

## Piety in Practice and Print



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KOEN GOUDRIAAN

# Piety in Practice and Print

*Essays on the Late Medieval Religious Landscape*

edited by Anna Dlabáčová and Ad Tervoort



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Jacket illustration: Statutes of the Bethlehem convent at Westerblokker: beginning of the Rule of St Augustine in Dutch (1537). Oxford, Keble College, ms 28, fol. 21r; *Devote ghetiden*, [Antwerp: Gerard Leeu, between 18 September 1484 and 9 July 1485], ILC 1246, Leiden, University Library, 1498 F 1, fols. p3v-p4r (woodcut: Crucifixion); *Mirabilia Romae* [Dutch] *Figuren van die seven kercken van Romem*, Gouda: Collaciebroeders, [not before 12 September 1494], ILC 1599, Haarlem, Noord-Hollands Archief, Oude Boekerij, fols. [a]6v-[a]7r (woodcut: Church of St Sebastian).

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# Contents

List of Tables, Maps, and Illustrations	6
List of Abbreviations	9
Introduction. Inspiring Spirituality and Religious Plurality in the Late Medieval Low Countries	11
Editorial Note	18
Acknowledgements	19
Publications by Koen Goudriaan	21
<b>I Religious Communities and Institutions</b>	
Early Hospital Development in the Provinces of Holland, Zealand and Utrecht	31
– Appendix: Catalogue of Hospitals in Holland, Zealand and Utrecht until 1428	63
Geert Grote, <i>On Simony to the Beguines</i> , and Church Reform	74
The New Devout and their Women of Authority	96
Beguines and the <i>Devotio Moderna</i> at the Turn of the Fifteenth Century	112
The Regular Observance of Women Converts of St Augustine	135
– Appendix: Convents of the ‘Outsider’-category	176
<b>II The Cult of the Dead</b>	
Ownership of Graves in Medieval Parish Churches in Holland	183
Geert Grote: A Founder Fading into Oblivion?	204
<b>III Religious Texts on the Early Printing Press</b>	
Middle Dutch Meditative <i>Lives of Jesus</i> on the Early Printing Press: An Exploration of the Field	219
– Appendix I: Texts and Editions	234
– Appendix II: Woodcuts	238
The Church and the Market: Vernacular Religious Works and the Early Printing Press in the Low Countries, 1477-1540	240
The <i>Devotio Moderna</i> and the Printing Press (c. 1475-1540)	257
The Franciscans, the Laity and the Printing Press	279
Bibliography	309
Index	344

# List of Tables, Maps, and Illustrations

## List of Tables

### ‘Early Hospital Development in the Provinces of Holland, Zealand and Utrecht’

Table 1	Hospitals until 1428	34
Table 2	Hospitals in Villages	35
Table 3	Hospitals in Villages Founded after 1428	58
Table 4	Small Towns Lacking a Hospital	59
Table 5	Hospitals in Small Towns after 1428	59

### ‘Begunes and the *Devotio Moderna* at the Turn of the Fifteenth Century’

Table 1	Number of Beguine Settlements	118
Table 2	Courts and Convents	119
Table 3	Cities with Multiple Beguine Settlements	119
Table 4	Modern Devotion in the Diocese of Utrecht	121

### ‘The Regular Observance of Women Converts of St Augustine’

Table 1	Women’s Convents Adhering to the Rule of St Augustine	139
---------	---	-----

### ‘Ownership of Graves in Medieval Parish Churches in Holland’

Table 1	Magistrate Members as Grave Owners (Gouda, StJ, 24)	190
Table 2	Distribution of Graves (Gouda, StJ, 24)	191
Table 3	Number of Graves. Totals and Averages for the Elite (Gouda, StJ, 24)	192
Table 4	Distribution of Graves (Delft, Grave Register D)	196
Table 5	Distribution of Graves (Delft, Grave Register M)	196
Table 6	Distribution of Graves (Delft, Grave Register P)	196
Table 7	Distribution of Graves (Amsterdam)	196
Table 8	Distribution of Graves (Gouda, Kerkmeesters Sint-Janskerk 1572-1820, 231)	197
Table 9	Elite as Grave Owners (Gouda, Kerkmeesters Sint-Janskerk 1572-1820, 231)	197
Table 10	Graves Given in Ownership (Gouda, Kerkmeesters Sint-Janskerk 1572-1820, 231)	199
Table 11	Graves Given in Ownership and Tombstones (Amsterdam)	199
Table 12	Composition of Groups	201

**‘Middle Dutch Meditative Lives of Jesus on the Early Printing Press: An Exploration of the Field’**

Table 1	Editions per Region in Chronological Order	220
Table 2	Prominent Printers within the Corpus	221
Table 3	Bestsellers	228

**‘The Church and the Market: Vernacular Religious Works and the Early Printing Press in the Low Countries, 1477-1540’**

Table 1	Vernacular Religious Texts Printed between 1477-1540: A Breakdown in Genres	243
---------	--	-----

**‘The *Devotio Moderna* and the Printing Press (c. 1475-1540)’**

Table 1	Survey: Numbers of Editions	266
Table 2	Vernacular Languages	266
Table 3	Genres: Latin plus Bilingual	267
Table 4	Genres: Vernacular	267

**‘The Franciscans, the Laity and the Printing Press’**

Table 1	Bestsellers	284
Table 2	Publishers with Most Occurrences	287
Table 3	Classification According to Content	289

**List of Maps and Illustrations**

Fig. 1	Map of Settlements with Hospitals in Holland, Zealand and Utrecht until 1428	33
Fig. 2	Zierikzee: Our Lady’s Hospital	34
Fig. 3	Wijk bij Duurstede, St Ewoud’s Hospital, 14th-century Cellar	38
Fig. 4	Cuijk, Sint Aegten, ms 135 (olim C 9 / C 9Bis), fol. 111r	77
Fig. 5	‘Fundatieboek’ of the Beguinage in Haarlem, Noord-Hollands Archief, Kloosters, inv. no. 419, fol. 83v (detail)	78
Fig. 6	Delft, St Agatha’s Convent	98
Fig. 7	Map of Settlements with One or More Communities of Beguines	120
Fig. 8	Groningen, Old Convent / ‘Red Orphanage’: remains of the medieval chapel	124
Fig. 9	Oxford, Keble College, ms 28, fol. 21r	155
Fig. 10	Gouda, Chapel of St Agnes’s Convent	161
Fig. 11	Map of the Convents of the ‘Outsider-category’	175
Fig. 12	Gouda, St John’s Church Seen from the South	189
Fig. 13	Skulls Supposedly of Geert Grote and Florentius Radewijnsz.	207
Fig. 14	<i>Devote ghetiden</i> , [Antwerp: Gerard Leeu, between 18 September 1484 and 9 July 1485], Leiden, University Library, 1498 F 1, fol. p3v	226
Fig. 15	<i>Epistolae et Evangelia</i> [Dutch], Zwolle: Peter van Os, January 1487, The Hague, Royal Library, 171 G 96, fol. p6r	226
Fig. 16	<i>Mirabilia Romae</i> [Dutch] <i>Figuren van die seven kercken van Romen</i>	

- Gouda: Collaciebroeders, [not before 12 Sept. 1494], Haarlem, Noord-Hollands Archief, Oude Boekerij, fol. [a]6v 255
- Fig. 17 Gerrit van der Goude, *Dat boexken van der missen*, Gouda, Collaciebroeders, 1506, The Hague, Royal Library, 227 G 28, fols. k3v-k4r 271
- Fig. 18 *Breviarium Windeshemense*, Schoonhoven: Regulieren in Den Hem, 1499, The Hague, Royal Library, 234 F 26, title page 273
- Fig. 19 *Den wijngaert van Sinte Franciscus vol schoonre historien, legenden, ende duechdelijcke leeringhen allen menschen seer profijtelyk*, Antwerp: Henrick Eckert van Homberch, 1518, The Hague, Royal Library, 227 A 8, title page 290
- Fig. 20 *Hier beghint een wandelinghe der kersten menschen met Ihesu den brudgom der sielen inden hof der bloemen*, Leiden: Jan Seversz, 1503, The Hague, Royal Library, 227 G 40, title page 296



# Abbreviations

AD	Archief Delft
AE	Archief Eemland
AGKKN	<i>Archief voor de geschiedenis van de Katholieke Kerk in Nederland</i>
BA	Archives entrusted to the city of Utrecht, now in HUA, Schuylenburg and Joosting 1917
BBFN XVI Bio	<i>Bio-bibliographia franciscana Neerlandica saeculi XVI</i> , vol. 1
BBFN XVI Bib	<i>Bio-bibliographia franciscana Neerlandica saeculi XVI</i> , vol. 2
BBFN a. XVI Bio	<i>Bio-bibliographia franciscana Neerlandica ante saeculum XVI</i> , vol. 1
BBFN a. XVI Bib	<i>Bio-bibliographia franciscana Neerlandica ante saeculum XVI</i> , vol. 2
BBH	<i>Bijdragen voor de Geschiedenis van het Bisdom Haarlem</i>
BL	British Library
BNM	<i>Bibliotheca Neerlandica Manuscripta</i>
BNU	Bibliothèque Nationale et Universitaire
<i>Bull. Traj.</i>	<i>Bullarium Trajectense</i> , Brom 1891-1896
CA	Campbell 1874
cal. no.	calendar number
DS	<i>De simonia ad beguttas</i> , De Vreese 1940 [Hofman 2016]
ELO	Erfgoed Leiden en Omstreken
GA	Gemeentearchief [Municipal Archives]
GvH	Graven van Holland [Counts of Holland]
GW	<i>Gesamtkatalog der Wiegendrucke</i>
HCO	Historisch centrum Overijssel
HUA	Het Utrechts Archief
ILC	<i>Incunabula printed in the Low Countries</i> , Van Thienen & Goldfinch 1999
ISTC	<i>Incunabula Short Title Catalogue</i>
MCC	Museum Catharijneconvent
MM	Museum Meermanno
NA	Nationaal Archief
NaSo	<i>Narrative Sources</i>
NHA	Noord-Hollands Archief
NK	Nijhoff & Kronenberg 1923-1971
OBA	<i>Oorkondenboek van Amsterdam</i> , Van der Laan 1975

OBAS	<i>Oorkondenboek van Amsterdam: Supplement</i> , De Melker 1995
OBU	<i>Oorkondenboek van het Sticht Utrecht</i> , Muller & Bouman 1920-1959
ÖNB	Österreichische Nationalbibliothek
OGE	<i>Ons Geestelijk Erf</i>
OHZ	<i>Oorkondenboek van Holland en Zeeland</i> , Koch a.o. 1970-2005
OKAE	Oud Kerkarchief Edam
OLV	Onze Lieve Vrouwe
RA	Regionaal Archief
RB	<i>Regestenboek van het archief van de abdij van Berne</i> , Van Bavel 1984-1990
<i>Rbr. Utr.</i>	<i>De Middeleeuwse rechtsbronnen der stad Utrecht</i> , Muller 1883
<i>Reg. Hann.</i>	<i>Regesta Hannonensia</i> , Muller 1881
<i>Reg. Par.</i>	<i>Register op de parochiën</i> , Grijpink 1914-1937
<i>Rek. Henn.</i>	<i>De rekeningen der graven en gravinnen uit het Henegouwsche huis</i> , Smit 1924-1939
Rek.reg.	Grafelijkheidsrekenkamer, Registers
Rek.rek.	Grafelijkheidsrekenkamer, Rekeningen
RHCVV	Regionaal Historisch Centrum Vecht en Venen
RHCZOU	Regionaal Historisch Centrum Zuidoost Utrecht
RL	Royal Library
SA	Stadsarchief
SAB	Stads- en Atheneumbibliotheek
SAMH	Streekarchief Midden-Holland
SANWV	Streekarchivariaat Noordwest-Veluwe
<i>Sta. Dor.</i>	<i>De oudste stadsrekeningen van Dordrecht</i> , Burgers & Dijkhoff 1995
StJ	Sint-Janskerk voor de Reformatie, Gouda, SAMH
UL	University Library
VD 16	<i>Verzeichnis der im deutschen Sprachbereich erschienenen Drucke des XVI. Jahrhunderts</i>
Verhoofstad	Bisdom Haarlem betreffende staties en klooster te Haarlem [Diocese of Haarlem concerning stations and convents in Haarlem], formerly inventoried by P.M. Verhoofstad
<i>VfLex</i>	<i>Die deutsche Literatur des Mittelalters: Verfasserlexikon</i>
WA	Waterlands Archief
WeA	Westfries Archief
<i>Zel.ill.</i>	<i>Zelandia illustrata</i> , Lantsheer a.o. 1866-1905

# Introduction

## *Inspiring Spirituality and Religious Plurality in the Late Medieval Low Countries*

On the way back from a late medieval shopping trip to Paris, with the explicit purpose of buying books that would help him with the preparation of his sermons, Geert Grote (d. 1384) visited John of Ruusbroec (d. 1381) in his Groenendaal monastery near Brussels.<sup>1</sup> This was only one of a number of visits Grote paid to the mystic. Grote, who, triggered by a nearly fatal illness had converted after a life of sin and had been rejected by the Carthusian order because of his bodily weakness, no doubt sought spiritual inspiration. Although the conversations between Grote and Ruusbroec might have revealed more differences than similarities between their ways of thinking and their preferred directions in religious life – Grote was not uncritical of Ruusbroec's writings –, this would not have outdone the initial inspiration the Northern Netherlandish founder of the *Devotio Moderna* must have felt when reading Ruusbroec's work, and still later when translating it after he was banned from preaching.<sup>2</sup> The slight disappointment Grote might have felt in the conversations with the man he admired and his own determination to proclaim a new kind of religiosity during his preaching campaigns, can be seen as epitomes of the mechanism of inspiration in general, and in religious life in particular. By constantly reflecting on older ideas people moved forward to 'new(er)' forms of religious practice fit for modern-day life, without ever entirely leaving past thoughts and worlds behind.

Just as Ruusbroec's famous Groenendaal priory had started off as a community of priests that later adopted the Rule of St Augustine, the followers of Geert Grote left the town of Zwolle in 1384 to build a convent in which they would live as followers of the same rule, as Regular Canons of St Augustine. As the movement initiated by Grote, which we have come to know as the Modern Devotion, attracted more and more men and women who wanted to dedicate themselves to a life of intense spirituality, the initial ideals and ways of life became increasingly diversified and complex. The first communities were organised as lay communities that gradually developed into Houses of Sisters and Brothers of the Common Life. Over time congregations could go through a number of transitions, adopting stricter (monastic) rules – a process known as 'claustralization'. Institutionally the *Devotio Moderna* took shape in three branches: the 'original' Houses of Brothers and Sisters of the Common Life, the Regular Canons and Canonesses and the Tertiaries of St Francis. The various rules supplemented with constitutions and

1 For Grote's biography see e.g. Weiler 1984, pp. 9–55. Warnar 2007, pp. 129–130, p. 133, pp. 232–234, and p. 312 on the meetings between Grote and Ruusbroec.

2 Weiler 1984. More on the translations in Warnar 2007, in particular pp. 233–235 and pp. 313–315.

the changes communities underwent over time brought a fascinating yet in retrospect often difficult discernable diversification to the movement.

Over the last decades the Modern Devotion received increasing and international scholarly attention. One of the major achievements of Koen Goudriaan, professor of Medieval History at the Vrije Universiteit Amsterdam from 2001 to 2015, is the study of the institutional diversity of religious communities connected to the Modern Devotion. Yet his work is far more encompassing and combines meticulous philology of individual texts – no doubt a merit of his background as a classical scholar – with comprehensive archival research and collections of large bodies of data, for example on the production of vernacular religious works on the early printing press. His field thus extends to late medieval piety and religious practice in general, with a particular interest in the impact of the Modern Devotion and the printing press. The essays collected in the current volume represent the varied perspectives of Goudriaan's work on the late medieval religious landscape of the Low Countries.

### From Classicist to Medievalist

Koen Goudriaan (1950) started his academic career as a classicist. After studying Classics (1967-75) at the Vrije Universiteit (VU) Amsterdam, he taught in secondary school before becoming 'wetenschappelijk medewerker' [lecturer] at his *alma mater* in 1981, though not in the Classics department, but the History department, where he taught Ancient History. One of his early exploits was *Ethnicity in Ptolemaic Egypt* (1988), a book that could easily have done as a PhD thesis, according to his supervisor on the occasion of the actual viva of his dissertation *Over classicisme. Dionysus van Halicarnassos: zijn program voor welsprekendheid, cultuur en politiek* [On Classicism. Dionysius of Halicarnassos: his Programme for Eloquence, Culture and Politics], well defended in 1989. Chapter one of this dissertation still stands as an excellent analysis and summary of ancient rhetoric and also deserves to be published in English (which lies beyond the scope of the present volume, however).

By that time Koen Goudriaan, in an age of severe cutbacks in higher education, had to make a career change. He had to make a switch from teaching Ancient History to teaching Medieval History at the VU. Goudriaan dedicated himself completely to the task of teaching Medieval History. And generations of students of Medieval History at the Vrije Universiteit Amsterdam profited from this transition. The editors consider themselves to be first and second generation pupils of Goudriaan's teaching as a medievalist, and they look back at his lectures and seminars with fond memories. A professor in the true sense of the word: students always came first, right to the very last year, in which he devised yet another new course! The immense student attendance at his farewell lecture on 17 September 2015 was a clear sign of how Koen Goudriaan was appreciated as a teacher.

In terms of research, the transition from Ancient to Medieval History also meant a serious switch. Though the natural option would have been to target the early medieval period, circumstances in university research were such that

research had to be focused on relatively close collaboration in a designated area and era. For the Department of Medieval History at the VU this meant a focus on culture and religion in the high and especially the late Middle Ages in the Low Countries. Koen Goudriaan embarked on studying a town that had not received the attention that towns in its proximity had: Gouda became his first target, where culture, capital and religion in the late Middle Ages were concerned. He acquainted his students with the computer at an early age, ploughing through the town's account books, and analysing the results to be put in a database, something of a novelty at the time.

It was in Gouda too that Goudriaan's interest in the history of the early printing press was awakened. His study of the Gouda printer Gerard Leeu resulted in the volume *Een drukker zoekt publiek* [A Printer in Search of a Readership], which he edited.<sup>3</sup> Goudriaan's in-depth knowledge of Gouda meant that he had to take a leading role in writing the town's history and so he did; as an editor and a writer he became the chronicler of medieval Gouda, culminating in the publication of *Duizend jaar Gouda* [A Thousand Years Gouda], a volume to which he made major contributions.<sup>4</sup> To this day, Koen Goudriaan will always be the first point of reference where medieval Gouda is concerned. His background as a classical scholar also enabled him to contribute considerably to the early history of humanism in Holland, again with a Gouda connection.

By that stage, Goudriaan had already firmly focused on the history of the late medieval religious landscape. His project on the Third Order of St Francis resulted in a cornucopia of publications and papers presented by him and his pupils at congresses at home and abroad, the International Medieval Congress in Leeds in particular, including two important dissertations supervised by him.<sup>5</sup> This steady focus on the late medieval religious landscape is also the subject of this volume.

### Eleven Essays

The articles in the present volume provide a representative sample of Koen Goudriaan's substantial contribution to scholarship on late medieval history. Each of the three headings under which the editors have subsumed the essays represents a major line of thought and field of interest in Goudriaan's research: religious communities and institutions, the cult of the dead, and vernacular religious texts on the early printing press. The first section, *Religious Communities and Institutions*, encompasses five essays in which the ideas for religious reform, pious leadership and the development of religious communities and other intuitions are scrutinized.

Geert Grote's *De simonia ad beguttas*, which despite of its later Latin title was written in the Dutch vernacular, provided lay people who felt compelled to self-reformation with an inspirational discussion of basic problems of monastic reform. The only surviving manuscript is in Low German and originates from

3 Goudriaan a.o. 1993.

4 Abels a.o. 2002.

5 The bibliography contains numerous publications by Sabrina Corbellini, Madelon van Luijk and Hildo van Engen who were involved in the project.

a community that before entering the sphere of the Modern Devotion existed as a Beguine house. Through the text, composed in the form of a *consilium*, Grote translated an essentially Latinate form of complex argumentation into the vernacular and transmitted advanced academic learning to a non-Latinate, lay audience, which was not without risk. Goudriaan places the text within Grote's oeuvre and thoroughly analyses its style and contents. The examination results in some revealing conclusions about the text as a coherent argument in which Grote expands the notion of simony by claiming a deeper, moral understanding of *religio* outside the strict canonical sense. In principle, religion was not restricted to those who had taken the monastic vows. Perfection was possible outside the state of perfection, i.e. a monastic order, which allowed for practices of simony that belonged to the domain of conscience and could not be brought before an ecclesiastical tribunal. The purchase of a place in a Beguinage was one of these practices. Towards the end of the essay a brief yet important comparison to the ideas of John Wyclif shows the essential differences between the two reformers. Grote was much more inclined to accept existing Church hierarchy and opposed to radical changes in its institutional structures. These ideological differences might explain the divergent fates both reform movements met.

The discussion of the role of strong, independent women in the early stage of the emerging *Devotio Moderna* is a valuable contribution to the way female agency and authority was construed in Holland and the city of Utrecht around 1400. Using narrative sources such as chronicles and sister books, legal documents including privileges and transactions, and a series of three *Devout Letters* written during the foundation process of the monastery of Jerusalem near Utrecht, Goudriaan explores the basis upon which the authority of these women rested. The encounter with eight women from towns such as Delft, Gouda and Leiden, shows their skills in management and their religious wisdom. Both qualities contributed greatly to their leadership, as did material wealth, social status and the 'women's network' they maintained. The analysis of their cooperation with male clergy is enlightening as to the strategies they employed in acquiring their position and influence.

The inspiring leadership of these women coincided, not surprisingly, with the appearance of a large number of new female communities in the decades around the turn of the fifteenth century. In its early years the communities of this 'second religious women's movement' sparked by the Modern Devotion were not yet clearly distinguishable from Beguine houses, which were essentially products of the first, thirteenth-century wave of female religiosity in northern Europe. Neither the concept nor the identity of the Houses of Common Life was clearly defined from the beginning of Grote's reform movement. This causes difficulties in classifying female religious communities in this time and space. Old and new found common ground in the Third Rule of St Francis, which was adopted both by Sisters of the Common Life, and, from earlier on, by Beguines. Drawing on data from his *Kloosterlijst* [List of Monasteries],<sup>6</sup> Goudriaan provides a new con-

6 *Kloosterlijst. Beknopt repertorium van de zeventhonderd middeleeuwse kloosters binnen de grenzen van het huidige Nederland*, <http://www2.let.vu.nl/oz/kloosterlijst>.