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Margaret of Parma's gift of a window to St John's in Gouda and the art of the early Counter-Reformation in the Low Countries*

Xander van Eck

The stained-glass window, 20 meters high, that Margaret of Parma, Regent of the Netherlands, donated to the Church of St John in Gouda is one of the largest monumental works of art ever produced in the northern Netherlands in the sixteenth century (fig. 1). It was made by Wouter Crabeth (?–Gouda 1587) and is divided horizontally into three segments. At the bottom is the portrait of the donatrix kneeling at a prie-dieu with her patron saint Margaret of Antioch behind her, attended by her fearsome dragon. The central section shows *Christ washing the disciples' feet* with reliefs on the back wall of the room containing scenes from the life of Moses. The third section illustrates Elijah's sacrifice on Mount Carmel, with the altar of the priests of Baal and a temple of Baal. At the very top of the window, God the Father and angels blowing trumpets are surrounded by clouds and the smoke rising from Elijah's sacrifice. This complex and unprecedented combination of scenes is evidence of the deep thought that went into the design of the visual program.

Donations of glass windows made by the Habsburg-Burgundian rulers of the Netherlands between 1419 and 1519 had served three different but simultaneous purposes: commemoration, devotion and proclamation of power,¹ and it was no different in Margaret's day. The proclamation began with the traditional devices of portrait, family coats of arms and inscriptions establishing the donor's territorial claims and position in the dynasty, and was underscored by the window's central position among others donated by loyal dignitaries from the immediate court circle. In addition, though, the biblical scenes above the donor's border lent narrative force to the royal legitimation by proclaiming that the regent was a staunch defender of the Catholic church.

Previously the devotional aspect had often been a simple display of a preference for certain saints or an adoration of Christ on the Cross, but in Margaret's window it is a humanistically inspired, Christocentric exegesis of the Bible. In this article I will argue that that exegesis came from the theological faculty of the University of Louvain, which the Catholic church and the house of Habsburg were using at the time as an important instrument for implementing decisions taken at the Council of Trent.

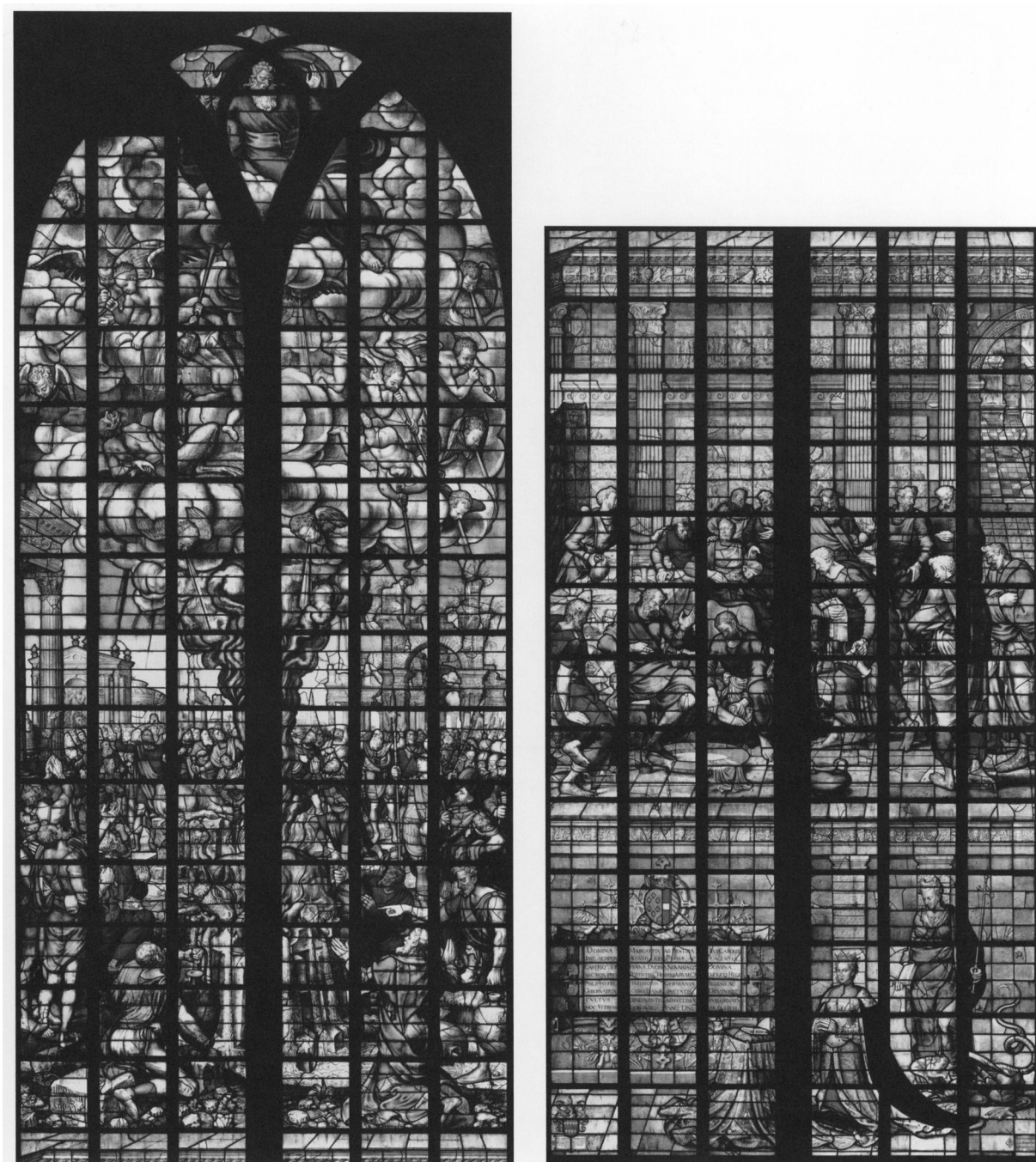
Margaret of Parma (1522–86) was the daughter of Emperor Charles v and the maidservant Johanna van der Gheynst of Oudenaerde. The emperor acknowledged her as his daughter and she grew up under the tutelage of Mary of Hungary and was destined to play a part in Charles's dynastic policies. At the age of 14 she married Alessandro de' Medici, who was murdered shortly afterwards. In 1538 she married her second husband, Ottavio Farnese, which made her Duchess of Parma and Piacenza. Charles v abdicated in 1555 and was succeeded by Margaret's half-brother, Philip, later King of Spain, who appointed her Regent of the Netherlands when he left Brussels for Spain in 1559.

The scanty biographical literature on Margaret of Parma deals largely with the events that took place during her lifetime and not with her own actions or ideas. It is certainly true that she was kept on a very short rein by Philip, especially in the period of interest to us. On his departure he had urged her to take the advice of Viglius and Granvelle, the two most powerful ministers at the court in Brussels. She plays a key part in the historiography of the Dutch Revolt by accepting the Petition of Compromise in 1566. A courtier put her mind at ease by telling her that the members of the lesser nobility who had submitted it

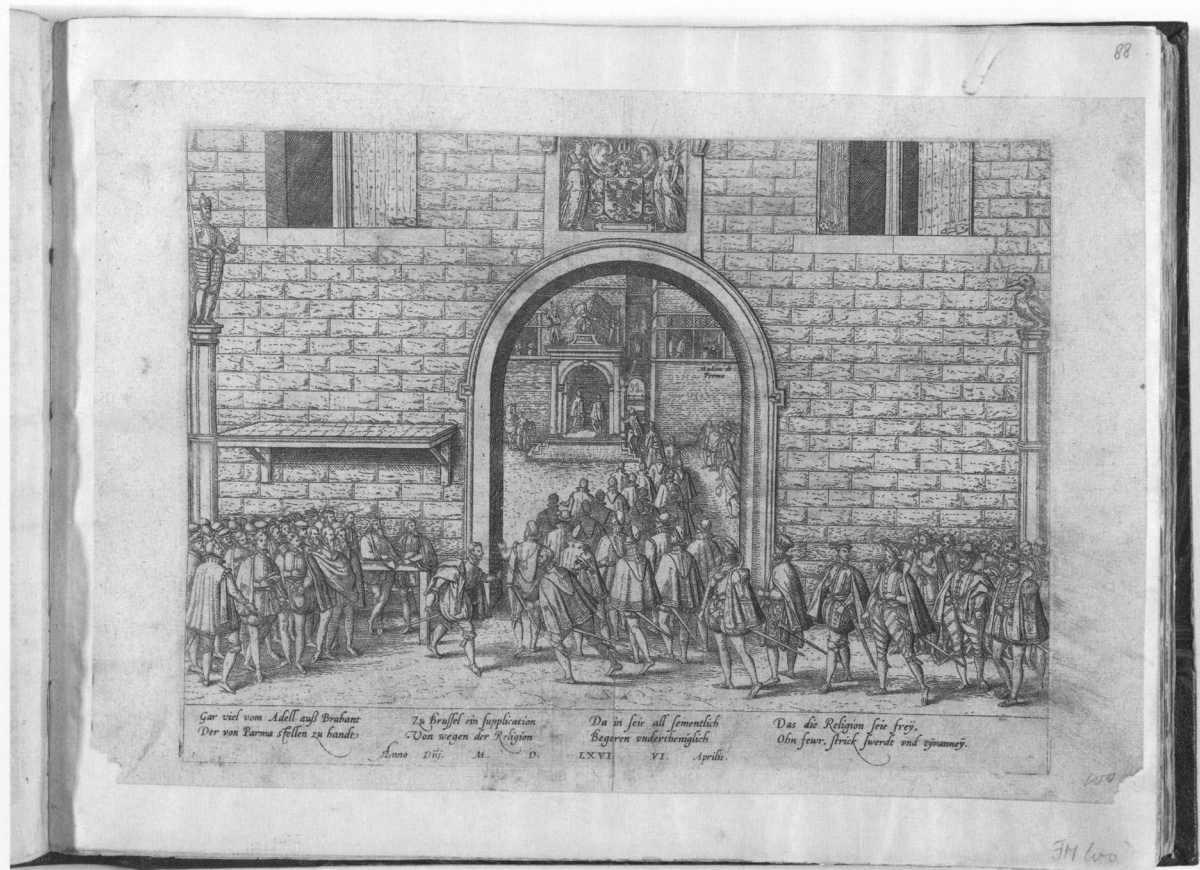
* Translated from the Dutch by Michael Hoyle.

1 M. Damen, "Vorstelijke vensters: glasraamscheningen als in-

strument van memorie, devotie en representatie (1419–1519)," *Jaarboek Middelieuwse Geschiedenis* 8 (2005), pp. 140–200.



1 Wouter Crabeth, *Margaret of Parma's window*, 1562. Gouda, Sint Janskerk



2 Frans Hogenberg, *The presentation of the Petition of Compromise*, engraving, 1566

were just a bunch of beggars, “des gueux,” which the opponents of the house of Habsburg then enthusiastically embraced as a *nom de guerre*. Margaret accepted several of the demands in the petition, among them the suspension of the placards denouncing heresy, much to Philip’s displeasure. Soon afterwards she witnessed the ravages of the Iconoclasm in her realm. The military and diplomatic offensive she undertook to combat the iconoclasts and the rise of Protestantism was not unsuccessful but could not prevent her being supplanted a year later by

the Duke of Alva, who took a much harder line with the rebels.²

AN DIFFIDENT DONOR The print that Frans Hogenberg made of the presentation of the petition (fig. 2) is illustrative of Margaret’s position in the shadow of power. She is just a faint apparition at a window overlooking the palace courtyard.³ Peter Arnade recently observed that unlike Margaret of Austria and Mary of Hungary, her predecessors as regent, Margaret of Parma lacked a

2 J. Israel, *The Dutch Republic: its rise, greatness, and fall 1477–1806*, Oxford 1995, pp. 137–54. The most authoritative biography is still F. Rachfahl, *Margaretha von Parma: Statthalterin der Niederlande*, Munich 1898. It was followed in the twentieth century by three biographies of a populist slant: J. de Jongh, *Madama: Margaretha van Oostentrijk, hertogin van Parma en Piacenza*, Amsterdam 1965; A. Puaux, *Madama: fille de Charles Quint, régente des Pays-Bas*, Paris 1987, and G.H. Dumont, *Mar-*

guerite de Parme, bâtarde de Charles Quint, Paris 1999. The latter authors supply more historical context than Rachfahl but add little of substance to our knowledge of the regentess’s actual life.

3 F.W.H. Hollstein, *The New Hollstein: Dutch and Flemish etchings, engravings and woodcuts 1450–1700*. Frans and Remigius Hogenberg, Ouderkerk aan den IJssel 2009, nr. B57.11.



3 Philips Galle, *Margaret of Parma*, c. 1570

clear-cut public persona. The Gouda window appears to have been an initial step towards creating one, but it was never really developed any further.⁴ There are very few cartoons of her (the rebels reserved most of their vitriol for Granvelle and Philip), and although her portrait appeared on various coins and prints (fig. 3),⁵ the Habsburg camp never seems to have published any narrative or allegorical prints depicting her as the proud representative of the dynasty or defender of the Catholic faith.

Not only was there a lack of visual propaganda to bolster Margaret's reputation but the written sources also contain very little praise or positive accounts of her actions or intentions as regent. A couple of brief lines from the foreword to the farce *De bervoete bruers* (The barefoot friars) performed by the Cornflower chamber of rhetoric in Brussels in 1559 merely express a pious hope: "may

God preserve the Duchess of Parma most moral, our regent, that we may rest in peace and serenity."⁶ That was precious little, in all conscience, and would not have been very encouraging anyway, because the play was immediately condemned for its mockery of Catholicism and its supposed heretical sympathies.

In addition, Margaret rarely commissioned monumental works of art or buildings. When she moved into the palace on Coudenberg in Brussels it was in exactly the same state as when Philip had left it. She changed little, apart from hanging a few new tapestries here and there, and no major extensions were made.⁷ She did commission her portrait from the court painter Anthonis Mor, as well as those of other European rulers, but paintings of that kind were not put on show for the general public. They served primarily as confirmation of the sitter's place in the dynasty and were only seen by people who were granted access to Margaret's private quarters.⁸ Nor was she often active outside Brussels as the financier of new buildings, sculptures or stained-glass windows that would advertise her role as regent.

This diffident presentation of Margaret of Parma is astonishing at first sight. If she was installed in Brussels more or less for show because Philip wanted to have a distinguished family member represent him to the outside world, then why was there no show? Perhaps her almost total lack of major commissions of works of art and building projects in the Low Countries was due to her preference for her possessions in Parma and Piacenza.⁹ That may have been exacerbated by a lack of money and the unstable situation in the north, but is hardly an explanation for the scarcity of propaganda prints and eulogies. The most likely reason is that it was the court's policy to focus attention on the king himself as much as possible. That theory is supported by the nature of the donations of windows that Brussels did make. During her regency Margaret gave her approval several times for gifts of windows with the likeness and arms of Philip II to churches

4 P. Arnade, *Beggars, iconoclasts and civic patriots: the political culture of the Dutch Revolt*, Ithaca 2008, p. 56: "Philip's half-sister had almost no public profile."

5 L. Traversi, "Aspetti della ritrattistica di Margarita d'Austria (1522–1586) tra pittura, medagliistica e stampa," *Bulletin de l'Institut Historique Belge de Rome* 63 (1993), pp. 381–419.

6 See W. van Eeghem, *Drie schandaleuse spelen*, Antwerp 1937, p. 3: "...de hertoginne van parma vol goeder seden/ ons regente wil Godt wel bewaren/ op dat wy mogen rusten in peys en in vreden." My thanks to Samuel Mareel for drawing this passage to my attention. For the play's

reception and the authorities' reaction to it see Arnade, *op. cit.* (note 4), pp. 63–64.

7 B.W. Meijer, *Parma e Bruxelles: committenza e collezionismo farnesiani alle due corti*, Parma 1988, pp. 117–52.

8 A. Perez de Tudela, 'La Galería de Retratos de Margarita de Austria (1522–1586), gobernadora de Los Países Bajos, in B.J. García García and F. Grilo (eds.), *Ao modo da Flandres: disponibilidade, inovação e mercado de arte na época dos descobrimentos (1415–1580)*, Lisbon 2005, pp. 115–30.

9 Meijer, *op. cit.* (note 7), pp. 140–52.

in both the southern and northern Netherlands. That she had herself depicted in Gouda for a change was evidently associated with the fact that there was already a king's window there and that it needed a pendant.¹⁰

MARGARET'S WINDOW FOR ST JOHN'S The donation of a window was rarely a spontaneous gesture on the donor's part. It was usually in response to a request, for the construction of a new church or the rebuilding of an existing one was often the occasion for making urgent and well-argued appeals to potential donors.¹¹ And when Margaret was appointed regent Gouda had a clearly defined request. Philip II was one of the first to donate a window after the devastating fire of 1552 and the launch of the subsequent rebuilding program. It was the large one in the north transept dated 1557, and directly opposite it was an equally large window opening, and that naturally required another donor of high standing, preferably a member of the royal family. There had been a recent precedent for the donation of stained-glass windows in prime positions by various members of the house of Habsburg in St Bavo's in Ghent, where the transept had been embellished with gifts from Philip II and Mary of Hungary on the occasion of the abdication of Charles V, whose likeness adorned the window on the east front. It is difficult to say whether the Gouda church council had already fixed its sights on Margaret for the opening facing the king's window when her half-brother made his commitment. In 1556–57, when the decision about the king's window was made, she still had no official government function, and that would have made her an unlikely candidate as a donor. Everything fell into place, though, when she was appointed regent and the opening had still not been filled.

The commissioning procedure is well documented in the church's archives. On 5 June 1560 Burgomaster Symon Gerritsz was reimbursed his expenses for facilitating the donation. On 14 June 1561 he arranged for the

church council to receive 400 guilders from Brussels, and on 16 August 1563 the glass painter Wouter Crabeth declared that he had been paid in full for his work on the "glass window donated by my gracious and high-born lady, the Lady of Parma etc., and delivered to Gouda in the Church of St John." Crabeth's assistants had been paid the usual gratuity the previous day, which was a sign that the window had been installed. The window itself is dated 1562.¹²

Wouter Crabeth was the younger brother of Dirck Crabeth, the leading glass painter in the northern Netherlands in the mid-sixteenth century. Dirck was the obvious person to head the redecoration after the fire of 1552. His workshop eventually supplied nine monumental windows between 1555 and 1572 — four in the choir and five in the nave and transept, the king's window among them. Wouter became involved in the project around 1560, and delivered four windows between then and 1567: one in the choir, two in the transept and one in the nave. They are his only surviving monumental works, but we know that there must have been more from several designs that he drew. Recently, too, Zsuzsanna van Ruyven has identified several of his small glass panels and designs for them.¹³ His style, which is reminiscent of Frans Floris and Maarten van Heemskerck, was more modern than Dirck's, who in his turn is more closely related to artists of an earlier generation like Jan Swart van Groningen.

DEFENDER OF THE CATHOLIC FAITH Although there is little comparative material outside St John's in Gouda that would help unravel the significance of the regentess's window, the neighboring ones in the church do provide a few useful clues. An obvious effort was made to harmonize all the windows in the church, both visually and iconographically,¹⁴ and everything indicates that Margaret of Parma's was intended as the pendant of the king's window opposite (fig. 4). Both are identical in

¹⁰ Z. van Ruyven-Zeman, *Stained glass in the Netherlands before 1795 (Corpus Vitrearum The Netherlands, IV)*, 2 vols., Amsterdam 2011, vol. 1, pp. 198, 199, vol. 2, pp. 458, 476; W. de Groot (ed.), *The seventh window: the king's window donated by Philip II and Mary Tudor to Sint Janskerk in Gouda (1557)*, Hilversum 2005, p. 158.

¹¹ M. Damen, "De schenkers van Scheut: het glasmecenaat van een kartuizerklooster, 1450–1530," *Millennium, Tijdschrift voor Middeleeuwse Studies* 23 (2009), pp. 78–111.

¹² "...glasevenster, welck gegeven heeft mijn genadige ende hooch geboren Vrouwen, Vrouwe van Parma etc., ende is geleverd ter Goude in St. Jans kerck." All the extant documents relating to the dating and

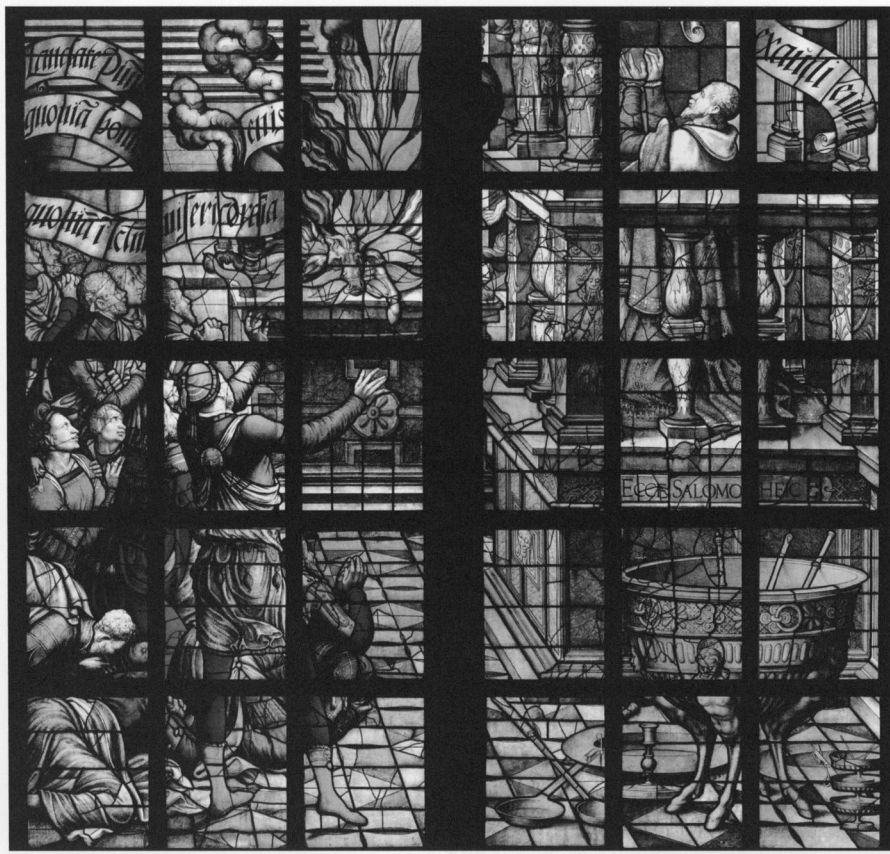
commission of the window have been fully transcribed and translated in X. van Eck, C. Coebergh-Surie and A. Gasten, *The stained-glass windows in the Sint Janskerk in Gouda: the works of Dirck and Wouter Crabeth (Corpus Vitrearum The Netherlands, II)*, Amsterdam 2002, pp. 143–44, notes 322–27, esp. note 327 for the document quoted here.

¹³ Z. van Ruyven-Zeman, "Wouter Crabeth from Gouda: his glass panels in Britain and a newly discovered design," *The Burlington Magazine* 153 (July 2011), pp. 458–63.

¹⁴ X. van Eck, "The Gouda windows: a coherent whole?," in: Z. van Ruyven-Zeman et al., *The cartoons of the Sint Janskerk in Gouda*, Delft 2011, pp. 34–49.



4 Dirck Crabeth, *The king's window*, 1557. Gouda, Sint Janskerk



5 Dirck Crabeth, *The dedication of the Temple by Solomon*, detail of fig. 4. Gouda, Sint Janskerk

form and dimensions, and both are divided horizontally in three at the same heights. The scene at the top of the king's window shows Solomon kneeling during the dedication of the Temple, while the one crowning Margaret's donation is *Elijah's sacrifice*. The central sections are devoted to scenes from John's account of the Last Supper: the request of the apostle Philip on the king's side of the church (John 14:8), and *Christ washing the disciples' feet* on his half-sister's side (John 13:1–12). However, the two royal portraits are in different positions. The king and his consort Mary Tudor are in the center, kneeling in witness to the Last Supper, in the same compartment as Christ, while Margaret is in the donor's border at the bottom, accompanied by her patron saint.

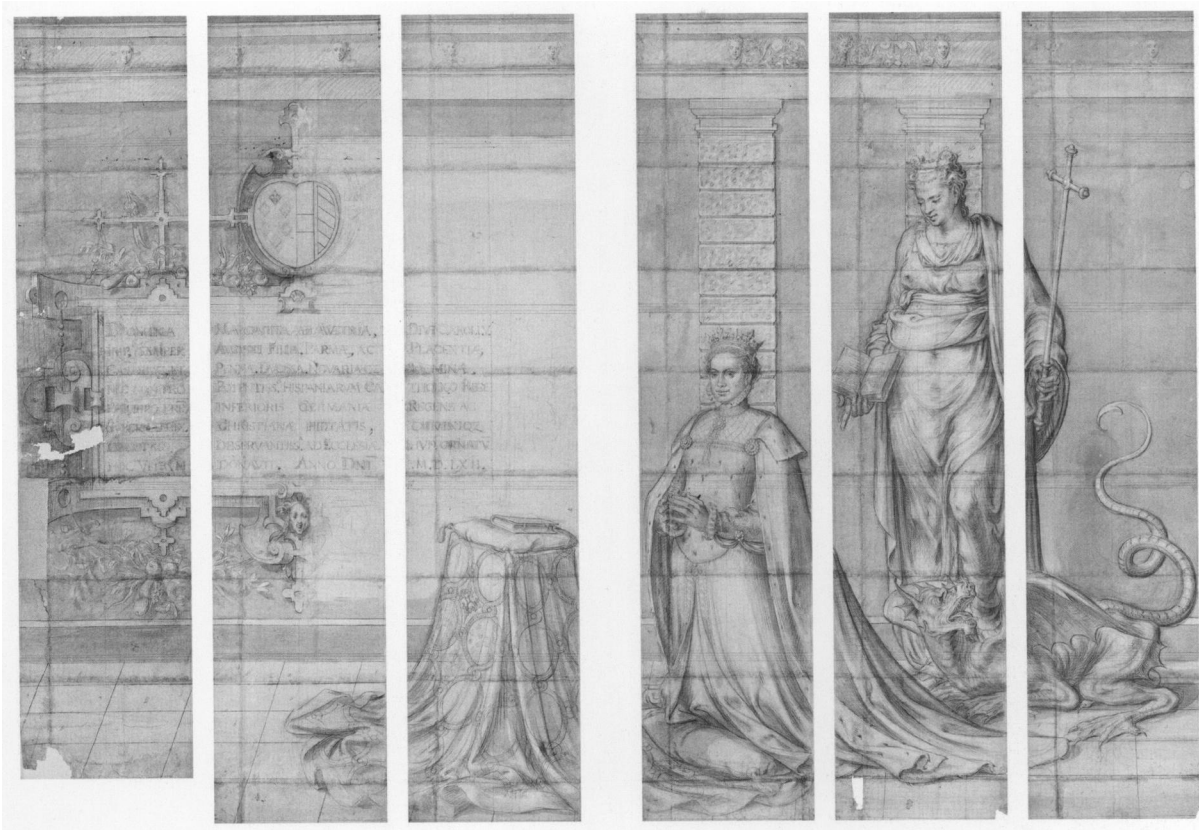
The complex concept underlying the king's window

can be deciphered from the inscriptions clarifying the scenes. In addition, the images and rhetoric fit in with what is already known about the image of Philip that was presented to the people at Joyous Entries and in sculptures, buildings and graphic art. In his case there is a wealth of comparative material. I have discussed it at length in earlier articles in these pages, so a brief summary can suffice here.¹⁵

The main element in the donor's border of the king's window is a cartouche with an inscription that opens with the statement that Philip was the son of "the invincible and highly exalted Emperor Charles v" and ends "May his throne, filling the entire world like the sun, endure forever." One of the banderoles in *The dedication of the Temple* at the top of the window has a text in the Latin

15 X. van Eck and C. Coebergh-Surie, "Behold, a greater than Jonas is here: the iconographic program of the stained-glass windows of Gouda, 1552–72," *Simiolus* 25 (1997), pp. 5–44; X. van Eck, "Siding

with Philip II: Margaretha van der Marck's donation of Dirck Crabeth's *Judith and Holofernes* to the Sint Janskerk in Gouda," *Simiolus* 34 (2009/2010), pp. 4–17.



6 Wouter Crabeth, *Cartoon for the donor's border of Margaret of Parma's window*. Gouda, Sint Janskerk

of the Vulgate with an important biblical parallel: "If thou wilt walk before me, as thy father walked, then will I establish the throne of thy kingdom forever" (cf. 2 Chronicles 7:17–18 and 1 Kings 9:4). The transfer of power from father to son, that is to say from David to Solomon, therefore prefigured that from the father Charles v to the son Philip II. *The dedication of the Temple* also shows what kind of king Philip aspired to be: as wise, just and peace-loving as the greatest king in the Old Testament. That he thus deserved the gratitude of his people is evident from the group of jubilant churchgoers in the foreground — an iconographic element never found before in the tradition

of this scene (fig. 5).

There is also a cartouche with an inscription identifying the donor and giving the reason for the gift in the bottom compartment of Margaret's window (fig. 6). It reads, in translation: "Lady Margaret of Austria, daughter of the ever-illustrious emperor Charles v, Duchess of Parma and Piacenza and Castro and Penna, Lady of Navarre, Regentess and Governess of the Low Countries for the most mighty Catholic King of Spain, Philip, her brother, carefully observing Christian and divine worship, donated this window for the embellishment of this church in the year of our Lord 1562."¹⁶ The inscription thus estab-

¹⁶ Van Eck, Coebergh-Surie and Gasten, op. cit. (note 12), p. 143, note 293. The original Latin reads: "DOMINA MARGARITA AB AUSTRIA, DIVI CAROLI V IMP[ERATORIS] SEMPER AUGUSTI FILIA PARMAE ET PLACENTIAE, CASTRIQUE ET PENNAE DUCISSA NOVARI-AQUE ET DOMINA, NEC NON PRO POTENTISS[IMO] HISPANIARUM

CATHOLICO REGE PHILIPPO FR[ATR]E INFERIORIS GERMANIAE RE-GENS AC GUBERNATRIX CHRISTIANAE PIETATIS DIVINIQUE CULTUS OBSERVANTISS[IMA] AD ECCLESIAE HUIUS ORNATU[M] HOC VITRUM DONAVIT, ANNO D[OMI]NI MDLXXI".



7 Wouter Crabeth, *Cartoon for Margaret of Parma's window*, detail with *Elijah's sacrifice* (bottom section). Gouda, Sint Janskerk

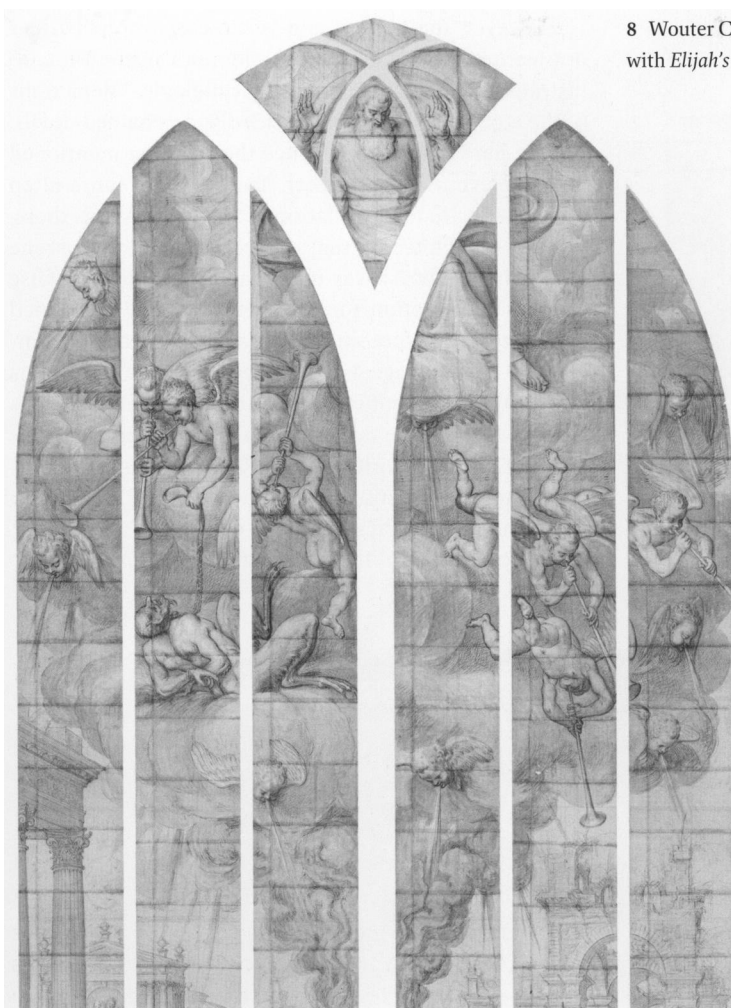
lishes Margaret's position within the Habsburg dynasty and the government of the Low Countries, mentioning her titles and affiliations in full, as was usual. The statement that she 'carefully [observed] Christian and divine worship' was less customary. No such formula is found on earlier windows donated by Habsburg rulers,¹⁷ and it was undoubtedly prompted by the alternatives to the Catholic liturgy that had now reared their heads.

As with the king's window, a connection can be made between the inscription in Margaret's border and the Old Testament scene at the top of the window (fig. 7). The passage in the Bible about *Elijah's sacrifice* (1 Kings 18:20–40) tells how the prophet challenged the priests of Baal to a contest to see whose god would be the first to ignite a sacrificial pyre. The priests of Baal lost, of course, despite their frenzied dancing and self-mutilation to urge their

god to display his power. Their sacrifice, which was as dry as a bone, failed to go up in flames. Elijah's faith was so strong, though, that he repeatedly drenched his with water, and needless to say it was immediately consumed by heavenly fire after the prophet made a simple request to Jehovah. Elijah's altar is in the center of the scene, and stretched out upon it is the bullock, which Elijah's assistants are soaking with water. Standing on the right and looking a little crestfallen is King Ahab, who had backed the priests of Baal. In the left background is a temple of Baal and an idol, and in the middleground is the priests' altar with their untouched offering.

Most of the bystanders, some of whom are on their knees, are looking up at the heavens in awe as the divine fire is sent down with a host of angels to envelop the animal. Some of the figures are blowing trumpets while oth-

¹⁷ Damen, *op. cit.* (note 1).



8 Wouter Crabeth, *Cartoon for Margaret of Parma's window*, detail with *Elijah's sacrifice* (top section). Gouda, Sint Janskerk

ers have puffed out their cheeks and are blowing in the direction of Elijah's altar as the sacrifice catches fire. God the Father looks down from the very top of the arch as if to check that everything is going according to plan. He is seated on a cloud that fills the entire top half of the composition and merges seamlessly with the pillar of smoke rising from the altar.

One of the trumpeting angels is almost nonchalantly holding a chain pinioning a satanic figure (fig. 8). This detail has attracted little notice in the literature, although it appears to be unique in the visual tradition of the scene. The depiction of Elijah's contest with the priests of Baal first made its appearance in the medieval typology

as a harbinger of the descent of the Holy Ghost at Pentecost, and it often features as a Bible illustration from the early sixteenth century on (fig. 9). Lucas Cranach the Younger used those illustrations as a source of inspiration for several paintings of a decidedly Lutheran stamp, such as the epitaph for the Hoffmann family from a Leipzig church (fig. 10). Luther himself was often likened to Elijah, the True Prophet, and it hardly needs pointing out that the superstition of King Ahab and his priests of Baal in this painting are equated with Catholicism, as Luther did himself in a well-known table talk in which he described a painting of the same subject — probably the one by Cranach that is now in Dresden.¹⁸



9 Hans Holbein, page from the *Icones historiae veteri testamenti*, Lyon 1547, with a woodcut of *Elijah's sacrifice*

However, the host of angels blowing trumpets does not feature in the Lutheran version, nor in the Bible illustrations, nor in the classically typological depictions of the story, and nor, most decidedly, do chained devils. That is hardly surprising, since they are not mentioned in the relevant Bible chapter. Trumpets are more often associated with the Revelation of St John, and it is there, starting in chapter 19, that one comes across the scene in which “the beast was taken, and with him the false prophet” (Revelation 19:20). There the devil is chained by an angel for a thousand years and cast into a bottomless pit. This passage was depicted on several occasions in the sixteenth century, among others by Dürer in his famous Apocalypse cycle, and in various illustrated Bibles or Bible summaries (fig. 11). Crabeth was clearly indebted to that tradition, as can be seen from the similar rendering of the devil’s collar and chain.

However unusual the combination of *Elijah's sacrifice*



10 Lucas Cranach the Younger, *Elijah's sacrifice*, c. 1552. Leipzig, Stadtgeschichtliches Museum



11 Anton Woensam, *An angel casting Satan into a bottomless pit*, woodcut, 1525

with angels blowing trumpets and a chained devil may be, its interpretation is obvious. It signifies the defeat of false prophets and thus of heresy. Triumphant over devils and monsters had regularly been used since the second half of the sixteenth century as a metaphor of the Catholic Church vanquishing Reformation heresy, as in a print after Maerten de Vos of St Michael crushing Satan underfoot (fig. 12). The chained devil reinforces the message of *Elijah's sacrifice*, itself a story about the destruction of an errant religious sect. It also resonates with the words of the inscription beside the portrait of the donatrix describing her as a staunch adherent of the Catholic faith and divine worship. There is a second link between the

18 K. Drescher (ed.), *D. Martin Luthers Werke: kritische Gesamtausgabe*, 6 vols., Weimar 1912–21, vol. 6, nr. 6396. On the painting in Leipzig see V. Rodekamp (ed.), *Leipzig original: Stadtgeschichte vom Mittelalter bis zur Völkerschlacht*, Altenburg 2006, p. 212. The picture in the



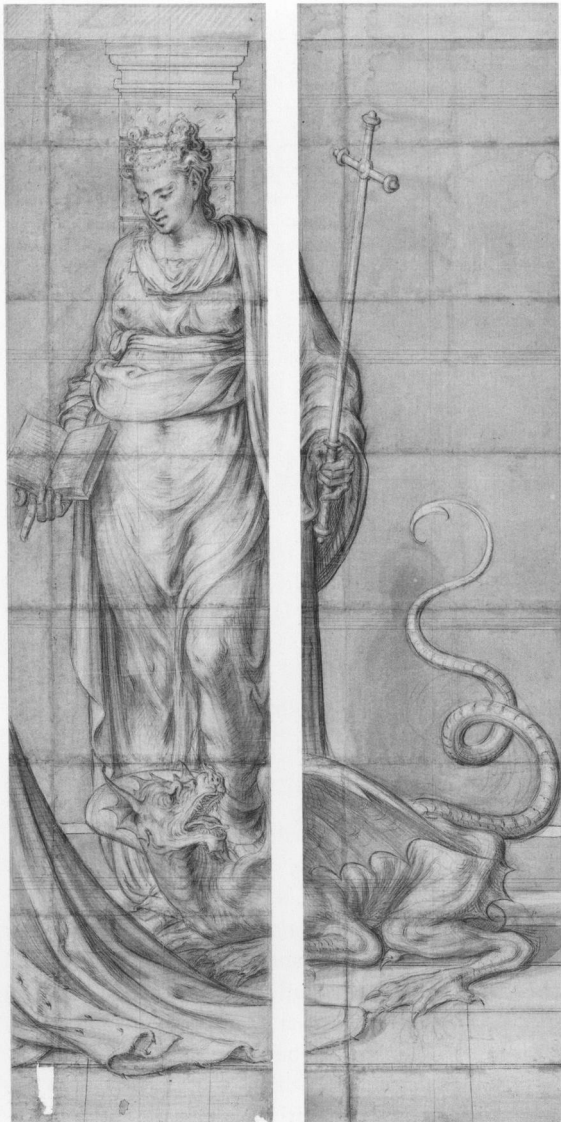
12 Hieronymus Wierix after Maerten de Vos, *St Michael vanquishing Satan*, engraving, 1585

scene of Elijah and the donor's border in the prominence of her patron saint, Margaret of Antioch, the princess who converted to the true faith and made a sign of the Cross to overcome the devil that appeared to her in the prison into which she had been cast for her beliefs (fig. 13).¹⁹

This proposed politico-religious interpretation of the donor's border combined with the Old Testament scene, which between them present Margaret of Parma as defender of the Catholic church and adversary of heresy, would not have escaped many contemporary observers. The first time one comes across such an interpretation of this element of Margaret's window is at the beginning of the eighteenth century in Ignatius Walvis's *Beschrij-*

Gemäldegalerie Alter Meister in Dresden (inv. nr. 1941) dates from 1545 and comes from the Torgauer Schlosskapelle.

19 L. Goosen, *Van Afra tot de Zevenslapers: heiligen in religie en kunsten*, Nijmegen 2002, pp. 243, 244.



13 Wouter Crabeth, *St Margaret treading the dragon underfoot*, detail of fig. 6

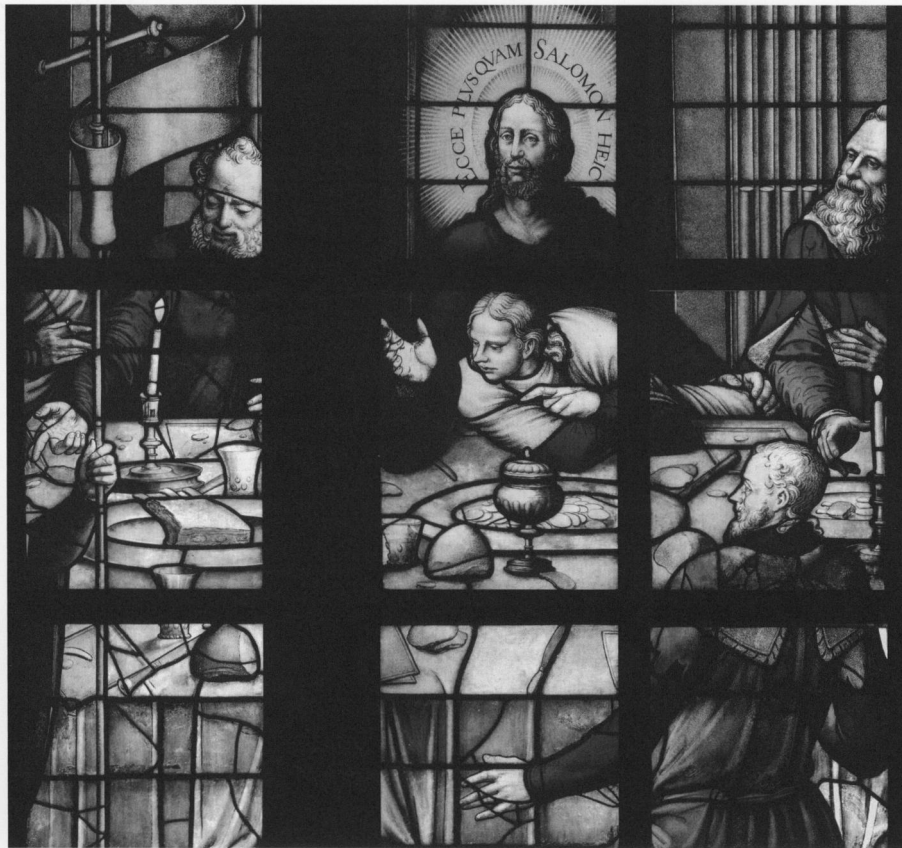
20 I. Walvis, *Beschrijving der stad Gouda*, 2 vols., Gouda & Leiden 1713, vol. 2, p. 72: "Een naukeurig bezeffer merkt op 't oog, dat het *Elias offer* en *Christus Voetwassching* met goeden voordacht hier geschildert zijn wanneer de nieuwe religie drift, zo veele opschuddinge in Nederland reeds begon te baaren. *Elias offer* beschaamde *baals* leeraren en leerlingen, en bevestigde hem en sijne leere, door een kenteken van een goddelijke wonderdaad."

ving der stad Gouda of 1713, who wrote that "an attentive observer immediately realizes that *Elijah's sacrifice* and *Christ washing the disciples' feet* were represented here with a clear intention at a time when the new religious passion was already beginning to create so much upheaval in the Low Countries. *Elijah's sacrifice* shamed Baal's teachers and followers, and confirmed him and his teaching through a sign of a divine miracle."²⁰

Given the originality of the visual program it is only logical to assume that the stories to be depicted were chosen by advisers trained in theology who were associated with the court in Brussels. We can also assume that Margaret was kept informed of the design of her window and that she was broadly in agreement with the image of her that it was to present. It is by no means impossible, for that matter, that she contributed suggestions herself.

We know from her correspondence with Philip in Spain that she regarded the defense of the Catholic religion and the battle against heresy as one of her overriding tasks. Her letters testify to a continuing and engaged concern with religious matters. She regularly describes the progress that was being made with the appointment of bishops to the new dioceses created on Philip's orders in 1559, and she also reports on individual cases of heresy and the associated sentences that had been and were about to be carried out. If religious problems arose, she wrote to her half-brother on 17 March 1560, "I shall ensure most earnestly that the necessary steps be taken. Several executions have been carried out in Antwerp recently, and recently a few more Calvinists have been seized. The margrave is making great haste with their prosecution at our continued insistence."²¹ She goes on to speak of the religious troubles in Friesland, where two priests had been arrested on suspicion of heresy, and of similar problems in Zeeland and Trèves. Philip, though, was never satisfied. "Madame, my good sister," he began on 31 October 1560, "although I have noted most clearly from various of your letters that you take a particular interest in every case of heresy and every offense against

21 M. Gachard (ed.), *Correspondance de Marguerite d'Autriche, Duchesse de Parme, avec Philippe II*, 3 vols., 1867–81, vol. 1, pp. 137–38: "...je sollicite extrêmement que l'on y face les diligences requises. Et s'en est fait en Anvers exécution de plusieurs depuis quelque temps en çà, et freschement s'en sont pris d'autres, mesmes calvinistes, contre lesquels le marcgrave procède assez vivement, et d'icy il en est continuellement sollicité."



14 Dirck Crabeth, *Christ at the Last Supper*, detail of fig. 4

our holy faith,... yet I cannot refrain from commending this matter to your attention once again as earnestly as I can because of the special and honorable obligation that I have to God and of the service I owe him, and because of the salvation of the souls of my good subjects.”²²

TPOLOGY AND HUMANISM In common with the king's window, the references to the donor's politico-religious ideals appear to be embodied in the Old Testament scene, while the one from the New Testament in the center is primarily an expression of the devotional aspect. In the king's window the two complexes of meaning — the politico-religious and the devotional — are very clearly distinguished by the detailed inscriptions. We have al-

ready examined the political dimension. Solomon is paraded as the biblical predecessor of Philip II, who inherits Solomon's good qualities and abilities by association.

However, in the customary typological exegesis of the Bible, Solomon is primarily an Old Testament prefiguration of Jesus Christ, and that relationship, too, was an important consideration for the creators of the iconography, as can be seen from the inscriptions on the dais on which Solomon is kneeling: “ECCE SALOMON HEIC” (Behold, Solomon is here; fig. 4) and in Christ's halo in the Last Supper scene below: “ECCE PLUSQUAM SALOMON HEIC” (Behold, a greater than Solomon is here; fig. 14). Since these words were taken from Matthew 12:28–45, where Christ tells the scribes that he is the Redeemer who is

²² Gachard, op. cit. (note 21), vol. 1, p. 312: “Madame ma bonne soeur, combien que je me sois assez clèrement apperçeu, par diverses voz lettres, du soing particulier que vous tenez au chastoy exempleaire des hérétiques et desvoyez de nostre sainte foy... je n'ay peu délaisser,

pour l'obligation singulière que j'ay à l'honneur et service de Dieu et au salut des âmes de mes bons subjectz, de vous encores recommander cet affaire autant qu'il m'est possible.”



15 Philips Galle, *Viglius van Aytta*, c. 1580

greater than both the prophet Jonah and King Solomon, this introduces an emphasis that gives a new twist to the traditional typological message. The emphasis is usually on the fulfillment of the prophecy, which establishes a kind of magical connection between the stories of the Old and New Testaments, but here the focus has been shifted to the qualitative difference between the ages before and after the coming of Christ. The nature of that difference is clarified by Philip's request, which is the real subject of the Last Supper scene. When he said "Lord, shew us the Father, and it sufficeth us," Christ replied: "... do you not know me, Philip? He that hath seen me hath seen the Father." The difference with the Old Testament king lies

in Christ's divinity. To put it in a nutshell: politically this window makes a pronouncement about Philip as king, but theologically it makes a pronouncement about Christ as the Redeemer.

The emphasis on the message of this chapter of the Bible through the use of typological combinations never before encountered in art history points to the involvement of scholarly, humanist advisers. Solomon as a predecessor of Christ may have been a customary combination, but Solomon's *Dedication of the Temple* combined with Philip's request really was something new, not to mention *Elijah's sacrifice* as a prefiguration of *Christ washing the disciples' feet* in Margaret of Parma's window. The much-quoted models of the *Biblia pauperum* or the *Speculum humanae salvationis* are clearly inadequate here.

This innovative typological approach probably had its roots in the circles around the Brussels court of Philip II and Margaret of Parma. Wim de Groot and Jan van Damme made a convincing case a few years ago that the leading humanist at the court, Viglius van Aytta (fig. 15), president of the Secret Council under Charles V, Philip II and Margaret of Parma, was the intermediary between Brussels and Gouda for the reglazing of St John's. His official function put him in the ideal position as the broker between Gouda and the king, and later the regent. On top of that, he had been a fellow student of George van Egmond, Bishop of Utrecht, for both had attended the *collegium trilingue* at Louvain University.²³ Viglius was also in close touch with Herman Lethmaet, the Utrecht canon from Gouda (and also an alumnus of Louvain), who mediated in the donation of other windows.²⁴

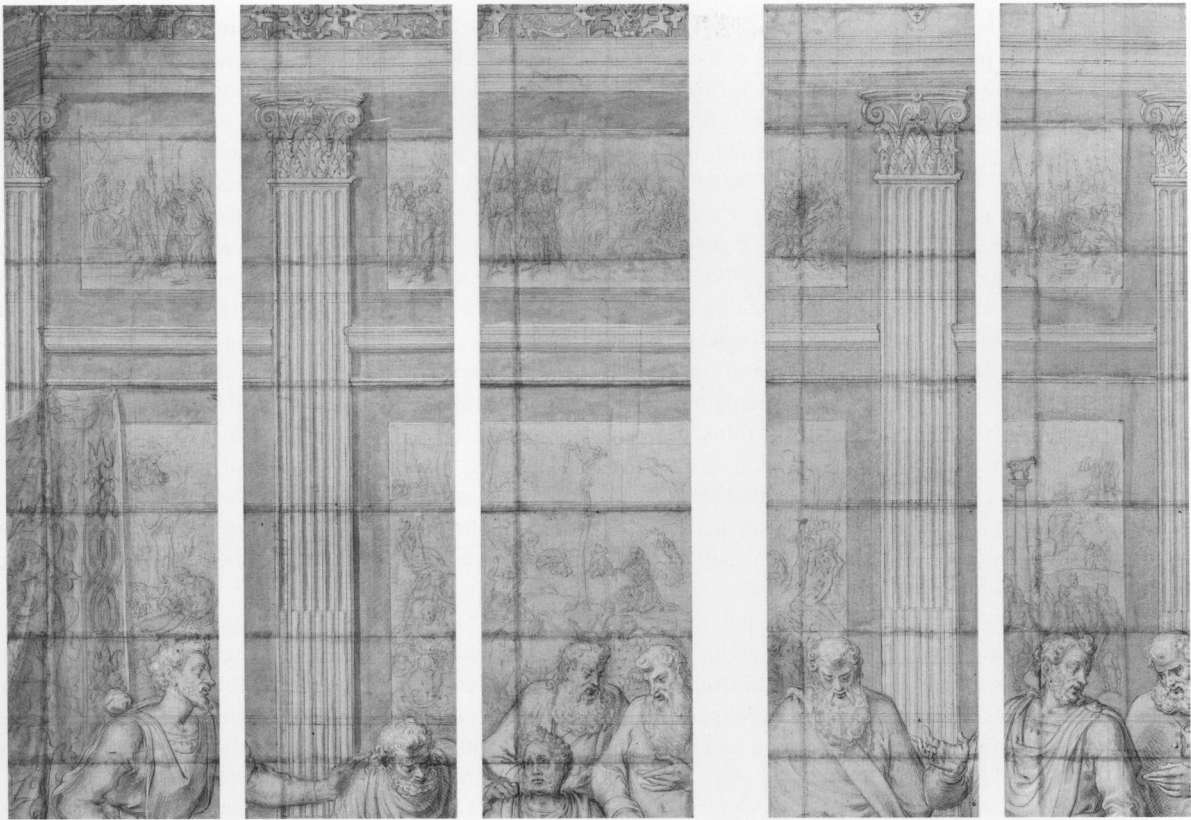
There are many indications of Viglius's involvement. In the year before the execution of the king's window, emissaries of his were busily going backwards and forwards between Brussels and Gouda, where they always received a warm welcome. In addition, a drawing of "the Gouda window" was discovered among Viglius's papers after his death. De Groot suspects that Viglius's influence was not limited to the King's window alone, but also extended to other windows in Gouda.²⁵ That seems particularly plausible in the case of Margaret's window.

²³ F. Postma, *Viglius van Aytta: de jaren met Granvelle 1549–1564*, Zutphen 2000, p. 145.

²⁴ J. van Damme, "The donation of the seventh window: a Burgundian-Habsburg tradition and the role of Viglius van Aytta," in de Groot, *op. cit.* (note 10), pp. 130–44. The king's window was also called the sev-

enth window because that was its number in the seventeenth-century conducted tour of the church.

²⁵ W. de Groot, "Viglius van Aytta and the iconography of the seventh window, and his protective influence during the Iconoclasm of 1566 in Gouda," in de Groot, *op. cit.* (note 10), pp. 145–52.



16 Wouter Crabeth, *Scenes from the life of Moses* in the background of *Christ washing the disciples' feet*, detail of the cartoon for Margaret of Parma's window. Gouda, Sint Janskerk

His involvement would not only help explain her willingness to make a donation to Gouda but also the iconographic unity between the two large Habsburg donations to the Church of St John. I suspect that Viglius, who was a lawyer by training, did not devise the programs for the two windows completely by himself. It was his custom to consult the theological faculty at Louvain on almost every religious issue that came his way, so it is very likely that he did so here as well.²⁶

AUGUSTINE, THE BIBLE AND LOUVAIN UNIVERSITY No matter who exactly was behind it, the original use of the typology in Margaret's window displays the same careful thought as was applied in the king's window. If anything, matters were even more complex, for in her window there are not only typological connections between the

two main scenes, but also between the Old and the New Testaments within the separate scenes. Mention has already been made of the inclusion of a vision from Revelation in *Elijah's sacrifice*, with the punishment of the priests of Baal being paralleled by the punishment of Satan and his false prophets as described by St John.

The scene of *Christ washing the disciples' feet* also has an internal typological element in the shape of six scenes, seemingly marble reliefs, on the wall of the room where the event is taking place. They are all episodes from the life of Moses: *Moses and Aaron before Pharaoh*, *The burning bush*, *The crossing of the Red Sea*, *The fall of manna*, *The brazen serpent* and *The dance around the golden calf* (fig. 16). The most important point is that these scenes jointly stand for the book of Exodus, which describes the escape from Egypt that is commemorated by Jews at Passover,

²⁶ Postma, *op. cit.* (note 23), pp. 81–90, 137–50.

which is when the Last Supper took place. This accounts for the prominent position of *The crossing of the Red Sea* at top center on the wall. *The fall of manna* is directly associated with the Passover meal, while traditionally *The brazen serpent* is a prefiguration of the Crucifixion.

The typological connection between *Christ washing the disciples' feet* and the exodus from Egypt was established in Augustine's treatises on St John's gospel. The first sentence in the biblical account reads: "Now before the feast of the passover, when Jesus knew that his hour was come that he should depart out of this world unto the Father, having loved his own which were in the world, he loved them unto the end." Augustine explains this as follows: "Pascha (passover) is not, as some think, a Greek noun, but a Hebrew: and yet there occurs in this noun a very suitable kind of accordance in the two languages. For inasmuch as the Greek word *paschein* means *to suffer*, therefore *pascha* has been supposed to mean suffering, as if the noun derived its name from His passion: but in its own language, that is, in Hebrew, *pascha* means passover; because the *pascha* was then celebrated for the first time by God's people, when, in their flight from Egypt, they *passed over* the Red Sea. And now that prophetic emblem is fulfilled in truth, when Christ is led as a sheep to the slaughter."²⁷

It is worth following Augustine's commentary a little further, above all because his interpretation leads to a formulation of a qualitative difference between the Old and New Testaments of the kind we noted in the king's window. It begins when he discusses the meaning of the second part of the sentence. "He loved them unto the end. In order, doubtless, that they also, through that love of His, might pass from this world where they now were, to their Head who had passed hence before them. For what mean these words, to the end, but just to Christ? For Christ is the end of the law, says the apostle, for righteousness to every one that believes. Romans 10:4." In other words, Christ, through his love, renews the Old Law of Moses so that mankind could afterwards live "under grace."

Like Solomon and Moses, Elijah had long been an important prefiguration of Christ in the typological ex-

egesis. In the visual arts his ascent into heaven in a fiery chariot (2 Kings 2:1–18) was often linked to Christ's Ascension, but as noted above, the combination of *Elijah's sacrifice* with *Christ washing the disciples' feet* was completely new. Nor is there an obvious formal similarity between them, as there is in most of the traditional typologies. We have already seen that the contrast between the Law and Grace was stressed in *Christ washing the disciples' feet*, in which the key is Christ's love for his disciples and for mankind, and his resulting sacrifice. That message is reinforced by linking the scene to *Elijah's sacrifice*, for there we see the vengeful God of the Old Testament (the 3,000 priests of Baal were slaughtered immediately after the failure of their sacrifice). In Margaret's window, like the king's, it is thus a question of the qualitative difference between the Old and the New Testaments. As Augustine put it so pithily: "Put very briefly, the difference between the two testaments can best be expressed in two words: fear and love."²⁸

At first sight, the emphasis on the biblical text that is so apparent in the Gouda program, and the exegesis that was evidently based on Augustine, evoke associations with Erasmus and Luther, but it is hard to imagine that the purpose of a program as prestigious as the one in Gouda, with its gifts from the most prominent defenders of the Catholic faith like Philip and Margaret, was to air a kind of veiled Reformational message. Nor is such a hypothesis necessary when one realizes that these two aspects fitted within a far wider context, for in the first half of the sixteenth century most theologians, and that included Catholic ones, were taking a renewed interest in the fathers of the church and the original text of the Bible. "The renewed interest in Augustine at the end of the Middle Ages and the early modern era, which thoroughly influenced Luther's, Calvin's and the other reformers' interpretation of the Scriptures, also led the Louvain theologians to a specific focus on the Church fathers, not least in their Bible commentaries," according to François.²⁹

Tangible political results were expected from that interest. Up until the 1550s Viglius van Aytta, Margaret's sheet anchor, had been a linchpin in the attempts by

²⁷ Augustine of Hippo, *Tractatus in Iohannem* 55. For an English translation see <http://www.newadvent.org/fathers/1701055.htm>.

²⁸ Augustine of Hippo, *Contra Adimantum Manichaei discipulum Liber Unus*; see http://www.augustinus.it/latino/controllo_adimanto/controllo_adimanto.htm.

²⁹ W. François, "Augustine and the golden age of biblical scholarship in Louvain (1550–1650)," in B. Gordon and M. McLean (eds.), *Shaping the Bible in the Reformation: books, scholars and their readers in the sixteenth century*, Leiden 2012.

Charles v and Philip II to reconcile the Catholic church with the Reformation parties. He, personally, was an adherent of Georgius Cassander, an Irenian theologian who believed that the key to reconciliation lay in study of the Bible and the early church fathers, whom all parties acknowledged were the most important sources.³⁰ In order to encourage that study, Charles v supported the theological faculty at Louvain financially and by appointing professors. When the Council of Trent declared on 8 April 1546 that the Vulgate was the only text of the Bible that was sanctioned by the Catholic church, the emperor immediately ordered the composition of a critical edition that would be the standard for Christendom everywhere.³¹

One important product of this more intense study of the Bible and the church fathers in the Catholic camp was the commentary of 1543 on St John's gospel by the Franciscan Franciscus Titelmans, which evidently enjoyed great authority, judging by the number of reprints it went through. In the best humanist tradition, Titelmans had a complete grasp of all three languages of the Bible and taught at the theological faculty in Louvain. His commentary on the chapter with the washing of the disciples's feet supports an interpretation of the typological logic of Margaret's window as set out above. After paraphrasing the chapter Titelmans supplies an annotated exegesis that sums up the essence of the opening sentence (John 13:1) as follows: "*In finem dilexit eos*. Augustinus in finem interpretatur: in Christum, iuxta illud: *Finis legis Christus*" ("He loved them unto the end". Augustine interprets 'unto the end' as the end of Christ, and adds: 'Christ is the end of the law').³² Augustine is repeatedly cited in the other annotations (for example, on the question of whether Peter was the first of the disciples to have his feet washed by Christ), but the most telling passage is Titelmans's elucidation of his commentary on Christ's words at the end of the chapter: "A new commandment I give unto you, That ye love one another; as I have loved you, that ye also love one another." (John 13:34). Titelmans asks how Christ could say that this was a new commandment, since it was already one of the Ten

Commandments: "Love thy neighbor as thyself." However, he followed Augustine by coming to the conclusion that the crux lies in the words "as I have loved you." That is the innovation. The old commandment said that one should love one's neighbor as one's fellow man, but Christ showed man the love of God.³³

THE ART OF THE EARLY COUNTER-REFORMATION IN THE LOW COUNTRIES It is usually said that Counter-Reformation religious art was introduced in the Low Countries with the conquest of Antwerp by Alessandro Farnese in 1585, after the Iconoclasm and the period of Protestant government. It has more or less tacitly been assumed that the Catholic church was in such a state of decay just before the Iconoclasm that no reforms of any significance could take place until the separation of the Protestant and Catholic parts of the Low Countries was a fact. That applies equally to Knipping's classic *De iconographie van de contrareformatie in de Nederlanden* of 1939 and to Vlieghe's recent volume on Flemish art in the *Pelican history of art* series.³⁴ In my own book on art for the Catholic church in the Dutch Republic I maintain that the Counter-Reformation did not begin there until around 1600, because the Dutch Catholics had even more obstacles to overcome than their southern neighbors did.³⁵

The Gouda windows, though, remind us that even before the Iconoclasm there was a purposeful program of renewal in the Catholic church that had almost immediate repercussions for art, particularly when that art was commissioned by the Habsburg rulers. The two great transept windows are reflections of both the political battle against the Reformation and the endeavor to reform devotion. The first aspect is most apparent in the inscriptions in the bottom compartments and in the Old Testament scenes at the top. As a result, the king's window of 1557 and Margaret's of 1562 proclaim that the house of Habsburg intends to put religious affairs in order. Philip's identification with Solomon holds the promise that religious peace will swiftly return, thanks to the king's wisdom, while *Elijah's sacrifice* in his regent's window

30 Postma, op. cit. (note 23), pp. 139–40, 205–07.

31 François, op. cit. (note 29).

32 F. Titelmans, *Elucidatio paraphrastica in sanctum Christi Evangelium secundum Iohannem*, Antwerp 1543, p. 241 v.

33 Ibid., p. 231.

34 J.B. Knipping, *De iconografie van de contra-reformatie in de Neder-*

landen, 2 vols., Hilversum 1939–40 (English edition: *Iconography of the Counter Reformation in the Netherlands*, Nieuwkoop 1974); H. Vlieghe, *Flemish art and architecture*, New Haven 1998.

35 X. van Eck, *Clandestine splendor: paintings for the Catholic Church in the Dutch Republic*, Zwolle 2008, pp. 24–27.

stresses the hope that the heretics will be defeated with God's aid.

The second aspect, the reform of devotion, seems more difficult to recognize as Counter-Reformational at first sight, because that art has been given a different look in the standard art-historical works. Their "typically Counter-Reformation art," usually exemplified by works by Caravaggio and Rubens, had evolved from the directives framed by authors like Molina and Charles Borromeo at the end of the sixteenth century. Important features include the glorification of the Catholic church as an institution, the liturgy, the sacraments, and of course the veneration of the Virgin Mary and the saints — all points on which the Catholic church set itself apart from the Protestants.³⁶

In the Gouda windows the renewal of the iconography was still being sought in a careful reading of the Bible in a way that had its roots in the humanist method introduced by Erasmus but which, as I have tried to show, was in fact quintessentially Catholic, and even closely related to the results of the early sittings of the Council of Trent. That strictly biblical iconography was accompanied by a wealth of Latin quotations from the Vulgate, particularly in the windows by Dirck Crabeth (figs. 5, 14), which testify to a concern for the biblical text similar to that paid to it at Louvain University. Wouter Crabeth used fewer inscriptions than Dirck did, but even in his work one finds an indication that the choice of the language of the Bible was an important consideration. At bottom left in *Elijah's sacrifice* he added a Latin reference to the relevant Bible passage in large letters on a block of stone in the foreground: "III Regum Caput xviii".³⁷ Interestingly, the same reference is found on the cartoon, but this time in Dutch: "III coning xviii".

Given the important part that the Brussels court and leading churchmen played in the conception of the Gouda windows, it would be logical to assume that the early Counter-Reformation tendencies that are evident there would also be detectable outside Gouda. This is why I believe that there are sufficient grounds for further study of what I will provisionally call "the early phase of Counter-Reformation art in the Low Countries," which roughly covers the third quarter of the sixteenth centu-

ry — from the first session of the Council of Trent until the establishment of the first Protestant administrations in the various cities. I think it would be worth adopting this viewpoint when taking another good look at the religious art of Frans Floris, Pieter Aertsen, Frans and Pieter Pourbus, Maarten van Heemskerck, Aert Pietersz, Anthonie Blocklandt and the other artists of their generation.

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³⁶ E. Mâle, *L'art religieux après le Concile de Trente*, Paris 1932; J. van Laarhoven, *De beeldtaal van de christelijke kunst*, Nijmegen 1992, pp. 225–76.

³⁷ The verse is nowadays known as 1 Kings 18, but books 1 and 2 Samuel in the Vulgate are titled 1 and 2 Kings, and the present 1 and 2 Kings were called 3 and 4 Kings.