The correspondence of Philip van Marnix, Lord of St Aldegond, right hand of William the Silent, is extensive and varied. We have chosen to analyse a sample of letters simply from the period from 1582 to 1584. The reasons for this are in part intrinsic to the sample and in part purely practical. Let me start with the practical reason. Part IV of the Marnixi Epistulae, a series initiated by my friend and colleague Alois Gerlo, whose loss is still mourned, and by myself, was issued the week of the colloquium ‘Between Scylla and Charybdis’. Parts I–III appeared between 1990 and 1996; part IV was elaborated as a component of the project Intellectuals on the Crossroads of Politics and Religion. Two case studies: Justus Lipsius and Marnix van Sint-Aldegonde, a project in which Jan Roegiers, Dirk Sacré, Jeanine De Landtsheer, Filip Vanhaecke and myself were involved. This made the selection of the period 1582–1584 for analysis fresh, timely and comparatively easy.

But it has already been intimated that there are other reasons for looking at these letters in particular. The newly published volume sheds light on a key period of the history of the Low Countries and some of the most turbulent years of Marnix’s life. During these crucial three years the rebels in the Low Countries solicited and ultimately rejected the leadership of Hercules-François, Duke of Anjou and Alençon, the youngest son of Henry II of France and Catherine de’ Medici; Marnix himself served as one of the burgomasters of Antwerp; William of Orange was murdered; Bonaventura Vulcanius attempted to get the States General to adopt Marnix’s metrical psalms for public worship;

* I am indebted to Filip Vanhaeke and Paul Arblaster for correcting and polishing my English.

1 Marnixi Epistulae. De briefwisseling van Marnix van Sint Aldegonde, een kritische uitgave, Pars IV (1582–1584). In memoriam Aloysi Gerlo, R. De Smet (ed.) (Brussels 2006) [henceforward MEp].

2 FWO-Vlaanderen, project G.0103.03N (1 January 2003–31 December 2006).
Fig. 13. Hendrik Hondius, *Portrait of Philip Marnix of St-Aldegonde*, engraving 1599. Leiden University Library / Prentenkabinet, inv.nr. PK-P-122.960