

Contested Augustinian Revival in the Netherlands during the Nineteenth Century

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ABSTRACT

The nineteenth century saw a remarkable flourishing of the religious life in the Netherlands, as elsewhere in Western Europe. But the Dutch Augustinian Friars lagged behind their more numerous and successful Dominican and Franciscan competitors, defying attempts at revival until the 1880s. This article endeavours to explain what motivated them to resist for so long and what eventually convinced them to relinquish their opposition. It will demonstrate that their complex relationship with their Belgian confreres was key, as traditional attitudes fused with contemporary concerns about the place of Catholicism and the religious life in the Netherlands.

It has often¹ been remarked that nineteenth-century European Christianity made an astoundingly successful recovery from the setbacks it suffered during the French Revolution, thus confounding the hopes of *philosophes* and revolutionaries alike. In the Netherlands after 1815, the government's policy of building a unified nation of enlightened, moderate and virtuous citizens could not prevent the rise of a more emotive and self-consciously orthodox religiosity, among both Catholics and Protestants. This trend continued during the second half of the century, and resulted in the formation of separate Catholic and Protestant communities or subcultures, whose emergence put an end to the 'moral unity' of the nation². In the Catholic case, the building of *katholiek Nederland* or 'Catholic Netherlands' took the form of the religious, cultural, social and ultimately political mobilisation of Dutch Catholics on a denominational basis³. Clergy and religious played an important role in this process, and they have therefore become the object of considerable scholarly interest⁴.

In fact, the revival of male and female religious institutes, especially the proliferation of new congregations and their success in attracting new

¹ An inchoate version of the argument formulated in this article previously appeared in Dutch in B. HEFFERNAN, *Een kleine orde met allure. De augustijnen in Nederland, 1886-2006*, Hilversum 2015, chapters 1 and 2.

² P. VAN ROODEN, *Religieuze regimes. Over godsdienst en maatschappij in Nederland, 1570-1990*, Amsterdam 1996, 16. 201.

³ J. ROES, «In de kerk geboren. Het Nederlands katholicisme in anderhalve eeuw van herleving naar overleving», *Jaarboek van het Katholiek Documentatiecentrum*, 24 (1994), 61-102: 82.

⁴ Role: M. MONTEIRO, *Catholic Intellectual Elites in the Netherlands. Fruitful and Vulnerable Alliances During the Interbellum*, in *Religious Institutes and Catholic Culture in 19th and 20th Century Europe*, U. ALTERMATT – J. DE MAEYER – F. METZGER, ed., Leuven 2014, 23-39: 24; interest: see for instance J. VAN GENNIP, «Veranderende getijden. Een impressie van de Nederlandse geschiedschrijving naar orden en congregaties over ruim één eeuw», *Tijdschrift voor Nederlandse Kerkgeschiedenis*, 17/3 (2014), 100-109; *Religious Institutes in Western Europe in the 19th and 20th centuries. Historiography, research and legal position*, J. DE MAEYER – S. LEPLAE – J. SCHMIEDL (ed.), Leuven 2004.

recruits, was a significant feature of the formation of a distinct Catholic subculture. Not only was it an outward sign of new-found vitality, but religious also helped to form the Catholic community by producing constitutive “ideologies, cultural codes and practices” and by contributing to the “structural level of social mobilisation and institutionalization”⁵. This article proposes to look more closely at this process of the revival of religious by studying the fortunes of one particular institute: the Dutch Augustinians. Its objective is to contribute to the historiography of this Order. The French era (1795-1815) and the period of the United Kingdom of the Netherlands (1815-1830) have been comprehensively covered by Felix De Ceukeleer and, more recently, by Martijn Schrama, but historiography for the rest of the century is sketchy⁶. More generally, this article endeavours to shed light on the various factors that determined the shape and chronology of the revival of the religious life in the Netherlands, particularly the 1830 secession of Belgium.

An institute’s chances for revival depended to a large extent on how badly it had been affected by the vicissitudes of the revolutionary period. The ‘old orders’ of monks, canons and mendicants were hardest hit⁷. Suppression decrees were mostly directed at institutes that had accumulated property and were deemed not to serve any useful purpose. As old orders reeled from the shock of suppression and expropriation, newer congregations – particularly active female institutes – found nineteenth-century conditions much more congenial⁸. But old orders who still had a critical

⁵ Cfr. U. ALTERMATT – F. METZGER, *Religious Institutes as a Factor of Catholic Communities of Communication*, in *Religious Institutes and Catholic Culture*, 11-20: 13.

⁶ F. DE CEUKELEER, «Suppression et restauration de l'ordre des augustins en Belgique, 1794-1834» (I), *Augustiniana*, 29 (1979), 366-393, and (II), 32 (1982), 312-347; M. SCHRAMA, *Suppression of Monasteries and Religious Liberty. Two Consequences of the French Revolution Concerning the Augustinian Communities in the Low Countries*, in *Le soppressioni del secolo XIX e l'Ordine Agostiniano*, L. MARÍN DE SAN MARTÍN (ed.), Rome 2010, 317-348; ID., «Hildebrand Verhoeckx (1766-1815). Notes on an Augustinian Family History», *Augustiniana*, 63 (2013), 83-154. There is valuable material in A.K. DE MEIJER, *Augustinus in de Domstad. 350 jaar zielzorg van de augustijnen 1636-1986*, Utrecht 1986; W. GROOTAERS – G.J. BRUINS, *De augustijnen in de kering 1796-1996*, in *Zeven eeuwen augustijnen. Een kloostergemeenschap schrijft geschiedenis*, W. GROOTAERS – M. MEES (ed.), Ghent 1996, 105-123; M. SCHRAMA, *De regel van de liefde. Over de volgelingen van Augustinus*, Kampen 2006. See also B. HEFFERNAN, «*Spiritus Ordinis Nostri Paulatim Reviviscere Incepit*». *Augustinian Revival in the Netherlands, 1886-1920*, in *La ripresa dell'Ordine. Gli Agostiniani tra 1850-1920*, L. MARÍN DE SAN MARTÍN (ed.), Rome 2012, 349-373.

⁷ A. COLOMBO, *The Laws of Suppression in Italy. Characteristics and Effects*, in *Religious Institutes in Western Europe*, 263-273: 266-268.

⁸ C. LANGLOIS, *Le catholicisme au féminin. Les congrégations françaises à supérieure générale au XIX^e siècle*, Paris 1984.

mass of membership after the suppressions were also able to profit from the changing tide. The Franciscans in 1815 must have numbered several dozen friars, if not more, who lived in 24 stations and in their former priority in Megen; while the Dominicans numbered approximately 35 in 1815, spread over 13 stations⁹. Meagre as these figures were compared to the situation before the Revolution, they seemed vigorous compared to the Augustinians, who in 1815 had 6 priests and 4 – soon 3 – stations¹⁰. While the Franciscans and Dominicans went from strength to strength, the Augustinians' very modest starting position seriously limited their prospects during the nineteenth century.

Revival was also a matter of 'ideology', of having an appealing narrative of identity that could bind people to the community. As Marit Monteiro has shown in the case of the Dutch Dominicans, their programme of revival entailed a monastic identity, characterised by emphasis on observance of the rule and communal life¹¹. Many Dutch religious had for centuries been primarily parish ministers, serving the country's mission stations or *staties* and living in presbyteries very much like secular priests. Pushing a programme of monasticisation therefore meant risking a clash with vested interests and existing self-images. Moreover, the prevailing enlightened ideal of the free citizen, averse to superstitious practices and unbeholden to clerics who claimed the right to rule his conscience, sat uneasily with the monastic ideals of religious vows and obedience to a superior¹². Peter Jan Margry has shown that Catholic revival in the Netherlands was accompanied and stimulated by the public manifestation, even the flaunting, of precisely those aspects of Catholicism that non-Catholics found objectionable¹³. The same process appears to have taken place with the revival of the old orders. Although the *statievader* ('station father') tradition retained an abiding vitality, revival often involved the emphasising

⁹ Franciscans: estimate based on number of stations served, M.A. BAAN, *De Nederlandse minderbroedersprovincie sinds 1853. Sociologische verkenning van een religieuze groepering in verandering*, Assen 1965, 41-42; Dominicans: M. MONTEIRO, *Gods Predikers. Dominicanen in Nederland (1795-2000)*, Hilversum 2008, 67.828-829.

¹⁰ SCHRAMA, *Suppression of Monasteries*, 346. The stations were Amsterdam (De Star), Groningen (Oude Ebbingestraat), Utrecht (Jerusalemsteeg) and Nijmegen (Houtstraat).

¹¹ MONTEIRO, *Gods Predikers*, 75-84. Jan de Kok has observed a similar development for the Franciscans: J.A. DE KOK, *Acht eeuwen minderbroeders in Nederland. Een oriëntatie*, Hilversum 2007, 253-257.

¹² MONTEIRO, *Gods Predikers*, 57; J. VAN VUGT, «Should it Happen that God Should Permit...». *The Political and Legal Position of Orders and Congregations in the Netherlands*, in *Religious Institutes in Western Europe*, 277-308: 283.

¹³ P.J. MARGRY, *Teedere quaesties: religieuze rituelen in conflict. Confrontaties tussen katholieken en protestanten rond de processiecultuur in 19e-eeuw Nederland*, Hilversum 2000.

of those parts of an institute's heritage that had been most thoroughly forgotten, for instance its medieval monastic identity¹⁴. The paradox was that by invoking their medieval past as their model for the future, these orders were effecting a revival that would make them, at least in some respects, agents of modernity for the Catholic community¹⁵.

The Early Modern Heritage: Mission Stations

Nothing remained by the end of the sixteenth century of the Augustinians' medieval presence in the Northern Netherlands, its five priories having been suppressed by the secular authorities as the exercise of the Catholic religion was banned¹⁶. It was not long, however, before friars began to arrive as missionaries from the Southern Netherlands, often Augustinians born in the Dutch Republic or from Northern refugee families in the south¹⁷. By the 1630s, a formal Augustinian mission had been established, under the Belgian provincial's jurisdiction, but with a *praefectus missionis* appointed by Propaganda¹⁸. By arrangement with Propaganda, this mission never numbered more than ten missionaries¹⁹. These missionaries' life work was to serve and promote the welfare of their stations and to protect the Order's possession of them against encroachment by the secular clergy. Legal restrictions ruled out any attempt to institute the conventual life in the Republic, but even such opportunities to live communally as did exist, they were sacrificed to the paramount necessity of preserving the stations. Thus the friars serving the two Groningen stations were forbidden from living together in the same house to avoid any attempt by secular or ecclesiastical authority to merge their churches, which would have left the mission short a station²⁰. It comes as no surprise to find two prominent Augustinian historians of this period concluding that

¹⁴ Abiding vitality: TH.A.J. JANSEN, *De pater op de pastorie. Het aandeel van de regulieren in de parochiële zielzorg van Nederland, 1853-1966*, Nijmegen 1976.

¹⁵ Medieval heritage: P. RAEDTS, *De ontdekking van de middeleeuwen. Geschiedenis van een illusie*, Amsterdam 2011, 249-261; agents of modernity, cfr. U. ALTERMATT – J. DE MAEYER – F. METZGER, *Introduction*, in *Religious Institutes and Catholic Culture*, 7-9.

¹⁶ L. VERACHTEN, *De augustijnen in de Nederlanden van ontstaan tot opheffing*, in *Zeven eeuwen augustijnen*, 30-49.

¹⁷ B. VAN LUIJK – L. VAN DYCK, «De augustijnen in de Hollandse Zending, Gelderland, Limburg en Staats-Brabant (1623-1853)», *Augustiniana*, 17 (1967), 274-298: 277.

¹⁸ VAN LUIJK – VAN DYCK, «De augustijnen in de Hollandse Zending», 280.

¹⁹ E. YPMA, «De augustijnen in de Hollandse missie. Het ontstaan van de missie», *Augustiniana*, 2 (1952), 61-70: 65.

²⁰ VAN LUIJK – VAN DYCK, «De augustijnen in de Hollandse Zending», 288.

there was little contact between the stations: lines of communication ran between each individual station and the Belgian province²¹.

The second half of the eighteenth century brought greater freedom from government interference in Catholic affairs in the Republic, but at the same time dark clouds were gathering above the mother province in the Southern Netherlands. The Austrian rulers Maria Theresa (1740-1780) and Joseph II (1780-1790) imposed numerous restrictions on religious orders, impoverishing them and impeding recruitment, while the Enlightenment popularised perceptions of religious as useless, backward and avaricious²². Developments in the south also affected the north, and one station – in Groningen – had to be closed in 1790²³. 1794 saw the invasion of the Southern Netherlands by the French; in 1796 they suppressed all religious houses. This measure, as well as the persecution between 1797 and 1799 of priests who refused to take an oath of hatred against the monarchy, caused many Augustinians to lie low or flee the country²⁴. The situation improved somewhat with the accession of Napoleon Bonaparte (1769-1821) in 1799, but hopes of restoration were dashed by the concordat of 1801 and the papal legate's decree of 1803, which withdrew religious from their superiors and subjected them to the authority of the bishops, thus effectively giving papal sanction to the 1796 suppression²⁵.

Setting the Scene: The Stations and Ghent

Things did not initially seem quite so bleak in the north, where the establishment of the Batavian Republic in 1795 was followed the year after by the formal separation of Church and State, bringing religious freedom for Catholics. The Augustinian missionaries, having acquired a sense of identity founded on the importance and relative wealth of their stations, could moreover rejoice at seeing their churches suddenly transformed into the only places in the Low Countries that could still openly function under Augustinian auspices²⁶. The arrival in Utrecht of one friar from the south permitted the missionaries to reopen a station there in 1795 that

²¹ VAN LUIJK – VAN DYCK, «De augustijnen in de Hollandse Zending», 282.

²² DE CEUKELEER, «Suppression et restauration» (I), 369-377.

²³ VAN LUIJK – VAN DYCK, «De augustijnen in de Hollandse Zending», 288.

²⁴ DE CEUKELEER, «Suppression et restauration» (I), 377-384.

²⁵ DE CEUKELEER, «Suppression et restauration» (I), 388-393.

²⁶ M. SCHRAMA, «Hildebrand Verhoeckx (1766-1815). Een kloosterling in revolutietijd», *Tijdschrift voor Nederlandse Kerkgeschiedenis*, 16/2 (2013), 56-63: 58.

had been ceded to the secular clergy at the orders of the city authorities some thirty years before²⁷. The victory which the Augustinians enjoyed in the ensuing bitter dispute with the Utrecht secular clergy seemed to prove that the Batavian Revolution meant the vindication of their historic rights, thus confirming them in their primary identity as legitimate guardians of their stations.

But it soon dawned on the missionaries that the disappearance of the Belgian province would also bring difficulties, the most important being that recruitment was interrupted as all formation houses had been suppressed. This was all the more problematic, since legal restrictions in the Batavian Republic and the French government's offer of salaried parish work made many Belgian friars unable or unwilling to come to the north. In 1804, this led the prefect and erstwhile provincial, Joannes Petrus van de Winckel (1738-1811), to consider for the first time the possibility of recruiting and offering a formation programme in the Northern Netherlands itself²⁸. Representations were made to Rome to this effect, but, as Schrama has surmised, the disarray in which both the Order's general curia and the papal curia found themselves at the time probably prevented their realisation²⁹. The annexation of the Northern Netherlands by France in 1810 further complicated things, as it meant that the French suppression decrees also came into effect in the Dutch *départements*³⁰. Van de Winckel's death in 1811 created yet another problem, because it left the mission without a superior who could admit new candidates. The papal chargé d'affaires, Luigi Ciamberlani (1748-1828), put Henricus Kleijn (1750-1814) in charge of the mission, but this appointment did not afford Kleijn any authority under the Constitutions of the Order³¹.

The fall of the French Empire in 1814 brought new opportunities. Not so much for restoration of the religious life, as the new United Kingdom of the Netherlands retained the legal restrictions it had inherited and King William I (1815-1839) banned religious orders from accepting new candidates³². But the prospect of sending recruits to Italy for their formation suddenly seemed realistic, now that the ravages of war had ended

²⁷ T. CLEMENS, «Het vuur van de revolutie en de rooms-katholieke kerk in de noordelijke Nederlanden», *De Achttiende Eeuw. Documentatieblad van de Werkgroep Achttiende Eeuw*, 28 (1996), 75-85: 79-80.

²⁸ DE CEUKELEER, «Suppression et restauration» (II), 319.

²⁹ SCHRAMA, *Suppression of Monasteries*, 344-346.

³⁰ VAN VUGT, «Should it Happen that God Should Permit...», 279. See also MONTEIRO, *Gods Predikers*, 57.

³¹ DE CEUKELEER, «Suppression et restauration» (II), 321-322.

³² VAN VUGT, «Should it Happen that God Should Permit...», 280-283.

and conditions in Italy were improving. Two able friars of the youngest generation seized the moment and became, if not architects of revival, then at least saviours from extinction. Augustinus Naudts (1761-1844) and Franciscus Van der Mensbrugghe (1770-1834), both from East Flanders and both *filius* of the Ghent priory, were decades younger than the last provincial and could normally have expected to have advanced further in their careers had the Revolution not intervened. In 1815, Naudts was *pastor primarius* or parish priest of the Amsterdam station of De Star, the mission's most prosperous and prestigious, while Van der Mensbrugghe was parish priest of St. Stephen's in Ghent, a former Augustinian oratory that had been turned into a parish church in 1802. The fact that Van der Mensbrugghe's predecessor Carolus Volbracht (1749-1810) had succeeded in repurchasing the Augustinian priory in Ghent when it was auctioned off in 1796 meant that the effects of the suppression there were considerably mitigated³³. A number of friars gathered around Volbracht, and clandestine communities of Augustinians also formed in other towns where priories had been suppressed. But these ageing groups were vulnerable to challenges from many quarters, and in fact none of them survived beyond the 1820s³⁴. A new initiative was required, and it came from Naudts and Van der Mensbrugghe. Most likely operating in tandem, they took steps to secure the future of the Augustinians in the Low Countries³⁵.

A first step came in February 1815, when the three *primarii* of the mission met in Amsterdam and agreed to accept new candidates. They were to be sent to Rome for their formation at the cost of the Dutch stations, and were destined for work in the stations³⁶. Naudts was given the responsibility to select candidates, this unofficial leadership being confirmed in 1816 when the vicar general of the Order appointed him commissary general for the mission in Holland³⁷. Despite the fact that accepting novices was illegal, and the government quickly closed a loophole by banning the return of religious trained abroad, the initiative led to a small stream of

³³ DE CEUKELEER, «Suppression et restauration» (I), 389; GROOTAERS – BRUINS, *De augustijnen in de kering 1796-1996*, 106.

³⁴ GROOTAERS – BRUINS, *De augustijnen in de kering 1796-1996*, 106.

³⁵ B. SAS, *Augustijnen op de pastorij. De augustijnenparochie Sint-Stefanus te Gent van 1803 tot 1914*, Heverlee 1997, 63; GROOTAERS – BRUINS, *De augustijnen in de kering 1796-1996*, 108. See also DE CEUKELEER, «Suppression et restauration» (II), 329. A number of small communities near other former Augustinian priories continued to exist into the period of the United Kingdom: DE CEUKELEER, «Suppression et restauration» (I), 388-389.

³⁶ DE CEUKELEER, «Suppression et restauration» (II), 324.345.

³⁷ DE CEUKELEER, «Suppression et restauration» (II), 326.336. His remit was extended to Belgium in 1834: *ibid.*, 337.

new friars; De Ceukeleer has counted ten between 1815 and the 1830s³⁸. Van der Mensbrugghe, meanwhile, managed to extract from the Ghent diocesan authorities the crucial guarantee that his parish would continue to be entrusted to Augustinians as long as they were able to provide successors³⁹. In need therefore of new recruits himself, he agreed with Naudts to pay for the formation of a number of the young friars, and at least some of them came to Ghent after their Italian novitiate to study at the diocesan seminary. New seminarians in these years were destined from the moment of entry to work either in the stations or in Ghent⁴⁰.

Rupture: Monastic Revival in Ghent and Dutch Resistance

Given the legal impossibility of founding religious houses anywhere in the Kingdom, and given the fact that friars north and south did the same kind of work, i.e. pastoral ministry, it does not seem likely that there were at this point strong differences in mentality between the friars in the stations and in Ghent. But the Belgian Revolution of 1830 brought about changes that would drive a wedge between the two groups. Belgium's new constitution guaranteed full religious liberty, making the prospect of restoring the communal life realistic⁴¹. Van der Mensbrugghe seized the opportunity and began to prepare for the re-opening of the Ghent priory. He had been working towards this goal in the 1820s by forming a not-so-clandestine religious community in his presbytery in a wing of the former priory⁴². As De Ceukeleer has contended, he could count on the support of a number of the young friars, who had encountered the spirit of revival through a return to religious observance during their formation in Italy⁴³. For other mendicant orders, the spirit of revival led to the emergence of voices that called for a fundamental rejection of parish ministry. As I have argued elsewhere, this was never the case for the Augustinians⁴⁴. The most important icon of the Augustinian revivalist attitude, novice master Stefano Bellesini (1774-1840), whom Dutch and Belgian semi-

³⁸ DE CEUKELEER, «Suppression et restauration» (II), 325.

³⁹ SAS, *Augustijnen op de pastorij*, 65-66.

⁴⁰ DE CEUKELEER, «Suppression et restauration» (II), 329-330. Not all young friars studied in Ghent, see SAS, *Augustijnen op de pastorij*, 145.

⁴¹ F. STEVENS, *Les associations religieuses en Belgique pendant le 19^e siècle*, in *Religious Institutes in Western Europe, 185-202*: 197-198.

⁴² SAS, *Augustijnen op de pastorij*, 66-67.

⁴³ DE CEUKELEER, «Suppression et restauration» (II), 332-333.

⁴⁴ DE KOK, *Acht eeuwen*, 292, 430; HEFFERNAN, *Een kleine orde*, 91-92.

narians also encountered in Italy, epitomised his Order's model of strong adherence to an observant communal life combined with an active apostolate⁴⁵. Although this model did not jeopardise pastoral ministry, it did challenge the Dutch missionaries' traditional way of life.

When Van der Mensbrugge succeeded in re-establishing a canonical convent in Ghent in 1834, he staged a significant ceremony on 5 May, the feast of the conversion of St. Augustine. The members of the new community appeared before the superior dressed in the habit of the order to place their possessions at his feet and to renew their vows, symbolically marking the transition from the *vita particularis* to the *vita communis perfecta*⁴⁶. Not all friars in Ghent were equally supportive of this last aspect of the new departure, and in fact the community's request for Roman permission had vainly attempted to extract a number of concessions on this point⁴⁷. Communal life remained a contentious issue in Ghent, suggesting once more that mentalities among friars north and south did not yet diverge much⁴⁸. But Naudts's support for the Ghent initiatives, and his plans to involve the Dutch stations in them by requesting the establishment of a new *provincia Hollando-Belgica*, strongly alarmed a number of Dutch friars⁴⁹. It is to the mid-1830s therefore that the rise of what might be called anti-monastic opposition in the stations must be dated. When Van der Mensbrugge died a few months after the May ceremony, Naudts decided to succeed him and moved to Ghent⁵⁰. His successor as *primarius* of De Star was Liborius Frees (1798-1860), a man nearly forty years his junior, one of the generation trained partly in Italy after 1815. Frees was one of the friars whose expenses had been paid by Van der Mensbrugge and who would therefore normally have been expected to accept appointment in St. Stephen's. But Frees had refused this, and had managed instead to secure a position as *pastor secundarius* or curate in De Star in 1821 immediately after his ordination⁵¹. Whether this decision had already been motivated by opposition to Van der Mensbrugge's plans for the reinstatement of the conventual life, it is impossible to tell. What

⁴⁵ A. ZUMKELLER, *Bellesini, Stefano*, in *Lexikon für Theologie und Kirche*, Freiburg i.B.-al. 1994³, II, 191.

⁴⁶ DE CEUKELEER, «Suppression et restauration» (II), 338-3340.

⁴⁷ DE CEUKELEER, «Suppression et restauration» (II), 334-336.

⁴⁸ GROOTAERS – BRUINS, *De augustijnen in de kering 1796-1996*, 113.

⁴⁹ Naudts's support: DE CEUKELEER, «Suppression et restauration» (II), 335-340.

⁵⁰ DE CEUKELEER, «Suppression et restauration» (II), 340.

⁵¹ DE CEUKELEER, «Suppression et restauration» (II), 329; D. VERKERKEN – W. GROOTAERS, *Repertorium ordinis fratrum Sancti Augustini provincia Coloniae – provincia Belgica 1252-1995*, Heverlee 1996, 170.

is certain, however, is that after his appointment as parish priest in 1834, Frees gradually became the unofficial leader of Dutch opposition to monasticisation. He fired a first shot in 1838, when he accused Naudts of spending money earmarked for the stations on the Ghent priory, which had been all but destroyed by a fire earlier that year⁵².

As will shortly become evident, Frees did not represent all Dutch friars, but he clearly enjoyed the support of a strong constituency in the small mission. Their opposition to Naudts's plans was not simply due to the fact that they were gentlemen unwilling to relinquish their comforts, although this motive perhaps played a part. In fact, however, Frees, for example, was a man of strong personal piety; his reputation for this was still alive in Amsterdam in the 1890s, three decades after his death⁵³. It was rather that his religiosity was different from the ultramontane, devotional Catholicism that was in the ascendant during the nineteenth century, and with which Frees and his supporters associated the observant revival programme. Their own somewhat patrician spirituality was serious, focused on the interior life, and much more indebted to the *Devotio moderna* than to the medieval heritage vaunted by the ultramontanes – it was the kind of spirituality that young curates in uncharitable moments might have labelled 'Jansenist' when out of earshot of the accused⁵⁴. It is no surprise that Frees was reputed to have always carried a copy of Thomas a Kempis's *Imitation of Christ*⁵⁵.

Opposition to Naudts's and Van der Mensbrugge's plans also resulted from two other important considerations. The first arose from status in society. Clergymen – even Catholic clergymen – enjoyed credit with the country's liberal elite to the extent that they spread exactly the kind of sober, ethical Christianity that Frees embodied. Monks or friars, on the contrary, with their exotic habits, their devotions and their unmanly subservience to their superiors, were the antitype of the free citizen that was the ideal of the era⁵⁶. For Frees and his associates there was no benefit

⁵² GROOTAERS – BRUINS, *De augustijnen in de kering 1796-1996*, 114. Frees's presence in Amsterdam probably also explains why Naudts moved to Utrecht rather than to his former station in the capital when he retired from his post in Ghent in 1840. Cfr. *ibid.*, 110.

⁵³ P. JANSEN, «Bijdrage tot het Archief van de kerk "De Star" te Amsterdam voorafgegaan door eenige Opmerkingen nopens de Hollandsche Paters Augustijnen» 1924, 1 (Het Utrechts Archief [HUA], 1392-2: Archives of the Dutch Augustinians [ANA], 4374).

⁵⁴ Cfr. J.M.M. LEENDERS, «Zijn dit nu de handelwijzen van een herder...!» *Hollands katholicisme 1840-1920*, Nijmegen 2008.

⁵⁵ JANSEN, «Bijdrage tot het Archief», 1.

⁵⁶ MONTEIRO, *Gods Predikers*, 57; VAN VUGT, «Should it Happen that God Should Permit...», 283.

to be attained from reinventing themselves as monks, quite the opposite. The second ground for their opposition was related to power over finances⁵⁷. The mission had a common fund, the *depositum missionis*, the nucleus of which had been formed by the proceeds of the 1804 sale of a former station church in Amsterdam⁵⁸. Although considerable, this fund was not sufficient to maintain the entire mission, and in fact the friars had to support themselves from the revenue of their stations, much like secular priests. The *primarii* were required to give an account of their finances to the commissary general, but as they controlled the funds, they enjoyed a strong position of power⁵⁹. They were unwilling in any case to relinquish this position. The fact that Naudts moved to Ghent in 1834 made revival in a monastic sense all the less attractive to the missionaries, as it meant that the superior was now likely to spend any funds to come under his control in Belgium. These fears were not allayed when the Belgian friars tried to repurchase other expropriated priories, and the Ghent priory was badly damaged by fire in 1838⁶⁰. In suspicious Dutch eyes, the Ghent friars' interest in strengthening ties with the stations stemmed from a desire to make up their budgetary shortfall.

The end of the stations

In 1848 Prime Minister Johan Rudolph Thorbecke's (1798-1872) liberal constitution brought full freedom of religion⁶¹. Five years later, Pope Pius IX (1846-1878) 'restored' the Dutch hierarchy. This boosted Catholic self-confidence, but also gave rise to the April Movement, a paroxysm of intense, if ultimately unavailing, popular opposition to the demise of the Netherlands' identity as a Protestant nation state⁶². Ironically, the restoration of the hierarchy presented all Dutch religious involved in parish ministry with an entirely new threat to their way of life. Having successfully resisted pressure from Belgian Augustinians, the Dutch friars now found themselves facing much more formidable adversaries. They had been used to deal with the somewhat lacklustre archpriests who governed the Dutch Catholic church on behalf of the *vice-superior* who resided in Brussels or The Hague. But from 1853, their stations suddenly belonged

⁵⁷ Cf. MONTEIRO, *Gods Predikers*, 57.63-66.

⁵⁸ VAN LUIJK – VAN DYCK, «De augustijnen in de Hollandse Zending», 285.

⁵⁹ Naudts to Stappershoef, 12 April 1837 (HUA, 1392-1: ANA, 686).

⁶⁰ GROOTAERS – BRUINS, *De augustijnen in de kering 1796-1996*, 112-113.

⁶¹ VAN VUGT, «Should it Happen that God Should Permit...», 289-291.

⁶² *Staf en storm. Het herstel van de bisschoppelijke hiërarchie in Nederland in 1853: actie en reactie*, J. VIS – W. JANSE (ed.), Hilversum 2002.

to new dioceses, headed by bishops whose ecclesiastical and canonical status gave them considerable clout and who were intent on gaining control over their territories, reducing the independence of religious. The bishops immediately set about erecting new parishes, abolishing supernumerary stations and insisting that the stations' property should be transferred to the parishes⁶³. The protests which Dutch religious addressed to Rome fell on deaf ears⁶⁴. The Augustinians had had to relinquish their Nijmegen station in 1818 because they could not provide a successor, and a Groningen station in 1842 under a government-enforced scheme to reduce the number of stations in the city. But in 1838 they had been able to appoint a friar in Nieuwendam for the first time in thirteen years, so that by 1853 they had three stations: two in the new diocese of Haarlem (Amsterdam and Nieuwendam) and one in the archdiocese of Utrecht⁶⁵. These soon became canonical parishes: the era of the stations, which had begun for the Augustinians in the 1630s, drew to a close.

With control over parish ministry wrested from them by bishops who regarded them at best as 'relief troops' to be deployed only where the secular clergy could not or would not go, many Dutch religious began to contemplate branching out into other activities, for instance missionary work⁶⁶. Still fearful of provoking anti-Papist reactions, but increasingly conscious of the April Movement's failure, mendicants involved in parish ministry began to warm to the revival of religious observance pushed by Pius IX and the general superiors he appointed or favoured⁶⁷. It had become possible for Dutch religious to imagine such a thing when King William II (1840-1849) began repealing his father's anti-monastic legislation; the process was completed by the 1848 constitution⁶⁸. Both the Dutch Franciscans and the Dominicans established or revitalised priories that could serve as model houses – even if parish ministry remained dominant well into the twentieth century⁶⁹. As Thorbecke's ideal of the unitary

⁶³ For an example see A. OLIEHOEK, *Van statie naar parochie. De hervorming van de katholieke kerk in Delft na de herinvoering van de hiërarchie (1853-1863)*, in *Staf en storm*, 289-312.

⁶⁴ JANSEN, *De pater op de pastorie*, 189-195.

⁶⁵ VAN LUIJK – VAN DYCK, «De augustijnen in de Hollandse Zending», 282-293.

⁶⁶ 'Relief troops': J.Y.H.A. JACOBS, *Werken in een dwarsverband. Een portret van de gezamenlijke Nederlandse priesterreligieuzen 1840-2004*, Nijmegen 2010, 30; branching out JANSEN, *De pater op de pastorie*, 196-202 and J. ROES – H. DE VALK, *A World Apart? Religious Orders and Congregations in the Netherlands*, in *Religious Institutes in Western Europe*, 135-162: 140-147.

⁶⁷ MONTEIRO, *Gods Predikers*, 80.

⁶⁸ VAN VUGT, «Should it Happen that God Should Permit...», 284-291.

⁶⁹ DE KOK, *Acht eeuwen*, 261-264; MONTEIRO, *Gods Predikers*, 87-89.

liberal nation collapsed during the following decades under the blows of orthodox Calvinists and ultramontane Catholics, the image of religious also began to change. Active religious became more conspicuous in the public space and positive perceptions began to replace older negative ones among Catholics⁷⁰. At the same time, old orders that emphasised their medieval past and monastic identity in the face of non-Catholic abhorrence discovered a new popularity. This was particularly so among men too young to have experienced the April Movement, and who were proud to be Catholic and desirous of “vindicating the heritage of their forefathers”⁷¹. Catholicism became more ultramontane, more devotional and more self-assertive; religious habits, neo-Gothic church buildings and plainchant all suddenly came at a premium⁷². For the Augustinians, pressure in this direction was coming from Prior General Paulo Micallef (1855-1865), who worked to restore regular observance throughout the order⁷³.

Some friars of Dutch extraction were amenable to this ideal of revival. A number of them had stayed in Ghent after their formation and worked there for the consolidation of the religious life: for instance Theodorus Bouman (1793-1874) and Aloysius Campfens (1809-1896)⁷⁴. Among the friars working in the Netherlands they found an important supporter in Henricus Stappershoef (1794-1866). Stappershoef had been one of the young friars who had placed his earthly belongings at the feet of the superior in Ghent in 1834, and unlike his class fellow Frees, he became a firm advocate of monasticisation⁷⁵. Appointed *primarius* in Nieuwendam in 1838 and in Utrecht in 1848, he succeeded Naudts as commissary general for the Netherlands and Belgium in 1843⁷⁶. If Frees and his supporters thought that the appointment of a missionary – rather than the prior of Ghent – as commissary general was a victory for their cause, they were much mistaken. From the moment of his appointment, Stappershoef worked tirelessly for the restoration of conventual life. It was no doubt at his instigation that General Filippo Angelucci (1838-1850) prescribed in

⁷⁰ Cfr. VAN VUGT, «Should it Happen that God Should Permit...», 291-296.

⁷¹ The biblical quotation *Vindicamus hereditatem patrum nostrorum* became a kind of motto for Catholic revival: L.J. ROGIER – N. DE ROOY, *In vrijheid herboren. Katholiek Nederland 1853-1953*, The Hague 1953, 11.

⁷² See for instance RAEDTS, *De ontdekking van de middeleeuwen*, 249-261.

⁷³ J. GAVIGAN, *The Augustinians from the French Revolution to Modern Times*, Villanova, PA 1989, 74-82.111-232.

⁷⁴ GROOTAERS – BRUINS, *De augustijnen in de kering 1796-1996*, 112-113. See also SAS, *Augustijnen op de pastorij*, 246.

⁷⁵ DE CEUKELEER, «Suppression et restauration» (II), 329. 340.

⁷⁶ VERKERKEN – GROOTAERS, *Repertorium*, 440.

1844 that the friars ministering in the stations should frequently assemble to read the Rule⁷⁷. The events of 1853 and Micallef's appointment as general emboldened Stappershoef to try to turn his presbytery in Utrecht into a real priory. He began wearing the habit in 1855, insisted that his curates do the same, and received permission to open a novitiate, which managed to attract two novices. His plans soon unravelled, as the novices departed and at least one of his curates proved unwilling to toe the line⁷⁸. Perhaps it was at this time that Stappershoef tried vainly to obtain Frees's dismissal as parish priest in Amsterdam, in an attempt to dethrone his main adversary⁷⁹.

Stappershoef did succeed in having an Augustinian lay brother from Ghent moved to Utrecht in 1858, proof that his failures had not lessened his zeal for the restoration of the conventual life⁸⁰. In fact Stappershoef's plan to found a priory in Utrecht proved a much more promising proposition for monastic revival in the Netherlands than persuading the Dutch friars to throw in their lot with Ghent. That it did not work out in the 1850s was due to opposition from fellow friars, but also to sheer paucity of numbers. The nine Augustinians who worked in the Netherlands in 1856 were all fully engaged in parish ministry. Even if they had wanted to, none were free to populate a priory – this in contrast to the more than fifty Dominicans and two hundred Franciscans in the country in the same year⁸¹. For the time being, therefore, the only possibility for monasticisation seemed to be a joint venture with Ghent, and this was unacceptable to the Dutch friars for the reasons stated above.

That 1853 had not changed anything in this respect is evident from the vigour with which Frees and his supporters combatted new plans to

⁷⁷ «Nonnulla decreta proposita approbationi Rmi Patris Vicarii Generalis ord. Eremitarum S.P. Augustini pro stationibus Augustinianis Hollando-Belgicis» (1844) (HUA, 1392-1: ANA, 3277).

⁷⁸ Subsecretary of Sacred Congregation for Bishops and Regulars to Zwijsen, 2 October 1855 (HUA, 449: Archives of the Archdiocese of Utrecht, 1477); Stappershoef to Zwijsen, 12 March 1856 (HUA, 1392-1: ANA, 3277); JANSEN, «Bijdrage tot het Archief», 22.

⁷⁹ JANSEN, «Bijdrage tot het Archief», 8. It seems likely that Stappershoef would have tried this in 1856, when the conversion of De Star into a canonical parish and the corresponding appointment of Frees as parish priest were being prepared (the date of erection was 1 January 1857), see T.H. VON DER DUNK, «De bouw van de St. Augustinus (De Star) aan de Amsterdamse Spinhuissteeg», *Tijdschrift voor Nederlandse Kerkgeschiedenis*, 8 (2005), 35-43: 41.

⁸⁰ DE MEIJER, *Domstad*, 39 says this happened in 1859; but according to GROOTAERS – VERKERKEN, *Repertorium*, 441, the man in question died in 1858.

⁸¹ Augustinians: JANSEN, *De pater op de pastorie*, 281; Dominicans: MONTEIRO, *Gods Predikers*, 90. 836; Franciscans: DE KOK, *Acht eeuwen*, 277.

create a Dutch-Belgian union, put forward in 1859 at the general chapter held in Rome. The Dutch representative at this chapter was commissary general Stappershoef, who was joined by the Ghent prior and parish priest Campfens⁸². Campfens's star was rising at the time, and the chapter elected him assistant general of the order. Together with General Micallef, who was elected to a new term of office by the chapter, he devised a plan to bind the Dutch missionaries more closely to Ghent. The chapter adopted their scheme and in September Micallef was able to present a draft proposal⁸³. All new entrants in the Netherlands and in Belgium were to become *fili* of the Ghent house, even if they were subsequently appointed to a Dutch parish. In addition, the commissary general would henceforth as a rule be based in Ghent. Stappershoef was replaced to that end by the Belgian friar Benignus De Jaeger (1826-1903), who was to hold this post for more than forty years⁸⁴. The scheme had to be submitted first to the nuncio in Brussels, Matteo Eustachio Gonella (1811-1870), who by papal appointment had special powers over exempt religious in Belgium⁸⁵. Gonella was not much impressed by the Dutch friars' apparent contempt for religious discipline and was, moreover, keen to concentrate power over the finances of the union within his own jurisdiction. He insisted that all the friars' possessions must become the property of the Ghent house, which would be able to exercise its rights upon the death of each friar⁸⁶. Needless to say this was unacceptable to Frees and his supporters. Even Stappershoef felt that Gonella's scheme went too far, and he tried to persuade Micallef and the nuncio to wait until one of the Dutch presbyteries could be turned into a priory⁸⁷. His own ill-fated attempt to do so only a few years beforehand must have somewhat undermined the plausibility of this argument. Difficult negotiations ensued, and a compromise was eventually worked out in March 1860 to the effect that a union would be established without Gonella's clause. Instead, the Dutch friars were instructed to found a new priory of their own. In the

⁸² Acts of the general chapter, 1859 (*Analecta Augustiniana*, 14 [1931], 90-97: 92).

⁸³ This course of events is evident from the wording of a decree by Micallef, 17 September 1862 (Archives of the Belgian Augustinians [ABA], Heverlee, St. Stephen's priory, Ghent, 6.1.39).

⁸⁴ Micallef to De Jaeger, 3 September 1859, *Documenta respicientia historiam ordinis in Hollandia et Belgio* (*Analecta Augustiniana*, 10 [1909], 117-118).

⁸⁵ L.C. VAN DYCK, «Visitator Frans Thomas Corselis en de norbertijnen. De Vati-caanse dossiers (1841-1848)», *Trajecta*, 3/4 (1994), 328-346: 328.345.

⁸⁶ Gonella to De Jaeger, 20 October 1859 (ABA, St. Stephen's priory, 6.1.33).

⁸⁷ Campfens to Stappershoef, 24 February 1860 (copy) (HUA, 1392-1: ANA, 3278).

meantime, they had to provide financial support to the Ghent house of formation⁸⁸.

It was a triumph for Frees, because the parish priests' independence and control over their finances remained largely intact. The showdown revealed that the transformation of the stations into parishes had not diminished the power of the parish priests vis-à-vis the commissary general. For Micallef it was a defeat, all the more bitter given that the recent advances of the suppressionist Kingdom of Sardinia-Piedmont in the Italian peninsula boded ill for the future of the order in Italy. Under these circumstances it would have been a consolation to see signs of a revival in Northwest Europe. In September 1860, in a letter to Campfens, the general lamented that it would probably take long before one of the Dutch presbyteries might be turned into a priory "because it is necessary first and foremost to form men who want to live as true religious"⁸⁹. In the meantime, he decreed, the Dutch parish priests should be regarded as "real superiors of religious houses" who exercised the rights and duties of local priors⁹⁰.

A Dutch Province

If Micallef's plans in 1859 came to little, his proposal to set up an international house of studies in Ghent four years later proved more successful. In an apparent attempt to encourage four potential growth regions of the order to join forces, he established this seminary for friars from Belgium, the Netherlands, Ireland and the United States during a visitation in 1863⁹¹. Micallef appointed the promising young Italian Luigi Sepiacchi (1835-1893) to the rectorship, a man he trusted to convey to the seminarians the spirit of religious observance and enthusiasm for the revival of the order. Ghent did not function as an international house for very long, as the Irish and American friars were withdrawn in the early 1870s to be educated at home, while the Dutch were sent to Würzburg from

⁸⁸ Decree Micallef, 4 March 1860, *Documenta*, 118-119. Gonella retaliated by adding further restrictions on the freedom of the Dutch friars, but these left the essence of Micallef's decree unaffected: Gonella to De Jaeger and all friars, 20 August 1860, *Documenta*, 119-120.

⁸⁹ Micallef to Campfens, 12 September 1860 (ABA, St. Stephen's priory, 6.1.36).

⁹⁰ Micallef to Dutch and Belgian friars, 6 September 1863 (HUA, 1392-1: ANA, 3278).

⁹¹ GROOTAERS – BRUINS, *De augustijnen in de kering 1796-1996*, 115-116.

1875⁹². But in the five years that Sepiaci taught there, he succeeded in creating a group of young friars who would be instrumental in transforming the Dutch mission into a growing province⁹³. The most important among them was Bernardus van Eert (1839-1905), who had joined the order from the Crosier college in Uden, a traditional recruiting ground for religious orders⁹⁴. Van Eert entered the novitiate at the relatively late age of 24; he was only four years younger than Sepiaci. The rector recognised in him a capable organiser who was receptive to his own vision of Augustinian revival. Van Eert was appointed a curate in Amsterdam in 1869, where he soon became conspicuous for his success in winning new recruits for the Order⁹⁵.

The Dutch mission was still very small; a secular priest had to be appointed to a curacy in the Augustinian parish in Utrecht as late as 1875 because there was no friar to fill the vacancy⁹⁶. But as Van Eert's new recruits and other entrants completed their formation, numbers slowly began to grow. When General Giovanni Belluomini (1865-1880) visited the mission in 1879, he instructed the three parish priests to carry out the 1860 mandate to establish a house or turn one of the presbyteries into a priory, and this within two or three years. On the advice of his secretary Sepiaci, who was surely the main influence behind Belluomini's Dutch policy, the general now judged the number of friars to be sufficient to make this plan viable. The express purpose was to create a place in the Netherlands where friars whose services were not directly required for parish ministry could lead a life of regular observance⁹⁷. The response from the Dutch parish priests was predictably dismissive; Belluomini noted that the Dutch friars were not motivated to change their accustomed habits⁹⁸. Frees had died in 1860, but his successor as parish priest in Amsterdam and as unofficial spokesman for the missionaries, Ambrosius Hoorneman (1818-1889), held very similar views on Augustinian identity and on monastic revival⁹⁹.

⁹² GAVIGAN, *The Augustinians from the French Revolution*, 110. 147; GROOTAERS – BRUINS, *De augustijnen in de kering 1796-1996*, 116.

⁹³ Sepiaci left in 1870 to take up a professorship at La Sapienza in Rome: GAVIGAN, *The Augustinians from the French Revolution*, 267-268.

⁹⁴ A.J. CLAESEN, *Ter vrome herinnering aan den hoogerwaarden pater Bernardus Joannes van Eert, pastoor der St. Augustinuskerk te Amsterdam, provinciaal en grondlegger der Nederlandsche augustijnenprovincie*, s.l. s.a. [1905], 3.

⁹⁵ CLAESEN, *Ter vrome herinnering aan den hoogerwaarden*, 6.

⁹⁶ *Draft necrologium provinciae Stephanus Etmans*, undated (Mariënhege priory, Eindhoven, ANA, personal file 15).

⁹⁷ Act of visitation, Belluomini, 19 August 1879 (HUA, 1392-1: ANA, 3278).

⁹⁸ GAVIGAN, *The Augustinians from the French Revolution*, 138.

⁹⁹ JANSEN, «Bijdrage tot het Archief», 8-10.

However, the situation was different at this time than twenty years before. Young friars trained under Sepiacchi regarded the older generation's aversion to a life of regular observance as a narrow-minded manifestation of 'station mentality', and deplored their elders' unwillingness to take a broader view of Augustinian identity and future potential. Van Eert's own recruits viewed Hoorneman and his contemporaries as old-fashioned, austere, and out of touch with the times. As they began their careers as curates in the 1880s and 1890s, these young friars made strong efforts to 'ultramontanise' their parishes, introducing new devotions, stimulating more frequent reception of the sacraments and softening the moral standards required of the faithful¹⁰⁰. Van Eert was somewhat too old to share these young Augustinians' enthusiasm for devotions and for the liturgical movement, but his commitment to the cause of Augustinian revival was real and made him critical of Hoorneman and the other parish priests¹⁰¹. In 1880 some friars wrote to Belluomini to complain of the parish priests' foot-dragging over the visitation instruction. It was most likely at Sepiacchi's prompting that the general responded in September by appointing Van Eert *praefectus missionis*. This position had been suppressed when the 1860 union came into effect, and had previously carried only limited faculties. This time, however, Belluomini bestowed upon the new prefect "all powers, and all rights and privileges, which the sacred canons and the constitutions of our holy order assign to our provincials", subject only to the authority of commissary general De Jaeger. Van Eert's main task was to carry out the instruction of founding a priory in which "the religious family would be able to live according to the Rule"¹⁰².

The appointment of a curate as superior of a mission that included his own and two other parish priests was a novelty probably made on the assumption that Van Eert would soon be able to secure a parish himself. He struggled to impose his authority on his new subjects, although his position was bolstered in 1882 when he became parish priest of St. Augustine's parish in Utrecht¹⁰³. The 'coup' carried out in 1880 in Rome, when Sepiacchi and a group of young friars successfully petitioned Pope Leo XIII (1878-1903) to replace the lethargic Belluomini with their energetic contemporary Pacifico Neno (1880-1889), probably convinced Hoorneman

¹⁰⁰ HEFFERNAN, *Een kleine orde*, 119-127.

¹⁰¹ Van Eert not supportive of devotions: JANSEN, «Bijdrage tot het Archief», 56.

¹⁰² Belluomini to Van Eert, 11 September 1880 (Archivio Generale Agostiniano [AGA], Rome, Dd264, 24-26).

¹⁰³ JANSEN, «Bijdrage tot het Archief», 21.

and his fellow parish priests that further resistance was futile¹⁰⁴. In 1886, Van Eert succeeded in founding a first Dutch priory, St. Monica's, which doubled as presbytery for a new chapel of ease in his Utrecht parish, and was financed partly by Hoorneman¹⁰⁵. The acquisition in 1891 of Mariënhege, a medieval monastery building in Eindhoven, enabled him to divide the new novitiate, philosophate and theologate over two houses. By 1888 the mission had 22 members, including a number of lay brothers; by 1900 this number had risen to 54, and it would continue to rise, reaching nearly 400 in 1960¹⁰⁶. This numerical expansion went hand in hand with a campaign to strengthen observance of the Rule, including the *vita communis perfecta*. At the opening of St. Monica's in 1886, Van Eert staged a ceremony much like that held in Ghent in 1834, during which all friars in the mission were required to put on the habit¹⁰⁷. These developments permitted the erection of a separate *provincia Hollandica* at the general chapter of 1895, although fears that they might be joined together with Ghent continued to haunt the Dutch until the last moment¹⁰⁸. By 1895, however, the Belgian friars were every bit as worried as their Dutch brethren at the prospect of such a union, as the balance of power between the two communities was shifting¹⁰⁹.

Conclusion

Several historians have recently examined Dutch images of Belgium after the secession of 1830¹¹⁰. Joep Leerssen has pointed out that 1830 gave rise to a new Dutch self-image specifically constructed in contrast with Belgium, an image that merged with older notions of a cultural

¹⁰⁴ P. BELLINI, *La risposta dell'Ordine in Italia alle soppressioni del secolo XIX*, in *La ripresa dell'Ordine*, 33–84: 57–58.

¹⁰⁵ B. HEFFERNAN, «Het St. Monicaklooster aan de Herenweg. Begin van augustijnse herleving», *Oud-Utrecht. Tijdschrift voor geschiedenis van stad en provincie Utrecht*, 86/1 (2013), 16–20. Donations from Hoorneman: «Geschiedenis der St. Monica-Priorij der Augustijnse Eremiten te Utrecht (1886–1954)», 10–1 (HUA, 1392–2: ANA, 3968).

¹⁰⁶ HEFFERNAN, *Een kleine orde*, 70–71. 275.

¹⁰⁷ HEFFERNAN, «*Spiritus Ordinis Nostris*», 364–371.

¹⁰⁸ Province: «Regestum Rmi. P.M. Sebastiani Martinelli Ordinis Prioris Generalis», 1 August 1894 – 31 October 1896, 82 (AGA, Dd269); concerns about Ghent: Van Dillen to Van Eert, 24 February 1895 (HUA, 1392–1: ANA, 3282).

¹⁰⁹ GROOTAERS – BRUINS, *De augustijnen in de kering 1796–1996*, 118.

¹¹⁰ J. LEERSSEN, *Een nieuw repoussoir. Nederlandse zelfbeelden en Nederlandse beelden van België*, in *De erfenis van 1830*, P. RIETBERGEN – T. VERSCHAFFEL, ed., Leuven 2006, 177–200; see also R. DAGNINO, *Twee leeuwen, een kruis. De rol van katholieke culturele kringen in de Vlaams-Nederlandse verstandhouding (1830-ca. 1900)*, Hilversum 2015.

divide between north and south, between Germanic and Latin peoples. In this dichotomy, qualities such as simplicity, honesty, moralism and individualism were assigned to the former (the north), and sophistication, shrewdness, sensualism and social conformism to the latter (the south)¹¹¹. It is not impossible to see in the resistance of Dutch Augustinian missionaries to the Belgian friars' programme of monastic revival an echo of this new self-image, reinforcing older reflexes that stemmed from the tradition of the stations. At the very least this resistance was a way of proving to non-Catholic Dutchmen that Catholics did not all revel in provocation. In any case, the diverging legal positions of religious in the two countries after 1830 pushed latent disagreements about the nature of Augustinian life to the surface. For the Augustinians, as for other mendicant orders, the only way to revival was through introducing the conventual life: through the founding of priories, the observance of the Rule and the Constitutions, the wearing of the habit, communal prayer, the *vita communis perfecta*, et cetera. These things were first realised in Ghent in the 1830s, where they were first permitted by law. The Dutch friars' weak numerical position throughout most of the century prevented them from aspiring to anything similar at home, long after it became legal to do so there in the 1840s. This form of life became associated in Dutch minds with Ghent, and specifically with the Belgian friars' suspected plots to gain control over their stations.

New Dutch perceptions of the south thus merged with old Augustinian fears of losing the stations. The missionaries' familiar reflex to protect the stations from the secular clergy was now triggered by advances coming from other Augustinians. In truth, for most Dutch missionaries up to the 1870s, being an Augustinian was much less about belonging to an international order than about being the custodian of a particular station and its traditions and possessions. Even the secular clergy's monopoly of control over parish ministry after 1853 could not change this. But from the 1870s the number of Dutch Augustinians began to increase, diminishing the threat of losing the parishes to 'Ghent'. Moreover, younger friars had no memories of the April Movement and were much less fearful of provoking Protestants. It was only then that the ruling elite – the three parish priests – began to envisage the possibility of accepting a monastic programme of revival. For Frees and his supporters strengthening religious observance had been a dangerous concession to Belgian designs on the stations' independence. For Hoorneman it ultimately seemed nothing more than the somewhat peculiar way in which his own young confrères

¹¹¹ LEERSSEN, «Een nieuw repoussoir», 185-190.

experienced life as an Augustinian. It no longer appeared alien to him, even if he did not share the young generation's enthusiasm for it. Most importantly, it no longer constituted a threat to the parishes. This is why what had been impossible in the 1860s could be realised in the 1880s. Not only does this confirm that a certain critical mass was required at the outset for 'old orders' to be able to carry out a programme of revival on their own. It also demonstrates that revival for the Augustinians was only possible to the extent that it could somehow accommodate parish ministry as an enduring activity.

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