

A Teachable Death: Doctrine and Death in Marten Micron's Martyrology

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Abstract

In the context of renewed interest in sixteenth-century martyrologies, this article considers a lesser known Dutch work, *The True Story of Hostes van der Katlyne*, by Marten Micron. After dealing with introductory questions of bibliography and authorship, the article proceeds to analyze the work. Micron recounts Hostes's life leading to his martyrdom and inserts into the narratives theological treatises showing Hostes's teaching on the human nature of Christ and the Lord's Supper. Micron uses Scripture to depict Hostes as an exemplary Christian, but the primary focus is on the doctrine Hostes taught. In contrast to Catholic martyrologies, there is no place for post-mortem merits of the Protestant saints. The article notes too that the work has both edificatory and apologetic functions.

I. Calvinist Martyrology

Although it seems a contradiction, Calvinism has produced a series of quite extensive martyrologies. The contradiction is that Calvinism, even more so than other versions of Protestantism, wanted to move away from any kind of adoration of saints or other “holy” persons. Yet, these martyrologies did

present the story of the life and death of the Christians described in such a way that it might give rise to the impression that the focus was more on the Christian than on the Christ they wished to serve and for whom they wanted to die. The intention of the authors, however, was the other way around, i.e., to let the biographies and martyrologies be witnesses of the gospel of Christ.

Over the last few decades, research has demonstrated renewed interest in sixteenth-century Protestant martyrology¹ but mainly focused on the well-known martyrologies by Jean Crespin,² John Foxe, Adriaen van Haemstede,³ and, to a lesser extent, the ones written by Antoine de la Roche⁴ and Antoine de Chandieu.⁵ One of the smaller works focusing on only one martyr is *The True Story of Hostes van der Katelyne*,⁶ written by the Dutch theologian Marten Micron. This martyrology is the topic of this article. The conclusion of my analysis is that although Micron says that Hostes's attitude is an example for other believers, his intention was not to present his martyr as an example for other believers, and even less as a saint with extraordinary spiritual qualities, but to use the story of Hostes to give encouragement to persecuted fellow-believers, and, above all, to communicate to his readership the essentials of the theology of the Reformation. He also intended to warn his readers against the unbiblical practices and convictions within Catholicism. Micron's martyrology is not exemplary, but doctrinal, and Hostes is presented not as a Calvinist saint, but as a teacher of Calvinism.

¹ John Exalto, *Gereformeerde Heiligen: De religieuze exemplartraditie in vroegmodern Nederland* (Nijmegen: Vantilt, 2005); Brad S. Gregory, *Salvation at Stake: Christian Martyrdom in Early Modern Europe* (Cambridge: Harvard University Press, 1999).

² Pierre Cameron, "Le martyrologe de Jean Crespin, étude de ses éditions au XVI^e siècle" (PhD diss., Université de Montréal, 1995).

³ A. J. Jelsma, *Adriaan van Haemstede en zijn martelaarsboek* ('s Gravenhage: Boekencentrum, 1970).

⁴ Antoine de la Roche de Chandieu, *Histoire des persécutions et martyrs de l'église de Paris: depuis l'an 1557 jusques au temps du roy Charles neuvième* (Lyon: Duplain, 1563).

⁵ Sara K. Barker, *Protestantism, Poetry and Protest: The Vernacular Writings of Antoine de Chandieu, c. 1534–1591*, St. Andrews Studies in Reformation History (Burlington, VT: Ashgate, 2009), 161–85.

⁶ *Een waerachteghe Historie, van Hostes (gheseyt Jooris) vander Katelyne, te Ghendt om het vrij opentlick straffen der Afgodischer Leere, ghebrandt ten grooten nutte ende vertroostinghe aller Christenen gheschreven. Waer in wt oorsake van dien, claerlick ghehandelt werdt van vele stichtelicke ende noot-weteghe stucken, in sonderheyt van der Misse, van het recht verstandt der worden Christi, DIT IS MIJN LICHAAM: ende van den waerachteghen ende valschen Christo: tot de ontschuldunge aller Christene, die nu dagelicxs om de rechte leere des Nachtsmaels Christi ghedoodt werden, met een vermanninghe tot de overheyt. Doer Marten Microen. 1 Pet. 4 So yemandt lijdt, als een christen, die sy niet beschaemt, maer pryse God in dit stuck. Want oock tijdt is, dat het gherichte van t'huys Gods beghinne.* Quotations are from the edition of this work in Bibliotheca Reformatoria Neerlandica ('s Gravenhage: Nijhoff, 1910), 7:177–253, abbreviated as *BRN*.

II. *Bibliographical Details*

The True Story of Hostes van der Katelyne was first published by Marten Micron in 1555 and was reprinted in various forms in some other early modern martyrologies.⁷ The work mentions no date nor a place of printing, but the introduction by the author is dated June 26, 1555. The 1564 edition of Crespin's martyrology includes this story of Hostes, and from then on it is part of all subsequent editions. In 1557, Ludwig Rabus had already given a German version of the text in volume 7 of his history of martyrs.⁸ In the famous martyrology of Adriaen van Haemstede, this work of Micron was also taken up, but added to Haemstede's versions is a report on Hostes's examination⁹ and a summary of "his handwritten confession."¹⁰ Both of these are missing in Micron's edition. In 1570, Micron's martyrology was placed on the *Index librorum prohibitorum*, the list of forbidden books.¹¹

So far, although it contributes to a better understanding of the function of Calvinist martyrologies, the content of this work has received no separate treatment.¹² The work itself—thus not its content—was treated elaborately in the *Bibliographie des Martyrologes Protestants Néerlandais*, the extensive bibliography of the Protestant martyrologies that were published in the Netherlands.¹³ A large part of the text was printed in a modernized Dutch version in the overview of Gent martyrs published by A. L. E. Verheyden.¹⁴

III. *The Author*

Marten Micron was born in 1523 in Gent (Flanders in present day Belgium).¹⁵

⁷ The *Bibliographie des Martyrologes* suggests 1556 as the date and Gilles vander Erven in Emden as printer of the work (*Bibliographie des Martyrologes Protestants Néerlandais: I. Monographies* [La Haye: Nijhoff, 1890], 215, abbreviated as *BMPN*).

⁸ Ludwig Rabus, *Historien der Heyligen Außervölten Gottes Zeügen, Bekemern vnd Martyrern, so in Angehender ersten Kirchen, Altes und Neüwes Testaments, zuo jeder zeyt gewesen seind : Auß H. Göttlicher, vnd der Alten Lehrer Glaubwürdigen Schrifftten, Zuo gemeyner Auffbauung vnnnd Besserung der Angefochtenen Kirchen Teütscher Nation, warhafftig beschryben*, vol. 7 (Strasburg: Emmel, 1557), 234a–245a. According to Pijper, this is the German translation of a Latin summary of Micron's work. See F. Pijper, *Martelaarsboeken* ('s Gravenhage: Nijhoff, 1924), 126.

⁹ "Mijn examinacie op den Witten Donderdach."

¹⁰ "... syne belijdenisse oock van zijn eyghen hant gheschreven."

¹¹ *BMPN*, 224.

¹² Gerretsen, in his biography of Micron, gives a brief overview by mentioning the various chapters in this work. See Jan H. Gerretsen, *Micronius: Zijn leven, zijn geschriften, zijn geestesrichting* (Nijmegen: H. ten Hoet, 1895), 86–89.

¹³ *BMPN*, 215–32.

¹⁴ A. L. E. Verheyden, *Het Gentsche Martyrologium, 1530–1595* (Brugge: De Tempel, 1945), 89–97.

¹⁵ *Biografisch lexicon voor de geschiedenis van het Nederlandse protestantisme* (Kampen: Kok, 1978), 2:327–30.

After having studied in Basel and Zurich, he served as pastor of the Dutch refugees in their church in London (1550–1553). After Mary Tudor ascended the English throne, Micron, together with 175 church members, fled and, after some wanderings, ended up in Emden (Ostfriesland, Germany). While there, he took a leading part in a major public dispute with Menno Simons, the leader of the Anabaptists, on the incarnation of Christ, a dispute in which Micron defended the classic doctrine of Christ's humanity. Soon after, in 1554, Micron became pastor of the Reformed church in Norden (Germany), where he died in 1559. Micron wrote many works and became influential through his writings on liturgy, church order,¹⁶ and catechism. As to his martyrology of Hostes van der Katelyne, he writes that "brothers in the faith" encouraged him to write down this story, which he was happy to do, although there were many other things on his agenda. Some scholars doubt whether the author is indeed the well-known Micron and suggest a cousin with the same name to be the man behind this martyrology.¹⁷ There are, however, no arguments for this thesis, whereas the theological topics dealt with in this work are exactly those that Marten Micron focuses on in his other works, namely the humanity of Christ, which is the issue in his discussion with Anabaptists, and the rejection of the mass in his discussion with Roman Catholic opponents.

IV. The Work

1. Structure and Summary

The book is a combination of history and theology. The first 26 pages of the work are of a historical nature and deal with Hostes's trial, his suffering, witness and death. The next 32 pages are strictly theological and contain an apology of Protestant standpoints as well as an attack on Catholic and Anabaptist positions. At the end of the work, there are some final pages where the faithful are exhorted to stand firm. It is quite clear that the historical element is instrumental for the theological focus, which means that Micron makes use of the history of the suffering and death of Hostes in order to once again—i.e., in addition to his other works—expound some theological issues. His own explanation of this combination of history and theology is that he wants to show that Hostes did die for the good cause. Thus, Micron describes how he thinks; the Bible speaks about the natures of Christ and

¹⁶ See the introduction by W. F. Dankbaar to his "Christian Ordinances," in Marten Micron, *De Christelike Ordinancien der Nederlantscher Ghemeinten te Londen, 1554: Opnieuw uitgegeven en van een inleiding voorzien door Dr. W. F. Dankbaar*, Kerkhistorische Studiën 7 ('s Gravenhage: Nijhoff, 1956), 1–30.

¹⁷ *BMPN*, 218.

about the celebration and the content of the Lord's supper. He then says that this was also the position Hostes took and that it was for this theological position that he was condemned and sentenced. This leads to the conclusion that Hostes died for no other reason than that of defending biblical truth.

2. *Micron's Introduction*

In his introduction, Micron writes that the murders of the Protestant martyrs, as they are daily executed by the Roman Catholic Church, represent the most scandalous way of dying. "For not only are they under much pain being burnt with fire, and afterwards hung on the gallows as if they were robbers, but—and this is even more burdensome—they must die as the most godless enemies of Jesus Christ, as slanderers of his holy church, as desecrators of the sacrament and as despisers of every piety."¹⁸ However, from a biblical perspective, their death according to Micron is "honorable, happy, and holy." As martyrs, they are a well-pleasing offering to God, which is a reference to Philippians 4:18; and they will, according to God's promise, receive a great reward in heaven, which refers to Matthew 5:12. Here Micron brings in the reason for his writing the story of Hostes. Since through the death of martyrs the name of God is glorified and the church receives encouragement to patience, piety, and mortification of the flesh, it has been customary since apostolic times to write down the suffering and death of these witnesses of Christ. Micron quotes the famous phrase attributed to church father Cyprian, saying that the blood of the believers is the seed of the church, and concludes that writing down the story of this blood will bring forth fruit for believers of today. He expressly states that the story of Hostes is an example to be followed.¹⁹

After this introduction, Micron starts with a short biography of Hostes and informs the reader that he was born in Gent but moved as a young man to London, where he worked in the cloth industry.²⁰ In England, his boss gave him the name Joris, as his original name in English meant inn-keeper. Hostes kept this new name even after he left England. He was a catholic but became a member of the Dutch church in London and started to study the Scriptures, and he regularly attended the sermons and the prophecies, the weekly Bible study meetings where members of the congregation could ask questions to the pastors in order to get a better insight into the Scriptures.

¹⁸ *BRN*, 190.

¹⁹ "D'welck christelick exempel wy nu in dese onse laetste tyden. ... wel behoorden na te volgen: op dat der ghelooveghen bloedt, d'welck een saet der Ghemeynte Christi is, meerder vruchten over al, oock by onse nacomminghen voortbringhen mochte" (*BRN*, 191).

²⁰ "Syn hantweerck is geweest Damaskynen" (*BRN*, 193).

This—together with a life of intensive prayer—brought Hostes to “the real knowledge of God’s dear Son Jesus Christ” and helped him to move away from the Roman-Catholic superstitions to sound Christian doctrine. Here already Micron inserts in brackets what the essence of this doctrine is, namely, salvation through Christ alone. Micron adds that Hostes more than once told him personally about this conversion experience and presents Hostes as an eager Christian wanting to grow in knowledge and faith. Hostes even read the books of the Anabaptists in order to be able to discuss certain topics with them, which resulted in his starting to write against those that denied either the human or the divine nature of Christ. Micron addresses the supposition of some who doubted Hostes’s orthodoxy by including in the martyrology one of his writings on the incarnation of Christ. The twenty pages that follow include this text. So, even before Micron writes about his actual topic, i.e., the suffering and death of Hostes, he confronts the reader with a doctrinal tract defending the true human nature of Christ. After these twenty pages, Micron picks up the biography and continues to portray Hostes with qualifications directly from biblical verses indicating how a true Christian should live.

After this apparently complete inclusion of the pamphlet, Micron says that he has included this text in order to show how Hostes had, in a short time, grown into the right understanding of the pure doctrine. As to his Christian life, Micron once again describes Hostes with all the qualifications the Bible gives of a good Christian, citing biblical texts to depict Hostes as an exemplary believer. Then Micron picks up the biographical thread again and writes that after the death of King Edward and the ascension of Mary Tudor in 1553, Hostes gave up his job and fled with his pregnant wife and many other Dutch refugees, finally ending up in Norden, in northern Germany. From there, Hostes wrote a letter of comfort to Micron after he had heard that Micron was in deep sorrow caused by the persecution of one of his former parishioners. Having mentioned this letter,²¹ Micron quotes it in full to demonstrate Hostes’s “divine insight and his upright ardor.”²² Then Micron continues with the biography again and tells the reader that, after a little more than four years in Norden, Hostes had for some reason to travel to the city of Gent, in Flanders. His peers warned him that Gent was a dangerous place for Protestants, but Hostes replied—and Micron quotes Hostes—that he would be careful in what he would say but that he could

²¹ This letter was also printed by Ludwig Rabus in his martyrology, see *Historien der Heyligen Außervölten Gottes Zeügen, Bekennern vnd Martyrern*, 7:234ff.

²² *BRN*, 210.

not keep silent if he were to hear the name of God or Jesus slandered. Micron reports that the ship that Hostes took was caught in a severe storm but that Hostes had stood up to comfort and reassure all those on board, who were afraid to die in the storm. Once safe on the shores, he admonished them to be thankful and fear the Lord. It is evident that Micron here depicts Hostes as a good follower of the apostle Paul, since he acted the same way in and after a storm as the apostle had done in Malta. This confirms the status of Hostes as someone teaching and acting with authority.

3. *Hostes's Witness and Imprisonment*

Micron informs his readers that he will now report on the cause of Hostes's imprisonment and his subsequent death but that it is for him impossible to describe "everything that happened except the things that happened in public and thus are known to us for certain."²³ With this introductory remark, Micron wants to give proof of the historical reliability of his report.

To begin, Micron says that the only reason for Hostes's capture and death was "a burning love for the truth of Jesus Christ" as he stood up against idolatry and proclaimed God's Word in spite of the physical dangers that would threaten him. In fact, as Hostes arrived in Gent, he heard from many sides that there was a monk in town who confessed "the truth in Jesus Christ" and drew large crowds every time he preached. From the archives of the city of Gent it becomes clear that the name of the monk was Pieter de Backere.²⁴ Of course, Hostes was attracted by this rumor and, "on the Thursday before Easter, he went to the St. Michaels Temple and positioned himself directly in front of the pulpit so that he could hear and understand all things better."²⁵ It was a great disappointment, as the message was completely other than expected.²⁶ The named monk dealt in his sermon with the "sacrament of the table of our Lord Jesus Christ," and extensively taught that through the speaking of the five words by the priest the bread is transformed into the true body of Christ Jesus with the consequence that we should honor, eat, and pray to Christ, who is present in that bread. Hostes was shocked and saddened that the people there were so seduced, and Micron reports that

²³ BRN, 210.

²⁴ The full report in the *Memorieboek der stad Ghent* is: "Up den Witten Donderdach, also in Ste. Mechelskercke preectede Pieter de Backere van den Heleghen Sacraments, zo was daer eenen Hostes van de Catelyne, die hem bestondt te segghen overluydt dat al valsch was datter ghepreeckt was, waer om hy vervolcht was by den procureur general ende ghevanghen, ende den xxvij-en April daer naer op de Verelplaetse verberrent." Quoted in *BPMN*, 220–21.

²⁵ BRN, 211.

²⁶ "Maer siet, vant voor goudt, coper, ende voor ghesonde spyse fenijn" (BRN, 211).

one could see on Hostes's face what impact this all had on him.²⁷ Hostes would have loved to speak out against this preacher, but he restrained himself and let the monk finish his sermon. But just as the preacher was about to leave the pulpit, Hostes stood up, took his hat off, and raised his voice as he spoke loudly: "Hear my friend. All that you have preached is completely contrary to all of Scripture, so if you allow me I will publicly and right from the Scripture explain to the congregation that you have taught wrongly and falsely."²⁸ Not surprisingly, it was now the monk's time to be shocked. He denied him Hostes's request and wanted to leave, but Hostes followed him and once again publicly and vehemently told him that, "the bread which you say is God, is only a remembrance of the body of Christ that was broken for us."²⁹

"On April 27th of the aforementioned year, Hostes, a man of some 30 years, was sentenced to death, and in the afternoon he was publicly displayed on a scaffold (on which was built a little wooden house in which he should be burnt), and there he was whipped as an innocent sheep."³⁰ In these words, Micron introduces the reader to the short report on Hostes's death.³¹ He continues to write that Hostes wished to speak to the gathered crowd but that the public prosecutor (*procureur*) would not let him, but told the hangman to just do his job. However, Hostes took action and told the official that he would forgive him now that he was about to shed innocent blood. Apparently, this had an effect because, according to Micron, the official responded with a twofold "amen." Hostes used this moment to address the people, telling them that he still had many things to say but that the official would not allow him to do so. In Micron's report, Hostes quoted Jesus as he was

²⁷ "Door welcke ende dergelijcke worden meer, is Hostes in synen gheest, de verleydinge des aermen volcks aansienende, grootelick bedroeft ende beroert gheworden so datmen een groote veranderinge in syn anschyn gesien heeft" (*BRN*, 211).

²⁸ *BRN*, 211.

²⁹ "... d'welcke maer een ghedachtenisse is, van het ghebroken lichame Christi voor ons, etc." (*BRN*, 212). This formulation is typical of a Zwinglian view of the Lord's Supper.

³⁰ *BRN*, 213.

³¹ The official sentence from the records in the state archives is published (in Dutch) in *BNMP*, 221. In translation, the text is as follows: "For the cause that you Hostes vander Catharine has undertaken publicly in the Church of St. Michael in this city of Gent, to reprimand during the sermon on last Maundy Thursday, the preacher as he was preaching on the holy sacrament of the altar, and to say that he had spoken badly and against the truth. And that besides this fact of which you are accused, you also persist in other errors contrary to the Catholic Faith of the Holy Church, and you stick to your own opinion. It has become clear to the court that you are well of mind and can be judged according to law. Therefore, this court, declaring that you have been found guilty against the law on heresy as proclaimed by the imperial majesty, sentences you to be put to death alive and with fire and that your books be burnt, and that afterwards your body will be put outside of town on a stake. Further declaring that all your belongings, whether loan, inheritance or furniture where it may be, is confiscated by the Emperor. Pronounced April 28th, 1555."

speaking to the crowd and said: "I have much more to say to you ..." (John 16:12). Then the hangman fell on his knees to beg for forgiveness, which Micron says was a custom in Flanders.³² Hostes heard the request of the hangman, kissed him without animosity and told him that he would forgive him. Then Hostes again took his chance, fell on his knees and started to pray aloud to God asking for forgiveness of his own sins. Directly after this prayer, he addressed himself to the crowd again to encourage the people to pray for him. Then it was the official's turn to take action again as he once again called out to the hangman, "Away with him."³³ Hostes then stood up and "willingly placed himself at the stake to be strangled and burnt for the name of his Lord Jesus Christ."³⁴ But even then, Hostes managed to say a few things, warning the crowd against false prophets and ending with the words: "O dear Father, into your hands I commend my spirit,"³⁵ again using Christ's last words (Luke 23:46). Micron picks up this identification with Christ as he writes: "After this he was strangled, his body burnt and afterwards it was hung together with the criminals."³⁶ Here Micron uses phraseology from Scripture where Luke 22:36 quotes Isaiah 53:12 and says that Christ "was numbered with the transgressors." Once again, this phraseology adds to the status of Hostes as a martyr with authority in what he said and did.

Micron concludes it is certain that as Hostes stood firm in the faith, God would—according to his promises—surely have taken him up into heaven and would raise him again on the day of Christ's return.³⁷ On that day, all of Christ's enemies will see what great wrong they have done to Hostes and to other witnesses of Jesus, and they will have to confess all their evildoings.

4. Hostes's View of the Lord's Supper

Micron continues his report by stating that in his opinion many among the political authorities are not aware that they shed innocent blood. They are guilty of a sin that might bring eternal damnation, but they sinned unknowingly, as they were convinced that Hostes was justly sentenced, for two reasons. First, that he was a *Sacramentschender*, which means that he had offended the sacrament by saying that he did not believe in transubstantiation, and secondly, that he was a revolutionary, as he publicly stood up and spoke against a monk.

³² "So is de scherp Richter (na des lands wyse) voor hem neder ghevalen" (BRN, 213).

³³ "Doet wech doet wech" (BRN, 214).

³⁴ BRN, 213.

³⁵ "O hemelsche Vader in uwen handen bevele ick mynen gheest" (BRN, 214).

³⁶ BRN, 214.

³⁷ "... sonder eenich twyfel ..." (BRN, 214).

Now, although Hostes in his trials and in his disputation in prison would have sufficiently convinced all that he was not an offender of the sacrament, still Micron thinks it necessary to include a small tract Hostes wrote on the Lord's Supper in comparison to the mass. Thus—if only the Christian reader will read it impartially and with a longing for truth—he will see, “that Hostes never thought differently about the sacrament than we in our Christian congregation have always taught and held according to Holy Scripture.”³⁸

The treatise that follows is not as small as Micron suggests, for it totals thirty pages in the edition of the *Bibliotheca Reformatoria Neerlandica* and consists of five chapters. The first part is “A simple explanation of the sacrament of the Last Supper of Jesus Christ; of the mass, and of the right understanding of the words of Christ.”³⁹ Here Hostes gives a more Calvinistic interpretation of the sacrament, for he defines it as a sign and a seal of God's promise⁴⁰ and rejects the idea that it is just an outward and general sign.⁴¹ Whereas earlier in Micron's work Hostes said it was just a symbol, here it is clear that Hostes regards the sacrament as more than that.⁴² This sacrament was meant by Christ to inform the conscience that he gave his body and blood for the forgiveness of our sins.⁴³ This was the doctrine of the church for a thousand years, but since then this false doctrine of the mass has entered the church. This makes a second chapter necessary, in which Hostes explains why Christians should stay away from the mass. He gives a list of things that are not in the mass, although according to the Bible they should be, as well as a list of superstitious and idolatrous additions that Scripture does not say anything about. The third chapter informs the reader that additional warrant for rejecting the mass is that it is presented as a good work and that believers receive grace by simply making use of the bread and wine. Chapter four continues on this track and explains “Why the words of Christ ‘This is my body’ should not be taken literally.”⁴⁴ Not only does Hostes try to convince his readers that the doctrine of transubstantiation is unscriptural but also that it is a danger for true Christian

³⁸ *BRN*, 216.

³⁹ *Ibid.*

⁴⁰ *BRN*, 218.

⁴¹ “... dat wy dit Sacrament, gheensins verachten, als oft maer een ydel, bloodt, ghemeyn teeken ende een buyckspyse ware ...” (*BRN*, 216).

⁴² This is in line with Micron's own view on the Lord's Supper, which Gerretsen calls Zwinglian, but with the conviction that it is more than a *signum*. Gerretsen, *Micronius*, 110–11.

⁴³ “... inde consciencie versekert synde dat syn lichaem eens voor onse sonden so seckerlick opgheoffert is, ended at wy doer de heylighe ghemeynschap syns lichaems, so waerachtelick dat ewewich leven hebben, als wy des Heeren broot na synen bevelen nemen ende eten” (*BRN*, 217).

⁴⁴ *BRN*, 226.

faith.⁴⁵ The final chapter in a way summarizes what so far has been said and opposes in 75 antitheses the “true Christ” and “the Christ of the mass.”⁴⁶

This “reprint” of Hostes’s treatise ends rather abruptly as Micron concludes that now everyone can read for what doctrine on the Lord’s Supper Hostes was put to death, that he was not a heretic, and that he was killed as an innocent man. This also means that those who condemned him will have to account for this on the day of God’s judgment, which is also a warning against all who persecute and put so-called heretics to death. Once again Micron takes Hostes’s martyrdom not only as a comfort and encouragement for Protestant believers but also as a serious warning to Catholic prosecutors.

5. Hostes and the Preaching Monk

In a final section, Micron deals with the other ground for Hostes’s condemnation, namely his public reproach of the preaching monk, Pieter de Backere. Micron admits that at first glance it looks as if Hostes acted unwisely and rebelliously, but if we take a closer look it becomes clear that the opposite is the case.⁴⁷ “It was not lightheartedness, even less impious rebelliousness, but far more a special working of God in him that forced him to speak for many reasons and out of godly zeal and ardor for the truth in Christ.”⁴⁸ Hostes has done just what the apostles tell us to do, and that serves to warn the church against false and idolatrous doctrines. This, according to Micron, does not mean that anyone at anytime can speak up against a preacher, for in a Christian church there is the rule that we should let all things happen in an orderly way, as Paul says in 1 Corinthians 14. This, however, does not apply to “dealing with the ‘Roman church’ for therein bishops, priests, and monks reign oppressively over the faith and the conscience of the congregation, against God’s Word; like all false prophets, they submit the people with sword, fire, and gallows to their horrible idolatries.”⁴⁹ Yet, however much it is lawful to speak up against these practices, Micron does use Hostes’s action to warn against spontaneous and—as he calls them—inconsiderate initiatives. Micron thus on the one hand accuses the authorities of shedding innocent blood and at the same time urges Protestant believers not to act in such a way that authorities might take believers to be

⁴⁵ “Ten anderen so is de letterlicke wtlegginghe niet alleyn teghen de nature aller sacramenten, ghelyck als vooren gheseght is, maer oock tehen den waeren Christelicken geloove” (*BRN*, 229).

⁴⁶ “Antitheses oft Teghensettinghen des waren Christi, ende des valschen Mischristi” (*BRN*, 235).

⁴⁷ “... als of Hostes niet alleene onwyselick, maer oock oproerelick hierinne ghedaen hadde: ende daeromme ten rechten soude ghedoot wesen” (*BRN*, 246).

⁴⁸ *BRN*, 246.

⁴⁹ *BRN*, 248–49.

revolutionaries. Micron appeals explicitly to authorities not to make the same mistake as Pontius Pilate did and shed innocent blood. “Therefore, O thy kings, just as King David in the second Psalm admonishes you: Be wise you judges of the earth; let yourself be taught!”⁵⁰

Micron ends his treatise with a brief summary, once again stating the innocence of Hostes, the cruel persecutions of the Roman Church, and the grief Hostes’s death caused the congregation. Yet, for Hostes himself it was a liberation, and thus we should not mourn but rejoice on his behalf. Also, he has left us a fine example of piety and Christian life.⁵¹ Therefore, Micron admonishes his readers to pray to God that he will help them to be, in life and death, steadfast “in the true apostolic faith.”⁵²

V. *Doctrinal vs. Exemplary*

The style of Micron’s account of the trial and death of Hostes is in line with the approach of many Protestant martyrologies, focusing on an individual or a small group of martyrs, and as such these martyrologies are different from traditional and Catholic martyrologies in focusing not so much on the person but more on the faith of the martyr.⁵³ This new so-called “Reformed” style still includes a description of the martyr, drawing upon the biblical imagery of Christ and the patriarchs, prophets, and apostles of the Old and New Testaments, and at the same time describing in detail the faith that caused the penalty. The result is that Micron’s story of Hostes, like other Protestant martyrologies, has more of a doctrinal than an exemplary function. The martyr should not so much be followed, let alone be revered, but should be listened to as a teacher of the church. And this fact is not so much related to a death in full assurance and godly assistance but indicates that we deal here not with a special believer, but with a situation in which the stake is turned into a pulpit at which the martyr for a last time stands against idolatry and appeals, first, to evangelical bystanders to stand fast in the evangelical faith and, second, to Catholic ones to convert to Protestantism. That is why Micron also uses the martyrology of Hostes to appeal to the political authorities. The appeal to the judgment seat of God, the elaborate description of Protestant doctrine as biblical and in line with the early

⁵⁰ *BRN*, 252.

⁵¹ “In sonderheyt om dat hy by alle christenen so costelick eenen rueck ende eerelick exempel der godsalicheyt ende des christelicken levendts achterghelaten heeft” (*BRN*, 253).

⁵² *BRN*, 253.

⁵³ Gregory speaks about, “the powerful combination of evangelical doctrines and martyr’s deaths.” See Gregory, *Salvation at Stake*, 142.

church, is meant to move the authorities to a confessional change or at least to a more tolerant approach towards Protestants.

These were also the motivations for the publication of other Calvinist martyrologies. They were catechetical, pastoral, but also apologetic and missionary documents. This means that the early modern Protestant martyrologies aimed at moving away from any form of hagiography. The city council of Geneva allowed Crespin to have his work printed there on the condition that he would not use the words “saint” and “martire.” And the preface to his massive overview explicitly warns that it is not the ashes or the bones but the testimonies of the martyrs that should be conserved.⁵⁴ According to John Exalto, who investigated the testimonies of the early modern Dutch martyrs, the example-function became so important that these martyrs can be called Protestant saints.⁵⁵ I think this can also be said of Hostes as an example, but only if “saint” is taken in the original sense of the word. In spite of the similarities between Catholic and Protestant saints as they are observed in the various martyrologies, the essential difference is the post-mortem function of the saint. In Protestant martyrologies, it is the message of the saint and his or her exemplary life that remains, but in Catholic martyrology the saint can—because of his or her merits—be a help in the present life and in the life hereafter. Micron’s martyrology has exemplary notions and thus was more than propaganda, even if it also functioned as a vehicle for doctrinal and apologetic material.⁵⁶ We may follow Hostes van der Katelyne as an example of faith, but, much more, we need to accept and apply his teachings in order to live and die well.

⁵⁴ Jelsma, *Haemstede*, 245.

⁵⁵ Exalto, *Gereformeerde Heiligen*, 104.

⁵⁶ Barker concludes that the martyrology that Antoine de Chandieu produced was not so much for propaganda but for offering the French Reformed examples as to how to lead a Christian life. Barker, *Protestantism, Poetry and Protest*, 162.