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# An Old Catholic *lieu de mémoire*: the French House

Dick Schoon

## 1. Introduction

The place where we are gathered today could be considered what the French historian Pierre Nora called a *lieu de mémoire*: a place, an object or something else, through which a kind of collective memory crystallizes.<sup>1</sup> Today we celebrate this location mainly as the place where the five Old Catholic bishops in 1889 signed their *Declaration to the Catholic Church*. We are grateful to the present owner of the property, the board of SHV, for letting us come together here to celebrate the 125<sup>th</sup> birthday of this Declaration.

Such a *lieu de mémoire* is not just a certain geographical location, a certain object or even a certain custom, but it stands for something that is collectively remembered and within that memory it is current. In this way the Bishops' Declaration of 1889 is not so much an historical document as the crystallization of an entire movement that took place within the Catholic Church and – witness the fact that we gather here today – is still taking place. *Mémoire* – thus the commemoration is directed at the past in order to look from there to the future.

I have the pleasure of telling you a bit about this place, the French House, also known as the Clarenburg House. I will do that in three parts: first I will tell you about the French inhabitants of this property, then something about the period when it was the residence of the Archbishop of Utrecht, and finally a bit about its later life – that last part will be very short, as it is not so pertinent to our story.

One small explanation for the sake of orientation. Initially the name Clarenburg House referred not to the place where we gather today, but to the nearby property where the clandestine church of St. Marie – Maria Minor – was established as a hidden catholic church in 1640. It originally belonged to the so-called cloister houses within the immunity of St. Marie.

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<sup>1</sup> The expression *lieu de mémoire* was invented in the later 1970s by the French historian Pierre Nora. He eventually published seven volumes with descriptions of material and immaterial 'points of crystallization' of the French collective memory. In the Netherlands his work found reception in e.g. Jan Jacobs et al. (eds.), *Aan plaatsen gehecht. Katholieke herinneringscultuur in Nederland*, Nijmegen 2012.

The immunity formed an independent jurisdiction surrounded by walls or canals where canons who were connected to the church lived. The Clarenburg House was number XII and stretched out as far as the Maria Cemetery, an area of 75 by 20 meters. The house's annex had a separate entrance on Achter-Clarenburg. This gives you an idea of the mediaeval origins of the property and its surroundings.

## 2. The French House

And now a bit about the French residents, from whom the term 'French House' comes. They were the last of a sizeable stream of clerics and a few laypeople, who had emigrated from the southern Low Lands and France to the Republic as early as the 17<sup>th</sup> century, but mainly in the 18<sup>th</sup> century. They were forced to leave their native countries in order to avoid persecution and imprisonment. I cannot expand on this religious conflict here, which is known as that of Jansenism, a movement within the Catholic Church that opposed the increasing centralization of church authority in the Roman Curia and in the person of the Pope. The arena in which this conflict was mainly fought was formed by theological disputes at the theological faculties of the catholic universities of Louvain and Paris. These disputes had their immediate consequences not only for theologians at these university faculties, but also for members of several religious orders who had to leave their monasteries, and for ordinary parish priests, who sometimes were driven out of their parishes and had to find a refuge elsewhere.

And so it happened that French clerics and theologians sought refuge in the Dutch Republic in the middle of the 18<sup>th</sup> century, and procured in 1726 the country estate Rijnwijk. Anno 2014 Rijnwijk doesn't exist anymore, but it was located just outside of Utrecht between Bunnik and Zeist.<sup>2</sup>

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<sup>2</sup> On the purchase and sell of Rijnwijk see E.F.B.B. Wittert van Hoogland, *Geschiedenis van het geslacht Wittert van Hoogland (Wittert van Hoogland en Emiclaer, Wittert van Valkenburg, Wittert van Bloemendaal, Wittert van der Aa) met de daaruit in vrouwelijke lijn gesproten familiën*, Den Haag 1914, pp. 527–531; A.J. van de Ven, 'La communauté cistercienne de la maison de Rijnwijk près d'Utrecht', in: IKZ 39 (1949), pp. 115–139, here 123; B.A. van Kleef, *De Kartuziers in Holland*, s.l. et s.n. 1956, p.13 [offprint from *De Oud-Katholiek* 72 (1956), pp. 144–145, 150–152, 159–160, 179–182, 190–193]; C. Maire, *De la cause de Dieu à la cause de la Nation. Le jansénisme au XVIII<sup>e</sup> siècle*, Paris 1998, p. 130. Both the house Rijnwijk and the chivalric manor Schonauwen near Houten, where fled Carthusians were housed since

When these refugees gradually died out they were replaced by French Oratorians, who established a school of theology at Rijnwijk to pass on their theological ideas to a new generation of clerics.<sup>3</sup> The main inspirational figure in their circle was abbé Jean-Baptiste le Sesne de Ménilles d'Etémare<sup>4</sup>, who had much authority in France as well as among the refugees. He himself was a wealthy man, but there was also money coming in from funds in Paris, the proceeds of which were meant for supporting the refugees. The administration of these finances, which together were known as the *boîte à Perrette*, was necessarily somewhat clouded in secrecy.<sup>5</sup> When one of the administrators died, the remaining colleagues co-opted a new member from the *amis de la vérité*, the 'friends of the truth', as they

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1727, were bought by a group of people who established a charity that was alternately named 'les conseillers', 'les consultants' or simply 'le Bureau'. This group consisted of twelve persons, who belonged to the most important of the French 'port-royalists'. They included Boursier, Dilhé, Petitpied, Du Vivier, Fouillou, Boidot, Boucher, the brothers Alexis (Alexandre) and Jean Baptiste (Poncet) Désessarts. The latter one, who mainly resided in Holland, can be regarded as the soul of the charity and as the man who contributed enormous sums of money to it (Van Kleef, Kartuizers, p. 26). Maire identifies the brothers Désessarts as the buyers of Rijnwijk and refers to HUA 215, 1826, where Adriaan Wittert (1692–1748) is also identified as owner of Rijnwijk. Van de Ven remarks that the house was bought on 1 July 1726 in order to serve as shelter for Cistercian monks from Orval. The purchase price of fl 8,500 was paid by A. Wittert (fl 4,500), A.J. Brigode Dubois (fl 2,400) and an unknown benefactor, according to Van de Ven perhaps one of the monks himself. On 19 September 1743 Wittert sold the house for fl 6900 to the Désessarts brothers (transaction on 4 August 1744). In 1756 the house came into possession of Alexandre Darboulin. In his turn, Darboulin sold the house on 25 April 1772 through J. Heyendaal to Jan Kol, steward to the chivalric order, for fl 10,000. Thus ended the affiliation of the French and the Church with the house Rijnwijk.

<sup>3</sup> Cf. Fred Smit, *Franse Oratorianen en de Clerezie in de jaren 1752–1763* (Publicatiesserie Stichting Oud-Katholiek Seminarie 9), Amersfoort 1981.

<sup>4</sup> Jean Baptiste Le Sesne de Ménilles d'Etémare (1682–1770), French theologian, appellant and figurist, pupil of Duguet, 1709 ordination to the priesthood, first mass in Port-Royal des Champs. Publications against *Unigenitus*. Overview of life and work, see *Nouvelles Ecclésiastiques* (= *NNEE*) 1771, pp. 25–33; René Cerveau, [Suite du] *Nécrologe des plus célèbres défenseurs et confesseurs de la Vérité du dix-huitième siècle*, 7 volumes, s.l., 1760–1778, vol. VII, 75–79. For an elaborate study of d'Etémare's thought, particularly in relation to contemporary philosophers, cf. Bruno Neveu, 'Port-Royal à l'âge des Lumières. Les *Pensées* et les *Anecdotes* de l'abbé d'Etémare, 1682–1770', in: idem, *Érudition et religion aux XVII<sup>e</sup> et XVIII<sup>e</sup> siècles*, Paris 1994, pp. 277–331.

<sup>5</sup> Cf. Nicolas Lyon-Caen, *La boîte à Perrette. Le jansénisme parisien au XVIII<sup>e</sup> siècle*, Paris 2010.

called their network. In spite of the generous funding d'Etémare's theological school never got really successful, and after his death in 1770 it was closed down. The three remaining Frenchmen moved to the center of Utrecht.

In 1772 d'Etémare's three students, close colleagues and heirs, Gabriel Dupac de Bellegarde<sup>6</sup>, Jean-Baptiste Silvain Mouton<sup>7</sup> and Jean-Baptiste Castera de Larrière<sup>8</sup>, sold Rijnwijk and used the money to purchase the

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<sup>6</sup> Gabriel Dupac de Bellegarde (also: Duparc; 1717–1789), pupil of abbé De Fourquevaux. In 1739 Dupac joined the Parisian community of St. Josse, where he met Boursier and d'Etémare. Since 1751 he lived primarily with d'Etémare at Rijnwijk and after the latter's death in 1770 at Utrecht. In 1761 he became a canon of Lyon with the title of *comte de Lyon*, which secured him entry into higher circles. Thanks to his vast networks of friends, Dupac was one of the most important correspondents for the *Nouvelles Ecclésiastiques*. He wrote or edited several books, e.g. *Mémoires historiques sur l'affaire de la bulle Unigenitus, dans les Pays-Bas Autrichiens* (4 volumes, 1755), *Journal de M. l'abbé Dorsanne* (2<sup>nd</sup> ed., 5 volumes, 1756), *Histoire abrégée de l'Église métropolitaine d'Utrecht* (1765), a *Supplement* to the collected writings of Z.B. van Espen (1767), with a *Vie de M. Van Espen* (also published separately), *Recueil des témoignages* (1763) and *Nouvelles témoignages* defending the Church of Utrecht, *Acta et Decreta* of the Council of Utrecht (published in 1765) and the collected writings of Antoine Arnauld (44 volumes, 1775–1783). Obituary: *NNEE* 1790, 205–208. On Dupac's attempt at reconciliation: F.C. de Vries, *Vredes-onderhandelingen tusschen de Oud-Bisschoppelijke Cleresie van Utrecht en Rome*, Assen 1930, pp. 181–217; B.A. van Kleef, *Geschiedenis van de Oud-Katholieke Kerk van Nederland*, Assen 1963, pp. 156–158.

<sup>7</sup> Jean Baptiste Silvain Mouton (1740–1803), son of Silvanus Mouton and Francisca Jubelet. Tonsure 21 September 1753 by Bishop de Caylus. Went to Holland after the latter's death. Minor orders March 1757, deaconing 20 December 1758, priesting December 1758 by Archbishop Petrus Johannes Meyndaerts. Assistant curate in several parishes. Received an annuity from Darboulain in 1771. Successor to Dupac de Bellegarde as correspondent with foreign friends and editor of the *NNEE*. Cf. M.B. Picot, *Mémoires pour servir à l'histoire ecclésiastique pendant le dix-huitième siècle*. Seconde édition, considérablement augmentée, 4 volumes, Paris 1815–1826, IV, p. 628; Smit, *Oratorianen* (as note 3), p. 64 n. 252.

<sup>8</sup> Noël Jean Baptiste Castera de Larrière (sometimes: Dubois; 1738–1802), theologian, layman, nevertheless called *abbé*. Since 1757 pupil of d'Etémare at Rijnwijk. Friend and collaborator of Dupac de Bellegarde and Mouton, e.g. for the collected writings of Arnauld, for which he wrote Arnauld's biography. In 1778 at Paris, since 1789 involved in ecclesiastical reformations in France, collaborator of the *Nouvelles Ecclésiastiques*. Abbé De Larrière defended the *Constitution civile du clergé* in several writings, referred for the power of the church as community of all faithful to Richer, and was an opponent of Maultrot, who taught the independence of (the bishops in) the church. In 1798, de Larrière published eight volumes of the *Annales religieu-*



Clarenburg house on the Mariaplaats in Utrecht. They paid 5,300 guilders.<sup>9</sup> They proceeded to live there, which is how the property became known as 'the French house'.<sup>10</sup> It was decided that Clarenburg would primarily be used to house those who had lived at Rijnwijk, and also for 'friends of the truth' who had been forced to flee to the Republic from France, or who had been sent there by the committee of the then five people in Paris who controlled the funds. Similarly, if there were no more French people to be housed, then the house and the copious library were to be made available to others such as clergy of the Dutch church, as long as they held fast to the true doctrine.<sup>11</sup>

So what did those Frenchmen do in that house aside from eating, drinking and sleeping? After the death of abbé d'Etémare in 1770, Dupac de Bellegarde had become one of the central figures in the international network of the 'friends of the truth'. Just as his master had done, Dupac had a vast network of correspondents. But where the correspondence of d'Etémare was mainly restricted to theologians in France, the network of Dupac covered all the European countries where theologians were fighting to preserve the old catholic doctrines and protect them from what they

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ses. Cf. Picot, *Mémoires* (as note 7), IV, pp. 599–600; Smit, *Oratorianen* (as note 3), p. 65 n. 254; Maire, *Cause* (as note 2), pp. 574–582, an overview of his writings: *ibidem*, p. 670 n. 73.

<sup>9</sup> Cf. Het Utrechts Archief (= HUA), inventory 478, archives of the French House, nr. 24: at notary Jan de Clefaij at Utrecht on 3 March 1772: purchase of the house Clarenburg from Nicolaas Potgieter, acting for Jean Dataguiette de La Mare in Paris, by Dupac de Bellegarde, Mouton and Castera.

<sup>10</sup> The real house Clarenburg, with its entrance at Achter Clarenburg, housed the hidden church and presbytery of St. Marie (Assumption of Mary) since 1640. The house purchased by the three Frenchmen was virtually adjacent to it, and had its entrance at the Mariaplaats. Purchase transaction at notary Jean de Clefay on 3 March 1772. Later, uncertainty occurred when Clément de Tremblay and Guenin de St. Marc placed the house at the disposal of the Seminary at Amersfoort. According to Morillon they did not possess the right to do so, because they were only administrators, cf. HUA, inventory 86-1, archives of the Archbishops of Utrecht, nr. 287: 1832-06-04 P.V.A. Morillon to J. van Santen. For the early history of the house Clarenburg, cf. Bert van Holst, 'Het Bisschopshuis op de Mariaplaats', in: Corjan van der Peet (ed.), *Utrechtse Paleizen*, Utrecht 1986, pp. 63–75. To the eighteenth-century Frenchmen and the nineteenth-century administrators, it was virtually invariably 'the house Clarenburg'; to the Dutchmen it was also 'the French house', in order to distinguish it from the building in which the church was housed.

<sup>11</sup> This arrangement dated from 16 June 1772, according to HUA 86-1, 287: 1832-06-04 P.V.A. Morillon to J. van Santen.

considered unacceptable innovations. This referred mainly to the Jesuits, who through their persecution of those they labelled 'Jansenists' sought to prevail over the religious truth; who gave absolution much too freely because of their expansive morals, thereby defiling the sacraments of penitence and eucharist; who spread un-biblical and thus un-Christian devotions such as those of the sacred heart of Jesus and of Mary's immaculate conception; who as confessors of Catholic royalty at several European courts were actually after power and considered all methods admissible to get it. In short: there was an obvious enemy who was not as powerful in the Republic as elsewhere.

In addition to this, the Republic was known internationally for its free press. This allowed the Frenchmen in Utrecht to freely publish the works of the theologians who they did sanction or write these works themselves. This is how Dupac and his colleague Larrière were able to publish in 1774 a monumental edition of the collected works of Antoine Arnauld, the leading Jansenist theologian of the 17<sup>th</sup> century; the edition comprised more than 40 quarto format volumes. Thanks to his extensive international network of correspondents Dupac was one of the most important contributors to the *Nouvelles Ecclésiastiques ou Mémoires pour servir à l'histoire de la Constitution Unigenitus* (= NNEE), the authoritative publication of the 'friends of the truth', which was published every other week from 1728 until 1803. It contained all kinds of news about church events in France, the Dutch Republic, the German-speaking countries, Spain, Portugal and Italy. The paper was, and still is, a real *Fundgrube* of everything that was happening on the Catholic theological front in the 18<sup>th</sup> century.

Dupac died in 1789 and his pupil Jean Baptiste Silvain Mouton continued his correspondence. But it didn't get any easier. In 1773 the great enemy, the Jesuit order, was formally abolished "for eternity" by Pope Clement XIV (only to be re-established in 1814). Perhaps even worse was that the 'friends of the truth' did not agree amongst themselves about the course which the French church was taking. Some of them defended the national French church, which with the *Constitution civile du clergé* of 1792 required all clerics to give an oath of allegiance to the French Revolution. Others opposed what they considered an infringement on the church's independence and autonomy by the revolutionary French government, and joined in the condemnation of the *Constitution* pronounced by the Pope. When Mouton died in the French House in 1803, the earlier circle of the 'friends of the truth' found themselves in a deep crisis.

That crisis became even deeper in 1810 – seven years after the death of Mouton – when his family members from France arrived to lay claim on his estate. Now the questionable legal construction of the 18<sup>th</sup> century came back to haunt the residents of the French House, because they had never officially taken ownership of the property. Ownership was in the hands of the administrators of the French funds who had always supplemented their council through co-opting without taking legal measures to secure anything. In addition to this, one year after Mouton died the French House had been entered in the register of the city of Utrecht, and it was thereby noted that everything would be ‘for the benefit of the seminary in Amersfoort’, which was established in 1728. The advantage of this was that there was an obvious owner, if only in name, and so there would be less tax to pay. Given the origins of the funds with which the property had been purchased in 1772 – i.e. the theological school at Rijnwijk – this new allocation in Amersfoort was a logical step. But it also complicated the relationship between property and administrators. Eventually an agreement was reached and the heirs were paid off.

### **3. The Archbishop’s residence: a palace?**

As I have mentioned, when the French House was purchased it was determined that if there were no more refugees it would be made available to the clergy of the Dutch church. After the fall of Napoleon in 1815 the Roman Catholic Church in France was able to begin its recovery and it did that in a spectacular manner. Resisting government interference that had caused so much misery, it now assumed authority in the church with the figure of the Pope heading it up. The few voices of protest against this strong centralization of church government drew little attention, and no one seemed to show any interest in the old theological disputes of the Jansenists, who with their endless disputes also were considered to have contributed to all the former troubles. This development caused the ‘friends of the truth’ to shrink down to a small group of faithful, who still recalled the battle that had been fought in the past. But that small circle did not provide any more residents for the Clarenburg House.

And so it happened that when the Mouton estate finally had been settled, the French administrators offered the property as official residence to Johannes van Santen (1772–1858) in 1825, the year he became Archbishop of Utrecht. There was some work to do to tidy up what was left of the editorial activities of Dupac and Mouton. An inventory dating from



1799 recalls that there were still 37 or 38 unsold sets of the complete works of Arnauld, in total some 1,800 volumes and more than 2,000 volumes of *Nouvelles Ecclésiastiques* and other books on the 18th-century theological controversies.<sup>12</sup> What exactly happened to all these books is not known, but the library of the French House continued to exist until this day. Only in 1900 at an auction by Frederik Muller in Amsterdam no less than 1,450 books on Jansenism, the Jesuits, the Church of Utrecht and Port-Royal were sold.<sup>13</sup>

Archbishop Van Santen would live at the French House until his death in 1858, and he remained in constant contact with the friends in Paris. For their part they cherished the old Dutch clergy as the only remnant of the holy Roman Catholic Church that had remained pure in doctrine and practice. Each year subsidy for maintenance of the French House arrived from Paris, and often for other purposes in the Dutch church, too. In turn, professors from the seminary in Amersfoort contributed to the journal published by the friends in Paris, the *Revue Ecclésiastique*. In 1845 a manuscript was discovered in the Clarenburg library that contained a tract by Blaise Pascal that had been presumed lost, the *Abrégé de la vie de Jésus-Christ*, which the friends gratefully published in their journal.<sup>14</sup>

Van Santen's successor, Henricus Loos (1813–1873), was the priest at St. Marie when he was elected archbishop. During the entire period of his episcopate, Loos was involved in serious conflicts with other leading members of the Dutch church, especially the president of the seminary in Amersfoort, Christiaan Karsten (1810–1884). Because the proprietors of the French House in Paris were on the side of Karsten, the archbishop was not allowed to live in the house. Only after the death of Loos the following archbishops resided in the French House again, so the property was inhabited successively by the Archbishops Johannes Heykamp (1824–1892),

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<sup>12</sup> Cf. HUA 478, 1: 22-02-1804 inventory of the French House after Mouton's death, with annotations of 30 June 1799.

<sup>13</sup> Cf. Adama van Scheltema, *Bibliotheca Rhyndykiana. Théologie catholique – Jansénistes – Port-Royal – Jésuites – Clergé d'Utrecht – La France protestante*. Auction catalogue Frederik Muller, Amsterdam 1900.

<sup>14</sup> Prosper Faugère, 'Écrit inédit de Blaise Pascal. Abrégé de la vie de Jésus-Christ', in: *Revue Ecclésiastique* 8 (1845), pp. 97–134; Augustin Gazier, *Histoire générale du mouvement janséniste depuis ses origines jusqu'à nos jours*, vol. 2, Paris 1924, p. 245; Dick J. Schoon, *Van bisschoppelijke Cleresie tot oud-katholieke kerk. Bijdrage tot de geschiedenis van het katholicisme in Nederland in de 19de eeuw*, Nijmegen 2004, p. 182.

Gerardus Gul (1847–1920) and Franciscus Kenninck (1859–1937). In this way the French House functioned as the residence of the Archbishops of Utrecht – with the exception of Loos – for more than a century.<sup>15</sup>

Towards the end of the 19<sup>th</sup> century ownership of the property changed. The French ‘friends of the truth’ in Paris slowly died out and it became increasingly difficult to maintain at least the three administrators. So because of the relationship with the seminary, at the end of the 1850s seminary president Karsten had been appointed co-administrator. When Karsten died in 1884 and Charles Edouard Pestel<sup>16</sup> was the only French administrator left, he transferred ownership of the French House and its finances to the Metropolitan Chapter of Utrecht in 1887–1888. The estimated value was 23,000 guilders, and, as was necessary at that time, in 1888 the Minister of Justice gave the Metropolitan Chapter permission to accept the donation.<sup>17</sup> This is how the house finally became the property of the Old Catholic Church.

#### 4. Apartments

Various property renovations took place during the 19<sup>th</sup> century.<sup>18</sup> The 16<sup>th</sup> century annex, which had already been separated from the actual Clarenburg house, was turned around so that its facade came to face what

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<sup>15</sup> Archbishop Johannes Jacobus van Rhijn (1797–1808) had lived in a private house in Utrecht, Archbishop Willibrordus van Os (1814–1825) had remained in the Seminary at Amersfoort. Cf. *De Oud-Katholieke* 54 (1938), 232–233; Fred Smit et alii, *Adjutorio Redemptoris. Dr. Andreas Rinkel, aartsbisschop van Utrecht, 1889–1979*, Amersfoort 1987, pp. 43–44. Incorrect dates regarding Rinkel in van Holst, ‘Bisschopshuis’ (as note 10).

<sup>16</sup> Charles Edouard Pestel (1829–1915), son of ... Pestel and Jeanne Victoire Guélon. Pestel lived together with his sister and was a wholesale wine trader together with his brother. In 1903 he married his housekeeper, the widow Barel, in order to secure her daughter a better position. Pestel always signed his letters ‘E. Pestel’; in Gazier, *Histoire* (as note 13) his name is not mentioned. HUA 86-1, 285: 1852-02-20 L.A. Guélon to J. van Santen; Noord-Hollands Archief (NHA), inventory 225, archives of the diocese of Haarlem, nr. 282: 1903-09-29 E. Pestel to J.J. van Thiel; HUA 86-1, 608: 1904-01-11 E. Pestel to G. Gul. HUA 224, 1249-1: 1867-03-04, 1875-11-21, 1876-10-30 C.E. Pestel to C. Karsten; HUA 86-1, 626: 1915-05-05 Pestel family to G. Gul.

<sup>17</sup> HUA 478, 24: papers concerning the donation by C.E. Pestel to the Metropolitan Chapter of a house *cum annexis* at Mariaplaats (kad. section 1516, Utrecht, 10 are 20 centiare, 1887–1888, with retroacts from 1743 and 1772).

<sup>18</sup> Cf. Van Holst, ‘Bisschopshuis’ (as note 10).

was known as the Kerkelaantje, the entrance to the Mariaplaats. Archbishop Gerardus Gul had often expressed the wish to build a whole new house on the street, but the plan never materialized.<sup>19</sup> In 1905 the property was almost completely rebuilt using a design by the old catholic architect Petrus Augustinus Weeldenburg from Rotterdam.<sup>20</sup> The beams and roof were raised, and a library was added at the back side above the renovated kitchen and storage area. On the south side a frontispiece was added with crest and pediment containing the archbishop's coat of arms. So Archbishop Kenninck inherited a completely new home, but it still exhibited 'the defects of an old house on all sides, with great hollow halls and lack of light'. And when his successor Andreas Rinkel (1889–1979) refused to live there, in 1938 the property was finally sold to the electric bookbinding firm of M.J. van de Wijngaard, which remained there until 1956.<sup>21</sup> After having stood empty and neglected for a long time after that, the house became one of Utrecht's first squatted buildings until in 1984 the municipality restored it and made it into ten apartment units. Eventually it came into the possession of SHV<sup>22</sup>, which as of 2014 uses it as an apartment complex for its foreign employees.

## 5. Lieu de mémoire

The somewhat tumultuous history of the French House can be compared not only to that of the Dutch Old Catholic Church, but also to that of the Union of Utrecht. After all, how has this house functioned in the past? First as an asylum for French refugees and then as accommodation for homeless archbishops. And what did they do there? They committed themselves to upholding the true catholic tradition, that which is believed always, everywhere and by everyone. On the basis of this positively formulated principle they opposed concepts or practices that violated this catholic tradition: the power politics of the Jesuits; the infringement of the

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<sup>19</sup> Concerning Archbishop Gerardus Gul as resident of the French House, cf. Ton van Schaik, 'De primate in het Franse huis of een bisschopswaapen met allure', in: *Maandblad Oud-Utrecht* 59 (1986), pp. 81–84.

<sup>20</sup> Petrus Augustinus Weeldenburg (1849–1912), son of Nicolaas Johannes Weeldenburg and Geertruida Elisabeth Reijns, was an architect, carpenter and mason and built the Paradijsskerk at the Nieuwe Binnenweg, Rotterdam, in 1908.

<sup>21</sup> Concerning Rinkel's refusal to take up residence in the French House see N.N., 'Het Fransche huis', in: *De Oud-Katholiek* 54 (1938), pp. 232–233.

<sup>22</sup> SHV (for: Steenkolen Handels Vereeniging) was founded in 1896.

rights of Utrecht's autonomous local church; the violation of the catholic faith by new dogmas such as the dogma of 1854 concerning the immaculate conception of the Holy Virgin and the papal dogmas of 1870.

In this same way the bishops of the Union of Utrecht drafted their *Declaration to the Catholic Church* in 1889, later known as the Bishops' Declaration. This declaration upholds the same principles as those of the 18<sup>th</sup>-century residents of the French House. And though it seems perhaps a bit bold to compare SHV to the Old Catholic Church, the French House still offers hospitality, today to employees from foreign countries in order to serve the common strategy of the company. For this reason the French House remains an important *lieu de mémoire*, a place to memorialize for its continuing hospitality during the past centuries and hopefully the years to come.

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