'Oh, How Spiritual Directors are Obligated to Remain Silent!' Michael's Redaction of the Writings of Maria Petyt: Some Initial Findings

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Introduction

The current image of Maria Petyt, from the point of view of historiography and spirituality, would have been radically different without the editorial work of her spiritual director Michael of St. Augustine (1621–1684). The discovery of a document on the Dutch War in a Latin translation, lying in the archives of the Postulator in Rome¹, not only causes us to revise this image, but also raises the question of the choices Michael might have made, and why. Were Maria Petyt's letters as uncontested as has hitherto been supposed?²

Michael's Silence Regarding Maria's Prayers on the Dutch War

On 7 December 1674 Maria Petyt expresses herself sharply on the obligation of spiritual directors not to divulge to the world what is entrusted to them by their directees:

Oh, how spiritual directors are obliged to remain silent and not to make mention of the secrets of the souls entrusted to them. Neither are they to speak about their spiritual progress for the encouragement and edifica-

- 1 Rome, Arch. Post. III, 70: *Vita Venerabilis Matris Mariae a Sta. Teresia Tertiariae ordinis Bmae Virginis Mariae de Monte Carmelo*, fol. 30r-49v. For a bibliographic description of the codex, see Deblaere (1979) 13, and Grosso's contribution to this volume, p. 83–88. I thank Dr Rijcklof Hofman and Veronie Meeuwssen M.A. for helping me with the translation of the Latin quotations and Drs Berbera van de Vate for helping me with the Italian quotations.
- 2 See e.g. Deblaere (1962) 19 and Deblaere (1979) 14, who did not question Michael's influence on the edition of the letters of Maria Petyt.

tion of others as long as these [souls] are living. At most, they may say something without naming anyone, so nobody can find out who it is.³

Probably this wistful admonition was meant for her own spiritual director Michael of St. Augustine, who initially made little secret of Maria's remarkable visions during the Dutch War, as evidenced by his letters to his friend Seraphinus of Jesus and Mary, who lived in Rome.⁴ In 1672 Seraphinus read several passages in Michael's letters about the visions of N.N. Mechlienensis, whose identity was no secret:

N.N. from Mechelen, full of God, is often driven by a wonderful impulse to pray for the conversion of Holland and for the success of France in this respect, and for our order in Belgium and for the whole church; God is working in her in a miraculous way.⁵

Seraphinus might also have read that Michael sincerely believed in the efficacy of Maria's prayer. At least so it appears a few months later when Michael wrote to him:

Already some two months ago our N. from Mechelen ceased to be driven by an impulse to pray, and since that time the king of France has ceased to meet with success.⁶

3 'Och hoe zyn de gheestelijcke Vaders verbonden te swyghen, ende gheen mentie te maecken vande secreten der Zielen, die hun bevolen zyn, noch sy en behoorden niet te spreken van hunnen gheestelijcken voortganck tot verweckinghe ende stichtinghe van andere, soo langh als die leven; ten hooghsten moghen sy jet segghen, sonder jemant te noemen, op datmen niet en come te weten, wie het is.' Petyt (1683) vol. 1, 269; 7 December 1674.

4 Seraphinus of Jesus and Mary (ca. 1612–1688) taught philosophy and theology to his fellow brothers and was called to Rome in 1668, where he held various posts, including that of secretary general for Germany and Belgium.

5 'N.N. Mechl. Deo plena, subinde agitur mirabili spiritu orandi pro conversione Hollandiae, et prosperitate Galliae in istum finem; et pro Belgio ordine nostro, et tota Ecclesia; Deus mire in illa operatur.' Michael of St. Augustine to Seraphinus of Jesus and Mary, Mechelen, 27 May 1672, Rome, Arch. Gen., Prov. Flandro - Belgica, commune provinciae 1675–1698. Michael of St. Augustine's letters are stored in a separate folder.

6 'N. Nostra Mechliniensis cessat agi spiritu orandi, iam a duobus circiter mensibus; et ab illo tempore cessat etiam Rex Galliae prosperari.' Michael of St. Augustine to Seraphinus of Jesus and Mary, Mechelen, 9 September 1672, Rome, Arch. Gen., Prov. Flandro - Belgica, commune provinciae 1675–1698. Even after her death Michael entrusted himself to the prayers of Maria Petyt. In a letter from Mechelen in 1681 Michael mentioned her intercession several times, including: *'tam bonum et desideratum succesum capitulo post Deum et Matrem Amabilem*

When new developments were imminent Michael readily connected these with the prayer life of Maria Petyt. A week later he wrote:

When she asked the Beloved what would please him and to what she should dedicate her communion, she heard: 'To the king of France.' And so the impulse to pray for this king returned, and she added that the king had acted badly when he left his army and did not pursue victory. And indeed it is said already that the king had given up on the capture of Maastricht, et cetera and is to descend with a new army. Time will tell.⁷

Despite these quoted passages, Michael disclosed in the document on the Dutch War that Maria had asked him to keep secret her celestial knowledge about Louis XIV.⁸ If we assume Michael's integrity as spiritual director, we cannot but conclude that Maria commanded this silence only in the second instance and she would not have asked for it unreasonably. In the aforementioned letter of 7 December 1674 Maria writes about a dark night in which she found herself since the Saturday before Palm Sunday. She blames the darkness of that night on the vainglory to which she succumbed in an unguarded moment:

It rewards me much before God that I have always tried to prevent anyone from learning about the grace which God has granted me, because I have always been an enemy of such revelations, [preferring] to remain unknown, because I rather fear that through human weakness I would be bitten by the infernal serpent because of some vainglory, to which I was not naturally inclined, and yet through circumstances I have succumbed.⁹

adscribo intercessioni V. Matris Mariae à Sta. Teresia.' Michael of St. Augustine to Seraphinus of Jesus and Mary, Rome, Arch. Gen., *Prov. Flandro - Belgica, commune provinciae 1675-1698*.

7 'dum autem illa peteret a Dilecto, pro quo placeret, et offeret suam Communionem audivit, pro Rege Galliae, et sic redijt spiritus orandi pro illo Rege, et addebat eum male fecisse, deserendo suum exercitum, nec prosequendo victoriam; iam autem dicitur ille Rex iterum absolute resobvisse intercipere Traiectum etc. et cum novo exercitu descendere; tempus docebit.' Michael of St. Augustine to Seraphinus of Jesus and Mary, Mechelen, 16 September 1672, Rome, Arch. Gen., *Prov. Flandro - Belgica, commune provinciae 1675-1698*.

8 Rome, Arch. Post. III, 70, fol. 30r.

9 'Het verschoont my noch veel by Godt, dat ick altoos soo inde weir gheweest ben, op dat niemant in kennisse soude komen vande gratien, die my Godt ghegunt heeft, want ick altoos eenen vyant gheweest hebbe van sulcken openbaeringhen, om onbekent te blyven, vreesende, dat ick door menschelijcke krancckheyt ghebeten soude worden van 't helsch serpent door eenighe eydel glorie, daer ick oock uytter nature niet toe gheneghen en was, ende nochtans door occasie, ben ick' er inghevalen.' Petyt (1683) vol. 1, 269; 7 December 1674. For the date of the incident, see 268.

Immediately after this passage follows Maria's lament about indiscreet spiritual directors. What exactly caused Maria to lash out so fiercely against spiritual directors is not known, but it might be connected with her prayer life during the Dutch War.

The fact that Maria enjoined this secrecy *only for her lifetime* poses even more questions than the slightly curious approach to what transpired between the spiritual director and his directee. The limitation on the commanded secrecy raises the problem why the remarkable letter collection about Louis XIV was not included in the *Leven vande weerdighe moeder Maria a S.ta Teresia*, (*alias*) Petyt.¹⁰ which Michael of St. Augustine published some six years after Maria's death in 1677. Nor is this letter collection included in the Latin *Vita Venerabilis Matris Mariae a Sta. Teresia*,¹¹ which has come down to us in the Roman codex. This omission is strange, since after Maria's death Michael was free to reveal her visions to the outside world. Michael provides the reader of the document on the Dutch War with the following reason for his decision:

how the spirit of prayer and of divine love worked in her [Maria Petyt] and with what fruit I will explain here logically from her writings, but separated from the context of her *Life*,¹² so that it will not displease some people too much and ... whether these things come forth from a divine spirit or not I leave up to others who are capable of examining and weighing such things. I just refer to those things with the same sincerity in which they were written by her and entrusted to me.¹³

10 Some other letters: Rome, Arch. Post. III, 70, fol. 32v, ll. 10–16 is a (not literal) translation of Petyt (1683) vol. 3, 94, ll. 6–15; Arch. Post. III, 70, fol. 42r, ll. 4–26 by Petyt (1683) vol. 3, 94, l. 21–95, l. 13; Arch. Post. III, 70, fol. 42r, l. 30–fol. 42v, l. 16 by Petyt (1683) vol. 3, 95, l. 18–96, l. 18; Arch. Post. III, 70, fol. 43r, ll. 11–27 by Petyt (1683) vol. 3, cap. LXVIII, 100–101, l. 8; Arch. Post. III, 70, fol. 44r, l. 44–fol. 44v, l. 20 by Petyt (1683) vol. 3, 13, ll. 10–34; Arch. Post. III, 70, fol. 44v, ll. 24–44 by Petyt (1683) vol. 3, 114, ll. 5–27. There are some 'changes' in the Dutch edition, for example: '*spiritus orandi pro prosperitate armorum Regis Galliae*' (fol. 42r, l. 5) is replaced by: '*den gheest van bidden [...] tot uytroeyinghe der Ketteryen.*' (vol. 3, 94 l. 22f.).

11 See n. 1. Some of the letters relating to R.G. [Rex Galliae] are found in the Index (fol. 6–29): cap. 201, 257, 269, 877 and 879. For the rest it is not possible to determine which letters are concerned. Some parts of the codex are damaged.

12 Her *Vita*, Rome, Arch. Post. III, 70 and Petyt (1683).

13 '*qualiter autem spiritus orationis et diuini amoris in ipsa tunc operatus fuerit, et cum quali fructu, hic consequenter subiiciam ex ipsius scriptis seorsim tamen a contextu reliquae uitae ipsius, ne forte aliquibus displaceant, et nimiae uariorum Criisi exponantur, quae an a diuino spiritu processerint nec ne, aliorum quorum est similia examinare, et ponderare iudi-*

Perhaps Michael's 'some people' refers to Maria's compatriots. It is not at all likely that Maria's prayers for the French king could count on their understanding. On February 24th 1680 - Flanders was claimed in that year by Louis XIV because of his reunification policy - Michael writes to Seraphinus that he does not know what to do with Maria's writings on the Dutch War 'because most of them are very much in favour of the King of France and some are against Spain and the Emperor, who supported Holland at that time, and are in many respects very antagonistic.'¹⁴ Michael trusts his friend with the knowledge of the spiritual involvement of Maria Petyt along with a surprising political consideration:

If the French King would know, he would be happy and have a strong motive to treat that venerable Mother with veneration, which perhaps in time could happen; if he would occupy the whole of Belgium, then it could not harm him to know it. The things I write are entrusted to Your Reverence [i.e. Seraphinus] so this knowledge [of Maria Petyt] can be used prudently.¹⁵

Probably Seraphinus might not have shared Michael's considerations in this respect. With his extensive contacts in the Roman curia¹⁶ he should have been aware of the growing tensions about Gallicanism. Already on 10 February 1673, while Maria was still sharing her 'supernatural' knowledge about the Dutch War with Michael, Louis XIV forced the issue with his *Droit de Regale*, in which he laid claim to the regalia of all dioceses in France. On 19 March 1682 - the day the clerics of the French General Assembly endorsed Bossuet's four arti-

cio reliquo; referam tamen illa, ea sinceritate, qua ab ipsa scripta sunt, et mihi concredita.
Rome, Arch. Post. III, 70, fol. 38r.

14 'sed quia pleraque multum sunt in favorem Regis Gall. et aliqua contra Hisp. et Imper. Hollandis tunc suppetias ferentes, essent forte multis odiosa.' Michael of St. Augustine to Seraphinus of Jesus and Mary, Brussels, 24 February 1680. Rome, Arch. Gen., *Prov. Flandro - Belgica, commune provinciae 1675-1698*.

15 'si Rex Gall. sceret, haberet occasionem gaudii et fortem motivum illam V. Matrem colendi, quod forte cum tempore posset fieri, si totum Belgium occuparet, tunc eum non posset nocere, quod istu sciret haec scribo confidentur R. V. quae illam scientiam prudenter utentur' Michael of St. Augustine to Seraphinus of Jesus and Mary, Brussels, 24 February 1680. Rome, Arch. Gen., *Prov. Flandro - Belgica, commune provinciae 1675-1698*.

16 Seraphinus had many contacts with the famous Cardinal Francesco Albizzi who was a influential member of the Roman curia; see Ceyssens (1974) XL. For more information on Francesco Albizzi, see Monticone (1960) 23-26.

cles¹⁷ – the relationship with Rome was definitely in crisis. Amid such tensions Seraphinus might not have considered it appropriate to make these writings of Maria Petyt known, either to the world or to Louis XIV.

Other Interventions by Michael

The editorial decision to omit the letter collection on the Dutch War from the *Leven vande weerdighe moeder Maria a S.ta Teresia* and partly from the *Vita Venerabilis Matris Mariae a Sta. Teresia* makes us somewhat suspicious of what Michael asserts in his preface to the *Leven*:

Furthermore I have considered it wise to arrange this extension of the *Life* of this venerable mother Maria of St. Teresa [alias Maria Petyt] in such a way that I follow her style and sentences and, as best I can, I also follow and keep her words. I simply wanted to select from her writings and divide them into treatises and chapters. I wanted to create some order in the material, without adding anything of my own except rough and simple connections and headings of chapters.¹⁸

Although he claims he does not want to append anything, the omission of these letters suggests that Michael might have made less innocent choices than those mentioned in the preface to the *Leven*.

Mindful of such editorial choices that Michael might have made, some other problems call for clarification. The main one is what else Michael might have left out when editing the writings of Maria Petyt. There are indications that he did so more than once. While both Maria and Michael were fiercely anti-Jansenist, the word 'Jansenism' does not occur in the Dutch letter collec-

17 These articles argue that the only authorization given to the pope is on spiritual affairs; that in the exercise of his spiritual power he is subject to the authority of a general council; and that he must maintain without restriction the institutions, rules and customs of the French church and the French empire. The articles also state that the pope's decrees are valid for the entire church, but are only irreversible with the consent of the whole church.

18 'Voorts ick hebbe goeet ghevonden dese vermeederinge van het Leven van dese weerdighe Moeder MARIA à SANCTA TERESIA soo te schicken, dat ick haeren stel ende sin, jac oock naer vermoghen; haere woorden maecke te volghen ende te houden, ende uyt haere schriften alleenlijck hebbe willen uytsonderen, ende ghelijck door Tractaten ende Capittelen verdeelen, ende in eenighe orden stellen de materien, sonder by naer jet van't myne by te doen, als een grove, ende simpele Connexie, ende de Titels der Capittelen' Petyt (1683) vol. 1, Prologue.

tion.¹⁹ Also, there are periods, especially in the latter years of her life, for which few letters are found in the Dutch edition. What went on in those years? Did she write less? Or did Michael omit these letters?

We encounter even more editorial problems when we consider all open questions about the history of the Latin codex. It was obviously prepared for publication.²⁰ Michael holds out this prospect in the *Kort Begryp*, a synoptic edition of the *Leven vande weerdighe moeder Maria a S.ta Teresia*.²¹ However the Latin codex was never actually published. Did Michael – or someone else – decide on closer scrutiny that publication of this work was no less inappropriate than that of the document on the Dutch War?

In this article I can only give an overview of possible obstacles to the release of the Dutch and Latin editions. Those with some knowledge of the turbulent theological developments in the 1680s will know that Michael found himself in a minefield with a lot of difficulties. A researcher who inquires into these tumultuous years often has to conclude that the most plausible explanation is an interplay of various factors. So in this article I confine myself to a couple of scenarios of what might have happened.

Michael's Troubles during His Work on the Latin Codex

First I will concentrate on the cancellation of the publication of the Latin codex.²² A major reason could have been that Michael fell into discredit in the circles of the Roman Curia. In these years Michael became suspect because of his connection with the 'other Maria', a Norbertine sister from Mechelen who

19 Probably this also applies to Arch. Post. III, 70. The table of contents contains no reference to Jansenism. Some caution is called for, however, because a small section of the table of contents is damaged.

20 It is evident on the front page, where a note is added with the text: '*Titulus generalis praefigendus initio totius libri*.' See also Deblaere (1962) 18f.

21 Only one copy of the single edition of the *Kort Begryp* in 1681 is to be found in the Royal Library of Brussels. However, the full text of the *Kort Begryp* is incorporated into James of the Passion (1681) 243–344. Michael writes about a Latin *Vita* in *Kort Begryp*: 'so it is worth reading that statement <by Maria Petyt>, written in her own hand, and extensively narrated in her *Life*, described in Latin, by the reverend father Michael of St. Augustine, provincial and her spiritual director.' 31f.

22 I omit the obvious possibility that the publication was stopped because of Maria's anti-Jansenism. Michael had overcome this problem already by leaving out those letters. See n. 19.

was under his spiritual direction.²³ Besides the information in his aforementioned letters to his friend Seraphinus, in which she is usually referred to as '*ista monialis*', nothing is known about this young sister. In 1680 she was 33 years old and well advanced in her prayer life.²⁴ Michael developed a close relationship with her, about which he wrote to Seraphinus:

This good nun is obliging to me in everything and we have agreed that all prayer intentions which are entrusted and recommended to her, as well as her own pious intentions, are also entrusted to me. And vice versa, all intentions which are entrusted to me, et cetera are also for her. And thus, although she is from a different order, she has a zeal that springs from holy inspiration and a motherly affection for our order. Therefore even your reverence is specially recommended to her.²⁵

Such intimate spiritual contact between director and directee is strongly reminiscent of a letter from Maria Petyt to Michael, written on 24 June 1675. There we read how the Beloved, at Michael's request, joined Maria with her spiritual director as a partner:

Reverend Father, at your wish the Beloved seems to join me, unworthy as I am, to you as a consort of your reverence, helping your reverence according to the spirit and in the spirit, to labour, to generate, et cetera.²⁶

- 23 The 'other Maria' also features only sparsely in the literature. See Ceyssens (1952) 13, n. 24: '*De alia poenitente, quae fuit Nobertina, nullam inveni litteraturam.*' However, Hoppenbrouwers (1949) 164 writes at length about this Norbertine sister.
- 24 On 9 March 1680 Michael writes from Brussels: '*spero quod promovebitur ad prelaturam etsi adhuc satis iuvenis, vix 33 annorum*' (Rome, Arch. Gen., Prov. Flandro - Belgica, commune provinciae 1675-1698). In the same period (Brussels, 27 January 1680) he wrote a letter in which he tells that three years earlier, on 12 November 1677 (twelve days after Maria Petyt's death on 1 November 1677), he had received a note from this 'other Maria' with a vision and instructions on how to deal with the Jansenist tensions; see Ceyssens (1952) 66.
- 25 '*Ista bona monialis mecum facit in omnibus et convenimus, ut omnes ipsi commissae et commendatae, ac eius piae intentiones sint etiam mihi commissae etc. et vicissim omnes mihi commendatae etc. sint ipsius, unde licet sit alterius Ordinis, ex divino instinctu, habet etiam zelum et affectum maternam erga ordinem nostrum; et sic Reverentia Vestra est etiam ipsi specialiter commendata.*' Michael of St. Augustine to Seraphinus of Jesus and Mary, Brussels, 9 March 1680. Rome, Arch. Gen., Prov. Flandro - Belgica, commune provinciae 1675-1698.
- 26 '*Eerweerdighen Vader den Beminden schynt naer uwen wensch, my omweerdighe als een mede-paer tot U-Eerweerdigheyt te voeghen, om naer den gheest, ende inden gheest U-Eerw. te helpen arbeeyden, baeren, &c.*' Petyt (1683) vol. 3, 150.

Like Maria Petyt, this 'other Maria' had great influence on Michael. On 23 September 1679 he writes how she discouraged him from going to Rome:

Moreover, a certain holy soul of the order of St. Norbert, entrusted to my guidance by her superiors, whom I have mentioned sometimes in my letters to your reverence, advised me against this journey as being not deiform. When I told her a few months ago, before she had asked God in her prayer for counsel, that I had to go to Rome, she made it clear that she rejoiced in natural hope that in Rome I could accomplish something against the Jansenists, about whom she had experienced once in the spirit that they were hated by God. But after being asked by me to consult God about the matter, she said that God didn't want me to undertake this journey because my presence in Rome could achieve nothing and because I would be detained on the way, et cetera. When I told her that I was healthy enough again and that there did not seem to be any excuse [for my absence], she did not alter her advice. When I visited her a week ago she told me again of her own accord that the Beloved absolutely didn't want me to make that journey. [...] The same nun, while praying for a remedy against the Jansenists, has been assured several times by God of a good outcome in Rome. Once when I told her that the deputies from Louvain had the ear of the pope and that negotiations in Rome were going badly, she answered: 'The Beloved promised me a truly happy ending. About this I cannot doubt. And see, from that time the negotiations seemed to go better.'²⁷

27 *'Accedit quod quaedam sancta anima, Ordinis Sancti Norberti, a superioribus meae directioni commissa, de quo aliquando mentionem feci in meis ad Reverentiam Vestram litteris, istud iter tamquam non deiforme mihi dissuadeat. Cum huic ab aliquot mensibus dicerem me debere ire Romam antequam in oratione Deum consulisset, ostendebat se gaudere ex naturali spe, quod Romae aliquid possem efficere contra Jansenistas, quos aliquando in spiritu didicit Deo odibiles; sed cum meo rogatu rem Deo commendasset, dixit mihi ultro quod Dilectus non vellet, ut iter illud assumerem, quod Romae per meam praesentiam nihil posset fieri, et quod in via manerem etc. et cum ei dixissem me iam satis bona frui sanitate, nec videri subesse causam excusationis, reliquit hoc intactum; donec ab octiduo illam iterum visitando, ipsa iterato mihi ultro dixit, Dilectum absolute nolle ut iter arripiam [...] Dicta Monialis orans pro remedio contra Jansenistas aliquoties a Deo habuit assecurationem de bono successu Romae; cui cum aliquando dicerem deputatos Lovanistas habere aurem pontificis, et negotium Romae esse in malo statu, illa replicabat; equidem Dilectus mihi promisit bonum successum; de quo non possum dubitare; et ecce ab illo tempore negotium habuit meliorem apparentiam.'* Michael of St. Augustine to Seraphinus of Jesus and Mary, Brussels, 23 September 1679. Rome, Arch. Gen., *Prov. Flandro - Belgica, commune provinciae*

This unknown sister's name crops up regularly in Michael's letters to his friend in Rome, also during important times in the production of both the Dutch text and the Latin translation. On 9 March 1680, shortly before the preface of the Latin text was dated, Michael wrote that the 'other Maria' had received messages which were transmitted by Maria Petyt:

Within three or four days I hope to see her, and then I will discuss it specifically. She has experienced several appearances of our venerable mother.²⁸

Unfortunately the content of these messages remains unknown. It might have referred to the publication of the Latin codex.

After this note he remained silent about the 'other Maria' for some years, as far as we can gather from Michael's correspondence with Seraphinus. Three years later, in the spring of 1683, a few months before the last '*facultas*' and '*approbationes*'²⁹ of the *Leven vande weerdighe moeder Maria a S.ta Teresia* were issued, Michael told his friend about the startling discovery that he was suspect in the eyes of the pope's confessor. Letters which the 'other Maria' had sent to Rome played a role in this awkward situation. At the beginning of this letter Michael narrates a remarkable encounter in the Carmelite monastery in Brussels:

The illustrious Mgr Internuncio³⁰ sent his secretary to the monastery to speak to reverend father provincial or, if he was absent, to the reverend father prior, and since both were outside the city and I was staying in the convent, the porter called me. Mgr Secretary asked: 'Where does father Michael of St. Augustine live, if not in Gent? (he said). The illustrious Mgr Internuncio, he added, would like to be informed about this father, about his qualities and merits. Then (I said): 'This father does not live in Gent; it is me.'³¹

1675–1698. In 1679 the Louvain faculty received a condemnation by pope Innocent XI of 65 theses in the work of its moral theologians.

28 *Post 3.4. dies spero illam invisere et tunc specialius agam; habuit plures apparitiones a Ven. Matre nostra.* Michael of St. Augustine to Seraphinus of Jesus and Mary, Brussels, 9 March 1680. Rome, Arch. Gen., *Prov. Flandro - Belgica, commune provinciae 1675–1698*.

29 Petyt (1683) vol. 1. after the Prologue.

30 The internuncio was Sebastiaan Antonius Tanara (1675–1687).

31 *'Ill.^{mus} D. Internuncius misit suum secretarium ad conventum ut loqueretur R. Provinciali, vel, eo absente, R.P. Priori; et cum uterque esset extra civitatem et ego restarem in conventu, portarius vocavit me. D. Secretarius petibat: 'Ubi habitat Michael à Sancto Augustino, nonne*

A little below Michael continues:

The reverend father provincial presumes that from the beginning I was suspected, since the illustrious gentleman [the Internuncio of Brussels] has received letters from Rome in which he is asked to gather information about me because of the letters of that sister from Mechelen to our most sacred lord, handed over by your reverence [Seraphinus] to the pope's confessor, as I believe, so they may well see if there is something in them [the letters from the 'other Maria'] that needs to be believed. I have no doubt about the divine spirit of this nun whose divine writings I have edited, as ordered by God, in some form, which I have written down in some 70 folia in condensed handwriting.³² They breathe an astonishing familiarity with the heavenly bridegroom. As a result of inquiries into my person [...] I was moved to send her two letters which she had sent to him, translated into Latin, also to your reverence. More than two months ago she sent me those letters with a description of the vision revealed to her. If you believe that it is advantageous, your reverence could read these letters aloud to the pope's father confessor or you could give him a copy, so it could be used by them for the good. I do not doubt that if the most sacred lord allows him to be informed, he will think otherwise about the 'novatores' [the Jansenists].³³

Gandavi? inquit. Ill^{mus} Dominus addet libenter informeretur de illo Patre; de illius qualitatibus et meritis. Ad quae ego: ille Pater non habitat Gandavi; sed ego sum....' Michael of St. Augustine to Seraphinus of Jesus and Mary, Brussels, 1 April 1683. Rome, Arch. Gen., *Prov. Flandro - Belgica, commune provinciae* 1675–1698.

32 These 70 folios with visions of the 'other Maria' have not yet been found.

33 '*suspiciatur R.A.P. Provincialis, uti et ego ab initio fueram suspicatus, quod Ill^{mus} Dominus Roma acceperit litteras, ut de me sumeret informationes ratione litterarum istius monialis Mechliniensis ad Sanctissimum Dominum, a Reverentia Vestra Confessario Pontificis, ut puto, traditarum, ut forte videant an aliquid fidei illis habendum etc. Non dubito de divino istis <sic!> monialis spiritu, cuius divina scripta, quasi iussu Dei, in aliquam formam redegi, et exscripsi in 70 circiter foliis chartae presso caractere. Spirant stupendam familiaritatem cum Sponso caelesti [...] Occasione autem informationis factae de mea persona [...] fui motus ut secundas ipsius litteras ad eundem, latine translatas, ad Reverentiam Vestram transmitterem, quas ipsa mihi misit plusquam a duabus mensibus cum descriptione visionis sibi factae; quas Reverentia Vestra, si iudicet expedire, Patri Confessario Pontificis poterit praelegere vel etiam copiam dare, ut illis uti in bonum. Non dubito, quin si Sanctissimus Dominus sineret se informari, aliter sentiret de novatoribus.'* Michael of St. Augustine to Seraphinus of Jesus and Mary, Brussels, 1 April 1683. Rome, Arch. Gen., *Prov. Flandro - Belgica, commune provinciae* 1675–1698.

Unfortunately these two letters of the 'other Maria' have not yet been discovered. However, the archives of the Carmelite Order in Rome contain a letter, in which Michael reveals the contents of two other letters from the 'other Maria'. On 28 May 1683 he wrote:

Last week I sent two letters from this nun which, I hope, may make a strong impression by putting matters in a holy light and leading to an actual movement. In those letters is written among other things that his holiness no longer has to doubt about a vicious evil, et cetera because it will be manifested only briefly as, for example, it is manifested now. For the 'novatores' of Belgium together with the 'novatores' of France, while they encourage each other with their knowledge, applaud the propositions against the pope in France, already approved and registered by the clergy and the king.³⁴

So also the 'other Maria' claimed to have special knowledge about political affairs, like Maria Petyt in the document on the Dutch War. The prelates were unlikely to have considered this knowledge from God, given the reaction of the pope's confessor to the previous two letters which had been sent to him. Michael wrote that the confessor considered 'that these letters were written from a human spirit.'³⁵ Anyway, the bold actions of this young Norbertine sister raised doubts in Rome regarding her spiritual director and his editorial work for visionary sisters. This awkward situation could have been an obstacle to the publication of the Latin codex.

34 *'precedenti septimana misi secundas litteras istius monialis, quae utinam, mediante divina aliqua illustratione et efficaci motione, efficaciter afficiant mentem per; in illis inter alia habetur, quod sua sanctitas non diu amplius debebit dubitare de malo serpente etc. quia brevi se manifestabit etc. pro ut ex nunc manifestat nam propositionibus contra pontificem in Gallia iam a clero et rege auctorizatis, et inter arresta regia registratis applaudunt novatores Belgii cum novatoribus Galliae confaederati et mutuas intelligentias foventes.'* Michael of St. Augustine to Seraphinus of Jesus and Mary, Brussels, 28 May 1683. Rome, Arch. Gen., Prov. Flandro - Belgica, commune provinciae 1675-1698.

35 *'Ista monialis istas secundas litteras, prout et sua omnia, reliquit meae dicretioni et arbitrio [...] His scriptis intelligo ex vestris Confessarium primas tandem tradidisse illi ad quem erant, sed quod ille existimet illas litteras ex humano spiritu scriptas etc. Sufficit, quod sint traditae; iam Dei est operari, prout spero operaturum, nisi peccata populi impedian etc. Illa monialis reliquit ista divinae providentiae. Data tamen occasione insinuabo illi quid actum.'* Michael of St. Augustine to Seraphinus of Jesus and Mary, Brussels, 1 April 1683. Rome, Arch. Gen., Prov. Flandro - Belgica, commune provinciae 1675-1698.

The Problem about the 'Oratio Quietis' in the Early 1680s

There may be another scenario explaining the cancellation of a Latin edition. During the process there could have been growing questions about the spiritual framework of Maria's letters. Working on the composition of the codex – Michael must have worked on it between 1677 and April 1680 – he might not have foreseen the rapid developments in the Roman Curia during and after these years, in which the Curia turned against mysticism and quietism, the *volta antimistica*.³⁶

In the early 1680s a polarizing attitude was emerging against a new form of prayer, the *Oratio quietis* or prayer of quiet. In the instructions of the Holy Office we find the following description of this prayer:

They call it an acquired contemplation, a prayer of quiet, without form, without images, a mystical silence, a simple gaze, a withdrawal to the centre, a sacred darkness, a mental exaltation, a deifying unification and more such perfections on which some books dwell, that promise that the soul will ascend to purely intellectual contemplation, to the essential application³⁷ of the spirit and to the most eminent life.³⁸

Although it is hardly possible in these early years to reduce any spiritual movement to a well defined content, the controversy about the *Oratio Quietis* crystallized rapidly.³⁹ The reason for this anti-mystical turn was the publication of

³⁶ See Malena (2003) 116.

³⁷ For the term 'application', see: *Dict. Spir.* 1: 822ff.

³⁸ *'La chiamano contemplatione acquisitata, oratione di quiete senza forma, senza immagini, silenzio mistico, semplice sguardo, introversione centrale, tenebre divine, eccesso mentale, unione deifica, et altre tali perfettioni delle quali trattano certi libri, che promettono d'inalzar l'anima sino alla contemplatione puramente intellettuale, alla applicatione essenziale dello spirito e vita sopra eminente.'* Rome, ASU, St.St. (Archivio della Congregazione per la Dottrina della Fede, Fondo Stanza Storica) Volumi dei consultatori conventuali dei ss.apostoli U.F. 4. S.O. Fabro consultore. Propositiones cleri Gallicani, Taloni et Lavard. orationes quietis 1680–1690 fol. 370r (Palazzo del Sant'Uffizio, Piazza del Sant'Uffizio 11 00120 Città del Vaticano). For more information about the use of the term essential and eminent in the work of Maria Petyt, see Deblaere (1961) 1346–1366.

³⁹ Eulogio Pacho writes about this preliminary phase of quietism in *Dict. Spir.*: *'Ceux qui ont le plus contribué à cette évolution peuvent être appelés «préquiétistes» à condition que cela n'implique aucune nuance péjoratives, aucun soupçon. Si des déviations se sont produites, plus ou moins nettes, c'est qu'un se sont produites, c'est qu'un sain équilibre interne n'a pas été maintenu; il faut alors détecter quand et comment elles se manifestent, les dangers qu'elles créent, les exagérations qu'elles suscitent dans la pratique de la vie spirituelle.'* *Dict. Spir.* 12,

the famous *Guida Spirituale* by Molinos in 1675. At the time this *Guida Spirituale* was a popular and widely read book in Rome. There was no problem until the end of the 1670s when the Jesuits Bell'Uomo (d. 1690) and Paolo Segneri (1624–1694) voiced the first protests against the book. In 1678 Bell'Uomo published a work entitled *Pregio e l'ordine dell'orationi de ordinarie e mistiche* in response to Molinos's thoughts on prayer. This writing, however, cannot really be called polemical in the opinion of Dudon, who records only slight concern about a 'new asceticism' in this work.⁴⁰ The debate on Molinos's thoughts became fiercer in March 1680, when the popular preacher Segneri informed his general that he planned to refute Molinos's ideas on meditation. In the same year his *Concordia tra la quiete e fatica nell'orazione* appeared.⁴¹

At first Segneri's efforts to polarise seemed in vain. On 26 September 1681 Cardinal Casanate, assessor of the Holy Office,⁴² wrote the following comment in the margin of his *Memoria per il libro del Paolo Segnari della Compagnia di Giesu*:

On the basis of moderation, nothing prohibits the manufacture of books which attack the prayer of quiet. But for the proper force of the same [prayer] [someone must write] circular letters which should be given to him [Segneri], and which should be compiled by a special convocation of the father cardinals.⁴³

This benevolent reception of the prayer of quiet seemed even more confirmed when on 26 November 1681, Segneri's *Concordia* was put on the Index.⁴⁴

2: 2758. The complexity of the facts and opinions prevents a researcher to form a clear picture of the dividing lines between pre-quietism and the prayer of quiet. Malena (2003, 6f.) writes about this problem: '*Appare perciò necessario cercare di analizzare tale strategia nel suo complesso, per evitare i rischi connessi all'adozione, come categorie di analisi storica, di quelli che furono capi di repressione inquisitoriale.*'

40 Dudon (1921) 66.

41 *Dict. Spir.* 12, 2: 2768. *Concordia tra la fatica e la quiete nell'orazione* appeared in Florence in the autumn of 1680.

42 Rome, Bibliotheca Casanatense, Ms Casanate 310. (Rome, Bibliotheca Casanatense, Via S. Ignazio 52, 00186 Rome) For more information on Cardinal Casanate, see Ceysens (1978) 144–147.

43 '*Nihil de moderatione prohibet factem librorum e impugnanciu orationi quietis, sed pro recto vi eiusde dandar ei literas circulares formandai per Congreg. particulare DD Cardinalium.*' Rome, Bibliotheca Casanatense, Ms Casanate 310, fol. 500v. The transcription and translation of this remark are tentative. Someone else might have written this note in the margin.

44 *Dict. Spir.* 12, 2:2770.

However, the atmosphere changed rapidly after this date. On 12 April 1682, one of the former assessors of the Holy Office, Cardinal Francesco Albizzi, completed a document called *Oratione di Quietè*.⁴⁵ In this treatise the cardinal refers to suspect forms of mystical prayer, such as those practised by the beguards. In his rejection of this prayer he did not advance substantive arguments, but rather stressed the threat which these movements constitute to the Church. Therefore, he believes, all writings on this theme in the vernacular should be destroyed and confessors and spiritual directors, especially those of nuns, should be instructed that only perfect souls may practise this form of prayer in complete solitude.⁴⁶

Cardinal Francesco Albizzi was not the only cardinal opposing the prayer of quiet. We find the same thoughts in the notes of Cardinal Maracci, the confessor of Pope Innocent XI, to whom the 'other Maria' probably sent her visions.⁴⁷ Undated but presumably in the same year, his notes circulated in Rome, in which far-reaching measures regarding the prayer of quiet are proposed, including the banning of

groups, particularly of women, where contemplation or rather the prayer of quiet is openly practised. This would create disorder and noteworthy scandals [...] hence it seems necessary to forbid these meetings as they are already banned in some places.⁴⁸

Cardinal Maracci also sought the prohibition of books on this topic except those with explicit permission from the Holy Office. Previously published books should be banned until they were purged of errors and suspicious passages.⁴⁹

45 Rome, Bibliotheca Casanatense, Ms Casanate 310, fol. 87–102. For more information on Francesco Albizzi, see Monticone (1960) 23–26. Seraphinus had many contacts with him; see Ceysens (1974) XL.

46 Malena (2003) 5f.

47 There was a second chamberlain of the pope, Mgr Agostino Favoriti, but he passed away in 1682.

48 The notes of Cardinal Maracci are entitled *Errari principali intorno alla nuova contemplatione, o vero Oratione di Quietè*. Rome, Bibliotheca Casanatense, Ms Casanate 310, fol. 493–497. The quotation is found in fol. 497r: '*les conventicole particolarmente di donne, nelle quali si professa la contemplatione, o uero Oratione di Quietè: e ne nascono disordini, e scandali notabili, [...] unde pare nassario proibire queste adunanze sì come già state proibite in alcuni luoghi.*'

49 Dudon (1921) 154. Cardinal Maracci writes: '*Per ovviare a i gravi mali, che ponne cagionare i sopradetti errori pare espediente che si proibisca il pubblicare in avvenire libri, attenenti à*

In an undated *Instruzione sull'orazione di quiete* in the archives of the Holy Office these thoughts about quiet prayer by women are accepted unequivocally. About the activity of *donniciole* (females) who pray on the lines of Teresa it says:

This most sublime contemplation can be acquired. It may even be practised by females, so they say: if you have made it sufficiently part of yourself, you can reach a habitus of personal knowledge of the beauty of virtue and the ugliness of sin; this ability one may acquire within six months according to St. Teresa and within two [months] according to St. Bonaventure. But it is true that St. Teresa never said anything like that.⁵⁰

Those in the Roman Curia who took this *Instruzione sull'orazione di quiete* to heart were unlikely to have shown much appreciation for the prayers of the sisters in the Cluysse of Mechelen, founded by Maria Petyt. She did not care much for what she called 'work exercises' but rather strove for profound quiet in God. She writes:

So normally I use no other means to prepare myself for prayer than trying to open myself inwardly more perfectly and to make an effort to expand my mind in God; the more quietly and easily this is done, the purer and clearer the entrance and access to God, and the sooner I come to pro-

Contemplatione in lingua volgare, e senza licenza, approbatione, e diligente revisione del S. Offitio, ò degli' Ordinari. Rome, Bibliotheca Casanatense, Ms Casanate 310, fol. 497r. This thought is adopted and even extended in the instructions of Cardinal Casanate: *'inhibendo, ne in posserum tam meditationi, quam contemplationi addicti, verbis aut scriptis invicem se lacessant, neq super modo, et circumstantiis praefaciarum orationum questiones moneant, none de praedicta materia libros sue impressos, su manuscriptos quocumque idromate in vulgus disfundant, nisi de licentia Sacr. Congregationes Sancti Officii sub poenis arbitrio eiusdem.'* Rome, Bibliotheca Casanatense, Ms Casanate 310, fol. 468r; in *Instructio Pro Confessariis et directoribus animarum circa meditationem et contemplationem sive orationem, quam vocant quietis.* Rome, Bibliotheca Casanatense, Ms Casanate 310, fol. 465–468.

- 50 'Questa elevatissima contemplatione s'insegna, e si fà praticare perfino alle donniciole, e perche dicono, che per basta per farci habili ad essa haver acquistato un' habito di propria cognitione della bellezza della Virtù, e della brutezza del vitio, il cui habito al parere de S. Teresa può conseguirsi in sei mesi, e secondo S. Bonaventura in due. Mà il vero s'è, che S. Teresa non hà detto tal cosa.' Rome, ASU, St. Volumi dei consultatori conventuali dei ss.apostoli UV 4, fol. 370v.

found quiet in God, or to union with the Spirit, or even to simply witnessing or contemplating the Beloved.⁵¹

Such descriptions of her mental prayer and her frequent references to Teresa could have led to misinterpretation by the Roman censors.⁵² This might be another reason for the cancellation of the publication of the Latin codex.

As a counter argument to this second scenario one could point out that the first 'official' note on the banning of books about the prayer of quiet is dated almost two years after the date of signature of the Latin codex. However, it should be noted that one aspect of this mounting agitation against the prayer of quiet was already discussed by Italian censors in the 1670s, namely the place of the affections in prayer life. This discussion could already have created difficulties for the publication of the codex.

Maria's Approach to the Affections

Maria's thoughts on feelings were quite different from the aforementioned notes of Cardinal Marraci where we read:

Furthermore, contemplatives have to flee from, reject and despise the feelings of sensory devotion, the tenderness of the heart, the tears and spiritual consolations, as contradictory to contemplation.⁵³

51 *'Dus ordinairlijck en ghebruycke ick gheen en anderen middel voorbereydinghe tot het gebedt, dan dat ick mijn inwendigh wat volmaeckter trachte te openen, ende den gheest in Godt uyt te spannen; ende hoe dit stilder ende eenvoudigher in sijn werck gaet, hoe den opganck, ende toeganck tot Godt puerder ende klaerder is; ende soo veel te haester come ick tot een innighe ruste in Godt, oft tot de vereeninge des gheests, oft oock tot een eenvoudigh aenschouwen oft aensien des Beminden.'* Petyt (1684) vol. 4, 158f.

52 The Roman Curia's suspicion of '(pre-)quietism' in Maria's writings could only be based on a few arguments. In her letters one finds many passages in which she warns against deliberate emptiness: 'so I understand at least that a soul has to abstain from its own operation if it is in an actual state of enjoyment, or if it feels itself attracted and invited to this, or if it discerns any entrance to it, or if God has any other operations in it.' (*Soo dan, ick verstaen alleenlijck, dat een Ziele haer van alle eyghen werckinghe ledigh houden moet, als sy is in die dadelijcke ghenietelijcke gesteltenisse, oft als sy haer daer toe aengelockt, ende ghenoeyt gevoelt, oft eenighen inganck daer toe bespeurt, oft oock, als Godt eenighe andere werckinghen in haer heft.*) Petyt (1684) vol. 4, 187.

53 *'Ancora gl'affetti della devotione sensibile, la tenerezza del cuore, le lagrime, e le consolationi spirituali si devono fuggire e rigettare, anzi disprezzare dai contemplativi, come cose repag-*

For Maria the sensory forces of the soul were of great value in the process of divine formation, through which transforming grace can lead a soul into godly life. In her letters on the mariaform life – one of the key notions of the spirituality which made Michael and Maria well-known in Carmelite history – Maria describes the importance of the sensory forces of the soul:

In a way the amiable Mother appears to be the life of my soul, and thus the soul of my soul. For that reason she [Mary] brings forth [...] and gives birth to the life of the soul in God or divine life in God through a sensory flow in the soul of the generative, anticipating, strengthening, supporting, alluring, accommodating and following or continuing graces, so that the soul will carry on the divine life in God with more firmness, fortitude, purity, et cetera.⁵⁴

Such thoughts about a sensory flow of grace might be acceptable in a Marian theology, but Maria Petyt was also fierce and directive about this issue in the field of spiritual direction. This might have caused trouble. In one of her noteworthy letters Maria inveighs vehemently against spiritual directors who believe that all natural affections have to be destroyed:

The Beloved has taught me and commanded me to write that some are to blame, who give general rules about mental prayer to souls which aspire to perfection in the purest sense and to mental prayer, and are ordered to exclude, reject, mortify and annihilate forever all sensory feelings, such as tender and passionate love, and any cooperation with their sensory forces, [...] Such teachers do not understand what it is to stand mentally under the free direction of the Holy Spirit, where the Spirit is absolute master and lord of the soul. He works both in the lower forces and in the higher, now in one way, then in another, just as he pleases, because sometimes he wants to be loved and served by all forces of the soul.⁵⁵

nanti alla contemplatione.' Rome, Bibliotheca Casanatense, Ms. Casan. 310, fol. 494r item 5 in *Errari principali intorno alla nuova contemplatione, ò vero Oratione di Quietè.*

54 'De alder-minnelijckste Moeder schijnt op een seker maniere van spreken, te wesen het leven van mijne Ziele, ende aldus te zijn de Ziele van mijne Ziele, om dieswil dat sy [...] mijne Ziele voort-brenght, ende baert het leven der Ziele in Godt oft goddelijck leven, door een bevinde-lijck invloeyen der gratien van verweckende, voorkomende, versterckende, aenleydende, aenlockende, mede-gaende, ende naervolghende, oft continuerende gratien, om in het goddelijck leven in Godt, met meerdere vastigheyt, ghestadigheyt, puerheyt, &c. te continueren.' Petyt (1683) vol. 2, 343.

55 'Den Beminden heeft my gheleert, ende bevolen my te schryven, hoe qualijck dat sommige doen, de welcke willen gheven generaele Reghels aen Zielen, die op het puerste van sin zijn te

When Michael put the date of 24 April 1680 below the preface of the *Vita Venerabilis Matris Mariae a Sta. Teresia* he might not have been aware that the Italian discourse on mental prayer had already been focusing on feelings for some time. In the early 1670s an Italian edition of a text by the French Ursuline Marie Bon de l'Incarnation (1636–1680) entitled *Stati d'orazione mentale*⁵⁶ was submitted to Tommaso Menghini, inquisitor of the diocese of Gubbio and Casale Monferrato.⁵⁷ Initially only a single passage was revised and in 1674 the document was approved for printing. However, on 18 January 1676 this book was condemned by the Congregazione dell'Indice and put on the Index. Some months later an inquisitor from Genova published a decree of the Congregation of 29 April 1676, which clearly stated that the Inquisition condemns not mental prayer, which is called of feelings and of quiet, but [condemns] the claims of those who reject vocal prayer and other spiritual exercises used in the Holy Roman Church, and who even claim that those who practise the aforementioned prayer can be sure of salvation and do not need forgiveness and also [claim that] they commit mortal sin when they omit this form of prayer [i.e. vocal prayer].⁵⁸

Although the sisters of Cluyse said their vocal prayers, Maria Petyt's attitude towards affective and sensory devotion could be as suspect to a censor as her striving for profound quiet in God. This aspect of her spiritual framework, too, could have been a reason for the cancellation of the publication.

It is not clear which scenario should be considered the reason why the Latin codex was not published. Probably it is impossible to trace the actual history.

trachten tot de volmaecktheyt, ende tot het inwendigh Ghebedt, datse voor altijd moeten uytsluyten, verwerpen, versterven, ende vernieten alle ghevoelijcke affectien, teere ende driftighe liefde, ende het mede-spelen vande ghevoelijcke krachten [...] sulcke Onderwysers en verstaen niet wel, wat dat is gheestelijck staen onder een libere bestieringhe vanden H. Gheest; want daer den H. Gheest is absoluut Meester, ende Heer inde Ziel, daer werckt hy soo wel inde onderste krachten, als inde opperste, nu op d'een, nu op d'ander manier, ghelijck 't hem belieft; want somtijds wilt hy ghedient, ende bemint worden van alle de krachten der Ziele, ghelijck inde Salighe inden Hemel.' Petyt (1683) vol. 3, 29. It is unclear whether this letter can be found in Rome, Arch. Post. III, 70.

56 Malena (2000) 304.

57 See also [http://www.treccani.it/enciclopedia/tommaso-menghini_\(Dizionario-Biografico\)/](http://www.treccani.it/enciclopedia/tommaso-menghini_(Dizionario-Biografico)/)

58 '*non damnat orationem mentalem, quae dicitur degli' affetti e della quiete, sed asserta illorum, qui reprobant orationes vocales et alia exercitia spiritualia, quibus utitur Sancta Romana Ecclesia, et asserunt, quod utentes praedicta oratione sunt securi de salute, non indigent poenitentia, eandem orationem omittentes peccant mortaliter.*' Malena (2000) 305, n. 90.

This last scenario, too, cannot really be clarified. But there is good reason to suppose an interplay of different factors and to assume that Michael might have been overcome by the inexorable wind that was blowing in the Roman Curia during those years.

The Delay in the Publication of the Dutch *Leven vande weerdighe moeder Maria a S.ta Teresia*, (alias) Petyt

In 1683/1684 a single Dutch edition of Maria's letters was published. This Dutch edition appeared more than three years after the date of the Latin preface, namely 24 April 1680.⁵⁹ Besides this noteworthy detail, there are other indications that the publication of the Dutch edition was delayed for some years. The title page of the *Kort Begryp* (1681) already refers to the forthcoming *Leven vande weerdighe moeder Maria a S.ta Teresia*, suggesting that the *Leven* must have been almost ready to go to press at that time. This is confirmed when we read towards the end of the *Kort Begryp*: 'the same can be read in her *Leven*, which has been prepared for publication by her spiritual director, the very reverend father Michael of St. Augustine, provincial of our Dutch province.'⁶⁰ Another sign of a delay is that on the front page of the first volume Michael is called provincial, although he no longer occupied that position after 1681. Also Michael dated his '*protestatie van den autheur*' as early as 10 April 1681.⁶¹

Apart from the possibility that Michael of St. Augustine was prevented by ill health or pressure of work⁶² from finalizing the bulky edition of the *Leven vande weerdighe moeder Maria a S.ta Teresia*, there may be other reasons for the delay. Staring states that Michael feared that in Belgium no permission would be given for publication 'given the Jansenist tendencies of the secular clergy, especially the bishops.'⁶³ This accords with a letter Michael wrote from Brussels in 1679 to his friend Seraphinus about sending the Latin *Vita Venerabilis Matris Mariae a Sta. Teresia* to Rome for publication, because (he argues): 'I believe I can get it done more easily there, for here I am strongly opposed by critical censors.'⁶⁴ However, this explanation does not give the true cause for

59 The Latin preface is an almost literal translation of the Dutch prologue.

60 Michael of St. Augustine (1681) 98. On this subject, also see Merlier (1975) 29–41.

61 The author's protestation is found in Rome, Arch. Post. III, 70, fol. 5r.

62 On 18 November 1678 Michael wrote from Mechelen that he did not have much time to work on the *Vita Venerabilis Matris Mariae a Sta. Teresia* because of a visitation.

63 Staring (1948) 303.

64 '*confido ibi facilius impetrandam quam <sic!> hic a criticis censoribus plurimi me dehortantur.*' Michael of St. Augustine to Seraphinus of Jesus and Mary, Brussels 1679. Rome, Arch. Gen., Prov. Flandro - Belgica, commune provinciae 1675–1698.

the delay of the Dutch edition. The *approbationes* by anti-Jansenist censors at the beginning of the *Leven vande weerdighe moeder Maria a S.ta Teresia* date from 1680, which suggests that the anticipated problem of the Jansenist censors was quickly resolved by Michael.⁶⁵ Hence it cannot be the cause of the delay till 1683.⁶⁶

An Editorial Purge

To find the real obstacle to the publication of the Dutch *Leven vande weerdighe moeder Maria a S.ta Teresia* we have inquired into the spiritual framework of the *Vita Venerabilis Matris Mariae a Sta. Teresia* and noted the changes which Michael (or someone else) introduced in the document in order to get the right *approbationes*.⁶⁷ This editorial revision might give us the best insight into the problems the editor tried to avoid.

- 65 The publication has no fewer than five approbations, whereas only two were needed. These are dated 27 July 1683, 3 July 1683, 12 July 1683, 12 September 1680, and 2 October 1680. (The *facultas* of the general and provincial are dated 7 March 1682, sq. 1 July 1683.) Apart from censors from his own order (Vincentius of the Nativity and Marius of St. James), we find the names of anti-Jansenist censors: A. Poelman, Nicolaus du Bois and Damman. The names of these censors appear on the list of members of the Secret Society: *Nicolaus du Bois: sacrae theologiae et utriusque iuris licentiatius, regius ac primarius sacrae theologiae professor in academia Lovaniensi, ac collegii regii ibidem praeses; Petrus Damman: sacrae theologiae licentiatius canonicus collegiatae Divi Petri [Lovaniensis], apostolicus librorum censor, collegii Dryusiani praeses; Adrianus Poelman: canonicus graduatus et archipresbyter cathedralis Gandensis, sacrae theologiae licentiatius*. Ceysens (1950) 364. Michael himself was a member of this Secret Society of anti-Jansenists founded in November 1678. The Secret Society had a governing committee at Louvain that met at least once a week and gathered incriminating material against the Jansenists on behalf of a large group of members.
- 66 Although none too plausible, there is yet another possibility to explain the difficulties. In the 1680s the battle between the Carmelites and the Bollandists was at its height. Relations were seriously strained. Three days after the date of the preface of the codex, James of the Passion wrote: '*Vix possumus nos cohibere in capitales nostri ordinis hostes, Jesuitas, qui mense Maio Vitam Sancti Angeli explodunt ut fabulosam, nullo vix fundamento nisi stramineo. Zelus Dei urget nos ad arma.*' Ceysens (1952) 102. This further cooled relations in the Secret Society, according to Lucianus Ceysens (1950) vol. 1, 367. How this conflict could have influenced the assessment of the *Leven vande weerdighe moeder Maria a S.ta Teresia* is not clear.
- 67 Ferdinand van der Haeghen writes in his *Bibliographie gantoise* (Gend 1860): '*Le père Michel de S.t Augustin, de ordre des Carmes (...) rapporte dans cette biographie un grand nombre de faits d'une authenticité douteuse. Aussi la cour de Rome l'obligea-t-elle de faire un*

The differences between the Dutch edition and the Latin codex are striking even at first glance. Regarding the sequence and compilation of the chapters, it is noteworthy that the Dutch collection does not parallel the Latin codex. In the Dutch edition Michael omitted about 56 chapters.⁶⁸ Due to the illegibility of some parts of the codex it is difficult to trace exactly which chapters are missing. We have to rely on the table of contents.⁶⁹ Although incomplete, the following may be stated about what may be inferred from the missing chapters.

Firstly, all letters about R.G. [Rex Galliae] are omitted by the editor. To some extent this also applies to the letters about R.H. [Rex Hispaniae], although the Spanish king is mentioned a few times in the letters on the Amiable Mother.⁷⁰ In the table of contents of the Latin codex we find the following chapters which are missing in the Dutch edition and in which we read among other things:

- Cap. 201: 'she [Maria Petyt] is moved to pray for all leaders of the church, for R.G., whose wicked life, and also God's wrath towards him, are revealed to her. This king is recommended to her, in order that she may pray for him in the hope of saving his soul. From the Beloved she understands that a relative of his has been liberated from purgatory.'⁷¹
- Cap. 269: 'The spirit of prayer in favour of the armies of R.G. is returning to her in deep contemplation, in the spirit, through the spirit, without words,

retraction.' (vol. 2, 77) He refers to Cosmas de Villiers, *Bibliotheca Carmelitana*, 2, 446. There we cannot find any indication for this statement. But it could be right. It is striking that in the Dutch edition of Maria's autobiography 31 chapters are missing. In the prologue of the Latin *Vita* Michael writes about 186 chapters. In the prologue of the Dutch *Leven* he refers to 155 chapters. This requires further investigation.

68 Although difficult to compare because of the bad condition of the codex, in my opinion the following chapters or parts of chapters are missing: 51, 52, 54–56, 201, 232–233, 247, 257, 269, 308, 366, 410, 421, 443, 444, 466, 476, 478–479, 513, 759, 769–771, 804–811, 814, 817–821, 828–829, 850–851, 865, 875–884, and 907. On the other hand, not all the letters in the *Tractaet van verscheyden ghesteltenissen der zielen* (Petyt (1683) vol. 1, 196–300) are found in the *Vita Venerabilis Matris Mariae a Sta. Teresia*, nor the following chapters from Petyt (1683) vol. 2, cap. 19, 32, 55, 192, 267; vol. 3, cap. 149–151, 185, 214; vol. 4, cap. 2, 8 and 31.

69 See Giovanni Grosso's contribution to this volume, p. 85.

70 Petyt (1683) vol. 2, 358–59.

71 Cap. 201: '*movetur ut oret pro omnibus superioribus ecclesiae; pro R.G. cuius mala vita, et dei contra illum ira illi revelatur; committitur ei iste R. ut pro illo oret, cum spe lucrandi animam eius; a Dilecto intelligit liberationem cognatae suae e purgatorio.*' Rome, Arch. Post. III, 70, fol. 13v. The name of the relative has not been discovered.

et cetera, and [the spirit] indicates to her its desire in the form of a simple intuition, which God understands.⁷²

- Cap. 308: 'Asked to pray, she feels whether she'll be heard. She cannot pray for things that are not deiform. She prays for the king of Spain.'⁷³
- Cap. 877: 'While the king of France besieges the city of Maastricht, in God she sees the city, certain that R.G. will fail [...].'⁷⁴
- Cap 879: 'Besides other things, she understands in God that R.G. will gain his victories and she is commanded immediately to pray for the things that need to be done by God to secure the victories which she sees in God.'⁷⁵

These chapters may have been omitted because of the strained relations with France or because Maria's supernatural knowledge was not considered according to God by the competent authorities.

Apart from these chapters about R.G. and R.H. several other chapters about Maria's visions and prophetic gifts are missing from the Dutch edition, for instance the following:

- Cap. 805: 'When she is not following her inner impulse she feels ill treated and darkened, she becomes afraid and she feels herself removed from the Beloved. She becomes afraid, asking herself whether the previous appearances perhaps were false.'⁷⁶
- Cap. 880: 'God shows her how the prophets foresaw the future in the spirit and how some saints read the thoughts of others, and also how without the operation of her own intellect this prophetic insight is in the intimate

72 Cap. 269: '*redit spiritus orandi in favorem armorum R.G. in intima contemplatione in spiritu per spiritum, sine verbis etc. per simplicem intuitum notificando sua desideria, quae deus intelligit.*' Rome, Arch. Post. III, 70, fol. 15v.

73 Cap. 308: '*Rogata orare, sentit, an sit exaudienda; non potest orare pro rebus non deiformibus; orat pro Rege Hispan.*' Rome, Arch. Post. III, 70, fol. 16v.

74 Cap. 877: '*Rege G. obsidente Traiectum, videt illam civitatem in Deo cum certitudine quod cedet R.G. et [...]git illa [...]rcipi auxilio angelorum.*' Rome, Arch. Post. III, 70, fol. 28v. In the second part we read: '*[...] R.G. et intelligit illam intercipi auxilio angelorum.*' Rome, Arch. Post. III, 70, fol. 441r.

75 Cap. 879: '*independenter a relatione aliorum, in Deo intelligit victorias R.G. inde subito, monetur ad orandum, ad gratia agendas Deo pro victoriis quas in Deo videt.*' Rome, Arch. Post. III, 70, fol. 29r.

76 Cap. 805: '*non sequens internum tractum acciter corripitur, obtenebratur, auxiliatur, et a Dilecto alienatur, auxiliatur etiam an praeteritae apparationes non fuerint falsae.*' Rome, Arch. Post. III, 70, fol. 27r.

ground of her soul, united with God in a simple passive intuition, which is given to her.'⁷⁷

- Cap. 881: 'The inner prophetic intuition originates from within, free from any other faculty of the soul. It must be entirely divine, for the mind stays passive while operation of the intellect conceals the complete ground [of her soul].'⁷⁸
- Cap. 466: 'she greets her spiritual father in the heart of Mary [...], in which he seems to live. At Mary's feast she exults in the love of Mary, and for her order which she sees is more pleasing to her [Mary] than other [orders].'⁷⁹

The editor also valued the discipline of her spiritual life. Where Maria's contact with her spiritual director was strained some chapters were dropped, for instance:

- Cap. 769: 'she laments that she cannot open herself to her spiritual director and she eschews speaking with people, even pious people, and she is drawn to follow this withdrawal and cling to God alone.'⁸⁰
- Cap. 770: 'The Beloved weans her from her spiritual director, by whom she was supported hitherto with the consent of the Beloved.'⁸¹
- Cap. 771: 'The Beloved himself wants to accompany her, so that she lives in God alone.'⁸²

Thus Maria's idea that she could be guided by her Beloved alone was not considered wise, and probably for that reason it was left out of the collection. The

77 Cap. 880: '*Deus ei ostendit quomodo prophetae in spiritu praeviderint futura, et aliqui sancti cogitationes aliorum, sine operatione propii intellectus ivisio prophetica sit in intimo animae fundo, Deo unito per simplicem passivum intuitum, qui ei datur.*' Rome, Arch. Post. III, 70, fol. 29r.

78 Cap. 881: '*intimus intuitus propheticus est intus expeditus ab omni alia animae potentia, et debet esse totus divinus, ad quem anima habet se passive, propria operatio intellectus totum fundum obnubilaret.*' Rome, Arch. Post. III, 70, fol. 29r.

79 Cap. 466: '*salutat Spiritualem in corde Mariae in quo videtur habitare; in eius festis exultet amore Maria, et erga ordinem suum quem videt illi prae caeteris gratum.*' Rome, Arch. Post. III, 70, fol. 19v.

80 Cap. 769: '*dolet, quod se non possit aperire Patri Spirituali et taedet eam loqui cum hominibus, etiam piis, et allicitur, ut hanc abstractionem sequatur; ac soli Deo adhaereat.*' Rome, Arch. Post. III, 70, fol. 26r.

81 Cap. 770: '*Dilectus eam ablactat a Spirituali, cui hactenus ex permissu Dilecti innixa est.*' Rome, Arch. Post. III, 70, fol. 26r.

82 Cap. 771: '*Dilectus solus vult eam dirigere, ut vivat in solo Deo.*' Rome, Arch. Post. III, 70, fol. 26r.

chapters in which her desire to live in seclusion goes too far are missing from the *Leven vande weerdighe moeder Maria a S.ta Teresia*:

- Cap. 804: 'she is invited to the highest withdrawal and mortification of her senses more than ever before and she is stimulated by God to live in seclusion.'⁸³
- Cap. 806: 'she is left to her nature and abhors the hermit's life, which is so withdrawn. She is tested by the vitality of her nature, and she is frightened'⁸⁴

Again, we shall probably never know why the publication of the Dutch edition was suspended till 1683. However, if we combine all probable obstacles in the complete redaction of the writings of Maria Petyt, this purge of the Dutch edition may anticipate or even be executed on the instructions of the Holy Office. This conclusion may overstate the available evidence, unless similar situations can be demonstrated in historiography. At present I do not know of any such cases.

In any case, assuming that Michael himself – and not a censor – was responsible for this editorial purge of the Dutch edition, the topics of the aforementioned letters once more justify the conclusion that Maria's spirituality was very sensitive in these eventful years of the anti-mystical turn.

Conclusion

When Maria's spiritual path is further investigated after this publication of her letters on the Dutch War, researchers have to be alert to the choices made in the redaction of her work. The recently discovered document on the Dutch War shows that Maria's spiritual path might have been very different from what has hitherto been ascribed to this famous Flemish mystic.

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83 Cap. 804: '*invitatur ad summam abstractionem et sensuum mortificationem, plusquam unquam autea, et monetur a Dilecto ut abstracta vivat.*' Rome, Arch. Post. III, 70, fol. 27r.

84 Cap. 806: '*reliquitur sue nature, quae abhorret vitam eremiticam tam abstractam; tentatur naturae vivacitate est, unde angustiatur.*' Rome, Arch. Post. III, 70, fol. 27r.

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Michael of St. Augustine's letters are stored in a separate folder.

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