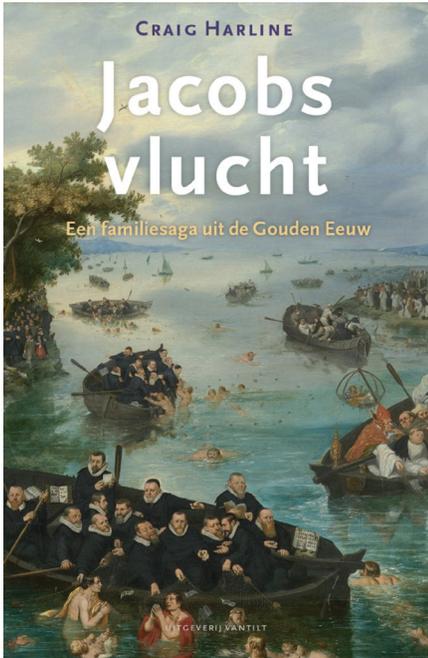


## Note

Craig Harline. *Jacobs vlucht: Een familiesaga uit de Gouden Eeuw*, Nijmegen, Vantilt, 2016. 352 pp. ISBN 978-9-460-04299-7.



This remarkable and wonderful book tells the story of three generations of the Rolandus family and their religion. It is also a book with a peculiar history of its own. It was originally published as one half of *Conversions: Two family stories from the Reformation and modern America* (Yale University Press 2011), where it constituted the Dutch and seventeenth-century part of the book. This Reformation part has been substantially expanded for this Dutch edition and provides an unusually direct portrait of life in the Dutch Golden Age, perhaps best compared with Willem Frijhoff's *Wegen van Evert Willemsz.* (1995). Like Frijhoff, Harline had the good fortune to stumble upon individuals with remarkable stories to tell.

The Rolandus family came to prominence as a direct result of the Reformation. The son of a tailor and early protestant convert from Delft, Jacob Roelandsz. was given the opportunity to train as a minister in Antwerp as well as in Geneva. After a spell in German

exile he returned to his native Delft, went back to Germany and ultimately ended his career in one of the country's most prestigious positions, as one of the ministers in Amsterdam's Oude Kerk. In 1626, 65 years old, he started to work on the authorized translation of the Bible that became known as *Statenbijbel*.

While the tale of the first generation provides an intimate portrait of the establishment of the Reformed Church in Holland, the second generation sheds light on the consolidation of the church in the seventeenth century. Timotheus Rolandus was as steadfast as his father, but lacked the wisdom that may have tempered this trait in the older man. He was quarrelsome and his career, which took him from one small congregation to another, is

proof that ‘friends in high places’ were not sufficient for a career in the Golden Age; talent and merit did come into play and Timotheus fell short on both counts. But his greatest failure was not as a minister but as a father.

In 1654, Timotheus’ son Jacob decided to leave the parental home, flee to Antwerp and join the Catholic Church. Jacob had grown up in Boxtel, where he had befriended other teenagers who lived in the local castle – and were, inevitably, Catholics. Jacob’s father made extensive efforts to retrieve his son, but to no avail (Compare H. Roosenboom, *Ontvoerd of gevlucht? Religieuze spanningen in Brabant en de zaak Sophia Alberts 1700-1710* [Hilversum, 2016], as announced in *Early Modern Low Countries* 1 [2017] 1, p. 199). Jacob ultimately went to Brazil as a missionary. And so the Rolandus family had come full circle, at least as far as their religion was concerned.

The original *Conversions* book seeks to show how religious divisions can impact on families – today as in the past. The story of the Rolandus’ family, as told separately in *Jacobs vlucht*, does not have a Big Thesis about the seventeenth century. However, due to its remarkable detail, it allows the reader to experience the Golden Age in close-up and makes for a great read. It has been rightly nominated for the *Libris* Geschiedenisprijs 2017.

Maarten Prak, Utrecht University