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1630s, now in Munich, and to Ferdinand Bol’s 1644 painting on the same theme, now in Dresden. The similarities with Bol’s conception of the theme are of a general nature and are not very compelling. However, the Bader picture shares with Rembrandt’s Holy Family the portrayal of a specific moment of family intimacy. Even more significant is Rembrandt’s 1645 etching on the same theme as the likely source for Mary’s gesture of revealing the sleeping child to her husband (fig. 68b). Also notable is the reduced palette of the present painting compared to most of Van den Eeckhout’s other history paintings from the 1630s – another indication that he was taking Rembrandt as his model.

Volker Manuth

1. This hypothesis is supported by technical evidence: neither the left nor the right edge of the canvas shows the usual scalloped or garland pattern, which allows us to conclude that it was cut down.
2. Sale Amsterdam (Christie’s), 16 November 2005, lot 38 (as by Gerbrand van den Eeckhout). This painting came from an unidentified private collection, for which it was bought from the Amsterdam art dealer Doews in 1947. Unfortunately, it has darkened in many areas and is covered by an uneven layer of varnish. In addition there are large areas of damage where the paint layer has vanished entirely, revealing the support. Particularly serious is the irregular band measuring around 13.5 × 2.7 cm that extends horizontally from Mary’s left forearm, over the face of the child and past Joseph’s right arm.
3. Sumowski suggested this possibility in his entry to the catalogue of the 2005 sale; see note 3 above.
4. Amsterdam Municipal Archive, Notary G. Borsellaer, Na. 593, dated 5 May 1685, folios 243-245, fols. 190; for further discussion see Loughman and Montias 2000, p. 50 note 123.
5. Rembrandt van Rijn, The Holy Family, 1634, oil on canvas, 183.5 × 123.5 cm, Munich, Bayerische Staatsgemäldesammlungen, Alte Pinakothek, inv. 1318, see Rembrandt Corpus, vol. 7, pp. 450-458, no AS8 (ill.)

69.

Gerbrand van den Eeckhout (Amsterdam 1621 – Amsterdam 1674)

Solomon’s Idolatry

Around 1665

Oil on canvas, 54.6 × 63.5 cm

Milwaukee, collection of Alfred and Isabel Bader

PROVENANCE

Uccle, Belgium, collection of W. van Gelder; sale, London (Christie’s), 14 May 1971, lot 58 (as by Salomon Koninck); The Hague, with J. Hoogsteder; purchased by Alfred Bader in 1971

LITERATURE


EXHIBITION CATALOGUES

Milwaukee 1976, pp. 100-101, no. 45 (ill., as by Van den Eeckhout, Solomon Praying in the Temple?); South Hadley 1979, no. 4 (ill., as by Van den Eeckhout, 1650s or 1660s); West Lafayette 1980, unpaginated, no. 9 (ill., as around 1650); Yokohama, Fukuoka and Kyoto 1986-1987, p. 79 (colour ill.), pp. 156-157, no. 23 (as by Van den Eeckhout, Solomon’s Idolatry, around 1665)

COLLECTION CATALOGUES

Milwaukee 1974, unpaginated, no. 12 (ill., as by Van den Eeckhout, Solomon Praying in the Temple)

THIS PAINTING SHOWS A ruler wearing a lavish mantle of gold brocade over a white undergarment and a turban surmounted by a crown. The figure kneels on a cushion, hands clasped before him in prayer. In front of him lies a sceptre, and to the right is an altar-like structure on which stand a censer and a pedestal. Behind the ruler two richly dressed women, also in a posture of prayer, kneel on a lower step. In the mid-ground is an enclosing structure with an open door and an arcade, through which other figures observe the scene.

This painting can be closely related to a drawing by Gerbrand van den Eeckhout that is presently in a Dutch private collection (fig. 69a). Differences in a number of details make it clear that this sheet is not a drawn copy of the painting, but a preparatory study. It is significant for the iconographic interpretation of the painting that the drawing allows all the observers looking...
through the arcade opening to be identified conclusively as women—something that is no longer clear in the painting. Also, the foot that appears on top of the pedestal at the right edge of the drawing unquestionably belongs to a seated statue of one of the pagan idols worshipped by King Solomon. This detail is absent from the painting.

According to the First Book of Kings, God had warned the Israelites not to associate with members of pagan tribes, lest his people succumb to the temptation of idolatry. Ignoring this caution, Solomon took many pagan wives and concubines, who persuaded him to worship foreign deities. The king even had sanctuaries erected, so his womenfolk might burn incense and make sacrifices to their gods (1 Kings 11:8).

It has been suggested several times that the theme of this painting is actually Solomon's prayer on the occasion of the Consecration of the Temple, which is thoroughly described in chapter 8 of the First Book of Kings.2 The chief argument in favour of this identification is the absence of the pagan idols seen typically on the altar in images of Solomon's Idolatry. Speaking against this identification, however, is the fact that there is no significant prior tradition for depictions of Solomon's prayer at the Consecration of the Temple. This theme was portrayed only rarely during the 17th century, and correspondences between Van den Eeckhout's painting and the few existing examples3—including the painting by Philips Koninck in the Bader collection (cat. 101)—are not evident. By contrast, Solomon joining his heathen wives in the worship of their pagan deities can be counted among the more frequently depicted themes. Many examples can be identified, particularly in the work of such Haarlem artists as Willem de Poorter (cat. 155), Jacob de Wet and Jan de Bray. But Leonard Bramer, active in Delft, also painted the theme repeatedly.4 With some differences in the details, nearly all these depictions emphasize the role of the pagan women, who encouraged King Solomon to commit idolatry. Moreover, in an earlier rendering of the subject dated 1654, Van den Eeckhout himself placed one of them in a prominent position, directly beside the kneeling Solomon.5 The presence of the female figures is critical to the iconography of this theme, and it is owing to their inclusion in the present painting that it may also be considered a representation of the Idolatry of Solomon.