The Family of Love Revisited:
A Study of Hendrick Niclaes’
Evangelium Regni and its Translations

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Abstract

This thesis studies the written tradition of the sixteenth-century religious movement known as the Family of Love. It examines both the Low German writings of the movement's founder Hendrick Niclaes and their contemporary translations in English and Latin.

The first part of this study demonstrates, through detailed textual analysis of the theological tract *Evangelium Regni*, the conscious deliberation of Hendrick Niclaes' writings and their functioning in the propagation of his spiritual beliefs. It documents Niclaes' painstaking efforts to communicate his visionary experiences through a literary medium and re-evaluates the importance of the written word in the movement.

The second part of this thesis closely examines the English and Latin renditions of the *Evangelium Regni* that were produced in the mid and late sixteenth century. In doing so, it not only sheds new light on the Family of Love's literary history but also contributes to the current state of research on the movement, in that it reconsiders, through analyses of this same primary text material, the various extant descriptions of the Family of Love.

Through descriptive comparisons of the translations with their source text, this thesis considers the extent to which the translations of Niclaes' works were both products of and factors in the spread and consolidation of the Familist movement, while also highlighting the meticulous organisation behind their creation. The findings of this study entail a reassessment of the significance and role of the translated word in the Family of Love and, more generally, show how translation becomes instrumental in the building of a religious organisation in post-Reformation Europe.
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Introduction

This introductory chapter sketches the context which informs the present study of the writings and translations of the religious movement known as the Family of Love. First, I will set out a short history of the Familist movement, with specific attention to the religious beliefs of its founder Hendrick Niclaes and the means he employed for the propagation of his ideas. Second, I will describe the interest Niclaes' movement and its writings have attracted in the past and today and point out some lacunae in the current descriptions of the Familist movement. In the third section of this chapter, the objects of the current thesis will be explained. Both the questions this research seeks to answer and the methodology informing the approach I have adopted will be set out. In the final section, I will explain how this thesis is organised.

A. Introducing Hendrick Niclaes and his Family of Love

In the early 1540s, while living in Amsterdam, Hendrick Niclaes founded ‘idt Husgesinne der Lieften’, better known in the Anglo-Saxon world as the ‘Family of Love’. His religious movement arose as a conciliatory solution to the various ecclesiastical schisms which had marked Europe since the Reformation and was unique in that it was not organised to protest against the abuses of the Catholic Church. On the contrary, Niclaes always maintained that his Family was not a schism from the Catholic Church.

1 Many modern students of the Family of Love speak of a ‘sect’. The word is not always employed by these students with a pejorative overtone, despite the negative ring it has gained in modern mass media. Following Christopher Marsh (1994: 4), I have chosen not to use it: Hendrick Niclaes employs various names to speak about his Family, all self-defining expressions which communicate a sense of cohesion and mutual support, like ‘Husgesinne der Lieften’, ‘Denste der Lieften’ and ‘Gemainschoppe der Lieften’. However, the aggressively isolationist connotations of the word ‘sect’ are conspicuous by their absence. For that reason, I prefer to call the Family of Love a ‘religious movement’.

2 I will frequently, in this thesis, speak simply of the ‘Family’.
Hendrick Niclaes was born at the beginning of the sixteenth century, somewhere in the present Netherlands or Germany. As a merchant, he resided in various places, first in Amsterdam, Emden and Antwerp, and then, until his death around 1580 in the city of Cologne. At a young age, Niclaes already doubted the Catholic doctrines he was taught by his orthodox parents. In the visionary dreams which he began to experience around the age of ten, he apparently found solutions to the problems his objections against the Catholic teachings had raised. In these visions, his later role as the new prophet was revealed - a role in which he would finish what Christ had left undone. Nevertheless, Niclaes' religious 'outing' came relatively late. It was at the age of forty, after having consorted for a short period with followers of Luther in the 1520s, that, following a further series of visions, Niclaes finally stepped into the open as God's latest 'chosen one' and started to develop systematically his own views on Christian religion.

Despite the theological changes Hendrick Niclaes made to his doctrines throughout his lifetime, he stuck consistently to the views he held on Christian history and his vocation. According to Niclaes, man had been united with God before the Fall. Adam, however, had broken this oneness by focusing attention on his own person and by seeking knowledge of Good and Evil. God then created Jesus Christ whose death on the cross would restore the unity that had first existed between Him and man. But few were enlightened by Christ's death and the teachings of Christ were soon distorted, while the ceremonies and sacraments, which had a commemorative value, were merely observed out of superstition and the Scriptures had become a 'dead' letter. Now though, for the last time, God had ordained a 'new man' to enlighten the world and to prepare for the New Jerusalem; this was HN and his movement was the Family of Love. Niclaes, who believed that he was living in the 'last age', was convinced that he could achieve what Christ's death had failed to do. Being 'one with God', he would follow Christ 'na de Geiste' and lead man to

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For this passage on Niclaes' beliefs I am indebted to Alastair Hamilton's *The Family of Love* (1981: 34).

The initials 'HN' stood for Helie Nazarenus. John Rogers (1579a: sig. F5v), one of the Family's contemporary attackers in England, implied that Niclaes' followers also understood them to mean 'Homo Novus'.

salvation. Niclaes saw his Family of Love as the fulfilment of all Scriptural prophecies: ‘... unsen uprechten Denste der Lieften ... daer alle Densten unde Prophetien ;die van God unde syner Waerheit uthgegaen zynt;\(^5\) thoe leiden.’ (Niclaes 1656: sig. G4v\(^6\)). The ‘Denste der Lieften’ was to cut across all confessions: ‘... Christenen, Juden, Mahomiteren edder Turcken, unde Heiden ... van wodane Natien unde Religien se oick zynt ...’ (sig. A3v), all were to join the movement and prepare for the ‘new age’, in which ceremonies would be meaningless and man would be restored in his unity with the Godhead. But, as Niclaes insisted, it was crucial his call be obeyed, for ‘nae dessem Dach salder gene Dach der Genaden, up Erden mehr thoekomen’ (sig. K3v). Anyone who did not care to answer it would be doomed; Niclaes, indeed, seems to have believed that with his movement God’s Last Judgment had begun:

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... dit is nu de Dach der Herprunckinge unde der Triumphe Christi ... daer uns Christus ... idt vohrige Ryck ... dat Godt ;vam Anbeginne; vor syne Utherweleden bereidet heft ... openbaret unde thoe-bringet... (sig. B3v).
\]

This was the basic message Niclaes set out in all his writings, which he began to publish at the time of the founding of his Family of Love.

It is difficult to determine precise influences on a writer as bent on claiming inspiration from the Spirit as Hendrick Niclaes\(^7\). Nevertheless, there were two

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\(^5\) Niclaes and his translators put many phrases between semi-colons. Note, however, that in their texts the first semi-colon is mirrored. Alastair Hamilton (personal communication) points out that this use of two different kinds of semi-colons seems to have been unique in the period.

\(^6\) Quotations from Niclaes’ oeuvre in this chapter are all taken from the *Evangelium Regni* to which tract I will often refer as ‘*Evangelium*’. I will consistently make reference to the seventeenth-century reprint (1656) of the Low German *Evangelium Regni* in this thesis. This reprint, which is held in the British Library (shelf mark: 1412.h.12), is an exact copy of the 1575 version of the text which was a revision of the text’s first edition. I have preserved in the quotations from the *Evangelium* (and the other Low German texts presented in this thesis) the original spelling and use of capital letters, modernising only the ‘v’ and the ‘u’, but have written in full all contracted word forms. I have left out the few accents found in the texts, for their use is often inconsistent and confusing. As for the punctuation, I have changed into commas those strokes which clearly serve the function of commas. Throughout this thesis, I will only give page references for quotations from the Low German *Evangelium*.

\(^7\) For this short overview of Niclaes’ forerunners I am indebted to Alastair Hamilton’s *The Family of Love* (1981: 6-23).
works of such outstanding popularity in Familist circles that we can safely assume that Niclaes read them, assimilated them and made an eclectic use of them, i.e. Thomas à Kempis' *De Imitatione Christi* and the *Theologia Germanica*. The ideas of the former Lutheran pastor Sebastian Franck, who popularised certain concepts from the *Theologia Germanica* and combined them with the ideas of Desiderius Erasmus and Hans Denck, seem to have played an equally significant part in Niclaes' doctrines. Not unimportant, when trying to determine Niclaes' forerunners, is the sectarian tradition of the Loists and Anabaptists, in which a markedly eschatological emphasis was combined with a Messianic element - aspects we also find in Niclaes' theology. Lastly, there are the similarities between Hendrick Niclaes and David Joris, the latter believing that God had intended him for a providential role and as an embodiment of the doctrines He had shown him in a series of visions.

Although it is difficult to pinpoint his religious forerunners, it is probable that Niclaes learnt from the reformers the importance of print for the spread of his doctrines. Niclaes' belief in the power of the printing press is attested by the fact that the first followers he gained were entrusted with the printing of his writings. Although the stronghold of his following lay in the Low Countries, over the years Niclaes won adherents all over Europe, mainly due to his and his closest followers' continuous travels in the Netherlands, Germany and France during which they distributed the Familist writings. The propagatory activities of Niclaes went, however, hand in hand with the commercial ones in which he had become involved at an early age. Following in his father's footsteps, Niclaes was a successful merchant who dealt in cloth beside other commodities. The nature of his profession gave him the opportunity to travel and associate with a highly diverse mixture of people; the wide range of his social contacts is reflected in the names and occupations of those now considered to have shown interest in Niclaes and his beliefs. Not only did he gain followers among the so-called lower classes, which people he often employed in the spread of his beliefs, but he also seems to have developed close friendships with renowned humanists like the Antwerp printer
Christopher Plantin and that most famous advocate of toleration Dirck Volckertszoon Coornhert.

Despite Niclaes' constant travelling, his literary activity never ceased. Niclaes was a man who liked to write: well over a hundred of his writings have survived\(^8\). Niclaes wrote in 'Niederdeutsch' or Low German\(^9\) which was used at the time on both sides of the present German-Dutch border, as far east as Cologne and Munster, and in the Dutch provinces of Overijssel, Gelderland and Groningen (Hamilton 1988: xviii). His writings are not only copious but also highly varied. They include a play and several kinds of verse, in addition to proverbs, prayers, psalms, pastoral letters and other more specific religious genres, such as prophetic exhortations, visions and meditations.

One of Niclaes' earliest and most important publications is *De Speghel der Gerechticheit*. This extensive work, the 'Bible' of the Family, discusses most of Niclaes' ideas in plain words, and it is possible that for this reason the work was never completely translated into English. The second most important writing of Niclaes is the *Evangelium Regni* - the focus of the present thesis. It contains an allegorical account of the Old and New Testament designed to emphasise the major tenets of his message. The other treatise that expresses well Niclaes' beliefs is the *Revelatio Dei*, an explanation of several of his prophetic visions, revealing that the new prophet is chosen by God to herald the coming Judgment. Another apocalyptic tract, the *Prophétie des Geistes der Lieften*, declares that Niclaes and his Family are to aid in the Judgment of the world. The *Terra Pacis* is a curious work which has reminded some readers of the *Pilgrim's Progress*; it offers a lengthy allegorical description of a traveller on his way to the blessed land and everlasting life. Two other works of Niclaes, *Proverbia HN* and *Exhortatio I*, seem specifically designed

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\(^8\) For a full list of all Niclaes' works, see: De La Fontaine Verwey, H. (1940-42). 'De Geschriften van Hendrick Niclaes', *Het Boek* 26, pp. 189-221.

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to educate new converts and instruct their readers in the proper method for leading upright lives.\(^{10}\)

The first series of Niclaes' writings spans the period from his founding of the Family until the 1560s, the second series consists of revised editions and was produced in the late 1560s and 1570s. The reason for this revision was that in the last ten years of his life Niclaes developed a much more complex organisation for the spiritual movement which the Family primarily was and demanded strict obedience to his own person. The much more outspoken claims Niclaes now made led to a breach in his movement, and many of his followers in the Netherlands left the prophet. Niclaes, aware of the fading interest in his Family, again resorted to the printing press, only this time to undertake one of the most remarkable enterprises in sixteenth-century printing: translations of his revised Low German writings were produced in English, French, High German and Latin.\(^{11}\) As a result, the stronghold of Niclaes' following now lay abroad and, particularly in England, the movement saw its most flourishing period after the arrival of the Familist translations in the mid-1570s.

While little of original Niclaesism lived on in the Low Countries after the prophet’s death, in England his ideas were eagerly adopted by those searching for religious and spiritual sustenance outside the context of the Anglican Church.\(^ {12}\) Although much of English adherence to the Family appears to have been concentrated in small communities living in the countryside, it seems that in the late 1570s Niclaes’ beliefs even infiltrated the court of Queen Elizabeth in London; apparently no fewer than five Yeomen of the Guard were closely connected to the movement. It is not unreasonable to believe that the English Familists attracted much hostility from the government for that very reason. While in the Netherlands Niclaes’ followers were, on the whole, relatively spared from persecution by the

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\(^{10}\) For this short overview of Niclaes’ main works I am indebted to Jean Dietz Moss’ ‘Godded with God’: Hendrik Niclaes and his Family of Love (1981: 32).

\(^{11}\) Considerably more translations in English have survived than those in the other languages.

\(^{12}\) For this short summary of the Familist history in England I am indebted to Hamilton’s The Family of Love (1981: 112-141).
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authorities, the English Familists suffered serious attacks at the hands of the
Elizabethan establishment. In 1580, a royal proclamation officially outlawed the
movement and called for persecution of its followers. It is true that the
investigations in the Familist movement took place in a context of widespread
persecution of religious dissidents. Moreover, Niclaes' movement, which claimed
not to be a schism from the Catholic Church, must have enhanced the fear of
Catholic infiltration into England. However, it remains remarkable that Elizabeth
I's 1580 proclamation was the only one in its kind to be directed against one
specific religious group (Martin 1989: 197).

Despite the hostile attention the English branch of the movement attracted in the
second half of the sixteenth century, Familist beliefs lived on and probably did so
quite successfully into the seventeenth century, as can be inferred from the fact that
in the early seventeenth century Familists were still attacked in literary works - they
were mocked in Thomas Middleton's Family of Love and Ben Jonson's The
Alchemist - and by the authorities - James I in 1603 spoke against the Familist
beliefs in his Basilikon Doron. The mid-seventeenth century saw the reprinting, by
Giles Calvert and George Witthington in the city of London, of almost all Niclaes'
works in both Low German and English. After this, the Family seems to have
ceased to exist as an independent movement. Many of Niclaes' beliefs were
subsequently absorbed by religious groupings like the Quakers.

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B. The Family of Love in Secondary Sources

a. Development of Modern Research on the Familist Movement

Modern interest in the Family of Love dates from the late nineteenth century, starting with Nippold's account of Niclaes' life:


The work of Nippold, the first serious investigation into the movement, is still valuable for its description of the earliest history of the Family. Nippold was the first to investigate thoroughly the Familist chronicles, i.e. the hagiographical accounts composed by Niclaes' most loyal followers by the end of his life.


The Chronika and the Acta HN are still the principal sources for what is known about Niclaes' life and his Family on the European Continent. The Familist chronicles were most likely based on drafts by Niclaes himself and compiled under his supervision (Hamilton 1988: xviii). Although many of the reports in these accounts have been counter-checked for their reliability and have, by and large, proven to be trustworthy, they obviously present the history of the Continental branch of the Family of Love through the eyes of Niclaes and those most devoted to

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him. The works were not intended for publication during Niclaes’ life and only the prophet’s closest followers were supposed to read them. They afford insight into the usually very secretive movement of the Family and are a bolder expression of his ideals than Niclaes ever dared to publish. The very detailed description of the events in the Family’s history which these works provide would have made them very damaging in the hands of Niclaes’ enemies (ibid.: xi, xix).

The extensive attention which Niclaes’ relationship with the printer Christophe Plantin receives in the Familist chronicles explains partly the fact that, following Nippold’s study and up until the middle of the twentieth century, much of the material that was published on the Family concentrated on investigating the extent to which Plantin and the circle of humanists around him, including the cartographer Abraham Ortelius, were involved in the movement. Today these speculations, which made of Plantin and his circle close followers of Niclaes, are generally considered not to be entirely correct. As we will see in more detail in Chapter I, it seems that Plantin’s contacts with Niclaes were primarily of a commercial nature.

It was with the work of H. De La Fontaine Verwey that this rather narrow fixation on the Antwerp humanists and their dealings with the Family came to end and that new aspects of the movement were seriously studied. An important landmark was De La Fontaine Verwey’s publication in 1940-42 of a near-complete bibliography

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16 This seems to follow from the utmost indiscretion of some of the accounts in the Familist chronicles. They would have offended Niclaes’ acquaintances, like Christopher Plantin who is portrayed in the works in highly negative terms. They were anything but a proof of equanimity and could have done nothing but harm to a movement purportedly based on charity (Hamilton 1988: xix).


18 H. De La Fontaine Verwey published in 1976 a study of the Continental branch of the Familist movement, which was in some aspects an update of the one made by Nippold. Again, the work is still of significance today, see: De La Fontaine Verwey, H. (1976). ‘The Family of Love’, Quaerendo 6, pp. 219-271.
of the surviving works of Niclaes. Others before him had made similar attempts, but his was the first to do so systematically:


As is clear, scholarly interest in the Family at first centred mainly on retracing its history in the Low Countries. The study of the history of the English branch of the Family, and the movement in France, did not become popular until the 1960s and 1970s. It is possible to explain this delayed interest by the fact that in the Familist chronicles hardly any attention is given to the English followers of Niclaes. The students of the English Family, therefore, approached its description from very different perspectives. They resorted to forced recantations and confessions given by suspected adherents of the movement in the late 1570s and early 1580s, and to the contemporary antagonistic accounts of those who attacked Niclaes and his followers. The major attacks on the English branch of the Family of Love in the

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sixteenth century came from the Protestant, more precisely Puritan, corner. They started after the arrival of Niclaes’ works in translation in the mid-1570s and undoubtedly contributed to the publication of the royal proclamation against the movement in 1580. The practices and beliefs which they ascribed to the Familists form the basis on which most of the English branch of the movement’s spread, working and organisation has been reconstructed in modern studies. The most important tracts that were written against the Family in the sixteenth century are:


At the start of the 1980s, two milestones on the Familist history came into print. In 1981, Alastair Hamilton published an extensive and innovative description of the Family, which gave attention to the movement on the Continent and in England, while Jean Dietz Moss, in the same year, brought out a detailed study of the English branch of the movement:


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23 The copy I have used in this thesis is held in the British Library (shelf mark: 697.e.10)

24 The copy I have used is held in the British Library (shelf mark: 3932.b.36.(1))

25 The copy I have used is held in the British Library (shelf mark:c.21.a.8)

26 The copy I have used is held in the British Library (shelf mark: 852.g.1.(3))

In the 1980s and early 1990s, the Continental branch of the Family of Love was given renewed attention, this time by Paul Valkema Blouw who researched the typography of Niclaes' works and the dealings of Niclaes with the various printers he set to work for the publication of his oeuvre²⁷. Valkema Blouw was the first to question seriously the earlier studies on Plantin's involvement in the Family. In 1994, another important study on the English branch of the movement came into print²⁸: the work of Christopher Marsh investigated the social background of Niclaes' followers in England and reconstructed yet unknown aspects of the organisation of the movement there, mainly from archival documents, such as the wills of those suspected of holding Familist beliefs. That the Family of Love and its main propagator Niclaes continue to attract interest is attested by Alastair Hamilton's as yet unpublished bibliography of Niclaes' oeuvre²⁹.

Although various aspects of the Family have been investigated³⁰, the main focus has been on the socio-cultural history of the movement in Western Europe. A major difficulty has been to find a point of entry into the Familists’ world. The various sources employed for the description of the Familist history should be treated with

³¹ Hamilton's latest work is an update of the bibliography produced in the 1940s by H. De La Fontaine Verwey; it also provides detailed summaries of the content of all of Niclaes' writings.
³² To give just some of the other aspects that received attention from modern scholars: Niclaes' conflicts with the reformed ministers in the Netherlands were studied by the chroniclers of Calvinism; Niclaes and his Family drew the attention of sociologists of religion, like Max Weber and Ernst Troeltsch, whereas the prophet's claims that his call was directed to the members of all denominations, and even heathens, were examined by historians of toleration. For this short list I am indebted to the draft version of Alastair Hamilton's still unpublished bibliography of the Family. I would like to thank Alastair Hamilton for letting me consult his work in manuscript.
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caution. The Familist chronicles, Niclaes’ spiritual biography, portray him and his movement in the most positive of terms, while the sources used for the reconstruction of the English Family are, on the whole, openly hostile. In the present thesis, a new angle for the study of the movement’s history will be developed. By concentrating on the actual writings of Niclaes and their English and Latin translations, I hope to arrive at new insights in the Family and a refinement of the existing descriptions of the movement.

b. Modern Research on the Familist Writings and Translations

A consequence of the earlier focus on the reconstruction of the history of the Family is that today there exists an imbalance in research on the movement. The writings and translations of Niclaes’ works, which obviously played an important part in the Family, have received comparatively little attention. Things were very different during Niclaes’ lifetime. From the sixteenth to the late seventeenth century, opponents of Niclaes’ beliefs, whether Catholic or Protestant, scrutinised the Familist works for expressions of Niclaes’ ‘monstrous and horrible heresies’, as the English Puritan John Knowstub called the Familist teachings\(^{31}\). What particularly shocked Niclaes’ opponents was the highly spiritualised style in which he expressed himself. John Rogers (1579b: sig. B2v) remarked on Niclaes’ writings that ‘there is no matter in the Author, that may bee drawn into argument, but … it

\(^{31}\) To name just a few of the other judgmental works that appeared on Niclaes and his Family in the sixteenth and the seventeenth centuries:


In England: Jessop, Edmond. (1623). *A Discovery of the Errors of the English Anabaptists. As also an Admonition to all such as are led by the like Spirit of Error*. London; Etherington, John. (1645). *A Brief Discovery of the Blasphemous Doctrine of Familisme, first conceived and brought forth into the World by one Henry Nicolas…* London; Bourne, Benjamin. (1646). *The Description and Confutation of Mystical Antichrist…* London; Rutherford, Samuel. (1648). *A Survey of the Spiritual Antichrist…* London. For this list I am again indebted to Hamilton’s still unpublished bibliography of the Family.
seemeth to be as a riddle, or darke speeche’. These early opinions on Niclaes’ works have, however, had a remarkable outcome today. Modern research has broadly accepted these earlier comments without revisiting the actual texts of Niclaes. Up until the late twentieth century, many scholars were content to repeat the, often judgemental, views on Niclaes’ style of writing, dating back to the sixteenth century. In the late 1960s, we find Julia G. Ebel (1966-67: 334) speaking about Niclaes’ writings as ‘incoherent raptures’ that are ‘hardly intelligible’.

It was only with the work of Nigel Smith in 1989 that the author Niclaes was for the first time seriously re-evaluated:


Smith carefully studied the rhetorical organisation of Niclaes’ works through their many metaphors, images and allegories. He recognised the highly sophisticated and well-planned nature of the Familist writings which, in all the prophet’s works, focuses on the relationship that, according to Niclaes, existed between his Family and God’s promises in the Bible. Smith’s studies led him to conclusions that were the complete reversal of the traditional earlier opinions. Smith (1989: 177) argued that ‘the rhetorical organisation of each work is elaborate so that it is easy to read and very clear’. The conscious and literary deliberation of Niclaes’ works he saw further testified in the fact that, as he phrased it (ibid.: 182):

"... even though his [i.e. Niclaes’] original visions might have been the result of genuine inspiration, he has rewritten them successively as their significance has changed and his sect has developed.

Referring here to Niclaes’ revision of his writings, Smith confronted the Family’s students with what many before him had failed to realise, i.e. that Niclaes was well aware of his two most important weapons, the written word and the printing press, and of their significance for the spread of his theology at every stage in the development of his movement."
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Although Smith’s investigations have been of major importance for the re-evaluation of Niclaes’ oeuvre, one drawback is that they are based on a wide selection of Niclaes’ writings and do not include sustained analyses of individual texts. As a result of Smith’s broadly-based approach, key aspects of Niclaes’ texts, like the marginal glosses to the Scriptures in which the prophet’s writings abound, were not described in detail. Moreover, Smith did not look into the first series of Niclaes’ writings. His investigations were all based on the revised texts which the prophet produced during the last period of his life.

C. Aims and Objectives of the Present Thesis

This thesis will build on the current research on the Family of Love and will address its weaknesses. Two main aspects need adjustment and further development. First, we need to find a new point of entry into the movement that allows us to reconsider the current descriptions of the history of the Family. Second, through detailed analysis of his œuvre, we need to develop further the picture modern research has built up of the writer which Niclaes supposedly was. How have I approached these two issues? The key texts in this study are the Low German Evangelium Regni and its translations in English and Latin:

_Evangelium Regni. Ein Frolicke Bodeschop vam Rycke, dorch den Hilligen Geist der Lieften Jesu Christi verkundiget, unde uth-gesandt an alle Natien der Volkeren, die de Waerheit in Jesu Christi lieven._

_Evangelium Regni. A Joyfull Message of the Kingdom, published by the Holie Spirit of the Love of Jesu Christ, and sent-fourth unto all Nations of People, which love the Trueth in Jesu Christ._

For the English translation, the quotations that I will present in this thesis are taken from the seventeenth-century reprint (1652), held in the British Library (shelf mark: E.1188.(5)). It was impossible to obtain a reproduction of the 1570s version (1574-75) of the work. Unlike the Low German reprint, the seventeenth-century English edition shows minor divergences from the first; the actual text has remained unchanged, but the spelling was modernised in the later edition and adaptations were made to the punctuation of the first version. I have decided to keep the seventeenth-century spelling in my quotations from the text to facilitate the reading, but to adapt the punctuation to that of the first edition for reasons that will become clear in Chapter V.
Evangelium seu Laetum Nuncium Regni, a Sacro Spiritu Charitatis Iesu Christ praedicatum, atque ad omnes Populorum Nationes, Veritatem in Iesu Christo amantes, missum.

The *Evangelium* was the Family's catechism and the early attackers of the movement eagerly resorted to it as the best expression of Niclaes' theology. The *Evangelium*'s success in setting out Niclaes' more 'heretical' views is attested by the fact that the work appeared on the Index of the year 1570, concerning books circulating in the Southern Netherlands (Bujanda 1988: 157). For John Rogers (1579b: sig. C7r), the very title of the text was proof of its insidious nature, for he wrote that 'the Booke of HN intituled Evangelium Regni, the Gospell of the Kingdome, which is a title that none of Gods children durst ever give unto any of their Bookes', while the Bishop of Rochester devoted a complete tract to its refutation.

Despite the attention the work attracted from the moment it appeared, only one modern study has been entirely devoted to the text:


Martin's work was definitely more innovative than the descriptions before him. He carefully analysed the content of the work and the different doctrines Niclaes conveyed in it, and showed that there was an intelligible coherence and sequence in the text which earlier students of Niclaes' writings had always denied. Nevertheless, his study was merely a description of the content of the *Evangelium Regni* and did

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33 Quotations from the Latin *Evangelium* are taken from the 1570s version (second edition; n.d.) of the text, held in Cambridge University Library (shelf mark: LE.20.137).
34 The tract *Notes upon the Booke entituled Evangelium Regni, gathered by the Reverend Father in Christ I.Y. Bishop of Rochester*, which consists of a dialogue between the Bishop of Rochester and the 'Famylie of Love', was added to William Wilkinson's (1579) printed confutation of the movement.
35 Martin (1972: 99) opened his study of the *Evangelium* with a conventional opinion on the work, expressed in 1903 by E. Belfort Bax who wrote that the text consists of 'nothing but a turgid mass of theological maundersings, which drone on page after page without apparently coming to any intelligible point, and out of which it is difficult to make any apparent doctrine'.

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not look far into the rhetorical organisation of the text. Furthermore, Martin still stuck to the view that the style of the work was ‘awkward’ (ibid.: 99).

Nigel Smith also paid attention to the *Evangelium Regni* in his study and established that the key to the work’s understanding lay exactly in its complex rhetoric (1989: 173-174). He pointed to the importance of the allegories in the text. The lack of clear reference between the literal and allegorical levels of Niclaes’ writings was an element already picked up by the sixteenth-century opponents of the Family in England (Rogers 1579b: sig. F4v; Knewstub 1579: fol. 82r), but, unlike Niclaes’ literary enemies who implied that this was the result of the prophet’s poor and confused mind, Smith showed that Niclaes had consciously created the work in that way (1989: 150). He also noted that behind the specific vocabulary - i.e. the keywords and key phrases - of the *Evangelium Regni* lay a well-planned organisation which he claimed to be closely interwoven with the complex messages of the text (ibid.: 174-178).

In this thesis, I will build on the work of Smith and offer a detailed discussion of the complex rhetoric of the *Evangelium* which addresses the work’s different layers in full. This type of study has never been conducted systematically before. In the first part of the thesis, I will analyse the text’s different key notions and marginal glosses to the Bible that support the narrative structure of the *Evangelium* on both the literal and the figurative levels, as well as the teachings Niclaes conveyed in it. I will also pay attention to the first edition of the *Evangelium*, a text that has not received scholarly attention before. These discussions will contribute to a reconsideration of Niclaes’ literary techniques; they are also prerequisites to considering the text in translation.

The second main part of this thesis studies the English and Latin translations of the *Evangelium Regni*. Since the translations of Niclaes’ works have never been

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36 Note that for the Latin translations of Niclaes’ works I will also look at the other renditions made in this language. Only four Latin translations of the Familist writings have survived, and a complete study was, therefore, far easier attainable than for the eighteen English translations we have today.
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studied in detail and have remained a marginal topic in current research on the Family, these comparisons initiate a new chapter in the writing history of the Family. More specifically, this study addresses the second major aim of my thesis, i.e. to reconsider and further develop current descriptions of the Familist history through detailed study of the movement's literary output. The philosophy behind this approach is that the Familist writings and their translations, in which Niclaes himself, as pointed out above, was to a certain degree involved, are the primary documents of the movement, and that their close reading, study and analysis can possibly lead to our understanding of aspects of the socio-cultural history of the Family which other sources employed in its reconstruction may not have given access to.

Although the current project was not initially conceived in the context of New Historical methodology, my approach is probably compatible with a New Historicist outlook. Behind the New Historicist theories lies the idea that, as Stephen Greenblatt (1980: 7) has phrased it, ‘for the sixteenth century art does not pretend to autonomy; the written word is self-consciously embedded in specific communities, life situations and structures of power’. According to New Historicists, texts of all kinds, not only literary texts but also travel writings, penal documents and anecdotes, play an active role in political, social and even religious formations, while being, at the same time, products of these formations. New Historicism, however, does not claim that every expressive act is simply a medium for the expression of historical knowledge, but it stresses the importance of literature as a constitutive part of the way a society or organisation orders, regulates and expresses itself (Brannigan 1998: 3-6). The translations of Niclaes’ writings were products of and functional components in the Familist organisation, and their close reading and analysis may tell us more about the historical and socio-cultural context behind their creation.

Although my emphasis on the rhetorical or textual organisation of Niclaes’ works and their translations follows from the study of Nigel Smith which I will continue in
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this thesis, analysing the rhetoric of written texts is also of major importance for the New Historicism. In the context of New Historicism, it is the student’s role to dismantle and study the rhetorical organisation of a work as an aim to maximise material or symbolic profit (Veeser 1989: xiv). In my analysis of Niclaes' Low German *Evangelium* I have paid much attention to the textual organisation of the work as a means of spreading the Family’s beliefs. In my study of the *Evangelium*’s translations, I have concentrated on comparing the textual organisation of the source text to that of its renditions and on interpreting the changes, if any, on this level within the historical and socio-cultural context of the period.

How have I conducted this study of the *Evangelium Regni*’s translations? My approach is broadly functionalist. It seeks to account for the findings which my comparisons and analyses have brought to light in terms of the presumed aims of the works, and to employ these results to further refine current descriptions of the Familist movement. The different steps I have followed during the actual application of this approach can be summed up as follows. I started by putting the original Low German *Evangelium* alongside its translated versions to compare the general presentations of the works. For this approach, I am indebted to J. Lambert and H. Van Gorp who developed a methodology which starts from an investigation of the contexts of individual texts and translations, including elements like layout (division in chapters or subchapters, meta-texts, etc). The second step consisted in cross-reading the original and its renditions and in tracing recurrent patterns in the translators’ choices. I developed a system of categories to describe the different and recurring patterns I found in the *Evangelium*’s renditions. The categories derive entirely from my analysis of the translations and not from any pre-established system developed in translation studies. The last and most difficult step was to interpret the patterns identified in the translations within their presumed aims and to compare my findings with the framework modern students have developed

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for the Familist movement. The results of these readings can be found in the different conclusions to each chapter on the Evangelium in translation and in the final conclusion to this thesis.

In short, the present thesis seeks to enhance existing reconstructions of the socio-cultural and literary history of the Family of Love in that it studies the movement through its most primary sources, i.e. the Familist writings themselves which have remained marginal in modern studies of the movement. It will re-assess the author Niclaes and the importance of the written word in the movement. The thesis breaks new ground in considering the first series of the Low German printings of Niclaes’ writings and in developing textual descriptions of the translations of Niclaes’ works, based on close comparisons with their originals. Lastly, my study illustrates the conscious employment of translations in the spread and consolidation of a religious movement, thus adding a chapter to the history of translation of religious and mystical texts in the Northern Renaissance.

D. Layout of the Thesis

Chapter I presents an outline of the movement’s history as described in the existing modern descriptions of the Family of Love. In my study of the Low German Evangelium and especially its translations, I will employ this framework to contextualise my analyses.

Likewise, Chapter II focuses on those aspects of the written tradition of the Familist movement that are relevant to my study of the Evangelium. I will discuss Niclaes’ theology and introduce his extensive oeuvre, with special attention to Nigel Smith’s discussions of Niclaes’ writings. Lastly, I will describe Niclaes’ ideas on the written word and printing press and their implications for the English communities in which his translations were received.
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In Chapter III, I will develop a new analysis of the complex content and rhetoric of the Low German *Evangelium Regni* - the source text of the Latin and English translations studied in the last two chapters of this thesis - through the text's key terminology and marginal glosses to the Bible. The second part of this chapter assesses the importance of the Scriptures in the *Evangelium* and tries to establish which versions of the Bible, Protestant or Catholic, Niclaes used in the work. This section is in preparation of my study of the text's translations in which I will consider how the translators of the *Evangelium* dealt with Niclaes' use of the Scriptures.

Chapter IV serves mainly as an introduction to my study of the *Evangelium*'s translations. It sets out the specific problems and research questions connected to my comparisons of the translations, and discusses in detail the methodology employed.

In Chapters V and VI, I will study first the English and then the Latin translations of the *Evangelium Regni*. The focus is on the description and comparison of the translations with their source text. I will first present the textual analyses of both renditions and then employ their results to reassess the current descriptions of the Familist movement.
Chapter I. Aspects of the History of the Family of Love

1. Introduction

In this first chapter, I will present a compact overview of the history of the Familist movement based on the traditional sources employed for its reconstruction; a framework, as I have explained in the Introduction, which we need for the study of the Familist writings later on in this thesis. To start, I will recapitulate the life of Hendrick Niclaes and the history of the Family on the Continent. Second, I will describe the spread of Niclaes' beliefs in England in the sixteenth and the seventeenth centuries. I have approached this description from the angle that, in my view, will best help us grasp the intricacy of the movement. For the Continental branch of the Family, it is necessary to understand the complex personality of its founder Hendrick Niclaes, while, for the English Family, we need to take a close look at its local leader Christopher Vittels, who also translated Niclaes' works into English.

Hendrick Niclaes was the 'prophet' of the Family of Love, 'God's elect' and 'last saviour of the world'. He was the author of all the major writings of the movement and of the Familist beliefs and doctrines. Niclaes took an active part in the spread of his beliefs on the European Continent and was always on the lookout for new followers. He was a highly successful man of business, who, despite his prophetic claims, had an undeniable feel for everyday situations and the spirit of his time. The peculiarities of Niclaes' person are not so much connected to his theological assertions - others before him, like David Joris, had developed similar

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38 I have based this description both on the contemporary accounts which have survived, like the Familist chronicles and the attacks of Niclaes' enemies, and the modern studies of the movement. Especially Alastair Hamilton's different descriptions of the movement (1981; and his as yet unpublished bibliography of Niclaes' works) have influenced this chapter.
ideas - but to the way business and religion went hand in hand in his life. This
complex entangling of finance and religion was not only present in Niclaes'
doctrines, but also characterised the relationships between the prophet and many of
his most important followers, besides influencing Niclaes' choice for the different
places where he resided, the commercial and religiously moderate centres of
Emden, Amsterdam and Cologne.

Christopher Vittels, the leader of the English branch of the Family of Love, was no
less a fascinating man, and the relationship between him and the movement’s
prophet must have been an interesting one. Vittels was the undisputed leader of the
Family in England in the 1570s, responsible for attracting the major part of the
movement’s adherents there. Vittels’ genius lay in his ability to interest lay people
in the religious beliefs he held and, then, to convert them to the Family of Love. He
had a history of heretical ideas - he even seems to have had his own following in the
1550s - before he became a ‘rising star’ in the Familist movement. In short, Vittels
knew the reality of English unorthodoxy. However, in the Familist movement, he
was not promoting his own beliefs but those of his prophet, and he was not the
author of the writings he spread but their ‘mere’ translator. Whether Vittels’
prominent personality influenced the shape of the translations he made for Niclaes
will thus be an element I will consider when studying the English version of the
Evangelium Regni. It is evident that the English Family would never have
flourished as it did without the intellect and charisma of Vittels, and many aspects
of the movement’s outlook, organisation and following, which at some points show
differences with the Continental Family, can only be fully understood if one is
conscious of the role and impact he had on the movement in England.

Max Weber’s (1905: 88) ambiguous remark on Niclaes - ‘God blesseth his trade’ - sums up it all
up.
2. Hendrick Niclaes, the Prophet of the Family of Love: a Life devoted to God’s Call

Hendrick Niclaes, or HN as he referred to himself in his writings, was born in mid-January in the year 1502; his place of birth is not specified in the Familist chronicles. It has been suggested that Niclaes was born and bred somewhere in the triangle between Utrecht, Emden and Cologne (Hamilton 1981: 24). Some English students of the Family are, however, more specific when it comes to defining Niclaes’ background (Fell-Smith 1917: 427; Williams 1962: 477; Martin 1972: 100) for they hold that Niclaes was born in the town of Münster. If this was indeed so, it is not surprising - considering the town’s violent Anabaptist episode of 1534-35 - that Niclaes would want to remain silent about his connection to the place.

Niclaes’ father was a prosperous merchant who traded in silk cloth and a devout Catholic. He seems to have wanted his son to follow him in his footsteps, both economic and religious. Indeed, Niclaes was to become a very successful merchant, but unlike his orthodox parents, even as early as the age of eight, the boy started to doubt and question the Catholic doctrines he was being taught (Hamilton 1981: 24-25). As the Chronika, the most elaborate of the Familist chronicles, relates, Niclaes was specifically interested in the role of Christ as the one who bestows grace unto man (Hamilton 1988: 11-19). It was around the same time that Niclaes had his earliest visions, which, as the prophet himself afterwards claimed, had answered his doubts about his belief and laid the basis for the later founding of the Family of Love (Hamilton 1981: 25).

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40 Taught by his father that Christ’s sufferings delivered man from original sin, the young Niclaes apparently claimed he could see no sign either that original sin had been amended or that the state of Righteousness prior to the Fall had been restored. God was, indeed, going to lead man back to the state he had before the Fall, the boy stated, but not through Christ’s death alone (Hamilton 1981: 24-25).

41 In the Chronika, a detailed account of Niclaes’ first vision can be read. In this visionary dream, ‘een seer groten Berch der hemelscher Schonheit’ grew around Niclaes, filling him with his glory, until the mountain and him became one single being. Niclaes’ incorporation into the mountain was explained by the Familist chronicles as his ‘Vorgodung’, i.e. his mystical incorporation in the Godhead, and as a reference to Niclaes’ role as the new prophet (Hamilton 1988: 19-20).
Out of fear of the reaction of those around him, Niclaes kept what God had shown to himself and continued to attend church services with unquestionable devotion. However, in 1521, the year of the Diet of Worms, Niclaes would venture upon his first unorthodox steps in the world of religion, for we know that he fell into the company of Lutherans around that time and probably maintained contact with them until he moved to Amsterdam in 1531 (Moss 1981: 11). While living in Amsterdam with his family, Niclaes got into serious trouble with the authorities. As the Chronika relates, he was arrested in 1532 on suspicion of heresy; no record of his interrogation has survived. Niclaes was interviewed by the Lord of Assendelft and the interrogator Reinier Brant in the Hague and cleared of any charge by the Court of Holland, after promising to avoid anyone suspected of heresy (Hamilton 1988: 28).

The next eight years Niclaes continued to live in Amsterdam unmolested by the authorities, while leading the comfortable life of a rich merchant. This quiet life abruptly came to an end in 1540 when Niclaes had a vision that induced him to found his Family of Love. He was told to take three Elders - Daniel, Elidad and Thomas - to help him in writing down 'God's testimonies' and to move to the 'Lande Pietas', apparently referring to Emden in East Frisia (ibid.: 30-33). God had revealed to Niclaes that the House of Israel was to be restored and that the Day of Judgment was at hand; it was now Niclaes' task to make this known to the world (Moss 1981: 11). This 'Lande Pietas', or the town of Emden, was conveniently the sort of place where the authorities were willing to ignore minor heresies in order to facilitate mercantile activities (Hamilton 1981: 31).

Niclaes' father and the Franciscan friars, the latter consulted to deal with the boy's religious doubts, had warned the young Niclaes that to have reservations about God's secrets deserved the harshest punishments (Hamilton 1981: 25).

The city of Amsterdam is the first certain geographical indication that the Chronika gives concerning Niclaes' whereabouts.

Niclaes had married at the age of twenty. The name of his wife remains unknown (De La Fontaine Verwey 1976: 228).

Who exactly Niclaes' Elders were we do not know; their identities are not revealed in the Chronika. In the reality of Niclaes' movement on the Continent, they were those who stood the closest to him and were his most loyal followers.
Accorded citizenship in 1542, Niclaes wrote his earliest works in Emden and gained his first followers there (De La Fontaine Verwey 1976: 228). As a successful merchant, Niclaes travelled continuously in Western Europe during the twenty years he lived in Emden. It is clear that his business trips went hand in hand with the spread of his doctrines, for Niclaes seems to have set up a network of contacts in the Netherlands, France, Germany and England of people, like-minded both in religion and business (Hamilton 1981: 33-34). For the creation of this particular network, Niclaes heavily relied on the support of his own children, whom he married into important families, scattered over the Netherlands and Germany (De La Fontaine Verwey 1954: 324).

Who were the people Niclaes and his teachings attracted? Traditionally, students of the Continental branch of the Family have made a distinction between Niclaes' Elders and 'humbler' followers, on the one hand, and the circle of humanists around the printer Christophe Plantin, on the other. Even though there are differences in the social status and background of those attracted to Niclaes during his Emden period, there seems to be one constant feature that connects most of those involved with Niclaes on the European Continent, i.e. money.

The first members Niclaes gained for his movement were former Anabaptists, often in financial difficulties, whom Niclaes set to work for the spread of his beliefs (Hamilton 1988: xii). Hendrick Jansen Van Barrefelt was one of the first members to be mentioned by name in the Chronika; he remained a faithful follower of Niclaes for some thirty years, after which time he defected to start his own movement, referring to himself as Hiel (Hamilton 1981: 40). A weaver by trade, Van Barrefelt became Niclaes' first agent and was entrusted with the distribution of

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46 Dirck V. Coornhert, who after Niclaes' death published several attacks on the Family, spoke about Niclaes' continuous travelling and proselytising in the Low Countries in the 1540s (1581: sig. A2r).
47 It should be noted that this section of Niclaes' adherents has been given much less attention in modern studies of the Family than the Familist humanists.
Chapter I

the prophet's works in Frisia, Holland, Overijssel and Brabant (Hamilton 1977: 254). He seems to have been the intermediary between Niclaes and Dirk Van den Borne of Deventer, the first printer of the Familist works. Niclaes, eager to exploit the potential of the printed word, had started searching for a suitable printer soon after moving to Emden. In Van den Borne he seems to have found the perfect candidate. His printing shop being in financial difficulties, Van den Borne was anything but unwilling to work for a rich businessman like Niclaes (De La Fontaine Verwey 1976: 229). Moreover, Van den Borne had already some experience in printing unorthodox tracts: he had been the printer of David Joris' main work, Twonder-boeck (Hamilton 1981: 20).

Another of Niclaes' early and close followers was Augustijn Van Hasselt, who was to play an important role in the printing of the prophet's works after Van den Borne's death. As the Chronika relates, Van Hasselt and his wife were living in great poverty in Groningen, after having taken part in the Anabaptist Munsterite movement. Niclaes decided to employ Van Hasselt and to use him for propaganda purposes: Van Hasselt was set to work with the next printer Niclaes involved for the production of his works, the famous Antwerp businessman and printer Christophe Plantin (Hamilton 1988: 44).

Indeed, Antwerp, the site of Plantin's main printing office, was a place frequently visited by Niclaes and his closest followers. The commercial importance of Antwerp at this time partly explains this. Moreover, Niclaes' eldest son, François, was running a branch of his father's business in Antwerp and so in a possibly favourable position to spread the Family's writings there (Hamilton 1981: 41, 43). Much controversy has surrounded Plantin's involvement in the Family. Plantin was depicted as a fully-fledged member of the Family of Love by his biographers and even as one of Niclaes' Elders. Today there appears to be a

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50 The work was printed by Van den Borne in 1542 (Hamilton 1981: 20).
consensus on the type of relationship that existed between Niclaes and Plantin: their affiliations seem to have been primarily of a commercial nature.

Plantin, who had set up a printing office in Antwerp in 1555, needed all the financial support he could get at the start of his business. In Niclaes he found an important investor. Niclaes had his most voluminous work *De Speghel der Gerechticheit* printed at Plantin's office in 1556, under the supervision of his emissary Augustijn Van Hasselt and at his own expense (Valkema Blouw 1993: 15-16). Plantin and Niclaes apparently liked working together, for on several occasions we find them involved in mutual commercial enterprises. When Niclaes, in the early 1560s, set up a press of his own in Kampen in order to print all of his writings which still remained in manuscript, he and Plantin, at the same time, used the Kampen press to publish Bibles so as to profit from the fast growing demand in the Netherlands for Scriptures in vernacular translations. Further evidence of their joint enterprises can be found in the only surviving letter between Niclaes and Plantin (1567), in which we find Niclaes involved as a financier in Plantin's production of Hebrew Bibles for Jewish communities in Morocco (ibid.: 7-8).

How then did the idea develop that Plantin and many of those around him were close adherents of Niclaes' beliefs? As we know from his correspondence, Plantin sympathised with a mystical faith that transcended the confessional conflicts and divisions of his time - ideas indeed all present in Niclaes' teachings - and it seems that many of those belonging to his circle, like the cartographer Abraham Ortelius, had a similar state of mind (Hamilton 1981: 65). After Hendrik Van Barrefelt broke with Niclaes in 1573, he started his own movement, which concentrated on a spiritual mysticism and not on his own person. The essential difference between Hiel and Niclaes consisted exactly in the amount of devotion to their own prophetic selves they demanded of their adherents. We know that Plantin and some of his

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51 Contrary to what has been suggested by the Familist chronicles and Plantin's early biographers, Plantin did not set up his printing shop with Niclaes' money (Valkema Blouw 1984b: 126).
52 Apart from *De Speghel der Gerechticheit*, another two short tracts of Niclaes were printed at Plantin's press in Antwerp (Valkema Blouw 1984a: 256).
circle were attracted to Hiel's teachings, that they read them and had them printed and even translated. But what attracted Plantin and those around him to Hiel was the broad mysticism Hiel promoted, which in his movement could exist without the development of a cult around his person (ibid.: 92-95). It cannot be construed from their later adherence to Hiel, which was considered a reason to assume that Plantin and many of his circle had earlier been members of the Family of Love, that they were also close followers of Niclaes' beliefs (Alastair Hamilton: personal communication). As has been suggested by Paul Valkema Blouw (1984b: 156), it seems that they could not accept the undisputed authority which Niclaes claimed for himself. If they read Niclaes' works, they probably concentrated on the spiritual and mystical sides of the Familist doctrines, without devoting too much attention to the personal claims of Niclaes.

But why then would Niclaes have chosen to invest in the businesses of Plantin? As in all the affiliations Niclaes had with those whom he supported financially, Niclaes never forgot to benefit from the power relationships he so created, and it seems that Niclaes had an interest in the many connections of the international printer and businessman Plantin. Plantin was a Frenchman, and we know that at least two of Niclaes' works were translated into French:


*Epistola XI. Correction et Exhortation d'une Affectueuse Charité...* (1580). Cologne.

As yet, it is difficult to pinpoint particular Familists in France, and the few modern studies on the topic consist mainly of suppositions. What seems certain however, is the role which international business and especially the book trade played for

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34 It has been suggested that ideas close to those of Plantin and his circle existed at the court of François d'Anjou, Henri III's brother (Yates 1975: 193-194), but this, of course, does not tell us whether there were actual 'followers' of Niclaes at the French royal court.
those connected with the Familist milieu in France (Maillard 1984: 237). Indeed, the *Chronika* openly states that Plantin distributed Niclaes' works among the financial elite of Paris (Hamilton 1988: 46). It is thus evident that Niclaes used Plantin's commercial connections with France to gain a new, more international market for his movement; an opportunity like that was certainly of far greater importance to Niclaes than the question whether Plantin truly adhered to all of Niclaes' beliefs or not.

While Niclaes' Emden period was the time he gained the majority of his followers on the European Continent, his rise also provoked hostility. These attacks on the Family of Love, which mainly came from Protestants, can be taken as evidence of the growing success of the movement. The first two attacks on the Family were launched by people with very similar ideas on religion as Niclaes himself. Both David Joris and Matthias Weyer reproached Niclaes for his claim to the knowledge of truth and for his infinite presumptuousness. Joris had addressed Niclaes as early as 1548, while Weyer wrote his attack some time before 1560 from Wesel. The fact that Weyer knew of Niclaes' works means that the Family's writings were circulating in Germany by that time and attracted attention there (Hamilton 1981: 21-22, 48-49). Weyer's attack on Niclaes is one of the only references we have to the Family of Love in Germany; German support for the Niclaes is unknown but seems certainly to have existed, because many of Niclaes' Low German works have survived in German libraries and one translation of Niclaes' works in High German has resurfaced (De La Fontaine Verwey: 1940-42: 164):

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55 Interest on the part of Niclaes in the French market dates back to the early 1560s, for we know from the *Chronika* that French editions of the Family's writings were being printed in Niclaes' office in Kampen (Hamilton 1988: 59).
56 As Alastair Hamilton (1981: 54) crisply suggests, there were far greater heresies to be confuted by the Catholic Church during the time the Family flourished.
57 Niclaes' claims were unacceptable to Joris the prophet since they jeopardised his monopoly (Hamilton 1981: 22).
58 For a list of Niclaes' works held in German libraries, see: De La Fontaine Verwey, H. (1940-42). 'De Geschriften van Hendrick Niclaes', *Het Boek* 26, pp. 189-207.
Chapter I

Die Erste Ermahnung Hendrick Nicolassen zu seinen Kinderen und dem Husgesind der Liebden Jesu Christi... (1580). Cologne.

The first Reformed criticism of Niclaes came from the Protestant pastor Adriaen de Kuiper in 1559 and focused on Niclaes’ claims to divine status. What further incensed the Protestants was Niclaes’ refusal to break away from the Church of Rome. Shortly afterwards, in 1560, Protestant resentment against Niclaes led to a public outburst during the marriage of one of Niclaes’ daughters. On the arrival of the bride and groom at the church, a Reformed Emden preacher, Gellius Faber, delivered a diatribe against Niclaes who in turn defended himself - according to the Chronika very adequately. Nevertheless, Niclaes seems to have seen this attack, rightly so, as the beginning of a dangerous and hostile period (Hamilton 1981: 50-52). Consequently, Niclaes left Emden for good the same year. His vulnerability had become apparent during the public outbreak against him; the authorities were closing down on him and his family who remained in Emden after Niclaes had left were briefly exposed to persecution^59 (ibid.: 52).

Not unexpectedly, in the Chronika, Niclaes’ escape from Emden is presented as the result of a new vision he received (Hamilton 1988: 59-60). Niclaes’ whereabouts after his flight are not altogether clear. It appears that he stayed for a while with Van Hasselt in Kampen who was printing Niclaes’ works there, and that he afterwards, sometime around 1565, moved to Rotterdam, another centre of trade, to live with one of his sons (Hamilton 1981: 53). However, his proselytising activities seem not to have decreased, and it is even suggested that Niclaes went to England for this purpose^60.

^59 The town council of Emden confiscated Niclaes’ goods, and soldiers were billeted in his house. During the episode, Niclaes’ wife died (Hamilton 1981: 52-53).
^60 The Chronika (Hamilton 1988: 66-67) relates that the Reformed pastor Nicolas Carinaeus, one of the Family’s critics in the Netherlands, went in 1562 to England in search of the prophet: ‘... manck welckere falsche Herten, wasser einer die wal de Nydigste was, genom et Nicolai Careneo: welcker uth dem Lande van Oist-frieslandt reisede, unde so hyr unde dahr, in vorscheidene Landen unde Steden, daer he HN meest vormoede te wesen, na HN vorforschede unde em allenthalven seer schendlick beloge, unde also daer-over seer rasede unde lasterde: unde wolde em also wal gerne, so he em hedde konnen forschin, an de Overicheit vorraden hebben ... is tom lestet, mit Torne synes Gemotes, in Engelandt gereiset.’. Although Carineus did write an attack on Niclaes, Alastair
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About the last period of Niclaes' life, which is of great importance for the study of Niclaes' works in translation, we are fortunately better informed. In about 1567, Niclaes received his last major series of visions. He was instructed to undertake another journey, this time to the 'hilligen Lande der Levendigen', together with twenty-four of his closest Elders, and there to review his writings (Hamilton 1988: 83). Thus, at the moment of the Duke of Alva's reprisals against the Protestants in the Netherlands, Niclaes left Holland and moved to Cologne, a city, conveniently enough, ruled by a tolerant council that protected the merchants living within its walls.

In accordance with Niclaes' visions, almost all the prophet's works were revised between 1568-1569 by Niclaes and his Elders and, subsequently, reprinted in the 1570s in Cologne. Furthermore, translations of Niclaes' works in High German, English, French and Latin also came off the Cologne press. The uniqueness of this enterprise cannot be overestimated; we are dealing with a large-scale propaganda exercise fuelled by a single source. The printing material for the revision of Niclaes' writings, again, came from Plantin who had sold the branch he held in Wesel to Niclaes in 156961 (Valkema Blouw 1993: 17-18).

The *Chronika* is seemingly clear about the reasons for this enormous and undoubtedly costly enterprise: Niclaes' enemies had used his writings merely to cause damage, but after their revision they would no longer understand them, only the 'Goedtwillige' believers would62. In the *Chronika* the divine orders Niclaes claimed to have received are phrased as follows (Hamilton 1988: 83):

Aldaer in demsulven Lande der Levendigen, salstu desulve Getugenissen dyner Schriften, dorch idt Licht myner Wyseheit, mith de vorbenomden

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61 Plantin was anything but unhappy about the sale of his Wesel branch. Not only had a considerable stagnation occurred in the domestic book trade, the Wesel press had been used to print unorthodox material and Plantin was eager to erase all heretical evidence against him and to work on the, Spanish subsidised, Polyglot Bible (Valkema Blouw 1993: 17-18).

62 We find the same idea with David Joris. He too developed a 'spiritual language' for his writings which could only be understood by the 'enlightened' elite (Waite 1990: 166).
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The reality was, not unexpectedly, more complex. As I have pointed out in the Introduction, by the time Niclaes arrived in Cologne, he had developed a new organisation for the largely mystical and spiritual movement which the Family of Love was primarily. The most important modification lay in the autocratic demands of devotion to himself which Niclaes now made. The writings composed by Niclaes in Cologne - like the Ordo Sacerdotis which I will describe in full in the next section - and the Familist chronicles all confirm Niclaes' exalted status as a prophet of the rank of Moses (ibid.: xvi). As we know from Coornhert, in around 1573, this led to a rift between Niclaes and some of his earliest followers who could not accept the new position Niclaes claimed for himself. Van Barrefelt broke with Niclaes and started his own movement, while Van Hasselt, who Niclaes had set to work in Cologne on the reprinting of his writings, left Niclaes to join Hiël. Many followed their example; only a few of Niclaes' closest Elders seem to have stayed completely loyal to their prophet until his death in or around 1580 (Hamilton 1981: 83-84).

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63 In his attack on Niclaes, Coornhert (1581: sig. H4v) described in detail the rift in the Family: he recorded the account Van Barrefelt had given him of the latter's clash with Niclaes and emphasised the doctrinal disagreements of the two men. Coornhert appears to have first met Niclaes in 1546 and they formed what seems to have been a close friendship. Niclaes called on him during his various business trips from Emden to Antwerp, and showed him some of his writings in manuscript. Although Coornhert was not totally convinced by them, the two men seem to have stayed on friendly terms. Then, Coornhert got to know Barrefelt who told him about his quarrel with Niclaes. But the most important reason for Coornhert to turn against Niclaes seems to have followed from an encounter between Coornhert and one of Niclaes' followers who claimed that he was God; this event seems to have shown Coornhert the absurdity to which Niclaes' doctrines could lead, and, in following, he published several attacks on the Family (Hamilton 1981: 103).

64 It is unclear who continued printing in Cologne after Van Hasselt's death. Some of Niclaes' writings printed between 1574 and 1580 bear the address of a certain Niclas Bohmbarghen. However, there is still no certainty as to who this person was (De la Fontaine Verwey 1940-42: 241).

65 No consensus yet exists about the survival of Niclaesism in the Netherlands after the death of the prophet, although there is very little evidence to assume that it did. Of course, the ideas of the spiritual tradition which Niclaes promoted would continue to live on - one of the centres where it certainly did was Leiden in Holland (Van Dorsten 1961: 64-65).
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The Familist chronicles, which also spoke about those who fell away from Niclaes in the early 1570s, painted a very different picture. The *Chronika* blamed the rift in the Family entirely on the ingratitude and financial dishonesty of Niclaes' followers who had merely abused the prophet's generosity. The theological differences, to which Coornhert and Van Barrefelt had ascribed the breach, were not mentioned by the Familist chronicles (Hamilton 1988: 185-205).

The propaganda machine set to work by Niclaes in Cologne, and especially the rather extensive production of the Family's works in translation, thus appears in another light. The decision to look for new adherents abroad would again demonstrate Niclaes' practical genius, as is attested by the Family of Love in England.

3. Christopher Vittels, the Highest Elder of the Family of Love in England. An Itinerant Preacher in the Sixteenth Century

When exactly Niclaes' doctrines were brought to England is uncertain; the generally accepted view is that they reached England during the reign of Queen Mary⁶⁶ (Hamilton 1981: 115). The man who allegedly played a role in their introduction, the joiner Christopher Vittels⁶⁷, was to become the most important propagator of Niclaes' beliefs in England in the 1570s and to translate the majority of Niclaes' work into English. Nevertheless, determining the exact role Vittels played in the history of the English branch of the Family of Love is not easy, for he left no spiritual biography and seems to have stayed out of all court or other public records (Martin 1989: 205). Of Vittels' life unsettlingly little is known: we have no

⁶⁶ Evidence that Niclaes' beliefs attracted attention in England at the time can be found in a letter Niclaes wrote (somewhere between 1553 and 1558) to two 'Maydens of Warffike', whom he addressed as adherents of the Family. The letter, which survived only in manuscript, was edited by Alastair Hamilton in a modern edition in 1980: 'Three Epistles by Hendrik Niclaes', *Quaerendo* 10, pp. 58-64.

⁶⁷ The English attackers of the Family spell his name variously as Vittels, Vittel or Vitel.
date, nor place of birth or death. Vittels seems to have been very careful not to attract the authorities’ attention, and even before the major literary attacks on the Family in the 1570s, which certainly must have increased Vittels’ secrecy, the Family’s critic John Rogers complained that he could not retrace Vittels’ whereabouts for that period (Moss 1981: 28).

It is not known where Christopher Vittels came from. In view of his ability to translate Niclaes’ works, the question arises whether Vittels might have been of Dutch or German origin. This question seems fairly simple to answer. If Vittels had been of foreign origin, his nationality would have been an element immediately picked upon by the English critics of the Family who seem to have used every scrap of information they could get their hands on to disgrace the Familists. But the Family’s opponents do not stigmatise Vittels as a foreigner: William Wilkinson (1579: sig. *3r) claimed that Vittels brought his beliefs from ‘Dutchland’ into England, but he did not say that Vittels was actually born there.

The first glimpse we get of Vittels’ ideas on religion is through a confession written by Henry Orinell, an inhabitant of the village of Willingham in Cambridgeshire, and reproduced in the late 1570s in William Wilkinson’s attack on the Family (Hamilton 1981: 115). Orinell had allegedly encountered Vittels in a Colchester inn in 1555, where a heated debate between Vittels and a militant preacher of the Gospel, John Barry, was taking place (Heal 1972: 215). The public present were a mixture of local lay people: servants, husbandmen and women all seem to have been fascinated by the theological issues, discussed by Vittels and Barry (Spufford 1974: 247). The ideas Vittels supposedly expressed were an interesting mixture of Anabaptist, Arian and Familist beliefs. Vittels had claimed that ‘children ought not to be baptised, until they come to the yeares of discretion’, and had held the Arian views that Christ was not the Son of God and that the godly

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68 The fact that Niclaes was not English was looked upon with disdain by the critics of the English Family (Rogers 1579a: sig. D7v; 1579b: sig. A6r).
69 Even though John Rogers (1579a: sig. E8v) sneered that Vittels’ actions in bringing the Familist doctrines ‘to our countrye, and translating the booke … was not done lyke … a true English harted man’.
do not sin. The idea Vittels possibly borrowed from Niclaes was his assertion that
the Pope was not the Antichrist but was to be identified with all the ungodly. But
most interesting is Orinell's claim that Vittels praised 'a great and learned
schoolmaster ... who lived beyond the seas an holy life and an upright
correspondence'. It was only afterwards that Orinell realised Vittels had been talking
about 'one Henry Nicholas'. Orinell further recounted how Vittels, 'wendring
uppe and downe the Countrey (to visite his disciple)', had shortly after their
meeting in the inn sent for him 'to speake with hym at an Alehouse' to further
discuss religious matters; an offer which Orinell claimed he declined (Wilkinson
1579: sig. *3v-4r).

Vittels is portrayed in the episode as an itinerant preacher: a man who travelled the
English countryside discussing theological issues with those whom he met on his
ways. What Vittels taught at this point can at best be described as an adulterated
form of Familism. Indeed on the whole, it would seem that Vittels' knowledge of
Niclaes' beliefs in the 1550s was still limited and superficial, and we know that
shortly after Queen Elizabeth's accession to the throne Vittels was forced to recant
at Paul's Cross not as a Familist but as an Arian (Hamilton 1981: 116). As Rogers
(1579b: sig. D3r) sarcastically stated, Vittels had been an Arian in the 1550s but
had then gone 'a malo in peius', referring to Vittels' later involvement in the Family
of Love. The religious inconstancy of Vittels was an element frequently snorted at
by his enemies.

Another piece of potential evidence of Familist activity in England dates from
1561 and was reproduced by John Rogers in 1579. In a confession to William

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70 Although Vittels may have well been referring to David Joris or someone else.
71 For further discussions on the issue, see: Martin, J.W. (1979). 'Christopher Vitel: an Elizabethan
72 Vittels indeed admitted his recantation but, according to John Rogers (1579a: sig. C2r), claimed he
had done so voluntarily for he had felt his earlier life to have been a mistake: '... so have I [i.e.
Vittels] humbled my selfe before the Lord and his Minister HN as the greatest sinner among sinners,
desiring the Lord that he ... woulde ... forgive me all my offences...'.
73 John Rogers (ibid.: sig. K3r) summed Vittels' life up as follows: '... in King Henrye's raigne ... unconstant, in King Edwardes raigne, a dissembler, and in Queene Maryes raigne, a playne Arryan, and now ... a chiefe teacher of the Famlye of Love.'

42
More, the justice of the peace in Surrey, two men, Thomas Chaundler, a clothier from Wonersh, and Robert Strete, a clerk from Dunsfeld, gave an account of their beliefs which Rogers eagerly used to attack and discredit the Familists (Hamilton 1981: 117). The accounts of these two men should be treated with the necessary caution for, according to Rogers himself (1579a: sig. K1v-K2r), Vittels later maintained that Chaundler and Strete were not acquainted with Niclaes’ doctrines.

The two men claimed to belong to a community with branches in southern and eastern England, indeed, the places where Familist ideas in the 1570s were to strike root. But even though they named ‘Henrycke a Dutchman’ as the head of their congregation (Rogers 1579b: sig. H3v-H4r), they, like Vittels a few years earlier, held ideas which differed substantially from Niclaes’ doctrines. Both denied the Trinity and that Christ was equal to God, and they held the belief that nobody should be baptised before the age of thirty. They believed the Arian tenet that ‘all thynges are ruled by nature’ and stated that heaven and hell are in this life (ibid.: sig. H7r-H7v). They opposed the bearing of weapons and defended the necessity to marry within the community (ibid.: sig. H6r). Together with their attitude towards baptism, these beliefs aligned them with Anabaptism rather than with Niclaesism. However, they made an interesting remark on Niclaes’ whereabouts, stating that he is ‘permanent in no place, but styll wandryth to vysytte his flock’ (ibid.: sig. H3v-H4r), possibly referring to a visit Niclaes paid to England after his flight from Emden - an element which I will discuss in more detail later on in this thesis. But even if Niclaes had indeed been in England to visit his followers there, what Chaundler and Strete knew about Familism seems to have been based more on hearsay than on first-hand acquaintance with Niclaes’ writings (Hamilton 1981: 119); this was to change significantly in the 1570s.

74 Vittels, indeed, claimed that Chaundler and Strete knew nothing of Niclaes’ doctrines, but added the curious phrase ‘what they were, that is that’ (Rogers 1579a: sig. K1v-K2r). Maybe this was an admission that even though the two men did not fully understand Niclaes’ doctrines, just as Vittels himself in the 1550s, they were Familists, maybe because it had even been Vittels himself who had taught them this tainted version of Familism (Moss 1981: 27).

The importance of the arrival of the English translations of Niclaes’ works in the early 1570s cannot be overestimated. Especially knowledge of Niclaes’ teachings, but also belief in and obedience to his person was to become much stronger. Before the arrival of Niclaes’ works, Familists in the parish of Balsham were prepared to disown some of their beliefs in order to evade serious prosecution; by 1580, brought before the authorities again, several of the same men preferred the prospect of prison to that of dissembling their faith anew (Marsh 1994: 79-80). Together with the arrival of Niclaes’ works, Vittels emerged as the major figure in English Familism, not least because he himself had been responsible for translating the prophet’s works into English. It is difficult to say how exactly Vittels attained the close relationship with Niclaes that made him the English translator of the Familist writings. J.W. Martin (1989: 209) provided a highly probable explanation. He suggested that Vittels spent many years between 1559 and 1574 on the Continent as a textile merchant, giving him ready access to Niclaes, himself a dealer in textiles. Martin based this suggestion on the London port record of 1568 in which reference is made to a textile merchant with the name Christopher Vittels who traded with the Netherlands. The role Vittels played in the English Family throughout the 1570s was a constant theme in the works of his critics. Rogers called Vittels the ‘oldest Elder’ of the English Family (1579b: sig. D3v) and the ‘onely man, that hath brought this wicked doctrine of HN, which lay hidden in the Dutch tongue, among our simple English people’ (1579a: sig. K2r). Wilkinson (1579: sig. O2v) agreed with Rogers that Vittels was the undisputed leader of the Familist movement in England and plainly called Vittels Niclaes’ ‘heyre’. Indeed, it was Vittels with whom the English critics stood in heated correspondence; Rogers even published the replies Vittels composed in answer to Rogers’ attacks on the Family of Love.\footnote{Rogers’ An Answere unto an Infamous Libel was stimulated by Vittels’ reply to Rogers’ initial attack on the Family, The Displaying of an Horrible Secte.}

At the same time, the arrival of Niclaes’ translations in England also aroused the attention of the authorities and led to serious investigation of the movement. The
first systematic series of confessions were being taken from 1574 onwards\(^77\) and the major literary attacks on the Family commenced in the mid-1570s. This period of heightened hostile interest in the Family affords us, ironically enough, detailed insights into the shape the movement took after the influx of Niclaes' works in translation and the major proselytising activities of Vittels.

It seems that the first English followers of Niclaes were to be found in East Anglia, an area where all heresy in the sixteenth century is best documented and, perhaps not unimportantly, the place where many textile merchants and workers from Holland resided (Ebel 1966-67: 337). From there, Familist ideas seem to have spread to Cambridgeshire and its surroundings, to Devon, Surrey, and even the royal court\(^78\) (Marsh 1994: 7). It is, however, very difficult to reach any reliable conclusion as to the numerical strength of the English Family. Rogers (1579b: sig. B7r) claimed that 'there are in England, at the least 1000 in divers partes of this realm', while Wilkinson (1579: sig. *3v) vaguely stated that 'the encrease of the familie is great, and that dayly'. The number suggested by Rogers seems to have been exaggerated, undoubtedly to make his mission as one of the Family's critic more impressive and important. It is more likely that the English branch of the Family was a small but close-knit group of individuals and families\(^79\), and that sixteenth-century anxieties over its existence were disproportionate to the group's actual strength and impact (Poole 2000: 79).

The spread and consequent consolidation of the Family in the 1570s needs to be ascribed almost completely to Christopher Vittels and a few other Elders of the

\(^77\) Nine confessions were extracted from alleged members of the Family during the reign of Elizabeth I (Marsh 1994: 34).
\(^78\) Supposed members of the Family of Love at the court of Elizabeth I were five Yeomen of the Guard, one of the Keepers of the Royal Armoury at East Greenwich, one or both of the Yeomen of the Jewel House, and one of the Gentlemen Pensioners (ibid.: 116).
\(^79\) In one of the strongholds of the movement, the Diocese of Ely, there were about sixty Familists (Heal 1972: 221).
movement, who continually travelled the English countryside to spread Niclaes' beliefs. Wilkinson (1579: sig. K2v) complained about the Elders' proselytising activities and their endless travelling, saying that they 'using such a romyng kynde of Traffique, keepe not commonly any one certaine abidyng place'. Many of the Family's Elders seem to have been merchants who wandered the country following existing trading networks (Marsh 1994: 7); indeed, William Wilkinson (1579: sig. K2v) referred to the movement's Elders as traders, claiming that 'where they dwell they have gotten licences to trade for Corne'. Vittels and his Elders were in charge of the book distribution and, equally important, selecting new groups of people that were to be introduced to Niclaes' ideas (Marsh 1994: 88). It was especially in rural parishes that Vittels looked for new followers. He approached those with an interest in unorthodox views and who searched for spiritual sustenance, while wanting to live peacefully in their parishes. The Familist confessions, to which I will refer in more detail in the next chapter, are characterised by a quiet mysticism and a striving for inward, spiritual transformation (ibid.: 41, 64). Vittels seems to have had a keen eye for those people whom he thought most likely to be receptive to Niclaes' doctrines; this is not at all surprising if we consider the experience he undoubtedly had gained while discussing religious matters with ordinary people earlier in his life. According to Wilkinson (1579: sig. *3v-4r), Vittels was so shrewd as to note the names of the people he met during his tours of inns and alehouses, so that they later could be approached on a more personal level and introduced to Niclaes' beliefs.

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80 Some of the Elders of the English Family are known by name: John Bourne, a glover, was the local leader of the Wisbech community and also Thomas Allen, a mercer, and David Oram, a joiner, were Elders (Hamilton 1981: 118).

81 The fact that the Family in England was mainly a rural lay movement largely depended on Vittels and his Elders who spread Niclaes' beliefs among these sections of society.

82 Marsh (1994: 64) also claimed that some Familists had more orthodox roots. Henry Barnard and Thomas Hockley from Horningsea in Cambridgeshire, who were closely linked with known Familists, were both Catholic. A similar case was Robert Turtleby of Famsiford who was accused of belonging to the Family in 1582. Coming from a Catholic family, Turtleby adopted Familism but stayed faithful to his earlier inclinations, and was eventually excommunicated in Elizabeth's reign for failing to attend the services of the established church (ibid.: 65).
One of these typical rural villages, visited by Vittels and his Elders, was Balsham in Cambridgeshire. Based upon the wills and tax rolls of those who in 1574 were forced as suspected Familsts to write a confession of their faith, Christopher Marsh (1994: 195-207) concluded that in Balsham adherents of the Family were among the wealthier members of the community. From the tax rolls of 1563, Marsh (1986: 200) deduced that of the twenty people taxed, ten were later connected with the Family of Love. That those who adhered the Family were wealthy was a complaint often phrased by the Familist critics: Wilkinson (1579: sig. *4v) ridiculed the Family's Elders as 'shamelesse dogges thrusting themselves (for a fatter soppe) into the houses of greath wealth' and claimed that Vittels was 'of a wealthy occupation' (ibid.: sig. K2v). Marsh (1994: 197) further revealed that the Balsham Familists formed no isolated group. They were deeply involved in local religious life and even held parochial offices. Significantly too, they came from families which were interrelated. Of the ten people taxed in 1563, nine were closely related and had for decades associated with one another because of their shared unorthodox religious convictions, which they, in the 1570s, combined with and adapted to Familism. Similar accounts of a close-knit and family-based movement can be found for other villages where Familists lived, like the parishes of

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83 On 13 December 1574, Robert Sharpe, a parson from Strethall in Essex, together with six men from Cambridgeshire - Thomas Lawrence, William Lawrence, John Taylor, Thomas Disse, Edmund Rule and Bartholomew Tassell - appeared before Andrew Perne, the Puritan master of Peterhouse, Dean of Ely and parson of Balsham, to sign a confession of their faith (Hamilton 1981: 120).

84 E.g. Thomas and William Lawrence were prosperous tenant farmers (ibid.: 121).

85 Although, on other occasions in their work, these same critics would, with the same ease, claim the reverse: Wilkinson (1579: sig. K2v) stated that the Familists were but poor 'Weavers ... Basketmakers ... Musitians and ... Botlemakers'.

86 The fact that the Familists did not consider themselves as an isolated group is attested by their concern for the poor. In their wills they often ordered for a part of their heritage to be distributed among the local poor, whether they be Familists or not (Marsh 1986: 205).

87 John Taylor, who signed the 1574 confession and was arrested in 1580 for his Familist beliefs, was one of the two church officers of Balsham in 1573 (ibid.: 204).

88 As Marsh (1994: 30) noted from the organisation of the Family of Love in Balsham and other parishes, many of the characteristics of the Familist social organisation had precedents in the activities of the Lollards who were often bound together within a locality by kinship and trading interests.

Wisbech and Shudy Camps, and the similarities in tenets\textsuperscript{89} given by those prosecuted in the 1570s point to the existence of enduring ties and connections between the Familist parishes in England (ibid.: 202-203).

The 1570s were a decade of expansion for the English Family, but the hostile attention the movement attracted because of it was, at the same time, the beginning of its decline. Prosecution by the local authorities led to Queen Elizabeth's official proclamation of 1580, which outlawed the Family of Love, called for these 'dangerous heretiks and sectaries to be severely punished'\textsuperscript{90}, and warned against its dangers for the stability of the realm (Hughes/Larkin 1969: vol. 2; 474). The consequences of this campaign were a series of arrests and interrogations in 1579 and 1580 throughout the South, East and West of England\textsuperscript{91}. The greatest number of interrogations seems to have taken place in London and East Anglia (Hamilton 1981: 130). This all led the Familists, who were already not eager to attract too much attention, to turn even more into themselves and, practically, to become invisible to the historian's eye. As a result, we hardly have any information as to what happened to the second and later generations of Familists that followed those of the 1570s. Nonetheless, it seems that Familist ideas continued to live on and that many of those forced to recant or imprisoned in the 1570s and 1580s stuck to their beliefs. The evangelising activities of Vittels and the Elders of the Family, however, came to an end and the Familist ideas were now predominantly passed on within the domestic setting (Marsh 1994: 142-144).

The most important evidence that Familism survived throughout the whole of the sixteenth century brings us, once again, to a very short, period of hostile attention to the movement. Attacked by James I in 1603, the Familists reappeared united and

\textsuperscript{89} Instead of summing up here the beliefs held by English adherents of the Family in the 1570s, I will set them out in detail in the next chapter in my discussions of the Familist theology.

\textsuperscript{90} Strangely enough, bills for punishing the members of the Family were presented in the Commons in February 1581 but did not pass (Hamilton 1981: 130).

\textsuperscript{91} E.g. at court Robert and Thomas Seale, two Yeomen of the Guard, were incarcerated in London. At Balsham, four of the men who had confessed their faith in 1574 - Thomas and William Lawrence, John Taylor and Edmund Rule - were arrested. Five men were apprehended in Shudy Camps, two women in Barrow. Some of them remained in prison until the end of 1582 (ibid.: 130).
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defended themselves against the King (Moss 1981: 131). What happened to the Familists later in the seventeenth century is not yet altogether clear, although it is certain that the mystical beliefs of Niclaes survived and saw a spectacular revival during the Civil Wars and in the Interregnum, as is attested by the reprinting in London of several of Niclaes’ works, in both Low German and English. It seems probable that this reprinting was instigated by those culturally distinct men and women who appreciated the Familist writings in the same ways as the other ‘spiritual’ authors they read, and that we can, therefore, no longer speak at this time of a ‘Familist movement’. Finally, Niclaes’ beliefs seem to have intrigued many of those later connected to the Quaker movement, like James Nayler who was actually accused of holding Familist beliefs, and the two movements were often attacked together in the late seventeenth century. However, establishing direct connections between them has remained difficult (Hamilton 1981: 139).

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92 In the 1603 edition of James I’s Basilikon Doron, the King equated Puritanism with the Family of Love. He further identified the Familists with the Anabaptists (ibid.: 131). In reaction, the Familists addressed a petition to the King in which they defended their beliefs. The work, A Supplication of the Family of Love, was anonymously published in 1606 (Moss 1981: 54).


94 At the time, English readers were much more acquainted with Dutch and German than they are today (De La Fontaine Verwey 1940-42: 187).

95 The Cambridge Platonist Henry More wrote several attacks on Quakerism in which he also refuted Niclaes’ beliefs at length (Hamilton 1981: 139).
Chapter II. Aspects of the Written Tradition of the Family of Love

1. Introduction

In this second chapter, I will set out different aspects of the written tradition of the Familist movement; many of the issues touched upon here will serve as frames of reference to the discussions in the following chapters. As in Chapter I, I will concentrate on those issues that are relevant for my study of the different versions of the Evangelium Regni.

The first section concentrates on the theological content of Niclaes' works. I will discuss the main features of Niclaes' theology which form the core of almost every one of his writings: the ideas he held on Christian history, Baptism and Resurrection, sacraments and ceremonies, and Nicodemism. We need this basic framework of Niclaes' doctrines for my discussions in the next chapter, where I will present the particular content and rhetoric of the text of the Evangelium Regni and will go more into the details of Niclaes' beliefs. The last part of this section deals with the complex organisation which Niclaes devised for his Family of Love at the end of his life in the Ordo Sacerdottis. This was the time when the majority of the translations of his works were printed.

The text of the Evangelium Regni finds its first serious introduction here, for I will employ it to illustrate many aspects of Niclaes' thinking in this chapter. Furthermore, my aim is to put Niclaes' beliefs and doctrines in a somewhat broader context by referring to those before him who developed similar ideas and on whom he might have depended for the development of his theology. I will also exemplify

those aspects of Niclaes' teachings that were adopted by the English Familists of the 1570s, by letting the followers of the movement there speak directly to us through the recantations and confessions that have survived. In this way, we will get an idea of the specific doctrines the English Familists held, when after the arrival of Niclaes' works in translation the movement saw its most flourishing period. Later on in this thesis, I will study how Niclaes' beliefs were presented to these people in the translations of the prophet's writings.

In the second part of this chapter, I will set out some of the main characteristics of Niclaes' style with reference to the innovative study of Nigel Smith. Besides a sense of Niclaes' manner of writing, this discussion will give us an idea of the particular task Niclaes' translators faced. In this discussion, I will include the reaction of the contemporary attackers of the Family of Love to Niclaes' writings in order to clarify where the origins of the later negative comments on Niclaes' oeuvre lie.

The main focus of this section is the role and importance of the Bible in Niclaes' oeuvre. The rhetoric, i.e. the textual organisation, of the Family's works cannot be understood if one is not aware of the complex relationship that existed between Niclaes' writings and the text of the Scriptures. Moreover, the Bible, as we will later see in more detail, is one of the keys to understanding the text of the Evangelium Regni, and in my analyses of the Evangelium's renditions I will focus on how the translators dealt with the prophet's particular relationship with the Scriptures.

The last section of this chapter describes the role the printed translations of Niclaes' writings played in the rural English societies where the majority of the Family's adherents lived. First, I will discuss the highly developed ideas Niclaes had on the power of the written word and the printing press, besides pointing out the importance of print for the religious changes which took place in the sixteenth century. Then, I will look into the implications of Niclaes' faith in the printed word.
for the Familists in England and how the translations of his works came to function within the movement's organisation there.

This discussion will give me the opportunity to make inferences about the levels of learning and literacy of the English readers of Niclaes’ works. The importance this has for the study of the English translation of the *Evangelium Regni* does not need to be spelt out. Furthermore, the way Niclaes’ texts functioned within the English Family affords us further glimpses of its organisation and working, and provides some of the necessary background to later contextualise my results of the translations’ analyses.

2. The Theology of Hendrick Niclaes

I have set out the basic framework of Niclaes’ theology in the Introduction to this thesis. Let us now look at his doctrines more in detail. Niclaes’ beliefs on Baptism came far closer to adult Baptism as a sign of spiritual regeneration than to the infant Baptism of the Catholic and Reformed churches, since it did not precede but came after introduction to the ‘Service of Love’ - one of the many names Niclaes gave to his movement (Hamilton 1981: 35). The first step a newly introduced member was to take lay in complete obedience to the Service of Love, and in awareness of sin and sorrow for sin. The cleansing of sin, the second step, was to be obtained by ‘imitating Christ’; an element Niclaes most probably borrowed from Thomas à Kempis’ *De Imitatione Christi*. As Niclaes phrased it in the *Evangelium* (sig. G3v):

... dorch den Offer Christi, unde synen Dodt des Cruczes, unde Em int Hillige daer-inne ane-tho-folgen, erlangen wy de ewige Vorgevinge unde Reininge der Sunden...

The English Familist Leonard Romsey summarised the process like this: ‘... every man ... must be crucified upon the crosse and so to bury what so ever is contrary

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97 Studying the functioning of Niclaes’ writings in the Continental branch of the Family would be impossible because of the lack of relevant information.
to the gracious word of the love.’ (Moss 1978: 191). The process of Baptism or regeneration was the process by which man became ‘Godedd’ or incorporated in the godly being - the final step in which the believer attained ‘full perfection’ - and which was exemplified by the divinisation of Jesus Christ. True membership of the Family of Love could only be obtained if the believer had held ‘de Over-gangk mit Christo’ until he became ‘in synem Dode gedopet’, ‘im Geiste vornyet’, ‘in Christi gehilliget’ and ‘mit Gode vorgodet’ and reached ‘idt ewige Leven’ (sig. H3r-H3v).

In being ‘Godedd with God’ or ‘vorgodet’, man’s individual will would immerse itself with that of God, and he would be able to personally perceive God’s Law. In everyday terms, the result of this complex process meant for the Familist that ‘perfection’ could be attained in this life (Hamilton 1981: 35).

The belief in the possibility of God descending into man was not new. It is likely that Niclaes borrowed it from the Theologia Germanica. With the termination of the Old Law, God descended into man in the figure of Christ and thereby ‘deified’ man. What was first symbolised by Christ, however, continued, according to Niclaes and the Theologia Germanica, to take place thereafter. It is God’s descent into man that is meant by the word ‘Vorgodung’ (ibid.: 8-9).

Niclaes claimed that all those baptised in the Family of Love would thereby belong to the ‘Kingdom of God’. Whether this was an actual kingdom on earth or a

98 Romney’s voluntary confession is transcribed in its entirety in the same work (see: pp. 190-191).
99 The implications of the Familists’ belief that perfectionism could be attained in this life were associated by the movement’s critics with carnal forms of transgression. ‘Familism’ became a synonym of sexual promiscuity in the English polemic and satiric literature of the late sixteenth century: believing themselves to be free from sin, the Familists, according to their critics, licensed themselves to commit all manner of sexual sins. The Family was believed to endorse ‘free love’, practising group sex and sanctioning incest (Poole 2000: 76-77). That there were no actual proofs for such behaviour by followers of the movement seems not to have mattered.
100 As in the case of Niclaes’ teachings, the conditions to attain ‘Vorgodung’ were rigorous in the Theologia Germanica. The work sets out that this ‘Godedd’ state could only be attained if the believer had renounced his own will and imitated the life and sufferings of Christ (Hamilton 1981: 8-9).
spiritual state alone he did not always clarify. In the *Evangelium* (sig. B2r), God’s Kingdom seems to have a spiritual, inward nature:

> Went nu in dessem Dage werth de Stadt des Heren, up ere olde Plaetze edder Hovet-stede gebouwet werden: unde de Tempel des Heren, edder Tabernakel syner Woninge, werth staen gelyck als he behort tho staen, nomplick, inwendich in uns...

Nevertheless some of Niclaes’ followers in England seem to have believed or pretended to believe that God’s Kingdom was to be established in a literal sense on this earth. In the confession Leonard Romsey gave to the authorities in about 1580, we read (Moss 1978: 190):

> ... and that this their rebellion is to be looked for ... because they hould their opinion that their kyngdome which they call Davides Kyngdome is to be erected here upon earth. And they have a prophesie ... that there should comme a time shortly when their [sic] should be no magistrate prince nor pallace upon the earthe but all should be governed by the spirite of love.

We should not forget that Romsey’s was a voluntary confession. This might explain the rather remarkable claims he made on the issue and which we find in none of the other confessions given by suspected members of the Family in England.

Another important feature of Niclaes’ theology was his attitude towards the sacraments and ceremonies of the churches. At the onset of his movement, Niclaes maintained that any ceremony not performed in the true spirit of Christ was of no value, while all ceremonies performed in the true spirit of Christ were of equal value. He claimed that ceremonies were of no importance before God\(^{101}\), but that they were testimonies of Christ’s eternal truth and that there was thus no harm in observing them (Hamilton 1980: 52). As Niclaes phrased it in the *Evangelium* (sig. I2v):
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However, only ‘true’ Baptism in Christ would bring the believer to a union with God, while the ‘figurlicke Densten’ could not bring man closer to ‘dem waren Wesen’ and were but ‘eine figurlicke Gedechtenisse Christi’ (sig. I2r). As one emerged with the godly being, the ceremonies and rites would become completely unnecessary because all the ‘unvolmakede edder kindische Dingen, Bilden, Figuren unde Schemen’ would cease to have any function (sig. L4r).

Niclaes’ shared his stance on outward ceremonies and sacraments to some extent with Sebastian Franck, but rarely was Niclaes quite as contemptuous of the sacraments and ceremonies as Franck\(^\text{102}\) (Hamilton 1981: 12). Moreover, Niclaes’ primary views on the topic saw a significant change after he and his Elders revised his writings, which led to inconsistencies in his thinking. He now claimed that the sacraments and ceremonies of the Catholic Church should be observed until the moment when a Christian entered the Family of Love; even though he admitted that, in general, the Catholic ceremonies had failed because they had come to be valued for their own sake instead of their spiritually uplifting possibilities. Niclaes warned his followers not to abandon the Catholic services too soon for they were aimed at instruction of God’s people until their role would be fulfilled in the ‘new age’ (ibid.: 39). In the *Evangelium Regni* (sig. I3v), we find Niclaes’ revised - more positive - opinion on the services of the Catholic Church expressed like this:

\[...	ext{so seet unde mercket, wo dath de Romsche Catholische Kercke, sick up de vorgemelte Densten unde Ceremonien ;die de Figuren edder de Uthbildinge van de ware Christenheit unde erer Densten zynt; gehorsamlick gegrundet unde desuve tor goeder Tuchtige edder Ordeninge der Gemeinten ;mith Flyt unde Nerstichet; underholden unde also ;in Figuren; der Christenen Naem geforet heft.}\]

\(^{102}\) Franck’s view of the church swept away all religious authority and all teachings of the church, and constructed the temple of God in the human heart. Thus, a new priesthood emerged not in outward sacraments but in a life lived upright before God (Hayden-Roy 1994: 67).
Another point I want to discuss here is Niclaes’ belief that religion was a private matter beyond the bounds of public authority. He frequently formulated his aversion to religious persecution; in the *Evangelium* (sig. K2r) we read:

... wat ein beklagelick Dingk, isset Doden edder Bloedt-vergieten, umme der Conscientien willen, der jener die to de Gerechticheit yferich unde ;na den utwendigen Handel; nemanden schadelick zynt.

Like David Joris before him, Niclaes abhorred violence (Hamilton 1981: 20). That none of Niclaes’ followers died for their beliefs depended partly on the fact that Niclaes did not believe in martyrdom and on the advice he constantly gave his followers to take a Nicodemist stance when confronted with religious hostility. The Familists believed in the justification of denying one’s true beliefs to interrogators and, especially in the English Family, of recanting and then reverting to the heresies once cleared (ibid.: 60-61). Not unexpectedly, these attitudes were criticised by the Family’s English critics and were an important issue in Queen Elizabeth’s proclamation against the movement (Hughes/Larkin 1969: vol. 2; 475):

... they may (before any magistrate, ecclesiastical or temporal, or any other person not being professed to be of their sect, which they term the Family of Love) by oath or otherwise deny anything for their advantage, so as though many of them are well known to be teachers and spreaders abroad of these dangerous and damnable sects, yet by their own confession they cannot be condemned...

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103 Niclaes clearly stated his beliefs on martyrdom in the letter he wrote to the two ‘Maydens of Warffike’: ‘What a slender and erring or earthly Understanding is this, that God should be pacified with an Elementish Bodie.’ (Hamilton 1980: 63). In the confession of the Seale brothers, we find Niclaes’ ideas on martyrdom expressed as follows: ‘[th]ey ought not to suffer their bodyes to be executed bycause, [they are] the temples of the holly.’ (Hitchcock 1970: 86; the confession is transcribed in its entirety in the same work (see: p. 86)).

104 In Leonard Romsey’s confession we read: ‘... the disciples of HN make no conscience of lyinge and dissemblinge to all them that be not of their religion.’ (Moss 1978: 191).

105 Following Niclaes, the English Familists reproached the State for persecuting people’s conscience and punishing them for that matter. They simply believed that a man’s conscience only belonged to God. They expressed their ideas on the topic to John Rogers (1579b: sig. L5r) as follows: ‘If any man do willingly erre, he shall have everlasting damnation for his rewarde at Gods hand ... is not that punishment sufficient which God hath ordeined, but that one Christian must vexe, belye, and persecute an other?’. 

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Moreover, since Familists believed that rites and ceremonies were matters of indifference, they could be practised wherever they might happen to dwell - in Catholic, Lutheran or Calvinist territory. The dangerous consequence of this stance, in the eyes of the attackers of the movement, was that the Familists were willing to mingle with the congregation of the State Church. Through this division of 'heart' and 'mind', the Familists in England were perceived as destabilising the local community: parishioners gathering for worship could never be certain of the sincerity of their neighbours, despite the communal recitation of the liturgy (Poole 2000: 84).

The last aspect of Niclaes’ doctrines I will be discussing focuses on the elaborate organisation Niclaes developed for his movement in the later years of his life. As seen before, the development of this new organisation was part of the reason Niclaes lost a major part of his followers on the European Continent. In one of his last works, the *Ordo Sacerdotis. De Ordeningen des Priestelicken States in dem Hus-gesinne der Liefen*\(^{106}\), Niclaes described in the greatest detail the new priestly hierarchy and the ceremonies connected with it. The work reflects the prophet’s state of mind at the time most of the translations of his works were made and printed. The *Ordo Sacerdotis* was never published in Niclaes’ time, and the Family’s attackers did not know of its existence; otherwise, they would have eagerly used it against the Family. It is impossible to know how many followers of the Family had heard about the work or had read it. The reason why the Family’s organisation was only developed at this point, Niclaes explained, was that the ‘New Kingdom’ was finally at hand and the new hierarchy of the Family of Love was needed to take charge of it (Moss 1981: 17).

At the head of the hierarchy, there was the highest bishop, Niclaes or his successor, while standing next below him were twenty-four Elders, called variously ‘Seraphin’ or ‘Ertsch-bischop’ (Hamilton 1988: 232). Below this rank were the Priests ‘to dem

\(^{106}\) As pointed out before, the text of the *Ordo Sacerdotis* was edited in a modern edition by Alastair Hamilton in 1988. A very helpful summary in English precedes each chapter of the text in this edition. The quotations from the *Ordo Sacerdotis* in this section are taken from Hamilton’s edition.
Denste des Stoels des Maiestaet Godes’ or the Bishops (ibid.: 228); next, followed the lower ranks of priests: ‘Priester-ampte des Heerschoppies-mit-gode’ (ibid.: 225), ‘Priester-ampte der Rechtsferdigen des Heren’ (ibid.: 223) and, lastly, ‘Priester-ampte des Lust-gaerdes des Heren’ (ibid.: 220). The largest number of Familists belonged to the lowest ranks of the priesthood. The conditions for its membership were that the candidate should at be at least thirty years of age, and that he or she should have a sound knowledge of ‘de dudesche Sprake’, for the ‘de Here heft by uns in dem Hus-gesinne der Lieften, de dudesche Sprake, mit synem hilligen Geiste gesegenet’ (ibid.: 260). It was necessary to those wanting to join the priesthood to be devoted to Niclaes and his writings and to be obedient in all his commands (ibid.: 258-264). Indeed, emphasis was now on obedience and devotion to Niclaes’ person (ibid.: 264):

... unde se allé die also, dorch de Getugenissen unserer Schriften ... gehorsamlick bugen unde thoe overgeven, salmen in de Liefte unde erem Denste upnemen...

Each of the orders had its special service to perform. The ‘Seraphins’ were entrusted with the most important task, i.e. the preparation of new members for the priesthood. They alone were permitted to perform the Family’s rituals and to preach, for membership to this order was only granted to those who had become ‘one with God’. The lower orders were given appropriate tasks in the education of the laity and in copying Niclaes’ writings (ibid.: 245-247). The importance of the transcription of Niclaes’ writings is given extensive attention in the Ordo Sacerdotis

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107 According to the Family’s critics in England, the movement was organised along hierarchical lines. It is certainly true that there were Elders in the English Family, entrusted with approaching new members and the distribution of Niclaes’ writings, but how far the movement was organised below this rank we do not know. Probably, there were too few members to have any rigid organisation (Marsh 1994: 85).

108 In the English Family, ‘de dudesche Sprake’ was also highly regarded. According to John Rogers (1579a: sig. E2r), Vittels considered it to be the ‘holy language’ of the movement. It is, however, unlikely, considering the English translations that were made of almost all Niclaes’ works, that many of the followers of the movement there knew it.

109 This concept seems to have been followed in the English Family because Vittels was said to hold the belief that ‘none should take in hande to teach or preach but the Illuminated Elders’ (ibid.: sig. H4v).
and underlines the prophet’s concern for the survival of his writings as originally drawn up by him\(^{110}\) (ibid.: 248):

... dath de hilligen unde godtsalige Getugenissen Godes unserer Schriften ... Worde to Worde overgeschreven unde nemandes Goedt-duncken manck vormenget werden, up dath also steeds unde ewichlick, de overgeschrevene Schriften, mit dem vornompsten Exemplar, alles in allen, vollenkomentlick, over-ein-dragen.

The *Ordo Sacerdotis* includes a very detailed description of how the movement should be organised financially. All priests were to live from a system of tithes, paid by all members of the community on their annual income. Priests were not to have any property of their own\(^{111}\). The poor and those in financial need could turn to the Elders who would examine their situations and, if needed, could help them from the common funds\(^{112}\) (ibid.: 288-290). This ‘mercantile utopia’, as Alastair Hamilton (1981: 58) called the financial organisation Niclaes developed, underlines the importance finance played in the prophet’s life and in the relationships with his followers. It probably reflects what Niclaes had tried to achieve during his lifetime, i.e. to help his more needy followers by asking for ‘tithes’ from the more wealthy\(^{113}\). Most important is the fact that, although the Catholic-based hierarchy of priests and the initiation ceremonies could be interpreted in a spiritual sense, the financial regulations had a practical purpose. The work contains a programme intended for implementation; it represents a desire to found a visible church (ibid.: 58-59).

\(^{110}\) This emphasis on the transcription of his writings is very curious considering Niclaes’ constant employment of the printing press throughout his life.

\(^{111}\) John Rogers (1579b: sig. H3v) claimed that new members of the Family in England were to give up their goods to common ownership.

\(^{112}\) In the confession of Leonard Romsey, we find a possible reference to the existence of such funds in the Wisbech community he belonged to. He claimed that, in case he were imprisoned for his beliefs, he and his family would continue to live well, supported by ‘suche collections among the famelye’ (Moss 1978: 191).

\(^{113}\) It seems that the more wealthy members of the Family in England were expected to support the movement financially. Reference to this practice may be found in Rogers’ accusation (1579a: sig. E3v) that Vittels had made ‘many an honest and wealthy housholder poore’, and in the claim of the Wonesh Familiists, Chaudler and Strete, that the Elders ‘increase in riches’ while the followers ‘become poore and fall to beggerie’ (Rogers 1579b: sig. I2r).
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The drafting of the *Ordo Sacerdotis* led to the appearance of major discrepancies in Niclaes' spiritual thinking. The obedience Niclaes asked of his followers was one of the major changes he made to his movement. But if, on the one hand, obedience was due to Niclaes and his Elders, it was also due, on the other, to the civil magistrates of the places where Familists resided. In the *Acta HN* we read (Hamilton 1988: 388):

Lasteret noch wederstrevet iummer nicht enige Overicheit, weder de Geistlicke noch de Werltlicke ... underholdet gehorsamelijk de Ordeningen des Landes daer gy wonen.

Surely, the attacks the Familists and Niclaes himself suffered from various sides made them more cautious in their attitudes towards the outside world. Nonetheless, it seems that Niclaes believed that all power comes from God who invests princes and magistrates with it; thus, to resist the authorities would be against God's commandments (Mout 1981: 79). Niclaes was trying here to reconcile two contradictory aims, as he did on more than one occasion in his works. He wanted to present the Family as a law-abiding community that any ruler would like to receive in his territory, while in the *Ordo Sacerdotis* he was organising this same community independently from any state or church so that he could retain unlimited power over his adherents (Hamilton 1981: 60-61).

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114 Despite Niclaes' ideas on the issue, in England the Familists were seen as disturbers of the State, as is clearly expressed in the royal proclamation of 1580. It is possible that the ambiguous claims of Niclaes about the Kingdom of God, enhanced by Romsey's confessions on the topic, gave rise to these suspicions (Moss 1981: 39).

115 This idea we find clearly stated in the letter Niclaes addressed to the Bishops of England in 1578, when his adherents there were coming under increasing pressure from the authorities: '... the Littleones which walk, even with upright Hearts, single-mynedly before the Lord, and rebel not or have not ben disobedient, neither against you, nor your doctrine either Religion, nor against the Queene in the Office of Supremacie over the Spirituall and Temporall, nor yet the Customes of the Land.' (Hamilton 1980: 66; this letter is transcribed in its entirety in the same work, see: pp. 64-69)
3. The Importance of the Bible for Niclaes’ Writings and Language

The Familist writings, in Low German and in translation, were heavily criticised from the moment they appeared. William Wilkinson claimed that they were ‘disorderly and confusedly written both for matter, and manner of thynges delivered in them’ (1579: sig. *3v) and that they were but ‘fruitless trees, and stares that wander without a certain motion’ (ibid.: sig. K4r), while John Rogers (1579b: sig. O8r) reproached Niclaes for his ‘ranging stile without conclusion’. Also in Elizabeth I’s 1580 proclamation against the Family, the language of the movement’s writings was an issue. It was claimed that the Familists employ ‘a monstrous kind of speech never found in the Scriptures nor in ancient father or writer of Christ’s Church’ (Hughes/Larkin 1969: vol. 2; 474). Although these comments are exaggerated, it is true that Niclaes’ writings, especially at first reading, seem to have been designed to elude reduction to exact propositions, possibly to avoid being pinned down on concrete heretical teachings by the authorities.\(^\text{116}\)

Let us now look more closely at Niclaes’ language. While God’s inner experience is generally considered to be essentially incommunicable, Niclaes, nevertheless, tried to convey it with a variety of terms, figures and phrases drawn largely from early Christianity and the Bible (Martin 1989: 186). Biblical history, paraphrase and allusion permeate both the language and structure of Niclaes’ works. His writings are, on the whole, intensely prophetic and characterised by obscure allegories which he based closely upon Biblical language and myth. Niclaes used prophetic and apocalyptic language from the Scriptures to express his divine union and inner revelations, often speaking directly in Biblical phrases. He seems to have ‘reserved’ for himself that allegorisation of Biblical language that

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\(^{116}\) In the writings of David Joris, this aspect is much more strongly present. His extreme vagueness - never is he anything like as clear as Niclaes - enabled him to deny almost any charge made against him (Hamilton 1981: 18).
described spiritual enlightenment within (Smith 1989: 152, 180). Niclaes frequently employed the Bible as a testimony to the personal and inner changes experienced during the process of 'Vorgodung'. The passage in the Evangelium Regni (sig. K3v) which relates Niclaes' deification is supported by twenty-eight different references to the Scripture texts. John Knewstub was particularly infuriated by the way Niclaes employed the Bible; he (1579: fol. 82r) reproached Niclaes for taking as many liberties of interpretation with the Bible, as he himself would with Aesop's Fables.

Besides using language from the Bible, Niclaes also employed his own allegorical figures, which represent his state of mind during the personal revelations, and made them look like biblical visions. Every original prophetic utterance of Niclaes relies for its authority, at least in part, upon the similarity with or partial repetition of the sayings of the Biblical prophets (Smith 1989: 153). One of the major problems with Niclaes' frequent use of allegories is that they create in his texts a peculiar lack of clear reference between the literal and allegorical levels (ibid.: 149). This is attested in Niclaes' Terra Pacis, a description of a spiritual pilgrimage to the 'Land of Peace'. The work was, indeed, an allegory, but nowhere did Niclaes solve the ambiguities as to whether this 'Land', in which nudism, polygamy and communism were the custom, could be reached in this life or, as in Bunyan's Pilgrim's Progress, only after death, or whether he was referring to a spiritual or physical place (Hamilton 1981: 36-37). One could see these ambiguities in Niclaes' writings as the result of the inspired prophet writing down directly what God prophesied to him. Indeed, it is possible that Niclaes wanted to give his readers this impression, but a closer look into his writings shows that his actual words were carefully constructed, and yield an undeniable rhetoric, the ambiguities often purposely created, as we will see later in my analysis of the Evangelium. This can be noted in the functions Niclaes gave to the visions he relayed to his readers. Their symbolism is very carefully tied up with the furtherance of his theology and the structure and function of the Family of Love, on the one hand, while, on the other

\footnote{Note that this especially applies to Niclaes' revised writings. In the following chapter, I will focus on the differences on the rhetorical level between the first and second editions of the Evangelium Regni.}
hand, through Niclaes’ direct borrowing of or similarity to the style of the Scriptures, they maintain a connection with the Biblical prophets and prophesies (Smith 1989: 152-153). Niclaes needed this latter connection to support his claim that whatever was to happen through his hands would do so ‘gelyck alse daer-vanne geschreven is in de Scripturen’ (sig. A3r). Indeed, Niclaes seems to have believed that the founding of the Family of Love was the result of God’s promises in the Bible. Whatever Niclaes wrote and proclaimed was to be regarded as on the same level as the Scriptures\(^\text{118}\) since he was the ‘living Voyce’ of Christ. Niclaes expresses this claim in the *Evangelium Regni* (sig. A4r) as follows:

... waket nu alle upp van dem Slape juwer Sunden: unde horet unde gelovet de uthfletende levendige Stemme der Liefte Jesu Christi, die Christus am hudigen Dage; dorch synen hilligen Geist unde utherweleden Dener HN; up der Erden horen lath.

Niclaes’ relationship with the Bible is highly complex and the importance of the Scriptures for Niclaes’ oeuvre is not easily described. In his writings, he always seems to be appealing to a Bible-reading public. In the *Evangelium Regni* (sig. B2r) he addresses his readers as ‘gy alle die dagelickes de Schrifture undersoken’. Almost all his works feature a profusion of marginal references to the Scriptures, in numbers often surpassing the Biblical citations in the tracts opposing him. What is interesting about Niclaes’ references to the Bible is that he will refer in one and the same gloss to several different chapters or even books of the Scriptures\(^\text{119}\): one reference in the *Evangelium Regni* (sig. B1r) lists the Biblical books Psalms, Isaiah, Jeremiah, Daniel, Malachi, Matthew, and Acts. Within one single gloss, Niclaes can, therefore, easily evoke an extremely diffuse set of connotations and subtexts (Smith 1989: 183).

\(^{118}\) That this claim seems to have been believed by some Familists in England is attested in Wilkinson’s attack on the Family. Wilkinson (1579: sig. B1r) quoted a letter, sent to him by some members of the movement, in which they stated that Niclaes’ works were of the same level as the Scriptures: ‘... what iniurie were it (seing that it procedeth by the same spirite) to valew it [i.e. Niclaes’ works] equall with those same sacred scriptures.’.

\(^{119}\) We find this same system of reference in David Joris’ *Twonder-boeck*. 
Niclaes claimed that, contrary to the beliefs of the Protestants, the Scriptures were not God's words. In the epistle to the 'two Maidens of Warwick' Niclaes maintains, while referring to the Gospel of John to support his statement, that the Protestants 'have the Scripture: and the same giveth testimonie of the Lord, and of his Word, but it is not the Word itself' (Hamilton 1980: 61). Niclaes rejected literal readings of the Bible\textsuperscript{120}: the Bible was symbolic and a testimony to the Word which man could only know within himself (Smith 1989: 180). In the \textit{Evangelium Regni} (sig. B2v), Niclaes expresses the idea that the literal reading of the Scripture is inferior to the spiritual as follows\textsuperscript{121}:

\begin{quote}
... dath nemandt ;wo wys edder vorstandich dath hy in de Wetenschoppe der Schrifturen zy; de Wyshet Godes geinsins besinnen edder vorstaen, noch de Gaven Godes, noch de Kraften des hilligen Geistes, seen, kennen, vinden, noch entfangen kan, den allene De, die under idt Wordt des Levens ... goedt-willichlick unde gehorsamlick gebogen stett.
\end{quote}

Reading the Bible 'according to the letter' bore an unquestionable relationship to historical events, while Niclaes apparently denied the historicity of the Scriptures. Niclaes wrote in the \textit{Evangelium} that 'der Olden Testament is idt Denstilicke Wordt dath ... mith spreckelicke Worden, Schriften, edder Boeckstaven angedenet wert' and which was 'denstelick in Bysproken, unde in Bilden edder Figuren', while the New Testament was 'hemmelsch, geistelick, unde levendich' (sig. E1r). Niclaes saw many of the Biblical figures largely as symbolic. In the \textit{Evangelium} (sig. D4r), he argues that Abel means 'ein jonge Minscheit' or 'Ydelheit', Cain 'ein die van Sunde in Eigendum beseten wert', while Noah signifies 'ein Upholdinge edder Ruste'. Rogers (1579b: sig. F4r) complained that the Familists took 'not the creation of man at the first to be historicall, (according to the letter), but mere allegoricall ... applying still the allegorie they destroye the trueth of the historie'.

\textsuperscript{120} An element followed by some of the English Familists for in the confession of the Seale brothers we read that the 'literall sence of the scrypture they [i.e. the Familists] do not regard' (Hitchcock 1970: 86).

\textsuperscript{121} Sebastian Franck, too, strongly believed in the superiority of the spirit as a source of inspiration when interpreting the Scriptures (Hayden-Roy 1994: 89).
Niclaes held that the Bible could only be understood by those in possession of the same spirit with which the work had been written and open to the ‘Spirit of the Love’. In the epistle to the ‘two Maidens’, Niclaes argues that God’s Word ‘neither can man understand the testimony therof, except he have first inherited the Spirit of the Lord, in the Re-generation or new-Birth’ (Hamilton 1980: 61). The possibility that every individual Familist could read and interpret the text of the Scriptures for himself infuriated the English critics of the movement, who believed that the Word would become subject to isolated human imaginations (Poole 2000: 86). As John Rogers (1579b: sig. F4v) lamented:

"What a miserable case is this to see the holie Scriptures thus drawen from the true sense, into Allegories, which may be taken many wayes, even as the vaine imagination of man can devise."

But Niclaes’ attack upon the letter of the Bible yielded more functions. It was also an attack upon the chaos of private understanding of the text of the Scriptures. Like Sebastian Franck, Niclaes held that the unity in the Church had been broken by personal reading and interpreting of the Scriptures (Hamilton 1981: 11). In the Evangelium (sig. K3v), Niclaes laments ‘dath sick de vordeelde Sinnen, uth de Wetenheit der Schrifturen ;mith vele Haderens unde Disputerens; ... dagelicks ;tho meerder Vorwerringe; thoemen’. Niclaes’ writings provided the Familists a resolution for the problems of interpreting the Scripture in the form of an authoritative interpretation. The real value of the use of the Scripture, Niclaes explained, lay in the spiritual authority of the exegete. As Niclaes phrased it in the epistle to the ‘two Maidens’ (Hamilton 1980: 61):

"... here giveth the Prophet [i.e. Niclaes] a cleare Difference betweene the Word of the Lord, and the Testimonies of an unregenerate Man..."

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122 This belief had earlier been expressed by à Kempis in his De Imitatione Christi and was also followed by David Joris (Hamilton 1981: 6-7, 21).
123 Following Niclaes, Leonard Romsey claimed that ‘the preachers who are now autorised can not teache the truthe [i.e. of the Scriptures] for because withouete the family of love no truthe is to be founde’ (Moss 1978: 191).
In the _Evangelium Regni_ (sig. K3v) Niclaes explains that he had been ‘raised’ from ‘death’ for the benefit of all those that searched the Scriptures ‘um de Waerheit unde den Wille Godes tho verstaen unde tho beleven’; that they needed his exegesis to do so is, of course, only implied:

... dewyle ... vele Goedwillige Herten ;die groten Hunger unde Dorste nha de Gerechticiteit hadden; mith grotem Flyte unde Yfer, de Schrifture ;um de Waerheit unde den Wille Godes tho verstaen unde tho beleven; undersochten: unde tot Godt suchteden unde bededen, so heft Godt tom lesten, de Vorlatene bedacht, idt Suchten unde Beden der Ermen vorhoret, unde umme syne Utherweleden ... My HN ... van dem Dode erwecket...

Especially in England, Niclaes’ exegesis of the Bible seems to have been highly regarded. It seems that the English Family of Love was meeting a spiritual need that the official religion was missing, and that this need concerned the area of religious authority (Pearse 1994: 173). Wilkinson (1579: sig. P4v) claimed to have heard from some Familists that the Scripture was ‘too hard for a simple man’ and that Niclaes’ writings provided ‘a readyer way to the understanding therof’. It is clear that Familism represented a possible response for post-reformation Englishmen to the crisis of the authority of the Anglican establishment, in which the basis for the existing established church was seen to be as transitory as the political balance of power within the country. As Pearse (1994: 180-181) phrased it:

Niclaes’ authoritative interpretation of the Scriptures was equally authoritarian as the established churches but it had the advantage that the source of authority was an illuminated prophet, and uncontaminated by the vagaries of political power which tainted the Protestant state churches.

4. The Role of the Printed Word in the English Branch of the Family of Love

The importance of the arrival of the translations of Niclaes’ works for the English adherents of the Family of Love, as pointed out earlier, can hardly be
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overestimated. From around 1574, Niclaes' revised writings in translation were smuggled from the Continent, shipped from Cologne down the Rhine to Rotterdam, into England and changed the picture of the English Family dramatically (Wilson Hayes 1984: 61). In 1575, there were eighteen English printed translations available\(^\text{124}\), while only two years earlier there had been none\(^\text{125}\). It is impossible to make any definitive statements concerning the numbers of each work that made the journey from Cologne, though more than a hundred copies of the eighteen works are known to be extant (Marsh 1994: 79-81). Preparations for this enormous enterprise had undoubtedly taken years and underline Niclaes' belief in the power of the printed word. As J. W. Martin (1989: 193) noted: 'The number and variety of their tracts appearing in English would have been a notable accomplishment even if they [i.e. the Familists] had been able to print them all legally in London.' The spiritual reassurance, which the movement's Elders provided the Familists before the works' arrival, was now supplemented with the possibility for those same followers to explore the Familist writings for themselves.

Before looking into Niclaes' personal ideas on the printed word, I will first touch upon the role printing played in the field of religion in the sixteenth century. Most important in this context is the impact printing had on the spread of Lutheranism in the first quarter of the sixteenth century. There had been other schisms in the Western Church and even the use of polemical tracts to sway opinion in favour of anti-papist action had occurred before printing. However, with the advent of printing religious divisions once traced, could not be easily erased (Eisenstein 1983: 151-152). When Luther proposed debate over his Ninety-Five Theses, his action was not in itself revolutionary. It was entirely conventional for students of theology to hold disputations over such issues as indulgences. The difference was that Luther's particular theses did not 'stay tacked to the church door'. Between 1517


\(^{125}\) Some of Niclaes' works in manuscript version had been in circulation before. Their impact and numbers, however, seem to have been far more limited than those of the printed works. Only two of the original manuscript texts have survived today, i.e. a book of psalms and songs and a single song-sheet (Marsh 1994: 79)
and 1520, Luther’s publications sold well over 300,000 copies (Eisenstein 1979: vol. 1; 306). It is clear that Luther himself was well aware of the potential printing had for his ideas, when he described it as ‘God’s highest and extremest act of grace’. The reformers realised that the printing press was useful to their cause and they acknowledged its importance in their writings (Eisenstein 1983: 147).

Today, it is generally accepted that Protestantism was the first fully to exploit the potential of printing as a mass medium, and the first movement of any kind, religious or secular, to use the new presses for overt propaganda against an established institution. But the impact of printing on Western Christendom was by no means confined to instigating protest or perpetuating heterodoxy. Like Luther, the Catholic Church, even the censorship edicts, hailed the invention of printing as divinely inspired and celebrated its advantages. Through print, the Catholic Church was able to implement internal reforms and institute more rigorous training of the clergy, and, no less important, to convert new territories. Moreover, the Catholic liturgy was standardised and fixed for the first time in a permanent mould (Eisenstein 1979: vol. 1; 303-304, 314, 317). Also mysticism was transformed, and attempts to inspire lay devotion became much more widespread. Devotional literature found an audience much larger than that of professional theologians and was turned out in large editions aimed less at monks than laymen: Thomas à Kempis’ *De Imitatione Christi* was, in the fifteenth and the sixteenth centuries, the most frequently reprinted religious work - of course, after the Bible (Febvre/Martin 1990: 251).

Niclaes too seems to have understood the enormous potential of this new medium, probably through his experiences as a merchant and his dealings with various printers. It is safe to argue that the success of his movement and beliefs, which did not vary substantially from those of other mystics before him, should at least in part be ascribed to the ways in which he resorted to the printing press, although, unlike Luther, he never admitted this in so many words. It is also likely that the broader interest in spiritual writings, which followed after the introduction of printing, helped Niclaes’ cause.
What exactly lay behind Niclaes' belief in the written and printed word? For Niclaes, religion was not a matter of intellect and knowledge, but of attitude and spiritual experience. Knowledge, according to Niclaes, was essentially irrelevant for salvation. In the Evangelium (sig. G2v), Niclaes claimed that the ‘Schrift-geleerden, unde de Werltsche Wysen’ could never understand and receive ‘idt Wearachtige der hemmelsche Waerheit Christi ... noch de Klaerheit synes hilligen Geistes’. In his feeling that knowledge was of no relevance in seeking God’s truth, Niclaes came very close to the ideas expressed by Thomas à Kempis in his De Imitatione Christi, which propagated an anti-intellectual ideal leading to an effortless abandonment to the will of God (Martin 1989: 189). Like à Kempis, Niclaes condemned the dry learning of the scholastic theologian for which they found ample justification in the Scriptures and, particularly, in Paul’s Epistles to the Corinthians (Hamilton 1981: 6-7). A chasm separated what Niclaes called the ‘good-thinking ones’ - those educated formally in the schools - and the ‘good-willing ones’, who were literate but not formally educated and, according to Niclaes, most suitable to receive the ‘Spirit of the Love’. Also in the De Imitatione Christi, we find the belief expressed that the spiritual formed a group apart in which human learning was of no account but in which divine wisdom was very much present (ibid.: 7). On the second page of the Evangelium Regni (sig. A3r), Niclaes phrases the division between the ‘good-thinking’ and ‘good-willing’ ones like this:

Went men sal nu in dessem Dage seen ... dath alle Goedt-willigen ... sick to de Goeden, nomplick, to de Gemeinschoppe der Lieften ... vorsammelen ... unde dath se alle die bosz van Wille zynt ... sick mit erer goedt-dunckender Wysheit, daer entjegen upmaken...

Those with a thorough education in the Scriptures, the ‘Schriftgeleerden’, were, according to Niclaes, ‘Dieven, Wulven, unde Morders’ (sig. H3v) who had created nothing but ‘Hader, Tzanck, unde Vordeeltheit’ within the Christian community (sig. K1v). Towards the end of the Evangelium, he becomes even bolder when he links ‘de Eigen-wysheit des erdischen Minschen’ with the Antichrist (sig. H4r):
For Niclaes, the Antichrist was part of all those who turned their back on the 'true' way, i.e. the spiritual way, of belief in Christ and who were satisfied with their 'knowledge of the Flesh'. The fact that they did not see, according to Niclaes, that God's truth could only be received through the 'Spirit', depended entirely on their unwavering belief in 'earthly' knowledge.

This, at first sight, simple scolding of the learned should not be mistaken for naivety. It seems that Niclaes had, rightly, comprehended that print had created a world of silent reading, which was in many respects in opposition to the predominantly oral world of the schools. By conceiving his adherents as a 'family', he emphasised the gulf that existed between, on the one hand, the private world of the solitary reader and his or her small study group at home, and, on the other, the public world of the orator and debater associated with the scholastic tradition and the monastic medieval world of the schools (Wilson Hayes 1986: 138). Moreover, Niclaes knew that the poor had been driven on to the barren heath both literally and culturally (ibid.: 139), but, through the Familist writings, all 'einfoldige Herten' could attain 'de Salicheit des ewigen Leven s' (sig. A4). It was through self-taught literacy enabled by print, Niclaes claimed, that the old culture of the schools could be defeated.

It is not surprising that his English attackers and the government viewed Niclaes' message as highly insidious. As Wilson Hayes (1986: 139) put it in a slightly dramatised manner:

In challenging the orally trained clerical establishment's hegemony of morality and in linking the innate good will of ordinary people with a call for the immediate founding of a heavenly kingdom on earth, Niclaes was undermining the basis of ecclesiastical and political power.
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The Queen’s proclamation of 1580 opens with the statement that certain ‘damnable heresies’ have been spread ‘among divers simple and unlearned people’, and that ‘the ground of their sects is maintained by certain lewd, heretical and seditious books’ (Hughes/Larkin 1969: vol. 2; 474). The rest of the proclamation, although it also touches upon certain of Niclaes’ doctrines, focuses on the dangers of the Familist writings and calls for searches to be made ‘in all places suspected for the books and writings maintaining the said heresies and sects’ (ibid.: 475). Special attention is also given to those who printed for the Family or smuggled the works into the country (ibid.: 475):

... that whosoever in this realm shall either print or bring or cause to be brought into this realm any of the said books, the same persons to be attached and committed to prison, and to receive such bodily punishments and mulct as fathers of damnable heresies.

The government’s distress about the influx of Niclaes’ books from the Continent probably also reflected its concern about Roman Catholic infiltration. The influx of the Familist translations, roughly, coincided with the arrival of the first missionary priests from the Continent and seems to have raised the question of how effective England’s border controls were (Martin 1989: 197).

Let us now look at the particular functions of Niclaes’ printed writings within the English Family. A good illustration of the role Niclaes’ translated works played in England can be found in one of the prophet’s own writings. The Exhortatio I (1575: sig. A2r), a sort of primer for those introduced into the Family of Love, contains a woodcut of a teacher, resembling physically very closely the person John Rogers described as Niclaes (De La Fontaine Verwey 1975: 89), instructing a roomful of boys how to read:
Initiation into the Family was thus presented as initiation into the world of print; similarly, advancement through the ranks of the movement’s spiritual hierarchy was regulated by step-by-step access to Niclaes’ more mystical writings (Poole 2000: 80). In the opening passage of the confession Leonard Romsey gave, he describes the Family’s way of recruitment. John Bourne, the local Elder of Wisbech community, perceived Romsey as a man who ‘favored religion’ and promised him ‘a way unto lyffe which many kynges and princes had desired to se and could not’. After Bourne had asked Romsey to swear secrecy to the Family, the Elder gave him a tract of Niclaes, i.e. the *Exhortatio I*, and, as Romsey phrased it, he was required to ‘reade it and to shewe him my jugement of it in writinge with myne owne hand and my name subscribed there unto’ (Moss 1978: 190). Entrance into the Family of Love was thus signified by a textual exchange. As just indicated and also suggested by the movement’s attackers (Rogers 1579a: dedicatory epistle), even within the Family itself not all Niclaes’ books were considered appropriate for those newly
introduced into the movement. The Familist literature seems to have been arranged on different levels: the *Exhortatio I*, as the example of Romsey suggests, was considered as one of the best starting points (Marsh 1994: 83).

The Familist books were clearly not intended as an attempt to flood the general market but were part of the introvert, secret policy of the movement, and care was taken to avoid Niclaes' books falling in the hands of the Family's enemies (ibid.: 83), as was confirmed by Vittels who, regretfully, claimed that some of the Familist writings 'have come to the hands of envious persons' (Rogers 1579a: sig. D3v). It seems likely that Niclaes' works were distributed along carefully constructed lines of sympathetic communication, with local members of the fellowship being instructed to pass them on only to those who expressed positive curiosity about the Familist doctrines (Marsh 1994: 82). As John Rogers (1579b: sig. A4r) explained, 'for except one will be pliant to their doctrine, and shewe good will thereto, he shall get any of their bookes'. The investigations of 1580 in the parish of Wisbech give us in some detail a probably typical picture of how the book distribution was organised within the movement. In Romsey's confession, it is made clear that the local leader, John Bourne, was in charge of distributing appropriate titles to his co-followers. Bishop Richard Cox, aware of the charges made against Bourne, searched the Elder's house and found twelve printed books of Niclaes. Beside copies of the *Exhortatio I*, the text of the *Evangelium Regni* and the *Terra Pacis* were discovered (Marsh 1994: 18). These two works were surely preserved for those who were on the way to 'Vorgodung' and, therefore, more likely to understand Niclaes' more mystical utterances. Interaction between the Familists and their books thus appears to have been supervised with considerable care, and accidents, such as occurred in the case of Leonard Romsey who betrayed the movement, were rare (ibid.: 83).

But what about the level of literacy and learning within those rural Familist villages? The Familist attackers portray Niclaes' adherents as simple and unlearned people. Rogers (1579b: sig. D4v) called Vittels a 'man utterly unlearned', and
William Wilkinson (1579: sig. M4v) wrote in abhorrence that the Familists did not believe in sending their children to school after they learned the rudiments of reading and writing. However, the Familists themselves made no objections to this portrayal and, when they agreed with their attackers that they were indeed ‘simple man [sic] who can scarcely reade Englishe’ (Rogers 1579b: sig. M6v-M7r), Rogers reversed his position and pointed out that those who had recanted their Familist beliefs ‘at the crosse’ were certainly not simple\(^{126}\) (ibid.: sig. N5v). However, the fact that Niclaes’ writings were so widely and eagerly distributed seems to indicate that most Familists could, indeed, read. But from all those who gave confessions and were interrogated by the authorities, it appears that only few were formally educated (Pearse 1994: 178). Following Niclaes’ accurate insights into the power of self-taught literacy, Vittels and his Elders directed their appeal to the newly literate sectors of society - artisans and merchants, all people that Henry VIII had excluded from Bible-reading in 1539 (Wilson Hayes 1984: 63). The English adherents of the Family were those people whom Niclaes called ‘the good-willing ones’, literate, but not necessarily formally educated in the schools.

This picture is attested by the research Margaret Spufford (1974: 207-208) undertook into the level of literacy in Balsham, one of the Familist parishes. Although no regular schooling was available in Balsham in the 1570s, it seems that, as she put it, 'more people than the minister were expected to read'. Orthodox theological literature was available in the village church for everyone to read, and itinerant booksellers that visited Balsham further point to the fact that there was a sufficient enough market for them to sell their books. It should be added here that in mid-Elizabethan England printed books were still not common in rural villages, and the very concept of a clandestine tract-reading public was a novelty (Poole 2000: 79). This may explain in part the attraction of the Familist writings in the English countryside. But even if not all Familists were literate, the particular organisation of the Family made sure that the appeal of the written word was not limited to those

\(^{126}\) Among those to whom Rogers refers was Robert Sharpe, a parson from Strethall in Essex, who, in 1575, recanted at Paul’s Cross (Pearse 1994: 178).
who could read. The works of Niclaes, in Low German and also in the English translations, are structured in such a way, through their heavy punctuation, that they can easily be read aloud. Indeed, this was how the English followers of Niclaes assured that also the illiterate could ‘enjoy’ the prophet’s words.

Like other separatists before and since, Niclaes stressed the need for the true believers to assemble in small groups for mutual support (Martin 1989: 189). In his ‘Gemeinschoppe der Liefte’, all ‘Goedt-willigen’ could enter ‘de Ruste des Heren’ and attain ‘de ewige Godtsalichheit’ (sig. A3r). Niclaes’ ‘Gemeinschoppe’ was to serve a supportive function for the Familist in his or her day-to-day life, and the names he gave to his movement were certainly expressive on this point (Martin 1989: 194). We know that the English Familists held such group meetings and that they made them into a crucial part of the religious experience of every one of them. The importance of these ‘privy assemblies of divers simple unlearned people’, as the royal proclamation called them, is attested both in the confessions and recantations of Niclaes’ adherents in England. Leonard Romsey confessed to them in 1580, as did the Balsham and Wisbech men and women who were interrogated by the authorities (Marsh 1994: 89). However, although the Familists did confess to the holding of religious conferences not restricted to the members of one household, it is clear that their meetings were on a small scale. It seems that the ‘Gemeinschoppe der Lieften’ involved edifying exchanges between individuals and households, rather than large and eye-catching conventicles (ibid.: 89-90).

Certain of the aspects of the Familist organisation in England must have had some familiarity for most Elizabethans. A Bible-reading public had been in preparation since the Lollards, and the middle of the sixteenth century had seen popular access to the Bible increase in several ways, both for those who could read the Scriptures for themselves and for those who could only listen to them. Thus, Familist propagandists had grounds for assuming in their audience a ready familiarity with the language and imagery of the Bible, and if not experience then at least awareness of the existence of conventicles (Martin 1989: 190). The tract *A Brief Rehersall of
the Beleef of the Goodwilling in Englande, which are named the Familie of Love, written by Niclaes' adherents in England and printed in 1575, spoke about the importance of reading and expounding the Scriptures in Familist meetings and, in Balsham and Wisbech, examples were recorded that both the Bible and Niclaes' writings were read aloud by the Elders and further discussed among the Familists present (Marsh 1994: 91-92). The fact that those who confessed to having taken part to these meetings were relatively junior Familists makes it probable that these conventicles were not limited to the seasoned members of the movement (Martin 1989: 195).

Familist printed works also imply the use of formal prayers, though it is important to note that the emphasis was upon families or small gatherings of Familists, rather than the collective Family of Love. The Exhortatio I includes a set of prayers designed for use at meals, at the time of awakening in the morning, and before going to sleep. The fact that some of these prayers were also printed as broadsheets may indicate an intention that they be widely employed within the movement. Also the Cantica H.N. is important within this context: it contains a set of seven songs each appropriate to a particular spiritual state (Marsh 1994: 92). The fact that a copy of the Cantica in English translation was discovered in the house of Thomas Allen, another local Elder of the English Family, might suggest that these songs were actually used during the Familist meetings (Martin 1978: 91). Thus, Niclaes' Elders in England seem not only to have been entrusted with the book distribution but were also in charge of organising meetings during which they read, taught and even prayed from Niclaes' works.

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127 One of the Familists in Wisbech, Margaret Colville, admitted to the authorities that she had heard the books of Niclaes being read aloud by the local Elders (Marsh 1994: 92).
Chapter III. The Low German *Evangelium Regni*: An Analysis

1. Introduction

In this third chapter, I will present a new analysis of the content and rhetoric of the revised Low German *Evangelium*, the text on which the English and Latin translations of the work were based. I will continue the earlier analyses made by students of the Family for the *Evangelium Regni* and so hope to contribute to a reassessment of Niclaes’ the author and to an appreciation of the complex textual organisation of his writings.

I will open the first, and longest, section of this chapter with a description of the different textual analyses of the *Evangelium Regni* which have been conducted by modern students of the Family. Then, I will analyse and discuss in detail the key terminology of the *Evangelium* and the different functions of the text’s marginal glosses to the Bible. In the second section, I will try to answer the question of which version of the Bible, Protestant or Catholic, Niclaes used in the *Evangelium* in those instances in the text where he quotes the Scriptures directly. Although this section is mainly in preparation for my study of the text’s translations, its results may yield further insights into Niclaes’ complex relationship with the two main religious currents of his time and, possibly, into the religious background of those for whom his texts were, presumably, meant.

2. The Current State of Research

As set out in the Introduction to this thesis, only two students of the Familist writings, i.e. Martin (1972: 99-108) and Smith (1989: 173-178), have given serious
attention to the text of the *Evangelium Regni*. For Martin (1972: 100), the main purpose of the *Evangelium Regni* lay in its communication to the reader of Niclaes’ call to inaugurate a new era in salvation history. Most of Niclaes’ writings, and thus, not surprisingly, also the *Evangelium Regni*, deal with this aspect of his beliefs. As Smith (1989: 173-178), however, rightly pointed out, assuming this to be the only way in which to interpret the work would be to underestimate its author.

The larger part of the *Evangelium Regni* is a retelling of Biblical history though the eyes of its authoritative interpreter HN. In the introduction to his summary of the Bible, Niclaes immediately set out his aims. He believed that his movement would establish God’s eternal Kingdom on earth and would so come to fulfil all God’s promises in the Scriptures. By stating that all God’s dealings with man, as described in the Bible, belonged to ‘idt vorighen Rycke’, Niclaes surely hinted at the fact that ‘this chapter’ in God’s plan had come to an end - of course, due to Niclaes’ founding of his Family of Love (sig. B2r).

In the main body of the work, Niclaes summarises all major events in Christian history which the Scriptures relate. He starts with Adam’s Fall, passing over Abel, Seth and Noah, then discusses at length God’s dealings with Abraham. Second, he focuses on Isaac, Jacob, Moses, and, particularly, David. Next, he brushes over figures like Solomon and Aaron until he arrives at Jesus Christ. Niclaes relates in detail the events of Christ’s life and of Christ’s relationship with his ‘true followers’ and enemies. After pages and pages on Christ’s dealings with man, Niclaes finally places the full spotlight on himself and his Family of Love and states boldly the central and repeated claims he made for his movement. Indeed, the last part of the work Niclaes devotes entirely to phrasing and rephrasing that God’s eternal Kingdom has come to be established on earth through the ‘Service of Love’. For Niclaes’ attackers, the problems lay in the ambiguity of these claims. Although, as said in the chapter above, the general tendency of the work seems to suggest that this Kingdom was to be seen as a spiritual one, in some places in the work this was less clearly stated, as can be read on one of the last pages of the text (sig. L1v):
... mit alle desse, unde in alle desse Wunder-wercken Godes; in dessem hilligen Dage der Lieften; wert uns oick; na de Getugenisse der Schrifturen; idt belovede Ryck des Sades David, unde de Stoel des waren Majestaets vorklaret, unde by Uns; umme der Gerechticheit willen; beth to ein Ewicheit vast-gemaket, up dath idtsulve Ryck des Sades Davids, unde de Stoel synes Majestaets, beth to in Ewicheit dure, gelyck alse de Schrifture daer-vanne tuget.

Not surprisingly, much of the attention at this point in the work is centred on Niclaes’ own person and prophetic self. His role as God’s chosen one is constantly stressed in little humble words and can be summed up in the prophet’s own words like this (sig. K3v):

... so heft Godt tom lesten ... My HN, den Geringesten manck den Hilligen Godes ... van dem Dode erwecket, unde dorch Christum levendich gemaket ... up dath nu tor lester Tydt, syne Wunder-wercken bekent ... geopenbaert unde de Theokumpste synes Ryckes; to ein Evangelium van demselven Rycke; unde tom Segen aller Geslachten der Erden; in alle de Werlt; vorkundiget solde werden...

Thus, Niclaes’ preachings were to be seen as a ‘new stage’, a ‘new dispensation’ in the history between God and man, and the finalisation of all what had been prophesied and promised to man in the Scriptures. His readers could not have missed this. All events of Biblical history which the Evangelium Regni retells are presented as the natural unfolding of God’s plan for mankind. To the reader, he literally spells this out by adding the phrase ‘na de/syne [i.e. God’s] Bel often’ after every passage of the Bible he summarises. Coming to the discussion of his Family of Love, he simply continues adding this short, but very important, phrase, thus leaving no doubt that the founding of his movement was also part, the final part, of God’s plan. According to Martin (1972: 102), Niclaes saw his place in God’s plan as ‘a sort of John the Baptist heralding the inauguration of a new covenant’. Martin (ibid.: 108), correctly, but at the same time, too narrowly, claimed that the key to the understanding of the Evangelium Regni lay in this millennialism.

Nigel Smith saw the rhetoric of the revised edition of the Evangelium Regni in a new light and found much more subtle and complicated levels within its make-up.
He was the first to study the implications of the consciously developed lack of clear reference between the literal and allegorical levels in the *Evangelium*. The text could be interpreted literally, as Martin did, but, as Smith (1989: 152) argued, Niclaes’ long-spun retelling of the events in the Bible could also be seen as an allegorical tale of the process of ‘Vorgodung’ or Baptism in the Family. Nowhere in the text does Niclaes state this in so many words - possibly to avoid the authorities pinning him down on his words. However, Smith presented evidence that made this suggestion very likely.

We have already seen before that Niclaes employs the language and allegories from the Bible to express the divine union which he believed his followers could attain. But in the *Evangelium Regni*, Niclaes uses the whole narrative structure to express this inner change. In this way, the Fall, Crucifixion and Resurrection can be understood as stages in the spiritual process of becoming ‘Godded’ and make the Bible into an allegory of inner change. Niclaes, indeed, describes the attainment of ‘Vergodung’ in the work in such terms, when he tells his adherents to follow Jesus in his ‘Dodt des Crutzes’ until they will be made ‘weder lewendich’ by God (sig. Glr). So, Niclaes makes even Jesus Christ into a type! If one takes into account Niclaes’ denial of the historicity of the Scriptures, Smith’s observations make perfect sense.

But Smith’s claims went further. As I have pointed out in the Introduction to this thesis, Smith (1989: 175) suggested that not only the narrative structure, images and allegories of the *Evangelium Regni* have a particular function in promoting Niclaes’ central tenet of ‘Vorgodung’, but that also behind the text’s specific vocabulary - the keywords and key phrases - lies a well-planned rhetoric. Smith especially focused on the role of the notion of Seed in the *Evangelium*, which he said had also an important role within other radical religious movements. Niclaes believed that Seed was the factor that transmitted inward Righteousness through all true believers.

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128 Martin (1972: 103) had earlier dismissed the importance of the allegorical language in the *Evangelium*; he only noted that Niclaes’ allegories were without any significant originality.
in God (ibid.: 176). In the Biblical history which Niclaes sets out in the *Evangelium*, he describes in great detail how, despite Adam's Fall, the true Seed was not completely destroyed. He relates how it was passed on to all true believers in God, and lists the different Biblical figures to whom it was transmitted - Abraham, Jacob and David to name just a few. Eventually, the true Seed reached Jesus Christ and it was Christ who passed it on to Niclaes himself. In the last pages of the work, Niclaes argues that, by imitating Christ and becoming 'Godded', his followers could also receive the gift of God's Seed since he believed that 'in dessem Dage sal sick, idt ware Saedt Christi ... openbaren, unde in Gerechticheit her-vorth komen, dorch uns ;uth desse unse ware Bedeninge der Lieften' (sig. L lv). As Smith pointed out, only when the reader reaches the last part of the work does he become aware of the full significance of Seed and, only at that moment, does the whole earlier discourse make full sense. Thus, Niclaes not only created a direct bond between God and all His true followers in the Bible, but also a bond within his own Family of Love. Indeed, as Smith (1989: 174) noted, Niclaes' vocabulary is not only part of the consistent whole that concentrates on the concept of 'begoddedness', but is furthermore concerned with intimating the sense of belonging to the 'Family of Love'.

It is here that my research begins. My aim in this chapter is to consider whether Smith's claims indeed apply to all the different levels of the second edition of the *Evangelium Regni*. First, I will take Smith's research on the word level further and analyse and discuss the text's different key terms and their functions. Then, I will focus on the role of the Bible in the work and will analyse the marginal references to the Bible, setting out the implications of their use for the rhetorical organisation of the text129.

There is, however, another aspect which I will concentrate on in this analysis. As mentioned previously, modern research on the *Evangelium* has only focused on the

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129 Smith was, again, one of the first to point out some of the aspects of the complex referential system to the Bible which we find in Niclaes' writings, but for the text of the *Evangelium* no full or detailed study on the topic exists.
revised or Cologne edition of the 1570s and no attention has been given to how the text compares with the first edition, printed in the 1560s in Kampen. It is true that, at first sight, the actual texts of these two editions vary little. No chapters or even paragraphs of the first edition have been added or left out in the second. Niclaes' teachings have, moreover, broadly stayed unchanged, and most sentences of the first edition are identical in the second. Nevertheless, it is on the level of the work's key terms and marginal glosses, the focus of this chapter, that the texts vary. Although my study here also concentrates on the revised edition, since this was the source text for the translations into English and Latin which I will study at length in the last two chapters of this thesis, I will also work into the analyses of the revised edition's key terminology and marginal glosses aspects of the first edition's rhetoric. In this way, I will try to find out whether the more marked claims concerning his inspired and prophetic self which Niclaes made towards the end of his life - as in the case of the Ordo Sacerdotis - and which were the reason he lost a large part of his followers in the 1570s, are also reflected in the variations of the second edition with the first.

3. The Rhetorical Organisation of the Evangelium Regni's Key Terminology

In this section, I will continue the analysis of the revised Evangelium Regni's word level, introduced by Smith's earlier observations and analyses for the notion of Seed, with attention to the differences between the first and second editions of the text\textsuperscript{130}. I will concentrate on those key terms which are of importance for Niclaes' theology and appear frequently throughout the text. In this way, I will not only be studying the text's rhetoric but will also delve more deeply into the more complex levels of the theology of the Family of Love.

\textsuperscript{130} I will merely point to differences between the two editions in this description of Niclaes' key terms. Thus, if no reference is made to the texts' variations it means that the second edition corresponds with the first.
The method I have employed for this study is quite straightforward. I first composed lists of the key terminology in the second edition of the Evangelium, so that I could easily determine the number of times a certain term appears and its position\textsuperscript{131}. After having created these tables, I went back to the text and tried to make sense of the different meanings and connotations Niclaes sought to give to the work's key terms in the complicated framework of his thinking. Since the majority of the terminology which I will describe here is of a Biblical origin and because of the major importance of the Bible in the Evangelium Regni, I have considered the meaning and importance of the Evangelium's key words within the text of the Scriptures and checked whether Niclaes' interpretations correspond to or differ from their Biblical use\textsuperscript{132}. Furthermore, and in connection with my choice of inserting the Scriptures here, I noticed that when Niclaes' central terminology appears he often adds glosses to a large number of Biblical passages or books. Thus, even though its full study is the topic of the next section, I have worked this aspect of the text into this analysis, so that I could get a better idea of what exact meaning Niclaes aimed to give to the work's central terms or what Biblical connotations he wanted his readers to recall\textsuperscript{133}. The structure of the following section takes the form of a list. I will discuss the particular functions of each of the key terms separately. At the end of this discussion, I will try to set out the main strategies informing the way Niclaes employs the text's key vocabulary and will

\textsuperscript{131} I have done the listing and counting of these terms by hand, since it was impossible to scan the letter-types used in the original text of the Evangelium. A slight margin in the counted numbers should, for that reason, be taken into account. For all terms, I will give the page numbers on which they are found and the number of times they appear on a certain page. Terms that are used in combination with other words - as is the case for 'Liefte' - I will list as such.

\textsuperscript{132} I want to add that, although I have included the text of the Scriptures in this analysis to explain the central terminology of the Evangelium, I have not done so for those authors, like Thomas à Kempis or Sebastian Franck, on whose thinking Niclaes probably depended. It is true that their works could possibly shed further light on Niclaes' writings, but due to lack of space I have refrained from this discussion.

\textsuperscript{133} I was presented with a major difficulty when trying to analyse the Biblical references in the text, for the reason that Niclaes does not refer to specific lines of the Bible. He gives the name of a certain Bible book and then uses letters to refer to more specific passages within the book - note that at some occasions he refers to whole chapters. There seems not to be any consistent system behind this use of letters. It more or less comes down to the following: 'a' refers to the first ten lines, 'b' to the passage between lines ten and twenty, and so on. Neither is it clear whether Niclaes is pointing to a single word, sentence or a passage from the text of the Bible; such decisions I have been forced to make for the purpose of this discussion.
establish whether there, indeed, lies a strategy behind all the central terms of the *Evangelium Regni*, as Nigel Smith suggested.

### I. Analysis of the Evangelium's Key Terms

#### A. Liefte

**a. Occurrences**

*Liefte:* sig. A3v (1); A4r (1); A4v (3); B1r (1); B1v (2); B2r (1); B2v (3); B3r (2); B3v (3); D4v (1); E2v (1); G2v (3); G3r (1); G4v (1); H1r (2); H4r (1); I1r (1); I2v (3); I3r (1); I4v (1); K1v (1); K2v (2); K3r (4); K3v (1); K4r (1); L2r (2); L3r (2); L3v (1); L4v (1); M1v (1); M2r (2); M2v (2); M3v (4); M4r (7); M4v (2).

*Bedeninge der Liefte:* sig. L1v (1).

*Dage der/syner [i.e. God’s or Christ’s] Liefte:* sig. A4v (1); B2r (1); B3v (2); E3r (2); F3v (1); G3r (1); G4v (1); I2v (2); I3r (1); K1r (1); K3r (1); K3v (1); L1v (1); L2r (1); L3v (1); L4v (1); M1r (1); M2v (1).

*Denste der/syner [i.e. God’s or Christ’s] Liefte:* sig. A3v (2); A4r (1); A4v (1); B1v (1); C1r (1); E2r (1); F3v (2); F4v (1); G2v (2); G4v (2); H1r (4); I2r (1); I2v (4); I3r (2); I4v (1); K4r (1); L3r (1); L3v (1); L4r (1); M1r (1); M1v (1); M2r (2); M2v (2); M3r (1); M3v (4); M4r (2).

*Gehorsamheit der/syner [i.e. God’s or Christ’s] Liefte:* sig. A4v (1); A4v (1); A4v (1); B1v (1); D1r (1); D4r (1); F4v (1); G4v (1); I2v (1); I3v (1); K4v (2); L2r (1); L4v (1); M2r (2); M3r (1); M3v (2); M4r (2).

*(hilligen) Geiste der/syner [i.e. God’s or Christ’s] Liefte:* sig. A3r (4); A3v (1); A4v (1); B2v (1); B3r (1); F4v (1); G4r (1); L3v (1); M2v (1); M3r (1); M3v (1); M4r (3).

*Gemeinschoppe der/syner [i.e. God’s or Christ’s] Liefte:* sig. A3v (1); B2v (1); G2v (1); G3r (1); L4r (1); M2v (1); M3r (1); M4r (1).

*Husgesinne der/syner [i.e. God’s or Christ’s] Liefte:* sig. A4v (1); K1v (1); M2v (1); M4r (2).

*Lere der Liefte:* sig. B2v (1).

*Licht der Liefte:* sig. L3r (2); M2v (1).

*Schote syner [i.e. Christ’s] Liefte:* sig. A3v (1).
Chapter III

Underdanicheit der Lieften: sig. B3r (1). Wesen der/syner [i.e. God’s or Christ’s] Lieften: sig. B3v (1); G2v (1); G3v (1); H2r (1); H4v (1); I3r (1)

b. Analysis

The key term ‘Liefte’ is possibly the most difficult to define exactly. It is one of the most prominent, most frequently used, and baffling of Niclaes’ figures. Its importance for the Familist doctrines cannot be overestimated; after all, it featured in the movement’s own name. As is made clear by the list above, the word appeared either alone or in such frequently used phrases as ‘Denste der Lieften’ or ‘Gehorsamheit der Lieften’, all different nominations Niclaes employed to refer to his movement. The major difference between the two editions of the text is that, even though the term was also of prime importance in the first edition, the concept itself and the different names of the movement feature much less frequently in this edition.

To start off, it is interesting to look at the first Biblical gloss Niclaes adds to ‘Liefte’. The first reference to the term can, in both editions, be found in the first sentence of the text and the Bible book to which Niclaes glosses is Paul’s First Epistle to the Corinthians (13). This is not surprising: chapter 13 of 1 Corinthians, which deals with Love as the highest of spiritual gifts, is among the most important in the New Testament (Livingstone 1997: 418). By referring to the First Epistle to the Corinthians as his first reference to Love, Niclaes immediately alludes to the importance and the place of the term in his beliefs. Strangely enough, despite the very frequent appearance of the notion of Love in the Evangelium Regni, Niclaes

\[134\] As Paul phrased its significance at the end of chapter 13: ‘But when the end comes, these special gifts will all disappear (10). It is like this: when I was a child, I spoke and thought and reasoned as a child does. But when I grew up, I put away childish things (11). Now we see things imperfectly as in a poor mirror, but then we will see everything with perfect clarity. All that I know now is partial and incomplete, but then I will know everything completely, just as God knows me now (12). There are three things that will endure - faith, hope and love - and the greatest of these is love (13).’. I have taken this passage and the other Bible fragments in the rest of this chapter from the online version of the New Living Translation, available at http://blueletterbible.org.
rarely adds other Biblical glosses to explain the term further. Was this because his interpretation of Love went further than its meaning and use in the Bible?

In this discussion, I will focus on the instances in the work where the concept appears in those combinations that have generally been accepted as references to, or names of, the Familist movement. On the first page of the *Evangelium*, Niclaes already sets out whom his call is addressed to. The passage reads (sig. A3r-A3v):

... derhalven solen ... alle Lief-hebberen der Waerheit, unde alle Seelen die nha de Gerechticheit hungeren unde dorsten ... to dem Denste der Lieften ... gehorsamelijk vorsammelt werden...

All those searching for the truth and looking for 'Gerechticheit', Niclaes claims, should be gathered into the 'Denste der Lieften'. The description is vague and the 'Denste der Lieften' seems more to allude to a spiritual church in which all 'Lief-hebberen der Waerheit' would be welcome. This suggestion is further underlined if we look at the passage which directly follows this call. Niclaes there encourages people from all beliefs and social positions - 'van wodane Natien unde Religien se oick synt' (sig. A3v) - to unite; importantly, Niclaes does not clearly state that they should join his movement. However, later in the work, when his movement comes into focus, he becomes bolder and adapts this earlier picture of a wide spiritual movement. Those looking for 'Gerechticheit' should indeed join his organisation. Niclaes sets this out very subtly; the names he earlier uses to refer to this, seemingly, broad spiritual church are now given a possessive article. The more vague 'Denste der Lieften' becomes 'unse Denste der Lieften', and Niclaes so leaves no doubt as to how the 'goedtwillige' believers should organise themselves, i.e. under the umbrella of his movement (sig. I2v):

... alle goedtwilligen to de uprechte Gerechticheit in Iesu Christi ... solen oick ... sick to unsen alderhilligesten Denst der Lieften unde syner Forderinge vordemodigen...

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135 The Biblical glosses that do appear link mostly to books of the New Testament. The reason for this will become clear at the end of this section where I will discuss the importance of the figure of Christ in connection with the concept of Love.
Of course, Niclaes meant this all along, but it is interesting to see how, as for the concept of Seed, full understanding of Niclaes’ aims and claims is only given towards the end of the discourse. The added pronoun undoubtedly also created the feeling of a bond among those Familists who read the work, and underlines Niclaes’ concern for his followers to feel a sense of belonging and to support each other.

But there is more. That precise combination ‘Denste der Lieften’ is also employed in the work, not in reference to Niclaes’ movement, but to Jesus Christ and his teachings (sig. F4v, H1r) - note that the first quotation in the first edition (sig. F8v) misses Niclaes’ reference to ‘synes Denste der Lieften’:

... zynter oick ... vele, die sick an de Erschininge der Thoekumpste Iesu Christi ... unde an de Bedeninge des Wordes unde Lere Iesu Christi, ergeren unde de Forderinge der Gehorsamheit synes Denstes der Lieften vorachten...

... so hebben se sick oick ... van de Gehorsamheit der Forderinge des Denstes der Lieften Iesu Christi afgewendet...

This brings us to the strong connection between the concept of Love and Jesus Christ to which Niclaes frequently alludes on the final pages of the Evangelium Regni (sig. M3r):

Went wie sick in dessem Dage, to idt Lichaem Jesu Christi; under de Gehorsamheit der Lieften; nicht vorsammelt, sundr syn Herte daer-af wendet, de sal in synem Herte vorwostet ... worden, unde gein Deel hebben in dessem hilligen Dage syner Thoekumpst...

This passage is very important and yields many different levels of interpretation. First of all, Niclaes implies that those who will not turn to the ‘Gehorsamheit der Lieften’, which by now he has made clear to refer to his movement, will be doomed and have no part in Christ’s coming. This is all still quite straightforward. However, the way in which they should join Niclaes’ movement is not described exactly and seems to be connected with ‘idt Lichaem Jesu Christi’. It is useful, here, to think of Smith’s interpretation of the Evangelium. He saw the work as an allegorical tale of the spiritual process that leads to ‘Vorgodung’. Within this context, we can interpret...
Niclaes' reference to 'the body of Christ' as an allusion to those spiritual steps the figure Christ embodies: the 'Crucifixion', as a reference to the 'spiritual death' which would cleanse the 'true' believers from sin and lead to their 'Resurrection' as 'perfect' believers in this life. This interpretation seems supported by Niclaes' claims a few lines further down that 'uns alles ;uth dem Denste der Liefte;' will be made 'levendich' again 'in Em [i.e. Jesus Christ]'.

The importance of the link between the Familist movement and Jesus Christ is repeated in the final sentence of the Evangelium (sig. M4v), in which Niclaes calls Jesus Christ 'idt godtsalige Wesen der Gemeinschop des hilligen Geistes der Lieften'. Here, Niclaes makes Christ into the ultimate core of the 'Gemeinschop der Lieften'. He summarises his whole movement, the whole of his doctrines, into the figure of Christ and Christ's symbolic importance in the process that leads to the state of 'Vorgodung'. The significance of the implications carried by Niclaes' concept of 'Liefte' cannot be stressed enough.

B. Vorgodung

a. Occurrences

(Mit Gode) (un)vorgodet: sig. A3r (1); H3r (1); H3v (1); I1v (2); K1r (1); K3v (1)

b. Analysis

Despite the lack of explicit references to the concept of 'Vorgodung' in the Evangelium Regni, I have chosen to include it in this section for it is so fundamental for the understanding of the text. In spite of its rare use, the importance of the term is stressed by its appearance in the first sentence of the work, where Niclaes refers to his own attainment of this godly state. Then the word temporarily disappears
from the text; throughout his retelling of the history of the Old Testament, Niclaes refrains from mentioning it even once. The second time the term appears is when he describes the different stages the ‘true’ believers in Christ pass through (sig. H3r):

... die den Over-gangk uth Fleisch, im Geiste, unde uth Dodt, im Leven, mit Christo geholden hadden: unde also Christo ingelyvet unde mit Gode vorgodet waren ... dath se den Over-gangk mit Christo helden, unde de Vornyeinge eres Geistes unde Gemotes erlangeden, in Iesu Christo...

This allegorical description of how Niclaes’ followers can attain the state of ‘Vorgodung’ underlines Niclaes’ belief in the value of, as Smith noted, the Bible as a figurative tale - Christ being used as a ‘figure’, a ‘type’. Moreover, it now becomes clear why the term was not used in Niclaes’ summary of the Old Testament: the very concept was reserved for those believers who came after Christ and followed him in his ‘death’. This passage gives a good idea of the language Niclaes employs when speaking about ‘Vorgodung’ and sets out what Niclaes considers as the necessary steps to be taken by man before attaining deification. A crucial phase the believers need to pass through is what Niclaes calls ‘the passing over from the Flesh into the Spirit’. On several occasions in the Evangelium Regni, Niclaes explains this process. Although I have already described it in the chapter above, it may be useful to repeat its main steps. The believer is urged to experience Christ’s sufferings and death, by eating his flesh and drinking his blood. The believer will then, like Christ, be made alive again, in what Niclaes calls ‘de andere Geborte’, so becoming a follower of Christ ‘na de Geiste’. Going through this ‘Pass-over’, one becomes ‘ingelyvet’ in Christ and ‘vorgodet mit Gode’. After Niclaes’ explanation of how man can become deified, he discusses, on the next page, those whom he labels as ‘unvorgodele Minschen’ (sig. H3v):

... unvorgodele Minschen ... die Christum nicht tho-rechte gemenet, noch, na de Waerheit, idt Paesschen mit Christo geholden hadden unde, dorch den Dodt Christi, idt ewige Leven nicht ingegaen waren...
Niclaes obviously distinguishes between what he sees as the ‘right believers in Christ’ and those who are not: the ‘right believers’ being those who have followed Christ in his death and attained ‘eternal life’.

It should be noted that, every time Niclaes mentions the concept, it is not directly connected with his own movement, but in the tradition of the *Theologia Germanica* he merely links it to the figure of Christ, who in a literal sense embodied both human and divine elements and in Niclaes’ allegorical tale exemplified the spiritual phases of the complex process of ‘becoming Godded’. Interestingly, one of the essential points from which the text of the *Evangelium* is developed, is explicitly mentioned so little. Of course, it was a highly heretical concept to have spelt out literally and, unlike the other connotations and allusions found in the work, there was no way Niclaes could deny its meaning if he were confronted on the issue by his attackers or the authorities. Nevertheless, Niclaes seems to have approached the concept with particular care: he never claims that this ‘Godded’ state is directly connected to his own person or even his movement. He always underlines the fact that all ‘true’ believers can reach it through Jesus Christ, as in that way, he, also, had become ‘vorgodet’. It is not completely clear why Niclaes did so. Did his true belief, his respect even, for the concept restrain him from claiming it solely for his own movement and linking it to his prophetic self? I do not think so. Maybe there is a more realistic explanation, the one I have just referred to. By linking ‘Vorgodung’ solely to Christ and by leaving his movement out of any direct connection to it, there was still one way he could escape its heretical implications. If this was indeed what Niclaes was aiming at, then the tactics he uses here may well exemplify another aspect of the well-planned textual organisation of his writings.

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136 As Niclaes phrased it (sig. K3v): ‘So heft Godt ... My HN ... van dem Dode erwecket, unde dorch Christum levendich gemaket ... unde My mit Em vorgodet...’. Note how Niclaes portrays himself as an utterly passive factor in the process.
C. De Beloften

a. Occurrences

*Belofte(n):* sig. A3r (1); B4r (2); C2r (2); C2v (1); C4r (3); C4v (3); D1r (6); D1v (6); D2r (1); D4v (5); Elr (1); Elv (2); E2r (3); E2v (1); E4v (1); Flv (1); F2r (3); G1v (1); G3v (1); G4r (1); H1v (1); H2v (1); K4r (1); L1v (1); M2v (1). *Na de/syne* [i.e. God’s] *Beloften:* sig. A3r (2); A4v (1); B1r (1); B2r (1); C2r (1); E2v (1); Flv (1); G3v (1); G4r (1); G4v (3); H1v (1); H2v (1); H3r (1); I1r (1); I3r (1); I3v (1); K1r (1); K3v (1); K4r (2); L2r (2); M2v (1); M3v (1)

b. Analysis

I have set out before that the promises made by God to man play a highly important role in the *Evangelium Regni*. We have seen how Niclaes constantly and openly states that the founding of his movement is the last phase of God’s eternal plan and a result of God’s promises in the Bible. The promises are, for Niclaes, the palpable ‘evidence’ of God’s preparations for the whole of mankind. In the first sentence already, it is made clear that Niclaes’ ‘election’ and the consequent founding of the Family are both the result of the promises God made to mankind (sig. A3r):

... HN ... erwelet to ein Bedener des genadigen Wordes ... na syne [i.e. God’s] Beloften ... um den Gelovigen, eine groit Licht des waren Wesens Iesu Christi tho-tho-bringen...

The function of the concept in the text is plain and very straightforward, and was the main focus of Martin’s analysis of the *Evangelium*. Note that, as in the case of ‘Liefte’, the phrase ‘na de/syner Beloften’ features much more frequently in the revised edition. The first edition connects Niclaes’ call much less directly to God’s promises, even though this connection is, of course, implied.
Chapter III

The function of the concept being clear, it might be interesting to look in more detail into the way the Biblical glosses operate in supporting the claims Niclaes made for himself and his movement. There is just one gloss Niclaes adds directly to the phrase ‘na de/syner Beloften’ throughout the whole work, although he repeats it in several instances. The first time this gloss appears is at the first mention of the phrase, and it is added to the quotation given above, where we find a marginal reference to the prophet Jeremiah. In chapter 33, Jeremiah prophesies the fulfilment by God of the promises made to David\textsuperscript{137}: David’s ‘righteous descendant’ will rule and Righteousness will reign. By means of this rather obvious reference, Niclaes immediately captures much of the deeper meaning behind the text: Niclaes is the descendant of David who God foretold would rule the earth.

D. Gerechticheit

a. Occurrences

\textit{Gerechticheit:} sig. A3r (3); A3v (1); A4r (1); B1r (2); B1v (4); B2v (5); B4r (1); C1r (5); C1v (2); C2r (1); C2v (1); C3r (2); C3v (2); D1r (1); D4r (3); D4v (3); E1v (1); E2v (1); E3r (1); E3v (1); E4v (1); F3r (1); G2v (2); G3r (4); G3v (1); G4v (3); H1v (2); H2r (2); H3v (1); H4v (1); I1r (5); I1v (6); I2r (1); I2v (6); I3v (1); I4r (1); K1r (3); K1v (1); K2r (3); K2v (7); K3v (3); K4r (2); L1r (1); L1v (3); L2v (3); L3r (1); L4r (1); M1r (2); M3r (1); M2v (2)

\textsuperscript{137} As Jeremiah phrases it: ‘The day will come, says the Lord, when I will do for Israel and Judah all the good I have promised them (14). At that time I will bring to the throne of David a righteous descendant, and he will do what is just and right throughout the land (15). In that day Judah will be saved, and Jerusalem will live in safety (16).’.
Another fundamental concept in Niclaes' doctrines and the text of the *Evangelium Regni*, to which I have given little attention so far, is Righteousness. The importance of Righteousness in the Bible is well known, and in Catholic theology Original Righteousness was to play a significant part as God's free gift to man of perfect rectitude in his original condition before the Fall (Livingstone 1997: 1195). Let us now look at what meanings Niclaes gives to the term in the *Evangelium* and how it features in the rhetorical organisation of the text.

The concept of Righteousness, as can be noted from the list above, appears consistently all through the text of the *Evangelium*; its first appearance being on the first page where it is used three times. From the beginning of the text onwards, Niclaes repeatedly addresses those whom he describes as all people 'die nha Gerechticheit hungeren' (sig. A3), so that it becomes one of the recurrent ways for Niclaes to address his readers. It is, again, only towards the end of the work that the connection between those who search for Righteousness and Niclaes' movement becomes fully clear, when Niclaes frankly sets out what he expects from them (sig. I2v): ‘... alle Goedtwilligen to de uprechte Gerechticheit in Jesu Christo ... moten ... sick to uns unde unser Gemeinschop versamelen...’. Note that this fairly unmistakable phrase is missing in the first edition.

But what did Niclaes want his readers to understand as Righteousness? Only in the last phase of the work does Niclaes openly and in detail explain what he considers as ‘attaining the state of Righteousness’ (sig. I4v):

> ... um dorch desulve ;in unseren Geiste; van dem Dode der Sunden afgesundert, Christi, mit synem gelycken Dode ingeplantet, unde also uth dem Dode Christi erwecket, unde na alle Gelyckheit Godes ;in der Krafte synes hilligen Geistes; levendich gemacket tho werden, in uprechte Gerechticheit.

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138 E.g. the notion features in the title of one of Niclaes' earliest and most exhaustive works *De Speghel der Gerechticheit*.
The state of Righteousness could thus only be reached if the believer had died in Christ and been resurrected. As set out before, Niclaes believed that the Catholic ideal of the Original Righteousness could be attained once the believer had become 'vorgodet' and that he or she would thus inherit the perfect state man had before the Fall.

But there lie yet more connotations behind the concept. Very early in the text, the term is employed in a traditional Biblical phrase (sig. A4r): ‘... de Here vorordent ... heft; den gantzen Erdbodem tho richten mith Gerechticeit [sic] ...’. Niclaes speaks here about the Judgment of the world, which, according to him, was at hand and during which He would judge all men with Righteousness. The full meaning of the sentence becomes clear when the marginal gloss (Acts 17:13) which Niclaes adds to Righteousness here, is taken into consideration. It is worthwhile to give in full the Biblical passage to which Niclaes refers:

For he has set a day for judging the world with justice by the man he has appointed, and he proved to everyone who this is by raising him from the dead.

The suggestion Niclaes makes cannot be mistaken. Niclaes had just said before that he had been 'erwecket vam dode' (sig. A3r): he was the one whom God had raised as part of His Judgment of the world\(^\text{139}\). The way the sentence is presented in the text does not immediately suggest this interpretation, but, when the phrase is connected with the Biblical reference Niclaes adds, its much more controversial meaning becomes clear. Niclaes openly manipulates the Bible here to substructure his calling. This same phrase about the Judgment at hand, with glosses to Acts 17:13, returns frequently throughout the whole of the Evangelium (e.g. sig. K3v, L1r).

\(^{139}\) That this claim infuriated Niclaes' attackers is not surprising: in the mid-seventeenth century, the Cambridge theologian Henry More wrote that if the Scriptures were really foretelling Niclaes' prophecy they would have had to say that 'God now commands all men everywhere to repent, namely, because 1500 years hence he will raise up H. Niclaes from the dead, in a moral sense, who shall judge the world with his doctrine' (quoted in Moss 1981: 35).
In his retelling of the Bible, Niclaes frequently speaks about the concept of Righteousness - from the Fall to the death of Christ. The different events in the Bible Niclaes summarises are presented as steps in the direction of Righteousness. This is the case for the Old Testament, where those in possession of God’s ‘uprechte Saedt’ - ‘... nomplick van Seth ... in de Plaetze van Abel beth to up Noe unde up Sem...’ - searched for Righteousness ‘up der Erden’ (sig. C1r), and in his summary of the New Testament where he writes that ‘Jesus is an de Jordan gekomen, um van Johannes gedopet tho werden, up dath alle Gerechtigheid, nae em ... solde vollenbracht werden’ (sig. F3r). The events in the Bible become a sort of preparation for Niclaes and his movement; their passing was a necessary requirement for his ‘rise’, for his ‘righteous’ role in God’s Judgment of the world, and also to pave the way for his followers to attain this perfect state of Righteousness.

The notion is, thus, both connected to Niclaes’ main doctrine of ‘Vorgodung’ - Righteousness being the state the ‘vorgode Minschen’ could attain - and to Niclaes’ own role in God’s plan - God’s ‘righteous Judgment’ of the earth meant Judgment through Niclaes’ person. Niclaes’ admonitions to his readers that if they wanted to attain Righteousness they ought to join his movement make, therefore, complete sense: Niclaes seems to have reserved the attainment of the righteous state solely for the ‘true’ followers of his doctrines.

E. Utherweleden

a. Occurrences

(Uth)erweleden/erwelet: sig. A3r (2); A4r (1); A4v (2); B2r (1); B3r (1); B3v (2); B4v (1); C2r (1); C3r (1); C3v (1); C4v (1); D2r (1); D2v (2); E1r (1); E3v (1); G3r (1); G3v (1); G4r (2); H4v (1); K3r (1); K3v (2); L1r (1); L2r (1); L3v (2); M1r (2); M2v (1); M3v (1); M4r (1)
Chapter III

b. Analysis

This last term bring us to another particular aspect of Niclaes’ beliefs. The idea of election was in the sixteenth century the object of many theological debates among Catholics and Protestants, and it is, therefore, interesting to consider how Niclaes understood it. The term appears twice in the first sentence of the work: Niclaes speaks about himself being elected by God to become ‘ein Bedener des genadigen Wordes’, and a couple of lines further followed by Niclaes’ statement that all which will come to pass through him has been prepared by God for ‘syne Utherweleden’. But who were these ‘Utherweleden’ and how strict was Niclaes’ idea of predestination?

The concept of election seems to have had for Niclaes one clear function. Smith had been one of the first to point out how Niclaes’ vocabulary is particularly concerned with alluding to the sense of a bond among his adherents; this aspect is very well captured in how Niclaes speaks about his followers and to them (sig. A4v):

... dit nye Wunder-werck Godes ... heft Godt nu in dessem syne hilligen Dage der Lieften mit Uns ;syne Utherweleden; angeheven...

By calling his followers God’s ‘Utherweleden’, Niclaes sets himself and his movement apart from those who have not been chosen by God and who have no part in God’s ‘Wunder-werck’. But the bonding is not merely limited to Niclaes’ contemporary followers: the same terminology is also used when Niclaes speaks about the crucial figures in Biblical history140. As we know, Familists did not separate themselves from the communities they were living in, but this particular way in which the prophet addressed his readers must have given them a sense of standing apart from, or even above, their neighbours and of being part of a ‘secret’ community - all elements which were also captured in the movement’s own names.

140 Noah, Abraham, Solomon and Christ are all presented as God’s ‘Utherweleden’.
A mildly-expressed predestinarianism is thus found in Niclaes’ writings with the specific aim of creating a sense of belonging within the ‘Family of Love’.  

II. Conclusion

Before coming to the particular rhetoric of Niclaes’ key terms, I want to draw attention to their actual ‘physical’ occurrences in the text. Reading through the revised edition of the *Evangelium*, one is dazzled, dazzled by the continuous repetition of Niclaes’ central terminology. The repetitive character of the work imprints the key terms of Niclaes’ thinking into the reader’s mind, even if their actual meaning is not, especially on first reading, immediately clear. In particular, in the passages which are important for the Family’s doctrines, the reader is overloaded by a dense use of the *Evangelium’s* central terms in very close sequence, as is, for example, already the case in the opening sentence of the work which talks about Niclaes’ call.

The aim of the revised *Evangelium Regni* as Martin saw it - to present Niclaes’ prophecies as the ‘last phase’ in Biblical history - is strongly present in the key terminology of the work. The concept of the promises of God is, of course, the clearest on the issue, but also other terms, like ‘election’, sustain a connection, a bonding, between Biblical history, as the ‘first part’ of God’s plan, and Niclaes’ call. The idea of a continuation from the Creation up until Niclaes’ movement is implied in most of the terminology. Especially through the concept of

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141 The English Familists were reproached by their critics for opposing the doctrine of predestination. William Wilkinson (1579: sig. *4r) complained that ‘neither can this Lovely Family abide the most blessed doctrine of Predestination’, basing this belief on a letter of an unknown Familist sent to John Rogers, which lamented that ‘at this present your [i.e. Rogers’] brethren in Christ (for their good faithes cause they have in your licentious doctrine of predestination and free election) fill all prisons almost in England’ (Rogers 1579b: sig. 17v). The implication was that a belief in ineluctable predestination inevitably encouraged crimes both moral and civil, since the elect were saved - do what they would - and the reprobate were damned - do what they might (Pearse 1994: 164). It seems that for the Familists ‘their’ form of predestination had a complete different meaning and function than that of traditional Protestantism.

142 Note that this does not apply to the term ‘Vorgodung’.
Righteousness, the reader gets the feeling that the events described in the Bible have just been a preparation for what man is now about to experience under Niclaes. Let us now go back to the study of Smith and consider how my findings fit in the framework he set out. My study of Niclaes' key terminology can only further underline the picture he developed. The key terms we have looked at are concerned with either one or both of the two central tenets of the work - the ideal of 'begoddedness' and the sense of belonging to the 'Husgesinne der Lieften' - as suggested by Smith. Thus, the messages contained in the narrative framework of the text are further developed and sustained, not only through the images as Smith attested, but also through the text’s key terminology. As for Seed, most of the connotations Niclaes wants to communicate through the use of his key vocabulary become only fully clear when the reader approaches the end of the work.

The other question I want to address is how this level of the revised edition of the Evangelium compares with the first. The major differences between the two editions consist in the fact that, although all the key terms employed in the second edition also feature in the first, they appear much more frequently in the second, and that Niclaes' claims, which are all also implied in the first edition, are more repeatedly and literally spelt out in the revised edition. In particular, the claim that the Family was the 'natural result' of God's promises is much more strongly present in the second edition. This corresponds with the picture we have of the changes the Familist movement went through by the end of Niclaes' life when he became much bolder about his own prophetic self and the importance of his Family.

4. The Rhetorical Organisation of the Evangelium Regni's Marginal Glosses to the Bible

In this section, I will explore the role of the Biblical glosses in the Evangelium. The particular way in which Niclaes refers to the Bible I have pointed out before - i.e.
his way of referring to different books of the Bible within one gloss - but here I will look at their specific functions in the text. I will begin with a short description of the method I have followed. First, I counted the different books of the Bible referred to in the revised edition of the text and created lists for each book. Then, I tried to link the content and importance of each book of the Scriptures in the Christian theological tradition to the passages where they appear in the text’s marginal glosses, and to explain for which particular functions Niclaes added them. I will only be able to present a selection of the various different connotations many of the Evangelium’s references convey, and the focus lies on establishing whether Smith’s claims concerning the nature of the rhetorical framework of the Evangelium also apply to this level of the text. One major aspect which I will not cover here in detail are the glosses that indicate similarities between Niclaes’ language and that of the Bible. However, in the chapter on the Latin Evangelium, where this issue is relevant for the translation’s discussions, I will consider it more extensively.

This section again takes the form of a list. First, I will give a numerical overview of the different books of the Bible Niclaes refers to in the work. Then, I will discuss the Bible books which are of particular significance for the rhetorical organisation of the main messages in the Evangelium, followed by those which are of secondary importance to the text’s central tenets. In the conclusion to this section, I will try to present the general strategies which seem to lie behind Niclaes’ use of the marginal glosses to the different books of the Scriptures in the Evangelium Regni. In the conclusion, I will also look at the first edition’s marginal references.

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143 The occurrences I will give for each book of the Scriptures relate to the different chapters of each book Niclaes refers to. Since Niclaes can refer in one gloss up to fifteen chapters of one book of the Bible, I felt it would give us a fairer idea of which books he obviously ‘liked’ to refer to if I counted the chapters and not merely the books.
I. Overview of the Marginal References to the Bible in the Evangelium Regni

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th></th>
<th>Old Testament</th>
<th>Apocrypha</th>
<th>New Testament</th>
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<tbody>
<tr>
<td><strong>Zechariah</strong></td>
<td>14 occurrences</td>
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<tr>
<td><strong>Malachi</strong></td>
<td>14 occurrences</td>
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<tr>
<td><strong>Genesis</strong></td>
<td>153 occurrences</td>
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<td><strong>Exodus</strong></td>
<td>44 occurrences</td>
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<td><strong>Leviticus</strong></td>
<td>12 occurrences</td>
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<td><strong>Numbers</strong></td>
<td>47 occurrences</td>
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<tr>
<td><strong>Deuteronomy</strong></td>
<td>30 occurrences</td>
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<td><strong>Joshua</strong></td>
<td>6 occurrences</td>
<td></td>
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<tr>
<td><strong>1 and 2 Kings</strong></td>
<td>20 occurrences</td>
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<tr>
<td><strong>1 and 2 Chronicles</strong></td>
<td>18 occurrences</td>
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<tr>
<td><strong>Esther</strong></td>
<td>1 occurrence</td>
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<td></td>
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<tr>
<td><strong>Job</strong></td>
<td>7 occurrences</td>
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<tr>
<td><strong>Psalms</strong></td>
<td>86 occurrences</td>
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<tr>
<td><strong>Ecclesiastes</strong></td>
<td>25 occurrences</td>
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<tr>
<td><strong>Isaiah</strong></td>
<td>195 occurrences</td>
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<tr>
<td><strong>Jeremiah</strong></td>
<td>97 occurrences</td>
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<tr>
<td><strong>Lamentations</strong></td>
<td>5 occurrences</td>
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<tr>
<td><strong>Ezekiel</strong></td>
<td>27 occurrences</td>
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<td><strong>Daniel</strong></td>
<td>39 occurrences</td>
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<tr>
<td><strong>Hosea</strong></td>
<td>7 occurrences</td>
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<tr>
<td><strong>Joel</strong></td>
<td>14 occurrences</td>
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<tr>
<td><strong>Amos</strong></td>
<td>3 occurrences</td>
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In total, Niclaes refers to 2184 different chapters of the Bible in the Low German Evangelium - 905 times to the Old Testament, 21 times to the Apocrypha and 1258 times to the New Testament. Considering that the text consists of 100 folios, this means that there are on average approximately 21 or 22 references to the Bible on each folio of the text.

II. Description of the Evangelium’s Marginal Glosses

A. Significant Works for the Main Rhetorical Organisation of the Evangelium

a. Old Testament

**Genesis**: 153 occurrences

Genesis is, apart from Isaiah, the book of the Old Testament to which Niclaes refers most frequently. Glosses to Genesis appear to give further context to Niclaes’ description of man’s earliest history, but their main function lies in supporting Niclaes’ claim that his movement was the ‘last phase’ in God’s plan and the natural result of God’s promises in the Bible. That this aspect was of particular importance is attested by the fact that Niclaes adds a quotation from Genesis (12:1-3) in the text which speaks about God’s promises to Abraham (sig. C2r). That the future founding of Niclaes’ movement was the actual promise God made to early mankind is repeatedly supported in the text by reference to the whole of chapter 22 of

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144 Again, the counting was done by hand; a slight margin in the numbers should be taken into account.
145 I am talking here about the seventeenth-century reprint of the Low German Evangelium (quarto format).
Chapter III

Genesis. On one of the last pages of the work, Niclaes (sig. M3v) writes that 'de Segen aller Geslachten der Erden', which was promised unto man 'in vohr-tyden', has now come to pass 'dorch den hilligen Geist der Lieften' - a claim which he supports by a gloss to this same chapter of Genesis. Chapter 22 relates Abraham's preparations for the offering of his son and God's consequent promises to reward Abraham's obedience: Abraham's Seed and progeny will be blessed forever more and will, once again, reign upon earth. Thus, Niclaes and his Family are the final fulfilment of God's earliest promises for Niclaes who inherited the upright Seed will now rule the world until eternity.

Job: 7 occurrences

The particular purpose of the *Evangelium*'s glosses to Job are connected with Niclaes' teachings on the Antichrist. We have seen before that Niclaes had his own view of the figure, for he claimed that the Antichrist was not, as the Protestants taught, the Pope, but consisted in the vanity of earthly knowledge. Thus, all 'Schrift-geleerden', according to Niclaes, carried the Antichrist within them. To underpin his views on the Antichrist, Niclaes refers consistently throughout the *Evangelium* to Job 20 (e.g. sig. H4r, K2r). In Job 20:6-7 we read:

Though the godless man’s pride reaches to the heavens and though his head touches the clouds, yet he will perish forever, thrown away like his own dung.

Job does speak about human pride, but no mention is made of its connection with knowledge and learning. Again, we are confronted with Niclaes' manipulation of the Bible to suit his own theories.
Chapter III

Psalms: 86 occurrences

The Evangelium’s glosses to Psalms are probably the best illustration of Niclaes’ referential system. Within one gloss to Psalms, Niclaes refers almost on all occasions to a whole series of different chapters of this book. References to Psalms are mainly concerned with supporting Niclaes’ claim that, ‘huden ten Dage’, God will judge the world. In the first instance in the text where glosses to the book are employed in that way, Niclaes refers to five different chapters (sig. B2r) - i.e. 9, 45, 93, 96, and 98 - in all of which praise is given to God as the ‘righteous judge’ of all people. It is interesting that Niclaes focuses on the more positive psalms found in the book; those that communicate the happiness God bestows on man, which he then relates to the joy the Familists must feel ‘in dessem hilligen Dage’ of His ‘Wunderwerck’ (sig. M1r). Towards the end of the work, Niclaes sets out in detail how ‘uns Nedderige-herten ... sick vorfrouwen ... unde unse Mundt vol lachens ist ... went groit unde machtich is des Heren Heerlickheit, hyr by uns’ (ibid.), which he links in the glosses to chapters 71, 89 and 118 of Psalms, in which God’s eternal grace is celebrated. Thus, the happiness which the Familists now experience is the evidence that God’s eternal grace, as celebrated in Psalms, is with all followers of Niclaes.

Isaiah: 195 occurrences

The Old Testament book to which Niclaes refers most frequently in the Evangelium are the prophecies of Isaiah. This is hardly surprising. The prophet Isaiah foretold the Judgment of the world and the blessedness of God’s people; all elements which Niclaes links to his call. Because of the dense use of glosses to Isaiah in the text, they become a constant testimony to the claims of Niclaes that his movement was the ‘last phase’ in God’s plan. The importance of the book is further attested by the fact that Niclaes quotes five passages from Isaiah in the text. As we have seen, very early on in the text, Niclaes implies that he is the one sent by God through whom
His Judgment of the world will take place. All through the text this implication reappears, always with a marginal reference to Isaiah 16:5, which reads:

Then David’s throne will be established by love. From that throne a faithful king will reign, one who always does what is just and right.

Glosses to Isaiah are also used to support Niclaes’ teachings on ‘Vorgodung’. In one of the passages in which Niclaes makes little attempt to hide his allegorical reading of the Bible, he refers to the first lines of Isaiah 42 (sig. G4v):

... dorch den Offer Christi, unde synen Dodt des Crutzes, unde Em int Hillige, daer-inne ane-tho-folgen; erlangen wy ;in dessem Tydt; de ewige Vorgevinge unde Reininge der Sunden, unde de Levdich-makinge edder Vorrysenisse van dem Dode.

The beginning of chapter 42 of Isaiah is not at first sight directly concerned with what Niclaes is claiming, since it speaks about ‘God’s chosen one’ who will ‘open the eyes of the blind and free the captives from prison’. Nevertheless, the connotations Niclaes wants to convey are clear: his teachings, and in particular his doctrine of ‘Vorgodung’, show the way in which the believers should worship God, and so Niclaes, or ‘God’s chosen one’, will ‘open the eyes of the blind’. Like this, he makes his theories on the importance of attaining union with the Godhead into the only road to salvation, which God told his prophets would be taught by His ‘chosen one’.

Jeremiah: 97 occurrences

Glosses to the prophesies of Jeremiah are employed by Niclaes in a similar way as those to Isaiah. Often, the two prophets are mentioned in one and the same gloss. Also Jeremiah is chiefly referred to in the Evangelium as a superscription to the Family’s importance as the ‘last chapter’ of God’s dealings with man. Most commonly, marginal glosses to Jeremiah sustain the claim that the ‘Nyen edder
Lesten Dagh’ has arrived (e.g. sig. B1r, E3r), referring to the new dispensation initiated by Niclaes’ teachings.

References to Jeremiah are further employed by Niclaes to support the division that, according to him, existed between the ‘good-willing’ and ‘good-thinking’ ones. The ‘good-thinking’ ones, as we saw above, Niclaes describes as (sig. H3v):

... unvorgodede Minschen ... die ... noch ;na de Waerheit; idt Paesschen mit Christo geholden hadden: unde ;dorch den Dodt Christi; idt ewige Leven nicht ingegaen waren ... uth ere eigene Goedt-duncken, edder uth de schriftellicke Wetentheit ... unde van de ware Propheten, falsche Herders genomet worden...

One of the ‘ware Propheten’ was Jeremiah and glosses to three different chapters of this book (23, 27 and 29) are found in the margin. All three chapters deal with the denunciation of God’s false teachers - as Jeremiah (23:28) repeated the Lord’s words:

Let these false prophets tell their dreams, but let my true messengers faithfully proclaim my every word. There is a difference between chaff and wheat.

Again, Niclaes uses the Bible here to present his teachings on ‘Vorgodung’ as true to God, by presenting the ‘unvorgode Minschen’, and their beliefs, as the ‘falsche Herders’ denounced by God and His prophets in the Bible.

_Ezekiel: 27 occurrences_

The visions of the prophet Ezekiel, although less prominent numerically in the Evangelium, continue the strategies we have encountered for the Biblical references to Isaiah and Jeremiah, and sustain Niclaes’ belief in the arrival of the ‘last age’. The book of Ezekiel, whose main theme is the Resurrection, appears in the glosses to support Niclaes’ personal views on the topic. Ezekiel is referred to on those
occasions - and quoted directly once (sig. K4v) - when Niclaes describes in detail the process of the 'spiritual Resurrection' in Christ of the 'vorgodede Minschen'. The lines (37:12-14) Niclaes always glosses to on these occasions (e.g. sig. B3v, G4r, K4r) contain Ezekiel's repetition of the Lord's words:

O my people, I will open your graves of exile and cause you to rise again. Then I will bring you back to the land of Israel. When this happens, o my people, you will know that I am the Lord. I will put my Spirit in you, and you will live.

It is clear how Niclaes' followers were to interpret this passage: the Spirit which God will put in the dead is a reference to the attainment of 'Vorgodung', and the rising of the dead is the spiritual Resurrection that naturally follows.

Daniel: 39 occurrences

The book of Daniel, like the three prophets before him, features as an important superscription to Niclaes' belief that the state which 'Vorgodung' bestows on those who attain it, is 'idt freedsam Rycke' that God has prepared for mankind at the end of times. Niclaes refers to different chapters of Daniel to sustain this claim; chapter 12, which speaks about the Resurrection of the dead, being the most common and easiest to connect to the Familist doctrines (e.g. sig. K2r, K4v).

I have, however, chosen to focus on another chapter of Daniel which is glossed to by Niclaes to support this same claim. The passage (sig. G4v) starts with Niclaes' detailed description of how man can attain the godly status in words we know all too well by now. Niclaes ends the description by stating that God 'by uns' has put an end to the 'lesten vordeleden Ryckes Babel' by means of 'datsulve Waeraftige', referring to the process of 'Vorgodung', and has established 'ein freedsam Ryck synen Hilligen', while glossing in the margin to Daniel 2. This chapter relates how Daniel was brought before Nebuchadnezzar to explain the king's prophetic dream. The dream predicts how many kingdoms after Nebuchadnezzar's reign will be
established, until God judges the time right to 'set up a kingdom that will never be destroyed'. The predictions in Nebuchadnezzar's dream, as Niclaes implies, refer to the 'spiritual Kingdom' all 'vorgode Minschen' carry within.

Zephaniah: 23 occurrences

The majority of the glosses to Zephaniah in the Evangelium are concerned with sustaining Niclaes' belief that the Judgment of the world is at hand. From the passage here, it will become clear that, for Niclaes, the process of 'Vorgodung' also plays an important part in this Judgment (sig. H3v):

... Godt wil nu up dessen Dach mit allen syne Hilligen ;die de ware Lidtmaten synes [i.e. Christ's] Lyves synt ... den Erdtbodem richten mith Gerechticheit.

Niclaes relates this passage to Zephaniah 3, in which Jerusalem's rebellion against God is described and His warnings given against the 'evil kingdoms' on which He will pour out his 'fiercest anger and fury'. The implications are, in my opinion, very subtle. According to Niclaes, the 'vorgode Minschen' or 'de Lidtmaten' of Christ will be saved in God's Judgment, while, as Niclaes' interpretation of Zephaniah's warnings might suggest, the 'unvorgode Minschen' which belong to the 'evil Kingdoms' will be destroyed. The rhetoric of this passage is an excellent example of the subtleties interwoven in the many levels of the work.

b. Apocrypha

2 Esdras: 21 occurrences

Despite the rather limited numerical appearance of 2 Esdras in the marginal glosses of the Evangelium, the book plays an important role in the rhetoric of the work, not
least because of Niclaes’ special relationship with the prophecies of Esdras. 2 Esdras is one of the apocrypha of the Old Testament; that group of books which have usually formed part of the western Bible but which were excluded from the Jewish canon (Hamilton 1999: 5). The work is an apocalypse, with a rich repertory of prophetic images and a strong eschatological tendency. Moreover, it is the only book in the Old Testament to name Jesus Christ. Niclaes was very much attracted to 2 Esdras, and his esteem for the work is shown in his addition on the title page of almost all his revised printed works and their translations of a medallion with the tetra-grammaton encircled with the device ‘Coronae assimilabo iudiceum meum’, taken from 2 Esdras 5:42, where the Lord says, ‘I will liken my judgment unto a ring’ (ibid.: 137):

Engraving on the title page of Hendrick Niclaes’ Low German *Evangelium Regni* (2nd edition) of 1575 (Cologne)
Glosses to the Second Book of Esdras appear in the Evangelium especially towards the end. Because of the apocalyptic character of the work, almost all references to the book are concerned with supporting Niclaes’ beliefs that with his movement God’s final Judgment had been introduced, as well as the establishment of His Kingdom on earth. The chapter of 2 Esdras most frequently referred to in the Evangelium - i.e. 8 times - is the eighth chapter of the work, which speaks about the opening of Paradise at the end of times. One of the passages to which Niclaes adds a gloss to this chapter of 2 Esdras contains the following claims (sig. L4r):

... uth unserem alderhilligesten Denste der Lieften ... wert juw allen, de Dore der hemmelsche Waerheit, de Porte des Rycke Godes der Hemmelen, de Ingangk des Paradys Godes edder Lust-gaerdes des Heren ... opengedaen.

Niclaes’ statements are plain enough: he uses the prophecy of Esdras to support the claim that for the followers of his doctrines Eden will be opened. The implication is, of course, that Niclaes is not talking here about a literal opening of ‘God’s Kingdom of heaven’, but of an allegorical paradisiacal state, attainable in this life for his ‘begodded’ followers.

c. New Testament

Luke: 95 occurrences

The Gospel according to Luke serves a double function in the Evangelium. It gives further context to Niclaes’ retelling of the events in Christ’s life and supports the particulars of Niclaes’ theology. In Luke, the activity of the Holy Spirit as an inspiration of the Christian community is highly significant (Livingstone 1997: 1005). Thus, Niclaes glosses to the book in those instances where he sets out the importance of the ‘Spirit’ over the ‘Flesh’ (e.g. sig. G2r, K4r). Niclaes’ descriptions of how the believer should go from ‘dem Fleische to in dem Geiste’ (sig. G3v), as a fundamental step in the process of ‘Vorgodung’, are controversially linked by
Niclaes to all chapters of Luke (i.e. 22, 23, 24) which describe the Last Supper Jesus had with his apostles.

But there are more interesting glosses to Luke. We have already looked at the passage in which Niclaes openly claims that God's Kingdom is a spiritual one: ‘... de Tempel des Heren, edder Tabernakel syner Woning, werth staen ... inwendich in Uns, durch dem Wesen des hilligen Geistes Jesu Christ.’ (sig. B2r). What Niclaes means is clear: the 'vorgodede Minschen' will carry God's tabernacle within. This highly explicit passage is supported by references to Luke 17:20-21, in which Christ teaches his disciples that 'the Kingdom of God is not ushered in with visible signs. You won't be able to say, 'here it is' or 'it is over there’’. Again Luke is very freely and personally interpreted to fit Niclaes' own aims.

John: 187 occurrences

The Gospel according to John is of extreme importance in the whole referential system of the Evangelium, for it is employed to support many, if not all, of Niclaes' central doctrines. John is present in the glosses throughout the whole of the text, starting from the first page where seven references to the book can be found. Further evidence of its importance lies in the three passages Niclaes quotes from John.

The central teaching of this Gospel is Jesus, as the eternal Son of God, pre-existent before Abraham and the world; an idea close to the beliefs of Niclaes. John expounds the idea of salvation in terms of 'light' and 'life', in which 'life' should be interpreted as the life that begins through believing in Christ, while salvation is heavily dependent on the death and Resurrection of Christ. In several of Niclaes' writings, e.g. in the Low German edition of the Speghel der Gerechticheit and in the seventeenth-century print of the Low German Evangelium, we find reference to John's concept of 'life' in the opening pages of the work. The woodcut with which
these two works open features the words ‘de Wech, de Waerheit unde idt Leven’ (see illustration on title page). Moreover, John expresses the idea that if the believers practise the same love as Christ has shown them, they will come to enjoy the same unity which he enjoys with his Father (Livingstone 1997: 882-883). It is unnecessary to point out the many ways in which Niclaes could ‘use’ John’s teachings to support his beliefs.

Instead of looking in greater detail at just some of the referential glosses to John, it might be useful here to sum up the many instances in which Niclaes relates his ideas to the book. The image of ‘light’ which is so particular to John is taken over by Niclaes, and he mentions it in his descriptions of the Godhead, Christ, and of himself and his movement (e.g. sig. E1r, F4v, H3r, L4v). The importance of this image is emphasised by its presence on the first page where Christ is ‘idt ware Licht des vollenkomen Wesens’. The Evangelium’s opening page is of further interest for it directly links Niclaes’ own state of ‘Vorgodung’ to John 14:20, where Christ says, ‘you will know that I am in my Father, and you are in me, and I am in you’. Throughout the whole of the text, each time the process of ‘Vorgodung’ is explained, Niclaes will add this same reference to John in the margins (e.g. sig. H3r, K3v). It is interesting to note that in almost all passages where Niclaes alludes to the meaning and the many implications that ‘begoddedness’ carries, glosses to John are added. This is the case for Niclaes’ definition of Righteousness as the ‘perfect’ state which the believers that are one with God attain (e.g. sig. D4v, G4r, H2v), as well as for Niclaes’ descriptions and serious scolding of the ‘Schrift-Geleerden’ or ‘unvorgodede Minschen’ (e.g. sig. F3v).

One of the most interesting glosses to this book of the Bible is probably that which Niclaes adds to the name of his own movement, ‘unse Gemeinschop der Lieften’ (sig. G2v). In John 10, Jesus describes the qualities of a good shepherd who out of love for his flock would lay down his life for them. The reference surely relates to the sacrifices Niclaes was supposedly prepared to make for his ‘beloved ones’, as he sometimes called his adherents, and its purpose undoubtedly lay in giving them a
sense of protection and belonging. Ironically, it is highly unlikely that Niclaes would actually have 'laid down his life' for his followers, since he often fled precarious situations instead of facing them, as he did in 1560 when he left his family to deal with the investigating authorities in Emden, while he himself escaped from the city.

Romans: 128 occurrences

Paul's Epistle to the Romans plays a very similar role in the Evangelium as does John; references to the two books often appearing in one and the same gloss. Romans is a text of primary significance for the Christian theological tradition, and Niclaes, not unsurprisingly, used the authority of the book in the Evangelium in support of his own theology. A short summary of Romans immediately shows us why it features this way in the text. The book sets down that deliverance from sin was a gift from God for all those following the example of Abraham, whose trust in God was counted for Righteousness. It maintains that all believers have the possibility of receiving God's love through the gift of the Holy Spirit, as well as salvation by the death of Christ; while a life according to the spirit and will of God in the unity of the body of Christ will lead those who received the sacramental Baptism to eternal life (Livingstone 1997: 1411-1412).

It again seems a good idea to present the different aspects of Niclaes' beliefs which the book of Romans is used to support. In the first sentence of the Evangelium, glosses to chapter 8 appear to support Niclaes' claim that his 'rise from death' was a natural result of 'de Vorsenicheit Godes unde syner Beloften'. In Romans 8:13, Paul teaches that 'if you live after the flesh, you shall die: but if you through the Spirit do mortify the deeds of the body, you shall live'. Niclaes, in an allegorical way, relates this line to his own 'Resurrection', which he had experienced - in this life, of course - by following Christ 'na de Geiste'. Indeed, just as for John, references to Romans are almost all concerned with supporting Niclaes' main
teachings on ‘Vorgodung’. All main steps which for Niclaes are part of the process man has to pass through to attain this divine state, are related in the glosses to Romans: the true believers who follow Christ ‘in the Spirit’ (e.g. sig. C4v, D1r, G3v) will be ‘baptised in Christ’ (e.g. sig. G1r, H3r) and receive forgiveness for their sins (e.g. sig. C2v, H2r, H4v, I4r), until they experience the ‘second birth’ (e.g. sig. D1r, D4v, H3r, K3r), are made ‘alive’ again in Christ (e.g. sig. G1r, G3v, H2, H2v, H3r), and become ‘one with God’ and ‘baptised’ in the Family of Love (e.g. sig. H3v, M2v). In order to set out his doctrines concerning Baptism in the Family of Love, Niclaes imitates and copies the words used in Paul’s teaching on the sacramental rite of Baptism as given in Romans, which, for Paul, represents the believer’s union with Christ through which he participates in Christ’s death and Resurrection and is incorporated into the body of Christ.

1 Corinthians: 57 occurrences

The First Epistle to the Corinthians takes a significant place in the New Testament for its treatment of love, as the highest of spiritual gifts, and the Resurrection (Livingstone 1997: 418). The references we find in the glosses of the Evangelium, not surprisingly, focus mainly on relating these two concepts to Niclaes’ own interpretations of them. As we have seen before, the first marginal gloss Niclaes adds to ‘Liefte’ is a reference to 1 Corinthians. However, just as for the other New Testament books described above, 1 Corinthians’ main function consists in relating Paul’s teachings on the Resurrection to Niclaes’ main tenet of ‘Vorgodung’. Paul, of course, believed in a literal Resurrection after death, while for Niclaes, Resurrection was a pure spiritual phase, which the Familist passed through in ‘this life’ on the way to ‘Vorgodung’. References to the book appear in Niclaes’ descriptions of how those who have ‘died’ in Christ ‘na de Geiste’ will ‘in dessem Tydt’ be ‘made alive again’ as ‘vorgode Minschen’ (e.g. sig. H2v, G4v, M3v). The use of 1 Corinthians is highly coherent with the way the other New Testament books we have looked at so far feature in the glosses. A trend is becoming visible.
Ephesians: 72 occurrences

The Epistle to the Ephesians, indeed, continues this trend. Ephesians is employed to support Niclaes’ claim that the ‘vorgode M inschen’ are grown into the ‘Olderdomme des hilligen Vorstandes Jesu Christ’ (e.g. sig. A3r, B3r, C3v, I3v, I4v) for they have received the ‘Vorferschinge edder Vorneyinge des Gemotes’ (e.g. sig. A3v, D1r, G2r, G4r, H3v). The chapter which Niclaes glosses to on almost every occasion is the fourth chapter of Ephesians, in which Paul teaches (4:15-16):

We will hold to the truth in love, becoming more and more in every way like Christ, who is the head of his body, the church. Under his direction, the whole body is fitted together perfectly. As each part does its own special work, it helps the other parts grow, so that the whole body is healthy and growing and full of love.

The rhetoric of this passage could almost have come from Niclaes himself - Christ as the ‘growing body of Love’, in which all Familists partake as they become ‘Godded’. As we have seen, it is clear that the expressive style of Paul, and especially his treatment of Baptism and Resurrection, was broadly copied by Niclaes in his descriptions of the process that leads to ‘Vorgodung’.

Colossians: 26 occurrences

In Paul’s Epistle to the Colossians, the role of Christ as the all-sufficient redeemer for all believers is very prominent. Colossians, therefore, features in the glosses to the passages in the Evangelium that stress the importance of the role of Christ in the process of becoming ‘Godded’. The epistle is glossed to whenever Niclaes speaks about the importance of following Christ ‘after the Spirit’ to obtain the ‘dying of the fleshly sins’ (e.g. sig. C2v, C3r, G4r, I4r). Furthermore, Colossians appears in the marginal glosses whenever Niclaes encourages his followers to attain the status of ‘idt Evengelycke-wesen der hemmelschen Godtheit’ (e.g. sig. D4v, E1v, F4v, G2r), so that they will become partakers in God’s heavenly Kingdom.
Chapter III

Hebrews: 117 occurrences

The glosses to Paul's Epistle to the Hebrews are further examples of how Niclaes associates all his central teachings in the Evangelium with the main books of the New Testament. Again, the book could very easily be made to fit Niclaes' theories: Paul puts emphasis on the finality of the Christian dispensation and its superiority to that of the Old Covenant. Furthermore, he encourages all believers to greater faith for the second coming of Christ (Livingstone 1997: 742-743).

I will focus on the references that highlight aspects of Hebrews that are unique to this epistle, instead of discussing its connection to the tenet of 'Vorgodung'. Niclaes uses Hebrews' emphasis on the finality of the Christian dispensation to support his ideas on the sacraments and ceremonies of the Churches. His claims that the 'bildische unde figurlicke Densten' will now cease to exist for they have no function in bringing man closer to a union with God, since they are mere 'Schemen' of 'idt Waerachtige', are supported by references to 8:5 of Hebrews (e.g. sig. D4v, G3v, I2v), in which Moses is portrayed as a servant of 'the shadow of heavenly things'. However, when Niclaes later on in the work modifies his views and warns his readers not to give up the Catholic ceremonies too early (sig. I3v-I4v), he supports his claims with glosses to this same passage of Hebrews! This is a good example of how Niclaes could bend anything written in the Bible to sustain his own beliefs, even using the same or similar references to back up his own contradictory claims.

Revelation: 83 occurrences

The prophetic character of the book of Revelation perfectly fitted Niclaes' cause, and it is quite safe to say that all the visions set out in the book, which Niclaes could link to his call, do appear that way. The importance of this book for Niclaes' claims, as was the case with John, is hard to overestimate. In particular, Niclaes repeatedly
glosses to the last two chapter of the work - chapter 21, from which he also quotes, and 22, both of which proclaim a general Resurrection and Judgment of all souls. Of particular interest are the glosses to the book that appear in support of the two central tenets of the Evangelium - the new and last dispensation heralded by Niclaes, and ‘Vorgodung’- each time Niclaes speaks about God’s Kingdom that will now be established on earth. Chapter 22, a description of the New Jerusalem, is glossed to towards the end of the Evangelium, where Niclaes writes (sig. K4v-L1r):

In welcker Upstandinge der Doden, Godt uns bewyset, dath itzundes de Tydt vorfullet is, dath ... de Doden die in dem Here entslapen zynt; in dessem Dage synes Gerichte upstaen ... welcker oick by uns ;van nu-ann; mit Christo ewichlick leven ... daer hudem am Dage de Schrifture inne vollenbracht wert, gelyck alse daer-vanne geschrven [sic] steit...

The message is clear: the ‘Godded people’ will now live in a paradisiacal state, as described in the last chapter of Revelation, and be the fulfilment of all promises made by God to mankind in this ‘last era’ of salvation history.

B. Books of Secondary Importance for the Evangelium’s Main Rhetorical Organisation

a. Old Testament

Exodus: 44 occurrences; Leviticus: 12 occurrences; Numbers: 47 occurrences; Deuteronomy: 30 occurrences; Joshua: 6 occurrences; 1 and 2 Kings: 20 occurrences; 1 and 2 Chronicles: 18 occurrences; Esther: 1 occurrence; Ecclesiastes: 25 occurrences; Lamentations: 5 occurrences; Micah: 18 occurrences; Zechariah: 14 occurrences; Malachi: 14 occurrences

This rather large group includes all glosses to Old Testament books whose core function seems to consist of supporting and contextualising Niclaes’ retelling of the story of the Bible. One could almost see them as a sort of ‘historical’ reference,
although this would be very hard to connect to Niclaes’ apparent denial of the historicity of the Scriptures. They mainly appear as references to give authority to the different events of Biblical history which Niclaes describes in the first part of the work. While it would go too far to say that these books are never employed by Niclaes to support his own claims, they do not do so in such a systematic way as those Old Testament books we have discussed earlier in this chapter.

_Hosea:_ 7 occurrences; _Joel:_ 14 occurrences; _Amos:_ 3 occurrences

The function of these books in the _Evangelium_ seems to consist of supporting Niclaes’ claims that his readers were living in an apocalyptic and dangerous time. Indeed, the three works have a pessimistic tone: Joel speaks about a plague of locusts, while Hosea and Amos are a complaint against the unjust Israelite society. On several occasions in the text (e.g. sig. B2v, E3r, G1r, G4r), Niclaes, while glossing to the more catastrophic passages of these three books, warns his readers that they are living in the ‘vaerlicke Tydt’ now that the ‘Bosen Aerdt’ rules.

_b. New Testament_

_Matthew:_ 172 occurrences; _Mark:_ 23 occurrences; _Galatians:_ 33 occurrences

Just as for Niclaes’ summary of the Old Testament’s history, there are also New Testament books whose main, but not sole, aim consists in lending authority and in contextualising Niclaes’ retelling of the events in the Bible. Mark and Matthew appear as glosses to Niclaes’ description of the events in Christ’s life, while Galatians has a similar function with reference to the story of Abraham.
Chapter III

Acts: 97 occurrences; 2 Corinthians: 45 occurrences; Philippians: 12 occurrences; 1 and 2 Thessalonians: 26 occurrences; 1 and 2 Timothy: 26 occurrences; 1 and 2 Peter: 49 occurrences; Jude: 10 occurrences

The books I have included in this list do have a place in the rhetorical organisation of the Evangelium, but are not as consistently interwoven with the central tenets of the text as are the other New Testament books we have looked at above. They mainly support particulars of Niclaes’ theology and not the whole complex message behind the text. I will set out briefly the different functions of each book.

Acts has a double aim: it serves as a ‘historical’ source to the life of Christ, while supporting Niclaes’ claim that the world will be judged through him and his movement, for which reason he also directly quotes the work. Glosses to the Second Epistle to the Corinthians resemble those to the First Epistle to the Corinthians, but the book does not support as systematically as 1 Corinthians Niclaes’ central tenet of ‘Vorgodung’. Philippians only has a small part in the endorsement of Niclaes’ beliefs, and references to the letter are limited to Niclaes’ claim that the dead will now rise. Glosses to the Epistles to the Thessalonians also have a rather narrow function in the text and are concerned with Niclaes’ claim that his movement will inaugurate the time of the ‘Christelicke Triumphe’. In the Epistles to Timothy, Paul sets out the organisation of a Christian ministry to combat the false doctrines discussed in the book. References to Timothy appear in the Evangelium’s glosses that relate to the ‘falsche’, i.e. ‘erdische’, doctrines Niclaes set himself to combat. The Epistles of Peter are, again, only concerned with one aspect of Niclaes’ beliefs: they support Niclaes’ claim that only an obedient stance towards Niclaes’ movement will bring the believer to salvation. Lastly, Jude appears in the glosses as a reference to Niclaes’ belief that he is the ‘last saviour’.

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Chapter III

III. Conclusion

The referential system of the second edition of the Evangelium Regni is one of the most complex aspects of the text and most difficult to describe in full - not least for the reason that one is never sure which parts of the Bible Niclaes interprets literally or allegorically. The margins of the text, from the first to the last page, feature glosses to the Bible. One is, again, struck by the quantity of it all. As is the case with Niclaes' use of images and vocabulary, the element of repetition is crucial in Niclaes' referential system, with Bible books and chapters of specific importance to Niclaes, like the last two chapters of the book of Revelation, reappearing up to 40 times throughout the text. Again, we can safely say that, apart from anything else, Niclaes expected close familiarity with the Scriptures from his readers.

The aim of this study was to establish how Niclaes supports the claims that his movement inaugurates the 'last phase' in salvation history, and his reading of the Bible as an allegory of the process of 'Vorgodung'. The findings are quite clear. Smith's suggestion that Niclaes saw the Bible as an allegory of the Familists' inner change is attested in the way the Scriptures are glossed to even more than on the level of the key terms Niclaes uses. The two interpretations of the work, as set out by Martin and Smith, come to overlap each other in the way Niclaes supports them in the marginal glosses. Both the Old and New Testaments are employed as superscptions to Niclaes' most controversial claim that the process of 'Vorgodung' is the only road that can lead man to salvation and Eden - Paradise being now open to all 'begodded' People - as God himself taught his 'true' believers. Niclaes' idiosyncratic reading, interpretation and manipulation of the Bible cannot be overlooked. Even the traditional Last Supper of Christ with his apostles is turned into an allegorical reference in support of Niclaes' teachings on 'Vorgodung'. But the glosses to the Scriptures yield more functions: they sustain literally every aspect of Niclaes' theology set out in the work.
That Niclaes had an obvious preference for certain books of the Bible is not surprising. The Old Testament prophets’ proclamations fit naturally to his claims and so, too, does the apocalyptic character of the books of Revelation and 2 Esdras. However, Niclaes also refers very frequently and systematically to the Gospels and Paul’s Epistles, mainly to sustain his teachings on ‘Vorgodung’. As I have also mentioned in the chapter above, and as had earlier been noted by Smith, it is clear that even the language Niclaes employs to express his personal beliefs maintains the text’s relationship with the Bible, for example, where Niclaes describes the process of Baptism in the Family in words that imitate Paul’s style of writing.

Let us now look at the marginal glosses in the first edition of the Evangelium. It seems certain that Niclaes, in his revision of the work, gave much attention to the reworking of the glosses to the Bible. In the first edition, there are far fewer marginal glosses; the first edition features, on average, half the number of references we find in the revised Evangelium. The first edition’s glosses also support the main tenets of the work, but do not cover every aspect of Niclaes’ teachings, as does the second edition. Nevertheless, those of major importance in supporting Niclaes’ teachings already feature in this edition; the first sentence has far fewer glosses to the Bible in the first edition, but we find the important references to chapter 13 of 1 Corinthians and chapter 33 of Jeremiah which I have discussed in the sections above. It is likely that during the revision of the text much effort was given to searching the Scriptures for other references that could also be interpreted as endorsements of Niclaes’ prophetic claims and doctrines. It therefore seems, from both the key terms and the references to the Bible, that the second edition, although preserving most of the text of the first, was revised with the purpose of supporting Niclaes’ claims more openly. This makes the account van Barrefelt gave of the rift in the Family more truthful than the Chronika, which explained the breach as a result of financial differences; van Barrefelt blamed

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146 I will discuss the issue further in the chapter on the Latin Evangelium, where I will compare the first edition of the Latin Evangelium with this same text.
Niclaes’ presumptuous claims as the reason many of the earlier followers of the movement fell away.

5. The *Evangelium Regni*’s Biblical Quotations

This last section concentrates on the question of which Bible text Niclaes used for the direct quotations in the revised edition of the *Evangelium*. Did he employ a Protestant Bible with which he might have become acquainted during his close contact with followers of Luther in the 1520s, or a Catholic version of the Scriptures which would have best fitted those of his teachings that echo Catholic doctrines, like Niclaes’ description in the *Evangelium* of the Catholic hierarchy as an ante-type to the organisation of his movement? This discussion is partly in preparation of my study of the *Evangelium*’s translations, in which I will explore whether the renditions of the Biblical quotations of the source text were adapted to the Bible versions known to the presumed readers of the target language or to the target public’s particular religious inclinations. For the discussions here, this exploration will tell us more about the stance Niclaes took towards the Bible: did he quote literally or did he adapt the words of the Scriptures to fit his theology? Did he see himself as the latest one to be chosen by God to express and explain anew the words of the Scriptures? The results of this study may also, as pointed out above, tell us more about Niclaes’ complex relationship with the two main religious currents of his time.

First, I will set out the method I have used for the selection of the different Bible texts employed in this comparison. Then I will analyse four of the Bible quotations we find in the *Evangelium*\(^{147}\). Since all quotations show similar trends, there was no

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\(^{147}\) Determining the exact Bible quotations in the *Evangelium* has been far from easy. First of all, all through the work, Niclaes borrows words and combinations of words from the text of the Scriptures, and, as we have seen, also copies the style of the Scriptures. Second, when he quotes whole passages from the Bible, he sometimes adds phrases like ‘secht de Here’ or ‘sprickt de Here’. However, he also adds these same short phrases to passages that are related in the glosses to more than one book.
need to discuss them all in detail. I have opted for those that express the patterns I have observed most clearly and, therefore, were most interesting to analyse in detail. The quotations not covered here can be found in the appendix to this thesis. In my conclusion, I will discuss the implications of this study's findings for Niclaes' beliefs and claims.

I. Niclaes and the Bible in Secondary Sources

I first resorted to the work done on Niclaes' use of the Bible in the secondary sources on the Family of Love. Although the information I found there proved incomplete, it has influenced my selection of the different Bible translations for this comparison. To start, I looked at Niclaes' contemporary adversaries. In spite of the long complaints about the prophet's use of the Bible which we find in all the works of Niclaes' English attackers, only William Wilkinson (1579: sig. M1r) claimed to know which Bible text Niclaes used, i.e. 'S. Jeromes Bible', in other words, the Vulgate. In modern research on the Family, we find the same opinion expressed by Nigel Smith (1989: 183), who unfortunately does not provide an explanation for his suggestion. Nevertheless, my first choice was made. The version of the Vulgate I have used in this comparison is one of the most important first Dutch translations of the work:

of the Bible and are not taken exactly from any of the books referred to, but are sort of compilations or paraphrases (e.g. sig. K4v, L1v). Moreover, in other cases, Niclaes starts quoting the Bible but then adds immediately after the quotation his own words, without breaking the sentence (e.g. sig. M3r). I have not included these and such passages in this discussion; also quotations consisting of only a few words I have left out. The quotations presented in this thesis are those for which it seemed clear to me that they were Niclaes' borrowings from whole parts of the text of the Scriptures. I have only given the first occurrence of the one quotation we find twice in the Evangelium (i.e. Isaiah 57:16; sig. A4v and L1r). I have not added Niclaes' quotation from 2 Esdras (sig. K4v), for the reason that not all the Bible versions selected for this comparison include the Apocrypha.

148 There existed no Low German translation of the Vulgate at the time. I have looked at the first printed Bible in German, the Mentel Bible of 1466, but the work does not shed any more light on my study than the Dutch translation of Van Winghe. In order to save space, I have refrained from adding quotations from the Mentel Bible in this discussion.

For the transcriptions of the quotations from the different versions of the Bible I have replaced the strokes found in the texts by commas, but have preserved the original spelling and use of capital letters. Again, I have left out the few accents found in the texts.
I based my second selection on Alastair Hamilton’s main work on the Family of Love, in which he does not go into a discussion of which Bibles Nicolaes might have used in his writings but describes the particular appeal of Lutheranism on the young Nicolaes. Hamilton sets out how Nicolaes, stimulated by Lutheran ideas, had prevailed on his reluctant father to give him a translation of the Old Testament, and how, as we have seen in Chapter I, he fell into the company of Lutherans in the period between 1521 and 1526, apparently to discuss his reading of the Bible with them (Hamilton 1981: 26). In the Acta HN Zacharias, ‘ein Mede-older in dem Husgesinne der Lieften’, describes Nicolaes’ connection with the Lutherans as follows (Hamilton 1988: 311-312):

... unde wowal HN der Romscher Catholischer Kercke ... nicht affalich wart ... so afsunderde he sick dennoch nicht van den errenden Herten [i.e. the Lutherans] ... sunder umme der Lieften wille, die wij Alle, by einem-ydern, tho bewysen schuldich zynt, ginge he mit se umme ... unde moste he ... mit se van den Waerheit unde Gerechticheit reden unde handelen.

The fact that Nicolaes was introduced to discussions of the Scriptures with followers of Luther I regarded as interesting enough to base my second selection upon. Two of the Bibles in this comparison are Lutheran - one in a Low German version, the other in a Dutch translation:


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149 The copy I have used is held in the British Library (shelf mark: C128.g.1).
150 I have decided to include also a contemporary Dutch translation of Luther’s Bible - I have opted for one of the earliest Dutch translations of the Luther Bible - for the two versions of the text complement each other and often reveal different aspects of Nicolaes’ way of quoting, as can be noted, for example, in Nicolaes’ quotation from Acts discussed below.
151 The copy I have used is held in the British Library (shelf mark: C18.b.17).
152 The copy I have used is held in the British Library (shelf mark: 3040.e.4)
Of course, my choice is biased, but this is a natural result of the many questions that remain on the topic. First of all, we have no idea which versions of the Bible Niclaes had access to, although it is reasonable to assume that those I have selected must have been available to him. Second, there is the language problem. We know hardly anything about Niclaes' knowledge of other tongues or whether he was capable of reading the Scriptures in their original languages. For that reason, I have limited myself here to the versions in Dutch and Low German, the two tongues we are sure Niclaes could read.

**II. Study of the Evangelium's Quotations**

*Isaiah 43:19*

*Evangelium Regni:*
Ick wil ein nye Dingk doen; unde idt sal itzundt upgaen; dath gy erfaren solen, dath Ick in de Wostenie, Wegen, unde in de Wylternisse, Waterstromen make (sig. A4v)

*Van Winghe's Vulgate:*
Siet ick make nieuwe dinghen, ende die sullen nu opstaen, ghy sultse voerwaer kennen, ick sal in die woestijne eenen wech stellen, ende in die onbewandelde plaetsen rivieren

*Luther Bible in Low German:*
Wente seet, Ick wyll was Nyes maken, itzundes schalt upgan, dat ghy ervaren werden. Dat yck Wege in der Wostenye make, unnd Waterstrome in der Wyltenisse

*Luther Bible in Dutch Translation:*
Want siet, Ick wil wat nieus maken, nu salt opgaen dat ghy ondervinden sult, dat ick weghen inder woestijnen make, ende waterstroomen inder wildernissen

It can be noted here and in all the other fragments that Niclaes never copies exactly the words of any of the three versions of the Bible presented above. Niclaes'

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153 It is unlikely that there was any truth in the claim made by some followers of the Family in England that Niclaes knew *all* languages (Rogers 1579a: sig. Elv; my italics)
quotations are re-phrasing of the traditional Bible texts. Niclaes’ quotation shows closer similarity to the Luther Bibles than to the Vulgate. This is clear on all levels of the quotation: the syntactical construction of the *Evangelium*’s quotation is similar to that of the two Lutheran versions and, in particular, the lexicon Niclaes employs in the last part of the phrase resonates with the Luther texts - the words ‘Wilternisse’ and ‘Water-stromen’ are interesting examples.

*Genesis 12:1-3*

*Evangelium Regni:*
Gae uth dynem Vaderlande, van dyne Frundtschop, unde uth dynes Vaders Huse: unde reise in ein Landt dat ick dy wysen wil. Unde ick wil dy tom groten Volcke maken: ick wil dy segenen, unde dy einer groten Name maken, unde du salt ein Segen zyn: Ick wil segenen, die dy segenen, unde vorflocken, die dy vorflocken. Went in dy solen gesegnet worden alle Geslachten der Erden (sig. C2r)

*Van Winghe’s Vulgate:*
Gaet uth uwen lande ende uwen maechschap ende ut uws vaders huys, ende coemt in een lant dat ick u toonen sal, ende ic sal u maken tot een groot volcke, ende ick sal u ghebenedijden, ende uwen naem groot maken, ende ghi suit ghebenedijt sijn. Ende die u ghebenediden, die sal ic ghebenediden, ende ic sal vermalediden die u vermaledijden, ende in u sullen alle die gheslachten der eerdens ghebenedijt worden

*Luther Bible in Low German:*
Gha uth dynem Vaderlande, unde van dyner Frundtschop, unde uth dynes Vaders Huse, in ein Landt, dat ick dy wysen wyll, unde ick wyl dy thom groten Volcke maken, unde wil dy segenen, unde dy einen groten Namen maken, und schalt ein Segen syn. Ick wil segenen, de dy segenen, und vorflocken, de dy vorflocken. Unde yn dy scholen gesegent werden, alle Geschlechte up Erden

*Luther Bible in Dutch Translation:*
Ghaet uth dijn Vaderlandt, ende van u maechschappen, ende uth us Vaders huys, in een lant dat ick u wijsen wil, ende ick wil u tot eenen grooten volcke maken. Ende ick wil u segenen, ende u eenen grooten Naem maken, ende u sult een ghebenedijdinge zijn. Ic wil ghebenedien die u ghebenedien: ende vervloecken die u vervloecken. Ende in u sullen ghebenedijt worden alle geslachten op Aerden
Although not a straight copy, Niclaes’ quotation from Genesis follows very closely the Low German Luther text. The word choice and order in Niclaes’ quotation reflect this text almost exactly: e.g. the terms ‘Frundtschop’, ‘wysen’ and ‘segenen’ we find in the both texts, while the Vulgate features a different vocabulary. From the two versions of Luther, it is clear that Niclaes’ text comes closer to the Low German version than to the Dutch translation.

Acts 17:31

_Evangelium Regni:_
De Here heft einen Dach bestemmet, up welcken He richten wil den Kreitz edder Umloop des Erdtbodems mith Gerechticheit, dorch Einen Man, in welcken He idt besloten heft (sig. L1r)

_Van Winghe’s Vulgate:_
Om dat hy eenen dach ghestelt heeft, inden welcken hy die werelt sal ordeelen in rechtverdicheyt, doer eenen man in den welcken hy dat gheordineert heeft

_Luther Bible in Low German:_
Darumme, dat he eynen Dach gesettet hefft, upp welckeren he richten wil den Kreis des Erdtbodems mith Gherechticheit. Dorch einen Man, inn welckerem he ydt beschlaten hefft

_Luther Bible in Dutch Translation:_
Daerom, dat hy eenen dach geset heeft, op welcken hij ordeelen wil den omloop des Aerdtbodems met gerechticheyt, door eenen man, in welcken hijt besloten heeft

Again, Niclaes’ quotation does not seem to have been taken directly from any of the versions of the Bible presented here. The Evangelium misses out the subordinate aspect of the quotation, ‘om dat’ and ‘darumme’, which we read in the three Bible texts, and the vocabulary level of his text differs from all three Bibles. Nevertheless, the passage is again more closely related to Luther’s Bibles than to the Vulgate. A very important element in the difference between the Vulgate and the Lutheran versions is the fact that the Luther texts speak about the very significant term for Niclaes’ theology, ‘Gerechticheit’, while the Vulgate has ‘rechtverdicheyt’. If we
consider the two Luther versions, it is interesting to note that Niclaes speaks of 'den Kreitz edder Umloop des Erdtbodems' - words which the Vulgate does not have - as if he were combining both the Low German version and the Dutch translation of the Luther text.

John 14:19

*Evangelium Regni:*
De Werlt sal My nicht mehr seen: menn gy (sprickt de Here Jesus Christus to syne Lidtmaten) solen My seen. Went ick leve, unde gy solen leven (sig. M3r)

*Van Winghe’s Vulgate:*
Die werelt en siet my nu voorts niet, maer ghy siet my dat ick leve, ende ghy sult leven

*Luther Bible in Low German:*
So werth my de Werlt nicht mehr sehen, averst gy scholen my seen, wente yck leve, und gy scholen ock leven

*Luther Bible in Dutch Translation:*
Soo en sal my de werelt niet meer sien, maer ghy sult my sien, want ick leve, ende ghy sult ooc leven

In this last example, the strategies we have observed in the three quotations above are reflected anew. Niclaes’ text is, again, not a straight copy of any of the three Bible versions. The addition Niclaes inserts here between brackets deserves some more attention: it could easily be interpreted in the framework of the *Evangelium* as a reference to Niclaes’ teachings concerning ‘Vorgodung’, in which all ‘vorgode Minschen’ are part of Christ’s ‘body’. The differences here between the Vulgate and the Luther versions are fairly subtle. However, within these subtleties Niclaes’ text appears again to be closer to the two versions of Luther’s Bible: the stress in the opening words of the Lutheran versions and Niclaes’ text seems to lie on the words ‘nicht mehr’, a stress that is not as such expressed in the Vulgate. Moreover, the syntactical structure of Niclaes’ quotation is the same as that of the Luther versions. The subordinate clause ‘dat ick leve’ of the Vulgate is not reflected in
Niclaes' text, in which the clause stands separate and is introduced by a causal 'went'.

**III. Conclusion**

For the reasons I have set out above, the major weakness of this comparison is, of course, its limited character, and its results will certainly need to be re-considered in the future with similar analyses for Niclaes' other writings. Nevertheless, within the framework set out on the topic by the earlier students of the Family, this comparison has yielded some interesting results.

In all the fragments we have looked at here and those in the appendix to this thesis, the text of the *Evangelium* follows consistently the Lutheran versions of the Bible more closely than the Dutch Vulgate translation. Both on the syntactical and lexical levels, Niclaes' Biblical quotations seem to follow Luther, and, presumably, a Low German or German version of the text, rather than the Vulgate. One could, of course, argue that because of the specific language Niclaes uses, it is not surprising that the word level and the syntax show similarity to Luther's Low German Bible, but the general strategies observed also apply to the Dutch translation of Luther's Bible. I would go as far as to argue that it is highly unlikely that Niclaes employed another Bible version in the *Evangelium* than that of Luther. I also base this assumption on the fact that, as I will set out in more detail in Chapter VI, the marginal glosses Niclaes adds to point out language similarities between his text and the Scriptures seem to relate to the Low German version of Luther's Bible. My findings, therefore, conflict with the earlier indications given by Wilkinson and Smith that Niclaes employed the Vulgate translation of the Scriptures. I do not

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154 Also for the numbering of the psalms referred to in the marginal glosses Niclaes follows a Lutheran version of the Bible.
155 They do not say whether Niclaes used the Vulgate in Latin or in a translation made from the Latin.
know why Wilkinson proposed that Niclaes worked from the Vulgate\textsuperscript{156}, but it is possible to explain his suggestion as one of the many ways in which the Puritan enemies of the Family tried to stain the movement as a product of the ‘Pope’s pitch’.

If indeed Niclaes based himself on a Lutheran version, then it is interesting to note that he obviously did not feel the need to quote Luther exactly. Not one of Niclaes’ quotations is completely identical to the Luther Bible. Like Luther, Niclaes may have felt that his communication with the Godhead left him the freedom to an inspired interpretation and rendition of the Scriptures\textsuperscript{157}. But this weak connection does not give us a satisfactory explanation as to why Niclaes preferred the Luther Bible to the Vulgate, which in terms of the claims he made towards the end of his life and the teachings set out in the \textit{Evangelium} would have been the most likely option. It gets even more confusing when we consider Niclaes’ views on the Protestants more in detail.

As we have seen, early in his life Niclaes associated with Lutherans, but, as Hamilton (1981: 26) argues, Luther’s works had little appeal for Niclaes. Niclaes maintained to have always opposed Luther’s schism from Rome, and denied that the Pope was the Antichrist. Niclaes argued in the \textit{Evangelium} (sig. K1v) that the Protestants had replaced the Roman Catholic ceremonies, which he respected up to a point, with far more damaging ones:

\begin{quote}
... vele, de Densten unde Ceremonien der Romscher Catholischer Kercke, unordentlick vorworpen unde gelastert ... hebben ... unde also uth ere Wetenheit ;die se uth de Schrifture annamen; etlicke Densten unde Ceremonien ... ingeforet hebben ... unde weinich Lieften unde Gerechtickeit sunder wal veel Haders, unde Partyschoppes, daer-mede angerichtet...
\end{quote}

\textsuperscript{156} Had Wilkinson looked at other writings of Niclaes in which the latter indeed employs the Vulgate?

\textsuperscript{157} This is further suggested by the fact that, as we will see in Chapter VI, Niclaes in his other works, where he ‘quotes’ precisely the same passages from the Bible we find in the \textit{Evangelium}, presents them in different words.
According to Nichlaes, the Biblical literalism of the Protestants had led them to a false understanding of the Scriptures. In Nichlaes’ eyes, their reading of the Bible had caused religious and public upheaval, while Nichlaes was himself opposed to disturbance of the public peace. In the Evangelium (sig. K2v), he even defended the state’s need to persecute and punish the disruptive Protestants:

Derhalven, dorch desse velerlye Misbruken unde Unvorstanden ;angenomen unde gedreven uth de Wetenschoppe der Schrift ... wahr-dorch se einanderen vor Secten unde Vorforers, unde mith manigerleye falsche Getugenissen beschuldigden ... worden de Overicheden der Werlt ;over Velen; to Vorfolch unde Dodinge vorohrsaket.

Furthermore, in reality, the Protestants were the ones who caused Nichlaes and his movement the most problems: both on the European Continent and in England, as we have seen, the Protestants reacted the most vehemently against the Familist doctrines. Then why Nichlaes employed a Protestant Bible in the Evangelium for his Scriptural quotations is all the more difficult to explain. Maybe it was the version of the Bible he was best acquainted with, but why would he ‘undermine’ his claims that he had never been ‘affalich’ to the Roman Catholic Church by choosing a Protestant Bible text? I do not have an adequate answer to the question. Could maybe the fact that both Luther and Nichlaes believed that the ‘dudesche Sprake’ was a Holy language\(^\text{158}\) in which God had chosen to express himself in their days, have provided sufficient a reason\(^\text{159}\)?

\(^{158}\) In the preface to his translation of the Bible, Luther implied that German was a holy language (Hamilton 1981: 9)

\(^{159}\) Also the Theologia Germanica was written by a German in Germany and was proof that God spoke wherever He chose, whenever He chose, and in whatever language He chose (ibid.).
Chapter IV. Translating in the Familist Context: Methodology behind the Study of the *Evangelium Regni*’s Translations

1. Introduction

This short chapter sets out the particular framework behind my comparisons of the original *Evangelium Regni* with its translations. First, I will describe the specific problems connected to this study and the questions my comparisons of the Low German revised source text and its translations in English and Latin have raised. The last section describes the method I have followed during the actual comparisons of the original *Evangelium* with its renditions.

2. The *Evangelium Regni* in Translation: Problems and Research Questions

The first and most obvious limitation of this study is that out of the wide oeuvre of Hendrick Niclaes I have only looked at a limited number of his writings and their translations. As set out in the Introduction, this thesis seeks to gain new insight into the written tradition of the Family but is for practical reasons limited to detailed study of one text and its translations.

The differences between the two translations of the *Evangelium* bring us to another key problem of this research. For the English translations of Niclaes’ writings we have a context. There are accounts of how the texts functioned within the Familist movement and we know something about their translator and the public that presumably read them. Although this information has come mainly from hostile
sources, it gives us at least a starting point. The Latin translation of the *Evangelium Regni* is a completely different case. At the start of this research hardly anything was known with certainty about the works of Niclaes that were translated into Latin, and therefore my approach to this translation has necessarily been different from the one I adopted for my analysis of the English version. In the introduction to the chapter on the Latin *Evangelium*, the specific method of study I have followed is set out in more detail.

The third difficulty of this study lies in the insufficiency of modern theoretical frameworks when studying translations like those of the *Evangelium*. The *Evangelium*'s renditions are very difficult to fit into the theorisation which translation studies have developed for the Renaissance. The problem consists in the exceptional position the Familist translations take up in literary history. As we will see, they remind us of the medieval tradition in some respects, while at the same time being highly innovative on other levels, with translations from Low German in not less than three vernaculars and Latin. One of the main problems, therefore, lies in deciding to which translation tradition we should look when studying and contextualising the renditions of Niclaes' works. Considering the aims of the *Evangelium Regni* and the claims it makes, one is inclined to look at the tradition of Bible translations. Niclaes consistently presented himself as God's last prophet who stood in direct communication with the Godhead, and, for some of his followers, his words were as important and valuable as the Scriptures themselves. It is indeed through the eyes of Niclaes' adherents that I think we should try to approach his works and their renditions. Of course, it is impossible to present a full discussion of the long tradition of Biblical translations, but in my actual analysis of the *Evangelium*'s renditions, when the issues debated require a closer look at certain aspects of this tradition, they are set out in more detail.

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160 To give just one example of the innovative status of Niclaes' translations: the eighteen English translations of Christopher Vittels were among the very few spiritual texts to exist in translation in England before the 1640s (Halley 1986: 98).
Let us now look at which specific questions I have sought to answer by studying the work's translations as a means of reconsidering the Familist socio-cultural and textual history. The starting point for these comparisons has been my analysis of the original Low German Evangelium. The question which naturally arose is how the translators rendered this rhetorically complex work, written in a very individual style, into the target languages. For the English translations of Niclaes’ oeuvre we have a frame, and the questions I have tried to answer follow from this context: for which public was this translation made, and does this fit with the picture modern research has built up of Niclaes’ English adherents? Do the particulars of the text’s translation strategy match the framework the students of the Family have developed for the structure of the English Familist movement, which they say varied in some aspects from its counterpart on the Continent? Does the textual organisation of the translation differ from its source text, and can the changes on this level tell us more about its presumed aims? Did the translation remain an obvious product of a Continental culture or could it function independently in an English context?

For the Latin translation of the Evangelium my study has been both more difficult and easier. Because there exist hardly any firm data about the Latin translations’ history, role or function in the Familist movement, all the findings this comparison brings to light are new and constitute, at the same time, the building materials for the construction of the work’s background. Two main questions have dominated my study of the Latin Evangelium: who made the translation and for what kind of audience was it meant - an international or local market; highly literate sections of society or not?

This part of my comparison focuses on the individual contexts of each of the two translations, but another question this study poses finds its answers in both comparisons. It centres on the possible role of Niclaes himself in the Familist translation process. We have seen before how significant it was for Niclaes to look out for new followers during his Cologne period, when he lost the majority of his earliest and closest adherents. I have also set out how his writings and their
translations were his most important means of attracting new interest in his movement at this point in his life. One of the questions I have therefore posed is whether the personal agenda of this authoritarian but practically and internationally minded man could not, directly or indirectly, be retraced in the ways the translations of his works were produced. Also, Niclaes developed the cult around his own person at the time the majority of the translations of his works rolled of the presses, and it is much more clearly present in the revised edition of the *Evangelium* than in the first. It will be interesting to study whether Niclaes' bolder claims also influenced the make-up of the translations of his works. I have partly tried to answer these questions by looking at the position of the *Evangelium*’s translators in relation to Niclaes the prophet, and, more practically, by studying in how far the translators clung to the original’s every word or took liberties with the source text. As Theo Hermans (1992: 108) pointed out, the closer a translator stays to the words of the original, the more marked the sense of inferiority and constriction on his part; an interesting issue to develop further in the case of the English translations where Vittels, the charismatic leader of the English Family, translated the words of the Continental head of the movement. Of course, even within a literal translation there are other ways open to a translator to diverge from the source text and for that reason my approach to these comparisons has been very broad - the focus points ranging from the general presentation to the detailed word level.

3. Methodology

Choosing a suitable model to compare translations with their source text is never an easy task. I have developed my methods of study with Theo Hermans' conclusions on descriptive translation studies in mind, which state that the existing models are best used within a 'research project that sets out its own parameters' (1999: 71). The method of comparison I have employed in this thesis is selective and functionalist, and I have chosen it as the best way to answer the questions this research poses. It is partly my own and partly based on the work of Lambert and
Van Gorp. The model of translation comparison developed by Lambert and Van Gorp fits the approach I have chosen to follow here. The comprehensive, but open character of their model, which studies translation as a cultural phenomenon in a broader setting rather than as a confrontation of two isolated texts and gives relevance to other than strictly textual elements (Hermans 1999: 64-65), comes close to the aims of my study of the Evangelium's translations. Their model directs attention to the contextual and historical siting of translations, and stresses that translation analysis involves the exploration of two entire communication processes rather than two texts. For most practical applications, Lambert and Van Gorp propose starting from the immediate context and meta-texts of a given translation, continuing from there to textual macro-structures and micro-structures, before working up again to the wider socio-cultural context (ibid.: 64-66).

The two comparisons of the revised edition of the Low German Evangelium with its translations in English and Latin are conducted along similar lines. Following Lambert and Van Gorp (1985: 48-49, 52-53), I will first present a comparison of the source and target texts' so-called preliminary data and macro-levels. In this section, I will compare the source and target texts' general presentations, focusing on the titles and title pages (e.g. presence or absence of author's and translator's name, date of imprinting, genre indication) and the meta-texts (e.g. prefaces, footnotes). I will also check for macro-level omissions, additions and alterations in the translations. A survey like this will provide a rough idea of the overall translation strategy and the main priorities in it (ibid.: 48).


This comparison forms the main body of the two chapters on Nicolaes' Evangelium in translation. My study of Nicolaes' works in Latin also looks at other translations, but their analyses are more limited and do not cover as extensively all the facets of the method I have followed for the comparisons of the revised translated editions of the Evangelium Regni.

I have consistently looked at the sixteenth-century versions of the Evangelium, both in Latin, Low German and English, for the comparisons of the text's preliminary data and macro-level.
The main part of this study consists in micro-level comparison of the original with its translation. This comparison focuses on the verbal, grammatical and rhetorical layers of the source and target texts and looks for shifts in the translation from which the underlying strategies of the translator can be deduced. With respect to the particular make-up of the Evangelium's translations, I have chosen to split the texts' microscopic comparisons up into three levels: word or lexical, sentence or syntactical, and Bible quotations.

The lexical analysis breaks down into two main parts. First, I will describe and analyse how the translator approached the typical Familist jargon, i.e. the key terminology of the Evangelium Regni as discussed in the previous chapter. Second, I will concentrate on the general lexical level of the translations. I will examine the different patterns of the target texts' translation strategies and exemplify each pattern with a set of quotations from the texts. I will give special focus to the possible dependence of the Evangelium's translators on earlier writers. The second main level deals with the comparison of the syntax of the complex sentences of the Low German original with its renditions. I will study how the typical Germanic sentence structures of the source text and Niclaes' personal style were rendered in the target languages. I will present relevant fragments from both the original and translations, and discuss the translator's strategy using these fragments. The last level of this study is specific to the particular context of the Evangelium, because it focuses on comparing the Biblical quotations found in the original with their translations. I will discuss in detail a selection of the Evangelium's quotations from the Scriptures, comparing the renditions with the

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164 Since I have set out which versions of the Evangelium I have used for this comparison, I have not added any other references to the borrowings from these texts apart from the pages on which they appear.

165 Considering the specific content and rhetoric of the Evangelium, I have, in particular, focused on possible similarities between the word level of the translations and religious writings composed in the same language as the target culture.

166 Again, I have kept the original spelling (I have changed 'j' into 'i' in the Latin text), capitalisation and punctuation - I have replaced the texts' strokes by commas - in my transcriptions from the translated texts, but have written in full all contracted word forms.
original and with a selection of Bible translations\textsuperscript{167} produced in the language of the target culture\textsuperscript{168}.

\textsuperscript{167} The exact Bible versions chosen for this comparison depend on the results of my studies for the translations' lexical dependence on other religious works.

\textsuperscript{168} Just as for the Bible quotations of the original \textit{Evangelium}, the quotations not described in the body of this thesis can be found, together with their equivalents from the different Bibles, in the appendix to this thesis.
Chapter V. The English Translation of the *Evangelium Regni*: a Comparative Description

1. Introduction

The current chapter is laid out as follows. I will first present Christopher Vittels as the translator of the English *Evangelium*. Second, I will discuss in detail the different aspects of Vittels' translation of the *Evangelium Regni*, following the methodology set out in the previous chapter. The conclusions to this chapter connect the findings of the analysis with the particular status Vittels had in the Familist movement, as both head of Niclaes’ followers in England and translator of the prophet’s writings.

2. Christopher Vittels, the Translator of Niclaes’ Writings in English

It is now generally accepted that Christopher Vittels translated Niclaes’ writings into English. The English translations of Niclaes’ works, as we have seen earlier, were all made after Niclaes’ revision of his writings in the late 1560s and printed in the early 1570s at the same press in Cologne as the prophet’s revised Low German writings. It is possible that Vittels composed the translations of Niclaes’ works on

169 Remarkably enough, there exist double translations in English of at least two works of Niclaes - the *Epistola Prima HN*, which I will discuss more in detail in the following chapter, and the *Epistola XI*. I have carefully compared these double translations with each other and with the style of writing and the translation strategies Vittels employs in his rendition of the *Evangelium Regni*, to check whether there was a possibility that another translator also worked on the renditions of Niclaes’ works in English. However, the differences within the double translations of these two epistles are very minor and the general translation methods of the two renditions are very similar to those of the *Evangelium Regni*. For this reason I assume there was indeed only one translator at work for the English renditions of Niclaes’ writings. In the next chapter, I will deal with the question of why there were double translations of some of the prophet’s works.
the Continent, although this is uncertain: the period of Vittels’ life between 1559 and the arrival of the translations in England in the mid-1570s is very poorly documented. We have seen earlier how important Vittels’ proselytising activities were for the growth and consolidation of the Family of Love in England. But the crucial significance of his linguistic capacities is worth highlighting too; in Chapters I and II, I have set out in detail the enormous impact the printed works of Niclaes had on the English Familists. That Vittels was fluent in the language in which Niclaes wrote is, as we will soon see, undeniable. However, I have also pointed out earlier that it is not very likely that he had Dutch or German origins. Exactly where Vittels gained this proficient knowledge of Low German is not known; it is probable that he learnt the language during his many contacts with the Netherlands and Germany as a merchant (Martin 1989: 208).

On the title page of many of the English translations of the Familist works Vittels is accredited as the translator, although this is not the case for the Evangelium Regni. The English attackers of the Family of Love, unsurprisingly, not only focused their criticism on Vittels because of his role in the English branch of the movement as one of its Elders, but also because of his primary involvement in the translations of Niclaes’ works. It was common knowledge among the enemies of the movement that Vittels was the translator of the Familist writings, as we read in John Rogers’ remark (1579a: sig. D4r), ‘that the bokes of HN were translated out of Dutch by you [i.e. Vittels] we knew before’. The attackers of the Family had, however, little interest in the methods of rendition employed by Vittels, and, as a result, even today very little is known about the way in which Vittels translated Niclaes’ writings. Only Rogers remarked on it and scorned Vittels for having consciously retained the ‘Dutch-ness’ of Niclaes’ works. Rogers (1579b: sig. D3v) quoted Vittels who, according to Rogers, had claimed that ‘I have geven forth certayne bookes, which are translated word for word as neare as we could, out of the bookes of HN’. These

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170 On other occasions in his many attacks on the Familist writings, Rogers (1579b: sig. B3r) took another stance on the issue and claimed that Niclaes’ works ‘beeing turned into our rude English ... his [i.e. Niclaes’] rude stile beeing written in the Dutch tongue, is rather beautified by translation, than impayred’.

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earliest comments on Vittels’ translation methods, like the initial remarks on Niclaes’ style of writing, quickly gained the status of ‘accepted truths’ among the later students of the Family of Love. Similar opinions to those of Rogers are nowadays still the ‘norm’ in modern studies on the Familist writings, with J.W. Martin claiming in 1989 (208) that:

... most of the publications appear to be no more than direct translations of HN’s works into English, with Vittels assuming no role but that of conveying an unchanged message to a new public.

The question is, of course, whether these later claims were merely echoing the few comments Vittels, according to his attackers, had given on his methods or were based on actual comparisons of Vittels’ translations with Niclaes’ source texts. In this study I will be able to compare them to the ‘reality’ of Vittels’ translations.

Although I have set out the general research questions of this comparison in the chapter above, let us now consider in more detail the specific issues this comparison focuses on. One of the questions bears on Vittels’ charismatic personality, which accounted for much of the following the movement gained in England, and the actual knowledge and experience he had with English religious separatism. Did they influence the way he translated Niclaes’ writings for this particular target public? Another interesting issue concerns the relationship between Niclaes and Vittels. Within the context of the Familist belief in the concept of ‘Vorgodung’, those who were Elders in the movement, like Vittels, had on their own account attained a union with the Godhead. In the Familist framework, this would mean that Vittels stood, like Niclaes, in direct communication with God. That Vittels apparently believed so was affirmed by Rogers, who claimed that Vittels had told him ‘that if he [i.e. Vittels] have any good that it comes from above’ (1579a: sig. K2v), and that Vittels thought himself to be ‘comforted with His holy spirite’ (ibid.: sig. K6r). The question is how far Vittels, as a ‘begodded’ believer, may have felt he had freedom to interpret Niclaes’ own writings and, at the same time, how far Niclaes may have permitted his translators to interfere with his original wording.
Chapter V

The fact that Vittels as a ‘Godded’ Elder may have had communication with God might not have given him, in Niclaes’ eyes, a complete understanding of his teachings. We have seen earlier how Niclaes believed that all his ‘begodded’ adherents could read and interpret the Scriptures for themselves, but that this did not stop him from setting out his authoritative reading of the Bible for those same people.

3. Comparison and Study of the English Translation of the 
*Evangelium Regni*

*I. Preliminary Data and Macro-level*

The first edition of Vittels’ translation of the *Evangelium Regni* has a small octavo format, just as the revised 1575 version of the Low German text. The copy I have looked at seems early on to have been bound together with other English translations of Niclaes’ writings. Even though the English *Evangelium* has no date of imprint on the title page, it is generally accepted that it was printed around 1574-75 (De La Fontaine Verwey 1940-42: 193).

The initial pages of the two works look very similar. Both consist of a title page, followed by a preface written by Niclaes. The title page of the English version is clearly based on the original, and the information given on the Low German one is completely and faithfully taken over by Vittels. The English title of the work is an exact translation of the original’s title:

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171 The work is held in the British Library (shelf mark: 697.a.26.(3)), as is the text of the Low German 1570s edition (shelf mark: C110.b.9.(3)).

172 According to Marsh (1994: 81), the different translated texts arrived unbound in England for reasons of easy transport and concealment. It is thus possible that the texts were bound together after their arrival in England.

173 Both title pages lack a date or place of imprint.
Moreover, both works state clearly that the reader has a revised edition of Niclaes’ *Evangelium Regni* in front of him:

*Dorch HN am dach gegeven, unde vam em uppet nye overseen unde dudelicker vorklaret.*

Set forth by HN and by him perused anew, and more distinctly declared.

The only difference is that in the English a brief statement has been added to the title, i.e. ‘translated out of Base-almayne’. These few words are the only clear reference to the fact that the reader is presented here with a translated text. Nowhere in the work is there any mention of the translator’s name, nor of his views or translating policy. Both title pages feature in the middle the same circular engraving of a medallion which I have described in Chapter III for its link with 2 Esdras. Under this engraving, the source text has three separate quotations from the Bible - Isa 52, Matt 24 and Rev 14\(^{174}\). On the English title page, we find the Biblical quotations of the original in translation. In both versions, the preface follows the title page\(^{175}\): the English preface is a mere translation of the source text. No individual meta-texts by Vittels have been added. The two versions have the same floral woodcuts above and under the text of the preface and open the preface with an engraved initial letter.

In both versions, the core text follows after the preface; the actual length of the two texts is identical (i.e. 100 folios). There are no engravings in either version throughout the texts. Just as in the original, a running title features at the top of each

\(^{174}\) The three quotations speak about the traditional Biblical ‘Evangelium’ which will be preached to all people on earth to introduce the end of times.

\(^{175}\) The preface is an encouragement to read the text.
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folio in the English translation\textsuperscript{176}. The general layout of the two texts is very similar: the English translation is divided into different chapters and sub-chapters\textsuperscript{177}, which exactly mirror the divisions of the original. The whole text of the original is present in the translation; no chapters or paragraphs have been added or left out. Both Niclaes and Vittels use the same system of reference to the Bible. The various marginal glosses to the Scriptures are copied exactly in the English rendition. Furthermore, they both employ a system of 'little hands' printed in the margins to point at important passages in the text; the positions of the hands in the English version matching exactly the original\textsuperscript{178}.

The general outlook of the Low German revised edition of Niclaes' \textit{Evangelium} has quite clearly served as an inspiration for the presentation of the first edition of Vittels' English translation. That the two texts were produced in the same printing office is equally obvious\textsuperscript{179}. The English version of the \textit{Evangelium} is by no means of lesser quality than the original; both editions are crafted in the same simple, but careful way. On the macro-level, the translator of the English \textit{Evangelium} remains practically invisible, while the hints concerning the likely translation method employed on the micro-level seem to suggest that we should expect Vittels' translation to be very close.

\textsuperscript{176} The running title in the Low German version reads 'Frolicke Bodeschop' (verso side) 'vam Rycke' (recto side). The English has: 'A Joyfull Message' (verso side) 'of the Kingdome' (recto side).

\textsuperscript{177} There are 42 chapters in the \textit{Evangelium}. These are subdivided in two different ways: letters in the margins break each chapter up into large paragraphs, while, at the same time, every separate sentence is numbered.

\textsuperscript{178} The 'hands' that appear in the Low German source text and its English rendition are few. We find them at sig. B2v and sig. F3v in the original. They both 'point' to passages in which Niclaes warns his readers not to turn themselves from God, under influence of their 'Eigen-Wysheit'.

\textsuperscript{179} On the typographical level, the editions printed in Cologne also resemble the editions of Niclaes' works printed at the Plantin press in Antwerp and in Kampen; this was because the material used in Cologne and Kampen, as pointed out before, had all been provided by Plantin.
II. Vocabulary Level

A. Familist Terminology

On the whole, most of Niclaes’ key terminology has been translated accurately by their English equivalents. The repetitive character of the Low German source text, which Niclaes conveys by employing constantly the same terms, is also present in the English translation. Since, as we have seen, most of the key terms of the text have a Biblical origin, I looked to see whether Vittels’ translations of them also appear in the English versions of the Bible that existed at the time. Indeed, most of them do; some of the terms already being employed in Wycliff’s Bible, like ‘Seed’ and ‘promises’. But there are nevertheless quite a few aspects of Vittels’ vocabulary which should be given further attention here.

‘Love’, which is the word Vittels uses to translate the key term ‘Liefte’, first appeared in a Biblical context in William Tyndale’s 1526 translation of the New Testament and replaced the notion of Charity that figured in Wycliff’s text. The term features in Vittels’ translations of the many names Niclaes gave to his movement: ‘Husgesinne der Lieften’, the nomination most frequently employed in the Evangelium Regni, Vittels translates as ‘Family of Love’. It is interesting to note the ways in which Vittels renders another name Niclaes uses to speak about his movement: the source text’s ‘Gemeinschoppe der Lieften’ we find translated in three different ways - ‘Communalty of the Love’ (e.g. sig. A4v), ‘Communion of the Love’ (e.g. sig. H3v), and ‘Society of the Love’ (e.g. sig. O1r). The noun ‘communalty’ was established in a religious context relatively early by its appearance in Wycliff’s Bible translation (Pro 29:2). The term ‘society’, in a religious sense, was relatively new at the time Vittels used it. The chronicler Edward Hall was the first to employ the word in a religious sense in his description of the work.

\[\text{\textsuperscript{180}} I \text{ will further discuss in the next chapter some aspects of the English Evangelium’s vocabulary.}\]

\[\text{\textsuperscript{181}} Tyndale made this change following Luther’s belief that salvation stands in faith alone and is not dependent on ‘good works’. Tyndale was heavily attacked by Thomas More on this changing of traditional words (Schwarz 1955: 14).}\]
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of the life of Henry VIII, published in 1548. The word 'communion' which we find in Vittels' text is probably the most interesting. The OED\(^{182}\) ascribes its first occurrence, in the meaning of a religious fellowship, to the Works of Richard Hooker, published in 1600. This would mean that, contrary to what the OED suggests, Vittels was the first to employ the noun in this particular sense.

Also noteworthy is Vittels' translation of the Biblical term 'Gerechtieit' as 'Righteousness'. The word was already in use in Old English - it first appeared in the Vespasian Psalter of c. 825 - but was introduced in a Scriptural context very late, i.e. in the 1535 Bible translation of Miles Coverdale\(^{183}\). When Vittels employed the terms 'Love' and 'Righteousness' in his translation of the Evangelium Regni, these two words had been part of the particular language of the English Biblical tradition for only a few decades and gave to his text a Protestant ring.

Niclaes' recurring references to his readers as God's 'Utherweleden' Vittels translates by the term 'elect'\(^{184}\). The word had only just been introduced into the English language - it first appeared in the Pilgrimage of Perfection of 1526 - and was not employed by the Protestant translators of the Bible. Its first use in a scriptural context dates from 1582 when it appeared in the Catholic-orientated Douay-Rheims Bible.

Although at the time there existed English counterparts for most of Niclaes' key terms, this seems not to have been the case for two of Niclaes' personal, but very important figures, for they are both attested in the OED by examples from later

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\(^{182}\) For the analysis of the vocabulary of Vittels' translation I have used the online version of the Oxford English Dictionary (2nd ed), available at http://oed.com.

\(^{183}\) Miles Coverdale (1488-1569), protégé of Thomas Cromwell, was the first to produce a complete English translation of the Bible that appeared in print. In 1535, while Coverdale resided in exile on the European Continent, his complete Bible text was published in a printing shop in Zurich. In 1537, Coverdale's Bible was reprinted in England under royal licence. His translation was based on the Vulgate, Luther's Bible, Zwingli's Zurich version, and on the Pentateuch and New Testament of Tyndale, while his leanings were Puritan and Lutheran. Nevertheless, his Bible was of a moderate temperament and became essential to the compromise and peace the Anglican Church preached (Partridge 1973: 60-62).

\(^{184}\) I will look at this term again in Chapter VI.
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dates than the composition of this translation. The term ‘Schrift-geleertheit’ is rendered very literally in the English text by the coinage ‘Scripture-learnedness’, a word we find used in no other instance than in the works of the English attackers of the Family of Love (the OED ascribes its first occurrence, wrongly, to the works of John Rogers (1579) and William Wilkinson (1579)). Vittels seems to have had more difficulty with the translation of Niclaes’ key term ‘Vorgodung’. This word appears to have had no predecessors in the English language either\textsuperscript{185}, and Vittels translates it in two different ways, i.e. ‘Godded with God’ (e.g. sig. A3v, L3r, L8v) and ‘codeified with God’\textsuperscript{186} (e.g. sig. I5r, K2r). These two expressions seem to have found an entrance in the particular jargon of heretical writings and were in the seventeenth century employed in discussions on the beliefs of English separatists. According to the OED, Ephraim Pagitt’s \textit{Heresiography} (1645) features both the expressions ‘Godded with God’ and ‘codeified with God’.

B. General Lexical Level

\textit{Germanisms}

The first category focuses on terms Vittels coined on the Low German lexicon of the original \textit{Evangelium Regni}. Vittels’ translation abounds in Germanisms as a result of the very literal approach he often takes towards the word level of the source text. Most of these terms were newly created by Vittels. Some never appeared again after him, but others came later into use in the English language, with the OED ascribing their first attestation mistakenly to authors after Vittels. Let us first look at the words which were particular to the English \textit{Evangelium} and that do not appear in the OED, and then at those which the OED assigns wrongly to authors after Vittels.

\textsuperscript{185} The \textit{Theologia Germanica}, in which the concept was first set out, had not yet been translated in English by this time.

\textsuperscript{186} I will look at this expression again in Chapter VI.
Vittels often preserves the source text's many compound words as such by modelling their translation on the Low German original. Examples of this practice are the grammatical metaphors which Vittels fabricates by creating compound nouns that consist of transformations of the verb ‘to make’ plus composite:

\begin{align*}
\text{‘ein Gelyck-makinge’ (sig. D2r)} & \rightarrow \text{‘a making-equal’ (sig. D5r)}; \\
\text{‘syne Levendich-makinge’ (sig. H2r)} & \rightarrow \text{‘his making-alive’ (sig. G7v)}; \\
\text{‘de Suver-makinge’ (sig. I2r)} & \rightarrow \text{‘the making-pure’ (sig. K3v)}^{187}
\end{align*}

Other new compounds which Vittels created consist of the adjective ‘good’ with an existing English noun. Their occurrences in the text are much rarer than the category just above: ‘de Goedt-willicheit’ (sig. A4v) → ‘the good-willingnesse’ (sig. A6v). Even though the word ‘willingnesse’ is recorded once in 1561 (in an anonymous translation of Calvin’s *Four Godly Sermons*), it was still a very rare term in the late sixteenth century. Here, however, it is combined with the adjective ‘good’. Another such example we find in Vittels’ rendition of the word ‘idt Goedt-duncken’ (sig. A4v) as ‘the good-thinking’ (sig. A6v) for which creation Vittels may have relied on the then existing term ‘high-thinking’\(^{188}\).

Some of the terms, although very few, that Vittels grafted on their Low German counterparts came into general use in the late sixteenth or the seventeenth centuries:

\begin{align*}
\text{‘de eigene W etentheit’ (sig. B4r)} & \rightarrow \text{‘the self knowledge’ (sig. B6v)}; \\
\text{‘de Vorgangk’ (sig. C4r)} & \rightarrow \text{‘the foregoing’ (sig. C7v)}; \\
\text{‘de Affaligen’ (sig. H4r)} & \rightarrow \text{‘the off-fallers’ (sig. I6v)}
\end{align*}

The first occurrence of the term ‘self knowledge’ the OED assigns to Thomas Overbury’s *Newes* of 1613, with the noun remaining in use up until the late nineteenth century. It is to Philip Sidney’s *Apology of Poetry* (1581) that the OED ascribes the first appearance of the word ‘foregoing’. This noun disappeared from

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\(^{187}\) I have put the Low German nouns in their nominative forms in these series and those in the following chapter.

\(^{188}\) Unlike ‘good-willingnesse’, we find the word ‘good-thinking’ used in a few instances in the second half of the twentieth century.
the English language after its use in the 1839 translation of Thomas Hobbes' *Elementa Philosophica de Cive*. The term 'off-faller' is attested only once in the OED in a letter of Robert Hamilton (1688), in which he refers to those who fall away from God's cause. Importantly, he is talking about a context outside the Family of Love.

**Neologisms**

Apart from the words which Vittels introduced into the English language that were coined on the source text, there are a few terms in his translation that were also neologisms but which were not calqued on the Low German original. Let us look at all the examples of this feature I found in the text. The Low German noun 'Thosamen-menginge' (sig. C1r) Vittels translates with the word 'commixture' \(^{189}\) (sig. B8v). The first appearance of this term, in the sense it has here, is ascribed by the OED to T. Watson's *Poems* (1592), and the word remained in use up until the late nineteenth century. The noun 'spottedness' (sig. K4r) for the Low German 'Befleckingen' (sig. I2r) takes up a similar position: in the OED, the first attestation of this word is attributed to John Cotgrave (1611) and, although rare, it continued to be used until the nineteenth century. The adjective 'nurturable' (sig. K3r), as a rendition of 'ordentilicke' (sig. I1v), has in the OED only one attestation, i.e. in the *Confutation* of the Family of Love William Wilkinson wrote in 1579. It is interesting to note that the OED apparently included the attackers of the Familist movement in its corpus, but not the texts from which the, supposedly, newly introduced terms were borrowed.

\(^{189}\) I will look at this term again in Chapter VI.
Bibles of Tyndale and Coverdale

In this section, I will discuss Vittels' frequent borrowings from the Bible translations of William Tyndale (1526) and especially Miles Coverdale (1535). Why Coverdale? The language Coverdale employed in his 1535 translation of the complete Bible was highly influenced by the German sources he worked from. His translation contains many Germanisms, and there is a constant use of doublets and compound words, often coined by Coverdale himself, few of which took root in the English language (Partridge 1973: 101). The recurrent borrowings of Coverdale's Bible in the Evangelium can possibly be explained by the fact that Vittels, in this way, could use language that had already been established in a religious context, while at the same time staying close to the Germanic language of Niclaes' source text. Let us look at some of these examples.

Vittels' rendition of the Low German 'Ogen-salve' (sig. Blv) as 'ey-salve' (sig. Blr) we find first used by Aelfric (c. 1000), but then the word vanished from the language until the sixteenth century, when it re-appeared in Tyndale's New Testament (Rev 3:18). A set of terms Tyndale introduced into the English language in his 1526 version of the New Testament is also employed by Vittels:

- 'Unbesnydinge' (sig. C2v) → 'uncircumcision' (sig. C5r; Rom 2:25);
- 'Tucht' (sig. C3v) → 'nurture' (sig. C7r; Eph 6:4);
- 'Erbarminge' (sig. K4r) → 'mercifulness' (sig. M1v; Rom 12:1)

Note that many of the terms discussed here for Tyndale's 1526 and Coverdale's 1535 translation of the Scriptures also appear in the later versions of the English Bible - as in the Matthew's Bible, the Great Bible and the Geneva Bible - for they all depend in various degrees on these two earlier translations. There is a vast number of words in the English Evangelium that appear in the Bibles of Tyndale and Coverdale. Often these words were well established in the language of the time, and, for that reason, it is impossible to know with certainty whether Vittels used them because they appeared in the works of Tyndale and Coverdale, or because they were part of the standard language of the sixteenth century. Therefore, in the list above, I have only included those terms for which Vittels' dependence on Coverdale and Tyndale seems obvious.

For each of the words found in Tyndale's and Coverdale's Bible texts I will give the exact lines on which they appear.
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Vittels' borrowings from Coverdale's 1535 Bible text are more common in the text of the *Evangelium*, but I will limit myself here to the most obvious examples. Some of the terms we find in the English *Evangelium* Coverdale had calqued on the German sources he worked from and appear therefore, misleadingly, in Vittels' translation as the latter's own coinages:

- 'over-heret' (sig. B4r) → ‘overwon’¹⁹³ (sig. B6v; 2 Esd 6:40);
- 'Heidenschoppe' (sig. C2v) → 'heathenship' (sig. C4v; 1 Cor 7:18);
- 'Handreickinge' (sig. M2r) → ‘hand-reaching’ (sig. N7v; the OED does not specify in which Bible book of Coverdale's text the word appears)

Several words of Old English, some of which had appeared in Wycliff's translation of the Bible and which Coverdale reintroduced in the English of the sixteenth century, we also find in the *Evangelium*:

- 'Schalckheit' (sig. B4v) → ‘guile’ (sig. B8r; Ps 32:2);
- 'Mede-genoten' (sig. E4v) → ‘Proselytes’ (sig. F4v; Matt 23:15 - first use ascribed to Wycliff's Bible where the term appears on the same line as in Coverdale's text);
- 'konninklike' (sig. F1r) → ‘kingly’ (sig. F5v; Hos 1:1 - used for the first time by Wycliff)

It is interesting to note that the vocabulary which Vittels apparently borrowed from Tyndale's and Coverdale's Bible texts was taken from a wide range of books, from both the Old and New Testaments. If one looks at the Biblical passages which the marginal glosses beside the text refer to, we find that often the lexicon which Vittels borrows is not used by Coverdale or Tyndale in exactly those parts of the text to which the glosses relate, but taken from other places in their translations of the Scriptures.

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¹⁹³ The verb 'to overwin' was also used in Old English but in the sixteenth century appeared only in Coverdale's Bible text.
Variations

What differentiates the English translation of the Evangelium from its source text is the care Vittels seems to have given to the variation of his vocabulary. Niclaes' original is, on the whole, characterised by the repetition of a considerable number of words, while Vittels often tries to vary these recurring terms by the use of synonyms - this is not true for Vittels' translations of the key terms of Niclaes' theology - and he does this not just on those occasions where the same words return within the same paragraph or even the same chapter. The repetitive effect of the passages by which Niclaes reinforces his sentences through repetition of the same words several times, sometimes becomes lost in Vittels' translation. The majority of these variations consist of pure synonyms - I mean here words that were equally established in the English language of the time - such as:

\[
\begin{align*}
\text{'Waerheit'} (\text{sig. B1r; B1v}) & \rightarrow \text{‘verity’ (sig. A7v) and ‘truth’ (sig. B1r);} \\
\text{‘Vortrostinge’ (sig. B3v (twice))} & \rightarrow \text{‘consolation’ (sig. B5r) and ‘comfort’ (sig. B5r);} \\
\text{‘Vor-hof’ (sig. C2v; L2v)} & \rightarrow \text{‘fore-front’ (sig. C5v) and ‘Court’ (sig. M6r);} \\
\text{‘Telinge’ (sig. C4r; M1v)} & \rightarrow \text{‘procreation’ (sig. C7v) and ‘birth’ (sig. N6r)}
\end{align*}
\]

However, in other cases, one, or more, of the variations consist of a Germanism, neologism, or a Bible-borrowed word:

\[
\begin{align*}
\text{‘Affaligen’ (sig. H4r; H4v)} & \rightarrow \text{‘off-fallers’ (sig. I6v) and ‘Apostates’ (sig. I8r);} \\
\text{‘Barmherticheit’ (sig. K4r (twice))} & \rightarrow \text{‘mercifulness’ (sig. M1v) and ‘mercy’ (sig. M1v)}
\end{align*}
\]

Doublets

Following the stylistic trends of his time, Vittels' translation of the Evangelium Regni abounds in doublets. Most commonly he uses doublets that consist of two synonyms of the Low German term he translates:

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\[104\] We have looked at these words in more detail in the categories above.
Chapter V

‘vor-dragen’ (sig. B1r) → ‘express or declare’ (sig. A7v); ‘bloyen’ (sig. B2r) → ‘flourish or blossom’ (sig. B2r); ‘underscheiden’ (sig. C1v) → ‘distinct or divide’ (sig. C2r); ‘uthforen’ (sig. D3v) → ‘accomplish or achieve’ (sig. E1r); ‘anmercket’ (sig. F3r) → ‘consider or respect’ (sig. G1v); ‘Deel’ (sig. H2v) → ‘part or portion’ (sig. I3v); ‘Partyschop’ (sig. K3r) → ‘variance or discord’ (sig. L7r); ‘upgeeisschet’ (sig. M3v) → ‘summoned or required’ (sig. O3v)

Interestingly, some of Vittels’ doublets remind us of the category above: they consist of an established term, on the one hand, and a neologism or coinage of the Low German word he translates, on the other:

‘over-heret’ → ‘mastered or overwon’; ‘Schalckheit’ → ‘craft or guile’; ‘ordentilicke’ → ‘civil or nurturable’; ‘Handt-reickinge’ → ‘assistance or hand-reaching’

It is noteworthy that the new or coined terms always take the second position in the doublets. It seems as though Vittels felt that if he did not add contemporary established equivalents, the reader would not understand his calqued words or neologisms.

Un-translated Terms

Only one word Vittels leaves in its original Low German form in the English Evangelium, i.e. the term ‘Gelatenheyt’ (sig. C6v). The word plays a highly significant role in Niclaes’ most complex and voluminous work De Speghel der Gerechticheit, where the explanation of the term takes Niclaes four whole chapters! The word’s complex meaning and the mystical concept it carried - it was connected with the humble and patient stance the believer was urged to take before God, a stance which consisted in waiting in ‘Gelatenheyt’ for one’s incorporation in Christ.

195 The examples given here have been discussed in the categories above, therefore, no page references are needed.

196 As Alastair Hamilton (personal communication) pointed out, Vittels does translate the term in the other translations he made of Niclaes’ writings.
- possibly influenced Vittels’ decision for the preservation of the term in its original form.

Mistakes

That the English rendition of the Evangelium was a carefully crafted work can be seen from the few obvious mistakes we find in the text, and it seems that most of them should be ascribed to the printer of the work rather than to Vittels:

‘Werck’ (sig. B3v) → ‘word’ (sig. B5v); ‘beste’ (sig. D3r) → ‘rest’ (sig. D7r); ‘Liefte’ (sig. L3r) → ‘life’ (sig. N1r); ‘Leven’ (sig. L3r) → ‘light’ (sig. N1r)

Additions

As a result of the particular ways in which Vittels translates the original’s sentence structures, as we will see more in detail in the next section, he inserts many and various co-ordinating and subordinating conjunctions - ‘and’ and ‘or’ being the most common in his translation. The only two other small additions in Vittels’ version of the Evangelium are, however, of a very different nature. They concern two similar inclusions: ‘no doubt’ (sig. K4v) and ‘doubtless’ (sig. N8r). The first ‘no doubt’ Vittels inserts in the passage that argues that the ‘figurative Services’ will be restored to their right use in the ‘day of Love’, while the second appears in Niclaes’ claim that the ‘un-illuminated men’ should not teach any services or ceremonies ‘wherewith (doubtless) they seduce themselves’. It is not clear to me why Vittels added these qualifiers. If one was unaware of the kind of person Vittels was, a devout follower of his prophet, they could even be interpreted as ironic remarks.
III. Sentence Level

I have chosen the three extracts discussed in this section as illustrating both the recurring patterns I observed in the English Evangelium, as well as the particularities of Niclaes' style that I want to draw attention to. The last two extracts, while generally following Vittels' translations methods, include shifts on the sentence level that are not a constant feature in the English text but are of interest with regard to the questions this research poses.

a. First Extract

| Dewile My dan nu van Godes Genade (alse ein utherwelet Vat, edder Hus, edder Woning Godes) in dessem Dage der godtsaliger Liefen, de Vorborgenheit des hemmelschen Rycke Godes, syn rechtferdich Gerichte, unde de Thoekumpst synes Christi ;nu tor lester Tydt; in de Vorrysenisse der Doden vorklaret, unde tho erkennen edder tho verstaen gegeben is: unde dath ick ;dorch den Denst der Lieften Jesu Christi; desulve Vorborgenheit der Ryckedommen Godes, wedder up Erden vorklare: unde idt genadige unde levendige Wordt des Heren (dat ick ;uth dem waren Lichte unde hemmelschen Jerusalem; to eine Getuige der Waerheit, van dem Munde Godes sulvest, entfangen hebbe) in synem Name, unde na synem Wille bedene, tor Beholdinge unde Segen allen Geslachten der Erden, die daer-anne geloven, na de Beloofen, so ware idt oick wal billick edder behorlick, dath se alle, die nu ;in desse vaerlicke Tyden; beholden willen bliven, My ;in dem genadigen Worde mynes |
| Seeing now then that ;out of God’s grace; in this day of the godly Love, the mistery of the heavenly Kingdom of God, his righteous Judgment, and the coming of his Christ ;now in this last time; in the Resurrection of the dead, is declared unto me (as an elected vessel, house, or dwelling of God) and given me to know or understand the same: and that I ;through the service of the love of Jesus Christ; declare forth again the same mystery of the riches of God, upon the earth: and minister the gracious and living word of the Lord (which I have received ;out of the true light and heavenly Jerusalem; to a witness of the truth, from the mouth of God himself) in his name and according to his will to the preservation and blessing of all generations of the earth, which believe theron, according to the promises: so were it likewise very meet and right, that they all which will now bide preserved ;in these perilous times; gave ear unto me, in the gracious word of my heavenly father: turned their |
The most striking feature for anyone reading through the English *Evangelium*, especially when one is not acquainted with its source text, must surely be the syntactical organisation of the work. The heavy punctuation of the Low German, which allows Niclaes to construct long sentences broken down in clausal units, is preserved in Vittels’ translation of the work. As Smith (1989: 179) rightly noted, the expressive function of Niclaes’ style becomes limited by the short clauses, so that the structure in each sentence becomes that of a list, the components of which contain one action within a larger framework. This is especially the case in the last part of the sentence above, which consists of a string of exhortations. It seems safe to argue that this aspect of Niclaes’ style is reflected in Vittels’ translation.

As can be observed, Vittels’ general approach to the sentence structure of the original seems to aim for an accurate and close following of the source text. Nevertheless, his translation avoids syntactic calques and reads idiomatically, while not strictly reflecting the wording of the original - e.g. the verbs are put in their natural position in English. The small changes he makes to the constructions of the source sentence force him sometimes to insert anaphora or substitutions so that the cohesion of the sentences is preserved, as can be seen on line ten in the passage above - ‘or understand the same’.

| hemmelschen Vaders; gehor gaven: ere Herten to de Gehorsamheit des genadigen Wordes ;mith alle Goed-willicheit to de Liefde unde erem Denste; wendeden: unde nicht unvorstandelick ;na erem Goed-duncken edder Inbildinge der Wetentheit; vorthliepen (sig. A4v) | hearts ;with all good willingnesse to the love and her service; unto the obedience of the gracious word: and ran not forth in ignorance, according to their good-thinking or imagination of the knowledge (sig. A6r-A6v) |

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b. Second EXTRACT

| Derhalven, dorch desse velerlye Misbruken unde Unvorstanden;angenomen unde gedreven uth de Wetenschoppe der Schrift; unde vormiddelst der falscher Herten, die Religien, Ceremonien, edder Godes- densten driven (wahr-dorch se einanderen vor Secten unde Vorforers, unde mith mannigerleye falsche Getugenissen beschuldigden: unde also mannigerleye Bosheit; tom Laster unde Vorfolkinge; over einandern uth riepen) worden de Overicheden der Werlt; over Velen; to Vorfolch unde Dodinge vorohrsaket (sig. K2v) | For that cause, through these many manner of abuses and ignorances; taken on and maintained out of the knowledge of the Scripture; and by reason of the false hearts, which set forth and enforced Religions, Ceremonies, and God-services (wherethrough they; with many manner of false testimonies; accused each other for sectaries and seducers: and also brayed forth much wickedness; to slander and cursing; one over another) the Magistrates of the world, were occasioned; against many; to persecution and putting to death (sig. L6r) |

The translation Vittels gives is of particular interest, because it includes one of the very few changes on the more syntactical level of the text to suit the particular context of the English religious situation. On the whole, Vittels follows the source text closely, with the typical associations of Niclaes' Low German original being preserved in the translation. Again, the exact wording of the source text is not strictly kept but adapted to the linguistic requirements of the English tongue. Note also the doublet 'set forth and enforced'. On the word level, Vittels does not translate as an absolute the Low German 'secten'.

The feature in the English sentence I want to draw attention to can be found on line thirteen in the Low German edition and on line fourteen in the target text: Vittels translates the source text's present tense 'worden' by the past tense 'were'; a practice which is rare in his translation. In this passage, which we have looked at in part before, Niclaes talks about the persecutions the Protestants suffer from the authorities. Of course, in the Anglican context of the Elizabethan time the religious

\[197\] The word 'sectary' came in the mid-seventeenth century in use as an absolute (first attestation in James Howell's Twelve Treatises of 1643), but this use was very rare.
policy of the State was orientated towards the propagation of Reformed ideas, and it was largely the Catholics who were under attack. Although Vittels does not alter the actual criticism Niclaes had on the Protestant religion - moreover, he preserves and translates literally Niclaes’ positive remarks about the Catholic Church which we find in the text - it is possible that the historical reality of the English religious context made him change the present tense of Niclaes’ original.

c. Third Extract

| Seet: middeler Tydt (dewyle idt by Velen noch Nacht was, unde de figurlicke Densten, unde Sacramenten, mit Ernst gedreven, unde oick mit Ernst ;tor Vordemodinge der Volckeren; underholden worden) so zynt oick de Volckeren, die sick gehorsamlick daer-under vordemodigeden, under desulve figurlicke Densten bewaret gewesen, dath en de grote unde gruwelicke Vordervinge nicht overfallen heft, die nu ;in dessem lest Tyde; allen Godtlosen unde Wedderstreveren der Waerheit, unde en allen die sick nicht ;gehorsamlick; under den Denst der Lieften Jesu Christi bugen willen, overfallen sal (sig. I2v) | Behold: in the mean time (the while it was yet night with many, and that the figurative services, and Sacraments, were with diligence set forth, and earnestly observed, to an humbling of the people) so have the people ;which humbled them obediently thereunder; been kept under those figurative services, so that the great and horrible destruction hath not fallen upon them, which shall now ;in this last time; fall upon all ungodly and resisters of the truth, and upon them all ;obediently; under the service of the love of Jesus Christ (sig. K4v) |

This last Extract shows that even a diligent translator such as Vittels could sometimes miss the meaning of Niclaes’ source text. On the whole, these two passages, again, exemplify Niclaes’ writing style and Vittels’ general translation strategy. Notice how Vittels varies the recurring ‘Ernste’ of the original. However, in his rendition of the last part of the original’s sentence Vittels, while forgetting to translate a crucial part of Niclaes’ original - i.e. ‘die sick nicht ... bugen willen’, brings about a shift in the textual function and claims the opposite of what the source text says. While Niclaes writes that the ‘horrible destruction’ shall now come
to fall upon all those who refuse to accept the ‘Denst der Lieften’, Vittels has it that those who are ‘under the service of the love’ will be destroyed. Examples of this kind, it needs to be said, are very few in Vittels’ translation, but they do exist. This quite ironic missing of the source text’s meaning might suggest that even an experienced Familist like Vittels was sometimes dazzled by Niclaes’ style, and, in a way, it explains the different interpretations some of the less ‘illuminated’ followers of the movement gave to their prophet’s doctrines.

IV. Conclusion to the Discussions of Vittels’ Vocabulary and Syntax

It seems right to open this conclusion by looking back at the remarks which earlier students of the Family have made on Vittels’ translation strategies. Their claims about the ways in which Vittels translated Niclaes’ writings - as one who conveyed an unchanged message for a new public - are in a way both true and untrue.

On the whole, the English *Evangelium* is an accurate translation. The complex layers and rhetoric of the source text are equally present in Vittels’ text, and the message and teachings are rendered unchanged. It is not impossible that this observation was the basis on which the earlier students of the Family founded their conviction that Vittels had made no attempt to adapt his work to an English readership. That the English *Evangelium* was produced as a close rendition of the original and is often highly source-orientated is undeniable and can be noted in the different levels of the text. The macro-level of the translation presents almost as an exact copy of the original: no major additions, alterations or omissions in the text can be found, and the general outlook and presentation of the source and target texts are highly comparable. On the whole, there is very little clue to the fact that the work is a translation. While the prophet’s name is everywhere to be found, Vittels’ name is not mentioned. He never appears from the shadows. But also on the micro-

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198 Vittels never adapts the actual teachings and ideas of Niclaes; only when the *Evangelium’s* claims are in contrast with the English religious situation, as we have seen above where Niclaes speaks about the persecution of Protestants, will he make slight changes to the original.
level, the indications given by the macro-level are further sustained. Vittels' literal method is especially clear from those aspects of his rendition that show close dependence on the Germanic character of the original. On the lexical level, the text is characterised by frequent use of coinages or Germanisms, while the Germanic punctuation of the original is also preserved. Nevertheless, the literal approach does include certain features that make of Vittels more than a mere conveyor with no eye for the target public.

An aspect of Vittels the translator which up until now has been given little attention in modern studies, is the care his translation shows for the presentation of a varied and idiomatic text within the limits of a literal approach. We have seen that Vittels gives specific thought to the variation of Niclaes' lexicon by avoiding the ever-recurring words we read in the original. On the sentence level, which Vittels approaches in a close way, it is clear that his text does not preserve the exact wording of the original. The text features no syntactic coinages, and Vittels adapts Niclaes' Germanic syntax to suit the requirements of the English language, even if this approach forces him to make small changes to the phrasing of the original. Furthermore, no focus has been given by the students of the Familist writings to the modern and innovative features of the lexical level of Vittels' translation. It even seems that Vittels was personally responsible for the introduction of a set of neologisms in English that also escaped the attention of the OED. Surely, the necessity to translate the original's vocabulary forced Vittels to create words and expressions the English language of his time lacked. Another feature that characterises the micro-level of Vittels' translation is his apparent intention to keep the text understandable. On the whole, the language Vittels employs is not too difficult and on the level of those who were to read the translation - i.e. the literate who were not formally educated. A nice example of Vittels' concern for the comprehension of the text are the doublets he constructs. As can be noted from the

199 Was the Germanic character preserved for the reason that the ‘dudesche Sprake’ was the movement’s ‘Holy language’?
200 Was it to this aspect that Rogers referred when he claimed that Niclaes' originals had been ‘rather beautified’ in translation?
examples I have presented above, in those instances in the text where he uses rare or new words he often makes them into a component of a doublet - the first element of the doublet is always a more commonly known synonym for the harder to understand other.

Let us now look in more detail at the religious vocabulary we find in the text. The majority of the religious terminology we find in the English *Evangelium* Vittels borrowed from the Protestant-inclined Bible translators of the early sixteenth century, and it is possible that he was aware of the controversies concerning the vernacular translations of the Scriptures during and before his time. On the whole, Vittels' rendition features various terms, both lay and religious, probably borrowed from Tyndale's and, especially, Coverdale's translation of the Bible. I have set out above some of the possible reasons why he preferred Coverdale, but I want to address the issue here again. If we think of the context and organisation of the English Family, we can ask ourselves whether the terms that Vittels apparently borrowed from Tyndale and Coverdale were inserted in his text on purpose. From my discussions in the chapters above, we know that Vittels was well aware of the kind of public most likely to be susceptible to Niclaes' beliefs: the lay-men in the quiet parishes of the English countryside with an interest in heterodox beliefs, who studied the English Bible, now widely available, at home. I have described how every English parish owned a copy of the Bible which was open to all the parishioners to consult. In this context, Vittels' dependence on Coverdale becomes even more interesting. From 1539 onwards, every parish in Ely, the place with the highest concentration of so-called 'Familist' villages, had a copy of the Coverdale version of the Scriptures201 (Spufford 1974: 242). It is thus possible that Vittels expected those families in Ely with a sustained interest in the Bible to be familiar

201 The Great Bible, which Thomas Cromwell ordered in 1538 to be set up in every parish church but was not issued till the summer of 1539, was the work of Miles Coverdale. This edition of the Bible, although not a mere copy of the 1535 version of Coverdale's text, contained large sections of it. The Great Bible remained in possession of royal and ecclesiastical authorisation in the reign of Elizabeth I (Livingstone 1997: 202, 702). Thus, at the time Vittels composed Niclaes' translations, substantial parts of Coverdale's text of 1535, through their appearance in the Great Bible, were still part of the 'official' version of the English Bible. It is not unlikely that this was the text the Familists read and discussed in their conventicles.
with Coverdale's wording and to experience a sense of recognition when they read the English translations of Niclaes' works.

The last element I want to draw attention to are the differences between the sixteenth and the seventeenth-century editions of the English Evangelium. Although the actual wording of the first edition remained unchanged in this later reprint, the major difference is the punctuation\textsuperscript{202}. The majority of the short clauses that often impede the text's expressive function have, in this later edition, been put between brackets. It is possible that this reprint was based on a Familist's personal copy of the text which the reader had edited by adding the brackets\textsuperscript{203}. With the inserted brackets, Niclaes' sentences become more readable, and it is in this aspect that their function seems to lie, i.e. to make the translation easier to read and, in particular, to read aloud\textsuperscript{204}. All this fits the picture I have described in the chapters above on the organisation of the Family in England. In small group meetings, the Familists read

\textsuperscript{202} It will be remembered that although in this discussion I have employed the text of the seventeenth-century reprint, I have adapted its punctuation to that of the earlier edition.

\textsuperscript{203} I base this assumption on the fact that not all the English translations of Niclaes' works which were reprinted in the seventeenth century show this use of brackets: e.g. the Exhortatio I (1655) and Revelatio Dei. The Revelation of God (1649) do, but the First Epistle (1655) and An Introduction to the Holy Understanding of the Glasse of Righteousnesse (1649) do not.

\textsuperscript{204} To give just one example of the effects these added brackets have on the English Evangelium, here are two fragments that exemplify the different punctuation we find in the 1570s version of the text (1) and in its reprint from the seventeenth century (2):

'Behold, in this contention and controversie, which sprang up among the unilluminated People, after that the defection or estranging from Christ and from the holy belief, was once chanced with many, through the works of darkness; so became then manifested and known; like as there is written thereof; the nature of sin, or the child of the devil, and of the condemnation, which in the Scripture, is named Antichrist: whose iniquity, wherethrough the law or Ordinance of the Lord was abolished, and the true holy and the requiring of his services, laid wast in the hearts of men; remained secret and unknown unto many, till unto the same time' (sig. L4v-L5r) (1).

'Behold, in this contention and controversie, which sprang up among the unilluminated People (after that the defection or estranging from Christ and from the holy belief, was once chanced with many (through the works of darkness)) so became then manifested and known (like as there is written thereof) the nature of sin, or the child of the devil, and of the condemnation, which in the Scripture, is named Antichrist: whose iniquity (wherethrough the law or Ordinance of the Lord was abolished, and the true holy and the requiring of his services, laid wast in the hearts of men) remained secret and unknown unto many (till unto the same time)' (sig. L4v-L5r) (2).

We can see from these two fragments how many of the different clauses, which in the first edition, in following of the source text, create the effect of a list, have been put between brackets in the later reprint. The clauses that remain out of the brackets are those that the editor must have felt to communicate the core meaning of the sentence. Niclaes' original, and with it the English translation, also features brackets, but in the 1650s reprint their occurrence is much more frequent and appears to be part of a strategy.
aloud and discussed Niclaes’ writings, and it is, therefore, not surprising to see the Evangelium Regni being printed in the seventeenth century with the additions of those who were confronted with the difficulties the Familist writings posed when reading them aloud.

To conclude, the English Evangelium is for many reasons a very peculiar work. While being a literal, often source text-orientated translation, it is on some levels also a product of its time - it follows, for example, the popular stylistic convention of using doublets - and the target culture. The particular aspects of the English Evangelium aimed at the target public generally agree with the picture modern research has built up for the English branch of the Family. The traditional opinion of the translator Vittels supposedly applies to the English version of the Evangelium in regard of the literal aspects of his translation, but it runs short at those instances where the text shows concerns for the English Familist tradition. It is clear that these results should be carefully compared with the other translations Vittels produced, and it needs to be studied how the text relates to those works, like the Exhortatio I, that were aimed at those newly-initiated into the Family. It will be interesting to see whether some of the translation strategies of the Evangelium were specific to the texts that were aimed at those on the way to ‘Vorgodung’.

Let us now look at the other important question this research poses, i.e. what can be learnt from this comparison about Niclaes’ role in the translating process? This question bears on the relationship between Niclaes and Vittels. On the whole, as mentioned previously, efforts seem to have been undertaken to make this translation look as little like a translation as possible, with Vittels openly claiming no credit for the work. The aspect of literalism, which Theo Hermans (1992: 108) has called an adequate parameter to check the position of the translator towards the writer of the original, is certainly present in the text. The peculiarity of the English Evangelium is, however, that within this literal context the text does include features aimed at the target public. The difficult question is whether a conscious decision had been made to bring the translation closer to the intended culture, and whether it was
Niclaes or Vittels, or both, who decided so. If it was Vittels, one could ask whether Niclaes was aware of the subtle aspects he had interwoven in the work’s translation. Nevertheless, it seems likely to me that Vittels’ role was clearly defined. He certainly does not openly appear as Niclaes’ ‘illuminated’ interpreter, and he did not boldly put his own stamp on the Evangelium’s translation, although maybe he did so subtly. Whether this was out of respect and admiration for Niclaes or out of constraint by the prophet I cannot resolve here.

V. Biblical Quotations

In this section, I will study Vittels’ renditions of the Biblical quotations of the Low German original. Let me summarise the exact issues this comparison addresses. First of all, what can we learn from the stance Vittels took towards Niclaes’ phrasing of the Bible? Within the particularities of the Familist context with its fixation on God’s last elect, one would expect the prophet’s own quotations from the Holy Book to be considered of the same value as the actual Scriptures themselves, and thus a literal and faithful stance on the part of the translator towards Niclaes’ phrasing of the Bible. However, on the general level of the text, we have seen that, on the whole, Vittels indeed presents a faithful rendition of Niclaes’ original, but that, at the same time, the target culture is not forgotten. I have set out above how Vittels applies vocabulary in his translation we also find in the New Testament of Tyndale and Coverdale’s Bible, and if recognition by his audience was his motive, then where would he have been given better opportunity to express this function than in those instances in the text where the Bible is directly quoted? One of the issues here is thus whether Vittels’ concerns for the target public are echoed in the sensitive context of his renditions of the prophet’s personal Scriptural phrasing. For this reason, the following study focuses on comparing Vittels’

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205 As Roger Ellis (1982: 31) noted, in translations of mystical medieval and Early Modern writings, one can often observe a different strategy on the part of the translator when he or she is faced with the rendition of the author’s quotations from the Bible: the literal word order of the original’s phrasing is more likely to be kept in the translations of such passages.
translations of the *Evangelium*’s Biblical quotations with the Low German source text and the Bibles of Tyndale\(^{206}\) and Coverdale\(^{207}\):

Tyndale, William. (1526). *The Newe Testament...* Worms\(^{208}\).

Coverdale, Miles. (1535). *Biblia. The Byble: that is the Holy Scrypture of the Olde and New Testament...* Zurich\(^{209}\).

I have opted for the four quotations below for the reason that they illustrate most clearly the patterns observed in Vittels’ translation methods. The quotations in the appendix show the same characteristics and need, for that reason, no full analysis.

*Isaiah 43:19*

*Low German Evangelium:*
Ick wil ein nye Dingk doen; unde idt sal itzundt upgaen; dath gy erfaren solen, dath Ick in de Wostenie, Wegen, unde in de Wilternisse, Water-stromen make (sig. A4v)

*English Evangelium:*
I will doe a new thing; and it shall now appear; whereby ye shall well perceive, that I make ways, in the desert, and rivers of water, in the wildernesse (sig. A7r)

*Coverdale’s Bible:*
I shal make a new thinge, and shortly shall it apeare, ye shal well know it. I will make stretes in the deserte, and ryvers of water in the wildernesse

The first part of Vittels’ quotation, i.e. ‘I ... perceive’, seems to have been closely based on Niclaes’ source text. The sentence structure suggests that Vittels is following Niclaes and not Coverdale. Vittels’ word level further sustains this

\(^{206}\) Of course, I will only be able to present quotations from Tyndale’s Bible when we are looking at New Testament quotations. Again, for the transcriptions of the quotations from the different versions of the Bible I have replaced the strokes employed in the sentences by commas.

\(^{207}\) For the quotations I will discuss below, the text of the Great Bible is very similar to that of Coverdale’s 1535 translation, and highlights no other aspects of Vittels’ relationship with Coverdale than the 1535 version does. I have, therefore, not included this Bible text in this discussion.

\(^{208}\) The copy I have used is held in the British Library (shelf mark: C188.a.17)

\(^{209}\) The copy I have used is held in the British Library (shelf mark: C18.b.8).
connection; it differs from Coverdale where it has ‘to do’ and ‘now’, while Coverdale reads ‘to make’ and ‘shortly’. However, the adverb ‘well’, which we find in Vittels’ quotation, does not appear in Niclaes’ original but can, instead, be read in the passage from Coverdale. The second part of Vittels’ quotation is, however, less close a rendition of the original. His translation inverts the Low German quotation and thus comes closer to Coverdale’s text. Maybe Vittels felt that preserving the construction of the source text would result in unidiomatic English. Although Vittels’ translation does not follow the lexicon of the original in a strict and literal sense, neither does it reflect exactly Coverdale’s terminology. Vittels might have based himself on Coverdale for his choice of the words ‘rivers of water’ and possibly also ‘desert’, but it opts to use the noun ‘ways’ above ‘stretes’ in this instance staying closer to the words of Niclaes’ original.

Isaiah 66:12

Low German Evangelium:
Ick vorbreide den Frede by juw, gelyck ein Water-strome, unde de Macht edder Heerlickheit der Heiden, gelyck eine Beke die vam Water over-fletet. Alsdan (sprickt de Here) werdenn gy sugen (sig. M1r)

English Evangelium:
I inlarge the peace among you, like a water-stream, and the might or dominion of the Heathen, like a river which floweth over with water. At that time (saith the Lord) ye shall suck (sig. N5v)

Coverdale’s Bible:
I wil let peace into her, like a water floude, and the might of the heithen, like a flowinge streame. Then shal ye sucke

Vittels’ rendition includes some interesting features on the lexical level when compared to the quotation above. That Vittels’ text is a close translation of the original is very clear, for example, where Vittels preserves the source text’s insertion between brackets, ‘sprickt de Here’, and the differences from Coverdale’s text are obvious. Nevertheless, even though Vittels translates faithfully Niclaes’ Low German, again, the lexicon he uses invites a closer look. First of all, Vittels’
coinage here of ‘water-stream’ for Niclaes’ ‘Water-strome’ is notable. We have just encountered the same word and its translation in the quotations above, where Vittels translates the noun quite freely by the more eloquent description ‘rivers of water’. Here, however, he chooses to graft it on the original and does not follow Coverdale’s ‘water floude’. The translation Vittels gives for the original’s ‘Macht edder Heerlickheit der Heiden’ we should also consider more in detail. Vittels translates the source text faithfully, but the exact words he uses lead us back to Coverdale. The noun ‘might’, which we see here in both Vittels and Coverdale, was introduced in a Biblical context by Coverdale. The same for ‘dominion’ - the word appears with Coverdale in Romans 6:9 - which Vittels’ quotation has as a translation for the Low German ‘Heerlickheit’. Lastly, Coverdale was also the first of the English Bible translators to use the word ‘Heathen’, possibly coined on Luther’s ‘Heyden’.

Acts 17:31

*Low German Evangelium:*
De Here heft einen Dach bestemmet, up welcken He richten wil den Kreitz edder Umloop des Erdtbodems mith Gerechticheit, dorch Einen Man, in welcken He idt besloten heft (sig. L1r)

*English Evangelium:*
The Lord hath appointed a day, in which he will judge the compass or circuit of the earth, with righteousness, through one man, in whom he hath decreed it (sig. M4r)

*Tyndale’s New Testament:*
He hath appointed a daye, in the whyche he will iudge the world according to righteousness by that man whom he hath appointed

*Coverdale’s Bible:*
He hath appoynted a daye, in the which he wyl iudge the compasse of the worlde according to righteousnesse, by that one man in whom he hath appoynted it
Vittels' translation of this quotation from Acts faithfully translates Niclaes, however, again, its lexicon is interesting. Most of the translated sentence shows close dependence on the Low German source text and it does so most clearly where it preserves the doublet 'Kreitz edder Umloop' of Niclaes' original. Vittels, while following Niclaes, translates this doublet with 'compass or circuit'. I want to suggest that Vittels had a look at how this exact passage was translated by the English translators of the Bible. The word 'compasse', although commonly used in the sixteenth century, does not appear, as we can see, in Tyndale's Bible. But this is not the only reason why I want to suggest that Vittels may have been considering the translations of this quotation in the different versions of the English Bible. My suggestion is supported by Vittels' use of 'circuit' to translate the second component of this doublet: the word was introduced into the English language through its appearance in Acts in Wycliff's Bible.

John 15:2

*Low German Evangelium:*
Ein itlick Wyn-rancke, an my, die gene Vrucht vorth-bringet, sal afgesneden werden (sig. M3r)

*English Evangelium:*
Every vine-branch, (an My) of mine, which bringeth forth no fruit, shall be cut off (sig. O2v)

*Tyndale’s New Testament:*
Every braunch that beareth no fruite in me, he will take away

*Coverdale’s Bible:*
Every braunch that bringeth not forth fruth in me, shal be cut of

This last quotation from the English *Evangelium* is of particular significance for in it Vittels makes clear reference to Niclaes’ source text; between brackets he adds the words ‘an My’ which he translates by ‘of mine’. This addition is one of the only clear references to Niclaes’ original in the text of the English translation. Why Vittels adds this note exactly here I do not know; in other instances, as we have
seen, his translations of the source text’s quotations also vary slightly from Niclaes’ original and then he obviously did not feel the need to explain his methods of translation. I want to suggest that Vittels may have subtly wanted to make clear to his readers, or to please Niclaes for that matter, that he was translating the Biblical phrasing of their prophet\(^2\). There is another feature of Vittels’ translation I want to draw attention to. Vittels, indeed, follows the lexicon of the original strictly when he translates the term ‘Wyn-rancke’ by its English equivalent ‘vine-branch’. Both Tyndale and Coverdale have ‘braunch’; I have checked ‘vine-branch’ in the OED and, although rare in the sixteenth century, it appears in Coverdale’s translation of John.

\textit{VI. Conclusion to the English Evangelium’s Biblical Quotations}

The most significant strategy in Vittels’ translations of the Scriptural passages we find in the Low German Evangelium is that his renditions closely follow Niclaes’ original; every single quotation in the English Evangelium maintains this impression. The strategy seems designed to make it obvious that the quotations in the English Evangelium are renditions of Niclaes’ phrasing of the Scriptures. On the whole, however, the ways in which Vittels translates Niclaes’ quotations from the Bible diverge little from the translation policy he follows on the general level of the text. Again, the word level of his translations shows Vittels’ likely borrowings from, mainly, Coverdale. Note that it is Coverdale’s Bible which Vittels generally comes closer to than Tyndale’s. I am, however, not claiming that Vittels merely copied whole chunks of Coverdale’s Bible text in his translations of the original’s Biblical quotations, but that he, when confronted with the rendition of single words or sets of words, seems to echo the specific vocabulary employed in the English translations of the Bible. The result of all this is interesting, to say the least: Vittels’ renditions of Niclaes’ phrasing from the Scriptures, for which Niclaes based himself

\(^{2\text{Another explanation is that the addition is a leftover of a manuscript note made by the translator; perhaps it indicates a translation problem to be checked with Niclaes.}}\)
on Luther’s Bible text, include borrowings from, mainly, Coverdale’ Bible, who in his turn, also leaned on the German text and language of Luther’s translation. It is possible that Coverdale’s dependence on Luther’s text, which Niclaes used for his quotations from and marginal glosses to the Scriptures, is one of the reasons why Vittels’ quotations show certain similarities with the word level of Coverdale’s Bible.

It is important not to forget the specific context we are looking at. As previously mentioned, it is not unreasonable to assume that for the translators of the Familist writings their task resembled that of the translators of the Holy Scriptures, since Niclaes’ translators were, after all, at least in the eyes of the Familists, translating the words of God’s last prophet. It is not unlikely that the borrowed lexicon Vittels employs in the quotations, and in the rest of the text, was purposely chosen for the status those words had attained by their appearance in a Biblical context through the Bibles of Coverdale and others. By using words that had earlier appeared in the English translations of the Scriptures, Vittels could sustain a connection on the word level between these exact texts and Niclaes’ works in translation, as the ‘last chapter’ to the Bible.

I will now focus on those aspects Vittels’ quotations share with the English translations of the Scriptures. One of the characteristic elements of Vittels’ quotations we already find in Wycliff’s Bible. In the preface of Wycliff’s translation, attention is given to the importance of avoiding unidiomatic English and to the need of abandoning the strict wording of the original should this impede the natural word order of the English language\textsuperscript{211} (Ellis 1982: 30). This concern we also find in Vittels’ renditions of Niclaes’ Biblical quotations, in which the requirements of the English language seem to have prevailed over the preservation of the strict word order of the Low German source text. Then, of course, there are the

\textsuperscript{211} In the traditional view of the Scriptures every word, every letter, contained God’s mystery, and it was thought that the word order might contain a meaning hidden from the translator, perhaps to be revealed in the future (Ellis 1982: 30). It is not unlikely that some of the most devoted followers of Niclaes held similar ideas about their prophet’s writings.
connections between Miles Coverdale and Vittels, some of which I have already
given attention to above. Coverdale, who knew no Hebrew or Greek and was thus
the least scholarly of the English Bible translators, believed in his free choice to use
those words and expressions he felt best to express the meaning of the original. His
translation shows his consideration for a varied vocabulary, of which a great deal
was coined on the German sources he worked from. (Norton 2000: 29-30). In a
way, this can also be said of Vittels' quotations and of the whole of his translation
for that matter. A good example of this we find in the first two quotations I have
presented above, in which 'Water-stromen' is first translated as 'rivers of water'
and in the second quotation with the coinage 'water-streams'. As is the case for
Coverdale, Vittels' language features coined words, but he might have felt that the
choice to use them, or not, at specific places in the text was his. If we consider the
various aspects which the translation strategies of the works of Vittels and
Coverdale share, one could almost think that Vittels based himself on Coverdale in
as far as his method was concerned. This would then suggest that Vittels, indeed,
saw Niclaes' words as being on the same level as the Scriptures.

If we consider the context I have just set out above, the features shown in his
translations of the original's quotations make of Vittels a faithful translator, even
within such a sensitive tradition as that of Bible translations. His quotations show
no other 'liberties' with the source text than had already been taken earlier by the
translators of the Bible in English. The same, in a way, also goes for the general
level of the text in which indeed Vittels, on the whole, takes hardly more 'liberties'
than he does with the translations of the original's Bible quotations. It is thus
possible that, for Vittels, the whole of the English Evangelium was a very faithful
rendition of the source text, with the features of the text which fitted the target
culture naturally following from the requirements of both the source and target
texts, and not falling outside the scope of what was considered to be, even in a

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212 Again, the fact that Vittels apparently took a similar stance to the translation of Niclaes' original
as a whole as he did to the specific renditions of the source text's Biblical quotations, might suggest
that he regarded all of Niclaes' words on the same level. It is possible that he considered the whole
of the text, Niclaes' every word, to be of the same 'sacred' nature.
Chapter V

Biblical context, a literal translation. Vittels’ dependence on the words of Coverdale’s Bible text, which might have been well known to the specific public which would read the Familist translations, suited the rhetoric of Niclaes’ *Evangelium* which also expressed itself in Biblical language. Vittels’ concerns for the understanding of his translation, which might have fitted the organisation of the English Family that centred on the reading aloud of the Scriptures and Niclaes’ texts, could easily be seen within the freedom even Bible translators had when translating the source text in ways that best suited the idioms and requirements of the target language.

Like that, Vittels could indeed claim, as he supposedly did to the attackers of the movement in England, that he had merely translated Niclaes’ every word, since the particulars of his text that fitted the target culture fell into the scope of the liberties the most literal of translators could take with the source text. For the specific relationship between Niclaes and Vittels, this meant that the target-aimed aspects in the English *Evangelium* needed not to be interpreted as diverging from the ‘holy words’ of the prophet, and so Niclaes’ ‘divine’ status remained intact. If we look at his translation in this way, Vittels’ work becomes very clever and well planned, and I doubt that the earlier students of the Family of Love were referring to these levels of Vittels’ renderings when they described his texts as ‘no more than direct translations of HN’s works into English, with Vittels assuming no role but that of conveying an unchanged message to a new public’.

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Chapter VI. The Latin Translation of the *Evangelium Regni*: a Study and Comparative Description

1. Introduction

In what is the longest chapter in this thesis, I will focus on the Latin rendition of Niclaes’ *Evangelium Regni*. As mentioned in Chapter IV, compared with my analysis of the English version of the work, this study requires a different approach. The main part of this chapter concentrates on reconstructing the background and context of the Latin renditions of Niclaes’ works to which, unlike the English texts, modern research has given little attention. This broad approach has its positive sides for it gives me the possibility of looking at a range of different aspects of this lesser-known tradition of the Family’s writings; elements which will all be important in the re-enactment of the role presumably played by the Family’s Latin translations in the movement’s working and organisation. I will now explain the structure of this chapter.

First, I will trace references to the Latin *Evangelium* in contemporary sources and modern studies. This will allow me to identify the many lacunae that remain in our knowledge of Niclaes’ writings in Latin - among them: who translated the writings of Niclaes into Latin and for which public were they meant?

The second and larger part of this chapter concentrates on the comparison of the 1570s Latin translation of the *Evangelium Regni* with Niclaes’ Low German original and follows the methods of comparison set out in Chapter IV. Although for both the *Evangelium Regni* in Latin and Low German there exist two editions, one from the 1560s and one from after Niclaes’ revision of his writings, in this study I will first compare the revised or Cologne editions of the text, since they form the direct connecting factor in all the chapters on the *Evangelium* in this thesis, and will
then look into the versions from the 1560s. I will use the results of the second edition’s analysis to make assumptions for the context in which the Latin Evangelium functioned and to consider the broader tradition of Niclaes’ writings in Latin in the rest of this chapter.

Then, I will focus on the one surviving translation that was based on Niclaes’ unrevised writings, i.e. the first edition of the Latin Evangelium Regni. The main concern is to establish the internal textual relationship between this text and the second edition of the Latin Evangelium. This section explores whether the strategies informing the translation method of the later version of the Latin Evangelium were based on those of the first edition, and whether it is possible to assume that the same translator, or translators, worked on both renditions.

In the fourth section of this chapter, I will study three other Latin translations of Niclaes’ writings, the Annunciatio Pacis and the Epistola Prima HN, for the latter of which two Latin renditions exist. The questions I will try to answer focus on how the translation strategies of the second edition of the Latin Evangelium compare with those of the Family’s other writings in Latin that were made in the 1570s. Again, I hope to find out whether these texts were the handiwork of the translator who produced the revised edition of the Evangelium.

Then, I will come to the discussion of who translated the works of Niclaes into Latin. It has been suggested that the Dutch historian Lambertus Hortensius worked on Niclaes’ translations in Latin; the suggestion is entirely based on secondary source material and still leaves many unresolved issues. I have, therefore, reassessed the matter on the basis of the textual analyses conducted in this chapter. In a new approach to the topic, I will use the findings of the analyses of the different Latin translations to consider whether Hortensius indeed worked on the Family’s translations.
In the last section of the current chapter, which stands somewhat apart from the discussions above, I will reconsider my analysis of the lexical level of the English *Evangelium* on the basis of my study of the Latin version’s vocabulary. Certain aspects of the English text’s lexicon, which seem difficult to explain if one looks at the text on its own, are clarified by that employed in the Latin renditions. On the basis of this comparison, I will revisit Vittels’ translation methods.

2. Introducing the Latin Renditions of the *Evangelium Regni*

That the Familists considered translations into Latin of particular importance is attested by the fact that the Latin versions were among the earliest renditions of Niclaes’ writings to have been produced. The Familist chronicles inform us that already at the Kampen press in the early 1560s - before Niclaes’ revision of his writings and the creation of the English translations - a Latin version of one of the prophet’s works had been printed\(^{213}\). Nowadays, it is generally accepted that the first edition of the Latin *Evangelium*, at which we will look in more detail later in this chapter, was produced in Kampen.

That the Latin editions of the *Evangelium* had an impact at the time they appeared can be gathered from the allusions made to the works in contemporary accounts. The Index of the year 1570, concerning books circulating in the Southern Netherlands, condemns all the works of Niclaes, but names, in particular, just two, i.e. the Low German version of *De Speghel der Gerechticheit* and the first edition

\(^{213}\) In the *Chronika* (Hamilton 1988: 59) we read: ‘In dessem middelen Tyde overst, so richte HN, to meestendeel up syne sulvest Kosten, eine gantze Druckerie up, to Kampen, in dem Lande van Overysel, unde datt mit Augustyn van Hasselt, die he daer-tho gewonnen hadde, um to Kampen int openbaer tho drucken: unde also worden daer to Kampen noch eensdeels unde mansigerleye kleine Bockeren vant Hus der Lieften gedrucket, oick einsdeels in der Latynscher Sprake, unde einsdeels in der Franscoiser Sprake, die allent uth den Dudeschen Schriften van HN am-dach gegeven, overgesettet waren.’ H. De La Fontaine Verwey (1940-42: 175), who looked into the archival material on printing offices in the Netherlands, established that although the *Chronika* claims that the Kampen office worked ‘int openbaer’, no documents have survived on its existence. Augustijn van Hasselt’s presence in Kampen, however, is attested in the ‘Sententiën van het Schepengericht’ when he applied for citizenship there in the early 1560s (ibid.).
of the Latin translation of the *Evangelium Regni*\(^{214}\) (Bujanda 1988: 157). It is also clear that the Latin versions of Niclaes' *Evangelium*, whether in first or second editions, were well known to the English attackers of the movement. John Rogers (1579b: sig. B3r-B3v) mentioned the work as being 'garnished' by its translator\(^{215}\):

> ... for I have some copyes in Dutcbe, some in Latin, and some in English: wherein the Authors barbarous stile, and his ignoraunce, is verie muche manifested, although some of his schollers have put to their helping handes, to garnishe this their barbarous Author: especially the booke intituled, Evangelium Regni, which is translated into Latin...

More so than in the case of any other work of Niclaes, we find the actual style in which the Latin *Evangelium* was written discussed by the English enemies of the movement. The earlier mentioned tract *Notes upon the booke entituled Evangelium Regni*, written by the Bishop of Rochester and published in William Wilkinson's attack in 1579, opens with a discussion of the Latin employed in the translation. The work criticises the 'meane' kind of Latin of the text and its 'darke and obscure stile of writing'\(^{216}\) (sig. A1v). In the form of a dialogue, the 'English Family' defends itself against this complaint by claiming that (sig. A1v):

> ... for the more common the Latin is, the easier it is to be understanded of the simple Clerkes, and therefore that it is not worthy of note to take exception at, for the single and lowly mynded respect more the intent, of a matter, than the flourished stile or speech.

Ironically, up until today this remark is the most detailed allusion made by a student of the Family - here, of course, one with little objective intentions - on the possible translation strategies informing the Latin versions of Niclaes' works.

\(^{214}\) It is certainly the first edition to which the Index refers, for the second editions of the Familist writings in Latin had not yet been printed by this date.

\(^{215}\) Although in his typical fashion, in other instances in his works, Rogers (1579a: sig. H8v) ridiculed the Familist Latin translations for being 'barbarous in phrase'.

\(^{216}\) I do not know whether reference is being made to the first or second edition of the Latin *Evangelium*.  

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Indeed, despite the attention given to the Latin translations of Niclaes' works by contemporaries of the movement, modern studies have generally ignored the topic. Let us survey the little work done on the writings of Niclaes in Latin. Friedrich Nippold knew of their existence (1862: 361) and the students after him painstakingly searched for surviving copies of the works\textsuperscript{217}. Despite the hopes that some expressed that eventually most, if not all, of Niclaes' works that were translated into Latin would resurface (e.g. Burrage 1912: 14), for a long time only Latin versions of the *Evangelium Regni* were rediscovered. This changed after Alastair Hamilton published his study of the Familist movement in 1981. He not only rediscovered Latin translations for three of Niclaes' other works\textsuperscript{218}, but also several more copies of the Latin *Evangelium*\textsuperscript{219}. No more translations have surfaced since; we do not know how many works of Niclaes were in fact translated into Latin. The actual rediscovery of the Latin translations did not lead, however, to the texts being studied by modern scholars. It needs to be said that approaching the works is not easy: the Familist chronicles are silent about the matter, and we have no secondary discussions of the kind the English attackers have provided for the English Familist context and Vittels' translations. As a result, the whole context in which these translations functioned is unknown. It is through a close textual study of the Latin translation of the *Evangelium* and a selection of the Latin renditions that exist for Niclaes' other works that I hope to rebuild parts of this framework and use the Familist literary tradition to speculate about the movement's history.

The first major issue this study addresses is at which audience these translations were aimed, i.e. the international or the local market, or both. One could think that

\textsuperscript{217} Already in 1869, J.H. Hessels (108), who catalogued the Familist works held in the University Library Cambridge, drew attention to the fact that a Latin version of the *Evangelium* (i.e. a revised edition) was kept there.

\textsuperscript{218} Hamilton found Cologne editions of the *Proverbia HN*, *Annunciatio Pacis* and two different versions of the *Epistola Prima HN*.

\textsuperscript{219} The first edition of the Latin *Evangelium* is held in the Bodleian library, Lambeth Palace and Corpus Christi College, Oxford; second editions of the work, apart from the copy in the University Library Cambridge, in Christ Church College, Oxford.
the works were created with an eye on new readers\textsuperscript{220}. The secondary information on the topic resolves little. From remarks made by the attackers of the Family, we know that the Latin renditions were in England from the sixteenth century onwards, while copies also circulated in the Netherlands as the Index indicates\textsuperscript{221}. We have, however, no knowledge of any surviving Latin translations outside this territory. Were Niclaes' works, then, translated into Latin for reasons of prestige within the Anglo-Dutch context where also vernacular versions circulated, as J.W. Martin (1989: 193) proposed? It is through the study of the writings themselves that I hope to reach more conclusive answers.

The second major question this study poses focuses on who translated Niclaes' works into Latin. Unlike the English translations, the contemporary writings of and on the Family give us little information in solving the mystery. We have seen in the chapter on the English \textit{Evangelium} how important it is for contextualising the Familist translations to actually \textit{know} who worked on Niclaes' writings. It is especially important to establish whether the translator was a follower of the movement or not. Much of the space of this chapter has been devoted to this question. So far, only Alastair Hamilton (1988: X) has addressed the issue and suggested the Dutch historian and humanist Lambertus Hortensius as the possible translator of Niclaes' works in Latin; a man who remarkably, before supposedly working on Niclaes' writings, had published an attack on the Anabaptists, entitled \textit{Tumultuum Anabaptisticarum Liber Unus}, in which he condemned David Joris together with certain of Niclaes' beliefs. Hamilton's assumptions were not based on the primary texts but on the few remarks on the topic he found in secondary sources.

\textsuperscript{220} In this context, it is important to consider the suggestions John Rogers (1579b: sig. A5v) made about a possible visit of Niclaes to Italy: although Rogers himself admitted to having heard about the event through rumours, it was said that Niclaes, after his flight from Emden, had journeyed to Naples in the entourage of Philip II's minister Cardinal Granvelle. Could he have been on the lookout for new adherents? However, as Hamilton pointed out (1981: 53), Rogers' suggestions have all the marks of Protestant propaganda, with the implication that Niclaes may have been a spy in the service of the Spanish Crown. Nevertheless, the fact remains that Granvelle was on the best terms with Plantin, and that such projects as Plantin's publication of the Polyglot Bible in Antwerp - encouraged by Granvelle - were not altogether unconnected with the Family.

\textsuperscript{221} Moreover, the sixteenth-century catalogue of the Leiden bookseller Thomas Basson includes works of Niclaes in Latin. Unfortunately, the titles of the works have not survived (Van Dorsten 1961: 64-65).
of the period, to which we will later look in more detail. In this thesis, I will consider whether the Familist Latin translations allow us to assume that, unlikely a candidate as Hortensius seems, he was indeed the translator of the works.

3. Comparison and Study of the Second Edition of the Latin Translation of the *Evangelium Regni*

1. Preliminary Data and Macro-level

The 1570s edition of the Latin *Evangelium*, like the English translation, had Niclaes’ reworked Cologne version of the work as its source and is, therefore, nowadays generally referred to as a revised edition. Copies of this Latin translation have so far only resurfaced in England. The two surviving copies are published, like the original, in a small octavo format and consist of 87 folios. As in the case of the English version, they use a black-letter typeface. The Cambridge copy of the *Evangelium* (shelf mark: LE.20.153) is a complete book on its own, while the copy held in Christ Church (shelf mark: Allestree R.6.11.(2)) is bound together with other Latin translations of Niclaes’ works

The actual presentation and appearance of the two surviving copies are identical. Like the English version, the title page does not provide the reader with much information on the work as a whole. The translator is not mentioned, neither is the printer nor the date of imprinting. The title page opens with the title of the work, a straight translation from the Low German original:

*Evangelium seu Laetum Nuncium Regni, a Sacro Spiritu Charitatis Iesu Christ praedicatum, atque ad omnes Populorum Nationes, Veritatem in Iesu Christo amantes, missum.*

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222 I will discuss these other Latin translations further on in this chapter.

223 Although printed during the working of the Cologne printing office in the 1570s, we have no idea of when exactly the work rolled of the presses.
Then follows a clear statement that the text is a revised edition, again translating from the source text:

Per HN in Lucem editum, denuoque ab eo recognitum, ac dilucidius explicatum.

The last phrase of the Latin title refers to the text as a translation. A brief statement, very similar to the one on the title page of the English translation, has been added: ‘ex Germanico translatum’. As in the case of the English Evangelium, this is the only clear reference to the fact that the reader is presented with a translated text.

Under the title, the typical circular medallion, which we also find in the original and English editions, is reproduced, followed by Latin translations of the three Biblical quotations from the original. The title page is followed by an exact translation of the preface found in the source text. As in the English version, there are no meta-texts from the hand of the translator. The visual presentation of the Latin preface and the beginning of the actual text itself leave no doubt that this work was also published in the same printing office as the original and English version. The floral woodcuts on top of the preface and above the text itself show striking similarities.

The whole make-up of the Latin Evangelium follows closely the Low German source text; no alterations to the macro-level divisions of the original can be noted. As with the rather sober nature of the original and English copies, the Latin features no woodcuts or engravings in the text. A running title also features at the top of every page. Attention to important passages and sentences in the Latin Evangelium, as in the case of the other versions of the text, drawn by the placement of small pointing hands in the margin, at precisely the same positions as in the original. The same system of referring to Biblical passages which we find in both the Low German and English versions is used in the Latin translation. However, unlike Vittels who merely copied the original’s marginal glosses, those found in the Latin version do not entirely correspond to the source text. The glosses, whose main function lies in supporting Niclaes’ theology with the teachings from the Scriptures.

224 ‘Evangelium’ (verso side) ‘Regni’ (recto side).
and which I have discussed at length in Chapter III, are all present in the translation. The different references relate to that aspect of the Low German original we have not looked at in detail before, but which I will discuss here, i.e. the glosses that point to similarities between the language of the Bible and the Evangelium. It needs to be said that these are substantially less numerous than those which support Niclaes' teachings; approximately one reference on every two or three folios. Their study has, nevertheless, led to the discovery of interesting new aspects of both the source text and the Latin translation.

The glosses beside the first sentence of the Latin and original Evangelium exemplify very well their use in the rest of the text. There is only one reference Niclaes adds to point out the similarity of language in the first sentence, and it is added to 'van-nyes tho telen' (sig. A3r) which verb is used specifically in John 3:5 of Luther's Low German translation of the Bible. As for his borrowings of the Bible quotations, it is again Luther's text that Niclaes uses here\textsuperscript{225}. In the Latin rendition, we do not find this gloss to John 3:5 but two other references (sig. A3r), which do not appear in the source text and relate to the language of the translation: the two expressions 'Sancto Spirito unctus' (Eph 4: 4) and 'Christo Cohæres' (Rom 8: 17), employed in the Latin Evangelium, are used exactly in the Latin Vulgate\textsuperscript{226}. This aspect of the Evangelium's marginal glosses seems to relate the texts' use of words or combinations of words to the Luther Bible for the Low German original and to the Vulgate for the Latin translation. The glosses that point out the language similarity between the source text and Luther's Low German Bible are mostly omitted in the translation, while the translator creates his own references for the

\textsuperscript{225} I have looked at the different Biblical texts which I have employed in the discussion on which version of the Scriptures Niclaes used for the phrasing of his Biblical quotations, to identify the Evangelium's glosses that point to this lexical similarity. Indeed, it was in Luther's Low German version of the Bible that I found the same wording as in Niclaes' original, even though, of course, many of the words appear also - sometimes slightly adapted, sometimes identical - in the Dutch translation of Luther's text. Some of the other examples are: ‘van gantzer Herten’ (sig. B1r; Jer 29:13), ‘Lesten Dagh’ (sig. B1r; Acts 2: 17), ‘Dodt des Crucizes’ (sig. G1r; John 19:31), ‘mit Gerechticheit gerichtet’ (sig. G3r; Ps 96:13 and 98:9).

target language. It is interesting that the Latin Evangelium has a greater number of such references than the original; this might suggest that the text is strongly dependent for its word use on the Vulgate.

On the whole, the findings of this macro-level comparison suggest the Latin Evangelium to be a close rendition of the source text. However, more so than for the English text, it seems that we should expect this translation to be especially adapted to the linguistic context of the target language, as the modifications to the source text’s marginal glosses indicate.

**II. Vocabulary Level**

A. Familiar Terminology

Considering the specific religious, or rather Christian, vocabulary Niclaes employs in the Evangelium and the tendencies informing the Latin version’s marginal glosses, it is not surprising that the Latin Evangelium leads us to the language of the Vulgate translation of the Bible and the writings of the Church Fathers for its renditions of the text’s key terms. On the whole, the translator uses common early Christian words when translating Niclaes’ theological vocabulary: ‘Liefte’ is always translated by ‘Charitas’ (e.g. sig. A3r, A5v, G2v, L3r) and appears in the Latin

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228 In Sebastien Castellio’s Latin translation of the *Theologia Germanica*, in which the concept of ‘Liefte’ is of equal importance and has a similar meaning as for Niclaes, we find ‘Amor’ instead of ‘Charitas’.
translation of the movement’s name; ‘Utherweleden’ by ‘Electi’ (e.g. sig. A3v, A5r, D4v); while ‘Gerechticheit’ becomes ‘Aequitas’ (e.g. sig. C3r, F6r) and ‘Iustitia’ (e.g. sig. A8v, H6v, L6v; coinciding with the Vulgate, this term is much more frequently used in the Evangelium than ‘aequitas’). As can be observed from the double translations for ‘Gerechticheit’, unlike the original, the text does not always translate the specific Familist lexicon by exactly the same terminology, but often uses synonyms.

The fact that the majority of the theological terms in this translation were widely established in the Latin language of the early Christian writings makes it hard to discern whether the translator was influenced by or preferred the language of a specific earlier author. However, for two of the more individual key expressions of the Evangelium, i.e. ‘Vorgodung’ and ‘Schriftgeleertheid’, links seem to appear with the language of that most famous mystic of the Low Countries, Thomas à Kempis. The typical Familist image which expresses man’s participation in the godly being is translated by the verb ‘codeificare’ and its derivations (e.g. sig. A3r, G6v, G7r, H2v). The verb ‘deificare’ appeared frequently with the Church Fathers, e.g. in the writings of Saint Augustine. The word was used in the sense of ‘to deify’ and did not express the particular meaning it had for the Familists. With Thomas à Kempis however, ‘deificare’ has the specific connotation articulated in the Evangelium by ‘codeificare’: in his Cantica (12), à Kempis employs the verb in reference to man becoming equal to or part of God. Also in Sebastien Castellio’s Latin translation of the Theologia Germanica (1632: fol. 64, 66, 67), we find ‘deificare’ used in this sense.

‘Schriftgeleertheid’ and ‘Schriftgeleerden’ are in the Latin Evangelium, again in contrast with the original, not translated by single terms. The word ‘Litteratura’ (e.g. sig. A7v) is used for ‘Schriftgeleertheid’, while ‘Litterati’ (e.g. sig. A7v, D5v), ‘Literarum Periti’ (e.g. sig. F6r), and ‘Scribae’ (e.g. sig. E8r, I4v) are all renditions

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229 Together with the fact that the language of the Vulgate and the Church Fathers had become incorporated into the general vocabulary of Latin by the time this translation was produced.

230 This translation appeared for the first time in 1556.
for ‘Schriftgeleerden’. The term ‘litteratura’ appeared in the writings of the Ecclesiastical Fathers, especially Tertullianus, in reference to general learning and erudition. However, it is, again, à Kempis (De Imitatione Christi, 1, 5, 5) who employed the word in the sense we find in the Latin translation. The term ‘litteratura’ must have become well established in the Low Countries in this meaning, for in 1477 we find it in a glossary (Gerardus De Scheuren’s Teuthonista) explained as ‘schriftleringe’. The ‘Scribae’, in both the Vulgate and the Patristic works, are those students of Jewish Law who expound the text of the Scriptures. Hence, already in the Vulgate, the term has a negative ring and is often mentioned in combination with the ‘Pharisaei’. However, the word seems later to have lost its specific connection with Jewish religion, and we, again, find it used by à Kempis (Cantica, 108) in a scornful reference to all those who study the Scriptures.

B. General Lexical Level

Vulgate

The vocabulary of the Vulgate resonates unmistakably in the Latin Evangelium. I am not arguing that the translator used the Vulgate as a source in the strict sense of the word; I am just drawing attention to the similar vocabulary employed. Many of the expressions which are identical between the Vulgate and the Evangelium can also be traced back to the works of the Church Fathers to whom I will give more attention below. We are not looking here at strict categories and overlapping is thus possible.

We observe links between the Vulgate and the Evangelium not only on the specific level of the religious terminology - more common words also connect the two texts - but, because of the Evangelium’s specific content, the religious imagery is omnipresent. In expressing specific Christian figures, the Evangelium seems almost at every instance to agree with the Vulgate:
More everyday Vulgate words we also find in the *Evangelium*; some of these are very common in the Vulgate, others particularly rare:


Looking at all the examples of this kind which we find in the *Evangelium* would not be possible for they are too copious; in almost every sentence the text seems to be echoing the language of the Vulgate, both in its religious and more common lexicon.

**Church Fathers**

In this section, I will look into those terms that do not appear in the Vulgate but which we find in the writings of the Church Fathers. Again, we are talking here about a considerable number of words, but, unlike the case of the Vulgate, most belong to a purely religious context. Interestingly, the translator of the *Evangelium*
fairly frequently employs words that only rarely appear in the corpus of J.P. Migne's *Patrologia Latina*. There are, of course, certain Christian terms which were widely used by most of the Ecclesiastical Fathers:

`'Tranen' (sig. E4r) → 'Threni' (sig. E1v); helsche (sig. G3r) → 'gehennalis' (sig. F6v); 'Heidenshop' (sig. G3v) → 'Paganismus' (sig. F7v); 'Prophetien' (sig. G4v) → 'Vaticania' (sig. G1v); 'Bedener' (sig. H3r) → 'Administrator' (sig. G5v); 'Telinge' (sig. H4r) → 'Procreatio' (sig. G7v); 'Parheren' (sig. I4r) → 'Parochi' (sig. H8r); 'unvorluchtede' (sig. K2r) → 'tenebricosi' (sig. I3r)`

Some of the vocabulary of the *Evangelium* links us to more specific Patristic authors. The adjective 'immoriger' (sig. B1v) for 'wedderstrevich' (sig. B2v) we only find in two instances in the *Patrologia*, once in the works of Eusebius Pamphilus (*Vita Constantini*) and once with Adamus Scotus (*De Ordine, Habitu et Professione Canonicorum Ordinis praemonstratensis*). 'Stolones' (sig. B4r) for 'Schoten' (sig. B4r) is only used at four instances in the *Patrologia* and not by any of the major Patristic authors. Among the early Church Fathers, St Augustine (*Sermones de Diversis Quaestionibus*) is the only one to employ the substantive 'Submissio' (sig. C2r) in the same sense as the translator here, i.e. as a rendition of the original's 'Gelatenheyt'. Not one of the major Ecclesiastical Fathers has the word 'Adumbratio' (sig. D3r) in the meaning of 'Uth-bildinge' (sig. D4v). We find the term in this meaning only with later, lesser-known Patristic writers.

*Spiritual Writings from the Low Countries*

As we have already seen above, the Latin translator of the *Evangelium* might have been acquainted with the works of Thomas à Kempis. In this section, I will consider whether there are more examples in the text that may support this connection. This is indeed the case: the Latin *Evangelium* features words which can be traced back

231 We find the word in the works of Hugo de S. Victore, Idatius Aquae Flavensius, Le Nourry Nicolaus and Bonacchus Franciscus.
exclusively to certain writings of Dutch spiritualists, or which in the *Patrologia Latina* are so rare that it seems more than likely that the translator employed the Dutch spiritual writings as models. As we will see, the text of the *Evangelium* points again to à Kempis, but also the Carthusian writer Petrus Blomevenna\(^{232}\).

A few words which appear in the Latin *Evangelium* relate exclusively to the two writers just named. The term 'Sanctius-Sanctiarium' (sig. B3v) for the Low German 'Alderhilligste' (sig. B3v) I have been able to trace back only to the *Vallis Liliorum* (par. 17) of à Kempis. The translation for 'Inwendicheit' (sig. E4v), i.e. 'Internitas' (sig. E3r), I have found only in Blomevenna's *Collationes. Henrici Theologia Mysticae Liber Singularis*, where it is used several times. Two other terms do appear in the *Patrologia Latina*, although very rarely and with lesser-known writers, while à Kempis and Blomevenna seem to have been very much acquainted with their use. The noun 'Jubilatio' (sig. G5r) in the meaning of 'Triumphe' (sig. H2v) I have retraced in two anonymous works, i.e. *Psalterium* and *Benedictio Reginae*, and in Johannes Bollandinus' *Commentarius Praevius*. However, à Kempis has the word in this sense in several instances in his works (e.g. *Orationes de Passione Domini*, par. 19). The term 'Commembra' (sig. G6v) for 'Mede-lidmaten' (sig. H3v) we find in the corpus of the Patristic authors in the works of Wolberus, S. Pantaleonis, Monachus Turonensis and Columbanus Hibemus. With Blomevenna, it was a popular word which he employed in several places in his *De Vario Modo adorandi Deum*.

**Glossaries**

I have tried to trace the few very uncommon words in the Latin *Evangelium* in contemporary glossaries. On the whole, this has been rather unsuccessful as the

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\(^{232}\) Petrus Blomevenna or Peter a Leydis (1466-1536), a Carthusian from Leiden, wrote several treatises of an ascetic and mystical nature. He also composed translations from German into Latin; he translated the Franciscan Henri de Herp's treatise *Spiegel der Volcomenheyt* (Knight 1999 at http://newadvent.org).
Chapter VI

next category will further demonstrate, but there is one exception. In the Dutch glossary *Vocabularius Copiosus et Singularis Unus ex Diversis Diligentissime Theutonicatus* (1480), the perfect passive participle ‘Dicati’ (sig. I1r), which in the *Evangelium* is a rendition of the noun ‘Gehilligeden’ (sig. K1r), is attested. In this glossary, ‘dicare’ is explained as ‘consecrare’; this shows that the verb indeed at some point existed locally in the sense in which we find it in the Latin *Evangelium*.

*Neologisms or Words without Further Attestation*

Unfortunately, there still remain a few terms in the *Evangelium* for which I have found no precedent usage. Two of them are specific to the Familist milieu: ‘Irrenati’ (sig. G3v) for ‘Unherborenen’ (sig. H1v), and ‘hominificare’ (sig. I6r) - possibly created by analogy with ‘codeificare’ - for ‘vorminschen’ (sig. K3v). The others correspond to a more general context:


**III. Sentence Level**

I have chosen the four extracts discussed in this section for the reason that they illustrate well the different patterns I have observed in the translation methods informing the Latin *Evangelium*. The first two extracts are taken from the *Evangelium*’s opening sentence, which I have split up for reasons of clarity. These two extracts give a good idea of the main features of the Latin translation’s syntactical make-up. The third extract I have included for its clear expression of the Latin translation’s most outstanding characteristic, i.e. close following of the

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233 I have checked Castellio’s translation of the *Theologia Germanica* in which we find the same concept, but there it is expressed by the phrase ‘ubi Deus homo est’ (1632: fol. 72, 79).
source text; the fourth, for the reason that it sheds light on the translator’s knowledge of Latin.

**a. First Extract**

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Low German</th>
<th>Latin</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>HN, Dei Gratia et Misericordia, sanctoque Spiritu Charitatis Iesu Christi, secundum Dei Providentiam eiusque Promissiones, a supremo Deo e Morte excitus: sancto Spiritu unctus, in Senecta sanctae Intelligentiae Iesu Christ: Deo in suae Charitatis Spiritu codeificatus: in coelestibus Divitiarum Dei Bonis, Christo Cohaeres: coelesti Veritate, vero Lumine perfectae Essentiae, in Spiritu collustratus: electus in Ministerium Verbi propiti (quod postremo iam Tempore a Deo excitum est, secundum eius Promissa) in Dei sanctissimo Ministerio, sub suae Charitatis Obedientia... (sig. A3r)</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

Comparing these two passages, it is striking that in the Latin rendition all the different short clauses that are so characteristic for Niclaes’ style keep their same position. Not one single clause of the source sentence has been displaced in the translation. It is also interesting that the translator preserves the strong punctuation of the source text: in the Low German original we need this punctuation to be able to read, or read aloud, the text, but Latin, a language with inflections, requires no such strong punctuation. Moreover, the Latin phrase, like the original, abounds in prepositions. Overall, the whole of the Latin translation does so, often putting

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234 Were the Latin versions also meant to be read aloud?
prepositions where Latin does not technically require them. Purposely including them, of course, makes the sentences easier to understand for the reader, because the function of a word or group of words and the coherence of clauses is clearly expressed. Added to this is the fact that every time pronouns occur in the Low German text, the Latin translator will also add them in his translation. These are a few of the many aspects, as we will see, that make of the Latin Evangelium a syntactic calque; the syntactic organisation of the Latin text is in this fragment strongly source-based, while its over-explicitness may point to the translator’s concern for understanding and readability.

b. Second Extract

| ... um nu tor lester Tydt, uth desulve Genade unde hertelicke Barmhertichteit Godes, unde dorch densuslen hilligen Geist der Liefen Jesu Christi, allen Volckeren, die in Dusternissen sitten, unde einen Lust edder Vorlangen, nha idt ware Licht hebben, eine goede Tydinge edder frolicke Bodeschop vam Rycke Godes tho verkundigen (sig. A3r) | ... ad laetum Nuncium sive Evangelium, postremo iam Tempore, ex eadem Gratia et Dei intima Misericordia, et per eundem sanctum Charitatis Iesu Christi Spiritum, de Regno Dei annunciandum, cunctis Populis, qui sedent in Tenebris, et veri Luminis Cupiditate ac Desiderio tenetur (sig. A3r) |

In this second part of the opening sentence, the Low German word order, which we find, on the whole, strictly respected, is not followed completely in the translation. The last clause of the Low German phrase (‘eine goede Tydinge ... verkundigen’) is broken up in the Latin and put in an earlier position - i.e. ‘ad ... Evangelium’ and ‘de Regno ... annunciandum’. Such shifts are, on the whole, very rare and especially here quite inexplicable, for the original’s thematisation of the clause becomes lost. It is not unlikely that Niclaes intentionally put the phrase in final position to stress its importance. Another interesting fact is that the translator uses a gerundive construction, i.e. ‘ad laetum Nuncium sive Evangelium ... annunciandum’, for, in general, their usage is uncommon in the translation and,
where possible, the translator will avoid them. It is not unreasonable to assume that, since such idiomatic constructions required a more profound knowledge of Latin on the reader’s part, the translator may have tried to avoid them so as to not make the text too complicated for readers who were not that familiar with Latin. A similar practice can be observed when we look at the relative clause ‘qui ... Tenebris’. The Latin text has an obvious preference for correlative phrases introduced by ‘qui’; in doing so, its stays closer to the source text while additionally avoiding the use of more idiomatic participle constructions.

c. Third **EXTRACT**

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Latin</th>
<th>English</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td><em>Seet: dit Vorbundt der Besnydinge wolde Godt, dat Abraham unde syn Saedt nae em, to ein Vorbundt Godes, in erem Fleische dragen solden, beth to in ewicheit (sig. C2v)</em></td>
<td><em>Ecce, hoc Foedus Circuncisionis voluit Deus, Abrahamum eiusque Semen post eum ;ad Foedus Dei; in Carne sua in sempiternum gestare (sig. B8v)</em></td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

This short sentence illustrates well the source-orientated approach of the Latin *Evangelium*. The translator follows the syntactical organisation of the Low German source text, and even the word order is closely preserved - in this respect, the beginning of the sentence is noteworthy. Again, one can notice the particular use of pronouns - e.g. ‘eiusque Semen’, ‘Carne sua’. As a general rule, the Latin *Evangelium*, like most Late Latin writings, does not give much importance to the exact connotations of the different pronouns that existed in Classical Latin.

d. Fourth **EXTRACT**

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Latin</th>
<th>English</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td><em>Overst desse Geslachten edder Afkumpsten van Noe, vormannichfoldigden sick in vele Heiden edder Volckeren, up der</em></td>
<td><em>At hae Nationes Progeniesve Noe, in multas Gentes aut Populos super Terram se multiplicarunt, sed multi eorum; qui in Stirpe Noe et Sem non</em></td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>
I have chosen this sentence because it illustrates what tends to happen when the translator does not follow certain clauses of the source text literally. However, such shifts are, on the whole, very uncommon. In accordance with the strategies we have observed in the \textit{Extract} above, the Latin passage is strongly source-orientated. It shows a tendency to follow closely the syntax of the original and preserves the source text’s short clauses. Again, we observe an abundance of, unnecessary, pronouns and the translator’s preference for correlative clauses, instead of the more idiomatic participle constructions. Notice also the incorrect tense ‘secuti fuerunt’. In particular, I want to draw attention to the rendition of the source text’s final phrase ‘na ... Wysheit’. The un-idiomatic clause which the translator constructs reads literally: ‘just as the knowledge of their own good opinion prescribed it to them’. Why the translator does not follow the letter of the source text is not immediately clear, especially since his translation very rarely features such shifts. Maybe he did not find the equivalent words in Latin to reproduce this passage or he judged his own description clearer than its Low German source.

\textit{IV. Conclusion to the Discussions of the Latin Evangelium’s Vocabulary and Syntax}

The indications given by the Latin \textit{Evangelium}’s macro-level only partly coincide with the actual translation strategy of the text’s micro-level. In accord with the macro-level, the text is a close, almost word-for-word rendition of the original, and
uses Vulgate terminology. However, its strong source-based approach results in the translation not being specifically adapted to the linguistic context of Latin, as might have been expected from the translator's adaptations of the marginal glosses.

The Latin *Evangelium* is, on the whole, an accurate translation: it preserves the meaning and rhetorical features of the original. No intended changes to the source text's theological teachings can be discerned and the marginal glosses that support them are equally present. The typical word level of the translation, moreover, supports the *Evangelium*’s claims to be a continuation of the Scriptures with its abundant use of terms we also find in the Vulgate translation of the Bible. It is especially clear on the sentence level that the text is strongly source-based: the Germanic syntax and the constructions of Niclaes’ associative style, which expresses itself in short clauses, are closely followed by the translator, and even the word order is respected, whenever possible. The Latin syntax of the translation is very unnatural and features many syntactic calques; it avoids idiomatic constructions and it even goes against the grammatical rules. Its literal approach goes a step further than that of the English translation which abides by the language requirements of the English vernacular. The lexicon is, on the whole, early Christian with influence of certain spiritual writings from the Netherlands. For our main question of who translated the work I want to suggest that the apparent link on the word level between the *Evangelium* and some of the Dutch spiritual writers and glossaries might suggest that the translator of the work had a connection to the Low Countries.

Why is the translation so literal? It is possible that the authority of the prophet Niclaes and the unique value of his words were the reason the translator presented such a strict rendition. It may be interesting to relate the translation strategy

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235 More accurate than the English translation is the Latin *Evangelium* where it adapts the marginal glosses that point to language similarities between the text and the Bible, to fit the linguistic context of the target language.

Unlike in the case of the English translation, the repetitive character of the original is somewhat lost in the Latin version, since it often translates the text’s key words by synonyms.

236 Another possible explanation is that a strict literal translation, not adapted to the linguistic context of the target language, is the easiest option for the translator. The strictly source-based approach of
informing the Latin *Evangelium* to the only secondary indication of the work’s style we have from the Familists themselves. In the tract in which the Bishop of Rochester attacks the *Evangelium*, we have seen how the ‘Family’ defends its style by claiming that the ‘common’ Latin in which the text is written, is purposely aimed at the understanding of the ‘simple Clerkes’. Indeed on the whole, it seems that the Latin *Evangelium* must have been readily understood by an audience with a rudimentary knowledge of Latin. The word level, with its Christian vocabulary, must have been accessible to those with a moderate education in the language, which was, at the time, taught by reading the Vulgate and other Christian writings. The syntax with its scarcity of idiomatic constructions and its preference for clarity seems to support this suggestion. I would venture that knowledge of Low German, Dutch, English or another West-European vernacular together with a very moderate acquaintance with Latin would have been sufficient to understand the Latin of the *Evangelium*. Conversely, it even seems possible to me that speakers of a non-Germanic language would have had difficulty with the understanding of the many artificial constructions employed in the text. The kind of Latin used here must have made very little impression on a Humanist, highly educated public. In how far the text’s language was also the result of the translator’s capability is not fully clear, even though it seems unlikely that we are dealing with the work of an educated humanist.

It seems clear that the Latin *Evangelium* was not produced to give the text a higher prestige. The question is then, why Latin translations of Niclaes’ writings circulated in the Netherlands and England while almost identical vernacular versions existed. I will look into this issue regarding the English context for which we are better informed about the movement’s organisation and followers than for the Continental branch. Is it possible that the English and Latin versions of the text might also be explained from the angle that the ‘dudesche Sprake’ was the Family’s ‘holy language’.

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237 Is this the reason that the Latin texts have resurfaced only in England and the Netherlands?  
238 One possible explanation is that, despite the growing impact of the vernaculars, Latin was still the language of communication in the sixteenth century, even among the lesser educated. Printing, despite the impact it had on the vernaculars, made for a more widespread knowledge of Latin in the fifteenth and the sixteenth centuries (Febvre/Martin 1990: 252).
Niclaes’ works were aimed at specific groups within the English Family of Love? To answer this, I will first look at what connects the two translations and, second, in what aspects they differ. First of all, the main translation strategy informing the English and Latin versions of the *Evangelium* is their close and literal approach to the source text. Nevertheless, where Vittels, within his close following of the original, gives consideration to the idioms of English, the Latin translation renders the source text as strictly as possible, without giving much care to the style and idiomatic aspects of Latin. Second, despite the complex source text they worked from, the translators of the English and Latin *Evangelium* have not further obscured the original. On the contrary, providing an accessible text seems to have been a concern for both translators. This leads me to think that the texts were meant for a public of a similar intellectual background: not the top layer of society, but, in Niclaes’ own words, the ‘Goodwilling ones’, i.e. those who could read but were not formally educated.

One of the major differences between the English and Latin renditions of Niclaes’ works is that almost all the prophet’s writings were translated into English, while for the Latin far fewer translations have existed or resurfaced. If it is the case that only a limited number of Niclaes’ works were translated into Latin, this might mean that, unlike the English versions, they were not employed as popular instruction of the Familist theology. In that case, how could they have functioned within the English Family? I want to suggest that they were meant for more private study of those with a particular interest in Niclaes’ teachings, who possibly already knew the texts in their English versions, like, for example, in the case of the Family’s Elders, whose function in the movement lay in the instruction of novices and exposition of Niclaes’ beliefs. Through their strict adherence to the source text, the Latin translations could bring the reader, ignorant of Low German, closer to the exact words of Niclaes’ original writings - closer than the English translations could\(^{239}\).

\(^{239}\) Although it is unknown how many of Niclaes’ Elders in England actually knew Latin.
V. Biblical Quotations

The questions this study of the Latin renditions of the original’s quotations from the Bible seeks to answer have been set out in Chapter IV, but the results of the analyses above influence its practicalities. On the whole, I expect the strict literal stance of the translator to be continued on this level. I will give special attention to the word level of the Latin quotations; the question is whether or not the translator continued to employ Vulgate words in Niclaes’ Protestant-based phrasing from the Bible. We have also observed how the translator gives specific attention on the level of the marginal glosses to assimilate his translation to the context of the Latin Vulgate Bible; it will be interesting to see how he approaches full quotations from the Scriptures. Again, all the Biblical quotations in the Latin Evangelium show similar strategies and I have, therefore, opted for those that are most interesting to analyse in detail.

Isaiah 43:19

Low German Evangelium:
Ick wil ein nye Dingk doen; unde idt sal itzundt upgaen; dath gy erfaren solen, dath Ick in de Wostenie, Wegen, unde in de Wilternisse, Waterstromen make (sig. A4v)

Latin Evangelium:
Volo Rem novam facere; et ea inpraesentia orietur: et cognoscatis, quod ego in Desertis, Viam et in Sylvis, Flumina praestem (sig. A6r)

Vulgate:
Ego facio nova et nunc orientur utique cognoscetis ea ponam in deserto viam et in invio flumina

The Latin Evangelium presents here a straight translation of the original’s first quotation from Isaiah, with the translator staying close to the wording, syntactical

240 I have used the online version of the text of the Vulgate, available at http://lib.uchicago.edu, in this section.
organisation and even word order of the source text. Nevertheless, the actual terminology of the Latin text requires a closer look. It seems that the translator may not have strictly based himself on the Vulgate for the word level of his text: we find ‘inpraesentia’ as a translation for ‘itzundt’ where the Vulgate has the more common ‘nunc’. The non-Classical adverb ‘inpraesentia’\textsuperscript{241} was extremely rare as a synonym for ‘nunc’; it only appears once in the whole corpus of the \textit{Patrologia Latina} (in Eusebius Pamphilus’ \textit{Vita Constantini}). The other instances where the Latin \textit{Evangelium} differs from the Vulgate are: the Classical plural form ‘Deserta’ for the Ecclesiastical singular form of the Vulgate; the Classical noun ‘Sylva’ for the Vulgate’s Late Latin ‘invium’; and the content-specific verb ‘praestare’ for the simpler ‘facere’ of the Vulgate.

\textit{Genesis 12: 1-3}

\textit{Low German Evangelium:}
Gae uth dynem Vaderlande, van dyne Frundtschop, unde uth dynes Vaders Huse: unde reise in ein Landt dat ick dy wysen wil. Unde ick wil dy tom groten Volcke maken: ick wil dy segenen, unde dy einer groten Name maken, unde du salt ein Segen zyn: Ick wil segenen, die dy segenen, unde vorflocken, die dy vorflocken. Went in dy solen gesegenet worden alle Geslachten der Erden (sig. C2r)

\textit{Latin Evangelium:}
Egredere ex Patria tua, ex tua Cognatione et Patris tui Domo, atque in Regionem, quam ego tibi ostendam proficiscere: te in Gentem magnam ego efficiam, tibique favebo: ac Nomen magnum tibi conciliabo: erisque benedictus. Favebo tuis Fautoribus, tuosque Exercatores execrabor. Nam in te cunctis Terrae Tribubus favebitur (sig. B7r-B7v)

\textit{Vulgate:}
Egredere de terra tua et de cognitione tua et de domo patris tui in terram quam monstrabo tibi faciamque te in gentem magnam et benedicam tibi et magnificabo nomen tuum erisque benedictus benedicam benedicentibus tibi et maledicam maledicentibus tibi atque in te benedicentur universae cognationes terrae

\textsuperscript{241} The Classical form is ‘impraesentiarum’.
The Latin *Evangelium* literally translates this quotation from Genesis as we find it in Niclaes’ original. Even though the Latin quotation is very similar to the Vulgate in what it expresses, a detailed comparison shows the dependence of the *Evangelium*’s translator on the source text: it translates the verb ‘reisen’ which the Vulgate lacks, and it preserves the subordinate aspect of the original’s last clause (‘nam’) which in the Vulgate co-ordinates (‘atque’). The lexical levels of the two Latin texts again differ considerably. The examples are plenty: ‘Regio’ as a translation for ‘Landt’ where the Vulgate reads ‘terra’; ‘ostendere’ for ‘wysen’ where the Vulgate has ‘monstrare’; and ‘cuncti’ for ‘allen’ where the Vulgate features ‘universae’. Some of these differences are interesting enough to consider them more in more detail. The ecclesiastical ‘benedicere’ of the Vulgate we find expressed in the *Evangelium* by ‘favere’. However, it is only in the works of Petrus Blomevenna (*Epistola ad Arnoldum Tungrensem*, par. 87) that the verb was used in the meaning of ‘segenen’. Furthermore, for the typical Vulgate expression ‘maledicere’ the *Evangelium* has the more Classical ‘execrari’.

**Ezekiel 39:21-22**

*Low German Evangelium:*
Ick wil myne Heerlickheit manck de Heiden bringen, dath alle Heiden seen solen myn Gerichte dat ick geholden, unde myne Handt, die ick over en uthgestrecket hebbe, up dath also idt Hus Israel bekenne, dath ick ;de Here; ere Godt zy, alse van dessem Dage ann, beth to in ewicheit (sig. K4v)

*Latin Evangelium:*
Volo meam Gloriam inter Gentes transferre, ut omnes Gentes videant Iudicium meum, quod ego peregi, et Manum meam, quam super eos extendi: uti sic Domus Israelis agnoscat, quod ego Dominus, eorum Deus sim utpote ex hac Die usque in aeternum (sig. I7v-I8r)

*Vulgate:*
Ponam gloriam meam in gentibus et videbunt omnes gentes iudicium meum quod fecerim et manum meam quam posuerim super eos et scient domus Israel quia ego Dominus Deus eorum a die illa et deinceps
Again, we are looking in the Latin Evangelium at a close translation of the source text’s quotation from Ezekiel. The strictly literal stance of the translator is exemplified anew; even the word order of the Low German is closely preserved. The differences with the Vulgate on the sentence level further support this insight: the Evangelium preserves the subordinate functions of the original’s quotation (‘ut’ and ‘uti’) where the Vulgate employs co-ordinating conjunctions (twice ‘et’). The lexical level of the Evangelium, again, does not feature precisely the same terminology as the Vulgate. The translation has the verb ‘transferrre’ for the Vulgate’s ‘ponere’; the Classical, judicial ‘peragere’ for the Vulgate’s simple ‘facere’; and the verbs ‘extendere’ and ‘agnoscere’ we find in the Vulgate as ‘ponere’ and ‘scire’. Also the endings of the two passages differ substantially.

Isaiah 66:12

Low German Evangelium:
Ick vorbreide den Frede by juw, gelyck ein Water-strome, unde de Macht edder Heerlickheit der Heiden, gelyck eine Beke die vam Water over-fletet. Alsdan (sprickt de Here) werdenn gy sugen (sig. MIr)

Latin Evangelium:
Ego Pacem quasi Flumen apud vos extendo: et Potentiam seu Gloriam Gentium quasi Fluvium redundantem. Tum (dicit Dominus) sugetis (sig. K8r)

Vulgate:
Ego declinabo super eam quasi fluvium pacis et quasi torrentem inundantem gloriam gentium quam sugetis

This last passage from the Latin Evangelium, again, exemplifies the translation strategies found in the renditions of the other quotations. The translation follows the original’s wording and sentence structure, and it preserves the source text’s inclusion between brackets which the traditional Bible texts lack, as we have seen before. Again, on the lexical level the Latin Evangelium varies from the Vulgate. First, it has ‘Flumen’ for the Vulgate’s ‘fluvius’ and later on ‘Fluvius’ for ‘torrens’ of the Vulgate. It further differs in its use of ‘reundans’ - note here that the
VI. Conclusion to the Latin Evangelium’s Biblical Quotations

This analysis of the Bible quotations in the Latin translation of the Evangelium presents us both with expected and unexpected results. First of all, one very important observation corresponds to the general translation strategy of the Latin text: the Biblical quotations are straight and literal translations of Niclaes’ original. The Latin translations of the original’s Bible quotations all show close adherence to the source text’s syntax and lexical levels.

The literal approach of the translator of the Latin Evangelium brings us back to controversies of the early medieval period when St Jerome made his Latin translation of the Scriptures, and the question of which approach was to be preferred when translating an inspired work. Would a word-for-word rendition suffice to communicate the divine inspiration of the original - in this case, of course, that of Niclaes? The issue is complicated. Inconsistencies between the theory and practice date back to St Jerome himself, who held that every word in the Bible was sacred and that changes to the word order would not only destroy this mystery but endanger the enigmatic profundity of the sacred text, but who himself, in practice, did not follow this method (Schwarz 1955: 35). This division between the theory and practice is possibly also the reason why in the Evangelium’s quotations, although seemingly set up as exact renderings of Niclaes’ original, the word order is not always strictly preserved. Nevertheless, the translations of Niclaes’ inspired phrasing in the Latin Evangelium diverge little from the medieval belief that in a translation the ‘incorrupta veritas’ of the source text mattered and
that this could only be achieved by a narrow following of the original\footnote{By following a strictly literal approach, the translators in the medieval and, less so, Early Modern Period claimed that they could not be held responsible for the author's statements, because they were merely handing them on (Hermans 1997: 24). Within this context, this would mean that if Hortensius translated the Evangelium, although he personally may have refuted Nicolaes and his movement, he could have claimed he was just 'handing on' the Familist writings and had no responsibility for their content.} (Hermans 1997: 24).

While the general lexical level of the translation abounds in terminology also found in the Vulgate, and the marginal glosses are adapted to the specific context of this Bible translation, the quotations themselves support this exact connection much less so\footnote{I wondered, therefore, whether the translator perhaps used another Latin rendition of the Scriptures. There were not that many options open at the time to do so, and the most likely - I looked at Erasmus' Bible translation and the 1543 Latin translation of Zwingli's Bible - did not show any obvious links with the Latin quotations of the Evangelium.}. The lexical differences between the two Latin texts recur in all the quotations; the words that vary being quite diverse, ranging from conjunctions and adverbs to nouns and verbs. It is important that the texts differ in those instances where one would not expect them to. In the first quotation, there is no obvious reason for the translator to translate the Low German 'itzundt' by the highly uncommon 'inpraesentia' instead of 'nunc' of the Vulgate; the same for the quotation from Genesis where we find the Blomevenna-based 'favere' for 'segenen', while the Vulgate has the common Ecclesiastical 'benedicere', and the Classical 'excrarai' for the Ecclesiastical Vulgate term 'maledicere'; nor is it clear why the Latin Evangelium in the quotation from Ezekiel needs the highly specific judicial verb 'peragere' instead of the Vulgate's simple 'facere'. While the general lexical level of the text is, on the whole, relatively simple, the quotations show a higher concentration of more content-specific terms. We have seen before that the Evangelium's translator was not only well acquainted with the language, but also the actual text of the Vulgate, as his adaptations of the marginal glosses attest. Therefore, despite the small size of the actual corpus the Evangelium's quotations make up, my impression is that the text's variations from the Vulgate's lexical level
were the result of a deliberate strategy. It seems that the translator made a particular effort to vary his lexicon from that employed in the quotations from the Vulgate\textsuperscript{244}.

If the translation’s variation from the Vulgate was indeed the result of a conscious decision, we should think of its possible explanations. It is not unreasonable to assume that the translator wanted to stress that the Evangelium’s quotations were the prophet’s own inspired phrasing of the Scriptures by avoiding any obvious connection with the traditional version of the Latin Bible. This, possibly, echoes Niclaes’ belief that the Bible could only be understood if set out by a spiritually inspired exegete, and that the traditional versions of the Bible were a ‘dead’ letter, when compared to the Biblical phrasing of Niclaes who stood in direct communication with God. In this translation, as in the case of the Low German source text, Niclaes’ adherents would be able to read their prophet’s authoritative interpretation of the Scriptures, free from the ‘dead letter’ of the traditional Bible texts. Nevertheless, we should not forget that Niclaes’ Low German phrasing of the Bible were based on Luther and, while Vittels also borrowed from Protestant versions of the Bible in his renditions of the quotations, to employ a Catholic Bible translation would, of course, clash with the original. Maybe the translator had no access to the other existing Latin Bibles - Erasmus’ New Testament and the Latin translation of Zwingli’s Bible - or it was felt that they were not appropriate in this context.


*I. Methodology and Research Questions*

In this section, I will study the first edition of the Latin *Evangelium* for the reasons set out in the beginning of this chapter. I will pay special attention to the ways in

\textsuperscript{244} I have the impression that the quotations employ more of a Classical lexicon than the rest of the text, although the material is too limited to make any serious assumptions on the issue.
which the two editions of the Latin *Evangelium* relate to each other, and will try to
determine whether the translation strategy of the second edition is dependent on that
of the first. First, I will look at the general presentation of the Latin *Evangelium*’s
first edition, and compare its appearance with the Cologne version of the Latin text
and the first edition of the Low German *Evangelium*. In doing so, I hope to find
indications for the micro-level relationship between the two Latin editions. Then, I
will study the language of the first edition of the *Evangelium*; the question I will
pose is whether the kind of Latin employed in the second edition is a continuation
of the first. I will present a selection of passages from the two Latin versions of the
*Evangelium* in which I will compare both the lexical and syntactical levels of the
two texts. In the conclusion, I will set out the general relationship of the texts’
styles of writing and translation strategies, and will look into the interesting issue of
how the first editions of the Latin *Evangelium* made their way to England.

II. Preliminary Data and Macro-Level

It was already known in the late nineteenth century to those who studied the
Familist chronicles that Augustijn Van Hasselt had printed a number of Niclaes’
Low German writings and some of their translations in Latin and French at the
Kampen press in the 1560s. Which exact writings of Niclaes were published by Van
Hasselt remained, however, unresolved until the mid-1980s. Paul Valkema Blouw
(1984a: 247-272) was the first to investigate the typefaces used in the printings of
Niclaes’ works and, consequently, to ascribe each work to the different printing
offices Niclaes made use of during his lifetime. He concluded, as had earlier been
suggested by H. De La Fontaine Verwey (1940-42: 193), that the first editions of
both the Low German and Latin versions of the *Evangelium* were made in Kampen,
although produced with material from Plantin’s Antwerp office where the Low

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245 I have employed the same system of transcription for passages from this text and those in
the following sections, as in the case of the second edition of the Latin *Evangelium*.

246 The Kampen and Cologne versions of Niclaes’ writings, in Low German and in translation,
include four bodies of fractura: Canon (288 mm), Double Pica (144 mm), English (91 mm), and a
smaller type (Valkema Blouw 1984a: 255).
German version of *De Speghel der Gerechticheit* had been published (Valkema Blouw 1984a: 257). So far, the Latin *Evangelium*’s first edition is the only translated text from this printing office to have come to light. It is only in England that copies of the first print of the Latin *Evangelium* have reappeared, while the first edition of the Low German text has survived in only one single copy held in the Doopsgezinde Bibliotheek, Amsterdam (shelf mark: OK.65.557.(6)).

When compared with the Cologne or second edition of the Latin *Evangelium*, the Latin version as printed by Van Hasselt is presented in a strikingly different form, while closely following that of the first Low German edition. The arrangements, however, are similar: all editions of the text have an octavo format. The Latin title page opens with the title of the work, which differs significantly from the second edition’s title but seems to have been based on the original first edition:

*Evangelium* [the word ‘Regni’ obviously being a later addition] *offte eine Frolicke Bodeschop; des Ryckes Godes, unde Christi, dat ;dorch de hertelicke Barmherticheit Godes, des Almechtigen; nu tor lester Tydt ;uth Liefte; dorch den Geist der Liefen, in alle de Werlt vorkundiget, unde an alle Liefhebberen der Warheit ;schriftelick; gesandt wert: to Upweckinge aller Vorstanden in de Godtsalicheit, unde to einen eindrachtigen unde vasten Vrede up Erden, na de Belofien.

*Evangelium* ;seu Laetum Regni Dei ac Christi Nuncium; Quod ;per Dei intimam Misericordiam; postremo nunc Tempore ;ex Charitate; a Spiritu-charitatis, in Orbe universo praedicatur: atque ;scripto; ad omnes Amatores Veritatis mittitur: ad omnium ;in Piae; intellectuum Excitationem, et concordem firmamque super Terram Pacem, secundum Promissa.

Then follows a statement on the translation policy of the work; although short, it is more explicit than the one found on the second edition’s title page. It reads that the text is a literal translation into Latin for all those who do not understand the language of the original:

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247 The French translation to which the *Chronika* alludes has not resurfaced.
248 The first Low German edition has 96 folios, the first Latin print 92.
249 Note that the Latin title is not completely identical to that of the Low German edition.
Chapter VI

In Latinam Linguam ad Verbum fere tralatum, in eorum Gratiam, qui Germanicum Idioma non intelligent.

The typical circular engraving, which we find in all Cologne editions of Niclaes’ works and translations, is missing in the two first editions. At the bottom of the first editions’ title pages, we also find three Biblical quotations; however, only one corresponds with those of the second editions (i.e. Rev 14). On the verso side of the title pages, a rather elaborate woodcut has been added, i.e. a picture of the globe crushing monsters while God’s lamb celebrates its victory:

Woodcut on the title page of Hendrick Niclaes’ Low German Evangelium Regni (1st edition) of 1561 (Kampen)

250 The first quotation is from Matt 24, the second one glosses to Ps 95 and Heb 3-4.
Unlike the second versions, no preface is added in the first editions and the texts immediately follow the title page. They open with a very elaborate engraving of Niclaes' initials. Throughout the works, as is also the case in the second editions, no engravings have been added. The divisions into chapters and sub-chapters correspond with the later editions; in addition, running titles are found at the top of every page. As already set out in Chapter III, the Biblical glosses found in the margins are different from the second editions. The books of the Bible referred to in the two first editions of the Evangelium are identical and much less frequent than in the revised editions. In contrast with the second editions, the Biblical references are put merely in the margins without any system of reference to words or phrases in the texts. The first edition of the Latin Evangelium which I have looked at, i.e. the copy from the Bodleian Library (shelf mark: 80.N.25.Th), also has 'little hands' in the margins to highlight important passages, while its source text features none. They are much more frequent in the Latin text and are drawn by hand and not printed as they are in the second editions. The hands are often accompanied by the English imperative 'note' or 'nota bene'. Also, other additions, such as exclamations and comments on Niclaes' doctrines, have been added beside the text; they are all in English and written by hand. Some parts of the texts have also been underlined. While the Low German original is a 'clean' copy, it is clear that the first version of the Latin Evangelium was studied by its English owner, an element which we need to keep in mind when sketching the full context surrounding this translation.

The presentation of the first editions of the Evangelium clearly differs from the way the second editions of the text were printed in Cologne. The first Latin edition

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251 The Low German version has 'Evangelium' (verso side) 'des Ryckes' (recto); the Latin reads simply 'Evangelium Regni' on every page and is, therefore, not a 'running' title in the strict sense of the word.

252 In the margin to Niclaes' description of the Antichrist (sig. H5v), we read: 'Oh, that this Antichrist were known'. To Niclaes' claim that the 'Romsche Catholische Kercke' has based itself on the 'Figuren edder Uhbildinge van de ware Christenheit' has been added in the margin 'not all' (sig. I1v).

253 This could corroborate my earlier suggestion that the Latin versions in England were mainly used for private study by people well acquainted with Niclaes' theology, like the Familist Elders.
closely follows the presentation of the first Low German edition; I expect this also to be reflected on the micro-level. The changes to the second editions’ layout make clear that the revisions of Niclaes’ writings were not merely textual, but that also the visual arrangements were altered. Some of the changes made in the Latin revised edition’s presentation are noteworthy. Where the 1560s version is quite clear in its statements about the reasons for which the text was translated, the second edition is much more vague.

III. Comparison of the Language and Translation Strategies of the First and Second Editions of the Evangelium Regni

As I have set out in Chapter III, on the whole, the two editions of the Low German Evangelium do indeed show certain differences on the content level, but passages where the doctrinal changes are minor or non-existent are much more common. The Low German revised edition, which the later Latin print follows, preserves overall the text of the first edition and varies only in its rephrasing of certain aspects of Niclaes’ teachings. Since the alterations between the two Latin translations in the important passages of the work are not of a radical nature, it is on such passages that this section will mainly focus. Although my main concern is how the Latin language of the first compares to that of the second, I will also point to the changes Niclaes made in his revised editions to support more explicitly the autocratic claims he made towards the end of his life, as we have also observed in my analyses in Chapter III.

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\[254\] In footnote I will present the texts of the Low German editions.
The second part of this sentence is identical in the two editions, both in Low German and Latin, and I will, therefore, look only at the first part. The larger part of this phrase, as translated in the first Latin version, has been carried over into the later edition. The lexical differences between the two passages do not depend on adaptations in the second edition to the Latin employed in the earlier text, but on alterations or additions in the source text: e.g. the first edition has the plural noun ‘Mortuis’ matching the original’s ‘van dem Doden’, where the second edition follows the revised Low German version; the possessive pronouns we find on the last lines of the revised edition follow the Low German source text, while the first editions lack them. Some of the differences in the order of the two phrases can be

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explained by the fact that the second edition follows closely the word order of the revised Low German text: e.g. the clause ‘sancto Spirito unctus’ of the second edition, which has a different position in the first, features in the sentence where we find it in the revised original. It is interesting to note how the opening words of this passage in the second edition, undoubtedly on purpose, immediately mention some of the key terms of the work, i.e. ‘sanctoque ... Christi’, where the first edition does not.

b. Second EXTRACT

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Second Edition:</th>
<th>First Edition:</th>
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</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Deus ... secundum sua Promissa et ;per intimam Misericordiam suae Charitatis; ex suo sancto Coelo, magnum et mirabile Opus super Terram operatus est: Meque HN, inter Sanctos Dei minimum (qui omnino mortuus, et sine Anheliu et Vita; inter Mortuos iacebam) e Morte excitavit, et ;per Christum; vivum effecit, ac divina sua Essentia unxit, Seipsum mecum hominificavit, et Me secum deificavit, Sibi in vivum Tabernaculum, seu Domum suae Habitationis, et in Sedem Christi eius, Seminis Davidis: uti nunc postremo Tempore, sua mirabilia Opera agnoscerentur, Lumen suae Gloriae ;cum plena Claritate et Instructione; manifestaretur, et Adventus sui Regni ;in Evangelium eiusdem Regni, et ad Felicitatem omnium Terrae Nationum; in universo Mundo annunciaretur, secundum Scripturam (sig. I5v-I6)</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Deus ... secundum sua Promissa et ;per intimam Misericordiam suae Charitatis; ex suo sancto Coelo magnum et mirabile Opus super Terram operatus est: Meque, minimum omnium ;qui omnino mortuus, et sine Anheliu et Vita; inter Mortuos iacebam; ex Mortuis excitavit, et ;per Christum; vivum effecit, ac divina sua Essentia unxit, Seipsum Mecum hominificavit, et Me secum deificavit, Sibi in vivum Tabernaculum, seu Domum suae Habitationis, et in Sedem eius Christi, Seminis Davidis: uti sua mirabilia Opera, et Lumen suae Gloriae ;cum plena Claritate et Instructione; nunc ;postremo Tempore; manifestaretur, et in toto Mundo annunciaretur, secundum Scripturam (sig. K1v-K2)</td>
<td></td>
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</tbody>
</table>

The first part of this sentence, in which Niclaes describes the moment he became one with God, has been copied identically in the second edition from the first. I
will, therefore, look only at the last lines. The differences between the two translations, again, depend on alterations Niclaes made to the first edition of the Evangelium and not on amendments of its language\(^\text{256}\), and support my earlier conclusions that the revision of the text was mainly concerned with the more blunt expression of Niclaes' claims: e.g. the addition of Niclaes' own initials in the later editions, and the fact that he describes himself as 'inter Sanctos Dei minimum' and not, as in the first version, as 'minimum omnium'. It is interesting to note how the later edition, at the end of the phrase - 'Adventus ... Nationum', adds a reference to the title and importance of the work, a reference which is missing in the first versions. The second edition, again, seems to adjust the order of the words of the first edition to the way they can be read in the revised source text: e.g. the clause 'nunc postremo Tempore' stands in the second edition at the same place where it can be found in the original.

c. Third and Fourth Editions

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Second Edition</th>
<th>First Edition</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Quorum unctorum Seniorum, seu Praegressorum Communitatis</td>
<td>Quorum unctorum Seniorum, seu Praegressorum Communitatis,</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

\(^{256}\text{Second Edition:} \) 'Godt ... heft ... na syne Beloften: unde ;dorch de hertelick Barmhertichheit syner Liefen; uth synem hillighen Hemmel, ein groit unde wunderlick Werck up Erden gewercket: unde My, den Geringesten manck den Hilligen Godes (die ganzelick dodd, unde ;sonder Athem unde Leven; manck den Doden lach) van den Doden erwecket, unde dorch Christum levendich gemaket: gesalvet mit synem godtlicken Wesen: sicksulven mit My vorminschet, unde My mit Em vorgodet, Em to einen levendigen Tabernakel, edder Hus syner Woningh, unde to einen Stoele synes Christi, des Sades David, up dath nu tor lester Tydt, syne Wunderwercken bekent, icht Licht syner Heerlickheit ;mith voller Klaerheit unde Berichtinghe; geopenbaert, unde de Theoekumpste synes Ryckes ;to ein Evangelium van demselven Rycke; unde tom Segen aller Geslachten der Erden ;in alle de Werlt; vorkundiget solde werden, na de Schrifturen.' (sig. K3v).

\(^{256}\text{First Edition:} \) 'Godt ... heft ... na syne Beloften: unde ;dorch de hertelick Barmhertichheit syner Liefen; uth synem hillighen Hemmel, ein groit unde wunderlick Werck ;up Erden; gewercket: unde My, de Aldergherighesten ;die ganzelick dodd, unde ;sonder Athem unde Leven; manck den Doden lach; van den Doden upghewecket, unde ;dorch Christum; levendich gemaket: gesalvet mit synem godtlicken Wesen; sicksulven ;mit My; vorminschet: unde My ;mit Em; vorgodet, Em to einen levenden Tabernakel, offte Hus syner Woninghen, unde to einen Stoele synes Christi ;des Sades David; up dath syne Wunderwercken, unde icht Licht syner Heerlickheit ;mith voller Klarheit unde Berichtinghe; nu ;tor lester Tydt; geopenbart, unde ;in alle Werlt; vorkundiget solde werden, na de Schrifturen.' (sig. K4v-K5r).
Chapter VI

Romanae Catholicae Ecclesiae, Supremus-unctus, Papa nominatus est: nobisque denotat, Sanctae Intelligentiae seniorem Parentem (sig. H7r)

Proximi Cardinalibus, dicuntur Episcopi, qui nobis Pastores Ovium et Agnorum Christi, ac superiores Sacerdotes seu Seniores denotant: qui in Ministerio et Testimonio spiritualis et coelestis Veritatis ; administratae a superiore Episcopo seu seniore Patre; intelligentes sunt (sig. H7v)

Supremus-unctus, nominatus fuit, Papa: nobisque denotat, Sanctae Intelligentiae seniorem Parentem (sig. I2r)

Proximi Cardinalibus, dicuntur Episcopi, qui nobis Sacerdotum Principes, seu superiores Seniorum denotant: qui in Ministerio et Testimonio spiritualis et coelestis Veritatis ; administratae a superiore Episcopo seu seniore Patre; intelligentes sunt (sig. I3r)

What I intend to make clear with these two passages is that the expositions of the hierarchical organisation of Niclaes' movement, as an ante-type to the Catholic hierarchy, have seen little change between the two editions, but that the second edition is more careful and specific in the terminology it uses to describe these organisations:

- In the first edition, 'Papa' is the 'Praegressor Communitatis' in the first edition, while in the later version more specifically the 'Praegressor Communitatis Romanae Catholicae Ecclesiae'; the 'Episcopi' the 'Sacerdotum Principes' in the first, and the 'Pastores Ovium et Agnorum Christi' in the second. The later edition, here again, merely follows the changes made in this respect to the revised source text. Note how, in the first fragment, the second edition corrects the non-existent form 'nominatus fuit' employed in the first (lines three and four).

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These two passages, which show only minor differentiations, illustrate very well that the source-orientated approach of the second edition is in every respect a continuation of the first. The strict adherence to the original’s sentence structure, syntax, and word order we find in both passages. Also, the expression of the source text’s every word and the avoidance of idiomatic constructions, i.e. the many relative clauses to avoid participle constructions, characterise the two translations. The differences between the two depend, again, on Niclaes' adaptations of the source text\(^\text{258}\): e.g. the verb tenses that vary - ‘est’ in the second edition (line

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\(^{258}\) Second Edition: ‘Went seet: Tor Tydt do de levende Seelen Christi ;dorch den hilligen Geist; up Erden getelet worden, so was de Gelove; mit dem Denste des Wordes der Hilligen Christi; idt vruchtbare Wyf, dar de levende Seelen Christi uth getelet worden, menn Christus ;idt Licht des Levens; was de Man, de Here, edder idt Hovet dessulven Wyves, die uth de Krafte Godes, synen Hilligen Geist; welcker idt Saedt des Wasdommes Christi was, to Teline syner geistelicker Kinderen; in eere stortede, unde also waren desulve alle, die daer-vanne getelet worden, de uprechte Kinderen Godes, na de Beloften.’ (sig. H3r).

First Edition: ‘Went seet: Tor Tydt do de levende Seelen Christi ;dorch den hilligen Geist; up Erden getelet worden, so was de Gelove; mith dem Denste des Wordes der Hilligen Christi; idt vruchtbare Wyf, dar de levende Seelen uth getelet worden, menn Christus ;idt Licht des Levens; was de Man, de Here, edder idt Hovet dessulven Wyves, die synen Hilligen Geist, uth de Krafte Godes; welcker idt Saedt des Wasdommes Christi was, to Teline syner geistelicker Kinderen; in eere stortede, unde
ten), ‘erat’ in the first (line ten) - reflect in each case the wording of the original; the addition of ‘Christi’, whose importance is stronger in the revised edition when compared to the first, as also  
also waren alle desse ;die daer-vanne getelet worden; de uprechte Kinderen Godes, na de Beloften.’

IV. Conclusion

The first Latin edition of the Evangelium occupies an exceptional position in the Family’s printing history. But how ‘isolated’ is the text within the tradition of the Family’s Latin translations? The presentation of the first edition differs markedly from the versions produced in the Cologne office, while following that of the Kampen printings. The appearance of the second edition has, indeed, been wholly adapted to the presentation of the Low German Cologne version and the text is undeniably a translation of Niclaes’ revised Evangelium. However, the language of the revised Latin Evangelium has, unmistakably, been influenced by that of the first edition of the Latin text. Wherever possible, the second edition copies the sentences from the first and adapts them to the changes made by Niclaes to the revised Low German text of the Evangelium. The differences between the two Latin texts depend, generally, on adaptations by Niclaes and not on variations to the style or language the translator of the second edition made to the first. The general translation strategies of the second edition also, therefore, apply to the earlier version of the text. True, there are phrases in the second Latin edition which we do not find in the first version, but then the translator imitates the kind of language found in the first. It is very important to add that the revised text of the Latin Evangelium shows no breaks of style whatsoever. The text does not read as a

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259 All the terms that are borrowed from the Dutch spiritual writings in the revised version we find used in the first edition.

260 To give just one example of a sentence we do not encounter in the first editions: ‘Idt welcke idt ware Paesschen is, dat wy mit Christo ;to ein Bewys, dat wy uprechelick an Em geloven; behoren tho holden’ (sig. G3v). ‘Id quod verum Pascha est, quod nos cum Christo ;ad Indicium nostrae sincerae in eum Fidei; decet servare’ (sig. F8v).
Chapter VI

compilation of two works, and the 'second' translator remains invisible. These are all important elements to be taken into account when we discuss the identity of the likely translator of the Latin Evangelium and the other Latin translations of Niclaes' works. In the 1570s edition of the Latin Evangelium, we are basically looking at a translation, and its language, created before the Cologne revision, and thus, in a way, from a different period in the Family's history. It will be interesting to compare the language of the Evangelium with the Latin translations for which we have no first edition.

This consistency on the language level between the two Latin translations is worthy of note and raises certain questions; the most obvious being: which translator would have been able to copy the style and language of an earlier work so perfectly? The most natural explanation seems that it was one and the same translator who worked on the two Latin editions of the Evangelium, but again, I will answer this question further and more accurately in my analyses of the other Latin translations of Niclaes' works.

How and when did the first editions of the Latin Evangelium arrive in England? We cannot derive anything with certainty on the issue from the text itself. The title page clearly states that the text was meant for those without knowledge of German, but reveals nothing more about the possible market the work was intended for. If nothing else, this seems to suggest that the translations were meant for a public outside the Netherlands and Germany; an element which the later editions do not specify. Another clue we might find is in the English notations which have been made in the Evangelium's copy held in the Bodleian Library. However, the additions are too scarce to make a full analysis of the handwriting. I cannot be completely sure whether these notes were made in the sixteenth or the seventeenth centuries; again, this does not bring us any closer to answering the question of when exactly the text arrived in England. Maybe we should look for answers in what is

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261 This might reflect the specific hopes Niclaes had at the start of his movement of attracting followers from a large territory.
known of the Family’s history and reconsider Niclaes’ possible visit to England in 1562. There are two tracts that insinuate that Niclaes journeyed to England. In the Family’s chronicles, we find a possible allusion to Niclaes being there\textsuperscript{262}, and, as we have seen in Chapter I, we have the account of Thomas Chaundler and Robert Sterte who spoke in 1561 about ‘Henrycke a Dutchman’ who visited his ‘flocke’ in England (Rogers 1579b: sig. H3v-H4r). If these accounts are true, they would further underline Niclaes’ interest in the English religious ‘market’, an interest which might have thus gone back to an early date. In this context, it appears not unlikely that the first edition of the Latin translation had reached England, because interest seems to have existed in Niclaes’ doctrines as early as this\textsuperscript{263}, and no English translations of his works had yet been made. Within this hypothesis, we might even go a step further and presume that if Niclaes indeed went to England, he might have been the one to take the translation of the \textit{Evangelium} with him, since his later propagator Vittels was at the time not well acquainted with the prophet. If we consider that the suggestions of Niclaes travelling to England can all be dated around 1561-1562, it would theoretically have been possible for Niclaes to have the Latin \textit{Evangelium}’s first edition in print, for the office in Kampen had commenced working in 1561 and the \textit{Evangelium} is generally considered to have been printed shortly after its start (Valkema Blouw 1984a: 265).

\textsuperscript{262} Although I have already given this passage from the \textit{Chronika} before, I will repeat it here. The \textit{Chronika} (Hamilton 1988: 66-67) relates that the Reformed pastor, Nicolas Carinaeus, one of the Family’s critics in the Netherlands, went in 1562 to England in search of the prophet: ‘... manck welckere falsche Herten, wasser einer die wal de Nydigste was, genom et Nicolai Careneo: welcker uth dem Lande van Oist-frieslandt reisede, undo so hyr unde dahr, in vorscheidene Landen unde Steden, daer he HM meest vormoede te wesen, na HM vorforschede unde em allenthalven seer schendlick beloge, unde also daer-over seer rasede unde lasterde: unde wolde em also wal gerne, so he em bedde kunnen forschen, an de Overicheit vorraden hebben ... is tom lest, mit Torne synes Gemotes, in Engelandt gereiset.’.

\textsuperscript{263} An element which also seems to follow from the letter Niclaes wrote to ‘two Maidens of Warwick’ in the 1550s.
5. A Study of the *Annunciatio Pacis* and *Epistola Prima HN*

**I. Methodology and Research Questions**

In this section, I will analyse three of the other Latin translations of Niclaes' writings, the *Annunciatio Pacis* and the *Epistola Prima HN*, for the latter of which we have a double translation in Latin, and compare them to the translation strategies of the Latin *Evangelium*. In doing so, I expect to be able to define better the position of the two editions of the *Evangelium* in the context of Niclaes' Latin translations and, at the same time, further reconstruct the general framework of the Familist literary history. Eventually, I hope to establish whether or not these translations were also the handiwork of the same translator, or translators, behind the versions of the *Evangelium Regni*. I will start by describing the macro-level contexts of each translation. Then, I will study the translation of the *Annunciatio Pacis*. I will analyse two passages of the Low German source text and its Latin rendition; I will focus on the lexical and syntactical levels of the language employed in the translation. Lastly, I will look at the two renditions of the *Epistola Prima HN*. I will compare the language and translation strategies of these texts with the Latin *Evangelium*. Additionally, I will study the internal relationship of the two Latin translations which exist for the *Epistola Prima*. After the language analyses of the different texts, I will try to establish the general translation strategies of Niclaes' writings in Latin, while also giving attention to the particularities of each of the translations discussed in this section.

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264 The space available in this section has prevented me from looking at all the Latin translations that have resurfaced. I have chosen to leave the Latin version of Niclaes' *Proverbia* out; the work is a mere compilation of Niclaes' utterances collected towards the end of his life. I have judged it the least suitable for this study.

265 Since the different versions of the texts, needed for this study and that of the *Epistola Prima*, are all found scattered across different English libraries, I needed to transcribe the different texts at the locations where they are currently held. For that reason, I have concentrated on the first chapters of each text. I have, however, read through the whole of the texts to check whether the chosen chapters were representative.
II. Background and Context

a. Annunciatio Pacis

The text of Niclaes' Vorkundinge des Fredes in its second edition has survived in three versions: there is the Low German original\(^{266}\), the English translation by Vittels\(^{267}\) and the Latin translation, held in Christ Church College Library, Oxford (shelf mark: Allestree R.6.11.(1)):

Eine Vorkundinge des Fredes up Erden, unde des genadigen Tydes unde angenam Jaer des Heren, die nu tor lester Tydt, uth dem Frede Jesu Christi, unde uth synem hilligen Geiste der Lieften, dorch HN up der Erden vorkundiget wert. Wahr-medie alle Menschen die Kryge edder Orloge wedder-einandern voren, sampt alle Wysen unde Schrift-geleerden die wedder-einandern haderen unde disputeren, tom Frede vormanet werden, unde gewaerner vor de grote Wee unde Elende, die en allen ;so se sick tom Frede nicht wenden; over-komen werth.

A Publishing of the Peace upon Earth, and of the gratious Tyme and acceptable Year of the Lorde, which is now in the last tyme ;out of the Peace of lesu Christ, and out of his holie Spirit of Love; published by HN, on the Earth. Wherewith all Men that make Warre or Battaile one against another, together with all Wyse and Scripture-Learned which contende and dispute against each-other, are exhorted unto Peace and warned of the great Woe and Miserie, which shall come upon them all, if-so-be that they geeve them not unto Peace.

Annunciatio Pacis super Terram, Temporisque benigni, et Anni Domino accepti: quae postremo hoc Tempore ;ex Pace Iesu Christi, eiusque sacro Charitatis Spiritu; per HN in Terra annunciatur. Quae cuncti Homines Bellum Praeliumve adversum se mutuo gerentes, simul ac omnes Sapientes et Literati, inter se contendentes ac discceptantes, ad Pacem admonentur. Deque ingenti Miseria et Calamitate praemonentur, quae iis omnibus ;si sese ad Pacem non converterint; evenient.

The presentation of the three versions is identical and very similar to the second editions of the Evangelium. On the title page, they all show the circular engraving

\(^{266}\) The copy I have used is held in the British Library (shelf mark: C110.b.9.(2)).

\(^{267}\) The copy I have used is held in the British Library (shelf mark: 697.a.26.(2)).
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of the Familist symbol, leaving no doubt that we are looking at editions from the Cologne printing office.

The Latin version of the *Vorkundinge des Fredes* is very rare, and so far only a single copy has reappeared. The text is found in a collection of four Latin translations of Niclaes’ writings which were all based on revised source texts\(^{268}\). The translations are all presented in exactly the same ways and the typefaces used in the different texts are identical. It is difficult to be certain whether this collection was produced as such at the time the texts were printed or dates from a later period. Apart from anything else, the collection shows us the specific interest in the Latin writings of Niclaes on the part of their collector, Richard Allestree. We know that this collection of the Family’s Latin translations was donated by Richard Allestree to Christ Church College Library in 1680 (Purcell 1999: 146). The question is how these Latin translations ended up in England. Was the work bought by Allestree in England, or did he acquire it during his long travels on the European Continent\(^{269}\)? Unfortunately, I must leave this question open for the ways in which Allestree collected books were many. We know that he was helped by his cousin, James Allestree, a London bookseller, who was a likely source for the acquisition of unusual or rare books (ibid.: 144). I am, therefore, not sure whether Allestree bought the Family’s Latin translations on the Continent\(^{270}\) or in England. The possibility that the works had been circulating in England for some time, before being bought by Allestree, remains open but is just a possibility.

\(b.\) *Epistola Prima HN*

The different editions of the *Eerste Epistel HN* - the book is a call to repent and join the Family of Love - bring us to one of the most extraordinary chapters in the

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\(^{268}\) Bound together are the *Annunciatio Pacts, Evangelium Regni, Proverbia HN* and the *Epistola Prima HN*.

\(^{269}\) As a supporter of the King, Allestree left England and stayed on the Continent in the 1650s (Purcell 1999: 144-146).

\(^{270}\) According to Alastair Hamilton (personal communication), this is the most probable option.
Family’s translating history: not only has the revised Low German source text been translated twice into English, the text also exists in a double Latin translation. The Wren Library of Lincoln Cathedral holds a very peculiar book which contains the revised Low German version of the text together with its translation in Latin and English. Interestingly, the text of the English translation differs from the other English renditions of the *Eerste Epistel* which have survived, while the Latin translation shows variations from the copy of the *Epistola Prima* held in Christ Church College Library. Since, as we will soon see, the translations of this epistle found in Lincoln Cathedral form a separate tradition from the other renditions of this text, I will describe them separately.

The Low German text in its sixteenth century version is only to be found in the library of Lincoln Cathedral, bound together with the two translations just mentioned. The full title reads:

*De Eerste Epistel HN. Ein roepende Stemme des hilligen Geistes der Lieften, daer alle Volckeren ;uht lutter Genade; dorch HN to de ware Boete vor ere Sunden, to den Ingangk des uprechten christelicken Levens, unde to idt Hus der Lieften Iesu Christi, mede geroepen en geladen worden.*

The presentation of the work is very similar to the other Cologne editions of Niclaes’ writings: it has an octavo format and features on the title page the circular symbol of the Family. The only other copy to be found in England of the Low German *Eerste Epistel HN* is a seventeenth-century reprint of the text, which is currently in Cambridge University Library (shelf mark: E.9.46). Because of the particular nature of the Lincoln editions of this epistle, I have also looked at this later reprint. The text is bound together with other reprints of Niclaes’ Low German writings, and the arrangements are of a very expensive and crafted nature, as they

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271 Shelf mark: Q.7.16.
272 An exact copy is kept in the Doopsgezinde Bibliotheek, Amsterdam.
273 The title page opens with the title of the work and then a quotation from the Bible. In the middle of the page, we have the circular engraving and, at the bottom, three more quotations from the Bible. The quotations from the Bible in all versions of the text are identical. After the title page, a preface follows and then the text.
Chapter VI

are for the seventeenth-century reprint of the Low German Evangelium. The text and title of this reprint are identical to the sixteenth-century version\textsuperscript{274}; however, it should be said that it contains rather many mistakes in the Low German; mistakes made probably by the printer.

The English translation of the Eerste Epistel - I am not talking here about the Lincoln version - has survived in, what is for the Family’s writings, a considerable number of copies\textsuperscript{275}. The title reads:

\textit{The First Epistle. A crying Voyce of the holy Spirit of Love, wherewith all People are out of meere Grace, called and bidden by HN to the true Repentance for their Sins, to the Entrance into the upright Christian Lyfe, and to the House of the Love of Jesu Christ.}

The text is a clear product of the Family’s printing office in Cologne: printed in an octavo format, the typefaces used being those we find in the revised editions of the Evangelium\textsuperscript{276}. It is further noteworthy that the text of the later seventeenth-century English reprint of this epistle was based on a copy from this tradition. The only surviving copy of the Latin translation of the Epistola Prima outside Lincoln forms part of the collection of Niclaes’ Latin translations held at Christ Church College, which I have described in the section on the Annunciatio Pacis\textsuperscript{277}. The Latin title reads:

\textit{Epistola Prima HN. In qua cunctae Nationes ;ex mera Gratia; Voce sacri Spiritus Charitatis clamante, ad veram Peccatorum Correctionem ad probae Vitae christianae Introitum et ad Charitatis Iesu Christi Domum, per HN vocantur ac invitantur.}

\textsuperscript{274} The title page opens with the title, then, follow the four quotations from the Bible, which we find also in the Lincoln versions.
\textsuperscript{275} Copies of the text are held at the University Library of Birmingham, University Library of Cambridge and in Lambeth Palace.
\textsuperscript{276} Like the seventeenth-century Low German reprint, the title page simply features the title of the work and the four Biblical quotations. I have looked at the copy held in Cambridge University Library (shelf mark: LE.20.137).
\textsuperscript{277} The title page opens with the title, followed by a quotation from the Bible. Then, it features the typical circular engraving and three more Bible quotations.
Let us now look at the two translations of the *Eerste Epistel HN* held in Lincoln Cathedral Library:

*The First Epistle of HN. A crying Voyce of the holye Spirit of Love, wherewith all People :eaven out of meere Grace; are called and intirelly-bidden, through HN, to the true Repentaunce for their Synnes, to the Entraunce of the upright Christian Life, and to the House of the Love of Jesu Christ.*

*Epistola Prima HN. Vox Sacri Spiritus Charitatis clamans, qua cunctae Nationes ;ex mera Gratia; ad veram Peccatorum Correctionem, ad probae Vitae christianae Introitum, atque ad Charitatis Iesu Christi Domum vocantur ac invitantur.*

Even though the Lincoln versions of this epistle show the same arrangements and are nowadays bound together, it seems unlikely that the book was produced in this way, because the numbering of the pages begins again with each separate letter. To explain the presence of the Latin version of the *Epistola Prima* in Lincoln Cathedral Library, we need, again, to consider its collector. In the late seventeenth century, Michael Honywood donated his collection, today referred to as the Wren library, to Lincoln Cathedral. Honywood’s life story is very similar to that of Richard Allestree. He, too, collected books both in England and, during his exile, in the Netherlands. As an unpublished and untitled catalogue of Honywood’s collection held in Lincoln reveals, the latter did buy books of Niclaes both in England and the Low Countries, but unfortunately it does not tell us which books he bought where. As the librarian of Lincoln Cathedral Nicholas Bennett suggests (personal communication), Honywood might have become interested in Niclaes’ writings on the Continent and then continued buying the Family’s works in England after his

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278 Note that the titles of the Lincoln translations differ from those of the renditions mentioned above.

279 Like the Low German version, the title pages of the two translations open with the title of the work, followed by a quotation from the Bible. In the centre, we find the circular symbol of the Family and, at the bottom, three more quotations from the Scriptures. The Latin and the English texts feature under the title the same phrases which we also find in the 1570s translations of the *Evangelium*: ‘ex Germanico translatâ’ in the Latin and ‘translated out of Base-alayne’ in the English version. The title page of the Latin translation has been dated - 1574.

280 Where he then might have bought the works in original language, for his collection includes many writings of Niclaes in Low German.
return. Again, this leaves us with no certain answer as to how and when this particular Latin translation made its way to England.

III. Analysing the Annunciatio Pacis

a. First EXTRACT

| Holdet nu oick uppe, unde stillet juw in dessem Dage ;O gy alle Wysen unde Schriftgeleerden; in alle juwen Hader unde Disputeren wedder-einandern, nadem dath doch de Argumenten, daer gy wedder einandern umme haderen, kancken, unde disputeren, vor juwe Ogen, Ohren, unde Vorstanden, alle duster unde vorborgen zynt, unde wendet juw bytydes umme to idt fredsame Hus der Lieften Jesu Christi, unde wandert in dem waren Lichten syner godtsaliger Lere, ehr gy in juwe Herten ganzelick vorstocket van de Dustemissen, to in den Afgrundt vorborgen werden, in de Vordomenisse. Derhalven ;O gy alle Volckeren up Erden, Overicheit unde Gemeinte, sampt alle Wysen unde Schriftgeleerden; horet nu wal theo, unde nemet tor Herten, unde vorstaet wat juw allen tom Frede denet: unde willet nu alle wal achtunge hebben up de godtsalige Getugenissen der Waerheit, die uth dem hillige Geiste Jesu Christi fleten, unde uth synem Denste der Lieften am dach gegeven worden (sig. A2r-A2v) |
| Desinite etiam, ac quiescite hodie ;o vos cuncti Sapientes Literarumque Periti; a cunctis vestris Contentionibus ac Disputationibus mutuis quum Argumenta, de quibus inter vos contenditis, dissidetis ac disceptatis, vestris Oculis, Auribus, Ingenisque omnino obscura et abdita sunt, vosque convertite Tempori ad pacificam Domum Charitatis Jesu Christi, et ambulate in vero Lumine piae Doctrinae, priusquam Corda vestra penitus obdurescant Tenebraeque, vos in Abyssum usque evertant, et a Claritate retectae Faciei Dei abiciamini, in Damnationem. Idcirco ;o vos terrae Nationes, tam Superiores quam Inferiores, pariter ac Sapientes Literarumque Periti ; sedulo audite, ac in Animum dimittite, et intelligite quae ad Pacem vobis omnibus conducunt piaque Testimonia Veritatis, quae ex sancto Spiritu Jesu Christi promanant, ac ex eius Charitatis Ministerio publicantur, diligenter considerate (sig. A2r-A2v) |
This passage from the Latin Annunciatio closely follows the syntactical organisation of the Low German source text and resembles the source-orientated approach of the Evangelium. All clauses of the Low German sentence are replaced by equivalents in Latin, in most instances, in precisely the same position in the sentence. We can also note the particular translation of the Low German pronouns. Furthermore, the last lines of the first sentence are interesting: the syntactical construction in the source text looks rather complicated, but in the Latin has been simplified by avoiding the passive tenses, i.e. 'vorstocket ... vordelget ... v orb annen ... werden', of the original. We might consider this arrangement as a concern on the part of the translator for the text's readability and accessibility, a concern which we have also encountered in the Latin Evangelium. The vocabulary level of this passage features an Ecclesiastical lexicon (e.g. 'Abyssus', 'retecta Facies', and 'Damnatio'), but more important is the fact that it relates to the Latin Evangelium, for we find a number of words used in both texts. The translations of the Familist key terms are most significant: 'Literarum Periti' as a rendition of 'Schrift-geleerden' we also find in the versions of the Evangelium\textsuperscript{281} (sig. F6r\textsuperscript{282}), and the same goes for 'Ministerium Charitatis' for the original’s 'Denste der Lieften' - e.g. at sig. A3v in the Latin Evangelium. Furthermore, the combination of the two nouns 'Contentionibus ac Disputationibus' can also be read in the Evangelium (sig. I5v), as well as the exact expressions 'retecta Facies' (sig. H6v) and 'pia Testimonia Veritatis' (sig. I2v).

\textit{b. Secon \textit{X} TAf p v C X}

\begin{tabular}{|l|}
\hline
Welcker hillige Geist mit syne Winden der godtsaliger Getugenissen ;nu in dessem Dage; van dem Angesichte des Heren, unde van dem Stoele synes godtlicken Maiestaets, to
\hline
Qui Spiritus sanctus cum suis Flatibus Testimoniorum salutarium ;nunc hac Die; a Facie Domini, Solioque divinae Maiestatis, ad nos perflat: in quo ;haci hodierna Die; Scriptura completur,
\hline
\end{tabular}

\textsuperscript{281} Moreover, the exact expression 'cuncti Sapientes literarumque Periti’ can be found on sig. F6r in the second edition of the Latin Evangelium.

\textsuperscript{282} Although the page references given here relate to the revised edition of the Evangelium, all the words discussed here and for the Epistola Prima also feature in the first edition of the text.
I have chosen this passage because it contains a quotation from the Bible which we also find in the *Evangelium*. On the whole, the Latin rendition shows similar trends to the Latin translations of the *Evangelium*; all words of the original are expressed in the translation, and the Latin follows closely the word order of the original. On the lexical level, the exact expression ‘Solio divinae Maiestatis’ we also find in the Latin *Evangelium* (sig. K2v). The Biblical quotation (i.e. Isaiah 57:16), which we read at the very end of the two passages, features in the original *Evangelium* in similar words, but is not identical\(^{283}\). This seems to support my earlier suggestions that Niclaes may have felt that his divine inspiration gave him the liberty to interpret and reproduce God’s words freely. It is interesting further to note that the words of the original quotation that are identical in the *Evangelium* and the *Annunciatio Pacis* are not translated the same in the two Latin translations. This also applies to the translation of this quotation in the English versions of the *Annunciatio Pacis*\(^{284}\) and the *Evangelium Regni*. Although one would expect Niclaes’ inspired phrasing always to be translated by the same words, it is possible that the translators were not always in a position to crosscheck.

### IV. Conclusion to the *Annunciatio Pacis*

Despite the limited space I have devoted to the *Annunciatio Pacis*, the discussion has shed light on the main question of how the strategies of this translation compare

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\(^{283}\) The quotations of the original and Latin *Evangelium* can be found in the appendix.

\(^{284}\) In the English translation of the *Annunciatio Pacis* this quotation reads: ‘A Spirit shall blowe-fourth from my face, and I will make breath, saith the Lorde.’ (sig. A2v). The English *Evangelium*’s quotation can again be found in the appendix.
with those employed in the Latin Evangelium. The presentation of the Annunciatio Pacis immediately reminds us of the second edition of the Latin Evangelium. We also note this similarity on the language level and the translation strategies employed in both texts. The main characteristics of the language used in the two editions of the Evangelium are reflected in the text of the Annunciatio Pacis: strict following of the word order and syntax of the source text, avoidance of idiomatic constructions, preference for clarity and readability, and an Ecclesiastical lexicon.

So far, as previously mentioned, the Evangelium is the only text for which a translation in Latin based on Niclaes' un-revised writings has survived. For the Annunciatio Pacis we do not know if an earlier Latin edition existed. The close similarity of the Annunciatio Pacis' language to that of the two versions of the Evangelium seems to suggest that they were all made by one and the same person, who merely continued working in a similar way as he had done in the first edition of the Evangelium. It seems unlikely that, if no first edition of the text had existed, a second translator would have been able to so closely reproduce the sort of Latin we find in the first edition of the Evangelium.

V. Analysing the Epistola Prima HN

a. First Extract

Dit is de Roepinge edder Stemme, die nu Huden in dessem Dage, dorch den hilligen Geist der Lieften Jesu Christi geschut, unde gehoret wert: unde daer-mede alle Volckeren ;dorch HN; tor Boete vor ere Sunden, unde to dem Huse der Lieften Jesu Christi ;de Ruste aller Hilligen edder Kinderen Godes; geroepen unde geladen werden (nicht allene mith desse Roepinge, sunder oick mith alle de Schriften, hemmelsche Getugenissen, unde geistelicke Stemmen der ewiger Waerheit, die van dem hilligen Geiste der Lieften uth-

285 The key terms of Niclaes' theology that feature in the rest of the Annunciatio Pacis are identical to those in the Latin version of the Evangelium: 'Utherwelden' is 'Electi' (sig. A3r); 'Heilige Geiste der Lieften' 'Sanctus Spiritus Charitatis' (sig. A6r); 'Bedeninge der Lieften' 'Obedientia Charitatis' (sig. A7v).
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The two Latin passages demonstrate clearly the general relationship between the different translations of the *Epistola Prima*. As can be noted, on the whole, the texts of these two renditions are very similar. Only in very minor details on the word level, like the use of 'solum' in the Christ Church version and its synonym 'tantum' in the Lincoln edition, do they vary. However, it is in the next passage I will be discussing that the particular differences between the two Latin translations of the *Epistola* are more pronounced. Note that this is one of the very few passages in the texts in which marked differences between the two translations appear. Generally

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286 I have taken the Low German passages from the Lincoln version of the text.
speaking, they are very similar and it should be added that the same applies to the two English renditions. The Latin translations' general similarities, therefore, seem to suggest that the two texts were not the result of separate and unconnected efforts; it is highly probable that one of the translations had the other as a model. Let us now consider one of the major concerns of this analysis: how do these extracts compare to the text of the Latin Evangelium? The way the two passages have been rendered in Latin does not differ from the general strategies which we have observed for both the Evangelium Regni and the Annunciatio Pacis. The texts are close and literal translations; again, the syntax and structure of the Germanic source text is preserved in Latin. Furthermore, the terminology of the two Latin passages is reminiscent of the Evangelium. The translations also feature an Ecclesiastical and Vulgate lexicon - e.g. 'Vocatio', in the sense it is used in the renditions, we find in several instances in the Vulgate, and the noun 'Delicti' for 'sins' is typically Ecclesiastical in its use.

b. Second Extract

Dewile dan dem Volcke Godes noch eine Ruste vor-handen is, welcke in dem Husgesinne der Lieften geogenbaert [sic] unde beervet wert: unde dath buten idtselve edder buten synem Denste, nichts denn alle Goedt-duncken, Moye, Arbeidt, unde Ellende is, so holdet de hillige Geist der Lieften ;dorch synen Dener HN; huden nicht uppe, alle Volckeren to demsulven Husgesinne der Lieften, vol alle liefflichen Wesens, unde to synen salichmakenden Denst, tho roopen unde tho laden, to erer aller Beholdinge inde Godtsalicheit. Unde en allen tho waernen vor den Jammer unde Elende, unde vor de Plagen der Goedt-dunckenheit, die en overkomen werth, die daer buten bliven, edder die sick nicht dorch den Denst dessulven Husjesines der Lieften, daer-thoe laten inforen, up dath se nu alle ;in dem Denste der Liefte, unde in de Gehorsamheit syner Forderinge; uprechte Boete vor ere Sunden doen, unde to de Ruste des Heren ingaen mochten (sig. A3r-A3v)
Chapter VI

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Christ Church Version:</th>
<th>Lincoln Cathedral Version:</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Igitur dum Populo dei Requies adhuc superest, quae in Familia Charitatis manifestatur,</td>
<td>Igitur dum Populo dei Requies adhuc superest, quae in Domo Charitatis manifestatur, necnon</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Haereditateque obtinetur: atque extra eam, extrave Ministerium eius, nihil praeterquam</td>
<td>Haereditate obtinetur: atque extra eam, extrave Ministerium eius, nihil praeterquam</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Boni-opinio, Molestia, Labor ac Calamitas existat, Spiritus sanctus Charitatis hodie</td>
<td>Boni-opinio, Molestia, Labor ac Calamitas existat, Spiritus sanctus Charitatis hodie non</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>non cessat; per Ministrum suum HN; cunctas Nationes ad eandem Charitatis Familiam omni</td>
<td>cessat; per Ministrum suum HN; unumquemque ad eam Charitatis Domum omni</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Amabilitate, et ad eius salutare Ministerium, vocare et invitare ad eorum omnium in</td>
<td>Amabilitate, et ad eius salutare Ministerium, vocare et invitare ad</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Pietate Conservationem, eoque omnes praemonere, de Miseria et Calamitate, et de Plagis</td>
<td>omnium in Pietate Conservationem: unumquemque etiam praemonere de</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Boni-opinionis, quae eos omnes invadent, qui foris manent, quique Ministerio eiusdem</td>
<td>Miseria et Calamitate, et de Plagis Boni-opinionis, quae eos omnes</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Familiae Charitatis se ad eam adduci non patiuntur: ut omnes in Ministerio</td>
<td>invadent, qui foris manserint, quique</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Charitatis, eiusque Postulationis Obedientia; se ad Peccatis suis vere corrigentes,</td>
<td>Ministerio eiusdem Domus Charitatis ad eam se adduci non patiuntur. Ut</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Requiem Dei ingrediantur (sig. A3v)</td>
<td>omnes in Ministerio Charitatis eiusque Postulationis Obedientia; de</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

I will start by looking at the general language level of the two Latin translations without considering their differences at this point. The translation strategies employed in the two Latin passages, again, point to the other Latin translations of Niclaes’ writings which we have looked at. The texts follow the Low German original literally and, even in their differences, they do not diverge from the style of the Latin Evangelium. It is, in particular, on the vocabulary level that the translations resemble the text of the Evangelium: the noun ‘Boni-opinio’ for the Low German ‘Goedt-duncken’ we find in the two versions of the Evangelium (e.g. sig. A5v), besides, more importantly, the typical Familist expressions ‘Spiritus sanctus Charitatis’ (e.g. sig. A5r), and ‘Ministerium Charitatis’ (e.g. sig. A7v) as a translation for one of the movement’s many names.
Chapter VI

Compared to the whole of the texts, the differences between the two passages in Latin here are much more pronounced and so demand a closer investigation\(^{287}\). The first notable variation between the two texts is found on lines nine and ten, where we read ‘cunctas Nationes’ for the Low German’s ‘alle Volckeren’ in the Christ Church version and ‘unumquemque’ in the Lincoln text. It is at this point that we should also take the English translations of this epistle into account, for in the same sentence we can read ‘all people’ in the Cambridge version and ‘every-one’ in the English translation of the Lincoln collection. Why the two Lincoln translations here depart from the source text seems unclear, but that they are internally connected will become further evident.

The Family’s own name, which reads in the Low German text ‘Husgesinne der Liefen’, has a different translation in the two Latin passages: in the Christ Church version we read ‘Familia Charitatis’ and in the Lincoln version ‘Domus Charitatis’. It should be added that in every instance in the two Latin translations of the *Epistola Prima*, where Niclaes refers to his movement, these two names can be read. If we look at the English translations we find the same divisions. The Lincoln translation reads the same as its Latin equivalent (i.e. ‘House of Love’), while the Cambridge

\(^{287}\) Since their differences are also reflected in the English renditions, I will give the English versions for this passage.

*Cambridge Version*: ‘Seing then ther is yet a Rest at hande for the people of God, which is made manyst, and inherited in the Family of Love, and that without the same, or without his Service, there is nothing but all good-thinking, tedious-travayle, labour, and misery, therefore doth not the holy spirit of Love cease this daye ;by his minister HN; to call and bidd all people to thesame family of Love, full of all lovely being, and to his safe-making service to the preservation of them all in the godlyness and to warn them every one of the Wo and misery, and of the plagues of good-thinking that shall com upon them, that remayne without thesame, or that will not suffer themselves to be lead into thesame through the service of thesayde family of love, to the end, that they mought all now in the service of love, and in the obeying of his requyring, doo upright repentance for their Sinnes, and enter into the Rest of the Lorde.’ (sig. A2r).

*Lincoln Version*: ‘Whilst then that ther is neat a Rest at-hande for the people of God, which is made-manifest, and inherited in the House of Love, and that without thesame, or without his Service, ther is nothing els but all goodthinking, tedious-travel, labour, and miserye, therefore doth not the holie spirit of Love ;through his minister HN; ceasse or leave-of in this daye to call and bidde every-one to that same house of Love, full of all lovelie beeing, and to hys safe-making service, to the preservation of them all in the godlynes and to warne them everyone of the calamite and miserie, and of the plagues of the good-thinking, which shall fall upon everyone, that bideth ther-with-out, or that will not suffer himself to be lead-in thereto, through the service of the same House, to the end, that they all mought now in the service of the love, and in the obedience of his requiring; doo upright repentance for their Sinnes, so and enter-in to the Rest of the Lorde.’ (sig. A3v).
rendition corresponds to the Christ Church text (it has 'Family of Love'). It is noteworthy that in the Latin *Evangelium* we consistently find 'Familia Charitatis' (e.g. sig. A5v, L5v, L6r). What could a possible explanation for these double translations for the movement's name be? In the early Christian and Medieval period, the noun 'Familia' was used to refer to religious, more specifically, Christian, groups and appeared very frequently in the works of the Church Fathers. However, the word 'Domus', in this sense, had a much more specific use. We find it in reference to groupings belonging to the Devotio Moderna, and the term can be read frequently in the works of Thomas à Kempis (e.g. *Epistola ad quondam Cellerarium* 136, 6). Of course, I do not know whether this link was added in the text with a specific purpose, but it does correspond with the translator's preference for terminology from the works of à Kempis which we have observed in the Latin texts of the *Evangelium*. The other clear variation between the Latin translations might be seen in the same light: on the two last lines, we read, in the Christ Church version, 'ad ... Peccatis ... corrigentes', while the Lincoln version has 'de ... Peccatis ... resispiscentes'. Even though the verb 'resispiscere' was common with writers of the Ecclesiastical period, we find the exact expression 'de peccatis resispiscere' in the work of à Kempis (*Sermones*, par 24). Whether this is again merely a coincidence or, indeed, a particular tendency in the Lincoln translation I cannot know for certain. On a more general level, it remains an unanswered question as to why the two Latin translations show distinct differences in this part of the text, while, on the whole, they vary very little.

**VI. Conclusion to the Epistola Prima HN**

The *Eerste Epistel HN* and its translations are of interest for a whole range of different reasons. In this analysis, I have specifically concentrated on the Latin renditions of the work, but here I will try to sketch the broader framework. Within

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229 Also with Johannes Busch (*Liber de Origine Devotionis Modernae* 3, 256, 2), the term is used in reference to the Devotio Moderna.
the rather scarce survival, or even existence, of Niclaes' translated works in Latin, the *Epistola Prima* has a double translation. Moreover, it is one of the very few texts to have been translated twice into English. All this needs explanation. However, the primary aim of this section is to compare the Latin used in the other translations of Niclaes' works with that of the *Evangelium*. Thus, it is on this aspect that I will first concentrate in this conclusion.

The general ways in which the two Latin translations of the *Epistola Prima* have been translated do not show any significant or pronounced differences from the translation strategies informing the Latin texts of the *Evangelium* and the *Annunciatio Pacis*. The same method of translating very closely and preserving the Germanic syntactical structure of the source sentences can, again, be observed. The choice to present a clear and readable translation for those with only a moderate knowledge of Latin seems also to have played a role in the two renditions of the *Epistola Prima*. The vocabulary level shows an even more undeniable link with the other Latin translations of Niclaes' writings. The lexicon employed includes Ecclesiastical and Vulgate terms, beside many words we also find in the texts of the *Evangelium*. All the key terms of Niclaes' doctrines, which are used in the two renditions of the *Epistola Prima*, we have encountered earlier in the Latin *Evangelium*.

It is clear that the translation strategy and language of the Latin texts of the *Evangelium Regni*, *Annunciatio Pacis* and the two versions of the *Epistola Prima* are very similar, and that the texts for which we have no earlier Latin editions translated their source in ways similar to the first version of the *Evangelium*. It seems more and more likely that one translator worked on the different renditions of Niclaes' Latin works. I will discuss in the following section whether this was the person whose name has been put forward as the Latin translator for the Family, Lambertus Hortensius. But first, I will look into the peculiar case of the *Eerste Epistel*’s double translations.
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From the discussions in the introductory part of this analysis, it seems clear that the *Eerste Epistel*'s translations need to be split into two different traditions. The English translation, of which copies are held in the university libraries of Cambridge and Birmingham and in Lambeth Palace, and which served as a model for the seventeenth-century reprint of the text, and the Latin translation from Christ Church College seem to be forming one group. The Lincoln Cathedral translations make up another. It is clear from their identical presentations that the three Lincoln versions of the text, in Latin, English and Low German, are closely connected. When comparing the actual texts of these two traditions, on the whole, their differences, both for the English and Latin translations, are very minor, often having no apparent reasons for their differences. It is, however, in the passage we have looked at above that the lexical dissimilarities between the two groups become more pronounced. What seems certain is that the connections seen within the Lincoln group go further than mere textual presentation. The English and Latin translations found in Lincoln vary from the more widely found English translation and the Latin version from Christ Church in important passages and in exactly the same ways. Why there would have been a need for a separate, slightly differing tradition is a question for which I have too little evidence to formulate an adequate answer.

It is possible that the Lincoln texts were the result of particular interest in the work by someone, or a group of people. This, indeed, is not so surprising since the *Epistola Prima HN* was of major importance for Niclaes’ theology. But fascination with this epistle must have gone beyond mere doctrinal issues, for the importance of the translations in this little collection is undeniable - also the fact that the translations show internal connections is interesting. The book held at Lincoln is a convolute. The different texts appear to have been separately written and then bound together, for the page numbers begin anew with each separate version of the epistle. The fact that the texts were also printed at the Cologne press in the 1570s seems to point to the fact that their creation dates from the sixteenth century. It is, therefore, unlikely that this collection’s existence can be ascribed to Michael
Honywood who owned it in the seventeenth century\textsuperscript{289}. Again, it is very unfortunate that we do not know exactly how and where Honywood acquired this particular work, because it might have possibly taught us a lot more about the translating history of the Family’s writings.

6. Was Lambertus Hortensius the Translator of the Familist Writings in Latin?

\textit{I. Methodology and Research Questions}

The main focus of this section is to study whether Lambertus Hortensius, who has been proposed as a translator of Niclaes’ writings into Latin, can be considered as a likely candidate. I will consider whether his personality and writings allow us to connect him to the Latin translations of Niclaes’ works, which we have been studying in this chapter. I will first discuss what is known about Hortensius’ life in order to understand the sort of person he was. Then, I will look at the contemporary tracts in which Hortensius is mentioned as the translator of Niclaes’ writings in Latin. I will give the relevant passages in full and try to link them to the Latin translations which have survived. In the third part of this discussion, I will focus on the writings of Hortensius and will try to establish how his writing style compares to the language employed in the translations. I will first discuss the meta-texts which have survived on the topic and will then look at a passage from Hortensius’ \textit{Tumultuum Anabaptisticarum Liber Unus}. In the final conclusion to this discussion, I hope to answer that most important question: was Lambertus Hortensius the translator of the Latin translations of Niclaes’ works?

\textsuperscript{289} Also for the reason that an exact copy of the Latin text found in Lincoln has survived in the University Library of Amsterdam.
II. Aspects of Hortensius’ Life

The sources on Lambertus Hortensius' life are rather scarce. Nevertheless, they give us some idea of the kind of man he was. Hortensius was born in Montfoort in 1500 or 1501 and died around 1574 in the town of Naarden. After studying in Utrecht and Louvain’s ‘Collegium Trilingue’, he became a priest in 1527. For the greater part of his life, Hortensius acted as rector of the ‘Latijnse School’ in Naarden, while devoting most of his intellectual activity to the writing of historical tracts. His most important historical work, the *Succesionum Civilium Ultrajectinarum ... Libri Septem*, retells the history of the city of Utrecht for the period 1524-1528 (Brugmans 1911: 1158-1159). Hortensius’ second work, however, is of more importance to us:


In this work, Hortensius attacked the doctrines of the Anabaptists and condemned the teachings of David Joris and Niclaes and his Family (Hamilton 1988: X). The work concentrates on the events in Münster and the series of attacks by Anabaptists in Amsterdam and Friesland (Mees 1836: 46). Besides his historical work, Hortensius was also a recognised Classical scholar. He wrote a commentary on Vergil’s *Aeneid* and on the *Pharsalia* of Annaeus Lucanus. He tried his pen as a poet and composed several satires on the events of his own time, in which he followed the style of Horatius (Brugmans 1911: 1159). Thus, Hortensius seems to have belonged to that new, up and coming group of intellectuals who were active in many different fields of study. In other words, he was a true child of his time.

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290 The copy I have used is held in the British Library (shelf mark: 9340.c.32).
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III. Hortensius’ Connection to the Familist Writings in Secondary Sources

As previously stated, Alastair Hamilton was the first to point to the link between Hortensius and the Latin translations of Niclaes’ writings. In the introduction to his edition of the Familist chronicles, Hamilton presented two textual references that would establish Lambertus Hortensius’ link with the translating history of the Family of Love. Let us look at them in detail.

In the biography of the Delft censor Martinus Duncanus a clear reference to Hortensius and the Family can be read, for apparently Hortensius had contacted him in about 1558, the year Duncanus acted as censor, to ask for the latter’s approval of his Latin translation of one of Niclaes’ works. I quote here the text as found in Hamilton’s preface to his edition of the Family’s chronicles\(^292\) (1988: X):

Lambertus Hortensius Montfortius hadde deur begheerte van Henrick Nicolaes aenhangers een van zijn Boecken int latijn overgeset, ende begeerde dat Duncanus dat Boeck soude willen approberen, dan merckende dat daer inne onder die schoone woorden fenijn verborgen was, heeft hijt niet willen onderteecken voor goet, als anderen meer gebeurt is.

What we have here is a seeming confirmation that Hortensius translated one of Niclaes’ works in Latin and that he asked Duncanus to approve it. First of all, within the secrecy that characterised the Family’s writing and printing history, it seems rather odd that official approval for one of Niclaes’ works was asked for. Niclaes and his followers avoided official interference in the Familist movement, by any means, and this request would attract attention to them all the more\(^293\). Can we

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293 However, it is possible that at the time the belief was held that controversial ideas were more ‘acceptable’ when written in Latin. A similar example, although from a later time, we find in the Netherlands of the seventeenth century: in the 1670s Spinoza tried by all means to prevent a Dutch translation of his Tractatus Theologico-politicus. The work contained a mix of scriptural criticism and radical Republican ideas, and Spinoza was aware that he could say things in Latin which the
suppose that Hortensius was acting on his own here, without the knowledge or approval of Niclaes? The major frustrating point is that the text fails to name the title of the work Hortensius sought approval for. The only early Latin translation we have knowledge of is the first edition of the *Evangelium Regni*. We know that this text was printed around 1561 when the Kampen printing press started working. If we suppose that the work mentioned in the fragment above is, indeed, the Latin *Evangelium*, then there would have been a gap of three years between this request and the actual printing of the text. One of the questions that comes to mind is whether the translation referred to in this request was, indeed, ever printed, for if, as seems likely, it was Hortensius who asked the censor’s permission, would he have wanted to take part in clandestine businesses?

Let us now consider the other tract in which Hortensius is linked to the translations of Niclaes’ works. We read here a passage from an admonition written by Henricus Nerdenus, the later Reformed theologian, in about 1565 to his tutor Hortensius:

> Observatio ad Lamb. Hortensium de non admovendo stylo versioni librorum Henrici Nicolai, in qua blasphemiae Spiritus Charitatis breviter indicantur et refellentur. Adjuncta est epistola ad Franconem Pastorem Nerdenum, ut me in hoc efficiendo apud Hortensium juvet.

In this short fragment, we read Nerdenus’ request to Hortensius not to work on Niclaes’ writings. Again, no mention is made of the exact title referred to. It is clear that Nerdenus was not a supporter of Niclaes’ doctrines, for he apparently added a short refutation of Niclaes’ theology. The admonition was written around 1565, while the first edition of Niclaes’ *Evangelium* had been printed some four years earlier and the Cologne editions were produced around the mid-1570s. Which translation would Nerdenus thus be talking about? Is it a text which has not resurfaced, or did Nerdenus indeed convince his tutor not to translate, or translate again, for the Family?

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On the whole, even though Hortensius does indeed seem to have been involved in one way or another with the renditions of Niclaes’ writings, the two fragments we have looked at are very difficult to connect to the contexts of the Latin translations of Niclaes’ works which we have today. Thus, for the moment we still have no conclusive answer as to whether Hortensius was the translator of the Latin translations we have studied in this chapter. It is in the analyses of Hortensius’ own writings that I hope to find a more accurate answer to this question.

IV. Hortensius’ Writings: a Comparison with the Family’s Latin Translations

a. Meta-texts

In G. Mees’ biography of Hortensius particular attention is given to the language and style of Hortensius’ writings. Mees is very clear about Hortensius’ capacities: he was a true Classical scholar who perfectly mastered Latin. In Mees’ own words (1836: 115-117): Hortensius’ Latin is ‘zuiver en vrij van alle bastaard-uitdrukkingen’. Mees also spoke about the meta-texts in which Hortensius gave recommendations on how an author should write in Latin295; Hortensius claimed that, even in his time, Classical Latin should be the norm for every writer in that language.

Even more interesting is the text of the Succesiones in which Hortensius, in his retelling of the history of Utrecht, translated Dutch sources into Latin:

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295 I have looked up the passages mentioned by Mees and found in Hortensius’ Satyrae of 1552 (sig. A8r) the following admonition which is a clear expression of Hortensius’ ideas on the topic:

‘Illud ego artificis duco esse probique bonique
Romanos ita scriptores aequare loquendo et
Scribendo (modo sufficient vires) ut ab ipsis
Fontibus Aonidum videare bibisse latinis,
Graecorum aut matre suxisse et ubere’.
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On the work as a whole, Mees remarks (1836: 116) that the language and style seem to have been of more significance to Hortensius than the actual treatise of the topic. I will mention some of the characteristic features of this text in order to give a better idea of how important the writing of ‘pure’ Latin actually was for Hortensius. The text of the *Sucessiones* copies the style and language of the Classics; moreover, the work avoids the use of any, so-called, Later Latin. To give just one example of how far Hortensius would actually go in this; in his description of the sixteenth-century Dutch political apparatus, which takes up an important part in the work, Hortensius solely uses the terminology of the Roman Republican political organisation. Hortensius’ concern for the method of translating from the vernacular he employed is clearly set out in the work. In the following passage from the text of the *Sucessiones*, we read that Hortensius considered it unnatural to translate a text written in the vernacular ‘ad verbum’, because this would force the author to write un-idiomatic Latin. He, therefore, only rendered the ‘sense’ of the source text. I quote here (sig. X4r):

> Ut iam huius mutationis regni memoria apud posteritatem extet, operae pretium fecero, si quibus verbis eo die translatio ditionis, in frequenti ordinem et principum conventu peracta fuit, literis prodam. Non totidem, quot in Germanorum lingua vocibus (nam id risum iuxta et fastidium provocaret) mehercle: sed quantum Latina puritas, exclusa nausea pro nostra facultate feret, sententiam reddam: cuius quidem hic tenor, sicuti ego accepi, ferme fuit.

**b. EXTRACT from the Tumultuum Anabaptisticarum Liber Unus**

Apart from the directions given by the meta-texts, it is, of course, in Hortensius’ works that we best see the author at work. I have chosen to discuss here one passage

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296 The copy I have used is held in the British Library (shelf mark: 9405.g.6).

297 Hortensius speaks about ‘Tribunes’ and ‘Praetores’, while he uses the chronological system of ‘Idae’ and ‘Kalendae’ for the dating of the events he describes.
from Hortensius’ *Liber Tumultuum Anabaptisticarum*, which is typical of his general style of writing, as well as of the ideas on religious discord expressed by him in 1548 (sig. A4r):

Principio omnium satis constat, varios errores, reviviscentibus nostra tempestate humanitatis studii, iam tum in ecclesiam irreperere coepisse. Horum autem plerique ab obscures authoribus et rudibus bonarum literarum ortum habuere. Sed cum ali alis pestilentiores essent, eum nemo non iudicarit orbi perniciosissimum fuisse, quo consensus humanae societatis perturbatus, quo nihil sanctum in vita, nihil iure proprium haberetur, nullus esset magistratus, nullis viveret legibus, sed aureo (quod in fabulis est) renato saeculo, mortales sua sponte fidem servare cogerentur. His ceu fundamento Anabaptistae, homines fanatici, postremo exorti, nullo iudicio nixi, rationis et legis naturae expertes, omnia divina et humana pervertere coeperunt.

First of all, we read in this passage Hortensius’ very harsh opinion of those who take a stance separate from the established religion. He sees them as disturbers of the peace. In his view, one of the most severe crimes man can commit. How we can relate this expression of abhorrence of religious discord with Hortensius’ later involvement in the Family of Love seems unclear. But let us consider his language and style. The fragment is written in a very Classical, well-constructed Latin. The contrast with the language found in the Latin translations of Niclaes could hardly have been greater. The syntax shows a profound knowledge of Latin; moreover, this short section abounds in constructions the Latin versions of Niclaes’ writings generally try to avoid - e.g. many ablative absolutes. Also Classical contracted verb forms can be noted - e.g. ‘habuere’ and ‘iudicarit’ - a practice completely missing in the Family’s Latin renditions. On the lexical level of the text, no Late Latin or ecclesiastical vocabulary is employed. Even more interesting is the appearance in this section of two words also employed in the Latin versions of the *Evangelium*. The Classical verb ‘reviviscere’ we find in the *Evangelium* expressed by its ecclesiastical equivalent ‘revivere’ (sig. I2r in the second edition). Even more interesting is the expression ‘renato saeculo’. In the *Evangelium*, the verb ‘renasci’ is conjugated wrongly, and non-existent forms derived from the verb have been
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made up. If Hortensius were the translator of the Latin *Evangelium*, he would have had purposely to construct a language which he knew to be wrong.

c. Hortensius' Latin and the Language of the Familist Translations

As I have set out in the discussions above, Hortensius was a Classical scholar who consciously profiled himself as such. As suggested by Brugmans (1913: 1565), one of the major concerns in Hortensius' life and writings was to be recognised by the intellectual community as a learned scholar. We are to see the commentaries Hortensius wrote on certain works of the Classical period and his following of their style in his own writings in this light. From the passages we have looked at, it appears that Hortensius was indeed a man with a thorough Classical education, very capable of writing the language he admired. His works all read as carefully constructed texts, strictly following the idioms of the Latin of Rome's Golden Age.

How does all this compare with my findings for the Latin translations of Niclaes' writings? My study of the language and style of the Family's Latin translations has presented us with results that show a great disparity with what has just been said on Hortensius' style of writing. The language found in the Latin versions of Niclaes' texts differs almost in every aspect from Hortensius' writings. The Classical aspect, which is so characteristic of Hortensius' style, is completely lacking in the Family's translations. On the whole, the Familist translations are at odds with all the ideas Hortensius had on writing in Latin. The renditions of Niclaes' works are completely embedded in a tradition other than Hortensius' own writings. The style and language which, for Hortensius, were so important in a work, more important even than the content, are of much less significance in Niclaes' Latin translations, in which, in almost a complete reversal, the content mattered above anything else. The Familist Latin translations were not intended for the humanistic, scholarly reader,

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298 E.g. the Latin translator derives the non-existent form 'irrenati' from this verb (sig. B2v in the second edition).
but were composed to suit the level of a much more moderately learned public. The kind of lexicon and syntax that Hortensius would, by any means, have avoided in his own writings are the core of the language in the translations of Niclaes' works. How would a person with such clear ideas on writing in Latin, in his own view, have 'lowered' himself to work on the translations of the Family, written in a language by which he claimed to be horrified? Would he have cast aside all his ideas on the issue and would he have been capable of creating writings of the Family's translations' standard? Moreover, if the translations were indeed by him, they would most certainly have undermined his attempt to be respected as a Classical scholar, so I doubt he would have asked official permission of the censor for translations of this kind. And what can be said about Hortensius' claim that translating 'ad verbum' from the vernacular was to be avoided at all times, while the major strategy behind the Latin translations of Niclaes' works was to stay as close as possible to the words of the vernacular source text? It is not the sense of Niclaes' words which is rendered in the Latin translations of his works, but more the originals' every word. Would Hortensius have agreed to translate in a way which he, on an earlier occasion, had characterised as 'ridiculous'?

As is clear, many issues stay unresolved here; the obvious differences between the language of the Family's translations and the writings of Hortensius being the most remarkable. It is now in the last passage of this chapter that I will make up the balance and try to put forward an acceptable explanation for Hortensius' link with the Familist writing history.

V. Conclusion: Did Hortensius translate the Latin Evangelium Regni?

In this conclusion to the consideration of Lambertus Hortensius' involvement in the translating history of the Family, we need to be extremely cautious in coming to far-reaching conclusions on the topic. The evidence I have presented is, up till now, the
only material which has come to light on the issue, and it leaves us, as yet, with a whole series of unresolved matters. However, in my study of the Latin translations of Niclaes’ works, it is nevertheless a subject of great importance with much potential to give us new insights into the Familist writing history.

First of all, from the material presented by Alastair Hamilton in 1988, it seems that Hortensius was indeed, in one way or another, involved in translating for Niclaes and his Family. The secondary material we have looked at indicates that Hortensius translated, on behalf of the Family, at least one of the writings of Niclaes into Latin. We need to accept this evidence, even though it is hard to link to the Latin translations of Niclaes’ works which have survived. Nevertheless, one important question still stands. How would somebody, who less than ten years before had written and published an attack on religious dissenters, later on in life come to work for a man who was the pure embodiment of everything he had earlier condemned - unless, of course, this earlier attack was merely a cover-up for Hortensius’ heretical beliefs, created to confuse the authorities? To explain Hortensius’ work on Niclaes’ translations, one could conceive that Hortensius was ‘hired’ by the Family, and that money must have driven him. It would certainly make Hortensius a man of very little principle. Theoretically, this would have been possible, for we know that Niclaes invested a large amount of his own resources in spreading his claims and that many of his interactions with those around him centred on money. But, at the same time, it leaves us with the difficult question of how far Niclaes would have wanted to go in this. From Niclaes’ view, we can ask ourselves whether he would ever have entrusted the translations of his writings to someone who had earlier shown his clear hostility to the Family’s doctrines and beliefs. We know that, for

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299 Another possibility is that Hortensius had, meanwhile, been ‘converted’ to Niclaes’ beliefs. Or did he possibly want to use his translation as a new angle from which to attack the Family of Love?

300 Although it is possible that Hortensius believed that he had no responsibility for what he translated.

301 It is true that Niclaes involved others in the spread of his beliefs of whom it is not clear whether they were close followers of all the prophet’s claims, like e.g. the printer Christophe Plantin. Nevertheless, Plantin was attracted to spiritualism, even if he might have not have agreed with all of Niclaes’ ideas, and he and Niclaes had many, mainly financial, objectives in common, while Hortensius had publicly attacked teachings of the kind the prophet promoted.
Niclaes, the translations of his works were an extremely important means in spreading his beliefs over a larger territory and, within this context, it is logical that the translator of Niclaes’ works in English was an adherent of the Familist beliefs.

But let us now try to link Hortensius’ involvement in the Family’s translations with the results of my analyses for the five Latin translations of Niclaes’ works we have looked at. First of all, it is very important to keep in mind that, even though Hortensius apparently translated for the Family, there is no clear secondary statement that points to the fact that any of the Latin texts we have been studying, were his handiwork. There are also problems when we try to link the material in which Hortensius is mentioned in connection with the Family to the translations discussed in this chapter. The only Latin translation we have knowledge of and that existed at the time the two pamphlets, in which Hortensius is connected to the Family, were written is the first edition of the Latin *Evangelium*. However, what we know about the printing history of the text can hardly be connected to the content and dating of these pamphlets.

But let us go back to the issues about which we can speak with more certainty, i.e. Hortensius’ own writings and the Latin translations of Niclaes’ works. The translated works of Niclaes in Latin all show the same characteristics in terms of the language and style employed in the texts. Very close similarities appear between the first Latin edition of Niclaes’ *Evangelium* and the later Cologne translations; it, therefore, seems likely that there was one translator at work both for the Latin translations based on Niclaes’ Cologne editions, as well as for the one surviving translation of Niclaes’ un-revised writings. In terms of purely verifiable facts, this does not immediately exclude Hortensius, because, as we know, he died around 1574 while Niclaes’ Latin translations were being printed in Cologne in the mid-1570s. Thus, in theory he should still be taken into consideration as the possible translator of the Latin texts we have been studying. Nevertheless, in my view, the contrast on the language level between the translations of Niclaes’ texts in Latin and Hortensius’ writings makes it impossible to conceive that Hortensius was indeed the
one who translated these works. It is unlikely that a scholar of Hortensius’ rank was actually capable of creating the language we find employed in the Familist writings in Latin.

To conclude, it cannot be denied that Hortensius worked on certain renditions of Niclaes’ works, but they were presumably not the Latin translations of Niclaes’ writings that we have today. If we consider the translation strategies of the texts I have studied in this chapter, it seems more probable that it was someone from within the close circle around Niclaes who translated the texts into Latin. The strict literal stance of the translator towards the source texts might, indeed, lead us to think that the renditions were the work of someone who respected and admired Niclaes as the prophet of the Family of Love. I am, however, not in the position here to come up with a new ‘name’. If I am indeed wrong and it was Hortensius who made these translations for the Family, then the conclusion seems inescapable that Niclaes had a substantial influence on the translating process of his works, which, considering the prophet’s personality, we cannot entirely exclude. Niclaes’ ideas on how a translation should look are then to be accounted for the language employed in the works. However, in my view, from the material I have been studying, there appear to have been two traditions of the Familist writings in Latin, of which one was never printed or rediscovered and is only alluded to in secondary writings of the period. Judging from Hortensius’ capability as a scholar, it seems

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302 H. De La Fontaine Verwey (1975: 94) suggested that it might have been Christophe Plantin who worked on the translations in Latin and French of Niclaes’ works. He based this assumption on the fact that Plantin stayed with Niclaes for some time in the early 1560s in Kampen, where the first Latin edition of the Evangelium was printed. Nevertheless, would the objections I have made against Hortensius not also apply to the humanist Plantin? Moreover, the friendship between Plantin and Niclaes seems to have cooled during the prophet’s Cologne period; after Plantin launched the idea to publish the Polyglot Bible, he never resumed direct contact with Niclaes (Mout 1981: 88).

C. Fell-Smith (1917: 429), who reconstructed Niclaes’ life in the Dictionary of National Biography, made the suggestion that the English attacker of the Family, John Knewstub, translated the Evangelium into Latin. On which basis this assumption was made is, however, not stated in the article. Also with Jean Dietz Moss (1981: 30) we find a similar claim: it is said that Knewstub translated the Evangelium into Latin, and that his analysis was published in his Confutation of Monstrous and Horrible Heresies. I have, however, looked at the work and found no clues to substantiate these suggestions; it is true that Knewstub quotes passages from the Evangelium, which he consequently refutes, but the texts quoted are in English and are abstracts from Vittels’ translation of the work.
possible that if he had been employed to translate for Niclaes, the work he produced was meant for a different public and, maybe indeed, to give Niclaes' works a more learned status, which one might expect to be the most obvious reason for translating from the vernacular into Latin in the sixteenth century.

7. Revisiting the English *Evangelium*: a Language Comparison with the Latin Translation

**I. Methodology and Research Questions**

In this last section, I will study the internal textual relationship between the English and Latin renditions of the *Evangelium Regni*. As I have set out above, some of the strategies informing the translation methods of these two texts seem to correspond. The question here is whether this connection runs deeper and is also reflected in the words of the texts themselves. Comparing the English and Latin translations of the *Evangelium* has, however, proved to be extremely complicated. The two languages are of a very different nature, and the fact that Vittels translated to a spoken vernacular, while the Latin translator, in a way, made up a language system of his own, makes it very hard simply to put the two translations side by side. Moreover, since the both texts have one source which they closely follow, it is very hard to pin down when exactly their sentence renditions show similarities or are a mere result of their mutual following of the source text. A comparison of the way whole parts of the texts, or even sentences, were translated has proved to be very difficult, if not impossible. I have, therefore, chosen to narrow this study down to the lexical levels. I will present examples from the translations' lexical levels that illustrate adequately the internal relationship I have noted in the *Evangelium's* renditions.

I will take the first and second editions of the *Evangelium* into account. I will only provide page references in this section for terms we have not encountered in this chapter and Chapter V.

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303 I will take the first and second editions of the *Evangelium* into account.
304 I will only provide page references in this section for terms we have not encountered in this chapter and Chapter V.
II. Comparing the Lexical Levels of the Evangelium’s Renditions

The first group we will look at includes terms with a religious meaning used within the context of the Family’s doctrines. One of the Evangelium’s key terms ‘Vorgodung’ we find translated in the Latin text by derivations from the word ‘codeificare’, a verb never attested before. In the English translation, we read ‘codeify’, employed by Vittels for the first time in the English language. As we have seen, in the seventeenth century the verb would enter the language and become part of the specific terminology used to discuss religious unorthodoxy. But was the word Vittels’ original creation or was it derived from the term employed in the Latin Evangelium? The Latin verb cannot have been based on the English text for ‘codeificare’ already appears in the first edition of the Latin Evangelium. The same goes for the other words in this section: all the Latin terms discussed here are also found in the Latin text’s first edition. The English translation for the original’s ‘Utherweleden’ should possibly be seen in the same light. The noun ‘elect’ is attested only once in English (in 1526), before the appearance of Vittels’ rendition, and did not feature in the texts of the Protestant Bible translators. Again, we can ask ourselves whether the word had not been grafted on the Latin text’s ‘Electus’. The translations for ‘Hillich-makinge’ (sig. B1v) are also noteworthy. The Latin text translates it as ‘Sanctificatio’ (sig. A7r), while in the English version we read ‘sanctification’ (sig. A8v). As we have seen in my analysis of the lexicon of the English Evangelium, it is interesting that Vittels here diverges from the strategy of rendering Low German nouns ending in ‘macinge’ by grammatical metaphors. Furthermore, ‘sanctification’ had been introduced into English as late as the early sixteenth century and did not appear in the works of any of the English Bible translators.

The next group of terms I will discuss are those which, both in their English and Latin translations, are mistranslations from the source text. In the Low German original, we find ‘Dorheit’ (sig. C2r) in reference to women who cannot bear

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305 The page references in this section again relate to the second edition.
children. However, the translations feature two nouns with different, but internally similar, meanings, i.e. ‘Stultitia’ (sig. B7v) in the Latin text and ‘foolishness’ (sig. C3r) in the English. There is another example of this kind: ‘Berichtinge’ (sig. K1r) we find translated by ‘Explanatio’ (sig. I2r) in the Latin and ‘explanation’ (sig. N8r) in the English rendition. From this category, it becomes clear that for the translation of particular terms Vittels seems to have used the Latin text of the Evangelium as a model. The observation is supported by the next set of examples.

In this last category, the focus will be on neologisms found in the English Evangelium which seem to have been calqued on the lexicon employed in the Latin edition and which Vittels may have been the first, or the only one to use - like the verb ‘to codeify’. The translation of the Low German doublet ‘Confusie edder eine Thosamen-menginge’ (sig. C1r) gives in Latin ‘Confusio seu Commixtio’ (sig. B5v) and in Vittels’ words ‘confusion or commixture’ (sig. B8v). The Latin ‘Commixtio’, which I have not found with any other Latin author, seems to have served as an example for the English ‘commixture’. As we have seen before, the OED ascribes the first use of the word ‘commixture’ to the Poems of T. Watson published in 1592. Another example is Vittels’ translation of the original’s ‘Arbeidersche’ as ‘labourice’ (sig. D4v). The noun never appeared before or after Vittels and seems to have been grafted on the Latin text, which features ‘Laboratrix’, a word that did not exist in Latin either.

III. Conclusion

From this comparison of the lexical levels of the English and Latin translations of the Evangelium, it becomes clear that the connections between the two texts go further than the similarities we have identified in their translation strategies. The English translator seems to have made use of the Latin text of the Evangelium as a model for the rendition of certain words. That it cannot have been the reverse is clear from the fact that the words we have been discussing all appear in the first
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Latin edition of the *Evangelium*, a text definitely older than any of the English translations. However, it should be noted that this study is limited in its material and its conclusions need certainly future reappraisal with reference to the other translations of Niclaes' works.

I want to mention that, in this analysis, I have included only those words for which the connections between the two translations seem incontestable. There is another, rather large, group of words in the English text which could also have possibly been based on the Latin, but their common dependence on the Low German *Evangelium* makes this difficult to prove. Furthermore, the examples I have given are those for which I could present secondary material, as in the case of the first use of certain words in English, that would support my suggestions concerning the English translation's dependence on the Latin text\textsuperscript{306}. However, the large quantity of these terms seems to suggest that their use in both renditions cannot, merely, have been the result of an accidental preference for words, which look similar or are constructed in similar fashion.

I want to end with the observation that apparently the English and Latin translations of the *Evangelium* were not made in two entire separate contexts, but that Vittels certainly had access to and consulted the Latin rendition of the work. It is possible that Vittels worked from the first edition of the Latin version of the *Evangelium* and that, indeed, the translations of the Cologne period, both in English and Latin, are not necessarily to be seen as a 'joint venture'. But this question can only be solved if all Latin and English translations of Niclaes' works are studied for their possible connections. We should, however, not forget the case of the translations in Lincoln Cathedral Library in which, indeed, the English and Latin translations show links, but this can possibly be explained by the special status of

\textsuperscript{306} It is possible that Vittels made use of the Latin *Evangelium* also for his renditions of the Biblical quotations. However, the similarities are hard to prove. To give just one example - the renditions of Niclaes' quotation from Isaiah 16:5 read: 'There shall be a seat prepared, through grace or benignity, that one may sit theron in truth; in the habitation of David' (sig. M5v); 'Praeparabitur Solium per Clementiam seu Benignitatem uni Unus insideat in Veritate; in Habitatione Davidis' (sig. K1v). Note that the English has 'benignity' where the Latin features 'Benignitatem', and 'habitation' for the Latin's 'Habitatione'.

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this collection. So, for now, I cannot make any speculations as to whether this
dependence of the English text on its Latin counterpart is a constant feature of the
Family's translations for which Latin and English versions exist, or even the result
of a conscious decision on the part of Niclaes or his translators. However, the
impression I have is that Vittels merely used the text of the Latin *Evangelium* as a
tool to make his job a little easier. But within the context of the Family's literary
history, this might be a naïve suggestion.
Conclusion

It is common knowledge that Northern Europe in the sixteenth century underwent radical changes in the field of religion. The traditional religious frameworks were broken up as a result of the Lutheran schism, and this led to the birth of various religious organisations in the areas affected by Protestantism. There had, of course, been other schisms in the history of Christendom, but the difference in the Reformation lay in the fact that the new technologies of the period were for the first time employed 'en masse' in its success. Hendrick Niclaes and his Family of Love, although original in many respects, were also products of their time. The Familist movement came into existence in the context of the religious upheaval after Luther's break from Rome and could not have existed as it did without the invention of printing. Modern research has devoted much attention to the religious beliefs of Niclaes and has explored the reasons for their popularity. Remarkably however, the means Niclaes employed for the spread of his beliefs, the Familist writings and translations, have been studied relatively little. This last aspect has been the object of this thesis.

Although Niclaes claimed to be in direct contact with the spiritual world, he seems to have had an acute understanding of its material counterpart as well. The best example of his insights into society was the way in which he employed the power of the printing press. We know that Niclaes carefully orchestrated the printing of his works in various languages, but only little about how many were printed or exactly where the books were received. Hence, this thesis has focused on textual aspects of Niclaes’ works both in Low German and in translation and has made inferences from textual analysis.

The writings Niclaes composed and published from the start of the Family of Love to his death in 1580 reflect well the different stages his movement passed through. Among the findings which my comparison of the rhetoric of the 1570s
version of the Low German *Evangelium Regni* with its edition from the 1560s has brought to light is that the revisions of Niclaes’ writings were indeed concerned with the expression of the more autocratic claims the prophet made in the later stages of his life, as was suggested by one of Niclaes’ friends, turned critic, Dirck Volckertszoon Coornhert. At the same time, this finding shows that the reconstruction of the Family’s history, as based on the Familist chronicles, should indeed be approached with the necessary caution: the theological differences between the prophet and those who broke away from him are not mentioned by the chroniclers’ authors. The well-planned textual organisation of the Familist writings goes, however, much further than this case illustrates and is a constant feature in the literary machinery Niclaes developed for his movement.

In this thesis I have attempted to develop further, through detailed analysis of his oeuvre, the picture modern research has built up of the writer Niclaes supposedly was and have done so by continuing the work of Nigel Smith who made the first important steps in this direction. My analysis of the Low German revised *Evangelium Regni* has demonstrated that those who called the work incomprehensible, from the sixteenth-century attackers of the Family up until its more modern students in the twentieth century, overlooked or chose not to see its rhetorical organisation. The *Evangelium Regni* is a text in which every word matters, not only, in the Familist view, because it includes the utterances of ‘God’s chosen’, but because the work supports Niclaes’ messages on every level. Indeed, as Smith noted, the *Evangelium* is easily readable, provided the text’s many layers are thoroughly studied and interpreted within the framework of Niclaes’ theology. Since Smith had already analysed the text’s images and complex allegories in detail, I have focused in this thesis on the key terminology and glosses to the Bible. Both on the level of the key words and marginal glosses to the Bible, the strategies Smith noted in Niclaes’ structuring of the *Evangelium*’s images are borne out. The work is, on a literal level, an expression of Niclaes’ belief that the ‘last age’ had begun through the founding of the Family of Love, but, at the same time, it offers an allegorical reading of the Bible as exemplifying the process of ‘Vorgodung’.

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These two levels are present in all the work's central terms, but they are probably even more obvious on the level of the marginal references to the Scriptures. My close study of their employment in the Evangelium has shown their significance for the understanding of the work. By making connections between Niclaes' words and the Biblical glosses, the literal and allegorical interpretations of the text correspond - attaining 'Vorgudung' becomes the only road to salvation, now, at the end of times. The technique nicely illustrates the work's ingenious make-up.

My study of Niclaes' relationship with the Bible in the Low German Evangelium Regni has, however, led to the finding of another new aspect of the prophet's complicated personality, and looks deeper into the question of how detailed studies of the works of Niclaes can refine the current descriptions that exist for the Family of Love. During the period Niclaes was working out a new organisation for the Family of Love, he also expressed his closeness to the Catholic Church more boldly. This is the case in the Familist chronicles and in the revisions he made to his writings. I have observed in the Evangelium Regni that his attitude was, however, more complex. The Bible text he employs in the Evangelium is that of Luther. Although difficult to explain, maybe we should approach the issue here from the prophet's point of view. As we know, Niclaes played an active part in the spread of his beliefs and surely knew who was most likely to be fascinated by his writings. It is possible that even though he considered himself a Catholic, some of his readers in the Low Countries did not; we know that the earliest followers of Niclaes, like Van Barrefelt and Van Hasselt, had a background in heterodoxy and were attracted by the ideas of the Reformation. It is possible that Niclaes' awareness of those who read his works and their religious inclinations were the reason he used a Lutheran version of the Scriptures, as it would have been the text of the Bible his readers were most likely to be acquainted with.

Modern studies have, mainly, concentrated on the circle of Plantin and its connections with Niclaes, while little research has been undertaken to establish who Niclaes' Elders and 'humbler' followers were. This focus on Plantin and his circle
has led to the impression that the Familists in the Netherlands should be looked for among the religiously conservative and moderately radical. Nevertheless, the dependence of Niclaes on Luther’s Bible text in the Evangelium might allude to the fact that the picture of his adherents in the Low Countries might be somewhat different than is traditionally accepted. It is clear that Niclaes’ relationship with the Scriptures should be further investigated in regard to his whole oeuvre, for it might tell us more about the intended audience of the Familist movement on the European Continent.

The other focus of this conclusion is what my comparisons of the English and Latin translations of the Evangelium Regni have taught us about Niclaes the prophet and his Family. The English and Latin renditions of the Evangelium support the divine status of their writer in their literal stance towards the Low German source text. The strategies of the translations point in the direction of the Bible translation tradition, which, from the viewpoint of the Familists, is comprehensible, since their prophet was the ‘living Voyce’ of Christ. Niclaes himself certainly believed this. As we have seen from my analyses of the Biblical quotations which he inserted in his texts, he did not copy but rephrased the traditional Bible texts. For the English Family, it follows that, even though in reality Christopher Vittels may have been the most important factor in the spread of the Niclaes’ theology there, in the translations which he made Niclaes and his personal cult remained the focus of attention. It is thus possible that the later concentration on his own person which Niclaes demanded had an influence on the translations of the Evangelium that were produced in the 1570s. The importance of the prophet’s original utterances is also the likely reason that the Germanic character of the source text is preserved at various levels in both translations; the ‘dudesche Sprake’ was after all the movement’s ‘holy language’.

Tracing the direct influence of Niclaes in the making of the translations, one of the questions this research has set itself, is, of course, not easy. There is, however, another element, present in both the English and Latin renditions of the
Evangelium, that can possibly be explained by the prophet’s influence. The language of the two translations seems aimed at a public with a moderate learning, and so corresponds with Niclaes’ personal ideas on the topic. He believed that those with a moderate education - who could read but were not necessarily formally educated in the schools - were most likely to be receptive to his doctrines, probably because in reality his movement had taught him so. It is possible that Niclaes’ ideas on the topic found a practical outworking in the renditions of his works.

Nevertheless, it is not because the translations are literal that they do not tell us anything about their intended audiences. Let us first look at the English version of the Evangelium and see how my findings compare to the picture modern research has developed for the Family there. The few glimpses we have of Vittels’ person in the contemporary accounts of the period seem at most points to correspond with the strategies my comparative description of the work has brought to light. Already in the mid-1550s, before he became a full-grown Familist, Vittels appeared as someone who knew the Bible well enough to take part in theological discussions with preachers of the Gospel. In the debates he held with John Rogers in the 1570s, he not only showed a profound knowledge of Niclaes’ doctrines but also defended the Familist teachings with quotations from the Bible. Vittels’ close acquaintance with the Scriptures resounds in the English Evangelium. His text is characterised on the word level by borrowings from Tyndale and Coverdale, while the translation methods Vittels employs often tend very much towards those of these same translators; so closely, that one gets the impression that they were the basis for his own methodology. It is, therefore, not unlikely that Vittels’ experience with the ‘reality’ of unorthodoxy went hand in hand with a profound knowledge of its more theoretical and intellectual background, and that he was not ‘utterly unlearned’ as his earliest enemies suggested; suggestions which nobody has as yet openly contradicted.

The readership of Vittels’ translations, as described in modern studies on the English Family, is also traceable in the make-up of the Evangelium Regni. The
work seems to have been aimed at those who could read, but apart from familiarity with the Bible and, of course, Niclaes’ own beliefs does not demand for any major intellectual training; a similar public, indeed, has been described by modern scholars as the readers of Niclaes’ works in translation in the so-called ‘Familist villages’. It is likely that Vittels and his Elders particularly sought out such people - Vittels’ personal experience may have played a role here, as well as Niclaes’ ideas on the topic. But there is more. Studies today have drawn attention to the fact that Vittels’ translations were read aloud among Niclaes’ followers in England. This element is detectable in the English Evangelium Regni, in which special care seems to have been taken to make Niclaes’ original accessible and not too difficult to understand, and reflected in the way the text was reprinted in the seventeenth century. It, therefore, seems that certain elements, which earlier students of the Family have investigated and described for the organisation of the movement in England, were anticipated in the make-up of the work. This, again, underlines the clever organisation behind the creation of the Familist works in translation and the insights of Niclaes and those around him.

At the start of this research hardly anything was known about the Latin Evangelium and the other translations of Niclaes’ works in this language, not least for the reason that apart from the actual texts few other sources have survived on the topic. The first question I have addressed in my studies of the works concerned their likely readers. I have approached this particular question from the little information we have on the Latin translations, i.e. the places where the texts have survived. The fact that only in England and the Netherlands Niclaes’ works in Latin have resurfaced led me to hypothesise that the works were translated for those areas where Familism was already established, to give Niclaes’ works a more elevated status. The meta-texts of the Latin translations themselves are vague when it comes to defining the public they were meant for - this is especially the case for those printed in Cologne. It is thus in the texts’ language that I have tried to look for answers. The Latin translations seem to have been aimed at a public that knew only the rudiments of the language and are, because of their strong source-based
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approach, of little literary value; it follows that these renditions were not meant to give the works a higher status. The question which remained is why translations in Latin circulated in places where vernacular versions of Niclaes' works were available. In Chapter VI, I have made several suggestions about this, but I want to address it here again, this time from the viewpoint of Niclaes' movement. Let us start by looking at the differences between the English and Latin translation of the *Evangelium Regni*. The lexical levels of the renditions vary in that Vittels' English text employs a lexicon reminiscent of the Protestant English Bible translations, while the Latin *Evangelium* echoes in its word use the Catholic tradition, i.e. the Vulgate and the Church Fathers. If we think again of the followers Vittels gained for the Family in England, I have set out in Chapter I that the majority had recent roots in Marian Protestantism, but this was not the case for all. As Christopher Marsh argued (1994: 64-65) and also John Rogers suggested (1579a: sig. C5r-C8r), some of Niclaes' adherents there approached Familism from a religiously conservative background. It is not unlikely that for those people the Latin *Evangelium* with its Vulgate vocabulary had more appeal than the translations of Vittels. For the same reason, some of those interested in Niclaes' beliefs in the Netherlands who had a Catholic background may also have preferred the Latin translation over and above Niclaes' original with its dependence on Luther's version of the Scriptures. Again, it is possible that we are confronted here with another aspect of the well-planned organisation of the literary tradition of the Familist writings, in which the personal experience of its main propagators found an expression in the conception of the texts themselves.

The second main issue this study of the Latin renditions of Niclaes' oeuvre has addressed concerns their translator. Following the secondary sources on the topic, I have investigated whether Lambertus Hortensius is likely to have been involved with the Latin translations that have survived. My study has concluded that it is improbable for Hortensius to have played any part in the renditions of Niclaes' works in Latin which we have today; nevertheless, from the meta-texts on the topic it does appear that he translated for the Family of Love. Although I cannot pinpoint
who then translated the Latin *Evangelium*, my study of the texts suggests that it was someone in the close circle around Niclaes, someone who stayed faithful to the prophet over a longer period, because I have established that it is very likely that one and the same translator worked on the Latin renditions that have survived for both Niclaes' Kampen and Cologne periods, as well as having a connection to the Netherlands as the lexical levels of the translations suggest. More interestingly, it is probable that there was more than one tradition of Niclaes' writings in Latin: the translations we have today, and also those in which Lambertus Hortensius was engaged and that were possibly, considering his stature as a scholar, meant to give Niclaes' vernacular originals greater standing among the more highly educated. If this is the case, then one is again inclined to explain the issue in terms of the ingenious literary propaganda machine of the Family of Love.  

All this leads me to think that the substantial production of Niclaes' works in translation in the 1570s was more than a desperate and uncontrolled attempt, as some modern studies seem to suggest, to reverse the decline in the Family in the Netherlands, and that their mastermind was certainly misunderstood when Bernard Rekers (1961: 142-143) called Niclaes a 'halfontwikkelde ziener' who 'remarkably' had managed to develop a wide and international interest in his ideas.

To conclude, this thesis has shown the major importance of the written word in the Familist movement and has argued the case for a well-planned and painstaking organisation behind its creation and development. It has demonstrated that the socio-cultural history of the Family of Love cannot be studied without considering in detail the writings and translations of Niclaes' works, and that the current modern accounts of the Familist movement can be refined and further developed through

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307 Maybe we should see the double translations that exist for some of Niclaes' writings, like the *Eerste Epistel HN*, in the same light. Is it possible that the two translation traditions that have survived for this epistle were aimed at different groups in society, which the practice of the movement had taught its main propagators would fit their background and inclinations, and that they, for that reason, were purposely created that way?
study of the primary text material. Finally, this thesis has not only determined the ingenious character of the Family’s writings and translations as carriers of Niclaes’ doctrines, but as functional and active factors in building a religious organisation in sixteenth-century Europe. As is clear, the conclusions of this study should be reconfirmed and further developed in the future with similar analyses of Niclaes’ other works, both the original versions and the translations.
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III. Illustrations

Title Page
Woodcut on opening page of Hendrick Niclaes’ Low German Evangelium Regni (reprint of 2nd edition) of 1656 (London).

Chapter II
Woodcut on title page of the English translation of Hendrick Niclaes’ Exhortatio I of 1575 (Cologne).

Chapter III
Engraving on title page of Hendrick Niclaes’ Low German Evangelium Regni (2nd edition) of 1575 (Cologne).

Chapter VI
Woodcut on title page of Hendrick Niclaes’ Low German Evangelium Regni (1st edition) of 1561 (Kampen).
Appendices

A. Appendix to Chapter III

In this first appendix, I will present the Biblical quotations of the Low German *Evangelium Regni* which have not been discussed in the body of this thesis. I will give their counterparts from Van Winghe’s translation of the Vulgate and from the two versions of the Luther Bible also employed in the discussions in Chapter III - the first in Low German, the other in Dutch.

*Isaiah 57:16*

*Evangelium Regni:*
Daer sal eine Geist edder Windt, van mynem Angesichte weyen: unde ick sal Windt maken (sig. A4v)

*Van Winghe’s Vulgate:*
Den gheest sal van mijnen aensichte uytgaen, ende die ademen sal ic maken

*Luther Bible in Low German:*
Eyn Gheyst schall van mynem Angesichte weyen, unde yck wyl Adem maken

*Luther Bible in Dutch Translation:*
Eenen Gheest sal van mijn aensicht waeyen, ende ick wil adem maken

*Ezekiel 39:21-22*

*Evangelium Regni:*
Ick wil myne Heerlickheit manck de Heiden bringen, dath alle Heiden seen solen myn Gerichte dat ick geholden, unde myne Handt, die ick over en uthgestrecket hebbe, up dath also idt Hus Israel bekenne, dath ick ;de Here; ere Godt zy, alse van deszem Dage ann, beth to in ewicheit (sig. K4v)
Van Winghe’s Vulgate:
Ick sal mijn glorie stellen in die heydenen, ende alle die heydenen sullen mijn ordeel sien dat ick sal ghedaen hebben, ende mijn handt die ick op hen sal gheleydt hebbe, ende thuys van Israel sal weten dat ick die heere hen Godt ben van dien dach ende voortaen

Luther Bible in Low German:
Yck wyl myne Herrlicheit manck de Heyden bringen, dat alle Heiden sehen scholen, myn Ordel, dath yck hebbe ghan laten, und mine Handt, de yck an se gelecht hebbe. Und also dath Huss Israel ervare, dath yck de Here er Godt byn van dem Dage an unde vordan

Luther Bible in Dutch Translation:
Ick wil mijn heerlijcheit onder de heydenen brengen, dat alle heydenen sien sullen, mijn oordeel, dat ick heb laten gaen, ende mijn hant, die ick aen haer gheslegenhebbe, ende dat also dat huys Israels bevinde, dat ick de Heere hare Godt ben, van dien dach aen, ende voorts aen

Numbers 24:4-5

Evangelium Regni:
De Woningen Israels zynt seer schone: Went se zynt gelyck brede grone Dalen, alse de walbevochtigede Gaerden by de Wateren, unde alse de Hutten die de Here befestiget, gelyck de grundt-vaste Cederen, an de Wateren (sig. K4v)

Van Winghe’s Vulgate:
Hoe schoone sijn u tabernakelen Jacob, ende uwe tenten Israhel, ghelijc die delinghen des wouts, ghelijc boomgaerden di die vloeden wel ghewatert, ghelijc tabernakelen welc die Heere gevesticht heeft, ghelijc die cederboomen by die wateren

Luther Bible in Low German:
Wo fyn synt dyne Hutten Jacob, und dine Woninge Israel, gelick alse sich de beken uthbreyden, alse de Garden an den Watern, alse de Hutten deede Here festiget, alse de Cedern an dem Water

Luther Bible in Dutch Translation:
Hoe fijn zijn uwe hutten Jacob, ende uwe wooningen Israel, gelijk als haer de beken ut breyden, gelijk de hoven aent water, gelijk de hutten, die de Heere plant, gelijk de Cedren aent water
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**Revelation 21:4-5**

*Evangelium Regni:*
De Dott, Leydt, Geschrey, noch Smerte werth nicht mehr zyn: went idt Eerste is vor-by gegaen. Unde die up den Stoele sat, sprack: Seet, Ick make idt althomael Nye (sig. L1r)

*Van Winghe’s Vulgate:*
Die doot en s al voertaen niet meer wesen, noch jammerlijck gheclach, noch gheroep, noch pijne en salder meer sijn, die ierst wech ghegaen sijn. Ende die inden throon sadt heeft gheseyt, Sietick maec al nieu

*Luther Bible in Low German:*
De Dodt wert nicht mer syn, noch Leidt, noch Geschrey, noch Schmerte werth mehr syn, wenthe dat erste ys vorghangen. Unnde de up dem Stole satt, sprack: Sue, ick make ydt allthomall nye

*Luther Bible in Dutch Translation:*
De doot en sal niet meer zijn, noch leet, noch geroep, noch smerte en sal meer zijn : want dat yerste is vergaen. Ende die op den stoel sat, sprac: Siet, ic maect altemael nieuwe

**John 14:23**

*Evangelium Regni:*
Wie my lievet, de sal myn Wordt holden: unde myn Vader sal densulven lieven. Wy solen to em komen, unde eine Woninghe by em maken (sig. L1v)

*Van Winghe’s Vulgate:*
Eest dat iemant my liefheeft die sal mijn woorden bewaren, ende mijn vader sal hem liefhebben, ende wij sullen tot hem komen, ende wooninge by hem maken

*Luther Bible in Low German:*
Wol my levet, de wert myne Wort holden, unnde myn Vader wert en leven, und wy werden tho em komen, und eine Woninge by em maken

*Luther Bible in Dutch Translation:*
Wie my lief heeft, die sal mijn woord houden, ende mijn Vader sal hem liefhebben: ende wy sullen tot hem komen, ende een wooninge by hem maken

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Revelation 21:3-4

_Evangelium Regni:_
Sue daer, ein Tabernakel Godes, by den Minschen: unde He werth by en wonen: unde se solen syn Volck syn: unde He ;Godt sulvest mit en; werth ere Godt zyn. Unde Godt werth alle Tranen van eren Ogen af-wisschen (sig. L1v)

_Van Winghe's Vulgate:_
Siet het tabernakel Godts met die menschen, ende hy sal met hen woonen, ende sy sullen syn volck syn. Ende hy Godt selve met hen, sal hen Godt sijn, ende Godt sal van haren ooghen alle traenen af vaghen

_Luther Bible in Low German:_
Sue dar, ein Hutte Godes by den Minschen, unnde he wert by en wonen, unde se werden syn Volck syn, und he God sulvest mit en, wert er Got sijn. Unde Godt werth affwischen alle Tranen van eren Oghen

_Luther Bible in Dutch Translation:_
Siet daer, een Hutte Gods by den menschen, ende hy sal by haer woonen, ende sy sullen syn volck syn, Ende hi Godt selve met haer, sal haer Godt sijn, ende Godt sal afwisschen alle tranen van haren ooghen

Isaiah 16:5

_Evangelium Regni:_
Daer werth einen Stoel bereidet werden, dorch Genade edder Godertierenheit, dath daer Ein up sitte ;in de Waerheit; in de Woninge Davids (sig. L1v)

_Van Winghe's Vulgate:_
Ende den richters stoel sal in de bermherticheyt bereydt worden, ende hy sal daer op sitten in die waerheyt in Davids tabernakel

_Luther Bible in Low German:_
Dar wert averst ein Stol bereidet werden uth Gnaden, dat dar ein uppe sitte in der Warheit, in der Hutten David

_Luther Bible in Dutch Translation:_
Daer sal eenen Stoel bereyt worden ut gheneden, dat daer een op sitte nder waerheit, nder hutte Davids
Psalms 92:13-15

Evangelium Regni:
Die em Huse des Heren geplantet zynt, werden in den Vor-hoven unses Godes gronen: unde wenn se oick olt werden, werdenn se dennoch bloyen unde fersch edder wal-gerustet zyn, um tho verkundigen, dath de Here uprecht is (sig. L1v-L2r)

Van Winge's Vulgate:
Die gheplant sijn in des heeren huys, sullen in die voorhoven van ons Godts huys bloeyen. Al noch sullen sij vermenichfuldicht worden in eenen vruchtbaren ouderdom, ende hen sal wel ghedaen worden, dat sijt vercondighen souden. Want recht is dat heere onse Godt

Luther Bible in Low German:
De gheplantet sint inn dem Huse des Heren, werden in den Vorhoven unses Godes gronen. Und wen se ock olt werden, werden se dennoch bloyen, fruchtarb und versch syn. Dat se verkundigen, dath de Here so vroom ys

Luther Bible in Dutch Translation:
Die geplant zijn in dat huys des Heeren, sullen in de voorhoven ons Gods groenen. Ende al worden sy ooc olt, so sullen sy nochants bloeyen, vruchtbaer ende versch zijn. Dat sy vercondigen dat de Heere so vroom is

Isaiah 66:12

Evangelium Regni:
Ick vorbreide den Frede by juw, gelyck ein Water-strome, unde de Macht edder Heerlickheit der Heiden, gelyck eine Beke die vam Water over-fletet. Als dan (sprickt de Here) werdenn gy sugen (sig. M1r)

Van Winge's Vulgate:
Ick sal op haer affdoen dalen als eenen vloet des vreedts, ende als een overvloedende beke die glorie der heydenen, die ghy suyghen sult

Luther Bible in Low German:
Ick breyde uth den Frede by er, ghelick alse ein Water, unnde de Heerlickheit der Heyden, alse eyn overlopende Beke. So werde gy sugen

Luther Bible in Dutch Translation:
Ick verbreyde den vrede by haer, ghelijck als een water, ende de heerlijkheyt der Heydenen ghelijck een overvloeyende Beke. Dan sult ghy suyghen
John 15:2

*Evangelium Regni:*
Ein itlick Wyn-rancke, an my, die gene Vrucht vorth-bringet, sal af-gesneden werden (sig. M3r)

*Van Winghe’s Vulgate:*
Alle rancken in my gheen vrucht draghende sal hy afnemen

*Luther Bible in Low German:*
Eine ytlicke Wynrancke an my die nene Frucht bringet, werth he affsniden

*Luther Bible in Dutch Translation:*
Een yegelijkke wijnrancke aen my, die gheen vrucht en brengt, sal hy afsnijden

Isaiah 26:19

*Evangelium Regni:*
Dyne Doden (dat zynt De die in dem Here gestorven zynt) solen leven, unde mit den Lichamen vorrysen (sig. M3r)

*Van Winghe’s Vulgate:*
De dooden sullen leven, mijn verslaghene sullen verrijsen

*Luther Bible in Low German:*
Dyne Doden werden leven unde mit dem Lichamme wedder upstan

*Luther Bible in Dutch Translation:*
Uwe dooden sullen leven, ende metten Lichaem weder opstaen
B. Appendix to Chapter V and VI

This second appendix presents those Biblical quotations which the space in my discussions on the topic in the comparisons of the English and Latin translations of the Evangelium Regni has prevented me from describing in detail. First, I will present the Bible quotations of the English Evangelium, together with their counterparts from Tyndale’s 1526 translation of the New Testament and Coverdale’s 1535 complete Bible text. Then, I will give the Biblical quotations of the second edition of the Latin Evangelium, with their equivalents from the Vulgate translation of the Bible. For reasons of clarity, I have also added the Low German source text’s quotations.

a. English Evangelium Regni

Isaiah 57:16

Low German Evangelium:
Daer sal eine Geist edder Windt, van mynem Angesichte weyen: unde ick sal Windt maken

English Evangelium:
A spirit or wind shall blow from my face: and I will make wind (sig. A7r)

Coverdale’s Bible:
The blasting goeth from me: though I make the breath

Genesis 12:1-3

Low German Evangelium:
Gae uth dynem Vaderlande, van dyne Frundschoop, unde uth dynes Vaders Huse: unde reise in ein Landt dat ick dy wysen wil. Unde ick wil dy tom groten Volcke maken: ick wil dy segenen, unde dy einer groten Name maken, unde du salt ein Segen zyn: Ick wil segenen, die dy segenen, unde
vorflocken, die dy vorflocken. Went in dy solen gesegenet worden alle
Geslachten der Erden

*English Evangelium:*
Go out of thy Native Country, from thy kindred, and from thy Fathers
House: and journey into a Land that I will shew thee. And I will make of
thee a great people: I will bless thee and make thee a great Name, and thou
shalt be a blessing: I will bless them, that bless thee, and curse them, that
curse thee. For in thee shall all generations of the earth be blessed (sig. C2v-
C3r)

*Coverdale’s Bible:*
Get thee out of thy Country, and from thy kynred, and out of thy fathers
House, into a lande which I wyll shewe thee. And I wyll make of thee a
myghtie people, and wyll blesse thee, and make thee a greate name, yee thou
shalt be a very blessynge. I wyll blesse them that blesse thee, and curse them
that curse thee: and in thee shall all the generacions of the earth be blessed

*Ezekiel 39:21-22*

*Low German Evangelium:*
Ick wil myne Heerlickheit manck de Heiden bringen, dath alle Heiden seen
solen myn Gerichte dat ick geholden, unde myne Handt, die ick over en
uthgestrecket hebbe, up dath also idt Hus Israel bekenne, dath ick ;de Here;
ere Godt zy, alse van dessem Dage ann, beth to in ewicheit

*English Evangelium:*
I will bring my glory among the Heathen, that all Heathen may see my
Judgment that I have kept; and my hand which I have stretched out over
them, to the end that the Hous of Israel may thereby know that I ;the Lord;
am their God, even from this day forth, for evermore (sig. M3r)

*Coverdale’s Bible:*
I will bringe my glory also amonge the Gentiles, that all the heithen maye se
my mydgment that I have kepte, and my hande which I have layed upon
them: that the house of Israel maye knowe how that I am the Lord their God
from that daye forth
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**Numbers 24:4-5**

*Low German Evangelium:*
De Woningen Israels zynt seer schone: Went se zynt gelyck brede grone 
Dalén, alse de walbevochtigede Gaerden by de Wateren, unde alse de Hutten 
die de Here befestiget, gelyck de grundt-vaste Cederen, an de Wateren

*English Evangelium:*
The habitations of Israel are very goodly: For they are like broad valleys, as 
the well-watered Gardens, by the Rivers, and as the Tabernacles which the 
Lord stablisheth, even like the Cedars planted by the water side (sig. M3r)

*Coverdale's Bible:*
How goodly are thy tentes O Jacob, and thy habitacions O Israel: even as the 
brote valleys, as the gardens by the waters syde, as the tentes which the 
Lorde hath planted, as the Ceder trees upon the water

**Revelation 21:4-5**

*Low German Evangelium:*
De Dodt, Leydt, Geschrey, noch Smerte werth nicht mehr zyn: went idt 
Eerste is vor-by gegaen. Unde die up den Stoele sat, sprack: Seet, Ick make 
idt althomael Nye

*English Evangelium:*
There shall be no more death, sorrow, wailing, nor pain: for the first, is 
passed by. And he which sate upon the seat, spake: Behold, I make it 
altogether New (sig. M4r)

*Tyndale's New Testament:*
There shalbe nomore deeth, nether sorowe, nether cryinge, nether shal there 
be eny more payne, for the olde thynges are gone. And he that sate apon the 
seate, sayde: Behold I make all thynges newe

*Coverdale's Bible:*
There shalbe nomore deeth, nether sorowe, nether wayling, nether shal there 
be eny more payne, for the olde things are gone. And he that sat upon the 
seate, sayde: Beholde, I make all thinges newe
John 14:23

Low German Evangelium:
Wie my lievet, de sal myn Wordt holden: unde myn Vader sal densulven lieven. Wy solen to em komen, unde eine Woninge by em maken

English Evangelium:
Whoso loveth me, he will keep my word: and my Father will love him. We will come unto him, and make a dwelling with him (sig. M4v-M5r)

Tyndale's New Testament:
Yf a man love me and wyll kepe my sayinges, my father also will love him, and we woll come unto him, and wyll dwell wyth hym

Coverdale's Bible:
He that loveth me, wyl kepe my worde, and my father wyl love him: and we wyl come unto him, and wyll make oure dwellynge with him

Revelation 21:3-4

Low German Evangelium:
Sue daer, ein Tabemakel Godes, by den Minschen: unde He werth by en wonen: unde se solen syn Volck syn: unde He ;Godt sulvest mit en; werth ere Godt zyn. Unde Godt werth alle Tranen van eren Ogen af-wisschen

English Evangelium:
Behold, the Tabernacle of God is with men: and he will dwel with them: and they shall be his People: and he ;God himself with them; will be their God. And God will wash away all tears from their eyes (sig. M5r)

Tyndale's New Testament:
Beholde, the Tabernacle of God is with men, and he wyll dwell with them. And they shalbe his people, and God hym selfe shalbe with them and be their god. And God shall wype awaye all teares from their eyes

Coverdale's Bible:
Beholde the Tabernacle of God is with men and he wyll dwell with them. And they shalbe his people, and God hymselfe shalbe with them, and shalbe their God. And God shall wype away all teares from their eyes
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Isaiah 16:5

Low German Evangelium:
Daer werth einen Stoel bereidet werden, dorch Genade edder Godertierenheit, dath daer Ein up sitte ;in de Waerheit; in de Woninge Davids

English Evangelium:
There shall be a seat prepared, through grace or benignity, that one may sit theron ;in truth; in the habitation of David (sig. M5v)

Coverdale’s Bible:
The trone of your kyngdome is ful of grace therefore he that sytteth upon it with faythfulnesse and trueth in the habitation of David

Psalms 92:13-15

Low German Evangelium:
Die em Huse des Keren geplantet zynt, werden in den Vor-hoven unses Godes gronen: unde wenn se oick oldt werden, werdenn se dennoch bloyen unde fersch edder wal-gerustet zyn, um tho vorkundigen, dath de Here uprecht is

English Evangelium:
Such as are planted in the house of the Lord, shall flourish in the courts of our God: and when also they are old, yet shall they blossom; and be fresh or in good liking, for they declare that the Lord is righteous (sig. M6r)

Coverdale’s Bible:
Soch as be planted in the house of the Lorde, be frutefull, plenteous and Greene. That they maye shewe, how true the Lorde is

John 14:19

Low German Evangelium:
De Werlt sal My nicht mehr seen: menn gy (sprickt de Here Jesus Christus to syne Lidtmaten) solen My seen. Went ick leve, unde gy solen leven
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*English Evangelium:*
The world shall see me no more: but ye (says the Lord Jesus Christ to his members) shall see me. For I live, and ye shall live (sig. O2v)

*Tyndale's New Testament:*
The world seeth me no more: but ye shall se me. For I lyve and ye shall lyve also

*Coverdale's Bible:*
Then shal the worlde se me nomore: but ye shall se me. For I lyve and ye shall lyve

Isaiah 26:19

*Low German Evangelium:*
Dyne Doden (dat zynt De die in dem Here gestorven zynt) solen leven, unde mit den Lichamen vorrysen

*English Evangelium:*
Thy dead (that is, those which are deceased in the Lord) shall live, and arise with the Body (sig. O2v)

*Coverdale's Bible:*
Thy dead men and ours, that be departed, they are in life and resurrection
b. Latin *Evangelium Regni*

*Isaiah 57:16*

*Low German Evangelium:*
Daer sal eine Geist edder Windt, van mynem Angesichte weyen: unde ick sal Windt maken

*Latin Evangelium:*
Spiritus seu Ventus a Facie mea spirabit, Ventumque concitabo (sig. A6r)

*Vulgate:*
Spiritus a facie mea egredietur et flatus ego faciam

*Numbers 24: 4-5*

*Low German Evangelium:*
De Woningen Israels zynt seer schone: Went se zynt gelyck brede grone Dalen, alse de walbevochtigede Gaerden by de Wateren, unde alse de Hutten die de Here befestiget, gelyck de grundt-vaste Cederen, an de Wateren

*Latin Evangelium:*
Habitationes Israelis sunt admodum pulchrae: sunt enim tanquam latae virides Valles, ut Horti iuxta Fluvis irrigui: ut Tabernacula, quae confirmat Dominus, quasi Cedros prope aquas fundatas (sig. I8r)

*Vulgate:*
Quam pulchra tabernacula tua Iacob et tentoria tua Israhel ut valles nemorosae ut horti iuxta fluvios irrigui ut tabernacula quae fixit Dominus quasi cedri propter aquas

*Acts 17:31*

*Low German Evangelium:*
De Here heft einen Dach bestemmet, up welcken He richten wil den Kreitz edder Umloop des Erdtbodems mith Gerechticheit, dorch Einen Man, in welcken He idt besloten heft
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Latin Evangelium:
Statuit Dominus Diem, in qua Orbem Terrae ex aequo iudicaturus est, per Virum unum, per quem decrevit (sig. I8v)

Vulgate:
Statuit diem in qua iudicaturus est orbem in aequitate in viro in quo statuit fidem

Revelation 21:4-5

Low German Evangelium:
De Dodt, Leydt, Geschrey, noch Smerte werth nicht mehr zyn: went idt Eerste is vor-by gegaen. Unde die up den Stoele sat, sprack: Seet, Ick make idt althomael Nye

Latin Evangelium:
Mors, Luctus, Clamor, neque Dolor erit ultra: quia Prima transierunt. Et dixit qui sedebat in Throno: Ecce, Nova facio omnia (sig. I8v)

Vulgate:
Mors ultra non erit neque luctus neque clamor neque dolor erit ultra quae prima abierunt et dixit qui sedebat in throno ecce nova facio omnia

John 14:23

Low German Evangelium:
Wie my lievet, de sal myn Wordt holden: unde myn Vader sal densulven lieven. Wy solen to em komen, unde eine Woninge by em maken

Latin Evangelium:
Qui me diligit, hic Verbum meum servabit: et Pater meus eum diliget. Veniemus ad eum, et Habitationem apud eum faciemus (sig. K1r)

Vulgate:
Quis diliget me sermonem meum servabit et Pater meus diliget eum et ad eum veniemus et mansiones apud eum faciemus
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Revelation 21:3-4

Low German Evangelium:
Sue daer, ein Tabernakel Godes, by den Minschen: unde He werth by en wonen: unde se solen syn Volck syn: unde He ;Godt sulvest mit en; werth ere Godt zyn. Unde Godt werth alle Tranen van eren Ogen af-wisschen

Latin Evangelium:
Ecce, Tabernaculum Dei apud Homines: Isque apud eos habitabit: et ipsi eius Populus erunt, et ipse ;Deus cum eis; erit eorum Deus: abstergetque Deus omnem Lachrymam ab Oculis eorum (sig. K1r-K1v)

Vulgate:
Ecce tabernaculum Dei cum hominibus et habitabit cum eis et ipsi populus eius erunt et ipse Deus cum eis erit eorum Deus et absterget Deus omnem lacrimam ab oculis eorum

Isaiah 16:5

Low German Evangelium:
Daer werth einen Stoel bereidet werden, dorch Genade edder Godertierenheit, dath daer Ein up sitte ;in de Waerheit; in de Woninge Davids

Latin Evangelium:
Praeparabitur Solium per Clementiam seu Benignitatem uti Unus insideat ;in Veritate; in Habitatione Davidis (sig. K1v)

Vulgate:
Praeparabitur in misericordia solium et sedebit super eum in veritate in tabernaculo David

Psalms 92:13-15

Low German Evangelium:
Die em Huse des Heren geplantet zynt, werden in den Vor-hoven unses Godes gronen: unde wenn se oick oldt werden, werrden se dennoch bloyen unde fersch edder wal-gerustet zyn, um tho verkundigen, dath de Here uprecht is

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Latin Evangelium:
Qui in Domo Domini sati sunt, in Dei nostri Atriis virebunt: et cum senuerint, adhuc florebunt eruntque pingues et bene compositi, ad annunciandum Dominum esse iustum (sig. K2r)

Vulgate:
Transplantati in domo Domini in atriis Dei nostri germinabunt adhuc fructificabunt in senectute pingues et frondentes erunt adnuntiantes quia rectus Dominus

John 15:2

Low German Evangelium:
Ein itlick Wyn-rancke, an my, die gene Vrucht vorth-bringet, sal abgesneden werden

Latin Evangelium:
Omnis Palmes in me Fructum non proferens, abscindetur (sig. L4r)

Vulgate:
Omnem palmitem in me non ferentem fructum tollet eum

John 14:19

Low German Evangelium:
De Werlt sal My nicht mehr seen: menn gy (sprickt de Here Jesus Christus to syne Lidmaten) solen My seen. Went ick leve, unde gy solen leven

Latin Evangelium:
Mundus Me amplius non videbit: sed vos (ait Dominus Iesus Christus suis Membris) Me videbetis. Quia ego vivo, et vos vivetis (sig. L4r)

Vulgate:
Mundus me iam non videt vos autem videtis me quia ego vivo et vos vivetis
Isaiah 26:19

*Low German Evangelium:*
Dyne Doden (dat zynt De die in dem Here gestorven zynt) solen leven, unde mit den Lichamen vorrysen

*Latin Evangelium:*
Tui Mortui (hoc est, qui in Domino mortui sunt) vivent, et Corpore resurgent (sig. L4r)

*Vulgate:*
Vivent mortui tui interfecti mei resurgent