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Venite et Videte: Art and Architecture in Brussels as Agents of Change during the Counter Reformation, c. 1609-1659

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Chapter I – The Minim Friars and the Intercession and Invocation of the Saints

Decree of the 25th session of the Council of Trent:

> The holy Synod enjoins on all bishops, and others who sustain the office and charge of teaching, that, […] they especially instruct the faithful diligently concerning the intercession and invocation of saints; the honour (paid) to relics; and the legitimate use of images: teaching them, that the saints, who reign together with Christ, offer up their own prayers to God for men; that it is good and useful suppliantly to invoke them, and to have recourse to their prayers, aid, (and) help for obtaining benefits from God, through His Son, Jesus Christ our Lord, who is our alone Redeemer and Saviour; but that they think impiously, who deny that the saints, who enjoy eternal happiness in heaven, are to be invocated; or who assert either that they do not pray for men; or, that the invocation of them to pray for each of us even in particular, is idolatry; or, that it is repugnant to the word of God; and is opposed to the honour of *the one mediator of God and men, Christ Jesus*; or, that it is foolish to supplicate, vocally, or mentally, those who reign in heaven.[207]

In their attempt to restore Habsburg authority and Catholic piety in the Low Countries after the religious troubles of the sixteenth century, the archdukes Albert and Isabella gave the impetus to founding or endowing convents all over the Southern Netherlands. Even the archducal court in Brussels was modeled after monastic examples: as we have seen in the introduction, this was to underscore the God-given nature of the Habsburg rule. This image of the "holy court of Brussels" also acted as an example for society at large. However, while courtiers avidly imitated archducal piety, the reality of seventeenth-century city life often deviated from these courtly ideals. In Brussels, citizens complained to the magistrate about the lascivious and immoral scenes that occurred daily in the city's streets, which were thought to inflame the wrath of the Lord. When in 1616 a community of monks of the ascetic Minim order settled in the ill-reputed Bovendal-quarter of Brussels, the tide was to be turned. Supported by the court nobility, and

[207] *The Canons and Decrees of the Sacred and Œcumenical Council of Trent, Celebrated Under the Sovereign Pontiffs, Paul III., Julius III., and Pius IV. Translated by J. Waterworth.*, 233–234.

especially by the community of French exiles at the archducal court, they founded their monastery on the site of a former brothel.[208]

The Catholic preoccupation with sexual repression, especially during the period of the Counter Reformation, is something of a commonplace, as is the emphasis on the role of the elite in the expansion of religious infrastructure. Yet in this chapter I will examine the particular case of the Minim foundation in order to elucidate the function of urban intervention in the broad Counter-Reformation efforts to effect societal change, conceived not as an end in itself, but as a way of repairing relations with God. What was the agenda of the monks and their patrons, and what role did art and architecture play in their implementation?

To answer these questions, I will first discuss the introduction of the Minims in Brussels and their main patrons. Secondly, I will examine the textual accounts of the foundation ceremony of the new convent. I will then present a variety of sources relating to prostitution in the convent's vicinity, and discuss the events, actions and viewpoints of different groups prior and consecutive to the ceremony of laying the first stone, and the function of the cults promoted at the church. I will argue that the dissemination of good Christian behavior through the foundation of this convent resulted from a complex exchange of interests, in which the archducal court played a seminal role.

Founding a new convent

Founding a new religious house in the city of Brussels was no small feat. Before any religious community could settle, they needed the authorization of a litany of authorities. Since 1296, express approbation was needed from the Duke of Brabant, the Chapter of Saint Gudule, and the city's aldermen or *schepenen*.[209] In addition, assent was needed from the archbishop, the general and provincial superiors of the order, and the Holy See by means of the apostolic nuncio. The foundation of mendicant orders in particular was often strongly opposed by the common folk and rivaling orders, fearing the detrimental effects of begging and the unfair competition of exemptions.

[208] For the Bovendael quarter, see Henne and Wauters, *Histoire de la ville de Bruxelles*, 1845, vol. 3; 418–424; *Bouwen door de eeuwen heen in Brussel: inventaris van het cultuurbezit in België. Deel Brussel, Volume 1, Part 2* (Liège: Editions Mardaga, 1993), 421–423.

[209] Jacques van Wijnendaele, *Promenades dans les couvents et abbayes de Bruxelles* (Brussels: Éditions Racine, 2007), 49.

Proponents of foundations were mostly nobles and notables, while those in power, the prince or governor and the magistrate were often divided.[210] The Minim convent would turn out to be the last mendicant settlement to be allowed in Brussels and only on the strict condition that the monks would not harass the population by begging for money.[211]

Moreover most new religious houses founded in Brussels after 1585 had great difficulties finding a place to settle permanently.[212] The Capuchins founded their convent in 1586 in a remote backstreet, while the Jesuits led a nomadic existence from 1586 until their college finally opened in 1604 after tremendous difficulties finding suitable accommodation. The prototypical reformed Spanish order of Discalced Carmelite or Theresian nuns had been able to circumvent such troubles, since the Archdukes, who had invited them to the Netherlands, put a part of their palace gardens at their disposal for building a convent (1607-1611), which would be known as the "Carmel royal".[213] Their mother-superior Anne de Jesus, companion of St Theresa of Avila, had tried to bring the male branch of the Spanish Discalced Carmelites to Brussels as well, but these refused to expand beyond the territory of Spain.[214] Therefore Pope Paul V sent six Italian Discalced Carmelites to Brussels in 1610, led by the famous Thomas of Jesus. These monks were first lodged at the refuge of the Abbey of Orval by its French abbot, the famous court preacher Bernard de Montgaillard (1563-1628). The foundation was financed primarily by the most prominent court nobles and military commanders.[215] The Archdukes designated a controversial plot of

[210] Marinus, "De Contrareformatie te Antwerpen, (1585-1676): kerkelijk leven in een grootstad," 73.

[211] During the periods before and after the reign of the Archdukes (1599-1621), the ducal power was transferred to the King of Spain, which immensely complicated the authorization process, requiring assent from the governor, the Council of State, the Privy Council, and the States of Brabant. This may explain why no new mendicant convents were founded after 1621.

[212] Luc Janssens, "Kloosterinplantingen," in *Het gewest Brussel: van de oude dorpen tot de stad van nu*, ed. Arlette Smolar-Meynart and Jean Stengers (Brussels: Gemeentekrediet, 1989), 146–61.

[213] See Terlinden, "Le Carmel Royal de Bruxelles, 1607-1957."

[214] See Marie-Anne de Jésus, *Anne de Jésus: fondatrice du Carmel en France et en Belgique* (Nouan-le-Fuzelier: Éditions du Lion de Juda, 1988).

[215] I.e. Rodrigo Niño y Lasso, Count of Añover; Charles-Bonaventura de Longueval, Count of Bucquoy; and Octavio Visconti, Count of Gamalerio; the famous commander of the Spanish army Marquess Ambrogio Spinola (1569-1630), and Charles-Alexandre, Duke of Croÿ-Havré (1581-1624). Also, contributions were made by Albert and Isabella; Louis de Velasco, Count of Salazar; the Counts of Tassis; and Franciscus Paz. Chapels and altars were founded by, inter alia, the Polish "palatine" Refradofsky (altar of St Joseph); Magdalena of Egmont, Princess of Chimay (altar of St Onophrius); and Hélène de Sermoise (altar of St Stephen). In addition there were tombs of the Arenberg and Bournonville families. Antonius Sanderus, *Antonii Sanderi presbyteri*

land for the convent to be built (1610-1614): the site of the former Culemborg palace, where during the troubles in 1566 the Compromise of the Nobles against the Spanish rule had been signed.[216] On the orders of the Council of Troubles, over which the Duke of Alva presided, the palace had been razed and the place was subsequently "excorcized" by sprinkling salt on the ground.[217] A monumental column was erected in its place as a warning sign, with the condition that no house should ever be built there.[218] This column was again demolished during the protestant occupation of the city (1579-1585). Up till the eighteenth century the highly charged history of the site was kept alive by the monks, who pointed out to visitors that on the site of the pond, which they avoided, the cursed conspiracy had taken place.[219] It could be asked whether the overwhelming contribution by court nobles, primarily of the Spanish "hawk" faction, to the foundation may perhaps be seen as a "new compromise of nobles", in which the agency of the situation was reversed by repeating it with new actors. However that may be, the fact that the site was contested made it suitable for founding a convent, while adding to a perception of "agency of change". The Minim convent was to inhabit a similarly undesired and controversial location as the Discalced Carmelites, however of a quite different nature.

Chorographia Sacra Brabantiae, sive celebrium aliquot in ea provincia abbatiarum, coenobiorum, monasteriorum, ecclesiarum, piarumque fundationum descriptio... et imaginibus aeneis illustrata. Tomus secundus, ed. Jacques Le Roy (The Hague: Christiaan van Lom, 1727), 343–346; Henne and Wauters, *Histoire de la ville de Bruxelles*, 1968, vol. 4; 8–9. On the powerful position of Añover, see Raeymaekers, *"Siempre un pie en palacio." Het hof en de hofhouding van de aartshertogen Albrecht en Isabella, 1598-1621*, chap. 6.

[216] Twelve nobles contributed to drafting the petition, more than thousand nobles signed it. On 5 April it was offered to the Governess Margareth of Parma. On 8 April a great banquet took place which initiated the Geuzen movement. See Peter Arnade, *Beggars, Iconoclasts, and Civic Patriots: The Political Culture of the Dutch Revolt* (Ithaca NY: Cornell University Press, 2008), 50–89.

[217] See the forthcoming dissertation by Jasper van der Steen, "Memory Wars in the Low Countries, 1566-1700" (University of Leiden).

[218] On 28 May 1568 the Duke of Alva ordered the Culemburg palace to be demolished. The column erected in its place contained a Latin inscription with the following meaning: "Under the reign of Philip II, very Catholic King of Spain, don Ferdinand Alvarez de Toledo, Duke of Alva, Governor of the Netherlands, had the house that stood in this place demolished to the ground, because there was a conspiration against the Roman Catholic church and His Majesty, in the year 1568". Walter d'Hoore, *Het Egmont-Arenbergpaleis te Brussel* (Tielt: Lannoo, 1991), 24–25; Edouard Laloire, *Histoire des deux hotels d'Egmont et du palais d'Arenberg (1383-1910)* (Brussels: Van Muysewinkel, 1952), 184–185.

[219] Gerard van Loon, *Beschryving der Nederlandsche historipenningen, Vol. 1* (The Hague: Christiaan van Lom, 1723), 115.

French exiles and the introduction of the Minims in Brussels

The friars of Saint Francis of Paola, popularly called Minims (the least of the faithful) were an order based on Franciscan spirituality founded in the late fifteenth century. The order distinguished itself by an extremely austere lifestyle, with permanent fasting (no meat, eggs, cheese or any dairy products). Having "charity" as their motto the Minim friars devoted themselves to the care of the outcasts of society: thieves, prisoners, children of prostitutes etc, and they were highly esteemed for their preaching. The order was especially popular in France, where its founder Saint Francis of Paola (1418-1507) (*fig*. 16) had spent the last 25 years of his life at court on the invitation of the French king Louis XI, and his successors Charles VIII, and Louis XII.[220] The future king François I was supposedly named after St Francis of Paola, after the saint had prophesized to his pregnant mother Louise de Savoy that she would give birth to a king of France. When Louis XII died without a male heir in 1515 this prophecy became true. The Infanta Isabella descended from this King through her mother Elisabeth of Valois.

Politically, the Minim order would in the seventeenth century become closely attached to the French Crown, and its obedience to the Most Christian King often took precedence over that to the Papal authority. In Rome the order was deployed as an extension of "gallican" or French national interests.[221] Many Minims cultivated learning and some of them greatly contributed to the scientific revolution of the seventeenth century, such as the mathematician and "father of acoustics" Marin Mersenne (1588-1648), a close friend of René Descartes, and his student the mathematician and painter Jean-François Niceron[222] (1613-1646), who specialized in optics and anamorphic art (*fig*. 17-19).[223]

The first Minim convent in the Netherlands was founded in Antwerp in 1614, by a group of Scottish Minims under the patronage of the Genoese

[220] P.J.S. Whitmore, *The Order of Minims in Seventeenth-Century France* (The Hague: Martinus Nijhoff, 1967), 3–4.
[221] Ibid., 100.
[222] Niceron's principal work is Jean François Niceron, *La perspective curieuse, ou magie artificielle des effets merveilleux: de l'optique, catoptrique, dioptrique* ... (Paris: Pierre Billaine, 1638); on Niceron, see Whitmore, *The Order of Minims in Seventeenth-Century France*, 155–162; Agostino De Rosa, *Jean François Nicéron. Perspective, Catoptric and Artificial Magic* (Rome: Aracne edizioni, 2013); Kirsti Andersen, *The Geometry of an Art: The History of the Mathematical Theory of Perspective from Alberti to Monge* (New York: Springer, 2007), 452–456.
[223] For publications by Belgian Minims, see Carlo De Clercq, "Oeuvres imprimées des Minimes de la province Belge, 4," *De Gulden Passer*, no. 1–2 (1961): 174–75.

merchant Agostino Balbi.[224] However, the Archdukes were displeased with the Scots because some of them had supposedly "once lived licentiously".[225] Soon, a new group of Minims was invited from France. The above-mentioned Bernard de Montgaillard, abbot of Orval (*fig*. 20), was instrumental in introducing these French Minims to Brussels.[226] This prominent member of the French community of ex-Ligueurs, or radical catholic militants, at the Brussels court had once been confessor to the French King Henry III and Catherine de Medicis (grandmother of the Infanta Isabella), and became the favourite preacher of Archduke Albert. Montgaillard drew large crowds and was famous for his ability to convert great numbers of Protestants.[227]

During the religious troubles of the late sixteenth century in France, the Catholic League was a radical group of catholic militants, who wished to extirpate Protestantism in France and who opposed the "politiques", who had a more conciliatory stance.[228] Members of the League were fiercely opposed to this laxity, and developed a fundamentally different concept of the relation between church and state. Whereas "politiques" strove towards a "church within the state", the "ligueurs" could only conceive of a "state within the church".[229] This may seem like a matter of nuance, but it was of major importance to them, since they conceived of the Monarchy as an adumbration of the Heavenly Kingdom, where Christ was king. The league's political-religious ideals were most closely reflected by the conception of

[224] Marinus, "De Contrareformatie te Antwerpen, (1585-1676): kerkelijk leven in een grootstad," 178–179.

[225] I.e. John Brown or Joannes Bruno Scotus (1569-1645) and John Francis Maitland or Metellano (+1625). Brown was fluent in Eastern languages and taught Hebrew in Avignon and Paris. With his sermons, he managed to convert many Jews to Catholicism. However he was illregarded by the Infanta and the French Minims. Bernard de Meester de Ravestein, *Correspondance du nonce Giovanni-Francesco Guidi di Bagno: (1621-1627)* (Brussels: Palais des Académies, 1938), 225–226.

[226] See Paul Bergmans, "Montgaillard," *Biographie Nationale* 15 (1899): 169–74.

[227] Ibid., 170.

[228] Mack P. Holt, *The French Wars of Religion, 1562-1629* (New York, 1995), 149–150; see also the monumental two volume study by Denis Crouzet, *Les guerriers de Dieu: La violence au temps des troubles de religion (vers 1525-Vers 1610)* (Seyssel: Champ Vallon, 1990); and Racaut, *Hatred in Print: Catholic Propaganda and Protestant Identity during the French Wars of Religion*.

[229] The concerns of the ligueurs in exile were the following: 1) Loyalty to religion (its defense is a categorical imperative and a question of justice), 2) Loyalty to the monarchy (on the condition that the prince is loyal to faith and pope, from which he derives legitimacy), 3) Anti-war (in the Thirty Years War they strive for peace with the Empire/Spain). For them, there were two types of society: natural and monstruous. They aim not to disturb the order, but to restore it. Robert Descimon and José J. Ruiz Ibanez, *Les ligueurs de l'exil: le refuge catholique français après 1594* (Seyssel: Champ Vallon, 2005), 255–256.

monarchy and state as promoted by the Habsburgs. During the conflict the Spanish King Philip II had supported the cause of the League, and their staunch catholic ideas of state resulted in the logical conclusion that it would be better to betray country and king, than the True Faith.

In 1589 their adversary Henry IV ascended the French throne, who was not only a member of the Bourbon branch of the royal family, but a Calvinist who had converted to Catholicism to become king ("Paris vaut bien une messe"). In the ensuing four years of war the League was mostly defeated. Especially after the Edict of Nantes in 1598, which granted Protestants some degree of religious freedom, many "ligueurs" chose a voluntary exile in the Spanish Netherlands. Refusing to serve a King who they considered a heretic, some ligueurs had even supported claims of the Spanish Infanta Isabella, whose mother was a Valois, on the throne of France.[230] Consequently a large number of ex-ligueurs gathered around the court of the Archdukes, choosing to serve their hoped-for queen at her court in Brussels. The most prominent of these French exiles was Charles de Lorraine, duke of Aumale (1555-1631), who had fled France after being accused of a plot against Henry IV.[231] His residence, the former palace of Granvelle, formed the centre of the French community in Brussels. As a member of the Guise family, a younger branch of the House of Lorraine, which claimed descendance from Charlemagne and therefore rights on the French throne, Aumale had once been a marriage candidate for the Infanta Isabella (as projected King and Queen of France). He therefore had a special position at the court of the Archdukes.[232] In 1615 Aumale founded a Minim convent nearby his palace in Anderlecht, close to Brussels.[233]

The new Minim convent of Anderlecht would act as springboard to the city of Brussels. Shortly after its foundation, the monks write to the Brussels magistrate that they have been "called to the city of Brussels by several

[230] Isabella was however betrothed to her cousin Albert at the deathbed of her father in 1598, with the Spanish Netherlands as dowry.
[231] A.M. van den Haute, "Le duc Charles d'Aumale et l'installation des pères Minimes dans la région bruxelloise," *Le patriote illustré* 65, no. 26 (1950): 772–.
[232] It is often thought he betrothed his eldest daughter Marie to Ambrogio Spinola, but this is not sure. Descimon and Ruiz Ibanez, *Les ligueurs de l'exil: le refuge catholique français après 1594*, 227.
[233] Ibid., 230; on this monastery, see Marcel Jacobs, *Anderlecht anno 1775* (Brussels, 1993), 264–270.

devote persons, in order to preach, hear confessions and visit the sick".[234] However, they complained that because of the great distance and bad roads during the winter season, the monks were often forced to stay in the city overnight, either with friends or "in public hostels of little convenience and decency to their profession". Therefore they pleaded to be allowed to found a permanent convent in the city. The Minims obtained this permission in April 1616, when a group of supporters pledged to fund the convent. Bernard de Montgaillard led this group of supporters. On the request of the magistrate, Montgaillard accommodated his house as lodging for the monks for three years while they had not yet found a permanent place in the city,[235] and in the convent's foundation act (24 April 1616) he is mentioned as the "principal and first motive to call and introduce the order of Saint Francis of Paola in Brussels, and to bring the monks to preach there".[236]

The newly introduced group of distinguished French preachers was an immediate success at the archducal court.[237] Their eloquence in French must have appealed to the French exiles as well as to the indigenous, mostly French-speaking nobility, by providing a complement to the predominantly Spanish and Italian court preachers.[238] According to Sanderus the French Minim Jean le Sauvage first preached in the church of the Discalced Carmelites, which was quite large, yet the crowds that gathered to hear his sermons were four times larger than the church could contain.[239] As we shall see, the reason for this great public acclaim was the insistence of the monks on the relation between voluptuousness and heresy. Their preaching against fleshly sins held the promise of countering the Reformation, and repairing the ties with heaven.[240]

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[234] ARAA, Eccl. Arch., 12037, 9 April 1616: authorisation of magistrate to found minim convent in Brussels, in reaction to petition (copy of 11 February 1618). See Henne and Wauters, *Histoire de la ville de Bruxelles*, 1845, vol. 3; 418–425.

[235] ARAA, Eccl. Arch., 12118, 20 April 1616: request magistrate to B. de Montgaillard.

[236] ARAA, Eccl. Arch., 12074, 24 April 1616, f. 1recto

[237] The popularity of the Minims may also be inferred from the fact that on 15 June 1628, Archbishop Jacques Boonen issued a decree against beggars who passed themselves off as Minims by wearing the Minim habit. AAMB, *Archiepiscopalia Mechliniensia*, reg. 11, f. 90recto.

[238] E.g. the Franciscans, Dominicans, and Discalced Carmelites.

[239] Antonius Sanderus, "Coenobium Bruxellense Ordinis PP. Minimorum S. Francisci de Paula, brevi chorographia et imagine aenea illustratum," in *Chorographia Sacra Brabantiae, Vol. 3*, 2nd ed. (The Hague: Christiaan van Lom, 1727), 44. The rare first edition of Sanderus' description of the Minim convent was published in Brussels in 1662 by Peter de Dobbeleer. I will here use the edition of 1727.

[240] This argument is also used in the only surviving sermon of Bernard de Montgaillard, *Le soleil eclipsé, ou discours sur la vie et mort du Serenissime Archiduc Albert* (Brussels: Hubert Anthoine, 1622), 77.

The principal patron of the Brussels Minim convent was Hélène de Sermoise, widow of Nicolas de Rieux, a noted "Ligueur" who had been executed after the victory of Henry IV in 1594.[241] After this tragic event Hélène de Sermoise emigrated to the Habsburg Netherlands.[242] Even though her late husband was completely rehabilitated by King Henry IV, she chose to live in Brussels, in her own words, "so she would not live there where her husband had found an ignominious death and where she was victim of persecution by his enemies".[243] At the Brussels court, Hélène de Sermoise was welcomed heartily: she obtained a pension from the Spanish king as well as the honour to serve the Infanta Isabella as a lady in waiting (*dueña de honor*).[244] She was open-handed with religious patronage of the Brussels Augustinians in 1609 (through the agency of Bernard de Montgaillard),[245] and in 1614 she donated a private chapel dedicated to her patron St Stephen, with a painting in a golden frame, in the new church of the Discalced Carmelites.[246]

Probably on the counsel of Montgaillard, and inspired by the example of Aumale, Hélène de Sermoise in 1616 donated the large sum of 16,000 guilders to build a Minim convent in Brussels, on the condition that she would be honoured as its founder.[247] Thus she gave her piety a lasting form,

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[241] Nicolas de Rieux had been governor of Laudun and the castle of Pierrefonds during the French religious troubles. He was executed in Compiègne in 1594. On the heroic deeds of Nicolas de Rieux and his rehabilitation by Henri IV, see Stanislas Prioux, "Communication sur le sieur de Rieux, ligueur, et sur la réhabilitation de sa mémoire par Henri IV," in *Memoires lus à la Sorbonne: histoire, philologie et sciences morales* (Paris: Impr. impériale, 1864), 159–71.

[242] She arrived in the Netherlands in 1595. Descimon and Ruiz Ibanez, *Les ligueurs de l'exil: le refuge catholique français après 1594*, 83.

[243] ARAA, Eccl. Arch., 12076, 24 October 1620: testament of H. de Sermoise.

[244] I have not found her in the study on the household of Isabella as Governess of Birgit Houben, however the documentation on which this study is based is not complete. Houben, *Wisselende gedaanten: het hof en de hofhouding van de landvoogden Isabella Clara Eugenia (1621-1633) en de Kardinaal-Infant Don Fernando van Oostenrijk (1634-1641) te Brussel*. As of 1598, a source reports that "she lived together as friends with Madame de Barbançon", another noblewoman at the Brussels court. Descimon and Ruiz Ibanez, *Les ligueurs de l'exil: le refuge catholique français après 1594*, 83.

[245] ARAA, Eccl. Arch., 12075, 24 November 1609.

[246] ARAA, Eccl. Arch., 12075, 22 November 1614.

[247] ARAA, Eccl. Arch., 12104, 29 April 1616: foundation act of the Minim convent by an anonymous benefactor (=Hélène de Sermoise). The convent was to be equipped for 6 monks during her life and 10 after her death. Sanderus mentions 23 June 1616 as the date of foundation. Sanderus, "Coenobium Bruxellense Ordinis PP. Minimorum S. Francisci de Paula," 40–41. On 25 July 1620 the provincial chapter of the Minims granted patent for the foundation of H. de Sermoise. On the influence of the Duke of Aumale, see Descimon and Ruiz Ibanez, *Les ligueurs de l'exil: le refuge catholique français après 1594*, 230.

much analogous to the pious women or *dévots* who founded reformed convents in Paris around the same time.[248] Yet according to the foundation act, "She, for several good reasons, does not wish that it is presently known that she is foundress of the Minim Friars […]".[249] The Minim chronicler Lanovius also mentions that "for many years we restrained ourselves by suppressing the Foundress' name, the disclosure of which she had declared strictly forbidden."[250] Sanderus adds that this was a sign of her typically female virtues of humility and modesty,[251] yet she may also have had strategic motives, for instance in dealing with landowners.[252]

The founding act stipulated that the church and its high altar were to be consecrated to Our Lady and the protomartyr St Stephen, because of Hélène de Sermoise's special devotion to these saints.[253] She also founded a mass in honour of St Helen. Her last will was recorded on 23 June 1622.[254] Since the Minim friars had not yet reached an agreement with the authorities (i.e. the chapter of St Gudule) on burials in their church, she founded a burial chapel in the parish church of the nobility, Our Lady ter Zavel (Sablon), just in case.[255] Hélène de Sermoise passed away on 24 October 1623,[256] shortly after an agreement had been reached with St Gudule.[257] So she was buried in

[248] See Diefendorf, *From Penitence to Charity: Pious Women and the Catholic Reformation in Paris*.
[249] ARAA, Eccl. Arch., 12074
[250] Franciscus Lanovius, *Chronicon Generale Ordinis Minimorum* (Paris: Sebastien Cramoisy, 1635), 480. "[...] ad annos plures nostri se continuerunt, suppresso interim Fundatricis nomine quod ipsa enunciari serio vetuerat."
[251] Sanderus, "Coenobium Bruxellense Ordinis PP. Minimorum S. Francisci de Paula," 41. "[…] suppresso interim Fundatricis nomine, quod enuntiari pro sua humilitate modestiaque serio ipsa inhibuerat." The practice of these virtues was encouraged in the circle of court ladies in the retinue of the Infanta, to which Hélène de Sermoise belonged (see Jean Terrier, *Portraicts des SS vertus de la Vierge: contemplées par feue S.A.S.M. Isabelle Clere Eugenie Infante d'Espagne*, ed. Cordula van Wyhe (Glasgow: Department of French, University of Glasgow, 2002). Another court lady, Marguerite de Lalaing, countess of Berlaymont, founded a convent for noble girls in 1626/27. See J. Schrygens, *Berlaymont: le cloistre de la Reyne de tous les Saints* (Brussels: Albert de Wit, 1928).
[252] Or perhaps Hélène de Sermoise wanted to let the entire honour of the religious foundation go to the Archdukes, who were to place the first stone of the new convent in 1621.
[253] ARAA, Eccl. Arch., 12074; Lanovius, *Chronicon Generale Ordinis Minimorum*, 481. "Nomen inditum à B. *Virgine* ac S. *Stephano* protomartyre, pro Fundatricis voto et pacto.
[254] ARAA, Eccl. Arch., 12076, 23 June 1622: testament H. de Sermoise.
[255] ARAA, Eccl. Arch., 12075.
[256] ARAA, Eccl. Arch., 12077; Sanderus, "Coenobium Bruxellense Ordinis PP. Minimorum S. Francisci de Paula," 42.
[257] Antoine Lefebvre, "Chronique du couvent des Minimes (KBR Ms. III 1338)," 1730, f. 2recto.

her own Minim church, dressed in the Minim habit, after obsequies that according to the chronicler Lanovius "defied description."[258]

Another French exile kindly disposed towards the Minims was Julien le Goix, a close friend of Hélène de Sermoise and chaplain in the church of the Carmelite nuns. As holder of an "office d'élu" as royal Counsellor in Paris, he seems to have played a role in the Paris uprising of 1588, the "Day of the Barricades", which was secretly coordinated in detail by the ambassador of Philip II, Bernardino de Mendoza.[259] Like Hélène de Sermoise, Julien le Goix also received a pension from the Spanish King, presumably in gratitude for services rendered to Spain. According to his will of 1616,[260]

> "[…] he had often risked his life, estate, and goods defending the Church during the religious troubles in France, and especially in Paris, where he was born and from where he had rather left, retreating to the Netherlands, than to bend ever so slightly to anything, that might offend the integrity of his faith, the right and respect of the true religion, or the duty of his conscience."[261]

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[258] Lanovius, *Chronicon Generale Ordinis Minimorum*, 481.

[259] See De Lamar Jensen, *Diplomacy and Dogmatism: Bernardino de Mendoza and the French Catholic League* (Cambridge MA: Harvard University Press, 1964).

[260] ARAA, Eccl. Arch., 12172, 26 September 1616: testament of J. Le Goix, designating the Brussels Minims as his sole heirs. The documents left by Julien le Goix contain many important pieces pertaining to (his role in) the French religious wars. The content of his will was not revealed until his death in 1625. Lanovius, *Chronicon Generale Ordinis Minimorum*, 480. ARAA, Eccl. Arch., 12081: house of mourning 1625

[261] ARAA, Eccl. Arch., 12172, 26 September 1616: testament of J. Le Goix. « Comparant en sa personne Monsieur Julien le Goix cidevant eslue Conseiller du Roy en l'eslection de Paris, Quartenier d'icelle ville, et à pnt pbre [à present presbyter], lequel poussé de longtemps d'une sainte inspiration de pourvueoir au bien et repos de son Ame, et disposer de ses biens et moyens à l'honneur et gloire de Dieu, à l'etretien du Culte et service de la foy, et Religion de l'Eglise Catholique Apostolique et Romaine, pour le soustien et deffence de laquelle il a souvent exposé sa vie, ses estate et biens pendant les troubles et persecutions de l'Eglise en france, et speciallement en la ville de Paris, d'ou il est natif, et d'ou il a mieux aymé sortir, et se refugier aux pays bas, que flechir tant soit peu a chose aulcune, qui peult offenser ny l'integrité de sa foy, ny le bien et respect de la vraye religion, ny le debvoir de sa conscience : desirant que du reste de sesdites biens, qui luy sont demeuréz du naufrage, la meilleure partie soit employée et offerte à Dieu pour faire une fondation a perpetuité, à son nom et intention pour le bien de son Ame, et pour la remission de celles des honorables personnes le Sieur Pierre le Goix Seigneur de la Court du Pontyblon [Pont-Yblon], et Dame Marguerite le Conte, iadis ses feuz pere et mere, de sa bien-aymée seur [...] »

Julien le Goix was ordained priest in Antwerp in 1609.[262] Le Goix was member of the third order of Minims and founded a chapel in honour of St. Francis of Paola in 1624, in which he was buried in 1625.[263]

Curiously, we have no clear evidence of patronage of the Brussels Minims by the entourage of the royal French exiles, Queen Marie de Medicis and her younger son, Gaston d'Orleans, who fled to Brussels in 1631. The frivolous manners and predilection for courtly love of these French courtiers met with some inconvenience at the stern and sacred court of the Infanta.[264] Their apparent lack of engagement with the austere French Minims may perhaps also be explained by the close ties of the monks and their ex-ligueur patrons with the rivaling Guise family.

The support of the court

First established in Brussels, the Minim friars were lodged in one of the two houses of Hélène de Sermoise, the former house of the famous sixteenth century anatomist Andreas Vesalius (1514-1564). But in order to settle permanently, and to build the convent and church for which they had received her rich donation, they needed adjacent property. This turned out to be difficult, although between 1617 and 1620 prominent courtiers made several important financial donations.[265] Like the Antwerp Minims, the friars in Brussels received little or no subsidy from the city Magistrate.[266] Neither do the Archdukes seem to have contributed financially, but they supported

[262] J. van den Nieuwenhuizen, "De wijdingsregisters van het bisdom Antwerpen (1570-1611)" (Antwerp: Kathedraalarchief Antwerpen, 2008), 205, http://www.provant.be/binaries/Wijdingsregisters_bisdomAntwerpen_1570_1611_V_2_tcm7-63281.pdf.

[263] ARAA, Eccl. Arch., 12172, act of 13 May 1624. Founding a chapel costed 1,600 guilders.

[264] Cordula van Wyhe, "Between Chastity and Passion: The Impact of the French Exiles on the Cult of Courtly Love at the Brussels Court in the 1630s," in *Passion, Affekt und Leidenschaft in der frühen Neuzeit, Wolfenbütteler Arbeiten zur Barockforschung, Vol. II*, ed. Johann A. Steiger and Ralph G. Bogner (Wiesbaden: Harrassowitz, 2005), 951–80; see also Henrard, *Marie de Médicis dans les Pays-Bas 1631-38*.

[265] I.e. Charles-Bonaventure de Longueval, Count of Bucquoy (1571-1621), confidant of Albert and right hand of Spinola, who died as a hero on the battlefield during the Thirty Years War (ARAA, Eccl. Arch., 12096. April 1617, donation); François de Rye, doyen de Besançon (1566-1637), first almoner of the Archdukes and from 1623 archbishop of Caesarea (ARAA, Eccl. Arch., 12097, 26 May 1618, promise of donation); Claude de Rye, baron de Balençon and *gentilhombre da cámara* (ARAA, Eccl. Arch., 12098, 1619, donation of 1600 guilders for food of the monks); and Ernest Woislawski (Boislafski), *ayuda da cámara* (ARAA, Eccl. Arch., 12099, 1619, foundation of a mass for the late Jacques Touchart, also *Ayuda de chambre de leurs Altesses*).

[266] Marinus, "De Contrareformatie te Antwerpen, (1585-1676): kerkelijk leven in een grootstad," 81.

the Minims by other means of patronage such as giving authorizations, pressing secular and ecclesiastical authorities to cooperate, and mustering support among courtiers.[267]

In late 1619 or early 1620,[268] a fundraising was held at court in which individual courtiers could subscribe to give alms for acquiring the "site of a church for the Minim friars".[269] This list, drawn in Spanish, survives and includes all the great as well as many minor names of officials in the Archducal household. Some nobles gave away "un tercio", one third of their court salary, and Jean de Croÿ, Count of Solre even gave two third.[270] Together they raised 5,300 guilders, a very high amount, which was however barely enough to buy the needed property: a brothel on Blaesstraat on the offset of the notorious Bovendal street (*fig*. 21, 22). That the Minims and their patrons nonetheless had faith in the enterprise is shown by the fact that Bernard de Montgaillard on 24 January 1620 donates money for the foundation of a chapel in the church to be built.[271] Eventually in 1622 it came to a settlement with the brewer's widow, a tough negotiator who owned five little houses, which obstructed the building plans, after intervention by the Magistrate and the Council of Brabant.[272]

The foundation ceremony of 1621

Even before all the property needed was acquired, a great foundation ceremony was mounted to consecrate the fundaments of the church by

[267] ARAA, Eccl. Arch., 12038, 13 June 1617: authorisation Archbishop Hovius. ARAA, Eccl. Arch., 12120, 20 June 1617: patent archdukes to acquire land for constructing convents in Brussels and Anderlecht. ARAA, Eccl. Arch., 12119, 19 December 1617: "droit de mutation" for a house owned by the princess of Mansfelt, in favour of convent. ARAA, Eccl. Arch., 12063, 7 April 1618: authorisation archdukes for Minims to settle anywhere in the country.

[268] It may be significant that this fundraising took place shortly after the Archdukes had repressed the opposition of the Nine Nations (artisan guilds) against taxation and repression by the Spanish army, an uprising known as "guerre du gigot". See Karin van Honacker, "Reorganisatie in Brussel of de strijd om de privileges. Het conflict tussen de ambachten en de aartshertogen van 1619," *Bijdragen tot de geschiedenis* 73 (1990): 299–313.

[269] ARAA, Eccl. Arch., 12171: "Las personas que dan limosna para comprar sitio para fabricar yglesia para los padres minimos"

[270] I am indebted to Luc Duerloo and Dries Raeymaekers for helping me to make sense of this document. For the household of the Archdukes Albert and Isabella, see Raeymaekers, *"Siempre un pie en palacio." Het hof en de hofhouding van de aartshertogen Albrecht en Isabella, 1598-1621*.

[271] ARAA, Eccl. Arch., 12173. 24 January 1620, foundation of chapel dedicated to St. Bernard by Bernard de Montgaillard, Abbot of Orval. On 2 May 1623 Montgaillard makes another donation of 1,600 guilders.

[272] ARAA, Eccl. Arch., 12121.

means of the traditional laying of the first stone.[273] On 6 April 1621 the court and the city convened for this ritual. At this occasion, special reference was made to the particular circumstance of replacing a brothel by a convent. The ceremony is described in the chronicle of the order by the French Minim Lanovius of 1635,[274] which was paraphrased and expanded by Antonius Sanderus in his chorography of the convent of 1662.[275] Both texts lay great emphasis on the depraved origin of the place. Lanovius stresses the great expenses and difficulties the monks had to overcome to acquire a house that was "certainly large and spacious, yet filthy and infamous as a public brothel […]", and how the "good people" rejoiced over the ejection of the "impure scum" and the erection of an "august sanctuary" in its place. In the paraphrase by Sanderus:

> "[...] after the Fathers had had a housing need there […], they bought themselves a house, which was certainly large and spacious, yet filthy and infamous as a public brothel, and it cost them grave expenses and (not surprisingly) the greatest difficulties to acquire it. As soon as the impure scum was thrown out (to the joy of all good people), out of piety they erected an august sanctuary. When the infect halls had been destroyed, they began to prepare the place for its destination as a religious domicile and sacred building [*sacra aedes*] in 1621, and digging out the foundations of a church, of which the first stone was laid by the Most Serene Infanta Isabella Clara Eugenia, and the 6th of April was selected and determined for this occasion by the Archduke Albert, who predicted it would be a clear day between rain and storm, the last opportunity for him to leave the palace, which prophesy of the pious Prince would prove to be true, as affirmed by the events. Laying the stone in the foundation (by the Princes, assisted by the court and innumerable masses of people) the solemn rite was blessed by the very distinguished and honourable Lucius Sanseverino, Archbishop of

[273] On rituals of consecration and dedication, see Delbeke and Schraven, "Foundation, Dedication and Consecration in Early Modern Europe. An Introduction"; Germonprez, "Foundation Rites in the Southern Netherlands: Constructing a Counterreformational Architecture"; Morel and Germonprez, "A Cornerstone in Architectural History: The Dedication of St. Peter's Abbey Church, Ghent, 1629"; Morel, "Glorious Temples or Babylonic Whores: The Architecture of Church Buildings in England 1603-1736 according to Consecration Sermons."
[274] Lanovius, *Chronicon Generale Ordinis Minimorum*, 480–481.
[275] Sanderus, "Coenobium Bruxellense Ordinis PP. Minimorum S. Francisci de Paula," 42.

Salerno, apostolic envoy (nuncio) who was afterwards created cardinal by pope Gregory XV."[276]

Sanderus than adds the inscription on the first stone (not found in Lanovius), which reads as follows:

Quae fuerant Veneris, nunc fiunt Virginis aedes

[Where used to be the shrine of Venus, will now be that of the Virgin][277]

It should be pointed out that an inscription on a foundation stone like this, though cited in Sanderus' chorography of the convent, was not visible on the façade of the building and therefore not primarily intended for human eyes, but rather for the allseeing eye of God.

Sanderus proceeds to cite another poem, which he must have noted down when he visited the convent, as it is not found in Lanovius either:

"Which inscription (of which I wrote this) may be explained by these verses from the monastery of the fathers:

Behold where lascivious Cupid shook his arrows

(arrows, through which body and soul perished in a loathsome way.)

Behold here now triumphs Jesus through his virginal love;

What used to belong to Venus, now only belongs to the Virgin.

Before the impious arrows gave death, now the pious arrows give life;

Arrows through which the body glows with a chaste love.

What before from unclean veins with a profusion of blood

became dirty through crime, is now made a milk white road.

Venus is now the Virgin Mary, Cupid has become Christ;

His bow will strike our veins

Happy bows, happy darts, happy

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[276] Ibid. "Verùm posteaquam in ea, cujus supra memini, domo aliquandiu Patres egissent, aream ipsi domui inferiorem, amplam certè ac spatiosam ast publico lustro foedam et infamem, gravibus expensis, summisque (quod facile est conjicere) difficultatibus sibi comparârunt; ut exactà impurissimâ faece (quod boni omnes gestiebant) augustum pietatis Sacrarium excitarent. Disjectis ergo foetidis fornicibus, locus Religioso domicilio et Sacrae Aedi anno 1621 coepit designari, effossisque Ecclesiae fundamentis, primarius in ea lapis à Serenissima Infanta D. Isabella Clara Eugenia missus est, delectâ statutâque ad id die VI mensis Aprilis ab Archiduce Alberto, qui in pluvia tempestate serenam eam diem fore, sibique postremam quâ posset Palatio egredi, pientissimus Princeps divino quodam afflatu praedicebat, ut eventus comprobavit.
Mittendum in fundamenta lapidem (assistentibus cum Aula sua et innumera populi multitudine, Principibus) solemni ritu benedixit Illustrissimus et Reverendissimus D. Lucius Sanseverinas, Archiepiscopus Salernitanus, per Belgium Nuntius Apostolicus ac postmodum S. R. E. Cardinalis à Gregorio XV creatus."

[277] Ibid.

You, whoever does not receive the flames from elsewhere.[278]

The last sentence is in all likelihood a reference to what was known (depending on one's perspective) as the Spanish or French disease: syphilis.

After citing this poem Sanderus takes up the description by Lanovius, proceeding to mention how the Spanish ambassador Alfonso de la Cueva and a large delegation of the city magistrates were congratulated with the "common good, of very religious men having removed this public shame from this bad place, and having consecrated this neighbourhood of scoundrels to the holy cult."[279]

The aggressive rhetoric of both texts clearly marks the rite of laying the first stone as a ritual in which all strata of society convene to witness the "exorcism" and intended transformation of a place that was polluted with sin. In the account by Sanderus, published fourty years after the event, material is added which interprets the event in terms of the invocation of the Virgin Mary. After all, the event celebrated the dedication of the church to Our Lady and St Stephen, yet the Virgin Mary was most suited to embody the transition of impurity to purity. During the Middle Ages, Marian churches were built on the sites of burnt down synagogues to put these places firmly under the protection of the patroness of the True Faith of Catholicism. Similarly, the Jesuit church in Ghent was founded in 1609 on the site of a house where a notorious heretic used to live.[280]

Rituals such as these, and the collective invocations of the Holy Virgin in Antwerp (1587) and Brussels (1625) may be seen as performances by means of which a societal change is constituted.[281] They also bear much in

[278] Ibid. Poem in the Minim convent: "En ubi lascivus vibrabat tela Cupido/(Tela, quibus corpus foedè animusque perit.)/En hic virgineo nunc Jesus amore triumphat;/Virginis est, Veneris quod fuit ante, solum./Inpia mortem olim, nunc dant pia spicula vitam;/Spicula queis casto corpus amore calet./Quae quondam ex spurcis profuso sanguine venis./Crimine sorduerat, lactea facta via est./Virgo Maria Venus nunc est, Christusque Cupido;/In nostros artus illius arcus eat./Felices arcus, Felicia spicula, felix/Tu quisquis flammas non aliunde capis."

[279] Ibid. "[…] communi bono congratulabantur, quod publicum dedecus ab infami eo loco viri Religiosissimi amolirentur, et probrosam aream divino cultui inaugurarent."

[280] In 1591 the Jesuit College took residence in the Hof van Veere, the former house of the radical Calvinist Jan van Hembyse (1513-1584). The first stone of the Jesuit church of St Livinus was laid in 1609. Germonprez, "Foundation Rites in the Southern Netherlands: Constructing a Counterreformational Architecture," 292.

[281] In Antwerp, where the citizens had rebelled so openly against the Spanish king and catholic faith, the entire city was consecrated to the Virgin Mary in a solemn ceremony that was organized by the Jesuits (i.e. their Marian sodality) in 1587. On this occasion the city's mascot, a statue of the legendary local hero Brabo crowning the gable of the city hall was replaced by a statue of the Immaculate Virgin, as a sign of triumph over Protestant heresy and local pride. In Brussels a similar ceremony was held in 1625 when the Infanta Isabella, in her capacity as Governess

common with the rituals of exorcism performed in Rome during the pontificate of Sixtus V, in which Egyptian obelisks were replaced and "Christianized", thus creating a "symbolical topography" and marking a triumph over paganism (while implicitly recognizing the value of paganism as precursor of Christianity).[282] In the case of the Brussels Minim foundation, the opposition of Venus to Mary lent the event a distinct rhetorical poignancy. What were the intended aims of this strategy? In order to better understand this, I will now take a closer look at the problem of prostitution in Brussels.

The problem of prostitution

During the Middle Ages, prostitution was widely seen as a necessary evil, which was tolerated in order to prevent worse, such as the rape of honorable women. According to Saint Thomas Aquinas, "prostitution in towns is like the sewer in a palace; take away the sewers and the palace becomes an impure and stinking place".[283] Therefore, city governments did not criminalize prostitution, though they usually tried to contain it within certain areas. However, as urbanization continued, concerned citizens would increasingly complain of the pernicious influences it had on their children, and of related problems such as drunkenness, violence, or theft.[284]

During the religious troubles in the Netherlands, the Calvinists closed brothels and banned adultery in every city they controlled.[285] After the Catholic reconquest in 1585, Protestants would continue to blame Catholics

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representing the King of Spain, placed an image of Maria Pacis (Our Lady of Peace) on the façade of the Broodhuis or Maison du Roy opposite the city hall, invoking the protection of the Virgin over the city and the country against plague, hunger and war. Yet, in the context of the resumed war with the Republic after the expiration of the Twelve Years Truce (1609-1621), this ceremony had a completely different set of meanings. In the play they staged for the occasion, the Jesuits presented Isabella as a new Ark of Covenant. See Annick Delfosse, *La Vierge « Protectrice du Païs-Bas ». Instrumentalisations politiques et stratégies identitaires dans les Pays-Bas espagnols* (Turnhout: Brepols, 2005), chap. 1.

[282] Michael W. Cole, "Perpetual Exorcism in Sistine Rome," in *The Idol in the Age of Art: Objects, Devotions and the Early Modern World*, ed. Michael W. Cole and Rebecca Zorach (Farnham: Ashgate, 2009), 57–76.

[283] Ptolemy of Lucca and Thomas Aquinas, *On the Government of Rulers (De Regimine Principum)*, ed. James M. Blythe (Philadelphia PA: University of Pennsylvania Press, 1997), (Opuscula XX), lib. iv, cap. XIV.

[284] Paul de Win, *De schandstraffen in het wereldlijk strafrecht in de Zuidelijke Nederlanden van de middeleeuwen tot de Franse tijd bestudeerd in europees perspectief* (Brussels: Paleis der Academiën, 1991), 140.

[285] Thijs, *Van geuzenstad tot katholiek bolwerk: maatschappelijke betekenis van de kerk in contrareformatorisch Antwerpen*, 136–139.

for the traditional policy of (limited) tolerance.[286] To counter this criticism the Brussels magistrate issued a series of ordinances aiming to get the prostitution under control, but what was exactly the problem? In 1589 it was proclaimed that: "all house owners, who have let their house to anyone who keeps house nastily and scandalously, with whores or otherwise, except in the usual places that have been traditionally from old times been known as such, will have to make [these prostitutes] move out at once or at latest within eight days […]".[287] This is clearly a traditional measure of containment; the prostitutes themselves are not persecuted. Fines are imposed on the house owners,[288] and more severe punishments are reserved for those who act as pimps or procuresses: at the first offence they will be put on the scaffold, the second time they will be whipped and banished from the city's territory. Rather than repression, the central concern was the prevention of seduction into impurity, and its facilitation.

In 1595 another resolution was proclaimed, this time directed at additional categories of people who are involved in the prostitution business.[289] In this bill the magistrate also emphasized that "impurity like adultery and fornication" are to be held responsible for the disasters that strike the country, a direct result of calling down the wrath of God over adultery. To take away the causes of this divine anger, the city government advised prayer and good works, while at the same time proclaiming new penalties for adultery. Very high fines were distributed to married men who frequent brothels at daytime, "under the guise of just drinking a pint of beer".[290] At the third offense they were to be put on the scaffold and banished. It should be noted that not prostitution *as such* was thought to invoke the fury of God, but adultery and fornication by married people, as well as the luring of honourable women into unchastity. Therefore, containment was the central objective of government policies.

As we will see, this containment policy was taken up very literally. In early modern cities, rich and poor did not live in separate quarters. Usually,

[286] Marinus, "De Contrareformatie te Antwerpen, (1585-1676): kerkelijk leven in een grootstad," 51–52, 72.
[287] "Het Groen Correctie-Boeck 1588-1597 (SAB Inv. XVIII)," n.d., f. 39recto–verso.
[288] The proceeds of which were to be divided equally among the lord, the city and the informer.
[289] F. Vanhemelryck, "De criminaliteit in de ammanie van Brussel van de late middeleeuwen tot het einde van het ancien regime (1404-1789)," *Verhandelingen van de Koninklijke Academie voor Wetenschappen, Letteren en Schone Kunsten van België. Klasse der Letteren* 43, no. 97 (1981): 157.
[290] Ibid.

the rich lived in straight, wide streets and the poor in narrow winding alleys.[291] This distinction can be seen clearly in the very detailed map of Brussels that was published by Martin de Tailly in 1640 (*fig*. 21). The straight street (Hoogstraat) with tall houses of well-to-do citizens contrasts sharply with the two side streets (Sweertstraat and Wayerstraat) where prostitution had traditionally been tolerated. The measures and penalties indicate that the government tolerated prostitution, as long as it remained within the boundaries of these bad streets. Yet these measures had little impact, and two years later (in 1597) the problem of adultery seemed to have only become worse, "each day inflaming the wrath of the Lord over this city even more".[292] In a new resolution by the Magistrate it is stated that:

> It is noted that the prostitutes living in the Bovendal quarter and in the Sweertstraat near the Hoogstraat within this city, are presenting themselves daily in large numbers in the latter street, showing and committing many inappropriate and indecent [acts], to the great disgrace and confusion of all people of honour, who pass through the aforementioned street, being a matter of very bad example and intolerable in such an open and straight street as is the aforementioned Hoogstraat, […][293]

Neighbours and passers-by complained about prostitutes soliciting, insulting and harassing honourable citizens. Fearing for the public image of their street and depreciation of their property, residents of the Hoogstraat forced the magistrate to take action once again. Thus, the lords decided to physically close off the two notorious alleys, expressly banning the prostitutes from the Hoogstraat. The newly constructed gates between these alleys and the Hoogstraat were opened and closed every morning and night by an officer.[294]

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[291] See Riitta Laitinen, *Cultural History of Early Modern European Streets* (Leiden; Boston: Brill, 2009).

[292] "Het Groen Correctie-Boeck 1588-1597 (SAB Inv. XVIII)," f. 508recto.

[293] Ibid., f. 507verso. "Alzoe men bevindt dat die lichte vrouwen woonende soe opt Bavendal als int Sweertstraetken neffens der Hoochstraate binnen deser stadt, hen daghelijckx opde selve strate in grooten getale zyn presenterende, thoonende ende bedryvende aldaer vele ongeschictheden ende onbetamelyckheden tot grooten schandale ende confusie van allen lieden van eeren, lancx den voirseide strate passerende, wesend een saeke van zeer quaden exempele ende nyet te tolereren in een alzulcken oepene rechte straete als is de voirseide hoochstraete, [...]"

[294] Mina Martens, *Histoire de Bruxelles* (Toulouse: Privat, 1976), 218; Henne and Wauters, *Histoire de la ville de Bruxelles*, 1845, 422; the officer, Jean Walschaert, was also active in the chamber of rhetoric Den Boeck. See Anne-Laure van Bruaene, *Om beters wille: rederijkerskamers en de stedelijke cultuur in de Zuidelijke Nederlanden (1400-1650)* (Amsterdam: Amsterdam University Press, 2008), 296, note 60.

A new start?

When on 6 April 1621 the Minim convent was solemnly founded at the site of a former brothel, this was an intervention of a very different nature. In a symbolically charged consecration rite, the Minim Friars, their benefactors, the Archdukes and the Magistrate, and foreign and ecclesiastical dignitaries (the Spanish ambassador de la Cueva, nuncio Sanseverino)[295] joined forces to make the convent foundation a statement of triumph over the evils that had taken place here. However, the real triumph still had to be earned. Therefore, the new inhabitants had to present themselves and their courtly patrons as antagonists of the whoremongers. This strategy was aimed particularly at the Magistrate, on which they heavily depended for authorisations, and at the court, for its donations. The perspective of the recommencement of the war after the expiration of the Twelve Years Truce in autumn 1621 must have made it all the more urgent to try to repel the wrath of God through a pious foundation such as this.

Shortly after the ceremony, the friars asked the magistrate to intervene in a dispute with a brewer's widow over the price of five little houses that still obstructed their building plans. They stress their noble intentions by saying that: "in order to even better effectuate their good plan […] they have chosen a very isolated place which has for a long time been very profane, […]".[296] The friars call to mind the laying of the first stone by the Archdukes and repeatedly refer to the "public benefit" of building a church "in a place that has been that profane".

The monks finally acquired the necessary property in 1622, and also received a large area of land for the convent garden from the Duke of Bournonville, who lived in the former Mansfelt palace on Wollendries, in the "good part" of the neighbourhood.[297] However, they were to be faced with another setback. The foundation ceremony had indeed turned out to be

[295] But in the absence of the new Archbishop Jacques Boonen (perhaps because he was not yet installed officially).
[296] ARAA, Eccl. Arch., 12121
[297] ARAA, Eccl. Arch., 12100, 20 September 1622: donation of land by the Duke of Bournonville (perhaps the "130 roeden landt" as mentioned in the convent chronicle by Lefebvre, "Chronique Du Couvent Des Minimes (KBR Ms. III 1338)," f. 4verso.) Sanderus, "Coenobium Bruxellense Ordinis PP. Minimorum S. Francisci de Paula," 49. On the Bournonvilles, see Marie de Villermont, *Grands seigneurs d'autrefois. Le duc et la duchesse de Bournonville et la cour de Bruxelles* (Brussels: Meester, 1904). Alexandre de Bournonville was the heroic governor of Valenciennes during the siege of 1656; another example of a military commander who patronized (and was interred in) the church of the Discalced Carmelites. See Bussers, "La famille de Bournonville et l'église des Carmes déchaussés à Bruxelles."

the last public appearance of the Archduke, who died 13 July 1621, as Sanderus (and also the nuncio)[298] did not fail to mention:

> "*Death, which knocks at the doors of all alike, be it the hovels of the poor or the towers of kings*[299], befell very cruelly on our matters, since that by all means best Prince and father (to whom we are devoted) was snatched away from the living on the 13th of July […], to the utmost grief of all, and indeed in this public grief the hands were withdrawn from the works, especially to the detriment of the roof, and not before the year 1624 were the works resumed, doubtlessly while our foundress, lady Hélène de Sermoise who had passed away, had legated means for that cause."[300]

From this time the work proceeded very quickly, and the convent building soon surpassed all others in height.[301] The building consisted of a massive block around a courtyard, sharply contrasting with the surrounding shacks (*fig*. 21). It would include a large refectory of a hundred feet in length, decorated with a cycle of stained glass windows by Abraham van Diepenbeek illustrating the life of St Francis of Paola.[302] Above this room

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[298] ASV, *Barberini Latini*, 6810, f. 91recto. De Vecchi, in a letter to Rome, 10 April 1621: "Il serenissimo Arciduca essendo passato bene della gotta questi giorni, è intervenuto sempre a I Divini officij, nella pnto settimana mag.e e martedi prossimo passato le loro AA. posero la prima pietra della chiesa, che nuovamente si [l]à da edificare in questa villa dai religiosi di S. Francesco di Paula." ("The most serene Archduke having been well with his gout over the last days, attended always the Divine Offices, […] and last Tuesday their Highnesses laid the first stone of the church, which is newly to be built up in this city by the religious of St Francis of Paola.")

[299] Horace *Odes*, 1.4.13-14

[300] Sanderus, "Coenobium Bruxellense Ordinis PP. Minimorum S. Francisci de Paula," 42. "At mors, quae aequo pulsat pede pauperum tabernas Regumque turres, importuna rebus nostris accidit, ipse quippe optimus Princeps, et Patrum (ut asservimus) apprime studiosus, ad XIII. Julii proximè sequentis (prout animus praesagierat) è vivis eripitur summon omnium luctu, adeoque in publico illo dolore manus ab opera amovenda fuit, cui praecipuum columen erat sublatum; nec ante annum 1624. manus operi denuò admota fuit, dum nimirum Illustrissima D. Helena Fundatrix ad eam causam bona sua moriens legâsset." Compare Lanovius, *Chronicon Generale Ordinis Minimorum*, 481. "Importune autem rebus nostri accidit, ut ipse optimus Princeps et nostrorum apprime studiosus, prout praesagierat animus, ad XIII. Mensis Julij proxime insequentis de medio tolleretur, in illo enim publico luctu destituendum opus fuit cui pracipuum columen erat subductum, nec ante annum 1624 repetitum fuit, postquam scilicet *Helena* Fundatrix ad eam rem bona sua moriens legavit."

[301] Sanderus, "Coenobium Bruxellense Ordinis PP. Minimorum S. Francisci de Paula," 42. "Resumptum itaque opus, brevi ad altitudinem assurrexit, ut alterum vix huic par coenobium inveniatur, supposita tamen (quam hac pace meditantur) templi structura." Compare Lanovius, *Chronicon Generale Ordinis Minimorum*, 481. "Denuo post haec resumptum opus brevi ad eam amplitudinem assurrexit et magnificentiam, ut in paucis par huic Coenobium inveniatur."

[302] Henne and Wauters, *Histoire de la ville de Bruxelles*, 1845, vol. 3; 420. Also, three tapestries from the convent are mentioned in Jean Le Mayeur, *La gloire Belgique, poème national en dix chants, suivis de remarques historiques sur tour ce qui fait connaître cette gloire, depuis l'origine de la nation jusqu'aujourd'hui* (Louvain: Vanlinthout et Vandenzande, 1830), 408. "Moise sauvé

was an equally large library. In 1630 the convent was ready to be inhabited, and on 15 January 1632 Archbishop Boonen consecrated the high altar of the church;[303] on 4 December 1633 the Provincial of the Flemish Minims, Balthasar d'Avila, consecrated the convent building.[304] The only element of their ambitious program which was not realized were the projected side chapels, to be sold to private families. We will now turn to the reasons for this.

Urban renewal

The Minims acquired much of the property in the vicinity of the convent, yet this was burdened with charges. Requesting amortisation, they pointed out the difficult market conditions for letting out these houses, since they were too remote, and the streets where they are situated were "too well known for having been formerly the centre of dissolute behaviour and the most glaring debauchery."[305] In case they would be forced to sell them, it was to be feared that,

> "[…] the neighbourhood will again be infected and the number of haunts for the wretched will only increase, as the buyers care very little to whom they let, provided they make a good profit. Instead the supplicants through religion and by attentiveness to keep away and even to eradicate as much as they can, these sorts of debauches, which tear apart the bosom of families, and disturb the public peace, will not fail to see after, even at the expense of their own temporal interest, the choice of well known and reputed tenants, even to the extent of watching over their behaviour."[306]

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des eaux, Josué combattant les Amalécites, l´adoration du veau d´or, servant de décoration dans l´église des Minimes de Bruxelles. Fabrique de Vanderborgt de cette ville."

[303] AAMB, *Acta episcopalia*, Boonen, f. 185recto. 15 January 1632: "Minim. Brux. [...] dedicatus Altari in Sapello Monasterii Minimorum in honorem Dominici Sepulchri, inclusis eides Reliquiis M.rus a Sanctus Theodorus, et Sancte Ursulae."

[304] Lefebvre, "Chronique du couvent des Minimes (KBR Ms. III 1338)," f. 3recto. "Het lichaem van S. Pia, en de reliquien van de H.H. Martelaeren Pius, en Alexander sijn solemnelijck in onse kercke ghestelt in het jaer 1653. Fol. 189verso. Wij hebben de selve ghehaelt met processie uijt de collegiale kercke van SS. Michael, en Gudula."

[305] ARAA, Eccl. Arch., 12140, f. 1verso: "Si on leur accorde l'amortissement persone ne poura imaginer qu'il leur soit possible de les louer a des negotians tels qu'ils puissent etre ; elles sont trop ecartées, et les rues trop connues pour avoir eté ci devant le centre du libertinage et de la debauche la plus criante,

[306] Ibid.: de façon qu'en cas qu'ils fussent obligés de les vendre il y auroit tout lieu, de craindre que ces cantons ne s'infectent de nouveau et n'augmentent le nombre des receptacle des malheureuses parce que tels acquereurs s'embarasseroit[ent fort] peu a qui les louer, pourvu d'en

The Minims also point out that "the majority [of the houses] will serve to cover their convent with insults from the tenants to which the supplicants would be subjected if other parties should gain possession."[307] In 1625 the Minims were granted amortisation of the houses by the States of Brabant in name of King Philip IV.[308] In the subsequent decades, they acquired a large part of the terrain opposite their convent, building twenty-nine small houses, "in place of taverns that used to serve as refuge to thieves and people of bad life, who gave scandal there and made use of the convenience to bother passers-by."[309] Slowly but steadily, the hotbeds of vice were bought out and replaced by honest tenants.[310]

Also, in order to enable people of quality to reach their church without having to traverse the ill-famed streets surrounding the convent, the monks wished to develop a new street connecting the main entrance of the church to the elegant Hoogstraat. They were granted permission to do so from the chapter of St Gudule in 1626, but lacked sufficient resources to build, and as nobody else was interested, the plan remained unrealized.[311]

Meanwhile, the excesses taking place in the neighbourhood continued. In a "bill considering arsonists, murderers and vagabonds" of 1626, it is stated that "it is forbidden for the officers of the Bailiff of Brabant and the Provost General, to exploit any Cabarets or Taverns or to dwell in the Bovendael quarter, at the penalty of being deprived of their position and salary."[312]Apparently these officers were involved in the illicit businesses that still thrived in the neighbourhood at that time.

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tirer bon interest, au lieu que les supplians par religion et par etat attentifs a eloigner et meme a extirper autant qu'il leur est possible, ces sortes de debauches, qui dechirent le sein des familles, et troublent le repos public, ne discontinueront de s'attacher, aux depens meme de leur interest temporel, au choix des locateurs connus et bien famés, etant meme a portée de veiller sur le comportement [des locataires]

[307] Ibid.: [...] a cause que la plupart sert à couvrir leur couvent des insultes des locataires auxquels ils seroient exposés si d'autres que les remontrans en avoient la propriété, [...]"

[308] Ibid., f. 2recto.

[309] Henne and Wauters, *Histoire de la ville de Bruxelles*, 1845, vol. 3; 423. "à la place de redoutes qui servoient de refuge à des voleurs et gens de mauvaise vie, qui y donnoient scandale et s'y ménageoient la facilité d'inquiéter les passants. Nous extrayons ce fait d'une requête par laquelle ils demandèrent, en 1754, l'amortissement de ces propriétés, en alléguent que tous leurs revenus ne montaient qu'à 1400 florins, et que si ces maisons passaient en d'autres mains, elles incommoderaient leur couvent."

[310] The area to the south of the convent was parcelled in 1642 when *le concierge de la cour* Laurentius de Bruyn sold an enormous terrain in forty parcels. Ibid., vol 3; 423.

[311] Lefebvre, "Chronique du couvent des Minimes (KBR Ms. III 1338)," f. 2recto.

[312] Antonius Anselmo, *Placcaeten ende ordonnantien vande Hertoghen van Brabant, Princen van dese Neder-Landen, Vol. 1* (Antwerp: Hendrick Aertssens, 1648), 465. "Placcaet, raeckende de Brandtstichters, Moordenaers en Vagabonden, Art. 14" (26 februari 1626)

In 1638 the Minim chapter made the resolution to start building side chapels to the church, for which the fundaments had already been laid.[313] The same resolution is reiterated in 1652, a result of the donation of a private chapel by the testament of the Marquess and Marchioness of St Martin, of which we will hear more below. However in 1655, through lack of alms for the new side chapels, everything that had been built was again demolished, in order to use the stones for something else.[314] The ambitious architectural project had more or less failed.[315]

The Minim friar Philibert Bressand eventually rebuilt the half-finished church from 1700-1715 on a central plan in a stern neo-classical style.[316] This church still exists as St Jan en Stefaan ter Minimen. Together with the convent its appearance is rendered in the print accompanying the second edition of Sanderus of 1727 (*fig*. 23). In the absence of detailed contemporary images or plans of the pre-1700 church, it is impossible to say anything about its appearance or plan, except that it had a nave and that side chapels were projected. In 1796, the French revolutionaries closed the church and convent.[317] The convent was later turned into a jail, and has been demolished in the nineteenth century during the construction of the Poelaertplein. Photos of the demolition show a very austere building with small windows (*fig*. 25-29).

[313] Lefebvre, "Chronique du couvent des Minimes (KBR Ms. III 1338)," f. 2verso. "Item in het jaer 1638 heeftmen gheresolveert in het capittel te bouwen op de fondamenten van onse nieuwe kercke, die omtrent 17 jaeren te voren gheweijdt waeren [1621], en daer volghens de oude teeckeninghe van beijde de kanten souden capellen in ghekomen hebben; maer dit is achterghebleven, onghetwijfelt bij ghebreck van gelt. Fol. 124.

[314] Ibid.: De selve resolutie is wederom ghenomen 1652, Fol. 177. en in het jaer 1655, om datter gheene aelmoessen en quaemen om voort te bouwen, is alles datter ghemetst was afghebroken om de careelen op een ander te ghebruijcken." According to Lefebvre, the stones were reused at the ceremony of laying the first stone of the new church in 1700.

[315] Other religious foundations often also took decades to be completed. See Krista De Jonge and Annemie De Vos, "Architectuur ten tijde van de aartshertogen: het hof achterna," in "*Bellissimi ingegni, grandissimo splendore*". *Religieuze architectuur in de Zuidelijke Nederlanden tijdens de 17de eeuw*, ed. Krista de Jonge, Annemie de Vos, and Joris Snaet (Leuven: Leuven University Press, 2000), 11–42.

[316] The first stone of the new church was laid on 8 November 1700 by Governor Maximilian Emmanuel of Bavaria. See Henne and Wauters, *Histoire de la ville de Bruxelles*, 1845, vol. 3; 420; Lefebvre, "Chronique du couvent des Minimes (KBR Ms. III 1338)"; Sanderus, "Coenobium Bruxellense Ordinis PP. Minimorum S. Francisci de Paula," 53.

[317] The convent was closed on 3 November 1796. See Henne and Wauters, *Histoire de la ville de Bruxelles*, 1845, vol. 3; 421.

Abstinence and conversion

Given traditional anti-clerical suspicions towards monks and their walk of life, the Minims had to carefully guard their public image. Yet from all monastic orders the Minims were arguably the most resilient to the risk of sexual sinning. As the consumption of meat was thought to induce carnal desires, the Minims with their vegan diet practised a "perpetual Lent" aimed to curb their passions. This was all the more important in the case of Brussels, where their convent was implanted in the most tempting of surroundings.

In this respect, the Brussels Minim convent resembled contemplative female convents, which were looked upon with great anxiety during the Counter-Reformation period and were subjected to increasingly strict observance of *clausura*. Recent studies have shown how cloistered nuns often engaged in intricate negotiating strategies with their (male) superiors, reinforcing (the image of) enclosure, countering criticism, and mustering support by means of (symbolic) architectural interventions such as raising walls and monitoring gates and grilles.[318] However, the aims of female claustration were often not so much to restrict contact with men per se, but rather to limit contact with family members in order to eliminate socio-economic distinctions among nuns.[319]

The Brussels Minims were faced with a different problem and took extensive architectural measures to minimize their exposure to their surroundings. When in 1628 their new convent on the notorious Bovendal street was nearly finished and ready to be inhabited, the Minims complained to the Infanta Isabella about their neighbours, asking her to intervene with the magistrate. The Infanta therefore requested the magistrate to "close off the Bovendal quarter by building a wall as long as should please the lords".[320] The joint request was granted and a wall seems to have been built along the length of the street (*fig*. 22), effectively completing the process of

[318] See for instance Helen Hills, *Invisible city: the architecture of devotion in seventeenth-century Neapolitan convents* (Oxford: Oxford University Press, 2004); Sarah Joan Moran, "Unconventual Women: Religion, Politics, and Image in the Court Beguinages of the Low Countries, 1585-1713" (Brown University, 2010).

[319] See Craig Harline, *The Burdens of Sister Margaret: Inside a Seventeenth-Century Convent*, 2nd ed. (New Haven CT: Yale University Press, 2000); Diefendorf, *From Penitence to Charity: Pious Women and the Catholic Reformation in Paris*.

[320] "Index Resolutien Tot 1630 (SAB, Inv. 410)," n.d., f. 25recto. "op het versoeck ende brief van Sijne hoogheijt ordonneert het magistraet ende op het beclagh van de PP. Minimen dat het Bovendal soude afgeloten worden met eenen muer soo lange als die heren soude gelieven. Res. 12 octobris 1628, den brief staet naer de resolutie, 28 septembris 1628."

containment (or even ghetto-formation) that had been started in 1597, when gates were installed between the Hoogstraat and two adjacent alleys. Just like the good citizens of the Hoogstraat, the monks wished to protect themselves from the lascivious goings-on in the street, and from the insults that went with it, while bolstering their public image. The next year, the Minims even obtained permission to dig a tunnel under the street to pass quietly to their land across the street where they would build a brewery (*fig*. 22-24).[321] The monks thus bypassed the confinement of their neighbours.[322]

These physical demarcations should be seen in the context of the monk's ascetism and the spiritual purposes they aimed to achieve. Through the performance of abstinence and corporal mortification, both male and female religious persons tried to attain a status of holiness, which would enable them to take a mediating position between heaven and earth. The prostitution at Bovendal was at once a great boon and the greatest threat to this aim of spiritual leadership. St Francis of Paola had shunned the company of women, and taught his disciples to "flee from them like serpents". He often said: "money and women draw to concupiscence, and burn the servants of God like nothing else"[323]

As role models, the Minims aspired to act as agents between society and God, an inherently two-way process of effectuating change in society (both the physical process of urban renewal and converting individual sinners) as well as pleading with God for forgiveness of sinners, through prayer and penitence. The asceticism they performed, and the pious support of it by the Magistrate and the court, acquired even more pertinence and purpose in response to the divine punishment of war. How closely the example of the monks' asceticism and the political agenda of the Brussels court were related may be illustrated by the following event.

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[321] "Index Resolutien Tot 1630 (SAB, Inv. 410)," n.d., f. 25verso. "permissie aen de minimen te wercken onder de straete. Res. 19 juli 1629." and Lefebvre, "Chronique du couvent des Minimes (KBR Ms. III 1338)," f. 2recto.

[322] Sanderus, "Coenobium Bruxellense Ordinis PP. Minimorum S. Francisci de Paula," 49. "quod viam subterraneam, qua è Conventu ad hortos ab altera plateae parte sitos iretur, fieri benevole permiserit; quod nuper viam, qua e plateae ad Templum itur, lapidibus sterni curaverit, quod denique probos hosce Religiosos vitae et victus austeritate omnibus aliis rigidiores, paterno semper affectu (utpote Civitatis filios) amplexus fuerit."

[323] Claude du Vivier, *Vie et miracles de Saint François de Paule, instituteur de l'ordre des pères Minimes, recueillie et composée par Le R.P. Claude du Vivier* (Douai: B. Bellère, 1622), 628.

On 24 May 1623, the Minims booked a great success. Upon hearing the sermons of the Minim friar Mathieu Martin during Lent, and as a result of a subsequent series of discussions with the monk, the Lutheran nobleman Rudolph Maximilian, Duke of Sachsen-Lauenburg (1596-1647) converted to Catholicism.[324] The young duke, who had served for several years as a colonel in mercenary armies of Catholics princes, publicly denounced his old faith on May 26 in the hands of the Papal nuncio Giovanni-Francesco Guidi di Bagno, witnessed by many courtiers including his comrades in arms Ambrogio Spinola,[325] Octavio Visconti,[326] and Petro de Medici,[327] and confirmed his resolution the next day by letter to the Pope.[328] Although Rudolph Maximilian was not a ruling Duke, as he and his brothers had renounced in a succession agreement of 1619 in favour of their older half-brother August, in the context of the outbreak of the Thirty Years War (1618-1648) and the current principle "*cuius regio, eius religio*" (whose realm, whose religion), contemporaries must have looked at his conversion with Argus eyes. In the Thirty Years War, Rudolph Maximilian would continue to fight in imperial service (on the side of the Catholic League) as "Generalfeldzugmeister" under Albrecht von Wallenstein.[329]

A year after the event, Martin published a book on the "felicitous and much desired" conversion, entitled *Triomphe de la Verité*, expounding his arguments in favour of the Catholic faith in the form of a dialogue of more than four hundred pages in which Christ as father instructs his child (*fig.*

[324] Sanderus, "Coenobium Bruxellense Ordinis PP. Minimorum S. Francisci de Paula," 45–46.
[325] Marquess, General of the Spanish army in the Netherlands.
[326] Count of Gamalerio, Grand Esquire of the Infanta Isabella. He died in 1632 and was buried in the Minim church.
[327] Colonel in the Spanish army.
[328] Ibid., 45. "attamen à decem ferme annis, quibus me Sacrae Majestatis Imperatoris mei causa tuendae per varior bellorum occursus adiunxi, placuit ei qui me segregavit ab utero matris meae infinitos misericordiae suae thesauros paulatim elargiri. Ex ipso enim Catholicorum Christi fidelium convictu, viso etiam Sanctae Ecclesiae optime constituto ordine coepi nonnihil anteactae vitae fastidij concipere; quousque tandem in hanc Serenissimae Hispaniarum Infantis aulam obsequia mea causae publicae praestiturus, adveniens, ita omnia pietatis et religionis plena conspexi, ut me terram pro Paradiso commutasse existimarem: inibi autem, praeter alia quae me plurimum commoverunt et confirmarunt, frequens interfui publicis concionibus, quae per quadragesimam in Ecclesia Patrum Ordinis Minimorum à R.P. Matheo Martin eiusdem Ordinis disertissimo tota hac Curia concurrente habebantur. Huius Patris ministerio erumpentibus saepe lacrymis tanta vi rapiebar à Domino misericordiam Patre ut amplius differre non possem, quin me ab haeresi ad sanem fidem convertem."
[329] http://www.30jaehrigerkrieg.de/sachsen-lauenburg-rudolf-maximilian-herzog-von-2/

30).[330] In the final and decisive chapters of the *Triomphe de la Verité*, Martin unequivocally argues that the "voluptuous life" and indulgence in carnal desires are the primary causes of heresy.[331] Quoting from a wide range of sources,[332] he reasons that "lust prevents a soul from turning to God, puts the faculties of the soul in disorder, both in practical as well as speculative actions, and leads to idolatry and heresy, to culminate in atheism."[333] This message is corroborated by crafty use of Biblical citations (from St Paul, and thus appealing to Protestants) such as "He who unites himself with a prostitute is one with her in body" – and consequently one in spirit, by agency of the carnal pleasure – "but whoever is united with the Lord is one with him in spirit" – by means of spiritual love (1 Corinthians 6:16).[334] This insistence that indulging in carnal desires leads to heresy, promoted by the Minims in their court sermons, must have been the main reason why the court was so interested in them: they promised to offer an effective strategy to counter the Reformation, and to appease God.[335]

The fervent preaching of the Minims against fleshly sins also led to them being put under close scrutiny. The Holy See wanted a group of Scottish Minims to establish a convent in the Netherlands to coordinate and prepare the Scottish mission. The Infanta however opposed this on account of the ill reputation of some of the Scots.[336] This is remarkable if we consider the strong support of the Archdukes to religious foundations of English

[330] Mathieu Martin, *Triomphe de la Vérité en l'heureuse et tant désirée conversion de monseigneur Rudolphe Maximilien, duc de Saxe, Angrie et Wesphalie* (Antwerp: P. et J. Beller, 1624).
[331] Ibid., 394–433. Part 3, Chapter 9: *Pourquoy l'on voit auiourd'huy si peu d'heretiques se convertir à Dieu, que la volupté en est la seule cause*. Chapter 10: *Du desordre qui provient de la vie voluptueuse es actions speculatives de l'entendement*. Chapter 11: *Comme l'Incontinence dispose l'ame à perdre la foy, et l'introduite à l'heresie*. Chapter 12 : *Comme cette vie luxurieuse et Epicurienne porte l'ame à l'Atheisme*. Chapter 13: *Comme il est difficile, et quasi impossible de convertir un heretique*.
[332] Martin quotes from a variety of sources, including classical works, Luther, and Calvin. His linking of voluptuousness and heresy derives mostly from St Jerome's Letter 133 to Ctesiphon, 1 Timothy 4, 2 Timothy 3, and 2 Peter 2.
[333] Ibid., Index.
[334] Ibid., 424.
[335] This Catholic reproach at the address of Calvinists was typical for France, whereas in Germany, Protestants ridiculed Catholics for having loose morals. Racaut, *Hatred in Print : Catholic Propaganda and Protestant Identity during the French Wars of Religion*, 131.
[336] Meester de Ravestein, *Correspondance du nonce Giovanni-Francesco Guidi di Bagno: (1621-1627)*, 242, 388–389, 404, 433, 448.

convents in their territories.[337] However, in the case of the Brussels foundation the stakes were high, and no mishaps could be permitted to happen. A violent struggle emerged from 1621 to 1624 between the French and the Scottish Minims over the control over the Flemish province. The French Minims at Brussels persecuted and imprisoned the Scots, and got away with this since they were, according to the nuncio, protected by the government because they enjoyed the favour of "certain devote ladies, friends of the Infanta".[338] Hélène de Sermoise must have been one of these ladies.

The nunciature also reported that Isabella had in 1629 chased a certain Minim father Dorothee from Brussels, which once again suggests that in spite of her great favour, Isabella implemented a policy of zero tolerance when monks failed to live up to their vows.[339] As we will see in the next section, the Minims could only applaud such an approach, for pressing reasons.

A radical approach: the funeral sermon for Claude du Vivier

The year 1629 was a catastrophic year for the South; 's-Hertogenbosch, one of the most important cities of Brabant was captured by the Dutch, and the public discontent about this misfortune led to a near uprising.[340] Clearly, these setbacks were to be attributed to the wrath of God. Therefore, on 2 December 1629 the Holy Sacrament was carried in procession to the Minim church by François de Rye, Archbishop of Caesarea[341], Grand Chaplain and Grand Almoner of the Infanta Isabella.[342] A solemn mass was sung in the presence of the Infanta and the entire nobility, and the Minim provincial and

[337] See Uddin, "William Trumbull: A Jacobean Diplomat at the Court of the Archdukes in Brussels, 1605/9-1625," 140–154.

[338] Meester de Ravestein, *Correspondance du nonce Giovanni-Francesco Guidi di Bagno: (1621-1627)*, 404. Brussels, 30 December 1623, Bagno to Propaganda Fide.

[339] Joseph Lefèvre, *Documents relatifs à la juridiction des nonces et internonces des Pays-Bas pendant le régime espagnol (1596-1706)* (Brussels: Palais des Académies, 1942), 120. Brussels, 6 February 1641, Stravius to the Counsellors of the Privy Council.

[340] Vermeir, *In staat van oorlog: Filips IV en de Zuidelijke Nederlanden, 1629-1648*, 11–42.

[341] François de Rye, doyen de Besançon (1566-1637) first almoner of the Archdukes, grand chaplain of Isabella.

[342] Lefebvre, "Chronique du couvent des Minimes (KBR Ms. III 1338)," f. 2recto. referring to Philippe de Mesemacre, provincial de Belgique (1666) (+1680) See Philippe de Mesemacre and Nicolas de Rache, *R.P. Philippi de Mesemacre Ordinis Minimorum in Belgio Prouincialis Oratiuncula, habita ad Reuerendissimum Patrem Rmum. P. Balthasarem d'Avila ejusdem Ordinis ex-Generalem jubilem ab ingressu Religionis annum agentem & celebrantem Insulis die XVIII. Julij*, 1666.

court preacher Claude du Vivier commenced Advent.[343] This moment in the liturgical year had an eschatological overtone, as it purported commemorating the first coming of Christ at Christmas while reminding of His second coming.

When Claude du Vivier died the next year, corrector (prior) Charles Gambart[344] held a funeral oration addressed to the Infanta Isabella, in which the defunct monk was celebrated as the new Elijah (*fig*. 31).[345] By comparing him to the Old-Testament prophet, father Du Vivier's frequent admonitions against concupiscent vices were framed once more in an eschatological context, as Malachi 4:5 states "Behold, I will send you Elijah the prophet before the great and terrible day of the Lord comes." The dedication to the Infanta recalls that "the voice of the LORD strikes with flashes of lightning [Psalm 29:7], a voice that has manifested his generous activity among the flames of the fire of concupiscence, dismissing and dispelling the hearts of prophane and illicit loves […]."[346] Du Vivier is praised for his chastity and his lifelong virginity and compared to an angel.[347] A recurrent theme throughout the oration is the phrase "*A facie peccati collectus est justus*: the just has been taken from the face of sin and malice, namely impurity."[348] The

[343] In 1629 Claude du Vivier was in trouble. The Vatican had demanded him to repeal his controversial opinion on the lineage of St Francis of Paola as published in his books on the life of the saint (1609, 1622, and in spite of prohibitions 1626). Upon refusing this he was summoned to Rome (1627), but he excused himself on account of his age. When he was subsequently elected for the general chapter meeting in Barcelona (1629), Rome forbade him to go (Congregation of Regulars). I would like to thank Dries Raeymaekers for bringing this to my attention. See Lucienne van Meerbeeck, *Correspondance du nonce Fabio de Lagonissa, Archevêque de Conza (1627-1634)* (Brussels: Institut Historique Belge de Rome, 1966), 124–125, 144–145.

[344] F.C.G.M. = frater Carolus Gambart minimus. http://minimospedia.wikispaces.com/DU+VIVIER,+Claude

[345] Gambart, *Chariot mystique du nouveau Elie, touchant la vie exemplaire, & glorieuse mort du Reverend Pere Du Vivier, Provincial des Peres Minimes des Païs-Bas, & Basse Alemaigne, & Predicateur Ordinaire de Leurs Altesses Serenissimes. Sur le modele du grand Prophet*.

[346] Ibid., dedication: "[...] *vox Domini intercidentis flammam ignis*, voix qui à faict paroistre son activité genereuse parmy les flammes du feu de la concupiscence escartant, & dissipant des coeurs les amours prophanes, & illicittes pour y plaçer l'amour de Dieu, & le desir des choses celestes, verité aussy claire que le jour, averée par tous ceux de vostre Court tant Ecclesiastiques que Seculiers qui ont eu le bien de l'entendre prescher avec admiration, & edification."

[347] Ibid., 27–28. "La chasteté est une vertu qui reprime les voluptés impures de la chair : Cest une vertu du Ciel, & et les Anges en terre, & dans ce Royaume de mortalité, plante l'Image & les Tiltres de l'immortalité, n'estimerez vous pas un Ange, celuy qui tout le temps de sa vie a gardé sa premiere pureté baptismalle?"

[348] Ibid., 50–51. "Le juste a esté enlevé de devant la face du peché & de la malice ; a sçavoir de l'impureté, car ces 4. vertus susdites [chastity, modesty, temperance, prudence] combattent directement contre ce vice detestable, & infernal, lequel pour le present semble paroistre a face decouverte sans honte & sans vergogne ; vice miserable, lequel regne en ce siecle si prodigieusement qu'il semble ne vouloir faire qu'un Element de feu du reste de l'univers :

oration contains numerous references to Du Vivier's ferocious preaching against impurity: "a miserable sin that thrives at present so openly and shamelessly; which reigns in this age so prodigiously […] that Asmodeus (demon of Lust) triumphs today, Messieurs:"

> […] you have been ear-witnesses having heard several times in his learned and devout preaching, how he abhorred that vice of impurity, having admonished you that your youth took the wide road of Hell, and that most of your domestic servants, Messieurs, are losing themselves in these infamous places that environ our Religious House. It is in this place of perdition where so many souls shipwreck, charging themselves with vices and infamy, which they will dump within your noble and honourable families for receiving in brief the sentence and punishment of the divine justice if you do not put order in there. For how may a house of grace and heavenly benediction prosper, if it has such miserable domestics! It is in this place forever detestable, that one hears a thousand blasphemies and denials of God, that drunkenness thrives, that treacheries and thefts are practised, that murders are custom.[349]

Thus Gambart makes clear to his noble public how the vices of their subjects would taint their own God-given superiority.[350] If the early modern state was regarded as a monarch's household, this text may be an example of how the Habsburg concept of "Aula sacra" applies equally to the scale of noble

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Asmodée triomphe aujourdhuy, Messieurs, & monstre ces Chariots couverts de l'Auriers de la *Chasteté*, de la *Temperance*, & de la *Modestie*, ou estes vous Reverend Pere pour y mettre remede par vostre parolle vive & efficace?"

[349] Ibid., 57–58. "[...], pour les parolles, vous en estes tesmoigns auriculaires ayans entendus plusieurs fois en ses doctes & devottes predications, comment il aborroit ce vice d'impureté, vous ayant remonstré que toute vostre jeunesse prenoit le grand chemin de l'Enfer, & que la plus part de vos Serviteurs domestiques, Messieurs, se perdoient en ces lieux infames qui avoisinnent nostre Maison Religieuse. C'est en ce lieu de perdition que tant d'Ames font naufrage, lesquelles se chargeans de vices & d'infamie, les vont d'eschargers dedans vos nobles & honorables familles pour en recevoir en bref de la Divine justice la peine & la punition si vous n'y mettes ordre. Car comme quoy peut prosperer une maison de grace & benediction du Ciel, laquelle à de tels & si malheureuses domestiques ! C'est en ce lieu a jamais detestable, que s'entendent mille blasphemes & renyemens de Dieu, ou les yvroigneries n'en bougent, les trahysons, & volleries s'y pratiquent, les meurtres s'y font d'ordinaire."

[350] Or in the case of the House of Arenberg: sovereignty. See Mirella Marini, "Interlocking Dynasties: Netwerking En Huwelijkspolitiek van de Familie Arenberg Tijdens de Opstand," in *Het verdeelde huis: de Nederlandse adel tussen Opstand en reconciliatie*, ed. Luc Duerloo and Liesbeth De Frenne (Maastricht: Shaker Publishing, 2011), 63; Luc Duerloo, "La Maison d'Arenberg dans les Pays-Bas Habsbourgeois," in *La Maison d'Arenberg en Wallonie, à Bruxelles et au G.-D. de Luxembourg depuis le XIVe siècle: contribution à l'histoire d'une famille princière*, ed. Jean-Marie Duvosquel and Denis Morsa (Enghien: Fondation d'Arenberg, 2011), 74.

households.[351] Gambart continues his tirade, now personally addressing the Infanta:

> For extreme diseases, extreme remedies are appropriate, says *Hippocrates*. Only the singular power and authority of command of your Most Serene Highness may bring remedy, by ordering if it pleases her, her officers to chase beyond the borders of her devout city of Brussels those landfills, such forsaken girls who are murderesses of bodies and souls, to the great scandal of good people, and to the detriment of our Religious House, which blushes of shame at the sight of such a neighbourhood. I have received, Madam, this commission from your most humble monk and regular preacher of Your Highness, Reverend Father Du Vivier, shortly before his death, who ordered me to make the prosecution swift and accurate, which will stop, Madam, a torrent of misfortune that menaces your blessed City, and will make her enter in grace with God to receive upon her, like upon all your Catholic Provinces, the heavenly blessings.[352]

The text shows to what extent the Minim friars (rhetorically) relied on the court in their efforts of sacralising society. While claiming to "serve the common good" towards the city magistrate, they now presented themselves as victims rather than charitable missionaries. Their complaints to the Infanta about their vicious surroundings might primarily be a rhetorical instrument to showcase their own exemplary virtue, standing firm in the face of seduction, to foster goodwill in courtly circles. And though a text like this funeral oration should surely not be taken at face value, it is worth noting the shift in focus when the monks argue that the prostitutes themselves should be chased away (instead of their pimps – and rather than licentious monks).

[351] Cf. Norbert Elias, *The Court Society* (Oxford: Blackwell, 1983).

[352] Gambart, *Chariot mystique du nouveau Elie*, f. 58–59. "Au grandes maladies, il y faut apporter les grands remedes, *dit Hypocrate*. Il ny à que la seule puissance & Auctorité du commandement de vostre A.S. qui y puisse apporter remede commandant s'il luy plaist a ses Officiers de chasser hors les confins de sa devotte Ville de Bruxelles ces voyriés, de telles filles abandonnées qui sont meurtrieres des corps & des Ames au grand scandale de Gens de bien, & au prejudice de nostre Maison Religieuse laquelle rougit de honte a l'aspect d'un tel voisinage. Iay reçue, Madame, cette commission de vostre tres-humble Religieux & Predicateur ordinaire de vostre A. le Reverend Pere du *Vivier*, peu de temps avant sa mort qui m'a commandé d'en faire la poursuite prompte & exacte, ce sera empecher, Madame, un torrent de malheur qui menace vostre benitte Ville, & la faire entrer en grace avec Dieu pour recevoir sur icelles, comme sur toutes vos Catholiques Provinces, les benedictions celestes."

Meanwhile, the need for Christian charity also spurred initiatives to help prostitutes leave their trade behind.[353] In Brussels a house of correction for repentant sinners, the penitents of Mary Magdalene or Madelonnette sisters in the convent of Bethanie had existed since 1506.[354] As was often the case, such institutions also accepted women who were in trouble for other reasons, and turned into regular convents over time.[355] In 1647 the chapel of the Holy Cross, a new reformatory for prostitutes was founded by "fille dévote" Anne de Greve (+1692), member of the third order of St Dominic, and the prior of the Dominican convent Ambrosius Druwé (+1665).[356] The Minims do not seem to have been involved in such initiatives. But the Minims did not primarily intend to reform prostitutes, instead, they aimed at converting their potential clients.[357]

So far, it may be concluded that the Minims held an ambiguous position playing alternatively active or passive roles, depending on the situation in which they found themselves and whom they had to deal with. Their sermons against adultery met with acclaim as they promised to counter heresy and appease God. Supported by French exiles like Montgaillard and Sermoise, and capitalizing on the concerns of the citizens and the court over the wrath of God, they managed to get a foothold in Brussels. The awkward place of their convent proved to be both a curse and a blessing; extensive measures had to be taken to sanitize their neighbourhood, while protecting

[353] For prostitution in seventeenth century Spain, see Mary E. Perry, "Magdalens and Jezebels in Counter-Reformation Spain," in *Culture and Control in Counter-Reformation Spain*, ed. Anne J Cruz and Mary E. Perry (Minneapolis; Oxford: University of Minnesota Press, 1992), 124–44.

[354] Compare Pamela Jones' study of Guercino's *Penitent Magdalene* for the Augustinian convent of S. Maria Maddalena delle convertite (for reformed prostitutes) in Rome. Jones, *Altarpieces and Their Viewers in the Churches of Rome from Caravaggio to Guido Reni*, chap. 4.

[355] Auguste Imbert and Benjamin-Louis Bellet, *Tablettes bruxelloises ou usages, moeurs et coutumes de Bruxelles* (Brussels: Galaud, 1828), 123–125; Henne and Wauters, *Histoire de la ville de Bruxelles*, 1845, vol. 3; 138–140; Jacques van Wijnendaele, "Un couvent pour prostituées repenties, rue du Fripiers à Bruxelles," *La revue d'histoire de Bruxelles*, n.d., http://www.jacquesvanwijnendaele.be; Paulette Pieyns-Rigo, "Penitentes de Sainte-Marie-Madeleine," in *Monasticon belge IV, Brabant, Vol. 5* (Liège, 1971), 1187–1200.

[356] Théodore Augustin Mann, *Abrégé de l'histoire ecclésiastique, civile et naturelle de la ville de Bruxelles, et de ses environs: avec la description de ce qui s'y trouve de plus remarquable* (Brussels: Lemaire, 1785), 176; see also Franciscus B. Moulaert, *Levenschets van Fr. Ambrosius Druwé* (Leuven: Karel Peeters, 1864), 24–25; Charles Pergameni, *Les archives historiques de la ville de Bruxelles: notices et inventaires* (B: Wauthoz-Legrand, 1943), 167, 169. The initiative was supported by Archbishop Boonen, and Hendrik Calenus, dean and vicar-general. Lucien Ceyssens, "Boonen, Jacobus," *Nationaal Biografisch Woordenboek* II (1966): 79.

[357] According to the Tuscan traveller Roberto Pucci who visited Brussels in 1657, prostitutes were no longer tolerated and severely punished. This account may however be based on second hand information. Mario Battistini, "Voyageurs Toscans En Flandre, Pendant le XVIIe Siècle," *De gulden passer* 13, no. 1 (1935): 120.

themselves from it, physically and symbolically, by means of walls and tunnels. Lack of money (and a salable offer) hindered the realization of the projected chapels. Yet noble patrons continued to flock to the church, especially in times of (military) misfortune.

The cults at the convent

Sanderus begins his description of the Minim convent as follows: "Among those monasteries, that flourish out of love of religion and piety, and outstanding public services, should be considered especially that of Saint Francis of Paola […]"[358] The next few paragraphs will discuss the most important and most popular cults promoted at the convent, to arrive at a better understanding of their function in the context of moral change. These are the cults of St Francis of Paola, the Holy Guardian Angel, and Our Lady of Loreto. Of course there were more cults at the church (most of which mentioned previously), but they seem mainly associated to private chapels where they primarily served the individual devotional purposes of their patrons, whereas the cults described here had a wider societal resonance within the Minim's agenda of change.

The cult of St Francis of Paola

The signature cult introduced by the Minims in the Netherlands (where it was previously unknown) was that of their order's founder St Francis of Paola.[359] The veneration of the saint was promoted by the Minims, and especially through father Claude du Vivier and his writings, as remedy for a wide array of ailments. It was especially known to be effective for married couples failing to produce offspring.[360] As mentioned previously, the chapel

[358] Sanderus, "Coenobium Bruxellense Ordinis PP. Minimorum S. Francisci de Paula," 40. "Inter ea quae religionis ac pietatis studio, publicisque praestandis obsequiis florentia nunc Bruxellis extant Caenobia, videre est splendidum illud augustumque, iam pridem aedificare caeptum, Sancti Francisci de Paula."

[359] Ibid., 41. "Inter haec de condendo quandoque sub titulo S.P. Francisci de Paula Sacello pactus est Vir Clarissimo et R.P. Julianos le Goix, Sacerdos et Consiliarius Parisinus morum et vitae integritate ac doctrinam spectatissimus, et praefati Ordinis Tertiarius : quod quidem Sacellum singulis jam quibusque sextis feriis magna magnatum et populi devotione frequentatur, ubi Sanctissimi hujus Patriarchae meritis et intercessione fisi, in necessitatibus suis miraculose saepissime exaudiuntur, et coelestia consequuntur auxilia fideles : mulieres speciatim, quae plures in statu conjugali annos absque ullo foetu versatae, foecunditatis gratiam à Deo implorant et impetrant."

[360] Vivier, *Vie et miracles de Saint François de Paule*, 533.

of the saint had been founded by Julien le Goix at an early stage, and by the time Sanderus writes (1662) many paintings and votive gifts bore witness to the effectiveness of the cult. According to the art guide of the eighteenth century painter Mensaert of 1763 the church possessed a painting of St Francis of Paola by Jan Lievens (1609-1674).[361]

Two miracles are mentioned by Sanderus as particularly famous. Count John of Nassau, who had changed from Lutheran to Catholic in 1613, and his wife Ernestine, Princess of Ligne, had already had four daughters (two of which had died) and invoked St Francis of Paola hoping to be blessed with a male heir.[362] The couple probably attended the celebration of the feast of St Francis of Paola on 2 April 1626, when a sung mass with sermon was held in the Minim church in the presence of the Infanta Isabella.[363] Nine months later, in 1627 they received a boy,[364] and in thanksgiving they founded the Minim convent of Louvain.[365] Needless to say, tales of such miracles spread rapidly in courtly circles and reverberated for decades in family networks.

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[361] Guillaume Pierre Mensaert, *Le peintre amateur et curieux, ou description générale des tableaux des plus habiles maîtres, qui font l'ornement des églises, convents ... & cabinets particuliers dans l'étendue des Pays-Bas Autrichiens* (Brussels: P. de Bast, 1763), 108. "Le tableau qui représente le martyre de Saint Etienne, est peint par *Jean van Orlay*, ainsi que celui de la Confrérie de l'Ange Gardien ; celui de Saint François de Paule, est peint par *Jean Livens*. Dans la Chapelle de Saint François de Sales ; ce Saint est peint sur l'Autel dans un tableau par *Erasme Quilin*." On Jan Lievens, who lived and worked in Antwerp from 1635 to 1644, see Hans Schneider, *Jan Lievens: sein Leben und seine Werke*, 2nd ed. (Amsterdam: Israel, 1973).

[362] Sanderus, "Coenobium Bruxellense Ordinis PP. Minimorum S. Francisci de Paula," 41. "Celeberrima sunt quae inter tot miracula recensentur, duo : alterum Exellentissimi Domini Comitis Joannis Nassovii, ejusque Exellentissimae Dominae Conjugis Ernestinae ex Principibus de Ligne votum ; is siquidem pientissimus Comes, è Lutherana haeresi ad fidem et Ecclesiam Catholicam conversus, cum dominia bonaque sua ad haereticos (è quibus oriundus erat) defectu prolis masculae revolvenda videret, agente R. Adm. Patre Claudio du Vivier, (de quo mox) prolis masculae gratiam, adhibito S. P. Francisco de Paula patrono et intercessore, repetitis precibus una cum Exellentissima conjuge à Deo efflagitabat ; sese (positam gratiae petitae impetratione) ad P.P. Minimorum Conventum loco commodo fundandum obligantes : audivit et exaudivit non minus justam, quam piam tantorum Magnatum supplicationem Deus, ita ut nono post mense masculam prolem praeclarissimis naturae gratiaque donis conspicuam Illustrissima Domina Comitissa peperit ; ea est Illustrissimus et Excellentissimus Dominus Franciscus Joannes Desiderius modo Princeps Nassovius, Regius Aurei Velleris Eques, armatae Germanorum Cohortis Colonellus etc. Parentes verbo votoque steterunt, et Lovanii […] conventum fundavere."

[363] Meester de Ravestein, *Correspondance du nonce Giovanni-Francesco Guidi di Bagno: (1621-1627)*, 727. 1527, Brussels, 4 April 1626, Bagno to Francesco Barberini.

[364] The child was named after St Francis of Paola, Johan Frans Desideratus of Nassau (1627-1699), and became knight in the order of the Golden Fleece and colonel in the German army.

[365] Founded in 1639. See Antonius Sanderus, *Le Grand Theatre Sacré du duché de Brabant, contenant la description generale & historique de l'église metropolitaine de Malines & toutes les autres églises cathedrales ... & autres fondations religieuses, qui se trouvent dans l'archevêché de Maline*, ed. Jacques Le Roy (The Hague: Christiaan van Lom, 1729), 129–130.

Around 1650 another, related miracle occurred when, against all odds, more than twenty years after her first marriage that remained without progeny,[366] the noble lady Albertine Marie de La Baume (related through her mother and her late husband to the Nassau-De Ligne couple) had a child from her second husband,[367] Charles François de La Baume, marquis de Saint-Martin-le-Châtel (1611-1688).[368] Although the child died in 1651, sixteen months after its birth,[369] the Marquis and his wife decide to found a family chapel in the church by testament in 1652 (which was effectuated upon her death in 1663).[370] The ramifications of these events will become clear in what follows.

The confraternity of the Holy Guardian Angel

The monks also propagated the cult of the Holy Guardian Angel, recourse against the temptation of (fleshly) sins. The moral substance of this devotion may be illustrated by a painting by Jan Steen depicting the biblical story of Sarah and Tobias (*fig*. 32).[371] These newlyweds were plagued by the demon of lust, who threatened to kill Tobias on their wedding night, just as he had done to Sarah's seven previous bridegrooms. When Tobias promised to God that he would love Sarah in pious sincerity, not just out of lust, the archangel Raphael killed the demon. This and other Biblical (Old Testament) stories, e.g. Lot and his daughters being led away from burning Sodom, supported the conviction that angels helped potential sinners to keep on the right track, while the New Testament offered points of reference for the idea that little children in particular enjoyed angelic protection.

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[366] Albertine Marie de la Baume had first been married in 1625 to Ernst Christoph of Ostfriesland, Count of Rietberg (±1602-1640).

[367] They married on 29 November 1642.

[368] Sanderus, "Coenobium Bruxellense Ordinis PP. Minimorum S. Francisci de Paula," 41. "Alterum miraculum accidit Exellentissimae et Illustrissimae D. Albertae Mariae à Bauma Marchionissiae Sancti Martini, quae cum viginti omnino annos secondo viro maritata, nullam editam prole, exegissit, ad divinam opem confugit, patronum S.P. Franciscum Paulanum adhibuit, gratiam nihil in fide haesitans postulavit et obtinuit. Gratiarum (quas plurimi alii impetrarunt) mentionem, ne prolixus sim, praetermitto ; fidem illarum publicam faciunt appensa ibidem anathemata et picturae."

[369] François Lambert André de la Baume. See Sanderus, *Le Grand Theatre Sacré du duché de Brabant*, 275.

[370] ARAA, Eccl. Arch., 12085, extract of 18 February 1663 from testament Marquis en Marchioness de St.-Martin, 16 June 1652 (donation of 16,000 florins).

[371] This painting, reassembled from two separated halves, is presently in the collection of museum Bredius, The Hague.

On 3 October 1635 a confraternity was founded in order to engage laypeople in this devotion.[372] The devotion soon spread to other Minim convents across the country, and in 1636 Pope Urban VIII confirms the confraternity with a bull and indulgences, and a booklet with rules and prayers is published by the printer of the court (*fig*. 33).[373] This publication contains a morning prayer to the Holy Guardian Angel, thanking him for letting the supplicant: "[…] escape from the traps, laid for me by the devil; pull me out of the occasion of sin, and do not permit that I shall anger my God today, but that under your protection neither the Devil, nor the World, nor the Flesh obtain any power over me […]."[374] In the evening prayer the angel is asked to "[…] guard for me while I sleep, turn from my spirit all the temptations of the night, and the impure fantasies, free me from the malice of the ghost of darkness […]"[375]

In 1645 two chapels are constructed "in the wall against the church, where formerly also a chapel of Our Lady had been."[376] One is dedicated to St Francis of Paola, the other to the Holy Guardian Angel. We know little of the artworks in the pre-1700 version of the church, let alone at the time Sanderus published his chorography (1662).[377] Mensaert, who writes a hundred years later, mentions a painting in the church by Gaspar de Crayer (1584-1669) of the Holy Guardian Angel guiding "a young Count of

[372] AAMB, *Archiepicopalia Mechliniensia*, reg. 11, fol. 153recto-verso.

[373] Lefebvre, "Chronique du couvent des Minimes (KBR Ms. III 1338)," f. 3recto; see also ARAA, Eccl. Arch., 12174: *Reghels, ende aflaeten van het Broederschap van den H. Enghel Bewaerder, op-gherecht in de kercken der PP. Minimen in Nederlandt* (Brussels: P. de Bast, 1636).

[374] Ibid., 21–22. "[…] en de stricken ontgaen, die my gheleyt worden van den duyvel: treckt my uyt de gelegentheydt van de sonde, ende en laet niet toe dat ick desen dagh mynen Godt vergrammen: maer dat onder uwe bescherminghe nogh den Duyvel, noch de Weirelt, noch het Vleesch eenigh vermoghen over my kryghen [...]"

[375] Ibid., 22. "waeckt voor my terwylen dat ick slape, keert van mynen geest alle de bekoringhe van den nacht, en de onsuyvere inbeeldinghen, bevrydt my van de boosheydt van den gheest der duysternissen [...]"

[376] Lefebvre, "Chronique du couvent des Minimes (KBR Ms. III 1338)," f. 3recto. "sijn de capellen van O.H. Vaeder, en van den H. Enghel Bewaerder ghemaeckt in den pandt teghen den muer van onse oude kercke (waer langhs men daer inquam) sijnde van te voren daer oock een capelleken van Onse Lieve Vrouwe." In 1646 it is decided to perform the litany of the Angels on Sundays instead of the prescribed tuesdays: "De litanie van de H. Enghelen, die wij alle dijnsdaeghen plochten te singhen wort in het jaer 1646 ghestelt te singhen op de sondaeghen, om datter dan meer volck quam. Dit gheschiede ter oorsaecke van het Broederschap van den H. Enghel Bewaerder, dat in onse kercke opgherecht was van het jaer 1636."

[377] Two altarpieces by Jean van Orley (1665-1735) presently in the church probably date from the eighteenth century.

Enghien and his sister".[378] This description corresponds rather closely to a painting by Gaspar de Crayer, presently in the City Hall of Leuven (*fig*. 34, 35).[379] It depicts the Guardian Angel leading two children towards Christ who appears in the clouds. A third richly dressed child stands to the left, holding a crucifix with a rosary and a book. Behind his back emerges a demon from the dark.

But who was the Count of Enghien, a county that had been elevated to a duchy-peerage in 1566, shortly before the title became extinct?[380] From his birth in 1621 until his father's death in 1646 the title Duke of Enghien was held by Louis II de Bourbon, Prince of Condé, also known as "le Grand Condé". Condé stayed in the Netherlands from 1652 to 1659 fighting, as we have seen, for the Spanish King. His son Henri Jules de Bourbon was born in 1643, and held the title from 1646 when his father became Prince. He was brought up in Brussels from the age of nine to sixteen.[381] Two other children were born in this period, both of whom died young: Louis (1652-1653) and a girl of which the name is not known (1657-1660).[382] Could the children depicted in De Crayer's altarpiece be Henri Jules and his two siblings? The age of the children corresponds to the approximate dating of the painting (1659), if we take into account the possibility that one or two of the depicted children are no longer alive. It is very well conceivable that the young prince Henri Jules (and/or his father) was a member of the confraternity of the Holy Guardian Angel, and/or that Condé upon leaving the Netherlands as a result of the Treaty of the Pyrenees in 1659 would donate such a painting to the

[378] Mensaert, *Le peintre amateur et curieux*, 108. "Dans leur Chapitre, on voit sur l'Autel, la copie de ce fameux Crucifix, peint par *Giotto*, qui coûta la vie à son modele, lorsque ce Peintre peignit ce tableau. Vis-à-vis de cet Autel, on voit un Ange Gardien, qui conduit le jeune Comte d'Enguien et sa soeur par la main. Il est peint par *G. De Crayer*."

[379] KIK-IRPA object number 114560. Hans Vlieghe, *Gaspar de Crayer, sa vie et ses oeuvres* (Brussels: Arcade, 1972), 243 (A230), fig. 217. The painting may have ended up in Leuven after the French Revolution. In the present Minim church a somewhat similar painting is conserved, showing only one child, signed Jan Cossiers and dated 1661 (KIK-IRPA object number 20014348). Both paintings seem to be modeled after the famous *Guardian Angel* by Pietro da Cortona, donated by the artist to Pope Alexander VII in 1656 upon receiving knighthood. See Jörg Martin Merz, *Pietro da Cortona: der Aufstieg zum führenden Maler im barocken Rom* (Tübingen: Wasmuth, 1991).

[380] The title was first conferred on Louis, Duke of Enghien (1530-1569). At his death the title became extinct, yet from 1569 to 1689 it was held by eldest son of the Prince of Condé.

[381] See Henri Chérot, *Le fils du Grand Condé: Henry Jules de Bourbon, duc d'Enghien: son éducation en France et en Belgique* (Brussels: Vromant, 1894).

[382] http://fr.wikipedia.org/wiki/Louis_II_de_Bourbon-Condé

French Minims in Brussels, for the salvation of his dead children that he had to leave behind.[383]

The Santa Casa of Loreto in Brussels

From shortly after its foundation, the Brussels Minim convent hosted a cult of Our Lady of Loreto.[384] A Loreto-chapel or hermitage was founded in 1623 and gained its most distinctive features only in 1659. In what follows, I will examine the function(s) of the cult, the texts in which it is described, and the various audiences that engaged with it. To what extent was this specific cult employed as a catalyst of moral change in the near vicinity of the Minim convent?[385]

The shrine of the Santa Casa in Loreto, Italy was the foremost Marian pilgrimage site in Europe (*fig*. 36-38). Here, a little brick structure was venerated as the Holy Family's sacred dwelling, in which the Virgin Mary had been born. After the Saracens conquered the Holy Land in the thirteenth century, the house had miraculously been transported by angels from Nazareth to the Adriatic coast, where it settled down on various locations before settling permanently in Loreto in Italy, where Kings and Popes bestowed precious votive offerings on the shrine of the "Holy House". A magnificent basilica was built over it in the sixteenth century, and it was clad with an elaborately sculpted marble casing by a team of artists under the direction of Donato Bramante and Jacopo Sansovino (*fig*. 37).[386] The interior of the house, however, was left unaltered as the humble brick space in which the Virgin was born (*fig*. 38).

The cult of Our Lady of Loreto centred on the belief that in the Holy House the Annunciation had taken place. This fostered a great devotion with

[383] Vlieghe does not merit the painting more than a few lines, and rightly puts a (?) behind the confusing title Count of Enghien. Mensaert (presumedly) saw the painting in the church before its artworks were dispersed during the French Period, and may have derived his identification of the depicted children from an inscription or from oral tradition by the monks. More research into the provenance of the Leuven painting is needed to provide conclusive answers.

[384] André Ver Elst, "De Miniemen en O.L. Vrouw van Loreto te Brussel," *Eigen schoon en de Brabander* 46 (1963): 131–40.

[385] The nineteenth-century city historians Alexandre Henne and Alphonse Wauters conflated Sanderus' account of the convent's foundation ceremony in 1621 with the description of the Loreto-chapel in 1662, creating the false suggestion that this was the case from the start. Henne and Wauters, *Histoire de la ville de Bruxelles*, 1845, vol. 3; 419.

[386] See Kathleen Weil-Garris, *The Santa Casa di Loreto: problems in Cinquecento sculpture* (New York: Garland, 1977).

women who wanted to become pregnant. For instance in 1609 Albert and Isabella donate a magnificent cloak to Our Lady of Loreto, probably as a last resort for their infertility, which had great constitutional implications, as the sovereignty of the Netherlands would return to the Spanish Crown if one of them died without progeny.[387]

At the same time, the miracle of the Annunciation constituted the epitome of purity and chastity. But most importantly, the Santa Casa was venerated as the historical place *where the word became flesh* (John 1:14).[388] This belief had a whole series of theological implications, not in the last place because it embodied the anti-Protestant argument of material proof of the truth of Catholicism (i.c. Mary's role in salvation). The Holy House was at once relic and reliquary, as the place where salvation history had materialized and Catholic truth had been manifested. The site of the Incarnation, it was the place where God became human to save us from our sins, and as the house where the Virgin was born without the stain of original sin, no place on earth could be considered more holy.[389]

Therefore, during the seventeenth century the cult of Our Lady of Loreto and the associated Lauretan Litany would spread rapidly throughout the catholic world, giving birth to replicas of the miraculous image of the Virgin, as well as of the Holy House itself. Loreto-chapels and sometimes even exact Casa Santa-replicas were often erected by patrons who had travelled to the miraculous shrine at Loreto in Italy and wished to be reminded of that special experience at home and to fulfil a vow they had made to the Holy Virgin. The cult of the Lauretan Virgin was also embraced at an early stage in the Spanish Netherlands. For instance the Antwerp patrician Jean de Gaverelles, who had visited Loreto during his grand tour in Italy, founded a chapel in honour of the Virgin under the title of "Rosa Mystica" (derived from the litany of Loreto) in the new Discalced Carmelite convent in Antwerp in 1615, thus creating one of the first "Loreto-chapels" in the Netherlands.[390]

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[387] Augustinus Wichmans, *Brabantia Mariana Tripartita* (Antwerp: Joannes Cnobbaert, 1632), 242.

[388] An inscription on the chapel read: *Quo verbum caro factum est.*

[389] Marie-Élizabeth Ducreux, "La Santa Casa dans l'espace Marial Habsbourgeois au XVIIe siècle," *Les cahiers du centre de recherches historiques* 41 (January 25, 2008): 39–71.

[390] Bert Timmermans, *Patronen van patronage in het zeventiende-eeuwse Antwerpen: een elite als actor binnen een kunstwereld* (Amsterdam: Aksant, 2008), 114. For the inscription on the first stone and its explanation, see: http://users.telenet.be/leopold.winckelmans/inscript/verklar2.htm

The House of Habsburg had always cultivated a singular devotion to the Virgin Mary, and ever since the defeat of the Turks at the Battle of Lepanto by Don Juan of Austria in 1571, supposedly obtained through the invocation of the Immaculate Virgin, the Marian cult had gained a strong political and military dimension.[391] When Ferdinand II of Styria visited the shrine of the Holy House in Loreto in 1598 he had vowed to the Virgin to expel all heretic preachers from the lands under his dominion, which he did.[392] Twenty years later he was "miraculously" elected Holy Roman Emperor (1619–1637), and naturally this was considered to be through the intervention of Mary. After the Catholic victory at the Battle of the White Mountain in 1620, which was attributed to the Virgin, and gave rise to the new cult of Our Lady of Victories, Ferdinand and his successors raised her to the rank of "generalissima" of their armies.[393] The Emperor and his entourage greatly stimulated the cult of Our Lady of Loreto and after 1620 a great many Loreto chapels were built by noble patrons in the Austrian Habsburg lands, as well as in the recently conquered and to-be-catholicized Bohemia.[394]

The Counter-Reformation significance of the cult derived also from the miraculous *translatio* of the shrine from the Holy Land after its occupation by the infidels. Protestants were regarded as the new infidels and the fight against heresy as a new crusade. Moreover, according to tradition the Holy House had first landed in Croatia, and moved to two other places before finally settling across the Adriatic in Loreto. This was explained by the dissatisfaction of the Virgin with the piety displayed at the former locations, which implied that founding a Loreto-replica was an act of performance, constituting a similar degree of piety as performed at the original sanctuary, to the satisfaction of Our Lady. The mobility and formal replicability of the cult of Loreto thus imbued it with a unique capacity of "sanctifying" geographical space on various levels. Its apotropaic agency is reflected in contemporary perceptions, in which effects of dispelling heresy

[391] Delfosse, *La Vierge « Protectrice du Païs-Bas »*, 228.
[392] Bridget Heal, "Mary 'Triumphant over Demons and Also Heretics': Religious Symbols and Confessional Uniformity in Catholic Germany," in *Diversity & Dissent: Negotiating Religious Difference in Central Europe, 1500-1800*, ed. Howard Louthan, Gary B. Cohen, and Franz A. J. Szabo (New York: Berghahn Books, 2011), 153–72.
[393] Delfosse, *La Vierge « Protectrice du Païs-Bas »*, 228.
[394] Ducreux, "La Santa Casa dans l'espace Marial Habsbourgeois au XVIIe siècle"; Franz Matsche, "Gegenreformatorische Architekturpolitik: Casa-Santa-Kopien und Habsburger Loreto-Kult nach 1620," *Jahrbuch für Volkskunde* 1 (1978): 81–118.

and other evil from the near vicinity of Loreto-shrines are attributed to the cult.[395] The indispensable function of Our Lady of Loreto as *mediatrix coeli et terrae* is clearly illustrated by an engraving from Gumppenberg, showing the Holy House floating between heaven and earth, accompanied by the text *ne pereat* (may [the world] not perish) and *ne feriat* (may [heaven] not strike) (*fig*. 39).

In their fight against heresy in general, and the war with the rebellious Northern provinces in particular, Albert and Isabella put their trust above all in the protection of Our Lady of Scherpenheuvel.[396] Yet even during the Truce (1609-1621), the Archdukes and their courtiers were deeply involved in the Thirty Years War (1618-1648) in Germany, with nobles like Bucquoy, Tilly, Spinola, and the above mentioned Duke of Saxony playing leading military roles.[397] As we have seen, military officers like these were committed patrons of reformed orders like the Discalced Carmelites and the Minims in Brussels, especially in the period immediately before the outbreak of the war, during which they still resided in Brussels. It is in these convents that we find the earliest examples of chapels, or rather hermitages, dedicated to Our Lady of Loreto.[398]

Following the recommendations of St Theresa of Avilá, the garden of the Brussels convent of Discalced Carmelite nuns (founded 1607) included three hermitages, one of which was dedicated to Our Lady of Loreto.[399] This reflected a return to the original Carmelite ideal of withdrawing as hermits in the desert to contemplate mysteries of the faith.[400] The convent of the Discalced Carmelite monks (founded 1610) was also equipped with a hermitage, and in a forest near Namur the archdukes had founded in 1618-1619 an entire complex of hermitages for the Discalced Carmelites, in an enclosed terrain named the Holy Desert of Marlagne (built on the initiative

[395] Ibid., 109–110.
[396] Duerloo, "Pietas Albertina. Dynastieke vroomheid en herbouw van het vorstelijk gezag," 7.
[397] See Duerloo, *Dynasty and Piety: Archduke Albert (1598-1621) and Habsburg Political Culture in an Age of Religious Wars*.
[398] Delfosse, *La Vierge « Protectrice du Païs-Bas »*, 122.
[399] The other two were dedicated to Christ and John the Baptist. See Joris Snaet, "Isabel Clara Eugenia and the Capuchin Monastery at Tervuren," in *Isabel Clara Eugenia: Female Sovereignty in the Courts of Madrid and Brussels*, ed. Cordula van Wyhe (London; Madrid: Paul Holberton Publishing; CEEH, 2011), 368, 379 (note 43); Meganck, "De kerkelijke architectuur van Wensel Cobergher (1557/61-1634) in het licht van zijn verblijf te Rome," 156–160.
[400] Trevor Johnson, "Gardening for God: Carmelite Deserts and the Sacralisation of Natural Space in Counter-Reformation Spain," in *Sacred Space in Early Modern Europe*, ed. W. Coster (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 2005), 193–210.

of Thomas of Jesus).[401] Another early example is the chapel and hermitage at the monastery of Groenendael outside Brussels, of which the Infanta Isabella placed the first stone in 1622 (*fig*. 25). This happened shortly after the bones of the fourteenth century mystic Jan van Ruusbroec had been reburied at the monastery with the intention to foster his beatification.[402] The chapel was dedicated to Our Lady of Loreto and was built next to the linden tree under which Ruusbroec used to sit and write his mystical literature, and immediately drew large numbers of pilgrims. In 1626 the Holy See proclaimed Ruusbroec "Blessed".

Not just the religious retreated in hermitages, but also their patrons, as we know that the Infanta Isabella had a hermitage built for herself at the Capuchin monastery near her castle in Tervuren (c. 1627), where she would pray for a few hours or sometimes for a few days, in preparation of religious feasts.[403] In much the same vein, the chapter of the Brussels Minims decided in 1623, when the church and convent were still under construction, to build a little chapel with a cell on the extremity of the convent garden. This information is derived from the manuscript chronicle of the Minim convent, written in 1730 by the convent's corrector Anton Lefevre, who based himself on archival material that has probably been lost.[404] According to Lefevre, the place of reclusion was funded by an anonymous benefactor, and was called the "hermitage". By withdrawing for a certain period in the hermitage, the monks (or their patrons) imitated St Francis of Paola, founder of the order, who had also been a hermit in the wilderness from the age of fourteen to

[401] F. Courtroy, "Les Archiducs Albert et Isabella au désert de Marlagne," *Namurcum, Chronique de la société archéologique de Namur* XVIII (1941): 44–48; see also Sanderus, *Chorographia Sacra Brabantiae, tomus secundus*, 244.

[402] From 7-8 November 1622 the remains of the fourteenth-century mystic Jan van Ruusbroec were excavated in the monastery of Rooklooster in the Zoniënwoud forest near Brussels by Archbishop Jacques Boonen and interred in the Trinity chapel of the nearby priory of Groenendael. Here, next to what was known as the linden tree of Ruusbroec the Infanta Isabella laid the first stone of a Loreto-chapel on 17 November 1622. See Wichmans, *Brabantia Mariana Tripartita*, 804–806.

[403] Snaet, "Isabel Clara Eugenia and the Capuchin Monastery at Tervuren," 367–370; for Cardinal's hermitages in Rome, see Arnold Alexander Witte, *The Artful Hermitage: The Palazzetto Farnese as a Counter-Reformation Diaeta* (Rome: "L'Erma" di Bretschneider, 2008).

[404] Lefebvre, "Chronique du couvent des Minimes (KBR Ms. III 1338)," f. 1verso. "In het jaer 1623 is er in het capittel besloten gheweest een capelleken met eene celle te bouwen, alsdan op het eijnde, nu in het midden van onsen hof, het welck onse PP. noch in het groot huijs van Vesalius woonende, de heremitagie noemden. Alles is bekostight door eenen onghenoemden weldoender. Siet den boeck van de Acten Capitulair op het 32 bladt, ghelijck oock voor alle de volghende cijffers, waer in gheene mentie ghemaeckt en wordt van de index van de archive. In dit capelleken is een beeldt van Onse Lieve Vrouwe van Lauretten ghestelt gheweest, dat veel volck quam vereeren; […]"

nineteen (*fig*. 16).[405] The chapel is rendered in the engraving of the convent and church from the Sanderus edition of 1727 (*fig*. 23). It appears as a typical hermitage-cum-chapel such as the one at Groenendael (*fig*. 40), and it is difficult to say if it possessed any distinctive "Lauretan" architectural qualities, let alone exact measurements. Yet if it had, this would probably have been communicated by the sources.

We do not know when, but most likely before 1630, a sculpted image of Our Lady of Loreto was placed in the chapel, which was soon venerated by a great number of people, especially women (*fig*. 41).[406] When the monks moved into their new convent in 1630, they enclosed the chapel by a wall that prevented the women to enter. Unhappy with this situation, some women instantly requested that the monks should build a second wall, thus creating a passage onto the street, to be closed at night with a door.[407] The monks obeyed to this request, until a new altar of Our Lady was erected inside their convent.[408] In 1640 a wall was built along the street across the hermitage and chapel, and the two convent gardens were joined into one large garden, at which time they walled up this entrance, which put an end to the women passing through.[409]

Some years later, in 1647 the Minims erected a confraternity of Our Lady of Loreto.[410] The history of the Loreto cult is recounted in the catechistic brochure for members of the confraternity, published in 1671 by the Brussels Minim friar Adrianus Houtmans, entitled *Spiritual Academy of*

[405] Vivier, *Vie et miracles de Saint François de Paule*, 29–31.
[406] Lefebvre, "Chronique du couvent des Minimes (KBR Ms. III 1338)," f. 1verso.
[407] Ibid. "maer als wij beneden in ons teghenwoordigh clooster sijn komen woonen, hebben wij dit capelleken in onsen muer ghesloten, waer door de vrouw-persoonen daer niet meer en [doorgekrast: konden] moechten inkomen; uijt welcker oorsaecke eenighe mevrouwen ons instantelijck versoecht hebben van noch eenen muer te trecken aen den anderen kant van het capelleken tot teghen de straet, en tusschen die 2 mueren eene duere te hanghen, die wij savonts souden konnen toesluijten, en smorghens weder openen; hetwelck wij ghedaen hebben in het jaer 1630."
[408] According to Lefevre in the place where in the new, post 1715 church the sacristy is located. Ibid., f. 4recto.
[409] Ibid., f. 3recto. "1640 is den muer van onsen hof teghen de straet recht over het capelleken ghebouwt. Fol. 134. en gheheel den hoeck van den selven tot het eijnde van onsen bovensten hof teghen dien van Bournonville het jaer daernaer. Daerenboven is den muer afghebroken, die tusschen beije onse 2 hoven was, en diens-volghens moet dan de poort aen de straet toeghemetst sijn, waer langhs de vrouw-persoonen naer het capelleken quaemen."
[410] On 18 October 1648 Archbishop Jacques Boonen prescribes its statutes. *La confrérie de N.-D. de Lorette en l'église des SS. Jean et Etienne (Minimes) a Bruxelles (1648-1898)* (Brussels, 1898), 29.

the Most Holy Virgin.[411] In the tradition of Mathieu Martin's *Triomphe de la Verité*, in which Christ acts as narrator, the Spiritual Academy relates the story of the Holy House in detail by mouth of no other than the Virgin Mary. With regard to the cult in Brussels, the Holy Virgin claims that "some of her children of the Minim order […] after having seen the miracles performed by her Son, through her intercession, at Loreto, got the desire to erect a chapel in their convent in Brussels with the same dimensions, width, length, thickness, and height of the walls, and manner" of the original.[412]

This idea should be seen as part of a long tradition of devotional draughtsmanship in the context of pilgrimage, based on the notion that "sacred measurements" ought in themselves to be considered relics, and were endowed with the same agency as the object or building from which they derived.[413] Replicating shrines from the Holy Land was often used as a device to expiate guilt and purify terrain recovered on infidels.

According to Houtmans, the monks also had an image of Our Lady of Loreto (probably the same image as mentioned above) sculpted from the wood of the miraculous, supposedly six-hundred-year-old oak of St Guido, patron saint of Anderlecht near Brussels.[414] The oak of St Guido was felled in 1633, at which occasion the monks may have obtained a piece of its wood, perhaps through their brothers of the Minim convent in Anderlecht.[415] In

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[411] Adrianus Houtmans, *Gheestelycke Academie van de Alderheylighste Maget Maria* (Brussels: Gielis Stryckwant, 1671).

[412] Ibid., 97. "De groote devotie die tot *Lauretten* gheschiedt in myn H. Huysken, considererende sommighe van myn kinderen der *Minimen Order*, die de liefde ende *Charitas* voor hunne wapen hebben, ende eenighe onder hun ghesien hebbende die wonderlycke werken die mijnen Sone door mijne Voorspraecke daer doet, hebben een begeerte ende devotie ghekreghen om een Capelle doen te bouwen in hun Clooster tot *Brussel*, op de selve grootte, breedde, lenghde, dickte, ende hooghde van Mueren, ende maniere ghelyck myn Huysken tot *Laurette* is.

[413] Beaver, "From Jerusalem to Toledo: Replica, Landscape and the Nation in Renaissance Iberia," 75–76. According to Beaver "measurement was not an indifferent fact used to build the replica; if anything, the replica was an indifferent edifice which served to house [or physically embody] the measurement." This logic applied to replicated shrines as to relics. See also Nagel and Wood, *Anachronic Renaissance*.

[414] Houtmans, *Gheestelycke Academie van de Alderheylighste Maget Maria*, 97. "Sy hebben oock doen snyden een Beelt van het Miraculeus hout van den Eycken Boom van *S. Guido*, Patroon van *Anderlecht by Brussel*, ende dat op de maniere gelyck het myne is, d'welck den *H. Evanghelist Lucas* heeft ghesneden, ende hetwelcke d'Apostelen in dese Capelle hebben ghestelt, ghelyck de selve Religieusen oock dit Beelt hebben ghestelt in hunne Capelle die sy ghegheven hebben den Naem van *Lauretten*, alwaer mynen Lieven Sone my seer vereert met vele wonderlijcke wercken te doen, ende ghehoor te gheven aen die my daer aen-roepen."

[415] "Légendes de chez nous (XIX). Le chêne légendaire d'Anderlecht," *Le patriote illustré* 69, no. 25 (1953): 793. See also Wichmans, *Brabantia Mariana Tripartita*, 948; Arnould de Raisse, *Hierogazophylacium Belgicum sive Thesaurus Sacrarum Reliquiarum Belgii* (Douai: G. Pinchon, 1628), chap. 59.

addition to the miracle-working material of which the image consisted, it also possessed the same form as the miraculous cult image that was venerated in the shrine of Loreto, Italy (*fig*. 42). This image was held to be a "true effigy" or *vera icon*, made after life by the Evangelist Luke and placed in the Holy House by the apostles.[416] Houtmans suggests that by adorning their hermitage with this image, the monks imitated the apostles.

A membership book of the confraternity of Our Lady of Loreto seems to have existed as of 1634, however the precise origin of the Loreto cult in the Brussels Minim church remains shrouded in mystery.[417] The account by Houtmans is a catechism for members of the confraternity, and speaks about the erection of the confraternity in 1647 or the preceding period only in very general terms. If the image of Our Lady of Loreto was the initial reason for the popular devotion since the 1620's, as suggested by Lefevre, was this the same image as described by Houtmans, and which is still venerated in the church at present?[418] And was the hermitage – or any other chapel at the convent before 1660 – deliberately conceived as a Santa Casa replica? We do not know, but is seems unlikely.

According to Houtmans the first and principal promoter of the cult of Our Lady of Loreto was the Minim friar Amandus Kerchof.[419] Houtmans'

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[416] In order to create this likeness the wood may have been sent to Loreto in Italy to have it sculpted after the original, which was considered St Luke's plastic masterpiece. See Hecht, *Katholische Bildertheologie der frühen Neuzeit: Studien zu Traktaten von Johannes Molanus, Gabriele Paleotti und anderen Autoren*, 96–103; Belting, *Likeness and Presence: A History of the Image before the Era of Art*, 47–77.

[417] Ver Elst, "De Miniemen en O.L. Vrouw van Loreto te Brussel," 138.

[418] KIK-IRPA object number 20014361 (dated 1641-1660).

[419] Houtmans, *Gheestelycke Academie van de Alderheylighste Maget Maria*, 98–101. "Den eersten ende principaelsten die ghevrocht heeft tot dese vervoordeinghe van dit devoot Broederschap is gheweest mijnen Lief-hebber *Pater Amandus Kerchof*, die vercosen zijnde van den *Marcgraef St. Martin*, die doen tot Brussel was, om te voldoen een belofte die hy my hadde ghedaen, ende hunne offerhande my te draghen tot *Lauretten*, het welcke hy met groote devotie heeft volbracht, niet teghen-staende hy den Oversten alsdoen van het Clooster van *Brussel* was, hebbende [p. 99] meer affectie om met dese occasie sijn devotie in mijn H. Huysken gaen te doen, oft te bethoonen, ende dese myne H. Plaetse gaen te dien, als te gouverneren sijn Religieusen ende Convent.

Den goeden voornoemden Pater zynde met zynen Mede-ghesellen van *Lauretten* naer Roome ghegaen, hadde daer ghesien ende hooren spreken van de groote devotien, ende goede wercken die daer wierden ghedaen van mijne Mede-broeders van het Arts-broederschap de *Confalonis*, inghestelt in de stadt van Roomen in't jaer 1273. door mijnen grooten Lief-hebber den *H. Bonaventura* in mijne Kercke genoemt *Maria major*, aen het welcke Broederschap door diversche ende verscheyde *Pausen* zijn ghegunt groote Aflaten ende Privilegien, doende daeromme by sijn Heyligheyt *Paus Alexander den VII*. groote neerstigheydt om moghen het Broederschap van Brussel t'samen te voeghen, ende vereenighen met dit Arts-broederschap ende te ghenieten de selve gratien, Privilegien ende Aflaten, het welcke den Stadt-houder van mijnen Sone *Iesu Christi* hier op der aerde hem heeft liberaerlijck vergunt. Maer al eere hy daer van tot Brussel de Bulle

story starts around 1650 when the miraculous pregnancy of the Albertine Marie de la Baume, Marchioness of St-Martin had occurred. While Sanderus ascribed the miracle to the intercession of St Francis of Paola instead of Mary's, Houtmans only mentions that the couple had made a vow to the Virgin Mary, and that Amandus Kerkckhof was chosen to fulfil this vow and to carry their offering to Loreto in Italy. In spite of the fact that he was at the time corrector (in 1651 and 1654), Kerckhof preferred to honour the Virgin to governing his convent. The monk and his companions completed the task with great devotion, and continued their journey to Rome, where they heard about the Archconfraternity of the Gonfalone.[420] This confraternity enjoyed great indulgences and privileges, from which similar confraternities could also benefit by means of affiliation. Therefore Kerckhof petitioned with Pope Alexander VII for the Brussels Loreto-confraternity to be granted aggregation.[421] Thanks to the good reputation in Rome of the General of the Minim Order Balthasar d'Avila, who had twenty years earlier as Provincial consecrated the Brussels Minim convent and who was also Provisor of the Archconfraternity, this request was authorized in 1658 by Cardinal Francesco Barberini, protector of the Archconfraternity, shortly after Kerckhof had died.[422] To celebrate this achievement, a solemn procession was organized in which the wife of the Governor General, the Marquess of Caracena, and her ladies of honour played a prominent role.[423]

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hadde ontfanghen, die in het jaer 1658. op den 26. dagh van December door sijn heyligheyt was ge-expedieert, soo heeft hem mijnen Sone van deser werelt gehaelt."

[420] A group of white penitents founded in 1263 by St Bonaventure in the church of Santa Maria Maggiore in Rome. On the Archconfraternity of the Gonfalone, see Barbara Wisch and Nerida Newbigin, *Acting on Faith: The Confraternity of the Gonfalone in Renaissance Rome* (Philadelphia PA: Saint Joseph's University Press, 2012).

[421] ARAA, Eccl. Arch., 12175, petition of 12 April 1658.

[422] ARAA, Eccl. Arch., 12175, aggregation on 26 December 1658 (including the indulgences by Urban VIII d. 23 May 1633). Archbishop Andreas Creusen gave his authorization on 28 May 1659.

[423] Houtmans, *Gheestelycke Academie van de Alderheylighste Maget Maria*, 99–101. "Den Oversten die in sijne plaetse gouverneerde, dese Bulle ontfanghen hebbende, soo isser gheordonneert gheweest, datmen tot verheffinghe van mijn Broederschap binnen de Princelijcke Stadt van *Brussel* in-ghestelt, ende tot danck-segginghe van dese gratie, een solemnele Processie soude in-stellen ende houden, ghelijck het met groote Feeste ende extraordinarissche Triomphe is gheschiedt, want veel duysende Persoonen sijnder ghecomen, om mijn miraculeus Beeldt te vereeren, ende t'selve te vergheselschappen met licht, zijnde op den wegh veel schoone ende rycke Autaeren ghemaeckt ende ghestelt, om het Hooghweerdigh H. Sacrement op te rusten.

Het was een ghenuchte voor de Borgerye ende Mede-gaenders te hooren het geclanck der Trompetten, Cymbalen ende andere Instrumenten van Musieck, die in sommighe Huysen speelden, ter wylen den omganck gheschiedde, andere losten menichte van geschut, ende vier-wercken, &c. Maer het ghene d'eere van dese Feeste was vermeerderende, is gheweest, dat Mevrouwe de Marcgravinne, Vrouwe van sijn Excellentie der Gouverneur doen ter tydt van

Then, on 22 May 1660 the first stone was laid for a new Loreto chapel by "syndicus" of the convent Aegidius Gerardi.[424] This chapel, we know with certainty, was built exactly according to the length, breadth and depth of the Holy House of Loreto in Italy. These dimensions had (supposedly)[425] been published as *Ichnographia* by the Bavarian Jesuit Bachamer in 1625, and were widely disseminated from 1657 through the Marian Atlases of the German Jesuit Wilhelm Gumppenberg.[426] Because of the inclination of some of the Minims for mathematics, they may have been particularly interested in ichnography and exact dimensions. An inscription on the chapel designated it as "exact representation of the sacred House of Loreto, in which the Word was made flesh."[427] Anticipating an immediate success, quite unlike when they first built the hermitage, the Minims placed a grille in the wall around the churchyard so that even when the convent precinct was closed, passers-by could see and venerate a large cross and the Loreto chapel.[428]

What was the agency of the Brussels Casa Santa copy? In addition to seeing the image of the Lauretan Virgin, which by virtue of its form and

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Nederlandt ende Spaens-bourgoignien den Marquis de Caracena haere staet-Iouffvrouwen den dagh te vorens hadde ghesonden, om myn beeldt te vercieren met haere costelijcke Iuweelen, Diamanten ende andere Ghesteenten ghe-estimeert wel op 40,000. oft 50,000. guldens, alsoo dat de Croone die mijn beeldt op het hooft hadde, ende den Rock was blinckende van de costelijcke Ghesteenten, doende oock vier van haere Pagien met witte Wasse flambeelen het selve beeldt vergheselschappen."

[424] Lefebvre, "Chronique du couvent des Minimes (KBR Ms. III 1338)," f. 3verso. ARAA, Eccl. Arch. 12178, inscription on the first stone: "Pro singulari suo in Beatissimam Virginem/Lauretanam affectu ac Devotione/Ornatissimus Vir/Dns. Aegidius Gerdardi/Huius Conventus Syndicus optime meritus/primum hunc Lapidem in sacelli dictae B. Mariae Virginis Lauretanae/Consecrandi extructione posuit 22. May An. 1660"

[425] At least according to Gumppenberg, however, Ducreux has not been able to find it. Ducreux, "La Santa Casa dans l'espace Marial Habsbourgeois au XVIIe siècle," n. 109.

[426] Wilhelm Gumppenberg, *Idea Atlantis Mariani* (Trent: Carolus Zanetti, 1655); and the first edition of his Marian Atlas, which appeared in three volumes between 1657 and 1659: Guilielmus Gumppenberg, *Atlas Marianvs, sive De Imaginibvs Deiparæ per Orbem Christianvm Miracvlosis* (Munich: Lucas Straub, 1657).

[427] Sanderus, "Coenobium Bruxellense Ordinis PP. Minimorum S. Francisci de Paula," 43. The inscription in Latin: "Exacta representatio/saCrae DoMVs s. LaVretanae, (=1660)/in qua/verbum caro factum est." See also James Hilton, *Chronograms: 5000 and More in Number Exerpted out of Various Authors* (London, 1882), 259, http://www.archive.org/stream/chronograms5000m00hilt. Hilton adds "And this, probably the date of some repairs: DoMVnCVLae LaVretanae. (=1715) i.e. The little house of Loreto."

[428] Lefebvre, "Chronique du couvent des Minimes (KBR Ms. III 1338)," f. 3verso. "In hetselve jaer fol. 303verso heeft den Eerw. P. Aegidius Machart eene ijsere traelie besorght, om de selve te doen setten in eenen kant van den muer, die ons kerckhof (nu onse kercke) afsloot van de straete, om dat de passanten het groot cruijs, dat op de plaetse daer nu den grooten autaer is, nieuwelijckx was opgherecht, en de capelle van Lauretten souden konnen sien als de deure ghesloten was."

material possessed miraculous and apostolic qualities, the visitor to the chapel could be absolutely certain that he or she was having a similar experience as pilgrims to Loreto: that is, to be in the holiest place on earth, where the most central mysteries of the history of salvation had actually taken *place*. Houtmans opposes the Holy House to the magnificent Temple of Solomon, which was according to Scripture built in a miraculous way without intervention of base manual labour. The Virgin's Holy House instead was a humble abode, made by human hands from lowly materials. As opposed to Salomon's temple, it featured no art, no costly materials, but the mere miracle and rich gift of the God-turned-human, making salvation possible for all.[429] This could only have a deeply transformative effect on the viewer, according to Houtmans (by mouth of Mary):

> "You, dear brothers who have visited and seen my holy chapel at Loreto, can attest, that when you enter this Holy House you find yourself so changed and excited in devotion, with the desire to serve me better henceforth, that you are not ashamed to instantly go throw yourself at the feet of a confessor to dispose of your sins by genuine contrition and make a good confession, with the intention to better yourself henceforth, and start a new life; and those who have been there get soon the desire to return."[430]

This rhetoric of change is elaborated upon by examples, and great emphasis is laid on the power of communal prayer (in the context of the confraternity), exemplified by citing Genesis 18:26 "And the Lord said: If I find in Sodom fifty righteous within the city, then I will spare all the place for their sakes."[431] Thus, it is implied, by subscribing to the Loreto confraternity, one

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[429] Houtmans, *Gheestelycke Academie van de Alderheylighste Maget Maria*, 20–21. "Maer myn Kamerken is eerwerdigh gheworden op dese maniere meer als eene andere plaetse des [p. 21] gheheelen werelt, niet ter oorsake van den wonderlijcken oft costelijcken bouw, die alleenlijck van slechte materie, ende ghemeyne wreck lieden was gemaeckt tot Nazaretten, maer om de groote ende menighvuldighe mirakelen die daer inne syn geschiedt. Want wat meerder mirakel heeft Godt oyt ghedaen als in dit Kamerken, in dese goddelijcke Capelle, *daer het woordt vleesch gheworden is*. [...]"

[430] Ibid., 28. "Ghy-lieden beminde Mede-broeders die dese mijne H. Capelle tot Lauretten hebt besocht ende ghesien, cont ghetuyghen, dat soo wanneer ghy in dit H. Huysken comt u selven soo verandert vindt ende ontsteken in devotie, met begheerte van my voordaen beter te dienen, dat ghy niet beschaemt en zijt terstonts u gaen te werpen voor de voeten van eenen Bicht-vader om uwe sonden door een opprecht berouw ende goede bichte af te legghen, met een goet propoost van sich voordaen te beteren, ende een ander leven aen te nemen; ende die daer eens heeft geweest, kryght altoos begheerte om noch weder te keeren."

[431] Ibid., 109–110. "[...] want het is seker dat het ghebedt dat van veel wordt ghesproken van meerder cracht is als van eenen in't besonder, [...]. Men heeft hier van een groote proeve in de heyliche Schrifture alwaer wordt verhaelt, dat hebbende Godt sich voor-ghenomen de Stadt van

could contribute significantly to warding off the wrath of God over Brussels, and especially the sinful neighbourhood of Bovendal…

It may therefore come as no surprise that during the later seventeenth century, when the Southern Netherlands were incessantly plagued by military invasions, culminating in the bombardment of Brussels in 1695, the confraternity continued to flourish. Since all members were required to make the pilgrimage at least once in their life, the confraternity also became something of a society for people who had travelled to Italy.[432] The chronicler Lefevre recounts how the Loreto-chapel was miraculously saved during the bombardment of 1695, thanks to a statue of St Francis of Paola which he had placed there.[433] When the church was rebuilt from 1700 to 1715, the chapel was rebuilt on a different location, resembling the original even closer.[434] Great festivities took place in 1709 and 1759 in celebration of the 50th and 100th jubilee of the confraternity.[435] At present, the eighteenth-century version of the chapel survives in the church, albeit stripped of most of its decorations during the French Revolution. Today the Virgin of Loreto has taken on a new role as patron saint of aviation.

Conclusion

As a result of the Protestant critique on the Catholic laxity towards adultery, the prostitution at Bovendal, which had traditionally been tolerated within this area, increasingly became looked upon as a problem. The city magistrate took a series of measures aimed at containment of the prostitution in order to curtail the adultery that was thought to provoke the wrath of God. At the same time, the circle of French ex-ligueurs around the duke of Aumale and Montgaillard, in voluntary exile at the court of the Archdukes, sought to bring the Minims to Brussels as French counterpart to the recently

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Sodoma te niet te doen, om de boosheydt die daer inne geschiedde, d'welck den *Patriarch Abraham* ghehoort hebbende, heeft beginnen nacht ende dagh te bidden om de gramschap Godts te stillen, ende dit quaedt van dese Afgodene dienaers af te keeren. Godt aensiende de traenen van desen synen goeden vrient antwoorde hem, dat soo wanneer hy coste in de Stadt 50. oft 40. jae thien goede ende rechtveerdighe menschen vinden, dat hy het Sweert sijnder justitie in de schee soude steken, ende van *Sodoma* in gratie nemen. *Si invenero in Sodomis 50. justos in medio civitatis, dimittam omni loco propter eos*. O wonderbaere effecten ende sterckheydt van een ghemeyn ghebedt!"

[432] According to a publication by the confraternity of 1696, more than 170 members had made the pilgrimage to Loreto. Ver Elst, "De Miniemen en O.L. Vrouw van Loreto te Brussel," 138.

[433] Lefebvre, "Chronique du couvent des Minimes (KBR Ms. III 1338)," f. 5verso–6verso.

[434] Ibid., f. 3verso.

[435] Ver Elst, "De Miniemen en O.L. Vrouw van Loreto te Brussel," 138.

introduced Spanish and Italian reformed orders. The fervent preaching of the monks against fleshly sins, along with their ascetic lifestyle, met with great acclaim. By promoting piety and Christian morals, while linking sexual vice to heresy, the monks promised to counter Protestantism.

When the war was about to recommence after the Truce, the Minims successfully capitalized on the concerns about the wrath of God in order to gain the necessary momentum and support to get a permanent foothold in Brussels. With the triumphant gesture of laying the first stone of the new convent on the site of a brothel, the different parties involved in the city's public life [court, magistrate, royal and ecclesiastical dignitaries] excorcized the "false idol" Venus and re-consecrated the neighborhood to the Virgin Mary. The ceremony was performative in that it constituted a new reality, even before the necessary land had been acquired: the monks anticipated change, trusting in providence. Crucial in this respect was the agency of the first stone: directed at heaven by invoking the intercession of the Virgin to repell the wrath of God.

The monks proposed a remedy, not only by the implantation of their convent as a beacon of moral rectitude in the middle of this vicious territory, but also promised to bring about change by means of social disciplining and control. At the same time they presented themselves also as (heroic) victims, urging the authorities to go beyond the usual policy of containment and actively prosecute the prostitutes. This rhetoric was heightened in reaction to crisis (1629), when sanctification was once again presented as antidote to the wrath of God. How can we make sense of the apparently conflicting and ambiguous intentions and strategies of the monks? Did the Minims play an active role in relation to their neighbourhood, or did the latter act on them?

The walls, tunnel, and the austere style of the convent building not only separated the monks from the prostitutes, but also drew attention to that separation. Together with their extraordinary asceticism, these architectural interventions enabled the monks to lay claim on a status of holiness and virtuous role models. The success of this strategy is demonstrated by the conversion of the Duke of Saxony and its promotion by the subsequent publication of the *Triomphe de la Verité*. However, the bad location of the convent led to insufficient alms and the artistic agenda of the church project more or less ran ashore: not all the projected side chapels could be realized as the chapel foundations were charged with debt, and the Minims had little

choice but to give priority to urban redevelopment and social control in order to break this vicious circle.

The founding of a hermitage in the garden facilitated private devotion by the monks and an anonymous patron. Yet the statue of Our Lady of Loreto soon became the principal object of popular devotion by women, about which the monks were uneasy as it led to an infringement of their seclusion. The monks tried to keep control over the cult by replacing the statue to a new chapel, erecting a confraternity in her honour, and by bolstering its anti-adultery agency by means of the poem cited in Sanderus. In addition, they erected a confraternity of the Holy Guardian Angel, addressing and disciplining potentially adulterous young men, while the cult of St Francis of Paola fostered the occurrence of pregnancy-miracles.

Of the various strategies to effectuate moral change, the Santa Casa replica seems to have been the most successful. By means of replicating sacred space, its virtual architecture exercised a strong agency: the awareness of being present inside the holy house put the believer “in place” of the Virgin. This comparative confrontation was to lead the believer to humility, penitence, conversion, and transformation.