledge within both individual and society, and thus inducing cooperation in a culture—cooperation to a certain set of ideas and values, to certain actions connected therewith.95

An extraordinarily lucky find of documents has allowed me to reveal the multifarious ways in which, during the Baroque period, the image’s influence was real, at least in Roman, and Roman Catholic society. Inevitably, this chapter has become an essay in integral history, as power always exists on many planes, reaches into different fields of human emotion and action. I have analysed and interpreted power from different perspectives. As an effort in integral history, this chapter has tried to ask as many relevant questions as seemed possible about the historical object and its context, and to use and interpret all the

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available evidence. As the object, in this case, is an image, or rather a corpus of images, one might be tempted to term this essay an effort in iconology. However, the very definitions put forward by the practitioners of that art do not entirely convince because they always seem to require a certain sensibility that, to me, is too gratuitous to deserve a place in the bag of technical and methodical skills the historian can use reconstruct the past. What we need to do is ‘read’ images and any other objects not as the fragments as which they have come down to us, but as evidence about a (segment of a) society and a culture that only can be understood properly if reintegrated in their context.

In a certain sense, the significance of the Case of the Bare Feet seems timeless. For as long as people have made images, specific groups have been trying to use them for their own propagandistic purpose or, on the contrary, to put a ban on their use and influence and, perhaps, introduce new images in their place. An image always is propaganda, part of a power structure it seeks to continue or change.


97 Thus, I find untenable Kristeller’s rather naïve position that ideas are not really influenced by economic life, politics, et cetera: P.O. Kristeller (ed.), Renaissance Thought and the Arts. Collected Essays (New York 1965, 1980) esp. VIII–IX.