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## Contested Space in a Contested Border Area: The Sint Jan in 's Hertogenbosch Or: From Bosch to the Ten Commandments

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# Contested Space in a Contested Border Area: The Sint Jan in 's Hertogenbosch

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**ABSTRACT** This article investigates contemporary perceptions of church space in the border town of 's Hertogenbosch in the aftermath of the Peace of Westphalia. Through a close reading of two chorographies, the study sheds light on ways in which historians can try to grasp contemporary views on what mattered in a church interior in the contested border areas of the Generality Lands, regions in the Dutch Republic, where the Calvinist political elite remained a minority. The study alerts us to the temporality of changes to church interiors and its embeddedness in local and regional circumstances.

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**KEY WORDS** church interiors and confessional change; art and the confessional soundscape; border areas; chorographies

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## Introduction

Medieval and early modern churches were not only houses of worship; they were complex, multifaceted social spaces. They were “nodes” of social life, as well as, at times, trading places for goods (Hamilton and Spicer 2005, 1-26). This multifunctional use of church space was particularly prominent in the seventeenth-century Netherlands, where Calvinist church buildings also served as public spaces to entertain and educate, to meet, and to remember. The distinction that historians have made between the “preekkerk” (preaching church) and the “wandelkerk” (strolling

church) gives testimony to this interpretation, which was also shared by contemporaries, even if the terms themselves were only coined in the eighteenth century (Pollmann 2002, 177-189). Matters in Dutch churches were complicated by the fact that magistrates and other local authorities reserved the right to nominate ministers and other church personnel. They were also formally in charge of the church building. While much research has been undertaken in recent years on the church interiors of European Lutheran churches, less is known about the Calvinist church interiors in the Netherlands (Spicer 2012, 2007). Here, research into the rearrangement of church space, church furniture, and changes in the course of the Reformation has so far been dominated by art historians with an interest in the often enigmatic and always intriguing genre paintings of “church interiors” (Vanhaelen 2012; Mochizuki 2008; Brusati 2009; Pollmer-Schmidt 2016). Interpretations often focused on either the mastery of perspective and architectural know-how of Dutch artists of these interiors, or they assumed iconoclasm as an inevitable step towards the secularization of the seventeenth-century art market and its marketable topics.<sup>1</sup> However, the historicization of the Iconoclastic Fury as a step towards the sober Calvinistic church space painted by artists such as Hendrick van Vliet and Emanuel de Witte is, as more recent investigations into the topic have argued, an anachronistic approach to seventeenth-century media addressing the subject of church interiors (Heal 2017). Certainly, for regions that had only recently, i. e. after the Peace of Westphalia in 1648, been added to the Dutch Republic, such as the Generality Lands, church

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1 A notable exception to this is Almut Pollmer-Schmidt’s nuanced investigation into the paintings of church interiors in Delft by the artists Gerard Houckgeest, Hendrick van Vliet, and Emanuel de Witte around 1650 (Pollmer-Schmidt 2013).

spaces and their presentation in contemporary media were far more than debates over the past or art expertise. They were “agents” in a discourse on religious diversity and identity. The confessional statements that could be read from paintings, and also from descriptions, travel accounts, and other contemporary media, were often deeply embedded in the local circumstances and discourses in which they were created and which they addressed. They might have changed over time, thus allowing for the perception of churches and their interiors to transform from a contested confessional space to a memory site musealizing art works, from former objects of devotion to high-quality craftsmanship, from places of worship to exhibition halls of civic pride and identity. It is the aim of this article to trace these interpretations and changes for ‘s Hertogenbosch, a border city that, after the siege and surrender to the Orangist forces in 1629, became incorporated into the Dutch Generality Lands of States Brabant. Its main church, the Sint Jan’s Kerk, which had only in 1559 been elevated to the see of a bishop and decorated accordingly, was turned into a Reformed house of worship, displaying the above-mentioned multi-functionality as a space to take a stroll, listen to sermons, serve as a tourist attraction, but also allow for the continuous, if contested and concealed, practices of Catholic worship. Through a close reading of two chorographical texts written by ‘s Hertogenbosch’s most prominent seventeenth-century chorographer, Jacob van Oudenhoven, this article also addresses recent calls to investigate contemporary images and imaginations of the Eighty Years’ War and its consequences.<sup>2</sup> Van Oudenhoven’s books (of which the second and later volume was marketed as a re-edition of the first text) can provide fascinating insights into these contemporary perceptions of

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2 These questions were raised, for instance, in the recent workshop on the visual language and representation of the Eighty Year’s War at the Rijksmuseum Amsterdam on 16 and 17 September 2016.

a Catholic church which had been converted into a Reformed house of worship in 1629, in a city which remained demographically overwhelmingly Catholic, but politically ruled by Calvinist magistrates. Van Oudenhoven's surveys not only grant us a rare glimpse of the arrangement of the newly claimed Reformed space, but also present a contemporary comment on continuity and change of what mattered in this building and how this space was used over time. As will be seen in the following investigation, church spaces were less confessionally homogenous than most of the genre paintings so frequently used as evidence for the Calvinist "purification" of churches seem to indicate. At the same time, they also served as a stage for intra-confessional discourse of the various stakeholders with a claim to the church both as a public and as a sacred space.

## **“schoon”, “cierlijck”, “konstich” and “kostelich”: Descriptions of the Church**

In 1649, Jacob van Oudenhoven presented his first historical-topographical survey of his native town of 's Hertogenbosch (van Oudenhoven 1649). In good chorographical fashion, he also covered the architectural features of the most prominent buildings in the city. These included, as the first on his list, the Sint Jan's Kerk, the former Catholic cathedral and seat of the bishop of the diocese of 's Hertogenbosch.

Chorography was a popular genre in the seventeenth-century Low Countries (Esser 2012). The texts often covered a survey of the interiors of churches and other eminent buildings. The Jesuit Daniel Papebroch, for instance, carefully recorded the church furniture and artistic decorations in the churches that he visited on his journey from Antwerp to Rome in 1660 (Kindermann 2002). In a detailed description of his home town, Antwerp,

from 1700, he even included a church plan outlining the altars, statues, and elaborately carved pillars of the interior in his survey of Antwerp's Cathedral dedicated to Our Lady (Mertens and Buschmann 1848, 339-359, Esser 2014). However, the detail of what van Oudenhoven described was rather exceptional for chorographies written from a northern Netherlandish perspective.

In the introduction to his survey of the building, van Oudenhoven used the assessment of an earlier commentator on the church: the Carthusian historian Laurentius Surius and his comment on the Sint Jan, set down in his *Historische Commentarien*. Under the date of 22 August 1566, the day after the first iconoclastic destructions had begun in the Cathedral and were continuing, Surius gave a description of the Sint Jan and of the iconoclastic assault on the church (1586, 691). Not only did van Oudenhoven insert the original Latin text of Surius' assessment, he also included his own, Dutch translation: "Dat haar tot den hoochsten glants, ende ongeloofelijcke schoonheyt, ende wonderlijcke verciersel niet en scheen te ontbreken." (That nothing was missing in her highest splendour, incredible beauty and wonderful decorations, RE) (van Oudenhoven 1649, 21). He then continued with his own, detailed description of the exterior and the interior of the church, which covered no less than five pages of the overall 107 pages of the book published in Quarto format (21-26). It was abundant with descriptors such as "schoon", "cierlijck", "konstich", and "kostelich".

Van Oudenhoven had a keen eye for detail; he was known and respected as a thorough chorographer and historian. What makes his description of the Sint Jan so special for the present purpose is the fact that he was a Calvinist minister. He was born in 1601 in the Brabantine town of Vessem but grew up in 's Hertogenbosch. He was baptized in the Catholic Church and entered the nearby Williamite monastery of Baseldonk. In 1620, he left the monastery and the Catholic Church and

took up the study of Reformed Theology in Leiden. From 1625 to 1626, he continued his study with private tuition by the eminent Reformed theologian Gisbert Voetius in Heusden, a border town in Brabant. In 1629, during and after the siege of 's Hertogenbosch, he translated and reedited the Latin history of the city written by his former Williamite mentor, prior Simon Pelgrom (Pelgrom 1629). The book, which came out under the title *Oorspronck van 's Hertogenbosch*, was published in Amsterdam and became an instant success due to the great media coverage of the siege and surrender of the city. It was republished three times in the same year and laid the foundations of van Oudenhoven's fame as an historian. From 1626 onwards, he served as minister in a number of Holland parishes until his retirement in 1665, when he moved to Haarlem. There, he continued his writing and died in 1690. He published not only two versions of his history of 's Hertogenbosch, but also of studies of Heusden, Haarlem, and of the province of Holland (Haitsma Mulier and van der Lem 1990, 317-318). Van Oudenhoven's text on 's Hertogenbosch was re-edited and republished in 's Hertogenbosch in 1670 with significant changes and amendments to the original volume (van Oudenhoven 1670).

After the surrender of 1629, 's Hertogenbosch remained in the hands of the United Provinces. Calvinism was the official religion required by magistrates and other office holders, but according to Brabantine law, these posts could only be given to men of Brabantine origin. Catholics were tolerated as long as they practiced their religion quietly and out of sight. The *Meierij van 's Hertogenbosch*, the region around the city, which was later to become the Generality Land of States Brabant under direct government of the States General, remained a contested border area. Until the signing of the Peace of Westphalia, many local parishes practiced a form of compromise by using their churches as *Simultaneum*, whereby the church could be used for services by both confessions at different times. In

many instances, these arrangements outlasted the peace and continued for the next two centuries (de Mooi 2009).

The following observations are devoted to this complicated scenario, which, upon closer inspection, might not be as unique as it seems. Historians such as Eamon Duffy have convincingly argued that Catholic traditions and religious practices remained deeply embedded in the popular culture of early modern societies and that changes were often more gradual than radical (Duffy 2001). Judith Pollmann and Willem Frijhoff have alerted us to the resilience of Catholicism in an environment that was dominated by Reformed politics and ideas (Pollmann 2011; Frijhoff 2002). Whether these observations were also reflected by contemporary authors, such as van Oudenhoven, remains to be seen.

's Hertogenbosch was also one of the contested new bishoprics created by the diocesan reforms of Philip II in 1559. Its establishment encountered much resistance from the local population, directed against the re-arrangement of ecclesiastical order and, consequently, power in their region. It took some years before the first bishop, Franciscus Sonnius, could appropriate the church as a Cathedral. The Catholic Church authorities invested heavily into the implementations of the new reforms, which went hand in hand with the requirements of the Council of Trent. 's Hertogenbosch also suffered from the Iconoclastic Fury in August (22-25) and again in October 1566, which led to heavy losses of church decoration. In 1584, parts of the church interior and its landmark, the great middle tower, whose original size is unknown but whose contemporary depictions and descriptions likened it to the spire of Antwerp's Our Lady's Cathedral, fell victim to a great fire. Bishop Clemens Crabeels, then in charge of the diocese, arranged for a massive redecoration programme to replace the destroyed images and artwork in the Cathedral (Boekwijt et al. 2011).

What were the highlights in this renewed church that van Oudenhoven presented to his readers twenty years after the Reformed takeover?

Firstly, he not only referred to the Cologne native, Laurentius Surius, as a witness of the beauty of the church. He also explicitly mentioned and cited Jean-Baptiste Gramaye, Catholic royal historiographer at the Court of the Archdukes Albert and Isabella in Brussels, who had covered the church in his chorographical survey *Taxandria* in 1610 (Gramaye 1610).

Gramaye, as van Oudenhoven explained in his dedication to the magistrates of 's Hertogenbosch, had been given access to the city archives for his research (van Oudenhoven 1649, n.p.). His book was therefore a trustworthy source, but Gramaye's chronology ended in 1609. The following, dramatic forty years were not covered in his book, which is why van Oudenhoven deemed a new version of the past necessary. It is interesting to note that he did not refer to the earlier version of Prior Pelgrom, which he had translated himself. It might be that he felt Pelgrom's work to be more tarnished with Catholicism than that of the humanist and much respected intellectual Gramaye.

From Gramaye, van Oudenhoven might have taken the detailed measurements of the church space, the number and the architectural style of the highly decorated columns that he included. He might also have copied some information about the iconographic programme of the images on display at the fifty altars that were mentioned. Of those, the Bosch tryptics at the High Altar and at the Altar to Our Lady in the Marian Chapel of the powerful Marian sodality in the city were explicitly mentioned by both authors. Little is known about the history of these tryptics depicting the biblical stories of the Creation, of the History of Abigael before David, and of Solomon and his mother Bethsheba. In a Catholic Church visitation in 1515, they came under severe criticism for the abundance of nude figures in potentially compromising positions.

Gramaye’s description of the whereabouts of the various parts of the tryptics remained vague. He only mentioned them as “still existing” (Büttner 2012, 21). Van Oudenhoven, however, simply stated that they “had been at the High Altar” (van Oudenhoven 1649, 25). The only other trace of these images can be found in ’s Hertogenbosch’s city archives, in which the treasurer recorded on 4 January 1671 that the city had paid the sexton of the Sint Jan the sum of 75 guilders for one of the wings of the Bosch altarpiece of the High Altar (Büttner 2012, 21). While art historians are still struggling to reconstruct the story of these pictures, what is relevant in the present context is that both authors, the Catholic humanist Gramaye and the Reformed minister van Oudenhoven, recognized the artistic value of Bosch’s tryptics—in spite of the verdict of the Catholic Church and in spite of van Oudenhoven’s own critique of other scenes of nudity in the church’s architecture, which he deemed “more suitable for the temples of the heathen idols Venus or Priapus” than for the House of God (van Oudenhoven 1649, 22). In his 1649 edition, van Oudenhoven mentioned the replacement of Bosch’s images by the “Ten Commandments in Great Golden Letters”, thus ignoring Abraham Blomaert’s *God with Christ and the Virgin as Intercessors*, which had been installed on the High Altar in 1615, apparently after the removal of the Bosch tryptic, and had been dismantled and moved to Antwerp after the city’s surrender in 1629 (van Oudenhoven 1649, 25; Fig. 1). Van Oudenhoven must have known this—for Calvinists—highly offensive painting from his time in the city but preferred not to mention it in his survey. The Ten Commandments were installed in 1633, at a time when the High Altar was already out of sight for visitors to the church (de Hond et al. 2013, 25).<sup>3</sup>

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3 At the same time, the two altars of the rood screen facing the community were replaced by text boards with the Lord’s Prayer and the Creed.

While he ignored this, he mentioned another highly contentious piece of Sint Jan's church furniture, the tabernacle or *Sacramentshuysken*, which



**FIGURE 1** Abraham Bloemaert, God with Christ and the Virgin as Intercessors, 1615.

had been attacked by the Iconoclasts in 1566 and which had been restored by Jacob Matthijsen in 1614. Again, he praised the high artistic calibre and the precious materials—and listed the price of the artwork at 5000 guilders. By 1649, however, it had fallen victim to the magistrates' initiatives of "purification". Ten years earlier, in 1639, they had provided a budget of 75 guilders for its removal by two masons and a joiner, overseen by a military captain, who supervised the destruction against the protest of the local population (Vos 2007, 357; Hezenmans 1866). Some of

the artwork could be rescued through the immediate intervention of Prince Frederik Hendrik, but after his death in 1647, the construction was completely dismantled, and the remaining alabaster sculptures were sold.

Further highlights of this eclectic and chronologically selective ensemble presented in the book are the baptismal font made by Aert van Triecht for the sum of 2.500 guilders in 1492, which was praised as a highly valuable piece of art (Fig. 2).

Significantly, van Oudenhoven informed his readers that this font was still present in the south aisle of the Church (van Oudenhoven 1649, 24). It was no longer in use, however; Reformed baptisms were performed in the newly-created *dooptuin* under the pulpit. Likewise, the massive and elaborate rood or choir screen, carved from wood and marble, which

had proved impossible to remove in 1629, was mentioned as an artistic masterpiece (van Oudenhoven 1649, 24). The Renaissance-style rood screen made by the carver Coenraed van



**FIGURE 2** Baptismal font in the Sint Jan's Cathedral, 's-Hertogenbosch, 27 February 1929.

Norenborch had been installed in 1610. It was subsequently decorated with alabaster sculptures, one of which was made by Amsterdam's top-sculptor and architect Hendrick de Keyser (Fig. 3).<sup>4</sup> Some scenes in the woodcarving and some alabaster images were attacked, but the monument itself served as a convenient partition of the old, Catholic heart of the church—the chancel, which was closed off for further use—and the new centre of worship around the pulpit. Sint Jan's pulpit also dated back to the sixteenth century and was highly decorated with exquisite woodwork. In van

Oudenhoven's text, however, this centrepiece of Reformed worship only received cursory mentioning with reference to its artwork (some of which had also been attacked after the Reformed takeover of the Church) (van Oudenhoven 1649, 26).

Most of what he described was, thus, in the part of the church that was not relevant for the Reformed service and was also physically sealed off from the community, first by the rood screen and later by a wooden construction fortified with copper spikes; the church council had additionally commissioned to bar the entrances to the former side-chapels around the

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4 The artists of the other sculptures are unknown.

choir. So although most of what van Oudenhoven described was no longer there, it was regarded by him as significant—if not for the present, then for the history of the church and the city.



**FIGURE 3** Carved marble choir screen, by Coenraed van Norenberch, 's-Hertogenbosch, Netherlands, 1600-13.

## Church Descriptions and Confessional Controversies

What also mattered for van Oudenhoven was the soundscape of the church. Much coverage was devoted to a clock with moving figures of the Virgin, the adoration of the magi, and the full scenario of the Last Judgement with Jesus and his angels blowing their trumpets on top and the devils grappling for lost souls at the bottom. This instrument had been installed in 1513 but, as van Oudenhoven mentioned, was no longer functioning (van Oudenhoven 1649, 23). The same clockwork had already been mentioned by Gramaye. He, however, emphasized the celestial constellations which were shown, rather than the scenario of the Last Judgement (Gramaye 1610, 23). Van Oudenhoven also gave very detailed descriptions of the numerous bells in

the Sint Jan, of the grant carillon with 26 bells installed in 1641, and of an elaborate clockwork, installed in 1647/48, which played to the tune of Psalm 16 every hour and of Psalm 116 every half-hour (van Oudenhoven 1649, 23). Church bells were regarded as suspicious by the Reformed Church, not least because many of them were inscribed with Catholic prayers and texts whose content was offensive to the Reformed faith. While initially associated with Catholic practices, the ringing of the bells at funerals



**FIGURE 4** The Organ, Sint Jan, at 's Hertogenbosch, organ pipes by Florens Hocque, completed 1634.

was gradually also adopted in some Dutch Reformed Churches, for instance in Utrecht. They rang to summon the worshippers to the church, and continued to ring for secular purposes, for instance in times of emergency. The Sint Jan was famous for its bells and carillons. 's Hertogenbosch itself boasted of a number of well-known bell-founder dynasties, including the Vechels, the van Wou, and the Moers. The city hall was adorned by a carillon made by the famous Hemony brothers from Zutphen in 1649.

The second bone of contention in the soundscape of the churches, the organ, was also covered to some extent in van Oudenhoven's book (van Oudenhoven 1649, 25). Here, he mentioned the two organs in the church: a smaller organ, which, he added, was now used to train the students of the city's *Illustre School* and was therefore mostly no longer in the church itself; and a second, larger organ, an enormous instrument which had been very costly and had only

been completed after the Reformed takeover, and was regarded as one of the finest of its kind (Fig. 4).

The organ pipes were made by Florens Hocque from Cologne, whose name is also mentioned by van Oudenhoven, together with the spectacular price of the whole construction, which amounted to 14.700 guilders. In 1641, a public dispute about the use of organs in Reformed Church services had flared up, in which van Oudenhoven's erstwhile mentor, Gisbert Voetius, who was also a member of the first Reformed church council in 's Hertogenbosch, took a radical stand against the instrument—and against proponents of organ music in Reformed services, such as Constantijn Huygens (Luth 2001). The reference to the organ in the Sint Jan might have been a statement of approval by van Oudenhoven, who did not belong to the more radical wing of the reformers.

What can we learn from this survey about the perception of church space in a contested border region? Firstly, even those who embraced the Calvinist religion were not immune to the beauty and value of Catholic (medieval) artwork (Bynum 2016). Van Oudenhoven specifically wrote his text, so he set out in his dedication to Prince Willem of Orange Nassau, to support the recruitment of more Reformed ministers in 's Hertogenbosch and its environment (“op dat de voornaamste Plaetsen met goede ende ghetrouwe Predikanten mochten bekleedt worden”) (van Oudenhoven 1649, v).<sup>5</sup> Had he deemed the visual remains of the old faith a stumbling

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5 Van Oudenhoven refers to the recruitment efforts of the Synod of Den Bosch to muster sufficient candidates for positions in States-Brabant. He himself had been approached to take over the parishes of Helvoirt and Cromvoirt but, after some deliberation, rejected the offer. As a reason for his negative reply he cited his wife's disapproval and outright refusal to move to States Brabant. The couple might have come to a different conclusion had van Oudenhoven been offered a more attractive parish, for instance in 's Hertogenbosch itself. In both the *Beschrijvinge* and in the later edition of 1670, he emphasized his attachment to his native Brabant. During the negotiations about his appointment, van Oudenhoven

block to attracting Reformed personnel to the city and its main church, he might have been even more, or differently, eclectic in his descriptions. He himself was not a “hardliner” when it came to the “purification” of Catholic space. He wrote critically about the Iconoclastic Fury in the Sint Jan in 1566, calling the iconoclasts “verscheyden sectarissen ende quaetdoers” (some sectarians and evil-doers; van Oudenhoven 1649, 100-101). In a *byvoegsel*, an addition, he also critically mentioned the graffiti that “een slechte man” (a bad man) had scribbled with coal on the walls beneath a lead-in-glass window depicting the Virgin, Jesus, and the late Bishop Gisbertus Masius in the Sint Pieters Kerk, the second church in ‘s Hertogenbosch, during the Twelve Years’ Truce (van Oudenhoven 1649, 81). Secondly, with his extensive survey of the bells, clocks, and carillons in the Sint Jan, he might have wanted not only to appeal to local pride in bell-foundry craftsmanship, but also to state his support for the practices associated with bell-ringing, which remained contentious in Reformed circles. The same might apply to the coverage of the organ in the church. Thirdly, there is also a clue in his dedication to the Prince of Orange. In his chronological account of events, van Oudenhoven mentioned the surrender of the city and the takeover by the forces of Frederik Hendrik, who heard the first Reformed sermon in the Sint Jan on 19 September 1629. Frederik Hendrik prevented the greatest “purifications” of the church and ordered and supported the safe conduct of the Catholic clergy out of the city. They were allowed to take the church treasures with them into exile. The members of ‘s Hertogenbosch’s guilds could reclaim their furniture and paintings, while other works were entrusted to leading citizens for safe keeping. Historians have argued that this lenient policy towards the Catholic citizenry was based on the

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spent some time in ‘s Hertogenbosch in 1648. He thus certainly used the opportunity to revisit the sites that he then covered in his text.

prince's hope to keep further antagonism of the defeated Boschenaers at bay (Gaskell 1990). It might also have been his response to the more radical voices of the Calvinist church on his and his family's adherence to the traditional and powerful Catholic Marian sodality in the city, which counted men of the high aristocracy as its lay members, the so-called Swan brothers. In the end, the sodality was the only Catholic institution in the city that remained (more or less) intact after the takeover. William the Silent had been the first member of the Orange family to be admitted to the Swan brothers, and the privilege was extended to his offspring. Van Oudenhoven was certainly aware of this special relationship between the family and the Sint Jan (Gaskell 1990). Frederik Hendrik also specifically mentioned the tabernacle, as well as the rood screen and the tomb monument of Bishop Masius, which he wanted to protect against the measures of the Reformed church council (Hezenmans 1866, 280-286). Maybe this was also a reason for van Oudenhoven to highlight this piece of unmistakably Catholic Church furniture in his survey, which had disappeared without a trace in 1647. He was much more guarded but nevertheless did mention the Swan brothers and the confraternity of Our Lady in his 1649 edition. Here, however, he drifted into one of his rare polemics against Catholic Church practices, listing the sale of the indulgences and the pilgrimages to the so-called miraculous Virgin of 's Hertogenbosch among the sources of income that the church could generate to finance the costly building (van Oudenhoven 1649, 26). 's Hertogenbosch's citizens had been "blind" before the Reformed takeover, but they were nevertheless pious and generous with the support of their faith.

Van Oudenhoven's description thus served several purposes and addressed several recipients. It transformed the church space of the Sint Jan into a public space adorned with precious artwork, most of which, however, was no longer available to the visitors. It highlighted the highly

valuable and much-acclaimed products of local craftsmanship—the bells, clocks, and carillons in the church—even if some of them were now defunct. Given that the text was also meant to attract potential new ministers to the area, it remained very moderate in its sketches of the “preekkerk”, mentioning its Reformed church furniture, and the—albeit contested— instruments of Reformed church service, such as the organ. At this level, one can state that van Oudenhoven contributed to an argument within a Reformed dispute, siding with a more lenient interpretation of the use of bells and music. In this respect, van Oudenhoven also sided with the city council, whose members were responsible for the purchase and the use of the bells and appointed and paid for the organist in the church (Vos 2007, 370–371). Van Oudenhoven received a gift of 120 guilders from the city council when his book was published (Beermann 1938, 127 fn 3). The officials in the city hall were obviously satisfied with his version of events and his interpretation of the use of the church space. Much research has been devoted in recent years to the role of tomb monuments in the description of churches as memorial sites and the different interpretations of these monuments in times of confessional change (Meys 2009; Schwyzer 2016; Walsham 2017). In the Dutch context, scholars have been particularly interested in the tomb monuments of national heroes, such as for Willem the Silent in Delft and for the great admirals of the Dutch Republic in Amsterdam (Scholten 2003; Mörke 2005). The reference to and emphasis on these monuments has added the dimension of national memory sites to the many functions of the churches. However, tomb monuments also played a role in the confessional conflicts of the period, and this is also the case in their coverage in van Oudenhoven’s text. Burial places in churches themselves became contested spaces. Neeske de Greef, an early supporter of the Reformation in the city, who had expressed her beliefs on her deathbed in 1582, and, consequently, had not

been buried in hallowed ground, was ceremoniously reburied at the High Altar of the Sint Jan in the presence of the church council, high-ranking members of the military, and other citizens in 1631 (Vos 2007, 357). Van Oudenhoven covered this event in his text under the rubric “byvoegsel” on page 82. On an earlier page of these “byvoegsel”, on page 79, he also mentioned the tomb monuments of the three bishops who had been buried in the church during its status as a Cathedral: Bishop Clemens Crabeels, Bishop Gisbertus Masius, and Bishop Nicolaus Zosius were all buried in the choir of the church. Masius’s tomb monument, probably erected in 1618/19 by the sculptor Hans van Mildert, who had also been responsible for the redecoration of the High Altar, continued to be a significant object in the church, symbolizing both the past Catholic regime and its mutilation. It featured in Pieter Saenredam’s enigmatic painting of the choir of the Sint Jan of 1646 (Wheelock Jr., n.d.; Fig. 5 and Fig. 6). In this painting, the accessories signifying the bishop’s status, the mitre and the crozier, were still intact, but in 1663, the English traveler William Lord Fitzwilliam, who visited the Sint Jan, noted: “several tombs, the chiefest is a bishop’s of this place, all cut out in stone, on his knees and formerly he had a mitre on his head and his hands crossed together. But at the taking of the town [1629], some over-zealous soldier did cut off his mitre and arms” (Strien 1998, 208). Interestingly, he also added: “Had he been caught, the Prince of Orange had bestowed a rope in him for his recompense.” It was thus known to later travelers that Frederik Hendrik had been the protector of the church and its interior—even including a memorial to a bishop, whose role he would contest. While either the memory of or the interest in the tomb seems to have faded away in later years, travelers still seemed to find it relevant to take note of them in the accounts of their visit. In August 1671, Richard Holford noticed that he had seen the “effigies of a priest and archbishop [sic], with this inscription”, but the space of the inscription is left

blank. Whether he intended to include the rather long biographical sketch of Masius, which was inscribed in Latin, at the front of the tomb monument or his more poignant motto, “omnia mors aequat” (death is the same for everyone), on top of it, remains unknown (Strien 1998, 210).



**FIGURE 5** Pieter Saenredam, Cathedral of Sint Jan at 's-Hertogenbosch (1646).



**FIGURE 6** Tomb Monument Bishop Gisbert Masius, drawing Pieter Saenredam 1632.

## Changes Over Time

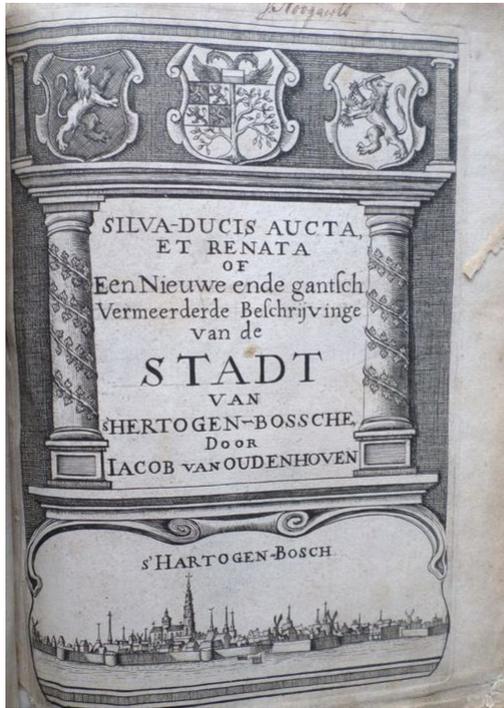
One year earlier, van Oudenhoven published his second, updated version of the *Beschrijvinge*. His “Silva-Ducis aucta et renata of een nieuwe ende gantsch vermeerderde Beschrijvinge van de Stadt van 's Hertogenbossche” appeared in 's Hertogenbosch in 1670, five years after van Oudenhoven’s retirement from the ministry, after which he devoted himself fully to the writing of history. In the preface to the text, he emphasized his own Brabantine origins and love of his fatherland (van Oudenhoven 1670,

n.p.). The book was dedicated to Govert van Slingelandt and Adriaen van Blyenburg, both members of the States General who had had earlier careers in Dordrecht's City Council.<sup>6</sup> With rising international tensions and an increasing threat of French expansionism, it was perhaps not a coincidence that van Oudenhoven wished to remind members of the States General of the importance of 's Hertogenbosch, which, as a border city near the Spanish Netherlands, would be on the front line of attacks from the South. The region had been regarded with distrust by the States General ever since its incorporation into the Dutch Republic. It was feared that its predominantly Catholic citizens would not be loyal to the Republic in times of emergency and would have preferred to be under the rule of the Spanish Netherlands. With the threat of the Catholic French, this fear was fueled even further. Van Oudenhoven also addressed the city magistrates of 's Hertogenbosch as the recipients of his book. Highlighting the former and the (proposed) new glory of the city might have reminded them that 's Hertogenbosch was worth fighting for. In his description of the church, the ensemble of the interior of the Sint Jan roughly resembled the survey of the earlier volume with a particular emphasis on the bells, clocks and carillons, which had already featured prominently in the first edition (van Oudenhoven 1670, 95). The altar pieces and images received a somewhat shorter coverage, but their themes as well as the name and mastery of Hieronymus Bosch were mentioned. The baptismal font, the rood screen, and the organ were mentioned again, each with their respective creator and their costs. The tomb monuments of the bishops and their position in the church were also listed again, with particular emphasis on Masius's alabaster tomb and the dedicatory text on the monument (van Oudenhoven

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6 Moreover, van Blyenburg's oldest son, of the same name, was in charge of the States General's financial support for the Meyerij van 's Hertogenbosch sometime in the 1670s or 80s.

1670, 17). The mutilation of the bishop's statue was not addressed. However, there are distinct differences between this and the earlier text which



**FIGURE 7** Frontispice Jacob van Oudenhoven, 's Silva-Ducis aucta et renata of Een nieuwe ende vermeerderde beschryvinge van de Meyerye van Hertogen-Bossche etc., 's Hertogenbosch: Ian Scheffers, ende Iacomina van Oudenhoven, 1670.

reveal a stronger historicization and, one might argue, nostalgia for the city's former glory. The most striking reference to this is the cityscape printed on the frontispiece of the book (Fig. 7). Here, the Sint Jan featured prominently as the heart of the city. The church that was depicted, however, was a construction which showed the remarkable middle tower that had been destroyed by fire in 1584.<sup>7</sup> The spectacular tower, adorned with a silver statue of Saint John in 1529, had been much praised and certainly represented the city and the church at the height of its glory, but was far removed from 's Hertogenbosch's economic and political position in 1670 (van Oudenhoven 1670, 95). In the text itself, the construction history of the

tower was extensively covered. Extensive coverage was also given to the Marian sodality in the city, a real bone of contention after the Reformed

7 The image of the church does not particularly resemble the only known sketch of the Sint Jan, prior to the fire, by Anton van den Wyngaerde. It might have been made well after 1548 to resemble Antwerp Cathedral rather than van den Wyngaerde's version of the Sint Jan.

takeover. Van Oudenhoven devoted seven pages, with various sub-headings, to the topic, outlining the establishment of the confraternity, its regime, and the devotional practices at the Lady Chapel at the heart of the Marian devotion in the city (van Oudenhoven 1670, 99–109). The *Illustre Vrouwenbroederschap* had been reorganized to accommodate an even number of eighteen Catholic and eighteen Calvinist members in 1642. However, the heyday of its influence and international calibre were over, and, once again, it seems that van Oudenhoven's detailed account, including the procession route of the annual devotional festival, created an image of a golden past. The anti-Catholic polemics of the previous edition had disappeared, and van Oudenhoven included extensive references to Augustinus Wichmans' *Brabantia Mariana Tripartita* of 1632, outlining the history and practice of the Marian cult in 's Hertogenbosch. For his account of the Iconoclastic Fury in the city, he relied verbatim on the account of a Catholic eye-witness, the Carmelite Dominicus Beyens, who actively intervened and rescued the treasures of Our Lady's Chapel during the first assault on the church in August 1566. Although van Oudenhoven alerted his readers to the confessional bias of the account, he nevertheless gave the Catholic commentator a voice, which condemned the iconoclasm in the city and its agents (van Oudenhoven 1670, 135f).<sup>8</sup> In this second version, the confessional distinctions or nuances of interpretation were not at stake. What van Oudenhoven created, instead, was an account of a city which had once been glorious, prosperous, and influential—attributes that were encapsulated in his description of the Sint Jan and the devotional practices around the church and its main spiritual centre, the Chapel of Our Lady.

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8 Much of the vocabulary that Beyens applied to the iconoclasts had already been used in van Oudenhoven's previous description of the Iconoclastic Fury. He might have already used Beyens' account for the 1649 edition, but he deemed it unwise to rely explicitly on this source.

The boundaries, however, between the glorious past and the less glorious present of the city were blurred, thus leaving it to the reader to draw comparisons between the past and the present of the city.

## Conclusion

Jesse Spohnholz (2011) has recently encouraged us to rethink the narrative of the reformation of church spaces in the Dutch Republic that has informed much of the scholarship on church interiors. He has also called for further nuance in the distinction between “public” and “private” places of worship. For areas with an overwhelmingly Catholic population, such as States Brabant, which proved rather immune to the reforming efforts of the ministers selected to preach in the *Meierij van 's Hertogenbosch* in 1648, “it was the few isolated Calvinists in the supposedly ‘public’ church, who were really isolated” (71). In ‘s Hertogenbosch, the official possession of the Sint Jan proved to be something of a poisoned chalice. The small Reformed community was unable to maintain the upkeep of the enormous building, which had also suffered extensively from the bombardments of the siege. Even after massive sales of the artwork of the Cathedral, the church council was in debt with 1500 guilders in 1659. After further sales of pictures and sculptures taken from the other churches in ‘s Hertogenbosch (St. Barbara, St. Anna, and St. Cornelis), the church council incurred debts of 2000 guilders in the two consecutive years following 1684 (Hezenmans 1866, 393–294). Instead of presenting the triumphantly sober, whitewashed, and excellently maintained church interior of the seventeenth-century genre paintings, the Sint Jan degraded into a building with masonry which was at risk of collapse and was only provisionally repaired with cheaper materials, and whose many windows could no longer be maintained in their original

form (Boekwijt et al. 2011, 242–259). At the same time, what was seen as the “public” space of the church was still and persistently used by Catholic worshippers. Time and again, the city council received complaints about Catholics burning candles in those places where their former altars stood (Vos 2007, 358). They knelt and prayed in empty niches. They disturbed Reformed services by singing, or by processing in the public space of the church. It was these practices that led to the assault and destruction of the tabernacle, not the existence of the tabernacle itself.

Incidents of disturbances of Reformed worship were not restricted to the Sint Jan. In Boxtel, also in States Brabant, the Reformed church was visited by a Catholic crowd on the Sunday after Saint Crispin’s day, 25 October 1648. The crowd, mainly cobblers, claimed to celebrate the feast day of their patron saint and did so with pipes, dancing, and songs during the Reformed service (de Mooi 2009). Neither the increasing dilapidation of the building nor the confessional tensions found room in van Oudenhoven’s description. He repeated the comments of the dysfunctional clocks that he had already mentioned in the first edition. Otherwise, his description focused on the former glory of the church. True to the title of his text, he created a picture of the reemergence of old beauty. Significantly, where he mentioned the collapse of the middle tower and the melting of the bells in the fire of 1584, he reminded his readers that much of the molten material was used for the foundry of new bells, whose ensemble of 26 was completed in 1647 (van Oudenhoven 1670, 95–96). There was no longer room for anti-Catholic polemics. On the contrary, where, in 1649, van Oudenhoven had ridiculed the miracle stories around the Virgin of 's Hertogenbosch, he now simply stated her miraculous powers, which, before 1629, had brought many people into the city and supported the costs of the church. Church spaces thus served many and different purposes for their beholders. The case of van Oudenhoven’s description of the Sint Jan has demonstrated

that ways of viewing and describing church interiors were multi-layered and changed over time—even over a seemingly short period of 21 years. In the Netherlands, rather than following seemingly simple patterns of desacralization and public appropriation, church spaces could be presented as places of civic pride and craftsmanship, and their description was embedded in local or national discourses. They were not nearly as confessionally homogenous as their city and church councilors might have implied. Moreover, there was also local dissent about the nature of Calvinist church furniture and the use of accessories for worship, which found its way into van Oudenhoven’s comments. If they served as vehicles to historicize the past, then which past was invoked, rejected, or glorified? Caroline Bynum has recently challenged the standardized chronological landmarks for the Reformation and its implementation, which, she argued, have traditionally been based on texts, such as the introduction of Lutheran (or Reformed) church orders and the installation of Lutheran (or Reformed) ministers. Instead, she alerts us to a different chronology, based on the “lives” of things, church furniture, vestments, and other items used in church services. She argues that many of these not only survived but continued to carry meaning in their local contexts of piety and devotion, but also as representations of prestige and power (Bynum 2016). Van Oudenhoven’s survey of the Sint Jan’s church interior supports this claim, and it is this nuance and this diversity that is worth further investigation.

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Fig. 2 Baptismal font in the Sint Jan's Cathedral, 's-Hertogenbosch, 27 February 1929. Public domain, <http://www.bossche-encyclopedie.nl/overig/sint%20jan/Doopvont.htm> Author: Fotopersbureau Het Zuiden.

Fig. 3 Carved marble choir screen, by Coenraed van Norenberch, 's-Hertogenbosch, Netherlands, 1600-13, Victoria and Albert Museum no. 1046-1871.

Fig. 4 The Organ, Sint Jan, at 's Hertogenbosch, organ pipes by Florens Hocque, completed 1634. Public domain: CC-BY-SA 1.0, Zanaq, met dank aan MaanMeis.

Fig. 5 Pieter Saenredam, Cathedral of Sint Jan at 's-Hertogenbosch (1646). source: Wikimedia commons (google arts project).

- Fig. 6 Tomb Monument Bishop Gisbert Masius, drawing Pieter Saenredam 1632. Noordbrabants Museum, Digitale Collectie. Objectnummer 12129.
- Fig. 7 Frontispice Jacob van Oudenhoven, 's Silva-Ducis aucta et renata of Een nieuwe ende vermeerderde beschryvinge van de Meyerye van Hertogen-Bossche etc., 's Hertogenbosch: Ian Scheffers, ende Iacomina van Oudenhoven, 1670 (public domain: google books).