

Jacobus Clemens non Papa's Troubles in Bruges

Records about Jacobus Clement, also known as Clemens non Papa, in the Chapter Acts of the Church of St Donatian's, Bruges, 1545. I am grateful to Peter de Groot for sharing his images, allowing me to use them for teaching and research, and for a magical time together in the Episcopal Archives in Bruges. The handout was made for MUS 232 (Music in the Renaissance), but I have revised it for the website.

12 March 1544

Deliberato super dando lucro annuo Jacobo Clement presbytero aut admittendo ad succentoriam (magistro Johanne de Hollande nunc succentore eo munere destituendo, sed per honesta dimissione eius officij ad stallum cum aliqua mercede annua retinendo), collectis dominorum votis, et domino Johanne Hollande introvato, eidem fuit expositum per organum domini presidentis quod cum alijs suppositis sepe dixerit, quod vellet bene exonerari laboribus et cura succentorie, et quia re vera ad idem munus propter corruptos mores et regimen suum nullo modo est idoneus, domini pre adviserunt eundem quod tollerabunt ad aliquantum temporis, sed quod non capiat spem continuationis sui muneris succentori, retinendus tamen in stallo si velit expectaturus suo loco et suo tempore promotionem aut pensionem usque tempus promotionis, qui abiens se humiliter commendavit gratijs dominorum,

Jacobus vero Clement admonitus gravitatis muneris et tenendi regiminis, atque mancipij suspecti mox abijciendi, puerorumque instruendorum in vita moribus et habitu, necnon instruende domus alicuius conducende aut cum aliquo bono viro habitandi, fuit eidem domino Jacobo datum tempus deliberandi quibus via et modo, si capitulo etiam ita videatur, provinciam huiusmodi acceptare possit.

Having discussed the question of giving annual remuneration to Jacobus Clement, priest, and of admitting him to the succentorship (thus depriving the current succentor, magister Johannes de Hollande, of that office, but keeping him, through honorable discharge of his office, in a choirstall with some income), [and] having gathered the votes of the lords [of the chapter], and having called in dominus Johannes Hollande, the lord president explained to him what he had frequently said with other suppositions, that he would gladly reward the labours and care of the succentorship, but since in truth he is in no way fit for the same office because of his corrupt habits and lifestyle, the lords warned him that they will tolerate it for a little while, but that he should not entertain any hope of continuing his office of succentor, but if he wishes he will await, being retained in his choirstall, promotion or pension in its time and place, until the time of promotion, which [Hollande] humbly commended himself to the good graces of my lords,

yet Jacobus Clement, having been reminded of the gravity of the office, and of maintaining proper governance, and of casting out the *mancipium suspectum*,* and of the instruction of the boys in life, morals, and deportment, and of providing and renting the house of some person, or of dwelling with some respectable man, Dominus Jacobus was given time to consider in what way or manner he is able to take on this task, if it would seem so also to the chapter.

* *mancipium* referred originally to a person held in property (i.e. a slave). It is possible that she was a ward, and Clemens her legal guardian. The word can refer to a person of either sex. It turns out from later documents (below) that she is a female, and that Clemens had a relationship with her. If so (and that's a big if), that would have brought this case before the episcopal court. But at this time, canon law defined sexual maturity by the growth of pubic hair. This would explain the lyrics of the late 15th-century Dutch song 'Meskin is u cutkin ru,' meaning literally 'Little girl, is your c--- hairy?'

17 March 1544

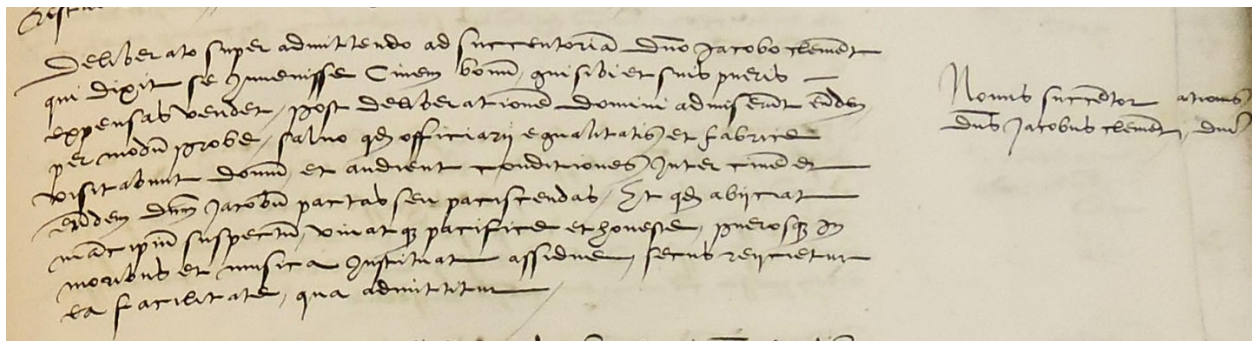
Continentibus oculis ad parvum tempus tollerabitur Hollande iuxta actam novissime diei, et differtur adhuc admissio Jacobi Clementis aut alterius.

Hollande will be tolerated for a little time with indulgent eyes, as decided on the most recent day, and the admission of Jacobus Clemens or of somebody else will be deferred.

26 March 1544

Deliberato super admittendo ad succentoriam domino Jacobo Clement, qui dixit se convenisse civem bonum qui sibi et suis pueris expensas vendet, post deliberationem domini admiserunt eundem per modum probe salvo quod officiarj equalitatis et fabrice visitabunt domum et audient condiciones inter civem et eundem dominum Jacobum pactas seu paciscendas, et quod abijciat mancipium suspectum vivatque pacifice et honeste puerosque in moribus et musica instituat assidue secus reijciatur ea facilitate qua admittitur.

The lords, having discussed the question of admitting to succentorship dominus Jacobus Clement, who said that he had found a respected citizen who will pay the expenses for him and his boys, they admitted him after more discussion, on probation, except that the officers of the Equalitas and Fabric shall visit the house and shall review the conditions agreed, or yet to be agreed, between the citizen and the same Dominus Jacobus, and [that he should cast out the *mancipium suspectum*], and should live peaceably and properly, and must diligently instruct the boys in morals and music—otherwise he will be dismissed as easily as he has been admitted.



Bruges, Bisschoppelijck archief, St Donaes, Chapter acts, 26 March 1543

October 1544

Succentor introvatus increpatur et obiurgatur, propter nonnullos publicos rumores qui cum multorum scandalo in natalibus contigerunt in domo Andree Zoertart sui hospitis et extra eam in via publica, occasione sui suspecti mancipij tunc in eadem domo convivantis, iniuncto sibi quod eandem mulierem penitus abijciat, seque alacriorem ad chorales, tam in bonis moribus quam etiam in musica instruendos, preberet, neque deinceps serotino tempore cum illis domos laicorum frequentare presumerit.

Having called in the succentor, he was upbraided and reprimanded because of several publicly rumored events that have happened, to the spiritual detriment of many, during Christmastide in the house of Andreas Zoertart, his host, and outside it on the public road, occasioned by his *suspectum mancipium* who was then feasting in the same house, with [Clemens] being enjoined to completely cast away the same woman, and to show himself more readily committed to the choirboys, who are to be instructed both in good morals and also in music, so that he will not again, at a later time, presume to frequent the houses of layfolk with them.

The following documents come from the court records of the De Croy family, and were discovered and published by Henri Vanhulst.

Archduke Maximilian to Philippe de Croÿ, Graz, 27 January 1553

A mon cousin le duc d'Arschot
Mon cousin, j'ay ces jours despesché par de là le
maistre de chappelle du Roy Monseigneur ... pour
recouvrement de quelques chantres et enfans de
coeur pour m'en dresser une chappelle; ... desirerois
singulièrement avoir deux chappelains et que l'un
d'iceux fuist maistre Clément [...] et sçaichant, mon
cousin, le dict Clément cy devant avoir servy feu le
duc vostre père, [...] en cas que le dict Clément
voulust chercher quelques excuses ou faire difficulté
d'accepter mon service, que veuillez faire tout vostre
possible pour l'en induyre [...]; en quoy me ferez
plaisir singulier. Ce sçait le Créateur qui, mon
cousin, vois doint sa sainte grâce. Maximilian.

To my cousin, the Duke of Aarschot.
My cousin, I have these last days sent abroad the
chapelmaster of the King, to obtain a number of
singers and choirboys from which I will assemble a
chapel; ... I shall singularly wish to have two
chaplains, and that one of them be maistre Clement
[...] knowing, my cousin, that the said Clement has
served before this the Duke your father, [...] should
the said Clement wish to search for some excuses, or
create difficulties in accepting my service, that you
do everything you are able to to induce him herein
[...] in which business you shall do me singular
please. So knows the Creator who, my cousin, may
give you his holy grace.
Maximilian.

Philippe de Croy's Answer to Archduke Maximilian, Heverlee, 13 May 1553

Sire,
Il y at desja quelque bonne espace qu'ay receu la
lettre de vostre Majesté. Et n'eusse faylly de y
donner plus briefve response. Mays ayant
le tout considerez, et bien pesé la demande, ne me
suis voullut avancer de l'envoyer. Car ne le trouve
ydoyne pour vous faire service, a cause qu'il est
grant yvroigne et mal vivant. A la reste ledit
Clement et fort expert a la musicque.

Sire,
it is already some time ago that I received Your
Majesty's, and I have neglected to respond briefly.
But having considered all things, and weighed the
request well, I have not wanted to go ahead and send
him. For I find him unfit for your service, for the
reason that he is a great drunkard and lives a bad
life. For the rest, this Clement is a great expert in
music.

Risky business, to defy the urgent personal request of the Archduke. If Clemens was indeed a drunkard, then surely the Archduke would have wanted to be the judge. There has got to be more to the story, and perhaps somebody will find documents to enlighten us. The request itself is not surprising, for at this point, Clemens was at the height of his fame as a composer. His work circulated widely in print. One have to wonder what experiences in life led the extraordinarily gift Clemens to lead such an apparently dissolute lifestyle.