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Image: Saint Leonard, c. 1350-1360, painted oak, decorated with gemstones, 107 cm, Zoutleeuw, Church of Saint Leonard (© KIK-IRPA).

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Faculty of Arts and Philosophy

THE MATTER OF PIETY

MATERIAL CULTURE IN ZOUTLEEUV'S CHURCH OF SAINT LEONARD (c. 1450-1620)

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In the wild cathedral evening the rain unraveled tales
For the disrobed faceless forms of no position
Tolling for the tongues with no place to bring their thoughts
All down in taken-for-granted situations

Bob Dylan, *Chimes of freedom*

Preface

This preface has already been written several times, drafted and rewritten during many late nights over the last four years. That I can now replace those fictitious forewords with an actual one would not have been possible without the invaluable help and unremitting support of some very special people. These words of gratitude are therefore not merely customary, but heartfelt. First and foremost, I would like to thank my two promoters, Anne-Laure and Koen. Without them there simply would not have been a project, and I am immensely grateful that they trusted in my ability to bring it to a good end. A topic that four years ago was a personal interest has now become much more to me, not least through the numerous discussions we had. They wisely steered me through the Scylla and Charybdis of doctoral research and provided me with the most useful suggestions. They were not only devoted and helpful promoters, but also the kindest people to work with. Their advice, together with the intelligent remarks by Maarten Delbeke during the DBC meetings, were of crucial importance for the success of this dissertation.

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List of abbreviations

Archives, collections and libraries

AAM	<i>Aartsbisschoppelijk Archief Mechelen</i>
DAZ	<i>Dekenij Archief Zoutleeuw</i>
KAB	<i>Kerkarchief Brabant</i>
KBR	<i>Koninklijke Bibliotheek Brussel</i>
RAB	<i>Rijksarchief Brussel</i>
RAL	<i>Rijksarchief Leuven</i>
SAA	<i>Stadsarchief Antwerpen</i>
SAB	<i>Stadsarchief Brussel</i>
SAL	<i>Stadsarchief Leuven</i>
SL	<i>Schepengriffies Arrondissement Leuven</i>

Coins and currencies

g	<i>Groot</i>
Kg	<i>Karolusgulden</i>
Plc	<i>Plak</i>
Rg	<i>Rijnsgulden</i>
St	<i>Stuiver</i>

Weights and measures

h	<i>Halster</i>
lb	<i>Pond</i>
m	<i>Mudde</i>
q	<i>Quart</i>

Other abbreviations

KR *Kerkrekening* (churchwarden account), followed by the financial year in question. From 1452 until 1577 this ran from 24 June in the mentioned year until 23 June in the following year. From 1589 onwards it ran from January until December. Unless noted otherwise, reference is always made to the final, official version. See also Appendix 1.

Note on currencies, weights and measures

Some of the information De Mecheleer, *De structuur van de rekeningen* provided on the used currencies, weights and measures and their mutual relationships in the Zoutleeuw churchwarden accounts is erroneous, and can be corrected by a thorough lecture of data in the accounts.

For dry goods the measures roughly correspond to those used in Leuven and Tienen:

1 mudde = 8 halsters

1 halster = 4 vierdel = c. 30 litres

1 vierdel = 4 pinjoelen

Compare with Doursther, *Dictoinnaire universel des poids et mesures*, pp. 356-358; Bigwood, 'Notes sur les mesures à blé,' Table II; Tits-Dieuaide, 'La conversion des mesures anciennes,' esp. p. 75.

For liquids the measures correspond to the system known for Brussels:

1 ame = 48 gelten or stopen

1 gelte or stoop = 2 quarten, potten or kannen = 2,748 litres

1 quart, pot or kan = 2 welpotten or pinten

Compare with Doursther, *Dictionnaire universel des poids et mesures*, pp. 158 and 437.

The dominant monetary unit in the Zoutleeuw accounts from 1452 to 1477 is the *grijp* of 10 *stuivers*. Afterwards this is changed into the *Rijnsgulden* of 20 *stuivers*. From 1540 onwards the dominant monetary unit in the accounts is the *Karolusgulden*, equally of 20 *stuivers*, although the *Rijnsgulden* continues to occur. Nevertheless, a whole range of other coins and monetary units is used. Therefore, an overview of their relation to the *stuiver* is provided here:

- 1 blanke = 0,75 st
- 1 botdrager = 2/3 st
- 1 ducaat = 28 st
- 1 Franse kroon = 36 st
- 1 grijp = 10 st
- 1 (Diesterse) groot = 1/24 st
- 1 (Hasseltse, or lichte) gulden = 10 st
- 1 Hoornsgulden = 12,5 st
- 1 Karolusgulden = 20 st
- 1 kroon = 24 or 25 st
- 1 mottoen = 3,5 st
- 1 nobele = 54 st
- 1 ossenhoofd = 0,625 st (15 g)
- 1 peter = 18 st
- 1 Philipsdaalder = 0,83 à 1,25 st (20 à 30 g)
- 1 Philipsgulden = 25 st
- 1 plak = 0,25 à 0,33 st
- 1 postulaatgulden = 14 st
- 1 Rijnsgulden = 20 st
- 1 vierdel = 2,5 st

The given proportions are based on personal calculations from data in the churchwarden accounts, which have been compared with information provided in the relevant scholarly literature: van Uytven, *Stadsfinanciën en stadseconomie te Leuven*, esp. pp. 64-69, Tables II and III; Van der Eycken, *Stadseconomie en conjunctuur te Diest (1490-1580)*; Peeters, 'Goudmunten'; Peeters, 'Brabantse en Bourgondische goudmunt'.

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Introduction

“Protected as heritage of exceptional importance.” Thus read the decision by which the Flemish Minister of Culture on 14 November 2016 definitively preserved eighteen objects from the “exceptionally rich, late medieval and renaissance furnishings” of Zoutleeuw’s Church of Saint Leonard. This was done by including them on the so-called *Topstukkenlijst* - a list of “rare and indispensable cultural goods,” compiled by the Flemish Government in order to preclude the objects’ possible removal outside the country.¹ The decision is part and parcel of a long tradition of appraisal of the Zoutleeuw church interior, also in art historical scholarship. Perhaps most famously, the prolific Leuven canon and art historian Jan Karel Steppe (1918-2009) referred to it as the “sanctuary of the Brabantine Late Gothic.”² Yet, although doubtless a coincidence, the timing of the governmental decision can hardly have been more symbolic as it was confirmed in the year that commemorated the 1566 *Beeldenstorm* which had so dramatically swept away important parts of other medieval and early modern church interiors in the Low Countries. In fact, exactly 450 years before their inclusion on the *Topstukkenlijst*, the very same objects in the Zoutleeuw church had similarly been the subject of protective measures. After the notorious wave of iconoclasm had hit important parts of Flanders, Brabant, Zeeland, Holland and Utrecht in the course of August and September 1566, in November the *Beeldenstorm* threatened to spread to the southern and eastern parts of Brabant and the Prince-Bishopric of Liège as well. Watchmen were installed in the Zoutleeuw church during both day and night, and messengers were continually sent out to neighbouring towns in order “to have tidings from the *Geuzen*.”³

¹ ‘Roerende goederen van de Sint-Leonarduskerk te Zoutleeuw op Vlaamse Topstukkenlijst,’ consulted 24 November 2017. <http://www.kunstenenerfgoed.be/>.

² Steppe, ‘Een sanctuarium van de Brabantse laat-gotiek’.

³ RAL, SAL, nr. 3608 (unfoliated, account of 1566).

Eventually, Zoutleeuw was spared from any iconoclastic attacks, but there had been much to protect. Although its political and economical days of glory were over and it was no longer among Brabant's most important centers, officially the town at the eastern border with the Prince-Bishopric of Liège was still one of the seven *chief-villes* of the Duchy.⁴ Long having held the seat of a deanery, the collegiate church retained its importance, and in his town description published a year after the iconoclastic threats Lodovico Guicciardini still described it as “a beautiful church.”⁵ By 1566, upon entering the building via the portal in the west front, pilgrims and parishioners alike entered a richly furnished sacred space. After being welcomed by a Marianum hanging from the vaults and crossing themselves at the brass holy-water font, they could walk along the eight side chapels distributed along both sides of the nave. Each was equipped with its own altarpiece. While most of the older works were carved in one of the many Brabantine workshops in Antwerp, Brussels or Leuven, the more recent pieces had been painted by important and still living masters such as Pieter Aertsen or Frans Floris. The latter's *Saint Hubert altarpiece* had only recently been installed in December 1565, and as Floris was given another commission immediately afterwards, a third triptych from his workshop would soon be added to the others. The primary destination for pilgrims lay a little further, in an annex to the southern transept, the wall above the gateway to which was covered with a monumental depiction of the Last Judgment. Through the doorway they would enter Saint Leonard's chapel, where a miraculous sculpture of that saint was kept in a tabernacle, placed on top of a carved and richly gilded altarpiece. The whole was lit by an arched, brass candelabrum, standing just in front of the altar, its shimmer honoring the thaumaturgic cult object - the reason for the pilgrims' visit. Parishioners might instead have been drawn to the choir. The sanctuary was closed off to laypeople by a rood loft carrying a monumental triumphal cross with life-size sculptures of Our Lady and Saint John at either side, but through the fencings it must have been possible to glimpse the brass eagle lectern, or the over 5 metres high Easter candlestand in the same material, cast in the 1480s by Renier van Thienen from Brussels. Arguably the church's most imposing structure stood a little further still, in the northern transept. There, an eighteen metres high sacrament house of white stone of Avesnes, which had only been carved some fifteen years before by Cornelis Floris, was lighted by candles on a brass fence surrounding the venerable micro-architectural monument. During liturgical services, this already rich and varied set of objects would be supplemented by all sorts of vessels and implements

⁴ Gachard, *Correspondance de Marguerite d'Autriche*, vol. 2, p. 117.

⁵ “... vn' Collegio di Canonici con la bella chiesa di San' Lionardo.” Guicciardini, *Descrittione*, p. 128.

in precious metal - monstrances, chalices, ostensories, censers - manipulated by clergymen dressed in rich fabrics, and reading aloud from more or less decorated books with sacred content.

The matter of piety in an age of religious change

The Flemish Government's official statement particularly singled out Renier van Thienen's Easter candlestand as "one of the absolute masterpieces of fifteenth-century brass founding in Belgium," as well as Cornelis Floris' sacrament house, "generally considered as the most extraordinary sculptural accomplishment of the sixteenth century." Apart from such assessments, the mere fact that these objects are being safeguarded is indeed revelatory for how valuable and unique they are nowadays considered to be. There is little reason to doubt that at the moment of the iconoclastic threats the objects were considered equally prestigious and valuable by the visiting pilgrims and parishioners, but they were definitely less unique. Van Thienen was asked to make his candlestand for Zoutleeuw after an example that had already been made for Leuven's church of Saint Peter, and Cornelis Floris would both design and execute several other sacrament houses for churches in both Brabant and Flanders.⁶ Such ornamentally elaborate and often intricate objects in various materials of differing degrees of preciousness were indeed crucial elements in lay devotional life in the Low Countries. Yet, the fact that they had to be protected in 1566 as well makes clear that they were hardly unproblematic. They stood at the center of a heated and highly public debate.

As a crucial turning point in the history of the Low Countries, the *Beeldenstorm* has long since appealed to the imagination of writers and scholars alike, including famous names such as Friedrich Schiller and Stefan Zweig. As a result, studies of the events are readily available, and their number has even substantially increased in recent years as current outbreaks of image-breaking throughout the world have triggered a renewed

⁶ For the Easter candlestand, see KR 1482, fol. 93. For Floris' other sacrament houses, see Suykerbuyk & Van Bruaene, 'Towering piety,' pp. 147-149 (Appendix), and *passim*.

general interest in the phenomenon of iconoclasm at large.⁷ Explanations ranged initially from predominantly political readings of the *Beeldenstorm* as an essentially political uprising against tyranny and absolutism, to the notorious Marxist reading by Erich Kuttner of the breakings as a socioeconomical revolt of the impoverished proletariat, directed against the wealthy commercial elites. However, the wealth of recent contributions has shown that although the reasons and triggers were multiple and varied, it was definitely more than that. Completely in line with Natalie Zemon Davis' groundbreaking anthropological readings of contemporaneous iconoclasm and religious violence in France, it has been shown that the actions were in essence really about religious convictions. They should be understood as the material result of a clear physical reaction against the physicality and materiality of traditional, Catholic devotion. The lavishly ornamented objects in precious materials such as those that have been preserved in Zoutleeuw, and their particular, ritual handling, had grown to be a major point of contention in the turbulent decades of the sixteenth century, when different Reformers stood up and preached with varying success that the Church of Rome had been wrong all along in its particular way of worshipping God.

Although it is therefore clear that knowledge and understanding of this 'particular way' is absolutely crucial to explain and assess the 1566 events and the preceding religious developments, this has strikingly enough never been the subject of a comprehensive study. The actual use of churches by laypeople in the Low Countries has never been systematically mapped, and as a result we know only very little of how these sacred spaces functioned on a day to day basis, let alone of the various and rich layers of meaning that were attached to the range of objects that were present, as described above. An important gulf still exists between the art historical analysis of this broad religious material culture on the one hand, and its place, on the other hand, in the historical discourse on the evolution of lay piety in the Low Countries at the turning point between the later Middle Ages and the early modern period. Art historical studies of pre-Tridentine church furnishings in the Low Countries are almost exclusively descriptive, and historical studies have often failed to include the material

⁷ The most important literature on the 1566 *Beeldenstorm* is discussed and referred to in II.4.1, but see most recently Van Bruaene, Jonckheere & Suykerbuyk, 'Beeldenstorm,' as well as the other contributions to that issue. Recent studies of iconoclasm in a broad chronological framework include Boldrick & Clay, *Iconoclasm*; Bremmer, 'Iconoclast, iconoclastic, and iconoclasm'; Kolrud & Prusac, *Iconoclasm from antiquity to modernity*; Elsner, 'Breaking and talking'; Spicer, *Iconoclasm*.

sources that were precisely at the center of the discussions.⁸ In order to better understand the issues at stake in the dramatic religious conflicts that profoundly characterized the Reformation in general and the history of the Low Countries, there is an urgent need for investigations of actual devotional practices, beyond the mere liturgical use of objects, wherein both the material object and the broader historical and religious context are involved. The present interdisciplinary study therefore attempts to bridge that important gap between history and art history, by mapping the existing devotional practices and the religious material culture, and by confronting these observations with the controversies that surrounded it. Such an approach will allow me to re-evaluate the nature and the evolution of lay piety in the Low Countries in the long sixteenth century. Precisely because of the rich set of at the time highly contested objects, Zoutleeuw's church of Saint Leonard is an ideal case study for that.

A pulverized image? *Status quaestionis*

In his 1939 inaugural lecture at the University of Amsterdam, wittily entitled 'The pulverized image' (*Het vergruisde beeld*), Dutch historian Jan Romein claimed that a surveyable comprehension of the causes of the Dutch Revolt - of which the *Beeldenstorm* is traditionally seen as one of the starting points - was hampered by increasing specialization and fragmenting of research into the period.⁹ His observation has been much debated since, and there is indeed much to say both in favour and against his arguments, but the historiographical image of lay piety in the Low Countries in the long sixteenth century is similarly fragmented and incomplete. For a long time it failed to include an in-depth study of the rich material culture that stood at the heart of the sixteenth-century religious debates and an accompanying appreciation of what it actually meant to contemporaneous believers.¹⁰ Until late in

⁸ For the period in question the most important art historical overview still is Bangs, *Church art and architecture*. De Groot, *De Dom van Utrecht* is a recent exception that includes discussions of the broader use of the objects described.

⁹ Published as Romein, 'Het vergruisde beeld'. A well-known reply was given by Woltjer, 'Het beeld vergruisd?'. For a recent discussion of Romein's lecture and the problem he addressed, see van Meersbergen, 'Reflecties op het vergruisde beeld.'

¹⁰ Good overviews of the relevant literature are provided by Milis, 'De devotieele praktijk'; Trio, *Volksreligie*, pp. 15-16; Speetjens, 'A quantitative approach'; Soen & Knevel, 'Slingerbewegingen'; Bauwens, 'Parish studies'.

the twentieth century, basic views were characterized by a largely negative appreciation, dominated by narratives of decline and decay. Johan Huizinga most famously expressed this in his *Herfsttij der Middeleeuwen* (1919, *The waning of the middle ages*). Although his judgements are generally rather balanced and nuanced, he describes religious life in highly secular terms, in some instances leaving a nearly pagan impression of devotional practices. According to Huizinga, pilgrimages, processions and church visits were occasions of wordly amusement that were characterized by excess and degeneration, and his description of the cult of saints comes close to an almost polytheistic view on late medieval Catholicism.¹¹ It has been noted that such pessimistic visions and assessments actually repeated *topoi* uttered by Protestant reformers, projecting later concerns and debates backwards on the preceding period.¹² In such views, supposed characteristics of late Medieval piety and Protestant critiques came to be seen in a causal relationship, and the Reformation thus became a logical consequence in a linear progression. This is not surprising given Huizinga's own reformed background, but he was hardly alone, as other late nineteenth- and twentieth-century Dutch scholars indeed helped to postulate a 'national-reformed tradition' that considered late Medieval anticlericalism as ominous for times to come and the new piety of the Modern Devotion that originated in the northern provinces as a precursor to the later interiorization of devotion.¹³

Similar pessimistic appreciations are however equally noticeable in the writings of many Catholic scholars - to a large extent caused by their own conceptions firmly rooted in contemporaneous, i.e. twentieth-century Catholicism. Later authors indeed continued to use Huizinga's metaphor of the later Middle Ages as an autumn, an epilogue to what was considered to have been a flourishing preceding epoch. A number of fundamental and now classic overviews of the religious history of the Low Countries, mostly published in the 1950s, strongly established this as the basic narrative. While the Dominican friar Stephanus Axters confirmed the pessimistic views on lay attitudes towards the mass "in the last hundred years before the Reformation," the Jesuit priest Edouard de Moreau elaborated on the immoral conduct and decadence of both laymen and clergy. Much like Huizinga, he nearly accused them of using religious pretexts for mundane matters, emphasizing the

¹¹ Huizinga, *Herfsttij der Middeleeuwen*, pp. 210-213 and 229. See, however, Peters & Simons, 'The new Huizinga,' pp. 615 and 619.

¹² Chiffolleau, 'Pour une économie de l'institution ecclésiastique,' p. 252.

¹³ Soen & Knevel, 'Slingerbewegingen,' pp. 4-5.

superstitious character of it all in passing.¹⁴ Yet, Huizinga's legacy and influence is perhaps most strongly to be noted in the two-volume *Kerkgeschiedenis van Nederland in de Middeleeuwen* (1957) by Reinier Post, also a Catholic priest. Throughout the pages he devoted to the subject, terms like overload (*overlading*), overgrowth (*overwoekering*), decay (*verval*) and even literally autumn (*herfsttijd*) pop up time and again.¹⁵

All of these studies strongly depended on an analysis of what can broadly be described as qualitative sources, either normative or literary texts. Soon, however, the subject would be approached from an entirely different angle. Of fundamental importance in the historiographic tradition, *Le sentiment religieux en Flandre à la fin du Moyen-Âge* written by the French priest Jacques Toussaert and published in 1963, offered an even more pessimistic vision on devotional life in the County of Flanders between 1302 and 1526. Contrary to his predecessors, he did not only come to this conclusion by reading narrative or other qualitative sources. He heavily relied on a quantitative and statistical analysis of administrative sources, mostly churchwarden accounts. Greatly influenced and inspired by the *sociologie religieuse* pursued by his fellow Frenchman Gabriël Le Bras, he tried to establish the precise number of practising believers by means of a set of different parameters, including the amounts of offered money, the volumes of wine and the number of hosts bought by the churchwardens. This radically new methodology notwithstanding, he basically posed the same questions and came to pretty much the same conclusions as scholars before him. Yet, this time the methodology used was fiercely criticized - to a large extent certainly with good reason. He drew too heavily from summary data in churchwarden accounts that had only fragmentarily been preserved, and he nearly completely neglected any financial, economical, social and demographic factors. As a result, his calculations and conclusions were hardly reliable.¹⁶ Perhaps Toussaert's diligence to calculate more or less exact numbers of believers was his greatest flaw, as the accounts used by him were evidently not composed with a statistic purpose in mind. It is possible that not everything was recorded, as it is known that payments were equally made in cash

¹⁴ Axters, *Geschiedenis van de vroomheid*, vol. 3, pp. 389-410, esp. pp. 399-400; de Moreau, *Histoire de l'église en Belgique*, vol. 3, pp. 574-593.

¹⁵ Post, *Kerkgeschiedenis van Nederland*, vol. 2, pp. 287-306.

¹⁶ Toussaert, *Le sentiment religieux*. For an overview of the most important reviews of his book, see Speetjens, 'A quantitative approach,' pp. 111-114.

immediately after a certain service or event.¹⁷ This vast body of critiques led Ludo Milis and Marc Boone to postulate a “post-Toussaert syndrome” in the historiography on the subject, leading to an overall neglect and of which the effects were to be felt until fairly recently.¹⁸

Regardless of the different methodologies, there are several problems connected with the approaches present in the body of works mentioned here. Insights gathered from research on late Medieval and early modern religion on a European scale, conducted in the last few decades, can shed light on some of them. First of all, the scholars discussed above implicitly or explicitly start from a highly static concept of piety, whereas in fact it should be considered as very broad, unstable and variable, both in time and space.¹⁹ Secondly, for a long time religious history was written from an official and orthodox point of view, not rarely informed by modern religious standards. In recent years, however, scholars have increasingly devoted attention to popular piety and in a similar revisionist context the strong social values of devotion have been emphasized.²⁰ Of course, ‘popular religion’ can on its own turn justifiably be critiqued for being a problematic term: it is inevitably investigated through the lens of ‘official’ sources, and it is furthermore highly debatable who might be considered as part and representative for ‘the people’. Yet, the social spectrum of research has nevertheless been considerably broadened.²¹ In line with a number of remarks by Craig Harline on the dangers of simplifying and generalizing official religion on the rebound, later scholars therefore started using a framework of cultural negotiation in a local context.²² In his seminal 1992 study on late Medieval and sixteenth-century piety in England, Eamon Duffy demonstrated that the commonly perceived gulf between the ‘elite’ religion of the clergy and that of ‘the people’ was actually non-existent. Within the broad diversity of possible religious beliefs and ideas he showed how there was a

¹⁷ As has for instance been remarked by Meyers-Reinquin, ‘De godsdienstpraktijk in de late middeleeuwen,’ p. 217, and idem, ‘Proeve tot statistische benadering,’ p. 214. A specific example of that practice can be found in Halsema-Kubes, Lemmens & de Werd, *Adriaen van Wesel*, p. 65, where an entry in the 1475 accounts reveals that the wardens took up to 50 *Rijns gulden* from the offertory box to give as an advance for a commission.

¹⁸ Milis, ‘De devotionele praktijk,’ p. 142; Boone, *Gent en de Bourgondische hertogen*, p. 93.

¹⁹ See, for instance, Lutton & Salter, *Pieties in transition*, esp. pp. 2-4.

²⁰ Duffy, *The stripping of the altars*; Speetjens, ‘A quantitative approach’; Soen & Knevel, ‘Slingerbewegingen’.

²¹ See an overview in Laven, ‘Encountering the Counter-Reformation,’ pp. 709-710.

²² Harline, ‘Official religion - popular religion’.

striking homogeneity throughout the social spectrum, and therefore preferred to speak of traditional rather than popular religion.²³

Another consequence of such revisionist tendencies is that recent contributions also represent a shift away from the previously dominant spiritual approach to religion. The material context has in recent years increasingly been taken into consideration in religious studies, as the visiting of either chapel, church or shrine is above all a physical experience in which all the senses were involved.²⁴ In several studies, Reindert Falkenburg has shown how paintings such as the famous *Mérode Triptych* or intricately carved boxwood prayer nuts actually functioned in devotional practice, and how such material objects were crucial in a “complex synesthetic devotional experience.”²⁵ The central role of the physical, exterior aspect for interior religious experiences has more recently also been elaborated by Caroline Walker Bynum in her book on *Christian materiality*. Contrary to the traditional treatment of medieval religiosity as spiritual process, she posited that it was profoundly characterized by an internal contradiction wherein the importance of ‘holy matter’ on the one hand, and spirituality and mysticism on the other hand grew in parallel. By focusing on materiality as one pole of this contradiction, she proposed a reevaluation of what until then had been interpreted as superstitious and outward piety.²⁶ In fact, contrary to predominant conceptions, there are no indications of discrepancies between inward and outward piety. In the same vein as Walker Bynum, Anne-Laure Van Bruaene has recently argued that the strict opposition between the material and the spiritual sphere, or between mind and body, was alien to medieval reality, and that it would be more appropriate to study religion within the framework of an ‘embodied piety’, whereby religious feelings, convictions and emotions are exteriorised and had an important social dimension.²⁷

²³ Duffy, *The stripping of the altars*, esp. pp. 2-3 on the terminology chosen.

²⁴ A selection from the growing corpus of relevant literature: Freedberg, *The Power of Images*; Blick & Tekippe, *Art and architecture*; Mochizuki, *The Netherlandish Image after Iconoclasm*; Göttler, *Last Things*; Karant-Nunn, *The Reformation of Feeling*; Walker Bynum, *Christian materiality*; Blick & Gelfand, *Push me, pull you*; De Boer & Göttler, *Religion and the senses*; Dyas, ‘To be a pilgrim’; Laugerud, Ryan & Skinnebach, *The materiality of devotion*. However, some studies still stick to a spiritual approach to popular religion, see for instance O’Sullivan, ‘Popular religion’.

²⁵ See for instance Falkenburg, ‘The household of the soul,’ and idem, ‘Prayer nuts seen through the “eyes of the heart”,’ (quote on p. 117).

²⁶ Walker Bynum, *Christian materiality*, esp. pp. 18-19.

²⁷ Marnef & Van Bruaene, ‘Civic religion,’ pp. 178-182; Van Bruaene, ‘Embodied piety’.

Now materiality is increasingly being incorporated into the image of lay piety, the applied chronological frameworks and limits, however, often remain problematic. While Walker Bynum has aptly mapped the dialectic relation between the material and spiritual aspects of devotion, her study is limited to the period preceding the Reformation, and she even characterized this 'Christian materiality' as she defined it as inherently late Medieval. She did not include an in-depth analysis of how the Reformation reacted to this phenomenon, and when it is touched upon, the observations are based on mostly *a priori* assumptions. The chronological scopes chosen in studies often leave little room for continuities in the long term, nor for idiosyncracies in the short term. Especially the role attributed to the fifteenth century in the largest segment of older literature is problematic. Depending on the main subject of study - Medieval religion or Reformation and Counter-Reformation - it has either been interpreted as an epilogue or prologue, not rarely in a causal relationship with the Reformation. Recent studies have done much to resist this characterization, both by emphasizing continuity in this respect, as well as by elucidating several aspects that were typical for this particular century.²⁸ In his classic analysis of *Christianity in the West* between 1400 and 1700, John Bossy stressed continuity throughout his period of investigation, rather than presenting the Reformation as a definitive rupture. On the other hand, John Van Engen has most notably claimed that it is historically inaccurate to consider fifteenth-century religion as completely homogeneous, 'traditional' and a withered tail of the Middle Ages. Very much on the contrary, Van Engen characterized the period as highly dynamic, providing a broad range of religious possibilities for laypeople, often in imitation of the clergy. The fifteenth century saw a multiplication and diversification of pre-existing practices, which resulted in intense lay participation. As a consequence, religion was no longer a prerogative of the clergy.²⁹ Anticlericalism was inherent to civic societies, but it certainly did not necessarily create an opposition between the laity and the clergy. It did, however, stimulate a devotional dynamic in which the laity could develop an active religious engagement and to which the clergy, in turn, responded.³⁰

The predominantly pessimistic narrative of late Medieval piety also greatly influenced scholarship on the Reformation and its impact on lay Catholic culture in the sixteenth

²⁸ One of the most famous examples stressing the continuity is Duffy, *The stripping of the altars*. See also the remarks in Terpstra, 'Lay spirituality,' pp. 263-264.

²⁹ Van Engen, 'Multiple options'.

³⁰ Terpstra, 'Lay spirituality,' pp. 271-272; Marnef & Van Bruaene, 'Civic religion,' p. 178.

century. Mostly the Reformation has been explained as either an extension of the already existing spiritual developments, or as a critical reaction against the late Medieval practices that had been dubbed as excesses or abuses.³¹ Such views have been confirmed by the previously discussed quantitative method that Jacques Toussaert had notoriously introduced into the historiography of religious life of the Low Countries. The portrait he painted based on his calculations was damning and he could not but conclude that the Reformation had been smouldering for a long time, that it was inevitable and a necessity.³² However, partly as a result of the torrent of sharp critiques on his methodology, studies with similar questions and source material, and a long-term set-up remained rare. One of the only studies was the one initiated by Meyers-Reinquin on Kortrijk soon after the publication of Toussaert's book, but it did not result in anything concrete as it was limited to a series of methodological remarks.³³ Later short-term quantitative analyses that pursued and refined the methodologies introduced by Toussaert have almost unanimously confirmed Toussaert's pessimist views, and collectively contributed to what has come to be known as the '1520-thesis' which posits a quite immediate and sudden devotional decline after the introduction of Protestant thought in the Low Countries.³⁴ Llewellyn Bogaers' study of the devotional landscape in Utrecht between 1300 and 1600 remains exceptional in its long-term set-up, its revisionist appreciation of traditional practices and its emphasis on the continuing importance of traditional religion.³⁵

Scholarly literature on religious developments in the sixteenth-century Low Countries has largely been devoted to the origins and development of different Protestant

³¹ As has been discussed by Rapp, *L'église et la vie religieuse*, pp. 315-331. But see Weiler, 'De Nederlandse laat-middeleeuwse godsdienstigheid', and Walker Bynum, *Christian materiality*, pp. 268-273.

³² Toussaert, *Le sentiment religieux*, pp. 597, 604-605.

³³ Meyers-Reinquin, 'Proeve tot statistische benadering'. Another intended long-term study on chantries in the northern Low Countries between 1400 and 1580 by Annemarie Speetjens (Amsterdam, VU) has not (yet) been completed either. See Speetjens, 'A quantitative approach,' p. 124, note 73, as well as a later presentation of her rich data set of 250 foundations between 1290 and 1590 in idem, 'The founder, the chaplain and the ecclesiastical authorities'.

³⁴ Vroom, *Financiering van de kathedraalbouw*; idem, *De Onze-Lieve-Vrouwekerk te Antwerpen*; Marnef, *Antwerpen in de tijd van de Reformatie*; Verhoeven, *Devotie en negotie*; Trio, *Volksreligie als spiegel*; idem, 'Moordende concurrentie op de memoriemarkt'. A general discussion in Goudriaan, 'Het einde van de Middeleeuwen ontdekt'. The 1520-thesis will be discussed more in detail in §3.2.

³⁵ Bogaers, *Aards, betrokken en zelfbewust*.

groupings.³⁶ Especially from the late 1960s onwards, these various alignments have been intensely studied from different perspectives, which has immensely expanded our knowledge of the social, economic and even professional relations, underpinnings and determinations of each conviction.³⁷ As far as art historians are concerned, they have often been eager to detect hidden - or not so hidden - Protestant messages in artworks and subsequently deduce the corresponding sympathies of the artists who made them. Especially Pieter Bruegel's ingenious and clever compositions that are open to many interpretations have been a rich treasure-trove in this respect, although his personal religiosity still remains a matter of intense debate.³⁸ A bottom-up, lay Catholic perspective has however only limitedly been taken into account in the study of piety and religious material culture in the sixteenth-century Low Countries. Contrary to the study of the many Protestant movements, the perspective on the Catholic situation was much more narrow-minded and has mostly focused on decline. The situation has only recently been reevaluated, but to a large extent only for the later sixteenth century. Andrew Spicer and Koenraad Jonckheere, for instance, each assessed the influence of the 1566 Beeldenstorm in central politics and artistic practice respectively.³⁹ Other important recent contributions to the study of the broad range of Catholic visual culture, including the research by Ralph Dekoninck, Walter Melion and Christine Göttler, primarily focused on theoretical, theological and spiritual features of devotion, most notably the post-Tridentine influence of the Jesuits.⁴⁰ The situation before the Tridentine reforms and the Beeldenstorm still remains understudied, however, and in much of this research spirituality is often interpreted as being at odds with its broad material, and supposedly 'superficial', basis. Most attention has been devoted to repression by Church and State through the inquisition,

³⁶ Research has greatly benefited from the contributions by Guido Marnef. Most importantly, see Marnef, *Antwerpen in de tijd van de Reformatie*. For a general discussion of the situation in Brabant in particular, see for instance Marnef, 'Verscheurde geesten'.

³⁷ It is impossible to enlist all the relevant studies. Of fundamental importance for the Low Countries are the contributions to the 1967 Brussels conference *Bronnen voor de religieuze geschiedenis van België*, including van der Wee, 'La Réforme protestante dans l'optique de la conjoncture économique et sociale'; van Uytven, 'Invloeden van het sociale en professionele milieu'; Moreau, 'La corrélation entre le milieu social et le choix de religion'. See also Delmotte, 'Het Calvinisme in de verschillende bevolkingslagen'; Backhouse, 'Korte schets van de socio-ekonomische en religieuze situatie'; van der Wee, 'The economy as a factor'.

³⁸ See for instance the discussions in Porras, 'Rural memory, pagan idolatry,' esp. pp. 493-494, and Jonckheere, *Antwerp art after iconoclasm*, pp. 66-69.

³⁹ Spicer, 'After iconoclasm'; Jonckheere, *Antwerp art after iconoclasm*.

⁴⁰ Dekoninck, *Ad imaginem*; Melion, *The meditative art*; Göttler, *Last things*.

as well as the apparent lack of action and militancy of the clergy in the earliest years.⁴¹ Thus, through the predominant use of institutional ecclesiastical sources, research and its outcomes were rather unilateral. The perspective of the ‘Catholic commoner’ within its material context remained conspicuously absent, with the notable exception of Judith Pollmann. She has given the lay Catholic a voice in her 2011 study by close-reading a rich set of ego-documents from the period in question, including diaries, chronicles, poems and plays.⁴² All the same, however valuable such testimonies may be, in order to arrive at a truly representative picture of the whole Catholic community, they need to be supplemented by other source types of different nature, be it material, visual or administrative. The present study attempts to provide just that.

Sources, methodology and set-up

In order to provide as complete an image as possible of lay piety in the long sixteenth century, as well as to give a new dimension to existing discussions and debates, a combination of several sources and related methods of inquiry will be used here. There are four major strands, which can be summarized as an (1) analysis of material, visual and written sources, (2) by both quantitative and qualitative methods, which (3) allows to address the different social strata of the laity (4) over a sufficiently long period of time. Let us discuss each element more in detail. First and most important, the approach is fundamentally interdisciplinary in nature, and confronts various source types that are usually discussed and studied separately. For instance, studies of pilgrimage and miracles have largely drawn from the rich data presented in miracle books, but little or no research - certainly regarding the Low Countries - has included other sources as churchwarden accounts or material sources such as pilgrim badges or ex voto's that are equally crucial keys for our understanding of these phenomena.⁴³ Therefore, a whole array of written sources will be used side by side with all kinds of material sources, as well as with a range of visual sources.

⁴¹ On the inquisition, see for instance van de Wiele, ‘De inquisitierechtbank van Pieter Titelmans,’ and Goosens, *Les inquisitions*. On the role of the clergy, see most notably Pollmann, ‘Countering the Reformation’.

⁴² Pollmann, *Catholic identity*.

⁴³ Compare with the remarks by Nilson, ‘The medieval experience at the shrine,’ pp. 95-97.

The point of departure is Zoutleeuw's church of Saint Leonard with its rich set of items from the church interior, and the well-known series of churchwarden accounts that have been preserved in a more or less continuous series for the period under consideration. This invaluable source type of administrative nature was drawn up by the churchwardens, who were the representatives of the 'church fabric' (*fabrica*, *fabrike*), i.e. the independent administrative organ and related fund that was responsible for the church construction, the embellishing of its interior and the material provisions for the liturgy. Partly as a result of the "post-Toussaert syndrome" referred to above, churchwarden accounts have only limitedly been used in the study of lay piety and pilgrimage in the Low Countries, and certainly not in a systematic, profound and integrated way. Most of the methodological reflection on such accounts as historical source for religious developments has happened in relation to England - especially after the publication of Duffy's book - where their usefulness and the methods to use were heavily debated by Clive Burgess and Beat Kümin. Although admittedly somewhat simplifying their respective standpoints, Kümin favoured a quantitative and comparative approach, while Burgess propagated a qualitative approach.⁴⁴ Churchwarden accounts have also increasingly been used in French research, and most recently also in Arnd Reitemeier's study of civic parish churches in Wesel (Cleves).⁴⁵

Still, the Zoutleeuw churchwarden accounts are well-known, especially in art historical scholarship. The possibility of confronting the preserved objects of the church interior with the entries in the accounts definitely makes the Zoutleeuw case exceptional in the Low Countries, but it should also be emphasized that their preservation in such a long series from 1452 onwards, with only a few lacunae, is not so common either (see Appendix 1). Comparably, quasi-continuous series for the same period are available for the Antwerp collegiate church, later cathedral, of Our Lady, and for the Utrecht Dom- and Buurkerk, but in most cases the series are either fragmented or only start later.⁴⁶

⁴⁴ Burgess, 'Pre-Reformation churchwardens' accounts'; Kümin, 'Late medieval churchwardens' accounts'; Burgess, 'The broader church?'. See also the contribution by Hutton, 'Seasonal festivity in late medieval England,' as well as the methodological discussion by Foster, 'Churchwardens' accounts of early modern England and Wales'.

⁴⁵ Reitemeier, *Pfarrkirchen in der Stadt des späten Mittelalters*, esp. pp. 33-88 and 610-612. For France, see Neveux, 'Cambrai et sa campagne', and the various contributions in Follain, *L'argent des villages*.

⁴⁶ Vroom, *De Onze-Lieve-Vrouwekerk te Antwerpen*, pp. 7-8 and 111, note 2. Compare with overviews for Flanders provided by Meyers-Reinquin, 'Repertorium van de kerkfabrieksrekeningen,' and De Smet, 'Aanvulling op het repertorium'. The sets of both Antwerp and the Utrecht Dom have been studied by Vroom, *De Onze-*

Although the value of the Zoutleeuw set was already noted in the nineteenth century, their preservation has sometimes been precarious. In October 1854, archivist Charles Piot (1812-1899) was sent to Zoutleeuw with the commission to sort out the documents of the church's archive and draw up their inventory, as the documents would be included in the Belgian State Archives in Brussels. Although the accounts of the church fabric initially were not part of Piot's commission, he nevertheless included them in the package sent by train to Brussels. He had noticed that they contained "precious information concerning the art objects with which the church of Saint Leonard is ornated," but parish priest Joannes Van Velck (1802-1880) threatened to burn them as a form of blackmail to make the Belgian State pay for the valuable accounts - money that was needed for the planned restoration of the church.⁴⁷ Fortunately the accounts were spared, and they have been regularly used since, most notably by Jan Karel Steppe, who had selective transcriptions of them made. Later, Lieve De Mecheleer's 1997 publication of the "entries with art historical significance" further facilitated the use of this rich source material.⁴⁸

De Mecheleer's edition, however, left out important parts of the accounts that contain valuable contextualizing information, such as the sections recording the offerings (both in money and in kind), or the income from burials. Most important, however, "art historical significance" is a notion open to interpretation, and the many entries documenting the acquisition of wax, candles, wine, hosts and incense, or the payments related to foundations, restorations and maintenance were left out. Also, as the subtotals per section and totals per year are not included, the edition does not allow for a financial analysis, which precludes the possibility of assessing the relative value and importance of the acquisitions. For all these reasons, the present study draws on an integral study of the accounts, for the purpose of which a new and full transcription was made. An in-depth analysis of the original accounts from 1452 to 1578 served as the backbone for parts I and II of this dissertation. As the subsequent period is only documented more fragmentarily, for part III sample surveys were taken, as well as some specific analyses with the help of De Mecheleer's edition.

Lieve-Vrouwewerk te Antwerpen, and idem, *Financiering van de kathedraalbouw*. The accounts of the Utrecht Buurkerk were used by Bogaers, *Aards, betrokken en zelfbewust*.

⁴⁷ Copies of the correspondance between Piot, director-general of the National Archives Louis-Prospere Gachard and Van Velck are available in DAZ, nr. 53, pp. 132-136. On Van Velck, see Bets, *Zout-Leeuw*, vol. 2, pp. 99-102. After this episode, Piot published his 'Notice historique sur la ville de Léau'.

⁴⁸ De Mecheleer, *Rekeningen van de kerkfabriek*, quote on p. 15. See also her *De structuur van de rekeningen*.

As churchwarden accounts are of course biased, not in the least because they have been compiled for administrative reasons by the local elite, they will be supplemented with data from other archival sources. This includes the vast charter collection of the collegiate chapter, which contains almost 1.600 deeds from 1235 to 1680. Most interesting for the present purposes are the various foundation charters within the set.⁴⁹ Other sources from the collegiate chapter have only limitedly been used here. The series of registers of the prebends have been consulted, as they include information on foundations.⁵⁰ However, due to the very fragmentary preservation, the accounts of the chapter have not been considered.⁵¹ The same goes for the *acta capituli*, which have only been preserved since 1593. The information provided by the collegiate chapter was furthermore supplemented by decanal visitation reports of Zoutleeuw's parish of Saint Leonard, although these have only been preserved from 1600 onwards.⁵² Source material on the town's confraternity life is equally limited. Although at least four, and possibly six, confraternities are documented in the Zoutleeuw sources, no accounts or membership lists are available.⁵³ Finally, the civic archives of Zoutleeuw provide important additional data, most importantly the civic accounts and the aldermen's protocols, which have both been preserved in a nearly continuous series for the period in question.⁵⁴

Scholars have demonstrated how religion was to an important extent a local matter, being influenced by particular local or regional dynamics, and historians such as

⁴⁹ RAL, KAB, Boxes 966 to 986, as well as three registers with copies, nrs. 989, 990 and 991. See Grauwen, Warlop & Muret, *Analytische inventaris*.

⁵⁰ RAL, KAB, nrs. 1023-1052.

⁵¹ Apart from the accounts that have been preserved in RAL, KAB, nrs. 1088 to 1157, several are bound into the volumes with the churchwarden accounts. See RAL, KAB, nrs. 1215, fols. 126-152v (1473-1474); 1218 (1512-1513, 1513-1514, 1514-1515, 1515-1516, 1516-1517, 1518-1519); 1221, fols. 1-42v (1590, and 1589-1603); 1222 (1605, 1606, 1607 and 1611-1612); 1223 (1616).

⁵² AAM, DV, Z1 and Z2. Although the list in Cloet, Bostyn & De Vreese, *Repertorium*, pp. 245-248 includes several pre-1600 reports in Z2, these do not include reports of visitations of the parish of Saint Leonard. They do, however, include visitations reports of the Zoutleeuw Church of the Beguinage for 1598 and 1599.

⁵³ Four certain confraternities include that of Saint Sebastian (handbowmen, see KR 1490, fol. 38), Saint George (crossbowmen, RAL, SL, nr. 3581), Saint Leonard (arquebusiers, erected 1515, see Bets, *Zout-Leeuw*, vol. 2, pp. 284-292) and Saint Anne (chamber of rhetoric, RAL, KAB, nrs. 991, pp. 15-16; 1033, fol. 12; nr. 1043, fol. 17v; nr. 1063; boxes 980 (nr. 1136), 982 (nrs. 1250 and 1255), 984 (nrs. 1397 and 1455)). There also was a foundation of the Holy Name of Jesus (RAL, KAB, nrs. 1030; 1033, fol. 12; 1043, fol. 18; 1048; 1077; box 977 (nrs. 1038 and 1047)), and the Lauds of the Holy Sacrament (discussed in II.3.3.2), but it is unclear if these were confraternities.

⁵⁴ RAL, SL, resp. nrs. 3581-3621 and 2976-3065.

William Christian have proposed to use the term ‘local religion’.⁵⁵ However, in order not to treat Zoutleeuw as an island within the Netherlandish context, and to balance expanding conclusions to a more encompassing level while not making too broad generalizations on the basis of just one case, the findings will be both confronted with and contextualized by drawing on source material from elsewhere in the Low Countries. Apart from comparisons with other - predominantly Brabantine - cases that have been discussed to varying degree in the scholarly literature, data was taken from several other sources. First, for the period in question, a significant set of miracle collections of individual shrines in the Low Countries has been preserved. Apart from each individually providing unique insights in the experiences of pilgrims, as a whole the body also presents a previously neglected source for the study of the evolution of piety in general.⁵⁶ Exceptionally rich information is also available in the many written sources that were produced as a result of the sixteenth-century religious tensions and debates, including polemical treatises from various authors on the Christian spectrum as well as many narrative sources of laypeople who wrote down their observations, experiences and fears during this tumultuous period.⁵⁷ Precisely because the subject of material piety became so controversial, these writings offer unique information on traditional practices that are not usually commented upon. For similar reasons, to a certain extent the same also goes for the documents from the archive of the Council of Troubles, a tribunal specifically erected to punish offenders who had revolted against Church and King during the Wonderyear. Although the various documents have already been studied for various reasons by historians, they have so far attracted little or no attention in the study of traditional religious practices. The often highly detailed sentences are particularly interesting for these purposes.⁵⁸ The present study presents them as a valuable mine of information, but further in-depth research will definitely yield more insights. Finally, these data will be supplemented with contemporaneous visual representations of church interiors and the religious practices in them.

⁵⁵ Christian, *Local religion in sixteenth-century Spain*. See also Terpstra, ‘Lay spirituality’, pp. 266-267.

⁵⁶ Most recently discussed by van Mulder, *Wonderkoorts*.

⁵⁷ The available treatises have been discussed by Freedberg, *Iconoclasm and painting in the Netherlands*; Jonckheere, *Antwerp art after iconoclasm*; Spicer, ‘Consecration and violation’; idem, ‘After iconoclasm’. The chronicles and diaries have most recently been analyzed and listed by Pollmann, *Catholic identity*, esp. pp. 203-206. See also the overview on <http://www.dutchrevolt.leiden.edu/dutch/kronieken/>.

⁵⁸ Jamees & Vermaseren, *Inventaris van het archief van de Raad van Beroerten*. On the Council as organization, see for instance Marnef & de Schepper, ‘Raad van Beroerten’. On the Council’s sentences, see also Woltjer, ‘De vonnissen van de Raad van Beroerten’.

Miniatures and paintings, but also sculpted fragments, provide a wealth of information, that will be used to cross-check the data drawn from the other sources.⁵⁹

Secondly, the interdisciplinary character is not merely limited to the selection of source material, but also extends to the analysis of this wealth of information. ‘Traditional’ study of the written source material will be combined with iconographical and visual analyses. Most importantly, qualitative methods will be confronted with quantitative methods. Until now, the debate surrounding the aforementioned ‘1520-thesis’ has mostly been based on quantitative parameters, in line with the groundbreaking work of Toussaert. The present study will partly pursue these methods, but it will add to that the equally important qualitative analysis of data. While quantitative analyses are definitely an indispensable tool to chart evolutions on the long term, they unintentionally neglect the more subtle nuances and transformations, as well as the meanings that were attached to the objects that were central in the debates. Although this approach is certainly not ‘resolutely anthropological,’ it definitely responds to Jacques Chiffolleau’s 1984 call to supplement statistical, ‘economic’ treatments with more symbolical readings of the transactions under consideration.⁶⁰ As such, it can also transcend the somewhat deadlocked discussion between Burgess and Kūmin, referred to above.

Thirdly, the source material selected as well as the proposed analytical models allow to address the broad subject of lay piety in a pluriform way, rather than as an *a priori* monolithic concept. By virtue of this proposed combination, it is possible to not only address the foundations and donations of wealthy parishioners, but also to include the acts of ‘common’ pilgrims into the considerations. Thus, the devotional acts of people from different social strata can be taken into consideration. Finally, in line with Duffy’s seminal book, this broad set of source material will be analyzed on the long term. As the respective periods of the later Middle Ages and the Reformation are all too often treated separately and even placed in strong opposition to each other, a broad chronological scope that encompasses both allows us to check such theoretical observations with the actual facts. Also, studying lay piety in the long sixteenth

⁵⁹ For the period under consideration no comprehensive study of representations of church interiors exists, but there are some useful tools. Most importantly, these are the online database *Missa Medievalis*, and Steinmetz, *Das Altarretabel in der altniederländischen Malerei*. These have been supplemented by a large set of other representations collected from diverse publications consulted throughout the research.

⁶⁰ “Cette histoire ne doit pas être ‘économiste’ mais résolument ‘anthropologique’.” Chiffolleau, ‘Pour une économie de l’institution ecclésiastique,’ quote on p. 250.

century allows an observation of possible continuities as well as to better appreciate periodical idiosyncracies.⁶¹ The chronological boundaries chosen are 1452, the date of the earliest preserved churchwarden account from Zoutleeuw's church of Saint Leonard, and 1621. The latter has not only been chosen for being the end point of the Twelve Years' Truce which saw an important Catholic *réveil*, but also because after that point Zoutleeuw and the surrounding Hageland region would enter a period of dramatic socioeconomic crisis.⁶²

The set-up of the text is chronological. The first part analyzes the period preceding the introduction of Protestant thought in the Low Countries (c. 1450-1520). The origins and establishment of the cult of Saint Leonard at Zoutleeuw will be discussed, with which a series of methodological considerations can be made on how to 'measure' the activity and the historical popularity of such shrines in general. For the Zoutleeuw case in particular the management of the cult of Saint Leonard will be scrutinized, in order to draw conclusions about how cult objects were made to work. The discussion will subsequently be broadened so that the particular developments in Zoutleeuw can be compared with and connected to the contemporary context of the Low Countries and Europe. This will then be used as a stepping stone for a discussion of a revised image of piety at the dawn of the iconoclastic sixteenth century. The second part zooms in on the decades between the first circulation of Protestant ideas and the actual breakings in the *Beeldenstorm* (c. 1520-1566). In the first place, the effects and the influence of Protestantism on piety in the Low Countries will be reviewed. A detailed critical analysis of the historiography on the subject will be presented, in particular of the abovementioned 1520-thesis, after which a number of new ways of looking will be proposed. After these primarily methodological and historiographical analyses, different themes will be treated in such a way that it is possible to address the actions of various groups of religious agents, namely pilgrims, parishioners and patrons. Thus, the dynamics in miracle cults, the developments in the local liturgy as well as the Reformation's influence on religious patronage will be analyzed in detail. Finally, the particular course of Zoutleeuw during the *Beeldenstorm* will again be contextualized and connected to other resisting tendencies in the Low Countries. The third and last part, finally, will pursue the analysis into the Catholic revival around

⁶¹ Similar remarks by Terpstra, 'Lay spirituality,' who also provides further references.

⁶² Compare with observations by Minnen, *Den heiligen sant*, vol. 1, pp. 160 and 169. A similar chronological scope has also been proposed in Carlos Eire's most recent book, studying evolutions in European religion between 1450 and 1650. See Eire, *Reformations*.

1600 and under the Twelve Years' Truce (1566-1621). It will present an assessment of the 'survival' of the late medieval miracle cult into the seventeenth century. Much like in the first part, the significant choices in the management of the shrine will be discussed, although this time it will be done in relation to the broad Netherlandish context of a burgeoning Counter-Reformation. More in particular, the analysis of the donation of a relic and the accompanying translation ceremony not only allows for a discussion of the tensions between images and relics as cult objects, but also to look at how this particular case fits into the general religious politics of the Archducal government.

The point of departure of each of these parts will be one particular object preserved in the Zoutleeuw church that is well documented in the accounts and - most importantly - will appear as significant for the discussion of lay piety in the period under consideration. Three different types of objects were chosen, each with a different religious function, role and attributed meaning. The first part will center around the discussion of a carved wooden altarpiece, the second part around a sacrament house in stone, and the third part around a painting on canvas depicting a miracle. The analysis proposed will not be merely functional. But by looking at individual and well-documented objects that each are part and parcel of a larger, contemporaneous wave of production of similar objects, it is possible to connect the individual object with the religious context at large. Consequently, they are revealing of both religious trends in each period in the Low Countries at large, as well as of the intentions of the patrons in the particular case of Zoutleeuw. Rather than on the creative decisions of the artist, the focus will indeed predominantly be on the patron and his significant choices and requests. This is not to deny or discard the important contributions of the executing artists, but rather to emphasize the equally important share of the patrons and their crucial, religiously motivated choices. Much like Michael Baxandall sought to chart the *Patterns of intention* of the maker, rather than something such as an inherent meaning of the final product, and deduce them within the conceptual triangle of assignment, context and solution, a similar quest will be held to try and establish the intentions of the patron and the communities they represented.⁶³ A central role in that respect will be reserved for the churchwardens.

⁶³ Baxandall, *Patterns of intention*.

Agency and social profile of the churchwardens

Churchwardens were crucial figures in lay devotional life of the Low Countries. As the churchwarden accounts of Saint Leonard's church form the backbone of the present study, it is of critical importance to determine who was responsible for the production of these sources and, by extension, who governed the parish finances. Indirectly, the accounts may reflect the devotional life of the Zoutleeuw community, but in the first place they are of course the direct expression of both the decisions and expectations of the men who administrated parish life on a daily basis. In that sense, they are not merely passive sources for the evolution of piety and devotional practices, but highly informative as an active group of crucial importance within the parish framework: the churchwardens. As far as the Low Countries are concerned only a few in-depth studies are available that analyze the churchwardens both as individuals and a social group over a longer period of time. Mostly they are summarily discussed in general surveys of the church fabric as an institution.⁶⁴ The exceptional preservation of sources for the Zoutleeuw case allows us to make some observations on the social profile of the wardens there, and so to speak, to give them a face within the anonymous and monolithic organ of the church fabric. The purpose is not so much prosopographic, but an evaluation of their profiles is necessary for the present study of lay piety.

Earlier studies tended to single out the clergy as the organizers and promoters of local cults, for instance being responsible for the propagation and dissemination of

⁶⁴ For the Low Countries, the basic discussions on the church fabric as an institution are Laenen, *Introduction à l'histoire paroissiale*, pp. 176-195; idem, *Kerkelijk en godsdienstig Brabant*, vol. 1, pp. 220-221; De Moreau, *Histoire de l'église en Belgique*, vol. 3, pp. 369-370; Nolet & Boeren, *Kerkelijke instellingen in de middeleeuwen*, pp. 346-347; Post, *Kerkelijke verhoudingen*, pp. 427-431. Most recently, Kuys collected a lot of scattered information in various studies: Kuys, 'Churchwardens' accounts'; idem, 'Who controlled the urban parish?'; idem, 'Secular authorities and parish church building'. Some individual in-depth analyses of local church fabrics as institutions are available, among others for the cities of Antwerpen, Delft, 's-Hertogenbosch and Utrecht. See Vroom, *Financiering van de kathedraalbouw*, pp. 19-49, 345; idem, *De Onze-Lieve-Vrouwekerk te Antwerpen*, pp. 23-36; Verhoeven, *Devotie en negotie*, pp. 25-28; Glebbeek, 'De kerkfabriek van de Sint-Jan'. Some rare social studies of churchwardens have been made for Ghent, Dudzele and the Campine area, see Boone, *Gent en de Bourgondische hertogen*, pp. 96-102; Dombrecht, *Plattelandsgemeenschappen*, pp. 268-273; Van Onacker, *Leaders of the pack*, pp. 214-218 and 263-265. Studies of individual churchwardens are exceptional, but see Bogaers, 'Adriaan van Helsdingen'. The Zoutleeuw church fabric is only briefly touched upon by De Mecheleer, *Rekeningen van de kerkfabriek*, pp. 10-11; idem, *De structuur van de rekeningen*, pp. 10-11.

miracles.⁶⁵ However, parish clergy of course had no monopoly on parish life, as local religion was well embedded in local cultural and political structures. Indeed, in recent years, scholars have increasingly described local devotional life in terms of civic religion, emphasizing both the stakes and essential roles of lay groups in its organization and formation. After the introduction of the concept by André Vauchez in 1995, basically two main interpretations developed, ranging from an active form of appropriation by civic authorities with legitimizing purposes, to a more bottom-up approach that sees a *Kommunalisierung* by the population itself.⁶⁶ While the former model was developed in relation to the Italian city-states, the latter was based on research of the German territories, and it has recently been remarked that neither is fully fit for the specific context of the Low Countries, where (semi-)religious communities and lay corporations appear to have been the major agents of change.⁶⁷ From this point of view, it seems desirable to consider the churchwardens not merely as obeying executioners of clerical desires, but as significant actors in local devotional life. In the same vein as Jacques Chiffolleau, Jan Kuys has aptly described their task as “the creation of material conditions for religious worship.”⁶⁸ It was they who bought the wax, incense, wine and hosts for the services and the badges for the pilgrims. It was they who often discussed church construction with the master builder and kept his designs.⁶⁹ And it was they who contracted the most important commissions for the embellishment of the parish church, and were thus in contact with the artists and artisans in question. For instance, in a survey of the patronage of sacrament houses in the period 1520-1566, they represented the largest group of documented patrons.⁷⁰

Furthermore, several case studies have revealed that churchwardens often had their own agendas, sometimes in strong opposition to that of the local clergy. A well-documented example is provided by Wezemaal, a small village between Aarschot and Leuven that became one of the most important Brabantine pilgrimage sites around 1500. In the first quarter of the sixteenth century, the local churchwardens combined

⁶⁵ For instance Soergel, *Wondrous in His Saints*, pp. 25, 29.

⁶⁶ Vauchez, *La religion civique*; Terpstra, ‘Civic religion’. Monnet, ‘Pour en finir avec la religion civique?’ provides some critical methodological reflections.

⁶⁷ Marnef & Van Bruaene, ‘Civic religion’.

⁶⁸ Kuys, ‘Secular authorities and parish church building,’ p. 115. Chiffolleau, ‘Pour une économie de l’institution ecclésiastique,’ p. 265 called it “la ‘gestion’ matérielle du sacré.”

⁶⁹ Roggen, ‘Jan van Osy,’ pp. 32 and 43-44, and Meischke, ‘Het architectonische ontwerp,’ pp. 150 and 167-169.

⁷⁰ Suykerbuyk & Van Bruaene, ‘Towering piety,’ pp. 134 and 148 (Appendix). Other examples in Kuys, ‘Secular authorities and parish church building,’ pp. 115-116.

forces with the local lord to institute legal proceedings before the Council of Brabant against the parish clergy. The latter had reportedly hindered the external priests, appointed by the lord to accommodate the increasing mass of pilgrims who came to visit the miraculous statue of Saint Job. At the same time, this very case study also indicates that churchwardens were not just puppets in the hands of the lord, either. Around 1600, they sided at their turn with the parish priest and community in opposition to lord Lancelot Schetz, who was accused of withholding parish funds. This time, they appealed to the church hierarchy, as they called in the help of Archbishop Mathias Hovius.⁷¹ Another example is documented in mid-fifteenth-century Kampen (Oversticht) where a chaplain openly criticized the churchwardens for the pew they had installed. From the pulpit the cleric tried to convince the parishioners not to give any more money to the wardens, and he urged them to even destroy the object of contention.⁷² Clearly, both in Kampen and Wezemaal, churchwardens followed their own course of action. Strikingly however, they never seem to have entered into conflict with civic authorities.⁷³ Indeed, as will be established for Zoutleeuw, they formed an essential middle group between two spheres: although in theory operating in support of the clergy and liturgy, they had important affiliations with the secular government.⁷⁴

The origins of church fabrics as organizations or funds remain obscure. Papal legislation remained conspicuously silent on these matters. The decrees of the Fourth Lateran Council (1215), for instance, still completely attributed the care of liturgical objects to the clergy. In fact, the Church of Rome never issued official decrees that obliged laypeople to erect a permanent organization of the sort, and it seems that they were rarely if ever instituted by decree, but evolved gradually from an informal to a formal structure. This development is notable all over Europe, and is generally situated over the course of the thirteenth century.⁷⁵ As a result of the disappearance of

⁷¹ Minnen, *Den heyligen sant*, vol. 1, pp. 82-91 and 139-146, another example on pp. 58-60.

⁷² Kuys, 'Stedelijke zeggenschap,' p. 296. In general, see also Kuys, 'Who controlled the urban parish?', p. 84. For comparable examples in England, see Craig, 'Co-operation and initiatives,' pp. 372-377.

⁷³ Kuys, 'Secular authorities and parish church building,' p. 116.

⁷⁴ Chiffolleau, 'Pour une économie de l'institution ecclésiastique,' p. 265 described them as "groupes intermédiaires, plus ou moins autonomes." Craig, 'Co-operation and initiatives,' p. 369 similarly referred to English churchwardens of around 1600 as "mediating figures between crown and local communities."

⁷⁵ Clément, 'Recherches sur les paroisses'; Vroom, *Financiering van de kathedraalbouw*, pp. 19, 49; Cloet, 'Kerkelijke instellingen,' p. 14; Carlson, 'Origins, function, and status,' pp. 168-169; Kümin, 'The English parish in a European perspective,' pp. 24-25; Cragoe, 'The custom of the English church,' esp. p. 30.

the privatised *Eigenkirchen* (proprietary churches) by the twelfth century, church property (*dos*) got divided in two parts: a fund for the clergy (*beneficium*) and another for the maintenance and embellishment of the church building (*fabrica ecclesie*). The word *fabrica* initially designated the act of upkeep and embellishing the building with its objects, the funds for which were governed by the parish priest. Over the course of the thirteenth century, it gradually came to indicate the separate organization erected specifically to that end and at least partly administrated by lay members. Simultaneous to the origins of the concept, in the Low Countries the term is used *nominatim* for the first time in the early thirteenth century, in Brussels (Saint Gudula, c. 1226-1238), Korbeek-Lo (1228) and Antwerp (Our Lady, 1239). Everywhere these institutions put up offertory boxes, the revenues of which served as an important financial resource for their activities.⁷⁶ Although it is safe to say that by the end of the thirteenth century prominent parishioners were in charge of their church's material basis, it is not entirely clear whether this was a consequence of clerical decisions or negligence, or of laypeople's initiatives. Older literature seems to stress that the parish clergy and patrons backed out of their obligation of maintenance at about the same time, and that this duty would consequently have been transferred to the laity more or less obligatorily.⁷⁷ Other authors, however, have emphasized the active role of laypeople in the development of the church fabric, drawing attention to their desire to manage themselves the gifts they had given to the church.⁷⁸ A case with exceptionally documented origins suggests that such a process of lay appropriation might have been the situation in Brabant as well. In Bunsbeek, near Zoutleeuw, the parishioners complained that their patron and parish priest unrightfully made use of money, intended for church maintenance. To settle the conflict, in 1317 it was decided that from then on the community would appoint two supervising churchwardens, in consultation with the priest.⁷⁹

⁷⁶ The link with the disappearance of the *Eigenkirchen* was first proposed by Schröcker, *Die Kirchenpflegschaft*, but has recently been challenged by Reitemeier, *Pfarrkirchen*, esp. pp. 93-94. For the early development in the Low Countries, see especially Laenen, *Introduction à l'histoire paroissiale*, pp. 177-187; Genicot, *Rural communities*, pp. 101-102; Kuys, 'Churchwardens' accounts,' pp. 97-98; idem, 'Secular authorities and parish church building,' pp. 109-111.

⁷⁷ See, for instance, Post, *Kerkelijke verhoudingen*, p. 427. Specifically on Zoutleeuw, see De Ridder, 'Het pastoraat van Leeuw,' p. 68.

⁷⁸ Vroom, *Financiering van de kathedraalbouw*, p. 49; Kümin, 'The English parish in a European perspective,' p. 25; Cragoe, 'The custom of the English church'.

⁷⁹ Laenen, *Introduction à l'histoire paroissiale*, pp. 186-187.

For the Zoutleeuw church fabric no foundation charter or articles of association have been preserved, and no information on its origins is available. An early reference in a 1314 deed, ratified by the Zoutleeuw aldermen, indicates that by that time the institution had already acquired its own properties, since two administrators of the church fabric (*provisores seu mamburni fabrice beati Leonardi Lewensis*) gave out a piece of land in annuity.⁸⁰ It is indeed quite likely that, like in many other places, its origins go back to the thirteenth century, when other typical parochial organizations are known to have existed in town as well. One of the oldest attested in the Low Countries, the local Poor Table (*pauperes Lewenses*, later (*tafele van den*) *heylyge geest*) is first mentioned in a 1235 charter. The local hospital (*gasthuys*) must have existed before 1253 and the leper house (*opus pauperum infirmorum seu leprosororum*) is first mentioned in 1277.⁸¹ Yet, Zoutleeuw's parochial development is not a straightforward one. Saint Leonard's church was probably founded as a chapel in the early thirteenth century - possibly even after 1213 - and only in 1231 it became the seat of the town's parish. This happened to the detriment of Saint Sulpice's church *extra muros*, which thereby lost its parochial status (cf. *infra*, 1.1.1).⁸² However, in order for the church to support the existing foundations, the previously mentioned 1235 charter specified that the *bona fabrice ecclesie Sancti Sulpitii* remained its property and would continue to be governed by its clergy. Thus, it seems that no church fabric in the later sense of the word - separate and administrated by laymen - existed in Zoutleeuw before the 1231 transfer, and it was certainly not transferred together with the parish seat. Nevertheless, it is not inconceivable that precisely this transfer, in conjunction with increasing specialization and diversification of responsibilities within the parochial functioning, sparked the development of the Zoutleeuw church fabric. The fact that Saint Leonard's - previously a chapel - became a parish church entailed structural alterations to the building in order to be able to accomodate the faithful, and this construction work doubtless needed administration. Furthermore, it seems that the material upkeep of Saint Sulpice's became Saint Leonard's responsibility as well.⁸³ In any case, as will be demonstrated later on, it seems that the church fabric existed well before the institution of a collegiate chapter in 1308 (cf. *infra*).

⁸⁰ RAL, KAB, Box 966, nr. 20.

⁸¹ RAL, KAB, Box 966, nr. 1; Bets, *Zout-Leeuw*, vol. 1, pp. 297-298 and vol. 2, pp. 222-223, 226, 232; Lisson, *Zoutleeuw*, p. 128; Blondé *et al.*, 'Samenleven in de stad,' p. 113. De Moreau, *Histoire de l'église en Belgique*, vol. 3, p. 371 gives 1243 as earliest date, but there can be little doubt that the *pauperes Lewenses* mentioned in the 1235 charter as institution owning lands is to be identified as the Poor Table.

⁸² The most recent discussion of the origins of the church is Lisson, *Zoutleeuw in de middeleeuwen*, pp. 98-105.

⁸³ Lefèvre, *L'organisation ecclésiastique*, pp. 30-31; De Mecheleer, *De structuur van de rekeningen*, pp. 10-11.

As they were meant to represent the whole parish, it is often supposed that the churchwardens were annually elected by the parishioners themselves.⁸⁴ Due to the lack of papal legislation on the matter, however, stipulations on the actual working of church fabrics were left for the bishops to decree in their synodal statutes.⁸⁵ This situation paved the way for many regional variations and practices were often subject to local customs, as a result of which the procedures of appointments of churchwardens may differ widely. A French example of 1466, where the elected churchwardens offered drinks to their voters, indeed suggests that such elections actually existed.⁸⁶ Yet, Kümin's assertion that the election proceeded "with more or less subtle pressure,"⁸⁷ based on a broader European perspective, adds significantly to that picture, and that especially seems to hold true with regard to the more urbanised areas of the Low Countries. A rare contemporary description of the procedure in 1570 in the town of Schalkwijk, near Utrecht, offers a unique insight. After having announced the election from the pulpit, the priest assembled with the local dignitaries. Together they chose the new churchwardens, whose names were submitted for approval to the community.⁸⁸ Furthermore, various examples in coastal Flanders make clear that such elections were not necessarily the result of active election campaigns, since sporadically conflicts arose after refusal of office.⁸⁹ Thus, although elections were organized, it seems that the options for both the community at large as well as for the elected were often rather limited, the former being limited to mere approval or rejection, the latter sometimes gently forced. Who the electing dignitaries were is hard to assess, but in most cases the civic government played a major role. Kuys has argued that from the middle of the fourteenth century onwards secular governments gradually took over the appointment and control over the churchwardens, and his hypothesis is indeed corroborated by many examples.⁹⁰ The way of the parish priest varied from one place to another, but in some cases the clergy tried to re-appropriate the rights of appointment. In 1465, for instance, a conflict

⁸⁴ For the Low Countries, see for instance Bijsterveld, 'De kerk in het midden,' p. 107.

⁸⁵ Kuys, 'Churchwardens' accounts,' p. 98, Cragoe, 'The custom of the English church'.

⁸⁶ Constant, 'Une source trop négligée,' p. 179.

⁸⁷ Kümin, 'The English parish in a European perspective,' p. 25. Compare with Carlson, 'Origins, function, and status,' p. 183.

⁸⁸ The example is given by Post, *Kerkelijke verhoudingen*, pp. 428-429.

⁸⁹ Dombrecht, *Plattelandsgemeenschappen*, pp. 244-245. Bogaers, 'Adriaan van Helsdingen,' p. 88 gives another example for the Utrecht Buurkerk.

⁹⁰ Kuys, 'Stedelijke zeggenschap,'; idem, 'Who controlled the urban parish?', pp. 84-85; idem, 'Secular authorities and parish church building,' pp. 112-113. For other examples, see for instance Vroom, *Financiering van de kathedraalbouw*, p. 345, and Cloet, 'Kerkelijke instellingen,' p. 14.

about precisely this issue arose between the secular authorities of Hoogstraten, including the lord, and the clerical representatives, presided by the Bishop of Cambrai. Both parties claimed the rights, but the Council of Brabant finally decided that they belonged to the secular authorities, “as has been the case since old times” (*also men van ouden tyd geplogten heeft te doen*).⁹¹ Documented cases in the immediate vicinity of Zoutleeuw confirm the important and continuing role of secular governments throughout the fifteenth and sixteenth centuries. This appears from the fact that regulations were included in the *costuymen*, local customary lawbooks. In Diest, for instance, the *costuymen* stipulated that four churchwardens should be appointed by the magistracy at their yearly renewal. Such was the case in Zichem (1546) as well, although it happened in consultation with the priest there.⁹² Indeed, although not a single parish church in the Low Countries is known where the clergy had a monopoly on appointments of churchwardens, it seems that in the more rural communities of the Hageland region parish priests were nevertheless systematically involved.⁹³

Neither the *Costuymen ende usantien der stadt van Leeuwe* of 1550, nor those of 1570 mention any procedures regarding the churchwardens and no other secure normative sources are available on this matter.⁹⁴ Although it has been thought that some fourteenth-century charters contained relevant information on the churchwardens’ relation with the civic authorities, the information given is unclear.⁹⁵ This vague

⁹¹ Adriaensen & Segers, ‘De collegiale kerk van de H. Katharina,’ pp. 116-117.

⁹² For the examples of Diest, Zichem (1546) and Hannut (1547), see Casier, *Coutumes du pays et duché de Brabant*, resp. pp. 420, 646 and 677. Other examples in Kuys, ‘Secular authorities and parish church building,’ pp. 112-113.

⁹³ For instance Langdorp, Messelbroek, Testelt, Rillaar, Betekom and Wezemaal, see resp. Willems, *De Kronijk door Adrien Carpentier*, pp. 22, 73 and 107; Schroeven, *De Kronijk door Adrien Carpentier*, p. 21; Scheys & Willems, *De Kronijk door Adrien Carpentier*, p. 42; Minnen, *Den heyligen sant*, vol. 1, pp. 82-83, 92.

⁹⁴ The Zoutleeuw *costuymen* are published in Casier, *Coutumes du pays et duché de Brabant*, pp. 744-763.

⁹⁵ A charter with civic privileges, issued by John II of Brabant in 1307, reconfirmed the traditional right of the aldermen and burgomasters to appoint the office holders “*van geesthuysen, van gasthuysen [en] van sieckhuysen*.” It is published in Willems, *Les Gestes des Ducs de Brabant*, vol. 1, pp. 741-744, esp. p. 743. Although Piot, ‘Notice historique,’ p. 400 read this as a reference to the churchwardens, the terms used do not unambiguously refer to churchwardens, as *geesthuys* was actually used for charitable institutions like *gasthuys* and *sieckhuys*. Two later documents use the more likely term *godshuys*, which was used in a very broad sense to indicate church buildings, abbeys, convents and cloisters, or again charitable institutions. Although around 1500 the term was indeed sporadically used to refer to the churchwardens, the information given does however not allow to securely identify them as such in this context. The civic statutes of July 1371 prohibit the giving of money in order for someone to obtain the office of *momboer* (tutor) *van eneghen goetshuse*, and a 1383 charter with civic privileges issued by Duke Wenceslaus I and his wife Joanna, prescribes that the

normative information notwithstanding, the exceptional preservation of the local churchwarden accounts themselves allows us to make an in-depth analysis of prevailing practices during the period under consideration. The names of the wardens are always mentioned on the first page of the yearly accounts. Furthermore, for several years for which no accounts have been preserved or for which the title page is lacking, the names of the wardens are recorded in charters or sporadically referred to throughout the accounts (see Appendix 2).⁹⁶ Various terms were used to designate the office.⁹⁷ Very much like the terminology in the 1314 document (*provisores seu mamburni*), the most prevalent in the headings of the accounts themselves was *momboren der kercken* or *fabriken van Sinte Leonarts van Leeuwe* (“tutors of the church” or “of the fabric of Saint Leonard of Zoutleeuw”), sometimes in combination with the term *provisoren* (guardians).⁹⁸ These, however, were used interchangeably with other words used elsewhere in the accounts, such as *kercmeesters*,⁹⁹ *fabrijckmeesters*¹⁰⁰ or *godshuys meesters*.¹⁰¹ In later Latin sources they were referred to as *magistri fabrice*.¹⁰²

Generally, the number of simultaneously appointed churchwardens seems to have been roughly correlated with the number of parishioners. In Zoutleeuw that number changed several times, seemingly as rather late reactions to changed demographics. In the 1314 deed, two administrators are mentioned, while from 1344 onwards there were

aldermen and burgomasters would choose them for the greatest profit of the city. See RAL, SL, Box 3876/2, resp. nrs. 53 and 59. See also Piot, *Inventaire des chartes*, resp. pp. 18, nr. 53, and 20, nr. 59. On the latter document, see also Lisson, *Zoutleeuw*, p. 168, who erroneously claims that it also stipulates that the officers in question were to be chosen among the city’s ‘lineages’ (*geslachten*). It is interesting to note that a 1718 description of the town of Zoutleeuw refers to Wenceslaus’ charter in relation to the then current election procedures of the two churchwardens. See Wauters, ‘Une ancienne description,’ p. 28.

⁹⁶ For the charters, see Grauwen, Warlop & Muret, *Analytische inventaris*.

⁹⁷ For a general overview of the terminology in the Low Countries, see Nolet & Boeren, *Kerkelijke instellingen*, pp. 346-347. An overview of terminology used throughout Europe is provided by Kümin, ‘The English parish in a European perspective,’ p. 25.

⁹⁸ For instance KR 1520, fol. 1 (“momboren ende provisoers van Sinte Leonarde te Leuwe”), KR 1523, fol. 55 (“momboren ende provisoers der kercken van Sinte Lenaerts te Leeuwe”), or KR 1530, fol. 130 (“momboren ende provisoryn der fabrieken van Sinte Leonarts tot Leuwe”).

⁹⁹ KR 1452, fol. 7 (“keercmeesters van Sinte Leonarts”); KR 1453, fol. 27 (“kerckmeesters vander fabriken van Sinte Leonarts”); KR 1495, fol. 145; KR 1496, fol. 171v; KR 1510, fol. 578.

¹⁰⁰ KR 1509, fol. 41; KR 1511, fol. 17; KR 1530, fol. 155; KR 1533, fol. 193; KR 1534, fol. 27v.

¹⁰¹ KR 1495, fol. 141, and KR 1505, fol. 15.

¹⁰² For instance in the early seventeenth-century decanal visitation reports, such as in 1606 (“ordinarie sunt tres magistri fabrice”) or 1611. See AAM, DV, Z1 (unfoliated).

at least three.¹⁰³ From the earliest preserved account of 1452 until 1549 a fixed number of four appointed administrators was maintained, diminishing again to three from 1550 onward.¹⁰⁴ Such was still the case in the early seventeenth century, although sporadically years with only two appointments occur. In the late sixteenth century, some smaller rural communities in the Hageland region, including Langdorp, Messelbroek, Testelt and Rillaar, also had two appointed churchwardens.¹⁰⁵ These figures concur with Zoutleeuw's demographical decline (see Graph 5) as well as with observations for the Low Countries at large, and for England and France. In the fifteenth century, parish churches in Ghent - the largest city in the Low Countries at the time - had four wardens at most. English parishes - in comparison much smaller in size - often had two, and two or three wardens also appear to have been the norm in rural France, as opposed to mostly four in the cities.¹⁰⁶ In some towns and cities in the Low Countries a hierarchy between churchwardens has been noted. In Hulst, for instance, the aldermen operated as "supreme churchwardens" (*opperkerkmeesters*), and the same function existed elsewhere.¹⁰⁷ No trace of a similar office has been found for Zoutleeuw. The only indication of a certain hierarchy seems to have been the order in which the respective names were mentioned in the headings of the accounts, in decreasing number of years of experience. It is unclear if this corresponded with a specific division of labour.¹⁰⁸

¹⁰³ Several documents from 1344 to 1440 mention three churchwardens: RAL, KAB, Box 967, nr. 112; Box 968, nr. 306; Box 979, nrs. 476, 492 and 522; Box 971, nrs. 546, 548 and 597; Box 972, nr. 662; Box 973, nrs. 699, 704 and 718. It should of course be noted that these documents not necessarily list all wardens in function, as only the ones actually appearing before the aldermen were mentioned.

¹⁰⁴ Exceptions are KR 1453, KR 1465, KR 1466 and KR 1540, when only three churchwardens are mentioned.

¹⁰⁵ See the examples given in note 93.

¹⁰⁶ Boone, *Gent en de Bourgondische hertogen*, p. 96; Burgess, 'Pre-Reformation churchwardens' accounts,' p. 307; Constant, 'Une source trop négligé,' p. 179; Laenen, *Introduction à l'histoire paroissiale*, p. 190; Marnef & Van Bruaene, 'Civic religion', p. 171. German cities mostly had two, see Reitemeier, *Pfarrkirchen*, p. 103. On the parish churches in Ghent, see most recently Van Bruaene, 'Exploring the features and challenges'.

¹⁰⁷ Dierick-van Pottelberghe, 'De parochiekerk van Hulst,' p. 67. See also Vroom, *Financiering van de kathedraalbouw*, p. 49; idem, *De Onze-Lieve-Vrouwewerk te Antwerpen*, pp. 25-26. Other examples in Kuys, 'Secular authorities and parish church building,' p. 114, as well as the villages mentioned in note 93. Compare also with the discussion between Burgess and Kümin on whether or not the churchwardens are to be considered as the 'chief executives' within the parish: Burgess, 'Pre-Reformation churchwardens' accounts,' pp. 317-330; Kümin, 'Late medieval churchwardens' accounts,' pp. 89-91; Burgess, 'The broader church?', pp. 106-107. For the German territories, see Reitemeier, *Pfarrkirchen*, p. 103.

¹⁰⁸ In Heist (1515), for instance, the oldest churchwarden automatically served as collector. See Dombrecht, *Plattelandsgemeenschappen*, p. 244, note 86. Compare with Reitemeier, *Pfarrkirchen*, pp. 105-106.

As elsewhere, yearly terms appear to have been the norm in Zoutleeuw, but so were re-elections, mostly immediate. For the period from 1452 to 1600 a total of 335 yearly offices has been collected from the churchwarden accounts and the charters. These offices were held by a total of at least 99 individual churchwardens, although it must be noted that some of the names identified here as one individual should probably be subdivided into multiple persons due to frequent homonymy. This is certainly the case for three of them, which can therefore not be included in further calculations (see Appendices 2 & 3).¹⁰⁹ Furthermore, the lacunas in the series of accounts further distort the image. Leaving that aside, the wardens are documented for an average of two to three terms, although longer periods are not uncommon. Jan Hasen, for instance, exceptionally served up to eighteen terms in the period from 1457 to 1481.¹¹⁰ The degree of mobility within organizations is often measured by means of the ‘mutation rhythm’ (*mutatieritme*), i.e. the ratio of the total number of offices per person.¹¹¹ For the whole period in question this figure amounts to 3,4, suggesting a relatively high mobility. Furthermore, it strikingly matches exactly with the other available calculations for the contemporary Low Countries (Dudzele 1499-1528, and Rijkevorsel 1493-1525).¹¹²

Although the Zoutleeuw *costuymen* do not mention the office of churchwarden, it is overtly clear that they were tightly connected to the civic magistracy, rather than to the clergy. There are three indications for this. Firstly, there is an *argumentum ex silentio* that none of the accounts contains a reference to clerical interference, not even from the chapter. This might seem odd, as in other Brabantine collegiate churches with parochial functions the chapters are known to have possessed at least partial rights of appointment, such as Mechelen (Saint Rombout) and Leuven (Saint Peter). It was also the case in Brussels (Saint Gudule) and Antwerp (Our Lady), and in these two churches canons or other clergymen even were appointed as churchwardens

¹⁰⁹ It concerns Jan vanden Cruix, Willem van Daleem and Gheert van Ertryck.

¹¹⁰ Compare with the Utrecht Buurkerk and the Antwerp Onze-Lieve-Vrouwekerk, where careers of ten up to twenty-five years were not uncommon. See Bogaers, ‘God Wouts’, pp. 75-76; Vroom, *De Onze-Lieve-Vrouwekerk te Antwerpen*, pp. 26 and 113, note 23. In Wesel, the average was twelve years, see Reitemeier, *Pfarrkirchen*, p. 107.

¹¹¹ For this notion and related methodology, see especially the studies by Blockmans: ‘Mutaties van het politiek personeel’; idem, ‘Het wisselingsproces’; idem, ‘Mobiliteit in stadsbesturen’.

¹¹² Dombrecht, *Plattelandsgemeenschappen*, pp. 268-271, and Van Onacker, *Leaders of the pack*, pp. 263-265. Dombrecht calculated a higher 4,5 rate for the period 1538-1579, which was characterized by an increasing oligarchization. In Wesel’s church of Saint Willibrord it appears to have been 6,5, see Reitemeier, *Pfarrkirchen*, pp. 108-113.

themselves (*geestelijcke fabryckmeester*).¹¹³ None of this seems to have been the case in Zoutleeuw. A possible explanation for this particular situation could be the fact that the Zoutleeuw chapter (erected in 1308) in a way was a ‘guest’ in the already existant Zoutleeuw parish (transferred in 1231). Furthermore, as suggested before, the church fabric probably developed in the course of the thirteenth century. Thus, it likely existed well before the chapter, in contrast with the aforementioned churches, where the chapters were erected prior to the general development of church fabrics in the thirteenth century.¹¹⁴ If chapters were witnesses to the coming into existence of church fabrics, it is logical that they claimed their share in its organization, but in a situation where the reverse was true that must have been much more difficult. Therefore, the primacy of the parish and its institutions could account for the fact that in Zoutleeuw the chapter had no rights in the church fabric whatsoever.¹¹⁵

Secondly, for other cases it is known that an oath was sworn and that the wardens were obliged to present a detailed account at the end of their terms. This was subsequently audited by ‘the community’, which in practice always seem to have been the electing parties.¹¹⁶ The earliest indications for Zoutleeuw in this respect reveal that the accounts were made in the town hall.¹¹⁷ It is not clear if here auditing is meant, but its location at the town’s political center is nonetheless significant. Furthermore, a 1307 charter with civic privileges stipulated that Zoutleeuw’s charitable institutions should yearly present their accounts to the aldermen and burgomasters as well.¹¹⁸ The first known churchwarden account that straightforwardly mentions to have been

¹¹³ Vroom, *De Onze-Lieve-Vrouwewerk te Antwerpen*, p. 25; De Ridder, *Inventaris*, vol. 1, p. 56; Kuys, ‘Secular authorities and parish church building,’ pp. 111-112.

¹¹⁴ The Mechelen chapter was erected c. 1000 (certainly before 1043), Leuven before 1015, Brussels in 1047 and Antwerp before 1096. See Laenen, *Kerkelijk en godsdienstig Brabant*, vol. 1, pp. 294, 305, 308, 319.

¹¹⁵ This does not seem to have been the case everywhere, however. In the foundation charter of the Turnhout collegiate chapter, erected in 1398, it was specified that one of the churchwardens should be a canon. See Leysen, ‘Het devotieleven in de Turnhoutse Sint-Pieterskerk,’ pp. 24-25. On the relation between collegiate chapters and ‘their’ parishes, see Delmaire, ‘Les collégiales,’ although he does not treat church fabrics.

¹¹⁶ See Kümin, ‘The English parish in a European perspective,’ p. 26, as well as the examples in note 93. See also Laenen, *Introduction à l’histoire paroissiale*, pp. 192-194, and Kuys, ‘Secular authorities and parish church building,’ pp. 116-117. Several texts of such oaths that have survived are collected by Reitemeier, *Pfarrkirchen*, pp. 104-105.

¹¹⁷ The earliest such mention is KR 1505, fol. 13v: “Item doen die oude momboeren van Sinte Leonaerts rekenden, doen verteert opter stathuys 12,5 st.” KR 1523, fol. 66v formulates it differently: “Item betaelt opden heeren huys doen wy onse rekeninghe deden 1 Rg.”

¹¹⁸ Published in Willems, *Les Gestes des Ducs de Brabant*, vol. 1, pp. 741-744.

audited, dating to 1530, carries an annotation by the town clerk indicating that it had been done before the burgomasters and aldermen.¹¹⁹ Later accounts frequently contain similar annotations, sometimes adding the presence of “others who wanted to come” (*meer anderen die daer bij hebben willen comen*).¹²⁰ Furthermore, from 1549 onwards payments occur to the burgomasters and aldermen for the auditing.¹²¹ Thus, in Zoutleeuw, the accounts were clearly audited by the magistracy, and the parish priest is not mentioned once. Only with the implementation of the Tridentine reforms, when deans were urged by their bishops to visit the churches in their deanery, clerical presence is to be noted once. In 1607 the dean mentioned in his visitation report that the accounts were made before him and the magistracy.¹²² Yet, even then it was still done in the town hall.¹²³

Thirdly, the supposed connection with the magistracy is corroborated by the prosopographical analysis of the Zoutleeuw wardens. A confrontation with the lists of civic magistrates abundantly illustrates the strong ties of the church fabric with the town council (Appendix 3).¹²⁴ At least 74 of the 96 identifiable, individual churchwardens also had a political career of some sort: 46 men served as aldermen (*scabini* or *scepenen*) and/or burgomaster (*mamburni*, *burgimagistri* or *borgermeesters*), and another 28 are documented as councillors (*consules* or *raidtsluyden*) or stewards (*rentmeesters* or *ontfanghers*). Only 22 wardens (23%) could not be traced in the lists. Although this might be a consequence of lacunae in the sources, or more probably of the absence in the lists of the names of councillors (until 1488), *gildescepenen* (until 1490) and stewards (until 1529), it is nevertheless quite probable that part of the

¹¹⁹ KR 1530, fol. 162v: “Gepasseert voer meester Aert Pylipert, Henric van Dalem, borgemeesters, Dierick van Halle, Jan van Meldert, Jan vanden Kerchove ende Jan van Halle, scepenen. Actum xix julij anno xv^c xxxi.”

¹²⁰ For instance KR 1556, fol. 278v.

¹²¹ KR 1549, fol. 349: “Betaelt aen Jan Thylys om schepenen te gheven om die rekeninghe aen te hoeren voir hueren solaris 26 st.”

¹²² AAM, DV, Z1 (unfoliated), visitation report of 1607: “computus recte et debite facti sunt coram me et magistratum.” Compare with the attention for the church fabric, its administrators and accounts in episcopal questionnaires for decanal visitations, such as those for the archbishopric of Mechelen (1597) and the dioceses of Antwerp (1633) and Ghent (1623): De Brouwer, *Bijdrage tot de geschiedenis*, vol. 5, pp. 464-466; Cloet, Bostyn & De Vreese, *Repertorium*, pp. 272, 277-278, 291-292. See also Laenen, *Introduction à l’histoire paroissiale*, pp. 188-189, 193.

¹²³ For instance AAM, DV, Z1 (unfoliated), visitation report of 1611 (“singulis annis in domo civitatis”), and 1600 (“compilus fabrice et pauperu... fit coram magistratum singulis annis”).

¹²⁴ The names of the magistracy are yearly listed in the aldermen’s protocols, which have been preserved in a nearly continuous series from 1425 onwards. See RAL, SL, nrs. 2976 to 3065.

churchwardens never had a seat in the civic government. Finally, an important correlation between dominant magistracy and churchwarden families is to be noted. The four families with the most civic offices (aldermen and/or burgomasters) also served as churchwardens. In the remaining top twenty, only four families are absent in the offices of churchwarden (Table 1). Similar trends have been noted in most of the larger cities in the Low Countries. For fifteenth-century Ghent, for instance, it has been established that 50 to 66% of the churchwardens of the various parishes also held political offices, and that up to 80% had familial ties with local politics.¹²⁵

FAMILY	# OFFICES MAGISTRACY	# OFFICES CHURCHWARDEN
van Halle	302	25
Bollen	200	11
Pijlepert (Pylepert, Pilepert)	156	18
van Ertrijck (Eertrijck)	124	13
van de Kerchove (de Atrio)	123	-
van Dalem (Daleem, Dalim, Daelem)	115	27
van Meldert	98	1
van Huwagen (Houwagen)	93	9
Minten (Menten)	90	3
Brieders	69	-
van Goethuysen (Goithuysen)	68	5
van Winde	66	10
van Gelmen (Ghelmen)	66	2
van Langel (Langhe)	57	2
Goudackers (Gaudackers)	52	3
van den Steene (de Lapide)	49	-
Tullers (Tullere)	48	1
Speeken (Speken)	42	4
Ausselo (Ausloe, Auseloe)	40	-
van Croy	38	4

Table 1 - Correlation between the families of the Zoutleeuw political elite and the churchwardens, by means of their members' total documented years of office in the magistracy and as churchwardens.

¹²⁵ Boone, *Gent en de Bourgondische hertogen*, pp. 96-98. In general, see Kuys, 'Secular authorities and parish church building,' pp. 114-115.

This clear link between the town council and the church fabric remained, even after political reforms. After the death of the Burgundian Duke Charles the Bold in 1477, the crafts and guilds of several cities in the Low Countries made use of the power vacuum and rose in rebellion against the ruling establishment. In Zoutleeuw, too, the traditional oligarchy of the so-called *geslachten* (lineages) was breached by calling into being the office of councillor. Serving as a supervisory board to the aldermen, a group of eight councillors was annually elected from the crafts and guilds, who also had the right to appoint one of two stewards.¹²⁶ Contrary to other Brabantine cities where such political reforms were abandoned soon after, in Zoutleeuw they remained in place, but they do not seem to have had an impact on the composition of the church fabric.¹²⁷ Immediately from 1452 onwards, members of families without a documented career in the civic magistracy appear as churchwardens, and such remained the case after the 1477 reforms.¹²⁸ At the same time the established political dynasties continued to be represented along with them. In the period from 1450 to 1500, during which four churchwardens were annually appointed, a general *status quo* is to be noted, with two representatives elected from either party, often with a slight predominance of the crafts and guilds (3/1). Only four exceptions to this rule are found, all of them postdating 1477: in 1482 and 1485 all churchwardens came from the crafts and guilds, while in 1491 and 1500 the *geslachten* predominated with a three-to-one ratio (Appendix 2).

The political connection is thus abundantly clear. But what were the broader social profiles and underlying motivations of these men? Is it possible to somehow refine the broad characterization of the wardens as ‘prominent citizens’ and grasp what was at stake for them in holding the office?¹²⁹ If given any attention in scholarly literature at all, focus was mostly on the responsibilities of the institution as such, rather than on the social background and agency of the individual churchwardens. Comparative or in-depth studies of this social group are lacking for the Low Countries, whereas it has become a hot topic of scholarly attention in England and recently received some focused attention in Germany in the work of Reitemeier. Craig stated generally that the churchwardens in England were recruited from the “broad middle section” of

¹²⁶ Ceunen, ‘De Zoutleeuwse stadsmagistratuur’.

¹²⁷ Van Uytven, ‘1477 in Brabant’.

¹²⁸ Pre-1477 examples include Sciven en Santbers (1452), Hasen (1457), Lauwers (1459), Tgix (1463) and Metsoels (1466). After 1477: Jan Godijns and Jan Baken (1483), Jan van Alken, Bartholomeeus van der Moelen and Jan Pannestert (1484).

¹²⁹ For France, Constant, ‘Une source trop négligée,’ p. 178 characterized them as “personnages importants.”

society, and that the offices were not only held by the local elite, but equally by farmers and craftsmen. Although sometimes held involuntarily, it was strongly considered as a status symbol.¹³⁰ Burgess pushed this idea somewhat further in stating that the holding of the office was only the means to the end of acquiring a prominent position in local society. It was a *rite de passage* that provided a passport to the real parish elite.¹³¹ Although Burgess entered into a heated discussion with Kümin about the question whether or not the churchwardens are to be considered as the ‘chief executives’ within the parish, they both agreed that they did not belong to the top of the parish hierarchy.¹³²

Whatever the case, a straightforward extrapolation of the English format to the Low Countries does not seem desirable, taking into account the differing range of duties and considerable larger scale of parishes in the Low Countries.¹³³ Before turning to the Zoutleeuw evidence, therefore, a look at what is known about the situation in the Low Countries is necessary. According to Marc Boone, the churchwardens in Ghent were elected precisely because of their social prestige and political power. Most offices as churchwardens were situated at the end of the holders’ careers and were a consequence of previous positions in the civic magistracy.¹³⁴ Something similar has been noted for rural areas by Léopold Genicot, who stated that wardens were elected on the basis of criteria such as birth, wealth, age, experience and wisdom.¹³⁵ For coastal Flanders these observations have been elaborated by Dombrecht, who found that the office was held exclusively by the 25% richest parishioners.¹³⁶ However, this figure cannot simply be extrapolated to the rest of the Low Countries. For Liège, the importance of family bonds or alliances has been stressed as churchwardens there equally seem to have served in the other parochial institutions of the Poor Table and the hospital. Recent research has revealed that the social profiles of the holders of these various offices were strongly dependent on the socio-economic profile of the region in

¹³⁰ Carlson, ‘Origins, function, and status’; Craig, ‘Co-operation and initiatives’; Kümin, ‘The parish in a European perspective,’ 27.

¹³¹ Burgess, ‘Pre-Reformation churchwardens’ accounts,’ pp. 322, 329, 332.

¹³² Burgess, ‘Pre-Reformation churchwardens’ accounts,’ pp. 317-330; Kümin, ‘Late medieval churchwardens’ accounts,’ pp. 89-91; Burgess, ‘The broader church?’, pp. 106-107.

¹³³ Kümin, ‘The English parish in a European perspective’.

¹³⁴ Boone, *Gent en de Bourgondische hertogen*, p. 101.

¹³⁵ Genicot, *Rural communities*, pp. 104-105. See also Carlson, ‘Origins, function, and status,’ pp. 191-193; Reitemeier, *Pfarrkirchen*, pp. 116-119.

¹³⁶ Dombrecht, *Plattelandsgemeenschappen*, pp. 268-273.

question.¹³⁷ For instance, comparative research revealed that not everywhere in the southern Low Countries the office of poor master (*Heilige Geestmeester*) was considered equally prestigious in the sixteenth century. While in the more egalitarian regions such as the Campine area or inland Flanders it was dominated by the local elite, in coastal Flanders - a region characterized by increasing social inequality - the poor masters were recruited from all levels of society. There, it apparently awarded less prestige and the elite therefore preferred the office of churchwarden.¹³⁸ Unfortunately, comparable examinations for the office of churchwarden in the Low Countries are lacking, but these observations nuance the traditional view that it was often the same individuals who occupied the offices of churchwardens and administrators of other parochial institutions.¹³⁹ For Zoutleeuw, however, comparison is difficult, given the limited preservation of the archives of both the Poor Table and the hospital.¹⁴⁰ For the present purposes, comparison is based on sporadic references in the churchwarden accounts and the charters. For only eight churchwardens an office in another parochial institution has been documented so far: six of them served as poor masters at other points in their careers, two as hospital masters.¹⁴¹ Although further research is definitely necessary, evidence of their further documented careers suggests that in Zoutleeuw the poor masters were recruited from the same families as the churchwardens, but that they generally did not take up the highest political functions of burgomaster or alderman. This, in turn, could suggest that in comparison the office of churchwarden was more prestigious.

The grounds these men had in pursuing or accepting their offices are not easy to pinpoint. Financial remuneration is unlikely to have been an important motivation as there must have been more suitable functions to attain personal wealth. Practices strongly differed locally throughout the Low Countries, but the office did not come with a salary everywhere. Often the churchwardens were rewarded only in kind, with a

¹³⁷ For Liège, see Dieterich, 'Confraternities and lay leadership,' pp. 25-26.

¹³⁸ Van Onacker & Masure, 'Unity in diversity,' pp. 68-69.

¹³⁹ As has been claimed by, among others, Genicot, *Rural communities*, pp. 104-105, and Bijsterveld, 'De kerk in het midden,' p. 107.

¹⁴⁰ For the Poor Table, the lists of properties and accounts have only been preserved from respectively 1637 and 1650 onwards. See D'Hoop, *Inventaire général*, vol. 1, p. 145.

¹⁴¹ These are Arnt Baken (RAL, KAB, Box 979, nr. 1054; KR 1503), Bartholomeus van Esche (RAL, KAB, nr. 1053), Jan Godijns (RAL, KAB, Box 978, nrs. 981, 985 and 986; KR 1503), Vrancken van Halle (RAL, KAB, Box 977, nr. 950), Lembrecht Hellespieghels (Stuer, 'Ambachten en bedrijf,' p. 30), Arnt Pilepert (KR 1514), Niclaes vanden Put (RAL, KAB, Box 984, nr. 1433) and Lembrecht Zeebouts (KR 1525).

dinner or a gift of wine from the part of the clergy or the magistracy.¹⁴² In other places they were paid in cash, but this might not always have occurred on a regular basis, as in Lier, and elsewhere the sum was rather modest, as in Dudzele.¹⁴³ In Zoutleeuw, the churchwardens were paid in cash at least from 1530 onwards, probably on a yearly basis. Throughout the period, the wage (*loen, solaris* or *gagie*) remained constant on 4 *Rijngulden* per warden.¹⁴⁴ However, comparison with other data immediately makes clear that this cannot be considered a genuine wage to live from. In the early 1530s, this amount equalled the monthly summer wage of construction workers employed at the warf of Diest Saint Sulpice's church. The workers' wages would increase shortly thereafter, whereas the wardens' remuneration was fixed.¹⁴⁵ On the Zoutleeuw pay roll, their wage was somewhat more than the yearly 70 *stuivers* paid to the menial servant (1560s and 1570s), but less than the 110 *stuivers* paid to the baker (1530s and 1540s), although these should not be considered as full-time wages either. Thus, churchwardenship was not a lucrative office and the yearly 4 guilders should more be seen as a symbolic compensation. Furthermore, other direct financial advantages were limited. When *broumeester* Reyner Coppens died in 1530-1531, he was buried free of charge because he was a churchwarden at the time.¹⁴⁶

For Coppens the remuneration came of course rather late, but contrary to what has been noted for England it seems equally difficult to maintain that the holding of the office of churchwarden served as a passport to the local elite. In any case, for the particular Zoutleeuw context it cannot be said to have served as a useful leg up to a career in the town council. Because of lacunae in both the lists of the churchwardens and of the magistracy, it is difficult to fully establish the precise succession of offices in individual careers. Yet, it is striking that for 47 churchwardens an earlier career in the town council is documented, whereas for only 13 office holders a civic career is preceded by their documented service in the church fabric. In fact, in most cases the

¹⁴² Kuys, 'Secular authorities and parish church building,' p. 114.

¹⁴³ Meuris, *Laat-middeleeuwse volksreligie*, pp. 34-35; Dombrecht, *Plattelandsgemeenschappen*, p. 245.

¹⁴⁴ First mentioned in KR 1530, fol. 155. The only exception to the 4 guilders might have been KR 1540, fol. 224v, in which a total of 14 guilders was paid to the three wardens.

¹⁴⁵ Based on data in Van der Eycken, *Stadseconomie en conjunctuur te Diest*, vol. 2, pp. 614-618. For the calculations an average of 21 working days per month was used.

¹⁴⁶ KR 1530, fol. 150v: "Item Reynder Coppens van sijn ligger ende cleet: 2 ríngulden, mer want hij meester van Sinte Leonart was, daer omme hier nyet." Other employees on the payroll of the church fabric are known to have been buried free of charges as well, such as the organ player, the servant and the menial servant, see KR 1572, fols. 524v and 525, and KR 1577, fol. 470v.

office of churchwarden fits nicely within a contiguous career in local political life. Chronological overlaps between the two mandates are rare, which might indicate that in practice the office of churchwarden was part of the Zoutleeuw civic 'rotation system' as described by Ceunen: as a result of the prohibition to serve two consecutive years as alderman, alternating it with other offices was a frequent practice.¹⁴⁷ Some twenty churchwardens appear to have held contemporaneous civic offices, although a part of these exceptions is probably to be explained by homonymy. Nevertheless, in ten of these cases the civic office in question was that of councillor or steward, suggesting that combining these with the office of churchwarden was allowed - if not in theory, then at least in practice.

In some cases, indications are available regarding the point in one's life when the office of churchwarden might be held.¹⁴⁸ For 42 individuals extra information has been traced in the lists with revenues from burials, yearly written down in the churchwarden accounts. This information allows to calculate the difference between respectively the first and last year served and the year of death. Of course, this only provides some rough indications, but a striking difference is noticeable between the politically active men and those from the artisan milieus who did not pursue a career in the magistracy. Although the office of churchwarden does not seem to have functioned as a guarantee to enter the town council, its members served the church fabric at a relatively early state in their lives, i.e. generally between the 18th and 11th years before their deaths. The politically non-active churchwardens, on the other hand, took up their offices at a much later state, often up until two years before dying (Appendix 3). Interestingly, several among them had already worked as artisans for the church fabric before.¹⁴⁹ Such was the case with goldsmith Bartholomeeus vander Moelen (d. 1490-1491), for instance, who is documented in the accounts from 1469 onwards, before serving at least four terms between 1485 and 1489.¹⁵⁰ Finally,

¹⁴⁷ Ceunen, 'De Zoutleeuwse stadsmagistratuur'.

¹⁴⁸ Compare with the results found by Carlson, 'Origins, function, and status,' pp. 192-193.

¹⁴⁹ This has also been noted for Antwerp, see Vroom, *De Onze-Lieve-Vrouwekerk te Antwerpen*, p. 27.

¹⁵⁰ KR 1468, fol. 13v (June 1469); KR 1471, fol. 60 (March 1472); KR 1473, fol. 122v (January 1474); KR 1474, fol. 164v (April 1475); KR 1476, fols. 201 (February 1477) and 202v (June 1477); KR 1477, fol. 219v (March 1478); KR 1479, fol. 264v (April 1480); KR 1480, fol. 30v; KR 1482, fol. 91v; KR 1484, fols. 133v (July 1484) and 135 (October 1484); KR 1486, fols. 148v (September 1486), 248v (January 1487) and 254 (June 1487); KR 1487, fols. 299 (August 1477), 300 (November 1477), 301 (January 1488), 302v (April 1488) and 303 (May 1488); KR 1490, fol. 37 ("Bartholomeeus vander Moelen ligghen ende cleet 2 ringgulden"). Reitemeier, *Pfarrkirchen*, p. 120 noted the frequent presence of goldsmiths.

although no general rule, the politically non-active churchwardens often seem to have served more terms than their political colleagues.

These differences notwithstanding, nearly all of the churchwardens must have enjoyed considerable positions in local society. Recent research has shown that in the early modern Low Countries wealth and status were reflected in the way people were buried, as use could be made of several options to embellish the funeral services, ranging from the various textiles used to the different types of tolling bells.¹⁵¹ As noted above, the Zoutleeuw churchwarden accounts registered the different costs that had been paid for the funerals, thus reflecting the relative statuses of the deceased parishioners. Firstly, the church fabric offered several types of palls (*clederen*) to be draped over the coffin during the obsequies, corresponding with low to very elevated prices (Fig. 67).¹⁵² The rates and number of available pall types changed throughout time (six to sometimes ten categories), but the most expensive pall often cost around 30 times more than the cheapest.¹⁵³ Secondly, extra payments were required for the corpse to be placed upon a bier (*ligghen*) allowing friends and relatives to mourn and perform vigils. The fact that this option as a rule came with the most expensive palls, as well as the mere cost of it (generally around 20 *stuivers*), suggest that it was reserved for the better-off.¹⁵⁴ With one, possibly two exceptions, all traceable churchwardens were placed on a bier during their funerals, and in 85% of the cases the palls belonged to the most expensive or second most expensive category (Table 2). Still, a social differentiation is noticeable: the churchwardens who also served as burgomasters or aldermen all rented palls from the first category (with one exception), whereas the others mainly rented from the second category. Furthermore, for at least 24 of the overall dataset of churchwardens (25%) a donation or religious foundation of some sort - anniversary services, masses or distributions - was found, either with the collegiate chapter or the church fabric. This is all the more striking in a total sample of 81 traced foundations, in which only 14 were by clerics, for instance.¹⁵⁵ Doubtless, some of them considered churchwardenship as a good, Christian work, but this is impossible to verify as personal statements are

¹⁵¹ Dombrecht, 'Edel, arm en rijk'.

¹⁵² Vroom, *Financiering van de kathedraalbouw*, pp. 347 and 483, note 17.

¹⁵³ The most frequent rates are 3,5 or 7 *stuivers* for the cheapest pall, to around 100 or 110 *stuivers* or more for the most expensive.

¹⁵⁴ Bijsterveld, 'Tussen twee werelden,' esp. p. 163.

¹⁵⁵ The foundations were found in the churchwarden accounts, in the charter collection of the collegiate chapter, analyzed by Grauwen, Warlop & Muret, *Analytische inventaris*, as well as in RAL, KAB, nrs. 1026, 1033, 1043 and 1052.

lacking. Yet, both Burgess and Reitemeier have proposed this as an important driving force for English churchwardens as it concerned “an arduous job” that was worthy to be remembered.¹⁵⁶ This commemorative aspect is far from self-evident in the case of the Low Countries, because nothing is known whatsoever about a commemoration of past officeholders, and the accounts enlisting them were safely locked away from the public in strongboxes. Occasionally, commemorative inscriptions documenting certain phases of construction campaigns have been preserved.¹⁵⁷ Moreover, such a hypothesis might frame their striking interest in foundations, often of a commemorative nature. Anniversary masses were usually announced beforehand, and the founders’ names were of course mentioned during the services. Whereas Burgess provided no data on the role of churchwardens in foundations, Reitemeier established that they were part of the most important founders in Wesel and elsewhere.¹⁵⁸

CATEGORY	ALDERMEN & BURGOMASTERS	COUNCILORS & STEWARDS	NOT IN THE MAGISTRACY	TOTAL
1	17	4	3	24
2	0	5	7	12
3	0	2	2	4
4	1	0	0	1
5	0	0	1	1
TOTAL	18	11	13	42

Table 2 - Relative categories of palls used for the funeral services of the Zoutleeuw churchwardens, in relation with the deceased’s career in the Zoutleeuw magistracy. The categories are put in order from most expensive (category 1) to cheaper.

In conclusion, these data confirm that the churchwardens - politically active or not - were part of the civic elite. This most likely was the case well before they started their careers as churchwardens, either because of their birth into an established family, or because of a succesful previous career. In any case, a career as churchwarden did not help them into the magistracy, as most of the politically active churchwardens had already started their political careers beforehand. Neither did it help the artisans with adding the church fabric to their clientele, since in most cases they had already worked

¹⁵⁶ Burgess, ‘Pre-Reformation churchwarden accounts,’ pp. 314-315 and 326, quote on p. 314.

¹⁵⁷ For instance a 1353 example in Berlaar, see BALaT, object nr. 83325. For such inscriptions, see also §1.1.3.

¹⁵⁸ Reitemeier, *Pfarrkirchen*, pp. 121-122; Kuujo, *Rechtliche und wirtschaftliche stellung*, pp. 192-193.

for the institution. Furthermore, as the financial benefits of churchwardenship were not significant either, it seems that the most likely motivation for pursuing or accepting the office was some form of status confirmation, rather than aspiration. As has been argued for small villages such as Dudzele up to big cities such as Ghent and Utrecht, the office was considered highly prestigious.¹⁵⁹ This is not so hard to imagine, considering that they were formally entrusted by their community to take care of the often largest public building in town, as well as for the broad range of services that took place in it and that had such an important communal value. This, however, was only possible because of their socio-economic positions. Being a churchwarden therefore likewise confirmed these men's prominent place within the Zoutleeuw community, which just like elsewhere might have been symbolically expressed by means of a special seat in the church or their place in the local processions.¹⁶⁰ And when at Pentecost 1457 a newly completed chapel was consecrated by the bishop, the churchwardens were part of the company that joined the dinner afterwards.¹⁶¹ Their motivations thus must probably be located somewhere between pride, duty and conviction. They were laymen, appointed and controlled by the magistracy, but with a parochial duty, which in the perception of the parishioners might have conferred a quasi-religious character on them, and to some extent perhaps also some moral authority.¹⁶² They strongly contributed to local devotional life and practice by organizing and funding it, both communally and individually: communally by building and embellishing the communal church and its liturgy, individually by their private gifts and foundations. As they were in charge of the material base of local devotion, they were mediating men between the religious and secular spheres, not passively executing clerical desires, but actively shaping the local church in the broadest sense of the word.

¹⁵⁹ Dombrecht, *Plattelandsgemeenschappen*, pp. 268-273; Boone, *Gent en de Bourgondische hertogen*, pp. 98, 101; Bogaers, 'God Wouts', p. 75.

¹⁶⁰ No such data are available for Zoutleeuw, but see Kuys, 'Secular authorities and parish church building', p. 114, and Meuris, *Laatmiddeleeuwse volksreligie*, p. 43. Compare also with Carlson, 'Origins, function, and status'.

¹⁶¹ KR 1456, fol. 155: "Item des 15 daechs inden mey was den choer ghewijt ende het cost 6 rijngulden aen den busscop op sinen cost, ende den cleerc enen clinckart, ende die momboren vander kercken ghinghen met hen eten ende schincden hen te wine 20 st."

¹⁶² Boone, *Gent en de Bourgondische hertogen*, pp. 101-102. Compare with England: Craig, 'Co-operation and initiatives', pp. 359-361.

Part I

Attaching devotees to a liberating saint: late medieval piety in perspective

“Ea [Aedem D. Leonardi] ex collatitia stipe et eleëmosynis accurentium ad famam miraculorum interventu istius Divi patratorum, aucta et multum exornata est...”¹

¹ “With monetary offerings and alms given by those who flocked together for the fame of the miracles worked by this saint, the chapel of Saint Leonard was enlarged and lavishly decorated.” Gramaye, *Thenae et Brabantia ultra Velpam* (1606), cited after Souverijns, ‘Leonia sive Leewae,’ p. 131.

An altarpiece

Under a stately series of elaborate gothic canopies, an age-old tale is told in brocade, oak and gold (fig. 1). Set in Merovingian France around the year 500, its hero is Saint Leonard:

“Saint-Remy, archbishop of Rheims, lifted him from the baptismal font [1] and instructed him in salutary disciplines. His parents [2] held first rank in the palace of the king of France. The king held Leonard in such high favor that any prisoners whom he visited were straightway released from bondage [3]. As the fame of his holiness spread abroad, the king compelled him to stay with him for a long time, until he might bestow a bishopric on him. But Leonard refused to accept this [4], and, longing for solitude, left everything... Leonard preached here and there, wrought many miracles, and lived in a forest close by the city of Limoges, where the king had a hunting lodge. It happened one day that the king was hunting there, and the queen had come out to enjoy the sport. Then suddenly she was seized with the pangs of childbirth and her life was in danger... [The king] brought Leonard to the queen, asking him to pray both for her well-being and for the safe delivery of the child. Leonard prayed, and his petitions were granted [6]. The king now offered Leonard much money, but Leonard refused the offer... saying: ‘I do not need any of this. What I desire is only to live in the forest and serve Christ alone...’ A monastery [5] was therefore built... [where] his many miracles won him fame.”¹

This monastery, as well as the rest of the miraculous narrative, is depicted in the oldest retable preserved in the Zoutleeuw church, dedicated to the christian hero of this very story. The origins of the altarpiece is securely documented in the accounts. In July 1476 the commission for an altarpiece (*tafele*) was discussed in a tavern by the churchwardens, who subsequently went to the city of Brussels to place the order.

¹ De Voragine, *The Golden Legend*, vol. 2, pp. 243-244. The numbers between brackets refer to the sculpted scenes in the altarpiece.

Along with them went Master Aert, who supplied the design (*bewerpene*). Later entries make clear that Saint Leonard was the subject of the altarpiece. In March 1478 work must have been finished as the churchwardens again went to Brussels to buy *Sijnte Leonaerts tafelen*, which was shipped off to Zoutleeuw via the city of Mechelen.² The subject, the style, as well as the presence of several Brussels quality marks on both the sculpture and the case of the retable preserved in the church confirms that it is to be identified with the one mentioned in the accounts of 1476-1478.³

Although no contract has been preserved, the entries in the churchwarden accounts make the Zoutleeuw retable a rare example of a securely dated and documented carved Netherlandish altarpiece. Just like in so many other cases, however, the identity of the people responsible for the production remains elusive. Some scholars have identified the Master Aert mentioned in the accounts as the altarpiece's sculptor, and subsequently attributed other sculpted retables to him and even placed him at the head of the contemporary Brussels school of sculpture.⁴ This is inaccurate, as the relevant entries clearly describe him as a painter (*dij moeldere*, cf. *Maler (D)*).⁵ A close reading of the churchwarden accounts further clarifies the identity of this artist, as

² KR 1476, fol. 198 (July 1476): "Inden iersten doen men die tafele verdincede aen die meester in dy herberghe, betaelt 10 st ende verteert in di herberghe 4 st. Item meester Aert van bewerpene doen hi te Bruesel was te lone ende metter cost 15 st. Item di meesters te Bruessel ghewest om di tafelle te verdinghene doen ter cost ghedaen 14 st." KR 1477, fol. 220 (March 1478): "Item van Sijnte Leonaerts tafelen ter cost gedaen metter vragte 6 Rg. Item vander selver tafelen te Bruesele ghecocht, cost 126 Rg." KR 1478, fol. 240 (September 1478): "Item Meester Aert dij Moeldere ghegeven... van dat hij bij dij kerchmeesters te Bruesele ghegaen was om die tafele van Sijnte Leonarts int jaere voerleden ghegeven ter goeder rekenynghen 5 gulden." KR 1478, fol. 243 (April): "Item Henric Wouts vanden jare voerleden van Sijnte Lenaerts tafelen te brijnghene van Mechelen tot Leeuwe, te lone 20 st." On the use of transporting carved retables over water, see Jacobs, *Early Netherlandish carved altarpieces*, p. 160.

³ Contrary to what is claimed by Engelen, *Zoutleeuw*, pp. 187-205, who dates the present altarpiece to 1453. On the altarpiece, see most recently De Boodt, 'Catalogue des retables bruxellois,' pp. 181-182, cat. A19, and Geelen & Steyaert, *Imitation and illusion*, pp. 497-499, cat. 62.

⁴ For instance Piot, 'Notice historique,' p. 59; Rousseau, 'Notes pour servir à l'histoire de la sculpture,' pp. 440-443 and 446 ("l'école d'Arnoul de Diest"); Destrée, *Étude sur la sculpture*, pp. 164-169 ("un des meilleurs maîtres de nos anciennes écoles"); Roosval, 'Retables d'origine néerlandaise,' pp. 137-139.

⁵ For comparable terminology, compare with a number of entries in the accounts of the Utrecht *Buurkerk*: "Item ghegeven Jan Claesz de maelre van 36 crussen te verwen" (1450-1451), "Item gegeven Hilbrant die maelre van 4 beelde te stofferen" (1460-1461). The painter mentioned in the latter entry is Hilbrant van Rewijck, who is documented in the accounts from 1456 to 1465. He was probably a relative of the polyvalent artist Erhart Reuwich van Utrecht, who in Germany also was referred to as "Meister Erhart der Moler." See van Rappard, 'De rekeningen van de Kerkmeesters der *Buurkerk*,' pp. 148, 161, 162 and 164, and Timm, *Der Palästina-Pilgerbericht des Bernhard von Breidenbach*, pp. 288-290.

they indicate his close affiliation with the town. The painter referred to as Art der Meeldere (also Aert, Arde, Molere, Moeldere) seems to have been in nearly permanent service of the church fabric from 1469 to 1482. He was responsible for the decoration with paint (*stofferen*) of several sculptures, ornaments or other architectural elements, and probably for mural paintings in the church too. From 1471 to 1474 he is even included on the payroll of the church fabric with a yearly salary of 18 *stuivers*.⁶ Further confirmation of his connection to Zoutleeuw are entries identifying "meester Aert di scildere" as the leaseholder of one of the church's meadows in 1481-82, and, most significantly, the parish burial records of a "meester Art der scilder" in 1484-85.⁷ With these definitive chronological records, I can confirm the cautious hypothesis put forward by both Frans Baudouin and Jan Karel Steppe to identify the painter as Arnold II (de) Raet, a man first mentioned as painter (*pictor ymaginum*) in Leuven in 1447, but who later lived in Zoutleeuw according to documents of 1470 and 1472.⁸

Although the design for the altarpiece was provided by a painter with whom the churchwardens maintained an established working relationship, the sculpturework itself was executed by a Brussels workshop, headed by a still anonymous sculptor only identified as *die meester* in the Zoutleeuw accounts. Yet, stylistic analysis suggests that it might have been produced in the same workshop as the one responsible for the passion altarpieces made for the Italian merchant Claudio Villa and his wife Gentina Solario (fig. 2), and Michel de Gauchy, councillor and chamberlain to Duke Philip the Good, and his wife Laurette de Jaucourt (fig. 3).⁹ As far as the comparison with the

⁶ KR 1471, fol. 58; KR 1472, fol. 93; KR 1473, fol. 121; KR 1474, fol. 162: "meester Art der Meeldere voer sijn wedde 18 st."

⁷ KR 1481, fol. 59v. In December of that year (fol. 64v) he is still mentioned as selling stones to the churchwardens. KR 1484, fol. 131v.

⁸ "Arnoldus Raet, pictor ymaginum, commorans pronunc apud Leeuwis." The available documents on this artist have been assembled by van Even, *L'ancienne école de peinture de Louvain*, pp.26- 29. The identification has been proposed by Baudouin, *Dieric Bouts*, p. 166, and Steppe, 'Een sanctuarium van de Brabantse laat-gotiek,' pp. 616 and 640. Both Hulin de Loo, 'Raet (Arnd de),' col. 581, and Engelen, *Jan Mertens en de laatgotiek*, p. 158 refuted the possibility, the former being erroneously informed by Alphonse Wauters that the man responsible for the Zoutleeuw altarpiece was based in Brussels rather than Zoutleeuw. Van de Ven, 'Schilders vermeld in de Diestse archieven,' p. 206 tentatively identified him as the Diest painter Arnold Vanden Bogaerde (act. 1443-1497), but the chronology of that man's career does not correspond to the burial date of Master Aert in Zoutleeuw.

⁹ Coremans, *Flanders in the fifteenth century*, p. 239; De Boodt, 'Catalogue des retables bruxellois,' pp. 167-169 and 200-201. For the De Villa altarpiece, see Jacobs, *Early Netherlandish carved altarpieces*, pp. 188-190. For de Gauchy's altarpiece in Ambierle see most recently Bücken & Steyaert, *De erfenis van Rogier van der Weyden*, pp. 114-117, cat. 8.

altarpiece of Claudio Villa is concerned, this assumption The comparison with the altarpiece of Claudio Villa can be confirmed by technical insights, since recent research has shown that both altarpieces make use of the same unique pictorial device of identifying recurring figures by means of a particular model of applied brocade. In Saint Leonard's altarpiece this device is used to identify Bishop Remigius who appears twice.¹⁰ As this application was very rare, it has been interpreted as pointing to the practices of one particular workshop.

The fact that the churchwardens chose a workshop with a considerable reputation that also worked for Italian bankers and Burgundian noblemen, makes Arnold Raet's involvement in the production process all the more intriguing. The question remains to what extent he was responsible for the final result. Lynn Jacobs has argued that the role of the patron was limited as carved altarpieces were generally variations on the same highly standardized formula, characterized by the so-called "inverted T-shape" wherein figures were organized under architectural baldachins.¹¹ However, contracts make clear that patrons were in fact able to define the form and the style of the altarpiece. Painters regularly acted as designers for carved altarpieces, and it was not unusual for local painters to be involved in the commissioning of artworks, even if the executing workshop in question was located out of town. In fact, in 1482 Arnold Raet was again summoned to accompany two churchwardens to Brussels to commission a monumental candlestand (*om den kendelere te verdijnghene*), for which he also provided the design.¹² The anonymous workshop employed by the Zoutleeuw churchwardens seem to have allowed its clients a say in the design. De Villa's altarpiece makes this sufficiently clear as it has a form unusual for Brabantine norms, but typical for the artistic production in the patron's region of origin.¹³ Furthermore, although the Zoutleeuw altarpiece indeed bears all the characteristics typical for contemporary Brussels retable production, including the traditional shape, the iconography is not

¹⁰ Geelen & Steyaert, *Imitation and illusion*, pp. 124 and 497-499, cat. 62.

¹¹ Jacobs, 'The marketing and standardization'. On the use, significance and various possible meanings of the inverted T-shape, see idem, 'The inverted "T"-shape'.

¹² KR 1482, fol. 89 (July 1482): "Item meester Art der Scildere ghegeven van enen patroen te beworpene ende van 2,5 daghe mede te gane te Bruesele." Examples can easily be multiplied. When the churchwardens of Saint Sulpice's church in Diest contracted a triumphal cross with the famous Brussels sculptor Jan Borman in 1493, both the city's painter Goert Cranen and a local carpenter were present. See Van de Ven, 'Schilders vermeld in de Diestse archieven,' p. 215. For painters as designers for carved altarpieces, see Jacobs, *Early Netherlandish carved altarpieces*, pp. 100-101.

¹³ Woods, *Netherlandish carved wooden altarpieces*, pp. 72 and 76, note 6.

one of them. The majority of the known examples depicts scenes from Christ's Passion or the life of the Virgin Mary.¹⁴ The highly specific and unusual visual program thus must have been carefully chosen and defined beforehand, and it is therefore reasonable to assume that Arnold Raet assisted in figuratively translating the churchwarden's desires and set out the general outline, composition and iconographical program of the requested sculpture.

This program, however, has suffered significant alterations. As it stands today the altarpiece actually embodies the ambiguous nature of the Zoutleuw church as source for scholars. Its material history is indeed indicative of the changes as well as the losses that took place over time, even in Zoutleuw. Although this church might very well be an exceptional source with an unusually large set of altarpieces preserved *in situ*, the retable in question has been stripped of some of its essential features and thus does not appear in its original form. Old photographs of the retable reveal that over the years it has been combined with other objects preserved in the church--at one time placed in an awkward construction with paintings featuring scenes of the life of Mary Magdalene, and later accompanied by independent statuettes from earlier and later periods (fig. 4). From the nineteenth century onwards the central place of the altarpiece had been occupied mostly by the miraculous sculpture of Saint Leonard, which led Irmgard Achter to suggest that the altarpiece had been made to house the object of veneration.¹⁵ This hypothesis was soon rejected with good reason, as will be explained further. The miraculous sculpture was in fact originally installed in a tabernacle on top of the altarpiece.¹⁶

The current consensus is that the original central scene of the altarpiece is lost, and it is not easy to determine what it might have represented. Resulting from the formal emphasis created by the elevated top, the central spaces of carved Netherlandish altarpieces were as a rule reserved for key moments in the depicted narrative.¹⁷ In many cases this was a crucifixion scene or Calvary group, and it has even been suggested that the elongated forms of the crosses in the center prompted the

¹⁴ A useful inventory of carved altarpieces produced in the Low Countries and preserved all over the world is included in De Boodt & Schäfer, *Vlaamse retabels*, pp. 281-291. A detailed catalogue of Brussels altarpieces is provided by De Boodt, 'Catalogue des retables bruxellois'.

¹⁵ Achter, 'Schrein und Flügelgemälde,' pp. 254-255.

¹⁶ Marijnissen & Van Liefferinge, 'Les retables de Rheinberg et de Hakendover,' p. 78, note 13.

¹⁷ Jacobs, 'The inverted "T"-shape,' pp. 36-37.

development of the inverted T-shape itself.¹⁸ A crucifix was indeed needed on the altar for the celebration of mass, and although from its earliest development onwards the winged altarpiece had taken on a broad range of forms and functions, crucifixion scenes had often been a recurring element throughout time.¹⁹ From a liturgical point of view, the presence of the body of Christ in the centrally elevated part of the altarpiece - especially in the form of a crucifixion - formed both a visual backdrop to or a formal echo of the symbolical re-enacting rite of the elevation of the host by the priest during mass.²⁰ Unsurprisingly, therefore, it has often been suggested that the central scene of the Zoutleuw altarpiece must have represented a Calvary group.²¹ The traces of the sparsely applied original gilding on the case could indeed suggest the contours of three crosses: a high central one and two lower ones at the sides. However, the supposed presence of a crucifixion never really received the necessary iconographical thought.

Calvary scenes were of course easily integrated into altarpieces depicting narratives devoted to either Christ or the Virgin, but not so much in pieces on other holy figures and in fact not a single extant or documented example of such a practice can be provided.²² An entirely unrelated crucifixion scene would indeed have disturbed the narrative continuity that was such a typical feature of carved Netherlandish altarpieces.²³ In late fifteenth- and early sixteenth-century retables dedicated to Christian martyrs it was often the latter's gruesome martyrdoms that took up the privileged place in the central niches, thus providing a strong visual and narrative parallel to Christ's passion and similarly inciting *compassio* in the viewer.²⁴ However, Saint Leonard was no martyr, as he is said to have died in peace in his monastery, as a result of which no similar passion scene was available to be depicted in the central

¹⁸ Hasse, *Der Flügelaltar*, p. 37.

¹⁹ Ehresmann, 'Some observations on the role of liturgy,' p. 368; Williamson, 'Altarpiece, Liturgy and Devotion,' pp. 365-367. Compare with van der Ploeg, 'How liturgical is an altarpiece?'

²⁰ Jacobs, 'The inverted "T"-shape,' pp. 45-46, and Woods, 'Thèmes iconographiques et sources,' p. 91.

²¹ For instance by Marijnissen & Van Liefferinge, 'Les retables de Rheinberg et de Hakendover,' p. 78, note 13.

²² The only example in De Boodt's catalogue of Brussels carved altarpiece combining a crucifixion scene with the story of other holy figures is the c. 1400-1410 Hakendover altarpiece. Although it now has a central crucifixion scene inserted into the miraculous story of the foundation and construction of Hakendover's church, depicted on the lower register, this in all probability is a later addition. See Marijnissen & Van Liefferinge, 'Les retables de Rheinberg et de Hakendover,' pp. 87-88. On the altarpiece see also Roggen, 'Het retabel van Hakendover,' and De Boodt, 'Catalogue des retables bruxellois,' pp. 176-177, cat. A15.

²³ Jacobs, *Early Netherlandish carved altarpieces*, p. 113.

²⁴ Woods, 'Thèmes iconographiques et sources'; D'Hainaut-Zveny, *Les retables d'autel gothiques sculptés*, pp. 160-164. On the importance of *compassio*, see for instance Delville, 'Images de la Passion'.

niche. Furthermore, none of Saint Leonard's hagiographies include a passage of such importance, other than the ones already represented on the sides, that could be considered a likely candidate for a central scene in an altarpiece dedicated to him. Comparisons with other treatments of the saint's iconography are impossible because contemporary retables completely dedicated to him from the Low Countries are no longer extant. A 1506 contract has been preserved for a carved wooden retable on Saint Leonard's altar in the Leuven church of Saint Peter, but it is not very helpful, as it only generally stipulates that one scene from the life of Saint Leonard must be represented, alongside scenes from the life of Saints Stephen and Maurice.²⁵

The only useful example is a design by Jan Gossart for a painted altarpiece with scenes of the life of Saint Leonard (fig. 5). Stijn Alsteens dated the sheet to the 1520s, but it is unknown who commissioned it and whether he actually ever executed it. Interestingly, he treated virtually the same subjects on the wings and the background scenes of the central panel as are represented on the Zoutleeuw altarpiece, though in a slightly different order. In Gossart's design, the central scene shows the saint preaching in a church interior, seemingly directing his speech to a group of prisoners.²⁶ That very scene also conspicuously shows a crucifixion in the form of a triumphal cross on the rood loft behind the pulpit on which Saint Leonard is preaching. This clever solution allowed for the inclusion of a crucifix, while at the same time preserving the narrative unity. Interestingly, the same solution also occurs in slightly earlier carved altarpieces. For instance, in the retable depicting the *vita* of Saint Renelde in Saintes, dated to the last decade of the fifteenth century, the central scene is also set in a church interior, dominated by a cross above the altar (fig. 6).²⁷ These observations suggest that the central scene of the Zoutleeuw altarpiece might have similarly depicted Saint Leonard in a church interior, possibly while preaching and working miracles as had been emphasized in the *Legenda Aurea*.

²⁵ SAL, nr. 7400, fol. 151r: "Item, dat de voirseide Henrick inde drie panden inde tafele voirseid sculdich zal zijn te makene drie poenten, deen vanden legenden van Sinte Lenairt, dandere vanden legenden van Sinte Steven ende tderde vanden legenden van Sinte Moer..." See also Helmus, *Schilderen in opdracht*, p. 368.

²⁶ Ainsworth, *Man, myth, and sensual pleasures*, pp. 360-362, cat. 90. The scenes depicted on the wings and in the background of the center panel are, clockwise starting from the lower left corner (with the numbers between brackets referring to the place in the Zoutleeuw altarpiece): the baptism of Saint Leonard [1], his instruction by Remigius [2], his refusal of the mitre [4], the queen giving birth [6], the freeing of prisoners [3], the building of the monastery [5] and the miracles that subsequently happened there [not depicted on the Zoutleeuw altarpiece].

²⁷ De Boodt, 'Catalogue des retables bruxellois,' pp. 184-185, cat. A21.

The central sculpted group is not the only part missing from the altarpiece. Old photographs until 1941 show hinges at the top right of the case (fig. 4), but this metalware has since been lost, leaving only traces and holes as tangible witnesses. Nevertheless, this evidence demonstrates that the altarpiece at some point must have had two sets of wings, separately covering both the upper and lower register, as was typical for contemporary carved retables (fig. 3). Cor Engelen has proposed two panels now in Antwerp to be part of the altarpiece's original wings. Although the scenes on the front are probably correctly identified as representations of Saint Leonard and attributed to a Brussels workshop, the link with the Zoutleeuw altarpiece is highly unlikely because of the unmatched dimensions and the entirely unrelated saints George and Hubert on the panels' backs.²⁸ In fact, the thought experiment of defining the lost wings' subjects is pertinent, especially because contemporary altarpieces always depict a continuous narrative, moving from the left wings - either painted or sculpted - over the sculpted central part to the right wings.²⁹ The altarpiece of Saint Renelde in Saintes is again a suitable example as its separately preserved painted wings depict scenes situated both before and after the sculpted central scenes.³⁰ This would mean that the subjects on the left wing of the Zoutleeuw altarpiece would have preceded the baptism of Saint Leonard shown on the right front panel, a subject that is not touched upon in his hagiographies.³¹ Interestingly, as it stands today the sculpted altarpiece actually forms a coherent ensemble, depicting the life of Saint Leonard from baptism to monastery. The very same scenes were also included in

²⁸ Antwerp, KMSKA, inv. nos. 127-130. Engelen, *Zoutleeuw*, p. 196. For the paintings see Vandamme, *Catalogus schilderkunst oude meesters*, p. 465. They show a saint in front of a prison, apparently liberating convicts, and a scene with monks mourning over a coffin. On the reverse, saints George and Hubert are depicted, both standing in front of a stone wall over which a honorary cloth is draped. Firstly, the present dimensions of the panels (94 x 58 cm) do not match in any way with the case of the retable (229 x 241 cm). As wings for the upper part they are both too high and too wide. In combination with two other panels of similar width they might at first sight have functioned as lower wings, but in that case it would leave a margin of more than 40 cm in height. Secondly, the inclusion of the Antwerp panels would have been strange from an iconographic point of view, as the scene with Saint Leonard and the prisoners would be represented twice, both in sculpted and painted form. Moreover, the presence of Saints George and Hubert would be odd, as Saint Leonard's altar in Zoutleeuw was furthermore dedicated to the 10.000 Virgins and All Saints (cf. infra).

²⁹ This is based on De Boodt, 'Catalogue des retables bruxellois,' but see also Woods, 'Thèmes iconographiques et sources'. Jacobs, *Early Netherlandish carved altarpieces*, p. 113 made the same observation.

³⁰ The wings of the Saintes altarpiece are now attached to the back of the *caisse*. See De Boodt, 'Catalogue des retables bruxellois,' pp. 184-185, cat. A21.

³¹ Contrary to what has been claimed by Engelen, *Zoutleeuw*, p. 195 the current order of the different sculptural groups is indeed the right one, as has been affirmed by the scientific investigation of the altarpiece by the KIK/IRPA. See the dossier of that intervention: Brussels, KIK/IRPA, nr. 2L/47-98/6382.

Gossart's design, spread over two wings and a center panel. In sum, the two sets of wings would necessarily have depicted either scenes that broke the narrative continuity by showing scenes on the left that chronologically preceded the saint's baptism, or subjects that were unrelated to Saint Leonard's *vita*. Lynn Jacobs has pointed out that such narrative disjunction only rarely occurred in opened altarpieces, and that it was either the result of the cooperation of two entirely distinct workshops that did not attune their respective productions, or of the wings being a later addition.³² As Arnold Raet is known to have provided an overall design for the altarpiece, independent of the producing workshop, the latter appears as the most reasonable option. This, in turn, would mean that the altarpiece initially was wingless.

The absolute majority of preserved altarpieces has wings or at least traces of hinges, but contemporary iconographic sources most often and quite consistently depict wingless retables (figs. 11, 26a-c, 30, 67).³³ Based on this body of visual evidence Kim Woods proposed that the predominant iconography corresponded to a historic reality and that altarpieces without wings must have actually existed. This was refuted by Lynn Jacobs based on the material evidence of the preserved altarpieces.³⁴ Yet, in none of the documents pertaining to the Zoutleeuw altarpiece is reference made to wings or painted parts. It is of course not unimaginable that Arnold Raet would have painted the wings, but no trace of that exists in the accounts. The full sum he was paid with regards to the altarpiece amounted to 5,75 *rijnsgulden*, which was said to be paid for the design he made and the fact that he had joined the churchwardens when they went to commission the altarpiece in Brussels. Other documented examples make clear that this amount was a typical cost for a design and indeed could not have included the painting of wings.³⁵ In February 1478, a month before the transport of the altarpiece was paid for, master Aert was paid 20 *rijnsgulden* for 'making paintings in Saint Leonard's chapel', but this formulation most likely refers to mural decorations

³² Jacobs, *Early Netherlandish carved altarpieces*, p. 113.

³³ The so-called Brimo de Laroussilhe altarpiece in Brussels (RMAH, inv. Sc. 130), dated to c. 1460-1470, is the only one in De Boodt's catalogue that does not seem to bear traces of hinges, although the case has been partially renewed. See De Boodt, 'Catalogue des retables bruxellois,' pp. 166-167, cat. A8. It should however be mentioned that the absence of (traces of) hinges is only rarely remarked in catalogues, and that the original presence of wings is too often an *a priori* assumption, even if there is no direct evidence. Compare with the iconographic sources assembled in Steinmetz, *Das Altarretabel in der altniederländischen Malerei*.

³⁴ Woods, *Netherlandish carved wooden altarpieces*, pp. 82-83, and Jacobs, *Early Netherlandish carved altarpieces*, pp. 96-99.

³⁵ For instance, in 1490, the Brussels painter Aert van den Bossche was paid a similar sum of 6 *gulden* for his *bewoerp* for a painted altarpiece. See Bonenfant-Feytmans, 'Aert van den Bossche,' p. 55.

instead of wings for the altarpiece.³⁶ Furthermore, although cooperation between two different towns was established practice in the production of carved altarpieces, in nearly all of the cases the wings were provided by painters from Brussels. There, moreover, civic regulations stipulated that painters were in charge of the production of mixed-media altarpieces, as sculptors were not allowed to subcontract wings to painters.³⁷ While it was the patron's choice to include painted wings in the contract for an altarpiece, all of the known examples related to the anonymous workshop that produced the Zoutleuw altarpiece have wings that were in all probability made in Brussels.³⁸ This makes it unlikely that wings would have been provided by Arnold Raet.

A look at the total sum paid provides final indications. It amounted to 2803 *stuivers*, shipping and design included, which represented 64% of the church fabric's 1478 revenues and 33,5% of its expenditures. The amount equalled 3,4 yearly wages of a mason or carpenter in Brussel or Lier in the same period.³⁹ Although no information is available about prices paid for Brussels retables in the last decades of the fifteenth century, the 2520 *stuivers* (126 *rijnsgulden*) paid for the altarpiece itself seems a relatively low price in comparison to other altarpieces.⁴⁰ In fact, in the list of contracts collected by Liesbeth Helmus, the only example that comes close to the Zoutleuw price is the 140 *gulden* agreed upon in 1510 by the Confraternity of the Holy Sacrament in Turnhout for an altarpiece that was to be made by Jan II Borman or his son Passchier. Interestingly, the contract stipulated that although panels for the wings

³⁶ KR 1477, fol. 219 (February 1478): "Item Meester Aert vander molerijden te makene in Sijnte Leonaerts coer ende metten cost samen 20 rijnsche gulden." Although the entry clearly localizes the paintings inside the chapel, Engelen, *Jan Mertens en de laatgotiek*, pp. 155-156 identified the *molerijden* with the mural painting of the Last Judgement above the entrance to the chapel.

³⁷ Périer-d'Ieteren, *Les volets peints des retables*, pp. 100-106, and Jacobs, *Early Netherlandish carved altarpieces*, pp. 100-101 and 218.

³⁸ The wings of de Gauchy's altarpiece in Ambierle were painted by somebody in the close entourage from Rogier van der Weyden, probably fulfilling the work left unfinished after the master's death. See Bücken & Steyaert, *De erfenis van Rogier van der Weyden*, pp. 114-117, cat. 8. The Passion altarpieces of both Dinslaken and Geel have wings attributed to the anonymous Brussels Master of the view of Saint Gudule. See De Boedt, 'Catalogue des retables bruxellois,' pp. 174-176 and 191-192, and Becker, 'Beobachtungen zum Hochaltar'.

³⁹ Comparison with the wages are based Jacks & Arroyo Abad, 'Belgium wages 1366-1603,' taking 250 working days per year.

⁴⁰ For prices of carved altarpieces, see Jacobs, *Early Netherlandish carved altarpieces*, pp. 175-182, and Helmus, *Schilderen in opdracht*, pp. 139-144 and 404-410. Compare also with the comparatively high advances of 72 (12 Lb. 10 gr. Vl.) and 100 (25 Lb. gr. Br.) *gulden* for sculpted altarpieces, mentioned in the documents published by Asaert, 'Documenten,' pp. 54-55, resp. Doc. 18 (d.d. 1466) and 20 (d.d. 1470).

were to be provided, they would be painted at a later date.⁴¹ As the altarpiece in question has not been preserved it is impossible to establish whether the wings were ever painted and when. Yet, the example not only gives an idea of the price for an altarpiece without wings, it also suggests that it indeed was possible to add wings later on. In fact, based on preserved examples, Catheline Périer-d'Ieteren has established that painted wings added to a previously produced sculpted *caisse* generally occurred significantly later, after five to even ten years.⁴² A famous and well-documented example, contemporary to the Zoutleeuw case, is the retable commissioned from the Utrecht sculptor Adriaen van Wesel in 1475 by the Illustrious Brotherhood of Our Blessed Lady from 's-Hertogenbosch. The sculpted part was delivered in 1477, but the painted outer wings were only commissioned from Hieronymus Bosch in 1488-1489. Polychromy of the sculpted parts would follow in 1508-1510, and the inner wings would be painted later still, in 1522-1523.⁴³ In sum, it is reasonable to assume that the 1476 commission of the Zoutleeuw altarpiece did not include wings, and that the iconographic program of the initial design was limited to merely sculpted parts that were permanently visible.

With the central scene missing and the open question of the possible - and probably later - wings and their representations, it is hard to say something about the inherent 'meaning' of the altarpiece and its iconographical program. Yet, it is sufficiently clear that the iconography of what is left of the altarpiece puts central emphasis on the saint's thaumaturgic character. While showing scenes from Saint Leonard's life, rather than on his exemplary conduct, emphasis is clearly put on two aspects of the story that were intensively related to the principal reasons of his later miracle cult, i.e. imprisonment and pregnancy. These are represented by sculptural groups on the left and the right sides of the altarpiece, respectively. Indeed, in addition to cripples, Saint Leonard was especially invoked by prisoners and pregnant women seeking a safe delivery.⁴⁴ As such, the altarpiece seems representative of one of the essential features of Zoutleeuw devotional life, the cult of its patron saint. This prompts the question as to the precise intention of the altarpiece - not necessarily of its anonymous author, but

⁴¹ "Item het es oick vorwarde dat dese tafel sal zijn met dobbel doeren slutende vast werck ende sterck om in toecomende tijde die laten scilden met poteratueren." SAL, nr. 7404, fol. 39v.

⁴² Périer-d'Ieteren, *Les volets peints des retables*, pp. 104-105. See also Jacobs, *Early Netherlandish carved altarpieces*, p. 107.

⁴³ Halsema-Kubes, Lemmens & de Werd, *Adriaen van Wesel*, pp. 34-35.

⁴⁴ Van Roey, *Levensschets en vereering*, p. 16.

rather of the patrons. What motivated the churchwardens to commission this piece with such a particular iconographic focus at precisely that moment in time?

Although it has been argued that the early development of winged altarpieces was closely related to the liturgy, they were not essential to its celebration. Retables originated long after the liturgy had taken on a fixed form, and they were probably more a product of devotion. Already long before the first altarpieces appeared there had been small diptychs and triptychs for private devotion.⁴⁵ Yet, it has been argued that the gilding and polychromy nevertheless created strong visual parallels with genuine liturgical utensils and reliquaries, thus providing retables with an aura of sacrality and liturgical importance that they inherently did not have.⁴⁶ The observation that altarpieces were strictly speaking not necessary for the liturgy suggests that they might have fulfilled other functions.⁴⁷ Beth Williamson has recently indeed questioned the strong opposition between liturgical and devotional functions, emphasizing that one altarpiece must have had multiple functions for different individuals.⁴⁸ Such conclusions that allow space for devotional interpretations of altarpieces are especially pertinent in the present case, as the Zoutleuw altarpiece is an early example of a veritable production wave of similar altarpieces. The period from *grosso modo* 1480 to 1520 has indeed been characterized as “the period of massive production of Brabantine retables.”⁴⁹ These products were not only distributed within the Low Countries, but exported all over Europe.

The broad popularity of such objects prompts the question of how they fit into contemporary lay devotion. A vast body of literature has recently emphasized the importance of increasingly spiritual ideals in late medieval piety, among others propagated by the *Devotio Moderna* movement. It is argued that laypeople, in imitation of the clergy, developed a growing criticism towards images and pursued an “aniconic piety,” i.e. the ideal of a devotion without images.⁵⁰ Such an observation has already been termed paradoxical, and it is indeed at odds with the material at hand.

⁴⁵ Ehresmann, 'Some observations on the role of liturgy'; Skubiszewski, 'Le retable gothique sculpté,' pp. 15-18.

⁴⁶ Jacobs, 'The inverted "T"-shape,' p. 46, and idem, *Early Netherlandish carved altarpieces*, pp. 94-95.

⁴⁷ Van der Ploeg, 'How liturgical is an altarpiece?'

⁴⁸ Williamson, 'Altarpiece, liturgy and devotion'.

⁴⁹ "La période de production massive des retables brabançons." Périer-d'Ieteren, *Les volets peints des retables*, p. 123. This observation is confirmed by the catalogues of Brabantine retables: De Boodt, 'Catalogue des retables bruxellois,' and de Boodt & Schäfer, *Vlaamse retabels*, pp. 281-291.

⁵⁰ A good critical overview of the recent literature is provided by Falkenburg, 'Hieronymus Bosch's Mass of St. Gregory,' pp. 180-181.

Not only did the production of opulent retables reach an unprecedented peak, but comparably complex and equally materially splendid objects such as carved wooden prayer nuts boomed in more or less the same period (c. 1500-1530).⁵¹ Reindert Falkenburg has recently demonstrated how such prayer nuts were inherent to a “complex synesthetic devotional experience.”⁵² It is worthwhile to consider similar intended roles for altarpieces such as the one in Zoutleeuw as well. After all, it is much more logical to consider the ‘material splendor’ of Brabantine altarpieces as essentially an expression of contemporary piety - rather than being at odds with it.⁵³ In the following first part of this dissertation I will attempt to map late medieval lay piety in the Low Countries in order to establish more precisely how the altarpiece functioned and what meanings it carried. An analysis of the churchwarden accounts enables me to situate the altarpiece in the broader devotional, liturgical and material context in which it functioned, and to define its own place therein. As will be demonstrated in this chapter, I argue the altarpiece served as much more than a utensil deployed during the liturgy and it in fact reveals important aspects of late medieval lay piety in the Netherlands and elsewhere in Europe.

⁵¹ Most of the available material on prayer nuts has recently been assembled in Scholten, *Small wonders*. See also the online database of *The Boxwood Project*.

⁵² Falkenburg, 'Prayer nuts seen through the "eyes of the heart",' quote on p. 117.

⁵³ Compare with observations by Jacobs, *Early Netherlandish carved altarpieces*, pp. 80-81 and 94-95.

Chapter 1 The cult of Saint Leonard at Zoutleeuw

1.1 Protohistory of the cult

1.1.1 A tale of two churches

What were the origins of Saint Leonard's cult in Zoutleeuw and what importance did it have at the moment when the altarpiece was bought and installed? The early history of Zoutleeuw's religious landscape remains obscure as relevant sources are rare for the high middle ages. In the earliest mention of the Zoutleeuw parish (1139) it is identified as the capital of the eponymous deanery within the Bishopric of Liège (*decania Lewis*). This testifies to the relative importance of the Zoutleeuw church, and it implies older origins.¹ Yet, this parish church was not dedicated to Saint Leonard, but to Saint Sulpice. This is made clear by a series of acts from the middle of the thirteenth century that document the transfer of the parish seat from Saint Sulpice to the Saint Leonard sanctuary. No act of the transfer itself survives, but in 1235 the Brabantine abbey of Vlierbeek and the Liège chapter of Saint Denis made agreements about the goods of Saint Sulpice's church *ad oppidum Lewense*. The two institutions declared that the *raison d'être* for the arrangements was the fact that 'in 1231 the seat of the parish was transferred from Saint Sulpice's church to the chapel of Saint Leonard, for the greater convenience of the people'.² Saint Sulpice's was subsequently donated to the Order of

¹ Lisson, 'De stedenpolitiek,' p. 413; Lisson, 'Grenzeloze macht,' p. 12. On the early history and urban development of Zoutleeuw, see most recently Lisson, *Zoutleeuw in de middeleeuwen*.

² "Cum ad majorem populi commoditatem parochialis ecclesia Sancti Sulpitii anno millesimo ducesimo trigesimo primo translata sit ad capellam Sancti Leonardi..." RAL, KAB, Box 966, nr. 1. Document published in

Val des Écoliers in Liège by the chapter of Saint Denis, and both acts were confirmed by the Duke of Brabant in 1237.³ In short, the former seat of the parish became a priory church, whereas a chapel was elevated to the rank of parish church.

This transfer must be seen in relation to efforts from the part of the Counts of Leuven - and later the Dukes of Brabant - of fostering the development of the town of Zoutleeuw.⁴ In an attempt to secure and control the eastern frontier of their territory, they had taken a number of measures in order to stimulate the growth of the town from the early twelfth century onwards. A number of privileges fostered its economic, political and social development: the town was provided with walls, merchants were obliged to use its facilities in their trade over both water and land, an annual fair with Pentecost was instituted and the dukes even formally considered it as one of the seven 'free' or 'good cities' of the Duchy.⁵ However, the settlement's parish church was located outside of the center the dukes of Brabant had chosen to develop. As the Liège chapter of Saint Denis noted in its deed of gift to the Order of Val des Écoliers, Saint Sulpice's was 'isolated and located outside town'.⁶ Thus, in addition to being inconveniently located for the majority of the parishioners, Saint Sulpice's church was a prime target for potential attacks, unprotected in the Zoutleeuw surroundings. By contrast, the chapel of Saint Leonard, located in the center of what became Zoutleeuw, was much more appropriate as a seat for the parish in 1231. Although it remains unclear when and by whom this initial chapel dedicated to Saint Leonard was erected, in all probability it happened under the influence of the bishops of Liège, in whose territories other sanctuaries to Saint Leonard were founded from the late eleventh

Bets, *Zout-Leeuw*, vol. 1, pp. 297-298. For a general overview of the relevant documents, see Lefèvre, *L'organisation ecclésiastique*, pp. 32-33.

³ Documents published in Miraeus & Foppens, *Opera diplomatica*, vol. 3, p. 729. See also Pieyns-Rigo, 'Prieuré du Val-des-Ecoliers,' pp. 1118-1121.

⁴ Scholars traditionally accepted the Liège origins of both Zoutleeuw churches: See most notably Piot, 'Notice historique,' pp. 52-55; Bets, *Zout-Leeuw*, vol. 1, pp. 19-21. See also Tarlier & Wauters, *Belgique ancienne et moderne*, vol. 4, p. 11. This vision is however too strongly based on chronicles that originated in the Liège atmosphere, and it is likely that the two churches were originally founded under the influence of the Bishops of Metz. See Lisson, 'De stedenpolitiek,' and idem 'Grenzeloze macht'.

⁵ Lisson, 'De stedenpolitiek,' and idem, 'Grenzeloze macht'. See also Gaier, 'Léau et la ligne de défense'.

⁶ "Ecclesiam Sancti Sulpitii esse extra villam sitam, & esse solitariam," Miraeus & Foppens, *Opera diplomatica*, vol. 3, p. 729. The distinction of 'intra' versus 'extra muros' does not seem to have been explicitly mentioned in contemporary sources, but is echoed in later documents, such as the priory's 1543 request for abolition. See Bets, *Zout-Leeuw*, vol. 2, pp. 292-293.

century onwards.⁷ Consequently, the *capellam nunc ecclesiam Sancti Leonardi* was likely the product of the ambitions of both the Dukes of Brabant and the Bishops of Liège, respectively attempting to maintain worldly and ecclesiastical power. The fact that Saint Leonard's right of patronage was shared by the Liège chapter of Saint Denis and the Brabantine abbey of Vlierbeek - founded by Count Godfrey I of Leuven - indeed suggests a compromise between the two powers.⁸

1.1.2 *Argumenta ex silentio*

While it is certain that the dedication to Saint Leonard was established by the early thirteenth century at the latest, it is entirely unclear to what extent this also involved a veritable cult of that saint. It is also difficult to determine what form this might have taken before the fifteenth century, when the churchwarden accounts start to provide more accurate information. Two points of evidence suggest that a conspicuous cult did not exist by the early fourteenth century, or at least was not actively pursued. First, it seems that by the late thirteenth century no cult existed that was lucrative enough to finance the church's ongoing construction. Architectural analysis of the present building indeed confirms that only after the 1231 transfer did it become part of a new series of building campaigns to construct a larger sanctuary suitable for the growing number of parishioners. As was current practice at many Gothic construction sites, the church was probably built around the former chapel, before destroying it.⁹ Work started with the choir in the middle of the thirteenth century, to be followed by

⁷ Including a chapel just outside the Liège city walls, dedicated to Saint Leonard by Bishop Otbert (r. 1091-1119), and a leper house in Huy, one of the *bonnes villes* of the princebishopric. For the former, see Stiennon, *Etude sur le chartrier*, pp. 287-291; Russe, 'Prieuré de Saint-Léonard,' p. 376; Dury, 'Prieuré de Saint-Léonard'. For the latter, see De Moreau, *Histoire de l'église en Belgique*, vol. 6, p. 250, and Dury, 'Prieuré de Saint-Léonard'. Lisson, 'De stedenpolitiek,' pp. 424-425 suggested that the Liège chapter of Saint Denis - the other patron of Zoutleeuw - founded the chapel, probably after the Battle of Steps in 1213, when the immediate *extra muros* surroundings of Zoutleeuw were plundered. According to Lisson, this would have urged the necessity for a sanctuary *intra muros*. Based on a supposed devotion to Saint Leonard in the Abbey of Vlierbeek, shared patron of Zoutleeuw, Bets, *Zout-Leeuw*, vol. 2, pp. 84-85 maintained that the founding of the Zoutleeuw chapel postdated the abbey's 1125 foundation. However, the earliest traces of a devotion to Saint Leonard in Vlierbeek date to the eighteenth century: Smeyers, 'Abbaye de Vlierbeek'; idem, *Vlierbeekse kroniek*, p. 42.

⁸ Lisson, 'De stedenpolitiek,' p. 425.

⁹ Buyle *et al.*, *Brabantse bouwmeesters*, p. 41. Compare, for instance, with the construction of Brussels' church of Saints Michael and Gudula: Bral, 'De gotische kathedraal,' pp. 82-99.

the northern transept and the same side of the nave with its tower later in that century. The southern side was built only in the early fourteenth century, seemingly to be concluded with the transept (fig. 7, cf. *infra*).¹⁰ In 1293 a letter of recommendation for the collectors was issued by the town and the clergy, stating that workers had started to build the most sumptuous church, but that the resources were lacking and one thus was compelled to beg alms of the faithful.¹¹ More importantly, although Saint Leonard is referred to in that document as a ‘wonderful confessor’ (*confessoris mirifici*), this should probably be understood in a general sense, as the text does not mention any particular cult of relics or a miraculous image that was venerated in Zoutleeuw and certainly does not use anything like it to convince potential almsgivers. Contrary to elsewhere no cult was used as an argument in the fundraising for the construction of the church.

As a second point of evidence, it is striking that no cult is referred to in the oldest surviving letter of indulgence awarded to the church in 1328 by a number of bishops residing in Avignon (fig. 8a-b).¹² Similar letters that were given to other established cult centers, such as Our Lady of Alseberg, did include references to relics and their miracles.¹³ The Zoutleeuw letter was petitioned in person in Avignon by *magister* Johannis de Sceverstene, who was a clergyman from Zoutleeuw, but who does not appear to have been part of the collegiate chapter recently established in Saint Leonard’s church in 1308.¹⁴ Though the 1328 document grants several days of

¹⁰ The analysis in the basic study by Lemaire, *Origines du style gothique*, pp. 198, 213-214 is to be supplemented by Leurs, *Zoutleeuw en O.L. Vrouw der Dominicanen*, as well as the recent insights by Doperé, ‘Techniques de taille,’ p. 429, and Buyle *et al.*, *Brabantse bouwmeesters*, pp. 39-43. The stylistic analysis of the choir by Branner, ‘St. Leonardus at Zoutleeuw,’ does not take into account the fact that this part was completely reconstructed in 1861 (cf. *infra*).

¹¹ “Cum ecclesia beati Leonardi, confessoris mirifici, in dicta villa de Lewis constructa, in qua quidem ecclesia sunt octo sacerdotes cotidie divina ibidem celebrantes pro omnibus benefactoribus, eidem redificari ceperit opere plurimum sumptuoso, ad cuius consummacionem proprie ipsius ecclesie non suppetant facultates, et propter hoc fidelium elemosinas cogitur mendicare...” See Piot, *Inventaire des chartes*, pp. 8-9, nr. 22. Published in De Ridder, ‘Notice sur la géographie ecclésiastique,’ pp. 81-83.

¹² RAL, KAB, Box 966, nr. 32bis (old number 50). Published in Delehay, ‘Lettres d’indulgence collectives,’ pp. 363-364. Wilmet, *Léau*, vol. 1, pp. 233-234 erroneously claimed that indulgence was granted “aux fidèles qui prient devant sa statue exposée dans la collégiale, et ils ne manquent pas de tourner pieusement trois fois autour d’elle.” None of this is mentioned in the text. On the requesting procedure in general, see Swanson, *Indulgences*, pp. 120-121.

¹³ See for instance Mak, ‘Vlaamse volksdevoties in een geuzenlied,’ p. 172.

¹⁴ In 1324 the man is mentioned as arbitrator in a conflict between the Zoutleeuw chapter and other clerics from the diocese of Liège, and it is unlikely that he would have been part of one of the two parties in conflict:

indulgence to those who attended the liturgical services for a whole catalogue of saints, Leonard is not especially emphasized among them and seems only mentioned perfunctorily for his role as patron saint. In fact, apart from increasing a general devotional enthusiasm of Christian believers, there appears to have been a twofold rationale behind the petitioning of the indulgence. On the one hand, just like the 1293 letter of recommendation it must have been meant as a means to collect money for the church, as it encouraged Christian believers to lend a helping hand (*manus porrexerint adiutrices*) to the *fabrica*, *luminaris* or *ornamenta*, or to give gold, silver, clothes or other caritative subsidies by testament to the church. On the other hand, the indulgence was related to the personal spiritual welfare of de Sceverstene, as those who would pray for his ‘salutary state’ (*salubri statu*) would also benefit from it. Indeed, Sceverstene himself is depicted in the left margin of the document. Admittedly, he is represented in prayer before a figure of Saint Leonard, but although at first sight this might hint at the cult, just like many other similar letters it was decorated while still in Avignon by the workshop of Galterius Alamannus from Strasbourg that used standardized procedures in depicting the patron saints of the requesting churches.¹⁵ This all is not to say that Leonard was not venerated in Zoutleeuw before this point, only that there are no indications that the cult had already taken on the form in which it would become known later.

1.1.3 The earliest evidence

The earliest cluster of indications of a veritable cult actually date to the middle of the fourteenth century, thus slightly postdating the indulgence bull. The most telling evidence is the cult object itself, a miraculous statue of the saint. As will be

RAL, KAB, nr. 990, fol. 25 (“Johenni dictum de Sceverstene clericum de Lewis”). Furthermore, in none of the sources he is called a canon. In 1351, a Jan van Sceverstene - probably identical - is mentioned as priest of the Zoutleeuw beguinage, see RAL, KAB, Box 967, nr. 152. Bets claimed that a man with the same name (Joannes de Sceversteen) held the same function in 1397, although it is unclear on what source his statement is based. See Bets, *Zout-Leeuw*, vol. 2, p. 198. The original foundation charter of the collegiate chapter is in RAL, KAB, Box 966, nr. 20. The text is published in Miraeus & Foppens, *Opera diplomatica*, vol. 3, pp. 730-731. On the erection of the chapter, see also Bets, *Zout-Leeuw*, vol. 2, pp. 85-86, and Laenen, *Kerkelijk en godsdienstig Brabant*, vol. 1, pp. 324-325.

¹⁵ Oliver, ‘The Herkenrode indulgence,’ pp. 188-190. Compare for instance with the contemporary indulgence bulls awarded to the churches of the beguinage in Diest (1333) and Saint Martin in Halle (1338). See RAL, KAB, resp. nrs. 13722/bis and 3066/4.

demonstrated further on, the Zoutleeuw cult of Saint Leonard would develop around this serene wooden sculpture. Still preserved in the church, it shows the confessor with tonsured head, identifying him as a monk (fig. 9). The figure is seated and holds a book in his left hand, while his right hand contains a tube-like fitting in which an abbatial staff can be placed. Although certain aspects still refer to Romanesque sculpture traditions - most notably the inlaid precious stones that decorate his priestly garments - the figure's gracious and elongated pose clearly point to more recent developments of the middle of the fourteenth century. Whereas earlier studies dated the sculpture to c. 1300, more recent assessments place it slightly later, around 1350-1360.¹⁶ Stylistic and technical analyses thus strongly support the hypothesis that this statue that would later become the cult object cannot have been the subject of devotion in the chapel before the construction of the church. Although it has been noted that cults of miraculous statues often developed around 'older' artifacts, the earliest written evidence closely follows the statue in time.¹⁷ From 1367 onwards a number of convicts from the city of Maastricht were sent on judicial pilgrimages to Zoutleeuw (*viam Lewis*). Their number reached an absolute high point with thirteen sentences in 1369 alone, but after 1377 Zoutleeuw does not appear as chosen destination in the Maastricht registers anymore.¹⁸ As suddenly as it appeared, as quickly it disappeared again.

It is only in the 1430s that a second cluster of evidence pertaining to the cult of Saint Leonard appeared. Historians have tried to trace the origins of the town's yearly Whit Monday procession to either 1274 or 1328, but these assumptions have no firm ground and can actually be proven wrong by means of the civic accounts.¹⁹ Although only

¹⁶ Older studies include De Borchgrave d'Altena, 'Over twee beelden van Sint Leonardus'; Steppe, 'Een sanctuarium van de Brabantse laat-gotiek,' p. 615; Buyle *et al.*, *Brabantse bouwmeesters*, p. 45. The more recent assessment by Didier, *La sculpture mosane du XIV^e siècle*, fig. 33 was confirmed to me by Emmanuelle Mercier (KIK/IRPA) who carried out an elaborate technical investigation of the sculpture. See Brussels, KIK/IRPA, nr. 2L47 2002 07752. Although a dendochronological investigation carried out by Pascale Fraiture yielded no useful results, the original polychromy was found to date after c. 1330.

¹⁷ Vauchez, 'Introduction'; Trexler, 'Being and non-being', p. 21; Walker Bynum, *Christian materiality*, p. 22.

¹⁸ Van Herwaarden, *Opgelegde bedevaarten*, pp. 486-487, notes 6 and 7, and p. 703. Many thanks to Jan van Herwaarden, for sharing his additional data with me in a written communication of 4 April 2017.

¹⁹ Bets, *Zout-Leeuw*, vol. 2, pp. 87-88 hypothetically linked the origins of the Whit Monday procession with the fact that in 1274 the Zoutleeuw town council bought off the obligation of the *obolus banalis*, which included a yearly procession around Pentecost to Sint-Truiden. According to Bets, this abolition would have allowed the town's inhabitants to organize their proper procession at that moment. For the relevant document, see Piot, *Inventaire des chartes*, p. 5, nr. 14. It is published in Piot, *Cartulaire de l'abbaye de Saint-Trond*, vol. 1, pp. 344-

fragmentarily preserved until the 1430s, nearly all of the earliest preserved accounts include yearly payments related to the town's procession on the feast of Corpus Christi. Strikingly, they are completely silent on a procession in honor of Saint Leonard, which is only referred to for the first time at Whit Monday 1437. As the account of 1434 is the one preserved immediately preceding the 1437 account, this strongly suggests that it had only been instituted somewhere in between these years. Further research on the origins of that procession are needed, but a preliminary analysis of the accounts suggests that it might have developed out of the yearly shooting event of the Guild of Crossbowmen, which is known to have taken place in the week after Pentecost.²⁰

This dating neatly corresponds to the completion of the separate chapel for Saint Leonard within the Zoutleuw church. According to Doperé, in the middle of the fourteenth century construction work began at the southern transept. This part initially ended in a portal that is still visible today. As the church and chapel are interrelated, the initial design probably extended the adjacent yet distinct chapel further southward into what is now identified as Saint Leonard's chapel (cf. *infra*, fig. 7).²¹ Although no accounts documenting these works exist, Doperé substantiated his claims in part by two preserved inscriptions on the building itself. On the western inner side of the portal connecting the two structures the date *mccclv* (1355) is incised in the stone at eye level, possibly referring to the conception of the whole, i.e. transept with its southern extension. A spiral staircase in the southwestern corner of the transept leads to the floor immediately above the chapel proper, where the second inscription is located. The space, equipped with two hearths, five windows and a sink,

345. See also Lisson, 'Grenzeloze macht,' pp. 16-19. On the other hand, Raymond van Uytven interpreted the 1328 civic ordination of moving of the *jaergeding* from Pentecost to early September as a consequence of the growing popularity of celebrations in honour of Saint Leonard at Pentecost. See Buyle *et al.*, *Brabantse bouwmeesters*, p. 38. For the document in question, see Piot, *Inventaire des chartes*, p. 11, nr. 33. However, civic accounts from the 1420s show that Saint Leonard's kermis was still celebrated on the second Sunday after Easter, not at Pentecost, and that the *jaergeding* also was scheduled after Low Sunday, not in September. RAL, SL, nr. 3581, civic account of 1422, fol. 10v; Piot, *Inventaire des chartes*, p. 65, nr. 199.

²⁰ RAL, SL, nr. 3581, civic account of 1437, fol. 10: "smaendachs in die tsinxen dach doen men Sinte Lenart om droech." The crossbowmen's *papegaaischietingen* are documented for instance in the accounts of 1421 (fol. 6v), 1434 (fol. 5v) and 1437 (fol. 10). The churchwarden accounts mention the procession from the beginning. KR 1453 (draft), fol. 67: "doemen Sinte Leonaerde om droech smaendachs in die Pinxen daghe."

²¹ Doperé, 'Techniques de taille,' p. 429. Compare with the contemporaneous (c. 1400) southern portal of Our Lady's church in Huldenberg, that later on would equally be turned into a closed chapel: BALaT object nr. 37862.

is subdivided into separate rooms by wooden partitions. In the midst of a jumble of nineteenth- and twentieth-century *graffiti* on the planks, one elaborate though only partly legible inscription stands out (fig. 10). Wilmet and Doperé both provided conflicting transcriptions of the text, but the most reasonable reading seems to be:

... atrio vorst(ius) kemerline
erant primi ... instrati anno domini
M° CCCC° XL° mensis octobris die xvii
met verwen...²²

Doperé suspected that it referred to the first occupants of the rooms, dated to 17 October 1440, which he subsequently used as a *terminus ante quem* for the completion of the chapel beneath. It is indeed not impossible that the rooms in question were designed to house pilgrims, as has been suggested by Bets and Wilmet.²³ Although this practice is poorly documented, the more worldly functions of church spaces have long been recognized. In Vorst, for instance, pilgrims slept in front of Saint Alena's altar, and similar cases have possibly been signaled in nearby pilgrim churches in Aarschot and Oplinter.²⁴

Yet, rather than being more or less spontaneously applied *graffiti* by lodging pilgrims, examples from other medieval sites and analysis of the text itself suggest that it was a commemorative inscription documenting the completion of the construction itself, as *instrati* can be interpreted as 'covering'. Commemorative inscriptions referring to certain phases in the building process are not uncommon in medieval churches. Multiple examples are known throughout Europe, either painted or engraved, on plaster or stone. Recent research has demonstrated how they contributed to the promotion of a shared civic memory, both by commemorating the parties involved in the construction works, as well as by emphasizing the veracity of the claim that was made by the text.²⁵ Although no comprehensive survey of similar inscriptions in the

²² Personal reading on 9 March 2016. Wilmet, *Léau*, vol. 1, p. 239, read "P. (de) Atrio (,) Vorst (ius) (,) Kemerinck era(n)t p(ri)mi ... trati a(n)no d(o)m(in)i M°CCCC°XL me(n)s(is) octobris die XVIII°." Doperé, 'Techniques de taille,' p. 429 transcribed "Item atrio vorto Kemerlin(gi) / erant primi (...?) instrati anno Domini / MCCCCXL mensis octobris die XVII°."

²³ Bets, *Zout-Leeuw*, vol. 2, pp. 127-128 and 200; Wilmet, *Léau*, vol. 1, p. 238.

²⁴ Kuys, 'Weltliche Funktionen'; Brussels, KBR, IV 42.129A (*Legende van Sinte Alena*), fol. 146v; Breugelmans, Ceulemans & van Haesendonck, *De Onze-Lieve-Vrouwekerk van Aarschot*, p. 61; Brigode, 'L'église Sainte-Geneviève,' p. 91. On the lodging of pilgrims in general, see Gross-Diaz, 'Lodging'.

²⁵ Gerevini, 'Written in stone'. Other Italian examples can be found in Dietl, 'Italienische Bildhauerinschriften'. For German examples, see especially Funken, *Die Bauinschriften*, as well as the many examples in the *Deutsche*

Low Countries has been undertaken yet, multiple examples testify to the practice. Sometimes they document the start of a campaign, such as in Leuven (1234 and 1305) and Tongeren (1442), or the installation of parts of the interior and its subsequent first use, such as the baptismal font in Handzame (1400). Some refer to the stonemason or the master builder in charge of the works, as illustrated by rarely preserved examples in Aarschot (Jean Piccart, 1337), Drogenbos (Jan van Lier, c. 1350) and Peer (Jan Groetheers, 1422), whereas others include the names of churchwardens (Berlaar, 1353) or the reigning abbess (Notre-Dame de Soleilmont, 1496).²⁶ As *instrati* can be interpreted as ‘covering’, a similar inscription in Zoutleeuw referring to the various parties involved would thus not be unusual.

Evidence suggests that the three words on the first line should each be interpreted as the names of the people involved in the chapel’s completion. *Kemerlinc* likely refers to priest and canon Godfried Camerlinck, alias Neckere, who between 1431 and 1478 held the office of steward of the collegiate chapter.²⁷ Secondly, whereas *atrio* can refer to a room with a hearth (*atrium*), in ecclesiastical contexts in the medieval Low Countries it was mostly used to refer to a churchyard (*kerkhof*), and by extension also to related personal names.²⁸ That was also the case in Zoutleeuw, where a family that went by the name van den Kerchove, *alias* De Atrio is documented in the civic magistracy from at least 1391 onwards. In 1417-1420 a certain Petrus de Atrio was *meier*, i.e. the chief administrative and juridical representative of the central authority in town, whereas somebody with the same name is documented later as both alderman and burgomaster in 1444 and 1445.²⁹ Contemporaneously, similar offices were held by a certain Reynerus de Atrio between 1412 and 1447, who certainly was alderman in 1439

Inschriften Online database, such as DI 25, Lkr. Ludwigsburg, Nr. 6 and DI 50, Bonn, Nr. 21. For graffiti in medieval and early modern churches, see especially Champion, *Medieval graffiti*.

²⁶ For these examples, see BALaT, object nrs. 83325 (Berlaar); 10142268 (Notre-Dame de Soleilmont); 46921 (Handzame); 49820 (Tongeren); 71632 (Peer); 4045 (Aarschot); 81285 (Drogenbos); 55293 (Leuven). For the inscription in Aarschot see also Coveliers, *Onze Lieve Vrouw van Aarschot*, pp. 92-93.

²⁷ See Grauwen, Warlop & Muret, *Analytische inventaris*, nrs. 632, 709, 762, 774, 781, 782, 785, 833, 835, 842, 849, 855, 858, 863 and 922.

²⁸ Du Cange, *Glossarium*, vol. 1, pp. 465-466. Compare, for instance, with Debrabandere, *Kortrijkse naamkunde*, pp. 22 and 98, nr. 480.

²⁹ RAL, SL, nrs. 2986 and 2987; Grauwen, Warlop & Muret, *Analytische inventaris*, nr. 547; Damen, ‘Prelaten edelen en steden,’ p. 93, note 159. Interestingly, Wilmet still read the first letters as “P. (de) Atrio.”

and 1441 and therefore possibly served as burgomaster in 1440.³⁰ Finally, although no family referred to as Vorst or Vorstius is documented in Zoutleeuw, it can be proposed to identify this man as Sulpitius van Vorst (c. 1375, Diest - 1439, Leuven), the famous master builder from Leuven. His involvement in the constructions in Zoutleeuw remains undocumented but are likely, especially since his pupil and successor Mathijs de Layens is securely recorded as principal master builder in Zoutleeuw in the 1450s. De Layens took over the lead of almost all of the construction sites in the region that were once headed by van Vorst - including the churches of Saint Peter in Leuven, Saint Sulpice in Diest and Our Lady *ten Poel* in Tienen - and it might therefore very well be that the church of Zoutleeuw was among them too. Although in October 1440 van Vorst was recently deceased, the inscription could nevertheless still refer to his responsibility for that particular part of the church.³¹ In sum, the inscription would not refer to the rooms' first inhabitants, but rather to three individuals involved in the completion of the chapel: a member of the town council (either Petrus or Reynerus de Atrio), a representative of the chapter (Godfried Camerlinck) and the master builder (Sulpitius van Vorst). As such, it commemorates an important event in the cultic history of Zoutleeuw's patron saint.

1.1.4 Saint Leonard's chapel

Soon after the completion of the southern transept, the chapel and its altar were consecrated and dedicated to Saint Leonard, the 11.000 Virgins and All Saints on 21 October 1442. This event would be commemorated yearly in the so-called 'four masses', in honour of the altar's patron saints: on the feast day of the 11.000 Virgins (21 October, coinciding with the feast of consecration), on Sunday before All Saints, on All Saints' Day (1 November) and on the feast of Saint Leonard (6 November). These masses were elaborately celebrated by a priest, deacon and subdeacon, accompanied by organ music and the chapter school choir and announced by persistent bell-ringing. Simultaneously, at the occasion of the consecration the hope to receive pilgrims was clearly expressed for the first time. The foundation charter, issued by Denis Stephani,

³⁰ Grauwen, Warlop & Muret, *Analytische inventaris*, nrs. 712, 715, 718, 720, 721, 733 and 736. As it was forbidden to serve two consecutive terms in the same office, Zoutleeuw politicians mostly switched yearly between burgomaster and alderman. Cf. supra.

³¹ Maere, 'Vorst (Sulpice van)'; Roggen & Withoff, 'Grondleggers en grootmeesters,' pp. 129-138; Cheyns, *De stadsmesters-metsers te Leuven*, pp. 146-152.

Bishop of Ross (act. 1436-1458) and suffragan to the Liège Bishop Jan van Heinsberg (1396-1459), provides a considerable amount of days of indulgence, 40 of which were to be earned at both the saint's feast day and Whit Monday. In relation to the latter it was explicitly stated that it was given "so that the faithful Christians will be encouraged in their devotion, prayer and pilgrimage, and that they will flock together in the chapel."³²

Possibly, part or all of the funding for this chapel was provided by a lay couple. In his 1734 compilation of acts and charters, priest Daniël Godts (1703-1797) added a marginal note next to his transcription of the act of consecration, stating that "Joannes de Katen and Maria, his wife, funded this chapel and masses in it, according to letters... of 23 September 1442."³³ Bets supposed that the couple took the initiative for the erection of the chapel while Wilmet assumed they financed the whole. It is impossible to interpret the true meaning of Godts's statement due to a lack of contextual information.³⁴ De Katen's name is conspicuously absent from the act of consecration, which seems to exclude the possibility that the space was related solely to the family's personal memoria. Nevertheless, it is plausible that the couple significantly contributed to the completion of the chapel. As demonstrated above, the construction of the chapel probably was already under way for about a century, and perhaps their intervention was precisely motivated by the fact that the construction project had remained uncompleted. Comparative analysis of the cutting techniques of the stones used in the chapel led Doperé to date the upper parts of the eastern, southern and western walls to 1410 at the earliest. This would mean that the chapel,

³² "...ut ipsi christi fideles eo libentius devotionis, orationis et peregrinationis causa confluant ad eamdem..." The original charter seems to have been lost, but an eighteenth-century transcription exists in Daniël Godts' *Registrum novum* (DAZ, nr. 45, pp. 141-142). That text has been published by Bets, *Zout-Leeuw*, vol. 2, p. 127, note 1. Whereas Godts still referred to the original in the archive of the church fabric ("Originale est in archivis fabricae"), it had been lost by Bets' time, as he referred to Godts' transcription. Bets erroneously transcribed 'Rossensis' as 'Hessensis'. The identification of this suffragan is based on Ernst, *Tableau historique et chronologique*, pp. 132-133; de Marneffe, 'Tableau chronologique'.

³³ "Joannes de Katen et Maria ejus uxor fundaverunt hanc cappellam et in ea fundaverunt missas secundum litteras Joannis Episcopi Leodiensis 23 septembris 1442 que sunt in archivis fabricae." DAZ, nr. 45, p. 141. Just like the act of consecration, the charters mentioned have not been preserved, but the mass is referred to regularly in the churchwarden accounts from 1460 to 1473, as the parish priest is being paid to say "Jans van Caten ende sijnre werdinnen messe." Nothing is known about this man, as he does not appear in other charters, nor in the lists of the civic magistracy. The fact that the family name van Caten (Katen) does not occur in any later sources might suggest that the couple was childless.

³⁴ Bets, *Zout-Leeuw*, vol. 2, p. 127, and Wilmet, *Léau*, vol. 1, p. 239.

begun in 1355, remained uncompleted for at least 55 years, which might account for complementary private funding. Interestingly, this closely corresponds to the two clusters of evidence documenting the cult of Saint Leonard: the first in the 1350s and 1360s, the second in the 1430s and 1440s.

The succession of the completion of the southern extension's construction by 1440 followed by the consecration of Saint Leonard's chapel in 1442 suggests the identification of the latter with the former. Yet, this is not self-evident, as the current placement of Saint Leonard's altar is not in the adjacent chapel, but against the eastern wall of the southern transept itself. This prompts the question as to where the altar, the altarpiece and the miraculous statue were each originally installed. The current location of the altar in the southern transept is due to an early nineteenth-century relocation. In 1824, priest Guillelmus Veulemans (1772-1834) added a note to Godts's transcriptions of a number of acts related to the cult of Saint Leonard. It stated that on 30 May 1820 the altar of Saint Leonard was sold to the Franciscans of Hasselt for 40 French *écus*, and that "shortly after it [was] placed where it is now, and at the same time Saint Leonard's chapel [was] changed into a sacristy for the security of the ornaments."³⁵ In the 1880s the southern extension was indeed still used as a sacristy, confirming the room's previous function as Saint Leonard's chapel, which in the act of consecration is described as an annex to the church (*capellam ecclesie sancti Leonardi Leeuwnensis adnexam*). This description is best applicable to the southern extension discussed above (fig. 7).³⁶ Furthermore, the act also explicitly states that Saint Leonard's altar was located in that chapel (*altare ibidem*). This is confirmed by a close reading of the accounts, wherein the terms for Saint Leonard's altar (*autær, outaer*) or his chapel (*choer, coer*) are used interchangeably.³⁷ Theoretically it is of course possible that the miraculous statue was not necessarily located on the altar

³⁵ "30 mai 1820 emptumen a fratribus minoritis Hasseleti altare Sancti Leonardi pro 40 coronis gallicis et paulo post locatum est ubi num stat, eodem tempore mutata est capella Sancti Leonardi in sacristiam pro securitate ornamentorum." DAZ, nr. 45, p. 142.

³⁶ Bets, *Zout-Leeuw*, vol. 2, p. 127. This interpretation is confirmed by later entries in the accounts. For instance, when in 1479 construction of the new building with facade in flamboyant gothic style started to the east of the annex, it was described as "the new room behind Saint Leonard's chapel" (*dij nieuwe camere staende achter Sijnte Leonarts coer*). See KR 1478, fol. 246v. Doperé, 'Techniques de taille,' p. 429 came to the same conclusion.

³⁷ For instance, the previously mentioned 'four masses' are alternately referred to as being celebrated on Saint Leonard's altar (*op Sinte Leonarts altair*) and in the chapel (*in Sinte Leonarts choer*).

itself.³⁸ Yet, no other terms occur that might refer to a separate room other than the chapel in which it might have been installed, and further analysis will confirm that the sculpture indeed was located on the altar itself (cf. *infra*).³⁹ Thus, in 1442 Saint Leonard was able to receive pilgrims in a proper chapel, especially designed for that purpose, and soon after the churchwarden accounts would start to register the history and the fortunes of this devotion.

1.2 The fortunes of devotion

As churchwarden accounts are lacking before 1452 it is virtually impossible to make sensible statements about how popular the cult of Saint Leonard in Zoutleeuw was. The snippets of information recounted above suggest an evolution towards official establishment approbation, but say nothing about how successful and widespread it was. The construction and consecutive consecration of the chapel were of course essential steps towards the official recognition and support, but they might obscure pre-existing movements of popular piety that remain under the radar. It is important to note, too, that an episcopal recognition did not necessarily constitute a popular cult, so it must not automatically be seen as indicative of success. It is by no means the purpose of the preceding overview to suggest that the cult of Saint Leonard in Zoutleeuw only took off after the 1442 consecration. Rather, it sets the stage for the main period under consideration in this dissertation and draws the backdrop against which further developments must be seen. Most importantly, the two clusters of evidence that have been put forward - the first in the 1350s and 1360s, the second in the 1430s and 1440s - confirm earlier observations of the cyclical movements of the popularity of individual cult objects. Patrick Geary referred in this respect to the 'careers' of relics, consisting of successive periods of intense veneration alternating

³⁸ Elsewhere in the Low Countries cases are known of altars that did not serve liturgical services, but merely as podia for the exposition of relics. See for instance Van der Ploeg, 'Maintaining identity'; *idem*, 'Preserving and reshaping'; George, 'De reliekenschat,' p. 27.

³⁹ Some entries also refer to 'Saint Leonard's room' (*cameren van Sinte Leonarts, Sinte Leonaerts camere*), which past scholars all too readily seem to have used as a synonym for the chapel. See for instance Rousseau, 'Notes pour servir à l'histoire de la sculpture,' pp. 440 and 443. However, as will be demonstrated further on this refers to the building with facade in flamboyant gothic style to the east of the annex, which served as churchwarden's room.

with times of general neglect.⁴⁰ By 1452, when the churchwarden accounts start to register its fortunes, the cult definitely existed already, but it is quite possible that its career had so far remained rather limited. Applying both qualitative and quantitative methods, this chapter will discuss methods to measure the success of pilgrimage sites to assess the importance of individual late medieval shrines.

1.2.1 Looking for clues: miracles, badges and penalties

Within and outside of the Zoutleeuw context, the lack of references offering insight into the cult's reputation is striking. No known contemporary chronicles refer to the miraculous statue at Zoutleeuw, or even descriptions of the Whit Monday procession. The only reference to the Zoutleeuw shrine outside of the city itself dates to 1555, when the cult of saints had already become a serious point of contention. A report of an investigation held in that year documents how a man had taunted the pilgrims who went to Zoutleeuw to worship Saint Leonard (cf. *infra*).⁴¹ The man in question was reportedly from Kuringen, near Hasselt, located some 25 kilometers away from Zoutleeuw. Regardless of how interesting this unique testimony is, it says only very little about the extent of Saint Leonard's renown. It is therefore necessary to turn to other possible indications.

In absence of narrative sources, the most useful documents to deduce the importance of medieval shrines are, miracle books, pilgrim badges, and registers of judicial pilgrimages. As pilgrimage sites are inherently associated with miracles, a common tool to geographically measure the fame of a shrine are miracle books. These textual collections contain the carefully assembled testimonies of the wonderful stories that happened at a certain place, kept by the local wardens or clergy. The information written down usually included the date of the miracle as well as the place of origin of

⁴⁰ Geary, 'Sacred commodities,' pp. 176-180.

⁴¹ "Wat die luyden te Leuwe muchten bevaert gaen?; dat beelt van Sint Lenarts weer van eenen noteleer gemaect ende Sint Lenarts kroht weer van eenen verckens troech gemaect... Arme verdoelde menschen weer dat sy daer geloeff op stelden meynende dat dat beelt van Sint Lenart mirakel deede, want alst scheen sweeten, dan weert met olyen bestreecken." Hansay, 'Blasphémateurs, hérétiques et sorciers,' pp. 31-33.

the *miraculé*.⁴² This led Gerrit Verhoeven to argue that the mapping out of localities mentioned in miracle collections provides a reliable image of the dissemination of the cult in question, claiming that the outermost places of the cluster indicate the ‘maximal radiation’ of a shrine.⁴³ Furthermore, comparisons of such geographical analyses enable an evaluation of the relative importance of pilgrimage sites. For instance, by comparing the two contemporary miracle books of Dadizele (1353-1537) and Gullegem (1450-1503), Antoon Viaene demonstrated that whereas the latter only was of limited local importance, Dadizele’s range of attraction was much larger and must have been among the most important shrines in the County of Flanders during the fifteenth century.⁴⁴ Yet, no such miracle book has survived for Zoutleeuw, and although the churchwarden accounts sporadically mention miraculous healings and releases, the place of origin of the *miraculé* is never revealed in those entries (cf. *infra*).⁴⁵

A second source type is archaeological in nature. Pilgrim badges are soft metal objects available for visitors at shrines and depicted the saint or object of veneration. They were often carried by the pilgrim, either as souvenir from the trip or as an amulet for the future. Although they generally existed in various executions and materials, they were generally relatively cheap. As a consequence, they are frequently found in archaeological excavations.⁴⁶ Here again, the mapping of the geographical distribution of these finds can serve as a valuable indicator for the action radius of cults. For instance, plotting the sites of all 47 known pilgrim badges related to the cult of Our Lady of ‘s-Hertogenbosch revealed a radius of up to 200 kilometers. In this exceptional case an extensive miracle book has also been preserved, allowing for a comparison of the material and written sources. As the radius of the pilgrims’ origins in ‘s-

⁴² General discussions of the source type include O’Sullivan, ‘Miracle narratives’; Purkis, ‘Miracles as propaganda’; Gross-Diaz, ‘Miracles’. Most of the available material for the Low Countries has recently been assembled by Van Mulder, *Wonderkoorts*.

⁴³ Verhoeven, *Devotie en negotie*, pp. 123-127.

⁴⁴ Viaene, ‘Zakband als exvoto’. Compare also with Verhoeven, ‘De cultus van het Heilig Hout te Dordrecht,’ pp. 217-219.

⁴⁵ Van Roey, *Levensschets en vereering*, p. 29, Wilmet, *Léau*, p. 335 and Buyle *et al.*, *Brabantse bouwmeesters*, p. 38 claimed that the miracle book got lost under the French occupation. However, no contemporary reference to such a document is known so far.

⁴⁶ See for instance Koldewij, ‘The wearing of significative badges’; Blick, ‘Pilgrim badges’; Kruij, ‘Pilgrim badges’. Useful overviews of the relevant material for the Low Countries are provided by van Beuningen & Koldewij, *Heilig en Profaan*; van Beuningen, Koldewij & Kicken, *Heilig en Profaan 2*; van Heeringen, Koldewij & Gaalman, *Heiligen uit de modder*.

Hertogenbosch extended even beyond 200 kilometers, it becomes evident that the initial range of distribution of the pilgrim badges must have been larger as well.⁴⁷ The lack of physical evidence is doubtlessly explained by the fragility of the badges that need favourable soil conditions in order to be preserved. Even if the image provided by the geographical pattern of the pilgrim badges is somewhat distorted, the various finds within one context are nevertheless indicative of the relative importance of the different sites. This can be illustrated by confronting the places of origin of the badges found in the city of 's-Hertogenbosch with those found at Nieuwlande in Zeeland, a region that is particularly known as a real treasure-trove of pilgrim badges as necessary soil conditions are present there. Strikingly, the top five of the 's-Hertogenbosch set is equally present in the Nieuwlande top ten (out of 44 different places of origin).⁴⁸ Several differences notwithstanding, this illustrates that pilgrim badges can be used as a valuable tool in assessing the relative importance of pilgrimage sites. The Zoutleeuw churchwarden accounts documented the existence of such badges (cf. *infra*), but as yet not a single specimen has been identified with certainty as coming from Zoutleeuw. Four badges, found in Bruges, Nieuwlande, Rotterdam and The Hague, depicting Saint Leonard and as yet unrelated to a shrine devoted to him, have already been proposed as possibly coming from Zoutleeuw.⁴⁹ Although this remains hypothetical, a further analysis might confirm this for at least two specimen found in Nieuwlande (cf. *infra*). Along with other sites where two additional badges were found, this would place Zoutleeuw at the bottom of the top 30 (out of 44). Furthermore, it would suggest that pilgrims came to Zoutleeuw all the way from Zeeland, entailing a maximum radius of around 100 kilometers. As far as it is possible to use this evidence as well as the 1555 critique to establish the geographical scope of the Zoutleeuw cult, it seems safe to assume that Saint Leonard was especially venerated by inhabitants of the town and its surroundings. Much like what has been established for Delft, most voluntary pilgrims were probably able to do the trip in a

⁴⁷ Kruij, 'GISwerk'; idem, 'Het Bossche mirakelboek in kaart gebracht'; idem, 'Pilgrim badges'.

⁴⁸ Compare Kruij, 'Het Bossche mirakelboek in kaart gebracht,' p. 17, with van Heeringen, Koldewey & Gaalman, *Heiligen uit de modder*, passim. The 's-Hertogenbosch top five is: Ninove (27), Aachen (18), Maastricht (12), Geraardsbergen (10) and Neuss (10). The Zeeland top ten is: Geraardsbergen (101), Ninove (50), Wilsnack (31), Wezemaal (30), Santiago de Compostella (27), Maastricht (21), Aachen (21), Saint-Hubert (17), Canterbury (16) and Neuss (15).

⁴⁹ Van Beuningen & Koldewey, *Heilig en Profaan*, p. 178, figs. 276, 277 and 278, and van Beuningen, Koldewey & Kicken, *Heilig en Profaan 2*, p. 277, fig. 1188.

day's journey (for instance from Kuringen), with occasional exceptions from further away (such as Nieuwlande).⁵⁰

The later middle ages also saw quite a lot of forced pilgrimage. A third source type that can be used to deduce a general idea of popular pilgrimage destinations are the lists of shrines that were chosen in sentences of judicial pilgrimages. This was a form of correctional punishment that was particularly popular in the Netherlands throughout the fifteenth century, both imposed by ecclesiastical and secular law courts. In such cases, the convict was obliged to fulfill one or more pilgrimages to destinations chosen by the authorities in question. Although these punishments could be bought off to a price in proportion to the distance, interestingly, the destinations assigned coincide with the most renowned destinations. Important shrines with international reputations such as Rome, Milan, Santiago de Compostella, Rocamadour and Cologne figure frequently in the condemnations.⁵¹ In principle this type of source material should therefore also be applicable in order to map a network of chosen destinations in the Low Countries. However, most law courts chose faraway destinations, not only in order to collect more money, but also to remove the condemned from the local civic society for a sufficient period of time. For instance, the destinations within the Netherlands that were chosen by the city of Brussels only form a mere 1,3% of all the places (11 sentences, 1403-1516). In Leuven this figure was slightly higher, yet still rather limited (4,4%, 75 sentences, 1404-1583).⁵² The list of shrines that were chosen within the Netherlands seems to concur with a hierarchy that can be deduced from other sources, including the aforementioned pilgrim badges. The cities of Geraardsbergen, Halle, 's-Hertogenbosch and Maastricht seem to occur most frequently and were key shrines in the Netherlands. So far, however, only one other sentence in relation to Zoutleeuw is known, apart from the previously mentioned series of judicial pilgrimages from Maastricht (45 kilometers) between 1367 and 1377. On 7 September 1520 two men from Neeroeteren were condemned to a pilgrimage to Saint Leonard in Zoutleeuw (some 56 kilometers away), of which they brought back proof on 17 September of that year.⁵³ The general absence from records is all the more

⁵⁰ Verhoeven, *Devotie en negotie*, pp. 123-127.

⁵¹ The best overviews for the late medieval Low Countries are van Cauwenbergh, *Les pèlerinages expiatoires*, esp. pp. 138-139, and Van Herwaarden, *Opgelegde bedevaarten*. For the early modern period most information is provided by De Brouwer, *Kerkelijke rechtspraak*, esp. vol. 1, pp. 224-232.

⁵² See Vanhemelryck, 'Strafbedevaarten in Brabant,' pp. 127 and 131.

⁵³ Van Herwaarden, *Opgelegde bedevaarten*, pp. 486-487, notes 6 and 7, and p. 703. Many thanks to Jan van Herwaarden, for sharing his additional data with me in a written communication of 4 April 2017.

striking, since the city of Brussels, for instance, sent several convicts to Tienen and Sint-Truiden, two cities between which Zoutleeuw is located.⁵⁴ Furthermore, the destinations chosen in the Campine area were often of a far more local or regional character. The city of Turnhout (1502-1561) indeed sent several convicts to shrines in Aarschot and Wezemaal. Although these places were only located a mere 30 or 35 kilometers away from Zoutleeuw, Saint Leonard never figured in the Turnhout lists.⁵⁵ Neither did it in other cities such as Antwerp, Leuven, Tienen or Vilvoorde.⁵⁶

1.2.2 (Re-)establishment as pilgrimage site

Although the different source types treated above reveal little as to the geographical scope of Zoutleeuw's popularity, they can however be used to make chronological deductions. The town's poor presence in the lists of judicial pilgrimages is disappointing at first sight, but might also be revealing. It is not possible to explain this by invoking Saint Leonard's particular reputation to free prisoners, as other shrines devoted to him in Saint-Léonard-de-Noblat (France) and Dudzele (Flanders) did receive many more penitential pilgrims.⁵⁷ Can this conspicuous absence then be interpreted as an indication of the late development of Zoutleeuw as a pilgrimage site in comparison to the other localities that did figure in the lists? Although the climax in terms of numbers of judgments with judicial pilgrimages varied locally - in Brussels it lay in the 1430s and early 1440s, in Leuven around 1500 - the general evidence at hand makes abundantly clear that the overall high point lay in the fifteenth century, and that it disappeared nearly completely early in the next century.⁵⁸ The Brussels peak definitely preceded the 1442 consecration and perhaps the absence in the lists of other cities can be considered revealing of Zoutleeuw as still developing its reputation as destination for pilgrims. After all, as mentioned above the only contemporary reference to the cult outside of the city itself dates to 1555.

⁵⁴ Vanhemelryck, 'Strafbedevaarten in Brabant,' p. 155.

⁵⁵ Peeters, 'Kempense zoengedingen,' esp. pp. 56-64.

⁵⁶ To the references cited in the previous footnotes can be added Brouwers, *De kriminaliteit te Antwerpen*; Roobaert, 'Brusselse bedevaarders'; Vandevenne, *De criminaliteit in de hoofdmeierij van Tienen*.

⁵⁷ Buyle *et al.*, *Brabantse bouwmeesters*, p. 38.

⁵⁸ Vanhemelryck, 'Strafbedevaarten in Brabant,' p. 151; Peeters, 'Kempense zoengedingen,' p. 64.

A confrontation with further evidence provided by the analysis of the churchwarden accounts both confirms and refines this chronology. Firstly, the pilgrim badge found in Nieuwlande dates to the late fifteenth century at the earliest, which ties in with the earliest mention of such paraphernalia in the Zoutleeuw accounts in March 1478, when for the first time a payment is made for the production of *Sijnte Leonaerts tekenen* to the goldsmith Bartholomeeus vander Moelen (act. 1469 - d. 1490-1491).⁵⁹ Secondly, whereas the 1442 consecration charter of Saint Leonard's chapel expressed the hope "that the faithful Christians [would] be encouraged in their devotion, prayer and pilgrimage," and the rooms installed above it could be seen as an expression of the same desire (cf. supra), the first pilgrims only start to occur in the accounts nearly four decades later. Until then, payments to an extensive group of people formed yearly recurring costs for the procession, including trumpeters, pipers, lutenists, actors, walk-ons, jesters, bell-ringers and torch-bearers, either paid in kind or in wine, beer, bread, sausages and cheese. Pilgrims only got included in this rich list with the Pentecost celebration of 1480 and from then on are rewarded with drinks and food on a yearly basis.⁶⁰ This does not necessarily mean that pilgrims were only present in Zoutleeuw after 1480, because it is certainly possible that this particular part of the costs were not specified in the accounts before, perhaps because a separate record was kept or simply because there was no money involved.⁶¹ Yet, it cannot be a mere coincidence that they occur about the same time as the first reference to pilgrim badges, and the fact that the churchwardens started to explicitly write it down suggests an intensification at the very least.

Due to the nature of entries, the payments in relation to the pilgrims do not allow a quantification of their numbers. Yet, from 1490 onwards the accounts also record the amount of grain used for the baking of the bread that was distributed to the pilgrims at Pentecost. This quickly rose from the initial 2 *halster* (ca. 60 litres) in 1490 to 2,5

⁵⁹ KR 1477, fol. 219v (March 1478): "Item aen Meuijs vander Moelen van Sijnte Leonaerts tekenen te makene."

⁶⁰ KR 1479, fol. 266 (May 1480): "Item op den selve dach [smaendaechs in dij Puynxendaghe] verteert dij speelliede ende die dienaers ende die pelgrijme tsamen 15 st." In the same account, the payment received for a pall of 3,5 *stuivers* for a certain "beaten pelgrym" (fol. 257v) was also registered by the churchwardens, though it is not clear whether this is a personal name or referring to a beatific pilgrim who died in Zoutleeuw. The next references to pilgrims, all at Pentecost, include KR 1482, fol. 93; KR 1483, fol. 118v; KR 1484, fol. 139; KR 1485, fol. 193; Kr. 1486, fol. 254; KR 1487, fol. 303v; KR 1489, fol. 325v.

⁶¹ Compare, for instance, with the methodological debate on the interpretation of late medieval churchwardens accounts between Burgess and Hutton: Burgess, 'Pre-Reformation churchwardens' accounts,' esp. pp. 309-310, and Hutton, 'Seasonal festivity in late medieval England,' esp. pp. 66-69.

halster (ca. 75 litres) in 1492, 3 *halster* (ca. 90 litres) in 1493, finally arriving at 4 *halster* (ca. 120 litres) in 1496 - an amount that would be maintained during the following years.⁶² It is impossible to cogently quantify these figures to absolute numbers, but it is very likely that the increasing amounts of grain reflect a growing number of pilgrims.⁶³ Lastly, the 1480s also saw the first clear and indisputable indications of miracles worked by the Zoutleeuw statue of Saint Leonard. In April 1484 the sextons were paid to ring the bells after a miracle had happened, and in May 1488 the churchwardens gave 7 *stuivers* to the pilgrim who had been miraculously released by Saint Leonard.⁶⁴ The ever increasing mentions of foreign coins between the monetary offerings from 1500 onwards furthermore suggest a broader, interregional interest, although this admittedly is not unambiguous, since Zoutleeuw was located at the border with the prince-bishopric Liège.⁶⁵ All this evidence clearly suggests that it was only in the course of the last decades of the fifteenth century that the church grew out to be a pilgrimage site of regional importance. This is all the more interesting in comparison with the economical development of Zoutleeuw, the high point of which lay in the thirteenth and early fourteenth centuries. After a first blow in the 1340s, a definitive decline set in from the 1430s onwards. A modest resurgence in 1466 proved short-lived as it irrevocably collapsed in 1484. Unsurprisingly, this general trend had

⁶² KR 1490, fol. 29v: "Item noch ghebacken te Pinxten voir die pelgheryme 2 halster." For the other entries mentioned, see KR 1492, fol. 75; KR 1493, fol. 107v; KR 1496, fol. 157v.

⁶³ Estimated calculations of the average daily individual grain consumption range from 0,77 litres in sixteenth-century Antwerp to 0,98 litres in fourteenth- and fifteenth-century Bruges. See Dehaeck, *Voedselconsumptie te Brugge in de middeleeuwen*, and Vandenbroeke, 'Aardappelteelt en aardappelverbruik,' pp. 28-29. Considering these data, the amounts of grain baked by the Zoutleeuw church fabric would have allowed to nourish 61 to 78 pilgrims in 1490 and 122 to 156 in 1496. However, rather than a full day's meal it is much more likely that the church only provided for one or even just a partial meal, which would at least double the calculations to 122 to 156 pilgrims in 1490 and 245 to 312 in 1496. Furthermore, as it is unclear whether every single pilgrim received a (piece of) bread, these calculations should be considered as absolute minima. The number of pilgrim badges that were bought in these years indeed indicate that the churchwardens' expectations lay considerably higher: 312 in 1492, 768 in 1495 and 1152 in 1497 (cf. infra).

⁶⁴ KR 1483, fol. 116v (April 1484): "Item gegeven den custers van luyden doen Sinte Leonart mirakel deede, 3 stuivers"; KR 1487, fol. 303 (May 1488): "Item den pelgherym gegeven dair Sinte Leonart mirakel over ghedaen heeft aen sijnen cost die hij verteert heeft met sijnen gheselle tot Lijnen Pels 7 stuivers." An earlier entry in April 1460 might also refer to a miracle, but the terminology used is ambiguous: KR 1459, fol. 210v: "Item om gode gegeven Willeken die Sinte Leonart verloest hadde, 30 groten."

⁶⁵ KR 1500, fol. 13v mentions for the first time "haechmunten." The online *Woordenboek der Nederlandsche Taal* defines a *haagmunt* as a coin that has not been issued or ratified by the government. Later accounts also refer to "Liège money" (*Luydicks gelde*). See for instance KR 1507, fol. 12v. On illegal or broken coins as offered gifts, see also Nilson, 'The medieval experience at the shrine,' pp. 110-111.

baleful influences on the demographic development and caused depopulation.⁶⁶ Despite these circumstances, it seems that the churchwardens did make serious efforts to receive the pilgrims well with food, drinks, money and souvenirs, and thus - as a hoped-for consequence - have the word spread about what happened at their shrine.

1.2.3 Assessing devotion: offerings in kind

A quantitative analysis of the churchwarden accounts allows to sketch this evolution in figures. Such an approach is not new in the context of the debate on piety in the Low Countries, in which the evolution of income figures has been used to draw conclusions about devotion (cf. *infra*). Although most scholars included only monetary revenues, it must be emphasized that offerings in kind were equally widespread, as is amply illustrated in contemporary imagery. The final panel concluding the cycle on the life and cult of Saint Rumbold in Mechelen is illustrative of the fact that donations mostly included items that were useful to the church in question, such as grain, wax or wine, which could either be sold or used in the masses (fig. 11). Two canons, sitting in front of the saint's tomb, are depicted receiving various kinds of offerings given by pilgrims in return for the kissing of the saint's reliquary. Previous visitors left coins, which lay scattered upon the table, and the pilgrim depicted in the act of kissing is handing over a wax candle and a bag, probably of grain. A woman to his right holds a caged chicken, while on the left a man arrives with a sheep slung around his neck. A particular category of offerings in kind is formed by *ex voto*'s, offered objects or images that always stood in direct relation with the favour that was begged of a saint, or with a miracle that had happened. For instance, pilgrims hoping for the healing of their legs generally offered an image of that body part and cripples that were able to walk again often left their crutches at the shrine. As these objects were often made of materials that were easy to adapt, such as wax or metal, they could either be used or cashed in by the church fabric. Still, they often remained untouched at their places in or near the sanctuary, because large quantities of *ex voto*'s functioned as striking proofs and illustrations of the popularity and power of the saint to whom they were dedicated.⁶⁷ A scene depicted on the central outer wings of the 1516 Antwerp

⁶⁶ The economical development of Zoutleeuw is discussed in great detail by Peeters, 'De betekenis der stad Zoutleeuw'; van Uytven, 'Zoutleeuw, een kleine "hoofdstad van Brabant"'; idem, 'Laken uit Zoutleeuw'.

⁶⁷ Verhoeven, *Devotie en negotie*, pp. 139-144. For *ex voto*'s, see for instance Signori, 'Kultwerbung - Endzeitängste - Judenhaß,' p. 441; Holmes, 'Ex-votos. Materiality, memory, and cult'; Blick, 'Votives, images,

altarpiece in Västerås (Sweden) illustrates the prominent display of precious gifts hung on a rod immediately above the altar (figs. 12a-b, compare with figs. 43, 60, 117 and 123). In Zepperen the donated crutches were even repeated in trompe l'oeuil mural paintings in Saint Genoveva's chapel, just beneath a cycle depicting her *vita* (fig. 13). Similar practices are extensively documented at Zoutleeuw. The church still possesses a fifteenth-century offertory box for grain and the accounts sporadically registered the amounts donated, recorded most regularly in the early decades of the sixteenth century.⁶⁸ Other materials that were offered include wool or flax, but also animals such as pigs or poultry.⁶⁹ Finally, the accounts also refer to *ex voto*'s. In January 1498 a rod for iron specimen - a material that might well have been particular to the cult of Saint Leonard - is installed near the chapel, which was followed by another rod for wax figurines in June 1509.⁷⁰ Such objects, including figurines, legs and crutches, are clearly depicted as hanging near the statue on the 1612 painting commemorating a miraculous healing worked by Saint Leonard (fig. 109). The most striking *ex voto* gift recorded in the accounts, however, is a suit of armour hanging in front of Saint Leonard in 1490, which was clearly cherished as an armourer was paid to clean it. On the Västerås panels a similar gift proudly hangs above the altar (fig. 12b). Yet, even

interaction and pilgrimage'; idem, 'Votives'. For a classification of the various possible sorts of *ex voto*'s, see van der Velden, *The donor's image*, pp. 213-222. For crutches in particular, see Craig, 'Crutches'. For a recent and broad, cross-cultural treatment of the subject, see Weinryb, *Ex voto*.

⁶⁸ The first recording is KR 1466, fol. 354v: "ontfaen van gheoffert coren." The next series of examples only dates from the sixteenth century: KR 1503, fol. 4v; KR 1504, fol. 3v; KR 1505, fol. 3; KR 1506, fol. 4; KR 1507, fol. 3; KR 1508, fol. 3; KR 1511, fol. 3; KR 1520, fol. 3v. In the decades following 1520 no other examples are recorded. For the offertory box, see BALaT object nr. 28523.

⁶⁹ For instance KR 1516, fols. 10r-v: "Item ontfangen van enen verkene dat Sinte Leonart geoffert was 43 st... Item ontfangen van wolle dij geoffert was 19,5 st 9 g"; KR 1525, fol. 116: "Item ontfangen tgelt van 3 kieken dij geoffert sijn 3 st 6 g. Item ontfangen van 7 steen 5,5 lb wollen dij geoffert is... Item ontfanc van vlasche welc geoffert is gewest 11 st 3 g."

⁷⁰ KR 1497, fol. 196: "twee gerden metter toebehoirten welcke staen voir Sinte Cristoffele voir Sinte Leonarts choer dairmen dat yser aen hanghen sal"; KR 1508, fols. 292v, 294 and 297: "vanden scalen te makene voer Sinte Leonart daer men dat was op set ende aehanck," "vanden yseren in te houwen in Sinte Leonarts choer daer dwas aen hinck," and "3 kerbeelen oft yseren daer dwas op steet voer Sinte Leonart." Compare for instance with an entry in KR 1592, fol. 264v: "Vercofft... 283 pont yseren mannekens ende beenkens." Van der Velden, *The donor's image*, pp. 261-262 claims that in medieval and early modern times iconic votive gifts made of iron were only given to Saint Leonard.

such prestigious gifts had monetary value and three years later the wardens sold the armour for 2 Rhenish guilders.⁷¹

In principle these gifts in kind could equally be considered as indicators of evolutions in piety, but in this particular case the available evidence does not allow a well-founded analysis. The *ex voto*'s themselves have long since disappeared and the accounts are rarely if ever clear on the precise provenance of the objects that were sold. The revenues from devotional gifts - both in species and in kind - were yearly registered by the churchwardens in a separate section with extraordinary income, initially called the revenues 'from various (or daily) accidents' (*inkomsten van alderhans* (or *daghelijcs*) *toevalle*), later 'from offerings and accidents' (*van offer ende toevalle*).⁷² However, this section contains much more than the purely devotional gifts and is often a collection of diverse revenues that were not structural in nature, contrary to the more or less fixed income from taxes or the rents of houses and meadows. Although the entries occasionally make clear that the objects sold were offered to the church, such specification is more the exception than the rule. Moreover, it is certain that a lot of objects that were sold actually came from structural incomes in kind or unused building materials.⁷³ As a consequence, revenues from the sale of materials, grain or animals cannot be used for a long-term quantitative analysis. Nevertheless, the material gathered here ties in with the trend that has been sketched above. In 1498 the rod for the metal *ex voto*'s is installed, followed by the one for wax in 1509 and from 1503 onwards the grain offers start to occur. It is highly plausible that these were consequences of the intensification in the later decades of the fifteenth century.

1.2.4 Quantifying devotion: offerings in species

As has been mentioned above, the debate on the evolution of piety in the Low Countries has mostly been based on studies of monetary evolutions. It must be emphasized that the present study does not posit a directly proportional relationship

⁷¹ KR 1490, fol. 44 (March): "Item den wapenmekere betaelt voir tharnas scoen te maken dat voir Sinte Lenart hinct, tsamen 6 st"; KR 1493, fol. 114: "Item ontfangen vanden harnas dat voir Sinte Leonart ghehangen heeft van Andries Ryserman 2 rijnse gulden."

⁷² From KR 1523, fol. 64 onwards.

⁷³ See for instance KR 1547, fol. 268: "Item vercocht 8 cappuynen die wij voer chijs ontfangen hebben."

between financial gifts and devotion, as it is maintained that the wide range of possible expressions of piety cannot be reduced to devotional liberality alone. Nevertheless, the analysis of offerings is one of the only ways in which devotion can be quantified to any extent, at the same time allowing to trace its evolution over a longer period of time. Furthermore, such an approach allows for a meaningful and congruous confrontation of the Zoutleeuw case with earlier studies, which can lead to complementary views and nuancing of the whole question of the nature and evolution of piety in the long sixteenth century. The monetary revenues that were demonstrably devotional in nature and which can be followed in the long term mainly stem from two sources: from gifts in an offertory box (*stock* or *kist*), and from the offers on various feast days. While the average village church in the Low Countries probably counted only one offertory box, urban churches often counted many more. For instance, Kortrijk's church of Saint Martin counted no less than twelve boxes.⁷⁴

The Zoutleeuw church initially had two specimen installed, as the earliest churchwarden accounts refer to 'both boxes' (*beyder stocken*).⁷⁵ The earliest records are rather vague on their placement in the church and the location cannot be securely identified. Until 1478, the only indication given is 'in the *choer*', a word that was used in the accounts to refer both to the presbytery when combined with the adjective 'high' (*inden hoghen choer*),⁷⁶ and to individual chapels within the church, such as the one dedicated to Saint Leonard (*Sijnte Leonaerts coer*) or Our Lady (*Onser Vrouwen choer*).⁷⁷ Thus, the use of "den choer" without any further specification seems odd. Nevertheless, in later years it was demonstrably used to indicate the presbytery as opposed to the nave.⁷⁸ It might seem rather unlikely that one of the offertory boxes would have been located in the presbytery, as laypeople were not allowed to enter this part of the church and thus could not donate their offerings there. A logical alternative for a place in the church that was referred to as *the chapel* would then be Saint

⁷⁴ Meindersma, 'Offerblokken in Nederland'; Meyers-Reinquin, 'Proeve tot statistische benadering,' p. 215.

⁷⁵ KR 1452, fol. 14: "Item ontfaen wyt beyden stocken ende in die Pinxen daghe al te samen 70 gripen."

⁷⁶ For instance KR 1474, fol. 162v.

⁷⁷ KR 1459, fol. 206v: "uten stocke inder choer."

⁷⁸ For instance, KR 1505, fols. 21 (March 1506) and 22v (April 1506) mention "vinsteren inden choer," which were clearly located in the presbytery as indicated by circumstantial evidence. See also KR 1509, fol. 43 (November 1509), where "den choer" as the presbytery is opposed to the nave ("boecke"). Finally, in later accounts the eagle lectern was also described as "den aer inden choer" (KR 1516, fol. 19; KR 1520, fol. 25; KR 1523, fol. 74; KR 1525, fol. 117; KR 1530, fol. 144; KR 1554, fol. 161). This piece is known to have been located in the presbytery (KR 1479, fol. 266 (May 1480): "den are staende inden hoghen coer").

Leonard's, and boxes were indeed mostly located near entrances or altars.⁷⁹ Whatever the case, the account of 1478 once more marks a turning point in the records. Then, for the first time the "box in Saint Leonard's chapel" is mentioned, apart from the "box at the doors."⁸⁰ The next year's account specified that one stood next to Saint Leonard's altar, whereas the other near the doors of the *choer*.⁸¹ It is again not entirely clear whether this refers to doors to the presbytery (such as in a rood screen) or to Saint Leonard's chapel, but the second option is plausible taking into account that the chapel itself must have been closed to from time to time.⁸² An offertory box within the church next to the chapel doors that was perhaps partially open to grant a look into the saint's sanctuary would have allowed devotees and pilgrims to donate their offer. From 1497 onwards two other boxes are documented that in later years were mostly located near the altar of Saint Blaise and the Holy Sepulchre. In 1555, finally, a fifth box was installed near the sacrament house.⁸³ No regularity in the moments or the number of times the boxes were emptied can be established, and because it is unclear when the most money was offered, it is impossible to infer seasonal variations. The boxes seem to have been emptied two to four times a year, and in most cases the accounts refer to the days around Easter, Pentecost, the feast of Saint John the Baptist (24 June) and Christmas, although other holy days also occur, such as Saint Matthew (21 September) or All Saints. Apart from the revenues from the offertory boxes, money was also collected on several feast days, probably by carrying round a collection plate or money-box. Especially the collections at Candlemas (2 February), at the occasion of Saint Leonard's procession on Whit Monday and on the feast of Saint

⁷⁹ Meindersma, 'Offerblokken in Nederland,' p. 28.

⁸⁰ KR 1478, fol. 236v: "stocke aen dy doere," "stocke in Sijnte Leonaerts coer." In the same account mention is still made of a "stocke inden koere," but it is unlikely that the one in Saint Leonard's chapel was a third, added box, as later accounts continue to mention "beyden stocken." See for instance KR 1483, fol. 110, and KR 1484, fol. 133.

⁸¹ KR 1479, fol. 258: "wytten stocke ontfanghen in Sijnte Lenaerts coer bijden autae" and "stocke aen dij coer doere." Compare with later entries in KR 1480, fol. 26: "stocke in dij kercke neven die koer doere"; KR 1481, fol. 61v: "stocke inden coer doer."

⁸² This might be suggested by the entry in KR 1471, which differentiates between the box in the chapel and the one outside of it: "Item wuyt den stocke in den choer Sijntjansmisse ontfaen ende oec wut ten stocken der buten 16,5 gripen" (KR 1471, fol. 57). On the opening and closing of shrines, see Nilson, 'The medieval experience at the shrine,' p. 100.

⁸³ KR 1497, fol. 191v: "Item vten stocke voir Sinte Blasius 4,5 stuivers. Item vten stocke voir Sinte Sebastiaen ontfangen 2 stuivers. Item noch vten stocke aen die choer doere 46 stuivers. Item noch vten stocke in Sinte Leonarts choer ontfangen 16 rijngulden." KR 1500, fol. 13v-14: "Item ontfanghen vuyten stocke voer theylich graf 1,5 stuivers 6 groten." KR 1555, fol. 199v: "Ontfangen vut Sakerments stock aen Heylich Cruys altaer opden xxiii^{en} february^a 9 stuivers 22 groten."

Leonard (6 November) constituted yearly recurring entries. In addition to these two main categories of the offertory boxes and the collections at feast days, sporadic donations made for a specific purpose were recorded by the churchwardens. These included money for a bell, or for the decoration with painting or the acquisition of altarpieces.⁸⁴

It is essential to emphasize that all the donations considered here were in principle both anonymous and voluntary gifts in an offertory box or a collection plate. This combination makes them more or less representative, contrary to revenues that were the consequence of sacramental obligations, a category on which Jacques Toussaert based most of his findings.⁸⁵ Still, some nuancing and contextualizing remarks on both terms should be made. Firstly, ‘voluntary’ is a notion open to interpretation in this period. There are clear indications that churchwardens or local clergymen actively collected offerings from pilgrims and visitors. Donation was implicitly encouraged in contemporary miracle books, such as in the printed booklet issued around 1518 by the shrine of Saint Alena in Vorst. The narratives recount miracles happening after pilgrims had made their offering, with or without encouragement from a present churchwarden.⁸⁶ Although representations of offertory boxes are conspicuously absent in contemporary imagery, collecting churchwardens or clergymen are often represented. While pilgrims of various social strata are depicted kneeling and praying in front of the altar, representatives of the church are usually shown standing next to the altar on which coins lie. Clergymen are thus represented in the panels of Mechelen and Västerås mentioned above (figs. 11 & 12, see also fig. 60), while a churchwarden is included in a 1527 panel with scenes of the life and cult of Saint Alena (fig. 14).⁸⁷ Their presence near the shrine might have urged visitors in donating money. Furthermore, the articles of association of many guilds often included stipulations that obliged their

⁸⁴ For instance KR 1453, fol. 36v: “Item dat ter clocken geoffert was ter Scoliere van paten ende peteren 13 gripen”; KR 1460, fol. 244v: “Item vanden offere vander schellen dy ter scolieren hinc 16,5 gripen”; KR 1479, fol. 258: “Item ontfanghen van Roeben Cloets dat hij te hulpen ghegeven heeft tot Sijnte Catelijnen tafele te stofferene 3 gulden”; KR 1483, fol. 111: “Item ontfanghen vander deeckene Sinte Leonarts te hulpen sijnen backen te makene 2,5 rijnsgulden.”

⁸⁵ Compare with the remarks by Marnef, *Antwerpen in de tijd van de Reformatie*, pp. 83-84.

⁸⁶ Brussels, KBR, IV 42.129A (*Legende van Sinte Alena*), fols. 145 and 146v-147.

⁸⁷ Other examples in relation to the cult of Saint Adrian in Geraardsbergen are known. See for instance the miniature from the *Légende de Saint Adrien* in van der Velden, *The donor's image*, p. 220, fig. 108. Compare with the miniatures in the abbey's mid-fifteenth-century breviary, now in the abbey of Maredsous, Ms. F°3/1-4, vol. 4, fol. 1 (BALaT object nr. 10070815).

members to make an offer on the feast day of their patron saint.⁸⁸ This was also the case with the Zoutleeuw arquebusiers' guild, erected in 1515 and devoted to Saint Leonard. The guild's extended statutes, issued in 1537, mentioned that "every member will go to the church on Saint Leonard's day to attend a sung mass that the guild will provide for in Saint Leonard's chapel, and that everyone will bring his offer there."⁸⁹ Nevertheless, it is likely that the money collected at these instances was destined for the guild's own purse, among others to pay the priest or the maintenance of the altar. As a consequence, such offerings were not recorded in the churchwarden accounts.⁹⁰ In any case, membership was not available to everyone and it is far from certain that such statutory obligations were actually observed. Moreover, every member or pilgrim determined how much he or she offered. The voluntary character of the offered money counters the possible critique that changing revenues would not necessarily reflect evolutions in devotion, but rather in wealth of the people. Although it is indeed not desirable to assume a directly proportional relationship between offered money and devotion, it is equally wrong to posit a similar relation between increasing wages and increasing devotional revenues.

Secondly, apart from their voluntary character it is also important to underline that donations were to a large extent anonymous. Although in principle other parameters exist to map the evolution of certain devotions, including foundations of (anniversary) masses and various forms of testamentary dispositions, the dangers of interference with other motives such as social prestige loom large, precisely because the individual memory of the founder was their *raison d'être*.⁹¹ Generally, in the Zoutleeuw accounts, personal monetary gifts were recorded explicitly as such, including the name in question, and as a rule they were considerably higher than other gifts. For these reasons, such gifts will not be considered here. Interestingly, even if smaller monetary gifts - under one guilder - were not put in the offertory box, they were mostly

⁸⁸ Van Autenboer, *De kaarten van de schuttersgilden*, vol. 2, pp. 535-539.

⁸⁹ "Item op Sinte Leonaerts dagh sal elcke geselle... te kercke gaen tot eender gesonghe misse, die de Camer oft Gulde alsdan sal doen singhen in Sinte Leonaerts choir, ende dat eenigelyck daer sal brenghen synen offer..." Document published by Bets, *Zout-Leeuw*, vol. 2, pp. 284-292, quote on p. 288.

⁹⁰ The fact that the Zoutleeuw archers' guild donated money to the church fabric in 1490 for the altarpiece of Saint Sebastian shows that such corporations had their own funds and bookkeeping. KR 1490, fol. 14: "Item ontfanghen vanden ghesworen hantboeschcutters te hulpen vander tafelen van Sinte Sebastiane 5 rijngulden." This guild's articles of association have not been preserved.

⁹¹ See for instance Mol's research on testaments and Trio's investigations of foundations and anniversary masses: Mol, 'Friezen en het hiernamaals,' and Trio, 'Moordende concurrentie op de memoriemarkt'. Compare with Suykerbuyk, 'Reformation, renovation and commemoration'.

registered as anonymous, usually identified as “from a good man” or “a good heart.”⁹² Although it might be suspected that the churchwardens simply did not deem such low gifts worthy to be registered *nominatim*, other examples make clear that this could definitely happen at the express wish of the giver, presumably because of pious reasons. For instance, in 1508 a woman modestly contributing to the polychromy of the previously mentioned altarpiece of the Illustrious Brotherhood of Our Blessed Lady from 's-Hertogenbosch desired to remain unknown.⁹³

In order to get an idea of how the cult of Saint Leonard at Zoutleeuw evolved through time, it is instructive to single out the revenues that can be directly linked to that particular cult from those related to other devotions, feast days and offertory boxes. The revenues from the cult of Saint Leonard are comprised of the gifts in the offertory boxes near Saint Leonard's altar throughout the year, the revenues from the collection on his feast day (6 November), and the money collected at the Whit Monday procession when the miraculous statue was carried around through town. Its share within the total of devotional revenues is uncertain in the earliest years, as the accounts do not specify where precisely the money came from. In most cases the churchwardens just recorded a total sum gathered from both boxes, without making clear just how much had been offered in honor of Saint Leonard. The figures from the first accounts therefore need to be considered as minimal. As mentioned above, it is only in the account of 1479 that the entries contain precise references to how much the churchwardens found in the box next to Saint Leonard's altar (*in Sijnte Lenaerts coer bijden autae*). This specification in itself already suggests that the financial importance of these revenues was increasing at that moment. Furthermore, the rise towards 1500 is clear, with a striking peak in the account of 1483. From the late 1490s onwards the share of the revenues generated by the cult of Saint Leonard within the total amount of devotional revenues gradually grew and from the late 1490s onwards it took up a portion of 80 to nearly 100% (graph 1). By subdividing the total revenues into its constituent parts it becomes clear that the money collected at the occasion of the Whit Monday procession formed the most important share by far (graph 2). Next to the more or less fixed income from taxes or the rents of houses and meadows, the cult of Saint Leonard grew out to be an ever more important financial source for the

⁹² “Van enen goeden man van offer” or “van eender goeder herten.” See for instance KR 1523, fol. 64; KR 1516, fol. 10v; KR 1520, fol. 13; KR 1540, fol. 209; KR 1572, fol. 519v.

⁹³ “Item ontfanghen van eender vrouwen die des nyet bekent weesen en woude in behulpe Onser Liever Vrouwen tafel te schilderen, 28 st.” See Halsema-Kubes, Lemmens & de Werd, *Adriaen van Wesel*, p. 65.

church fabric. Towards the end of the fifteenth century both categories had the same worth, and the latter even surpassed the former in the first decades of the sixteenth century (graph 3). This again correlates with the earlier observations that cult of Saint Leonard became more and more popular within the Zoutleeuw devotional landscape in the last decades of the fifteenth century.

When analyses such as these rely on financial data, it is of primary importance to consider monetary depreciation, inflation and the financial policies of the relevant governments. Yet, rises and declines are not only visible in the curve depicting the nominal figures, but also in the one converted by means of a calculated real wage index (graph 4).⁹⁴ Also, the changing proportion between the revenues of the cult of Saint Leonard and the fixed revenues of the church fabric is telling: whereas the fixed income remained more or less stable until 1478, the revenues from the cult had already been increasing for some years. The temporary regression in the late 1480s and early 1490s probably have to be explained by the fact that in September 1488 the town of Zoutleeuw together with several other Brabantine cities joined the County of Flanders in its rebellion against Maximilian of Austria. As a consequence, the town and its immediate surroundings found itself in a state of war, of which they soon experienced the disastrous effects.⁹⁵ The churchwarden accounts of these years indeed featured notably more people in the lists with financial exemptions (*cortsel*), in these cases specified as a result of damages caused by armed men (*mannen van wapenen*).⁹⁶ In addition, the rebel provinces were subjected to a pernicious financial policy, pursued by the central government to finance the war. All the same, such factors cannot account for the rise that preceded these events. Maximilian's first currency reforms only dated to 1485, more than a year after the first peak.⁹⁷ Neither can the increasing revenues be explained by demographic evolutions, as population figures of Zoutleeuw

⁹⁴ Van Der Wee, *The growth of the Antwerp market*, vol. 3, pp. 26-27, Graph 7. The real wage index was calculated on the basis of the series of prices published by Herman Van Der Wee and the information on wages that has been made available by The Global Price and Income History Group. See respectively Van Der Wee, 'Prijzen en lonen als ontwikkelingsvariabelen,' pp. 436-447, and Jacks & Arroyo Abad, 'Belgium wages 1366-1603'. Many thanks to Erik Aerts for his valuable suggestions.

⁹⁵ Van Uytven, 'Crisis als cesuur,' and Willems, 'Militaire organisatie en staatsvorming,' p. 266.

⁹⁶ KR 1483, fol. 104r-v; KR 1485, fol. 178v; KR 1486, fols. 235-236; KR 1487, fols. 290r-v; KR 1490, fols. 30-31; KR 1491, fol. 52v-53v and 67; KR 1492, fol. 74 and 89v; KR 1493, fol. 106v; KR 1495, fol. 130v; KR 1496, fol. 156v; KR 1497, fol. 184v; KR 1498, fol. 211v.

⁹⁷ Van Houtte, 'Handel en verkeer,' pp. 198-199; Van Uytven, 'Crisis als cesuur,' pp. 434-435; Spufford, 'Debasement of the coinage'. A complete overview of the monetary ordinances issued in the Low Countries under Maximilian is provided by van Gelder, 'De muntpolitiek van Philips de Schone'.

and the Hageland region as a whole show a clear downward tendency towards 1500 (graph 5).⁹⁸ Therefore, it is worthwhile to have a look at the agency of the churchwardens in this period of flux. How did they respond to these trends? And how must the altarpiece of Saint Leonard be seen within this changing context?

1.3 The promotion of devotion

1.3.1 Cultic awareness

The figures assembled above and the graphs drawn from them depict an evolution in devotion or pious expression. This data could suggest an increasing piety on the part of the population at large, but it certainly depicts a rising devotional liberality in the last decades of the fifteenth century. At Zoutleeuw, the cult of Saint Leonard thus demonstrably became an important though variable source of income for the church fabric and all the evidence at hand suggests that the later 1470s and early 1480s marked an important turning point. The years 1478 and 1479 in particular seem to have been of critical importance, and there are clear indications that the churchwardens must have been aware of the developments in that respect. Throughout the 1470s the accounts increasingly record precisely how much money was found where and, most importantly, from 1478 onwards they start to record donations from the offertory box in Saint Leonard's chapel. As argued above, this meticulous record keeping suggests that the wardens were aware that the financial importance of these particular revenues was increasing at that moment. Similar conclusions can be drawn from the sudden appearance of the pilgrim badges in 1478.

This increased awareness is most clearly seen in the construction, begun in April 1479, of a building described as “the new room (*camere*) behind Saint Leonard's chapel (*coer*).”⁹⁹ To judge by the acquisitions for this particular room it functioned as a space

⁹⁸ Compare with van Uytven, 'In de schaduwen van de Antwerpse groei,' p. 186, table IV, and idem, *Geschiedenis van Brabant*, pp. 236-237, tables 6.5 and 6.7.

⁹⁹ KR 1478, fol. 246v: “dij nieuwe camere staende achter Sijnte Leonarts coer.” The construction is amply documented in KR 1478, KR 1479 and KR 1480, *passim*. All the recorded uses of the term ‘Saint Leonard's room’ postdate 1479, confirming the distinction between the chapel and the room. See for instance KR 1577, fol. 473: “Goort Everaerts met twee knechten hebben op Sinte Leonaerts choore ende camer gedect.” Thus,

for administration and safekeeping. In 1486 a *contoir* (cabinet) was bought, followed by a treasure-chest in 1490. Later it also stored the precious Saint Leonard's play, written on parchment.¹⁰⁰ As such, it can be identified as the churchwarden's room (*meesters camer* or *camer der fabriicken*).¹⁰¹ It was used for the storage of their archives, books, money and other valuables, and it possibly also served as their meeting venue and a room where they organized meals.¹⁰² Interestingly, the accounts variably refer to it as "Saint Leonard's room" (*cameren van Sinte Leonarts, Sinte Leonaerts camere*), which clearly emphasizes the wardens' self-identification as the "guardians of Saint Leonard" - an office that arguably had become more important due to the increased attention to the patron saint.

Both this heightened importance of the cult and the churchwardens' awareness of it were formally expressed in the structure. A systematic analysis of references to Saint Leonard's room throughout the accounts reveals that it was used to indicate the building with facade in flamboyant gothic style to the east of Saint Leonard's chapel (fig. 15). Its location right next to the chapel would indeed have been very convenient for that purpose. Furthermore, at its northern side the room bordered one of the entrances to the church.¹⁰³ Although today the wall between the choir and Saint Leonard's room is provided with a window, both a unique 1851 photograph and a contemporary lithograph show a door at that very place, indicating that it must have served as an entrance before the radical restoration of the choir from 1861 (figs. 16 & 17).¹⁰⁴

contrary to what has been claimed by several scholars, including Rousseau, 'Notes pour servir à l'histoire de la sculpture,' pp. 440 and 443, the two terms cannot be used as synonyms.

¹⁰⁰ KR 1486, fol. 252: "een contoair inder cameran van Sinte Leonarts"; KR 1490, fol. 42v: "vanden trisore te volmakene, staende inder cameran van Sinte Leonarts"; KR 1504, fol. 20v: "Item betaelt Henricken Strookorff om tspel van Sinte Leonart te scrijven op franchyn, dwelck altyt blijven sal in Sinte Leonaerts camere 12 st." Compare for instance with KR 1533, fol. 189: "dye keste in Sint Leonart camer."

¹⁰¹ KR 1555, fol. 208. Compare with KR 1503, fol. 29, where it is described as "our room" (*ons camere*), corresponding to the perspective of the churchwardens who wrote the account. A 1625 church inventory describes it as the *tresorij oft camer der fabriicken*, see De Ridder, 'Een oud inventaris der Sint-Leonarduskerk,' p. 47. It is unclear if the *treserije* or *tresorije* mentioned in earlier accounts referred to the same building. That designation might also have referred to a room located elsewhere, which functioned as sacristy.

¹⁰² KR 1573, fol. 403: "den ontbijt ende noenmael inde camer voer mans ende vrouwen die opden offer ende metten wasch voert gheseten hebben."

¹⁰³ See for instance KR 1530, fol. 149: "soldernagelen totter doeren vander stegen tusschen die kercke ende die camere van Sinte Leonarts."

¹⁰⁴ For the photograph and the context in which it originated, see Joseph & Schwilden, *A l'aube de la photographie*, pp. 30-42 and 88, fig. 5, and Andries & Aerts, *Camera Gothica*, pp. 80-101.

The building's facade is arguably the most conspicuously and emphatically ornamented part of the whole church building's exterior. The stonemason Henneken from the quarry at Gobertange supplied the necessary parts, and the accounts thoroughly document the acquisition of various specific decorative and structural elements, including *water-* and *dachlijsten*, *spersteene*, *sammaranden*, *avinckels metten perlerkens* and *rabats*.¹⁰⁵ In fact, this is an understated, though expressive illustration of what Matt Kavalier has labeled "Renaissance Gothic," a term with which he refers to the new, elaborate gothic ornaments with emphatic tracery motifs that were developed in the Low Countries in the late fifteenth century. According to Kavalier, such forms were consciously located at important places on buildings, which through "the authority of ornament" were given an important hierarchic position within the whole of the construction.¹⁰⁶ Thus, the decorative gaudery on the facade of the Zoutleeuw churchwardens' room identified the space behind it as the beating heart that ran the sacred space and thereby strongly asserted important status of the churchwardens that gathered within.

This is all the more interesting for our present purposes, as it fully coincides with the commission and installation of Saint Leonard's altarpiece. I will argue in the following paragraphs that there are strong indications that the churchwardens responded to these evolutions. I will demonstrate how they actively promoted the local cult of Saint Leonard in the wider region at precisely this point in time, by means of various techniques and media. In part, this promotion campaign might have happened by order of the collegiate chapter. Although there are no indications that the canons were entitled to part of the revenues from the cult and all of the income probably went to the fund of the church fabric, it is not unreasonable to assume that both institutions closely worked together. Collegiate chapters are indeed known to have intensely cherished the cult of their patron saints, and they often served as principal commissioners of construction works.¹⁰⁷ Yet, the role of the Zoutleeuw chapter in these matters cannot easily be assessed, as the *acta capituli* have only been preserved since 1593.¹⁰⁸ Therefore, I will continue to focus on church administration fabric as the body

¹⁰⁵ KR 1479, fol. 265 (May 1480). For the exact meaning of these terms, see Doperé, 'L'extraction, la taille et la mise en oeuvre,' p. 95, and idem, 'L'exploitation du calcaire gréseux,' pp. 125-128.

¹⁰⁶ Kavalier, 'Renaissance Gothic in the Netherlands'; idem, *Renaissance Gothic*.

¹⁰⁷ Vroom, *Financiering van de kathedraalbouw*, p. 40; Somers, *Amici nunc sicut et antea*, pp. 157-159.

¹⁰⁸ It is possible, however, that an in-depth analysis of the accounts of the chapter, would provide more information on the precise share of the chapter.

that maintained and decorated the sacred space of Saint Leonard's church, and the sources it produced.

1.3.2 Spreading the word: badges and indulgences

A first indication pointing to a campaign of active promotion in precisely this period are the previously mentioned pilgrim badges to which, as mentioned before, the first reference in the accounts dates to March 1478. Apart from being an important tool for modern scholars to assess the dispersion around a certain shrine, contemporaries attached much value to them. For some they were straightforward souvenirs to the pilgrimage they had completed, whereas to others they became the subjects of active devotion. This variable consideration led to different uses and functions of the badges. They were not only manifestly worn on clothing as 'significant badges' to express religious feelings or convictions and even social status, but they were also kept as amulets or relics that partially carried the thaumaturgic powers of the cult object they represented. They could be sewn into devotional manuscripts or even cast on church bells.¹⁰⁹ These paraphernalia strongly reflected the ambitions of the issuing shrine. At the very least they were highly visible markers of the cult that could spread its name and fame in a wider region. They were indeed pre-eminent promotional tools. Despite the lack of evidence, it is unclear whether such badges were available in Zoutleuw before; as noted above, the first mention in an account does not necessarily mean that it did not already exist. Furthermore, other scholars have demonstrated that churches did not always possess the monopoly on the sale of pilgrim badges. In several cities they were sold by independent merchants, and in other towns such as Regensburg it was the town itself that commissioned them.¹¹⁰

Several arguments make clear that even if they were not an entirely new phenomenon at the Zoutleuw shrine, then at least the churchwardens took measures to control and

¹⁰⁹ In general, see Blick, 'Pilgrim badges', and Freedberg, *The power of images*, pp. 124-126. On the wearing of such badges, see for instance Koldeweij, 'The wearing of significant badges'. On their use in devotional manuscripts, see the many examples in van Asperen, *Pilgrimstekens op perkament*; Foster-Campbell, 'Pilgrimage through the pages'; Rudy, 'Sewing the body of Christ'. The use of pilgrim badges on bells is discussed by van Loon van de Moosdijk, *Goet ende wael gheraect*, pp. 85-114.

¹¹⁰ Cohen, 'In haec signa'; Nilson, 'The medieval experience at the shrine,' p. 116; Soergel, *Wondrous in his saints*, pp. 52-61.

regulate their production, sale and dispersion at this important moment. Firstly, it is indeed striking that the earliest reference to *Sijnte Leonaerts tekenen* is in the very same month as the churchwardens' trip to Brussels after the completion of the altarpiece they had commissioned.¹¹¹ Soon after the accounts began to include reference to paraphernalia nearly on a yearly basis. This means that it cannot be discarded as a unique occurrence, and in fact the following years show a steady development of the supply, suggesting that the practice found itself in its early stages. Very soon after the purchase of the first specimens in 1478, in March 1479 the Leuven sculptor Joes Beyaert (c. 1405-1483) is paid for the making of "a mould in which one casts Saint Leonard's images."¹¹² It might have been this mould from which the two previously mentioned badges found in Nieuwlande were cast (fig. 18).¹¹³ In the earliest years after the acquisition of the mould the accounts do not refer to the casting itself, whereas they do include entries recording the purchase of tin to make the badges. This suggests that while the badges in precious metal were bought from the gold- and silversmith, the churchwardens cast the pewter badges themselves at first.¹¹⁴ However, from 1491 onwards this task was outsourced to professional tincasters (*canghietere*), both in Diest and Sint-Truiden.¹¹⁵ Certainly from the earliest years of the sixteenth century

¹¹¹ KR 1477, fol. 219v (March 1478): "Item aen Meuijs vander Moelen van Sijnte Leonaerts tekenen te makene." See also fol. 221 (May 1478): "Item aen tekenen van Sijnte Leonarts ghecocht om 7 st."

¹¹² KR 1478, fol. 242v (March 1479): "Item betaelt den selven Joese [Beyaert] van eender vermen daer men Sijnte Lenaerts byelden in ghyet, daer af ghegeven 8 st."

¹¹³ Whereas they lack the elements characteristic of the badges issued by other shrines such as Dudzele and Saint-Léonard-de-Noblat, the figure of Saint Leonard depicted on these very badges in fact contains stylistic features reminiscent of Beyaert's monumental sculpture, most importantly the egg-shaped face with beady eyes. Compare, for instance, with the sculpture of Saint Catharine preserved in the church, which is a securely documented work of Joes Beyaert (BALaT object nr. 29101). He was paid for it in March 1479, see KR 1478, fol. 242v. On Beyaert, see Smeyers, 'Het inwendig gebeeldhouwd decor van het Leuvense stadhuis,' pp. 278-286; Crab, *Het Brabants beeldsnijcentrum Leuven*, pp. 219-225 and *passim*; de Taeye, 'Beyaert, Josse'. For the pilgrim badges from Dudzele and Saint-Léonard-de-Noblat, see Koldewey, 'Teekenen van mynheere St. Lenaert'; van Beuningen & Koldewey, *Heilig en profaan*, pp. 176-177; van Beuningen, Koldewey & Kicken, *Heilig en profaan 2*, pp. 276-277.

¹¹⁴ KR 1484, fol. 133v (July 1484): "Item Meeus vander Molen gegeven van selveren tekenen te makene 10,5 st"; KR 1487, fols. 301 (January 1488) and 302v (April 1488): "Item betaelt Vrancken den Ketelbueter van tinne dair tekenen af ghegoten sijn 5 st 7,5 g," "Item ghecocht tot Dieste 3 lb teens om tekenen te ghieten, cost ellic lb 10 plc, compt op 7,5 st"; KR 1489, fol. 325v (May 1490): "Item betaelt Tryuken Anderbiers voir een cummeken daer tekenen af gegoten sijn 1 st... Item gecocht teghen Eelen Ballen 4,5 lb teens, cost elc lb 1,5 st maakt 6,5 st 6 g"; KR 1490, fol. 45v (June 1491): "Item ghecocht teghen Goert Slaechs int voirleden jair theen om 10 st."

¹¹⁵ KR 1491, fol. 65: "Item den canghietere van beelden te ghietene betaelt 4 st"; KR 1492, fol. 88 (June 1493): "Item betaelt aen bielgien van Sinte Leonart te ghietene, te wetene omtrint 26 dosijnen, daer voer betaelt 12

onwards, the badges were demonstrably available in many different forms and materials, corresponding to different price ranges. Some were made in tinplate, others in copper, silver or gold, and some were supplied with a red paper underneath.¹¹⁶

The entries in the accounts do not always provide all the necessary information on prices and quantities, but the evidence at hand clearly shows that from the middle of the 1490s onwards the badges were available in steadily increasing quantities. Whereas in 1492 312 badges were recorded, this number rose to 768 in 1495 and to 1152 in 1497 (graph 6). A similar, steady rise is apparent in the budget allotted to this purpose (graph 7). Oddly, contrary to other shrines in the region such as Wezemaal, the Zoutleeuw accounts never record the number of badges that were sold.¹¹⁷ This either means that they were handed out freely to pilgrims or more likely only to those who made an offering - in which case the revenues would be included in the section of the accounts discussed above - or that the sale of the paraphernalia was subcontracted to stallholders.¹¹⁸ From 1482 onwards the church fabric indeed received payments for stallage in the parvis or church portal (*parvise, parvijs, provijs*), such as depicted on Bruegel's *Fight between Carnival and Lent* of 1559 (fig. 19). Some of the tenants were merely described as pedlars (*cremer*), but others also as jewelers, of whom it is not inconceivable that they sold such badges.¹¹⁹ In any case, whether the badges were

st"; KR 1493, fol. 119v (June 1494): "Item betaelt te Dieste van tekenen te doen ghieten 15 st"; KR 1495, fols. 143v (May 1496) and 145 (June 1496): "Item Hubrecht der Cangierter heeft gemaect 63 dosijnen tekenen ende die dosijne cost 20 g, maken 5 gulden 3 st 8 g," "Item voir 14 loet garens die gheorbert sijn aen die tekenen 3 st"; KR 1502, fol. 439v (June 1503): "Item betaelt Claes der canghieter van Sintruyden van 88 dozijnen Leonarde te ghietene vanden dosijnen 21 g, compt op 3 rinsgulden 17 st."

¹¹⁶ KR 1503, fol. 18v (August 1503): "Der selver [vrouwe Speecken] betaelt enen boeck pampiers om dat roet te makene ende onder dij bielsekens van Sinte Leonarde te settene 5 plc"; KR 1509, fol. 41v (July 1509): "Item betaelt vanden cruyce roet te makene ende pampier roet te makene aende beelden van Sinte Leonaerts voer de pelgrijms, cost 5 plc"; KR 1510, fols. 573 (October 1510) and 574v (December 1510): "Item noch gecocht 200 coperen thekenen van Sinte Leonart costen 24 st," "Item gecocht tegen Meester Jan dij Triechtener 100 silveren teekene van Sinte Leonarde costen 20 st"; KR 1520, fol. 21v (May 1521): "Item betaelt aen 450 blecken tekenen van Sinte Leonart 28 st"; KR 1523, fols. 66v (August 1523) and 68v (November 1523): "Item ghecocht 12 silveren teekenen 15 st," "Item ghecocht tegen Arnout die goutsmet 103,5 dosyne teekenen, die dosyne 3 plc, macht 3 rinsgulden 17,5 st 3 d."

¹¹⁷ Minnen, *Den heyligen sant*, vol. 1, p. 107.

¹¹⁸ Compare with the observations by Nilson, 'The medieval experience at the shrine,' p. 116.

¹¹⁹ KR 1483, fol. 110v: "Item ontfangen van Henric der Wijse van twe jair hueren als van stadghelde int parvijs als vanden jaer 82 ende 83 tsamen 9 st"; KR 1485, fols. 185v and 186v: "Item ontfangen van Jan Bolx van staen int provijs 4 st. Item ontfangen van Art der Juwelier van staene int parvijs 4 st," "Item ontfangen van Lippen der Cremer van sijnen staene inden parvise 20 st"; KR 1487, fol. 296: "Item ontfangen van Henric metter Zeepen

actually sold by these stallholders or not, the fact that they are mentioned points to an increasing diversity of activities in and around the church building, which was presumably caused by a rising number of devotees coming to town.

A second indication that suggests that the churchwardens sought to promote the cult of Saint Leonard is a papal indulgence bull that arrived in April 1485. Contrary to the pilgrim badges it is far less documented, and the only relevant entry in the accounts mentions the payment of four Rhenish guilders “for the indulgence bull sent from Rome.”¹²⁰ The document itself has not been preserved, but it is likely that it is still listed in a church inventory of 1625, mentioning several such documents.¹²¹ As a consequence, its contents are unknown, but it is not unreasonable to assume that the church fabric, with or without the support of the collegiate chapter, had petitioned an indulgence bull related to the miraculous statue of Saint Leonard that precisely in the year before had worked a miracle (cf. supra). Most of the papal bulls - including indulgences - were in fact not issued on the initiative of the Pope himself, but after a supplication that was submitted to the Apostolic Chancery by the petitioning party. In case the request was granted, the administration drew up the official bull, the text of which often followed closely that of the supplication, which was then sent to the requesting party.¹²² Upon arrival, the obtained privileges were soon proclaimed by means of various media, whereby larger churches such as cathedrals or collegiate churches evidently had more means at their disposal than smaller parish churches.¹²³ The indulgence letters themselves were often lavishly illuminated and hung in public places such as church doors. In Diest, for instance, a painter was paid to decorate an indulgence bull that was nailed to the church doors “at the time of the indulgence.”¹²⁴

van sijnen stane int parvijs van twee jaren 9 st”; KR 1489, fol. 321v: “Item ontfangen van enen man van Loeven van stane int parvijs 6 st”; KR 1491, fol. 59v: “Item noch ontfangen van Willem den Cremer voir tstaen int parvijs 6 st.”

¹²⁰ KR 1484, fol. 137v (April 1485): “Item ghegeven vanden bullen vanden aflate van Roemen gesonden, 4 rijnsgulden.”

¹²¹ “Daude ende nieuwe bullen van de indulgentien... Daude besegelde bulle vander indulgentien metten grooten zegelen. Die nieuw indulgentien deur Paulus papa verleent.” See de Ridder, ‘Een oud inventaris der Sint-Leonarduskerk,’ pp. 53-54.

¹²² Weigl, ‘Papal bulls’; Tingle, *Indulgences after Luther*, pp. 54-55.

¹²³ In general, see Morris, ‘Art and advertising,’ pp. 335-340. Compare with the overview in Soergel, *Wondrous in His saints*, pp. 29-43, and Nilson, ‘The medieval experience at the shrine,’ pp. 113-114.

¹²⁴ “Gegheven Hendrik Vanden Boogaerde, den Meelder, van den briefve des paus en de cardinaels wapenen aftekenen, die met den tide van den afaet op die kerk duere en de poerten geslagen worden, 4 gripen.” See

Such tasks were even executed by famous painters such as Hugo van der Goes, who in 1469 was paid by the city of Ghent for the painting of the papal coat of arms on the letter that was to be hung on the city gates.¹²⁵ Other churches, such as Antwerp's church of Our Lady, went further than merely advertising within the church, and paid for the sending out of copies or priests to preach the indulgence.¹²⁶ These media campaigns are not surprising, as it goes without saying that such indulgences made a shrine much more attractive to potential pilgrims. It was therefore of primary importance to spread the information as soon and as far as possible.¹²⁷ Given the important financial potential indulgences had, their role and significance in relation to the financing of church construction have been amply emphasized elsewhere, and as will be argued below a similar rationale might have been at play in Zoutleuw.¹²⁸

1.3.3 Furnishing sacred space: a reconstruction of Saint Leonard's chapel

These examples indicate that in Zoutleuw, too, the churchwardens drew on a variety of techniques to spread the word about the cult in order to firmly establish it. As scholars such as Robert Swanson and Virginia Nixon have argued, art and architecture - i.e. the churches and their interiors itself - played a key role in the advertising of indulgences and devotions, as elaborate and ingenious artworks attracted people into the churches.¹²⁹ It is therefore worthwhile to consider the possibility that Saint Leonard's altarpiece should have to be seen within the context of these developments and the promoting strategy in particular. In fact, as indicated by the enormously increasing expenditures for interior decoration between 1476 and 1483, the churchwarden accounts document a major decoration campaign of the church in precisely this period, thus coinciding with the subtly increasing revenues and

Van de Ven, 'Schilders vermeld in de Diestse archieven,' p. 208, note 6. Compare with examples in Fournier, 'Affiches d'indulgence,' and Nilson, 'The medieval experience at the shrine,' pp. 113-114.

¹²⁵ Fredericq, *Codex documentorum*, p. 252, nr. 181.

¹²⁶ Prims, 'Uit de kerkrekeningen van O.L.V. van Antwerpen,' pp. 105, 109, 114.

¹²⁷ Compare with Trio, *Volksreligie*, pp. 282-283. On indulgences in general, see - among others - Shaffern, 'The medieval theology of indulgences'; Morris, 'Indulgence handbills'; Bird, 'Indulgences'.

¹²⁸ Caspers, 'Indulgences in the Low Countries,' pp. 72-76; Morris, 'Art and advertising'; Lewis, 'Rewarding devotion'.

¹²⁹ Nixon, *Mary's mother*, p. 83; Swanson, *Indulgences in late medieval England*, p. 162. For altarpieces in particular, see van der Ploeg, 'How liturgical is an altarpiece?' pp. 112-113.

immediately preceding the 1483 peak (graph 8). Although the whole church benefitted from this campaign, Saint Leonard's chapel clearly was given a prime role, and this, in turn, suggests that it was part of a consciously worked out plan. The decoration campaign commenced with the commission of the altarpiece in 1476 - extensively discussed above - and in subsequent years the sacred space would be fully provided with lavish ornaments suited to worship the liberating saint in an appropriate way. As a result of the room's reorganization into a sacristy, the altar's replacement into the southern transept in the early nineteenth century and the subsequent sale of various decorative elements it originally contained, it is one of the lesser preserved parts of the church, but the subsequent entries in the churchwarden accounts and their contextualization by means of comparative research allow a reconstruction of its interior to a sufficient degree.

In February 1478, a month before the new altarpiece was delivered, Arnold Raet was paid for making paintings (*molerijden*) in the chapel.¹³⁰ Immediately before a scaffolding had been bought "for making Saint Leonard's work" (*Sijnte Lenaert werck mede te makene*).¹³¹ It is most likely, therefore, that Raet decorated the walls of the chapel with figurative or ornamental mural paintings, comparable to those that have been preserved in the southern transept, above and directly next to the entrance to the chapel (figs. 20 & 21). These are doubtless contemporary and although they are not documented, they might have been executed by Raet as well.¹³² Later on, in June 1481, "a new *casse* in which Saint Leonard will stand" was commissioned from the aforementioned sculptor Joes Beyaert from Leuven.¹³³ In contemporary religious contexts, the word *casse* was generally used in a broad sense to designate a shrine

¹³⁰ KR 1477, fol. 219 (February 1478): "Item Meester Aert vander molerijden te makene in Sijnte Leonaerts coer ende metten cost samen 20 rijnsche gulden."

¹³¹ KR 1476, fol. 202 (June 1477): "Item di stellinghe te Lintere ghecocht Sijnte Lenaert werck mede te makene om 4 gripen. Item Merten Mertens een voeder stellinghen ghehaelt te Lintere, te lone 4,5 st." KR 1477, fol. 217v (September 1477): "Item Lenaert Meersmans enen leessenare ghemaect ende 2 daghe steellynghe ghemaect met sijnen cnape, loept samen 26 st."

¹³² Interestingly, the composition of the *Last Judgment* is closely related to the lost painting of the same subject that Dirk Bouts painted for the city of Leuven in 1468-1469, and which is known through an anonymous copy on canvas (now Munich, Bayerische Staatsgemäldesammlungen). See Buyle & Bergmans, *Middeleeuwse muurschilderingen in Vlaanderen*, pp. 188-189; Périer-d'leteren, *Dirk Bouts*, pp. 69, fig. 40 and 274-287, cat. nrs. 16, 17 and 18. For these mural paintings, see also Raes, *Zoutleeuw, glorie en naglans*, pp. 63-64, cat. nrs. 34 and 35, and Geelen & Steyaert, *Imitation and illusion*, pp. 512-515, cat. nr. 65.

¹³³ KR 1480, fol. 40v (June 1481): "Item ghegeven Joes Beyaerts van eender nouwer cassen daer Sijnte Lenaert in sal staen te makene 8 rijnsche gulden."

holding objects of veneration.¹³⁴ Given the description provided in the entry in the accounts, as well as Beyaert's profession of sculptor in wood and stone, it must have been a wooden tabernacle or niche crowned with a carved ornamental baldachin of some sort, in which the miraculous statue of Saint Leonard was placed. Such tabernacles, which mostly could be closed with painted wings, are standard features in contemporary descriptions and depictions of church interiors (fig. 22).¹³⁵ Some unique examples have been preserved, most notably the one that used to enclose a reliquary statue of Saint Quirinus of Neuss, originally in Huy (figs. 23a-b).¹³⁶ Until a theft in 1983 the Zoutleeuw church itself possessed another example, that probably belonged to the altar of Saint Anne (figs. 24a-b).¹³⁷ Saint Leonard's tabernacle has not been preserved, but it is depicted as having wings on the 1612 painting commemorating the miraculous healing of Paulus Gautier (fig. 109). Once again the help of Arnold Raet was called in by the churchwardens, as he was paid to redecorate the miraculous sculpture with paint in 1481, as well as its new tabernacle in 1482.¹³⁸ Still in 1482 an antependium was bought for 18 Rhenish guilders from the embroiderer Anthonis Jonckeren from Lier, "to hang before Saint Leonard's altar on feast and holy days."¹³⁹ Finally, in the same year a complex brass candelabrum (*luymenarys*, later also *kendelere*) was commissioned for the chapel from the well-known Brussels caster Renier van Thienen (active 1465-1498), to whom the churchwardens later also turned for the production of the famous Easter candlestand.¹⁴⁰ The agreement stipulated that it

¹³⁴ Compare, for instance, with Dewitte, 'Juweleninventarissen van de Brugse collegiale Sint-Donaas,' p. 42. Another example is provided by *De legende van Sinte Alena*, fol. 140-141v, where the reliquary shrine of Saint Alena is described as "de casse van sinte Aleenen" or "sinte Aleenen casse."

¹³⁵ Other examples include Steinmetz, *Das Altarretabel in der altniederländischen Malerei*, cats. TB3, TB9A, TB68A, TB71, TB86, TB87, TB88, TB97A, BM2, BM7, BM9, BM11, BM40, BM54, BM71 and BM76. On the practice and its origins, see van der Ploeg, 'How liturgical is an altarpiece?' esp. p. 108.

¹³⁶ On that tabernacle and its statue, as well as for other documented examples and descriptions, see Didier, 'Le problème du retable et de la statue'. See also the examples given in Steyaert, 'The Ghent Altarpiece'.

¹³⁷ Steppe, 'Een sanctuarium van de Brabantse laat-gotiek,' pp. 636-638.

¹³⁸ KR 1480, fol. 30v (June 1481) "Item ghegeven meester Arde der moelder op sijn verdinct werck dat hij Sijnte Lenart ghestoffert 7 rijnsche gulden ende 8 st." KR 1481, fol. 65 (April 1482) "Item betaelt Meester Aert dij Scildere van Sijnte Lenaert te stoffere 8 rijnsche gulden ende noch vander nouwer cassen te stofferene al soe daer staet dij somme tot 19 rijnsche gulden ende van desen 2 ponten hebben wij gherekent in tjaer voer leden dat wij ghegeven hebben 7 rijnsche gulden 8 st, also compt hem noch 19 rijnsche gulden 12 st."

¹³⁹ KR 1481, fol. 66v (June 1482): "Item ghecocht teghen Tonys van Liere der capmekere een cleet voer Sijnte Lenarts autaer te hanghene te hoghentijde ende op dij heyleghe daghe om xviii rijnsche gulden." See for this embroiderer also KR 1480, fol. 27v (September 1480) and KR 1486, fol. 247v (November 1486).

¹⁴⁰ On van Thienen, see Duverger, 'Thienen, [Renier] van'; Frederiks, 'Enkele beschouwingen naar aanleiding van het gietwerk van Reinier van Thienen'; De Ruelle, 'Étude technologique des dinanderies coulées'.

should be made “in the manner of that in the church of Saint Gudula in Brussels.” Once again Arnold Raet was involved in the design, as he was paid for the making of a pattern (*patroen*) and he accompanied the churchwardens to Brussels for the commission. It was installed in the course of 1483.¹⁴¹ This candelabrum was sold early in the nineteenth century after a Royal Decree of 1827 had permitted the sale of “old copper.” As a result it has disappeared completely, save for a 56 centimeter high statuette of Saint Leonard that according to Bets was once part of it and which is now kept in Rotterdam (fig. 25).¹⁴²

How did these various elements interrelate, what did the chapel look like after this extensive decoration campaign, and how did the whole function? Apart from the statue of Saint Leonard, the altarpiece and some scattered traces of the candelabrum, nothing has been preserved. Although the cult image of Saint Leonard has been placed in the middle of the altarpiece since at least the nineteenth century, it originally must have been exhibited in the tabernacle carved by Beyaert and decorated with painting by Arnold Raet, which in turn was placed on top of the altarpiece. The only iconographical source depicting the chapel is the aforementioned 1612 painting. It indeed locates the statue in a tabernacle standing on something that looks like an

¹⁴¹ KR 1481, fol. 65v (May 1482) “Item verdinct te makene teghen Meester Reynder van Thienen, gheelghietere te Bruysele enen luymenarys voer Sijnte Lenaert staende in sijnen coer na dy maniere van Sijnte Goedelen te Bruysele ende na tenoer enen selegreane daer af ghemaect sijnde ende op ghegeven ende betaelt den meester vanden voerseide wercke 200 rijnsche gulden ende ellic 100 lb cost 15 rijnsche gulden. Item op dese selve comescap es verteert ende verdroncken metten meester ende met goeden mannen daer bij sijnde ende over waren tsamen 6 rijnsche gulden van welken voerseide 6 rijnsche gulden meester Reynder sal corten te leesten pamynte 3 rijnsche gulden in afslaghe vanden voerseiden sommen.” KR 1482, fols. 89v (July 1482) and 93: “Item verteert Willem van Halle, Reynder Froeytens ende meester Art di scildere doen si te Bruesel gheweest waren om den kendelere te verdijnghene, verteerden op drye daghe te samen 4 gulden 4 st. Item meester Art der Scildere ghegeven van enen patroen te beworpene ende van 2,5 daghe mede te gane te Bruesele ghegeven te lone tsamen 10 st.” “Item betaelt meester Reynder van Thienen, gheelghietere te Bruysele vanden voerseiden wercke dat voer Sijnte Lenarts steet hier op betaelt doen men werck sette 107 rijnsche gulden. Item betaelt voer di twe blau steene daer die posten metten ynghelen op staen 8 rijnsche gulden. Item betaelt vanden vrachte vanden voerseide werke staende in Sijnte Lenarts coer van Bruysele tot Leeuwe te bringhene 10 rijnsche gulden. Item di ghesellen ghegeven die dat vorseide werck ghesat hebben te drinckghelde 20 st. Item doen dit vorseide werck gheset ende ghelevert waert doen verteert metten vorscreven wercklieden ende metten meester 7,5 gulden.” KR 1483, fol. 114v (November 1483): “Item betaelt Henric Hoenen, Leonart Hoenen ende Wouter Bousterman vanden voete te houdene dair den luminaris op staet ende noch dat kalchhuys te paveydene ende te metsene dat sitten ende noch den luminaris in Sint Leonarts choer op helpen te winden ende te stellen, Henric 6,5 dach, Leonart 6,5 dach ende Bousterman 1,5 dach, compt tsamen op 35 st.”

¹⁴² Bets, *Zout-Leeuw*, vol; 2, pp. 130 and 140-141.

altar, complete with altar cloth and liturgical utensils (fig. 109). The painting does not depict the altarpiece, but its absence can be explained as a simplification on the part of the modestly talented painter, or just for the sake of clarity. Contemporary depictions of church interiors regularly show statues on top of altarpieces, sometimes enclosed in a more or less elaborate tabernacle (figs. 22, 26a-c), and several entries in the Zoutleeuw accounts can be interpreted as referring to such an arrangement.¹⁴³ Moreover, similar conclusions can be deduced from a number of entries related to the acquisition of the candelabrum, which is described as standing “in front of Saint Leonard in his chapel.”¹⁴⁴ The Saint Leonard referred to in that entry is undoubtedly the miraculous statue, and as traces of the candelstand’s original location remain on the chapel floor (fig. 27), it confirms that the chapel was the location of the object of veneration.

This brings us to the question of what Renier van Thienen’s complex candelabrum looked like. Although in the financial agreement the comparison was made with a similar element in the Brussels church of Saint Gudula, no such object has been preserved there. Furthermore, the terms used in the entries related to the commission - *luminaris* or *candelare* - are general vocabulary to designate candleholders in a broad sense. For instance, the preserved Easter candlestand that was commissioned from van Thienen after the first candelabrum was installed, was equally alternately referred to by either of these terms (fig. 28).¹⁴⁵ Nevertheless, it must have looked quite different and the evidence at hand suggests that it was an elaborate arched candelabrum standing in front of the altar. An entry in the accounts related to the acquisition and installation mentions the payment of “two blue stones on which the posts with the

¹⁴³ See for instance KR 1480, fol. 30v (May 1481): “eender nouwer cassen daer Sijnte Lenaert in sal staen”; KR 1505, fol. 25 (June 1506) “ende Sinte Leonaert daerboven...”

¹⁴⁴ KR 1481, fol. 65v (May 1482): “enen luymenarys voer Sijnte Lenaert staeande in sijnen coer.” Compare with KR 1482, fol. 93: “vanden voerseiden wercke dat voer Sijnte Lenarts steet” (“the aforesaid work standing before Saint Leonard”).

¹⁴⁵ KR 1482, fol. 93: “Item verdincht te makene teghen meester Reynder van Thienen, gheelgieter te Bruyesele, enen candelare staen sal inden hoghen coer na tenoer ende na di maniere van Sijnte Peters te Lovene ende na tenoer enen selegreane daer af ghemaect es, daer af costen sal ellic 100 lb 15 rijnsche gulden ende op dit vorseide werck es betaelt 50 rijnsche gulden.” KR 1483, fol. 114r-v (November 1483): “Item gecocht teghen meester Reyneren van Thienen, wonende te Brueselle, enen luminaris inden hogen choer, wagende 1800 ende 39,5 lb, cost ellic hondert 15,5 rijnsgulden, compt tsamen op 285 rijnsgulden, dair af die meesters voirleeden den selfven Reynere voirseid betaelt hebben ter sommen van vijftich rijnsgulden in afslaghe der sommen voirseid, ende wij momboren nu ter tijt wesende hebben hem noch betaelt doen hij den luminaris opden achten dach van deser maent stelde den selfven Reynere voirseid 55 rijnsgulden.”

angels stand” (*twe blau steene daer die posten metten ynghelen op staen*). Later, workmen are paid “to cut the feet on which the candelabrum stands” (*vanden voete te houdene dair den luminaris op staet*), and both entries in fact likely refer to two hexagonal bluestone socles that are still preserved in the church, which in turn correspond to a hexagonal hole in the chapel floor (figs. 27 & 29).

No contemporary descriptions or depictions of the work in question are known, but an early eighteenth-century church inventory predating the 1827 Decree provides valuable information that concurs with the entry that describes the pillars with the angels. In the chapel of Saint Leonard, it mentions “two copper pillars, on each top of which stands a copper angel. The one with the cross in its hands lacks a wing.” Further, it vaguely describes an arch (*loop*) - no material mentioned - “as broad as the chapel is, with elaborate work.”¹⁴⁶ Firstly, this means that the candelabrum integrated the traditional altar angels, which were a standard feature in church interiors, as evidenced by contemporary depictions (figs. 30 & 67). Traditionally, such angels stood on pillars in front and/or aside of the altar, usually used to hold up curtains that hung at both sides. Few examples have survived and the phenomenon has hardly been studied, but they are frequently documented all over the fifteenth- and sixteenth-century Low Countries.¹⁴⁷ Although most preserved examples are made of wood, including the later examples preserved in Zoutleeuw (fig. 31) and the set still in situ in Schwerte (fig. 32), other sets in brass such as the pair in the Louvre give an idea of what the angels on the Zoutleeuw candelabrum might have looked like (figs. 33a-b).¹⁴⁸ The prickets present on some examples demonstrates that in several cases they were used as candleholders, but other angels carried the instruments of the Passion, as must have been the case in Zoutleeuw.¹⁴⁹ It seems that in Zoutleeuw their traditional outlook was altered, as they were part of a more encompassing candelabrum, much

¹⁴⁶ De Ridder, ‘Vijf oude inventarissen,’ p. 148: “De Choor van St Lenaert heeft: ... Twee coeperen pilaeren; op elk pont van die pilaeren staen eenen coeperen engel; aen dien met het cruys inde hand mankeert eenen vleugel. Een loop soo breet als de coer is met een uytgewerkt werk.” De Ridder dated the inventory to c. 1810. According to the online *Woordenboek der Nederlandsche Taal*, a “loop” designates something that is stretched out lengthwise.

¹⁴⁷ In general, see Randall, ‘Thirteenth-century altar angels’. For other documented examples in the Low Countries, see for instance Prims, ‘Uit de kerkrekeningen van O.L.V. van Antwerpen’, p. 122; De Mecheleer, *Rekeningen van de kerkfabriek*, p. 31; Rotsaert, ‘Aanzienlijke herstellingen’, p. 17; Philippen & Ernalsteen, ‘Rond het Hoogsraatsch altaarstuk,’ p. 60.

¹⁴⁸ *Catalogue des bronzes et cuivres*, p. 18, nrs. 12 and 13.

¹⁴⁹ For instance the set in Lille, Musée des Beaux-Arts, inv. A152. See Steyaert, *Laat-Gotische beeldhouwkunst*, pp. 244-245, nr. 62.

like the structure that was donated to the abbey church of Gembloux in 1515 by abbot Mathieu Petri (r. 1511-1517), now lost but drawn some ten years later by his successor Antoine Papin (r. 1518-1541) in the *Gesta abbatum Gemblacensum* (figs. 34a-c).¹⁵⁰ This example indeed clearly consists of two pillars crowned by angels with the *arma christi*, connected by a horizontal bar holding candle prickets. In Zoutleeuw, however, the structure must also have contained the brass statuette now in Rotterdam, which was doubtless given a central place. An idea of what that might have looked like is given by a panel from a series of paintings on the life and cult of Saint Stephen, possibly from the workshop of Colijn de Coter in Brussels (fig. 35).¹⁵¹ The altar on which Saint Stephen's shrine rests is decorated with a brass arch, centrally holding a statuette of that saint and resting on two pillars that are crowned by candlebearing figures. All things considered, the Zoutleeuw candelabrum must have been quite similar to the unique example still preserved in Xanten, dating to 1501 (fig. 36).¹⁵² Though in this example the altar angels have been replaced by figures of saints on the pillars, much like must have been the case in Zoutleeuw, it spans the whole breadth of the space and centrally carries a bronze statuette.

All these elements enable a reconstruction of the whole chapel with a high degree of accuracy (fig. 37) that shows striking parallels to contemporary depictions (figs. 26, 30): it included an altarpiece with an inverted T-shape, crowned with the cult statue in a tabernacle and flanked by brass altar angels that served as candleholders - the whole lit by a window from the back. While it is safe to concur with Bets that Saint Leonard's altar was originally located in the chapel and that the miraculous sculpture was installed in the same room, the precise location and orientation of the altar remains as yet untouched. Traditionally, unlike in Rome, medieval altars are supposed

¹⁵⁰ Brussels, KBR, ms. 10292-10294, fol. 71v. Compare with the examples depicted in the drawing on fol. 74 in that manuscript. See also Straus, *La Geste des abbés de Gembloux*, pp. 156-157. Similar structures are depicted on the miniature in an extensive Book of Hours, now in Vatican City (Biblioteca Apostolica Vaticana, Vat.lat.3769, fol. 66v), as well as on the last painting of the Cologne Saint Severin cycle of c. 1500. On these two sources, see respectively Kren & McKendrick, *Illuminating the renaissance*, pp. 374-376, and Oepen & Steinmann, *Der Severin Zyklus*, pp. 48-49, nr. 20.

¹⁵¹ On these paintings, see Périer-d'Ieteren, *Les volets peints des retables*, pp. 80-83, who emphasizes de Coter's clear influence but attributes the execution to a workshop from Mechelen.

¹⁵² As had already been proposed by Frederiks, 'Enkele beschouwingen naar aanleiding van het gietwerk van Reinier van Thienen,' pp. 123-125, and Steppe, 'Een sanctuarium van de Brabantse laat-gotiek,' pp. 613-614 and 646-647. On the Xanten candelabrum, see Klapheck, *Der Dom zu Xanten*, pp. 73-74, and Beissel, *Die Bauführung des Mittelalters*, pp. 22-25. Engelen, *Jan Mertens en de laatgotiek*, pp. 146-148 on the contrary interpreted the set of entries as referring to two distinct items: a traditional candelabrum and a choir screen.

to be oriented towards the east.¹⁵³ However, the reconstruction of the location of the monumental candlestand in the chapel suggests that the altar did not face east, but south. As mentioned before, the only remaining traces of the brass construction are two hexagonal socles in bluestone and one corresponding hexagonal hole in a tile in the southwestern corner of the chapel floor (figs. 27 & 29). The hole that the second socle must have left has in recent years been replaced by a new tile, but it was located to the east of the hole that is still preserved.¹⁵⁴ This means that the candlestand followed an east-west axis. As similar examples are known to stand before the altar and run parallel to the long frontal side of the altar stone, this would mean that in this particular case the altar itself was oriented southward. Any other alternative option based on the location of the preserved tile would not only have been liturgically inconvenient for the celebration and attending of masses, but would also have gravely diminished the desired effect of the lighted candles on it. If this reconstruction is correct, it would be necessary to look for other comparable cases in order to assess its true value. Many pilgrim chapels in other churches are located in similar annexes to transepts, and it might be worthwhile to investigate their initial spatial organization and furnishings. Surveys of the orientation of churches in English and German territories have demonstrated that the importance of the tradition of ‘eastings’ diminished from the fifteenth century onwards, but no comparable overviews for the Low Countries exist.¹⁵⁵ However, it seems plausible that the orientation of churches as well as the altars within them and in later added structures in part was dictated by practical grounds. For instance, it has been established that the choirs of the Brabantine abbey churches of both Rooklooster (1381-1384) and Groenendaal (1512) were oriented to the south, and that was also the case in the old, thirteenth-century church of Our Lady in Laken, of which only the choir remains on the present-day churchyard.¹⁵⁶ These churches are all located in the surroundings of Brussels, and their orientations might very well have been due to the highly irregular landscape that characterizes the region. Similarly, the southward orientation of Saint Leonard’s altar

¹⁵³ De Blaauw, *Met het oog op het licht*; idem, ‘In view of the light.’

¹⁵⁴ Oral communication by conservator Ward Hendrickx (9 March 2016), who still knew the original disposition. Furthermore, given the location of the preserved hole quite far in the southwestern corner, a north-south orientation would have been quite strange, as the candlestand would have stood near the western wall.

¹⁵⁵ Arneitz, Draxler, Rauch & Leonhardt, ‘Orientation of churches,’ p. 1.

¹⁵⁶ De Jonge, ‘Sites et monuments,’ pp. 92-94. In a late seventeenth-century publication the odd orientation in Laken was explained by the miraculous foundation of that church. See Delbeke, Constant, Geurs & Staessen, ‘The architecture of miracle-working statues,’ p. 233.

in Zoutleeuw likely was the consequence of the fact that an ancient portal - with stone pews integrated in both its eastern and western walls - was transformed into a chapel.

1.3.4 Creating sacred space: making it work

How should this whole decoration campaign be assessed? Was it a reaction to the increasing popularity of Zoutleeuw as devotional destination, or was it rather a ‘spontaneous’ and proactive strategy from the part of the churchwardens to attract potential pilgrims? While the revenues from monetary offerings might subtly have been increasing in the preceding years, this certainly does not provide a definitive answer. Scrutinizing the available evidence it is striking that all the references to a broader devotional attention postdate the first stages of the decoration campaign. As has been established above, the first specific references to pilgrims in the accounts date to 1480, the first incontestable evidence for a miracle to 1484 and the first distribution of bread to pilgrims to 1490. A closer look to how precisely the whole campaign was financed provides firmer answers. Often such furnishing activities were fully or partially funded by private investments. The important intervention of Merten van Wilre and his wife Maria Pylipert in the Zoutleeuw church in the 1550s provides a clear example of that (cf. *infra*). However, as far as Saint Leonard’s chapel is concerned, no such private funding is documented with the possible yet modest exception of the 2,5 Rhenish guilders donated by the dean of the chapter.¹⁵⁷ Confraternities, too, served as important patrons in the decorations of their chapels, but the only documented organization of the kind in Zoutleeuw was the arquebusiers’ guild devoted to Saint Leonard, which was only erected in 1515 and thus cannot have contributed to the furnishing of the chapel (cf. *supra*). Although proportionally the revenues from monetary offerings became more and more important in comparison to the fixed revenues, neither of them were sufficient to fully cover the expenses. And yet, it was clearly no wild investment churchwardens ventured, because the extraordinary revenues were always sufficient (graph 9). This might seem surprising at first sight, but in fact it appears that in precisely these years significantly more corn was sold from the church fabric’s stock, with striking peaks in 1476 and 1478 - not coincidentally the first years of the decoration campaign (graph 10). As it is very

¹⁵⁷ KR 1483, fol. 111: “Item ontfanghen vander deeckene Sinte Leonarts te hulpen sijne backen te makene, 2,5 rijngulden.” It is unclear if it actually concerns the altarpiece of Saint Leonard, or another one.

unlikely that in precisely these years the wardens collected more than two to four times more corn than other years, this pattern most likely points to a controlled and specific sale of surplus from the granaries. This, in turn, suggests a very conscious action from the part of the churchwardens.

Other scholars have already suggested before that churchwardens must have played an essential role in promoting and developing cults. Often this has been connected to building campaigns, and research has indeed shown that in several cases the numbers and proportions of gifts to churches were to a considerable extent connected to the construction of the building in question. For instance, in relation to Delft, Gerrit Verhoeven has suggested that the churchwardens actively sought to stimulate devotions in the context of fundraising for new construction projects.¹⁵⁸ In principle, a similar line of argument might be applicable for the Zoutleeuw case as well. By the second half of the fifteenth century the basic structure of the church building - including the choir, the transept and the western part - might have been erected (cf. supra), but it was far from finished nor fully decorated. The wooden vaulting of the nave would only be replaced by the current one in brick from 1503 onwards, and the side chapels on the southern side of the church were constructed later still, between 1507 and 1511. All these constructions were overseen by Jan I and II Sallaken.¹⁵⁹ The northern side chapels would follow in 1520. Contrary to these construction works, the decoration of the rest of the church had already started earlier on. This is clear from the large number of altarpieces that was bought. Initially Joes Beyaert received most of these commissions, but after his death in 1483 the churchwardens increasingly turned to Jan Mertens (act. 1473 - c. 1509) from Antwerp with whom they had already worked before for other sculptural works.¹⁶⁰ The list includes the altarpieces for the high altar and for the altar of Saint Catherine, which were both paid for in 1479,¹⁶¹ the

¹⁵⁸ Vroom, *De financiering van de kathedraalbouw*, p. 347-348 and p. 351; Verhoeven, 'De cultus van het heilig Hout te Dordrecht,' pp. 205, 210, 214 and 220; idem, *Devotie en negotie*, p. 55-56 and p. 62-63; Leysen, 'Het devotieleven in de Turnhoutse Sint-Pieterskerk', *passim*; Mertens, *Mirakelboek van Sint Gummarus*; Purkis, 'Miracles as propaganda'.

¹⁵⁹ On Sallaken, see Saintenoy, 'Sallaken (Jean van),' and Vanhoof, 'Jan Sallaken en Jan Vlayen'.

¹⁶⁰ For a biographical summary of Jan Mertens, see Asaert, 'Documenten,' pp. 68-69, though the information he provides on his activities for Zoutleeuw is inaccurate.

¹⁶¹ KR 1478, fol. 242v (March 1479): "Item betaelt Joes Beyaerts van eender tafele te makene di op Sijnte Catelijnen autaeer staet 7 rijnsche gulden"; fol. 243 (April 1479): "Item betaelt Peter Codden vander tafele te halene te Lovene van Sijnte Catelijnen autare 22 st"; fol. 244 (June 1479): "Item 1 tafele ghecocht tot Antwerpen die opden hoghen autaeer steet te Jan Mertens dij bieldescnydere om 27,5 lb grote Wlaems, maakt 160 rijnsche gulden."

altarpieces for the altars of Saint John the Evangelist and Saint Nicholas commissioned in June 1481,¹⁶² three other unspecified altarpieces early in 1483,¹⁶³ the altarpiece of Saint John the Baptist in March 1484,¹⁶⁴ and the altarpieces of the Saint Christopher, Saint George, the Holy Trinity, Saint Anthony and Saint Cornelius in March 1485.¹⁶⁵

All the same, within all these necessary works left to do, Saint Leonard's chapel was clearly picked out first and foremost. Within the church's total collection of eleven altarpieces from the fifteenth and sixteenth centuries, nine of which are nearly fully preserved and two fragmentarily, Saint Leonard's retable is very likely to be the oldest one. This is significant, as also in the churchwarden accounts it precedes the whole series of commissions that would follow immediately afterwards. This is all the more striking since, as discussed above, Saint Leonard's altar had been consecrated in 1442 and in fact had already been provided with an altarpiece in 1453. In October of that year a *tafele* for Saint Leonard's chapel was bought for 16 *gripen* (160 *stuivers*), and immediately afterwards the painter Willem van Colene was paid nearly the same amount to decorate it with painting.¹⁶⁶ Seen in that light, the sudden campaign in 1476-1483 to redecorate the chapel seems quite striking: only 23 years later the wardens bought a new altarpiece that would cost nearly ten times more. Strictly speaking, there was no need for a new one and other altars in the church, including the high altar, would only be provided with their altarpiece later on. The decoration of Saint Leonard's chapel thus in many ways preceded that of the rest of the church. Apart from the altarpieces, the *luminaris* in Saint Leonard's chapel was also

¹⁶² KR 1480, fol. 30v (June 1481): "Item noch ghegeven den selven Joese [Beyaert] op 2 backen dij hij verdinct heeft te makene op Sijne Jans Ewangelijsten autae ende op Sijnte Claes autae, 5 rijnsche gulden."

¹⁶³ KR 1482, fol. 92v: "Item noch doen men cruys verdijnde ende die drie backen metten bielden en Sijnte Jacop teghen Jan Mertens van Antwerpen ter cost ghedaen 4 rijnsche gulden."

¹⁶⁴ KR 1483, fol. 116 (March 1484): "Item doen wij verdincden den back oft tafelle op Sint Jans Baptisten altair doen verteert metten goeden mannen 2 rijns gulden."

¹⁶⁵ KR 1484, fols. 137r-v (March 1485): "Item den selven [Jan Mertens] noch betaelt vanden tafelen van Sinte Cristoffels ende Sinte Joris die welke coste 7 lb groete Vlaems ende van 6 scrinen houten, tsamen 43 rijns gulden 13 st... Item verdinct tjeghen Janne Mertens eene tafele vander Drivoldicheit, Sinte Anthonis etc. doen ter cost gedaen ende te lijcoepe gegeven 19 st." KR 1484 (Draft), fol. 478v specifies the third altarpiece in adding "ende Sinte Cornielis, na tenuere vanden bewerpe dair van gemaect, dwelc Jan Mertens met hem gedraghen heeft..."

¹⁶⁶ KR 1453, fol. 39: "Item die tafele in Sinte Leonarts choer, cost 16 gripen. Item Willem van Colene vander tafelen te stofferenne 12 gripen 3 stuivers." Without any firm ground, Engelen, *Zoutleeuw*, pp. 187-205 identified this 1453 altarpiece as the one now preserved in the church.

commissioned before that in the presbytery. Though slightly exaggerated, one could say that the cult of Saint Leonard was given precedence over the traditional, sacramental provisions.¹⁶⁷

By promoting it, furnishing the chapel, and providing all the necessary accommodation for potential pilgrims, these elements clearly suggest that the churchwardens actively seized the cult of Saint Leonard. Although nothing is known about how and where the miraculous statue of Saint Leonard was presented before, it is clear that the 1476-1482 decoration campaign enhanced the sacred aura of the object of devotion. It was located in its own chapel, separated from the rest of the church, freshly decorated with paint and given an emphatic, distinguished and privileged place in an ornamented tabernacle on top of a gilded altarpiece narrating the miraculous story of his life. All this was lighted by an impressive candelabrum, that doubtlessly helped animating the statue.¹⁶⁸ In sum, it was imbued with what Richard Trexler has labelled “miraculous charisma.”¹⁶⁹ This phenomenon, in turn, is inherently related to a process described by David Freedberg as enshrinement, i.e. the giving of a prominent place to cultic images within a focused context. He has argued that the decoration and presentation of cult objects in many cases was more important than the image itself, as this “is what makes these pictures and statues effective, and what attracts the crowds.” Such a strategy especially proved to be effective in shrines with older images, as was the case in Zoutleeuw.¹⁷⁰ Other scholars have similarly posited a relation between decoration or ornament on the one hand, and the sacred character of objects and places on the other. Matt Kavalier, for instance, has demonstrated how sacred space was essentially created by the gothic ornaments within it and the elaborate vaults that shaped it.¹⁷¹ In the same vein Patrick Geary has claimed that the effectiveness and attractiveness of cult objects were closely related: in order to be effective within a circuit of competing shrines, cult objects had to be inviting.¹⁷² Undertaken in order to receive divine grace, pilgrimages were by definition driven by hope and expectation, and the journey - either long or short, yet often tiring and in any case physically intense - had one central purpose, i.e. the shrine with its sought-after thaumaturgic cult object. Especially for the ill and handicapped - arguably representing the largest part of

¹⁶⁷ Compare with the remarks by Vauchez, ‘Introduction,’ p. 13.

¹⁶⁸ For other examples and general remarks, see Davies, ‘Lighting of pilgrimage shrines,’ p. 79.

¹⁶⁹ Trexler, ‘Being and non-being,’ p. 23.

¹⁷⁰ Freedberg, *The power of images*, pp. 99-135, esp. pp. 103 and 109-110, quote on p. 118.

¹⁷¹ See for instance Kavalier, ‘The late gothic German vault’.

¹⁷² Geary, ‘Sacred commodities,’ p. 180.

travelling pilgrims¹⁷³ - the bodily experiences of such a journey must have been particularly intense. Consequently, it is not hard to imagine that the precise setting, atmosphere and the way in which a cult object such as Saint Leonard's statue was presented strongly influenced the religious experience of visitors upon arrival.

In short, while the conditions to create miraculous experiences were optimized, at the same time the cult itself was promoted in a wider region. Yet, the question as to the precise motivations behind it remains. Was it really a purely financial desire that can explain these investments and actions? Circumstantial evidence suggests that the cult did not immediately provide a substantial surplus of revenues that was able to fully cover the expenses of the further decoration works in the church. Just like before, in 1481 and 1483 again considerable amounts of grain were sold, this time even on the market in Antwerp.¹⁷⁴ This is all the more striking, as the early 1480s are known to have been years of deep crisis, caused by failed harvests that were as yet unseen. Even if Zoutleeuw briefly experienced a modest economic resurgence between 1466 and 1484 (cf. *supra*), the harsh crisis that struck there was as unrelentingly as elsewhere. This not only led to excessively high mortality rates - in Zoutleeuw too - but also to an impressive increase in price of grain, a situation of which the churchwardens apparently took their advantage.¹⁷⁵ By doing so, they were only just able to finance their expenses on interior decorations. Thus, it is not immediately evident that the wardens promoted the devotion for financial benefit, although they might have hoped for or predicted its importance on the long term. Nevertheless, other motivations can have been at play as well, such as a quest for civic prestige or - most evidently - purely devotional grounds. Although it is difficult to provide clear answers on the precise motivations, as will be demonstrated in the next paragraph, the churchwardens clearly were responding to broader trends in the region and even abroad.

¹⁷³ Compare with the observations by Finucane, 'The use and abuse of medieval miracles'.

¹⁷⁴ KR 1481, fol. 58v.

¹⁷⁵ Van den Broeck & Soens, 'Kwetsbaarheid in een veerkrachtige samenleving,' esp. pp. 80-81; Curtis, Dijkman, Lambrecht & Vanhaute, 'Low Countries,' esp. pp. 124-125 and 135-136, tables 6.1, 6.3 and 6.4.

Chapter 2 The image of piety at the dawn of an iconoclastic age

2.1 Old sources, new views

2.1.1 Status quaestionis: the Low Countries and beyond

Now that the late medieval character of the cult of Saint Leonard at Zoutleeuw has been established, it is necessary to investigate the broader relevance of these findings. What does this all say about devotion in the Low Countries around 1500? Since the 1970s scholars have increasingly employed the concept of ‘local religion’, by which the locally diverse and highly creative interaction with official religious structures is emphasized.¹ Such studies lay bare the often specifically regional or even local religious dynamics and should warn us against using the Zoutleeuw case to make extrapolations. It is therefore necessary to consider the bigger picture. What do we know about lay piety during the decades immediately preceding the introduction of Protestant thought?

The above discussion of the historiography on the subject has revealed that negative views long dominated scholarly characterizations of late medieval piety.² Yet, a closer look reveals inherent contradictions. For instance, regardless of his pessimistic judgement of late medieval piety, Reinier Post couldn’t help but notice an important

¹ Christian, *Local religion in sixteenth-century Spain*; Terpstra, ‘Lay spirituality,’ pp. 266-267; Soen & Knevel, ‘Slingerbewegingen,’ pp. 9-10.

² Good overviews of the relevant literature are also provided by Milis, ‘De devotieele praktijk’; Trio, *Volksreligie*, pp. 15-16; Speetjens, ‘A quantitative approach’; Bauwens, ‘Parish studies’.

increase in the number of commemorative foundations in the same period, as well as a striking building activity when it came to religious buildings. The latter he - perhaps correctly - related to the increased devotional liberality of believers (*offergezindheid der gelovigen*).³ In the light of the most recent research on the subject, such symptoms and characteristics should now be studied in their own right. Although there still is no unanimity on the quality of late medieval European devotion, scholars now at least tend to agree on its striking intensity.⁴ It indeed seems that the years around 1500 are characterized by an important devotional boom, that has been noted elsewhere in Europe. Germany has already been especially well-researched in this respect, most notably in a pioneering article by Bernd Moeller. He was the first scholar who explicitly stated that he wanted to study the period immediately preceding the Reformation as an epoch in its own right, and he claimed that it was impossible to speak of an *Auflösung der mittelalterlichen Welt*.⁵ Precisely the same indications that Post had interpreted in terms of decay or overload, Moeller saw as coherent utterances of an extremely intense piety: an enormous rise in the number of religious foundations between 1450 and 1490, the institution of a significant number of confraternities after 1450 and a *Baufrühling* all over Europe that led to a flourishing of the flamboyant gothic style. This all led him to characterize the late fifteenth century as one of the most pious periods of the complete medieval era.⁶

Later studies confirmed these views.⁷ For instance, Philip Soergel investigated the many pilgrimage shrines in Bavaria, which he found dated back only to the late fifteenth century. Especially in the more rural areas, Soergel claimed that “sites were very much creations ex nihilo.”⁸ A famous case in the Rhineland is the town of Düren, which very suddenly developed into a main cult center for the devotion to Saint Anne after the theft of a relic from Mainz in 1500, and thus competed with long established

³ Post, *Kerkgeschiedenis van Nederland*, vol. 2, pp. 266-267 and 288f.

⁴ Eire, *War against the idols*, pp. 10-11.

⁵ “...das Zeitalter vor der Reformation energisch als eine Zeit eigener Art und eigenen Rechts zu verstehen.” Moeller, ‘Frömmigkeit in Deutschland um 1500,’ p. 6. The essay was later published in English as ‘Piety in Germany around 1500’. Compare also with Walker Bynum, *Christian materiality*, pp. 18-19, 32 and 268, and the further literature she cites.

⁶ “Man darf es, meine ich, wagen, das späte 15. Jahrhundert in Deutschland eine der kirchenfrömmsten Zeiten des Mittelalters zu nennen.” Moeller, ‘Frömmigkeit in Deutschland um 1500,’ p. 22.

⁷ On the *Baufrühling* in particular, see Göttler, ‘Die Disziplinierung des Heiligenbildes,’ pp. 285-286.

⁸ Soergel, *Wondrous in His saints*, pp. 20-27 and 43.

centers such as Aachen, Trier and Cologne.⁹ A later, but most notorious example is the cult of the *Schöne Maria* in Regensburg, where pilgrims flocked together from 1519 onwards. Initially, the town council was heavily involved in its promotion by arranging for a papal indulgence bull and the commissioning of pilgrim badges, but soon the pilgrims' more and more extravagant utterings of devotion led to chaos and in the end they called upon Luther for advice.¹⁰ While a range of studies has documented the situation in the German provinces, the rest of Europe has been less researched. Nevertheless, it seems likely that it was a broader phenomenon. The devotion for Saint Anne, for instance, suddenly became immensely popular all over Europe from the 1470s onwards. Her cult was promoted by humanists and clerics, but they in turn strongly fell back on an expanding popular cult.¹¹ For France, Lucien Febvre famously noted *un immense appétit du divin*, Jacques Chiffolleau spoke about *des manifestations 'aberrantes' ou 'folles' de la piété*, and Neil Galpern placed the apogee of what he called 'late medieval religion' around 1500.¹² In a broader northern European perspective an exponential increase in numbers of pilgrims has been noted, although it has hardly been analyzed and quantified.¹³

As this is precisely the period in which the devotion to Saint Leonard in Zoutleeuw was heavily promoted and put on a broader geographical map, it is worthwhile to establish whether or not similar dynamics are to be noted in the Low Countries.¹⁴ The historiographical overview indeed lays bare the need for a new survey of late medieval piety in the Low Countries through the lens of the latest insights, incorporating qualitative methods as well as quantitative approaches such as those introduced by Toussaert. Long-term surveys of individual churches in the Low Countries with a focus on their functions as pilgrimage shrines are rare, and as a result comparison of the particular Zoutleeuw situation with a broader context is difficult. The sketching of a new image is nevertheless essential in order to understand the environment in which

⁹ Nixon, *Mary's mother*, pp. 31-38.

¹⁰ Kühnel, 'Werbung, Wunder und Wallfahrt,' pp. 105-107; Soergel, *Wondrous in His saints*, pp. 52-61.

¹¹ Dhanens, 'Een Maagschap van de H. Anna,' pp. 118-119; Nixon, *Mary's mother*, pp. 21-27.

¹² Febvre, 'Une question mal posée,' p. 39; Chiffolleau, 'Ce qui fait changer la mort,' p. 129; Galpern, 'The legacy of late medieval religion,' esp. p. 175.

¹³ Blick & Tekippe, *Art and architecture of late medieval pilgrimage*, p. xxi; Soergel, *Miracles and the Protestant imagination*, pp. 34-35. A general discussion of medieval pilgrimage with a large geographical and chronological scope, see Webb, *Medieval European pilgrimage*.

¹⁴ Weiler noted "groeierende intensiteit van vroomheid," but referred to Moeller and did not elaborate on it. See Weiler, 'De Nederlandse laat-middeleeuwse godsdienstigheid,' p. 438.

the cult of Saint Leonard was promoted. The following discussion thus does not claim to be definitive, but proposes to chart the bigger picture of the broader Netherlandish context by means of several proxies, most importantly miracles and indulgences - two devotional aspects that have been put forward as central to the cult of Saint Leonard in Zoutleeuw. In order to avoid potential differences in economic evolutions and demographic dynamics, monetary offerings will not be considered here, as their interpretation is too easily subjected to regional and local variations. As will be demonstrated, a fresh look at old sources provides new views.

2.1.2 Old sources I: miracle collections

Miracle collections have already briefly been discussed above as a tool to map the fame and geographical radiation of a shrine, but they are abundantly valuable as a source, although it took historians some time to appreciate their true value. Initially such material was discarded as expressions of medieval superstition and devotional hysteria, and no scholar would ever believe such spectacular stories had actually taken place. Thus the rich potential was ignored. This changed after a number of twentieth-century methodological turns and a group of scholars began to study miracles and the sources in which they were recorded. Ronald Finucane made especially important contributions to changing the regard of miracles as sources for research. He convincingly argued that it is unnecessary to call upon fraud and hysteria to explain medieval miracles, as they should be approached by means of contemporary concepts. The bulk of the source material he analyzed were miraculous cures, which led him to consider medieval notions of both health and disease. Finucane found that they both were highly fluid categories, fundamentally different from ours, and given the high mortality rates the slightest improvement in bodily conditions could quickly be considered as a miracle when happening in the right context. Indeed, not the saints but the pilgrims worked the miracles. “A single cure was worth well over a hundred failures, was enough to give a boost to what people desperately wanted to believe.”¹⁵ In the wake of studies such as these, miracles came to be used as sources for a whole range of studies, not only in order to understand medieval notions of infirmity, but also to demonstrate how they were rooted in moral issues and social discourses.¹⁶

¹⁵ Finucane, ‘The use and abuse of medieval miracles,’ quote on p. 10.

¹⁶ See, among others, Finucane, *Miracles and pilgrims*; van Mulder, ‘Miracles and the body social’.

This does of course not mean that the sources in which miracles were recorded do not have their bias. Numerous case studies have made it abundantly clear that such collections were often assembled or written down with a very precise purpose in mind. In most cases these texts - increasingly written in the vernacular and often displayed on a chain near the shrine itself - were utilized to promote the shrine in question, and a substantial dossier was mostly indispensable in the quest for obtaining indulgences and official recognition. It goes without saying that in the eyes of the ecclesiastical authorities shrines that could boast a significant number of miracles were more qualified for indulgences than others.¹⁷ Nor are miracle books necessarily to be considered as accurate recordings of the total number of worked miracles. Gabriela Signori has argued that textual miracle collections represent only the very last step in a much larger process, in which they are preceded by narratives in other forms, including spoken in sermons or visual in paintings.¹⁸ Some complaints by early seventeenth-century antiquarian collectors of medieval miracle books in the Low Countries are also telling in this regard.¹⁹ For instance, in compiling the material for his account of the wondrous events at the shrine of Our Lady of Halle, Justus Lipsius essentially made use of the still preserved volume that recorded the miracles, of which he had received a copy from Aubertus Miraeus. Yet, he noted a considerable lacuna for the sixteenth century, which he did not attribute to a cessation of miracles, but rather to the negligence of those who were in charge of the registration. After all, as Lipsius was able to observe himself, the church still held votive tablets and other images that bore witness to miracles that were not included in the book he was given (cf. *infra*).²⁰

¹⁷ General discussions of the source type include Signori, 'Kultwerbung - Endzeitängste - Judenhaß,' pp. 441-447; Hofmann-Rendt, 'Wallfahrt und Konkurrenz'; O'Sullivan, 'Miracle narratives'; Purkis, 'Miracles as propaganda'.

¹⁸ Signori, 'Kultwerbung - Endzeitängste - Judenhaß,' pp. 438-445.

¹⁹ This theme will be further discussed in Part III. On the early seventeenth-century reception of late medieval miracle books, see especially Thijs, 'Over bedevaarten in Vlaanderen,' pp. 276-281, and Van Mulder, *Wonderkoorts*, pp. 335-350.

²⁰ "Et quae hactenus dedi, unius fere saeculi sunt (duo excipio) id est ab anno M.CCCC. aut circa, ad annum quingentesimum, imo ad eum non pertingunt. Deinceps usque ad hoc nostrum aevum fere silentium est, an non incuria, aut omissione eorum, qui Actis praefuerunt? Ego arbitror: sive etiam satietas eos cepit scribendi aut colligendi, cum viderent Divae gloriam satis iam propagatam testatamque esse. Neque enim desiisse miracula, vel haec aetas dicit: in qua paucis ab annis memorabilia evenere: quae tamen non Actis comprehensa, sed Tabulis fere votivis signata, aut depicta, breviter hic commemorabo." Lipsius, *Divae Virgo Hallensis*, pp. 65-66.

Nevertheless, the material at hand suggests that the correct registration of what happened was often a serious concern, just like the collection of evidence and testimonies. Moreover, insights such as Finucane's about the importance of taking miracles seriously urge to include such material in a survey of evolving notions of devotion. Moreover, Jonas Van Mulder recently noted that most material available for the Low Countries in fact can be dated to the long fifteenth century, contrary to France for instance, where miracle collections already appeared in the twelfth and thirteenth centuries.²¹ Yet, this whole body of source material has never been used to draw a general, chronological evolution, let alone in quantitative terms. As they should be considered as genuine, religious expressions, as experiences coming from believers and pilgrims themselves, they can at least provide a broad outline of how the popularity of certain devotions evolved, both from a general as from an individual point of view. Therefore, all the material that is available for the Low Countries in the period under consideration will be analyzed here from a quantitative and chronological perspective. In order to be able to assess the evolution on a sufficiently long term, I will use a set of 1850 dated miracles that happened at 27 different shrines somewhere between 1400 and 1620, registered in collections that were mostly compiled at some point in the same time span. However, in order to focus on the evolution of piety on the long term, only collections that have pre-1550 origins were included. As a result, the material presented here essentially gives an idea of how late medieval shrines fared throughout the long sixteenth century, and for that very reason the other parts of this dissertation will come back to it repeatedly. As a whole, both the chronological and the numerical scope of this dataset is comparable to the one used by Finucane (2300 miracles from 1066 to 1300), although he came to virtually the same amount of material by studying a mere nine sites.²² This set does not claim to be complete, but as it stands it offers interesting material to draw conclusions. Not all miracles recorded in the available collections could be used, however, as some are only generally dated and others not at all.²³

²¹ Van Mulder, review of De Boer & Jongen, *In het water gevonden*.

²² Finucane, *Miracles and pilgrims*, pp. 9-14.

²³ These shrines are Aalst, Alsemberg, Amersfoort, Arnhem, Bolsward, Breda (Niervaart), Brussels, Cambrai, Dadizele, Delft (Maria Jesse, Seven Sorrows and Holy Cross), Dordrecht, Gullegem, Halle, Kerselare, Lede, Leuven (Holy Sacrament of Miracle and Our Lady), Lier, Malmedy, Scheut, 's-Hertogenbosch, Tongre-Notre-Dame, Waver and Wezemaal. Overviews of the material are available in Giraldo, 'Vlaamse mirakelboeken'; de Boer & Jongen, *In het water gevonden*, pp. 19-20; Van Mulder, *Wonderkoorts*, Appendix 1 and *passim*. The collections mentioned in these overviews have been completed with the rich material compiled in Vrancx, *Den*

All the individually recorded miracles of the different collections were grouped per decade in which they reportedly happened. First of all, the dataset can be used to chart the general evolution per decade of ‘active’ shrines - that is, the number of places where miracles were registered. It is important to note here that the bulk of available material per miracle collection is typically concentrated in the early years of a shrine’s activity. Such an evolution is displayed by the graph charting the number of miracles that were recorded in the still understudied miracle book of Saint Gummarus in Lier (graph 11). Interestingly, the recordings started in 1475, a year after the authenticity of the Lier relics of their patron saint had been reconfirmed. During the first year 64 miracles were written down, a year later only 27, later on further diminishing to ten and less per year.²⁴ The Marian shrine at Amersfoort displays a similar pattern. In December 1444 the miraculous statue of the Virgin was found in a river, later that month it was installed in the church where it reportedly immediately started working wonders. During the remainder of the 1440s, no less than 409 individual miracles were drawn up, falling back to a mere 7 during the 1450s. During the next decades the number rose again to around 30 per decade, but it never again reached the extraordinary level of the 1440s.²⁵ It is therefore difficult to assess the degree of activity in later years when miracles were perhaps less diligently recorded, but it also means that the general graph roughly charts the ‘activation’ of new shrines (graph 12). Although conclusions are precarious because of the small numbers, the curve suggests a gradual rise throughout the fifteenth century, with the 1440s as a first peak and the 1510s as absolute high point with ten active shrines all over the Low Countries, including Leuven (two shrines), ’s-Hertogenbosch and Wezemaal in Brabant, one in Cambrai, one in Bolsward (Friesland), three shrines in Delft (Holland) and one in Malmedy.

In absolute numbers, the majority of the miracles in the data set (533) are dated to the 1440s, but the course this graph is in fact heavily influenced by the Amersfoort data. With 542 records, that collection is by far the most sizeable of all the preserved Middle Dutch miracle sets, representing more than one fourth of our whole data set. 409 of the 533 miracles from the 1440s were indeed attributed to Our Lady of Amersfoort.

tweeden cout der nichten, as well as with *Historie ende mirakelen van de Alder-Heylighste hostie*; George, ‘Les miracles de Saint Quirin’; Minnen, *Den heylige sant al in Brabant*.

²⁴ Mertens, *Mirakelboek van Sint Gummarus*. On the Lier cult, see also Van Mulder, *Wonderkoorts*, pp. 119-120.

²⁵ De Boer & Jongen, *In het water gevonden*; Van Mulder, ‘Miracles and the body social’; idem, *Wonderkoorts*, pp. 79-83.

Consequently, it proportionally outweighs all the other shrines and distorts the curve. When the data from the Amersfoort collection is left out, the graph shows what is probably a more representative evolution (graph 13). The gradual rise throughout the fifteenth century noted before is still discernable, but a clear sudden regression in the 1480s and 1490s appears - possibly due to the disastrous war years in the revolt against Maximilian. The 1510s again show a marked peak. The graph plotting the average number of miracles per place per decade displays a similar evolution (graph 14): a steady rise toward the 1470s as an absolute high point, followed by a regression in the 1490s and a new - though significantly less prominent - peak in the 1510s. The overall image that emerges from these analyses suggests a considerable growth of (recorded) miraculous experiences in the second half of the fifteenth and earliest decades of the sixteenth centuries. Moreover, the 1470s stand out as a particularly miraculous decade. This all concurs with the German material described before, and it indeed seems justifiable to describe the period as characterized by a broader *climat miraculeux*, as Henri Platelle has described the situation in Lille and its surroundings around 1600. Much like the situation of c. 1500 discussed here, Platelle saw a steady rise of newly originating devotions and shrines, where suddenly new series of miracles occurred. Similarly, Trevor Johnson spoke of a “culture of the miraculous” in relation to the eighteenth century Palatinate.²⁶ Indeed, as mentioned earlier Philip Soergel has demonstrated that much of the Counter-Reformatory culture had clear late medieval roots.²⁷

2.1.3 Old sources II: indulgences

A second tool that can be used to characterize the epoch are indulgences. However, contrary to miracles, which can - as discussed above - to a certain extent quite safely be considered as experiences coming spontaneously from the believers themselves, the indulgence system was developed by the Church itself. Informed by Reformatory critiques, in the historiography on the subject they are often considered as the quintessential excess that characterizes the pre-Reformation Church of Rome. Yet, as far as the Low Countries are concerned, the issue is still in need of a decent survey,

²⁶ See, respectively, Platelle, *Les Chrétiens face au miracle*, p. 45, and Johnson, ‘Blood, tears and Xavier-water,’ p. 202.

²⁷ Soergel, *Wondrous in His saints*. See also Laven, ‘Countering the Counter-Reformation,’ p. 713.

contrary to the well-studied German territories. Until fairly recently the historiography on indulgences was fundamentally influenced by confessional identities of scholars.²⁸ Consequently, a revisionist view would be desirable here as well, as the whole phenomenon has only rarely been studied from the perspective of the people, and it should be emphasized that the system certainly was much more complex than merely seeking financial profit. Indeed, a reductive approach to indulgences as superficial expressions of faith needs to be nuanced and does no justice to this broadly spread phenomenon.²⁹ Shaffern has defined indulgences as “remissions of the temporal penalty due for sin granted by the episcopal authority of the Catholic Church.”³⁰ The system came into being around the middle of the eleventh century, although initially indulgences were only available after intensive trials, such as dangerous pilgrimages or crusades. This would change dramatically in later centuries. Indulgences could be issued on the authority of various persons, and the Fourth Lateran Council of 1215 established some rules on the matter, including Canon 62: depending on the occasion bishops could give either maximum 40 or 100 days, and only the Pope had the authority to grant a plenary indulgence.³¹ Circumstantial evidence suggests that these regulations were not strictly followed, however, and from the fourteenth century onwards cardinals are known to have granted indulgences, and the limits to the maximum amount of days were often greatly exceeded.³²

Gradually, a system developed in which indulgences were granted in different forms, for varying reasons and in campaigns organized on different levels of the ecclesiastical hierarchy: from special indulgences granted by the pope as Bishop of Rome over extensive campaigns with itinerant *quaestores* organized on a diocesan level, to the much lesser known parochial indulgences that were promulgated by the parish priest.³³ As a consequence, the relevant material is much more scattered and a “total survey” is

²⁸ The best recent surveys are van Herwaarden, ‘Medieval indulgences and devotional life’ (which is a partial translation of his ‘Middeleeuwse aflaten en Nederlandse devotie’), and Caspers, ‘Indulgences in the Low Countries’. Both authors treat the historiographical issue. On indulgences in general, see Tingle, *Indulgences after Luther*; Shaffern, ‘The medieval theology of indulgences’; Morris, ‘Indulgence handbills’; Bird, ‘Indulgences’; Swanson, *Indulgences in late medieval England*.

²⁹ Compare the remarks by Caspers, ‘Indulgences in the Low Countries,’ pp. 66 and 92. A recent revision is proposed by Sugiyama, *Promise to the penitent*.

³⁰ Shaffern, ‘The medieval theology of indulgences,’ p. 11.

³¹ Schroeder, *Disciplinary decrees*, pp. 236-296.

³² Van Herwaarden, ‘Medieval indulgences and devotional life,’ pp. 91-94.

³³ On the latter, see Caspers, ‘Indulgences in the Low Countries,’ pp. 93-97.

nearly impossible.³⁴ Neither are the sources so easily quantified as miracles. Yet, a still invaluable tool for research on indulgences in the Low Countries is Paul Fredericq's posthumously published *Codex documentorum sacratissimarum indulgentiarum Neerlandicarum* (1922), containing virtually all relevant sources he and his students were able to find on the papal indulgences in the Burgundian and Habsburg territories. Although it does not contain any material on 'small' or 'local' indulgences, it is the only nearly complete overview of at least one aspect of the indulgence system in the Low Countries.³⁵ A quantitative processing of his data per decade can therefore not be considered as fully accurate, but it nevertheless displays striking parallels with the previous graphs drawn from the miracle accounts (graph 15). There is a significant upsurge in the second half of the fifteenth century until around 1520, again with the 1490s as an important temporary regression. Two remarks should be made here. First, the graph can be criticized for simply showing the increasingly preserved documents. Yet, the fact that it closely follows the previous graphs is significant, especially considering the enormous sudden rise and the temporary regression of the 1490s. On top of that, the definitive relapse after 1530 at least partially contradicts such a critique. Second, it must be noted that Fredericq's corpus does not only contain the known letters of indulgence themselves, but also other documents relating to them and narrative accounts on the practice as a whole. Therefore, the graph should perhaps rather be considered as illustrative of the broader culture surrounding the practice of indulgences - a point to which we will return.

The increasing importance of indulgences in the later middle ages in general and the second half of the fifteenth century in particular has already repeatedly been noted by various scholars, not only in relation to the Netherlands but also in a broader European context. Jan van Herwaarden referred to the situation as "an inflation of indulgences."³⁶ Furthermore, a close-reading of Fredericq's material itself clearly points to increasing and intensifying dynamics. In the first place, this is closely related to the celebration of the Roman Jubilees in increasingly shorter cycles towards the end of the fifteenth century. The first Jubilee Year was proclaimed by Pope Boniface VIII in 1300. It was meant to draw pilgrims to Rome, for whom a plenary indulgence was made available on that occasion. Several years later, Clement VI declared 1350 to be a

³⁴ This has also been noted by Caspers, 'Indulgences in the Low Countries,' p. 75.

³⁵ Fredericq, *Codex documentorum*, p. x.

³⁶ Van Herwaarden, 'Medieval indulgences and devotional life,' pp. 120-121; Kuys, 'Secular authorities and parish church building,' pp. 123-124; Morris, 'Indulgence handbills'.

second jubilee and he subsequently instituted a cycle in which such jubilees would be held every 50 years. His system was somewhat disturbed by the Western Schism, during which the two different popes maintained their own cycles. In the end, however, the cycle of 50 years was maintained, and 1450 was the next officially endorsed Roman Jubilee celebrated in the newly united Church of Rome. But the 50-year cycle was soon abandoned, when in 1470 Paul II created a cycle of 25 years, making 1475 the next jubilee year. These increasing dynamics and shortening cycles are an underlying explanation of the upsurge in the abovementioned graph, all the more because the benefits of such Jubilees were not restricted to the city of Rome alone. Since the late fourteenth century, immediately following the jubilee year the related indulgences were also made available in a highly limited selection of other cities (*ad instar jubilei*), some also in the Low Countries. 1450 turned out to be of unprecedented importance, however. Starting in 1443, the civic authorities of Mechelen had launched a veritable lobbying campaign in order to obtain permission to provide the papal indulgence in their city. They saw themselves supported by Duke Philip the Good and John of Burgundy, Bishop of Cambrai, and in the end their efforts proved successful, as the pope allowed the sale of indulgences from April to November 1451 to faithful Christians who - in imitation of the practice in Rome - visited seven churches in the city and made their offerings. The event turned out to be a tremendous success, so much so that other cities in the Low Countries set up similar campaigns to obtain similar privileges. Through the mediation of papal legate Nicholas of Cusa, a whole series of other cities were allowed to offer indulgences for limited periods of time after Mechelen, but none of them equalled the latter's success. Furthermore, between 1455 and 1465 Mechelen's privilege was renewed, and after that it was again available in various other cities, including Ghent (1467-1468) and Bruges (1478), where candidates again had to visit seven churches. In 1498, 1500 was already proclaimed as the next jubilee, before it had even started its term was prolonged in 1499 and from 1501 onwards it was again available in the Low Countries.³⁷ Although this indulgence was of course a papal one, the church fabrics in question nevertheless also benefited from the situation.³⁸

³⁷ Most of the relevant documents are included in Fredericq, *Codex documentorum*. For more detailed discussions, see Remy, *Les grandes indulgences pontificales*, pp. 40-116; Jongkees, 'De jubileum-aflaat van het jaar 1450'; Van Herwaarden, 'Medieval indulgences and devotional life,' pp. 101-106; Caspers, 'Indulgences in the Low Countries,' pp. 74-75; Kuys, 'Secular authorities and parish church building,' pp. 123-124.

³⁸ Jongkees, 'De jubileum-aflaat van het jaar 1450,' p. 82.

Parallel to the increasing popularity of the jubilee, indulgences and the notable administrative ease in obtaining it, there were a multitude of other methods for believers to shorten their temporary penalty in purgatory. Cities and churches still tried to obtain their own, individual indulgences, either from the pope, a bishop or a cardinal, and as discussed above it is quite possible that a similar process is hinted at in the Zoutleuw accounts.³⁹ Dioceses continued to send out *quaestores* and Wim Vroom has effectively demonstrated how the related financial revenues in Utrecht represented an increasingly important share in the funding for the construction of the cathedral. Throughout the fifteenth century a steady rise can be noted there, reaching an absolute summit in the years around 1500 when it represented up to 70 or even 80% of all the revenues.⁴⁰ Furthermore, also the source material collected by Fredericq suggests a heightened activity of papal indulgence commissions in the Low Countries at large. The activities of Raymundus Peraudi (1435-1505) have received ample attention in Germany, but at the turn of the century he was equally active in the Low Countries, from Vollenhove in the north to Brussels and Mechelen in the south.⁴¹ He was preceded by Lucas de Tollentis (1428-1491), bishop of Šibenik (Sebenico), who from 1472 onwards was appointed papal nuntio and indulgence preacher in the Low Countries. Printed indulgence letters on vellum that were granted by him have been preserved for 1477 until 1480, issued in cities that suggest an area of activity similar to that of Peraudi after him (fig. 38).⁴² At the same time, however, both the fact that more and more critical voices are heard and that secular authorities moreover started issuing edicts to control or even prohibit related practices, suggest excesses resulting from increasing dynamics. As far as the critiques are concerned, it must be emphasized that they were nearly as old as the indulgence system itself. Peter Abelard had already expressed serious doubts around 1139, and in the Low Countries writers such as Lodewijk van Velthem and Jan van Boendale uttered unfavourable opinions on the matter. Criticism continued in the *Devotio Moderna*, and later in the writings of Erasmus. Yet, none of these objections actually concerned the system *in se*, but only the excesses related to it, especially when money was involved. The only exception was

³⁹ Other examples, including the abbeys of Groenendaal and Egmond, are discussed by van Herwaarden, 'Medieval indulgences and devotional life,' p. 99.

⁴⁰ Vroom, *Financiering van de kathedraalbouw*, pp. 300 and 508-512.

⁴¹ Fredericq, *Codex documentorum*, nrs. 215, 226-228, 231-235, 237, 282, 289-291, 293 and 294-297. On his activities see also Caspers, 'Indulgences in the Low Countries,' p. 84, and Eisermann, 'The indulgence as media event,' pp. 325-329, who cites an extensive body of earlier literature in note 45.

⁴² Fredericq, *Codex documentorum*, nrs. 174, 189, 191-193, 195, 199 and 206-212. See for biographical data also Goetstouwers, 'Notes sur les papiers d'affaires de Pierre de Hagenbach'.

Wessel Gansfort, whose writings from the 1480s were later republished, provided with a foreword by Luther in 1521.⁴³ Further intensification of indulgence traffic is also suggested by the fact that the Burgundian, and later Habsburg, sovereigns increasingly issued decrees prohibiting and limiting the trade. An early example is provided by Duke Philip the Good in 1458, condemning “indulgence peddlars who walk the County and impoverish it by their extortions.” Similar laws would later be issued by Philip the Fair in 1502 and 1503, authorizing only papal indulgences, and his son Charles, the future emperor, in 1515.⁴⁴ Finally, several cases of executions of swindlers and frauds are also documented in this period. For instance, a certain Jan van Poederlee had forged papal indulgence bulls with which he crossed the Low Countries and made good fortune. He was caught, however, and decapitated in 1481 in Kampen.⁴⁵ A similar trial took place in Bruges around 1512.⁴⁶

The selection of material presented here does not suggest that indulgences were unimportant before the later fifteenth century. Rather, it is meant to sketch the intensifying dynamics surrounding the system during these years. The examples amply illustrate that the practice was increasingly present and visible in both the public space and opinion. Indulgences were available more frequently and in ever more locations. Essential in this context is the employment of the printing press, which was actively used to spread information in a clear and standardized way, and - most importantly - on a scale that had not been seen before. The papacy of Sixtus IV in the 1470s was crucial in that respect. The materials that were printed were not even limited to the indulgence letters themselves, but equally included a whole corpus of promoting materials surrounding them, ranging from calendars and papal bulls to instructive leaflets and booklets. A good portion of all this was moreover printed in the

⁴³ Fredericq, *Codex documentorum*, nrs. 4, 7, 250-253, 264, 283, 326, 368-369, 398-399, 400, 404, 406-408. On Abelard, see Shaffern, ‘The medieval theology of indulgences,’ p. 11. In general, see van Herwaarden, ‘Medieval indulgences and devotional life,’ pp. 97-98; Caspers, ‘Indulgences in the Low Countries,’ pp. 68-69, 77-81 and 86. Compare with Erasmus’ foreword to the 1526 edition of his *Colloquies*: “Nor do I condemn papal indulgences or briefs there; but I do reprove the utterly frivolous man who, without even a thought of amending his life, puts his whole hope in human pardons.” See Erasmus, *The Colloquies*, p. 627.

⁴⁴ Fredericq, *Codex documentorum*, nrs. 149, 286, 301 and 339. On related politics by secular authorities in general, see also van Herwaarden, ‘Medieval indulgences and devotional life,’ pp. 100 and 107.

⁴⁵ Fredericq, *Codex documentorum*, nrs. 196 and 216-217. On that case, see also Caspers, ‘Indulgences in the Low Countries,’ p. 68.

⁴⁶ Fredericq, *Codex documentorum*, nr. 328.

vernacular and thus reached an even broader audience.⁴⁷ As such, in combination with what has been said about miracles, the discussion of indulgences provides a complementary idea about the context in which devotion was lived and practiced around 1500.

2.1.4 Toward a new image

Both chronological evolutions sketched here on miracle collections and indulgences strikingly match observations made in other studies of related topics, most notably confraternities, testaments, foundations, and processions. With regard to late medieval confraternities in the Low Countries, the most extensive survey still remains that of Paul Trio - albeit focused on just one city, Ghent. Of course, the popularity of confraternities evidently depended on a whole range of different factors. The decision to become a member was not always purely religiously motivated, as social and moral pressure must have been involved, including secular concerns like the assurance of a remembrance after death.⁴⁸ Nevertheless, the general pattern Trio discerned in studying the Ghent confraternities was a steady rise in memberships in the second half of the fifteenth century until around 1480-1485. In most cases, this was first followed by a temporary decline until 1492-1493, and a subsequent revival until around 1525. Also, throughout the fifteenth century the number of confraternities that were simultaneously active in the city had doubled by 1500.⁴⁹ The similar pattern with the evolutions sketched above is clear. Parallel evolutions can be read in the material collected by Mol, who analyzed 217 Frisian testaments from the period running from 1400 to 1580, and a number of related studies of foundations. The latter equally suggest an increase throughout the fifteenth century, with an absolute summit around 1500-1510.⁵⁰ A comparable in-depth and long-term survey of foundations in Zoutleeuw remains to be done, but in a first sample based on the collegiate chapter's charter

⁴⁷ For a good overview, see Eisermann, 'The indulgence as media event'. A similar thesis had already been put forward by Soergel, *Wondrous in His saints*, opposing the 'classic' view that only Protestants actively made use of the printing press, as has most notably been stated by Eisenstein, *The printing press as an agent of change*.

⁴⁸ Trio, *Volksreligie*, p. 344.

⁴⁹ Trio, *Volksreligie*, pp. 167-199, esp. pp. 190-192 and 347.

⁵⁰ Mol, 'Friezen en het hiernamaals,' pp. 61-64; Trio, 'Moordende concurrentie op de memoriemarkt,' pp. 153-155; Speetjens, 'A quantitative approach', p. 124; idem 'The founder, the chaplain and the ecclesiastical authorities,' pp. 205-206, graph 2.

collection the 1500s and 1510s similarly display a peak (cf. *infra*, graph 27). Finally, Andrew Brown's study of general processions in Bruges corresponds with the above data. While they are mentioned in the source material he used from the fourteenth century onwards, civic processions occur ever more frequently throughout the fifteenth century. The 1460s saw a notable increase, leading to absolute peaks in the 1470s and 1480s. Once again, a slight decline is visible in the 1490s, but the number of processions was still significantly higher than in the early fifteenth century (graph 16).⁵¹

In sum, all the material on the Low Countries presented here paints a highly uniform picture of a strikingly intense piety at the dawn of an iconoclastic age. It thus seems that the question as to the commensurability of the previously sketched German and broader European contexts on the one hand, with the situation in the Low Countries on the other, is to be answered positively. This observation, in turn, allows for a revision of the character of this very piety. As has been discussed above, it has mostly been viewed in a negative light, essentially seen in a reductionist framework of an almost mechanical 'economy of salvation'. Scholars traditionally expressed the gravest doubts on the pious sincerity regarding indulgences. Much like elsewhere in Europe, however, all these different proxies should be considered as coherent outward expressions of inward devotion. While it is certainly legitimate to question whether all the assembled material above is representative of the piety of the people at large or only as a broad and intense offensive from the part of either Rome or the local clergy, it must be emphasized that all the evidence suggests that people at least *wanted* to believe in its efficacy. It would indeed be very hard to explain the unprecedented success of the indulgence system if there were no broad appetite for it. After all, it involved more than just a transaction of money, as indulgences were typically related to a whole array of devotional acts, ranging from confession, fasting, pilgrimages and prayers, either before a specified image or not. Multiple paintings and prints from the period in question give precise instructions on how and when to kneel, and which prayers to say in order to receive the promised remissions.⁵² If certain prayers were said in front of particular types of images, indulgences were granted as well, and in such cases money was not involved in any way. Two examples, Maria in sole and the Mass of Saint Gregory, were particularly well-known in this respect, and both aptly illustrate how the indulgence system at the same time was inherently related to the

⁵¹ Brown, 'Perceptions of relics'.

⁵² For an overview, see Sugiyama, *Promise to the penitent*.

spreading and popularity of devotional and theological ideas. As part of a campaign to promote the doctrine of the Immaculate Conception of Mary, Pope Sixtus IV (r. 1471-1484) had granted an indulgence of 11.000 years to those who said the prayer *Ave sanctissima Maria mater dei* in front of an image of the Virgin in the Sun (*Maria in sole*).⁵³ The iconography of the Mass of Saint Gregory was a highly literal visualization of the True Presence of Christ in the Eucharist during Mass, and therefore served as perfect vehicle for spreading the related doctrine. These examples harkened back to a somewhat obscure tradition. Pope Gregory the Great was said to have granted indulgences to those who looked at a particular image of the Man of Sorrows in Rome. Over time the terms of indulgences were gradually loosened and expanded. Indulgences of 12.000 to even 20.000 years were said to have been granted not only for the beholding of the original image in Rome, but also of copies or of images depicting Christ as the Man of Sorrows in general. Eventually, the very iconography of the Mass of Saint Gregory was even included in this list. It only occurred after 1400, but its popularity significantly increased throughout the fifteenth century and peaked around 1500.⁵⁴

These and related iconographic themes pervaded the religious material culture of the Low Countries in this period. Because the Mass of Saint Gregory and *Maria in sole* were frequently depicted in immediate combination with each other there can be no doubt that their popularity was at least in part related to the expansion of the indulgence system. Yet, the images could be seen in both the public and the private sphere, on objects that were commissioned by laypeople just as much as the clergy, which is indicative of their popularity within the whole range of possible devotional practices.⁵⁵ In private contexts, they were included in prayerbooks, where rubrics often literally indicated the acts that had to be done and the number of days of indulgence that thereby could be earned.⁵⁶ They were also represented on precious minuscule carvings of boxwood prayerbeads. In one example, both halves of the interior of the paternoster bead of a decade rosary, said to be of Henry VIII, each

⁵³ Ringbom, 'Maria in Sole', and Sugiyama, *Promise to the penitent*, pp. 50-58.

⁵⁴ D'Hainaut-Zveny, 'Les messes de saint Grégoire'; Göttler, 'Is seeing believing'; Sugiyama, *Promise to the penitent*, pp. 59-73.

⁵⁵ An iconographical survey of the Mass of Saint Gregory in different media in the Low Countries is provided by de Borchgrave d'Altena, 'La messe de Saint Grégoire'.

⁵⁶ Examples in Rudy, 'Images, rubrics, and indulgences,' and Sugiyama, *Promise to the penitent*.

show one of these two themes (fig. 39).⁵⁷ The popularity of the *Maria in sole* theme also led to the development of the monumental sculptural Marianum, hung high in the naves of churches for the parishioners to behold. A rare example, probably by Peter Roesen, has been preserved in the Zoutleeuw church, to which it had been given around 1534 by a still unidentified private donor (fig. 40).⁵⁸ Furthermore, the iconography was also included in other objects within the church space, ranging from metal chandeliers to stone epitaphs.⁵⁹ Finally, both devotional iconographies were often included on altarpieces, interestingly mostly on the outer wings or the predella so that they were almost permanently visible to the laity. An oft-recurring formula in Brussels altarpieces was the placement of the two themes on the small wings closing the high, central part, as in Västerås (fig. 41).⁶⁰ Other retables displayed monumental representations of the Mass of Saint Gregory in recognizably Netherlandish church interiors, spread out over the exterior wings, as in Zepperen (fig. 42).⁶¹

These images and the related devotions were clearly given a central place within both individual and collective religious experiences. Either small or big, in private or in public, they functioned on various levels. The indulgence system doubtless served as a

⁵⁷ For that example, see Scholten, *Small wonders*, pp. 232-235 and 618-619, cat. no. 35. For the use of such objects, see Falkenburg, 'Prayer nuts seen through the "eyes of the heart"'.

⁵⁸ It was at least partly made by sculptor Peter Roesen, probably a relative of the better-known Leuven sculptor Hendrik Roesen. It was installed by May 1534: KR 1533, fols. 189v (April 1534, "Item betaelt Peter Rosin van dat hij dy sonne ghemaek heef, 6 st) and 191v (May 1534, "Item betaelt Peter Hollants van dat hij met sijn cnape heef hulpen dye Lieve Vrouwe op hangen 11 st 1 ort"). For Roesen, see also under 4.3.2. On the Zoutleeuw Marianum, see also Steppe, 'Een sanctuarium van de Brabantse laat-gotiek,' p. 611, and Bangs, *Church art and architecture*, pp. 136-138. Raes, *Zoutleeuw, glorie en naglans*, p. 68, cat. nr. 43 identified the coat of arms as that of a certain Cleynen-Bellen family, but I have not come across any of these names in the sources I studied. On the object type in general, see Smeyers, 'Het Marianum'. The only other complete Marianum in Belgium, still preserved *in situ*, is in Neeroeteren, see BALaT object nr. 21699.

⁵⁹ Contemporaneous examples of chandeliers are in Bocholt, Bruges and Xanten, see respectively BALaT object nrs. 78276 and 108541, and Klapheck, *Der Dom zu Xanten*, fig. 53. An example of an epitaph is in Nivelles, see BALaT object nr. 10149609.

⁶⁰ For this and similar examples, see De Boodt, 'Catalogue des retables bruxellois,' p. 209, cat. B30; pp. 213-214, cat. B35; pp. 216-217, cat. B38; pp. 218-220, cat. B40; pp. 220-221, cat. B41; pp. 222-224, cat. B43. Closely related are the Brussels altarpiece of Sala and the 1516 Antwerp altarpiece of Västerås, both showing each of the themes in one of the two openings. See, respectively, De Boodt, 'Catalogue des retables bruxellois,' pp. 212-213, cat. B34, and BALaT object nr. 40001372.

⁶¹ Other examples are provided by d'Hainaut-Zveny, 'Les messes de saint Grégoire,' esp. pp. 55-56. To these should be added Jheronimus Bosch' *Adoration of the Magi* (Madrid, Museo del Prado) and the 1520 polyptych with the Death of the Virgin by Bernard van Orley (Brussels, Museum van het OCMW, BALaT object nr. 20000373). Compare also with Hoffmann, 'Compound altarpieces in context,' figs. 2-3 and 6-7.

catalyst for their popularity, but they also spread the theological and devotional ideas they represented and visualized themselves, i.e. the Real Presence and the Immaculate Conception. As a result, at the same time this whole body of intensely entwined and interrelated imagery is an expression of the dissemination of theological ideas and the popularity of particular devotions among the people at large. The spheres of private devotion and official liturgy reinforced one another, and in recent years scholars have made important contributions to our understanding of how precisely that worked. Beth Williamson has demonstrated how one religious image could have multiple functions for different individuals, and referred in that context to a ‘devotional afterglow’ of altarpieces after the liturgical ritual in the observer.⁶² Reindert Falkenburg elaborately described how religious images could incite a ‘dynamic imaginative perception’ of the represented subject, in order to interpret it as reality - and therefore, to believe it - with the help of the ‘mental eye’ or the ‘eyes of the heart’.⁶³ The following example illustrates this more in detail.⁶⁴ Attendants to the mass that was celebrated on a normal day on Saint Geneveva’s altar in Zepperen would see the closed altarpiece with its depiction of the Mass of Saint Gregory (fig. 42).⁶⁵ In such a context the iconography’s visualisation of the Real Presence would indeed be most pertinent and convincing, as it literally depicts what the viewer is supposed to believe, namely the fact that Christ is actually present at that very moment (i.e. during mass) at that particular place (i.e. the altar). Several iconographical details emphasize this, such as the fact that Christ stands on the depicted altar, shown pouring his blood into the chalice of the depicted officiating priest. This was represented on the altarpiece

⁶² Williamson, ‘Altarpiece, liturgy and devotion’.

⁶³ This process has been first described in Falkenburg, ‘The household of the soul’. For the iconography of the Mass of Saint Gregory in particular, see idem, ‘Hieronymus Bosch’s Mass of St. Gregory,’ and idem ‘Super-Entanglement’.

⁶⁴ This fictive example is largely based on the analysis in Falkenburg, ‘Hieronymus Bosch’s Mass of St. Gregory’.

⁶⁵ Contrary to what has often been supposed (see Falkenburg, ‘Hieronymus Bosch’s Mass of St. Gregory,’ p. 196), there is clear evidence that masses were performed in front of closed altarpieces on normal days. See, for instance, the c. 1475-1479 miniature by the Master of the Moral Treatises in Brussels, KBR, Ms. 9272-76, fol. 55; the c. 1520 miniature depicting the Mass of the Holy Spirit, attributed to Simon Bening, in Kassel, Landesbibliothek, Ms. 50, leaf 27; the contemporary anonymous Antwerp panel depicting the mass of Saint Agilolf in Cologne, Wallraf-Richartz Museum. See, respectively, Kren & McKendrick, *Illuminating the Renaissance*, p. 160, fig. 28a; Biermann, ‘Die Miniaturhandschriften,’ p. 129, fig. 169; Steinmetz, *Das Altarretabel in der altniederländische Malerei*, pp. 82-82, cat. TB7B. Later church interiors confirm this practice, such as the 1618 painting by Pieter I Neeffs and Frans III Francken in Madrid, Prado. For the opening and closing of altarpieces in general, see Fabri, ‘Triptieken in situ gebruikt,’ pp. 39-41, and Helmus, *Schilderen in opdracht*, p. 48. To the examples mentioned in these publications can be added the one in Halsema-Kubes, Lemmens & de Werd, *Adriaen van Wesel*, p. 63.

which hung directly behind where the very ritual happened, simultaneously serving as its backdrop and a visual focus for the attendants (cf. supra). Outside of that very liturgical context, the same attendants could subsequently encounter the same theme in more intimate contexts in devotional books or prayer beads, where they would subsequently serve as visual support for religious exercises.⁶⁶ The indulgences promised in the prayerbook's margins might in part have increased the devotional enthusiasm, but the 'devotional afterglow' of the complex liturgical moment in the individual observer equally increased the belief in and devotion for the same themes. Outward expressions and sensory perceptions thus stood in direct and mutual relationship with inward, spiritual themes. Exteriorization of piety helped internalization.⁶⁷

2.2 Cult circuit in the Low Countries

The above discussion has thrown light on the ways in which altarpieces could function. Possibly, similar mechanisms were at work in Zoutleeuw, although such interpretations must remain pure speculation as Saint Leonard's iconography remains incomplete. Yet, a crucial aspect that remains to be explored is its function within a pilgrimage context. The different kinds of source material discussed above were in several ways related to the phenomenon of pilgrimage. Miracles - especially the ones that were recorded and collected in books - most often took place in established shrines, and if the place in question was not yet recognized as such, it soon would be precisely because of them. Indulgences, too, were often an important motivation for pilgrims to initiate their trip, as the visits of particular churches or shrines in many cases formed an essential prerequisite for the earning of the promised temporal remission of sin. Both phenomena were indeed crucial for either the establishment or re-evaluation of pilgrimage sites, and the developments discussed above are therefore likely to have had repercussions on the network of shrines. Thus, in order to further contextualize the developments in Zoutleeuw sketched above, it is essential to map the cult circuit in the Low Countries in these years of intense piety. How rare were shrines there, and how dense was the network? In other words, how unique was Zoutleeuw, and to what other places did it have to position itself?

⁶⁶ Falkenburg, 'Prayer nuts seen through the "eyes of the heart",' esp. pp. 118 and 125.

⁶⁷ Compare with observations by Walker Bynum, *Christian materiality*, pp. 24-25, 36 and 267-270.

2.2.1 Defining the cult circuit

The situation is hard to assess, both for theoretical and practical reasons. It is not always clear if a certain church or chapel functioned as a destination for pilgrimages. Moreover, there is no scholarly consensus on what precisely should be considered as such, and terms like ‘place of pilgrimage’, ‘sanctuary’ and ‘shrine’ are generally - just like here, admittedly - used interchangeably, though they in fact each stress slightly different aspects. To an important extent this is a consequence of the fact that throughout the middle ages and early modern period the Church of Rome had no clearly defined term for destinations of pilgrimages in its administrative vocabulary. There was no separate category. After all, every Christian was a pilgrim on the way to God.⁶⁸ Mostly, the broad term *locus sacer* was used, which basically referred to any place of worship that had been consecrated, i.e. every church, chapel, altar or cemetery. As a result, neither ‘place of pilgrimage’, ‘sanctuary’ or ‘shrine’ can really be considered to correspond to a securely delimited historical reality. Furthermore, as has been remarked above, vital cults were not necessarily always officially recognized. A useful working definition is provided by the database *Bedevaartplaatsen in Nederland*: a sacred space that is considered to be especially salutary because of the presence of a certain object of veneration, to which visitors undertake a journey and which has established cult traditions.⁶⁹ However, a considerable number of localities we now consider as contemporary pilgrimage destinations, such as Delft, largely drew on the local population.⁷⁰ Therefore, it might be historically more accurate for the late medieval context in particular - and thus more fruitful for scholars now - to consider it more as a spectrum running from the three great pilgrimage destinations - Jerusalem, Rome and Santiago de Compostela - at the one end, to other established centers of secondary (e.g. Aachen) and tertiary (e.g. Delft) importance and every other *locus sacer* at the other end, which potentially also possessed cult objects or in any case was able in theory to acquire them through gift, purchase or even theft. While the places at the top of the hierarchy were fixed, there was probably a considerable degree of mobility and fluidity at the other, as there were doubtlessly churches and chapels that tried to move up. Financial concerns could have played a major role in this. Based on patterns

⁶⁸ In antique Latin *peregrinatio* meant ‘trip’ and *peregrinus* ‘stranger’. Halkin, ‘Erasmus pèlerin,’ p. 240.

⁶⁹ For the definition, methodological remarks and relevant references, see Margry & Caspers, *Bedevaartplaatsen in Nederland*, vol. 1, pp. 12-16. See also Margry & Post, ‘Het project Bedevaartplaatsen in Nederland’.

⁷⁰ Verhoeven, *Devotie en negotie*, pp. 123-127.

in structural income, Arnd Reitemeier has distinguished two basic sorts of parochial church fabrics. The majority of them was primarily financed by foundations, from which they had revenues from real estate, annuities and rent-charges. In such cases, the income from collections and offertory boxes was of secondary importance. The reverse was true for the second type of church fabric, responsible for the upkeep of pilgrimage churches (*Wallfahrtskirchen*). In such cases, the revenues from local or regional pilgrims marginalized all other sorts of revenues.⁷¹ There are many examples from the Low Countries that confirm that the cult of saints could be very lucrative, such as Kortrijk and Utrecht, to which Vroom has stated that the devotional offerings formed the ‘financial backbone’ of the Cathedral church fabric.⁷² Thus, it is certainly not inconceivable that efforts were made to transform from the first into the second type.

2.2.2 Mapping the cult circuit

As for the practical inconveniences in assessing the state of pilgrimage in the Low Countries at the end of the middle ages, the most pressing problem is the lack of any database or map with pilgrimage destinations on the Belgian territory, in sharp contrast with the very convenient Dutch project mentioned before and the list Jan van Herwaarden distilled for the medieval period in particular.⁷³ The only available attempts at surveys or listings are folkloric in both purpose and method. For the region that concerns us here, i.e. eastern Brabant, the survey of Julienne Sannen from 1950 deserves to be mentioned. With the explicit purpose of drawing up the disappearing regional pilgrimage traditions, she sent out 90 questionnaires, to which she received a mere fifteen responses. Moreover, there was only one correspondent that returned a fully completed form, and interestingly that was the curate of Zoutleeuw. She nevertheless succeeded in drawing up a substantial list of possible complaints or diseases, for each of which she listed the shrines in eastern Brabant that could potentially provide any help. However, no attention was paid to the origins or

⁷¹ Reitemeier, *Pfarrkirchen*, p. 615.

⁷² Meyers-Reinquin, ‘Proeve tot statistische benadering’, p. 215; Vroom, *Financiering van de kathedraalbouw*, p. 276.

⁷³ Van Herwaarden, ‘Medieval pilgrimages,’ pp. 205-210 (Appendix).

historicity of the various places.⁷⁴ Thus, the history of many sites has not yet been written systematically and with attention to source criticism, as folkloric studies often rely on Counter-Reformational source material. Such texts typically highlight the often vaguely defined age, as in order to justify the shrines' existence authors wanted to demonstrate the ancient roots, whether fictive or not (cf. *infra*, 6.1.1). Understandably therefore, until now most scholarly attention has been paid to Counter-Reformational shrines, an interest that in part runs parallel with the study of pilgrimage pennants (*bedevaartvaantjes*), which have only been preserved since the seventeenth century onwards (cf. *infra*, 4.1.4).⁷⁵ As a result, we hardly have any systematic knowledge of the active sites of pilgrimage in the southern provinces of the Low Countries around 1500.

As has already been touched upon above, a basic impression of all the pilgrimage destinations that were important to the inhabitants of the Low Countries in precisely this period is provided by the pilgrim badges found in a number of towns and villages in the province of Zeeland that were swept away forever by the disastrous storm floods of 1530 and 1532 (map 1). Obviously, such a map presents several problems, first and foremost because it can only be taken to represent the local preferences of the inhabitants of these villages. Several places that issued pilgrim badges are not included in that list. For instance, not a single badge of Saint Guido of Anderlecht has been found in Zeeland, although they were definitely available from 1474 onwards.⁷⁶ Secondly, as discussed above, the confrontation with miracle accounts reveals a significant distortion between the badges found and the real geographical scope of a shrine (cf. *supra*, 1.2.1). Moreover, the place of origin of several finds remain unidentified. Thus, it does not necessarily represent a full overview. Nor does the map of all shrines where pilgrim badges have been found, provided by the online Kunera database.⁷⁷

Therefore, a provisional and far from exhaustive map is provided here, representing all the more or less securely documented pilgrimage destinations in the Duchy of Brabant and the surroundings of Zoutleeuw to the east in the Princebishopric of Liège, active

⁷⁴ Sannen, 'Volksbedevaarten tegen kwaal van mensch en vee'. For other relevant literature, see the references given by Margry & Caspers, *Bedevaartplaatsen in Nederland*, vol. 1, pp. 36, note 149, and 43, notes 212-214.

⁷⁵ See, for instance, the focus in Thijs, 'Over bedevaarten in Vlaanderen', and De Roeck, *Devotie aan de grens*.

⁷⁶ Roobaert, 'Zestiende-eeuwse bedevaarttekens,' pp. 2-15.

⁷⁷ Map shown by selecting the layer 'Bedevaartplaatsen'. Shrines that appeared as relevant throughout this research but are absent in Kunera include Herkenrode, Leuven, Sint-Truiden, Tienen, Vorst and Waver.

around 1500, that were encountered in sources or literature during the research for this dissertation (map 2). It has mostly been compiled through work on other topics that have already been mentioned above. Most importantly, these are miracle collections or sporadic accounts, sentences of judicial pilgrimages and indulgences.⁷⁸ Some archival evidence of pilgrim badges and pennants can be added, as well as the particular category of posthumous pilgrimages that were recorded in testaments, and finally a collection of interesting sources that record Protestant critiques on specific shrines.⁷⁹ The best known of these are *Den Byencorff der H. Roomsche Kercke* from 1569, written by Philips of Marnix, Lord of Saint-Aldegonde, *Een liedeken van de Sancten* and *Een refereyn van de Sancten*, the latter two both written by unidentified Flemings between 1566 and 1600.⁸⁰ For smaller shrines in the immediate or further surroundings of Zoutleeuw, especially the aforementioned 1555 investigations of the heretic from Kuringen are interesting.⁸¹ It is a very precarious exercise to definitively confirm the chronological evolution and development of this dataset. The collected data could only be judged on the basis of first mentions recorded in scholarly literature which did not always involve in-depth analysis of the shrine in question. As has already been emphasized several times before ‘first mentions’ should be treated carefully, as they can always be preceded by unrecorded traditions. Nevertheless, a significant number of shrines are first mentioned in the period under consideration here, i.e. roughly speaking 1470-1510 (some twenty out of a total of fifty). This would concur with earlier observations by Margry and Caspers, who stated that 71% of the shrines discussed in the first part of their compendium originated in the late middle ages. These mostly were of supralocal and regional importance.⁸² Similar statements have been made from a broader, European point of view.⁸³

⁷⁸ For some methodological remarks about such evidence, see Margry & Caspers, *Bedevaartplaatsen in Nederland*, vol. 1, p. 21.

⁷⁹ On posthumous pilgrimages, see Roobaert, ‘Brusselse bedevaarders’.

⁸⁰ See, respectively, Mak, ‘Vlaamse volksdevoties in een geuzenlied’; van Haver, ‘Hekeling van volksbedevaarten’.

⁸¹ Hansay, ‘Blasphémateurs, hérétiques et sorciers’.

⁸² Margry & Caspers, *Bedevaartplaatsen in Nederland*, vol. 1, p. 26, note 106.

⁸³ See, for instance, Kühnel, ‘Werbung, Wunder und Wallfahrt,’ p. 95, and Hofmann-Rendtel, ‘Wallfahrt und Konkurrenz,’ p. 129.

2.2.3 Saint Leonard's share

In order to contextualize Zoutleeuw's position it is instructive to have a look at where and why Saint Leonard was venerated elsewhere in the Low Countries. The seventeenth-century norbertine friar Johannes Ludolphus van Craywinckel enlisted a number of complaints for which the saint could be called upon, including strokes, headaches, 'bad legs' and imprisonment. Sannen's research further revealed that he was called upon in Brabant for rheumatism, paralysis and pregnancy.⁸⁴ Zoutleeuw certainly was not the only place in the Low Countries where Saint Leonard was venerated (map 3). Around 1500, devotees had several options for sites to go to with one of the aforementioned problems, but the chronology of the different shrines is rarely clearly documented. Possibly one of the oldest sites of veneration was the previously mentioned priory just outside the Liège city walls. Sources only since the fifteenth century have been preserved, but it was reportedly dedicated to Saint Leonard under Bishop Otbert (1091-1119) in the late eleventh century. Seventeenth-century authors claim that miracles occurred already in the twelfth century, but no clear proof of that exists, and the earliest documented cases in fact date from the beginning of the seventeenth century (cf. *infra*, 6.2).⁸⁵ More securely documented is the cult in Dudzele, north of Bruges. A charter from 1163 already mentions pilgrims coming for Saint Leonard, although the local procession probably has fifteenth-century origins. It also certainly was one of the most well-known shrines for the saint in the Low Countries. A considerable number of pilgrim badges from Dudzele has been found in Zeeland (see map 1), and the place and its procession was explicitly mentioned and ridiculed in *Een liedeken van de Sancten*.⁸⁶ The cult of Saint Leonard in the eponymous village Sint-Lenaarts, in the northern Campine area, was probably of slightly more regional importance. A chapel dedicated to him is mentioned in 1226, when a chaplain was appointed. A procession in his honor on Whit Monday is first

⁸⁴ "Popelsye," "Hooft-pyn," "quaede Beenen" and "Ghevanghene." Van Craywinckel, *De triumpherende suyverhey*t, pp. 320-327. Sannen, 'Volksbedevaarten tegen kwaal van mensch en vee,' pp. 322-323, 377-378, 380-381 and 384.

⁸⁵ Stiennon, *Etude sur le chartrier*, p. 290; Russe, 'Le prieuré de Saint-Léonard'; George, 'Revenant et exorcisme à Liège,' p. 264. Occasional judiciary pilgrimages are however already documented in the later fourteenth century, see van Herwaarden, *Opgelegde bedevaarten*, pp. 486, note 6 and 696.

⁸⁶ "En S. Lenaert te Dudsele fraey / Droegmen ooc omme sonder delaey / Dat deden de Kuypers van Brugge / Som vielense over rugge / Dronck en versmacht / Ja in een gracht / Dan wierden sy als swynen / Op wagens thuys gebracht." See Mak, 'Vlaamse volksdevoties in een geuzenlied,' p. 160. For the badges, see Koldewey, 'Teekenen van mynheere St. Lenaert,' and van Heeringen, Koldewey & Gaalman, *Heiligen uit de modder*, pp. 80-83. In general, see Dombrecht, *Plattelandsgemeenschappen*, esp. pp. 283-284.

mentioned in 1495, and between 1530 and 1550 the chapel was significantly enlarged and decorated with stained-glass windows depicting the life and the shrine of the saint (fig. 43). This likely happened under the impulse of Adriaan van der Noot, Lord of Brecht (d. 1555), who had himself depicted on one of the windows (fig. 44). Furthermore, the funding for these works is said to have come in part from the increasing revenues from monetary offerings by pilgrims.⁸⁷ The cult of Saint Leonard in nearby Wouw is first mentioned in 1491, when Jan II van Glymes, lord of Bergen op Zoom - to which Wouw belonged - came on pilgrimage and offered a wax candle. From 1555 onwards a yearly procession with a cult statue and relics is documented.⁸⁸ A similar seigniorial interference is documented in Aartselaar, where it probably marked the very start of the cult and eventually also led to a reconstruction and redecoration of the church. In 1308 the building had been consecrated in honour of Our Lady, but later - in the seventeenth or eighteenth century - this devotion was changed to Saint Leonard. One of the key motivations for this, and possibly the first, was the donation of a relic. *Jonker* Adriaan Sanders, lord of Blaesvelt (d. 1494), is said to have taken a complete arm of Saint Leonard from Noblac. The fact that he donated it “in honour of God and Our Lady,” and not of Saint Leonard, indeed suggests that no such cult existed before. Yet, in 1472 a tabernacle for the relic was foreseen, which in 1513 would be placed on a separate altar. In 1496 a yearly procession in the saint’s honour had been instituted, and in the same year the construction of a new church took off. The building was finished by 1503, and from 1507 until 1527 its interior was furnished.⁸⁹ A final documented shrine in honour of Saint Leonard is Huizingen, to which a posthumous pilgrimage is mentioned in 1509 in the last will of a Brussels clergyman.⁹⁰ Apart from these more or less securely documented shrines for Saint Leonard that must have existed around 1500, a whole series of localities is known to have had a similar cult from at least the seventeenth or eighteenth century onwards.⁹¹

⁸⁷ Michielsen, *Geschiedenis der verwoesting van Brecht*, pp. 23-24; Goetschalckx, ‘Geschiedenis der parochieën van Brecht en St. Lenaarts,’ esp. pp. 124-129; De Roeck, *Devotie aan de grens*, passim. On van der Noot, see Prims, ‘De geschiedenis van Jonker Jan Van der Noot,’ pp. 600-604.

⁸⁸ Merkelbach van Enkhuizen, ‘Wat een oude kerkrekening ons leren kan,’ pp. 39-40; Toebak, *Kerkelijk-godsdienstig leven*, vol. 1, pp. 88-89.

⁸⁹ Goetschalckx, ‘Aartselaar,’ pp. 399-402; Van Heurck, *Les drapelets de pèlerinage*, pp. 4-5.

⁹⁰ Roobaert, ‘Brusselse bedevaarders,’ p. 142. Van Heurck, *Les drapelets de pèlerinage*, pp. 220-224 claimed that the cult was “older than that of Our Lady of Halle,” but he did provide supporting data or cite relevant sources.

⁹¹ Beegden, Donk, Peutie, Pont-à-Râches, Schaelsberg, Vlierbeek and Wanssum. See Sannen, ‘Volksbedevaarten tegen kwaal van mensch en vee,’ pp. 322-323, 377-378, 380-381 and 384; Coningx, *Sint-Leonardus*, pp. 108-

2.2.4 The condensing of the circuit: Brabant, c. 1500

Yet, the cult circuit included of course much more than only shrines devoted to Saint Leonard, and it is interesting to take a look at the dynamics in this period of that circuit at large. It has been assumed that the Low Countries were characterized by an overall quite uniform pilgrimage praxis with some minor regional differences in the density of shrines, but the Hageland and wider Brabantine region definitely seem to have had their share in these developments.⁹² Here, the broader context will be sketched by means of three contemporary and well-studied cases that strikingly parallel the Zoutleeuw case: Lier, a town south of Antwerp on the edge of the Campine area, Aarschot, and Wezemaal, both in the Hageland region. Contrary to the vague dating of shrines in many Counter-Reformatory source materials, for the cult of Saint Gummarus in Lier a late seventeenth-century Antwerp chronicle states that in 1475 “for the first time Saint Gummarus started working miracles.”⁹³ This date indeed concurs to the rich material in the extensive miracle book that has been preserved, wherein 232 miracles from 1475 to 1499 are recorded (graph 11).⁹⁴ As elsewhere, these miraculous activities should be seen in relation with the renewed recognition (*elevatio*) of the saint’s relics in in the same year, at which occasion the church was immediately provided with an indulgence.⁹⁵ An analysis of the rich set of churchwarden accounts provides two sorts of indications to suggest that this meant the start of a promotion campaign. On the one hand, a significant increase in expenses for processions can be noted in the years 1476 to 1478, and in 1476 the wardens paid for the writing of a play about Saint Gummarus. On the other hand, just as in Zoutleeuw, pilgrim badges were issued in Lier. Although like in Zoutleeuw the accounts have been preserved since the 1450s, such badges (*tekenen*) only occur from 1476 onwards. From then on, they appear in different forms, either silver or gilded, big or small. Four of these have been found in Zeeland, placing the shrine within the top 20, along with Cologne and Mont-Saint-Michel (see map 1). The exceptional preservation of the accounts in this case also

115; Margry & Caspers, *Bedevoertplaatsen in Nederland*, passim. On Pont-à-Râches, see Platelle, ‘Mirakels in de Zuidelijke Nederlanden,’ p. 229, and Rayssius, *Hierogazophylacium Belgicum*, pp. 446-448.

⁹² Margry & Caspers, *Bedevoertplaatsen in Nederland*, vol. 1, p. 25.

⁹³ “In het selve jaer [1475] begost tot Lier aldereerst St Gummaers mirakelen te doen.” Van Havre, *Chronijck der stadt Antwerpen*, p. 18. See also Vroom, *De Onze-Lieve-Vrouwekerk te Antwerpen*, pp. 52-53 and 106.

⁹⁴ Published by Mertens, *Mirakelboek van Sint-Gummarus*.

⁹⁵ On the ritual of elevation and its importance for the revitalization of cults, see Geary, ‘Sacred commodities,’ pp. 177-180. Compare for instance with the example of Mechelen 1479, where the *elevatio* of Saint Rumbold’s relics served as stimulus to renew the cult. For that example, see Part III.

makes an evaluation of the results of this supposed promotion possible. Certainly from 1482 onwards, but possibly earlier on already, the accounts show a considerable increase in monetary offerings for the patron saint at the occasion of the procession. Interestingly, during the preceding years the accounts were traditionally closed with a deficit, but from 1478 onwards the revenues and expenses were more or less in balance. Although it is perhaps somewhat too strong to state that the promotion was solely responsible for this, the cult of Saint Gummarus nevertheless appears to have developed into a significant revenue for the Lier church fabric.⁹⁶

The second destination, the cult of Our Lady of Aarschot, stands slightly higher in the top 20 pilgrimage destinations represented by finds in Zeeland. A miraculous statue there survived as a sixteenth-century copy of a lost thirteenth-century original (fig. 45). Legend has it that the statue arrived by boat, and based on authorities such as Divaeus and Gramaye, seventeenth-century author Augustinus Wichmans states in his *Brabantia Mariana* (1632) that it was a centuries-old cult, without providing precise data, however.⁹⁷ As indicated by an inscription (cf. supra, 1.1.3), the choir of the church was constructed in 1337 and dedicated to the Virgin Mary, but the available evidence only allows to trace back the history of the church as a destination for pilgrims to the later fifteenth century.⁹⁸ Although between 1452 and 1458 somebody was sentenced by the Lier authorities to go on pilgrimage to Our Lady of Aarschot, all the other known judicial pilgrimages date to the early sixteenth century, apparently the high point of its fame. Convicts were sent to the shrine from Ghent, Herentals, Kortrijk, Oudenaarde, Turnhout and Vilvoorde, all between 1502 and 1571.⁹⁹ A second indication is provided by the pilgrim badges, which archaeologically and stilistically all have been dated to around 1500. A similar dating is confirmed by the fact that one of the known badges includes the coat of arms of Willem van Croÿ-Chièvres (1458-1521), who came into possession of the Seigniory Aarschot in 1494.¹⁰⁰ Around the same time, in 1506, a confraternity in honor of the miraculous statue is

⁹⁶ Meuris, *Laat-middeleeuwse volksreligie te Lier*, pp. 59, 62, 64-67, 78, 99 and 125. On the pilgrim badges, see also Van Heeringen, Koldeweyj & Gaalman, *Heiligen uit de modder*, p. 94.

⁹⁷ "...ita quoque antiquissimo Deiparae cultu." Wichmans, *Brabantia Mariana tripartita*, p. 498.

⁹⁸ In general, see Van Haesendonck, 'De historiek en de aktualiteit rond de devotie,' and Breugelmans, Ceulemans & van Haesendonck, *De Onze-Lieve-Vrouwekerk van Aarschot*.

⁹⁹ Peeters, 'Kempense zoengedingen,' p. 61; Gerits, 'Strafbedevaarten naar Onze-Lieve-Vrouw van Aarschot'; van Heeringen, Koldeweyj & Gaalman, *Heiligen uit de modder*, pp. 91-93.

¹⁰⁰ Van Beuningen, Jurion & De Waha, 'Over pelgrimstochten naar Aarschot'; Cuypers, 'Over een Aarschots pelgrimsinsigne'.

documented for the first time, and soon several citizens of Brussels would include posthumous pilgrimages to the shrine in their last wills.¹⁰¹ The development of Aarschot as pilgrimage destination has been linked to the acquisition of the seigniorship by the important de Croÿ family in 1461. The family immediately advanced both the town and the church by instituting a fair, a collegiate chapter (1462) and a chamber of rhetoric (1497). They might well have fostered the cult of Oud Lady of Aarschot as a means to enlarge both the prosperity and the fame of the town, and theirs by extension.¹⁰² As one of the highest and leading noblemen in the Low Countries, Willem van Croÿ-Chièvres has been characterized as one of the ‘architects’ of the Burgundian-Habsburg cultural offensive, and he was equally closely related to the prestigious Brussels confraternity of Our Lady of the Seven Sorrows.¹⁰³ Whatever the case, the fact that the cult was the subject of the first significant investments after the sixteenth-century troubles indeed suggests that the revenues from pilgrims were of a certain importance to the church.

In the final example, Wezemaal was one of the most important pilgrimage destinations in the Low Countries around 1500. Located near Leuven, a miraculous sculpture of Saint Job was venerated there (fig. 46). The cult is supposed to have been introduced between 1377 and 1437, probably in the later fourteenth century. And though it initially was a local affair, its fame would reach far beyond the borders of Brabant, as far as Alsace, Lyon and Canterbury.¹⁰⁴ It was one of the only shrines in the Low Countries which Philips of Marnix, Lord of Saint-Aldegonde mentioned by name in his 1569 *Den Byencorff der H. Roomsche Kercke*, and it would also be ridiculed in later Protestant songs.¹⁰⁵ Here again, circumstantial evidence strongly suggests that this widespread fame was a fairly recent phenomenon. Bart Minnen assumed that the number of pilgrims increased between 1458 and 1466, but none of his arguments provides definitive proof, as neither pilgrims nor the cult of Saint Job are explicitly

¹⁰¹ In 1509, 1510 and 1525-1526, see Roobaert, ‘Brusselse bedevaarders,’ p. 142.

¹⁰² Van Beuningen, Jurion & De Waha, ‘Over pelgrimstochten naar Aarschot’; Delbeke, Constant, Geurs & Staessen, ‘The architecture of miracle-working statues,’ pp. 231-232.

¹⁰³ Van Bruaene, *Om beters wille*, p. 65; Speakman Sutch, ‘Patronage, foundation history, and ordinary believers,’ pp. 40-42, Appendix A.

¹⁰⁴ Minnen, *Den heyligen sant*, vol. 1, pp. 37-39.

¹⁰⁵ Mak, ‘Vlaamse volksdevoties in een geuzenlied,’ p. 160: “Voor quade beenen en Fledersijn / Sy souden beter met verkloecken / Sint Job mogen versoecken / Den heyligen Sant // Al in Brabant / Die stont te Wesemale / tWas een soo bruynen guant.”

mentioned.¹⁰⁶ Yet, pilgrim badges immediately occur in the earliest preserved churchwarden account of 1472-1473. Around a thousand badges were reportedly sold from the total number of more than 4800 that were bought for 387 *stuivers*. The following year, more than 10.200 badges were estimated to have been sold. By means of comparison: around this period the Zoutleeuw churchwardens only spent several *stuivers* on such badges (graphs 6 & 7). Several of these badges have been preserved - one even in Canterbury - and identified: one of them is dated to 1491, while four others carry the coat of arms of the Brimeu family that only came into the possession of the Seigniory of Wezemaal in 1472. Much like Aarschot, the cult of Saint Job in Wezemaal might thus have profited from noble support.¹⁰⁷ The earliest judicial pilgrimages are documented in Antwerp in 1459 and 1460, but all the rest dates to the early sixteenth century, when convicts came from Amsterdam, Kortrijk, Luik and Turnhout.¹⁰⁸ Several posthumous pilgrimages to Wezemaal are recorded in a number of Brussels' last wills between 1509 and 1525-1526.¹⁰⁹ The evolution of Saint Job's cult has recently been charted by Bart Minnen. He claims that it only became of vital importance to the church fabric from 1473 onwards, and related it to the completion of the church building. Interestingly, he was able to trace a series of conflicts from the 1470s between the parish priest and the churchwardens about external priests that were hired by the wardens to provide services for the increasing numbers of pilgrims. The absolute climax of the cult appears to have been between 1495 and 1520, with 1513 as an absolute peak as far as revenues from offerings are concerned. That year, they took up as much as 79% of all the church's income. Minnen linked this sudden popularity to the spread of syphilis from 1495 onwards, of which Saint Job was proclaimed as its patron saint. A 1501 petition to the pope mentions numerous miracles that Saint Job had worked in Wezemaal as an argument for the approval of a college of priests, the institution of 10 May as feast day and the grant of an indulgence. The petition received a positive response, but just like Zoutleeuw, neither the miracle book, nor a copy of the letter of indulgence has been preserved. Although the chronology strikingly matches the shrines of Aarschot, Lier and Zoutleeuw, the fame of Wezemaal spread much further than the other Brabantine pilgrimage destinations. In the

¹⁰⁶ Minnen, *Den heyligen sant*, vol. 1, pp. 49-50.

¹⁰⁷ Hoc, 'Médailles de S. Job'; van Beuningen, 'Van silveren ende andere teekenen van Sint Job'; De Kroon & Minnen, 'Pelgrimssouvenirs van Sint-Job'.

¹⁰⁸ Peeters, 'Kempense zoengedingen,' pp. 61-62.

¹⁰⁹ Roobaert, 'Brusselse bedevaarders,' pp. 142-143.

following years, the Wezemaal shrine is mentioned in collections of sermons that were published in Haguenau and Lyon in 1514.¹¹⁰

All the evidence that has been discussed seems to suggest that the decades around 1500 saw a considerable condensing of the cult circuit in the Low Countries. This is no doubt related to the other developments towards an intense piety that were discussed above, the development of more *loca sacra* into pilgrimage destinations. Most of them only had a supralocal or regional radiation, some had reputations that surpassed the contemporary boundaries of the Habsburg territories, but all of them tried to recruit their own visitors by means of a wide variety of media, either with word or image. Thus, the sudden popularity of shrines caused a situation of mutual religious competition, not only between the new ones, but also with those that had already been established for decades or even centuries. Indeed, in extreme cases such as Regensburg, new shrines could suddenly become so intensely popular, that they quickly surpassed centuries-old shrines like Mariazell and Altötting in terms of visitors.¹¹¹ Although in most cases it is impossible to pinpoint the precise origins and developments leading up to the establishment of local shrines, in nearly every case a significant intensification in the later fifteenth or early sixteenth century is noticeable. Thus, at the moment of its devotional expansion Zoutleeuw very likely entered into competition with both new and established cult centers alike, all the more so because the later middle ages saw an increasing specialization in the patronage functions of saints.¹¹² All this allows to contextualize the promotion campaign in Zoutleeuw, but it still does not explain the grounds for it.

¹¹⁰ Minnen, *Den heyligen sant*, vol. 1, pp. 37-78. A selection from the churchwarden accounts has been published by Erens, 'De eredienst van Sint Job te Wezemaal'.

¹¹¹ Soergel, *Wondrous in His saints*, pp. 59-60. See also Signori, 'Kultwerbung - Endzeitängste - Judenhaß,' p. 446; Kühnel, 'Werbung, Wunder und Wallfahrt'; Hofmann-Rendtel, 'Wallfahrt und Konkurrenz'; Nixon, *Mary's mother*, p. 89; Blick & Tekippe, *Art and architecture*, p. xxi.

¹¹² Hofmann-Rendtel, 'Wallfahrt und Konkurrenz,' pp. 129-131.

Conclusion: Promoting Saint Leonard's profits in a quest for devotion

In the very beginning of the seventeenth century, the court historiographer of the Archdukes Jean-Baptiste Gramaye wrote a series of local histories of Brabantine cities, towns and villages. Zoutleeuw was one of them, and in discussing the origins of the local church, he stated that “with monetary offerings and alms given by those who flocked together for the fame of the miracles worked by this saint, the chapel of Saint Leonard was enlarged and lavishly decorated.”¹ As has been demonstrated above, that statement cannot be confirmed by the analysis of the churchwarden accounts, since the revenues from the cult were insufficient to fully finance the extensive decoration and construction campaign in the later fifteenth and early sixteenth centuries. Nevertheless, it gives an interesting idea of how the cult of Saint Leonard was perceived in later times. Does it also reflect the initial motivation of the churchwardens to intensely promote the cult of their patron saint in the first place? I would like to argue that it is historically incorrect and unjustly simplifying to reduce everything to one factor. Rather, the developments discussed here are best understood as being the result of a cluster of intermingling rationales, which can be disentangled in an economical, a social and a religious thread. None of them fully stands on its own, but for the sake of clarity each will be discussed separately.

In the same vein of Gramaye's statement, in the absolute lion's share of the studies that investigate individual late medieval pilgrimage shrines and cults of saints, an economical rationale is put forward to explain the churchwardens' or the clergy's

¹ “Ea [Aedem D. Leonardi] ex collatitia stipe et eleēmosynis accurentium ad famam miraculorum interventu istius Divi patratorum, aucta et multum exornata est...” Gramaye, *Thenae et Brabantia ultra Velpam* (1606), cited after Souverijns, ‘Leonia sive Leewae,’ p. 131.

efforts in promoting their local cult. To a certain extent this certainly must be taken into consideration. As Arnd Reitemeier has made clear with his twofold classification of church fabrics, the extraordinary revenues of pilgrimage churches by far exceeded those of regular churches. The broad selection of examples discussed above provides ample evidence of how lucrative such cults could be at times, and it would thus be completely understandable that churches tried to move up from the first to the second type in order to both increase and take control of their extraordinary revenues. A case can be made for such an interpretation in Zoutleeuw. There, just as in most other cases, the fixed revenues of church fabrics consisted of taxes, rents of houses and meadows, of which a considerable part was the direct or indirect result of bequests or foundations. Thus, such revenues were inherently dependent on the local population, either for the yearly payment of the taxes and rents, or for new foundations and bequests. In Zoutleeuw, however, the demographical evolution had been in decline from the early fifteenth century onwards (graph 5), and a similar trend is in fact notable in the whole of the Hageland region and even in Brabant at large.² This downward demographical trend potentially involved fewer foundations, less tenants of houses or meadows and fewer people to work the lands and pay the tithes and interests. From this perspective it would be a logical step for the churchwardens to make efforts to try and get the money from further away.

Such an explanation significantly illuminates a part of the questions at stake, but it does not fully explain everything, for here again the question needs to be asked what the complete motivations behind this financial drive would have been. If they all acted legally, neither the clergy nor the churchwardens themselves were able to enrich themselves personally by promoting the cult they were responsible for. As has been discussed in the introduction, at this point in time no indications exist of financial compensations for churchwardens, and when they appear in the accounts it becomes clear that they cannot have been considered as a full wage. Thus, the consideration of another possible motivation is justified. Although such a financial approach in itself proves to be insufficient as explanation, it automatically leads to a second aspect. The *raison d'être* for church fabrics was of course the construction and embellishing of the local church building, its upkeep and the material support of the services in them. For all these purposes, money was of course indispensable, and as has been demonstrated above, in Zoutleeuw the fixed revenues were far from sufficient to

² See for the Hageland region and Brabant in general the material in Van Uytven, *Geschiedenis van Brabant*, pp. 236-237, tables 6.5 and 6.7.

finance the interior decoration of the late fifteenth century. In recent years, the extension and decoration of parish churches has been increasingly interpreted as reflections of the desire to express individual piety in a communal context.³ Church buildings were usually the largest buildings in town and they were usually the source for or even the embodiment of local or civic pride. Moreover, *memoria* - the practice of celebrating and commemorating the deceased in an attempt to try and keep them present - has been put forward as the central pillar of civic religion, and this found of course its material embodiment in the complex of foundations for which the church fabric was responsible. Most notably, Pierre Monnet has described the city as a “community of souvenirs” (*communauté des souvenirs*), encompassing plural and different identities and even including invented traditions.⁴

This puts civic pride and other communal motives forward as the grounds for promotional campaigns. As far as the Zoutleeuw case is concerned, several arguments can be put forward to substantiate such claims. First and foremost, it has been demonstrated in the introduction that the churchwardens had strong bonds with the civic authorities, and it was precisely this group that should probably be seen as the prime motor behind the promoting dynamics. Although it is unclear to what extent they acted solely in this regard, or whether they closely co-operated with the collegiate chapter, their involvement in the cult is most clearly illustrated by the construction of the churchwarden’s room with emphatic decoration, which is consistently referred to as Saint Leonard’s room in the accounts. Secondly, several entries explicitly voice such civic concerns. These are most notably the series of payments in the 1480s to the singers at the Pentecost festivities or at the feast day of Saint Leonard, which are known to have been done on the explicit order of the town’s burgomasters. In some cases the entries reveal that the singers were paid “because they help to augment the honor of the church.”⁵ Furthermore, it is interesting to compare Zoutleeuw with towns that have a similar socio-economic profile. For instance, much like Zoutleeuw,

³ See for instance Roffey, ‘Devotional objects and cultural context’.

⁴ Monnet, ‘Pour en finir avec la religion civique?’ esp. pp. 108 and 115.

⁵ KR 1484, fol. 135v (November): “Item den sengers bij bevele der borgenmeesteren ende custers van vele anderen daghe voer gesciet sijnde tsamen gegeven 18 st.” KR 1486, fol. 248v (January): “Item ghescinct den sengers om dat sij die ere vander kerken hulpen vermeederen 10 st.” KR 1487, fol. 303 (May): “Item wt bevele vanden burghemeesteren gegeven den senger 20 st.” KR 1490, fols. 45 (April and May) and 45v (June): “Item noch gegeven wt bevele vanden burgemeesters vreemde ghesellen dat sij gheluyt hebben inder processien 3 st,” “Item den sengers betaelt voir haeren dienst die ere vander kercken te vermeederen te Pinxten 7 st.”

fifteenth-century Regensburg equally found itself in economic decline, but the social elite of the city was still formed by the same age-old patrician families. That led Olivier Richard to argue that it was of crucial importance to create a strong civic identity, whereby urban processions and commemorative ceremonies played an important role.⁶ As has been touched upon above, the Regensburg civic authorities were themselves involved in the promotion of the local cult of the Schöne Maria, as they commissioned the pilgrim badges and printed miracle books, and arranged for a papal indulgence bull. Similar processes of communal conscience have been observed in the Low Countries.⁷ It is perhaps in this context that the secular influences on sacred places through the agency of local lords must be seen. Apart from the examples of Aartselaar, Aarschot and Wezemaal discussed above, local rulers are known to have promoted cults elsewhere too. We have seen that they were closely involved in Sint-Lenaarts and Wouw, and just as is the case for Aarschot, a pilgrim badge from Geel carries the weapon of the Mérode family who were lords of the seigniorship from 1483 onwards.⁸ It is likely that such efforts were meant to enhance the honour of both the cult and the locality in question.

Cases of cultic competition within one city are equally documented, however, as has for instance been noted by Jonas van Mulder for fifteenth-century Amersfoort, where two confraternities competed with one another.⁹ Moreover, several cities such as Antwerp, Brussels or Leuven had multiple active cults, which indicates that they not necessarily identified with one cult in particular - although in smaller towns such as Zoutleeuw this is not at all unlikely. This brings us to the last thread of the cluster, which at the same time is actually the most obvious - that is, the religious aspect. Whereas social and economic motivations are certainly part of the puzzle, they should not obscure that the developments in part must have been genuine actions and reactions to religious needs. In his seminal article, Moeller called upon *Heilssehnsucht* and *Heilsunsicherheit* as prime motivations for such intense expressions of faith. He claimed that the longing for the hereafter was stirred up by the crisis that characterized the epoch, but he did not specify in what exactly the period was different than, say, a century before, when the Plague and the Hundred Years' War

⁶ Richard, 'Memoria et institutions municipales à Ratisbonne'.

⁷ See for instance Brand, 'Mémoire individualisée et conscience communautaire'.

⁸ On Geel, see van Heeringen, Koldewey & Gaalman, *Heiligen uit de modder*, pp. 86-88. In general, see Kühnel, 'Werbung, Wunder und Wallfahrt,' p. 99. For similar patterns in the seventeenth century, see Harline, 'Miracles and this world,' and Perneel, 'Onze-Lieve-Vrouw van Goede Wil te Duffel,' pp. 350-353.

⁹ Van Mulder, review of De Boer & Jongen, *In het water gevonden*.

caused death and despair.¹⁰ Firstly, the years leading up to and after 1500 are known to have been considered as apocalyptic times. In part this might have had to do with that year being a half-millennium, recalling a similar climate around the year 1000.¹¹ The reality and extent of such supposed general fear is hard to assess, and the anxiety psychosis for *l'an mil* has been considerably toned down. Yet, a recent, long-term investigation of apocalyptic representations and visions has revealed how they have always been the source and breeding ground for new ideas and practices throughout history. Time and again the announcing of the end of times stirred up enormous energy. Just like the preachings of Christ himself had created Christianity, Johannes Fried interpreted a widespread fear of fall as crucial stimulus for the development of Renaissance and Reformation.¹²

The Reformation was however preceded by an important and distinct period of intense piety, and we know for sure that apocalyptic sermons were increasingly being preached. Such was for instance the case in Regensburg, to such an extent that the Fifth Lateran Council thought it necessary to forbid them.¹³ Most famously, it is also the time when Albrecht Dürer created his famous *Apocalypse*, which he himself fully designed and published in Nuremberg in 1498 (fig. 47). Although the magnificent series of woodcuts has previously been interpreted as an anticlerical critique, more recent - and perhaps more probable - readings see it as inherently being part of the lay piety of the time, expressing a certain awareness about the end of times.¹⁴ A combination of major religious, social, political, economical, demographical and philosophical revolutions and crises was explained by and interpreted in religious terms, whereby apocalyptic imagery was never far away.¹⁵ Jacques Chiffolleau indeed explained the previously mentioned *manifestations 'aberrantes' ou 'folles'* as responses to a profound traumatism and worry about the relationship between the here and the hereafter.¹⁶ Similarly, Andrew Brown considered the increasing number of general

¹⁰ Moeller, 'Frömmigkeit in Deutschland um 1500'. Compare with the remarks by Zemon Davis, 'Some tasks and themes in the study of popular religion,' p. 315.

¹¹ The classic treatment of the subject is Duby, *L'an mil*. A recent and broad discussion can be found in Landes, Gow & van Meter, *The apocalyptic year 1000*.

¹² Fried, *Dies Irae*.

¹³ Examples in Soergel, *Wondrous in His saints*, pp. 49 and 58; idem, *Miracles and the Protestant imagination*, pp. 33-34; Signori, 'Kultwerbung - Endzeitängste - Judenhaß,' pp. 447-458.

¹⁴ Price, 'Dürer's representations of faith'.

¹⁵ Cunningham & Grell, *The four horsemen of the Apocalypse*, pp. 1-18.

¹⁶ Chiffolleau, 'Ce qui fait changer la mort,' p. 129.

processions in late fifteenth-century Bruges as a “seismograph of the level of social anxiety.”¹⁷

Several of these crises have already been mentioned in the previous paragraphs, most importantly the disastrous civil war that held the Low Countries in its grip throughout the 1480s and 1490s and had a deep and lasting impact on most of the provinces. It has been mentioned that Zoutleuw also had its share in the calamities, as the churchwarden accounts of the 1480s and 1490s regularly mention damage inflicted by soldiers. After that conflict, a series of new devotions were soon introduced and they rapidly spread over all of the the Low Countries, most notably the devotion to the Seven Sorrows of Mary.¹⁸ Elisabeth Dhanens has similarly suggested a relationship between the war damage and victims, and the sudden popularity of Saint Anne in the late fifteenth century.¹⁹ This does not necessarily have to be seen in a causal relationship, but it doubtless acted as a an impulse and strengthening factor. The same can be said about the aforementioned catastrophic harvest failures in the early 1480s which led to extremely elevated grain prices and enormous mortality rates. As has been demonstrated by means of the Zoutleuw revenues from the cult of Saint Leonard, the first peak was notable in 1482-1483, which is precisely known to have been the pre-eminent year of crisis.²⁰ Given such severe economical circumstances and accompanying existential instability, a heightened attention to the hereafter becomes more understandable. However, just as has been emphasized in relation to the situation around the year 1000, this was certainly not paralysing fear. Rather, it was “a heightened atmosphere of mingled hope and fear,” which in itself functioned as an impetus for social action.²¹ And it was this conglomerate of both individual and collective action and emotions that fundamentally shaped the devotional climate around 1500. As Kühnel has noted in using the term *Wunderbedürfnis*, perhaps people really wanted to believe in miracles.²²

¹⁷ Brown, ‘Perceptions of relics,’ p. 188.

¹⁸ Sutch & Van Bruaene, ‘The Seven Sorrows of the Virgin Mary’. See also Marnef & Van Bruaene, ‘Civic religion,’ pp. 189-190. A detailed discussion of the conflict and its various consequences is provided by Van Uytven, ‘Crisis als cesuur’.

¹⁹ Dhanens, ‘Een Maagschap van de H. Anna,’ pp. 118-119.

²⁰ Curtis, Dijkman, Lambrecht & Vanhaute, ‘Low Countries’.

²¹ Landes, Gow & van Meter, *The apocalyptic year 1000*, p. vii.

²² Kühnel, ‘Werbung, Wunder und Wallfahrt,’ pp. 95-96.

This brings us back to the altarpiece the Zoutleeuw churchwardens commissioned in 1476. It is hoped that the preceding paragraphs have made clear that it is more than just a necessary liturgical utensil, and that it should actually be considered as an expression of a much larger devotional culture. The iconography of the piece explicitly emphasizes the miraculous character of Saint Leonard, and in that way suggests a similar potential in the very space it was installed in. What you see is what you hope to get. Furthermore, it cannot be considered as either the cause or the consequence of events. It is essentially both, and a mere functionalist approach would miss what it actually embodied. To a certain extent it is certainly true that it was part and parcel of a much broader promotional campaign with which the churchwardens sought to establish Zoutleeuw as a valued regional pilgrimage destination, firmly anchoring it in a wider and pre-existing cult circuit with long-established major centers. The recruiting qualities of astonishing decoration and shiny artworks have long been recognized, and it is easily understandable that for many people stepping into a splendidly lit and richly decorated space provided a welcome contrast with the more prosaic daily life in town or on the land. Thus, when considered in the total context of material provisions for the cult, it might well have been responsible in part for the increasing popularity of the cult of Saint Leonard, which has been amply demonstrated above. Yet, at the same time, the actions undertaken by the churchwardens in this period point to an awareness of changing devotional dynamics, both in the Hageland region and the Low Countries or even Europe at large. They were certainly not the first, nor the last, to take similar steps, and it would be wrong to consider them as outsiders of religious change. Thus, the retable and, by extension also the chapel at large and the activities that surrounded the cult, can and should be considered as the crystallization of a much broader devotional evolution with a notable active religious engagement of the laity which fundamentally characterized the years around 1500.

Part II

Continuity or confirmation?

Catholic piety in the time of iconoclasm

“Cives hoc commendat, quod nemo unquam his iniquis temporibus nomine haereseos vel suspectus fuerit.”¹

¹ “The fact that no one has ever been suspected of heresy during these troublesome times brings honor to the citizens.” Gramaye, *Thenae et Brabantia ultra Velpam* (1606), cited after Souverijns, ‘Leonia sive Leewae,’ p. 130.

A sacrament house

2 octobre [1864]. - Partis pour Louvain. Nous faisons un détour pour voir Léau, ville inédite; on n'y passe jamais. (...) Dans l'église (...) [un] magnifique tabernacle de la Renaissance, haute pyramide tourelle de pierre ouvragée à dix étages décroissants de figures, de statues, de bas-reliefs et d'architectures. Napoléon a voulu enlever ce chef-d'oeuvre; on l'eût mis en poussière, il y a renoncé. Vis-à-vis une tombe du comte de Léau et de sa femme qui ont donné ce tabernacle à l'église. Voilà monsieur et madame, nous disait un habitant. Le tabernacle est garanti par une superbe grille de cuivre repoussé et menuisé; l'ensemble est splendide.¹

On Sunday 2 October 1864, France's famous writer and unofficial national hero Victor Hugo made a stop in Zoutleeuw. During his exile in Guernsey (1851-1871), he had made a habit of yearly visiting his beloved Belgium from 1861 onwards, which he mostly did in the company of his mistress, Juliette Drouet. Coming from Liège, the day before the company had arrived in Tienen. Although they were on their way to Leuven, some twenty kilometers westward, Hugo decided to first visit Zoutleeuw. In the letter in which he afterwards described his trip he called it a *détour*, but in fact he had to go in the completely opposite direction to reach the town he thought to be fully unknown. The carillon on the roof of the church's crossing was the subject of the only known drawing he made on the occasion of his visit, but in his letter he mostly sung the praises of the sacrament house, located inside (fig. 48).² Ever since the middle of

¹ Arty, *La Belgique selon Victor Hugo*, p. 155. This introduction is a partial reworking of Suykerbuyk & Van Bruaene, 'Towering piety'.

² The drawing is in Paris, Maison Victor Hugo, inv. MVHPD0021.

the nineteenth century, the enormous, eighteen-meter high tower was and indeed still is one of the church's best-known showpieces. Before Hugo's visit, prints of it had already been included in popular overviews of the artistic treasures of the young Belgian state, such as Louis Haghe's *Sketches in Belgium and Germany*, published in London in 1840, or François Stroobant's *Monuments d'architecture et de sculpture en Belgique*, of which the first edition appeared in 1852 (figs. 49 & 50). The fact that it figures in the major collections of plaster casts of Europe's great museums of the time, including the South Kensington Museum in London (now Victoria and Albert Museum) and the Brussels Royal Museums of Art and History (fig. 51) further illustrates the attraction of this particular work of art. In both museums, it takes a place of honour beside internationally still renowned sculptural works like Trajan's column and Lorenzo Ghiberti's *Gates of Paradise* to the Florence baptistery. Yet, in the fifteenth and sixteenth centuries a sacrament house was hardly unique.

Sacrament houses are firmly rooted in medieval tradition. The Fourth Lateran Council (1215) had defined the dogma of the Real Presence, a key element in late medieval and sixteenth-century theology which taught that the transforming rite of Mass rendered Christ physically and actually present in the communion bread and wine. As such, after the ritual, the hosts became a sort of relic of Christ. The dogma and the subsequent institution in 1264 of the Feast of Corpus Christi, first in the Prince-Bishopric of Liège of which Zoutleeuw was a part, led to an intense veneration of the consecrated host.³ Within the Low Countries, several cults of miraculous hosts were instituted in the course of the fourteenth century. That was already the case in Niervaart around 1300, and although the object of veneration was later replaced to Breda in 1449, miracles continued to be reported. From 1327 onwards the Abbey of Herkenrode also could boast a miraculous specimen. Arguably the best known example is the Holy Sacrament of Miracle of Brussels, which has its origins in an anti-Semitic episode of the city's history, set in 1370. Soon after, in 1374, a miraculous host was also revealed in Middelburg, from where it was replaced to Cologne and later, in 1380, to the Augustine convent in Leuven. In 1405, finally, the abbey of Bois-Seigneur-Isaac saw a Eucharistic miracle that meant the start of an important cult.⁴

³ In general, see, among others, Zika, 'Hosts, processions and pilgrimages'; Rubin, *Corpus Christi*; Burnett, 'The social history of communion'. For the Low Countries in particular, see Caspers, *De eucharistische vroomheid*.

⁴ For these cults, see Pauli, *Vier historien van het H. Sacrament van Mirakel; Historie ende mirakelen van de Alder-Heylighste hostie*; Schoutens, *Geschiedenis van den Eerdienst van het Allerheiligst Sacrament*; Cauchies & Collet-Lombard, *Le miracle du Saint Sang*; van Mulder, *Wonderkoorts*, pp. 102-115 and *passim*.

Apart from this limited number of miracle cults with a broad geographic importance, from the late fourteenth century onwards many towns also developed their own Corpus Christi processions, in which the civic community paraded the consecrated host through the streets.⁵

As the host was considered as a relic, the remains from the Mass had to be protected and appropriately preserved. Thus, around the same time these miracle cults were instituted, the precious containers that both protected and displayed the Eucharist in churches became more and more imposing. Although the host initially was stored on the altar itself, from the twelfth century onwards a practice developed in which a separate locked cabinet at the side of the altar came into use. This process is nicely illustrated in Delft, where a civic chronicle mentions that in 1411 “a holy sacrament house was built in the presbytery on the north side, next to the high altar, wherein the Eucharist was kept and locked, which until then had stood in the retable of the high altar.”⁶ As a result of the growing Eucharistic piety, the repositories grew in size and monumentality, and they were often decorated with lavish ornamentation and elaborate iconography. From the late fourteenth century onwards two basic types can be discerned, although occasionally experimentation created hybrid forms. On the one hand the traditional wall tabernacle remained in use, such as in Hasselt (Saint Quirinus, 1406) and Halle (Saint Martin, 1408, fig. 52), while on the other hand these cabinets evolved into independent structures, detached from the church wall. The latter were mostly constructed in stone, but examples in wood or in metal have survived as well, such as in Bocholt (Saint Lawrence, fig. 53). These independent, micro-architectural and tower-like sacrament houses could be found all over the broad Germanic region in Europe, from the Low Countries to Hungary. Most examples have been preserved in central Europe and the Baltic, with famous specimen in Ulm (c. 1460-1470, 26m) and Nuremberg (1493-1496, 18m).⁷

In the Low Countries, by contrast, almost no sacrament houses are extant, which could be the result of any combination of religious upheavals in the late sixteenth

⁵ Caspers, *De eucharistische vroomheid*; James, ‘Ritual, drama and social body’.

⁶ “In deser voirs. tijt worde mede opt hoechchoor een heylige sacramentshuys gemaect an de noortzide besiden thoochoutair ende dair worden doe die sacramenten bewairt ende gesloten die tot dier tijt toe gestaen hadden in de tafel van den hogen outair voirs.” Oosterbaan, ‘Kroniek van de Nieuwe Kerk,’ p. 196.

⁷ The most recent survey of sacrament houses is Timmermann, *Real presence*. On the Low Countries in particular, see Maffei, *La réservation eucharistique*; van Gelder, ‘Sacramentstorens in Brabant’; Lambert, *Sacramentstorens in West-Vlaanderen en Oost-Vlaanderen*.

century, later alterations of church interiors, or destruction in WW I. The oldest and at the same time most famous sacrament house preserved in the Low Countries was commissioned from Mathijs de Layens by the Confraternity of the Blessed Sacrament for the church of Saint Peter in Leuven around 1450 (fig. 54).⁸ Yet, they must have reached their height as an essential feature in most churches in the fifteenth and first half of the sixteenth centuries. For instance, in Ghent alone no less than twenty-five sacrament houses have been documented for the period prior to the *Beeldenstorm*.⁹ Most of our knowledge of such structures indeed comes from documentary sources, such as contracts, entries in churchwardens' accounts, references in inscriptions on other (especially funerary) monuments and later church descriptions. They must have ranged from relatively simple wall tabernacles to impressive Gothic towers, but it must be underlined that it is impossible to identify the precise form of the structures if further descriptions are lacking. Contemporary terminology did not distinguish between the two, as the structures are quite consistently referred to in terms of 'houses', either as (*heylich*) *sacramentshuys* in middle Dutch, *mayson du Saint Sacrement* in French or *sacrae eucharistiae domicilium* in Latin.¹⁰ They are never described as *sacramentstoren* or *tourelle eucharistique*, which are indeed neologisms, nor as *tabernakel*, which was used in a broader sense to indicate niches crowned with a baldachin of some sort, such as the one in which the miraculous sculpture of Saint Leonard was placed (cf. supra). Nevertheless, it seems that the independent sacrament houses predominated, either freestanding or against a wall, but always on the evangelical side, i.e. to the north of the high altar. Formal experiments such as Jean Mone's *Retable of the sacraments* in Halle (Saint Martin, 1533, fig. 55), which is crowned by a *sacrarium* and originally functioned as main altar, remained unique.¹¹

Just like Saint Leonard's altarpiece that has been used as point of departure in the first part of this dissertation, Zoutleeuw's sacrament house is exceptionally well-documented and can thus again be firmly linked to the laypeople involved.¹² An

⁸ See, among others, Welzel, 'Ausstattung für Sakramentsliturgie und Totengedenken'.

⁹ Van Bruaene, 'Embodied piety,' esp. pp. 39-40, based on Scheerder, *Het Wonderjaar te Gent*, pp. 103-116.

¹⁰ Other Latin terms include 'aedicula,' 'repositorium' or 'reclinatorium Venerabilis Sacramenti', whereas in French it was sometimes also described as 'repositoire du Saint Sacrement'. See Suykerbuyk & Van Bruaene, 'Towering piety', pp. 127-128.

¹¹ Saintenoy, *Le statuaire Jean Mone*, pp. 39-40, and D'Hainaut-Zveny, *Les retables d'autel gothiques*, pp. 118-120.

¹² On the sacrament house, see most recently Timmermann, *Real presence*, pp. 327-328 (referring to the most important older literature).

inhabitant reportedly introduced Victor Hugo to its donors with a reverential “voilà monsieur et madame,” whose memorial stone was placed vis-à-vis the enormous structure. The author was evidently wrong in stating that it was given by the count of Zoutleeuw as that title has never existed, but the stone slab is still preserved (fig. 56) and the Dutch inscription it carries indeed provides essential information on the genesis of the remarkable piece of sculpture:

“Here lie buried the noble squire Merten van Wilre, lord of Oplinter, who died in the year of our Lord 1558, on 13 December, and lady Maria Pylipert, his wife, who died on 23 December 1554. In honor of God they have installed this sacrament house here.”¹³

Although *jonker* Merten van Wilre (1481/91 - 1558) was not a count, he and his wife certainly occupied a central place in the public life of mid-sixteenth-century Zoutleeuw. The memorial stone inextricably bound up their names with the donation of the sacrament house, but for a long time the artist who was responsible for the execution remained unknown. At the time of Hugo’s visit, it was still generally accepted to have been executed by a Florentine artist from the circle of Michelangelo. Four years later, however, the Brussels archivist Alphonse Wauters published the contract that the couple had drawn up for the sacrament house. Thus, Wauters was able to disprove its long supposed Italian origin and proudly give it back to Antwerp’s master sculptor Cornelis Floris de Vriendt (1514-1575). For him it was a clear proof that *la petite Belgique* also had sculptors of great talent.¹⁴ At the moment of the commission, the sculptor was in fact just embarking on an international career. Although we are not well-informed on his early years, we know for certain that around 1549 he must have received the commission to execute the funeral monument for Dorothea of Denmark, Duchess of Prussia (1504-1547) and in the first years of the 1550s he must have been working on the tomb for her father, Frederick I of Denmark (1471-1533).¹⁵ The contract with van Wilre, drawn up on 13 August 1550 before the Zoutleeuw aldermen, laid down the financial conditions and practical arrangements for the construction of the monumental structure. The text does not provide any iconographical, proportional or dimensional guidelines, as it refers to and comments on

¹³ “Hier leyt begraven die Eedele Joncker Marten van Wilre, heerre van Oplinteren, hy sterf int jare ons heeren 1558 13 december ende joffrou Maria Pyliepeerts syn huysvrouwe die sterf anno 1554 23 december ende hebben ter eerre Goedts dit sacraments huys hier gestelt.” See for the stone Cooreman, *Grafmonumenten in de provincie Brabant*, pp. 261-262, cat. 88.

¹⁴ Wauters, ‘Le tabernacle de l’église de Léau’.

¹⁵ On those two commissions, see Huysmans, *Cornelis Floris*, resp. pp. 96 and 81.

a design (*den patroone*) made previously, which Merten van Wilre had approved with his signature.¹⁶ Just like many other contemporary examples it had to be carved in soft white stone of Avesnes.¹⁷ A first part had to be installed by Pentecost 1551 (10 May), whereas Pentecost 1552 (5 June) was agreed upon as final deadline for the work. The churchwarden accounts of these years repeatedly refer to it. In the course of March 1551 a glazier was paid for the making of a window “above the portal next to the holy sacrament house.”¹⁸ This definitely refers to the portal in the north transept where Floris’ structure was located. Yet, it is less clear if the final deadline was as strictly observed. The accounts of 1551 and 1552 repeatedly mention related works, such as a new pew and sanctuary lamp in its immediate vicinity, but only in October 1552 was somebody paid to unload the stones of the sacrament house from a ship.¹⁹

The result is a tower-like structure, consisting of nine stories and reaching a total height of eighteen meters. The elaborate and highly complex iconographic program appears as one great ode to the Eucharist. A whole parade of sculpted scenes and figures help sing the praise of the Real Presence. Five reliefs in the base all show offering scenes, followed on the next story by scenes from Genesis flanked by four prophets. Then follows the sacarium itself, which is closed off by three painted metal doors with a caryatid on each side representing one of the four cardinal virtues. After

¹⁶ The original contract has not been preserved, but a transcript of the contract exists in the acts of the aldermen. See RAL, SL, nr. 3033, fols. 2r-v. After the first publication of that text by Wauters, it has often been reprinted afterwards. A German translation is provided by Hedicke, *Cornelis Floris und die Florisdekoration*, vol. 1, pp. 65-66. On the contract, see also Huysmans, *Cornelis Floris*, esp. p. 263, and the review of that publication by van Ruyven-Zeman, p. 262. On 31 October 1550 Cornelis Floris arranged before the Antwerp aldermen the surety that had been stipulated in the contract: SAA, Schepenregisters, nr. 239, register WG I, fol. 318v. Many thanks to Robrecht Janssen for drawing my attention to this document.

¹⁷ On the use and extraction of stone of Avesnes, see Tolboom & Dubbelaar, ‘Avendersteen in Nederland,’ and Hurx, *Architect en aannemer*, pp. 104-107 and 381, note 91. Compare with the overview of materials in Suykerbuyk & Van Bruaene, ‘Towering piety,’ pp. 147-149, Appendix.

¹⁸ KR 1550, fol. 27 (March 1551): “Betaelt Jan die ghelaesmaker heeff een wienster ghemack, boven portael by theylyck sacramens huys.”

¹⁹ It is of course possible that this payment was delayed, or booked much later. A selection of relevant entries: KR 1551, fol. 65v (June 1552): “Betaelt Joes vander Gheeten met eenen cnape ende eenen joenghe, dat hy ghevrocht aen sydt sel voir Heylych Sacramenhuys”; KR 1552, fols. 102r-v (July 1552): “Hans van Hauwagen met synen cnape hebben aent ghestuelte ghevrocht vanden heylyghe sacramente..”; KR 1552, fol. 106v (October 1552): “Betaelt Jan Pans van een metalen lampe meten candelaren soe die voir theylycht sacramens huys hanckt”; KR 1552, fol. 107 (October 1552): “Betaelt de selve [Jan van Haughen, byldesnyder] van dat hy die steen vanden heylyghen sacramens huysse uwyttten scepe heeff helpen loessen, twee daeghen, sdachs 5 st, facit 10 st.”

an ornamental cornice with the coats of arms of the patrons just above the metal doors, the honorary parade is continued by the four evangelists standing aside Eucharistic prefigurations. The next two stories contain figures of saints, both male and female, as well as other virtues and the church fathers. The apostles appear on the next two levels, in combination with other saints and kings. These figures carry a small *tempietto* containing Saint Michael slaying the Devil, flanked by angel musicians, which itself is a base for a baldachin with the crowning of the Virgin Mary. The whole is topped by a pelican picking its own breast to feed its young, the traditional image of Christ's sacrifice.²⁰

This elaborate iconographic program is inherent to the antique style used, namely through its typical decorative elements such as caryatids and herms, and through structural motifs and architectural frames including the classical architectural orders and garlands. The antique style of the Zoutleeuw sacrament house must not, however, obscure its gothic essence. The sacrament house clearly is a transitional work of art in a typological form that is still essentially gothic in its marked verticality.²¹ The basic disposition and spatial development of the structure are still thought in a basically 'Gothic', i.e. vertical way, rather than in the more horizontally conceived Renaissance style in which Cornelis Floris usually worked, and in which Jean Mone, for instance, had designed his *Retable of the sacraments* nearly twenty years earlier (fig. 55). Thus, a subtle play with tradition and renewal appears to be a fundamental characteristic of the Zoutleeuw sacrament house. As the Eucharist and its material cult at large were central to both late medieval theology and lay devotional life (cf. supra, 2.1.4), such an observation begs the question as to how it ties in with the traditional narrative on the evolution of piety in the sixteenth-century Low Countries. Some twenty years ago, the year 1520 has been rhetorically proposed as the end of the Middle Ages. A range of studies of Netherlandish devotional life characterized that moment as one of dramatic disruption with the preceding period. By almost explicitly emphasizing decline, much of this research has in fact - consciously or unconsciously - applied a teleological framework in which the 1566 *Beeldenstorm* was seen as a more or less logical consequence of a generally deteriorating Catholic piety. However, scrutinizing the sources from another point of view allows to tell an alternative, more complex story.

²⁰ The iconography is discussed more in detail by Ceulemans, 'De iconografie van de sacramentstoren,' and Patigny, 'Un type de mobilier liturgique particulier'.

²¹ For a similar assessment of the sacrament house, see Hedicke, *Cornelis Floris und die Florisdekoration*, vol. 1, pp. 67-70, and Gabriëls, *Het Nederlandse ornament in de Renaissance*, pp. 152-154.

This is especially, though certainly not exclusively, true for material sources, such as the Zoutleeuw sacrament house. In this chapter, it will be considered as exemplary for this alternative story. As it is essentially rooted in medieval tradition, to a certain extent a case for continuity can indeed be made. Mapping the bigger picture of Catholic devotion in the Low Countries throughout the sixteenth century will not only elucidate the background for donations of such complex artworks as sacrament houses or the motivational underpinnings for stylistic choices, but it also encourages a reconsideration of the traditional view of a waning medieval piety.

Chapter 3 1520. The waning of medieval piety?

3.1 Reformation and iconoclasm in the Low Countries

Not long after Martin Luther had caused a stir in Saxony with his 95 theses on the sale of indulgences by the Church of Rome, the reformer's writings and his ideas gradually reached the Habsburg territories. Around the beginning of 1519 a set of his publications arrived in the university town of Leuven, where the professors of the theological faculty would soon engage in a penetrating inquiry on whether his statements contained heresies or not. After having consulted their colleagues from the university of Cologne, on 7 November 1519 the Leuven faculty unanimously condemned Luther and in the course of February 1520 their denunciation was published by Dirk Martens. Only in the course of the following months would a reaction from Rome follow, when Pope Leo X obliged the Saxon reformer to revoke his teachings with the bull *Exsurge Domine*, issued in June 1520.¹ Meanwhile, the debate had already burst out of its theological university boundaries, however, and in November 1520 a middle Dutch translation of Luther's writings on indulgences circulated in Antwerp.² The commercial metropolis indeed soon took up a lead role in the early history of the reformation in the Low Countries, especially by the activities of the local Augustinian friars. After their convent had been abolished and demolished on imperial command, on 1 July 1523 two of their friars - Hendrik Voes en Jan van Essen - were publicly burned at stake on the central market square in Brussels, as a result of which they went down in history as the first Protestant martyrs.

¹ Giellis, *Hemelbestormers*, pp. 82-92.

² Fredericq, *Corpus documentorum*, pp. 595-602, nr. 400.

The gruesome execution did not keep Luther's ideas from spreading, however. Ever since the papal nuncio Hieronymus Aleander arrived in the Low Countries in 1520 to see to the observation of Exsurge Domine, he had assessed the situation as very dangerous. He organized public book burnings in Antwerp, Leuven and Ghent, and all over Flanders trials soon followed in the course of the 1520s.³ In Utrecht, the churchwardens of the cathedral provided their *quaestores* - collectors that travelled around the diocese with relics and provided indulgences to those who offered money - with printed texts that condemned Luther's ideas, the latter which were partly held responsible for the decline in devotional revenues they had noted in 1522.⁴ Best known in art historical scholarship is the 1527 trial held in Brussels against court artists Bernard van Orley, Pieter de Pannemaeker and others, who were also referred to as *lutheriaenen*.⁵ Luther's ideas were indeed an important impetus for the Reformation, but the movement at large also heavily drew on the Christian or biblical humanism that had preceded it, with major thinkers such as Erasmus as central figures.⁶ Furthermore, very soon the dynamics in the Low Countries would go far beyond the mere influence and ideas of Luther himself. In the course of the following years, however, 'Lutheran' would be used as a general and rather imprecise umbrella term, also in the sources that will be used throughout this chapter. Alastair Duke has rightly emphasized the 'protean character' of this early phase of the Reformation in the Habsburg territories, which was characterized by excitement, experiment and chaos.⁷

Chaos and literal destruction of the past were indeed another indication of the debates stepping out of the walls of universities and 'popish' institutions. On a larger European scale, the spreading of Reformed ideas was soon accompanied by cases of iconoclasm. Building on a long-standing tradition in Western culture with important roots in antiquity and the Byzantine Empire, and resurfacing endemically well into the fifteenth century, iconoclasm got inextricably bound up with the Reformation from the 1520s onwards. The *Wittenberger Unruhen* of late January 1522 are traditionally

³ Most of the available information is collected in the basic study by Decavele, *De dageraad van de Reformatie*, esp. chapter 1. More recently, see also Fühner, *Die Kirchen- und die antireformatorische Religionspolitik*, pp. 176-185.

⁴ A similar statement was again uttered in 1529. Vroom, *Financiering van de kathedraalbouw*, pp. 298, 316 and 320-321.

⁵ On that trial see most recently Gielis, 'In reparationem scandalii'.

⁶ However, for a recent critical review of Luther's ambivalent stance towards Erasmus, see Visser, 'Irreverent reading'.

⁷ Duke, 'The origins of Evangelical dissent,' pp. 18-23.

considered as the starting point of Protestant image-breaking: in response to Bodenstein von Karlstadt's tract *Von abtuhung der Bylder* and to popular demand, the city council of Wittenberg decided to do away with the images in churches. This happened much to Luther's disappointment, since he took a more moderate stance. In a similar way, after popular attacks on religious objects in Zürich in September 1523, the magistracy organised a widely attended public debate on the matter of images in which Zwingli defended the harshest position.⁸ In the slipstream of Protestant reform, iconoclasm followed all over northern Europe: in Scandinavia (1530s), in England (especially between 1547 and 1553), in Scotland (from 1559 onwards) and in France (most violently between 1559 and 1562).⁹ In the Low Countries a series of intense iconoclastic attacks succeeded each other in the course of August, September and October 1566. The events, now known as the *Beeldenstorm* or Iconoclastic Fury, hit almost all of the provinces of the Habsburg Netherlands in an impressively short time span (cf. *infra*, Chapter 5).¹⁰

Already well before the 1566 events there had been cases of violence against images and liturgical objects, however, and it is instructive to consider the evidence here. A number of early examples has been documented in Leuven. In 1535 a group of six men and two women, reportedly adherents of Luther, "unworthily" (*indigne*) treated a crucifix on a cemetery, and in 1539 a certain Antheunis de Sprengere had daubed an image of Christ with dirt.¹¹ Around the same time, the spreading of the Ghent revolt to neighbouring areas would also lead to a number of iconoclastic outbursts in Oudenaarde in late 1539 and early 1540.¹² Incidents occurred increasingly towards the end of the 1550s and the early 1560s. The collegiate church of Saint Hermes in Ronse, a pilgrimage destination of a certain importance, was reportedly aggressively profaned

⁸ See Michalski, 'Bilderstürme im Ostseeraum,' as well as the many other relevant contributions in the same volume. Classic studies include Michalski, *The Reformation and the Visual Arts*, esp. pp. 10-11, 52-54 and 75-98, and Wandel, *Voracious Idols and Violent Hands*. For a more recent analysis of the 1522 Wittenberg events, see Krentz, 'Auf den Spuren der Erinnerung'.

⁹ For England, see Phillips, *The Reformation of Images*, and Duffy, *The Stripping of the Altars*, esp. 381, 453 and 480. For Scotland, see Spicer, 'Iconoclasm and Adaptation'. For France, see especially Christin, *Une révolution symbolique*, and Crouzet, *Les guerriers de Dieu*, pp. 493-561. A general survey is provided by Eire, *War against the Idols*.

¹⁰ A recent overview of the events and historiography on the *Beeldenstorm* with earlier references is provided can be found in Van Bruaene, Jonckheere & Suykerbuyk, 'Beeldenstorm'. See also Spicer, 'Iconoclasm'.

¹¹ Molanus, *Les quatorzes livres sur l'histoire de la ville de Louvain*, vol. 2, pp. 818-819; van Uytven, 'Bijdrage tot de sociale geschiedenis van de Protestanten te Leuven,' p. 16, note 39.

¹² Arnade, *Beggars, iconoclasts and civic patriots*, p. 151.

in 1559, together with two other churches in town that underwent destructions at the same occasion.¹³ Not less notorious were the nocturnal attacks in the Westkwartier from 1560 onwards, whereby images hung on trees and wayside crucifixes were seized and cast on the ground.¹⁴ Even in Bruges, a city that was able to ward off all iconoclastic threats in the summer of 1566, sporadic hostility against images and other sacred objects could not be prevented in the preceding years. In October 1563 a crucifix had been chopped into pieces by a sword, after which the parts were taunted and thrown in a public cesspool, and at another instance a statue of Our Lady was stolen and thrown in a fountain.¹⁵ Such cases were certainly not limited to the County of Flanders alone. The Brabantine cloister of Hertoginnedal in Oudergem, for instance, was heavily sacked in February 1562, at which occasion consecrated hosts were trampled under foot. The subsequent burning of sculptures, ornaments and paintings entailed a burnout of the whole complex.¹⁶

Crucial for our understanding of the context in the broad region around Zoutleeuw is the diary of Christiaan Munters (c. 1505-1555), chaplain in Kuringen, near Hasselt (some 20 kilometers northeast from Zoutleeuw). He wrote down all sorts of noteworthy events in the period between 1529 and 1545, ranging from wondrous happenings such as the birth of siamese twins or a cow with two heads, to important international developments and facts, such as the Munster Rebellion (1534-1535) or the death of Erasmus (1536). Thus, the manuscript offers a unique reflection of the broad variety of news that actually circulated in the region. It is therefore all the more interesting to observe that Munters devoted a great deal of attention to the spreading of Protestantism and the persecution of its followers in and around Kuringen. Clearly, iconoclasm appears as an inherent characteristic. In December 1533, Munters described the acts some Lutherans had reportedly committed with a crucifix in a chapel in Repen (now Over- and Neerrepen, near Tongeren). They chopped off the hand and feet of Christ, split his face in two before throwing the damaged image in a ditch “with his blessed arms upwards.” The scattered pieces of statues of Our Lady

¹³ “Per incendium quo totum templum prorsus conflagratum fuit anno 1559... omnia altaria profanata, ita ut nullum restat consecratum” See de Brouwer, *Bijdrage tot de geschiedenis van het godsdienstig leven*, p. 133.

¹⁴ “Maer van desen tijdt af [1560] begonden sy bedectelick by nachte de beelden af te werpen die langst de wegen opgeregt waren of in capellekens aen boomen hingen...” Heinderyckx, *Jaerboeken van Veurne en Veurneambacht*, vol. 3, pp. 6-7.

¹⁵ Vandamme, ‘Het Calvinisme te Brugge,’ pp. 102-03.

¹⁶ Germonprez, ‘De Recette Générale,’ p. 73.

and Saint John joined the debris.¹⁷ Some years later, in June 1537, Munters described similar profanations which he heard had happened in Zierikzee (Zeeland). There, four priests had taken an image of Our Lady, on which - after they had thrown it hard on the ground - they sat, peed and crapped.¹⁸ At other instances he registered news about priests being attacked at mass in Gorsleeuw or Lutherans of Kuringen threatening to destroy the churches and cloisters and kill all priests and clerics.¹⁹

Munters's diary confirms that sporadically actual destructions were carried out not too far from Zoutleeuw. The city of Leuven is only located some 30 kilometers to the west of town, and both Repen and Gorsleeuw some 25 kilometers to its east. More importantly, however, it aptly illustrates that iconoclasm was an important regional news item. However sporadic such actual cases might have been, their significance and impact must not be underestimated. These examples neatly demonstrate that iconoclasm was by no means an unknown phenomenon in the Low Countries prior to 1566, and from a broader European perspective one can certainly speak of iconoclastic times. Networks for news had developed on an international scale and information from all over Europe was increasingly available in cities and towns.²⁰ Apart from the occasional iconoclasms in the Low Countries, its inhabitants certainly must have heard of the other events throughout Europe. This means that the more encompassing debate, which essentially was about the materiality and physicality of traditional devotion and the question how to worship God in an appropriate way, certainly was not limited to university or humanist circles alone, but that the community at large was involved in significant ways. The debate was public, and the acts of common laymen and -women were voices that translated learned, theological objections.

¹⁷ "Anno xxxiii omtrent der maent van december hebben dy lutheriaenen voer Repen in een capelleken Onsen Lieven Heer gebenedyt aent heylich cruys syn gebenedyde handen ende voeten aff gehouwen ende syn gebenedyt aensicht al ontwee gehouwen, ende doen worpen sy Onsen Lieven Heer in eenen gracht met synen gebenedyden arm opwärts ende Ons Lieven Vrouwen gebenedyt ende Sint Jan hebben sy oeck geheel ontwee gehouwen." Grauwels, *Dagboek van gebeurtenissen*, pp. 18-19.

¹⁸ "Item Tsirck [Zierikzee] hebben iiii vermaledyde priesters genomen dat gebenedyt bilt van Onser Liever Vrouwen ende hebbense geworpen seer hardelyck ter eerdern ende ginghen op het bilt sitten ende bepident ende beschedent ende tsavons hadden sy hon hooft aff, sy waerens al weert wat doot datmen hen aen hed gedaen." Grauwels, *Dagboek van gebeurtenissen*, p. 51.

¹⁹ Grauwels, *Dagboek van gebeurtenissen*, pp. 19 and 22.

²⁰ In relation to the spreading of the news of the Beeldenstorm in particular, see Lamal, 'Nieuws en informatienetwerken'.

3.2 The 1520-thesis

3.2.1 Assessing Protestant influence

What were the practical consequences of these discussions? In order to understand how traditional piety and religious patronage were influenced by Protestantism in general and by these debates in particular, it is essential to look beyond theological writings and consider the evolution of lay piety ‘on the ground’ during the period in question. As has been discussed in the introduction, this common, lay Catholic perspective, however, has only limitedly been taken into account in the study of piety and religious material culture in the sixteenth-century Low Countries. This goes for historians as well as art historians, both of whom historically looked for changes rather than for possible continuities. Logically, a significant part of the scholarly literature on religion in the sixteenth-century Low Countries has indeed been devoted to the origins of different Protestant groupings in the Low Countries, their developments and organisations. Although Luther was the first reformer whose ideas had an impressive impact, others would soon follow. In the Netherlands, Anabaptists, Calvinists and many other religious groupings on the Protestant spectrum would gain ground through increasing organisation.²¹

Whereas the many Protestantisms have been studied in many respects, as has been established in the introduction, the perspective on the Catholic situation has long been much more narrow-minded and mostly focused on decline. As far as the Low Countries are concerned, this can to a significant extent be traced back to the daunting image of late medieval piety that was sketched by Jacques Toussaert in 1963. It has been demonstrated how he introduced important new, quantitative methods in the study of laypeople’s piety. According to his findings and calculations frequent communion was virtually non-existent, monetary offerings were only given by a fraction of the parishioners and the moral life of both clergy and laypeople could hardly be described as Christian. The portrait he painted was damning and he could not but conclude that the Reformation had been smouldering for a long time, that it was inevitable and a necessity.²² Although his method was as ground-breaking and refreshing as his radical

²¹ Especially worth mentioning here are the contributions by Guido Marnef. For a general discussion of the situation in Brabant in particular, see for instance Marnef, ‘Verscheurde geesten’.

²² Toussaert, *Le sentiment religieux*, pp. 597, 604-605.

views, the merits of his study soon were overlooked as a result of the impressive torrent of sharp critiques written against his book.

Nevertheless, a number of studies of the period immediately preceding the Reformation, especially undertaken from the early 1990s onwards, have increasingly made use of similar quantitative methods to map religious transformations. First and foremost, Wim Vroom's study on the financing of cathedral construction in the Middle Ages was pioneering in more than one respect, not least because it was one of the first studies to unravel the complex monetary mechanisms behind cathedral building on a European scale. More important for our purposes is the fact that it included an in-depth and long-term case-study of Utrecht cathedral, contrary to Toussaert who had used rather scattered material from all over Flanders and in non-continuous sequences at that. After an extensive analysis of the various revenues throughout the fifteenth and early sixteenth centuries, Vroom emphasized significant changes in the early 1520s. The revenues from diocesan collections that had grown out to be an important source of income, quite suddenly and nearly completely fell away after 1525, and the collegiate chapter disappointedly noted that "the glow of ancient piety has cooled off and nearly smothered in these bitter times."²³ A few years before, in 1522, Luther himself had already been blamed as being one of the causes, but it is important to note that the chapter at the same time saw the raging wars and economic crisis as equally inherent characteristics of what they defined as bitter times.²⁴ Vroom later discovered similar developments for Antwerp's church of Our Lady, where he identified 1522 as turning point. Although in this case the material he collected suggested a decline that was much more gradual, the devotional offerings diminished, and the explanation Vroom put forward was the religious crisis that most notably took shape with Luther.²⁵ Much like in Utrecht, the churchwardens of the Antwerp church of Saint Jacob - only raised to the status of parish church in 1479 while still under construction - had indeed complained to Charles V that the offerings had gravely diminished ever since Luther's teachings were spread in the city.²⁶ Guido Marnef later confirmed these general trends for the whole metropolis on the river Scheldt, and

²³ "Ob antique pietatis calorem... hac infellici tempestate infrigeratum et pene extinctum..." Vroom, *Financiering van de kathedraalbouw*, pp. 266-267.

²⁴ "Propter magnam caristiam, propter doctrinam magistri Martini Lutheri, propter guerras transsylvanas, ubi non potuerunt habere cursum." Vroom, *Financiering van de kathedraalbouw*, pp. 298 and 316.

²⁵ Vroom, *De Onze-Lieve-Vrouwekerk te Antwerpen*, pp. 58-60.

²⁶ "Want zindert dat trumoer ende opinie van Lutherus geregneert heeft, soe zijn die aelmoessen der menschen zeere gedeclineert." See Goovaerts, 'Construction de l'église Saint-Jacques,' pp. 10-11.

furthermore added that after 1520 almost no new confraternities and chaplaincies were founded.²⁷ In a similar vein, Verhoeven's study of a set of late medieval miracle cults in the city of Delft included an analysis of the various cults' revenues, and there again 1520 was interpreted as an "abrupt" ending in each of the different churches. He even termed it a "total collapse."²⁸ A final scholar that deserves to be mentioned here is Paul Trio, who conducted extensive research into the origins, developments and functioning of confraternities and brotherhoods in late medieval Ghent. As far as his material allowed him to make conclusions on the matter, he saw a "general and drastic decline of the number of new members in the second quarter of the sixteenth century."²⁹ He later ventured another general study of the evolution of anniversary masses wherein he again noted a decline in the number of foundations from around 1520 onwards.³⁰

3.2.2 Problems with the 1520-thesis

As a whole, this corpus of studies has established a still generally accepted narrative of a rapid decline of Catholic devotion in the Low Countries after 1520. Not unlike Toussaert's characterization of late medieval piety as forewarning an inevitable Reformation, this perceived 'sudden' implosion of devotion was considered as marking the end of an era. As the material was presented, it was indeed highly compatible with Protestant critiques. Offerings and investments in chantries diminished, pilgrimage sites became less popular, membership numbers of religious confraternities dwindled, convents attracted less vocations and were openly criticized. These observations came to be known as the 1520-thesis, as that year was taken as a crucial turning point for religious life in the Low Countries. Alastair Duke concluded that it marked a "profound transformation" in the religious expressions and behaviour of both laypeople and clerics.³¹ Koen Goudriaan even went so far as to rhetorically declare it as the end of the Middle Ages, and he spoke of a veritable "crisis in the religious

²⁷ Marnef, *Antwerpen in de tijd van de Reformatie*, pp. 83-86, graphs 4.1 and 4.2

²⁸ Verhoeven, *Devotie en negotie*, pp. 160-184.

²⁹ Trio, *Volksreligie als spiegel*, pp. 167-199 and 346-347.

³⁰ Trio, 'Moordende concurrentie op de memoriemarkt,' pp. 153-154.

³¹ Duke, 'The origins of Evangelical dissent,' pp. 8-10.

behaviour.”³² From this perspective, the *Beeldenstorm* of 1566 was no more than a logical consequence of the widespread aversion to traditional Catholicism in general and material devotion in particular. Some nuance has recently been introduced by Judith Pollmann, who established that many lay Catholics resented this course of events, but remained passive *vis à vis* Protestant critiques as they were convinced that ‘each should tend his own garden’.³³ In general, however, the basic gist of the argument remained the same.

This is problematic, both from a historiographical as from a methodological point of view.³⁴ Firstly, the documentary evidence that has been used to support the 1520-thesis almost exclusively comes from highly urbanized contexts. In the early sixteenth century, Antwerp was one of the largest cities in Europe. Cities such as Ghent and Utrecht followed in its wake and counted among the largest cities within the Low Countries. Delft, too, had around 10.000 inhabitants or more in 1514 and thus was one of the principal cities in the highly urbanized County of Holland.³⁵ It goes without saying that such large urban entities had other dynamics than smaller towns and villages, and the Reformation has often been characterized as an essentially urban phenomenon.³⁶ This should caution for rash extrapolations. Nevertheless, cities such as Antwerp have all too often been taken as textbook examples for developments elsewhere and the 1520-thesis has also been used to explain developments in non-urban areas.³⁷ For instance, in his excellent study on the important pilgrimage destination Wezemaal, Bart Minnen supposed a “collapse” of the cult after 1520. The material at hand to claim so is limited, however, and only financial in nature. Furthermore, many pilgrims came from out of town, so the developments are not necessarily telling about the situation in Wezemaal itself. In 1559 the parish priest interestingly reported that he knew of no heresies among his flock.³⁸ Therefore, such cases should be studied in their own right. Although virtually no research has yet been conducted on the religious

³² Goudriaan, ‘Het einde van de Middeleeuwen ontdekt’. The extended version of his paper was never published, but he somewhat nuanced his statement in his valedictory speech at the Vrije Universiteit Amsterdam, 17 September 2015.

³³ Pollmann, ‘Each should tend his own garden,’ and idem, *Catholic Identity*.

³⁴ See also the critical remarks by Speetjens, ‘A quantitative approach,’ pp. 122-123.

³⁵ De Vries, *European urbanization*, pp. 271-272 and 280-282; Verhoeven, *Devotie en negotie*, pp. 7-12.

³⁶ Ozment, *The Reformation in the cities*; Moeller, *Reichsstadt und Reformation*. Compare with Dickens, *The German Nation and Martin Luther*, p. 182, who called it “an urban event.”

³⁷ Compare with the problematic use of Antwerp as textbook example for the *Beeldenstorm*: Suykerbuyk, ‘De sacra militia contra iconomachos,’ p. 17.

³⁸ Minnen, *Den heyligen sant*, vol. 1, pp. 95-98.

developments throughout the sixteenth century in more rural areas, it has already been supposed that they precisely remained more or less untouched by Reformed ideas. Both Juliaan Woltjer and Johan Decavele have argued that in the Low Countries Protestantism only firmly settled in larger cities or areas characterized by well-developed industrial infrastructure (such as the Westkwartier), whereas traditional ideas and practices comparatively remained stronger in the rural areas.³⁹ This statement remains to be further verified, but recent research on the rural Veluwe area in the Duchy of Guelders confirms this. Until the early seventeenth century the implementation of the Reformed religion met with fierce resistance from the inhabitants, who did not want to give up Catholicism and saw themselves backed by important parties such as the local nobility.⁴⁰ Furthermore, highly relevant for the present case-study is the situation in the Bishopric of Liège, of which Zoutleeuw was part until the reforms of 1559. Contrary to the rest of the Low Countries, the influence of Protestantism appears to have been strikingly limited. Interestingly, this does not seem to have been the consequence of placards or an active policy of repression as was the case in many of the Habsburg territories. There were only a few persecutions, and executions of heretics rarely if ever caused tumult.⁴¹ Thus, as it will be developed in the following paragraphs, the case of Zoutleeuw can provide a valuable supplementary contribution to the debate. It is located in different bishoprics than Tournai, Cambrai or Utrecht, which seems to have reacted differently to the development of Protestantism, and moreover located in a significantly less urbanized area. Although Zoutleeuw had been considered as one of the seven chief cities in the Duchy of Brabant during the thirteenth and fourteenth centuries, by the time Luther developed his theses it had lost much of its previous importance. Much like the surrounding Hageland region of which it was part, the town had long since been in an economic decline, which clearly had a negative impact on demographic trends.⁴² With about 2000 inhabitants around 1520, the context was certainly very different than that of Antwerp, Delft, Ghent and Utrecht.

³⁹ Decavele, *Dageraad van de Reformatie*, vol. 1, pp. 586-588, and Woltjer, *Tussen vrijheidsstrijd en burgeroorlog*, pp. 134-135. More recently, see Fühner, *Die Kirchen- und die antireformatorische Religionspolitik*, pp. 176-185.

⁴⁰ De Weerd, 'Betrouwbare zielzorgers,' and idem, 'Adellijke beschermers van een christelijke gemeenschap'.

⁴¹ Halkin, *Réforme protestante et réforme catholique*; Harsin, 'Les premières manifestations de la réforme'; Dieterich, *Brotherhood and community*. In general, see Bax, *Het protestantisme in het bisdom Luik*.

⁴² Van Uytven, 'In de schaduwen van de Antwerpse groei'; idem, 'Zoutleeuw, een kleine hoofdstad van Brabant'; Peeters, 'De betekenis der stad Zoutleeuw'.

A second layer of methodological critique has to do with the chronological scope and the historiographical frame within which the events are interpreted. The 1520-thesis is essentially part of a narrative that is firmly rooted in stereotypical pessimistic views of late medieval piety, which have been both discussed and questioned in the introduction and the previous part. An important part of the critique was related to the ambivalent position of the fifteenth century in the historiography on the subject. As was pointed out, it has been treated as either an epilogue or prologue - depending on the prime field of interest - which is at odds with the period's own rich idiosyncrasies, as John Van Engen has elaborately established. A similar mechanism seems to be at work in the literature on the 1520-thesis. With the exception of Marnef, whose principal subject was the development of Protestantism in Antwerp, the thesis has mostly been propagated by studies that were chronologically focused on the medieval period. Whereas Vroom focused on medieval church building, both Verhoeven's study on Delft as pilgrimage destination and Trio's studies on confraternities and anniversary masses were chronologically limited to the Middle Ages. From this angle, 1520 might have appeared as a convenient end point. However, to a certain extent such termini are often scholarly constructs with conscious or unconscious rhetorical purposes, either or not slightly forced.

3.2.3 Alternatives

Such a bias can be overcome by taking a larger chronological scope that transcends the traditional categories of historical periodization. On a general European level several scholars, including Francis Rapp, have indeed already emphasized the necessity to study the events framing the Reformation on a somewhat more long-term basis, but this has rarely been put into practice.⁴³ The same goes for the study of the events in the Low Countries in particular. For instance, in a critique on Toussaert's book Jean Lestocquoy has remarked that in order to posit a decline it is necessary to analyse the preceding period.⁴⁴ Much like Lestocquoy criticized Toussaert for not doing so, a similar critique can be raised against the 1520-thesis. Moreover, this not only applies to the period preceding, but also to the decades following the introduction of

⁴³ Rapp, *L'église et la vie religieuse*, pp. 317-318.

⁴⁴ "Pour parler de déclin, de chute, il faudrait montrer ce qu'était la période antérieure..." Lestocquoy, Review of Toussaert, *Le sentiment religieux*, p. 160.

Protestant thought. As far as the preceding period is concerned, the documentary evidence that has been presented in the previous part of this dissertation enables considerable reevaluation of the picture. As has been argued, the years around the turn of the century - the period immediately preceding Luther's activity - were characterized by a strikingly intense piety and a devotional boom in many regards: miracles increasingly occurred at newly established shrines, as a result of which the cult circuit appears to have condensed, and the indulgence system was successful to an extent that had not been seen before.

This devotional boom not only becomes apparent from the source material presented here, but - quite surprisingly - upon closer evaluation it can actually also be discerned in the material that has been advanced to support the 1520-thesis. This can most clearly be demonstrated by means of the city of Antwerp, where much of the attention has turned to the cult of Our Lady 'on the stick' (*op 't Stokske*) in the church devoted to her. Scholars have noted that this cult, which in financial terms was one of the most important within the Antwerp devotional landscape, saw a considerable decline from the early 1520s. This is certainly true, but it has insufficiently been emphasized that the cult was of a relatively recent origin. And contrary to what historian and dean of the Antwerp chapter Aubertus Miraeus (1573-1640) tried to establish in 1625, its origins certainly did not go back to 1124. A seventeenth-century chronicle seems to have come closer to the truth in mentioning that the statue of Our Lady *op 't Stokske* started to work miracles in 1474.⁴⁵ Interestingly, it is also from that year onwards that individual accounts of the cult have been preserved, the first of which immediately documents the installation of the stick in question, and Philippen has convincingly argued that it cannot have dated to an earlier period.⁴⁶ The curves representing its devotional revenues show a steady rise in the later years of the fifteenth century, with a peak around 1490, after which they actually already start to diminish in absolute terms. This individual pattern recurs elsewhere in the Antwerp context. The graph with the total devotional revenues in the Antwerp church of Our Lady shows a strikingly parallel evolution, again with an unprecedented peak around 1490. Finally, while Marnef uses the chronological evolution of the foundation of confraternities and

⁴⁵ "Doen [1474] begonst onse Lieve Vrouwe opt Stoccken tot Antwerpen in de hooftkercke eerst miraculen te doen, die men doen eerst openbaerde." See van Havre, *Chronijck der stadt Antwerpen*, p. 18.

⁴⁶ Philippen, *Le culte de Notre-Dame op 't Stoccken*. See also Vroom, *De Onze-Lieve-Vrouwekerk te Antwerpen*, p. 51.

chaplains in Antwerp to illustrate the decline after 1520, the years around 1500 again stand out as the absolute high point.⁴⁷

The case can also be made for Utrecht. Although Vroom rightly established that the revenues from the diocesan collections almost completely fell away after 1525, it should also be emphasized that his data clearly show a steady rise throughout the fifteenth century, reaching climaxes in 1500 and 1525 itself.⁴⁸ And the same goes for the confraternities in Ghent studied by Trio, because, as has been mentioned in the previous chapter, the later fifteenth century saw the absolute high point of memberships, which for some confraternities even lasted until 1525.⁴⁹ Even in a rural context such as Wezemaal this assessment holds true since the absolute climax of the cult of Saint Job there appears to have been between 1495 and 1520, as has been discussed previously. In conclusion, rather than disproving the decline or generally downward tendencies after 1520 that have been emphasized by scholars so far, these observations present a view of the developments in a different light. The perceived sudden - or in some cases not so sudden - decline after 1520 is not necessarily absolute, but rather relative. Although it indeed seems possible to speak of decline, that is only so by virtue of the high peak that preceded it, and both moments not only need to be studied separately but in conjunction as well. At this point it is interesting to recall the typical form of graphs charting the number of miracles that were recorded at shrines, which much like negative exponential curves often show the highest degree of activity in the earliest years of a shrine's activity and then gradually diminish (graph 11). As a lot of new curves 'started' in the later fifteenth century, they all dropped more or less at the same time.

The proposed long term that arguably is needed to study the events around 1520 evidently also stretches out to the ensuing period. In this regard scholars have generally been quick to emphasize that contrary to earlier fluctuations the drop in the curves was definitive rather than a temporary phenomenon. Not all cases that have been treated thus far allow such a firm conclusion, however. For instance, after a devastating fire in the Antwerp church of Our Lady in 1533 the devotional revenues again started to rise and though they would not reach the exceptional level of around 1490 again they nevertheless remained on a significant level certainly until 1552.

⁴⁷ See Marnef, *Antwerpen in de tijd van de Reformatie*, pp. 83-86, Graphs 4.1 and 4.2.

⁴⁸ Vroom, *Financiering van de kathedraalbouw*, pp. 300, 321, 337, 360 and 508-512.

⁴⁹ Trio, *Volksreligie*, pp. 167-199.

Precisely the same process has been noted in the case of the Delft churches that had been severely hit by a conflagration three years later, in 1536.⁵⁰ These examples seem to demonstrate that at least some citizens continued to care for their church buildings, regardless of the spreading of Protestantism and growing criticism on the Church of Rome. This indirectly may also appear from the increasing popularity of lotteries that were being organized to finance major church building projects, *grosso modo* between 1520 and 1560.⁵¹ Protestantism had apparently not yet conquered the minds of the parishioners to such an extent that they conscientiously refused to donate money to the church.

Furthermore, Annemarie Speetjens has rightly highlighted that studies tend to overlook the possible transformations and changing aspects of piety.⁵² It is definitely true that the lion's share of the relevant studies have mostly relied on financial data to plot devotional evolutions. These, however, should always be treated with care. This is especially true for the Low Countries in the 1520s, which was suffering a severe economic crisis, causing an extremely high cost of grain and widespread pauperism. Some historians have however stated that the decline in devotional liberality cannot - partly or entirely - be explained by referring to the economic circumstances, because when the crisis was more or less over it was not followed by an upsurge in devotional revenues.⁵³ In light of the previously described developments it becomes clear that such line of reasoning only partly holds true, because theoretically it is perfectly possible that the dominant expressions of piety had changed, just as they had done quite drastically in the preceding decades. Although much work remains to be done to verify this hypothesis, Henry Dieterich has for instance already stated that confraternities in the city of Liège took on different forms of piety precisely at the moment when the distinction between Protestant and Catholic became crucial. He posited a Catholic Reformation driven by an 'active and pious laity'.⁵⁴ In the following paragraphs I hope to further contribute to an understanding of the evolution of piety during these momentous times. I will do so first by further pursuing the proposed analysis for the long term, and second by going beyond studying merely financial

⁵⁰ Vroom, *De Onze-Lieve-Vrouwekerk te Antwerpen*, pp. 59-60, and Verhoeven, *Devotie en negotie*, pp. 168, 176-177 and 184.

⁵¹ Kuys, 'Secular authorities and parish church building,' pp. 127-130.

⁵² Speetjens, 'A quantitative approach,' pp. 123-126.

⁵³ For instance Goudriaan, 'Het einde van de middeleeuwen ontdekt,' p. 69; Marnef, *Antwerpen in de tijd van de Reformatie*, p. 85.

⁵⁴ Dieterich, 'Une confrérie paroissiale à Liège,' and idem, *Brotherhood and community*.

parameters to chart evolutions of devotion and also introducing categories such as material sources.

As a final remark, as Speetjens has already pointed out in her critical assessment of the 1520-thesis, a lot of material that does not fit into the general narrative is often left out from discussions of the subject. She cited examples of confraternities that already started to have less members before the introduction of Protestant thought, including examples from Ghent in 1485, Bergen op Zoom in 1489 and 's-Hertogenbosch in 1510, while other confraternities and churches enjoyed continued popularity until the middle of the sixteenth century, such as Heusden and the Utrecht *Buurkerk*.⁵⁵ To this material many more examples can be added. Apart from the data from Zoutleuw that will be treated in the remainder of this part and the material that will be used regularly to contextualize it, a few instances will suffice here. In his study of the Confraternity of Our Lady in Doesburg (Duchy of Guelders), Kruisheer claimed that a diminishing number of bequests made and memorial masses founded was notable already well around 1510.⁵⁶ A similar pattern can be discerned in the data assembled by Meuris on late medieval Lier, a town in the vicinity of Antwerp. Although unfortunately no churchwarden accounts have been preserved for the period between 1509 and 1547, she was able to draw interesting graphs from both the preceding and ensuing periods. These rather unanimously reveal a boom between 1476 and 1490 - doubtlessly related to the promotion of the cult of Saint Gummarus that has been treated in the previous part - which is clearly followed by a decline from around 1490 and 1495. This evolution is not only suggested by the monetary offerings, but also by gifts in kind, or other indications such as the sale of pilgrim badges.⁵⁷ In the Ghent parish of Our Lady, on the other hand, no decline in the number of founded anniversary masses can be discerned around 1520, very much contrary to Trio's observations, and in Kortrijk a decline in the cult of saints is only notable around 1540.⁵⁸ Finally, a look at the material available for the town of Turnhout in the rural Campine area is interesting. Although no churchwarden accounts have been preserved prior to 1533, quantitative analysis of the series from the remainder of the sixteenth century reveal that also after 1520 considerable fluctuations occurred in the revenues from collections. Moreover, the church's register recording the founded anniversary

⁵⁵ Speetjens, 'A quantitative approach,' p. 122.

⁵⁶ Kruisheer, *De Onze Lieve Vrouwe-Broederschap te Doesburg*.

⁵⁷ Meuris, *Laat-middeleeuwse volksreligie te Lier*, pp. 73-74, Graph 11 and pp. 80-89, 95-96, 99-100.

⁵⁸ Franck, 'Memoria et caritas,' p. 52; Meyers-Reinquin, 'Proeve tot statistische benadering,' p. 216.

masses between 1398 and 1574 certainly does not show a linear downfall, but rather a strikingly cyclical pattern over the years.⁵⁹

3.3 A case for continuity?

The examples collected here suggest that thinking in terms of cyclical movements of forms piety and the popularity of certain cults, rather than straightforward decline can prove to be rewarding and seem to do more justice to the documentary evidence. In fact, in the previous part such cyclical patterns have already been referred to in relation to the cult of Saint Leonard in Zoutleeuw (cf. supra, 1.2). Such an approach has most notably been proposed by Patrick Geary, who in his basic studies of the cult of relics in the Middle Ages similarly pointed to “considerable fluctuations in both the short and the long term.”⁶⁰ However, up until now the devotional developments around 1520 in the Low Countries in particular, as well as in the sixteenth century in general, have overall been interpreted too unilaterally in terms of strict disruption, as a result of which patterns of continuity have all too often been neglected. This is most clearly expressed by Goudriaan’s characterization of 1520 marking the end of the Middle Ages, and thus the beginning of the early modern period. Regardless of the specific field of study such strict distinction between these two epochs have long been the subject of intense debate, and a number of recent studies has again tried to stress the continuities in order to bridge the gap.⁶¹ Specifically in relation to the religious history, a number of studies have already pointed to the continued attachment of ordinary believers to medieval cults and traditional religious practices. In his classic analysis of *Christianity in the West* between 1400 and 1700, John Bossy stressed continuity throughout his period of investigation, rather than presenting the Reformation as definitive rupture. This pan-European view has more recently been confirmed by Constantin Fasolt, who argued that the Reformation was not the radical and decisive break with the Middle Ages it often is thought to have been, and by

⁵⁹ Leysen, ‘Het devotieleven in de Turnhoutse Sint-Pieterskerk,’ p. 54, Graph 1, and pp. 113-115, Graphs 32 and 33.

⁶⁰ Geary, ‘Sacred commodities,’ pp. 176-180, quote on p. 178.

⁶¹ See for instance Burnett, Meirinhos & Hamesse, *Continuities and disruptions*, and Muldoon, *Bridging the medieval-modern divide*. In this respect, see also the extensive body of literature referred to by Van Engen, ‘Multiple options,’ pp. 257-259.

Caroline Walker Bynum.⁶² Regional studies have done much to work out such views more in detail on a local level. Some of the most important contributions have been made by Neil Galpern for France and Eamon Duffy for England, the latter amply illustrating the tenacity of what he has labelled ‘traditional religion’.⁶³ In pretty much the same vein, Llewellyn Bogaers has analysed religious life in Utrecht. All of these scholars have emphasized the continuing importance of the strong social value that traditional devotional practices had.⁶⁴ Finally, the recent research by Jos de Weerd on the Veluwe region referred to above points in the same direction.⁶⁵

Interestingly, also from the heterodox perspective, attention has been drawn to continuities by stressing that there were clear links between late medieval heresies and the earliest Protestants in the Low Countries. Persecutions were certainly no new phenomenon when the first reformed martyrs were burned at the stake on the Brussels market square. Moreover, Alastair Duke has pointed out that the same imagery and metaphors continued to be used.⁶⁶ Indeed, Luther’s critique in his 95 theses of 1517 was focused on the indulgence system, but as has been signaled in the previous chapter that was a phenomenon nearly as old as the system itself. Furthermore, iconoclasm also had clear precursors. Caroline Walker Bynum, among other scholars, has argued that late medieval iconoclasm actually developed in parallel to the increasing popularity of lifelike images.⁶⁷ Still in the later sixteenth century the Leuven theologian Johannes Molanus referred to a medieval tradition whereby images of saints were humiliated if the requested miracles failed to occur.⁶⁸ Finally, although it is tempting to univocally link the 1525 complaint of the Utrecht cathedral chapter that “the glow of ancient piety has cooled off” to the spreading of Luther’s teachings, such utterances are soon put in perspective when read aside of episcopal complaints in Tournai that use nearly exactly the same wording but date about 150 years before.⁶⁹

⁶² Bossy, *Christianity in the West*; Fasolt, ‘Hegel’s ghost’; Walker Bynum, *Christian materiality*, esp. pp. 272-273.

⁶³ Galpern, ‘The legacy of late medieval religion’; Duffy, *The stripping of the altars*. See also Terpstra, ‘Lay spirituality,’ p. 263.

⁶⁴ Bogaers, *Aards, betrokken en zelfbewust*.

⁶⁵ De Weerd, ‘Betrouwbare zielzorgers,’ and idem, ‘Adellijke beschermers van een christelijke gemeenschap’.

⁶⁶ Duke, ‘The origins of Evangelical dissent,’ pp. 23-28; Ozment, *The reformation in medieval perspective*. Compare, however, with Rapp, *L’église et la vie religieuse*, p. 320.

⁶⁷ Walker Bynum, *Christian materiality*, pp. 24-25. On the problematic status of sculptures in the Middle Ages, see also Camille, *The Gothic idol*, pp. 41-44.

⁶⁸ For examples, see Rooijackers, ‘Cult circuits in the Southern Netherlands,’ pp. 32-35.

⁶⁹ “Refrigescit devotio laicorum et diminuitur debita reverentia sacramentorum.” Le Groux, *Summa statutorum synodaliū dioecesis Tornacensis*, p. 34, art. 14. Quoted by Toussaert, *Le sentiment religieux*, p. 594.

In conclusion, it seems that the stereotypical image of the sudden breakdown of traditional religion around 1520 marking the end of the long and dark Middle Ages clashes with a significant series of facts and objects. The sacrament house Cornelis Floris made for Zoutleeuw is just such an object: although its elaborate antique ornamentation readily testifies to its production in the early 1550s, at the same time it cannot possibly hide its Gothic and therefore late medieval basic form and essence. This demands an explanation and a nuance of traditional categories. A new analysis of devotional life in the Low Countries can clarify matters in significant ways, and that is what the following pages attempt to present. Taking into account the slipstream of critiques that were written in the wake of the publication of Toussaert's book, this study will combine three important perspectives that have already been alluded to in the previous paragraphs. Firstly, the detailed focus on the case of Zoutleeuw will allow consideration of the specific context and developments that inevitably varied from place to place.⁷⁰ Secondly, it will be possible to chart evolutions over the long term, as the analysis presented in the preceding chapter included a period of nearly 70 years prior to the introduction of protestant thought. Thirdly and finally, to by-pass each one's respective biases and limitations I will draw on a wide variety of different source types.⁷¹ Although for the Zoutleeuw case the rich churchwarden accounts remain the backbone of the study, they will be analysed in both qualitative and quantitative ways. Regardless of the fierce critiques after Toussaert's book, the latter remain extremely valuable in assessing long-term evolutions.⁷² This data will be supplemented with other source types, including religious foundations and - most importantly - the material objects and artworks themselves. After all, it was this broad and diverse set of religious material culture that stood in the centre of much of the Protestant critiques, but in this context this important body of evidence still has been rarely used. Finally, much like the previous chapter, it will continue to draw on the fascinating material furnished by miracle accounts. To be clear, the next pages do not intend to refute the developments around 1520 or deny the importance of the introduction of Protestant thought in the Low Countries. Rather, they are meant to both frame and adjust them: framing, by charting the developments before and after, and adjusting by adding the Catholic perspective to the debate that has been dominated by Protestantism.

⁷⁰ Compare with the remarks by Meyers-Reinquin, 'Proeve tot statistische benadering'.

⁷¹ Milis, 'De devotionele praktijk,' pp. 142-144.

⁷² Compare with remarks by Mols, 'Emploi et valeur des statistiques en histoire religieuse,' pp. 403, 406 and 410; Meyers-Reinquin, 'Proeve tot statistische benadering,' p. 212; Aerts, 'Quelques réflexions sur les comptes,' p. 152.

Chapter 4 Whose piety? Pilgrims, parishioners and patrons

An object of research as complex as lay Catholic devotional life cannot be studied as a monolithic phenomenon, neither in terms of time or space, nor in social regard. As the previous paragraph has suggested, Reformed religion did not take root as easily everywhere in the Low Countries. This conversely also means that the degree in which traditional religion remained popular was also geographically variable. Furthermore, just as scholars of Protestantism have done much to establish the socio-economic realities and links of the various religious groupings, a study of Catholic piety should equally consider such possible varieties. However, the nature of the sources that have been preserved make such a task difficult. As a result of the persecutions of Protestants, details of their lives can be traced in the archives. Reports of interrogations not only inform us about their family ties and social and professional backgrounds, but also about their convictions and world views. Moreover, in case of condemnation, their property was often confiscated, which also to a certain extent permits analysis of their financial situation and economic position within society. Somewhat contradictorily perhaps, such information hardly exists for their Catholic counterparts. The fascinating world view of Menocchio the miller that has famously been analyzed in great detail by Carlo Ginzburg is essentially known to us now precisely because the contemporary instances considered it as containing heresies. If it would have been judged to concur to the official views, the chances of such ideas being written down would have been much smaller.

We indeed know frustratingly little about what Catholic laymen and -women actually believed, what they judged as most important, what values they attached to tenets and objects and how that might have been related to their socio-economic or familial situation. Apart from the aforementioned set of rich egodocuments that has been brilliantly analyzed by Judith Pollmann, the potential sources for the lower strata are

indeed rather scarce. Extensive, though indirect sources are the decanal visitation reports, but they are only available in significant series from the later years of the sixteenth century onwards, when the storm of war had quieted down a little. In the case of Zoutleeuw's parish of Saint Leonard, such reports have only been preserved from 1600 onwards.¹ The monetary devotional gifts that were diligently recorded in the churchwarden accounts and that have fruitfully been used by previous scholars to chart evolutions of piety, as a rule were anonymous donations, either in an offertory box or a collection plate. Foundations and donations, on the other hand, were generally limited to the better-off and can therefore not be considered as representative of the lower strata of society. Only archival material of brotherhoods allows for a prosopographical analysis, but the information on Zoutleeuw's confraternity life is too scarce to use for such purposes. Nevertheless, it cannot be taken for granted that a wealthy nobleman had exactly the same set of religious convictions and moral values as a journeyman whose fortunes were much less certain.

To nonetheless try and grasp the broad panorama of believers, I will treat different groupings separately. First, the attention will turn to pilgrims, a group that has already played a major role in the previous chapter. Second, an attempt will be made to assess the group of parishioners at large, before finally focusing on the local elite which will allow us to address the questions raised by the sacrament house. It should be emphasized that none of these groups are strictly defined social categories, and without any doubt overlaps between them must have existed. Much like Gerrit Verhoeven has demonstrated for the different miracle cults in Delft, the cult of Saint Leonard in Zoutleeuw doubtlessly drew for a large part on the local population, and the nature of the sources does not allow for a strict separation between parishioners and pilgrims.² On the other hand, the group that can broadly be defined as the local elite evidently also was an integral part of the parish community, and they might equally have undertaken pilgrimages. Nevertheless, employing an approach that distinguishes between these groups both allows me to focus on different thematic aspects, as well as to combine various complementary methodologies. The nature of the sources left behind by the local elite, both written and material, allows individual and qualitative treatment, whereas the other two groups largely remain under the

¹ AAM, DV, Z1 and Z2. Although the list in Cloet, Bostyn & De Vreese, *Repertorium*, pp. 245-248 includes several pre-1600 reports in Z2, these do not include reports of visitations of the parish of Saint Leonard. They do, however, include visitations reports of the Zoutleeuw Church of the Beguinage for 1598 and 1599.

² Verhoeven, *Devotie en negotie*, pp. 123-127.

radar. Yet, they can be approached by a serial analysis of the churchwarden accounts, both quantitative and qualitative. Apart from analyzing the different groups within the Zoutleeuw community, it will be essential to establish for each of them just to what extent the related observations can or cannot be considered as representative or rather as exceptional. Although such questions will not be easy to answer due to a lack of comparable studies at hand, the Zoutleeuw situation will be contextualized as much as possible by means of comparisons with available material. A combination of these various data and methods makes it possible to overcome the bias inherent in individual sources and consequently to paint a picture of a broad social spectrum, including different layers of society, though not necessarily all. Thus, I will avoid approaching the question as to the evolution of piety during the larger part of the sixteenth century in a unilateral way.

A recurring question throughout all of the three parts will address motives and intentions, in other words, to what extent the developments described can or should be seen as either ‘unconscious’ continuity or a ‘conscious’ confirmation of religious practices. In other words, did the Zoutleeuw community engage in a dialogue with heterodox views, as a direct reaction against the spreading of Protestant ideas? It will be clear that the nature of the available sources makes answering such questions for pilgrims and parishioners rather difficult, as no statements of their motivations have been recorded. However, the documentation on patrons is much richer, which, in combination with a comparative survey of contemporary patterns in patronage in the Low Countries, enables well-reasoned conclusions.

4.1 Pilgrims

4.1.1 Images, pilgrimages and miracles: reformed reproaches

Although the direct causes of the 1566 *Beeldenstorm* were diverse and cannot possibly be reduced to a single factor, the acts themselves were a direct physical and material expression of a body of critiques that had become common ground among the reform-minded. One of the most controversial subjects was indeed the veneration of saints, relics and images, which - in turn - were the *raison d’être* for the phenomenon of pilgrimage. Best-known are the critiques on images. In line with the Ten Commandments (Exodus 20, 1-17; Deuteronomy 5, 4-21) which included the

stipulation that “thou shalt not make unto thee any graven image,” Reformers judged their use and paying honor to them to be idolatrous, distracting the attention of the people from the genuine devotion to God. Luther, Zwingli and Calvin all fulminated against such Catholic practices, although it must be emphasized that their standpoints significantly differed, varying from rather tolerant in Luther’s case to virtually encouraging iconoclasm in the case of Zwingli.³ After his initial fierce criticism, Luther indeed developed an increasingly moderate attitude, and as has already been mentioned above he firmly disapproved of the iconoclastic *Wittenberger Unruhen* that took place in late January 1522. In the series of sermons he held in the town in early March to end the disorderly course of events, he applied the Stoic notion of *adiaphora* on images, as he considered them as things that in themselves are neither good nor bad (*weder gut noch böse*). Furthermore, he made a distinction between exterior idolatry, among others directed to images, and interior idolatry, which he considered much more dangerous as it concerned the cult of idols “which every person [has] in his or heart.”⁴ Inasmuch as images could help believers to worship God, they therefore were to be allowed in Luther’s view.

For Calvin, however, the main problem was constituted by the individual and material character that was pursued in the worshipping of specific images. The philosophical ground for his stance was that the finite cannot contain the infinite, and that - consequently - the spiritual cannot possibly be represented by the material. He clearly made his point by means of a set of rhetorical questions in his *Institution de la religion chrétienne*, of which the first edition in Latin had appeared in 1536, followed by a French version in 1541:

“Why are such distinctions made between different images of the same God, that while one is passed by, or receives only common honor, another is worshiped with the highest solemnities? Why do they fatigue themselves with votive pilgrimages to images while they have many similar ones at home?”⁵

³ For comprehensive accounts of the different views regarding images, see especially von Campenhausen, ‘Die Bilderfrage in der Reformation,’ and Freedberg, ‘De kunst en de beeldenstorm,’ esp. pp. 39-45. More encompassing studies include Eire, *War against the idols*, and Michalski, *The reformation and the visual arts*, esp. chapters 1 and 2.

⁴ Michalski, *The reformation and the visual arts*, pp. 6 and 13-15, and von Campenhausen, ‘Die Bilderfrage in der Reformation,’ pp. 113 and 116.

⁵ English translation from Calvin, *Institutes of the Christian religion*, p. 56. The original, French text reads: “pourquoy font-ils si grande difference entre les simulacres d’un mesme Dieu... Pourquoy est-ce qu’ils trottent

However different the views of both giants on either end of the reformed spectrum might have been, the actual cult - *adoratio*, or worship, rather than *veneratio* - of specific images was considered highly problematic and idolatrous by both.⁶ As the quote by Calvin makes clear, this was inherently related to the practice of pilgrimage. For him, the notion that some places were to be considered holier than others was fundamentally erroneous, as God was omnipresent. Therefore, going on pilgrimage was a superfluous practice. On this Calvin again agreed with Luther, who in some of his early writings had already plead for abolishing the practice altogether. He explained why in *An den christlichen Adel* of 1520, his first publication after having realized that a split from Rome was inevitable, in which he called upon the German princes to practically implement the Reformation. Luther's argument is mostly based on moral and social principles. While he claimed that the practice of going on pilgrimage was not founded upon a divine commandment, he noted that in many cases it even leads to a straightforward neglect of the order to take care of one's wife and children. Not only did Luther consider travelling to faraway so-called holy places such as Rome a total waste of money, it also unnecessarily caused families to be left alone in distress.⁷ Yet, he also disapproved of the many, often newly-erected local shrines such as Wilsnack, Trier and Regensburg. Such cults were driven by the devil, he maintained, and they frequently led to the visiting of taverns and brothels. Moreover, such pilgrimages led to a neglect of one's own parish, the importance of which Luther especially emphasizes. It is in the parish churches that real Christians find baptism, the sacraments, sermons and neighbors - things that are far more important than the saints in heaven.⁸

Closely related was a general attempt from the Protestant side to criticize and discredit all post-biblical and contemporary miracles.⁹ As the Strasbourg reformer Martin Bucer explained, pilgrimages were the most flagrant excess that sprang from an unbridled faith in miracles, allegedly worked by cultic objects venerated at a whole array of

si loin en pèlerinage pour voir un marmouset, duquel ils ont le semblable à leur porte?" Calvin, *Institution de la religion chrétienne*, Livre I, Chapitre XI, 10. See also Eire, 'True piety begets true confession,' and Christin, 'Le temple disputé,' pp. 492-493.

⁶ The theological differences between the two are clearly discussed by Zwanepol, 'Lutheran and Reformed on the finite and the infinite,' esp. pp. 417-419. See also Rasmussen, 'Iconoclasm and religious images in the early lutheran tradition'.

⁷ Clemen & Leitzmann, *Luthers Werke*, vol. 1, pp. 392-393.

⁸ Clemen & Leitzmann, *Luther Werke*, vol. 1, pp. 402-404. See also Eber, 'Martin Luthers Kritik an der Wallfahrt'.

⁹ In general, see Vogler, 'La Réforme et le concept de miracle' and Walker, 'The cessation of miracles'.

shrines. In Bucer's view, it was precisely such miracles that drove the popularity of devotions to saints. For that reason miracles formed the point of departure of his critique on papist practices, and he tried hard to demonstrate that contrary to common belief miracles were not worked by God, but by the devil or the antichrist in order to pervert true religion.¹⁰ Although the point would later come to be known as the doctrine of the cessation of miracles, neither Luther nor Calvin treated it as a genuine doctrine, and it has been demonstrated how Calvinists did not so easily give up their faith in wonders and the miraculous, and that they continued using the exact same terminology (*miracula*) as Catholics.¹¹ Yet, this clearly was contrary to Calvin's wishes, and both he and Luther considered their statements on miracles as strongly recommended opinions. Luther talked about it in his sermons, whereby he distinguished between miracles of the soul and of the body. While the former continued because they were to be understood as transformations of the soul by the force of faith, the latter - including miraculous cures, for instance - had ceased. The begging for miraculous signs (*wundertzeychen*) was considered as an expression of doubt about the Bible and was therefore undesirable. In sum, "they are signs of an immense unbelief in the people."¹² Quite similarly, Calvin taught that miracles occurred in the Bible only with the purpose of spreading the one true religion by convincing people of the divine nature of Christ. Yet, such acts ceased when the apostolic age came to an end.¹³ However, their exposing of the devil's work in miracles in fact still testifies to a belief in them as supernatural events not that diametrically opposed to previous conceptions, much like an act of iconoclasm testifies to a belief in the power of images. To borrow David Freedberg's phrase, both are "two sides of one coin."¹⁴

In many respects these critiques were not unique to the Protestant Reformation. They stood in a long tradition of criticism on excessive belief in merely outward devotion, that also had become part and parcel of the Christian humanism that had developed in the early sixteenth century. This movement's best-known protagonist and main spokesman was Erasmus of Rotterdam, who treated many of the topics in his satirical *Colloquia*, a series of short but increasingly critical dialogues on which he worked for

¹⁰ Eire, *War against the idols*, pp. 89-90.

¹¹ Sluhovsky, 'Calvinist miracles'.

¹² "Es sein zeychen einis grossen ungläubens ym volck." Clemen & Leitzmann, *Luthers Werke*, vol. 1, p. 402. On the development of Luther's conception of miracles in general, see especially Soergel, *Miracles and the Protestant imagination*, pp. 34-46.

¹³ Walker, 'The cessation of miracles,' pp. 111-112; Eire, 'True piety begets true confession,' pp. 258-259.

¹⁴ Freedberg, *The power of images*, quote on p. 405.

the larger part of his life.¹⁵ In one of these colloquia, first printed in 1522 and later entitled *De visendo loca sacra*, Erasmus incorporated three clusters of grievances related to pilgrimages that immediately recall both Luther's and Calvin's later criticisms. To begin, he points to some practical problems, mostly the enormous costs, the waste of time and the fact that family is left unguarded. Next, he complains about the immoral and even obscene attitudes that often characterizes pilgrims. Lastly, it appears that a major theological objection for Erasmus was the fact that God is everywhere, and that one place cannot be holier than another.¹⁶ This - in Erasmus's view erroneous - theology of localization, together with the other points, is more subtly and most famously worked out in his *Peregrinatio religionis ergo*, first printed in 1526. Including the well-known descriptions of the shrines of Walsingham and Canterbury, the text also hints at the first successes of the spreading of Reformed ideas, by including references to declining offerings and diminished veneration because of a "new-fangled notion that pervades the whole world."¹⁷ His discussion of miracles equally shows direct links with the major reformers' teachings. Not only did Erasmus claim that miracles only occurred in apostolic times, just like Calvin would do later he also emphasized that they were not necessary anymore since the Christian faith has spread.¹⁸

4.1.2 A public debate in the Low Countries

Although Erasmus' *Colloquies* were printed by Johann Froben in Basel and reached a wide international audience, they were firmly based on a Netherlandish context. For instance, several clues make clear that the pilgrim in *Peregrinatio religionis ergo* who had visited Santiago de Compostela, Walsingham and Canterbury in fact came from

¹⁵ For discussions of Erasmus' writings on the subject of pilgrimages, see Halkin, 'Erasmus pèlerin'; idem, 'Le thème du pèlerinage dans les Colloques d'Erasmus'; van Herwaarden, 'Erasmus over bedevaarten en heiligenverering'; Eire, *War against the idols*, pp. 43-44. On Erasmus' stance towards miracles, see van Herwaarden, 'Erasmus over wonderen'.

¹⁶ Erasmus, *The Colloquies*, pp. 4-7. Although not systematically, these critiques had already been addressed by Erasmus in earlier writings. See Halkin, 'Erasmus pèlerin,' pp. 242-243.

¹⁷ Erasmus, *The Colloquies*, pp. 285-312, esp. pp. 288-291. On that text, see also Godin, 'Erasmus et le sacré'. On the 'theology of localization' and broader Protestant critiques on this principle, see also Van der Velden, *The donor's image*, pp. 199-208.

¹⁸ Erasmus, *The Colloquies*, pp. 208 (*The Well-to-do Beggars*, 1524) and 340-341 (*A Fish Diet*, 1526).

the Antwerp area. When his critical interlocutor questions why he necessarily had to perform his prayers in Walshingham, he rhetorically asks:

“Couldn’t the Virgin Mother here at home see to those matters? At Antwerp she has a church much grander than the one by the sea.”¹⁹

It is clear that what is meant here is Antwerp’s church of Our Lady, which was known as the largest church in the Low Countries at the time. It could boast a nave with as many as seven aisles and a tower of 123 meters, and in 1521 - on the very next day of the first public burning of Luther’s books in Antwerp - Charles V laid the first stone for a new, monumental choir that was to be four times larger than the previous one. As has been discussed before, from 1474 onwards the church was home to a thriving cult of a miraculous image of Our Lady (*Onze Lieve Vrouw op ‘t Stokske*), and it was probably at this cult that Erasmus hinted. However, although the relevance for the situation in the Low Countries is clear, the texts were printed in Latin. Thus, regardless of their immense popularity, these publications only were available to the upper class that had enjoyed considerable education. Yet, in the wake of - and partly also simultaneous to - the development and elaboration of the major reformed theological standpoints, the whole academic and humanist discussion about how to worship God in an appropriate way also grew to be a highly public debate in which the community at large became increasingly involved. As has been discussed above, already before the *Beeldenstorm* raged through the Low Countries in 1566, sporadic acts of iconoclasm occurred, and apart from the dissemination of the texts by Luther, Calvin and other reformers, a considerable number of treatises on these matters appeared in the vernacular in the Low Countries too. Furthermore, the fact that Catholics such as Marcus van Vaernewijck discussed such ideas in their diaries illustrates that reformed ideas circulated widely.²⁰

One of the earliest ‘indigenous’ texts that directly criticized the act of pilgrimage was *Een troost ende spiegel der siecken* by Willem Claesz. de Volder *alias* Gnapheus (1493-1568), written in 1525 or 1526, but first printed in 1531 in Antwerp.²¹ Gnapheus, who held the office of rector of the Latin school in The Hague in the 1520s, was an essential

¹⁹ A later passage reveals that the pilgrim came home from London with “some sailors from Antwerp.” Erasmus, *The Colloquies*, pp. 291 and 309.

²⁰ Van Vaernewijck, *Van die beroerlicke tijden*, vol. 1, pp. 134-137, mentioning among others the idea that miracles would have been worked by the devil.

²¹ The text has been edited and published in Cramer & Pijper, *Bibliotheca Reformatoria Neerlandica*, vol. 1, pp. 151-249.

figure for the early Reformation in the Low Countries, and his course of life can be considered exemplary for the protean and dynamic character of the early Reformation there. For obvious reasons he was soon persecuted by the inquisition, for which he fled to North-Eastern Europe where Lutheranism had been instituted as the official religion. Even there he would eventually enter into conflict with colleagues, resulting in excommunication by the Lutheran church as well, and return to Emden. In *Een troost ende spiegel der siecken*, Gnapheus criticizes the adoration of saints, to which he refers as foreign gods, and he unmasks their miracles as untruthful dreams of false prophets or deceit of the devil. As a consequence, he claimed to observe daily that at places where the true word of God was spread the cult of miraculous images completely collapsed, and therefore the “fairy-tale miracles and pilgrimages” were to be eradicated completely.²²

In subsequent years, both pilgrims and the saints they visited continued to be a popular target in the sharp writings of the reform-minded. Some years after the publication of Gnapheus’ book pilgrims were mocked as people that “in all the world display the most folly” (*ter waerelt meest zotheyt tooght*) in a series of refrains recited at a rhetoricians’ contest in Ghent in 1539.²³ The supposed thaumaturgic powers of images were also ridiculed somewhat later in a treatise entitled *Den Val der Roomsche Kercken*, written by an anonymous member of the Calvinist exile community in England. It first appeared in Norwich in 1550 and was reprinted in London in 1553, but later editions were also published in the Low Countries, including Emden in 1556 and Antwerp in 1561.²⁴ The author mockingly points to the hypocrisy of Catholics in relation to images, by remarking that,

“the statues that are in the sculptor’s shop can do no miracles until these fine fellows have brought them into their whorish church, and while the crucifixes

²² “Dese ende diergelic verleydinghen gheschien, daeromme door Gods gerechtich oordeel, om dat wi so lichtelic scheyden tot vreemde Goden, tot santen ende santinnen, tot valsche teekenen ende miraculen, die wt eenen logenachtighen droom des valschen Propheets oft door tbedroch der duvelen gemeynliken geschien ende opherecht worden. Daerom so waer dwoort Gods bekent gemaect wort, ende daer tgelooove aenghegrepen wort, daer vallen terstont alsulcke neeringhen ende iaermercten vant versoec der beelden van miraculen geheel ter neder, twelck men tot veel plaetsen sien mach dagelics gescien. Want dwoort Gods blijft inder eewicheyt, waren sulcke sprokerijen der miraculen ende peregrimatien wt dat woort Gods si solden wel staende blijven, mer nu moet alle die plantatie wtgeroyt worden, die de hemelsche vader gheplant en heeft.” Cramer & Pijper, *Bibliotheca Reformatoria Neerlandica*, p. 196.

²³ Cited from Mak, ‘Vlaamse volksdevoties,’ pp. 103-104.

²⁴ Edited and published in Cramer & Pijper, *Bibliotheca Reformatoria Neerlandica*, vol. 1, pp. 399-420.

are still in the goldsmith's hands, they possess no holiness, but when one of these hypocrites has fingered it then one must take off one's bonnet before it and bow one's knee, and they go bleating and screaming after their false gods."²⁵

Passages such as these provide a unique peek into the contemporary perceived tensions between the man-made and the sacred, and between art and traditional devotion that was strongly characterized by an essentially embodied form of piety. Interestingly, such precise information on the unwritten obligations or customs of taking of one's hat and genuflecting before images indeed rarely if ever occur in writings from a Catholic perspective. Nevertheless, it is precisely such acts that must have sparked reformed irritation and consequently became the main bone of contention in religious discussions. Finally, the commonplace critiques on pilgrimages also found their way into images and visual culture. For instance, the *Couple in the cornfield* of around 1535-1540 (fig. 57) directly addresses the issue of amorality and adultery that was considered by some - including Luther - as inherently related to pilgrimages and processional culture. The two paper pilgrimage pennants that lay carelessly on the ground reveal that the couple secretly slipped away from the procession that is still going on in the background, and the fact that both are in the process of undressing unequivocally suggests the reason why.²⁶ And whereas Pieter Aertsen's *Return from the pilgrimage to Saint Anthony* of around 1550-1555 (fig. 58) at first sight seems to depict a serene processional scene with devout participants, a closer look reveals a group of fighting men in the background.²⁷

²⁵ "Merkt haer supersticie die sy tot noch toe gebruyckende zijn daghelicx, want die beelden so langhe als sy inden beeltsnijders winckel zijn, so en connen sy geen miraculen doen, tot der tijt toe datse dese fijne ghesellen ghebrocht hebben in haer hoerachtige kercke, ende die cruycen dewijle si zijn onder de goutsmits handen, so en is daer gheen heilicheyt in, maer alse dese ypocriten die eens gevinghert hebben, dan moetmen die bonet daer voor af nemen ende die knien buyghen, ende sy gaen daer achter bleetende ende crijschende achter haer valsche goden." Cramer & Pijper, *Bibliotheca Reformatoria Neerlandica*, p. 416. English translation from Moxey, 'Image criticism in the Netherlands,' p. 159.

²⁶ On that painting, see Becker, 'Puff, Passion und Pilgerfahrt,' pp. 22-27, and most recently Ubl, *Der Braunschweiger Monogrammist*, pp. 155-167 and 316-319, Kat. VII, including an ample discussion of the older literature.

²⁷ See Moxey, 'Reflections on some unusual subjects,' pp. 62-70, who cites other written critiques and refers to similar themes in prints by Pieter Bruegel and Peeter van der Borcht. Becker, 'Puff, Passion und Pilgerfahrt,' p. 37, note 8 rejected Moxey's interpretation of Aertsens treatment as 'lighthearted', intending "entertainment rather than moralization."

4.1.3 Catholic responses

All reformed critique notwithstanding, however, the written Catholic defense was long in coming. The first real Catholic defense was published in 1522 by the famous theologian Johannes Eck, whose *De non tollendis Christi et sanctorum imaginibus* was based on a sermon he had held. Although it contained all the traditional arguments that would later become commonplace, the fact that it was written in Latin considerably limited its audience.²⁸ The same was the case with most of the later defenses published all over Europe, of which the most important are Conradus Brunus' *De imaginibus liber unus*, published in Mainz in 1548 and Ambrosius Catharinus' *Disputatio de cultu et adoratione imaginum*, published in Rome in 1552.²⁹ In England, notable humanist Thomas More stepped into the breach with a publication in the vernacular. Whereas his good friend Erasmus had used the shrine of Our Lady at Walshingham as a point of departure to ventilate his critiques on pilgrimages, More regularly referred to it in an opposite way. As the subtitle of his *A Dialogue concernynge heresyys* (1529) makes clear, he discussed the veneration of images and relics and the practice of pilgrimages in relation to "the pestilent sect of Luther and Tyndale." Although he recognizes that pilgrimages sometimes lead to abuses, he maintains that they do not invalidate this practice which had been established long ago.³⁰ In the Low Countries, no such response was published, neither by humanists nor by the clergy, and this region's contribution to the whole debate was rather small before 1566. Judith Pollmann has recently studied this Netherlandish inability to react adequately to Protestant critiques, in particular in comparative perspective with France, where the clergy sometimes even straightforwardly plead for aggression. Contrary to previous suppositions that collectively portrayed Catholics in the Low Countries as indifferent, she claimed that it was not uncommon for them to be strongly committed to their cause. Before 1566, however, it seems that in stark opposition to France the clergy mostly decided to neglect Protestant ideas in order to leave the laity uninformed about them.³¹ It was only the *Beeldenstorm* that acted as a catalyst for the publication of a number of Catholic treatises defending traditional devotional

²⁸ Hecht, *Katholische Bildertheologie*, p. 85.

²⁹ On these authors, see Freedberg, *Iconoclasm and painting in the Netherlands*, pp. 52-54. Other pre-Tridentine Catholic apologists are considered in Jedin, 'Entstehung und Tragweite des Trienter Dekrets,' pp. 148-167.

³⁰ On More's text, see Mitjans, 'Thomas More's veneration of images,' and Duffy, 'The comen knowen multytude'.

³¹ Pollmann, *Catholic identity*. For the comparison with France, see especially her 'Countering the Reformation'.

practices, of which the first appeared in 1567. As David Freedberg rightly observed, the sometimes violent iconoclastic attacks led to a “broad-fronted response to the image critics.” Translations and re-editions of earlier works by foreign authors appeared, but there were also new treatises written, not only in Latin, but now also in the vernacular.³²

The hesitant stance from the Catholic side was doubtless also related to the absence of a quick, firm and clear response from Rome itself. It was only by the end of 1545, when Protestantism had already settled itself firmly in the European religious landscape and all the views of the major reformers were more or less definitely worked out, that the Catholic Church organized a Ecumenical Council to reconsider and redefine its own standpoints and doctrines within these disputes. The council took place in Trent, was spread over 25 sessions and lasted until 1563. As the veneration of both images and relics, and all related devotional practices including pilgrimages and the belief in miracles were severely criticized by the reformers, the Church was obliged to take an official stance on these matters. However, it appeared to be a thorny question, and it lasted until the ultimate session for the church to handle it, while some participants even wanted to skip the complete issue altogether. Chiefly instigated by iconoclastic outbursts in France in 1561-1562, the Council finally treated images in the 25th session on 3 and 4 December 1563.³³ The decree was entitled ‘On invocation, on veneration, on relics of the saints and on sacred images’ (*De invocatione, veneratione et reliquiis sanctorum et sacris imaginibus*) and its arguments were partly based on the proceedings of the Council of Nicaea of 787, which had famously put an end to the first phase of iconoclasm.³⁴ The arguments in favor of images are well known and basically can be traced back to two theological principles. Perhaps the strongest argument was that the images were the books of the illiterate, the *libri idiotarum* or *bilbia pauperum*. In origin, this argument comes from a letter of Pope Gregory the Great (c. 560-604) to

³² Freedberg, *Iconoclasm and painting in the Netherlands*, p. 72. On these treatises see most recently Jonckheere, *Antwerp art after iconoclasm*.

³³ See mainly Jedin, ‘Entstehung und Tragweite des Trienter Dekrets’, as well as Fabre, *Décréter l’image*, pp. 45-68.

³⁴ The text of the decree is available in a partial English translation in Gilmore Holt, *A documentary history of art*, vol. 2, pp. 62-65. For an older, but full translation, see Waterworth, *The Council of Trent*, pp. 233-236. A recent interpretation and French translation - in juxtaposition with the original Latin text - is provided by Fabre, *Décréter l’image* (with on p. xxiv a similar reading of the decree’s title). For the traditional, Byzantine arguments in favour of images, see especially Barnard, ‘The theology of images’. For a summary chronological overview of earlier iconoclastic periods, see Bryer & Herrin, *Iconoclasm*, pp. 178-179.

Bishop Serenus of Marseille, who had commanded the destruction of images in his bishopric.³⁵ The Trent decree explicitly stated that people are instructed by images and that their faith is strengthened by them. Moreover, by looking at images, they can shape their life in imitation of the saints. Secondly, for orthodox Catholics a distinction was made between image and prototype, which was reaffirmed by the Council of Trent. Its theological essence was based on *De spiritu sancto* of the Greek bishop Basil of Caesarea (330-379), which the Council of Nicaea had used to claim that the religious veneration is not directed at the image itself, but rather to the thing it represents, its prototype.³⁶

The Council of Trent did all but solve the religious problems, mainly because it most often restated its old principles. Also concerning the use of religious imagery there were no concessions towards the reform-minded. A moderate reformer such as Luther, for instance, had a rather tolerant attitude towards images and he accepted that they could be aids for believers to venerate God. Yet, he had clearly preached against extreme abuses in pilgrimages and begging for miracles, and this was common ground for a lot of other authors, from traditional or critical Catholics such as More and Erasmus to reformed Protestants as Calvin. Seemingly in response to this corpus of critiques, the actual purpose of the Trent decree - besides the reaffirmation of the abovementioned theological backings - was to put an end to the abuses related to images and the cult of saints. Here, just as in many other Tridentine decrees, bishops were given an important new task to ensure that these principles were not violated. They had to give permission for every new image that would be erected, and “no new miracles [were to] be accepted and no relics recognized, unless they have been investigated and approved by the same bishop.” Apart from these limitations on new images, miracles and relics, it was specified that every superstition was to be removed, and that “the celebration of saints and the visitation of relics [were not to] be perverted by the people into boisterous festivities and drunkenness” (*sanctorum celebratione ac reliquiarum visitatione homines ad comessiones atque ebrietates non abutantur*).³⁷ It is interesting to note that whereas the decree specifically refers to miracles, the text makes use of a rather vague circumscription to refer to pilgrimages.

³⁵ For the Latin text, see Norberg, *Gregorius Magnus Registrum epistularum libri VIII-XIV, appendix*, pp. 873-876, Reg. XI, 10. An English translation is available in Davis-Weyer, *Early medieval art*, pp. 47-49. See also Hecht, *Katholische Bildertheologie*, p. 169.

³⁶ “Imaginis honor ad primitivium (prototypum) transit.” See Hecht, *Katholische Bildertheologie*, pp. 224-225.

³⁷ Gilmore Holt, *A documentary history of art*, vol. 2, p. 65. See also Jedin, ‘Entstehung und Tragweite des Trienter Dekrets,’ p. 427.

It does not use the word *peregrinatio* here, nor is it used elsewhere in this sense in any of the Tridentine decrees.³⁸ As has been pointed out in the previous part, this might have had to do with the lack of a clear terminology (cf. *supra*, 2.2.1), but the editors of the first Dutch translation of the decrees apparently found themselves compelled to be more specific. In the translation of Abbot Thomas van Thielt of the Antwerp Abbey of Saint Bernard, published in 1565 by Willem Silvius, this specific passage was slightly altered by adding “or going on pilgrimage” (*oft pelgrimagie gaen*).³⁹ Nevertheless, the decree is clear in that it reaffirmed age-old practices, and condemns everybody who counters this:

“They who affirm that veneration and honor are not due to the relics of saints; or that these, and other sacred monuments, are uselessly honored by the faithful; and that the places dedicated to the memories of the saints are in vain visited with the view of obtaining their aid; are wholly to be condemned, as the Church has already long since condemned, and now also condemns them.”⁴⁰

In short, although new images, miracles and relics were firmly placed under the authority of bishops, the clergy at Trent decided that the practice of pilgrimage was to be maintained at all cost. But what influence did these theoretical debates and polemics have on actual shrines and devotional attitudes in the Low Countries? The remainder of this chapter will be devoted to an in-depth discussion of the material available for Zoutleeuw, in order to assess its role as a regional pilgrimage site in precisely this period. As has been thoroughly discussed in the previous part, the town enjoyed a particular popularity in this respect in the decades around 1500. This was especially the case from the 1470s onwards and all the evidence suggests that it was

³⁸ It is used, however, as a metaphor of life. For instance: “ex huius miserae peregrinationis itinere, ad caelestem patriam pervenire valeant...” *Canones et decreta Sacrosancti Oecumenici et Generalis Concilii Tridentini*, fol. 31v. On the contemporaneous significance and the application of that metaphor, see Falkenburg, *Joachim Patinir*. Compare, for instance, with Erasmus’ terminology in conformity with antique Latin, where *peregrinatio* meant ‘trip’ and *peregrinus* ‘stranger’. To refer to ‘pilgrimage’, Erasmus used the formula *peregrinatio religionis ergo*, or the pejorative *peregrinatiuncula*. See Halkin, ‘Erasmè pèlerin,’ p. 240.

³⁹ “Dat ooc de menschen het vieren vanden heyligen, oft pelgrimagie gaen, ende besoecken de heylige reliquien, niet en misbruycken tot overdaet ende dronckenscap...” *Ordonnancien ende Decreten*, fol. 235. On the editions and translations of the Tridentine decrees in the Low Countries, see Vanysacker, ‘De Mechelse kerkprovincie en haar officiële drukken,’ pp. 211-212. It is interesting to note that van Thielt would later break with the Catholic Church after the Wonderyear and would even become a major figure of Calvinism in Brabant during the late 1570s and early 1580s. See Marnef, ‘Thomas van Thielt’.

⁴⁰ Waterworth, *The Council of Trent*, p. 234. This passage is not included in the translation published by Gilmore Holt, *A documentary history of art*.

not on the wane at the moment when Luther's teachings started to circulate in the Low Countries. Thus, the case provides a good opportunity to check the 1520-thesis with actual facts. For contextualizing purposes, comparisons will be made both with other towns and villages including Anderlecht, Dudzele, Lier and Wezemaal, and with more important cities such as Brussels and Leuven that have only received little attention in this respect.

4.1.4 The cult of Saint Leonard at Zoutleeuw: tradition and renewal

The act of pilgrimage and the veneration of miraculous images and relics were central to the debate that has been sketched above. Luther, for instance, had directly criticized a number of popular destinations, such as Wilsnack and Regensburg, and the English shrines of Walsingham and Canterbury were the subject of Erasmus' mockery. Within the Low Countries, however, the critiques remained rather general and rarely if ever mention specific sites, and only after the *Beeldenstorm* would particular shrines become the subject of directed satire. This was most notably the case in *De bienkorf der h. Roomsche kercke*, published in 1569 by Philips of Marnix, Lord of Saint-Aldegonde. Therein Wezemaal, Halle and Menen are ridiculed, and later writings would pick out some other destinations in the same vein.⁴¹ Yet, the Zoutleeuw cult of Saint Leonard demonstrably was the subject of protestant mockery well before. The already mentioned 1555 report of an investigation held in Kuringen near Hasselt, some 20 kilometers away from Zoutleeuw, documents how a certain Jan Caussarts had taunted the pilgrims who went to Zoutleeuw to worship Saint Leonard:

“Why should they go to Zoutleeuw? The statue of Saint Leonard is made of walnut and its tabernacle of a pig's trough. ... Those are poor, misguided people that put their faith in it, believing that it sweats when it works a miracle, while it had been covered in oil.”⁴²

⁴¹ Mak, 'Vlaamse volksdevoties,' pp. 104-107.

⁴² “Wat die luyden te Leuwe muchten bevaert gaen?; dat beelt van Sint Lenarts weer van eenen noteleer gemaect ende Sint Lenarts kroht weer van eenen verckens troech gemaect... Arme verdoelde menschen weer dat sy daer geloeff op stelden meynende dat dat beelt van Sint Lenart mirakel deede, want alst scheen sweeten, dan weert met olyen bestreecken.” Hansay, 'Blasphémateurs, hérétiques et sorciers,' pp. 31-33. For the investigations, see also Bax, *Het protestantisme in het bisdom Luik*, pp. 266-267.

It is not easy to pinpoint the precise religious convictions of the man in question, but it is clear that he shared a high degree of harsh criticism with the famous writers discussed above. To judge by the statements of forty witnesses, Caussarts claimed that pilgrimage was a waste of time, that pilgrims were not wise and that the offerings were better spent at home. Completely in line with critiques that were uttered elsewhere, in Zoutleeuw Saint Leonard's image and his tabernacle are reduced to their bare material, wooden being, and the supposed miracles debunked as deceiving illusions. Both were oft-recurring reformed strategies: precisely because images - three-dimensional sculptures in particular - had animated and lively qualities, it was crucial to reduce them to their material essence in order to demonstrate their impotence. Though only in words, Caussarts completely profaned the sacred aura the miraculous statue had for Catholics.⁴³ It would seem that the Zoutleeuw churchwardens were aware of such criticism and perhaps even feared actual attacks well before. In 1538, a new function appears in the accounts when for the first time "the woman who sits for Saint Leonard" is mentioned.⁴⁴ Although similar functions doubtless existed elsewhere before, no such guarding of Saint Leonard's chapel is hinted at in earlier accounts, and the fact that she is given a key in precisely this year strongly suggests something new.⁴⁵ Later accounts indicate a near-permanent presence at the shrine. Whereas in 1542 she is still paid for only 312 days, from 1547 onwards she is continuously paid half a *stuiver* per day for 364 days per year, indicating that she must have sat the whole year long. The further activities or social profiles of these women are unknown, but the rather low wage and the fact that they are only referred to by their first names - Lysken, Berbel, Eelen, Meereken or Gret - suggests that they must have been common laypeople. Their precise duties are equally unknown, but in all probability they both received and supervised the offerings made, perhaps as precaution for growing unrest and tensions. This certainly must have been the case some years later, however. In 1556, one year after Jan Caussarts from Kuringen had uttered his critiques against Saint Leonard, special measures were taken during the traditional Pentecost festivities. During the four nights when the miraculous statue was

⁴³ Other examples will recur throughout this part. Interestingly, exactly the same strategy of reducing sacred objects to their material essence was also used by Catholic apologists c. 1600 in defense of images. See Dekoninck, 'Between denial and exaltation,' p. 150.

⁴⁴ KR 1538, fol. 358v (August 1538): "Item Jacop eenen slotel gemaect voer dy vrouwe dy voer Sintte Leonart sit."

⁴⁵ Compare with examples of shrines and related visual sources in 1.2.4. In the 1509 mural paintings in Saint Genoveva's chapel at Zepperen a man called "Adriaen der Stockhueder" is depicted, i.e. "Adriaen the surveillant of the offertory box." See BALaT object nr. 79960.

temporarily replaced from its own chapel to the center of the nave for the pilgrims to worship, a man was paid to keep watch in the church.⁴⁶ Vigilance was increased in the next years, when both the number of guards as well as the number of nights were augmented. In 1562 four men were in duty for five nights, and this would virtually remain the same in the years to come. During the Wonderyear 1566 men were even hired to guard during the daytime (cf. *infra*).⁴⁷ There can be no doubt that these men were hired to prevent any potential disorder, and the fact that they had been in place since at least the middle of the 1550s clearly indicates that the Zoutleuw authorities and churchwardens were aware of what was happening elsewhere as a result of prevailing critiques. They obviously realized that they had to protect the miraculous statue of Saint Leonard, which for an important part had grown out to be the symbolical reason of being of their office.

Apart from these security measures, no active campaign from the part of the churchwardens has been documented which could hint at a conscious (re-)affirmation of the cult. Unlike in the later fifteenth century, no major decoration works are to be noted in the chapel. Apart from some minor adaptations on the offertory box, the only elements worthy of notice are a new, painted procession banner depicting the church's patron saint in 1542 and a new garment for the miraculous statue in 1556.⁴⁸ The same goes for the composition of the yearly procession at Pentecost. While the accounts of the middle of the fifteenth century amply describe which and how many figures,

⁴⁶ KR 1555, fol. 222v (June 1556): "Betaelt enen man van te Sinsen in de kercke 4 nachten te waecken 5,5 stuivers."

⁴⁷ KR 1561, fol. 402 (January 1562): "Betaelt vier waeckers te Sinxen van 5 nachten 2,5 Karolusgulden"; KR 1565, fol. 541 (January 1566): "Betaelt 3 veeckers voer dat sij inde kerck gevackt hebben, elck 5 nachten, elck 3 stuivers, facit 2 Rijns gulden 5 stuivers"; KR 1566, fol. 539 (December 1566): "Betalt vier weeckers die gevackt hebben inde kerck, elck 5 nachten, elck snachs 3 stuivers, ffacit 3 Rijns gulden. Betalt noch 4 weeckers die sdachs ghewackt hebben inde kerck, elck 2 daghen, elck sdachs 3 stuivers, ffacit 24 stuivers"; KR 1567, fol. 445 (December 1567): "Betalt 2 waekers die inde kercke ghewackt hebben, elck 5 nachten, elck suos 3 stuivers, facit 30 stuivers."

⁴⁸ KR 1534, fol. 26v (June 1535): "Noch betaelt Jacop Goemans van een slote te hermaken aen onse coeren kiste met eender pijpen ende noch van 2 scapen geslagen aende kiste staende voer Sinte Leonart ende eenen sloetel daer toe gemaect..."; KR 1542, fol. 242v (July 1542): "De selve [Meester Anthonis de Schilder] heeft inde vanen onsen patroen gemaect, betaelt 2 Karolusgulden 8 stuivers... Heere Peeter Scutiser vanden vanen te repareren ende de patroen in te setten, 10 stuivers"; KR 1554, fol. 166r-v (June 1555): "Item gecocht tot Lovene 3 ellen groens om op de kiste voer Sinte Lenaert te leggen, delle 9 stuivers, facit 27 stuivers... Item gecocht een ciborie coepere om voer Sinte Lenaert opten kiste te setten dagelijks, 5 Karolusgulden 3,5 stuivers"; KR 1555, fol. 220v (May 1556): "De selve [Ghielis Vreven] van een cleet voer Sinte Lenaert te maken, 10 stuivers."

characters, torch-bearers and musicians walked along, this is not the case anymore a century later. In part, this is due to the fact that the civic authorities were financially involved in this event as well, and the civic accounts often include costs for the reparation of participating wagons, giants or the legendary horse Bayard. The *Lelikens uten Dale*, the local chamber of rhetoric, was yearly charged with the organization of theatrical plays on the life of Saint Leonard during and after the procession. However, as these civic sources are not systematically considered here, further research is needed to establish how the respective roles of church fabric and town council changed over time in relation to the procession.⁴⁹ The expenses in the churchwarden accounts suggest a steady continuity in budgetary terms, however. A possible novelty that could be singled out are the children walking in both the processions at Pentecost and at Corpus Christi, carrying candles, torches, thuribles and the priest's cope. They are mentioned from 1557 onwards and although their number varied over time, there were generally around ten.⁵⁰ It is also in this period that pilgrims are securely documented as participating in the procession itself, apparently walking along between ropes (*seelen*) as a separate yet essential group within the parade.⁵¹

There is indeed every indication that pilgrims kept on coming to the shrine in Zoutleeuw. Firstly, this is suggested by the monetary offerings that were registered in the accounts. As has been discussed above, scholars have based their work on such indications to posit an implosion of the popularity of miracle cults around 1520 in cities such as Antwerp, Delft and Utrecht. Although considerable fluctuations are

⁴⁹ Van Autenboer, 'De reus en de ommeegang van Zoutleeuw,' studied Zoutleeuw's procession by browsing the civic accounts from 1366 to 1595, but did not do so in a chronological perspective. Interestingly, however, he did claim that a total renewal of the procession took place in 1538, at the occasion of the inauguration of the new town hall. See also idem, 'De Lelikens wten Dale,' pp. 258-260. On the chamber of rhetoric, see also Sacré, 'Het voormalig dorpstoonneel,' pp. 41-44.

⁵⁰ KR 1556, fol. 268v (April 1557): "Betaelt te Sinsen 7 kinderen van de goude cappe op te houden, de candelaren te dragen ende vieroeck te verpen, elck 0,5 stuiver, facit 3,5 stuiver"; KR 1557, fol. 312 (April 1558): "Betaelt te Sinsen 12 kinderen dij de toersschen, candelaren ende wieroekwaten droegen, elck 6 groten, facit 3 stuivers"; KR 1559, fol. 354v (February 1560): "Betaelt 10 kinderen van diversche dingen te dragen te Sinxen in die processie ende sacramentsdach, elcke 3 placken, facit 7,5 stuivers"; KR 1565, fol. 541 (January 1566): "Betalt 8 scolckenderen van dat weyrockvat, kandelaren, lanternen, smellen ende van die cab op te hauden, elck 6 groten, 2 stuivers."

⁵¹ KR 1523, fol. 72v (June 1524): "Item betaelt aen seelen om die processie te gaende viii st"; KR 1530, fol. 153v (May 1531): "Item betaelt Katlyn Maesmans van 14 lb zeelen... daer die pelgrims mede ghingen"; KR 1534, fol. 25 (May 1535): "een cleyne seel voer de pelgremes"; KR 1538, fol. 379v (June 1539): "zeels... aen dy pelgremes"; KR 1547, fol. 279 (May 1548): "Betaelt Willem die Zeeldraer van 12 lb zeels voir die pelgrams zeel dair sye tuesschen gaen..."

notable just as had been the case in the preceding period, no such implosion can be seen in Zoutleeuw (graph 4). Much like elsewhere, the early 1520s marked a high point, after which the revenues would fall back a bit. In Zoutleeuw, the figures had reached a summit in the financial year 1523 and subsequently went into a slight decline, but throughout the period between 1520 and 1566 the revenues never went below the level they had attained around 1500. Furthermore, a new climax was reached in the financial year 1547, and the first considerable blow was only to be noted in the financial year 1566, which included the revenues of the first Pentecost procession after the 1566 *Beeldenstorm*.⁵² Due to a relative dearth of available information it is hard to contextualize these data and compare them with other pilgrimage destinations of the same calibre. Much like Zoutleeuw, the Brabantine village of Wezemaal that has been discussed in the previous chapter had grown out to be a pilgrimage destination in the later decades of the fifteenth century. Its growth went much quicker, however, and it quite suddenly acquired a supraregional importance. In line with the established 1520-thesis, Bart Minnen claimed that a similar collapse was discernable in Wezemaal as well. Whereas it is true that in 1523 less money (ca. 1100 Rhenish guilders) was collected in comparison with the absolute summit in 1513 (ca. 1800 Rhenish guilders), it must be emphasized that the rate is still much higher than the amount collected in the early 1480s (ca. 400 Rhenish guilders).⁵³ Thus, this supposed implosion is only a relative phenomenon. Furthermore, it is impossible to pronounce upon the further developments between 1523 and 1563 as no accounts have been preserved for this tumultuous period. As the Zoutleeuw data make clear, strong fluctuations would not have been uncommon, and as a result it is too premature to suppose a fully parallel development between Wezemaal and the larger cities mentioned previously. The case of Lier presents a similar problem, as no accounts between 1509 and 1547 have been preserved.⁵⁴ It is therefore instructive to look beyond the borders of Brabant. Dudzele, a village in coastal Flanders, also functioned as a relatively important pilgrimage destination where Saint Leonard was venerated, and with a rich set of sixteenth-century sources we can assess the situation more closely. Kristof Dombrecht has recently demonstrated that although a decreasing trend can be noted in the shrine's devotional revenues, there certainly was no sudden implosion. Furthermore, he

⁵² The strikingly low figure in the graph for the financial year 1538 is to be explained by the fact that only an incomplete draft version of the account has been preserved, in which the revenues for the Pentecost procession are missing.

⁵³ Minnen, *Den heyligen sant*, vol. 1, pp. 73 (Graph) and 77.

⁵⁴ Meuris, *Laat-middeleeuwse volksreligie te Lier*, p. 73.

plausibly argued on the basis of circumstantial evidence that the local procession enjoyed continued popularity and that the decreasing revenues therefore did not necessarily reflect a decreasing interest.⁵⁵ We will come back to this point later.

The case of Dudzele makes clear that financial data is not always optimal for an assessment of devotional life, and as has been discussed in the previous part, there were many other ways to express religious feelings, convictions or wishes. An important and still understudied aspect in the context of the Low Countries is the donation of *ex voto*'s - offered candles or figurative objects in wax or metal, given in gratitude or to beg a favour of a saint. Although no medieval or early modern specimen has been preserved in Zoutleeuw, the accounts testify to a continued tradition and even suggest a thriving commerce. The idea that conspicuously displayed offered objects in chapels testified to the success and popularity of the venerated saint was indeed still current in the middle of the sixteenth century.⁵⁶ The church fabric anticipated this need and installed rods to hang them on. Various entries indicate that such infrastructure was already present in the years around 1500 (cf. *supra*, 1.2.3), but it obviously proved insufficient as in 1535 a set of three new iron rods "to hang the iron legs" was installed.⁵⁷ Images of legs were not only given in iron, but also in wax form, and sometimes the churchwardens paid artists to remake them in more durable materials to make use of the consumptive material of which they were made, while at the same time preserving the memory of the gifts. This is nicely documented for Wezemaal, where in 1523 the prolific Leuven sculptor Hendrik Roesen was paid to carve "a kneeling man in Saint Job's chapel, that before had been made in wax." The entry also reveals that Roesen delivered many other "images, legs and arms," thus making clear that artists of his stature not only made their living from prestigious commissions, but also from more common tasks such as the sale of devotionalia.⁵⁸ The Roesen family was also active in Zoutleeuw. Between 1503 and

⁵⁵ Dombrecht, *Plattelandsgemeenschappen*, pp. 284-287 and 423 (Appendix 13).

⁵⁶ See for instance the 1566 translation of a treatise by Theodoret of Cyrhus: du Val, *Den spiegel der Calvinisten*, fol. 71v: "de selve ghiften tooghen oock wat cracht ende macht dat die martelaers hebben, die daer begraven sijn."

⁵⁷ KR 1534, fol. 26v (June 1535): "noch van 3 yseren geerden met 6 ooghen gemaect ende inden muer geslaghen om dyseren bienen aen te hanghen..."

⁵⁸ Minnen, *Den heyligen sant*, vol. 1, p. 102: 1523 "Item betaelt Hendricken Roose, beelsnyder wonende te Loeven, de somen van 5 rijngulden ter zake van eenen knyllende maen gemact in St Jobs coor, die van te voeren van wass gemact was, ende noch veele andere beelden, beenen ende armen hanghende ende staende in St Jobs coor..." On the process of replicating *ex voto*'s in other, cheaper materials, see van der Velden, *The*

1505 Hendrik carved a *Palmesel* and a statue of Saint Leonard that was to be carried in procession during the Rogation Days (fig. 59).⁵⁹ The almost certainly related Claes Roesen served as principal sculptor to the Zoutleeuw church between 1548 and 1560 (cf. infra, 4.3.2). In January 1557, the churchwardens called upon him to make a wooden leg, which later on was polychromed by Master Anthonis van Hulleberge.⁶⁰ In all probability this leg was made after a wax exemplar donated to the shrine earlier on, which was subsequently replaced near the altar. Sporadically some more spectacular gifts also occur. In the early 1490s a suit of armour is known to have hung in the chapel, but it was sold in 1493. By 1549, however, a new specimen had taken place in the chapel, and it was clearly cherished as costs were paid to clean it.⁶¹ Such gifts must have been rare however, and crutches and metal or waxen images of arms or legs constituted the traditional gifts of pilgrims or devotees.

The sale of these objects was to an important extent controlled and organized by the church fabric itself. From 1548 onwards, the accounts yearly include entries for the payments of “four women that sat with wax at Pentecost” on the market place. The fact that these women were paid by the churchwardens makes it likely that it was the church fabric that provided the *ex votos*, and possibly also votive candles, as has been depicted on a late fifteenth-century representation of the Bruges shrine of Saint Ursula (fig. 60).⁶² The church fabric indeed bought significant quantities of wax throughout

donor's image, pp. 175-176, 185-187 and 262, providing other examples, including a silver votive portrait of Charles the Bold given to Our Lady of Scheut (1477), replaced by a painted wooden sculpture in 1484 already.

⁵⁹ KR 1503, fol. 18 (August 1503): “Item dij voirseide Willem van Halle ende Jan Baken voerts gereyst geweest tot Lovene aen Henrick den Bielsesnijdere van Loeven om doen te makene ons heeren opden esel gelijk Sinte Peters te Lovene ende noch enen nouwen Leonart van 2,5 voeten, sittende, dijmen dragen soude inde Cruysdaghe, der bielssesnijdere metten goiden mannen verteert ende metten voierseiden Willem ende Janne verteert soe tot Ghempt, soe tot Lovene, soe tot Roesbeecke, tsamen 21 stuivers.”

⁶⁰ KR 1556, fol. 265 (January 1557): “Betaelt Claes Roesen van enen hulten been te maken, 5 stuivers”; fol. 272 (June 1557): “De selve [meester Anthonis van Hulleberge] van een hulten been te schilderen geel, 2 stuivers.”

⁶¹ KR 1549, fol. 350v (August 1549): “Betaelt van het haernies dat voir Syncte Leonardt hanght schoen te maken 2 stuivers.”

⁶² KR 1548, fol. 317v: “Betaelt vier vrouwen die te Sinsen met wasse geseten hebben, elck 2 stuivers, macht 8 stuivers.” Compare with KR 1556, fol. 268v (April 1557); KR 1557, fol. 312 (April 1558); KR 1559, fol. 354v (February 1560). Later entries make clear that they were also given a meal. See for instance KR 1573, fol. 403 (June 1574): “Betaelt Willem van Gerlmen 26 quarteren biers gehaelt te Sinxen eensdeels tot den ontbijt ende noenmael inde camer voer mans ende vrouwen die opden offer ende metten wasch voert gheseten hebben...” Compare with KR 1508, fol. 293 (May 1509). Van der Velden, *The donor's image*, pp. 249-250 assembled several examples suggesting that also apothecaries served as important furnishers of *ex voto's* in the fifteenth century.

the year, from which they had candles made by a candle maker (*kersmakerssen*) who was in permanent service and whose wage was included on the yearly payroll. These candles evidently included the ones used in liturgical services and on various chandeliers and altars throughout the church, but the accounts also refer specifically to “the candles for Saint Leonard” which are probably votive candles.⁶³ Until the 1540s the total amount of wax bought by the wardens very rarely exceeded 100 pounds, and it is therefore all the more striking to observe that from around 1547 onwards, increasing quantities were bought that nearly always exceeded 100 pounds and even went up to 372 pounds in 1565 (graph 17). This could suggest an increasing market and interest for such votive gifts.

Other devotionalia might have been sold by the stallholders who had their booth in the parvis or church portal, such as depicted on Bruegel’s *Fight between Carnival and Lent* of 1559 (fig. 19). From 1540 onwards the revenues from these rentals are systematically registered under the heading of the rents from houses (*huysshueren*) of the church fabric’s property.⁶⁴ In most cases two tenants are registered, and the mere fact that throughout the period under consideration people continued to show interest in renting stalls in the portal suggests that it must have remained a lucrative activity. Unfortunately, however, not much is known about the tenants themselves, just as was the case in the late fifteenth century. The name of “Barbel die Cremers van Sintruyen” (Barbara the pedlar from Sint-Truiden), one long-time tenant, indeed confirms that the stalls were used for the sale of objects. Interestingly, one of the long-term tenants was an artist, the painter Philips Vleeschauwers (documented 1547-1577) who was occasionally also hired by the churchwardens for the restoration, cleaning, varnishing or polychroming of artworks.⁶⁵ We do not know what precisely he sold, but given his profession it is tempting to assume that he offered small-scale images for meditational purposes or as souvenirs. Furthermore, he and his wife Grietken Stiers yearly lent their kitchen, pots and kettles to the churchwardens at Pentecost, for the preparation of

⁶³ See for instance KR 1551, fol. 1560 (February 1561): “Betaelt Pauwels van Heylesym huysvrouw van dat sye de kerssen voir Syncte Leonardt mackt 12 st.”

⁶⁴ KR 1540, fol. 206v.

⁶⁵ First registered in KR 1547, fol. 265v: “Philips de Schildere van die andere hellycht vanden provyse, 7 stuivers.” For his activities in the service of the churchwardens, see for instance KR 1557, fols. 312v-313 (May 1558). See also van Autenboer, ‘De reus en de Ommegang van Zoutleeuw,’ pp. 410, 414, 417 and 423. He must be distinguished from his eponymous colleague Philips van Hullebergen, who is documented from 1562 onwards and died on 15 April 1573. See KR 1572, fol. 525v.

meals for the pilgrims (cf. *infra*).⁶⁶ Thus, much like the previously mentioned members of the Roesen family, he is likely to have earned part of his living from pilgrimage or related activities in some way.

The women who sat with wax on the market place are also known to have sold *beeldekens* or metal pilgrim badges at some point.⁶⁷ As has been demonstrated in the previous chapter, such paraphernalia were available in Zoutleeuw from at least 1478 onwards and they must have been inherently related to the promotion of the cult. By the beginning of the sixteenth century they were available in different formats and materials, and the increasing amounts purchased indicated a growing market that paralleled the increasing monetary offerings. Thus, they proved to be a useful tool to study the evolution of devotional practices, and it is therefore worthwhile to pursue the analysis and consider their use in the period under consideration here. In the middle of the 1530s the churchwardens appear to have decided to alter the offer. In 1534 and 1535 new molds were bought in Brussels and Liège, both brass blocks for the casting of lead badges and an iron block for the striking of copper and silver specimen.⁶⁸ Just like before, however, the wardens continued to outsource the actual production of the badges to craftsmen - mostly gold- and silversmiths, though not exclusively - usually based in larger cities like Sint-Truiden, Leuven (Jacob Boba and Mathijs Oten, active 1519-1555), Brussels (Jacob Failgie, documented 1542-1549) or even Halle in Hainaut (Jan Noé, documented 1551-1577). The result was again a diverse set of badges of different types for a whole range of budgets. For instance, silver specimen were now also available in small and large forms.⁶⁹ Another novelty was badges that included a small glass plate (*glaeskens*), which are first mentioned in 1534.⁷⁰ The latter have been identified by Elly van Loon van de Moosdijk as ‘mirror

⁶⁶ First mentioned in KR 1542, fol. 246v (May 1543): “Betaelt Grietken Stiers vanden ketelen, potten die zij geleent heeft voer de pelgremms, 6 stuivers.”

⁶⁷ KR 1554, fol. 163 (May 1555): “Item betaelt 4 vrouwen die metten beeldekens ende met was opten merckt geseeten hebben, elck 2,5 stuiver, facit 10 stuivers.”

⁶⁸ KR 1533, fol. 190 (April 1534); KR 1534, fols. 17v (August 1534, “Noch betaelt van eenen ijser daermen Sinte Leonart op steeken soude om bielsekens te slaene, 3 st 3 plc. Noch betaelt den meester van Luydick van Sinte Leonart daer op te steeken, 30 st”), 19 (October 1534: “Noch gecocht tot Luydich een lattonen voermen ende een yseren om silveren teekenen te slaene ende die lattonen om loeten te ghieten voer de pelgremms, 30 st”) and 24 (April 1535: “Noch betaelt tot Bruesel van eenen yser daermen silveren ende cooperen teekenen van Sinte Leonart op slaet voer de pelgremms te Pinxsten, 2 rijns gulden 5 st”).

⁶⁹ KR 1547, fol. 278 (May 1548); KR 1549, fol. 357v (March 1550).

⁷⁰ KR 1534, fol. 17 (August 1534): “Ierst betaelt 100 ende 18 dosijnen teekenen van Sinte Leonart met gelaeskens, elck dosijne 21 g, facit tsamen 5 rijns gulden 3 st 1 ort.”

badges' - a type of paraphernalia that was developed at the Marian shrine in Aachen, where the huge flood of pilgrims often hindered a direct contact with the sacred object of devotion. A small mirror inserted in the badge partly remedied this situation by permitting at least indirect eyecontact.⁷¹ This typological link with mass pilgrimage is interesting, but it is not very plausible to suppose that the Zoutleeuw shrine has functioned in the same way as famous destinations such as Aachen or Regensburg.

An analysis of the purchased badges allows a quantification of the evolution to a certain extent (graph 6). The curve shows a slight decline in the 1520s, whereas in the following years the badges are strikingly bought in ever greater quantities, up to around 4000 specimens in the 1540s and more than 6000 in the 1550s. This is a fascinating development, especially given the general demographic decline of both the town of Zoutleeuw and the Hageland region at large.⁷² The scarce evidence that is available for the important shrine of Wezemaal suggests a structural implosion of pilgrimage and points to the near disappearance of the medium of pilgrim badges towards the middle of the sixteenth century. While at the shrine's high point in 1514 more than 22.000 badges were sold, this number dropped to slightly under 3000 in 1523 and even less in the 1560s. Moreover, Bart Minnen was able to demonstrate that the number of purchased badges at times significantly differed from the quantity that was actually sold.⁷³ Whereas no information on the number of sold badges is available for Zoutleeuw, it certainly must have been the case there too. This is suggested by the strong alternation of extremely large and extremely small quantities one year after the other. For instance, in the well-documented period 1549-1552 successively 4109, 100, 5760 and 144 badges were bought. Nevertheless, contrary to Wezemaal, the general and average tendency throughout the period is rising. Although such an observation clashes with the generally held view of a waning interest in pilgrimage and traditional devotion as a result of growing critiques, a similar pattern can for instance also be observed in Anderlecht, where Saint Guido was venerated (graph 18).⁷⁴

The altered offer thus points to a continuing and perhaps even increasing demand for devotionalia, either waxen *ex voto*'s, votive candles or metal pilgrim badges. This is

⁷¹ Van Loon van de Moosdijk, *Goet ende wael gheraect*, p. 103.

⁷² Van Uytven, 'In de schaduwen van de Antwerpse groei,' p. 186, table IV; idem, 'Zoutleeuw, een kleine "hoofdstad van Brabant" in zijn hoogdagen,' p. 13; idem, *Geschiedenis van Brabant*, pp. 236-237, tables 6.5 and 6.7

⁷³ Minnen, *Den heyligen sant*, vol. 1, pp. 68-69 and 94-95.

⁷⁴ See the data collected by Roobaert, 'Zestiende-eeuwse bedevaarttekens,' pp. 2-15.

also suggested by another type of paraphernalia that was introduced in Zoutleeuw: pilgrimage pennants. Printed on paper in typically large runs, not a single fifteenth- or sixteenth-century copy is known, which doubtless is the paradoxical result of their relatively low price and intense usage.⁷⁵ Still, they certainly did exist by the second half of the fifteenth century. A set of regulations issued by the Brussels chapter of Saint Gudula in 1471 contains an early reference to this at the time probably new phenomenon, as it stipulated that at the occasion of its procession every member of the Confraternity of Our Lady “should carry in his hand a pennant (*vaenken*) with an image of Our Lady on the one side and an image of the Mediatrix on the other.”⁷⁶ In his still basic study, Emiel van Heurck emphasized both technical and economic aspects as reasons for such pennants’ success, as the printing of a whole series of images from a single block was at once cheaper and easier than the casting of metal badges. The latter indeed was labour-intensive and required more expensive metal. Yet, while van Heurck claimed that the paper pennant gradually took over the role of the metal badge throughout the sixteenth century, Alfons Thijs maintained that the actual success of paper pennants only began around 1600. He put forward the increasingly smaller distances of pilgrimages as principal reason, as they rendered the durable metal badges superfluous.⁷⁷ Whatever the case, the Zoutleeuw data indicate that metal badges remained popular throughout the sixteenth century. At the same time, although much research on the development and practical usage of such paraphernalia at local pilgrimage sites remains to be done, it can safely be assumed that by the middle of the sixteenth century pennants were a common feature in the Low Countries’ pilgrimage culture.⁷⁸ At various shrines in the County of Flanders pennants are documented from around 1509 onwards, and painters subsequently used them to identify figures as participants in or onlookers to processions (figs. 57, 58 & 61a-b).⁷⁹ Furthermore, these iconographic sources simultaneously reveal the traditional triangular form which the object would continue to have up until the

⁷⁵ On that phenomenon in general, see especially van der Stock, *Printing images in Antwerp*.

⁷⁶ “Elck broeder zal hebben een vaenken in syn hant met onser vrouwen beelde aen deen syde ende op dander zyde Mediatrix.” Cited by Roobaert, ‘Michiel van Coxcie,’ p. 261.

⁷⁷ Van Heurck, *Les drapelets de pèlerinage*, pp. viii-xviii, and Thijs, ‘Pelgrimstekens in de Zuidelijke Nederlanden,’ pp. 76-80. The latter’s view was recently confirmed by Minnen, *Den heyligen sant*, vol. 1, pp. 215-216.

⁷⁸ Compare with the observations by Van der Stock, *Printing images in Antwerp*, pp. 133-134, 186. See also Freedberg, *The power of images*, pp. 124-126.

⁷⁹ See for instance the examples of Lede (Our Lady, 1509), Dudzele (Saint Leonard, 1510), Gistel (Saint Godelieve, 1512) and Evergem (Saint Christopher, 1514) mentioned by Van der Linden, *Bedevoartvaantjes in Oost-Vlaanderen*, pp. xviii and 118. Pilgrimage pennants are also depicted on Pieter II Brueghel’s *Kermis in Antwerp*, KMSKA, inv. 644.

twentieth century, as well as the pennants being typically worn on headwear or, to a lesser degree, held in the hand. In that case they were placed on a little stick. Van Heurck had already made the distinction between pennants for confraternity members, such as the ones in the Brussels example of 1471 cited above, and pennants for pilgrims.⁸⁰ Yet, the evidence at hand does not allow to establish whether the latter were sold or freely distributed among bystanders.

They first occur in Zoutleeuw in 1540, when 1000 “pennants for the pilgrims” (*vaynkens voer die pilgrims*) are bought from a certain Gilbeert van Loeven (from Leuven) for three Carolus guilders.⁸¹ In subsequent years, they were glued to sticks by the churchwardens’ servant.⁸² Like the metal badges, the paper pennants were delivered by a number of external suppliers, who in several cases appear to have engaged in a broader trade of devotionalia. Apart from the otherwise unknown Gilbeert van Loeven - Gilbert Masius? - the churchwardens turned to at least three other suppliers in the period under consideration here. In 1549 the pennants came from Jacob Failgie, possibly based in Brussels, who had already provided the church with tin badges from 1542 onwards.⁸³ One year later, the wardens bought three reams from Cornelis Coennen, a printer from the Flemish town of Dendermonde (*prienterie van Derremonde*), who in 1560 would again deliver a similar quantity. Coennen seems to have been active elsewhere in Brabant as well in the 1550s, as he almost certainly was the furnisher of pennants to the church of Saint Gertrude in Machelen.⁸⁴ From 1555 onwards, finally, Jan Noé from Halle (documented 1540-1577) acted as the principal supplier to the Zoutleeuw churchwardens. Already in 1551 he is paid for metal badges and he would remain on the payroll until at least 1577. Interestingly, he also appears

⁸⁰ Compare also with the example of the Confraternity of the Trinity in the Brussels Church of Our Lady of the Chapel: “vanden vaenkens te scilderen die de brueders ten ommegang vander heyliger dryvuldicheyt gewoenlyc syn te hebbene” Cited by Roobaert, ‘Michiel van Coxcie,’ p. 280, note 88.

⁸¹ KR 1540, fol. 222v (June 1541).

⁸² First mention in KR 1548, fol. 321. Compare with KR 1551, fol. 64v (June 1552): “Betaelt van die vaenkens op stoockens te stellen, 20 st,” and KR 1561, fol. 406 (May 1562): “Betaelt Gielis Vreven 2800 vaenkens te stelen ende te pappen...”

⁸³ KR 1542, fol. 244 (October and november 1542); KR 1547, fol. 277v (April 1548); KR 1549, fol. 352v (November 1549). He died in or before June 1553, as his widow is mentioned in KR 1552, fol. 120v (June 1553) and KR 1554, fol. 146 (July 1554).

⁸⁴ KR 1550, fol. 22 (October 1550); KR 1560, fol. 315v (November 1560). For Machelen, see Roobaert, ‘Zestiende-eeuwse bedevaarttekens,’ p. 20.

to have provided hosts (*mesbroets*).⁸⁵ Furthermore, much like Coennen he was not only active in Zoutleeuw, but elsewhere in Brabant too. The churches of Saint Peter in Anderlecht, Saint John the Baptist in Sint-Jans-Molenbeek and Saint Martin in Wezemaal were part of his clientele, and probably he served many more. Although it cannot be established with certainty whether he himself produced all the objects he sold, or whether he only served as an intermediary between actual producer and client, he certainly was their principal salesman.⁸⁶ It is, however, interesting to note that none of the abovementioned suppliers is known as established printer, and although Coennen is explicitly identified as a printer (*prientere*) neither Dendermonde nor Halle is known as a publishing center before the eighteenth century.⁸⁷ This could point to the existence of an independent profession between producer and client, because we know for certain that well-known printers did print pennants, although they are not mentioned in the accounts. For instance, Hubert de Croock (documented 1522-1546) from Bruges, who had published works by Juan Luis Vives and Joost de Damhoudere, claimed in 1546 that he simultaneously had been supplying “kermes pennants (*kermesse vaentkens*) to various cities and villages, such as Dunkirk, Blankenberge, Nieuwpoort, Ostend, Sluis, Damme, Aardenburg and more others.”⁸⁸ Furthermore, much like has been demonstrated to be the case in the production of ex voto’s, well-known artists are known to have engaged in the production of this type of objects as well. For instance, the highly acclaimed painter and designer of international stature Michiel Coxcie is known to have provided the design for the pennant of the Confraternity of Our Lady in the Brussels Church of Saints Michael and Gudula in 1546, and it even seems that the Schernier *alias* van Coninxloo family made it a

⁸⁵ KR 1551, fol. 62v (April 1552); KR 1552, fol. 115 (April 1553); KR 1555, fol. 220 (May 1556); KR 1556, fol. 254v (July 1556); KR 1557, fols. 303v (August 1557), 309 (January 1558) and 314 (June 1558); KR 1561, fols. 397 (September 1561), 401 (December 1561) and 401v (January 1562); KR 1565, fol. 541v (January 1566); KR 1566, fol. 539v (January 1567); KR 1567, fols. 439v (August 1567), 445 (December 1567) and 448v (April 1568); KR 1569, fol. 506 (July 1569); KR 1573, fols. 395 (December 1573) and 400 (May 1574); KR 1577, fol. 475v (November 1577).

⁸⁶ See especially Roobaert, ‘Zestiende-eeuwse bedevaarttekens’, with many references.

⁸⁷ None of their names are to be found in the classic repertoires, including Rouzet & Colin-Boon, *Dictionnaire des imprimeurs, libraires et éditeurs*; Nijhoff & Kronenberg, *Nederlandsche bibliographie*; Cockx-Indestege & Glorieux, *Belgica typographica*. Although pure speculation, ‘Gilbeert van Loeven’ could tentatively be identified as Gilbertus Masius (documented 1527-1544), the only printer active in Leuven in this period with Gilbert as first name. On him, see Rouzet & Colin-Boon, *Dictionnaire des imprimeurs, libraires et éditeurs*, p. 143.

⁸⁸ “... kermesse vaentkens van alle steden ende dorpen, als: Dunckercke, Berghen, Nieupoort, Ostende, Sluyen, Damme, Ardenburch ende meer anderen...” Document published by van der Stock, *Printing images in Antwerp*, p. 366, Doc. 33. On de Croock, see also Vandamme, ‘De boekdrukkunst in Brugge,’ pp. 134-136.

specialization of sorts, as various of its members are known to have supplied designs or the prints themselves for several Brussels churches.⁸⁹ As a whole, this list of merchants and producers strongly suggests the emergence of a group of specialized furnishers of all sorts of devotionalia, ranging from metal badges over paper pennants to even hosts. Here again the professionalization of the sales suggest a still thriving commerce.

The numbers of pennants that were traded seem to confirm such an observation. For instance, ample evidence is available in a more or less continuous series for the already mentioned shrine of Saint Leonard in Dudzele. Throughout the sixteenth century, the number of pennants is kept up and between *grosso modo* 1540 and 1560 it even doubled from 600 to 1200. More importantly, by means of a comparison with data from Lede, near Aalst, Dombrecht was able to demonstrate that the evolution of monetary offerings did not necessarily parallel the degree to which local processions were attended. Indeed, whereas the revenues dwindled, the number of pennants did not follow the same pattern. While he considered the number of pennants a valuable indicator of the actual attending of processions, Dombrecht concluded that devotional liberality might have been on the wane, but traditional devotional practices remained popular. He argued, therefore, that one cannot speak of a “Copernican revolution” in popular piety.⁹⁰ For Brussels, the investigations of Edmond Roobaert on the pennants for the confraternity of Our Lady in the Church of Saints Michael and Gudula, and the confraternity of the Holy Sacrament in the Church of Saint Nicholas have revealed that there were always more pennants than there were members (graph 19).⁹¹ Thus, there was always a certain surplus, and although that certainly will have been the case elsewhere too, the numbers still sketch a reliable evolution. Precise quantitative information on pennants in Zoutleeuw are unfortunately rather scarce, but the sporadically given figures of the number that was glued on the wooden sticks give an idea of the general trend (graph 20). Strikingly, just like in Dudzele, the tendency is upward in the 1550s and 1560s: whereas in 1552 only 1000 pennants were put on sticks, that number had risen to 3600 in 1565. In Zoutleeuw, too, it thus seems hard to discern a “Copernican revolution.”

Such sacred souvenirs or meditational aids were however not the only things that pilgrims who came to Zoutleeuw were provided with. Apart from this food for the soul,

⁸⁹ Roobaert, ‘Michiel van Coxcie,’ pp. 262-263, 266, 276 and 289.

⁹⁰ Dombrecht, *Plattelandsgemeenschappen*, pp. 286-287, figs. 27 and 28.

⁹¹ Roobaert, ‘Michiel van Coxcie,’ pp. 258-268 and 281-286.

the churchwardens also offered ample food for the body at the occasion of the Pentecost procession. Here we touch upon one of the spearheads of the Reformed critiques that were discussed above, as it was often uttered that the gluttonous participants in such feasts were more in search of worldly pleasures than for God. For instance, a critical distinction between charity and excesses leading to blasphemous carousals at the occasion of religious festivities is accurately depicted by Pieter Bruegel. In his recently rediscovered *Wine of Saint Martin's Day* of c. 1566-67 (fig. 62) the drunken and greedy gluttony of the people attacking the enormous wine barrel in the center of the picture is formally opposed to the true Christian virtue of charity in the form of Saint Martin giving his cloak to the beggars.⁹² Nevertheless, the distribution of food remained a stable characteristic throughout the period under consideration. In the previous chapter it has been shown that at the latest from 1490 onwards bread was distributed to visitors. The amount of grain used for that purpose quickly rose from an initial 2 *halster* to 4 *halster* in 1496. For a long time this quantity was maintained, until in 1540 it was again doubled to 8 *halster* (ca. 240 litres), which would remain the standard for the years to come.⁹³ From the early sixteenth century onwards pilgrims were also invariably given meat, mostly sausages (*pensen*), but occasionally also some more exceptional dishes such as liver, calf's or sheep's head.⁹⁴

This food was all washed away with drinks, that were equally available in significant quantities. Already well before 1520, sporadic mentions occur of beer that was bought "for the pilgrims who went before Saint Leonard" (*voer die pelgrijme dij voere Sinte Leonart gingen*).⁹⁵ The practice remained in use throughout the sixteenth century, and from 1520 onwards the precise quantities are given in the accounts. This once more allows us to observe continuity and constancy, as the average of 3 *amen* (ca. 390 liters) per year was steadily maintained (graph 21).⁹⁶ It is of course impossible to establish how respectfully or decently these foods and drinks were consumed, but it is not

⁹² On that painting, see especially Sellink & Silva Maroto, 'The rediscovery of Pieter Bruegel the Elder's Wine of St Martin's Day,' esp. pp. 789-790.

⁹³ First mention in KR 1540, fol. 201. It would only drop to 6 *halster* in 1577, see KR 1577, fol. 461.

⁹⁴ First mention in KR 1516, fol. 17v (June 1517): "aendi pensen vordi pelgrim..." See also KR 1534, fol. 26 (May 1535): "Noch gecocht te Pinxsten voer die pelgremms een rintspense, een kalffhoot metter leveren, een scaeptshoot ende smout totter soppen..."

⁹⁵ KR 1503, fol. 29 (June 1504). See also KR 1515, fol. 13 (July 1515); KR 1516, fol. 17v (June 1517).

⁹⁶ In Antwerp, 1 *ame* equalled 137,4 liters, whereas in Brussels it amounted to 129,6 liters. See Craeybeckx & Verlinden, *Dokumenten voor de geschiedenis van prijzen en lonen*, vol. 1, p. 8, and Doursther, *Dictionnaire universel*, p. 158.

difficult to imagine how such habits could spark the excesses that reformers fulminated against and the drunkenness the Council of Trent tried to do away with. This, however, did not keep the Zoutleeuw churchwardens from introducing culinary novelties at the occasion of the Pentecost procession, and in the 1530s two new dishes were introduced. Account records mention gingerbread (*pepercoek*)⁹⁷ and cooked peas, possibly in the form of a stew or a soup (*soppe*), prepared with butter, sugar and spices such as pepper, saffron and clove.⁹⁸ Cooked peas were also provided to pilgrims elsewhere, such as in Amersfoort and Berchem.⁹⁹ It was probably to this end that the previously mentioned painter Philips Vleeschauwers and his wife Grietken Stiers lent their kitchen with its pots and pans.

In sum, none of the categories that have been discussed above demonstrate an implosion of the existing regional pilgrimage culture as has been often supposed on the basis of studies of cities such as Antwerp, Delft and Utrecht. While the revenues from monetary offerings might suggest a slight recession in the 1520s and early 1530s, they would reach new peaks in the 1540s and 1550s. A similar pattern is discernable in the analysis of devotionalia, including *ex voto*'s, metal pilgrim badges and paper pennants. Not only were the latter introduced as a novelty in the 1540s, their number would increase in the following years, and the same goes for the already existing metal pilgrim badges. While the food and drink that the pilgrims were offered confirm this sense of continuity, the other parameters even seem to point to renewed dynamics and a slight revival in the period preceding the 1566 *Beeldenstorm*. Of course, the scale of our research only allows us to make such observations for the town of Zoutleeuw, but a modest comparative investigation of other villages, towns or cities does not unequivocally suggest Zoutleeuw as an exceptional case. These indications are of course extremely valuable for an assessment of devotional culture in these momentous years, as they show that traditional religious practices continued without abatement, regardless of swelling critiques. It can indeed be assumed that in the years immediately preceding the *Beeldenstorm* the yearly Pentecost procession was still attended by

⁹⁷ For instance, KR 1533, fol. 192v (June 1534), and KR 1540, fol. 213v (July 1540).

⁹⁸ The first mention is in KR 1530, fol. 155 (June 1531): "Item gecocht tegen Jan Ruytinx voir die pelgrims 1 herten, cost 10 st." Later the acquisition of the necessary peas was transformed as part of a rent on land in the property of the church fabric, as from 1533 onwards this very quantity is included in the list of rents in kind, see KR 1533, fol. 165v. From that year onwards it is also included in the list of fixed expenses in kind, alongside the grain for bread. See KR 1533, fol. 168v. For the preparation, see for instance KR 1549, fol. 359v (June 1550): "Betaelt aen perper, saffraen, suker ende naeghelen om te Syncsen in die pergroms eerten te doene..."

⁹⁹ Thiers, *Bedevaart en kerkeraad*, p. 25; Prims, *Geschiedenis van Berchem*, p. 105.

interested pilgrims. Similar observations have been made by Woltjer, and more famously by Duffy for England.¹⁰⁰ Nevertheless, the indications discussed so far do not so easily allow judgement of the deeper religious meaning of the whole happening, which is a different issue to ponder. The procession was of course a quintessentially Catholic ritual, as the central focus was the carrying around and veneration of a miraculous statue, and it can quite safely be assumed that such events would not enthusiastically be attended by the staunchly reform-minded. Although the religious views of the major reformers were more or less definitively worked out by the middle of the century, the confessional proportions of the people at large would only slowly begin to take shape from that moment onwards. There was of course a broad and heterogeneous religious middle group of people that were neither convinced Catholics nor Protestants, and thus the attending of a procession does not automatically mean that somebody is convinced of its theological appropriateness or its religious salubrity. Furthermore, although defining moments such as 1566 worked as strong catalysts that made people move to either end of the religious spectrum, geographical differences remained as to the speed of this process.¹⁰¹

4.1.5 Miracles and cults, old and new

While the food and drinks that were offered at the occasion of the procession could be put forward as potential pull-factors for poor pilgrims to attend the procession, especially in times of heavy economic crisis, other factors reveal a deeper religious understanding of the events. The actual giving of *ex voto*'s has already been discussed and does indeed testify to a certain belief in its accuracy and appropriateness, but the source material is unfortunately rather scarce. Miracles are a final parameter in this discussion that allows a deeper consideration into matters of convictions. Several examples given in the previous chapter demonstrated that in the later fifteenth century a number of miracles were reported at the shrine. They were referred to in the churchwarden accounts, as the sextons were paid to ring the bells to make these

¹⁰⁰ Woltjer, *Friesland in Hervormingstijd*; idem, Review of Enno van Gelder, *Van Beeldenstorm tot Pacificatie*, p. 383; Duffy, *The stripping of the altars*.

¹⁰¹ First discussed for the Low Countries by Woltjer, *Tussen vrijheidsstrijd en burgeroorlog*, pp. 89-102 and 134-136. For the situation in Antwerp around mid-century, see Marnef, *Antwerpen in de tijd van de Reformatie*, pp. 88-90. For a case-study of Brabant, see Marnef, 'Verleid en bedrogen'. For a later period, see especially Kaplan, 'Remnants of Papal Yoke'.

wondrous events public. Yet, no such mentions are included in the sixteenth-century accounts, and since no miracle book has survived it is difficult to gauge the miraculous activity of the shrine during this particular period. Still, there are some indirect indications that suggest continuity in this regard as well. Firstly, around 1543 the miraculous character of Zoutleeuw's statue was used as an argument in a request for institutional reforms of the collegiate chapter. The Priory of Val des Écoliers, located at the southern border of town, had suffered serious damages as a result of the Guelders Wars (1502-1543), to such an extent that the community of friars claimed to be unable to assure the fulfilment of their religious duties. For that reason they worked out a plan together with the collegiate chapter of Saint Leonard, in which it was proposed to abolish the priory and merge both communities in one large chapter. This would eventually result in an unusually large chapter of sixteen canons, but in the request both parties addressed to the Pope they justified this by referring to the importance of the cult of Saint Leonard, "who by his clear working of miracles, draws many devout Christians to the church."¹⁰² Indeed, the argument went, such a sizeable chapter would guarantee the continuous presence of clergymen in the collegiate church, who would heighten its standing with the celebration of the Divine Office, their protection of the existing civic procession and the protection of church property against occupiers and devastators (*adversus occupatores et devastatores bonorum suorum*).¹⁰³ The request implicitly referred to miracles in the present tense, thus suggesting that they still happened at the time of writing. It can of course be argued that the Zoutleeuw communities embellished the importance of the cult in order to obtain their wishes, but in his 1555 critique Jan Caussarts from Kuringen again referred to people who foolishly "believe that it sweats when it works a miracle, while it had been covered in oil."¹⁰⁴ The fact that Caussarts referred to the Zoutleeuw statue, located some 20 kilometers away from Kuringen, strongly suggests that it still had some miraculous renown in the region. How does this fit the broader pattern?

¹⁰² "... dicte ecclesie S. Leonardi, que a Christi fidelibus undique confluentibus propter multa miracula, quibus Divus Leonardus in eadem ecclesia S. Leonardi valde clarere dignoscitur..." Bets, *Zout-Leeuw*, vol. 2, pp. 294-295.

¹⁰³ For the full text of the request, as well as some other relevant documents and their discussion, see Bets, *Zout-Leeuw*, vol. 2, pp. 170-175 and 292-297. See also Pieyns-Rigo, 'Prieuré du Val-des-Ecoliers,' pp. 1128-1129.

¹⁰⁴ "Arme verdoelde menschen weer dat sy daer geloeff op stelden meynende dat dat beelt van Sint Lenart mirakel deede, want alst scheen sweeten, dan weert met olyen bestreecken." Hansay, 'Blasphémateurs, hérétiques et sorciers,' pp. 31-33.

Caussarts' critical analysis of the so-called miracles as a result of oil put on statues was part of a broader, regional Protestant exposure of miracles as Catholic falsehoods. For example, when in July 1535 another protestant was executed in Kuringen, he expressed his disbelief in very much the same terms.¹⁰⁵ The precise confessions of these men remain unknown, but it is clear that all the major reformers shared a similar rejection of contemporary miracles. As has been discussed above, they all maintained that they had ceased after the apostolic age, and as a consequence the events that Catholics presented as miracles cannot have been worked by God. This conviction of a 'cessation of miracles' is nicely projected into the particular sixteenth-century context in Protestant songs that circulated in the Low Countries after the 1566 *Beeldenstorm*. One such text remarked that after all the critiques and attacks "all saints have submerged, they do not work miracles anymore."¹⁰⁶ In fact, rather than to the apostolic age this seems to refer to the preceding era of the decades around 1500, in which devotional life in the Low Countries had been characterized by an exceptional miraculous climate (cf. *supra*). To a certain degree this concurs with the body of extant miracle collections. A number of important late medieval miracle books indeed stop their registrations in the first part of the sixteenth century. More than half of the 22 collections in Jonas van Mulder's corpus of Middle Dutch miracle books ends in the first half of the sixteenth century, seven of which have their last miracle recorded between 1520 and 1545.¹⁰⁷ And although the collection of miracles worked by the Holy Cross (*Heilig Hout*) in Dordrecht, started in 1457, it ends with the miraculous deliverance of a shipmaster's child in 1509, the text as it passed down ends with the ominous inscription "finis actum 1566."¹⁰⁸ Clearly, the critiques of the reformers on miracles somehow found their reflection in the actual collections, and 1566 was considered by some as the definitive end point of an era. Similar conclusions can be drawn from the quantitative processing of the corpus of preserved miracle narratives (cf. *supra*, 2.1.2). Not only were there very few miracles recorded in the 1540s, 1550s and 1560s - respectively 9, 1 and 10 as opposed to still 48 in the 1530s - they also occurred at fewer places.¹⁰⁹ Whereas the 1510s marked a high point in the number of active miraculous shrines with ten registering locations, the situation was completely

¹⁰⁵ "Item dy papen goeten smalt op dy hoefden van dy bileren, dan seede sy dat sy mirakel deden." Grauwels, *Dagboek van gebeurtenissen*, p. 33.

¹⁰⁶ Mak, 'Vlaamse volksdevoties,' p. 161: "Alle die Sancten sijn gaen duycken / Sy en doen geen mirakel meer."

¹⁰⁷ Van Mulder, *Wonderkoorts*, Appendix 1.

¹⁰⁸ Verhoeven, 'Het mirakelboek van het heilig Hout,' pp. 109 and 136.

¹⁰⁹ Note that the figure for the 1530s does not include the miracles recorded at the shrine of Bolsward, because of a lack of chronological details.

reversed in 1550, when only one shrine recorded a dated miracle. Moreover, throughout the 1540s, 1550s and 1560s, the average numbers of miracles worked per shrine also greatly dropped to a mere one or two per decade (graphs 12-14). Finally, the dearth of tangible information about miracles during these turbulent years was also perceived as a problem in the early seventeenth century, when Catholic authors such as Justus Lipsius sought to reevaluate pre-existing miracle cults like Our Lady of Halle. In their writings, they either proposed all sorts of explanations for the lack of evidence, or they applied witty rhetorical tricks to cover it up and suggest continuity (cf. *infra*, 6.1.1). It almost seemed as if in the middle of the sixteenth century the ‘cessation of miracles’ was now also an established fact, even for the most devout Christians.

Behind this predominating pessimistic narrative lies a thin layer of evidence that is revelatory of a particular continuity, however. While the evidence for the cult of Saint Leonard might be scarce, this point can be illustrated by another striking case in Zoutleeuw. Even in these momentous times there is an example of a new cult that suddenly originated there. Around early May 1538, a Marian statuette was discovered hanging on an oak near a road called the Ossenweg, some 3 kilometers northeast of town.¹¹⁰ Immediately after its discovery it started to work miracles, the fame of which apparently soon spread in the region as they were reported with awe by contemporary chroniclers. On 19 June 1538 the previously mentioned chaplain Christiaan Munters from Kuringen wrote in his diary that he went to the shrine with his uncle and nephew, and that he had read a mass there. A few weeks later, in early August, news had reached him of three new miraculous healings that had been worked by Our Lady of the Ossenweg, which he subsequently noted carefully.¹¹¹ The wondrous events were

¹¹⁰ Although it is not mentioned in any of the primary sources, in the early twentieth century the story went that the statue was found by a ploughing peasant. See De Cock & Teirlinck, *Brabantsch sagenboek*, vol. 2, pp. 157-158; Hendrickx, ‘Legende van O.-L.-Vrouw van den Ossenweg’; Vandeput, *Onze-Lieve-Vrouw van de Ossenweg*, pp. 9-21. Another interpretation of this part of the story was given by Callebaut, ‘Zoutleeuw en de Osseweg,’ pp. 185-189. Bets did not yet mention it in his discussion of the cult, see Bets, *Zout-Leeuw*, vol. 2, pp. 155-165. On this and similar types of narratives, see Delbeke, Constant, Geurs & Staessen, ‘The architecture of miracle-working statues,’ esp. p. 221.

¹¹¹ “Decima nona juny [19 June 1538] in profesto Venerabilis Sacramenti gincken wy, myn oem Aert, Heynken ons neeff ende ich Ons Lieve Vrou besoecken by Leuw op den Ossenwech, ich las daer mes, men metsden daer een capel, Onser Liever Vrouwen syn seynt Senter Vresmis lestleden geoffert xii hondert brabant gulden.” “Nona augusti voersc. [9 August 1538] is tOnser Liever Vrouwen op den Ossenweech een stom manspersoen alt synde omtrent dertich jaeren, spreckende woerden, dy wellich stom geboren was ende bleeff tot dat hy Mariam dy gebenedyde moder Gods had besocht, ende doen woert hij sprekende. Item op den dach voersc.

also deemed worthy to be included in the chronicle of Joannes van Brustem (d. 1549), a Franciscan from the cloister in Sint-Truiden who in 1545 compiled a history of the Bishopric of Liège, dedicated to Prince-Bishop George of Austria (1505-1557). He claimed that devotees came from far and wide to pray for the newly found miraculous statuette.¹¹² Later sources confirm the dazzling miraculous activity at the shrine. A painting that reportedly hung at the site testified to the benefactions received by a certain Aegidius vanden Hoeve, standard-bearer from the Antwerp Guild of Saint George who had become paralyzed. In the year of the statuette's discovery he had heard from its divine powers, which caused him to go there too. As he knelt down he was almost instantaneously cured.¹¹³ It appears that many of these miracles were soon collected in a codex on parchment, now lost. The book was mentioned by Augustinus Wichmans in his 1632 survey of Marian shrines in Brabant, and it was said to include many miracles dated to 1538. Thus, from its earliest days the fame spread in other parts of both the Duchy and the Bishopric, and although no complete catalogue of miracles has come down to us, there are many indirect indications that are revelatory of the sudden popularity of the cult.

The flood of pilgrims that was emphasized by Joannes van Brustem immediately gave cause to the building of a stone chapel in which the visitors could decently be received. A previously unknown account provides a unique peek into the earliest development of the shrine between May and November 1538.¹¹⁴ Although it is unclear which

verlosde Maria dy gebenedyde moder Gods oeck eenen mensch dy beseten was. Item ipsa die Laurentii [10 August 1538] woert daer oeck een cropel gaende, dy tachtentich muylen ver was comen om gesont te syn." Grauwels, *Dagboek van gebeurtenissen*, pp. 87 and 92.

¹¹² "In festo Inventionis Sancte Crucis (3 mai), cepit populus [Leodiensis] turmatim adire locum cui vulgo vocabulum est 'den ossen Wech', id est via boum. Erant nempe ibidem secus viam quercus ad quarum alteram statuuncula dependebat lapidea dive Virginis imaginem representativa, quam etiam aiebant novis clarere miraculis. Is siquidem rumor adeo plurimorum attonitas opleverat aures ut etiam a remotis partibus illuc catervatim properantes sua vota exolverent." Balau, *Chroniques Liégeoises*, vol. 2, p. 131, r. 15-21. On van Brustem, see Balau, 'Jean de Brusthem' and Houbaert, 'Joannes van Brusthem'.

¹¹³ "Inter cetera sanitatis adeptae argumenta in Sacello pendula, pictura cernitur quam beneficii in se a Divam collati testem esse voluit Aegidius vanden Hoeve..." Wichmans, *Brabantia Mariana tripartita*, pp. 457-459, quote on p. 458.

¹¹⁴ It has erroneously been included in RAL, KAB, nr. 1075, which are the accounts of the foundation of the Lauds of the Holy Sacrament from 1537-1544. One of two quires bearing the date 1538 evidently does not belong to that series: it has a completely different structure and contents, it is far more exhaustive, it has a different watermark than the rest of the series and, most importantly, it does not mention the Holy Sacrament at all. Arguments in favour of an identification as the first account of the chapel are most importantly the fact

institution initially was in charge of the shrine, the account confirms that the town of Zoutleeuw and its church of Saint Leonard were at least partly involved, even though the chapel would soon grow out to be an independent institution with its own wardens.¹¹⁵ The source was compiled by Matheus Weers, member of the town's financial elite and at that moment warden of the foundation of the Lauds of the Holy Sacrament in Saint Leonard's church. Later he would function as churchwarden, civic steward, town councillor and after the death of his wife he eventually even was ordained priest, saying masses in Zoutleeuw's parish church.¹¹⁶ On 19 May, only a little more than two weeks after the statuette's alleged discovery, Weers started registering diligently the affluent revenues and the expenses for the construction. In the span of half a year, all the necessary building materials were bought: more than 40.000 bricks, more than 50 cartloads of natural stone, several oaks and quantities of various metals. Later, the decoration of the chapel was taken care of. The roof was topped with a metal cross, one of the windows was provided with a glass depicting the Mystic Lamb (*eenen raem van enen schaepen inden authar*) and Peter Roesen (cf. infra 4.3.2) carved the still extant sculpture of the Pietà (fig. 63). At the same time, the necessary measures were taken so that it would be possible to read mass at the shrine: an altar stone was bought in Gobertange, the liturgical utensils in precious metal came from Antwerp, including a silver chalice and ciborium, a holy-water font and a lavatorium, and a chasuble was acquired in Brussels. A request to have the altar consecrated was sent to the Liège *curia officialis* in Diest, but it seems that mass was read there well before the official ceremonies. Apart from occasional masses read by external priests such as Munters, who noted that the chapel was still under construction, canon Henrick vander Gheten from the Zoutleeuw chapter was paid to read sixteen Sunday masses.¹¹⁷ Finally, various entries are revelatory of the early trade in devotionalia at

that it starts on 19 May 1538, a few days after the statuette's discovery, as well as the many mentions of the chapel in the entries.

¹¹⁵ By 1555 the chapel certainly had wardens independent from the church fabric of Saint Leonard, which is confirmed by documented transactions between the wardens of the Ossenweg and those of Saint Leonard. See for instance KR 1555, fol. 211 (November 1555).

¹¹⁶ After a documented period as warden of the Lauds of the Holy Sacrament from 1537 to 1544 (RAL, KAB, nr. 1075), Weers served several terms as churchwarden between 1548 and 1557. During the same period he is also documented as steward and town councillor. His financial status can be judged by the high costs he paid for his wife's funeral (KR 1557, fol. 295v). After her death he seems to have been ordained priest, which is suggested by him being called *heer* and being paid to say mass. See KR 1566, fol. 529; KR 1569, fol. 503; RAL, KAB, nr. 1048.

¹¹⁷ He probably was a member of the collegiate chapter of Saint Leonard, with whom he founded a weekly mass at the altar of Saint Mary Magdalen. See RAL, KAB, nr. 1048.

the shrine. Already in the course of the first half year of the shrine's existence, pilgrim badges (*bilsekens*) were available to the devout visitors, and votive candles were sold on Zoutleeuw's market place.

The popularity of this new cult is also reflected in the devotional offerings. When Munters came by on 19 June to read his mass, he claimed that since 3 May devotees had already offered 1200 Brabantine guilders.¹¹⁸ Comparison with Weers' account shows that such an amount is highly exaggerated, but it is nevertheless illustrative of the early perception of the shrine as being incredibly well-attended. Furthermore, it is true that the revenues by far exceeded the costs for the building of the chapel, which concurs with the observations of early-seventeenth-century authors such as Gramaye and Wichmans, who claimed that the chapel was built with the alms of pilgrims.¹¹⁹ In the course of May 1538 alone a stunning amount of 3571,5 *stuivers* was collected, which equalled the contemporary devotional offerings at Saint Leonard's church for a whole year.¹²⁰ Although the revenues would diminish after the first month, the total sum of 8924 *stuivers* collected in this first half year was something the churchwardens of Saint Leonard could only dream of (graph 22). Within the scope of this study it is impossible to assess just how exceptional a newly established shrine in this tumultuous period was, but given both the previously sketched context and the absence of available examples in the relevant literature it seems fair to say that it was far from self-evident.

The cult of Our Lady of the Ossenweg convincingly testifies to the continued popularity into the middle of the sixteenth century of both belief in miracles worked by images and the devotion to Our Lady, at least in the region around Zoutleeuw in particular. A number of specific cases furthermore confirm the existence here and there of active miracle cults elsewhere in Brabant - whether veritably flourishing or not. For instance, even the cult of Saint Job in Wezemaal that would become such a popular subject of Protestant mockery upheld its thaumaturgic faculties in the 1560s.

¹¹⁸ Grauwels, *Dagboek van gebeurtenissen*, p. 87. He mentions "Senter Vresmis" as starting date which should probably be interpreted as the feast day of Saint Ansfried of Utrecht on 3 May. This date is also given by Joannes van Brustem as the moment at which devotees started visiting the shrine.

¹¹⁹ "ex multitudine sacrarum oblationum," Wichmans, *Brabantia Mariana tripartia*, p. 458. "Onse Lieve Vrou op den Ossenberch, anno 1536 [sic] ... Sacellum Deiparae miraculis clarum et ex elemosynis peregrinorum nuper erectum." Gramaye, *Thenae et Brabantia ultra Velpam* (1606), cited after Souverijns, 'Leonia sive Leewae,' pp. 133-134.

¹²⁰ In KR 1534 3561 *stuivers* were collected, in KR 1550 3935 *stuivers*.

Although it is difficult to assess the true extent as no miracle book has survived, the churchwarden accounts sporadically refer to new wondrous events. In October 1563, for instance, the bells were rung for three days after the miraculous healing of a man. And even immediately after the iconoclastic threats of the 1566 *Beeldenstorm* had been successfully warded off and the furnishings that had been temporarily sheltered to that end had returned to the church, two new miracles were celebrated in exactly the same way in March and April 1567.¹²¹ It was in nearby Leuven that the only recorded miracle dating to the 1550s happened. From 1519 onwards the Augustinian friars had indeed proudly started to record a new series of miracles worked by the miraculous host that had been venerated in their convent since 1380. The original manuscript in which the miracles were written down has not been preserved, but it was published in the later seventeenth century. The anonymous author of the accompanying treatise seems to have been aware of the oddity of the hiatus between 1380 and 1519, but he was quick to ascertain that miracles doubtlessly had happened before 1519, too, and he suggested that they either had not been recorded or that the evidence was lost.¹²²

A similar cult had existed in Brussels since 1370, when several hosts miraculously went bleeding after having been stabbed by Jews. After some years of intense devotion the cult was on the wane in the middle of the fifteenth century, but around 1530 it became the subject of an intense promotion campaign. In 1529 the city had been threatened by the sweating sickness, from which the government tried to protect itself by carrying the Holy Sacrament of Miracle - as the Eucharistic relic was known - around in procession. As the attempts reportedly were successful, initiatives were soon taken to immortalize the events. In 1531 the churchwardens of St. Gudule started making plans for a new and bigger chapel, which was consecrated in 1542, and a yearly procession in its honor was instituted in 1532. It is in this particular context that the compilation of a proper miracle collection must be situated. Still in 1532 a book was published by the Cologne Carthusian Dirk Loër (Theodoricus Loërius) that not only recounted the story of the Holy Sacrament of Miracle, but also included the increased number of miracles

¹²¹ Minnen, *Den heyligen sant*, vol. 1, pp. 98, 103-104 and 108.

¹²² On the cult, see Pauli, *Vier historien van het H. Sacrament van Mirakel*, 134-147. The seventeenth-century publication of the miracle book is included in *Historia et miracula sacratissimae hostiae*. In the later eighteenth century the latter was translated as *Historie ende mirakelen van de Alder-Heylighste hostie*, pp. 18-19: "Al is het saecken dat wy het verhael der Wonderheden... maer en beginnen van de sestiende Eeuwe... hier uyt nochtans magh men geensints beslyuten, dat'er voor dien tydt geene Mirakelen zyn voor-gevallen, maer alleenelyk dat men de selve soo nauwkeurig niet en heeft aen-geteekent, oft dat dese aenteeckeninge, is 't dat sy gebeurt is, door 't een ofte 't ander geval verloren is..."

that had occurred in the preceding years. A few years later, around 1543, preparations were made to publish yet another book. Although only the preparatory manuscript is known and the project possibly stranded in this phase, the majority of the miracles were dated between 1523 and 1536.¹²³ Thus, although these cults demonstrably had existed well before, the compilation of the miracles arguably were patterns of a renewed interest.

4.1.6 Miracles as anti-Protestant statements

The increasing protestant critiques clearly did not prevent these Brabantine shrines from promoting the miraculous character of the sacred objects they hosted. Yet, given this very particular religious context, a related issue that remains to be discussed is the question of how this new shrine of Our Lady of the Ossenweg or the newly collected miracles of older shrines, such as the Miraculous Hosts of Leuven or Brussels, are related to the ongoing devotional developments. Were only the forces of tradition and continuity at work, or were they indirect reflections of the tense religious context of a time wherein traditional values and long-held tenets were questioned and straightforwardly ridiculed? Or should they even be interpreted as direct reactions to Protestant critiques? It is impossible to firmly demonstrate either of these possibilities, but some arguments can be put forward to illustrate that the developments were inherently part of their time. As for the Holy Sacrament of Miracle in Leuven's Augustine convent, it remains to be established whether or not it is pure coincidence that the first recorded miracle in the preserved collection is dated to 1519, the year in which the city's University unanimously condemned Luther - a fellow Augustinian friar! - for the first time.¹²⁴ The fact that the later editions of the miracle book were

¹²³ Loërius, *Praestantissima quaedam, ex innumeris miracula*. A recent and detailed status quaestionis of the research on the history of the cult and its various miracle collections is provided by van Mulder, *Wonderkoorts*, pp. 106-115. See also Adam, 'L'Histoire de Saint Sacrement de Miracle,' esp. pp. 415-416. On the design and construction of the new chapel, see De Bruyn, *Histoire de l'église de Sainte Gudule*, pp. 167-168; Lefèvre, 'La collégiale SS. Michel et Gudule,' esp. pp. 34-38 and 62-71; van Ypersele de Strihou, 'De kapel van het Heilig Sacrament'.

¹²⁴ In this early period other Augustine cloisters in the Low Countries, including those of Antwerp, Dordrecht, Ghent and Tournai, were strongly influenced by Luther's teachings. See Decavele, 'De noodlottige zestiende eeuw,' p. 69.

said to be printed as “consolation for believers and disgrace for heretics” can only be considered as characterizing the rationale in the later seventeenth century.¹²⁵

In Brussels, however, the active promotion of the Holy Sacrament of Miracle by the Habsburg court suggests that there was more at stake. The successful 1529 procession with the Eucharistic relics was attended by Governess Margaret of Austria and she had four of her courtiers carrying the shrine. Moreover, the first stone of the new chapel, laid in 1534, carried her coat of arms. Loërius, who in the same year published the book that included the recent miracles, had good connections with Emperor Charles V, and so did one of the churchwardens responsible for the later miracle manuscript, who was a member of the Council of Brabant. It was also the Emperor who took the initiative for a major patronage project by which the enormous windows of the newly constructed chapel would be provided with magnificent stained-glass windows donated by the major European princes who were all member of the Habsburg family or related to it.¹²⁶ Whereas Bob van den Boogert has brilliantly analyzed the political messages and imperial claims that underlie the antique style that was deployed in the windows, the importance of the choice for the cult itself has not yet sufficiently been emphasized.¹²⁷ The donation of monumental windows was of course an age-old princely tradition in the Burgundian-Habsburg Low Countries, and the Brussels windows were certainly not the first sponsored by Charles. In 1517, for instance, he had given money for a series in the choir of the Brussels church as well as in Lier’s Saint Gummarus’ church. These, however, consisted only of representations of himself and his illustrious ancestors looking up to their patron saints and thus mainly served to visualize and glorify the dynasty (fig. 64).¹²⁸ In the Brussels project from the 1530s, however, Charles and his fellow Habsburgs deliberately chose to eternally associate their name to the cult of the Eucharist in general and of the Brussels Holy Sacrament of Miracle in particular, which by means of their glass representations they were depicted to adore in perpetuity. In particular, in the monumental glass window of 1537 in the north transept, Charles V and his wife Eleonora of Portugal are represented kneeling and praying in front of the actual

¹²⁵ “... tot troost der Geloovighe en schande der Kettters,” *Historie ende mirakelen van de Alder-Heylighste hostie*, pp. 3-4.

¹²⁶ On the windows, see van den Boogert, ‘Habsburgs imperialisme’ (with older literature). On the connection of Loërius with Charles V, see van Mulder, *Wonderkoorts*, p. 111.

¹²⁷ But see Reintjens, ‘The Habsburg windows,’ pp. 152-153.

¹²⁸ Leemans, *De Sint-Gummaruskerk te Lier*, pp. 279-281, and Damen, ‘Vorstellijke vensters’.

reliquary holding the Brussels miraculous hosts (figs. 65 & 66).¹²⁹ Furthermore, the classical architecture that was used to frame the depicted stories and figures functioned as more than a glorification of just the imperial power and dynasty. On the level above the representations of the European rulers, the triumphant architectural structures also framed the miraculous story of the host that started bleeding after being stabbed. This was of course the perfect demonstration of the truth of the doctrine of transubstantiation, as it cannot possibly have happened if the Protestants' symbolical interpretation of the Eucharist were true. Thus, the series of windows also functioned as a glorious and public statement of the Habsburg endorsement of the doctrine, and more broadly of the belief in miracles. After all, in the course of the 1520s Charles V had appointed himself as a staunch defender of the ancient Christian, i.e. Roman, faith. In the Low Countries this policy was put into practice not only by a number of anti-heresy laws, but also by a series of judicial reorganizations and the creation of a new type of inquisition that, contrary to the pre-existing medieval institutions, would be able to actively combat the spreading of heterodox ideas.¹³⁰ The windows can thus be seen as a visual testimony to his profiling.

The choice for the main church in the city of Brussels is also revelatory in at least one respect, as from 1531 onwards the city had taken over the role of Mechelen as the *de facto* capital of the Low Countries, where the central government and public authorities were located. Thus, in the Habsburg state ideology it inevitably also had to function as a stronghold of religious orthodoxy. More broadly, there are no indications that the initiative was a reaction against a particular Protestant threat or episode, but Protestantism certainly did spread in the city and the veneration of the Eucharist demonstrably was a debated issue there. For instance, in the previously mentioned 1527 investigations held in Brussels that led to the trial against court artists Bernard van Orley, Pieter de Pannemaeker and others, it was revealed that during the sermons

¹²⁹ The original reliquary has not survived. The earliest known representation is the illumination on the 1550 printed indulgence bull, awarded to the Brussels Confraternity of the Holy Sacrament of Miracle by Johannes Dominicus, Bishop of Ostia. On the Brussels reliquary and its complex material history, see van Ypersele de Strihou, *De kerkschat van de Sint-Michiels en Sint-Goedelekathedraal*, pp. 75-92. Compare with the equally exceptional example of a window donated in 1501-1503 by Philip the Fiar to the Brussels Church of Our Lady of the Sablon, discussed by van der Velden, *The donor's image*, p. 123. Compare, for instance, also with the lower right section of the contemporaneous window donated in 1530 by Canon Léon d'Oultres to Saint Paul's church in Liège, in which the d'Oultres kneels in front of the church's patron saint in the form of a statue on a pedestal. See BALaT nr. 11023434. This, however, is not a specific, contemporary cult statue.

¹³⁰ Fühner, *Die Kirchen- und die antireformatorische Religionspolitik*.

they had attended a symbolic interpretation of the Holy Sacrament was propagated. In the end none of the accused were executed, but they were explicitly prohibited to pronounce themselves on such doctrinal matters.¹³¹ Ironically, it was van Orley who some years later received the commission for the cycle of windows wherein the Eucharistic miracle was glorified. It is difficult to assess just how broadly the debate was held, but it is overtly clear that the 1529 procession - two years later - was a citywide and extremely public event. The decision to organize it was taken after a meeting of the collegiate chapter with the city council and the chancellor of Brabant. The civic community was informed about the event in a traditional proclamation in front of the city hall, wherein it was stipulated that all inhabitants were to fast and attend the mass that would be held in the city's main church, during which the relics would be exposed in the center of the church. Afterwards, everybody was requested to participate in the procession by carrying a candle, and even those who did not attend were directly confronted with the happening as the bells of all churches in the city are said to have rung. After the procession the relics were again exposed in the church, and it was at that particular moment that the first, new miracle reportedly happened.¹³² In short, the procession was an ideal occasion to put the Eucharistic relics to the fore again, and it arguably functioned as a strong message to those in doubt.

Within the Brussels collection of miracles there are no explicit references to Protestantism, but this is demonstrably the case elsewhere. The shrine that registered even more miracles than Brussels in the course of the 1530s was that of Saint Quirinus in Malmedy (respectively 20 and 23 on a total of 48). Under the direction of Abbot Guillaume de Manderscheid (r. 1501-1546) a collection of 46 miracles was composed. Philippe George has already linked this book with the spreading of Protestantism, as its author put a strong emphasis on the guarantee of authenticity. George therefore characterized the collection as a “pre-Tridentine reaction” (*une réaction prétridentine*).¹³³ Although no evidence exists to fully endorse such a statement, one of the miracles in the collection indeed directly refers to heterodoxy in relation to the cult of the venerated saint. In 1536 a ‘Lutheran’ from Maastricht who had criticized pilgrimages and the cult of saints was instantaneously struck by inconveniences and grave infirmity. However, finding himself in such distress and heavily wanting to

¹³¹ Decavele, 'Vroege reformatorische bedrijvigheid,' pp. 20-25 and Gielis, 'In reparationem scandali,' pp. 426 and 442.

¹³² Van Mulder, *Wonderkoorts*, pp. 113-114.

¹³³ George, 'Les miracles de Saint Quirin,' esp. p. 8.

recover, he soon sent a messenger with sumptuous offerings to Saint Quirinus' shrine.¹³⁴ As an admonition for the dangers and inherent wickedness of Protestantism this story was of course unmistakable. For our purposes, it is furthermore very interesting to look at the geographical origins of the *miraculés*. Several of them came from Brustem, Diest, Sint-Truiden and Tongeren, within the broad region around Zoutleeuw, concurring with what must have been the radius of action of Our Lady of the Ossenweg.

The perception of miracles as anti-Protestant statements is also documented elsewhere in the same region at exactly the same time, which was the climax of both the Anabaptists' activity and their simultaneous persecution. Several miraculous stories testifying to divine intervention are included in the diary of Christiaan Munters from Kuringen, which I have characterized above as an adequate reflection of the news that circulated in the region around Zoutleeuw.¹³⁵ Strikingly, all of these stories have an explicit anti-Protestant message, as they deal with 'Lutheran' critiques or mockings of either the Eucharist or Our Lady. In the course of March 1534, he noted that a man in Munster - where the Anabaptist rebellion had just begun - had ridiculed the Eucharist as being "nothing but bread" (*nyet dan broot*), after which he immediately fell deaf, dumb and blind.¹³⁶ Even more cruel was the fate of three pregnant women in Oudenburg. In 1537 Munters recounted that they had questioned the blessed state of Our Lady in comparison to other women, after which they reportedly fell dead to the ground. The diarist remarked dryly that their babies died too, without having received baptism.¹³⁷ However, not only Protestants who openly criticized Catholic tenets were struck by the anger of God, also those who merely feigned their devotion. This appears in a story of a rich, dying Lutheran from an unspecified place in Holland, set in the course of April 1534. At the urgent insistence to abandon his Lutheranism by his brother, a priest, he accepted the last rites, but the moment he died it immediately appeared that he had simulated his orthodoxy. His body suddenly disappeared,

¹³⁴ "Eodem tempore [1536], civis quidam Traiectensis cum sua conterali lepra lutherana infectus, peregrinationes et sanctorum vota abhorrens, instantissime impugnando quos poterat avertebat. Tandem vesaniae suae tale praemium sumpsit, invasit eum importuna et gravis infirmitas. Qui, videns se ita opprimi compunctus, ob recuperandae sanitatis gratiam, cum sumptuosis oblationibus ad sancti martyris ecclesiam singularem dominica quadragesimali mittit nuncium." George, 'Les miracles de Saint Quirin,' p. 21, nr. 15.

¹³⁵ For other discussions of this material, see Waite, *Eradicating the devil's minions*, pp. 42-45 and Pollmann, *Catholic identity*, pp. 52-57.

¹³⁶ Grauwels, *Dagboek van gebeurtenissen*, p. 20.

¹³⁷ Grauwels, *Dagboek van gebeurtenissen*, p. 46.

except for his head which turned black as coal. Upon looking in his brother's mouth, the priest discovered that the Eucharist still lay on his tongue, and when he took it off the head disappeared too.¹³⁸ Some two years later, on 19 February 1536, Munters again recorded a similar story about a mortally ill woman from Aachen who had also feigned her orthodoxy by accepting the last rites. Just as had been the case with the man from Holland the Eucharist was found lying on her tongue, but this time it proved impossible to remove. Therefore it was decided to cut out the tongue, which was carried "with great reverence" to the church, where it was placed in a glass holder (*in gelas beslaeghen*) together with the Eucharist on it. Thus, much like the 1370 host profanations by the Brussels Jews had created the Holy Sacrament of Miracle, this new episode of an unbeliever's irreverence towards the holy host created yet another Eucharistic relic. Yet, in this case the religious context was completely different, as unlike Judaism in the late fourteenth century Protestantism now formed a genuine threat to traditional piety. The story and the relic it brought forth were therefore much more urgent, and according to Munters the Aachen canons soon communicated the wondrous news to the Liège Prince-Bishop Erard de la Marck, who had it preached everywhere.¹³⁹ Finally, in spite of such cruelties, at least one story also left open the possibility for reconciliation after repentance, as is also suggested in the miracle at Malmedy. In the course of February 1535 a 'Lutheran' in Maastricht had convinced a 'Christian' to give up his Christian faith (*kersten gheloeff*), since he claimed it was all deceit. In exchange, the Christian was promised all knowledge, but it did not work out that way and he became seriously ill. After his tongue and mouth had turned black as coal, preventing him from speaking, his wife called for a priest who immediately remarked that he had turned to heresy. Yet, the man had remorse and the priest took his confession, after which he was immediately cured.¹⁴⁰

These narratives clearly include didactical elements, such as the portrayal of Protestants as deaf, dumb and blind or the rhetorical opposition between the pregnant women in Oudenburg and the immaculate conception of the Virgin Mary. Yet, whereas the quest for knowledge in the Maastricht story displays some striking parallels with *Mariken van Nieumeghen*, first printed in Antwerp around 1518, none of

¹³⁸ Grauwels, *Dagboek van gebeurtenissen*, p. 23.

¹³⁹ "Dit mirakel lieten dye heeren van Aken onsen genedighen heer cardinael weeten ende ons heer dedet op alle plaetsen vercundighen dat dit aldus gesciet weer." Grauwels, *Dagboek van gebeurtenissen*, pp. 37-38.

¹⁴⁰ Grauwels, *Dagboek van gebeurtenissen*, pp. 27-28.

these miracle stories has been identified as being taken from polemical texts.¹⁴¹ This strongly suggests that Munters picked them up orally. In the case of the Aachen miracle, for instance, this probably happened at one of the preachings that were ordered by the Prince-Bishop. In its own turn, Munters' diary was not meant to be published, nor did his writings circulate, and therefore it cannot be considered as having an implicit agenda. Thus, his diary is not only uniquely revealing of how such miracle stories circulated in a surprisingly large area - from Oudenburg 180 kilometers westward to Munster 215 kilometers northeastward - but more specifically also how they were included in edifying, oral narratives that countered the Protestant ideas.

On a more general level, such stories provide a prism through which other miracles that happened in this period should be seen. Not only could their mere existence efficiently refute the Protestant idea of the cessation of miracles, their contents clearly could help Catholics to convince themselves that God was on their side, too. Unsurprisingly, therefore, they were also actively deployed as arguments against Protestants, which played a crucial role in confirming the Church of Rome as the true church well before that would become a prime strategy after the Council of Trent, especially among the Jesuits. For instance, when in 1534 an Anabaptist in Leiden challenged the doctrine of the True Presence of Christ in the consecrated host by claiming that even if he would stab 50 hosts none of them would bleed, his opponents countered his statements by referring to the wondrous deeds of the miraculous host in Amsterdam, venerated in *de Heilige Stede*.¹⁴² In sum, the examples given clearly illustrate that miracles and miracle cults received a confessional character. That is not to say that every single miracle was (seen as) a reaction to Protestantism, but it does reveal what was at stake. Indeed, given the context that Munters sketched of the 1530s, it is reasonable to assume that the brand new cult of Our Lady of the Ossenweg at Zoutleeuw might have been a reflection - either direct or indirect - of increasing religious tensions. Thus, the parameters discussed before - monetary offerings, the trade in all sorts of devotionalia and the supply of food and drinks - presented a continuity of tradition, seemingly with especially renewed vigor in the 1540s and 1550s. But the evidence related to miracles show a deeper religious significance or devoutness. A certain sense of defiance also seems present. But to whom precisely should this be attributed? Although the Zoutleeuw community doubtless was aware of

¹⁴¹ Pleij, 'Mariken van Nieumeghen en de doperij', Pollmann, *Catholic identity*, p. 55.

¹⁴² Heiss, 'Konfessionelle Propaganda und kirchliche Magie'; Waite, *Eradicating the devil's minions*, pp. 37, 40-41, 49 and *passim*; Ditchfield, 'Tridentine worship and the cult of saints,' p. 213.

the increasingly acrimonious critiques, it is necessary to have a closer look in order to establish whether the actions actually might have strengthened and enhanced their devotion.

4.2 Parishioners

Before becoming a pilgrimage destination and collegiate church, Zoutleeuw's Saint Leonard's church was in the first place, of course, a parish church. As the smallest unit within the multi-storied ecclesiastical hierarchy, the parish is considered by scholars to have been the level on which religion was experienced by all Christians on a daily basis. Although it had more or less neatly defined boundaries, it was essentially a community of its inhabitants, especially in smaller towns or rural areas. The parish church was its material exponent, which often quite literally stood in the center of the community in question. In many cases the largest stone building in town, it typically served secular and communal purposes in addition to its religious function, ranging from defensive use in case of danger, to storage of important archives to communal meeting room.¹⁴³ Yet, it was of course primarily the sacred space where important moments in the parishioners' life were celebrated, including baptism of newborn children, their subsequent confirmation and participation in communion at mass, marriage and finally funeral rites and burial at the local cemetery or in the church after the administration of the last rites by the parish priest. Indeed, the principal *raison d'être* of the parish has been circumscribed as "to ensure an adequate administration of sacraments."¹⁴⁴ The Church of Rome upheld seven sacraments, but as the miracle stories such as those recounted by Munters show some of these crucial elements of devotional life within the parish community were subjected to great pressure in the sixteenth century. Indeed, apart from the abovementioned critiques on religious images, pilgrimages, relics and miracles, the whole parish liturgy was questioned and taunted. This prompts the question of how traditional parish life with

¹⁴³ For these various aspect, see among others de Smet, 'Heavenly quiet and the din of war'; Kuys, 'Weltliche Funktionen'; Signori, 'Sakral oder Profan?'.
¹⁴⁴ Kümin, 'The English parish in European perspective,' p. 21. The literature on the parish is large, but helpful overviews and summaries for the Low Countries are provided by Bijsterveld, 'De kerk in het midden', and Bauwens, 'Parish studies'.

its particular liturgical and paraliturgical activities and events evolved throughout the period under consideration. Such investigations are far from self-evident, however, as the wide range of sources that later would describe post-Tridentine parish life in often great detail did not yet exist before the Council of Trent. Records of decanal or episcopal visitations of the parish are exceptional, as well as the names of baptised children or deceased parishioners.¹⁴⁵ Much of the parochial life around the sacraments thus remains underdocumented, and this is mostly the case for baptism, confirmation and marriage.

Indirectly however, churchwarden accounts provide information on some other aspects of parish life. This is the case for burials, as the Zoutleeuw churchwarden accounts registered the different costs that had been paid for each parishioner's last ritual. Firstly, the church fabric offered several types of palls (*clederen*) to be draped over the coffin during the obsequies, corresponding with low to very elevated prices (fig. 67).¹⁴⁶ The rates and number of available pall types changed throughout time (six to sometimes ten categories), but the most expensive pall often cost around 30 times more than the cheapest.¹⁴⁷ Secondly, extra payments were required for the corpse to be placed upon a bier (*ligghen*) allowing friends and relatives to mourn and perform vigils. The fact that this option as a rule came with the most expensive palls, as well as the mere cost of it (generally around 20 *stuivers*), suggest that it was reserved for the wealthy.¹⁴⁸ Recent research has indeed shown that in the early modern Low Countries wealth and status were reflected not only in the location of people's graves but also in the particular way they were buried, as use could be made of several options to embellish the funeral services, ranging from the various textiles used to the different types of tolling bells.¹⁴⁹ The latter option is however not documented in the Zoutleeuw accounts. Nevertheless, apart from mortality rates, the Zoutleeuw data mostly reflects the relative statuses of the deceased parishioners, rather than their devotional preferences. Of course, such status claims were in essence religiously based as they were made with parochial, devotional tools, but the data do not contain the information necessary to deduce religious continuity or change in practices or attached values. In

¹⁴⁵ An overview of the rich post-Tridentine sources is provided by Cloet, 'Sources pour l'étude de la vie religieuse des laïcs'.

¹⁴⁶ Vroom, *Financiering van de kathedraalbouw*, pp. 347 and 483, note 17.

¹⁴⁷ The most frequent rates are 3,5 or 7 *stuivers* for the cheapest pall, to around 100 or 110 *stuivers* or more for the most expensive.

¹⁴⁸ Bijsterveld, 'Tussen twee werelden,' esp. p. 163.

¹⁴⁹ Dombrecht, 'Edel, arm en rijk'.

the following paragraphs the issue of parish life will therefore be tackled by means of other datasets that could be deduced from the accounts. Two themes will be considered: communion and Eucharistic devotion, and the broader furnishings and embellishments of the parish liturgy.

4.2.1 Communion and Eucharistic devotion

In a passage in *Puerpera* (*The new mother*), one of Erasmus' colloquies first published in 1526, the author describes the current events in highly pessimistic terms. Next to the exile of King Christian of Denmark to the Low Countries, the captivity of Francis I in Madrid, the imperialism of Charles V and the Peasants' Revolt in the German lands, Erasmus also describes the whole Western Church being "shaken to its very foundations." One of the principal reasons for the author's religious pessimism is because "the Eucharist is called into question."¹⁵⁰ Indeed, one of the most important focal points in the critiques on the Roman liturgy seems to have been the celebration of mass and its high point, the elevation of the host and the simultaneous consecration of bread and wine used in the Eucharist (fig. 68). For Catholics, it is at this precise moment that the Real Presence of Christ becomes tangible through the transubstantiation, or the changing of the bread and wine into the body and the blood of Christ. Eucharistic devotion had been criticized long before, not only by heterodox thinkers such as John Hus and important Catholic theologians such as Nicolas Cusanus, but also by laypeople. For instance, when in 1517 a certain Torreken van de Perre is whipped in Oudenaarde "for having pronounced blasphemous words against the Holy Sacrament," his utterings cannot possibly have been the consequence of Reformed writings.¹⁵¹ However, critiques intensified from the 1520s onwards, when more and more Reformed theologians developed and systematized their thoughts on the matter. Although these authors' precise interpretations of the institution of the Eucharist by Christ at the occasion of the Last Supper greatly vary, they share a general rejection of the material and physical devotion as it had developed throughout the later Middle Ages, most strongly embodied by monumental sacrament houses and ostentatious Corpus Christi processions (fig. 69). In general, it seems fair to say that most Reformed authors proposed a more symbolical and spiritual interpretation of the

¹⁵⁰ Erasmus, *The Colloquies*, pp. 267-285, quote on pp. 269-270.

¹⁵¹ Decavele, *Dageraad van de Reformatie*, pp. 274 and 591.

Eucharist.¹⁵² This was for instance also talked about in the sermons held in Brussels by Claes van der Elst that led to the 1527 trial against Bernard van Orley and his colleagues (cf. *supra*). However, although these men were generically referred to as *lutheriaenen*, it is clear that van der Elst's conception of the Eucharist differed considerably from Luther's - van der Elst's being much more radical and spiritual - which suggests that a variety of heterodox ideas on the subject circulated already in these early years.¹⁵³

The disagreement with traditional, Roman Eucharistic practices was also translated in a wide range of lay actions. The examples are manifold, and therefore only a random selection will be given here.¹⁵⁴ In its most subtle form, such critiques could be aired by breaking deeply-rooted and embodied devotional conventions, which for modern historians are generally difficult to detect and hard to understand. Yet, the sentences that were pronounced by local authorities and the notorious Council of Troubles after the Wonder Year include multiple clues. For instance, in the immediate aftermath of the *Beeldenstorm*, the town council of the severely affected Bergues (Sint-Winoksbergen) in southwestern Flanders sentenced a certain Jean de Wale, who had misbehaved during the local Corpus Christi procession. The charges reveal that while he was working as a mason on a scaffolding at the local church, the Eucharist returned to the church. However, de Wale had not paid due reverence by not taking off his hat, as one was apparently accustomed to do. Others had reportedly turned their backs at the Eucharist.¹⁵⁵ Clearly, such corporeal behaviour was far from innocent and meaningless in these days. More explicit were verbal attacks. In the course of September 1566, a man was arrested in Leuven for having been drunk at the occasion of a procession with the Eucharist, and when the venerated object passed over the market square he reportedly started singing a taunting song.¹⁵⁶ He must have had ample inspiration for that, because by that time a rich vocabulary to utter critiques circulated. Over the course of the years, the host had indeed received a whole range of mocking nicknames, ranging from flour- or breadgod (*meel-* or *broodgod*) and *Dieu des*

¹⁵² Detailed discussions of the Eucharistic theologies of the different confessions can be found in the chapters of Wandel, *A companion to the Eucharist in the Reformation*.

¹⁵³ Decavele, 'Vroege reformatiebedrijvigheid,' pp. 20-25

¹⁵⁴ For other examples, see for instance Decavele, *Dageraad van de Reformatie*, vol. 1, pp. 266 and 589-599 and Van Bruaene, 'Embodied piety,' pp. 44-47.

¹⁵⁵ De Coussemaeker, *Troubles religieux*, vol. 3, pp. 156-157 and 166. See also Deyon & Lottin, *Les casseurs de l'été 1566*, p. 182.

¹⁵⁶ SAL, Oud Archief, nr. 299, fol. 268.

papistes, over *Jean le Blanc* or *Jan de Witte* (referring to its white color) to ‘Melis in the crescent’ (*Melis in de halve maan*). Just like the former, the latter referred to it being merely made of flour (*meel*) and placed in monstrances on holders in the form of a crescent (fig. 70). Thus, by reducing the venerated objects to its material essence, these names attempted to do away with the sacred character it had.¹⁵⁷ This strategy of reduction and a sometimes almost carnivalesque inversion of traditional values also appears at other instances. In 1546, a man had to perform an *amende honorable* in Princenhage, near Breda, after having publicly ridiculed the Eucharist by proposing a pot of mead to the celebrating priest, who was evidently using wine at that particular moment.¹⁵⁸ And in the church of Walem, near Mechelen, somebody had shouted “the king drinks!” when the priest consumed the consecrated wine, thus referring to the popular game played at the occasion of Twelfth Night.¹⁵⁹ The most blatant offense was of course physically attacking the Eucharist or the celebrating priest. A famous case is that of the young tapestry weaver Hans Tuscaens, which even made it into the correspondence of Governess Margaret of Parma. During the mass of the Holy Sacrament on Thursday 30 May 1566, celebrated in the parish church of Pamele, near Oudenaarde, the young man in his early twenties was noticed near the high altar, “irreverently with a bonnet on his head” (*irreventelick metten bonnette up ‘t hoofd*). Later, at the moment when the celebrating priest knelt down holding up the consecrated host, it was snatched away from his hands by Tuscaens, who threw it to the floor, “on a tombstone near the altar.” Another priest quickly picked up the tattered host in order to continue the ritual, but Tuscaens proclaimed that “God was not in there [i.e. in the host], but in heaven” (*dat God daer niet en was, maer inden hemele*), that “the idolatry had lasted far too long” (*dadt zo lange duerde, dat zulcke afgoderie ghebeurende was*) and that “he was prepared to die [for his deeds]” (*dat hy bereet was daerinne te levene ende te stervene*). Tuscaens was immediately arrested and soon burned alive on the Oudenaarde market square, for which he was bravely

¹⁵⁷ The explanation of ‘Melis in de halve maan’ is also given in the contemporary *Historie van B. Cornelis Adriaensen*, fols. 240v-241. For *Dieu des papistes*, see for instance RAB, Raad van Beroerten, nr. 38, fols. 26r-v and 84v. An overview of different terms of abuse is provided by Acquoy, *Jan van Venray*, pp. 42-45, with many further references. See also Kumler, ‘The Genealogy of Jean le Blanc,’ pp. 119-121.

¹⁵⁸ Beenakker, *Breda in de eerste storm van de opstand*, p. 25.

¹⁵⁹ “... geroepen onder ander int midden van dlichaem onss heeren inden kelck byden prochiaen dese woerden ‘De Coninck drinct!’ mit meer anderen dyer gelycken woerden van oopenbaren ketteren tot groote schandale van anderen goeden kersten die alsdoen in den dienst gods te hoiren aldaer gecomen waeren.” See RAB, Raad van Beroerten, nr. 6, fol. 442. Carnivalesque inversions were also typical during the *Beeldenstorm*, see Arnade, *Beggars, iconoclasts, and civic patriots*.

memorialized in protestant martyrologies compiled by Jean Crespin and Adriaan van Haemstede.¹⁶⁰ Interestingly, the magistracy later claimed that it was at precisely that place that the troubles began in the course of July, and Tuscaens' family and friends had incited the people to smash the images in August 1566.¹⁶¹ Clearly, even though these people's deeds sometimes may have had a carnivalesque appearance, they were serious expressions of discontent with far-reaching consequences.

The miracles recounted by Christiaan Munters in his diary demonstrate that such stories also circulated in the broad region around Zoutleeuw. Furthermore, elsewhere in his text he provides ample evidence that in the course of the 1530s criticisms on traditional Eucharistic practice had gained ground in that part of the Bishopric of Liège, too. Not without a certain sense of horror, he narrates the multiple executions he witnessed in Kuringen. At such instances, he learned a great deal about the convicts' convictions, as their confessions were read out aloud. In 1534, for instance, he learned about men who "would not believe that the priests had any power to consecrate the venerable holy sacrament."¹⁶² At other occasions, he recorded utterances that were in line with the previously mentioned mocking nicknames for the host. Several prisoners had confessed that they did not believe in the holy sacrament, as it was only bread baked in the oven.¹⁶³ In early 1535 he had even heard that there were irreverent characters who had fingered this most venerable object.¹⁶⁴

How did these developments affect Eucharistic devotion and participation in communion in Zoutleeuw? The most notorious assesment of Eucharistic piety based on data from churchwarden accounts is arguably that of Jacques Toussaert. He tried to

¹⁶⁰ Enno van Gelder, *Correspondance française de Marguerite d'Autriche*, vol. 2, pp. 237-239; Russe, 'Le proces et le martyre de Hans Tuscaens,' quotes on pp. 115-118. A similar case is documented in Tournai's cathedral of Our Lady in 1554, where during mass somebody came "prendre et oster la sainte hostie entre les mains du pasteur alors qu'il la monstroir au peuple; et il la rompit par pièces, et puis après la jetta par terre et la foulla aux pieds; ete appelant le pasteur, et le peuple idolatre..." The story is recounted in Debièvre, *Chronique de Mahieu Manteau*, p. 29.

¹⁶¹ Vander Meersch, *Mémoire justificatif du magistrat d'Audenarde*, pp. 17-19.

¹⁶² "... en woude nyet gheloven dat dy priesters eynighe macht hedden te consacreeren dat eerwerdich heylich sacrament." Grauwels, *Dagboek van gebeurtenissen*, pp. 21-22.

¹⁶³ "... hy en had egheen geloeff in dat eerwerdich heylich sacrament, ten weer nyet dan broot inden oven gebacken." Grauwels, *Dagboek van gebeurtenissen*, pp. 29, 33 (1535), 36 (1536) and 48 (1537).

¹⁶⁴ "... daer waerenter onder dy by dat eerwerdich heylich gebenedyt sacrament hadden gegeit met honnen vingeren." Grauwels, *Dagboek van gebeurtenissen*, p. 28. Another example of irreverence in Daris, *Histoire du diocèse*, vol. 3, pp. 410-411.

approach the number of active and devout parishioners by converting the scarce data on numbers of hosts and quantities of wine, mentioned in the accounts he used, to a number of people that consumed it.¹⁶⁵ As has been noted above, his method was soon subjected to fierce critiques, among others because the sources he used were not made for statistic purposes, but also because his converting methods were dubious and highly arbitrary. Furthermore, it has been argued that participation in communion is not a good indicator for individual devout convictions, as it is strongly related to the sacramental obligations. For instance, Reinier Post has remarked that frequent communion did not exist in or before the sixteenth century, and that it therefore does not provide information on the intensity of devotion. Also, he and other modern scholars have pointed out that apart from the actual communion there also was a spiritual communion that did not require the consumption of the consecrated host and wine, but consisted mainly of contemplating the Eucharist. A 1507 vernacular treatise on the mass stated that some people, “out of humility... never allow themselves to go to the sacrament, but hear the mass with devotion and behold the sacrament worthily.”¹⁶⁶ Yet, it is worthwhile to consider the rich data provided by the Zoutleeuw churchwarden accounts. As they run over a long period of time, they can be used not so much to make estimations on the absolute number of participating parishioners, but rather to look at *longue durée* evolutions and shifts in habits.

Both in relation to the wine and the bread used for this sacrament, the accounts provide ample documentation on the actual practice. From the earliest preserved accounts onwards the purchase of the communion wine is registered, referred to as “god’s wine” (*gods wijn*).¹⁶⁷ Throughout the period under consideration, lay communion with wine took place at the occasion of the most important feast days, i.e. Easter and Christmas, and in some cases also at Pentecost. This seems to confirm Post’s remark about the frequency of the practice, which in the Zoutleeuw accounts is referred to as *monigen* or, less frequently, “to administrate the holy sacrament” (*om*

¹⁶⁵ Toussaert, *Le sentiment religieux*, pp. 122-204.

¹⁶⁶ Gerrit van der Goude, *Dat boexken vander missen* (Antwerp 1507), part 3, chapter 29, quoted from Falkenburg, ‘Hieronymus Bosch’s Mass of St. Gregory,’ p. 183. In general, see Post, *Kerkelijke verhoudingen*, pp. 401 and 405; Kroesen, ‘Pour veoir Dieu en passant’; Falkenburg, ‘Hieronymus Bosch’s Mass of St. Gregory,’ esp. pp. 179 and 183 (with many contemporary sources and further references). On the frequency of communion, see also van Miert, ‘Een bijdrage tot de geschiedenis der Eucharistie,’ pp. 112-124.

¹⁶⁷ It is referred to by Toussaert as “vin d’ablution” and by Meyers-Reinquin as “nataalwijn” or “ablutiewijn.” See Toussaert, *Le sentiment religieux*, p. 162, and Meyers-Reinquin, ‘Proeve tot statistische benadering,’ pp. 208-209.

theylich sacrament te administreren) or “to go to the holy sacrament” (*ten heyligen sacramente gaen*). The participants are mostly referred to in a general way as “the people” (*tvolec*), or sometimes more specifically as “the communicants” (*communicanten*).¹⁶⁸ A lot of information is also available on the types of wine used for the various liturgical purposes. For communion a marked preference for Rhine wine (*rijnswijn*) is notable, sometimes specified as coming from Alsace (*elseter*), contrary, for instance, to the regional wine (*lantwijn*, sometimes specified as *haugaerds*, i.e. from Hoegaarden) that was preferred for the ceremony of the washing of the altars at Maundy Thursday. This has some interesting repercussions on the color of the used wine. The Church Fathers and liturgists almost unanimously proposed to use red wine, and that was also the most frequent color given in contemporary images. From a symbolical point of view red was of course the most appropriate color to commemorate the blood of Christ.¹⁶⁹ But whereas thirteenth-century statutes for the Diocese of Tournai for instance expressed a preference for red instead of white wine used in the communion, other statutes only specified that it had to be pure without saying something about the color.¹⁷⁰ In fact, the Rhine wine that was used for the communion at Zoutleeuw typically had a white color, contrary to the red color of the regional wine, as from time to time is specified in the various entries.¹⁷¹ Thus, the direct liturgical color symbolism of red as the color of Christ’s blood interestingly was not extended into the actual communion practice.

Much like the wine, the bread used for the communion was called “god’s bread” (*goeds broet*) or “mass bread” (*misbroet*), but exceptionally also “hosts” (*ostene*) or “bread with which one sanctifies” (*broet dair men mede sacreert*).¹⁷² Just as in the accounts of

¹⁶⁸ See for instance resp. KR 1534, fol. 19v (November 1534), KR 1490, fol. 41v (September 1490) and KR 1505, fol. 25v (June 1506). *Monigen* appears in a wide variety of spellings, including *moniginge*, *moninge*, *monigen*, *monegen*, *moenigen*, *mu(e)nigen*, *monnigen*, *moengen* and *mongen*.

¹⁶⁹ Pastoureau, *Red*, p. 66.

¹⁷⁰ Izbicki, *The Eucharist in medieval canon law*, pp. 77-78.

¹⁷¹ “Item gecocht te Wouter Zwilden 1 pot roet lantwijns georbert aende outaeren, cost 15 g. Item gehaelt int wijnhuys voer die communicanten opte Witten Dondersdach, opten Paesdach gedragen 13 kannen wit rijnswijns, den pot 1,5 st, maakt 19,5 st.” KR 1509, fol. 45 (March 1510). Compare for instance with the implications in KR 1516, fol. 16 (April 1517, “Betaelt aen wijn opten paesdag georbert vordi communicanten 14 quarten rijnswijn ende 1 quarte roets”) and KR 1520, fol. 20 (March 1521, “aen 1 quarte roet wijns om dij altaren te wasschene”). Compare with Brian, ‘Catholic liturgies of the Eucharist,’ p. 187. White wine appears to have been preferred for general consumption as well, see van Uytven, *Geschiedenis van de dorst*, pp. 34-35.

¹⁷² For the latter two, see for instance KR 1456, fol. 148v and KR 1468, fol. 13. Elsewhere it was also referred to as “monnichbroets,” using the same verb (“monnigen”) that was used for the communion wine in Zoutleeuw.

Bruges' Saint Jacob's parish that were used by Toussaert, occasionally a distinction is made between large and small hosts, but most of the time there is no specification on size. Toussaert supposed that the large ones were for the consecrating priest and the small ones for the laity.¹⁷³ This has been accepted by most of his critics - although there is no historical evidence to support the hypothesis - but they refuted his problematical analysis of the ambiguous information at hand. Indeed, in the many cases where the distinction between hosts for the laity and those for the clergy is not made, it is impossible to make quantified estimations about lay participation.¹⁷⁴ Whatever their size, none of the hosts were baked in Zoutleeuw itself, but always bought from outside. In most cases they were bought in a wide range of larger cities, including Antwerp, Hasselt, Leuven, Maastricht, Mechelen and Sint-Truiden, presumably from specialized bakers. In fact, ecclesiastical legislation and synodal statutes often required that hosts be made by the clergy, and, according to the strictest rules, in an almost liturgical atmosphere.¹⁷⁵ However, the rare instances in which more precise information on the provenance is given, we cannot confirm whether such rules were strictly observed. For instance, in Mechelen they were bought from a certain Mathijs der Brootbecker, and in 1557 they were provided by Jan Noé from Halle, who supposedly acted as an intermediary merchant in devotionalia as he also supplied the pilgrim badges to the Zoutleeuw church (cf. *supra*).¹⁷⁶ In any case, they were made with a special host press, which typically left a figural representation (mostly a cross or crucifixion) or text (such as a Christogram) in relief on the communion wafer. Not much is known about the actual distribution of both the communion bread and wine, but to judge by contemporary imagery it is likely that the participants knelt down at the sides or in front of the altar, behind the officiating priest (fig. 71). Those who were ill received the wine at the occasion of Easter from separate cups.¹⁷⁷

See for instance an example from Diest, 1513 in Bonenfant & Frankignoulle, *Notes pour servir à l'histoire de l'art en Brabant*, p. 63.

¹⁷³ Toussaert, *Le sentiment religieux*, pp. 180-184. Interestingly, in churchwarden accounts from Diksmuide the distinction is made between "messebroets" and "sacrament broots," see Weale, *Les églises du doyenné de Dixmude*, pp. 9-11.

¹⁷⁴ Dierickx, 'Christelijk Vlaanderen in de late middeleeuwen,' p. 52; Mols, 'Emploi et valeur des statistiques en histoire religieuse,' p. 407; Meyers-Reinquin, 'Proeve tot statistische benadering,' pp. 210-211.

¹⁷⁵ Kumler, 'The Genealogy of Jean le Blanc,' pp. 126-128.

¹⁷⁶ KR 1496, fol. 170 (March 1497); KR 1557, fol. 309 (January 1558).

¹⁷⁷ KR 1555, fol. 206 (July 1555): "Gecoft twe croeskens voer de siecken om te Paesschen vut te drincken 4 st."

It is possible to plot the quantitative evolution of the data on the acquired bread and wine for the period under consideration. The most striking development is notable in the purchased volumes of wine, which very suddenly quadrupled between 1546 and 1551, from 23 to 85,5 *quarten* (resp. 31,6 and 117,5 litres).¹⁷⁸ Later, after 1555, it would again drop to around 40 à 50 *quarten*, but that represented still twice the original level. In 1565-1567 it would again rise to an unprecedented height of 119,5 *quarten* (graph 23). The graph plotting the quantities of hosts is less straightforward to interpret. Much like the graph that showed the numbers of pilgrim badges purchased by the churchwardens, this graph shows successive high and low values (graph 24). This suggests that the churchwardens had some sort of reserve that was replenished, although nothing is known about how long communion wafers could be preserved. Yet, while from the later fifteenth century onwards the maxima continued to rise until an absolute peak volume of 25.900 hosts was reached in 1548, the minima do not decline, suggesting an overall upward trend, with a slight spin after the middle of the 1550s. Thus, both graphs suggest a similar general trend: a slight growth throughout the middle of the sixteenth century, which quite suddenly accelerated around 1550. Finally, these patterns might also concur to the monetary offerings in the offertory box for the Lauds of the Holy Sacrament (cf. *infra*). Although the data are incomplete due to lacunae in the series of accounts, they show a sudden increase in the late 1530s and early 1540s. From 1555 onwards they were on a lower level (graph 25).¹⁷⁹

How are these quantitative developments to be interpreted in qualitative terms? Do these evolutions straightforwardly signify an increased participation in communion around 1550? Comparison with the demographical evolution of Zoutleuw suggests that there was no increased population that could account for the growth (graph 5). Yet, before drawing conclusions it is necessary to point out here that there were some changes in the religious landscape of town, with possible implications on parish life. As has been referred to above, in 1543 the Priory of Val des Écoliers at the southern border of town presented a request to the Pope in which they asked for abolition of their convent. The reason given was that their buildings did not permit a decent execution of their services. Although the request was granted it does not appear to have had any practical consequences, but in the years that followed a conflict arose

¹⁷⁸ For the conversion of the relevant measures of volume, see Craeybeckx & Verlinden, *Dokumenten voor de geschiedenis van prijzen en lonen*, vol. 1, p. 8, and Doursther, *Dictionnaire universel*, pp. 158 and 437-438.

¹⁷⁹ Two series of separate accounts exist: RAL, KAB, nrs. 1074 (1520-1533) and 1075 (1537-1544). In 1555 they were incorporated in the churchwarden accounts, see KR 1555, fol. 195v. See also *infra*.

about the material maintenance of the priory's church of Saint Sulpice. In 1553 the friars tried to have the city pay for the costs, but it was decided that they had to finance it themselves together with their patrons, the Abbeys of Vlierbeek and Saint Denis in Liège. A year later they tried once more, although this time they attacked the church fabric of Saint Leonard. In 1559 the case was brought before the Council of Brabant, which finally brought an end to the claims of Val des Écoliers in 1563.¹⁸⁰ It is nevertheless possible that the deplorable state of the church created an increased number of actual, communiating parishioners at the expense of the church fabric of Saint Leonard, and that this would have been reflected in the quantitative evolutions sketched above. The most marked changes indeed postdate 1543, and part of the parochial services indeed took place there, as the parish priest had the right to perform funeral services there.¹⁸¹ In further support of such an interpretation it can be mentioned that from 1556 onwards the accounts of Saint Leonard suddenly start to specify in which church or chapel funeral services were held, other than Saint Leonard's church itself, among others including the chapel of Saint John, Saint Sulpice's church, the chapel of Our Lady of the Ossenweg and the church of the beguinage. This probably was related to the writing of an act "concerning the palls," drawn up by the city secretary Henric Staes who was paid for it by the churchwardens in February.¹⁸² The fact that the church of the beguinage is included is especially interesting since it had its own priest who had the right to bury the dead and administrate the sacraments, although it is not clear whether this only counted for the beguines or also for the neighbours of the church. In any case, in a *pouillé* of 1558 it is still mentioned as a separate parish.¹⁸³

Although this sudden specification at first sight could suggest a changing income structure as a result of a supposed extension of Saint Leonard's parish rights, it is unclear whether this actually was the case. It might equally have concerned a reaffirmation of the current practice. Furthermore, although the available information is ambiguous, several arguments can be put forward to refute the possibility of an important increase in the number of parishioners accounting for the abovementioned rise in purchased communion wafers and wine. Already in the earliest preserved

¹⁸⁰ Pieyns-Rigo, 'Prieuré du Val-des-Ecoliers,' p. 1129.

¹⁸¹ Bets, *Zout-Leeuw*, vol. 2, p. 170.

¹⁸² KR 1555, fol. 215 (February 1556): "De selve [Henric Staes] van een achte te maken aengaende de lycleederen 4 st."

¹⁸³ De Ridder, 'Notice sur la géographie ecclésiastique,' pp. 141-142.

churchwarden accounts of Saint Leonard, expenses in relation to the priory church of Val des Écoliers are registered, suggesting that the church fabric *de facto* maintained the building. Thus, with regards to this church there would not have been any changes in the expenses. Furthermore, it is unlikely that a *de facto* incorporation of the beguinage and the priory into the parish of Saint Leonard's would have led to such dramatic increase as the quadrupling of the communion wine. For instance, a 1526 census reveals that at that moment there only were 36 beguines and 12 friars in the priory, and it is unlikely that given the unfavorable circumstances these numbers would have increased by mid-century.¹⁸⁴ Thus, if the number of potential communiating parishioners did not significantly augment, there are three possible explanations for the increasing quantities of communion wafers and wine: a greater number of parishioners participated in conventional communions, there were more occasions for communion per year, or a combination of both. Several entries from the accounts are revelatory in this respect. From 1556 onwards, the accounts start to record sums of money that were offered “on the table for the wine” (*opde tafel voer den wyn*).¹⁸⁵ This refers to a bench that was used at the occasion of the communion. It indeed appears that a sort of precursor of what would later develop into the highly elaborate, baroque communion rail or bench was already in use by at least the later fifteenth century. It is depicted in various visual sources, and also occurs in written accounts (fig. 72).¹⁸⁶ For instance, an entry in the 1540 account of Antwerp's church of Our Lady documents the acquisition of “six cloths to lay on the tables where the wine is given in the communing (*moenigen*) of the people.”¹⁸⁷ Similarly, the range of duties of the carillonneur of the church in Tiel (Gelre) included the preparation and decoration

¹⁸⁴ Marshall & Bogaerts, *Bibliothèque des antiquités belgiques*, vol. 2, p. 53.

¹⁸⁵ First mention KR 1556, Fol. 247r-v: “Item ontfangen te Kersmysse van offer voer den wijn opde tafel 8 st 3 plc... Item ontfangen te Paesschen van offer voer den wyn 37 st 15 g.”

¹⁸⁶ See for instance the miniature in a book of hours from Bruges of c. 1490-1495 in Brinkmann, *Die flämische Buchmalerei*, vol. 2, fig. 53, as well as the depiction on a cope of c. 1475, now in Bern (Historisches Museum, inv. 53). These and other relevant images are also included in the online database *Missa Medievalis*, ‘Kommunion’. On the contrary, Toussaert, *Le sentiment religieux*, p. 162 claimed that such furniture did not yet exist. They are not mentioned classic overviews such as Bangs, *Church art and architecture in the Low Countries*, or Reinle, *Die Ausstattung deutscher Kirchen im Mittelalter*. Another existing practice was the holding up of a white cloth between the priest and the communicant, as is depicted in the now lost miniature from the Turin-Milan Hours, of which an image is included in Durrieu, *Heures de Turin*, pl. XXVII. Compare with the miniature depicting the seven sacraments in Bruges, Potterie (BALaT object nr. 93403).

¹⁸⁷ “Gecocht by moeyken in O.L.V kapel 6 dweelen om te Paschen de tafelen mede te dekken daar men den wijn geeft int moenigen van den gemeynen volke.” See Prims, ‘Uit de kerkrekeningen van O.L.V. van Antwerpen,’ p. 119.

of “the bench where one receives the wine and bread.”¹⁸⁸ And in 1554-1555 the churchwardens of Saint Nicholas’ church in Diksmuide commissioned a new table from a local carpenter for that very purpose.¹⁸⁹ Apart from the recorded offerings, several other entries in the Zoutleeuw accounts suggests that a similar piece of furniture was in use in Zoutleeuw too.¹⁹⁰ The practice of offering money for the received communion wine is documented elsewhere well before the mid-sixteenth century, but it is unclear whether it existed in Zoutleeuw before too.¹⁹¹ Yet, whereas the first recordings only mention it at the occasion of Easter and Christmas, the practice would soon also be in vogue on other holidays. For instance, from 1561 onwards offerings for wine are recorded on Candlemas, and from at least 1566 onwards also on All Saints’ Day.¹⁹² Thus, although it is impossible to produce firm arguments for an increased number of parishioners participating in communion, it is safe to argue that lay communion happened or - at least - was proposed more frequently throughout the year. Furthermore, the amounts of money offered at the occasion of communion at Easter and Christmas also show an upward trend throughout the period under consideration (graph 26). It would be rash to interpret this as a reflection of the number of participants, but it does suggest a continued enthusiasm for the sacrament of communion, markedly intensifying around 1550. This chronology is all the more interesting, since it actually predates the decisions taken at the Council of Trent. Only in 1551, at its thirteenth session, would the Council reaffirm the doctrine of

¹⁸⁸ “... off veroident worden, dat men generalick ten Sacrament solde gaen, die communiceerbanck setten mit die banck, dair men den wiin aff ontfergt, ende idt bret, dair men die wiinkannen op settet, ende alle desen becleeden mit den cyraet dairtoe behoorende...” Van Veen, ‘Handboekje van den Tielschen pastoor,’ p. 110.

¹⁸⁹ “Betaelt Cornelis Spee, scrijwercker, voor tleveren ende maeken van... een buffet tafle om de lieden te berechten te hoochtiide...” Weale, *Les églises du doyenné de Dixmude*, p. 20. The verb “berechten” signified “communing,” see the online *Woordenboek der Nederlandsche Taal*.

¹⁹⁰ For instance KR 1566, Fol. 535 (August 1566): “Betalt Wouter Wouters ende heeft die banckens gereppereert diemen beesicht als men tOnssen Heer gaet, eenen dach 5 st.” See also Brian, ‘Catholic liturgies of the Eucharist,’ pp. 186-188.

¹⁹¹ Referred to by Toussaert as “nataelpennijnck” and by Meyers-Reinquin as “wijngeld.” See Toussaert, *Le sentiment religieux*, pp. 175-180 and Meyers-Reinquin, ‘Proeve tot statistische benadering,’ p. 210.

¹⁹² KR 1561, Fol. 384: “Ontffangen opden Lichtdach op die taeffel van offer voerden weyn 3 st 6 g.” KR 1566, Fol. 526v “Ontffangen op Alder Heylegghen dach op die taeffel voerden wyn 16 st 1,5 g.” Compare also with the list of holidays for which wine was bought in KR 1561, Fol. 400 (December 1561): “Betaelt den selven [Leonart van Ottenborch] van weyn die wy daer ghehaelt hebben op Alder Heyligen dach, Kersmisse, Lichtmisse ende ander hoechgheteyen ende lieffve vrouwen dagen ende totten luminaris tsamen 4 Kg 18 st 1 ort.” From 1551 onwards wine was also bought at the occasion of the sale of indulgences, see KR 1552, Fol. 112 (February 1553): “Betaelt Leonarde van Oettenborcht van diverse jaeren 51 ende 52 ende doen den aefflaet hier was wyn ghehaelt 80,5 q rynschen wyn die q 3,5 st, facit 14 Kg 7 orden.”

transubstantiation.¹⁹³ Although the decree made a distinction between sacramental and spiritual communion, it propagated a combination of both, and urged to “communicate [i.e. in a sacramental way] every year, at least at Easter.”¹⁹⁴ This was a reconfirmation of the Church Commandments laid down at the Fourth Latheran Council of 1215. In its twenty-first session of 1562 another decree would follow “on communion under both kinds” (*sub utraque specie*), meaning bread and wine. It stipulated that laypeople and non-officiating clergymen were not obliged to take both the consecrated host and wine in order to receive the grace necessary for salvation.¹⁹⁵ Thus, the developments sketched at Zoutleeuw can by no means be considered as an early implementation of the Tridentine decrees. Rather, it appears to have taken place independently, but unfortunately no information whatsoever exists on it being the result of an initiative from the clergy or resulting from increasing demands from the part of the congregation.

Comparison or contextualisation is difficult due to a lack of comparable studies. Little data has been published, and as the Zoutleeuw case shows they are often very difficult to interpret. For instance, very much like Zoutleeuw, the material collected by van Miert for Nijmegen shows a steady increase in the volumes of wine that were bought for the communicants between 1519 and 1543, and that Easter was by far the most popular occasion for this sacrament. Yet it is unclear how these increasing volumes of wine relate to contemporary demographical developments there.¹⁹⁶ Such influences have been called in as partial explanation for Lier, where the population demonstrably grew throughout the sixteenth century, in part as a result of quartered troops. It is nevertheless very interesting to notice that the quantities of wine and the number of hosts bought and the budget allotted to that purpose grew after 1545.¹⁹⁷ Also, an overall increasing trend in the monetary offerings for the communion wine between

¹⁹³ Daly, ‘The Council of Trent,’ esp. pp. 164-165.

¹⁹⁴ “... teneri singulis annis, saltem in Paschate, ad communicandum...” *Canones et decreta Sacrosancti Oecumenici et Generalis Concilii Tridentini*, fol. 32. In Silvius’ Middle Dutch translation of 1565 it was translated as “ten minsten jaerlicx te paesscen ten heyligen Sacramente te gaen...” The different sorts of communion are referred to as “sacramentelyck” and “gheestelyck.” See *Ordonnancien ende Decreten*, fols. 112r-v and 114v.

¹⁹⁵ “... datmen gheensins (met goeden gheloove) mach twijfelen, oft hunlieden [laypeople and clergy when not consecrating] het nutten van den sacramente, onder die eene van beyde de specien soude genoech wesen totter salicheit.” *Ordonnancien ende Decreten*, fol. 169. Elsewhere “specie” is translated as “ghestalten.” See also Daly, ‘The Council of Trent,’ p. 166, and Brian, ‘Catholic liturgies of the Eucharist,’ pp. 186-187.

¹⁹⁶ Van Miert, ‘Een bijdrage tot de geschiedenis der Eucharistie,’ pp. 121-123.

¹⁹⁷ Meuris, *Laat-middeleeuwse volksreligie te Lier*, pp. 107-114.

1548 and 1578 can be noted.¹⁹⁸ This was also the case in Turnhout, between 1533 and 1569.¹⁹⁹ In itself, these upward rather than downward tendencies are revealing. Clearly, whereas Eucharistic devotion became highly controversial after 1520 (as has been illustrated above), it certainly did not lose its appeal. Although participation in communion is not the same as Eucharistic piety, both are nevertheless strongly affiliated and expressions of the same theological principles. The cults of the Miraculous Hosts of Brussels and Leuven, both of which enjoyed renewed popularity, have already been discussed above. In Brussels, the confraternity of the Holy Sacrament in the church of St. Nicholas also had a large and constant membership throughout this period with around 100 members.²⁰⁰ Nothing is known about the attendance at Zoutleeuw's yearly Corpus Christi procession in which the consecrated host was paraded through town, but to judge by the accounts it remained in vogue. For Oudenaarde, for instance, it is well documented that such events continued to attract huge crowds from inside and outside town.²⁰¹ As a whole, these examples point to a continuity rather than a radical change.

4.2.2 Musical embellishment of the parish liturgy

The celebration of the Eucharist was of course the high point in the celebration of the mass, but there were many more aspects to it and it could be celebrated in many different ways. Thus, when the reformers attacked the Roman mass as the ritual it had developed into by their time, they were not only addressing the Eucharist as expression of the dogma of the Real Presence. The questioning and criticising of the traditional liturgy indeed included much more, not in the least the subject of the function and type of music in the rituals and celebrations.²⁰² Although it concerned all different sorts of music, both instrumental and vocal, from Gregorian plainchant to most elaborate polyphony, the attacks on the latter are best known. Just like many of

¹⁹⁸ Meuris, *Laat-middeleeuwse volksreligie te Lier*, pp. 74-78, Graph 18.

¹⁹⁹ Leysen, 'Het devotielevens in de Turnhoutse Sint-Pieterskerk,' pp. 57-59, Graph 4.

²⁰⁰ Roobaert, 'Michiel van Coxcie,' esp. pp. 299-300, Appendix II.

²⁰¹ Ramakers, *Spelen en figuren*. Halkin, *Réforme protestante et réforme catholique*, pp. 206-208 suggested that in Liège the number of processions increased, and also Goudriaan, 'Het einde van de Middeleeuwen ontdekt,' p. 74 claimed that they occurred much more frequently after 1520. Compare with France, where the increasing number of processions with relics in the 1530s and 1540s has been directly linked to protestant reproaches: Jobin, 'L'attitude des protestants face aux reliques,' pp. 134-135.

²⁰² Bouckaert & Schreurs, *Stemmen in het kapittel*, p. 45.

the reformers' other points of contention that have been discussed above, they stood within a longer tradition of critiques, however. In the later Middle Ages a number of official church councils even had forbidden such music, and it comes as no surprise that like many other wordly vanities it was strongly condemned by Savonarola. Later, Erasmus' notorious critiques are revelatory for the reasons why there was such a relatively broad-fronted opposition to the melismatic decoration. From at least 1519 onwards he regularly uttered his profound dissatisfaction, and at one instance he called it unintelligible "ornamental neighing."²⁰³ The elaborate and ornamental character of late medieval polyphony was considered as unnecessarily distracting from the text that was sung, i.e. the word of God. For similar reasons it was treated as a problematic issue by the reformers as well. Much like their critiques on images and the Eucharist, their critiques were meant to reduce the superfluous embellishments to their physical essence. Karlstadt, for instance, claimed that plainchant was "merely sound, nothing else." Yet, the respective positions of the various reformers strongly differed, just like the consequences they drew from their observations. Here as elsewhere, Luther arguably took up the most moderate position, whereas Calvin and Zwingli had the most radical opinions. For instance, whereas Luther had Gregorian chant replaced by congregational hymns in 1522, a year later Zwingli devoted himself to fully abolish all church music.²⁰⁴

The fact that the clergy was represented as the "devil's bagpipes" in widely distributed satirical prints such as the one by Erhard Schön of around 1530 is a clear expression of this Protestant conception of the clergy being inextricably bound up with music (fig. 73).²⁰⁵ Another woodcut that must have circulated in the Low Countries around 1566 shows a satirical depiction of the mass with the clergy being represented as foxes (fig. 74). It is entitled 'the mass of the hypocrites' (*De misse der ijpcrijten* or *La messe des Hippocrits*) and contains two lines in both Dutch and French. Here, too, music is given a leading part: on the right side a fox plays the organ while on the left a choir sings from a songbook on a lectern, and in the upper left another fox rings the bell at the occasion of the consecration. Clearly, the anti-Roman cartoonist considered the liturgical music - both vocal and instrumental - as quintessential characteristics of

²⁰³ Quote in Bouckaert & Schreurs, *Stemmen in het kapittel*, p. 50.

²⁰⁴ Kist, 'Het kerkelijk orgel-gebruik,' pp. 228-238. A helpful overview is provided by Wegman, *The crisis of music*, pp. 181-185, Appendix 1. On Luther in particular, see Leaver, *Luther's liturgical music*. On the continuation of the debate into the seventeenth-century Dutch Republic, see Schwartz, 'Saenredam, Huygens and the Utrecht bull'.

²⁰⁵ On this print, see Bartrum, *German Renaissance Prints*, p. 95.

‘popish hypocrisy’. It is in this context that the massive destruction of organs and liturgical songbooks during the *Beeldenstorm* must be understood, as they were the material embodiments of this essential yet thorny aspect of the traditional liturgy.²⁰⁶ In Tournai, for instance, one man was condemned by the Council of Troubles for having “torn down and broken the organs in the church of Saint Brice, saying that they have made God dance enough *musettes*,” the latter referring to a traditional pastoral dance to the sound of bagpipes.²⁰⁷ Thus, here again, in a carnivalesque way a clear link was made between Roman practices and devilish bagpipes, traditionally associated with lust. Music had not been a major issue at the Council of Trent, however. The decrees in which it is discussed only do so in passing, and the only guidelines were rather limited and vague in contents. Much like in the decrees on images, it tried to do away with all lascivious and impure elements. Specific directions on the actual execution of the traditional repertoire were left for the bishops to give on provincial synods.²⁰⁸

Still, although the musical embellishment of the Roman liturgical ceremonies clearly was a major point of contention, it must be emphasized that music took up a prime role within Protestant rituals and actions as well. However, contrary to the elaborate musical arrangements of the Latin liturgy, theirs was mainly vocal music with texts in the vernacular. Many of the indexes of prohibited books that had been published in the preceding years - first by secular authorities, and in 1559 for the first time by the Church of Rome - contained songbooks.²⁰⁹ Many of these doubtlessly contained satirical songs, but by the early 1540s the Reformed practice of congregational singing also had stimulated the production and distribution of musical arrangements of the

²⁰⁶ In general, see Bangs, *Church art and architecture*, pp. 83-94. Specific examples can be cited, among many others, for Breda (Beenakker, *Breda in de eerste storm*, pp. 71-72), Ghent (Scheerder, *Het wonderjaar te Gent*, pp. 103-116) and Utrecht (Scheerder, *De Beeldenstorm*, pp. 82-85).

²⁰⁷ “... chargé d’avoir avecq aultres pillé et sacagé en leglise Saint Brixie, et meisme d’avoir happé, abbatu et brisé les orghues dicelle eglise, disant quon avoit fait assez danser dieu des musettes.” RAB, Raad van Beroerten, nr. 6, fol. 43v-44.

²⁰⁸ See Beghein, *Kerkmuziek, consumptie en confessionalisering*, pp. 32-33.

²⁰⁹ See for instance the Leuven index of 1546, *Mandement der Keyserlijcker Maiesteit*, s.p.: “Een schoon liedekens bouck in welcken ghy vinden sult veelderhande liedekens oude ende nieuwe. Dit es een suverlijcke boucxken, int welcke staen veel schoonder leysenen in latyn ende duytsche, ende veel schoonder gheestlijcke liedekens... Item een hoochduyts boecxken geheeten Enchiridion gheestelijcke ghesanghen, sonder naem des autheurs.” See also Kronenberg, *Verboden boeken en opstandige drukkers*, pp. 44, 129-130.

psalms and their translation from Latin into the vernacular.²¹⁰ The most famous reworkings are those by the French poet Clément Marot, some of which Calvin himself had collected and published as *Aulcuns Pseaulmes* (Strasbourg 1539), which subsequently also came into use in the Reformed services. Later, in 1541 and 1543, Marot published some other adaptations himself, which were soon put on the index. At the very same time a full translation was also available in Dutch, probably made by the Utrecht nobleman Willem van Zuylen van Nijvelt. They were arranged on the melodies of popular and at the time widely-known songs, and published as *Souterliedekens* in Antwerp in 1540. Although a Reformed touch might be discernable in this collection and the Church of Rome distrusted it, surprisingly it was never put on the index.²¹¹ Later, both the Ghent artist Lucas de Heere and Petrus Datheen published their translations of Marot, respectively in 1565 and 1566 (both as *De Psalmen Davids*). Such collections, adaptations and their performance played an increasing role towards the Wonderyear. An inquiry into the events at Brandwijk (near Dordrecht) revealed that “the parish priest had come into the church, ascended the pulpit without stole or cope, during which Dutch psalms were sung and after which the priest delivered his sermon in such way.”²¹² They were also a crucial element at the so-called hedge-preachings (*hagenpreken*). For instance, on 7 July 1566 it was noted that in Antwerp many people went to these sermons, armed with weapons as well as with Marot’s psalms which reportedly were for sale in Ghent for a small price.²¹³ It is overtly clear that the singing of these psalms by the interested audience both during and after the sermons was considered highly provocative. At several instances the crowds walked in battle-array through cities while singing the psalms. For example, a number of weeks before the actual outbreak of the *Beeldenstorm*, a singing group of Calvinists came into the city of Ieper and marched to the town hall.²¹⁴ The singing continued throughout the iconoclastic acts as well. Such was the case in Antwerp, where they immediately preceded the destructions in the Cathedral, which led an observer to remark that Marot’s psalms “have always served as foreboding and

²¹⁰ On the crucial role of song in the spreading of the Reformation, see especially Oettinger, *Music as propaganda*.

²¹¹ Mincoff-Marriage, *Souterliedekens*, p. xiii.

²¹² “Ende es die pastoor inde kercke comende ter stondt opte preeckstoel gegaen sonder stole ofte coorcleet. Ende worde daer duytsche psalmen gesongen ende die pastoor dede voorts alsoe zijn sermoen.” RAB, Raad van Beroerten, nr. 115, fol. 48.

²¹³ Parker, *The Dutch Revolt*, p. 73.

²¹⁴ Mack Crew, *Calvinist Preaching and Iconoclasm*, p. 8, Arnade, *Beggars, iconoclasts, and civic patriots*, pp. 98 and 129.

countersign at all their [the Calvinists'] ventures."²¹⁵ And the chamber of rhetoric in Den Briel reportedly held a mock trial against images and liturgical books, which they burned while singing psalms and satirical songs.²¹⁶ Thus, it is not surprising that afterwards it was also considered a major crime by the Council of Troubles. In Cassel, a man was condemned for having "sung publicly the forbidden psalms, scandalizing everybody," and in Tournai somebody was suspected of having "sold psalms and forbidden books."²¹⁷

The lay appropriation, reworking and translation of sacred songs into the vernacular, as well as their performance in other contexts than within the liturgical confines of the consecrated church building was clearly considered unacceptable in the eyes of the Catholic authorities. Although devotional songs in the vernacular certainly existed in civic or paraliturgical contexts, the musical embellishment of liturgical services was in the first place a task of the clergy: in smaller parish churches it was performed by the officiating priest, whereas in collegiate churches the whole chapter was supposed to perform the prayers at the canonical hours.²¹⁸ Often schoolmasters were called in with their pupils as well, and the common musical background for the singing of these different voices was provided by the organ player, mostly appointed. It goes without saying that larger churches with a higher number of active clergymen had more potential to perform elaborate musical services, but a lot depended also on foundations and patronage. At many places ensembles of professional musicians under the direction of a *zangmeester* were erected with secular funding, either private or by confraternities. Contrary to many clergymen, these singers were schooled in the newest musical developments and were thus able to perform highly complex arrangements. Nevertheless, in absence of any musical repertoire it is often very difficult to establish whether the musical arrangements were polyphonic or not. Generally it is assumed that at normal services Gregorian chant was sung, whereas polyphony was reserved for the important feast days and performed by external musicians. Such was for instance still the case in the Antwerp parish churches in the second half of the sixteenth

²¹⁵ "... qui ont tousjours servy d'advertence et de mot du guet en toutes leurs entreprises." Henne, *Mémoires de Pontus Payen*, vol. 1, p. 177.

²¹⁶ Freedberg, *Iconoclasm and painting in the Netherlands*, p. 111.

²¹⁷ "... zynghende openbaerlijc de verboden psalmen in scandale van eenen yeghelicken tot den daghe van uwer apprehentien," and "vendu pseaulmes et livres reprouvez." RAB, Raad van Beroerten, nr. 6, resp. fols. 266 (Cassel) and 277 (Tournai).

²¹⁸ For examples of pre-Reformation, devotional songs in the vernacular, see Oettinger, *Music as propaganda*, pp. 55-60.

century.²¹⁹ In Zoutleeuw, no liturgical songbooks have been preserved, as a result of which it is almost impossible to evaluate the performances.²²⁰ Some information can still be collected from the accounts, however, because since the parish services were the responsibility of church fabrics, they functioned as important consumers of church music. They paid the wages of the musicians, and they were responsible for both the acquisition and maintenance of musical books and instruments.²²¹ Until the middle of the sixteenth century traces of professional musicians in the liturgy are very rare in the Zoutleeuw accounts, apart from the organ player who was appointed permanently and paid by the church fabric, and some sporadic mentions of singers (*senghers*) in the course of the 1480s. Neither is there any evidence of the town having a regional reputation for exceptional musical education. Yet, at mid-century quite suddenly a whole series of indications occur that quite consistently point to an increasing musical adornment of a number of masses.

A first cluster of evidence is related to the mass performed at the occasion of the feast day of Saint Leonard (6 November). As has been discussed in the previous part, this was the conclusion of an annual cycle of masses in late October and early November - the so-called 'four masses' - related to the consecration of Saint Leonard's chapel (21 October). Traditionally, these masses were celebrated solemnly with a priest, deacon and subdeacon, and the musical embellishment was provided by the chapter school choir, accompanied by organ music. Exceptionally, in the course of the 1480s the burgomasters ordered several payments to "the singers because they help to augment the honor of the church." These commissions may have been related to the festivities at Saint Leonard's day, but the evidence is unclear and in any case no such payments occur afterwards.²²² In general no use seems to have been made of external,

²¹⁹ Bouckaert & Schreurs, *Stemmen in het kapittel*, p. 35; Beghein, *Kerkmuziek, consumptie en confessionalisering*, p. 53.

²²⁰ Some fragments with musical notations have however been used in the binding of archival documents, such as the account of the chapel of Our Lady of the Ossenweg in RAL, KAB, nr. 1075. An inventory of music books, dating to 1657, includes mainly post-Tridentine composers from a surprising rich geographical variety, including the Low Countries (Joannes Dromael (after 1600-1684), Etienne Bernard (c. 1569-1600)), England (Peter Philips (c.1560-1628)), Germany (Michael Praetorius (1571-1621)) and Italy (Crisostomo Rondinio (1576-1628), Paolo Tarditi (c. 1580-1661), Francesco Colombini (1588-1671)). See de Ridder, 'Een oud inventaris,' p. 71.

²²¹ Beghein, *Kerkmuziek, consumptie en confessionalisering*, pp. 27-32.

²²² KR 1484, fol. 135v (November): "Item den senghers bij bevele der borgenmeesteren ende custers van vele anderen daghe voer gesciet sijnde tsamen gegeven 18 st." KR 1486, fol. 248v (January): "Item ghescinct den senghers om dat sij die ere vander kerken hulpen vermeerderen 10 st." KR 1487, fol. 303 (May): "Item wt

professional musicians, suggesting that the singing was relatively uncomplicated - Gregorian? - regardless of the musical accompaniment. This changed over the course of the 1540s, when the mass for Saint Leonard was increased by the addition of professional singers under the direction of an independent *zangmeester*.²²³ The accounts confirm that this is a novelty that nearly doubled the budget for the celebrations. While the price for the four masses itself remains stable to around 20 or 30 *stuivers*, new payments of another 20 *stuivers* were added to the costs. Furthermore, it is clear that this addition was not due to a private foundation. Just as was the case in the 1480s, at several occasions it is specified that the payments were done by order of the burgomasters (*uwv bevel van borghenmeesters*).²²⁴ Directed by Master Jan *den sangmeester*, the singers were hired in other towns in the region.²²⁵ In 1547 it is specified that the group was based in Diest, whereas in 1550 they hailed from Sint-Truiden. Although nothing is known about the latter, the group from Diest had a wider regional reputation. At Whit Monday 1537, for instance, *dy sengers van Diest* are known to have sung the mass in Kuringen.²²⁶ There is indeed ample evidence of Diest being a

bevele vanden burghemeesteren gegeven den senger 20 st." Compare with van Autenboer, 'De reus en de ommegang van Zoutleeuw,' p. 411, note 8. Cf. supra, I, Conclusion.

²²³ KR 1547, fol. 274 (November 1547): "Betaelt Meester Jan Jelviedoy met die zanghers van Diest, uwv bevel van borghenmeesters gegeven 20 st"; KR 1548, fol. 311: "Ghegeven Ghielen van Doen met consente van boergemesters van in Sinte Lenaert dage dy messe helpen te singen 20 st"; KR 1548, fol. 315: "Ghegeven meester Jan van Doen om dobbel pampier te copen om enen sanboeck te maken 12 st"; KR 1549, fol. 351v (November 1549): "Betaelt Meester Jan den sangher 20 st"; KR 1549, fol. 356v (January 1550): "Betaelt Mr. Jan de Sangmeester van een boeck pampiers te coepen in grote forme om sanck inne te scryven 4 st"; KR 1549, fol. 362 (June 1550): "Betaelt Meester Jan die Sangmeester van eenen boeck van duyskant in groete forme 6 Kg"; KR 1550, fol. 24 (December 1550): "Betaelt Jan Coens van dat meester Jan de sangmeester met die sangher van Synctruyden dair verteert hadden duerre bevelle van borgemeesters ghegeven 23 st"; KR 1550, fol. 25v (January 1551): "Betaelt Mr. Jan die sangher te helen eenen boeck uwv bevel van borgemeesters ende scepenen 16 st"; KR 1551, fol. 55 (July 1551): "Betaelt meester Jan de sangmeester van dat hy de meesse ghesonden heeft op Syncte Leonardts dacht 20 st"; KR 1554, fol. 149 (September 1554): "Item gegeven den sangers van die misse in discant te singen op Sinte Leonarts dach 12 st"; KR 1557, fol. 304 (September 1557): "Ghegeven den sangers van op Sinte Lenaerts dach de meesse ende loff te singen 15 st."

²²⁴ Van Autenboer, 'De reus en de ommegang van Zoutleeuw,' p. 411, note 8 referred to one unique but similar entry in the civic accounts of 1536, when singers from Sint-Truiden came over on Saint Leonard's day.

²²⁵ This man does not appear to have been documented by other studies. Although he is mostly referred to as "Meester Jan den sangher" or "sangmeester" (1549, 1550, 1551), his real name might have been Jan Ghielen van Doen. Whereas in 1548 the accounts both use "Ghielen van Doen" and "Jan van Doen" in relation to the mass, in 1547 he is called "Meester Jan Jelviedoy," which might be a phonetical contraction of "Jan Ghielen van Doen."

²²⁶ Grauwels, *Dagboek van gebeurtenissen*, p. 49. In 1532 some singers from Diest also took part in the Whit Monday procession at Zoutleeuw. See van Autenboer, 'De reus en de ommegang van Zoutleeuw,' p. 414.

relatively important musical center in Brabant in the later fifteenth and sixteenth centuries, as singers from that town are mentioned in some very important churches in the Duchy that had impressive musical ensembles, including the churches of Our Lady at Bergen op Zoom, Breda and 's-Hertogenbosch.²²⁷ This is indicative for the skill that was concentrated in Diest, and by extension it illustrates the aims and ambitions that must have been at play for the Zoutleeuw authorities. All the evidence indeed points to relatively elaborate arrangements. The accounts reveal that the musicians “helped sing the mass at Saint Leonard’s day” (*in Sinte Lenaert dage dy messe helpen te singen*), but at the latest from 1557 onwards it also included lauds (*loff*). Such ceremonies were extra-liturgical devotional services that were given particular musical attention, although the actual execution and interpretation varied from place to place and depended on the available funds. Essential was the singing of antiphons and hymns, often accompanied by organ music, but more than other sorts of services *loven* included polyphony.²²⁸ This appears to have been the case in Zoutleeuw as well. Saint Leonard’s mass is known to have been sung in discant, for which purpose a large songbook “in discant” (*van duyskant*) was commissioned from Master Jan *den sangmeester* in 1548-1549. Although during this particular period the term discant is open to several interpretations, in this case it doubtlessly refers to a polyphonic singing technique in which one or more upper voices were added as counterpoint to a pre-existing plainchant part, thus creating at least two different voices and melodies. This was by no means a new phenomenon in the mid-sixteenth century, but it was still considered a marvellous thing. In 1545, for instance, chaplain Christiaan Munters still deemed it worthy to be mentioned in his diary that a whole mass was sung in discant in the church at Kuringen.²²⁹ This option of adding extra, melodious layers to pre-existing musical structures has been described as ‘ornament’ by modern scholars, but as has been pointed out above it was also considered as such by contemporaneous

²²⁷ For examples, see Wegman, ‘Music and Musicians at the Guild of Our Lady,’ pp. 175-176, 194-195, note 38 (Ghyskene den choraël van Dyste, 1479 and 1480) and 245 (Henricke Haudijn van Diest, 1505-1542); Paquay, ‘Breda, Bredanaars en de Onze-Lieve-Vrouwekerk,’ p. 77, note 149 (Trudo van Diest, 1492, and Hendrik van Diest, 1504); Smijers, ‘De Illustre Lieve Vrouwe Broederschap te 's-Hertogenbosch,’ pp. 188 (Henrico van Diest, 1477-1478), 218 (sengmeester van Diest, 1498-1499), 67 (Henricken van Diest, 1507-1508), 72 (jongen senger van Diest, 1509-1510) and 226 (bass van Diest, 1540-1541); Vente, ‘De Illustre Lieve Vrouwe Broederschap te 's-Hertogenbosch,’ p. 39 (1554).

²²⁸ Trio & Hagg, ‘The archives of confraternities in Ghent and music,’ esp. pp. 72-78, Wegman, ‘Music and Musicians at the Guild of Our Lady,’ p. 185.

²²⁹ “Dies jovis heeft myn heer dy mes vanden heyligen gebenedyden sacrament gehoert van her Joris in dy kerck van Curinghen ende syn sengers songen dy geheel mes in ditscant.” Grauwels, *Dagboek van gebeurtenissen*, p. 192. See also p. 49.

observers such as Erasmus and the Reformers, many of whom considered it superfluous embellishments.²³⁰ In sum, this new addition to the traditional mass for the church's patron saint must have represented a considerable ornamental elaboration to this high point in the Zoutleeuw liturgical year.

Around the same time such musical elaboration was also introduced on another feast day in November. From 1559 onwards, a group of singers was yearly paid around 15 or 20 *stuivers* at the occasion of Saint Cecilia's day (22 November).²³¹ The precise activities of these musicians are unknown, but the fact that they are also referred to as *duytskanters* suggests that they sang the upper voice(s) in celebrations sung in the discant technique, just like at the occasion of Saint Leonard's day.²³² In fact, these two polyphonic, discant novelties seem to be related to a much broader tendency of considerable investments in music in Saint Leonard's church in precisely these momentous years. In February 1555, for instance, a lectern for the singers (*lesseneer voer de sangers*) was made, and in the following months and years costs for the acquisition or production of songbooks occur regularly, suggesting that the repertoire was extended by new works or arrangements. In most cases the precise nature of these musical collections remains unspecified, merely being referred to as *sancboeck*, but one entry of September 1559 documents the commissioning of the writing of a mass *in muesycke* from Willem van Dalem, dean of the collegiate chapter at that time.²³³ It has been demonstrated that in such contexts in the Low Countries the term *musieck* or *musica* unambiguously referred to polyphonic arrangements, which thus also must have been the case for the written mass in question.²³⁴ Another cluster of evidence is related to the foundation of the Lauds of the Holy Sacrament (*heylich sacraments loff* or *laudes venerabilis sacramenti*), weekly celebrated on Thursdays. As has been

²³⁰ Wright, *Music and ceremony*, pp. 70 and 357. See also Kavalier, 'Renaissance Gothic in the Netherlands,' pp. 238-239 for a relevant comparison of the use of discrete motifs in the different arts of architecture, music and poetry.

²³¹ First mention KR 1559, fol. 347 (September 1559): "Betaelt den sanghers op Sinte Cecilien dach 15 st."

²³² KR 1565, fol. 533 (July 1565, "duytskanters"); KR 1567, fol. 438v (July 1567, "duidskanters"); KR 1569, fol. 508v (September 1569, "duitskanters"). Compare with KR 1549, fol. 362 (June 1550, "eenen boeck van duyskant"), and Grauwels, *Dagboek van gebeurtenissen*, p. 192 ("ditscant").

²³³ KR 1554, fol. 158v (February 1555); KR 1555, fol. 213 (December 1555): "De selve [Henrick de Boeckbinder] heeft enen sancboeck ghebonden met 12 percamenten bladren 2 Kg"; KR 1559, fol. 348 (September 1559): "Betaelt Willem van Dalem van een misse in muesycke te scrijven 10 st"; KR 1561, fol. 400v (December 1561): "Betaelt eenen sancboeck voer die sanghers 30 st." For van Dalem, see RAL, KAB, nrs. 1043, fols. 9, 12v and 18v ("meester Willem van Dalem ons deken"), and 1048, unfoliated ("Magistri Wilhelmi de Dalem decani").

²³⁴ Beghein, *Kerkmuziek, consumptie en confessionalisering*, p. 100.

mentioned above, such *lof* ceremonies traditionally contained much musical embellishment, and to judge by the fragmentarily preserved accounts of the Zoutleeuw foundation, between 1533 and 1537 the expenses significantly increased. Unfortunately, no details are available on the precise arrangements of this ceremony and its evolution (cf. *infra*).

Finally, the supposedly increased attention for musical performances in Saint Leonard's church is also reflected in expenditures for the organ. From 1508 onwards the salary of the organ player had been fixed at 400 *stuivers* a year, but in 1557 it was suddenly raised significantly to 520 *stuivers*. In itself this might have been related to generally increasing wages throughout the sixteenth century, but in this particular context it is clearly linked to a number of investments in the instrument itself. Sensitive to climatic changes, the organ was of course a near-constant debit item. It had to be tuned on a regular basis, the leather bellows had to be greased or repaired, and the instrument had to be furnished with iron locks or wooden doors. Although the terminology used is confusing and far from standardized, it is clear that by the middle of the sixteenth century at least two different instruments were in use in Saint Leonard's church: a relatively small, positive organ on the rood loft (*een posetyff opten ocksale*) and a great organ high up against the church wall (referred to as *den organen metten stoele* or *tgroet orghelwerck*, compare figs. 75 & 82).²³⁵ It is likely to have been located near the choir in the southern transept, above the church doors and between the two windows in the eastern wall, where it could both serve for the celebrations in the presbytery as well as in Saint Leonard's chapel.²³⁶ This great organ especially appears to have been the subject of some important reparation and extension campaigns, led by some of the most renowned organ manufacturers in the Low Countries.²³⁷ In the 1470s and 1480s the works were supervised by Jan II van Aren, son of Jan I (act. 1458-1467) who had been in the service of Duke Philip the Good. In 1487, he was commissioned to "reform" (*reformeerde*) the organ for a sum of 45

²³⁵ See for instance KR 1533, fol. 192v (June 1534) versus KR 1487, fol. 303v (June 1488) and KR 1506, fol. 22 (March 1507). The term "posetyff" was also used in a general way to refer to a keyboard, or a part of the great organ. See for instance KR 1508, fol. 292v (May 1509): "vanden positijf inden stoel."

²³⁶ In 1503 the organ is described as located above church doors, other than the north portal. KR 1503, fols. 20v-21 (October 1503, "dat slot vander kerckdoeren onder dorganen"). Apart from the portal in the south transept the only other possibility is the west portal, but that would have been far from where the celebrations took place, and it is furthermore unclear if that was already in use in 1503.

²³⁷ Most of the relevant sources and identifications have been published by Vente, *Proeve van een repertorium*, pp. 164-165.

Rijns gulden.²³⁸ Between 1501 and 1508 the instrument was again rebuilt by Daniël van der Distelen (doc. 1472-1508), based in Antwerp and Mechelen but active in the most important churches in the whole Duchy of Brabant. His work in Zoutleeuw was generically referred to as *makene*, making it unclear what precisely he did, but his salary of 55 *Rijns gulden* again suggests a fundamental intervention.²³⁹ Later some minor reworkings by Anthonis Toers (doc. 1525-1555) from Tienen followed, such as in 1525, when a set of eighteen pipes was added to the instrument, and 1533-1534.²⁴⁰ Yet, the most important investments were done in the 1550s. In 1554 and 1555 Anthonis Toers installed a set of new pipes, as well as a new *roeperken*, after which the whole organ was repaired, cleaned and tuned.²⁴¹ Later, however, the churchwardens approached *meester Claes den orgelmaker*, identified by organ specialist Maarten Vente as Nicolaas Niehoff (c. 1525-c. 1604), who was a member of a dynasty of organ builders active all over the Low Countries and up to Hamburg and Lüneburg. His intervention is again merely described as *maken*, but it certainly included the installation of a set of 22 new pipes and a register called *tbaerdoenken* (bourdon), which was an organ stop with a low pitch and a characteristic dark, droning tone. Master Claes was hosted by a citizen throughout the time he worked on the Zoutleeuw organ, and in the end he was paid 108 *Karolus gulden* - a high amount indicative of the extent of the work done.²⁴²

²³⁸ KR 1473, fol. 122 (September 1473, “Meester Jan der Orghelmeester van Lovenen”); KR 1487, fols. 298 (July 1487) and 301v-303v (February-June 1488, “Meester Jan van Aren, orghelmekere”). See on this intervention and on the van Aren family in general Vente, *Proeve van een repertorium*, pp. 164 and 220-221, note 2; idem, *Bouwstoffen*, p. 55; Gerits, ‘Aantekeningen over de orgelmakers van Aren’.

²³⁹ KR 1500, fols. 15v (October 1500), 16v (December 1500) and 17 (January 1501, “meester Daneel den Orgelmaker”); KR 1503, fol. 18 (August 1503, “meester Daneel vander Dijstelen”); KR 1505, fols. 15 (September 1505) and 21v (March 1506); KR 1506, fol. 22 (March 1507); KR 1508, fol. 292v (May 1509). On van der Distelen in general and the Zoutleeuw works in particular, see Stellfeld, ‘Bronnen tot de geschiedenis,’ pp. 41-49; Vente, *Die brabantse Orgel*, p. 21; idem, *Proeve van een repertorium*, p. 164; Bush & Kassel, *The organ*, p. 146. On instrument from van der Distelen has (at least partly) survived in Saint Germanus’s church, Tienen. See Deschrevel, ‘Het orgelmeubel in de Sint-Germanuskerk,’ and idem, ‘Het vander Distelen-orgel’.

²⁴⁰ KR 1525, fols. 119 (September 1525) and 120v (December 1525); KR 1533, fols. 183v (January 1534), 185r-186 (February 1534) and 188-190 (April 1534). See also Vente, *Proeve van een repertorium*, p. 143. Toers (also called Antonis Toers Janssoen van Hasselt) also worked for the Abbey of Averbode, where he installed an important new organ in 1530 for the price of 70 *gulden*. For this work, see van der Mueren, *Het orgel in de Nederlanden*, pp. 29, 176-177 and 251-254.

²⁴¹ KR 1554, fols. 154r-159v (December 1554-February 1555) and 169 (June 1555).

²⁴² KR 1557, Fol. 304v (September 1557), 308v (January 1558) and 309v (February 1558); KR 1559, fols. 346 (August 1559), 347 (September 1559), 349 (October 1559), 351v-352v (December 1559), 357 (April 1560), 359v (June 1560); Vente, *Die brabantse Orgel*, p. 90.

Put together, all of these elements should be considered as indicative of a marked and renewed interest in religious music in the parish liturgy in the late 1540s and 1550s. In fact, this does not appear to have been limited to Zoutleeuw alone and can be linked to broader trends. It has already been remarked that after the dose of criticisms described above, the ancient concept of music as praise of God was enlivened anew around 1560. The sudden popularity of Saint Cecilia in particular seems to be an apt expression of that trend. At least from the fifteenth century onwards she was associated with music, iconographically represented with instruments such as a viola or a portative organ. Gradually she would take on the role of patron saint of church music, and by extension also of musicians in general. Much like in Zoutleeuw, in Wezemaal's church of Saint Martin, the practice of yearly giving singers 22 *stuivers* at the occasion of Saint Cecilia's day was established by 1563, too.²⁴³ The popularity of this saint was also reflected in paintings of the period. In the course of the 1560s, Michiel Coxcie painted a refined ode to the martyr, of which the most famous version was bought by King Philip II in 1569 (fig. 76). Crowned with a richly inlaid diadem and accompanied by three angels, Cecilia is playing a harpsichord. The heavenly group is performing music from three printed music books, which can be identified as copies of Petrus Phalesius' 1559 edition of motets by Jacob Clemens non Papa (c. 1510-c. 1555). The texts in the books are in fact clearly legible. This not only shows that the group is singing a polyphonic, four-part piece ("*4 vocum*"), but also reveals the specific song, which itself is an ode to the very saint, being entitled *Cecilia virgo gloriosa*.²⁴⁴ Coxcie's ode to the musical saint proved to be very popular, judging by the series of extant copies, some of which are still kept in churches in the Low Countries.²⁴⁵ Although these all slightly differ from the Prado version, being reduced in size and simplified in composition, they still retain the key figure of the angel looking straight out to the viewer. Just like in the larger version, they display the clearly legible notes and text of the ode to Saint Cecilia to the onlookers, thus inciting the viewer to join them in their praise. The veneration of Saint Cecilia in the middle and later sixteenth century was a larger,

²⁴³ "Op Ste Cecilien dach in tijden deser reekeningen gegeven den sangeren tot behulp van hennen gelage naerden ouden costumen." Minnen, *Den heyligen sant*, vol. 1, pp. 98-100.

²⁴⁴ Van Durme, *Les archives générales de Simancas*, p. 202, nr. 913. The edition represented on the painting is *Liber quartus cantionum sacrarum vulgo moteta vocant quatuor vocum*, 4 vols., Leuven 1559. See Fischer, *Music in paintings of the Low Countries*, p. 12.

²⁴⁵ The extant versions are in Bierbeek (Saint Hilarius, BALaT nr. 32354), Liège (Musée des Beaux-Arts, inv. BA 214, BALaT nr. 10128874) and Zichem (Saint Eustace, BALaT nr. 26634), as well as the copy sold at Christie's, Monte-Carlo, 30 June 1995, lot 16. Fischer mentions still another version in a private collection, see Fischer, *Music in paintings of the Low Countries*, p. 12.

European phenomenon. For instance, in 1571 a prestigious confraternity was erected in honour of the martyr in the Cathedral of Our Lady of Evreux (Normandy), instituting a yearly celebration of the patron saint on her feast day. Later, from 1575 onwards, the confraternity furthermore organized a yearly musical competition that would become highly prestigious. Interestingly, the documents in relation to these particular foundations refer to other, similar musical celebrations on the saint's feast day elsewhere in Christendom.²⁴⁶ In the 1570s plans were also made for the founding of the *Congregazione de' musici di Roma* in honour of Saints Cecilia and Gregory the Great, which was officially confirmed by a papal bull of Pope Sixtus V in 1585.

It is tempting to connect the developments described here with the broad current of Protestant critiques discussed above and see them in a causal relationship wherein the critiques evoked an intense reaction. The processes of intensification, elaboration and increasing ornamentation that have been touched upon are indeed diametrically opposed to growing demands for simplicity instead of complex polyphony during the services, as well as to an ideal of vernacular, congregational plainchant - two ideals that occur in various forms and intensity in different religious groupings on the Protestant spectrum. In theory such a causal relationship is therefore perfectly possible, and there are some scholars who have drawn similar conclusions. For instance, Eric Rice has studied liturgical changes in the 1570s in Aachen Cathedral in this context. With regards to the liturgy for Charlemagne in particular he argued that the alteration of traditional plainchant melodies into a polyphonic setting was a direct reaction to the Reformation. This new musical treatment would have added both ornament and rhetorical power to the services.²⁴⁷ Most recently, Stefanie Beghein has described church music as a tool of confessionalization in the later sixteenth and early seventeenth century. Studying the musical culture in the Antwerp parish churches during the Counter-Reformation, she found an increased attention to and interest in professional and polyphonic music. Expenses for musical performances during parish services increased, which was but one expression of a general policy that attached a renewed importance to the embellishment of the parochial liturgy. She interpreted this as Catholic self-representation, distinguishing itself from the simple, unaccompanied

²⁴⁶ "... soubz l'invocation de laquelle [Saint Cecilia], en plusieurs endroitz de la chrétienté, ont esté faictes plusieurs belles fondations par les zélateurs du service de Dieu, amateurs de l'art de musique, qui tous les ans au jour et feste de ladite vierge chantent motetz, hymnes et louanges à Dieu le Créateur et à elle." Bonnin & Chassant, *Puy de musique*, p. 2. See also Husk, *An account of the musical celebrations on St. Cecilia's day*, pp. 113-115.

²⁴⁷ Rice, 'Two liturgical responses to the Protestant Reformation'.

congregational plainchant in Reformed services. Thus, music served to articulate confessional differences. And by increasing both quality and frequency of musical performances, it was hoped to equally increase the attractiveness of the services and by that strengthen the people's devotion.²⁴⁸ Although the material for Zoutleeuw around mid-century discussed here would fit nicely in such an interpretation, no explicit information on the precise motivations or the reception of the changes is available. Nor are there secure indications of who lead these initiatives - the clergy or particular groups of laypeople. Such readings must therefore remain speculation. However, the phenomena of adding ornament and rhetorical power also occur in the private patronage project with which the Zoutleeuw church was benefited in precisely the same years, and in which Floris' magnificent sacrament house functioned as the monumental centerpiece. For this particular project additional contextual information is available, allowing firmer conclusions on both the initiators and the motivations at play.

4.3 Patrons

The preceding discussions of Zoutleeuw pilgrimage and parish life provide a valuable contextual background for the donation of the sacrament house at the beginning of this section. As has become clear, the commissioning of the structure in 1550 coincided with a number of other highly relevant developments that have been described above. Not only was there a continued enthusiasm for the sacrament of communion, which markedly intensified around 1550, at the very same moment the parish liturgy was increasingly adorned with new layers of musical ornament, particularly in the form of polyphony. The pertinence of these observations for our purpose is immediately clear: not only were sacrament houses grand odes to the Eucharist, the ornamentation and iconography of the Zoutleeuw specimen is abundant. It is therefore worthwhile to investigate a final group that plays a leading role in our story, and that moreover has several advantages over the preceding two groups: patrons. Often patrons can be

²⁴⁸ Beghein, *Kerkmuziek, consumptie en confessionalisering*, esp. pp. 93 and 185-186.

identified, and in several cases there is enough evidence to draw conclusions about their motivations.²⁴⁹

4.3.1 Motives

Determining motivations for historical patronage is of course a delicate exercise. Patronage, especially if religious in character, should be understood in direct relation with commemoration and *memoria* practices, both in a general as well as in a narrow, liturgical sense. This inherent connection between patronage and *memoria* is made abundantly clear in the invaluable collection of autobiographical notes of the Cologne lawyer, merchant and councillor Hermann Weinsberg (1518-1597). Throughout his text he repeatedly expressed his anxiety about sinking into oblivion: “In churches and houses one finds old paintings and windows commissioned by prominent people who died not long ago... One cannot tell who their blood relatives are, where their bones lie, where they lived, or where their great property has gone to. If the paintings had not survived, so these persons would have fallen from memory, as if they had never been on earth.”²⁵⁰ Weinsberg was a patron and a churchwarden himself, and his care for the commemoration of both himself and his fellow townsmen was beautifully reflected in his own activities and demands. As a churchwarden he re-organized the parish archives and compiled a detailed *Memorialbuch* that contained all the necessary information on foundations. As far as his own foundations were concerned, he provided for an annual mass and stipulated that a painter and sculptor had to come to his family grave, not only to pray for the dead souls of the people it contained, but also to perform any cleaning or restoration on the adjacent objects if necessary.²⁵¹ It is evident here that both the material monuments and the paper administration were crucial for the adequate functioning of *memoria*.

Patronage and *memoria* must therefore be investigated *in tandem*. It should be clear that donated objects were not intended to stand alone, but were often the visible and enduring material testimony to a larger immaterial foundation or patronage project.

²⁴⁹ Parts of this paragraph are based on Suykerbuyk, ‘Reformation, renovation and commemoration,’ and Suykerbuyk & Van Bruaene, ‘Towering piety’.

²⁵⁰ Quoted from Lundin, *Paper memory*, pp. 175-176.

²⁵¹ Lundin, *Paper memory*, pp. 172-177.

Frequently, the costs for liturgical services exceeded those for the objects.²⁵² Nevertheless, the material monuments in particular have the potential to emphasize loyalties or perpetuate constructed identities. Scholars generally agree as to their functions as means of communication *par excellence*, but the precise interpretation of these messages and, more generally, the motives for specific patronage projects often remain subjects of discussion. Was the often conspicuous consumption primarily a result of genuine devout motives and convictions, or were religious habits opportunistically used as a vehicle to exhibit wealth, status and fame? Is it even possible to make valid statements about early modern motives? Although optimistic about the possibility, Truus van Bueren has pointed to the many difficulties in interpreting the grounds for patronage, because of the great number of possible formats, places and institutions to endow with precious objects and to arrange *memoria* services.²⁵³ People could for example invest in anniversary masses, chaplaincies or poor relief, either in a parish church, a cloister, a hospital or orphanage, with or without the necessary material equipment. However, one could also turn the argument around: precisely because people had an enormous number of possibilities, their choices might prove significant. *Memoria* services and arrangements were indeed carefully chosen, if at all, since not every wealthy citizen was a founder or donor.²⁵⁴ Historians and art historians alike have often emphasized the social, status-related aspects of late medieval and early modern religious patronage, describing it as exploiting its religious basis. However, recent research suggests that devotion or piety is not dichotomously opposed to related social grounds for patronage. Both are not merely complementary, but intrinsically part of the other. This has especially been emphasized in relation to the nobility, which was a social concept in a still fundamentally religious framework.²⁵⁵ In a similar vein, recent studies of later

²⁵² Schleif, *Donatio et memoria*, p. 235, and van Bueren, 'Care for the here and the hereafter', p. 20. Such an integrated approach has recently been proposed by van Bueren, Ragetli & Bijsterveld, 'Researching medieval memoria,' esp. pp. 220-221. The amount of literature on *memoria* is enormous, but the afore-mentioned article provides a recent overview. An excellent survey on patronage in the Low Countries is Martens, 'Patronage'. See also Flora, 'Patronage' and Hourihane, *Patronage*.

²⁵³ Van Bueren, 'Care for the here and the hereafter' pp. 13-15. Compare with Timmermans, *Patronen van patronage*, pp. 200-201 and 257-258. On the many different formats, see for example Trio, 'Moordende concurrentie op de memoriemarkt'.

²⁵⁴ Schleif, *Donatio et memoria*, p. 228; Timmermans, *Patronen van patronage*, p. 257; Trio, 'Moordende concurrentie op de memoriemarkt,' p. 145.

²⁵⁵ Authors emphasizing the social aspect include Assmann, *Erinnerungsräume*, pp. 33-43; Bossuyt, "'Media vita in morte sumus'"; Dumolyn & Moermans, 'Distinctie en memorie'; Franke, 'Between status and spiritual salvation'; Trio, 'Moordende concurrentie op de memoriemarkt,' esp. p. 145. On the other hand, Jeroen

sixteenth- and seventeenth-century funeral monuments have similarly emphasized how they always served a double function. Not only were they expressions of status or power claims, but in multiconfessional Europe they also served to emphasize the deceased's religious confession.²⁵⁶ Furthermore, recent patronage studies laid bare the reciprocal benefits for both the donor and the receiving institution, as well as the topicality of many projects that often responded to current events, desires or needs.²⁵⁷ In sum, the range of motivations for patronage went far beyond individual representation, and by addressing topical issues, patronage projects could have clear communal values and stakes.

For an adequate understanding and interpretation of the motives for patronage projects, contextual information on the life of the donors and their other foundations is of the utmost importance. Yet these are often lacking due to relocations, alterations or loss of documents. Such is even the case in churches with a richly preserved interior and series of archives as Zoutleeuw's Saint Leonard's church. The source material is mostly scattered and rarely if ever complete. In the best case a donated object can be related to a foundation charter, but in many cases only one of the two remains. Still other projects or foundations are only known by summary references in churchwarden accounts, records of the collegial benefices or later church inventories. Furthermore, although the church still preserves a rich collection of sculptures and altarpieces, many of the testimonies on commemorative material culture have disappeared. Almost no tombstones or epitaphs and not a single stained-glass window have been preserved in situ, although it is certain that such objects were present in the fifteenth and sixteenth centuries. As a consequence, it is almost impossible to provide a complete overview of the patronage in Zoutleeuw, and such a project is also beyond the scope of the present study. In order to provide an idea of its scope and some general characteristics, I will discuss a proxy and some brief examples before turning to one specific case study that is exceptionally well documented.

Stumpel for instance argued in favour of a basically religious reading, see Stumpel, 'The case of the missing cross'. Other pleas for an integration of both include Bijsterveld, *Do ut des*, esp. pp. 200-201, and Buylaert, 'The Van Pottelsberghe-Van Steelant memorial by Gerard Horenbout'.

²⁵⁶ Pawlak, 'Künstlerruhm und Konfession,' and Lipinska, 'Novo stylo sepultus?'.
²⁵⁷ See for instance Hourihane, *Patronage*, esp. pp. xx-xxi.

4.3.2 Characteristics

The charter collection belonging to the collegiate chapter of Saint Leonard provides a sense of the variety of foundations. Nearly 1.600 documents have been preserved from the early thirteenth to the late seventeenth centuries, either as original deeds or as copies of lost documents in cartularia.²⁵⁸ Comparison with other sources such as the churchwarden accounts or the records of the collegial benefices reveals that the charter collection does not even provide a complete picture of the total number of foundations. Furthermore, none of the documents reference donated objects. As Maximiliaan Martens has pointed out, it is quite common that foundation charters do not mention altarpieces that would decorate the altar where liturgical services were to be performed, even if the altar itself was newly founded.²⁵⁹ Only one document in the collection suggests that if such deeds were drawn up at all, it was done separately.²⁶⁰ Yet, for our purposes, it is still useful to consider the the foundation charters in the chapter's collection as a representative selection. Furthermore, they have the significant advantage that all the documents are securely dated, contrary to the often summary or vague references in the other source types. From the period under consideration, between 1451 and 1621, a total number of 55 documents deals with foundations, mostly memorial (36) and/or other (15) masses. Sometimes donations to the poor in the form of bread or clothes were foreseen (8), or money to the canons and chaplains (4). In fourteen cases the founders were clergymen, either priests, canons or chaplains. Plotting the chronological distribution of the documents provides some sort of approximation of the chronological distribution of the total number of foundations (graph 27). Although the figures are too low to be statistically useful, interestingly enough the 1540s and 1550s again stand out. Furthermore, the higher figures in the first two decades of the sixteenth century concur to the observations on the devotional boom that has been discussed in the previous part.

References to other foundations or donations in Zoutleeuw provide clues about recurring characteristics of patronage in general, not in the least the social profile of the people involved. Although it is beyond the scope of this study to provide a full

²⁵⁸ These documents are listed and summarized in Grauwen, Warlop & Muret, *Analytische inventaris*. The cartularia in question are RAL, KAB, nrs. 989, 990 and 991.

²⁵⁹ Martens, 'Patronage,' p. 359.

²⁶⁰ Grauwen, Warlop & Muret, *Analytische inventaris*, p. 266, nr. 1213. It is the 1548 deed of gift of the monstrence by Merten van Wilre and Maria Pylipert (cf. infra).

prosopographical and social study of the Zoutleeuw patrons, the examples that will be provided in the following paragraph make clear that it was comprised primarily of individuals or families with important public functions, either religious or administrative. The role of churchwardens as patrons has already been pointed out in the introduction. For a quarter of the wardens that have been identified, a donation or religious foundation of some sort has been found. Scholars such as Burgess and Reitemeier have explained this notable interest by stating that the office of churchwarden was considered a difficult job that should be commemorated.²⁶¹ This distinct social and public profile of patrons was not limited to the immaterial foundations, but was also expressed in material monuments such as epitaphs. These were memorial monuments to founders, mostly located in the immediate vicinity of the relevant grave. Typically, they consisted of a devout image - either painted, sculpted or chiseled - depicting the patron, who was mostly identified in an inscription that in the case of a larger foundation also elaborated on the related commemorative project at large.²⁶² Although only two sixteenth-century specimen have been preserved in Zoutleeuw (cf. *infra*), an early seventeenth-century church inventory makes clear that there were definitely more.²⁶³ Every single epitaph that is mentioned in that document can be related to important public functions. The Kempeneers family provided for parish priests and canons, and the very same benefices were held by *magister* Gillis van Haugen. Members of the Kerckhof family are also documented as local clergymen, but equally functioned as town councillors. This is also the case for both Frans Minten and Gilis Vreven, who made careers in the town council as aldermen and burgomasters. The *meester* Jan Bollen that is mentioned, finally, can either be identified as the dean of the collegiate chapter, or as the *meier* of Zoutleeuw, i.e. the chief administrative and juridical representative of the central authority in town.

Memorial objects, including epitaphs, were often related to more than one individual, and in some cases they functioned as family monuments, connecting laypeople with clergymen. This might have been the case with the church's stained-glass windows, which are now lost, but we know the donating families for some of them. For instance,

²⁶¹ Burgess, 'Pre-Reformation churchwardens' accounts', pp. 314-315, 326; Reitemeier, *Pfarrkirchen*, pp. 121-122; Kuujo, *Rechtliche und wirtschaftliche stellung*, pp. 192-193.

²⁶² On epitaphs in the Low Countries, see most recently Brine, *Pious memories*.

²⁶³ De Ridder, 'Oud inventaris,' pp. 58-61: "het epithaphium Kempeneers," "het epithaphium Mr. Jan Bollen," "Frans Minten epithaphium," "tepithaphiom Kerckhoffs," "tepithaphiom Gilis Vreven" and "het epithaphium Egidii Hugeni."

reference is made to a window depicting the “coats of arms of the Gruyters [family]” in Our Lady’s chapel. The illustrious de Gruytere family, after whom a local street was named must have financed the window. In another account, the foundation of a yearly distribution of bread to the poor is documented in the accounts for one of its members.²⁶⁴ Before October 1481 another window had been financed by the prominent van Liefkenrode family, which had supported aldermen and burgomasters throughout the fifteenth century. In this case, too, these material objects had counterparts in more immaterial foundations. For instance, by 1481 Peter van Liefkenrode had provided a yearly donation of a barrel of herring to the poor in the Holy Week, and by the middle of the sixteenth century one Jan van Lieffkenroye would bequest money for the singing of the Eucharistic hymn *O salutaris hostia*, once on Sundays and thrice on feast days.²⁶⁵ In commemorative projects material objects thus clearly functioned in dialogue with founded liturgical or charitable activities.

A complex material history of such objects was often due to the involvement of several individuals and parties. This is clearly the case in the small Strijrode triptych (fig. 77), one of two epitaphs that have been preserved in Zoutleeuw. An inscription on a tablet under the central panel reveals the names of the commemorated party:

“Here lie buried Master Henrick van Strijroeij, he died in the year 1565, the 12th day of May, and lady Margriet Speken, she died in the year 1561, 10 August. Pray for their souls...”²⁶⁶

The profession of Henrick van Strijrode (also Strijroye) is unknown, and although he probably came from Diest, he is known to have acted as civic steward (*rentmeester*) for the town of Zoutleeuw in 1529-1530.²⁶⁷ Since at least 1533 he was married to Margriet

²⁶⁴ KR 1452, fol. 10: “Item 4 spiinden vander Grutere elc van 4 m”; KR 1503, fol. 26 (March 1504): “Den selven [Mychiele den gelaesmakere] betaelt vander vinsteren daer die Gruyters wapenen inne staen boven Onsen Vrouwen choer 11 voet van nouwe gelase, vanden groten voet 2 st, maakt 22 st.” On the street and the local importance of the de Gruytere family, see Bets, *Zout-Leeuw*, vol. 1, pp. 104-105.

²⁶⁵ KR 1480, fol. 29v (April 1481); KR 1481, fol. 63v (October 1481): “Item noch enen nouwen pant ghemaect in dy ghelassen vinstere metten wapenen van dy van Liefkenrode, te lone 14 st.”; RAL, KAB, nr. 1043, fol. 8v: “vuyten leghate Jans van Lieffkenroye om te singhen et sondaechs ende in festis triplicibus O Salutaris hostia.”

²⁶⁶ The last part of the inscription is not legible: “Hier [leyt begraven] M. Henrick van Strijroeij, hy sterf int jaer xv^c ende lxxv den xii dach Meij ende joeffrouwe Margriet Speken sy sterf int jaer xv^c lxi den x augustus. Bidt voer h[en] siele [om] Godts wille.”

²⁶⁷ The Diest origin is suggested by several facts. Whereas the name does not occur in Zoutleeuw before Henrick van Strijrode, several namesakes are documented in Diest. In 1599 his nephew is documented as from Diest. Possibly, he was also related to the Dominican Godevaert Strijrode (Stryroy, d. 1549), also from Diest,

Speken (or Spieken), who was member of a prominent Zoutleuw family. The dates of death given in the inscription are corroborated by other sources. Margriet was indeed buried in Saint Leonard's church in 1561, the costs for which are registered in the accounts.²⁶⁸ For her funeral service the second most expensive pall was used, and as was fit for the local elite her corpse was placed upon a bier (*ligghen*). No testament of the couple has been preserved, but later documents reveal that Henrick gave money to the collegiate chapter for a memorial mass, for an annual distribution of four *halsters* of grain (ca. 120 litres) to the poor, and for an unidentified purpose to a female convent.²⁶⁹ Yet, whereas the epitaph itself is dated on the outer wings to 1571, on stylistic grounds the center panel should be dated much earlier, possibly even to around 1530. None of these dates concurs to the relevant dates of death. In fact, the panel, depicting a magnificent Crucifixion with the piercing of Jesus' side, is a rarely preserved example of a reverse glass painting. Due to the material used for this technique - large glass plates were extremely expensive - it was mostly used for small-scale works used for private devotion. A comparable example is the *Virgo lactans* that has equally been integrated in a triptych form with the outer wings depicting the arms of nobleman Antoine Van der Noot and his wife Elisabeth van der Meeren (fig. 78).²⁷⁰ The size of the Zoutleuw panel (approximately 30 by 20 centimeters) suggests that it originally served a similar function, probably in the intimate context of the Strijrode's

who in 1548 supervised the first Middle Dutch Vulgate translation at Leuven University. On him, see Berlière, 'Stryroy (Godefroid),' and François, 'Solomon writing and resting,' pp. 186-187. Finally, the toponym Strijrode referred to a place between Kaggevinne and Zichem, both near Diest, see Claes, 'Familienamen afgeleid van toponiemen uit de streek van Diest,' p. 152.

²⁶⁸ First mention of their marriage in RAL, KAB, nr. 991, pp. 151-152, which is a copy of RAL, KAB, box 980, nr. 1140. See Grauwen, Warlop & Muret, *Analytische inventaris*, p. 251. For the funeral costs, see KR 1560, fol. 308: "Meester Henric Strijroye van zijns huysvrauwe cleet ende ligghen 3 Kg."

²⁶⁹ KR 1565, fols. 409 ("Ontffangen van Anna Halemants die maecht ghewest heeft van Meester Henric Stryroede ende dat duer cracht vander testament van Meester Henric voerseid waer voer dat die ffabryck jarlicx spinden moet 4 h coren 30 Rg") and 532v (July 1565, "Ghecocht aen Suster Leysken Schollans met consent vanden ghemen convent 20 st erffelickx die meester Henric Strijroede haer ghelaeten heeft staende op een rinte van 14 Rg die meester Henrick op die stadt terlicx treckende vas 18 Rg"). The latter annuity is possibly also referred to in RAL, KAB, box 983, nr. 1333, d.d. 25 October 1565, documenting the donation of a hereditary rent of 2 *Karolusgulden* by Master Joos van Strijrode from Diest to the church fabric of Saint Leonard. See Grauwen, Warlop & Muret, *Analytische inventaris*, p. 293.

²⁷⁰ Bücken & Steyaert, *De erfenis van Rogier van der Weyden*, pp. 142-143, cat. 18. Compare with the Brussels *Virgin and Child with Saint Anne* (Royal Museums of Art and History, BALaT object nr. 11016576) and the *Penitent Saint Jerome* in Liège (Musée Curtius, BALaT object nr. 10133480). On the technique and its use, see Helbig, 'Les églomisés'; Ritz, *Hinterglasmalerei*, esp. pp. 8-10 and 41; Brauneck, *Religiöse Volkskunst*, pp. 205-237.

household. Only later - probably in 1571 - would it be integrated in the triptych format, adding the inscription and the wings. The wings separately depict Henrick and Margriet in prayer before prie-dieu, in a landscape that the painter tried to connect with the center panel to unite the pictorial space making the patrons immediate spectators to the sacred event. This material reorganization of objects - possibly by an heir - found an interesting parallel in a later reorganization of the memorial mass Hendrik had founded. On 23 March 1599, Henrick's childless nephew and heir Hubrecht van Strijrode, from Diest, provided extra money for the earlier foundation to also have his own memory celebrated in his uncle's memorial mass.²⁷¹ It was also possibly Hubrecht who arranged for the epitaph.

The Spieken epitaph (figs. 79 & 80) has a highly comparable genesis. In this case the inscription explicitly identifies the individuals responsible for the epitaphs installation:

“Lord and Master Henrico Spieken, canon and dean of this church's collegiate chapter, died 21 October 1555. For his memory this [epitaph] was installed by his heirs Willem Spieken, who died in the year 1570, 18 August, lady Mari Hespighels, who died in the year 1597, 4 January, lady Anna Copis, who died in the year 1604, 13 December.”²⁷²

Soon after joining the collegiate chapter, Henric Spieken (doc. 1518-1555) served as steward (*rentmeester*), and from at least 1547 onwards he held the benefice of dean.²⁷³ His heir Willem Spieken made a career in the town council from 1540 onwards, serving almost uninterrupted as either burgomaster, alderman or steward until just before his death in 1570. The most expensive pall was used for his burial services, but its payment was long in coming and had still not been paid in 1573.²⁷⁴ It must have been the younger Spieken who, together with his wife Marie Hespiegels, took the initiative of installing the epitaph. The couple is depicted side by side in front of a prie-dieu on

²⁷¹ RAL, KAB, box 984, nr. 1459, copy in RAL, KAB, nr. 991, pp. 147-149. See Grauwen, Warlop & Muret, *Analytische inventaris*, p. 317.

²⁷² “Domino et Magistro Henrico Spieken, ecclesie huius collegiate canonico et decano, anno 1555 21 octobris defuncto, heredes memorie ergo posuerunt Willem Spieken, obiit anno [15]70 18 Augusti, Joncfro Mari Hespighels, obiit anno [15]97 4 Ianuarii, Iofrouw Anna Copis, obiit anno 1604 13 decembris.”

²⁷³ First mention as steward on 25 May 1518: RAL, KAB, box 979, nr. 1074, copy in RAL, KAB, nr. 991, pp. 122-123. First mention as dean on 26 June 1547: RAL, KAB, box 981, nr. 1207. See Grauwen, Warlop & Muret, *Analytische inventaris*, resp. pp. 236 and 265. Prenau claimed that his personal missal has been preserved, see Prenau, 'Zout-Leeuw,' p. 323.

²⁷⁴ KR 1572, fol. 527v: “Willem Speecken cleet, ligghen ende beste cappen 5,5 Kg.” Still included in KR 1573, fol. 388.

the right outer panel, facing Henric Spieken on the left outer panel who is identified as a canon by the fur almuce draped over his left arm. The sculpted central part and probably also the painted scenes on the inner wings should be dated to around 1530. The outer wings, however, can only have been painted somewhat later. Much like the central panel of the Strijrode epitaph, the small Spieken epitaph (104 x 65 cm) likely originally served as a house altarpiece for private devotion, later turned into an epitaph.²⁷⁵ These two examples interestingly illustrate how public and private devotion intermingled: objects that initially served private purposes were given a highly public function after the deaths of their owners, yet still in direct relationship with them through their location near the burial site.

The Spieken epitaph also reveals that the objects and their iconographical themes were carefully chosen. The theme of the small retable is the True Cross. The sculpturework centrally depicts a Crucifixion, whereas the six smaller compartments on both sides tell the story of the Finding of the True Cross by Empress Helena. The painted inner wings depict prefigurations of these events: the right shows Emperor Constantine's vision of the True Cross before the Battle of the Milvian Bridge, and the left wing depicts the story of the Adoration of the True Cross by the Queen of Sheba, as told in the *Legenda Aurea*. For Henric Spieken such iconography was highly relevant and had a very personal meaning. He had earned his living as rector of the altar of the Holy Cross in Saint Leonard's church.²⁷⁶ Spieken's personal devotional preference for the Holy Cross was furthermore also expressed and memorialized in another, more direct way. Another inscription reads "Tuam crucem adoramus Domine / tuam gloriosam recolimus passionem." These are the first lines of an antiphon sung at the occasions of the feasts of the Invention of the Cross, the Exaltation of the Holy Cross and at some places also during the Good Friday liturgy - feasts that Spieken doubtlessly must have celebrated in his capacity of rector of the Holy Cross altar.²⁷⁷ This inscription is located immediately under the figural scenes and the first lines are visible whether the retable was open or closed. When closed, the next lines of the antiphon are visible: "Qui passus es pro nobis, miserere nobis." Interestingly, they are integrated between the heads of

²⁷⁵ The name of Anna Copis seems to have been added only later on. On the epitaph, see also Steppe, 'Een sanctuarium van de Brabantse laat-gotiek,' pp. 632-636. The sculpturework is also discussed in Rousseau, 'Notes pour servir à l'histoire de la sculpture en Belgique,' pp. 448-451.

²⁷⁶ RAL, KAB, nr. 1076, unfoliated.

²⁷⁷ Cantus Manuscript Database ID 006046a.

Henric and Willem Spieken, as if they both answer to the first lines in responsory, looking up to a vision of the risen Christ holding the Cross.

The preference of clergymen for devotions related to their proper benefice appears to have been common, but in some cases it took on more elaborate and monumental forms. This can be surmised through the patronage of chaplain Henric Ausems, rector of Saint Peter's altar.²⁷⁸ He died soon after drawing up his testament on 29 December 1560, with which he had founded both a memorial mass and a weekly mass on Sunday for the Holy Trinity in Saint Peter's chapel. He also provided money for the candlelight during these services, he stipulated that a collection was to be held for the priests and he founded the yearly distribution of three *mudde* of grain (ca. 720 litres) to the poor.²⁷⁹ As rector of Saint Peter's altar, he had a personal affiliation with the chapel and is known to have contributed personally to its decoration. Although the altar already existed in the early fifteenth century, a charter by Prince-Bishop Énard de la Mark dating to 5 July 1514 states that it had to be moved due to reconstruction works on the church.²⁸⁰ During the first quarter of the sixteenth century records note that side chapels of the nave were indeed being built. Works started on the four chapels on the south side in February 1507, under direction of subsequently Jan I and II Sallaken, *metzers* from Aarschot.²⁸¹ The works were finished in 1512, but soon the construction of the four side chapels on the northern side began. Saint Peter's chapel was likely part of this building campaign. In March 1516 the accounts mention work on the chapel, to which the finishing touch was added in April 1521 under the supervision of a certain Symon van Trieht (from Maastricht): the keystone was hung and the vaults were painted.²⁸²

Yet, the new chapel space still required furnishing, and in this the church fabric was financially aided by Henric Ausems. In 1533 he gave 5 *rijnsgulden* for the *tafele* in

²⁷⁸ RAL, KAB, nr. 1076, fol. 5.

²⁷⁹ Fragmentary copy in RAL, KAB, nr. 991, p. 71. See Grauwen, Warlop & Muret, *Analytische inventaris*, p. 289, nr. 1314. His bequest is also referred to in the records of the *luminaris*: RAL, KAB, nr. 1033 (unfoliated). KR 1561, fol. 372: "Noch ghespinct wten legaet heer Henrick Aussems 3 m." The costs for his burial are recorded in KR 1559, fol. 338v: "Heer Henrick Aussems cleet, liggen ende beste cappen 5,5 Kg."

²⁸⁰ RAL, KAB, nr. 1057, fols. 31v-32. The altar is already mentioned in a charter dating to 18 December 1417: RAL, KAB, nr. 990, fol. 38v. See Grauwen, Warlop & Muret, *Analytische inventaris*, resp. p. 116, nr. 529 and pp. 232-233, nr. 1055.

²⁸¹ On Sallaken, see Saintenoy, 'Sallaken (Jean van),' and Vanhoof, 'Jan Sallaken en Jan Vlayen'.

²⁸² KR 1520, fols. 18r-v (December 1520 & January 1521) and 20v (April 1521). In September 1523 mention is made of a consecration, but the accounts do not specify which altar: KR 1523, fol. 67v (September 1523).

Saint Peter's chapel. Although this altarpiece has not been identified within the church's collection and is probably lost, its acquisition and subsequent installation is amply documented in the accounts. The churchwardens commissioned it in June 1534 for 60 *rijnsgulden* and 3,5 *mudde* grain from Master Peter Roesen (Rosin, Roosen) *dy Beldesnijder* (doc. 1533-1539), probably related to the prolific Leuven sculptor Hendrik Roesen, both of whom have already been mentioned above (cf. supra, 4.1.5).²⁸³ The carved altarpiece with wings was installed in December 1534: ironwork was anticipated to attach the three saint's statues and the capitals on top of it, as well as for the wings to rest upon. Furthermore, it was also provided with a lock, three handles and a bolt. The whole was fastened with ironwork that was cast into the chapel wall. In January 1535 the curtain rods were hung and in April the painter Jan vanden Kerchoven painted the rear wall black. The last payments for this retable were booked in June 1535, and the artist was even given an extra payment in kind, "because he complained" (*midts dat hij claechde*).²⁸⁴ Later, in 1547, the chapel was provided with a decorated wooden screen that accentuated the demarcation with the nave. Ausems again made a substantial financial contribution of 9 *Karolusgulden*.²⁸⁵ Just like the altarpiece, the screen has not been preserved, but it is the first object in Saint Leonard's church that demonstrably was made in an antique style. It was

²⁸³ KR 1533, fols. 168 ("Peter dye Beldesnijder vanden tafelen 3,5 mudde, daer op heeft hij noe 2 mudde 5 h"), 177 ("Item ontfangen van her Henric Ausems te hulpen der tafelen in Sint Peters coir 5 rijnsgulden") and 193 (June 1534, "Peter dij beldesnijder van den tafelen dye hy tegen ons verdindt heeft om 60 rijnsgulden, daer op hem nae gegeven 25 rijnsgulden 1 st"). Peter Roesen also delivered at least part of the Marianum, that was installed by May 1534 (cf. supra, 2.1.4). He also provided a *antickx kindeken* and a *naecx vrouwen* for a procession wagon in 1539, see van Autenboer, 'De reus en de ommeegang van Zoutleeuw,' p. 412.

²⁸⁴ KR 1534, fols. 4v ("M. Peter der Bielsensnijder van dat hij van Sinte Peters tafelen moest hebben 3,5 mudde coerns, daer van inder lester rekeninghen mer gerekent en was 2 m 5 h, aldus nu 7 h. Ende noch midts dat hij claechde dat hij ande tafele voirseide geschooten was 5 h"), 20v-21 (December 1534, "Noch betaelt Jacop Goemans van onsen yser te makene totter tafelen van Sinte Peters, ierst 4 houvasten, noch 3 lanxte ijsers daer die drije heylegen aen vast zijn, noch 6 banden daer die cappetelen aen vast zijn, noch 3 cramen aende santen, noch 2 scoevysers daer die dueren vander tafelen op rusten, noch een slot met eenen sloetel opte selven tafel, noch drije clincken met eenen gringel al tsamen voer zijnen arbeyt ende loen 20 st. Noch betaelt Proper Janne van allen den ysers inden steenen muer te ghieten ende die gaten te makene ende noch 4 ysere clemmen booven onse camer inne te ghieten all tsamen 5 st"), 21v-22 (January 1535, "Noch betaelt Jacop Goemans van... 2 ijsers aen Sinte Peters tafel ende die gordijn ijsers gecort aen Sinte Peters tafel all tsamen 5 st"), 24 (April 1535, "Noch betaelt Jan vanden Kerchoven scilder vanden muer achter Sinte Peeters tafel sweert te maken 12 st") and 27v (June 1535, "Noch verdinckt teghen Peter Roosen Sinte Peters tafel te snijden om 60 rijnsgulden ende want inden jaere voerleeden mer betaelt gerekent en is 25 rijnsgulden dus noch betaelt 35 rijnsgulden").

²⁸⁵ KR 1547, fol. 268: "Item heer Handrick Ausems heeft gegeven totten aff sluyten van Syncte Peeters coer 9 Kg."

commissioned from local craftsman Joes vander Gheeten and was ornamented with decoration in the antique style that was provided by Claes Roesen (Roossen), probably related to both the sculptors Peter and Hendrik Roesen. Work must have been almost finished by January 1548, when the doors to the screen were put in place.²⁸⁶ As demonstrated by the rich set of preserved chapel screens in Bruges' Saint Saviour or the specimen in Hoogstraten's church of Saint Catherine, such structures often included references to the parties involved in the commission, including coats of arms, visualisations of their activities or dates (fig. 81).²⁸⁷ The inclusion of a personal reference to Ausems as a token of his financial contribution is therefore likely.

Although Saint Peter's chapel was partly appropriated and customized by its chaplain, who had strong memorial connections to the altar, the sacred space and its furnishings fundamentally served a communal liturgical function. In Ausems' case such public service can be assumed, although it is little explicit. Indeed, although recent research suggests that, besides personal stakes, communality might very well have been a recurring characteristic of memorial foundations, it is often hard to detect.²⁸⁸ The patronage of *magister* Gillis van Haugen (or Houwagen) is somewhat more straightforward in this respect. A member from a prominent local patrician family that held seats in the town council, the collegiate chapter and the church fabric, Gillis van Haugen graduated from the Leuven Artes faculty on 15 March 1543. Just like some other family members he was a canon in the Zoutleeuw collegiate chapter and he subsequently obtained the benefice of *plebanus*, or the parish priest in a collegiate

²⁸⁶ KR 1547, fols. 260v ("Joes vander Gheeten int verdienghen van Syncte Peeter coer aff te sluten 4 h"), 274 and 275 (November 1547, "Betaelt Joes vander Gheeten vander anttyke te wegghen 6 st... Betaelt Proper Jan van dat hij heeft affghebroeken heeft aen Syncte Peeters coer ende die crammen gheslaeghen heeft 5 st"), 276v (January 1548, "Betaelt Reynder die Bye van syncte Peeters coer die duereen te hangghen ende te sloetten ende crammen ende pijnnen tot die kandelers, tsamen 3,5 Kg"), 282v and 283v (July 1548, "Betaelt Joes vander Gheeten van synne verdient werck van Syncte Peeters coer aff te sluyten dat hem noch campt 15 Kg 17 st... Betaelt Claes Roossen van dat antyckx werck dat boven Syncte Peeters coer affsluytten staet 9 Kg"). Lieve de Mecheleer transcribed 'Roossen' as 'Coossen': de Mecheleer, *Rekeningen van de kerkfabriek*, p. 418. For Claes Roesen, cf. supra 4.1.4, as well as van Autenboer, 'De reus en de ommegang van Zoutleeuw,' pp. 419 and 423.

²⁸⁷ On chapel screens in the Low Countries, see Bangs, *Church art and architecture in the Low Countries*, pp. 64-65, with references to further literature.

²⁸⁸ Duffy, *The stripping of the altars*, p. 139, and Speetjens, 'The founder, the chaplain and the ecclesiastical authorities'. Compare with earlier remarks by Zemon Davis, 'Some tasks and themes in the study of popular religion,' pp. 327-328.

chapter responsible for the spiritual care of the congregation.²⁸⁹ He died in the Spring of 1566, at the beginning of the notorious Wonder Year. For his funeral service the most expensive pall was used. Most likely he was buried in Saint Leonard's chapel, where he had an epitaph installed that was illuminated by three chandeliers.²⁹⁰ For an important part his testamentary provisions of 30 April 1566 were indeed related to this part of the church. He foresaw a sum of money to be distributed among the canons and chaplains present at the first mass on the feasts of the consecration of Saint Leonard's altar (Saint Ursula, 21 October), All Saints (1 November) and Saint Leonard (6 November).²⁹¹ As has been discussed above, these were part of the so-called 'four masses' that were celebrated in Saint Leonard's chapel, which - aside from the Whit Monday procession - constituted the core of the local liturgical veneration of the church's patron saint. Much like the increasing musical embellishments of the celebration at Saint Leonard's day from the late 1540s onwards must have served to attract the parishioners to these services, van Haugen's foundation was likely meant to assure the presence of the Zoutleeuw clergy at this important occasion in the years to come. Although this was of course of interest for his personal *memoria* as his grave was located in that very chapel, the celebrations for Saint Leonard were also of great importance for the Zoutleeuw community.

A more extensive testamentary provision had already been foreseen in an earlier testament of 16 October 1564, in which van Haugen bequeathed a considerable part of his personal library to the church fabric. In addition to the 53 books and four maps in question, he also gave a sum of 60 *rijnsgulden* to the churchwardens, so that the construction of the actual library with its furnishings (*liebereye*) "would not weigh too heavily on the church fabric."²⁹² From March 1566 to June 1567, extensive works took

²⁸⁹ "Egidius Hugo, Leeuwensis." Reusens, 'Promotions de la Faculté des Arts,' (1866), p. 12. He is mentioned as canon and *plebanus* in the last will of Merten van Wilre, d.d. 12 December 1558: "Gielis van Houwagen, plebaen ende canoninck der collegialen ende parochikercke van Sinte Leonaerts binnen der stadt van Leeuwe". The present whereabouts of the document are unknown, but it is published in full by Bets, *Zout-Leeuw*, vol. 2, pp. 262-264, note 2. On the benefice of *plebanus*, see Bijsterveld, 'Organisatie en instellingen,' p. 96.

²⁹⁰ KR 1565, fol. 410: "Meester Gillis van Huygen cleet ende lyggen ende bisten cappen 5,5 Rg. Deselve voer syn orlementen daer hy in begraven vas 30 st." De Ridder, 'Een oud inventaris,' p. 61: "Voor het epithaphium Egidii Hugeni drij halff kandelaeren."

²⁹¹ Partial copy of his testament in RAL, KAB, nr. 991, p. 72. See Grauwen, Warlop & Muret, *Analytische inventaris*, p. 293, nr. 1335.

²⁹² "Et ne hoc munere legatoque videar gravare fabricam, lego eidem sexaginta Caroleos singulos XX st., quibus libri, si sit necessarium, aptentur iisque locus preparetur." Bets, *Zout-Leeuw*, vol. 2, p. 37, note 2. KR 1565, fol.

place in the building, where windows were installed and the walls were plastered. The wardens also installed the furniture, including iron rods to hang on the books and maps (*caerten*), attached with locks. One of the windows was installed in the donor's honor, probably depicting his coat of arms.²⁹³ Although none of the library's items have yet been identified, a full list of titles has come down to us, testifying to the broad interests and knowledge of the Zoutleeuw parish priest.²⁹⁴ On top of a depiction of the pre-Copernican cosmos in the world chronicle in roll form by Cornelis van Hoorn (*alias* Cornipolitanus, *Corte cornikel in dese rolle ghescreven ofte ghefigureert*, Utrecht 1537), three additional maps depicted the Holy Land, Europe and the world. A number of volumes also consisted of profane or classical works, including the writings of Plato, Seneca, Titus Livius, Herodotus and Boccaccio's *De casibus virorum illustrium*. Logically, however, the greatest portion of the collection was taken up by religious publications. The list included a printed Bible (Antwerp, Steelsius), Bible commentaries, three volumes on decrees of church councils, hagiographic works (Luigi Lippomano) and a long list of works by theologians. For the most part, these were all classics in the field, such as Dionysius the Areopagite, Origen, Jerome, Ambrose, Thomas Aquinas, Rupert of Deutz and Walafrid Strabo. The list however also includes some contemporaries of van Haugen, such as Joannes Driedo (c. 1480-1535), Adam Sasbout (1516-1563) and the later bishop of Roermond Guilielmus Damasus Lindanus (1525-1588), all of whom had been active at Leuven University and whom van Haugen thus could have known personally from his study there.

Most interestingly, a close-reading of the list reveals the presence of a number of explicitly anti-heretical works, most of them of very recent date and therefore highly topical. Apart from Venerable Bede's *Historia ecclesiastica Anglorum*, whereby it is explicitly specified in the list that it was directed "against heretics" (*contra heresies*), the list mentions "Historia Coclei cum Alphonso de heresibus." Thereby two books are

409v: "Ontfangen van Lyncken van Haughen wyten legaet van Meester Gillis haer soen tot behoeff vanden lebereye te maeken 60 Rg."

²⁹³ KR 1565, fols. 544-549 (March-June 1566), KR 1566, fols. 533v-545 (July 1566-June 1567), esp. fol. 536 (September 1566): "Betalt den selven voer die een vinster van meester Gillis weegen die wij op ons genomen hadden te betalen 30 st."

²⁹⁴ Bets, *Zout-Leeuw*, vol. 2, p. 38 stated that a part of the library of Saint Leonard's church went to the Royal Library in Brussels, but of all the publications on van Haugen's list none of the copies preserved in the Royal Library bears witness to a Zoutleeuw provenance. The moving of the books to Brussels must have happened after 1854, as in that year archivist Charles Piot still referred to them as located in the church and decided not to acquire them as he judged them unnecessary for the National Archives. See DAZ, nr. 53, p. 134.

meant: Johann Cochlaeus' *Historiae Hussitarum XII libri* (1549) and Alfonso de Castro's *Adversus omnes haereses libri XIV* (ed. princ. Salamanca 1534; Antwerp 1556). De Castro (1495-1558) was born in Spain, but came to the Low Countries where he became the advisor to Charles V and Philip II. He attended the Council of Trent, and in the later years of his life was active as a preacher in Antwerp, mostly addressing the problem of Protestantism. His *Adversus omnes haereses* is an encyclopedic work, listing more than 400 different sorts of heresies, and his activities earned him the nickname of the 'heretics' scourge' (*haereticorum flagellum*). In his introductory dedication he specifically directed this crucial publication against Luther, the "manyheaded Hydra" who had synthesized and revived all heresies and for Castro was the embodiment of heresy.²⁹⁵ The humanist theologian Cochlaeus (1479-1552), on the other hand, also developed a staunch pro-Roman stance. He grew out to be one of the most tremendous adversaries of Luther, producing a stream of anti-Lutheran and anti-reformatory publications from 1520 onwards. Van Haugen also owned a copy of the *Historia ecclesiastica* (1556 and 1560) by Michael Buchinger (d. 1571), a preacher and theologian from Alsace. In this book Buchinger, who "saw himself as a distinctly Counter-Reformation preacher," not only directly denounces Luther, he also defends the Church of Rome and papal authority with historical arguments. He does so by reinforcing its traditional narrative that directly links the popes with Saint Peter.²⁹⁶

Van Haugen specified that the books were to be used "by the clergy, and all the inhabitants of Zoutleeuw that wish to study the sacred books."²⁹⁷ This is of course a clear statement of communal desires, but later sources suggest that they were used by preachers in particular. The historian Gramaye, for instance, judged the library to be worth mentioning in his 1606 description of the city, and he claimed that van Haugen bequeathed it specifically for the use of preachers (*concionatoribus*) and priests from the mendicant orders.²⁹⁸ This is not confirmed by van Haugen's testament, but as preachers are also referred to in relation to the library in another chronicle it might be

²⁹⁵ Müller, 'Ketzeri und Ketzerbestrafung,' and Maihold, 'Systematiker der Häresien'.

²⁹⁶ Frymire, *The primacy of the postils*, pp. 293-296, quote on p. 293.

²⁹⁷ "Libros sequentes nominatos relinquo eidem fabrice in usum cujusquumque ecclesiaste ac litterarum sacrarum in nostro oppido studiosi." Bets, *Zout-Leeuw*, vol. 2, p. 35, note 2.

²⁹⁸ "Spectat ad hanc Ecclesiam domus cum Bibliotheca recipiendis Sacerdotibus Ordinis Mendicantium et Concionatoribus relicta ab Aegidio van Haughen." Gramaye, *Thenae et Brabantia ultra Velpam* (1606), cited after Souverijns, 'Leonia sive Leewae,' p. 132.

revealing for the collection's actual use.²⁹⁹ In fact, this is logical considering traditional preaching practices. Sermons were mostly organized at the most important local feast days, and members of the mendicant orders were considered particularly skilled in this regard. In Zoutleeuw, the sermons were traditionally held at celebrations related to the city's patron saint, such as Saint Leonard's day and kermis, mostly by Friars Minor.³⁰⁰ Considering van Haugen's personal devotional preference for Saint Leonard, such a use of his book collection is perfectly logical. Furthermore, with its particular focus on heresy, van Haugen's selection of books lent itself well to Catholic preachers in the mid-sixteenth century. Although the priest died in the Spring of 1566, at the moment when many contemporaries were stunned by the sudden popularity and mass attendance of hedge preachings, reformed sermons were of course nothing new in the Wonder Year. Already well before they had been held at secret meetings, but also in public services, including those of priests with reformed sympathies.³⁰¹

The above examples of patronage projects illustrate that material monuments or donations often corresponded to larger, 'immaterial' foundations and services. Yet, it must be underscored that there were different degrees of patronage, and that more modest or partial donations to communal projects were also done. The contributions by Henric Ausems to Saint Peter's chapel have already been mentioned above, but to that other examples can be added. In 1479, for instance, one-time churchwarden Roeben Cloets donated three *rijnsgulden* as an aid for the decoration of Saint Catherine's altarpiece with paint.³⁰² Some years later, the dean of the collegiate chapter, Hubertus Bollen (r. 1475-1502), contributed two and a half *rijnsgulden*, probably for the acquisition of the tabernacle for the miraculous statue of Saint Leonard which had been commissioned just some years before.³⁰³ Finally, financial

²⁹⁹ Compare with a statement in the 1676 chronicle by Petrus Vaele, cited by Bets, *Zout-Leeuw*, vol. 1, p. 45, note 1: "Hic fratres cubiculum habent, quod praeterea Minorum dicitur, in quo dormiunt et ab inquilina domus ministratur illis ex parte civitates lumen et ignis, atque ibi Bibliotheca antiquis authoribus illustris."

³⁰⁰ KR 1456, fol. 148 (November 1456): "Item in Sijnte Leonarts daghe den minderbrueders ghegeven 4 st." KR 1463, fol. 269 (April 1464): "Item den auf [sic] augustijn ghegeven om dat hi ter kermessen sermoende 4 st." Saint Leonard's kermis was thus still held on the second Sunday after Easter, as in 1464 Easter fell at 1 April. See Strubbe & Voet, *De chronologie*, p. 126. On preaching in general, see also Van Herwaarden, 'Geloof en geloofsuitingen,' p. 192.

³⁰¹ Mack Crew, *Calvinist Preaching and Iconoclasm*, pp. 5-8.

³⁰² KR 1479, fol. 258v: "Item ontfanghen van Roeben Cloets dat hij te hulpen ghegeven heeft tot Sijnte Catelijnen tafele te stofferene 3 gulden."

³⁰³ KR 1483, fol. 111: "Item ontfanghen vander deeckene Sinte Leonarts te hulpen sijnen backen te makene 2,5 rijnsgulden."

contributions could also be made by groups of people. Confraternities or guilds often served as important financiers for ecclesiastical furnishings and foundations.³⁰⁴ The Zoutleeuw archers' confraternity, for instance, did not themselves commission the altarpiece of Saint Sebastian, their patron saint, but gave five *rijnsgulden* to the church fabric to that purpose instead.³⁰⁵ Apart from confraternities there were also existing foundations that could be enriched by other individuals. An example of this principle is provided by the Lauds of the Holy Sacrament (*heylich sacraments loff* or *laudes venerabilis sacramenti*). In many cases confraternities provided the financial support for such celebrations. Antwerp for instance had a particularly important *Gulde van 't Heylige Sacraments loff*.³⁰⁶ But there are as many instances where they were not linked to such formal, confraternal organizations.³⁰⁷ This seems to have been the case at Zoutleeuw. Although the foundation was managed by two lay wardens (*mombaers*), in not a single document it is referred to as a *gulde* or *bruederschap*.³⁰⁸ Nor do the preserved accounts mention any members or subscription fees. It is therefore most likely a private foundation, independent from both the church fabric and the collegiate chapter, which was gradually enhanced throughout time with other donations and arrangements. Foundations like this are in general thoroughly documented, and a 1468 document from Breda even refers to it as a habit in the most important Brabantine churches.³⁰⁹ Their *raison d'être* was the adoration and benediction of the Holy Sacrament with laudatory songs and music (often polyphonic) and candlelight, for which purpose the Eucharistic monstrance was temporarily taken out of the sacrament house and placed on the altar. In Zoutleeuw the foundation is already mentioned in 1458.³¹⁰ The service took place weekly, in conjunction with the Mass of the Holy Sacrament after the matins on Thursdays. The foundation yearly paid the chapter for the service to be celebrated as a solemn mass: before mass the verse

³⁰⁴ On the patronage of confraternities, see for instance Martens, *Artistic patronage in Bruges institutions*, pp. 223-232, 235 and 308-312, and Muller, 'Confraternity and art'.

³⁰⁵ KR 1490, fol. 38: "Item ontfanghen vanden ghesworen hantboechscutters te hulpen vander tafelen van Sinte Sebastiane 5 ríngulden."

³⁰⁶ *Antwerpsch chronykje*, p. 76; Wegman, 'Music and Musicians at the Guild of Our Lady,' p. 185.

³⁰⁷ See the many examples given by Post, *Kerkelijke verhoudingen*, pp. 402-405, Paquay, 'Breda, Bredanaars en de Onze-Lieve-Vrouwekerk,' pp. 36-37, and de Loos, *Patronen ontrafeld*, pp. 91-93. Other examples of private patronage include Tiel 1540 and Ghent 1561, see Van Veen, 'Handboekje van den Tielschen pastoor,' pp. 247-250, and Gyseling, 'Inventaris van het archief van de Sint-Jacobskerk,' p. 51.

³⁰⁸ RAL, KAB, nr. 1033, fol. 13v: "*mombaers van het heylich sacraments loff*."

³⁰⁹ Paquay, 'Breda, Bredanaars en de Onze-Lieve-Vrouwekerk,' p. 36.

³¹⁰ Earliest mention in RAL, KAB, box 975, nr. 830: "ex donatione Gertrudis de Sorpele ad laudes venerabilis Sacramenti." See Grauwen, Warlop & Muret, *Analytische inventaris*, p. 183.

Tantum ergo sacramentum was sung, followed by *Genitori genitoque* after mass. Both were parts from Thomas Aquinas' hymn *Pange lingua*, written for the Feast of Corpus Christi.³¹¹

An incomplete series of the foundation's independent accounts has been preserved for 1520-1533, 1537-1544 and 1554, before its incorporation into the church fabric in 1555. With this information we can study the evolutions during the crucial period 1520-1566.³¹² The accounts recorded both fixed and extraordinary income, from bequests and an offertory block, respectively, in Saint Leonard's church. Occasionally collections in town were also organized. Between 1537 and 1543 there was quite suddenly a considerable increase in monetary offerings, but they soon dropped again (graph 25). This runs contrary to the fixed income which also significantly increased but remained more or less constant until the incorporation in 1555 (graph 28). Yet, during the same period the increasing income was paralleled by the expenses, suggesting that during the period 1537-1544 an increasing number of bequests and services were arranged for. For instance, it is only in 1537 that the first torches carried by children are documented during the lauds ceremony, and in 1539 a black velvet cope was bought in Antwerp. At the occasion of the weekly adoration of the Holy Sacrament, the monstrance was only shortly shown to the people by the parish priest (fig. 82). From 1533 onwards, the churchwarden accounts also document the long-lasting exposition of the Holy Sacrament at Pentecost and Corpus Christi, possibly a whole day long (fig. 83).³¹³ For that purpose a carpenter was paid annually in kind or

³¹¹ RAL, KAB, nr. 1033, unfoliated: "om datmen dese messe solempnitis sigghen soude." RAL, KAB, nr. 1043, fols. 18v and 21: "des donderdaechs int loff" and "inde sacramentsmesse nae de metten." For other examples, see Post, *Kerkelijke verhoudingen*, pp. 402-405. For a definition of *lof* ceremonies, see Wegman, 'Music and Musicians at the Guild of Our Lady,' p. 185.

³¹² RAL, KAB, nr. 1074; RAL, KAB, nr. 1075. First mention in the churchwarden accounts KR 1555, fol. 195v.

³¹³ The most famous depiction of the parish priest showing the Eucharistic monstrance to the community is the anonymous panel in Antwerp (KMSKA, inv. 224; BALaT object nr. 92646). See Vandebroek, *Catalogus schilderijen*, pp. 35-38, who lists comparable examples. To those can be added the miniature in the c. 1475 Missal of Claudio Villa (Torino, Bibliotheca Reale, Ms Varia 186, fol. 176r; BALaT object nr. 40003463), and the upper right panel of the right wing from the first opening of the 1516 Antwerp Passion altarpiece in Västerås (BALaT object nr. 40001372). Depictions of the adoration of the exposed Holy Sacrament include the miniature accompanying Anthonis de Roovere's Ode to the Holy Sacrament (Bruges, Cathedral of Saint Saviour, BALaT object nr. 145080), the first opening of the 1523 Passion altarpiece in Schwerte (Sankt Viktor) and the outer wings of the 1521 Altarpiece of the Holy Sacrament in Dortmund (Petrikirche). The latter two are by the Antwerp painter Adriaen van Overbeke. See Hoffmann, 'Compound altarpieces in context,' pp. 110, fig. 28 and 114, fig. 32.

in money for the “putting in and out” of the monstrance.³¹⁴ Presumably they were charged with the production of a temporary structure for the extended display. In 1547, for instance, Joes van der Gheeten was paid for a “table on which the Holy Sacrament rests.”³¹⁵ In sum, although at first sight the declining offers would suggest a diminishing interest in the Eucharist, a closer look at the accounts strongly suggests the opposite. Instead, it concurs with the continued enthusiasm for the Eucharist in the mid-sixteenth century.

4.3.3 Van Wilre

Eucharistic devotion was also at the core of the extremely well-documented project of Merten van Wilre and his wife Maria Pylipert, the donors of the sacrament house.³¹⁶ Without any doubt it was the most extensive patronage project at Zoutleeuw at mid-century, and arguably even of the whole history of the church. Later documents indeed indicate that the couple’s legacy was by far the largest ever left to the church. After van Wilre’s death the various aspects of their bequests were written down in a separate section in the accounts. Because the wardens had never done anything similar for other benefactors, this aptly illustrates that their patronage and foundations were of considerable importance to the churchwardens of Saint Leonard’s.³¹⁷ The financial importance of his foundations must indeed have been considerable. So much so that it eventually became a heavy burden on the church fabric’s finances. Over time, devaluation of rents caused a decline of the actual value of the funds donated for his services, which became no longer sufficient to remunerate all parties involved. To remedy that situation, in 1612 Archbishop Mathias Hovius approved of a request that

³¹⁴ KR 1533, fol. 168: “van den sacramens huys in neen te stellen ende vuyt een.” In later accounts it is also described as “vuyteen ende ineen te doene,” “vuyt ende in te settene” or “te stellene.” The occasions are specified in KR 1556, fol. 272v: “vanden Heylegen sakermentsshuys vut ende in te setten te Sinsen ende Sakermentsdach.” In Breda, the “afsetten” and “opsetten” took place at the occasion of the confraternity’s procession, respectively on Saturday evening and Sunday. See Paquay, ‘Breda, Bredanaars en de Onze-Lieve-Vrouwekerk,’ p. 47.

³¹⁵ KR 1547, fol. 280v: “vander taeffelken dair het Heylicht Sacrament op ruest.” Compare with Lier, where at the occasion of Saint Gummarus’ day carpenters were paid for the taking in and out of the saint’s reliquary (“van St. Gommaerscasse aff en wederom op te doen”). See Meuris, *Laat-middeleeuwse volksreligie te Lier*, p. 42.

³¹⁶ This paragraph is largely based on Suykerbuyk, ‘Reformation, renovation and commemoration’.

³¹⁷ The first such entry is in KR 1559, fol. 341v: “Wtgeven wten legaet joncker Merttens van Wilre.”

had been presented to him by the churchwardens, asking to reduce the number of masses that had been funded by van Wilre, which had become “difficult if not impossible” to perform.³¹⁸ Nevertheless, in the 1788-1789 overview of foundations in the *Acta capituli*, van Wilre's foundations are by far worth the most in financial terms, and a 1739 description of the town straightforwardly calls him *the* benefactor of the church (*den weldoender deser kercke*).³¹⁹

Who were these benefactors, and what did their patronage consist of? Merten van Wilre was a member of a noble family that is documented in the city of Leuven from the early thirteenth century.³²⁰ The family soon ranked among the local upper class and various members occupied important civic and clerical positions in town. Later on, the family expanded to the neighbouring town of Tienen, where Willem van Wilre was appointed *meier* in 1355.³²¹ From the late thirteenth century, several ancestors were knighted, as was the father of our donor - also called Merten (in or before 1430 - 1490) - who furthermore probably was a Knight in the Order of the Holy Sepulcher and *meier* of Tienen for several periods.³²² However, his eponymous son never seems to have acquired similar titles, and as far as we know never even pursued a political career. Nevertheless, the lordship of the Seigniorie Oplinter must have given him considerable status, as it granted him the rights of high jurisdiction and the appointment of the priests.³²³ Anecdotal accounts of him financing the complete construction of Zoutleuw's new town hall (1530-1539) proved fictional, but they nevertheless explain the later perception of his wealth.³²⁴ From 1526 at the latest, he

³¹⁸ KR 1612, unfoliated (August 1612). Copies of the text of the request, as well as of Hovius' reply are included in DAZ, nr. 45, p. 144. Such reduction were not unusual, however. See for instance the 1633 questionnaire for decanal visitation reports in the Bishopric of Antwerp: Cloet, Bostyn & De Vreese, *Repertorium*, p. 279, nrs. 14 and 15. See also Genicot, *Une source mal connue*, p. 87.

³¹⁹ “Den weldoender deser kercke is den doorluchtigsten heer Martinus de Wilre, heere van Oplinter, inwoonder deser stadt (Obiit 13 decembris 1558), die de selve kercke seer beneficiaert heeft...” Wauters, ‘Une ancienne description,’ p. 48. For the *Acta capituli*, see RAL, KAB, nr. 1000, pp. 101-107.

³²⁰ While ‘van Wilre’ seems to have been the most current spelling in contemporary sources, his name is also spelled Wilder, Wildere, Wildre or Willere, but never Wilré as Wilmet, ‘Étude sur la famille Wilré’ suggests. The most recent study on the van Wilre family is Van den Bossche, *De familie van Wilre*, extending the earlier research from de Troostembergh, ‘De Wilre’.

³²¹ De Troostembergh, ‘De Wilre’, pp. 299-302. A *meier* was the chief administrative and juridical representative of the central authority in several medieval and early modern Brabantine cities.

³²² Van den Bossche, *De familie van Wilre*, vol. 1, pp. 14-15, and vol. 3, pp. 366-387.

³²³ Van den Bossche, *De familie van Wilre*, vol. 3, pp. 332-333 and 337.

³²⁴ See Van den Bossche, *De familie van Wilre*, vol. 3, p. 352. Recounted in Bets, *Zout-Leeuw*, vol. 2, pp. 262 and 268, note 1, and Wilmet, ‘Étude sur la famille Wilré,’ p. 12. On the town hall, see Verleysen, ‘De bouw van een

was married to Maria Pylipert (d. 1554), member of an ancient and prominent family of the town of Zoutleeuw.³²⁵ Van Wilre very probably originated from Tienen, and although he held the lordship of the nearby village of Oplinter, all of his known foundations are related to the church of Saint Leonard in Zoutleeuw. It is here that the couple is known to have regularly resided.³²⁶ Their marriage produced no heirs, as a result of which the hereditary line of the van Wilre family ceased to exist. The Seigniorship Oplinter - and thus the title - was legated to Lodewyck van der Tommen, the son of his sister Cornelia.³²⁷

In his 1545 testament Merten van Wilre only took care of his worldly heritage by dividing his real estate among his family members. No goods or financial means were given to the Church of Saint Leonard yet, but soon the couple's munificent patronage would accelerate and reach lavish heights, completely dedicated to their parish church. In 1548 the churchwardens accepted their gift of a silver monstrance (*ciborie oft monstrantie*) "to put in the Holy Sacrament" and a set of two silver *ampullae*, to be used in the mass for the Holy Sacrament every Thursday.³²⁸ The commission of the

laatgotisch stadhuis'. He analyzed the financing of the whole building, but does not mention the name of van Wilre at all. Wilmet also mentions the story of the church's carillon as a gift from van Wilre, which is not documented either. See Wilmet, *Léau*, vol. 1, p. 167.

³²⁵ In a document of 23 March 1526 a Vrancken Pylipert is called Merten van Wilre's *zweert*, while on 6 August 1528 he appears before the aldermen together with 'Jouffrouw Marie Pyliperts', who supposedly was his wife at the time. See RAL, SL, resp. nrs. 3012, fol. 166, and 3013, fol. 78. Although it can generally mean in-law, according to Stoett, Verdam and Verwijs, *Middelnederlandsch woordenboek*, vol. 7, col. 2508-2509, *sweer* mostly specifically indicates father-in-law. Regardless of the interpretation the document proves van Wilre was married to a member of the Pylipert family by 1526. See Van den Bossche, *De familie van Wilre*, vol. 3, p. 330. The spelling of the family name greatly varies, but most current are Pylipert(s) and Pylepert(s).

³²⁶ The earliest known mention of the couple actually living in Zoutleeuw dates from their first testament of 10 December 1545, see RAB, Familiearchief De Troostembergh, nr. 24 ('ingesetene der stadt van Leeuwe' and 'den woonhuuse des testamentmakers voirseid, staende in de stadt van Leeuwe'). This is confirmed by a document of 14 May 1555, see RAL, SL, nr. 3037, fol. 87 ('woonende bynnen der stadt van Leeuwe voorseid'). On his birthplace, see Van den Bossche, *De familie van Wilre*, vol. 3, p. 348.

³²⁷ As stipulated in his testament of 10 December 1545 (RAB, Familiearchief De Troostembergh, nr. 24). He did not change this in his last testament of 12 December 1558 (present whereabouts unknown, published in full by Bets, *Zout-Leeuw*, vol. 2, pp. 262-264, note 2). In 1568 Lodewyck van der Tommen is indeed called his heir, see RAL, KAB, box 981, nr. 1344 (affixed to nr. 1199). See Grauwen, Warlop & Muret, *Analytische inventaris*, pp. 295-296.

³²⁸ Original deed of gift in RAL, KAB, box 981, nr. 1213. It is published by Bets, *Zout-Leeuw*, vol. 2, pp. 131-132, note 1. Transcript in RAL, SL, nr. 3030, fols. 40r-v. In July 1548 the churchwardens paid the aldermen for the charter of the deed of gift, see KR 1548, fol. 282. For the identification of the vessel as a monstrance and not a ciborium, see Suykerbuyk, 'Reformation, renovation and commemoration,' p. 48. Both could however have

former had been given to the Leuven gold- and silversmith Mathijs Oten (act. 1519 - d. 1555) on 3 October 1547.³²⁹ It appears to have been one of the only objects taken from the church by the French revolutionaries and unfortunately was later lost, but Oten's monstrances for other churches can give an idea of what it might have looked like (fig. 84).³³⁰ Two years after the donation, their sacramental devotion was expressed in an even more monumental way by the donation of the sacrament house, which has been discussed above. The couple had their first foundation drawn up on 21 December 1554, when they passed on a hereditary annuity to the churchwardens. With this they founded four masses per week on the altar of the Seven Sorrows of Mary and Saint Martin, both of the donors' name saints. Interestingly, they also allotted part of the money to the decoration, maintenance and - if necessary - restoration of the altar.³³¹ Two days after the foundation Maria Pylipert passed away. It seems that her death acted as a stimulus for the widowed nobleman, as from then on new foundations occurred much more frequently.³³² In the year following her death, Merten van Wilre first founded a daily mass at Saint Erasmus' altar, which by the time of the foundation was yet to be consecrated. Half a year later, he bequeathed money to the church fabric for a monk to preach a sermon every Sunday and holiday and in 1556 he donated a hereditary annuity in order to have laudatory prayers sung on five evenings a week.³³³ Finally, on 12 December 1558 - the day before he died - he had his last will drawn up in which he allocated a huge sum of money to have his immediate *memoria* celebrations arranged: he gave money to three cloisters in the neighbourhood for prayers for his soul, to ten cloisters in the wider region for a mass to be celebrated thirty days after his funeral and to the churchwardens to make a yearly distribution to the poor and for his and his wife's yearly and eternal anniversary mass in Saint Leonard's church. Furthermore, he ordered a stone and a *tafereel* - an epitaph? - to be

similar forms and functions and examples of monstrances that equally functioned as ciboria are documented. See Tixier, *La monstrance Eucharistique*, pp. 102-103, 108, 202 and 207-209.

³²⁹ Transcript of the contract in RAL, SL, nr. 3030, fol. 6v. The artist's name is also spelled Oyen, Oeyen, Oeen and Oyeten. On him, see especially van Dievoet, *Edelsmeden in Vlaams-Brabant*, pp. 123-124.

³³⁰ Wilmet, op. cit. (note 7), p. 9 claims it was still in the church in 1796.

³³¹ "...tot nootreparatien ende onderhoudenisse vanden voirseiden altair, als van sijraet, ornamenten, lichte, kandelaers, kelcke, wijn ende al datter toebehoirt gelijck dien nu daer aff versien es." Original foundation charter in RAL, KAB, box 982, nr. 1258.

³³² On the couple's gravestone 23 December is mentioned as her date of death. In the churchwardens' accounts of 1554-1555 the costs for her funeral were indeed registered, see KR 1554, fol. 142: "Item Joffrouw Marie Pilyperets, huysvrouw Joncker Marten van Wilre, vanden cleede, liggen ende beste cappen 5,5 Kg."

³³³ The original foundation charters are all in RAL, KAB, box 982, resp. nrs. 1261, 1268 and 1281.

made for their grave and he gave a considerable sum of money to the churchwardens for an altarpiece to decorate Saint Hubert's chapel.³³⁴

Documents indicate that the Merten van Wilre also donated an elaborate set of artworks on top of the monstrance and the sacrament house. In 1555, he commissioned a cope from the Brussels embroiderer Bartholomeus van den Kerckhoven (active 1542-1563). The preserved contract stipulated that it was to depict the Seven Effusions of the Blood of Christ in a series of seven roundels on both the borders and the back. Though the contract does not mention its destination, a cope preserved in Saint Leonard's church corresponds with the description and is inscribed with the year 1555. This has indeed rightly been identified as the one given by van Wilre (figs. 85a-b).³³⁵ Later sources even suggest that in this very year he gave still more donations, including liturgical vestments in various colours, of which today nothing is known.³³⁶ Finally, a 1746 inventory mentions an otherwise undocumented chalice displaying van Wilre's coat of arms.³³⁷

This all suggests that his patronage might have been even more comprehensive than the preserved documents suggest. As mentioned above, it has already been pointed out that it was quite common that foundation charters do not mention altarpieces to decorate the altar on which the liturgical services were to be performed, even if the altar itself was newly founded.³³⁸ A close scrutiny of objects preserved in the Zoutleeuw church allows a hypothetical identification of three altarpieces as donated by Merten van Wilre. None of their acquisitions are referred to in the churchwardens' accounts, which suggests that they were donated to the church rather than bought by the wardens themselves.³³⁹ The 1554 foundation of masses at the altar of the Seven

³³⁴ Bets, *Zout-Leeuw*, vol. 2, pp. 262-264, note 2. In 1597, *tafereel* and *epitaphium* are used interchangeably to refer to an epitaph, see KR 1597, fol. 99: "Betaelt die vracht van het tafereel van den pastoor heer Dionys Lantmeters saliger, 31,5 st... Betaelt heer Jan Berwauts ter ordonnantien van die borgemeester Bollen te helpen het epithaphium van den pastoor saliger, 8 gulden."

³³⁵ Transcript of the contract in RAL, SL, nr. 3037, fols. 87r-v. On van den Kerckhoven, see Coekelberghs, *Trésors d'art des églises de Bruxelles*, pp. 76-77, cat. 35, and Steppe, 'Brabantse borduurkunst,' p. 158, cat. T/21 (the 1555 Zoutleeuw cope).

³³⁶ "Dese kercke is wel versien van schoone cappen van diversche coleuren (ex dono dicti Martini de Wilre, 1555), welcke in solemnele processien gedraeghen worden." Wauters, 'Une ancienne description,' p. 41.

³³⁷ "Item, eenen kelck, met eenen gaude cuppe, met de wapenen van joncker Merten van Wilre daer op..." De Ridder, 'Vijf oude inventarissen,' p. 146.

³³⁸ Martens, 'Patronage,' p. 359.

³³⁹ Though it must be noted that the 1553-1554 account is missing.

Sorrows of Mary and Saint Martin provides a first clue. Although the charter does not mention a donated altarpiece, the stipulation that reserved part of the legated money to maintain and restore the altar recalls Weinsberg's arrangements above. This also suggests that the couple also took care of the material equipment connected with the celebrations. The fact that the altar was dedicated to the couple's name saints indicates it had a particular importance to them. The donation of an altarpiece therefore seems reasonable, and various scholars have already appropriately suggested that the preserved altarpiece from the studio of Pieter Aertsen (c. 1508-1575) that depicts these very topics should be connected to his foundation (figs. 86a-b). A visual and thematic counterpart to this altarpiece - clearly painted in the same workshop around the same time - is the *Triptych of the Seven Joys of the Virgin* (figs. 87a-b), inscribed '1554' on the lower right roundel on the center panel. Apart from depicting the martyrdom of Saint Erasmus on the interior left wing, the triptych is still located on the altar dedicated to that saint. As noted above, on 17 March 1555 van Wilre had already founded a daily mass on this altar before it was even consecrated, which suggests he had a particular interest in it. The consecration took place in May 1556 - probably on Pentecost, 10 May - and both altarpieces considered here seem to have been installed around that time and provided with a sculptural top, the costs of which were paid by the churchwardens.³⁴⁰ Therefore, the inscription of 1554 on the *Triptych of the Seven Joys of the Virgin* - again Maria Pylipert's name saint - is not necessarily the year of completion, but rather a reference to the year van Wilre's wife died. All this again suggests that Merten van Wilre played at least an important role in commissioning the altarpiece, if not being solely responsible for it.³⁴¹

³⁴⁰ KR 1555, fols. 219v-222 (May and June 1556), and KR 1556, fols. 262v-264 (December and January 1557). Consecrations often took place on significant holidays and Pentecost was the high point of Zoutleeuw's liturgical year as a result of the annual Saint Leonard's procession on that day. See Germonprez, 'Foundation rites in the southern Netherlands,' p. 280. The deadlines for both the monstrance and the sacrament house were at Pentecost.

³⁴¹ Wilmet was the first to suggest that both Aertsen triptychs were donated to the church by van Wilre. This was subsequently accepted by Genaille, Kreidl, van de Velde and Buchan, who also included Floris' triptych with the Seven effusions of the blood of Christ. The hypothesis was mostly based on van Wilre's foundations, but never fully analyzed or substantiated. See Wilmet, 'Étude sur la famille Wilré,' p. 10; Genaille, 'L'oeuvre de Pieter Aertsen,' pp. 282, cat. 13 and 285, cat. 33; Kreidl, 'Die religiöse Malerei Pieter Aertsens,' pp. 82-83, note 98; van de Velde, *Frans Floris*, vol. 1, pp. 228-231; Buchan, *The paintings of Pieter Aertsen*, p. 108. The altarpieces were first attributed to Aertsen by Michel, 'Deux peintures religieuses de Pieter Aertsen'. An attribution to his workshop seems justified. For a detailed discussion of such an attribution, see Kloek, 'Pieter Aertsen,' pp. 6-9, 15-16 and 20-21. A squared preparatory drawing by Aertsen himself of the left outer wing depicting Saint Martin is preserved in Munich, Staatliche Graphische Sammlung, inv. 1949:32. See Bevers,

Both of the altarpieces use the same compositional principle of visually juxtaposing a central scene with a number of smaller scenes in roundels, as was more or less standard with regards to the iconography of the Seven Sorrows of the Virgin (fig. 88).³⁴² Interestingly, the contract van Wilre drew up in 1555 with Bartholomeus van den Kerckhoven shows that the donor explicitly wanted the embroiderer to apply this very principle on the cope depicting the Seven effusions of the blood of Christ. This does not seem to have been a traditional compositional principle in that medium.³⁴³ This makes it possible to link yet another altarpiece to his patronage. Just like the cope, the church still houses a triptych that uses both this visual strategy and depicts the same very rare iconography of the Seven effusions of the blood of Christ (figs. 89a-b).³⁴⁴ Though the exact number of effusions and the choice of precise subjects are variable in the literature and prints on the subject, both are precisely the same in cope and triptych. Unlike the two previous triptychs, this one stems from the workshop of Frans Floris (1517-1570).³⁴⁵ Interestingly, a set of seven roundels depicting this very theme and attributed to Pieter Aertsen is mentioned in a 1662 sale in Amsterdam, the city in which Aertsen is documented from at least 1557 onwards.³⁴⁶ This might suggest

Niederländische Zeichnungen, pp. 9-10, and Kloek, 'De tekeningen van Pieter Aertsen,' pp. 142-143, cat. A9. Regardless of the attribution, quality marks confirm the triptychs' Antwerp origins. See Boreel & van Zon-Christoffels, 'Enkele aspecten van de schilderspraktijk,' p. 170.

³⁴² See for other examples Schuler, 'The Seven Sorrows of the Virgin,' esp. p. 24.

³⁴³ "... sess teekenen ende figueren vander bloetstortinghen ons lief heeren ende opden capruyn de sevenste bloetstortinghe al in rondeel en nae vuytwijzen die patroonen die hij daer af ontfangen heeft, daer op de selve joncker Merten zijnen naem gescreven oft geteekent heeft..." RAL, SL, nr. 3037, fols. 87r-v.

³⁴⁴ No other examples are known in painting, apart from a later panel depicting the *Fifteen effusions of the blood of Christ* (Antwerp, Cathedral of Our Lady, BALaT object nr. 87293). The iconography seems to have had its basis in religious theater and devotional literature, and therefore it is unsurprising that most known examples are in print. A highly comparable example is the devotional print by Master S (active c. 1510 – c. 1530) in London, British Museum (inv. 1884,0223.125, 93 x 68 mm) equally depicting the effusions in roundels and juxtaposing them with a central scene. See Braunfels, Kirschbaum and Bandmann, *Lexikon der christlichen Ikonographie*, vol. 1, p. 311; Veldman, 'De boekillustratie als inspiratiebron,' p. 267. Known examples of plays on the theme were written by rhetoricians Cornelis Everaert and Matthijs de Castelein, see Muller and Scharpé, *Spelen van Cornelis Everaert*, pp. 451-461, and Coigneau, 'Matthijs de Castelein,' p. 458.

³⁴⁵ Van de Velde, *Frans Floris*, vol. 1, pp. 228-233, nrs. 80-84 dated it to c. 1555 and also suggested that it was commissioned by van Wilre. It is unclear on which altar it was originally installed, but possibly it decorated that of the Eucharist, with which the themes of the Blood of Christ, death and resurrection are consistent. Work on an unspecified altar next to the sacrament house was done in August 1554. See KR 1554, fol. 147.

³⁴⁶ "Seven ronde schilderijen van de bloetstortingh Christi, by Lange Pier." Obreen, 'Een kunstverzamelaar der 17^e eeuw,' p. 300, nr. 115. Lange Pier or Pietro Lungo is the common nickname for Aertsen, referring to his tall stature. Aertsen's move to Amsterdam is generally placed around 1555, because of various commissions for

that Aertsen - to whose studio the two previous altarpieces are generally attributed - was initially also ordered to paint a third altarpiece in the series, but that due to his move to Amsterdam the commission was passed on to Frans Floris, the brother of the sculptor of the sacrament house. Thus, the seven roundels might well have constituted a set of designs for an altarpiece he ultimately never executed, but for which he took the preparatory work with him to Amsterdam.³⁴⁷ In any event, this triptych seems the first in a row of three that Floris delivered to the church of Zoutleeuw in the subsequent years, one of them being the *Saint Hubert altarpiece* (figs. 90a-b), commissioned in 1557, for which van Wilre donated part of the necessary funds in 1558. This suggests that patron and painter knew each other.³⁴⁸

The couple's patronage clearly served as a catalyst for further decoration in the church. This had already been the case with the donation of the sacrament house. The gift motivated the churchwardens to have the north transept - where Floris' structure was located - redecorated: immediately after its installation new pews were installed, a new sanctuary lamp was hung, the walls were whitened, the roof was repaired and new windows were made.³⁴⁹ By 1555 the brass fence or *thuyn* surrounding the structure was also in place (fig. 91). Probably it was installed in 1553-1554, but since the churchwardens' accounts for that financial year are lacking, it is impossible to determine whether it was also donated by van Wilre or bought by the church itself. Whatever the precise chain of events, the installation was in any case a consequence of his donation.³⁵⁰ Furthermore, Merten van Wilre also seems to have brought the

stained glass windows. See Genaille, 'L'oeuvre de Pieter Aertsen,' p. 274, note 13; Friedländer, *Early Netherlandish Painting*, vol. 13, p. 57.

³⁴⁷ A set of six roundels, attributed to Aertsen and depicting the effusions, appeared on the art market in the 20th century, see Dordrecht, A. Mak, sale 28, 29, 30 November and 1 December 1967, nrs. 1-6. Several scholars made the link between them, the 1662 Amsterdam sale and the Floris triptych. See Buchan, *The paintings of Pieter Aertsen*, pp. 178-180 and Van de Velde, *Frans Floris*, vol. 1, p. 230.

³⁴⁸ The altarpiece was installed in 1565. See KR 1557, fol. 307 (November 1557) and KR 1565, fol. 540v (December 1565). On the altarpiece, see Van de Velde, *Frans Floris*, vol. 1, pp. 265-268, nrs. 122-125, who aptly dated it to c. 1558-1560 on stylistic grounds.

³⁴⁹ KR 1552, fols. 102-104 (July and August 1552), 106-107v (October 1552), 113-114v (March and April 1553), 118v-120v (June 1553), and KR 1555, 216 (March 1556).

³⁵⁰ "Den thuyn aen tsacramentshuys" is first mentioned in March 1555, see KR 1554, fol. 161. Urban, 'Het geelkoperen hekwerk,' p. 37, attributed it to a certain Michiels, probably the coppersmith Adriaen Michiels mentioned in the surityship of 31 October 1550: SAA, Schepenregisters, nr. 239, register WG I, fol. 318v. Though it is not impossible, that specific document does not mention the *thuyn* and, consequently, there is no proof of the otherwise unknown Michiels' involvement.

churchwardens in contact with prominent artists, working in the major creative centers of the Low Countries, whose importance, influence and renown extended beyond the local level. Indeed, after he donated the *Triptych with the Seven Effusions of the Blood of Christ* in the mid-1550s and generously sponsored the *Saint Hubert altarpiece*, commissioned in November 1557, the churchwardens commissioned yet another altarpiece from the same Frans Floris in the 1560s. Immediately after the installation of the latter in December 1565, Floris' *Triptych of the Penitent Sinners* (figs. 92a-b) was commissioned in January 1566.³⁵¹ The same happened with Mathijs Oten, the gold- and silversmith who created the monstrance for the couple in 1547-1548, and who later on was employed again by the churchwardens in 1550, 1555, and even additional years, for pilgrim badges.³⁵² In sum, there can be no doubt that the patronage of Lord Merten van Wilre and his wife Maria Pylipert was of decisive importance for the actual appearance of the present interior.

There is no doubt that social, commemorative motives played a significant role in this complex of donations and foundations. By the time their patronage took off in 1548 it had become clear that the marriage of Merten van Wilre and Maria Pylipert would remain childless, since they had been married since 1526 at the latest. As a result, the hereditary line of the ancient and noble Van Wilre family would cease to exist, and the seigniorship and its accompanying title would pass on to another name. This posed a considerable problem in a society in which continuity of name and lineage was of key importance to uphold noble identity. Therefore, the couple deliberately placed a monumental ensemble in their parish church, the center of the community to which they belonged. They did not do this merely for their personal celestial afterlife, but rather as a 'last of the line memorial' - a memento for the honor of the ancient noble house that after their deaths would disappear forever.³⁵³ It is therefore interesting to note that in comparison to his ancestors, Merten van Wilre's patronage was much more extensive and at the same time more material and visible. Of course, he was not the first in his family to donate money to religious institutions, but the documented

³⁵¹ Van de Velde, *Frans Floris*, vol. 1, pp. 328-330, nrs. 188-192, stylistically dated the altarpiece to around 1568. Although no subject is mentioned, it is highly likely that the commission is documented in the churchwardens' accounts. See KR 1565, fols. 542 (January 1566) and 548 (May 1566), and KR 1569, fol. 506v (July 1569).

³⁵² KR 1549, fol. 362 (June 1550), and KR 1554, fol. 164 (June 1555).

³⁵³ Contamine, 'The European nobility,' p. 100. The concept of 'last of the line memorials' comes from Gittos, 'Motivation and choice,' esp. 144-145. Many thanks to Frederik Buylaert for drawing my attention to it. For an elaborate discussion of the project's social aspect, see Suykerbuyk, 'Reformation, renovation and commemoration,' pp. 64-71.

examples almost exclusively consist of monetary gifts or lands to assure yearly commemorative services. In sharp contrast, Merten van Wilre's donations were highly visible and present in the town's parish church, the center of the society to which he belonged.³⁵⁴ The only strategy last scions of noble families could resort to, was indeed to try and remain present in the community of the living through foundations and donations, through perpetually performed rituals and installed monuments, and the more visible the better.³⁵⁵ The survey of Merten van Wilre and Maria Pylipert's foundations and patronage suggests that they were motivated by that very rationale. The couple provided the church with eleven founded masses a week, five evenings a week laudatory music was to be heard in the church and at least once a week a sermon was preached at their expense. As a result, every day of the week there was at least one service that they provided for, whether it was a mass or lauds (Table 3). It is very likely that the benefactors' names were mentioned at every single performance of the various rituals. This meant that the Zoutleeuw congregation was constantly confronted with the couple's memory. This was the case both liturgically and visually, as they also provided artworks and material equipment for the services. Three side altars were decorated with altarpieces likely sponsored by the couple. Celebrating priests were dressed in precious vestments they gave and liturgical vessels such as the chalice and the monstrance used for the exposition of the Eucharist demonstrably remained attached to their names until the eighteenth century, probably through the current practice of inscriptions on the objects.³⁵⁶ Possibly, lost inscriptions, escutcheons or portraits might have provided extra information on the donors.³⁵⁷ Although the hereditary Van Wilre line ended irrevocably, the final chord was quite majestic.

³⁵⁴ Van den Bossche, *De familie van Wilre*, vol. 1, p. 12. Though it is impossible to make firm statements about the total cost of the donations and foundations due to a lack of information, estimated calculations range from a minimum of 90,848 *stuivers* to possibly 112,148 *stuivers*, of which 30 to 45% went to material donations, and the other 70 or 55% to foundations.

³⁵⁵ Compare with Vroom, *De financiering van de kathedraalbouw*, p. 275; van Bueren, 'Care for the here and the hereafter,' p. 17; Timmermans, *Patronen van patronage*, pp. 214-215 and 260. A similar example is discussed in Bogaers, 'Commemoration in a Utrecht collegiate church,' pp. 203-205.

³⁵⁶ This is suggested by the fact that it is always referred to by van Wilre's name in the inventories mentioned above. In general, see Bijsterveld, *Do ut des*, pp. 200 and 213. Compare, for instance, with the 1550 reliquary by Mathijs Oten in Ophain-Bois-Seigneur Isaac (BALaT object nr. 10148159).

³⁵⁷ On escutcheons and heraldic devices in churches, see Reinle, *Die Ausstattung deutscher Kirchen im Mittelalter*, p. 279.

	MONDAY	TUESDAY	WEDNESDAY	THURSDAY	FRIDAY	SATURDAY	SUNDAY
1548				<i>Ampullae</i> , Mass for the Holy Sacrament			
1554: altar of the Seven Sorrows and St Martin		Mass for St Anne	Mass <i>pro defunctis</i>			Mass for Our Lady	Mass for the Holy Trinity
1555: altar of St Erasmus	Mass	Mass	Mass	Mass	Mass	Mass	Mass
1555							Sermon
1556		Laudatory prayers for St Anne	Laudatory prayers for the Sweet Name of Jesus		Laudatory prayers for the Holy Cross	Laudatory prayers for Our Lady	Laudatory prayers for the Holy Trinity

Table 3 - Weekly schedule of the foundations by Merten van Wilre and Maria Pylipert in the church of Saint Leonard, Zoutleeuw (1548-1558).

This social reading should not, however, obscure very deliberate religious choices. Although the commemorative aspect might explain a great deal about the project, it does not account for the stylistic or devotional decisions. As a whole, the donated artworks form a coherent ensemble that was completely in tune with the most recent stylistic developments, displaying ornamental features drawn from classical Antiquity. For that purpose the Van Wilre couple engaged a group of fashionable and prominent artists that worked in an avant-garde stylistic idiom, including Cornelis Floris for the sacrament house, his brother Frans Floris (1517-1570) and Pieter Aertsen (c. 1508-1575) for the altarpieces, and finally the lesser known but equally influential embroiderer Bartholomeus van de Kerckhoven (active 1542-1563). With these donations the couple seems to have consciously renewed and updated several aspects of the interior: they had the Gothic sacrament house replaced (cf. *infra*) and two of the painted altarpieces they gave must have taken the place of outdated, carved wooden altarpieces of the Seven Sorrows of the Virgin and Saint Hubert (figs. 93 & 94).³⁵⁸ This modernization campaign, however, was only stylistic. Basically, everything else

³⁵⁸ More in detail, see Suykerbuyk, 'Reformation, renovation and commemoration,' pp. 57-64.

remained the same. In their triptychs Aertsen and Floris still used medallions depicting scenes separated from the main narrative as had been a convention in the representations of the Seven Sorrows of the Virgin since c. 1500, and, like earlier examples, the Zoutleuw sacrament house pointed vertically to heaven.³⁵⁹ All the iconographies and themes represented in the artworks donated by Van Wilre and his wife were highly orthodox and refer to strong Catholic devotions and dogmas. Though they were cloaked in the latest stylistic idiom. The Eucharist as well as the devotions to and iconographies for the Seven Joys and Seven Sorrows of Mary were central to the Reformers' critiques of the Church of Rome.³⁶⁰ By expressing their devotion to both the Virgin Mary and the Eucharist, the donors selected traditional devotional themes that were of topical interest and gave them a fashionable, new look. Although the selected artists were not particularly known for being staunchly Catholic, their antique style nevertheless seems to have been used explicitly here to reaffirm orthodox, Catholic tenets. While Merten van Wilre was incapable of assuring the genealogical continuity of his noble family, the monumental ensemble in his parish church abundantly emphasized persistence in its religious identity. Just like his illustrious forefathers, Van Wilre was an upright Christian adhering to the Church of Rome, who honored his ancestors through traditional memorial practice.³⁶¹ Social and religious agendas thus went hand in hand for Merten van Wilre - they were not merely complementary, but intensely interwoven.

4.3.4 Countering the Reformation

At the beginning of this chapter the question was raised if the described developments between 1520 and 1566 can or should be seen as either 'unconscious' continuity of traditional religion or as a 'conscious' confirmation of religious practices, deliberately taking a stand within current religious debates.³⁶² The examples given have made it more than probable that the Zoutleuw community was well aware of Protestant

³⁵⁹ Schuler, 'The Seven Sorrows of the Virgin,' p. 24.

³⁶⁰ Knipping, *De iconografie van de Contra-Reformatie*, vol. 2, pp. 49 and 55, and Tixier, *La monstration Eucharistique*, pp. 237-242. Compare with the centrality and popularity of the Immaculate Conception and Real Presence in piety around 1500, cf. supra 2.1.4.

³⁶¹ Compare with Pollmann, 'Being a Catholic in early modern Europe,' p. 169.

³⁶² The central thesis of the following paragraph was first proposed in Suykerbuyk, 'Reformation, renovation and commemoration,' and was further elaborated in Suykerbuyk & Van Bruaene, 'Towering piety'.

critiques. Furthermore, several relevant aspects have been emphasized, most importantly the continued attachment to the sacrament of communion which markedly intensified around 1550. It has also been pointed out that the parish liturgy was increasingly adorned with polyphonic, musical ornament, and it has been cautiously proposed that this might have been a reaction to critiques. The preceding discussion of patronage in Zoutleeuw has also revealed some interesting trends in this respect. It has for instance been inferred that the ceremony of the Lauds of the Holy Sacrament - at which occasion the Eucharist was venerated - significantly expanded from the 1530s onwards. And finally, I have pointed out that the library of parish priest Gillis van Haugen contained several volumes treating heresy, some of which were written in direct response to Protestantism, defending the Church of Rome. This collection of knowledge was bequaethed to the community through the institution of the church fabric, and it is likely to have been used by preachers.

It should be clear that these observations do not fit in the traditional narrative of a rapid decline of Catholic devotion in the Low Countries after 1520, of which the 1566 *Beeldenstorm* has always been considered a logical consequence. Furthermore, in the historiography of religious life in the Low Countries, the view persists that a Counter-Reformation offensive, imposed top-down by both the Catholic Church and the central government, led to a reappraisal of religious material culture only after the Fall of Antwerp in 1585.³⁶³ Patronage studies often claimed that the patronage of ecclesiastical furnishings came to a temporary standstill in the middle of the sixteenth century as a direct result of the spreading of reformed ideas.³⁶⁴ However, this classic narrative ignores two observations that appeared in our discussion of religious life and material culture in Zoutleeuw between 1520 and 1566. Firstly, much like the findings of Galpern for France, Duffy for England, Bogaers for Utrecht and De Weerd for the Veluwe area, the present case confirms the tenacity of traditional religion (cf. *supra*). Secondly, it ignores the important expenditure on religious ceremony and art for churches in the decades directly following the reception of Protestant thought in the Low Countries. Scholars have only recently started to challenge this classic view, in which the 1566 *Beeldenstorm* is usually taken as a turning point. Andrew Spicer has demonstrated that the events and the restorations they subsequently necessitated led

³⁶³ Traditional views are Thijs, *Van geuzenstad tot katholiek bolwerk*, recently reaffirmed by Muller, 'Communication visuelle et confessionnalisation à Anvers,' and idem, *St. Jacob's Antwerp Art and Counter Reformation*.

³⁶⁴ For instance Duverger & Onghena, 'De zuidnederlandse beeldhouwkunst', and Binski & Black, 'Patronage'.

to early attempts at implementation of the tenets of the Council of Trent. In the same vein, Koenraad Jonckheere established how the dramatic events stimulated artists on both sides of the religious divide to take a stand and express convictions in their artworks.³⁶⁵ But can these findings be taken a step further?

The case of Zoutleeuw suggests that the story is indeed much more complex than is generally accepted. It is tempting to deduce from the above observations a desire to counter the Reformation, but so far it has not been possible to confirm such a hypothesis with hard facts because no direct statements exist of townsmen engaging in a direct dialogue with heterodox views. Although the same circumstances apply to Merten van Wilre and Maria Pylipert, contextual analysis of their thoroughly documented and well-preserved patronage project allows us to consider it as Counter-Reformatory in spirit. Such an interpretation of course strongly depends on the chosen definition. In the historiography 'Counter-Reformation' has grown out to be used almost as a synonym to terms such as the 'Catholic' or 'Tridentine Reformation', i.e. a body of essentially top-down, post-Tridentine initiatives. Recently, John O'Malley has convincingly proposed the more encompassing term 'Early Modern Catholicism' when referring to Catholicism after Trent.³⁶⁶ This, in turn, allows us to reinterpret 'Counter-Reformation'. Although internal Catholic reforms can only be seen in relation to reactions against the Protestant Reformation, reform should indeed be distinguished from reaction and considered separately.³⁶⁷ Contrary to the convoking of an ecumenical council, reacting against the spreading of Protestantism was of course no mere prerogative of the Church of Rome, nor did it fail to occur before the Council of Trent. Therefore, 'Counter-Reformation' is used here in its most literal sense as referring to a general attitude to counter Protestant critiques.

Such an understanding of Counter-Reformation has important consequences. It is inclusive for a broad set of actions, much more encompassing than the orchestrated campaign that would follow after the Council of Trent. Historical studies have shown that in this early phase of Catholic reaction the agency of local elites was crucial.³⁶⁸ This will be confirmed by our analysis (cf. *infra*). It also has repercussions on

³⁶⁵ Spicer, 'After iconoclasm', and Jonckheere, *Antwerp art after iconoclasm*, pp. 45-78.

³⁶⁶ O'Malley, *Trent and all that*. He offers a general discussion of the history and different possible meanings of 'Counter-Reformation' and related terms.

³⁶⁷ Compare with Spiertz, 'Succes en falen van de katholieke reformatie,' p. 58.

³⁶⁸ Laven, 'Encountering the Counter-Reformation'. Dieterich, *Brotherhood and community* refers to an 'active and pious laity'.

chronology and on the interpretation and significance of style. Since Werner Weisbach's classic 1921 study, the Counter-Reformation has increasingly been seen through the prism of the Baroque style, which was considered as the true expression of the spirituality related to this 'renewed' Catholicism.³⁶⁹ Weisbach's view was immediately, though unsuccessfully, criticized by Nikolaus Pevsner, who instead saw Mannerism as the true Counter-Reformation style.³⁷⁰ Pevsner's assessment never succeeded in breaking up the intimate connection that had been established in the historiography, regardless of establishing which style is the purest expression of the related religious ideals. In the light of the present discussion Pevsner's chronological observations deserve reevaluation. They support a reassessment of the symbolic values and intentions of mid-sixteenth-century patronage projects. Not unlike what will be deduced from the present material, Pevsner noted a *radikalen Gegenreformation* in the 1550s. Similar observations occur in varying degrees of decisiveness in recent research of contemporaneous artistic production in Europe. For instance, analysing Parmigianino's art of the 1530s, Morten Steen Hansen proposed a reconsideration of the strict distinction between Renaissance and Counter-Reformation, thus leaving open the possibility of a temporary overlap of the style with the religious attitude.³⁷¹

In recent studies of Netherlandish artistic production, such interpretations occurred as well, and rightly so. For instance, Michiel Coxcie (c. 1499-1592) was a religiously engaged artist who rhetorically visualized orthodox, Catholic tenets in the works he produced after the *Beeldenstorm*. For this reason, Koenraad Jonckheere has identified him as the "first painter of the Counter-Reformation."³⁷² Xander van Eck pushes the chronological demarcations even further to include the decade preceding the *Beeldenstorm*. Based on his analysis of the patronage of the magnificent set of stained glass windows in Gouda's church of Saint John, he has proposed the period from 1550 to 1575 as an 'early phase of Counter Reformation art in the Low Countries'.³⁷³ The conceptually most substantial treatment of the subject, however, remains Andreas Tacke's research on the Holy Roman Empire, and his observations are highly relevant for the present purposes. Shifting the focus from artist to patron, Tacke's

³⁶⁹ Weisbach, *Der Barock als Kunst der Gegenreformation*. Recently confirmed by Lepage, 'Art and the Counter-Reformation'.

³⁷⁰ Pevsner, 'Gegenreformation und Manierismus'. On the debate between Weisbach and Pevsner, as well as for further literature, see O'Malley, *Trent and all that*, pp. 35 and 183, note 55.

³⁷¹ Steen Hansen, 'Parmigianino and the defense of a miraculous image'.

³⁷² Jonckheere, 'First painter of the Counter-Reformation'.

³⁷³ Van Eck, 'Margaret of Parma's gift of a window,' p. 84.

investigations analyzed a set of conspicuous *Bildstiftungen* that chronologically preceded the Council of Trent. He characterized such projects as deliberately countering the Reformation, describing them as thematically and stylistically conservative, yet always offering a new interpretation of the traditional.³⁷⁴ As demonstrated by the material that has been discussed above, such conspicuous investments in Catholic material culture that reevaluated traditional devotions and iconographies were equally central in van Wilre's project. Reading van Wilre's project as Counter-Reformatory in spirit does not suggest that patrons like him represented the Catholic majority in the Low Countries. However, such elaborate *Bildstiftungen* and patronage projects had a profound influence and made far-reaching claims on the communal space of early modern church buildings. Their donors and founders should be considered as making clear, religious statements to their communities. Both donor and donated object were important voices in the public, religious debate about what was appropriate in worshiping the Christian God.

As it has been reconstructed above, van Wilre's project included multiple objects, all of which were strongly related to highly contested issues. The explicit mention of the impressive sacrament house on their memorial stone inscription emphasizes that the tower functioned as the centerpiece of the commemorative multimedia ensemble. Unusually, it was placed in the transept rather than in the choir, making it even more visible from the nave and accessible to the laity. The lavish and exceptionally high tower (18m) was directly connected with the couple's grave and the memorial stone placed immediately in front of it. This devotional preference for the Eucharist aligns with earlier observations on communion. While it is impossible to identify the initiative for the continued attachment to that particular sacrament, in van Wilre's case, the Eucharistic enthusiasm can clearly be attributed to an active lay initiative. Without any doubt, this was an unmistakable expression of Catholic orthodoxy. On the one hand, the broad range of critiques on the Eucharist and its veneration have already been amply discussed above, but in some cases sacrament houses in particular were the subject of virulent remarks. Completely in line with their critiques on the Eucharist itself, reformers such as Luther, Zwingli and Calvin all wanted to abolish the sacrament house, regardless of their internal differences.³⁷⁵ Similar criticisms were also found in the Low Countries. During a 1539 heresy trial a convict from Ghent criticized

³⁷⁴ Tacke, 'Einleitung in den Tagungsband'. He does not literally use the term Counter-Reformation, but referred to such artworks as "gegen die Reformation gerichtete Kunstwerke."

³⁷⁵ Timmermann, *Real presence*, pp. 321 and 342. See also Van Bruaene, 'Embodied piety'.

the superfluous material furnishings of the cult, claiming that “neither God nor the Sacrament dwell in gold or silver, but they dwell in a virtuous heart alone.”³⁷⁶ In the same vein, the Ghent Calvinist Maarten Micronius condemned sacrament houses (*sacrament huyskens*) as idolatrous in a 1552 publication, and still in 1569 Philips of Marnix, Lord of Saint-Aldegonde claimed that nobody had “the right to make beautiful and costly ciboria, monstrances and sacrament houses.”³⁷⁷ On the other hand, the Eucharist was also central to the authorities’ reactions to heresy. Alastair Duke has demonstrated how the authorities in the Low Countries emphasized Eucharistic devotion, describing attacks or denial of the consecrated host as blatant expressions of heterodoxy that were easy to detect.³⁷⁸ As a result, from the 1520s sacrament houses played a significant role in the exemplary punishment and reconciliation of heretics. Multiple cases are known in which they had to perform an *amende honorable*, i.e. a ceremony during which heretics had to kneel in front of the sacrament house, implore forgiveness for their deeds and offer a torch.³⁷⁹ The doctrine of the Real Presence was confirmed at the Council of Trent in 1551, and although the decrees would only officially be published in the Low Countries in 1565, professors from the University of Leuven would meanwhile publicly defend the Eucharist in their publications.³⁸⁰ Thus, gradually, the Eucharist developed into the emblem of Counter-

³⁷⁶ “God noch ‘t sacrament en huusen in gout noch in selvere, maer huusen alleene in een duechdelyc herte.” Decavele, *Dageraad van de reformatie*, vol. 1, p. 599, translation from Van Bruaene, ‘Embodied piety,’ p. 45.

³⁷⁷ “... dat sy doe de macht noch niet en hadden om schoone costelijcke ciborien, oft monstrencien ende Sacrament-huyskens te maken.” Van Marnix van Sint Aldegonde, *De Bijenkorf*, vol. 2, p. 35. Micronius, *Een claer bewijs*, published by Cramer & Pijper, *Bibliotheca Reformatoria Neerlandica*, vol. 1, pp. 437-563, esp. pp. 486 and 522-523.

³⁷⁸ Duke, ‘The origins of Evangelical dissent,’ pp. 18-23.

³⁷⁹ De Win, ‘Analyse van een merkwaardige straf,’ esp. 159-160, and Decavele, *Dageraad van de reformatie*, vol. 1, p. 32, who refers in general terms to “eerherstel brengen aan het Sacrament” as a punishment for heretics in the 1520s and 1530s.

³⁸⁰ Daly, ‘The Council of Trent,’ esp. pp. 164-165. On the introduction of the Tridentine decrees in the Low Countries, see Willocx, *L’introduction des décrets du Concile de Trente*. For the editions and translations, see Vanysacker, ‘De Mechelse kerkprovincie en haar officiële drukken,’ pp. 211-212. In 1563 Johannes Hessels (Hesselius) published a demonstration of the Real Presence: Hessels, *Probatio corporalis praesentiae corporis*. Compare with the contemporary Eucharistic prayers and devotional exercises by the Leuven theologian Godevaert Strijrode (Stryroy, d. 1549), printed between 1557 and 1563 in Antwerp: Stryroy, *Dit syn XV puntkens als XV trappen*. Overall, the clerical response to Protestantism came late in the Low Countries. See Pollmann, ‘Countering the Reformation’.

Reformation action as its veneration was considered by some as a “warlike confession of faith.”³⁸¹

With such a background, it is almost impossible not to see the donation of a sacrament house in an age of religious controversy as a direct and highly orthodox reaction against Protestant critiques. In fact, the Zoutleeuw sacrament house was far from the only specimen erected between 1520 and 1566. Analyzing the phenomenon of the construction of sacrament houses in a broader chronological and European framework, Achim Timmermann noticed a last wave of flourishing from roughly 1530 to 1560, especially in the territories of Brabant and Flanders.³⁸² This is confirmed by our recent survey of sacrament houses in the Low Countries. Apart from the four preserved sacrament houses that with certainty date to the period under consideration here - i.e. Walcourt (1531, 2,65 m, fig. 95), Leuven (1537-1539, 12 m, fig. 96), Zoutleeuw (1550-1552, 18 m) and Zuurbemde (1555-1557, 7 m, fig. 97) - thirty-one other structures have been documented by means of various sources.³⁸³ Chronologically, this list displays peaks in the 1530s and especially the 1550s. The absolute majority - nineteen out of the total of thirty-five - were constructed in the Duchy of Brabant, but they equally occur in the other provinces. Admittedly, fewer sacrament houses have been documented in the northern provinces, but similar patterns of Eucharistic piety can be discerned in this area as well, wherein priests, bishops, magistrates and confraternities instituted more or less elaborate foundations in relation to the Eucharist, such as masses or laudatory music.³⁸⁴

The funding for the expensive and prestigious projects was provided by members of different social groups, who can be broadly defined as local elites, including reigning abbots, parish priests and other prominent (lay) residents of the parish. In fact, a significant number was commissioned by the churchwardens, who represent the largest

³⁸¹ Klauser, *A short history of the Western liturgy*, p. 137. See also Tixier, *La monstration eucharistique*, pp. 237-257.

³⁸² Timmermann, *Real presence*, p. 324.

³⁸³ These are especially entries in churchwardens' accounts, references in inscriptions on other (especially funerary) monuments and later church descriptions. For a list of 30 documented sacrament houses, as well as a list of possibly contemporary but insufficiently documented specimen that do not allow for a precise dating, see Suykerbuyk & Van Bruaene, 'Towering piety,' resp. pp. 147-149 and 150, note 31. To the former list should be added the sacrament house installed in 1555 in Berchem's church of Saint Willibrord by Francois de Roose from Mechelen. See Prims, *Geschiedenis van Berchem*, pp. 107 and 132-133.

³⁸⁴ Post, *Kerkelijke verhoudingen*, pp. 402-405 gives various relevant examples. See also Suykerbuyk & Van Bruaene, 'Towering piety,' pp. 128-130.

group of documented patrons. This is once more revelatory of the importance of their agency and initiatives, as has been discussed in the introduction. Often, however, these various groups acted in dialogue, not in the least for financial reasons. In some cases residents of the parish were indeed mentioned as co-patrons, probably in part as guarantors for the large investments. For these reasons, such commissions were often presented as community affairs. For instance, parish collections to finance the construction of sacrament houses were made in Diest (St. Sulpice, 1526-1527) and in Bourbourg (or Broekburg, 1537).³⁸⁵ As has been discussed in the previous part, it is not easy to assess how voluntary these collections were. But when it concerned testamentary dispositions as in the case of Bourbourg, we can presume that the testators embraced the plans for a Eucharistic shrine.³⁸⁶ Apart from these collective commissions, sacrament houses were also funded as personal gifts from individual lay members of the nobility or of the urban elites, as in Zoutleeuw. Other notable examples are the specimen donated by the rich merchant Andries Seys to the Ghent Church of Saint Nicholas (1553-1555), the one in the Celestine monastery of Heverlee (1563) which was a testamentary foundation by the leading nobleman Guillaume II de Croÿ, Lord of Chièvres (1458-1521), and the structure donated by Giovanni Francesco Affaitadi (before 1545-1609), Lord of Gistel, to the parish church of his seigniorship (1565). Interestingly, the latter was made by the Bruges sculptors Jan de Smedt, Joos Aerts and Jan Aerts after a design that had been supplied by Cornelis Floris, who had also created the structure in Zoutleeuw. The remaining fragments of the Heverlee sacrament house can be attributed to his circle as well (figs. 98-101).³⁸⁷

³⁸⁵ For Diest, Raymaekers, 'Notice historique,' (1859), pp. 47-49, and Bonenfant & Frankignoulle, *Notes pour servir à l'histoire de l'art en Brabant*, pp. 65-67. For Bourbourg, see De Coussemaker, 'Ancien tabernacle'. A parish collection was also made for the brass screen around the sacrament house in Breda, see Paquay, 'Koren en altaren,' p. 178. In Sint-Joris-Winge (1556) an alderman was involved, see Crab, *Het Brabants beeldsnijcentrum Leuven*, p. 190.

³⁸⁶ See the literature on testaments as religious statements: Mol, 'Friezen en het hiernamaals'; Craig & Litzenberger, 'Wills as religious propaganda'; Ramsey, *Liturgy, politics and salvation*. Compare with Breda, where donations by testament were made for the reparation of the sacrament house. See Paquay, 'Koren en altaren,' pp. 154 and 193-194, note 181.

³⁸⁷ For Ghent, see De Smidt, *Twee H. Sacramentstorentjes*, esp. pp. 9-10. For Heverlee, see Smeyers, 'De verdwenen sacramentstoren'. For Gistel, see Parmentier, *Documenten betreffende Brugsche steenhouders*, pp. 56-58, and Lambert, *Sacramentstorens in West-Vlaanderen en Oost-Vlaanderen*, pp. 19-24. These examples are amply discussed in Suykerbuyk & Van Bruaene, 'Towering piety'. Other cases are documented for Nieuwvliet and Anderlecht. The one in Nieuwvliet was donated in 1530 by Jan Adornes, lord of Nieuwenhove and Nieuwvliet. See Parmentier, *Documenten betreffende Brugsche steenhouders*, pp. 3-4. The one in Anderlecht's Church of Saints Peter and Guido was donated by Canon Johannes Van der Thommen around 1553, which is

The donation of a sacrament house by Merten van Wilre and Maria Pylipert in 1550 to the Zoutleeuw church thus clearly fits a much broader pattern of a renewed interest in sacrament houses, and an in-depth comparison of the available data reveals that such donations were highly directed answers to Protestant critiques. It is clear that to the local elites who provided for them, these highly ornamented sacrament houses of expensive materials were both appropriate and powerful expressions of their belief in the Real Presence and as a result, their Roman Catholic convictions. The fact that many sacrament houses commissioned between 1520 and 1566 replaced older structures underscores such a hypothesis.³⁸⁸ In fact, this was the case in Zoutleeuw, where the church already had a stone sacrament house with (metal) doors painted by Master Aert, installed between July 1469 and June 1470. As Mathijs de Layens (d. 1483) was the master builder in charge of the Zoutleeuw church constructions, it most likely had been designed by him, just as he had done for the Leuven Confraternity of the Blessed Sacrament around 1450 (12,5 m, fig. 54). Between 1452 and 1472, *meester Matheuse der stad werckman van Lovenen* or *der steenmetsere* received a yearly salary in both money and in kind from the Zoutleeuw churchwardens, on top of a daily wage for extra services and designs. The 1469 account almost exclusively deals with the work at the sacrament house. In precisely this year de Layens appears to have been more frequently present in comparison to previous years, suggesting that he indeed supervised it.³⁸⁹ The actual execution of the stone structure was left to four workers, referred to as “Olivier ons steenhouwere,” “Jan sinen geselle,” “Joris zijn broder” and “Alart den Steenhouwere.” As these names never again occur in the Zoutleeuw sources, they must have been his mates, and it might even be suggested to identify the latter as the young Alart Du Hameel (c. 1450-c. 1506), who in all probability indeed was a pupil of de Layens and who would later succeed him as civic building master of Leuven in 1494.³⁹⁰ Because de Layens is the most likely candidate to have designed the

recorded on the still extant epitaph triptych of 1555 (BALaT object nr. 20005075): ‘cujus quoque sumptibus erectum est in choro magnificum illud sacrae eucharistiae domicilium’.

³⁸⁸ For examples, see Suykerbuyk & Van Bruaene, ‘Towering piety,’ p. 137. In general, see Maffei, *La réservation eucharistique*, pp. 116-117.

³⁸⁹ KR 1469, fols. 42-46v (July 1469-June 1470). The attribution was first proposed by Hulin de Loo, ‘Communication,’ and subsequently accepted by Destrée, ‘L’Armairium Sacramenti’, and Roggen & Withof, ‘Grondleggers en grootmeesters,’ p. 166. Without any argument, Timmermann, *Real presence*, p. 114, note 84, refuted the attribution to De Layens, as did Engelen, *Jan Mertens en de laatgotiek*, pp. 135-139. For architects’ wages, see Génard, ‘Notice sur les architectes,’ pp. 439-440, and Meischke, ‘Het architectonische ontwerp,’ p. 137.

³⁹⁰ Interestingly, in the middle of the 1480s he is thought to have supervised the construction of the sacrament house in Antwerp’s church of Our Lady, and around the same time he produced an impressive engraving with a

1469 Zoutleeuw sacrament house, we can imagine that it was stylistically similar to his creation in Leuven's Saint Peter's church. Interestingly, the latter was famous and became exemplary by the middle of the sixteenth century. The contracts for the sacrament houses in both Lier's Saint Gummarus's church (1536) and Leuven's Saint Jacob's church (1538) referenced it as the model to be followed.³⁹¹ In Zoutleeuw, however, de Layens' structure fell into disuse due to the donation of the new one by van Wilre, and it was subsequently sold to a nearby church for 20 *rijnsgulden*.³⁹² The Van Wilre couple thus must have been highly conscious of their stylistic choice when they convinced the churchwardens to replace the Gothic work by the famous Leuven master builder, still in vogue just a decade earlier, with a new and strikingly antique-style sacrament house. Although the sacrament house is a transitional work of art with a typological form that recalls the marked verticality of its Gothic predecessors, it is decorated in a purely antique style, containing structural motifs such as the classical architectural orders, garlands, caryatids and herms, fully in line with the couple's other donations.

This conscious stylistic choice is relevant, as in the sixteenth-century Low Countries the use of the antique was perceived not only as a renewal of style but also as a political statement, since it was promoted by the Habsburg dynasty in order to materially support their state ideology and highly orthodox self-image. Noted above, one example includes the state-supported decoration of the Brussels chapel of the Holy Sacrament of Miracle with monumental stained-glass windows. Designed by court artists Bernard van Orley and Michiel Coxcie, they explicitly deployed the antique

design for a Eucharistic monstrance. Timmermann, *Real presence*, p. 185; Cheyns, *De stadsmeesters-meters te Leuven*, pp. 218-224. For the print, see Lehrs, 'Ueber gestochene Vorlagen,' and de Werd, 'Alart Duhomeels monstrans-ontwerp'.

³⁹¹ The contract for Lier is published in Maere, 'De sacramentstorens van Leuven,' pp. 346-348: "... na die ordinantie van den wercke des sacramentshuys gestaen in Sinte Peters Kercken tot Loeven; behoudelijck dat men dit werck wilt doen maken na den nyeweren aert, te wetene van metselrijen, hoe wel dat men de ordonantie van Sinte Peters tot Lueven volgen sal." For Saint Jacob's sacrament house and its contract, see Van Even 'Renseignements inédits,' p. 412: "... te makene een heylich sacramentshuys, van alsulcken steene en op alsulcken grootte en wydde, breydde en hoogde en opt selve patroon als es theylich sacramentshuys in de kercke van Sinte Peeters te Lovene, nyet arghere mair betere, ende met gelycke beelden, soe en gelyck int selve heylige sacramentshuys van Sinte Peeters staende zyn, nyet arghere mair betere van faitsoen..." See also Kavalier, 'Renaissance gothic in the Netherlands,' p. 233 and idem, *Renaissance gothic*, pp. 10-11.

³⁹² KR 1552, fol. 97v: "den auden heylygen sacramens huys duwyllyck de kerckmeesters van Halle ghecocht hebben." Contrary to earlier assumptions, the Halle mentioned here is probably to be identified as the village south of Zoutleeuw (now Halle-Booienhoven), rather than the well-known town south of Brussels.

style for precisely such purposes, as has been aptly analyzed by Bob van den Boogert.³⁹³ In this manner, they publicly linked themselves with the cult of the Eucharist. Furthermore, in imitation of the reigning princes, from the early sixteenth century nobility had also appropriated motifs from classical antiquity.³⁹⁴ A number of the donors discussed had close links with the central authorities or politically belonged to the Habsburg party. This double affiliation with the Habsburgs and orthodoxy is of course most evident in the case of abbots, who often had close ties with both the higher ecclesiastical and political authorities. Abbot Robert II Leclercq (1489-1557, elected 1519) of the Abbey of the Dunes near Koksijde, who commissioned an antique sacrament house in marble, touchstone and alabaster (fig. 105), had served as confessor of governess Margaret of Austria.³⁹⁵ Abbot Gerard van Cuelsbrouck (r. 1517-1555) of the Ghent Abbey of Saint Peter also had a sacrament house of touchstone and alabaster installed, most likely in the early 1550s. He, too, was affiliated with the Habsburg dynasty, as he had sheltered the exiled Christian II of Denmark and had provided important loans to the latter's brother-in-law Charles V.³⁹⁶ The same goes for the nobility, who by definition were directly related to the reigning authorities, and whose power was moreover seen within a religious framework. For instance, Guillaume II de Croÿ, who founded the Heverlee convent where the sacrament house from the circle of Cornelis Floris was located, was a highly influential councilor to the Burgundian-Habsburg court. Moreover, with the foundation of a convent with a funerary chapel, Guillaume de Croÿ placed himself in an established Burgundian tradition.³⁹⁷ And also the Affaitadi family maintained good relations with Charles V,

³⁹³ Van den Boogert, 'Habsburgs imperialisme,' and De Jonge, 'The court architect as artist'. See also the many references in Jonckheere, *Antwerp art after iconoclasm*, pp. 240-242. Compare with the political and religious claims that were made by installing Floris' rood loft in the Cathedral of Tournai, as analyzed by Kavalier, 'Tournai's Renaissance jubé'.

³⁹⁴ Van der Laarse, 'De ontdekking van de oudheid'.

³⁹⁵ De Visch, *Compendium chronologicum*, p. 94, and Dubois & Huyghebaert, 'Abbaye des Dunes,' p. 408. On the sacrament house, see Suykerbuyk & Van Bruaene, 'Towering piety,' pp. 130-132. A contemporary description is provided by van Vaernewijck, *Van die beroerlicke tijden*, vol. 1, p. 75: "een sacramentshuus van marbere, toetse ende albastre, dat den voorleden abt hadde doen maken ende hadde wel xiiii^c pont grooten ghecost."

³⁹⁶ Van Lokeren, *Chartes et documents*, vol. 2, pp. lxxviii-lxx. Contemporary descriptions of the sacrament house in are provided by Van Campene, *Dagboek*, p. 17 ("een costelick sacramendshuus van allebaestere ende tousteen, daer vooren hij [van Cuelsbrouck] knielende ghemaect es, ende lichter vooren begraven") and Van Vaernewijck, *Van die beroerlicke tijden*, vol. 1, p. 131 ("dat zeer costelic sacramentshuus, ooc van ghelijcker matterie, als van albastere ende toeste...").

³⁹⁷ Cools, *Mannen met macht*, pp. 200-201 and *passim*.

whose warfare they sponsored. Moreover, a year before Giovanni Francesco ordered designs for the sacrament house from Floris, Emperor Ferdinand I had elevated the seignory to the status of county, making all of Gian Carlo's sons hereditary counts of the Holy Roman Empire.³⁹⁸ Finally, also for the Ghent patron Andries Seys it has been supposed that he belonged to the Habsburg party in the civic government.³⁹⁹ All these sacrament houses must have been in the antique style, as is suggested by their materials (alabaster, marble and touchstone), their designers (Floris) or their dates (1550s and 1560s). In the case of Zoutleeuw, this political link is especially relevant, because the devotion to the Seven Sorrows of the Virgin - equally chosen by van Wilre in his project - was also highly political.⁴⁰⁰ In sum, the couple explicitly reaffirmed orthodox, Catholic tenets that at the same time had overt political connotations, both in terms of style and subject matter.

Van Wilre's replacement of Zoutleeuw's previous sacrament house also must have increased its scale and it can be inferred that height was of crucial importance to its donors. The eighteen meter high structure is by far the largest of all documented and preserved within the Low Countries, of which the median represents only half its height with 9,6m. Within that sample, the second-highest, now lost sacrament house of Tongerlo Abbey 'only' reached 14,37 m.⁴⁰¹ The verticality of the structure is also highly unusual for Cornelis Floris, who usually worked in a horizontalizing antique mode, which suggests that the orientation was motivated by the patrons.⁴⁰² The structure is also not located at the same place as the previous sacrament house, likely the traditional liturgical place under the arcades in the choir, but rather in the north transept.⁴⁰³ By installing it in the north transept -- stipulated in the contract as "at the place that has been indicated and designated" -- rather than under the low arcades (c. 7,50m) of the choir, the sacrament house could unrestrictedly reach its breathtaking

³⁹⁸ On the Affaitadi family, see Lansens, 'Ghistelles,' esp. pp. 443-466 and 529-531 (French translation of the 1564 charter of elevation); Denucé, *Inventaire des Affaitadi*, esp. pp. 62-79; Van Acker & Opsomer, 'Bijdragen tot de geschiedenis van de heren van Gistel,' esp. pp. 197-202.

³⁹⁹ Suykerbuyk & Van Bruaene, 'Towering piety,' p. 144.

⁴⁰⁰ Speakman Sutch & Van Bruaene, 'The Seven Sorrows of the Virgin Mary'.

⁴⁰¹ See for all these data Suykerbuyk & Van Bruaene, 'Towering piety,' pp. 147-149 (Appendix). For the Tongerlo sacrament house, see most recently Jansen, 'Filip Lammekens en zijn sacramentstoren'. See also Van Spilbeeck, 'De voormalige abdijkerk van Tongerlo,' pp. 22-23, and Duverger, *Conrat Meijt*, pp. 56-57, 97 and 105-108.

⁴⁰² See the many examples in Huysmans, *Cornelis Floris*.

⁴⁰³ This suggested by a later entry documenting the installation of a bench at the location of the previous sacrament house. KR 1554, Fol. 152v (November 1554): "Item betaelt een plancke van 10 voeten tot eender bancken daer dat aude heyligh sacraments huys gestaen heeft 8 st."

height of eighteen meters.⁴⁰⁴ In other cases, too, there are strong indications that height was a key factor, and this is most clearly the case in the structure donated by the Ghent merchant Andries Seys. The contract for the eventually thirteen meter high structure corrected and improved a previous design, stipulating that it yet had to be even “greater and higher” (*wat vromere ende hooghere*).⁴⁰⁵ Thus, height was an essential feature, and the vertical measurements of these stone embodiments of the Real Presence equaled their polemical force.⁴⁰⁶

Finally, the elaborate iconographic program played a key role in transmitting the van Wilre couple’s intentions. Not much is known about the imagery on Zoutleeuw’s preceding sacrament house, but it must have been rather limited. Its only iconographic elements that have been documented are a Last supper and possibly six other sculptures that were commissioned from the woodcarver Joes Beyaert from Leuven for 16 *rijnsgulden*.⁴⁰⁷ Such a limited iconographic program seems to tie in well with other known fifteenth- and early sixteenth-century examples, which mostly contained merely New Testament or related scenes. De Layens’ sacrament house for Leuven, for instance, only includes representations of the twelve apostles, angels with the Arma Christi, five scenes from Christ’s Passion and a Trinity. As argued above, this example remained influential for many years, and that also appears to have included its iconography. In the contract for Leuven’s church of Saint Jacob (1537-1539, fig. 96) it was literally specified that it was to be made “with the same sculptures” (*met gelycke beelden*) as de Layens’. To judge by the still extant but slightly worn and altered object, that stipulation was interpreted rather freely, but the selected scenes still remained limited to the Passion.⁴⁰⁸ Other examples also concur with this observation. The metal sacrament house in Bocholt (fig. 53) only has six figures of apostles and saints. In Meerssen (c. 1500, fig. 102) three biblical scenes are represented,

⁴⁰⁴ “... gelyck men hem de plaetse gewesen ende gedesigneert heeft.” Wauters, ‘Le tabernacle de l’église de Léau,’ p. 362.

⁴⁰⁵ The contract is published in De Smidt, *Twee H. Sacramentstorentjes*, pp. 9-10. Compare also with Marcus van Vaernewijck’s description of the structure, who referred to it as “a high rising work” (*een hooghe upghaende weerck*). See Van Vaernewijck, *Van die beroerlicke tijden*, vol. 1, p. 152. For Seys’ patronage, see more in detail Suykerbuyk & Van Bruaene, ‘Towering piety,’ pp. 142-145.

⁴⁰⁶ See also Kavalier, *Renaissance gothic*, pp. 101 and 264.

⁴⁰⁷ KR 1477, Fol. 219 (January 1478): “Item verdijnt aen meester Joes van Lovene den maeltijt voer scakramenshuys ende 6 bielden te makene costen tsamen 16 rijnssche gulden.”

⁴⁰⁸ See van Even, ‘Renseignements inédits,’ pp. 412-413, note 1: “opt selve patroon als es theylich sacraments huys in de kercke van Sinte Peeters te Lovene, nyet arghere mair betere ende met gelycke beelden.” See also Kavalier, *Renaissance Gothic*, pp. 10-11.

in combination with some freestanding figures, although most are now lost. The sacrament house in Limbourg (c. 1520, fig. 103) only includes a Last Supper and Salvator Mundi, whereas the one in Walcourt (1531, fig. 95) again much like de Layens' example depicts the Arma Christi, the four evangelists, a weeping Saint John and Mary and a Trinity, the whole crowned by a Salvator Mundi.

It is immediately clear that the iconographical program of the sacrament house donated by van Wilre is far more complex than these previous examples. The traditional apostles and saints are now joined by a whole parade of other figures and scenes. Not only does it include Eucharistic prefigurations and offering scenes from the Old Testament, it also features prophets, caryatids representing the four cardinal virtues, the four evangelists and church fathers. More important, the tower-like structure is crowned by a *tempietto* containing Saint Michael slaying the Devil, which itself is a base for a baldachin with the crowning of the Virgin Mary.⁴⁰⁹ This growing iconographic complexity can be observed elsewhere, too, towards the middle of the sixteenth century. One of the most legendary examples was located in the abbey church of Tongerlo. The now lost structure, begun in 1536 and completed in 1543, was a monumental fourteen-meters high and multi-storied edifice. Eighteenth-century descriptions confirm that it contained "all the symbols and all that has been written on the Holy Sacrament," including prefigurations from the Old Testament as well as the cardinal virtues.⁴¹⁰ The contract for the Ghent sacrament house donated by Andries Seys reveals a similar program. It stipulated that not only the traditional four evangelists, twelve apostles and a representation of Christ's agony in the garden were to be included, but also the four church fathers, a set of prefigurations from the Old Testament, six prophets and the seven sacraments.⁴¹¹ The 1564 contract for the abbey church of Saint Gertrude in Leuven, finally, referred to even more figures. Apart from sixteen angels, a pelican and the Mystic Lamb, it prescribed twenty-eight freestanding sculptures, among others of prophets and evangelists, and twenty-five reliefs, both

⁴⁰⁹ The iconography is discussed more in detail by Ceulemans, 'De iconografie van de sacramentstoren,' and Patigny, 'Un type de mobilier liturgique particulier'.

⁴¹⁰ "... une pyramide d'albâtre, qui s'élève jusqu'à la voûte, sur laquelle sont représentés tous les symboles et tout ce qui est écrit du Saint Sacrement" (1717), and "... verciert met alle de historiën van het oudt testament, eenigsints refererende de figure van het alderheyligste sacrament... drie tamelijcke groote beelden: Geloof, Hoop en Liefde" (1779). For these descriptions, as well as on the sacrament house in general, see van Spilbeeck, 'De voormalige abdijkerk van Tongerlo,' pp. 22-23; Duverger, *Conrat Meijt*, esp. pp. 56-57, 97 and 105-108, docs. LXXXII and LXXXV; Jansen, 'Filip Lammekens en zijn sacramentstoren'.

⁴¹¹ Contract published by De Smidt, *Twee H. Sacramentstorentjes*, pp. 9-10.

from the old and new testaments, including prefigurations (*die figueren vanden heylig sacramente*), the resurrection and the last judgement.⁴¹² The elaborate iconographic program Cornelis Floris and his workshop sculpted for Merten van Wilre and his wife in Zoutleeuw thus was part and parcel of a broader movement of renewal in this traditional type of liturgical furnishing.

To an extent, this increasing iconographic complexity is related to stylistic issues. The examples of sacrament houses cited with a rather limited iconographical program (in comparison to later specimens) are all demonstrably executed in an idiom we now generally call Gothic, but which in contemporary terminology was referred to as the 'modern' style. In the above analysis of the facade of the churchwardens' room, the variant of this stylistic mode in vogue in the later decades of the fifteenth and the first part of the sixteenth centuries essentially differed in its elaborate tracery motifs and geometric or floral ornaments, which emphasized the hierarchy of parts and thus unified the whole. The later examples with more elaborate iconographies, on the other hand, were all executed in a style now called Renaissance, but which at the time was called antique (*antijks*). Contrary to the gothic, or modern, mode, this idiom featured architectural and ornamental features, largely drawn from classical antiquity.⁴¹³ As has been argued above, towards the mid-sixteenth century the antique was embraced as the new fashion for the sculpture of sacrament houses, and as bas-reliefs, atlantes, caryatids and herms were characteristic features of this style, application of it entailed increasing possibilities in inserting figurative representations.⁴¹⁴ The contract for Seys' sacrament house, for instance, does not prescribe a particular style, but the description of the sculptures of the four church fathers as 'sculptures in the pillars of the foot' doubtless refers to a form of atlantes - structural forms that were only used in the antique style, seen in the contemporary examples of Zoutleeuw and Zuurbemde (fig. 97).⁴¹⁵

⁴¹² The contract is published in Crab, *Het Brabants beeldsnijcentrum Leuven*, pp. 311-313.

⁴¹³ On the contemporary distinction between these two styles, see Duverger, 'Vlaamsche beeldhouwers te Brou,' esp. pp. 7-8; Baarsen, Halsema-Kubes & Kloek, *Kunst voor de Beeldenstorm*, vol. 1, pp. 39-48; Bangs, *Church art and architecture in the Low Countries*, p. 33; Kavalier, 'Renaissance Gothic in the Netherlands'; idem, *Renaissance Gothic*.

⁴¹⁴ For other examples apart from the ones cited here, see Suykerbuyk & Van Bruaene, 'Towering piety'.

⁴¹⁵ 'Noch vier beelden inde pylaeren vanden voet, wesende de vier leeraerts...' Compare with Patigny, 'Un type de mobilier liturgique particulier'. De Smidt, *Twee H. Sacramentstorentjes*, pp. 15-18, on the contrary, argued that it must have been made in the Gothic mode. His arguments do not hold out, however. By the 1550s, the new antique style had already made its way into Ghent, and as the Zoutleeuw case proves, the high age of the

Yet, there must have been more at stake than just stylistic renewal. These parades of sculpted Old Testament prefigurations of the Eucharist, prophets that have referred to the dogma in some way, and apostles and church fathers who wrote about the Real Presence directly link the Catholic dogma. Its biblical foundations firmly place it within the subsequent tradition of the church, the latter which was precisely refuted by Protestants as valid basis for dogma and belief. Other figures such as the virtues embedded the whole in a larger Christian context and its moral principles. The figures represented were mostly non-controversial in itself, but strongly underlined the claim for doctrinal truth of the ensemble.⁴¹⁶ Thus, the elaborate iconographies of mid-sixteenth-century sacrament houses confirmed the doctrinal validity of the Real Presence. And this, in turn, cannot be seen but in relation to the Protestant refutation of the Catholic dogma. Interestingly, it finds parallels in polemical Catholic writings in support of the Eucharist. A case in point is the 1567 *Tractaet vant hoochwaerdich sacrament des aultaers* by the Leuven theologian Cunerus Petri, published as a response to those who call Catholics idolatrous. He devotes nearly half his book to listing Biblical passages, church fathers, saints and church councils that illustrate the truth of the doctrine - a list of subjects that immediately recalls the sacrament houses' iconographies.⁴¹⁷ Furthermore, some sacrament houses offer even more specific clues that the display of Catholic orthodoxy was indeed at stake. The sacrament house donated by Andries Seys in Ghent, for instance, included a relief of the seven sacraments, which was an affirmation of Catholic orthodoxy as the number of sacraments had recently been reaffirmed at the Council of Trent in 1547.⁴¹⁸ In Zoutleeuw, this is pushed even further by the presence of a Coronation of Mary and a St. Michael slaying the dragon on the two highest levels, two highly unusual subjects for sacrament houses that do not have direct doctrinal or theological links with the Eucharist. While the former was highly criticized by Protestants as they denied the prime role of Mary, around mid-century the latter had been used to refer to the fight against heresy, among others in a rhetoricians' contest.⁴¹⁹ In this way, the iconography seems to directly respond to Reformed critiques. Contrary to earlier sacrament houses

donor does not automatically suggest a preference for the Gothic style. Furthermore, 1553 would also be a rather late date for a work in the Gothic mode.

⁴¹⁶ Hecht, *Katholische Bildertheologie*, pp. 79-151 referred to this as the *Traditionsprinzip*. See also 6.1.1.

⁴¹⁷ Petri, *Tractaet vant hoochwaerdich sacrament des aultaers*, fols. 34-58v.

⁴¹⁸ Daly, 'The Council of Trent,' p. 164.

⁴¹⁹ On the contemporary significance of St. Michael slaying the dragon, see especially Meganck, *Pieter Bruegel the Elder*, pp. 134-140.

it is not just an ornamental ode to the Eucharist, but almost a polemical theological treatise on the doctrinal validity of the dogma of the Real Presence.

In Zoutleuw there are no documented examples of refutations of or critiques on the Real Presence, therefore the sacrament house must be seen more as a statement within a general hostile climate in the Low Countries rather than as a reaction to a particular situation. Elsewhere, however, there are strong indications that sacrament houses were firm statements against recent local unrest and events. Such must have been the case in Leuven's church of Saint Jacob (fig. 96). The driving force behind that commission - also a replacement of an older structure - was Franciscus de Campo, at that time still a simple curate, but later inquisitor and bishop of 's-Hertogenbosch and Antwerp. He is generally known as a staunchly Catholic theologian and ardent opponent of the Reformation, much in line with his teacher Ruard Tapper.⁴²⁰ At the time of the commission, the university town of Leuven was the scene of growing religious unrest. In the 1520s and 1530s, for instance, a number of church robberies had taken place, also in Saint Jacob, that had targeted the sacred vessels. And in 1543, a large heresy trial in which Sonnius was heavily implicated was held in Leuven. The evidence suggests that much of the controversy revolved around sacramental devotion.⁴²¹ The same goes for Ghent, where two of the previously cited critiques on sacrament houses were uttered, and where at least two magnificent new structures were erected in the 1550s. Therefore, the mounting of a new and in many cases certainly more magnificent sacrament house seems to have been intended as a clear material statement in defense of the dogma of the Real Presence.

In case of private donations, as was the case in Zoutleuw, the sacrament houses also served as vehicles for a visual Catholic profiling of their donors. Just like Merten van Wilre and Maria Pylipert, patrons were often buried at the foot or at least in its immediate vicinity.⁴²² Although their memorial stone is now set into the same wall as the sacrament house, old descriptions and photographs reveal that they originally faced each other (fig. 104). Thus, the gazes of the depicted couple would have been

⁴²⁰ Gielis, 'Franciscus Sonnius'.

⁴²¹ The trial is amply described in Van Uytven, 'Bijdrage tot de sociale geschiedenis van de Protestanten te Leuven'.

⁴²² See other examples cited in Suykerbuyk & Van Bruaene, 'Towering piety,' p. 147. On the funerary context of sacrament houses in general, see Herremans, 'De sacramentstoren als blikvanger,' p. 35. Compare with the general importance of effigies in the immediate vicinity of sacred objects, discussed by van der Velden, *The donor's image*, pp. 237-238.

directed towards the Eucharist. This must have been a deliberate choice, because the 1550 contract with Floris reveals that they did not want to be depicted on the sacrament house itself, as had been proposed in an earlier design. Consequently, that decision left open the possibility to represent themselves *in front* rather than *on* the sacrament house.⁴²³ Similar arrangements are known elsewhere. A contemporary description of the sacrament house in the Ghent abbey of Saint Peter mentions that Abbot Gerard van Cuelsbrouck was buried right before it and that he was moreover represented kneeling.⁴²⁴ The burial in the vicinity of the Eucharist doubtless had a practical side to it, since it allowed the donors to take advantage of the central place it occupied in liturgy. As a result, more visitors would be drawn to the tombs in question and the candles that were lighted in front of the sacrament houses would also shine their lights on the donors' effigies.⁴²⁵ Yet, it also had a strong symbolic connotation and effect. The visual effects achieved in Zoutleeuw and Ghent must have been similar to the preserved example in Zuurbemde (fig. 97), where an unidentified couple is depicted in prayer at both sides of the sacrament house.⁴²⁶ In this manner, these donors were immortalized in perpetual prayer for the consecrated host, eternally beholding it, which gave their Catholic combativeness a directly visual expression. And although there is earlier documentation of sculptural programs that display patrons as *priants* at the foot of sacrament houses, given the controversial context described above, such a spatial arrangement was much more pertinent after 1520.⁴²⁷ It immortalized the donors in their spiritual communion which, as discussed above, did not require the consumption of the consecrated host and wine, but consisted mainly of contemplating the Eucharist. According to many contemporary scholars, this was

⁴²³ "... behoudelyck dat myn joncker oft zyn huysvrouwe daer aen nyet en willen gecontrefeyt zyn." RAL, SL, nr. 3033, fols. 2r-v. For a discussion of the original placement of the stone, see Suykerbuyk, 'Reformation, renovation and commemoration,' pp. 63-64.

⁴²⁴ "... een costelick sacramendshuus van allebaestere ende tousteen, daer vooren hij [van Cuelsbrouck] knielende ghemaect es, ende lichter vooren begraven." Van Campene, *Dagboek*, p. 17.

⁴²⁵ Compare with similar remarks by Schleif, *Donatio et memoria*, pp. 40-45; Duffy, *The stripping of the altars*, pp. 329-331; Heinz, 'Aspice Ricardi monumentum,' pp. 322-323.

⁴²⁶ The inscription on the sacrament house's foot reveals that it was commissioned by Heyndrik van Halle and Steven Jordens, who were churchwardens at the time ("Anno 1555 doen wert dit werck bestede door Heyndrik van Halle ende Steven Jordens die doen kerckmeesters waren van deser kercken"), but one of the two sculpted figures clearly is a woman. Huysmans, *Cornelis Floris*, p. 109 proposed to read Stefanie instead of Steven, but that solution can evidently not be maintained.

⁴²⁷ An earlier example is the sacrament house commissioned from Matheus II Keldermans in 1506 by Abbot Gerard vander Scaeft for the Abbey of Averbode. The contract stipulated that it should have two *priants*, one of the abbot, the other of the prior. See Lefèvre, 'Travaux d'artistes malinois,' pp. 22-23.

even more important than the actual communion.⁴²⁸ Interestingly, it was precisely the same visual technique that had been applied during the exemplary punishments by the authorities from the 1520s onwards. For example, in the immediate aftermath of the *Beeldenstorm*, the town council of the severely affected Bergues (Sint-Winoksbergen) in southwestern Flanders sentenced a certain Jean de Wale, who had misbehaved during the local Corpus Christi procession, to perform an *amende honorable* during Mass. Bare-headed and dressed only in linen, he had to kneel before the local sacrament house, loudly profess his repentance and offer a burning torch to the consecrated host he had ridiculed. This act of submission had to be repeated every Sunday during an entire year, making it plain to the local community that the sacrament house had become the emblem of orthodoxy.⁴²⁹

Finally, the desire to send out a public, religious message is also overtly clear in van Wilre's whole project. This is most directly illustrated by the fact that in 1555 he founded a sermon to be preached every Sunday and holiday by a monk. It is of course unknown what was discussed and propagated at these occasions, but it is more than likely that devotional themes similar to van Wilre's donations and foundations were addressed. Moreover, such texts were delivered in the vernacular, and thus were capable of reaching a large audience.⁴³⁰ Furthermore, around mid-century, sermons were increasingly explicit against Protestant doctrine, and they would grow out to be principal instruments to fight heresy.⁴³¹ In early April 1566, for instance, preachers in Brussels were threatened for talking too much about Calvin, which only made them more perseverant in confirming the people in the ancient Catholic faith.⁴³² Especially the Friars Minor - who in Zoutleeuw were paid to deliver van Wilre's sermons - were known as sworn enemies of Calvin, as they always attacked him in their sermons.⁴³³

⁴²⁸ Post, *Kerkelijke verhoudingen*, pp. 401 and 405, and Falkenburg, 'Hieronymus Bosch's Mass of St. Gregory'. See also 4.2.1.

⁴²⁹ This and other examples in De Coussemaker, *Troubles religieux*, vol. 3, pp. 154, 156-157 and 166.

⁴³⁰ Van Herwaarden, 'Geloof en geloofsuitingen,' p. 192.

⁴³¹ Compare for instance with the emphasis put on sermons in late sixteenth- and early seventeenth-century visitation reports: Toebak, 'Het kerkelijk-godsdienstige en culturele leven,' pp. 127-128.

⁴³² Pouillet, *Correspondance du Cardinal de Granvelle*, vol. 1, p. 201 (7 April 1566): "Aussi at le prédicateur de la court, et celluy de sainte Goule, auquel l'on at miz ung billet affin qu'il se gardît de tant parler de Calvin; mais il ne le lesse pour cela, et tous ceulx que preschent en ceste ville se sont fort bien acquitez à confirmer le peuple."

⁴³³ See for instance Henne, *Mémoires de Pontus Payen*, vol. 1, pp. 172-173: "aux ordres des mendiants, ennemys jurez de la doctrine de Calvin, à laquelle ils s'attaquoyent tousjours for aigrement en leurs sermons..." The first

That might very well have been the case in Zoutleeuw as well, who would be armed with anti-Protestant books from the library of Gillis van Haugen donated to the church fabric only a few years later. At several instances, Pentecost is chosen as a significant date. As mentioned above, both the deadlines for the monstrance and the sacrament house given by the couple were set at Pentecost. Furthermore, Saint Erasmus altar - on which van Wilre had already founded a daily mass in 1555, before it has even been consecrated - was most likely consecrated on Pentecost, 10 May 1556. Pentecost and Whit Monday were of course the high point of Zoutleeuw's liturgical year as a result of the annual Saint Leonard's procession.⁴³⁴ And, as has been argued above, on precisely that day of the year many pilgrims were present in Zoutleeuw. Around mid-century they still seem to have come in significant quantities. As a result, his message potentially had a broader, regional spreading. Finally, this public role is also inherent in the very concept and self-image of the nobility - and by extension perhaps also to the elite. Noblemen indeed saw themselves as both leaders and protectors of the local community, for which they had to take responsibility by guaranteeing its unity and Christian character.⁴³⁵ In the case of van Wilre this is illustrated by the fact that two of his foundation charters - both from 1555 - explicitly disclaim personal benefits, specifying his motives as the 'multiplication of God's service and the common good' (*tot vermeerderinge des dienst Goids ende gemeyne welvaerts*).⁴³⁶ And the whole project of masses, Marian, and Eucharistic devotions made immediately clear that, according to van Wilre, this proper service of God was a Catholic one.

payment of the churchwardens to Friars Minor to deliver van Wilre's sermons is in KR 1559, Fol. 341v: "Wtgeven wten legat joncker Merttens van Wilre: Den minderbrueders van sermonen te doen, 30 Kg."

⁴³⁴ KR 1555, fols. 219v-222 (May and June 1556). Consecrations often took place on significant holidays, see Germonprez, 'Foundation rites in the southern Netherlands,' p. 280.

⁴³⁵ Buylaert, 'The Van Pottelsberghe-Van Steelant memorial by Gerard Horenbout,' and most recently De Weerd, 'Adellijke beschermers van een christelijke gemeenschap'. Compare also with the communal functions and benefits of foundations, chantries and donations that have been identified by Zemon Davis, 'Some tasks and themes in the study of popular religion,' pp. 327-328; Schleif, *Donatio et memoria*, pp. 232-234; Speetjens, 'The founder, the chaplain and the ecclesiastical authorities,' p. 200.

⁴³⁶ The foundation charters for the daily mass at Saint Erasmus' altar and for the sermons: RAL, KAB, Box 982, nos. 1261 and 1268.

Chapter 5 1566 and beyond

5.1 *Beeldenstorm*

5.1.1 Destructions and descriptions

Precisely because of their highly orthodox and in some cases even defiantly Catholic character, sacrament houses became one of the prime targets of violent iconoclastic attacks in 1566 following years of controversy and sharp criticism in the writings and preaching of the reform-minded.¹ Many of the magnificent sacrament houses that had been constructed in the same last flourishing wave after 1520 - including the Zoutleeuw sacrament house - were dramatically torn down. This led to both vivid and horrified descriptions by contemporaries. Describing the first phase of iconoclasm in the Low Countries, set between 10 and 20 August 1566 in the Flemish *Westkwartier*, Marcus van Vaernewijck narrates with awe how an army of around 3000 members travelled in small gangs from village to village, destroying the interiors of every church they crossed on their path.² One of the gangs went to the “rich and very powerful Abbey of the Dunes... where they broke the sacrament house of marble, touchstone and alabaster, which the previous abbot had made and which had cost 1400 pounds groats.”³ The abbot in question was Robert II Leclercq (1489-1557, elected 1519), and

¹ On the destruction of sacrament houses in 1566 in general, see Van Bruaene, ‘Embodied piety’.

² On the different phases that are to be distinguished in the *Beeldenstorm*, see Scheerder, *De Beeldenstorm*, pp. 18-19.

³ Vaernewijck, *Van die beroerlicke tijden*, vol. 1, p. 75: “Emmer heeft groote schade gheleden dat rijcke ende zeer machtich clooster van den Dunen, daer voren dat zij ghecommen zijn, ende om dat haer daer wederstant ghedaen wart, zoo hebben zij daerinne afgebroken een sacramentshuus van marbere, toetse ende albastre, dat den voorleden abt hadde doen maken ende hadde wel xiiii^c pont grooten ghecost.” On the sacrament

as has been argued above the materials mentioned in the description leave little doubt that the sacrament house was executed in an antique style. Two stone fragments that have been identified as coming from the structure further illustrate how the iconoclasts went about in mutilating this structure. The figures in a Last Supper (fig. 105), for instance, have been meticulously deprived from their heads and hands, just like in so many other places the representations of human figures were disarmed of their potentially most dangerous, i.e. recognizable and speaking features.

The price of the sacrament house in the Abbey of the Dunes mentioned by van Vaernewijck is strongly exaggerated, but precisely for that reason is all the more interesting and revelatory of the contemporary perceptions of the newly erected sacrament houses as extremely costly and sumptuous. The author speaks in highly comparable terms when he describes the destruction of the “very costly” (*zeer costelic*) sacrament house in the Ghent Abbey of Saint Peter on the evening of 22 August.⁴ This specimen was probably donated in the early 1550s, and, like the Dunes’ sacrament house, must have been executed in the antique as well. Interestingly, other accounts confirm that it was a perception shared by other contemporary observers. For instance, in his diary the Ghent merchant Cornelis van Campene (1516-1567) describes the tearing down of the sacrament house, “donated shortly before by one Andries Seys, linen-merchant, which was made from white stone of Avesnes and cost more than 100 pounds groats.”⁵ The fact that he mentions the high price, which approximates the

house see also De Visch, *Compendium chronologicum*, p. 94, and Suykerbuyk & Van Bruaene, ‘Towering piety,’ pp. 130-132.

⁴ Van Vaernewijck, *Van die beroerlicke tijden*, vol. 1, pp. 131-132: “Ooc wart gheruwineert ende in sticken ghebroken dat zeer costelic sacramentshuus, ooc van ghelijcker matterie, als van albastere ende toeste... Schipperkins die zaten boven op tsacraments huus...” Another description of the destruction of that structure in Van Campene, *Dagboek*, p. 17: “Item in dabdie van sente Pieters waeren se oock, daerse sulck een schade deede, dat niet wel serievelick en es. Alvooren den ouden preelaedt her Gheeraerdt van Kulsbrouck hadde ghedaen maecken ter memorie een costelick sacramendshuus van allebaestere ende tousteen, daer vooren hij knielende ghemaect es, ende lichter vooren begraven.”

⁵ Van Campene, *Dagboek*, p. 17: “Item inde kercke van sente Niclaus, aldaer dat zoulieden oock deden ghelijck vooren gheseyt staedt, de santen afwerpen, sacramendshuus, dat een luttelken hier te vooren ghegheven was bij eenen Andries Zeys, coopman van lienwade, ende was ghemaect van widt Avennes-steen, ende cost bedt dan hondert ponden groote, al onsticken gheworpen...” Another account in Van Vaernewijck, *Van die beroerlicke tijden*, vol. 1, p. 152: “In Sente Nicolaus keercke hadden zij ooc ter keermesse gheweest (zoo voorseijt es), hadden in den hooghen choir ooc veel schade ghedaen. De tafel up den hooghen autaeer ende tSacraments huus, nieuwe ghemaect, een hooghe upghaende weerck, was gheheel gheruwijneert, welc Sacramentshuus doen maken was ende ghegheven van Andries Seijs, jeghen over den Fremenueren, een rijk coopman van lijnwade.”

actual price of 90 pounds groats, not only illustrates that van Campene was well-informed, but also that the sacrament house's high cost was an issue that was talked about in public. Many of the newly-erected sacrament houses were indeed very expensive: the prices paid by Seys in Ghent and by van Wilre in Zoutleeuw equaled about seven annual wages of a schooled worker.⁶

As emphasized in the account by van Campene, the destroyed sacrament houses discussed here had only been donated “shortly before” (*een luttelken hier te vooren*). This should caution for a too monolithic interpretation of the 1566 *Beeldenstorm* as merely destroying the religious material culture of a preceding medieval era that was definitively over. Authors such as van Campene and van Vaernewijck still knew the names of some of the sacrament houses' donors, and several of them or their close relatives must still have been alive when these large-scale destructions took place. Moreover, as demonstrated above in the discussion of the Strijrode and Spielen epitaphs, the objects placed in churches could have a direct link with the private lives of the donors (cf. *supra*, 4.3.2). This all gives the iconoclastic attacks a strikingly personal touch. The same goes for the various objects' creators. Without any discrimination the most recent creations by still living artists were also subject to fierce attacks during the Wonder Year. Throughout his famous *Schilder-Boeck* (1604), Karel van Mander gives many examples of artworks which he ranked among the most artful creations of the mid-sixteenth century that were “smashed by desecrating hands, to the distress of Art, by fierce stupidity” (*van scheyndige handen, tot jammer der Const, door het woest onverstandt vernielt*).⁷ Such was for instance the case with a large altarpiece which Pieter Aertsen had painted for a church in Warmenhuizen, near Alkmaar in Holland. Much like van Vaernewijck and van Campene before him, van Mander does not fail to emphasize both the artistic and the financial value of the deplored object, as he often did elsewhere. He narrates that a prominent lady from Alkmaar tried to prevent the triptych's destruction by offering 100 pounds, but “just when it was taken out of the church to hand it over to her, the peasants furiously threw themselves on it and annihilated the beautiful art.”⁸ Our knowledge of Aertsen's

⁶ Suykerbuyk & Van Bruaene, ‘Towering piety,’ pp. 138-139 and 148-149 (Appendix). Compare also with the contemporary examples of Torhout (1550-1552) and Bruges (1554-1557).

⁷ Other contemporary examples include van Mander, *Schilder-Boeck*, fols. 232v (Willem Key), 236 (Jan van Scorel), 247 (Maarten van Heemskerck), 254 (Anthonie Blocklandt van Montfoort) and 259v (Dirck Barendsz). On van Mander and iconoclasm, see Ford, ‘Iconoclasm’.

⁸ “Daer was oock in Noort-hollandt, te Warmenhuysen, van hem een groot Altaer-tafel, een Crucifix, daer onder ander eenen met een bijl den eenen Moorder de beenen in stucken sloegh, seer wercklijck gedaen: de

religious work is limited, which in part is certainly due to the large-scale destructions in the different sixteenth-century waves of iconoclasm, and van Mander even recounts that it drove the painter “beside himself with despair that the things he meant to leave the world in memory were nullified like that.”⁹ But he was of course far from the only painter who befell such a fate. Frans Floris is another case in point, about whom David Freedberg has even suggested that the psychological shock caused by the sight of his own artworks being destroyed might well explain his diminished output after 1566.¹⁰ One of his absolute masterpieces must have been the *Assumption of the Virgin* which he painted in 1561-1564 for the high altar of the church of Our Lady in Antwerp, at the time only recently elevated to the rank of cathedral. Just like Aertsen’s altarpieces this work was reportedly severely damaged when iconoclasts sacked the church on 20 August 1566. Reporting that it was broken into pieces, Van Mander especially praised the work’s composition, while an anonymous chronicler mostly deplored its artful and costly character.¹¹

In Zoutleeuw, on the contrary, Floris’ and Aertsen’s creations were spared. And although sacrament houses were violently attacked by iconoclasts all over the Low Countries, the Zoutleeuw structure remained standing, just like the other extant specimen in Walcourt, Leuven and Zuurbemde. In this chapter, I will investigate how that was possible. I will present an overview of the Catholic agency in the period covering Spring 1566 until Spring 1567 - the year that one anonymous but

binnenste deuren wrochten mede. Dit werck, als A°. 1566 t’ghemeen in zijn raserije was, wiert in stucken gheslagen met bijlen, alhoewel de Vrouw van Sonneveldt t’Alckmaer daer voor boodt 100 pondt, want alsooment uyt de Kerck bracht om haer te leveren, vielen de Boeren als uyt sinnigh daer op, en brachten die schoon Const te niet.” Van Mander gives other examples in his biography of Pieter Aertsen, among others that of the high altarpiece of the Amsterdam *Oude Kerk*, of which Vasari had written that it had cost 2000 crowns. See Van Mander, *Schilder-Boeck*, fols. 244r-v.

⁹ “Pieter was dickwils onverduldigh, dat zijn dingen, die hy de Weerelt tot gedachtenis meende laten, soo te nieten wierden ghebracht...” Van Mander, *Schilder-Boeck*, fol. 244v. On his religious work in general, see Baarsen, Halsema-Kubes & Kloek, *Kunst voor de Beeldenstorm*, vol. 2, pp. 342-343.

¹⁰ Freedberg, ‘Art after iconoclasm,’ p. 45, note 14.

¹¹ “Noch was van hem in de selve Kerck t’hoogh Altaer-tafel, eenen grooten doeck van tijck, wesende d’opvaart Mariae, daer seer fraey lakenen in quamen, van gevlogelde vliegende Engelen, en was een heerlijck stuck wercx, versierlijck geordineert, en wel geschildert, dan dat te jammeren is, werdt in stucken gebroken, en van snoode handen in’t beeldtstormen vernielt,” Van Mander, *Schilder-Boeck*, fol. 241r. “... menich constig en costelycke schilderye van diversche excellente meesters gedestruert, als... de Hemelvaart van onse Lieve Vrouw in den hoogsten Choor, gemackt van Frans Floris...’ *Antwerpsch Chronykje*, pp. 88-89. On the painting in question and its fame, see Van de Velde, *Frans Floris*, pp. 280-282, nr. 139; Held, ‘Carolus Scribanius’s Observations on Art,’ pp. 179-180 and 201; Jacobs, *Opening doors*, p. 257.

contemporary Catholic chronicler dubbed ‘the year of wonder’ (*het jaer van wonder*), for the almost miraculous chain of events that took place in the Low Countries.¹² While research on this crucial period has largely focused on Protestant action or official, governmental reaction, the local actions of Catholics remain largely understudied.¹³ After a first, general overview of the quick succession of events in the Low Countries and various historical explanations that have been proposed, I will discuss some general patterns of local reaction to counter the Protestant actions, with a particular focus on the situation in Brabant. This will then be compared to what happened in and around Zoutleuw in order to assess the impact of the events on the small Brabantine town, both during the Wonderyear and beyond.

5.1.2 The Wonderyear: facts and theories

1566 was a year in which a number of tensions that had been slumbering in previous years converged. A broad resistance against the central government’s harsh heresy laws was joined by the nobility’s and political elites’ profound discontent with King Philip II’s centralising politics. Thus, the unique political and religious climate was created that would profoundly characterize the Wonderyear.¹⁴ The traditional starting point is set on 5 April 1566. On that day, more than 200 armed members of the confederate lesser nobility organized a march on Brussels and presented governess Margaret of Parma with a petition to abolish the Inquisition and to suspend the edicts against heresy. Although the overall tone of the text was moderate and loyal, the action in itself was revolutionary.¹⁵ Many inhabitants of the Habsburg Low Countries were hopeful, but tensions immediately ran high and cities such as Antwerp and Brussels had a permanent watch installed. From then on the events became international news. Foreign observers, especially in Italy, kept close track of the developments in the Low Countries.¹⁶ Governess Margaret reacted in panic and a few

¹² “Anno 1566, d’Welck men hiet het jaer van wonder om de grouwelycke veranderinghe die men sach in het out Christenen Gelooff, ende de groote muyterye dier gebeurde onder den Adel...” *Antwerpsch Chronykje*, p. 69. On the further fortunes of the term, see Pollmann, ‘Iconoclasts anonymous,’ p. 172.

¹³ For Catholic reactions in the period immediately after the *Beeldenstorm*, see De Boer, ‘Picking up the pieces.’

¹⁴ Excellent overviews of the events are provided by Woltjer, *Tussen vrijheidsstrijd en burgeroorlog*, and Marnef, ‘The Dynamics of Reformed Militancy in the Low Countries: The Wonderyear.’

¹⁵ See, among others, van Nierop, ‘A Beggars’ banquet’.

¹⁶ Pouillet, *Correspondance du Cardinal de Granvelle*, vol. 1, pp. 201-202; Lamal, ‘Nieuws en informatienetwerken,’ p. 73.

days later proclaimed a moderation, awaiting the official answer of King Philip II. This apparent tolerance was however soon misinterpreted, as a result of which inhabitants who had been banned in previous years for religious reasons now returned to their home country. Furthermore, shortly thereafter Calvinists came out into the open and organised massively attended hedge-preachings outside many cities. These sermons gradually received a militant tone, and they were soon attended by an armed audience.¹⁷ A drawing by Crispijn van den Broeck testifies to the bursting activity at such hedge-preachings (fig. 106). Spread over an open field, hermetically closed off by armed men standing on and around wagons, up to four different preachers addressed the gathered crowds, while here and there merchants sold useful goods, such as printed books, pamphlets or songs and even stools. Thus, in the summer of 1566 Calvinism rapidly grew from a persecuted underground church to a large, popular and increasingly well-organized movement.

One such sermon was delivered on 10 August by Sebastiaan Matte in Steenvoorde, in the west of Flanders, urging the crowd to break the images and other religious objects in the nearby convent of Saint Lawrence. This particular event is traditionally identified as the start of the *Beeldenstorm*: in the week following Matte's sermon many sacred places in the *Westkwartier* in the south-west of the County of Flanders were attacked by wandering bands of iconoclasts under the guidance of Calvinist preachers. It was during this first phase that the Abbey of the Dunes and its sacrament house were sacked. The intense iconoclastic attacks in Antwerp on 20 August were a crucial turning point, since they worked as an important catalyst for further destructions. Immediately afterwards important cities such as Ghent and Tournai followed, and later the fury spread to Holland, before finally reaching the northernmost provinces in September and October 1566 (map 4).¹⁸

Over time, interpretations of the iconoclastic events have evolved significantly. Perhaps most notoriously, the Marxist historian Erich Kuttner analyzed the *Beeldenstorm* as a dramatic expression of class struggle, identifying the slumbering socio-economic tensions as the main trigger. Although his interpretation of the events

¹⁷ On the hedge preachings, see in particular Mack Crew, *Calvinist Preaching and Iconoclasm*.

¹⁸ A detailed chronological overview is provided by Scheerder, *De Beeldenstorm*, whereas an important recent analysis has been made by Arnade, *Beggars, Iconoclasts, and Civic Patriots*. For this chronology, see also Duke & Kolff, 'The Time of Troubles in the County of Holland'; Backhouse, 'Beeldenstorm en Bosgeuzen in het Westkwartier'; van Nierop, *Beeldenstorm en burgerlijk verzet*; Deyon & Lottin, *Les casseurs de l'été 1566*; Scheerder, *Het Wonderjaar te Gent*.

soon met with fierce critiques, both methodologically and in content, other economic readings were still proposed afterwards.¹⁹ A crucial and nuancing contribution to the debate was made by Herman Van der Wee, who pointed to the essential role of the middle-classes. As a result of both economic and climatologic factors, their prosperity was quite suddenly threatened in the early 1560s, an evolution that Van der Wee interpreted as an important push-factor towards Calvinist teachings.²⁰ Such economical interpretations soon proved insufficient, however, and in recent years they have been enriched by more cultural readings.²¹ Peter Arnade, for instance, linked the events with the traditional, political culture of the Burgundian Low Countries.²²

Most important for our purposes is the fact that the religious basis of the controversy was again brought into the debate, like the pioneering work by Nathalie Zemon Davis, who showed that the iconoclastic attacks in France were indeed all about religious convictions.²³ For the Low Countries in particular, David Freedberg has made important contributions by demonstrating the actual importance of the theological motivations for the actions, and how they in fact are inherent to the Judeo-Christian tradition and even human psychology.²⁴ The theoretical underpinnings and the various stances of their ideologists have been amply discussed above. It has also been shown how the iconoclastic wave fit in a much larger sixteenth-century, European pattern, whereby religious factors always intermingled with more regionally determined social, economical and political concerns. Indeed, before 1566 many European countries north of the Alps had already been confronted with iconoclasm (cf. supra, 3.1). Although iconoclasm in itself was hardly unique, the scope and intensity of the 1566 wave in the Low Countries was exceptional. Unlike elsewhere, the destruction had not been done on official command, nor were the iconoclasts approved of by local authorities, and the actions were not limited to individual places. The central government had evidently not consented, and yet the upheaval spread throughout almost all of the provinces, from Steenvoorde in the South-West to Groningen in the North-East. For these reasons, Sergiusz Michalski even spoke of a ‘iconoclastic

¹⁹ Kuttner, *Het hongerjaar 1566*. Critiques by Roelink, ‘De Nederlandse Opstand een klassenstrijd,’ and Leblanc, Review of Kuttner, *Het hongerjaar 1566*.

²⁰ Van der Wee, ‘The Economy as a Factor.’

²¹ For a critical note, see for instance van Nierop, ‘De troon van Alva,’ esp. p. 218.

²² Arnade, *Beggars, Iconoclasts, and Civic Patriots*.

²³ Zemon Davis, ‘The Rites of Violence,’ and Holt, ‘Putting Religion Back into the Wars of Religion’.

²⁴ Freedberg, *Iconoclasm and Painting in the Revolt of the Netherlands*.

psychosis' in the Low Countries, which was absolutely exceptional from a European point of view.²⁵

5.1.3 Countering iconoclasm

Because of this exceptional character, the *Beeldenstorm* was viewed by many chroniclers - both contemporary and later - as a unique chain of events. As has become clear from the multiple examples given throughout this part, the traditional world of the Low Countries, with which its inhabitants were so familiar, was turned upside down in an almost carnivalesque manner. The shouting of "the king drinks!" to a priest consuming the consecrated wine, the comparison of organ music with pastoral *musettes* and the mock trials against images all fully testify to that. Yet, although the iconoclastic scare must have been enormous and the actual impact of the attacks of summer and autumn 1566 can hardly be exaggerated, the *Beeldenstorm* was not as comprehensive as it seemed to contemporaries and subsequent historians.²⁶ A considerable number of important economic, political or religious centres in the Habsburg Netherlands actually managed to ward off destruction. In the Duchy of Brabant, both Brussels and Leuven were spared, and in Flanders two of the Low Countries' largest cities in terms of inhabitants did not endure iconoclasm in 1566 (map 5).²⁷ Thus, in all three regions that Jozef Scheerder distinguished in his study, there were cities left untouched.

The situation was tense and complex nevertheless. A good case in point is the city of Leuven, located just off the western border of the Hageland region. The course of events in the city is thoroughly documented in the letters written by Maximilien Morillon from Leuven. Morillon was the diligent informant of Cardinal Antoine Perrenot de Granvelle. On Saturday 31 August 1566, in the midst of the iconoclastic upheaval, Morillon apologised for not being able to provide as much information as usual on the precarious situation in the Netherlands. "I cannot leave this city as they keep it closed," he wrote, "which is the reason why I cannot report as fully as I could

²⁵ Michalski, *The Reformation and the Visual Arts*, p. 86. See for examples of forged letters of instruction Scheerder, *De Beeldenstorm*, pp. 24, 27, 52, 77 and 100.

²⁶ On this, see especially Suykerbuyk, 'De sacra militia contra iconomachos'. Compare with the remark by Mack Crew, *Calvinist preaching and Iconoclasm*, p. 11, note 27.

²⁷ Compare with the data in de Vries, *European Urbanization*, pp. 271-272 and 280-281.

while being in Brussels. But the danger is too great there.” At the same time, he expressed his gloomy prognosis for the future: “The good order is maintained here and one keeps great watch, but I am afraid that in the end the inhabitants will get angry.”²⁸ Almost two months later however, after several weeks of ostentatious destruction in churches, chapels and cloisters all over the Habsburg Netherlands, Governess Margaret of Parma wrote the city of Leuven about “the satisfaction that His Majesty got from seeing the good work done by his good and loyal subjects in order to preserve and maintain their ancient devotion, both with regards to religion as to the service of His Majesty.”²⁹ This example is illustrative of how real the iconoclastic scare was and it indicates that the city of Leuven suffered genuine threats. Yet, it also prompts the question of how it was possible that it was able to ward off the attacks and, as a result, the city’s two magnificent sacrament houses were not hewn down as they were at so many other places during the *Beeldenstorm*.

The abundance of studies charting the local developments of the *Beeldenstorm* illustrates that it was certainly no homogenous movement that struck identically everywhere. Instead, it was highly heterogeneous and characterised by pluralism and particularism.³⁰ Indeed, as Peter Arnade’s recent study aptly demonstrated for Antwerp, Ghent and Ypres, the motivations for and precise developments of the iconoclastic acts differed significantly from place to place.³¹ Therefore, it may be concluded that the reasons why certain cities resisted also differ and depend on various factors. However, as the iconoclastic scare seems to have been omnipresent, they all felt threatened and consequently took measures. Contemporary Netherlandish sources

²⁸ “Je ne puis... sortir ceste ville que l’on tient close, qu’est cause que je n’ay moien de faire si ample advertence comme je polroie faire estant à Brucelles: mais le dangier y est trop grand... L’on tient icy assez bon ordre et grand guest: mais je craindz que, à la longue, les bourgeois se fascheront...” Pouillet, *Correspondance du Cardinal de Granvelle*, vol. 1, p. 438.

²⁹ “... le contentement qu’elle prend de veoir les bons offices et devoirs que ses bons et loyaulx subiectz font pour eulx conserver et maintenir en leur ancienne devotion tant au regard de la religion que pour service de Sa Majesté.” RAB, Audiëntie, nr. 244/2 (nr. 126). The same letter was sent to Leuven (Duchy of Brabant); Douai, Lille, Bruges, Aalst, Kortrijk and Dendermonde (County of Flanders); Gouda, Rotterdam and Dordrecht (County of Holland); Arras and Saint-Omer (County of Artois); and Mons (County of Hainaut). It is partially published in Enno van Gelder, *Correspondance française de Marguerite d’Autriche*, vol. 3, p. 62.

³⁰ Duke & Kolff, ‘The Time of Troubles in the County of Holland,’ pp. 322-323. See also the remarks in Roelink, ‘De Nederlandse Opstand een klassenstrijd,’ pp. 53 and 70, and Scheerder, *De Beeldenstorm*, pp. 18 and 114.

³¹ Arnade, *Beggars, Iconoclasts, and Civic Patriots*, pp. 125-165. Compare with Scribner, ‘Why was there no Reformation in Cologne?’, who claimed that “the failure of the Reformation in Cologne was as much a product of the urban environment as its success elsewhere” (quote on p. 241).

are rather pessimistic about the resistance and remain silent about the measures taken, but these issues surprisingly received much more attention in Italian reports on the quick succession of events in the Low Countries.³² Giovanni Battista Guicciardini, sometime merchant in Brussels and informant for the Medici court, is one of the few authors who offered a succinct analysis of the resistance. He mentions three main reasons for the success of cities that remained *intatto*, such as Brussels and Leuven: the closing of the city gates, the organisation of a guard that patrolled day and night, and the providing of churches with armed watchmen.³³ These are indeed the measures that recur time and again in the cases of the cities that were spared.³⁴

By closing the gates and ‘sealing’ the city’s jurisdiction, the magistrates sought to prevent citizens from attending the sermons of hedge-preachers outside the city walls. However, closing gates and mounting guards were also done to keep a close watch on people coming in. Names, places of origins, as well as lodging were registered, and strangers or vagabonds were straightforwardly refused entry. In many cases non-inhabitants that had already been in the city for a significant period were sent away. In Leuven, for instance, all but two gates were closed on 29 August - a policy of which the informant Morillon felt the consequences.³⁵ In the later requested reports on the events and adopted policies for the Council of Troubles, or *Mémoires justificatifs*, cities were often quick to emphasise that none of their inhabitants were actually involved in any of the troubles.³⁶ However, actual events seem to have been the result of an interplay between internal and external factors. One measure that was taken to counter the danger from the inside was the guarding of the churches and chapels in town, or even the complete closing with a temporary suspension of its liturgical services. A well-documented example is the Church of Saints Michael and Gudula in Brussels. On 21 August, as a reaction to the news of the destruction in Antwerp the day before, the Brussels magistracy decided to put watchmen in the church towers and all churchwardens were advised to stand guard in their churches themselves.³⁷

³² Lamal, ‘Nieuws en informatienetwerken,’ pp. 75-76.

³³ Battistini, *Lettere di Giovan Battista Guicciardini*, p. 267. The date of 2 August 1566, suggested by Battistini, is evidently wrong, since the letter mentions the destruction suffered in Antwerp, which only started on 20 August.

³⁴ This is discussed in detail in Suykerbuyk, ‘De sacra militia contra iconomachos,’ pp. 21-33.

³⁵ SAL, Oud Archief, nr. 299, fols. 250-256.

³⁶ Such as Bruges, Diksmuide and Hoorn. RAB, Raad van Beroerten, respectively nr. 64, fol. 205; nr. 55, fol. 53; nr. 109, fol. 362v.

³⁷ SAB, nr. 1724, fol. 99v.

Tensions were indeed running high, and a few days later, on 24 August, it was rumoured that a Calvinist preaching and the despoiling of the Church of Saints Michael and Gudula were being planned. According to Maximilien Morillon, the destruction would have actually taken place that day if Nicolas tsHagen, lieutenant to the Brussels *amman*, had not intervened: the divine office was suspended, the building was closed and guards were stationed in and around the church.³⁸ A week later, on Sunday 1 September, the church was opened again for a limited number of services and under heavy protection, and the very next day the governess had a Te Deum sung to celebrate the birth of Infanta Isabella. This event was an occasion for the chronicler Pierre Gaiffier to express his amazement about the strict surveillance. “It was very strange to see harquebusiers and a great number of armed soldiers in the church. There were so many that one only had access to the church after great pains and difficulty, through a narrow passage, one after another.”³⁹ It was only on 15 October that the magistrates decided to officially reopen the church, however still with limited opening hours.⁴⁰

The examples make clear that local counter-moves were crucial. In Brussels, military organisation was essential, but there was a dire need for soldiers, most of whose payment was far in arrears. Several cities urgently begged for troops, but the central government was often unable to send any at all, or at best only a very few. This caused cities including Brussels and Leuven to put up temporary civic armies, paid for by local authorities and institutions, both secular and religious.⁴¹ Interestingly, in Leuven the necessary funds were supported by donations from ‘good citizens’.⁴² Yet, apart from such official measures and arrangements, the Catholic population could also take

³⁸ SAL, Oud Archief, nr. 299, fol. 254; Battistini, *Lettere di Giovan Battista Guicciardini*, pp. 272-273; Poulet, *Correspondance du Cardinal de Granvelle*, vol. 1, pp. 432 and 440.

³⁹ “Et estant fort étrange de veoir en ladite église harquebusiers à crocq et grand nombre de sauldars armez, tellement que à grande peine et difficulté pouvoit-on avoir accèz en ladite église, sinon par estroict passage et l’ung après l’autre...” Verheyden, ‘La chronique de Pierre Gaiffier,’ pp. 31-32. *Harquebuses à croc* were large guns that were rested on a fork-shaped device when used. On the re-opening of the church, see *Dagboek van Jan de Pottre*, p. 22, and Poulet, *Correspondance du Cardinal de Granvelle*, vol. 1, pp. 448 and 451.

⁴⁰ SAB, nr. 1724, fol. 106. Confirmed by letters of Viglius (7 September) and Morillon (15 September): Hoyneck van Papendrecht, *Vita Viglii ab aytta Zuichemi*, vol. 2, p. 377, and Poulet, *Correspondance du Cardinal de Granvelle*, vol. 1, p. 462.

⁴¹ Suykerbuyk, ‘De sacra militia contra iconomachos,’ pp. 26-28.

⁴² SAL, Oud Archief, nr. 299, fols. 258v-262 and 264. Compare with Battistini, *Lettere di Giovan Battista Guicciardini*, p. 274; Molanus, *Les quatorze livres*, vol. 1, p. 442 and vol. 2, p. 885; Enno van Gelder, *Correspondance française de Marguerite d’Autriche*, vol. 1, p. 159.

matters into their own hands in order to offer stubborn resistance to iconoclasts, whether on the instigation of the local authorities or not. A telling example is the town of Veurne: although it closed its gates, a number of iconoclasts succeeded in entering and started to cause devastation, but the inhabitants quickly managed to drive them out.⁴³ Less glorious, but apparently equally effective, was to chase the attacking iconoclasts away with dung, which the inhabitants of Hoorn used successfully.⁴⁴ These examples illustrate the importance of the local dominance of the reform-minded for the iconoclastic fury to be effective: where they were not, they often had difficulties carrying out their plans. Quite logically, a correlation between the degree of success of rising Protestantism and iconoclasm has already been advanced by several scholars.⁴⁵

But this does not mean that the threats were insignificant in the cities that were able to ward off iconoclasm. In several of the *villes bonnes* - as they were called in the official state correspondence - reformed communities actually existed and the iconoclastic scare evoked in the many letters by Morillon and the governess, among others, was no doubt fueled by real threats. In Brussels the Calvinists were well organised by the Wonderyear, and the university town of Leuven also saw considerable support for reformed ideas as a result of many contacts with Protestant centres. The 1543 trial has already been mentioned above in relation to Sonnius. It counted 42 persons accused of Protestantism, and military security measures had to be taken during both the legal proceedings and executions.⁴⁶ And iconoclasm, of course, could come completely from

⁴³ "Ende also zij heurlieden [the iconoclasts] begonsten te stellen tot afwerpen vanden imagen ende chijraet der zelve kercke werdt tselve belet ende wederstaen bij zommeghe vanden prochianen ende zijlieden ter kercken uutghedreven, inder voughen datter gheene oft emmers zeere cleyne schaede ende braeke gheschiede." RAB, Raad van Beroerten, nr. 55, fols. 110-111; Scheerder, 'Le mouvement iconoclaste en 1566,' p. 300; Backhouse, *Beeldenstorm en Bosgeuzen in het Westkwartier*, pp. 82-83 and 100.

⁴⁴ "... die met slijck ende dreck beworpen, ende voorts wech stootende..." RAB, Raad van Beroerten, nr. 109, fols. 363-365. Other examples in Scheerder, *De Beeldenstorm*, pp. 20-21, 35 and 51; Verheyden, 'Chronique de Pierre Gaiffier,' pp. 5 and 24; Duplessis, *Lille and the Dutch Revolt*, p. 210; Pollmann, 'Countering the Reformation,' p. 95.

⁴⁵ Duke and Kolff, 'The Time of troubles,' p. 324; Scheerder, *De Beeldenstorm*, pp. 58-59, 109-110.

⁴⁶ For Brussels, see the report by Councillor Josse de Bracle made for the Council of Troubles: RAB, Raad van Beroerten, nr. 38, esp. fols. 14, 15, 16, 17v, 42, 73v and 85v. See also Marnef, 'Het protestantisme te Brussel,' pp. 57-61. For the trial in Leuven, see van Uytven, 'Bijdrage tot de sociale geschiedenis van de Protestanten te Leuven.' Other well-documented examples include Bruges and Lille: Dewitte, 'Chronologie van de reformatie te Brugge,' p. 39; Vandamme, 'Het Calvinisme te Brugge in beweging,' p. 107; Willems-Closset, 'Le protestantisme à Lille'; Backhouse, *Beeldenstorm en Bosgeuzen in het Westkwartier*, p. 64.

out of town. The example of Diksmuide is a case in point.⁴⁷ When Sebastiaan Matte - the minister who preached the notorious instigating sermon at Steenvoorde - sent a small army to the city, demanding that they be let in, the magistracy stubbornly refused. Yet, although the population appears to have been predominantly Catholic, they feared bloody reprisals and put pressure on the magistrates to let them do their job. Nonetheless, the churchwardens of the parish church of Saint Nicholas took the initiative for bringing as much as possible in safety. During several days some fifteen men were paid to hide or carry away most of the church's furniture. The sculptures of the rood loft were taken away, as well as the triumphal cross with the images of Our Lady and John the Baptist. The organ was partly protected, while parts of it were hidden in a parishioner's house, just like the baptismal font. Finally, wooden sculptures of the saints (*de houten santen*) were hidden in the church tower, and also the brass screen around the sacrament house was carried away.⁴⁸ Although iconoclasts indeed managed to enter the church and afflicted some damage, later on magistrates explicitly declared that there had been no citizens involved: 'strangers' were said to have carried out the iconoclastic cleansing of the church, but under the supervision of the bailiff who made sure that the "principal ornaments" (*principale cieragien*), including the rood loft and "the costly carved sacrament house, made of white stone of Avesnes," were spared. The date of the sacrament house is unclear, but the rood loft had only been installed in 1536-1543 by Jan Bertet (fig. 107). Much like van Campene and van Vaernewijck, the Diksmuide magistrates explicitly emphasized its high cost of more than 12.000 guilders in their *mémoire justificatif*.⁴⁹ Both structures suffered some damage during a slightly later iconoclastic episode of *ghueserye*, after which their

⁴⁷ Partially discussed in Scheerder, 'Le mouvement iconoclaste en 1566,' pp. 299-300; idem, *De Beeldenstorm*, p. 27; Backhouse, *Beeldenstorm en Bosgeuzen in het Westkwartier*, pp. 99-100.

⁴⁸ See the excerpts of the 1566-1567 churchwarden accounts published by Weale, *Les églises du doyenné de Dixmude*, pp. 32-33.

⁴⁹ RAB, Raad van Beroerten, nr. 55, esp. fols. 49v-52v and 58-62: "Welcke brake ghebeurt is bijden voornoemde sectarissen ter presentie vanden bailliu ende sommighe wethouders vanden voirnoemde stede dairtoe ghecommitteert bij tghemeene collegie vanden weth, omme grieff ende schade te beletten daert hemlieden moghelijck was, ende bijzonder omme te beletten dat den docxsael vande prochiekercke, die gecost heeft bet dan xii^M guldenen, ende theilich sacramentshuus, oock wesende seer costelijck gesneden ende gemaect van wit avennesteen, ende de sepulturen vanden heeren van Dixmude, metgaders diversche ander costelicke tafereelen nyet gebroken en souden werden, twelcke al deur de presentie vanden voirnoemden bailliu ende wethouders ende deur haerlieden schoonspreken gheheel ende ongeschent bleeff." The sacrament house is first mentioned in the churchwarden account of 1543 and therefore might date from around the same time. The account was published by Weale, who also collected some documents on the rood loft: Weale, *Les églises du doyenné de Dixmude*, resp. pp. 13 and 138-142.

sculptures were repaired or replaced, but their bases remained intact. Yet, their further fortunes are more or less paradigmatic for the fate of many of the other sacrament houses in the Low Countries that had survived iconoclasm. In 1612-1614 the magistracy commissioned a new sacrament house (fig. 108) from the Bruges sculptor and architect Hiëronymus Stalpaert (1589-c. 1659), but even this later specimen was later definitively reduced to debris in the ravages of the first World War.⁵⁰

5.2 Zoutleeuw and the Hageland region: between resistance and neglect

The above survey nuances the idea of the *Beeldenstorm* as an all-destructive wave, and provides insights into the dynamics of the Iconoclastic Fury. More specifically, the cliché that the passivity of magistrates was the main reason for losses seems in need of considerable revision. In several cases, as in Leuven, acute and genuine threats were certainly met with an active resistance sponsored by some of its inhabitants. Yet, it is hard to assess how broad-fronted it was. In certain areas, however, the threats must have been considerably less immediate. Contemporary correspondence and chronicles make clear that the cities in the southern Counties of Artois, Hainaut and Namur - wherein Walcourt was located - and the Duchy of Luxembourg “remained constant in their Catholic religion.”⁵¹ The inhabitants were predominantly Catholic, and no gangs of iconoclasts are known to have wandered through their territories. Returning to the

⁵⁰ See the churchwarden account of 1568-1569: “Betaelt Ian Bottelgier, beeldesniider ende steenhauer van ziinen stiile, van trepereren, maken ende leveren van de ystoryen ende viiventzeventich nieuwe beelden anne tSacramens huus, die alle afghesmeten ende ghebroken waren in de ghueserye, miitsschaders tschoonen maken ende tresseeren van alle de loverye van den zelve Sacramens huuse...” Weale, *Les églises du doyenné de Dixmude*, pp. 34-35. For the later sacrament house, see idem, *ibidem*, pp. 59-62; Maffei, *La réservation eucharistique*, p. 118; Lambert, *Sacramentstorens in West-Vlaanderen en Oost-Vlaanderen*, vol. 1, pp. 60-83 and vol. 2, pp. 27-35; Timmermann, *Real presence*, p. 342.

⁵¹ “Les villes du pays d’Arthois, Namur et Luxembourg demeurarent tousjours constantes en la religion catholique...” Henne, *Mémoires de Pontus Payen*, vol. 1, pp. 185-186. Compare with Enno van Gelder, *Correspondance française de Marguerite d’Autriche*, vol. 1, pp. 151 and 162 (“pays de Haynault... qui continue faire bon debvoir, comme aussy fait la conté de Namur...”); Pouillet, *Correspondance du Cardinal de Granvelle*, vol. 1, pp. 457-458; Wauters, *Mémoires de Viglius et d’Hopperus*, pp. 345-346.

particular case of Zoutleeuw, in what situation did this town find itself during the summer of 1566?

The traditional explanation for Zoutleeuw's escape has always been that the town gates were closed for a group of iconoclasts that wanted to enter. This contention is based on an excerpt from one of Morillon's letters to Granvelle in 1566. In it, he stated that "those of Zoutleeuw... kept their city closed."⁵² This, however, is a false and misleading explanation. The letter was dated 21 July 1566 and it does not refer to iconoclasm, which - as discussed above - escalated nearly three weeks later, on 10 August. Instead, Morillon was referring to another event that was crucial for the further developments to come: the meeting of the confederate nobility in Sint-Truiden. This convenient meeting point - only 6 kilometers east of Zoutleeuw - was chosen as it was easily accessible just over the eastern border of the Duchy of Brabant, yet located in the independent Prince-Bishopric of Liège where the heresy laws of the Low Countries did not apply. The principal reason for the meeting on 15 July was the fear that King Philip II would come to the Low Countries with an army, and the need to discuss protection measures. The confederates asked permission from Prince-Bishop Gerard van Groesbeeck (1517-1582) for the meeting, but he refused and ordered the town of Sint-Truiden to deny them entry. Soon, however, the town felt intimidated by the crowd that meanwhile had arrived and gave in for fear of reprisals. It is not clear who precisely was present, but apart from several members of the Confederation of Nobles there certainly were delegates of the consistories such as the well-known Calvinist preacher Herman Moded, as well as wealthy Calvinist merchants. After a second meeting on 18 July in Duffel, near Antwerp, with William of Orange and Duke of Aarschot Philippe de Croÿ as representatives of the governers, the confederates returned to Sint-Truiden on 20 July to continue their discussions with the Calvinist representatives. From there they sent a statement to Margaret, in which they formally declared to protect *ceulx de la religion réformée*.⁵³

⁵² Poulet, *Correspondance du Cardinal de Granvelle*, vol. 1, p. 380. Referred to by Bets, *Zout-Leeuw*, vol. 1, p. 201.

⁵³ On the meeting, see Parker, *The Dutch Revolt*, pp. 73-74; Scheerder, *Het Wonderjaar te Gent*, pp. 54-55; Mack Crew, *Calvinist preaching and iconoclasm*, p. 9. For contemporary discussions, see for instance Balau, *Chroniques liégeoises*, vol. 2, pp. 517 and 521-522; Battistini, *Lettere di Giovan Battista Guicciardini*, p. 268; Henne, *Mémoires de Pontus Payen*, vol. 1, pp. 163-172 and 180-182; Poulet, *Correspondance du Cardinal de Granvelle*, vol. 1, pp. 373-383.

It is in this context of heightened Calvinist presence in the region around Zoutleeuw that Morillon's remark should be understood. Just before 15 July, when the town of Sint-Truiden still kept its gates closed, a part of the confederates - including Philip of Marbais, lord of Louverval, and Charles van der Noot, lord of Risoir - requested entry into Zoutleeuw. After stating that the company included William of Orange, it was granted. It was soon discovered that Orange was not among them, and they were ordered to leave early the next morning. The reference to the closed gates in Morillon's letter narrates thus how Zoutleeuw subsequently refused entry to the confederates after this episode.⁵⁴ A similar policy was adopted by the city of Leuven: on 15 July, the day of the meeting, it was decided to close the city gates at night, and the next day a deliberation of the city council with the *meier* discussed what was to be done in case the company (*compagnien die tot St-Truyden ende daer omtrent begonst hebben te vergaderen*) would try to enter.⁵⁵ This suspicion was probably not entirely unfounded; Although among the confederates were orthodox Catholics, the assembly attracted militant Calvinists to the region as well. Morillon reported that among the attendants were "many merchants of Antwerp and Tournai, infected with heresy... threatening to exterminate and massacre the clergy."⁵⁶ Furthermore, as a result of rumours that spread immediately after the meeting, several contemporary observers - including Viglius - firmly believed that the later *Beeldenstorm* had actually been planned at that particular occasion. Although it is possible that iconoclasm really was a topic during the discussions, the *Beeldenstorm* certainly was not planned.⁵⁷ Yet, it should be mentioned that in some cases the Calvinist presence in mid-July did lead to sporadic cases of occasional iconoclasm, such as in Hasselt, 15 kilometers northeast of Sint-Truiden. Although preceded by some minor cases already in March and April, on the night of 14 to 15 July 1566 crucifixes and images of saints that were located outdoors

⁵⁴ "Ceux de Leewe, que sont à une demie lieue de Sainctron, tiegnent leur ville serrée. Du Risoir, avec Louvreval et aultres, jusque environ XL chevaux, y entrèrent il y at huit jours, lorsque Sainctron se tenoit encores close, à faulses enseignez, disantz que c'estoit Mr d'Egmond: dont les habitants furent très mal contentz quant ilz sçurent le contraire, et les feires desloger que bien que mal lendemain au point du jour." Pouillet, *Correspondance du Cardinal de Granvelle*, vol. 1, p. 380.

⁵⁵ Pouillet, *Correspondance du Cardinal de Granvelle*, vol. 1, p. 380, note 1, referring to SAL, Oud Archief, nr. 299, fols. 225-227.

⁵⁶ "... entre les susdicts il y at beaucoup de marchantz d'Anvers et de Tournay infectéz d'hérésie que font beaucoup de maulx... menassent d'exterminer tous les ecclésiastiques et les massacrer..." Pouillet, *Correspondance du Cardinal de Granvelle*, vol. 1, p. 374.

⁵⁷ Scheerder, *De Beeldenstorm*, pp. 99-100; idem, *Het Wonderjaar te Gent*, pp. 54-55; Mack Crew, *Calvinist preaching and iconoclasm*, pp. 20-21. The theory that the *Beeldenstorm* was fully planned has been convincingly refuted, see especially Scheerder, 'Le mouvement iconoclaste en 1566.'

were smashed, and the cemetery was desecrated. Reports even mention participants throwing skulls.⁵⁸

Nothing of the sort seems to have happened in Zoutleeuw, however, and peace soon returned to the Hageland. Even in the midst of the iconoclastic upheavals that struck the Low Countries from mid-August onwards the town never appears to have been directly threatened. Although one nightwatchman was installed by the civic authorities from 23 August onwards - when the *Beeldenstorm* had reached the cities of Mechelen and Turnhout - the very next week they still had to send out letters to Diest and Rotem (near Halen) “to have tidings from the *Geuzen*.”⁵⁹ Tensions increased towards the end of November 1566, however. Similar letters with requests for news on the *Geuzen* were again sent, this time to nearby Sint-Truiden, Brustem and Tienen. Later, a delegation of the *Geuzen* even entered the town, although this does not appear to have led to any uprisings.⁶⁰ The churchwardens also subsequently took some measures. It has already been mentioned above that as precaution for growing unrest after 1566 a man was paid to keep watch in the church during the four nights around Pentecost, when the miraculous statue was placed in the center of the church for the pilgrims to worship. The following year, vigilance had been gradually increased by augmenting both the number of guards and the number of nights they kept watch. From early December 1566, the churchwardens first appointed four watchmen to also guard the church during daytime. Later the granary (*coerenhuys*) was temporarily refurnished and equipped with candlesticks, especially for the watchmen.⁶¹ This

⁵⁸ Documents published by Hansay, 'Documents pour servir à l'histoire de la Réformation à Hasselt,' esp. pp. 226-227. See also Daris, *Histoire du diocèse*, vol. 3, p. 400, and Venner, *Beeldenstorm in Hasselt*, p. 101.

⁵⁹ “Inde weecke daer S. Bartholomeus dach inne quam [18 to 24 August 1566]: ... Jan vande Kerchove heft 2 nachte ghewaecht, snachts 3 st, facit 6 st. Inde weecke voor S. Gielis [25 to 31 August 1566]: ... Willem Pijleperts heeft eenen brieff ghedraghen tot Diest vande borghmeesters om tijdinghe te weeten vanden gueus ende heeft eene nacht daer moeten blijven, aldus heeft betaelt 16 st. Betaelt Jan van Bist van eenen brieff tot Rottum te draghen, 4 st.” RAL, SL, nr. 3608, Account of 1566, unfoliated.

⁶⁰ “Inde weecke daer S. Cecilie inne quam [17 to 23 November 1566]: ... De selve [Henric vande Velde] heeft ghevaceert tot Sintruden ende tot Bruestom om te vernemen vande gueus, 10 st. De selve noch eens tot Thienen daer voor betaelt, 8 st... Inde weecke daer S. Andries inne quam [= 24 to 30 November 1566]: ... Jan Thielis ende Henric vande Velde hebben bij consente van hoots borghemeester verteert doen die gueus hier savens inne quame, 12 st.” RAL, SL, nr. 3608, Account of 1566, unfoliated.

⁶¹ KR 1566, fols. 539 (December 1566: “vier weeckers die gevackt hebben inde kerck elck 5 nachten... noch 4 weeckers die sdachs ghewackt hebben inde kerck...”), 543-544 (May 1567: “dat coerenhuys gherennicht ende effen gemackt ende dat gheplinck om daerin te waeken... Ghecocht noch een hulten kandeler voer die weeckers...”) and 545 (June 1567: “6 kandelaren int kerckhuys voer die weeckers”).

heightened surveillance can be related to newly increased tensions in and around Hasselt. After accusations of having been one of the principal leaders of the iconoclastic uprisings in the territories of Flanders and Brabant, Calvinist preacher Herman Moded fled to the Prince-Bishopric of Liège. After 5 December 1566, he preached in the city of Hasselt, to much acclaim. And just over one month later, on 19 January, the city's parish church was sacked by iconoclasts.⁶² Yet, these events did not trigger similar uprisings in Zoutleeuw, and at the end of May 1567 the town's nightwatchman was discharged.⁶³

Although some modest measures were taken to counter potential attacks, Zoutleeuw had never really been threatened by iconoclasm during the Wonderyear. As such, it appears to be representative of the general situation in the Hageland in this period. The town of Diest, for instance, remained untouched by the *Beeldenstorm* as well, but nevertheless took preventive measures. A nightly patrol was organized already starting on 6 August, and from early September until the end of April 1567 the civic militia served as additional vigilante patrol. The latter were reportedly financed voluntarily by the clergy.⁶⁴ In and around Aarschot, Duke Philippe de Croÿ acted firmly. A loyal councilor to the governess, he was known as both an ardent opponent to the Confederation of Nobles and a staunch supporter of the Church of Rome. Later, his vigorous and efficacious actions during the *Beeldenstorm* were praised by the Spanish court.⁶⁵ Measures were also taken at the shrine of Saint Job in Wezemaal, where the offertory boxes were emptied and much of the church furniture was brought in safety to the city of Leuven on 24 August. But no iconoclasts came, and in April 1567 everything returned.⁶⁶ Lastly, Tienen also escaped. Although in the earliest stages of the Reformation some inhabitants had been accused of adhering to Luther in the 1520s and 1530s, no iconoclastic cleansing of the churches occurred in 1566. This appears from their 1573 *Mémoire justificatif*. Not without a certain pride they reported that “concerning those who would have been the leaders and promoters of the

⁶² Hansay, 'Le sac de l'église de Saint-Quentin,' and Venner, *Beeldenstorm in Hasselt*.

⁶³ "Inde weecke dair Sacramentsdach in quam [25 to 31 May 1567]: ... Ende want Jan vanden Kerchoven nyet gewaeckt en heeft: nyet." RAL, SL, nr. 3608, Account of 1567, unfoliated.

⁶⁴ Van der Eycken, 'Diest tussen Beeldenstorm en Twaalfjarig bestand,' pp. 26-27.

⁶⁵ "Monsr. le duc d'Arschot at miz grand ordre contre les preschez par tous ses villaiges icy alentour." Pouillet, *Correspondance du Cardinal de Granvelle*, vol. 1, p. 453 (8 September 1566). Compare with Geevers, *Gevalen vazallen*, pp. 23-25, 100, 135 and 165-168. See also Bangs, *Church art and architecture*, p. 50, and de Fraine, 'De stad Aarschot tijdens de troebelen.'

⁶⁶ Minnen, *Den heyligen sant*, vol. 1, pp. 108-109.

despoiling and sacking of the churches, we announce your Excellency that we do not know of any, as such events did not happen in this town. God be praised!”⁶⁷

Zoutleeuw and the Hageland region were certainly not isolated cases, but the situation is difficult to assess because available studies predominantly focus on uprising and revolt. This has already been remarked by Robert Duplessis in his 1991 study of the equally loyal city of Lille, in which he called on scholars to supplement his research by other local studies in order to better understand factors of stability within revolution.⁶⁸ Much like Scribner referred to local, urban and communal structures in explaining the success or failure of the Reformation, explanations for occurrences of relative stability in the Low Countries are in all probability indeed to be sought on a more structural level.⁶⁹ For that purpose, much more in-depth and comparative research on the region is needed, which falls beyond the scope of this dissertation. Although the towns in the Hageland clearly took measures, these were merely preventive. To be sure, the citizens of Zoutleeuw were definitely aware of current Protestant critiques, to which inhabitants such as Merten van Wilre and Maria Pylipert took a clear standpoint. Yet, the iconoclastic threats never appear to have been as acute as they had been in other cases such as Brussels, for instance. The above survey has shown that the complex mechanisms behind the *Beeldenstorm* essentially consisted of a combination of internal and external factors. In the Hageland, both were apparently lacking. No gangs of iconoclasts such as those that sacked the Abbey of the Dunes or threatened the city of Diksmuide wandered through the region. There apparently were no threats from within either, as was the case in Lille. The evidence at hand at least suggests that the support for the Reformed religion within Zoutleeuw was fractional and limited. None of the examples discussed above suggested a devotional decline: neither from the part of the parishioners, who seem to have upheld their participation in the sacraments, nor from the part of the essentially regional pilgrims, who continued to visit the shrine of Saint Leonard and attend the yearly Pentecost procession. It is of course impossible to judge to what extent this was due to public, orthodox projects such as Merten van Wilre's, or the other initiatives that have been tentatively identified as reactions to the spreading of protestantism. The documentary evidence discussed above at least

⁶⁷ “Ende aengaenden dengenem, die soudem syn geweest als hoeffden oft promoteurs van het beroven en sacageren van de kercken, enz. adverteren wy uwe Excell. dat wy daer aff nyet en weten, als saeken die binnen dese stadt nyet gebeurt en syn. God hebbe loff!” Full document published in Deracourt, ‘Enkele grepen uit de Hervorming te Tienen,’ quote on p. 127.

⁶⁸ DuPlessis, *Lille and the Dutch Revolt*, esp. p. 313.

⁶⁹ Scribner, ‘Why was there no Reformation in Cologne?’ pp. 240-241.

suggests that van Wilre's initiative was partially preceded by patterns of growth in traditional piety. Yet, it does not seem unlikely that within the intense religious debates the voices of local elites had an important impact on the communities they governed. In any case, still in his 1606 history of the town of Zoutleeuw, court historian Gramaye stated that none of the inhabitants "has ever been suspected of heresy during these troublesome times."⁷⁰ And although it is difficult to verify, not a single inhabitant is indeed known to have been condemned for heresy by the Council of Troubles.⁷¹

5.3 Coda

Despite this relative stability in the summer and autumn of 1566, the Wonderyear marked the start of particularly hard times for the town of Zoutleeuw. While devotional revenues had remained more or less stable throughout the earlier decades of the sixteenth century, the first considerable blow was to be noted in the financial year 1566, which included the revenues of the first Pentecost procession after the 1566 upheavals. At the occasion of the procession immediately preceding the *Beeldenstorm*, a normal sum of 3403,31 *stuivers* was still collected. The very next year this was halved to only 1477,125 *stuivers*.⁷² The same trend is notable in the total monetary offerings, representing respectively 4394,94 and 2207,6 *stuivers* (graph 4). This decline was followed by a modest recovery, but throughout the years to come, like the rest of Brabant and the Low Countries, the town would endure a particularly distressful period, mostly due to the civil war that ensued after the Wonderyear.⁷³ Due to its strategic location at the border of the Duchy of Brabant, Zoutleeuw and its surroundings were particularly hit by the raging war. This had disastrous

⁷⁰ "Cives hoc commendat, quod nemo umquam his iniquis temporibus nomine haereseos vel suspectus fuerit." Gramaye, *Thenae et Brabantia ultra Velpam* (1606), cited after Souverijns, 'Leonia sive Leewae,' p. 130.

⁷¹ No individuals from Zoutleeuw are repertoried in Verheyden, *Le Conseil des Troubles. Liste des condamnés*.

⁷² Both in 1566 and 1567 the procession took place, unlike what has been claimed by van Autenboer, 'De Leliken wten Dale,' p. 259. See for instance the traditional expenses in KR 1565, fols. 541-542v.

⁷³ On the town in this particular period, see especially Piot, 'Notice historique,' pp. 29-42, and Bets, *Zout-Leeuw*, vol. 1, pp. 202-228. Compare with the similar situation in Wezemaal: Minnen, *Den heyligen sant*, vol. 1, pp. 131-140. On the material situation in Brabant in this period in general, see Toebak, 'De 'religieuze' tegenstelling tussen stad en platteland'.

consequences for the population and the churchwarden accounts regularly mention exemptions for farmers due to “great damage inflicted by the *Geuzen*.”⁷⁴ Furthermore, a garrison was installed in town, of which not only the maintenance weighed heavily on the inhabitants, but also the frequent mutiny and grave misbehaviour of the soldiers. When William of Orange approached the town during his invasions of Brabant of 1568 and 1572, they remained loyal to the Spanish-Habsburg authority. Between 1575 and 1578, however, it temporarily chose the side of the rebellious States Army.⁷⁵ This led the Spanish to quarter yet more soldiers in the garrison in 1578 and 1590, respectively. Notorious phases of mutiny followed as a consequence. These events, in combination with several plague epidemics in the 1570s, had far-reaching consequences for the population figures: in 1581 there reportedly were some 60 households, in 1594 only 30 and in a 1601 petition to the Court of Accounts the widow of the deceased *meier* claimed that the greater number of the inhabitants had died.⁷⁶ The situation also had its repercussions on the administration of the church fabric: the period between 1566 and 1600 is only fragmentarily covered by accounts, and it would not be surprising if these accounts had never been made at all.⁷⁷

One of the most dramatic episodes in the town’s history became so notorious that it was included in letters, diaries and later chronicles elsewhere in Brabant. Although not a single inhabitant was accused of heresy by the Council of Troubles, the town nevertheless managed to arouse the Duke of Alba’s wrath.⁷⁸ After his first invasion of Brabant in 1568, in October William of Orange tried to take the town of Tienen with his 28.000 men strong army, encamped near Hakendover. The Spanish army therefore sent the garrison stationed in Zoutleeuw as enforcement to Tienen, leaving behind their provisions and ammunition. This attracted Orange’s troops to Zoutleeuw. Not only did they claim the goods left behind by the Spanish army, they also required

⁷⁴ For instance KR 1569, fols. 491v-492: “Dit is dat cortsel in coeren: ... Gecort deselve noch voerden wintslach ende voer syn groete schade vanden gueyens ende ander 3 m... Gecort Jan Andries van Overhespen voer syn groete schade vanden brant die hy gheleeden heeft vanden gueyens ende ander 7 h ½ vierdel.”

⁷⁵ On these invasions see Parker, *The Dutch Revolt*, resp. pp. 110-111 and 140. On Zoutleeuw in particluar, see also the letters in Battistini, *Lettere di Giovan Battista Guicciardini*, pp. 358 and 360.

⁷⁶ See the data provided by Piot, ‘Notice historique,’ pp. 40-41; Cosemans, ‘Het uitzicht van Brabant op het einde der XVIe eeuw,’ p. 343; van Uytven, ‘Zoutleeuw, een kleine hoofdstad van Brabant,’ pp. 12-14. Compare also with the observations by Gramaye in Souverijns, ‘Leonia sive Leewae,’ p. 127.

⁷⁷ After 1585 the ecclesiastical authorities were confronted with gaps in the archives everywhere, which they tried to remedy as soon as possible. See Toebak, ‘De ‘religieuze’ tegenstelling tussen stad en platteland,’ pp. 78-79.

⁷⁸ No individuals from Zoutleeuw are repertoried in Verheyden, *Le Conseil des Troubles. Liste des condamnés*.

money. Out of fear for being attacked by the army, the Zoutleeuw magistrates complied.⁷⁹ Alba's reaction was not long in coming. Stationed with his army near Parc Abbey, just outside Leuven, he summoned representatives of the Zoutleeuw magistracy for an explanation of why they had provided support for the opponent army. Burgomaster Dierick van Halle, alderman Jan van Ertryck and secretary Hendrick Staes accounted for their behaviour by stating that they had done so "for fear of being raided by the prince of Orange." The verdict was immediate and merciless, as all three were instantaneously condemned to be hanged. Yet, reportedly after several members of the Duke's entourage tried to mediate by emphasizing the magistrates' "good faith and good life," Alba commuted the sentence and requested that only one of them would be hanged. The condemned was to be decided by a throw of the dice. The fate befell Jan van Ertryck, who was hanged from a tree near the Abbey on 29 October 1568. The case was also brought before the Council of Troubles. The verdict was given four years later in 1572, and deprived the town of its ancient privileges.⁸⁰ News soon spread and many contemporary observers were aghast at the events. When Alba's army left some days later, some inhabitants of the city of Leuven took the body from the tree and gave it an honorable funeral in the Dominican church. Karel van der Linden, abbot of Parc Abbey, subsequently had the tree cut down "because of the ungodly act, done by the Duke of Alba more out of cruelty than justice."⁸¹ Even Morillon was appalled by the news, writing to Granvelle on 18 November 1568 that "There is much grieving for the poor man because he was an honorable old man who served as an example for all magistrates."⁸²

To set an example was indeed Alba's main intention, and in a letter written from Brussels on 19 January 1569 he informed King Philip II about the state of affairs. "In order to chasten the irreverence of the inhabitants of Diest and Zoutleeuw, I sent ten infantry companies (*los de Diste y Leo, embio diez vanderas*) that will live there for a certain number of days at the expense of the population. That will serve as example to

⁷⁹ Cosemans, 'Het uitzicht van Brabant op het einde der XVIe eeuw,' p. 296; Deracourt 'Enkele grepen uit de hervorming te Tienen,' pp. 125-126; van Nuffel, 'Schets voor een geschiedenis van Zoutleeuw,' esp. p. 114.

⁸⁰ RAB, Raad van Beroerten, nr., 6, fol. 394. The text is published in Piot, 'Notice historique,' p. 30, note 2.

⁸¹ "... mits het ongoddelyck feyt, meer door vreetheyt dan gerechtigheyt des voerscreven hertoghen van Alve daeraen gebeurt." Boonen, *Geschiedenis van Leuven*, p. 102. Other contemporary versions of the story in Balau, *Chroniques liégeoises*, vol. 2, p. 535, and Molanus, *Les quatorze livres*, vol. 2, pp. 817-818 and 886.

⁸² "Le povre homme at esté fort regretté à cause que c'estoit un honorable vieillard; mais servant d'exemple à tous magistraux..." Pouillet, *Correspondance du Cardinal de Granvelle*, vol. 2, pp. 406-407.

other cities.”⁸³ The letter was well received by Philip, who read it attentively and made annotations. Yet, there was one thing that caused trouble. “I do not understand this word *Leo*,” he wrote in the margin, “and I have never heard of a place with that name. Check whether it is not in secret code and that it hasn’t got another sense, which is quite possible.”⁸⁴ In a later annotation it appears he believed to have found the solution: “I once more examined the passage. It means to say *y les embio*, although the *s* looks much more like an *o* than an *s*.”⁸⁵ This anecdote is not so much exemplary of the faraway king’s cool relationship with the towns in his hereditary lands, rather it is illustrative of the late sixteenth-century result of the decline of Zoutleeuw - once a chief town in the Duchy of Brabant, but now fully unknown by its hereditary Duke.

⁸³ “... por castigar el desacato que hizieron los de Diste y Leo, embio diez vanderas a alojar dentro, donde les haré dar de comer algunas dias por el exemplo de las demas villas.” Published in Kurth, ‘Comment Philippe II travaillait,’ pp. 290-291. See also Cosemans, ‘Het uitzicht van Brabant op het einde der XVIe eeuw,’ p. 317.

⁸⁴ “Esta palabra *Leo* no entiendo, ni hé oydo decir tal lugar. Mirese si es cifra y quiere decir otro alguno, que podria ser.” Kurth, ‘Comment Philippe II travaillait,’ p. 291.

⁸⁵ “Despues hé myrado mas y quiere decir *y les embio*, sino que la *s* parece mas *o* que no *s*.” Kurth, ‘Comment Philippe II travaillait,’ p. 291.

Conclusion: a Catholic community between tradition and renewal

The widely accepted and classic view of Catholic piety in the Low Countries between the introduction of Protestant thought in the years around 1520 and the outright destructions of religious material culture in 1566 has always been highly pessimistic, emphasizing decline and indifference. In the above paragraphs these views have been checked against one specific case study. Apart from being exceptionally well-documented, Zoutleeuw provides a valuable counterpoint to the traditional, urban approach wherein large cities such as Antwerp have been unilaterally accepted as textbook examples. Quite homogeneously and contrary to standard observations or hypotheses, this description of piety in Zoutleeuw revealed more signs of a vivid Catholic culture than of decline, regardless of increasing critiques and fragmentation of confessional identity. This was notable in different social groups. No implosion of the monetary offerings occurred, and all evidence strongly suggests that pilgrims continued to visit the shrine to venerate the miraculous statue of Saint Leonard and to attend the annual Whit Monday procession in which the statue was carried. Like before, they brought gifts of either coins or ex votos. Similar patterns of continuity were equally observed in local parish life. Although very difficult to fully grasp, our investigation into the participation in communion mostly revealed an enduring interest in this very sacrament. Finally, the town's civic and religious elite continued to serve as important patrons and benefactors to the church, founding services or distributions and installing monuments that immortalized their lives and deeds. Moreover, by not only unilaterally focusing on quantitative parameters as has been customary, but also including qualitative analysis and descriptions, the available data

quite univocally confirm earlier observations that temporary financial decline in devotional offerings does not necessarily reflect an overall devotional decline.¹

Behind these patterns of continuity, however, lie a series of indications that point to renewal and innovation of traditional religious elements. Again, this holds true for all levels of piety that have been investigated. While the market for devotionalia arguably remained lucrative, new sorts of souvenirs for visiting pilgrims were added to the offer, most importantly paper pilgrim pennants. As for parish life, communion appears to have intensified around 1550, and all the evidence suggests that participation of the laity was proposed at more times during the year. Furthermore, around the same time there was a considerable investment in religious music, as some of the liturgical services were demonstrably increased in their ornamentation by adding musical layers and embellishments, mostly polyphonic singing. Finally, although general patterns of patronage are hard to pinpoint, a quantitative analysis of the foundations in the archives of the collegiate chapter revealed a heightened interest in the 1540s and 1550s, in sharp distinction to the previous two decades. As a whole, these observations suggest a renewed vigor in precisely these years, and depending on the precise expression of piety it can either be described as an intensification, elaboration or increasing ornamentation.

The actors behind such developments are often difficult to identify and their motives hard to elucidate. Much like recent patronage research has shown, the above survey of patronage projects supports the idea that they were often multiple and complex. Although social and status-related rationales certainly were at stake, such concerns were always expressed through a well-chosen religious vocabulary and within a *dito* framework, either material or immaterial. Furthermore, it is clear that the innovations cannot have been the consequences of decisions taken at the Council of Trent, like nearly all of the trends observed, preceded the famous ecumenical council. Interestingly, in several cases the developments described seem to be a reflection of or reaction to the spreading of Protestantism and related forms of lay agency. This is most clearly seen in miracle narratives, that circulated orally and were occasionally written down in larger miracle collections, diaries or chronicles. Although they were a traditional feature of miracle cults, they are now sometimes given a clear anti-Protestant tone with clear didactical underpinnings that defended the traditional veneration of saints and their images or remains.

¹ Dombrecht, *Plattelandsgemeenschappen*, pp. 284-287 and 423 (Appendix 13).

Interestingly, the observed tendency towards increasing ornamentation can also be linked to Protestant ideas, as it is diametrically opposed to the general reformed demands for simplicity, sobriety and clarity in venerating God. Most clearly this can be discerned in the musical embellishments and the sacrament house. Music not only increased the attractiveness of the services for the parishioners, but by adding layers of polyphonic ornament they also increased their rhetorical power. This is equally true for the sacrament house, but in that case the elaborate iconography clearly asserts a defense of the faith. More than the traditionally petrified Eucharistic praise, the Zoutleeuw sacrament house and other contemporary structures represented overwhelming theological defenses in support of the doctrine it stood for. Instead of accommodating Protestant critiques, it was decided to counter these attacks with even more magnificence, either in ornament - in music or in stone -, height, or iconography. All this novelty notwithstanding, the basic forms remained the same. Thus, the sacrament house can be considered exemplary for certain developments as it represents a subtle play with tradition and renewal. As such these observations can be connected to broader European trends that have been noted elsewhere. In his study of sacrament houses, Achim Timmermann coined the term ‘conservative innovatism’, defining it as the wrapping up of traditional but contested beliefs in a reinvented traditional form. Moreover, such a description strikingly matches Andreas Tacke’s descriptions of pre-Tridentine anti-Reformation initiatives in the German territories.²

It would be too rash, however, to interpret all these developments as deliberate stances within the current religious debates. Some were no doubt more or less unconscious forms of continuity rather than of conscious confirmations of religious practices. Also, not all of developments and changes are sufficiently documented to substantiate such claims, and much more comparative research is necessary to check assessments against broader contexts. Yet, in the case of the sacrament house - for which comparative research has been conducted - it is clear that such donations testify to an early Counter-Reformation spirit among local elites. Moreover, in Zoutleeuw this was part of a much broader project and it was probably combined with anti-Reformatory sermons. Such observations considerably nuance the traditional picture of Catholic reactions to the Protestant reformation. Although published responses, especially those in the vernacular, remained conspicuously absent in the years before the *Beeldenstorm*, it is definitely possible to point to unmistakable reactions in the material and ornamental furnishings of the cult. And although it is as yet impossible to

² Timmermann, *Real presence*, pp. 325-327; Tacke, ‘Einleitung in den Tagungsband’.

determine how representative such projects were, regardless, they were clear local experiments in a material response to Protestantism.

Part III

Epilogue:

the resumption of miracles

“Arx ergo fuit, vel arcis nomine intelligenda civitas.”¹

¹ “[Zoutleeuw] indeed was a stronghold, or a community to be understood as stronghold.” Gramaye, *Thenae et Brabantia ultra Velpam* (1606), cited after Souverijns, ‘Leonia sive Leewae,’ p. 126.

A miracle memorial painting

Within the gloomy and strangely rendered space of a painting, the same man is portrayed twice (fig. 109). On the right he is depicted kneeling on the ground and at the left he stands upright. In both cases he looks upwards with his hands held high, not unlike depictions of Saint Francis receiving the stigmata. In the lower right of the painting, the scene is explained by a text, painted as an unfolded paper document glued to a wooden support. Two distinct inscriptions, in Dutch and French respectively, identify the young man as a certain Paulus Gautier and date the event to 4 April 1612:

“Anno 1612, 4 April, the leprous young man named Paulus Gautier has been healed here by the virtues of Saint Leonard.

Anno 1612, the fourth day of April, Paul Gautier, portrayed here as a cripple, by the merits of Saint Leonard has been healed as you see.”¹

Upon looking closer, it is possible to identify the represented space - i.e. the “here” referred to in the inscription - as Zoutleeuw’s Saint Leonard’s chapel. The small cross and the monstrance on the red cloth behind Gautier indeed suggest an altar, and the sculpture of Saint Leonard represented in the above tabernacle can safely be identified as the particular thaumaturgic object that was venerated in the Brabantine town (fig. 9). In the upper right, votive offerings such as waxen or metal legs, feet and figurines leave no doubt that it indeed concerned a pilgrimage shrine. Among the ex votos are two pairs of crutches, and one such pair is also depicted lying on the foreground of the represented scene. Together with the text, these clues can be used to correctly

¹ “A° 1612 4 APRIL IS ALSVLLIKE MELAETSEN JONGMAN / GENAEMPT PAVLVS GAVTIER HIEN [sic] GENESEN GEWORDEN OVER / DIE VERDIENSTEN VAN S. LENAERT. / A° 1612 davril le 4 jour Paul Gautier icy pourtraict estroupié / par les merites St Leonard est gary comme voyez.” Note the rhyme in the French lines, which has not been maintained in the translation.

interpret the event. Although the inscription does not use the word, it clearly concerns the representation of a miracle: Paulus Gautier had long been cripple (*estroupié*) and therefore walked with crutches. But through the intervention of Saint Leonard in his chapel at Zoutleeuw (“here”), he was miraculously healed. As a result, he no longer needed his crutches, which he probably left as *ex voto*. The divine intervention itself is depicted quite literally by a beam of light coming from heaven and pointing straight to the still crippled Gautier at the right. Within a month after the miraculous event, the painting - referred to as “the likeness (*contrefeytsel*) of Paulus Gautier’s miracle” - was commissioned by the churchwardens from Jacop Lambrechts (doc. 1606-1616), a painter who regularly worked for both the Zoutleeuw church and town in these years.²

In the previous two parts of this dissertation it has been demonstrated how the devotional culture of the Low Countries in the late fifteenth and sixteenth centuries had been profoundly characterized by an important tradition of miracles. In the first part it has been argued how a whole range of pilgrimage sites developed in the years around 1500, all claiming the possession of an object - either a relic or an image - which had the power to work miracles. Zoutleeuw, too, actively tried to position itself as such in the later years of the fifteenth century - a claim that was substantiated by emphasizing the thaumaturgic character of their patron saint in the depicted scenes of the sculpted retable the churchwardens commissioned in 1476. Its installation and the subsequent furnishment of the saint’s chapel further enhanced the thaumaturgic object’s “miraculous charisma,” thus optimizing the conditions for miraculous experiences to take place. In the course of the sixteenth century these miracles, with the accompanying Catholic material culture, would be criticized by Protestant thinkers as ‘Popish trickery’. Cults of saints were ridiculed, and the existence of miracles worked through their intercession was denied. Yet, in the second part of this dissertation the tenacity of traditional piety has nevertheless been demonstrated, as well as the continuing importance of miracles. In Zoutleeuw, the cult of Saint Leonard withstood these criticisms for a long time. More important, it has been argued that miracles received an increasingly militant and confessional - i.e. Catholic - tone, directed against the spreading of Protestant ideas. In all these developments local elites were shown to have played a crucial role, either the churchwardens as representatives of the church, or individual patrons such as Merten van Wilre. These

² KR 1612, unfoliated (April 1612): “Betaelt Meester Jacop Lambrechts, Schilder, voor het contrefeytsel van het mirakel van Paulus Gautier 4 gulden.” For other references to Lambrechts, see also KR 1606, unfoliated (receipts in money); KR 1612, unfoliated (June 1612); RAL, SL, nr. 3622, fol. 73.

patterns of continuity notwithstanding, the dramatic events of 1566 and the ensuing civil war seriously disrupted the existing religious culture. As discussed above, the *Beeldenstorm* meant the start of a period of particular distress for the Low Countries in general, and certainly for Zoutleuw. The impoverished border town was selected to receive a military garrison, which entailed extra troubles. This final part will investigate how the thread was picked up after this traumatic period, in the early years of the seventeenth century especially when the period of the Twelve Years' Truce (1609-1621) brought some relief. What was the role of the churchwardens? Why did they suddenly commission such a painting? The available sources suggest that it was something which they had never done before, nor would they do again in subsequent years. And what importance can be attributed to the canvas' composition?

Merits of saints could be promulgated in many ways. Altarpieces, such as the one commissioned by the Zoutleuw churchwardens in 1476, were a widely used for this purpose. But because for such works use was generally made of the widely known and semi-official *vitae*, most importantly Jacobus de Voragine's *Legenda Aurea*, they rarely if ever showed particular miracles that had happened at the particular place and church where the piece was installed. Instead, the selected miracles in the depicted narrative were generally well-established and usually took place in the past at a place distant from the observer. De Voragine, for instance, quite accurately places the miraculous intercessions worked by Saint Leonard that are depicted on Zoutleuw's altarpiece in Merovingian France, "around the year 500."³ Exceptions to the rule were altarpieces like the early fourteenth-century example in Hakendover, which depicts the foundation myth of that particular church, or in Korbeek-Dijle where the compositions on the outer panels appear to represent miracles that had happened there (figs. 26a-c).⁴

Post mortem miracles that happened at particular shrines were therefore memorialized in other ways. In the course of the first two chapters, regular reference has been made to locally compiled collections of miracles, which was arguably the most widespread manner of both recording and communicating the thaumaturgic experiences that had

³ De Voragine, *The Golden Legend*, vol. 2, p. 243.

⁴ On the Hakendover altarpiece, see Roggen, 'Het retabel van Hakendover'; Marijnissen & Van Liefferinge, 'Les retables de Rheinberg et de Hakendover'; De Boodt, 'Catalogue des retables bruxellois,' pp. 176-177, cat. A15. On the altarpiece of Korbeek-Dijle, see Bruijnen, 'Het Stefanusretabel van Jan van der Couteren,' and De Boodt, 'Catalogue des retables bruxellois,' pp. 180-181.

happened at a certain place. Yet, due to the fact that these were mostly manuscript books, they only reached a limited audience. Of course, their contents were often used in sermons. The miracles spawned by the cult of Our Lady of the Seven Sorrows around 1500, for example, were very famously publicized in such a way, in what seems to have been veritable campaigns.⁵ The direct and mutual relationship between sermons and miracle collections can furthermore be illustrated by the collection of Our Lady of Zaffelare, compiled sometime in the second quarter of the sixteenth century. As a source for the last two miracles that were included in the collection, the anonymous author cites the sermons of the preacher at the occasion of the yearly procession.⁶ Regardless of the communicative advantages of sermons held at special occasions throughout the liturgical year, they could not possibly demonstrate the merits of the local cult object in question on a permanent basis at that particular shrine.

Alternatives were readily available, however. Perhaps the most direct way to immortalize such local miraculous events was to hang up the original charters authenticating the miracles in the church or chapel. The inner walls of the pilgrimage church in Wezemaal, for instance, were reportedly decorated with “beautiful authentic parchment letters” (*fraey autentieke Perquementebrieven*). Although all are now lost, the practice was still ridiculed in 1569 by Philips of Marnix, Lord of Saint-Aldegonde in his *De bienkorf der h. Roomsche kercke*.⁷ A similar practice is referred to by Erasmus in his 1526 colloquy *Peregrinatio religionis ergo*. When the narrating pilgrim Ogygius recounts how he was presented the milk relic of Our Lady in Walsingham, he mentions that after his inquiry into the proof for the authenticity of the venerated object, the custodian irritably replied saying “What need is there to inquire into that when you have an authentic record?” Later, it becomes clear to Ogygius that the record referred to was a high-hung textboard (*tabulam*) narrating the miraculous story of the provenance of the relic, in which “the whole thing [was] set forth before my eyes - the

⁵ Speakman Sutch & Van Bruaene, ‘The Seven Sorrows of the Virgin Mary,’ pp. 270-272.

⁶ Daem, ‘Het mirakelboek van Onze-Lieve-Vrouw van Zaffelare,’ pp. 118 and 133; Van Mulder, *Wonderkoorts*, pp. 98-99. See also Vrancx, *Den tweeden cout der nichten*, pp. 118 and 127. Later compilers also referred to sermons at other occasions, such as the Ghent Abbot Cornelis Columbanus Vrancx writing around 1600 on the miracles worked between 1569 and 1599 by Notre Dame de la Fontaine in Chièvres (Hainaut): Vrancx, *Den tweeden cout der nichten*, p. 20.

⁷ “Het welck verstaen werde van de Lovensche doctoren... dat hy siende was, soo dat men het selve voor een groot mirakel in den tempel opgheschreven heeft.” Van Marnix van Sint Aldegonde, *De Bijenkorf*, vol. 1, pp. 281-282. Minnen, *Den heyligen sant al in Brabant*, vol. 1, pp. 66-67.

name, the place, the story, told in order.”⁸ Much like in Wezemaal, the document is described as being the authentic document, officially endorsing the claims made in the text. Yet, other examples suggest that textual miracle narratives were also copied on other supports, unofficial but probably more monumental. For instance, when the parish priest Petrus Spijskens started to compile a miracle book for the church of Our Lady in Tielt (Brabant), he not only turned to the oral testimonies of still living notable persons, but could also rely on “a written table in parchment” (*een tafereel int franchijn gescreven*) on which several miracles had been recorded.⁹ Similarly, in the abbey of Vrouwenpark Abbot Augustinus Wichmans mentions a table (*tabula*) in the chapel wherein the miraculous image of Our Lady was placed, on which several miracles were described (*descripta*).¹⁰ Both the phrasing and the terminology used in these two cases suggest it concerned subsequently compiled anthologies rather than the official documents.

Not all church visitors were able to read, however, and in absence of preachers or custodians reading the textboards out loud or expounding upon its contents, the majority of visitors could only be reached by hanging up visual representations of the miracles. The best known category in this regard are votive paintings, but they have only scarcely been studied for the Low Countries.¹¹ By definition, votive paintings are a specific type of *ex voto*. *Ex votos* are a broad category of objects given to beg a particular favour of a saint or in gratitude for a received benefaction. Examples include the crutches and figurines against the right wall in the Paulus Gautier picture. Not only are they the final act in the fulfillment of a vow, such objects functioned equally as “affirmation of the efficacy of dialogue between a pious petitioner and a

⁸ Erasmus, *The Colloquies*, pp. 296-298. See also Godin, ‘Erasme et le sacré,’ p. 134.

⁹ Van De Woude, ‘De Mirakelboeken der O.-L.-Vrouwkerk,’ pp. 93-94. It was also referred to by Wichmans, *Brabantia Mariana*, pp. 501-502: “in Tabulis & Chartis membranaceis.”

¹⁰ “Siquidem adservatur ibi in exiguo Sacello, vulgo den Gast-choor, hoc est, *chorus hospitum*, ad sinistrum summi altaris, Imago Deiparae, quae plurimis jam a saeculo miraculis inclaruit, prout ex adpensa Tabula colligitur, in qua non nulla eorum ex fide descripta habentur, quae ab anno potissimum 1506 ibidem contingerunt.” Wichmans, *Brabantia Mariana*, p. 635.

¹¹ Some scarce examples from the Low Countries are discussed in Giraldo, ‘Votivtypen aus Westflandern,’ pp. 107-108, and Zuring, ‘Ex-voto’s in Noord-Brabant,’ pp. 99-103. The most important studies with a broad, European focus are Kriss-Rettenbeck, *Das Votivbild*; idem, *Ex Voto*; Brauneck, *Religiöse Volkskunst*, pp. 89-94; Frijhoff, ‘Het votiefschilderij als historisch object’; Freedberg, *The power of images*, pp. 136-160. A recent in-depth study of the Italian material is provided by Jacobs, *Votive panels and popular piety*. For a recent criticism on Kriss-Rettenbeck, see van der Velden, *The donor’s image*, pp. 211-212 and 227-229.

holy intercessor.”¹² As has been pointed out in both of the previous parts, the amassed votive offerings surrounding the cult object always served as immediate evidence of the object’s powers as well as its popularity. But while the donation of waxen or metal figurines as offerings to shrines were customary since the early and high middle ages, votive paintings are only documented as such from the later fifteenth century onwards, with an increasing popularity in the sixteenth century. Quasi continuous series of paintings from around 1500 until the present day have been preserved in Spain and especially in Italy, where more than 1.500 specimens from the fifteenth and sixteenth centuries are known. The earliest extant and documented examples from Germany and Austria also date from around 1500. There the practice temporarily came to a standstill with the Reformation, only to become an almost mass phenomenon in the 1620s and 1630s in parallel with the revival of old and foundation of new shrines.¹³ In the Low Countries, by contrast, the lack of study is doubtless related to the fact that there is not a single extant votive painting dating to the fifteenth and sixteenth centuries. The earliest preserved examples only date to the seventeenth century, concurring with Willem Frijhoff’s observation that the practice spread across Europe in close connection with the Counter-Reformation.¹⁴ Regardless of this meagre dataset, the practice certainly existed (cf. *infra*, 6.1.2).

In principle only paintings given after a divine intercession are considered as genuine votive paintings - ‘narrative (votive) gifts’ in van der Velden’s classification - and they are indeed the only type that can depict the miracles that had happened.¹⁵ As a rule, votive paintings included a number of standard formal characteristics. Apart from

¹² Jacobs, *Votive panels and popular piety*, p. 1.

¹³ Kriss-Rettenbeck, *Das Votivbild*, pp. 109-110; Brauneck, *Religiöse Volkskunst*, pp. 90-91; Frijhoff, ‘Het votiefschilderij als historisch object,’ pp. 39-40; Jacobs, *Votive panels and popular piety*, pp. 5-7.

¹⁴ Frijhoff, ‘Het votiefschilderij als historisch object,’ pp. 39-40. Similar observation by Van der Velden, *The donor’s image*, p. 218, with a hypothetical explanation of the difference between Italy and northern Europe on pp. 282-285. Best known in these regions are the particular genre of eighteenth-century children’s portraits, donated by often noble or bourgeois parents in order to place their offspring under the protection of a certain miraculous image. See for instance the collections in Ghent and Bottelare, respectively studied by Daem, *Votiefschilderijen en mirakelboek van kapelletje Schreiboorn te Gent*, and idem, *Votiefschilderijen en mirakelboek Sint-Annaverering te Bottelare*. Other collections include Brustem (Saint Eucherius), Dendermonde (Our Lady), Lebbeke (Our Lady), Lede (Saint Martin) and Mechelen (Our Lady of Hanswijk). Jan Gossart’s 1517 *Diptych of Jean Carondelet* (Paris, Louvre) has been interpreted as *ex voto*, but does not meet any of the criteria: it does not represent a specific miraculous image or a miracle, nor was it given to a specific shrine. For the proposition, see Ainsworth, *Man, myth, and sensual pleasures*, pp. 245-249, cat. 40.

¹⁵ Van der Velden, *The donor’s image*, pp. 218-219.

portraying the worshipper or votary in prayer, the painting included a representation of the particular miraculous object of devotion, mostly placed in or surrounded by clouds and sometimes also with a halo. Furthermore, the scene was traditionally and recognizably set in the particular space where the miracle happened, which as such was represented as an accomplished fact. Finally, apart from the visual information provided by the staging of the scene, the precise intervention was clarified in an inscription.¹⁶ Although all of these features apply to the painting depicting the miracle of Paulus Gautier, the churchwarden account of 1612 clearly shows that it was not paid for or installed by Paulus Gautier himself, but rather by the churchwardens. Thus, although it concurs to the formal description of a typical votive painting, functionally it was clearly something else.

Thus it is clear that not all paintings that correspond to the formal characteristics described above can unequivocally be identified as votive paintings *strictu sensu*. As votive paintings functioned as *ex votos*, a distinguishing feature by definition must be that they were given soon after the miracle took place, by the *miraculé* him- or herself or a close relative - mostly parents - rather than an unrelated third party such as the churchwardens. Yet, because of the close formal affinities the two categories are often confused, and the type of painting commissioned by the churchwardens largely remained under the radar. In absence of the necessary documentation of when and by whom it was donated, it is indeed often impossible to identify the precise function of the painting in question. To an significant extent, this scholarly misunderstanding or neglect has to do with the fact that contemporary terminology is rarely clear. Justus Lipsius is one of the few contemporary authors using explicit (Latin) vocabulary in his 1604 book on Our Lady of Halle. Describing the statue's chapel, he mentioned that it was "decorated with offerings and votive panels (*tabulis votivis*).” Elsewhere in his text he complains about the lack of recorded miracles, but he immediately notes that some had been "registered or depicted on votive panels" (*Tabulis fere votivis signata, aut depicta*).¹⁷ Some 40 years earlier, however, the very same panels had been mockingly

¹⁶ Whereas Kriss-Rettenbeck considered the inscription as the distinguishing feature, Jacobs emphasized the direct visual communication between devotee and cult object within the painting. For definitions and characterizations, see especially Kriss-Rettenbeck, *Das Votivbild*, pp. 12 and 112; Brauneck, *Religiöse Volkskunst*, pp. 89-94; Jacobs, *Votive panels and popular piety*, pp. 7-10.

¹⁷ Lipsius, *Diva Virgo Hallensis*, resp. pp. 14 and 65-66. On p. 74 he mentions a *tabula* dating to 1455, depicting Duke Philip the Good kneeling in front of the Virgin and including a French inscription. Although it might be an exceptional early documented example, the painting's precise function remains unclear. Van der Velden, *The donor's image*, p. 279 interpreted it as a commemorative epitaph rather than a votive painting or portrait. On

referred to as *tafereelkens* by Philips of Marnix, Lord of Saint-Aldegonde.¹⁸ Moreover, two contemporary Dutch translations of Lipsius' text, published in 1605 (Delft) and 1607 (Brussels) respectively, confirm the absence of a clearly defined and current terminology for votive paintings, which in turn could be considered revelatory of the still rather limited dissemination of the practice of offering votive paintings at this point in time. The - Protestant! - Delft translation interpreted Lipsius' concise term *tabulis votivis* either literally as "promised panels" (*beloofde tafereelen*) or as "panels that were given out of devotion" (*tafereelen, die wt devotie gheschoncken zijn*), whereas in the Brussels version it was lengthily translated as "panels that were given in memory of miracles and received benefactions" (*tafereelen, die aldaer ghegheven zijn in ghedenckenisse van eenighe mirakelen ende ontfanghen weldaden*).¹⁹ Much like the abovementioned text boards narrating miracles, in most cases the broad and generic *tafereel* in Dutch or *tabula* in Latin was indeed the terminology used, and even *tabella votiva* could refer to a textboard rather than an image.²⁰ For instance, a painting depicting a number of miracles that once hung next to the altar of Our Lady in Leuven's Saint Peter's church was described by Cornelis Vrancx as *tafereel* and by Wichmans as *tabulis*. Yet, the fact that it depicted multiple miracles with texts in rhymed verses strongly suggests that it was a retrospective anthology of earlier miracles, rather than a painting given as votive offering.²¹ Other terms used by Wichmans are equally unclear. In the previous part the example has been given of a painting (*pictura*) that reportedly hung in the Zoutleeuw chapel of Our Lady of the Ossenweg (cf. supra, 4.1.5). Although Wichmans, writing in 1632, claims that the painting testified to the benefactions received in 1538 by a certain Aegidius vanden

Lipsius' book, see Tournoy, Papy & De Landtsheer, *Lipsius en Leuven*, pp. 249-253, cat. 77, and De Landtsheer, 'Justus Lipsius's treatises on the Holy Virgin'.

¹⁸ "... daer soo veel crucken van creupele menschen, ende soo menighe tafereelkens hanghen der gheener die van haere krancheden ende gebreken zijn alsoo sijn ghenesen gheweest." Van Marnix van Sint Aldegonde, *De Bijenkorf*, vol. 1, p. 281.

¹⁹ See, respectively, Lipsius, *Heylige Maghet van Halle*, pp. 18 and 71-72, and idem, *Die Heylige Maghet van Halle*, pp. 22 and 106-107 ("gheschildert in tafereelen tot memorie aldaer ghegeven"). On the two Dutch translations, see Tournoy, Papy & De Landtsheer, *Lipsius en Leuven*, pp. 254-255, cat. 78-79; De Landtsheer, 'Justus Lipsius's treatises on the Holy Virgin,' pp. 84-85; Hermans, 'Miracles in translation'.

²⁰ As is for instance the case in Erasmus' *Peregrinatio religionis ergo*, where Ogygius relates that he offered a textboard to Our Lady of Walsingham. See Erasmus, *The Colloquies*, p. 299, and Halkin, 'Erasmus pèlerin,' p. 250.

²¹ Vrancx, *Den tweeden cout der nichten*, p. 267: "ghenomen wt een Tafereel hanghende in Sinte Pieters kercke by den Aultaer van ons lieve Vrouwe aldaer." Wichmans, *Brabantia Mariana*, pp. 258-261: "quibus majora vel insigniora, non facile aliis in Locis Marianis reperias; utpore raritate sua prorsus admiranda quorum pars publice in Tabulis juxta Altare D. Virginis ibidem depicta conspicitur..."

Hoeve, he does not mention who gave it and when precisely it was installed.²² Another example is referred to by the author as a *pictam tabulam* hanging in the church of Our Lady in Aarschot, which he had visited in 1629. He described it as depicting a miracle that had happened in 1604. After the 18 month-old Catharina Lavaerts had been overrun by a cart her parents prayed to Our Lady of Aarschot. They vowed to go on pilgrimage and Catharina immediately recovered from the accident. Wichmans mentions that the vow included promised offerings (*cum munere*), but it is not clear whether or not that included the said painting.²³

A rare example of a preserved painting that moreover has been described by contemporary sources confirms that not every painting depicting a miracle can be considered a votive painting. The Marian pilgrimage site of Ommel (Brabant), for example, still holds a painting depicting the foundational events from the chapel's history (fig. 110). Merchant Johannes vander Haven found himself immobilized on the open sea without the slightest breeze, as a result of which he risked starvation. He called upon Our Lady, to whom he promised, upon his safe return, to build a chapel for the miraculous ivory relief kept in Ommel (fig. 111). Formally the painting has all the characteristics of a votive panel, and not unlike other paintings mentioned above it was described by Wichmans as a *tabulam* containing "all the events of this history." Yet, whereas the events must have taken place in the early fifteenth century as the chapel was consecrated in 1444, the painting clearly dates from the later sixteenth or even the early seventeenth century. As a result, it cannot possibly have been given in

²² "Inter cetera sanitatis adeptae argumenta in Sacello pendula, pictura cernitur quam beneficii in se a Divam collati testem esse voluit Aegidius vanden Hoeve..." Wichmans, *Brabantia Mariana*, p. 458.

²³ Wichmans, *Brabantia Mariana*, p. 499: "Habet ea peculiare sibi Sacellum ad latus Chori Aquilonare, in quo varia anathemata, & tesseras sanitatum adeptarum conspexi. Inter cetera pictam Tabulam, quam repraesentatur, quomodo anno 1604. *Catharina Lavaerts* tum adhuc puellula, curru onusto fascibus, fuerit obpressa; primam seu anteriori rotam corpusculum eius pertranseunte, sed posteriori eidem insidente, ac totum quasi luxante. quae tantum non mortua, a parentibus miserabili hoc casu pariter consternatis, D. Virgini Arscotanae mox fuit oblata, voto facto sese eam visitaturos cum munere, ac viam quam solennis Subplicatio graditur, religioso ritu circum ituros. Audiit Diva votum, & eius interventu, continuo filiam suam integram parentes receperunt. quae veluti nihil passa, cunctis in miraculi testimonium, cum reliquis pueris in plateam coepit ludere, & sua prout ante obire." That painting and another example of 1605 got lost after the World Wars, but were still described by Coveliers, *Onze Lieve Vrouw van Aarschot*, pp. 76-78, who also provides the full inscriptions. See also Breugelmans, Ceulemans & van Haesendonck, *De Onze-Lieve-Vrouwekerk van Aarschot*, p. 69.

grace by vander Haven, and it can therefore not be considered as a votive painting.²⁴ Still, this type of painting was by no means unique. For instance, at the Ghent shrine of Our Lady *ter Rive* the parish priest paid a local artist for “the painting of a miracle by Our Lady.”²⁵ In German scholarly literature such imagery is mostly referred to with the term *Mirakelbilder*.²⁶ Such a terminology is somewhat confusing, however, especially in an English equivalent, as it might erroneously suggest that miracles are worked by the images that are referred to. In contemporary terminology, thaumaturgic images were indeed called “miraculous images” (*miraculeuse beelden*) or “images of miracle” (*beelden van mirakelen*).²⁷ As useful alternative it can therefore be proposed to refer to them as ‘miracle memorial paintings’, in line with the term *memorie* used in contemporary sources.²⁸ For instance, a painting of the miraculous healing of a paralyzed beguine who fled the *Geuzen* from Ghent to Mons in 1579, worked through the intercession of Notre Dame de la Fontaine at Chièvres, was described by Vrancx as “an eternal memory and remembrance of this miracle.”²⁹ Similarly, three seventeenth-century paintings preserved in Lede (Saint Martin) each depicting a miracle at different points in time - 1414, 1582 and 1593 - are referred to in accompanying text boards as “memorial of the miracle” (*memorie van het mirakel*, figs. 112-114).

Much like votive paintings, these miracle memorial paintings depict specifically local miracles rather than the broadly known, ‘canonical’ ones that were traditionally included on altarpieces. Yet, they were not commissioned and given by the people

²⁴ Wichmans, *Brabantia Mariana*, pp. 393-394: “Neque his contentus, auri plurimum obtulit, & pecuniae magnam summam adsignavit Sacello aedificando, in quo etiam tabulam suspendit totius rei gestae historiam continentem; quam perpetuum tanti beneficii sibi a Deipara collati monumentum esse voluit.” Zuring, ‘Ex-voto’s in Noord-Brabant,’ pp. 102-103.

²⁵ “Ick onderschreven kenne ontfanghen te hebben wtter hand van sijn eerweerdigheyt de heer pastor van onse lieve vrouwe op Sinte Pieters de somme neghen permisie en 9 gr. schellynghen voor het schilderen van een schilderijken van mirakel van onse lieve vrouwe bij mij Judocus Treujaert schildere.” Daem, ‘17^e-eeuwse mirakelschilderijen,’ p. 229. The author erroneously identifies this painting as an votive gift.

²⁶ Giraldo, ‘Votivtypen aus Westflandern,’ pp. 103-107; Kriss-Rettenbeck, *Ex Voto*, pp. 75, 119 and 214-216. This type of imagery is also briefly discussed by Benz, ‘L’histoire ou l’art de vérifier les miracles,’ pp. 80-82.

²⁷ See for instance Coens, *Confutatie oft wederlegginghe*, fols. 206v-207.

²⁸ It should however be noted similar wording was occasionally also used to refer to genuine votive paintings. Compare for instance with the 1472 example given by van der Velden, *The donor’s image*, p. 243 (“en remembrance”). Platelle used a similar term - “tableau commémoratif” - to refer to votive paintings. See Platelle, *Les Chrétiens face au miracle*, pp. 32 and 53.

²⁹ “... ghelijck sy daer inde cappelle oock hanght gheschildert, tot een eeuwighe memorie en ghedinckenisse van dit Mirakele wtnemende groot en schoone.” Vrancx, *Den tweeden cout der nichten*, p. 19.

represented on them, but instead by the institutions responsible for the administration of the shrine in question, whether or not sponsored by a third party. A further difference is that they were often part of larger series. The genre existed well before the seventeenth century, and one of the earliest known examples dates to the later fourteenth century. After the miraculous sculpture of Our Lady of 's-Hertogenbosch had worked its first healings in 1381 and the first miracle was officially recorded on 8 November 1382, the administrators presented a painting depicting “the miracle of Our Lady’s image” to the Count of Holland on 19 November of the same year.³⁰ One of the better known precursors within the Low Countries is the series representing the life and posthumous cult of Saint Rumbold, 25 panels of which are still preserved in the eponymous cathedral in Mechelen (figs. 11 & 115). Below the scenes, rhyming verses in Middle Dutch describe what is shown, and some of the panels include coats of arms and donor portraits. Originally placed in the chapel where the saint’s tomb was located, outside the cathedral on the cemetery, they were probably commissioned by the collegiate chapter after the elevation of his relics in 1479. The funding was provided by the city’s most notable inhabitants, including knights, members of the magistracy and the bailiff. The production was completed by several Brussels and Mechelen workshops possibly under the direction of Colijn de Coter, was completed around 1510.³¹

At first sight, the series appears to be highly comparable to series such as the sixteen panels on Saint Victor's life (c. 1510-1520, fig. 116), and the twenty paintings on canvas on the life, cult and translation of the relics of Saint Severin in Cologne (c. 1500, fig. 117). These two series both include inscriptions and coats of arms below, suggesting that the financing and commissioning was organized in the same way as the Mechelen series and that they were displayed in a similar way. But while the first

³⁰ “... ghegeven tot hoveschede bi miner vrouwen bevelen 1 man van die vanden Bosche, die hoer brochte 1 bort daer op ghemalen stont de miracle van onser vrouwen beelde die daer is, 1 oude scilt...” Published by De Boer, ‘Mirakels mooi,’ pp. 210-211. Compare also with the church of Notre Dame de Boulogne, where Duke Jean de Berry (d. 1416) had a portal with sculpted reliefs installed that on one side depicted the arrival of the church’s miraculous statue and on the other side its principal miracles. See van der Velden, *The donor’s image*, p. 264.

³¹ An in-depth study of this series is still lacking, but most of the information is available in Laenen, *Histoire de l’église métropolitaine de Saint-Rombaut*, vol. 1, pp. 95-113; Périer-d’Ieteren, ‘Précisions iconographiques et historiques’; idem, ‘Le maître de la Gilde de St. Georges’; idem, ‘Deux tableaux de la légende de Saint Rombaut’; Martens, ‘Un témoin méconnu de la peinture bruxelloise,’ pp. 90-110; Bücken & Steyaert, *De erfenis van Rogier van der Weyden*, pp. 330-331, cat. 86; Van Eck, ‘The high altar of the archiepiscopal cathedral of Mechelen,’ pp. 214-215. For the *elevatio* of his relics, see De Munck, *Gedenck-schriften*, pp. 246-252.

fourteen of the Mechelen panels depict the *vita* of Saint Rumbold, unlike the Saint Victor cycle the latter eleven furthermore show *post mortem* miracles and the contemporary cult of the city's patron saint. Moreover, in the various panels the saint's chapel, shrine and tomb are clearly recognizable. Thus the legendary past of the saint's lifetime is connected with a very specific here and now for the contemporary observer. The Saint Severin cycle, however, ends with a scene dated to 881 in the inscription.³² Further comparable examples from the sixteenth century are rare, but a panel in the church of Our Lady in Damme is even more specific than the Rumbold cycle (fig. 118). In each of its six sections it shows a miracle worked by the Holy Cross of Damme, which is either shown in its chapel or appearing to sailors who invoked it. Just like the series in Mechelen the depicted scene is narrated in a Middle Dutch text below, but in this case the events are also precisely dated, between 1510 and 1537.³³

Most of the known and preserved examples, however, date to the seventeenth and eighteenth centuries. Just like the panel in Damme, the events themselves are often dated, and mostly took place in a relatively recent past. The images either include a representation of the cult object in question, or of its place of worship. Clearly conceived as series, the individual paintings have similar dimensions and uniform designs. A good example is the cycle of six paintings in Izenberge (Chapel of Our Lady of Mercy) painted by Joris Roeland in 1667, depicting miracles worked between 1636 and 1657. Each painting carries an elaborate Dutch text below, cross-references in some clarify particular parts of the visual narratives (fig. 119).³⁴ A comparable set in Meetkerke depicting eight miracles from 1645 to 1654 furthermore includes the names of the respective donors, sometimes followed by their function or office, such as a churchwarden.³⁵ Although painting appears to have been the predominant medium for such cycles, occasionally other materials were used as well.³⁶ In the Chapel of Our

³² On the Severin cycle, see Clemen, *Die Kunstdenkmäler der Stadt Köln*, vol. 4, pp. 307-311, and Oepen & Steinmann, *Der Severin Zyklus*. In the last painting of the cycle the actual church is recognizable as well. The Saint Victor cycle was probably made for the Canonessess regular of the Congregation of Saint Victor in the Cloister of Mount Sion in Mechelen (Blijdenberg). See Casier & Bergmans, *L'art ancien dans les Flandres*, vol. 3, pp. 55-64.

³³ Tanghe, *Parochieboek van Damme*, pp. 94-95, and Giraldo, 'Votivtypen aus Westflandern,' p. 104.

³⁴ Giraldo, 'Votivtypen aus Westflandern,' pp. 104-105.

³⁵ Compare with the series in the Churches of Our Lady at Jezus-Eik and Kortenbos, discussed by Delbeke, Constant, Geurs & Staessen, 'The architecture of miracle-working statues'. The series in Kortenbos equally includes heraldic devices and inscriptions revealing the names of the donors.

³⁶ Compare also with the four stone reliefs on the life and subsequent cult of Saint Ermelinde in Meldert (cf. *infra*). See also the example of Boulogne in note 30.

Lady of the Potterie in Bruges, for instance, three tapestries dating to c. 1625-1630 are subdivided in six scenes that are each accompanied by eight lines. Interestingly, this example also allows us to identify the source material for such miracle memorial cycles. In this particular case both the images and the texts are directly based on a manuscript miracle book with pen and ink drawings, compiled in 1521-1522 and containing sixteen miracles from 1499 onwards (figs. 120 & 121).³⁷ Other series were equally based on miracle books, instead of the *vitae* traditionally used for altarpieces and the like.³⁸ Such must have already been the case in the Rumbold cycle, as the inscription on one of the panels mentions how what is depicted and described can also be read elsewhere (fig. 115).³⁹ A painting on canvas depicting a miracle worked by Our Lady of Hanswijk even explicitly refers to the page of the publication on which it is based (fig. 122).⁴⁰ Some - if not all - the divine intercessions depicted in a series of fifteen canvases on Our Lady of Halle, still preserved in the church, can be related to the various miracle books on the shrine. Finally, in some rare instances the paintings also refer to official documents that recorded the miracle. Two of the miracles depicted on the previously mentioned panels preserved in Lede are included in the Vrancx' publication, for which he clearly made ample use of locally preserved miracle books. However, in its accompanying inscription one of these furthermore refers to "public letters of the city of Dendermonde from the year 1593" as proof (fig. 114).⁴¹ Similarly, in one of five paintings on the miracles of Our Lady *ter Rive* in Ghent, the included description concludes by saying that the same had been "declared on 17 June 1603 in front of the aldermen of the seigniorie of Sint Pieters," a document which has actually been preserved in the miracle collection (fig. 123).⁴²

³⁷ Pannier-Deslypere, 'Het mirakelboekje en het wandtapijt'. On the miracle book, see also van Mulder, *Wonderkoorts*, pp. 100-102.

³⁸ In general, see Kriss-Rettenbeck, *Ex Voto*, p. 75.

³⁹ "Drie verwoede menschen ghequelt vanden vyant / werden hier oec verlost soe wij lesen."

⁴⁰ "Hist. Virg. Hansw. fol. 205," referring to Croon, *Historie van Onse Lieve Vrouwe van Hanswyck*, pp. 205-206. On that cult and publication, see Delbeke, 'Miracle books and religious architecture'.

⁴¹ "... soo t'selve blyckt breeder by d'opene brieven van de stede van Dendermonde in t'iaer 1593." Vrancx, *Den tweeden cout der nichten*, pp. 137-138. On that painting, see also Müller-Hofstede, 'Zum Werke des Otto van Veen,' pp. 133-134.

⁴² "... twelcke sy inoghelycx verkent heeft op den xvii^{en} iuny 1603 voor schepenen deser heerlicheyt van Sente Pieters." On these miracles, the paintings and the document, see Daem, 'Mirakelverhalen uit de O.L.-Vrouwkerk,' esp. p. 33, and idem, '17e-eeuwse mirakelschilderijen in de O.-L.-Vrouwkerk,' esp. pp. 229 and 242-244. The author erroneously refers to them as votive offerings.

While such images are clearly recognizable when part of a series, as independent paintings they are not always so easily distinguished from votive paintings. This is illustrated in the example of Paulus Gautier.⁴³ Furthermore, there actually appears to have been some overlap. Perhaps the best example to illustrate this is in the church of Our Lady in Alseberg, near Brussels. It houses a cycle of paintings that depicts defined moments from its legendary foundation history. Commissioned in 1649 by the parish priest and churchwardens as a series of eleven canvases from the Brussels painter Antoon Sallaert, some paintings were added later, perhaps as replacement after some were destroyed by fire. One such canvas, painted by a certain Christophe Lemens, was actually given in 1679 by the Confraternity of Our Lady of Alseberg from Mons (fig. 124). Interestingly, it carries an inscription documenting that donation, furthermore specifying that it was done “as an act of grace because none [of the confraternity’s members] died of the plague that reigned in the years 1668 and 1669.”⁴⁴ Thus, in this case, a votive painting given as thanks for a received benefice at the same time functions as completing part of a larger series of images documenting the history of the church. To a certain extent this overlap of genres also seems to be at play in the case of the painting depicting the miracle of Paulus Gautier. While clearly making use of the same visual and iconographical conventions as votive paintings, it cannot be considered as such in the strict sense of the word, as it was not given by Gautier, the *miraculé*, himself. On the contrary, it was commissioned and paid for by the churchwardens, much like the miracle memorial paintings, but unlike most of the examples given above, it was clearly not part of a larger series. The Zoutleeuw churchwardens had never commissioned similar paintings before, nor would they do so in subsequent years.

In sum, the painting cannot be seen as the result of an action from the part of the *miraculé*, but rather as a reaction from the churchwardens on what had happened to him. This brings us back again to the agency of the churchwardens as it begs the question why they suddenly decided to commission such a painting that deliberately blurs boundaries between established genres and functional categories. To better understand the intentions of the churchwardens and, by extension, the function of the

⁴³ The two only seventeenth-century paintings identified by Giraldo as votive paintings can therefore equally be miracle memorial paintings commissioned by the churchwardens. See Giraldo, ‘Votivtypen aus Westflandern,’ pp. 107-108. In general, see Kriss-Rettenbeck, *Das Votivbild*, p. 12; idem, *Ex Voto*, pp. 119 and 214-216; Jacobs, *Votive panels and popular piety*, pp. 7-10.

⁴⁴ “Ce tableau at esté donné à la virge dalsebergh en lan 1679 par les confreres de Mons en action de grace de ce quil n’est mort aucun d’eulx du fleaux de la peste dans les années 1668 et 1669 lors regnante.”

painting, it is useful to have another look at the cult of Saint Leonard in Zoutleeuw, now at the early years of the seventeenth century. This will allow us to pursue the analyses of the first two parts of this dissertation and assess how previously established cult centres in the Low Countries fared in this new period of relative stability. Much research has already been done on Catholic miracle cults in the seventeenth century, even quite recently, but it has mostly focused on the establishment of new shrines, and then especially so related to the cult of Our Lady or Christ, mostly in the form of the Eucharist.⁴⁵ After all, those were also the cults which the Catholic Church tried to prioritize, and cults of saints of late medieval origins often aroused suspicions.⁴⁶ Yet, they remained an inherent part of the devotional landscape of the Low Countries, and although iconoclasts and the civil war might have seriously damaged the cults and their furnishings, traces - either material or mental - remained present.⁴⁷ As a consequence, it is definitely a factor to consider. Thus, the case of Zoutleeuw allows us to scrutinize an established, late medieval cult centre for a saint, rather than Our Lady or Christ. In addition to this, we will pursue our investigation of the character and materiality of the cult. This is especially interesting when considering the broad-fronted Catholic response that can be noted in the later sixteenth and especially seventeenth centuries, both legitimizing cults after Protestant critiques and reforming existing cults. In this particular case, we will investigate the role of relics in this, and especially their relationship with images. Finally, using this case study we will investigate the broader question of how the Counter-Reformation actually proceeded. While it initially had been considered as a primarily top-down process, in recent years historians have argued on the contrary that the changes were initiated from the bottom-up. Still other scholars maintain that it was really an interaction between the two.⁴⁸ In addressing that question, we will once more utilize

⁴⁵ Among the most recent studies on seventeenth-century shrines in the Low Countries are Duerloo & Wingens, *Scherpenheuvel*; Harline, 'Miracles and this world'; idem, *Miracles at the Jesus Oak*; Delfosse, *La protectrice du Païs-Bas*; Perneel, 'Onze-Lieve-Vrouw van Goede Wil te Duffel'; Delbeke, 'Miracle books and religious architecture'; Dekoninck, 'Between denial and exaltation'; Adam, 'L'Histoire de Saint Sacrement de Miracle'; Delbeke, Constant, Geurs & Staessen, 'The architecture of miracle-working statues'; Constant, 'Cette vénérable et charmante petite statue'.

⁴⁶ Toebak, 'Het kerkelijk-godsdienstige en culturele leven,' pp. 131-132. See also the remarks in Ditchfield, 'Tridentine worship and the cult of saints'.

⁴⁷ Van der Steen, *Memory wars in the Low Countries*.

⁴⁸ In general, see Harline, 'Official religion - popular religion,' pp. 250-254; Forster, *The Counter-Reformation in the Villages*; idem, *Catholic Revival in the Age of the Baroque*; Ditchfield, 'Tridentine worship and the cult of saints'. For the Low Countries, see Harline & Put, *A bishop's tale*. For Brabant in particular, see Toebak, 'Het

the churchwarden accounts, which will allow us to approach the issue not from the traditional point of view as it has been recorded in miracle books, visitation reports or episcopal investigations.⁴⁹ Rather, while keeping the necessary methodological precautions in mind, the accounts in a way permit tracking of the developments on the lowest level, in a manner of speaking from the front rank, before being processed in other source material.

kerkelijk-godsdienstige en culturele leven'. For an excellent recent historiographical overview, see Laven, 'Encountering the Counter-Reformation'.

⁴⁹ For instance Platelle, 'Mirakels in de Zuidelijke Nederlanden,' pp. 173-175.

Chapter 6 The resumption of miracles

6.1 A new era?

Soon after the *Beeldenstorm* had hit a significant number of shrines all over the Low Countries, a Protestant song circulated in which the end of an era was proclaimed. It opened with a question that immediately set the tone: “How have the times changed? Many saints are not honoured anymore in these Flemish fields.” The remainder of the song provides an invaluable catalogue of medieval and early modern saints’ shrines in the various regions of the Low Countries, until it suddenly pinpoints the core of the alteration: “All these saints have submerged, they do not work miracles anymore.”¹ Regardless of the later general Reformed uneasiness about the dramatic course of the events, the text was evidently referring to the scale and efficacy of the 1566 iconoclastic cleansings, which many Protestants - including Philips of Marnix, Lord of Saint-Aldegonde - immediately after the *Beeldenstorm* saw as proof of the legitimacy and rightness of their cause.² The same idea of an age that drew to a close in 1566 is also expressed in an anonymous print, depicting an allegory of the *Beeldenstorm* (fig. 125). In the right background a group of iconoclasts is seen in action, pulling down a statue above a church portal and hammering on others already laying on the ground, while in the foreground men in typical *Geuzen* costumes symbolically clean up the Catholic debris with brooms. The supposedly positive, Christian connotation of these actions is emphasized by the inclusion of a group of clergymen kneeling and praying in

¹ “Hoe is den tijdt aldus verkeert? / Veel Sancten en zijn niet meer gheert / In dese Vlaemsche Landouwen / ... Alle die Sancten sijn gaen duycken / Sy en doen geen mirakel meer.” Mak, ‘Vlaamse volksdevoties,’ p. 161.

² For early reactions to and receptions of the *Beeldenstorm*, see Göttler, ‘Ikonoklasmus als Kirchenreinigung,’ pp. 62-64; van Deursen, ‘Marnix van St. Aldegonde,’ pp. 25-26; Duke, ‘Calvinists and Papist idolatry,’ pp. 179-180; Pollmann, ‘Iconoclasts anonymous,’ pp. 159-162.

front of an altar on which the Pope is depicted as the Whore of Babylon, riding the seven-headed beast. Thus, by their actions the iconoclasts definitively revealed the falsehood of the Church of Rome, its members serving the Antichrist. To judge by the accompanying captions, which still conveyed this early sense of euphoria that characterized the immediate aftermath of the *Beeldenstorm*, it was likely published soon afterwards. In the text below, the swept-up Catholic material culture - “this pedlary” - is attributed to the Devil, depicted above, flying off with some ornaments he was able to save. In a caption next to him, he admits his defeat, saying that his time is over and done. The song is undated, though the explicit addition of the year 1566 in the print leaves no doubt over the date of this definite turning point of the Church of Rome’s supremacy.³

To many Reformed thinkers the Devil was indeed responsible for the miracles that had been central in Catholic religious culture. As has been discussed in the previous chapter, the Reformation’s most important theorists generally agreed on a principle that came to be known as “the doctrine of the cessation of miracles.” As the Christian faith had spread, no miracles had occurred after the apostolic age. Therefore, the contemporary miracles that the Church of Rome continued to claim as divine interventions and that had been so typical of devotional life in the decades around 1500, were now debunked as manipulations of the people by the Pope’s minions or as works by the Devil or the Antichrist, with the sole purpose of perverting the true, Christian faith. Although it has been shown that in actual practice Calvinists continued to use the very same terminology as Catholics and did not give up their belief in wonders so easily. Both the song and the print that appeared after the *Beeldenstorm* accentuated the actuality of the Protestants’ theoretical conviction: the Devil flew off and miracles stopped occurring.⁴ The religious debates and upheavals that had fundamentally characterized the preceding years indeed had a profound impact on the actual devotional life. Around mid-century almost no shrine recorded miracles anymore, as if they had actually ceased in accordance with the Protestant doctrine (cf. 4.1). Thus, around 1600, when the gravest warfare temporarily calmed down, the Catholic Church started to pick up the pieces. But it faced a major problem.

³ The full caption reads: “Laet ons wel bidden sonder ophelden / Och dat ons heylichdom te meer mach gelden. / Laet ons ras keren en worden niet moe / Want aelle dees cremekie [*sic for* cremerie] hoort den duyvel toe” (below), and “Tis al verloren, ghebeden, oft ghescheten / Ick heb de beste canse ghestreken / 1566” (above). On this print see especially Göttler, ‘Ikonoklasmus als Kirchenreinigung,’ and Duke, ‘Calvinists and Papist idolatry,’ pp. 191-193.

⁴ Sluhovsky, ‘Calvinist miracles’.

How were they to account for the apparent lack of miracles and the dearth of related, tangible material for the middle of the sixteenth century?

6.1.1 Explaining intermittency, constructing continuity

Commentary from contemporary authors on the dearth of tangible material on miracles makes it clear that this is not a mere misinterpretation by modern historians caused by fragmentarily preserved sources from the middle of the sixteenth century. Regardless of the town's demonstrable tenacity and continuity of traditional religious practices, this was even the case in early seventeenth-century descriptions of Zoutleeuw. Augustinus Wichmans' account of the miracles at the shrine of Our Lady of the Ossenweg, located just out of town, was the occasion for him to utter a general complaint. He only found traces of a mere eighteen authenticated miracles, both in the original parchment miracle book (*ex Originali Codice membranaceo*) as well as in 'proofs' (*argumenta*) of healings hanging in the chapel. He concluded that it was regrettable that not all miracles had been recorded, "just like it is the case in so many other holy places." Often this was the result of negligence, but even more often of carelessness and ingratitude on the part of those who had received the benefaction. As a conclusion, he quoted from the Book of Tobias to emphasize the importance of revealing the works of God: "it is good to hide the secret of a king, but honourable to reveal and confess the works of God" (Tobias 12, 7).⁵ One of the "many other holy places" Wichmans referred to was the shrine of Our Lady Halle, on which Justus Lipsius had published his famous *Diva Virgo Hallensis* in 1604. The material on which he based the lion's share of his treatise was a copy of the church's miracle register, provided by two friends from Antwerp, Aubertus Miraeus and Johannes Hovius.⁶ Towards the end of his text he notes that most of the miracles he had been relating so far were all dated between 1400 and 1500. "From that point onwards until our time there is a silence." His reaction to this observation reveals that this perceived silence corresponds to an actual hiatus in the source material he was provided with, and it indeed roughly concurs with the original, late medieval manuscript that has been

⁵ "Dolendum tamen, non omnia miracula (siquidem solummodo decem & octo authentice subsignata penes me habeo) esse scripto commendata: quod & aliis quam plurimis sacris locis commune fatum est." Wichmans, *Brabantia Mariana*, p. 459. The *locus* from the Book of Tobias was used in other contemporary printed miracle books too, see for instance Croon, *Historie van Onse Lieve Vrouwe van Hanswyck*, unfoliated foreword.

⁶ De Landtsheer, 'Justus Lipsius's treatises on the Holy Virgin,' pp. 73-74.

preserved in Halle.⁷ Although he was able to collect nine sixteenth- and early seventeenth-century examples, dating from 1535 to 1603, these were not written down in the acts, but rather “described or depicted on votive tablets.” Thus, “contrary to what is claimed by some,” Lipsius maintained that “memorable events did actually happen in our time.” Basing himself on these findings, as an explanation for the lack of evidence the author concluded that the people responsible for the registration of miracles must have judged Our Lady of Halle’s fame sufficiently spread by their time, as a result of which they deemed it unnecessary to add new ones.⁸ Both authors thus maintained that there had been absolutely no cessation of miracles, explaining the lack of evidence by claiming that they simply had not been duly recorded.

Lipsius and Wichmans are arguably among the best-known reporters on seventeenth-century miracle cults, but their publications had been preceded by Cornelis Columbanus Vrancx’ *Den tweeden cout der nichten* (1600). Written in the vernacular, this was a very popular book and arguably had an even more ambitious set-up than both later publications. It contained a survey of 23 Marian shrines in the southern Low Countries (Artois, Brabant, Cambrésis, Flanders and Hainaut) and elsewhere in Europe (Italy, Portugal and Spain). By the time of its publication, Vrancx (d. 1615) was a well-known and successful preacher and a prolific author, mostly of anti-Calvinist treatises defending Catholic tenets such as the Eucharist and Our Lady. He was elected abbot of the Ghent abbey of Saint Peter in 1597, and it was in this capacity that he published *Den tweeden cout*.⁹ The book is a dialogue (*cout*) between two devout women, Margriete and Willemyne, who each tell a series of miracle narratives, organized by cult centre. Vrancx was considered to be a great authority in the mid-seventeenth century on the subject of miracles and Marian shrines. This is aptly illustrated by the fact that he is portrayed with a staff, mitre and black

⁷ The last two dated miracles in the manuscript supposedly took place in 1461 and 1526. See most recently Van Mulder, ‘Lieve Jehan, goede vriend’, and idem, *Wonderkoorts*, pp. 87-94 and 339-341.

⁸ “Et quae hactenus dedi, unius ferè saeculi sunt (duo excipio) id est ab anno M. CCCC aut circa, ad annum quingentesimum, imo ad eum non pertingunt. Deinceps usque ad hoc nostrum aevum ferè silentium est, an non incuria, aut omissione eorum, qui Actis praefuerunt? Ego arbitror: sive etiam satietas eos cepit scribendi aut colligendi, cum viderent Divae gloriam satis iam propagatam testatamque esse. Neque enim desiisse miracula, vel haec aetas dicit: in qua paucis ab annis memorabilia evenere: quae tamen non Actis comprehensa, sed Tabulis ferè votivis signata, aut depicta, breviter hic commemorabo.” Lipsius, *Diva Virgo Hallensis*, pp. 65-66.

⁹ Blommaert, *De Nederduitse schrijvers van Gent*, pp. 186-190; Winnepeninckx, ‘Vrancx, Cornelius Columbanus’; Andriessen, ‘Een weinig bekend boekje’; Berings & van Simaey, ‘Abbaye de Saint-Pierre,’ pp. 139-141.

benedictine habit on one of the paintings from the previously mentioned cycle by Antoon Sallaert, depicting *The first historians of the church of Our Lady at Alseberg* (c. 1645-1649). He is shown alongside Wichmans (in white norbertine dress) and others (fig. 126). On the other hand, the fact that *Den tweeden cout* was ridiculed in anti-Catholic publications that appeared in the United Provinces equally testifies to the reputation the book and its author must have had at the time.¹⁰

Vrancx' intentions were clearly manifold. Although he did make some theological remarks about the nature of image cults, he also confirmed a 'theology of localization' by claiming that miracles are not worked by the images themselves but by God who himself chose particular places. Thus the nature of his publication was not theoretical, but rather practical.¹¹ In the first place, his purpose was to demonstrate the existence of miracles. Like Lipsius, he admits that the evidence is rather limited for the middle of the sixteenth century, and at one point he directly links this with the rise of Protestantism. The occurrence of miracles had always been a custom (*ghewoonte*), but "due to the heresy of Luther and others who scorn the holy saints this tradition has gone."¹² In part, he circumvented this lack of evidence by referring to foreign cult centres - including Guadalupe, Loreto, Mondovì and Montserrat - which he then subtly linked to the Low Countries by demonstrating that the thaumaturgic images venerated at these places had been invoked by Netherlanders throughout the sixteenth century.¹³ Yet, like Lipsius he equally tried to emphasize that the thaumaturgic powers of Our Lady and the saints had never ceased in the Low Countries either. In fact, "miracles would happen daily, if she [Our Lady] were invoked daily, which due to heresy here and elsewhere has cooled down."¹⁴ It is in this precise context that Vrancx' book was supposed to be helpful, as is made most clear in the following excerpt of the dialogue between the two women:

MARGRIETE: This habit needs to recover.

WILLEMYNE: By the hearing or reading of these miracles it will doubtlessly be done, and the poor peasant will often find comfort in Mary...

¹⁰ See Hermans, 'Miracles in translation,' pp. 140-142. Still in the eighteenth century Vrancx is being mocked by Jacob Campo Weyerman, see Wetzels, 'De vagevuur-sprookjes van C.C. Vrancx'.

¹¹ See for instance Vrancx, *Den tweeden cout*, pp. 154-155 and 192.

¹² "Dwelck deur de ketterye van Luther, en meer andere die de Heylighen Sancten en Sanctinnen versmaen is wt de ghewoonte ghegaen." Vrancx, *Den tweeden cout*, pp. 152-153. Compare with p. 209.

¹³ See for instance Vrancx, *Den tweeden cout*, pp. 257, 259 and 266.

¹⁴ "... datter noch daghelicx souden Mirakelen werden ghedaen, waert dat sy daghelicx noch aenroepen en versocht wierdt, dwelc deur de ketterye hier en elders is verkaut." Vrancx, *Den tweeden cout*, p. 209.

MARGRIETE: I think that the parish priests who read and know these miracles will please their community by preaching and joyfully proclaiming them.

WILLEMYNE: That's why all parish priests need to know these miracles.¹⁵

In particular the actual “miracles that still occur at various places within the holy Catholic Church need not be concealed, because it is profitable to know them in these pitiful times of the last century, during which so many people have fallen into unbelief and various heresies, and still fall at many places.”¹⁶ In other words, by informing the laity about miracles that have happened in the past and in more recent years and thus about the unabated thaumaturgic powers of Our Lady and the saints, the people's devotion will increase again, which in turn will restore the continuity with the pre-Reformation era.

For this reason, Vrancx wanted to collect source material that was threatened to get lost, the most acute danger of which were of course the ongoing war and the ruthless behaviour of the *Geuzen*. In his discussion of Our Lady of Hanswijk, for instance, he stated that a lot of miracles had been recorded in a parchment book, “which was found and broken by the *Geuzen*, out of the hatred they bear towards God, his sweet Mother and all the Saints.” Similarly, he knew of other shrines of which the written miracle collections had gone missing, including Vilvoorde, Mere, Hulsterlo and Nazareth.¹⁷ Yet, apart from such malicious destruction of source material, carelessness in registration was considered an equally considerable cause in the loss of knowledge on Our Lady's miracles. Thus, he observes that in the chapel devoted to the Mother of God in his own abbey church a great many waxen *ex voto*'s testify to the thaumaturgic powers and popularity of the statue, but he subsequently appears to be unable to recount a single event as nothing had been written down - something that was beyond his comprehension. Much like Lipsius and Wichmans, not recording miracles was considered highly problematic.¹⁸ In order to remedy this situation of

¹⁵ Vrancx, *Den tweeden cout*, pp. 152-153.

¹⁶ “Oversulcx de Mirakelen, die noch daghelicx in de heylighe Catholijcke Kercke op diveersche plaetsen gheschieden, en dienen niet verzweghen, ende zijn profytelick gheweten in desen deerlicken tijt vande leste eeuwe, alster soo veel Menschen in ongheloovicheyt en diveersche ketteryen ghevallen zijn, ende noch vallen in veel plaetsen...” Vrancx, *Den tweeden cout*, pp. 4-5.

¹⁷ “... die stonden gheschreven in eenen Boeck van Perkemijn met volcommen bescheedt, die vande Gheusen ghevonden ende ghebroken is gheweest, wt den haet die sy draghen op God, zijn lieve Moedere en alle Heylighen.” Vrancx, *Den tweeden cout*, pp. 281, 283.

¹⁸ “.. alsoot blijkt wt vele teecken en van Wasse, wt danckbaerheit by het Beeldt van Maria daer van diveersche Persoonen gheoffert, maer daer is cleen kennisse ende memorie oft ghedinckenisse aen

imminent loss, Vrancx industriously set out to collect as much evidence as possible, for which he appears to have conducted ample research. In most cases, his sources consisted of written or printed miracle books, but his quest also benefitted from material sources such as memorial or votive tablets that decorated the walls of the churches and chapels he had visited (cf. *supra*). In Tongre-Notre-Dame he took his information from old churchwarden accounts, and in other cases he refers to sermons in which the miraculous stories had been recounted.¹⁹ Interestingly, inasmuch as it is possible to verify, Vrancx appears to have provided a faithful impression of the material he must have consulted. This can for instance be judged on the basis of comparison with the Zaffelare miracle book, one of the only manuscript books that was consulted by Vrancx and has survived in its original form.²⁰ Furthermore, part of the events that Vrancx had selected in his paragraph on Our Lady of Halle were equally included in the subsequent and otherwise unrelated publication by Lipsius. The latter, in turn, included miracles that were not in Vrancx's selection, suggesting that both independently relied on actual material sources in the church.²¹ Thus, although it does not provide an extensive survey of the miracles at every single shrine, *Den tweeden cout der nichten* is one of the earliest printed compilations of miraculous source material in the Low Countries, even before Lipsius' publications.

Such 'antiquarian' concerns in fact prove to be characteristic for the period.²² For instance, when Peeter Spijskens was appointed as parish priest of the church of Our Lady in Tielt (Brabant) in 1596, he immediately set out to collect as much material as possible on the miracles worked by the miraculous statue of the Virgin that was venerated there. The ravages of war had however wiped away many traces, and the earliest miracle Spijskens was able to reveal only dated to 1572.²³ Other cult centres could boast proofs of medieval miracles, however. As a consequence, such investigations to prove continuity led to a recurring pattern to add new miracles to medieval collections after a long, sixteenth-century hiatus. The clearest example Vrancx provides in this regard is the series of stories from the Marian shrine at Tongre-

ghehauen, ende noch min alsoo ick verstaet isser yet af gheschreven." Vrancx, *Den tweeden cout*, pp. 117-118, 127.

¹⁹ Vrancx, *Den tweeden cout*, pp. 20, 28, 58, 127 and 152-153.

²⁰ Compare the edition of Daem, 'Het mirakelboek van Onze-Lieve-Vrouw van Zaffelare,' with Vrancx, *Den tweeden cout*, pp. 118-128.

²¹ Compare Vrancx, *Den tweeden cout der nichten*, pp. 6-15, and Lipsius, *Diva Virgo Hallensis*, *passim*.

²² In general, see Van Mulder, *Wonderkoorts*, pp. 335-350.

²³ Van De Woude, 'De Mirakelboeken der O.-L.-Vrouwkerk'.

Notre-Dame (Hainaut). Although no miracle book is mentioned, the Ghent abbot compiled a selection with the help of “antiquities and old accounts from the church of Tongre.” On a total of 29 stories, 25 date to the period between 1081 and 1497, to which were added the remaining 4 that had occurred between 1591 and 1598. This chronological disposition was repeated in subsequent publications on the miraculous statue.²⁴ Furthermore, it can also be discerned in other collections that were not included in *Den tweeden cout der nichten*. An interesting example is the case of Our Lady of Dadizele, of which the miracle collection consists of 26 stories dating from 1353 to 1537. To that set was added one final example of 1617, as “demonstration that Gods hand was not curtailed.”²⁵ Something highly similar can be observed in the substantial book of Our Lady of ’s-Hertogenbosch, of which all the recorded miracles date from before 1521, except for one from 1603.²⁶ A final example that can be referred to is the set related to Saint Alena from Vorst. Although the cult had high Medieval origins, it was still very much alive in the first decades of the sixteenth century. Around 1518 a unique, Middle Dutch booklet with woodcuts describing her life and miracles was published in Brussels, and, even in 1527, the original Latin miracle manuscript - kept in Rooklooster - was copied for the abbey of Vorst. Yet, after that date a hiatus follows until 1602, and in the very next year both Dutch and French translation of the original manuscript were published. This renewed attention was doubtlessly related to the openings of the saint’s shrine in 1600 and 1601.²⁷

This restoration of tradition worked in the other direction as well. Not only did it affect the perception of the present, it also tried to do the same for the past. Apart from demonstrating the unabated actuality and relevance of miracle cults in the early seventeenth century, considerable effort was also put in strengthening the historical basis and, as a consequence, the legitimacy of the shrines in question. The books mentioned above were part of a much larger and increasing wave of publications on shrines, that collectively tried to strengthen the faith in Our Lady and the saints and even create a shared, Catholic identity among the inhabitants of the southern

²⁴ “... antiquiteyten en oude Rekeninghen vande kercke van Tongre.” Vrancx, *Den tweeden cout der nichten*, pp. 37-63, quote on p. 58. Compare, for instance, with Huart, *L’histoire admirable de Nostre-Dame de Tongre*, pp. 47-97, esp. pp. 82-83.

²⁵ Quoted from Van Mulder, *Wonderkoorts*, pp. 95-98.

²⁶ Hens, van Bavel, van Dijck & Frantzen, *Mirakelen van Onze Lieve Vrouw*, p. 72. See also Van Mulder, *Wonderkoorts*, pp. 83-85 and 341-343.

²⁷ Indestege, ‘lets over Alena’; *L’Histoire de la vie et des miracles*, esp. pp. 46, 67 and 101. The c. 1518 booklet is now in Brussels, KBR, IV 42.129A.

provinces.²⁸ Yet, almost without exception, such publications at the same time gave historical overviews of the cults as well, tracing back its origins to a distant past in order to refute Protestant accusations of them as recent inventions. In fact, this deliberate tying in with the past is a well-known principle, typical for Counter-Reformation theology, to which Christian Hecht has referred as the *Traditionsprinzip*. Besides the Bible, the tradition of the Church was considered an equally important source of revelation, and Catholic writers all over Europe tried to prove the validity of their practices by claiming that they were in harmony with apostolic traditions.²⁹ The Tridentine decree on the veneration of images and relics, for instance, emphasized that such practice was “in accordance with the usage of the Catholic and Apostolic church, received from the primitive times of the Christian religion, and with the unanimous teaching of the holy Fathers and the decrees of the sacred councils.”³⁰ Very soon this theological principle was used in vernacular publications. Already in the middle of the sixteenth century, for instance, Antoine du Val had called Calvin a liar for claiming that making vows, going on pilgrimages and giving ex voto’s were new inventions. He substantiated this accusation by providing the translation of a relevant treatise by the fifth-century theologian and Bishop Theodoret of Cyrrhus.³¹ Later, such ideas also found expression in treatises on specific shrines. Etienne Ydens’ 1605 book on the Brussels Holy Sacrament of Miracle is a clear case in point. After having recounted the history and the miracles of the cult by means of the findings of his extensive research in churchwarden accounts, official testimonies and various sorts of gifts including votive panels, he directly addressed himself to the reader:

“Catholic reader, by the extracts transcribed above and by the narration of so many sufficiently verified miracles, one can clearly recognize how great and shameless the impudency of the heretics of our time is, and in particular of those

²⁸ Delfosse, 'La Vierge comme protectrice des Pays-Bas méridionaux,' and idem, *La protectrice du Païs-Bas*, pp. 25-54.

²⁹ Hecht, *Katholische Bildertheologie*, pp. 79-151.

³⁰ “... ut juxta Catholicae et Apostolicae Ecclesiae usum a primaevis Christianae religionis temporibus receptum sanctorumque patrum consensionem et sacrorum conciliorum...” English translation from Gilmore Holt, *A documentary history of art*, vol. 2, p. 63.

³¹ “Calvin dan is een openbaer lueghenaer, de welcke seyt dattet nieuwe inventien zijn, beloefte te doen ende in pelgrimage te gane ter plaetsen daer die lichamen ende reliquien der heyligher martelaren ende andere heylighen sijn, om die te bidden ende daer die heyligen te presenteren die figueren van armen, van beenen, oft van eenich andere lit, met protestatie ende in teecken vande weldaet ende ghesontheit, die welcke wij deur haer ghebet ontfanghen ende vercregen van God hebben.” Du Val, *Den spieghel der Calvinisten*, fol. 71. Interestingly, this Dutch translation received a royal approbation on 2 September 1566, in the middle of the iconoclast crisis.

who had kept our city of Brussels and dared to publish a placard in 1581, in which they - among many other blasphemies, calumnies and impostures - claimed that this Holy Sacrament has only appeared for the first time in 1529 during the disease called the sweating sickness... And yet by the same placard they cannot conceal that more than hundred years before people already talked about it...”³²

The rich documentation he provided in his treatise thus not only served to arouse enthusiasm for the city’s Eucharistic relics, but also to dismiss the very specific rumours of denial that had been spread during the Brussels Calvinist regime (1577-1585) with the sole purpose of debunking the so-called relic as a recent, Papist invention that had nothing to do with the true, apostolic Christian faith. Ydens on the contrary tried to demonstrate that the cult existed well before the reformed ideas started to spread and that it was thus part of an established, Christian tradition. These two disparate visions, however, are striking examples of opposing, contemporary interpretations of the principle of cyclical movements of cults, which has been referred to in the two previous parts. Although it definitely had fourteenth-century origins, as has been shown above, the Brussels cult was indeed actively revived anew from 1529 onwards, under the impulse of the Habsburg Court and arguably in order to counter Protestant critiques (cf. *supra*, 4.1.6).

The *Traditionsprinzip* also found expression in other media. A later seventeenth-century writer on the shrine of Tongre-Notre-Dame similarly maintained that his book was not just a “story of our age, [because] it will almost be 600 years that it is held in esteem and veneration by everyone.”³³ He thus implicitly referred to a potential jubilee celebration of the cult’s installation, a practice of which the seventeenth century indeed saw the origins and rise that was yet another way to (re-)establish a

³² “Lecteur Catholique, par les extraitz cy dessus transcriptz & la narration de tant de miracles suffisamment verifiez, on peut clairement cognoistre, combien est grande & effrontée l’impudence des Heretiques de nostre temps, & particulierement de ceux qui ont tenu nostre ville de Bruxelles, qui oserent publier en l’an 1581 un placart, dans lequel, entre eultres blasphemes, calumnies & impostures, ilz misrent en avant, que ce S. Sacrement a esté manifesté premierement en l’an 1529 durant la maladie, que l’on appelloit lors, la Sueur d’Angleterre, de laquelle avons parlé cy dessus en nostre Histoire. Et neantmoins par le mesme placart ilz ne peuvent dissimuler, que plus de cent ans auparavant on en parloit...” Ydens, *Histoire du S. sacrement du miracle*, pp. 236-237. On that publication, see Adam, ‘L’Histoire de Saint Sacrement de Miracle’. On that publication, see also Adam, ‘L’Histoire de Saint Sacrement de Miracle d’Étienne Ydens,’ and van Mulder, *Wonderkoorts*, pp. 106-115.

³³ “.. pas une histoire de nos jours, il y aura bien-tost six cens ans, qu’elle est en estime & veneration d’un chacun...” Huart, *L’histoire admirable de Notre-Dame de Tongre*, sig. A2.

link with the past.³⁴ Finally, visual media were also actively deployed to actualize the ancient origins of cults. In 1625, Aubertus Miraeus (1573-1640), dean of the Antwerp collegiate chapter, falsely tried to establish that the origins of the cult of Our Lady *op 't Stokske* in his cathedral went back to 1124 by installing a painted panel next to the altar with verses referring to its foundation.³⁵ In most cases, however, it was more extensive narrative cycles that made the faraway histories vivid again. Contrary to the series discussed above that solely depicted 'actual' miracles in the time of the contemporary observer, these cycles mainly focused on a legendary past. Yet again this was not a new phenomenon. The aforementioned series of paintings in Mechelen and Cologne, both dating to c. 1500, are cases in point (figs. 116 & 117). By elaborately displaying Saint Severin's *vita*, and concluding the cycle with the translation of his relics to 'his' church in Cologne and the subsequent cult there, the latter set should indeed be interpreted as a "legitimation of the cultic happenings in the collegiate church."³⁶ Similarly, the four tapestries commissioned by François de Tassis (1459-1517) and donated to the Brussels Church of Our Lady of the Sablon in 1518 extensively visualize the origins and translation of the miraculous statue of Our Lady to that particular church (fig. 127). The story is set in 1348, but the many inserted portraits of both the series' patron and members of the Habsburg court amply illustrate the cult's actual and official endorsement.³⁷

Apart from these typological precedents, the genre clearly boomed again in the seventeenth century, when the imagery became a visual counterpart to printed historical narratives recounting the origins of these churches. The series in Alsemberg by Antoon Sallaert has already been mentioned. On several canvases it depicts the very specific building history of that particular church, which, according to tradition, was the result of a particular request from the part of Our Lady to Saint Elisabeth (1207-1231). Throughout the cycle the cult is linked to the Dukes of Brabant, including John III (1300-1355). Yet, this historical narrative was given a

³⁴ Achermann, 'Translationen heiliger Leiber,' p. 111; Benz, 'L'histoire ou l'art de vérifier les miracles,' pp. 83-84; Van der Steen, *Memory wars in the Low Countries*, pp. 256-273. An early example might have been the quinqucentenary of the Antwerp Abbey of Saint Michael in 1624. See Haeger, 'Rubens's "Adoration of the Magi",' pp. 67-68, and Herremans, 'De geschiedenis van de abdij'.

³⁵ Philippen, *Le culte de Notre-Dame op 't Stoccken*, pp. 5-18.

³⁶ Oepen & Steinmann, *Der Severin Zyklus*, p. 146. Other sixteenth-century examples include the panels depicting the finding of Our Lady of Amersfoort in 1444 (Amersfoort, Saint George) and the construction of the church Lebbeke (Our Lady). On the latter, see Dauwe, *Geschiedenis van de verering tot O.-L.-Vrouw*, pp. 37-39.

³⁷ De Meûter, *Wandtapijten uit de tijd van Keizer Karel*, pp. 14-19.

contemporary touch by including representations of the seventeenth-century appearance of the church (figs. 128a-b & 129).³⁸ Clear references to reigning precursors of the current dynasty and historical objects in contemporary appearance were frequently used to establish a link between past and present. Such is also the case in a similar cycle of twelve paintings dating to around 1630 in Nivelles, depicting the life and cult of Saint Gertrude and originally hung against the pillars of the former, eponymous abbey church. It linked the cult to the very specific political history of the devout Merovingian kings, ancestors of Charlemagne. The daughter of *majordomo* Pepin of Landen (d. 639), Gertrude equally belonged to this political family. Depictions of her building the Abbey of Nivelles as well as her installment as its abbess furthermore firmly linked the cult to the city, the place where the paintings were displayed. A number of *post mortem* miracles before her shrine made it recognizable for contemporary viewers (fig. 130).³⁹ The Blessed Pepin of Landen also played a role in the cycle of four stone reliefs on Saint Ermelinde in her chapel at Meldert. The link with the current dynasty is even more explicit here, as he is explicitly, yet anachronistically, named as Duke of Brabant on the saint's tomb, located in the chapel. While the first two reliefs depict scenes from Ermelinde's life, the third shows the building of the chapel by the order of Pepin. Lastly, the fourth relief depicts miraculous healings at her tomb in its mid-seventeenth-century appearance (figs. 131 & 132), which along with the reliefs was installed in 1649 with funds from Baron Jacobus d'Oyenbrugge (d. 1651).⁴⁰ A final example displays perhaps the most striking replacement of a medieval miracle in the seventeenth century. A set of three paintings commissioned in 1639 by the Confraternity of the Holy Sacrament of Miracle of Leuven represents the history of the Eucharistic relic. Strikingly, the figures in the painting that shows the first miracle of 1374 are dressed in seventeenth-century costume. The scene is also set in a highly detailed and elaborate Baroque church interior, probably the Augustinian church where both the relic and the paintings were

³⁸ On these paintings, see Theys, 'Over enkele schilderijen'; idem, 'Nog over de schilderijen'; idem, *Geschiedenis van Alseberg*, pp. 326-327, 349-352 and 393-399; van der Vennet, 'Le peintre bruxellois Antoine Sallaert,' pp. 180, 185 and 190-191, nrs. C8-11; Delbeke, Constant, Geurs & Staessen, 'The architecture of miracle-working statues,' pp. 234-235.

³⁹ Madou, *De heilige Gertrudis van Nijvel*, vol. 1, p. 176, and Osterrieth, 'Vie et miracles en douze tableaux'. The iconography of these paintings might in part have been based on an earlier, fifteenth-century series. See Bücken & Steyaert, *De erfenis van Rogier van der Weyden*, pp. 135-141.

⁴⁰ The text on the tomb reads: "Hic corpus sanctae Ermelindis virginis angeli condiderunt anno 600 eruit Dux Brabantiae Pepinus et honorificentius locavit anno 648." Compare with similar anachronistic terminology on a mid-seventeenth-century print after Rubens, where an inscription identifies Pepin as the first duke of Brabant (Amsterdam, Rijksprentenkabinet, RP-P-OB-59.884).

once on display. In all three paintings confraternity members are portrayed as a parade of onlookers linking the three canvases, until in the third and final painting the most important members are seen kneeling before the actual Eucharistic reliquary (figs. 133 & 134).⁴¹ However, as demonstrated above, exactly the same visual strategy had been used 100 years earlier already by Charles V. In a window he donated to the Brussels Church of Saints Michael and Gudula, he was depicted in prayer in front of the reliquary of the Holy Sacrament of Miracle venerated there (figs. 65-66). It has been shown how he took a clear public stand in the religious debates in doing so. In sum, such visual programs wittily bridged the sixteenth-century episode of troubles by both proving ancient origins of cults and showing undiminished actuality of their miracles. Yet, they could also fall back on visual techniques that had already been used in the sixteenth-century debates itself.⁴²

6.1.2 The rise of votive paintings

Newly made material objects with clear visual messages were deliberately commissioned to construct continuity between past and present. It has also been shown how in conjunction with this imagery, various authors similarly published historical narratives on particular shrines, in which continuity was stressed in a highly similar way. Yet, these writing men were often confronted with a lack of textual evidence. Therefore, they supplemented the merely narrative texts with a range of material sources already present in the churches they described, which at first sight do not seem to have been deliberately made with the same ideological purposes in mind. Including this rich material allowed them to overcome important gaps in the archives. Interestingly, the previous two parts of this dissertation demonstrate how this same method proved fruitful in other practices. In the second part, it has for instance been shown how a closer look at all sorts of devotionalia considerably nuanced the traditional, pessimistic view of a declining piety in the Low Countries after the introduction of Protestant thought around 1520. This is clear in Zoutleeuw, where the market for devotional objects was thriving, and occasionally even some new types

⁴¹ On these paintings, see Wolters van der Wey, *Groepsvertoon*, vol. 3, pp. 841-847, cat. L3, and 848-851, cat. L4.

⁴² Compare also with Pollmann's highly similar interpretation of Cornelis de Vos' 1630 painting depicting the Antwerp citizens before Saint Norbert (Antwerp, KMSKA) as a Medieval episode after heresy, yet in contemporary dress. Pollmann, *Catholic identity*, pp. 175-178.

such as pennants were introduced and disseminated (cf. supra, 4.1.4). Similarly, around 1600 Vrancx plausibly interpreted the great number of waxen ex voto's near the miraculous image of Our Lady in the Ghent abbey of Saint Peter as a reliable indication for both its popularity and efficacy.

In their publications, Vrancx and his colleagues Lipsius, Wichmans and Ydens also referred to another type of devotional object as material source that has not yet received sufficient attention: votive panels. The formal characteristics of this particular type of ex voto have already been described above, but here it is of special importance to recall Willem Frijhoff's observation that the spreading of the practice throughout Europe happened in close connection with the spreading of the Counter-Reformation.⁴³ For the Low Countries, this phenomenon still lacks an in-depth survey, but a brief discussion of the available evidence provides important insights into the evolving dynamics of miracle cults. While examples have been preserved in Austria, Germany, Italy and Spain from the late fifteenth century onwards, the Low Countries stand in sharp contrast where not a single votive panel from the fifteenth and sixteenth centuries is extant. Nonetheless, some examples of the practice are documented in the sixteenth century. In his 1605 historical treatise on the Brussels Holy Sacrament of Miracle, Etienne Ydens included all the known miracles that had been worked by the miraculous host. One of these, dated to 1536, involved a certain Lauren Couderlier, courtier and *garde de linge* to Emperor Charles V. Being dangerously ill, he called upon the Brussels Holy Sacrament of Miracle which immediately "appeared to him in a vision, in the same way as it can be seen in the said church" (*s'apparut a luy en vision, en la mesme figure, comme il est monstré en ladicte Eglise*). He recovered, and "in memory of this great benefice and as an act of grace, he had a panel (*tableau*) painted, representing the said vision and carrying a subscription of this beautiful miracle." Ydens claimed that the painting was still extant in the choir of the Beguinage church in Brussels, but it appears to have disappeared since.⁴⁴ Although such an early example at first seems to be in conflict with Frijhoff's hypothesis, it is interesting to recall that the revival of the whole cult of the Brussels Holy Sacrament of Miracle was likely a more or less direct reaction to Protestant

⁴³ Frijhoff, 'Het votiefschilderij als historisch object,' pp. 39-40. Similar observation by Van der Velden, *The donor's image*, p. 218.

⁴⁴ "... en memoire de ce grand benefice, & pour action de grace, feist peindre un tableau, representant saditte vision avec la soubscription de ce beau Miracle: lequel tableau ce veoit encores aujourd'huy pendant au choer du Beguinaige a Bruxelles." Ydens, *Histoire du S. sacrement du miracle*, pp. 205-206.

developments and refutation of increasing critiques. Moreover, it has been demonstrated how the Habsburg court was particularly involved, and in this respect it is all the more interesting that the votive panel in question was given by a courtier of Charles V. Regardless of the given painting being a genuine expression of piety and gratitude, a reaction against Reformatory critiques, or indeed a combination of both, either way the visual representation of the miracle in conjunction with the textual elucidation served as a clear argument within the public debate in the Low Countries. In a highly effective way, such an image argued in favour of both the Real Presence as well as the existence of miracles. Wichmans must later indeed have referred to similar paintings as *argumenta* for good reason (cf. supra, 6.1.1).⁴⁵

Whatever the case, it is clear that the number of documented votive paintings increases towards the end of the sixteenth century. Another example is included in Vrancx' compilation of miracles. An anonymous man who had been tormented by extreme pain for 21 years, was miraculously delivered after a pilgrimage to Notre Dame de la Fontaine at Chièvres. In gratitude (*in danckbaerheyt*) for this miracle he had a painting (*tafereel*) made, which he sent to the shrine.⁴⁶ Not all paintings were given by the *miraculé* him- or herself, though always by close relatives. For instance, in his *Brabantia Mariana* Augustinus Wichmans mentions a painting (*tabulam*) that included a representation of how a child was miraculously healed through the intercession of the statue of Our Lady in the Brussels church of Saint Gudula. In this case, the panel was evidently given by the parents "as testimony to their gratitude for the received benefaction" (*in beneficii accepti gratam testificationem*).⁴⁷ Neither Vrancx nor Wichmans dated the miracles they mentioned, but examples clearly became more numerous in the seventeenth century. At the pilgrimage church of Our Lady of Alseberg, for instance, some eight examples dating between 1611 and 1682 have been recorded in the church's archives. The first one was given by Pieter van der Haegen,

⁴⁵ Compare with Büttner, 'Argumentatio in Bildern der Reformationszeit'.

⁴⁶ "... doende daer af een tafereel maken, dat hy nae Cheevre ghezonden heeft in danckbaerheyt." Vrancx, *Den tweeden cout der nichten*, p. 30.

⁴⁷ "Quantum ad Miracula ibi patrata, praeter ceratas plures tabellas, optatae illius meritis, vel obtentae sanitatis indices, majorem unam, eamque depicta conspexi ibidem Tabulam, in qua puer repraesentatus, qui intercessione Virginis miraculose traditur sanatus. Unde in beneficii accepti gratam testificationem, Are B. Virginis, effigiem illius parentes suspenderunt." Wichmans, *Brabantia Mariana*, p. 290.

meier of Alseberg, in gratitude for his sudden recovery. In his votive panel, the man was said to have been represented kneeling before Our Lady.⁴⁸

A comparison between two prints from 1604 and 1658 showing the interior of Our Lady's chapel of Saint Martin's basilica in Halle confirms the impression of an increasing popularity throughout the first half of the seventeenth century. An important Marian pilgrimage destination from at least the thirteenth century, it housed a miraculous statue of the Virgin and child. Because of this, the chapel had been filled with many costly gifts, several of them given by prominent figures including the Dukes of Burgundy.⁴⁹ It is therefore no surprise to notice a great variety of objects on and around the altar. The 1604 print included in Justus Lipsius' *Diva Virgo Hallensis* only shows one or possibly two votive paintings among these gifts. In the later 1658 print, some 10 paintings are visible on the right wall of the chapel (figs. 135 & 136). At least one of them, hanging in the doorway on the lower right of the print, is still extant, and it certainly is one of the earliest preserved specimens in the Low Countries. Much like the documented 1611 Alseberg painting described above, the panel from 1614 depicts the wealthy Antwerp silk merchant Rogier Clarisse (d. 1622) kneeling and in prayer in front of Our Lady, represented in an enlightened set of clouds (figs. 136b & 137). An inscription on a banderole in the lower right corner explains that Clarisse had recovered from health through the intercession of Our Lady. Interestingly, Clarisse was part of a network of friends that included both Lipsius and Rubens, both of whom are portrayed alongside Clarisse's brother-in-law Johannes Woverius in Rubens' contemporary *Four philosophers* (c. 1611-1614, Firenze, Palazzo Pitti).⁵⁰ Another example, dating to 1649 and preserved in the church of Our Lady at Jezus-Eik, addresses the object of devotion even more directly, providing an apt illustration of the aforementioned principle of the paintings as devotional dialogue (fig. 138). A man, identified as Antonius Walschatten by the initials A.W. and a heraldic device, kneels down in a wooded landscape on a cushion, holding a rosary in his right

⁴⁸ Theys, 'Een mirakel te Ternat,' and idem, *Geschiedenis van Alseberg*, pp. 391-392. For another documented example in Ghent (Our Lady, 1631), see Daem, 'Mirakelverhalen uit de O.-L.-Vrouwkerk,' pp. 39-40, and idem, '17^e-eeuwse mirakelschilderijen,' p. 229.

⁴⁹ Van der Velden, *The donor's image*, pp. 166-178.

⁵⁰ "VIRGINI DEI GENETRICI / A MORBO RESTITUTUS / Rogerius Clarisse ... / MDCXIII." Panel, 65,9 x 51,5 cm. On Clarisse, see Hildebrand, *De Kapucijnen te Lier*, pp. 13, 18 and 21-24; Jaffé, 'Rubens's Portrait of Rogier Clarisse'; Renger, 'Rubens dedit dedicavitque,' pp. 203 and 209-210; Vlieghe, *Rubens portraits*, pp. 71-72, cat. 84; Timmermans, *Patronen van patronage*, pp. 17, 112, 124 and 239-240. On Woverius, Rubens, Lipsius and the cult of Our Lady of Halle, see Bass, 'Justus Lipsius and his silver pen'.

hand and looking up to Our Lady with the Christ child, seated on a series of clouds and illuminated by a light emanating from the back. In the accompanying inscription, the man directly addresses the Virgin and thanks her for her intercession:

“Having invoked you in this chapel, o sweet Virgin, at the age of 40 years I was miraculously delivered from a rupture that had obliged me to wear this truss for more than 12 years. To the greater glory of the Mother of God. Ex voto. A.W.”⁵¹

The relative scarcity of examples makes it difficult to pronounce upon the actual dissemination of the practice of donating votive paintings in the Low Countries, but the evidence at hand suggests that it took off well in the later sixteenth century and increased in popularity in the early seventeenth century.

6.1.3 A culture of the miraculous

This supposed rise of a new type of devotional object around 1600 suggests new dynamics as well as a renewed popularity of miracle cults. In fact, the quantitative analysis of the previously discussed dataset of recorded miracles in the Low Countries lends further support to that hypothesis. Just like the temporal breakdown in the middle of the sixteenth-century, the actual revival in the years around 1600 of miracles at shrines with pre-1550 origins is subtly notable, since both the number of shrines where miracles were recorded as well as the ratio per shrine increased again (graphs 12-14). Together with the elaborate set of examples given above, such an approach allows us to evaluate the initially careful but subsequently impressive revival of devotional activities at established cult centres in the Low Countries at the dawn of the seventeenth century. It is therefore not surprising that the culture in question has been referred to as “miraculous” by scholars such as Henri Platelle, studying seventeenth-century Lille, and Trevor Johnson, in his work on the Counter-Reformation in the Palatinate.⁵² The material assembled by Vranx in his 1600

⁵¹ “T’AYANT INVOQUE EN CESTE / CHAPELLE O DOUCE VIERGE SUIE / MIRACULEUSEMENT DELIVRE / EN MON AGE DE 40 ANS DUNE / ROMPURE QUI M’AVOIT OBLIGE / A PORTER CEST BRAYER PLUS / DE 12 ANNEES. AD MAIOREM DEIPARE GLORIAM. / EX VOTO / A.W.” Canvas, 78 x 60 cm. On the shrine of Jezus-Eik, see Harline, ‘Miracles and this world’, and idem, *Miracles at the Jesus Oak*.

⁵² “Un climat miraculeux” and “a culture of the miraculous.” See respectively Platelle, *Les Chrétiens face au miracle*, p. 45, and Johnson, ‘Blood, tears and Xavier-water,’ p. 202. In general, see also Soergel, *Wondrous in His Saints*. For a brief overview of the early seventeenth-century Low Countries, see Platelle, ‘Mirakels in de Zuidelijke Nederlanden’.

publication indeed confirms such a development, and he was convinced that his book - and, by extension, communication on miracles in general - would only contribute to this general increase. His Jesuit colleague Franciscus Costerus (1532-1619) - an equally popular preacher and prolific publicist - similarly recommended his audience in 1604 to go on a pilgrimage from time to time “because one observes that at saints’ shrines miracles do actually happen.”⁵³

This miraculous revival was subtly notable at the already existing shrines, but most significant in newly established ones. Henri Platelle indeed emphasized the important “role of newness.”⁵⁴ As had occurred a century before, the Low Countries in this period saw a significant rise in newly established cult centers, of which the lion’s share were devoted to the Virgin Mary. The best-known of these is certainly Scherpenheuvel, where a small statuette hanging on an oak had started to work miracles in the last decades of the sixteenth century. While Vranx did not yet include it in his 1600 overview of Marian shrines in the Low Countries, it would very soon grow out to be a place of ‘national’ importance. Its fame quickly spread, and in 1602 a wooden chapel was built to accommodate the increasing flow of pilgrims. The most important impulse was given the very next year, when the Habsburg Archdukes Albert and Isabella started to engage with the new shrine. They attributed the successful outcome of the siege of ’s-Hertogenbosch in 1603 to Our Lady of Scherpenheuvel, which marked the start of a lifelong devotion to the cult statue and an extensive patronage project that would develop the initially small place into a veritable Marian town that could boast the first church with a cupola in the Low Countries.⁵⁵ The increasing dynamics led Mathias Hovius, Archbishop of Mechelen, to commission an investigation into many the miracles that were said to have happened there. The task was carried out by the Brussels town clerk Philips Numan, and soon afterwards Hovius gave official consent to have the already rich collection published. Numan’s *Historie vande mirakelen* came out in the summer of 1604 and already contained a set of 63 endorsed stories, 46 of which dated to 1603 and 14 to the first months of 1604, just prior to the book’s publication. Like Vranx and the other authors, Numan also assessed the popularity of the shrine in terms of *ex voto*’s. In 1603, 135 crutches were reportedly displayed in

⁵³ “... daer men ghewaer wordt dat aen de memorien der Heylighen miraeckelen gheschieden.” Costerus, *Vijfthien cathollicke sermoonen*, p. 259.

⁵⁴ Platelle, *Les chrétiens face au miracle*, pp. 37-45.

⁵⁵ Numan, *Historie vande mirakelen*, pp. 33-35; Duerloo & Wingens, *Scherpenheuvel*, esp. pp. 23-28. Compare with the contemporary chronicle written by the parish priest Godfried van Thienwinckel: Goetschalckx, ‘Sichem tijdens de Nederlandsche beroerten,’ p. 387.

the chapel, beside a great amount of shoes, clothes and waxen or metal figurines. In addition, there was also a selection of more prestigious gifts, including a silver crown from the city of Brussels, two silver chandeliers from the city of Antwerp, an antependium from Dorothea of Lorraine and several gifts from the Archdukes and other members of their court. Already in 1613 Numan edited a first continuation and a second one would follow in 1617. In the period between 1603 and 1682 a total number of 266 different miracles would be published, but their chronological distribution was clearly concentrated in the earliest years: more than one fourth (73) was dated between 1603 and 1605, more than two thirds (187) between 1603 and 1633.⁵⁶

Such a pattern was typical for miracle cults around 1500 as well, as has been discussed in the previous chapters (graph 11). At first sight, the situation seems strikingly similar to the climate in those earlier years, as was analyzed in the first part of this dissertation. Some historians have even characterized it in exactly the same terms. Victor Fris, for instance, wrote about an *excès de religiosité* in Vrancx' Ghent.⁵⁷ It is indeed tempting to take for granted the sense of continuity that these miracle books and visual cycli strongly tried to impress upon their audiences. After all, the number of new cult centres seemed to have been burgeoning a century before, and a great number of writings on the many miracles attested to their efficacy. Similarly, the crutches and other votive offerings described by Vrancx and Numan could equally be found in late medieval shrines, where they would serve as a striking visual illustration of the cult object's potency in just the same way. Although these similarities are definitely pertinent, there are important differences, two of which especially should be singled out.

First, and perhaps most important, are changes in religious practice. In the course of the intervening century, the politico-religious developments had dramatically overturned the religious landscape and its geography. Local practices and occasional divergence notwithstanding, it is safe to say that around 1500 religious life in the Low Countries can still generally be characterized as belonging to one more or less uniform confession, i.e. the Church of Rome. The situation was completely different around 1600, when religious identities and political factions had strongly polarized the confessional landscape. It goes without saying that this had far-reaching consequences

⁵⁶ Numan, *Historie vande mirakelen*, pp. 39-43 and *passim*; Duerloo & Wingens, *Scherpenheuvel*, pp. 37-39 and 56-64.

⁵⁷ Fris, *Histoire de Gand*, p. 233.

on religious life, both in terms of experiences and practices. In fact, Trevor Johnson's observations on the Counter-Reformation in the Upper Palatinate also seem to apply to the particular Netherlandish context. He noticed a certain continuity with late medieval spirituality, of which the main characteristics now had received a militant and confessional tone.⁵⁸ In the previous chapter, it has been demonstrated how the advancing Reformation gradually aroused a parallel countermovement, cutting clean across the principles of the different Protestant convictions. For instance, as a result of reformed denials, Eucharistic devotion had grown into an almost "warlike confession of faith," and the patronage of lavish sacrament houses served as a material embodiment of such principles.⁵⁹ In the same way, and for similar reasons, the practice of pilgrimage and the belief in miracles had received a strong confessional character. Some suggestive mid-sixteenth-century examples have been given in the previous chapter, but around 1600 this was explicitly confirmed and acknowledged by Catholic writings. As has been discussed, Vrancx was convinced of the merits of publishing miracle stories, since they are profitable for the people. Not only are they consoling, they also strengthen them in their faith and the author clearly saw a didactic and instructive role.⁶⁰ Costerus similarly claimed that miracles confirm believers in their faith.⁶¹ Interestingly, such a discourse was even used in official but unpublished documents. For instance, the official document drawn up by the Ghent aldermen, testifying to the previously mentioned 1603 miracle that was also depicted in a painting (fig. 123), explicitly stated that it had been drawn up, "lest everyone should be strengthened in the faith and the power of God and his blessed mother, and do not doubt it."⁶² For the great majority of the faithful, such wonders indeed actually counted as the most important parameters for the efficacy of the saints.

Strengthening one's faith is one thing, disproving the validity of the Reformation another. Yet, a direct polemic with the Reformation is of course obvious. Simon Ditchfield has emphasized that after the Council of Trent miracles would start to play a central role in the Catholic Church's argumentation as the one true church.⁶³ In the

⁵⁸ Johnson, 'Blood, tears and Xavier-water'. See also Soergel, *Wondrous in His Saints*.

⁵⁹ Klauser, *A short history of the Western liturgy*, p. 137.

⁶⁰ Vrancx, *Den tweeden cout*, pp. 4-5 and 152-153.

⁶¹ "... op dat wy door de miraeckelen in het gheloove souden bevesticht worden." Costerus, *Viifthien cathollicke sermoonen*, p. 259.

⁶² "... up dat een yeder int gheloove ende moghentheyt Gods met zijne ghebenedide moeder ghesterct zij ende daerinne niet en twijffele." Daem, 'Mirakelverhalen uit de O.-L.-Vrouwkerk,' p. 33.

⁶³ Ditchfield, 'Tridentine worship and the cult of saints,' esp. p. 213.

Low Countries, that idea was also spread among the flock in vernacular publications such as Cunerus Petri's *Den schilt teghen die wederdoopers* (1568) and Costerus' *Schildt der catholijcken teghen de ketterijen* (1591) - two prime examples of books that were explicitly meant to furnish Catholics with the necessary readymade arguments to retort reformed charges to the accusers.⁶⁴ Miracles were particularly promoted by the Jesuits, among whom Costerus was a central figure in the years around 1600.⁶⁵ He argued that while the heretics' hatred against miracles had led them to break and destroy holy relics and images, Catholics continued to believe in them, as they are both signs of the holiness of these venerated objects, as well as proofs of their faith being genuine. Citing Christ from the Gospels (John 15, 24), he established that new faith (*nieuw leeringe*) always needs miracles to prove its validity. Yet, while such does clearly not happen in the Reformed faith, within the Catholic Church many miracles are happening at the moment (*nu ter tijdt*), which demonstrates the truth of their belief anew.⁶⁶ Miracles were thus considered as clear proof of the Catholic Church controlling the supernatural realm, and therefore of its legitimacy. As a result, going on pilgrimage and belief in miracles were not only considered as a refutation of Protestant doctrine, but also as an open confirmation of the person in question's orthodoxy. For this reason, Costerus actively encouraged believers to go on pilgrimage, and at the same time preempted oft-heard critiques on the practice. In the previous part it has been demonstrated how writers such as Erasmus condemned pilgrimages for being immoral, as they often led participants to lascivious behaviour while their families remained unprotected at home, left in uncertainty about the pilgrim's fortunes. Costerus therefore especially addressed those who could afford to go on pilgrimage, and he emphasized the importance of nearby shrines (*by-gheleghen heylighe plaetsen*), rather than faraway places such as Jerusalem.⁶⁷ This seems to have become custom, which created renewed opportunities for regional shrines such as Zoutleeuw.⁶⁸

⁶⁴ On Petri, see especially Waite, *Eradicating the Devil's minions*, pp. 40-41.

⁶⁵ Waite, *Eradicating the Devil's minions*, pp. 34, 41 and 49.

⁶⁶ "... nochtans wordt de heylige kercke oock nu ter tijdt met veel miraeckelen, die gheschieden aen de heylighe beelden ende reliquien der Heylighen, verlicht, ende de waerheydt van ons gheloof bevesticht, daer de kettters oock d'minste teecken, waer mede, als met brieven vanden wille Godts, sy behoorden te bevestigen hen seydinghe in dese nieuwe neersticheydt van de wereltd te reformeren oft hermaecken, niet en hebben connen ghedoen." Costerus, *Schildt der catholijcken*, pp. 28-30.

⁶⁷ "Dit en segghe ick niet om allen man dese Hierusalemsche pelgrimage aen te prediken, wetende dat die eenen jehelijcken niet en dient... maer ick begheere dat men de valscheydt der ketteren were, die de pelgrimagien lasteren, ende datmen somtijds nae bequaemheydt de by-gheleghen heylighe plaetsen besoecke daermen ghewaer wordt dat aen de memorien der heylighen miraeckelen gheschieden... Dat nochtans dese

While Costerus and others saw a confirmation of orthodoxy in the miraculous climate circa 1600, other writers went further and even proposed a causal connection between reformed reproaches and increasing miracles. Among them was Justus Lipsius, who in his 1604 book on Our Lady of Halle claimed that the saints and especially the Holy Virgin work so many miracles in these times, precisely because they are refuted by the heretics. Christ himself does not need miracles to prove himself anymore, as he is accepted by ‘everybody’ (i.e. Christianity in the modern sense). Not so with the saints and the Virgin, who are still taunted in many places, and “that is why God comes with good reason to elevate what they turn down, and to light what they obscure.”⁶⁹ In sum, as Judith Pollmann has established, miracles were obviously considered as anti-Protestant statements.⁷⁰ The clearest illustration of that is a particular category of miracles actually featuring Protestants. They were particularly used as rhetorical strategy in Jan Coens’ 1598 confutation of Philips of Marnix’ *De bienkorf der h. Roomsche kercke* (1569), one of the most stinging and popular critiques on the practices of the Church of Rome. In his two chapters on images, Coens specifically addressed the idea of a cessation of miracles: just as God has worked miracles through Saints Peter and Paul, he still works miracles daily through images of Our Lady or other saints.⁷¹ Just like Marnix had specifically addressed Our Lady of Halle to make his point, Coens too used the shrine in his confutation to enforce his arguments.⁷² Among the many miracles worked by the statue, he particularly singled out two stories from 1582, when the *Geuzen* had tried to capture the city. Not only had Our Lady of Halle successfully defended her stronghold, but through her intervention her assailants were also suitably penalized. A heretical churchwarden who had boasted to sell the thaumaturgic statue was turned into a fearful swineherd, and the soldier who had

pelgrimagien niet en gheschieden wt lichtveerdicheydt, oft met onmanierlijckheydt, maer met behoorlijke eerweerdicheydt ende devotie...” Costerus, *Viifthien cathollicke sermoonen*, p. 259.

⁶⁸ Thijs, ‘Pelgrimstekens in de Zuidelijke Nederlanden,’ pp. 76-80, and Angenendt, *Heilige und Reliquien*, p. 249.

⁶⁹ “At in Divis quia aliter est, & multi etiam Christum professi obstrigillat eorum honori, aut cultui: merito extra ordinem eos asserit, & quos abiiciunt, allevat; quos obtenebrant, illustrat.” Lipsius, *Diva Virgo Hallensis*, p. 18.

⁷⁰ In general, see Pollmann, *Catholic identity*, pp. 166-167.

⁷¹ “Gelijckerwijs dan, dat Godt miraekelen ghewrocht heeft doer de schaduwe van Petrus, de siecken ghenesen, de duvelen wtghedreven doer de sweetdoecken oft voorschooden van Paulus, alsoo werckt hy noch daeghelijcx mirakelen doer de beelden van Maria oft eenighe andere heylighen.” Coens, *Confutatie oft Wederlegghinghe*, fols. 204-208v, quote on fol. 206v.

⁷² See for instance Van Marnix van Sint Aldegonde, *De Bijenkorf*, vol. 1, pp. 116-117 and 281-282.

planned to cut off her nose was deprived of his own by a bullet.⁷³ Coens included similar stories on other cities and their images, where they were linked with episodes of iconoclasm. When in 1566 an iconoclast (*eenen beltstormer*) in 's-Hertogenbosch defied an image of Saint Anthony. Anthony had given his name to ergotism, a disease known as Saint Anthony's fire. Due to his heresy, the man was instantaneously struck by the disease and died. A similar fate befell a man in Bruges, who had mocked Saint Christopher by climbing on the shoulders of the statue, saying that he had carried the Christ child long enough and that it was his turn now.⁷⁴

The earlier examples from the 1530s show that there were definitely antecedents, but now the thorny memories of the recent iconoclastic events were clearly forged into strengthening arguments in favour of Catholic supremacy.⁷⁵ Coens was far from the only author in late-sixteenth-century Brabant to do so, and the fact that similar miracles also occur in unpublished acts is illustrative of the degree to which such ideas lived among the flock. In Everberg, for instance, all original documents attesting to the miracles worked by the Holy Cross venerated there got lost in the troubles, but in 1588 the local confraternity assembled a handwritten collection in their archives based on testimonies of prominent inhabitants. Within the small collection of collectively remembered miracles was a story of the *Geuzen* in vain trying to take away and burn the Cross and the images in the church, whereupon they caught fire themselves.⁷⁶ Finally, it is interesting to note that the miracle memorial paintings discussed above also featured this particular category of miracles. At least one example has been preserved in Vilvoorde (Carmelite Convent). It depicts the 1578 event of the *Geuzen* attacking the local beguinage, where the miraculous statue of Our Lady *Ten Troost* was venerated (fig. 139). The statue was saved, however, and it reportedly pushed the

⁷³ Coens, *Confuratie oft Wederlegginghe*, fols. 207v-208. One these miracles, see also Viaene, 'Mirakelen van O.-L.-Vrouw te Halle,' and Pollmann, *Catholic identity*, p. 167. The latter miracle was also included in Lipsius, *Diva Virgo Hallensis*, pp. 23-24.

⁷⁴ Coens, *Confuratie of Wederlegginghe*, fol. 208v.

⁷⁵ In general, see Soergel, 'Spiritual medicine for heretical poison,' and Pollmann, *Catholic identity*, pp. 167-168. To the literature on the example of the iconoclasm in Hasselt Pollmann provides can be added Hansay, 'Le sac de l'église de Saint-Quentin,' who provides the original 1567 documents on which later versions of the story must be based. A similar story about the miraculous preservation of a crucifix during the sack of the Abbey of Vorst in 1582 was published in the eighteenth century, see *L'Histoire de la vie et des miracles*, pp. 124-125. For other examples, see De Boer, *Picking up the pieces*, pp. 65-68.

⁷⁶ "Noch de gwesten en hebbet Cruys niet connen nemen, maer alst sij inde kercke voerschreven mijnden de bilden te verbranden soo sijn sij int vier gevallen." See the documents published online by the Heemkring Campenholt: 'Mirakels te Everberg (1588)' (accessed 4 September 2017).

assailants from their ladders. Interestingly, the painting was probably commissioned around 1586, and carried along in the procession for Our Lady *Ten Troost* after the Calvinists had been driven out.⁷⁷

Precisely because of this heightened importance of miracles as crucial arguments for Catholic orthodoxy, the Church also sought to establish a much greater control over them - and this is the second important difference with the situation of around 1500. The ecclesiastical authorities now adopted a much more critical stance and consequently invested much time and effort in verifying whether the miracles that were reported everywhere were genuine manifestations of the divine, rather than human or devilish fraud. As this had been a central critique in the Protestant discourse against the Catholic Church, the latter evidently wanted to prevent abuses in order to smother all potential critiques beforehand. As has been discussed in a previous section, the Tridentine decrees on the cult of saints had stipulated that “no new miracles [were to] be accepted... unless they have been investigated and approved by the same bishop.” Thus, if a local shrine wanted to take advantage of a miraculous intervention that had happened by having it pronounced in sermons or published in booklets, they now were obliged to have their miracles officially approved by following a fixed procedure that generally cost a significant sum of money. A dossier with testimonies by the *miraculé* and witnesses, sometimes supplemented by a doctor’s certificate, had to be handed over to the bishop, who appointed an *ad hoc* committee of inquiry. They sent a report with their findings back to the bishop, who took the final decision on the matter.⁷⁸

It is unclear from which point in time such attitudes and procedures were in vogue, but several examples from the later sixteenth century demonstrate that the critical attitude was adopted by some fairly early. An early case of suspected fraud has been documented in Merchtem, a village northwest of Brussels. In January 1569, the church was attacked by iconoclasts, who broke open the sacrament house and threw the consecrated hosts on the ground. They were reportedly picked up by the parish priest the very next day, who noticed red stains on them, which he interpreted as blood. In March the priest eventually decided to show these alleged Eucharistic relics

⁷⁷ Marnef, ‘Een maat voor niets?’ p. 88. The story is recounted in many later publications, including Wichmans, *Brabantia Mariana*, pp. 919-920. See also Delbeke, Constant, Geurs & Staessen, ‘The architecture of miracle-working statues,’ p. 229.

⁷⁸ Platelle, *Les chrétiens face au miracle*, pp. 27-37.

to Maximilien Morillon, secretary to Archbishop Granvelle, whose suspicion was immediately aroused. Morillon based his decision on his familiarity with the art of painting and claimed that the colour was actually artificial, and he set up an investigation.⁷⁹ Although the priest and the local lord's insistent request on the consent to have the miracle pronounced was not granted, they nevertheless proclaimed the news with solemn celebrations and a procession. Evidently, this only aggravated the conflict, and the whole issue was presented to the Leuven theologians. The commission finally debunked the whole story as a fraud in June, indeed identifying the blood as artificial colour. The priest was sanctioned.⁸⁰ A similar story is known in Breda. In September 1580, the local Augustinian nuns displayed in their convent chapel two crucifixes and an Ecce Homo statue, reportedly sweating blood. People had already been giving monetary offerings, but an investigation was set up. It soon revealed that the sextoness covered them in blood herself.⁸¹

This somewhat more critical attitude is also discernable in the writings and attitudes of the authors that have been discussed above. In fact, in recent years the traditional narrative of early modern Catholicism as a merely dogmatic and uncritical obstruction in a linear development towards the Enlightenment has been nuanced. Stefan Benz has demonstrated that the transition between confessional and humanistic historiography was indeed fluid. The major Bollandist project of the *Acta Sanctorum* serves a classic example, but the historiography on shrines and their miracles played a crucial role in this as well. Although a theological and more or less polemical defense of tradition remained at the center of many Catholic writings - as discussed above - the described antiquarian interests and *uferlosen Sammeleifer* testify to a developing critical attitude towards the source material.⁸² Regarding miracles in particular, in an attempt toward veracity over the course of the sixteenth century, a number of systems were developed to verify the stories reported. The Spanish theologian Melchior Cano was a pioneer in this respect, and his ideas were pushed somewhat further by Justus Lipsius. By means of a disclaimer in the foreword to his *Diva Virgo Hallensis*, he

⁷⁹ "La couleur est artificielle, si j'ay jamais cognu couleur de paintres." Pouillet, *Correspondance du Cardinal de Granvelle*, vol. 3, p. 543.

⁸⁰ See van der Linden, 'Een pseudo-mirakel te Merchtem'.

⁸¹ Toebak, 'Het kerkelijk-godsdienstige en culturele leven,' p. 134.

⁸² Benz, *Zwischen Tradition und Kritik*, quote on p. 216. On the *Acta Sanctorum*, see for instance Angenendt, *Heilige und Reliquien*, pp. 251-253.

assured his readers that he wrote the book as a historian rather than as a theologian.⁸³ He indeed held the office of royal chronicler and historiographer (*chroniste et historiographe de sa Majesté*) from 1595 onwards, and as has been noted above the basis for his work were copies of official documents furnished by well-respected and trustworthy people, both in his opinion as well as in that of the community.⁸⁴ The first four chapters of his treatise deal with the history of the cult, the provenance of the image and a description of city, church and chapel. Yet, before narrating Our Lady's miracles, Lipsius devotes a chapter to the discussion of how to discriminate genuine from false miracles, for which he distinguished three discriminating criteria.⁸⁵ Finally, the other examples discussed above also testify to the role and importance of original documents as well as of images that were displayed in the sacred space of the cult centres of proofs to the miraculous claims being made. Printed miracle books increasingly included word for word transcriptions of the original notary depositions, sometimes even up to graphically imitating the documents' signatures. In a similar vein, Ralph Dekoninck has pointed to the shift around 1600 in apologetic literature on Catholic cults from the general to the specific: instead of defending the general phenomenon, authors now started to focus on substantiating the legitimacy of individual shrines.⁸⁶ Benz has aptly referred to this phenomenon as creating an "atmosphere of historicity."⁸⁷ All these elements at once helped to sustain and to endorse this broad 'culture of the miraculous'.

6.2 Zoutleeuw, 1612

The cult of Saint Leonard in Zoutleeuw did not remain untouched by the hand of God in these years either. The lack of a complete miracle collection precludes detailed analysis, but it is safe to assume that the miracle of Paulus Gautier on 4 April 1612 -

⁸³ "Historiam scripsi." Lipsius, *Diva Virgo Hallensis*, unpaginated. Compare with Benz, 'L'histoire ou l'art de vérifier les miracles,' p. 89.

⁸⁴ De Landtsheer, 'Justus Lipsius's treatises on the Holy Virgin,' pp. 77 and 80; Vermaseren, 'Het ambt van historiograaf,' p. 269; idem, *De Katholieke Nederlandsche geschiedschrijving*, pp. 203-204. See also Benz, *Zwischen Tradition und Kritik*, p. 322.

⁸⁵ These are *magnitudo* (greatness), *finis* (purpose) and *fides* (faith). Lipsius, *Diva Virgo Hallensis*, pp. 15-18.

⁸⁶ Dekoninck, 'Between denial and exaltation,' p. 150.

⁸⁷ Benz, 'L'histoire ou l'art de vérifier les miracles'.

depicted on the painting discussed at the beginning of this part - was the first in a new series. This is suggested by the importance the churchwardens appear to have accorded to the miracle - most clearly in commissioning the painting - but also by the renewed dynamics it generated. While no miracles are recorded in the preserved sixteenth-century churchwarden accounts, this one is amply documented in those very sources. After the miracle occurred a solemn mass “in gratitude” was performed in Saint Leonard’s chapel, both on the day itself as well as the day after. During these two days the bells were also rung, for which the sextons as well as other ad hoc hired bell-ringers were paid in money and in beer.⁸⁸ As elsewhere, this new miracle soon engendered others. Immediately the day after Gautier’s healing, on Palm Sunday 1612, a second miracle reportedly happened. Furthermore, in June the accounts mention another miracle with a woman, and on 20 September the bells were again rung as a miracle had happened with a man from the neighbourhood of Leuven. In April 1616, finally, a certain Livina de Hont equally claimed to have been miraculously healed from her lameness. The bells were rung and a “mass of devotion” was performed as usual, but this time the churchwardens also gave her some money to eat (*teerghelt*) and a garment (*lyffken*).⁸⁹ Of course, many more than these five recorded miracles might have happened, but the evidence clearly suggests that Paulus Gautier was the first to have benefitted from the renewed thaumaturgic powers, and 1612 therefore marked an important event in the cult history at Zoutleeuw.

The first phase of the long civil war that followed the Wonderyear had disastrous consequences on life in the Low Countries, and it has been demonstrated above how

⁸⁸ “Den 4en april als het mirakel ghebuerde over Pauls Gautier van Limborch ende den 5en als men een solemnele messe dede in Sinte Leonaerts choor in danckbaerheyt die custers van luyen den 4 ende 5 ghegeven, 12 st. Noch aen andere 3 luyers 18 st. Den personnet vande messe te doen 5 st. Aen 7 potten bier voor die luyers 10,5 st. Die gareelmaker voor een riem vande groote clocke die wuyt gevallen was 13 st.” KR 1612, unfoliated (April 1612).

⁸⁹ “Heer Willem Marien gherestitueert het gheens hij hadde Merten Reers ghegheven die naer Gheldenaken ghesonden worden om sekerheyt te hebben van het 2en mirakel die sanderdaechs was ghebuert als Pauls van Limborch ghesondt worde, 20 st. ... Als den pastoor met ons secretaris naer Gheldenaken reden om sekerheyt te hebben van het mirakel aen een vrou persoon betaelt voor peertshueren, 30 st. ... Op 20 september als men luyde voor het mirakel vanden man van omtrent Lueven betaelt aende luyers 6 st.” KR 1612, unfoliated (April, June, September). “Livina de Hont die seyde hier verlost te syne van haren cruepelheyt haer ghegheven tot teerghelt 2 gulden 10 st. Voor die selve een lyffken costen 2 gulden 8 st. Den maeckloon 6 st. Die costers van luyen als het mirakel ghebuerde 15 st. Die selve vande messe van devotien 15 st.” The miracle in June 1612 might have happened at the occasion of Saint Leonard’s procession, as it must have taken place on 1 June. Strubbe & Voet, *De chronologie*, pp. 130 and 150.

this was particularly the case in Zoutleeuw. The successful Spanish *reconquista* in 1585 would mean the start of a careful restoration, not only in a material sense but also in terms of ecclesiastical organization and Catholic piety.⁹⁰ The state of the cult of Saint Leonard in Zoutleeuw during the years of war is hard to assess due to the absence of churchwarden accounts, and even when the series resumes in 1589 with some lacunae, the evidence at hand cannot simply be compared with the previous period. The nominal monetary offerings suggest a steadily rising development throughout the 1590s and later years (graphs 2-4). The amount of purchased pilgrim badges gradually rose again from 2016 specimen bought in 1589, 5040 in 1591, and 5112 in 1595, but the number of pennants is considerably lower than in the pre-1566 period (graphs 6 & 7). All the same, these figures suggest that the cult slowly re-established itself, and this seems to be confirmed by active attempts at restoration. Around the turn of the century there is evidence for yet another type of devotional object being made available to the pilgrims. While no copies of the pennants are known, the church still preserves a late sixteenth- or early seventeenth-century engraved copper plate for a small devotional print with a prayer to Saint Leonard of Zoutleeuw (12,2 x 8,8 cm, figs. 140a-b). It shows three pilgrims in front of an enthroned Saint Leonard, bringing votive gifts such as a burning torch and a sack of corn. At both sides of the saint's throne, *ex voto*'s hang from rods, as was the case in the Zoutleeuw chapel itself. Below, a votive prayer sings the praise of the saint as patron of Zoutleeuw.⁹¹ Much like metal pilgrim badges and paper pennants, such small prints helped spread the word about the local cult and encouraged devotion. The most striking example of such restoring attempts, however, is dean Petrus Tielemans' foundation on 23 May 1597 of a *festum recollectionis* for Saint Leonard. He donated funds to the collegiate chapter in order to have Whit Monday - when the procession for the patron saint was traditionally held - celebrated in Zoutleeuw as a solemnity, a feast of first rank (*festum prime classis*). Money was allocated to cover the costs for these services, including distribution of payment among the canons present, as well as to the *cantores*, the sextons, the organ

⁹⁰ On the situation in Brabant in this period, see especially Toebak, 'De 'religieuze' tegenstelling tussen stad en platteland,' and idem, 'Het kerkelijk-godsdienstige en culturele leven'. On the restoration of Catholic piety in the southern Low Countries in general, see Thijs, *Van geuzenstad tot katholieke bolwerk*; Marnef, 'Protestant conversions in an age of Catholic reformation'; Pollmann, *Catholic identity*, pp. 125-158.

⁹¹ "Lost doch wt prangghen die ligghen ghevanghen / En croepele maect gaende ter deser vaert / Blust elcx verlanghen in pynen verhanghen / So wort hi van elcken devotelijc verclaert / Lof heilich patroon te Leeuwe sinte Lenart." See also Thijs, 'Pelgrimstekens in de Zuidelijke Nederlanden,' p. 78.

player and for the lighting.⁹² Interestingly, the Latin verb *recolere* means to resume or to rehabilitate, but it can also particularly refer to the restoration of the honors due to statues, and the latter seems to have been the case here as well.⁹³ Furthermore, this restoration also had material consequences. Throughout time, the cult statue of Saint Leonard has been repeatedly repainted - a recent investigation revealed at least five distinct interventions - and one of these layers of polychromy was prominently dated 1587 just above the front lower border of his vestments (fig. 141).⁹⁴

The miracles of 1612 and later thus seem to happen after a gradual re-establishment of the cult. In the peaceful period of the Twelve Years' Truce (1609-1621), this must have provided the perfect context for the churchwardens to undergo actions to put the cult anew on the map of the fundamentally changed sacred landscape of Brabant. The miraculous dynamics had indeed equally affected the broader Hageland region, where new cult centers had developed, among which Scherpenheuvel was doubtless the most important and would soon nearly eclipse all other Marian shrines in the Low Countries. Although of more modest geographical importance, the older cult centers discussed in the previous part of this dissertation also revived. In 1604 and 1605 miracles were recorded once again at the shrine of Our Lady in Aarschot, and as mentioned above these were immediately also depicted on paintings.⁹⁵ Similarly, the happy end of a grave accident during reconstruction works at the church in Wezemaal in 1607 was attributed to the miraculous powers of Saint Job venerated there.⁹⁶ And although the newly appointed parish priest of Tielt (Brabant) in 1596 immediately started to collect evidence on the miracles that had been worked by Our Lady before, the majority of them were still to happen in the years to come. On a total of 29 dated

⁹² "... qui legavit et instituit donatione inter vivos festum Recollectionis sanctissimi nostri patroni Divi Leonardi, quod semper evenit ipsa secunda feria Pentecostes, quatenus deinceps celebrabitur tamquam festum prime classis." The original foundation charter is lost, but copies exist in Daniël Godts' *Registrum novum* (DAZ, nr. 45), p. 142, and in RAL, KAB, nr. 991, p. 140. See also Bets, *Zout-Leeuw*, vol. 2, p. 88, and Grauwen, Warlop & Muret, *Analytische inventaris*, p. 316, nr. 1453. The foundation is also mentioned by Gramaye in 1606: *Souverijns, 'Leone sive Leewae,'* pp. 131-132.

⁹³ Gaffiot, *Dictionnaire illustré*, p. 1321.

⁹⁴ Brussels, KIK-IRPA, dossier nr. 2L47 2002 07752. Many thanks to Emmanuelle Mercier for kindly providing me the necessary information. This particular intervention is not documented, but other restorations are: KR 1480, fol. 30v (June 1480); KR 1481, fol. 65 (April 1481, "betaelt Meester Aert dij Scildere van Sijnte Lenaert te stoffere"); KR 1505, fol. 25 (June 1506); KR 1547, fol. 280v (June 1548, "betaelt meester Anthonis die Schieldere... van Syncte Leonardt te stoefferen").

⁹⁵ Breugelmans, Ceulemans & van Haesendonck, *De Onze-Lieve-Vrouwekerk van Aarschot*, p. 69.

⁹⁶ Minnen, *Den heyligen sant*, vol. 1, p. 148.

stories between 1572 and 1621, 25 had happened after 1604, with a striking peak of 13 miracles in 1615 alone. Another five miracles were undated, but they must have occurred between 1594 and 1617.⁹⁷ As the war had had a devastating impact on the religious infrastructure, nearly all churches in the region were in need of material restoration. Zoutleeuw's church of Saint Leonard itself seems to have been spared of drastic damages, but the town at large had suffered greatly of military attacks and mutiny.⁹⁸ Therefore, re-establishment of prosperity promised by returning pilgrims was more than welcome. Thus, a new situation of cultic competition between shrines was established, whereby the benefits of individual cult objects were strongly promoted, just like a century before.

The Zoutleeuw churchwardens were certainly aware of these developments. In 1598, for instance, they sent two employees to Our Lady of Halle. The precise reason of their mission is unknown, but upon their return they must have reported on some aspect of the newly intensified cultic activity at this important Marian shrine, especially after miracles had occurred increasingly in the 1590s.⁹⁹ Particularly relevant for the Zoutleeuw cult are of course the other places where Saint Leonard was venerated in the Duchy of Brabant and neighboring territories (map 3). In his 1632 discussion of Zoutleeuw, Wichmans particularly noted Sint-Lenaarts and Donk (near Aarle-Rixtel) as other places worth mentioning, but their relative importance is unclear.¹⁰⁰ In Aartselaar, on the contrary, where Saint Leonard's cult had equally peaked around 1500, the venerated relic had been stolen by the *Geuzen*, but by the 1620s the cultic activity must have been restored as decanal visitation reports again refer to the pilgrimage as "famous" (*celebris*, 1621) and attracting a lot of people (1628).¹⁰¹ Yet, for Zoutleeuw, the most relevant event was probably the cultic renewal at the Priory of Saint Leonard outside Liège in 1605, and this is at the same time the best documented case. Although seventeenth-century authors maintained that miracles had occurred long before, the earliest documented miracle worked there by Saint Leonard in fact

⁹⁷ Van De Woude, 'De Mirakelboeken der O.-L.-Vrouwkerk'.

⁹⁸ Overviews of the events are provided by Piot, 'Notice historique,' pp. 31-41, and Bets, *Zout-Leeuw*, vol. 2, pp. 208-228.

⁹⁹ KR 1598, fol. 199v: "Peeter Briers en Aerdt van Haughen om naer Ons L. Vrau van Hal te gaen, gegeven 4,5 gulden." For the miracles in Halle, see Vrancx, *Den tweeden cout der nichten*, pp. 6-15; Lipsius, *Diva Virgo Hallensis*. See also Platelle, 'Mirakels in de Zuidelijke Nederlanden,' p. 175.

¹⁰⁰ Wichmans, *Brabantia Mariana*, p. 457. A 1602 visitation report of the Brecht church mentions the presence of ex voto's. See Toebak, 'Het kerkelijk-godsdienstige en culturele leven,' p. 132.

¹⁰¹ Goetschalckx, 'Aartselaar,' pp. 399-402.

dates to the early seventeenth-century.¹⁰² On 25 February 1605 a ten-year-old boy who for six months had been unable to walk and was declared incurably ill by doctors, suddenly was restored to health in front of the priory's image of Saint Leonard (*sancti Leonardi imago*). The case was immediately substantiated by parish priest Gilles Guillion (c. 1575-1620) "to the confusion of heretics and iconoclasts" (*ad confusionem haereticorum et iconoclastarum*). The miracle was soon accepted as genuine by the ecclesiastical authorities, after which a procession was organized in gratitude, in which the boy himself walked along barefoot as proof of the efficacy of the divine intervention through the image.¹⁰³ As usual, the event engendered renewed religious activity, which was fostered by the publication - still in 1605 - of a book by Guillion containing this and other miracles worked by Saint Leonard in the priory.¹⁰⁴ It was printed by the Liège printer Léonard Streel, who was actually born in Zoutleeuw, and from 1592 at the latest was the standard supplier of printworks to the Zoutleeuw church, most notably of their pilgrimage pennants.¹⁰⁵ The news doubtless made it to Zoutleeuw. Interestingly, the Liège theologian and chronicler Jean Chapeville (1551-1617), who is the principal current source for this miracle, names a certain Leonarda de Leeuwe as the mother of the boy.¹⁰⁶ Although the toponym *Leeuwe* can refer to several places, at the time it was still the prevailing way to refer to Zoutleeuw both in Latin and in Dutch. It is therefore tempting to assume that the family came from Zoutleeuw, where they might have first unsuccessfully tried their luck. In any case, it is reminiscent of an ancient rhetorical trick in miracle stories, where the previously tested, yet unsuccessful shrines were explicitly named and enlisted, thus suggestively

¹⁰² Stiennon, *Etude sur le chartrier*, p. 290; Russe, 'Le prieuré de Saint-Léonard'; George, 'Revenant et exorcisme à Liège,' p. 264. Occasional judiciary pilgrimages are however already documented in the later fourteenth century, see van Herwaarden, *Opgelegde bedevaarten*, pp. 486, note 6 and 696.

¹⁰³ The best account available of the events is in the 1616 book by Chapeville, *Qui gesta pontificum*, vol. 3, pp. 643-644. It is equally mentioned by Russe, 'Prieuré de Saint-Léonard,' p. 380, and George, 'Revenant et exorcisme à Liège,' p. 265.

¹⁰⁴ It was reportedly titled *De l'invocation et de l'intercession des Saints, avec la vie de saint Léonard et les miracles advenus par ses mérites au foubourg de la cité de Liège* and printed by the Liège publisher Léonard Streel in 1605, but no actual copy has surfaced so far, nor is it included in the Universal Short Title Catalogue. Consulted collections include the university libraries of Antwerp, Ghent, Leuven and Liège; the Royal Library and Société des Bollandistes in Brussels; seminary libraries of Ghent and Liège; Archiepiscopal Archives of Mechelen; Centre de Documentation et de Recherches Religieuses (Namur). Nevertheless, the book is mentioned in the *Acta Sanctorum Novembris III*, p. 145, col. E, as well as in two nineteenth-century biographical notes on Guillion, providing independent and complementary information on the book: de Becdelièvre, *Biographie liégeoise*, vol. 1, p. 364, and Wauters, 'Guillon (Gilles),' col. 547.

¹⁰⁵ On Streel, see Hermans, 'Le livre liégeois,' esp. pp. 128-133.

¹⁰⁶ Chapeville, *Qui gesta pontificum*, vol. 3, p. 643.

implying a rivalry with the other shrine for Saint Leonard in the region. The woman's first name as given by Chapeville - Leonarda - should further be considered as a significant detail in this respect.

Accidentally or not, the first new miracle at Zoutleeuw concerned the healing of a crippled boy exactly like had happened in Liège a few years before. In order for the hoped for revival to be successful, the renewed miraculous activities of 1612 in Zoutleeuw therefore had to be made as widely known as possible. For this the churchwardens deployed different techniques. As noted earlier, the first communication after the miracle had occurred was the ringing of the bells and the performance of a mass. Soon after, however, they used promotional devices that enlarged the geographical radius and, moreover, actively engaged Paulus Gautier, the man cured in the first miracle. He was given food, clothes and several pairs of shoes for various trips in the wider region to spread the word about what had happened to him. A week after the miracle he was sent to the nearby shrine of Hakendover to walk along in that town's annual procession on Easter Monday to "thank God that he was so miraculously cured" (*soe miraculueselycken was ghenesen*). He seems also to have been sent to Bastogne, 120 kilometers southeast of Zoutleeuw, and most interestingly also to Scherpenheuvel together with a preacher.¹⁰⁷ The reason for his trip to Bastogne remains unclear, but the other two destinations were clearly opportunities for publicity. It was not uncommon for *miraculés* to be led in procession: medieval examples are known and in 1605 the same had happened with the boy cured by Saint Leonard in Liège.¹⁰⁸ Yet these other known examples remained local matters, contrary to the sending out of Gautier to other communities and established cult shrines at that. So although the accounts stress that the ground for his participation in the Hakendover procession was the expression of gratitude, an equally important motivation for those journeys was most likely to draw the pilgrims present there to

¹⁰⁷ KR 1612 (unfoliated): "Peeter van Lier voor een paer aude schoen voor Paulus van Limborch daer die mirakel in Sinte Leonaerts choer over ghedaen was, 15 st... Paulus Gautier van Limborch als hy naer Hakendever ginck om aldaer inde prosessie te gaen ende Godt den heere dancken van dat hij soe miraculueselycken was ghenesen, hem ghegheven 4 st... Paulus Gautier als hy naer Bastonien reysde, 2 gulden 10 st. Betaelt Dirick Buys voor een paer schoen voor Pauls Gautier, 35 st... [April] Als Pauls Gautier naer Scherpenhuevel reysde met dij Predicant, hen tot teerghelt ghegheven 27,5 st... Betaelt aen Aerdt Moleneers die montkosten van Pauls Gautier, 4 gulden... [August] Suster Marie Gilis betaelt soe van lynwaet, den montkost van Paulus van Limborch die ghenesen is van syne cruepelheyt, 4 gulden." Easter Monday in 1612 fell on 13 April, see Strubbe & Voet, *De Chronologie*, p. 130.

¹⁰⁸ For a medieval example, see Nilson, 'The medieval experience at the shrine,' p. 108.

nearby Zoutleeuw. The fact that a preacher was sent along to Scherpenheuvel says enough in this respect.

The 1612 miracles were also seized as an opportunity to request new indulgences from Pope Paul V (r. 1605-1621).¹⁰⁹ In April 1613 the town council ordered the churchwardens to pay parish priest Willem Strauven (also Struyven or Stravio, doc. 1611, d. 1634) for going to the bishop in Mechelen to pick up “the bulls of Rome from His Holiness.” The text of the indulgence was soon translated from the original Latin into the vernacular, into French by master Willem Boseau, but doubtlessly also in Dutch. It was subsequently spread in print form. In 1614, a *bottresse* - a female pedlar from Liège - brought 150 “print letters to proclaim the indulgence,” printed by Léonard Streel. The same happened in 1616.¹¹⁰ In April 1619, a new indulgence was obtained for the period of seven years, which was again translated.¹¹¹ Probably the 1613 indulgence had already been awarded in 1612 for a period of seven years, which was then subsequently renewed in 1619.¹¹² Whatever the case, the text of one undated indulgence bull awarded by Pope Paul V for a similar period has fragmentarily survived in a Dutch version, on a large parchment sheet with rubrications (fig. 142). In a rather militant manner, the two most important Zoutleeuw holidays were promoted. A plenary indulgence was awarded to those who, after having confessed and taken part in communion, visited Saint Leonard’s church between the vespers of Pentecost and sunset on Whit Monday - i.e. the day of the yearly procession - and prayed there “devoutly for the unity of the Christian princes, the eradication of heresy and the exaltation of our mother the holy church.” For those who visited the church in the

¹⁰⁹ On the issueing of indulgences under Paul V, see especially Tingle, *Indulgences after Luther*, pp. 54-55.

¹¹⁰ KR 1613 (unfoliated): “[April] Duer ordonantie vande magistraet ghegheven onsen pastoor Struyven om die bullen oft brieven tot Mechelen aen den bischop te halen die de bullen van Roomen van sijne Heylicheyt hadde ontfanghen, hem ghegheven 3 gulden... Meester Willem Boseau betaelt eenen halven dach vacatie int beschicken vanden brieff aen Pater Ney aengaende den afflaet, 25 st. Den selven Boseau voor het translateren den afflaet uwuyten lattyne in fransois, betaelt 20 st.” KR 1614 (unfoliated): “Betaelt die bottresse voor het bringhen van 150 ghedruckte brieven om den afflaet te condighen 6 st... Den selven [Lenaerdt Straels] betaelt vanden afflaten te drucken, 4 gulden.” KR 1616 (unfoliated): “[March] Betaelt aen die bottresse van die ghedruckte indulgentien te bringhen van Luyck, 10 st... [May] Lenaert Straels van 1,5 riem vanekens ende vande pardonnen te drucken, betaelt 22 gulden.”

¹¹¹ KR 1619 (unfoliated): “Heer Jan Linden betaelt voor het translateren vanden nieuwen afflaet, 9 st. Betaelt aenden borgemeester ende licentiaet Ghelmen voor den solisitatuer vanden afflaet vercreghen in april 1619 voor 7 jaeren, 12 gulden.”

¹¹² Compare with van Herwaarden, ‘Geloof en geloofsuitingen in de late middeleeuwen,’ p. 418.

same way on Saint Leonard's day (6 November), an indulgence was granted for seven years and seven quadragenes, i.e. a period of 40 days.¹¹³

6.3 The intention of the painting

The painting commissioned to depict the miracle of 1612 thus also fits in this larger set of strategies to spread the word about the thaumaturgic powers of the Zoutleeuw cult statue. As has been demonstrated above, it was not really a votive painting given by the *miraculé* in gratitude. Instead, it was commissioned and paid for by the churchwardens. And although they must have been equally grateful for what had happened, in part it certainly seems to have served as a promotional image. Clearly, Gautier was cherished at Zoutleeuw, as he was provided for with food and clothes and probably stayed in town for a period after the miraculous intervention.¹¹⁴ The outspoken communicative function of the painting is also clear from the fact that the explicative caption on the painting is rendered in both Dutch and French, just like the indulgence bulls would be translated in these two vernacular languages. This effort for bilingualism in fact appears to have been used equally at other cult centers that were located close to the linguistic border, doubtless with an eye toward expanding the potential public. For instance, when the church of Alseberg commissioned Antoon Sallaert to paint the abovementioned series depicting the foundational history of the church, he was explicitly asked to provide legends in both Dutch and French.¹¹⁵ Much like when Gautier was sent to other towns as a publicity device, the painting almost literally served as a signboard.

¹¹³ RAL, KAB, nr. 1240B. Although the year '1659' is inscribed twice on its verso, this cannot possibly be considered the date of issuing given Pope Paul V's period of government. See also the 1625 inventory, mentioning "Die nieuw indulgentien deur Paulus papa verleent": de Ridder, 'Een oud inventaris,' p. 54. The militant formulation is not unique for Zoutleeuw, but equally occurs in other indulgences awarded by Paul V. See for instance the printed edition of a Dutch translation awarded to Scherpenheuvel in Amsterdam, Rijksprentenkabinet, RP-P-OB-81.407.

¹¹⁴ A similar example in Wezemaal, 1635. See Minnen, *Den heyligen sant al in Brabant*, vol. 1, pp. 177-179.

¹¹⁵ "... met oeck het geschrift onder int nederlands ende fransois te scrijven dat daer onder sal moeten gescreven worden." Theys, *Geschiedenis van Alseberg*, pp. 351 and 395.

A whole range of media and material objects were used for proselytising, as had been the case slightly more than a century earlier. But there were a few significant differences from the previous phase. As has been explained above, the genre of such a painting was now however relatively new. And of course, although it is unclear where exactly the painting was originally located, it cannot have taken as central a place as the altarpiece commissioned in the 1470s. Most significant, however, is the changed climate of miracles and the authorization of their validity. Indeed, before really making use of the advertising potential these events had for the local cult, the civic authorities made sure to have each case carefully investigated. At several instances delegates were sent to the places of origin of the people that claimed to have been miraculously healed, in order to be sure about their previous state of health. For instance, after Gautier had claimed to have been healed, the burgomaster travelled to Huy “for an attestation of Paulus Gautiers paralysis.” The same happened after the later miracles, when both the town clerk Merten Reers and the parish priest were sent to Geldenaken (Jodoigne). Interestingly, the various relevant entries in the accounts stress the necessity of having certainty (*sekerheyt*).¹¹⁶ Thus, this is a fine illustration of how the previously discussed procedure that had developed in line with the Tridentine decrees and the subsequent regional synodal statutes was actually applied in a specific context. Well before the ecclesiastical investigations, it seems that especially the Zoutleeuw magistracy - rather than the clergy - engaged in a substantiating dossier to be submitted for episcopal approval.¹¹⁷ Although the latter remains undocumented as the miracles or the subsequent procedure are never mentioned in the contemporary decanal visitation reports and no dossier has been preserved in the Mechelen archiepiscopal archives, the indulgences awarded at least confirm papal approval.

This new context with its quest for certainty and objectivity is equally embodied in the painting. In fact, Gautier not only served as promotional tool, but also as piece of evidence. By sending him to shrines and processions, his body - the ‘object’ that

¹¹⁶ KR 1612 (unfoliated): “Den pastoor alhier duer ordonnantie van myne heeren als hy naer den bischop reysde ghegheven, 5 gulden... [April] Ons borgemeester Minten ghegheven als hy naer Hoye reysde om attestatie te hebben van Pauls Gautiers lamheyt, 4 gulden... Heer Willem Marien gherestitueert het gheens hij hadde Merten Reers ghegheven die naer Gheldenaken ghesonden worden om sekerheyt te hebben van het 2en mirakel die sanderdaechs was ghebuert als Pauls van Limborch ghesondt worde, 20 st... [June] Als den pastoor met onsen secretaris naer Gheldenaken reden om sekerheyt te hebben van het mirakel aen een vrou persoon betaelt voor peertshueren 30 st.”

¹¹⁷ Compare for instance with the case of Wezemaal in 1635, where it was the parish priest who seems to have taken the principal initiative. Minnen, *Den heyligen sant al in Brabant*, vol. 1, pp. 177-179.

underwent the miraculous change - served as the most direct proof of the veracity of the claims. It is a development typical of the period: the Tridentine emphasis on verification and approbation seems to have led to a shift in the precise nature of the reported miraculous interventions, now mostly being physical or mental cures, rather than almost magical releases and liberations. Cures were indeed more easy to verify, leading to an increasingly closer interaction between doctors and clerics in distinguishing true belief from superstition.¹¹⁸ Thus, the painting depicting Gautiers body not only served as a publicity device, but also as convincing argument. Unlike the altarpiece that had been commissioned in the 1470s, its function was to draw pilgrims to the shrine within a competitive cult circuit and enhance the sacred space of the chapel with miraculous charisma. Along with this, a key purpose was to convince visitors of the truthfulness of the miracle, working as a factual counter-argument against Protestant denials. This is clear from the contemporary terminology used to refer to the painting. In the entry in the accounts it is called a *contrefeytsel* or likeness, a term that especially stresses the correct and objective representation of the subject. In early modern artistic discourse it was used for images that had an ontological status of “witness to material fact,” most notably portraits. They were supposed to be an objective representation of the sitter which thus had to be transparent, showing no signs of artistic invention. This stood in strong opposition with history paintings, which to a certain extent always were invented images.¹¹⁹ Interestingly, as emphasized above, Wichmans would some years later similarly refer to the painting depicting the 1538 miracle at Our Lady of the Ossenweg as ‘proof’ (*argumenta*) of the event.¹²⁰ And when Jan I Moretus prepared the first edition of Lipsius’ *Diva Virgo Hallensis*, he sent a painter to Halle with the explicit commission of accurately drawing the chapel (*ad vivum*), which would serve as the basis for the aforementioned print (fig. 135).¹²¹

This also had stylistic repercussions. As a result of the reformed emphasis on the Word, the image debate had led Catholic theologians to formulate a demand for realism and *veritas historica*. Images had to display the historic truth. Source material and texts had to be examined critically, and painters were obliged to promptly use this

¹¹⁸ De Landtsheer, ‘Justus Lipsius’s treatises on the Holy Virgin,’ pp. 82-83, and van den Abeele, ‘Ende subitelijk was sij genesen,’ esp. pp. 9-14. Compare with Benz, ‘L’histoire ou l’art de vérifier les miracles,’ p. 90.

¹¹⁹ Parshall, ‘Imago contrafacta’; Swan, ‘Ad vivum’.

¹²⁰ Wichmans, *Brabantia Mariana*, p. 459.

¹²¹ “Aenden schilder expres van Brussel op Halle ghesonden int beghinsel van meert 1604 om ad vivum te doen affteekenen de Cappelle van onser Liever Vrouwe mette de stadt van Halle etc.” Voet, *The golden compasses*, vol. 2, p. 214, note 2.

information.¹²² Moreover, they had to represent things true to life in great detail. Koenraad Jonckheere has demonstrated how this resulted in a “proto-Caravaggesque naturalism” in painting of the later sixteenth century.¹²³ In relation to Italian votive tablets, Fredrika Jacobs has stressed their testamentary value, arguing that they not only served as expressions of faith but also as “record of verifiable fact.” Interestingly, she pointed out in this respect that the typical, simple style of the paintings was a reflection of unpretentious and genuine devotion.¹²⁴ In the Low Countries, the genre in all probability became popular precisely in the decades preceding the commission of the 1612 Zoutleuw painting, and above it has been demonstrated how it actually makes use of the very same conventions. It can therefore be argued that it might have been a deliberate choice. Of course, although strictly speaking the painting was not given by Gautier as an act of grace, the churchwardens who commissioned it must have equally been grateful for what had happened. But the presence of an image looking like a votive painting in the immediate vicinity of the cult object also suggested a broader popularity and effectiveness of that object, because as has been pointed out above, ‘genuine’ votive paintings generally served as illustrations and tokens of efficacy. In addition, the conspicuous absence of ingenious artistic skill was a conscious strategy to stress the veracity of the depicted scene. After all, exaggerated mannerisms and plain expression of creative *inventio* would immediately raise suspicions of invented or alternative facts. In the middle of the sixteenth century Catholic theologians in Germany, most notably Hieronymus Emser, had opposed “simple” (*schlicht*) to “artful” (*künstlich*), whereby the simplicity served as synonym for honesty. Later, in 1570, also Johannes Molanus recommended a *simplicitas maiorum*.¹²⁵ This was of course not, or at least to a lesser extent, the case for miracles that had already sufficiently been proven, most important of which were those recorded in the Bible. For instance, writing about Theodoor van Loon who provided the newly built church of Scherpenheuvel with a series of paintings depicting the life of the Virgin, the humanist Erycius Puteanus stressed that he had rightly represented them as beautifully as possible, with the necessary rhetorical gaudery, because he was convinced that the divine manifested itself in beauty.¹²⁶ It is easy to imagine that the opposite must have been the case with miracles that were still in the process of being

¹²² See especially Hecht, *Katholische Bildertheologie*, pp. 248-266.

¹²³ Jonckheere, *Antwerp art after iconoclasm*, passim, quote on p. 37.

¹²⁴ Jacobs, *Votive panels and popular piety*, pp. 12-19 and 85-125.

¹²⁵ Freedberg, ‘Johannes Molanus on provocative paintings,’ p. 238; Göttler, ‘Die Disziplinierung des Heiligenbildes,’ pp. 286-291.

¹²⁶ Thøfner, ‘Amico intimo’.

recognized, either officially by the ecclesiastical authorities or unofficially by the public opinion. Their images and depictions had to be as 'objective' and as 'clean' as possible in order to be convincing. As both a clear and artistically unpretentious composition, Jacop Lambrechts' rendering of Gautier's miracle thus served this double purpose of 'objective' promotional image splendidly. In any case, the Zoutleeuw cult of Saint Leonard modestly revived and would soon catch the attention of the higher authorities.

Chapter 7 Devotional negotiation

Over the course of August 1616, some four years after the miracles had resumed, the Zoutleeuw authorities were approached by a high-ranked military officer. A delegation of representatives of church and city, consisting of the dean of the collegiate chapter, the burgomaster and a churchwarden, was sent to the nearby town of Sint-Truiden for a meeting with an unidentified *commisaris Generael*, about “the holy relic of our patron Saint Leonard.”¹ This was to be the first in a series of what seem to have been intense and relatively costly negotiations to obtain a relic of Saint Leonard for the collegiate church. Meetings primarily took place in Brussels in the first weeks of November. The parish priest, the burgomaster and a messenger each on their turn went to the court city to follow up on the developments in the case.² It soon proved to be fruitful, as on 14 November a deed of gift was drawn up before the Brussels notary Juan Mendez de Salas. The deed declared that Don Luis de Velasco, general of the light cavalry of the Spanish army in the Low Countries and possibly the man referred to as *commisaris Generael*, donated part of Saint Leonard’s cranium to the Zoutleeuw church, as he was

¹ RAL, SL, nr. 3622, fol. 34: “Item als myn heere den deken van het cappittel alhier met den Borgemeester Jan Ruyschaerts de Jonge met Henric van Gelmen ende Meester Gilis Bosmans syn ghegaen naer Sintruyden om aldaer te spreken den commisaris Generael aengaende die heylige reliquie van onsen patroen Sinte Leonaert aldoen die selve tot teergelt gegeven 3 gulden 10 st.” The entry is undated, but both the preceding and the following entry refer to August.

² KR 1616, unfoliated (November 1616): “Den pastoor om naer Brussel te reysen om te vervolghen van eenighe reliquien te vercryghen van Sinte Lenaert, 4 gulden... Willem den bode naer Brussel gesonden om naer die reliquie te vernemen, betaelt 2 gulden. Den pastoor als hy naer Brussel reysde om die reliquien, hem gegeven 3 gulden. Pastoor broer als hy oyck naer Brussel om die oysake gonck, 1 gulden... Jan Bollen, borgemeester, op den 20 november als hy naer Brussel reysde inde sake van Sinte Lenaerts reliquie soe hem met ghegheven als hem gesonden met Merten den bode, 13 gulden 8 st.” KR 1616, unfoliated (December 1616) “Jan Bollen borgemeester op geleet tgheens hy heeft verleeet int solliciteren vande reliquien vanden reliquien van onsen patroon van Sinte Leonaert alst blyckt by synder cedullen 61 gulden 2 st.”

convinced that there it would be venerated with due reverence. For that reason, he handed over the relic to Abbot Godfried Lemmens (r. 1609-1627) of Vlierbeek Abbey, one of the two patrons of the Zoutleeuw church.³ The Tridentine decrees had however specified that “no relics [were to be] recognized, unless they have been investigated and approved” by the bishop. Investigations had indeed become more strict in this regard.⁴ The abbot presented a request to authenticate the relic to Archbishop Mathias Hovius, who was apparently not wary of the fact that Saint Leonard’s complete skull was already said to be kept in Saint-Léonard-de-Noblat, and declared the relic to be authentic (*legalitate*) soon afterwards on 28 November.⁵ After these necessary formalities, preparations for the solemn ceremony of translation could be made in Zoutleeuw, where the relic entered on 11 December 1616.⁶ It is still preserved in the church, in a seventeenth-century silvered wooden reliquary bust (fig. 143).⁷

The donation of this relic will be used in this final chapter to further chart the rehabilitation of Saint Leonard’s cult that had started anew some years before, and assess its implications and changing character at the beginning of the seventeenth century. To begin, the new object of devotion will be used as a stepping stone for a discussion of the theological issues involved, mainly about the relation and tensions between images and relics of saints. By placing it in the context of a wider revival of the interest in relics, the altered materiality of Saint Leonard’s cult can be addressed. Secondly, with the material at hand we can also address the broader question of how the Counter Reformation actually proceeded. Although it is unclear who took the first step of the negotiations, it is clear that the events as a whole were a reaction of the Habsburg government to local developments. The ample documentation available sheds light on the interaction between town and central government in what might be referred to as a form of devotional negotiation on sacred matters. An in-depth analysis of what the gift of a patron saint’s relic meant in this particular context will be at the center of the discussion. Finally, the case study provides additional insights into the

³ Vlierbeek, Heemkundige Kring, A3.5.8a. Many thanks to Robrecht Janssen for helping me to bring this document to the surface again. For Lemmens, see Smeyers, ‘Abbaye de Vlierbeek,’ pp. 101-102.

⁴ Platelle, *Les chrétiens face au miracle*, p. 32.

⁵ AAM, Acta episcopalia Mechliniensia, reg. nr. 5, fol. 131v. A transcription of that document is included in Daniël Godts’ *Registrum novum* (DAZ, nr. 45), pp. 158-159.

⁶ A transcription of the official report of the translation written by Abbot Lemmens is included in Daniël Godts’ *Registrum novum* (DAZ, nr. 45), p. 158. It is published in Bets, *Zout-Leeuw*, vol. 2, pp. 133-134.

⁷ The most important previous literature on the Zoutleeuw relic is Wilmet, *Léau*, vol. 1, pp. 242-244; Van Roey, *Levensschets en vereering*, p. 26-28; Smeyers, *Vlierbeekse Kroniek*, p. 41; Coninx, *Sint-Leonardus*, pp. 52-53.

Catholic, Netherlandish response and relation to the past around 1600. A close reading and contextualization of the translation ceremony in particular will prove illuminating in this regard. Contrary to the much better studied public ceremonies of Joyous Entries, this type of public ritual remains severely understudied, especially in the Low Countries. Yet, like its political counterpart, such ceremonials were highly communicative events that are revealing of the central issues at stake.

7.1 The object of devotion: image versus relic

The donation of a relic in 1616 to an already established shrine of Saint Leonard begs the question of what precisely had been at the center of the Zoutleuw cult in previous years. Contrary to what the 1852 print by Stroobant suggests (fig. 50), the saint's tomb was not located in Zoutleuw, but in Saint-Léonard-de-Noblat, near Limoges. In fact, it appears that no relic of the saint was venerated in the town, but rather the miraculous statue alone. Liturgically, of course, every consecrated altar needed to contain a relic in or under its base (*stipes*), as had been stipulated at the Second Council of Nicaea in 787. Yet, carefully wrapped up and placed in a securely closed cavity that was covered with plaster, these sacred remains were never visible.⁸ As a result, they could not be beheld, let alone be touched by the worshippers, nor could they be carried around in sanctifying communal processions, contrary to possible miraculous statues or relics that had been acquired after the consecration. Such relics in altars indeed do not seem to have been considered as part of a church's sacred treasure, and a difference should be made between these invisible liturgical necessities on the one hand and visible, venerated relics on the other. For instance, when King Philip II organised a broad survey of more than 500 Spanish churches in the 1570s in order to draw up the state of the Church in his realm, only 13% of the responding churches claimed to possess one or more relics.⁹ Thus, although the Zoutleuw altar of Saint Leonard probably contained a relic that was said to have been of this very saint, it is highly unlikely to have served as the primary focal point in the cult.

⁸ Reinle, *Die Ausstattung deutscher Kirchen*, pp. 3-23; Angenendt, *Heilige und Reliquien*, pp. 168-172.

⁹ Christian, *Local religion in sixteenth-century Spain*, p. 127. Compare with Vanhauwaert & Geml, 'Don't judge a head by its cover,' pp. 117-118, who discuss the "gradation of the visibility of the relic."

Saint Leonard's statue is indeed the only cult object mentioned by sources prior to the 1616 donation. Jan Caussarts, the man from Kuringen who reportedly had taunted the Zoutleuw cult and its pilgrims in 1555, clearly attacked a wooden sculpture, not a relic. Furthermore, although in the churchwarden accounts the object that was carried around and played for at the Whit Monday procession is never accurately identified prior to 1589. From that point onwards it is specified as being the statue of Saint Leonard (*het beelt van Sinte Leonardt*).¹⁰ In the earliest preserved account dating from after the translation, however, the relic is explicitly mentioned as being carried along in the procession, together with the statue.¹¹ Other subsequent sources, including a 1625 inventory and a town chronicle dating to the 1650s, consistently speak of *the* relic, singular.¹² In sum, it appears that up to 1616 no relic of Saint Leonard was venerated at Zoutleuw.

In this respect, it is a typical late medieval cult, centered around a miraculous statue rather than a saint's tomb or sacred remains as was customary in late Antiquity and the early and high Middle Ages. In a European perspective, the cult of relics chronologically preceded the cult of images, enjoying an absolute peak in popularity between the eighth and twelfth centuries. Precisely because of relics, sculptures were admitted in churches, the former giving the latter a reason of being by protecting them against critiques of idolatry.¹³ It is only in the thirteenth and fourteenth centuries that the popularity of relics dwindled. This development was much in favour of images, which were gradually being treated as relics and took over their roles as far as supernatural powers were concerned.¹⁴ Reliquaries increasingly took on figural, human

¹⁰ See for instance, KR 1589, fols. 244v-245 (May 1589); KR 1592, fols. 293v (May 1592) and 306v (June 1593); KR 1595, fol. 180v (May 1595); KR 1597, fol. 93v (June 1597); KR 1598, fol. 92v (May 1598); KR 1611, unfoliated (June 1611); KR 1612, unfoliated (June 1612); KR 1613, unfoliated (June 1613); KR 1614, unfoliated; KR 1615, unfoliated (June 1615); KR 1616, unfoliated (May 1616).

¹¹ KR 1619, unfoliated: "Te Pinxten 8 draghers die het beelt van Sinte Leonaert droeghen, elck 4 st, es 32 st... 2 jonghen met flambeauwen die voor die reliquie van Sinte Leonaert ghinghen, 2 st."

¹² "Attestatien ende bescheet van Sinte Leonaerts reliquie... Een berrie... daermen het reliquium op draecht," and "In de choir van Sint Lenaert rusten en worden bewaert syne H. reliquien, aen dese kercke gegeven ende solemnellycke gebrocht ... door den eerw. heere Godefridus Lemmens, prelaet van Vlierbeeck, den 11 decembris 1616..." See respectively De Ridder, 'Een oud inventaris,' pp. 52-53, and Wauters, 'Une ancienne description,' pp. 38-39.

¹³ Geary, 'Sacred commodities,' esp. pp. 169 and 176; Angenendt, *Heilige und Reliquien*, pp. 167-172; Schmidt, 'Statues, idols and nudity'; Vanhauwaert & Geml, 'Don't judge a head by its cover,' p. 119.

¹⁴ Soergel, *Wondrous in His Saints*, pp. 21-22; Vauchez, *Saints, prophètes et visionnaires*, pp. 79-91; Brown, 'Perceptions of Relics,' p. 186.

forms, as a result of which images could almost take over their prime place by making use of the popularity of relics. Images - either painted or sculpted - grew ever more costly and became potent even without containing the actual bodily remains of the saints they represented.¹⁵ The cult of relics fused into the cult of images, and eventually this led to the ‘theology of localization’ which has already been referred to above: a specific place was a pilgrimage site not because a particular saint was venerated there, but because of the particular image of the saint the shrine housed.¹⁶ However, it is important to emphasize that relics and images remained two entirely distinct theological entities. This rise of the image as cult object certainly did not mean that relics were discarded altogether. On the contrary, relics continued to take up a central place in cult centers such as Saint Rumbold in Mechelen or Saint Gumarus in Lier, for instance. It is therefore no surprise that a significant amount of Protestant critiques were devoted to speaking out against them and demanding the abolition of their cults. Like attacks on other ‘Papist’ practices, such as the sale of indulgences or the veneration of images, the theological critiques on relics had much older precedents and were based on a long tradition. In the sixteenth century, however, critiques were both more widespread and more radical. These critiques did not call for a correction of abuses, but a complete abolition of the practice altogether. If Luther were still relatively tolerant when it came to the cults of saints and images, he could not accept relics in any way.¹⁷ As a result they formed a prime target for iconoclasts in general, and for the *Geuzen* in the Low Countries in particular. During and after the *Beeldenstorm* many churches were robbed of their specimen, which in most cases were immediately destroyed in order to deprive them of their possible powers.¹⁸

This Protestant hostility was an important factor contributing to the renewed popularity and traffic of relics from the late sixteenth century onwards. In the 1570s and 1580s a “massive relocation of relics” took place, safeguarding them from protestant territories. The scale of this project extended across Europe, supported by the pope who issued many of the necessary certificates of authenticity. The opening of the Roman Catacombs in 1578 further fostered this development, as the supposed

¹⁵ Meyer, ‘Reliquie und Reliquiar im Mittelalter’; Schmitt, ‘Les reliques et les images,’ pp. 156-157; Fricke, *Fallen idols, risen saints*. See also D’Hainaut-Zveny, ‘Origine et spécificités des retables gothiques’.

¹⁶ Freedberg, *The power of images*, pp. 119-120; Van der Velden, *The donor’s image*, pp. 199-208.

¹⁷ Schreiner, ‘Discrimen veri ac falsi,’ pp. 33-50; Angenendt, *Heilige und Reliquien*, pp. 236-241; Joblin, ‘L’attitude des protestants face aux reliques’.

¹⁸ For examples in the Low Countries, see Duke, ‘Calvinists and Papist idolatry,’ pp. 190-191, and De Boer, ‘Picking up the pieces,’ pp. 63-67.

graves of proto-Christian martyrs were being intensively mined as a treasure-trove of relics. Besides, in 1588 the Catholic Church started a new canonization campaign after a period of 65 years during which nobody was elevated to the rank of saint. It comes as no surprise that this created an increased demand for the remains of these newfound saints.¹⁹ In the Low Countries the peak of this period fell in the early seventeenth century, in particular during the calmer years of the Twelve Years' Truce. Catholic exiles fleeing from the northern to the southern provinces had of course taken with them their sacred material culture, including images as well as many relics.²⁰ Yet, it was only during the reign of the Archdukes that it took on much larger proportions, and Jean-Baptiste Gramaye (1579-1635) would play a crucial role in this.²¹ After Lipsius' death in 1606, Gramaye had been appointed historiographer of the Archdukes, who in 1608 charged him to compile and publish a series of town descriptions with prints.²² In 1610, he proposed Archduke Albert to secure all relics of saints still located in the Dutch Republic and bring them to the Catholic south. After having travelled around for four years in order to draw up an inventory of all relics and copy the related, necessary documents, he was given permission in 1614 to commence the operation.²³ Its most famous episode is certainly the relocation of the body of Saint Lidwina of Schiedam. Immediately after her death in 1433, the Schiedam magistrate had a chapel built above her grave, soon drawing pilgrims for the many miracles reportedly worked there. The town's alteration in 1572, however, put an end to her cult there. In 1615, her remains were saved from Protestant hands by Gramaye, although things went not as smoothly as was hoped for and two attempts were necessary to finish the job. A first tentative step had caused consternation, after which the hired gravedigger was arrested by the Reformed town council and even accused of instigation to idolatry. The later, second attempt was successful, after which the relics were brought to the Archdukes' private oratory. They, in turn, would subsequently redistribute them to several other religious institutions in the Low

¹⁹ Christian, *Local religion in sixteenth-century Spain*, pp. 136-138; Burke, 'How to be a Counter-Reformation saint'; Ditchfield, 'Martyrs on the move'; Angenendt, *Heilige und Reliquien*, pp. 243-244 and 250-251.

²⁰ Janssen, *The Dutch Revolt and exile*, pp. 167-169.

²¹ See for instance the many examples provided by van Lommel, 'Berigten aangaande reliquiën'.

²² On Gramaye, see among others Vermaseren, *De katholieke Nederlandsche geschiedschrijving*, pp. 203-208; Benz, *Zwischen Tradition und Kritik*, pp. 323-324; Esser, *The politics of memory*, pp. 182-184, 194 and 207-211.

²³ An important set of relevant documents and correspondence has been published by van Lommel, 'Berigten aangaande reliquiën,' pp. 115-141.

Countries from 1616 onwards.²⁴ Miraculous images were equally saved in similar ways. After the capitulation of 's-Hertogenbosch in 1629, the thaumaturgic statue of Our Lady was hidden and eventually brought to Brussels at the instigation of Archduchess Isabella. Reportedly, in 1625 she likewise hosted a statue of Our Lady that had long been the object of veneration in Aberdeen.²⁵

Such quests for relics were however not always initiated by the government, as local communities equally took the first steps. In Alem the corpse of Saint Odrada was unearthed around 1600 and brought to nearby 's-Hertogenbosch. The bishop would subsequently distribute her relics to institutions in Catholic territories.²⁶ The many relics Archbishop Hovius authenticated during the Twelve Year's Truce further testify to this renewed general interest.²⁷ Some of these initiatives would later on also attract the attention of the court, however. The example of the Blessed Idesbald, third abbot of the Abbey of the Dunes, is a case in point. After the abbey had been severely sacked in 1566 and the Cistercian community temporarily fled to Bruges, around 1600 the monks returned and soon started to look for the remains of their illustrious abbot. In November 1623 a leaden coffin was found in the chapterhouse, which was officially opened by the Bishop of Ieper in April 1624. There was a ceremony that was widely attended by abbots and other clergymen from all over Flanders. An intense devotion would quickly follow, and in 1625 Isabella visited the abbey, at which occasion she received a relic of Idesbald.²⁸

A strong increase in the mobility of relics should be noted, both during and after the religious troubles. In part this was of course necessary for the Catholic restoration. On a general level, the Church instrumentalized relics as it needed to both incorporate its

²⁴ Huysmans, *Sainte Lydwine de Schiedam*, pp. 315-317; Dresch, 'Het opgraven van het gebeente der H. Liduina'; Duerloo & Thomas, *Albrecht & Isabella*, pp. 265-266.

²⁵ Delfosse, *La protectrice des Païs-Bas*, pp. 128-129, and Delbeke, Constant, Geurs & Staessen, 'The architecture of miracle-working statues,' p. 223.

²⁶ Van Strydonck, Ervynck, Vandenbruaene & Boudin, *Relieken*, pp. 115-116; Jansen, 'Over relieken en echtheidsattesten'.

²⁷ See for instance AAM, Acta episcopalia Mechliniensia, reg. nr. 5, fols. 129-132. Apart from authentication of the Zoutleeuw relic it contains certificates for relics of Saint Valentine and Saint Helen (15 October 1613), Saint Lidwina (14 January 1616) and the Martyrs of Gorcum (22 June 1616 and 16 April 1619).

²⁸ A 1624 report of the events, including the certificate of authenticity, is provided by Pybes, *De admiranda pariter*. For Isabella's visit, see Viaene, 'Het lichaam van den Glz. Idesbald', extensively quoting from her chaplain's diary who was present at the ceremony. See also Lehouck *et al.*, 'Het schrijn van de Z. Idesbald,' and Van Strydonck *et al.*, '14C-dating of the skeleton remains'.

various, local devotions, as well as demonstrate its continuity with the pre-Reformation past.²⁹ On a local level, however, the Reformation had sometimes aggressively swiped this past away by destroying the relics that had long been venerated. As mentioned above, Aartselaar's relic of Saint Leonard was destroyed by the *Geuzen* sometime before 1572.³⁰ This evidently created a new demand, and the theoretical possibility remains that the relic donated to Zoutleeuw in 1616 could have served as replacement for a hypothetical, earlier relic that went missing during the troubles. Yet, as has been established above, none of the sources point in that direction, and it is unlikely that contemporary and later authors would have remained silent about this. The donation of the relic therefore most likely constituted the addition of an extra dimension to the already existing cult around the miraculous statue.

Theological issues were at the core of many relic donations. This had a lot to do with the problematic character and ambiguous nature of sculpture, especially in comparison with painting. The Ten Commandments had indeed particularly forbidden "graven images" (*sculptile*). Throughout Middle Ages, three-dimensional sculpture was considered much more lifelike than paintings, "for the very reason of its being tactile and physically present," and many theoretical frameworks from the twelfth and thirteenth centuries onwards ascribed negative connotations to the medium.³¹ In the same vein, Protestant critiques mostly focused on sculpted idols. As pointed out above, that was equally the case in Zoutleeuw. During the *Beeldenstorm*, this particular uneasiness with three-dimensional images was made manifest through focused attacks on the medium of sculpture, arguably more so than paintings.³² In emphasizing the benefits of images, the decrees of the Council of Trent had only referred in very general terms to *sacra imago*. Although in line with local Italian tradition and custom, this mostly seems to refer to painting, rather than sculpture, which was by far the predominant medium of miraculous images in the Low Countries. Valérie Herremans has pointed out that subsequent provincial councils and diocesan synods in the Low Countries maintained this emphasis on the art of painting.³³ This gave the attacked sculptures an ambiguous theological status and it remained an issue

²⁹ In general, see Ditchfield, 'Martyrs on the move'.

³⁰ Goetschalckx, 'Aartselaar,' p. 401.

³¹ Quote from Camille, *The Gothic idol*, pp. 41-44. See also Walker Bynum, *Christian materiality*, pp. 24-28.

³² Ford, 'Iconoclasm,' pp. 83, 85.

³³ Herremans, 'The legitimate use of images'. See also De Boer, 'Picking up the pieces,' p. 72.

with which the Church did not always feel comfortable. Cults such as the one at Zoutleeuw would have been extra problematic, as they were not only centered around a miraculous statue, but moreover also focused on a saint, who, contrary to the omnipresence of Christ, were only considered to be really present on earth in relics. Finally, unlike relics or *acheiropoieta* - images made without human intervention - the cult object was not made by God, but by a human.³⁴ In sum, such cults could qualify for the sacred approval of adding a relic. A such, it would not only be provided with a firm theological backbone, but it would also revive the early Christian principle of relics as protectors of images against critiques of idolatry (cf. supra).³⁵ Such a reading can be substantiated by the overall production of *Johannesschüsseln*, sculptures of the decapitated head of Saint John the Baptist on a platter. While Medieval examples rarely served as reliquaries in the Low Countries, examples from after 1575 increasingly fulfilled such a function. A striking example is documented in the church of Saint John the Baptist of Kachtem (Flanders). In his 1642 visitation report, the bishop of Bruges noted the particular local devotion for a sculpted head of the church's patron saint, but he remarked that it did not contain a relic. He therefore ordered the church to acquire one and put it in the sculpture, meanwhile forbidding all devotion to the sculpture.³⁶ In this case, the acquisition was clearly the result of an active Catholic Reformation move from the part of the ecclesiastical authorities. Yet, similar motivations cannot be demonstrated for Zoutleeuw: comparable indications are completely lacking and in the well-preserved yearly visitation reports the whole case of the relic donation is not even mentioned once. Furthermore, the relic was placed in an independent reliquary rather than in Saint Leonard's statue. As both were carried separately in the yearly procession afterwards the relic clearly did not replace the miraculous statue, suggesting its continued essential role in the seventeenth century.³⁷ Thus, while a purely theological motivation does not seem to have been the principal element at play, an anthropological and political reading of what it meant to donate a relic - in general as well as in the Zoutleeuw case in particular - proves insightful.

³⁴ Angenendt referred in this respect to the *Doppelexistenz* or *bipolare Existenz* of saints: Angenendt, *Heilige und Reliquien*, pp. 102-122. See also Dinzelbacher, 'Die Realpräsenz der Heiligen'.

³⁵ On the tensions and interactions between images and relics, see Meyer, 'Reliquie und Reliquiar im Mittelalter'; Angenendt, *Heilige und Reliquien*, pp. 183-189; Schmitt, 'Les reliques et les images'; Zchomelidse, 'Liminal phenomena'.

³⁶ Vanhauwaert & Geml, 'Don't judge a head by its cover,' pp. 117-119, and Vanhauwaert, 'The sculpture of the Johannesschüssel'. The preserving of relics in images was a medieval tradition: Walker Bynum, *Christian materiality*, p. 29.

³⁷ Compare with Vauchez, 'Introduction,' pp. 11-12.

7.2 The gift

The ecclesiastical authorities indeed remain conspicuously absent in the whole story, while representatives of the Archducal court appear to have played a major role, especially the donor of the relic, Don Luis de Velasco (Valladolid, 1559 - Dunkirk, 1625, fig. 144). The *intitulatio* of the deed of gift refers to him as “hault et puissant Sr. messire Don Louys de Velasco, Marquis de Bellebeder [Belveder], chevalier de lordre de Saint Jacques, commandeur de Valentia del Ventoso, capitaine general de la cavallerie legere de larmee de Sa Majesté en ses Pays Bas et de son conseil de guerre.” These titles are illustrative of how high he stood in the Spanish king’s favor, and how close he was to the Archducal court of Albert and Isabella. He not only was an important commander-in-chief of the Spanish army in the Low Countries, but he also was a member of the regional Council of War, Archduke Albert’s advisory organ in matters of warfare.³⁸ Particularly relevant for the present purposes is the fact that he was deployed by Archduke Albert in the Rhineland, at the eastern border of the Low Countries, from 1614 onwards.³⁹ Moreover, several of his sons served as pages (*menino*) in the service of Isabella. His high status in Habsburg circles is also reflected in his membership of the *Orden Militar de Santiago de la Espada*, wherein he served as commandor of Valencia del Ventoso (Extremadura). As this was a highly prestigious order of knights that was incorporated in the Spanish monarchy, it amply testifies to royal favor.⁴⁰ Correspondence with King Philip III indeed reveals his particular satisfaction in Velasco’s military services, and already in 1603 and 1605 he was promised rewards. However, in 1610 Velasco still complained about the meagre recompenses after 30 years of dutiful service, and only in January 1616 would he be

³⁸ The text of Hovius’ authentication suggests that the relic had been given to Velasco by the Council of War, “as appears from a document on that matter” (*ipsique a Consilio Belli juxta instrumentum ea de re expeditum*). This is in contradiction with the deed of gift, wherein Velasco is unambiguously identified as the sole donor, and the Council of War only figures among his titles and functions. As the deed of gift is most probably the document referred to in Hovius’ authentication, the erroneously supposed role of the Council of War is most probably to be explained as a reading error of the former document. The Council of War never served as donor of relics. Many thanks to Luc Duerloo, Monique Van Melkebeek and René Vermeir for their clarifications on this matter.

³⁹ Duerloo, *Dynasty and piety*, pp. 377-378.

⁴⁰ Lambert-Gorges, ‘El señor comendador,’ p. 108.

endowed with the title of Marques of Belveder.⁴¹ The title of Count of Salazar would follow in 1621.⁴²

Personal links with Zoutleeuw hardly seem to have played a role in this case, contrary to the previously discussed elaborate patronage of Merten van Wilre in the middle of the sixteenth century, for instance. In part, the deed of gift emphasizes Velasco's personal piety, referring to the "great devotion, honor and reverence he holds for the blessed Saint Leonard." However, the text also reveals that Velasco desired that the saint's relics would be placed "in a holy place, there where they would be shown due reverence," and that he was "well assured that this would be the case in the collegiate church of Saint Leonard in the town of Zoutleeuw."⁴³ Yet, not a single link between Velasco and the town of Zoutleeuw could be established. His name is not mentioned once in the Zoutleeuw sources, he does not appear to have been present in the translation ceremony, and he was in no direct way attached to the garrison quartered in the city.⁴⁴ As the Low Countries furthermore counted several other centers of devotion to Saint Leonard (map 3), his choice for Zoutleeuw is intriguing and merits closer scrutiny.

Although it is unclear whether the town of Zoutleeuw actually asked for a relic - in general or this one in particular - it is clear that it was a gift. This important fact needs to be emphasized. Patrick Geary has studied the circulation mechanisms of relics by applying anthropological frameworks, and he has clearly defined the consequences of relics being acquired through gift, rather than through the other two possible transactions, namely theft or purchase. In the case of a gift no payment in currency is demanded from the receiving party. However, Geary claimed that the alternative 'price' in the unwritten agreement is obedience. Thus, the act of giving a relic creates power relationships, whereby the donating party stresses its power and importance. In

⁴¹ Lonchay & Cuvelier, *Correspondance de la cour d'Espagne*, vol. 1, pp. 221-222 and 358, resp. nrs. 490, 492 and 820. The letter of elevation is in RAB, Secretarie van State en Oorlog, nr. 179, fol. 53 (25 January 1616).

⁴² On Velasco, see especially Duerloo, *Dynasty and piety*, pp. 87 and 377-378, and Raeymaekers, *One foot in the palace*, pp. 77, 176 and 231-232.

⁴³ "... grande devotion, honneur et reverence quil port au bienheureux Saint Leonarard et desirant que ses saintes reliques soient mises, colloquees et gardees en lieu sacre et la où il leur soit faite toute reverence deue, et estant bien assuree quil les seront en leglise collegiale de Saint Leonard en la ville de Liau." Vlierbeek, Heemkundige Kring, A3.5.8a.

⁴⁴ For the persons present see RAL, SL, nr. 3622, as well as the official report of the translation in Daniël Godts' *Registrum novum* (DAZ, nr. 45), p. 158, and Bets, *Zout-Leeuw*, vol. 2, pp. 133-134. Governor of town at that moment was Thomas de Wijngaerde.

a more peaceful terminology, a personal relationship of ‘brotherly love’ is established between donor and receiver.⁴⁵ Although Geary exclusively dealt with the Medieval period and more study on relic donations in early modernity is definitely needed, his observations neatly seem to apply to the Catholic Low Countries in the later sixteenth and early seventeenth centuries. In any case, Archdukes Albert and Isabella’s own personal interest for relics has already been touched upon above. They were arguably the greatest collectors of relics of their era and both of them assembled an impressive collection, sometimes intensively using their influence in order to obtain the desired object. This, however, not only served for private use, but also to be donated to various religious institutions all over the country, especially during the Twelve Years’ Truce.⁴⁶ This interest evidently already had its roots in their predecessors Charles V and especially Philip II, who from 1564 onwards started to amass his own relic collection. Philip’s collection eventually counted more than 7000 specimen from all over his empire, including those ‘saved’ from the northern Low Countries. They were stored in the royal monastery of San Lorenzo de El Escorial, which thereby became a sort of national depot of sanctity.⁴⁷ Thus, although acting in his own name, Velasco’s donation was clearly in keeping with well-established and still prevailing practices at the Habsburg court, of which he himself was part. The Habsburg and Archducal connotations of his gift must therefore have been equally clear to contemporaries, in particular to the inhabitants of Zoutleeuw.

This clear gesture of a gift notwithstanding, it is crucial to underline the aspect of negotiation as well. The successive meetings between the two parties in Sint-Truiden and Brussels have already been referred to above, but it is instructive to draw attention to other, parallel discussions with the government that had been taking place both simultaneously and well before. Although Zoutleeuw had housed a garrison since 1565-1566 and was of considerable strategic interest due to its location at the border, it had suffered greatly during the war and was in considerable decline, infrastructurally as well as socioeconomically. Thus, after the disastrous troubles of the sixteenth century the town council of Zoutleeuw repeatedly asked for financial aid such as extension of payment of taxes or economical privileges, for infrastructural restorations and in particular for renewed ramparts. In 1597, for instance, Philip II

⁴⁵ Geary, ‘Sacred commodities,’ pp. 182-183.

⁴⁶ See especially Duerloo, ‘Pietas Albertina,’ pp. 9-11 and 14.

⁴⁷ Christian, *Local religion in sixteenth-century Spain*, pp. 135-136; Vroom, *In tumultu gosico*, pp. 10-21; Lazure, ‘Possessing the sacred’.

granted the town the privilege of having a weekly cattle market. Furthermore, in both 1606 and 1612 it was granted two respective extensions of payment.⁴⁸ The situation had not changed that much by 1616-1617, when similar requests are amply documented. Interestingly, much like in the case of the relic it also seems to have concerned negotiations with the governmental institutions, as delegates from Zoutleeuw were staying for longer periods in Brussels. For instance, town clerk Jan Bollen stayed from 7 until 16 November 1616 in order to obtain a quittance of 700 guilders, and he was again sent from 20 November until 14 December for the same reason as well as “in order to come to the fortification of this town.”⁴⁹ The same was still the case in 1617, when several requests “to the lords Estates for the obtainment of some measure for the repair of this town” are mentioned.⁵⁰ The state of the ramparts was inspected, after which an estimation of the “necessary reparations” was drawn up. At the same time complaints were uttered about the oppressive military presence, and attempts were made to obtain a set of regulations for the soldiers as well as a prison. These requests clearly reflect underlying tensions between town and government, in particular a discontent with the military state of affairs and its consequences on town life. In fact, the supplications did not all remain unanswered. In the context of their general restoration project, between 1615 and 1621 archdukes Albert and Isabella made several financial donations to the Zoutleeuw convent of Bethania and the cloister of the Beghards.⁵¹ However, there were of course limits to their aid, especially since help was needed all over the southern provinces. Eventually, the town would only receive their renewed ramparts in 1642, followed by the construction of a citadel between 1671 and 1679.⁵²

Seeing the donation of the relic in relation to this particular situation provides further insights, and three interrelated aspects of its symbolic value should be pointed out in this regard. In the first place the gift of a relic of course served as an extra stimulus to the revival of Saint Leonard’s cult, of which the town as a whole would benefit. After all, in the early seventeenth century relics of Saint Leonard still seem to have been relatively rare in the Low Countries, as his complete body was said to be kept in Saint-

⁴⁸ For many examples of requests and complaints, see especially Bets, *Zout-Leeuw*, vol. 1, pp. 202-232.

⁴⁹ “... om te comen tot fortificatie van dese stadt.” See RAL, SL, nr. 3622, fols. 41-43.

⁵⁰ “... requeste aendie heeren Staeten om te vercrygen eenige middelen tot reparatie deser stadt.” RAL, SL, nr. 3623, fols. 39-41.

⁵¹ Many thanks to Dagmar Germonprez for generously sharing these data of her ongoing research with me. On the Archdukes’ overall financial aid in the Low Countries, see Germonprez, ‘De Récette Générale’.

⁵² Bets, *Zout-Leeuw*, vol. 1, pp. 240-241.

Léonard-de-Noblat. At the shrine in Liège, for example, the cult object equally was a statue, and when in 1650 a relic was given to the church as votive offering for a received healing, it was not one of its patron saint, but of a certain Saint Eloy.⁵³ Only a few cult centers actually claimed to possess a part of Saint Leonard. The church of Aartselaar had received one in the later fifteenth century, but it was destroyed by 1572. For none of the other centers could an origin prior to 1616 be established. In his 1628 *Hierogazophylacium Belgicum*, a catalogue of relics in the Low Countries, Arnold de Raisse only mentions relics of this saint in Râches, near Douai.⁵⁴ Furthermore, both a seventeenth-century pilgrimage pennant from Peutie and a 1760 booklet on the saint's cult in Sint-Lenaarts claim the presence of relics at the respective shrines.⁵⁵ Finally, in 1770 Joannes-Henricus de Franckenberg authenticated a relic of Saint Leonard for Vlierbeek abbey.⁵⁶ As such, the Zoutleeuw relic would contribute to a restoration, not only of the cult, but also of the local social fabric. As patron saints were considered protectors of their communities and were therefore central to social identity, it goes without saying that receiving such a saint's bodily remains had a profound impact on the identity of Catholic communities after a traumatic period. Indeed, as William Christian has pointed out for later sixteenth-century Spain, relics "reinforced community pride and chauvinism," by rehabilitating the shared, communal religion.⁵⁷ Even more so than in late sixteenth-century Spain, the towns and villages in the Low Countries would benefit from such a reinforcement during the short period of peace of the Twelve Years' Truce, as they had literally and figuratively been torn apart by religious strife. Just like the Archdukes, Rayssius believed that relics could heal the country of "its sickness of the soul."⁵⁸ The communal role of the Zoutleeuw relic is illustrated by the fact that it was immediately included in the town's yearly procession at Whit Monday in honor of its patron saint, and by its proud description in a town chronicle dating to the 1650s.⁵⁹

⁵³ George, 'Revenant et exorcisme à Liège,' pp. 265-272.

⁵⁴ Rayssius, *Hierogazophylacium Belgicum*, pp. 446-448.

⁵⁵ "S^t Lenaert wiens reliquien rusten tot Peutij aldaer..." and *Het leven ende mirakelen van den H. Leonardus belijder, wiens geapprobeerde reliquien berusten in de kerke ofte capelle van der zelve heyiligen, onder de parochie van Brecht*, Antwerp 1760. See Van Heurck, *Les drapelets de pèlerinage*, pp. 373-375 and 402-404.

⁵⁶ Smeyers, *Vlierbeekse kroniek*, p. 42.

⁵⁷ Christian, *Local religion in sixteenth-century Spain*, p. 141.

⁵⁸ Pollmann, *Catholic identity*, pp. 164-165.

⁵⁹ Wauters, 'Une ancienne description,' p. 38.

The role of relics in the restoration of a community's pride and identity is directly related to the second aspect, namely the important political role they could play. This had become painfully clear during the most intense periods of the troubles. Precisely because relics were inherently related to specific communities and, therefore, social and political orders, their destruction was a very conscious rift with a past or regime that was not accepted anymore by Protestants.⁶⁰ Conversely, relics that had been spared from destruction during a period of Protestant occupation would later on play a crucial role in the installment of the renewed Catholic order. In Mechelen, for instance, the relics of Saint Rumbold had been scattered as a result of a sack of the cathedral during the city's Calvinist regime (1580-1585). After the Catholic reconquest, the saint's remains were reunited and solemnly installed anew in the cathedral's choir in 1586, an event that was accompanied by a ceremonial *elevatio* in which indulgences were issued. Moreover, the reunification and therefore the city's unity and return to Catholicism, would be commemorated annually.⁶¹ Similarly, whenever French Catholics took over power in the sixteenth and seventeenth centuries, these events were accompanied by processions with and exhibitions of relics.⁶² Indeed, still in early modern times, control over relics - especially those of a patron saint - was equated with control over their hosting town. A famous episode from the history of Paris accounts to that. When at a time of intense political conflict, the reliquary shrine of Saint Genevieve was carried in procession in 1652, Le Grand Condé, one of the leading political figures, publicly and repeatedly kissed the shrine and was soon hailed by the citizens as the actual ruler over the city. The public appropriation of the patron saint's cult clearly bore fruit in terms of accumulation of public authority.⁶³ Conversely, by virtue of their perceived protective power over communities, relics could also serve as substitutes of public power.⁶⁴ In this sense, the donation of the relic of Zoutleuw's patron saint by a Habsburg officer and member of the Archducal court, would no doubt reconfirm the bonds between the town and the ruling authority. Regardless of existing tensions, the town was definitively incorporated into their Catholic empire.

A third and final aspect is related to patron saints' roles as protectors and defenders of towns and communities. By carrying around the principal cult object in procession

⁶⁰ Joblin, 'L'attitude des protestants face aux reliques,' pp. 134-135.

⁶¹ De Boer, 'Picking up the pieces,' esp. pp. 64-65.

⁶² Joblin, 'L'attitude des protestants face aux reliques,' p. 138.

⁶³ Ditchfield, 'Tridentine worship and the cult of saints,' p. 221. For other comparable examples, see Vroom, *In tumultu gosico*, pp. 8 and 15-21.

⁶⁴ Geary, 'Sacred commodities,' p. 179.

through the parish, the space was both consecrated and placed under the protection of the saint. The area where the cult object had been, was thereby considered as sacredly protected. Usually, such processions took place once a year, but in times of crisis such as in cases of war or epidemics, their frequency was often increased.⁶⁵ However, as has already been pointed out above, it was generally believed that their protection and defense could only be possible by means of their permanent and physical presence through relics.⁶⁶ This has been aptly demonstrated for Cologne and its relics of the Eleven Thousand Virgins. When an attack on the city in 1268 had been successfully warded off, this was soon attributed to the defense of the city's army of female patron saints. This story was enforced by repeating it time and again in both text and image, and the crucial role of relics was increasingly emphasized. And this was certainly not a uniquely Medieval affair, as in 1619 the narrative was yet again brought to the fore.⁶⁷ In the same way, only through the presence of a relic of Saint Leonard, would he be considered actually and permanently present as the Zoutleeuw patron saint, and therefore able to protect the town and its community of inhabitants.

This militant aspect is especially interesting in the Zoutleeuw case, considering the particular donor: he was a military officer who invested the garrison town with the protective shield of its patron saint. An interesting example for comparison is provided by the town of Uceda in Spain (Guadalajara). In 1574 its church received a set of relics of the Eleven Thousand Virgins from a certain Juan de Bolea, who had served as an officer under the Duke of Alba in the Low Countries. In the subsequent report the community sent to King Philip II, it was stated that he had saved them from the hands of the heretics, "as a good captain and defender of the Christian faith."⁶⁸ This example hints at the important role that officers may have played in the protection as well as in the circulation of relics. However, contrary to this previously discussed pattern of relics being saved from Protestant territories to Spain, Saint Leonard's relic instead travelled in the opposite direction. Possibly even coming from Spain itself, it was given by a Spanish general to a town in the Low Countries that during the

⁶⁵ See for instance Herremans, 'The legitimate use of images,' p. 125. Compare with the many examples in Brown, 'Perceptions of relics'.

⁶⁶ See for instance Philip II's personal belief: Vroom, *In tumultu gosico*, pp. 14-15.

⁶⁷ Montgomery, *St. Ursula and the Eleven Thousand Virgins*, pp. 99-115, and idem, 'Bones and stones'.

⁶⁸ Christian, *Local religion in sixteenth-century Spain*, pp. 136-137.

troubles had been threatened by Protestant forces.⁶⁹ The protective powers of the relic thus had a highly particular connotation in the contemporary political context.

The sacred protection in the first place of course concerned the town and jurisdiction of Zoutleeuw itself, but in a broader sense it might also relate to the whole region of the Catholic Low Countries. After all, as a garrison town at the border of the Duchy of Brabant, Zoutleeuw occupied an important position in the protection of the frontier to the Habsburg territories. It has already been pointed out above how the town had been the subject of military strategies from armies of both Catholic and Protestant signature from 1568 onwards, and this continued well into the seventeenth century. For instance, still in 1635 a Franco-Dutch alliance entered Brabant via its eastern frontier and immediately occupied the town of Zoutleeuw.⁷⁰ It would therefore be not surprising that one of the underlying rationales of the gift was the turning of the garrison town of Zoutleeuw in to an explicitly Catholic stronghold, and thus sacrally strengthen the frontier of the Low Countries. Various countries are known to have put up a ‘wall of relics’ as defense against protestants. For instance, the rationale behind the Dukes of Bavaria’s quest for relics, also in Protestant lands, and their subsequent collection in Munich, has been described by Jeffrey Chipps Smith as transforming their capital “into a mighty fortress of Catholic faith.”⁷¹ Similar motivations have in particular been discerned in the Archdukes’ policy. Their relic collection has been interpreted as apotropaic, a conscious strategy “of amassing sacral power within their territories.”⁷² Other scholars have demonstrated that much the same principles were at play in Scherpenheuvel, which was a clear manifestation of the Archdukes Catholic militancy.⁷³ In the first place, this is clear from the fortified town’s ground plan, which was shaped in the form of the religiously charged heptagon.⁷⁴ Furthermore, the shrine was located on territory that used to be property of the princes of Orange. Finally, the

⁶⁹ In none of the contemporary sources the provenance of the relic is mentioned. Only in an eighteenth-century manuscript on the history and abbots of Vlierbeek it is stated that the relic came from Spain, see Brussels, KBR, Ms. 13.553, fols. 23r-v (“hispania cranium Sancti Leonardi”). However, it is possible that the Spanish origin claimed in that source was merely based on the fact that it was given by a Spanish general. All the same, no relic of Saint Leonard is mentioned as coming from the northern provinces in the collection of documents published by van Lommel, ‘Berigten aangaande reliquiën’.

⁷⁰ See the many examples in Bets, *Zout-Leeuw*, vol. 1, pp. 202-228, and Deracourt, ‘Enkele grepen uit de Hervorming te Tienen’.

⁷¹ Chipps Smith, ‘Salvaging saints,’ quote on p. 38.

⁷² Nagelsmit, *Venite & videte*, pp. 167-169.

⁷³ Duerloo & Wingens, *Scherpenheuvel*, pp. 28 and 71-109, and Thøfner, *A common art*, p. 281.

⁷⁴ Lombaerde, ‘Dominating space and landscape,’ pp. 178-182.

town was located on the front line, and the fact that the Archdukes chose a place close to the territories controlled by the Protestant army was certainly not a coincidence. That particular detail was indeed also emphasized by contemporary authors, such as Philips Numan, who explained that the shrine's many miracles might work as a factor to convince the nearby Protestants of the truth of the Catholic Church.⁷⁵ As the devotion to Our Lady was still highly controversial, the pilgrims to the shrine would moreover be turned into militant Catholics, instead of mere 'opportunistic believers'.

Why Velasco chose Zoutleeuw rather than for instance Sint-Lenaarts, which was equally home to a cult of Saint Leonard and practically lay on the front line itself, remains an object of speculation. However, Sint-Lenaarts was only a small village, and Zoutleeuw's pre-existing role as garrison town must have played a role. In that capacity it was doubtless much more important to a military leader. Furthermore, the cult of Saint Leonard in Zoutleeuw had just recently experienced a new impulse with the series of miracles that had occurred from 1612 onwards. It can be presumed that this devotional revival had attracted the attention of the Archducal court, including Velasco, who must have realized the town's relative importance. After all, Zoutleeuw was not located that far from 'their' shrine of Scherpenheuvel, a place which Velasco had also visited as pilgrim himself in the company of fellow Spanish officers in the summer of 1607.⁷⁶ In fact, the succession of events in Zoutleeuw shows striking parallels with Scherpenheuvel, as in both places members of the Habsburg court responded to the increasing popularity of a local pre-existing cult. Just like in Zoutleeuw, Scherpenheuvel had seen a steady rise in worked miracles in the years immediately preceding the Archducal interventions (cf. supra, 6.1.3). Already on 8 September 1603 - i.e. well before the Archdukes' lavish patronage would take off, and even before the episcopal approval - an immense crowd of reportedly 20.000 pilgrims had come to visit the shrine.⁷⁷ Thus, there is no direct causal relationship between Habsburg interventions and the devotional revival. In fact, much to the contrary was true: Albert and Isabella clearly responded to pre-existing processes and local initiatives.⁷⁸ The revival of Catholicism preceded governmental actions, but these added significant layers of meaning. While Velasco did not provide Zoutleeuw with the requested fortifications, he nevertheless provided the town with the symbolic and at

⁷⁵ Duerloo & Wingens, *Scherpenheuvel*, p. 97, and Pollmann, *Catholic identity*, p. 166.

⁷⁶ Duerloo, 'Hawks, doves and magpies,' p. 157.

⁷⁷ Thøfner, *A common art*, 278-279, and De Landtsheer, 'Justus Lipsius's treatises on the Holy Virgin,' p. 75.

⁷⁸ Similar observations by Germonprez, 'De Réception Générale,' pp. 76-77.

the same time physical protection of its patron saint, thus reviving a Medieval principle. Through the gift of the relic, the bonds with the Archducal government were reinforced, thus turning the garrison town at the border into a militant Catholic stronghold and strengthening the frontier of their Catholic territories.

7.3 The translation

A final way of gaining insight into the value generated by the donation of the relic is by looking at the precise way it was brought into the community and its implications. The process of moving relics happened in *translatio* ceremonies, “formal, liturgical processions in which remains of saints were officially recognized and transported from one place to another.”⁷⁹ Relics strictly spoken had no material value, which was only attributed to them by the community in which they were located, who invested them with meaning. This value was therefore to a large extent localized. Thus, when such sacred remains were transferred from one community to another, the value and meaning it had accumulated in the former was not automatically transposed to the latter. A cultural transformation was needed anew, through which the relic could acquire status again. Translation ceremonies primarily served this purpose, and were therefore often concluded by authentication rituals. They were usually very costly public rituals, and the detailed organization prompted special committees. They were not only attended by the most important regional religious and political elite, but also by large crowds.⁸⁰ Although the practice already existed in the early Middle Ages, in the later sixteenth century *translatio* ceremonies were explicitly encouraged. As a result, in the seventeenth and eighteenth centuries they had become widespread.⁸¹

In Zoutleuw, celebrations started with a copious breakfast for the highest guests and their servants. Among those present were of course members of the Zoutleuw religious and civic elite, including the town council, the aldermen and town governor Thomas de

⁷⁹ Geary, ‘Sacred commodities,’ p. 179.

⁸⁰ On translations in general, see Geary, ‘Sacred commodities,’ pp. 181 and 186, and Angenendt, *Heilige und Reliquien*, pp. 172-175, 247 and 250-251. For the medieval period, see Heinzlmann, ‘Translation (von Reliquien)’. For the seventeenth and eighteenth centuries, see Achermann, ‘Translationen heiliger Leiber’.

⁸¹ Achermann, ‘Translationen heiliger Leiber,’ p. 110, and Nagelsmit, *Venite & videte*, pp. 170-173. See also Noyes, *Peter Paul Rubens and the Counter-Reformation crisis*, pp. 49-53.

Wijngaerde. Furthermore, the presence of at least three abbots of the most important nearby abbeys is documented: Godfried Lemmens, Abbot of Vlierbeek, Jean de Frayteur, Abbot of Heylsem (r. 1612-1645), and Jean Druys (r. 1601-1634), Abbot of Parc Abbey. These were all high-ranked, mitred abbots.⁸² The churchwarden accounts provide a unique look behind the scenes. The guests were served a wide variety of dishes, including chicken, beef, goose, duck, pork and veal, and fish “since it was Advent for the prelates.” This all was combined with bread, cheese, butter, fruit, oat, almonds, sugar and spices.⁸³ The ceremony itself mainly consisted of a procession, in which the relic was carried from the *refugium* of the Abbey of Heylisseem (*thuys van Heylesim*, now known as the *Scholierenhoeve*) located at the edge of town next to the northwestern Dalhem gate, to Saint Leonard’s church that was especially decorated for the purpose.⁸⁴ Headed by four standard-bearers and under the sound of chiming bells, it was carried in procession through the city streets with “great solemnity.” The parade brought the relic to the middle of the church, where it was displayed in a tabernacle and illuminated by burning torches.⁸⁵ The civic authorities’ share in both costs and organization of the events seems to have surpassed those of the church. Even before the liturgical celebrations in the church started the event was celebrated with the necessary ceremonial pomp and circumstance. Upon entering the city’s marketplace, the parade passed through a temporary wooden arch, decorated with coats of arms by Master Jacop Lambrechts, the painter. The place itself was illuminated by a big lantern, suspended from a line hung up between the church building and the town hall, emphasizing the shared role of both ecclesiastical and civic authorities. The accounts also mention the presence of decorative elements such as tabernacles, probably installed throughout town along the road the procession

⁸² KR 1616, unfoliated (December 1616), RAL, SL, nr. 3622, fol. 38v and DAZ, nr. 45, p. 158. The privilege of carrying mitre and crosier was awarded to Parc Abbey in 1462, to Heylisseem Abbey in 1518 and to Vlierbeek in 1533. See respectively D’Haenens, ‘Abbaye de Parc,’ pp. 805-806; Koyen, ‘Abbaye de Heylisseem,’ p. 762; Smeyers, ‘Abbaye de Vlierbeek,’ p. 98.

⁸³ KR 1616, unfoliated (December 1616).

⁸⁴ The *refugium* is described by Gramaye in 1606. After 1671 it was sold to the Priory of Val des Écoliers. See Souverijns, ‘Leonia sive Leewae,’ p. 127, and Bets, *Zout-Leeuw*, vol. 2, pp. 177-178. This route is confirmed by an entry in the civic accounts, stating that the town was cleaned from Saint John’s chapel - located just outside the Dalhem gate - to the center of town: “Item vandie stadt schooen te maken van aen Sint Jans cappelle tot binnen deser stadt als die heylige requie [sic] inne comende...” RAL, SL, nr. 3622, fol. 71.

⁸⁵ KR 1616, unfoliated (December 1616): “4 vaendraghers als men die reliquie met prosessie gonck halen int huys van Heylesim 16 st. 6 luyers 30 st. Die inde kercke sierden 12,5 st. Noch aen 2 fyn hatsen gecocht tot Thienen die branden voor het tabernakel int midden der kerken voor die reliquie betaelt 7 gulden.”

followed. Finally, reference is made to a spectacle (*specktakel*), in all probability a play depicting Saint Leonard's life, organized by the city's chamber of rhetoric.⁸⁶

Contrary to the urban ceremonials of Joyous Entries, translation ceremonies remain seriously understudied in the Low Countries.⁸⁷ Nevertheless, as has proven to be the case with the entries of sovereigns, an analysis of how precisely such rituals were designed and customized locally is revealing of some crucial issues at stake and the deeper meaning of the happening. However, more research is needed to pronounce upon the frequency and formal practices or traditions of pre-Reformation *translatio* ceremonies, and it is therefore difficult to establish whether or not the 1616 Zoutleeuw ceremony was tying in with an established tradition. A documented example of Saint Eustachius' church in Zichem, dating to 1517, only mentions that a relic of its patron saint was "enthroned with honorable hymns and chants," in the company of the parish priest and the local lord (*villicus*). No reference is made to related civic ceremonies that might have taken place outside of the church.⁸⁸ Some rare iconographic examples, such as Goswijn van der Weyden's 1505 depiction of the translation of Saint Dymphna (fig. 145), help to visualize the processions, but equally emphasize the role of the clergy and in any case do not suggest elaborate pomp. One of the few points of immediate resemblance is the presence of two clerical standard-bearers, leading the procession. They also figure in the translation of Saint Stephen as represented by Jan vander Coutheren in 1522, that moreover also documents the presence of bishops or mitred abbots (figs. 146a-b).

Comparison of the 1612 Zoutleeuw festivities with other early seventeenth-century examples from the southern Low Countries, however, reveals striking similarities and point to recurring characteristics. One of the best documented contemporary examples in the Low Countries is the translation into Lille on 22 January 1612 of a certain Saint Victor "and his companion." They were two of the many corpses that were being dug

⁸⁶ RAL, SL, nr. 3622, fols. 35v-38v and 71-73 (damaged): "Item die den lanterne hebben gehangen tusschen het misseclocxken ende den toren vanden stadthuys in het innecomen vandie heylige reliquie... Item in het ... specktakel ... reliquie van ... Sinte Leonaert... Vandie gaten toe te maken daer tabernakels hebben gestaen betaelt vi st... Jan Bollen Librechtsz. betaelt voer 92 voet berts bijden selven geleverd tot die poorte gestelt aen Willem Morren als die heylige reliquie waren innecomen is 3 gulden 4 st... [La]mbrechts, schilder, ... voerseide poorte... zekere wapenen..."

⁸⁷ On Joyous Entries in the early modern Low Countries, see Soly, 'Plechtige intochten'; Soenen, 'Fêtes et cérémonies publiques'; Thøfner, *A common art*.

⁸⁸ "... cum ymnis et canticis honorabiliter intronisate..." Goetschalckx, 'Eenige aanteekeningen,' p. 561.

up from the Roman catacombs, identified as early Christian martyrs and whose bodily remains were subsequently sent to all over the Christian world as newly discovered relics.⁸⁹ These two corpses were donated to the Lille city council by Claudio Acquaviva, Superior General of the Jesuits, in gratitude for its support of the order. The construction of their new church, which was completed in 1611, had indeed been financed with civic money. The translation ceremony and the surrounding festivities have been amply described, both in a contemporary town chronicle as well as in an official account by Jean Buzelin, a local Jesuit, printed in 1612 and at least partially paid for by the magistracy. A delegation of the Lille political elite met the convoy with the saints' bodies just outside the city and accompanied them to the city gate, where they were met by the town council and the local clergy. After having spent the night in a chapel just outside the city walls, the relics' actual translation ceremony started the next day. They were carried in a solemn procession with abbots and the bishop of Tournai, intermediately making stops and posing the bodies at five altars along the way. The sumptuous parade passed through several temporary triumphal arches, and during the day multiple cannon volleys were to be heard and bonfires and theatrical spectacles to be seen. The very first miracles reportedly happened on the day of the translation itself.⁹⁰

The Jesuits played a crucial role in the Lille ceremony. The order was indeed central in the redistribution of relics, and as such they had an important influence on the precise form of the processions and festivities. The order was of course known for its characteristic sumptuous celebrations in which the onlookers' sensory experiences were stimulated in many ways. Comparable festivities had already taken place in Lille, for instance at the occasion of the laying of the foundational stone of the Jesuit church in 1606, when the first mass was celebrated there and when the order officially took up its residence in 1610.⁹¹ And they recurred time and again, all over the Low Countries,

⁸⁹ On the relation between the Roman catacombs and the circulation of relics, see Achermann, 'Translationen heiliger Leiber'. For other examples in the Low Countries, see Platelle, 'Mirakels in de zuidelijke Nederlanden,' p. 233, and Nagelsmit, *Venite & videte*, pp. 170-173.

⁹⁰ Buzelinus, *Triumphus quo SS. Victorem eiusque socium martyres*; Houdoy, *Les imprimeurs lillois*, pp. 190-191, nrs. 8 and 9; Debièvre, *Chronique de Mahieu Manteau*, pp. 118-121. Buzelin's publication is the only source on these saints' lives and cults, and is therefore entirely reprinted in the *Acta Sanctorum, Januarii III*, pp. 167-174. See also Platelle, *Les Chrétiens face au miracle*, pp. 73-79, and Lottin, *Lille*, p. 274.

⁹¹ Debièvre, *Chronique de Mahieu Manteau*, pp. 96-98 and 116-117; Platelle, *Les Chrétiens face au miracle*, p. 74; Lottin, *Lille*, pp. 273-275. On the Jesuits' interest in relics see Christian, *Local religion in sixteenth-century Spain*, pp. 137-138.

at various occasions and for different reasons. Most well-known are the 1622 celebrations of the canonization of the order's founding father Ignatius of Loyola.⁹² Yet, similar forms involving multimedia campaigns equally recur in other translation ceremonies where the Jesuits were not involved. A well-known example from the very same year as the Lille ceremony is the translation of Saint Albert of Leuven from Reims to Brussels. As this saint was a member of the ducal house of Brabant, the event was initiated by Archduke Albert for dynastical reasons, and he had put substantial pressure on the Archbishop of Reims to hand over his patron saint's body to him. Eventually the translation took place on 13 December 1612. The body was carried through the city streets by four mitred abbots, while it was carried into the church of the Discalced Carmelites by Archduke Albert himself, together with general Ambrogio Spinola, Philip William, Prince of Orange, and the Spanish envoy. Inside, the authentication ritual followed. As in Lille an official report of the ceremony was published by court confessor Andrés de Soto, both in Spanish and French.⁹³ Elaborate media campaigns would frequently recur in later translation ceremonies.

The saints that were thus being carried around were carefully selected. It is obvious why Archduke Albert desired to have the body of his name saint close to his court in Brussels, and his spouse actually did the same with her own patron Saint Elizabeth.⁹⁴ Another example of a state-sponsored ceremony with a clear ideological motivation behind it was the translation of the Martyrs of Gorkum to the Brussels Franciscan convent in October 1618. This group of nineteen clerics had been hanged in 1572 by the *Geuzen* in Den Briel, because they were protecting a consecrated host from profanation. Although their beatification would only take place in the later seventeenth century, they soon grew out to be the most famous Catholic martyrs of Protestant violence in the Low Countries. Thus, the choice of having their remains transferred to Brussels not only meant an open condemnation of Protestant atrocities, but also a conscious statement on the Eucharist. The procession that was organized at the occasion of the translation reportedly counted more than 5.000 people, and just

⁹² Dekoninck & Delfosse, 'Sacer horror'.

⁹³ Vervaeck, 'Les reliques de S. Albert de Louvain,' pp. 397-398; Duerloo, 'Pietas Albertina,' pp. 9 and 14; van Wyhe, 'Court and convent,' pp. 430-431; Duerloo, *Dynasty and piety*, pp. 387-389.

⁹⁴ Duerloo, 'Pietas Albertina,' pp. 9-10. Compare with similar examples in late sixteenth-century Italy: Schraven, *Festive funerals in early modern Italy*, pp. 127-140.

like the abovementioned examples a booklet including a description of the events was printed immediately afterwards.⁹⁵

The form of the Zoutleeuw ceremonial thus clearly ties in with a broader contemporary pattern. This was moreover not limited to the Low Countries alone, but also recurs elsewhere in seventeenth-century Europe. Visual sources on these ceremonials are unfortunately scarce, but a rare print depicting a 1698 translation in Augsburg depicts an oft-recurring element that is revealing of a general characteristic (figs. 147a-b). Before entering the cathedral, the print shows the parade passing through a triumphal gate, an element that was equally present in Zoutleeuw and Lille, among other places.⁹⁶ While it is known that in medieval translations relics were sometimes treated and even addressed as lords, the ceremonies were now indeed often explicitly modelled after antique, Roman triumphal marches.⁹⁷ Richard Krautheimer and, more recently, Minou Schraven have both convincingly demonstrated how this was part of a broader papal project that had started under Paul III (r. 1534-1549) wherein the city of Rome was being reinvented in a new, Christian form. It legitimized the ancient city as the capital of Christianity and, consequently, the primacy of the Roman Catholic Church. For that purpose the post-Tridentine rhetorical language made deliberate use of triumphal imagery, in order to establish an image of Christian victory over the older triumphs of pagan antiquity.⁹⁸ With regards to relic translation ceremonies in particular, such ideals were especially put into practice by Charles Borromeo in Milan and Gabriele Paleotti in Bologna, from 1575 onwards. Typical of a general paleochristian revival, these churchmen based themselves on the Church Fathers, especially Saint Ambrose, who had described relics as trophies. Martyrs in particular had long since been associated with military victory in hagiographical texts, which would eventually give them the image of being Christian soldiers.⁹⁹ Sacred remains thus lent themselves perfectly for Christian triumphal marches. In Milan and

⁹⁵ Estius, *Histoire des Martyrs de Gorcom*; Duerloo, 'Pietas Albertina,' pp. 10 & 14; Nagelsmit, *Venite & Videte*, pp. 166-167.

⁹⁶ In general, see Angenendt, *Heilige und Reliquien*, pp. 250-251. Compare for instance with the elaborate description of a 1654 Swiss ceremony in Achermann, 'Translationen heiliger Leiber,' pp. 104-109. Triumphal arches also occur in late sixteenth-century Spain, see Vroom, *In tumultu gosico*, p. 12.

⁹⁷ Dinzelsbacher, 'Die Realpräsenz der Heiligen,' pp. 132-133; Walker Bynum, *Christian materiality*, p. 34.

⁹⁸ Krautheimer, 'A Christian triumph in 1597,' and Schraven, *Festive funerals in early modern Italy*, esp. pp. 115-116. Compare with remarks by Angenendt, *Heilige und Reliquien*, p. 248.

⁹⁹ See Delehay, *Les passions des martyrs*, p. 213. Many thanks to Jetze Touber for drawing my attention to this.

Bologna temporary arches were constructed, but when the practice spread to Rome the processions would also pass through the preserved antique specimen on the Forum Romanum. As such, these ceremonies were powerful visualizations of the triumph of a “militant cult of church history and saints.”¹⁰⁰ By presenting both a triumph over heathendom as well as a continuity with Christianity’s earliest days, two of the contemporary Catholic Church’s main goals were realized at once.

Triumphalism was also central to *translatio* ceremonies in the Low Countries. Of course, even though the territories were far away from the antique capital, they too belonged to the Church of Rome, and the rhetorical language used in Italy thus preserved all its pertinence. The most striking example of this is perhaps the 1612 ceremony in Lille, which in Buzelin’s official report is literally referred to as a *triumphus*. Furthermore, in the book’s foreword the translation is explicitly presented as a devout, Christian triumph, as opposed to conceited, antique triumphs. Although Buzelin emphasizes that Saint Victor deserved a splendid triumphal march as much as Alexander the Great did, the author point by point explains the differences. For instance, instead of being carried around by golden chariots, the saint was carried on the shoulders of priests. Neither was the parade preceded by a jester and followed by a retinue of slaves, rather, it was headed by prominent and devout people, and closed by the Bishop of Tournai.¹⁰¹ Finally, even the name of this otherwise completely unknown Saint Victor is particularly suitable, so much so that it might even be suspected to have been invented especially for the occasion.

In the particular context of the Low Countries, however, the translation ceremonies are also particularly akin to the traditional Joyous Entries of sovereigns into the cities of their territories. Ephemeral triumphal arches decorated with coats of arms, theatrical representations on stages spread throughout the city and artillery volleys were indeed invariable elements to such public ceremonies as well (fig. 148).¹⁰² As a matter of fact, this contemporary association is not limited to formal similarities, but becomes furthermore also clear from the identical terminology used (*innecomen* or *incomste*). In Zoutleeuw, the event is indeed referred to as “when the holy relic of our

¹⁰⁰ Krautheimer, ‘A Christian triumph in 1597,’ p. 176, and Schraven, *Festive funerals in early modern Italy*, pp. 127-140, quote on p. 128.

¹⁰¹ Buzelinus, *Triumphus quo SS. Victorem eiusque socium martyres*, sig. A3-A5.

¹⁰² Thøfner, *A common art*; van Gelder, ‘Dynastic communication’.

patron Saint Leonard was welcomed” or “brought in.”¹⁰³ On the one hand, this is yet another manifestation of the previously identified *Traditionsprinzip*, whereby traditions of the past were actively used as legitimizations of the present.¹⁰⁴ On the other hand, however, this is illustrative of the association of the translation with the secular authority and as the Archducal government wholeheartedly embraced and actively promoted the Church of Rome, the triumphs in a way were also theirs. This was of course most evident in the various Brussels ceremonies discussed above, but in Zoutleeuw it must have been the case as well, as the relic was donated by an officer of the Spanish army, a representative of the Habsburg authority. Furthermore, Joyous Entries were important moments of power negotiations: while the cities promised obedience and loyal submission, the sovereign assured protection and respect for the local privileges. Reciprocal gifts were crucial items in such ceremonies and has been described as personalised items “in a bigger process of exchange and as a confirmation of the outcome of political negotiations which could differ with time and place.”¹⁰⁵ The similar treatment of both relics and sovereigns suggests similar expectations from them. Thus, these observations seem to confirm the interpretation proposed above. Just as the donation of the relic had been the result of negotiations, the precise form of its translation was a clear expression of devotional communication between town and government, whereby one of the main demands was protection. Just like an entering sovereign would promise his protection, the relic was proposed to serve the requested apotropaic function instead.

¹⁰³ “... alsmen die heylige relique vanden H. Patroen Sinte Leonaert heeft inne gehaelt,” RAL, SL, nr. 3622, fol. 35v; “... als die relique inne quampt,” KR 1616, unfoliated (December 1616).

¹⁰⁴ Compare with Angenendt, *Heilige und Reliquien*, p. 248.

¹⁰⁵ Damen, ‘Princely entries and gift exchange,’ quote on p. 248. In a similar vein, Schraven has also interpreted a series of relic translations in 1576 from a number of parish churches to the cathedral of Milan as a visualization of “the loyal submission of the parishes to the archdiocese.” See Schraven, *Festive funerals in early modern Italy*, p. 128.

Conclusion: the course of the Counter-Reformation

The vicissitudes of the Reformation and the Dutch Revolt had considerably challenged Netherlandish shrines hosting miracle cults. Thus, when the damage was assessed in the last years of the sixteenth century, these cults were posed with the vital question of how to go on. So too in Zoutleeuw. The analysis of how exactly the late Medieval cult of Saint Leonard was renewed around 1600 revealed interesting patterns illustrative of broader tendencies in the devotional life of the Low Countries at this turning point in their history. Firstly, there is a notable and particular perception of time and history at play. The legitimacy of cults had been questioned, and thereby the identities of their hosting communities as well. The events of 1566 in particular had created a widespread impression of an era that was definitely over, and as a consequence the pertinent question was choosing between continuity or change. In looking at the future, therefore, these shrines manifestly harkened back to a past, to which they tried to establish its undiminished actuality. Many different ways were developed to tie in with the important tradition of miracles, which - as has been demonstrated in the two previous parts of this dissertation - was inherent to Catholic devotional life in the Low Countries of the fifteenth and sixteenth centuries. In the years around 1500, miraculous dynamics created a devotional boom with multiple thriving shrines, and even after the Protestant critiques had taken off in the sixteenth century miracle stories became of crucial importance for the shaping of the Catholic confessional identity and its defence. Circa 1600 it arguably was this very tradition that made such a strong revival possible. Similar explanations have been put forward by Eamon Duffy, who referred to the tenacity of traditional religion to explain how the temporary restoration of Catholicism in England under the reign of Mary Tudor (1553-1558) was possible, even after drastic religious reforms under Henry VIII.¹ In

¹ Duffy, *The stripping of the altars*, pp. 524-564.

the particular case of Zoutleeuw, it has been demonstrated that it was only the political and military developments that brought the cultic activity at the shrine to a temporary standstill, rather than Protestant critiques. As soon as the gravest warfare was over, the pious practices could resume.

Regardless of this strong historical basis, the tradition was emphatically recounted and publicized around 1600. An obvious way to do so was through publishing books that discussed the origins and the history of the shrine, often including a catalogue of recorded miracles and the relevant proofs. Visual media and ceremonial traditions were also instrumentalized to bring about a sense of continuity and actuality. Paintings, such as the one in Zoutleeuw depicting the 1612 miracle of Paulus Gautier, convincingly showed how miracles continued to happen at shrines by placing them in a spatial and temporal context that was clearly recognizable to contemporary onlookers as the present. In part, it made deliberate use of the stylistic and iconographic conventions of the functional genre of votive paintings, that around 1600 was relatively new in the Low Countries and in itself doubtless was a product of the miraculous revival. In other cases the visual imagery was part of a series that connected this present with a distant past. This rhetorical technique legitimized both present practices and contested traditions. In a similar way, the early seventeenth-century civic ceremonial of relic translations in the Low Countries drew on much larger traditions. These were in the first place of course religious, and in this regard their organization and outlook was clearly akin to similar, Roman Catholic ceremonies all over Europe, wherein a general triumph of the Church of Rome was proclaimed. Yet, in the particular context of the Low Countries they inevitably also harkened back to the well-established regional tradition of the Joyous Entries of sovereigns. The result were powerful public rituals that sought to impress its audiences with a sense of triumphalism and unbroken continuity of Roman Catholic traditions.

Identifying the principal agents of such efforts - perhaps agents of continuity rather than agents of change - has long been a crucial question in history and art history. For a long time traditional narratives proposed a predominantly top-down approach, whereby Church and State intensively collaborated in implying their Counter-Reformation ideals.² This somewhat monolithic view has been seriously challenged in recent years, among others by introducing the study of popular devotion and by looking at lay agency. As a result, local developments and popular piety have been

² For an excellent recent historiographical overview, see Laven, 'Encountering the Counter-Reformation'.

increasingly taken seriously, eventually leading to a much more dynamic view of how the Counter-Reformation went about. Craig Harline, for instance, proposed viewing things as a cultural negotiation in a local context, and Simon Ditchfield likewise stressed dynamic interaction and processes of reciprocity.³ Soon, this framework was adopted in research on religious life on the Low Countries as well.⁴ For instance, a study of the material and architectural surroundings of Brabantine Marian shrines in the seventeenth century emphasized the importance of multiple groups involved in the creation of their embellishments, which were interpreted as bridging the too stark dichotomy between previous top-down and bottom-up approaches.⁵ In another case study, the cult of a miraculous statue of Our Lady in Duffel has demonstrated how it was appropriated by parishioners and pilgrims, as a result of which the Catholic Church never was in full control.⁶

While this research was almost exclusively focused on Marian shrines, the present case study of the cult of a saint fully confirms these views and partly also expands them. The body of previous studies demonstrates that around 1600 the Low Countries saw a broad revival of miracle cults that has been referred to as a “culture of the miraculous.” This at least in part preceded both ecclesiastical and governmental actions, regardless of the ecclesiastical control that had markedly increased since a century before. First miracles happened, and an intervention ‘from above’ would only follow later on. Archdukes Albert and Isabella are indeed known to have reacted to local initiatives, rather than creating a revival of Catholicism out of nothing. The most famous example is of course the shrine at Scherpenheuvel, which they virtually appropriated.⁷ The particular contribution of the present case lies in the studying of the devotional development in the Low Countries over a sufficiently long period of time. As such, it can not only be demonstrated how these actions ‘from above’ reacted to local developments, but also how this revival in turn was strongly related to an important miraculous culture that had continued to play a crucial role throughout the sixteenth century, more than has generally been assumed. Yet, although these interventions from above rarely lay at the base of the devotional developments, they nevertheless incorporated and perpetuated them. The case of the relic donation to

³ Harline, ‘Official religion - popular religion,’ pp. 250-254; Ditchfield, ‘Tridentine worship and the cult of saints’.

⁴ Harline & Put, *A bishop’s tale*. For Brabant in particular, see Toebak, ‘Het kerkelijk-godsdienstige en culturele leven’.

⁵ Delbeke, Constant, Geurs & Staessen, ‘The architecture of miracle-working statues,’ esp. pp. 244-245.

⁶ Perneel, ‘Onze-Lieve-Vrouw van Goede Wil’.

⁷ Duerloo & Wingens, *Scherpenheuvel*, p. 46; Germonprez, ‘De Réception Générale,’ pp. 76-77.

Zoutleeuw by a member of the Archducal court fully fits these observations. As a result of a process of negotiation, they contributed their share by adding significant new layers of meaning.

Conclusion: the thin line between tradition and transformation

The purpose of the present study was to gain insight into the historical development of lay piety in the long sixteenth century. I have focused on the material aspects of devotion, as these were so crucial to the questions brought up by the Reformation. This interconnection can be clearly observed in the actual destructions during the *Beeldenstorm* of 1566, and yet closer study of the broad set of available sources also shows that objects were a major point of contention in public debates already since the 1520s, and that the latter in turn were actually a response to fairly recent developments in Catholic piety. By confronting the broad material culture - which encompasses the elusive and restrictive concept of mere 'art' - with the larger religious developments in the Low Countries, and by looking at how these were closely interrelated, this interdisciplinary study hopes to have bridged the gulf between the respective disciplines of history and art history, or at least have brought them closer to one another. The mapping of the actual use of churches by laypeople, by means of different types of source material - from written, over visual to material data - has considerably nuanced the dominant historical narrative of the evolution of lay piety. The classic perception of the waning of medieval piety as a linear decline through the introduction of Protestant thought around 1520 and reaching a dramatic climax in 1566, proved incorrect in several respects. The particular case of Zoutleeuw has considerably contributed to the telling of this alternative story.

In the first place, using an interdisciplinary and long-term approach, I could better plot developments of tradition and transformation. Indeed, concepts of continuity and change recurred time and again in the above pages. But what exactly does each of these terms really mean? What is tradition, and what is renewal? In the general historical consciousness, but also in the historiography of piety in the Low Countries, '1520' is put forward as a decisive break with a long, medieval tradition. It should be

clear that this in part certainly corresponds to contemporary perceptions. The well-known complaints of the Utrecht collegiate chapter about Luther being one of the causes for its diminished income have been cited above, and it has also been pointed out how Erasmus referred to the spreading of Protestant ideas as a “new-fangled notion that pervades the whole world” in his 1526 *Peregrinatio religionis ergo*.¹ Only a few years before, however, in his 1522 *De visendo loca sacra*, he used a similar phrase, *nova religio*, to refer to something that is usually considered Protestantism’s extreme opposite, namely a strikingly intense outward piety and accompanying excesses of pilgrimage.² Indeed, as has been demonstrated in the first part of this dissertation, such characterizations were highly typical of the devotional life around 1500, in the Low Countries as well as elsewhere. Still more strikingly, even Luther himself, the man who was held responsible for the dramatic changes of around 1520, characterized the religious developments a few decades earlier as something incontestably new. In his *An den christlichen Adel*, he wrote acrimoniously about the “new pilgrimages” (*die neuen walfarten*) to places such as Wilsnack, Sternberg, Trier, Grimmtal and Regensburg.³ Elsewhere, he also referred to the sudden popularity of the cult of Saint Anne as something that only originated when he was fifteen years old (*als ich ein knabe von funffzehen jharen war*), i.e. around 1498. “Before that,” he maintained, “nobody knew anything about her.”⁴

To a certain extent such typecasting was part of a broader strategy of the respective confessional parties to deny each other’s historical identity, and thereby legitimacy. Denouncing specific developments as mere novelties underscored the primacy of their own traditions. As a result, similar mutual imputations occurred frequently in contemporaneous polemics. In a 1566 treatise that appeared immediately after the *Beeldenstorm*, Calvin was denounced as a “public liar” (*openbaer lueghenaer*) for calling pilgrimages “new inventions” (*nieuwe inventien*).⁵ And still in 1581, the Calvinist government of the city of Brussels tried to do away with Catholic miracle devotions, among others by proclaiming that the important local cult of the Holy Sacrament of

¹ Erasmus, *The Colloquies*, pp. 288-291.

² Halkin, ‘Le thème du pèlerinage,’ p. 88. Thompson translated it as “a strange devotion,” see Erasmus, *The Colloquies*, p. 6.

³ Clemen & Leitzmann, *Luther Werke*, vol. 1, pp. 402-404. See also Eber, ‘Martin Luthers Kritik an der Wallfahrt’.

⁴ “Bej meinem gedencken ist das gross wesen von S. Anna auffkomen, als ich ein knabe von funffzehen jharen war. Zuvor wuste man nichts von ihr, sondern ein bube kam und brachte S. Anna, klugs gehet sie ahn, den es gab jederman darzu.” Quoted from Nixon, *Mary’s mother*, p. 38.

⁵ Du Val, *Den spiegel der calvinisten*, fol. 71.

Miracle had only been instituted in 1529.⁶ While this claim can easily be proven wrong, and while Luther could similarly be suspected of giving the truth a twist in favor of his own ideas, this is less probable in Erasmus' case. Although he certainly had some sympathy for certain reformed ideas, he always remained loyal to the Church of Rome. Moreover, the developments as they have been described in the first and second parts of this dissertation suggest that his were rather apt observations. In fact, this set of examples as a whole demonstrates the tensions between, and relativity of, 'old' and 'new' as historical categories. As a consequence, it also prompts closer reflection on the present use of such concepts to refer to developments in the past.

Studying the evolution of lay piety in the long term, rather than only from around 1520 onwards, has revealed both periodical cycles and strong continuities - different forces that interacted and influenced each other. Thus, the cyclical model proposed by Patrick Geary for the study of high medieval cults also proved applicable to the late medieval and early modern period. This has been shown at work on the local level in Zoutleeuw, as well as on the general level of the Low Countries. Sometimes these cycles ran together when individual, local events picked up on broader tendencies. But sometimes developments also diverged, when at certain places the force of tradition worked stronger than elsewhere. As for Zoutleeuw, reference has been made to the ups and downs of the cult of Saint Leonard. This cult definitely existed before, but an important peak in popularity was notable from the 1470s onwards, and in the third part of this dissertation the 1610s were identified as a decade of renewed dynamics. In both cases this was found to correspond with developments in the Low Countries at large. More specifically, the state of research allows us to link the peak around 1500 with broader European tendencies that have already been discussed by other scholars, including Bernd Moeller, Lucien Febvre, Jacques Chiffolleau and Carlos Eire. Indeed, as Eire concisely put it: "Though scholarly opinion varies concerning the quality of late medieval religion, there is little disagreement about its intensity."⁷

Contrary to the general opinion about the rapid decline of Catholic piety after 1520, the case of Zoutleeuw has revealed particularly strong forces of tradition and continuity. It was impossible to point to a veritable implosion of the local cult of Saint Leonard until the start of the Dutch Revolt in the later 1560s, and much like several other cities in the Low Countries the town successfully withstood iconoclastic threats

⁶ Ydens, *Histoire du S. sacrement du miracle*, pp. 229-230.

⁷ Eire, *War against the idols*, p. 10.

in 1566. Moreover, contrary to Judith Pollmann's claim of a limited Catholic response to the Reformation in the Low Countries, looking at the actions of the laity via multiple sources has in fact revealed early initiatives to counter Protestant critiques. Although such actions are generally thought to have taken place only after 1585 - a view recently confirmed anew by Jeffrey Muller - in recent years the timeline has been altered considerably. Scholars such as Andrew Spicer and Koenraad Jonckheere have identified 1566 as a crucial catalyzing moment in this respect, but our observations tend to confirm the hypothesis put forward by Xander van Eck that Catholic reactions to Protestant ideas were already increasingly uttered in previous decades as visual and material statements. In this respect, too, the evidence at hand confirms earlier research on contemporaneous developments in Germany, most notably by Andreas Tacke. While the material aspect of Catholic devotion was a major point of contention, precisely this aspect was reaffirmed by reinstalling traditional objects in often more monumental and elaborate forms. In this respect, the important tradition of miracle cults that had boomed around 1500 also played a crucial role. While such cults were fiercely criticized and the number of recorded miracles dwindled around mid-century, the miraculous stories that did circulate received a clearly confessional character. Moreover, the strength of this tradition was also crucial for the Catholic *réveil* of around 1600. Thus, the indications for the Low Countries are in line with Eamon Duffy's observations on the tenacity of what he referred to as "traditional religion" in England, and the reasons why temporary restoration under the reign of Mary Tudor (1553-1558) was possible.

The present observations also put further emphasis on the increasing importance of lay initiatives, participation and engagement in the religious developments of the long sixteenth century, as has in recent years been put forward by Henry Dieterich, John Van Engen, Nicholas Terpstra, Guido Marnef and Anne-Laure Van Bruaene. Indeed, in the consecutive dynamics that have been amply described above, the crucial role of the agency of lay groups clearly was a recurring factor. To a significant extent, focus has been on the important local institution of the churchwardens. In the introduction it has been demonstrated that they definitely had an important status and role within the community - possibly exuding some form of quasi-religious authority - of which they were certainly aware. As a group, they are an important expression of the concept of civic religion as it has been discussed and described in increasing detail in recent years. This is not only further confirmed by their important links with the town government and other parochial institutions, wherein they often occupied positions as well, but also by the very fact that they literally worked for the town's church, i.e. a symbol *par excellence* of local religious identity. As discussed in part I, their initiatives

were of prime importance for the establishment of the cult of Saint Leonard within a broader cult circuit. In other places, evidence indicates that similar initiatives were actively stimulated by local lords, another category of lay actors. These local elites - lords as well as churchwardens - would also play a crucial role in attempts to counter the Reformation on the community level, as has been argued in part II. They lent active support to the Reformation in one place, and committedly countered critiques elsewhere. In the third part of this dissertation, finally, churchwardens and the civic magistracy were both found to be prime driving forces behind the revitalization of the local cult of Saint Leonard, after years of disastrous war. To be clear, this emphasis on the laity is not to disregard the role of the clergy. Yet, earlier research has demonstrated how they were sometimes powerless to do anything about particular devotional developments.⁸ Moreover, lay groups clearly responded to and interacted with pre-existing clerical structures, such as established pilgrimage circuits and centers, the indulgence system or the cult of the Holy Sacrament, for instance. While these are all aspects of religious life that had been made possible by clerical decisions, the laity clearly tried to take over parts of the organization or at least get involved in it.

Religious material culture formed the core of this dissertation, but focus has not so much been on the creative processes of artists or craftsmen than on their patrons as creators. As I hope to have shown, the patrons made reasoned choices within a multitude of possibilities that equally determined the final outlook of the objects in question. This has been most clearly demonstrated in the case of the three objects that were chosen as the starting points for each of the three parts of this dissertation. The carved wooden altarpiece discussed in the first part was clearly a central, yet inherent part of a much broader campaign to embellish the sacred space of Saint Leonard's chapel. While this was clearly not conceived as a whole by one artist, the churchwardens must have striven for a more or less clearly defined idea of what it should come to look like. And as has been argued, it was precisely this ensemble and the atmosphere that it created that was crucial in fulfilment of the churchwardens' intentions. For these purposes they called upon a local artist to visually translate their ideas into designs, which were subsequently contracted to specialized artists from out of town. In the second part, it has been argued that the final form of the sacrament house to an important extent must have been the result of choices from the part of its patrons, nobleman Merten van Wilre and his wife Maria Pylipert. And it was precisely

⁸ Soergel, *Wondrous in his saints*, pp. 45-46, 51.

such choices - form, size, style, iconographical motives - that carried crucial meaning in the context of the religious debates on the materiality of devotion. The final result served as a statement in favor of continuity. Finally, in the third part, all the evidence suggests that by ordering the painting depicting the miracle of Paulus Gautier, the churchwardens deliberately linked with the relatively recent development of votive paintings to restore tradition. Thus, like artists, patrons made deliberate choices between tradition and renewal.

All this, in sum, has considerably added to our understanding of the multiple layers of meaning pilgrims and parishioners visiting the Zoutleeuw church of Saint Leonard on the eve of the *Beeldenstorm* in 1566 must have attached to its rich furnishings. The Marianum that welcomed entering devotees might have incited them to recite the prayer *Ave sanctissima Maria mater dei*, perhaps almost automatically as a devotional habit, or precisely very consciously to obtain the years of indulgence that were connected to that very act. The pilgrims who had selected the shrine of Zoutleeuw within the much larger cult circuit in the Low Countries - regardless of Protestant critiques that the miraculous cult object merely was a wooden statue in a “tabernacle [made] of a pig’s trough” - walked on to Saint Leonard’s chapel. There, the multitude of burning candles, suspended crutches, waxen and metal legs and figurines, and other votive gifts such as harnesses, reassured them of the cult object’s effectiveness. Many among them would leave their own *ex voto* in turn, in gratitude for a received gift, or as a token of careful hope for salvation. This heterogenous group of significant objects, together with the other items installed by the churchwardens in honour of Saint Leonard, all contributed to a sense of miraculous charisma in the sacred space. On the saint’s feast day in early November this would still have been greater still, as the mass in the chapel included polyphonic singing and extra honouring lauds. Sacred souvenirs of all these devotional experiences were proposed by the stallholders in the church portal, either in the form of metal badges or paper pennants.

Finally, the above observations more specifically help to qualify Duffy’s concept of ‘traditional religion’. In 1566 a large part of the parishioners would have remembered the old Gothic sacrament house being replaced by the current antique one, which was certainly traditional in terms of function but definitely not in style and size, nor in spatial impact. Together with the donor’s memorial stone in front of it, it formed a significantly meaningful ensemble. Moreover, during the mass of the Holy Sacrament on Thursday mornings the microarchitectural structure was involved in a similarly significant and quintessentially Catholic ritual: the adoration and benediction of the Holy Sacrament with candlelight and laudatory music, often polyphonic, for which

purpose the Eucharist monstrance was temporarily taken out of the sacrament house and placed on the altar. This monstrance, too, was given recently to the church by the same noble couple, and was more than probably also executed in this very same, radically new style. And leaving the church whilst walking among the side chapels with the triptychs from the Antwerp workshops of Pieter Aertsen and Frans Floris, parishioners must have equally been struck by the traditional devotional subjects they had known for so long, such as the Seven Sorrows of the Virgin, which were now rendered in the same avant-garde style. These combinations of 'old' and 'new' went beyond mere tradition, and within a climate of increasing Protestant critiques they merged into unmistakable Catholic statements on the matter of piety.

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Summary

The purpose of the present study is to gain an insight into the historical development of lay piety and its material aspects in the Low Countries during the long sixteenth century. These were crucial in the questions brought up by the Reformation, but the actual use of churches by laypeople has never been systematically mapped, and as a result so far only very little is known of how these sacred spaces functioned on a day to day basis, let alone of the various and rich layers of meaning that were attached to the range of objects that were present. The perspective of the ‘Catholic commoner’ within its material context remained conspicuously absent. This interdisciplinary study therefore attempts to bridge an important gap between history and art history, by mapping the existing devotional practices and the religious material culture, and by confronting these observations with the controversies that surrounded it. Such an approach will allow to re-evaluate the nature and the evolution of lay piety in the Low Countries in the long sixteenth century. Precisely because of the rich set of at the time highly contested objects, Zoutleeuw’s church of Saint Leonard is an ideal case study for that.

In order to provide an image as complete as possible of lay piety, as well as to give a new dimension to existing discussions and debates, an innovative combination of several sources and related methods of inquiry are used. The study presents an analysis of material, visual and written sources, by both quantitative and qualitative methods, which allows to address the different social strata of the laity on a long-term basis. This approach is fundamentally interdisciplinary in nature, as various source types that are usually discussed and studied separately are now confronted. The point of departure is Zoutleeuw’s church of Saint Leonard with its rich set of items from the church interior, and the well-known series of preserved churchwarden accounts. These are supplemented with data from other archival sources, both of civic and clerical origin. The findings on the Zoutleeuw case are then confronted with data from other Brabantine case studies, miracle collections of individual shrines in the Low Countries,

polemical treatises, narrative sources, documents from the Council of Troubles, and finally contemporaneous visual representations of church interiors and the religious practices in them. In analyzing this broad set of source material, ‘traditional’ study of the written sources is combined with iconographical and visual analyses. Most importantly, qualitative methods are confronted with quantitative methods.

The set-up of the study is chronological. The first part analyzes the period preceding the introduction of Protestant thought in the Low Countries (c. 1450-1520). The origins and establishment of the cult of Saint Leonard at Zoutleeuw are discussed, allowing to make a series of methodological considerations on how to ‘measure’ the activity and the historical popularity of such shrines in general. For the Zoutleeuw case in particular the management of the cult of Saint Leonard is scrutinized, in order to draw conclusions about how cult objects were made to work. The particular developments in Zoutleeuw are then connected to and compared with the contemporary context of the Low Countries and Europe. This comparison is used as a stepping stone for a discussion of a revised image of piety at the dawn of the iconoclastic sixteenth century, wherein exterior expressions of devotion, outward piety and physical experiences took up a central place. For the Zoutleeuw case in particular it is argued that the decoration of Saint Leonard’s chapel in the 1470s and 1480s should be interpreted as a well-reasoned action from the part of the churchwardens in order to optimize the conditions for miraculous experiences, and thereby claiming a place within the cult circuit that considerably condensed during these years in the context of a general, devotional ‘boom’ around the turn of the century.

The second part zooms in on Catholic piety in the crucial decades between the first circulation of Protestant ideas and the actual breakings in the *Beeldenstorm* (c. 1520-1566). In the first place, the effects and the influence of Protestantism on piety in the Low Countries are reviewed. A detailed critical analysis of the historiography on the subject is presented, in particular of the so-called 1520-thesis which posits a quick decline of Catholic piety after that date as a result of that date. Instead, a number of new ways of looking are proposed, and in connection with the first part of this dissertation it is argued that the public debates from the 1520s onwards were in fact an answer to fairly recent developments in Catholic piety. After these primarily methodological and historiographical analyses, different themes are treated in such a way that the actions of various groups of religious agents can be addressed, namely pilgrims, parishioners and patrons. Again, data from the Zoutleeuw case are confronted with available information and studies on the Low Countries. Finally, the particular course of Zoutleeuw during the *Beeldenstorm* is contextualized and

connected to other resisting tendencies in the Low Countries. In this central part it is argued that the classic perception of the waning of medieval piety as a linear decline which was accelerated by the introduction of Protestant thought around 1520 and that saw a dramatic climax in the breakings of 1566, proves incorrect in several respects. By looking closely at renewed dynamics in miracle cults, significant developments in the Zoutleuw liturgy for Saint Leonard, innovations in Eucharistic devotion and the sacrament of communion, and most notably the religious patronage during these years, it is argued that the traditionally perceived decline in Catholic piety was far from universal and that strong countercurrents definitely manifested itself. Certain ‘traditional’ Catholic aspects received an important confessional character, which is identified here as early Counter-Reformation in spirit.

The third and last part, finally, pursues the analysis into the Catholic revival around 1600 and under the Twelve Years’ Truce (1566-1621). It presents an assessment of the ‘survival’ of the late medieval miracle cult into the seventeenth century. Much like in the first part, the significant choices in the management of the shrine are discussed, although this time in relation to the broad Netherlandish context of a burgeoning Counter-Reformation. In particular, the analysis of the donation of a relic and the accompanying translation ceremony not only allows to discuss the tensions between images and relics as cult objects, but also to look at how this particular case fits into the general religious politics of the Archducal government. Earlier observations on the years around 1600 being characterized by a ‘miraculous climate’ are confirmed and amply illustrated by means of the Zoutleuw case. In particular, the donation of the relic is presented as a reaction by the Archducal court to the local revitalization of the cult of Saint Leonard, within a broader context of negotiation between town and government.

Samenvatting

Deze studie poogt een substantiële bijdrage te leveren aan het begrip van de historische ontwikkeling van de lekenvroomheid en de daarmee intens verbonden materiële aspecten, in de Nederlanden tijdens de lange zestiende eeuw. Hoewel dit centraal stond in de vragen die opgeworpen werden door de Reformatie, werd het eigenlijke gebruik van kerken door leken nog nooit systematisch in kaart gebracht. Bijgevolg bleef het vaak erg onduidelijk hoe deze sacrale ruimten op een dagdagelijkse basis functioneerden, en welke betekenissen aan de uitgebreide set devotieele voorwerpen in kerken gegeven werden. Het perspectief van de modale katholieek in een materiële context bleef opvallend afwezig in het historisch onderzoek. Daarom poogt deze interdisciplinaire studie de kloof te dichten tussen de disciplines van de Geschiedenis en de Kunstgeschiedenis, door de bestaande devotieele praktijken en de daarmee samenhangende religieuze materiële cultuur in kaart te brengen, en deze observaties te confronteren met de controverses die errond ontstonden. Een dergelijke benadering laat toe om de aard en de evolutie van de lekenvroomheid in de Nederlanden tijdens de lange zestiende eeuw te herwaarderden. Case study is de Sint-Leonarduskerk in Zoutleeuw, net omdat die nog een rijke set van destijds zeer gecontesteerde objecten bewaart.

Om een zo volledig mogelijk beeld van de lekenvroomheid te geven en om een nieuwe dimensie aan lopende historische debatten te geven, wordt in deze studie een innovatieve bronnenselectie en daarmee samenhangende methodologieën gebruikt. Materiële, visuele en geschreven bronnen worden op zowel kwalitatieve als kwantitatieve manier geanalyseerd, wat toelaat om de verschillende sociale lagen binnen de grote groep leken te bestuderen over een lange termijn. Deze benadering is fundamenteel interdisciplinair van aard, omdat verschillende bronnentypes die doorgaans afzonderlijk werden bestudeerd hier met elkaar geconfronteerd worden. Het vertrekpunt is de kerk van Zoutleeuw met diens interieur en de uitgebreide reeks bewaarde kerkrekeningen. Deze worden aangevuld met andere bronnen, zowel van

kerkelijke als stedelijk oorsprong. De observaties van de Zoutleeuwse casus worden vervolgens steeds geconfronteerd met gegevens over andere Brabantse cases, mirakelcollecties van bedevaartsoorden uit de Nederlanden, polemische traktaten, narratieve bronnen, documenten uit het archief van de Raad van Beroerten, en ten slotte contemporaine afbeeldingen van kerkinterieurs en de religieuze praktijken die daarin plaatsvonden. In de analyse van deze uitgebreide verzameling bronnen wordt een ‘traditionele’ studie van geschreven bronnen gecombineerd met iconografische en visuele analyses, en worden kwalitatieve methoden geconfronteerd met kwantitatieve benaderingen.

De studie is chronologisch opgevat. Het eerste deel analyseert de periode die aan de introductie van protestantse ideeën in de Nederlanden vooraf ging (c. 1450-1520). De oorsprong en vestiging van de cultus van Sint-Leonardus in Zoutleeuw wordt besproken, wat een uitstekend vertrekpunt is voor het maken van een aantal algemene methodologische beschouwingen over het ‘meten’ van de activiteit en historische populariteit van dergelijke heiligdommen. In het bijzonder voor de Zoutleeuwse casus wordt het beheer van de Leonarduscultus in detail bekeken, om conclusies te kunnen trekken over hoe men cultusobjecten effectief maakte. De Zoutleeuwse ontwikkelingen worden dan verbonden en vergeleken met de contemporaine context van de Nederlanden en Europa. Deze vergelijking wordt uiteindelijk gebruikt als opstap voor de bespreking van een gereviseerd beeld van de vroomheid aan de vooravond van de iconoclastische zestiende eeuw, waarbij uiterlijke expressies van devotie, uitwendige vroomheid en fysieke ervaringen een centrale plaats innamen. Voor de Zoutleeuwse casus in het bijzonder wordt geargumenteed dat de decoratie en inrichting van de Leonarduskapel in de jaren 1470 en 1480 moet gezien worden als een beredeneerde actie van de kerkmeesters om de condities voor miraculeuze ervaringen te optimaliseren, en zo een plaats te verwerven binnen het bredere cultuscircuit dat aanzienlijk verdichtte tijdens deze jaren in de context van een algemene, devotionele hausse rond de eeuwwisseling.

Het tweede deel zoomt in op de katholieke vroomheid in de cruciale periode tussen de verspreiding van de eerste protestantse ideeën en de effectieve vernielingen tijdens de Beeldenstorm (c. 1520-1566). In de eerste plaats worden de effecten en de invloed van het protestantisme op de vroomheid in de Nederlanden herzien. Er wordt een gedetailleerde en kritische analyse van de historiografie over het onderwerp gegeven, in het bijzonder van de zogenaamde 1520-these, die een snelle instorting van de katholieke vroomheid na die datum poneert. In verbinding met het eerste deel van deze dissertatie wordt geargumenteed dat de publieke debatten vanaf de jaren 1520 in

feite een reactie waren op relatief recente devotionele ontwikkelingen. Na deze voornamelijk methodologische en historiografische analyses, worden verschillende thema's behandeld, zodanig dat de handelingen van verschillende groepen religieuze *agents* aan bod komen, namelijk pelgrims, parochianen en donors. Opnieuw worden de observaties uit de Zoutleeuwse casus geconfronteerd met de beschikbare informatie en studies over de Nederlanden. Ten slotte wordt de afwijkende loop van de gebeurtenissen in Zoutleeuw ten tijde van de Beeldenstorm gecontextualiseerd en verbonden met andere weerstandstendenzen in de Nederlanden. In dit centrale deel wordt geargumenteed dat de klassieke perceptie van het uitdoven van de middeleeuwse vroomheid in de vorm van een lineair verval dat versneld werd door de introductie van protestantse ideeën omstreeks 1520 en een dramatisch hoogtepunt kende in de gebeurtenissen van 1566, aanzienlijk moet bijgesteld worden. Door nauwkeurig te kijken naar nieuwe dynamieken in mirakelcultussen, naar significante ontwikkelingen in de liturgie voor Sint-Leonardus in Zoutleeuw, naar innovaties in Eucharistische devotie en het sacrament van de communie, en bovenal naar het religieuze patronage tijdens deze periode, wordt geargumenteed dat de traditioneel gepercipieerde neergang van de katholieke devotie verre van universeel was en dat er bovendien sterke tegenstromen zichtbaar waren. Bepaalde 'traditionele' katholieke aspecten kregen een belangrijk confessioneel karakter, die hier als vroeg Contra-Reformatorisch geduid worden.

Het derde en laatste deel, ten slotte, trekt deze analyse door naar het katholieke *réveil* van omstreeks 1600 en onder het Twaalfjarig Bestand (1566-1621). Er wordt gekeken naar hoe laatmiddeleeuwse mirakelcultussen overleefden in de sterk gewijzigde context van de vroege zeventiende eeuw. Net als in het eerste deel worden de significante keuzes in het beheer van de cultus van Sint-Leonardus besproken, hoewel in dit geval in de context van een opkomende Contra-Reformatie in de Zuidelijke Nederlanden. Een centrale plaats wordt toebedeeld aan de analyse van de schenking van een relik en de bijhorende translaticeremonie, die niet alleen toelaat om dieper in te gaan op de spanning tussen afbeeldingen en relieken als cultusobjecten, maar ook om te onderzoeken hoe deze specifieke casus past binnen de bredere religieuze politiek van de Aartshertogen. Eerdere observaties van de periode omstreeks 1600 als gekarakteriseerd door een 'miraculeus klimaat' worden bevestigd en uitgebreid geïllustreerd aan de hand van de Zoutleeuwse casus. De schenking van het relik in het bijzonder wordt geïnterpreteerd als een reactie van het Aartshertogelijke hof op de lokale heropleving van de Sint-Leonarduscultus, binnen een bredere context van onderhandelingen tussen stad en overheid.

