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THE LEGACY OF EXILE AND THE RISE OF HUMANITARIANISM[1]

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The memory cultures of the Reformation are intrinsically connected to stories of migration. This is true in the sense that religious tensions sparked the movement, either voluntary or coerced, of thousands of dissenters across early modern Europe. The Reformation has even been blamed for causing the first European 'refugee crisis'.[2] Yet the linkage of the Reformation and migration is also true in the sense that migratory experiences generated powerful memories that would shape the confessional mentalities of the following generations. As Johannes Müller has argued, memories of persecution, flight and displacement stimulated a 'narratisation' of the concept of exile and diaspora among various denominational groups and became a popular tool of religious expression in post-Reformation Europe.[3] Just like martyrs' tales and conversion stories, migration histories defined the rival confessional canons of Protestants and Catholics alike.

Memories of migration, and the notion of exile in particular, served particular purposes in early modern Europe. First, they provided a frame of reference that could be invoked to address the challenges of the times. When, for example, large numbers of Huguenots left France during the 1680s, Protestant audiences elsewhere in Europe were duly reminded that the Huguenot diaspora was just the latest example of a well-known history of Catholic tyranny.[4] Second, memories of persecution and flight were used to underpin calls for action in the present. In his study of the Thirty Years' War, Ole Grell has noted that the military conflict in the German Empire triggered large-scale relief efforts and church collections in surrounding countries. Many of these built on transnational refugee networks that had emerged in the sixteenth century and employed a rhetoric of exile history with which many Protestant communities could identify.[5]

The 'cult of exile' in post-Reformation Europe has received some attention in recent scholarship, but a cross-confessional analysis of its significance, popularity, and functions among different denominations is lacking.[6] More specifically, few

attempts have been made to assess the impact of exile memories on shifting chari-
table mentalities and emerging humanitarian sensibilities in Europe. Still, such an
endeavour seems pertinent because most scholars situate the origins of modern
humanitarianism in human rights thinking, which would only gain ground during
the eighteenth-century Enlightenment.[7] By addressing the relationship between
memory practices and the rise of long distance advocacy in post-Reformation
Europe, this essay seeks to rethink this common Enlightenment narrative and
gauge the agency of religious minorities in forging early humanitarian cultures.

Migrations of the Reformation

Forced migration and displacement have been common throughout history, but
recent scholarship contends that the refugee first emerged as a mass phenomenon
in the early modern period. In his wide-ranging overview, *Religious Refugees in
the Early Modern World*, Nicholas Terpstra explains how the bureaucratisation of
states, shifting economic structures and, above all, increasing religious tensions
fostered anxieties about uniformity in late-medieval Europe.[8] Partly inspired by
Robert Moore's thesis about the formation of a persecuting society and David
Nirenberg's work on communities of violence, Terpstra asserts that from the late
fifteenth century onwards European elites sought to establish more cohesive and
pure communities of faith.[9] The removal of religious dissenters was a common
means to achieve a more purified *corpus christianum*. According to this line of
argument, the notable rise in the number of displaced persons in the sixteenth
century was not kick-started by Reformation disputes as such, but rather found
its origins in broader concerns and earlier attempts to purge and cleanse European
societies of dissent.

Challenging the notion of a single, exclusively Protestant 'refugee Reformation',
Terpstra urges scholars to include Jewish diasporas and Muslim expulsions in tra-
ditional Reformation historiographies. Thus, his analysis of the early modern refu-
gee crisis starts with the expulsion of Jews from German and French towns in the
mid-fifteenth century and the forced migration of New Christians or Sephardim
from the Iberian Peninsula after 1492. These diasporas were followed by the dis-
placement of 'Morisco' minorities from Spain in the early seventeenth century.
Meanwhile, the rise of Protestantism and its subsequent persecution generated
waves of evangelical refugees across sixteenth-century Europe. Countervailing
Catholic migrations were generally smaller and were mostly concentrated in
northern Europe. Although precise numbers are not available for any of these
groups, estimates suggest that several hundred thousands of men and women were
driven away as a result of repressive confessional policies.[10] The effects of reli-
giously informed migrations were tangible in the development of hubs of asylum,
including Emden and Cologne in the Holy Roman Empire, London and Norwich
in England, Geneva and Zurich in the Swiss Confederation, Venice and Rome in
the Italian peninsula, and Tunis and Istanbul in the Ottoman Empire.

The Reformation's refugee crisis generated paradoxical consequences. Despite the hardship and misery, diasporic communities were able to forge new international networks of correspondence, media, and business. Economic historians have pointed to the impact of Protestant refugees for the revitalisation of draperies in sixteenth-century England and the advancement of printing industries in Geneva and Emden. The expulsion of Sephardim likewise fostered the development of innovative trading networks in the Mediterranean and the Atlantic world.[11] Yet the experience of displacement borne by so many would have particularly profound consequences for European thinking about religious identity and confessional allegiance. The growing number of displaced communities fuelled a greater appetite for politicised confessional mentalities among all religious groups. Scholars have noted how in places such as Emden, Geneva, and London many evangelical refugees became receptive to strands of Reformed Protestantism.[12] Something similar happened to Catholics who escaped Protestant regimes in the British Isles and the Low Countries in the later sixteenth century. In safe havens such as Douai and St Omer, many expatriate Catholics for the first time encountered Counter-Reformation doctrine and experimented with more militant forms of Tridentine spirituality.[13]

Recent scholarship contends that the galvanising effects of exile was not a specifically Calvinist or Tridentine phenomenon. The experience of diaspora also triggered a re-judaisation among expelled Sephardic communities and forged more cohesive Jewish identities in major host cities such as Venice and Amsterdam.[14] Scattered evidence about expelled 'Moriscos' likewise suggests that many of them became part of the dedicated, confessional forces of the Islamic Ottoman regime in the early seventeenth century.[15] This is not to claim that all religious refugees went through a similar 'radicalising' process. Several scholars, notably Liesbeth Corens, Jesse Spohnholz, and Mirjam van Veen have pointed to the variety of responses to displacement and to the many forms of religious mobility that coexisted. In some areas, the experience of exile in fact encouraged experiments with religious toleration.[16] All the same, the rise of parallel, confessional mentalities in post-Reformation Europe cannot be separated from the formative experiences of its various migrating minorities.

The rise of the refugee

If migration was a driving force behind religious identity formation, it also nurtured the discursive invention of the refugee as a distinct social category in European society. In their search for meaning and their wish to distinguish themselves from common migrants, displaced dissenters eagerly looked to classical and, particularly, biblical precedents. The Old Testament offered a number of role models in this regard, including Abraham, Moses, and the exiled prophets from the time of the Babylonian captivity. These edifying examples were appropriated by displaced Protestants and Catholics alike. Martin Luther and his adherents drew on Matthew 10:23 ('when they persecute you in this city, flee ye

into another') as well as a catalogue of biblical blueprints to argue that exile —
either physically or spiritually — was part of a venerable Christian experience, a
sign of steadfastness, and means towards spiritual salvation.[17] Calvinists of a fol-
lowing generation claimed Old Testament analogies in even bolder ways. The
Panhuys family from Antwerp, for one, commissioned a large imaginary group
portrait (c. 1575) in which the dispersed relatives were re-united as ancient
Israelites on their way from Egypt to the Promised Land. Moses himself was
included to the evocative *portrait historié* [Fig. 13.1].[18]

The Catholic publicist Joannes Costerius, in turn, asserted in 1580 that it was
Catholic refugees who were the true victims of Pharaoh who relived the wander-
ing fate of the biblical Jews.[19] As the religious conflict in sixteenth-century Europe
hardened, confessional parties on both sides styled their respective displaced com-
munities as reenactors of a long biblical tradition and consisting of quasi-martyrs of
the faith.

The term exile (or *exul, exulant*) became a popular catchphrase for those who
justified their migration along such confessional lines. As Alexander Schunka
and Jesse Spohnholz have observed, narratives of biblical exile were often
applied with hindsight and obscured the very different incentives and experi-
ences behind the various migrations during the Reformation.[20] This observation
is also pertinent for our understanding of the emergence of the concept of
refugee in the same period. Although its semantic origins have never been fully
studied, the term refugee first gained ground in the context of expelled religious

FIGURE 13.1 Maarten de Vos, *Moses Showing the Tablets of the Law to the Israelites, with
            Portraits of Members of the Panhuys Family, their Relatives and Friends* (c. 1575).
Collection Mauritshuis, The Hague.

minorities and their exile discourses. The Latin *refugium* (place of shelter) and the French verb *se réfugier* (to seek shelter) had long existed, but the person of the refugee as a noun was unknown, as sixteenth-century dictionaries demonstrate.[21] In a letter to Cardinal Antoine Perrenot de Granvelle of October 1572, provost Maximilian Morillon referred to 'ung monde des bien réfugiés' when he discussed the fate of escaping Catholics in the Dutch Revolt.[22] The expression 'les réfugiés' was subsequently adopted by the Habsburg administration in the 1580s to single out 'bonnes catholicques' who had fled sites of Protestant rebellion in the Low Countries.[23] Being a refugee thus implied a particular type of migrant who had become the victim of religious repression and deserved solidarity and support from co-religionists. Distinctions between the terms exile, refugee, fugitive, and expelled were often blurred though. Contemporaries used them in a variety of senses and sometimes even interchangeably. The usage of refugee vocabulary became more widespread in different European languages after the Huguenot *refuge* of the later seventeenth century. Dictionaries published after 1685 generally listed 'refugee' and privileged it for French Protestants, thereby ignoring its sixteenth-century, Catholic origins. Well into the eighteenth century, refugee retained its confessional connotations and was applied almost exclusively to victimised Protestants.[24] Forced displacements during the Reformation thus encouraged the development of a richer and more nuanced vocabulary of migration, but they also generated the myths of exclusive victimhood, which have long coloured our understanding of the phenomenon.[25]

The agency of religious minorities in distinguishing between types of migrants and framing the concepts of 'exile' and 'refugee' becomes particularly clear when we compare them to other early modern victims of forced migration. For example, men and women who fled war violence, economic deprivation, or climate change in early modern Europe never adopted the language of biblical exile to explain their experiences, nor did they conceptualise their flight in analogous semantic categories. Hence they were not seen, or indeed did not see themselves, to be akin to refugees. It was the language of religion that first provided displaced minorities in Europe with a distinct identity, which aligned their experiences with venerable precedents and could be used as a badge of social respectability. For numerous other migrants, such a categorisation may not have been feasible or useful, for example if they were aiming for social assimilation or economic integration into host communities.

The emergence of the refugee as a distinct social category in pre-modern Europe was not, then, solely the result of the rising number of displaced minorities. Its conceptualisation also stemmed from the activism and the discursive strategies of particular groups who sought religious freedom, legal protection, and international solidarity from co-religionists. By defining their displacement in terms of persecution, religious migrants effectively reinvented themselves: rather than unprivileged strangers, they were honourable victims who deserved a special status in civilised societies.

Exile memory politics

The growing respectability of the religious refugee translated into the memory politics of Europe's rival churches. Protestants and Catholics all cultivated their respective histories of persecution and exile as evidence of the religious commitment and sacrifice of their forebears.[26] Still, there were notable differences in the meanings attached to the exile past and their popularity among different denominations. For Reformed Protestants, exile narratives reinforced the notion of an elect community, whose members had relived the biblical script set by the people of Israel. In the seventeenth century, identifications with Israel became a trope within puritan and Reformed circles and the idea that Calvinism was a religion born out of exile experiences was widely disseminated in sermons, songs, chronicles, and published histories.[27] Lutherans too developed a didactic and devotional exile genre, which included histories of persecution and migration and biographical accounts of exemplary Lutheran ancestors.[28]As Liesbeth Corens has shown, within the Church of Rome the theological concept of exile was less popular and the idea of an embattled minority church did not sit well with Counter-Reformation teachings. To be sure, English Catholics cultivated memories of persecution and migration during the Reformation but these fused into a broader framework of religious mobility, which also included missionary activity and pilgrimage. In this way, the migratory past of Catholic minorities could be integrated into general Tridentine models.[29] In the Dutch Republic, a sense of religious competition contributed to exile being claimed as a founding experience by Calvinists, Protestant dissenters, and Catholics alike.[30]

Publicists and publishers, sometimes labelled the 'memory brokers' of the period, fuelled and channelled these different scripts of exile. It is telling that many of them shared a migration past. In his overview of exile and expatriate culture, Peter Burke remarks that history-writing and publishing have long been a powerful tool and resource for refugees. Indeed, numerous religious migrants of the sixteenth and seventeenth centuries later became chroniclers and historians who could write and have disseminated a particular image of their troubled past. Several popular histories of the Dutch Revolt, for instance, were composed by former exiles, who claimed that the history of flight and displacement had been instrumental to the rise of a newborn Protestant state.[31] The English Jesuit Robert Persons sought to frame and publicise his experience of exile as part of a wider missionary effort to retake England for the Church of Rome.[32] A cyclical reading of history characterised many of these works. The *Historia persecutionum* (1648), for one, was styled after books of martyrs and presented the migrations of Protestants from Bohemia as a recurring story of persecution of 'true Christians', which had existed since the Christianisation of the region in the ninth century.[33]

Memories of exile were also promoted through selective record-keeping, collections of memorabilia, and the construction of public monuments. The opening lines of the notes of the Reformed Church of Amsterdam stated dramatically that the congregation had been established on 24 May 1578 'after the return from

exile'. The diverse migrations of some of its members were thus rewritten into a founding myth of the entire Reformed community.[34] In Emden, the local church capitalised on its heroic past by installing a memorial plaque as late as 1660 — almost a century after the exile of Netherlandish Protestants in the town. It proudly claimed that 'God's church, persecuted and expelled, has received God's consolation here'.[35] The relevance of the exile past was remembered in Counter-Reformation circles, too. In seventeenth-century Antwerp, for example, the expulsion and subsequent return of Catholics in the Dutch Revolt were commemorated in a dedicated chapel of the Cathedral of Our Lady.[36]

In the later seventeenth century, French Huguenots would exploit these different and rivalling scripts of exile. Of all persecuted groups in early modern Europe, they were arguably most successful in shaping a particular image of their diaspora by adapting and recycling established Protestant tropes. Through prints, illustrated histories and pamphlets, Huguenot authors retold the story of their *refuge* in the darkest possible colours and infused their written histories with suggestive historical parallels. The *History of the Jews* (1706–1707), written by Jacques Basnage, is a case in point. His narrative of the dispersion of the chosen people clearly echoed recent stories of Huguenots.[37] In the popular news prints of Romeyn de Hooghe, analogies between forced migrations during the sixteenth-century Reformation and the current situation in France were skilfully made by reusing familiar images of earlier Protestant suffering.[38]

Collective memories of exile could serve confessional, political, and social purposes. In areas where religious refugees had been instrumental in advancing the Reformation, stories of displacement became arguments for social mobility. In the United Provinces, the history of the Dutch Revolt encouraged the development of a patriotic discourse about the aristocracy of exile suffering during the war. Numerous urban elites in Holland capitalised on their familial histories of migration — real or imagined — and presented themselves as natural standard-bearers of the new Protestant regime.[39] In Amsterdam, a clan of former Emden exiles was able to stay in power throughout the seventeenth century. In England, too, exile credentials were used, with various degree of success, to further political and ecclesiastical careers under the regimes of Elizabeth I and James I.[40] As for Catholic elites in Protestant areas, exile pedigree could be useful as well. References to an ancestral history of flight appear in requests for patronage to the authorities in Rome or at the court of the King of Spain and the German Emperor.[41]

The cult of exile even appeared as an argumentative strategy in diplomatic circles. In 1612, for example, the town of Emden sought relief for its many financial troubles. One of their main creditors, the Dutch States General, received a letter in which the magistrates of Emden asked to have their debts waived because the town had offered hospitality to Dutch refugees in the sixteenth century. Now, they argued, their descendants should in turn show their generosity and solidarity. The English ambassador in The Hague, Dudley Carleton, expressed a similar reasoning a decade later.[42] The significance of exile memories in post-Reformation Europe is perhaps best illustrated in its use by men and women whose refugee past was, in

fact, unclear or even non-existent. Johannes Müller and Jesse Spohnholz have uncovered how the appreciation of exile encouraged later generations to rewrite their family histories.[43]

A seemingly paradoxical aspect of confessional exile narratives concerns their transnational character. From the start, the refugee crisis of the sixteenth century had forged international communities of faith. In hubs of asylum such as Geneva and Emden (for Reformed Protestants), Cologne and Paris (for Catholics) and Venice and Amsterdam (for Sephardic Jews), refugees of various national backgrounds had interacted and often shared the same religious facilities, patronage resources, and devotional media. International group-bonding also bred a charitable mentality along confessional yet transnational lines. In Protestant circles these long-distance solidarities have been dubbed 'International Calvinism'. But among expelled (crypto-) Jews the expansion of international bonds and a heightened sense of Sephardic community have been observed as well. More recently, scholars have pointed to Catholic variants of the same transnational support networks that had been strengthened by the rise of a militant, confessional brand of International Catholicism in the 1580s.[44] The experience of displacement thus fed a charitable mentality among rivalling churches and stimulated a continuing interest in new 'refugee crises'. In the seventeenth and eighteenth centuries, international aid to repressed co-religionists abroad became a popular tool of religious expression among Protestants, Catholics, and Jews alike. This proto-humanitarian spirit was particularly visible in transnational charity campaigns and forms of public diplomacy.

International charity

The informal webs of correspondence, business, and media that had developed in sixteenth-century refugee communities provided the basis for an enduring charitable network. From the early seventeenth century onwards, Protestant congregations in England, France, and the Dutch Republic regularly organised church collections for oppressed and dispersed brethren elsewhere in Europe. Ole Grell has highlighted the scale of some of these campaigns during the Thirty Years' War. In the United Provinces, for example, about 64,000 *thaler* were raised between 1626 and 1645 for refugees from the troubled German Palatinate. Successive collections in England, Scotland, and Ireland generated even larger total sums for the same cause.[45] The end of the war in the Holy Roman Empire did not diminish this charitable zeal directed beyond one's own borders. Growing tensions between Catholics and Protestants in Ireland triggered a widely publicised campaign in Dutch Reformed churches in 1643–1644. Erica Boersma has estimated that no less than 300,000 guilders were given in aid of Irish Protestants.[46]

Charity to the needy had of course long been part of Christian culture. What seemed to distinguish the fundraising practices of (post-) Reformation Europe from established charitable giving traditions, concerned their geographical scope, confessionalised agenda, particular focal groups, and sophisticated use of media. By

campaigning for fleeing and persecuted co-religionists abroad, the organisers of transnational support networks advocated a new type of long-distance solidarity and encouraged a sense of identification with the suffering of distant others. Politicised, confessional media furthered these sensibilities and disseminated a vocabulary of empathy, which showed similarities with later humanitarian discourses.[47]

The engagement with persecuted refugees in distant lands may have been particularly pronounced in Reformed circles, but it was by no means limited to supporters of 'International Calvinism'. Scattered evidence suggests a similar sort of transnational solidarity among Lutheran, Anabaptist as well as Catholic communities, which set-up their own competing charitable schemes in the early decades of the seventeenth century.[48] Sephardic Jews in Hamburg and Amsterdam likewise started to organise support for oppressed Ashkenazi Jews in Central and Eastern Europe. Despite tensions between the denominations, Yosef Kaplan has revealed the considerable sums collected by the Sephardic community in Amsterdam during the pogroms in Poland in 1648.[49] While these different initiatives have usually been seen and interpreted in the context of particular Jewish or Protestant attitudes, a more comparative perspective allows us to appreciate that each of these transnational support networks were local variants of a broader European pattern.

Exile memories fuelled these identifications with refugee-victims abroad and stimulated a continuing popularity for long-distance aid. Indeed, the cult of exile neatly fit the emerging cult of transnational 'humanitarian' charity. In the United Provinces church collections for international refugees of Protestant colouring were generally justified by a rhetoric about barbarian Catholic persecution and earlier Protestant refugee experiences during the sixteenth century. The notion of a shared history of exile and the responsibility of Protestant communities elsewhere in Europe to support their brethren underpinned the aid campaigns for the Palatinate and Bohemia in the 1620s and 1630s. During their meeting in Dordrecht in 1637, the Dutch Reformed Synod typically reasoned that the current sufferings of German Protestants affected their Dutch co-religionists, too, because they were all 'parts of the same body'.[50] A circular letter by English Puritan minsters in 1627 likewise referred to German refugees as 'Brethren in Christ'.[51] Published chronicles and other media kindled such identifications. In the funeral sermon for the London alderman John La Motte in 1655, the local minister told his flock that John's benevolence towards oppressed Calvinists abroad had been informed by his readings of the 'Histories' of his age, 'especially such as treated of the Persecutions and Deliverances of the Church of God, and the Propagation of the Gospel'.[52]

As Judith Pollmann has shown, early modern contemporaries generally believed that remembering the past was useful because it could teach something about the present. Identifying historical analogies was therefore a common argumentative strategy in printed media such as newspapers and illustrated broadsheets.[53] During the Thirty Years' War, Protestant publishers skilfully re-used well-known images of alleged Spanish atrocities in the Americas and religious violence in the Dutch Revolt to draw comparisons with more recent victims of 'Catholic barbarity' and 'Habsburg tyranny'.[54] International propaganda during the English Civil War of

the 1640s, the Waldensian crisis of the 1650s, and the Huguenot diaspora of the 1680s recycled these and other iconic images.[55] The history of the Waldensians in Piedmont in particular had long been revered in Protestant circles because they were regarded as a kind of forerunners of the Reformation. When the dukes of Savoy renewed their persecutions of the community in the seventeenth century, an international Protestant outcry followed.[56] Calls for financial aid and relief operations for the Waldensian refugees were bolstered by references to the renowned past of this proto-Protestant community. The media war of the 1680s employed similar historical scripts. Huguenots may have left France for a variety of reasons, but they were keen to portray themselves as traditional confessional exiles. By fusing their sufferings into recognisable Protestant categories of exile, Huguenot publicists sought to persuade host countries such as England, Brandenburg-Prussia, and the Dutch Republic to fulfil their obligation of charity towards fellow Protestants in need.[57]

Narratives of exile remained an important frame of reference for charity campaigns of the early eighteenth century. When in 1731–1732 the Lutheran minority of Salzburg was expelled by the local prince-archbishop, Protestant publishers seized the opportunity to frame the migration as the latest chapter in a long tradition of persecution and exile. Thus, the 'exodus' of Salzburg Lutherans was compared to the exilic wanderings of the ancient Israelites and readers were duly reminded that Protestants had been victims of similar forced migrations since the start of the Reformation.[58] An orchestrated international media campaign for help eventually elicited some 34,000 *thaler* from European donors, including the kings of Sweden and Great Britain and leaders of several Protestant cities in the Holy Roman Empire. Brandenburg-Prussia in particular presented itself as the generous safe haven for the wretched Salzburg Lutherans.[59]

As the example of Brandenburg suggests, transnational charity often interacted with the interests of states. But religiously informed long-distance solidarities could also cause friction between churches and government officials, who were anxious about the wider repercussions of aid to refugees. The eagerness with which the Reformed Church of the United Provinces presented itself as a rescuer of repressed brethren abroad regularly worried Dutch diplomats. In 1629, the States of Holland opposed a new collection for German refugees because it feared large-scale migrations of foreign Protestants to the Netherlands.[60] In England, the royal government was hesitant to fully endorse Puritan initiatives during the Thirty Years' War when they seemed to damage dynastic interests or heighten domestic religious tensions.[61]

Europe's rivalling churches were key in defining the focus groups and organising the infrastructure of this proto-humanitarian activism. Still, the emphasis taken by historians, concentrating on these institutional players and their archives, has obscured the agency of individual families. Numerous charitable initiatives were, in fact, kick-started and promoted within family networks whose members cultivated their own ancestral histories of refuge. The Courten dynasty in London, for example, was made up of powerful entrepreneurs who were instrumental in raising international attention and support for refugees during the Thirty Years' War. The

Courtens typically descended from Protestant refugees from the sixteenth-century Low Countries. In Counter-Reformation Antwerp, the Van der Cruyce family had likewise suffered exile during the Calvinist regime of the early 1580s and became ardent advocates for Catholics displaced from the Northern Netherlands.[62] As conscious descendants of sixteenth-century refugees, these families were both the stakeholders of the collective cult of exile as well as the informal agents and stewards of the humanitarian spirit that emerged out of it.

Humanitarian diplomacy

Media coverage of persecutions and refugee crises in the seventeenth-century have recently been interpreted as part of 'public diplomacy' and lobby for foreign intervention.[63] Already in the sixteenth century, religious refugee communities had called upon authorities abroad to step in and use their power in the service of these communities' interest. Elizabeth I, for one, had received petitions from Dutch rebels and exiles in London, asking for protection and military help in their fight against the Habsburg monarchy. Catholic refugees, for their part, had sought to interest Philip II of Spain in their cause. In the 1580s, Catholic émigrés in Cologne even designed an ambitious plan for a Counter-Reformation league of princes that would eliminate the Protestant threat in northern Europe. While most of these ambitious schemes never materialised, the Thirty Years' War would show the disastrous effects of a rhetoric of transnational confessional solidarity. In the later sixteenth century, the preservation of 'the Church' became an accepted legal argument to justify military interventions abroad. Not only was it employed by Philip II to defend his military involvement in France in the 1590s, but traces of the same reasoning about foreign intervention as an act of 'collective defence' can be found in Protestant writings of the following decades as well.[64]

In the seventeenth century, calls for intervention on 'humanitarian' grounds were, it seems, directed particularly towards England and the Dutch Republic.[65] As a self-styled bastion of Protestant resistance against Catholic persecution, the United Provinces received numerous petitions for help from German Protestants in the 1610s and 1620s. While the States General was reluctant to become involved in religious troubles in the Empire, they did occasionally provide money and loans to displaced German communities from places such as Paderborn and Aachen and wrote pleading letters to German princes.[66] The flight of the Waldensian minority in Piedmont in the 1650s prompted similar calls for foreign intervention. Oliver Cromwell's government applied strong diplomatic pressure on Louis XIV and the Duke of Savoy in favour of the community.[67] Actual military involvement on behalf of refugees was rare, though, and the available examples should be seen in the context of wider strategic concerns. In the United Provinces, the arrival of thousands of Huguenots in the 1680s was marshalled rhetorically as a justification of Dutch military campaigns against Louis XIV.[68] Many Huguenot refugees were also recruited into Dutch, English, and Prussian armies to fight their repressive French monarch. In 1689, the Dutch East India Company (VOC) even planned an

attack on French-held islands in the Indian Ocean, allegedly with the aim of compensating Huguenot refugees for their confiscated properties in France.[69] The Spanish-Habsburg monarchy did something similar on behalf of Catholics who escaped 'Protestant aggression' elsewhere in Europe. After the battle of Kinsale (1601), for example, a considerable number of Irish Catholics settled in Spain. Some of the Irish émigrés were recruited for the Habsburg armies, but even those who were considered unfit for military tasks were eventually offered asylum. King Philip III reportedly refused to send back 'useless' men, women, and children because of his charitable responsibilities as a Catholic monarch.[70]

Although little studied in the context of early modern international relations, calls for humanitarian intervention often coincided with the charity campaigns discussed earlier. They also built on the same memory culture of exile. During the Thirty Years' War a dedicated stream of pamphlets targeted Protestant audiences across Europe. Written by local ministers, residents or anonymous agents, these printed media sought to influence public opinion by reporting events in the Palatinate and Bohemia within a framework that recalled well-known histories of the sixteenth century. The *Humble Request* of 1637 reminded Dutch readers of the hospitality that the Palatinate had offered to Protestant exiles during the Dutch Revolt and encouraged the Dutch to put pressure on their authorities to help the afflicted former host.[71] Some authors signed their appeal letters as 'exules', emphasising the links between past and present suffering. Immigrant communities in the United Provinces employed similar argumentative strategies in their negotiations with governments. When a group of Sephardic Jews submitted a petition to the authorities in Amsterdam in 1616, they stressed their entrepreneurial importance for the city, but also presented themselves as 'being refugees of the fire of the Spanish inquisition and other cruelties'. The Sephardim knew how to kindle sympathy by using a vocabulary with which Dutch elites were keen to identify.[72]

Pre-modern humanitarianism

Although the scale and effectiveness of early modern 'humanitarian' activity remains understudied, the examples given here prompt some larger questions about its character and origins. First, it is notable that forms of transnational refugee support already used a language of empathy and even humanity, which scholars have traditionally attributed to the eighteenth-century Enlightenment. Lynn Hunt has famously shown how human rights thinking gained currency in the eighteenth century as a result of what she called a new emotional regime, which centred on imagined empathy. A legal regime of human rights eventually followed from this development.[73] While it is undeniable that the Enlightenment project defined the concept of human rights, it appears that a rhetoric of empathy and long-distance solidarity already characterised the refugee aid networks of the preceding two centuries. Religiously forced migrations of the sixteenth century had confronted all denominations with the question of what it actually meant to be persecuted and expelled, and whether particular migrants deserved their help and protection.

These embryonic humanitarian sensibilities were furthered by the ways in which memories of the Reformation's refugee crisis were cultivated by different confessional groups in the following decades.

Second, by evoking memories of a shared exile past, pre-modern humanitarian mentalities challenge accepted readings about agency. Within the rapidly expanding historiography on the topic, most scholars situate the roots of humanitarianism in external pressure groups that became particularly popular in the nineteenth century.[74] The examples from post-Reformation Europe, by contrast, largely stem from the activism of the victims themselves. Indeed, the very concept of 'refugee' was invented by religious minorities in their search for protection, aid, and respectability. Sceptics of this reading might argue that the examples of early modern 'humanitarian' culture are still quite different from their modern counterparts in their strict confessional colouring. Indeed, rival refugee networks rarely offered the prospect of solidarity with each other, let alone lobbied for equal privileges to be extended to all repressed minorities. Early modern humanitarianism was firmly confessionalised.[75] But this observation does not imply that there existed a clean break between the confessional world views of early modern Europe and more secular, enlightened, or 'modern' ones. The work of Caroline Shaw and Abigail Green has revealed that the notion of an international Protestant brotherhood was still an important frame of reference in nineteenth-century humanitarian networks, but it coexisted with more religiously neutral, general Christian discourses.[76]

In recapturing early forms of long-distance advocacy, this essay has finally sought to demonstrate that the refugees of Reformation Europe were not mere marginalised victims of conflict, as contemporary images and later historiography often suggest. Displaced religious minorities were also agents of change who made a significant impact on early modern society, be it as the inventors of refugee vocabulary, the promoters of exile memory cultures, or as the initiators of transnational humanitarian attitudes. This was a legacy on which the Enlightenment project would build.

Notes

1 This essay is part of the NWO-VICI project 'The Invention of the Refugee in Early Modern Europe' (016.Vici.185.020).

2 Peter Burke, *Exiles and Expatriates in the History of Knowledge, 1500–2000* (Waltham, MA, 2017), 39–64; Susanne Lachenicht, 'Refugees and Refugee Protection in the Early Modern World', *Journal of Refugee Studies* 30, no. 2 (2017), 261–81; Nicholas Terpstra, *Religious Refugees in the Early Modern World: An Alternative History of the Reformation* (Cambridge, 2015).

3 Johannes Müller, *Exile Memories and the Dutch Revolt. The Narrated Diaspora, 1550–1750* (Leiden, 2016), 203–5.

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