



Universiteit
Leiden
The Netherlands

Exile memories and the Dutch Revolt : the narrated diaspora, 1550 - 1750

Müller, J.M.

Citation

Müller, J. M. (2014, May 14). *Exile memories and the Dutch Revolt : the narrated diaspora, 1550 - 1750*. Retrieved from <https://hdl.handle.net/1887/25763>

Version: Corrected Publisher's Version

License: [Licence agreement concerning inclusion of doctoral thesis in the Institutional Repository of the University of Leiden](#)

Downloaded from: <https://hdl.handle.net/1887/25763>

Note: To cite this publication please use the final published version (if applicable).

Cover Page



Universiteit Leiden



The handle <http://hdl.handle.net/1887/25763> holds various files of this Leiden University dissertation

Author: Müller, Johannes

Title: Exile memories and the Dutch Revolt : the narrated diaspora, 1550 – 1750

Issue Date: 2014-05-14

Chapter 1 - Imagining the Diaspora

The formation of diaspora narratives

The Netherlandish diaspora networks that persisted for about two centuries relied on narratives that explained the reasons for their existence and provided commonly recognizable tales of origin. The discourses in which these narratives were developed emerged in the 1550s and were continued and modified by subsequent generations of migrants. Writings of the first generation of the diaspora set the tone for later chronicles and other historiographical works of the various stranger churches. This chapter describes the emergence of discourses that shaped the later diasporic networks and provided images with which individuals and groups could identify. Such processes of identification were necessary for the formation of the diaspora. Refugees from the Low Countries and their descendants saw their fate not as an individual experience but as one shared with a wider community of exiles with whom they remained connected, often over great distances.

Historians and church historians have sometimes attributed the cultivation of a diasporic mentality and a pronounced theology of exile to specific branches of Western Protestantism, especially Calvinism.⁶⁸ We must, however, not forget that these religious diasporic discourses had their own development and were not initially and self-evidently part of the new confessional cultures that emerged in the sixteenth century. This chapter explores how these discourses came into being and how they were appropriated by groups and individuals within the refugee networks. While the scholarly discussion of a specific Reformed 'exile theology' has long focused on Calvin's works, it is unclear to what extent his writings influenced wider audiences of exiled believers and how the consciousness of belonging to a religious diaspora was cultivated in the exile networks. To answer these questions, I will treat

⁶⁸ See e.g.: Heiko A. Oberman, 'Europa afflicta: The Reformation of the Refugees', in: *Archiv für Reformationsgeschichte* 83 (1992), pp. 91–111; Heiko A. Oberman, *Two Reformations. The Journey from the Last Days to the New World*, London / New Haven 2003, pp. 145ff.; Heinz Schilling, 'Christliche und jüdische Minderheitengemeinden im Vergleich. Calvinistische Exulanten und westliche Diaspora der Sephardim im 16. und 17. Jahrhundert', in: *Zeitschrift für historische Forschung* 36/3 (2009), p. 436.

a wider range of sources relating to the early Netherlandish diaspora, such as pastoral works on exile, sermons and pamphlets of exiled clerics as well as historiographical works on persecution and flight.

While going into exile eventually came to be regarded as a sign of religious steadfastness and acquired a certain prestige in itself, this was not initially the case. As defenses of refugees from the 1550s show, the choice to flee could be seen as an act of cowardice. In particular, the flight of clerics who were responsible for the spiritual well-being of other believers was considered to require a justification. The purity of the motives for emigration was also sometimes addressed: were the refugees really driven by their faith or did they seek their fortune abroad? Even if such discussions ended after the first phase of the mass migration from the Netherlands, they shaped the way in which religious exile would be perceived later.

In defense of the diaspora

In June 1558, around the feast of Corpus Christi, inquisitor Nicolaas de Castro travelled to the North Holland town of Alkmaar to arrest Cornelis Cooltuyn, a former Catholic priest who had become notorious for preaching evangelical doctrines and refusing to say mass. However, before De Castro could reach Alkmaar Cooltuyn was warned and left the town in haste to head for Emden, one of the major safe havens for Dutch Protestants and other dissenters at the time.⁶⁹ In his well-known pastoral work *Dat Evangeli der Armen* ('The gospel of the poor') Cooltuyn later stated that the person who had warned him and thereby saved his life must have been an angel.⁷⁰ The decision to include this element in the narrative was more than a mere mystification of the story and played a crucial role in the rehabilitation of the clergyman who now served the Reformed congregation in his Northern German exile town. Among his fellow brethren the choice to avoid martyrdom by going into exile was not yet necessarily considered a virtuous deed for the sake of one's faith. From the first days of the Reformation in the Netherlands the new Reformed martyrs had been commemorated and celebrated as exemplary believers who had feared neither death nor torture in order to remain loyal to the 'true religion'. By the 1540s

⁶⁹ G.N.M. Vis, *Cornelis Cooltuyn (1526-1567): de vader van de Hollandse reformatie*, Hilversum 1995, p. 140.

⁷⁰ Cornelis Cooltuyn, *Dat Evangeli der Armen*, *Bibliotheca Reformatoria Neerlandica*, deel 9: *Geschriften van gemengde aard*, The Hague 1912, pp. 239, 240.

Flemish rhetoricians were composing songs about the old and the new martyrs, and in 1559, the same year that Cooltuyn's *Dat Evangeli der Armen* saw the light, Reformed minister Adriaan van Haemstede published his famous martyrology which would become the canonical martyrs book of Dutch Reformed Protestantism.⁷¹ Although van Haemstede was an exile in Emden too and certainly did not condemn fleeing one's homeland for religion's sake, martyrdom had gained such a prestige that other refugees, especially among the clergy, obviously felt the necessity to defend their choice not to have ended their lives as martyrs.

Dat Evangeli der Armen was composed as a pastoral device for 'miserable Christians' and, as the title page revealed, had been written by Cooltuyn 'to comfort himself, while in exile and also others who are in affliction'.⁷² In the introduction to this work Cooltuyn explained his decision to choose exile over martyrdom. Though the martyrs needed to be praised, Christ had not commanded his disciples to let themselves be slaughtered like sheep but to leave for another town when their message was outlawed. Even Jesus himself had fled his persecutors several times, and, as Cooltuyn argued, martyrdom was acceptable only for those who had not been forewarned and were surprised by the enemies of the Gospel.⁷³ Becoming a martyr deliberately and without utter necessity was therefore not only against Christ's explicit orders but also a sign of recklessness rather than of piety. Furthermore, acceptance of the Christian message did not depend on the death of its witnesses, as the cases of Jan Hus, Jerome of Prague or Jan de Bakker had shown. To preach the gospel was far godlier than to suffer death and torture, Cooltuyn asserted.⁷⁴ In his defense of the choice of exile and his plea to avoid martyrdom, he even went so far as to praise St. Peter for his denial of discipleship at the court of the High Priest Annas. Instead of accusing the apostle of cowardice, he depicts Peter's betrayal as prudent and defends it by misquoting a verse from Ecclesiastes 3: 'He, who loves danger, shall perish in it.'⁷⁵ Finally, the assertion that it was an angel who

⁷¹ Adriaan van Haemstede, *De historien der vromer martelaren / die om het getuygenis des evangelij haer bloet vergoten hebben: van tijden Christi af tot dezen tegenwoordighe tijde toe opt corte by een vergaert*, Antwerp 1559.

⁷² Cooltuyn, *Dat Evangeli der Armen*, p. 217.

⁷³ Ibid., p. 240.

⁷⁴ Ibid., p. 241.

⁷⁵ Ibid., p. 240: 'Die dat Perijckel liefheft, sal daer in in vergaen (Eccles. 3)'. This quote does in fact not resemble any verse in Ecclesiastes 3.

had warned him to flee Alkmaar provided Cooltuyn's argument with the highest possible authority: going into exile was fully in accordance with the will of God, whose angel had saved the life of His servant.

Church historians have often seen the cultivation of religious exile identities as characteristic of Netherlandish and international Calvinism while early modern Catholics and Lutherans are believed to have condemned the choice to flee religious persecution as cowardice.⁷⁶ As Geert Janssen has recently shown, the question of whether it was legitimate for Christians to choose exile over martyrdom was indeed discussed by Catholics who faced violence at the hands of Protestant rebels.⁷⁷ However, the attitudes towards the decision to flee soon changed, and exile was described in a fashion very similar to Protestant writings on this topic. In fact, as the example of Cooltuyn shows, a comparable discussion took place among Protestants, who had to decide how to respond to persecution two decades earlier. Going into exile was not glorified from the initial starting point of Netherlandish Reformed Protestantism but seems to have required justification.

Just as in Catholic circles, the question of how to deal with religious persecution was also discussed among adherents of the Lutheran confession. When in 1566 the Lutheran congregation in Antwerp was confronted with increasing pressure by the government of Margaretha of Parma, the ministers requested advice from the University of Rostock on how to respond to the present hardships. The answer from Rostock, published in the same year under the title *Ein Schrifft an die Christen zu Antuerpen der Theologen zu Rostock* ('Missive to the Christians of Antwerp from the theologians of Rostock') was clear: above all their evangelical faith must be maintained; however, participating in violent resistance against the secular government was forbidden.⁷⁸ The refusal of the Antwerp Lutherans to

⁷⁶ See e.g.: Heiko A. Oberman, 'Toward the Recovery of the Historical Calvin. Redrawing the Map of Reformation Europe', in: Heiko A. Oberman, *John Calvin and the Reformation of the Refugees*, Geneva 2009, esp. pp. 79-92; Schilling, 'Christliche und jüdische Minderheitengemeinden', p. 436; Heinz Schilling, 'Peregrini und Schiffchen Gottes: Flüchtlingserfahrung und Exulanten-theologie des frühneuzeitlichen Calvinismus', in: Ansgar Reiss and Sabine Witt, *Calvinismus. Die Reformierten in Deutschland und Europa*, Berlin 2009, pp. 160-168.

⁷⁷ Geert Janssen, 'Quo vadis? Catholic Perceptions of Flight and the Revolt of the Low Countries. 1566-1609', in: *Renaissance Quarterly*, vol. 64/2 (Summer 2011), pp. 472-499. See also Pollmann, *Catholic Identity*, p. 133.

⁷⁸ Otto Krabbe, *David Trychäus*, (part 1), Rostock 1870, p. 188; Otto Krabbe, *Die Universität Rostock im fünfzehnten und sechzehnten Jahrhundert*, Rostock 1854, p. 642; Eckhard Dücker, *Freudenchristentum: Der Erbauungsschriftsteller Stephan Praetorius*, Göttingen 2003, p. 112.

partake in the resistance against the Habsburg authorities would remain a contentious issue for decades, but it fostered the early decision of the Lutheran community to go into exile in Frankfurt where many of its merchant members had contacts.⁷⁹ This Lutheran exodus from Antwerp preceded the great Reformed trek of 1585 by almost ten years: in 1576, after the Spanish Fury, many of the Lutherans had already left. The choice to leave was, however, not made impromptu but after thorough theological consideration based on scholarly advice from Lutheran divines from Germany. Fleeing one's homeland obviously demanded a justification in order not to be regarded as cowardice or opportunism.

Another indication of the suspicions against the choice for exile can be found in the works of Dirck Volkertsz. Coornhert, a Haarlem artist and poet inclined to an idiosyncratic form of 'libertine' spiritualism. In a dramatic play on the departure of the biblical patriarch Abraham from his homeland Chaldea, Coornhert reflected on the experience of leaving one's homeland for the sake of faith. Coornhert himself had been forced to flee his native Holland several times in the 1560s and 1570s and wrote a number of biblical plays in which he reflected on the experience of exile and dispersion. In *Abrahams Uytgangh* ('Abraham's exodus') which he published in 1575 and dedicated to his Wesel host and protégé, Arend van Wachtendonck, he introduced the allegorical character *Communis opinio* who tries to prevent the biblical patriarch from leaving. *Communis opinio* represents the voice of the refugee's contemporaries who accuse him of motivations other than piety, such as social and religious elitism, economic considerations or cowardice. Even though the author lets Abraham emerge triumphantly, he also warns of unjustified reasons for choosing exile. In the preface to the poem, Coornhert presents the two allegorical characters *Cruysvlucht* ('Flight from the cross') and *Raedwel* ('Good counsel'). *Cruysvlucht* is eager to flee his homeland in order to avoid the plagues God has sent to punish the wrongdoings of the country, as he confirms.⁸⁰ *Raedwel* admonishes him to meditate on the causes of the plagues, live a righteous life and hope that God would take away the afflictions. As a role model of the righteous

⁷⁹ Guido Marnef, *Antwerpen in de tijd van de Reformatie. Ondergronds protestantisme in een handelsmetropool 1550-1577*, Antwerpen 1996, p. 143; J. W. Pont, *Geschiedenis van het Lutheranisme in de Nederlanden tot 1618*, Haarlem 1911, p. 89.

⁸⁰ Dirck Volckertsz. Coornhert, 'Abrahams Uytgangh', in: *Het roerspel en de comedies van Coornhert* (ed. Paul van der Meulen), Leiden 1955, p. 268.

refugee *Raedwel* introduces Abraham, who did not leave his homeland to follow his own desires but to be obedient to God, who called him out of Chaldea and promised him a future in Canaan. The justification of the choice for exile is accompanied by a model that exemplifies which motivations and behaviors are appropriate for Christian refugees. Following Abraham's example is not only justified; as in the work of Cooltuyn, Coornhert praised living as a stranger in the diaspora as an act of obedience to the will of God.

'Exile theology' and confessional identity

In the works of exiled authors such as Cooltuyn, Coornhert and many others the status of the exiled Christian who fled his homeland to remain loyal to his faith was celebrated and provided the great numbers of Netherlandish refugees with an appropriable image of their own situation and a collective identity to which they could relate. The sixteenth-century Netherlandish diaspora was not only an empirical given, consisting of a multitude of individual exiles but also an imagined community connected by bonds of confession and regional origin as well as friend- and kinship relations. As Esther Peeren has argued, the representation of the diaspora is never separable from its lived conditions.⁸¹ Only through developing a collective consciousness of being in exile and fashioning collective diasporic identities do actual diasporas come into being. The religious exiles from the Netherlands did not perceive their own fate as an isolated case but identified with larger groups of people, whom they necessarily did not personally know but with whom they felt united in the same religious conviction and often the same common political cause.

The fashioning of religious exile identities was not restricted to any confessional current: not only Reformed authors but also Catholics, Mennonites and even anti-confessional spiritualists mirrored the fate of the contemporary refugees with the heroes of biblical accounts of dispersion and exile. The question of whether and how the exile experience shaped the various forms of the newly emerged confessional currents and how it contributed to new forms of theology has recently been the subject of debate. Scholars working on early modern Calvinism have emphasized the significance of the exile situation for the constitution of a specific

⁸¹ Esther Peeren, 'Through the Lens of the Chronotope', p. 70.

form of Reformed faith and worship.⁸² According to Heinz Schilling, the Calvinist refugees who had to flee their homelands developed a specific kind of 'exile theology' that evolved when the Reformed refugee communities tried to maintain their own religious identity and to distinguish themselves from the natives of their new abodes.⁸³ Thereby the characteristic Calvinist features, such as the emphasis on predestination, strict ecclesiastical discipline and the presbyterial-synodal church order were adopted or further developed. When the Reformed Church became the 'public church' of the Dutch Republic these distinctive characteristics were, at least partially, preserved, and the church was able to maintain its identity as an exclusive group of believers gathering around the communion table as full *lidmaten*, whereas the services were also frequented by the larger group of *liefhebbers*, who did not fall under the discipline of the church.⁸⁴

In his examination of Reformed exile theology Schilling draws heavily on the ideas of Heiko Oberman, who drew a strict distinction between the communal and the city reformation, on the one hand, and the Calvinist 'Reformation of the refugees,' on the other.⁸⁵ Whereas the communal and the city reformers envisaged an all-embracing church for the whole community or even tried to transform it into a kind of Erasmian *magnum monasterium*, Calvin

did not understand his own position as that of the *Leutpriester* of Geneva, or the people's priest of the Genevan city-state. He did not receive his calling from the city council, as had been the case in the late medieval *Praedikaturen*. He insisted that he had been called to his ministry directly by God, just as Isaiah to his prophecy, David to his kingship, and Paul to his apostolate. Reading the Scriptures as an exiled refugee in light of his own experience, he addressed his listeners and readers not as citizens of Geneva or any other European region, but rather as uprooted wayfarers who had signed up for the hazardous trek to the eternal city.⁸⁶

⁸² Oberman, '*Europa afflicta*: The Reformation of the Refugees.'; Oberman, *Two Reformations*, pp. 145ff.; Alastair Duke, 'The Ambivalent Face of Calvinism in the Netherlands 1561-1618', in: *Ibid.*, *Reformation and Revolt in the Low Countries*, London / New York 2003, p. 269; Schilling, 'Die frühneuzeitliche Konfessionsmigration', pp. 82ff.

⁸³ *Ibid.*; Schilling, 'Peregrini und Schiffchen Gottes', p. 167

⁸⁴ See: Duke, 'The Ambivalent Face of Calvinism', pp. 291ff.

⁸⁵ Oberman, '*Europa afflicta*', pp. 99ff.; Oberman, *Two Reformations*, pp. 145ff.

⁸⁶ Oberman, '*Europa afflicta*', p. 103.

According to Oberman, central aspects of Calvin's theology, such as the doctrine of divine predestination, were rooted in the experience of being persecuted and cannot be understood outside the context of the exile situation.⁸⁷ Oberman argued that in pre-modern Europe being banished and exiled was regarded as divine punishment for those who had fallen into apostasy or were abandoned by God's mercy and providence, such as the wandering Children of Israel after their rejection of Christ, whereas Calvinism brought about a radical reevaluation of the diaspora experience: wandering through a hostile world became solid evidence that God directed his chosen few through the desert to the Promised Land.⁸⁸

To be sure, the focus on particular socio-historical constellations, such as the exile situation of French and Dutch Calvinists or the local structures of the southern German towns experiencing a typical 'city reformation', has contributed much to the understanding of certain confessional cultures and forms of worship that emerged during the sixteenth century. Nevertheless, Oberman's answer to the question of how these specific historical contexts contributed to the formation of distinct religious and confessional phenotypes has two essential limitations. First of all, Oberman and Schilling were primarily interested in, and have vigorously emphasized, the notion of the religious confession. As Schilling writes in a recent article, the fundamental distinction between the confessional cultures of continental Lutheranism and Western European Calvinism was the prominent '*peregrinus* mentality' of the latter. By contrast, Schilling argues, the experience of exile was absent from the historical identity of Lutheranism and its religious-sociological shape that was rather

determined by stability and legal security under the protection of the Peace of Augsburg. It was characterized by the continental parochialism of the regional churches, which cared for the spiritual and social welfare of the natives and was inclined to perceive strangers as intruders and troublemakers.⁸⁹

In fact, the experience of exile was by no means exclusively Reformed, and as historians of Central Europe and other regions have recently demonstrated, being

⁸⁷ Oberman, *Two Reformations*, p. 162.

⁸⁸ Ibid., p. 83.

⁸⁹ Schilling, 'Christliche und jüdische Minderheitengemeinden', p. 436.

exiled and banished could also play an important role in the theology of other confessions. Not only Calvinists but also Lutherans, Mennonites and Catholics fashioned themselves as ‘the persecuted Children of God’ and regarded exile as a creditable mark of the ‘true Christians’.⁹⁰

A second problem with the notion of an exclusively Reformed exile theology, as defined by Oberman and Schilling, is the lack of clarity about the social as well as the theological *locus* of this phenomenon. When Oberman spoke of the ‘Reformation of the refugees’, he did not get far beyond an impressive exegesis of Calvin’s works. Building on Oberman’s work, Schilling proclaimed the decisive impact of a Reformed exile theology for the constitution of a specifically Dutch form of Calvinism.⁹¹ However, this postulate has not yet been tested by a systematic study of primary sources. It is therefore still unclear what happened ‘between’ Calvin’s ideas and the concrete form of exile theology in the Netherlands. Even if Oberman’s turn to the ‘Reformation of the refugees’ started as a bold attempt to ground the study of theology in social history, the focus on canonical reformers like Calvin remained dominant although the direct impact of Calvin’s genuine ideas on the diasporic networks is highly questionable. Not only were works like the *Institutes* available relatively late in the Low Countries and the typical exile destinations of the Reformed refugees, but assuming primacy of the influence of a, though highly approved and authoritative, theologian like Calvin above the practical experience of the great numbers of refugees themselves would be incompatible with Oberman’s own program of a ‘social history of religion’.

In order to reexamine the notion of such an exile theology, I propose to address ‘theology’ in a broader sense and to conceive of it not as a static system of

⁹⁰ On Lutheran migrants, see e.g.: Alexander Schunka, ‘Constantia im Martyrium. Zur Exilliteratur des 17. Jahrhunderts zwischen Humanismus und Barock’, in: Thomas Kaufmann/Anselm Schubert/Kaspar von Greyerz (eds): *Frühneuzeitliche Konfessionskulturen*, Gütersloh 2008, pp. 175-200; Alexander Schunka, *Gäste, die bleiben*. On Catholic exiles in the Southern Netherlands, see: Janssen, ‘Quo vadis?’; Janssen, ‘The Counter-Reformation of the Refugee’.

⁹¹ Schilling, ‘Peregrini und Schiffchen Gottes’, p. 167. See also: Heinz Schilling, ‘Religion und Gesellschaft in der calvinistischen Republik der Vereinigten Niederlande. ‘Öffentlichkeitskirche’ und Säkularisation; Ehe und Hebammenwesen; Presbyterien und politische Partizipation’, in: Franz Petri (ed.), *Kirche und Gesellschaft in deutschen und niederländischen Städten der werdenden Neuzeit*, Cologne / Vienna 1980, p. 214.

doctrines but as a historical and context-bound interpretation of human experiences in the light of faith.⁹²

Theological reasoning is, of course, never restricted to divines and academics but is a practice of professional theologians and laypeople alike. The sources to be studied here are therefore not restricted to academic books and tracts. In order to get a fuller grasp of how the experience of religious exile was articulated in theological terms we should also consider sermons, literary texts, pamphlets and personal writings as well as social practices. By doing so I hope to present a clearer and more contextualized picture of what early modern 'exile theology' was and in which social and religious milieus it was practiced and cultivated. What can be gained by 'zooming out' of the theological characteristics of the various confessional currents and their canonical heroes is a better explanation of the cultivation of exile identities by adherents of various early modern confessions. As the source material from the Netherlands shows, the fashioning of such identities and theological explanations and justifications did not differ very much between Reformed, Mennonite or Libertine or even Catholic authors.

Making sense of exile

A crucial challenge for many of the exiles who had left the Netherlands during the religious persecutions was how to interpret their present situation and God's purpose behind it. Particularly during the first two migration waves of Protestants and dissenters from the Netherlands in the 1540s and 1550s and during the early Dutch Revolt between 1566 and 1572 going into exile was rarely motivated by economic consideration but above all by the need to escape immediate danger. Open dissent could easily cost people their lives, and flight was the only way to avoid martyrdom. The desperation surrounding the forced peregrination through foreign lands and the threatening insecurity are clearly expressed in the early writings of refugees. Many of their works remained highly influential and were frequently reprinted and, in the

⁹² The notion of theology as a practice, which is not limited to academically trained divines, has become increasingly important in the field of historical theology during the last twenty years (See e.g.: Angie Pears, *Doing contextual theology*, Abingdon 2010.). In the context of this development, Stephen B. Bevens has identified five types of contextual theology. My characterization of 'exile theology' corresponds to what he calls the 'praxis model' (Stephen B. Bevens, *Models of Contextual Theology*, Maryknoll 2002, p. 82.).

case of manuscripts, conserved and treated as objects of commemoration.⁹³ Among those works was Jan Utenhove's *Simplex et fidelis narratio* ('Simple and truthful narration') which became a formative and canonical narrative of the Netherlandish diaspora. The book was not only reprinted more than seven times between 1560 and the early seventeenth century but also translated into German and spread among the Reformed territories of the Empire.⁹⁴ Utenhove's work described the burdensome odyssey of a group of 175 Dutch refugees, who had first fled to England but were forced to leave their exile abode after Mary Tudor's coronation in 1553. During the winter of 1553/54 they sailed along the North Sea coast to seek asylum in the ports of Northern German and Danish towns but were expelled due to the agitation of Lutheran clerics and city councils. The *Simplex et fidelis narratio* stylized the refugees as steadfast Christians, persecuted for the sake of faith, and at the same time accused Lutherans of confessional fanaticism. Until the eighteenth century Utenhove's work remained a cornerstone of Reformed exile narratives in Germany and England and strongly informed the stranger congregations' chronicles and their sense of the past.⁹⁵ Similarly, an early history of the war in the Netherlands, written by Emmanuel van Meeteren in England, was highly influential in the later memory cultures of the diaspora abroad and was still used in eighteenth-century chronicles of stranger churches.⁹⁶ Among the more theological and pastoral works on exile Hieronimus van der Voort's pastoral works on flight, war and banishment had their heyday a considerable time after his death, and they were reprinted several times

⁹³ See for the conservation of manuscripts e.g.: Marcus Zuerius van Boxhorn/Jan Reyghersbergh, *Chroniick van Zeelandt, eertijds beschreven door d'Heer Johan Reygersbergen, nu verbeterd, ende vermeerdert door Marcus Zuerius van Boxhorn*, Middelburg 1644, p. 169; Clasiën Rooze Stouthamer, *De opmaat tot de Opstand. Zeeland en het centraal gezag (1566-1572)*, Hilversum 2009, p. 82;

⁹⁴ Jan Utenhove, *Simplex et fidelis narratio de instituta ac demum dissipata Belgarum, aliorumque peregrinorum in Anglia, ecclesia: & potissimum de susceptis postea illius nomine itineribus, quæque eis in illis euenerunt* Basel 1560. See also: Henning P. Jürgens, 'Die Vertreibung der reformierten Flüchtlingsgemeinden aus London. Jan Utenhoves „Simplex et fidelis narratio“', in: Henning P. Jürgens and Thomas Weller (eds.), *Religion und Mobilität. Zum Verhältnis von raumbezogener Mobilität und religiöser Identitätsbildung im frühneuzeitlichen Europa*, Göttingen 2010, pp.13-40.

⁹⁵ In several chronicles of the Frankfurt Reformed congregation, Utenhove's text was even included almost in full or quoted and paraphrased extensively. See: Institut für Stadtgeschichte Frankfurt am Main, Deutsch-Reformierte Gemeinde, inv.nr. 148: Mangon, Geschichte der beiden Gemeinden, fol. 45-90, and inv.nr. 149, Chronik der beiden Gemeinden. Abraham Mangon dedicated no fewer than forty-five pages to Utenhove's account. On references to Utenhove's account in seventeenth-century petition letters, see also: Grell, *Brethren in Christ*, p. 199.

⁹⁶ Emmanuel van Meeteren, *Historie der Nederlandscher ende haerder Na-buren Oorloghen*, The Hague 1623 (The first edition appeared in 1599). Even Lutheran writers used Van Meeteren's history for their accounts of their ancestors' exile past. See: Lehnemann, *Historische Nachricht*, pp. 4f.

during the seventeenth century.⁹⁷ These works, along with those of writers like Jean Taffin, Caspar Cooltuyn, and Ysbrand Balck in the Reformed tradition or Menno Simons and Dirck Coornhert in the Mennonite and Libertine camps would shape the emerging discourse on exile for decades and remain popular.

Like Cooltuyn's *Evangelii der Armen*, Van der Voort's *Een schoon profijtelik boeck, ghenaeamt den benauden, verjaechden Christen* ('A fair and useful book, called the afflicted and exiled Christian') was intended to serve as a pastoral manual on the question of how to deal with affliction and exile as a believer. Styled in the form of the contemporary popular *rederijkers* poetry, the work is structured in thirteen questions, posed by the 'poor afflicted Christian'.⁹⁸ The answer to these questions consists exclusively of Bible quotes dealing with exile, suffering and war. Though dedicated to the Woerden nobleman Roeland van der Staken, on whose soil Van der Voort and other exiled 'Christians' were allowed to live, the book is explicitly addressed to 'those who are aggrieved, displaced from their homeland and afflicted by depressing thoughts'.⁹⁹ The 'scriptural' answers to the question of the afflicted believers point to God's providence that assures them of His guidance and final relief of earthly afflictions. To illustrate God's guidance practically, Van der Voort ends the book with a brief narration of his own deliverance after he had been accused of heresy under Alba's Council of Troubles. This story is also meant to provide his work with more authenticity; not only had he suffered greatly under the persecuting regime, but God had not forgotten him in his afflictions:

After my death, you shall hear speak of me,
for this is my book and no one can doubt it,
which I have written, having fled
from Lier in Brabant,
when the Duke of Alba came there,
a tyrant in all his deeds,
with his Egyptian locusts, which devour all the green.
Though they leave the land bare-branched, they are not sated.
They harm not only the Christian but every man,

⁹⁷ Hieronimus van der Voort, *Een schoon profijtelik boeck, ghenaeamt den benauden, verjaechden Christen*, Haarlem 1612.

⁹⁸ On sixteenth-century *rederijkers* (rhetoricians') poetry and drama in which religious topics were frequently discussed, see: Gary K. Waite, *Reformers on Stage. Popular Drama and Religious Propaganda in the Low Countries of Charles V, 1515-1556*, Toronto 2000.

⁹⁹ Ibid., fol. E9v.(Finis): 'Derselffde is nut mijn Boeck te hooren spreken, die daer bedroeft zijn, ut haer vaderlant gheweken, desolaet met ghepeynsen belaeien.'

But from their hands I was saved by God Himself in all His grace,
on the ninth of July in 1568, He fulfilled His work
and I could escape by daylight, but unrecognized
by the guards in front of my house.
When God intends to intervene,
no one and nothing can resist.¹⁰⁰

The notion of a final triumph through God's providence is inherent in virtually all the pastoral writings of the Netherlandish refugees. However, this triumph was not always sought in this earthly life but in the great reward the true believers would be granted in heaven. This notion is strongly pronounced in the numerous writings which Menno Simons published about exile. In his *Eyne troestelijke van dat lijden, cruyze, unde vervolginge der heyligen* ('A consoling exhortation of the suffering, cross and persecution of the godly') the Beatitudes of the Sermon of the Mount (Matthew 5) are applied to the persecuted believers, particularly verses 10 and 11: 'Blessed are they which are persecuted for righteousness' sake, for theirs is the kingdom of heaven'.¹⁰¹ The righteous, Menno explains, had always been persecuted, from Abel to Jesus and his followers. The prophets of the Old Testament were often forced to flee as were the first Christians.¹⁰² Contemporary believers had no reason to think that they would be an exception:

I hope, dear Brethren, that these examples have made clear to you of which kind the people the godly were and which spirit was in them, namely Christ Jesus, the silent, peaceful, innocent and obedient Lamb of God. And his members were banished, plundered, betrayed, incarcerated, tortured,

¹⁰⁰ Ibid., fol. E10r.: 'Want naer mijn doot, suldy noch hooren spreken,
My dats mijn boeck dwelck niemant en sal weiren
Dwelck ick ghemaect hebbe, zijnde gheweken,
Wt Liere in Brabant, doen daer quam ghestreken
Duck de Alba, tyrannich in al zijn affeiren,
Met de Egiptische Sprinchanen die tgroen verteiren
Ja dlant cael maken, en blijven noch onversadich,
Niet den Christenen alleen, maer elcken schadich,
Wt hare handen tooch my de Heere ghenadich
Alsmen vijfthien hondert achtentsestich dicteerde,
Julij neghen, twas Gods werck ghestadich
Dat ick sdaechs wt mijn cot, deur de wakers passeerde,
Waer God een aenslach drijft noyt yet en facteerde.'

¹⁰¹ Menno Simons, *Eyne troestelijke vermaninge van dat lijden, cruyze, unde vervolginge der heyligen, umme dat woort Godes, unde zijne getuichenisse*, s.l. 1554/1555(?), fol. A1r.-A3v.

¹⁰² Ibid., fol. B3v.; fol.E4r.

mutilated, drowned, burned and strangled, without any mercy and from the beginning until this present day.¹⁰³

The world as a hostile place for the godly from its foundation onwards is a notion shared by pastoral authors of all confessional allegiances, who argued that being cast out was the 'natural' fate of believers. According to Doede van Amsweer, a nobleman from Groningen who had converted to Reformed Protestantism when travelling in Germany and had to flee his homeland after the Catholic recapturing of the *Ommelanden*, the present state in the Netherlands had to be understood as an affliction brought upon Dutch Protestants by Satan himself, whom God allowed to test the faith and loyalty of the believers, as He had tested Job in the Old Testament.¹⁰⁴ Doede van Amsweer's work, which he dedicated to his fellow exiles, consisted mainly of a translation of a tract by Hieronymus Savonarola on Psalm 31 that encouraged believers to remain steadfast and not to doubt the rightfulness of their cause. Banishment from one's homeland was Satan's attempt to discourage the exiles and to tempt them to compromise with the ungodly customs of the world. What they needed to do was to understand the causes behind their afflictions and persevere to prove their godliness.

Punishing the wicked – chastising the elect

Many of the writings on exile and persecution written by refugees from the Low Countries share a paradoxical tension: on the one hand, exile is increasingly revaluated and praised while, on the other hand, the reason for flight is often sought in a godly punishment. In 1606, playwright and rhetorician Jacob Duym, who had fled to Leiden after the fall of Antwerp in 1585, published his *Ghedenck-boeck*, a collection of propagandistic plays about the Dutch Revolt in which the atrocities of the Spanish enemy were graphically depicted and the patriotic Netherlands of all

¹⁰³ Ibid., fol. G3r.: 'Ick verhope werde Broeders, dat hier in dese aenghetoghene Exempelen [...] bewesen is wattet alle wegen voor eyn Volck geweest is, uth wat Vader se gheboren sijn unde wat Gheyst se gedreven heeft, die Christum Jesum, dat Lyestijcke, Vreedtsamighe, Unschuldige, unde Gehoorsamige Lam Gades [sic], unde sijne heylighe Ledematen van Aenfange heer so unbermhertelijcken hebben uthghetoten, geplundert, belogen, ghevangen, ghepijnicht, afghehouwen, verdroncken, ghebraden, versticket, ummeghebracht unde vermoort tot op desen yeghenwoordigen dach toe.'

¹⁰⁴ Doede van Amsweer, *Spiegel der aenvechtinghen des Sathans, unde waere proeve des gheloofs : daer in ons de strijde des vleeschtes tegen den geest, die alle Christen in tijde van cruyce unde tegenspoet, in sich gevoelen, levendich wort voor oogen ghestelt Proeve des ghelovens. Vande ware salichmaeckende erkenntnisse Christi. Ein trouhertige unde droevighe vermaninge an de verstroyde utgewekene, unde gemeyne ingesetene der Vrieszchen Ommelanden*, Emden 1584.

provinces, who had heroically defended their country, enthusiastically praised.¹⁰⁵ In one of the plays, *Belegheringhe der stadt Antwerpen*, a confusing ambivalence appears. In the play, the city of Antwerp is presented as an allegorical personage, the innocent virgin Antwerpia, who has to suffer under the iniquities of the besiegers. She trusts in God's providence and remains confident and virtuous. Once the city is conquered by the Spanish, the tenor of the play seems to change radically: when Antwerpia laments her fate, another allegorical personage, *Gods stranghe rechtvaerdicheyt* ('God's severe justice') appears and explains the reason for the fall. God has punished the corrupt city, 'whose sins stink towards heaven'.¹⁰⁶ At once, Antwerpia seems to be transformed from an innocent virgin into a guilty city deserving of punishment.

How can this ambivalence be explained? In the collective memory of the Northern Netherlands, especially in orthodox-Reformed circles, the fall of the Calvinist cities in the south served as an exemplary warning against earthly vanities and the arrogance of the rich. The theme of the downfall of the proud and luxurious Flemish and Brabantine merchant towns was often addressed in Reformed sermons. During the Twelve Years' Truce, Reformed minister Jacobus Trigland warned his Haarlem congregation not to forget the terrible example of Antwerp, which was punished for its arrogance and luxuriousness.¹⁰⁷ In a sermon on Exodus 8:1-20, held in the late 1580s by Sluis minister and former Carthusian monk Wilhelmus Commantius, the punishment of the Southern cities was compared to the fate of the seven churches in Asia from the Book of Revelation and their downfall under the Turks hundreds of years later. The punishment of Egypt by the ten plagues could also serve as an example of God's intervention in the plans of the disobedient, who resembled the people in the fallen Southern cities.¹⁰⁸ At the time when the sermon was preached, the Reformed congregation in Sluis consisted mostly of refugees from the 'punished towns' in the South.¹⁰⁹ Except for Commantius from Roermond and

¹⁰⁵ Jacob Duym, *Een ghedenck-boeck, het welck ons leert aen al het quaet en den grooten moetwil van de Spaingnaerden en haren aenhanck ons aen-ghedaen te ghedencken. Ende de groote liefde ende trou vande Princen uyt den huyse van Nassau, aen ons betoont, eeuwelick te onthouden*, Leiden, 1606.

¹⁰⁶ Jacob Duym, *Belegheringhe der stadt Antwerpen*, in: *Ghedenck-boeck*, fol. G2r

¹⁰⁷ A. Th. Van Deursen, *Bavianen en slijkgeuzen. Kerk en kerkvolk ten tijde van Maurits en Oldenbarnevelt*, Assen 1974, p. 222.

¹⁰⁸ A. Bauwens / D. van der Bauwhede, *Acta van de kerkeraad van de Nederduits Gereformeerde Gemeente te Sluis 1578-1587*, Torhout 1986, p. 285.

¹⁰⁹ Ibid., p. 21.

Johannes Arcerius from Noordhorn, all the congregation's ministers between 1578 and 1587 were themselves Flemings and Brabanders.¹¹⁰ What was the significance of the interpretation of the fall of Antwerp and other Southern cities as a divine punishment for people who were Southern exiles themselves? When the Reformed refugees presented themselves as the new children of Israel, why did they wish to understand the exodus from Antwerp as a righteous judgment? A typical feature of sixteenth-century exile theology in the Netherlands was the notion of the twofold nature of God's punishment. This notion can also be found in the works of Calvin as he tried to explain why the elect were faced with persecution and exile. For him, the afflictions Christians had to suffer in this world were in the first instance meant to test their faith and confidence in God: as Abraham was tempted by the command to sacrifice Isaac, the obedience of His elect was still tested from time to time. By being afflicted and persecuted, they were cleansed 'just as gold is tried in a furnace of fire'.¹¹¹ By recalling the famous verses from Proverbs 3:11 to the minds of his readers, Calvin sees earthly tribulations as a sign of God's love towards His elect: 'For whom the Lord loveth he correcteth; even as a father the son in whom he delighteth'. By chastising the believers, God purifies them and thus saves them from damnation, which is prepared only for the wicked.¹¹² Once having been subjected to God's chastisement, the elect are consoled by the knowledge of the intention behind it:

Poverty, indeed considered in itself, is misery; so are exile, contempt, imprisonment, ignominy: in fine, death itself is the last of all calamities. But when the favour of God breathes upon us, there is none of these things which may not turn out to our happiness.¹¹³

The twofold nature of divine punishment was an often recurring theme in theological treatises and sermons among Dutch exiles. In the *Evangelii der Armen*, Cooltuyn asserted that all afflictions in this world occurred only to benefit the true believers. The work is composed as a dialogue between the characters Theophilus and Dorothea, who reflect on the question of God's will in human suffering and

¹¹⁰ Ibid., pp. 33-39.

¹¹¹ Calvin, *Institutes of the Christian Religion*, p. 498.

¹¹² Ibid., p. 499. Calvin refers to 1 Corinthians 11:32 here.

¹¹³ Ibid., p. 500.

affliction. The Reformed Theophilus teaches the sick Dorothea the basic Protestant doctrines, and they discuss the question of why God lets His children be persecuted. In his explanation and justification of human suffering Cooltuyn draws on the fundamental distinction between ‘natural’ and ‘godly’ men. While natural men seek only earthly joys and pleasures, they forget about God and become more and more removed from His will and presence. To keep the believers close to Him, God chastises them and lets them suffer, lest they become too focused on the world and its concerns.¹¹⁴ For the children of God, suffering does not mean only chastisement but also sanctification: in their afflictions they can grow in godliness and are constantly reminded that their home is not in this world but in their eternal fatherland. Earthly afflictions like war, persecution and exile serve only to draw the believers closer to God.

In his devotional work *De marques des enfants de Dieu* (‘The marks of the children of God’) Walloon Reformed preacher Jean Taffin developed the notion of a twofold judgment into an elaborate theological scheme.¹¹⁵ To him earthly tribulation was not so much a necessary evil that belonged to the earthly life of every Christian as the distinguishable ‘mark of the children of God’. At first sight, the experience of persecution would make the believers doubt God’s benevolence towards them:

What appearance is there (saith the flesh) that wee are the children of God? Our goods are violently taken from us, our possessions are confiscate, and our offices and Estates are taken away. We are driven out of our countrey, yea from countrey to countrey like vagabonds: we are hated of mother and father, and of our own kinsfolke and friends: we are drawne and kept in prison [...]: To be short, we see nothing but the wrath and the curse of God upon us.¹¹⁶

In fact, Taffin elaborates, the experience of tribulations in the world is not a result of ‘the wrath and the curse of God’ but, on the contrary, a sign of His fatherly love. Only the reprobate are struck by God’s anger – for them, the horrors of this world are indeed meant as a punishment, whereas they serve the elect as a purifying

¹¹⁴ Cooltuyn, *Dat Evangelie der Armen*, pp. 271ff.

¹¹⁵ I quote from the English translation by Anne Prowse: Jean Taffin, *Of the marques of the children of God and of their comforts in afflictions. To the faithfull of the Low Countrey. By Iohn Taffin. Ouerseene againe and augmented by the author, and translated out of French by Anne Prowse*, London 1590.

¹¹⁶ Ibid., p. 136.

chastisement. As an example of those for whom persecution and exile are a sure sign of God's judgment, he mentions the Calvinist apostate Jean Haren: God 'hath set him forth for an example of his judgments, that those that make profession of Religion, and chiefly the Ministers of the word, may study more and more to walke with a good conscience to keepe themselves in their vocation [and] to renounce the passions of the flesh.'¹¹⁷

The elect, on the contrary, are not punished but rather benefit from the tribulations in the world:

This which thou lamentest, is thy medicine, and not thy punishment. As in a house where there are many children, the rod is necessary: and as in a Citie subject to divers diseases, and where there is an evil ayre, Physicians are needfull: so in the house of God, where there are many children inclined to evill, the rod is many times more necessary than bread.¹¹⁸

The believers should regard persecution and afflictions as a beneficial 'medicine' provided by God:

And indeed, behold the difference betweene a mad man, and one that is sicke of a corporal disease; the mad man is angry with the Physician, chaseth him away & throweth away the medicine; but the other sendeth for a Physician, taketh the drinke at his hand, thanketh him, yea and giveth him a reward. [...] let us not bee like mad men rejecting the medicine, let us give him thanks and blesse him, after the example of *Iob*.¹¹⁹

Reformed minister Ysbrand Balck, who preached the two last sermons before Reformed worship was made illegal, had to leave Antwerp twice, once in 1567 and then again in 1585. Balck argued in a vein similar to that pursued by Taffin: In both his farewell sermons, he chose to preach on the parable of the small mustard seed which became a strong and powerful tree (Mark 4:30). Referring to Hebrews 12:6-8, he tried to show that it was not only necessary that true believers be chastised by their Lord but that this chastisement was the sure sign that they were not 'spiritual

¹¹⁷ Ibid., p. 125.

¹¹⁸ Ibid., p. 186f.

¹¹⁹ Ibid., p. 188.

bastards' but the Father's true beloved sons.¹²⁰ Whereas the reprobate expect the elect to despair of the present situation, the elect are in fact consoled by it through the knowledge of their adoption by God: through this knowledge, 'we do not become desperate notwithstanding all the [...] persecution, banishment and exiling, strangling, killing and murdering [...].'¹²¹

In his introduction to the printed edition of the sermon from 1590, Balck makes clear that the fall of the town should be regarded as a warning from God himself. God had not yet given up on all the inhabitants of Antwerp, and His intervention has been fruitful indeed: even the 'ghecrulde en ghedrulde Joffrouwen', the cuddled and finely dressed damsels, whose lax morals had provoked the fall, understood the warning and were saved from eternal damnation.¹²² Chastising the elect was necessary for their salvation and the perseverance of their faith and their godly life. Like Taffin and Balck, rhetorician Hieronimus van der Voort, who had fled his hometown Lier for Holland, underlined the necessity of chastisement for true believers:

Everything that happens, be it persecution, be it prosperity or poverty,
Be it word or fire, comfort or discomfort, honour or humiliation,
it all only serves to benefit you, otherwise it would be prevented.
*Because the rod is used to bring forth both knowledge and virtue.*¹²³

Similarly, Menno and Coornhert saw the earthly tribulations of exile as a learning process: suffering was meant only to keep the godly oriented towards their master.¹²⁴ On the way to their final destination they needed to be chastised in order to remain pure:

¹²⁰ Ysbrand Balck, *Het cleyn mostert-zaet, dat is, de laetste predicatie a. 1567. den 9 Aprilis, ende wederom, die naest-laetste predicatie den 18. Aug. a. 1585. binnen Antwerpen*, Amsterdam 1590, p. 144. See on Balck's repeated relocation during the Dutch Revolt: Timothy Fehler, 'Conflict and Compromise in International Calvinism: Ysbrand Trabijs Balck's Pastoral Mediations in Exile and Beyond', in: *Reformation and Renaissance Review*, vol.10, 3 / 2008, pp. 291-313; Frank van der Pol, *Mosterdzaad in ballingschap. Over christelijke identiteit en geloofsrepressie in de Nederlanden*, Kampen 2007.

¹²¹ Ibid., p. 145.

¹²² Ibid., *Voorreden aende verstroyde Ghemeynte van Antwerpen*, IX.

¹²³ Hieronimus van der Voort, *Een schoon profijtelik boeck, ghenaeamt den benauden, verjaechden Christen*, Haarlem 1612 (reprint), fol. E9r.:

'Wat u nut is, tsy vervolch, rijcdom oft armoede,
Sweert oft vier, gemac oft ongemac, smaet oft eere,
Den gheschiet niet ten gheschiet u ten goede,
Want tot kennis en deucht, ghebruyctmen de roede.'

¹²⁴ Menno Simons, *Eyne troestelijke vermaninge van dat lijden, cruyze, unde vervolginge der heyligen*, fol. O1v. ff.

This is how my God works:
He tests whom He loves the most.
He takes away knife and fire
and every harmful thing from His children
and gives them his cross-book, so they can learn patience.¹²⁵

Exile and persecution as the mark of God's true children

Perhaps the most prominent aspect of exile theologies during the Dutch Revolt was the emphasis on exile and persecution as marks of true Christian identity. This notion was not something exclusively Reformed and had earlier also been articulated by Luther and others, and it is telling that it was not Calvin or A. Lasco but the territorial reformer of Wittenberg, who regarded persecution and tribulation as marks of the True Church.¹²⁶ Taffin encouraged the 'faithfull of the Low Countrie' in their confidence in divine providence by pointing to 'the testimonies of your Adoption, and the full assurance of the certaintie of it'.¹²⁷ As he assured his readers, afflictions in this world 'have beene foretold, and therefore they ought to confirme us in the assurance of our adoption'.¹²⁸

Taffin's intention was to prevent persecution and exile from making his persecuted coreligionists doubt God's benevolence towards them and from interpreting suffering and affliction as a sign of His wrath, as had been the case with numerous Huguenots after the massacre on St. Bartholomew's Day. To refute their doubts and to encourage them in their faith, he points to earlier persecutions, like those of the first Christians:

[I]f the most excellent servants and children of God have always beene most afflicted, Afflictions ought not to make us doubt of our adoption and salvation, except wee will call in doubt the salvation and felicitie of those, whom we confesse to be very blessed children of God: Especially, if affliction doe serve greatly to pull our hearts from the earth, and to lift them

¹²⁵ Coornhert, *Abrahams Uytgangh*, p. 302:

'So gaet het oock te wercke met mynen Gode.
Die oeffent meest dien hy die meeste liefde draecht
Hy neemt sijn Kinders vuyr en mes dat hun mach deren,
Ende gheeft hem 't kruys-boeck om gedult te leeren.'

¹²⁶ See: Euan Cameron, *The European Reformation*, Oxford 1991, p. 147.

¹²⁷ Taffin, *Of the markes of the children of God*, preface *To the faithfull of the Low Countrie*, fol. A7r.

¹²⁸ *Ibid.*, p. 140.

up into heaven, to purifie our faith as gold in the fire, and to fashion us into a true obedience of God.¹²⁹

The notion of the continuity of Christian suffering in this world became a strong argument to explain the present situation. Ysbrand Balck listed the miseries of the believers of the Old Covenant: Joseph was brought as a slave to Egypt, Moses found himself wayfaring through an endless desert and David had been an exile for ten years. The first Church was severely persecuted for three hundred years, and in Balck's own time, not only did the believers in the Netherlands have to flee their homes, but also the Swiss, English, Scottish and French Christians were persecuted by the wicked.¹³⁰ Also Menno saw the entire history of the Church and the believers of the Old Covenant as marked by hostility from the ungodly world.¹³¹ The elect are recognizable by inverting the values of their environment and 'searching the wisdom which is eternal and therefore they look like fools to the world.'¹³²

For Balck and Taffin as well as Menno or Coornhert exile acquired the character of an existential metaphor for Christian life. Addressing the question of the assurance of salvation of the individual believers, Taffin delineates the human condition after the fall of Adam and Eve as a situation of exile:

If there were two or three hundred inhabitants of some town banished for some offence, and after a generall pardon should be published, that all the banished of such a towne should have free liberty to returne thither, with all assurance to enter againe upon all their goods and honours: suppose thou wert one of those banished, and that he that hath given the pardon were a faithfull and true Prince: wouldest thou not believe, that thou wert comprehended in the pardon [...] Now, wee have beene banished from the kingdome of heaven by the transgression of *Adam*. Iesus Christ dying for these banished persons, causeth a generall pardon to bee published by the preaching of the Gospell, with permission, yea with commandement to returne into heaven.¹³³

¹²⁹ Ibid., pp. 138f.

¹³⁰ Balck, *Het cleyn mostert-zaet*, pp. 50ff.

¹³¹ Menno Simons, *Eyne troestelijke vermaninge van dat lijden, cruyze, unde vervolginge der heyligen*, fol.: B1v.: 'Ja, van deze aengheteykende Bangheyt, Druck, Droeffenisse, elende, bannen, slagen, scelden, belieghen, verraden, vangen, beroven, smadelijcke doot unde Cruyce der Heiligen avervloeyet [sic] die gansse Schrift beide mit Vermaningen unde ooc mit exempelen unde gheschiedenissen an allen orden.'

¹³² Ibid., fol. L3v.: 'Se soecken de wijsheyt de eeuwich is unde daerumme moeten ze hier aller werlt narren zijn.'

¹³³ Taffin, *Of the markes of the children of God*, pp. 53f.

The exile situation is freed here from its concrete historical actuality and presented as the spiritual *conditio humana*. Those who follow the call to return to the ‘kingdom of heaven’ are still part of estranged humanity, but they have become conscious of their situation and do not regard themselves as inhabitants of this world but rather as homeless travelers on the way to eternity. Exile as a religious metaphor for the present state of the world was applied even to Christ himself. In 1560, the consistory of the Dutch Reformed stranger congregation in London wrote a letter to Queen Elizabeth, in which they identified their Lord with the mass of persecuted believers in this world. As they stated, ‘Christ [was] now an exile in His members’ and lived with his followers in a state of homelessness until all things were restored and the believers gathered in their father’s house.¹³⁴

Exile as a metaphor for Christian life in general did not always have confessionalist implications. In the works of Coornhert, who resented confessional strife and antagonism, the *verstrooying* (‘dispersion’) of the true Christians refers not only to violent persecution and expulsion but also to the contemporary situation of confessional division. As a spiritualist he felt that the true Church was shattered into pieces and divided between the various antagonizing confessions. None of the institutional churches could claim to be the true Church. The state of the true believers, who were divided along confessional lines, was one of isolation and dispersion. In his work *Ghelove ende wandel der verstroyde ende eenzame Christenen* (‘Faith and conduct of the dispersed and solitary Christians’) which mainly consisted of scriptural quotes, he distinguished the visible institutional churches from the spiritual body of Christ.¹³⁵ Those who belonged to it were in fact free from church organizations and found themselves as a solitary minority among the hard-hearted masses who had subscribed to one of the various churches instead of following Christ in the right manner. For those who did, the present situation in the church was one of exile and dispersion – the visible Church was not their home, and they longed to be united in Christ. Sixteenth-century ‘exile theology’ could thus have implications that were fundamentally different from and opposed to the confessional Calvinist discourse in which early modern exile religiosity has often

¹³⁴ Jan Hendrik Hessels, *Ecclesiae londino-batavae archivum*, vol. 2, London 1887, p. 125. *On the motive of Christ as an exile in Calvin’s works*, see: Oberman, ‘John Calvin. The mystery of his impact’, in: *John Calvin and the Reformation of the Refugees*, p. 64.

¹³⁵ D.V. Coornhert, *Ghelove ende wandel der verstroyde ende eenzame Christenen*, Gouda 1590.

been located by modern historians. Discourses of exile were omnipresent in the early modern Netherlandish religious landscape, and their uses could widely differ. The meanings of the exile metaphor were multifaceted – while they overlapped in some aspects, they also at times opposed and contradicted each other.

Exile as God's command

Such a topical transfer from social and political reality to theological discourse was not rare and would shape the discourse on exile for a long time to come. Going into exile often meant sealing a religious choice and was also addressed as such. When the former priest Jean Baquesne from Normandy publicly renounced his old faith and converted to Calvinism in the Walloon Church in Middelburg, he addressed his spiritual development in terms of confessional exile:

Because it is Babylon, of which the heavenly voices commands us to depart, saying: Come out of her, my people, that you not partake in her sins, and that you not receive of her plagues. Therefore I have departed from my birthplace and my parents and relatives and have joined the true children of God (being obedient to God's commandment and following the example of the great patriarch Abraham, whom God commanded to leave behind his homeland and his kinfolds and to move out of his father's house to seek the land God had promised him). I have left behind impure popery, the whore of Babylon and her evil pits. I have eluded the devil's power, the veneration of the idols and the home of the Anti-Christ, by which I mean the Roman Church, which is concealed in falsehood, and now I throw myself into the bosom of the True Church.¹³⁶

While Baquesne's equation of conversion with exile seems rather metaphorical, for masses of early modern Europeans conversion did in fact mean not only a change of religious and ideological mindset but also of physical and social space. The imagery

¹³⁶ Jean Baquesne, *Bekeeringhe ende wederroepinghe des pavsdoms, openbaerlick ghedaen inde Francoysche Kercke der Stadt Middelburgh*, Middelburg 1612, fol. A3v.: '[...] want tis het Babel, uyt welcke de hemelsche stemme ons beveelt te vertrekken, segghende: Gaet uyt van haer mijn volck, opdat ghy haerer sonden niet deelachtich en wordt, ende haer plagen en ontfangt. Daarom is't dat ick (Godts gebodt onderdanich zijnde, volgende d'exempel des grooten Patriarchs Abrahams, den welcken de Heere beval uyt zijn landt ende maechschap te gaan, en sijns Vaders huys te verlaten, ende te trekken int landt dat hy hem wijzen soude) oock vertrokken ben uyt de plaetse mijnder gheboorten ende hebbe mijn Ouders ende vrienden naer den vleesche verlaten, ende hebbe my comen voeghen by de de ware kinderen Gods. Ick hebbe verlaeten 't onreyne Pausdom, de hoere van Babel, ende hare fenijnighe putten, ende hebbe my ontrocken uyt des duyvels macht, uyt 'd aenroepinghe der Afgoden, uyt de wooninghe des Antichrists: Ick meene de Roomsche Kercke die vermomt is is met gheveynstheyt, opdat ick my mocht werpen in de schoot der waerachtighe kercke.'

of leaving Babylon or Ur is used in many of the writings of Protestant exiles. Jacob Fokkens' pamphlet that urged Catholics to flee the 'city of sins' and join the true Christian Church, first published in 1635, was reprinted until the late seventeenth century.¹³⁷

In the opposite confessional camp Catholics called on their undecided fellow-believers not to compromise with the rebels and employed the same language. Johannes Costerius, a priest in Oudenaarde, addressed the Catholics in the so-called Calvinist Republics in Flanders and Brabant and used the same Bible verse as Jean Bauquesne and Fokkens in his conversion testimony: 'Come out of her, my people, that you not partake in her sins, and that you not receive of her plagues. For her sins have reached unto heaven, and God has remembered her iniquities' (Revelation 18: 5). His *Institutio necessaria de exitu Aegypti et fuga Babylonis* is set up as a plea for exile and urged the Catholics in the rebel towns to join their exiled brothers in Cologne or Douai.¹³⁸

Exile was increasingly propagated as a religious necessity in the various confessional camps. Both Catholics and dissenters urged their coreligionists to stay loyal to their faith and leave their hometown if they were ruled by 'heretics' or 'idolators'. In the early seventeenth century, Calvin's tract against the Nicodemites was translated into Dutch and spread among the remaining Protestants in the Southern territories. His work was included in an anonymous pamphlet that urged Protestants from the southern provinces to migrate to avoid contamination from the ungodly religious practices of their neighbors.¹³⁹ Philips of Marnix, Lord of Saint-Aldegonde, who had left his Southern homelands for Holland, addressed his fellow-southerners, who thought that they could be steadfast enough to stay at home and remain Protestants. In his epistle *Trouwe vermaninge aende christelicke gemeynten van Brabant, Vlanderen, Henegou, ende ander omliggende landen* ('Faithful

¹³⁷ Jacob Fokkens, *Fuga e Babylone, dat is: een vermaeninghe om uyt het Roomsche Babel te gaen, ofte een meditatie over de woorden der Openbaringe Johannis, int XVIII. cap. IV.*, Delft 1635. The last known edition is:

Fuga e Babylone, dat is, Vlucht uyt Babel : of Geestelyke bedenking over Apoc. 18. vers 6.: tot waerschuwingh van alle roomsch-gesinden, Gorinchem 1679.

¹³⁸ Johannes Costerius, *Institutio necessaria de exitu Aegypti et fuga Babylonis id est de egressu Catholicorum et civitatibus haereticorum Iuramentis & Edictis, varioque; inevitabili contagio pollutis*, Douai 1580. See also: Janssen, 'Quo vadis? Catholic Perceptions of Flight'; Janssen, 'The Counter Reformation of the Refugee'.

¹³⁹ *Tractaet vande gheveynstheyt ofte Vermaninghe aen alle Brabantsche, Vlaemsche, ende andere natien, die onder den papisten woonachtigh zijn*, Delft 1609.

exhortation to Christian congregations of Brabant, Flanders, Henegouwen and other surrounding areas') he even depicted the purges of Protestants after 1585 as a work of God, who wanted to lead His elect out of Egypt and Babylon. For Marnix, going into exile became almost a kind of religious imperative. He warned the Reformed believers not to act against God's will:

Do not provoke and enrage the Eternal God only for the sake of temporal welfare, but follow the calling of the Lord with an alert and obedient heart and without looking back, when he wants to call you with Abraham from Ur in Chaldea and with Lot from Sodom and Gomorra.¹⁴⁰

The purges in the south were God's way to lead the faithful away from the fleshpots of Egypt; in the diaspora they would be free to practice their faith according to His commandments. To Marnix the exile question was of such enormous importance that he accused all those who stayed behind of forsaking their faith: he who loved his parents or children more than Christ was not worth the appellation of a Christian, and staying among the ungodly was hardly better than participating directly in their idolatry.¹⁴¹

The story of Abraham, who had been commanded to leave the Promised Land, became immensely popular in the emerging diasporic culture, and the biblical patriarch was celebrated as an exemplary role model. What made the story so attractive to discourses of the Netherlandish diaspora was the possibility to compare it to the present situation in various aspects. Not only did Abraham leave his homeland and all his social ties behind to head for the unknown, but his decision also marks an inner conversion: he submits himself to God's will and cuts the bonds with the idolatrous practices he was accustomed to. In Coornhert's play, Abraham is contrasted with other kinds of migrants, who seek only their earthly fortune and are admonished by the authoritative voice in the play. Abraham, however, is only acting on command:

¹⁴⁰ Philips of Marnix, *Trouwe vermaninge aende christelicke gemeynten van Brabant, Vlanderen, Henegou, ende ander omliggende landen*, in: *Godsdienstige en kerkelijke geschriften*, ed. J.J. Toorenenbergen, The Hague 1871-1891, vol. 1, p. 530: 'Ende wilt en wilt ten opziene vande tijdelijcke sorchvuldicheyt den eeuwigen God niet tergen ende vertoornigen, maer volgt vele eer de beroepinge des Heeren nae met een wacker ende gewilligh herte sonder achterdencken, soo wanneer hy u met Abraham uyt het Ur der Chaldeën, ende met Loth uyt Sodoma ende Gomorra wil roepen.'

¹⁴¹ Ibid., p. 519

Therefore I will quickly and humbly
obey my Lord's command, and leave behind
my country and all my kin,
and move out of my father's house,
heading for a strange land, which the Lord will show me.
He, who follows God, shall live with Him everywhere.¹⁴²

In a biblical play on Hagar, Abraham's maidservant, published in 1615 by Abraham de Koningh, also a refugee from Antwerp in Amsterdam, the same aspect of Abraham is portrayed:

Now I forsake myself, my flesh, my goods and comfort,
my friends and fatherland and all my kin
for the sake of obedience to God,
who is pleased by it more than by sacrifices,
and worship Him with all my soul.
Idolatrous fatherland! Spellbound Chaldeans!¹⁴³

Refugees like Coornhert, De Koningh and many others staged Abraham explicitly as a spiritual hero *and* as a migrant. By spiritualizing his choice for exile he could serve as an example for all believers not only those who had left their homeland. Coornhert explicitly exhorts the believers to follow Abraham's example and join in his spiritual pilgrimage:

Blessed he who with his heart and mind
flees all earthly desires
and always looks towards heaven.
He who travels through this world as if on pilgrimage
and faithfully desires only the Lord as heritage.¹⁴⁴

¹⁴² Coornhert, *Abrahams Uytganck*, p. 273:

'Daeromme wil ick nu oock met spoedicheyt snel,
Onderdanigh volbrenghe mijns Heeren bevel,
Ende gaen uyt myn landt, uyt alle myn maghen,
En uyt mijn Vaders Huys, omme te beiaghen
Een vreemt Landt, dat my die Heere sal thoonen.
Die Godt volcht, Godt sal over al by hem woenen.'

¹⁴³ Abraham de Koningh, *Hagars vluchte*, Amsterdam 1615, p. 83:

'K ontsteel nu, als mijn selfs, eer lichaems goed'r end' rust,
Geboort' vriendt, Vaderlandt end' al mijn bloedts na-magen,
Uijt g'hoorsaemheijt, die Godt, meer als 't vet offer, lust,
Met een siel-grage dienst, devotich, op te dragen.
Afgodisch Vaderlandt! Betooverde Chaldeen!'

¹⁴⁴ Coornhert, *Abrahams Uytganck*, p. 315:



Hans Bol, *Abraham op weg naar Kanaän*, Rijksmuseum Amsterdam.¹⁴⁵

In the emerging imagination of the diaspora, exile and migration thus gained increasing religious prestige. Migration's connotations of pilgrimage and asceticism often referred back to medieval discourses on monasticism. In many circles having been in exile became such a powerful recommendation that even one's enemies were ready to acknowledge this sacrifice. When Menno Simons distanced himself from the early Anabaptists in Munster, he depicted them as cruel fanatics without any understanding of the biblical message. However, he still acknowledged that they must have been earnest and really believed that their course

'Wel hem die so met hert, zin en gemoed,
Van d'aardsche lusten spoedt
Ten Hemel waert altyd,
Die als een gast ter wereld Pelgrimeert,
Geloovigh vast den Heer tot erf begeert.'

¹⁴⁵ Hans Bol was also a migrant from the Southern Netherlands. After having lived in Heidelberg in the 1560s, he moved back to his hometown Mechelen, but fled to Antwerp in 1572. In 1586 he left Antwerp for Amsterdam where he died in 1593 (See: Hans Bol, in: NNWB, vol. 8, p. 168).

was just since they had been willing to go into exile, to 'leave behind their houses and homes, their goods and lands, their fathers, mothers, wives, children and even their own lives.'¹⁴⁶

At home in the diaspora

In some periods of the Dutch Revolt, for example in the early 1580s in the Southern Calvinist cities or after 1572 in Holland, many refugees were convinced that the time of exile lay behind them and that they could look back from a safe distance. In 1582, Antwerp minister and former exile Gaspar van der Heyden dedicated a treatise on the sacrament of Baptism to the magistrate and described the past from the triumphant perspective of having persevered in the times of hardship:

I have ventured to dedicate his aforementioned tract on the Holy Baptism to Your Honorable Lordships, whom God has installed as the Lords and providers of His Church and the regents of this republic, not only because you are so learned and able to judge what God's Word teaches on this matter, but also because the Lord has called me to the service of the Holy Gospel in this town and has appointed and gathered Himself a congregation through my humble talents. I have nourished this congregation night and day for three years, until I was forced to flee the town and forsake all my possessions in order to save my life. How much the congregation had to suffer in the meantime: on the one hand, because the persecutions and, on the other, because of the hostilities of all kinds of sects and heresies. Nevertheless the Lord has always protected and maintained it, so that it could remain undefeated and, as it pleased Him, proclaim Jesus Christ, His son, as King, while Satan's dominion was scattered in many pieces.¹⁴⁷

¹⁴⁶ Menno Simons, *Een schoone ende profitelijcke vermanende ende bestraffende redene aen die overheyte, gheleerde, ende ghemeyn volck, aen die verdorven secten, ende aen die ghene die om des Heeren waerheyt daghelijcx vervolghinghe lijden moeten. Noch een troostelijc vermaen tot de bruyt Jesu Christi*, Antwerpen 1552(?), fol.L3v.: '[...] ende daer voor hebben si verlaten huys, hof, lant, sant [sic], vader, moeder, wijf, kindt, en ooc haer eygen leven,...'.

¹⁴⁷ Gaspar van der Heyden, *Cort ende claer bewijs vanden Heyligen Doop*, Antwerpen 1582, fol. A2: 'Dit voors. Tractaet vanden H. Doop heb ick my verstout U.E. toe te schrijven, dien Godt als Voedster-heeren syner kercken, ende tot Regeerders deser Republijcken gestelt heeft, niet alleen omdat U.E. als gheleerde ende verstandige in Godes woort connen oordeelen wat vander saken is, maer ooc dewyle my de Heere van omtrent over 30 Jaren in deser stadt, totten dienst synes H. Evangelij beroepen ende door myne geringen gaven hem een ghemeinte versamelt heeft, die ick met vele tranen, arbeyts, perijckels ende sorghen, dry Jaren lanc dach en nacht opgevoestert hebbe, tot dat ick eyndelijck, ghelijc vander doot verlost wert, ende met verlies myner goederen de selve moeste verlaten, maer hoe veel aenstonts die daerentusschen gheleden heeft, ter eende syden, door de vervolghinge, ter ander syden door menigherley secten ende ketteryen, so heeftse nochtans de Heere doorgaens beschermt, ende ghehandhaeft, datse onverwinnelijck ghebleven is, tot dat het hem belieft heeft, synen sone Jesum Christum openbaerlijck tot ener Coninck te doen wtcondigen, Satan's rijck in velen deelen verstoort hebbende.'

Of course, exile was not yet over for Van der Heyden and many of his coreligionists in Antwerp. In 1585, Van der Heyden had to leave again for Germany and served the congregation in Frankenthal where he had already preached until 1574. Among the congregations he served were those of Antwerp, Emden, Frankfurt, Frankenthal and Middelburg. His colleague Ysbrand Balck shared this fate. In Antwerp, he held the same farewell sermon twice, when he was forced to leave in 1567 and again in 1585. In his foreword to the printed edition of 1590 he perceived his entire life in terms of exile: since the first days of his conversion from Catholicism he had not had any permanent home and was constantly travelling among the various Calvinist exile towns. For many, the topos of the ever-wandering pilgrim who travelled as a stranger through this world was more than mere imagination. Many Reformed refugees indeed moved hence and forth between Antwerp, Emden, London and Holland. Along the translocal networks of their faith, they lived in a diasporic space that connected the safe havens of Calvinism in the North Sea, the Rhine region and the Baltic.

As Daniel Rogers, diplomat of the English Crown and son of an Antwerp mother and an English father, stated in 1578, those who rejected Catholicism had become ‘strangers in their own country’.¹⁴⁸ In his ode on the exile town Frankenthal that had been granted to the Netherlandish refugees by Frederick III, count of the Palatine, Rogers praises the town as a place where Netherlandishness was cultivated outside the Low Countries and where the strangers could find a better home: ‘Despite his harsh fate, every exile, who is able to preserve his homeland in his place of refuge, can count himself fortunate.’¹⁴⁹ According to Rogers, the refugees preserved their Netherlandish customs, style of clothing and food and had transferred their home into another geographical region without really losing it. While the Low Countries were vanishing, in Frankenthal they could arise to new glory, and its inhabitants were planted like trees from foreign coasts into new and

¹⁴⁸ Thea Vignau-Wilberg, ‘Dichter, Denker, Diplomaten – Daniel Rogers’ Ode auf Frankenthal aus dem Jahr 1578’, in: Edgar J. Hürkey, *Kommerz, Glaubenskampf – Frankenthal um 1600. Frankenthal 1995*, p. 52.

¹⁴⁹ Ibid.: ‘Foelix sorte suam, saeva quae siti, obtinet exul
Sede peregrinam patria cuncta colens.’

even more fertile soil.¹⁵⁰ Netherlandishness is detached here from geography and transformed into a cultural and religious identity that can take shape in the diaspora.

Many dissenters who had not yet gone in exile themselves developed a strong consciousness of belonging to the diaspora. Indeed they felt that they had become ‘strangers in their own country’, as Rogers had put it. Around 1575 the Antwerp regent and merchant Peter van Panhuys commissioned a painting by Maarten de Vos that depicted his entire family including their wider network of friends as the ancient Israelites on their way from Egypt to the Promised Land. The core of the family, Peter van Panhuys and Gillis Hooftman and their wives and children, still lived in Antwerp at the time, but others among the depicted persons lived in England or Germany by 1575, for example Johan Radermacher and his wife, a niece of Gillis Hooftman, or Lucas d’ Heere who had fled Antwerp due to his religious convictions earlier.¹⁵¹ Even though many persons portrayed in the painting were not physically present at the same place at one time, they were united in the imagined space of the diaspora.



Maarten de Vos, *Mozes toont de tafelen der Wet*, Catharijneconvent Utrecht (Item on loan from Maurithuis, The Hague).

¹⁵⁰ Ibid.: ‘Non aliter quam quae persis venit arbor ab orbis
Translata floret fit meliorque suo.’

¹⁵¹ J.W. Zondervan, ‘Het Panhuys-paneel van het Mauritshuis. Beeld van een snel vervlogen droom’, in: *Jaarboek Centraal Bureau voor Genealogie*, vol. 36 (1982), p. 102.

For the Van Panhuys and Hooftman families themselves, exile became a reality only after the recapturing of their hometown in 1585. However, they partook in the culture of the diaspora much earlier and given their dissenting religious views and practices, it was only realistic of them to be prepared for exile. The identification with the exodus narrative remained strong among the Van Panhuys circle. When Peter van Panhuys died shortly after having left Antwerp to travel via Amsterdam to his children in Germany, Johan Radermacher wrote the text for his epitaph and portrayed his old friend as a pilgrim on earth:

I've carried my city's heavy burden
in many honest and honorable functions:
as bailiff, custodian, juryman and treasurer,
I have served in Antwerp I came here after a grave siege.
I died here as a pilgrim, three days after my wife
and now we lie lost in the dust of the earth.
No earthly goods, nor friends, nor doctors
could delay the hour of death.
If Christ had not payed for us, we'd have become ashes in hell.
Therefore love God, avoid sin and the world's illusions
'cause everything that shines and twinkles,
decays like dust and smoke,¹⁵²

The exile heritage of the Van Panhuys family was commemorated for many generations, as will be shown in chapter 5. The foundations of this discourse, however, had been laid in the sixteenth century when the migration experience demanded a religious interpretation and created a range of new identities.

¹⁵² Album Joannis Rotarii, fol. 169r.:

'Stadts lasten swaer ick droech; tis eerlyck alst wel sticht;
Almoessenier, Rentmeester, oock schepen, lest thresorier
T Antwerpen uut gedient. Uut swaer beleg'ring quam ick hier
Als pilgrom, daer ick storf, myn wyf dry daeg' tevoren.
Nu liggen wy hier int stof, der Werelt als verloren:
S doods ure en conden t goet, vrinden, noch meester uutstellen,
Hadd' Christus niet g'rantsoent, wy waren t' aes der hellen.
Daerom Liefst Godt, vliet sond', t bedroch der werelt varen laet:
Want hoe schoon dat hier blinckt, als wolck end roock alles vergaet.'