PRINTS AND THE STATUS OF IMAGES IN FLANDERS

The role of the print in the transmission and diffusion of images and styles has not, in general, been overlooked. Prints have always been acknowledged — often by those whose starting point is painting and sculpture — as providing important information about the ways in which particular images and styles may be transmitted. In the specific fields of Dutch and Flemish art of the seventeenth century, recent research has examined the topic in a variety of new and fruitful ways, with some notable results. Christian Tümpel has revolutionized Rembrandt research by showing how a detailed examination of Rembrandt's debt to sixteenth century Netherlandish prints — particularly after artists like Marten van Heemskerck and Marten de Vos — may illuminate some of the more puzzling aspects of his iconography; while in the field of Rubens prints, Konrad Renger has made a special study of the considerable number of surviving proofs and counterproofs which Rubens touched up, improved and otherwise altered with his own hand, and he has been able to plot with extraordinary precision that artist's role in the making and supervision of prints after his own composition.

On the face of it, the aim of studying the role of prints in the diffusion of images and styles seems fairly straightforward; but the results are often left to remain on the level of the more or less simple isolation of prototypes and intermediaries. The present paper is predicated on the belief that the plotting of stylistic transmission is not in itself a useful exercise, but that it receives its justification from the consideration of its purpose. The aim, therefore, is not so much to provide illustrations of the diffusion of images and styles through the medium of prints, but to examine some of the implications of the problem and to suggest the potential of the comparative method on which it is based.

An attempt will be made in the following to signal a few of the ways in which prints may illuminate the status of images and to consider some of the problems which such an approach may generate. Discussion, therefore, will centre round a series of methodological proposals, rather than present a detailed argument of a particular case. By «status of images» is meant the function of images, both their real and their latent function, both how images were intended to be used and how they were actually used. But it is not only the functional role of images that is envisaged by this term. It is also intended to refer to what one
might call the relative status of images, that is, their relation to each other both in terms of their effectiveness and in terms of their place on an aesthetic scale, with the analysis always proceeding from the point of view of the beholder, and, more broadly speaking, from the social context of images. In this respect the approach is deliberately dialectical.

Much of the evidence for problems of this nature is provided by popular prints and reproductive engravings. The present paper will consider a number of prints produced in Flanders in the seventeenth century in order to exemplify the potential of that evidence. No claim will be made for the uniqueness of most of the phenomena to be discussed — similar phenomena may be observed in the case of prints after any number of artists from Raphael onwards. Such prints have occasionally been used to illustrate the genesis or influence of other works (usually — and revealingly — of paintings); but they have rarely been considered in their own right. Even in the case of this paper they will constantly be set beside the work of the artist who dominated the whole period; but it would be wrong to diminish their role as independent components of a particular visual culture and as examples of its range.

We may begin with a class of images that is unfamiliar to most art historians, although they are well known to folklorists and students of popular imagery. Pilgrimage pennants began to be produced in large quantities in the latter half of the sixteenth century and continued to enjoy considerable popularity up until well into the seventeenth. Their appearance on prints such as the engraving after Bruegel of the St George's Day Fair (fig. 43) — and the wide variety of their recent usage demonstrate the persistence of a type of printed image that is still occasionally to be found in Flanders. These images provide a rich store of material, but only a few issues relevant to the present discussion will be raised here.

The quality of their execution varies enormously: towards the one end of the scale one finds comparatively rudimentary representations such as the St Martin from Peutie (fig. 44), probably dating from the third quarter of the seventeenth century. It is to images such as this — and not only to paintings of the subject — that one may turn when considering the variations of popular Iconographic and stylistic taste. Similarly, it is worth remembering that some of the finest woodcutters and engravers of the period were engaged in the production of these pennants. Thus, Jan Christoffel Jegher, the son of the great woodcutter who worked under Rubens’s supervision, was also responsible for rather crudely cut images such as the pennant from Horst (fig. 45), although the actual cutting may have been left to a member of the shop. It is works such as this, as well as his numerous book illustrations, that appear to have been the main source of Jegher’s livelihood. Indeed, in the case of the pilgrimage pennants one is quite well supplied with details of prices, quantities printed, licences, and so forth — the kind of information about prints that one often wishes for but is so rarely available. Five thousand impressions of a single edition does not appear to have been an unusual quantity in the seventeenth century, and prices — predictably — were extraordinarily low. Thus the church accounts of Belsele in East Flanders for 1610 record that for nine dozen blazons in the shape of a heart, four dozen tin pennants and four dozen paper ones they paid just over twelve stuivers, that is a little over three-fifths of one guilder.

There are other aspects of the Jegher woodcut which may be of interest to the historian of art concerned with the status of images. Of a variety of possibilities, two obvious features may be mentioned. It testifies, for example, to the extraordinary persistence of old-fashioned landscape schemata; and it reflects — and presumably contributes to — the standardization of both the depiction and adornment of those miraculous images of the Madonna that became so widespread a feature of devotional life from the beginning of the seventeenth century onwards.

Far more refined in execution than the two preceding pennants is the St Andrew from Balen-Neet (fig. 46); its quality is sufficiently refined to have come from one of the major shops of reproductive engraving of the period. This is the other end of the aesthetic scale, and it has been illustrated here not only as a reflection of the variation in quality of the pennants, but also as a striking example of the influence of Rubens on everyday representation — one may consider not only the figure of the saint himself, but also the depiction of the putti, a feature to which further allusion will be made below. By their very nature, these objects contributed even further to the dissemination of Rubensian stylistic modes. They are carried home by pilgrims and accumulated by them, and their function varies very widely indeed. It ranges from that of a souvenir to that of a fetish: «Touched by the relics of St Elizabeth» reads an inscription on a seventeenth century pennant from Zeesel; «this pennant touched the miraculous image of Our Lady at Hal» reads another; and «this image of Notre-Dame of Hal miraculously delivers souls from purgatory» asserts an eighteenth century example also from Hal. The anthropological implications of such statements are self-evidently rich; our present concern, however, is not with the transmission of magical powers but with that of images and styles. As souvenirs kept or displayed in the most unpretentious and mundane of ways, these images may not have stamped themselves on the imagination, but tacit account at least should be taken of the possible subliminal consequences of cherishing and fingering these engraved records of some of the central journeys in the lives of vast numbers of people in the seventeenth century.

Much the same may be suggested of the dissemination of images and styles by the prayer cards of the period. There are far too many kinds to be listed here, and the cruder forms are well known, from the countless small rectangular images of favourite Madonnas, to the innumerable crucifixions and instruments of the passion. Perhaps less well
known are those images which are taken directly from Rubens and which appear to have served similar functions to the prayer cards. Individual figures were often lifted out of compositions and placed against plain white backgrounds, to throw them into the kind of relief required by the genre, in certain cases bestowing upon them some of the qualities of the Andachtsbild. Amongst the finest examples is the St. Catherine engraving by Schelte à Bolswert (fig. 47), but more typical — to move to the other end of the scale — are the extraordinary Jesuit adaptations (figs. 48 and 49) of the lower half Rubens’s altarpiece of St. Teresa Interceding for St. Bernardino de Mendoza (fig. 50). Such adaptations demonstrate not only the way in which Rubens’s style could be schematized for popular consumption, but also those aspects of his work which appealed to popular taste. The souls withering in purgatory are certainly a suitable subject for a prayer card, but they may also be taken to be representative of the appeal exercised by Rubens’s depictions of more or less naked figures withering or gesturing in striking or novel poses. The same symptom may be observed in the multitude of copies in one form or another of the full range of Rubens’s eschatological subjects; but this is another issue.

It is not surprising that Rubens’s representations of Christ on the Cross should have served as a model for such quantities of reproductive engravings, but here too one should pause to consider the variety of images concerned. On the one hand one finds pietistic images of the commonest type — though often executed with considerable finesse (fig. 51) — while on the other there are far larger works, which serve an entirely different function, of which Bolswert’s print dedicated (by the publisher, Martinus van der Enden) to Bartolomeo de los Ríos a good example (fig. 52). At least part of the motivation for such prints was the expression of admiration for the dedicatary, here described, as often, as a «favourer of the arts».

There are also prints which are conceived on a more ambitious scale than the prayer card type, but which nonetheless seem to partake, to some extent at least, of the nature of the smaller images. Such a work is Pontius’s engraving after Rubens’s St. Roch altarpiece in Aalst (fig. 53), where the inscription «Sancte Roche ora pro nobis» reminds one very clearly of its devotional function. It would be mistaken to regard the inscription simply as an adiphoron, or as an easy way of conforming to a convention which required a caption beneath such prints, for almost every other image of the large reproductive type is provided either with an appropriate biblical quotation or with a dedication to a notable contemporary. In any case, the importance of considering the implications of captions and titles on prints should be stressed.

At this stage it may be objected that these images are being seen not in their own right, but as reflecting the work of a single great artist. In some respects the charge would be justified, but it can be countered by the fact that Rubens was far more widely reproduced than any other Flemish master of the seventeenth century. That in itself is of some significance when one considers his role in the formation and development of the expectations of what images were supposed to be like and of how they most effectively function. Furthermore, he provides a secure visual reference point against which one may plot the vagaries of stylistic taste. In order to exemplify this observation, a whole series of works showing a bearded male saint adoring the Christ child will be adduced here. The subject in itself provides testimony of a particular form of Counter Reformation sentimentality, of which other examples will emerge in the course of this paper, but for the moment we may simply note some transformations of closely related motifs.

Rubens’s painting of St. Francis Receiving the Infant Christ (fig. 54) was changed by Michel Lasne into a St. Francis of Paola (fig. 55), simply by including the Minim Friars’ emblem Charitas and adorning their capular to the habit of the Capuchins. Lasne himself is one of the least known but most important of the Rubens engravers, and his rather harsh and schematized manner of engraving (it is even more schematic than usual) appears in the still more idiosyncratic print after another of Rubens’s paintings of the theme of St. Francis Receiving the Christ Child (fig. 56). Both these works were published by Theodor Galle, and one should compare them with the later copy after the second of these paintings, engraved by Cornelis Visscher and published by F. de Wit (fig. 57), as a striking illustration of the way in which a composition by Rubens could be adapted in the direction of a greater degree of emotionalism and overt sentiment. Such characteristics are accompanied by an attempt at heightened sweetness — one has only to look at the Madonna’s face and free-flowing hair — and elsewhere: compare the elongated toes and fingers of the two figures with the knotty joints of both the original and Lasne’s adaptation. That we find such qualities almost sickly is beside the point; what is important to gauge in this case is the divergence from the archetype as a means of assessing the aesthetic requirements and expectations of certain sections of the populace.

Although the subject of the next illustration (fig. 58) is ostensibly St. Joseph as Patron of the Carmelite Order, the appeal of the image — as well as its devotional content — depended on the charms of the Infant Christ and the putti. This is not the place to discuss the significance of putti as bearers of specific devotional messages — and here they do so quite literally — but it should be observed that the central part of the composition is attributable to Rubens. The lost painting from which it is derived was made for the Discalced Carmelites at Bruges near Namur, but the rest of the composition is clearly a later invention. Rubens cannot have been responsible for either the ornamental pedestal, or the various putti, or the two medallions. It is characteristic of his art that he eschews the kind of explicitness implied by these medallions, just as he abstains from most of the varieties of literal allegorization that one finds in emblem books and many
of the illustrated devotional handbooks. Such adaptations of Rubens inventions are symptomatic of the polarities of high and low taste — the terms are used without the presupposition of a value judgment — and so are engravings like the St. Hildegardis (fig. 59) 48, despite the dedication to the Benedictine Abbot Antonius de Winche. Here the Rubens invention has been enclosed in a type of ornament that overtly spells out its devotional implications and is far more florid than anything in Rubens's own work. It may be remarked that the print of St. Joseph Carrying the Christ Child also served one of the functions to which illusion has already been made. Printed at the bottom of the sheet is a prayer — in two languages — for which the Bishop of Antwerp, Ambrosius Capello, promised forty days indulgence. Engravings such as this one could therefore serve the same erotic function as the medieval images of the Maria in Sole, to take only one example of an image used as a specific type of encouragement to piety and prayer 41.

All these phenomena are combined in the striking sheet showing the Holy Family in a wreath of strapwork and flowers (fig. 60) 42. Here is the emphasis on the childhood of Christ which played so important a part in Counter Reformation piety 43; here is the kind of ornament which both enhanced the central image and contributed to the dissemination of the iconographic type — the central image — represents. As in the case of the Madonnas in Flower Garlands painted by Jan Brueghel, Hendrik van Balen and Rubens from the beginning of the century onwards, the garland enhances the status of the image in two different but related ways: it concentrates attention on the subject it encloses, but it also suggests the preciousness of the central image, of the image as image 44. The fact that the present sheet is printed from two separate plates indicates the reutilization of a work which had previously had an entirely different function; and the result is an elevation in status of the central image from its original prayer card type. Apart from anything else, such works testify to a greatly increased belief in the intrinsic worth and significance of religious images as such — a belief which had been undermined in the sixteenth century 45 but was revived with ever greater strength from the beginning of the seventeenth century onwards. One has only to think of the importance attached to those many otherwise negligible images which became the centre of cultic adoration in the great churches of Rome and the pilgrimage centres of the Netherlands. Indeed, Rubens first made his mark with a work involving such an image, when he enclosed the Madonna della Vallicella in a garland of angels 46.

At this stage we should turn to the implications of book illustration for the status of images. One of the most practical tasks for the researcher in this area would be to make a numerical assessment of the adaptations of Rubens compositions in illustrated books, classifying them according to the type of work concerned. In the field of devotional handbooks it should be possible to gain some idea of both the kinds of audience for which they were destined and their circulation; and the many copies and adaptations in the pocket catechisms, prayer books and other devotional vade-mecums of writers like the immensely popular Father Andries 47 offer a rich store of material that has yet to be exploited. Instances of the popular pietistic reutilization of Rubens's work are legion; as a completely random example one of the adaptations of the Rouen Adoration of the Shepherds 48 has been chosen here (fig. 61) 49. The painting was bought by the Buchenau Aachen 50. Vorsterman's engraving of 1620 (fig. 62) 51 was dedicated — by Rubens — to Pieter Peccius, the Chancellor of Brabant 52; while the humble engraving — instantly recognizable as a product of the important Boudicca workshop — presumably came from the pages of a popular devotional work aimed at the lower end of the market. Its inscriptions, not surprisingly, are in the vernacular alone, and the emphasis is yet again on the infancy of Christ, as the almost assertive use of the diminutive makes clear.

Alongside this kind of unpretentious illustration one may set the sort of work that emerged from the shops of the great Dutch publishers and engravers like Visscher. The sumptuous illustrated bibles they produced were intended for wide circulation — as can be judged from the fact that the captions are often in French, German and English as well as in Latin and Dutch — and although they catered primarily for the Protestant market, they still provide remarkable indices of pictorial taste at the upper end of the market 53. Reproduced in them on a grand scale are illustrations by a great variety of engravers, from sixteenth century artists like Marten de Vos to contemporary Dutch ones, as well as the inevitable Flemish masters 54. To some extent this has to do with the availability of plates of the subjects concerned, but one is still left with revealing documents both of what was acceptable and what contributed to the formation of aesthetic and iconographic standards, both inside and outside the North Netherlands.

But the evidence of book illustrations also bears on a number of other issues, including several that have already been raised. It has been noted that in assessing the differences between popular prints and the work of Rubens, a striking discrepancy is to be found between the level of allegorization in each. In the former there is a tendency for every element in the allegory to be spelt out in the most literal fashion, with every stage in the process of allegorization carefully demarcated. One never finds in Rubens the hearts of every shape and form used in every possible way, the ladders, winchpresses and mirrors that so graphically illustrate the devotional message in the religious handbooks (fig. 63) 55. Thus again one encounters the polarities of high and low allegory, between its sophisticated and its cruder forms; but there are naturally many intervening stages, where the allegorical elements are spelt out with a greater or lesser degree of literalness 56.

The beginnings of this particular mode of communication in Flanders, where letters are used in a diagrammatic way in conjunction with explanatory captions or texts, are to be found in the second half of the
sixteenth century. It is favored and promoted by the Jesuits, among the best examples in this category is the body of illustrations accompanying Jeronimo Nadal's *Adnotationes et Meditaciones in Evangelia*. Here are the roots of the method that was to be exploited so fruitfully in the religious emblem literature of the seventeenth century. This mode of communication depends on literal and visual enumeration, on the making explicit of every detail in the scene, and the clear segmentation of action into components which correspond to textual divisions (fig. 64). Thus, actions are split up into their component details not only within single scenes, but also - in the case of subjects like the *Carrying of the Cross* and the *Death and Assumption of the Virgin* - across whole sequences of illustrations.

The first time that this method is adopted in allegorical illustration in the Netherlands is in Johannes David's *Veritiae Christianas de 1601*. This important work, which established the formula for a great quantity of what have usually been called religious emblem books, provides abundant evidence of a kind of representation that is emphatically explicit, rather than elliptically tacit in the way that even the allegorical works of Rubens are (fig. 65). Here the letters in the illustrations require whole passages of text to explain the moments, while the captions simply serve as mottoes or lemmata in the usual manner of emblems. Even the more straightforward subjects in this book are depicted in this denotative and enumerative way (fig. 66).

But what is the connection between such illustrations and an artist like Rubens? It is not difficult to show that a work like Nadal's must have occupied his attention, and there can be little doubt that Rubens's extraordinarily wide-ranging use of charming putti to convey serious devotional messages has its precedents not only in engravings by the Wierix brothers, but also in the book illustrations by his master, Otto van Veen. But there are possibly more important methodological implications for the student of the status of images. The engravings and woodcuts in the devotional emblem books provide evidence of an alternative mode of picturing the world that finds little or no reflection in the major painters of the time; though it is probably worth remarking that the degree of explicit allegorization increases as one descends the scale of the acknowledgedly canonical artists. In other words - to put it more crudely - the greater the artist, the lower the degree of explicit allegorization.

The basis for all such hypotheses should, ideally, be the examination and classification of the vast body of popular and reproductive prints in seventeenth century Flanders, not only because they merit investigation in their own right, but also because they provide indispensable evidence about the status of paintings in the period. Which of Rubens's works, for example, were most often reproduced? Which aspects and which elements in them received the most emphasis in the prints? If such questions can be answered then we should have an index of popular taste, as well as of Rubens's influence on it. But the point is not simply to determine the formation and variations of taste; it is to assess the position of particular images in terms of the beholder's perception of them - as aesthetic objects, as bearers of one kind of message or another, as totemic or otherwise functional objects. Thus, comparative analysis may yield much about the ways in which the prints themselves were used, as well as about their aesthetic status. With respect to the latter, it will be observed that there appear to be two notable constants in the adaptation of canonical images to less sophisticated forms: firstly, the movement away from faithful reproduction of the archetypal towards schematization of forms and styles; and secondly, the movement towards the kind of decorative embroidery represented by the garlands, wreaths and other kinds of ornament discussed above. These are two of the most significant ways in which images are more accessible and - to use the Horatian metaphor - more palatable. There are, of course, other ways, but they are closely related to the general rules just outlined.

There remain several issues regarding the tension between the functional aspects of prints and their aesthetic status, which cannot all be dealt with here. Such problems will seem even more acute to anyone who remains impressed with the formulations of William Ivins about the reproductive nature of prints. Clearly, Ivins's insistence on the informational aspect of prints and the consequences of the multiplication of large numbers of identical images raises an issue which must be a basic factor in any assessment of the status of images in a particular period; but it overlooks the importance of the determining role of the market - at all levels - of how prints should look, and, very often, of how they should be made to look more agreeable or more trenchant. In this respect the aesthetic component is at least as important as the mechanical or reproductive one. The problem becomes acute in a number of areas, say Dutch landscape prints, where the tension between the informational aspect and the self-consciously artistic one may be very marked indeed, even if not always immediately apparent. On the other hand, the functional element of the fetishistic images referred to at the beginning of this paper seems to be so pronounced as to exclude any kind of aesthetic determination of their function, but even in such cases it is unlikely that the two factors are entirely unrelated. These, however, are not matters that can be resolved here and they must await further analysis.

Finally, it remains to consider - briefly - the consequences of a further issue - that of the use of words on the prints themselves (fig. 67). This particular mode of literalizing visual language, of supplementing the communicational aspect of visual forms is as old as printmaking itself. It may reflect all kinds of psychological processes and impulses, from the assumption of the primacy of verbal language over visual language; to a feeling that pictorial images alone are not sufficient to convey specific messages. In some cases words may even serve to vivify the actors in a drama, and the notion of vivification is introduced here.
not in the sense of making the image more aesthetically vivid, but in the sense of making it seem to be alive, of emphasizing that miraculous aspect of pictorialization that is present in all forms of representation. The actors are no longer Abbildenden: they become the Urbilder themselves. Any study of the status of images has to consider the implications of words on images, whether in dedications, captions, or banderoles, not only for the obvious relevance they may have for the assessment of their audience, but also for the ways in which they reflect on particular modes of communication — even when such modes invoke the tendency to invest the unnameable with the animate.

A question may have arisen as to the advisability of concentrating exclusively on prints with religious subjects. Naturally, any complete analysis of the status of images in a particular period must take account of secular subjects as well, but they do not offer, in this case, such wide-ranging analytic possibilities. It will be observed that Rubens’s religious compositions are engraved far more extensively and repeatedly, in the seventeenth century at least, than his mythological and historical works. To a large extent this simply reflects the fact that the religious works were more often in public places — rather than private collections — and that they conveyed a more significant — and accessible — meaning than the mythological ones. Indeed, the quantity of specific mythological subjects that were engraved may be correlated fairly closely with those that were better known to begin with. Thus the commonest engraving of this kind would seem to be the Bacchanaal and Drunken Silenus type, or the many variations of the theme of Diana and her Nymphs, to take only two possible examples 70. On the other hand, the engravings of religious subjects conform far less closely to the conditions of accessibility, both actual and iconicographic. In this sense, therefore, the concentration on religious subjects may be justified, where reproductions of a wide range of compositions are more frequent and the transformations all the more obvious, particularly in their adaptation to the variety of functions outlined in this paper.

This investigation has been made easier by the presence of a single artist whose imprint may be observed throughout the period and whose style is all pervasive. That in itself is a reflection of the relative status of his works and those of other artists, and similar phenomena can be described for any number of periods and regions. But it would not be a fruitless task to examine the reproductions and adaptations of the works of the lesser figures, to isolate those points at which they differ both iconographically and technically, and then to proceed along the lines suggested above. The diffusion of images and styles may not in itself be a significant issue, but it does offer the most plausible historical and anthropological means of assessing the status of images in particular social contexts 70. The present paper has been designed not only to tap something of the extraordinary richness of the field, but also to suggest some of the ways in which it might expand.

ABBREVIATIONS


Rooses: Rooses, M., L’Oeuvre de P.P. Rubens, histoire et description de ses tableaux, I-V, Antwerp, 1886-1892.


Amongst the catalogues of exhibitions held in the Rubens Year (1977), the one which has the most discussion of this aspect of Rubens’s activity is: Peter Paul Rubens 1577-1640, I. Maler mit dem Grabstichel, Rubens und die Druckgraphik (Cat. Exhibition), Cologne, 1977.


4 It should be noted here that a vast amount of useful material is gathered together in Knippenburg, B., De Iconografie van de Contra-Reformatie in de Neder- landen, 1-11, Hilversum, 1939-40 (translated into English as The Iconography of the Counter Reformation in the Netherlands, 1-11, Leiden, 1974). See also Bost, D., Rubens e l’incisione nelle collezioni del Gabinetto Nazionale delle Stampe (Cat. Exhibition), Rome, 1977.

5 The standard work remains Von Heurck, E.H., Les drapeaux de périnage en Belgique et dans les pays voisins. Contribution à l’iconographie et à l’histoire des périnages, Antwerp, 1922, although several important contributions to the subject have appeared since then. Amongst those most relevant to the present di-
scussion may be mentioned: Van der Linden, R., Bedevaartsantijt in Oost-Vlaanderen, Bijdrage tot de studie van de legenden, de iconografie, de volksgebrukken, Ledeberg-Gent, 1938 (with useful bibliography on pp. XXIII), and the more popular but telling Philippes, J., De Oude Vlaamse Bedevaartsantijt, Hun volkskundige en cultuurhistorische beteekenis, Diest, 1968.


For examples, see the works listed in note 5 above, especially Philippes, pp. 13-18, with a photograph of a pennant inserted behind the ears of a horse.

8 Van Heurck, pp. 37-5.

9 Van Heurck, pp. 211-15. On the verso are represented the arms of Claus van de Werve, the founder of the Chapel at Horst bij Schooten.

10 Cf. Van Heurck, pp. 214-15 for instances of Jegher’s work in both these areas.

11 Entries such as this one serve to remind one of the wide variety of pilgrim age images and tokens that fall into the same broad typological category as the pennants discussed here; like the latter, they would also repay art historical examination.

Van der Linden, op. cit. (note 5), p. 30; See also Philippes, op. cit. (note 5), pp. 23-5 and 37-8 for further examples of payments and prices.


14 Van Heurck, pp. 32-3.

15 Cf. below, pp. 41-42, and notes 55 and 64.


19 For a striking — and amusing — example, see the illustration in Philippes already alluded to above in note 7.

20 These should perhaps be divided, according to popular custom, into two kinds: the «bidprentjes» (prayer cards) and the «santjes» (images of saints); although the distinction between the two genres — and sometimes a third, «sulfragiën» — is quite fluid. See Van Heurck, E.H., Een nieuwe reeks afbeeldingen van gotische sinsmomente, Ommen, 1950.

21 The title of the prayer card/Andachtsbild type is Spamer, A., Das Kleine Andachtsbild vom XIV. bis zum XX. Jahrhundert, Munich, 1930. Amongst subsequent studies one of the most informative and interesting is Gugitz, G., Die kleine Andachtsbild in den Oesterreichischen Geschichtssammlungen, In Darstellung, Verbreitung und Brauchtum nebst einer Iconographie, Vienna, 1930.

22 Voorhemsche Schreevoogt, p. 113, No. 28; based on the figure of St Dominica on the right of Rubens’s first altarpiece for Santa Maria in Vallicella, the St Cecilia Surrounded by Other Saints now in Grenewyck (Rosse, op. cit. No. 411; Vlieghe, Saints, II, No. 108). Compare this image with the smaller and cruder series of pietistic images known as the «Véllins» (Voorhemsche Schreevoogt, pp. 213-17, No. 13, 1-88; also discussed in Bodart, op. cit. (note 4), p. 202).

23 Voorhemsche Schreevoogt, p. 68, Nos. 32 and 33; after the lower zone of the painting now in Antwerp, Koninklijk Museum voor Schone Kunsten, No. 259 (Rosse, op. cit. No. 493; Vlieghe, Saints, II, No. 152).

24 In the case of the Fall of the Damned (Rosse, No. 93), for example, no fewer than thirty-five copies — in different media — have been recorded in my forthcoming volume in the Corpus Rubenianum Ludwig Burchard, VII, The Life of Christ after the Passion, No. 49.

25 Voorhemsche Schreevoogt, p. 46, No. 306; Rosse, No. 301.

26 Voorhemsche Schreevoogt, p. 45, No. 304, third state; Rosse, No. 301.

27 The full decree reads thus: “Recevoir, administrateur et Eximio PATRI MIO F. BARTOLOMÉO DE LOS RIOS ET ALARCON virtutum virtutem, artium patriae, bono arte expressum virtutum omnium exemplum D.C.Q. Marthini Fundi Edicto”. There is a whole body of prints after Rubens compositions which were dedicated either by Rubens himself, or by the printmaker, or by the publisher, to ecclesiastics and theologians. In many cases — as here — their cultivation of the arts receives express mention. Sometimes this may simply be conventional; but all such works should nonetheless be taken into consideration when assessing the range and significance of clerical attitudes to and patronage of the arts during the period. This is a chapter in the history of seventeenth century Flemish art that remains to be written and which would amply repay investigation.


30 In Lille, Musée des Beaux Arts, No. 310 (Rosse, No. 419; Vlieghe, Saints, I, No. 95).

31 Voorhemsche Schreevoogt, p. 99, No. 42.

32 See Vlieghe, Saints, I, p. 149, sub No. 95a, where it is established that the engraving was made on the basis of Rubens’s oil sketch (Vlieghe, Saints, I, No. 95a) for the painting in Lille (note 30 above), and not directly after the painting itself.

33 Michel Lasne (Caen, c. 1590 - Paris, 1667) was active in Antwerp from 1613 (when he became master there) and 1621 (when he returned to Paris). See Arnaudet, T. and Duplessis, G., Michel Lasne de Caen, graveur en taille douce, Caen, 1836, and Bodart, op. cit. (note 4), p. 63.

34 Voorhemsche Schreevoogt, p. 98, No. 35; after the painting in St Anthony’s Antwerp (Rosse, No. 420; Vlieghe, Saints, I, No. 94).

35 Voorhemsche Schreevoogt, p. 98, No. 34, third state.

36 Voorhemsche Schreevoogt, p. 105, No. 98; Rosse, No. 465.

37 The matter is discussed at greater length here; see also below pp. 41-42 and notes 55 and 64.

38 Vlieghe, Saints, II, pp. 102-4, No. 124.

39 None of these elements are present in Mensaert’s description of the painting (Mensaert, G.P., Le peintre amateur et curieux, II, Brussels, 1763, p. 93) nor in the 17th century drawn copy reproduced by Vlieghe, Saints, II, Fig. 67. While this cannot be regarded as conclusive evidence for their absence in the original picture (and the upper corners of the drawn copy do indeed appear to have been cut), they nevertheless appear to the present writer to be quite inconsistent with the date of the original commission (1621). The engraving was published by G. Dornk in 1668, presumably based on a drawing attributed to Justus van Egmont in the Rijksmuseum in Amsterdam, Buttmans van Beuningen Museum in Rotterdam (Vlieghe, Saints, II, No. 124, Copy No. 47).

40 Voorhemsche Schreevoogt, p. 116, No. 152; Rosse, No. 447.

42 Voorhelm Schaevegoet, p. 27, No. 131. The central image — properly a Return from the Flight into Egypt — is based on Rubens's lost painting of this subject, of which a copy survives in the Metropolitan Museum in New York (Rosen, No. 183), while the surround may, as suggested by Voorhelm Schaevegoet, p. 27, be after Daniel Seghers.

43 Cf. Kupping, I, pp. 151-60. For a charming example, see the series by Hieronymus Wierix entitled Jesu Christi Dei Domini Salvatoris Nostri Infansitia (Maurice Hendrix, I, p. 60-64, Nos. 407-18).

44 All these issues are discussed at greater length in the paper referred to in note 13. Colin Eisler has suggested to me that the surround may also have been intended to carry votaries' connotations, in pointed contrast to the central image.


47 Much information about the circulation and prices of Andries's books may be gained from the books themselves. Thus, Andries, J., Necessaria ad Santarem Scientia, Antwerp (C. Wouws, 1644), has this detailed commercial information on p. 15: «Hic libelli minus antiquorum, et quinque viginti duorum iconum (woodcuts by J.C. Jeger after designs by A. Sallarc), excusum papier procul diversa est, quoniam veritatem, apo Typographiam in Albis duobus Assissi. Emensis vero viginti quattuor aequo loco, aut in exquisitissima singula septem quadrantium veseunt apud Typographam. Compacta cuinaque in ebraria marmorea mammelanda inclusa, non constans quadrantium duobus... Hic Perpetua Croix sitte Passio Jesu Christi a sancta Inea, in usum populi et extremin vitae, Ioannis Quadragesimae expicata quarum signum lignae in bonum psalmum genus dariatur, Antwerp (C. Wouws) 1652, has this on p. 15: «Hic libelli constans quattuor foliorum quoniam quadrantis iconum, non quiusvs cum medio, incompactus, per Belgiam»; while the Altera Perpetua Croix bound in with most copies of this book (dated the same year and with the same forty illustrations) gives some idea of its substantial circulation: «Pluram quadrangulam libellorum millibus diverso idioamate tam vulgata, & procul non intermedii stirpe in dies». The indispensable guide to the editions of all such works by Jesuit writers is De Backer-Sommervogel. For Andries's works, see De Backer-Sommervogel, I, cols. 374-80.

48 Rouen, Musée des Beaux-Arts; Rouer, No. 150.

49 Voorhelm Schaevegoet, p. 16, No. 27; presumably made on the basis of Vorsterman's engraving (Fig. 20), and certainly not directly after the painting itself (cf. note 51).

50 Voorhelm Schaevegoet, p. 15, No. 23. There are several differences between the painting now in Rouen (note 48) and the engraving, most significantly with respect to the Holy Family. The Virgin is no longer absorbed in suckling the Christ Child, but — her breast now chastely covered — displays him to the shepherds. The change may or may not be accounted for in terms of the inscription recorded in the following note.


52 The best known examples are those published by Nicolas Visscher in a variety of formats; amongst the most splendid is the folio Historiae Sacrae Veteris et Novi Testamenti, published with the privilege of the Councils of Holland and West Friesland.

53 In this respect one should compare the great compendium of biblical illustrations known as the Theatrum veteri et novi Testamenti, first published by C. de Jode in Antwerp in 1585. For further information on this work, its engravers and its editions, see the valuable study by Mielke, H., Antwerpsche Grafie in de 17e Hulde des 16e Jaarhunderts, Der Theatres veteri et novi Testamenti der Gerard de Jode (1585), in: «Zeitschrift für Künstgeschichte», XXXVIII, 1975, pp. 29-73.

54 This particular example is taken from Van Haevege B., Schola Cordis, sive Arevis a Deo Cordis, Antwerp (Meursius and Verdussen), 1635, p. 85. (Landwehr, Nos. 182-3), which provides a good compendium of images of this kind, with charming child-like figures and putti as the main actors in each scene. For other illustrations see this, see note 64 below.


56 Natalis, H., Adnotationes et meditatio Evangelicae quae in sacrosanctae missae sacrificio, iato estan legatur cum evangeliorum concordantia... Accessit Index historiarum ipsae Evangelicae in ordine temporis, edited by M. Christi Merck, Antwerp (Nutius), 1595, in fol. The plates, first published separately (with the title Evangelicae Historiae Imagines) in 1593, are largely by Hieronymus Wierix after Andries Passeri and Marien de Vos.

57 Natalis, op. cit. p. 127. On these aspects of Nadal's work, see Freedberg, A Source, pp. 433-34, with further bibliographic references in notes 12 and 13.

58 Cf. Natalis, op. cit., plates 85-7 (Entry into Jerusalem), 124-6 (Carrying of the Cross), 136-7 (Three Marys at the Sepulchre) and 150-53 (Death to Coronation of the Virgin).

59 David, J., Veredis Christiana, Antwerp (Plantin), 1601, in 4°, with the Dutch version appearing two years later as Christen Herterstick. The principale stucken vant 't Christen Geloof en Leven..., Antwerp (Plantin-Moretens), 1603, in 4°. (Landwehr, Nos. 130-2). For David's works see De Backer-Sommervogel, II, cols. 184-5.

60 Much of this material is listed in the Lettres to standard references works on the subject: Praz, M., Studies in Seventeenth Century Imagery, 2nd edn., 1971; with racy increased, Rome 1964 (with a great deal of additionally relevant material), and Landwehr, J., Emblem Books in the Low Countries, 1554-1949, A Bibliography, Utrecht, 1970. For other works by David, see Landwehr, Nos. 133-4. Neither Praz nor Landwehr, however, give any idea of the full range of illustrated devotional books (the works by Andries referred to in note 47 above, for example, are not included). De Backer-Sommervogel contains further material, but only on the Jesuit writers. For the emblem books they produced, see now Dimler, G., Jesuit Emblem Books in the Belgian Provinces of the Society (1587-70). Topography and Themes, Archivium Historicum Societatis Jesu, XLVI, 1977, pp. 377-87.

61 David, op. cit. (note 60), pl. 11.

62 For the evidence, see Freedberg, A Source, pp. 432-3.

63 See, for example, the much reutilized series by Anton Wierix entitled Cor Jesu Animati Sacramentum, Maastricht Hendricx, I, Nos. 429-446, with full list on pp. 68-70 of the works in which they were used; but more significant is Van Veen's Amorvm Emblemata and Amorvm Divini Emblemata, first published in Antwerp in 1612 and 1615 respectively (Landwehr, Nos. 693-703). Later on this

64 In this case, specifically the topographical aspect.
65 The general tendency is towards an increasingly self-conscious use of the printmaking techniques and media themselves, culminating in the work of Rembrandt and Hercules Seghers, where the informational and communicational aspect gives way to purely aesthetic considerations, or rather: where the reproductive nature of printmaking is exploited for other than informational considerations. It is at this point that Ivins's emphasis on the relations between reproduction and information is weakened.

68 It may perhaps be objected that this paper has not made enough of an attempt at working towards a closer definition of the ways in which class structures may or may not condition response to images. While such an attempt would be worth making, one of the phenomena that I hope has emerged from the present discussion is precisely the way in which response may vary across the putative boundaries of such structures,


47. S. à Bolwert after Rubens. St Catherine. Engraving. 237 : 137 mm.


58. G. Donck (publisher) after Rubens. St Joseph as Patron of the Carmelite Order. Engraving, 463 : 343 mm.
