

PIETY AND POLITICS IN THE ROYAL CONVENT
OF DISCALCED CARMELITE NUNS IN BRUSSELS
1607-1646

On 22 January 1607, Ana de Jesús, spiritual co-worker of St. Teresa of Avila, arrived in Brussels, accompanied by a small group of Spanish Discalced (or barefoot) Carmelite nuns to found a convent under the patronage of the Infanta Isabella. St. Teresa had founded the order in the 1560s in Spain as a reformed branch of the Calced Carmelites. Establishing the convent in Brussels was one of the last projects of Ana's busy life, during which she had laboured faithfully to spread the order all over Europe ⁽¹⁾. Ana de Jesús' arrival in Brussels marked the first foundation of the order in the Netherlands after more than forty years of Dutch rebellion against the Catholic house of Habsburg ⁽²⁾.

The Discalced Carmelites had already initiated a revolution in female contemplative life by the time they arrived in Brussels. St. Teresa's notion of an intimate communication with God through mental prayer — as opposed to ritual chanted prayer — in sur-

(1) Pierre SÉROUET, (OCD), *Jean de Brétigny (1556-1634), aux origines du Carmel de France, de Belgique et du Congo* (Bibliothèque de la Revue d'Histoire Ecclésiastique, 60), Louvain, 1974; Joachim SMET, *Los Carmelitas. La historia de la Orden del Carmen*, Madrid, 1987, vol. 3, p. 437-442.

(2) During the past few years literature on the second generation Carmelites has increased significantly. Particular focus has been given to Ana de Jesús and the other prioresses of Netherlandish convents, whose writings have been published by Concepción Torres, Antonio Fortes, Restituto Palmero and Pierre Sérouet. Ana de Jesús has been the subject of several modern monographs, see for example, Berthold-Ignace DE SAINTE-ANNE, *Vie de la Mère Anne de Jésus*, Malines, 1876; Pierre SERVAIS, (OCD), *La Vénérable Anne de Jésus, coadjutrice de Sainte Thérèse, et fondatrice du Carmel en France et en Belgique*, Namur, 1907; Anna of Jesús of Notre Dame de Namur (Sister), *Life of the Venerable Anna de Jesús Companion of St. Teresa of Avila*, London, 1932; Louis VAN DEN BOSSCHE, *Anne de Jésus, coadjutrice de sainte Thérèse d'Avila*, Antwerp, 1958; Ildefonso MORIONES, *Ana de Jesús y la herencia Teresiana: humanismo cristiano o rigor primitivo?*, Rome, 1968; Marie-Anne de Jesús (Sister), *Anne de Jésus: fondatrice du Carmel en France et en Belgique*, Nouan-le-Fuzelier, 1988; one of the latest publication is *Anne de Jésus. Écrits et documents*, Antonio FORTES, Restituto PALMERO (eds), Toulouse, 2001.