

The Medieval Low Countries

An Annual Review

Volume 4 (2017)



BREPOLS

Baking the Bread and Roasting the Meat Dorlandus's Saint Lawrence as a Model for Carthusians

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Abstract

The two sermons on Saint Lawrence by the prolific Carthusian author Petrus Dorlandus survive in a manuscript from the charterhouse in Louvain, which was used for reading at table. Dorlandus's development of the well-known tale about this martyr is geared to this practice. Inviting his fellow Carthusians to both corporeal and spiritual mastication, Dorlandus focuses on the body of the saint as being inviolate and virginal, and, in a very literal sense, food. These sermons challenge hagiographical gender studies by showing how the male body could be as consistently intact as a female virgin's and how framing the saint as food and thus as similar to Christ was as relevant to a male Carthusian audience as to any female one. How male or female is a saint, actually? Or should saints be seen as being beyond gender?

Saint Lawrence of Rome was consistently among the most popular saints from Late Antiquity through to the Middle Ages and the Early Modern Age, as is clear from the many images, dedications of altars and churches, and texts about him. In the Low Countries, he was a patron of churches, monasteries, altars, and cities, most notably the city of Rotterdam. His relics were in Liège from the eleventh century.¹ In addition, accounts of his life and miracles as well as sermons about him survive from the twelfth century, first in Latin, later also in Middle Dutch.² It could even be argued that Saint Lawrence's prominence in Western Christendom survives to the present day. In the recent television series *Fargo*, a character comments on his signature torment of being roasted on a gridiron: 'Saint Lawrence,

¹ For more information, see *Bibliotheca Hagiographica Latina* 4778–83, consulted through http://bhlms.fltr.ucl.ac.be/Nquerysaintrubrique.cfm?code_dossier=Laurentius%2005&rubrique=Laurentius%20diac%2E%20m%2E%20Romae,3-22-2017. Abbreviated here as *BHL*.

² For Latin versions see *BHL* 4752–89; for Middle Dutch Werner Williams-Krapp, *Die deutschen und niederländische Legendare des Mittelalters* (Tübingen: M. Niemeyer, 1986), p. 431.

patron saint of hard asses [...] You know what he said? “Turn me over. I am done on this side.” That’s a goddamn saint.³

Despite his obvious importance, which might even be rekindled today, little scholarly attention has been paid to the later retellings of the legend of Saint Lawrence.⁴ The same is true about other martyrs, although some virgin martyrs are increasingly an exception. Under the influence of the rise of gender studies, these have been discovered as valuable objects of study, initially only with respect to constructions of gender, later as objects of devotion and models for secular and religious folk.⁵ Hagiography is an excellent source to chart shifts in the construction of piety.⁶ Since the times of the Early Church, the lives of the saints and other hagiographical material were regarded as very important educational literature.⁷ As such, their content had a certain flexibility. The material was reworked according to what the intended audience needed to guide it on the path towards piety, at least in the perception of the author or copyist.

This article focuses on two sermons about Saint Lawrence by the Zelem Carthusian Peter Dorlandus (1454–1507), which survive in a large

³ *Fargo* (Randall Einhorn dir., Noah Hawley aut., USA 2014), season 1, part 3.

⁴ In contrast to the interest in the earliest legend, as written by Prudentius, *Peristephanon Liber* in Prudentius, ed. and transl. by H. J. Thomsen (London: Heinemann/Cambridge MA: Harvard University Press, 1953), pp. 98–345, (pp. 108–42); William McCarthy, ‘Prudentius, Peristephanon 2: Vapor and the martyrdom of Saint Lawrence’, *Vigiliae Christianae*, 36 (1982), 282–86; and Catherine Conybeare, ‘The ambiguous laughter of Saint Lawrence’, *Journal of Early Christian Studies*, 10 (2002), 175–202. See also Jill Ross, *Figuring the Feminine: the Rhetoric of Female Embodiment in Medieval Hispanic Literature* (Toronto: University of Toronto Press, 2008), pp. 50–80.

⁵ For instance, Anne Simon, *The Cult of Saint Catherine of Alexandria in Late Medieval Nuremberg: Saint and City* (Burlington: Ashgate, 2012); Jacqueline Jenkins and Katherine J. Lewis eds, *Katherine of Alexandria: Texts and Contexts* (Turnhout: Brepols, 2003). For the enduring popularity of virgin martyrs as objects of devotion, see Eamon Duffy, *The Stripping of the Altars: Traditional Religion in England c. 1450–c. 1580* (New Haven: Yale University Press, 1992), pp. 170–77.

⁶ Jacques Le Goff, ‘Les mentalités: une histoire ambiguë’, in *Faire l’Histoire: Nouveaux Objets*, ed. by Jacques Le Goff and Pierre Nora (Paris: Gallimard, 1974), pp. 76–94.

⁷ For instance, in Augustine of Hippo, *De Mendacio*, ed. by J. P. Migne, *Patrologia Latina*, vol. 40 (Paris: J. P. Migne, 1840–1841), pp. 508–13.

collection of texts in a manuscript from the Charterhouse of Saint Mary Magdalene under the Cross in Louvain.⁸ Possibly, he wrote one more text on this saint, *De inventione et passione de S. Laurentii Martyris*, but this appears to be lost.⁹ The sermons will be approached on two levels. First, I will focus on how these worked in their local context. How were the sermons used, practically and ideologically? How was Saint Lawrence construed to serve as a model for Carthusians or possibly the Louvain Carthusians in particular? To what extent is Dorlandus's description of this saint geared to the specific situation in which his sermons were used? Using these writings by Dorlandus as a case study, the second level concerns saints as an object for gender studies, more specifically gendered forms of sainthood and gendered education through male or female saints. I will show that the sermons about Saint Lawrence challenge assumptions common to present-day scholarship, specifically about the function of the body of the saint.

The article is structured as follows. A short introduction about the author and the Charterhouse at Louvain is followed by an analysis of the manuscript and its uses. The central piece is a description of the content of the sermons and their sources, which, in the next section, will develop into a discussion of how these sermons served in the education of the Carthusians who used these texts. Consequently, in the penultimate section, the findings on Saint Lawrence will be connected to the scholarship concerning female martyrs, specifically as focused on the body. Finally, it closes with a conclusion.

⁸ Peter Dorlandus, *Sermo historicus in laudem [...] ac penarum sanctissimi et serenissimi martyris Laurentii* and *Sermo secundus de eodem martire typicus* in Brussels, Royal Library (abbreviated here as KBR), MS 15003–15048, Charterhouse of Saint Mary Magdalene under the Cross, Louvain, ca. 1527–1532, fol. 347^v–355^v and fol. 355^v–361^r respectively. J. van der Gheyn provides a description of this manuscript in his *Catalogue des Manuscrits de la Bibliothèque Royale de Belgique*, 13 vols (Brussels: Lamertin, 1902), 2: no. 1223, pp. 227–32 and the sermons are mentioned in two lists of Dorlandus's works i.e. Andrew of Amsterdam, *Opuscula edita venerabili patro Petro Dorlando ordinis Carthusiensis*, ed. by L. Willems, *Elckerlyc-Studien* (The Hague: Nijhoff, 1934), pp. 11–16, (p. 14, nr. 29) and Theodorus Petreius, *Bibliotheca Cartusiana sive Illustrium sacri Cartusienis ordinis scriptorium catalogus* (Cologne: Antonius Hieratus, 1609), p. 253, nr. 29.

⁹ Andrew of Amsterdam, *Opuscula edita venerabili patro Petro Dorlando*, p. 14, nr. 28 and Petreius, *Bibliotheca Cartusiana*, p. 253, nr. 28.

The Author

Today, ironically, Dorlandus is best known for a work that he probably did not write. In 1892 the Dutch literary historian Logeman asserted that the Zelem Carthusian was the author of the morality play *Elckerlyc*. The author, a certain Peter of Diest, was to be identified with Dorlandus because of the proximity of Zelem to Diest. According to Logeman, it was customary to name an author after his place of residence.¹⁰ Others, however, argued that it was unusual for Carthusians to be identified other than by their place of birth.¹¹ This debate remains unresolved to the present day, its main value being that it triggered an interest in Dorlandus. Several scholars have attempted to reconstruct his work and life, which is why I will limit myself here to a summary of the most important aspects.¹²

Despite the survival of a memoir written by Dorlandus's fellow brother and disciple Andrew of Amsterdam, few biographical facts are certain.¹³ The register of the University of Louvain notes Dorlandus's matriculation as a student of the *Artes* in 1472.¹⁴ The date of his entry into the Charterhouse of Saint John the Baptist at Zelem is not known, but this must have been after his studies, around 1475.¹⁵ It seems clear that he was a well-known author in his day, whose fame survived decades after his death in 1507. Andrew provided a list of titles of 57 works in Latin, adding that his master also wrote in Middle Dutch for female communities,

¹⁰ *Elckerlijck, a fifteenth century Dutch morality (presumably by Petrus Dorlandus) and Everyman, a nearly contemporary translation. A contribution to the history of the literary relations of Holland and England*, ed. by H. Logeman (Ghent: Vuylsteke, 1892), pp. xxi–xxiv.

¹¹ H. J. J. Scholtens, 'De litteraire nalatenschap van de kartuizers', *Ons Geestelijk Erf*, 25 (1951), 9–43 (pp. 26–27); H. J. J. Scholtens, 'De kartuizer Petrus Dorlant en de Elckerlijc-problemen', *Ons Geestelijk Erf*, 26 (1952), 188–97; 'De sluier over Peter Dorlandus opgelicht: enkele fasen uit het leven van de Zelemse kartuizer in vooronderzoek', in *Amo te, sacer ordo Carthusiensis: Jan de Grauwe, passioné de l'Ordre des Chartreux*, ed. by Frans Hendrickx and Tom Gaens (Louvain, 2012), pp. 293–332 (p. 331).

¹² For an extensive reconstruction see Hendrickx, 'Sluier'.

¹³ Andrew of Amsterdam, 'Vita venerabilis domini ac patris Petri Dorlandi Carthusiensis domus Diestensis per illius confratrem et discipulum' in Scholtens, 'Petrus Dorlant en de Elckerlijc-problemen', pp. 297–300.

¹⁴ Hendrickx, 'Sluier', p. 299.

¹⁵ Hendrickx, 'Sluier', p. 305.

for which he does not provide titles.¹⁶ Several other lists of works are extant.¹⁷ In 1572, the Benedictine abbey of Sint-Truiden requested his works from the Charterhouse of Saint John the Baptist at Zelem, with the aim of printing them. It is unlikely that this plan came to fruition as no copies of an *opera omnia* survive.¹⁸

There is some debate about Dorlandus's possible connections to humanist networks.¹⁹ At least two of his works were printed by Dirk Martens (c. 1446–1534) from Aalst: *De Enormi Proprietatis Monachorum Vicio Dialogus Cultissimus* (*Very Elegant Dialogue on the enormous vice of possession by monks*) and *In nativitatem et vitam inclitae martyris beatissimaeque virginis Catharinae* (*On the Birth and Life of the Famous Martyr and Blessed Virgin Catherine*).²⁰ Martens printed humanists such as Erasmus and was closely connected to the University of Louvain.²¹ Further proof which may point to humanist connections is that the jurist Judocus Beysseus († 1514) dedicated his treatises on the Anne, Mary, and Jesus Rosary to Trithemius, Dominic of Guelders OP, and Dorlandus, respectively. Moreover, Dorlandus shared some humanist interests. Like Trithemius (1462–1516) and Bostius (1446–1499), he wrote a life of Saint Anne, but there is no evidence of him being in correspondence with them.

Apparently, Dorlandus was on friendly terms with the prior of Saint Mary Magdalene at Louvain, judging by how cordial the letter he addressed to him was, and within which he included his version of the life of Saint John Evangelist, as recounted in our manuscript. Dorlandus urged, 'you in particular, whose name is John' to read the text, and stressed

¹⁶ Andrew of Amsterdam, *Opuscula edita venerabili patro Petro Dorlando*, pp. 12–16.

¹⁷ See for an assessment of the lists Hendrickx, 'Sluier', pp. 310–11.

¹⁸ Hendrickx, 'Sluier', p. 313.

¹⁹ See for this Hendrickx, 'Sluier', pp. 309–11.

²⁰ Dorlandus, *De enormi proprietatis monachorum vicio Dialogus cultissimus* and his *In nativitatem et vitam inclitae martyris beatissimaeque virginis Catharinae* (Louvain: Theodericus Martinus Alost, 1513).

²¹ On Martens: *Exposition Thierry Martens 1473–1534 Dirk Martens Tentoonstelling* (Brussels: Royal Library Brussels, 1950); *Thierry Martens et la figure de l'imprimeur humaniste, Une nouvelle biographie*, ed. by Renaud Adam and Alexandre Vanautgaerden (Turnhout: Brepols, 2009), nos 101, 108, and 118; Alexandre Vanautgaerden, *Theodericus Martinus Typographicus: de ongelofelijke geschiedenis van de eerste 'Belgische' graficus* Coloquia in Museo Erasmi 30 (Antwerp: Erasmushuis, 2009).

their mutual love.²² Considering that the author would not refer to the prior before he had officially acquired this status, this dates the letter to after 1504, the formal incorporation of Saint Mary Magdalene into the Carthusian Order, and the prior as John Petri of Delft (1495–1515; † 1530).²³ Moreover, as we will see shortly, it is tempting to connect another text to John Petri's Charterhouse specifically. In this parable, as Dorlandus terms it, he describes a convent from which the abbess, Charity, had been away on a journey and where the sisters mistakenly followed the advice of Sister Prudence in their financial affairs, rather than that of Sister Wisdom. Judging by this tale and other publications, Dorlandus felt that it was wrong for religious people to care too much about material wellbeing at the expense of their spiritual needs.²⁴

The Charterhouse

The Charterhouse of Saint Mary Magdalene under the Cross at Louvain owned the manuscript containing Dorlandus's sermons on Saint Lawrence. It was the first in the Low Countries to be created within a city's walls. It thus constituted a landmark in the development of the Carthusian Order in the Late Middle Ages, the brothers of which chose to live closer to the groups they sought to inspire to a pious lifestyle: secular layfolk and religious people. In the Low Countries and the Holy Roman Empire, they developed into a major force for reform, both at the macro level of the reform of the ecclesiastical hierarchy in the conciliar movement, and at the micro level of individual believers.²⁵

The early history of the Louvain Charterhouse is not entirely clear. The records of the general chapter and the chronicle cite different founders: the Antwerp citizen Joannes Overhof and Charles the Bold's chaplain Wouter Waterleet, who donated the land on which the new monastery

²² Brussels, KBR, ms. 15003–15048, fol. 390^v: *Tu precipue qui Johannis es nomine...*

²³ H. Delvaux, 'La Chartreuse de Louvain' in U. Berlière ed., *Monasticon Belge* (Liege: Centre National de Recherches d'Histoire Religieuse, 1971), 4–6, pp. 1458–94 (pp. 1468–73).

²⁴ Brussels, KBR, ms. 15003–15048, fol. 1106^r–111^r. Cf. Dorlandus, *De Enormi Proprietatis*.

²⁵ See, for instance, *A Fish out of Water? From Contemplative Solitude to Carthusian Involvement in Pastoral Care and Reform Activity*, ed. by Stephen J. Molvarec and Tom Gaens (Louvain: Peeters, 2008) and the recent thematic issue of *Church History and Religious Culture*, 96 (2016), under guest editors Mathilde van Dijk, Tom Gaens, and José van Aelst.

was to be erected. In 1489 the city of Louvain granted permission for the creation of the Charterhouse. Charles the Bold's widow, Margaret of York, laid the first stone.²⁶

The confusion about the events surrounding the erection of Saint Mary Magdalene might be due to the sheer number of benefactors who supported it. Many of them were also involved in supporting the University, for instance, by providing scholarships for poor students or creating colleges.²⁷ As for the Louvain Carthusians, they were connected to the university from the start. In 1505 the Visitors assigned them a specific role: they were to inspire students and professors by their example.²⁸ The founders of the colleges of Standonk and Arras, as well as the *Collegium Trilingue*, had all arranged for the Carthusians to be involved, to varying degrees. As Visitors, they were the guardians of the moral character of all three colleges. For instance, in the *Collegium Trilingue*, they oversaw the finances and appointed the professors and the president.²⁹

It is a matter of debate whether Saint Mary Magdalene was a successful foundation. The Charterhouse grew rapidly into a double charterhouse in 1533.³⁰ However, in almost every report, the Visitors voiced their concern about the financial situation. Is Dorlandus's parable about abbess Charity and her sisters connected to these problems? In addition, although the first prior, John Petri of Delft, is always praised for his virtue and learning, they drove him to being stricter, and criticised the laxity of certain monks. From 1527 on, warnings against Lutheranism surface.³¹

²⁶ See Louvain, General Archive, *Archives Ecclésiastiques du Brabant* 4, no. 14957, E. Reusens ed., 'Chronique de la Chartreuse de Louvain depuis sa foundation, en 1498, jusque' a l'année 1525' in *Analectes pour servir à l'Histoire Ecclésiastique de Belgique*, 14 (1877), 228–99 (p. 230); and De Grauwe, *Historia Cartusiana Belgica* (Salzburg: Institut für Anglistik und Amerikanistik, 1985), pp. 224–42. See also the monasticon in <http://www.cartusiana.org/node/51>; and Tom Gaens, 'Atque haec quidem fuerunt! Carthusians and college foundations at the University of Leuven' in *Les Chartreux et les élites XIF-XVIII^e siècles*, ed. by Sylvain Excoffon (Saint Étienne: CERCOR (Centre européen de recherche sur les congrégations et les ordres religieux)), pp. 260–84.

²⁷ Gaens, 'Atque haec quidem fuerunt!', pp. 262–71.

²⁸ Jan de Grauwe and Francis Timmermans eds, *Cartae visitationum Cartusiae Lovaniensis (1504–1537 & 1559–1561) British Library, Ms Harley, 3591* (Salzburg: Institut für Anglistik und Amerikanistik, 2007), p. 5.

²⁹ Gaens, 'Atque haec quidem fuerunt!', pp. 276–78.

³⁰ Gaens, 'Atque haec quidem fuerunt!', p. 278.

³¹ De Grauwe and Timmermans, *Cartae visitationum*, pp. 57–58.

The Manuscript

Several brothers from Saint Mary Magdalene under the Cross wrote or copied historiographical and religious works; yet despite their reputation as diligent scribes and authors, no systematic investigation into the production of their manuscripts has been conducted so far.³² Therefore, it is unclear whether the *codex* containing Dorlandus's sermons originated in this charterhouse or, rather, whether all of it did. The manuscript contains two dates: 1527 and 1532.³³ Parts of it may well have been written earlier or later, and in view of this, it remains unknown whether the different quires of the current manuscript were intended to be together from the start. The index of texts might provide a clue, although it provides no certainty about the book's history. It is incomplete: after the detailed overview of chapters in Humbert of Romans's *De tribus votis essentialibus religionis aliisque virtutibus eis annexis*, a partial title of the text which continues the Dominican's work is provided.³⁴ At the very least, it is certain that Dorlandus's letter and life of Saint John Evangelist was addressed to the first prior of Saint Mary Magdalene, and possibly the parable as well.

The manuscript is large, consisting of 523 folia written in several hands, and containing texts in different genres: sermons, letters, hagiographical and historiographical material. Occasionally, brothers collaborated on the same text, taking turns to work on it.³⁵ The size of the manuscript alone points to its use for communal rather than private reading, although the first folia do not seem suited to this purpose, unless we imagine a reader showing these to his audience. This section offers an illustrated exposé

³² Probably the most famous work was the chronicle of the Charterhouse by Joannes Vekenstijl and continuator Joannes de Thymo, which was included in Brussels, KBR, ms. 15003–15048, 441^r–462^r; and edited in E. Reusens, 'Chronique de la Chartreuse de Louvain depuis sa foundation', pp. 228–99. See also Matthew S. Campion, 'Emotions and the social order of Time: Constructing history at Louvain's Carthusian House, 1486–1525' in Susan Broomhall ed., *Gender and emotions in Medieval and Early Modern Europe*, ed. by Susan Broomhall (London: Taylor and Francis, 2015), pp. 89–108. For a list of authors from the Louvain Charterhouse, see H. Delvaux, 'La Chartreuse de Louvain', pp. 1463–64 and Jan de Grauwe, *Historia Cartusiana Belgica* (Salzburg: Institut für Anglistik und Amerikanistik, 1985), pp. 232–34.

³³ The folios 46^r and 48^v provide the date of 1527; fol. 506^r provides 1532. See these folia in Brussels, KBR, ms. 15003–15048.

³⁴ Brussels, KBR, ms. 15003–15048, fol. 3^v.

³⁵ For instance, in Brussels, KBR, ms. 15003–15048, fol. 67^v–68^v.

on the biblical lines of descent and the workings of history. Sermons and letters by or ascribed to Caesarius of Arles follow. The preceding caption explains that these and other ‘treatises and works’ were intended for reading at table.³⁶ In what follows, the Louvain manuscript consists of works by two types of authors: Church Fathers such as Caesarius, and Low Countries Carthusians. For instance, it contains a large collection of sermons and letters by or ascribed to Caesarius of Arles, Saint Augustine, and Peter Damian, and Carthusians such as David de Bode (also known as David the Carthusian († 1412)) from Bruges, as well as several anonymous brothers.³⁷

Several works by Dorlandus are in evidence, all of which are identified with his name and copied by a single scribe.³⁸ These were copied before either 1527 or 1532, possibly in the Zelem Carthusian’s lifetime. As the scribe also wrote the captions identifying the author as ‘the most reverend Carthusian Peter Dorlandus’, an autograph seems unlikely – at the very least, it would counter Andrew of Amsterdam’s description of his master as being supremely humble.³⁹

³⁶ Brussels, KBR, ms. 15003–15048, fol. 13^v: *Incipiunt diversorum sanctorum patrum complures eruditi sermones, tractatus et opuscula lectu ad mensam.*

³⁷ See De Gheyn, *Catalogue des Manuscrits*, 2: no. 1223, pp. 227–32. Information on David de Bode in Scholtens, ‘De litteraire nalatenschap’, pp. 13–14; H. J. J. Scholtens, ‘Het kartuizerklooster Dal van Gracien buiten Brugge’, *Handelingen van het Genootschap Société d’Emulation te Brugge*, 83 (1947), 3–71; Frans Hendrickx, ‘De handschriften van de kartuis Genadendal in Brugge (1318–1580)’, *Ons Geestelijk Erf*, 47 (1973), 3–63, 241–90.

³⁸ In addition to Dorlandus’s sermons on Saint Lawrence in Brussels, KBR, ms. 15003–15048: *Religiosi patris domini Petri Dorlandi Carthusiensis domus sancte Iohannis Baptiste in Zeelem prope Diest de corruptele religionis sancte*, fol. 106^r–111^v; *Tractatus religiosi patris domini Petri Dorlandi Carthusiensis domus sancte Iohannis Baptiste in Zeelem prope Diest de multiplici conflictu beatissimi patris Anthonii contra dyabolum*, fol. 106^r–111^v; *Epistola probemialis venerabilis domini Petri Dorlandi ad prestantissimum virum domnum Iohannem Delfum primum priorem domus Mariae Magdalene sub Cruce in Lovanio ordinis carthusiensis in actus mirificos beatissimi Iohannis apostoli et ewangeliste*, fol. 390^r–402; *Novum miraculum conscriptum a religioso patre Petro Dorlando ordinis Carthusiensis professo in Zeelem prope Diest*, fol. 463^r–463^v.

³⁹ Andrew of Amsterdam, ‘Vita venerabilis domini ac patris Petri Dorlandi Carthusiensis’, pp. 297–98: *Celeberrimus pater ita in divinis paginis eruditus et sapientia et scientia ex spiritus sancti illuminatione adeo donatus [...] de humilitate eius, qua seipsum conculcabat, proclamabat reum, qua loquebatur in accusatione sui [...].*

A Pair of Sermons

Before going into the content of the sermons, it should be noted that medieval texts under the title of 'sermon' are notoriously hard to define. This is also true for Dorlandus's pair, which seem more like a *vita* and a treatise, respectively.⁴⁰ Usually with such 'sermons', if it is likely that an actual act of preaching preceded the surviving text, the connection between the written record and the orally delivered text is unclear, as is the purpose for which the text was ultimately used. The surviving record of a sermon which was delivered orally might have been created from the text that a preacher used, or based on notes taken by the audience, which were elaborated later with or without the preacher's supervision.⁴¹

Another issue is whether a 'sermon' was actually used for preaching. In Latin, the word *sermo* can be used for any text intended for oral delivery. For instance, in addition to the sermons in our manuscript, which probably did start as content for actual preaching – such as much of Caesarius of Arles' material – the phrase is also used for excerpts from the *Collationes patrum*, the record of the conversations of John Cassian with famous hermits. As for Dorlandus's sermons, as we will see, his remarks about how the brothers should prepare themselves for listening clearly points to an oral delivery in the refectory, as does the division into sections, which would make it feasible to spread the reading of it over several meals. It is equally clear that the two were intended as a pair: the historical sermon as a literal account of the martyr's life, the typical sermons as an interpretation of its meaning. Moreover, although serving as matter for reading during meals may have been an appropriation after the fact for many of the texts in the manuscript, this is not true of Dorlandus's sermons on Saint Lawrence, which were especially geared to use during meals.

⁴⁰ B. M. Kienzle, *The sermon* (Turnhout : Brepols, 2000), pp. 144–74.

⁴¹ See the study by Patricia Stoop, *Schrijven in Commissie: de zusters uit het Brusselse klooster Jericho en de preken van hun biechtvaders (ca. 1456–1510)* (Hilversum: Verloren, 2013) about the different ways of receiving sermons; Mertens, Thom, 'Relic or Strategy: The Middle Dutch Sermon as a Literary Phenomenon' in Georgiana Donavin, Cary Nederland and Richard Utz eds, *Speculum Sermonis: Interdisciplinary Reflections on the Medieval Sermon* ed. by Georgiana Donavin, Cary Nederland and Richard Utz (Turnhout : Brepols, 2004), pp. 293–314; pp. 293–314, and Mertens, Thom, 'De middelnederlandse preek, een voorbarige analyse', in *De Middelnederlandse preek* ed. by Thom Mertens, Patricia Stoop and Christoph Burger (Hilversum: Verloren, 2009), pp. 9–66. (pp. 9–38).

The *Sermo Historicus*

The first sermon, titled *sermo historicus*, begins with a prologue. First, Dorlandus protested his unworthiness, despite his joy at being chosen to speak about the saint. A panegyric follows, in which Saint Lawrence was hailed as a:

School of virtues of the levites, the model for the glory of the cardinals, the mirror of chastity, the holy exemplar, the splendour of justice, the beauty of virginity, the martyr of Rome, the illustrious warrior, the vanquished victor, the noblest *triumphator*...⁴²

Dorlandus continued with an explanation of the name Lawrence, connecting it to the laurel, which retains its green leaves and red berries throughout the year. The red berries are linked to the nine torments involving fire, all of which the saint survived. Other symbols of indestructibility follow: Saint Lawrence was like the salamander because his vigour increased in fire, like a marble column and like the fruit of the wheat, which dies first and bears fruit later.⁴³ Dorlandus continued by asserting that fire refreshed the saint rather than burning him. In addition to the reference to the grain, he made several other connections to food, for instance when he asserted that Saint Lawrence was like the fish which was eaten by Christ and the Disciples when He appeared to them at the Lake of Tiberias.⁴⁴ Fire did not destroy his whiteness on the inside, which signified his constant charity and gratitude towards God, and which he expressed in prayers, songs, and happy tears. His martyrdom changed the salt sea, in which he swam, into sweet water.

The sermon proper starts with the following injunction: 'Prepare your ears [...] and your hands for your plates and your throats for food.'⁴⁵ The first part of the *sermo historicus* discusses Lawrence's birth and youth and the second his passion, which is divided into seventeen 'punishments'.⁴⁶ The following tale is told about the martyr's nativity:

⁴² Brussels, KBR, ms. 15003-15048, fol. 348^r: *Scola virtutum, levitarum forma cardinalium gloria pudicie speculum sanctitatis exemplar iusticie splendor virginitatis decus martirum robor bellator egregius, victor vincus nobilissimus triumphator.*

⁴³ Isidorus of Sevilla, *Étymologies: Des Animaux*, ed. by Jacques André (Paris: Les Belles Lettres, 1986), 12: 4,36 and John 12: 24.

⁴⁴ John 21: 12-13.

⁴⁵ Brussels, KBR, ms. 15003-15048, fol. 348^v: *Accomodate aures [...] manum ad discum et fauces ad cibum.*

⁴⁶ Brussels, KBR, ms. 15003-15048, fol. 347^v et seq.: *Pena.*

The Spanish prince Olibrius and his wife had been praying to Jupiter for many years, but without the desired outcome, i.e., the birth of a child. Eventually, they followed the advice of a Christian friend and had themselves baptised. This solved the problem: Olibrius' nameless lady instantly conceived. Miraculously, this did not show at all. Shortly before the birth, she had a strange dream: a man with a radiant face, shining like the sun, hit the devil with a gridiron, incurring the latter's ever-lasting hatred. Frightening as this dream was, the birth was easy: she did not suffer any pain.

Sooner than any other child, Lawrence smiled at his parents and developed into an ideal baby: always happy, quiet, and never waking up his parents by crying at night. The devil was furious about the loss of Lawrence's parents' souls. He stole the child and threw it under a laurel. Consequently, he took on the form of a baby and installed himself in Lawrence's cradle. A baby from hell, he made the entire palace miserable with his incessant and extremely loud crying, his production of enormous quantities of foul-smelling faeces, and his biting of the breasts of his wet-nurse.

After a week, Lawrence's father escaped the palace and went hunting. Exhausted, falling asleep under a tree, he had a vision of a meeting of demons, headed by Satan himself. They exchanged self-congratulation on how they had corrupted priests by seducing them into the vices of ambition and avarice. Finally, the devil boasted about how he had replaced Olibrius's son and thrown him under a laurel. The following morning, the prince rushed to this laurel, the location of which had been revealed by the devil inadvertently, and returned with his son to the palace. Upon baptism, the child received the name of Lawrence.⁴⁷

In the following, Dorlandus detailed how Saint Lawrence grew up into a beautiful young man who surprised everyone with his wisdom and his commitment to avoiding all carnality, as is shown by his reaction to experiencing a vision of three beautiful virgins. The young man averted his gaze immediately. These virgins, however, managed to convince him that they were *bona fide*, explaining that they were his companions Chastity, Humility, and Wisdom, and that they would remain in his breast to prepare his future home in heaven. Consequently, they kissed him with a thousand kisses, all from within.

The second part of the *sermo historicus*, about Saint Lawrence's passion, begins when the papal legate Sixtus took him to Rome, where he became a cardinal dean. After Sixtus's election as Pope, Lawrence and his mentor collaborated as diligent missionaries, converting many Romans. They also functioned as miracle-workers, healing the blind and the lepers and

⁴⁷ Paraphrased after Brussels, KBR, ms. 15003–15048, fol. 348^v–349^v.

reviving the dead. Furious at their success, the devil incited the emperors Decius and Philip to greed – all of this was revealed to Lawrence in a dream. They suspected Sixtus of hiding a great treasure and had him arrested, tortured for three days, and eventually killed. Having done so, they turned to his cardinal dean, Lawrence.

The seventeen ‘punishments’ which follow give alternating accounts of torments, attempts at seduction, and discussions between the saint and the emperor Decius, in the usual way of a passion. According to Dorlandus, the saint was tortured in various ways, such as by whipping and burning his sides with faggots, in addition to his signature torment of the gridiron. During the stints in prison between the torments, he converted several others, including a spy who was put into his dungeon to extract information on the treasure. Moreover, Saint Lawrence experienced visions of personified virtues in the forms of virgins, angels, and Christ, which protected and healed him. All of these are standard elements in a martyr’s *vita*, but were developed in a way particular to this saint, true to earlier versions of the legend, and which Dorlandus’s retelling enhanced in a special way.

Arguably, the most striking feature about Saint Lawrence’s legend is its humour. In addition to the well-known ‘turn-me-over’ episode, another instance is when Saint Lawrence was questioned about the location of the treasure. Before the interrogation, he had a vision of a virgin who revealed herself as Compassion, telling him that he knew what to do with the church’s treasure. She was right: Lawrence gave it all away to the poor. Confronted by the emperor, he admitted to knowledge of the whereabouts of the treasure and offered to reveal it the following day. That morning, Decius found the saint surrounded by a flock of paupers, engaged in washing their feet. When the emperor asked for an explanation, Saint Lawrence explained that they were the true wealth of the Church, causing the former to rage and storm. Another example of humour is how the emperor appeared to be as much of an expert in the gospels as the saint was, quoting Christ’s injunction to give the emperor what is his due.⁴⁸

To a twenty-first century reader, the episode in which the devil impersonated the most horrible of babies also works comically. It is a matter for debate whether the Carthusian author and audience would have felt the same. Locked in a battle to divert their souls from carnality, the active participation of both Satan and Christ was a very real experience for them. Laughing at this dangerous enemy might defuse their fear of

⁴⁸ Mt. 22: 21.

him, as it did in other literary genres.⁴⁹ Whether this actually had this effect depends on how scared they were of him. In the sermons, comical as the baby episode might be, the devil is consistently shown as being the saint's very dangerous enemy, who singled him out as a special target for his evil plans.

Other striking points are the reactions of the bystanders and the descriptions of Saint Lawrence's response to them. Throughout Saint Lawrence's torments, the crowd was shocked by their extreme cruelty. The bystanders regularly burst into tears of pity and admiration of Lawrence's endurance and constancy. However, they had no need to worry, as the saint, becoming increasingly happy as the punishments progressed, showed himself as being both intrepid and indestructible. Over and over again, he countered the emperor's torments and words by stating that they strengthened rather than weakened him and by, for instance, ridiculing the gridiron. As for the emperor's offer of friendship in return for his conversion to paganism, Lawrence dismissed this as 'fluff of wool'.⁵⁰

The saint's body is an important sign of his moral indestructibility, particularly in the episodes about his physical torments, for instance, in his unbroken virginity. His body remained inviolate, despite being torn apart by whips, with fragments torn from it and so on. Fire could not hurt him as the fire of his charity was hotter than the flames. Moreover, Dorlandus described the saint as being food, for instance, by specifying which parts of his body were roasted, such as his kidneys. During the episode of the gridiron, the saint asked the emperor which part of his body he would like for his dinner. In addition, Dorlandus used phrases such as the 'cooked soldier'.⁵¹ Finally, the gridiron was not the only instance in which the saint appeared to be like food: he was also boiled in oil.

Occasionally, Lawrence himself is shown as longing for nourishment: weeping, he thirsts for Christ. At last, as he died, the saint prayed for the conversion of Rome, as came to pass eventually.

The *Sermo Typicus*

The second sermon, under the title of *sermo typicus*, deals with how Saint Lawrence demonstrated his perfection in a threefold sacrifice: of his innocent life, his contrite heart, and his blood and death. Throughout



⁴⁹ See, for instance: Jeffrey B. Russell, *Lucifer: the devil in the Middle Ages* (Ithaca/London: Cornell University Press, 1984), pp. 259–63.

⁵⁰ Brussels, KBR, ms. 15003–15048, fol. 352^v: *Amicitiam me tuam floccifacere*.

⁵¹ Brussels, KBR, ms. 15003–15048, fol. 354^v: *Excocto militi*.

this sermon, he is compared to Old Testament figures, Cicero, and eventually to Christ.

After praising the saint as ‘an admirable martyr, an eloquent rhetor, a *virgo intacta*, a doctor of wisdom’ and so on, Dorlandus invited the Carthusians to enjoy their meals in Lawrence’s honour and to combine their corporeal mastication with its mental analogue, by masticating spiritually all that they had heard about the great martyr. Listening to the sermon, they would learn about ‘the viscera of his piety, compassion and sweetness.’⁵² In the following, Dorlandus stressed how Saint Lawrence was prepared to die for the redemption of others and would rather suffer than lack charity. Explicitly, he warned the audience about the dangers of greed: ‘Lawrence teaches you [...] to dispense first his own and afterwards the church’s goods to the poor [...]’.⁵³ Thus the saint practised justice by giving the riches of the church to the poor before the emperor could seize them. Dorlandus urged his audience to imitate Saint Lawrence with him.⁵⁴

In the part about the sacrifice of his innocent life, again his virginity and chastity were highlighted, how he cared nothing for the world and carnality, how his chastity caused him to be frugal in all respects, how striving for the virtues was his greatest joy. Like an Abraham, he left his people behind at the Lord’s call, as he followed Sixtus to Rome; like Moses, he showed the law to the emperor. More comparisons to Old Testament figures follow. For instance, his exploits on the gridiron are compared to David’s playing of the harp; as a hunter of souls, he imitated Nimrod; like several Old Testament warriors such as Judas Maccabeus, he beat the Enemy; like Job, he was constant in his faith and so on. Dorlandus added to this by comparing the martyr to Cicero, whom he rivalled in his eloquence.

Saint Lawrence’s next sacrifice was the sacrifice of his contrite heart. He tortured his body by fasting and weeping. Once more a beautiful virgin appeared to him. She introduced herself as ‘tearful Compunction.’⁵⁵ Compunction strengthened his resolve to convert others. She explained how she helped people to rise above sin, for instance, by making the prophets chastise Israel.

⁵² Brussels, KBR, ms. 15003–15048, fol. 356^r: *Ipsa sunt eius viscera pietatis, misericordie et suavitatis.*

⁵³ Brussels, KBR, ms. 15003–15048, fol. 356^v: *Docet vos Laurentius et qui suas primum et post ecclesie divitias dispersit dedit pauperibus atque ideo iusticia eius manet in secula seculorum.*

⁵⁴ Brussels, KBR, ms. 15003–15048, fol. 356^r: *Ymitemur, precor.*

⁵⁵ Brussels, KBR, ms. 15003–15048, fol. 357^r: *Lachrymosa Compunctio.*

The third and final sacrifice happens on the third day of Lawrence's passion. A furious and strict woman appeared to him, accompanied by many female servants, such as Ignorance, Exile, and Death. She herself was Persecution and attempted to convince Saint Lawrence to recant. In his usual witty manner, Lawrence made light of the gridiron on which he was being roasted: 'although your little gridiron tastes of hard times of the flesh, it prepares eternal, delicious things for my mind'.⁵⁶ Another virgin appeared, dressed in gold armour, accompanied by two more virgins: Charity and Patience. According to Dorlandus, these virgins constituted the shield of faith to which Saint Paul referred in his letter to the Ephesians.⁵⁷ They defended Lawrence against Persecution by surrounding him. All night, the martyr burnt on the gridiron and did not become dry as ashes: this was because of his charity.

Dorlandus concluded this sermon by listing how Lawrence on the gridiron was similar to the crucified Christ:

- Both bodies were stretched on an instrument of torture
- Both were fixed to it
- Both wept
- Both witnessed
- Both continued loving their enemies
- Christ baked the bread and Lawrence roasted the meat
- Both irrigated the world with their blood
- Christ confirmed the mystery of our salvation and Saint Lawrence completed his earthly life in the best possible way
- Christ destroyed hell and Lawrence ridiculed the tyrant
- Both were in pain
- Both ended up in heaven; Lawrence was raised to the seraphim⁵⁸

The seraphim were the highest-ranking angels, with a direct view of God.⁵⁹

Using Tradition

In the two sermons, Dorlandus used material from several classical and Christian sources, but always viewed from his own perspective. A rare instance of a direct quotation is his reference to Virgil's *Ecloga*, when

⁵⁶ Brussels, KBR, ms. 15003–15048, fol. 358^v: *Craticula vero tua et si carni ad tempus asperum sapiat et menti tamen delicias preparat sempiternas.*

⁵⁷ Eph. 6: 16.

⁵⁸ Paraphrased after Brussels, KBR, ms. 15003–15048, fol. 359^v.

⁵⁹ Ps. Dionysius the Areopagite, *De Coelesti Hierarchia*, Günther Heil ed. (Berlin: De Gruyter, 1991), ch. 5–6, 5, 25–28, ch. 10–15, 40–52.

he described Saint Lawrence as an ideal baby who smiled at his parents from the very first moment.⁶⁰ More frequently, he recounts the tales of Saint Lawrence in his own words, picking and choosing elements and occasionally expanding on his sources considerably or providing a shorter version. His most important sources are the oldest version of the legend, i.e., Prudentius's (348, after 305) hymn on Saint Lawrence, which he included in his *Peristephanon*, and Jacobus de Voragine's *Legenda Aurea*.⁶¹

Prudentius is the only source which Dorlandus mentioned explicitly.⁶² His indebtedness is apparent in several instances, such as in the clash between the emperor's greed and the saint's charity, the comparisons to food – including suggestions of cannibalism – the episode about the paupers being the true treasure of the Church, and the emperor quoting Jesus' words on giving the emperor his due, were present from this first version of Saint Lawrence's legend.⁶³

Specifically in the *sermo historicus*, Dorlandus used Jacobus de Voragine's format of starting the life with an etymology of the saint's name. The author of the *Legenda Aurea* connected Lawrence to the laurel, which is a symbol of victory, as winners were crowned with laurel. Moreover, he mentioned its continuous greenness, sweet scent, and vigour. The greenness symbolised the purity of his heart, the scent the perpetual memory of Saint Lawrence as a righteous and charitable man who gave to the poor freely, and the vigour of the laurel tree 'breaks up the stone, remedies deafness, and wards off lightning'. Thus, Lawrence broke down 'hardness of heart, restored spiritual hearing, and provided protection against the lightning bolt of damnation'.⁶⁴

Like Jacobus, Dorlandus referred to the laurel in his etymology, but he concentrated on the indestructability of both saint and plant, and from the very first on the ability of the saint's body to serve as food. In addition to the perpetual greenness of the leaves, he introduced the symbolic value of the red colour of the berries. Like the plant and its red berries, Lawrence never withered in his faith. Red symbolised the several instances of fire which burnt Saint Lawrence but never harmed

⁶⁰ Publius Vergilius Maro, *Eclogues*, ed. by Guy Lee (Liverpool: Cairns, 1980), *Ecloga* 4: 28–29.

⁶¹ Prudentius, *Peristephanon*, and Jacobus de Voragine, *Legenda Aurea*, ed. by G. P. Maggioni (Florence: SISMEL-Edizioni del Galuzzo 1998) 2, pp. 754–73.

⁶² Brussels, KBR, ms. 15003–15048, fol. 354^v.

⁶³ See, for instance, Prudentius, *Peristephanon*, pp. 114–15, 132–37.

⁶⁴ Cited after the translation in *The Golden Legend. Readings on the Saints*, transl. by W. G. Ryan (Princeton: Princeton University Press, 2012), pp. 449–60 (p. 449). For the Latin, see Jacobus de Voragine, *Legenda Aurea*, p. 754.

him. Moreover, Dorlandus elaborated on the saint's indestructability by comparing him to a salamander which, according to medieval scientists, could survive in fire.⁶⁵ Apparently, this was common knowledge to his audience: the Carthusian did not feel the need to explain the reference. As for the food metaphors, absent from Jacobus's etymology, these tend to be literal, for instance, by describing the saint as white on the inside, like a fish on a gridiron.

The Carthusian also borrowed the *Legenda Aurea's* format of first recounting a life and then performing a more analytical assessment. Jacobus put Saint Lawrence forward as one of the best martyrs:

[A]nd this for four aspects, as we gather from the writings of Saint Maximus and Saint Augustine. The first aspect is the bitterness of his sufferings, the second, their effectiveness or usefulness, the third, his constancy or fortitude, the fourth, his wonderful fight and the mode of his victory.⁶⁶

In the following, the Dominican provided an explanation about how Saint Lawrence's suffering increased his glory and therefore made him more effective as a model and an object for devotion. Jacobus also argued that Saint Lawrence was the most important martyr after Stephen, for instance, because of the location of his martyrdom in Rome and his impeccable charity. Consequently, he described Saint Lawrence's fortitude against external fires, such as the madness of his persecutors, and the way he countered these by his three internal fires: faith, love, and knowledge of God. Here, Dorlandus was less extensive. His important point is the construction of Saint Lawrence's passion as a series of sacrifices, thus strengthening the connection to Christ and to the saint as food. Finally, Dorlandus used other sermons on the saint, for instance, in the passages on the saint's body being impervious to flames because of his hot charity, which he took from a sermon by Saint Augustine.⁶⁷

I have not found any sources for the other episodes in the two sermons, or possibly not yet. Lawrence's many visions of personified virtues and vices seem original elements. The same is true about the tale of his birth, which has limited correspondence with the much shorter version published by the German classical scholar Oesterley in his edition of the *Gesta Romanorum*. First of all, Dorlandus's version is much longer. In



⁶⁵ Isidorus of Sevilla, *Étymologies*, 12: 436.

⁶⁶ Cited after Ryan, *The Golden Legend*, p. 456. For the Latin, see Jacobus de Voragine, *Legenda Aurea*, p. 765.

⁶⁷ Augustine of Hippo, 'In Natali martyris Laurentii', *Sermones de Sanctis*, Classis 3, sermon 303 in J. P. Migne ed., *Patrologia Latina* (Paris: J.P. Migne, 1840–1841), 38: cols. 1393–95.

addition, several details are different. In the Carthusian's sermon, there is no mention of Satan taking the baby Lawrence out of Spain. In Oesterley's edition, however, the devil took the child to Italy and hung him from a laurel. Grown up, Lawrence himself experiences the apparition in which the devil revealed what he had done. Afterwards, he sets out for Spain to find his parents.⁶⁸ In Dorlandus's *sermo historicus*, his father finds his baby son, rather than the other way around.

'I Implore You: Let Us Imitate Him'⁶⁹

In this quotation from the *sermo typicus*, Dorlandus made his purpose crystal clear: he wanted to exhort the audience to use Saint Lawrence as a model. Strikingly, he extended this invitation to himself. As a human being after the Fall, like the brothers listening to his sermon, he needed the example of a saint as much as anybody who aspired to turn themselves from carnality to God.⁷⁰ Saint Lawrence offered an example: he showed himself to be a model of piety by practising contrition, although being perfect, he probably did not need to.

Several scholars of hagiography have suggested that this genre should be regarded as a sequel to Scripture, rather along the lines of how the Old Testament was regarded as a prequel to the New Testament.⁷¹ Old Testament figures such as Moses and Job were regarded as being *praefigurae* of Christ, i.e., as models foreshadowing him. Old Testament tales were viewed as prophesying events to come. For instance, the tale of the Exodus was regarded as a model of how, like Moses, Christ would lead his people to the Promised Land, i.e., the heavenly Jerusalem. Moreover, from the Early Church, exegetes had been convinced that God's Word carried meaning

⁶⁸ *Gesta Romanorum* ed. by Hermann Oesterley (Berlin: Weidmann, 1872), pp. 612–14.

⁶⁹ Brussels, KBR, ms. 15003–15048, fol. 356^r: *Ymitemur, precor*.

⁷⁰ Cf. a similar pastoral technique in Thomas a Kempis, *Sermones ad novicios regulares, Opera Omnia* 6, ed. by M. J. Pohl (Freiburg im Breisgau: Herder, 1904), Sermon 8, p. 58.

⁷¹ M. van Uytfanghe, *Stylisation biblique et condition humaine dans l'hagiographie mérovingienne [600–750]* (Brussels: Paleis der Academiën, 1987); J. Leclercq, 'L'Écriture Sainte dans l'hagiographie monastique du Haut Moyen Age', *La Bibbia nell'alto Medioevo, Settimani di studio del centro Italiano di studi sull'Alto Medioevo*, 10 (1963), 103–28; H. Vekeman, 'Lezen als broeders en zusters van het gemene leven: een cyclus van levensbeschrijvingen uit Deventer kring', in *Wat duikers vent is dit! Opstellen voor W. H. M. Hummelen*, ed. by G. R. W. Dibbets and P. W. M. Wackers (Wijhe: Quarto, 1989), pp. 91–103.

on different levels. Usually, four levels were distinguished: the literal or historical – the level at which Scripture tells a tale about what happened in the past; the tropological – the level at which Scripture teaches us how to behave morally; the allegorical, at which the nature of God is revealed; and finally, the anagogical level, at which Scripture forecasts human salvation.⁷² Hagiographical scholars argued that the material on the saints was also seen as a form of sacred scripture, in which God whispered his truth into the ears of the authors, and which should be interpreted after the model of biblical exegesis.⁷³ Consequently, the saints offered a multi-layered model for imitation.

Dorlandus's set of sermons on Saint Lawrence is a case in point, both in the *sermo historicus* and the *sermo typicus*. As far as the tropological level is concerned, greed and its opposite, charity, are major themes. The emperor's lust for treasure triggers the action in the tale of the passion and is countered by Saint Lawrence's open-handedness. This must have appealed to Dorlandus in particular, as he regarded greed as a major cause of whatever was wrong with the Church of his day and, more specifically, religious people.⁷⁴ It was also an important theme in the statutes of the Carthusians: in the so-called *Customs*, the author Guigo I sought to prevent the Carthusians from falling prey to it by strict provisions about poverty.⁷⁵ Other points intended to inspire the audience to imitation are Saint Lawrence's impeccable chastity, which even made him avert his gaze when having a vision of personified virtues, as well as his constancy, courage, and patience, which allowed him to remain in good spirits throughout his martyrdom.

Despite the indubitable importance of this tropological level, Dorlandus stressed the allegorical and anagogical levels rather more, casting Saint Lawrence's history as an episode in the cosmic battle between God and the Devil. This is distinct from the hagiography that he wrote for environments outside the Carthusian Order, particularly in the *Devotio Moderna*, at least as far as these works have survived. In this material, he concentrated on the tropological level rather more.⁷⁶

⁷² H. de Lubac, *Exegèse Médiévale. Les quatre sens de l'Écriture* (Paris: Aubier, 1959).

⁷³ See note 70.

⁷⁴ Peter Dorlandus, *De enormi proprietatis* and Brussels, KBR, ms. 15003–15048, *De corruptele religionis sancte*, fol. 106^r–111^r; see for instance fol. 110^r.

⁷⁵ Guigo I, *Coutumes de Chartreuse*, ed. by M. Laporte (Paris: Éditions du Cerf, 1984), ch. 41: 244–47.

⁷⁶ For instance, in Peter Dorlandus, *Historie des alderheilichsten ende doerluchtichsten patriarchken sunte Joseph* in Ghent, University Library, ms. 895,

In contrast, the sermons on Saint Lawrence have a strong anagogical content as episodes in salvation history, which runs from the Fall to the Apocalypse – for instance, in how Lawrence’s prayer for the conversion of Rome was vindicated.⁷⁷ Moreover, the saint is compared to Christ and to figures from the Old Testament and Antiquity, e.g., Cicero, thus demonstrating the continuity of history. Saint Lawrence’s connection to previous and later history is also clear in the quotations Dorlandus inserted, for instance, Virgil’s quotation on his immediate smiling as a baby. Parts of Virgil’s *Ecloga*, from which this quotation originated, were commonly regarded as prophecies of the coming of Christ, thus enhancing Saint Lawrence’s similarity to Christ, which is also developed allegorically. At this level, Dorlandus concentrated on the meanings of the saint’s body.⁷⁸

Pure and Edible

Emphatically, Dorlandus described Saint Lawrence as a virgin. In female virgin martyrs, their bodies are usually regarded as symbols of the unity and unbrokenness of God. This is connected to specific parts of the female anatomy: either the seal which was supposed to lock the uterus or the hymen.⁷⁹ Obviously, as a man, Saint Lawrence lacked these parts. Although the fact that virginity was gendered is without question, the tales about this male martyr make clear that the determination of how gendered virginity worked is more complex than usually assumed. The purity and wholeness of his body, in short, his status as a *virgo intacta* and, therefore, a symbol of the divine, is as important as it is in a female martyr’s life.

It should be noted here that there is more to virginity than corporeality. For instance, the Church Father Saint Augustine pointed out that true virginity is about a state of mind, primarily.⁸⁰ Virgins who had chosen to live ascetically, rose above their femininity morally and physically. Women’s anatomy was determined by coldness and humidity,

St. Lucia, regular canonesses, Sint-Truiden, 1503, fols 1^r–62^v; *Dialogus Brevis super virginitate, fide et fenice*, in Brussels, KBR, ms. 1918–1925, regular canons, Korsendonk, Turnhout, 1530, fols 230^r–233^v.

⁷⁷ Cf. Champion, ‘Emotions and the social order of Time’.

⁷⁸ Publius Vergilius Maro, *Eclogues*, Ecloga 4: 28–29.

⁷⁹ See, for instance, Kathleen Coyne Kelly, *Performing Virginity and Testing Chastity in the Middle Ages* (London: Routledge, 1999), pp. 17–39.

⁸⁰ Augustine of Hippo, *De bono coniugali; De sancta virginitate*, ed. by P. G. Walsh (Oxford: Oxford University Press, 2011), for instance ch. 54–55.

whereas men were blessed with heat and dryness. The latter was connected to the work of the mind and to God, whereas cold and humid women were more inclined to carnality. These characteristics could be manipulated by living ascetically: virgins became hotter and dryer, becoming more masculine in the process and, therefore, closer to God.⁸¹ Viewed from this perspective, being an ascetic male, Saint Lawrence was a super-virgin, embodying the most masculine of masculinities and reaching for the highest level of proximity to God. It is significant that Dorlandus stressed his heat so much, for instance, in the saint's charity being hotter than fire.

In Dorlandus's sermons, which were intended to be read aloud during meals, the significance of the body of the saint as food is stressed even more. Practices surrounding food had always been important in religious environments. The Early Church hermits, monks, and nuns who invented the religious lives in the deserts of Syria, Palestine, and Egypt were known for their heroic fasting.⁸² Being hermit-monks themselves, the Carthusians must have felt close to these Desert Fathers. Eating soberly and fasting were regarded as very important exercises to divert the mind from this inborn carnality and to refocus it on God.⁸³

Of course, food was necessary to survive, but it was also viewed as a temptation. The Church Father Saint Augustine pointed out that the Fall had originated in *gula*, gluttony, which he also connected to another sin linked to the body, lust.⁸⁴ According to him, the problem was the desire for things other than God into which Satan seduced Adam and Eve, and

⁸¹ Thomas Laqueur, *Making Sex: Body and Gender from the Greeks to Freud* (Cambridge/London: Harvard University Press, 1990) pp. 25–62; Joan Cadden, *Meanings of Sex Difference in the Middle Ages: Medicine, Science and Culture* (Cambridge, 1993), pp. 169–227.

⁸² See, for instance, *Vita Mariae Aegyptiacae* in Société des Bollandistes, *Acta Sanctorum* (Paris: Garnier, 1879), 73:col. 0671–90.

⁸³ See the seminal works on the importance of food by Caroline Walker Bynum, *Holy Feast and Holy Fast: the Religious Significance of Food to Medieval Women* (Berkeley: University of California Press, 1987); and Caroline Walker Bynum, 'The female body and religious practice in the Later Middle Ages', *Fragmentation and Redemption* (New York: Zone Books, 1991), pp. 181–238, 365–93.

⁸⁴ Augustine of Hippo, *Enarrationes in Psalmos*, ed. by F. Gori (Vienna: Verlag der Österreichischen Akademie der Wissenschaften, 2001–2011, 6; Augustine of Hippo, *De Libero Arbitrio Libri Tres*, ed. by William M. Green (Vienna: Hoelder-Pichler-Tempsky, 1966) 2: 7; Augustine of Hippo, *Confessiones*, ed. by James Joseph O'Donnell (Oxford: Clarendon Press, 1992), 10:3.

which they gave to their entire progeny.⁸⁵ Reading at table, as prescribed in the Rule of Saint Benedict, was a safety measure.⁸⁶ Listening to a religious text helped keep the eaters' minds on God rather than on enjoying the meal or the company of their fellow brothers. Dorlandus's injunctions to masticate spiritually must have served this aim perfectly.

The Carthusians followed the Benedictine Rule but added to it with statutes that regulated their special lifestyle as a combination of hermits and monks and which, in a late medieval house, would consist of Guigo's *Customs* and several later additions as canonised by the General Chapter.⁸⁷ In the *Customs*, the importance of food practices is clear not only from the detailed regulations in the sections which refer to food specifically, but also from how references to it are intertwined with those about the hours, *the* work of monks.⁸⁸ They fasted on Mondays, Wednesdays, and Fridays on bread, water, and salt. On Tuesdays, Thursdays, and Saturdays the brothers cooked their own meals, which consisted of vegetables and a small measure of wine cut with water. On Thursdays, cheese, fish, or eggs were added, of which the brothers were allowed only small quantities. Eggs and cheese were forbidden during advent. From the *idus* of September until Easter, they ate only once a day, excepting major feast days. Otherwise, two meals were allowed.⁸⁹ Particularly in the so-called *Statuta Antiqua*, detailed prescriptions are given for the reading during meals, for instance, about physical posture of both reader and audience, and the kinds of books that could be used: sermons and treatises as well as biblical passages.⁹⁰ The reading in the refectory was an extension

⁸⁵ For instance, in Augustine of Hippo, *De vita eremitica ad sororem liber*, ch. 32, in J. P. Migne ed., *Patrologia Latina*, vol. 32 (Paris: J. P. Migne, 1840–1841), col. 1462.

⁸⁶ *Regula Benedicti*, ed. by R. Hanslik (Vienna: Hoelder-Pichler-Tempsky, 1977), ch. 37, 96–97.

⁸⁷ For the history of the statutes see Dom Irenée Jaricot, *Essai sur l'Histoire de nos Coutumes Chartreuses* (Salzburg: Institut für Anglistik und Amerikanistik, 2014), 1: 4–5.

⁸⁸ Guigo, *Coutumes*, for instance ch. 3, 160–61, ch. 4, 166–67; specifically about food: ch. 33–34, 236–37.

⁸⁹ Guigo, *Coutumes*, ch. 33–34, 236–37.

⁹⁰ In addition to Jaricot, *Essai sur l'Histoire* consulted the set of statutes of the nearby Charterhouse at Scheut, see Brussels, KBR, ms. 10858, *Constitutiones Carthusianorum*, Carthusians, Our Lady of Grace, Scheut near Brussels, 1465, fol. 89^v–90^r.

of the reading in the church: occasionally, texts begun in the church were to be repeated or continued in the refectory.⁹¹

As noted, in Dorlandus's sermons, Saint Lawrence himself is presented to a very large extent as being food. This connects to the Eucharistic piety, which had developed extensively in the Late Middle Ages.⁹² Many scholars described how the body of Christ came to be considered the ultimate food in a very literal sense, both spiritually and physically, particularly in female religious environments, as is shown by the many reports about female religious and saints who limited their food intake to it. This form of piety was linked to devotion to the suffering Christ, as is clear from many examples. For instance, in the representations of Saint Gregory's Mass, in which the saint and his audience have a vision where they actually see the transubstantiation occur, Christ is usually accompanied by the instruments of his passion. These images were omnipresent in the Low Countries.⁹³ Dorlandus connected both Christ's and Lawrence's suffering to their being edible, particularly in the passage where the former is baking the bread and the latter roasting the meat.

Caroline Walker Bynum and other scholars noted how, in the development of Eucharistic piety, Christ's body took on female characteristics, such as being capable of feeding others like a female body. Conversely, there are many reports of female saints and religious women who were, like Christ, capable of feeding their followers with their bodies, using fluids flowing from them, such as milk or occasionally blood or pus.⁹⁴ It has also been argued that the concentration on the bodily imitation of a saint was particularly promoted in women's environments as a way to counter their disadvantages in reaching true piety, as caused by their humid and cold anatomy.⁹⁵ The insistence on the similarity of women's bodies to Christ's offered an opportunity to turn this disadvantage into

⁹¹ Brussels, KBR, ms. 101858, fol. 34^v.

⁹² See Miri Rubin, *Corpus Christi: the Eucharist in Late Medieval Culture* (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 1991) and Charles M. A. Caspers, *De Eucharistische vroomheid en het feest van Sacramentsdag in de Nederlanden tijdens de Late Middeleeuwen* (Louvain: Peeters, 1992).

⁹³ Rubin, *Corpus Christi*, pp. 308–10.

⁹⁴ Bynum, *Holy Feast and Holy Fast*, and by the same author 'The female body and religious practice'.

⁹⁵ For instance, by Anke Passenier, 'Het lijdend lichaam en de vrije ziel: middeleeuwse mystica's op zoek naar God', *Lover. Literatuuroverzicht voor de vrouwenbeweging*, 23 (1996), pp. 15–20, 22; and Amy Hollywood, *Sensible Ecstasy: Sexual Difference and the Demands of History* (Chicago: University of Chicago Press, 2002), pp. 236–73.

an advantage. Saint Lawrence's legend as told in the sermons shows that the food-like quality of the body of a saint was not a female prerogative. Although the Carthusians did not literally eat him, the food metaphors connected them to the saint and through him to Christ, as a metaphor for the connection made in the Eucharist. Moreover, encouraging the listeners to use Saint Lawrence as food for spiritual mastication, in line with the reading practice as prescribed in the *Statuta Antiqua*, Dorlandus defused the dangerous distraction, which a meal might bring, and shaped it into a useful spiritual exercise.

At the end of this section it is helpful to compare Dorlandus's sermons to Prudentius's hymn again. Armed with contemporary feminist theory, notably Judith Butler's seminal *Gender Trouble*, several scholars have argued that the Roman author construed a feminised Saint Lawrence, as opposed to traditional Roman masculinity as embodied by the emperor and his accomplices.⁹⁶ For now, let me merely note that Dorlandus in his sermons, written around 1100 years later, never referred to Saint Lawrence as having feminine characteristics. If anything, he is the most masculine of men. Yet, it is a matter for debate whether the male-female binary is actually helpful in understanding the Carthusian's construction of this saint. Rather, as a virgin, as food, and through being similar to Christ, I would suggest that he is beyond gender, like the seraphim and, ultimately, God.⁹⁷

Conclusion

In the Louvain manuscript, Dorlandus put a male saint forward as a model for male Carthusians. Like Scripture, this model works on several levels: as an object for immediate imitation, as a message about trying to be like Christ, and about the history of salvation. Aiming for a tropological message, Dorlandus put Saint Lawrence forward as a model of chastity and charity, as opposed to his greedy tormentors. Elsewhere, he argued that greed was a major reason behind the downfall of the Church. The avoidance of greed and the promotion of poverty and sobriety were also major subjects in the statutes of the Carthusians.

At the allegorical level, Saint Lawrence's body is the most important sign of his similarity to Christ. Like Christ's, it is virginal, ultimately unbreakable, and beyond gender. An important feature is its presentation as food, where Dorlandus linked him to Christ more specifically,

⁹⁶ Judith Butler, *Gender Trouble: Feminism and the Subversion of Identity* (New York: Routledge, 2006); as used by Catherine Conybeare, 'The ambiguous laughter of Saint Lawrence'. See also Jill Ross, *Figuring the feminine*, pp. 50–80.

⁹⁷ Cf. Kelly, *Performing virginity*, pp. 17–39.

describing the roasted Saint Lawrence as being connected to Christ's eucharistic bread, baked at the cross. Acknowledging that the same tales may have affected different audiences differently, contrary to what has been argued about Prudentius' work and late medieval female religious communities, Dorlandus's Saint Lawrence did not need ambivalent gender characteristics to be like Christ: he was fully male and, as virgin and food, a symbol of divinity. As such, he was beyond created divisions such as gender. Strikingly, this enhances his proximity to God – those who were admitted to the seraphim were as beyond gender as He was. Dorlandus's sermons show that messages about saint's virginity and edibility were as useful for his male Carthusians as similar material written for female audiences.

Despite the very literal descriptions of Saint Lawrence as cooked or grilled meat, Dorlandus stressed that he was to serve as spiritual food first. Encouraging the audience to masticate both physically and spiritually, he turned the practice of eating from a possible distraction from the monks' efforts to concentrate on God at all times, to a useful exercise. The sermons thus reveal the attitude which Carthusians should cultivate, according to their statutes, becoming completely divorced from all worldly and carnal concerns and focused exclusively on the divine.

Here, the presentation of Saint Lawrence as locked in an unending battle with the Devil served as a reminder to the Louvain Carthusians that they were engaged in the same struggle. The challenge of living as Carthusians among their fellow humans in a burgeoning university town, who were perhaps inspired by other than pious purposes, could only be met by being as religious as Saint Lawrence had been. How difficult it was to imitate him in his Christ-like qualities in these circumstances is shown by the Visitors' repeated criticisms.

