

When a Female Pope Meets a Biconfessional Town: Protestantism, Catholicism, and Popular Polemics in the 1630s

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Abstract

The early modern afterlife of Pope Joan has been remarkably little studied, perhaps because its contours have seemed familiar: Joan's existence was embraced by Protestants for its challenge to the apostolic succession of the papacy and rejected by Catholics for the same reason. This role reversal, which cast Protestants as defenders of monastic chronicles and Catholics as their critics, offers ostensible proof for the mercenary use of history in confessional polemics. This article uses an overlooked 1635 defence of the popess, the longest ever written, as a case study to argue the opposite: debates over Pope Joan could be vehicles for popular confessional grievances and identities, and they can teach us much about the difficulties facing the Catholic and Reformed churches in the 1620s and 1630s. Written in Dutch by a German minister of the Church of England, this lengthy treatise possesses a significance well beyond the local conditions – a public disputation in a small biconfessional town in the Duchy of Cleves – that gave rise to its publication.

Keywords: Pope Joan, confessional polemic, confessional coexistence, Duchy of Cleves, Dutch Revolt, Puritan exiles, Church of England, Arminianism

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The longest book ever written in defence of the existence of Pope Joan is also its most obscure. The two-volume, 1,075-page work, published by the Calvinist minister Egbert Grim in 1635, last received historical attention in 1924, when the British journal *Notes and Queries* published a reader's question: 'What is known of this man and his book?'¹ The two-paragraph query received no reply. Even the author only knew of the book because it had been cited by another of Pope Joan's defenders, the Huguenot theologian Samuel Desmarets.² He, in turn, was the only contemporary participant in the long-running confessional dispute concerning the mythical female pope to take any notice of Grim's work. If the virtually universal silence which greeted the publication of these two weighty tomes makes them appear a discouraging subject for historical investigation, the language

1 Wainwright, 'Egbert Grim'. Many, *many* debts have been accrued during the researching and writing of this article. Most of the research took place during an academic exchange with KU Leuven in 2017 and I would like to acknowledge above all the support of my two sponsors, Wim François and Violet Soen, who made that visit possible. They, along with many others (Vera Hoorens, Jane Judge, Jeanine de Landtsheer, Alexander Soetaert, Werner Thomas, Johan Verberckmoes, and Heleen Wijffels) made Leuven a welcoming and intellectually stimulating home away from home. Nikolas Funke provided invaluable background information on 1620s and 1630s Wesel and shared extracts from his transcriptions of its council protocols. Erik Goosmann of Mappamundi designed the map included in this article. Nina Lamal gave indispensable help with the Universal Short Title Catalogue and pointed me towards another Netherlandish Pope Joan tale. Tina Oostendorp of the Rees city archive was a hospitable and knowledgeable host, while Martin Roelen of the Wesel city archive provided helpful biographical detail on Egbert Grim's later life. Will Poole and Richard Serjeantson suggested sources for 1620s Oxford and Cambridge student life respectively. Alexander Soetaert pointed me towards the intriguing Netherlandish publication history of Florimond de Raemon's Pope Joan treatise. David Trim discussed the fascinating figure of Sir Horace Vere and the world of seventeenth-century English mercenaries with me. Peter Wilson provided valuable bibliographical references on the political history of the Duchy of Cleves. Versions of this article were presented at conferences in York (2017) and Swansea (2018) and I would like to thank the organizers, Stefan Bauer and Simon Ditchfield at York, Simon John and Charlie Rozier at Swansea, for their hospitality. Anthony Milton and Freyja Sierhuis commented on drafts of this article and made suggestions which improved it in many ways. Finally, I would like to thank the editors and anonymous reviewers of *Early Modern Low Countries* for their suggestions, comments, and editing, which strengthened the final version of this article considerably.

2 Desmarets, *Ioanna Papissa restituta*, 12.

in which it was written and the apparent backwater where it appeared – Dutch and the Duchy of Cleves – may seem to limit the book’s wider significance still further.

Appearances can be deceiving. They certainly are in this case. The book’s subject matter, its author, and the circumstances of its publication all conspire to make it into a prism through which we can study the problems facing the Catholic and – perhaps especially – Reformed Churches during the 1630s. Of these factors, the book’s subject will likely require the least by way of introduction. In a seminal 1988 study, Alain Boureau traced the origins of the myth of the popess to the early to mid-thirteenth century, when at a time of great tension between the papacy and the religious orders Joan made her way into a number of monastic chronicles. According to most of these accounts, she occupied the Holy See as Pope John VIII in the 850s. For the next three centuries, the story commanded almost universal assent.³ By contrast, Pope Joan’s lively early modern afterlife has received surprisingly little attention from historians. Aside from Craig M. Rustici’s study of its legacy in England (Joan’s supposed country of origin), no monograph and few chapters and articles have been devoted specifically to the story’s reception during the Reformation era.⁴ Perhaps Boureau’s professed ‘dream of exhausting a historical object’ and his ‘desire for totality’ have scared off other historians, although the medievalist spent only a single chapter on the fifteenth to seventeenth centuries.⁵

Contributing to this historical neglect is the *seemingly* entirely predictable nature of Pope Joan’s encounter with this age of confessional rivalry. Notwithstanding her monastic and medieval origins, Protestants embraced her existence, starting with Martin Luther’s claim to have seen a statue of her allegedly erected on the site of her death at the hands of an enraged Roman mob. Joan both supported the common identification of the papacy with the Whore of Babylon (Revelation 17:5) and invalidated papal claims to apostolic succession.⁶ The story of the cross-dressing pope thus led to a role reversal with Protestants, at least until David Blondel’s *Familier esclaircissement* (1647), unanimously professing belief in a medieval tale, while Catholics starting with Onofrio Panvinio in 1562 espoused scepticism in ever more strident terms.⁷ At first sight, such apparently mercenary (ab)use of the popess appears to support a familiar paradigm, first set out by Pontien Polman in 1932, in which both Protestants and Catholics valued history only as a tool for confessional polemic.⁸

This article shows that these outlines present at best a crude generalization. If attitudes towards the popess were largely predetermined by confessional allegiance, the *types* of arguments put forward were similarly inflected. These, in turn, reveal a great deal about

3 Boureau, *The Myth of Pope Joan*.

4 Rustici, *The Afterlife of Pope Joan*; Freeman, ‘Joan of Contention’; Tinsley, ‘Pope Joan Polemic in Early Modern France’; Donneau, ‘Sa Sainteté femelle’.

5 Boureau, *The Myth of Pope Joan*, x, 221–254.

6 Boureau, *The Myth of Pope Joan*, 140. On the interruption of the apostolic succession, see e.g. the conclusion in Cooke, *Pope Ioane*, 125–128.

7 Blondel, *Familier esclaircissement*; Platina, *De vitis pontificum Romanorum*, fols. 102r–104v. On Blondel, see Donneau, ‘Sa Sainteté femelle’.

8 See Polman, *L’Élément historique dans la controverse religieuse*, and the correction offered by Backus, *Historical Method and Confessional Identity*.

how both sides saw themselves and each other. The arguments put forth by either side were shaped by religious concerns: both perennial – going to the very essence of confessional identities and histories – and occasional. The peculiar circumstances that led to the publication of Grim’s ironically titled *Pauselijke heiligkeit* (Papal Holiness, 1635) speak to both types of concerns but highlight the importance of the latter. Pope Joan became a vehicle for grievances rooted in a specific place and time.

Indeed, Grim’s magnum opus has its origins in public humiliation. It was the unforeseen outcome of a disputation in the small city of Rees (fig. 1) on the morning of 27 September



Fig. 1 The Dutch Republic and the Duchy of Cleves in the 1630s.

1631. Invited by the local Calvinist consistory as a well-regarded and well-educated outsider, Grim had entered the debate as the heavy favourite but unexpectedly lost to the local Catholic priest, Johannes Stalenus.⁹ This missing context has had the effect of making Grim's text, with its many venomous swipes at an often-nameless opponent (Stalenus), even less accessible. This background, long hidden from view, can only be pieced together by putting newly discovered correspondence alongside the two men's other publications, some of which survive only as single copies.¹⁰

Both the confessional geography that gave rise to the *Pauselicke heiligheit* and its author's background mean that this reiteration of the Pope Joan debate possesses a significance well beyond the Duchy of Cleves. Rees, the site of Grim's public disputation, and Wesel, the place of publication, were both held by the officially Reformed Dutch Republic. Whereas Wesel had been overwhelmingly Protestant before its occupation, Rees was majority Catholic and offers a microcosm for the religious tensions that convulsed Europe during the Thirty Years' War. Grim's background further adds to the debate's significance. Although Grim wrote in Dutch, he hailed from Neuenhaus in the County of Bentheim across the border from the Republic. Crucially, he was also a minister in the Church of England.¹¹ He had arrived in the Duchy of Cleves as a chaplain to the English mercenaries who held Wesel for the Republic.

Grim's *Pauselicke Heiligheit*, then, is worthy of study for reasons other than its purported contribution to the Pope Joan controversy. A triumph of quantity over quality, its compendious nature was already recognised by one of the few contemporaries who took note of it. The work was primarily an inventory of no less than 135 medieval witnesses who reported the Pope Joan story, organised by region, and ending with Martinus Polonus (or Martin of Troppau, d. 1278), Joan's most important early chronicler, as the witness from Poland.¹² Grim's *opus* and the Catholic pamphlet to which it offered an exceedingly verbose reply therefore matter not because of any novelty in their arguments but on account of the context in which they appeared. They demonstrate the ways in which scholarly polemics, even ones about the authenticity of medieval manuscript evidence, could move well beyond the confines of the libraries and studies of their authors. This particular incarnation of the Pope Joan debate intersected with the realities of religious violence and forced confessional co-existence. Read closely, both texts reveal how Grim and Stalenus gave a voice to the experiences of the communities they represent.

9 This date is mentioned obliquely and in passing in Grim, *Cort verhael*, 7, but fits all the circumstantial evidence. A letter by Grim, dated 8 December 1631, to one of his Leiden teachers, provides no date but reports that the debate had taken place recently and assumed that the recipient, André Rivet, had already heard of it: 'Ex Nobili D. Scoto capitaneo congregationis meae membro non infimo Controversiam nuper hic motam D.T. innotuisse intellexi'. Leiden, Universiteitsbibliotheek (hereafter UBL), BPL 285-II, fol. 74r. The Catholic priest, Johannes Stalenus, later suggested that Grim spent four and a half years writing his *opus*, the preface of which was dated 20 April 1635, which would put the debate in October 1631. See the letter excerpted in Grim, *Cort verhael*, 18.

10 The debate has escaped the notice of local historians as well. R. Scholten, 'Beiträge zu den Kämpfen', mentions Grim on p. 334, but is ignorant of the original debate.

11 The title page of Grim's *Pauselicke Heiligheit* describes him as 'Pastor van de Kercke Christi uyt Groot Britannien'.

12 Grim, *Pauselicke Heiligheit*, I, 527-569. The work's second volume discusses Joan's supposed relics, such as the supposed statue of her in Rome, and deals with some of Stalenus's other objections.

There is a second dimension to this debate as well. Employed as a weapon by both sides, Pope Joan can also teach us much about the weaknesses in their respective confessional armour. On the level of ideas, then, the polemic between Stalenus and Grim throws light on the problems which the Catholic and Reformed Churches faced during the 1620s and 1630s, with its reverberations felt as far away as England. The story of the popess could be used both to identify specific weaknesses in the opposing side's position and to deflect attention away from one's own. Understanding why Pope Joan was embraced by the Protestants and Catholics of Wesel and Rees offers a window onto the turbulent religious landscape of much of north-western Europe.

Inevitably, a case study of this sort takes some setting up. The first two sections of this article will sketch the particularly complex confessional and political geography of the Duchy of Cleves and introduce Grim, our main protagonist. The third section offers a reconstruction of the polemic itself, drawing on both printed sources and newly discovered manuscript material. The final sections will explore this article's main arguments, unpacking the different ways in which both sides used Pope Joan as a medium for the expression of their confessional identities and the difficulties that the popess posed for Protestants and Catholics alike.

Setting the Scene: The Duchy of Cleves and the Dutch Revolt (1609-1631)

To fully understand the wider historical importance of the 1631 disputation, we must first set it against the complex political and religious geography of which it was in many ways a product. The War of Succession (1609-1614) that followed the death of Johann Wilhelm, the mad and childless Duke of Jülich-Cleves-Berg, has been seen as a prelude to the Thirty Years' War with international powers lining up to support the two principal claimants, one Calvinist, the other Catholic.¹³ The political fragmentation of the territory and the religious moderation pursued by its Lutheran dukes had converted the duchy into a religious smorgasbord with Catholics still making up about half the population in 1609.¹⁴ As a border region, Cleves had been the terrain of a proxy war between the Dutch Republic and the Spanish Habsburgs since the early 1590s, a war which continued even during the period of the Twelve Years' Truce (1609-1621) when the two powers were notionally at peace.¹⁵ Majority-Catholic Rees, in Spanish hands since 1598, surrendered to the troops of Maurice of Nassau in September 1614, while the Spanish took control of the larger Protestant city of Wesel.¹⁶ While Rees was of strategic importance for its position on the Rhine, the capture of Wesel was of especial significance to the Spanish. The city – described by one papal nuncio, with some overstatement, as the 'Geneva of the north' – had been a

13 Mostert, 'Der jülich-klevische Regiments- und Erbfolgestreit'. For a reassessment of this claim, see Wilson, *Europe's Tragedy*, 229-238, esp. 229-230 and 237.

14 Wilson, *Europe's Tragedy*, 230; Smolinsky, 'Formen und Motive konfessioneller Koexistenz'; Ehrenpreis, 'Wir sind mit blutigen Köpfen davongelaufen', 35-84, esp. 67. For the higher estimate of 75 per cent, see Coenen, *Die katholische Kirche am Niederrhein*, 82.

15 Groenveld, 'Der Jülich-Klevische Erbfolgekrieg'; Gabel, 'Sicherheit und Konfession'.

16 Van der Kemp, *Maurits van Nassau*, III, 94-96; Van Deursen (ed.), *Resolutiën der Staten-Generaal*, II, 322 (no. 802).

refugee centre for Dutch and even English Protestant exiles.¹⁷ Both towns were thus occupied by forces opposed to the majority religion of their populations. These conquests also essentially tied their fortunes together, with the rights of the religious majority in one town being held hostage to those of the other.¹⁸

Rees's Catholic population and clergy also possessed a certain amount of soft power: Maurice had guaranteed their rights and privileges as part of the town's peaceful surrender and the Holy Roman Empire's Catholic powers regularly interceded on their behalf with the Dutch States-General.¹⁹ Although Rees constructed its first Reformed Church sometime in 1623-1624, Catholics did not fare too badly at first.²⁰ In 1619, the papal nuncio in Cologne even reported – much to Rome's delight – that Rees's priest, probably Stalenus's predecessor Johannes Sternenbergh, had converted sixty Dutch soldiers to Catholicism.²¹ According to Grim, Catholics were represented among the Rees magistrates, and when the Catholic parish church was eventually transferred to the Reformed, the magistrates protested the infringement of the rights of the 'papists' guaranteed by their treaty of surrender.²² This confiscation in 1628, however, had been a direct retaliation for the handing over of two Reformed churches to the Catholics in Spanish-occupied Wesel, news of which even reached England.²³ The States-General pressured the Catholic clergy to intercede with local rulers to obtain a return to the *status quo ante*, but efforts failed at least in part because of Roman opposition to any compromise.²⁴

The fall of Wesel to Dutch forces on 19 August 1629 therefore has considerable repercussions for our story, and not simply because it would lead a few months later to the arrival of Egbert Grim alongside the English mercenaries sent to hold the town.²⁵ News quickly reached English shores. As early as 27 August, Willem Thilenus, minister to the Dutch church in London then on a visit to his native Middelburg, described Wesel's capture 'as a dream' and an act of divine deliverance in a letter to his consistory in England.²⁶

17 Cited in Siccama, *Schets van de diplomatieke betrekkingen*, 58. On Wesel as a centre for Dutch Calvinist refugees, see Spohnholz, *Tactics of Toleration*.

18 For an excellent case study of how the rights of religious minorities could be protected *quid pro quo* across borders, see Kaplan, *Cunegonde's Kidnapping*.

19 An unfoliated copy of the treaty, dated 11 September 1614, is preserved in The Hague, Nationaal Archief, 1.01.02, Archief Staten-Generaal, inv. nr. 12569.92. For intercession on behalf of Rees, see e.g. the Elector of Cologne to the States-General, in Van Deursen (ed.), *Resolutiën der Staten-Generaal*, II, 527 (no. 822).

20 Wensky, 'Rees (Kr. Kleve)', 879.

21 *Nuntiaturberichte*, V/3, 493–94 (no. 2971) and 506 (no. 2988). On Sternenbergh, see Ricken, 'Die Stadt Rees', 101–102.

22 Grim, *Cort verhael*, 10; Rees, Stadtarchiv, XIV.5, fol. 125 (11 September 1628).

23 Owen, *The Unmasking of All Popish Monks*, 117–118; Hexham, *A Historical Relation of the Famous Siege of the Busse*, 15.

24 Nijenhuis et al. (eds.), *Resolutiën Staten-Generaal*, resolutions of 18 July 1628, 1; 19 August 1628, 5; 13 September 1628, 14; 14 September 1628, 3; and 12 October 1628, 19. Available on-line at <http://resources.huygens.knaw.nl/bsluitenstatengeneraal1576-1630/BesluitenStaten-generaal1626-1651> (Accessed on 24 October 2018); *Nuntiaturberichte*, VII/2, 200 (no. 1368) and 228 (no. 1414).

25 Bordes, *De verdediging van Nederland*, 229–249, 267 (appendix 2). English forces were not involved in the original attack as they were in Den Bosch.

26 Hessels (ed.), *Ecclesiae Londino-Batavae archivum*, III/1, 1440–1441 (no. 1993), Middelburg, 27 August 1629: 't'Was ons als eenen droom en is noch.'

In fact, the military consequences of the surprise attack were greater than the subsequent and well-known capture of Den Bosch on 14 September, because it instantaneously cut off supplies to the Spanish forces that had penetrated deep into the heart of the Republic, seizing Amersfoort and threatening Utrecht.²⁷ For the Catholics of Rees, the fall of Wesel was an unmitigated disaster: they had lost their main bargaining chip. While Calvinists instantly took back their two Wesel churches, the Catholics of Rees had to wait until 1672 when the Dutch finally surrendered their town. Until then, they had to make do with the convent church belonging to the town's Franciscan tertiaries and a room in the deanery.²⁸ It is within this atmosphere of Protestant resurgence, Catholic resilience, and mutual grievances that the debate about Pope Joan took on the significance that it did.

A Grim Origin Story

If the geography of the Duchy of Cleves provides our story with a certain emblematic quality, then Egbert Grim's background adds a further transregional dimension. While Johannes Stalenus, Pope Joan's Catholic 'assailant' ('bestormer'), was to all intents and purposes a local, born in Kalkar less than eight miles from Rees on 24 March 1596,²⁹ Grim had only arrived in Wesel after a considerable period of study in England and the Dutch Republic alongside an influx of German students, many of them refugees of the Thirty Years' War.³⁰ Born in 1604/1605, Grim matriculated at the University of Franeker, the Dutch Republic's second university, on 20 April 1625, to study theology and philosophy.³¹ In 1626, perhaps in June, he defended a theological disputation with the then university rector, the English divine William Ames, a puritan 'of the rigidest sort', presiding.³² While not officially a religious exile, Ames's strong Calvinist leanings had sent him to the Republic in search of employment.

Grim has been listed among the young Germans whom Ames dispatched to the informal Puritan seminary run by John Cotton in Boston, Lincolnshire, and there is no doubt that Grim eventually did go there, perhaps spending as much as two years with the future New England clergyman, whom he described as 'this kind host, in whose home school

²⁷ Bordes, *De verdediging van Nederland*, 258.

²⁸ Scholten, 'Beiträge zu den Kämpfen', 330-331.

²⁹ On the label 'bestormer', see Grim, *Cort verhael*, 5. One of the journal's reviewers was able to correct the date provided in Scholten, 'Beiträge zu den Kämpfen', 294. Stalenus was the son of Derrick Stael, burgher of Kalkar, and his wife Henrica: Kalkar, Stadtarchiv, ms Ki 63b.

³⁰ On the growing number of Germans studying at Franeker during the Thirty Years' War, see Boeles, *Friesland's Hoogeschool*, 1, 26, 50-51. On the university's hiring of 'grateful' German professors, see 1, 51 and 11/1, 126-129.

³¹ Fockema Andreae and Meijer (eds.), *Album studiosorum*, 76 (no. 2202). Grim's name is recorded as 'Egbertus Grin'. The Leiden matriculation register identifies Grim as aged 24 in 1629: Du Rieu (ed.), *Album studiosorum*, col. 220. For 1608 as Grim's year of birth, see Desmarets, *Joanna Papissa restituta*, 12.

³² Grim, *Disputatio theologica de incarnatione verbi*. No date for this disputation is given, but Ames's term as rector began only on 1 June 1626: Fockema Andreae and Meijer (eds.), *Album studiosorum*, 79. On Ames, see Sprunger, *The Learned Doctor William Ames*, esp. 96-97 for Ames's embrace of puritanism as a label.

[*contubernium*] he did not stand in the way of me growing in knowledge, which he poured forth abundantly, and I progressed by the example that he showed to be worthy of imitation.³³ At Boston, he met other Dutch and German students at the dining table, including Peter Gribius, an exile from the Palatinate and a fellow student under Ames at Franeker, who went on to minister to the English troops garrisoning Den Bosch in the early 1630s, as Grim would in Wesel.³⁴

Before arriving in Boston, however, Grim spent possibly as much as a year in Oxford. On 10 October 1626 O.S., he registered to use the Bodleian Library as an external reader, alongside Hermann Vigelius, an exile from Wesel financially supported by the Dutch Church in London.³⁵ In his work on Pope Joan, Grim sang the Bodleian's praises and recounted meeting Bodleian sub-librarian John Verneuil.³⁶ Although Grim apparently did not matriculate, he would describe the Rector of Exeter College, John Prideaux, as his 'patron and teacher' and later sent him a copy of his eventual Leiden theology dissertation.³⁷ Grim was presumably still in Oxford on 6 May 1627, when Prideaux signed Vigelius's *album amicorum*.³⁸

After a three-year stay in England, Grim matriculated at Leiden University on 3 August 1629.³⁹ On 1 October he obtained a licentiate in theology on the basis of a theological disputation containing 'ninety-nine theses on just as many or even more controversies of our age'.⁴⁰ Its dedicatory epistle singled out Cotton and Prideaux for praise but was addressed to the Bishop of Lincoln (later Archbishop of York), John Williams.⁴¹ Yet, while

33 Grim, *Disputatio theologica inauguralis*, sig. A2r: 'Hunc benignum hospitem; in cuius contubernio per ipsum non stetit quin auctus fuerim doctrina, quam ille fundebat abunde, et exemplo profecerim, quod dignum imitatione exhibebat.' On Grim being sent by Ames to Cotton, see Sprunger, *The Learned Doctor William Ames*, 237. For the two-year period, see below.

34 On Gribius, 'a German, who lived sometime here with us [...] receyved to Table in my house, and (for want of roome with me) to lodging, in a neere neighbours', see Cotton to Goodyear, Boston, 12 April 1630 O.S., in Bush Jr. (ed.), *The Correspondence of John Cotton*, 140. On Gribius as a student of Ames and Cotton, see London, Dr Williams's Library, ms 38.34, John Quick, 'Icones sacrae Anglicanae or the Lives and Deaths of Severall Eminent English Divines', 269. Gribius matriculated at Franeker on 7 June 1624; Fockema Andreae and Meijer (eds.), *Album studiosorum*, 74. For references to Dutch students during the same period, see Van Vleteren to Cotton, London, 26 October 1629 O.S., in Bush Jr. (ed.), *The Correspondence of John Cotton*, 134.

35 Oxford, Bodleian Library, ms Wood E 5, fol. 96v. His name is spelled 'Ethbertus Grim'. A third German, Georgius Medingus, is listed separately as registering on the same day. On financial support for Vigelius, see Grell, *Dutch Calvinists in Early Stuart London*, 291 (appendix vi), where he is listed as 'Vigecius, Hermanus'.

36 Grim, *Pauselicke Heiligheit*, I, 351 ('de vermaerde Bibliotheca tot Oxford'), 362 ('in de trefflicke Bibliotheca tot Oxford'), 397, 404, 552 ('in de vermaerde ende grootste (so veel als ick oyt gesien ofte gehoorte hebbe) Bibliotheca in de werlde'); and II, 311 ('in de grootste Bibliotheca tot Oxford').

37 Grim, *Disputatio theologica inauguralis*, sig. A2r: 'fautorem et praeceptorem'; Grim, *Pauselicke Heiligheit*, I, 132. Note the undated inscription in Grim's handwriting on Worcester Cathedral Library, Sel. A 57.2(4), title page: 'Reverendo D. Doctori Prideauxio Professori Regio D[omi]no et amico fautori suo etc. Oxon.' Prideaux became bishop of Worcester in November 1641.

38 Bonn, Universitäts und Landesbibliothek, ms S2569, fol. 138r.

39 Du Rieu (ed.), *Album studiosorum*, col. 220.

40 Grim, *Disputatio theologica inauguralis, continens theses nonaginta novem, de totidem, vel etiam pluribus nostri aevi controversiis*.

41 Grim, *Disputatio theologica inauguralis*, sig. A2r. Grim mentions his use of the libraries of St John's College, Cambridge, and Westminster School, both endowed by Williams, as well as the bishop's hospitality. The only

the disputation itself might have looked west, the accompanying celebratory poems, possibly printed separately, were all penned by ‘friends and table companions’ from the Holy Roman Empire.⁴² Consulted for advice, Ames advised Grim to return home – that is, to Germany: ‘Your fatherland is not yet considered abandoned, and the more the enemies of truth bear down, the more you should recover your spirits so that you struggle against them to the best of your abilities. Indeed, you should not consider where you could be safest, but where you could be most useful or [work] with greater fruit for the Church of God.’⁴³ Grim may have obtained his position as a chaplain to English mercenaries in the Republic’s employ due to the intercession of Ames’s patron, Sir Horace Vere, the most influential of the English army officers serving the Republic.⁴⁴ When and where Grim was ordained, however, is unclear. Much like Grim’s disputation, his new post was a product of a shared Anglo-Dutch-German Reformed domain. If Grim chose Pope Joan to fight the ‘enemies of truth’, as Ames advised, and to give voice to the sufferings of war, he also used her, and history more generally, to paper over tensions within the Reformed position.

Pope Joan Meets a Biconfessional Town (1630-1639)

Having thus set the scene and introduced the disputants, we should now turn to the debate itself. Reformed preachers saw Dutch military resurgence as an opportunity for conversion. Ministers arriving at Den Bosch in 1630, for instance, challenged the Catholic theologians of the University of Leuven to a series of disputations.⁴⁵ It seems similar confidence prompted the pope Joan debate. In a letter, dated 8 December 1631, to the Leiden theologian André Rivet, himself a skilled controversialist, Grim explained that he had been approached by his Rees colleagues following an earlier disputation:

three surviving copies are kept in English libraries. In addition to Prideaux’s copy, a second copy survives in the Bodleian Library (II 54(2) Jur.). A third copy is included in the Boswell Papers in the British Library: London, British Library (hereafter BL), Add. 6394, fols. 40ff. The Bodleian also possesses the only surviving copy of Grim’s 1626 Franeker oration (8° G 134 Th. (1)).

⁴² *Novi honores viri literata pietate eximii*, included only in the Bodleian copy. The friends were Johannes Brünger from Bielefeld, Michael Mylius from Elbing, Hiobo Tretero from Pomerania, and Georgius Giese from Stettin (Szczecin). Of these I have only been able to trace Mylius, a later rector of the Elbing gymnasium, and Giese, who defended a physics dissertation in his hometown in 1625. See the PPN/Identifikationsnummers 005884217 and 004606728 in *Das Verzeichnis der im deutschen Sprachraum erschienenen Drucke des 17. Jahrhunderts*, www.vd17.de (Accessed on 17 March 2018). Curiously, none of them seems to have matriculated at Leiden or Franeker.

⁴³ BL, Add. 6394, fol. 39r: ‘Hoc tamen censes, patriam tuam nondum habendam pro derelicta: Et quo magis premitur ab hostibus veritatis, eo magis erigendum tibi animum, ut pro virili contra nitaris. Non adeo spectandum est tibi, ubi tutissime possis esse, quam ubi utilissime, vel cum fructu maiore Ecclesiae Dei.’ The letter is dated Franeker, 27 October 1629. Grim, *Pauselicke heiligkeit*, 1, 12, once refers to Bentheim as his ‘Vaderlandt’, but the concept was malleable.

⁴⁴ On Vere, see Trim, ‘Vere, Horace’.

⁴⁵ Leuven, Universiteitsarchief, Oude Universiteit G, ms A43, Johannes van Asseldonck to the Dean of the Theology Faculty, Brussels, 27 May 1630, reporting about a letter (‘litteras’) addressed to the faculty, ‘per ministros aliquot haereticos Silvaeducis per totam Civitatem affixas, et per omnes vicinas Provincias divulgatas’.

Some months ago, in Rees during disputations [*sermones*] between men of our and the papal religion on the two or three papists thundering on the Roman seat at the same time [i.e., the Great Schism], which the papists constantly denied, they came to the history of the popess. Although [the papists] called it a fable, an elder of the Reformed Church of the city who was present, perceived that it could be demonstrated out of the papist authors themselves, and to that end he offered the Nuremberg Chronicle by Hartmann Schedel to the priest of the same city.⁴⁶

The priest, who can only have been Stalenus, then declared the chronicle ‘neither authentic nor worthy of faith’ and ministers from both Rees and Wesel turned to Grim to take him on.⁴⁷ Possibly they were inspired by Grim’s impressive academic credentials and contacts. Grim had written to Rivet before on behalf of Wesel’s Reformed clergy, asking him to intercede with Stadtholder Frederick Henry and his wife to make sure that their recently reclaimed churches were not returned to the Catholics.⁴⁸ Certainly, the appeal of Pope Joan’s story was clear to Grim; her existence invalidated the papal succession, and as her ordinations of bishops and priests were also invalid, so were those of *all* subsequent Catholic clergy, Rees’s Catholic priest included.⁴⁹ Perhaps the opportunity to embarrass the Catholic priest with the fact that ‘his Holy Mother the Roman Church had taken on this prostitute as her Holy Father’ proved irresistible as well.⁵⁰

Whatever the precise motivations, Grim had been certain of victory and not just because he was sure of the rightness of his cause. The deck was also firmly stacked in his favour. The disputation took place in front of a notary and perhaps also in the presence of the town magistrates.⁵¹ Stalenus had been set a very narrow question, and a major source of Grim’s frustration (and a sizeable chapter in his eventual book) was the fact that Stalenus, like a clever undergraduate in an exam, had reinterpreted it to his benefit. The question, as Grim had perceived it, had been whether Joan’s existence could be proven from a book ‘so authentic that your pastor (namely Stalenus) nor any other papist is able to deny or say that the same book is not a Roman Catholic book.’⁵² Grim then submitted a selection

46 UBL, BPL 285-II, fol. 74r: ‘Ante menses aliquot Reesae inter sermones nostrae et pontificiae religionis hominum de duobus aut tribus pontificibus simul in sede Romana tonantibus quod constanter pontifici negabant, ad historiam papissae deventum est, quam dum fabulam vocarent, senior reformatae illius urbis Ecclesiae, qui aderat, ex Pontificiis autoribus id se probaturum receperet, et eo fine Chronica Noribergensia H. Schedelii Sacrificulo eiusdem urbis obtulit.’ Grim briefly references this earlier debate, which he describes as common in biconfessional towns: Grim, *Pauselicke heiligheit*, 1, 70.

47 Grim, *Pauselicke heiligheit*, 1, 70: ‘non authentica vel fide digna’.

48 UBL, BPL 285-II, fol. 73r, Grim to Rivet, Wesel, 24 April 1631. Rivet was held in considerable esteem by Frederick Henry, who made him the tutor to his son Willem in 1632: Van der Aa et al., *Biographisch woordenboek*, XVI, 358-359.

49 Grim, *Pauselicke heiligheit*, 1, 17.

50 Grim, *Pauselicke heiligheit*, 1, 69: ‘Ende of hy schoon met al syn Confratres noyt wilden bekennen, dat haer H. Moeder de Roomsche Kercke dese hoer voor haer H. Vader hadde aengenomen.’

51 The presence of a notary is reported by Grim in his letter to Rivet: UBL, BPL 285-II, fol. 74r. Grim’s discussion of the role of magistrates is rather cryptic (see Grim, *Pauselicke heiligheit*, 1, 83-86, 90), but at the very least they confirmed the ‘quaestie offte vraeghe, daer men van disputeren soude’.

52 Grim, *Pauselicke heiligheit*, 1, 84: ‘ALSO Authentyck, dat u Pastoor (naemelick Stalenus) noch eenighe Papen niet en komen wederleggen, noch seggen, dat t’selve Boeck geen Rooms-Catholyck Boeck en is.’ Grim’s frustration is apparent from his letter to Rivet, where he returns to the question again at the end: UBL, BPL 285-II, fol. 75v.

of ‘authentic’ works discussing Joan to the town council for scrutiny.⁵³ Given that these works were all pre-Reformation, and hence considered Roman Catholic by both sides, Grim had every reason to feel confident.

The disputation took place in the deanery, Stalenus’s residence, and lasted from nine or half past nine in the morning until after lunch time.⁵⁴ Although only three or four representatives from both sides were meant to be present, many other ‘papists’ had shown up and interrupted the debate with ‘many unsuitable and strange words’.⁵⁵ Grim got particularly flustered by one such interruption. When he declared that he had not made Pope Joan up but had found her in the works of ‘many grand papists’, one Catholic in the audience interjected that even the Bible contained mistakes: ‘Stalenus did not even discipline him.’⁵⁶ Interruptions like these sent the debate in strange directions, one tangent even causing the priest to ask the minister whether he ate *blutwurst*.⁵⁷

Towards the end of this marathon disputation which covered biblical exegesis, papal authority, and image worship, order finally emerged. Stalenus’s strategy or ‘hiding place’ (‘sluiphoeck’, as Grim called it) became clearer.⁵⁸ The original question had read ‘authentic’ and ‘Catholic’ together, the books testifying to Joan’s existence being *authentically* (or truly) Catholic. ‘Who does not see the difference between authentic on its own and so authentic that no papist could deny that the books out of which one wanted to prove the history of the popess are Catholic books?’ Grim asked rhetorically.⁵⁹ Stalenus’s escape, as Grim’s frustrated comment implies, was to divorce the authentic from the Catholic.

By defining authentic as ‘credible’ and ‘possessing authority’, the priest was able to deny the authenticity of the late medieval authors reporting Joan’s tale while downplaying or glossing over their Catholicism. No author mentioned the story during the first four centuries after 855, the year Joan reputedly died so horribly. Those who recounted the tale later, like Martinus Polonus, were not eyewitnesses and generally appended some sort of disclaimer or health warning. What is more, Stalenus set out this argument not just in person but in a short pamphlet that he had secretly been printed beforehand. In a final *coup de théâtre* he took out this pamphlet but would not give it to Grim. Instead, he left the house to read it out loud to an audience that had gathered outside.⁶⁰

Only two copies of *Eene corte doch grondlicke resolutie* (A Short though Thorough Resolution) survive.⁶¹ The work’s brevity – a mere twenty-one pages or (as both Grim and

53 Grim, *Pauselicke heiligheit*, 1, 90.

54 Grim, *Pauselicke heiligheit*, 1, 90.

55 Grim, *Pauselicke heiligheit*, 1, 92: ‘met veel ongerymde ende vreemde woorden’.

56 Grim, *Pauselicke heiligheit*, 1, 93: ‘Stalenus bestraefte hem niet eens.’

57 Grim, *Pauselicke heiligheit*, 1, 70[=100], in contravention of the prohibition laid out in Acts 15:29.

58 Grim, *Pauselicke heiligheit*, 1, 84.

59 Grim, *Pauselicke heiligheit*, 1, 84–85: ‘Wie en siet niet, datter onderscheyt is, onder Authentyck Alleen, ende so Authentyck, dat geen Papen konnen seggen, dat de Boecken, daer men de Historie van de Pausin uyt wilde bewysen, geen Rooms Catholycke Boecken zyn.’

60 Grim, *Pauselicke heiligheit*, 1, 110.

61 Stalenus, *Een corte doch grondlicke resolutie*. The copies are in Amsterdam, Universiteitsbibliotheek, Obr. 1487, and Brussels, Koninklijke Bibliotheek/Bibliothèque royale, II 25997A.

Stalenus pointed out) three sheets of paper – may help account for the poor survival rate.⁶² Aside from its rarity, another reason why the pamphlet has never before been connected to Grim is that it mentions neither him nor the circumstances of its publication. Instead, much to Grim's scorn and chagrin, Stalenus pretended to be invited by both Catholics and the 'so-called Reformed' to give his verdict on the Pope Joan story.⁶³ A greater insult still than Grim's omission was the motto chosen: 'He that is hasty to give credit, is light of heart, and shall be lessened' (Sirach 19:4).⁶⁴ Only two aspects of the text hint at the circumstances in which it was written: a concluding promise of a lengthier exposition 'if anyone's reply gives me the occasion' (a gauntlet that Grim would later pick up) and the place of sale listed on the title page.⁶⁵ The work was listed as for sale 'in the hall underneath Rees town hall', a possibly provocative and certainly convenient location.⁶⁶ Those who heard Stalenus's oration would have been able to pick up a printed copy nearby afterwards.

Victors do not write lengthy vindications. It was clear that Grim had been defeated by a local parish priest whose education had not taken him further from home than the University of Cologne. The secret publication still rankled with Grim when he wrote to Rivet: 'But already before our meeting the priest had printed a certain response (which the meeting having ended he finally revealed) [...] which we have taken upon ourselves and have already begun to refute.'⁶⁷ With his letter, Grim included a list of almost ninety witnesses to Pope Joan's existence which he had already compiled, marking with an asterisk the texts he hoped Rivet and his colleagues would obtain for him.⁶⁸ On 18 October 1632, roughly a year after the original disputation, Grim was only able to provide a rough sketch of his lesson plans during his inaugural oration as teacher of philosophy at the Wesel gymnasium, because he had been so occupied with pope Joan: 'I am called away by the popess detested by the papists who is now puffing under the press.'⁶⁹ Stalenus, meanwhile, applied the same successful strategy of responding in print in subsequent disputes with Reformed ministers.⁷⁰

⁶² Grim, *Pauselicke heiligheit*, 1, 110. Stalenus's protestation to the Rees magistrates is excerpted in Grim, *Cort verhael*, 19.

⁶³ Stalenus, *Een corte doch grondlicke resolutie*, 1.

⁶⁴ Stalenus, *Een corte doch grondlicke resolutie*, title page. Translation taken from the Douai-Rheims Bible. Note also the concluding line on 21: 'fallitur et fallit vulgi qui pendet ab ore.'

⁶⁵ Stalenus, *Een corte doch grondlicke resolutie*, 21: 'als my door yemants antwoort occasie sal gegeven worden.'

⁶⁶ Stalenus, *Een corte doch grondlicke resolutie*, title page: 'Men vindtse te koop tot Rees inde Hal onder het Raethuys.' The town hall faced the small Reformed Church across the market square. It was overshadowed by the confiscated Catholic church from behind. The deanery was presumably close by. The Städtisches Koenraad Bosman Museum in Rees contains a fascinating model of the city as it was in 1650.

⁶⁷ UBL, BPL 285-II, fol. 74r: 'Sed iam ante conventus nostrorum typis vulgarat (quem conventu finiti demum producebat) sacrificulus Responsum quoddam [...] quod nos refutandum recepimus et iam cepimus.'

⁶⁸ UBL, BPL 285-II, fol. 74r. Rivet's reply has not survived, but it evidently consisted only of some words of advice and, possibly, the sending of an (unidentified) book for which Grim had to pay: UBL, BPL 285-II, fol. 75r, Grim to Rivet, Wesel, 1 January 1632.

⁶⁹ Grim, *Oratio inauguralis*, sig. B2v-B3r: 'Neque usque adeo praemeditatus (avocor scilicet ab invisā illa Papistis Papissa nunc sub praelo anhelanti)'. For the date of the oration, see *Festschrift zur Feier*, 86. The only surviving copy of this oration is at UBL, Thysia 1920, as part of the Bibliotheca Thysiana collection.

⁷⁰ See e.g. Stalenus, *Sol eucharisticus*, and Stalenus, *Apologeticus pro litanis Sanctorum*. For a longer list (from which *Een corte doch grondlicke resolutie* is absent): Scholten, 'Beiträge zu den Kämpfen', 332-334.

As it happened, Grim's response only appeared in the spring of 1635.⁷¹ In a preface, Grim told his Catholic readers that he originally intended to refute only the 'papist of Rees' (following Stalenus in refusing to mention his opponent by name) but then decided to refute all other papists, to avoid him returning with the arguments of his predecessors.⁷² The title page similarly placed a 'certain papist in Rees' at the end of a lengthy list of more illustrious names, including Panvinio, and the famous cardinals Robert Bellarmine and Cesare Baronio.⁷³ Grim then returned to Rees seeking a rematch and printed a *Cort verhael* (Short Account) of the proceedings that was prefixed or appended to copies of his original treatise.⁷⁴ In a final imitation of the priest's earlier actions, Grim had given Stalenus no advance warning.⁷⁵

Unsurprisingly, Stalenus refused to engage, despite Grim pressing him for two days, on 7 and 8 June 1635.⁷⁶ The priest's agreement to pay half of Grim's travel expenses probably reveals more about the precarious state of Catholicism in the occupied town, but the minister triumphantly took it as an admission of defeat.⁷⁷ Grim put further pressure on Stalenus to debate him by setting out his arguments in a (public) supplication to the magistracy, but to no avail.⁷⁸ However, while Grim was packing his bags and getting ready to leave, 'the papists started to circulate the rumour that their pastor Stalenus had maintained his victory and that I was made to go for that reason' – a situation Grim most certainly could not abide.⁷⁹ He deposited the chronicles that he had collected at the town hall for inspection by the Catholic population and publicly challenged any Catholic contestant to a disputation, their champion 'not daring to show himself in the open'.⁸⁰

Grim's challenge, posted and (according to Stalenus) 'unabashedly proclaimed' at several places in the city, received a public response from the priest, who protested that he could not be expected to read a book so long in the making in a mere two days.⁸¹ The result was a public *written* back and forth that lasted until 13 June, in which Stalenus promised that *his* reply in print would not take four and a half years to arrive.⁸² All of these placards were excerpted in full in Grim's *Cort verhael*, heavily annotated in the margins with variously clarifying, sarcastic, and defensive comments. The minister protested, for instance, that refuting Stalenus had not been a full-time occupation. Tending to a flock of

71 Grim, *Pauselicke heiligheit*, I, sig.)(3v; and II, sig. sig.)(3v. The preface of volume I is dated Wesel, 20 April 1635, that of volume 2 Wesel, 22 April 1635.

72 Grim, *Pauselicke heiligheit*, I, sig.)(2r: 'Paepen tot Rees'.

73 Grim, *Pauselicke heiligheit*, I, title page: 'Seker Paepe tot Rees'.

74 Grim, *Cort verhael*. I have not seen a single copy of this pamphlet separately; but it is not included in all copies of the *Pauselicke heiligheit*.

75 Grim, *Cort verhael*, 3.

76 Grim, *Cort verhael*, 5.

77 Grim, *Cort verhael*, 4. Grim himself alludes to the intercession of the magistracy.

78 Grim, *Cort verhael*, 5-9.

79 Grim, *Cort verhael*, 10.

80 Grim, *Cort verhael*, 11: 'Den pape Stalenus hier tot Rees so verre gebraght hebbende dat hy niet derf voor den dagh openbaerlick komen.'

81 Grim, *Cort verhael*, 11-12: 'glorieuselick uytgeroepen'. Stalenus claimed he could barely get through a quarter of the book in that time.

82 Grim, *Cort verhael*, 19.

scattered English mercenaries and teaching at the Wesel *gymnasium* were time-consuming activities.⁸³

Grim evidently wanted to have the last word, but he was not to have it. His early death in September 1636 allowed Stalenus to proverbially dance on his grave. In 1639, the priest published his reply to the ‘trifles and calumnies of a certain Calvinist, Egbert Grim’.⁸⁴ In a prefatory letter addressed to the ‘sane reader’, the priest likened Grim to the jackdaw in Aesop’s *Fables* which dressed itself in the feathers of other (Protestant) birds. For a time after Grim had been summoned by ‘the Just Judge’, Stalenus saw no need to reply, but he became fearful that others might take up his cause.⁸⁵ No such challenger appeared.

The Popular Dimensions of Scholarly Invectives

The personal and often petty nature of the dispute between Grim and Stalenus should not obscure its wider significance. In fact, this polemic was vicious precisely *because* more than personal reputation alone was at stake. Both Grim and Stalenus were spokesmen for their respective sides. It was the possibility of losing face in front of one’s flock and peers that animated both men, as Grim’s horror and actions when Catholics again claimed victory indicate. Before we can explore the blows the two men landed, however, we must first explore the ways in which this seemingly scholarly disputation was a vehicle for popular confessional grievances and identities, beginning with the vernacular language in which the debate was for the most part conducted.

The chosen vernacular in fact tells us more than we might expect. Dutch was spoken alongside German in most of the Duchy of Cleves until the very end of the eighteenth century at least. In fact, the debating language itself carried covert religious undertones. Only in larger cities such as Wesel and Duisburg had High German been completely victorious, in no small part because of the success of the Reformation there. If German was the language of Protestantism, Dutch continued as the Catholic *Kirchensprache*.⁸⁶

Given this religious-linguistic divide and the fact that it was Stalenus who first attempted to reach a wider audience in print, it might surprise us that it was Grim who was keen to continue the debate in the vernacular. During their abortive exchange of 1635, he attempted (but failed) to extort a promise from Stalenus to publish his response in ‘Nederduits’. His own treatise had been printed with ‘Latin letters’ because ‘Dutch’ (gothic?) ones had been lacking in Wesel: ‘If he seeks the education of the common man in these parts, which we both claim to do, he could do likewise.’⁸⁷ Stalenus, therefore, could not use the absence of the correct type as his excuse. Grim feared the loss of his intended lay audience if the debate

83 Grim, *Cort verhael*, 19.

84 Stalenus, *Papissa monstrosa*.

85 Stalenus, *Papissa monstrosa*, sig. *5r-v: ‘a Iusto Iudice’.

86 See esp. Cornelissen, ‘Beide taalen kennende’, and the other contributions in the volume *Niederländisch am Niederrhein*.

87 Grim, *Cort verhael*, 30: ‘So hy soeckt d’onderrichtinge des gemeinen mans in dese landen, waervoor wy ons beide uytgeven, can hy ooc so doen.’

shifted into Latin. Even so, Stalenus's final Latin response may still have been aimed in part at his own flock: impressing them with his erudition without bothering them with the actual arguments and occluding any potential Protestant reply. The priest's first pamphlet had already been peppered with Latin vocabulary and quotations that underpinned its didactic tone and highlighted the priest's role as a knowledgeable teacher and arbiter for his flock. Stalenus, for instance, began by explaining the 'scholarly' concept of *status quaestionis*.⁸⁸

The fact that the debate was conducted in the vernacular, and in front of a lay audience, also suggests that a wider audience was familiar with the Pope Joan story. In the preface of his 1631 pamphlet, Stalenus acknowledged that 'many, especially in our Fatherland, proclaim, say and believe that at a certain time a woman had been pope' until her gender was exposed.⁸⁹ Whether Pope Joan was unusually popular in the Low Countries – the fatherland Stalenus most likely had in mind – is unclear.⁹⁰ Her story certainly circulated widely in Dutch vernacular print but these works had more often been translated from the French. Jean de Marconville's *De la bonté et mauvaistié des femmes* appeared in Antwerp in 1577 in Dutch translation. It decided that women of sufficient intelligence existed to fool men in the way Pope Joan had.⁹¹ After an edition of Florimond de Raemond's *L'Anti-papesse* appeared in Cambrai in 1613, a Dutch translation was published in Antwerp the following year.⁹² The most suggestive evidence of widespread familiarity with the Pope Joan myth comes from an arrest for disturbing the peace in Bruges in February 1591, when a group of drunken revellers had regaled each other with stories of the scurrilous behaviour of various popes, including Joan.⁹³

While these Bruges merry-makers had used Joan and papal malfeasance simply to express their resentment at the imminent onset of Lent, in Rees the debate over her existence was employed to give voice to confessional grievances accumulated over decades of religious conflict. Although he did not experience it first-hand, Grim gave voice to the suffering of Wesel's Protestant majority under Catholic rule. For instance, when Stalenus protested that Grim's public placards challenging him to a rematch were against common custom, Grim responded that the actions of Wesel's Catholics, in particular their occupation of its churches, had been as well.⁹⁴ When Stalenus pleaded for the placards to be taken down, Grim pointed out that Wesel's former Catholic rulers did not take down those put up by an (unidentified) abbot.⁹⁵

The debate, of course, took place on an uneven playing field. Grim both revelled in that fact and took advantage of it, charging the priest with cowardice. If a papist had

⁸⁸ Stalenus, *Een corte doch grondlicke resolutie*, 2: 't'welck de geleerden noemen *statum quaestionis*.'

⁸⁹ Stalenus, *Een corte doch grondlicke resolutie*, 1: 'Hoe dat voornamentlick in ons vaderlandt van velen wort wtgeroepen gheseyt ende daervoor gehouden dat op eenen tijt een Paus soude sijn geweest van geslacht een vrouwe.'

⁹⁰ Stalenus would later dedicate works to prominent Catholics in the Southern Netherlands: e.g. Stalenus, *Catechismus*.

⁹¹ Marconville, *De vrouwen lof ende lasteringe*, 41-44, 165-167.

⁹² Raemond, *L'Anti-papesse*; Raemond, *De fabel van Jeanne*.

⁹³ Roelens, 'Komt een paus bij Sint-Pieter'.

⁹⁴ Grim, *Cort verhael*, 20.

⁹⁵ Grim, *Cort verhael*, 16: 'Wat soude hy my niet gedaen hebben, daer hy meester was?'

presented himself in majority-Protestant Wesel for a disputation and Grim refused to engage, 'its papists would no doubt believe that they had won'.⁹⁶ Yet, he also insinuated that if Stalenus had not been kept in check, the priest would have inflicted horrible punishments. 'What,' he asked rhetorically and ominously, 'would [Stalenus] have done to me if he had been in charge?'⁹⁷ Catholics, as it were, will be Catholics. He dismissed Stalenus's calls for restraint, claiming that Protestants 'through God's grace possessed so much discretion that we do not act as the papists did, murdering their very own King of France [Henri IV], the father of the current king' – a marginal note further pointed to the Gunpowder Plot.⁹⁸

At the same time, by identifying the restrictions placed on Stalenus and calling out his 'cowardice', Grim inadvertently shows us how important Stalenus and his victories were for the town's Catholic population. Stalenus was pointedly reminded of the time when he was hauled before Rees's military governor after popular celebrations of one of the priest's 'decorated victories' had got rather out of hand.⁹⁹ The continued closure of Stalenus's church could have made print a substitute for the pulpit, yet the medium cannot have been free from restrictions.¹⁰⁰

On a certain level, then, the public debate provided a forum or outlet for communal tensions and was not about pope Joan at all. Nevertheless, the arguments surrounding Pope Joan played directly into the confessional divide. Her account allowed Protestants (not just Grim) to identify a particular form of Catholic violence. To that classic distinction, once put forth by Natalie Zemon Davis, that where Protestants destroyed polluting idolatrous objects, Catholics destroyed heretical idolaters as sources of pollution, we may add that Catholics, throughout the pope Joan debate, were cast as the destroyers of books.¹⁰¹ As other Protestants had done before him, Grim denounced Catholic censorship and 'book defiling' ('boeckschenderie') which he tied to other forms of Catholic violence.¹⁰² He recounted how Wesel's Dominicans refused to give him access to a chronicle alleged to contain the popess's story – which did not stop him from counting the unseen manuscript as one of his witnesses from 'the Netherlands'.¹⁰³ It was to remedy such despoiling that Grim surrounded his text with some of the most extensive notes and references to

96 Grim, *Cort verhael*, 9: 'Soo my het gebeurde, dat een Pape tot Wesel quam, ende soo sich tegen my presenteerde als ick hier tot Rees tegen den vorsz. Paepe doe, ende ick daer niet aen wilde; ick twijffle niet off de Papisten souden meynen, dat sy gewonnen hadden.'

97 Grim, *Cort verhael*, 16: 'Wat soude hy my niet gedaen hebben, daer hy meester was?'

98 Grim, *Cort verhael*, 17: 'Want wy hebben door Goods genade soo veele discretie dat wy het niet maecken als de Papisten, die haeren eygenen Coningh van Vrancrijcke, Vader van desen tegenwoordigen Coningh, vermoort hebben.'

99 Grim, *Cort verhael*, 13: 'Als syn volckien syn versierde overwinningen van een ander, die hem wel bekend is, hadde uytgespreyt.'

100 On Stalenus's belief in print as a substitute for 'levendige stemmen', see Stalenus, *Catechismus*, sig. .: 4v.

101 Davis, 'The Rites of Violence', 174. Interestingly, Grim devotes most of the second volume to discussing the popess's 'reliquien', relishing the irony of Catholics destroying such relics.

102 Grim, *Cort verhael*, 28, 29: 'de oude boeckschendende manieren der Papisten'; Grim, *Pauselicke Heiligheit*, 1, sig.)(2v; Cooke, *Pope Ioane*, 42.

103 Grim, *Pauselicke Heiligheit*, 1, 278. Grim explained that he listed the Wesel witness there because he could not find a 'more suitable location' ('bequaemer plaetse') for it.

appear before the famous *Dictionnaire historique et critique* (1697) of Pierre Bayle.¹⁰⁴ Pope Joan, however, did not only enable Protestant accusations, she gave expression to common Catholic depictions of Protestantism as well. In his subsequent Latin treatise, Stalenus used the widespread diversity of opinion among medieval chroniclers about the popess's origins, period, and even name to demonstrate that there could be no truth outside the Catholic Church.¹⁰⁵

Pointing to the wider implications of the Pope Joan debate could also prove effective. Stalenus sought to apply his opponent's arguments elsewhere. In his standard measured tone, the priest explained that if the myth of Pope Joan, which had gone unreported for centuries after her death, deserved credence, then the story that John Calvin had been branded for the crime of sodomy, which had started to circulate only twelve years after the Reformer's death, did as well.¹⁰⁶ The priest also charged Protestants with hypocrisy: they were more reluctant to accept Rome as the site of St Peter's death than they were to accept it as Joan's, despite a smaller stretch of time separating the Church Fathers from the Apostle than Joan from her medieval chroniclers.¹⁰⁷ As already noted, Grim eagerly elucidated the implications of Joan's existence for Stalenus himself. Joan's accession to the Holy See invalidated the ordination of all later Catholic clergy, Stalenus foremost among them.¹⁰⁸ The argument that Stalenus's ordination had been invalid seemed to have seeped into later confessional polemics in which the priest was engaged.¹⁰⁹ Joan, then, also enabled the hurling of insults, emanating from and defined by the terms of the debate over her existence.

As a vehicle for the expression of confessional identities, Pope Joan also seems to have strangely foreshadowed the role the Virgin Mary would later come to play in the region. The affinity between the two figures has long been recognised. For instance, the statue of the popess and child that allegedly marked the site of their death (one of Joan's principal 'relics', once seen by Luther) probably represented the Virgin and Child.¹¹⁰ In the early 1640s, Stalenus became the promotor of the cult that grew up around a miracle-working print of the Virgin Mary as *Consolatrix afflictorum* (Comforter of the Afflicted) in the nearby village of Kevelaer, which developed into a hallmark of Catholic identity, both locally and for Netherlandish Catholics. By the nineteenth century, the site drew more than 100,000 pilgrims annually. Much like the conflict surrounding Pope Joan, this Marian cult was the product of the traumas of war – most of Kevelaer's population had

104 Grafton, *The Footnote*, ch. 7. Bayle cited Grim through Desmarets without apparently reading him: Bayle, *Dictionnaire historique et critique*, II, 492.

105 Stalenus's *Papissa monstrosa* was organised by *quaestiones* followed by a numbered list of the possible answers. See for example the six answers under *quaestio IV* for her name, and the nine options under *quaestio X* for the date of her election to the papacy: Stalenus, *Papissa monstrosa*, 5-6, 10-11.

106 Stalenus, *Een corte doch grondlicke resolutie*, 10-11.

107 Stalenus, *Een corte doch grondlicke resolutie*, 19-20. Grim refuted these and other charges by Stalenus in the second volume of his *opus*.

108 Grim, *Pauselicke Heiligheit*, ch. 1.

109 See the reference to Stalenus's ordination, in Stalenus, *Sol eucharisticus*, sig. A2v, where the priest questions why his opponent Johannes Wilhelmi called him 'eenen vermeenden Pastoor'.

110 Boureau, *The Myth of Pope Joan*, 47.

been killed by rampaging Croatian mercenaries in 1635.¹¹¹ In 1642, Stalenus led the first pilgrimage to the small chapel built to mark the Virgin's appearance and in 1649, he gave the sermon when its larger replacement was consecrated.¹¹² In 1658, he would leave Rees for Kevelaer to enter the local Oratory, where he died in 1681.¹¹³ That the assailant of the popess was transformed into a defender of the Virgin is one of the unacknowledged ironies of this history.

Pope Joan's Challenge to Catholics

The debate between Grim and Stalenus thus gave expression to local confessional grievances which extended well beyond the issue at hand. Widespread familiarity with Pope Joan and the use of the vernacular helped this polemic to transcend the confines of scholarly polemic. Each side used the popess to expose the other's true nature: Catholics stood accused of duplicity and violence, Protestants of faithlessness and hypocrisy. As representatives of their factions, rival communities had a vested stake in the two men's victory or defeat. On one level, then, the debate offers us nothing more than a powerful but local story, which when read closely teaches us about the consequences and experiences of war and foreign occupation. On another level – the realm of ideas, exemplified by the *arguments* both sides hurled at each other – it reveals a great deal about the difficulties both confessions faced in the early seventeenth century.

We might suppose that, having discredited the story of Pope Joan (to their own satisfaction at least), Catholics were quite comfortable discussing her. Joan's problematic tenure could simply be dismissed as false, whereas it could prove more difficult to dispense with the dubious moral behaviour of some of her male counterparts. Grim's *Pauselicke Heiligkeit* unsurprisingly (given the book's title) indulges the reader with a wide range of anecdotes of papal malfeasance, ranging from Benedict XII's lecherous advances towards Petrarch's sister to Julius II's well-known bellicosity.¹¹⁴ Joan's fictitiousness, then, might make her a more attractive subject of debate.

There is some evidence to support such a hypothesis. An anonymous 1588 pamphlet, which debunked the myth of Pope Joan and traced its origins to the 'pornocracy' or rule of harlots of the tenth century, alleged that the tale distracted from real papal debauchery: the popes 'more easily bear a false and fictitious disgrace than either the true origin of the story or other histories, which lay bare their abominations'.¹¹⁵ Predating David Blondel's *Familier esclaircissement* by more than half a century, this short treatise – which like those by Grim and Stalenus has never been studied – should be seen as the first Protestant demolition of

111 Dyckmans, *Kevelaer*, 7-8; *Kevelaer: 350 Jahre Wallfahrt ohne Grenzen*, 24-25.

112 Stalenus, *Concio de consecratione*.

113 Sluijter, *Gelehrte Männer aus Rees*, 8-11; Frijhoff, 'The Oratory in the Seventeenth-Century Low Countries'. A Kevelaer street name still remembers Stalenus's role. Johannes-Stalenus-Platz comes out on Kapellenplatz.

114 Grim, *Pauselicke Heiligkeit*, 1, 8-10.

115 *Simplex narratio*, sig. A4r: 'Facilius ferunt fictum fabulosum opprobrium, quam veram fabulae vel originem vel alias historias, abominaciones ipsorum detegentes.'

the Pope Joan myth. The *Simplex narratio* (A Simple Story) seems to be structured and written in such a way as to lull possible Catholic readers into a false sense of security. It begins by calmly disproving the popess's existence, before charting centuries of papal misdeeds with Celestine V's renunciation of the papacy as the sole positive exception.¹¹⁶

Joan's relative appeal notwithstanding, her story did present Catholics with two problems. The first, readily acknowledged by Stalenus, was the difficulty presented by the Latin proverb *audacter calumniare, semper aliquid haeret* (slander without fear, something always sticks) or as the priest translated it, 'even if it is not true, something will stick'.¹¹⁷ The refutation of an untruth still perpetuated it. The second and more serious problem is contained in Grim's argument, although he was an imperfect messenger for it. The real challenge posed by Pope Joan did not lie in the story itself but in the fact that the sceptical arguments used to demolish it were *not* applied to other aspects of the Catholic past. In his preface, Grim told his Catholic readers that there was more evidence for the existence of Pope Joan than for many saints.¹¹⁸

Catholics were aware of the need for consistency, though they rarely applied it in practice. For instance, when the Catholic church historian Cesare Baronio came to discuss Pope Joan in his twelve-volume *Annales ecclesiastici* (1588-1607), he referenced other tales which he had debunked – the collapse of the Roman Temple of Peace at Christ's birth, Gregory the Great's prayer for the soul of the Roman emperor Trajan – but he overlooked the many instances when scepticism did not suit him.¹¹⁹ For both Baronio and Stalenus, untruths such as the Joan story started small (like a snowball in Stalenus's metaphor) but grew in size unless they were checked.¹²⁰ For this reason, Stalenus argued that 'authentic historians are those who do not write down popular sayings but who employ reasons and certain proof to distinguish truth from falsehood'.¹²¹ Having lived centuries after Joan's alleged papacy, Stalenus denied her chroniclers any credibility. Where Baronio had labelled the medieval chronicler Sigebert of Gembloux (whom he wrongly believed to have reported the story) a schismatic, Stalenus barely registered the religious affiliation of the chroniclers at all.¹²² One would not know from the priest that Bartolomeo Platina (1421-1481) had been a papal secretary, while Polonus's *professione monachus* is mentioned only once in passing and left untranslated.¹²³ In other words, Stalenus's strategy of dealing with this problem was to sidestep it.

The debate surrounding Pope Joan, in sum, reveals the difficulties that Catholics faced when they defended 'their' medieval past. Protestants could resort to medieval 'popish' authors 'who fight for us against their little brothers of our own time'.¹²⁴ Grim called on

116 *Simplex narratio*, sig. B4v.

117 Stalenus, *Een corte doch grondtlicke resolutie*, 4: 'Al isset niet waer daer blijft wat aen.'

118 Grim, *Pauselicke Heiligheit*, 1, 1, sig. ***r.

119 Baronio, *Annales ecclesiastici*, x, 107.

120 Baronio, *Annales ecclesiastici*, x, 107; Stalenus, *Een corte doch grondtlicke resolutie*, 4.

121 Stalenus, *Een corte doch grondtlicke resolutie*, 6: 'Authentijcke historischrijvers sijn die welke niet uit een seggen der menschen en schrijven maer die met redenen en vast bewijs schrijven onderscheydende de waarheyt van valscheyt.'

122 Baronio, *Annales ecclesiastici*, x, 107.

123 Stalenus, *Een corte doch grondtlicke resolutie*, 16.

124 Grim, *Pauselicke Heiligheit*, 1, 142: 'Die voor ons tegen haer broertjes van desen tydt vechten.'

Stalenus to defend his medieval ‘little brothers’ and pointed out that cardinals Robert Bellarmine and Cesare Baronio elsewhere praised the chroniclers they had denounced for reporting on Pope Joan.¹²⁵ Grim’s entire strategy was thus built on using ‘his enemy’s sword’ against his enemy’s friends – medieval Catholic authors against contemporary ones: ‘Papists [...] could testify against Stalenus and other papists, who are their friends, but not against us, their enemies.’¹²⁶ In vain, Grim pushed Stalenus to ‘denigrate and fight your little brothers: we want to watch who wins’.¹²⁷ Beyond ignoring the supposed Catholicity of the chroniclers, Catholics could either reject medieval chroniclers as heretics, as Baronio did to Sigebert of Gembloux, or reject manuscript readings as corrupt, leading to further Protestant accusations of ‘book defiling’. Although Stalenus (rightfully) pointed out that earlier versions of Sigebert’s chronicle did not contain the story, neither method could be used with any consistency.¹²⁸

Pope Joan’s early modern afterlife also teaches us something neither side in the debate was willing to concede: that the late medieval church which could tolerate rumours of her existence, even use them as a spur to reform, was very different from the Tridentine reincarnation which replaced it, partly because the papacy took on a significance it had not previously possessed. Study of the Pope Joan’s early modern afterlife, then, can shed light on the transformation Roman Catholicism underwent during the period, and the textual practices that helped to construct the new image of an unchanging Church.

Pope Joan: A Protestant Rallying Cry

If the arguments surrounding Pope Joan throw light on the challenges faced by the Catholic Church and Catholic conceptions of tradition and history, they illuminate our understanding of the problems faced by Reformed Churches of England and the Dutch Republic as well. Throughout the 1610s and 1620s, Netherlandish Catholics had watched with glee as the Arminian Controversy engulfed the Dutch Reformed Church. The Antwerp canon Aubertus Miraeus, for instance, compared the ‘barbarism’ committed by the Gomarists (Calvinists) against the Arminians, ‘their erstwhile allies and fellow soldiers’, to that of the Turks.¹²⁹ Stalenus did not allude to the Arminian controversy in his conflict with Grim, perhaps because it might draw attention to dissension within Catholic ranks. Yet, in his public disputation with other Reformed ministers, the priest gladly pointed out that Scriptural interpretation had led to doctrinal disputes between Lutherans, Calvinists, Mennonites, and Arminians.¹³⁰ He particularly relished the charge from Arminians, ‘your

125 Grim, *Pauselicke Heiligheit*, 1, 105: ‘Broertjes’; and 1, 108.

126 Grim, *Pauselicke Heiligheit*, 1, 105: ‘Papisten [...] kunnen wel tegens Stalenum ende Papisten haere vrienden, maer niet tegen ons, haere vianden, getuigen.’

127 Grim, *Cort verhael*, 31: ‘Begint eens u broertjes swart te maecken ende te bevechten, wy willen toesien, wie dat windt.’

128 Stalenus, *Een corte doch grondlicke resolutie*, 13-15.

129 Miraeus, *De bello bohemico Ferdinandi II*, 10: ‘Apud Batavos Gomaristae in Arminianos, suos ante socios ac commilitones, barbarie plusquam Turcica hodieque saeviant.’

130 Stalenus, *Sol eucharisticus*, sig A3r.

own fellow brothers', that Calvinists had transformed God into a devil or a tyrant.¹³¹ Grim could not help but intervene (and in the process, he assumed an intimate familiarity of his nemesis's entire corpus on the part of his own readers). The description of Arminians as 'our fellow brothers' was 'an evil attack by people who, as we saw, did not have the faintest idea as to how to respond in the case of the popess'.¹³²

To explain Grim's determination and obsession with Pope Joan, however, we need to look beyond the Arminian Controversy, and beyond Rees and the humiliation he suffered at Stalenus's hands, in order to consider his tenuous relationship with the Church of England, a church that was experiencing even greater turmoil. Not only was Grim based in one of its remotest outposts, his position as 'pastor of the Church of Christ from Great Britain' which he proudly advertised on the title pages of his books was conditional on the favour of others.¹³³ The English (and Scottish) classis or synod had been set up in 1621, with permission from both James I and the Dutch States-General, 'for the removall of all jealousies of innovation, Separation, faction or schisme' among English and Scottish preachers based in the Republic.¹³⁴ Because these city preachers and army chaplains had their salaries paid either by merchant companies or the Dutch States-General, they existed in a rather liminal state outside the episcopal hierarchy of the Church of England, though this did not prevent Charles and his ambassadors from attempting to press them into conformity.¹³⁵ Identified in one contemporary inventory of English preachers only as 'a Dutchman which speakes English', Grim was one of the 'fringe members' of the classis, appointed by the States-General at its recommendation.¹³⁶ Grim thus owed his position to an organisation whose existence was under threat – in fact, the English ambassador Sir William Boswell would suppress it step by step between 1633 and 1635 – and whose right of ordination had been disputed since at least 1628.¹³⁷

As his lack of sympathy for the Arminian position suggests, Grim had little difficulty navigating the controversies within the Dutch Reformed Church. In 1629, he became the first Leiden theology graduate to sign a profession of orthodoxy, including acceptance of 'the articles previously called into dispute, namely on predestination and allied articles' settled at the Synod of Dort (1618-1619).¹³⁸ The Synod of Dort, which had condemned the Arminians, had demanded such a profession of all 'servants of God'.¹³⁹ Grim's Leiden

131 Stalenus, *Sol eucharisticus*, sig. B1v: 'u eyghene Medebroeders'. Cf. Episcopius, *Apologia pro confessione*, sig. (...)3r: 'Ex Deo Diabolus aut Tyrannus Phalaride quovis immanior efficiatur.'

132 Grim, *Cort verhael*, 22: 'De geheele werltd sal ooc wel sien connen, dat het eene met het ander een valschen aenslagh is van lieden, die tot de saecke van de Pausin, als gesien is, geen raedt noch antwoorde nu wisten.'

133 Grim, *Pauselicke Heiligheit*, title page: 'Pastor van de Kercke Christi uyt Groot Britannien.'

134 See Appendix II in Stearns, *Congregationalism in the Dutch Netherlands*, 83-84. See also De Jong, 'John Forbes'.

135 Stearns, *Congregationalism in the Dutch Netherlands*; Sprunger, *Dutch Puritanism*.

136 Appendix IV, in Stearns, *Congregationalism in the Dutch Netherlands*, 86; Sprunger, *Dutch Puritanism*, 297.

137 Stearns, *Congregationalism in the Dutch Netherlands*, 71, 96; De Jong, 'John Forbes', 107-108; Sprunger, *The Learned Doctor William Ames*, 231.

138 Kist, 'De onderteekening der formulieren'; Leiden, Universiteitsarchief 369bis, fol. 469: 'Articulis antehac in controversiam adductis, scilicet de praedestinatione et connexis.'

139 On the Synod of Dort from an English perspective, see White, *Predestination, Policy, and Polemic*, ch. 9; Milton, *Catholic and Reformed*, 418-425.

disputation, then, did not spark conflict within the Dutch Reformed Church, but Grim, having just returned from his studies in England, had a second constituency in mind. His disputation proved a failed attempt at triangulating a position that pleased audiences within the Dutch and English Churches.

As a student of Ames, Cotton, and Prideaux, Grim would have been aware of the tensions within in the Church of England, and Dutch scholars had, in any case, been monitoring the situation in England closely. As early as 1624, Willem Thilenus (who had studied at an informal Puritan school, as Grim would later with Cotton) accepted the role of minister of the Dutch Church in London on the condition that he would be allowed to resign if ‘the general state of affairs in England’ altered radically.¹⁴⁰ On 20 June 1629, the Dutch humanist Gerardus Vossius, in Leiden, reported to no less a figure than Archbishop Laud the fears ‘of those who would appear to know British matters well’ that a schism on the issue of predestination ‘and allied dogmas’ might be imminent.¹⁴¹

Given his solemn subscription to the articles of the Synod of Dort, it was not Grim’s views of predestination that caused a storm but his defence of the Church’s existing liturgy. Seeking to reconcile and justify differences in rituals between England and the Dutch Republic, Grim argued for conformity to the state church and denounced those seeking unnecessary change as having ‘violated the order of things and broken the bonds of charity’.¹⁴² According to a second-hand account produced later, the radical Leiden-based preacher Hugh Goodyear stood up and ‘opposed [Grim] publicly in the scholes; because he tolerated the liturgy’.¹⁴³ Other Puritans were equally displeased. Ames, who had vehemently attacked the English liturgy in print, was also annoyed by Grim’s dedication to Bishop John Williams: ‘I approve of all your theses, except the eightieth [on the liturgy], which you have left much too crude because you wanted to moderate it for the palate of *your* [bishop of] Lincoln.’¹⁴⁴ It had precisely been the presence of bishops ‘and some ceremonious superst[iti]ons’, rather than points of doctrine, that caused Ames in 1622 to ‘deny utterly’ that the Church of England ‘may represent the face of the primitive Church’.¹⁴⁵ From England, Cotton similarly sent Grim a (lost) letter ‘blaming his meddling’.¹⁴⁶

These criticisms from the Church’s puritan wing have survived because Grim shared them with a fellow military chaplain, Stephen Goffe, whose regiment visited Wesel in the spring of 1633. Goffe had been appointed as chaplain to Sir Horace Vere and his regiment

¹⁴⁰ Grell, *Dutch Calvinists in Early Stuart London*, 58.

¹⁴¹ Oxford, Bodleian Library, ms Rawlinson Lett. 84b, fols. 150-151, at 150v: ‘Accepi his diebus ab iis, quibus res Britannicae non ignotae viderentur, adhuc metus esse aliquid, ne improvido quorundam zelo, etiam in inclyto regno vestro, schisma fortasse oriatur, ob dissensum aliquem doctissimorum hominum in controversia de praedestinatione et dogmatis adnexis.’

¹⁴² Grim, *Disputatio theologica inauguralis*, sig. B2v: ‘Sed huiusmodi homines rei violati ordinis, et rupti charitatis vinculi [...] censendi sunt.’

¹⁴³ BL, Add. 6394, fol. 127. On Goodyear, see esp. Sprunger, *Dutch Puritanism*, 126-134.

¹⁴⁴ BL, Add. 6394, fol. 39r: ‘Theses tuae mihi probantur omnes, praeter 80. quam, dum ad Palatum Lincolnienis tui voluisti temperare, nimis crudam reliquisti.’ Emphasis added.

¹⁴⁵ Ames, *A Reply to Dr. Mortons Generall Defence*, 63. For the importance of the episcopacy and the liturgy for English conformists, see Milton, *Catholic and Reformed*, ch. 9.

¹⁴⁶ BL, Add. 6394, fol. 127.

in 1632, and he seems, at the very least, to have been nudged by England to introduce the Book of Common Prayer.¹⁴⁷ Goffe's labours on behalf of uniformity in the Church of England eventually got him in Archbishop Laud's good graces.¹⁴⁸ In the short term, however, Goffe found himself denounced to the Dutch authorities by 'the factious Englishe and Scottishe Ministers' as an 'innovator and dangerous troubler of the Church'.¹⁴⁹ Desperate for an ally, Goffe depicted Grim in a letter to William Boswell, the English ambassador, as 'a very thankfull man to England, for both in his life and learning he is more English than Dutch'. Goffe emphasised that Grim spoke English 'having lived in Oxon above a year and elsewhere in England 2 years more', without specifying that the period 'elsewhere' included study with Cotton. Goffe forwarded Ames's criticism of Grim and satirised Ames's prejudices: 'You may see Dr Ames his good nature that he liked not any mans hartily that is acquainted with a B[isho]p'.¹⁵⁰ For Goffe, Ames's and Cotton's criticisms of Grim (both of whom Goffe monitored closely from afar) clearly constituted a stamp of approval.¹⁵¹ In addition, Grim was also willing to turn informer – he 'could tell you many stories of the proceeding of the [English] classists' – in exchange for preferment elsewhere.

Unfortunately for Grim, Goffe quickly soured on his new ally, although he did use his evidence to prepare a case for the abolition of the English classis.¹⁵² Goffe had now heard 'the Weasell minister' preach and found 'that his English language is so imperfect that I doubt now it would please the officers'.¹⁵³ Grim's deficient knowledge of English had scuppered other job opportunities and similar charges were commonly levelled against Dutch

147 Where the initiative for the introduction of the Prayer Book lay is unclear, but London seems to have played some role. Sir Horace Vere learned from Secretary Coke that 'His Ma[jes]tie is most pleased' with him and Goffe 'in using our booke of common prayer, which is a great favour': London, The National Archives (hereafter TNA), State Papers (hereafter SP) 16/534, fol. 20r, Lord Vere to [Secretary Coke], The Hague, 27 February 1633. Goffe's enemies charged that he had 'comission and instruction from England beforehand', which Goffe denied: TNA, SP 16/236, fol. 39r, Goffe to Secretary Coke, The Hague, 18 April 1633. However, it seems Goffe was being economical with the truth and sought Coke's support for his interpretation of events. An unspecified clause in a letter from Coke to a certain Colonel Hollis was 'brought to prove that w[hic]h I had done was by commands from his Ma[jes]tie' and had upset Vere. Goffe asked Coke to clarify this clause with Vere, which 'I tooke leave to interpret as meant only *de futuro* or that is, His Ma[jes]ties gracious pleasure to look upon our practise as commanded by himselfe, being nothing els but the execution of His Lawes w[hic]h his faithful subjects ought every where to love and obey.' Vere being 'alwais ready to command' the introduction of the Book of Common Prayer, Goffe 'knew it was my duty to lay hold on the opportunity and to promote so necessary a worke.'

148 Although Sprunger casts Goffe as 'Laud's chief agent among the English preachers', there does not seem to be any direct contact until at least early 1634: Sprunger, *Dutch Puritanism*, 276; TNA, SP 16/260, fol. 27. Goffe to Sheldon, Leiden, 13 February 1634, where Goffe asks the recipient to thank Laud for the appointment as preacher to the Delft Merchants Company: 'You will do y[our]e poore friend the most acceptable and friendly office in the world if the exceeding thankfullness and devotion of my hart may some way come to be made known unto His Grace.'

149 TNA, SP 16/232, fol. 37r, Goffe to Henry, Earl of Dover.

150 BL, Add. 6394, fol. 127.

151 For Goffe reporting news on Cotton: BL, Add. 6394, fol. 137r, and TNA, SP 16/260, fol. 27. On Ames: TNA, SP 16/250, fol. 129.

152 Stearns, *Congregationalism in the Dutch Netherlands*, appendix IX, 117. Grim was present at the ordination of a minister 'through the imposing of all the hands of the present ministers'.

153 BL, Add. 6394, fol. 133, Rheinbach, 25 May 1633.

and German ministers seeking preferment in the Church of England.¹⁵⁴ Although Grim still seemed ‘a very deserving man’, on reflection Goffe thought that Boswell should have ‘both the good and the bad of him’.¹⁵⁵ By early summer, Goffe had definitely turned against Grim. During an illness, Grim agreed to stand in for the Englishman, but ‘whether that he might please his friends otherwise affected, or that he feared more letters from Dr Ames and Cotton’, Grim proved reluctant to use the Book of Common Prayer, so despised by the Puritans: ‘There is no trusting these doubtfull men, and so are all the Dutch English.’ Gribius, the Den Bosch preacher who had studied under Cotton at the same time as Grim, ‘would erect a presbytery among the Capteins’ if they had let him.¹⁵⁶

These controversies concerning liturgy and church governance affecting the Church of England in the Dutch Republic provide a crucial background for Grim’s Pope Joan project because she (and anti-Catholicism more widely) had the potential to unify the divergent strands of Protestant opinion. No Protestant dogmas were at stake. In fact, the debate surrounding her existence was staged almost exclusively on Catholic territory. Grim had sought to impress Goffe with his book manuscript, although the Englishman’s comments about it were laced with his customary irony. To Boswell, Goffe described Grim as ‘well studied in the History of the Popes and hath a booke now in the presse to prove that there was a Pope Jone, a work of more labor than fruit: yet it will show that he hath read books’.¹⁵⁷

To be sure, Pope Joan was not completely trouble-free terrain. Grim could not entirely keep the issue of church governance out of a treatise on papal history. In his dedication of his *Cort verhael* to the British military officers serving the Dutch Republic, Grim stressed that his *Pauselick Heiligkeit* demonstrated ‘the power of all Christian princes, especially the Kings and Queens (especially Queen Elizabeth, whose honour is worthy of eternal memory) of Great Britain, over ecclesiastical persons and acts’ – whether the soldiers were able to read it is another matter.¹⁵⁸ Pope Joan also presented a particular difficulty for English Protestants. Martinus Polonus had declared the popess to be simultaneously from Mainz and *English*. From the 1560s onwards, Catholics had relished depicting Queen Elizabeth as an English female pope, a Protestant counterpart to the popess, whose existence was more difficult to deny.¹⁵⁹ Without any sense of irony, Grim suggested that ‘anglicus’ had been a textual corruption or a reference to Joan’s last name, rather than her nationality. Following the suggestion (without acknowledgement) of the English clergyman

154 On Grim’s command of English, see De Jong, ‘John Forbes’, 113–114. For comments about Dutch preachers in general: Dr Williams’s Library, MS 38.34, Quick, ‘Icones sacrae Anglicanae or the Lives and Deaths of Severall Eminent English Divines’, 258, 270, 755.

155 BL, Add. 6394, fol. 133.

156 BL, Add. 6394, fol. 141, Den Bosch, 17 July 1633.

157 BL, Add. 6394, fol. 127.

158 Grim, *Cort verhael*, sig. azv: ‘Verdedigt de macht van alle Christen Princen, ende in ‘t besonder van de Coningen ende Coninginnen [...] van Groot Britannien, over Kerckelicke personen ende handeligen.’ Grim departs here from his 1629 dissertation, where he described the Church as ‘Aristocratico-Democraticum’: Grim, *Disputatio theologica inauguralis*, sig. B2v.

159 Rustici, *The Afterlife of Pope Joan*, ch. 2.

Alexander Cooke, Grim suggested that the popess's full name had been Joan English.¹⁶⁰ These difficulties were small beer, however. At a time when Reformed orthodoxy became increasingly contested, Pope Joan had the potential to unify Protestants. Grim, whose status within the Church of England was tenuous and imperilled by these conflicts, had good reasons to seek her embrace.

Conclusion

Modern readers of Egbert Grim's *Pauselicke Heiligheit* can only endorse Goffe's acerbic comment that it shows 'that he hath read books'. It may therefore not surprise us that aside from a reference by Samuel Desmarets, it soon disappeared with barely a trace. Even the Huguenot minister did not know Grim well, identifying him as an Englishman writing in Dutch.¹⁶¹ The only surviving private note of appreciation came from the Deventer poet and Calvinist theologian Jacobus Revius, who had briefly touched on the popess in his own *Historia pontificum Romanorum contracta* (Brief History of the Roman Popes, 1632).¹⁶² Although Revius had gained 'wonderful fruit' from reading Grim's work, most of the letter was in fact devoted to corrections and (rather incredibly) suggestions of further medieval readings on Pope Joan.¹⁶³

Yet, while Grim's exhaustive compendium may not win many plaudits for originality, the wider polemic of which it was part has still taught us much. The Pope Joan polemic afforded the Catholics and Protestants of Wesel and Rees the opportunity to assert their communal identities, give voice to their experiences of war, and undermine the opposing side. Grim tied the alleged destruction of evidence of Joan's existence to the suppression of Protestant churches in Wesel by the Spanish. Her alleged actions also invalidated his opponent's ordination. Stalenus used disagreement among the popess's chroniclers about her identity to argue that there was no truth outside the Catholic Church, only division. Both Stalenus and Grim acted as representatives of their communities. Restrictions placed on Rees's Catholics made Stalenus's victory during the original 1631 polemic more important, and for Grim that more humiliating.

On the level of ideas, Pope Joan posed a problem for Catholics even after Panvinio's successful demolition of her origin story because such sceptical arguments had potentially destabilizing implications for Catholic understandings of the past. Having laid claim to the medieval past, Catholics could not easily disown medieval 'Catholic' chroniclers, while denunciations of corrupted manuscripts enabled Protestant charges of the destruction or

160 Cooke, *Pope Ioane*, 39 [=47]; Grim, *Pauselicke Heiligheit*, 1, 566; Desmarets suggested that in Grim's work 'multa mutuatus est ex popularis sui Alexandri Cooke Dialogo'.

161 Desmarets, *Ioanna papissa restituta*, 12: 'natione Anglus [...] edidit [...] lingua Belgica'.

162 Revius, *Historia pontificum Romanorum contracta*, 77-78.

163 Deventer, Athenaeumbibliotheek, MS 100 A 16 KL, letter no. 24: 'mirificum [...] fructum'. Deventer, 24 March 1636. Revius wished to add to Grim's work ('opus tuum locupletare volui') with a medieval Brabant chronicle. Revius's most substantial correction was to point out that Grim mistook imperial correspondence with the real Pope John VIII for correspondence with Joan (which Grim had wrongly taken as proof of her existence).

suppression of books. While Grim sought to embarrass Stalenus with the testimony of his medieval 'brethren', Stalenus could only studiously ignore their religious affiliation.

At the same time, Grim's *Pauselicke Heiligheit* also demonstrates that Pope Joan was no Protestant panacea. The fact that the longest defence of her existence was written by a minister whose link to the Church of England was tenuous at best, and who found himself stranded between different factions, is highly revealing. Pope Joan offered Grim the opportunity to demonstrate his Protestant and anti-papist credentials, but without taking a stand on vexing intra-confessional issues such as predestination, church governance, and the Book of Common Prayer.

Grim's magnum opus may therefore also have disappeared from view because Pope Joan was not able to unite a fractious Reformed community. In fact, the demolition of her story by David Blondel in 1647 made the popess into one more factor to divide Protestants. Blondel had prefaced his *Familier esclaircissement* with familiar claims of Catholic book defiling which, he conceded, potentially deprived him of contrary evidence. Jesuits had managed to borrow two particularly ancient manuscripts from Heidelberg's Calvinist librarian which were said to contain evidence of the popess's existence, and they had failed to return them. The Palatinate library itself was later pillaged during the Thirty Years' War, its contents 'transported by the Bavarians where it pleased them' (in fact, the collection would be incorporated into the Vatican Library).¹⁶⁴ Nevertheless, the examination of other manuscripts, the evidence of chronology and a great and frequently highlighted love of truth compelled Blondel to denounce those who had interpolated 'their own dreams' into older manuscripts and those who had been fooled by them.¹⁶⁵ Later Protestant attempts to revive the popess, notably Desmaret's *Ioanna papissa restituta* were aimed in the first instance not at Catholics, but at Blondel.¹⁶⁶ In that sense, Grim's *Pauselicke Heiligheit* also marked the end of Pope Joan as a unifier of Protestants.

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¹⁶⁴ Blondel, *Familier esclaircissement*, 3-5: 'transportez par les Bavaurois où il leur a pleu'.

¹⁶⁵ Blondel, *Familier esclaircissement*, 9-10, 97, 109.

¹⁶⁶ See esp. Spanheim, *De papa foemina*.

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