The Artful Hermit. Cardinal Odoardo Farnese's religious patronage and the spiritual meaning of landscape around 1600

Witte, A.A.

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5. Gardens for the Soul

In 1615, when Lanfranco will have started his work on the decoration in the Camerino, Cardinal Roberto Bellarmino published a book called *Scala di salire con la mente a Dio per mezzo delle cose create*, a 'Ladder to ascend with the mind to God by means of the created things' (fig.82). This treatise explained that the elements of visible nature were a series of steps leading to a spiritual understanding of the Creator. The book's dedication to Pietro Aldobrandini emphatically indicated that this work was to be a helpful manual for ecclesiastics with many obligations and busy schedules:

> Because if one could hope for any use of this work of mine, that will be particularly applicable to the persons occupied in public affairs, especially Ecclesiastical Princes.

According to this dedication, the *Scala di salire* was aimed at cardinals and Odoardo Farnese was one of its intended readers, as he belonged to the same faction of cardinals as Aldobrandini and Bellarmino. That he was supposed to take notice of this book is also indicated by the dedication to him of the sequel (in time as well as in subject) to the *Scala*, Bellarmino's *De aeterna felicitate sanctorum*, 'Of the eternal happiness of the Saints', of 1616.

Apart from this external evidence, the choice of words in the above citation also implied Farnese as one of its recipients. The term 'Ecclesiastical Prince' was coined by Albergati in his treatise of 1592 on the life of the cardinal and reflected a contemporary discussion on the political dignity and modes of address for cardinals. This book, dedicated to Farnese upon his nomination as a cardinal, discussed the double social position of the 'Cardinal born a Prince', and devoted an entire chapter to the primacy of ecclesiastical over secular dignity. Moreover, following Bellarmino in the above citation, so too Albergati alluded to the time-consuming duties of the...

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1 It originally appeared in Latin, both in Rome and Antwerp, in 1615 under the title *De ascensione mentis in Deum per scalas rerum creatarum...* and in an Italian edition. Several editions were printed, as well as numerous translations into other languages well into the nineteenth century. See Sommervogel 1960 vol.1, cols.1231-1236.
2 Bellarmino 1615, preface: 'Perciòche se utilit a alcuna può sperarsi da questa mia fatica, questa ridondara particolarmente ne gli uomini occupati ne' pubblici affari, come sono per lo più i Principe Ecclesiastico.'
3 BAV, Boncompagni C.20, fol 98v.
4 Although reports between 1600 and 1605 indicate that the friendship between Farnese and Aldobrandini had been disrupted, other sources suggest that after 1605 recommenced their contact; see BAV, Boncompagni C.20, 'Discorso de Cardi li viventi in tempo di Papa Paulo Vo.', fol.191v., about Farnese: 'Con Aldobrandino sta un pezzo male, hora sta bene.' For the publication history of *De aeterna felicitate sanctorum*, see Sommervogel 1960 vol.1, cols.1236-1238.
5 Albergati 1598.
6 Albergati 1598, p.3. Prodi 1987, pp.84-85 described the new position of the Cardinal after the Tridentine reforms and his position under the new papal power, as the 'ecclesiastical prince'; treatises and dedications only begin to use this term after the 1620's. Albergati was the first to investigate and define the meaning of the double nature of the prince-cardinal.
cardinal-prince, and formulated the concept of nature as a ladder to reach the Divine as one of the recommendable devotions for a cardinal. The natural component of Lanfranco's decoration of the Camerino, and indeed the concept of nature in the decoration of the Palazzetto, can be grasped through Bellarmino's book on the devotional interpretation of the visible world. As he was one of the influential authors of spiritual treatises in early modern Rome, his views were widely accepted by church-authorities and the general public as well.

**Bellarmino's 'Ladder of Nature'**

As the book's title stated, Roberto Bellarmino's treatise described a 'stairway' from this world to Heaven. By looking at the individual elements of nature and, through this act of contemplation, understanding the universe as God's creation, the reader would gain an understanding of the qualities of the Divine. This implied a dual interpretation of the visible world as a valley of tears and as a reflection of its Maker. To explain the relation between the two, Bellarmino utilised the didactic concept that it was in fact the mind of the beholder which turned the treacherous side of the natural world into a positive perception of its Creator:

> So thus, my soul, what you see before your eyes, and in your mind that seems marvellous and worthy to you, becomes a staircase for you to ascend to the knowledge of the perfection of the Creator, which is, without any comparison, the best. Thus it will occur that the created things, which at the feet of the stupid have turned into pitfalls, will not deceive you, nor do they throw you back, but they will instruct you, and confirm the steps towards better, and more sublime things.  

The text of the *Scala* pointed out a spiritual path, divided into three degrees, each of them subdivided into five chapters, leading from the consideration of man as a microcosm, through the description of the macrocosm and its constituting elements, to the discussion of the Virtues. In other words, the argument progressed from the immediate and corporal to the invisible and ethereal components of Creation. After an initial examination of the human body (*First step:*

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1. Albergati 1598, p.181: 'E, perche alla cognizione delle cose divine invisibili, & insensibili, l’uomo agevolmente sinalza con la scala de i sensi; perche, riguardando l’ordine maraviglioso della natura, e gli stupendi effetti prodotti dalle cause seconde, veniamo in esquisita certezza del primo motore, e dell’ineffabile sapienza, potenza, e bontà di Dio, vera, e prima cagion di tutte le cose. Però alla scienza della Teologia deve precedere la Filosofia naturale, e Metafisica d’Aristotele, come quella, che per l’uniformità, per la sodezza, e metodo viene dal comune consentimento di tutte le scuole anteposta ad ogni altra.'

2. Bellarmino 1615 p.32: 'Niche, anima mia, quanto ti si pari avanti a gli occhi, & al pensiero, che ti piaa maraviglioso, e riguardevole, fa che ti sia scala per salire alla conoscenza della perfezione del Creatore, la quale senza paragone alcuno è di gran lunga maggiore. Quindi avverrà che le cose create, che sono d’apiedi del saggio diventati luci non tingamaranno, ne ti riputaranno indietro, ma ti istruiranno, & assodaranno il passo per salire a cose migliori, e più sublime.'
Man is considered as a microcosm), through the contemplation on the earth ('Second step: The entire world is considered') and its four elements: Earth, Water, Air and Fire (Steps three to six). Bellarmino discussed the celestial bodies of the sun, moon and stars (Step seven) and proceeded to the contemplation of the immaterial aspects of Creation. He examined the angels and the soul (Step eight: Our soul is considered; Step nine: The Angels are considered') and further informed the reader of the virtues to be discovered and brought into one's own life for the attainment of spiritual perfection. Bellarmino concluded with a number of meditations about the divine qualities and eternal wisdom ('Step ten: The Essence of God'; 'Step eleven: The Almightyness of God'; 'Step twelve: Theoretical Wisdom of God'; 'Step thirteen: Practical Wisdom of God.') The book ended with chapters on the mercy and the justice of God (Steps fourteen and fifteen).

Especially in the first part of the book, the consideration of the natural world was held to be an important incentive towards the spiritual ideal; this practice of observing the visible functioned as introduction to the more advanced steps. In the preface this is supported by a number of citations from Saint Augustine and the Apostle Paul, who both believed that it was possible to understand God through observation of this world. Bellarmino even stated that other means of reaching an understanding of the Divine in saeculum - and here he alluded to the mystical method by which the initiative had been transferred from man to God⁹ - were exceptions to the rule:

But that man can rise up [to God] by means of the creatures, and can come to the understanding and love of the Creator as taught by the Book of wisdom, and the Apostle writing to the Romans, and this is confirmed by reason itself; while though the effects one can come to acknowledge the original cause, and by the figure to its example. And one cannot doubt that all created things are works of God, and that man and the Angels are not merely works, but also images of God, as Scripture teaches us.¹⁰

According to Bellarmino, the multitude of creatures reflected the infinite beauties of God and His perfections; each of them contained a spark of this ideal - like a scudo is worth a great many

¹ For the difference between mystical and ascetic forms of prayer, see DS 1937-1994 vol. 10, cols. 1934-1936.
¹⁰ Bellarmino 1615, p.5: 'Che l'huomo per mezzo delle creature possa salir, e giungere alla cognizione, & amore del Creatore, l'insegna il libro della sapienza, e l'Apostolo scrivendo a Romani, e la ragione stessa il conferma; mentre da gl'effetti si può conoscere la cagione fattrice, e dalla figura l'esemplare. E non si può dubbiarre, che tutte le cose create non sieno opere di Dio, e che l'huomo, e l'Angelo non solamente sieno opere, ma ancora imagini di Dio, la Scrittura ce l'insegna.' With this last remark Bellarmino alluded especially to the Psalms, which contained a number of references to this principle. In the Commentary to the Psalms, published in Latin in 1611, a number of them have been explained in connection with the vision of God through nature. See Brodrick 1961 p.382.
The reader should thus not turn from the world, but understand how to 'read' this second revelation, and add all these detailed perfections found in Creation into a concise idea of one sublime Perfection, which is an image of the Creator. This notion presupposed the idea that outward perfection was an image of God's Wisdom, and for that reason beauty was considered a Divine quality. At this supreme stage of his method, Bellarmino reverted back to his first chapter with the analogy of the human body, thus making his argumentation turn full circle.

In other words, according to Bellarmino his method was not a one-directional system of ascetic prayer, but instead the insight gained at the end would reinvest the early stages with new significance: it might be compared to the modern concept of the hermeneutic circle. The goal of the book was twofold: circular and ascending. Firstly, the visible world was not to be left behind during the course of meditation, but should be returned to with a new understanding, and would gradually become a transparent screen to reveal the image of God. Secondly, by continually reflecting upon the visible world, one would be able to rise above it until the vision of true and incorporate beauties was reached. These two directions together constituted the process of contemplation: the continuous reflection upon all aspects of one theme until true understanding was reached.

Bellarmino had not invented all this by himself, as he regularly reminded his reader both directly and indirectly. His text contained numerous references to biblical and Patristic texts, of which Saints Paul and Augustine have already been mentioned, and many later authors who had touched upon the relation between the earthly and divine realms. The Scala fitted into a tradition of considering the natural world as a reflection of the Creator, the origins of which went back to the Apostle Paul. In his letter to the Romans, Paul had suggested that one way in which God had revealed Himself to man was through Creation. Saint Augustine took up this idea and sustained it with biblical arguments: in his discourse on the relation between the physical and metaphysical, Creation was considered a condition for the Redemption of Man. In the thirteenth century, Hugh of Saint Victor, Thomas Aquinas and Bonaventura discussed this concept of the world as the Second Book of Revelation in greater depth, and turned the scholastic issue into a subject for

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1 Bellarmino 1615, p. 37: 'Pericoche l'Uomo ha voluto esser conosciuto dall'Uomo in quella guisa, che s'è potuto megliore per mezzo delle sue creature e perch'e non v'era creatura alcuna, che rappresentasse l'infinita perfezione del Creatore, ha egli moltiplicate le creature, e dato a ciascuna nell'esser suo, qualche perfezione, accio da queste si venisse in cognizione della bonta, & infinita perfezione del Creatore, il quale sotto la perfezione d'una semplicissima essenza, ha perfezioni infinite, appunto con uno scudo d'oro contiene in se valore di molti quattrini.'

12 Romans 19-20.
prayer and contemplation.14

In particular, Bonaventura's work was an important example to Bellarmino. Already the title of the Scala di salire echoed that of the earlier treatise, which was known as Itinerarium Mentis in Deum - the 'Pilgrimage of the Mind to God'. Secondly, their systematic approaches were very similar. Bonaventura had divided the ascension of the soul into three stages each consisting of a number of steps, in which, as the Seraphic Doctor explained,

the totality of the things is the ladder to ascend to God, and among the created beings, some have a connection with God as traces, others as images, some are corporeal and others spiritual, some are temporal and others are eternal, and for that reason some are within us and others outside of us...15

Although the course sketched out by Bonaventura differed from that prescribed by Bellarmino, it also followed a logical progression in six steps from the external and phenomenological world to the image of God inside man himself, and from there ascending to the divine Trinity and Christ. The difference lay in the reversal of the first and second stages: the Scala started with man as an image of God. Only in one other important detail did Bellarmino's book differ from that of his predecessor: his work was contemporaneously published in Italian and soon also in other vernacular languages.16 It offered itself to a much wider audience.

Although the preface of Bellarmino's Scala di salire addressed a very small public of Cardinals, the paraext of the publication enlarged this to encompass a vast group of readers. Initially, Bellarmino's book was intended as a reminder for himself: only after circulating - in manuscript - in Jesuit houses and finding praise for its contents and composition, did the Cardinal become convinced that its method was useful to others and should appear in print.17 At that point, he dedicated it to another cardinal, and described it as apt for 'ecclesiastical Princes' with little time to devote to the practice of meditation. Numerous editions and translations testify to the popularity of the Scala di salire: the relatively small format secured a wide diffusion.

Although Bellarmino suggested that he had hesitated to give his manuscript to the printer, this was more a literary topos to underline his humility, rather than an expression of doubt about

115. Augustine discussed the relation between Creation and Redemption among other places in his Enarratio in psalmum XLV, 67.
15 See Zahlten 1979, esp. pp.112f and 181 for the influence of Bonaventura's cosmological ideas in relation to the beginning of Genesis and the Creation upon the medieval arts.
16 Bonaventura 1961, ch.1.2.
17 For the editions of the Scala, see Sommervogel 1960 vol.1, cols 1231-1236
the proposed method of devotion. On the contrary, he followed an approved model, and he had actively promoted the use of the natural world as a means to spiritual edification in an earlier book. This very idea of the visible world as the Book of God was described in Bellarmino’s *Explanatio in Psalmos* of 1611, a textbook for preachers that was used for the instruction of the general public. In the commentary on the eighteenth Psalm, the heavenly bodies are seen as invested with cogency - for they ‘speak’ an alternative language of symbols, in which God wrote his Second Revelation. For example, the verse Day to day uttereth speech, and night to night showeth knowledge’ from Psalm 19:2 was interpreted as the sun and moon perpetually announcing the glory of the Lord: the rounds they made on the celestial globe were regarded as heavenly music to their hymn of praise.” By thus representing the celestial bodies as being invested with the ability to speak and sing, Bellarmino turned nature itself into the active preaching authority for the instructed observer.

Presented in this light, nature itself became an active agent in the Catholic cause. With the right impetus, the beholder of real or imaginary landscapes, in paint, fresco or print, would be drawn up to the first step of prayer and meditation by merely looking at natural specimens. But before this method could be adopted by the public at large, they must be taught the method, and this was done around 1600 by means of booklets, oral explanation, and instruction ‘on the spot’.

The *Scala di salir* itself alluded to such a direct link between place and devotional method: in his preface Bellarmino described that the booklet - indicated in the original title which was altered in the final printed version - was the ‘product’ of one of his regular devotional retreats:

The past month of September, with the help of God I wrote as well as I could a booklet, *DellA SALITA*, which conducts the mind to God by means of the stairs of created things: having chosen this month (with the good grace of His Holiness Our Lord) for complete occupation with prayer, having put all other affairs aside.”


2 Bellarmino 1611, p.73: ‘*Dies dies eruat verbum, & nox nox indicat scientiam. Admirabilis plane est prae dicatio, qua enarrat gloriam dei...* In hoc versiculo declaratur prae dicatio sine intermissione: & quia caelum praedicat per dies & noctes, cum interdum conspicatur pulchritudo Solis, & noctu pulchritudo stellaram; & quia dies ac noctes non permanent, sed labuntur, ac sibi invicerunt; idem postero artificem fingit Propheta, unum dicat peracto cursu & praedicatione sua, tradere dies sequentia verba prae dicationis, & noctem quoque peracto cursu, & quas hymnos cantato, tradere nocte sequenti mamas canendi. & sine nulla intermissione dies, & noctes quasi choreas ducunt, & Dei laudibus celebrant.’ See also the rest of this psalm-exegesis, where the symbolism of nature is widely used. For the *Explicationes in Psalmos* see Döllinger Reuss 1887, p.69, Brodnick 1961, p.382, and JS1937-1994 vol.13, col.716.

17 Bellarmino 1615, Introduction: ‘*Il passato Mese di Settembre, come potè il meglio, composi con l’aiuto di Dio, un libretto, *Della SALITA*, che fà la mente a Dio, per le scale delle cose create: havendomi (con buona gratia della Santità di Nostro Signore) eletto quel Mese per occuparvi tutto nell’orazioni, posto in disparte quals’altro affare.’*
As already discussed in the third chapter, the place where Bellarmino sojourned each year for his spiritual exercises was the noviciate of Sant'Andrea. This was not only a set of buildings, but it also contained a large garden that occupied much of the block. It was here that, from around 1600, the concept used by Bellarmino had been put into practice by the novices, explaining to the public the allegorical and mystical significance of the Creation. Bellarmino had not only based his own text upon the writings of others, but he was also inspired by the contemporary practice he could observe in his immediate vicinity. The Scala di salire constituted only one of the media through which the ascetic practice of allegorically reading nature was promoted as a popular method of spiritual improvement. The Jesuit Order played an active part in all those forms, and most conspicuously in the garden of the San Vitale in Rome.

The garden of Sant'Andrea al Quirinale

On the southern slope of the Quirinal Hill, a large complex of Jesuit possessions gradually came into being during the last decades of the sixteenth century. Its nucleus, the church of Sant'Andrea al Quirinale, was donated to the Society in 1566 by Gianandrea Croce, Bishop of Tivoli, and in that same year the adjacent house and vigna were given to the Jesuits by Giovanna d'Aragona, Duchess of Tagliacozza. The ruinous state of the church as well as the house, and the urgent need for a noviciate independent from the Jesuit Casa Professa led almost immediately to plans for restoration and rebuilding. Extensions were added to the back and sides of these buildings, unifying the various parts.

In 1598 this complex was enlarged with another church, San Vitale, given to the Jesuits by express papal approval. This church was an early Christian basilica dating from the fifth century and in desperate need of repair. Work started almost immediately, with private funding from Isabella della Rovere, Principessa di Bisignano. The aisles were partly torn down and the colonnade walled up to provide structural support; these new walls were decorated between 1599 and 1603 under the supervision of the painter Giovanni Battista Fiammeri, himself a professed Jesuit. The frescoes in the apse and tribuna were executed by Andrea Commodi and Agostino Ciampelli; the walls of the nave were done by Tarquino Ligustri. This interior decoration

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5 Huetter Golzio 1935, Kuhn-Forte 1997 pp.201-226; for Ciampelli (1565-1630) see Allgemeines Künstler-Lexikon 1992-present vol.19, pp.132-134; for Commodi (1560-1638) and his frescoes see Allgemeines Künstler-Lexikon
reflected the official requirements of the Order, as the plans had been approved by the general in 1599 before their execution: the financial patronage by various nobles did not affect either the theme or form of the decoration. The general subject of the frescoes, surrounded by painted architecture, was the theme of martyrdom. All these early Christian episodes were set within conspicuous landscape settings.

Landscape was also present outside the church in the form of real nature. Between the noviciate of Sant’Andrea and the church of San Vitale, on the slope of the Quirinal hill, was a garden. Its nucleus was the vigna donated in 1566 by Giovanna d’Aragona, and pieces of land were added to this throughout the later sixteenth and seventeenth century. Contemporary accounts and sources document these gifts and acquisitions and the works subsequently undertaken to transform these parts into one large garden. The grounds were rearranged and new buttressing walls were built to support three terraces. Walls were put up around the premises to secure privacy for the novices. Accounts and drawings also mentioned the acquisition in 1588 of water from the aqueduct feeding the Moses Fountain on the Quirinal Hill, and the construction of drainage-pipes for the cultivation of the plants in the garden (fig.83).

At the end of the seventeenth century, the Jesuits owned almost the entire isola. The expansion of this garden can be followed through a number of visual sources. On the map by Du Perac of 1577, the area between the two churches consisted of several walled premises in a larger uninhabited space. Antonio Tempesta’s map of 1593 shows the facade of the old Sant’Andrea, and behind it a number of separate vineyards, divided up by walls; what was directly behind the noviciate is hidden by the buildings. Giovanni Maggi presented both the façade of the Sant’Andrea and the apse of the San Vitale surrounded by an irregular zone in his map of 1625 (fig.84). Greuters’ map of 1618 indicated that the grounds between the two churches was divided into three levels, but the location of this detail on the border of two plates hinders its legibility. In 1662, the subdivisions of the area can be recognised in the Tempesta-Rossi map, and only from Nolli’s map of 1748 (fig.85), does a concise idea of the garden between the San Vitale and

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1992-present, vol.20, p.457 and Papi 1994; for Ligustri (around 1580-after 1618) in the San Vitale, see Guerrieri Borsoi 2000, pp.92-95. Ligustri was called in when Annibale Priori, who had started the decoration, renounced the commission.


2 A number of accounts for the project of the garden between San Vitale and Sant’Andrea can be found in ARSI Fondo Gesuitico 867 2, Tabbrichi fate in giardino 1593-1680.
26 ARSI Fondo Gesuitico 867 2, 'lura diversa quad Viridarium Funtum a DD. Caponis & quad ad Manutenzionem aquarum', contains juridical contracts for the supply of water between 1588 and 1742.
28 Frutaz 1962 vol.2, plate 265.
29 Frutaz 1965 vol.3, plate 287.
Sant'Andrea emerge. Between the two churches the sloping ground was divided into terraces and the large area to the east of the churches was used for agriculture.

A print of 1611, probably made by Greuter, represented the general organisation as well as many details of the garden located between the two churches of San Vitale and Sant'Andrea al Quirinale (fig.87). The upper half of the etching shows the back facade of the noviciate, marked A, with the apse of the old church of Sant'Andrea to the right. Immediately behind this, a formal garden had been laid out on the first terrace in the form of six squares, with a fountain to the left of the centre. Against the wall on the left, a pergola for viniculture was constructed and pot-plants, presumably oranges, were positioned on the buttressing wall. This wall contained three fountains.

The middle terrace, marked F, was used largely as an orchard and housed another small fountain with a basin; on the left side was another pergola with vines. A flight of stairs ran through this area, alongside which stood a shed; another revetment separated this middle section from the lower garden. This last terrace, marked H, as again an open area with paths dividing this into six sections. By the representation of foliage, the print seems to suggest that in each section of this garden a specific variety of plant or herb was cultivated. Beehives were placed against the buttressing wall next to three further fountains. In the middle of this section, an obelisk with painted decoration could be admired. At this end of the garden a porch gave onto the public road.

This print of the garden was inserted into a book entitled *La peinture spirituelle ou l'Art d'admirer et louer dieu en toutes ses oeuvres, et tirer de toutes profit salutere*, or 'The spiritual painting or the Art of admiring and praising God in all his works, and drawing healthy profit from all this' (fig.86), which provided a lengthy description of the noviciate complex at Sant’Andrea. Its author was Louis Richeome (1544-1625), a French Jesuit who was the master of the novices at Sant’Andrea for a number of years until at least 1618. The text of the *Peinture Spirituelle* proceeded along the line of the actual buildings, discussing in each chapter a section of the noviciate, beginning with the description of the church of Sant’Andrea, continuing with the paintings in the refectory and dormitories and, after an account of the garden, it concluded with a chapter on the church of San Vitale, situated at the other end of the premises.

During this virtual guided tour, Richeome discussed the symbolic interpretation given to the decoration and organisation of the complex and the intermediate garden. The title and the

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introduction suggest an allegorical reading of the world, as a kind of visual sermon or an image for prayer:

I called it *Spiritual Painting*, as she is prince of various spiritual images (*Tableaux*) of Grace and nature, which are to be seen in this house; those, and by means of those, speaking to the novices, I try to help all these to be useful to their eyes and simple hearts, and to become gloriously great in the face of God, and wise in a Christian manner in their youth, teaching them through my small industry the way to philosophise well without great difficulty, and and the art to recognise and admire God in all His works...

Walking in the gardens down the slope of the Quirinal Hill, an encyclopaedic account in the tradition of natural histories linked all the plants, trees and flowers to the account of Creation and the qualities of the Creator. This didactic explanation of nature was attuned to the education of the novices. The garden offered them not only the simple enjoyment of the outdoors, but nature’s allegorical meaning as a reflection of the Divine.

**Spiritual Paintings of the Universe**

Book six of the *Peinture spirituelle* described an imaginary walk through the three terraces of the garden, and provided a religious exemplification for each element encountered as well as for the whole. Richeome began with a description of the lintel above the entrance on the upper side, next to Sant’Andrea, which contained a relief representing a virgin on the outside, while the inner side showed the figure of Christ. The accompanying inscription, a citation from Canticle 5.1: ‘That my beloved will come into his garden’, linked the two sides of this arch. The citation also related the lintel to the physical garden situated behind the door, a traditional image of Mary, who had conceived the Christ Child in her Virginity. On a third level, it provided a clear reference to the soul of the devout that should be prepared by a virtuous life for the coming of Christ, and the spiritual illumination He would bring into the garden of the human soul. These biblical connotations prepared the visitor to the garden for a spiritual rather than a literal enjoyment and

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1 Richelieu 1611, ‘Introduction’: ‘Je l’appelle la Peinture Spirituelle, parce qu’elle est prime de divers Tableaux spirituels de grace & de nature, qui se voyent en icelle maison: esquels, & par lesquels, parlant aux Novices, ie tasche d’ayder tous ceuls qui voudront estre utilement peits devant leurs yeux & simples de coeur, & devenir glorieusement grands devant Dieu, & Christienement scavans des leur yeunesse, leur apprenant selon ma petite industrie, la maniere de bien fielosyer sans grande difficulte, & l’art de congnosctre & admirer Dieu et ses oeuvres...’

2 Coffin 1991, pp.100-102; Macioce 1990, p.122 regarded the iconography of the garden as a reference to martyrdom. Erasmus of Rotterdam gave in his *Consilium Religionis* an earlier literary example of the allegorical reading of nature where nature, painting, and the Creator were discussed as comparable entities; see Schlüter 1995, pp.50, 109 and 159-161.

3 Richelieu 1611, p.473; ‘Qu’oc mon bien aime vieume en son iardin.’

invoked a programmatic concept of the garden between the San Vitale and Sant'Andrea.

Inside the uppermost geometrical garden (the subject of the first Tableau), was a paraphrase of Paradise, the first garden made by God. Numerous flowers in multiple colours, perfuming the air and bearing delicious fruits, alluded to familiar representations of Paradise. The fountain in the middle was a reference to the Fountain of Life, a familiar motif in paintings of the paradisiacal theme. According to Richeome, behind all the elements of this garden the Presence of the Creator should be perceived, and Gods' goodness should be reflected upon. He had given all this to mankind, and in return man should thank and praise Him for it.

The argument of the next Tableau was the copiousness of creation, in which a great variety of grasses and flowers illustrated the excellence of the Creator, as well as the frailty of human life and its vanity. These paragraphs form a paraphrase of learned treatises on plants and animals, such as that by Ulisse Aldrovandi who expanded Aristotle's system with newly discovered plants and animals from the East and West. Richeome's own text read like a herbarium attuned to the idea that all this could not have come into existence without a higher authority. This should, as the last paragraph of this section recommended, 'stupefy' the reader and the viewers of these marvels of nature.

The third Tableau illustrated, by means of two sun-dials designed by the Jesuit mathematician Christopher Clavius (one on a pillar in the first garden, and the other against the wall of the novicicate-building itself, and marked with the letters B and C in the print), the aspect of time as a quality of terrestrial life. Human existence could end at any hour, as God decided. The measurement of time was also an aspect of the cosmos, by means of the Sun illuminating sun-dials; this concept confronted the longevity of celestial time with the brevity of existence on earth. On another level, the Sun was also an image of Christ who illuminated man's spiritual life.

The description of the buttressing wall between the first and second terrace took the reader from an anagogic to a typological reading by means of three fountains embellished with reliefs of scenes from the Old and New Testaments, linked through the element of water. The
first fountain presented Moses striking the rock, the second showed Rebecca at the well, and a third one depicted the Rest on the Flight to Egypt with the young Christ. All of these episodes formally fitted into the garden, as they had taken place in the landscape. Richeome allegorically explained that the waters flowing through these basins as the life-giving Water of the Divine Love through Old-Testament references, by means of the Gospels likened them to the water of Baptism, and thus explained the fountains as illustrating one of the Sacraments of the Catholic Church.

The middle level of the garden offered the visitor contemplation on a more detailed level, with particular attention to the force of the Creator present in this universe and working in all its particulars. Richeome illustrated this by describing the fruit trees in the middle terrace - almonds, laurel, cherry-trees, apricots, pears, etc: they instructed the reader about the recurrence of the seasons and the organisation of the cosmos, and exemplified the subservience of creation to mankind. He also compared these fruit-trees with Christians as trees planted by God to sustain His Church.

The sixth Tableau discussed the revetment at the other end of this partition: the only sculpture described here depicted the figure of the Samaritan woman at Jacob's well, which was a reference to Baptism and to the act of conversion. The other two fountains were apparently devoid of sculptural embellishments. In this case, Richeome likened water to the virtue of humility, because this element was able, by lowering itself, to reach high up in the fountain. Water could also signify God's vengeance and misericorde - as expressed in the biblical stories of the Flood, the Israelites crossing the Red Sea, and of course the act of Baptism. A last analogy linked water with Paradise and the four rivers Euphrate, Tygris, Ghehon and Phison, which all sprang from the Fountain of Life, which signified among other things the Divine Wisdom and the four Cardinal Virtues, and formed a reference to the Christian mission.

46 Richeome 1611, p.540. "Elles montent ainsi haut, parce qu'elles ont autant descendu en bas, & c'est leur nature de monter, autant qu'elles descendent. Fait de mystique, pour vous apprendre, que de tant plus que vous descendez par l'humilité, & vous abaisser en vostre mock devant Dieu & devant les hommes, de tôt plus vous vous guinderez haut vers le ciel, à la perfection et à la gloire éternelle."
47 Richeome 1611, p.551. The comparison of the fountain and the four rivers with Wisdom and Virtues comes from patristic literature, on the iconography of the paradisical rivers and the missionary theme, see Lac 1968-1976 vol.3, cols.382-384 and Schiller 1966-1991 vol.4.1, pp.63-64.
The basins of these fountains also offered, here and in a later Tableau, a moment of reflection on the birds coming there to bathe. Richeome assumed on the physical level, that feathers had been made out of the element of water; the animals themselves were interpreted metaphysically as images of the good Christian, for they strove towards heaven. Also the fish living in the basins of these fountains were seen as references to the good Christian, who lived in this world without taking it in.\textsuperscript{19}

The Tableau Septiesme: De la Vigne, & autres arbres was not precisely located by Richeome; on the engraving it seems to have been a section of the middle terrace, possibly the pergola on the left hand side.\textsuperscript{50} It discussed a vigna or vineyard which produced the wine for the Sacrifice of the Mass, and was thus related to Christian liturgy; it also led the mind of the author to the various regions of the world and to the topic of geographical difference. According to the place where wine was produced, the harvest of the grapes would either fall in January to March (in Peru),\textsuperscript{51} or between April and June (in Ethiopia), or between July and September (in northern Europe), or even, in some places, in still other times of the year. This led Richeome back to the level of strict natural history, in the variety of produce that agriculture brought - from olive-oil to honey, the latter acquired from a miraculous tree named Occus, in Hircanie.\textsuperscript{52}

After a detailed description of all the elements of trees - roots, branches, leaves, flowers and seeds, all allegorically explained as references to the Christian in the guise of the Divine tree whose fruit consisted of Good Works, and which came from the seeds sown by Christ\textsuperscript{53} - Richeome then turned to the presence of animals in the garden in the thirteenth and fourteenth Tableaux.\textsuperscript{54} First he discussed a number of bird-species - the nightingale, the dove, the swallow, and the peacock - and then the insects. Ants, flies, grasshoppers, and even snakes and scorpions were presented as examples of good and bad behaviour, but also discussed in their varieties as

\textsuperscript{48} Richeome 1611, p.542 likened the effect of rays of light falling through birds' feather with the rainbow, a 'hieroglyphe' of water, and and took that as 'la marque de leur origine'.

\textsuperscript{49} Richeome 1611, p.543: 'Les bons poissons sont notes de gens de bien, utiles & vivans comme petits poissons en la mer de ce monde sans la boire, & sans s'abysmer és voluptez d'iceluy. Ainsi tous le Chrestiens appellez poissons, & S. Pierre, & les Apostres Patrons de telle pesche...'

\textsuperscript{50} Richeome 1611, p.556-572.

\textsuperscript{51} Richeome 1611, pp.557-558 probably had this information from Acosta who described the (not very successful) introduction of viticulture in Peru, see Acosta 1880 vol.1, pp.267-268.

\textsuperscript{52} Richeome 1611, p.571, referring to Pliny 1.12 c.8. It is also possible that Richeome referred to a tree in Peru producing a liquid that could be turned into honey by cooking, which is described in Acosta 1880 vol.1, p.247.

\textsuperscript{53} Richeome 1611, p.599: 'Les Chrestiens, arbres divins. Les fruits d'un bon Chrétien sont les bonnes œuvres.'\textit{Ibidem}, p.602; 'La troisieme, en ce qu'elle est semblable à la parole de Dieu, qui est par luy appelée Semence...' and 'Les paroles de l'Iscription. Semence de vertu.' Richeome goes on likening the seeds as the origins of the social order of this world, and especially the noviciate as the place where the seeds are sown for the mission by the education of young missionaries.

\textsuperscript{54} Richeome 1611, pp.612-660.
found in the diverse parts of the world, and as described by Pliny, Aristotle and Cicero.

The final part of Richeome's description - *Tableau des Allees. & Pyramides du Jardin* - discussed the lowest, third terrace of the garden. Mural on the walls along the alleys depicted three scenes connected with the theme of spiritual gardening. The first painting illustrated the parable of the sterile fig tree that is burned by its gardener when it refuses to produce figs; it exemplified that being a Christian was not enough to bear fruit. The second allegorical painting depicted the biblical comparison of the Sower, and the third showed the workers in the Lord's vineyard. All three murals allegorised the works that the Christian should undertake to help God's garden - an allegory of the Catholic Church - to flourish.

In the centre of this last garden, the visitor encountered a white marble 'pyramid', as Richeome described it, which better resembled a obelisk, with a Cross on top, and embellished with painted figures on all sides. By its position, decoration and inscriptions on its basis, this 'pyramid' indicated the four points of the compass. On the east side, Christ was depicted accompanied by a sun and lilies. An inscription from Zechariah 'The Orient is His name' and from the Song of Songs 'I am the flower of the field, and the lily of the valleys' commented upon these images. On both the north and south sides two virgin were represented, of which the printed view of the garden showed the one on the south side as barely recognisable. A citation from the Song of Songs was inscribed below the figure on the north side: 'Awake, O north wind, and blow through my garden'. The south side bore the same inscription, but was adapted to the southern direction. The west side depicted the crowned king Salomon, who regarded his riches

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55 Richeome 1611. pp.666-671.
57 Richeome 1611. p.667; the parable of the Sower which is related in Matthew 13:3-8, 18-23, Mark 4:1-9, 13-20 and Luke 8:5-8, 11-15, for two readings of this iconography in the work of Jacopo Bassano, see Akema 1996, pp.76-79 and Berdimi 1997, pp.63-75.
58 Richeome 1611. p.668: ces paroles gravées au pied-destal en deux rouleaux, en Tum, L'Orient est son nom. En l'autre, il est la fleur des champs, et le Lys des vallées. The first citation is from Zechariah 6:12. That no wind was represented here will have had to do with the negative Biblical connotations of the east wind as destroying crops and flowers; see Caliver Bibellexikon 1973, col.996. The substitution with Christ is another reference to the Garden of Eden, as the east-direction in the Old Testament was often a reference to Paradise. See the Anchor Bible Dictionary 1992 vol.2, p.218. The latter citation is from the Song of Songs 2:1-2.
59 Richeome 1611. p.669: 'Venez, ouest, & souffle à mon iardin. Au ceste opposé, qui regarde le Midi, est la même vierge habilée d'une robe d'or exaltant, semée d'Esmeraudes & Escaraboules, coronnée d'un diadème tissu de plusieurs belles fleurs & fruites, & dit ces mots: Vien l'ouest, & souffle en mon jardin, & sensonne odysseaux conduirent.' The citation is actually an adaptation from Canticle. 4:16: 'Awake, o north wind, and come, south wind, blow upon my garden that its perfume may pour forth'. With this citation, Richeome returned again to the beginning of his description as the inscription on the lintel above the entrance of the first garden followed directly upon this verse calling the winds.

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and foretold that all his possessions would be idle in the light of the Heavenly Kingdom; the citation from Ecclesiastics 2.4 mentioned them as 'vanity and waywardness of spirit'.

At the lower end of the garden, Richeome thus returned to the metaphor of the human soul as a spiritual garden, with which he had started his description of the lintel above the entrance of the first terrace. The murals and obelisk in this section underlined the necessary efforts of maintenance and upkeep of this spiritual garden. This was as much a reference to the attention paid to one's own spiritual health, as it was taken as an exhortation of the missionary zeal to save the souls of others from eternal damnation.

**Scenes of martyrdom in San Vitale**

After this instructing walk through the open air, the reader was introduced to the church of San Vitale, located to the right of the lower garden. The Seventh Book of the *Peinture spirituelle* continued with an ample description of the church interior, which was primarily adorned with scenes of martyrdom. Judging from the order in which the church was described, one entered the building directly from the gardens, on the left-hand side of the choir. The theme of martyrdom was envisaged in the apse with frescoed scenes from the lives of Christ and Saints Vitale, Protasius and Gerviasius to whom the church was dedicated and whose relics were kept there. The subject was also allegorised by two adjacent scenes of Samson finding honey in the mouth of a dead lion, and Gideon victorious over the Madianites. The latter two frescoes were explained as a reference to the reward awaiting the martyrs: Samson prefigured Christ, who had found the celestial sweetness that the saints would taste after their death, and Gideon's trick with lights showed the moral enlightenment of Christ for the martyrs.

Then followed an image of Christ in the Garden of Olives, for whom the martyrs had been prepared to offer their lives.

This theme of martyrdom continued on the walls of the nave with four depictions of cruel forms of dying on each side, and two more on the entrance wall on either side of the main door. The presence of landscape was conspicuous in these scenes; the dimension of the figures seemed to reduce them to mere staffage, until the inscription giving the name of the martyr underneath these frescoes pointed the viewer towards the human presence in these natural settings. Most of
these martyrs were unfamiliar to the Romans, and almost all scenes depict saints who had begun wandering out voluntarily or against their will, to spread the Faith. For this zeal, they all had suffered martyrdom.

Richeome led the viewer's attention directly to the tortures represented in these frescoes. He described the scenes according to their location on the walls; alternating with the scenes of martyrdom were images of Confessors and popes, who had testified to their Faith not with their fearful death, but with their virtuous lives. It was thus not solely the fact of dying as a Christian, but the active life in the service of the Faith preceding it, which counted in the decorative scheme of San Vitale.

The first scene of martyrdom was that of the death of Pope Clement I (fig. 88). This disciple of the Apostle Paul was exiled to the Black Sea because of his conversion of the Roman governor Sisinnius. Two thousand other exiles had been sent to work there under harsh circumstances in the marble quarries. After miraculously finding a well to provide these exiles with a source of fresh water, Clement converted many others to Christianity; according to some sources, as many as 'fifty a day' were baptised. The fresco depicted the death of Saint Clement, being punished for having converted so many people.

The next fresco depicted the massacre of Saint Gennaro, Bishop of Benevent, together with a number of pagans he had converted to Christianity. They were beheaded in Naples on the command of the city's Roman governor Timothy. The following scene of martyrdom depicted forty Cappadocian soldiers, paying with their life for their newly acquired Christian beliefs while on duty in Armenia, which according to Richeome presented an instance of pagans taking the place of Christian apostles; the next scene showed Saints Martian and Saturnian dying in exile in the African desert as a result of their missionary zeal. Next came the scene of martyrdom of Saint Ignatius, bishop of Antioch. At his trial for not worshipping the Roman deities, he declared...
his belief in the one God who had created heaven and earth. In other words, he answered the exhortation to idolatry with the first sentence of the Catholic Credo. Although the saint was a personal friend of the Emperor, this did not save him from conviction, and being thrown into in the lions' den, the moment depicted in the fresco.

The following scene illustrated the death of Saints Marcellinus and Peter, both well-known for having converted many people. They were decapitated and buried in the woods near the city of Rome, so that their graves would never be found; but before they were killed, they converted many fellow-prisoners.

The hagiographic account on which the next fresco of Saint Paphnutius was based, illustrated this saint's courage in the defence of the Christian Faith, as he decided to leave the desert where he was hiding and turn himself in to the Roman governor of Egypt. During the following torture and imprisonment, the many miracles he performed led to the conversion of soldiers, officials and magistrates. These were all put to death, but Paphnutius himself escaped conviction and set forth his missionary activities, leading all new converts immediately to the Roman tribunal and thus to their inevitable martyrdom. In the end, Paphnutius himself was condemned by emperor Diocletian to death by crucifixion.

The next scene showed the Roman tribune Saint Andrew martyred with his soldiers by the Antiochans, after having called on Christ during a battle against the Persians. Andrew had heard of Christ and his powers, and his proposition to place their cohort under His protection was accepted by the other soldiers. In other words, Andrew converted them to Christianity. This fact caused them to be arrested by Antioch, their superior, but they were released from the army awaiting their further punishment, baptised, and finally massacred.

The last two frescoes of this cycle, on the entrance wall on either side of the door, depicted the death of an anonymous martyr and that of Saints Victor and Corona respectively. The former was covered in honey and exposed to the burning sun, to be tortured and killed by the insects that were attracted by the sweet smell. In the background of this same scene, another story depicted a man whose chastity was threatened by the lust of the flesh in the form of the

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70 Richeome 1611, pp.748: 'A quoy a respondu le Sainct vieillard en peu de paroles, qu'il ne reconnoissoit autr Dieu, que celui qui avoit cree le ciel & la terre...' For the hagiography of Saint Ignatius of Antioch, see BS 1961-1970 vol.7, cols.654-665.
72 Andreas is also known as Andre Stratelates. Their liturgical feast is celebrated on August 19, according to the Martyrologium Romanum 1593, p.371.
devil in a woman's guise - he circumvented this by biting off his tongue and spitting it out towards her. Neither of these stories seems to have been historically or hagiographically founded: all exemplified the horrors put upon man by the Devil. On the opposite side of the entrance, the cruel deaths in Syria of Saints Victor and Corona (also called Stefania), was depicted; the former had converted the latter to the Christian faith. While the first was butchered to pieces, the second was torn apart by the force of four trees.74

In the Peinture Spirituelle, Richeome offered his audience an allegorical tour through real nature on two levels of abstraction, both subdivided into three stages, with the aim of inspiring them to follow the example of the saints depicted in San Vitale to spread the Word of the Lord even at the cost of risking their own lives; they would gain eternal happiness for their souls, however. From the consideration of the visible world, Richeome led his audience to consider their own role in Creation.

In the context of natural philosophy, the tour started with the macrocosmic consideration of the world, followed by a microcosmic explanation of its details, and ended with a discussion of man as a miniature reflection of this cosmos. In its basic ordination, this was comparable to the order in Thomas Aquinas' Itinerarium, and in an altered order, also with Bellarmino's Scala. On the metaphysical level, Richeome showed that God, as the Old Testament had proclaimed, was the Creator of the Universe and each specimen reflected His image as well as His power; this was typologically set forth in the Old Testament prophecies of the Life of Christ as allegorised in the element of water, and ended with the New Testament notion that Christ had recreated Paradise with his death on the Cross. Through Redemption, man could see the world as it had been intended by its Creator and seen by Adam and Eve prior to the Fall.

Being the only creature with reason, man should desire, and was obliged to admire God through his creatures and thank Him for life, by being a good Christian. Good works - especially the instruction of other Christians - were the means to do so.75 One of the main Good Works was illustrated in the Book describing the interior of San Vitale: it was an obligation of the Good

74 Richeome 1611, pp.779-783.
75 See Martyrologium Romanum 1593, p.217. May 14, and BS 1961-1970 vol.12, cols.1290-1293. There is uncertainty with respect to the sources; some suppose that the martyrdom was suffered in Damascus, others suggested Antioch, Alexandria, Egypt, or even Sicily and Marseille. Richeome simply stated it to have been Syria evidently concentrating on this story for edification rather than for hagiographic purposes.

Richeome 1611, pp.480-481. "Sur quoi vous noterez de sens mystique, que les creatures muettes ne peuvent pas-""er Dieu, su le remercier proprement, c'est a lere a la seule creature raisonnable, duee d'entendement, & de tran-"" arte, neantmoins le profete les invite toutes a ce devoir, m'a par meugarde, mais a devoir; pour deux raisons. La premi""re, pour montrer le desir, qu'il a, & que chacun doit avoir, que Dieu soit magnifie, & glorifie en toutes, &"" par toutes ses oeuvres; la seconde pour enseigner a l'homme, qu'il a obligation de louer Dieu, & louer tres graces""on seulement pour les biens, qu'il a recues de Dieu en sa personne, mais encore de ceux, qu'il voit aussi et faire a""aux autres creatures pour son regard."
Christian to restore and maintain the spiritual health of himself and others, and this was done by conversion and spiritual instruction. This would save their souls from the devil and provide entrance to the Heavenly Jerusalem, of which this world functioned as a spiritual image. The landscapes behind the martyrs thus were not meant to veil the atrociousness of the scenes, but illustrated the world that should be Christianised by missionaries and at the same time it offered them the tools to convince pagans and heathens.

**Functions of the Sant'Andrea complex**

The primary goal of the noviciate complex of Sant'Andrea and San Vitale was the education of Jesuit novices, whose principal task would be, according to the Constitutions of the Society, that of evangelisation and mission. Ministry was placed above other regular duties and this should begin during the noviciate. This activity was not restricted to Rome or Italy, but should be undertaken in the entire world. The noviciate was a training ground for an internationally oriented group of Jesuits; its populace came from all over Europe. Richeome alluded to this in the conclusion of his book, where he addressed the novices in the first person plural, and indicated that his preceding account should function for them as a source of inspiration. The novices should take these zealous examples of itinerant missionaries and martyrs in the San Vitale to heart, and should even identify with them. Richeome exclaimed about these saints after his description of the scenes of cruelty:

> Oh my dearly beloved brothers, you are still happy, and happy will be the course of your education, when in some way you will be able to imitate the works of these saints, to participate in their glory! It is the house of probation of the Lord, where all the children of his descent should be formed, and where they should proceed to perfection and possession of immortal glory.

With the 'works' Richeome did not intend the martyrdom the saints had suffered; he referred to their success in converting pagans to Christianity. 'Immortal glory' was thus attained by their actions during life, for which they were rewarded after death, not by the way they died. As Richeome had explained to them, the novices should also use pictures - which alluded to the

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1. O'Malley 1993, p.80, citing a letter by Nadal to saint Carlo Borromeo.
3. Richeome 1611, pp.783-784: 'O mes bien-aimez freres, heureux vous encorez, & heureuse la course de vostre escole, si en quelque facon vous pouvez imiter les travaux de ces Saintz, pour avoir part à leur gloire! ... C'est la grande maison de probation de Dieu, où tous les enfans de son heritage doivent estre formez, & où ils doivent passer à la perfection & possession de la gloire immortelle.'
natural world, because that had been 'painted by God' - in their explanations to the visitors. The young Jesuits were thus impelled to follow the example given by their master, and use the arguments with which he had furnished them in the guided tour they had just concluded:

These are the teachings that the sacred walls of this church of San Vitale give to you, by the words of the silent pictures (Tableaux muets) ... For the crowning and fulfilment of this celestial and spiritual picture that I have sketched out for you, it only remains to say a word to you about the talking pictures (Tableaux parlans), that you will paint every Wednesday in the souls of the people that come here, and lend you their ears ... Here, once a week, you will show to numerous people the Christian Doctrine: which is to say, Paradise, and the correct route that should be followed to arrive there at the right time and place, and for that reason you will make Italians, Poles, Bohemians, Hungarians, the Flemish, Walloons, the Irish, Scots, English, Greek, Spanish, French and other nations of Christianity, and each and every one of them will be taught in their native language ... a German among you will address in German: a Polish man in Polish, and likewise for all the others...

At the turn of the seventeenth century, some travel-accounts mentioned visits to San Vitale and its gardens. These documented the effectiveness of the propaganda undertaken by the Jesuits and the reception of this Doctrinal explanation of nature. These dairies also attested that the Peinture Spirituelle by Richeome was a record of an already existing situation. The French pilgrim Florisiel de Claveson, being in Rome in the years 1608-1609, just prior to the publication of Richeome's book, described his experience of the visit as follows:

San Vitale, a church depending on the noviciate of the Jesuit Fathers, in which each Wednesday great Charity is done for the needy pilgrims of all countries: some twenty young religious are employed for catechising and instructing those poor beggars in the Christian religion, and having fulfilled them spiritually, they are being given good alms.
Precisely this kind of guided tour was suggested in the views of the interior of San Vitale and of the adjacent garden (figs 87 and 89). On the first and third terraces one can see small groups of people shown around by Jesuits, recognisable by their typical head-dress. The etching of San Vitale showed its interior with a small crowd gathered in it. In the foreground near the entrance alms are being distributed to beggars and cripples, after first having been instructed in Christian Doctrine by other Jesuits, and in the background a preacher is standing on a pulpit surrounded by listeners, and to the right hand side a Father seems to be hearing confession.

The complex of San Vitale functioned as a training-ground for apostolic work, in the Roman as well as in the international context. Young novices were being taught how to fulfil their duties as parishioners and missionaries, for which they could practice on the weekly Italian and foreign visitors. The primary aim was to teach the Christian Doctrine according to the Catholic church, either with the aim of strengthening the Faith, or of converting pagans in Protestant countries or faraway regions. Allegorical, symbolic and biblical readings of nature played an important role as a means to convey this message. As exemplified in the Peinture Spirituelle, the tour of the premises of San Vitale and Sant'Andrea was a form of instruction in Christian Doctrine with the help of 'mute' images. These would only turn into 'speaking' images, when the 'language' they 'spoke' was properly explained. This didactic method was applied in the three contexts where the Jesuits were employed: Schools of Catechism, the assistance of pilgrims, and the mission.

**Christian Doctrine and the argument of nature**

Catechism teachings from the late sixteenth century onwards used nature to prove the Christian Doctrine of the one and triune God who had created the world, and it was to this that Richeome referred in his Peinture Spirituelle. The first occasion on which the devout in the Seicento would be familiarised with regarding nature as symbol or 'image' of its Creator was in the Credo of the Catholic Church, which began with the sentence 'I believe in God the Father and Omnipotent Creator...' In several instruction books of the late sixteenth century this phrase was explained by means of visible nature; these had a particular influence on the time around 1600, and on the Roman context in particular. The Jesuits took up a tradition of Catechism-teaching that had evolved earlier, especially in Spain. Not only the choice, but also the order of the arguments was followed in the later treatises by Richeome and Bellamino.

In 1585 the Della Introdottione al simbolo della Fede appeared from the pen of the
Spanish Dominican Luis de Granada, which offered a profound explanation of the mysteries of the Faith for the use of Catechism-instruction. Its text followed the intentions of the Credo, and made ample use of the relation between creation and Creator:

These two important works are the principal fundaments of the Articles of our Faith. For that reason in the first of those the initial part of the Credo is explained, which refers to the figure of the Father: which is I believe in God the Father almighty, Creator of the Heavens, and the World.

From this point on, by means of observation of the created world the first book of De Granada’s treatise led the reader to knowledge of the Creator. In his introduction, he used Christian as well as pagan philosophers (especially Aristotle) to argue that only by means of this meditation over the visible world could knowledge of the Divine be obtained in this life. The subsequent description of the universe followed the order of Creation in Genesis: the Sun, moon, stars and the celestial bodies; the four elements, the plants, the animals - the latter two of which were discussed not only in their different varieties, but most of all as life-sustaining substances for humans. More amply discussed were specimens such as the small animals, because ‘the wisdom and providence of God resplends as much in the small things as in the great.’ Particularly bees and ants were considered moral examples for the human spectator, as their way of living peaceably in groups and their sense of co-operation were exemplary.

The conclusion of this first book described the human body and mind, both created in resemblance of the Creator; and for this reason, God has special attention for the welfare of Mankind; all the things in this world have been made for man. But humans were often ignorant of the symbolic meaning of nature; they should be instructed in this method as a step towards the knowledge of the Creator, as De Granada exemplified with an example taken from the Book of Job:

Although Saint Job by special revelation knew the mystery of our Redemption, and that of the general Resurrection, nonetheless the friends with which he discussed [these things] did not understand this mystery, and for that reason they proceeded with the
De Granada's book was meant to offer the reader a course to follow in reading and prayers, and should thus take him towards a better devotional life. Three other voluminous books followed this first part, in which the principles of Christian life, the mystery of Redemption, and the other miracles of the Catholic Faith were explained.

In 1598, Roberto Bellarmino published a booklet for the use of parishioners, the *Dichiaratione più copiosa della Dottrina Christiana*, that in spite of the suggestion of its title, was much shorter than Granada's large volume. It was meant to be useful for the context of group teaching. It explained in a brief text the significance and meaning of the Catholic dogmas in strict relation to the texts of the Credo and several prayers. Again, the first words of the Credo were explained in connection with visible nature, now in the form of a dialogue that evoked the situation in confirmation class:

D. Why does one say Creator of Heaven and Earth? Has not God also created the air, the waters, the stones, the trees, mankind, and all other things?

M. By means of Heaven and Earth are also indicated all that which is in the Heavens, and on the earth. Like one says, that man has a body, and soul, it is also meant that he contains all that is found in the body, like the veins, blood, bones, nerves, etcetera; and all things, that are found in the soul, like intellect, will, memory, interior and exterior sentiments, etcetera. As for the Heavens, this also means the air, where the birds are, and all the higher things, where the clouds are, and the stars. So one says the birds of the sky, the clouds in the sky, the stars in the sky, and finally the Angels ... Thus it is said, 'God creator of the heavens and the earth': because these two are the principal parts of this world, the one up above, in which the Angels live, and the other down below, in which man lives, which are the two most noble creatures of all, which all the others serve; since they are obliged to serve God, who has made them out of nothing, and placed in such a high state.

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8 De Granada 1585, p.217: 'Peroch c quantunqu c e l Sant o Giobb e conoscesse per spetial e revelation e il mistero della nostra redentione, & quello della risurrettione generale, nondimeno gli amici che con lui disputavano non compresero questo misteria, & per questo procedono con la considerazione, che dicemmo delle cose create.' Granada probably referred to Job 19:25-27. For the iconography and significance of Job, see *B.N. 1961-1970 vol.6*, cols.470-485, and Terrien 1996, pp.135-139, esp. pp.136-137 on Carpaccio and the interpretation of Job as prophet on the basis of the Augustinian Vulgate.

7 For the numerous editions of this treatise, see *Sommervogel 1960 vol.1*, cols.1182-1183 and vol.8, col.1797. For this study, use has been made of the edition that appeared with Zanetti in Rome in 1600.

8 Bellarmino 1600, pp.21-22: 'D. Perche si dice Creatore del Cielo & della terra? Non ha fatto Dio anco Paria, l'acqua, le pietre, gli alberi, gli huomini, & ogni altra cosa? M. Per Cielo & terra s'intende anco tutto quello, che e nel Cielo, & nella terra. Come chi dice, che l'huomo ha corpo, & anima, intende ancora, ch'egli hà tutte le cose, le quali
By means of a game of questions and answers, the parishioner would open the eyes of the candidates for confirmation to the hidden significance of visible nature. After a successful conclusion of Sunday School, these Catholics would be able to see behind the surface of nature and perceive its Creator.

In a new edition of this treatise published in 1604 under the new title *Dichiarazione del simbolo*, aimed at the parish priests of Capua where he had become Bishop, Bellarmino expanded this concept and discussed the six days of creation one by one, instead of dealing with this matter with only one answer. He explained the function of all the elements of Creation in sustaining life, going from the detail to the whole, from plants and animals to the system of the universe. He also wrote a counterpart to the *Dichiarazione*, the *Dottrina Christiana*: it was intended for reading and consultation by the devout and appeared in many languages - Spanish, German, Polish, and many more. It also contained images with short captions to improve understanding and support memorisation. The first line of the Credo was illustrated here by Eve taken from Adam's side: the last episode from the Creation as given in Genesis 2. The choice for this image will have evoked in the mind of the viewer the preceding six days of Creation, of which the Creation of Eve was the conclusion, and established again a link between the visual world and its primary Cause.

Around 1600, books by Bellarmino and Granada for Sunday School were institutionally promulgated: reading nature allegorically as a sign of the Creator was divulged in an active way by parish priests and ecclesiastical organisations. Throughout Italy so-called Schools of Christian doctrine were founded in the late sixteenth and early seventeenth century, many with the support of religious orders or confraternities. Although the contents and the duration of this kind of religious education could vary from school to school, the involvement of the Jesuits in this field secured Bellarmino's books a certain familiarity with the general public.

Indeed, within the Roman sphere, Bellarmino's books on Christian Doctrine became the main instrument for the classes organised by the Confraternity of the Christian Doctrine. This
brotherhood even took the trouble to produce their own editions of the *Dottrina Christiana*, in Italian and a number of other languages. Through the network of associated brotherhoods, they secured the propagation of this booklet in Schools of Christian Doctrine. The use of nature as an argument to explain the Credo can thus be assumed to have been a familiar concept with the general public in early Baroque Rome, thanks to the edifying efforts of Jesuit authors, preachers and institutions.

**Pilgrimage and the real world**

A second context in which the allegorical reading of nature was promoted was that of pilgrimage. Novices at San Vitale trained their skills on foreign visitors who came in ever-increasing numbers to Rome and its churches after the Council of Trent and the reinvigorated tradition of the Jubilees. As a result of the growing popularity of pilgrimage, the market for pilgrim-guides began to flourish, and many of these were written for travellers to Rome. Devotional exercises, not surprisingly, played a conspicuous role in these booklets. A practical treatise was the *Trattato delle Sante Peregrinationi, Dove s'insegna il modo delle Stationi* of 1575, written by the Jesuit Gaspar Loarte († 1578), and aimed at pilgrims coming to Rome for the special occasion of the Holy Year. In his booklet the moment of actual travelling was designated a moment of devotional reflection upon the world. The mind of the pilgrim should not remain idle, and in this context perceiving landscape and nature plays a role. Loarte's text even evoked in the future traveller the gaze upon the landscape:

> So, my brother, you can taste a little of this divine food, as much as suffices to distract you and to relieve the fatigue and tiredness of the pilgrimage, and helpful with the following considerations. Firstly, when you have walked for a while and feel exhausted, stop for a moment to view the vastness of the countryside, or the mountains, woods or meadows through which you are walking; the agreeableness of the trees, the beauty of the roses, lilies, flowers and other grasses, with so much variation in colour and scent which you perceive, and when you will have seen all the creatures, apply yourself a while to their Creator, and consider what his powers are, that so much and such admirable things as are to be seen in this world. He has done with one word only. How great is the beauty of the one that has created such beautiful creatures, because all the beauty that is to be seen in them is but a small particle, that is derived from that infinite see of all the beauty

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See Black 1989, p.226.

On the Jubilees of the late sixteenth and early seventeenth centuries, see Alfanì 1725 and Andretta 1997b.
and perfection, so much is His goodness, a part of which has been distributed to these creatures, and above all there is the unutterable love, that he conveys to mankind, in whose service he has wanted to create this magnificent machine of the world, so that man will dedicate oneself to serve and love the one that has given those things to him. So raise your eyes, and look at the heavens, the sun, the moon, and the stars, and their greatness, beauty and splendours; they will help you to understand the same power, goodness, beauty and love we have explained, and how the royal Prophet has stated. The heavens recount the glory of God, and the stars announce and demonstrate what the powers are of His hands that have made this work, and what should be our gratitude towards our Creator, who has wanted to create all this for our sake. See there how the creatures serve as a stairway to raise through them towards understanding and consideration of the Creator, from which you can draw great refreshment and recreation."

Loarte thus preceded Bellarmin in the use of this concept of the 'Ladder of nature' as religious exercise, and applied the lessons that the reader might have learnt in Catheism-school in another context. This kind of consideration was not confined to the moment of repose, for Loarte recommended that the reader kept on paying attention to his surroundings while travelling, with the same goal of foretasting the Divine. A roadside fountain would evoke the consideration of the birds gathering there to drink and bathe - similar to the episode in Richeome's Peinture Spirituelle - and convey an understanding of the essence of God as the Creator of this world. Realising that God was omnipresent would fix the mind of the pilgrim not upon his geographical, but on his spiritual goal. The rest of Loarte's book contained more pragmatic information, on the preparations before going and the roads to follow. An important part of the book described how,

\[\text{Loarte 1575, pp 70-73: Potrai adunque tu fratello mio assaggiare un poco di questa divina riflessione, tanto che basti recitarti, & alleggerir il fastidio, & stronchezza della tua peregrinazione, aiutando in essa delle seguenti considerationi. Prima quando havendo caminato un pezzo ti sentirai stracco, fermati un poco a riguardare la grandezza della campagna, o monti, o boschi, o prati per li quali camini, la vaghezza de gli arbori, la bellezza delle rose, gigli, fiori, & altre herbe, con tanta diversità di colori, & odori, che vederti, & poi che harai riguardato tutte queste creature, voltati un poco al Creatore loro, & considera quale è la potenza di colui, che tante, & si mirabili cose quanto nel mondo si veggono, ha fatto con una sola parola, quanta è la bellezza di chi ha creato così belle creature, poi che tutta la bellezza che in esse si vede non è altro che una minima particella, che deriva da quello infinito mare di ogni bellezza, & perfettione, quanto è la bontà sua, dalla quale procede che s'è voluto diffondersi & comunicarsi a queste creature, & sopra tutto quale è eternibile amore, che porta a gli uomini, per servirli delle quali ha voluto creare questa gran machina del mondo, accio che loro s'impieghino in servire & amare che gli l'ha dato. Alza dopo gli occhi, & riguarda il cielo, il Sole, la Luna, le stelle, & la lor grandezza, bellezza, & splendore, ti tara più conoscere la medesima potenza, bontà, bellezza, & amore, che dicevamo, poi che come dice il Regio Profeta, Li Ciel narrano la gloria di Dio, & le stelle annunciano, & dimostrano qual sia la potenza delle mani che tale opera hanno fatto, & quale deverebbe essere la gratitudine nostra verso il Creatore, per che noi ha voluto creare tutte queste cose. Poco come le creature ti serviranno di scalini (come dice il Saviolo) per montare per essi alla coginitione, & consideratione del creatore, della quale potrai cavare gran reinfoirtio & recreatione.}\]
after arrival in the Eternal City, the pilgrim could obtain as many indulgences as possible. Loarte thus directed his reader to see the physical and the metaphysical goals of the pilgrimage as complementing each other.

In 1604 the arguments and devotional methods collected by Loarte were repeated in Louis Richeome's manual for pilgrims to the basilica in Loreto, his *Pelerin de Lorete*. This book, however, did not only offer practical and spiritual advice on the necessary preparations, the route to be followed, and an appetiser of the Holy place to be visited, but it prescribed a meticulous day-to-day calendar. Part of the preparation was teaching the pilgrim how to take care of his spiritual health, by instructing him in the methods and subjects for spiritual exercise: prayer, meditation and contemplation. The first was 'a turning of the mind to God', as Richeome cited Saint Augustine; the second was 'a discourse in the mind of a divine subject, of the Creation of the world....'

Meditation could be done by means of a didactical query on the visible world, and Richeome provided the reader with the clues:

noting the causes and the effects, and reaching conclusions adequate to the honour of God, and to our own profit; for example, meditating upon the Creation of the world, I will notice how God is the supreme cause of all things, which he made everything out of nothing with one word, that the sky, the earth, and the creatures which are between the two are works of his power, wisdom, and goodness; from which I conclude that he is almighty, having produced so many beautiful effects out of nothing; all wisdom, having ordered them so divinely; all goodness, having given them all to me; I conclude that I should believe in him as the sovereign Lord, adore him as supreme Wisdom, love him as Infinite Goodness, and serve him with all my heart, and all my powers, like my Creator, my King, my Maker, my Father and my All.'

Richeome concluded that this would enlighten the knowledge of the pilgrim on the marvels of God, that he would be inspired to communicate with Him by means of prayer and meditation while travelling. Under the recurrent spiritual obligations of each day, Richeome returned to the

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"Richeome 1628 vol.2, p.217: 'Or mediter en Chrestien, c'est discourir en son esprit de quelque divin subject, de la Creation du monde, de la nativite du Fils de Dieu...'

"Richeome 1628 vol.2, p.217: 'Ce discours se fait en notant les causes, & les effects, & tirant des conclusions convenables à l'honneur de Dieu & à nostre profit, par exemple, meditat de la Creation du monde, je remarque comment Dieu est la supreme cause de toutes choses, qui a fait tout de rien par sa seule parole, que le ciel, la terre, & les creatures qui sont entre-deux, sont oeuvres de sa puissance, sagesse, & bonté; de la ie conclus qu'il est tout-puissant, ayant produit tant de beaux effects de rien; tout sage, les ayant si divinement ordonnez; tout bon, me les ayant tous donnez: le conclus que ie le doibs croire comme souverain Seigneur, adorer comme supreme sagesse; aymer comme infinte bonté; & le servir de tout mon coeur, & de toutes mes forces, comme mon Createur, mon Roy, mon Plasmateur, mon Pere, & mon Tout.'
regard of visible nature, occurring on every day of the voyage, and that could be practised for a number of hours. He now turned from the details to the whole:

Being in the fields he will take the subject of praising God according to the occasion which the things he passes will give him; looking at the sky, he will admire God in these bodies and the immortal lights; looking at the mountains, the plains, the rivers, the plants, the animals, and other creatures, he will render Grace for all to the Creator, as these have been made for the good and use of man and his own being; and he invites them to praise this same Creator in imitation of the wise and valiant Jews, who said in the middle of the furnace. *Praise the Lord, Lord of all things. Carry his name sung in the celestial spaces.*

Regarding the metaphysics of visible nature in the context of travelling was thus highly recommended in the late sixteenth and early seventeenth century and the foreign pilgrims paying a visit to the garden of Sant'Andrea must have recognised the kind of argumentation used by the Jesuit novices.

But Louis Richeome meant his *Pelerin de Lorele* to be more than a mere manual for travellers; pilgrimage was not only an act of geographical movement, it was a state of mind. For this reason, his book was meant to be more than a mere travel-guide, it was meant to be a manual 'for life', and the text itself underlined this by inserting an allegorical story about a city, told by a hermit to three travellers returning from Loreto. He explained to them, that the goal of each pilgrimage was not the geographical destination but the Heavenly Jerusalem; and the road to that is constructed with prayer and meditation. This was the concept of the 'pilgrimage of life', also discussed in another treatise by Richeome. In his *Deffence des pelerinages* of 1605, he stated that life was a spiritual pilgrimage through this earthly realm towards celestial Paradise, and that thus not the physical act, but the pilgrim's spiritual intentions counted. The journey in this world was full of dangers - for which real pilgrimage was considered an act of penitence and purification - preparing the soul for the transition into the heavenly Paradise. During this voyage, natural surroundings turned a double face to the devout: on the one hand of the valley of tears, and on the

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1. Richeome 1628 vol.2, p.222: "Avec ces méditations il en aura d'autres qui luy sont cy-apres données pour chaque journée de son voyage, qu'il fera en mesure pour soubs diverses heures. Istant aux champs il prendra sujet de louer Dieu selon les occasions que les choses qu'il verray lui donneront; regardant au ciel, il admettra Dieu en ces corps & lumiers immortelles, voyant les montagnes, les plaines, les rivières, les plantes, les bestes, & autres creatures, il rendra graces de toutes au Createur, comme faites pour le bien & utilité de l'homme & le sien propre; & les invitera a louer celuy Createur à imitation de ces sages & vaillans Hebreux, qui disoient au milieu de la fournaise. *Bénissez le Seigneur, du Seigneur oeuvrent toutes. Portez son nom chanté sur les celestes voûtes." The biblical citation is a paraphrase from Daniel 3:52-90.
3. See Trefers 1997 for the concept of spiritual pilgrimage in Richeome's *Deffence* and in the work of Canavaggio.
other hand prefiguring the Heavenly paradise. Rieheome explained, that it was the mind of the beholder to see either the one or the other:

The third point touches the point why man is a Pilgrim in this life, regarding the visible world as made for him; why his pilgrimage is so full of anguish. The reason for the first is the excellence of man consisting in his primary functions; knowing in the soul, eternal and heavenly being, carrying in himself the image and likeness of supreme beauty; for which reason he has been given an eternal home attuned to his dignity, and more noble than the earth, common abode of the beasts, and creatures of vile condition; even though he has not yet sinned, this mean world notwithstanding has been assigned to him as place of pilgrimage, not troublesome and futile, that which it is at present, but gracious and honourable; where standing delighted for some time in the contemplation of the Creator and his marvellous works, and in the action of good Graces received by this supreme Goodness, without intervention of death, and without application of any effort, he has taken the flight to Heaven, his real home, to reign here for ever in the company of the Angels his compatriots and fellow townsmen: the earth is thus given to him like a wonderful residence, but not in perpetuity, but as passing and temporary: for which he is there a Pilgrim, and not citizen, for reason of his superiority.¹⁰⁰

Much more explicit than in his own Peinture Spirituelle or Bellarmino’s Scala di salute, Rieheome argued in his Deffence des Pelerinages that it was in the eye of the beholder to see the good or bad side of nature and that the valley of tears could turn into a vision of the Heavenly Paradise through the act of faith. Nature was an image of the Creator to whom the pilgrim was travelling - in the flesh or in the mind - and provided the building-blocks for the spiritual road.¹⁰¹ Concurrently, in the above citation Rieheome turned the world into an ambiente for the pilgrimage of life. The physical road and the spiritual path became mirror images.

¹⁰⁰ Rieheome 1628 vol.2, p.223: ‘Le troisieme point contient la cause pourquoy l'homme est Pelerin en ceste vie, vuc que le monde visible est fait pour luy; pourquoy aussi son Pelerinage est si plein d'angoisses. La cause du premier, c'est l'excellence de l'homme consistant en sa principale partie, savoir en l'ame, essence immortelle & celeste, portant en soy l'image & semblance de la supreme beaute; a raison de quoi il luy estoit donne une habitation perpetuelle proportionnee a sa dignite, & plus noble que la terre commun senour des bestes, & creatures de vile condition: si bien qu'encor qu'il n'eu peche, ce monde hau ceste luy estoit assigne seulement comme une terre de Pelerinage, non penible & chetif, tel qu'il est a present, mais gracieux & honorable; ou stant delici de temps en la contemplation du Createur & de ses belles oeuvres, & en actions de graces des biens recues de ceste supreme bote, sans entremisse de mort, & sans commerice d'aucun peine, il eut avec son corps plus le vol au Ciel sa vraie patrie, pour y regner a jamais en la compagnie des Anges ses compatriotes & concitoyens: La terre donc luy estoit donnee comme demeure delicieuse voirement, mais non perpetuelle, ains passagere & pour de temps; parquoy il y estoit Pelerin & non citoiy, a raison de sa preemience.’

¹⁰¹ Significant is the fact that the chapter entitled L'Allee du Pelerin only described methods of prayer and meditation, clearly taking the significance of Allee to be the spiritual road.
Missionary theory and natural philosophy

The third aim of the Jesuit complex of San Vitale was the education of future missionaries who were sent out to the Americas and Asia to spread Catholicism. Missionary practice was subject to co-ordination and control after the Council of Trent; this led in 1622 to the institution of the Propaganda Fide. Similar progress was made in the field of missionary theory: during the first quarter of the seventeenth century, systematic ideas were developed in this field. The appearance of treatises on the subject of 'how to convert pagans' was one of the outcomes, and as in the related context of catechism, the concept of Creation played a significant part in it. The theories current in the Jesuit Order reflected general ideas on the conversion of heretics and useful didactic arguments to attain this.

The first book on missionary practice was written by the Italian Jesuit Giuseppe Acosta (1540-1600), published under the title *De procuranda Indorum salute* in 1588. Acosta had spent a couple of decades as a missionary in Peru and his local experiences formed the basis of this book. These were backed by theoretical expositions to help future missionaries, but most of all Acosta tried to convince his reader that missions to the Americas were necessary and worthwhile: pagans were in need of spiritual edification by Catholic regulars. The first edition of the *De Procuranda* also contained his *De Natura Novi Orbis Libri duo*, a study on the habitat and lifestyle of the people in the New World. These anthropological and biological additions would lead to a better understanding of its inhabitants, and thus to greater success in delivering the Christian message. Knowledge of botanical particularities and the way of life of the indigenous people would support the missionary in the practical side of his work.

On missionary methods Acosta held the opinion that, when converting the Indians in Peru, it should lead to the understanding of the Christian message of the New Testament, and not merely the biblical story of God's Creation. Thus, as he stated in a chapter on the pitfalls of conversion, although the Apostle Paul had recommended the knowledge of God through his creatures, the missionary should be cautious with this kind of reasoning. God did not so much reveal Himself to mankind only through the visible world, but more importantly through his Spiritual self, for which reason Christ had sacrificed himself.

These cautious remarks meant that even before 1576, when Acosta wrote the major part...
of his treatise, referring to nature as the image of its Creator was already \textit{en vogue} in missionary praxis. Although he continued to warn his readers against too much confidence in this method, he refined his opinion in 1596 when he published the \textit{Historia morale, e naturale delle Indie} in 1596, a profound study on the flora, fauna and original inhabitants of Peru, an extension to the chapter added to the first edition of 1588. In the preface of this book Acosta now explicitly stated that nature was useful as a step towards understanding the otherwise invisible Divinity:

The things made by the Creator, and among them the things of man, who wants to go closer and arrive at the understanding of the causes and the effects, will make the effort to things belonging to philosophy, [and] when someone gets the inspiration to try and raise his thoughts to the highest and first artifice of those marvellous things, he will enjoy the fruits of his knowledge, and will discuss an important part of theology.\textsuperscript{106}

This positive turn notwithstanding, in his missionary treatise no clearly defined method was given for conversion, and it is thus hard to pinpoint just to what extent Acosta taught the indigenous people to regard nature as the Creator imprinting Himself onto the creatures. His book however clearly related the natural history of the world to the mission; knowledge of the botany and zoology would at least help the missionaries themselves to improve the effectiveness of their actions. Richeome had as has been explained above, used this kind of knowledge in his tour through the garden, by pointing out the exotic specimens at San Vitale as marvels of creation.

Soon after Acosta's publication, the need for a more structured and generally applicable theory was felt. The Discalced Carmelite Tomás de Jesús filled in this omission.\textsuperscript{107} His \textit{De procuranda salute omnium gentium} of 1613 (fig.53) offered a veritable encyclopaedic view of missionary theory and theology. Although it was highly theoretical in approach, and dependant upon scholastic reasoning, it would function as a \textit{vade-mecum} for missionaries for two centuries to come.\textsuperscript{108} In the first six books, Tomás discussed the involvement of ecclesiastics and regular orders in the mission, and the election and education of future missionaries; the second half of the work discussed various classes of atheists that were to receive the Catholic message, from the Greeks, Jews and Muslims to the pagans on the new continents. For each of those groups, nobis vero revelavit Deus per spiritum suum. Non ad naturalia, necessario cognoscenda natura ipsa non usque adeo deficit. Fides vero est sperandarum substantia rerum, argumentum non apparentium.\textsuperscript{109}

\textsuperscript{106} Ford 1998 discussed Acosta’s theory of natural history. For the numerous editions see Sommervogel 1960 vol.1, cols.34-36.

\textsuperscript{107} Acosta 1596 p.35: “Le cose fatte dal creatore, et in quelle le cose degli huomini, chi vuole andare più innanzi, et arrivare ad intendere le ragioni delle effetti, si affaticherà in cosa pertinente a buona filosofia, se ad alcuno vennerà nell’animo, di voler alzare i suoi pensieri al sommo, et primo artifici di queste cose maravigliose, godrà il frutto del suo sapere, et tratterà una parte eccellente della Teologia.”

specially adjusted strategies for conversion were offered.

The eleventh book on the conversion of American natives entitled *De ethicorum conversione procuranda* argued that the example of nature was crucial to convince the Indians of the existence of the Christian God. Because, as Thomas Aquinas had stated, the fault of 'natural races' was that they ignored the existence of something surpassing visible nature, it was necessary to show these supernatural levels to them. Especially the doctrine of Creation would relieve their ignorance: according to Catholic belief God was the Supreme Being who was the beginning and the end of everything in this universe, the prime mover and the principle of all created things. Tomas de Jesus suggested three themes to convince the pagans of their wrongs, before the solution in the form of the Christian view of the world was to be explained to them.

First of all, the world was full of various races and nations who, notwithstanding their different ways of life, all had a notion of divinity and a name for God. This must be the effect of a higher entity that had fixed this idea in the human mind. Secondly, the movement of all things had a cause, either internal - such as the human mind that steered the body - or external - such as a ship moved by the wind. Of these external influences traces should be found, such as the sail that billowed. The internal movements of all earthly objects and animals should have their origin outside the bodies themselves, and that origin could only be the Christian God. Thirdly, all created things were aimed towards one goal, often without rational knowledge, such as the trees that first made leaves, then flowers, and finally fruit and semen to procreate. An outside power was the cause of this aim, and this was the invisible God who had organised the universe according to His plans in which all creatures played their assigned role. The following chapters subsequently explained that although God is One, at the same time he was omnipresent in all creatures of this world, and that the goal of our lives lies in the recognition and adoration of God.

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1 Peers 1951-1960 vol.2, p.223 and Hoffman 1960 described the request made in the mid-seventeenth century by the Propaganda Fide to the Carmelites for a new edition of the *De procuranda*.
2 Tomas de Jesus 1613, p.716: 'D. Thom.lib.2. contra Gentes c.3 referentur: Primus, inquit, est eorum erro, qui creaturam naturam ignorantium, nihil supra corporalem creaturam existimantes, divinum creaturam, primam causam & Deum constituere....'
3 Tomas de Jesus 1613, p.777: 'Primâ igitur fundamentâ ex instintu humano sumitur. Nam cum innumeræ sint in tuto orbis naturæ, nullam inuenire tam barbaram quæ non hæbeat aliquam Dei notitiam diuinamque esse aliquam vim caq; aliquo cultus genere non honoret; etsi forte nesciat quis verbis Deus sit, & quis modus illi honorandi certus sit. Huius rei ratio est, quia idem Deus qui cordibus hominum impressit quandam reverentiam naturalem, & amorem erga parentes, qui eos generavit, & erga Principes & Dominos, qui eos regunt & gubernant....'
4 Tomas de Jesus 1613, p.777: 'Secunda ratio est a rerum naturalium motu, Omni enim quod movetur, vel movetur ab interna aliqua causa, vel corpus humanum ab anima: vel ab externa, vel natus in mari, quam cum contemplatur panis velis maniöstis, superatis periculis, certum tenere cursum, statim indicamus, quam aliq. Rectore moderant.'
5 Tomas de Jesus 1613, p.778: 'Tertia ratio desumitur, ex eo quod res omnes videamus tam recto rigore & linea per certa media ad suos fines dirigite: quae cum partim sensu, partim ratione carcant, certum est, ipsas ex se non intelligere suos fines: quis enim dixerit plantas & arborese consulto per se ipsas alimentum ex terra imbibere: & primo folia, mox flores, deinde fructus statutis temporibus emitere?"
From this triple conclusion, arguments were extracted to convert the pagans to Christianity, by explaining to them the six Truths in the Christian view on the world. The first of these was the origin and goal of man in his Creator; the second was that there is but one God in this world, and Truth number three explained that mankind should love God. The fourth truth logically explained the adoration and veneration of God as an obligation, and for this reason the fifth Truth was that God revealed himself in various ways to his believers - the natural world provided mankind with the initial information on the Creator. The sixth and last Truth culminated in the acceptance of the Christian belief as the cult of the one and only God, and the True knowledge of the Divine through the first and the second Book of Revelation.113

In the approach sketched out by Tomas de Jesus, the first encounter of pagans with Christendom would be a new perception of nature, and recognising that this was not a collection of smaller individual divinities, but a system obeying and praising the one and only Christian God. When this initial understanding had been communicated to the Indians, the missionaries would be able to take up where the books on the Christian Doctrine started. Thus, by taking the ever present natural surroundings as example, the Tridentine Professio Fidei as issued by Pius IV in 1564 was proven by experience, reading 'I believe in one God the Father Almighty, creator of heaven and earth, of all things visible and invisible...'.114 This formula explained the Creation as a Christian Dogma, visible to all, and for that reason regarded as one of the prime arguments of the missionaries.

**Allegorical gardens in Seicento Rome**

The design of the garden at San Vitale (fig.87) reckoned with the three aims of teaching the Christian Doctrine, receiving pilgrims and educating missionaries, by providing the clues for the necessary arguments. Next to that, the garden also alluded to the link between macrocosm and microcosm: it contained specimens of plants from all over the world, ordered as in a herbarium, alluding to the endless variety and copiousness of Creation. In this sense, it constituted a musaeum in the open air.115 The three sorts of subjects considered in Richeome's description - the exotic plant, the flower and the sculpture - were however standard elements of the pleasure-garden in early seventeenth century Rome. In many respects, the Jesuit garden was similar to the generic garden, and to the giardino segreto behind the Palazzetto Farnese.

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113 Tomas de Jesus 1613, pp.800-804; 'Capv XIV: Brevis forma proponendi Gentibus Sanctum Evangélium'.
115 Findlen 1994, pp.286-257 termed early modern botanical gardens as 'living museums'.
Rare and exotic botanical specimens, sent to Rome by the Jesuit overseas missionaries, had been planted in the garden at San Vitale. This collection of (sub)tropical plants served plural goals: they would excite wonder in the average visitor, while they would also help prepare the Jesuit novices for their mission on other continents. For this reason, not only the seeds were provided, but also information about these varieties, and this was communicated to the younger Jesuits in the garden at San Vitale. In his description of a Brazilian grass sown in the upper terrace of the garden, Richeome used the information provided by Giuseppe Acosta, and added to this his own Christian explanation for the necessary religious instruction:

From Brazil comes a grass, that has feeling: Because it shuts its leaves when someone approaches it, and it unfolds them when they have gone away; the Brazilians name it for that reason the LIVING GRASS for this perception, and also because it is evergreen, fearing heat no more than cold, showing in this the semblance of the pious and just man, while leaves and good works are always verdant, whether in the ice of adversity, or the warmth of prosperity.\(^{116}\)

Richeome also mentioned other variants discovered in the New World that had been sent to Rome and cultivated on the slope of the Quirinal Hill. Many other owners of gardens in early seventeenth-century Rome strove to obtain seeds of rare plants, and Farnese was among the more important figures in the circles of botanical collectors.\(^{117}\) The *Exactissima descriptio rariorum quærem quædem plantarum* of 1625 inventoried his proud possession of American and Asian species in the Farnese garden on the Palatine Hill, and other sources indicate him as an esteemed supplier of seeds and beans.\(^{118}\)

Flowers formed another recurrent theme in Richeome's text and in the garden itself. The many species described in the second *Tableau* - roses, violets, jasmine, and many others - belonged to the regular inventory of gardens in the rest of Europe and could be found in France and Italy, where horticulture had become an important aspect of early-modern court-culture. The inclusion of rare, and thus valuable bulbs, turned these gardens into prestigious objects and led to a lively trade in these commodities among the upper classes.\(^{119}\) Farnese's secret garden also was embellished with flowers and agricultural plants: from lilies to citrus-trees, arranged in

\(^{116}\) Richeome 1628 vol.2, p.463: *Le brésil donne une herbe, qui a un sentiment: Car elle réserve ses feuilles, si quelqu'un s'approche d'elle, & les laisse quand il s'en est allé; les Brésiliens l'appellent par prérégative L'Herbe Viva pour ce sentiment, par eau aussi qu'elle est toujours verdoyante, ne craignant non plus le chaud que le froid, portant en ceste qualité la semblance de l'homme pieux, & juste, dont la feuille, & belles œuvres sont toujours en vertueur aussi bien en la glace de l'adversité, qu'en la chaleur de la prosperité.*

\(^{117}\) On exotic plants in Roman gardens, see Chapter 1, pp.70-71. See also MacDougall 1994, p.248.

\(^{118}\) Aldini Castelli 1625.

\(^{119}\) Masson 1972 and MacDougall 1994, pp.219-249.
rectangular beds and pots. and doubtless, these were avidly collected and cherished. The presence of Castelli as a special gardener for the extensive Horti Farnesiani on the Palatine Hill (fig.90) indicated that care for the gardens was considered an important enough task to hire specialised people.

The appearance of books in which the holdings of precious flowers were discussed and analysed on the botanical, classical, mythological and biblical levels, illustrated the quest for this kind of encyclopaedic knowledge among members of the Roman nobility. The *Descripizio exactissima* by Pietro Castelli was just one of the first projects that set the tone for others. An important example published in 1633 was the *Flora, sive De florium cultura Libri IV*, by the Jesuit Father Giovanni Battista Ferrari. This work, dedicated to Cardinal Barberini, discussed the precious flowers in the giardino segreto next to the Barberini palace, it discussed in its introduction the familiar topos of Christ in the guise of the Gardener, and paraphrased the words that He was the lily of the valley and the flower of the field.

Lastly, the artificial element of sculpture embellishing the garden was widespread in early seventeenth-century Italy; in *Seicento* Rome the outdoor display of antique and modern statues and reliefs had become a real vogue. The location and use of the fountains at San Vitale reflected the contemporary fascination with these furnishings that no respectable villa in early modern Rome could possibly do without. The only difference at San Vitale was the presence of religious instead of antique themes; but the harmonisation of the sculptural iconography with the theme of the garden was habitual. The garden behind the Palazzetto Farnese was an example of this trend; when the bridge was constructed the new building itself was indicated as 'statuario', and thus intended for the exhibition of the rich holdings of antique sculpture owned by the Farnese family. In conjunction with the flowers in the secret garden, the classical statues

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121 Benedetti 1973 pp.479-480 and Coffin 1991, pp.134-135. For the arrangement in rectangular beds, see I ginnet 1980, p.117 where accounts are transcribed in which workmen are paid to construct these beds in the 'giardinetto nuovo'. Jestaz 1994, p.161 transcribed the inventory of 1644. Payments to gardeners belonged to the regular costs in the accountbooks of the Farnese household; these can be found among other places in ASN, Fondi Farnesiani.

122 On Castelli see chapter 1, p.70.


124 Ferrari 1646, p.8: 'Christus redivivus hortulan i specie'; and 'florem campi, liliumq ; convallium...'


126 For the fountain in sixteenth-century Roman gardens, see Coffin 1991, pp.28-57 and MacDouggall 1994, pp.57-88.

alluded to floral themes, just like Domenichino's decorative frescoes in the vault of the loggia. This thematic coherence was set forth even inside the Palazzetto, in the cosmological themes of the paintings in the five Camerini.

In short, Richome's book made clear that the world was regarded by the seventeenth-century public as an allegorical picture painted by God, and that this devotional exercise was especially apt for the cultivated microcosm of the urban villa of which the garden at San Vitale was but a modest example. The typical garden in early seventeenth-century Rome contained all the elements described by Richome and often in even greater abundance: the agricultural species, the rare and exotic examples, and the beds with flowers. The place where nature was explained to the common public intentionally reflected the generic roman villa as owned by an Ecclesiastical Prince. These parks were often open to the general public - and thus offered more opportunities to practice Richome's didactic arguments than the weekly visits to San Vitale and Sant'Andrea. Although Mario Praz intended something quite different, his statement that the cinquecento villa constituted a 'breviary of the proud cardinal ... a Bible of the rich' is very apt to describe the function of these gardens.129

The Palazzetto as metaphorical Scala

The lessons from Richome's treatise could be enjoyed in any given princely garden, just as was implied in Bellarmino's Scala di salire of 1615. But although both treatises used nature as a subject for devout considerations, the extensiveness of their respective methods distinguished the Peinture Spirituelle from the Scala. While the former was an introduction to the spiritual painting of the world and Christian Doctrine for an audience with basic knowledge - children, pilgrims and pagans - the latter went beyond this first stage. The Scala constructed a course of meditation on this concept that led to a deeper understanding of the cosmos as a reflection of its Creator. In other words, while Richome offered a first introduction using a static image of the world, Bellarmino's book aimed at a higher level of understanding. It was for this reason that the Scala was considered apt for Cardinals - as this kind of reader was assumed to have already received the proper introduction into the Catholic Faith.

Just like Richome, Bellarmino had written his treatise in the garden of San Vitale - which in a sense constituted his 'own' villa for regular retreats. In this sense, it was comparable not only in form but even in function to the villa of other Ecclesiastical Princes, where they were supposed

128 Praz 1975, p.82.
to relax after their ecclesiastical duties. The allusion to the devotional retreat in the garden was thus meant to evoke recognition in the mind of the intended reader. The dedication to Pietro Aldobrandini was, apart from the personal links between the author and the recipient, also related to the fact of the villa. In 1600, Pietro had been donated the Villa Aldobrandini by his uncle Clement VIII, which was located close to San Vitale, on Monte Magnanapoli on the southwestern slope of the Quirinal Hill.\textsuperscript{\ref{130}} In a description of the late 1590s, it was still described as horto - often meaning an agricultural garden or suburban estate - while in the subsequent decade the refurbishing of the casino and garden would turn it into one of the most admired urban villas of the day (fig.91).\textsuperscript{\ref{111}} These works included the cultivation of many flowers and plants in vases and beds.\textsuperscript{\ref{132}}

The relation between the geographical site and spiritual aims of Bellarmino's \textit{Scala di salire} of 1615 was thus more significant than at first appeared; Aldobrandini could take the book in hand when he walked around his own villa, as it was similar in arrangement to the garden at San Vitale. After all, the elements described were found in any garden of the time, for they were constituent elements of the world-view. For that reason, Odoardo Farnese was able to do the same in his secret garden behind the Palazzetto, where flowers, exotic plants, fountain with fish-pond and sculptures reflected a microcosm comparable to the macrocosmic ideas as expressed in the \textit{Scala di salire} and the \textit{Peinture Spirituelle}.

The devotional lesson did not stop when Farnese went inside the Palazzetto; after considering the \textit{tableaux parlans} in the garden, he was able to perceive the praise to the Lord in the elements of the cosmic cycle in the five \textit{camerini}, and in the landscapes and saints in the Camerino degli Eremiti. By means of these real steps, he would be able to transcend with his mind the mere physical world, to approach its divine cause. While in Richelme's description these saints had been martyrs, Bellarmino named in his book a number of hermits, which were depicted in the paintings of the Camerino. They functioned as examples of the practice of considering in solitude the Divine countenance of the visible world, and ultimately transcending it:

How great the beauty of God is one can know just the same, because the beauty of all the creatures together one finds collected in Him in a higher and more excellent manner; but also because, being invisible to us, while we pilgrimage towards him, solely with the


\textsuperscript{130} Vocabolario degli Accademici della Crusca 1612 1987, p.580: 'Orto: campo chiuso, il qual si cultiva a erbe, per mangiare.'
mean of faith, the Scriptures and through the mirror of created things he becomes better
know to us: still many saints have so ardently loved God, that many of them, to be free
and liberated from thoughts, and from the affairs of the world, and to dedicate themselves
to the sole contemplation of Him, they have hidden themselves in abandoned and solitary
places, like Saint Mary Magdalene, Paul the First Hermit, Anthony the Great, and other
innumerable [saints], whom you will find in Theodoretus in the religious History.  

In this citation Bellarmino presented the solitary saints as admirable students reaching the highest
level, having surpassed the consideration of this world, but still plucking the fruits from this
initial exercise to become familiar with their Creator. They had mastered the course starting from
the microcosm, through the macrocosm, to the immaterial aspects of Creation, exactly the course
Bellarmino had shown in his Scala. After all, his subtitle, per mezo delle cose create, indicated
that the reader would not stop at Creation, but proceed to the Creator. By climbing the stairs from
his secret garden to the Camerino in a literal manner, Odoardo Farnese could ascend in his mind
from a literal to a metaphysical consideration of the Divine. Through the earthly Garden of Eden
laid out behind the Palazzetto, he would enter the Heavenly Paradise of divine contemplation.

The same principle was reflected in the sonnet praising Paolo Bozzi's stories of the
ancient hermits turned into modern examples, in his Tebaide Sacra of 1621-1625, a publication
nearly contemporary with Lanfranco's decoration of the Camerino. The poem presented Saint
Paul the first hermit as the subject with which to explain the change in perception as a result of
the spiritual renewal attained:

Horrid cliffs, ancient stones, and broken
Demolished mountains, alpine digurations.
Solitary plants in lonely horrors.
Shingles long since broken, and corroded.

To flee the frighteningly dark night
Of the world, the hard ambushes, and the vain honours.
Paul lived, which is between celestial choruses
The prime glory of the woods, and the grottoes
And behold, a new Paul to the sacred voices.
A new hermit, changes the desert
Horrid before, into Paradise itself

Fortunate Thebaid, to which was conceded
By chance, that to the pious people
The two great Pauls opened your great merit.\footnote{Bozzi 1621-1625, vol.1, 'introduction': 'Horrido balze, antiche pietre, e rotte: Diroccatte montagne, alpestri errori;/ Romite piante in solitari horrori:/ Selci dal lungo di guaste, e corrotte: Per fuggir la dubbia oscura notte: Del Mondo, i duri lacci, e i vani honorii: Paolo habitò, ch'è tra celesti chori: Prima gloria de'boschi, e de le grotte:... Et ecco, un nuovo Paolo a i sacri accenti: Frenita novel, cangi il deserto: Horrido pria, nel Paradiso stesso: Fortunata Tebaide, a cui concesso: In sorte fia, ch'è le piitose genti: Aprisser duo gran Paoli il tuo gran merito.' The poem was signed by Alessandro Gatti, otherwise unknown, who published in 1619 one other poetical work entitled La caccia... Poema heroico, nel qual si tratta pienamente della natura, e de gli affetti d'ogni sorte di fiere; e con modo di cacciarle, et prendere.'}