Maria Petyt against the Background of the Political and Religious Situation in Flanders in the Seventeenth Century

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Ecologically and politically speaking, the seventeenth century was a turbulent and unstable century.¹ There was a minor ice age going on. Crops failed and dangerous diseases like the plague and typhoid fever caused many deaths. Europe was ravaged by power struggles and wars. The Thirty Years' War (1618–1648) called forth a vicious circle of violence, which in the Habsburg empire alone claimed eight million lives.² For the inhabitants the consequences of the massacres and sackings were nearly incalculable. Not long after the Peace of Westphalia, Louis XIV (1638–1715) was crowned king of France in 1654. His expansive power politics brought a new wave of warfare over Western Europe, which we are introduced to in the document on the Dutch War.

Contributions from the history of mentality show the toll this took on the seventeenth century mind. People became anxious and confused.³ Structures of interpretation, certainly religious ones, were put under pressure and events were interpreted on the basis of personal experiences and subjectively ex-

1 I want to thank Sr. Rebecca Braun osc for the translation of this article.

2 Wilson (2009) 4.

3 See H. Lehmann and A.Ch. Trepp. (eds.) *Im Zeichen der Krise. Religiosität im Europa des 17. Jahrhunderts*. Göttingen: Vandenhoeck & Ruprecht. 1999. Lehmann summarizes: 'Die Geschichte der Religiosität im Europa des 17. Jahrhunderts wird deshalb durch zwei Tendenzen bestimmt: Durch die häufig auch mit erheblichem politischem Druck forcierten Versuche der Obrigkeiten, in ihren Territorien religiöse Uniformität zu etablieren, und ebenso durch die nicht minder energischen Versuche weiter Kreise der Bevölkerung, sich ihres Seelenheils zu versichern. Während die Obrigkeiten die Maximen des Merkantilismus umzusetzen suchten, stehende Heere aufbauten und repräsentative Residenzen planten, kurzum: ihre politische Macht auszubauen und zu demonstrieren bestrebt waren, wurden viele ihrer Untertanen von endzeitlichen Ängsten umgetrieben. Hier, in diesen endzeitlichen Ängsten und den daraus für die Lebensführung gezogenen Konsequenzen, hat, wie es scheint, die für das 17. Jahrhundert so virulente religiöse Pluralität ihren »Sitz im Leben«.' Lehmann (1999) 12f.

plained.⁴ Although the world of Maria Petyt's experience fits in seamlessly with this development,⁵ this transition did not take place unambiguously, either in the mind of Maria Petyt, or in her surroundings. From a historical viewpoint such irregularities make the discovered document an interesting source, which opens a clearer view on the diachrony of this process.

In order to situate the figure of Maria Petyt against the background of her times, this chapter first sketches a rough image of the process of confessionalization and the political and religious situation in the Southern Netherlands at the time. Attention is paid to the impact of the Council of Trent, especially in Flanders, and the emergence there of the spiritual daughters, who drew their inspiration mainly from Teresa of Avila. Next the Tridentine reform of the Carmelite Order (o.carm.) and the figure of Maria's spiritual director, Michael of St. Augustine, are described. Finally both, Michael and Maria, are situated in the context of Jansenism and anti-monachism. In each part, where applicable, we will focus on the position and/or spirituality of Maria Petyt.

Confessionalization and the Political Situation in the Southern Netherlands

From a historical perspective the figure and spirituality of Maria Petyt become visible against the background of the catholic reformation or, phrased more broadly and properly, the process of catholic confessionalization in the seventeenth century.⁶ After the violent polarization of the Reformation, at the end of the sixteenth century the theological and social tensions between Catholics, Lutherans and Calvinists subsided.⁷ Authorities, both secular and ecclesiastical, attempted to strengthen their power by creating religious uniformity in

4 Roeck (1999) 331. This observation is shared in historical studies of spirituality, in which a turn is seen in the sixteenth and seventeenth century from an essentialistic piety focused on unity with God, to a spirituality centered on the human being which was of a more psychologizing nature. See Hoppenbrouwers (1996) 40 and Steggink (1985) 42–46.

5 Cf. Deblaere (1962) 232f.

6 Within historical research a paradigm shift can be seen in the past decades from the terms counter reformation / catholic reformation to the term confessionalization. These concepts proved no longer appropriate for identifying the cultural-historical developments in the sixteenth and seventeenth century, on the one hand because they placed too much emphasis on church history, on the other because the antithesis between reformation and counter reformation was historically untenable. See for an overview of the discourse Reinhard (1995) 419–452 and Burschel (1999) 588f.

7 Panzer (2006) 305.

their respective territories.⁸ This political and religious consolidation was greatly promoted in the Southern Netherlands by the governors Albert of Austria and Isabella of Spain, son in law and daughter of the Spanish king Philip II.

The death of Archduke Albert and the resumption of the Eighty Years' War in 1621 brought a turnabout in this period of development. In Flanders, where infanta Isabella reigned on alone until her death in 1633, a dejected and bitter resignation grew.⁹ Anti-Spanish sentiments impeded relations with Spain. Moreover France, after cardinal Richelieu took office as first minister of Louis XIII, became an increasingly important power on the scene of battle. Although Richelieu's involvement with the Southern Netherlands was initially not direct, he did in great measure finance the military interventions of the North German sovereigns against the Austrian Habsburgs, who could count on the support of the Habsburgs in Madrid.¹⁰ One year after Isabella's death the new governor, cardinal-infante Ferdinand of Austria, delivered a devastating defeat to Sweden, the ally of the North German sovereigns. Not long afterwards, in 1635, France declared war on the Austrian and Spanish Habsburgs and in the same year forged an alliance with the Northern Netherlands. French incursions on the southern border of Belgium – Maria mentions them in her autobiography¹¹ – were the result. The peace which was expected of the new governor was not yet forthcoming. He died in 1641. With every new governor after him, Spanish interest in Flanders decreased. Flanders turned out to be no more than a conquered land.

8 The secular authorities, too, had an interest in the process of confessionalization: '*Pious and purified individuals in turn made for godly communities, ones that could serve as potent bulwarks against heresy.*' Bilinkhoff (2005) 93.

9 Houtman-Desmedt (1979) 385–395.

10 Rooms (2007) 21.

11 For this period in the life of Maria Petyt see Deblaere (1962) 28. The first incursions of the French state alliance in Flanders were in May 1635. Roosbroeck (1940) 5, 50. In 1638 the French temporarily occupied the territory between Aire-sur-la-Lys and St.-Omer. The siege of St.-Omer took place from May 24 until July 16, 1638. Maria must have been 15 years old then. She recollects, however, that she was about 17 at that time. Petyt (1683) vol. 1, 24. '*Both in Flanders and by some in the Netherlands the defeat of Atrecht <Aug. 9, 1640> was felt as a heavy blow and as the beginning of the French invasion.*' Roosbroeck (1940) 5, 52. From 1638 to 1642 the front remained mobile. The unrest lasted until 1659, albeit with an interval of several years. After the Treaty of the Pyrenees was signed there was a period of peace between France and Spain from 1659 to 1667. See Rooms (2007) 24.

War of Devolution

After several years of relative peace, at the end of the '60s the political horizon of Flanders was once again severely disrupted. As France was surrounded by Habsburg territory on all sides, Louis XIV had set his heart on conquering the Spanish Netherlands. Annexation would secure the northern border of France, keep England at a distance better and deter the Republic of the Seven United Netherlands.¹² In 1667 French troops, without any declaration of war, crossed the border of the Southern Netherlands. Louis XIV thought, at least that was his cover for this attack, that the supposed rights of inheritance of his Spanish wife, infanta Maria-Theresia, daughter of the recently deceased Philip IV, gave him claim to a part of the Belgian territory, including the city of Mechelen where Maria Petyt lived.¹³ The so-called War of Devolution was then a reality.¹⁴

Although the French armies did not reach Mechelen, the tales of war will not have passed by the Cluyse where Maria lived. The sisters must have had knowledge of the French raid in the hermitage of the Carmelites in Liedekerke:

In the monastery Termuylen, in Liedekerke, they acted in a terrifyingly tyrannical way, dishonoring women and daughters in sacred places, irrespective of persons or age. Yes, they even disrobed the daughters stark-naked and hung them from the beams by their feet and whipped them in an infernal way until they bled. The Carmelites they tied to the tails of their horses in a more than barbaric manner and thus dragged them from their monastery and hermitage.¹⁵

¹² Sonnino (2009) 19.

¹³ Around 1640 the city numbered about 20,000 to 25,000 inhabitants. Marnef (2002) 291. Control of the region Antwerp – Brussels – Leuven, with Mechelen in the center, was of great strategic importance in order to control the Southern Netherlands. Rooms (2007) 45.

¹⁴ The law of devolution – which still existed in certain parts of the Southern Netherlands – determined that in the case of the inheritance of children from different marriages, the private possessions were divided according to the estates that had been brought in. Each heir could lay claim to the estate of the marriage he or she had been born from. Although this claim did not apply to public possessions, Louis XIV seized upon the law of devolution as justification for invading the Southern Netherlands. Rooms (2007) 27f.

¹⁵ *'In het clooster ter-Muylen, te Liedekercke, heben sij schrickelijke tyrannie ghedaen, ont-eerende in de heilige plaetsen vrouwen en dochters zonder onderscheit van personen ofte ouderdom, jae, hebben selfs de dochters moedernaecht ontkleet ende met de voeten omhooghe ghehangen aen de balcken en naer hun vervloeckelijck werk die gegheeselt tot den bloede. De Carmelieten hebben sij op eene meer als barbaersche wijze ghebonden aen de steerten van hunne peerden ende alsoo ghesleept uyt hun clooster ende hermitage.'* From the

This report will have made an impression on the sisters, all the more when one realizes that the hermitage of Liedekerke is later mentioned in Maria Petyt's codicil.¹⁶

In Maria's biography, and in her writings, we find only one indication that the political unrest came closer to the inhabitants of the Cluyse:

On August 19, 1668, she <Maria Petyt> gained knowledge that, if one wants to ask something of God through the amiable Mother Mary, it is very good (...) to greet her with the hymn Ave maris stella etc., Hail Morning star etc. By this means she experienced much help, especially when they came to inspect all the houses in Mechelen in order to see if it was accommodation suitable for housing soldiers and they tried to burden her hermitage with the same.¹⁷

This inspection of the Cluyse perhaps had to do with the retreat of Spanish soldiers from the territory that Spain had to yield to France after the treaty of Aachen was signed on May 2, 1668.¹⁸

The Dutch War

With the outbreak of the Dutch War in 1672, the political situation in the Southern Netherlands worsened again.¹⁹ On May 18, 1672, without being offi-

Gent Gazette, d.d. 19 September 1667, cited following Bronselaer [1945] 38f. This report, however, is probably not from the Gent Gazette but from the Gendtsche post-tydinghen, published by Maximiliaan Graet since 1667.

16 The name of this hermitage is mentioned '*by haere codicille van den 22 meert 1677*'. File Mechelen in the Nederlands Carmelitaans Instituut (Dutch Carmelite Institute) in Boxmeer.

17 '*Den 19. Augusti 1668. kreegh sy kennisse, dat, als-wanneer men iet van Godt wilt versoecken door de minnelycke Moeder Maria, het seer goet is, (...) haer te groeten met den Lof-sangh: Ave maris stella, &c. Weest ghegroet Morghen-sterre, &c. Hier door heeft sy vele behulpsaemheydt onder-vonden: dat besonderlyck, als-men tot Mechelen alle huysen visiteerden, om te sien, oft daer commoditeyt was, om Soldaten te logeren, ende men hare Kluyse met de selve socht te belasten.*' Michael of St. Augustine (1681) 89. See also note 37 in Michel van Meerbeeck's contribution to this volume, p. 57.

18 With the treaty of Aachen the Netherlands, Sweden and England allied themselves against France, aiming to end the War of Devolution. Spain was forced, among other things, to cede the southern part of Flanders, between Dunkerque and Lille (Maria's native region), to France again. France consented to the arrangement and ceased the war.

19 See Veronie Meeuwssen's contribution to this volume, p. 244.

cially at war with Spain, Louis XIV once again invaded the Southern Netherlands, and initially marched on Gent but then turned towards the vicinity of Brussels. On June 4, his army advanced towards Maastricht which had at that point been besieged by the French for some time. Some months later, on August 30, 1673, Spain joined the anti-French coalition, also known as the League of The Hague, and declared war on France on October 15, 1673.²⁰ One year later Michael of St. Augustine, Maria's spiritual director, writes what this situation means for the Southern Netherlands:

The state of the country is very miserable, because an army of at least eighty thousand armed soldiers which, in common opinion, ought to have been enough to wage war against the French and drive them away from Belgium, now – because of what providence of God I do not know – without being chased²¹ by anyone, confusedly fearfully and gone wild has so plundered our entire country that all the farmers have taken flight and there is, so to speak, no grain left for seed or food and there is no growth left on the fields.²²

During this calamity Maria Petyt – against public opinion – prays for Louis XIV and his armies.²³ If one does not want to base oneself on the explanation she herself gives, namely the supernatural activity in her prayer, one can fall back on several other interpretations to explain this prayer. Perhaps Maria – and with her probably many other religious – did not see through the ideological apologetics surrounding the kingship of Louis XIV.²⁴ According to his court prelate J.-B. Bossuet, Louis XIV, as king, took the place of God. By placing Louis'

20 The reason for this was that Count de Monterrey, governor of the Southern Netherlands, had entered into an agreement with the Republic on the defense of important cities such as Breda and 's-Hertogenbosch. Rooms (2007) 47.

21 *Quasi* is not translated. It probably refers to '*nemine persequente*' in Proverbs 28, 1 (Vulgata).

22 '*status patriae miserrimus est, quia exercitus octoginta facile millium armatorum militum debellandis et e Belgio expellendis Gallis, communi iudicio sufficiens, nescio, qua Dei providentia, quasi nemine persequente confusus, territus, dissolutus, totam nostram patriam ita depopulatus est, ut profugis omnibus rusticis ne vel unum, ut sic dicam, granum pro semente vel nutrimento nec pallea in pagis remanserit.*' Ceyssens (1968) 242. Michael wrote this letter on October 20, 1674. Cardinal Bona died eight days later on October 28, 1674. Ceyssens (1968) 242.

23 Fol. 30v. See Veronie Meeuwse's contribution to this volume, p. 244ff and Esther van de Vate's contribution to this volume p. 93f.

24 Burke (1992) 9.

image in line with figures like Clovis and Saint Louis,²⁵ Versailles propagated a sacred kingship. Another explanation could be that in her prayer Maria Petyt identified with the political interventions of a number of French Carmelites, key figures in the reform of Carmel (o.carm.).²⁶ John of St. Samson (1571–1636) was in contact with Maria de Medici, the mother of Louis XIII, and Léon de Saint Jean (1600–1671) gave the eulogy at the funeral of cardinal Richelieu in 1642.²⁷

In any case, Maria did not pray without reflection on the political choices that were made. About the League of The Hague she writes to Michael of St. Augustine:

These sparks and impressions seemed to enlighten me and to notify me from the side of the Beloved how He complained very much about the innocent blood, which is unjustly shed by both sides in Holland and about the injustice done to Him from the side of the Spaniards, who seemed to use all of their forces and an extreme power to expel Jesus from his new kingdom, and, as far as they could, they tried to prevent the peaceful possession of His desired kingdom and of the catholic faith that began to be planted there etc. Not that the Spaniards have expressed this intention, but because they supply the heretics with their arms in order to expel the king of France, trusting in some promises made to them by that impious nation, hoping that they themselves would occupy Holland, gradually and eventually would subject them to their power.²⁸

Here it becomes clear that Maria duly realizes that innocent blood is being shed on both sides in Holland and that she cannot reconcile herself to the not very confessional considerations of the Spanish authorities.

Yet it was not her political considerations that made Maria's prayer for Louis XIV so fervent. The catholic kingdom of her Beloved came first with Maria. She experienced her solitary prayer in service of the ecclesiastical authorities:

Sometimes the love-spirit seems to fly over the whole world like a bird, sometimes with the pagans, Turks, unbelievers, heretics, sometimes with the great sinners in order to convert them all to God, at other times with all the superiors of the entire Holy Church, with all the preachers, confes-

25 Louis IX, King of France (1226–1270) played an important role in Carmelite tradition.

26 Read more on p. 38f.

27 See John of St. Samson (1656) 96f. and Smet (1982) 53.

28 Fol. 33r. Transcription and translation can be found on p. 142f.

sors, as if I join them and work together with them in order to perform in a worthy manner the burden of the authorities and to perform those services as pleases God and for the salvation of their subjects.²⁹

Seventeenth century women were all but forced to develop such visionary forms of redemptive ministry, regardless of whether these were politically bi-ased. The reason for this should be sought in the impact of the catholic reformation.³⁰

The Impact of the Council of Trent

After the Council of Trent (1545–1563) the apostolate of the Catholic Church – in response to the success of the Reformation – was intensified and disciplined. Historical research into the effects of the Council has made clear that this development in the direction of a sacramental, ministerial church was not one-way traffic from above. Willem Frijhoff even describes the confessionalization as a process of appropriation:

The process of giving meaning by means of which groups or individuals fill in the bearers of significance proffered, imposed or dictated by others with their own meaning and so make them acceptable, livable, bearable or humane for themselves.³¹

The principal instruments for the implementation of the Tridentine decrees were the sermon and the instruction of the catechism. Better schooled secular clergy and reforms within the religious orders were to ensure an orthodox preaching of the faith according to the guidelines of the church.³² In the lives of famous saints, such as Borromeo, Teresa, Ignatius, Philip Neri and Francis de Sales, an ascetical piety was held up as an example and a climate of activism

29 'sontydyts schijnt den minne-gheest, als eenen voghel te door-vlieghe de heele werelt, nu by de Heydensche, Turcken, Ongeloovige, Kettters, nu by groote Sondaers, om die al tot Godt te bekeeren, nu by alle Oversten van heel de H. Kerck, by alle Predicanten, Biecht-vaders, my gelijck by hun voeghende, ende mede-werckende, om den last van overheyt weerdelijck te quytten, ende die diensten wel te volbrenghe naer't behaeghe Gods, ende tot Saligheyt van hunne Ondersaeten.' Petyt (1683) vol. 3, 32f.

30 See Bilinkhof (2005).

31 Frijhoff (1997) 108 (My translation), cited and endorsed by Marnef (2002) 299.

32 Jedin (1985) 4, 588f.

was encouraged.³³ The example of their striving for perfection was supported by a growing number of spiritual methods.³⁴ Medieval – and sometimes even early Christian³⁵ – traditions were, somewhat forcibly, reassessed and adapted to the demands of the modern age.³⁶

This process of modernization in the Church was not favorable for women. The Tridentine reform pursued a different avenue for women than for men. Where the male religious identity centered on the military symbolism of the Jesuits, the female identity was laid down in the metaphor of virginity.³⁷ Moreover, the Church harked back to medieval rules.³⁸ Not long after the Council, in the constitution *Circa Pastoralis* (1566), Pope Pius V declared the requirement of enclosure in the bull *Pericoloso* in 1568 applicable to all religious women.³⁹ This meant that only women who lived a contemplative life within the walls of the cloister were officially acknowledged as religious. Other forms of life, such as that of the tertiaries, proved no longer acceptable in the pope's view.⁴⁰ The consequence of this was that these communities were discouraged. They were changed into more exclusive and hierarchically organized forms of communal life.⁴¹

33 'Obwohl die genannten Heiligen große Asketen waren, die alle mehr oder weniger zu persönlicher Religiosität, individueller Glaubensarbeit, Weltverachtung und visionärer Selbsterfahrung neigten, läßt sich im keinem Fall beobachten, was Max Weber 'planlose Weltflucht' genannt hat. Im Gegenteil: Ihr innerweltlicher Aktivismus steht außer Frage und rief schon in 17. Jahrhundert Erstaunen hervor, das immer wieder auch in Ablehnung umschlagen konnte, wenn allzu offensichtlich wurde, daß die voluntaristische Dynamik der fünf Aktivistinnen das vorherrschende religiöse Wertesystem durchbrach, in dem die *vita contemplativa* noch immer vor der *vita activa* rangierte.' Burschel (1999) 594.

34 Frijhoff (2003) 379.

35 Maria Petyt, for instance, revived an early Christian life model. See Esther van de Vate's contribution to this volume, p. 11.

36 Much study of the revival of medieval spirituality was done by K. Porteman. See Porteman (1973) 400 and 406. That the apologetic nature of this revival also changed its content is ascertained in Porteman (1976) 139f. and Mommaers (1984) 749. The term 'forced' is taken from Bill-Mrziglod (2013) 68f.

37 Strasser (2004) 125.

38 Rapley (1993) 27f.

39 Monteiro (1996) 24–27.

40 Rapley (1993) 26 and Strasser (2004) 75.

41 Strasser (2004) 119f.

The Tridentine Reform in Flanders

In Flanders the process of confessionalization was characterized by a successful adaptation to the guidelines of the Council of Trent.⁴² Thanks to the tact of archdukes Albert and Isabella there came to be a good climate for the catholic reform. In their right to appoint new bishops the archducal couple let themselves be guided by the pastoral suitability of candidates such as Antoon Triest and Jacob Boonen.⁴³ This fair wind made the Southern Netherlands an attractive place to settle for young religious congregations such as the Capuchins and the Society of Jesus. The older orders as well, and their reformed versions, such as the Discalced Carmelites and the Recollects, flooded the Southern Netherlands in an '*invasion conventuelle*'.⁴⁴ Circa 1650 there was a disciplined clerical system, which propagated a virtuous and edifying life.⁴⁵

Life in the beguinages blossomed again, after the vicissitudes of the wars of religion, at least numerically and in a material sense.⁴⁶ The measures of the Council of Trent, however, were not without effect. On March 22, 1588 Johannes Hauchin, archbishop of Mechelen, promulgated general statutes for all the beguinages in his archdiocese, in which he stated the importance of a morally virtuous climate with a greater inward focus:

People who have true concern for their holiness labor diligently to see not only their sins but also the causes. It is not without reason that they do this, because differing company and disquieting places usually tempt and divert their followers or cool in them the ardor for God who desires to take up his abode in quiet hearts, where alone he wants to be and remain.⁴⁷

42 Lottin (1979) 63.

43 Cloet (2006) 12 and Venard (1992) 453.

44 '*Die Hauptrolle bei der katholischen Restauration spielte jedoch der Ordensklerus. Während der ersten 30 Jahre des 17. Jh. waren die Niederlande von Ordensleuten regelrecht überlaufen.*' Panzer (2006) 44. See also Venard (1992) 499. On their piety, see Axters (1960) 4, 69–239.

45 Cloet (2006) 14. See also Put (2009) 113–119.

46 Triest (1998) 42f. and Aerschot (2001) 41. According to estimates as many as one in 20 women was a beguine. Aerschot (2001) 40.

47 '*Menschen die waerachtige sorge dragen voor hun salicheijdt, doen neersticheijt om te schouwen niet alleene die sonden, maar oock die oirsaken der selven ende dat niet sonder groote redenen, want ongelyck geselschap ende becommerde plaetsen, verleijden ende verstroijen gemeijnelyck hunne aenhangen oft emmers vercoelen in hun die viericheyt tot Godt die sijne woonstede begeert te hebben in geruste herten daer hij alleen wilt wesen ende blijven.*' Philippen (1918) 315. The statutes can be found in Philippen (1918) 315–328. These

Gradually a greater uniformity was imposed on these women and their autonomy disappeared as they came under the control of the ecclesiastical hierarchy.⁴⁸

Spiritual Daughters

In the foundation of the community of tertiaries in the Cluyse, the reader is extensively introduced to the rise of the spiritual daughters in the Southern Netherlands,⁴⁹ a movement that found its precedent in the Medieval '*mulieres religiosae*'.⁵⁰ Spiritual daughters, also called spiritual virgins, were catholic unmarried women or widows who lived outside the cloister in service of God and their neighbours.⁵¹ They often lived together in a community.⁵² This was a remarkable phenomenon, considering the decisions at the Council of Trent on the religious form of life for women as described above.⁵³ Spiritual daughters, after all, did not observe enclosure and professed no vows or only simple ones. The apostolic élan of their commitment, however, makes this development understandable.⁵⁴ Because of this it was possible for many new communities to form outside of the scope of the Tridentine rules, despite the fact that these rules had been made stricter.⁵⁵ Though Marit Monteiro does note:

All the same their opportunities to devote themselves actively to church and fellow human beings were limited by the social and ecclesiastical restrictions that applied to the members of their sex. (...) Not only concrete utterances on paper point to this, but also their strong Passion

statutes by Hauchin had great influence and also served as a model for beguinages outside of the archdiocese, see Geybels (2004) 66f. and Philippen (1929) 186.

48 Triest (1998) 42.

49 Monteiro (1994) 57. De Vroede speaks of a '*qualitatively important phenomenon, that one found both in the countryside and in the cities.*' Vroede (1994) 71. In the home of the Petyt family, too, a spiritual daughter had her abode. See Petyt (1683) vol. 1,9.

50 Conrad (2013) 9. For a historical overview see Harline (1995) 543f.

51 Monteiro (1996) 13f.

52 Cloet (2006) 25f. '*M. de Vroede estimates that approximately eighty such communities were founded during the seventeenth and eighteenth centuries, varying in size from less than ten members to more than a hundred. By the end of the eighteenth century the spiritual daughters – although formally they were not religious – represented between 15.5 and 17.5 % of the total number of women religious.*' Monteiro (1996) 32. For quotation, see Vroede (1994) 118.

53 Monteiro (1996) 44ff.

54 Monteiro (1996) 25.

55 That an active form of life could continue to exist was, at least in the Southern Netherlands, due to defense on the part of society and the local bishops. See Harline (1995) 550.

devotion could be an indication that the catholic gender coding of the day for women was very aggravating for these spiritual virgins.⁵⁶

Tertiaries in Carmel

Many of these spiritual daughters – among them Maria Petyt – chose to live as tertiaries under a monastic rule that had been adapted to their state of life. Despite public support⁵⁷ they, too, were subjected to a stricter life. In the Order of Carmel (o.carm.), the Prior General Theodore Stracci complied with the regulations that had been drawn up on December 20, 1616 by the Congregation of Bishops and Regulars in 1637. In his *Opusculum Regularum et constitutionem pro Tertiariis* he instructed the directors of the Third Order only to admit women who led an excellent and tested life, were at least forty years old, owned enough possessions to live on, had the permission of the local ordinary, were born of respectable parents and had a good name.⁵⁸

Daniel of the Virgin Mary⁵⁹, director of the Third Order in Flanders, rewrote the Third Order Rule of his province and published it as *Af-beeldinghe van de derde orden onser L. Vrouwe des berghs Carmeli*.⁶⁰ He there writes about the state of life of the tertiaries:

For although it is true that the state or condition of such persons is not truly the same as a Religion, it is yet a way of life that is very similar to that of the religious, especially if it is confirmed by a vow of eternal purity, without which that way of life does not deserve the name State, because State means steadfastness and constancy, that is to say, when one has so securely bound oneself to God by a promise that it cannot be dissolved. This happens by means of a promise of purity unto death.⁶¹

⁵⁶ Monteiro (1994) 59. (My translation)

⁵⁷ See n. 55.

⁵⁸ Stracci also imposed other criteria for admission not mentioned here. These can be found in an unpublished document by A. Staring, with the title *Derde Orde. Regel III*. Dutch Carmelite Institute, Boxmeer. For the history and development of the Third Order within the Carmelite Order (o.carm.) in Belgium: Smet (1982) 557–560. On the *Opusculum*: Smet (1982) 537.

⁵⁹ In his *Speculum Carmelitanum* (1680) Daniel of the Virgin Mary O. Carm. (1615–1678) made many spiritual documents and biographies accessible.

⁶⁰ Daniel of the Virgin Mary (1666). See also Michel van Meerbeeck's contribution to this volume, p. 55.

⁶¹ 'Want al is't sake dat den staet oft conditie van soodanighe personen niet oprechtelyck eenen Religie en is, nochtans is't een maniere van leven aen die van de Religieusen seer ghelyck;

This striving on the part of tertiaries not to be left behind by the members of the First and Second orders will have been part of a widespread process of confessionalization, but within that context should also be seen as a phenomenon typical of the French and the Southern Netherlands.⁶²

Various rules of tertiaries show that their way of life in the Southern Netherlands was often to a great degree oriented towards the monastic life,⁶³ as was also the life of Maria Petyt and her sisters in the Cluyse.⁶⁴ When Maria looks back on the first time she made her profession on the '*derden Reghel vande Heylighe Maghet Maria des Bergh-Carmeli*' (Third Rule of the Holy Virgin Mary of Mount Carmel), she writes:

Although I professed the simple vow to observe the Third rule, our father confessor let us observe the rule of the religious regarding the fast days, abstinence, penitence, silence and so on. We could do that very well because no one stood in our way. The Third rule was then not yet printed and I felt drawn to a stricter life than to simply observe the Third rule, because the Third rule is more general for all sorts of people, so that it can be observed in the world as well.⁶⁵

Maria must have made her first profession on the Third Order rule of the reform-minded general John Soreth (1451–1471). Soreth initiated the development of the Second and Third Order in Carmel and was a champion of the Reform of Mantua, a movement that strove for a return to the contemplative way of life in Carmel.⁶⁶

besonderlyck als die bevesticht is door belofte van eeuwighe suyverheydt; sonder de welke die maniere van leven niet wel en verdient den naem van Staet: want Staet beteeckent stantvastigheydt ende on-veranderlyckheydt, te weten, als-men sy-selven door belofte soo vast aen Godt is verbindende, dat-men 't niet en kan ont-binden; het welk gheschiedt door belofte van Suyverheydt tot de doodt toe.' Daniel of the Virgin Mary (1666) preface. On state see also Schulz (2013) 36f.

62 Monteiro (1996) 34.

63 Monteiro (1996) 34.

64 See Petyt (1683) vol. 1, 52.

65 '*Al dede ick simpellick belofte van te onderhouden den derden Reghel, nochtans gaf onsen Biechtvader ons te onderhouden den Reghel van de Religieusen, nopende de vastendagen, abstinentien, penitentien, stilswyghentheyt, ende soo voorts, wy kosten dat ghevoeghelijk onderhouden, mits niemant hebbende inden wegh: Den derden Reghel en was alsdan noch niet ghedruckt; ende oock ick vondt my wat stricter ghetrocken, als simpellick den derden Reghel te onderhouden; want den derden Reghel ghemeynder is voor alle soorten van menschen, om oock in de werelt te kunnen onderhouden.*' Petyt (1683) vol. 1, 52.

66 His Third Order rule was promulgated on March 14, 1455, but only published in 1675 by Philip of the Visitation. The text of this *Troisieme Regle des freres et soeurs de Nostre dame*

Some years later Maria Petyt, following a second (half-)noviciate, made another profession as a tertiary, now on the rule from the *Af-beeldinghe*. Her later biographer and spiritual director, Michael of St. Augustine, gives the following reason for this:

In doubt as to whether her profession on the Third Rule of the Carmelites, when she still lived in Gent, had been valid, she renewed it in the hands of the most reverend father Gabriel of the Annunciation (...) ⁶⁷ and was given a confessor [i.e. Michael of St. Augustine] who instructed her better in practicing her obligation or commitment. ⁶⁸

Maria, who already at her first profession received the name Maria of St. Teresa, was given this name because of the '*special attraction I felt towards this Holy Mother*.' ⁶⁹

In the Footsteps of Teresa

During this century Teresa of Avila (1515–1582) was very popular among the (semi-)religious women of the Southern Netherlands. ⁷⁰ In one of the popular

Du mont Carmel, was (with some corrections) included in *Analecta Ordinis Carmelitarum* VI, vol. III, 263–265 and in Grosso (2007) 272–274. The canonical beginning of the Third Order is dated on the basis of the bull *Dum attenta*, promulgated by Sixtus IV on November 28, 1476. Monsignani (1715) tom. I, 319–346. About her profession on this old Third Order rule Maria herself writes somewhat reservedly: '*The Third rule was then not yet printed*.' *Den derden Reghel en was alsdan noch niet ghedruckt*.' Petyt (1683) vol. I, 52.

67 Omitted in this citation: *Als-doen Prior al-daer, en naer-maels Commissaris Generael door Hoogh en Neder-duytschlandt; waer hy de Reformatie der PP. Lieve-Vrouwe-Broeders heeft in-ghevoert: al was 't dat hemel en aerde schier tegen hem stelden; en is ghestorven Prior van Weenen, ende Procurator Generael in het Hof des Keyzers*. ('At that time the prior there, and later commissary general for High and Low Germany, where he introduced the reform of the Fathers Brothers-of-Our-Lady, though heaven and earth nearly stood up against him. He died as prior of Vienna and as procurator general in the emperor's Court') From the latter we can infer how sore a subject Maria's prayer for Louis XIV was in Carmel. On the tensions surrounding Gabriel of the Annunciation, read Hoppenbrouwers (1949) 165f.

68 '*Twyffelende, oft hare Professie van den derden Reghel der Carmeliten, wettigh geweest hadde, als sy tot Ghent woonden, heeft die vernieuwt, in de handen van den seer Eer-weerdighen Pater Gabriël ab Annuntiatione (...) ende kreegh eenen Biecht-Vader, die haer beter onderwees in het oeffenen van hare obligatie, ofte verbintenisse*.' Michael of St. Augustine (1681) 20.

69 '*besonderen treck, die ick tot dese Heylighe Moeder ghevoelde*.' Petyt (1683) vol. I, 52.

70 This popularity can be ascertained from, among other things, the many connections between the Discalced Carmel and the beguinages. Anna of Saint Bartholomew kept in

beguines' lives we read how Elisabeth van Soetems chooses Teresa as her patroness at her profession.⁷¹ Later she calls herself a Carmelite and – like Maria Petyt – renounces the eating of meat: '*Not that she made her profession in that Order, but because she tried to observe that rule in everything.*'⁷²

Often this popularity was shared by the counselors of these women. Daniel of the Virgin Mary⁷³, who in his *Konste der Konste*⁷⁴ developed a method of prayer in Teresa's spirit, included a timetable for beguines in his *Af-beeldinghe*.⁷⁵ His discalced brother Herman of St. Norbert founded a community of spiritual daughters around the beguinage in Dendermonde in 1663, together with the beguine Anna Puttemans. These marolles, later also called maricolles, lived by a rule composed in the spirit of Teresa of Avila.⁷⁶

One of Teresa's merits for the Church is that she shifted the prayer apostolate of women – praying for the souls in purgatory – in the direction of prayer for the church.⁷⁷ In the *Wech der volmaecktheydt* (Way of Perfection) she writes:

What does it matter that I am in purgatory until the day of judgment, if by my prayer even one soul may be saved? Of how much more importance is not the profit of so many souls and the glory of the Lord? And do not attend to pains that pass when you can do some greater merit to the one who suffered so much for us. (...) It is to his glory and the profit of his church.⁷⁸

touch with Maria van der Linden, beguine in Ghent. See Philippen (1929) 194. As early as 1632 a Dutch edition of Teresa's *Life* was presented to abbot Iosephus Geldolphus van Rykel, protector and biographer of many beguines' lives. See also Mirjam de Baar's contribution to this volume, p. 72ff and Elisabeth Hense's contribution to this volume, p. 252ff.

71 Begga (1712) 258.

72 '*Niet dat sy in dit Order professie heeft gedaen, maer om dat sy naer de regel des selfs, in alles socht te leven.*' Begga (1712) 261.

73 See Esther van de Vate's contribution to this volume, p. 33.

74 See further Smet (1982) 445f.

75 Daniel of the Virgin Mary (1666) 101–105.

76 Quaghebeur (2009) 158. In the *Speculum Carmelitanum* we find written that Herman of St. Norbert wrote a book on the origin and institution of the maricolles. Daniel of the Virgin Mary (1680) tom. II pars II, 1129. With this Daniel is referring to Herman's *Humilis et libera familia Maricolarum sive tractatus explicans initium et finem sive scopum institutionis praedictae familiae*, Cologne 1678. Regarding the perfection to be strived for by the sisters, Herman in this book refers to his *Cibus solidus perfectorum, sive de Proposito et voto seraphico S. Mtris N. Teresiae faciendi semper quidquid intelligeret esse perfectius libri duo*, auctore R. P. F. Hermanno a S. Norberto. (p. 5) Read about this in Meulemeester (1913).

77 Weber (2000) 124.

78 '*Wat is daer toch aen ghelegghen, dat ick tot den dach des oordeels in 't Vaghevier sitte, indien door mijn ghebedt alleen een ziele mach saelich worden? hoe veel te meer, importerende het*

However much Maria Petyt felt attracted to the figure of this great Spanish saint,⁷⁹ the reader of the third book of Maria's *Life* will find that this transition to praying for the church hardly took place in her life.⁸⁰

In Maria's religious identification it is mainly the image of the 'eremitical' Teresa that comes to the forefront.⁸¹ When at the age of five Teresa is kept by her uncle from converting the Moors, she and her brother feel attracted to a radically solitary life: '*When I saw that it was impossible to go because they <the Moors> would kill me on account of God, we determined that we would become hermits.*'⁸² This eremitical ideal⁸³ fits in entirely with the pursuit of perfection of the catholic reformation and was stimulated from above:

The *eenicheyt* <i.e. *hermit's cell*> is the best means towards the best end, because the end that the *eenicheyt* strives for is the contemplation of God or of the divine things, Bellarmine says. The divine people who are enlightened with eternal light and ignited by divine love, are held to be perfect. It is a completely perfect life, to be on earth with the body and with the spirit to abide in heaven: to live among people and be in the company of angels.⁸⁴

profijt van soo veel zielen, ende de eere des Heeren? ende maeckt gheen werck van pijnen die vergaen, wanneer ghy eenighen meerderen dienst cunt doen aen den ghenen die soo veel voor ons gheleden heeft. (...) het is tot sijnder glorie en profijt sijnder kercken.' Teresa (1634) 19f.

- 79 See also Elisabeth Hense's contribution to this volume, p. 256 and Mirjam de Baar's contribution to this volume, p. 73.
- 80 Maria's prayer mainly consisted of penance for the souls in purgatory. This is possibly related to the revival of medieval traditions mentioned earlier.
- 81 Burke points out how saints formed themselves according to the example of an earlier model. Burke (1984) 52. See Petyt (1683) vol. 1, 11.
- 82 '*Alsoo ick dan sagh dat onmoghelijk was te gaen daer sy my om Godt souden dooden, soo schickten wy dat wy souden heremijten worden.*' Teresa (1632) 6.
- 83 See also Axters (1960) 239–245.
- 84 '*De eenicheyt is den besten middel tot het beste eynde: want het eynde daer de eenigheyt toe is streckende, is de contemplatie oft de beschouwinghe van Godt oft van goddelijcke dinghen, seght Bellarminus. Die goddelijcke menschen die verlicht zijn met het eeuwich licht, ende onsteken zijn met de goddelijcke liefde, die worden ghehouden voor volmaeckt. Het is een perfect volkomen leven, in der aerden te wesen met het lichaem, ende met den gheest te woonen in den hemel: onder de menschen te leven, ende met de Enghelen te verkeerem.*' Gorcum (1619) prologues. The 17th and 18th century situation of the eremitical life in France was studied and described in Sainsaulieu (1973).

In her choice for the eremitical life Maria Petyt did not ally herself to the Tere-
sian reform, however, but to the strict observance of the original order
(o.carm.).

Reforms in the Carmelite Order (o.carm.)

The Tridentine reform of the Carmelite Order (o.carm.) was ushered in by the *Decreta ad Reparationem et Restaurationem regularis disciplinae* by the Prior General Henry Silvio.⁸⁵ In this reform the contemplative charism of Carmel was not so much called into question on its content as challenged regarding the traditional framework of its community life and prayer life.⁸⁶ Older and less old spiritual forms were brought back to life and integrated in the old ideal of the order. The aim of its reformers was ultimately a return to the sources and the retention of its contemplative legacy. The *'pristinus splendor'*⁸⁷, the former radiance of Carmel, had to be restored.

Entirely in line with this, in 1659 Maria Petyt prayed to the prophet Elijah:

... to obtain that in his Order his first spirit, his first disposition be renewed and engendered, that is to say the continuous solitude, poverty, continuous prayer in purity of spirit, thoroughly and willingly foregoing the search for diversion in creatures.⁸⁸

The Reform of Touraine

An important point of reference within this reform movement was the province of Tours, especially the monastery of Rennes. The stricter discipline introduced there was initially called *observantia strictior*, later also *reformatio Turonensis* or *Rhedonensis* (Touraine Reform). At the beginnings of this reform stood Louis Charpentier and Peter Behourt.⁸⁹ Philip Thibault is named as a champion in its implementation. The great mystic of this reform was John

85 Panzer (2006) 50.

86 Plattig [sa] 1.

87 Panzer (2006) 295.

88 *'te verwerven dat in sijne Orden sijnen eersten gheest, sijne eerste instellinghe magh vernieuwt, ende verweckt worden, te weten, de gheduerighe eensaemhey, aermoede, gheduerigh Ghebedt in puerhey des gheests, grondigh ende ghewilligh derven van alle vermaeck-soeckinghen in creatueren.'* Petyt (1683) vol. 3, 148.

89 Smet (1982) 36–62.

of St. Samson. His work, in which many traces of Rhineland and Flemish mysticism can be found,⁹⁰ had a profound spiritual reverberation in Carmel, as well as in the works of Maria Petyt.⁹¹

Although the separation between the original order and the disalced was definitive as of 1593, the reform of Touraine – following the Teresian reform – oriented itself towards ‘*the descent from our holy Fathers of Mount Carmel*.’⁹² The parallels between the two reforms were not limited to this, however. Certainly in the initial stages Peter Behourt and Phillip Thibault sought a connection with the disalced way of life.⁹³ Many of their practices, such as mortification and self-denial, devotion to the child Jesus, forfeiting one’s family name and taking the name of a saint were adopted.⁹⁴ Nevertheless, the Touraine reform did not choose the model of reform of the disalced Carmel.⁹⁵ The Touraine reform recognized the stipulations of the so-called mitigated Rule of 1432.⁹⁶ In this regulation the stipulations regarding remaining in the cell were tempered and the Carmelites were permitted to eat meat three times a week.

The Observantia Strictior in Belgium

This reform of the observantia strictior had profound effects in the Carmel of Belgium.⁹⁷ In 1603 the province was visited by the Prior General Henry Silvio,

90 A list of books read to the blind John of St. Samson can be found in Blommestijn (1987) 97–99.

91 Bouchereaux (1950) 269f. On the ties of this Carmelite reform movement with the salon of Madame Barbe Acarie and the French school Boaga writes: ‘*What were the relations between the protagonists of the Touraine reform and the prominent personalities of ‘Hotel Acarie’? They had personal connections: a) The Carthusian monk Dom Beaucousin, promoter of the reform of spiritual life among religious followers, was confessor and spiritual director of Fr. Thibault, who also frequently consulted him about the reform. b) The same Thibault was friends with Pierre de Berulle, with whom he often spoke of questions about the Carmelite nuns. c) While John of St. Samson lived in Paris at the end of the 16th century, he had as director Blanzky, who also visited Madame Acarie, and her spiritual daughters. John of St. Samson read Ruysbroeck and other authors then in fashion.*’ Boaga [sa] 3.

92 ‘*De afcomste van onse heylige Vaders vanden bergh Karmel.*’ Teresa (1650) fifth mansion, chap. 1, 88. See also Plattig (1995) 76.

93 Smet (1982) 55.

94 Panzer (2006) 303.

95 Panzer (2006) 90f.

96 Plattig (1995) 35. On the integration see Panzer (2006) 313.

97 Smet (1982) 110.

who on this occasion elucidated his decree mentioned above which ushered in the Tridentine reforms.⁹⁸ The reform of the Order that was set in motion after this visitation moved between two poles: avoiding scandals among the population⁹⁹ and building up the province along the lines of the Tridentine pursuit of reform.¹⁰⁰ The devotion to Our Lady, so typical of Carmelite tradition, proved an important theme in the process of confessionalization, which gained the loyalty of both bishops and the ordinary population.¹⁰¹

The first initiatives of reform were taken in the Carmels of Gent and Valenciennes. The protagonists were Martin de Hooghe († 1637) and Livinus d'Hondt († 1641).¹⁰² In 1640 the Belgian province rallied around the constitutions that the Prior General of the Order Stracci had based on the reform of Touraine,¹⁰³ but until 1645 – when the constitutions of the observantia strictior were definitively accepted – there was a tense time concerning the question whether or not various local stipulations would be included.¹⁰⁴ After this period the pursuit of reform of the observantia strictior increasingly finds its own form.

98 Panzer (2006) 50. Mention is made of this decree on p. 38.

99 'so schreibt am 3. Juli 1624 Martin de Hooghe (...) 'Vorsorge zu treffen, daß nicht das Volk (...) das hier in Nachbarschaft und eingemengt zwischen den Häretikern sitzt, durch die Skandale der Ordensleute dem katholischen Glauben entfremdet wird'. Aus der Feder Isabellas lautet dasselbe Argument: 'Es kann mir nur höchst willkommen sein, daß die Religiosen in diesen Provinzen, die an der Nähe der Häretiker leiden, von allererprobtestem Leben sind.' Panzer (2006) 95f. In Ghent the original order did not yet receive the qualification of disciplina regularis from bishop Triest even in 1625. Cloet (1992) 163. Some of these scandals are described in Panzer (2006) 287f.

100 Panzer (2006) 95f.

101 Bishop Antoon Triest, bishop of Ghent, wrote in 1649 how with the revival of Marian devotion the former glory of Carmel was restored in his city. Daniel of the Virgin Mary (1680) II, no 3553, p. 1019. The Marian devotion was not unambiguous. Burschel writes: 'schon ein kurzer Blick in die einschlägige Forschungsliteratur läßt erkennen, daß die nachtridentinische Maria in immer stärkerem Maße dazu eitrug, das katholische Kirchenvolk zu disziplinieren, um seine konfessionelle Homogenität sicherzustellen was wiederum zur Folge hatte, daß diese Maria nach und nach zu einer Maria wurde, deren Schutz, Trost und Hilfe nicht mehr umsonst zu haben war.' Burschel (1999) 590. On the question of how the Marian devotion gained the loyalty of the population as well, see note 113.

102 Smet also mentions the name of Francois Potel, see Smet (1982) 112f.

103 Panzer (2006) 308. 'Obwohl die belgische Provinz im Dezember 1640 die Konstitutionen annahm, die General Straccio auf Grundlage der Tourainer Satzungen erstellt hatte, trugen einzelne mit diesen Konstitutionen verbundene Bestimmungen zu einem Konflikt bei, der die Provinz zwischen 1641 und 1644 in die Spaltung trieb. Erst mit deren Überwindung und dem Sieg der 'reformatio pura' war die Grundlage geschaffen, um bis zum Jahr 1656 alle Konvente der Provinz der Reform zuzuführen.' Panzer (2006) 358.

104 Smet (1982) 119–121.

The initial identification with the way of life of the Discalced Carmelites then fades into the background and makes way for a stronger appeal to the work of John Soreth.¹⁰⁵

These were the years in which Maria Petyt developed her spiritual authority, supported in this by her spiritual director Michael of St. Augustine. His influence on the observantia strictior in Belgium was great.

Michael of St. Augustine

Michael of St. Augustine¹⁰⁶ – his name in the world was Jan van Ballaert – was born on April 15, 1621.¹⁰⁷ Jan must have been a determined and self-confident young man. When at a young age his mother advised him against entering the original Order of Carmel – the Order seems to have completely collapsed in Belgium¹⁰⁸ – he answered her: *'Who knows if it is not up to me to call this most holy family back to its first discipline.'*¹⁰⁹

Entering in 1637, he received the habit of the Order on October 13, 1639. On October 14, 1640, the eve of the feast of St. Teresa, he professed his solemn vows and according to his biographer he displayed the same fervor as this saint.¹¹⁰ About his virtuous life the same biographer writes: *'Do you want to judge how genuine his life was? Read his books that he wrote on the mystical and spiritual life and know with certainty that he lived in such a way.'*¹¹¹

¹⁰⁵ Panzer (2006) 296.

¹⁰⁶ An elaborate biographical sketch is given in Hoppenbrouwers (1949) and *DS*, t.10, 1980, cc. 1187–1191. A biography of earlier date is Jacobus (1684) 322–331. The biography by Timothy of the Presentation of the Blessed Virgin Mary is included in Wessels (1926) VII–XL. A French translation can be found in Lima (2005) 3–28.

¹⁰⁷ According to his biographer Timothy, Michael was born in 1622. Timotheus (1926) VII. Michael's certificate of baptism and the baptismal registers of the parish of St. Nicholas, however, give the date of 1621, according to an annotation by Wessels to this passage and an elaborate footnote in Hoppenbrouwers (1949) 159.

¹⁰⁸ The point of departure did not look very good, Daniel of the Virgin Mary reports: *'In conventibus Belgii Obseruantia, & Reformatio à Ven. P. Ioanne Soreth plantata perstiterat feliciter, & constanter per annos circiter centum (...) At sub annum 1570 per tumultus bellicos & haereticorum rabiem exsiccatus ibi penè fuit vertex Carmeli, periit omnis decor eius.'* Daniel of the Virgin Mary (1662) 348, no 649.

¹⁰⁹ *'Quis scit, aiebat, an sanctissima haec familia per me non sit ad pristinam disciplinam revocanda?'* Timotheus (1926) IX.

¹¹⁰ Jacobus (1684) 326.

¹¹¹ *'Zyt ghy keurigh hoe oprecht syn leven was? leest syne Boecken, welcke hy van het Mystieck en Gheestelyck Leven beschreven heeft, en weet voor-seker: dat hij dusdanighlyck heeft gheleeft.'*

In the execution of his administrative duties¹¹² Michael attached great value to the observance of Marian devotion. About this his biographer writes:

And in order to impress this devotion on the peoples' hearts more deeply, he was the first to have the portrait of the miraculous image of Our Lady of Naples publicly placed in our churches, by means of which so many anxious hearts found comfort in their need. This devotion was fostered every Wednesday by singing the Litany before it, with a great gathering of the people.¹¹³

It must have been this preference for Marian devotion that made Michael a fervent anti-Jansenist.¹¹⁴ The polarization between Jansenists and anti-Jansenists in the Southern Netherlands has a complex history, however, which makes the fanatical dedication of Michael – and also of Maria Petyt – to anti-Jansenism understandable.

Jansenism and Anti-Monachism

At the beginning of the Jansenist movement – in the 1640s, after the posthumous publication of the book *Augustine* by the bishop of Ieper, Cornelius Jansenius (1585–1638) – Jansenism and the Catholic reformation still had many

Jacobus (1684) 326. Omitted is '*Onder al, den Boeck: Van de Grondeloose Verloocheninghe syn-selfs, om Godt en Maria, in Godt en Maria. Syn: Godtvruchtigh Leven in Christo. Inleydinghe tot het Landt van Carmelus. Syn: Engels Leven. Syn: Thien-daeghsche Exer-citien, in welke onse Religieusen hun eens's jaers moeten vertrecken.*'

112 Michael was provincial from 1656 to 1659, from 1667 to 1670 and from 1677 to 1681, assistant provincial from 1659 to 1663, from 1674 to 1677 and from 1681 to 1684. Moreover he managed the province as vicar from August 16, 1672 to the end of 1673 during the absence of the provincial.

113 '*En om meer in de herten der menschen dese Devotie te prenten, heeft hy den eersten ghewest, den welcken publieckelyck, in onse Kercken heeft doen op-rechten, het Portret van 't Miraculeus Beeldt van Onse Lieve-Vrouwe van Napels, door welke soo vele benouwde herten, in hunnen noodt, troost hebben vonden: en wiens Devotie alle Woensdaghen, is vervoordert, door de Litanie, welke men singht voor 't selve, met eenen grooten toe-loop des volcks.*' Jacobus (1684) 327.

114 Michael was a member of the secret Society of anti-Jansenists founded in November 1678. See Van Michel van Meerbeeck's contribution to this volume, p. 58 and Esther van de Vate's contribution to this volume, p. 112. Marian devotion was a very sensitive issue in this polemic. See Spiertz (1992) 43.

parallel features.¹¹⁵ During this period the controversy, which began as a theological polemic, mainly centered on dogmatic questions about grace. Jansenism was suffused with a pessimistic anthropology. The human being's free will was not sufficient for observing God's commandments. The breaking point between the two groups came when Jansenist priests refused to renounce the five summarizing theses formulated in the bull '*Cum occasione*' (May 31, 1653).¹¹⁶

In a subsequent phase, after 1660, the followers of Jansenism proved ever less interested in dogmatic matters. Their attention was rather focused on the pastoral, spiritual and moral renewal of the Church.¹¹⁷ In a growing polemic with anti-Jansenism – '*no Jansenism without anti-Jansenism*'¹¹⁸, Ceyssens once sighed – the movement ultimately hardened in the direction of rigorist standpoints and became increasingly detached from its pursuit of dogmatic reform in the 40s and 50s.

This hardening was not an isolated occurrence. A serious problem had arisen in the relations within the church due to the highly diocesan approach to the pursuit of reform in the Southern Netherlands. The relatively autonomous sphere of influence that the bishops strove after did not agree with Rome's pursuit of reform, which advocated far more centralized power politics.¹¹⁹ This conflict became crystallized in times of high tension. The reform-minded bishops were considered Jansenist,¹²⁰ while an anti-Jansenist tendency was ascribed to Rome. That the escalation of the conflict was in the end dominated by a collision between these spheres of influence becomes apparent when Pope Alexander VII, despite his doctrinal sympathies for anti-Jansenism, nevertheless condemns 45 laxist – read anti-Jansenist – theses.¹²¹

¹¹⁵ Roegiers (1996) 43.

¹¹⁶ The five theses (Denzinger 1092–1096) summarize the original doctrine of Jansenism, based on Jansenius' posthumously published work on Augustine. Already in 1641, 1642 and 1653 the book was banned by the Holy Office.

¹¹⁷ Their demanding program required of every Christian a pursuit of holiness in his own way, in accordance with his 'state'. See Roegiers (1996) 45.

¹¹⁸ Roegiers (1996) 45 cites Ceyssens.

¹¹⁹ At the Council of Trent a Roman delegation had pushed the point that the bishops derived their jurisdiction from the pope. Although this view was rejected, elements of it had filtered into some documents. See Roegiers (1996) 55.

¹²⁰ Michael writes: '*episcopi reguntur a jansenistis*.' Ceyssens (1968) 226. There was good reason for this. Bishop Boonen hesitated to publish the ban on *Augustine* by Jansenius.

¹²¹ Roegiers (1996) 56; Propositiones XLV damnatae in Decretis S. Officii; Errores doctrinae moralis laxioris; prop. 1–28, décret V du 24 sept. 1665; 29–45, du 18 mars 1666. Denzinger (2005) no 2020.

This controversy between Rome and the bishops had far-reaching consequences for the religious in the Southern Netherlands. They were labeled as anti-Jansenist, not least because the popes relied on the regular clergy for their policy of centralism, and because of their stance they often came into conflict with the bishops. Ceyskens describes this unpalatable polarization with a term he probably borrows from Michael of St. Augustine: anti-monachism.¹²² As a culmination of this almost endlessly mounting power struggle, Alphons de Berghes, archbishop of Mechelen, subjected the holding of processions to a strict discipline on August 29, 1674.¹²³ He not only reduced the number, he also forbade carrying statues of saints in processions of the Blessed Sacrament. This prohibition had drastic consequences for the Carmelites, who in Brussels alone held roughly one hundred processions a year.¹²⁴ In 1676 Rome initially took the side of the archbishop.¹²⁵ Because of the strong resistance on the part of the religious, however, the case was once more presented to the Congregation of Rites. Pending their decision the practice from before 1674 was maintained. This conflict lasted until May 20, 1682, when in his letter, '*Cum Inter Venerabilem Fratrem*', Innocent XI pronounced in favor of the regulars.¹²⁶

Maria Petyt did not live to see this pronouncement as she died in 1677. The Jansenist disagreement and the problems surrounding anti-monachism were by that time not nearly solved and also affected Michael and indirectly her own person. In 1673 there was a polemic regarding Michael's treatise *Marie-vormigh ende Marielijck leven in Maria om Maria*.¹²⁷ In a letter to his friend Seraphinus¹²⁸ Michael writes:

122 Ceyskens (1952) 20.

123 Ceyskens (1968) 222f. See also Smet (1982) 334. Alphons de Berghes (1624–1689) based himself on Borromeo's instructions and other practices that were customary in Italy. De Berghes became archbishop of Mechelen in 1671. Thanks to protection by the Spanish king he was only barely kept from being unseated in 1679 during an anti-Jansenist witch-hunt aimed at his person. See Ockeley (2009) 125–162.

124 Ceyskens (1974) XXVI, note 1. See also Ockeley (2009) 150.

125 Ceyskens (1968) 492.

126 The decree of Innocent XI can be found in Van de Velde [1829] II, 380–38.

127 Maria Petyt's visions of Mary underlie this treatise on 'Mariform' life. Michael does not mention Maria's name, but states as his source: '*Den geest schynt voort te leeren ende metter daet te doen ondervinden*.' ('*The spirit seems to continue teaching and actively cause to experience*.') However, the spirit speaks here with the words of Maria Petyt. We find passages from Petyt (1683) vol. 2, cap. CCVII and cap. CCVIII in chapters 6 and 7 of the treatise; cap. CCXVI. we find in chapter 12; cap. CCXII we find in chapter 13.

128 See Esther van de Vate's contribution to this volume, p. 93.

It is written to me from Gent that our treatise on Marian life in Mary and through Mary is very displeasing to the Jansenists. What does his most eminent Bona think of this? Can a positive testimony not be obtained from him about this? I believe that that most eminent Lord is imbued with the spirit of his Holy Father Bernard who, as is well-known, excelled in the Marian path as described in this treatise. Meanwhile it is said that the Jansenists have taken offence at this and have taken the opportunity to publish this ultimately biased book.¹²⁹ It is a strange business that these people do want to know about the holy fathers, popes and the entire Church, which they want to reform, but condemn the spirit of the saints and scoff at their thoughts.¹³⁰

This polemic did not leave Maria unmoved. In the document on the Dutch War we read how she (probably) shortly thereafter writes that the Jansenist attack on Marian devotion affects her painfully:

The necessity of the Holy Church, that was impressed upon me, was partly because of the uproars and commotions etc, which the Jansenists caused in the Holy Church, by their doctrines that they proposed as a great insult, criticism and blasphemy against the Holy Virgin, and the many errors that they thrust upon the hearts of the faithful.¹³¹

But however dramatic it was, the controversy did not leave deep traces in her writings.

¹²⁹ This book is *Monita salutaria Beatae Mariae Virginis ad cultores suos indiscretos*. The first edition of this polemical writing was published in Ghent in 1673. The name of the author, Adam Widenfeldt († 1678), had been omitted but the imprimatur, signed by Ignace Gillemans, a known Jansenist, evoked much opposition from the very start. Hoffer (1938) 187ff.

¹³⁰ 'scribitur mihi gandavo jansenistis multum displicere tractatum nostrum de Vita Mariana in Maria propter Mariam. Quid sentit de illo Eminetissimus Bona? Non posset obtineri ab ipso testimonium bonum de illo? Existimo eum eminentissimum Dominum imbuturum spiritu Sancti. P. Sui. Bernardi, quem in via mariana, qualis in isto tractatu describitur, excelluisse constat. Interim jansenistae dicuntur inde offensi, et accepisse occasionem saltem partialem edendi istum libellum. Est res mira quod isti homines velint sapere supra S.S. Patres, pontifices et totam ecclesiam, quam volunt reformare, et improbant spiritum Sanctorum, eorum sententias cavillant.' Mechelen, December 22, 1673.

¹³¹ Fol. 35v.

Maria's prayer for the Church and the original radiance of the Carmel continued for several decades after her death. In the 80s Angelo Monsignano, Carmelite Prior General, writes about the sisters of the Cluyse who:

... now number eight and who hope by God's mercy to persevere in this practice of hers unto death in order to advance <this practice> all the more diligently and happily on the narrower battleground of the First Rule of our Order.¹³²

In Closing

In her Cluyse Maria Petyt certainly did not find the heavenly life she hoped for in her ardent desire for God. She did, however, leave behind a living testimony to how a anchoress can be involved with the spiritual search of her times. It is not without reason that her spiritual director writes about her and many of the other searching women in this period:

Show me new Teresas, new Magdalenes, new Gertrudes, new Catharines of Siena, in purity of heart, in divine love, in Christiformity, in conformity with the will of God and at once God will marvelously appear in these, his saints.¹³³

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¹³² See note 11. '*...nu acht in 't getal zijn, de welcke in de pratycke der selver door de bermher-tigheyt Godts totter doot toe hopen te volherden ende om in dese van den eersten Regel van onse Orden engere strijdtbaene te vlijtiger ende te geluckiger te vervoorderen.*' At the second approbation of the ordinances of Schaarbeek. See Michel van Meerbeeck's contribution to this volume, p. 54. Persoons (2009) names the sisters on p. 275–277. Staring (1948) also mentions Sister Anna Gores and Sister van der Poorten, on p. 303.

¹³³ '*Toont my nieuwe Teresien, nieuwe Magdalenen, nieuwe Geertruyden, nieuwe Catharinen van Senen in puerheyt des herten, in goddelijcke liefde, in Christi-vormigheyt, in ghelijck-vormigheyt met den wille Godts, ende terstont zal Godt wonderlijck verschynen in dese sijne Heylighen.*' Petyt (1683) preface 3r.

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