

# The Ghent Altarpiece and the Spanish Connection



**A Study**

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# Part I

## The Ghent Altarpiece



# Introduction.



Van Eyck 1432  
Ghent Altarpiece

This study does not present itself as an easy read and does not seek to impress with its literary style. It does not offer an authoritative or definitive account of art in the 15th century. Instead, it challenges the reader to actively participate in a quest to uncover the world of Jan van Eyck. Through a close examination of the study's rich iconography, the reader can critically assess the prevailing narratives surrounding Van Eyck and his art. The study is divided into two distinct parts.

## Part I: The Ghent Altarpiece.

First, we look at the eyewitnesses (from the 16th and 19th centuries) who would have seen and described the Mystic Lamb at that time.

After comparing their descriptions with the reality of today, we can delve deeper by studying the details in the Ghent Altarpiece (Mystic Lamb) and comparing them with similar elements in its contemporary setting (both geographically and historically).

## Part II: The Spanish connection.

Two celebrated Spanish paintings (*La Fuente de la Gracia* and *The Virgin of the Consellers*) are associated with the Mystic Lamb. Can this connection be upheld?

Subsequently, a detailed examination of these paintings is undertaken.

★

The quatrain in Latin with attribution and date 1432 (chronogram) was discovered in 1823 on the (original?) frame. Christophe van Huerne (†1629) mentions it around 1616.

*"Pictor Hubertus e Eyck - maior quo nemo repertus  
Incepit - pondus - q(ue) Johannes arte secundus  
(Frater perfunctus) - Judoci Vijd prece fretus-  
Versu sexta mai - vos collocat acta tueri -"*

*"The painter Hubert van Eyck, a greater man than whom cannot be found,  
began this work. Jan, his brother, second in art,  
completed the weighty task at the request of Joos Vijd.  
He invites you with this verse, on the sixth of May [1432], to look at what has been done."*



At the present moment, the only basis to assign a date is the text on the frame: 1432, Hubert and Johannes Van Eyck. The dating of the painting to 1432 has not been done based on the data on the painting itself. Those features are then used as references for other works of art. All details are automatically assumed to refer to 1432 in Flanders.

**However, upon closer inspection, several details refer to Spain and Italy.**



Van Eyck 1432 Ghent Altarpiece

Would we be willing to declare a Rembrandt authentic based solely on the frame?

This is obviously not acceptable, not for Rembrandt nor for the Mystic Lamb.

Present in the Mystic Lamb are a hundred details that can lead to situating it in a certain time and space. Until now, only faces were compared with each other.

We study clothing, hats, violins, organs, lute, psaltery, fountains, shoes, crowns, aureoles, armor, shields, miters, tiaras, censers, chairs, tiles, altarpieces, and customs.

The study cannot and must not be solely guided by the text on the frame. We will now analyze these details further to determine if they corroborate the date on the frame. These are distinct studies whose objectives may be questioned. They serve to shed light on Van Eyck's world. It's a puzzle whose complete picture emerges when all the pieces are assembled.

This study on the Mystic Lamb is part of a general study on the Flemish and French Primitives. The present study elaborates on this theme from a different perspective.

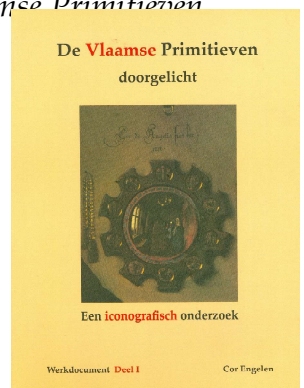
The page references refer to my book on the Flemish Primitives "*De Vlaamse Primitieven doorgelicht*". Louvain 2016.

When referring to this study, we mention *Study p*.

Just a word about the headings and subtitles given with the images.

Some data are displayed in **red**. Red does not necessarily mean that it is a forgery. The artwork sometimes only requires a different period or location. **Green** stands for a new date.

**Cyan** indicates irony. Some captions appear in **blue** to bring them to the reader's attention. The head titles above each page is not a title but a reference to the content of the page.



# Eyewitnesses

Karel van Mander in the *Schilder-Boeck* (1604) writes about the Mystic Lamb and what it looked like according to him. He probably relied on the work of two rhetoricians.

Marcus Van Vaernewijck wrote in his diary: *Van die beroerlicke tijden in die Nederlanden en voornamelick in Ghendt 1566-1568.*

*Of those miserable times in the Netherlands and especially in Ghendt 1566-1568.*

Lucas d'Heere wrote in 1559 (published in 1565) an *Ode aan het Lam Gods. Ode to the Ghent Altarpiece.*

These two works were written before the second iconoclasm (1578/79).

In 1557 Michiel Coxcie is said to have made a copy of the Ghent Altarpiece and in 1625 the Bishop of Ghent permitted to copy the Ghent Altarpiece yet again.



Van Eyck 1432 Ghent Altarpiece

Van Vaernewijck describes a *Coronation of Mary* by the Holy Trinity, featuring God the Father, Christ, and the Holy Spirit. Van Mander echoes this description.

*"De binnenste Tafel van dit werck is uyt der Openbaringe Joannis, daer het Lam van den Ouderlinghen aen wort gebeden, daer overloedich veel werck in is, en uytnemende netticheyt, ghelijck in het gantsche werck oock is.*

*Boven de Tafel comt een Marie beeldt, die van Vader en Sone wort gecroont, daer Christus in de handt heeft een Cruys geschildert, als een doorschijnende Cristael, gheciert met gulden knopen, en ander cieraten, met ghesteenten: en is so gedaen, dat gheoordeelt is geweest van eenige Schilders, dat desen staf oft cruys wel een Maent tijts alleen soude costen te schilderen.*

*Ontrent dese Marybeeldt zijn Engelkens, die musijcke singen, so constich en wel gedaen, dat men aen hun actien licht mercken can, wie den bovensangh, hoogh contre, tenor, en bassus singt."*

*"The inner table of this work is from the Revelation of St. John, where the Lamb is worshiped by the Elders, in which there is a lot of work, and which is full of cleanliness, like in the whole work.*

*At the top of the retable, there is a Mary, who is crowned by the Father and the Son, and where Christ has in hand a Cross painted as a translucent cristal, decorated with golden buttons, and other jewelry, with stones: and is so done, that it has been judged by some painters, that this staff or crucifix alone would cost a month to paint.*

*Around this Picture of Mary are Angels, who sing music, so artful and well done, that one can lightly discern by their actions, who sings the upper song, high contre, tenor, and bassus."*





Joan Mates, *Salvator Mundi*, ca. 1410-20  
procedente del sancstuario de Penafel  
MNAC 214533



Pere Teixidor, *Salvator Mundi*,  
ca. 1420-30  
procedente de Estopiñán  
MNAC/MAC 4505



A. Benson ca. 1530  
*Crowning of the Virgin*

According to Karel Van Mander, Mary is crowned by God the Father and Christ bearing a cross of translucent crystal.

Idem with Marcus Van Vaernewijck: *"int midden den Vader, den Zone ende den helighen Gheest, met Mary die moeder ons Heeren die zij coroneren"*.

*"In the middle the Father, the Son and the Holy Spirit, with Mary the mother of our Lord, whom they coronate"*.

In the present Mystic Lamb, God the Father/Christ has a scepter of translucent crystal. Mary wears not a crown, but a damsel's wreath with roses and madonna lilies.

Instead of Christ with a cross, there is a John the Baptist.

Mary is said to be surrounded by angels.

On the present Ghent Altarpiece, the angels are pictured on two separate shutters.

It is typical of old annals that faith is given to the data useful to the story, but the deviations are pushed aside as errors.

Above right is an image as Van Mander may have seen it.



## Karel Van Mander in 1604.

Karel Van Mander in the Schilder-Boeck (1604) writes about the Mystic Lamb and what it looked like according to him:

*"Joannes heeft op een seer versierlijcke mutse, schier als eenen tulbant achter afhangende, hebbende op eenen swarten Tabbaert een root Pater noster, met een Medaillie."*

*"John bears a very elegant hat, almost like a turban, hanging down his back. He has on a black tabbart a red paternoster with a medal".*

Differences noted we see a red paternoster but no medal on the Mystic Lamb. Lucas d'Heere speaks only of a red paternoster.

Commentators say that Van Mander is mistaken regarding the iconographic representation, or that he viewed the Mystic Lamb with less attentive eyes than a historiographer of the Dutch painting would do.

Karel Van Mander may have seen Joannes wearing a red paternoster and a medal in 1604.

The Hampel painting and the 1572 engraving show a Jan Van Eyck with a red paternoster **and** a medal, coincidentally in the same pose as on the Mystic Lamb.



Van Eyck 1432 Ghent Altarpiece



Hampel, June 2012 nr. 272, oak 23/32 cm.



Portrait of Jan van Eyck  
anonymous engraver 1572



Portraits of Hubrecht, Jan and Margaretha van Eyck  
reproduced in 1764 by Steven van Esveldt



Seroux d'Agincourt, Jean Baptiste Louis Georges (1730-1814), Histoire de l'art par les monumens depuis sa décadence au IV<sup>e</sup> siècle jusqu'à son renouvellement au XIV<sup>e</sup> : Tome sixième, 1823



## Adam and Eve, scared or not ? fig or apple ?



Michiel Coxcie ca. 1550  
The expulsion from Paradise  
Kunsthistorisches Museum,  
Vienna

Karel Van Mander writes that Adam and Eve are pictured at the top of the right-hand panel.

*"At the top of the right door is an Adam and Eve, in which Adam is in a certain thread of breaking the commandment, seeming to be horrified..."*

We do not see a terrified Adam here as Van Mander claims 117 years later.

We do on Coxcie's painting.

There we see Adam and Eve on a (right) panel together.

Eve is picking an apple, while on the Mystic Lamb she is holding a fig.

*"Boven in de rechter deure is eenen Adam en Eva, daer men siet in den Adam een seker verschricken voor t'breken des gebots, schijnende te grouwelen, also hem van zijn nieuw Bruydt wort gheboden, niet (als de Schilders ghemeenlijck schilderen) den Appel, maer een versche Vijghe, waer by eenighe geleertheyt blijkt geweest te hebben in Joannes: want Augustinus, en sommige Geleerden achten, dat het wel mocht een Vijge wesen, die Eva haren Man gaf, dewijl Moyses de vrucht niet en onder-scheyt, want sy hen met geen Appel-bladen maer met Vijgen-bladen (stracx met datse, gesondicht hebbende, hun naecktheyt kenden) bedeckten."*

*"In d'ander deure is (soo ick wel meen) een S. Sicilie."*

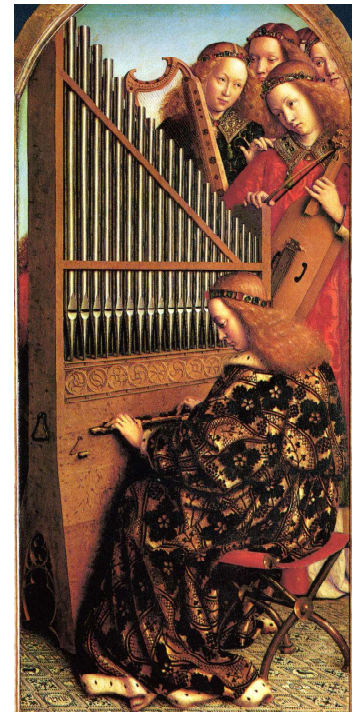
*In the other door is (I believe) a St. Cecilia.*

Van Mander also says that the other panel depicts a Saint Cecilia.

According to Marcus Van Vaernewijck there are angels with an organ:

*ende an dander zijde ooc inghelen die up een hurghel spelen.*

On the Ghent Altarpiece we see only angels (without wings).



Van Eyck 1432 Ghent Altarpiece



## The patrons of Lysbette Borluut and Judocus Vijd.



Van Eyck 1432

Ghent Altarpiece

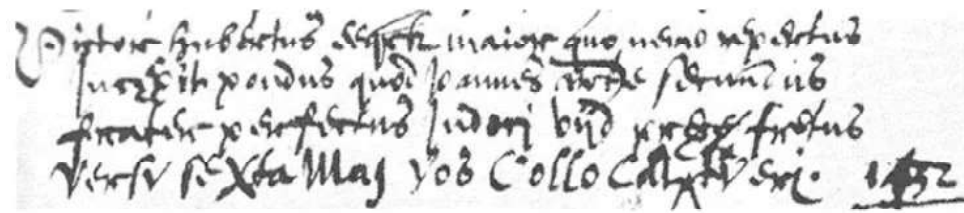
Marcus van Vaernewyck writes:

*Buten ende beneden zijn gheconterfeet, knielende elc voor zynen helich daer hij naer ghenaeemt was.*

*Below outside are painted, each kneeling before his saint after which he was named.*

The patrons, Jodocus Vijd and his wife would be kneeling before their patron saint. Logically we should expect the images of Jodocus and St. Elizabeth, not these of Saint John the Evangelist and John the Baptist.

Van Mander, who does not mention the quatrain on the frame of the Mystic Lamb, says that Philip, Duke of Burgundy, had given the commission for it.



Christophe van Huerne ca. 1616

Mr. de Bast, Dr. Waagen's annotator and translator, discovered the inscription in a book written by Christophe Van Huerne.

The quatrain on the Mystic Lamb had been painted over, and recovered by Dr. Waagen in 1823.

Antonius Sanderus names Jodocus Vyd, lord of Pamele, a patrician of Ghent (Flandria Illustrata, 1641-1644): "*Picturae etiam variae . . . Triumphus agnus coelestis est qui Joh. et Hubertus picturae coryphaei, Justo Vitio domino de Pamele patricio Gandavense pretium solvente . . .*"



France ca. 1438

Le sacerdote de la Vierge  
Paris, Louvre



## The puff sleeve.



Flanders ca. 1410-20  
Coll. Tenschert 1989, nr. 33



Paris ca. 1432-34  
*Bréviaire de Salisbury*  
Paris, BN, Lat. 17294, fol. 56v.



Rouen ca. 1425 *Hours Malain*  
Tenschert, 14 nr. 3

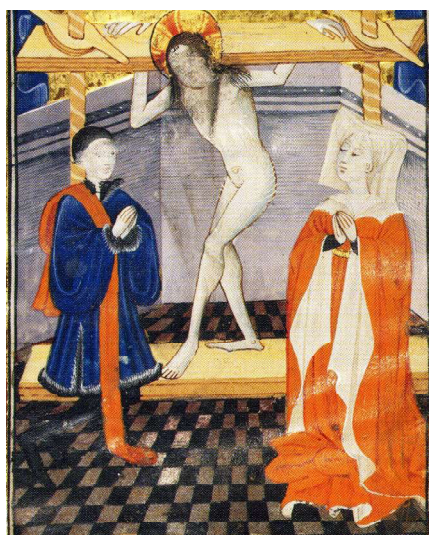
Jodocus Vijd wears so-called puff sleeves. Puff sleeves were mostly worn by men in the first half of the 15th century. A puff sleeve hangs in a round bow like a balloon, not with broken folds. The opening fits closely at the wrist. Jodocus Vijd, the patron, has a plain sleeve with broken folds. Below that is the puff sleeve, also with broken folds. The sleeve ends at a wide edge, while the characteristic of a puff sleeve is a narrow wrist.



Bruges ca. 1430-40  
PML ms. 76 fol. 195v.



Bretagne ca. 1430-40  
*Hours Jean de Montauban*  
Bib. lesChampsLibres



Bruges ca. 1430-40 *Hours*  
V&A, MSL 1902/1690

We notice the same strange and peculiar puff sleeves at Etienne Chevalier.

Has it been painted over?

It is a part of the Melun Diptych. The Melun Diptych is a two-panel oil painting attributed to the French court painter Jean Fouquet (c. 1420-1481) around 1452.

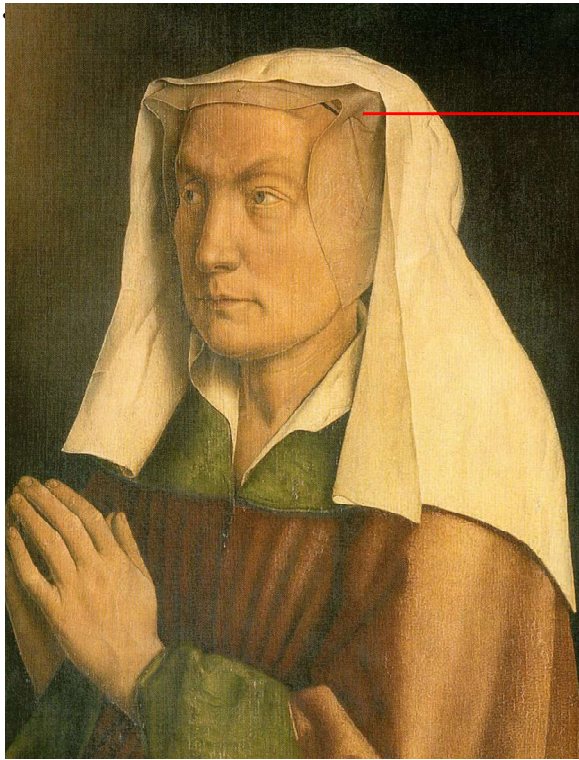
See also *Study* p. 78 and 96.



Jean Fouquet ca. 1450 *Etienne Chevalier*  
Berlin, Staatliche Museen



## The dresses of Lysbette Borluut, the sleeves, the bonnet.



Jan van Eyck 1432 *The Mystic Lamb*  
Ghent, St. Bavo



Valenciennes ca. 1450-60  
Pr. Coll. fol. 143

The clothing of Lysbette Borluut, the wife of Jodocus Vijd, is not in accordance with the fashion of 1430-35.

Women of that time usually wore a robe with tight-fitting sleeves and a cloak over it. Lysbette Borluut, on the other hand, wears a robe with wide sleeves like the men and a headdress that does not belong to that period. There is no bonnet under the headscarf, which would be expected for 1430. It is more like a starched headscarf.



Grammont? ca. 1440  
Ottob. Lat. 2919



Delft? ca. 1440-50 *Hours*  
V&A, MSL 1902/1667



Brussels, ca. 1431 *History Bible*  
Brussels, KB Albert I ms. 9020-23



Valenciennes ca. 1450-60  
Pr. Coll. fol. 187



Tournai ca. 1425  
Tournai, Eglise Saint Nicolas



Tournai ca. 1420-26  
*Isabelle Taquet*



Tournai ca. 1430  
Epit. Marie de Quinghien  
Tournai, Cathedral



Ca. 1440-50  
Epit. Isabelle and Christine Franckenberg,  
Nivelles, Musée communal





London ca. 1420-30  
*Clarence Hours* Sotheby's London  
19 June 1989 lot 3018



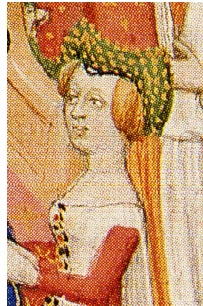
Lorraine ca. 1440 *Hours Metz*  
Paris, Bibliothèque Nationale,  
ms. Lat. 10533 fol. 134v.



Paris ca. 1435  
*Margaret Willoughby*  
Harley ms. 2900 fol. 200



Paris ca. 1436 *Book of Hours*  
Additional ms. 181921 f. 89v.



Paris ca. 1420  
Tenschert V, nr. 13



Johanna van Brabant



France ca. 1430-40 *Vie de Saint Antoine*  
San Lorenzo, Biblioteca Mediceo-Laurenziana



Rennes ca. 1420-30  
Coll. Tenschert, TdF 21



Bruges ca. 1445  
London, BL, Harley 3828



Paris ca. 1420, *Heures Lamoignon*  
Gulbenkian ms. LA 143, fol. 202v.



Arras ca. 1420-40 *The Hunt*  
London, V&A



France ca. 1440  
Ternant I



Bruges ca. 1445 *Hours*  
London, BL Add. 39638 fol. 31v.



Bruges ca. 1430-40 *Hours*  
V&A, MSL 1902/1690



Tournai ca. 1425  
Enschede, Rijksmuseum Twente



Ca. 1430 *Roman de Mélusine*  
Paris, BN ms. fr. 12575 fol. 79



France ca. 1430 *Heures de Neville*  
Paris, BN ms. Lat. 1158 fol. 27v.



Rouen ca. 1444-45  
*The Shrewsbury Book*  
London, British Library  
Royal 15E. vi, fol. 2v.



Utrecht ca. 1428  
*Hours (Use of Windesheim)*  
Les Enluminures 2013



## Retablo de Gante de Adan y Heva. The Ghent altarpiece of Adam and Eve.

Mentions at the end of the 16th and the beginning of the 17th century.

-In December 1556 Juan López Gallo reports:

*A maestre miguel de coxies pintor para en quenta del retablo de gante de adan y heva...*

Church (Saint Bavon) account from February 1557. It states the following: "*Betaelt bij laste van mijnen heeren dekin ende capitle deser kercken ter causen van 't maken van een camere ten versoucke van meester Michiel Hauschij, scildere van den cueninc van Inghelande om de tafele van Adam ende Eva daerinne te conterfeijtene*"

-The accounts of Philip II include a 1558 payment to Coxcie for the "retablo de Gante".

-1559. Archivo General de Palacio: *En 17 de henero de 1559 a unos ombres que en tres carros truxeron desde gante a brusselas el retablo de hadan y eba que maestre michael coxia pintor contrahizo...*

-28 december 1563. Letter of Granvelle to Gonzalo Pérez:

*... y este el mismo pintor que copio la tabla de gante...*

-5 may 1566. Letter of Morillon to cardinal Granvelle. Comment of Granvelle:

*Jay escript a Vandenesse que maestre michiel est content de faire la table de gand au mesme pris quil at fait laultre endedan deux ans et deux mois et que le tout considere. Il est force the faire sur bois ou sur toile, car les metaulx mortifient les couleurs.*

-7 juli 1566. Letter from Morillon to cardinal Granvelle:

*"Je n'ay encores résolution de Sa Mté touchant la table de Gand, qu'elle veult estre faicte par Maistre Michiel, qu'il est force faire sur tablez de bois bien liéez."*

-31 august 1566. Letter of proost Morillon to Granvelle:

*...lesdicts Gantois, à la requeste de Monsieur de Wacquene ont lessé le doxal à Sainct Bavon qu'ilz avoient commencé de rompre. Aussi at esté saulvée la table d'Adam et Eva ...*

-Registers of the Chapter of St. Bavo's Church from 1567 that were also associated with Coxcie in the literature. On October 25 of that year, it is recorded that the chapter received a request from a Spanish nobleman to have the Adam and Eve painting copied from the altar ("*extractum ymaginum Ade et Eve ex altaris tabula*")

1587 september. The chapel is embellished in 1586: "*Jacop Piesins, metsere, metser van der autae ende in besetten ende witten van de capelle van Adam & Eva.*"

1600 (about). In the manuscript of "De ghelase veinsteren" f'12v, of Ghent's St. Bavo Cathedral (inv. no. 745)) "*En celle qu'on appelle de Adam et Eva ...*

1610 (about). "*Daer is het epitaphie van Jan van Eyck, den excellenten schilder, die gheschildert heeot de autaeartaele van Adam en Eva,... zoo Marcus van Vaernewijck schrift*" Anonymous manuscript (244).

1617, april. The chapter decided that the income for the chaplain will be spent for three years on the decoration of the Vijt Chapel with the "*reposita tabula Adami et Eve*".

1624. Emanuel Gueyro, Annales de Flandre, Antwerp 1624, f"2, "*Vee se aum en la lglesia de S. Juan de Gante el retablo de las efigies de Adam y Eva en los*".

1624-1625. Marten David restored the stained glass windows of the chapel (note 165b ).

In the accounts of the Old Church Factory we read "*Item angaende den ontfanck vande tafel Adam en Eva tooghen en is bij den doender deser niet ontfan, dus hier voor memorie*" (noot 203).

1631, september 13-1632, october 26. Philips Beernaert receives XV s. vig. for the delivery of wax in 1629-1631 "*aen de capelle van Adam en Eva*"

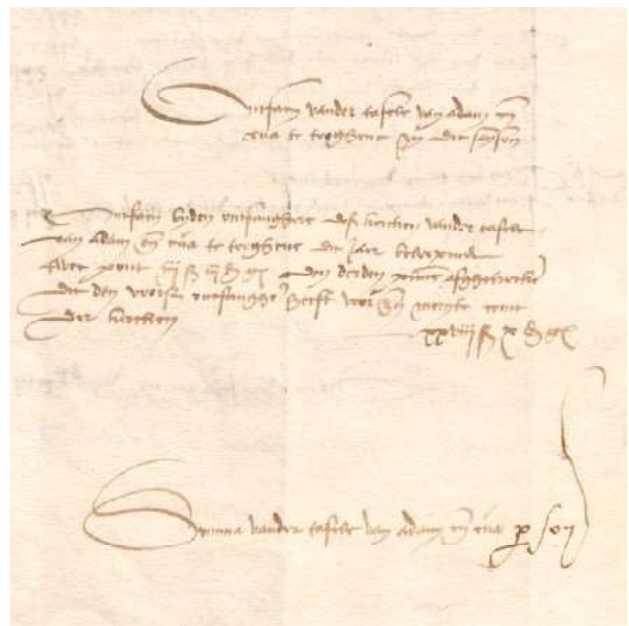
1633, november 4. Canon Ph. Matthias receives a discharge of two masses per week to "*ontlastinghe vande fondatie aenden authaer van Adam en Eva*".

1633-1635. Philips Beernaert was paid for supplying candles for the "*Capelle van Adam en Eva*".

1635, January 20. On the occasion of the 2nd centenary of the foundation, the chapter ordered from Pieter de Wagheneere an altar cloth and an antependium of white Genoese damask and blue satin, decorated with silver fringes "for the benefit of the chapel of Adam and Eve" (note 6b)

1636, July U. Jacques Cocx made a new fence for the "capel van Adam ende Eva", which now is located at the chapel next to the Vijd chapel, where the tomb of Canon F. de Brunswyck-Luneberg lies (note 223).

Granvelle does not mention a Ghent Altarpiece. If the Ghent Altar is named, it is the Adam and Eve altar. At no point is "the Mystic Lamb adored by the Elders", a picture from the Apocalypse, mentioned. Only Lodovico Guicciardini (19 August 1521 – 22 March 1589) who was an Italian writer and merchant from Florence living and residing primarily in Antwerp from 1542 or earlier, speaks of the triumph of the Agnus Dei, erroneously called the Adam and Eve altar (*Descrittione di Lodovico Guicciardini patritio fiorentino di tutti i Paesi Bassi altrimenti detti Germania inferiore*, 1567, Description of the Low Countries).



Income for the visits to the 'tafele van adam ende eva',  
Rijksarchief Ghent, oude fabriek rekeningen, K60  
(24.06.1549-23.06.1550), fol. 8v.

**There is exclusive mention made of retablo de gante or de tafele van Adam ende Eva.**

**There is never a mention made of an Adoration of the Lamb.** Nowadays it would never occur to us to label the present polyptych as the altarpiece of Adam and Eve. Yet tenaciously the altarpiece (tafele) of Adam and Eve is interpreted as being the Adoration of the Lamb.

A "capelle of Adam and Eve" did exist.

Michiel Coxcie painted an altarpiece of Adam and Eve for the same price as a commission two years earlier. The side panels of the Coxcie paintings are located in the Kunsthistorisches Museum in Vienna. We are not going to interpret these panels as being part of an Adoration of the Lamb.

In the texts of the 16th and 17th century is no trace of an "Adam and Eve painting" as part of the Mystic Lamb, copied by Coxcie.

## Inventory of the Alcazar (Escorial Spain).

Panroja de la Cruz gives the following description of an altarpiece in the inventory of the Alcazar in 1600. It is supposed to be the copy of Coxcie.

*"Un retablo grande, que siue en la capilla, que tiene dos órdenes de historias de pintura al hólío, con dos ordenes de puertas; en la horden más alta, en el medio, Dios Padre y a mano derecha nra. señora, y a la hizquierda sanct. Joan Batista; y en las quatro puertas que cierran la dha. orden alta, en la una, de mano derecha una historia de Virgenes y en la otra, adán desnudo, y en las dos de mano hizquierda en la una, sancta Cicilia tañendo un horgano con otras virgenes y en la otra eba desnuda; y en la horden de más avajo en la tabla de enmedio que esla mor y más principal, quatro de las vienaventuranzas, con un altar en medio, con el cordero encima y un choro de angeles a la redonda, con ynsignias; y en las quatro puertos de los lados, las otra quatro bienabenturanzas: puesto el dho. retablo sobre una peana de madera dorada, pintada al holio.*

*Tasólo Ju de las cruz, Pintor de su magd. en tres mil y quienientos ducados, assi como está con guarnicion."*

*"A large altarpiece, which is in the chapel, which has two orders of stories of oil paintings, with two orders of doors, in the highest order, in the middle God the Father, on the right hand Our Lady, on the left, Santo Joan Batista, in the four doors that close the high order, in one of the right hand, a story of virgins and in the other Adam naked and in the two of the left hand, in one Santa Cecilia holding an organ with other virgins, in the other naked Eve. In the lower order, on the middle panel which is the greatest and the most important one, four of the Blessed with an altar in the middle, with the lamb on top and a choir of angels around with insignia, on the four doors on the sides, the other four Blessed. The altarpiece is placed on a piece of gilded wood, painted with oil.*

*Tasalo Ju de la Cruz, painter of his master, in three thousand five hundred ducats, as well as this with housing."*

This description could match Coxcie's copy.

A retable with two rows and four shutters on each side, above and below.

In the center above God the Father with Mary on his right and John the Baptist on the left. To the right of God the Father is a scene of Virgins and a naked Adam.

Below the Lamb with around it a choir of angels with the Arma Christi.

In the four lower panels, the Blessed.

The Virgins on the left are singing angels and on the right we see angels making music in stead of a Cecilia holding a portable organ surrounded by other Virgins.

We have not yet seen Virgins singing and making music in the 15th and 16th centuries.

Sancta Cecilia *tañendo un horgano* is translated as Cecilia playing on the organ to match the current image on the Ghent Altarpiece and the Coxcie's copy.

In a series of Virgins in the 16th century (not in the 15th century), Cecilia holds her attribute, a portable organ, in her hand. The other Virgins have a damsel's wreath and some have a crown.

There is no description of the back of the shutters by Panroja de la Cruz.



## Altars at Saint-Bavo.

The Adam and Eve altarpiece apparently survived the first iconoclasm, but in 1578-79 the Pacification of Ghent (peace of religion) was flouted and a second iconoclasm followed, which was fatal for the Ghent altarpiece.

In the accounts of the church we find mentions of the Joos Vijds altar from 1529-30 "*Joos Vyts tafele te tooghene dwelc es ghegadert gheweest in een busse*".

Foundation deed 1435: '*...ter heere van Gode, ziner ghebenedider moeder ende allen zinen helighen omme huerliden en haerder voerders zielen zalicheden ordeneeren moesten ende stichten eene eeuwelike ende erveliken dienst van eenre messen alle daghe in de cappelle ende ten autae die sij met haren goede van nieus hebben doen maken ...*'



P. J. Goetghebuer 1829 *Saint Bavo's Cathedral*  
Ghent City Archives, Atlas Goetghebuer

There may have been a great altarpiece which has always been mentioned as an *Adam and Eve tafele* and also a Vijds altarpiece. Van Mander mentions a right and left upper door when he refers to the Ghent altarpiece, which suggests that the altar had a raised centerpiece with two shutters attached.

Each side chapel contained a reliquary, a sculptured or painted altarpiece for Saint Bavo, Livinus, Adrianus, Barbara, Chrysogonus, Landoaldus, Macharius, Ida, Vincinia, Landrada and Pharaildis. Since the 15th century, there was a choir aisle surrounded with chapels and after 1533 the transept was enlarged with 8 side chapels for guilds and brotherhoods.

In the chapel of Sint-Lievens: The Brotherhood of Sint-Lieven had a Sente Lievin-altar (abolished in 1540).

O.-L.-Vrouw-op-de-Rade: Onze-Lieve-Vrouwegulde. The Rade was a large candlestick or sometimes a bar for candles, for the high choir.

In 1477 the old reredos (high altar) was removed to make way for the new sculptured reredos with painted side panels. Below that was a predella with the image of the 12 apostles.

In 1475 a Brotherhood commissioned a Passion Scene.

A large alabaster Madonna was destroyed in the iconoclasm.

The Brotherhood of Sint-Aldegonde, as plague saint, is linked to Sint-Laureins and Margaretha. Gulde ende Gheselscepe by Sente Audegonden.

The altar stood on the site of the old Laurentius altar.

Gheselscepe of Sint-Barbara (linked to Appolonia and Elisabeth van Thuringen). She had a Barbara altar (in 1439).

In the chapel of the Bakers, there was an altar in marble and alabaster with painted shutters by Frans Floris. Five epitaphs of stone marble and alabaster with paintings.

According to Van Vaernewijck, the reredos on the main altar had been damaged, as well as two altars to the side of the choir.

Van Vaernewijck died in 1569 and could no longer report on the raids by the Spaniards and the second iconoclasm in 1578-79.

The drawing by P. J. Goetghebuer from 1829 only shows the altars constructed after the iconoclasm.

## The story of the Iconoclasm

18

G E N D S C H E

1566 haelden, en boven dien noch twee tonnen biers, vyf Aug. groote brooden, en twee a dry steenen boter sonden aen de gewapende, die op den Meerfch gedient hadden tot de Waght van de Predicanten.

Den 19. wierden 's morgens ontrent ten thien uren in de Kerke van de PP. Augustynen twee Autaren in ftecken geflagen; waer door den fchrick onder alle de Geestelyke en goede Borgers nog vermeerderde. De Canoniken van S. Baefs dit vernemende, sloten aenftonds de Kerke, verfamelden al de byzonderfte kostelykheden die zy hadden, en vervoerden de felve met de Reliquien van de *HH. Bavo, Livinus, Chrysogonus, Adrianus, Landoaldus, Macharius, Ida, Barbara, Vinciana, Landrada, Pharaildis* naer het Spaensche Casteel; waer naer zy de Kerke wederom openden, en het H. Sacraments-huys, of Tabernakel ten aensien van een ieder lieten open staen, om 't welke te zien, eene groote menigte van volk naer de Kerke quam, van 't welke eenige met groote droefheydt, en tranen, en andere met vreugt volgens hunne gefintheyt het felve aensagen: selfs waren'er vrouwen, die overluydt tegen het H. Sacrament en de Beelden der Heyligen grootelykx lasterden; en alsoo ter felfer tydt twee kinderen van verscheide Moeders ten Doop gebragt wierden, waeren fy zoo vermeten van den Pastor Heer *Leo Hughe* geboortig van Thielt te dreygen, dat fy hem de Cruyne gepelt fouden hebben, indien hy in 't Vlaensche niet en wilde Doopen; waerom hy die kinderen naer huys deed dragen, en daer Doopte, het gene den anderen Pastoor (a) Heer *Willem Aury*s den 21. ook genootfackt wierdt te doen, om diergelyke dreygementen te ontgaen.

Dit voorbeeldt van de Canoniken van S. Baefs

(a) Daer waren dan dry laten, die twee Onder-Pastors van S. Baefs sonder Pastors soude hebben, by Onder-Pastors; maer men de welke over weynige ja heeft sedert geradig gevonden noch eenen derden is den maer eenen Pastor te gevoegt geweest,

96

G E N D S C H E

1567 Den 6. wierdt by trompet uytgeroepen, indien iemand begeerde werk aen te nemen, dat hy naer Antwerpen zoude gaen, om te werken aen 't Casteel, 'tzy in dag-huere, ofte by aanbestedinge.

Den 7. wierden door het Capittel van S. Baefs uyt het Nieuw-Casteel gehaelt de Reliquie-kassen, die over jaer, uyt vreeze van de Beeldtfvormers, daer gevlugt geweest waren, uytgenomen de kasse van den *H. Livinus*, de welke in Junius laetstleden, daegs voor den Feest-dag van zyne Vervoeringe, was getransporteert geweest. Den *Maestro del Campo* en wilde aen de Canoniken de zelve kassen niet laten volgen, ten zy door bevel van den eersten Deurwaerder van het Hof, de Reliquien wierden den 8. alle uytgestelt in den Choor van S. Baefs, en daer geschiedde eenen solemnelen dienst.

As a result of the Calvinist riots, in 1566 the valuables of Saint Bavo's Church were taken to the Spanish Castle in safety. The Spanish castle was erected between 1540 and 1545 on the orders of Charles V on the site of St Bavo's Abbey.

The most important objects were the relics of Saint Bavo, Livinus, Adrian, Barbara, Chrysogonus, Landoaldus, Macharius, Ida, Vincinia, Landrada and Pharaildis.

There is no mention of a Mystic Lamb here. Nevertheless, according to the official version, the Mystic Lamb was brought to safety in the tower of the church.

The date of August 19 was maintained.

O&. Den 1. zynde den Feest-dag van den *H. Bavo*, Patroon van het Bisdom van Ghendt, en wierdt de goude (a) Reliquie-kasse van dien Heyligen voor den hoogen Autaar niet uyt-geftelt, uyt vreeze van door de Geusen bestolen te worden.

On the feast day of St. Bavo, the golden reliquary was not placed on the high altar for fear of theft by Calvinists (Beggars/Geuzen).

A year later on Oct. 8 1567, the reliquaries were again displayed in the choir of St. Baafs.

One was particularly concerned with the gold and silver reliquaries.

Not a word was written about the Mystic Lamb.



1578 den, in de zelve al het zilver en goudt, en alle de Feb. kostelykheden, die'er waren. Den Heuver-deken ook met soldaten deed 't zelve doen in de Collegiale Kerke van S. Pharaïdis, en insgelyk den Deken van de Weverye met de Commissarissen daer toegestelt in de andere Kerken. De reden daer van zoo zy voorgaven, was de vreeze, die z'hadden, dat de Geestelyke met de schatten der Kerken Don Juan zouden by-gestaen hebben om den Oorlog te voeren tegen de Staten; eenen goeden dek-mantel, om die schatten te behouden voor hun zelve.

Den 22. haelden zy uyt S. Baefs de Reliquie-kassen van S. Bavo, S. Lieven, S. Barbara, en van het hoofd van S. Jan Baptiste met de andere Juweelen, die veragtelijk stellende op eenen straet-wagen, en niet anders in de Kerke latende, als een zilvere Wierook-vat, en eenige Kelken om Misse te doen, en dit nog by Inventaris. Op de zelve maniere gingen men

Ook wierdt belast van de ryklyke perzoonen eene goede zomme geldts te leenen, waer voor de Staten gelyke renten, als voren, zouden verkennen; al welke zommen tot Ghendt ontfangen wierden van M<sup>her</sup> Joos Triest Heere van Lovendeghem, en moesten gebruykt worden, om het Krygsvolk te betalen, en nieuw te werven, met het welke zy de

De Kerken van beyde de Beggyn-hoven wierden verwoest: andere gebruykte men voor Casernens om de soldaten te logeren, van andere maekte men Peerde-stallen, en d'ergelyke; van den Crogt van S. Baefs wierdt een Wagt-huys gemaekt, daer de soldaten vier maekten van de gebroken stoelen, banken, Beelden &c. al-hoe-wel dat het in 't midden van den somer was, alleenelyk om den vollen toom aen hunne boosfaerdigheyt te geven.

Op den zelve tydt wierden ook alle de Beelden gebroken, en alles geplundert in de andere Kerken en Cloosters van de Stadt, zoo dat'er geen een Kerke, Clooster oft Capelle over en bleef, de welke niet en wierdt geplundert. De Kerke van S. Baefs was de laetste, alwaer alles ook gebroken wierdt by nagte, en met gesloten deuren, waerschynelyk door die soldaten van den Capiteyn van Mighem, die daegs te voren in den Crogt geforierd waren, en die daerom als regt meynden te hebben, om dien buyt voor hun alleen te behouden.

In deze Maendt was de Stadt zoo vol van gevlugte Boeren, dat het nog zeggelyk, nog beschryvelyk en is. De Kerken van S. Jacobs, S. Michiels, en S. Nicolaes waren in Peerde-stallen verandert; in den Krogt van S. Baefs waren de Boeren met hunne Koeyen, Verken &c. De gebroken Kloof-

On December 12, 1576, a placcaet was issued ordering the collection of all gold and silver objects except chalices, cibories, relic shrines. Everything had to be handed in in exchange for bonds. Resistance to this came mainly from the clergy so the placard was withdrawn and another solution sought.

Joos Triest, lord of Lovendegem, was charged with borrowing large sums of money from wealthy individuals at interest to pay for the soldiers.

Later, all the gold and silver was confiscated anyway.

The churches of the beguinages were destroyed. Other churches were used as casernes to house the soldiers.

The basement of St. Baafs was used as a guardroom. Chairs, benches and statues were burned although it was summer.

All statues were broken. Monasteries and churches were plundered. Last came the church of St. Baafs: the soldiers considered everything valuable as their loot.

The churches of S. Jacobs, S. Michiels and S. Nicolaes were used as horse stables. In the basement of St. Baafs, the fleeing farmers settled with their cows and pigs.

After the Pacification of Ghent (1576), Ghent came under the Calvinist Republic. Despite religious peace, a second iconoclasm followed. In 1584, this period of turmoil came to an end.

## Notes from some authors.

During Cardinal Louis Aragon's visit on August 1, 1517, to St. Baafs Church in Ghent, the following was noted by Antonio de Beatis, secretary to the cardinal: "*secondo dicevano quelli canonici, è che forno facte da un maestro de la Magna Alta decto Roberto gia cento anni... quale no havendola decto maestro possuto finire, perche se morse, fu compita dal fratello, quale anche era gran pictore.*"

According to the canons, it was made by a master from Germany named Robert a hundred years ago...which this master was not able to finish because he died, but was completed by his brother who was also a great painter.

**Guiccardini**, published in 1567, writes: a painting by Jan van Eyck with 330 faces....

*l'eccellentissima tavola del trionfo dell' Agnus Dei, benche alcuni inpropriamente la nominino d'Adam & Eva.*

Karel van Mander has also read that:

*"want in dit werk comen omtrent 330 geheel tronien".*

*For in this work, about 330 whole faces occur.*

**twēst. Daer was oock tot Ghent in Sint Jans kercke een schilderpe van Jan van Eyck / in de welcke drie hondert dertich geheele aensiechten gesien wēden / met groote verwonderinge van alle de gene die haer aen die konste verstonden.**

Beschryvinghe van alle de Nederlanden  
door M. Lowijs Guiccardijn, t'Amsterdam 1612



**HUBERT**  
E T  
**JEAN VAN EYCK,**  
ÉLÈVES DE LEUR PÈRE.



'EST à la petite Ville de Maasfeyk, située sur les bords de la Meuse, que nous devons le secret de la Peinture à l'huile, que les Anciens ne connoissoient pas, & auquel les Modernes doivent la conservation de leurs Chef d'œuvres. Cette Ville donna le jour à *Hubert van Eyck* & à *Jean* son frere: le premier A nâquit

Then I saw "*des Johannes taffel*", which is a most beautiful, most important painting, and in particular the Eve, Mary and God the Father very well.

Thus says **Dürer** in his diary on April 10, 1521.

From the mid 18th century, there was interest in the van Eyck brothers as founders of the Flemish School and inventors of oil painting.

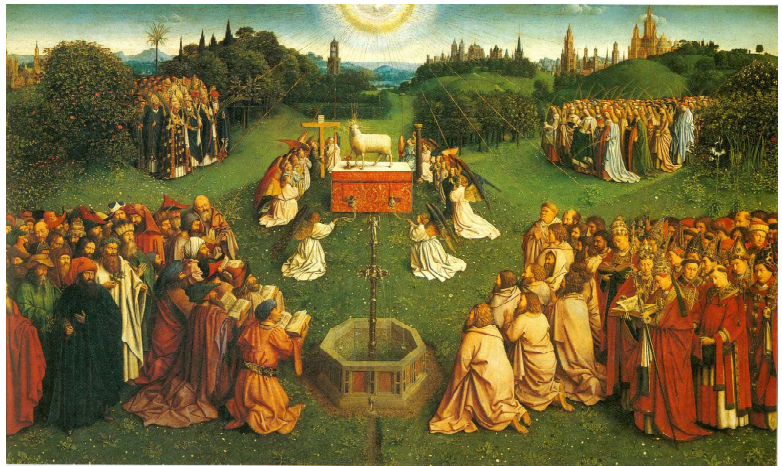
See J. B. Descamps à Paris 1753 and M. Lacombe, à Paris 1759.

J. B. Descamps à Paris 1753

*La Vie des Peintres Flamands, Allemands et Hollandois*



VAN-EYCK (Hubert & Jean), Peintres, natifs de Malſeyk ſur la Meuſe. Ils étoient freres. On les regardoit comme les Fondateurs de l'Ecole Flamande. Ils travailloient ordinairement de concert; ces deux freres firent pour l'Egliſe de Saint Jean de Gand, un Tableau dont le ſujet eſt tiré de l'Apocalypse, & qui représente les Vieillards adorant l'Agneau. Le Tableau eſt très-bien conſervé, & excite encore l'admiration des Connoiſſeurs. Hubert mourut en 1426. Jean ſe retira à Bruges, d'où lui eſt ſurvenu le ſurnom de Jean de Bruges. Ce Peintre cherchant un vernis pour donner de l'éclat & de la force à ſes Ouvrages, trouva que l'huile de lin mêlée avec les couleurs faiſoit beaucoup d'effet, & fit uſage de ce ſecret qui a paſſé, avec ſes Tableaux, dans l'Italie.



The two brothers created a painting for St. John's Church with the subject of a scene from the Apocalypse: the Elders in adoration before the Lamb.

It is called *Un Tableau*, not a large retable.

M. Lacombe, Dictionnaire portatif des Beaux-Arts ou abrégé de ce qui concerne l'architecture, la Sculpture, la Peinture, la Gravure, la Poësie & la Musique, Paris, 1759

Nos. 279, 280 et 281 du *Musée à Paris*, qui représentent *Dieu le père, la Vierge et St. Jean-Baptiste*, tous trois peints par *Jean Van Eyck*,

*God the Father, Mary and St. John the Baptist* of the Louvre are described as separated pictures in 1808; not as part of the Mystic Lamb.

Traité des Connoissances nécessaires aux amateurs de Tableaux. Par François-Xavier de Burtin. A Bruxelles MDCCCVIII

Ils y verront en même tems, que les *Pécheurs agenouillés devant l'agneau divin*, un des principaux ouvrages à la détrempe de *Jean Van Eyck*, qui ornoit le piédestal de l'agneau pascal adoré, son chef-d'œuvre à l'huile, a été entièrement effacé, au moyen d'une *expérience*, semblable à celle de *M. de Mechel*, que s'y sont permise des peintres, assez ignorans, pour ne s'apercevoir du mal qu'ils faisoient, qu'après avoir détruit tout le tableau.

Jan van Eyck's painting of *sinner kneeling before the Divine Lamb*, executed in tempera, was one of his most significant works. It adorned the base of his masterpiece, "*The Adored Paschal Lamb*". However, when the pedestal underwent a cleaning process, this scene was inadvertently obliterated and destroyed by inept restorers.

Traité des Connoissances nécessaires aux amateurs de Tableaux. Par François-Xavier de Burtin. A Bruxelles MDCCCVIII

Oil paint was used to paint the masterpiece.

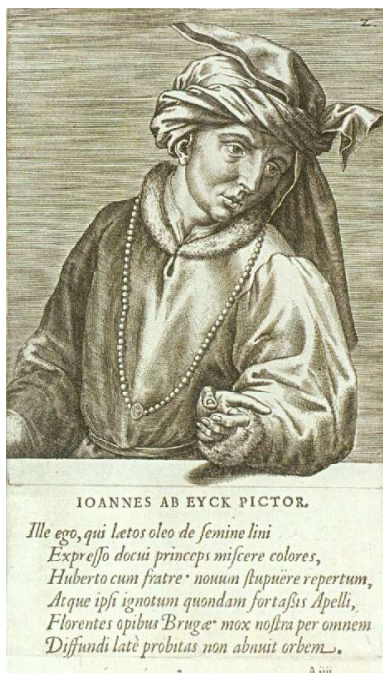
## Eyewitnesses from 19th-20th century?

1805. F.W. Schlegel, *Gemähldebeschreibungen aus Paris und den Niederlanden in den Jahren 1802-1804* (Sämtliche Werke, 6), Vienna, 1823 p. 55. He praises above all the rigidity, the Egyptian grandeur of the Deism, stern and severe it seems to date from centuries an incomprehensible monument from a distant past, even more rigid and grand.



Seroux d'Agincourt, Jean Baptiste Louis Georges (1730-1814), *Histoire de l'art par les monumens depuis sa décadence au IV<sup>e</sup> siècle jusqu'à son renouvellement au XIV<sup>e</sup>* : Tome sixième, 1823

Allegedly the painting above has been painted by Jean de Bruges.  
Antonello da Messina is said to have painted the painting on the lower right.



Portrait of Jan van Eyck  
anonymous engraver 1572

Portrait of Hubert van Eyck  
anonymous engraver 1572

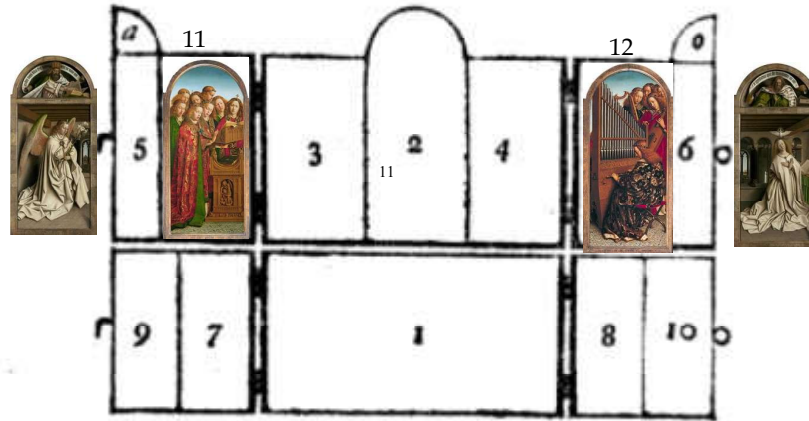




# Eyewitnesses of 1819.

( 12 )

*Image figurée du tableau de Jean et d'Hubert Van Eyck, tel qu'il a été conservé dans l'église de Saint-Bavon à Gand, depuis l'an 1426 jusques en 1794.*



## *Explication des sujets.*

- N° 1. L'Agneau de l'Apocalypse.
- N° 2. L'image de Dieu.
- N° 3. L'image de la sainte Vierge.
- N° 4. L'image de saint Jean.
- N° 5. et 6. Adam et Ève.
- N° 7. et 8. Cavalcade, avec les portraits de Philippe-le-Bon et des deux frères Van Eyck.
- N° 9. et 10. Saint Christophe et plusieurs autres Saints.
- N° 11 et 12. Sainte Cécile, et un concert de voix et d'instrumens.

**a et o. Deux sujets en grisailles attachés aux N° 5 et 6.**

Description historique et pittoresque de l'église cathédrale de Saint-Bavon, à Gand.  
Pierre François Antoine De Goesin Gand : P.F. de Goesin-Verhaeghe, 1819.

According to the author, the work was commissioned by Justus Vitius, lord of Pamele.  
*"Sur le côté extérieur, lorsque les portes étaient fermées, on voyait peints en grisaille, l'Annonciation, S. Jean et S. Pierre; ces belles grisailles étaient d'Hubert van Eyck."*  
*"On the outer side, when the doors were closed, we saw painted in grisaille, the Annunciation, St. John and St. Peter; these beautiful grisailles were by Hubert van Eyck."*

11 and 12 are shown here with a straight upper frame.

7 and 8 would be with horsemen.

The mention of St. Peter must be a mistake because there is none.

Furthermore, the author repeats everything written by Karel van Mander.

He does not describe the actual state of 1819.

## Eyewitness of 1822.

*“Ueber Hubert und Johann van Eyck”*

by Waagen, Gustav Friedrich, 1794-1868.

Publication date: Breslau 1822.

According to Waagen, the Mystic Lamb was painted between 1420 and 1426, commissioned by Philip the Good, Duke of Burgundy.

He situates Hubert van Eyck at panel no. 12 and at panel no. 10 the sister of the Van Eycks or the wife of either of them (closed altarpiece).

Madame Johanna Schopenhauer (mother of) wrote also about Van Eyck (*Jan van Eyck und Seine Nachfolger*, volume 1, Leipzig-Frankfurt am Main, 1822) in the same period. She thinks the kneeled woman, panel no. 10 in the closed altarpiece, to be Margaretha van Eyck.

Waagen draws the representation of The Hell on panel no. 13 of the opened altarpiece. He shows the Pilgrims and the Eremites on the left and the Just Judges on the right side. He draws the music-making angels in a straight frame instead of rounded panels. Waagen does not add small additions (Cain and Abel) above Adam and Eve. He describes the altarpiece as he supposes it once was in Ghent and not as he saw it in 1822.

Boisserée, S., review of G. Waagen, *Über Hubert und Johann van Eyck*, Breslau, 1822, in *Kunstblatt*, 4, 54, 7 July 1823, p. 213-216.

De Bast, L., Sur les tableaux des frères van Eyck, placés dans l'église de S. Bavon à Gand et plus particulièrement sur le mérite d'Hubert van Eyck comme peintre, in *Messenger des sciences et des arts*, 1, 1823, p. 257-268



A. Die Bilder der Brüder von Ende, wie sie sich daz-einst zu Gent befanden, mit geöffneten Flügel.

6.	5.	3.	2.	5.	4.	7.
Nam	Gruppe finger- der und spielen der Engel.	Maria.	Gott Vater.	Johannes d. Tauffer.	Cäcilie.	Eva.
10.	9.	8.			11.	12.
Event- ken.	Älter.	Anbetung des Lammes.			Gerechte Richter.	Strei- ker Christi.
		15.				
		Versehung der Vögel.				

B. Dieselben, mit geschlossenem Flügeln.

5.	6.	7.	6
Engel Gabriel	?	?	Maria.
9.	10.	12.	11.
Johannes, der Evangelist.	Schwe- ster des von Ende oder Frau von ei- nem der Brüder.	Hubert d. Eyd.	Johannes der Tauffer.



A. Die Bilder der Brüder van Eyck, wie sie sich der-  
einst zu Gent befanden, mit geöffneten Flügeln.

6. Adam.	5. Gruppe singen- der und spielen- der En- gel.	3. Maria.	1. Gott Vater.	3. Johannes d. Täufer.	4. Cäcilia.	7. Eva.
10. Eremiten.	9. Pilger.	8. Anbetung des Lammes.			11. Berechtete Richter.	12. Streiter Christi.
13. Vorstellung der Hölle.						

B. Dieselben, mit geschlossenen Flügeln.

5. Engel Gabriel	6. ?	7. ?	4. Maria.
9. Johan- nes, der Evan- gelist.	10. Schwe- ster der van Eyck oder Frau von ei- nem der Brüder.	13. Hubert v. Eyck.	11. Johan- nes der Täufer.

## Eyewitness of 1836.

Athanasius Graf Racynski shows rectangular panels instead of rounded ones:  
"Der Genter Altar", in:  
"Geschichte der neueren deutschen Kunst", Berlin 1836.



The curves above the Angel and Mary were filled in square with three-passes as with the two St. Johns and the Patrons.



## Eyewitness of 1857.



Round frames become rectangular.

The preface begins with: *Two great Schools of Art, illustrating the fourteenth century, rose to robust and healthy vigour; the first under the warm and genial sun of Italy, the second under the colder and more clouded atmosphere of Belgium.*



Joseph Archer Crowe and Giovanni Battista Cavalcaselle: *The Early Flemish Painters: Notices of Their Lives and Works.* London, John Murray 1857.

# Eyewitness of 1838 - 1910.

*"Hubert et Jean van Eyck"*

by Durand-Gre'ville, E'mile, 1838-1914

Publication date 1910



The frames between the figures have been narrowed to match the panel with the Lamb.

Above the figures with roundings, there was a frame that is now filled in with a blue area.

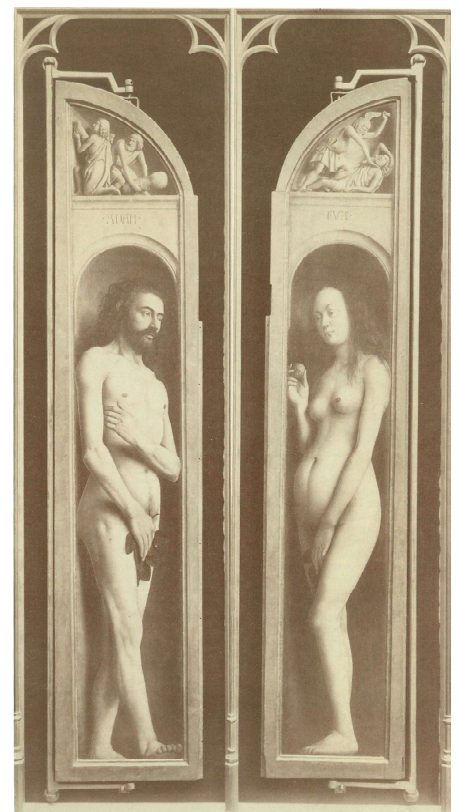


## Witness of 1897.



Photograph 1897

With a clothed version of Adam and Eve.



In 1861, the Belgian state purchased the panels depicting Adam and Eve, who were moved to Brussels museum. There, until 1920, they were displayed in metal handles that allowed them to be turned to show the backside. Victor Lagye made a painted version with a clothed Adam and Eve.

In 1897, Adam and Eve were still dressed in animal skins.



## Eyewitnesses from the 19th century?

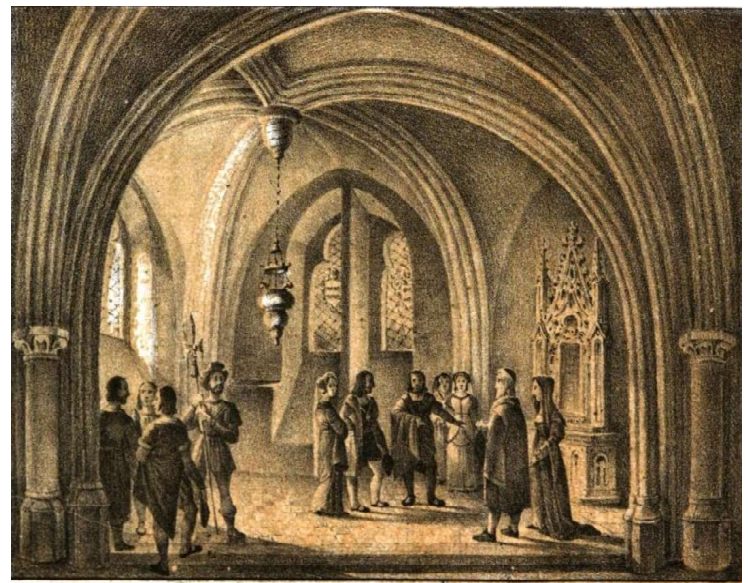


Pierre François De Noter, 1829  
*The Mystic Lamb by the van Eyck brothers in St. Bavo in Ghent.*

Pierre François De Noter (Walem, 1779 – Ghent, 1842) made a painting of the Vijd Chapel with a full polyptych although the side panels (Adam and Eve) were not present in Ghent in 1829. It is a history piece from the Romantic period, and cannot serve as a contemporary witness. The frame above the three upper figures is rounded here; while rectangular in Ghent. The tiles below the Singing and music-making Angels are of a different type. The canopy above the polyptych differs between the two De Noter-versions of the Vyd chapel.

The altar has a predella; not on the 1840 version. The 1431 Tomb of Margaretha van Gistel that serves as an altar and the Entombment sculpture (end 15th century) were present but not in that place. An interesting study would be to find out where De Noter got his information.

He filled his image of the interior of the Vijd Chapel with a variety of art objects that were never actually located there.



A. DÜRER VISITANT LE TOMBEAU DE H. VAN EYCKLE 10 J'APRÈS PÂQUES 1521.

Pieter Frans de Noter and Felix de Vigne  
*Albrecht Dürer in front of the polyptych depicting the Adoration of the Mystic Lamb by Hubert and Jan van Eyck ca. 1840*  
Collection Rijksmuseum Twenthe, Enschede



**Conclusion:**

**What Karel van Mander and Marcus Van Vaerewyck describe is a different altarpiece than the present Mystic Lamb Altarpiece in Ghent.**

**The 19th-century descriptions and images differ between them and do certainly not correspond to the present Mystic Lamb.**

Another testimony comes from Michiel Coxie who was commissioned to make a copy: a copy with important differences.



Coxie's copy of Jan van Eyck's "Mystic Lamb" brought together at Museum M in Leuven. Parts of the copy are now in the museums of Brussels, Munich and Berlin.

# The pilgrimage of Coxcie's copy.

Michiel Coxcie (1499 – 1592) was one of the most influential painters in the sixteenth-century Low Countries. His nickname was the “Flemish Raphael”.

M. Coxcie, commissioned by Philip II, realized a copy of the Ghent Altarpiece between 1557 and 1559 and received 2,000 ducats for it. The retable was sent to Spain and there, from 1563, was displayed in the chapel of the Royal Palace of Madrid.

The estate inventory of Philip II, drawn up after his death in 1598, would confirm this location. Under Philip III, the work underwent restorations in 1617 and 1622. The retable is mentioned in estate descriptions of 1633 and 1638.

In 1808, during the Napoleonic War, General Belliard sent the Coxcie retable from Madrid to Brussels where it ended up on the art market. The twelve panels of the Coxcie copy would then become separated.

*Christ and the Adoration of the Lamb* (signed and dated 1559) were purchased by the King of Prussia, Frederick William III for the Museum in Berlin in 1823.

These were severely damaged during World War II.

*Mary and St. John the Baptist* were purchased in 1820 by Maximilian I, King of Bavaria and ended up in the Munich Pinakothek in 1836. The trace of the Coxcie side panels depicting Adam and Eve seems to have been lost during this period.

Prof. J.K. Steppe believes that those two panels have not left Spain and are kept in the Real Sociedad Economica Aragonesa de Amigos del Pais, in Saragossa.

As for the six other Coxcie shutters, we know that they were entrusted first to the house of Dansaert-Engels and then to the house of Nuens-Latour for sale. Then they ended up in the collection of William of Orange, the later William II. After his death in 1849, they were bought in 1855 by the art dealer C. J. Nieuwenhuys, who would transfer them to the Belgian state in 1861.

It is those six Coxcie shutters that will replace the six original panels from 1861 to 1920. Those original panels had been sold by the Church Factory of St. Bavo Cathedral to the Royal Collection of Berlin in 1816. It is to these six original shutters that the King of Prussia had added Coxcie's copies of *Christ and the Adoration of the Lamb*.

In 1861 the Belgian State purchased the original panels of Adam and Eve for the Museum in Brussels from the churchwardens of St. Bavo Cathedral with the condition, among others, that the six Coxcie panels newly acquired by the State would be given in deposit to the churchwardens of St. Bavo Cathedral.

After the '14-'18 war, in fulfillment of a clause in the Treaty of Versailles, the six original Berlin shutters were turned over to the Belgian State which gave them in deposit to St. Bavo Cathedral. Then the six shutters of the Coxcie copy were returned to the Royal Museums of Fine Arts in Brussels.



# The copy of Coxcie.

Coxcie affords himself many liberties.

Instead of the patrons and the two Saint Johns the king of Spain gets the four Evangelists.

There is no monogram AF on Coxcie's copy.

Neither is there an Adam and Eve on Coxcie's copy.

Saint Michael with a helmet is incongruously depicted in Roman armor.

Did Philip II (the patron) ask for a portrait of himself and his father?



Michiel Coxcie 1557  
Brussels KMSK



The Coxcie panels depict Charles V with his son Philip II. The man in the background looking at the spectator is said to be Coxcie's self-portrait.

There is no Charles V with his son Philip II and also no self-portrait on the Antwerp copy (assumed 1625, artist unknown).

On the copies attributed to Coxcie the blue skies are strikingly modern and certainly not from the 16th century.

Perhaps this is due to a major restoration?

Additionally, the frames themselves are modern.



S. Frisius Portret van Michiel Coxcie  
1610

In the style of the second half of the 16th century.



Van Eyck 1432 *Ghent Altarpiece*



Michiel Coxcie 1557  
Brussels KMSK

Coxcie's four evangelists are to be painted in the style of the second half of the 16th century.

The Gothic arcades are not depicted.

Van Eyck's Saint Johns are on a pedestal, not Coxcie's Evangelists.

Why did Jodocus Vijd and Lysbette, the patrons, have to disappear?

There are many questions that remain unsolved.

In the Coxcie copy, Saint Michael is incongruously depicted in Roman armor despite the fact that Saint Michael was never portrayed with a helmet in 15th-century Flanders. The helmet itself is an anachronism as this style did not exist until the 16th century. Moreover, Coxcie would never have depicted Saint Michael as a malevolent figure in Roman armor. While explanations have been proposed for these deviations the underlying inconsistencies and contradictions remain.

Furthermore, the excuses for the discrepancies are mere assumptions and lack any documentary support.

These deviations from the polyptych now in St Bavo's Cathedral in Ghent could partly be explained by adaptation to the tastes and interests of the patron (Philip II) but also contains anomalies and anachronisms that strongly question the authenticity of this work as a genuine Coxcie.

In 1625, the bishop of Ghent granted another permission to copy the Ghent Altarpiece. The copy from Antwerp is associated with this third copy, but a thorough study of this work has not yet been conducted.



Michiel Coxcie  
Brussels KMSK



