Memento Mei: The Two Thieves and the Movement of the Soul in the *Spiegel om Wel te Sterven* (1694)

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He went before thee bearing His cross and died for thee upon the cross, that thou also mayest bear thy cross and mayest love to be crucified upon it. For if thou be dead with Him, thou shalt also live with Him, and if thou be a partaker of His sufferings thou shalt be also of His glory.

Thomas à Kempis (1379/80–1471), *De Imitatione Christi.*

For centuries, emotional movement has been induced by the climax of the New Testament: the Crucifixion. Artistic representations of the Crucifixion have played an important part in stirring the souls of Christians by showing the emotional and physical suffering on the cross. This suffering is not just present in the figure of Christ. According to Scripture, Christ was crucified alongside two other convicts: Dismas, the Good Thief, and Gestas, the Bad Thief.[1] The Gospel of Luke recounts a brief yet charged interaction between the three of them as they hang on the cross. While the Bad Thief blasphemes Christ, the Good Thief contrasts this with his penitent conduct, asking simply to be remembered in Paradise: "Domine, memento mei." In response, Christ forgives him and promises him salvation.[2] The Bad Thief's last moments on earth were a foreboding of eternal damnation in hell, whereas the

[1] The Two Thieves' names have been recorded in the *Gospel of Nicodemus*, also known as *The Acts of Pilate*. James, *The Apocryphal New Testament*, IX & X; Merback, *The thief,* 23. Dismas is also known as St Dismas, but was never officially canonized.

[2] Luke 23:42. The full sentence reads, according to the Vulgate: "Et dicebat ad Iesum Domine memento mei cum veneris in regnum tuum." For the remainder of this article, the King James Bible will be consulted.

Good Thief admitted guilt, prayed to Christ for forgiveness, and secured himself a place in heaven.

The brief conversation between Christ and the Two Thieves has resonated deeply within Christian textual and visual culture as an example of good moral conduct in the last moments before dying. Dismas, as a model for Christians on the deathbed, plays a significant role in the 1694 work *Spiegel om wel te Sterven, Aanwyzende met Beeltenissen van het Lyden onses Zaligmaakers Jesu Christi—Alles wat een Zieke moet doen om Gelukkig te Sterven [Mirror for Dying well, Showing in Images the Suffering of our Savior Jesus Christ—Everything a Sick Person must do to Die Well]*.[3] The *Spiegel* is a richly illustrated book of 39 engravings, divided in three parts by three separate title plates, which are anonymous copies of the original etchings designed and produced by the Dutch draughtsman Romeyn de Hooghe (1645 –1708). The engravings are designed to accompany a Dutch translation of a text composed by the Franciscan friar David de la Vigne (c. 1614 –1684). He wrote the original French version, *Le Miroir de la Bonne Mort* in 1673.[4] Designed for a Catholic audience, the book aims to instruct reader-viewers on what was known to medieval and early modern Christians as the art of dying well (*ars moriendi*).[5]

This article argues that the role of the Two Thieves in the *Spiegel's* engravings and text is pivotal in eliciting the penitential conduct needed to perfect the soul before dying. This analysis sheds new light on how Catholic visual culture aimed to reinforce penitential ideals through early modern devotional literature and art

[3] Translation by the author. *Spiegel om Wel te Sterven* (Amsterdam, Johannes Stichter, 1694), Universal Short Title Catalogue (USTC), (https://www.ustc.ac.uk/), last accessed May 30th, no. 1834278. The copy this research is based on is held in the National Library of the Netherlands in The Hague, under inventory number KW 26 G 12.

[4] Coppens, *Een Ars Moriendi*, 78.

[5] Lips, "Leren Sterven," 150. The *Spiegel* could be understood by laypeople as well as clergymen, and it therefore catered to the concrete need for emotional and religious support at the deathbed. The rich illustrations and in-folio format were relatively costly and therefore the intended audience was presumably limited to the well-to-do layer of the Low Countries' society.

in the post-Trentian Dutch Republic.[6] Through depictions that emotionally 'move' the reader-viewer by visualizing pain and suffering, reader-viewers are simultaneously 'moved' to conform to the penitential conduct that the Church imposes. As Sarah McNamer states, this means that the fundamentally practical function of the *Spiegel* is to teach its readers how to feel on the deathbed.[7] The conceptual lens of 'affective piety' comes into play here. Affective piety is a copiously studied phenomenon concerning the characteristic late-medieval and early-modern Catholic practice of emotional and embodied compassion with and devotion for the suffering of Christ and Mary.[8] Art historian Mitchell B. Merback and literary historian Jan van Dijkhuizen describe the phenomenon of affective piety as 'suffering with' Christ: emotionally aiming to embody his or his Mother's hardships, often instigated by devotional texts and images.[9] Traditionally, the scholarly focus is on Christ and Mary as devotional models with whom to identify, especially in Crucifixion scenes. However, considering the *Spiegel om Wel te Sterven*, the Two Thieves offer an enriching perspective as they are mere mortals, with whom it is easier to identify than the (partly) divine figures of Christ and Mary.

To further establish the interpretation that the Two Thieves are didactical *exempla*, or models that the believer was urged to follow through imitative devotion, the visual aspects of the *Spiegel* in relation to its text will be considered.[10] The artistic motifs which Romeyn de Hooghe applies in his original etchings, are designed to move the reader-viewer into an affective devotional mode. The depiction of the Thieves in the *Spiegel* will be visually analyzed and contextualized through a comparison with a Crucifixion painting by

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[6] The term post-Trentian here refers to the period following the Council of Trent, held between 1545 and 1563. The Council of Trent was an important part of the Catholic Churches' Counter-Reformation as a reaction to Protestantism.

[7] McNamer, *Affective Meditation*, 2.

[8] See also: Caroline Walker Bynum's *Jesus as Mother: Studies in the Spirituality of the High Middle Ages* (Berkeley: University of California Press, 1982,) and Rachel Fulton's *From Judgment to Passion : Devotion to Christ and the Virgin Mary, 800-1200*. (New York: Columbia University Press, 2002.)

[9] Merback, *The Thief,* 19; Dijkhuizen, *Pain and Compassion*, 38; Karant-Nunn, *Reformation of Feeling*, 15.

[10] Zimbalist, "Medieval Affective Piety," 203-4.

the Italian painter Andrea Mantegna (1431 –1506). Mantegna's work serves as a representative example of the continuous tradition of Crucifixion painting in which the Two Thieves play a significant role. The artistic devices and iconographical aspects of the depiction of the Thieves are deeply embedded in the tradition of Crucifixion painting, which hardly changed within the two centuries between the *Spiegel* and Mantegna's painting. By contextualizing De Hooghe's depiction of the Two Thieves within this art-historical tradition, using Mantegna's *Crucifixion* as a point of reference, we can better see how De Hooghe applies a visual vocabulary for distinguishing good from bad—a moral contrast embodied in the Two Thieves. This tradition originates in both the Bible and the story of Joseph of Arimathea. These sources which will be explored briefly before focusing on the *Spiegel*. This multidisciplinary approach will lead to a deeper understanding of how emotional movement, followed by devotional action, is engendered in the reader-viewer through the depiction of the Two Thieves.

Current scholarly research on the *Spiegel om Wel te Sterven* is indebted to the work of historian Christian Coppens from 1995, whose extensive research has not been surpassed since. Coppens argues convincingly that the *Spiegel* is of a didactic-religious nature, and that the book offers the devotee a mirror or an *exemplum* to imitate.[11] Coppens refers here to the dying person on the deathbed depicted in the *Spiegel*, through which the reader-viewer could prepare for their final hour (fig. 1).[12] Coppens does not, however, explicate the role of the Good Thief as a model. This is in line with other scholarly literature, where the Two Thieves as model and anti-model in the context of *ars moriendi*-handbooks are often taken for granted. This is not to say that the Good Thief's powerful *exemplum* has never been recognized: for instance, Merback and Dijkhuizen emphasize the role of the Two Thieves in both visual art and devotional literature.[13] Additionally, Susan C. Karant-Nunn and Jussi Hanska address the role of the Two Thieves in late medieval and early modern sermons.[14] Achim Timmerman, on the other

[11] Coppens, *Een Ars Moriendi*, 89.
[12] *Ibid.*
[13] Merback, *The Thief,* 69-100, 218-65; Dijkhuizen, *Pain and Compassion*, 38-40.
[14] Karant-Nunn, *Reformation of Feeling,* 91, 109; Hanska, "The Good Thief," 36.

hand, focuses on the Good Thief as a model depicted on painted panels, which were shown to criminals on their way to their execution.[15] There is, however, no mention of the role of the Good Thief in printed books designed specifically for use on the deathbed, such as the *Spiegel*. This article is a first attempt at filling this lacuna.

The Crucifixion in Scripture

The biblical sources describing the Thieves are concise and allow for several readings. Artists have filled this room with a variety of interpretations of the scriptural sources of the scene on Golgotha. All four evangelists mention the Two Thieves, but Mark, Matthew and John do so briefly, whereas Luke offers the most elaborate and didactically rich history of the Two Thieves. As will be shown, his narration has been re-interpreted by many artists as he makes a distinction between the good, penitent Thief, and the bad, unrepentant Thief. Luke's gospel provides the following interaction between the Thieves and Christ while they are hanging on their crosses:

> And one of the malefactors which were hanged railed on him, saying, "If thou be Christ, save thyself and us."
> But the other answering rebuked him, saying, "Dost not thou fear God, seeing thou art in the same condemnation? And we indeed justly; for we receive the due reward of our deeds: but this man hath done nothing amiss."
> And he said unto Jesus, "Lord, remember me when thou comest into thy kingdom."
> And Jesus said unto him, "Verily I say unto thee, today shalt thou be with me in paradise."[16]

The Good Thief's reverent request to Christ solely concentrates on the eternal kingdom he is headed to, and not his earthly suffering. Hanska argues that because of this contrite conduct, and the fact that Dismas is absolved of his sins by the highest authority possible; the

[15] Timmermann, "Locus calvariae," 137.
[16] Luke 23:39-43, King James Bible.

figure of the Good Thief is the ultimate "archetype of conversion *in extremis*."[17]

Apart from this passage, the distinction between good and bad is explicated in another key historical source: the writings of Joseph of Arimathea, a man who was involved in the burial of Christ.[18] He described the appalling crimes of Gestas, the Bad Thief, who had lived a violent and ungodly life murdering travelers, hanging women by their feet and cutting off their breasts, and drinking baby blood. Dismas, on the other hand, had made his livelihood as an innkeeper, taking from the rich and giving to the poor. While he committed sins, he is not described as cruel.[19]

It is made noticeably clear in Arimathea's writings that there is a distinction between the Two Thieves, and that they both have an influence on their fate in their last moments. Dismas is self-condemning, and while there is no literal mention of his remorse, his reverence for Christ and his last-minute conversion shows us that he handles his sin in the prescribed way. He admits that he is sinful, accepts his punishment, and puts all his faith in his newly discovered God. Gestas, the anti-model, remains ignorant. He fails to recognize the significance of both the divine entity next to him and the event of his death.

The *Spiegel*

Following these Biblical and apocryphal sources, the hierarchical distinction between good and bad is apparent in the depiction and description of the Thieves in the *Spiegel*. For instance, the book tells the reader: "Where the Sick who cannot read will see what he must follow to die well. See and do after the following Examples."[20] The *Spiegel* mentions several times that one must see the images, which

[17] Hanska, "The Good Thief, 35.
[18] Metzger, *New Testament Studies*, 35.
[19] Merback, *The Thief*, 23.
[20] "Waar in de Zieke die niet en kan leezen, zien zal wat hy moet volgen om gelukkig te sterven. Ziet en doet na de volgende Voorbeelden." Translation by the author. This copy is unfoliated, and the text and images have been distributed variously in the different copies. In the edition in the National Library of the Netherlands, The Hague inv. no. KW 26 G 12, this text can be found on the folium with text bound before plate 14.

Figure 1: Romeyn de Hooghe, *Spiegel om Wel te Sterven*, plate 26, 1694, engraving, 186 x 146 mm. (The Hague, National Library, inv. no. KW 26 G 12.)

could imply that the textual sections are secondary to the images, or that the text was mainly for reading aloud to the dying person, who was physically unable to read themself.[21] To demonstrate the synergy between image and word, an analysis of the two engravings that depict the Thieves, along with their accompanying texts is presented here. The word-image interplay helped reader-viewers to be able to remember elusive and intangible concepts, making the *Spiegel* an ideal case study for exploring the didactic and devotional role of the Good Thief.[22]

Each image in the *Spiegel* is accompanied by a quote taken from either John, Luke, or Matthew. Additionally, the Bible text is elucidated by a subheading that alludes to the images and includes a lesson for the reader-viewer. These texts are printed on separate unfoliated pages and are each linked to an engraving through

[21] Coppens, *Een Ars Moriendi*, 96.
[22] Carruthers, *The Book of Memory*, 276. Melion, *Ekphrastic Image-Making*, 5.

numbers. For instance, the 26th engraving (fig. 1) is accompanied by the following text:

> They brought Jesus weighed down by his Cross to Mount Calvary, also known as death place. John 19.
>
> —
>
> The courage with which our Savior went with his cross to his place of punishment teaches the sick person the fortitude he must have in his ailments until he comes to the place of his rest.[23]

Plate 26 (fig. 1) shows a dying man in a luxurious four-poster bed, surrounded by an angel, female figures, a dog, and clergy. The man is meant to be a generalized model for the good, repentant sinner on his deathbed.[24] This is why the patient is a different person in each plate, and each bedroom is a different one—it highlights the universal crisis that the man is undergoing and its applicability to others preparing for death.

Included in each engraving are cherubs holding a picture frame, depicting a scene from the Passion of Christ. The attention of the dying man in his bed is often fully focused on the painting within the engraving. In other cases, such as in plate 26 (fig. 1), a parallel is drawn between Christ,

Figure 2: Detail of figure 1.

[23] "Zy brachten Iesus belaaden met zyn Kruys op den berg Calvarien, doodts plaats gezegt. Iohan 19. - De gemoedigheyd waar mede onze Zaligmaaker met zyn Kruys tot aan zyn straf-plaats ging, leert den Zieke de standvastigheyd, welke hy in zyn kwaalen moet hebben tot dat hy ter plaatse van zyn rust komt." Translation by the author.

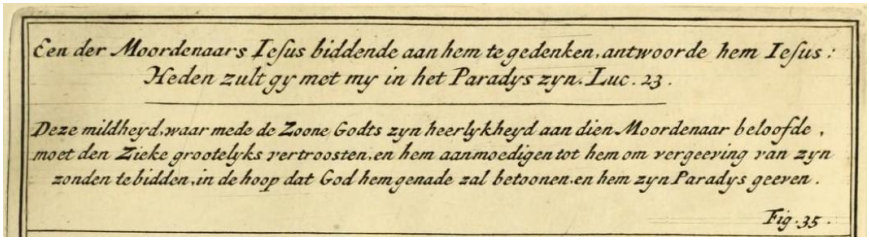
[24] The question if the *Spiegel* was used by women on their deathbed, and in how far their engagement with its message was influenced by their gender, thus far remains unanswered.

Figure 3: Romeyn de Hooghe, *Spiegel om Wel te Sterven*, plate 35, 1694, engraving, 186 x 146 mm. (The Hague, National Library of the Netherlands, inv. no. KW 26 G 12.)

the Thieves, and the dying man. The painting depicts the scene where Christ almost collapses under the weight of the cross on the road to Golgotha. Behind him are the Two Thieves carrying their own crosses—Dismas with his young, defeated face and Gestas on the left with a terrifying expression and a bald head resembling a skull. Mimicking the three men carrying their crosses on the road to Golgotha, the dying man is given his own cross to hold. The same goes for plate 25 (image is not included in this article), where the Flagellation of Christ is depicted in the picture frame. The dying man on the deathbed is depicted in the same engraving while undergoing a bloodletting. An angel points at Christ bleeding from the soldiers' instruments of torture, designating Christ as an *exemplum* of how calm and composed the dying man in his bed must be while enduring the hardships of dying.

The Two Thieves reappear in engraving 35 (fig. 3).[25] In this engraving, we see the scene at Golgotha in full horrendous splendor. The dying person on his deathbed looks up at the image with sorrow written on his face while everyone around him has fallen asleep. He is alone with the angel, who directs the man's attention to the three crosses in the picture frame. The Bible text that comes with the image derives from Luke 23, reciting: "One of the murderers prayed to Jesus to remember him, Jesus answered: today you shall be with me

[25] While the Two Thieves are not depicted from engraving 26 – 34, they are mentioned in the text accompanying the 30th engraving, in which John 19:18 is quoted. They are, however, not included in the image.


Een der Moordenaars Iesus biddende aan hem te gedenken, antwoorde hem Iesus:
Heden zult gy met my in het Paradys zyn. Luc. 23.

Deze mildheyd, waar mede de Zoone Godts zyn heerlykheyd aan dien Moordenaar beloofde, moet den Zieke grootelyks vertroosten, en hem aanmoedigen tot hem om vergeeving van zyn zonden te bidden, in de hoop dat God hem genade zal betoonen, en hem zyn Paradys geeven.

Fig. 35.

Figure 4: The text accompanying plate 35, the Crucifixion, in the *Spiegel om Wel te Sterven*. (The Hague, National Library of the Netherlands, inv. no. KW 26 G 12.)

in Paradise."[26] However, David de la Vigne's additional text in the *Spiegel* gives an enlightening perspective on the conditions of divine forgiveness exemplified by the Good Thief and the grace that Christ bestows upon him:

> This bounty, with which the Son of God promised his glory to that Murderer, should greatly comfort the sick person, and encourage him to pray to him for the forgiveness of his sins, in the hope that God will show him mercy and grant him his Paradise.[27]

This sentence summarizes the message that de *Spiegel* wants to communicate through the story of the Two Thieves: following the example of the Good Thief leads to grace. De Hooghe enriches this message in his depiction of the Crucifixion. It captures the moment in which the penitent Thief speaks to Jesus, his expression full of great reverence and awe. Jesus turns his head, surrounded by a halo of light, and he answers. The depiction of their interaction exhibits the Christian ideal of divine forgiveness and God's 'mildheyd,' mildness or mercy, which could greatly soothe the dying on their deathbed.

The message is amplified by the illustration of the contrasting fate of Gestas on the other side of the scene. The Bad Thief hangs

[26] "Een der Moordenaars Iesus biddende aan hem te gedenken, antwoorde hem Iesus: Heden zult gy met my in het Paradys zyn. Luc. 23." Translation by the author.
[27] "Deze mildheyd, waar mede de Zoone Godts zyn heerlykheyd aan dien Moordenaar beloofde, moet den Zieke grootelyks vertroosten, en hem aanmoedigen tot hem om vergeeving van zyn zonden te bidden, in de hoop dat God hem genade zal betoonen, en hem zyn Paradys geeven." Translation by the author.

there, suspended from his hands, his legs seeking for support. The wood he is nailed on is of inferior quality: while Jesus and the Good Thief are crucified on nicely cut beams, Gestas is hung on unprocessed timber. Another telling indication that Gestas will go straight to hell is the pair of flying creatures that De Hooghe chose to depict, signifying his devilish soul departing from the body.[28] The materialization of the abstract idea of the unrepentant soul in these two beings is an important aspect of the iconographical scheme in the *Spiegel*.[29]


Figure 5: Detail of figure 3.

The Iconography of the Crucifixion

An additional element of importance in the iconography of Crucifixion painting is, among others, the distinction between the left and right side of the image. In this section, the iconographical tradition that establishes this distinction will be explicated through an analysis of the central panel of the San Zeno Altarpiece (between 1457 –1460) by the Italian painter Andrea Mantegna (1431 –1506) (fig. 6). This work will be compared with the anonymous engravings of the crucifixion in the *Spiegel*.

Mantegna's painting depicts the Good Thief, Dismas, on Christ's right-hand side, on the left of the canvas for the viewer. This side is known as *dextra,* a place of honor and privilege. Gestas is on Christ's left, or *sinistra*, a place of debasement and condemnation.[30] In the *Spiegel*, however, the Thieves are placed contrary to the

[28] Admittedly, the timeline here is vague, as Gestas seems to still be alive at this point and it would be strange if his soul already departed this living body. My hypothesis is that De Hooghe wanted to emphasize Gestas' doomed soul and therefore took the liberty to play with temporality.
[29] Merback*, The Thief,* 240.
[30] Id., 23.

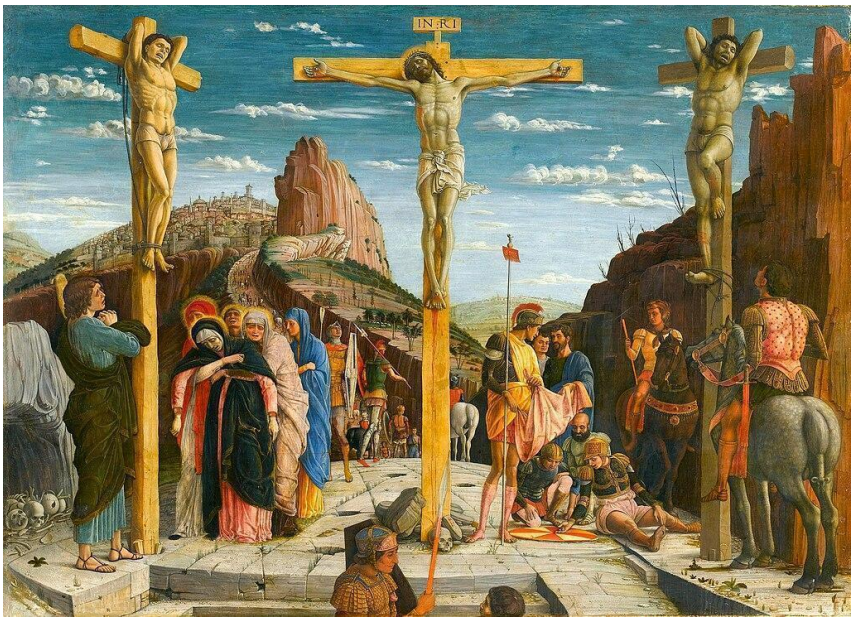


Figure 6: Andrea Mantegna, *Crucifixion, central panel of the San Zeno Altarpiece*, between 1457 and 1460, tempera and oil on poplar, 76 x 96 cm. (Paris, Louvre Museum, inv. no. 368.)

tradition (fig. 6). A viewer would expect the Good Thief to be on Christ's right-hand side, on the viewer's left. While it becomes clear that Romeyn de Hooghe was familiar with this iconographical tradition in his original French version of the *Spiegel* of 1673, his later anonymous colleague(s) copied his originals in mirror image.[31] This has to do with the medium of engraving, where the scenes that were scratched in copper appeared in reverse on the paper on which they were printed. It was possible to copy engravings by using a mirror, ironically. The unidentified engravers who copied the *Spiegel* did not make the effort to apply this technique to copy this specific print truthfully; the reason for this remains unclear.

Although scripture offers no explicit indication of which Thief was crucified on which side of Christ, tradition consistently places the Good Thief on Christ's right. This placement aligns with longstanding symbolic, anthropological, and even neuropsychological associations of the right side with virtue, moral superiority, and

[31] See for example the French version *Miroir de la bonne mort,* 1973, in the University Library in Amsterdam, the Netherlands, under signature OM 63-1499.

divine favor. In short: Dismas is at the right hand of God.[32] Mantegna's *Crucifixion* (fig. 6) is merely one example of similar scenes where this tradition is followed. However, the compositional distinction is not the only way Mantegna differentiates between *dextra* and *sinistra*. He uses several iconographical and artistic devices, which offer a fruitful focal point for comparison with the *Spiegel*.

On the dexter side of the composition, the highly emotional figures of Mary and John the Evangelist are depicted. The contrast with the sinister side of the painting is apparent: here, the groups consist of Pilate's soldiers playing dice for Christ's garments, surrounded by richly clad mounted soldiers, including two horses standing with their hindquarters towards the viewer, a—perhaps slightly farfetched—hint of the unworthiness of the Bad Thief. In the *Spiegel*, the medium of engraving does not allow for this level of detail on such a small scale. Still, the distinction is made plain by showing Pilate's soldiers on the Bad Thieves' side and having the lamenting figures on the Good Thieves' side.

This brings us to the actual sentence of crucifying. According to the Gospels, the three convicts receive the same sentence in the court of Pilate. Antithetically to this, artists vary the ways in which the bodies are fixed to the cross, distinguishing the punishment of the Thieves from that of Christ or even differentiating between the Two Thieves. According to Merback, the variations in crucifying found in the art historical tradition, denoting good and bad, can be categorized in four ways. First, the shape of the crosses and the type of wood they are made of; second, the (non-)conformity of the bodies to the shape of the cross; third, the method by which the bodies are fastened to the crosses; and lastly, the depiction of wounds.[33]

These four variations are visible in both the *Spiegel* and Mantegna's work. Although the shape of the crosses is alike in each depiction, their material qualities are different. In Mantegna's *Crucifixion*, the beamson which the Bad Thief is hung is of a significantly darker color. In the *Spiegel*, the crosses of Christ and

[32] Fabbro, "Left and Right," 174.
[33] Merback, *The Thief*, 72.

the Good Thief are of the same, processed material, while Gestas is crucified on untreated tree trunks. Concerning the second and third variations as proposed by Merback, whereas the three bodies in the *Spiegel* are all nailed to the crosses, the feet of the Bad Thief are not fastened. This is parallel to Mantegna's representation of the Bad Thief, whose leg appears to be pulled loose from the ropes. Additionally, in Mantegna's painting, the Two Thieves have not been nailed to the cross but loosely bound with ropes.

Regarding the fourth and last distinction: the *Spiegel* does not show obvious wounds or blood. This is possibly due to the limits of the medium of engraving and the size of the picture frame, which measures only a few centimeters. Mantegna does show the blood from Christ's five Holy Wounds: the wounds from the nails in his hands and feet and the wound in his side, which is wholly in line with the tradition. [34] While the Good Thief's body remains unscathed, the Bad Thief's shins are badly wounded.

Conclusion

While the traditional distinction between *dextra* and *sinistra* and the subsequent placement of the Good and Bad Thief is not maintained in the *Spiegel*, the message still comes across successfully thanks to the minute depiction of the conversation on the cross where the Good Thief receives grace. De Hooghe presents the Bad Thief as barely hanging on to the rough beams of his cross, whereas the Good Thief is nailed to similar wood as Christ. De Hooghe's use of these visual and affective distinctions in the *Spiegel*, which are in line with the art-historical motifs as proposed by Merback, explicate the importance of the Two Thieves in the didactical scheme of the book.

The engravings and texts persuade the reader-viewer to spiritually re-enact, or affectively imitate, the conduct of several figures in the *Spiegel*. The Thief is a powerful model of dying a good death through penitential conduct, which fits well in the book's aim to bring about an emotional 'movement,' in the reader-viewer, leading to a movement to action: prayer. The prospect of eternal paradise following Christ's merciful verdict made the Good Thief's

[34] Hall, *Hall's Iconografisch Handboek*, 188.

pain on the cross bearable. The visual confrontation with the specific moment in which God is forgiving a penitent sinner in the eleventh hour was a reassuring narrative for the reader-viewer and a compelling instruction for the reader-viewer on their deathbed, "encouraging him to pray to him for the forgiveness of his sins."[35]

What also has become clear in the analysis is that the Good Thief is not the only model that the *Spiegel* proposes to follow. Both the dying person on the deathbed and Christ himself are referred to in both text and image as *exempla*. For instance, the text accompanying the 26th engraving (fig. 1) encourages the reader-viewer to be 'standvastig,' or steadfast, like Christ while undergoing the pains of death closing in. The fact that there are multiple figures to 'mirror' is no surprise given the title of the book.

According to Dijkhuizen, the Good Thief often serves as a mediator between the crucified Christ and the reader-viewer.[36] Seeing only Christ suffer in a Crucifixion scene would exclude the human body with which we can relate, separate as we are from the divine status of Christ. The penitent Thief, therefore, functions as a body which the reader-viewer can relate to: a human body that indicates how pain and penance can be an instrument for salvation.[37] This notion is especially valuable in the context of a book that aims to offer consolation on the deathbed, such as the *Spiegel*. Furthermore, Merback argues that out of all the Catholic saints Dismas was the most dynamic and compelling model for the laity.[38] His last moments are the actualization of ideal penance, and his moral opposite, Gestas, makes clear what happens in the absence of this penance.

Romeyn de Hooghe, and the engraver who copied his etchings, incorporated various motifs into them, notably selecting the crucial moment when Christ speaks to the Good Thief. The Two Thieves play a humble, but significant part as model and anti-model within the didactic scheme of the *Spiegel*. Reader-viewers are encouraged to place themselves in the position of the Good Thief,

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[35] ". . . en hem aanmoedigen tot hem om vergeeving van zyn zonden te bidden." Translation by the author.
[36] Dijkhuizen, *Pain and Compassion*, 38.
[37] *Ibid.*
[38] Merback, *The Thief*, 263.

because he is a mortal just like all of us who hope to hear the redeeming words: "Verily I say unto thee, today shalt thou be with me in paradise."[39]

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