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The Counter-Reformation of the Refugee: Exile and the Shaping of Catholic Militancy in the Dutch Revolt

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This article explores the Catholic exile experience in the Dutch revolt of the 1570s and 1580s. It shows how Catholic refugees negotiated their stay in places such as Cologne and Douai and developed a more militant, Tridentine identity. This process of religious radicalisation is reflected in a series of white papers by leading refugees about Catholic renewal in the contested Netherlands. This article argues that Catholic exiles became the mobilising forces of a popular Counter-Reformation movement in the southern Netherlands, thereby facilitating the eventual split of the Low Countries into a northern and southern state.

Among the most remarkable achievements of the Tridentine project in sixteenth-century Europe was the resurgence of Catholicism in the contested Habsburg Low Countries. Scholars have long noted how after 1585 the southern Netherlands quickly transformed themselves from hotbeds of Protestant dissent into bastions of Tridentine renewal.¹

ARAB = Algemeen Rijksarchief Brussels; ARSI = Archivum Romanum Societatis Iesu, Rome; HAK = Historisches Archiv der Stadt Köln; SAA = Stadsarchief Antwerpen

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¹ James D. Tracy, 'With and without the Counter-Reformation: the Catholic Church in the Spanish Netherlands and the Dutch Republic, 1580–1650', *Catholic Historical Review* lxxi (1985), 547–75; M. Cloet, 'De gevolgen van de scheiding der Nederlanden op religieus, cultureel en mentaal gebied, van circa 1600 tot 1650', in J. Craeybeckx, F. Daelemans and F. G. Scheelings (eds), *1585: Op gescheiden wegen...*, Leuven 1988,

These shifting religious allegiances during the Dutch revolt would have lasting consequences for the wider region. First of all they marked the dramatic split of the Low Countries into two contrasting states: a predominantly Protestant Dutch Republic in the north and a Catholic Habsburg monarchy in the south. Secondly, they had an impact on developments in Catholic Europe at large. Turned into a Counter-Reformation stronghold, the southern Netherlands became the hub of significant numbers of English exiles and Catholic radicals from France, established a powerful Catholic printing press and secured Habsburg power in the North Sea area for another two centuries.²

Whereas there is little doubt about the significance of Catholic recovery in this corner of Europe, historians have found it difficult to identify the origins of this process. In line with tendencies in international scholarship, scholars in the past generally assumed that the alleged Catholic revival had in fact been imposed from above. The construction of a militant Catholic party in the Dutch revolt had been the result of rigorous Tridentine reform and Habsburg state sponsorship.³ More recently, arguments in favour of a 'bottom up' explanation have been brought forward. The emergence of a Counter-Reformation movement in the south may have had something to do with the experience of Calvinist radicalism in places such as Ghent, Antwerp and Brussels during the early 1580s.⁴ Thus, while historians agree that after 1585 Catholics in the Habsburg Netherlands started to organise themselves and develop a confessional identity, they are divided about the forces that triggered this shift of mentality.

53–78. An excellent assessment of Catholic reformation in the southern Netherlands is offered in Craig Harline and Eddy Put, *A bishop's tale: Mathias Hovius among his flock in seventeenth-century Flanders*, New Haven 2000.

² Robert Descimon and José Javier Ruiz Ibáñez, *Les Ligueurs de l'exil: le refuge catholique français après 1594*, Seyssel 2005; Peter Guilday, *The English Catholic refugees on the continent, 1558–1795*, London 1914; Paul Arblaster, *Antwerp and the world: Richard Verstegan and the international culture of Catholic Reformation*, Leuven 2004; Alexandra Walsham, "'Domme preachers'? Post-Reformation English Catholicism and the culture of print", *Past and Present* clxviii (2000), 81–108. For the use of the term Counter-Reformation in this context see John O' Malley, *Trent and all that: renaming Catholicism in the early modern era*, Cambridge, MA 2000.

³ M.J. Marinus, *De contrareformatie te Antwerpen (1585–1676)*, Brussels 1995, esp. p. 39; A. K. L. Thijs, *Van geuzenstad tot katholiek bolwerk: Antwerpen en de contrareformatie*, Leuven 1990, 33–60; Tracy, 'With and without the Counter-Reformation', 548.

⁴ Paul Arblaster, 'The Southern Netherlands connection: networks of support and patronage', in Benjamin J. Kaplan and others (eds), *Catholic communities in Protestant states: Britain and the Netherlands, c. 1570–1720*, Manchester 2009, 125–7; Margit Thøfner, *A common art: urban ceremonial in Antwerp and Brussels during and after the Dutch Revolt*, Zwolle 2007, 146–67. See also Tracy 'With and without the Counter-Reformation', 549.

Judith Pollmann has recently added some new perspectives to this issue by pointing to the agency of exiles in the process of Catholic renewal. More specifically, she noted that the leading figures of Tridentine reform in the late sixteenth century had often spent previous years in exile in places such as Cologne, Douai and Liège. Pollmann therefore suggested that a 'Catholic party' in the Dutch revolt had taken shape in those refugee communities of the 1570s and 1580s.⁵ Yet how exactly this link between exile and the rise of Catholic militancy should be understood is still unclear, since Catholic refugees in the Dutch revolt have received little study so far. A decade ago Henk van Nierop examined the *émigré* community in royalist Amsterdam, but a more comprehensive picture of the Catholic exile experience in the crucial 1570s and 1580s is lacking.⁶

This article seeks to identify the formative impact of exile on the origins of Catholic militancy in the Dutch revolt. More specifically, it will map the conditions in several Catholic asylum centres and assess how refugees responded to these. At the core of this study will be an analysis of the writings of the exiles themselves. How, for example, did Catholics negotiate their displacement and to what extent did exile change their view of themselves, of their family and society, and of the conflict that gripped the Low Countries? What media and forms of sociability were available in the host towns and how did these affect the way in which Catholic men and women articulated their exile experience? Finally, this article will examine a number of white papers that exiles composed in the 1570s and 1580s and assess the extent to which they succeeded in mobilising others for their agenda.

The Catholic refugee crisis

It is something of a commonplace to state that the military conflict in the sixteenth-century Low Countries transformed the political, religious and economic infrastructure of the area. These changes were essentially shaped by large-scale streams of refugees. It has been estimated that about 200,000 men and women left their homes between *c.* 1560 and 1590.⁷ These different migration movements have not received equal attention. Historians of the Protestant Reformation have carried out a good deal

⁵ Judith Pollmann, *Catholic identity and the Revolt of the Netherlands, 1520–1635*, Oxford 2011.

⁶ This is now available in English translation: Henk van Nierop, *Treason in the Northern Quarter: war, terror and the rule of law in the Dutch revolt*, Princeton 2009.

⁷ Geoffrey Parker, *The Dutch revolt*, Harmondsworth 1985, 118–19; Jonathan Israel, *The Dutch republic: its rise, greatness and fall, 1477–1806*, Oxford 1998, 160, 219; J. G. C. A. Briels, *Zuid-Nederlanders in de Republiek, 1572–1630*, Sint-Niklaas 1985, 80.

of research into evangelical dissenters who escaped the Habsburg Netherlands from the 1540s onwards. They have mapped the development of Reformed exile churches abroad and examined the economic impact of *émigré* communities in German and English host cities.⁸ A parallel, though smaller movement of 'loyalist', or Catholic refugees has remained largely unexplored.

The Catholic exodus started in 1572, when a number of towns in Holland and Zeeland opened their gates to the rebel troops of William of Orange. As a result of military violence and Calvinist leadership in the following months, several hundreds of Catholic men and women fled to nearby royalist towns. Others moved to Catholic safe havens abroad, especially Cologne. A similar process occurred a few years later in the other provinces, notably Brabant and Flanders. Following the Pacification of Ghent of 1576 – a peace treaty that sought to unite rebel and loyal provinces – groups of militant Protestants managed to establish so-called Calvinist republics in places such as Ghent, Bruges, Brussels, Mechelen and Antwerp. Guido Marnef has shown how their radicalism sharpened divisions in the south and brought about a new wave of Catholic refugees. In some towns Catholic priests and royalist office-holders were expelled by force.⁹ Thus, by the early 1580s Catholic strongholds including Cologne, Douai and Liège had turned into large asylum centres. Their respective exile communities consisted largely of clergy, female religious and magistrates who wanted to remain loyal to the Habsburg government. But there were also significant numbers of lay men and women who 'voluntarily' escaped rebel territory and opposed the religious freedoms offered to Protestants. While exact figures are not available, it may be assumed that by 1582 between 5,000 and 10,000 Catholics lived in exile.¹⁰

⁸ Examples include M. Backhouse, *The Flemish and Walloon communities at Sandwich during the reign of Elizabeth I, 1561–1603*, Brussels 1995; A. Dünnwald, *Konfessionsstreit und Verfassungskonflikt: die Aufnahme der Niederländischen Flüchtlinge im Herzogtum Kleve, 1566–1585*, Bielefeld 1998; Raingard Esser, *Niederländische Exulanten im England des 16. und frühen 17. Jahrhunderts*, Berlin 1996; Ole Grell, *Calvinist exiles in Tudor and Stuart England*, Aldershot 1996; Andrew Pettegree, *Emden and the Dutch revolt: exile and the development of Reformed Protestantism*, Oxford 1992; and Heinz Schilling, *Niederländische Exulanten im 16. Jahrhundert: ihre Stellung im Sozialgefüge und im religiösen Leben Deutscher und Englischer Städte*, Gütersloh 1972.

⁹ Guido Marnef, *Het calvinistisch bewind te Mechelen, 1580–1585*, Kortrijk 1987, 323–30, and 'Het protestantisme in Brussel, ca. 1567–1585', *Tijdschrift voor Brusselse Geschiedenis* 1 (1984), 57–80.

¹⁰ This is based on references in Van Nierop, *Treason*, esp. pp. 165–85; Charles H. Parker, *Faith on the margins: Catholics and Catholicism in the Dutch golden age*, Cambridge, MA 2008, 28–31; B. A. Vermaseren, *De katholieke Nederlandse geschiedschrijving in de 16e en 17e eeuw over de opstand*, Leeuwarden 1981; Fernand Donnet, *Les Exilés anversois à Cologne (1582–1585)*, Antwerp 1899; A. A. J. Hoogland, 'De Friesche vlugtelingen in 1580', *Archief van het Aartsbisdom Utrecht* xvi (1888), 323–71; and

Exile was a new, confusing and humiliating experience for Netherlandish Catholics. The few diaries and correspondences that have survived all reflect the material hardship and existential crisis that displacement spawned. The Augustinian priest Wouter Jacobsz, for one, noted the challenging conditions in royalist Amsterdam to which he had escaped in 1572. 'You may imagine', he wrote in his diary, 'the misery endured by those who conceal their poverty. To their shame they are forced to ask favours to obtain loans.'¹¹ Going into exile was to have dramatic consequences indeed. From 1572 the rebels started to appropriate and confiscate the possessions of Catholic 'fugitives'.¹² Deprived of their incomes, many became dependent on charity. Since the position of immigrants in host towns was weak, support was characteristically provided by fellow exiles. Surviving wills show that Antwerp elites who had escaped to Cologne left substantial sums of money to 'those poor, miserable and expelled Netherlanders'.¹³ Since housing prices in Cologne had become exceptionally high by the early 1580s, religious convents with Dutch members as well as houses owned by Netherlandish merchants accommodated large numbers of refugees.¹⁴ In particular priests and female religious struggled to make a living. In March 1573 it was reported that two exiled priests in Amsterdam 'had perished from hardship since they had been cut off from their possessions and they could nowhere find hospitality'.¹⁵

Yet exile did not only mean the loss of housing, incomes and offices. In a society in which much of an individual's sense of belonging and identity depended on locality, 'exile' also turned respectable citizens into unknown strangers. A Catholic refugee from Friesland was astonished to discover that he and others were treated 'as if we were criminals'.¹⁶ Displaced Catholics noted with concern the blurred social distinctions in their new environment. Elizabeth Gerritsz, wife of an exiled burgomaster, found herself

A. Viaene, 'Vlaamse vluchtelingen te Douai: hun verweer tegen Marnix' Biënkorf, 1578–1584', *Handelingen van het Genootschap voor Geschiedenis gesticht onder de Benaming Société d'émulation te Brugge* xciii (1956), 5–37.

¹¹ *Dagboek van broeder Wouter Jacobsz (Gualtherus Jacobi Masius) prior van Stein*, ed. I. van Eeghen, Groningen 1958, i. 131. I have used English translations provided by Alastair Duke at <http://dutchrevolt.leidenuniv.nl/>.

¹² Geert H. Janssen, 'Exiles and the politics of reintegration in the Dutch revolt', *History* xciv (2009), 43–52; James D. Tracy, *The founding of the Dutch republic: war, finance, and politics in Holland, 1572–1588*, Oxford 2008, 109–13, 118–20.

¹³ SAA, notariaat, Egide Verbraecken. The quotation is taken from a will made by P. Joossen, 29 Sept. 1583, fos 101v–102r.

¹⁴ See the diary of Cologne citizen Herman Weinsberg: *Die autobiographischen Aufzeichnungen Hermann Weinsbergs: Digitale Gesamtausgabe*, entries for 16 Mar., 19 July 1580; 16 Apr. 1581; 2 Jan. 1582. Available at <http://www.weinsberg.uni-bonn.de/Home>.

¹⁵ *Dagboek van broeder Wouter Jacobsz*, i. 211.

¹⁶ Unknown author to Alexander Farnese, 26 Jan. 1581, ARAB, Papieren van Staat en Audiëntie, 589, fo. 61.

eating 'peas and buckwheat' and had no choice than 'to be anyone's guest, be it poor or rich'.¹⁷ Wouter Jacobsz vividly described how refugees in Amsterdam struggled to come to terms with their new status:

The good Catholics, who have left their towns because they would have no part in the godlessness perpetrated by the Beggars [=rebels], are gripped by a melancholy, which cannot be adequately described. They had always been men of good repute, they were accustomed to prosperity and they never stayed anywhere against their will; if they travelled from home, they did so for pleasure. And now they find themselves in a quite different condition. They see clearly that they are little different from fugitives, banished from their towns, as if they were criminals.

No wonder, he remarked in his diary of 17 April 1573, that 'many good exiles more and more disappear into themselves'.¹⁸

Exile thus forced Catholic refugees – religious and lay alike – to redefine their position in society and to formulate a new answer to the question what it actually meant to be loyal to the Church of Rome and the king of Spain. In their search for meaning, some found consolation in biblical parallels and typically likened their situation to that of the exiled Israelites. Within a month of his expulsion, former parish priest Joost Buyck bought a book evoking the flight of Daniel 'to soften the great distresses of my sad life'.¹⁹ In a similar fashion Wouter Jacobsz looked for inspiration in the Old Testament. He was particularly 'strengthened by the miraculous liberation of Israel's children, of whom we were mindful'.²⁰ Mathias Lambrecht later recalled that his religious experience had deepened as he had 'been studying Catechism during my time in Douai'.²¹ Pious texts thus helped exiles to make more sense of their experiences and enabled them to identify with the key narratives of the Christian tradition. In the *Fondatie-boeck* of the Poor Clares from Antwerp, the unknown author modelled the account of the dangerous flight of the nuns to Trier on the Exodus story and the experiences of the Apostle Paul.²²

As had been the case with Calvinist exiles earlier in the sixteenth century, such biblical blueprints also served to fashion a more heroic image of exile.

¹⁷ *Dagboek van broeder Wouter Jacobsz*, i. 388–9.

¹⁸ *Ibid.* i. 158–9, 233.

¹⁹ This was a copy of Jacobus Veldius, *Daniel Propheta commentariis pro concione explicatus*, Antwerp 1576. Buyck wrote the following poem on the title page: 'Bis septem stufferis exsul me Clivica in urbe / Emit, cui nomen principis Vrna dedit. Scilicet ut tristi lenirem in comoda vitae, / Et patriae fleret cum Daniele vires': University Library, Amsterdam, sig. 273 G 20.

²⁰ *Dagboek van broeder Wouter Jacobsz*, i. 162.

²¹ This is quoted in Viaene, 'Vlaamse vluchtelingen', 10.

²² Stephanus Schoutens, *Geschiedenis van het voormalig klooster der arme Claren te Antwerpen*, Antwerp 1900, 66–100; Geert H. Janssen, 'Quo Vadis? Catholic perceptions of flight and the revolt of the Low Countries, 1566–1609', *Renaissance Quarterly* lxiv (2011), 472–99.

They provided displaced Catholics with the tools to appropriate a collective self-image of being the elect people of God, a latter-day Israel exiled from Egypt. In 1580 Johannes Costerius published a little book, *Institutio necessaria de exitu Aegypti et fuga Babylonis*, in which a typically Protestant frame of reference was reconceptualised and adapted to a Catholic audience. Costerius compared rebel leader William of Orange to the Pharaoh and called upon his fellow Catholics 'to free themselves' by escaping the rebel towns, 'infected' as they were by heresy.²³ Interestingly, in the *Institutio necessaria* the Exodus story did not just serve to confirm the hopes of exiles that God was on their side. Costerius' polemical narrative simultaneously reminded Catholics that liberation from tyranny was, to some degree, the task of the oppressed themselves.²⁴

Exile and confessional change

Costerius' spirited analysis was shaped by his own refugee experience, but it was equally informed by the world that he encountered in Douai. More specifically, Costerius had associated himself with the Jesuits in the town and the circle of militant theologians who taught at the new Catholic university.²⁵ It appears that this local infrastructure shaped the way in which he and other Catholics negotiated and articulated their exile experience. This is particularly noticeable in host towns that offered refugees a religious landscape that contrasted with the spiritual culture that they were used to back home. Tridentine reform had made little progress in the Habsburg Netherlands on the eve of the revolt and a recent study by Judith Pollmann has confirmed that clerical leaders continued to offer their flock highly traditional messages that did little to mobilise them for a common fight against heresy.²⁶ Considering this religious background, many exiles must have felt that they had entered a different world when they arrived in Douai or Cologne. In both refugee centres a more militant and internationally oriented climate prevailed. Close to the French borders, Douai was an important centre for English Catholics and it incorporated a young Catholic university and a small, but productive, Catholic

²³ Johannes Costerius, *Institutio necessaria de exitu Aegypti et fuga Babylonis: id est, de egressu Catholicorum e civitatibus haereticorum Iuramentis & edictis, varioq; inevitabili contagio pollutis*, Douai 1580.

²⁴ Compare Michael Walzer, *Exodus and revolution*, New York 1985, 49.

²⁵ This becomes clear from ARAB, Audiëntie, 910, fos 52–100; cf. Viaene, 'Vlaamse vluchtelingen', 16, 30–1.

²⁶ Judith Pollmann, 'Countering the Reformation in France and the Netherlands: clerical leadership and Catholic violence, 1560–1585', *Past and Present* cxc (2006), 83–120.

printing press.²⁷ Cologne was a commercial hub that accommodated numerous ecclesiastical institutions, including the seat of a papal nuncio, an archbishop and the Jesuit-run Tricoronatum college. Crucially, the city was a pre-eminent printing centre in northern Europe where exiles had access to a wealth of Tridentine media.²⁸ In this way displaced Catholics inevitably encountered the spirit of international Catholicism.

How exactly such local facilities could channel the experience of exiles becomes clear when the activities of the Society of Jesus are considered more closely. While the Jesuits had struggled to gain ground in the Habsburg Netherlands prior to 1572, in both Douai and Cologne the Society had firm bases.²⁹ Archival sources from the latter reveal that the Jesuits showed a keen interest in refugees from rebel areas and had a prominent part in accommodating them.³⁰ Among other things, they provided them with an institutional framework that could compensate for the loss of contacts and reputation back home. In 1575 Rector Frans Coster, himself from Mechelen, founded a Marian sodality in Cologne, modelled after the confraternity that he had established in Douai a few years earlier.³¹ Although the confraternity was initially intended for students and never catered exclusively for exiles, surviving lists of membership from Cologne demonstrate that the sodality became hugely popular among Netherlandish refugees. By the early 1580s whole convent communities from Brabant and Flanders had joined the club, whereas the entry of exiled magistrates and the local papal nuncio added lustre to the

²⁷ *Bibliographie douaisienne ou Catalogue historique et raisonné des livres imprimés à Douai*, ed. H. R. Duthilloeul, Douai 1842–50; Guilday, *The English Catholic refugees*, 63–120; Vermaseren, *De katholieke Nederlandse geschiedschrijving*, 115–29; Viaene, ‘Vlaamse vluchtelingen’.

²⁸ Johannes Arndt, *Das Heilige Römische Reich und die Niederlande, 1566 bis 1648*, Cologne 1998, 192–4, 217–30, 266–74; Josef Kuckhoff, *Die Geschichte des Gymnasium Tricoronatum: ein Querschnitt durch die Geschichte der Jugendziehung in Köln vom 15. bis zum 18. Jahrhundert*, Cologne 1931; H. von Molitor, *Das Erzbistum Köln im Zeitalter der Glaubenskämpfe, 1515–1688*, Cologne 2008; Vermaseren, *De katholieke Nederlandse geschiedschrijving*, 1–27; Samme Zijlstra, ‘Studying abroad: the student years of two Frisian brothers at Cologne and Douai (1582–1593)’, in K. Goudriaan, J. van Moolenbroek and A. Tervoort (eds), *Education and learning in the Netherlands, 1400–1600: essays in honour of Hilde de Ridder-Symoens*, Leiden 2004, 297–313.

²⁹ The Jesuits in Douai had been expelled for a short period in 1578 when the town became involved with the revolt: J. Andriessen, *De Jezuiten en het samenhorighedsbesef der Nederlanden, 1585–1648*, Antwerp 1957, 16–17.

³⁰ The Cologne college incorporated a large number of Jesuits of Netherlandish origin: HAK, Bestand Jesuiten, A17, A18, A19; ARSI, Provincia Rheni et Rheni Inferioris, 38, Cat. trien. et brev, Coloniensis 1584.

³¹ Louis Châtellier, *Europe of the devout: the Catholic Reformation and the formation of a new society*, trans. J. Birrell, Cambridge 1989, 3–15; J. B. Kettenmeyer, *Die Anfänge der Marianischen Sodalität in Köln, 1576–1586*, Münster 1928, 4–10.

Jesuit enterprise.³² Representatives from the Dutch exile community also served as prefects of the sodality, which was later organised around several socially distinct ‘departments’.³³

While source material for Douai is limited, the Cologne archives allow us to examine how the Jesuit confraternity affected the lives and perceptions of exiles. First of all, it fostered a sense of solidarity among displaced Catholics. Resembling an artificial kinship group, its members engaged in charity work and regularly banded together to pray for the welfare of the Netherlands. In this way Coster sought to play a guiding role in the existential crisis that many exiles faced. In his *Libellus sodalitatıs* he later asserted that the confraternity had been intended ‘to preserve the old religion in the imperial city’.³⁴ Yet many of its Netherlandish members will have been introduced to a type of Catholicism that was quite different from the religious culture with which they were familiar. Styled after Tridentine guidelines, the Marian sodality propagated an exuberant Catholic self-confidence and offered its ‘sodales’ exercises that served to shape a more disciplined and sharply defined confessional identity. They were expected to confess weekly, take communion monthly and to participate in various communal activities such as processions, prayer sessions and public book burnings.³⁵ Coster thus sought to turn the passive victimhood of Catholic refugees into a militant, Tridentine mentality. Moreover, his goals were aimed at both private and public life. ‘Sodales’ were encouraged to internalise Trent’s decrees, but they were also expected ‘to set a good example’ to relatives, friends and neighbours.³⁶

Of course, these ambitious instructions did not necessarily reflect daily practice. How can the actual impact of the Jesuit enterprise in Cologne be measured? Sceptics might argue that the Marian sodality was

³² Lists of membership (1576–88), HAK, Jesuiten, A52.

³³ List of prefects (1576–89), *ibid.* A52a. On the later development of the sodality see Kettenmeyer, *Die Anfänge*, and Rebekka von Mallinckrodt, ‘Reichweite und Grenzen des Konfessionalisierungs-Paradigmas am Beispiel der Kölner Laienbruderschaften im 17. Jahrhundert’, in Kaspar von Greyerz and others (eds), *Interkonfessionalität–Transkonfessionalität – binnenkonfessionelle Pluralität: Neue Forschungen zur Konfessionalisierungsthese*, Heidelberg 2003, 16–47.

³⁴ Franciscus Costerus, *Libellus sodalitatıs, hoc est christianarum institutionum libri quinque*, Antwerp 1586. Many editions exist. I have used the Dutch version, entitled *Het boecksen der broederschap, dat is vijf boecken der Christelijcker leeringhen*, Antwerp 1587, preface (no page numbers).

³⁵ This becomes clear from HAK, Jesuiten, A51, a collection of papers regarding the sodality; *Rheinische Akten zur Geschichte des Jesuitenordens, 1542–1582*, ed. Josef Hansen, Bonn 1896, 703–4, 716; and Kettenmeyer, *Die Anfänge*, 16–18; cf. Châtellier, *Europe of the devout*, 33–46.

³⁶ Costerus, *Het boecksen*, preface. An assessment is offered by Bridget Heal, *The cult of the Virgin Mary in early modern Germany: Protestant and Catholic piety*, Cambridge 2007, 250–60.

an exclusive club: it was closed to women and primarily catered for students, priests and magistrates. What is more, a recent study by Bridget Heal has demonstrated that Cologne was a religious melting pot that accommodated a variety of 'Catholic cultures'.³⁷ We know that the city even incorporated an underground Reformed church with strong Netherlandish links.³⁸ All the same, scattered evidence suggests that the mobilising force of the Jesuits on the Catholic exile community was significant. Displaced Catholics who struggled to create new identities for themselves appear to have been receptive to the radical vocabulary of the order. In their annual report of 1582 the Society remarked on the large numbers of refugees from the Low Countries that confessed regularly with them in Cologne.³⁹ Even those who did not formally join the Marian confraternity became familiar with its spiritual agenda through books and sermons that the Jesuits pitched at them. Local citizen Herman Weinsberg, who rented out his house to two exiles from Delft, noted in his diary how 'jesuitical' they were. Both women went to church early in the morning and fasted zealously. Weinsberg also found that the Jesuit headquarters in the city had grown into a gathering place for Dutch expatriates. When he was invited for a dinner party at the house of the regent of the Jesuit college in March 1582, he characteristically met a Catholic exile from Gouda.⁴⁰ Records of wills show that the exiles often banded together in the convent of St Maximinen, 'to pray for peace and victory' in the Low Countries. The convent was located next to the Jesuit college in the Maximinenstrasse. The exiled bishop of Leeuwarden, Cunerus Petri, preached here and it may well be that members of the Society did the same.⁴¹ When Jodocus van der Cruyce, an Antwerp refugee and prefect of the Marian sodality, died in August 1585, more than 300 fellow exiles and 'sodales' were said to have participated in his funeral procession.⁴²

It thus appears that at least a significant part of the Catholic exile community of Cologne gradually 'confessionalised', appropriating a more self-conscious confessional attitude. Studies of religious refugees elsewhere in early modern Europe suggest that this process was not specifically Catholic, nor typical of Cologne. There are some striking similarities in this respect to what had happened to Protestant refugees a few decades earlier.

³⁷ Heal, *Cult*, 207–61.

³⁸ Robert van Roosbroeck, *Emigranten: Nederlandse vluchtelingen in Duitsland (1550–1600)*, Leuven 1968, 135–57; Schilling, *Niederländische Exulanten*, esp. pp. 110–21.

³⁹ *Rheinische Akten*, 754.

⁴⁰ *Die autobiographischen Aufzeichnungen Hermann Weinsbergs*, entries for 24 Mar. 1578; 9 Mar. 1582.

⁴¹ Attestation for Elizabeth Styen, 31 Jan. 1585, SAA, notariaat, Egide Verbraecken, fo. 120r–v; *Die autobiographischen Aufzeichnungen Hermann Weinsbergs*, entry for 17 Feb. 1580; Kuckhoff, *Die Geschichte*, 63–4, 135, 159.

⁴² List of prefects (1576–89), HAK, Jesuiten, A52a; Kettenmeyer, *Die Anfänge*, 28.

Studies by Heinz Schilling and Andrew Pettegree have shown how many Protestants exiles from the Low Countries initially had only vague, eclectic evangelical ideas. It was only in places such as Emden and London that many turned into fixed Calvinists.⁴³ What Emden did for Reformed Protestantism, Cologne and Douai did for Tridentine Catholicism. In these different refugee communities exile served as a catalyst for radicalisation as it galvanised a more strictly defined, 'politicised' confessional mentality.

Further evidence for this development may be found in the shifting perception of exile itself. While in the early 1570s refugees such as Wouter Jacobsz in Amsterdam had lamented their deplorable social status and some Catholics had argued that escaping was a sign of cowardice, a decade later this public imaginary was altering in Cologne. In 1577 the papal nuncio of the city, Bartholomeus Porta, recorded that a certain Jan Gerrit Stempelse had grown into a kind of Counter-Reformation hero. A former burgomaster of Gouda, Stempelse had been expelled by the rebels after organising a royalist coup in 1573.⁴⁴ He subsequently moved to Cologne where he became the first prefect of the Marian sodality in 1576. Thanks to his exemplary piety and unconditional commitment to the Catholic cause, Stempelse was, according to Porta, widely regarded as 'a living saint'.⁴⁵ The evolving notion of the Catholic exile martyr was also apparent in correspondence of Jesuits who praised refugees as role models and recommended them for prebends and offices.⁴⁶ Exiles themselves were keen to exploit this heroic image. The historian Michael ab Isselt wrote that he endured his exile with pride 'for the sake of Christ', while Maarten Donck was eager to stress that by 1579 he had been exiled 'as many as three times'.⁴⁷ In the 1580s refugees in search of money, jobs

⁴³ Schilling, *Niederländische Exulanten*; Pettegree, *Emden*, esp. pp. 226–51. See also Alastair Duke, 'Perspectives on European Calvinism', in Alastair Duke, Gillian Lewis and Andrew Pettegree (eds), *Calvinism in Europe, 1540–1620*, Cambridge 1994, 5–6.

⁴⁴ For Stempelse see A.Th. Boeree, 'Het verraad van hopman Maarten Schets: een mislukte aanslag op Gouda in 1572', *Tijdschrift voor Geschiedenis* xxxix (1924), 195–219; M. P. R. Droog, 'De oprichting van de nuntiatuur te Keulen', *De Katholiek* cxxxviii (1910), 109–12; C. C. Hibben, *Gouda in revolt: particularism and pacifism in the revolt of the Netherlands*, Utrecht 1983, 48, 52, 70–2, 266; Vermaseren, *De katholieke Nederlandse geschiedschrijving*, 18–24; and *Uittreksel uit Francisci Dusseldorpii Annales, 1566–1616*, ed. Robert Fruin, The Hague 1893, pp. li–liii, 479.

⁴⁵ *Romeinsche bronnen voor den kerkelijke-staatkundigen toestand der Nederlanden in de 16e eeuw*, ed. G. Brom and H. Hensen, The Hague 1922, 242.

⁴⁶ Compare letters in ARSI, Assistentia Germaniae, 137–II, 210; 138–II, 329; 157; *Romeinsche bronnen*, 280–2, 288, 293, 358, 419, 677–8, 706. See also Janssen, 'Quo Vadis?', 476–93.

⁴⁷ Michael ab Isselt, *Michaelis ab Isselt Amorfortii svi temporis historia, in qua res in toto orbe terrarum gestae, tum praecipuè motuum Belgicorum sub Philippo II Hispaniarum rege & c. concitatorum origo et successus usque ad annum M.D.LXXXVI. perspicuè & accuratè*

or patronage started to refer explicitly to their exile credentials, of which they were 'proud'.⁴⁸ This changing discourse shows how 'exile' had gradually developed into a marker of Catholic esteem, a badge of honour and exclusivity. Johannes Costerius, in his pamphlet, presented exile as an admirable strategy by which Catholics could show their true commitment to Rome and the king of Spain. He sought to persuade fellow Catholics that exile was a 'purifying' experience, a way of cleansing the soul.⁴⁹

The forced migration of Catholics from the Low Countries thus created contradictory effects. While the expulsion of priests and royalist officeholders served to strengthen a sense of unity in the rebel camp, it simultaneously encouraged Catholic believers to reinvent themselves. By alienating them, the rebels in fact facilitated the growth of Catholic militancy in refugee centres. That is not to say that all loyalist refugees went through a uniform spiritual process or that 'radicalisation' was the inevitable outcome of exile. In isolated places such as Amsterdam in the 1570s and Groningen in the 1580s, there is little evidence that resentment among refugees bred Tridentine militancy. Yet such contrasting responses to displacement in fact confirm the formative impact of local media and religious infrastructures. In both towns the religious market was more traditional, while the Society of Jesus was not active and the supply of Tridentine print was limited.

Fervent supporters of Catholic renewal also pointed to the significance of such local facilities. The exiled bishop Wilhelmus Lindanus, for example, escaped to Cologne in 1577 and became a member of the Marian sodality.⁵⁰ As an educated cleric Lindanus was very familiar with Tridentine Catholicism. For him confessionalism will not have been the outcome, but rather the cause of exile. Yet even Lindanus noted that the Jesuit enterprise triggered a new sense of group bonding among committed Catholics. The bishop was excited by the spirit of Catholic pride and solidarity that he encountered in Cologne. In the founding of the Marian sodality Lindanus saw signs that a new 'Golden age' for Catholicism was

describuntur, Cologne 1602, 648; P. Noordeloos, *Pastoor Maarten Donk*, Utrecht 1948, ii. 78.

⁴⁸ Wilhelmus Lindanus to Don Juan, 24 July 1578, ARAB, Audiëntie, 1718/2; Lindanus to Farnese, 9 Jan., 10 Apr. 1581, ARAB, Audiëntie, 1806/1; various letters from exiles Jacques Ficq, Pierre Arentsoen, Willem Bonsen, Nicolaas Buyck, Jan Meeusz, Gerrit Gerritsz, Dirk Jan Deyman to Farnese, 1580s, ARAB, Audiëntie, 1840/4; *Romeinsche bronnen*, 281; cf. *La Vie et les oeuvres de Gislain Bulteel d'Ypres, 1555-1611*, ed. L. Bakelants, Brussels 1968, 251-484.

⁴⁹ Costerius, *Institutio*, 7-9.
⁵⁰ His membership is evident from HAK, Jesuiten, A52, fo. 61r. On Lindanus see P.Th. van Beuningen, *Wilhelmus Lindanus als inquisiteur en bisschop: bijdrage tot zijn biografie (1525-1576)*, Assen 1976.

looming.⁵¹ Indeed, crucial to the Jesuit involvement was not just their innovative confessional agenda, but the organisational structure that they provided. In the Society's confraternity various Catholics from the Low Countries were united, forging a closer relationship between clerics and the laity. Quite how important this development was for the construction of a Catholic party in the Dutch revolt becomes clear in a series of intriguing 'white papers' from the 1570s and 1580s. They were composed by members of the Cologne *émigré* community and make it possible to trace the evolving perceptions of the exiles themselves.

Mobilisation through education

The changing religiosity of many Catholic refugees is reflected in their shifting perspective on the war in the Netherlands. 'Now that I am in exile', Peter Audomarus wrote in his account of the war, 'I understand the problems and causes of the troubles even better.'⁵² Exile inspired numerous Catholics to consider solutions to the Dutch revolt and the role that refugees might play. Some of them took concrete action. In the course of the 1570s Catholic asylum centres developed into hotbeds of conspiracy where coups against the rebels were organised, money for troops was raised and strategies for a Catholic resurgence in rebel territory were discussed.⁵³ While places such as Douai and Liège had their part in this, Cologne unmistakably became the epicentre of exile activity. Surviving records reveal that between 1572 and 1585 the refugee community of Cologne composed at least three substantial white papers.⁵⁴ Addressed to the authorities in Rome, Brussels and Madrid, these policy proposals consisted of

⁵¹ Jan Stempelse to Everardus Mercurianus, Cologne, 27 June 1577, ARSI, Germaniae, 138-I, 223. Note similar remarks about the militant spirit in the Cologne exile community in *Laevinus Torrentius correspondance: période liégeoise, 1583-1587*, ed. Marie Delcourt and Jean Hoyoux, Paris 1950, i. 182-6.

⁵² Petrus S. Audomarus, *Declaratio cavssarum, ob quas Belgium gravissimis, praemittit calamitatibus, cum demonstratione remedij aduersus easdem efficacissimi*, Cologne 1582, preface.

⁵³ ARAB, Audiëntie, 589; 1787/1; 1831/1; Pieter Christiaensz Bor, *Oorsprongk, begin, en vervolgh der Nederlandsche oorlogen, beroerten en borgerlyke oneenigheden*, Amsterdam 1680, ii. 203-4. See also Guido Marnef, 'Een Gentse proost in Keulen: Bucho Aytta en zijn rol in de Opstand, 1579-1581', in A. Jans and others (eds), *Liber amicorum Dr. J. Scheerder*, Leuven 1987, 75-86, and S. A. C. Dudok van Heel, *Van Amsterdamse burgers tot Europese aristocraten: de Heijnen-maagschap, 1400-1800*, The Hague 2008, i. 87-91.

⁵⁴ Some white papers have been published, but they have not been studied comparatively. See references to these and other plans in *Archivalia in Italië belangrijk voor de geschiedenis van Nederland*, ed. G. Brom, The Hague, 1908-14, i/1, 273, 463; ii. 28, 190-5, 220; iii. 267-70, 272-3, and *Romeinsche bronnen*, 229-33, 554-5.

strategies to regain the Low Countries for the king, the pope and the exiles themselves. They simultaneously illustrate how a common Catholic exile agenda gradually took shape in the 1570s and early 1580s.

The principal agent behind most of these initiatives was Jan Gerrit Stempelse, prefect of the Marian sodality. In late 1573 he composed a first memorandum, together with a group of fellow exiles from Holland.⁵⁵ Remarkably, the authors distanced themselves from the punitive campaign that the Habsburg government had been pursuing in rebel territory under the leadership of the duke of Alba. Instead, the refugees pleaded for education. In their eyes the troubles in the Netherlands had essentially been the outcome of religious discord and ineffective clerical leadership. The solution to this was proper teaching, aimed at regaining the common people for the Church of Rome. The Stempelse group therefore proposed to establish Jesuit colleges in the towns of Holland that had recently been taken by rebel forces. The Jesuits could improve the religious instruction of the young and galvanise a renewed Catholic spirituality in areas that were infected by heresy. For the same reason the exiles advised the establishment of a seminary for priests in nearby Utrecht. Such long-term investments in local Catholic infrastructure would do more good than a military occupation, Stempelse and his co-authors argued.

Such ideas did not come out of the blue. Alba's strategy to enforce obedience by punishment and military pressure had received a bad press in the Netherlands. Numerous officials in the Habsburg administration advocated a pacifying policy that focused on pardon and reconciliation.⁵⁶ Yet the white paper composed by the Cologne exiles differed from these commonly held opinions in that it propagated Tridentine education as a means to mobilise common Catholics for the cause. This strategy was clearly inspired by Jesuit blueprints. It is even possible that the rector of the Cologne college, Johannes Rethius, had suggested that Stempelse and his fellow exiles think in this direction. In any case it was Rethius who informed the Jesuit general in Rome, Everardus Mercurianus, about the proposal in February 1574. Meanwhile, the rector lobbied for the plan in the office of the papal nuncio in Cologne.⁵⁷

⁵⁵ This is published in 'Stukken betreffende Nederlandsche kerkgeschiedenis van 1556–1580', ed. G. Brom, *Archief voor de Geschiedenis van het Aartsbisdom Utrecht* xxii (1895), 415–19; cf. *Archivalia in Italië*, i/1, 270, and Vermaseren, *De katholieke Nederlandse geschiedschrijving*, 20–2.

⁵⁶ Henry Kamen, *The duke of Alba*, New Haven 2004, 75–105; Violet Soen, *Geen pardon zonder paus! Studie over de complementariteit van het koninklijk en pauselijk generaal pardon (1570–1574) en over inquisiteur-generaal Michael Baius (1560–1576)*, Brussels 2007, esp. pp. 243–55.

⁵⁷ Johannes Rethius to Mercurianus, Cologne, 9 Feb., 4 Mar. 1574, ARSI, *Germaniae*, 135–I, 115. See also Vermaseren, *De katholieke Nederlandse geschiedschrijving*, 19–22.

The collective project of the Cologne Jesuits and the city's exile community appeared to trigger some action. The nuncio responded very positively and recommended the plans to the Roman Curia. Don Luís de Requesens, the newly appointed governor in the Low Countries, referred to the issue in a letter addressed to Philip II in February 1574. On 4 December Pope Gregory XIII indeed wrote an instruction to the archbishop of Utrecht, urging him to establish a seminary.⁵⁸ It proved difficult, however, effectively to coordinate the direction of reform from Rome and Cologne. Plans that smacked of Trent's decrees had become unpopular among many senior clerics in the Netherlands, while the interference of the Jesuit order also caused suspicion. Above all, the ongoing war in Holland frustrated the founding of new seminaries and colleges.⁵⁹ Nevertheless, the untimely project points to the embryonic agency of the exile community. Rather than leaving it to the authorities at home to deal with the troubles, the Cologne exiles were eager to claim a role for themselves. Moreover, the memorandum reveals how much their alternative view of the war was framed by Jesuit ideas. In stressing pedagogical reform, the Holland exiles argued that the creation of a Counter-Reformation lay movement was crucial to a solution of the conflict.

Political and religious renewal

As the influx of refugees in Cologne increased after 1577, the religiously activist atmosphere in the city gave a new impetus to the exile agenda. In early 1578 Wilhelmus Lindanus composed an elaborate programme for reform, addressed to the king's governor Don Juan.⁶⁰ As a distinguished member of the Marian sodality in Cologne, the exiled bishop was a close friend of Stempelse and a passionate advocate of the *émigré* community. Characteristically, his master plan attributed a key role to the exiles in

⁵⁸ 'Stukken', 421–2; *Correspondance de Philippe II sur les affaires des Pays-Bas*, ed. L.–P. Gachard, Brussels 1858, iii. 20–2; L. J. Rogier, *Geschiedenis van het katholicisme in Noord-Nederland in de 16de en 17de eeuw*, Amsterdam 1964, i. 211.

⁵⁹ To make matters worse, Rethius was murdered in Cologne in December 1574; Kuckhoff, *Die Geschichte*, 156.

⁶⁰ This is published in 'Twee geschriften van den bisschop van Roermond, Wilhelmus Lindanus over den kerkelijken toestand der Nederlanden in 1578–1579', ed. G. Brom, *Publications de la Société Historique et Archéologique dans le Duché de Limbourg* xxix (1892), 277–300. See also M. G. Spiertz, 'Wilhemus Lindanus, eerste bisschop van Roermond en zijn partijkeuze in de Nederlandse opstand (november 1576–juli 1578)', *Archief voor de Geschiedenis van de Katholieke Kerk in Nederland* xxxi (1989), 192–213. For Lindanus' earlier involvement with exiles see Beuningen, *Wilhelmus Lindanus*, 16–17, 285–7.

regaining the Netherlands. In Lindanus' view the troubles in the Low Countries had mainly been caused by unreliable town magistrates. A radical purge of office-holders was therefore crucial for the restoration of Habsburg authority and a Catholic monopoly.⁶¹ Lindanus proposed that political replacements could best be recruited among those 'respectable men, of confirmed faith and proven moral quality and experience, who, for the sake of God and their Catholic king, have left all they had, and are currently living in exile'.⁶² Lindanus thus advised that the exiles be used as the pioneering forces of a new Catholic political order. He even proposed to establish a 'council' of prominent exiles, who could advise the government about policies and future appointments in retaken areas.

The objectives of these new policies became clear in the following part of the master plan. Lindanus argued that a restoration of Habsburg authority was intrinsically linked to a renewal of Catholic spirituality. New magistrates with exile credentials should therefore also swear an oath of loyalty to the Council of Trent. In this way loyalty to the Church of Rome would become inseparable from loyalty to the king of Spain and his government.⁶³ This reading of the conflict clearly clashed with the views of many senior clerics in the Low Countries. At the time that Lindanus wrote his paper, a number of bishops and abbots as well as Catholic office-holders had started to collaborate with the rebel party. Following the Pacification of Ghent of 1576, these moderates had been arguing that the troubles could only be solved by negotiation and compromise. Some of them openly supported a form of religious accommodation. Lindanus' contrasting views thus marked a division within the Catholic community between the moderates and the group of exiles and radical Catholics who rejected any privileges offered to Protestants.⁶⁴ This ideological division became more explicit in Lindanus' advice that future priests should be tested on their ability to fight heresy. He finally added some more predictable guidelines for Tridentine reform, such as the implementation of stricter rules for regular priests and the establishment of seminaries.⁶⁵

⁶¹ This analysis resonated with an advice that Lindanus had composed for Philip II ten years earlier: Beuningen, *Wilhelmus Lindanus*, 189–90. Compare similar remarks made by Laurentius Metsius, bishop of Den Bosch, in *Correspondance de Philippe II*, iv. 739–94.

⁶² 'Twee geschriften', 284. This policy had been tested with success by the bishop himself. From 1572 onwards Lindanus had consciously appointed exiles from Holland to ecclesiastical positions in his diocese: Beuningen, *Wilhelmus Lindanus*, 285–7.

⁶³ This link was also characteristic of Jesuit discourses, with which Lindanus was well familiar: Andriessen, *De Jezüieten*, 33–4, 40–1, 51–3.

⁶⁴ Spiertz, 'Wilhelmus Lindanus', 199–210; Gustaaf Janssens, *Brabant in het verweer: loyale oppositie tegen Spanje's bewind in de Nederlanden van Alva tot Farnese, 1567–1578*, Kortrijk 1989; E. Valvekens, *De Zuid-Nederlandsche Norbertijner abdijen en de opstand tegen Spanje: maart 1576–1585*, Leuven 1929, 103–9, 198–201.

⁶⁵ 'Twee geschriften', 285–90.

The proposal by Lindanus appeared at a critical moment. Scholars of the Dutch revolt have long noted the polarisation in the Low Countries that took place between the Pacification of Ghent of 1576 and the peace negotiations of 1579.⁶⁶ A growing number of Catholics who had initially supported the rebellion became uncomfortable with a movement that had incited Calvinist radicalism. In the context of this growing Catholic anxiety, Lindanus' programme offered some radical alternatives. However, the white paper, which never appeared in print, does not seem to have been intended to persuade this broader Catholic public directly. Rather, it called upon the authorities to modify their strategy. It appears that Lindanus succeeded in this. Significantly, the proposals found a willing ear with Philip II's governor, Don Juan, who was frustrated about his own dealings with the moderate Catholic centre. He sent the plans to Madrid in spring 1578, while Lindanus himself sent copies to the Roman Curia. In November Lindanus travelled to Rome, undoubtedly to elaborate on his ideas. He was received warmly by Gregory XIII and subsequently went to Madrid, apparently at the request of the pope.⁶⁷

Although it is difficult to gauge the precise reception of the Lindanus plan, it is clear that his proposals arrived at the time when both the Roman Curia and the royal Spanish court shifted their policies. Pope Gregory XIII, who had favoured a peace agreement with the rebels not long before, sent out new instructions to the Netherlandish bishops in June 1578 – a few weeks after the white paper had reached Rome. The papal guidelines echoed elements of Lindanus' uncompromising plan. The pope announced that from now on it was strictly forbidden for Catholics to serve the rebel government. More specifically, clerics were warned not to attend any meetings of the States General.⁶⁸ Gregory prescribed that loyalty to the Church of Rome should be considered inseparable from loyalty to the Catholic King and his administration. As a result, Catholic moderates found themselves in a difficult position. In the course of 1579 the majority of bishops and clerics in the Low Countries saw no alternative to reconciliation with the Habsburg government. In so doing, they marked a division between two opposing parties in the conflict that were increasingly perceived in confessional terms.⁶⁹

In Madrid Lindanus' visit coincided with a new spirit of optimism at the royal court. After the financial fiascos of the mid-1570s, Philip II's resources

⁶⁶ This is summarised by J.J. Woltjer, *Tussen vrijheidsstrijd en burgeroorlog: over de Nederlandse opstand, 1555–1580*, Amsterdam 1994, 64–88.

⁶⁷ In Spain Lindanus presented another memorandum of which the content is unknown: *Les Archives générales de Simancas et l'histoire de la Belgique*, ed. M. van Durme, Brussels 1964–73, iv. 169; *Romeinsche bronnen*, 260–2; Spiertz, 'Wilhelmus Lindanus', 210.

⁶⁸ This is published in 'Stukken', 429–39.

⁶⁹ Woltjer, *Tussen vrijheidsstrijd*, 79–88.

from the Americas significantly increased from 1577. Moreover, temporary peace agreements with the Turks in the Mediterranean allowed the king to redirect his funds. A number of scholars, including John Elliott and Geoffrey Parker, have demonstrated that these events enabled Philip II to launch audacious new campaigns against the rebel Netherlands and Protestant England.⁷⁰ In the context of Lindanus' proposal, it is notable that in 1580 Philip announced the establishment of two seminaries for priests, an express wish of the exiled bishop and the Cologne community. Chronicler Pieter Bor claimed that the plan had been implemented 'by the pressure of Wilhelmus Lindanus [...] while he was in Spain'.⁷¹ Significantly, the king appointed a prominent exile from Cologne as head of the new seminary to be based in Leuven. Johan Strijen, exiled bishop of Middelburg, was on good terms with Lindanus and had been a member of the Marian sodality in Cologne as well. For the seminary in Douai, Philip II chose Willem Estius, son of an exiled magistrate from Gorinchem.⁷²

Whereas the exile plans of 1574 and 1578 had highlighted the 'Netherlandishness' of the troubles, Catholic polemicists of the early 1580s started to present the Dutch revolt as part of a much larger Catholic struggle against heresy, disorder and tyranny in Europe. A number of scholars have remarked how by 1580 militant printers in Cologne, Douai and elsewhere were campaigning for a pan-European Catholic League under Philip II's leadership.⁷³ A final memorandum that Stempelse composed in June 1583 exemplifies how the years abroad had also convinced the Cologne exiles of the importance of an international approach to the conflict. As figurehead of the Marian sodality Stempelse sent his extensive white paper to the papal nuncio Bonomi, although only a summary has survived.⁷⁴

The paper differed from previous plans in that it included foreign policy advice and advocated a rigorous military solution to the troubles. Notably, Stempelse proposed a holy war, a *sacrum bellum*, of Catholic princes across Europe. Although the former burgomaster of Gouda did little to elaborate

⁷⁰ Geoffrey Parker, *The grand strategy of Philip II*, New Haven 1998, 145, 164–70; John H. Elliott, *Imperial Spain, 1469–1716*, London 2002, 263–6, 269–70.

⁷¹ Bor, *Oorsprongk*, ii. 215.

⁷² HAK, Jesuiten, A52, fo. 62v; Bor, *Oorsprongk*, ii. 215.

⁷³ John Bossy, *Giordano Bruno and the embassy affair*, London 1991, 5; Parker, *The grand strategy*, 96–7; J. H. M. Salmon, 'Catholic resistance theory, ultramontaniam, and the royalist response, 1580–1620', in J. H. Burns and M. Goldie (eds), *The Cambridge history of political thought, 1450–1700*, Cambridge 1991, 221–3, 236–41.

⁷⁴ This is published in *Annales ecclesiastici quos post Caesarem S. R. E. Card. Baronium, Odoricum Raynaldum ac Iacobum Laderchium, presbyteros Congregationis Oratorii de Urbe ab an. 1572. / ad nostra usque tempora continuat*, ed. Augustin Theiner, Rome 1856, iii. 474–5.

on this rather grotesque plan, his ideas about a common Catholic crusade were evidently shaped by the flow of recent publications in which older anti-Islamic narratives were remodelled into an anti-Protestant one. In 1578 Gregory XIII had published a papal bull supporting Don Juan's troops in the Netherlands, which adopted the same language as previous papal declarations that had glorified Christians who went to war against Islamic forces.⁷⁵ The link between these two common Catholic enemies was especially meaningful since Don Juan had defeated the Ottoman fleet at Lepanto in 1570. More specifically, Stempelse's crusade narrative appears to have been inspired by a work written by Cornelis Loos entitled *De tumultuosa Belgarum rebellione sedanda*.⁷⁶ Interestingly, Loos came from a family of exiled magistrates from Gouda, the same town where Stempelse had served as burgomaster. Echoes of Loos's aggressive rhetoric about a *sacrum bellum* can also be found in the publications of other Cologne refugees, including Cunerus Petri, the exiled bishop of Leeuwarden.⁷⁷ Clearly, this broad support for a holy crusade contrasts with the more moderate proposals that the exiles had submitted ten years before. In 1574 Stempelse and his clan had argued that the arrival of Jesuits would do more good than troops. This shifting agenda exemplifies the polarisation as well as internationalisation of the Dutch revolt and illustrates how the Cologne exiles in particular had gradually internalised a more radical and transnational Catholic vocabulary.

The return of the refugees

The Catholic exile agenda, as it developed in the white papers of Stempelse, Lindanus and others, remained fiction as long as large parts of the Netherlands were in rebel hands. Philip II and Gregory XIII may have endorsed some of the proposals, but it was only after 1585 that the effects of these exile preparations became truly visible. In 1584–5 Alexander Farnese, governor-general of the Habsburg Netherlands, succeeded in recapturing the large urban centres of Brabant and Flanders, including Ypres, Bruges, Ghent, Brussels and Antwerp.⁷⁸ As a result, many exiled Catholics were finally able to return home. On 1 September 1585 Herman Weinsberg remarked in his diary that festivities were organised in Cologne

⁷⁵ Bor, *Oorsprongk*, i. 935.

⁷⁶ Cornelis Loos, *De tumultuosa Belgarum rebellione sedanda*, Luxemburg 1579; cf. Andriessen, *De Jezüieten*, 50, and Vermaseren, *De katholieke Nederlandse geschiedschrijving*, 47–50.

⁷⁷ Ignatius Walvis, *Beschrijving der stad Gouda, bevattende een verhaal van stads grondlegginge*, Gouda 1714, i. 78–81, 287–8. For Cunerus Petri see Vermaseren, *De katholieke Nederlandse geschiedschrijving*, 44–9.

⁷⁸ Parker, *The Dutch revolt*, 208–16.

to celebrate the fall of Antwerp. In a splendidly decorated St Mary in Capitol, mass was celebrated and followed by a procession in which numerous exiles from the Netherlands participated. According to Weinsberg most of them left the city in the following days and weeks.⁷⁹ Simultaneous reports from Ghent, Antwerp and Brussels confirm the arrival of hundreds of exiled priests, nuns, office-holders and other lay men and women.⁸⁰

Alexander Farnese facilitated the reintegration of exiles in a number of ways. First, he started systematically to appoint returning refugees to vacant offices: precisely the strategy that Lindanus had suggested. When Ghent was conquered in August 1584, Farnese instructed a number of agents to advise him about a renewal of the town magistracy. The informants provided the governor with lists of candidates that indicated who had been 'refugee' in previous years and hence was fit for election.⁸¹ A similar strategy was followed that summer in Bruges. Farnese received records with names on which 'the absent ones and refugees are indicated with an A-mark'.⁸² Their appointment also served an exemplary purpose. Ferdinand Veranneman, one of Farnese's confidants in Bruges, reasoned that the recruitment of refugees showed the local community 'that His Majesty is elevating the good Catholics to public office'.⁸³ Similarly, when Antwerp was taken in the following year, the governor was informed about those candidates 'who have been refugees in Cologne'.⁸⁴ Although the majority of Farnese's appointments concerned magistrates who had been in office before the troubles, it is clear that an exile background was a decisive criterion for their rehabilitation. In ecclesiastical spheres the restored Habsburg administration applied a similar strategy. Numerous clerics who had stayed in Cologne, Douai or St Omer in the early 1580s became the leading figures of the renewed Catholic Church of the following two decades.⁸⁵

Secondly, Farnese provided returning exiles with the means to regain their possessions and exploit the ideas that they had developed during

⁷⁹ *Die autobiographischen Aufzeichnungen Hermann Weinsbergs*, entry for 17 Aug. 1585.

⁸⁰ Jean-François Foppens, *Histoire du Conseil de Flandre*, Brussels 1869, 70–1; Marinus, *Contrareformatie*, 155–6; Floris Prims, *Geschiedenis van Antwerpen: viii. met Spanje (1555–1715): 3e boek: de geestelijke orde*, Antwerp 1943, 217, 226, 252–3; Guillaume Weydts, *Chronique flamande, 1571–1584*, ed. Émile Varenbergh, Ghent 1869, 144–5.

⁸¹ Notes regarding the election of magistrates in Ghent, 1584, ARAB, Audiëntie, 809/9.

⁸² Notes regarding the election of magistrates in Bruges, 1584, *ibid.* 809/7.

⁸³ List of recommendations from Ferdinand Veranneman, addressed to Jean Richardot, Bruges, 14 Aug. 1584, *ibid.*

⁸⁴ *Ibid.* 809/13. Returning exiles were also (re)installed on lower administrative levels: SAA, list of town secretaries. Available at http://www.felixarchief.be/Unrestricted/Folder.aspx?document_id=09041acf80000ab3&format=pdf.

⁸⁵ A number of examples are cited in Viaene, 'Vlaamse vluchtelingen', 7–22.

their years of absence. Funds for the refurbishment of their houses, convents and churches were characteristically taken from the confiscated goods of Protestants. Victims of the rebel regime were thus given the chance to clear their debts at the expense of those who had been responsible for their exile and suffering.⁸⁶ Jesuits in particular profited from this policy of recompense.⁸⁷ Backed by the Farnese government, the Society started to copy the policies which had proved so successful in Douai and Cologne. As early as 8 December 1585 Frans Coster founded a Marian sodality in Antwerp, modelled after the Cologne example. Its first members consisted of 'those who had been associated and enlisted with the same sodality, in Cologne, Douai and elsewhere, to which they had escaped because of the Catholic religion'.⁸⁸ The confraternity based itself in the House of Aachen, a building that had been occupied by Calvinist officials during the rebellion. 'A place of the devil and his helpers' was suitably transformed into 'a room and *oratorium* of God and His Blessed Mother Mary'.⁸⁹ Within a year the Marian sodality counted seventy members. In the course of the next decade its numbers rose and by the early seventeenth century no less than 1,400 'sodales' were registered in one of the departments of the Jesuit confraternity in Antwerp.⁹⁰

In this way, the returning exiles became the mobilising force of the militant Catholic party that emerged in the later 1580s. In Brabant and Flemish towns, former refugees took the initiative in organising public processions, the cleansing and re-consecration of churches and printing projects that articulated a new Catholic self-confidence. Among the most productive authors of Catholic polemical print of the 1590s were former exiles such as Jan David and the great Jesuit entrepreneur Frans Coster.⁹¹ M.J. Marinus has observed that in Antwerp families of exiles served as important fund-raisers for Jesuit building projects.⁹² From fugitives and visionaries, the exiles had transformed themselves into the pioneering forces of a refashioned political and confessional order.

⁸⁶ There are numerous examples in ARAB, Audiëntie, 1806/4; 1807/2; 2855; 2552-3.

⁸⁷ Andriessen, *De Jezüieten*, 113-14; Marnef, *Het calvinistisch bewind*, 323-30; Marinus, *Contrareformatie*, 41-3; V. Vander Haeghen, 'Archives Gantoises', *Messenger des Sciences Historiques* (1887), 88-97.

⁸⁸ Th. van Lerijs, *Kronyk van de sodaliteit der getrouwden te Antwerpen (1585-1773)*, Antwerp 1862, 7. I am grateful to Judith Pollmann for providing me with a copy of this volume.

⁸⁹ *Ibid.* 7-8.

⁹⁰ Marinus, *Contrareformatie*, 255-8.

⁹¹ Karel Porteman, 'Na 350 jaar: de "sermoenen" van Franciscus Costerus', *Ons Geestelijk Erf* xliii (1969), 209-69; Viaene, 'Vlaamse vluchtelingen', 14-16, 29-37; cf. Arblaster, *Antwerp and the world*.

⁹² Marinus, *Contrareformatie*, 158-62.

The impact of exile

Modern scholarship has advanced paradoxical conclusions about the impact of exile in early modern society. On the one hand historians tend to present a bleak picture of the harsh conditions of displacement and the low social status of refugees in sixteenth-century communities.⁹³ On the other hand, scholars have been eager to highlight the formative role that religious refugees played in the construction of confessional identities in Reformation Europe. Studies of Reformed Protestantism in particular have shown how exile shaped international Calvinism and how returning refugees spread their creed and church organisation back home.⁹⁴ This ambiguous image of the Calvinist exile experience goes a long way in explaining what happened to Catholic refugees in the Dutch revolt. However painful and confusing, exile encouraged Catholics to organise themselves and to develop a more confessionalised, Tridentine identity.

In demonstrating how exile triggered collective Catholic action, two additional conclusions may be drawn. First, these examples may clarify the rapid emergence of Tridentine renewal in the Habsburg Netherlands, a development that has often puzzled historians. This Catholic resurgence after 1585 was not merely the outcome of state sponsorship, nor was it exclusively the result of spontaneous initiatives 'from below'. By showing how exiles, generally of the 'middling sort', exploited their agenda, this article suggests a dynamic interaction between the two. Catholic renewal in places such as Antwerp, Brussels and Ghent may not have been successful without the assistance of a dedicated movement of returning refugees. Yet conversely, exiles would have been unable to implement their ideas without government support. Secondly, a reconstruction of the Catholic exile experience reveals that the shaping of Catholic militancy in the Habsburg Low Countries was not an isolated, or typically 'Netherlandish' development, but a process that was profoundly international in origin and scope. For it was not in Antwerp or Brussels that a common Catholic party first became conspicuous, but in the refugee centres near or across the borders of Habsburg territory. Considering this unforeseen development, it could be argued that the Catholic exile crisis in the Dutch revolt was a blessing in disguise for the Catholic cause in northern Europe at large.

⁹³ Compare the assessment by Philip L. Kintner, 'Refugees', in Hans J. Hillerbrand (ed.), *The Oxford encyclopedia of the Reformation*, Oxford 1996, available at <http://www.oxfordreference.com/views/ENTRY.html?subview=Main&entry=t172.e1174>.

⁹⁴ Philip Benedict, *Christ's Churches purely reformed: a social history of Calvinism*, New Haven 2002, esp. pp. 70–1, 179–80; Duke, 'Perspectives', 5–6; Heiko Oberman, 'Europa afflicta: the reformation of the refugees', *Archiv für Reformationsgeschichte* lxxxiii (1992), 91–111.