

## Introduction

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### *The Other Voice*

Anna Maria van Schurman (1607–1678) was regarded throughout the seventeenth century, and well into the eighteenth century, as the most erudite woman in Europe—“the Star of Utrecht,” “the Dutch Minerva,” “the Tenth Muse,” and “a miracle of her sex,” to cite just some of the sobriquets bestowed on her. A brilliant linguist, she was proficient in more than a dozen languages, both modern and ancient. She was also a talented craftswoman who mastered several of the amateur arts popular among the Dutch elite, from miniature painting and embroidery to glass and copper engraving, wax modeling, and intricate paper-cutting. Van Schurman was the first Dutch woman to actively seek publication of her correspondence, and her letters to the learned men and women of her time—written in Latin, Greek, Hebrew, French, and even Arabic—reveal the breadth of her interests in theology, philosophy, medicine, literature, numismatics, painting, sculpture, embroidery, and instrumental and vocal music. A collection of her letters, entitled *Minor Works in Hebrew, Greek, Latin, and French, in Prose and Verse, by the Most Noble Maiden Anna Maria van Schurman* (the *Opuscula*), appeared in 1648 at the height of her fame. Her correspondents included the most renowned intellectuals and writers of Europe: Caspar Barlaeus, Jacob Cats, Princess Elisabeth of Bohemia, Daniel Heinsius, Constantijn Huygens, André Rivet, and Claudius Salmasius in the Netherlands; Sir Simonds D’Ewes, Bathsua Makin, Lady Dorothy Moore, and John Owen in England; Valentin Conrart, Pierre Gassendi, Marie de Gournay, Marin Mersenne, and Princess Anne de Rohan in France; and Johann Schütz and Johanna Eleonora Petersen in Germany, to name but a few of the vast number who wrote to her.

Van Schurman’s relation to authorship and publishing was made possible through her advanced education, derived partly from being the first woman to sit in on lectures at a university in the Netherlands—albeit hidden in a cubicle—and partly from being an autodidact. Pursuant to her academic experience, she advocated boldly that women be admitted into universities. She stood in the late humanist tradition of innovative female polemicists such as Moderata Fonte, Lucrezia Marinella, and Marie de Gournay, and she paved the way for later seventeenth-century protofeminists Bathsua Makin, Mary More, Gabrielle Suchon, and Mary Astell, who championed a serious education for women. Although Van Schurman, along with these early feminists, emphasized women’s rationality, she did not openly contend that women should take on the same public functions as men. She spoke from an accommodationist social and religious perspective. In keeping with the Dutch Republic’s emphasis on *devotio domestica*, she

advocated that women have a broadly-based humanist education for private use, and to strengthen their religious faith. By defending equal access to a university education, however, she implicitly critiqued unequal sociopolitical structures. To move beyond the customary practice of female exclusion from institutions of power and learning—the colleges and universities, the seminaries, and the scientific academies—women’s ability to reason had first to be recognized. Therein lies the political efficacy of Van Schurman’s appeal and legacy. She did not alter social structures, a transformative change that would occur much later in history. Rather, she participated in the early development of a rights discourse by creating a precedent for women, the right to attain serious knowledge and to appropriate a rhetoric constituting a form of political influence.

In her later years, Anna Maria van Schurman became a courageous spokesperson for a renegade religious movement. She relinquished her iconic status as a celebrated member of the international Republic of Letters to join a small persecuted Pietist household founded by Jean de Labadie (1610–1674). A French defrocked Jesuit priest, Labadie converted to Calvinism, was banned from serving the Calvinist church, and formed his own religious community. Within this environment, paradoxically, Van Schurman found a new authoritative voice and visibility, abandoned the tropes of humility so prevalent in her earlier writings, and achieved equality of respect among the Labadist leadership as theologian, correspondent, and translator.

We translate and edit here a remarkable run of Van Schurman’s correspondence covering almost four decades of her life, from 1631 to 1669, ending just a month before she joined the Labadists. Largely unpublished, these manuscript letters and poems to and from her mentor and other members of her circle show how deeply engaged and respected she was in the traditionally male Latin world of the Republic of Letters.

### *Historical and Religious Context of the Early Dutch Golden Age, 1580–1650*

The poems and letters that Anna Maria van Schurman addressed to her mentor André Rivet and other members of her circle were mostly written in Utrecht, where she resided during the early Golden Age of the prosperous United Provinces of the Netherlands, known as the Dutch Republic. As will be discussed in detail later, four essential features characterized Dutch culture at the time: a large middle class founded on mercantile wealth; the relative absence of political and religious centralization; universities and a publishing industry with a global reach; and religious toleration.

The Republic’s large middle class—the nobility comprised less than 1 per cent of the population—meant that the relative lack of strict hierarchies and

governmental authoritarian structures created a zone of intellectual freedom quite liberating for scholars from other countries: from France, for instance, came the great humanist scholars Joseph Justus Scaliger, Claude Saumaise (Salmasius), and René Descartes. The network of rivers, inland waterways, and access to the sea facilitated the growth of mercantile wealth for an urban patriciate, rather than dependence on the rural, landed, and *rentier* aristocracy dominant in other countries. General prosperity was high, and the urban and rural poor were better fed and taken care of by the different religious communities than in other parts of Europe. High female labor participation and high literacy and numeracy among both men and women characterized the urban centers, making the Dutch Republic the most literate country in Europe.<sup>1</sup> Women fared better than elsewhere, since domestic violence was considered a crime and women had some legal and economic rights they did not enjoy in other countries.<sup>2</sup> The entrepreneurial agency of Dutch women of the lower, middle, and even upper middle classes in the economy of their country was well known; foreign visitors commented on their engagement in activities largely reserved to men in other countries due to, as an English visitor to Amsterdam noted in 1622, their “Bargaining, Cyphering, & Writing.”<sup>3</sup> Judith Drake, an English medical practitioner and writer, noted in 1696 that Dutch women not only managed the household but did “all the Business . . . with as much Dexterity and Exactness as their, or our Men do.”<sup>4</sup>

The Dutch Republic eschewed a “prescriptive centralization” in the political and devotional spheres by enabling municipal councils and regents—councillors, burgomasters (mayors), and aldermen—to govern their towns and territories, even in matters of religion. The regents formed a “small oligarchy” numbering some two thousand in a population of two million.<sup>5</sup> Each individual province, furthermore, had its own provincial church synod, and appointed its own ministers or pastors according to its own guidelines; this policy hindered the formation

1. Danielle van den Heuvel, *Women and Entrepreneurship: Female Traders in the Northern Netherlands, c. 1580–1815* (Amsterdam: Aksant, 2007), 17, 19.

2. Based on the limited number of extant trial records, however, it appears that women had difficulty in proving sexual violence and rape. See Amanda Pipkin, *Rape in the Republic, 1609–1725: Formulating Dutch Identity* (Leiden and Boston: Brill, 2013), 25.

3. Alena Buis, Christi Spain-Savage, and Myra E. Wright, “Attending to Fishwives: Views from Seventeenth-Century London and Amsterdam,” in *Mapping Gendered Routes and Spaces in the Early Modern World*, ed. Merry E. Wiesner-Hanks (Farnham, UK, and Burlington, VT: Ashgate, 2015), 186.

4. [Judith Drake], *An Essay in Defense of the Female Sex* (London: Printed for A. Roper and E. Wilkinson, 1696), 16. Drake added that if English women learned accounting and mathematics, “it would be a mighty profit to the Nation” (17).

5. Willem Frijhoff, “Religious Toleration in the United Provinces: From ‘Case’ to ‘Model,’” in *Calvinism and Religious Toleration in the Dutch Golden Age*, ed. Ronnie Po-Chia Hsia and Henk van Nierop (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 2002), 50.

of a national state Reformed Church with an administrative apparatus applying to all the provinces.<sup>6</sup> Nonetheless, as public churches, the Reformed congregations contributed in an important way to the formation of the national identity as a people saved from the Catholic persecution that newly-arrived refugees had endured in other countries. The Dutch Republic had seven constituent provinces; each had its own stadtholder, over whom the Stadtholder of the dominant province of Holland, of the House of Orange-Nassau, held a position of power.<sup>7</sup> The stadtholder, translated loosely as “governor,” functioned as a political advisor and military commander. His position was circumscribed and more akin to that of the royal provincial governors who ruled Holland under the Spaniards in earlier times. The States General held sovereign power and controlled the country’s finances, foreign policy, and religion.<sup>8</sup> Loyalty to the House of Orange enabled all the religious communities to express a common national patriotism.<sup>9</sup> Further support for the national character was expressed in the myth of the Batavians and of the Maid of Holland, or *Hollandia*, which became culturally prominent especially from the 1580s. Known from the writings of Tacitus, the Batavians, an ancient Germanic tribe, were considered the ancestors of the Netherlanders because it was thought that their fierce opposition to Rome prefigured the Dutch Revolt against Spain.<sup>10</sup> Thus the renowned jurist Hugo Grotius, in *On the Antiquity of the Batavian Republic* (1610), recalled the story of the Batavians to explain the nature of the Netherlanders’ devotion to their privileges and rights.<sup>11</sup> The Maid of Holland, a Minerva figure, became a symbol of Dutch independence during the Revolt.<sup>12</sup> Anna Maria van Schurman was frequently praised as a “Batavian

6. Frijhoff, “Religious Toleration,” 39.

7. Jonathan I. Israel, *The Dutch Republic: Its Rise, Greatness, and Fall, 1477–1806* (Oxford: Clarendon Press, 1995), 300–6.

8. David Onnekink, “The Body Politic,” in *The Cambridge Companion to the Dutch Golden Age*, ed. Helmer J. Helmers and Geert H. Janssen (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 2018), 107–23.

9. Ronnie Po-Chia Hsia, Introduction, in *Calvinism and Religious Toleration*, 4. See also Herbert H. Rowen, *The Princes of Orange: The Stadholders in the Dutch Republic* (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 1988).

10. Benjamin J. Kaplan, “‘Dutch’ Religious Tolerance: Celebration and Revision,” in *Calvinism and Religious Toleration*, 12.

11. Pipkin, *Rape in the Republic*, 55n58.

12. As Martha Moffitt Peacock explains, this “gender-crossing archetype” was an enabling figure for women in Dutch society. See “The Maid of Holland and Her Heroic Heiresses,” in *Women and Gender in the Early Modern Low Countries, 1500–1750*, ed. Sarah Joan Moran and Amanda Pipkin (Leiden and Boston: Brill, 2019), 68–127. With thanks to Amanda Pipkin for sending this article ahead of publication.

miracle”<sup>13</sup> and heroine by eulogists such as Constantijn Huygens and Caspar Barlaeus, and enlisted as the “Dutch Minerva” in service to the Dutch Republic.<sup>14</sup>

The new universities of Leiden (1575), Franeker (1585), Groningen (1614), Utrecht (1636), Harderwijk (1648), and Nijmegen (1655) became centers for classical studies and late humanism in Europe; they enrolled thousands of students and attracted renowned scholars. During the quarter-century from 1625 to 1650, Leiden, the most prestigious of these universities, had nine thousand students in attendance, around forty-four per cent foreign-born.<sup>15</sup> About half of these were German Protestants; the rest came from France, England, Scotland, and Scandinavia. All told, some twenty countries sent students to Leiden, including countries in North Africa, the Turkish Empire, and Persia.<sup>16</sup> Leiden University paid well for the services of such late humanist scholars as Joseph Justus Scaliger, Justus Lipsius, and Claudius Salmasius. Further institutions, including six Illustrious Schools, or Athenaea, civic colleges for boys, and ninety-two Latin schools, attracted equally renowned teachers and rectors who at some point in their careers taught at the university.<sup>17</sup> The Republic’s printing presses also had a European reach; 68 publishers were in business in 1600, and by 1654, that number had increased to 247.<sup>18</sup> The leading publisher at the time, the prestigious Elzevier family dynastic firm, marketed its books directly at sales counters all over Europe, especially Germany and France. Thanks to its oriental press with Syriac, Chaldaic, Ethiopic, Arabic, Hebrew, and Greek fonts, acquired in 1624, the firm published nearly half of all the scholarly books issued in Leiden during its tenure.<sup>19</sup> Elzevier became Van Schurman’s main publisher, starting with her *Dissertatio* in 1641,<sup>20</sup>

13. Hubertus Beets, *Oratio in laudem mulieris* [*Oration in Praise of Women*] (Haarlem: Vincent Casteleyn, 1650), 4; cited in Peacock, 100.

14. Huygens calls Van Schurman a “Batavian goddess” (2:3) and an “illustrious jewel of our fatherland” (2:18); Barlaeus eulogizes her as born “for the Batavians” (Appendix B1). Van Schurman uses the term as well, in January 1644, when she welcomes Claudius Salmasius as a “Batavian Traveler” on his return after a three-year sojourn in France (1:50). References are to the present edition.

15. Israel, 572.

16. Laura Cruz, *The Paradox of Prosperity: The Leiden Booksellers’ Guild and the Distribution of Books in Early Modern Europe* (New Castle, DE: Oak Knoll Press, 2009), 218.

17. Daniela Prögler, *English Students at Leiden University, 1575–1650* (Farnham, UK, and Burlington, VT: Ashgate, 2013), 86.

18. Maarten Prak, *The Dutch Republic in the Seventeenth Century: The Golden Age*, trans. Diane Webb (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 2005), 226.

19. David W. Davies, *The World of the Elseviers, 1580–1712* (The Hague: Nijhoff, 1954).

20. *Nobiliss. Virginis Annæ Mariæ à Schurman. Dissertatio, de Ingenii Muliebris ad Doctrinam, & meliores Litteras aptitudine. Accedunt Quædam Epistolæ, ejusdem Argumenti* [*A Dissertation on the Aptitude of Women for Knowledge and Humane Letters. To which are added certain letters on the same argument*] (Leiden: Elzevier, 1641). Hereafter cited as “*Dissertatio*.”

and published her *Opuscula* (1648, 1650)<sup>21</sup> in a beautifully printed octavo volume. Because her collected oeuvre was so well published and highly valued by the international Republic of Letters, she was widely read. A third edition was published in Utrecht in 1652 by Johannes Waesberghe.<sup>22</sup> Three editions of the *Opuscula* thus appeared in the space of a mere four years. Her printed letters disseminated her fame across borders, preserving her writings and story for posterity.

Complementing this vigorous intellectual environment was religious toleration, which allowed marginal groups such as Catholics, Portuguese Sephardic and Ashkenazic Jews, Lutherans, Anabaptists, spiritualists, and other religious minorities to exist, if only in a secondary role, and within the *religio domestica* or private sphere.<sup>23</sup> Article 13 of the Union of Utrecht (1579), which marked the emergence of the United Provinces from war with Spain, guaranteed freedom of conscience, allowing all inhabitants the right to simply attend, formally join, or even choose not to attend or join a church. It also prohibited persecution for religious reasons. The Reformed Church, which became the official public church in the period 1573–1581, opposed an official public status for Catholicism on grounds that Catholics were a potential source of revolt against the new Dutch Republic; it would also oppose Jews who wished to practice Judaism openly. However, even the Reformed orthodoxy recognized the legitimacy of differences of opinion due to the fundamental principle of freedom of conscience understood as freedom of thought.<sup>24</sup> As Ronnie Po-Chia Hsia notes, “the central paradox of the Dutch Republic” was the coexistence of discrimination against Catholics and other religious minorities with a “pragmatic religious toleration.”<sup>25</sup> Different Christian confessions grouped in more or less distinct metaphorical social spaces—the later so-called *zuilen* (“pillars”)—were protected by the regents, for whom ensuring the social peace was primordial.<sup>26</sup> These civil authorities censored

21. *Nobiliss. Virginis Annæ Mariæ à Schurman, Opuscula Hebræa, Græca, Latina, Gallica. Prosaica & Metrica* [Minor Works in Hebrew, Greek, Latin, and French, In Prose and Verse by the Most Noble Maiden Anna Maria van Schurman] (Leiden: Elzevier, 1648/1650). Hereafter cited as “*Opuscula*.” Unless otherwise noted, all translations from Latin, Greek, French, and Dutch, including book titles, are our own.

22. All citations from the *Opuscula* come from the 1652 edition.

23. On the degrees of toleration in the Dutch Republic, see Willem Frijhoff, “Religious Toleration,” 27–52.

24. Frijhoff, “Religious Toleration,” 30.

25. Ronnie Po-Chia Hsia, Introduction, in *Calvinism and Religious Toleration*, 2.

26. Judith Pollmann underscores the constant intermingling in daily life of Netherlanders with different religious beliefs. See “Public Enemies, Private Friends: Arnoldus Buchelius’s Experience of Religious Diversity in the Early Dutch Republic,” in *The Public and Private in Dutch Culture of the Golden Age*, ed. Arthur K. Wheelock, Jr., and Adele Seeff (Newark: University of Delaware Press, 2000), 182.

religious and polemical defamation to protect social order and discipline.<sup>27</sup> The solution of distinct social spaces was culled from Roman civil law, which accorded limited rights to religions other than the official state church; this allowed their existence as “voluntary societies” for the purpose of communal worship with no possibility of communal possessions other than a place of worship to prevent political aspirations.<sup>28</sup>

Some historians have maintained that the regents’ policy of tolerating dissenting religious minorities was a form of “concealed intolerance” or “containment,” and that “the real test of tolerance” concerned radicals such as Spinozists, Socinians, and Deists, who were largely suppressed.<sup>29</sup> Indeed, for all their acceptance of pluralism, the regents and the Reformed Church balked at Spinozists’ refusal of the divinity of Christ and the anti-Trinitarianism of the Socinians. A better description of Dutch toleration, according to Willem Frijhoff, is “connivance and concord . . . the two pillars of the civil policy of religious peace in the Republic.”<sup>30</sup> What made the Dutch experiment unique was “a tacit toleration of religious diversity . . . as long as the necessary concord between believers did not endanger the unity of the body politic and the civic community.” Concord—written into the motto of the state, *Concordia res parvae crescent* (“Through unity small things flourish,” or “In unity there is strength”),—was the leading policy, based on “solutions of consensus rather than of constraint.”<sup>31</sup> This civil pragmatism found its match in intellectual libertinism (of those who supported a broadly inclusive, non-dogmatic church) and irenicism (of those who promoted church unity and peace), the latter embodied by the statesman jurist Hugo Grotius; when developed into a political philosophy, civil pragmatism transcended the Dutch situation to create a new secular ideal that flourished during the Enlightenment.

The Reformed Church, to which Anna Maria van Schurman and her family belonged, was a public church, meaning that unlike other Protestant countries such as Scotland, Switzerland, and the German territories where Protestantism had been imposed, the Dutch Reformed model was one of voluntary membership. As a public church, it offered baptism and marriage to everyone regardless of church membership or lack thereof but reserved the Eucharist or Lord’s

27. See Willem Frijhoff, “Dimensions de la coexistence confessionnelle,” in *The Emergence of Tolerance in the Dutch Republic*, ed. Christiane Berkvens-Stevelinck, Jonathan I. Israel, and G. H. M. Posthumus Meyjes (Leiden: Brill, 1997), 213–37.

28. Joke Spaans, “Religious Policies in the Seventeenth-Century Dutch Republic,” in *Calvinism and Religious Toleration*, 79.

29. Kaplan, “Dutch’ Religious Tolerance,” 23; Israel, 372. Spinozists were followers of the Dutch philosopher Baruch Spinoza; Socinians were disciples of Fausto Sozzini, who rejected the doctrine of the Trinity; Deists rejected the supernatural aspects of religion.

30. Frijhoff, “Religious Toleration,” 31.

31. Frijhoff, “Religious Toleration,” 32.

Supper to confessing members only. Its “self-created exclusiveness” led its conservative wing, consisting of orthodox Calvinists,<sup>32</sup> to view its increasing membership over the course of the seventeenth century—about half the population belonged to it by the 1650s—more as “a threat,” leading to attempts to distinguish true believers from worshipers who attended purely out of social respectability.<sup>33</sup> Orthodox Calvinists were aided in this by Calvinist refugees, such as Anna Maria van Schurman’s father and paternal grandparents, who had emigrated from the southern Netherlands to escape persecution during the Spanish Habsburg conquest; such refugees comprised about one third of the membership of the Dutch Reformed churches in Utrecht and Leiden especially.<sup>34</sup> They were accused of wanting to impose on the church a Geneva-like inquisition mirroring the Spanish intolerance that was thought untrue to the national character.

Contrary to the orthodox Calvinists, the Arminians, or so-called Remonstrants, not only claimed that the national character was inherently tolerant, but also located the origins of Dutch Protestantism in the views of Desiderius Erasmus (1466–1536), “a native Hollander . . . and champion of a ‘purified’ Christianity,” in Benjamin Kaplan’s words, and “the perfect father-figure for a religious movement intent on portraying itself as autochthonous, popular, and distinctly Dutch.”<sup>35</sup> Other religious leaders, including “Libertines” such as Dirck Coornhert, Hubert Duihuis, and Caspar Coolhaes, were strongly influenced by spiritualist and Protestant teachings from their own religious exile in cities of the German Rhineland such as Cologne, Essen, and Wesel.<sup>36</sup> Starting in the 1570s, they returned imbued with views based on the church welcoming all believers and encouraging the imitation of Christ rather than doctrinal purity and subjection to ecclesiastic discipline. Sanctification (the improvement of the Christian’s life) rather than confessionalism (the advocacy of a religious confession) was the Libertines’ main concern.<sup>37</sup> Thus, in the German Rhineland, they had joined churches that mixed confessional services together in the same church space;

32. “Orthodox Calvinists” included the Gomarists, or so-called Counter-Remonstrants, who defended clerical independence and the doctrine of double predestination, meaning the divinely decreed salvation of some and damnation for others.

33. Johannes Müller, *Exile Memories and the Dutch Revolt: The Narrated Diaspora, 1550–1750* (Leiden and Boston: Brill, 2016), 174.

34. Kaplan, “‘Dutch’ Religious Tolerance,” 13.

35. Kaplan, “‘Dutch’ Religious Tolerance,” 15.

36. The following sketch on the Rhineland Reformed ‘Libertines’ is indebted to Mirjam G. K. van Veen and Jesse Spohnholz, “Calvinists vs. Libertines: A New Look at Religious Exile and the Origins of ‘Dutch’ Tolerance,” in *Calvinism and the Making of the European Mind*, ed. Gijsbert van den Brink and Harro M. Höpfl (Leiden and Boston: Brill, 2014), 76–99, and Benjamin J. Kaplan, *Reformation and the Practice of Toleration: Dutch Religious History in the Early Modern Era* (Leiden and Boston: Brill, 2019).

37. Veen and Spohnholz, “Calvinists vs. Libertines,” 83.



they did not remain, as did the Van Schurman family when it lived in Cologne, in churches exclusively for conservative Reformed worship: “Through much of the Rhineland, there was good reason for refugees to reduce, not increase, commitment to Calvinism.”<sup>38</sup> The Van Schurmans, unlike the Libertines, went thus against the grain, helping us understand the particular religious outlook of Anna Maria’s early and later years (to be discussed more shortly).

Throughout much of the Rhineland, local churches attended by Libertines accepted the magistrates’ local authority. Once back in the Netherlands, they encouraged greater inclusivity in church membership and opposed church discipline, which did not endear them to strict Calvinists.<sup>39</sup> Their clash with the Calvinists was particularly felt over their dispute concerning the Heidelberg Catechism, which, with the Belgic Confession, constituted the doctrinal standard for orthodoxy. Strict Calvinists mandated the catechism, while Libertine preachers refused it on the grounds that it was too pessimistic regarding human potential to do good. The Libertines also rejected the doctrine of predestination, insisting that, aided by grace, believers could obey the divine commands and refrain from evil. This dispute, which had been smoldering for more than a decade from around 1604, came to a dramatic head at the Synod of Dordrecht (or “Dordt,” as the city is called by its residents). Starting on 13 November 1618, the Synod pitted the Remonstrants (moderate to liberal Calvinists who endorsed the views of the theologian Jacobus Arminius) against the Counter-Remonstrants (orthodox Calvinists who backed the Leiden theologian Franciscus Gomarus).<sup>40</sup> Free will, divine providence, predestination, election, and freedom of religion were hotly debated. The synod ended in 1619 when the Stadtholder Maurice of Nassau, in a classic *coup d’état*, ousted the Grand Pensionary Johan van Oldenbarnevelt, a respected statesman and diplomat who had sided with the Remonstrants and had earlier negotiated a truce with Spain despite Maurice’s opposition. Van Oldenbarnevelt was imprisoned, then executed for treason—a fate that his fellow prisoner, Hugo Grotius, was able to avoid through a daring escape. After the death of Van Oldenbarnevelt and the purging of the Remonstrants, the United Provinces were presided over by the Stadtholder and the Counter-Remonstrants, who favored strict Calvinism.

38. Veen and Spohnholz, “Calvinists vs. Libertines,” 84.

39. Benjamin J. Kaplan, “‘Remnants of the Papal Yoke’: Apathy and Opposition to the Dutch Reformation,” in Kaplan, *Reformation and the Practice of Toleration*, 38.

40. Studies on the Synod of Dordt abound. See, for instance, Aza Goudriaan and Fred van Lieburg, eds., *Revisiting the Synod of Dordt (1618–1619)* (Leiden and Boston: Brill, 2010); Theodoor Marius van Leeuwen, Keith D. Stanglin, and Marijke Tolsma, eds., *Arminius, Arminianism, and Europe: Jacobus Arminius (1559/60–1609)* (Leiden and Boston: Brill, 2009); Dirk van Miert, *The Emancipation of Biblical Theology in the Dutch Republic, 1590–1670* (Oxford: Oxford University Press, 2018), chap. 2; and the survey by Martin van Gelderen, “Hot Protestants: Predestination, the Freedom of the Will and the Making of the Modern European Mind,” in *Calvinism and the Making of the European Mind*, 131–54.

As Van Gelderen notes, however, the orthodox Calvinists' victory was a "pyrrhic one": because of the Stadtholder's intervention, it had to accept "the superiority of secular authority," and it could not impose its doctrine on the Dutch faithful, making living under Calvinist discipline a voluntary choice.<sup>41</sup>

The Synod of Dordt was of major significance to the development of European Calvinism. Orthodox Calvinists recognized that social peace and unity among the different Christian confessions, including the Libertines, had to be maintained, and they did not attack the founding principle of freedom of conscience. Instead, they sought to progressively usher in a more sincere practice of piety by forming a movement of further reformation (the so-called *Nadere Reformatie*) based on the notion of a church for the elect—the perfecting of the few—rather than a large popular church of those who became members out of habit rather than conviction.<sup>42</sup> A majority of Netherlanders favored a pious and at the same time non-confessional Christian culture to maintain social cohesion.<sup>43</sup> Since joining the church was voluntary, many had family members and friends who were not church members. The incidence of mixed marriages was also high; about two thirds of Reformed church members were women,<sup>44</sup> suggesting that, aside from unmarried and widowed women, a high number were married to men who were not Reformed Church members. Such an imbalance suggests religious diversity within families and the perception that religious uniformity was not essential.<sup>45</sup> As late as the 1680s, English travelers such as the physician Ellis Veryard observed the diversity of religious creeds within families with the husband of one faith, the wife of another, the children of a third, and the servant of yet another: "and yet they live without the least jangling of dissension."<sup>46</sup> As Judith Pollmann notes, many Dutch church members were active in two cultures, the vitriolic "discourse of confessionalism," and an "a-confessional religious culture" founded on conservative and communalist values; the latter was favored

41. Gelderen, "Hot Protestants," 148.

42. Since there is no standard English translation of *nadere*, another possible translation is "Dutch Second Reformation." See Joel R. Beeke, "The Dutch Second Reformation ("Nadere Reformatie")," *Calvin Theological Journal* 28 (1993): 300–7, and Fred A. van Lieburg, "From Pure Church to Pious Culture: The Further Reformation in the Seventeenth-Century Dutch Republic," in *Later Calvinism: International Perspectives*, ed. W. Fred Graham, Sixteenth Century Essays & Studies 22 (Kirksville, MO: Sixteenth Century Journal Publishers), 409–29.

43. Benjamin J. Kaplan, *Calvinists and Libertines: Confession and Community in Utrecht, 1578–1620* (Oxford: Clarendon Press, 1995), 291–94, cited in Judith Pollmann, "The Bond of Christian Piety: The Individual Practice of Tolerance and Intolerance in the Dutch Republic," in *Calvinism and Religious Toleration*, 55.

44. See Judith Pollmann, "Women and Religion in the Dutch Golden Age," *Dutch Crossing* 24 (2000), 162–82, for the reasons single and widowed women joined the church as members.

45. Pollmann, "Bond of Christian Piety," 56.

46. Pollmann, "Bond of Christian Piety," 56.

especially by the Libertines, the Mennonites, and the religiously unaffiliated.<sup>47</sup> For them, Christianity was moralistic rather than doctrinal. On the other hand, theologians such as Gijsbert Voet (Gisbertus Voetius, 1589–1676)<sup>48</sup> stressed that good Christian behavior was not enough and had to be grounded in an internalized faith based on sound doctrine.

Judith Pollmann's study of the religious trajectory of the Utrecht antiquarian Aernout van Buchel (Arnoldus Buchelius, 1565–1641), a close friend and sponsor of Anna Maria van Schurman, demonstrates how Netherlanders lived in two cultures, a necessary means of safeguarding religious diversity. Buchelius migrated from Catholicism to church un-affiliation, then to membership in Utrecht's Libertine Reformed Church, and finally to full adherence to the orthodox Counter-Remonstrants. His transitioning occurred during the years of the fragile truce with Spain that still threatened the security of the young Republic, leading up to the Peace of Westphalia in 1648. Catholics and Arminians, Buchelius thought, posed a risk both to internal security and to the moral fiber of society. But even though Buchelius became a strict Calvinist, in practice his relations with Arminians were anything but intolerant, as is evident in his close friendship with Caspar van Baerle (Barlaeus, 1584–1648), an Arminian theologian, poet, and rector of the Athenaeum Illustre in Amsterdam. Buchelius also had friendly relations with non-Reformed thinkers and artists, such as the Catholic nobleman Johannes de Witt,<sup>49</sup> the Mennonite engraver Crispijn van de Passe the Elder, the Catholic painter Abraham Bloemaert, and others. As Pollmann states, "For Buchelius, the elect, clearly, were not just to be found within the Church."<sup>50</sup>

### *Life and Published Works*

Born on 5 November 1607 in Cologne, Anna Maria van Schurman was the third child and only daughter of Frederik van Schurman (1564–1623) and Eva von Harff (ca. 1580–1636/7), who married in Cologne in 1602.<sup>51</sup> She had two

47. Kaplan, *Calvinists and Libertines*, 47–51, 292–304, cited in Pollmann, "Bond of Christian Piety," 58.

48. Voetius, a minister, theologian, and reputed scholar in Semitic languages, studied at the University of Leiden, became pastor of Vlijmen in 1611, and was influential as a Counter-Remonstrant at the Synod of Dordt (1618–19). In 1634, he became professor of theology and ancient oriental languages at Utrecht, where he also led the Reformed congregation. When the school became a university in 1636, he also became its rector. In his numerous writings, he censored any concession to Roman Catholic doctrine.

49. Not to be confused with Johan de Witt (1625–1672), the Grand Pensionary of Holland who opposed the House of Orange-Nassau and was brutally lynched, along with his brother, in The Hague.

50. Judith Pollmann, *Religious Choice in the Dutch Republic: The Reformation of Arnoldus Buchelius, 1565–1641* (Manchester and New York: Manchester University Press, 1999), 66.

51. This sketch is indebted to G. D. J. Schotel, *Anna Maria van Schurman* ('s-Hertogenbosch: G. Muller, 1853); Joyce Irwin, "Learned Woman of Utrecht: Anna Maria van Schurman," in *Women Writers of the*

older brothers, Hendrik Frederik (ca. 1603–ca. 1632) and Johan Godschalk (ca. 1605–1664), and a younger brother, Willem (ca. 1610–1615). Her paternal and maternal grandparents had fled persecution because of their Calvinist faith. Pierre Yvon (1646–1707), her contemporary biographer and Labadist colleague, relates how her paternal grandfather Frederik van Schurman [the Elder] and his wife, Clara van Lemens, fled Antwerp on 4 October 1564, on the night that the Protestant martyr Christoffel Fabricius was burned at the stake by the army of the Duke of Alva.<sup>52</sup> On losing their possessions—they belonged to the magistracy of the city<sup>53</sup>—they moved to Frankfurt, then Hamburg, finally settling in Cologne in 1593, where the elder Frederik died in 1599. Her mother’s parents, from the minor German nobility, fled persecution when they narrowly escaped from the city of Neuss, pillaged by the Duke of Parma’s troops, and settled in Cologne.

Anna Maria van Schurman was baptized in a clandestine Calvinist church in Cologne. Cologne was the seat of a bishopric that kept a close watch over the Protestant minority. Due to the imperial ban on Reformed Church services in 1610, the Van Schurmans fled to Schleiden, southwest of Cologne, to the small family castle of Dreibern, home of her mother’s ancestors. From there they moved to The Hague, and in 1615 to Utrecht; Anna Maria was then seven or eight years old. Before leaving Cologne for the Netherlands, and to ensure the nobility of his children, her father and his two brothers, Johan and Samuel, obtained letters of nobility for themselves from the Holy Roman Emperor Matthias.<sup>54</sup> Van Schurman’s maternal aunts, Sybille and Agnes von Harff, also escaped from

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*Seventeenth Century*, ed. Katharina M. Wilson and Frank J. Warnke (Athens, GA: University of Georgia Press, 1989), 164–85; Pieta van Beek’s monographs “*Verbastert Christendom*”: *Nederlandse gedichten van Anna Maria van Schurman (1607–1678)* (Houten: Hertog, 1992) and *The First Female University Student: Anna Maria van Schurman (1636)* (Utrecht: Igitur, 2010); Carol Pal, *Republic of Women: Rethinking the Republic of Letters in the Seventeenth Century* (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 2012); Van Schurman’s contemporary biographers Pierre Yvon, “Abregé sincere de la vie & de la conduite & des vrais sentimens de feu Mr. De Labadie,” in Gottfried Arnold, ed., *Unpartheyische Kirchen- und Ketzerhistorie* (Frankfurt: Fritsch, 1700; reprint, Hildesheim: Georg Olms, 1967), 2:1234–70, and Isaac Bullart, *Academie des Sciences et des Arts, contenant les Vies, et les Eloges Historiques des Hommes Illustres parmi diverses Nations de l’Europe* (Amsterdam: Elzevier, 1682), 2:228–32; Anne R. Larsen, *Anna Maria van Schurman, The “Star of Utrecht”: The Educational Vision and Reception of a Savante* (London: Routledge, 2016), chap. 1; and “Anna Maria van Schurman,” in *Project Vox* (2020), Duke University, Department of Philosophy, accessible at <[www.projectvox.org](http://www.projectvox.org)>. For an overview of Van Schurman scholarship to date, see Bo Karen Lee and Anne Larsen, “Anna Maria van Schurman,” in *Oxford Bibliographies: Renaissance and Reformation*, ed. Margaret L. King (2018), <<https://www.oxfordbibliographies.com/obo/page/renaissance-and-reformation>>.

52. Yvon, 1264, col. 2. See Appendix D for the translation of Yvon’s biography. On Fabricius, a former monk, born Jan de Smet, see, e.g., the entry in the *Nieuw Nederlandsch biografisch woordenboek*, ed. P.J. Blok and P.C. Molhuysen (Leiden, 1930), 8:523–24, accessible at [www.dbnl.org](http://www.dbnl.org).

53. Bullart, 2:229.

54. Beek, “*Verbastert Christendom*,” 11.

Cologne to settle in Utrecht. The obstacles Anna Maria's family encountered to live out their faith freely greatly influenced her educational and religious views, as the letters we translate will indicate.

Her education began early. In her spiritual autobiography *Eukleria, or The Choice of the Better Part* (1673), we learn that at age three she could already "read German accurately and recite part of the [Heidelberg] catechism from memory," thanks to "an outstanding tutor, who lived at home with us."<sup>55</sup> She describes how, when she recited the first question of the Heidelberg Catechism to her maid one day, "at the words 'that I am not my own but belong to my most faithful Savior Jesus Christ,' my heart was flooded with such an intense and sweet joy that I became intimately conscious of Christ's love. All the subsequent years could not erase the living memory of that moment" (13–14). Connecting the love of Christ with the heart, seat of intuitive knowledge and inner experience, became foundational to her religious understanding.

As was customary among elite families, she was sent at age seven to a French school, but after only two months she returned home to study writing, arithmetic, and instrumental and vocal music with a private tutor.<sup>56</sup> The Dutch-born bio-bibliographer Isaac Bullart (1599–1672) indicates that "she began to speak Latin, taught by a preceptor, who taught this language to her older brothers," and she became so good at it that at ten or eleven she was correcting her brothers.<sup>57</sup> Discovering her at this one day, her father permitted her to take part fully in their lessons. He handed Seneca's sayings to her, and to encourage her further in her Latin studies, he quoted an adage from Erasmus: *Aquila non capit muscas* ("The eagle does not catch flies").<sup>58</sup> Her progress in the amateur arts also continued. At age six, she cut out with scissors, "without any example," intricate designs from bits of paper to everyone's astonishment; at age ten, she learned embroidery "in three hours . . . Everybody was amazed" (*Eukleria*, 18).

At age eleven Van Schurman began reading the lives of the martyrs, including most likely John Foxe's *Commentarii Rerum in Ecclesia Gestarum* (Strasbourg, 1554; later translated into English in 1563 as *History of the Martyrs*

55. Anna Maria van Schurman, *Eukleria, seu melioris partis electio. Tractatus brevem vitae ejus Delineationem exhibens* (Altona: Cornelis van der Meulen, 1673), 15. Unless otherwise indicated, all translations from the *Eukleria* are our own. The first two chapters of the *Eukleria* are translated in Anna Maria van Schurman, *Whether a Christian Woman Should Be Educated, and Other Writings from her Intellectual Circle*, ed. and trans. Joyce L. Irwin (Chicago: University of Chicago Press 1998).

56. French schools were mostly attended by boys; only after the 1630s were schools founded for girls. The Reformed Church had no control over these schools. See Dick van Miert, "Education," in *Cambridge Companion*, 339, 342.

57. Bullart, 229. On Bullart, see Anne Delvingt, "L'Académie des sciences et des arts (1682) d'Isaac Bullart et les 'Peintres illustres du Pays-Bas & autres en deçà des Monts,'" in *L'Histoire de l'histoire de l'art septentrional au XVII<sup>e</sup> siècle*, ed. Michèle-Caroline Hick (Turnhout: Brepols, 2009), 67–78.

58. Erasmus, *Adages*, III.ii.65.

or *Actes and Monuments*). Portions of Foxe's work—a popular history of early Christian and Protestant martyrs across Europe, as were most of the influential martyrs' books—were first translated into Dutch in 1612. There she would have read about the writings and the heroic death of the early Reformist Lady Jane Grey (1536/7–1554), who fascinated her and whom she mentions several times in her letters. Jane Grey, queen of England for only nine days, was beheaded at age sixteen or seventeen and immediately became “a symbol of Protestant heroism and martyrdom.”<sup>59</sup> Foxe's work, important to Dutch Calvinists, especially to those families who like the Van Schurmans emigrated to escape persecution, evoked in the young Anna Maria a burning desire to die for her faith. She states in *Eukleria*: “Upon seeing examples of so many of Christ's faithful servants and witnesses to his truth, a burning desire for martyrdom seized my mind and I passionately longed to exchange the life that I so much prized for a death as glorious as theirs” (14). The significance of these martyrs in her early life was not lost on Pierre Yvon, who connected it with her later decision to join the Labadists: what she experienced at age eleven, she newly experienced, he wrote, “and felt in her heart the renewal of that joy she had then when she judged that she would be infinitely happy if some day she could suffer hardship for His [Jesus's] Name.”<sup>60</sup>

Van Schurman's adolescent years were marked by her formal entrance into the networks of the Republic of Letters. That she managed this as a woman, and at so young an age, suggests an overarching strategy. Her engagement in these networks closely resembles what Carol Pal calls a “three-stage development,” which, for a male scholar, usually included, first, being noted locally for his accomplishments; second, getting the attention of national and international savants; and last, creating his own network(s) of exchange within the larger community of letters.<sup>61</sup>

Van Schurman began attracting attention locally for her artistic work and learning.<sup>62</sup> In around 1620, at age twelve or thirteen, she was eulogized by Anna Roemers Visscher (1584–1651), a poet and emblem writer from Amsterdam, for cultivating art and music, *and* for her Latin and Greek. Prophetically, Visscher thought that Van Schurman would one day “banish male pride / With reason and

59. Carole Levin, “Lady Jane Grey: Protestant Queen and Martyr,” in *Silent but for the Word: Tudor Women as Patrons, Translators, and Writers of Religious Works*, ed. Margaret Patterson Hannay (Kent, OH: Kent State University Press, 1985), 92–106, at 97. On Lady Jane Grey in Van Schurman's letters on the education of women, see Larsen, *Star of Utrecht*, chap. 6.

60. Yvon, 1212, col. 2.

61. Pal, *Republic of Women*, 26.

62. Van Schurman's artistic education included embroidery, calligraphy, intricate paper-cutting, glass and copper engraving, wax modeling, and miniature carvings intended as gifts. Later she became the first Hollander to paint a pastel portrait. See Beek, *First Female*, 20; Katlijne van der Stighelen, *Anna Maria van Schurman (1607–1678) of “Hoe hooge dat een maecht kan in de konsten stijgen”* (Leuven: Leuven University Press, 1987).

with argument.”<sup>63</sup> Visscher became for Van Schurman a model on how to introduce oneself to scholars. The former had secured local recognition by replying to a praise poem from the classical philologist, orientalist, and poet Daniel Heinsius (1580–1655), which he included in his collection *Nederduytsche Poemata* (*Dutch Poems*, 1616). Visscher went on to compose a poem honoring Jacob Cats (1577–1660), the Grand Pensionary of Holland and a poet of national stature. Her poem was included in a poetic anthology from Zeeland entitled *Zeeusche nachtegael* (*Zeeland Nightingale*, 1623).<sup>64</sup> With Visscher as her model, the fifteen-year-old Van Schurman addressed a letter to Heinsius in 1623; she had also sent a missive to Cats a year earlier, thanking him for his recent visit and for inquiring “zealously after my studies (or rather, my trifles).”<sup>65</sup> Unlike Anna Visscher, however, she wrote in Latin, the international language of the Republic of Letters. Moreover, she alluded to the fame Cats had promised to give her and her studies. Cats then praised her in his bestseller, *Houwelick* (*Marriage*, 1625); he singled her out, along with Visscher, as an exception to her sex. In his major work *Proefsteen van de Trou-ringh* (*Touchstone of the Wedding Ring*, 1637), dedicated to Van Schurman, Cats included an engraved portrait of her with a description of her qualities, languages, and learning, stating that she and he resembled one another in that both bore “paper children.”<sup>66</sup>

Now fully embarked on drawing attention locally, she continued doing so in the next phase of her life in Franeker, the capital of Friesland, to which her family moved in 1623 so that Johan Godschalk, her brother and lifelong supporter, could study medicine and geometry at the university. Her father also wanted to study, along with his sons, under the English Puritan William Ames (Amesius, 1576–1633), professor of practical theology at Franeker from 1622 to 1633. Amesius and the English Puritans emphasized personal religious conversion, piety, and strict morality, and they greatly influenced Dutch Pietism. But Frederik van Schurman died suddenly on 15 November 1623, soon after the move and Anna Maria’s sixteenth birthday. On his deathbed, he urgently admonished her “against the inextricable and corrupting chains of worldly marriage.” She obeyed his fatherly advice “when thereafter,” she writes in *Eukleria*, “the World attempted and sought in various ways to bind me to it by marriage” (25). Her decision to remain single dovetailed with her growing sense of a scholarly vocation.

63. Anna Roemers Visscher, *Gedichten van Anna Roemersdochter Visscher: Een bloemlezing*, ed. Riet Schenkeveld-van der Dussen and Annelies de Jeu (Amsterdam: Amsterdam University Press, 1999), 96.

64. Visscher, in Lia van Gemert et al., eds., *Women’s Writing from the Low Countries, 1200–1875: A Bilingual Anthology* (Amsterdam: Amsterdam University Press, 2010), 237, 239.

65. Van Schurman to Jacob Cats, 1622, in *Opuscula*, 166–67.

66. Cats’s description is included in Van Schurman’s *Opuscula*, 334. Cats’s books sold in the tens of thousands.

Van Schurman resembled well-known women intellectuals of the period who also did not marry, all for different reasons. This group included, for instance, Marie de Gournay, Marie du Moulin, the Protestant princesses Elisabeth of Bohemia and Anne de Rohan, Madeleine de Scudéry, and Queen Christina of Sweden. As well, several Dutch women writers such as Margaretha van Godewijck, Katharina Lescailje, and Cornelia van der Veer, all contemporaries of Van Schurman with long careers, remained unmarried.<sup>67</sup>

But Van Schurman, unlike these women intellectuals, prized her virginity especially because it provided a single-minded devotion to Christ. Her life's motto, *Amor Meus Crucifixus Est* ("My love has been crucified"), borrowed from the letters of the martyr Saint Ignatius of Antioch (ca. 35–ca. 107 CE), appeared in her many contributions to the *alba amicorum* (friendship albums) of acquaintances. She was enthusiastically commended for her virginal life by Meletios Pantogalus, bishop of the Greek Orthodox Church at Ephesus.<sup>68</sup> Her dedication to the single life became well known: Thomas des Hayons, a French Hellenist writer from the Huguenot French city of Sedan, published in Utrecht in 1649 a collection of epigrams entitled *Epigrams Consecrated to the Virtue of Mademoiselle Anne de Schurman*, in which he described her devotion to Christ as akin to a holy marriage.<sup>69</sup> Her desire to consecrate her life to her faith, and her father's deathbed warnings, reflected her spiritual yearnings. However, her father may also have wished to protect her from a confessionally mixed union. Utrecht remained in the first half of the seventeenth century a center of Catholicism in the Netherlands; about a third of its population was Catholic, its elite was mostly Catholic, and about a quarter of the Republic's priests lived in the city. It had a high incidence of religiously mixed marriages among the Dutch nobility until the 1640s. Calvinist authorities opposed such unions, warning of the dangers of possible conversion to Catholicism.<sup>70</sup>

67. On Lescailje and Van der Veer, see Martine van Elk, *Early Modern Women's Writing: Domesticity, Privacy, and the Public Sphere in England and the Dutch Republic* (London: Palgrave Macmillan, 2017).

68. Beek, *First Female*, 123–25.

69. Thomas des Hayons, *Epigrammes, consacrez à la vertu de Mademoiselle Anne Marie de Schurman* (Utrecht: Johannes Waesberghe, 1649); transcribed in Schotel, 2:84–91.

70. There is a growing body of work on mixed marriages in the Dutch Republic. See Bertrand Forclaz, "The Emergence of Confessional Identities: Family Relationships and Religious Coexistence in Seventeenth-Century Utrecht," in *Living with Religious Diversity in Early-Modern Europe*, ed. C. Scott Dixon et al. (Farnham, UK, and Burlington, VT: Ashgate, 2009), 249–66, and Benjamin J. Kaplan, "For They Will Turn Away Thy Sons': The Practice and Perils of Mixed Marriage in the Dutch Golden Age," in Kaplan, *Reformation and the Practice of Toleration*, 298–315. Van Schurman's brother Johan Godschalk published a book, *Weegh-schale des Heyligdoms* (*Weigh scale of the Sanctuary*, Utrecht, 1658) against mixed marriages (with thanks to Amanda Pipkin for this last title). On Johan Godschalk's book, see Pieta van Beek, with Joris Bürmann, "Ex Libris": *De Bibliothek van Anna Maria*



The family stayed on in Franeker until about 1625/6 so that Johan Godschalk could complete his studies. Anna Maria profited from her proximity to the University of Franeker by becoming acquainted, through her brother, with several professors, two of whom she would meet again later at the University of Utrecht: Meinardus Schotanus, professor of the Old Testament and her “regular discussion partner,”<sup>71</sup> and his brother Bernardus, professor of law and mathematics, who became Utrecht’s first *rector magnificus*. While at Franeker, she composed around 1625 a florilegium or anthology, no longer extant, of thirteen brief sayings on God that she transcribed from a wide range of classical authors and church fathers.<sup>72</sup>

Returning to Utrecht in November 1629, Eva von Harff bought a house situated on *Achter de Dom* (“Behind the Cathedral”). The house’s location (indicated by a large plaque stating that Van Schurman had lived on that spot) could not have been more fortunate for her budding career. Just a few hundred meters away on the same street would be established the university she would soon attend. Around the corner stood the house of the rector of the university and her soon-to-be professor and mentor, Gisbertus Voetius.

Voetius, a Reformed minister, became professor of theology, Hebrew, and ancient oriental languages at the Illustre Latin School of Utrecht in 1634. The high school became a full-fledged university two years later, and from the start was considered second in status after Leiden for the prestige of its humanist studies—classical philology, biblical studies, and philosophy.<sup>73</sup> On the occasion of its founding, Voetius invited Van Schurman to write the customary Latin ode, to which she added poems in Dutch and French.<sup>74</sup> She was an exceptional Latinist, not merely verbally fluent but with a rare command of classical (Ciceronian) Latin which very few women could display.<sup>75</sup> Voetius, who had started mentoring Van Schurman in 1634, wanted to show off the talents of his precocious protégée by featuring her as a type of civic titular Minerva, thereby adding to the prestige of the city. But while he envisioned her merely in a ceremonial and ornamental role, she seized the occasion to challenge received ideas and issue an activist call

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*van Schurman en de Catalogi van de Labadiestebibliotheek*, Schurmaniana-reeks no. 5 (Ridderkerk: Provily Pers, 2016), 32.

71. Stated on the caption to an oil portrait of Schotanus at the Martena Museum in Franeker.

72. See Pieta van Beek, “On God.” *An Unknown Florilegium of Anna Maria van Schurman* (ca. 1625), Schurmanniana-reeks no. 1 (Ridderkerk: Provily Pers, 2014). Van Beek, who reconstituted the florilegium from the inventory compiled in 1851 by a Franeker notary, comments that the anthology is “truly exceptional” for its wide range of sources and its “non-Calvinist dogmatic point of view” (23).

73. Israel, 573–75.

74. The Latin ode was included in *Opuscula* (1648/1650), 262–63, while the French poem was added to the 1652 edition of *Opuscula*, 302–3.

75. Jane Stevenson, “Women’s Education,” in *Brill’s Encyclopaedia of the Neo-Latin World*, vol. 1: *Macropaedia*, ed. Philip Ford, Jan Bloemendal, and Charles Fantazzi (Leiden and Boston: Brill, 2014), 87–99, at 94.

for gender integration: “these holy precincts are inaccessible to Minerva’s virgin chorus!” she exclaims in her thirty-line ode, and she boldly petitions officials of the new university for a space for female students.

### **Anna Maria van Schurman’s Attendance at Disputations and Her Study of Languages**

Voetius invited Van Schurman (and her brother Johan Godschalk<sup>76</sup>) to attend his disputations on theology and to study languages. André Rivet, her mentor at the time (to be discussed more shortly), encouraged her to accept the invitation. In a letter to him in October 1634, she confessed her anxiety in taking such a step: “But I fear that there is a need not so much for a net as for a goad on that very threshold to which I’m clinging” (no. 8, 1:11).<sup>77</sup> She accepted, however, since a month later she told Rivet that Voetius was tutoring her in advanced Greek (which she had begun to study with her father) as well as biblical and rabbinic Hebrew (no. 9, 1:12). She also took up Arabic. The following year, in May 1635, her good friend Arnoldus Buchelius expressed some anxiety over her surcharge of studies: “Anna Maria van Schurman is pursuing Arabic and I fear that it may in some way overwhelm her too much.”<sup>78</sup> Then, in 1636, Voetius expanded his lessons to include theology and oriental languages (Syriac and Aramaic). He invited her to these lectures, making her the first woman to attend a university. She did so, hidden in a closet-like space or cubicle with a lattice grid. She also attended his private lectures (the so-called *privatissima* for a few privileged students) at his home. Such private teaching, as an early modern contemporary stated, was for the “sublime geniuses.”<sup>79</sup>

Van Schurman’s presence at Voetius’s disputations was typical of all university students at the time, but unheard-of for a woman. The *disputatio*’s main purpose was to resolve a disputed *quæstio* (question); the faculty of theology presented these as part of a series in the *collegium* covering a range of theological topics, the shortest of which, consisting of forty to fifty disputations, was usually

76. Fred A. van Lieburg, “Johan Godschalk Van Schurman (1605–1664),” in *Figuren en thema’s van de Nadere Reformatie*, ed. J. B. H. Alblas et al. (Rotterdam: Lindenberg, 1993), 58.

77. Unless otherwise indicated, all citations from Van Schurman’s letters to Rivet come from *A Collection of Seventy-four letters & four Latin Poems &c. in the handwriting of the very talented & very celebrated Anna Maria van Schurman* (KB, MS 133 B 8), hereafter “KB collection,” on which our translations are based. The first parenthesized number indicates the number in the KB collection; the second indicates the number of the letter (or poem) in our translations.

78. Aernout van Buchel (Arnoldus Buchelius), *Notae Quotidianae*, ed. J. W. C. van Campen (Utrecht: Kemink, 1940), 40.

79. Françoise Waquet, *Les enfants de Socrate: Filiation intellectuelle et transmission du savoir, XVII<sup>e</sup>–XXI<sup>e</sup> siècle* (Paris: Albin Michel, 2008), 220.

completed in fifteen months.<sup>80</sup> Van Schurman would thus have spent long periods of time attending these. Her presence at these disputations became so widely noted that Descartes wrote in jest to his disciple Henricus Regius (Hendrik de Roy, 1598–1679), professor of theoretical medicine and botany at Utrecht, that he would not hesitate to come to the latter’s rescue should he need moral support in his defense of Cartesian theories, “provided that no one knows anything about this and that I am able to remain hidden in the listening area or the tribune where Mlle de Schurman is accustomed to following the classes.”<sup>81</sup>

Van Schurman’s study of languages, on the other hand, was not so unusual for girls from the Dutch elite. French was taught in the schools, and Italian was considered a desirable female accomplishment. Instruction in Latin and Greek depended on paternal encouragement. Hebrew was valued as the original language of the Scriptures, offering, as the *linguarum mater* (mother of languages), a direct access to biblical knowledge; some ambitious parents had their sons and daughters instructed in Hebrew. Van Schurman’s extensive knowledge of Semitic and Near Eastern languages, however, was unparalleled for a woman. As a university student, she learned these languages because biblical philology and oriental studies were pre-eminent at Utrecht, as at Leiden. The study of Arabic was included on grounds that it advanced the study of science, medicine, mathematics, and the Bible. Van Schurman annotated a handwritten Arabic version of the Qur’an, now lost, which was edited in 1694 by the Hamburg Reformed pastor Abraham Hinckelmann.<sup>82</sup> Her rapid mastery of Syriac and Arabic surprised even Buchelius, who noted in his journal that “she has imbibed the basics of Syriac with great ease and is beginning to read Arabic with great dexterity; she is also studying philosophy, especially logic.”<sup>83</sup> To Arabic, Chaldaic (or Aramaic), and Syriac, Van Schurman added Persian, Samaritan, and Ethiopian, which she studied on her own. She wrote an Ethiopian Latin grammar, never published and no longer extant.

She was proficient in French, German, Italian, and Flemish or Dutch. None of her writing in English survives, except for one line on a penciled portrait of her deceased father or grandfather.<sup>84</sup> According to Jean Le Laboureur—who met

80. On university lectures and disputations, see Keith D. Stanglin, ed., *The Missing Public Disputations of Jacobus Arminius* (Leiden and Boston: Brill, 2010).

81. Descartes to Henricus Regius, 24 May 1640, in Descartes, *Œuvres complètes*, ed. Charles Adam and Paul Tannéry, 12 vols (Paris: Vrin, 1964–71), 3:70.

82. Schotel, 34–35; Beek, *First Female*, 79; Beek, “Anna Maria van Schurman,” in *Christian-Muslim Relations: A Bibliographical History*, vol. 8: *Northern and Eastern Europe (1600–1700)*, ed. David Thomas and John A. Chesworth (Leiden and Boston: Brill, 2016), 600.

83. Buchel, *Notae Quotidianae*, April 1636, 65.

84. Katlijn van der Stighelen, “Portretjes in ‘Spaens loot’ van de hand van Anna Maria van Schurman (1607–1678),” *ZE 2* (1986): 27–44; Beek, *First Female*, 42.

Van Schurman in Utrecht in 1645 while accompanying the new Queen of Poland, Louise-Marie de Gonzague—she also knew Spanish, as attested to by three other non-Dutch contemporaries: Claude Joly, Canon of Notre-Dame de Paris, who visited Van Schurman while accompanying the duchesse de Longueville in September 1646; the Carmelite priest and bibliographer Louis Jacob de Saint-Charles; and the poet Rotger zum Bergen, a university professor in his birthplace of Riga.<sup>85</sup> So far, however, there is no extant evidence of Spanish in Van Schurman's writings.

### Transnational Fame and Works

Van Schurman's fame quickly crossed borders. The founding of the University of Utrecht in March 1636 led to her first publications. Her Latin ode, *Anna Maria van Schurman Congratulates the Famous and Ancient City of Utrecht with its Recently Founded University*, and her French poem, *Remarque d'Anne Marie de Schurman*, were published in a commemorative volume of the professors' inaugural speeches.<sup>86</sup> Her Dutch poem on the inauguration was appended to Voetius's *Sermon on the Usefulness of Academies and Schools, and of the Sciences and the Arts that are taught therein*.<sup>87</sup>

A second work, *De Vitae Termino (On the Temporal Limits of Life)*, a philosophical and theological treatise, soon followed. She figured prominently in the title of Johan van Beverwijck's collective volume, *Epistolary question on the temporal limits of Life, destined or changeable? With Scholarly Responses [ . . . ] to which is added the same topic by the most Noble and Learned Maiden Anna Maria van*

85. Le Laboureur kept a travel journal, and recounts how the entire royal entourage was astounded by Van Schurman's linguistic brilliance as she conversed effortlessly in Italian and Latin with the Bishop of Orange, and in Greek with the queen's physician. See Jean Le Laboureur, *Histoire et relation du voyage de la Royne de Pologne et du retour de Madame la mareschalle de Guébrian, ambassadrice extraordinaire, & sur-intendante de sa conduite* (Paris: Toussaint Quinet, 1648), 66, excerpted in *Opuscula*, 337–39; Claude Joly, *Voyage ou description de toutes les villes de Münster en Westphalie, Hollande, Osnabrück, Cologne, et autres lieux des Pais-Bas* (Paris: François Clouizier, Jean de La Tourette, and Pierre Aubouyn, 1672), 150; Louis Jacob, *Bibliothèque des femmes illustres par leurs écrits* (1646) (BnF, A.F. Fr. 22.865), and *Opuscula*, 346. On Bergen, see Pieta van Beek, "Herrezen uit de as": *Verbrande lofgeschriften van Rotger zum Bergen voor Anna Maria van Schurman (1649–1655)*, *Schurmanniana*-reeks no. 4 (Ridderkerk: Provily Pers, 2015), 57.

86. *Academiae Ultrajectinae inauguratio, unà cum orationibus inauguralibus* (Utrecht: Aegidius and Petrus Roman, 1636).

87. *Sermoen van de nutticheydt der academien ende scholen, mitsgaders der wetenschappen ende consten die in de selve gheleert weren* (Utrecht: Aegidius and Petrus Roman, 1636). For the translation of the Latin ode, see Pieta van Beek, "Alpha Virginum: Anna Maria van Schurman (1607–1678)," in *Women Writing Latin from Roman Antiquity to Early Modern Europe*, vol. 3: *Early Modern Women Writing Latin*, ed. Laurie J. Churchill, Phyllis R. Brown, and Jane E. Jeffrey (New York and London: Routledge, 2002), 271–93. On the Dutch poem, see Beek, "Verbastert Christendom," 54–63.