

Elisabeth Stopp. *Adrien Gambart's Emblem Book: The Life of St. Francis de Sales in Symbols*.

Ed. Terence O'Reilly. Philadelphia: St. Joseph's University Press, 2006. xii + 374 pp. index. illus. \$60. ISBN: 0-916101-49-5.

Joseph F. Chorpenning, ed. *Emblemata Sacra: Emblem Books from the Maurits Sabbe Library, Katholieke Universiteit Leuven*.

Philadelphia: St. Joseph's University Press, 2006. 116 pp. illus. bibl. \$45. ISBN: 0-916101-55-X.

Recently, religious emblem books of the early modern period have begun to attract the attention of scholars in many different disciplines, including the history of art, literature, and rhetoric, as well as the history of religious doctrine and practice. The difficulty in accommodating those interests is due to the books' having only rarely been reprinted: comprehensive collections of them are few and difficult to locate since they are often not recognized as discrete collections at all. Until quite recently, the only early modern Catholic emblem book to be reprinted was Herman Hugo's *Pia desideria* of 1624, the most popular of all religious emblem books. And many of the reprints that are available have been for the most part limited to unedited quasi-facsimiles introduced only by the briefest of commentary.

Hence, this well-presented new edition of Adrien Gambart's *Vie symbolique du bienheureux François de Sales* comes as a very welcome addition to the works at our disposal. Trained by the Jesuits, this Vincentian priest and early companion of Saint Vincent de Paul was later also a companion of Saint François de Sales, but he spent most of his career as chaplain of a convent of Visitation nuns in Paris. Published at his own expense, Gambart's emblem book was intended as a spiritual guide for the nuns of this convent. The plates for the illustrations are the work of Albert Flamen, who is known to have illustrated two other emblem books.

The volume under review begins with two introductory essays. The first, by the late Elisabeth Stopp, situates Gambart's book in relation to the tradition of Salesian spirituality. In the second essay Agnès Guiderdoni-Bruslé positions Gambart's work in the context of seventeenth-century sacred emblematics with numerous well-chosen illustrations accompanied by commentary. The emblem text itself is presented in two different but complementary forms. First, the fifty-two emblem pictures are presented in a letter-press reproduction of title and image on consecutive versos in a 150% enlargement. On the facing recto we find Elisabeth Stopp's translation of the title, or heading, the motto in the picture, and

the verse text. The two prose texts that accompany each emblem are summarized very succinctly in English. This part of the study has been edited by Terence O'Reilly.

Another reprise of the emblems presents them in a color facsimile, complete with the full prose texts. Gambart's book contains another set of unillustrated meditations that have only a tenuous connection to the emblems. These meditations, based on parallels between the life of Christ and Saint François, have not been reproduced in this edition. The emblems themselves are often built with imagery that François had used in his sermons, but the emblems shape them to the ideal of the Visitation life through the fifty-two weeks of the year, and this explains why each emblem has seven "points" (*Fruits et pratiques*): each emblem leads the reader, day by day, through a week of the Visitation year. The emblemization of scenes from François's life turns these episodes into models for conduct.

Readers can appreciate and understand this important emblem book better by referring to the context provided by the catalogue of the exhibition of Catholic emblem books originally mounted in conjunction with the *Emblemata Sacra* conference in Leuven in January 2005. This catalogue was developed and published in conjunction with the exhibition's venue at Saint Joseph's University in Philadelphia, running from March to May 2006. The exhibition will again be available to the public at Fordham University in spring 2007.

The exhibition presents around seventy emblem books and manuscripts from the library of the University of Leuven. While all of this material is distinctly emblematic, some of the books, like that of Jerome Nadal and an illustrated edition of Loyola's *Spiritual Exercises*, are not part of the standard canon of emblem literature. Nevertheless — or perhaps for this very reason — these books provide important new perspectives on the emblem phenomenon. The succinct and well-informed catalogue commentary by Agnès Guiderdoni-Bruslé, Ralph Dekoninck, and Mark van Vaeck guides the reader through this fascinating and representative group of books. The books and manuscripts are arranged thematically. These themes range from the use of emblems in the practice of meditation, following the principles and guidelines set down by Ignatius Loyola, to the use of leaves detached from printed emblem books to decorate the notebooks of boys in Jesuit schools in the Low Countries in the seventeenth and eighteenth centuries.

Among the other groups, the heart emblems and the section on the circulation of images are particularly interesting in that they show how emblems were built on variations of traditional symbolic motifs: how, indeed, the emblematic turn relies on such witty variant construction. Hence, we see an arrow projected from the eye of God toward the heart of man; elsewhere the human soul is the arrow sent toward heaven from a catapult made from the Cross. Equally interesting are the manuscripts that show the role of emblems in Jesuit scholastic culture of the time. For ceremonies that marked the end of the school year students designed emblems that were executed by professional artists and collected into annual anthologies. The notebooks that these schoolboys kept in the Jesuit colleges also contain traces of this emblematic culture. Sometimes an emblem was copied from a printed

emblem book into a student's notes, and sometimes students bound single leaves of emblems from printed books into their notes. There is even some evidence that printers catered to this audience by publishing unbound emblems to be sold separately.

Both of these handsome volumes have been produced with great care; high-quality color reproductions almost give the impression one is looking at real emblem books. Together with these high-quality reproductions, the clear and knowledgeable commentary makes these two books as good an introduction to early modern Catholic emblem books as one is likely to find anywhere.

DANIEL RUSSELL

University of Pittsburgh