

CHAPTER FOUR

HERETICAL SAINTS AND TEXTUAL DISCERNMENT:
THE POLEMICAL ORIGINS OF THE
ACTA SANCTORUM (1643–1940)

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The sixty-eight folio volumes of the *Acta Sanctorum* (1643–1940), and the 6,200 saints they contain, have gradually made their way into the historical spotlight. Historians have made increasing use of their scholarship. Saints, and therefore the saints' lives collated and edited by the Society of Bollandists, are prisms which shed light on the societies in which they lived. Peter Brown, in particular, has used saints' lives as mirrors to catch, from an angle, a glimpse of the average Late Roman.¹ As the Belgian sociologist Pierre Delooz has famously pointed out, "one is never a saint except for other people."² The lives of saintly exemplars, therefore, tell us much about the society that placed them in a position of high esteem. The same, this chapter suggests, holds true for the lives and acts of the early modern hagiographers who edited them.

The study of the role of saints within early modern Catholicism has gathered steam in the wake of Peter Burke's now almost canonical exposition on "How to be a Counter-Reformation Saint."³ Saints have become objects to "think with," revealing the underlying

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¹ Peter Brown, "The Rise and Function of the Holy Man in Late Antiquity," *The Journal of Roman Studies* 61 (1971): 80–101, here 81. For Brown's praise of the Bollandists: *Ibid.*, 80.

² Pierre Delooz, "Towards a Sociological Study of Canonized Sainthood," in *Saints and Their Cults: Studies in Religious Sociology, Folklore and History*, ed. Stephen Wilson (Cambridge: Cambridge UP, 1983), 189–216, here 194. Delooz goes on to observe that "they are also made saints by other people." *Ibid.*, 199.

³ Republished, for instance, as Peter Burke, "How to Become a Counter-Reformation Saint," in *The Counter-Reformation: The Essential Readings*, ed. David M. Luebke (Oxford: Blackwell, 1999), 129–42.

structures of early modern Catholic thought.⁴ If in Simon Ditchfield's phrase "all hagiography is contemporary hagiography," it was only a matter of time before the discipline became an object of historical study in its own right, part of the burgeoning field of "sacred history."⁵ Yet, the editors of the *Acta* have largely escaped historical study.⁶ In particular, the origins of the *Acta Sanctorum* have never been the object of independent enquiry.

The aim of this chapter is to reassess the foundation of the Society of Bollandists in order to interpret a story of origin that has been told and re-told for many generations. Historians are well-aware that human memory involves the act of forgetfulness; what is absent is as revealing as what is there.⁷ The rediscovery of the polemical origins of the *Acta Sanctorum* therefore is significant by virtue of having first been forgotten. Similarly, anthropologists have taught us that stories of origins aim to resolve contradictions that cannot be reconciled.⁸ A study of the foundation myth of the Society of Bollandists will tell us much about the problematic, yet interdependent relationship between notions of sanctity and the problem of discernment of spirits.

For the editors of (largely medieval) saints' lives the problem of discernment of past spirits was particularly poignant. The historical dimension added two layers of complexity to the enterprise. First,

⁴ Simon Ditchfield, "Thinking with Saints: Sanctity and Society in the Early Modern World," *Critical Inquiry* 35, no. 3 (2009): 552–84. Ditchfield's article is an homage to Stuart Clark, *Thinking with Demons: The Idea of Witchcraft in Early Modern Europe* (Oxford: Clarendon Press, 1997).

⁵ Simon Ditchfield, *Liturgy, Sanctity, and History in Tridentine Italy: Pietro Maria Campi and the Preservation of the Particular* (Cambridge: Cambridge UP, 1995), 1; on "sacred history", see the chapters by Anthony Grafton and Ditchfield in: Katherine Van Liere, Simon Ditchfield, and Howard Louthan, eds., *Sacred History: Uses of the Christian Past in the Renaissance World* (Oxford: Oxford UP, 2012), 3–26 and 72–100.

⁶ A recent exception is Jan Marco Sawilla, *Antiquarianismus, Hagiographie und Historie im 17. Jahrhundert: Zum Werk der Bollandisten; Ein wissenschaftshistorischer Versuch* (Tübingen: Max Niemeyer Verlag, 2009). See also the very useful case study of Bollandist working practices by Edmund Kern, "Counter-Reformation Sanctity: The Bollandists' Vita of Blessed Hemma of Gurk," *Journal of Ecclesiastical History* 45, no. 3 (1994), 412–34.

⁷ James Fentress and Chris Wickham, *Social Memory* (Oxford: Blackwell, 1992), ch. 1, esp. 14–15.

⁸ The reference here is to structural anthropology and the work of Claude Lévi-Strauss. See Wendy Doniger, "Claude Lévi-Strauss's Theoretical and Actual Approaches to Myth," in *The Cambridge Companion to Lévi-Strauss*, ed. Boris Wiseman (Cambridge: Cambridge UP, 2009), 196–215, here 206–7.

there is the difficulty of establishing (or the opportunity of doubting) whether the events, miracles, and visions described had even taken place. As we shall see, the possibility of their invention made *discretio spirituum* itself a secondary concern. The dilemma it led to was much the same but was more beneficial or problematic depending on the perspective of the editor. It opened up the possibility to doubt the actuality of a miracle, without doubting the sanctity of the miracle worker involved. (That is, an implausible miracle or vision need not be demonic; it could also not have happened.) Yet, some of the editors discussed below appear to have regarded what I shall call textual discernment as a slippery slope. For them, no past error or mistake could be admitted as it would cast doubt on the veracity of the whole narrative.

Secondly, the historical dimension, indeed the very existence of the original saint's life, also meant that the saint in question had been venerated by part or all of the Church. As Clare Copeland has shown in the preceding chapter, the production and circulation of eye-witness documents of sanctity already allowed a saint's adherents a share or stake in his or her experiences. On one level, past veneration, especially when it had been officially recognized, meant that the act of discernment was superfluous as sanctity had already been established; on another, that new concern about the sanctity of previously recognized saints was potentially subversive. Here, the hagiographer confronted that peculiar problem that faced the Catholic Reformation as a whole; that reform, instituted by a Church which was *semper eadem* (always the same), could not be readily admitted.⁹

To these two concerns, which we shall meet in passing, a third must be added: the sacred nature of the pursuit of hagiography, of which the discernment by text demanded of the hagiographer was but one part. The fact that hagiography was a sacred enterprise in and of itself helped determine how it was conducted. The story of the origins of the *Acta Sanctorum* sheds light on how the act of discernment and the pursuit of sanctity by hagiographers shaped the lives of the saints posthumously. This story has changed little since the Flemish Jesuit Jean Bolland (1596–1665) first put it in writing 370

⁹ For more on this conundrum, see Jan Machielsen, "The Counter-Reformation," in *Encyclopedia of Neo-Latin Studies*, ed. Philip Ford, Jan Bloemendal, and Charles Fantazzi, vol. 1 (Leiden: Brill, [2013])

years ago.¹⁰ Although somewhat further sketched in, the broad contours of Bolland's narrative are instantly recognizable in the volumes that celebrated the ter- and quadcentenary of the Society that bears his name.¹¹ In the preface of the first 1643 volume, which covered saints whose feast day fell in the first half of January in the liturgical calendar, Bolland traced the project back to a small octavo sized book, the *Fasti Sanctorum* (Calendar of the Saints, 1607) by the Jesuit Heribert Rosweyde (1569–1629).¹² Bolland's account is by no means a straightforward historical narrative, however. It contains some telling lacuna and should be interpreted, as any other story of origins, for its meaning, not as historical fact. The relationship between Bolland and Rosweyde needs to be examined afresh.

For Rosweyde, the *Fasti* had been the opening salvo for a project to collect and publish materials pertaining to the lives of the saints. The *Fasti*, however, were a false start. Teaching commitments and, especially, confessional polemic intervened to frustrate the project, as Bolland noted with a hint of disapproval. In 1629, just after announcing the imminent arrival of the first January volume of his *Vitae Sanctorum*, Rosweyde died a death in the hagiographical line of duty. The fall of Den Bosch to Dutch troops had sent the books of its Jesuit College to Antwerp, where they arrived damaged, wet, and, foul smelling.

These books [Rosweyde] read with too much haste according to his insatiable desire for learning and he avidly investigated whether he could find anything hitherto unseen by him. He breathed in their cor-

¹⁰ Jean Bolland et al., eds., *Acta Sanctorum* [henceforth, AS], 68 vols. (Antwerp-Brussels, 1643–1940), vol. 1, ix–x. Unless otherwise indicated future references are to this volume. I have used the text available through the *Acta Sanctorum Database* (ProQuest), accessible online at: <http://acta.chadwyck.co.uk>, but I have substituted v's for u's and vice versa, where appropriate. The nineteenth-century French (loose) translation of the prologue has been used to clarify some finer points of Latin: J. Carnandet and J. Fèvre, ed., *Les Actes des Saints depuis l'origine de l'église jusqu'à nos jours*, vol. 1 (Lyon: Librairie catholique de Louis Gauthier, 1866).

¹¹ Hippolyte Delehaye, *The Work of the Bollandists through Three Centuries, 1615–1915* (Princeton: Princeton UP, 1922), 8–21; Robert Godding et al., *Bollandistes, saints et légendes: Quatre siècles de recherche* ([Brussels]: Société des Bollandistes, 2007), 24–29; and most recently, Bernard Joassart, *Aspects de l'érudition hagiographique aux XVII^e et XVIII^e siècles* (Geneva: Droz, 2011), 1–44.

¹² Heribert Rosweyde, *Fasti Sanctorum* [henceforth, FS] (Antwerp, 1607).

rupt air. Some at the time have complained that by this [Rosweyde's] body had been disturbed and altered.¹³

A few days later, after administering the last rites to a plague victim, Rosweyde contracted a fever and died.

Bolland's description of Rosweyde's death served to redeem the latter's polemical distractions. In later accounts Rosweyde remains a flawed or at least easily distracted hero who foolishly believed that a project such as the *Acta* could have been undertaken by a single middle-aged man. Robert Bellarmine's possibly apocryphal and oft-repeated exclamation—"does this man think that he will live 200 years!"—has worked its way from Bolland's preface into modern Counter-Reformation scholarship.¹⁴ The comment may appear well justified from a distance of some 400 years, but it in fact measures Rosweyde by the more demanding standards of Bolland's later project.

Bolland made use of the material that had already been collected but his project differed, as we shall see, from Rosweyde's plan in manifold ways. Bolland himself stressed that,

my intention is not to follow anxiously in the footsteps of Rosweyde; as those had not firmly been imprinted by having finished part of the work, but had no more than lightly touched [the ground] by having sketched out a certain idea in thin lines.¹⁵

It served Bolland's purpose to locate the divine spark that prompted his own foray into such a sacred topic within someone who had predeceased him. Lost in the dark and dense forest that Rosweyde had left him, it occurred to the Jesuit that "if it was dear to God, that the deeds of his soldiers [the saints] came forth in the light, he will provide so that this work could be moved forward in whatsoever way even by me, because from there someone more skilled would

¹³ AS, x. "hos ille libros cum praepropere pro sua inexplibili discendi cupiditate pervoluit, atque avide investigat, num quid sibi antehac invisum reperire possit, corruptum ex iis aerem hausit, quo commotum alteratumque sibi corpus fuisse, nonnemini tunc est questus."

¹⁴ AS, xxiii. "an ei esset exploratum se ad 200. annos esse victurum." Cf. Ronnie Po-Chia Hsia, *The World of Catholic Renewal, 1540-1770*, 2nd ed. (Cambridge: Cambridge UP, 2005), 137.

¹⁵ AS, xxiii. "Nec vestigia Rosweydi anxie ac sollicite persequi animus est, ut quae non fixa firmiter, parte aliqua operis absoluta, sed leviter pressa dumtaxat, idea quadam tenuibus lineamentis informata."

complete it.”¹⁶

At the heart of the *Acta Sanctorum* lay a very careful balancing act. Bollandists embarked on the divine—indeed, possibly saintly—task of hagiography. They were able to ask for but unable and unwilling to claim divine guidance for themselves and the gift of discernment which this entailed. Yet, Bollandists did project (near-)miraculous powers on their deceased predecessors. For Bolland the need for textual discernment led to a paradox; for the divine inspiration that could enable such discernment could not possibly be (publicly) claimed. It could, and was, only claimed on Bolland’s behalf by his successors. With Bolland’s need for Rosweyde in mind, it is useful to consider what *separated* the two men. I will argue that Rosweyde put forward an approach to discernment which was very different from that set out later by Bolland. Rosweyde had made discernment an act of philology, consisting only of the collation of ancient manuscripts. For Rosweyde, the events these manuscripts recounted could not be doubted. As such, the personal sanctity of the hagiographer *ought* to have been irrelevant (as irrelevant as the problem of discernment of spirits) but, for reasons we will investigate, this was not the case.

Rosweyde’s hagiographical interests had clear, yet previously unknown antecedents which should reshape our understanding of his motives. Later Bollandists were aware that prior to his *Fasti* of 1607 Rosweyde’s literary activities had been limited to a liminary poem for the *Disquisitiones magicæ* (Investigations into Magic, 1599–1600) of the Spanish-Flemish Jesuit Martin Delrio (1551–1608), an influential study of (among other things) witchcraft and superstition.¹⁷ Bollandists have seen this as Rosweyde’s brief encounter with the “philosophy of the period [which] only offered a merry-go-round where [Rosweyde] could have turned round and round his entire life.”¹⁸ In their view, some sort of almost Damascene conversion must have already occurred years earlier during Rosweyde’s stay in Douai as a Jesuit novice.

¹⁶ AS, xi. “Sed illud deinde in mentem venit, si Deo cordi esset, suorum militum res gestas ita prodire in lucem, provisurum ut vel a me quoquo modo hoc opus promoveretur, quod deinde peritior perficeret.”

¹⁷ Paul Peeters, *L’Oeuvre des Bollandistes*, new ed. (Brussels: Palais des Académies, 1961), 4.

¹⁸ Peeters, *L’Oeuvre*, 4. “La philosophie de l’époque ne lui offrait qu’un manège, où il aurait pu tourner en rond, sa vie durant.”

Today, [...] we easily find a thousand good reasons to judge the hagiographical literature bequeathed by the High Middle Ages as insufficient. It would be exciting to know by what clear-sighted intuition this truth entered the mind (*se fit jour dans l'esprit*) of a young professor of philosophy, who is not known to have protested against the infantile commentaries on the *Physics* and *Natural Problems* of Aristotle which kept on being embroidered in Coimbra, Salamanca, and other places.¹⁹

There is good reason to question the existence of such a moment of revelation. Rosweyde was Martin Delrio's biographer and student. The project for the *Fasti* and *Acta Sanctorum* can be traced back one generation earlier.

This chapter brings to light the polemical origins of the *Acta Sanctorum*. Rosweyde, and Delrio before him, regarded textual discernment as a form of philology which Bolland and others thought naive. Yet, this approach to saints' lives is fully comprehensible when placed within a wider struggle against heresy which regarded the saints as fellow soldiers of Christ. In this struggle against heresy no ground could be ceded, and hence no discernment was required. Texts were only to be restored, not emended or improved. However, Rosweyde's approach, fuelled as it was by the fight against the heretics, also put further emphasis on the imitative aspects of the worship of the saints and the particular holiness demanded of the hagiographer. It is here that Bolland's debt to Rosweyde is most in evidence.

1. Rosweyde & Jesuit Hagiography before Bolland

It is tempting to see the *Fasti* and the *Acta* as the first Jesuit incursions into sacred history. At least one of Bolland's correspondents, the Irish Jesuit Paul Sherlock, saw the project as entering territory previously dominated by non-Jesuits.²⁰ There is a kernel of truth to

¹⁹ Peeters, *L'Oeuvre*, 5. "Aujourd'hui, [...] on découvre sans peine mille bonnes raisons de juger insuffisante toute la littérature hagiographique léguée par le bas moyen âge. Mais il serait piquant de connaître par quelle intuition clairvoyante cette vérité se fit jour dans l'esprit d'un jeune professeur de philosophie, qui n'est pas connu pour avoir jamais protesté contre les commentaires enfantins que l'on continuait de broder à Coïmbre, Salamanque et autres lieux sur la *Physique* et les *Problèmes Naturels* d'Aristote."

²⁰ Sawilla, *Antiquarianismus*, 341.

this; the *Annales Ecclesiastici* (12 volumes; 1588–1607) by the Oratorian Cesare Baronio (1538–1607) was the implicit and explicit point of reference for all the protagonists considered here. But it ignores the fact that saints' lives were pivotal to Jesuit self-perception. "The Father of the Society [of Jesus]," Ignatius of Loyola (1491–1556) had famously been converted by his reading of saints' lives during his recovery from wounds sustained in the battle of Pamplona—a point insisted on not a little by Bolland.²¹ Alongside an addiction to reports and reporting, the Society quickly developed a tradition of composing *vitae* of its deceased members.

Most of these *vitae* remained in manuscript but in Pedro de Ribadeneira (1527–1611) the Society possessed a skilled hagiographer, able to elegantly obscure Ignatius's problematic dearth of miracles.²² The Flemish Jesuit Andreas Schott, a later colleague of Rosweyde in Antwerp, had translated (originally plagiarised) Ribadeneira's Spanish *Vita* of Francis Borgia (1510–72), the third Jesuit General and a future saint, into Latin.²³

Such hagiography, which covered the life of the Society's early giants, appears different from what Rosweyde proposed and Bolland accomplished. In the preface of his *Vita Ignatii Loiolae* (Life of Ignatius of Loyola, 1572), Ribadeneira discussed the importance of the hagiographer's truthfulness:

Because I am not going to speak on the sanctity of some very ancient man, where one could embellish anything to the truth, no one refuting it already on account of its antiquity, but what we offer is well

²¹ AS, xiii–xiv, xxxviii, lvii; cf. Ignatius of Loyola, *The Autobiography of St Ignatius*, trans. and ed. J. F. X. O'Connor (New York, Cincinnati, Chicago: Benziger Brothers, 1900), 24.

²² Pedro de Ribadeneira, *Vita Ignatii Loiolae* (Naples, 1572), 208; on Ribadeneira, see Jodi Bilinkoff, "The Many 'Lives' of Pedro de Ribadeneira," *Renaissance Quarterly* 52, no. 1 (1999): 180–96.

²³ Cf. Andreas Schottus, *De Vita Francisci Borgiae [...] libri quattuor* (Rome, 1596), sig. *2v–*3r. "meas esse partes duxi, licet eventu impari, pari tamen voluntate, atque conatu, quae de Francisci vita, legendo *Hispanorum monumenta*, sciscitandoque pridem didicissem, *litterarum monumentis mandare*"; and, Pedro de Ribadeneira, *Vita Francisci Borgiae [...] latine vero ab And. Schotto* (Antwerp, 1598), sig. *4v–*5r. "meas esse partes duxi, licet conatu impari, pari tamen voluntate, quae de Francisci vita, legendo *praeclara Petri Ribadeneirae monumenta*, sciscitandoque pridem didicissem, *Latino posteris sermone transcriberem*." Emphasis added.

known to those of the multitude who lived so very close and familiarly with him [Ignatius] of whom we are speaking.²⁴

Ribadeneira's comment, as we shall see, goes to the very heart of the problem of textual discernment, where *discretio spirituum* was secondary to the question of whether events had even taken place.

Ribadeneira's influence on his Netherlandish contemporaries is hard to estimate. Rosweyde translated Ribadeneira's *Flos Sanctorum* (Blossom of the Saints, 1601) into Dutch. The Spanish Jesuit's interest in composing lives "anew" (*de nuevo*) meant that the engagement of Rosweyde and Bolland with their Spanish predecessor was only indirect.²⁵ One clear target however, was the Carthusian friar Laurentius Surius (1522–78). Surius had reworked a disorganised compilation of saints' lives by the bishop of Verona, Luigi Lipomano (1500–59) into a collection organised according to the Church's liturgical calendar. Surius's collection proved immensely popular despite its size and price, and in 1590 the Dutch priest Franciscus Haraeus (c. 1550–1632) published a short compendium of saint's lives drawn "above all" from the Carthusian friar for those who lacked the time or money to read Surius in his entirety.²⁶

Surius had stripped out supposedly spurious events and corrected faulty medieval grammar and style. It was to this editing that Rosweyde objected in the *Fasti*. Rosweyde maintained that "art destroyed truth, and because the gracefulness of style is sought, that of virtues is neglected. [...] The saints love their honour to be expressed by their natural colour, not by cosmetics (*litt. dye*); [...] they prefer to be known, rather than have their vestment admired."²⁷ In response, Rosweyde proposed to publish critical,

²⁴ Ribadeneira, *Vita Ignatii Loiolae*, sigs. †5v–†6r. "quia non de antiquissimi alicuius viri Sanctitate, mihi agendum est: in quo veritati quicquam affingere liceat, nemine propter vetustatem iam refellente, sed haec iis cognoscenda proferimus, quorum permulti coniunctissime cum eo ipso, de quo loquimur, familiarissimeque vixerunt." The passage is an adaptation of Cicero, *De Oratore* 2.2.9.

²⁵ Pedro de Ribadeneira, *Flos sanctorum, o, Libro de las vidas de los santos*, 2nd ed. (Madrid, 1604), sig. ¶6v. In the preface to the AS, Bolland places Ribadeneira among the, less reliable, compendia of lives, "quae ex genuinis contractae, vel certe variis locis interpolatae." AS, xxxvii.

²⁶ Franciscus Haraeus, *Vitae sanctorum: ex probatissimis authoribus, et potissimum ex Surio, brevi compendio summa fide collectae* (Antwerp, 1590), sig. *2v.

²⁷ FS, 11. "Ars veritatem perdidit, & quoniam styli gratia quaeritur, negligitur virtutum. [...] Sancti honorem suum colore suo, non fuco exprimi amant: [...] malunt se nosci, quam vestem conspici."

unimproved editions of original saints' lives. The Jesuit believed that these lives spoke for themselves.

We have already witnessed Bellarmine's incredulous reaction upon learning the scope of the project. The reaction of the Jesuit hierarchy was equally discouraging. In 1611, four years after publishing the *Fasti*, Rosweyde drew up one of many justifications for the delays his publicly advertised project had already incurred. In it, he again refuted objections raised by his wary superiors. To the charge that the project was too difficult for a single man, Rosweyde raised the counter-example of Baronio's *Annales*, a comparison which highlighted more his ambition than the realistic nature of the project since Baronio had left his project unfinished.

If a matter were useful in itself and of great moment to the glorification of the Catholic Church, which few terrified by the vastness and difficulties of the work either dare or wish to embark on, it is proper to long for and embrace the eager will of an industrious man [i.e., Rosweyde], who offers to conquer these difficulties with the grace of God and the help of others. And the lifetime of one person ought to be esteemed of small importance so that the history of the saints of all ages is illustrated.²⁸

Concerns that the Carthusians, the monastic order to which Surius belonged, might take offence at Rosweyde's explicit revisionism were similarly dismissed. "[For if] Surius was allowed to publish the lives of saints after Luigi Lipomani without true injury to Lipomani; why would another not be permitted after Surius?"²⁹ Yet, Jesuit reluctance was understandable. The fact that Surius had been converted by Petrus Canisius (1521–97), a feat later trumpeted in his Jesuit *Vita*, meant that Jesuits had a stake in the Carthusian's reputation.³⁰

²⁸ Heribert Rosweyde, "Plan conçu par le père Rosweyde la Compagnie de Jésus, pour la publication des Acta Sanctorum" in *Analectes pour servir à l'histoire ecclésiastique de la Belgique*, ed. Edm. Reusens, P. D. Kuyl and C. B. de Ridder, vol. 5 (Leuven: Ch. Peeters, 1868), 261–70, here 268–69. "Si res in se utilis et magni momenti sit ad Ecclesiae catholicae illustrationem, quam pauci aggredi vel audent vel volunt territi operis vastitate et difficultatibus, exoptanda videtur et amplectenda prompta laboriosi hominis voluntas, qui se ad difficultates illas superandas cum Dei gratia et aliorum subsidio offerat. Et unius hominis aetas parvi videtur facienda, ut historia sanctorum tot aetatum illustretur."

²⁹ Rosweyde, "Plan conçu," 268. "Licuit Surio post Aloysium Lipomanum vitas sanctorum edere, sine vera Lipomani injuria; quidni et alteri post Surium liceat?"

³⁰ Matthäus Rader, *De vita Petri Canisii [...] libri tres*, new ed. (Munich, 1623), 13–

The enthusiastic letter of Superior General Claudio Acquaviva which Rosweyde copied out for the benefit of his immediate superiors does not survive in the Jesuit archives.³¹ One letter that does survive worries about the great expense involved and the replication of work already accomplished.³² A 1613 letter from the local provincial restated a suggestion, made originally by Bellarmine, that Rosweyde should focus on those saints' lives left unpublished by Surius.³³ In 1622 the rector of the Antwerp professed house judged Rosweyde's knowledge of temporal matters ("experientia rerum temporalium") as only mediocre.³⁴ While the admittedly older Andreas Schott was given a secretary to assist him, Rosweyde was not.³⁵ What we are presented with does not, therefore, amount to a ringing endorsement of either Rosweyde or his project.

Instead, the picture that emerges fully from the archives is an active campaign conducted by Rosweyde, yet cloaked in the language of obedience, which was designed to overcome internal opposition. Rosweyde's letters give us a glimpse of the resistance he faced. In his 1613 reply to his provincial's concerns, he demanded to be told if there were any new reasons for him to abandon the project. "Notwithstanding that there is one among the consulters [of the province] who has always been against this project, I was ordered to begin."³⁶ Recent archival research by Bollandists has brought to light that Rosweyde himself had been his publisher's best client. The Jesuit acquired some 160 copies of the *Fasti* over the summer follow-

14; Rader added that Canisius discussed the discipline of saints' lives "frequenter" (frequently) with Surius.

³¹ Rosweyde, "Plan conçu," 270.

³² Claudio Acquaviva to Heribert Rosweyde, 5 September 1609, Flandro-Belgica [henceforth, Fl. Belg.] 1-II, fol. 1137, Archivum Romanum Societatis Iesu [henceforth, ARSI], Rome.

³³ Guillaume Veranneman to Rosweyde, 8 July 1613. Robert Godding, "L'Oeuvre hagiographique d'Héribert Rosweyde," in *De Rosweyde aux Acta Sanctorum: La recherche hagiographique des Bollandistes à travers quatre siècles*, ed. Robert Godding et al. (Brussels: Société des Bollandistes, 2009), 35-62, here 51 (Document I).

³⁴ *Catalogus triennalis* 1622, Fl. Belg. 11, fol. 1v, ARSI, Rome.

³⁵ *Catalogus brevis* 1616, Fl. Belg. 44, fol. 7r, ARSI, Rome, where Joannes Grauwels is listed as "Aman[uens] P[atris] Schotti."

³⁶ Rosweyde to Veranneman, between 9 July and 4 September 1613. Godding, "L'Oeuvre," 51-52, here 52 (Document II). "Quamquam inter consultores unus est qui semper contrarius fuit huic instituto, quo tamen non obstante, iussus fui inchoare."

ing its appearance.³⁷ How Rosweyde obtained the necessary funds is unclear; external financial support is possible. We should therefore see the *Fasti* more as an attempt to gather support than an attempt to whet the public's appetite with a specimen. By publicly advertising his *Vitae Sanctorum* project Rosweyde made it impossible for the Society to renege on the plan. At least, that is how the Jesuit himself saw it. In his 1611 memorandum Rosweyde listed the attention the project had already received among his reasons to continue:

Because with the consent and on the advice of his superiors, [Rosweyde] has published and distributed around the whole world the *Fasti Sanctorum* or a specimen of the whole work, in which his plan and method of treating the histories of all saints is expressed. The *Fasti* were sent to wise men in all parts of the world, so that they could see if they could contribute anything to this undertaking.³⁸

Rosweyde's insistence that in carrying out his project he was simply obeying his superiors was rhetorical—the very existence of these documents showed Rosweyde's hard-headed persistence.

In the same memorandum Rosweyde revealed just how the project had originally been conceived, however indirectly, by his superiors. In 1603, the Visitor of the Belgian Province, Olivier Manare, had inquired of his fellow Jesuits, "which pursuits they were looking at, and by what sort of pursuit especially any [of them] could be useful to the Church and bring glory to the Society."³⁹ Rosweyde immediately suggested the study of the saints, many manuscripts of which were still languishing unpublished in Belgian libraries. "He affirmed that, if it appeared proper to his superiors and he were given spare time, he was not averse to this kind of project."⁴⁰ There is reason to seriously doubt this narrative cast in the language of Jesuit obedience. Sometime in 1601, two years before

³⁷ The *Fasti* appeared in June 1607; the total number of copies acquired by Rosweyde included 25 free copies due to him as author. Godding, "L'Oeuvre hagiographique," 41.

³⁸ Rosweyde, "Plan conçu," 269. "Quia Superiorum consensu et suasu Fastos Sanctorum, seu specimen totius operis edidit, et toti orbi vulgavit, quo institutum eius et tot Sanctorum Historias tractandi ratio exprimitur. Qui Fasti in omnes orbis partes ad doctos viros missi sunt, ut viderent, si quid ad hoc institum conferre possent."

³⁹ Rosweyde, "Plan conçu," 263. "quae studia spectarent, et quo potissimum studii genere quis Ecclesiae prodesse, et Societatem illustrare posset."

⁴⁰ Rosweyde, "Plan conçu," 263. "A quo studio, si ita superioribus videretur, et otium daretur, se non abhorreere affirmabat."

Rosweyde's encounter with Manare, the Jesuit curia in Rome received his "idea for a work which set into motion the illustration of the lives of the Saints."⁴¹ The letter in which Rosweyde set forth "on the utility and necessity of this sort of reading" has not survived; in his reply Acquaviva only expressed the pious but ineffective hope that the Jesuit's immediate superiors might release him from some of his other duties.⁴²

Bollandist narratives have stressed how teaching assignments in Saint-Omer (1604–6), Courtrai (1610–12) and Antwerp (1607–9, 1612–29) distracted Rosweyde's efforts.⁴³ In this, they echoed Rosweyde's recurrent complaints. These accounts accept at face value Rosweyde's sense of victimhood (if not proverbial martyrdom), without recognizing that these repeated memoranda were an attempt to assert his mission in the face of opposition. It also fails to recognize that the failure to relieve Rosweyde of these duties was a symptom of that opposition. The ego documents produced by hagiographers are as revealing of contemporary attitudes as their saints' lives. It is with the same mindset that we should approach Bolland's original depiction of Rosweyde as a man too easily distracted from the blessed duty of hagiography by polemical compositions. Such a view misrepresents the more modest aims of Rosweyde's project and ignores, or sidesteps, the polemical purposes to which the saints, Christ's soldiers, could be put.

2. *A Teacher and His Disciple: Martin Delrio and Heribert Rosweyde*

Heribert Rosweyde entered the Society of Jesus in Douai on 21 May 1588. Little is known of the first nineteen years of his life. Ironically, given the context of this essay, no *vita* (in manuscript or in print) appears to have survived. According to most of the archival evi-

⁴¹ Claudio Acquaviva to Heribert Rosweyde, 20 October 1601, Fl. Belg. 1-II, fol. 821, ARSI, Rome. "operis ideam quod molitus ad SS Vitas illustrandas."

⁴² Acquaviva to Rosweyde, 20 October 1601. "de utilit[ate] et necessitate huiusmodi lectionis."

⁴³ Rosweyde's whereabouts can be followed through the Jesuit *Catalogi breves* and *Catalogi triennalis*. See the entries in: Fl. Belg. 43; Fl. Belg. 44; Fl. Belg. 10; Fl. Belg. 11, ARSI, Rome. In 1622 Rosweyde calculated that he had taught poetry (one year), rhetoric (two), philosophy (two) and scholastic theology (four). He had also been a "consultor" for eight years and he "scripsit varia." *Catalogus Triennalis* 1622, fol. 1v, Fl. Belg. 11, ARSI.

dence (though not all) he was born in Utrecht on 20 January 1569.⁴⁴ Rosweyde's place of birth features prominently on the *Fasti's* title page; his vernacular writings bemoan the heresy into which Utrecht had lapsed.⁴⁵ Rosweyde left for Douai nine years after the Union of Utrecht had marked the origins of the independent—and officially Reformed—Dutch Republic. Utrecht, however, possessed a lively Catholic minority of which the Rosweyde family formed a part.⁴⁶ Only one Utrecht-bound letter has survived, addressed to the humanist Dirk Canter (1545–1611). Dated as early as 1598, the letter already discussed editing an early Christian text by the apologist Arnobius, whom Canter had also edited. Rosweyde showed his preoccupation with polemic already at this early stage; he regaled his correspondent with recent successes in the Jesuit war against the prominent Huguenot scholar Joseph Scaliger (1540–1609).⁴⁷

The University of Douai, meanwhile, was an obvious stepping point for Dutch and Flemish speaking students (regardless of their religious affiliation) who wished to practise their French on the provincials before moving onto Paris. It is possible, but unlikely, that Douai was the unexpected endpoint of an aborted grand tour.⁴⁸ Rosweyde's fellow Utrechter Arnoldus Buchelius (1565–1641) had embarked on a journey to Douai and Paris only a few years earlier

⁴⁴ This is the date accepted by Willem Audenaert, *Prosopographia Iesuitica Belgica Antiqua* [henceforth, *PIBA*], 4 vols. (Leuven-Heverlee: Filosofisch en Theologische College SJ, 2000), 2:267 (who did not consult the Roman archives) and *Catalogus triennalis* 1628, Fl. Belg. 11, fol. 122v, ARSI, Rome. According to the *Catalogi triennales* of 1599 and 1622 (Fl. Belg. 9, fol. 300; Fl. Belg. 11, fol. 1v) Rosweyde was born in January 1570; the *Catalogus* of 1606 (Fl. Belg. 10, fols. 31–32) gives 1568 as Rosweyde's year of birth.

⁴⁵ Heribert Rosweyde, *Generale kerckelycke historie van de gheboorte onses H. Iesu Christi tot het iaer MDCXXIV* (Antwerp, 1623), sig. *16r.

⁴⁶ Utrecht was, along with Haarlem, one of two centres of Catholic activity in the Dutch Republic. Charles H. Parker, *Faith on the Margins: Catholics and Catholicism in the Dutch Golden Age* (Cambridge, MA: Harvard UP, 2008), 17. Rosweyde's relatives married before the civic magistracy (rather than in the Reformed Church), suggesting strong Catholic family ties. See the notes gathered in the nineteenth century by J. H. Hofman: "Van Rosweyde," MS 1466, Collectie Rijnsenburg, Het Utrechts Archief, Utrecht.

⁴⁷ Heribert Rosweyde to Dirk Canter, 14 March 1598, Verzameling Van Buchel-Booth 21, fol. 92, Het Utrechts Archief, Utrecht; on Canter, see A.J. van der Aa, *Biographisch woordenboek der Nederlanden*, vol. 3. (Haarlem: J.J. van Brederode, 1858), 121–24.

⁴⁸ A second Utrechter, Johannes van Gouda (1571–1630), was also admitted to the Society in Douai on the same day as Rosweyde. *PIBA*, 1:393.

and grew disenchanted with Catholicism as a result.⁴⁹ Another, who had once trodden the same path, was the Antwerp-born Martin Delrio.

Most of what we know about Martin Delrio's youth is derived from Rosweyde's not terribly reliable *Vita* and the scathing corrections made by Delrio's brother in the margins of one partial copy.⁵⁰ Nevertheless, the suffering of the Delrio family at the hands of the rebels is well documented. Martin Delrio, while an aide to the Spanish governor-general Don Juan of Austria, lost his personal library. His father Antonio del Río (d. 1585–86), deeply involved in the workings of the duke of Alba's notorious Council of Troubles, was imprisoned and died a penniless exile in Lisbon.⁵¹ His son saw his political aspirations quashed by Don Juan's premature death and entered the Society in Valladolid on 9 May 1580. During the 1580s Delrio studied or taught at Jesuit Colleges in Léon, Bordeaux, Mainz and Leuven. It was just after Rosweyde's arrival to study philosophy at the Jesuit college of Douai that Delrio was made its professor of philosophy.

If Rosweyde had not yet come across *discretio spirituum* or the saints' lives collated by Surius he would soon be introduced to both; sometime in 1589 Martin Delrio held a public oration at Douai, discussing "whether spirits [of the dead] could ever appear?"⁵² The affirmative answer was a foregone conclusion and fully aligned with Catholic orthodoxy, but Delrio's position on discernment of good and evil spirits may be surprising.⁵³ His opponents (Delrio identified John Calvin and Ludwig Lavater in the margin) objected that no statement on the matter could be made. "Satan is accustomed to turn himself into a man, indeed into an angel of light; how will we

⁴⁹ Judith Pollmann, *Religious Choice in the Dutch Republic: The Reformation of Arnoldus Buchelius (1565–1641)* (Manchester: Manchester UP, 1999), 43–46.

⁵⁰ On these marginal comments and Delrio's early life, see Jan Machielsens, "Thinking with Montaigne: Evidence, Scepticism and Meaning in Early Modern Demonology," *French History* 25, no. 4 (2011): 427–52, here 432–37.

⁵¹ On Antonio del Río, see: Octave Lemaire, "Antoine del Rio: Seigneur de Cleydael et Aertselaer, commerçant, mecène et fonctionnaire espagnol au XVI^e siècle," *De Schakel; Antwerpsche Kring voor Familiekunde*, 2 (1947): 111–19.

⁵² Martin Delrio, *Disquisitionum magicarum libri sex* [henceforth, *Disq*], 3 vols. (Leuven, 1599–1600), 1:248. "Utrum unquam animae queant apparere?"

⁵³ On the confessional debate on spiritual apparitions, see Timothy Chesters, *Ghost Stories in Late Renaissance France: Walking by Night* (Oxford: Oxford UP, 2011), 21–99.

distinguish him from true spirits? *Discretio spirituum* is a gift from God and not conceded to all.”⁵⁴ Delrio conceded the difficulty but maintained that “nevertheless, the writings of erudite men lighting the way in this darkness are not lacking, so we do not stray dangerously.”⁵⁵ The examples discussed were all taken from saints’ lives, some from Surius. For Delrio, the discernment of past events was largely a foregone conclusion, having already been interpreted before. What remained, was deciding whether the dove in the life of St Gummarus, a local Flemish saint, was an angel, a devil, or simply a bird. But that discussion was problematic enough for Delrio to declare that in such cases, the profession of ignorance was the safer course of action, after all.⁵⁶

The question raised by Ribadeneira—whether the events described actually took place—is only tangentially addressed in the final section. There, Delrio discussed spiritual apparitions organised by century (like Baronio’s *Annales*, the first volume of which had appeared the preceding year). It again relied heavily on Lipomani and Surius, excerpting from them on nearly every page.⁵⁷ To those familiar with Rosweyde’s later argument in favour of simplicity of style, Delrio’s position is unsurprising. “We have already taught,” he wrote of saints’ lives, “that [apparitions] can happen, that it is fitting that they happen and are expedient. Why do we not believe these most saintly and earnest men, who recounted them simply and without embellishment, as events in their own character, but force even on the unwilling [the quality of] speaking in another’s character?”⁵⁸

In 1596, the two men were re-united and explored a very similar topic at the Jesuit College of Leuven. Rosweyde was now a second

⁵⁴ Delrio, *Disq*, 1:260. “Satan se solet in hominem, & adeo in lucis angelum transfigurare: quo illum pacto a veris spiritibus distinguemus? Dei donum est discretio spiritum, nec omnibus concessum.”

⁵⁵ Delrio, *Disq*, 1:260. “Non deesse tamen hominum eruditorum scripta in his tenebris praelucentia, ne periculose aberremus.”

⁵⁶ Delrio, *Disq*, 1:264.

⁵⁷ Delrio, *Disq*, 1:270–310.

⁵⁸ Delrio, *Disq*, 1:271. “fieri posse, fieri decere & expedire iam docuimus. cur igitur sanctissimis & gravissimis hominibus, ea simpliciter & sine fuco narrantibus, ut ἀυτοπρόσωπως gesta, non credamus; sed vel invitis ἑτεροπροσωπίαν obtrudamus?” I am grateful to Adrian Kelly for discussing this passage with me and correcting the Greek, misspelled in the 1600 edition.

year student of theology, Delrio professor of exegesis.⁵⁹ They had stayed in touch by letter, and Delrio had introduced Rosweyde to Justus Lipsius, the famous Flemish humanist, in whose return Delrio had played some small part.⁶⁰ On 24 March 1597, Delrio and Rosweyde signed the *album amicorum* of the Scottish student William Barclay.⁶¹ It was in this period that Delrio taught the course on “superstition and the evil arts,” which later became his *Disquisitiones magicæ* (Investigations into Magic, 1599–1600).⁶² As we have already noted, Rosweyde (together with Lipsius) provided one of the prefatory poems to the *opus magnum*.

The *Disquisitiones* are still frequently regarded as an inquisitor’s manual, inspired by first-hand experience of persecuting witches.⁶³ Yet, such personal experience is only noticeable by its absence. As I have argued elsewhere, we should see the *Disquisitiones* as a work of textual scholarship, one for which Delrio’s edition of Senecan tragedy had already provided some exercise.⁶⁴ But if Seneca’s *Medea*, represented as true history, provided Delrio with part of his evidence for witchcraft and demonic activity, an even larger role was

⁵⁹ *Catalogus Brevis* 1596, Fl. Belg. 43, fol. 25r, ARSI, Rome.

⁶⁰ On the friendship of Delrio and Lipsius, see: Jan Machielsen, “Friendship and Religion in the Republic of Letters: The Return of Justus Lipsius to Catholicism (1591),” *Renaissance Studies* [pre-published on-line]; the letter from Lipsius to Rosweyde, in which the humanist described Delrio as someone “qui utrumque nostrum amat” is ILE VI 93 04 28 in the Lipsius correspondence; Justus Lipsius, *Iusti Lipsi Epistolæ*, ed. Jeanine de Landtsheer et al., 9 vols. [ILE I–III, V–VIII, XIII–XIV] (Brussels: Koninklijke Academie voor Wetenschappen, 1978–). Rosweyde printed an excerpt from this letter in his *Delrio Vita*; Hermannus Lange-veltius [Heribert Rosweyde], *Martini Antonii Del-Rio [...] Vita* (Antwerp, 1609), 45, as well as one letter he received from Delrio; *Ibid.*, 32–33. A second Delrio letter included, sent “ad discipulum,” was presumably directed to Rosweyde as well; *Ibid.*, 23–24.

⁶¹ Jan Papy, “The Scottish Doctor William Barclay, His *Album amicorum* and His Correspondence with Justus Lipsius,” in *Myrica: Essays on Neo-Latin Literature in Memory of Jozef IJsewijn*, ed. Dirk Sacré and Gilbert Tournoy (Leuven: Leuven UP, 2000), 333–96 (entries 22 and 28).

⁶² One set of course notes has survived under this title. “De superstitione et malis artibus tractatus R.P. Martini Antonii Delrii Lovanii,” MS 3632, Koninklijke Bibliotheek/Bibliothèque royale [henceforth, KBr], Brussels. The scribe, Franciscus Witspaen, was a student of the Jesuit College.

⁶³ This is the view of Wolfgang Behringer, *Witches and Witch-Hunts: A Global History* (Cambridge: Polity Press, 2004), 101–4.

⁶⁴ Jan Machielsen, “Marvellously Consistent throughout the Whole of Europe and across all Ages’: The Nature of Evidence and the Decline of Witchcraft Belief,” in *Crossing Frontiers: Belief in Magic and Witch-Hunting as Culture Transfer*, ed. Jürgen-Michael Schmidt and Katrin Moeller [forthcoming].

assigned to the lives of the saints. Edda Fischer, in her inventory of the *exempla* which Delrio excerpted, counted thirty (or over 10% of the total) from Surius alone.⁶⁵ The saints helped prove that the devil could temporarily adopt the form of the innocent, enchant animals, and deceive women about demonic flight.⁶⁶ By turning demonology into philology and history, the Jesuit evaded *discretio spirituum*. The *Disquisitiones* established, for those who accepted the truth of its varied collection of *exempla*, the theoretical reality of witchcraft, it offered very little by way of useful, practical advice.⁶⁷

Also in 1600, Delrio published the *Commonitorium* composed by St Orientius (fl. 5th century AD), an early medieval poem which Baronio had feared lost. “It had been found and obtained through the diligence of our Heribert Rosweyde” and transcribed and edited by Delrio.⁶⁸ The Jesuit had expressed the hope that “if this work is approved, perhaps God will provide so that I may provide the other writings of other pious fathers which have not yet seen the light.”⁶⁹ The next year Delrio published the work of St Aldhelm (ca. 639–709), another early medieval poet-bishop.⁷⁰

In the final pages of his *Disquisitiones*, Delrio launched a polemic, defending one saint, Dionysius the Areopagite, against the sceptical Joseph Scaliger. Delrio was by no means the first Jesuit to attack Scaliger. Rosweyde, as we saw, had celebrated the wider Jesuit polemic two years earlier. The Huguenot scholar had questioned the veracity of the so-called Dionysian corpus, ascribed (in the sixth century) to Dionysius the Areopagite, the Athenian convert of Paul mentioned in Acts 17:34. The conflict was particularly venomous—it ended with Delrio composing a pamphlet disputing which of the two men was a beetle.⁷¹ But in its less heated moments Delrio par-

⁶⁵ Edda Fischer, *Die “Disquisitionum magicarum libri sex” von Martin Delrio als gegenreformatorische Exempel-Quelle* (Frankfurt: Johann Wolfgang Goethe-Universität, 1975), 127, 131–32.

⁶⁶ Delrio, *Disq.* 1:160, 1:174 (ref. to Jerome’s life of Hilarion), 1:186 (lives of Macarius and Germanus).

⁶⁷ Machielsen, “Marvellously consistent.”

⁶⁸ Martin Delrio, *S. Orientii Episcopi Illiberitani commonitorium* (Antwerp, 1600), 8. “inventum id diligentia Heriberti Rosueydi nostri, impetratumque.”

⁶⁹ Delrio, *Commonitorium*, 8. “Si labor iste probatur, forte dabit Deus ut dem alium alia piorum Patrum scripta, quae nondum lucem adspexerunt.”

⁷⁰ Martin Delrio, *S. Aldhelmi [...] poetica nonnulla* (Mainz, 1601).

⁷¹ Martin Delrio, *Peniculus foriarum elenchi Scaligeriani* ([Antwerp], 1609), 101–8. The motto of this pamphlet was Proverbs 26:5; “Answer a fool according to his folly,

ticularly defended the possibility of texts resurfacing after many centuries. “How many books have lain hidden for many centuries which later came forth into the light?”⁷² Delrio drew attention to the large number of recent discoveries made and published by Jesuits, including himself.⁷³ There can be little doubt that Rosweyde published Delrio’s Dionysian pamphlets—they were written in Spain but appeared in Antwerp. In his memorandum, Rosweyde blamed the delay of his saints’ project in part on his being charged with publishing the writings of fellow Jesuits.⁷⁴

Delrio’s interest in saints, their writings, and their lives therefore was long-standing. Having published saintly poetry together with Rosweyde, there is sufficient evidence to substantiate a mutual interest. It is in part through Rosweyde’s notes that Delrio’s writings made their way into the *Acta Sanctorum*.⁷⁵ The evidence to tie Delrio directly to the *Fasti Sanctorum*, however, is slender. Delrio left the Low Countries late in the summer of 1600, first for Austria, later for Spain; just under a year before Rosweyde contacted Rome. Only one mention of Delrio in these years has survived amid Rosweyde’s scattered papers. Among the very few responses to the *Fasti* that have been preserved, is the enthusiastic reply of the Douai-born Jesuit, Antonius Laubegois (1572–1626).⁷⁶ Writing from Coimbra, he also thought to inform Rosweyde that “you will have heard, I believe, that Father Delrio is retained at [the Jesuit College of] Valladolid.”⁷⁷

With Rosweyde’s other writings, we are on firmer ground. While teaching at the Jesuit College of Bordeaux in the 1580s, Delrio came across a manuscript written, or so it seemed, by one Evagrius the Deacon, “on the lives of the saintly monks who he saw in Egypt.”⁷⁸ “A worthy author,” Delrio commented in his notes on Senecan trag-

lest he be wise in his own conceit.”

⁷² Martin Delrio, *Vindiciae Areopagiticae* (Antwerp, 1607), 31. “Quot enim libri multis saeculis latuerunt, qui postea prodierunt in lucem?”

⁷³ Delrio, *Vindiciae*, 31.

⁷⁴ Rosweyde, “Plan conçu,” 266–67.

⁷⁵ A full-text search of the *Acta Sanctorum* database reveals that Delrio was cited in the dossiers of 21 saints; at least one of these references carries Rosweyde’s stamp: AS, 2:129 “& ex eo Rosweyodus hic.”

⁷⁶ On Laubegois, see Audenaert, *PIBA*, 2:52.

⁷⁷ Antonius Laubegois to Heribert Rosweyde, 28 May 1608, MSS 8590–8599, fol. 125, KBr, Brussels. “Audiveritis credo P. Delrio Vallisoleti retineri.”

⁷⁸ Martin Delrio, *Syntagma tragoediae latinae*, 3 vols. (Antwerp, 1593–94), 3:552. “tres libros de vita sanctorum Monachorum, quos in Aegypto vidit, conscripsit.”

edy, “who should see the light at some point.”⁷⁹ Delrio—wrongly—believed this collection of lives to be different from a relatively well-known collection called the *Vitae Patrum*.⁸⁰ This collection of lives of the Desert Fathers had appeared in print as early as 1475, falsely ascribed to Jerome. Rosweyde, when he published the first critical edition of the *Vitae Patrum* (1615, 2nd ed. 1628), pointed out and excused Delrio’s error.⁸¹ This edition, the one instance where Rosweyde put his plans into practice, also marked him out as Delrio’s disciple. Rosweyde did not experience a sudden conversion to hagiography; his interests in hagiography were long-standing. They had been fostered by a teacher whose *Vita* he later composed.

3. *Heretical Saints and Textual Discernment*

On 12 May 1628, Heribert Rosweyde wrote to an unidentified clerical correspondent on a rather delicate matter—errors had crept into the Roman Martyrology, the result of mistakes made by none other than Cesare Baronio, the celebrated Church historian.⁸² Catholics traced the origins of the *Martyrologium Romanum* (containing the liturgical offices of all saints, not just martyrs) back to Pope Clement in the first century AD.⁸³ A revised martyrology was imposed on the whole Catholic Church by Gregory XIII (pope 1572–85) as part of his wider project of calendar reform. This was no immaculate conception; Baronio revised (and annotated) the work twice under Sixtus V (pope 1585–90) and used it to advertise his *Annales Ecclesiastici*.⁸⁴ The impact of these attempts to standardise liturgy and worship were

⁷⁹ Delrio, *Syntagma*, 3:552–53. “dignus scriptor, qui lucem aliquando aspiciat.”

⁸⁰ Delrio, *Syntagma*, 3:553. “alius omnino ab illo cuius feruntur a nonnullis Patrum vitae.”

⁸¹ Heribert Rosweyde, *Vitae Patrum: De vita et verbis seniorum sive historiae eremiticae libri X*, 2nd ed. (Antwerp, 1628), xvi.

⁸² Heribert Rosweyde to an unknown clerical correspondent, 12 May 1628, Arch. 76, fols. 407–430, Museum Plantin-Moretus [henceforth, MPM], Antwerp. The salutation, “R[everen]de in Xr[ist]o Pater,” strongly suggests a fellow Jesuit. For a very useful introduction to Baronio’s scholarship, see Giuseppe Antonio Guazzelli, “Cesare Baronio and the Roman Catholic Vision of the Early Church,” in Van Liere et al., *Sacred History*, 52–71.

⁸³ e.g., Caesare Baronio, ed., *Sacrum Martyrologium Romanum* (Cologne, 1590), ii; Ribadeneira, *Flos sanctorum*, sig. ¶5v.

⁸⁴ Baronio, *Sacrum Martyrologium Romanum*, sig. +2rv; see also Machielsen, “The Counter Reformation.”

felt across the Church. Simon Ditchfield has studied how local *Baronii* sought to accommodate locally venerated saints within this newly enforced, universal framework.⁸⁵ Yet, for Antwerp savants the Roman Martyrology contained, if anything, too many rather than too few saints. In 1620, Rosweyde's collaborator Aubertus Miraëus, confronted with the prospect of another round of additions, exclaimed; "But really! If the Romans proceed in this fashion, we will shortly have a Martyrology that is twice as large."⁸⁶

For Rosweyde eight years later, the problem was another set of additions. More precisely, it was Baronio's (mis-)use of the Greek Menology, which had led the historian to translate saints of dubious legitimacy into the Roman Martyrology. Menologies were akin to breviaries in the Roman tradition. They were of liturgical importance first and of historical relevance second. Although Rosweyde wrote with obvious restraint, it is clear that Baronio's misreadings were troubling him. St Martha included on 20 September, for instance, "is not a saint and companion of St Susanna, but rather her mother who died in impiety."⁸⁷ Another, non-Menology related inclusion was, in the Jesuit's eyes, even more egregious. Baronio had taken one St Rutilius from Tertullian, a particularly problematic early Church Father in terms of orthodoxy.⁸⁸

What if, as this Rutilius has never appeared in the Roman Martyrology [i.e., before Baronio], someone begins to doubt whether he truly is a Martyr! For when Tertullian, being already a Montanist, calls Rutilius a most sacred Martyr, does it appear probable that a heretic himself wished to give a Roman Catholic the title of saint? It could therefore be that Rutilius was perhaps a Montanist. I timidly suggest that this may appear worthy of consideration.⁸⁹

⁸⁵ Ditchfield, *Liturgy, Sanctity, and History*.

⁸⁶ Aubertus Miraëus to Heribert Rosweyde, 31 October 1620. Bernard Joassart, "Un lettre inédite d'Aubert Le Mire à Héribert Rosweyde," in *Analecta Bollandiana; Revue critique d'hagiographie*, 124, no. 1 (2006): 44. "Sed heus! Si sic pergunt Romani, duplo auctius brevi habebimus Martyrologium." On Miraëus's assistance to Rosweyde: AS, xliii.

⁸⁷ Letter by Rosweyde, 12 May 1628, Arch. 76, fol. 423, MPM, Antwerp. "Hic Martha non est sancta et socia S. Susannae, sed potius mater eius, quae in impietate obiit."

⁸⁸ On the ambivalent reception of Tertullian in the early modern period, see: Irena Backus, *Historical Method and Confessional Identity in the Era of the Reformation (1378-1615)* (Leiden: Brill, 2003), 152-72.

⁸⁹ Letter by Rosweyde, 12 May 1628, Arch. 76, fol. 408. "Quid si quispiam, cum

Rosweyde put forward here one, perhaps unusual version of the problem of discernment. Until the Second Vatican Council (1962–65), the Roman Martyrology was read every morning in the Divine Office at Prime. Rosweyde’s suggestion that the Church may have worshipped “impious” heretics was itself therefore potentially subversive, and if the epistle was ever sent to Rome, it fell on deaf ears.⁹⁰

Rosweyde’s anxieties concerning the Roman Martyrology were long-standing. In 1613, Rosweyde published an edition of the Martyrology, to which he appended an early medieval counterpart. The previous summer he returned to his printer, Balthasar Moretus, a copy of the Roman Martyrology which he had corrected for this publication:

See here the Martyrology of Baronio, and I thank you for its use. I have repeatedly corrected definite (*certas*) errors in numbers, and such things. Other graver ones I have kept to myself, on which another time. Because I would not dare anything in this, except with the agreement of the Romans.⁹¹

It is very well possible that Rosweyde gave expression to these long-held sentiments in 1628, when the Martyrology was undergoing revision in Rome.⁹² Rosweyde’s focus is instructive. He did not question the truth of the original sources, only their interpretation; for Rosweyde a concern for truth had been transplanted by a concern for orthodoxy. A pre-occupation with the latter made other forms of discernment immaterial.

Rutilius hic nunquam in Romano Martyrologio comparuerit, dubitare incipiat, an vere Martyr sit! Nam cum Tertullianus iam Montanista existens Rutilium vocet sanctissimum Martyrem, verone simile videtur, quod Romano-Catholicum sanctitatis nomine ipse haereticus afficere voluerit? fuerit igitur Rutilius hic forte Montanista. Hoc timide suggero, ut videatur an consideratione dignum sit.”

⁹⁰ Rutilius remains included; *Martyrologium Romanum ex decreto sacrosancti oecumenici concilii Vaticani II instauratum auctoritate Ioannis Pauli PP. II promulgatum* (Vatican City: Vatican Press, 2001), 408. Both Martha and her pious daughter Susanna were removed some time after the eighteenth century. They were still present in *Martyrologium Romanum* (Venice, 1792), 186.

⁹¹ Heribert Rosweyde to Balathasar Moretus, 29 August 1612, Arch. 92, fol. 795, MPM, Antwerp. “Ecce Martyrologium Baronii, et gratias ago pro usura. Subinde certos errores numerorum et similium correxii. Alia graviora mihi servavi, de quibus alias. Nec enim ausim quidquam in iis, sine Romanorum consensu.”

⁹² A revised Martyrology was published under Urban VIII in 1630: Hippolyte Delehaye, “Martyrology,” in *The Catholic Encyclopedia*, vol. 9 (New York: Robert Appleton Company, 1910), <http://www.newadvent.org/cathen/09741a.htm>.

By contrast, the main concerns which faced Jean Bolland were precisely these more easily imagined ones: first, whether the events recounted in the sources actually took place, and second, the traditional problem of *discretio spirituum*, whether events and visions were divinely inspired or of demonic origin. It was the first concern, which particularly pre-occupied Rosweyde's self-styled successor. Bolland claimed that his method of editing saints' lives, which he contrasted with Rosweyde's method of *non*-editing, restored faith in their veracity. Bolland was particularly pleased with how well his method had coped with the Bishop of Glasgow, St Kentigern (d. ca. 612).⁹³ Bolland had prefaced the flawed, medieval saints' life with an introduction for which he had collated the remaining evidence for the saint's birth, parentage, age, and writings (but, crucially, no miracles).⁹⁴ In other words, Bolland established a historical core to the saint that could not be doubted and that, in his view, would bolster the saint's authenticity. While setting out his method in the general introduction, the Jesuit offered the Kentigern preface as evidence for his success.

I asked a certain man, very learned and well-versed in the writers of English affairs, when he had a conversation with me on the lives of the saints, what he thought about John Capgrave (1393–1464) or his *Sanctorum Angliae Legenda* [Legends of English Saints]. He either wrote fables on the most saintly men, he said, or collected them. “You disapprove of all of them then?” “The majority,” he said. I [Bolland] admit that those foolishly and incompetently written texts, which I do not wish, exist. But what does he think of Kentigern? He was, he said, a man of apostolic life (*vir Apostolicus*) but his life swarms with inventions. After I asked what he would reject above all, I offered to let him read what was already composed by me, asking him to cast his light [upon it]. When he had read it, he said, “many divine histories that have so far been scorned will be pleasing to the erudite, when they will be illustrated in this way, even though nothing is blander than style (*stylus*).”⁹⁵

⁹³ On Kentigern, see Dauvit Broun, “Kentigern (d. 612x14),” *Oxford Dictionary of National Biography* (Oxford: Oxford UP, 2004–), <http://www.oxforddnb.com/view/article/15426>, who doubts whether there was even a diocese of Glasgow in this period.

⁹⁴ AS, 815–16.

⁹⁵ AS, xxiv. “Vir quidam eruditissimus, & in Anglicanarum rerum Scriptoribus versatissimus, cum mecum de Sanctorum Vitis haberet sermonem, rogatus a me est, quid de Ioanne Capgrauio, eiusve Sanctorum Angliae Legenda sentiret. De sanc-

Bolland's principle of discernment lies in an appeal to credibility and communal consensus of, at least, the well-educated. Bolland realized that an appeal to probability would falter in the face of the miraculous or, as he happily conceded, ridiculous events recounted. "I admit that what the most stupid demons have plotted to shake the constancy of the Saints in the pursuit of prayer and other virtues is ridiculous. You may be uncertain whether this was more out of [the demons'] madness or [their] cunning, but I deny that it is ridiculous to recount them."⁹⁶ Even if they were ridiculous, they were certainly not incredible. Bolland claimed that "if Livy or Salust had reported that this had happened, you would have believed it, I think, but you would have said they had been done by demonic illusions."⁹⁷ It is a comment that is not only hugely revealing of early modern attitudes towards classical sources but also of the apparent similarity of demonic and divine that so troubled contemporaries.

It is clear, then, that of the two concerns—the actuality of the events described and their meaning (the actual *discretio spirituum*)—it is the former that Bolland felt most in need of defending. Bolland remained concerned, even when discussing miraculous events, with the fact that they might be entirely discounted, rather than that they might be demonic in origin. Certainly, the fact that these saints were recognized by the Church mitigated concerns for the latter. But Bolland acknowledged the fundamental issues involved. Miracles could never be instantly dismissed, not even on grounds of a stupendous quantity or eery similarity. Bolland defended the abundance of miracles in the British Isles "because truly in working wonders of this sort, God accommodates himself to the simplicity and faith of men," and the particular simplicity of life of the inhab-

tissimis hominibus, inquit, fabulas vel scripsit, vel collegit. Omniane ergo, inquam, improbas? Pleraque, ait. Fateor esse quae ita imperite ac inepte scripta nollem: at de Kentigerno quid videtur? Fuit, inquit, vir Apostolicus, sed figmentis scatet vita. Sciscitatus quid praecipue reiiceret, quae iam a me excusa de eo erant, legenda obtuli, rogavi ut afferret lucem. Cum legisset, Multae, inquit, spretae hactenus Diuorum historiae, vbi sic erunt illustratae, etsi stylo nil insipidius, arridebunt tamen eruditibus."

⁹⁶ AS, xxxviii. "Ridicula sunt fateor quae stolidissimi daemones ad Sanctorum labefactandam in precandi studio aliisque virtutibus constantiam machinati sunt, dubites maiori furore an vafritie: nego tamen ridiculum esse ea narrari."

⁹⁷ AS, xxxviii. "Si Livius aut Salustius haec narraret accidisse, crederes, opinor, sed daemonum praestigiis facta diceres."

itants of these isles—“or else certainly because of their more simple authors.”⁹⁸ And he admitted that the same type of miracles were often ascribed to multiple saints. This could be due to the weakness of human memory (which led to confusing saints with each other), but similar saints were tested in a similar fashion. Given God’s greatness and goodness, “these [events] may not perhaps have been done, but greater things could have been done by God and others have been done [by Him]. Beware, therefore, of denying deeds because they could not or should not have happened.”⁹⁹

In the face of these difficulties the responsibility for discernment devolves onto the reader. And Bolland seeks to instil him with courage, given the power and efficacy of truth. “Not even that of wine is as great, although that also drives the wise mad; nor that of a king, on whose command the life and death of his people is dependent; nor that of a woman, whose vehement love is accustomed to lead to madness.”¹⁰⁰ The reader was told not to fear inconsequential mistakes and not be afraid to err. “What does it matter whether St George killed a true dragon or a metaphorical one?”¹⁰¹ This way Bolland shifted part of the responsibility for discernment onto the fearless reader. The *Acta* were variously a source (*fons*), a mine, and a forest. Bolland had identified the seam of raw material, but it was up to the reader to mine and purify the material and exchange the proceeds for eternal rewards with the celestial treasury.¹⁰² The hagiographer is too visible in Bolland’s account for the lives to be a transparent eyeglass, another common metaphor, but Bolland had set great store on the efficacy of these texts—and of the divine—to inspire their reader on a level well-removed from reason, in the way

⁹⁸ AS, xxxiv. “Quia vero in eiusmodi patrandis prodigijs sese fere simplicitati ac fidei hominum Deus attemperat;” “vel certe quia simpliciores Scriptores.”

⁹⁹ AS, xxxiv. “ea facta non sint fortassis: at fieri maiora potuere a Deo, & facta alias. Cave igitur ideo neges facta, quia fieri non potuerint aut debuerint.”

¹⁰⁰ AS, xxxviii. “Nosti quae vis & efficacitas sit veritatis, quanta neque vino inest, licet etiam sapientes dementet; neque Regi, cuius tamen nutu vita morsque subiecti populi constat; neque mulieri, cuius solet esse amor ad insaniam vehemens.” The first part of the comparison is a reference to the Latin proverb “in vino veritas.” e.g., Pliny the Elder, *Naturalis historia* 14:141. I am grateful to Juliane Kerkhecker for this reference.

¹⁰¹ AS, xxxviii. “Occiderit S. Georgius draconem verum, an metaphoricum, quid interest?”

¹⁰² AS, xxv.

they had once moved Ignatius.¹⁰³ Prominent Protestant scholars, such as William Camden (1551–1623) and Gerardus Vossius (1577–1649), had used saints’ lives seriously in their studies, and Bolland hoped for a very similar, beneficial effect on them. “If only at some point their minds are stirred up by this reading, so that they might finally surrender their hands, souls, and pens to Catholic concord and charity.”¹⁰⁴

I argue that the profound differences in attitude towards heresy expressed by Rosweyde and Bolland explains their different approach to textual discernment. Bolland prayed for their conversion, but he refused to inveigh “more sharply” against the heretics.¹⁰⁵ Heretics mocked saints’ lives, it was true but, he wrote, “we do not write for them.”¹⁰⁶ It was the conversion of heretics, not their defeat that Bolland sought; Bolland’s writings differed sharply from Rosweyde’s but equally had a confessional purpose. As we have seen before when we assessed Rosweyde’s struggle with his superiors, there is a purposeful tendency to separate different strands that properly belong together. Bolland disapproved of Rosweyde’s polemics—they were works which he “gladly” (*lubens*) passed over—and he criticised Rosweyde’s editorial approach to saints’ lives.¹⁰⁷ These two facets of Rosweyde’s thought can only be criticised as frivolous and incoherent when considered separately.

Unlike the *Acta Sanctorum*, the intent of the *Fasti Sanctorum* was polemical. Whereas Bolland in his opening paragraphs stressed the importance of hagiography in its own right, Rosweyde’s mind never strayed far from the fight with heretics.¹⁰⁸ “There is,” he concluded a lengthy argument, “no healthier, no easier medicine to the wounds [inflicted by] the heretics, than the life, struggle, and death of the saints.”¹⁰⁹ Bolland, in his prayer, did refer to saints’ lives confirming Catholic dogma, but for Rosweyde the confirmation and

¹⁰³ AS, xxxviii. On the image of saints as eyeglasses to be looked *through* rather than *at*, see Massimo Leone, *Saints and Signs: A Semiotic Reading of Conversion in Early Modern Catholicism* (Berlin: De Gruyter, 2010), 4.

¹⁰⁴ AS, xxxviii. “Utinam eorum aliquando ista lectione commoueantur mentes, ut tandem Catholicae caritati & concordiae manus, animos, calamos dedant.”

¹⁰⁵ AS, lix–lx; xxx. “acrius in eos non invehor.”

¹⁰⁶ AS, xxxviii. “Illis non scribimus.”

¹⁰⁷ AS, x.

¹⁰⁸ AS, xiii.

¹⁰⁹ FS, 7. “Ita non salubrior, non facilius Haereticorum vulnere medicina, quam SS. vita, pugna, mors.”

defence of Catholicism took centre stage.¹¹⁰ In the *Fasti*, the imagery of the saints is used to full, violent effect.

Truly, [heretics] shudder at the cult of sacred relics in the case of the Martyr, the vow of chastity in the case of the Virgin, and the uninterrupted course (*tenor*) of Ecclesiastical rites in the Confessor. And the rose of the Martyrs therefore punctures with its thorn the wicked evil-doer, the lily of the Virgins blinds the eyes of the enchanted with its radiance, the violet of the Confessors with its odour kills the poisonous toads.¹¹¹

Late in life Rosweyde described his polemical ventures, which Bolland considered distractions, as “leaving therefore the sepulchres (*armariis*) of the saints, I turned myself to their arsenals (*armamentaria*).”¹¹²

In contrast to Bolland’s editorial approach, Rosweyde’s was marked by the conviction that the only obstacle had been their editing so far. Rosweyde’s method was philological; limited to criticism of Surius’s concerns for style and saintly vestments. In the *Fasti* he outlined a two-step process: “first, to seek out from everywhere the lives published by others, such as Lipomani, Surius, etc.” and “second, to confer the same lives with the manuscripts and old books.”¹¹³ And this, for the “two-fold reason” (*caussa duplici*) of unwarranted concern for style and for the omission (read:

¹¹⁰ AS, lx.

¹¹¹ FS, 6. “Nempe horrent in Martyre sacrarum Reliquiarum cultum, in Virgine Castitatis votum, in Confessore tenorem Ecclesiasticorum rituum. Ita Martyrum rosa nefarium temeratore spina sua pungit, lilia Virginum candore suo fascinantium oculos praestinguunt, Confessorum viola odore suo venenatas rubetas exanimat.”

¹¹² Rosweyde, *Vitae Patrum*, sig. *6r. “Relictis igitur Sanctorum armariis ad Sanctorum armamentaria me converti.” The choice for “sancitorum,” an unusual neologism, is an odd one. Ecclesiastical Latin had coined the word “sancitus” (hallowed, ratified) as the perfect participle of “sancio,” in order to avoid the inevitable confusion with “sanctus” (the original participle) but I have not been able to find a single instance of this participle in the genitive plural elsewhere. Nevertheless, Rosweyde’s word play highlights interchangeability of “sanctus” and “sancitus,” and the link between the two words was perfectly clear. See, for instance, the following comment by a contemporary of Rosweyde in relation to St Francis of Assisi: Laurentius a Brundusio, *Opera omnia*, vol. 9, *Sanctorale* (Padua: Officina typographica seminarii, 1944), 173. “Latine dicitur sanctus quasi sancitus, confirmatus, nam sanctus est qui in fide, spe et caritate confirmatus est.” Originally retrieved from the Library of Latin Texts (Brepolis).

¹¹³ FS, 11. “i. Conquirere undique vitas ab aliis editas, ut Aloysio, Surio, &c. ii. Easdem vitas cum MS. & veteribus libris conferre.”

suppression) of prologues, miracles, and more obscure facts.¹¹⁴ Rosweyde's plan, as set out in the *Fasti*, was for unmediated access to (early) medieval prose, with the notes relegated to two separate volumes of "illustrations," only the first of which would offer "annotations."¹¹⁵ In his response to Rosweyde, Robert Bellarmine worried that the original documents would inspire "laughter rather than edification."¹¹⁶ Rosweyde was not swayed. To the charge that the original lives contained "many fables and digressions," he conceded that "he did not plan to reinsert [what was] well excised by Surius," but, he continued, his plan remained "to recall the acts of the martyrs and lives of the saints to their original and genuine style so that faith in their antiquity and simplicity shall remain."¹¹⁷ Doubting these writings, even in part, would be a concession to the heretics.

Rosweyde's philological approach may seem unsophisticated; it certainly was void of all discernment, which, by its very essence, was an act of separating truth from specious appearance. From Bolland's perspective it was deficient in many ways; the relegation of notes to a separate volume and the absence of saints who lacked a *vita* were especially criticised.¹¹⁸ Bolland, as we saw, was much less enamoured with the idea of unmediated access to medieval texts. Ending his example of his reworked Life of St Kentigern, Bolland concluded with either irony or false humility: "What would then have happened if Rosweyde himself with his singular erudition had set out and embellished (*ornassetque*) the same? How much more prominent would the brilliance of truth be, thus far obscured or corrupted by some barbarism of the times!"¹¹⁹ This end result was in any case, as Rosweyde's criticism makes clear, not something he

¹¹⁴ *FS*, 11.

¹¹⁵ *FS*, 8–9.

¹¹⁶ Robert Bellarmine to Heribert Rosweyde, 7 March 1608. Charles De Smedt, "Les Fondateurs du Bollandisme," in *Mélanges Godefroid Kurth*, 2 vols. (Liège: Vailant-Carmanne, 1908), 1:295–303, here 1:297–98. "risum potius quam aedificationem."

¹¹⁷ Rosweyde, "Plan conçu," 268. "Nec enim statuit bene a Surio recisa rursus inserere, sed acta martyrum et vitas sanctorum ad germanum et genuinum stylum revocare, ut sua antiquitati et sinceritati stet fides."

¹¹⁸ *AS*, xxiii–xxiv.

¹¹⁹ *AS*, xxiv. "Quid si ergo ipse ea sua singulari eruditione digessisset ornassetque Rosweyodus, quanto illustrior emicuisset obscuratae hactenus aut nescio qua temporum barbarie infusatae splendor veritatis?"

would have had in mind.

When seen in the light of Rosweyde's editorial principles, Rosweyde's criticism of Baronio's additions to the Roman Martyrology is less surprising. The Jesuit's concern for possibly heretical saints was linked to his faith in the original material. Baronio, whom Rosweyde had translated into Dutch, defended against the Huguenot scholar Isaac Casaubon, and invariably quoted in prefaces and general introductions, had been led astray by an anthology, not an original source.¹²⁰ Having studied Rosweyde's approach, we can now also discern the full extent of his debt to Delrio. In insisting on a form of philology based solely on the comparison of manuscripts, Rosweyde had followed principles set out in Delrio's edition of Senecan tragedy—there, Delrio had likened speculative emendation, not based on manuscript evidence, to divination.¹²¹ Contemporaries generally saw divination as a positive metaphor for philological prowess; for instance, a Protestant correspondent had described Joseph Scaliger as “an oracle, not a God” to a bemused Rosweyde.¹²² For Delrio, the connotation was strongly negative; a stance he reiterated in the *Orientius* edition on which Rosweyde and Delrio had worked together.

I have put conjectures for emendations in the margin [of the book], and I supplied notes shedding some light on the book, being careful that I do not assign too much to audacious divination. It is better for certain things to be left intact, than for new wounds to be inflicted.¹²³

Rosweyde also followed Delrio's praise of stylistic simplicity. Delrio had insisted that every genre had its own style and that theologians

¹²⁰ For Rosweyde's defence of Baronio, see Heribert Rosweyde, *Lex Talionis XII tabularum* (Antwerp, 1614); his translation of Henri de Sponde's epitome of the *Annales Ecclesiastici*: Rosweyde, *Generale kerckelycke historie*; for praise of Baronio, e.g., *FS*, 11.

¹²¹ Such charges are to be found throughout Delrio's notes, to offer just one example: Delrio, *Syntagma*, 3:46.

¹²² Petrus Scriverius to Heribert Rosweyde, ca. 1602. (Letter 13) Antonius Matthaëus, *Veteris aevi analecta seu vetera monumenta*, 2nd ed., vol. 3 (The Hague, 1738), 704–9, here 704–5. “oraculum, non Deum, Scaligerum.” Rosweyde's critical reply has not been preserved but some of its contents may be deduced from Scriverius's answer. See *ibid.*, 712–16 (Letter 12; the numbering of the letters is not consecutive).

¹²³ Delrio, *Commonitorium*, 8. “coniecturas emendationum in marginem reieci, & libello Notulas lucis aliquid adlaturas subieci, cavens ne nimis audaci divinationi tribuerem. praestat quaedam intacta relinqui, quam nova vulnera infligi.”

should imitate and adopt a simple, Christian writing style. It was a passage the disciple copied out at length in his teacher's *Vita*.¹²⁴

For Rosweyde—and Delrio—, veracity was not a cause for concern because heresy had substituted falsehood. Either a text was true or it was heretical. If it was conducive to Catholic doctrine, one could not possibly deny its authenticity. Rosweyde's saints bore witness to, and defended, relics, celibacy, and Church rites but, by virtue of their opposition, so did the heretics. Catholic truth and heretical falsehood were complementary. While Catholics pursued the lives of the saints, "our heretics attacked all others, [proceeding] on an altogether different road towards impiety."¹²⁵ By eschewing divination, by turning discernment into the simple collation of available manuscripts, the hagiographer ought to have disappeared from view. But the polemical attitude that inspired the literal, philological approach to saints' lives impeded such transparency. As committed Catholics, who themselves had suffered for their faith, Delrio and Rosweyde became the arbiters of a new standard of evidence, defined by their personal opposition to heresy. Theirs was a mentality forged during civil war and exile.

Simon Ditchfield has already noted that the *Fasti Sanctorum* emerged, not from Catholicism's Mediterranean heartlands, but from the fragile frontiers of the Roman Catholic world.¹²⁶ This is an important insight, and the same observation holds true, of course, for the *Acta*. It should, however, be pointed out that a generational gulf separated Bolland, born when Catholicism had confidently reasserted itself in the Southern Netherlands, from his predecessors.¹²⁷ The *Vitae Sanctorum* project espoused by Rosweyde emerged at a particular junction in time and place, where late humanist philology and religious polemic overlapped. Rosweyde was not "distracted" by polemic from hagiography; the *Fasti* themselves had clear polemical overtones. Rosweyde's impact on the editorial

¹²⁴ Cf. [Rosweyde], *Vita*, 33–34, and, Martin Delrio, *Florida Mariana, sive de laudibus sacratissimae virginis deiparae panegyrici XIII* (Antwerp, 1598), 7–8.

¹²⁵ *FS*, 4. "Alia omnia Haeretici nostri, alia omnino via ad impietatem grassantur."

¹²⁶ Ditchfield, "Thinking with Saints," 574–75.

¹²⁷ On the emergence of a distinctly Catholic identity in the Spanish Netherlands, see Judith Pollmann, *Catholic Identity and the Revolt of the Netherlands, 1520–1635* (Oxford: Oxford UP, 2011); and on the role played by Jesuits: Jos Andriessen, *De Jezuïeten en het samenhorighheidsbesef der Nederlanden, 1585–1648* (Antwerp: De Nederlandsche Boekhandel, 1957).

practice of the *Acta Sanctorum* was, as we have seen, fairly limited. His certainty was replaced with the possibility of doubt and an emphasis on the faith both of the reader and, as we shall see, the hagiographer. It is tempting therefore to relegate these early efforts to the sidelines. But Bolland, I suggested, enlarged Rosweyde's role for reasons to do with the sacred nature of hagiography, and it is to the representation of the hagiographer that we must now turn. Paradoxically, it is here that Bolland's greatest debt to his predecessor lies.

4. *Saint and Hagiographer*

"The death of the just is an aid to the good, and a testimony to the bad; because from it the evil may perish without being excused, and the elect take it as an example so they may live."¹²⁸ The motto, which Rosweyde had picked for his *Martini Antonii Del-Rio [...] Vita* (Life of Martinus Antonius Delrio, 1609) was suitably polemical. Perhaps, it was more to point out the polemical intent than to seriously obscure his authorship that the work appeared under a pseudonym.¹²⁹ Even when composing the Delrio *Vita*, saints were not far from Rosweyde's mind. In the *Vita*, Rosweyde stressed the importance of their imitation. Rosweyde maintained that Delrio had

¹²⁸ [Rosweyde], *Vita*, sig. *4v. "Mors iustorum bonis est in adiutorium, malis in testimonium; ut inde perversi sine excusatione pereant, unde electi exemplum capiunt, ut vivant." The provenance is curious in light of Rosweyde's professed attachment to primary sources. Rosweyde cites Gregory the Great on Matthew 10 as his source. The passage in Gregory, however, relates to an explication of Luke 21:9–19: Gregory the Great, "Homilia XXXV," *XL homiliarum in Evangelia libri duo*, book 2, in *Patrologia latina*, series secunda, vol. 76 (Paris: Migne, 1849–55), 1259–65, here col. 1261A. Available through the *Patrologia Latina Database* (ProQuest), <http://pld.chadwyck.co.uk>. Rosweyde seems to have relied on an anthology, possibly Thomas Hibernicus, *Flores omnium pene doctorum, qui tum in theologia, tum in philosophia hactenus claruerunt* (Cologne, 1577), 605 (easily found under the heading "mors"). Cf. Rosweyde's "D. Gregor. in X. Matth." with the marginal note "Gre. super Mat. 10 In testim. illis, &c."

¹²⁹ As indicated above in footnote 60, the *Vita* contains both excerpts from letters by Justus Lipsius and Martin Delrio to Rosweyde. The pseudonym Hermannus Lange-veltius is reminiscent of Heribert Rosweyde's name—both "veld" and "weide" are a "field" in Dutch. The MPM archives also show Rosweyde buying copies of the work alongside additional copies of the *Fasti*: e.g., Sales Catalogue 1609, 31 August 1609, Arch. 216, fol. 144v, MPM, Antwerp, where Rosweyde buys three copies of the *Vita* and one copy of the *Fasti*.

followed the example of John of Damascus (ca. 645–749) so closely that the process was akin to soul migration.¹³⁰ Like John, Delrio had fought the iconoclasts. Heretics feared Delrio, more than the Greeks had feared Hector and the Trojans Achilles.¹³¹ Also like John, Delrio had been an ardent follower of the Virgin Mary.¹³² And like John, the Jesuit, born for the magistracy, turned to a religious vocation late in life, “as if a young novice, becom[ing] a boy again for Christ’s sake.”¹³³ The reader was invited to reflect on and participate in this imitative chain. Delrio, who had imitated, was now in turn worthy of imitation. “They, who with St Paul are ‘fools for Christ’s sake’ [1 Corinthians 4:10], when they read these [texts], admire the virtues of these men [John and Delrio] and are stimulated by a form of useful rivalry to represent those deeds with their own actions.”¹³⁴

Imitation was an age-old Christian practice. In a later passage then cited by Rosweyde, Paul had already enjoined the Corinthians: “Be imitators of me, as I am of Christ.” (1 Cor. 11:1) It is a passage that Surius, among others, had adapted in his defence of the worship of saints.¹³⁵ To draw out the particular excellence of Christian imitation, Bolland opened with the pagan example of Julius Caesar’s emulation of Alexander the Great.¹³⁶

Truly, these [examples] are a great deal more frequent and illustrious among Christians. How few undertake anything great, who do not propose to themselves an example of one out of the rank of saints? Who, when he hears their deeds commemorated, is not inflamed by the desire to emulate them?¹³⁷

¹³⁰ [Rosweyde], *Vita*, 15.

¹³¹ [Rosweyde], *Vita*, 16.

¹³² [Rosweyde], *Vita*, 17.

¹³³ [Rosweyde], *Vita*, 20. “quasi novellus repuerascere propter Christum.”

¹³⁴ [Rosweyde], *Vita*, 21. “qui cum Apostolo *stulti propter Christum*, haec dum legunt, illorum virorum admirantur virtutes, & utili quadam aemulatione stimulantur ad eorum gesta suis factis adumbranda.”

¹³⁵ Laurentius Surius, *De Vitis Sanctorum*, vol. 1 (Venice, 1571), unpaginated folio preface (verso). “Imitatores nostri estote, sicut & nos Christi.” On the medieval use of this passage, see Thomas J. Heffernan, *Sacred Biography: Saints and Their Biographers in the Middle Ages* (Oxford: Oxford UP, 1988), 215.

¹³⁶ AS, xiii.

¹³⁷ AS, xiii. “Verum haec apud Christianos multo & frequentiora sunt & clariora. Quotusquisque magnum aliquid suscipit, qui non alicuius sibi e Caelitum numero proponat exemplum? Quis cum eorum audit commemorari facinora, non inflammatur aemulandi cupiditate?”

Saints were always more than intercessors with Christ; they were his imitators, who in turn were to be imitated. Not surprisingly, the imitative aspect of sanctity created a sizable number of similar (would-be) saints.¹³⁸ Saints were always to be admired *and* imitated—the precise balance between these actions, however, was subject of dispute already in the Middle Ages.¹³⁹

Aside from the polemical purposes to which imitation could be put, there are two other factors that explain the further emphasis on imitation in Rosweyde's work. Jesuit spirituality laid great stress on the importance of imitation; Ignatius of Loyola himself recalled wondering, as he embarked on his path towards sainthood: "What if I should do what St Francis did? What if I should act like St Dominic?"¹⁴⁰ Bolland had joined the Society of Jesus after reading Orazio Torsellino's life of Francis Xavier (1506–52), although he appears to have lacked any desire for overseas evangelising.¹⁴¹ For Rosweyde, we may wonder whether his discipleship was in itself an act of imitation; according to Rosweyde, Delrio had become an example to be imitated.

Imitative techniques were also given fresh impetus in the late medieval Netherlands by the lay religious movement known as the *Devotio Moderna*.¹⁴² Its most popular meditative text, the *Imitatio Christi*—the most popular spiritual book after the Bible, according to the early twentieth-century *Catholic Encyclopedia*—was edited, republished in Latin and translated into Dutch by Heribert Rosweyde.¹⁴³ Imitation was part of, but also moved beyond Rosweyde's polemical interests (although, not surprisingly, the *Imitatio* was subject to a polemical exchange as well).¹⁴⁴ The motto of the *Fasti*

¹³⁸ Gábor Klaniczay, "Legends as Life Strategies for Aspirant Saints in the Later Middle Ages," *Journal of Folklore Research* 26, no. 2 (1989): 151–71.

¹³⁹ Sarah Salih, *Versions of Virginity in Late Medieval England* (Cambridge: D. S. Brewer, 2001), 42–46.

¹⁴⁰ Ignatius of Loyola, *The Autobiography*, 25–26.

¹⁴¹ AS, xiv.

¹⁴² On the use of the Desert Fathers within the *Devotio Moderna*, see Mathilde van Dijk, "Disciples of the Deep Desert: Windesheim Biographers and the Imitation of the Desert Fathers," *Church History and Religious Culture* 86, no. 1 (2006): 257–89.

¹⁴³ Thomas a Kempis, *De Imitatione Christi libri quatuor*, ed. Heribert Rosweyde (Antwerp, 1617). On its popularity, see "Imitation of Christ," in *The Catholic Encyclopedia*, vol. 7, <http://www.newadvent.org/cathen/07674c.htm>.

¹⁴⁴ The polemic was directed against a fellow Catholic, the Benedictine monk (and custodian of the Vatican Library) Constantin Cajetan (1560–1650), who had

project likened the contemplation and imitation of the saints to the activity of painters, who “when they paint from other pictures, constantly look at the model, and do their best to transfer its lineaments to their own work.”¹⁴⁵ As already suggested, imitation seems at first sight at odds with Rosweyde’s philological approach to saints’ lives—these texts were no longer dead, the act of “painting” brought them back to life.

The emphasis on imitation also sets into relief Rosweyde’s own role and the personal sanctity of the hagiographer. As we have seen, the Jesuit portrayed himself as working almost single-handedly for “the glorification of the Catholic Church.” The analogy of the painter applies to the reader of saints’ lives mentally visualising their deeds, but it was particularly apt for their editor literally copying them. The Jesuit wrote that he intended to imitate the practices of painters to establish the most life-like portraits. Rosweyde’s correspondents should warn him if any painting or colour was lacking in his planned “Ecclesiastical picture gallery.”¹⁴⁶ The hagiographer as painter reproduced—imitated—the acts of the saints. While Bolland ignored the polemic that made up the bulk of Rosweyde’s introduction, he cited this passage at length.¹⁴⁷

Yet, the role of hagiographer was more than imitative. Rosweyde’s central realization, with which he opened the *Fasti Sanctorum*, was that sanctity, for it to be known, required a witness and a pen:

Those who desire [to leave] a name among posterity, have two [things] above all in their prayers; an erudite pen, and a [painter’s]

attributed the *De Imitatione* to a fellow Benedictine, the Italian abbot Giovanni Gersen. On the controversy, see Maximilian Von Habsburg, *Catholic and Protestant Translations of the Imitatio Christi, 1425–1650* (Aldershot: Ashgate, 2011), 196–97. On Cajetan, see Jean-Pierre Nicéron, *Mémoires pour servir à l’histoire des hommes illustres dans la république*, vol. 25 (Paris, 1734), 202–11. The tone of Rosweyde’s attack was not appreciated in Rome. Mutio Vitelleschi to Heribert Rosweyde, 20 May 1617, Fl. Belg. 3, fol. 342, ARSI, Rome.

¹⁴⁵ FS, [2]. “Quemadmodum pictores, cum imaginem ex imagine pingunt, exemplar identidem respectantes, lineamenta eius transferre conantur magno studio ad suum opificium.” The reference is to “D. Basil. Ep. 1. ad Gregorium Theologum.” The translation is taken from Basil of Caesarea, *On the Holy Spirit; Select Letters*, ed. Philip Schaff and Henry Wace, Nicene and Post-Nicene Fathers of the Christian Church, 2nd series (Grand Rapids: Eerdmans, 1996), 110–12, here 111 (letter 2, para. 3).

¹⁴⁶ FS, 7. “Ecclesiasticam hanc pinacothecam.”

¹⁴⁷ AS, xxii.



Figure 4.1. Frontispiece of the *Acta Sanctorum*, vol. 1 (Antwerp, 1643).
 Reproduced with permission from Jesus College, Oxford.

brush or a malleable chisel. By the former the better part of man, the virtue of the mind is propagated, by the latter the glory of the body and [its] achievements. This double happiness befell the holy martyrs, the courageous athletes of Christ, in every age, who nobly fight in this Circus of life, [who] prevail by falling, [who] defeated overthrow the enemy, [who] create a trophy from the remains of their own body, all the while a spectator does not restrain his hand. For one draws words out of wax tablets, another outlines with his pen the basics of the battles; one takes the vestment of the martyr, a faithful spoil; the other collects [the martyr's] blood, a pledge of faith. And thus, surviving himself, the martyr lives; after the sword, after the ashes, he gives testimony to his own battle.¹⁴⁸

Rosweyde's witnesses shared in the glory of the martyrs—they enabled the martyr's testimony. Rosweyde shared in the martyrdom of the saints, imbuing his own polemical battles with *their* holiness.

Bolland's injunction to the reader to imitate the saints specifically extended to the hagiographer as well. Saints, as Bolland had noted, had also written hagiography.¹⁴⁹ The frontispiece of the *Acta Sanctorum* shows a radiant figure, *Hagiographia* herself, assisted by angels rescuing documents from the grasp of Time who was eating them [Figure 4.1]. Bolland directed a prayer to the saints for their aid: "Wherefore I pray and implore you, O saints, that you ask for grace for me from God, by which I may conform my character to his will and your examples." And he linked this prayer directly to the task at hand: "because the more saintly a life I lead, the more heaven will aid me writing well and suitably."¹⁵⁰

Textual discernment again becomes a charism, a gift from God, bestowed on reader and hagiographer, but it is the latter who

¹⁴⁸ FS, 3. "Qui apud posteros nomen amant, duo potissimum in votis habent, eruditum calamum, & penicillum, caelumve ductile. Illo hominis pars potior, animi virtus; hoc corporis rerumque gestarum decus propagatur. Gemina haec felicitas SS. Martyribus, animosis Christi Athletis, ab omni aevo obtigit; qui dum generose in hoc vitae Circo decertant, cadendo vincunt, superati hostem sternunt, trophaeum de corporis sui exuviis statuunt, non tenuit spectator manum. Hic namque verba ceratis tabulis excipit, ille stylo certaminum rudimenta adumbrat; hic Martyris vestem rapit, fidele spoliium; ille sanguinem colligit, fidei obsidem. Ita sibi superstes vivit Martyr; & post gladium, post cineres, certamini suo testimonium dicit."

¹⁴⁹ AS, lvii.

¹⁵⁰ AS, lvii. "Quare vos oro obtestorque, Sancti, ut gratiam mihi a Deo impetretis, qua mores ipse meos ad illius voluntatem, vestra exempla, conformem; hoc maiorem ad bene apteque scribendum facultatem divinitus consecuturus, quo sanctius vixero."

shared in the sanctity of the saints. Bolland directed a prayer to “my Father,” Ignatius of Loyola, to that effect. Ignatius, as Bolland again pointed out, had been converted by saints’ lives and could intercede with God to favour “us sons.”¹⁵¹

If only occasionally some common servant from your most blessed group would rule my pen to cast and set these forth (I do not ask that this should be visible, nor do I think myself worthy [of that], but through some hidden inspiration and protection), how much more speedily, accurately, and suitably would I understand and explain everything! Please see (*curate*) to it that I will find what has been well written in the past, that I separate the spurious from the legitimate, set out all according to a well adjusted method and order; and that, if anything is more obscure, I explain and elucidate it properly.¹⁵²

Bolland’s humility had saintly connotations. The Jesuit professed doubt (much as Baronio had done) whether he should attach his name as author to the project; the various saints’ lives had, after all, authors of their own.¹⁵³ But he hid behind the insistence of superiors and worried that those readers who wished to share saints’ lives might not know where to send them.¹⁵⁴ Bolland also protested that all that he had written (quotations from Scripture and papal letters excepted) should be seen as fallible, human history. Bolland hoped he would be seen as any other author, but one who “prefers to die rather than knowingly deceive anyone.”¹⁵⁵

The part of martyr never fell to Bolland yet his disciples, who bore his name and imitated him, did admire his “almost miraculous” powers of manuscript collation.¹⁵⁶ With Bolland’s death it became tradition to preface the next volume of the *Acta* with the life of the deceased Bollandist—hagiographer and saints bound together in

¹⁵¹ AS, lvii. “Patrem meum”; “nobis filiis.”

¹⁵² AS, lvii. “Utinam ad haec eruenda exponendaque calamum meum tantisper beatissimi illius coetus vestri mediastinus aliquis regeret, (non postulo ut aspectabilis, neque me dignum censeo; sed tacito quodam afflatu ac praesidio) quanto citius, accuratius, aptius cuncta assequeretur explicaremque! Curate ut quae apte scripta sunt olim, reperiam; spuria a legitimis secernam; digeram concinno ordine ac methodo omnia; & siqua sunt obscuriora, accommodate ea explicem ac dilucidem.”

¹⁵³ Cyriac K. Pullapilly, *Caesar Baronius: Counter-Reformation Historian* (Notre Dame: University of Notre Dame Press, 1975), 36.

¹⁵⁴ AS, lviii.

¹⁵⁵ AS, xli. “mori malit quam vt sciens quemquam fallat.”

¹⁵⁶ AS, vol. 6 (March, vol 1.), xxxv. “pene miraculose.”

one tome. Bolland's *Vita* composed by his disciple, Godefrid Henschen, filled forty-six folio pages. In life, Bolland's correspondents prayed that God would grant him superhuman powers to accomplish his task. In death, other excerpted letters expressed the hope that he would join the saints amongst whose lives he had lived. In the words of one prominent Roman correspondent:

He lived among the lives of the saints, why would he not die according to the precious death of the Saints, accepted in the most loving embrace, of them, of whose blessed lives he painted and commended an image[? . . .] I commend Your Reverences and this Holy (*Sanctum*) work, which will be of such great use to the Church, of such splendour to the Society [of Jesus], and of so great a glory to God.¹⁵⁷

Canonization procedures had been institutionalised only in Bolland's time; new saints could only be discerned and proclaimed by Rome, but the holiness of the Bollandist task and the ambiguous conviction that Bolland was "with God and all the Saints" could be expressed.¹⁵⁸ Unlike the saints, no miracles were reported after death (one criterion for sainthood) but *near*-miraculous powers were observed in the *lives* of the Bollandists after death.¹⁵⁹ And the label Bollandist became itself a useful substitute; failed collaborators "who do not rank amongst those entitled to be called Bollandists" emerged.¹⁶⁰ The Society of Bollandists may regard itself as the world's oldest scientific society, but what motivated its members for many generations was not the pursuit of "scientific hagiography," but the pursuit of sanctity in their own lives. In order to understand attitudes towards saints' lives and the discernment of spirits then, we must recognize that the sanctity of ages past was a resource that lived on into the future, providing both models for imitation and a pedigree to bolster claims to holiness of later followers.

¹⁵⁷ AS, vol. 6, lxvi. "Vixit ille inter Vitas Sanctorum, quidni obierit praetiosa morte Sanctorum, acceptus amantissimo amplexu ab illis, quorum beatæ vitæ imaginem pinxit ac commendavit, [...] commendo Reuerentias vestras opusque illud Sanctum, quod Ecclesiae tantæ vtilitati, & Societati tanto splendori, & Deo tantæ gloriæ futurum est."

¹⁵⁸ AS, vol. 6, xliii. "Liceat eximij istius Patris, Domus vestrae Antverpiensis totiusque Societatis illustrissimi sideris, tantisper immorari memoriæ, quæ vere in benedictione est apud homines, ecquis dubitet quin & apud Deum Sanctosque omnes?"

¹⁵⁹ See e.g., the comments made on Daniel Papebroch: Delehaye, *The Work of the Bollandists through Three Centuries*, 32–33.

¹⁶⁰ Delehaye, *The Work*, 37–38.

Were Delrio and Rosweyde both Bollandists *avant la lettre*? If we label them so, we must admit the polemical origins of the *Acta Sanctorum*; origins, or so it seems to me, that Bolland was well aware of but wished to obfuscate. Bolland's obfuscation highlights both the difficulty of embarking on a sacred task (the motivation for which needed to be located in the orders or actions of others) and the difficulty of claiming the gift of discernment. At the same time, such difficulties delayed none of these men. Anthropologists, I noted at the outset of this chapter, have seen myths as attempts to give voice to human truths that are simultaneously true and mutually opposed.¹⁶¹ This exploration of the origins of the Society of Bollandists reveals something very similar: a quest for sanctity in past and present which was impossible in theory and yet was also a daily pursuit not only for aspiring saints but also for the hagiographers studied here.

It is still possible to preserve part of the traditional narrative albeit for different reasons. Rosweyde's persistence wore down the scepticism of his superiors, paving a path for Bolland to follow. Nevertheless, there were at least as many differences as similarities in approach. The interest expressed by Delrio and Rosweyde in medieval saints' lives was motivated by their struggle against heresy. Defeat, not conversion, was their aim. Consequently, they believed that they could not admit any concern about the veracity of the lives they collected. Yet, both also drew a parallel between the martyrs and their own imitated sanctity. Bolland was impelled by his own quest for sanctity to credit Rosweyde more than he should have, given their many differences. Paradoxically, that act of humility represented a debt larger than Bolland would care to admit.

¹⁶¹ Doniger, "Claude Lévi-Strauss's Theoretical and Actual Approaches to Myth," 206.