

# Enlightened Religion

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# Enlightened Religion

*From Confessional Churches to Polite Piety  
in the Dutch Republic*

*Edited by*

Joke Spaans  
Jetze Touber



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Cover illustration: Excerpt from Romeyn de Hooghe, *Hieroglyphica* (Amsterdam, 1735). Private collection. The central figure, Reformed Faith, represents the ongoing development of the churches of the Reformation towards the original Christian simplicity. She acknowledges her dependence on divine grace, and receives God's blessing in return. In her lap rests the hat of freedom, representing freedom of the conscience, while she tramples the papal regalia. Behind her De Hooghe etched modest ministers, elders and deacons, and in front of her venerable figures representing the Synod of Dordrecht and the States of Holland as the ultimate protectors of the faith and guarantors of the unity of the Church. The full image can be found as figure 8.6 on page 254.

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# Enlightened Religion: From Confessional Churches to Polite Piety in the Dutch Republic

*Joke Spaans and Jetze Touber*

European religious culture changed in the transition from the seventeenth to the eighteenth century. We have known this for a long time. Ernst Troeltsch, in his *Die Bedeutung des Protestantismus für die Entstehung der modernen Welt* (1906), famously hinted at a reconceptualization of religion at this juncture, especially within Protestant areas such as the Dutch Republic and England. Here Troeltsch saw the roots of a 'New Protestantism,' essentially the *Kulturprotestantismus* of his own time, a Protestantism that had turned away from the confessional definitions of the sixteenth century. Through its absorption of elements from Renaissance humanism, Anabaptism, and spiritualism this modern Protestantism had become a personal conviction for its adherents, rather than the religious system that had offered early modern princes and political elites legitimation for their confessional states. More influential, however, was Paul Hazard's *Crise de la conscience Européenne (1680–1715)* (1935). In this book he traced the transformations in this same crucial period far beyond the sixteenth century, back to classical paganism and its revival in the Renaissance, which bore fruit in the—anti-Christian—French Revolution. Peter Gay's interpretation of the Enlightenment, whose first part was tellingly entitled *The Rise of Modern Paganism* (1966), expanded on this view, shifting the emphasis from antiquity and the Renaissance to the secularizing tendencies of the Enlightenment. With hindsight we can safely state that these authors projected their own ideals—Troeltsch of an openminded, modern Protestantism, Hazard and Gay of a secular modernity—back into the past.

The perception of a decisive shift in worldviews sometime around 1700 has persisted, but how to interpret it, especially with regard to religion, has remained an open question. Troeltsch, despite his necessarily schematic representation of historical processes in his short overview of the relation between Protestantism and progress, did not limit himself to religious or even intellectual history in the aftermath of the Reformations of the sixteenth century and the early modern pre-history of his modern age. His analysis encompasses a wide range of environments and debates where religion could have made a difference: politics, social and economic developments, legal systems, and

gender relations. It culminates, however, in a claim that religion itself had become more modern—in a sense: more ‘religious’—around 1700. Building upon Troeltsch’s informed hunches, the contributions to this book show how the intellectual culture of the later seventeenth century was host to a number of conversations between people with a wide variety of philosophies and world-views and who came from different walks of life. These dialogues exerted an impact on religion and the state and all that these terms implied in early modern societies. Across all of Christendom, the topics under discussion in this period show marked similarities, and at the same time separate debates raged over their applicability within individual polities. Case studies in this volume focus on the Dutch Republic, where discussion culture was less constrained and therefore more inclusive than in most other countries.<sup>1</sup>

Unlike Troeltsch, who analysed the impact of Protestantism on various sections of society but not the other way around, the authors of this volume foreground this more inclusive conversational aspect of intellectual life. Like the fruits of any conversation, the discoveries of the seventeenth century, the debates they engendered, and the reflections that those in their turn invited went each and every way. They did not so much produce firm conclusions as explore possibilities. They often transcended the boundaries of the topics Troeltsch used for his analysis, as they addressed seventeenth-century rather than modern concerns. We therefore eschew here any claim of a unilinear Enlightenment project evolving towards modernity. Neither do we take as our point of departure the ‘culture wars’ or any modern concern about the relation between religion and secularism. Instead, like Troeltsch, we look first and foremost at religion in the long aftermath of the Reformation. Trying to ‘see things their way’ may eventually be a more fruitful approach towards calculating the lasting influence of the developments that Paul Hazard proactively declared a ‘crise de la conscience’ than an exclusive focus on those aspects and persons that we would consider adumbrations and precursors of modernity can hope to accomplish.<sup>2</sup>

The chapters that follow are concerned with changes in religion’s conceptualization and the new discursive spaces where the nature of Protestantism came to be discussed by the end of the seventeenth and the beginning of the eighteenth century. Late humanism and the Enlightenment both played a part

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- 1 Most of the articles are expanded versions of lectures presented at a conference held in Utrecht, January 21–23, 2015, which concluded the research programme *Faultline 1700: Early Enlightenment Conversations on Religion and the State*. This project was made possible by a generous subsidy from the Netherlands Organisation for Scientific Research (NWO).
  - 2 Cf. Alister Chapman, John Coffey and Brad S. Gregory, *Seeing Things Their Way: Intellectual History and the Return of Religion* (Notre Dame, Ind., 2009).

in these debates. Individual thinkers from a wide spectrum, from the highly sceptical Pierre Bayle to the orthodox Wilhelmus à Brakel, worried about and eventually dissolved the logic underpinning confessional states and churches and explored the more individual and 'polite' forms of religion that we have come to associate with the Enlightenment. Unlike most of the respectable, still growing body of scholarship on the relation between religion and the Enlightenment, this volume does not focus on the resilience of religion despite growing criticism—of its metaphysics, of the authority of the Bible or the Church as an institution and its relation to the State—or on these criticisms per se, but rather on the cultural changes that produced them, how they produced them, and the religious cultures they provoked.<sup>3</sup>

The interlocked conversations about the early modern conundrums of politics, intellectual culture, and religion defy attempts to formulate simple and straightforward interpretations of the transformations produced by this period of crisis. Specialization has not been kind to the study of this complex process. Historians have often focused on separate elements. Over the last half century historical research on early modern religion has been dominated by the confessionalization theory, a theory eminently suited to analyse the political implications of either religious homogeneity or religious diversity in the early modern period. Initially the concept of confessionalization was used first and foremost in a political and socio-historical approach towards religion and religious settlements, and covered the policies used by politicians and ecclesiastics to enforce religious conformity.<sup>4</sup> Gradually, however, historians came to realize that, as essential as government policies were for early modern religious settlements and for the shape of ecclesiastical structures, they did not explain all the observable changes. Devotional religious cultures flourished in the later seventeenth century, in Protestant as well as in Catholic countries, with or without state support. Piety was often considered a badge of distinction, and devotional exercises, both in the form of public ritual and the deeply personal habits of the heart, appear to have been exceedingly popular. Vibrant religious cultures became tightly interwoven with local and national identity politics. This entanglement could not have happened only in a top-down

3 For the development of this field see Sheridan Gilley, 'Christianity and Enlightenment: An Historical Survey,' *History of European Ideas* 1 (1981), 103–22; Simon Grote, 'Review-Essay: Religion and Enlightenment,' *Journal of the History of Ideas* 75 (2014), 137–60; William J. Bulman, 'Enlightenment for the Culture Wars,' in: *God and the Enlightenment*, ed. William J. Bulman and Robert G. Ingram (New York, 2016), pp. 1–41.

4 Thomas A. Brady Jr, 'Confessionalisation: The Career of a Concept,' in: *Confessionalization in Europe, 1555–1685: Essays in Honor and Memory of Bodo Nischan*, ed. John M. Headley, Hans J. Hillerbrand, and Anthony J. Papalas (Aldershot, 2004), pp. 1–20.

fashion; it presupposed the cooperation of the 'common people.'<sup>5</sup> Research on the confessional age has consequently broadened its scope to allow for more complex dynamics operating within societies. This more expansive purview, however, has done little to assuage another interpretive incongruence, namely between the social forces of confessionalization and the intellectual forces of Enlightenment thought. Confessionalization theory operates within the field of socio-cultural history, Enlightenment thought within that of intellectual history. As yet it is far from clear how the two developments may have been related, and how religion figured in this relation.

A key concept in the intellectual history of early modern religion is toleration. Enlightened thought has always played an important part in the study of its emergence.<sup>6</sup> In the early modern period freedom of religion was as yet only an ideal on a far horizon, shared among a rather select group of Enlightened thinkers. Controversy withered, as did the Wars of Religion. In most European countries the Reformation and Counter-Reformation had produced confessionally fairly homogeneous populations through settlements between princes and established churches. This was especially the case in Scandinavia and the southwestern portion of the continent, but less so in the Holy Roman Empire, the Swiss Confederacy, the Low Countries, and Great Britain.<sup>7</sup> Here governments, faced with religious diversity among their subjects, experimented with toleration. Initially they did so predominantly as a matter of law enforcement:

5 This new outlook appears in Heinz Schilling, 'Confessional Europe,' in: Thomas A. Brady Jr et al., eds., *Handbook of European History 1400–1600. Late Middle Ages, Renaissance and Reformation*, 2 vols. (Leiden, 1995), 2:641–81, and above all R. W. Scribner, *For the Sake of Simple Folk: Popular Propaganda for the German Reformation* (Cambridge, 1981), and id., *Popular Culture and Popular Movements in Reformation Germany* (London, 1987). Instructive case studies are Craig Harline and Eddy Put, *A Bishop's Tale: Mathias Hovius among his Flock in Seventeenth Century Flanders* (New Haven, 2000); Wietse de Boer, *Conquest of the Soul: Confession, Discipline, and Public Order in Counter-Reformation Milan* [Studies in Medieval and Reformation Traditions, vol. 84] (Leiden, 2000); Ronnie Po-Chia Hsia, *The World of Catholic Renewal 1540–1770* (Cambridge, 1998); Karen E. Carter, *Creating Catholics: Catechism and Primary Education in Early Modern France* (Notre Dame, Ind., 2011); Margo Todd, *The Culture of Protestantism in Early Modern Scotland* (New Haven, 2002). For the Dutch Republic: Judith Pollmann, *Religious Choice in the Dutch Republic: The Reformation of Arnoldus Buchelius (1565–1641)* (Manchester, 1999); Willem Frijhoff, *Embodied Belief: Ten Essays on Religious Culture in Dutch History* (Hilversum, 2002).

6 E.g., John Marshall, *John Locke, Toleration and Early Enlightenment Culture: Religious Intolerance and Arguments for Religious Toleration in Early Modern and 'Early Enlightenment' Europe* (Cambridge, 2006); Hans Erich Bödeker et al., eds., *Discourses of Tolerance and Intolerance in the European Enlightenment* (Toronto, 2009); Perez Zagorin, *How the Idea of Religious Toleration Came to the West* (Princeton, N.J., 2013); Jonathan Parkin and Timothy Stanton, eds., *Natural Law and Toleration in the Early Enlightenment* (Oxford, 2013).

7 Diarmaid MacCulloch, *Reformation: Europe's House Divided 1477–1700* (London, 2003).

religious diversity was perceived as a threat to political and social stability and toleration as an unwelcome necessity.<sup>8</sup>

Theorizing about religious toleration at the turn of the eighteenth century was anything but 'enlightened' in the modern sense, as it perpetuated forms of discrimination and exclusion. Neither was it 'modern' in the sense of advocating what we call secularization. Eventually, however, and despite lingering popular discontent and occasional bouts of persecution, Enlightened ideology became happily married to political expediency and helped shape a culture of tolerant politeness. From Protestant Prussia to Catholic Austria, Enlightened monarchs lifted the obstacles for political and cultural participation by religious minorities that had always been part and parcel of their confessional states. They did so not merely out of Enlightened largesse, but rather out of the awareness that the traditional practice of discrimination against minorities left unused their social, economic, and intellectual potential. Novel ideas of citizenship, beginning to be conceived not as a cluster of jealously guarded privileges granted to an established elite but as an entitlement due every man, woman, and child willing and able to contribute to the well-being of society, started to emerge.<sup>9</sup>

The Enlightenment has long been considered a force not only towards religious toleration but also the disenchantment of the world, and consequently it has been regarded as the intellectual foundation of a unilinear process of secularization. Supposedly, the impact of corrosive 'radical Enlightened' thought was buffered or stalled for some time by the influence of a moderate Enlightenment and the rise of forms of 'reasonable religion,' but in the long run secularization was to be irreversible. It has been convincingly argued that

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- 8 *Difference and Dissent: Theories of Toleration in Medieval and Early Modern Europe* (Lanman, 1996); John Christian Laursen and Cary J. Nederman, eds., *Beyond the Persecuting Society: Religious Toleration before the Enlightenment* (Philadelphia, 1998); Benjamin Kaplan, *Divided by Faith: Religious Conflict and the Practice of Toleration in Early Modern Europe* (Cambridge, Mass., 2007); Marshall, *John Locke* (see above, n. 4); Alexandra Walsham, *Charitable Hatred: Tolerance and Intolerance in England, 1500–1700* (Cambridge, 2006); Eliane Glaser, ed., *Religious Tolerance in the Atlantic World: Early Modern and Contemporary Perspectives* (Basingstoke, 2013). On the Dutch Republic: C. Berkvens-Steveling, J. Israel, and G. H. M. Posthumus Meyjes, eds., *The Emergence of Tolerance in the Dutch Republic* (Leiden, 1997); Henk van Nierop and Ronnie Po-Chia Hsia, eds., *Calvinism and Religious Toleration in the Dutch Golden Age* (Cambridge, 2002).
- 9 Derek Beales, *Enlightenment and Reform in Eighteenth Century Europe* (London, 2005); Lynn A. Hunt, *The Enlightenment and the Origins of Religious Toleration* (Utrecht, 2011); Rienk Vermij, *De geest uit de fles: de Verlichting en het verval van de confessionele samenleving* (Amsterdam, 2014). On ideals of citizenship: Willeke Los, *Opvoeding tot mens en burger: pedagogiek als cultuurkritiek in Nederland in de 18e eeuw* (Hilversum, 2005).

this conception was an idea projected by late-eighteenth-century philosophers, canonized in the French Revolution and perpetuated by its anticlerical admirers and defenders; it reflected wishful thinking rather than an accurate account of historical realities.<sup>10</sup> Developments in philosophy and the natural sciences, once considered inimical to traditional Christian religion, usually proceeded from the work of people who considered themselves religious and who did not aim to undermine religion. Orthodox theologians initially decried Cartesianism as a high road to atheism, as it advocated doubt even about the existence of God. It was hailed by other, equally orthodox theologians as a firm foundation for establishing truth, also in religion. Natural philosophers unravelled the mysteries of Creation without arriving at a purely materialist worldview. Most could effortlessly combine their findings with continued adherence to confessional Christianity.<sup>11</sup> Others found their discoveries troubling—but a Jan Swammerdam sought solace in radical religion rather than an embrace of materialism. Observations in microscopy that defied integration into a Christian universe were abandoned as insoluble conundrums and did not engender a rejection of that universe.<sup>12</sup>

Not only has the Enlightenment, taken as a project, thus regained a more positive connection to religious history, Enlightenment research has also spilled over into intellectual areas previously neglected in its historiography. The lively interest in philology and antiquities in the seventeenth and eighteenth centuries has long been considered alien to Enlightened concerns, perhaps even relatively harmless. Yet philology may have been the discipline most threatening to religious authority and most conducive to the development of forms of Enlightened Christianity. Textual criticism, not only of Louis Cappel

10 David Sorokin, *The Religious Enlightenment: Protestants, Jews and Catholics from London to Vienna* (Princeton, N.J., 2008), pp. 311–4.

11 John Hedley Brooke, *Science and Religion: Some Historical Perspectives* (Cambridge, 1991), pp. 53–81; Rienk Vermij, *The Calvinist Copernicans: The Reception of the New Astronomy in the Dutch Republic, 1575–1750* (Amsterdam, 2002); Eric Jorink, *Reading the Book of Nature in the Dutch Golden Age, 1575–1715*, trans. Peter G. Mason (Leiden, 2010). For the integration of new developments in natural philosophy in biblical exegesis: Bernd Roling, *Physica Sacra: Wunder, Naturwissenschaft und historischer Schriftsinn zwischen Mittelalter und Früher Neuzeit* (Leiden, 2013).

12 Wiep van Bunge, *From Stevin to Spinoza: An Essay on Philosophy in the Seventeenth-Century Dutch Republic* (Leiden, 2001); Luuc Kooijmans, *Gevaarlijke kennis: inzicht en angst in de dagen van Jan Swammerdam* (Amsterdam, 2007); Rienk Vermij, *Secularisering en natuurwetenschap in de zeventiende en achttiende eeuw: Reading the Book of Nature* (see above, n. 11) (Amsterdam, 1991); id., *The Calvinist Copernicans* (see above, n. 9); Jorink, *Reading the Book of Nature* (see above, n. 11); Edward G. Ruestow, *The Microscope in the Dutch Republic: The Shaping of Discovery* (Cambridge, 1996).

and Richard Simon but also of 'scripturarians' at the theological faculties in the Dutch Republic and elsewhere, undercut claims of the factual truth of the Bible, the most authoritative text of the time. At the same time the historicizing exegeses of Hobbes and Spinoza proved explosive in both the ecclesiastical and political domains.<sup>13</sup> Together and often in close conjunction with early modern ethnology, a field that has only recently captured the interest of cultural historians in efforts to create global history and gain a more subtle understanding of the cultural transfers of this period, antiquarianism appears to have been just as important in reshaping the 'early modern worldview' as the usual suspects in radical philosophy and physics.<sup>14</sup> The title of a recent monograph even makes the somewhat overstated claim that the early-eighteenth-century encyclopedia of world religions *Cérémonies et coutumes religieuses de tous les peuples du monde*, edited by Jean Frédéric Bernard and lavishly illustrated by Jean Picart, was a "book that changed Europe."<sup>15</sup> Observable change, however, did not take the direction of a complete relativism but tended towards

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- 13 Jonathan Sheehan, *The Enlightenment Bible: Translation, Scholarship, Culture* (Princeton, N.J., 2005); Dirk van Miert et al., eds., *Scriptural Authority and Biblical Criticism in the Dutch Golden Age: God's Word Questioned* (Oxford, 2017); Jetze Touber, *Spinoza and Biblical Philology in the Dutch Republic (1660–1710)* (Oxford, 2018). Cf. Dmitri Levitin, 'From Sacred History to the History of Religion: Paganism, Judaism, and Christianity in European Historiography from Reformation to "Enlightenment,"' *Historical Journal* 55 (2012), 1117–61.
- 14 Anthony Grafton, 'Jean Hardouin: The Antiquary as Pariah,' *Journal of the Warburg and Courtauld Institutes* 62 (1999), 241–67; Peter N. Miller, 'The "Antiquarianization" of Biblical Scholarship and the London Polyglot Bible (1653–57),' *Journal of the History of Ideas* 62 (2001), 463–82; Jonathan Sheehan, 'Idolatry, Antiquarianism and the Polemics of Distinction in the Seventeenth Century,' *Past & Present* 192 (2006), 35–66; William Poole, *The World Makers: Scientists of the Restoration and the Search for the Origins of the Earth* (Oxford, 2010); Martin Mulso, 'From Antiquarianism to Bible Criticism? Young Reimarvis Visits the Netherlands. With an Edition of the Travel Diary Fragment of 1720/1,' in: *Between Philology and Radical Enlightenment: Hermann Samuel Reimarvis (1694–1768)*, ed. Martin Mulso (Leiden, 2011), pp. 1–39; J. Z. Buchwald and M. Feingold, *Newton and the Origin of Civilization* (Princeton, N.J., 2013).
- 15 Michiel van Groesen, *The Representations of the Overseas World in the De Bry Collection of Voyages (1590–1634)* (Leiden, 2008); Lynn Hunt, Margaret Jacob, and Wijnand Mijnhardt, *The Book that Changed Europe: Picart & Bernard's "Religious Ceremonies of the World"* (Cambridge, Mass., 2010); id., eds., *Bernard Picart and the First Global Vision of Religion* (Los Angeles, 2010); Joan-Pau Rubiés, 'Theology, Ethnography, and the Historicization of Idolatry,' *Journal of the History of Ideas* 67 (2006), 571–96; id., 'From Christian Apologetics to Deism: Libertine Readings of Hinduism, 1650–1730,' in: Bulman and Ingram, eds., *God and the Enlightenment* (see above, n. 3), pp. 107–35; Guy Stroumsa, *A New Science: The Discovery of Religion in the Age of Reason* (Cambridge, Mass., 2010).

a heightened interest in natural religion as a foil against which a reasonable Christianity could take on new meaning.

All these developments in the study of 'the' Enlightenment have produced the notion that there was, in fact, not one Enlightenment but rather an 'Enlightenment spectrum.' We have come to consider the period from the late seventeenth to the end of the eighteenth century and even beyond as a historical epoch, marked by Enlightened notions in a great variety of ways, not only varying from one country to the next, but also producing changing fashions in practically all domains of life, from the political and scholarly to the cultural and popular. Enlightenment appears less and less a well-defined project tending towards a secular age and ever more an ongoing conversation across disciplinary and social boundaries that transformed the religious cultures emerging from the Reformations of the sixteenth century.<sup>16</sup> Participants in these conversations did not belong exclusively to the leisured classes within and outside the academies but were also found among a wider public of people who were well educated, although not always formally so, and who were engaged in various professions, arts, and crafts. Increasingly, we are aware that Enlightened correspondence and conversation included printers, booksellers and librarians, draughtsmen, engravers and painters, instrument makers, cartographers and architects, diplomats and politicians, clergymen and schoolmasters, all those who had stakes in the new discoveries in the various fields where knowledge was being produced. Men (and a few women) from these and similar walks of life entered the conversation.<sup>17</sup>

Religion in the eighteenth century gradually distanced itself from its sixteenth century confessional moulds. Confessional cultures persisted, and with them the political and social advantages for those professing the dominant religion or willing to conform outwardly as a sign of loyalty to the political regime.

16 Sorkin, *The Religious Enlightenment* (see above, n. 8), pp. 19–21; Roy Porter and Mikulas Teich, eds., *The Enlightenment in National Context* (Cambridge, 1981); Stefanie Stockhorst (ed.), *Epoche und Projekt. Perspektiven der Aufklärungsforschung* (Göttingen, 2013); Dale van Kley, 'Conclusion: The Varieties in Enlightened Experience,' in: Bulman and Ingram, *God and the Enlightenment* (see above, n. 3), pp. 278–316.

17 On knowledge production in skilled artisanal milieus, see Jonathan I. Israel, *The Dutch Republic: Its Rise, Greatness and Fall 1477–1806* (Oxford, 1995), pp. 348–51; Deborah E. Harkness, *The Jewel House: Elizabethan London and the Scientific Revolution* (New Haven, CT, 2007); Patrick O'Brien, ed., *Urban Achievement in Early Modern Europe: Golden Ages in Antwerp, Amsterdam and London* (Cambridge, 2001), pp. 287–345; James Van Horn Melton, *The Rise of the Public in Enlightenment Europe* (Cambridge, 2001). In the Dutch Republic: Van Bunge, *From Stevin to Spinoza* (see above, n. 10), pp. 1–9. On vernacular education and public opinion: Arjan van Dixhoorn, *Lustige geesten: rederijkers in de Noordelijke Nederlanden (1480–1650)* (Amsterdam, 2009).

However, as more and more people from different walks of life gained voices in the conversation, the emphasis shifted from doctrine, the specialism of academic theologians and church leaders, to the Christian life. The Protestant embodiment of this new emphasis insisted on a priesthood of all believers and rejected all forms of ‘priestcraft,’ practiced by ministers who continued to act as if they stood hierarchically above the common faithful. It demanded a living faith, “pious but not churchly”<sup>18</sup>—that is, a faith built on a heartfelt conviction bred through study or the experience of saving grace, a faith that rejected devotions imposed by outside agencies as superstition, fanaticism, or enthusiasm. The Dutch Reformed church fostered advanced catechism teaching to create a well-informed church membership and demanded that its ministers coached those unable to study towards a personal, experiential understanding of the faith. Piety remained at a premium, but it became increasingly identified with civic virtues. The result was what contemporaries called ‘reasonable religion’: a religion that satisfied heart and mind alike, allowed a certain latitude for different interpretations within one’s own religious community, and rejected the intolerance towards the state’s dissident minorities. Left behind were the previous century’s battles between confessions and the squabbles over the new philosophies, discoveries, and interpretations of scripture: the individual conscience became the arbiter of religious choice.<sup>19</sup>

A new, more interdisciplinary type of history of religion is needed to come to grips with this very complex process. This volume, presenting several case studies, aims to give an outline of the most relevant directions such a new religious history should take. The main focus is on the Dutch Republic: religiously the most tolerant polity in Europe during the second half of the seventeenth century, a champion for the cause of international Protestantism, the cradle of the early Enlightenment, and a hub of the Republic of Letters. Moreover, skilled and well-read professionals, artists, and craftsmen, native-born and immigrant alike, abounded in the highly urbanized Dutch population. Most households possessed books, and many could even boast sizeable libraries. In the eighteenth century, discussion of recent literature, from spectatorial periodicals and newspapers, plans for agricultural innovations, and reports of experiments in the natural sciences, to poetry, history, and theology, took

18 Betje Wolf and Aagje Deken put this lapidary characterization in the mouth of the ‘Enlightened believer’ Stijntje Doorzicht in their correspondence novel *Sara Burgerhart*, letter 133.

19 J. A. I. Champion, *The Pillars of Priestcraft Shaken: The Church of England and Its Enemies, 1660–1730* (Cambridge, 1993); Euan Cameron, *Enchanted Europe: Superstition, Reason & Religion, 1250–1750* (Oxford, 2010); Joke Spaans, *Graphic Satire and Religious Change: The Dutch Republic 1676–1707* (Leiden, 2010).

place in the omnipresent societies—not only in the cities but even in remote rural villages. These social currents fostered an intensely civic, perhaps philosophically unspectacular but uniquely variegated, popular Enlightenment.<sup>20</sup> Therefore, instead of limiting their views to either confessional religion or radical philosophy, the authors of the essays in this volume explore how a great variety of early modern cultural formations and intellectual disciplines contributed to changes in the conceptualization of religion and its position within a wider cultural arena, and how, moreover, all these developments fed off of one another. Famously, in the seventeenth century Descartes' 'mathematical' method was imitated not only in mathematics and in physics, but in the then much wider and very comprehensive field of natural philosophy as well, and even in theology. A series of chapters provide in-depth analyses of the interface between new knowledge and views on religion—from the core textual approaches of humanism to the focus of philosophers on the relations between Church and State and the seeds of modern social sciences planted in the encounter with exotic cultures, to a popular culture of catechism teaching and the emergence of church history as a discipline.

This first attempt at mapping out the entangled strands of intellectual and religious history is long overdue. The Dutch case has been mined mainly for its precocious radical Enlightenment, first and foremost in Jonathan Israel's seminal *The Radical Enlightenment* and its sequels.<sup>21</sup> It has too easily been assumed, not only by Israel but in most of the literature before and after him, that the churches, and especially the public Church, were unresponsive and even hostile to any form of innovation.<sup>22</sup> The professors of theology and the ministers of the public Reformed Church are often presented as a monolithic block of conservatives, for whom the emergence of Cartesianism, new political philosophies, critical philological and antiquarian approaches to the Bible, an incipient comparative study of religions, and the discoveries in the natural sciences constituted so many threats to orthodox theology. They are rarely considered to be public intellectuals, although their academic standing and public

20 Wijnand Mijnhardt, *Tot heil van 't menschdom: culturele genootschappen in Nederland, 1750–1815* (Amsterdam, 1987); Arno Neele, *De ontdekking van het Zeeuwse platteland: culturele verhoudingen tussen stad en platteland in Zeeland 1750–1850* (Zwolle, s.a. [2011]).

21 Jonathan I. Israel, *Radical Enlightenment: Philosophy and the Making of Modernity 1650–1750* (Oxford, 2001); id., *Enlightenment Contested: Philosophy, Modernity, and the Emancipation of Man, 1670–1752* (New York, 2006); id., *Democratic Enlightenment: Philosophy, Revolution, and Human Rights 1750–1790* (Oxford, 2011).

22 E.g., Andrew C. Fix, *Prophecy and Reason: The Dutch Collegiants in the Early Enlightenment* (Princeton, N.J., 1991); Michiel R. Wielema, *The March of the Libertines: Spinozists and the Dutch Reformed Church (1660–1750)* (Hilversum, 2004).

authority uniquely predisposed them for that role. In view of their prominent involvement in the debates of the second half of the seventeenth century, one would expect that they would have given innovation a more nuanced reception than just contestation, and that the cultural and intellectual environment would have been conducive to an adaptation of religious views to new directions in philosophy, discoveries in science and textual scholarship, a socially more complex society, and the growth of global networks: in short, to the various forms of the Enlightenment. Recently a forceful appeal has been delivered to finally fill this lacuna, and several of the authors in this book make a start.<sup>23</sup>

It is all the more timely as comparative studies of religious culture ‘around 1700’ usually skip the Dutch Republic for want of useful previous studies which are accessible to a non-Dutch audience. A glaring example is Reginald Ward’s *The Protestant Evangelical Awakening* (1992), a magisterial overview of pietist revivals originating in Central Europe, sweeping westwards and eventually developing into the Great Awakenings in the North American colonies. Many of the key figures of this movement had connections to the Dutch Republic, with its high density of theological faculties, practically all of excellent repute, where the Reformed Church vigorously pursued further religious reform, and where evangelical preachers and prophets of revival too wild for their home churches found refuge and often dedicated followings. English, Dutch, and German theologians corresponded and influenced one another through their writings and in personal meetings across borders all over the Protestant world. Yet the Dutch Republic is absent from Ward’s narrative as a whole.<sup>24</sup>

23 Sorkin, *The Religious Enlightenment* (see above, n. 8); Bulman and Ingram, eds., *God and the Enlightenment* (see above, n. 13). On the Dutch Republic: P. Bange et al., eds., *Kerk en Verlichting: voordrachten gehouden tijdens het Windesheim Symposium te Windesheim op 18 november 1989* (Zwolle, 1990); Ernestine van der Wall, ‘Orthodoxy and Scepticism in the Early Dutch Enlightenment,’ in: *Scepticism and Irreligion in the Seventeenth and Eighteenth Century*, ed. Richard H. Popkin and Arjo Vanderjagt (Leiden, 1993), pp. 121–41; id., ‘Cartesianism and Cocceianism: A Natural Alliance?’, in: *De l’Humanisme aux Lumières, Bayle et le Protestantisme: mélanges en l’honneur d’Élisabeth Labrousse*, ed. Michelle Magdelaine et al. (Paris, 1996), pp. 447–61; id., ‘The Religious Context of the Early Dutch Enlightenment: Moral Religion and Society,’ in: *The Early Enlightenment in the Dutch Republic, 1650–1750: Selected Papers of a Conference held at the Herzog August Bibliothek, Wolfenbüttel 22–23 March 2001*, ed. Wiep van Bunge (Leiden, 2003), pp. 39–57; Ernestine van der Wall and Leo Wessels, eds., *Een veelzijdige verstandhouding: religie en verlichting in Nederland 1650–1850* (Nijmegen, 2008); Jan Wim Buisman, ed., *Verlichting in Nederland 1650–1850: vrede tussen rede en religie?* (Nijmegen, 2013).

24 W. R. Ward, *The Protestant Evangelical Awakening* (Cambridge, 1992); Mirjam de Baar, *Ik moet spreken: Het spiritueel leiderschap van Antoinette Bourignon (1616–1680)* (Zutphen, 2004); Brigitte Klosterberg and Guido Naschert, eds., *Friedrich Breckling (1629–1711):*

The budding literature on Enlightened forms of religion, spreading out from the usual suspects France and Great Britain to the Catholic Habsburg lands, and from an exclusive focus on Christianity to the inclusion of the Jewish *haskala*, also tends to bypass the Republic. David Sorkin's *The Religious Enlightenment: Protestants, Jews and Catholics from London to Vienna* (2008) is a good example. Sorkin presents case studies of scholars who introduced novel, Enlightened forms of religion in several confessional contexts and in a variety of Western countries, but not in the Dutch Republic, despite its well-known role as an entrepôt of Enlightened debate and publishing—and intellectual exchanges among people of a variety of faiths.<sup>25</sup> Jonathan Sheehan's *The Enlightenment Bible* (2005) similarly ignores the Dutch Republic even as it surveys the implications of two centuries of philological work on the Bible in northwestern Europe.<sup>26</sup> Although 'religious Enlightenment' and 'Enlightened religion' are no longer perceived to be oxymorons, in the research in this field the contributions of spokespeople for the Dutch Reformed are sorely missed.

This volume is divided into two parts. The chapters of Part I present surveys of the larger changes in the intellectual landscape, which impinged upon the changing understanding of not only what religion was, but also how it should be evaluated.

In the opening chapter, Henri Krop outlines a programmatic development in the paradigm shift, identified by the Israeli scholar Guy Stroumsa, that led to the modern notion of religions in the plural. This new plural implied the equality of different religions and thereby the imperative of toleration, a key element of the Enlightenment. He traces this development through an analysis of a number of key texts, prominent among them the newly invented encyclopedias. A comparable redimensioning of the traditional sources of Christianity occurred in other areas as well. Jetze Touber explores the contribution of antiquarianism in a case study on Gisbertus Cuper. Over the course of a lifelong correspondence with fellow scholars about history of writing, Cuper came to see the necessity of redesigning the relation of 'world history' to biblical history as a divinely-laid-out, providential path of human development. The expanding spatial parameters of humanity also offered food for thought as well as occasions to experiment with alternative religious communities in the New

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Prediger, "Wahrheitszeuge" und Vermittler des Pietismus im Niederländischen Exil (Halle, 2011).

25 See also: Martin Mulso, 'Orientalistik im Kontext der sozinianischen und deistischen Debatten: Spencer, Crell, Locke, Newton,' *Scientia Poetica* 2 (1998), 27–57.

26 Sheehan, *Enlightenment Bible* (see above, n. 11).

World. Arthur Weststeijn demonstrates this in his presentation of the dreams of several radical reformers for communities where Enlightened spiritualities could flower, free from the constraints of the confessional state and its endemic conflicts. Martin Gierl analyses the communicative space in which religion was discussed, and shows how theological controversy, more specifically the pietist controversies in the German Empire, developed into new genres and media, in the end changing not only the shape and tone of the conversation but its content as well. Journals and programmatic church histories created religious identity in new ways, but also meshed with Enlightened values of impartiality and improvement and with new means of knowledge production. Albert Gootjes concludes this section with a reconstruction of the activities of the Utrecht *Collegie der Sçavanten*, an informal scholarly society that played a key role in the evaluation of radical thought in the Republic during the troubled early 1670s.

After the general themes discussed in Part I, in Part II the case studies of individual thinkers, authors, and artists serve to demonstrate how such figures contributed to this debate and how they found their way into the shifting media landscape. These cases sidestep the canons of church history or the history of philosophy and present intellectuals from what was traditionally called 'the second tier,' men who were entrepreneurs as well as opinion makers and self-proclaimed enlighteners of the general public. Exemplary for this newly emerging class is the etcher Romeyn de Hooghe, whose work can be read as a pictorial commentary on his age. He capped his career with two substantial books, one on the nature of the Dutch Republic, the other on the nature of religion.

The contribution of Frank Daudeij shows how De Hooghe, in his chorography *Spiegel van Staat* (Mirror of the State), claims for the Dutch a yearning for liberty in politics as well as religion, inbred in the Dutch from their immemorial past and consolidated in customs that preceded and determined later religious regimes. De Hooghe's valuation of custom, although not in itself radical, turns out to have been derived from the works of sceptic authors and satirists and to have some affinity with the political theory of Spinoza, and to have contributed to eighteenth-century notions of the fatherland. Jaap Nieuwstraten's work on the versatile linguist and historian Marcus Zuerius Boxhorn highlights how De Hooghe's modern ideas of fatherland were indeed founded on those of a previous generation. Boxhorn transformed a much older humanist appreciation of the respect for custom in ancient Greece into a defence of the confessional state, yet his belief in the versatility of custom earned him a warm reception among more radical authors who argued that religious regimes should change with the times.

Trudelien van 't Hof and Jonathan Israel explore the contribution of graphic artists to the unfolding debate on Enlightened religion. Van 't Hof analyses De Hooghe's *Hieroglyphica* and shows how this enigmatic book reflects a good deal of the contemporary critique of confessional religion, yet does not advocate irreligion. Rather, the etcher problematized religion and invited readers to forge their own informed opinions. Israel demonstrates that Willem Goeree and Arnold van Houbraken, men who in many respects resembled De Hooghe, were much more radical, as their art theory echoes the ideas of the most controversial thinkers of the age. All this may have made them a connecting link between the early phase of the radical Enlightenment and the *libertinage érudit* of the Huguenot refugees from the second quarter of the eighteenth century. Wiep van Bunge, however, claims that this *libertinage* already had strong roots in the French Refuge from the start. He reviews the work of Pierre Bayle, and offers a new approach and a possible solution of the as yet undecided question of how Bayle saw the relation between faith and reason. He positions Bayle way beyond pyrrhonism and much closer to Spinoza than other interpreters do.

The volume is concluded by the contributions of Joke Spaans and Fred van Lieburg. Both are concerned with authors who were theologians and produced new genres of religious literature for a lay audience that was literate in the vernacular. Spaans studies the biography and publications of Johannes Duijkerius, a schoolmaster who was trained as a theologian but who, rather than entering the ministry, became a broker among the established clergy, a wider public interested in vernacular theology, and the very mixed company of people who discussed the implications of new philosophy and scientific discoveries for the traditional Christian worldview. Fred van Lieburg analyses the views of the prominent Reformed minister Wilhelmus à Brakel on the boundaries of Reformed orthodoxy. In the aftermath of the controversies of the later seventeenth century he delineated a 'reasonable religion' and defended it against the rise of 'enthusiasm' in radical pietisms. He paved the way for a newer Protestantism: orthodox and pious, yet polite and egalitarian.

When all is said and done, can we confirm, or perhaps expand upon or modify, Troeltsch's hunch that a new kind of Protestantism developed in the decades around 1700, a Protestantism that was moralized, personalized, interiorized? A Protestantism, in other words, that was to be appropriated by and that benefitted individual Christians, instead of buttressing the confessional state? With a focus on the Dutch Republic, but with our eyes open to developments in Europe and beyond, the contributions to this volume provide the first outlines of an answer, pointing to fruitful lines of approach for further research. A common factor that many contributions hint at is that often it was

not so much the content of religious doctrine or practice that changed, but rather the circumstances in which this content was articulated or experienced.

We see this, for instance, in the *theoretical elaboration* of the position of religion in society, as explored by Krop and Nieuwstraten. The philosophers that Krop examines are notable not so much for the criticisms they level against traditional notions of the one and only True Religion, but rather for the conceptualization of the existence of a plurality of religions, none of them true in any absolute sense. Any religion was potentially valid, as long as it satisfied certain requirements. These requirements were defined not dogmatically but ethically: religiously informed piety should breed moral rectitude, and religious worship must serve a politically defined social order. This becomes apparent even more starkly in Nieuwstraten's analysis of the political writings of Boxhorn and their reception by several late-seventeenth-century theologians. Boxhorn held on to the importance of a state religion that promoted social cohesion and offered moral guidance—the religion of a confessional state. However, by making the choice of that religion dependent on the historically evolved customs of society, he seemed to subject theological truth-claims to the demands of political expediency. Each society had its own customs, so each society should also have its own religion. It is striking that this pragmatic argument for confessional religion found resonance among theologians such as Melchior Leydekker and Gerard de Vries, both active in an environment that is usually considered to have been very intransigent in its orthodoxy. In other words, on a theoretical level the real novelty often was the 'agreement to disagree' rather than any change in the content of one's own religious denomination.

Religion could also change in character by moving into *new media*, even if such a shift was not immediately accompanied by new content. Gierl has shown how exactly the media in which confessional and less confessional concepts of Christianity were expressed effected a shift in the status of those concepts. By moving, first, out into the open arena of learned journals, debate among orthodox and pietist theologians involved a broader public. The proliferation of contributions, also in the vernacular, engendered a change in the mode of debating: the debate itself became historicized as participants attempted to disentangle the immediate past of their particular controversies. The result was that positions of both orthodox Lutheranism and pietism were firmly anchored in public consciousness, and neither could claim exclusive authority over the other. We see this mechanism time and again in the various contexts examined in this book: new media and a new readership meant that religion operated in a new way, even if the content of doctrine and worship (initially) remained more or less the same. The network of *sçavants* in Utrecht, for instance, charted by Gootjes, created an informal platform on which religious

truth was juxtaposed with all kinds of knowledge pertinent to both nature and culture. The participants in this network had absolutely no intention to deviate from orthodoxy, yet the result was a disconcerting broadening of the cognitive context in which theology needed to stand its ground—with the concomitant labelling of these *çavants* by their adversaries as libertines, atheists, and radical critics. Spaans and Van Lieburg have looked into yet another reconfiguration of the media in which religion took shape: an explosion of the market for catechization, driven not so much by clerical authorities as by a genuine demand originating in lay circles yearning for self-advancement (either spiritually or materially). The immediate result was a steady stream of vernacular theological literature, easily accessible to interested lay people. The example of Brakel shows how this literature could be employed to mould the Reformed reading public into ‘reasonable’ believers. Another result was the emergence of a ‘minor clergy,’ straddling and dissolving the division between the ordained ministry and the laity, as the example of Johannes Duijkerius illustrates.

A third way that the traditional forms of Christianity seem to have been caught up in a new context lies in their *spatial-temporal framing*. Weststeijn has alerted us to the way the expanse of North America’s eastern coasts energized religious activists of all stripes within the confessional spectrum: whether orthodox Reformed, freethinking minimalist, or spiritualist sectarian, all could hope to find space for their religious ambitions in the New World. All ran up against insurmountable obstacles, but their efforts could be expanded on when missionary zeal and sectarian adventurism really took off over the course of the eighteenth century. At the same time, the bewildering diversity of societies that already peopled newly encountered areas, as well as the interminable variety of religious experiences across the ages, reverberated among the well-informed professionals, the ‘elite of the skilled,’ back in Europe. Van ’t Hof has foregrounded Romeyn de Hooghe as a perfect case in point: the historical and comparative interests pervading the *Hieroglyphica* show that even if De Hooghe himself nowhere gives evidence of any deviation from orthodox Reformed Christianity, the mere visual presence of a world of religious diversity outside of the traditional scheme of Old Covenant/New Covenant/Heresy cast a whole new light on the genealogy of True Religion. The same could be said of the ‘early modern world history’ with which Gisbert Cuper busied himself. The steady accumulation of materials showed, in an ever more accurate way, that there was no obvious relationship between various cultures in the Middle East, in eastern Asia, in southern Asia. Toubert has focussed on the early modern antiquarian interest in writing systems to argue for the importance of practical skill, even in such a traditional field as biblical history. As the possibilities of procuring accurate reproductions of scripts continued to increase, the

impossibility of establishing formal kinship among alphabets in various parts of the world impressed itself on scholars—to the point that they abandoned their ambitions of reducing world history to a past that could be derived from a single, divinely ordained, primeval civilization.

Changes in the theoretical justification of religion, in the media used to communicate religion, and in the spatial-temporal framework encapsulating religion go a long way towards explaining why the communal religion, consolidated in the early seventeenth century, lost its anchoring in the eighteenth century. In the end, it was often the very urgent needs of the moment that forced people into outspoken positions that took stock of the new situation, which had latently been in the making for a long time. The civic religion of Romeyn de Hooghe, sketched by Daudeij, is again a good example: subjecting religious practice to a sacralized, imagined civic community, and doing so in a vernacular genre that had traditionally eschewed delicate social and political themes, was both an innovative and an effective way of redefining religion without touching its content. But Willem Goeree and Arnold Houbraken, no less, were in the business of transforming the framework in which religion could be meaningful. Both being artists like De Hooghe, they broke with every convention in publishing lavishly illustrated, naturalist investigations of the societal embedment of religion, as Israel has shown—while continuously professing their adherence to the tenets of orthodoxy. And Pierre Bayle may have been an enigma, but it is very clear that he set a new standard for the framing of received knowledge. The conscience of the new temporal and spatial limits of the world, of nature and of culture, found a natural home in his *Dictionnaire*. Moreover, as Van Bunge has argued, even if it is impossible to pinpoint one assertion that confirms Bayle's rejection of the religion of the confessional state, it is precisely in the tortuous layout of his oeuvre that his retreat from religion as it had been defined in the seventeenth century becomes apparent.

So even if most authors in the decades around 1700 did not claim that Christian religion should be abandoned—there was no advocacy of anything approaching secularization, that is—we must conclude that Christians lived their religion in a new awareness of the relativity of their truth-claims and in a newly enlarged world of religious diversity and historical dispersion, and were surrounded by new media propagating an Enlightened religion to an expanding and increasingly literate, and even theologically articulate, popular audience. These developments inevitably redefined the way they themselves, and the communities to which they belonged, related to their religion. This redefinition increasingly distanced this new sense of religious adherence and faith from the religious regimes of the confessional age. It resulted in the creation of a newer Protestantism at the outset of the eighteenth century, which remains

to be explored in greater detail as part of the 'long Reformations.' All this calls for an approach towards the Enlightenment that acknowledges that the anti-clerical discourse long taken as *the* Enlightenment project is only one segment of a broader spectrum, a spectrum that includes the totality of arguments exchanged over the question of how to reach a new cultural equilibrium between Church and state, religion and the secular, after the fragmentation of European Christendom during the Reformations of the sixteenth century.

**PART 1**

*Trends*





# From Religion in the Singular to Religions in the Plural: 1700, a Faultline in the Conceptual History of Religion

*Henri Krop*

## Abstract

Guy Stroumsa has identified a paradigm shift that led to the modern pluralistic notion of religion. This chapter shows how, in the Dutch Republic, this shift emerged out of a general and long-lasting conversation on tolerance and diversity conducted by philosophers and theologians. Although well before 1700 the orthodox had also accepted the existing practices of tolerance, Reformed authors of all stripes regarded it as an—in-avoidable and deplorable—evil, because they all held that true religion should be based on correct theology. Consequently they recognized only one true religion: that is, their own. Over the course of the seventeenth century the knowledge of God necessary for true religion radically changed character. Instead of an extensive and logically coherent edifice of scholastic theology, the dictates of one's conscience became the rule of faith. For radical thinkers the Bible became irrelevant, at least to the possession of divine knowledge. However, even these radical philosophers remained within the traditional paradigm in which there was one true religion among many forms of idolatry. Only after 1700 did the new religious paradigm develop in two traditions. The tolerance debate caused some influential scholars of natural law and philosophers to underline the individual character of all religions. Other scholars focused on the universal character of religion arising from human nature, which made the differences among existing religions insignificant.

## 1 The Negative Connotation of Tolerance and Religious Diversity before 1700

As is well known, religious diversity was seen as a problem in early modern Europe. Once the realization dawned that the Reformation had resulted in a permanent religious schism within the populations of countries and cities, society aimed first at practical solutions. After 1700, however, we see the general

acceptation of toleration not as a stopgap but as a Christian ideal, which in a short span of time gained almost general acceptance. The first two sections of this chapter will substantiate this observation.

In the late autumn of 1653 two Arminian students of theology travelled from Amsterdam to Utrecht to take some courses in the theological faculty and in particular, to hear its luminary, Gisbertus Voetius (1589–1676), the last living member of the 1618 national Synod of Dordt.<sup>1</sup> They also attended the Reformed confirmation classes of Jodocus van Lodenstein (1620–77), a pupil of Voetius, who became one of the leading figures of the ‘further Reformation.’ Philippus van Limborch (1633–1712), one of these students, wrote to his father about these visits. According to the later Arminian professor, both mainstays of the public Church received the young Arminians well. When, on leaving his house, they asked Van Lodenstein if their conversation had annoyed him, he said it hadn’t and even called the students ‘beloved’ and ‘agreeable.’<sup>2</sup> During an academic disputation in April 1654 Voetius’s colleague Hoornbeek gave Van Limborch the opportunity to attack Reformed doctrine, which he did by expounding on the 1629 Arminian *Apologia pro confessione*.<sup>3</sup> In this little story of Van Limborch’s study year at Utrecht university we observe that even during the apogee of the confessional state, leading members of the Dutch public Church entertained an open and liberal attitude towards ‘heretics’: people whose loss of faith was, according to conventional doctrine, a deadly sin.

The toleration practiced in the Dutch Republic seems not to be exceptional. Some historians have argued that de facto toleration was rather common in seventeenth-century Europe. In the introduction to their landmark volume *Difference and Dissent* Cary Nederman and Chris Laursen even state that “a considerable body of historical scholarship has established the sheer diversity of tolerant practices as well as theories throughout Europe before the late seventeenth century.”<sup>4</sup> They argue that this was nothing new at that time. As is well known, already in the Middle Ages Saint Thomas Aquinas had produced theological arguments for the toleration, in practice, of infidels and Jews. Only heretics and apostates he excluded from any toleration at all.<sup>5</sup> Hence,

1 P. J. Barnouw, *Philippus van Limborch* (The Hague, 1963), pp. 11–2 and Otto J. de Jong, ‘Voetius en de tolerantie,’ in: *De onbekende Voetius*, ed. J. van Oort et al., (Kampen, 1989), pp. 109–16.

2 Abraham des Amorie van der Hoeven, *De Joanne Clerico et Philippo a Limborch* (Amsterdam, 1843), p. 130: “Gij zijt mij lief en aengenaem.”

3 Des Amorie van der Hoeven, *De Joanne Clerico et Philippo a Limborch* (see above, n. 2), pp. 132–3.

4 Cary J. Nederman and John C. Laursen, ‘Introduction,’ in: *Difference and Dissent: Theories of Toleration in Medieval and Early Modern Europe*, ed. Cary J. Nederman and John C. Laursen (Lanham, Md., 1996), pp. 1–16, there 5.

5 Thomas Aquinas, *Summa Theologiae* 2.2.10.11: “Dicendum quod humanum regimen derivatur a divino regimine, et ipsum debet imitari. Deus autem, quamvis sit omnipotens et

Nederman and Laursen censure “the virtual consensus in the English-speaking world that the first true theoretical defence of tolerance was proposed by John Locke,” and that the publication of his *Epistola de Tolerantia* marked a fault line in the de facto history of tolerance.<sup>6</sup>

Indeed, the connotations of tolerance in Locke and his predecessors show a marked continuity. It should be noted that the main connotation of ‘tolerance’ in Locke’s letter is negative: the magistrate tolerates certain people with a particular religious belief if he refrains from using physical force against them, i.e., an action against the outward goods and bodies of those dissenters.<sup>7</sup> Moreover, persuasion in the classical rhetorical tradition is also a kind of force.<sup>8</sup> Finally, Locke’s position is substantially a Protestant one, banning atheists from society and denying Roman Catholics the right to exercise their religion freely. Laursen calls Spinoza’s position a more “thoroughly modern one,” as it is more universal.<sup>9</sup> He underlines the descriptive nature of Spinoza’s argument and, indeed, the actual practice in the Dutch Republic was far more tolerant than what Locke theoretically asked for in his *Epistola*. However, even Spinoza saw tolerance in a negative light, because it tends to lead to conflict and the destruction of peace, concord, and unity of mind (*unio animorum*) in the city.<sup>10</sup> To avoid these evils, which endangered society, the patricians should be of the same religion: “great conventicles”—of people who are not members of the public Church—“are to be forbidden” and the churches of “sects” should be small.<sup>11</sup>

Voetius, contrary to his reputation as an intolerant Calvinist hardliner—an adversary maliciously called him the “Pope of Utrecht”<sup>12</sup>—fully accepted the existing practices of tolerance in the Netherlands and elsewhere in Europe.

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summe bonus, permittit tamen aliqua mala fieri in universo, quae prohibere posset ... Sic ergo in regimine humano illi qui praesunt, recte aliqua mala tolerant etc.” Cf. K. Schreiner, ‘Toleranz,’ in: Otto Brunner et al., eds., *Geschichtliche Grundbegriffe: Historisches Lexikon zur politisch-sozialen Sprache in Deutschland*, 8 vols. (Stuttgart, 1972–97), 6: 457–8.

6 Nederman and Laursen, ‘Introduction,’ p. 2.

7 William Walker, ‘Force, Metaphor, and Persuasion in Locke’s *A Letter Concerning Toleration*,’ in: *Difference and Dissent*, ed. Nederman and Laursen (see above, n. 4), pp. 205–29, there 205–10; cf. Benjamin Kaplan, *Divided by Faith: Religious Conflict and the Practice of Toleration in Early Modern Europe* (Cambridge, Mass., 2007).

8 Walker, ‘Force, Metaphor, and Persuasion’ (see above, n. 4), pp. 210–29.

9 John C. Laursen, ‘Spinoza on Toleration: Arming the State and Reining in the Magistrate,’ in: *Difference and Dissent*, Nederman and Laursen, ed. (see above, n. 4), p. 195.

10 Benedictus de Spinoza, *Tractatus Politicus*, in: *Opera Posthuma* (s.l., 1677), pp. 265–354. (Hereafter cited as Spinoza, *TP*), 3.7 and 3.10. It should be noted that the word ‘tolerance’ is almost absent from Spinoza’s works. See J. I. Israel, ‘Tolerantia,’ in: *The Bloomsbury Companion to Spinoza* (hereafter cited as BC) (London, 2010), pp. 328–9.

11 Spinoza, *TP* (see above, n. 10), 8.46.

12 A. C. Duker, *Gisbertus Voetius*, 4 vols., (Leiden, 1915), 3: 74–7. He refers to Pierre du Moulin’s anonymous *Papa Ultrajectinus, seu, Mysterium iniquitatis reductum à clarissimo*

The United Provinces tolerated Roman Catholicism and Arminianism by not applying its “perpetual edicts against the free exercise of these false religions.”<sup>13</sup> Moreover, Voetius saw in this kind of *libertas religiosa* the cornerstone of “the Dutch confederation.”<sup>14</sup> He favorably contrasted it to the Roman-Spanish Inquisition, which subjected human conscience, which “recognized only God as its Lord,” to a human power.<sup>15</sup> This kind of religious freedom implied a full liberty of conscience and the toleration of every form of religion that a person privately practiced with his family and his servants.<sup>16</sup> Therefore: “our religion does not and does not want to suppress the liberty of conscience by slavery or tyranny.”<sup>17</sup> According to the Utrecht divine, the magistrate grants the right of religious freedom in this specific form to every citizen, but it has to be balanced with the duty to protect true religion.<sup>18</sup> Voetius acknowledged the *ius reformandi*, that is the right to choose the public religion and to determine the freedom or repression of other religious groups, which had been accorded to sovereign powers under the Union of Utrecht and under the peace treaties of Augsburg and Westphalia. Like Spinoza, however, he—not surprisingly—did not consider toleration to be a social or religious ideal.

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*viro Gisberto Voetio in opere Politiae ecclesiasticae* (London, 1668). See Douglas Nobbs, *Theocracy and Toleration* (Cambridge, 1938), p. 224.

- 13 Gisbertus Voetius, *Politica ecclesiastica*, 4 vols. (Amsterdam, 1663–74), 2: 385.
- 14 Voetius, *Politica ecclesiastica* (see above, n. 13), 2: 354–7. Religious freedom as the freedom of the church is dealt with in the first chapter of this treatise. Voetius distinguishes among seven grades of this freedom. The sixth is the freedom of the Dutch Republic, where the “state (*politia*) as principle and as rule (*in thesi et in genere*) grants a just and complete liberty and adopts the cause of religion and the church,” although politicians in fact limit this religious freedom.
- 15 Voetius, *Politica ecclesiastica* (see above, n. 13), 2: 401: “Huic coactioni conscientiae (quae tyrannidis in conscientias eique subservientis inquisitionis Romano-Hispanicae quod ad formam et modum agendi, non vero quod ad objectum, aemula dici potest), opponitur libertas conscientiae, in qua nulla potestas humana, sed sola divina imperium habet.”
- 16 Voetius, *Politica ecclesiastica* (see above, n. 13), 2: 380: “Est talis libertas conscientiae in foederato Belgio omnibus subditis et incolis concessa et perpetua praxi jam recepta.”
- 17 Gisbertus Voetius, *Selectae disputationes theologicae* (Utrecht, 1648–69), 2: 540: “libertatem conscientiarum nostra religio servitute aut tyrannide non premit et non premi vult.” Moreover, it does not subject the conscience to human writings and ecclesiastical tenets. Here and elsewhere Voetius identifies the liberty of conscience with the “*libertas prophetandi*.”
- 18 Voetius, *Politica ecclesiastica* (see above, n. 13), 2:387: “By divine order every magistrate is in conscience obliged to promote true religion, the church and its members.” According to Voetius and his contemporaries the freedom of conscience is by no means identical with the freedom of religion, as J. A. B. Jongeneel underlined in his ‘Voetius’ zendingstheologie, de eerste comprehensieve protestantse zendingstheologie,’ in: *De onbekende Voetius*, ed. Van Oort (see above, n. 1), pp. 118–9.

Notwithstanding the general practice of a certain tolerance in the confessional states of Europe at the end of the seventeenth century, the main connotation of the concept remained substantially negative. It was considered to be the persistence of a religious and social evil and, if possible, measures had to be taken to avoid its nasty consequences. In this respect, the differences among Voetius, Spinoza, and Locke in their assessments of the concept of tolerance are relatively small, certainly if compared with High Enlightenment ideas. In the conceptual history of tolerance—but not in its practices—we find a far-reaching change after Spinoza, that is: after 1700. This paradigm shift made ‘tolerance’ a virtue.

## 2 The Positive Connotation of Tolerance after 1700

In the *Lettres écrites de la montagne*, Rousseau observed that “the Protestant religion—being a free religion—is tolerant on principle. It is basically tolerant and as far as possible, because its only tenet is not tolerating intolerance.”<sup>19</sup> In his *Maximen und Reflexionen* Goethe rejects the word *Toleranz* by maintaining that “toleration should, strictly speaking, be only a passing mood; it ought to lead to acknowledgment and appreciation. To tolerate a person is to affront him.” Moreover, true religion implies that every Christian acknowledges that others think and express themselves “after their own fashion.”<sup>20</sup> Another example is the Halle luminary Johannes Salomo Semler, who created the slogan “Religion ist Privatsache.”<sup>21</sup> In 1776, more than a century after Lodewijk Meijer had written *Philosophia Sacrae Scripturae Interpres* (1666), Semler prepared Meijer’s work for publication. In his preface he rhetorically asks the reader why Christians persecuted and even burned so many heretical books, a practice so

19 Jean-Jacques Rousseau, ‘Lettres écrites de la montagne,’ in: id., *Collection complète des oeuvres*, 33 vols. (Geneva, 1782–89), 6: 283: “La Religion Protestante est tolérante par principe, elle est tolérante essentiellement; elle l’est autant qu’il est possible de l’être, puisque le seul dogme qu’elle ne tolere pas, est celui de l’intolérance.” This barrier separates the Reformation from Roman Catholicism, Rousseau continues, and in a footnote he adds that “De toutes les Sectes du Christianisme la Luthérienne me paroît la plus incon-séquente.” It is intolerant but does not know the reason for it. Quoted by Gerhard Besier, ‘Toleranz,’ in: *Geschichtliche Grundbegriffe* (see above, n. 5), 6, p. 501.

20 Johann Wolfgang von Goethe, *Maxims and Reflexions* (New York, 1906), 7: 356 and 522. Cf. Besier, ‘Toleranz’ (see above, n. 5), p. 505.

21 Gottfried Hornig, *Johann Salomo Semler: Studien zu Leben und Werk des Hallenser Aufklärungstheologen* (Tübingen, 1996), p. 180.

obviously at odds with the tolerance that is essential to Christianity.<sup>22</sup> In Kant's political philosophy Semler's idea of a private religion is transformed into the first principle of an ideal civil society, namely the idea that every citizen may seek his ultimate *Glückseligkeit* in his own way without interference from the state because a rational state is 'patriotic' and not 'paternal.'<sup>23</sup> Hence, the magistrate should no longer conceive of himself as a father and should stop treating its citizens like minors unable to think for themselves.

In all these texts we meet with a radically different conception of tolerance than before: now toleration has an utterly positive connotation, since it is basic to 'real religion' and 'enlightened society.' Without tolerance true religion is impossible; true religion necessarily implies tolerance and an enlightened society presupposes both virtues in its citizens. The three interlinked concepts formed a new 'political-theological' language, in which 'religion' is defined in terms of 'tolerance' and the other way round. Both are essential to a free society of civilized citizens. Discursive innovation, however, did not automatically transform social practice. In the Netherlands, for example, the end of the confessional state marked by the *Staatsregeling voor het Bataafsche Volk*,<sup>24</sup> its constitution, certainly did not imply the sudden end of discrimination against Jewish and Roman Catholic citizens in the new Batavian Republic (1795–1806), the Kingdom of Holland (1806–10), or even the United Kingdom of the Netherlands (1815–30).

We find a clear and significant example of the changed concept of religion adopted in the High Enlightenment period in the works of the towering figure of the German theologian and philosopher Friedrich Schleiermacher (1768–1834), who continued the reflections of Semler and Herder on this topic.<sup>25</sup> In his *On Religion* he observed that religion is essentially "contemplative" and therefore "neither a metaphysics, nor a morality." Since the early nineteenth century Schleiermacher's new concept of religion has been considered an "epochal innovation."<sup>26</sup> Schleiermacher adopted neither the approach which

22 Lodewijk Meijer, *Philosophia Sacrae Scripturae Interpres*, ed. J. S. Semler, (Halle, 1776) (hereafter cited as Meijer, *PSS1*), p. v. Further references to the first edition: 'Eleutheropoli' [=Amsterdam] 1666.

23 Immanuel Kant, 'Über den Gemeinspruch: Das mag in der Theorie richtig sein, taugt aber nicht für die Praxis,' in: id., *Gesammelte Schriften: Akademie Ausgabe*, 33 vols. (Berlin, 1900–55), 8: 290.

24 *Staatsregeling voor het Bataafsche volk*, (The Hague, 1798), articles 19–22, pp. 4–5. Article 20, for example, reads: "Geene burgerlijke voordeelen, of nadeelen, zijn aan de belijdenis van eenig Kerkelijk Leerstelsel gehegt."

25 Falk Wagner, *Was ist Religion? Studien zu ihrem Begriff und Thema in Geschichte und Gegenwart* (Gütersloh, 1986), p. 59.

26 Wagner, *Was ist Religion?* (see above, n. 25), pp. 59–60. Friedrich Schleiermacher, *On Religion: Speeches to Its Cultured Despisers*, (London, 1893), p. 36: "The contemplation of

based religion in a science of God, nor the Spinozan-Kantian view, which focused on morality. Instead he defined religion to be the “sense and taste for the Infinite,” implying that it is specifically an intuition and a feeling. “Religion is a direct relationship with the infinite”; “belief in God, is not necessarily a part of religion”; “one can conceive of a religion without God.”<sup>27</sup> According to this definition religion is not basically a form of specific knowledge but rather a sentiment that links humanity with the infinite whole of nature. We are unable therefore, to conceive of religion via a universal concept; it is necessarily a diverse phenomenon.<sup>28</sup> According to Schleiermacher, true religion always manifests itself in the existing religions of the world. He opposes general and abstract theological doctrines with religion, which is based on a personal sentiment and not on conformity with a particular creed.

This—High—Enlightenment discourse on tolerance and religion is in sharp contrast with political-religious languages of the seventeenth century. Although Voetius and his contemporary theologians and philosophers had in principle accepted existing religious policies and were well prepared to endure the diverse forms of religious life outside the Church backed by the state, they had all presumed the existence of only one true religion, concretely embodied in their own Church, which was necessary to maintain social order and peace. Such a religion was acquired by being taught its basic doctrine. The Reformed Church, for example, was a genuine religion because it was formally based on the Three Formularies of Unity approved by the Synod of Dordt and materially consisted of a body of propositions inferred from these creedal statements. The anecdote with which this chapter began may illustrate this. During their visits with Reformed leaders in Utrecht the Arminian students engaged in fierce debate in an effort to establish the truth of their doctrine. Both sides assumed the concept, dominant during the seventeenth century, of a religion that, like the results of a mathematical calculation, was the only true one, implying that all other religions were false.<sup>29</sup>

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the pious is the immediate consciousness of the universal existence of all finite things, in and through the Infinite.... Religion is to seek this and to find it in all that loves and moves.” “Morality always shows itself as self-manipulating, as self-controlling, piety appears and a surrender,” *ibid.*, p. 37.

27 Schleiermacher, *On Religion* (see above, n. 26), p. 39.

28 Wagner, *Was ist Religion?* (see above, n. 25), p. 68.

29 In *Politica ecclesiastica* (see above, n. 13), 2: 355 Voetius, no doubt sardonically, stated that in the period 1616–8 the Arminian regime of Utrecht granted only the most inferior form of religious liberty, the freedom of conscience, and denied its dissenters the *genuini reformati*, the freedom to exercise their religion, either in public or in private, within the city or outside its walls. This observation by the lifelong Utrecht controversialist should warn us against choosing without much ado a speaker of seventeenth-century political language as a predecessor of the modern discourse.

In the early modern period, according to Guy Stroumsa, a growing interest in other religions gave rise to a “new science” of religion. Due to the awareness of religion in the New World, traditional classifications were transformed. He calls this transformation a “paradigm shift” in the title of the first chapter of his book *New Science: The Discovery of Religion in the Age of Reason*. It implied the notion of “a basic plurality of religions” and a conceptualization that overcame “the limits of Christianity” and, I would like to add, the limits of one’s own confession.<sup>30</sup> Stroumsa hardly specifies the moment of this shift: I suggest ‘faultline 1700’ as a plausible turning point in a basically gradual development.

Since specific philosophical speculation about religion started only at the end of the Age of Enlightenment—the *Spätaufklärung*—with the rise of the philosophy of religion, one must consult indirect sources such as manuals, inaugural addresses, and dictionaries to assess the paradigm of religion that had prevailed in earlier periods. For the seventeenth century, reflections on religion by leading scholars in the Dutch Republic such as Voetius, Van Limborch, and Spinoza will be dealt with in the next section. They represent the whole spectrum of ideological positions extending from orthodoxy on the one hand to philosophical radicalism on the other. These authors may be used to reconstruct this paradigm, because, as Jonathan Israel underlined, seventeenth-century scholars acted and wrote as members of their institution, church, or legal body, not as independently thinking individuals.<sup>31</sup> The focus on the Dutch Republic is also justified by its being a trendsetter in its social and political structure and its openness to religious diversity due to commerce. In some of the original core provinces—Holland, Utrecht, and the western part of Friesland—several confessions coexisted side by side, although in a hierarchical order, and unlike its counterparts in the rest of Europe the government refrained from imposing a single confession on the entire population.<sup>32</sup> It seems plausible to assume that the paradigm shift from religion in the singular to religion in the plural revealed itself there first. Moreover, in the United Provinces curiosity about other religions was stimulated by all kinds of travelogues and journals telling of real and imagined voyages into non-European territories.<sup>33</sup>

30 Guy G. Stroumsa, *A New Science: The Discovery of Religion in the Age of Reason* (Cambridge, Mass., 2010), pp. 37–8.

31 Jonathan I. Israel, *Enlightenment Contested: Philosophy, Modernity and the Emancipation of Man (1657–1752)* (Oxford, 2006), p. 24.

32 Peter van Rooden, *Religieuze Regimes: Over godsdienst en maatschappij in Nederland, 1570–1990* (Amsterdam, 1996), pp. 21–3.

33 Michiel van Groesen, *The Representation of the Overseas World in the De Bry Collection of Voyages (1590–1634)* (Leiden, 2008); P. J. Buijnsters, *Imaginaire reisverhalen in Nederland in de 18e eeuw* (Groningen, 1969). The phrase ‘*voyage imaginaire*’ seems to have been created in 1745; according to Buijnsters, this genre served as an instrument to spread ideas of tolerance and reasonable religion. It flourished from 1709 onwards and suddenly disappeared

This culminated in the famous 1723 *Ceremonies and Customes of the Several Nations*, published in English, French, and Dutch.<sup>34</sup>

### 3 The 'Humanist' Paradigm of Religion: Religion in the Singular before 1700

In the entry 'Religion' in the *Historisches Wörterbuch der Philosophie*, the Roman Catholic theologian Ernst Feil resumes the thinking of the first volume of his conceptual history *Religio*. The word 'religion' in antiquity denoted the careful enactment of our obligations towards God. Christianity added the notion that such worship required a science of God, which implied that the only true religion is Christianity, because it is based upon direct divine revelation. Second, the consequence of this focus on true knowledge of the Deity was that 'religion,' with respect to other creeds and rituals such as those of Judaism, Islam, and paganism, is in principle never used. The followers of these creeds were called 'secta' and the whole of their rituals, practices, and rules 'lex.' All non-Christian religions were considered to be forms of superstition.<sup>35</sup> However, the author of the part of this section on 'religion' in the early modern period underlines "the transformation in meaning" brought about by humanism. A distinction was created between 'religion' in a broad sense, applying to all religions, and in a particular sense, referring to the one and only true religion. This attempt to differentiate between religion in a broad and in a proper sense, which enabled commentators to carry on the basics of the Christian paradigm, is a distinct feature of the humanist paradigm.<sup>36</sup> In the following section I will show that during the whole seventeenth century this paradigm still controlled

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after the 1795 Batavian revolution, when the genre apparently lost social relevance. *Ibid.*, p. 18.

34 Lynn Hunt, Margaret Jacob, and Wijnand Mijnhardt, *The Book that Changed Europe: Picart and Bernard's Religious Ceremonies of the World* (Cambridge, Mass., 2010), pp. 38–9: "Such books [travel books] provided the essential textual and visual sources for *Religious Ceremonies of the World*."

35 Ernst Feil, 'Religion: Vom Beginn der Neuzeit bis zur Frühaufklärung, §5 B,' in: Joachim Ritter and Karlfried Gründer eds., *Historisches Wörterbuch der Philosophie*, 13 vols., (Darmstadt, 1971–2007), 8: 646. The four volumes of his *Religio* (Göttingen: 1986–2007) have the following subtitles: *Band 1: Die Geschichte eines neuzeitlichen Grundbegriffs vom Frühchristentum bis zur Reformation*; *Band 2: Die Geschichte eines neuzeitlichen Grundbegriffs zwischen Reformation und Rationalismus (ca. 1540–1620)*; *Band 3: Die Geschichte eines neuzeitlichen Grundbegriffs im 17. und frühen 18. Jahrhundert*, and *Band 4: Die Geschichte eines neuzeitlichen Grundbegriffs im 18. und frühen 19. Jahrhundert*.

36 S. Lorenz, 'Religion: Vom Beginn der Neuzeit bis zur Frühaufklärung,' Ritter and Gründer, eds., *Historisches Wörterbuch der Philosophie* (see above, n. 35), 8: 645.

the minds of all scholars, by dealing with representatives of Reformed orthodoxy, heterodoxy, and philosophical radicalism.

#### 4 Reformed Orthodoxy: Voetius

In his voluminous works on theology and ecclesiastical politics Voetius rarely uses the word 'religion.' Yet several meanings can be distinguished in his writings. In a broad sense the word refers to all religions, for example in his discussions of Islam or Roman Catholicism or his observation that the frequent change of religion causes atheism.<sup>37</sup> In a more proper sense he opposes the unique 'true religion' to other, false religions, which, in fact are not real religions at all because they cannot bring salvation. For the truth of religion proof can be given, and rational argument easily exposes the falsity of other presumed religions.<sup>38</sup> The object of religion is God; knowledge of him will lead to true acts of worship. Voetius opposes true religion to irreligion and unbelief on the one hand, and to superstition and magic on the other. All these forms of false religion are based on an incorrect knowledge of God and the false cult that thus ensues.<sup>39</sup>

Voetius basically reproduces Calvin's ideas here. The French reformer had underlined the objective and cognitive nature of religion, with its foundation in the knowledge of God, and had observed that true religion should conform to "the perpetual will of God, who is always identical with himself and therefore God is not a spectre or phantasm, which may change according to the fancy of every individual." By imagining ourselves a God, we revolt against the

37 'De atheismo,' in: Gisbertus Voetius, *Selectae disputationes theologicae* (see above, n. 17), 1: 128: "crebra religionis mutatio et transitus de secta in sectam." According to Voetius the phenomenon that atheism is caused by frequent religious changes is to be observed with Mennonites, spiritualists, and in particular "those who defect from Christianity to Mohammedanism, or Judaism" and "qui in vera religione apud nos educati" like dogs returning to their vomit. Feil, *Religio* (see above, n. 35), 3: 46–57, unfortunately deals only with Hoornbeek, Voetius's junior colleague, as a representative of Reformed orthodoxy and not with Voetius himself.

38 Voetius, *Politica ecclesiastica* (see above, n. 13), 4: 335: "per rationes refutandi falsam religionem et theologiam." Voetius here quotes Aquinas's *Summa contra gentiles* 1. 9.

39 Voetius, *Selectae disputationes theologicae* (see above, n. 17), 4: 778: "an actus religionis recte distinguatur in interiorem et exteriorem; ad illum referantur orationes mentales et meditationes; ad istum vero sacrificia, primitiae, decimae, laudes Dei seu cantus spirituales? Aff."

true God.<sup>40</sup> So “we may decide with Lactantius, that there is no legitimate religion unconnected with truth.”<sup>41</sup> However, according to Calvin, religion consists not only of barren speculation but also knowledge, which implies the worship of God.<sup>42</sup> There is only one pure and genuine religion, which is different from all forms of superstition, and it consists in *eusebeia*, that is, right worship, as the Greeks already surmised. There should be “a certain rule, because otherwise He would be worshipped wrongly.”<sup>43</sup> Although Calvin accepts the idea that religion is theoretically universal—“since experience testifies that God sowed the seed of religion in all men”—in historical reality there is only one real religion, since outside the true Church religion did “not ripen” and had degenerated into superstition.<sup>44</sup>

In its strictest sense Voetius identifies religion with the Reformation and its church. This real religion is different from other forms of Christianity such as ‘popery,’ Lutheranism, and the sects established after the Reformation. This religion is constituted primarily by a particular doctrine laid down in a confession and a catechism, secondarily by a particular social order (*politia*), and in a tertiary sense by well-described rites and ceremonies (*cultus*).<sup>45</sup> In Voetius’s

40 Jean Calvin, *Institutio religionis Christianae*, (Geneva, 1602) 1.4.3, p. 5: “Sed non animadvertunt, veram religionem ad Dei nutum ceu ad perpetuum regulam debere confirmari.” Imagining God, mankind established mendacious cults. If we do not know God, we are unable to serve him. However, Calvin assumes that speculative knowledge of God is insufficient. “En quid sit pura germanaque religio, nempe fides cum serio timore Dei coniuncta, ut timor et voluntariam reverentiam in se contineat et secum trahat legitimum cultum, qualis in Lege praescribitur” (Pure and genuine religion is faith combined with serious fear of God, in order that such fear implies a willing reverence of God and leads to the legitimate cult prescribed in the divine law), *ibid.* 1.2.2, p. 4.

41 Calvin, *Institutio* (see above, n. 40), 4.3, pp. 5–6: “Superest ergo ut cum Lactantio constituamus, nullam esse legitimam religionem nisi cum veritate coniunctam.”

42 Calvin, *Institutio* (see above, n. 40), 1.12.1, p. 29: “Diximus autem Dei notitiam non esse positam in frigida speculatione, sed secum trahere cultum eius.”

43 Calvin, *Institutio* (see above, n. 40), 1.12.1, p. 30: “semper caeci ipsi [the Greeks] in tenebris palpando senserunt tenendam certam regulam, ne praepostere colatur Deus.” See Feil, *Religio* (see above, n. 35), 1: 258–63.

44 Calvin, *Institutio* (see above, n. 40), 1.4.1, p. 5: “omnibus inditum esse divinitus religionis semen experientia testatur ... alii evanescent in suis superstitionibus ... omnes tamen degenerant a vera eius notitia.”

45 Voetius, ‘De praediciis verae religionis,’ in: *Selectae disputationes theologicae* (see above, n. 17), 2: 542: “religionem et veram ecclesiam appellamus tum protestanticam tum reformatam stricte ita dictam.... Hujus ecclesiae et religionis considera 1. formam et statum. 2. ortum et progressum. 1. Status religionis atque ecclesiae nostrae circumscribitur formulis et adjunctis quibusdam. Formulae describunt vel doctrinam catechesibus et confessionibus expresssam, vel politiam et ritus.” The disputation was held 3 September 1642.

view the cognitive element of religion clearly prevails over its moral and social aspects.

Although there is only one true religion, Voetius does not deny the obvious facts of history in this regard: namely, the diversity of the churches and the development of Christianity. He observes that a historical phenomenon may be in agreement with 'our' true religion or oppose it. Apparently, other reform movements in the Middle Ages, such as the Waldenses and the Hussites, preceded the true church of the Reformation. They had clearly continued the church of the Fathers and had shared the fundamentals of its creed. According to Voetius the identity of the Reformed churches in various countries appears empirically due to their common doctrine and enemies.<sup>46</sup> However, true churches may differ in cult and organisation (*politia*). In sum, it is obvious that according to Voetius there is only one religion, the others are pseudo-religions, and this genuine religion—*religio nostra*—is identical with the Reformed Church. Its truth stems from the truth of its constituting knowledge of God.

## 5 Reformed Heterodoxy: Vossius

The orthodox theologian Voetius stands in a long tradition of identifying one's own form of Christianity with the only true religion, but so do 'heterodox' scholars such as the humanist scholar Gerardus Vossius (1577–1649) and Van Limborch as well. Apparently, both thought within the 'humanist paradigm' of religion. This conceptual framework is adopted in Vossius's encyclopaedic work on religion, the *De Theologia gentili* (1642), according to a modern biographer his "greatest work."<sup>47</sup> In this study Vossius, who due to his sympathy with the Arminian cause was dismissed after the Synod of Dordt as principal of the Staten College, a training institute for Reformed ministers at Leiden University, and who in 1632 became professor of history at the new Illustrious School of Amsterdam, collected all the mythological material known to him and attempted to provide a 'history' of religion. According to the Dutch scholar, 'true religion' is constituted both by the true knowledge of the true God and the

46 Voetius, *Selectae disputationes theologicae* (see above, n. 17), 2: 542–3: "Adjuncta religionis ... sunt partim antecedentia, partim concomitantia, vel opposita. Illa sunt praeludia sive praeambula reformationis ... Ista sint convenientia cum ecclesiae antiquae in fundamentalibus: unde resultat ipsius antiquitas, catholicismus, successio. Unitas, concordia ... Amplitudo ... Propagatio et plantatio ... Zelus et oppositio valida adversus omnes haereses ... Testimonium adversariorum ... Zelus in urgenda doctrina et praxi bonorum operum ... Convenientia cum politis et magistratibus."

47 N. G. J. Wickenden, *G. J. Vossius and the Humanist Concept of History* (Assen, 1993), p. 30.

correct worship of the true God which such knowledge produces.<sup>48</sup> It maintains the golden mean between irreligion and superstition or idolatry. For this notion Vossius refers to the Bible, Plutarch, and some of the Fathers. However, although pagan religion and idolatry are false, their object may well be correct: the true God. In that case pagan religion errs only in the act of knowing and worshipping.<sup>49</sup> The causes of idolatry are natural ones, and this explains why even false religion may have a divine origin, since God reveals himself not only in Scripture but also in nature and history. Therefore, the conviction that there is only one true religion did not prevent the study of religion's 'defective' forms.<sup>50</sup>

## 6 Van Limborch

Van Limborch adopts the same framework. In his famous 1687 *De veritate religionis Christianae amica collatio cum erudito Judaeo* (Friendly conversation about Christian religion with a learned Jew) the Arminian professor Van Limborch systematically avoids using the words 'Jewish' or 'Muslim' in combination with 'religion.' He refers to these 'false' religions by the traditional designation of *secta*.<sup>51</sup> Like Voetius, he acknowledges that true religion is based upon true doctrine. In his main work, his outline of Christian doctrine *Theologia Christiana* (1686), Van Limborch defines religion as the object of theology, the true science of God. He describes religion as the "right way or method of both knowing and serving the true God, in the firm hope of obtaining a reward from Him. It therefore comprehends the duties of love, fear, faith, hope and obedience."<sup>52</sup> The difference between religion and theology, however, is

48 Gerard Johannes Vossius, *De theologia gentili et physiologia christiana, sive ad veterum gesta ac rerum naturam reductae*, (Amsterdam, 1641), 1.3, p. 16: "adumbravimus ea, ad quae lumine naturae potuit pervenire, tum in cognitione Dei, tum in cultu ejus, in quibus duobus religio consistit." Referring to Titus 1,2 he specifies his definition of religion by observing that "this acknowledgement of his truth," is of a practical nature, being "after piety and leading to the hope of eternal life."

49 Vossius, *De theologia gentili* (see above, n. 48), 1.3, p. 21: "Hujusmodi tamen idololatria, ubi non objecto, sed solo in actu peccatur non proprie sed, ut dixi tralatitiae idololatria vocatur."

50 Wickenden, *G. J. Vossius* (see above, n. 47), pp. 28–9.

51 Philippus van Limborch, *De veritate religionis christianae amica collatio cum erudito Judaeo* (Gouda, 1687), pp. 28–9. See Feil, *Religio* (see above, n. 35), 3: 62–3.

52 Philippus van Limborch, *Theologia christiana ad praxin pietatis ac promotionem pacis christianae unice directa* (Amsterdam, 1686), 1.1, p. 2: "Religio quam Theologiae objectum diximus, est recta verum Deum cognoscendi et colendi ratio, sub certa spe remunerationis ab ipso obtinendae, complectiturque in se amorem, timorem, fidem, spem ac obedientiam."

small, because the foundation of religion is the knowledge of God's existence. An inquiry into the nature of divine worship would be pointless if God does not exist. Although this knowledge of God may well be acquired by natural means—here Van Limborch refers to the usual philosophical arguments for God's existence—the only norm or rule of religion is Scripture. The knowledge of God acquired by natural means is very weak and is full of errors. It obviously lacks clearness and distinctness.<sup>53</sup> Like Voetius, Van Limborch sees the main parts of religion to be correct knowledge and the true worship of God following from this true knowledge. The polity as the third part of 'our religion' is not mentioned, but the proper structure of the Church is dealt with in the seventh and last book of *Theologia Christiana*. Unlike Voetius in his main theological work Van Limborch does not deal with any other religion, be it Roman Catholicism, Judaism, or Islam. However, Van Limborch, obviously, adhered to the traditional conceptualization of religion and focused on the knowledge of the Divine in defining religion.

## 7 Radical Cartesians on Religion

Unlike Voetius and Van Limborch, most radical Cartesians did not represent a church or a religious group. A boundless rationalism seems peculiar to their reflections on religion, and they tended to deny the need for any revelation. Notwithstanding these particularities, philosophical radicals remained within the humanist paradigm of religion.

The 'moderate' Cartesian philosopher Johannes De Raey, for example, saw a direct parallel between the hermeneutical rationalism of Meijer's *Philosophiae Sacrae Scripturae Interpres* and the theological rationalism of the Franeker professor of philosophy and theology Herman Alexander Röell, who, being a professor, spoke on behalf of his university and his church.<sup>54</sup> In his inaugural address *De religione rationali*, delivered on 17 June 1686, Röell defined reason as "the most supreme gift of God," by which the mind is conscious of itself and all other things. Moreover, reason is also the faculty of reasoning, which orders ideas representing the various things in a series of *modi cogitandi*, which "infers the unknown from the more known, the obscure from the more clear and

53 Van Limborch, *Theologia christiana* (see above, n. 51), 1.2, p. 6: "Scientia Dei, quam ex natura haurimus, admodum debilis est, multisque erroribus obruta, ut patet in Ethnicis, docetque tantum in genere esse Deum ... non autem distincte."

54 Johannes de Raey, 'Epistola ad virum celeberrimum theologum in sua de litibus Franekeranis dissertatione,' in: id., *Cogitata de interpretatione, quibus de natura humani sermonis et illius rectus usus tum in communi vita et disciplinis ad usum vitae spectantibus, tum in philosophia ... vindicantur* (Amsterdam, 1692), pp. 661–8.

conclusions from their premises.”<sup>55</sup> The geometrical order governing all ideas rests upon common notions, which make us discern universal truth in the sciences and in morality. God has impressed these innate common notions on the human mind, and together they contain “all science, all wisdom and all seeds of virtue.” Without them no knowledge is possible.<sup>56</sup>

In *Dissertatio de religione rationali* Röell applied his Cartesian epistemology to our knowledge of God and consequently to religion. He defines true religion as consisting of an actual redemptive knowledge of God, which implies a true worship of God.<sup>57</sup> Hence, his Franeker colleague and main adversary Ulricus Huber angrily wrote that Röell had merged philosophy and theology, and had made reason “the unique principle of Christian truth” and the necessary precondition for interpreting “the divine word.”<sup>58</sup>

Twenty years before Röell, Meijer had developed a comparable theological rationalism. After four hermeneutical chapters in the *Interpres*, Meijer defined philosophy in chapter 5. He observed that philosophy is certain and true knowledge, which reason “discovers in the most certain Light of Truth.”<sup>59</sup> In my translation the nouns in “the Light of Truth” are given capitals; this Light is clearly divine. According to Meijer the source of all knowledge is God, which is to say, in scholastic terms, that God is its principal cause. He continues by observing that the human intellect is the secondary, remote, or instrumental cause of philosophical knowledge. Although the Amsterdam man of letters speaks the language of scholasticism here, he gives it a Cartesian twist. According to Meijer, human reason is capable of acquiring full knowledge of the essences of things and all the properties they necessarily imply if it carefully proceeds from the simplest and best-known truths to the more complicated and less obvious ones in accordance with the true method to guide the intellect. The power of reason to know the essences or natures of things, both in physics and metaphysics, the “choir of the mathematical disciplines” clearly shows.<sup>60</sup> A few years before, Meijer had already propagated the notion that

55 Herman Alexander Röell, *Dissertatio de religione rationali*, 4th ed., (Franeker, 1700), § 13, p. 14.

56 Röell, *Dissertatio de religione rationali*, § 26, p. 23.

57 Röell, *Dissertatio de religione rationali*, § 5, p. 6: “sola salutaris esse religio potest, quae vera, ea vera in qua est gloriae et virtutum divinarum agnitio, amor, celebratio. Talem deum agnoscere, amare, laudare ac colere ... vera proculdubio religio est.” Hence there is a “cultus Dei verus et rationalis.”

58 Ulricus Huber, *De Concursu rationis et Sacrae Scripturae Liber* (Franeker, 1686), pp. xx5r and ††4r. The immediate occasion for writing this pamphlet, which started an acrimonious controversy, were disputations in the fall of 1686 defended by two pupils of Röell.

59 Meijer, *PSSI* (see above, n. 22), p. 40.

60 Meijer, *PSSI* (see above, n. 22), p. 42: “secundum veram intellectum dirigendi methodum procedat.”

mathematics is the example that philosophy—and ‘theology’—should follow in order to become a science.<sup>61</sup> In the appendix of *Ethics* I Spinoza shared this idea, stating about teleology that “such a doctrine might well have sufficed to conceal the truth from the human race for all eternity, if mathematics had not furnished another standard of verity in considering solely the essence and properties of figures without regard to their final causes.”<sup>62</sup> Moreover, Meijer hints at the notion that true method consists in observing the logical hierarchy governing essences. Apparently, the idea was taken from the *Tractatus de intellectus emendatione*, where in section 38, for example, Spinoza says that the logical order of two ideas is identical with the order of the “formal essences of those ideas.”<sup>63</sup>

Moreover, man knows that he knows, for every clear and distinct perception causes in us the consciousness of it. Hence God is not only the cause of all knowledge in an objective but in a subjective sense. God causes all our convictions, including faith, via clear and distinct perceptions and, therefore, via our intellect.<sup>64</sup> Meijer concludes that both as knowledge and as an instrument to lead humanity to faith, revealed or supernatural theology is superfluous.<sup>65</sup>

Of these notions, *conscientia*, in its double meaning of conscience and consciousness, became the most prominent idea in second-generation Cartesian epistemology. Lambertus van Velthuijsen, for example, called it a gift of God, because of its indispensable moral and epistemological functions. It leads virtuous men to “tranquillity of mind” and constancy in the face of fate.<sup>66</sup> Moreover, consciousness is a precondition of knowledge. All knowledge requires that someone who knows, the Utrecht scholar observed, knows that he knows. In a philosophical disputation in 1689 Andreas Diosi, a Hungarian pupil of Röell, even directly linked consciousness to God, observing that true knowledge is possible because it is, in a literal sense, knowing with the help

61 Meijer, *PSSI* (see above, n. 22), pp. \*2r–\*3r.

62 Benedictus de Spinoza, *Opera posthuma* (see above, n. 10), p. 35: “quae sane unica fuisset causa, ut veritas humanum genus in aeternum lateret, nisi Mathesis, quae non circa fines; sed tantum circa figurarum essentias, et proprietates versatur, aliam veritatis normam hominibus ostendisset.”

63 Spinoza, *Opera posthuma* (see above, n. 10), p. 368.

64 Meijer, *PSSI* (see above, n. 22), p. 43: “quoniam est nulla clara et distincta perceptio, quae non intime sui conscientiam in nobis gignere possit, et cum omnis clarae et distinctae perceptionis Deus causa sit, etiam hujus intimae conscientiae causa erit, cumque haec conscientia rem perceptam veram esse nobis indubie persuadeat, ... non immerito ... Dei seu Spiritus Sancti ... testimonium ... appellari poterit.”

65 Meijer, *PSSI* (see above, n. 22), pp. 43–4.

66 Lambertus van Velthuijsen, *Opera omnia*, 2 vols (Rotterdam, 1680), 1, p. \*2: “conscientiam quem immediate a Deo immortali accipimus.”

of God: *con-scientia*.<sup>67</sup> This notion reinforces the Cartesian identification of philosophy with ‘the science of God’ and consequently with religion, because this knowledge necessarily entails moral consequences and creates ultimate human bliss. However, although Cartesianism transformed theology, it did not affect the concept of religion. Based on reason, religion more than ever remained a unique body of truths which guided mankind to real happiness, whereas other faiths had been relegated to the sphere of error and superstition.

## 8 Spinoza on Religion

Like Voetius, Spinoza used the term ‘religion’ in a manifold sense. However, the philosopher’s ideas on religion are more disparate. It is hard to reconcile his ideal of a ‘scientific’ religion based upon reason, as developed in the *Ethics*, with the religion leading “the ignorant to salvation” (Matheron)—that is, which had to guide the lives of the rest of the population. In the *Ethics* he uses the word in a strict sense and it is defined along traditional lines, focusing on the true knowledge of God. In *Ethics* IV, proposition 37 Spinoza observes: “whatever we desire and do, whereof we are the cause insofar as we have the idea of God, that is insofar we know God.”<sup>68</sup> According to this definition, divine knowledge has direct moral implications—obviously the Latin *quatenus* has a causal meaning here—and results in certain desires and actions. Religion therefore is put on a level with true life and piety and is part of *fortitudo*, the force of the knowing mind, which takes passive affects and makes them active. This philosophical religion is without ceremonies and without a church, but it implies a political community, because the ‘true life’ of the religious man is a social life, as is obvious from the appendix of *Ethics* 4. Like Meijer, Spinoza thought that ‘philosophers’ acquire this form of religion wholly by natural means, that is to say without revelation.<sup>69</sup>

67 Andreas Diosi, *Disputatio philosophica de conscientia* (Franeker, 1689), p. 5. Cf. Jacob van Sluis, *Herman Alexander Röell* (Leeuwarden, 1988), pp. 148–50.

68 Spinoza, *Opera posthuma* (see above, n. 10), p. 192; “quicquid cupimus et agimus, cujus causa sumus quatenus Dei habemus ideam sive quatenus Deum cognoscimus, ad religionem refero.” Cf. Alexander Samely, *Spinozas Theorie der Religion* (Würzburg, 1993), p. 59 and Paul C. Juffermans, “Religio,” in: BC (see above, n. 10), pp. 301–2. He there summarizes chapter 6 of his *Drie perspectieven op religie in het denken van Spinoza* (Budel, 2003).

69 For Röell, however, revelation is necessary due to man’s innate ignorance and impiety, *Dissertatio de religione rationali* (see above, n. 55), § 161, pp. 179–80. Without the “Batavian tube” of Scripture the pagans are hardly able to be aware of “rational religion and true piety and virtue” (§ 150, p. 164). Of this deplorable fact the modern atheism of Spinoza and his followers gives evidence, as do the “West Indians” inhabiting “New France” and

In the *Tractatus theologico-politicus* 'religion' is used in a broader sense. It is still a unique phenomenon and refers to a 'universal or catholic' religion. Such a religion is within the reach of all men. In the preface of this work Spinoza states one of his objectives: "In order that I might know from Scripture whether the human heart and understanding were naturally corrupt, I proceeded to inquire whether the universal Catholic system of religion, or the Divine law propounded by the prophets and apostles to the whole human race, was different from the religion which the light of nature teaches?"<sup>70</sup> To answer this question Spinoza undertook a scrupulous investigation of the Bible.<sup>71</sup> In chapter 14 he presents as the outcome of his hermeneutical research a *credo minimum*, which consists of some "fundamentals of faith," or "fundamentals and dogmas of Scripture," as Spinoza called it.<sup>72</sup> Other authors such as Locke, Voetius, and Van Velthuisen use the more current term 'article of faith,' which is defined in the lexicon of Micraelius as "a peculiar tenet of doctrine contained in the Word of God, which is put before the Christians to believe in order to acquire salvation."<sup>73</sup> Theologians used these notions in a different sense in the seventeenth century, but both conceptions defined religion in terms of divine knowledge, elaborated in a set of propositions, which is essential to our ability to lead a moral life. According to Bordoli, Spinoza apparently combined the Protestant belief in the self-sufficiency of the Bible with the 'irenic' tendency to reduce the number of articles to a bare minimum, which "cannot give rise to controversy among good men."<sup>74</sup> Spinoza enumerates seven basic dogmas—Locke and Van Velthuisen give only one. Five of these are of a theo-

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the peoples near the Ganges who are without any grasp of God's existence and His real worship. Moreover, the Chinese, the Malabri, and the Peruvians, for example, worship the sun and the moon. Elsewhere there is the cult of animals (§ 152, p. 170). Reason proves the divinity of Scripture and so, indirectly, the rationality of the mysteries of faith, which are in themselves above reason. See Van Sluis, *Herman Alexander Röell* (see above, n. 67), pp. 56–8.

70 [Benedictus de Spinoza], *Tractatus theologico-politicus* (Amsterdam, 1670) (hereafter cited as Spinoza, *TTP*): p. [\*5v]: "Porro, ut scirem, num ex Scriptura concludi posset, humanum intellectum naturâ corruptum esse, inquirere volui, num Religio catholica, sive lex divina per Prophetas & Apostolos universo humano generi revelata alia fuerit, quam illa, quam etiam lumen naturale docet?" I corrected the Wallis version, available online, which curiously translated *Religio catholica* as "Roman Catholic religion."

71 See for example Susan James, *Spinoza on Philosophy, Religion and Politics. The Theologico-Political Treatise* (Oxford, 2012), chapters 6–8.

72 Spinoza, *TTP* (see above, n. 70), c. 14, pp. 163–4.

73 Johannes Micraelius, 'Articulus fidei,' in: *Lexicon philosophicum terminorum philosophis usitatorum* (Stettin, 1662), p. 177.

74 Spinoza, *TTP* (see above, n. 70), c. 14: p. 163: "hinc sequitur, ad fidem catholicam, sive universalem nulla dogmata pertinere, de quibus inter honestos potest dari controversia," see Roberto Bordoli, 'Fundamenta fidei,' in: BC (see above, n. 10).

retical nature. The universal religion requires the acceptance of the notions of God's existence, unity, omnipresence, omnipotence, and His preparedness to forgive the sins of all those who repent. Spinoza, therefore, maintains that true religion is founded on knowledge and superstition on ignorance.<sup>75</sup>

However, to make religion really 'universal' Spinoza transforms—and reduces—the role of religious knowledge and identifies religion with morality. Here he anticipates the new eighteenth-century paradigm of religion. At the end of chapter 18 Spinoza resumes his argument: "To avoid such evils in a state, there is no safer way than to make piety and religion to consist in acts only—that is, in the practice of justice and charity, leaving everyone's judgment in other respects free." In chapter 14 Spinoza makes the truth of religious knowledge dependent on the right actions it gives rise to. He writes: "Faith consists in knowledge of God, without which obedience to him would be impossible, and which the mere fact of obedience to Him implies," and "Faith is not salutary in itself, but only in respect to the obedience it implies." Apparently, religion consists of a simple moral practice, which is to live in justice and charity. This implies among other things the defence of the law, relief for the poor, and prohibitions on killing other people and coveting another's property.<sup>76</sup> Along with Hobbes in his definition of religion, Spinoza returns here, behind the Christian paradigm, back to Cicero's ritualistic notion, and in the *Tractatus* the adverbial form of 'religion'—*religiose* or even *religiosissime*—is frequently used to denote the way that different kinds of persons complied with a specific ritual, law, or ceremony, for example circumcision.<sup>77</sup>

What is more: religion is universal due to its simplicity, as is the 'natural' religion of the eighteenth century. That is why every person not blinded by prejudices and passions and able to interpret the divine word freely will easily understand the universal religion. To know God in a proper way does not require philosophical speculation or other forms of science.

The ritualistic connotation leads to the third meaning of religion. In this even wider sense religion is a historically established national institution prevailing in a specific society. Men in the state of nature, Spinoza maintains,

75 Spinoza, *Opera Posthuma* (see above, n. 10), ep. 21 (dated 1 December 1675), pp. 449–50: "Hoc tantum hic addo me inter religionem et superstitionem hanc praecipuam agnoscere differentiam, quod haec ignorantiam, illa autem sapientiam pro fundamento habeat" (in modern editions Letter 73).

76 Spinoza, *TTP* (see above, n. 70), c. 12, p. 151: "Videlicet justitiam defendere, inopi auxilio esse, neminem occidere, nihil alterius concupiscere &c."

77 Thomas Hobbes, *De homine*, c. 14, in: id., *Opera philosophica qui Latine scripsit omnia* (London 1839), p. 119: "hominum, qui Deum sincere honorant, cultus externus." See Spinoza, *TTP* (see above, n. 70), c. 3, pp. 49, 62, 65, 66, 67, c. 8, 124, c. 9, 141, c. 12, 163, and c. 16, 217.

live without religion in this sense,<sup>78</sup> and Spinoza observed that a lawgiver creates a particular religion in order to form a specific society. For example, it was Moses who, due to his power and by divine order, introduced the Hebrew religion.<sup>79</sup> Unlike the apostles, the prophets preached religion as basically a law for a nation.<sup>80</sup> It is an instrument of power, demonstrated for example when the Spanish king forced the Jews to adopt the religion of his kingdom.<sup>81</sup> Here Spinoza identifies religion with a political law, which requires obedience to God and to the authorities who deem themselves qualified to interpret his word. Religion acquires the force of law by decree of the sovereign; before revelation, Spinoza observes, there is no divine law that a man has to obey.<sup>82</sup> Social reasons, according to the *Political Treatise*, account for why all patricians must share the same religion.<sup>83</sup>

This third notion of religion seems hard to reconcile with the previous conceptions, which, as Spinoza observed, are “inscribed in all human hearts.”<sup>84</sup> In annotation 34 Spinoza stated that the third notion of a particular religion belongs to the first kind of knowledge, because the concept of a God who gives laws is an imaginative fiction that requires the notion of the will of princes who give laws. Reason, however, conceives of the divine nature as it is, without

78 Spinoza, *TTP* (see above, n. 70), c. 16, p. 184: “Et ideo status naturalis cum statu religionis minime confundendus, sed absque religione & lege ... concipiendus.” For this section see Ernst Feil, ‘Benedictus de Spinoza’ in: *Religio* (see above, n. 35), 3, pp. 418–23.

79 Spinoza, *TTP* (see above, n. 70), c. 5, p. 61: “Hac igitur de causâ Moses virtute, & jussu divino religionem in Rempublicam introduxit, ut populus non tam ex metu, quam devotione suum officium faceret.”

80 Spinoza, *TTP* (see above, n. 70), c. 12, p. 149: “videlicet quia ante adventum Christi Prophetæ religionem prædicare solebant, tanquam legem Patriæ, & ex vi pacti tempore Mosis initi; post adventum autem Christi eandem tanquam legem catholicam, & ex sola vi passionis Christi omnibus prædicaverunt Apostoli.” Hence, unlike Judaism, the New Testament religion is universal.

81 Spinoza, *TTP* (see above, n. 70), c. 3, p. 42: “Rex Hispaniæ olim Judæos coegit Regni religionem admittere.”

82 Spinoza, *TTP* (see above, n. 70), c. 19, pp. 214–5: “Religionem vim juris accipere ex solo eorum decreto, qui jus imperandi habent; & Deum nullum singulare regnum in homines habere, nisi per eos, qui imperium tenent, & præterea quod Religionis cultus, & pietatis exercitium Reipublicæ paci, & utilitati accommodari, & consequenter a solis summis potestatibus determinari debet quæque adeo ejus etiam interpretes debent esse.” This power Spinoza some lines earlier identified with the traditional Reformed “hoc jus, circa sacra summis potestatibus competere.”

83 Spinoza, *TP* (see above, n. 70), 8.46, p. 339. It is, however, inconsistent with his argument that Spinoza calls this religion of the *regents* the most simple and universal (*catholica*).

84 Spinoza, *TTP* (see above, n. 70), c. 12, p. 144: “Nam tam ipsa ratio, quam Prophetarum & Apostolorum sententiæ apertè clamant Dei æternum verbum & pactum, veramque religionem hominum cordibus, hoc est, humanæ menti divinitus inscriptam esse.”

will or intellect.<sup>85</sup> Led by reason we can love God, but we cannot obey his will. Spinoza reconciles the religion of reason with the religion established within a political society by making a clear-cut distinction between inward and external worship. External worship belongs to the third form of religion and is created by the imagination. It includes ceremonies and rites, which are in no way relevant to our real happiness and have a social function only. The worship practiced in inward religion is defined as “the means by which the mind is inwardly led to do homage to God in singleness of heart.”<sup>86</sup> This inward religion is simple and consists of “truth of character,” not specific actions.<sup>87</sup> Moreover, the distinction between inner and outward religion enables Spinoza to dissociate his view from the tenets of Roman Catholicism, which, as Spinoza observed, makes “the pope the interpreter of the divine law”: even if, in his view, the prince is the interpreter of the divine law as well, he may arrogate this authority only with respect to outward religion. In inward religion every man is “of his own right” and is fully entitled to believe whatever his reason tells him to.<sup>88</sup>

Although Spinoza loosened the relation between real religion and a particular confession in this manner, and severed the link between theology and faith, his objective approach towards religion and his focus on the knowledge of God in his main definition of religion kept him within the humanist paradigm. On the broader level of universal religion, he singled out a true religion and called

85 Christophorus Theophilus de Murr, *Benedicti de Spinoza Annotationes ad Tractatum theologico-politicum* (The Hague, 1802), pp. 41–2: “Amor enim Dei non obedientia sed virtus est, quae homini, qui Deum recte novit necessario inest. At obedientia voluntatem imperantis non rei necessitatem respicit et veritatem.... nequaquam nisi ex voluntate scire possumus, an Deus aliquo honore coli velit ab hominibus tamquam princeps.... Ex rationis ductu igitur Deum quidem amare, sed non obedire ei possumus.”

86 Spinoza, *TTP* (see above, n. 70), c. 19, p. 218: “cultum religionis externum, & omne pietatis exercitium reipublicae paci, & conservationi debere accommodari, si recte Deo obtemperare velimus,” and p. 215, “non autem de ipsa pietate, & Dei interno cultu, sive mediis, quibus mens interne disponitur ad Deum integritate animi colendum; internus enim Dei cultus, & ipsa pietas uniuscujusque juris est (ut in fine Cap. VII. ostendimus), quod in alium transferri non potest.” See Juffermans, *Drie perspectieven op religie* (see above, n. 86), pp. 418–23.

87 Spinoza, *TTP* (see above, n. 70), c. 7, pp. 102–3: “At Religionis longe alia est ratio. Nam quandoquidem ipsa non tam in actionibus externis, quam in animi simplicitate & veracitate consistit, nullius juris neque autoritatis publicae est. Animi enim simplicitas & veracitas non imperio legum, neque autoritate publica hominibus infunditur ... Cum igitur summum jus liberè sentiendi, etiam de Religione, penes unumquemque sit.” Cf. Spinoza, *TP* (see above, n. 70), 2.22. Here Spinoza refers to the dictates of reason which religion is about, and he underlines the fact that it is a human way of speaking to say that we obey God’s will.

88 Spinoza, *TTP* (see above, n. 70), c. 7, p. 103: “Longè igitur abest, ut ex autoritate Pontificis Hebraeorum ad leges Patriae interpretandum posset concludi Romani Pontificis autoritas ad interpretandam religionem.”

other kinds of faith ‘superstition,’ which is necessarily self-destructive. To guarantee social peace, ‘catholic’ religion should be a phenomenon in the singular.

## 9 The Eighteenth-Century Paradigm of Religion

In the Age of Reason there emerged a “new paradigm for the studying of religious phenomena,” as Stroumsa has recently called it.<sup>89</sup> Unlike Thomas Kuhn, he underlined the fact that “intellectual revolutions are not born from a big bang.” However, the new ‘Enlightenment’ paradigm was already taken for granted in general mainstream reference works with entries on religion, such as Zedler’s *Universal-Lexicon* of the 1730s and 1740s and Diderot and D’Alembert’s *Encyclopédie*. These entries gave voice to new attitudes towards religion and, more importantly, made the general public familiar with this new view. At the beginning of the century these ideas were developed in widely current academic texts, such as Noodt’s rectoral address and Barbeyrac’s manuals of natural law.<sup>90</sup> The drastic change in our thinking about religion came about along two lines of argument.

89 Stroumsa, *A New Science* (see above, n. 30), pp. 4–5.

90 In Picart’s *Ceremonies et coutumes religieuses de tous les peuples du monde* of the 1720s and 1730s, religion is also conceived as a common human feature. This momentous study had a wide circulation, but it gives too little conceptual analysis of religion to be useful to my purpose. However, see Hunt, Jacob, and Mijndhardt, *The Book that Changed Europe* (see above, n. 34), pp. 292–4 and 11–6. Yet the book calls the non-monotheistic religions by their traditional negative name ‘idolatry.’ In the frontispiece Protestantism figures as ‘true religion,’ as opposed to superstitious Roman Catholicism. Although according to the authors of *The Book that Changed Europe*, p. 13 the frontispiece “underestimates the actual importance of idolatrous people,” seemingly the distinction between a unique true religion and all kinds of superstition did not completely lose its force. In the opening dissertation on religious worship it is conventionally observed that the greatest part of mankind worships God with external signs. So, the more confused the ideas of God are, the more absurd and extravagant these rites. “Ignorance has carried devotion even to barbarism.” Here the example of human sacrifices is given. In the opening dissertation of volume VIII, ‘On the conformity of the ceremonies of the greatest part of Christianity with those of the Greeks and Romans,’ we read on page 7: “je prétens que les protestants n’ont pas retranché sans raison de leur [i.e., of the Greeks and Romans] culte religieux ces ceremonies, quelles qu’elles soient comme vaines et inutiles.” The Protestants are satisfied to worship God only in the spirit and in truth, “in conformity with true Christianity,” while the greatest part of Christianity practices superstitious ceremonies. Hence, according to the *Coutumes religieuses de tous les peuples du monde*, if anywhere, it is only in liberal Protestantism, due its spiritual nature, that we find the true knowledge of God, which leads to pious worship.

One observes around 1700 a growing disbelief in, or a diminishing need for, a ‘science of God’ as the foundation of religion. More and more scholars were no longer attempting to establish basic truths about God. The interest in the objective creed was increasingly replaced by a subjective and individual inner ‘cult.’ The toleration debate of the end of the seventeenth century seems to have given rise to this tendency, an observation that will be substantiated here by dealing with the trendsetting examples of Bayle and Noodt. It is also the prevailing notion of religion in Zedler’s encyclopaedia. There had also been the growing naturalization of religion, which made it part of humanity’s—moral—nature. It transformed the ceremonies of tradition into moral practice. This development will be dealt with in the last three sections before the conclusion. Both tendencies made religion a plural concept, which may equally refer to any religion. The distinction, cultivated in the humanist paradigm, between religion in a broad sense and in a strict sense fades away.

## 10 The Growing Neglect of Religion’s Doctrine: Bayle

In 1706 the Leiden legal scholar Gerard Noodt (1647–1725) developed a principled Latin defence of tolerance on the basis of a ‘subjective’ concept of religion: a conception of religion which, by focusing on the attitude of the believer, specifies neither the object of religious knowledge nor its doctrine. In this respect he was influenced by Pierre Bayle (1647–1706). The famous ‘Rotterdam philosopher,’ Feil observed, started to use religion freely in a neutral sense, referring to any confession whatsoever. Besides Christian forms of religion, such as Socinianism, Protestantism, and Roman Catholicism, we find in his works abundant mention of Chinese, Persian, Jewish, and Japanese religions.<sup>91</sup> What is more, in his argument the term ‘sect’ has lost its negative connotation and is merely used as an equivalent for religion.<sup>92</sup> In his main treatise on toleration, he defined ‘religion’ as follows: “hence the nature of religion is a certain persuasion of our soul with respect to God which produces in the will the love, respect, and fear that the supreme Being merits.” The subjective element is underlined by the phrase “persuasion of our soul.”<sup>93</sup> In this definition Bayle

91 An example of this alignment of religions: in Pierre Bayle, *Janua coelorum reserata*, 3, 5, in: id., *Oeuvres diverses*, 2 vols, (The Hague, 1737), 2: 876: “Atqui ex probatis hucusque in Religione Pontificia, Sociniana, Judaïca, & Mohametica salus obtineri potest.”

92 Feil, *Religio* (see above, n. 35), 3: 451–2.

93 Pierre Bayle, *Commentaire philosophique sur ces paroles de l’evangile selon St. Luc: “Contrains-les d’entrer,”* in: id., *Oeuvres diverses*, 2: 371b: “La nature de la Religion est d’être une certaine persuasion de l’ame par rapport à Dieu, laquelle produise dans la volonté

focused on the inner side of religion—a disposition of the mind—which is not necessarily linked with its outward manifestations in corresponding acts. Contrary to our acts, an inner conviction cannot be produced by force, but only by argument. Force only produces false religion, Bayle argues in summary of his ideas.<sup>94</sup>

Fully in line with this notion of the basic interiority of religion is Bayle's observation that religion is localized in the laity and not in a clergy. In the *Commentaire philosophique* he ironically writes that were the magistrate, out of fear of the dominant church and in order to please the clergy, not to tolerate 'the sects,' the prince should simply exhort the clergy to lead a life in accordance with the precepts of Jesus Christ. This appeal would meet the laity's wishes for a purer religion and would destroy the power of the opponents of tolerance.<sup>95</sup>

Making conscience the '*pierre de touche*' of religious truth reinforces the subjective conception of religion. Every individual's conscience is the ultimate judge deciding whether an action is good or bad. A religious person necessarily assumes that the rule used to assess such an act lies only in God. However, the individual's conscience provides the only access to this law. Considering this idea to be obvious, Bayle calls it one of the clearest notions of metaphysics.<sup>96</sup> So a man acting against his conscience acts wrongly whatever he does.<sup>97</sup> Yet conscience is a highly defective means to assess moral truth. Therefore, we

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l'amour, le respect: et la crainte que mérite cet Etre suprême & dans les membres du corps les signes convenables à cette persuasion, et à cette disposition de la volonté; desorte que si les signes externes sont sans un état intérieur de l'ame qui y réponde ou avec un état intérieur de l'ame qui leur soit contraire, ils font des actes d'hypocrisie et de mauvaise foi ou d'infidélité." A few lines before Bayle had more traditionally defined the essence of religion as consisting of the human mind's judgments of God and the emotions of respect, fear and love they create. It is hence possible that religion can exist without any external acts of worship—ceremonies—but this is rarely the case. In Locke we find a similar subjective definition of 'true and saving religion': "Religio consistit in interna animi fide," John Locke, *Epistola de tolerantia* (London, 1765), p. 5 (original 1689).

94 Bayle, *Commentaire philosophique* (see above, n. 93), 2, ch. 6, p. 419a: "un Prince ... se mettroit au-dessus de ce peril, car il n'auroit qu'à faire publier dans tous ses etats, qu'il ne toléreroit plus les sectes, dès que tout le clergé de la religion dominante meneroit une vie conforme aux conseils et aux préceptes de Jésus-Christ ... Cette condition plairoit sans doute aux laïques."

95 Feil, *Religio*, (see above, n. 35), 3: 451–2.

96 Bayle, *Commentaire philosophique* (see above, n. 93), 2, ch. 8, p. 422b: "D'où je conclus que c'est la même chose de dire: *ma conscience juge qu'une telle action est bonne ou mauvaise et ma conscience juge qu'une telle action plaît ou déplaît à Dieu.*" See H. Bost, *Pierre Bayle et la religion* (Paris, 1994), p. 59.

97 Bayle, *Commentaire philosophique* (see above, n. 93), 2, ch. 8, p. 423a: "Ainsi c'est une proposition évidente que tout homme qui fait une chose que sa conscience lui dicte être mauvaise ... fait un péché."

have to make our personal choices in religious affairs, if we do not want to be a sceptic in religion our entire lives.<sup>98</sup> Since in religious matters no objective truth is available, it is obvious that, given the world's actual religious diversity most people will act in ways urged on by conscience, which is 'objectively' in error. In religion, subjective truth prevails. According to Bayle, religion is necessarily a plural phenomenon.

## 11 Van Noodt

In 1706, at the end of his second term as *rector magnificus* of the university of Leiden, the renowned Dutch legal scholar Gerard Noodt (1647–1725) delivered an address on the freedom of religion which instantly caught the attention of all Europe. Many editions of the Latin text appeared both in the Protestant North and the Roman Catholic South. Dutch, French, English, and German versions circulated widely.<sup>99</sup> Van den Bergh, Noodt's intellectual biographer, underlines the controversial nature of the address, which did not plead for the traditional indulgence but rather for an absolute freedom of religion, unhindered by any interference by the government.<sup>100</sup> Van den Bergh did not only argue for the traditional 'Batavian freedom' of conscience, granted by the Union of Utrecht in 1579. He intended to advocate religious tolerance in "that great Republic" of mankind, which has "no other limits than the ocean and the course of the sun."<sup>101</sup> Van den Bergh underlines the influence of Bayle's ideas.<sup>102</sup>

Of the distinguishing features of religion Noodt dealt with in his address, nearly all tend to underline the subjectivity of religion. He starts by observing that religion is universal, given to all. "Religion, to my understanding, Gentlemen, is a Gift of God, which God has given to every one in particular."<sup>103</sup> However, religion is of a personal nature, being "a holy commerce between God and man."<sup>104</sup> Like Bayle, Noodt infers that the individual has to decide on

98 Bayle, *Commentaire philosophique* (see above, n. 93), 2, ch. 8, p. 427b: "mais après tout dans la religion on ne peut se faire toute sa vie le sceptique et le pyrrhonien; il faut se fixer à quelque chose et agir selon ce à quoi l'on se détermine."

99 G. C. J. J. van den Bergh, *The Life and Work of Gerard Noodt (1647–1725): Dutch Legal Scholarship between Humanism and Enlightenment* (Oxford, 1988), p. 224.

100 Van den Bergh, *Life and Work* (see above, n. 100), p. 226.

101 Gerard Noodt, *The Power of the Sovereign and the Right of the Liberty of Conscience, in two discourses*, trans. John Savage (London, 1708), p. 92.

102 Van den Bergh, *Life and Work*, p. 226 (and those of Spinoza, p. 227). A link with Arminianism was partly due to his family history (*ibid.*, pp. 229–31).

103 Noodt, *Power of the Sovereign* (see above, n. 101), p. 92.

104 Noodt, *Power of the Sovereign* (see above, n. 101), p. 108.

the truth in religion wholly by himself.<sup>105</sup> Noodt argues for the personal nature of religion on the base of natural law. He writes: “What can be more just and equitable than to leave every one full liberty to do what he thinks best in his own affairs.”<sup>106</sup> Man, like every animal, is created with the inclination to seek his own advantage. Due to this inclination every person freely chooses not only a profession but also a religion, in order to procure a certain infinite good. In elaborating this natural law argument Noodt infers that God gave every individual a soul and reason and thus implanted morality.<sup>107</sup> The object of every religion is “the sovereign good, true felicity and eternal happiness,” which is arrived at by uniting ourselves to our God. Such a union is produced not by words or other external acts but “by the Spirit only, that is by holy thoughts and a pure will.”<sup>108</sup> This implies a third characteristic of all religions: all possess a spiritual nature and all are of equal value. Every religion rightly claims to be of a natural or even divine origin, because our ideas of the Divine are not in our power.<sup>109</sup> However, there are in the world an infinite number of religions—Noodt uses the traditional word ‘sects’—into which mankind is divided: Christian, Jewish, Turkish, Pagan, etc. The disputes among them aiming to establish the truth of any of these are endless and pointless if we hope to arrive at any agreement, because religion as such is without a universal doctrine and, due to its diversity, its general content cannot be fixed universally.<sup>110</sup> Only within a church or religious society can rules be established and a creed formulated.<sup>111</sup> Yet a man may—and should—withdraw his subscription the moment he considers this confession to be irreconcilable with his own sense of religion.<sup>112</sup> The dispute between churches and religions neither reason nor the law of nature can settle.

105 Noodt, *Power of the Sovereign* (see above, n. 101), p. 108.

106 Noodt, *Power of the Sovereign* (see above, n. 101), p. 93.

107 Noodt, *Power of the Sovereign* (see above, n. 101), p. 94 and p. 103: “I have always found that Nature has not brought forth a few privileged persons, to whose judgment all the rest of world are to submit blindly in the search after truth, but that she has given a share of reason to all men.”

108 Noodt, *Power of the Sovereign* (see above, n. 101), p. 95.

109 Noodt, *Power of the Sovereign* (see above, n. 101), pp. 98–9. Hence “no mortal man of what rank, quality or condition soever, is master of his own conscience” and thus of his religion. It depends entirely on “the sovereign and eternal Being.”

110 Noodt, *Power of the Sovereign* (see above, n. 101), p. 102: “Thou hast not, O God, thought it proper to give such a degree of evidence to religion, as may lead us all to one faith, as we all have one arithmetic. Thy will be done.”

111 Noodt, *Power of the Sovereign* (see above, n. 101), p. 109.

112 Noodt, *Power of the Sovereign* (see above, n. 101), p. 108: “Tis not less a Man's privilege to quit a religion, than to profess it at first. Indeed, that person shews himself to be manifestly unworthy of being reckon'd a member of the spiritual society between God and man, who does not adore ... his Divine majesty with his heart.... He who chooses a religion,

This remark leads to the fourth characteristic of religion, its basic plurality. According to Noodt the way to eternal felicity is obscure, slippery, and difficult. God ordained the obscurity of religious truth and the absence of any fixed doctrine. For, if He had wished to do otherwise, it would have been quite easy for Him to give all humans one and the same religious conviction. In science everyone knows the same truths, for example that three and two are five, and its truths are beyond controversy.<sup>113</sup> In religion, however, God did not think it proper to give humanity such a degree of evidence, and its absence inevitably resulted in a plurality of religions. Therefore, the existence of a great number of religions is due to the divine will; no religion can prove its 'scientific' truth. Due to this 'theological' justification of religious diversity, the difference with radical Cartesian thought is obvious.

## 12 *Zedler's Universal-Lexicon*

Between 1731 and 1754, in 68 volumes totalling 62,571 pages and 300,000 entries, there appeared the most voluminous encyclopaedia ever published in Europe. This "big and complete" *Universal-Lexicon of all sciences and arts*, as the first words of its title read, is called after its publisher 'Zedler,' but unlike his predecessors he did not contribute any entries to his work. Although the huge encyclopaedia is a monument of baroque learning, it is not a scholarly work but a so-called *Konversations-Lexicon*. It was published by Johann Heinrich Zedler (1706–1751) to commercialize "exclusive knowledge of experts of former ages" and to transform it into the common knowledge of the educated public.<sup>114</sup> Intended for educated readers, it was written in the vernacular and alphabetically ordered,<sup>115</sup> lacking any "*innere Systematik*."<sup>116</sup> That is to say: the growing need for 'orientation' and 'consumption of knowledge' could not be met by strenuous efforts to organize all knowledge in a systematic way. Apparently

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with a design to procure himself a certain good, may reserve a right to himself to examine whether what it teaches be exactly confirmable to the Truth."

- 113 Noodt, *Power of the Sovereign* (see above, n. 101), p. 102. According to Van den Bergh this argument is familiar in the natural law tradition and originated in Grotius's *De jure belli ac pacis* 1.1.10.5.
- 114 Kai Lohsträter and Flemming Schock, 'Einleitung,' in: id., *Die gesammelte Welt: Studien zu Zedlers Universal-Lexicon* (Wiesbaden, 2013), p. 3.
- 115 Elger Blühm, 'Johann Heinrich Zedler und sein Lexikon,' *Jahrbuch der Schlesischen Friedrich-Wilhelms-Universität zu Breslau* 7 (1962), 189–90 (my translation).
- 116 U. J. Schneider quoted in Frank Weiske's report 'Die gesammelte Welt: Wissensformen und Wissenswandel in Zedlers *Universal-Lexicon*' of the Wolfenbüttel conference 18–19 November 2010, available on the Web journal *H-Soz-Kult*, 05.03.2011.

the publisher cared only about the ‘simple usefulness’ and ‘traceability’ of the information.<sup>117</sup>

The article ‘Religion,’ like the other anonymously written entries, starts by reproducing the traditional etymology of the word by Lactantius, and continues by observing that religion is basically the just worship of God, which requires a proper understanding of him.<sup>118</sup> This implies the distinction between false and true religion which is used to classify all religions: the pagans serve God although they know him falsely and imperfectly; the Jews know God, partly accepting revelation in half of its fullness; the Christians possess a perfect and complete revelation; and the Muslims serve God starting from a fiction and an imagined revelation.<sup>119</sup>

However, the author does not supply any notions that might be used to identify true religion and, what is more, in the remaining ninety per cent of the article the distinction between false and true religion is not mentioned.<sup>120</sup> The author merely describes facts about the beliefs, images, and ceremonies of the world’s different religions. More than once he refers to Picart’s classic

117 Lohsträter and Schock, ‘Einleitung’ (see above, n. 114), p. 4.

118 Johann Heinrich Zedler (ed.), *Grosses vollständiges Universal-Lexicon aller Wissenschaften und Künste, welche bishero durch menschlichen Verstand und Witz erfunden und verbessert worden. Darinnen so wohl die Geographisch-Politische Beschreibung des Erd-Kreyses, ... Wie nicht weniger die völlige Vorstellung aller in den Kirchen-Geschichten berühmten Alt-Väter ..., Endlich auch ein vollkommener Inbegriff der allergelehrtesten Männer ... enthalten ist*, 68 vols, (Halle, 1742). Ibid. 31: 443: “In besonderm Verstande versteht man dadurch den Dienst und die Verehrung des wahren Gottes; weil man aber Gott nicht gebührend verehren kan, wenn man ihn nicht vorher gehöriger massen erkannt, so braucht man auch dasselbige in weitem Verstande und begreift man darunter so wohl die wahre Erkenntniss Gottes, als auch die Verehrung des wahren Gottes.” Since ‘religion’ is also applied to the worship of false gods, Zedler concludes that there is a distinction between false and true religions. True religion is provided with true knowledge of God, false religions with inadequate knowledge of the Divine power.

119 Zedler, *Grosses vollständiges Universal-Lexicon* (see above, n. 118), 31: 443: “die Heyden Gott dienen aus einer falschen und sehr unvollkommenen Erkenntniss ... die Juden Gott nach seinem geoffenbahrten Willen zu dienen vermeynen, aber nur ein Theil desselben annehmen wollen; die Christen ihren Gottesdienst nach der ganzen und vollkommenen Offenbarung des göttlichen Willens richten, die Mahometaner einer fälschlich angegebenen Offenbarung folgen.” Although in this entry this traditional framework of the four religions—Christianity, Judaism, Islam and Paganism—hardly played a part, in other entries, according to T. Winnerling, it led to a serious misconception of other religions and the inability to erode the “absolute priority” of Christianity. ‘Zur Buddhismus-Wahrnehmung im *Universal-Lexicon*,’ in: Lohsträter and Schock (eds.), *Die gesammelte Welt* (see above, n. 114), p. 156.

120 Zedler, *Grosses vollständiges Universal-Lexicon* (see above, n. 118), 31: 443–4, give a theoretical introduction and pp. 444–52 give a factual description of all religions, whether false or true.

*Céramonies et coutumes religieuses de tous les peuples du monde*, which, unlike Vossius's seventeenth-century work, has no longer 'idolatry' but 'religion' in the title.<sup>121</sup> He starts with Africa, and via America and Asia he reaches Europe, which is dominated by four churches. However, on a global scale Christianity forms a minority. So demography does not establish its truth either.<sup>122</sup> Europe, moreover, is religiously diverse. Although the Inquisition attempted to enforce religious conformity in some territories such as Spain and France, it did not succeed. In these countries substantial religious minorities still live in secret: Jews, Muslims, and Protestants, notwithstanding the official religious uniformity.<sup>123</sup>

After dealing with religious diversity in other regions, the author focuses on the German lands. The Treaty of Westphalia regulates the coexistence of three tolerated religions—Roman Catholic, Lutheran, and Reformed. According to the entry's author, this treaty prevented religious compulsion. He observed that even if adherence to a certain religion is required for a specific state office, the conscience remains free, because in that case only conformity to the ceremonies of external religion is needed. The author's advice to the reader is to avoid blameable hypocrisy, or even self-repudiation, by steering the middle course between offending one's own conscience and taking unnecessary risks.<sup>124</sup> Finally, the Zedler entry observed that in the Ottoman Empire religious

121 Zedler, *Grosses vollständiges Universal Lexicon* (see above, n. 118), 31: 450: "dem berühmten Kupfferstecher, Bern. Picart." However, the existing literature merely consists of travel journals. Scholars have to consider the doctrine of 'religions of foreigners' in a logical order and it is necessary to rely upon its sources, the writer in Zedler observed.

122 Zedler, *Grosses vollständiges Universal Lexicon* (see above, n. 118), 31: 449. It is observed in the book that the world's population was calculated to be 19/30 Pagan, 6/30 Islamic, and only 5/30 Christian.

123 Zedler, *Grosses vollständiges Universal Lexicon* (see above, n. 118), 31: 448: "In Spanien giebt es lauter Catholische, weil die Inquisition daselbst gar scharf ist, gleichwie auch in Portugall. Sie leiden anieso weder Maurer noch Jüden. Wobey iedoch wohl zu merken dass nichts destweniger die Anzahl der heimlichen Juden in diesen Landen noch immer sehr gross ist."

124 Zedler, *Grosses vollständiges Universal Lexicon* (see above, n. 118), 31: 451: "nicht allein nach Massgebung des Westphälischen Friedesschlusses, sondern auch anderer Reichs-Grundgesetze, aller Zwang und Bedrängniss wegen der Religion, als eine unzulässige Gewalt über die Gewissen verboten.... Es ist zwar vornehmlich in Sachsen der Religions-Eid eingeführt, krafft dessen alle, die in öffentliche Bedienungen treten, verbunden werden bey ihrer Religion zu beharren, oder auf widrigen Fall sich ihrer Bedienung zu begeben. Weil aber dadurch dem Gewissen seine Freyheit gelassen, und bloss eine äusserliches Bedinge, welches um besserer Ordnung und Erhaltung des gemeinen Ruhestandes willen eingeführt, erfordert wird, so ist solches vor einen Religions-Zwang nicht anzusehen.... Die nach der Wahrheit urtheilen halten dafür, dass wohl ein Mittelweg zu finden, da man ohne Anstoss des Gewissens und ohne Furcht für Zuziehung unnöthiger Gefahr fortkommen könne."

conformity is not enforced. The Turks leave all religions in peace and they admit freedom not only of conscience but also of religious exercise. Apparently, they no longer adopt Muhammad's principle of spreading religion by the sword. It is the reverse in Christianity, where the first Christians abhorred the use of force and considered its use to convert people to be the distinguishing mark of a false religion. Later on Christianity deviated from this principle. Although the Zedler writer never forgets himself and only describes the different ideas in a neutral manner, the reference to Noodt may suggest that he agrees with the first Christians and takes the renunciation of violence to be the main constituting element of true religion, which may be observed from the outside.<sup>125</sup> From the argument in the last section on Germany's religious diversity we may also infer that like Noodt, the Zedler writer situated religion in the human heart, which made individual conscience and not philosophical discourse or Biblical hermeneutics the ultimate subjective judge. In this manner the search for the truth of religion was transformed into a question of its veracity.

### 13 Religion in Natural Law: Pufendorf and Barbeyrac

In the early modern confessional state, positive law imposed a particular religion and a public church on a specific society. However, according to High Enlightenment legal scholarship, nature itself also put humanity under the obligation to have faith and religion. This development of natural law transformed religion into a man-made phenomenon, which was to be conceived as common to all. Apparently, with *De Officio hominis et civis* (1673) Samuel Pufendorf inaugurated this tradition by not dealing with religion as based upon revelation or 'sacred scriptures,' as Hobbes, for example, still did.<sup>126</sup> At the end of the eighteenth century Thomas Reid wrote that Pufendorf had been the first to introduce the Christian duties into natural jurisprudence.<sup>127</sup> This handy treatise on the duties of man and the citizen by the German jurist was a great success. In the first hundred years after its publication it was reissued sixty-three times, and in due course was translated into English (1682), German (1691), French (1693), Russian (1624), Danish (1742), Dutch (1761), and Italian

125 Zedler, *Grosses vollständiges Universal Lexicon*, 31: 452: "Die ersten Christen sind einer ganz andern Meynung gewesen, so dass sie under die Kennzeichen einer falschen Lehre gezählet, wenn sie zu ihr Ausbreitung Gewalt gebrauchet. In den folgenden Zeiten ist man von diesem Grunde abgewichen."

126 Thomas Hobbes, *Elementa philosophica de Cive* (Amsterdam, 1647), part 3.

127 Thomas Reid, *Practical Ethics, being Lectures and Papers on Natural Religion, Self-Government, Natural Jurisprudence, and the Law of Nations*, ed. Knud Haakonsson (Princeton, 1990), p. 305, note 1.

(1761). Through all these versions this little treatise, like Zedler's *Universal-Lexicon*, reached an audience far beyond the small circle of academic scholarship and managed to attract bourgeois readers.<sup>128</sup>

Pufendorf's argument started by defining 'duty' in terms of human 'actions'.<sup>129</sup> By making 'action' a key concept in this definition, 'duty' is related to the ontological distinction between '*entia moralia*' and '*entia physica*.' For an action is not any motion whatsoever, but rather it proceeds from two human faculties: the intellect and the will.<sup>130</sup> By these powers man does not only know things, but as the result of his actions also makes them conform to a certain rule. The things in nature, which are 'beings-in-conformity-with-a-rule,' are studied in moral science. This implies that Pufendorf acknowledges an ontological foundation of natural law.<sup>131</sup> The rule or norm of human action is called 'law' and is a "decree by which a superior obliges one that is subject to him to accommodate his actions to the directions prescrib'd therein."<sup>132</sup> Such a moral law requires the knowledge both of the lawgiver and of the law itself. For no man obeys a rule if he does not know whom he has to obey and what act he has to perform.

Laws may be distinguished according to the legislator—God or man—and according to their necessity and universality. Natural laws are necessary and universal, whereas positive laws are contingent and particular to a state. The natural law, created by God, is congruent with the social and rational nature of every human individual. Hence, all peaceful societies have to apply them. God is the lawgiver of these natural laws, and they are known by the "light of reason."<sup>133</sup> However, although reason is able to know these laws, we need God's intervention once more to make these laws obliging—because of the weakness of our intellectual faculties after the Fall and the variety of human individuals. Reason alone cannot do the job.<sup>134</sup> Natural law prescribes all kinds of obligations, which are distinguished according to their object: God, other people,

128 Samuel Pufendorf, *De officio hominis et civis juxta legem naturalem libri duo*, in id., *Gesammelte Werke* 2, ed. Gerald Hartung, (Berlin, 1997), p. ix.

129 Pufendorf, *De officio* (see above, n. 128), 1.1.1: "Officium nobis heic vocatur actio hominis pro ratione obligationis ad praescriptum legum recte attemperata." English in: *The Whole of Duty of Man according to the Law of Nature, made English* by A. Tooke, London, 1735, p. 1: "Duty is that action of a man, which is regularly order'd according to some prescrib'd Law."

130 Pufendorf, *De officio* (see above, n. 128), 1.1.2 and Simone Zurbuchen, *Naturrecht und natürliche Religion: Zur Geschichte des Toleranzproblem von Samuel Pufendorf bis Jean-Jacques Rousseau* (Würzburg, 1990), p. 11.

131 Zurbuchen, *Naturrecht und natürliche Religion* (see above, n. 130), p. 21.

132 Pufendorf, *De officio* (see above, n. 128), 1.2.2.

133 Pufendorf, *De officio* (see above, n. 128), 1.2.16.

134 Zurbuchen, *Naturrecht und natürliche Religion* (see above, n. 130), p. 23.

and ourselves.<sup>135</sup> The obligations towards God include our duty to know his existence and his main attributes. Here Pufendorf infers a credo consisting of four basic tenets: the belief in God's existence; in his act of Creation; in God's regime over the world and mankind, and God's utter perfection. These tenets imply an inner and an external worship of God. Pufendorf implicitly accepts the existence of a public church, because we have to worship God in the midst of others publicly. Otherwise we may give the impression that we are ashamed of doing so. Our example may testify to our devotion and incite others to do the same.<sup>136</sup> Pufendorf's argument is an example of how religion became involved in natural law. Barbeyrac's versions of Pufendorf's manuals show how this development changed the idea of religion.

#### 14 Barbeyrac

'Natural religion,' apparently, tends to neutralize the humanist distinction between false religions in the plural, unfortunately practiced by the majority of mankind, and true religion in the singular. However, Pufendorf's natural religion remained a defective religion, because it is restricted to this life here on earth. According to Leibniz, only a religion based upon revelation will guide human action to eternal bliss and bring salvation. This transcendental religion is real religion.<sup>137</sup> It was the Groningen professor Jean Barbeyrac (1674–1744)<sup>138</sup> who, according to Hartung, effaced the distinction between religion included in natural law and supernatural religion.<sup>139</sup> To transform natural religion into a real religion, Barbeyrac added to his French version of *De officio* a densely annotated letter of Leibniz, in which the latter had criticized Pufendorf for confining natural law to this life<sup>140</sup> and to our external actions in the physical world.<sup>141</sup> Barbeyrac simply denied that natural law is confined to this world;

135 Pufendorf, *De officio* (see above, n. 128), 1.3.13.

136 Pufendorf, *De officio* (see above, n. 128), 1.4.2–5 and 6–7.

137 Zurbuchen, *Naturrecht und natürliche Religion* (see above, n. 130), pp. 38–46.

138 Philippe Meylan, *Jean Barbeyrac, 1674–1744, et les débuts de l'enseignement du droit dans l'ancienne Académie de Lausanne* (Lausanne, 1937).

139 Hartung in Pufendorf, *De officio* (see above, n. 128), p. 243 note 6 and 7: "Barbeyrac relativiert diese strikte Trennung von irdischer und jenseitiger Rechssphäre."

140 [Leibniz], 'Jugement d'un anonyme sur l'originel de cet abregé,' in Samuel Pufendorf, *Les devoirs de l'homme et du citoyen, tels qu'ils lui sont prescrits par la Loi Naturelle* (Amsterdam, 1746), pp. 214–9. Cf. the summary in Hans Welzel, *Die Naturrechtslehre Samuel Pufendorfs: Ein Beitrag zur Ideengeschichte des 17. und 18. Jahrhunderts* (Berlin, 1958), pp. 5–6.

141 [Leibniz], 'Jugement d'un anonyme' (see above, n. 140), pp. 225–7.

all considerations about a future life should be “excluded from natural law.”<sup>142</sup> He welcomed Leibniz’s critique of Pufendorf’s attempt to distinguish between natural law and theology by arguing that human actions in the outside world are dealt with in natural law and the “Divine Tribunal.” Hence theology deals with our interior acts.<sup>143</sup> Unlike Bayle and Noodt, Barbeyrac maintained that conscience is indeed able to assess with certainty our inner volitions, which cause our actions. Although we have to rely on visible actions in the outside world to assess the causes of another person’s actions, we are able to penetrate into the inner realm of the causes of our own actions. Hence, a natural science of morality is possible and moral theology is part of natural jurisprudence. Apparently Barbeyrac’s thought is still a bit ambiguous on this issue. It was the Wolffian notion of ‘human perfection’ that led to the full integration of natural religion into natural law. F. A. van der Marck, Barbeyrac’s successor at Groningen University, for example, wrote that external natural law, which derives from the social nature of humanity, makes the individual a perfect citizen, but, supplemented by a higher inner natural law, it transforms the human individual into a moral being and leads to an ultimate spiritual perfection. This makes religion obligatory by natural law, and even mission, in the sense of teaching natural religion to the ‘pagans,’ he considers to be an obligation of natural law.<sup>144</sup> In this argument, mission has been transformed from the traditional preaching of the Christian gospel to all people into the teaching of morality to humankind.

It might well be that Barbeyrac’s ambiguity with respect to the relation between theology and natural law in part accounted for the success of his commentaries. His fame rests chiefly on the annotated translations into French of Latin works on natural law, making these works available not merely to the world of the scholars but also to the reading public outside academia without Latin, that is, “*le grand monde*,” as Leibniz called it.<sup>145</sup> The 1706 translation of Samuel Pufendorf’s treatise *De Jure Naturae et Gentium* is preceded by an elaborated preface in which he introduces a comprehensive “science of morality”

142 [Leibniz], ‘Jugement d’un anonyme’ (see above, n. 140), pp. 213–4: “on ne doit pas exclure du droit naturel toute considération d’un vie à venir.”

143 [Leibniz], ‘Jugement d’un anonyme’ (see above, n. 140), p. 224: “C’est de cette application aux actions dont on ne peut pénétrer le principe que par quelque effet ou quelque signe extérieur, c’est des choses dont le tribunal humain peut connoître que notre Auteur veut parler.”

144 See Henri A. Krop, ‘The Law of Nature is a Lamp unto Your Feet: Frederik Adolf van der Marck (1719–1800) on the Book of Nature and Revelation,’ in: *The Book of Nature in Early Modern and Modern History*, ed. Klaas van Berkel and Arjo Vanderjagt (Leuven, 2006), pp. 99–102.

145 Sieglinde C. Othmer, *Berlin und die Verbreitung des Naturrechts in Europa* (Berlin, 1970), pp. 97–124.

and outlines its “progress from the Earliest Times Down to the Publication of This Work,” as the title in the contemporary English version states. Barbeyrac underlines the general significance of natural law, its formation of the basis for a new “*science des moeurs*” accessible to “*le magistrat, l’homme de guerre, le négociant, l’artisan,*” that is, “men without letters” as Barbeyrac called them. The book with this new science is only out of reach of “the farmer and the journeyman,” who are completely illiterate. However, although the term “natural law” is, like the legendary “Southern Lands,” unknown to them, even “persons without education” will profit by reading a book on “moral science” with the same attention as “they do their daily business.”<sup>146</sup>

According to the preface, the “science of morality” deals with all rules God prescribes to everyone in order to make them happy by reaching their destined end.<sup>147</sup> This science makes humankind familiar with all its duties and, in the tradition of natural law, the laws of nature are presented as instruments used by God ordering everything in the universe to that end. If the end of human life is happiness, then the love of God, which grants ultimate bliss, is extremely beneficial to mankind. This implies that religion is universal. In the contemporary *Théodicée* Leibniz formulated this idea as follows: since the love of God is the main principle taught by all religions in a more or less perfect way, their creeds and forms of worship all “foreshadow truth.”<sup>148</sup> They prepare humanity for the divine law by accustoming people to virtue and making them abhor vice. This was the goal of Moses, other good legislators, wise founders of religions, and Jesus Christ, who “established the most pure and most enlightened religion.” However, according to Leibniz, the natural religion of the pagans is full of superstition and an “absurd” belief in miracles. It had to be perfected in Hebrew religion and in Christian doctrine. Jesus Christ transformed natural religion into a law and gave it the authority of a public dogma. He did what the philosophers had attempted in vain and “the religion of the sages became the

146 Jean Barbeyrac, ‘Préface,’ in: Samuel Pufendorf, *Le droit de la nature et des gens, ou Systeme general des principes les plus importants de la morale, de la jurisprudence, et de la politique. Traduit du latin ... Avec des notes du traducteur, où il supplée, explique ... les pensées de l’auteur.* (Amsterdam, 1706), 1: lxxxv and Othmer, *Berlin und die Verbreitung des Naturrechts* (see above, n. 145), pp. 124–9.

147 Barbeyrac, ‘Préface,’ in: Pufendorf, *Le droit de la nature et des gens* (see above, n. 146), p. 1: “En effet, on ne sauroit raisonnablement douter, que chacun n’ait besoin pour se rendre heureux, de régler sa conduite d’une certaine manière et que Dieu comme Auteur et Père du genre humain ne prescrive à tous les hommes sans exception des devoirs qui tendent à leur procurer la félicité après laquelle ils souûpirent.”

148 Gottfried Wilhelm Leibniz, *Essais de théodicée sur la bonté de Dieu, la liberté de l’homme et l’origine du mal* (Amsterdam, 1734), p. v: “Les cérémonies ressemblent aux actions vertueuses et les formulaires sont comme des ombres de la vérité.”

religion of the people." Muhammad only retained the "tenets of natural theology" and spread them to Asia and Africa.<sup>149</sup> In this manner Leibniz retained the notion of the uniqueness of Christianity. Barbeyrac adopts a comparable historical framework. His outline of the "science of morality" starts with the "Chaldeans and the Chinese" and continues with the ancient Greek philosophers and the Church Fathers. Common moral and religious notions had been developed all over the world almost from the beginning of humankind.

Moreover, reversing Noodt's position, Barbeyrac distinguishes between the hermetic speculative sciences, which are basically uncertain and controversial, and the *science des moeurs*, the principles of which all will find easy to understand and are hence prescribed to all members of the human race. Barbeyrac makes his point by referring to Confucius, the Stoics, Cicero, and Montaigne.<sup>150</sup> Morality, which Barbeyrac calls the "daughter of religion," is simple and certain.<sup>151</sup> Therefore, becoming moral and religious requires no "metaphysical speculation, leafing through voluminous books"; it is not necessary "to learn several languages, to penetrate the mysteries of an antiquity for a long time past—in one word: to be a scholar." A religious man needs no other master than his own heart.<sup>152</sup> Barbeyrac argues for this moral equality by invoking God's goodness and the ensuing veracity in the tradition of natural law, which prevents the development of an outrageous scepticism with respect to religion and morality.<sup>153</sup>

Finally, Barbeyrac underlines the fact that religion is not the exclusive concern of theological experts. On the contrary: "all ministers of public churches, whether Roman Catholic, Protestant, Pagan, or Jewish tend to neglect moral science." Based upon the human conscience, which discerns the basic principles of morality, moral science and religion presuppose tolerance and freedom.

149 Leibniz, *Essais de théodicée* (see above, n. 148), p. viii.

150 Barbeyrac, 'Préface,' in: Pufendorf, *Le droit de la nature et des gens* (see above, n. 146), pp. i–ii: "Les Stoiciens ... s'outenoient que leur philosophie n'étoit pas au dessus de la portée des femmes et des esclaves, et que comme la vertu est ouvert à tous les hommes sans distinction, il n'y a non plus aucune condition privilégiée en ce qui regarde la connaissance des règles et des principes tant des devoirs communs" And p. iv: "Les moeurs et les propos des paysans (dit Montaigne) je les trouve communement plus ordonnez selon les principes de la vraye philosophie, que ne sont ceux de nos philosophes."

151 Barbeyrac, 'Préface,' in: Pufendorf, *Le droit de la nature et des gens* (see above, n. 146), p. xix: "elle [morality] marche d'un pas égal avec elle [religion] et la perfection de celle-ci est la mesure de la perfection de celle-là."

152 Barbeyrac, 'Préface,' in: Pufendorf, *Le droit de la nature et des gens* (see above, n. 146), p. ii.

153 Barbeyrac, 'Préface,' in: Pufendorf, *Le droit de la nature et des gens* (see above, n. 146), p. xii. This history deals with morality in the Christian and non-Christian worlds. See Petter Korkman, *Barbeyrac and Natural Law*, (Helsinki, 2001), pp. 22–32.

Therefore, although the Reformation returned to the pure religion of Christ, leading theologians such as Calvin and Beza spoiled their achievements by re-introducing intolerance and persecution.<sup>154</sup> That is why religion took refuge with the layman, the expert of natural law, who finally restored the ancient *science des moeurs* and natural religion.<sup>155</sup> Those natural law scholars are the real Reformers, and their work allowed religion to regain its original conformity with the divine law.

## 15 Religion in the *Encyclopédie*

The *Encyclopédie* contains an elaborate article on religion, though it merely focuses on natural religion. Revealed religion is dealt with in separate entries on particular religions such as Christianity, Islam, paganism, and Judaism. Louis de Jaucourt (1704–80), a Paris-born nobleman of Protestant descent, wrote the entry. He had studied sciences, theology, and medicine at Geneva and Leiden.<sup>156</sup> Back in France, he befriended Voltaire and Madame du Châtelet. From the second volume onwards he collaborated with Diderot and contributed to the enterprise no fewer than 17,395 articles.<sup>157</sup>

In accordance with Christian tradition, Jaucourt observed that religion consists of ‘knowledge’ and the worship we owe God. Religion, therefore, presupposes the existence of a God, who maintains relationships with his creatures and requires to be worshipped by them. This deity might be known either by revelation or by natural means. If we know the deity by natural means, natural religion develops, which is defined as “the worship reason, left alone and using only its own lights, understands it owes to the Supreme Being, Creator, and

154 Barbeyrac, ‘Préface,’ in: Pufendorf, *Le droit de la nature et des gens* (see above, n. 146), p. xxx: “Les lumières de la réformation rétablirent considérablement parmi les protestants la pureté de la doctrine et la pratique. Mais les réformateurs eux-mêmes et les successeurs, ont-ils toujours bien suivi l’esprit du christianisme et la réformation?” Barbeyrac asks rhetorically. The answer is clear: “Le dogme affreux de l’intolérance ou de la persécution pour cause de religion, n’a-t-il pas été soutenu par deux traités exprès, l’un de Calvin, l’autre de Bèze?”

155 Barbeyrac, ‘Préface,’ in: Pufendorf, *Le droit de la nature et des gens* (see above, n. 146), p. xxxii: “Les docteurs destinés à enseigner la religion se divisent sur des questions fort inutiles.’ Hence it was a layman who had a “système de cette science. Ce ne sont pas les ecclésiastiques ou des théologiens de profession c’est illustre Grotius dont la mémoire sera toujours en bénédiction pour ce sujet chez tout les amateurs sincères de la Vérité.”

156 Philipp Blom, *Enlightening the World: Encyclopédie, the Book that Changed the Course of History* (New York, 2005), pp. 102–12 and Jean Haechler, *L’Encyclopédie de Diderot et de ... Jaucourt: Essai biographique sur le chevalier Louis de Jaucourt* (Paris, 1995), pp. 75–83.

157 Madeleine F. Morris, *Le chevalier de Jaucourt: Un ami de la terre (1704–1780)* (Geneva, 1979), p. 2.

Sustainer of all things in the sensible world.”<sup>158</sup> “Natural religion,” Jaucourt continues, is also called ‘morality’ because it includes the duties of man towards his fellow man and himself, because God created all men.

Jaucourt observed that deists pretend that natural religion is sufficient to enlighten us about the nature of God and to order our morality in conformity with his laws, but he—ironically?—points out their inconsistency. If God did everything in accordance with his necessary laws, they should accept the fact that there is truth in revealed religion. Apparently, according to His providence, God uses revelation to enlighten man. Otherwise he would be doing something pointless.<sup>159</sup> So revelation is a natural phenomenon as well.

The article in the *Encyclopédie* that follows the entry on religion is on natural religion. This phenomenon is defined by the three main duties it produces: to love God, to be grateful to him, and to pay him tribute. Natural religion is based upon a threefold sentiment: admiration of God’s infinite greatness, gratitude for his blessings, and an acknowledgement of his sovereignty. Natural religion is primarily inner worship; cults are wholly dependent upon historical and social circumstances.<sup>160</sup> However, Jaucourt refutes the argument of radical philosophers that cults, being human fictions, are reprehensible.<sup>161</sup> Given the existence of God, religious sentiments are a natural consequence of that fact, and outward religions are natural as well. They are the necessary result of religious sentiment. Moreover, religion is a social phenomenon: if piety is a moral virtue, it is also a social virtue. Nothing contributes more to the dominance of virtuous behaviour in a society than the example people continuously give to one another. Just as Pufendorf had argued, worship in a public church, although in itself pointless, has a moral and social value. Moreover, man is not a purely rational being but is always subject to devastating passions. To liberate ourselves from their dominance, we have to edify one another and to help our fellow humans direct their minds to the spiritual.<sup>162</sup> Here the traditional social

158 Louis de Jaucourt, ‘Religion,’ in: *Encyclopédie, ou Dictionnaire raisonné des sciences, des arts et des métiers, par un société des gens et des lettres. Mis en order et publié par Mr. \*\*\**, 28 vols., (Neufchastel, 1765), 14: 78: “le culte que la raison, laissée à elle-même, et à ses propres lumières, apprend qu’il faut rendre à l’Être suprême, auteur et conservateur de tous les êtres qui composent le monde sensible, comme de l’aimer, de l’adorer, de ne point abuser de ses créatures, &c.”

159 Jaucourt, ‘Religion’ in *Encyclopédie*, 14: 78.

160 Jaucourt, ‘Religion’ in *Encyclopédie*, 14: 81–2.

161 Jaucourt, ‘Religion’ in *Encyclopédie*, 14: 80.

162 Jaucourt, ‘Religion’ in *Encyclopédie*, 14: 82: “Si la piété est une vertu, il est utile qu’elle regne dans tous les coeurs: or il n’est rien qui contribue plus efficacement au regne de la vertu, que l’exemple. Les leçons y feroient beaucoup moins; c’est donc un bien pour chacun de nous, d’avoir sous les yeux des modeles attrayans de piété. Or, ces modeles ne peuvent être tracés, que par des actes extérieurs de religion.”

dimension of true religion is transformed into the concept of a community of civilized citizens.

Finally, Jaucourt mentions the historical fact that all peoples have always had some external religion, or at least religious ceremonies. Here an outline of a history of religion is given which, as in Barbeyrac's preface, culminates in Christianity, presented as the most perfect form of religion.<sup>163</sup> It does what all religions do, that is: it links man to his god, makes him observe his laws, and creates sentiments of submission and dependency. Arguing within the tradition of natural law, Jaucourt observed that the Christian religion leads to our perfection in particular and makes us happy in this life and the next. Even if this positive observation about Christianity is ironic, the *Encyclopédie* had to deal with religion within the new High Enlightenment paradigm in order to be accepted by the general reading public. It presented religion as a universal human phenomenon, which is produced by nature to transform man into a moral being and make humankind deserve ultimate happiness.

## 16 Conclusion

The first years of the eighteenth century witnessed a dramatic change in attitudes towards religion. Until the end of seventeenth century all leading commentators had been convinced that a public religion was intellectually and socially necessary. This established religion was conceived as the true one; other believers, which was to say the adherents of superstitions, were to be endured if possible. Such a feeling was shared by the orthodox and the heterodox alike, as the first section tries to substantiate.

Around 1700 scholars increasingly lost their belief that reason could enable them to establish 'true' religion. In the Dutch Republic the general fear of religious diversity gradually diminished as well. After 1700 religious uniformity was no longer seen as an unambiguous ideal which individuals and society

<sup>163</sup> Jaucourt, 'Religion' in *Encyclopédie*, 14: 83–8. On p. 88: "J'ajoute seulement que la religion est le lien qui attache l'homme à Dieu, et à l'observation de ses lois, par les sentimens de respect, de soumission et de crainte qu'excitent dans notre esprit les perfections de l'Etre suprême, et la dépendance où nous sommes de lui, comme de notre créateur tout sage et tout bon. La religion chrétienne a en particulier pour objet la félicité d'une autre vie, et fait notre bonheur dans celle-ci. Elle donne à la vertu les plus douces espérances, au vice impénitent de justes allarmes, et au vrai repentir les plus puissantes consolations; mais elle tâche sur-tout d'inspirer aux hommes de l'amour, de la douceur, et de la pitié pour les hommes." Haechler considers Jaucourt's argument highly ironic here. He observed that Jaucourt "contests Christianity by omission," that is, by passing over the divine affection towards its creatures (p. 425).

should aspire to. Tolerance, therefore, was transformed from a social and religious evil, as all religious parties in the seventeenth century considered it to be, into a virtue indispensable for true religion and a civilized society. Gradually, the concept of tolerance also came to encompass the recognition that all religions might be 'true' if they stimulated the moral perfection of the individual and the civilization of society. This recognition applied to citizens belonging to dissenting churches, but less so to members of the Roman Catholic Church, and was most outspoken with regard to the public religions of empires outside Christendom. Chinese religion as well as Islam were each perceived to be the core of a civilized system of values and virtues standing on an equal footing with Christianity. The man-made social value of religion came to replace God-given doctrinal knowledge as the objective and universal measure of religious truth. Religions that lacked a clear association with a territorial political power, however, retained the odium of being 'primitive' and 'barbarous.' 'Civilized' religions emphasized moral and political usefulness over 'superstitious' ceremonies, 'irrational' hopes and fears, and idle speculation. Religious virtue became equated with secular, national virtues rather than with spirituality, hostile to the world. The resulting religious cultures are often characterized as 'Protestant,' but are more aptly called 'Enlightened.'

In the second part of this chapter causes of this paradigm shift were discerned and outlined: the tolerance debate, which led Bayle and Noodt to underline the subjective nature of religion and its private character, and the development of natural law theory, which made religion an overall phenomenon that was an integrated part of human culture. The main encyclopaedias of the Enlightenment bear witness to the sudden popularity among the reading public of this new vision. Whereas Bayle's pleas for a layman-centered religion and a full subjugation of the clergy under the authority of the state, limiting its office to educating the people in the way of a virtuous life, were still controversial, by the time of Diderot and D'Alembert in the High Enlightenment such notions were being propagated in vernacular texts aimed at a wide audience.

The paradigm shift from religion conceived to be basically singular to a sense of religions in the plural, which took place in the years around 1700, might remind the historian of religion that any search for an ahistorical 'essence' of religion is pointless.

# Tracing the Human Past: The Art of Writing Between Human Ingenuity and Divine Agency in Early Modern World History

*Jetze Touber*

## Abstract

In this chapter, Jetze Touber examines the changing views on the history of writing, in the context of 'early modern world history'. Early modern efforts to reconstruct the origin of the art of writing in various parts of the globe problematised the relation of 'world history' to biblical history as a divinely laid out, providential path of human development. Touber shows how in the seventeenth century scholars generally agreed that the ancient Hebrews, God's Chosen People, had acquired the alphabetic script as a divine gift. A century later, however, the *Encyclopédie* ascribed the origin of the alphabet to an anonymous Egyptian scribe, who developed it as a secret code for government administration, impenetrable for the uninitiated. The correspondence of Gijsbert Cuper, magistrate and antiquarian, with an extensive network of international contacts, provides a unique window through which we can observe how the evolving reconstruction of the history of alphabetic writing impacted on world history. Around 1700 Cuper and his correspondents discussed the then recently discovered inscriptions in a variety of antique scripts from around the world. Getting access to and making sense of inscribed artefacts required collective effort. It also required special skills in faithfully reproducing letters. The study of inscriptions acquired some of the characteristics of the natural sciences, with their increasing sophistication in graphic reproduction. Scholars studying ancient scripts in this period might ignore the deciphering of texts, and focus on letterforms, in order to trace the diffusion of peoples from Paradise and the ancient Israelites. The discovery of an apparently very ancient Sinhalese culture using characters that did not compare to any known script, associated, moreover, with images that seemed to support the pre-Adamite thesis of La Peyrère, proved especially disturbing. Eventually, with more accurate insight in the forms of letters, the suspicion grew that the traditional genealogy of mankind, based on biblical narrative, was false.

## 1 Introduction

In August 1713, Gijsbert Cuper (1644–1716), burgomaster of Deventer and an internationally renowned scholar, articulated a number of questions that interested him about the island of Ceylon, prompted to do so by his friend Nicolaas Witsen (1641–1717). He asked

whether several nations live on that island; when they have come; whether they are all of one belief, or some Muslims and the others idolaters; what kind of Idols they worship; whether there is one language throughout the island; what kind of chronology they have; and whether any memory lives on of sea voyages undertaken by other nations to that island.<sup>1</sup>

This short list of questions, which combines ethnography and antiquarianism, is typical of the range of topics that informed early modern accounts of newly encountered peoples. Since the sixteenth century Europeans had collected observations of other cultures with the aim of embedding them in the received narrative of humankind's history and its relation to the Creator. The Bible seemed to give a straightforward account of the origin of the world, of humankind, and of human culture. However, there was much room left for the details to be filled in. In piecing together the details of world history, early modern Christian scholars increasingly found it difficult to maintain a coherent narrative within the biblical framework. In this chapter, I will examine a particular kind of cultural artifact that complicated the received wisdom concerning the historical development of humankind: the many alphabets newly encountered across the globe.

Several historians have looked at the broad intellectual debate that transformed the way Europeans conceived of the Bible as a source of cosmogonic knowledge. The histories of the earth, of nature, and of human societies and culture were heavily interdependent on one another in discussions among early modern scholars, who regarded the Bible as the most authoritative source for all these topics. We may call this complex of discussions 'early modern world history.' Paolo Rossi traced the development of geological and of linguistic

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1 "Off gheen diverse volkeren woonen op dat Eylant, wanneer die daer zyn gekoomen; of altemaal van een geloof zyn, dan of de eenen zyn Mahometaens, ende de andere afgoodendienaers, wat voor soorten van Afgooden zy aenbidden; of de taal het geheele eyland door eene ende deselfs id is; hoe dat haare tydt rekeninghen zyn; en of gheen heugenisse aldaer is overgebleeven van scheepvaarden by andere volkeren daer op ondernoomen." Letter of G. Cuper to N. Witsen (14 August 1713), Amsterdam, Library University of Amsterdam [hereafter: UBA], MS Be 74.

thought between 1650 and 1750, when theories about the antiquity of both the world itself and human culture changed rapidly, irreversibly dissociating nature and culture.<sup>2</sup> Along similar lines, authors have more recently suggested how hermeneutics and natural history were interconnected within more circumscribed historical contexts.<sup>3</sup> Within this ‘early modern world history,’ the great variety of letterforms used in writing, around the world and throughout history, merits particular attention, being positioned at the interface between human culture and the material world.

Historians, insofar as they have examined early modern perceptions of the history of writing as a technique, have focused on *ideas* about human communication and epistemology, leaning heavily on published treatises and journal articles.<sup>4</sup> These ideas, however, grew out of early modern travelers’ and scholars’ experience with scripts actually encountered on paper, in stone, and on metal. Little serious attention has been given to an essential precondition: the actual *observation* and *reproduction* of the letterforms of scripts. The challenges posed by the material reproduction of scripts in the service of reconstructing the global history of languages have hardly been explored. To delve into this area requires that we pay greater attention to the way graphic materials were approached, copied, exchanged, and examined in correspondence and in manuscript volumes. This chapter will argue that intensified commerce with the Middle East, Asia, and the Americas necessitated more hands-on dealings with a greater variation of letterforms than had previously been imagined. This in turn increased awareness of the variety of human experience, and made a coherent, divinely-laid-out, providential path of human development seem less plausible. I will closely scrutinize how the alphabet and thus the art of writing—that most fundamental of human technologies—lost their anchoring in biblical history.

This chapter will thus explore how the discovery, reproduction, and examination of letterforms from around the world informed changing perceptions of ‘early modern world history.’ It is important to note that I will focus on the early modern conceptualization of the history of the *alphabet*, a limited set of graphic signs denoting the sounds that constitute spoken words. I refer to alphabets as *phonographic* script, as opposed to *ideographic* script—graphic

2 Paolo Rossi, *I segni del tempo: storia della terra e storia delle nazioni da Hooke a Vico* (Milan, 1979).

3 E.g., William Poole, *The World Makers: Scientists of the Restoration and the Search for the Origins of the Earth* (Oxford, 2010); Eric Jorink, *Reading the Book of Nature in the Dutch Golden Age, 1575–1715* (Leiden, 2010).

4 Besides Rossi and Poole, important publications in this respect are Paul Cornelius, *Languages in Seventeenth- and Early Eighteenth-Century Imaginary Voyages* (Geneva, 1965); Nicholas Hudson, *Writing and European Thought, 1600–1830* (Cambridge, 1994).

symbols such as hieroglyphs that represent concepts. Recent work on the entanglement of antiquarianism and orientalism has explored the fascination for ideographic writing, including seventeenth-century attempts to associate the newly encountered Chinese characters with ancient Egyptian hieroglyphs.<sup>5</sup> Speculation about hieroglyphs, however, was only part of the story, as important as it was in early modern intellectual history. Early modern scholars came to realize the vastness and variety of human experience through phonographic writing as well. Grasping the many different marks used for writing across the world made it ever less plausible that they could all be traced back to one single, divinely endowed writing system.

Gijbert Cuper (1644–1716) is an excellent gauge for these developments, because his biography coincides exactly with the decades investigated in this book. We will accompany Cuper as he received, pondered, and discussed ancient inscriptions, newly discovered across Eurasia. Starting out as a classical scholar, Cuper was exposed in the second half of his life to increasingly diverse scripts from various parts of the world. In the examination of the shapes of these letters, the variability of writing through time and space thrust itself on Cuper and his friends. The existing neat genealogy, tracing human cultures back to the first people mentioned in the Bible, became unsustainable in light of the variety of material realizations of writing now encountered by the Europeans.

## 2 The Art of Writing

To get an idea of the changes in how the art of writing was incorporated into early modern world history during the decades when Cuper was working, it is useful to consider two landmark publications, one published during Cuper's youth, the other more than a half century after his death. Published in 1657, the London Polyglot was a massive edition of biblical texts in Latin, Greek, Hebrew, Syrian, Arabic, Aramaic, and Ethiopian. An introductory essay by the work's main editor, Brian Walton (1600–61), treated the history of writing. This essay from the middle of the seventeenth century reflects the assumption that, in one way or another, the biblical texts were central to the history of writing as a human achievement. More than a century later, in 1782, this assumption had receded to the background, if it had not vanished altogether. For this evolution in thinking we can turn to the renowned *Encyclopédie ou Dictionnaire*

5 Thijs Weststeijn, 'From Hieroglyphs to Universal Characters: Pictography in the Early Modern Netherlands,' *Nederlandsch Kunsthistorisch Jaarboek* 61 (2011), 238–81, there 249–54; Daniel Stolzenberg, *Egyptian Oedipus: Athanasius Kircher and the Secrets of Antiquity* (Chicago, 2013), pp. 226–43. See also the contribution of Trudelien van 't Hof to this volume.

*Raisonnée*, edited under the supervision of Jean le Rond d'Alembert (1717–83) and Denis Diderot (1713–84) and intended to bring together all current professional knowledge. An *Encyclopédie* article on the history of writing discussed subject matter that was similar to what Walton took up in his essay. This entry, however, more or less reversed the traditional account of writing's history. The alphabet, long considered a divine gift, was now regarded as a set of arbitrary signs, ingenious but also arcane, a system to be mastered by human minds rather than something that God had bestowed.

The London Polyglot was fourth and last in a series of multilingual Bibles, starting with the so-called Complutensian, published by Spanish humanists in Alcalá de Henares in 1520. The polyglot genre had been born out of the humanist aspiration to make available to scholars all versions of the biblical text in the original languages. The production of these Bibles was tremendously costly in part because of the difficulty of printing a single publication that required a variety of scripts: Latin, Greek, and several Semitic ones. The London Polyglot, once it was realized in 1657 despite financial, technical and political obstacles, became a major reference work for European scholarship, not least because of its authoritative introductory materials—which included, as noted, an essay on the history of writing.<sup>6</sup>

In this essay, the volume's chief editor Walton extolls writing as a great wonder. His admiration is directed exclusively at phonographic writing. He claims that even the Chinese, who were proud of their own ideographic characters, had been deeply struck by the fact that Europeans were able to fix the sounds of the Chinese language on paper, allowing even those who did not know a single word of the language to reproduce its sounds. Walton gives the honor of inventing phonographic characters to the Hebrews. He surmises that before the Flood, human beings had already known how to write. Adam, probably, had invented a version of the Hebrew script. After the Flood the Hebrews preserved their letters, which allowed the people surrounding them, the Assyrians, to derive their own alphabet. The original Hebrew letters were not, however, those of the Hebrew script as Walton and his seventeenth-century contemporaries knew it. Rather, the original letters were the so-called Samaritan letters. Only much later, when the Jews returned from Babylon to Jerusalem in the fifth century BCE, did they bring along the set of characters that the Assyrians had derived from these original Samaritan letters. The new alphabet was called

6 Peter N. Miller, "The 'Antiquarianization' of Biblical Scholarship and the London Polyglot Bible (1653–57)," *Journal of the History of Ideas* 62 (2001), 463–82.

the Quadrata (or, confusingly enough, the Assyrian script), supposedly the variant of the Hebrew script in use among the Jews ever since.<sup>7</sup>

This genealogy was how the advanced philologists of the time conceived the history of the alphabet: an original that developed into the Samaritan, from which the Assyrians derived the variant of the Quadrata, which the Jews subsequently adopted and still used in the early modern period. Scholars all over Europe—Azariah de' Rossi (ca. 1511–78), Juan Bautista Villalpando (1552–1608), Joseph Justus Scaliger (1540–1609), Gerardus Johannes Vossius (1583–1645), to name a few—submitted to this account of how writing had entered the world and had spread.<sup>8</sup> Already in 1538 the Parisian orientalist Guillaume Postel (1510–81) had sketched more or less the same history of the Hebrew script: returning from the Babylonian Captivity, Ezra discarded the ancient Hebrew alphabet that by then had come into use among the despised Samaritans (and which was called, accordingly, the Samaritan). As an alternative Ezra had introduced the Quadrata, the Assyrian variant that the Hebrews had already begun to use in Babylon.<sup>9</sup>

For all its scholarly sophistication, Walton's reconstruction of the history of writing fit perfectly with a providential view of world history. Sure enough, Walton accommodated the variants of the Hebrew script in a model of historical change—the Samaritan script was the original, the 'Assyrian' Quadrata was a derivative. He was cautious and noncommittal about the antediluvian history of writing, merely suggesting rather than claiming definitively that Adam, his son Seth, and their descendants had introduced the Samaritan alphabet. Nonetheless, the Hebrew phonographic alphabet was central to Walton's history of writing. Significantly, he accorded an inferior status to the Egyptian, Chinese, and Mexican scripts on account of the ideographic nature of each. To the superior, phonographic Hebrew letters he attributed a monogenetic origin closely bound up with the history of the Chosen People.<sup>10</sup>

This last of the polyglots appeared at a crucial juncture in the history of biblical scholarship. Both Thomas Hobbes (1588–1679) and Isaac La Peyrère (ca. 1596–1676) had recently published the works with which they were to make

7 Brian Walton, 'Prolegomenon II. De literis sive characteribus,' in: *Biblia sacra polyglotta*, ed. Brian Walton (London, 1657), pp. 6–8.

8 Cornelius, *Languages* (see above, n. 4), pp. 5–23; cf. the anonymous (Richard Simon?), 'Dissertation critique sur les anciennes lettres des Hebreux,' *Bibliothèque critique* 2 (1708), 389–417, there 391; see Hudson, *Writing and European Thought* (see above, n. 4), p. 35, who states that "Walton, more daringly, claimed that Adam's letters were Samaritan rather than Hebrew." It is unclear why such a claim would have been daring.

9 Guillaume Postel, *Linguarum duodecim characteribus differentium alphabetum, introductio* (Paris, 1538), fols. (Cii)v–(Ciii)v.

10 Walton, 'Prolegomenon II' (see above, n. 7).

their marks in the field—even if, or maybe precisely because, this field was not their primary concern at all. Hobbes's *Leviathan* (1651) presented human history as the product of impersonal social forces acting within a morally neutral mass of self-centered human individuals. Expounding his political theory, Hobbes cursorily identified the Bible as originating in fifth-century Palestine as an expedient instrument of political dominance.<sup>11</sup> La Peyrère's *Prae-adamitae* (1655) was a millenarian project in which the author argued for a union between Christians and Jews. La Peyrère narrowed the scope of the Bible by capitalizing on the presence of two Creation stories, the first (Genesis 1) purportedly narrating the creation of humankind in general, and the second (Genesis 2) being limited to the creation of Adam, the ancestor of the Jews. This allowed him to reduce the rest of the Bible to a history of the Jewish people only—creating a potentially enormous span of time between the general Creation and the specific Creation, an interval about which Europeans knew virtually nothing.<sup>12</sup> These interventions by relative outsiders compromised the notion that the Bible was the ultimate source of world history. Walton's introductory essays to the London Polyglot represented the culmination of generations of biblical philology, achieved, however, at a moment when biblical scholarship was about to irrevocably lose its exclusive claim to world history.

After Walton, there were significant changes in the way that the introduction of writing into the world was reconstructed. The hieroglyphic script of Egypt ceased to be imagined as a system of writing parallel to the Hebrew alphabet, hiding esoteric wisdom, as Renaissance scholars from Pierio Valeriano (1477–1558) down to Athanasius Kircher (1602–80) had believed. Starting with the Christian apologist Edward Stillingfleet (1635–99) and continuing down to the controversial British divine William Warburton (1698–1779), northern European scholars downplayed the significance of hieroglyphs, judging them not to be subtle and mysterious symbols but rather the manifestations of a crude attempt at written communication: infantile doodles, not arcane tokens. The alphabet came to be conceived of as a simpler and therefore more ingenious and elegant system of signs, capable of conveying complex thought. Warburton thought, as had John Woodward (ca. 1665–1728), that due to its higher degree of abstraction, this phonographic alphabet was more sophisticated than ideographic hieroglyphs. Its complexity necessitated a more advanced human culture, prompting Woodward and Warburton to posit a

11 Noel Malcolm, *Aspects of Hobbes* (Oxford, 2002), pp. 383–431.

12 Richard Popkin, *Isaac La Peyrère (1596–1676). His Life, Work and Influence* (Leiden, 1987); Andreas N. Pietsch, *Isaac La Peyrère: Bibelkritik, Philosemitismus und Patronage in der Gelehrtenrepublik des 17. Jahrhunderts* (Berlin, 2012).

much later, postdiluvian dating of the alphabet's origin as compared with the infantile hieroglyphs.<sup>13</sup>

This speculation was a first step in detaching the history of writing from the biblically informed history of humankind. What it might lead to becomes clear from the aforementioned article devoted to the art of writing in the *Encyclopédie* (volume eleven, 1782). Unlike Walton, its author, Louis de Jaucourt (1704–79), does not speculate about the Adamic origins of writing. The *encyclopediste* does not mention the Flood or the post-Babel confusion of languages, and in fact makes no reference to the Bible. He does not even attempt to identify the first script. He simply ascribes to an Egyptian official the brilliant idea of breaking down speech into a distinct number of sounds. From there, writes Jaucourt, it was only a small step to inventing a graphical system to represent those sounds, rather than ideas.

The technique of writing, Jaucourt claims, started out with people drawing graphic representations of the objects of their thoughts: “écriture en peinture.” Subsequently peoples thought of devices to simplify the art. The Egyptian hieroglyphs were examples of such simplifications. Nevertheless, they remained ideographic characters. The use of an alphabet, which transposes the sounds of words to marks on paper or some other surface, was something entirely different. In a stroke of genius, an official under the Egyptian pharaoh Thoth had realized that speech actually consists of only a limited number of sounds. Once a system was devised to render these sounds graphically, this first alphabet came into being. But it was first used exclusively for correspondence about state affairs. Commoners had no knowledge of this phonographic script.

Jaucourt signals an important change compared with predecessors such as Walton. He implies that it actually requires effort to understand and interpret phonographic letterforms. According to him, originally the hieroglyphs appealed directly to the visual sense, rendering them legible even to unlettered peasants. Only over time were these forms stylized, losing their original relationship with the things they denoted and making it impossible for people to grasp their meanings quasi-intuitively. The alphabet, on the other hand, had originally been used to keep state affairs secret from the common people. It was accessible only to the select few who happened to know the system. It may have been a brilliant invention, but it was not instantly usable by everybody. It had its origins as an instrument of domination. Chosen arbitrarily, the alphabet's set of letterforms could have comprised any other group of marks.<sup>14</sup>

13 Rossi, *I segni del tempo* (see above, n. 2), pp. 232–381.

14 Louis de Jaucourt, ‘Écriture,’ in: *Encyclopédie ou Dictionnaire Raisonnée*, ed. Denis Diderot and Jean D’Alembert, 24 vols. (Lausanne, 1780–82), 11: 812–5.

Jaucourt leaned heavily on Warburton's *The Divine Legation of Moses* (1738–41) for this new speculative history of the alphabet.<sup>15</sup> It was a striking reversal of the cultural significance attributed to the alphabet's invention: instead of an intuitive system of written communication of a divine lucidity, it was now in Warburton and Jaucourt's accounts an arcane instrument, initially exclusive to government and only gradually gaining wider application. This new description also entailed the recognition that it was difficult mentally to couple arbitrarily chosen graphic signs with the sounds that constitute speech.

Walton's and Jaucourt's publications mark a significant shift between 1650 and 1750 in the way that writing was understood as a part of world history—concurrently with the diminished authority accorded to Scripture as a source of world history by some critics, in the wake of the likes of Hobbes and La Peyrère. It is vital to observe that not only ideographic scripts (Egyptian hieroglyphs, Chinese characters) were now being evaluated by scholars in a profoundly different way but, in a parallel development, so were the phonographic scripts (Hebrew and other alphabets). Hieroglyphs and characters lost their attraction as polysemic storehouses of wisdom, leaving only a sense that communicating in pictures was infantile; the Hebrew legacy, for its part, lost its privileged status as the source of the most perfect system of graphic communication. The invention and use of the alphabet became detached from the Jewish protagonists of the Pentateuch. The former development signaled the transformation of an emblematic worldview, and the latter made all textual knowledge, even divine revelation, dependent on human ingenuity—a universal trait rather than a providentially ordained endowment.

### 3 Antiquity in Script

Gijsbert Cuper, a scholar and magistrate from the provincial town of Deventer, lived and worked as this shift was taking place. Cuper is known best for his correspondence with his peers, a diverse, numerous, and international group.<sup>16</sup>

15 William Warburton, *The Divine Legation of Moses Demonstrated*, 2 vols. (London, 1738–41).

16 On Cuper and his place in the Republic of Letters, see: Marion Peters, 'Nicolaes Witsen and Gijsbert Cuper: Two Seventeenth-Century Dutch Burgomasters and Their Gordian Knot,' *LIAS* 16 (1989), 111–50; Peter J. A. N. Rietbergen, 'C. C. Rumpf, G. Cuper and Cultural Relations between Sweden and the Dutch Republic during the Last Quarter of the 17th Century,' in: *Baltic Affairs*, ed. J.Ph.S. Lemmink and J. S. A. M. van Koningsbrugge (Nijmegen, 1990), pp. 315–42; Anne Goldgar, *Impolite Learning: Conduct and Community in the Republic of Letters* (New Haven, 1995), pp. 56–9; Bianca Chen, 'Digging for Antiquities with Diplomats: Gisbert Cuper (1644–1716) and his Social Capital,' *Republics of Letters: A Journal for the Study of Knowledge, Politics, and the Arts* 1, no. 1 (May 1, 2009): [http://arcade.stanford.edu/rofl/digging-antiquities-diplomats-gisbert-cuper-1644-1716-and-his-social-](http://arcade.stanford.edu/rofl/digging-antiquities-diplomats-gisbert-cuper-1644-1716-and-his-social)

His letters testify to a lively interest in everything that fascinated scholars of the late seventeenth and early eighteenth centuries: antiquities, natural history, philosophy, and languages. Cuper himself excelled in a relatively limited range of subjects, though. Epigraphy and numismatics were his main areas of expertise. Over the course of his life, these specialties would direct him to the exciting subject of the origin of writing. The questions that, as we have seen, were continuously being asked by Walton and Jaucourt and also by Scaliger, Stillingfleet, and Warburton—When was the art of writing introduced? Was it a divine gift or the invention of human genius? Which letters constituted the first script?—were posed and explored repeatedly in Cuper's correspondence. As the years went by, it turns out, his vision broadened—and his confidence about being able to give unequivocal answers diminished.

As a young man, Cuper was mainly concerned with classical antiquity.<sup>17</sup> He studied with Johann Friedrich Gronovius in Leiden, who trained him to be an excellent philologist. His first publication (1670) was a series of *observationes*, short philological essays on subjects of Greek and Roman history and literature.<sup>18</sup> He then published two antiquarian studies, the first of a Roman statuette of Harpocrates, son of the Egyptian gods Osiris and Isis (*Harpocrates*, 1676), the second of a Greek marble relief depicting the deification of Homer (*Apotheosis Homeri*, 1683).<sup>19</sup> The former was in the possession of Johannes Smetius (1636–1704), a collector of antiquities in Nijmegen. The latter had appeared in the Lazio countryside near Rome. Tellingly, even though in the treatise on the Egyptian god Harpocrates Cuper refers to its 'hieroglyphic' quality ("forma satis docet, illam antiquam, notam hieroglyphicam, atque adeo Aegyptorum numen esse"), he does not follow this up with a discussion of hieroglyphs.<sup>20</sup> He does not venture into the speculative Egyptology of contemporaries such as Kircher, and also Isaac Vossius (1618–89) and Georgius Hornius (1620–70), in their debate on chronology.<sup>21</sup> He remains safely within the limits of Greek and Roman source materials, partly literary, partly epigraphical,

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capital; Bianca Chen, 'Politics and Letters: Gisbert Cuper as a Servant of Two Republics,' in: *Double Agents: Cultural and Political Brokerage in Early Modern Europe*, ed. Marika Koblusek and Badeloch Vera Noldus (Leiden, 2011), pp. 71–93.

- 17 It is not quite right that Cuper "made his fame studying Egyptian religion" or that "his main interest was Egyptology", as claimed in Willemijn van Noord and Thijs Weststeijn, 'The Global Trajectory of Nicolaas Witsen's Chinese Mirror,' *The Rijksmuseum Bulletin* 63 (2015), 325–61, there 340, 349. In fact, Cuper made his fame studying Greek and Roman classical culture, and his main interest was antiquity, quite generally.
- 18 Gijsbert Cuper, *Observationum libri tres* (Utrecht, 1670).
- 19 Gijsbert Cuper, *Harpocrates* (Amsterdam, 1676); idem, *Apotheosis vel Consecratio Homeri* (Amsterdam, 1683).
- 20 Cuper, *Harpocrates* (see above, n. 19), p. 5.
- 21 Weststeijn, 'From Hieroglyphs to Universal Characters' (see above, n. 5), 249–54.

partly numismatic. Until he was 45 years old, there is little sign that Cuper was interested in anything other than classical and biblical culture—materialized in manuscripts and books, inscriptions, sculpture, and medals. This was to change, however, due to the arrival of ancient fragments from further afield. I will review these in the order Cuper obtained them.

In 1691 English travelers discovered the ruins of Palmyra in present-day Syria.<sup>22</sup> The discovery made a great impact. Palmyra occurs in the Bible as a fortification of King Solomon.<sup>23</sup> The ruins, therefore, potentially held traces of the Judaic kingdom, even from before the split of the Hebrew polity into two rival states under Jeroboam and Rehoboam. Cuper was among the first to receive the travel report, which included a sample Palmyrene inscription using letters that, although unknown, were thought to be related to Hebrew (Fig. 2.1).<sup>24</sup>

The travel report, together with the inscription, was published in 1695 by the English orientalist Thomas Smith (1638–1710) in the *Philosophical Transactions* (Fig. 2.2). Meanwhile, Cuper enlisted his friends to discuss the purport of the inscription.<sup>25</sup> Cuper himself, one should note, could not read Hebrew or any other Eastern language. He was completely dependent on acquaintances to make sense of the letters of the Palmyrene inscription. One such acquaintance was Jacobus Rhenferd (1654–1712), a professor of Eastern languages in Franeker. Rhenferd aspired to construct an all-encompassing grammar of Near Eastern languages, as appears from a disputation held under his supervision: *Rudimenta grammaticae harmonicae linguarum orientalium* (1706). Evidently, Rhenferd was thrilled by the discovery at Palmyra. In 1704, he published a book about the Palmyrene alphabet.<sup>26</sup> Below we will see that for several years Cuper functioned as a conduit between Rhenferd and several other European scholars actively studying languages and scripts (such as Mathurin Veyssière de La Croze [1661–1739] and Francesco Bianchini [1662–1729]).

The Palmyrene alphabet was still within the purview of biblical tradition. This was not the case with antiquities arriving after 1700. In 1703 Cuper's friend Nicolaas Witsen, a burgomaster of Amsterdam and administrator of the Dutch

22 For the circumstances of the discovery of Palmyra: Chen, 'Digging for Antiquities' (see above, n. 16); Chen, 'Politics and Letters' (see above, n. 16).

23 2 Chronicles 8,4.

24 Cuper compiled a file of documents relating to the discovery of Palmyra, including a copy of the English travel report, a copy of the Dutch translation which Cornelis de Bruyn had inserted in his itinerary, and several letters discussing the significance of the discovery: The Hague, Koninklijke Bibliotheek [hereafter: KB], MS 72 C 3.

25 For the publication history of the travel report see Chen, 'Politics and Letters' (see above, n. 16), pp. 89–92.

26 I consulted *Periculum Palmyrenum* in the posthumous edition of Rhenferd's works: Jacob Rhenferd, *Opera philologica*, ed. D. Mill (Utrecht, 1722).







FIGURE 2.3 Ancient Chinese inscription, inscribed on a metal disc, reproduced in an engraving sent by Gijsbert Cuper to a correspondent in Rome. Rome, Biblioteca Angelica, MS 359

East India Company, sent him an artifact which originated in the Urals. Found in a Siberian grave, this circular, metal mirror had been engraved with ornamental patterns and a double row of Chinese characters on the rim of the disc (Fig. 2.3). It caused great excitement for Witsen and Cuper, as well as for several of their learned correspondents, since it appeared to be (and in fact was) a Chinese object of venerable antiquity, dating to before or around the beginning of the Christian Era. Jesuits had introduced the Chinese language to Europeans around 1600. In the Dutch Republic in particular, the study of Chinese took off after repeated visits to China by Nicolas Trigault SJ (1577–1628), successor to Matteo Ricci in the Jesuit mission there, and disseminator in Europe of the knowledge of China acquired by the missionaries. Throughout the seventeenth century, scholars reflected on the nature of the language,

especially on the relation between written and spoken Chinese. The encounter with Chinese characters inspired speculations that universal pictography had engendered Chinese as well as Egyptian languages at a very early stage of human civilization.<sup>27</sup>

But this disc, of which Cuper received an engraving, with its old age and the characters that adorned it, was the most tangible source of information on *ancient* China that Europeans had yet laid hands and eyes on.<sup>28</sup> Like the Palmyrene inscriptions, the Chinese mirror was a rare witness to a distant past. This artifact was all the more exciting because the disconcertingly old age of Chinese society, in particular, had anxiously been debated since the middle of the seventeenth century. In the years that followed, Cuper communicated with various scholars, in Berlin, Paris and Rome, about the Chinese characters. He came to know the thesis of John Webb (1611–74) that Chinese was the first language, spoken by Adam, and that possibly there was a connection between Chinese and ancient Egyptian.<sup>29</sup> Cuper repeatedly asked his correspondents to keep him up to date, but he himself seems never to have committed to any of the theories circulating concerning the primacy of these ideographic scripts.<sup>30</sup>

Then samples of another type of ancient handwriting, causing as much amazement as the encounter with Chinese, began to circulate in Europe. The ruins of Persepolis had been attracting the attention of European travelers, mainly envoys to the court of the Persian shahs, since the beginning of the seventeenth century. The first descriptions of the cuneiform script appeared in travel accounts of Garcia de Silva Figueroa (1550–1624) (“characters composed of little triangles in the form of a pyramid”) and Thomas Herbert (1606–82) (“figures, obelisk, triangular and pyramidically yet in such symmetry and order

27 David E. Mungello, *Curious Land: Jesuit Accommodation and the Origins of Sinology* (Honolulu, 1989), pp. 13–20; Thijs Weststeijn, ‘The Middle Kingdom in the Low Countries: Sinology in the Seventeenth-Century Netherlands,’ in: *The Making of the Humanities*, ed. Rens Bod, Jaap Maat, and Thijs Weststeijn, 3 vols. (Amsterdam, 2010–14), 2: 209–41, there 210, 214–15.

28 The mirror has been studied with admirable breadth by Van Noord and Weststeijn, ‘The Global Trajectory’ (see above, n. 17). In what follows, my interpretation of Cuper’s thoughts about China, Egypt, and biblical culture will deviate somewhat from theirs.

29 Letter of G. Cuper to M. V. de La Croze (9 August 1713), in: Gijsbert Cuper, *Lettres de critique, d’histoire, de littérature, etc. écrites à divers savans de l’Europe*, ed. Justinus de Beyer (Amsterdam, 1742), p. 140, where Cuper references John Webb, *An Historical Essay Endeavoring a Probability that the Language of the Empire of China is the Primitive Language* (London, 1669).

30 Weststeijn, ‘From Hieroglyphs to Universal Characters’ (see above, n. 5), pp. 249–54; Thijs Weststeijn, ‘Vossius’s Chinese Utopia,’ in: *Isaac Vossius (1618–1689): Between Science and Scholarship*, ed. Eric Jorink and Dirk van Miert (Leiden, 2012), pp. 207–42.

as cannot well be called barbarous"). Both De Silva Figueroa and Herbert suggested that even though it was impossible to decipher them, the cuneiform signs might bear some graphic relation to the ancient Hebrew and Greek alphabets. An engraved sample of cuneiform was first disseminated in Europe in the posthumously published second volume of the *Viaggi* (1658) of Pietro della Valle (1586–1652) (Fig. 2.4).<sup>31</sup>

Only a few scraps of cuneiform writing were available in print by the end of the seventeenth century. The inscription reproduced in Della Valle's *Viaggi*, for instance, consisted solely of five letters. André Daulier-Deslandes published a mere three letters in *Les beautés de la Perse* (1673). These small samples induced Thomas Hyde (1636–1703), the author of a book on Persian religion, to suppose that cuneiform was no script at all but merely a collection of ornamental devices.<sup>32</sup> Seeing that so little cuneiform was actually available to examine, Cuper must have found it exciting to receive news about Cornelis de Bruyn (1652–1726/27). This artist had traveled extensively through the Middle East and South Asia in 1701–8. In Persia he had visited the ruins of Persepolis. Making elaborate drawings of the architectural remains he encountered, he took particular care to copy cuneiform script (Fig. 2.5). He also managed to gather some stone fragments and send them home. Cuper inspected both the copies and the original fragments himself in De Bruyn's home in Amsterdam in 1709.<sup>33</sup> He asked for and obtained his own copies, which he distributed among his friends (Fig. 2.6). As with the other scripts, the Persian cuneiform elicited various responses from among Cuper's scholarly friends—about which more below.

In 1713 Cuper learned of an even more exciting inscription made up of unknown characters. The same Nicolaas Witsen who had shared the reproduction of the Chinese mirror with Cuper was in touch with Willem Konijn (fl. 1704–14), a prospective Reformed minister for whom he had procured a position on Ceylon (present-day Sri Lanka). Konijn had learned the local language, and Witsen suggested that Cuper send the prospective minister questions pertaining to the culture and nature of Ceylon.<sup>34</sup> Cuper responded with

31 Quotations in Arthur J. Booth, *The Discovery and Decipherment of the Trilingual Cuneiform Inscriptions* (London, 1902), pp. 12–47. The engraving appeared in Pietro della Valle, *Viaggi*, 3 vols. (Rome, 1650–1658), 3: 286.

32 Eva Cancik-Kirschbaum and Grégory Chambon, 'Les caractères en forme de coins: le cas du cunéiforme,' *Revue d'Assyriologie et d'Archéologie Orientale* 100 (2006), 13–40, there 23–4.

33 Jan Willem Drijvers, 'Cornelis de Bruijn and Gijsbert Cuper: A Skilled Artist and a Learned Discussion,' in: *Through Travellers' Eyes: European Travellers on the Iranian Monuments* [Achaemenid History 7], ed. Heleen Sancisi-Weerdenburg and Jan Willem Drijvers (Leiden, 1991), 89–107.

34 Letter of N. Witsen to G. Cuper (1 August 1712), UBA, MS Bf 60 (see above, n. 1).

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*Lettera 15. da Scirdz.*

Mi dà inditio, che possa scriuerfi dalla sinistra alla destra al modo nostro, il secondo carattere, che è composto di quattro figure simili piramidali, trè diritte, con la punta in giù, & vna sopra colcata. Perche, delle figure piramidali, il capo, in questa scrittura, come si vede in tutti i caratteri, è la parte larga, che sempre stà di sopra, quando stan diritte. Hora, in quella figura piramidale colcata sopra le trè che stanno in piedi, essendo il suo capo, che è la parte larga, alla sinistra, e la coda, che è la punta, alla destra; mostra, che il principio della scrittura è dalla parte sinistra verso la destra: tuttauia, non l'affermo per sicuro. Il medesimo par che accenni il carattere quarto di vna sola figura piramidale pendente; la cui parte superiore larga, che, come hò detto, è il suo capo, stà pur alla parte sinistra, e la coda, o punta, verso la destra si stende. L'istesso anco fa, la piccola piramide di mezo, nel carattere terzo. Et a chi dicesse, che il capo, e'l principio delle piramidi, fosse la punta sottile, e non la parte larga; onde si hauesse a presumere il contrario: risponderci, che bisognerebbe dunque, che nel carattere secondo, & in tutti gli altri, le piramidi hauessero la punta in sù, e non in giù, come si vede auenire; perche in tutti i caratteri di qualsiuoglia sorte, il capo, e'l principio loro, si stima sempre la parte più alta, e non mai la più bassa. Pur, in fatti, son mie speculationi, con niente di certezza; e può esser, che sia altrimenti. Notai di più, che tutti i caratteri di questa scrittura son composti delle medesime figure piramidali, e di quelle altre più sottili angolari, variamente disposte frà di loro; facendosi differenti i caratteri, vn dall'altro, solo nel numero, e nella disposizione, delle già dette figure. Dopo le iscrizioni, da vna banda e dall'altra della facciata, comincia subito la processione delle statuette di bassò rilieuo,  
tanto

FIGURE 2.4 Sample of cuneiform, reproduced in print in Pietro della Valle, *Viaggi*, 3 vols. (Rome, 1650–1658), 3. Google Books

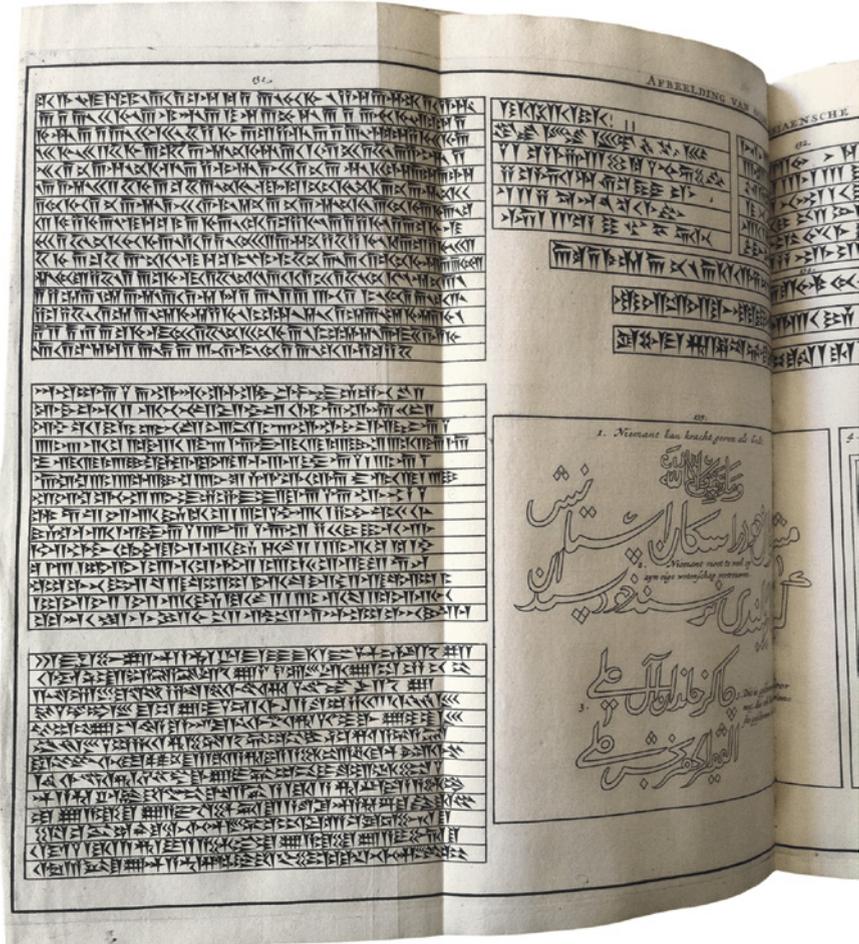


FIGURE 2.5 Cuneiform inscriptions in Persepolis, reproduced by Cornelis de Bruyn in his *Reizen* (Delft, 1698). Amsterdam, Rijksmuseum, call nr KOG OG 1

the questionnaire cited at the start of this article. The island was of interest to Cuper, since he saw possible connections to both biblical and classical culture. It might be identified as Taprobane, mentioned by the ancient author Diodorus Siculus (*Bibliotheca Historica*). Alternatively—or concurrently—it might also be the biblical land of Ophir (or part of it), the destination of the ships that King Solomon sent out to fetch gold (1 Kings 9,26–28).<sup>35</sup>

35 Letter of G. Cuper to N. Witsen (19 August 1712), UBA, MS Be 61 (see above, n. 1); letter of G. Cuper to N. Witsen (14 August 1713), UBA, MS Be 74a (see above, n. 1). Marion Peters has

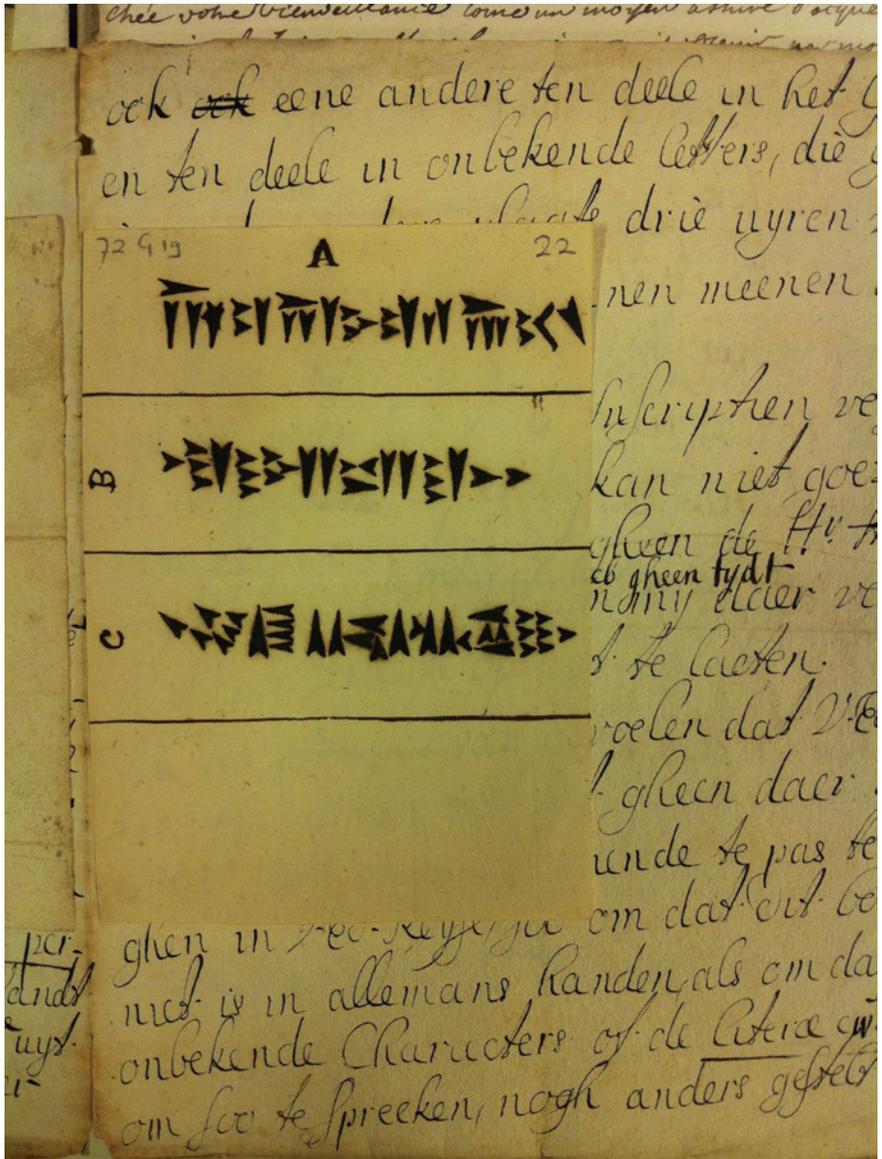


FIGURE 2.6 Sample of cuneiform, copied in ink by Cornelis de Bruyn for Gijsbert Cuper. The Hague, Koninklijke Bibliotheek, MS 72 G 19



FIGURE 2.7 A statue of the reclining Buddha, in the cave complex in Mulgirigala, Sri Lanka, drawn in ink on paper. Amsterdam, University of Amsterdam, MS Bf 71a

Cuper received from Witsen drawings and descriptions of an ancient religious site that the Dutch called Adam's Hill, in Mulgirigala, in the south of Ceylon.<sup>36</sup> Adam's Hill is a large complex of cave sanctuaries containing enormous statues of human figures (Fig. 2.7) (Fig. 2.8) (Fig. 2.9). The figures in the temples hewn out of the rock of Adam's Hill are easy to recognize as Buddhas in various conventional poses (sitting cross-legged, sitting on the *naga*-throne, reclining).<sup>37</sup> When Cuper received the material from Witsen, however, he

already noted Cuper's interest in Ceylon, including his initial intuition that it might have been mentioned in ancient writings (even though she has conflated the classical and the biblical traditions): Peters, 'Nicolaes Witsen and Gijsbert Cuper' (see above, n. 16), 132–3, 136–7.

36 Letter of N. Witsen to G. Cuper (17 September 1713), UBA, MS Bf 71a,c,d (see above, n. 1).

37 R. K. de Silva and W. G. M. Beumer, *Illustrations and Views of Dutch Ceylon, 1602–1796: A Comprehensive Work of Pictorial Reference with Selected Eye-Witness Accounts* (London, 1988), pp. 189–201. 'Adam's Hill' is not to be confused with 'Adam's Peak' or Sri Pada, a mountain with a giant footprint on top, attributed by Buddhists to Buddha and by Muslims and Christians to Adam. For the traditional Sinhalese poses of Buddha images: *ibid.*, p. 472.



FIGURE 2.8 Various statues of the Buddha, in the cave complex in Mulgirigala, Sri Lanka, drawn in ink on paper. Amsterdam, University of Amsterdam, MS Bf 71c

understood them to be statues of Adam and Eve, marking the graves of the first human beings (see the next section).

On the steep way up to the statues there are, again, intriguing inscriptions. One is now considered to be a twelfth-century text in Sinhalese, giving the ancient name of Mulgirigala as Muhundgiri.<sup>38</sup> This inscription, found in a rainwater basin on the plateau giving access to four cave temples, was rendered as a set of scribbles on the drawings that Witsen sent to Cuper in September 1713 (Fig. 2.10).<sup>39</sup> Two years later Cuper received Konijn's copy of a Mulgirigala inscription, drawn with much greater care (Fig. 2.11). Even though it gives the impression of having embellishments originating in the draughtsman's fantasy, the characters are plausibly based on actual medieval Sinhalese script.<sup>40</sup> An impor-

38 S. Paranavitana, *The God of Adam's Peak* (Ascona, 1958), p. 22.

39 Drawing accompanying the letter of N. Witsen to G. Cuper (17 September 1713), UBA, MS Bf 71g (see above, n. 1). Cf. De Silva and Beumer, *Illustrations and Views* (see above, n. 37), p. 471.

40 Letter of W. Konijn to N. Witsen (20 November 1714), accompanying the letter of N. Witsen to Cuper (4 September 1715), UBA, MS Bf 90c (see above, n. 1). It seems that Cuper had



FIGURE 2.9 Various statues of the Buddha, including a Buddha sitting on the naga-throne, in the cave complex in Mulgirigala, Sri Lanka, drawn in ink on paper. Amsterdam, University of Amsterdam, MS Bf 71d



FIGURE 2.10 Part of the cave complex in Mulgirigala, Sri Lanka, drawn in ink on paper. Amsterdam, University of Amsterdam, MS Bf 71g

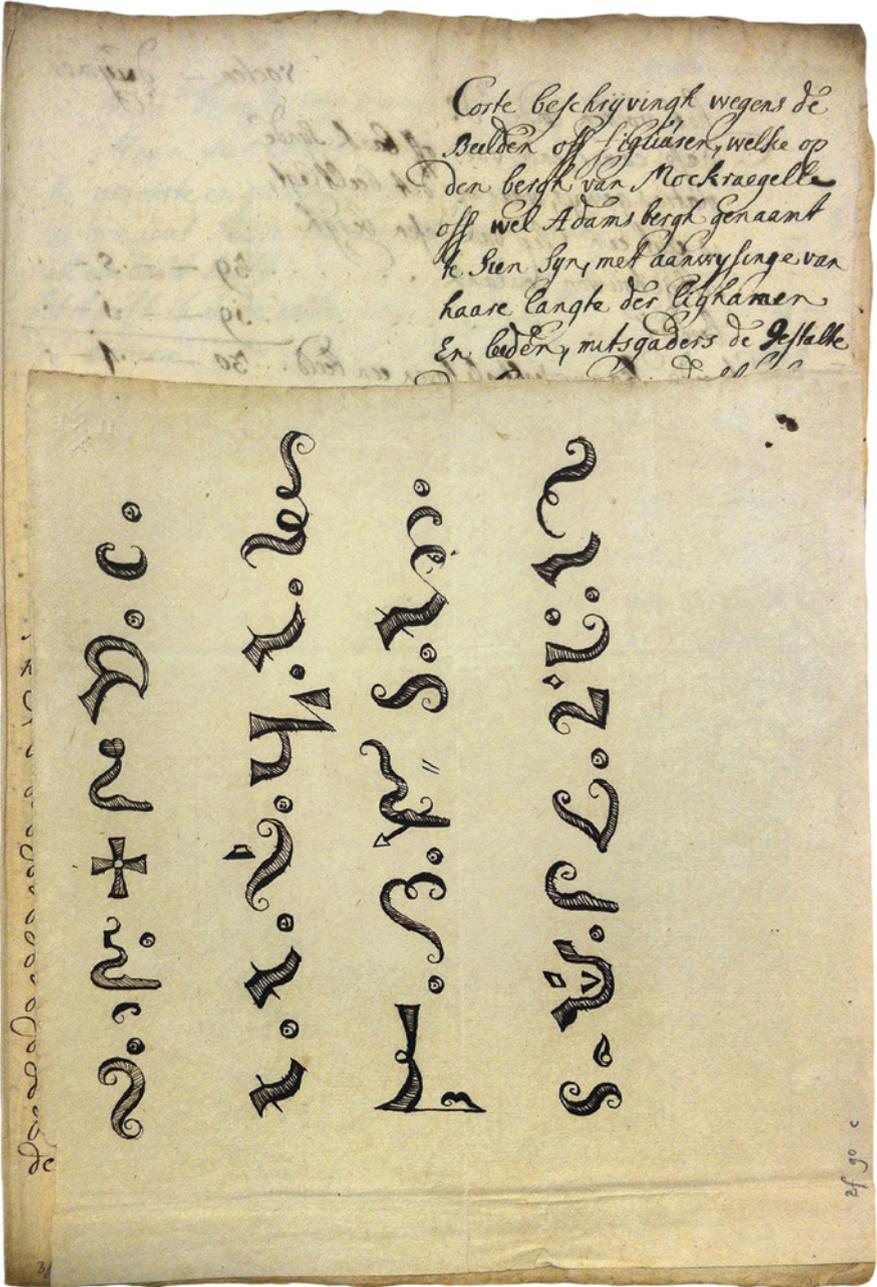


FIGURE 2.11 Sinhalese inscription, reproduced in manuscript by Willem Konijn, 1713. Amsterdam, University of Amsterdam, MS Bf 90c

tant feature of these engraved letters is that they were, like the Chinese characters on the Siberian mirror, ancient. Konijn could not find anyone in Ceylon who knew how to translate the characters. He associated them with the remains of stone settlements, which he surmised had been built by a people inhabiting the island long before the current population had established itself there.<sup>41</sup> Cuper was impressed with the apparent obliteration of any memory of the script:

I also add the inscription [i.e., returning it to you] that has been carved in a rock on the aforementioned mountain [i.e., Mulgirigala], and it is curious that nobody can explain it, which indicates that it has been made there by another people, or that the letters have at some point been changed and fallen into disuse.<sup>42</sup>

Cuper's intellectual horizons, it would seem, expanded substantially from about 1690, during the last twenty-five years of his life, with respect to the classical and biblical world with which he had grown up. This was due to his exposure to a bewildering variety of new texts and artifacts—the reproductions of inscriptions from across the Eurasian continent representing texts and artifacts at the same time. The inscriptions of which he received copies were all ancient, discovered at sites that contained the relics of bygone ages. With the acquisition of samples of ancient Palmyrene, Chinese, Persian, and Ceylonese writing, Cuper had scripts at his disposal which were sufficiently diverse to defy accommodation within his cultural framework, determined by Scripture and the classics. Tellingly, in 1714 and 1715, two years before his death, Cuper seems to have immersed himself in a collection of travelogues. In those years, the letters he wrote to Witsen dealt exclusively with the 28-volume series published by Pieter van der Aa, *Naaukeurige versameling der gedenk-waardigste zee en land-reysen na Oost en West-Indiën* [Accurate collection of the most

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already obtained another reproduction of the same inscription, probably in 1714: UBA, MS Bf 75b (see above, n. 1). See, for a comparison with an actual twelfth-century Sinhalese inscription: G. S. Ranawella, ed., *Inscriptions of Ceylon*, 8 vols. (Colombo, 1970–2008), 6: 339. Unfortunately, I have neither been able to visit Mulgirigala nor to find a reproduction of the inscription in the basin in front of the Alut Viharaya and Naga Viharaya.

41 Letter of W. Konijn to N. Witsen (20 December 1714), accompanying N. Witsen to G. Cuper, 4 September 1715, UBA, MS Bf 90 (see above, n. 1).

42 “Hier gaet ook bij het opschrift, het welk in een rots gehouwen is op gemelten berg, ende het is verwonderings weerdigh, dat niemant die kan uijtlegghen, het welk een teken is, dat die daer gestelt is van andere volkeren, of dat die Characters t’eenemaal verandert en uijt het gebruikt geraekt zijn.” Letter of G. Cuper to N. Witsen (1 October 1715), UBA, MS Be 92 (see above, n. 1).

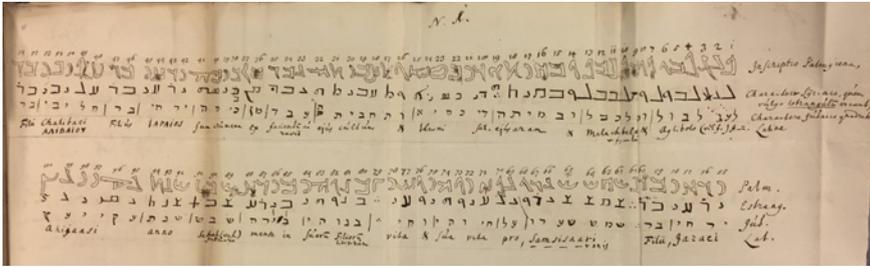


FIGURE 2.12 Palmyrene inscription, reproduced in ink by Jacobus Rhenferd, with corresponding characters in the Syrian Estrangulum-script and the common Hebrew Quadrata, and a Latin word-by-word translation. The Hague, Koninklijke Bibliotheek, MS 72 G 25

memorable voyages by sea and by land to the East and West Indies] (1707).<sup>43</sup> The vastness of the world—culturally, rather than spatially—dawned on him in these final years of his life. It remains to be seen what consequences this new consciousness had for his awareness of the histories of writing, of human cultures, and of the adequacy of the biblical account in accommodating them.

#### 4 Origins of Writing

Cuper was one of several European scholars whose encounters with previously unknown types of ancient writing left their mark on their conceptualizations of world history, and God's part in shaping it. As we observed above, Cuper was not proficient in any ancient language other than Latin and Greek. He seems never to have made any attempt to learn other ancient languages, either. If he articulated ideas concerning the relative antiquity and mutual relations of scripts, he did so based on their appearance, not on the languages they recorded. Accordingly, he made no attempt to decipher the scripts. This neglect of the phonetic or semiotic value of letters and characters is borne out by a mistake he made when passing on Rhenferd's first efforts to decipher the Palmyrene script to his Berlin correspondent La Croze. Rhenferd had sent him the inscription, with a tentative word-by-word translation in Latin written underneath the lines. Cuper sent along only a version of the Latin translation,

43 *Naaukeurige versameling der gedenk-waardigste zee en land-reysen na Oost en West-Indien*, 28 vols. (Leiden, 1707); Marion Peters, *De wijze koopman: het wereldwijde onderzoek van Nicolaes Witsen (1641–1717), burgemeester en VOC-bewindhebber van Amsterdam* (Amsterdam, 2010), pp. 282–3.

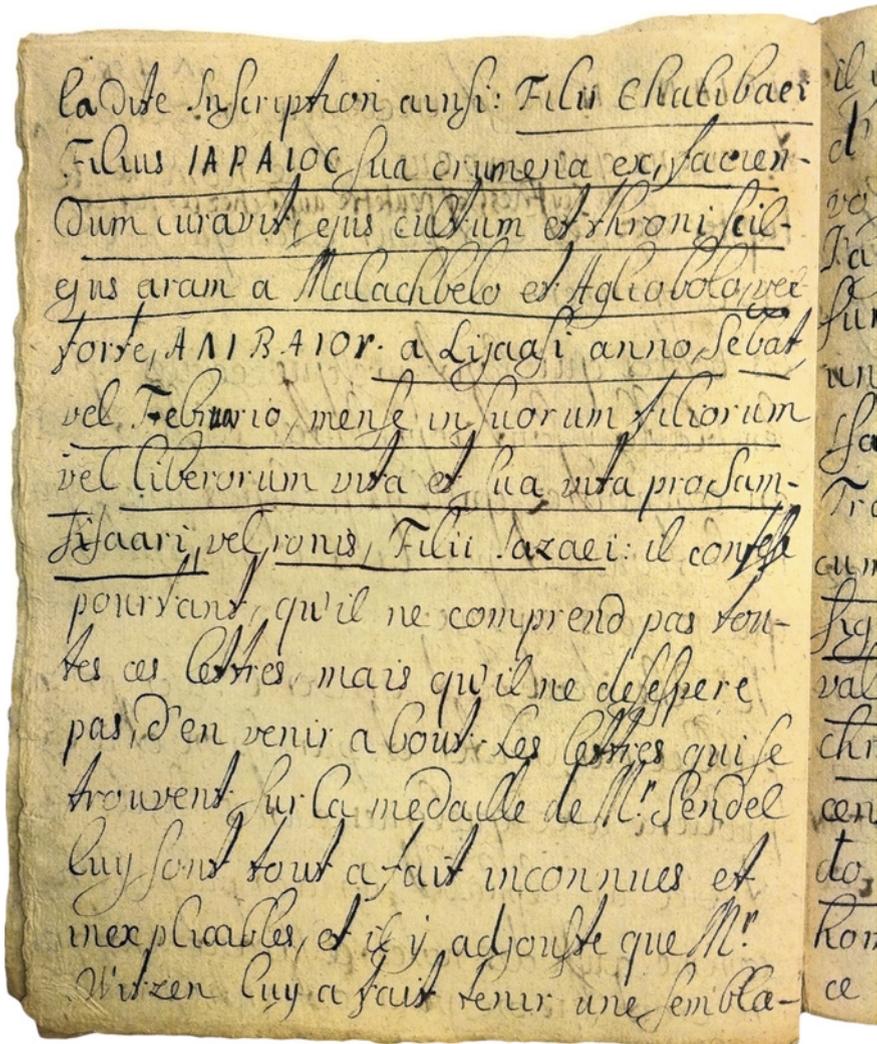


FIGURE 2.13 Draft of a letter of Gijsbert Cuper to Mathurin Veyssière de La Croze, reporting Rhenferd's word-by-word translation of the Palmyrene inscription. The Hague, Koninklijke Bibliotheek, MS 72 H 18

which, because he had not reversed the word order, produced an incomprehensible sentence (Fig. 2.12) (Fig. 2.13).<sup>44</sup> He had forgotten that Semitic languages are written right to left instead of the other way around, as he explained in a subsequent letter:

44 Letter of G. Cuper to M. V. de La Croze (9 July 1709), KB, MS 72 H 18 (see above, n. 24).

I made a laughable mistake, when I had the honour of sending you my last letter. No doubt you will have noticed this blunder, and I apologize for it. The fact is that copying out the explication that mister Rhenferd gives of the memorial inscription, to call it that, of two Palmyrene divinities, I started reading it from the left hand side to the right hand side, instead of what I should have done the opposite, as you will make out from what follows: [there follows the transcript of the Latin translation in the right order].<sup>45</sup>

With regard to non-European scripts, and their origins, Cuper relied purely on visual reproductions, not on any linguistic referentiality.

At first sight this might seem to corroborate a seventeenth-century Dutch fascination with letters based on pictures of things, a pictorial *ideographic* script, as a more immediate form of written communication: a “general desire to sidestep the contingency of alphabetic signs and arrive at pure communication of knowledge,” as Thijs Weststeijn puts it. This pictorial imperative supposedly was behind the evolution from fantastic theories about the semiotic richness of hieroglyphs to systematic attempts to construe graphic systems for the expression of logical relationships.<sup>46</sup> Nevertheless, as we will see below (pace Weststeijn), despite Cuper’s concentration on visual analysis, he and his contemporaries were very clear about the superiority of phonographic characters over ideographic characters—even if they differed about which of the two types of script they preferred to study.

Debate the origins of scripts Cuper certainly did, especially during the last decade of his life. The initial questions he raised with his correspondents were conventional. He wanted to know whether the study of scripts could help establish which alphabet had been the first. More specifically, he hoped that the primacy of either the well-known Quadrata Hebrew or the Samaritan script might be determined. The genealogy of scripts and languages was a fashionable topic in the decades around 1700, and several of Cuper’s correspondents are known to have been prolific participants in these debates: Mathurin Veyssière de La Croze, Louis Bourguet (1678–1742), and Gottfried Wilhelm Leibniz (1646–1716).

45 “Incidit in ridiculum errorem, quand j’avois l’honneur de vous envoyer ma dernière lettre. Vous l’aurez sans doute remarqué cette bevuë, et j’en demande pardon. Le factum est, qu’en copiant l’explication, que Mr. Rhenferd donne a l’Inscription conservatrice, pour m’exprimer ainsi, de deux divinites Palmyrennes, j’ay commence, a la lire de la main gauche vers la droite, au lieu que je devois faire le contraire, comme vous verrez par ce qui s’en suit: [here follows the transcript of the Latin translation in the right order],” letter of G. Cuper to M. V. de La Croze ([before 7 September] 1709), KB, MS 72 H 18 (see above, n. 24).

46 Weststeijn, ‘From Hieroglyphs to Universal Characters’ (see above, n. 5), p. 240.

## 5 Ideography and Phonography

In Cuper's correspondence, we see the various ways that intellectuals schematically related the art of writing to world history and to God's interventions in human affairs. One of the most significant exchanges was with La Croze. The librarian from Berlin was probably the most voracious linguist among these correspondents. He studied on average one language a year. He was also the most optimistic about the possibility of reconstructing a global linguistic genealogy that could accommodate all languages. With Leibniz, La Croze discussed the relation of Albanian to Russian, whether Armenian derived from the language of the ancient Medes, and, famously, whether Coptic was the key to Egyptian and Chinese characters alike.<sup>47</sup>

La Croze seems to have fit the identikit of the graphic idealist. He was concerned with a writing system common to all humankind. He considered ideographic characters (Egyptian, Chinese) to be much more ancient than phonographic ones (Hebrew, Greek), and more apt for a system of 'real characters' (signs denoting things rather than sounds or words), possibly even a universal writing system. He shared this framework with John Wilkins (1614–72) and Leibniz.<sup>48</sup> Following in the footsteps of Kircher, La Croze was obsessed with finding the 'key' which would reduce ideographic scripts as diverse as ancient Egyptian and Chinese to a single graphic system (even though he was dismissive of Kircher's own attempts to arrive at such a key). He was convinced that the Coptic language would provide this key.<sup>49</sup> Underlying this search for a universal graphic script implicitly is a Baconian ideal. A writing system that would convey meaning by picturing things directly would obviate the distorting effects of words. It would restore the universal accessibility that written communication had once possessed but had lost as societies in different parts of the globe—Egyptians, Chinese, the civilizations in Mexico—developed their cultural idiosyncrasies.<sup>50</sup>

47 Malte-Ludolf Babin, 'Armenisch, Albanisch, Hokkien ... Zum sprachwissenschaftlichen Teil von Leibniz' Korrespondenz mit Mathurin Veyssi re de la Croze (1704–1716),' in: *Einheit und Vernunft und Vielfalt der Sprachen: Beitr ge zu Leibniz' Sprachforschung und Zeichentheorie*, ed. Wenchao Li (Stuttgart, 2014), pp. 207–18. See for La Croze's attempt to derive the *clavis sinica* from Coptic: Stolzenberg, *Egyptian Oedipus* (see above, n. 5), pp. 228–9.

48 Jaap Maat, *Philosophical Languages in the Seventeenth Century: Dalgarno, Wilkins, Leibniz* (Dordrecht, 2004), pp. 10–23.

49 Letter of G. Cuper to M. V. de La Croze (19 July 1711), in: Cuper, *Lettres de critique* (see above, n. 29), p. 111; letter of G. Cuper to M. V. de La Croze ([after 21 August] 1713), *ibid.*, p. 121.

50 Rossi, *I segni del tempo* (see above, n. 2), pp. 232–81; Maat, *Philosophical Languages* (see above, n. 48), pp. 10–12.

Although enthusiastic about hieroglyphs and other ideographic writing systems, La Croze held the phonographic alphabet in even greater veneration. At a certain point, Cuper expressed skepticism that God had introduced Hebrew letters to the world when he had Moses inscribe them on the stone tables containing the Decalogue.<sup>51</sup> La Croze responded with a passionate eulogy praising the divine splendor of the alphabet, resonant of Walton's essay in the *London Polyglot*. According to La Croze, the alphabet, "the wonderful art of dividing the voice into the imperceptible elements of which it is composed," was above the faculties of human beings to invent. He had always believed it to be a gift of God.<sup>52</sup> In fact, precisely this supposed divine origin may have marked it as a static fact in 'early modern world history,' not prone to further investigation—unlike the ideographic characters, created by human beings, which invited speculation about a diffusionist model of culture in which at least the entire Eurasian continent derived its pagan cultures from one single source.

A similar scheme—a phonographic alphabet given by God to Moses; ideographic characters much more ancient, of human invention, and possibly originating in one single source—was advocated by Louis Bourguet, a Swiss merchant and friend of Leibniz.<sup>53</sup> He even planned to write a book about the subject, a systematic account of the beginnings of writing (hieroglyphs), to be followed by sections on derivatives of the hieroglyphs, on Hebrew and related characters, on Greek and related characters, and thematic sections on writing's invention and the materials used for writing. The book has not materialized, but Leibniz could give Cuper a detailed table of contents.<sup>54</sup>

The graphic-idealist excitement about ideographic writing notwithstanding, La Croze's remarks about the divine nature of the *alphabet* should give us pause. They remind us that the providential scheme of early modern world history was affected by the origin of phonographic letters rather than that of Egyptian hieroglyphs and Chinese characters. Cuper, for one, did not share in the fascination with ideographic writing and the idea of its global diffusion from a single primeval culture—be that culture infantile or sage. From

51 Exo. 31,18; Exo. 32,15–6; Exo. 34,27–29; Deut. 5,22. In fact, the biblical text is equivocal about whether the inscription on the second set of Moses's tablets was physically written by God or by Moses.

52 "J'ai toujours cru jusqu'à present que Dieu qui a enseigné l'homme à parler, lui a aussi enseigné l'écriture. Quand je considère l'ars merveilleux qui divise si industrieusement les sons de la voix dans les élémens imperceptibles dont ils sont composez, il me paroît qu'il est au dessus de la portée de l'esprit humain d'avoir fait une telle découverte." Letter of M. V. de La Croze to G. Cuper (12 November 1710), KB, MS 72 H 18 (see above, n. 24).

53 Letter of G. Cuper to M. V. de La Croze (10 April 1714), in: Cuper, *Lettres de critique* (see above, n. 29), p. 144.

54 Letter of G. W. Leibniz to G. Cuper (29 December 1707), KB, MS 72 H 17<sup>1</sup> (see above, n. 24), fols. 77r–84v.

the outset Cuper concentrated on Hebrew. He was convinced that the phonographic alphabet was older than La Croze allowed for—that is, older than Moses. Initially, Cuper deployed a biblical argument to push the invention of the alphabet back in time. In the books of Joshua and Judges, the Jews attacked the city of Qireyat-Sepher (City of Letters). If that city had already been called the ‘City of Letters’ before the Jews entered Canaan, then clearly the Canaanites had invented the alphabet themselves.<sup>55</sup> But Cuper did not press the matter. He was politely noncommittal in his dealings with international scholars such as La Croze and Bourguet. However, in his protracted exchange with, for instance, Johannes Meyer (1651–1725), a little-known professor of theology at the University of Harderwijk, it is the phonographic Hebrew alphabet that he expressly inquired about. His much more outspoken statements in this correspondence show his conviction that the Hebrew alphabet was among the most ancient existing scripts, yet not necessarily the most ancient, and that several scripts may have come into use at different moments—implying that rather than a gift from God, they were the result of human inventiveness.<sup>56</sup>

Frequent encounters with exotic scripts after 1690 complicated matters. Cuper now had to deal with a variety of scripts that had come to his attention. The Palmyrene alphabet may not have caused too much of a disturbance. It was easily absorbed into the speculative evolution of Semitic scripts, as tabulated, for instance, by the Franeker professor Rhenferd.<sup>57</sup> (Fig. 2.14) As for the Chinese of the Siberian mirror, Cuper did not give much credence to the diffusionist thesis. “I believe that neither the Egyptians, nor the Jews ever penetrated into China,” as he put it in a letter to La Croze in 1708, in relation to the Chinese mirror discovered in the Siberian grave.<sup>58</sup> Cuper duly forwarded reproductions of the ancient Chinese script, but he refrained from commenting on it himself.

It was Ceylonese culture which threw Cuper off balance. Attempts were already underway to find out whether contemporary Sinhalese, one of the living languages spoken on Ceylon, was related to any other language encountered in Eurasia. La Croze typically singled out words that Sinhalese seemed to have in common with Egyptian. This reflected his tendency to bring as many scripts

55 Letter of G. Cuper to M. V. de La Croze (15 October 1710), in: Cuper, *Lettres de critique* (see above, n. 29), pp. 75–6.

56 Letters of G. Cuper to J. Meyer (21 May 1709; 16 July 1709); 15 October 1709), KB, MS 72 G 18 (see above, n. 24).

57 Correspondence between G. Cuper and J. Rhenferd, KB, MS 72 G 25 (see above, n. 24), fol. 100r.

58 “Je croi che ni les uns [i.e., Egyptians] ni les autres [i.e., Jews] n’ont jamais pénétré jusques dans la Chine, ou dans la Siberie,” letter of G. Cuper to M. V. de La Croze (4 December 1708), in: Cuper, *Lettres de critique* (see above, n. 29), p. 19.

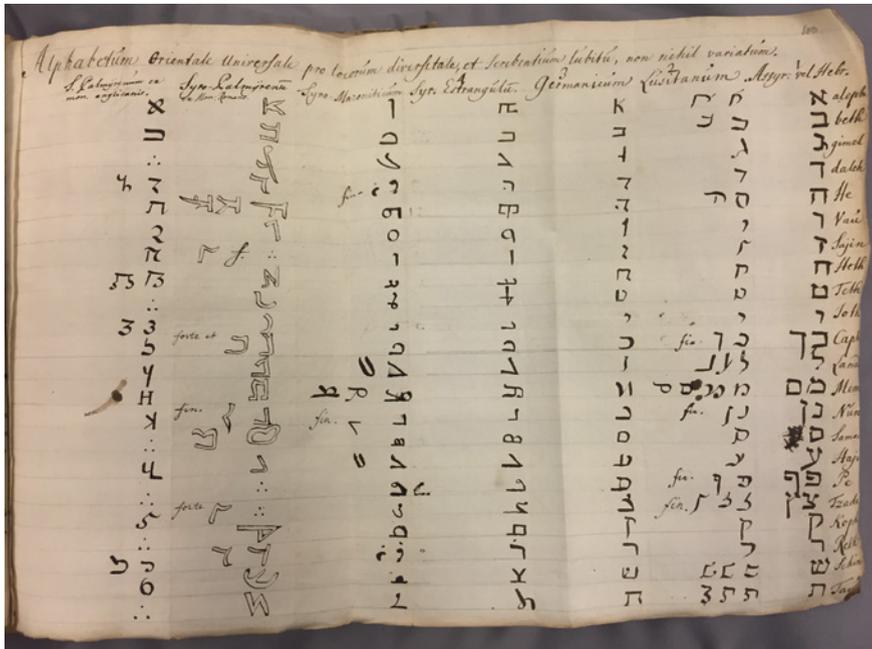


FIGURE 2.14 Semitic alphabets, tabulated by Jacobus Rhenferd. The second column has the Palmyrene alphabet. The Hague, Koninklijke Bibliotheek, MS 72 G 25

as possible within a globally diffused system of ideographic characters, which purportedly had devolved into a plethora of different sets of characters. Cuper was impressed—but also cautious, as usual. “If you happen to have some time, you would oblige me more than I know how to express, by informing me which Sinhalese words you think are Egyptian in origin.”<sup>59</sup> Witsen’s representative on the island, the prospective minister Konijn, had investigated whether Sinhalese showed any similarities with Hebrew or Greek. He had found only eight words that seemed similar to Greek words both in their consonants and in their meaning.<sup>60</sup>

But more thought-provoking than contemporary Sinhalese was the inscription copied at the Mulgirigala sanctuary, which seemed to go back to times

59 “Si vous aviez quelque temps vous m’obligeriez plus que je ne sçaurois vous dire de me faire part de quelques mots Singalois, que vous croyez être Egyptiens.” Letter of G. Cuper to M. V. de La Croze (9 August 1713), in: Cuper, *Lettres de critique* (see above, n. 29), pp. 139–41.

60 Letter of W. Konijn to N. Witsen (20 December 1714), accompanying N. Witsen to G. Cuper, 4 September 1715, UvA, MS Bf 90c (see above, n. 1); cf. Peters, ‘Nicolaes Witsen en Gijsbert Cuper’ (see above, n. 16), 125–6.

immemorial—literally, since the indigenous inhabitants had no recollection of their significance, suggesting pre-Sinhalese origins. This obscure origin added considerably to their value as graphic witnesses to archaic world cultures. Would these characters prove the diffusionists right after all, even if the script diffused was not ideographic but phonographic?

What was more, on the island there were ruins of a city, with towers and gateways made of cut stones. The contemporary Ceylonese people did not practice masonry. The techniques evident in the ruins seemed to corroborate the suggestion that before the current population arrived, another people had inhabited Ceylon. These extinct or emigrated previous inhabitants must have produced the inscription at Mulgirigala. Could they have been Egyptians? Chinese? Jews? The cross sign among the characters of the Mulgirigala inscription, moreover, “embarrassed” Cuper, as he remarked to La Croze in a letter of 1714: was it a reference, proleptic or prophetic, to Christianity?<sup>61</sup> The other artifacts found at the site of the inscription compounded Cuper’s embarrassment. Mulgirigala was famous for its sculptures marking graves attributed to Adam and Eve. The caves were filled with statues that supposedly depicted Adam and Eve (in fact they are Buddha statues), each seemingly surrounded by different sets of children. This would mean that Adam and Eve had offspring with other partners, which in turn would be an unsettling confirmation of the infamous pre-Adamite thesis of La Peyrère (‘pre-Adamites’ having produced various children with Adam and Eve, respectively). Cuper dismissed this possibility outright as a pagan superstition, but the thought clearly disturbed him.<sup>62</sup> A feature which struck him particularly was the statue of Buddha protected by the *naga*, a giant snake (Fig. 2.9), which Cuper hesitantly associated with the snake in Paradise tempting Eve: “a sign, so it seems to me, that those Heathens, who erected these statues, or had them made, were knowledgeable about the deplorable and sad fall of our first mother.”<sup>63</sup>

Especially the *combination* of an inscription which confirmed the diffusion of the art of writing from a Mediterranean cradle to the outskirts of the world, and a context of artifacts which confirmed the existence of people before Adam, was a menacing prospect for the consistency of world history within a biblical framework. At what temporal distance from Cuper’s age would this

61 Letter of G. Cuper to M. V. de La Croze (22 November 1713), in: Cuper, *Lettres de critique* (see above, n. 29), pp. 145–6; letter of G. Cuper to M. V. de La Croze (5 May 1714), in: Cuper, *Lettres de critique* (see above, n. 29), pp. 151–2.

62 Letter of G. Cuper to N. Witsen (10 October 1713), UBA, MS Be 75 (see above, n. 1).

63 “Een teken, naer mij het toeschijnt, dat die Heydenen, die dese beelden hebben opgerigt of doen maeken, kennisse hebben gehadt van den beklaghlijcken en bedroefden val van onse eerste moeder.” Letter of G. Cuper to N. Witsen (28 November 1713), UBA, MS Be 76 (see above, n. 1).

diffusion have taken place? Who could these people who had transmitted written knowledge—and to whom the Bible made no reference—have been? Again, Cuper discussed the Ceylonese inscription with the polyglot La Croze. To no avail: La Croze considered the characters very pretty, but he had no clue how to decipher them or where to position them in the universal genealogy of languages and scripts.<sup>64</sup>

Fortunately for Cuper, soon afterwards he was able to observe a resemblance between these statues and Siamese sculpture, and to conclude—wrongly—that the Ceylonese inscriptions derived from Chinese.<sup>65</sup> Nevertheless, this episode very clearly shows how the historical scenarios available to scholars interested in the history of human language and scripts were becoming unstable. The neat binary development of a phonographic script, divinely planted among Semitic ancestors and used for the Bible and subsequently for the classical corpus, and a family of ideographic scripts, originating among the Egyptians and diffused among heathens across the globe, was becoming untenable. The providential scheme of the generation of Walton was giving way to the open-ended scheme that we have seen fully developed in the generation of Jaucourt.

## 6 Reproducing and Examining Scripts

Here it is expedient to dwell briefly on the issue of the reproduction and examination of letterforms in this period. It is in these decades that we see a deep concern for the accuracy of graphic reproduction, embodied in the development of state-of-the-art techniques for transferring ancient letters, drawn and chiseled, onto paper. We may surmise that with regard to inscriptions comprising unknown letters, the accuracy of transcription was even more important than with Latin or Greek inscriptions. After all, the reader would not be able to resort to intuition in combining letters into words and sentences. Every single

64 Letter of G. Cuper to M. V. de La Croze (5 May 1714) (see above, n. 61); letter of M. V. de La Croze to G. Cuper (22 May 1714), KB, MS 72 H 19 (see above, n. 24). For the copy of the inscription in Mulgrigala that Cuper had obtained already in 1714, before receiving the one Konijn had sent to Witsen, and which Cuper discussed with La Croze and Jean-Paul Bignon (1662–1743), see above, n. 40.

65 Letter of G. Cuper to M. V. de La Croze (5 May 1714) (see above, n. 61); letter of G. Cuper to J.-P. Bignon ([after 5 May] 1714), *Lettres de critique* (see above, n. 29), p. 327. In the latter, Cuper mentioned Trigaut, cited in Kircher's *China illustrata*, who reported that the Chinese language had a cross to mark the number ten, which for Cuper resolved the issue of the significance of the cross in the Ceylonese inscription. The editor of the *Lettres de critique* dated this letter "February 1714," but since Cuper did not mention the Ceylonese inscription to Bignon until 5 May 1714 (*ibid.*, p. 328), this date cannot be correct.

line had to be carefully examined so as to allow the unknown script to be compared with other letterforms.

It would seem that the improvement in the graphic craft of reproducing letters (written or inscribed) accelerated over the course of the seventeenth century. An early standard collection of European Latin epigraphy, a point of reference for scholars throughout the century, was Janus Gruterus's two volume *Inscriptiones antiquae*, published in 1602–3.<sup>66</sup> Despite its claim to have been true to the original letterforms, in general the twelve thousand inscriptions reproduced in the two volumes looked more or less the same. Only in relatively few instances was the actual appearance of the epigraphy presented by way of a graphic reproduction.<sup>67</sup> By the end of the century, this working method had changed. Jean Mabillon (1632–1707) issued his *De re diplomatica libri VI* in 1681. This work included sixty tables with reproductions of ancient and medieval writing, as well as artifacts. Mabillon's monumental publication is renowned as a first attempt to systematize historical source criticism.<sup>68</sup> Incidentally, it is also a landmark in the graphic reproduction of writing. Its author treated script as just another type of ancient artifact, which ought to be rendered faithfully in form as well as content.

Excitement about Mabillon's project is borne out by letters exchanged between Cuper and Antonio Magliabechi (1633–1714), the librarian of the Grand Duke Cosimo III (1642–1723) of Tuscany. Magliabechi told Cuper about Mabillon's "curious book" in 1679, two years before its appearance. Magliabechi himself had contributed to the project with samples of writing from two treasures of the Medici library: a copy of Virgil from late antiquity and an early medieval copy of the Justinian Pandects.<sup>69</sup> Tellingly, he drew attention to the way he had crafted the reproductions, following the instructions of the Maurists: he had "copied, or better, traced" the lines of letters. They were not re-drawn by sight but were re-traced on transparent paper stretched out on top of the original.<sup>70</sup> Mabillon's paleographic innovation, and Magliabechi's enthusiasm

66 Janus Gruterus, *Inscriptiones antiquae totius orbis Romani*, 2 vols. (Heidelberg, 1602–3).

67 William Stenhouse, 'Classical Inscriptions and Antiquarian Scholarship in Italy, 1600–1650,' in: *The Afterlife of Inscriptions: Reusing, Rediscovering, Reinventing & Revitalizing Ancient Inscriptions*, ed. Alison Cooley (London, 2000), pp. 77–89, there 80.

68 First edition, Jean Mabillon, *De re diplomatica libri VI* (Paris, 1681). I have consulted the edition (Paris, 1709). See also Gabrielle Bickendorff, 'Die Geschichte und ihre Bilder vom Mittelalter: Zur "longue durée" visueller Überlieferung,' in: *Visualisierung und Imagination: Materielle Relikte des Mittelalters in bildlichen Darstellungen der Neuzeit und der Moderne*, ed. Bernd Carqué et al., 2 vols. (Göttingen, 2006) 1: 103–52, there 128.

69 Mabillon, *De re diplomatica* (see above, n. 68), pp. 354, 357.

70 "Il Padre Mabillon, fà stampare in Parigi, un suo dotto, e curioso Libro, intorno alle Scritture di ciasun secolo, per conoscere le vere, dalle false, e[cc.] Inserirà in questo

about it, indicate the importance attached to visual precision by Cuper's contemporaries. They applauded innovative techniques of graphic reproduction.

We see this enthusiasm for graphic accuracy interwoven with the discussions about the origins of letters. This is clear, for instance, in La Croze's comments on the inscription from Ceylon. Not only was he enthralled by their visual appearance, but he was also impressed by the quality of the reproduction. He had seen another version in a manuscript of the Royal Library in Berlin, which was not as well executed as Cuper's: "The inscription which you have sent me can be found here, as well, but poorly drawn: your copy seems much more accurate."<sup>71</sup>

Cuper himself employed a draughtsman to reproduce the antiquities he discussed with his international set of friends. As he explained to Rhenferd in 1702, he could send the professor more samples of the Palmyrene writing another time, "when the person who normally draws for me, is back in town."<sup>72</sup> Apparently the scholar had an artist in regular service to reproduce the many inscriptions, coins, and reliefs that he discussed with his interested friends across Europe. It is not surprising, then, to see La Croze praising Cuper for the accuracy of the copies he sent him.

In one extraordinary episode revolving around the inscriptions from Palmyra, we see a scholar and an artist collaborating in copying an inscription so accurately that the resulting depiction showed even the cracks of the original. This endeavor was a direct consequence of Rhenferd's dealings with the Palmyrene language. Dedicated to mapping the history of Semitic languages and scripts, Rhenferd meticulously compared Hebrew and Aramaic letterforms, past and present. A sample of this interest, a table of versions of Hebrew and other Semitic scripts, can be found among Cuper's papers. Rhenferd reproduced variations that were not only chronological but geographical, such as those of Sephardic and Ashkenazi Hebrew, typically the variants that he would encounter in the Dutch Republic (Fig. 2.15). In fact, as an added note explains, Rhenferd had copied the Sephardic script himself "with a trembling hand."<sup>73</sup> Again, Rhenferd draws attention to the appearance of the reproduction, in this case

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suo Libro i primi due versi di molti insigni manoscritti, copiati, o per dir meglio, lucidati per l'appunto. Per tale effetto, gli ho mandati lucidati in tal maniera, i primi due versi delle famose Pandette, e del celebre manoscritto di Vergilio, che quà si trova." Letter of A. Magliabechi to G. Cuper (1679 Nov 1), KB, MS 72 D 10 (see above, n. 24), fols. 4–5.

71 "L'Inscription que vous m'avez envoyée s'y trouve aussi, mais fort mal représentée: vôtre copie paroît bien plus exacte." Letter of M. V. de La Croze to G. Cuper (22 May 1714), KB, MS 72 H 19 (see above, n. 24).

72 Letter of G. Cuper to J. Rhenferd (16 November 1702), KB, MS 72 G 25 (see above, n. 24), fols. 7r–8r.

73 Correspondence between G. Cuper and J. Rhenferd, KB MS 72 G 25 (see above, n. 24), fol. 87v.



After six years of frantic correspondence Cuper's attempts bore fruit. The famous antiquarian Francesco Bianchini provided Rhenferd with a copy of the inscriptions on the stele. Bianchini's report of his discovery of the inscription testifies to the pride he took in his meticulous method of working. The relief was built into the façade of the Villa Giustiniani in Rome and Bianchini had spotted it only by aiming his spyglass at the sculpture. He went to great lengths to produce a copy that would satisfy Rhenferd. He employed an "expert in the manufacture of models" to make the reproduction. The relief was situated high up in the façade, so Bianchini had the owners of the villa erect a scaffold for the artisan to stand on. The artisan covered the inscription with chalk. He made a mold by pressing the chalk into the cavities of the letters. He poured plaster over it, which hardened to a plaster cast. This cast allowed Bianchini to make a print of the inscription, on a large sheet of paper that ended up as fold-outs in several manuscript volumes (Fig. 2.18).<sup>76</sup> Bianchini was jubilant about its accuracy. One could see the letterforms, the distance between letters, and even the lesions!<sup>77</sup>

Bianchini's enthusiasm testifies to the concern for the actual, *visual* form of letters (alphabetic letters, not hieroglyphs or characters), analogous to Mabillon's novel technique. The almost obsessive investment in visual and graphic accuracy was certainly not unique to the study of scripts or of antiquities in general. In fact, the painstaking notation and depiction of visual minutiae was the hallmark of the naturalist counterparts to the study of antiquities—the study of minerals and fossils, of insects and plants, which were equally instrumental in a shifting hermeneutics.<sup>78</sup> In the case of letterforms, however, higher accuracy did not lead to more clarity.

76 E.g. Correspondence between G. Cuper and J. Rhenferd, KB, MS 72 G 25 (see above, n. 24), fol. 142<sup>bis</sup>; leaf accompanying the letter of G. Cuper to M. V. de La Croze (17 September 1709), KB MS 72 H 18 (see above, n. 24).

77 "Characteres quidem Graecos et Palmyrenos non satis distinguere dabatur nudis oculis, prae nimiâ scilicet altitudine, quae sexaginta palmorum intercapedine tabulam à me removebat. Optico tamen tubo eosdem ita secernebam, ut stylo imitari expedire possem.... Quin etiam permiserunt, ut creta complanata admoventur marmoris per artificem plasticas peritum: qui subinde lacunas [*sic*] characterum eandem adigens justo pressionis modo ectypon retulit: mox affuso supra cretam gypso toreuma literarum [*sic*] efformavit, archetypo quam simillimum: Unde ipse potui curare morosius ac reddere, singulorum characterum ductus, figuram, intervalla, et ipsamet vitia marmoris exesi, et in aes deinde transferri, ut inclusum exemplum ostendit." Letter of F. Bianchini to G. Cuper, undated [1708/09], KB, MS 72 G 23/2 (see above, n. 24); the letter has been published in Francesco Bianchini, *Opuscula Varia* (Rome, 1754), pp. 55–9, with minor variants.

78 Eric Jorink, 'Between Emblematics and Argument from Design: The Representation of Insects in the Dutch Republic,' in: *Early Modern Zoology: The Construction of Animals in Science, Literature and the Visual Arts*, ed. Karl A. E. Enenkel and Paul J. Smith (Leiden,



FIGURE 2.16 Syrian stele, found in Rome, with an inscription at the bottom in both the Greek and Palmyrene scripts. Rome, Capitoline Museum, NCE2406

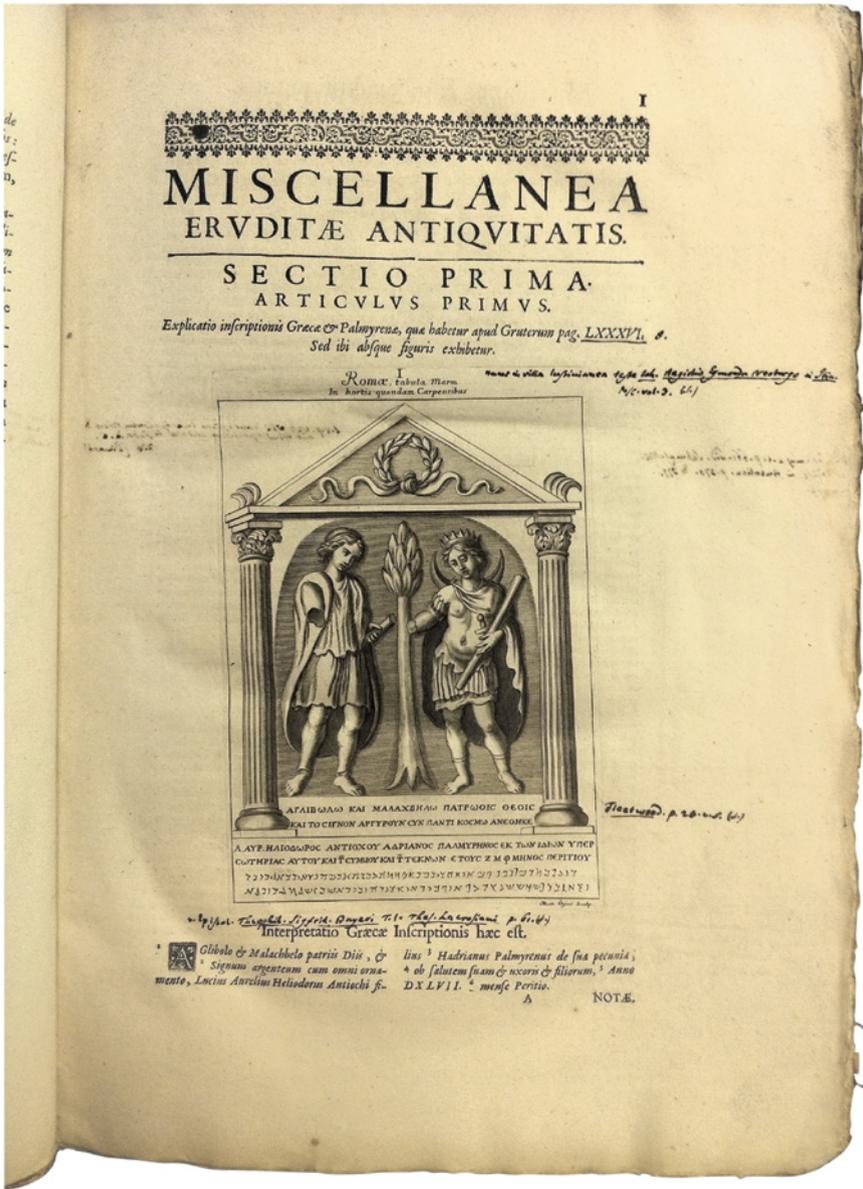


FIGURE 2.17 Syrian stele, reproduced in Jacob Spon, *Miscellanea eruditae antiquitatis* (Lyon, 1685), based on Janus Gruterus, *Inscriptiones antiquae totius orbis Romani*, 2 vols. (Heidelberg, 1602–3). The Hague, Koninklijke Bibliotheek, call nr. KW 392 C13



FIGURE 2.18 Palmyrene inscription on the Syrian stele, reproduced in engraving by the Utrecht printer Frans Halma, copy of Gijsbert Cuper. The Hague, Koninklijke Bibliotheek, MS 72 G 25

The care with which reproductions of unknown scripts were forged and examined was vital to the reception of these scripts and their accommodation in the perception of world history. Despite the ever-increasing accuracy of reproductions, formal relations among newly discovered scripts failed to reveal themselves, and their possible derivations from any of the others was not made clearer. Thus some scholars—including Cuper—became convinced that the history of writing did not reflect a gradual diffusion of graphically encoded wisdom from a single source, and that God had not created a Hebrew alphabet instantaneously as a unique stroke of genius for other cultures to follow. Rather, the application of ingenious principles had occurred in different places at different times by several cultures—at a remove that was distant and impossible to pinpoint exactly.

The factor of accurate reproduction was definitely in play in the evaluation of the significance of the cuneiform inscriptions found in the Middle East. When Thomas Hyde commented on cuneiform, he denied that it was even a script. The appearance of its signs had led him to this verdict: no single instance of a cuneiform sign occurred more than once, proving that these were not letters but merely ornamental elements. This hypothesis seemed to be corroborated by the fact that the signs he saw were separated by dots. This argument based on dots actually rested on a misperception, however: the dots had

2007), pp. 147–75; Paula Findlen, 'Agostino Scilla: A Baroque Painter in Pursuit of Science,' in: *Science in the Age of Baroque*, ed. Ofer Gal and Raz Chen-Morris (Dordrecht, 2013), pp. 119–59; Eric Jorink, 'Snakes, Fungi and Insects: Otto Marseus van Schrieck, Johannes Swammerdam and the Theory of Spontaneous Generation,' in: *Zoology in Early Modern Culture: Intersections of Science, Theology, Philology, and Political and Religious Education*, ed. Karl A. E. Emenkel and Paul J. Smith (Leiden, 2014), pp. 196–233.

been added by one Samuel Flower (fl. 1693) to separate an arbitrary combination of several cuneiform letters which he raked together and depicted in an article in the *Philosophical Transactions* of 1693.<sup>79</sup>

Conversely, De Bruyn took care to reproduce the cuneiform with great technical precision. In a letter to Cuper of 1709, Leibniz praised the artist for copying the Persian cuneiform so well.<sup>80</sup> More generally, De Bruyn was renowned for the high quality of his depictions of artifacts. Zacharias von Uffenbach, who made a tour of the Republic in 1711, observed how De Bruyn executed his reproductions of antiquities on the spot:

He has made them after life, not only with Indian ink, but usually also with all kinds of water colors, and not only as mere designs, but he has always finished them on the spot, complete with foreground and embellishments.<sup>81</sup>

De Bruyn's reproduction of cuneiform prompted Cuper to look hard at these signs. In a letter to La Croze, commenting on the Persian script, Cuper responded to the former's predictable contention that the cuneiform letters were related to hieroglyphs—as were most scripts. Cuper failed to see anything hieroglyphic in them. The signs did not depict anything. Rather, they looked alphabetic, to be combined into words.<sup>82</sup> On this point, Cuper agreed with Leibniz. In fact, the German philosopher was very impressed by the cuneiform script, by its form as much as its apparent antiquity. In a letter of 1707, he emphasized that the Persian characters were exceptional because they were plain: they made up “a very peculiar kind of alphabet, surpassing all others in simplicity, if I am not mistaken.”<sup>83</sup>

As Leibniz later remarked, this script was the invention of a sage, whereas all other alphabets were nothing but the barbarian deformations of the original Hebrew or Phoenician that had either been given by God to humankind

79 Cancik-Kirschbaum and Chambon, ‘Les caractères en forme de coins’ (see above, n. 32), 23–5.

80 Letter of G. W. Leibniz to G. Cuper (26 October 1709), KB, MS 72 H 17 (see above, n. 24).

81 “Er hat sie nicht allein mit Indianischer Dinte, sondern auch meistens mit allerhand Wasserfarben nach dem Leben verfertigt, und zwar nicht als blose Entwürfe, sondern er hat sie jedesmal in loco, wie er versicherte, ausgearbeitet, und ausgeführt, mit dem Vorgrund und ganzer Ausstaffierung.” Cited in Drijvers, ‘Cornelis de Bruijn and Gijsbert Cuper’ (see above, n. 33), p. 95.

82 Letter of G. Cuper to M. V. de La Croze ([the end of] 1715), in: Cuper, *Lettres de critique* (see above, n. 29), p. 178.

83 “Alphabeti genus plane singulare et aliis omnibus ni fallor praestans simplicitate,” letter of G. W. Leibniz to G. Cuper (27 December 1707), KB, MS 72 H 17 (see above, n. 24).

or devised by some Patriarch.<sup>84</sup> Jean-Jacques Rousseau (1712–78) would later echo this observation when he stated “this character [i.e., cuneiform] is not at all deformed, nor barbarian.”<sup>85</sup> Leibniz’s remark is illuminating in more than one sense. He understood cuneiform script to constitute a phase in the history of writing that was completely independent of the Semitic-Greek-Latin family of alphabets. He also left open the question whether the Semitic-Greek-Latin family had entered the world by direct divine intervention or through the ingenuity of some unidentified pre-Mosaic individual.

Cuper made these views his own, either persuaded by Leibniz or arriving at them himself. A few months before he died, Cuper expressed what we may take to have been his final thought on the history of writing—the result of a quarter-century of exposure to an overwhelming variety of scripts. For once he abandoned his usual reticence toward his international peers, expounding in unequivocal terms what he had come to believe the most sensible position in his penultimate letter to La Croze. He appealed directly to the *appearance* of letters. He refused to believe that God had created the alphabet, not for Adam, Moses, or anyone else. Otherwise the various alphabets around the world would certainly have *looked* more alike. Tellingly, Cuper adduced the Persian cuneiform: even though these plain characters looked more like Hebrew letters than any other known script, on close inspection they turned out to have nothing in common with Hebrew. Given that there was so much diversity among scripts, even among those that at first glance might seem vaguely similar, Cuper concluded that there was no one single family to which all forms of writing could be reconnected. Writing must have been invented in several societies independently. Scripts were among the *heurēmata*, the crafty inventions of human beings. They were not to be attributed to the *Pantokratōr*, the Almighty God, but to human acuity.<sup>86</sup>

Thus, in Cuper we see how the formal appearance of letters became more meaningful to scholars during a period when meticulous graphic reproduction was at the forefront of technical innovation. More specifically, the formal diversity of alphabets played a decisive role in relocating the introduction of writing in the history of human societies. This was a period when world history was redefined, so that the seams that had held together the Bible, the Earth,

84 Letter of G. W. Leibniz to G. Cuper (30 July 1708), KB, MS 72 H 17 (see above, n. 24).

85 “Ce caractère [cunéiforme] n’a rien de confus ni de barbare,” Jean-Jacques Rousseau, ‘Essai sur l’origine des langues’ (ca. 1754), in: idem, *Traité sur la musique* (Genève, 1781), pp. 209–325, there 233.

86 “Je range cela parmi les ἐυρήματα par la pénétration de l’esprit humain, comme il y a autant d’autres, qu’on s’étonne d’être inventez & pratiquez, qu’on droit devoir leur origine à Dieu le παντοκράτορ.” Letter of G. Cuper to M. V. de La Croze (1 June 1716), in: Cuper, *Lettres de critique* (see above, n. 29), p. 182.

and human culture came loose as a consequence of biblical criticism, ethnographical observations, and antiquarian scholarship. The history of writing was but one of the forces which contributed to the unraveling of this fabric, but it shows particularly well how humanist philological expertise, combined with the craftsmanship of graphic artists in dealing with the stubborn material world, helped transform the biblical framework of world history.

## 7 Conclusion

The increased accuracy of reproductive techniques should have enabled scholars to establish the relationships among systems of alphabetic letterforms more easily. It might have been expected that as such techniques developed, the genealogy of scripts, and concurrently the genealogy of languages, and above all the genealogy of the peoples who had populated the various parts of the world, would have become more sharply drawn. Instead, the opposite happened. As experts in Europe received ever more accurate reproductions of exotic inscriptions, what really struck observers was their diversity. Cuneiform is a case in point. First interpreted as a highly stylized pictographic script, it ultimately appeared to Leibniz and Cuper to be analogous to the letters of an alphabet rather than to hieroglyphic or Chinese characters. Rather than being an addition to the known pictographic or ideographic scripts, it was an apparently alphabetic script. Nevertheless, despite the analogy, there was nothing in cuneiform that could formally be related to the Hebrew, Greek, or Latin alphabets. This led Cuper, for one, to conclude that the technique of writing was the result of human ingenuity, in various places, at various times.

The exchange of materials and ideas that led to this conclusion intersected at various points with the circulation of better-known strands in the history of ideas: the pre-Adamite thesis of Isaac La Peyrère, the relative antiquity of Judaic, Egyptian, and Chinese cultures discussed by Isaac Vossius and Georg Hornius, and the global esotericism of Athanasius Kircher. Cuper was intrigued by these topics, as shown by his indignation at the supposed statues of Adam and Eve and their progeny on Ceylon, and again by his curiosity when La Croze claimed to be able to relate Chinese to Coptic, Armenian to Median, and Sinhalese to Egyptian. Nevertheless, speculation about phonographic alphabets had a dynamic of its own, distinct from the discussions of ideography and pictography, and it was as much determined by technical sophistication as by critical argument. Moreover, the phonographic alphabet was more closely bound up with the providential history of God's chosen people. As such, for biblical religion the failure of Hebrew letters to retain their status as the

primeval source of all other phonographic scripts was ultimately more consequential than the evident untenability of the idea that Chinese, Mexican, and Egyptian scripts could reveal one single, universally intelligible ideographic source.

Cuper is a striking example of how one academic, starting out solidly primed in the classics, experienced his awareness of the immensity of world history expand to the point that the framework of the Bible and classical antiquity could no longer encompass it. This newfound awareness affected his appreciation of writing and its place in world history. It is in the papers of Cuper that we see the notion of a linear progression, beginning with the Creation and extending through the Fall, the Flood, the Laws, Redemption, and ultimately the Last Judgment, yield in the face of proliferating fragments of knowledge about the world and its diverse inhabitants, who had developed widely divergent cultural traditions. Human achievements such as writing were progressively eased away from the compelling teleology of providential world history that was characteristic of confessionalized Christian culture. The multifarious cultural encounters thus had *practical* implications, which were as consequential as *theoretical* speculation for unraveling the coherence of a religiously informed world history.

# Colonies of Concord: Religious Escapism and Experimentation in Dutch Overseas Expansion, ca. 1650–1700

*Arthur Weststeijn*

## Abstract

The historiography of early modern Dutch colonial expansion in the East and the West shows a rather stark division between studies on governance and trade on the one hand, and those on Christian mission on the other. This chapter explores a third field of research: the impact of cultural and religious entanglement in the context of the voyages of discovery, the creation of trade networks, and colonial enterprise. After an analysis of the legal justifications for rule and proselytizing overseas, either by conquest (Batavia, Brazil), first occupation (New Netherland, Cape Colony), or treaty (Ternate, Decima) the chapter presents three very different yet related projects for religious regimes in the Dutch overseas colonies of the second half of the seventeenth century: the first by the Leiden professor of theology Johannes Hoornbeeck, the second by the freethinkers Franciscus van den Enden and Pieter Plockhoy, and the third by the Labadists. Despite having very different inspirations, all three projects aimed to overcome the confessional strife afflicting Dutch society at the time. While Hoornbeeck's ideal was missionary, Van den Enden and Plockhoy's inclusive, and the Labadists' sectarian, they all looked to the overseas colonies not merely as a source of worldly riches (for which purpose they had been founded in the first place) but most of all for spiritual gain. All these projects, however, ended as brilliant failures because of the problematic relationship between the secular sovereign and the public Reformed Church. Successful mission had to await the Dutch missionary societies of the later eighteenth century. Early modern settlements overseas can be seen as shelters for escapism and laboratories for experimentation, and they functioned as a safety valve to release interconfessional pressure.

In his classic *The Dutch Seaborne Empire* (1965), still one of the few comprehensive studies of the early modern Dutch world on a global scale, Charles Boxer elegantly characterized the background to Dutch overseas expansion as a discordant marriage between gain and godliness. Combining the seeking

of profits with efforts at evangelization, “the Dutch managed to square the precepts of a religion which denounced this life as a mere nothing (*dit leven is gants niet*) with the practices involved in their possession of a world-wide commercial empire.” The lust for gain, Boxer argued, was the most important driving force behind this empire; godliness clearly played a subordinate role.<sup>1</sup> In subsequent scholarship, this relative subordination has become open separation: whilst Boxer had still characterized gain and godliness as uneasy bedfellows, commerce and religion have become increasingly estranged in the historiography. Leading studies of Dutch expansion overseas generally focus on its commercial aspects, paying little to no attention to religion.<sup>2</sup> There is the occasional attempt to bring the two spheres together again: Willem Frijhoff, for example, has convincingly argued that profit and religiosity were intrinsically linked in the seventeenth-century mindset.<sup>3</sup> Yet overall the divorce between gain and godliness has been sealed. Studies that discuss in detail the role of religion in the Dutch colonial world are few and far between; often clearly religiously inspired, they risk becoming apologetic and therefore remain somewhat marginal to the general debate.<sup>4</sup> As a consequence, issues of clear religious significance, such as toleration in the Americas or confessional non-interference in Asia, are often reduced to mere manifestations of mercantile pragmatism. Godliness has departed, leaving gain as the only important factor to explain Dutch rule overseas.

This relative neglect of religiosity in early modern Dutch colonial history has meant that significant recent developments in the study of Dutch religious

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- 1 C. R. Boxer, *The Dutch Seaborne Empire, 1600–1800* (London, 1977), p. 113. The global scope of Boxer’s analysis, including both Asia and the Atlantic, has been matched only by J. van Goor, *De Nederlandse Koloniën: Geschiedenis van de Nederlandse expansie, 1600–1975* (The Hague, 1994) and Piet Emmer and Jos Gommans, *Rijk aan de rand van de wereld: De geschiedenis van Nederland overzee, 1600–1800* (Amsterdam, 2012).
  - 2 See e.g. the two standard accounts of the Dutch East and West India Companies: Femme S. Gaastra, *De geschiedenis van de VOC* (Zutphen, 2003) and Henk J. den Heijer, *De geschiedenis van de WIC* (Zutphen, 2013).
  - 3 Willem Frijhoff, *Wegen van Evert Willemsz: Een Hollands weeskind op zoek naar zichzelf, 1607–1647* (Nijmegen, 1995), p. 499.
  - 4 See A. Th. Boone, ‘Zending en gereformeerd piëtisme in Nederland: een historisch overzicht,’ *Documentatieblad Nadere Reformatie* 14 (1990), 1–31; L. J. Joosse, *Scoone dingen sijn swaere dingen: Een onderzoek naar de motieven en activiteiten in de Nederlanden tot verbrediging van de gereformeerde religie gedurende de eerste helft van de zeventiende eeuw* (Leiden, 1992); G. M. J. M. Koolen, *Een seer bequaem middel: Onderwijs en kerk onder de 17e–eeuwse VOC* (Kampen, 1993); F. L. Schalkwijk, *The Reformed Church in Dutch Brazil (1630–1654)* (Zoetermeer, 1998); and G. J. Schutte, ed., *Het Indisch Sion: De Gereformeerde kerk onder de Verenigde Oost-Indische Compagnie* (Hilversum, 2002). An important recent exception is Evan Haefeli, *New Netherland and the Dutch Origins of American Religious Liberty* (Philadelphia, 2012).

and intellectual culture around 1700 have largely bypassed the colonial dimensions of the Dutch world. The pioneering research of the past two decades on the Early Enlightenment generally discusses the Dutch Republic within its European context, with occasional attention given to the impact of global networks of knowledge and the confrontation with exotic religious cultures in Asia.<sup>5</sup> Nonetheless, there is still no clear picture of the specific role of Dutch colonial rule in the changing perceptions and practices of religion around 1700. This lack is even more apparent because the few existing studies of the religious aspects of Dutch colonialism have focused mostly on the first half of the seventeenth century, thus leaving few clues to assist in interpreting the main transformations in Dutch religious culture after 1650. How did Dutch rule overseas relate to the intellectual development of the Early Enlightenment?

To answer that question, an inclusive approach is needed—one that not only considers religion to be an intrinsic element of the Dutch colonial enterprise but also incorporates the colonial world as an intrinsic element of Dutch religious culture. The aim of this essay is to help establish such an approach. Starting from a general overview of the crucial link between sovereignty and evangelization in seventeenth-century colonial church politics, I analyze three different examples of the interaction between Dutch global expansion and religious thinking and practice between 1650 and 1700: the missionary work of the orthodox theologian Johannes Hoornbeeck, the overseas utopias of the free-thinkers Pieter Ploekhoy and Franciscus van den Enden, and the millenarian mirages of the Labadist sect. The juxtaposition of these three cases shows not only how religious zeal contributed in different ways to Enlightened visions of intercultural dialogue, ecumenical openness, and communal spirituality, but also how the colonial world could offer the conflict-ridden Dutch society an escape route from internal tensions and a valve to release intraconfessional pressure. As shelters for escapism and laboratories for experimentation, overseas settlements created room for some of the farthest-reaching religious projects of the second half of the seventeenth century. Yet despite their exoticism, the underlying rationale of these projects remained very much in line with the

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5 See e.g. Jonathan I. Israel, *Enlightenment Contested: Philosophy, Modernity, and the Emancipation of Man 1670–1750* (Oxford, 2006), pp. 590–662; Lynn Hunt, Margaret C. Jacob, and Wijnand Mijnhardt, *The Book that Changed Europe: Picart and Bernard's Religious Ceremonies of the World* (Cambridge, Mass., 2010); Siegfried Huigen et al., eds., *The Dutch Trading Companies as Knowledge Networks* (Leiden, 2010); and Thijs Weststeijn, 'Vossius' Chinese Utopia,' in: *Isaac Vossius (1618–1689) between Science and Scholarship*, ed. Eric Jorink and Dirk van Miert (Leiden, 2012), pp. 207–42.

main intellectual characteristic of early modern Dutch society: its obsessions with maintaining concord and overcoming the ills of pluralism.<sup>6</sup>

## 1 The Politics of Colonial Religiosity: Church and State Overseas

When Dutch exploration and overseas expansion took off at the end of the sixteenth century, it was doubtless the lust for gain that drove Dutch merchants and navigators to the outer ends of the known world. Yet before long, godliness entered their minds as well. Challenged to make sense of their deeds and to legitimize their colonialist pursuits, the protagonists of Dutch expansion claimed to be fulfilling a predestined plan to spread the Reformed faith across the globe. One such protagonist was Jacob van Heemskerck, whose seizure in 1603 of the Portuguese vessel *Santa Caterina* occasioned Hugo Grotius's elaborate defense of the freedom of the seas, traditionally considered the intellectual foundation of Dutch imperialism. A few months after the seizure, Van Heemskerck wrote to the directors of the recently established Dutch East India Company (VOC) that the Dutch attacks against the Portuguese in Asia were not merely serving commercial and political interests but contributed to a much more divine agenda of worldwide religious unity. "Oh, may God's glory be exalted among so many different nations, peoples and countries by means of the true protestant religion," Van Heemskerck wrote. "Perhaps the Lord will use a small, despised country and nation to work his mighty miracles."<sup>7</sup> This evangelical message was echoed by other powerful members of the VOC administration such as Jan Pieterszoon Coen, governor-general between 1619 and 1623. In his agenda-setting *Discoers* from 1614, Coen concluded his proposals to build a Dutch empire in Asia with a strong exhortation to send God-fearing ministers overseas, so that concord could be created among the Dutch colonists and the indigenous would be colonized. "Is there anything in the world," Coen asked rhetorically, "that unites and connects the hearts of men more than the

6 See Willem Frijhoff et al., *1650: Bevochten eendracht* (The Hague, 1999). Recent work by literary scholars has highlighted the conflictive aspects of this quest for unity: see Helmer Helmers, *The Royalist Republic: Literature, Politics and Religion in the Anglo-Dutch Public Sphere, 1639–1660* (Cambridge, 2015), and Freya Sierhuis, *The Literature of the Arminian Controversy: Religion, Politics and the Stage in the Dutch Republic* (Oxford, 2015).

7 Quoted in Martine van Ittersum, *Profit and Principle: Hugo Grotius, Natural Rights Theories and the Rise of Dutch Power in the East Indies (1595–1615)* (Leiden, 2006), p. 42.

concord and exercise of religion, or on the contrary, anything that more separates the hearts of men and creates larger hostility than religious difference?"<sup>8</sup>

Such voices were raised not only in relation to Dutch colonialism in Asia. Willem Usselinx, the main intellectual inspiration behind the founding of the Dutch West India Company (WIC), was equally adamant in his claims that overseas colonization paved the way for the dissemination of scripture (and the reading of *sola scriptura*) on a global scale, and specifically in the Americas. As Benjamin Schmidt has shown, early-seventeenth-century Dutch visions of the New World identified indigenous American peoples as innocent victims of Spanish tyranny and Catholic persecution, to be countered by Protestant proselytization, which used peaceful persuasion instead of force to win over their heathen souls. Usselinx was one of the most prominent propagators of this Calvinist colonial agenda.<sup>9</sup> In one of his many writings in favor of colonization in the West, Usselinx argued that Dutch expansion in the New World would realize four different objectives: "To advance the honor of God through the dissemination of the holy Gospel; also, to damage the enemy; and third, to increase the country's income and to relieve the community; finally, for the common welfare of all inhabitants of these united lands."<sup>10</sup>

In concrete colonial practice, this hierarchy of objectives was more likely ordered in exactly the opposite way: gain remained much more dominant than godliness throughout the opening decades of Dutch colonization worldwide.<sup>11</sup> Nonetheless, in line with the fervent calls to proselytize overseas, the ecclesiastical authorities, backed by the governing boards of the VOC and the WIC, decided to send ministers, schoolmasters, and comforters of the sick overseas and to erect churches in newly conquered territory. The classes of Amsterdam and Walcheren generally took the lead in these initiatives, and the particularism and provincial strife that characterized Dutch society and politics were

8 Jan Pieterszoon Coen, 'Discoers,' in: H. T. Colenbrander, *Jan Pietersz. Coen: Levensbeschrijving* (The Hague, 1934), p. 474: "Isser ter werelt wel iets, dat meer des menschen harten vereenicht ende verbindt als de eendracht ende exercitie van religie, oft ter contrarie, dat meer des menschen harten scheyt ende grooter vyantschap maect, als de differente religie?"

9 See Benjamin Schmidt, *Innocence Abroad: The Dutch Imagination and the New World, 1570–1670* (Cambridge, 2001).

10 Quoted in O. van Rees, *Geschiedenis der koloniale politiek van de Republiek der Vereenigde Nederlanden* (Utrecht, 1868), pp. 74–5: "tot bevordering van de eere Godes door de voortplanting des heiligen Evangelium; ten anderen tot afbreuk der vijanden; ten derde tot vermeerdering van 's lands inkomen en ontlasting van de gemeente; eindelijk tot gemeen welvaren van al de ingezetenen dezer vereenigde landen."

11 See Frijhoff, *Wegen van Evert Willemsz* (see above, n. 3), pp. 499–500.

thus transposed to the colonial world.<sup>12</sup> Moreover, the theological and political controversies of the late 1610s, which brought the Dutch Republic to the brink of civil war, temporarily eclipsed the grand ideals of a global Reformed evangelization. Only after the securing of orthodoxy at the Synod of Dordt could the best and brightest theological minds begin to project their religious zeal overseas.

This renewed emphasis on colonial religiosity is exemplified by the second charter of the VOC from 1622, which explicitly stated that the Company had been created “for the preservation of the public Reformed faith.”<sup>13</sup> That same year, the *Seminarium Indicum* opened in Leiden to train Dutch missionaries under the guidance of the orthodox theologian Antonius Walaeus, a prominent propagator of the Contra-Remonstrant interpretation of the relationship between church and state. For Walaeus, the worldly sovereign was neither superior to the ecclesiastical authorities nor neutral toward its evangelical pursuits; church and state were distinct yet interdependent entities that together were responsible for the preservation of the true faith.<sup>14</sup> In line with the *ius reformandi* authorized by the Diet of Augsburg in 1555, the worldly sovereign was, moreover, considered to possess the authority to impose its confessional denomination over the people within the territory it claimed. At the same time, the Dutch war for independence had at least partly been fought to safeguard religious liberty and to protect the private conscience from persecution. The Union of Utrecht of 1579 postulated this freedom as one of the founding principles of the newborn United Provinces. The ensuing religious-political framework of the Dutch Republic and the public Reformed Church was therefore based on the foundations of sovereignty and liberty, but the exact demarcations of state sovereignty and religious liberty remained a matter of continuous dispute. This religious-political framework was equally applicable to the colonial world, where the VOC, according to its charter, fulfilled the

12 L. J. Joosse, ‘Kerk en zendingsbevel,’ in: *Het Indisch Sion*, ed. Schutte (see above, n. 4), pp. 25–42. On the impact of provincial strife on Dutch colonialism, see Henk den Heijer, ‘Het recht van de sterkste in de polder: Politieke en economische strijd tussen Amsterdam en Zeeland over de kwestie Brazilië, 1630–1654,’ in: *Harmonie in Holland: Het poldermodel van 1500 tot nu*, ed. Dennis Bos et al. (Amsterdam, 2007), pp. 72–92.

13 Quoted in G. J. Schutte, ‘De kerk onder de Compagnie,’ in: *Het Indisch Sion*, ed. Schutte (see above, n. 4), pp. 43–64, there 47: “de conservatie van de het publieke Gereformeerde geloof.”

14 See Antonius Walaeus, *Het ampt der kerckendienaren: Midtsgaders de authoriteyt, ende opsicht, die een hooghe christelicke overheydt daer over toecompt* (Middelburg, 1615). For a lucid synopsis of the Contra-Remonstrant position, see Douglas Nobbs, *Theocracy and Toleration: A Study of the Disputes in Dutch Calvinism from 1600 to 1650* (Cambridge, 1938), pp. 1–24.

rights and duties of a sovereign actor.<sup>15</sup> Accordingly, the concrete claims of the VOC for territorial sovereignty formed an essential precondition for recreating the Dutch Reformed order of church and state overseas.

The transposal of this metropolitan framework to the colonial world was far from unproblematic. As in the Republic itself, it resulted in a difficult dynamic of continuous collaboration and competition between representatives of church and state. This dynamic is clearly illustrated by the case of Ambon, the first place in Asia where the VOC claimed to exercise territorial sovereignty after conquering the Portuguese settlement on the island in 1605. Not coincidentally, Ambon was also the first focus of Dutch mission in the East. These evangelical efforts could only be consolidated, however, once VOC sovereignty over the island had been firmly established over the course of the 1640s and 1650s.<sup>16</sup> In Batavia, founded in 1619 as the center of the Dutch colonial government in Asia, direct sovereignty could be claimed straightaway on the basis of the right of conquest. Yet here as well, the relationship between church and state remained problematic. Batavia was a multicultural city dominated by Muslims and Buddhists, and especially the large Chinese population formed a constant challenge to the public dominance of Reformed orthodoxy. The ecclesiastical authorities attempted to strengthen their position through a combination of evangelization and suppression, but the eventual outcome was the civil government's unofficial toleration of Buddhism in the city, somewhat similar to the position taken toward Catholics and Jews in the Dutch Republic. The practices of dealing with religious diversity at home were thus copied overseas to deal with diversity there.<sup>17</sup>

The other areas in Asia where the Dutch actively tried to spread the Reformed faith were the Banda Islands, where since the bloody Dutch conquest in the 1620s the local population remained deeply suspicious of the authorities;<sup>18</sup>

15 The position of the VOC in international law is analyzed in Jan A. Somers, 'De VOC als volkenrechtelijke actor,' PhD dissertation, Erasmus University Rotterdam, 2001. See also my 'The VOC as a Company-State: Debating Seventeenth-Century Dutch Colonial Expansion,' *Itinerario: International Journal on the History of European Expansion and Global Interaction* 38 (2014), 13–34.

16 Cf. H. E. Niemeijer, 'Orang Nasrani: Protestants Ambon in de zeventiende eeuw,' in: *Het Indisch Sion*, ed. Schutte (see above, n. 4), pp. 127–45. On the gradual establishment of Dutch sovereignty over the island, see Gerrit Knaap, 'De Ambonse eilanden tussen twee mogendheden: De VOC en Ternate, 1605–1656,' in: *Hof en handel: Aziatische vorsten en de VOC 1620–1720*, ed. Elsbeth Locher-Scholten and Peter Rietbergen (Leiden, 2004), pp. 35–58.

17 See H. E. Niemeijer, *Batavia, een koloniale samenleving in de 17de eeuw* (Amersfoort, 2005), and the lucid judgment of Haefeli, *New Netherland* (see above, n. 4), pp. 129–33.

18 H. E. Niemeijer, "Als een Lelye onder de doornen": Kerk, kolonisatie en christianisering op de Banda-eilanden, 1616–1635," *Documentatieblad voor de Geschiedenis van de Nederlandse Zending en Overzeese Kerken* 1 (1994), 1–24.

Formosa (Taiwan), where missionaries such as Robertus Junius, a student of Walaeus in Leiden, helped to win souls and territory until the Chinese ousted the Dutch in 1662;<sup>19</sup> and Ceylon, where from the late 1630s onwards the Dutch expanded their territorial authority and their proselytizing activities in equal measure.<sup>20</sup> It is clearly no coincidence that these evangelization projects were carried out in areas conquered by the VOC: the right of conquest formed the juridical basis of claims for sovereignty in the seventeenth-century colonial world,<sup>21</sup> and the rightful existence of a Reformed sovereign, in the political-religious framework of Dutch Calvinism, was the precondition for creating a public Reformed Church. Arguably, the existing historiography has not sufficiently emphasized this fundamental aspect of the politics of religiosity in Dutch colonialism. It helps to explain why the proselytizing activities of the Dutch remained limited in comparison to the Catholic mission in the Spanish and Portuguese empires, which is often interpreted too simply as a token of the dominance of gain over godliness within Dutch expansion. At the same time, it also serves as a warning for apologetic accounts not to use the modern, nineteenth-century ideal of evangelization to judge seventeenth-century concepts and practices.<sup>22</sup>

For in most areas in Asia where the VOC was active, its power remained rather undefined, with no direct exercise of undisputed sovereignty. A case in point is the island of Ternate in the northern Moluccas, where the position of the VOC was circumscribed by a series of treaties with the local rulers that included stipulations of non-interference in each other's religious affairs. As a result, the Company's efforts to proselytize in the area were heavily restricted: as long as the VOC could not claim sovereign rule, it could not support the establishment of a Reformed public church.<sup>23</sup> Similar treaties were concluded

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- 19 Leonard Blussé, 'De Formosaanse Proeftuyn der Gereformeerde Zending,' in: *Het Indisch Sion*, ed. Schutte (see above, n. 4), pp. 189–200; and idem, 'Dutch Protestant Missionaries as Protagonists of the Territorial Expansion of the VOC on Formosa,' in: *Conversion, Competition, and Conflict: Essays on the Role of Religion in Asia*, ed. Dick Kooiman et al., (Amsterdam, 1984), pp. 155–84.
- 20 G. J. Schutte, 'Een hutje in den wijngaard: Gereformeerd Ceylon,' in: *Het Indisch Sion*, ed. Schutte (see above, n. 4), pp. 177–88.
- 21 For a wide-ranging analysis of the importance of claims for sovereignty and occupation in the development of Western imperialism, see Andrew Fitzmaurice, *Sovereignty, Property and Empire, 1500–2000* (Cambridge, 2014).
- 22 See Peter van Rooden, *Religieuze regimes: Over godsdienst en maatschappij in Nederland, 1570–1990* (Amsterdam, 1996), pp. 132–7, and the literature mentioned in note 4 above.
- 23 Cf. H. E. Niemeijer, 'Agama Kumpeni? Ternate en de protestantisering van de Noord-Molukken en Noord-Sulawesi, 1626–1795,' in: *Het Indisch Sion*, ed. Schutte (see above, n. 4), pp. 147–75.

with many other powers throughout Asia.<sup>24</sup> Arguably the most remarkable and best-known example of this ‘empire by treaty’ was the small Dutch trading post in Deshima in the Bay of Nagasaki, where the Dutch received exclusive commercial privileges through complete subservience to the Tokugawa shogunate. To the dismay of the ecclesiastical authorities in the Dutch Republic, this subservience included the forsaking of any Christian signs or activities in public.<sup>25</sup> The VOC’s willingness to abide by this condition is often explained in mere terms of commercial interests and an unhindered lust for profits. Nonetheless, here as elsewhere, gain was not necessarily opposed to godliness: the religious-political framework of Dutch Calvinism created room for such mercantile pragmatism to prevail in the absence of a Reformed sovereign.

Dutch colonial sovereignty was much more clearly defined in the West, especially in the main area of Dutch expansion in the Atlantic: Brazil. Not long after the establishment of the WIC in 1621, the conquest of Salvador da Bahia in 1624 gave rise to enthusiastic appeals for extensive evangelization in the New World. The orthodox minister Willem Teellinck, for example, argued in a series of pamphlets that Dutch expansion in Brazil offered a perfect opportunity to disseminate the Gospel “to the blind inland heathens, banned Jews and erring Portuguese.”<sup>26</sup> Once Dutch sovereignty in northeastern Brazil was secured and expanded from the 1630s onwards, the Reformed Church gained an unparalleled level of institutional strength with the creation of twenty-two congregations and a total of fifty-three ministers serving in the colony until its demise in 1654. Unlike in Asia, the colonial church obtained its own independent organizational framework with the establishment of the Classis of Brazil

24 See *Corpus diplomaticum Neerlandico-Indicum: Verzameling van politieke contracten en verdere verdragen door de Nederlanders in het Oosten gesloten*, ed. J. E. Heeres, 5 vols. (The Hague, 1907–38), and see the analysis in my “‘Love Alone is Not Enough’: Treaties in Seventeenth-Century Dutch Colonial Expansion,” in *Empire by Treaty: Negotiating European Expansion, 1600–1900*, ed. Saliha Belmessous (Oxford, 2014), pp. 19–44.

25 Adam Clulow, *The Company and the Shogun: The Dutch Encounter with Tokugawa Japan* (New York, 2014). For the reaction of the ecclesiastical authorities in the Dutch Republic, see the ‘Acta’ of the Utrecht classis from August 9–10, 1653, in Utrecht, Het Utrechts Archief, Archief classis Utrecht, inv. nr. 3, pp. 312–4. I owe this reference to Jo Spaans.

26 Quoted in A. Th. Boone, “‘Tot verbreydinge van het rijcke onses Heeren Jesu Christi’: Een inleiding tot de zendingsgedachten binnen het gereformeerd Piëtisme in Nederland,” *Documentatieblad Nadere Reformatie* 17 (1993), 1–17, there 3: “tot de blinde inlandsche Heydenen, verstoote Joden, ende verdwaelde Portugesen.” On Dutch missionary activities in the Atlantic, see also Mark Meuwese, ‘Dutch Calvinism and Native Americans: A Comparative Study of the Motivations for Protestant Conversion Among the Tupís in Northeastern Brazil (1630–1654) and the Mohawks in Central New York (1690–1710),’ in: *The Spiritual Conversion of the Americas*, ed. James Muldoon (Gainesville, Fla., 2004), pp. 118–41.

in 1636 and the Synod of Brazil in 1642. Yet also in Brazil the relationship between church and state remained problematic. The WIC, fulfilling the rights and duties of the worldly sovereign, was responsible for upholding the public church, yet the clergy continuously complained about insufficient financial support. Ecclesiastical hardliners were outraged, moreover, with the rights to public worship that the WIC granted to Portuguese Catholics and Jews.<sup>27</sup> As in Batavia, this practice of toleration echoed similar attitudes in the Dutch Republic itself, such as was manifested in the privileges granted to Catholics in the conquered cities of Venlo and Maastricht.<sup>28</sup>

Elsewhere in the Atlantic, Dutch sovereignty was claimed on the basis not only of conquest but also on the right of first occupation, as with the colony of New Netherland and, in South Africa, the Cape Colony. In these settler colonies there existed no formal toleration of other public congregations, but attempts to strengthen the Reformed church order and to further evangelize fluctuated according to local circumstances and developments.<sup>29</sup> Overall, the particularities of the Dutch Reformed political-religious framework, together with the vicissitudes of global politics, created a hybrid colonial conglomeration where gain and godliness constantly interacted in the creation of a global Dutch empire of trade and religiosity.

A typical attempt to make sense of this hybrid empire was the treatise *'t Geestelyck roer van 't coopmans schip* by the orthodox cleric Godefridus Udemans. First printed in 1638, then published in enlarged editions in 1640 and 1655, this work principally aimed to steer Dutch merchants, sailors, and devout armchair travelers on the righteous path toward God's grace. Troubled by the dominance of commerce in Dutch overseas expansion, Udemans argued that trade should be considered not an end in itself but rather a means "to expand the Kingdom of Christ to the end of the world."<sup>30</sup> Udemans thus tried to reconcile gain with godliness as the double essence of Dutch colonialism. This attempt was certainly not confined to the margins of Calvinist orthodoxy. Jacob Cats, a bestselling author and prominent politician, accompanied Udemans's treatise with a poem that proclaimed: "A Christian's heart should burn with zeal / When the anchor is dropped near rich beaches / Not for the beautiful

27 See Schalkwijk, *Reformed Church in Dutch Brazil* (see above, n. 4), and Michiel van Groesen, ed., *The Expansion of Tolerance: Religion in Dutch Brazil (1624–1654)* (Amsterdam, 2007).

28 Haefeli, *New Netherland*, (see above, n. 4), p. 101.

29 See the analysis in Haefeli, *New Netherland* (see above, n. 4); A. W. Biewenga, *Kaap de Goede Hoop: Een Nederlandse vestigingskolonie, 1680–1730* (Amsterdam, 1999).

30 Godefridus Udemans, *'t Geestelyck roer van 't coopmans schip*, facs. ed. 1640 (Dordrecht, 1965), pp. 14–5: "om het rijke Christi te verbreyden tot aen het eynde der werelt."

galore of scents or silk / But to bring a wild bunch to the Church.”<sup>31</sup> Around 1650, after half a century of Dutch expansion overseas, Cats’s words represented a widespread feeling that religious zeal should counteract the lust for gain in the Dutch colonial world. How did this call for godliness resonate in the second half of the century?

## 2 Channeling Religious Zeal Overseas: Hoornbeek’s Mission for Intercultural Dialogue

After the peace with the Habsburg monarchy was signed in 1648 and the Dutch Republic entered a period of ‘True Freedom,’ attempts to overtly outdo Catholic proselytizing efforts worldwide did not cease. On the contrary: the most extensive argument in favor of Reformed global evangelization was developed over the course of the 1660s by the theologian Johannes Hoornbeek. Hoornbeek, who has only recently been rediscovered as a prominent figure in Dutch intellectual life around the middle of the seventeenth century, had been a student and colleague of Gisbert Voetius, the doyen of Dutch orthodoxy at Utrecht University, before he was appointed professor in theology at Leiden in 1654.<sup>32</sup> Combining an academic desire for universal knowledge with a practical approach to pastoral issues, Hoornbeek trained his students at Leiden to study the different guises of heathenism and to develop theological counterarguments through public disputations. These disputations formed the basis

31 Ibid., sig. \*8r.: “Hoe dat een *Christen-hert* van yver dient te branden / Wanneer men ancker werpt ontrent de rijcke stranden / Niet om haer schoon gewas van reuck, of sijde-werck / Maer om een *woesten hoop* te brengen tot de *Kerck*.” Cf. A. Th. Boone, “Om een woesten hoop te brengen tot de kerck”: Een onderzoek naar zendingsgedachten in piëtistische zeemansvademeccums,’ in: idem and J. van Ekeris, *Zending tussen woord en daad: Twee hoofdstukken uit de geschiedenis van gereformeerd piëtisme en zending* (Kampen, 1991), pp. 12–46, there 26–31.

32 For Hoornbeek’s background and significance, see Jos Gommans and Ineke Loots, ‘Arguing with the Heathens: The Further Reformation and the Ethnohistory of Johannes Hoornbeek (1617–1666),’ *Itinerario: International Journal on the History of European Expansion and Global Interaction* 39 (2015), 45–68; and idem, ‘Johannes Hoornbeeks ethnohistorische methode en de Nieuwe Wereld,’ in: *Reizen door het maritieme verleden van Nederland: Maritiem-historische opstellen aangeboden aan Henk J. den Heijer*, ed. Anita van Dissel et al. (Zutphen, 2015), pp. 189–203. Gommans and Loots’s work supersedes the earlier studies that approach Hoornbeek from a purely evangelical perspective, including B. Oosterom, ‘Johannes Hoornbeek als zendingstheoloog,’ *Theologia reformata* 13 (1970), 81–98, and T. Brienens, *Johannes Hoornbeek (1617–1666): Eminent geleerde en pastoraal theoloog* (Kampen, 2008).

of his large missionary treatise *De conversione Indorum et gentilium*, published posthumously in 1669.

In the introduction to this work, Hoornbeeck revisited many of the commonplace arguments that had been raised by Dutch advocates of evangelization such as Teellinck and Udemans. He started by claiming that the Great Commission from Matthew 28, Jesus' admonition to his disciples to spread his teachings over the world, was still applicable and also easier to fulfill now that the Dutch "not only have knowledge of all the world" but also the means to visit and communicate with people and places that had been unknown to the ancients. Moreover, these "hidden corners of the East and West ... have also been occupied, tamed and possessed by the Dutch since some time, in my opinion not so much to promote the matters and glory of the Republic as those of the kingdom of Christ and the church."<sup>33</sup> With this revealing phrasing Hoornbeeck emphasized the crucial aspect of Dutch evangelization overseas: occupation and ownership (in other words, legitimate sovereignty) were the essential conditions for establishing a Reformed church order and spreading the Gospel in the colonial world.

Hoornbeeck went on to argue that the remarkable expansion of the Dutch presence overseas since the preceding decades must have been part of a providential plan. For certainly God did not bestow so much fortune on the Dutch "only to explore and usurp these regions or to take away the riches of the earth for a larger or even superfluous quantity of material things, on behalf of the glory and the idle triumphs of the Dutch name." Neither territorial expansion nor commercial gain nor national glory could be the main objective; instead, providence wanted the Dutch to spread the true faith "to lands that so far have been alien to the company of humanity and religion, and to people who know only the earth and earthly matters."<sup>34</sup> Such evangelization was furthermore a fulfillment of the divine order that different peoples should assist each other in the mutual exchange of goods. This stance came close to Grotius's natural law argument for overseas expansion,<sup>35</sup> but Hoornbeeck, like his evangelical

33 Johannes Hoornbeeck, *De conversione Indorum et gentilium* (Amsterdam, 1669), p. 1: "Nec innotuerunt tantum qua Orientis, qua Occidentis recessus, sed occupati, domiti, possessi Belgis sunt, ab aliquo retro tempore, ad Reip. non magis, quam regni Christi & Ecclesiae opinor promovendas res & gloriam." My translation follows, with some minor changes, the edition of *De conversione* by Ineke Loots, forthcoming from Brill. I am very grateful to Ineke for allowing me to consult her work before publication.

34 Hoornbeeck, *De conversione* (see above, n. 33), pp. 1–2: "tantummodo ad regiones hinc inde explorandas & usurpandas, vel ad terrarum avehendas opes, & corporalium rerum majorem vel superfluum copiam, ad gloriam & inanes triumphos Belgici nominis [...] cultum terris hactenus ab humanitatis & religionis contubernio alienis, & praeter terram & terrena nihil sapientibus."

35 Cf. Hugo Grotius, *The Free Sea*, ed. David Armitage (Indianapolis, 2004), p. 49.

predecessors Teellinck and Udemans, turned the Grotian emphasis on commercial exchange into spiritual exchange, so that “we give spiritual goods to the people who enrich us with their material goods.”<sup>36</sup> Godliness in return for gain. Indeed, the Dutch would be obliged to spread the Word of God regardless, for, as the example of the apostle Paul showed, preaching to the heathens is itself a priceless reward for the faithful.

These were staple statements of the standard evangelical literature, but Hoornbeeck also made an unusual, highly significant move. Evangelization overseas, he argued, could be a welcome means to channel outward the religious zeal that was consuming Dutch society from within: “the disputes and quarrels among the Christians and even among the Protestants ... will at least skillfully be avoided, if not corrected in this manner.”<sup>37</sup> This was an oblique but all the more suggestive reference to the religious controversies that raged incessantly in the Dutch Republic, both at a strictly theological level and more generally in public political debate. During the time of his teaching in the early 1660s, Hoornbeeck had become deeply involved in these controversies. Earlier he had proved to be one of the staunchest polemicists on behalf of the Reformed Church against Catholics and Protestant dissenters such as Remonstrants and Lutherans, and especially against the novel heresy of Socinianism. More significantly, he was also a key player in the schism that had arisen within the Reformed church following a dispute on the observance of the Sabbath. At Leiden, Hoornbeeck positioned himself in the vanguard of this polemic, writing a series of treatises on the matter against his colleague Johannes Coccejus.<sup>38</sup> But toward the end of his life, at the time when he wrote the introduction to *De conversione*, Hoornbeeck seems to have become somewhat disillusioned about this ongoing infighting in the church, which was “often with minimal result.” Mission overseas now seemed to offer an antidote against this internal strife, a way to direct religious zeal to a more noble and fruitful purpose. For, as Hoornbeeck bitterly noticed, the constant quarrels in the church implied that “perhaps the Christians will sooner become heathens than the heathens Christians.” To counter this risk, all theological forces should be mobilized toward the conversion of the heathens instead of toward internal

36 Hoornbeeck, *De conversione* (see above, n. 33), p. 2: “ut spiritualia recipiant, qui nos suis ditant corporalibus.” For the comparison with Teellinck and Udemans, see Gommans and Loots, ‘Arguing with the Heathens’ (see above, n. 32).

37 Hoornbeeck, *De conversione* (see above, n. 33), p. 3: “Praeterea disputationes & rixae inter Christianos, & Reformatos etiam ... hoc modo artificiose, si non corriguntur, saltem devitantur.”

38 For the political context, see F. G. M. Broeyer and E. G. E. van der Wall, eds., *Een richtingenstrijd in de gereformeerde kerk: Voetianen en coccejanen, 1650–1750* (Zoetermeer, 1994), especially pp. 74–94.

disputes. Indeed, Hoornbeeck concluded, “to turn a heathen into a Christian is more worthwhile and more useful than to change a Christian into a member of a different Christian sect, even if perhaps of a better one.”<sup>39</sup>

The prospect of converting heathens overseas thus served for Hoornbeeck as an escape route, a colonial valve that could relieve the rising pressure within Dutch society. Moreover, the confrontation with exotic heathenism offered the true believer a much more rewarding challenge than the futile attempts to make all Christians, Catholics and Protestants alike, agree on the same principles. For could a singular confessional denomination truly pretend to embody the divine truth? Hoornbeeck’s own phrasing (‘perhaps’) shows his doubts about the usefulness and necessity of a relentless theological debate on the *adiaphora* of faith. And once doubts enter the scene, curiosity takes over. The result, in *De conversione*, is a highly inquisitive and open approach to the many appearances of heathenism worldwide.<sup>40</sup> Subdivided into two parts, the book starts with a learned and truly global survey of ancient and modern heathenism, based on classical authors and the latest ethnographic literature. Without reservation, Hoornbeeck used especially Jesuit sources and interpretations for this survey, along with some recent Dutch scholarship such as the work of the missionary Abraham Rogerius on the Brahmins.<sup>41</sup> While Udemans had characterized the Jesuits as “grasshoppers of the whore of Babylon,” Hoornbeeck’s embrace of their example indicates his relative openness.<sup>42</sup> Of course, he considered Alexander VI’s bull, on which Habsburg claims for global dominance rested, to be a sham, but this anti-papal stance did not become the basis of an uncompromising anti-Catholic polemic. Once again following Grotius, Hoornbeeck preferred to make a secular argument, using the verdict of the Spanish scholastic Francisco de Vitoria to argue his case against the papal bull’s legitimacy.<sup>43</sup>

In the second part of the work, Hoornbeeck continued to analyze the differences between heathenism and Christian doctrine, in terms of beliefs as well as habits. The analysis starts with an overview of authors who argued against

39 Hoornbeeck, *De conversione* (see above, n. 33), p. 3: “saltem exiguo saepe cum fructu, de iis contendatur inter Christianos: unde Christiani fere prius deveniunt gentiles, quam Gentiles Christiani.... prout majoris pretii ususque est, Gentilem formasse Christo, quam Christianum alteri cuicumque etiam in Christianismo sectae, si forte meliori.”

40 This inquisitiveness is highlighted in Gommans and Loots, ‘Arguing with the Heathens’ (see above, n. 32).

41 Abraham Rogerius, *De open deure tot het verborgen heidendom* (Leiden, 1651). Rogerius is discussed in detail in Hoornbeeck, *De conversione* (see above, n. 33), 1.5 and 2.8.

42 Udemans, *t Geestelyck roer*, quoted in Oosterom, ‘Johannes Hoornbeeck’ (see above, n. 32), p. 96: “sprinckhanen van de hoere van Babel.”

43 Hoornbeeck, *De conversione* (see above, n. 33), pp. 8–9. Cf. Grotius, *The Free Sea*, ed. Armitage (see above, n. 35), pp. 15–7.

the heathens, from the Church Fathers and Thomas Aquinas to Renaissance humanists such as Marsilio Ficino and Juan Luis Vives, Grotius's ecumenical *De veritate religionis Christianae*, and, especially, the Jesuit missionary José de Acosta. Following their lead, Hoornbeeck discussed the crucial matters of debate with the heathens, from the existence of a single eternal God and the immortality of the soul to exotic practices of worship and wrongful behavior such as nudity and polygamy (focusing especially on Asia, Hoornbeeck did not share the obsession with cannibalism that can be encountered in contemporary sources on the Americas).<sup>44</sup> Significantly, Hoornbeeck continuously looked for comparisons and similarities with Christianity to create a fruitful basis for successful evangelization.<sup>45</sup> The overall result is an interreligious dialogue of sorts, in which the peaceful exchange of arguments should pave the way for the vindication of the true faith and the conversion of all heathens. Here, Hoornbeeck once again referred to the missionary work of the Jesuits as a laudable example to be followed, especially with regard to their knowledge of indigenous languages. He even argued for the establishment of a Dutch Reformed counterpart to the *Congregatio de propaganda fide*, comprising a worldwide network of missionaries and correspondents who would survey the global state of religious affairs. True to the Contra-Remonstrant interpretation of the relationship between church and state, Hoornbeeck emphasized that the governing board of such an organization should include not only ecclesiastical members but also representatives of the worldly sovereign.<sup>46</sup>

The curiosity toward exotic cultures and the openness shown to Catholicism eventually brought Hoornbeeck to an oblique but nonetheless powerful condemnation of Dutch colonial conduct. He voiced this criticism indirectly by denouncing Spanish "cruelty and greed" in the Americas, following the famous accusation directed at Spain by Bartolomé de las Casas. Clearly, such an accusation did not apply to Spaniards only, "for the heathens, however barbarian and wild they are, judge people and their profession from their moral behavior."<sup>47</sup> Dutch colonists and missionaries should therefore retain the highest ethical standards and not succumb to the classical double vice that brings empires down, "the desire for riches and the desire to rule." Again referring to Vitoria and now subtly censuring Grotius's theory of just war, Hoornbeeck insisted that Christians are not allowed "to wage war on the barbarians for whatever

44 Cf. Michiel van Groesen, 'Arnoldus Montanus, Dutch Brazil, and the Re-Emergence of Cannibalism,' in: *Transformations of Knowledge in Dutch Expansion*, ed. S. Friedrich, A. Brendecke, and S. Ehrenpreis (Berlin, 2015), pp. 93–120.

45 Gommans and Loots, 'Arguing with the Heathens' (see above, n. 32), pp. 57–9.

46 Hoornbeeck, *De conversione*, (see above, n. 33), p. 210.

47 Hoornbeeck, *De conversione*, (see above, n. 33), p. 220: "Etenim Gentiles, utcunque barbari & rudes, ex vivendi moribus tamen aestimant homines, & eorum professionem."

reason, be it religion or the extension of empire or to punish them for their sins, least of all their lack of faith.”<sup>48</sup> Conversion can take place only through inner conviction, never the use of force. But the main threat to successful evangelization was not so much the Dutch desire to rule as the Dutch desire for riches, epitomized by the reproachable subservience of the VOC in Japan. “It is to be feared,” Hoornbeeck concluded, “that we want to do all our business to the ignominy of God.”<sup>49</sup>

All in all, Hoornbeeck’s argument in favor of global Reformed evangelization aimed to substitute godliness for gain as the main driving force behind Dutch overseas expansion. “I wish that both would always be sought in equal measure!” he sighed. “At least we can hardly deny that God’s providence has pointed out a fruitful opportunity in spiritual matters and that we should undertake to promote to our utmost the matters of God and his kingdom, not only our own.”<sup>50</sup> This appeal for an increase in missionary zeal not only meant rebalancing the Dutch colonial mindset. It specifically aimed to achieve concord in the religious realm, both at home and overseas. Worldwide evangelization clearly served to bring all people together in the single true faith; intercultural dialogue with other belief systems, as well as the explicit emulation of Catholic missionary models, could build universal concord under the umbrella of the Reformed Church. At the same time, such evangelical enthusiasm would also restore concord within that church in the Dutch Republic. Channeling all religious zeal overseas would demobilize and thereby put an end to the internal disputes that were tearing Dutch society apart. The colonial world, for Hoornbeeck, offered a double opportunity to conquer the demons of confessional pluralism.

48 Hoornbeeck, *De conversione*, (see above, n. 33), pp. 225, 227–9: “opum & regendi cupiditate”; “inferre Barbaris bellum, ex quavis causa sive religionis, sive imperii provehendi, aut castigare illos propter peccata sua, minus vero infidelitatem.” Cf. Hugo Grotius, *The Rights of War and Peace*, 3 vols., ed. Richard Tuck (Indianapolis, 2005), 2.21.

49 Hoornbeeck, *De conversione*, (see above, n. 33), p. 256: “Metuendum sane ... quin cum ejus ignominia velimus conjuncta nostra negotia.”

50 Hoornbeeck, *De conversione*, (see above, n. 33), p. 10: “Quod utinam quaesitum aequè fuisset semper, atque illa! Saltem Dei providentiam digito indicasse sementem copiosam in spiritualibus faciendam, negare haud possumus; & Dei etiam ac regni ejus, neque nostris tantum, rebus promovendis, pro virili, esse incumbendum.”

### 3 Starting Anew in the New World: The Utopian Projects of Van den Enden and Ploekhoy

Hoornbeeck's *De conversione* was not the only attempt to rethink the role of religion in Dutch overseas expansion during the 1660s. In the same years that he was discussing his ideas with his students at Leiden, pamphleteers and politicians in Amsterdam were debating two very different yet comparable proposals for building religious concord through colonial enterprise. The ideological background of these proposals was directly opposed to the Reformed orthodoxy of Hoornbeeck, but they nonetheless shared his fundamental conviction that Dutch colonialism involved exceptional prospects for fostering confessional concord by challenging the colonial status quo.

These two proposals both originated in the context of New Netherland, the WIC colony along the shores of the Hudson River and its surroundings. In 1656, the city of Amsterdam had established its own colony alongside New Netherland after receiving a patroonship or fief from the WIC in return for the city's assistance in the local war against New Sweden. This colony, christened 'New Amstel,' was located on territory conquered from the Swedes on the Delaware River, some two hundred kilometers south of Manhattan. The directors of the colony, a committee appointed by the Amsterdam Burgomasters, immediately started a recruitment campaign, publishing a set of favorable conditions to attract prospective settlers to the colony.<sup>51</sup> At first, encouraged by the Amsterdam classis, they hoped to make it a stronghold of the Reformed Church, but within a few years marked by setbacks they changed their strategy: in 1662 two Catholic priests received permission to preach in the region, and the following year, a Lutheran pastor was also allowed to administer to the remaining Swedish congregation.<sup>52</sup> By then, New Amstel had grown into a sizeable colony along the Delaware, including a southern outpost near the Atlantic coast called Hoerenkil, purchased from indigenous chiefs in 1659.

This colonial outpost became the focus of a remarkable experiment in political and religious utopianism, triggered by the relative openness of the Amsterdam directors and their willingness to attract new colonists. The experiment started with a petition by Franciscus van den Enden, an ex-Jesuit

51 *Conditien die door de Heeren Burgemeesteren der Stadt Amstelredam ... gepresenteert werden aen alle de gene, die als coloniërs na Nieuw-Nederlandt willen vertrecken* (Amsterdam, 1656). On the colony of New Amstel, see Jaap Jacobs, *New Netherland: A Dutch Colony in Seventeenth-Century America* (Leiden, 2005), 126–32.

52 Haefeli, *New Netherland* (see above, n. 4), 237.

freethinker who is known especially for being Spinoza's teacher of Latin.<sup>53</sup> Loitering at the Amsterdam Exchange in the early 1660s, Van den Enden had come into contact with "some well-intentioned citizens, residents as well as foreigners, nonetheless lovers of this Free-State," who wanted to leave for Hoerenkil. For this diverse group of prospective colonists, the river mouth of the Delaware seemed a perfect location to create a virgin society on virgin soil overseas, to start anew in the New World. Van den Enden, learned and rhetorically skilled, became their spokesman, and in December 1661 he presented their proposal for a new society to the directors of New Amstel. An intricate series of negotiations followed and the directors continually asked for further clarifications of the colonists' plan, which contained some remarkable democratic and tolerationist elements. Yet eventually (by April 1662) the proposal was denied. Van den Enden, clearly upset, then decided to publish all documentation relative to the negotiations to defend his cause in public. The Dutch reading public had recently been provoked by the radical republican writings of the De la Court brothers, and Van den Enden explicitly claimed to follow their example, "encouraged by their invitation or seduction on the way of a modest exercise of Freedom."<sup>54</sup>

Van den Enden's provocative tone is evident from the opening words of his pamphlet, addressing an audience "that has no interest in the Preaching-Ministry and all the other mostly also idle scholarly delusive knowledge and that is likewise not supporting all worldly authorities founded upon imposture and violence." Indeed, Van den Enden's ideal reader was one who would take "no or little notice of the judgment of foolish, academically conceited Know-it-alls, cocky Grammarians, and such like envious Characters of the Night."<sup>55</sup>

53 See Jonathan I. Israel, *Radical Enlightenment: Philosophy and the Making of Modernity, 1650–1750* (Oxford, 2001), pp. 168–70, 175–84.

54 Franciscus van den Enden, *Kort verhael van Nieuw-Nederlants gelegenheit* (1662), ed. F. Mertens, from <http://users.telenet.be/fvde/WorksP/kortVerhael.pdf>, pp. iv, 43; "aenge-moedicht om hare nodingh of aenlokingh ter baan van bescheide Vryheits-betrachting"; "enige wel-geintentioneerde Burgers, en Inwoonders, als mede Vremdelingen, en niet te min Liefhebbers van dezen Vryen-staet." On the De la Court brothers, see my *Commercial Republicanism in the Dutch Golden Age: The Political Thought of Johan & Pieter de la Court* (Leiden, 2011).

55 Van den Enden, *Kort verhael*, (see above, n. 54), p. ii: "ghy die zijt buiten Interest van 't Predick-Ampt, en van alle andere ook meest ydele schoolze waen-geleertheyt, midtsgaders ontoegedane aen alle wereltze, op bedroch, en geweld gevestighde, heerschappijen ... laet hy sich aen der sotten, schoolze laetdunkende *Betweeters*, vijze Grammatisten, en diergelijke nijdige *Nacht-gediertens* oordeel weinigh, of niet gelegen zijn." I follow the translation and analysis by Haefeli, *New Netherland* (see above, n. 4), pp. 241–7, with some minor differences. See also Henk Looijesteijn, 'Petitioning, Colonial Policy, Constitutional Experiment and the Development of Dutch Colonial Thought,' paper presented at the 10th International Conference on Urban History, Ghent, 1–5 September 2010.

Given this anti-establishment attitude, it is not surprising that the directors of New Amstel saw little reason to accept Van den Enden's petition. But they were also critical of the practical implications of his plan. Speaking in the name of the several families willing to leave for Hoerenkil, Van den Enden's proposal was to establish overseas a "society of different people with conflicting sentiments," where there was to be no room for any "preachers, who feed and stiffen particular opinions." For Van den Enden, the main challenge for any peaceful society was the institutionalization of religious pluralism and the ensuing plurality of churches, which would entail "appointing particular preachers for each sect." This would not only be unfeasible practically but would also result in "an unavoidable ruinous pest of all peace and concord, without which no righteous society can be established, advanced, or in any way expected to be stable."<sup>56</sup>

In line with orthodox theologians such as Hoornbeeck, Van den Enden thus argued that institutionalized pluralism must at all times be avoided. But his proposed solution to counteract such pluralism overseas was diametrically opposed to Hoornbeeck's project of Reformed evangelization. In Van den Enden's colony, all public worship was to be based on scripture alone, the "most peaceful and least expensive Preacher."<sup>57</sup> For other, human preachers, there would be no place in society: public worship would consist of young members of the colonial community taking turns reciting scripture aloud at specific hours. This proposal came close to the Collegiant ideal which by then was spreading in Amsterdam, and possibly at least some of Van den Enden's prospective colonists were Collegiants themselves. Nonetheless, clearly directing himself against all existing churches, Van den Enden did not speak explicitly on behalf of any particular confessional denomination. His ideal was one of a broad public church, to be based on *sola scriptura*, the inalienable exercise of private freedom of conscience and on a radical anti-clericalism. This inclusivist and relative tolerationist stance, however, did not imply that there would be place for all sorts of believers in Van den Enden's colony:

All intractable people, such as stiff-headed Papists narrowly devoted to the Roman See, usurious Jews, stiff-headed English Quakers, Puritans and

56 Van den Enden, *Kort verhael* (see above, n. 54), pp. 28–9: "een Societeit van verscheide in gevoelens strijdige menschen ... alle Predicanten, als voeders, en stijvers van ieders particuliere opinie ... voor ieder gezintheit byzondere Predicanten te stellen ... een onvermijdelijke ruineuxse pest van alle vreed, en eendracht, zonder de welke geen rechtschapige Societeit kan begonnen, noch gevordert, veel min op eenigerhande manier bestant te zijn geacht werden."

57 Van den Enden, *Kort verhael* (see above, n. 54), p. 29: "den aldervreedzaamste, ook onkostelijkste-Predicant, de H. Schrift."

foolhardy stupid Millennialists, as well as all stiff-headed contemporaries claiming revelation etc., must be carefully excluded from this still fragile Christian civil society to preserve the common peace.<sup>58</sup>

Given this significant stipulation, Van den Enden's radicalism or religious openness should not be exaggerated. After all, his proposal remained thoroughly Protestant in character, and quite close to the general Reformed ideal of a single public church. Indeed, during the negotiations over the proposal, the directors of the Amsterdam colony were concerned not so much with Van den Enden's religious ideas as with more worldly matters such as desired tax breaks for the colonists and the administration of justice in their new society. The main problem posed by Van den Enden's colony was the possibility that it might become too independent of Amsterdam's control and thus undermine the city's colonial sovereignty. After more than a year of negotiations, the directors of New Amstel therefore refused to grant its support. The crucial issue, as so often in the Dutch colonial world, was not so much religion as such but rather the proper allocation of sovereignty.

This relative importance of sovereignty over religion is shown by the success of a new proposal that was presented to the directors of the city-colony one month later, in May 1662. This time, the directors were approached by an ex-Mennonite freethinker from Zeeland, Pieter Plockhoy.<sup>59</sup> In the late 1650s, Plockhoy had spent some time in England, where he had tried to convince Oliver Cromwell to support his plans to establish an ecumenical community in Ireland. When these plans did not come to fruition, Plockhoy returned to the Dutch Republic (where he may have been in contact with Quakers and Collegiants) and turned his attention to the New World. The openness of the Amsterdam city-colony and the ongoing discussions about sending colonists to New Amstel triggered Plockhoy's enthusiasm. Like Van den Enden, he became the spokesman for a small group of prospective colonists willing to settle in Hoerenkil, possibly including members of Van den Enden's flock. Their aim was to establish a society of twenty-five men, farmers as well as artisans, who would form a colonial company of shareholders, "a peaceful, harmonious

58 Van den Enden, *Kort verhaal* (see above, n. 54), p. 52: "Aengezien alle intractabele Menschen, als daer zijn stijf-koppige, en aen den Roomse-Stoel-naeuw-verplichte Papisten, Woekerige Joden, Engelze stijf-koppige Quakers, Puriteinen, en driestige domme duizent-jarige Rijks-Gezinden, midtsgaders alle stijf-hoofdige hedendaeghse Revelatie-pretendeerders, enz. uit deze noch tedere Christ-burgerlijke Societeit, tot behoudt der gemene rust omzigtelijk moesten werden geweert."

59 On Plockhoy, see Henk Looijesteijn, "'Born to the Common Welfare': Pieter Plockhoy's Quest for a Christian Life (c. 1620–1664)," PhD dissertation, European University Institute, 2009. See also Haefeli, *New Netherland* (see above, n. 4), pp. 247–51.

and selected people” who would remain subject to the authority of New Amstel and ultimately to the city of Amsterdam.<sup>60</sup> Their proposal, presented by Plockhoy, contained a democratic foundation similar to Van den Enden’s plan, but it made adamantly clear that the sovereignty of Amsterdam would not be infringed. Plockhoy had learned from Van den Enden’s mistake of asking for too much colonial independence.

At the same time, Plockhoy’s proposal also slightly differed from Van den Enden’s with regard to the religious characteristics of the society that he wanted to establish. The foundations were comparable, and again there was likely Collegiant inspiration: Plockhoy’s society would form a broad Christian association of colonists who would not be educated by “human interpretations of Religion,” so that “no foundation of sectarianism or partisanship shall be laid in their hearts.” As in Van den Enden’s plan, the aim was a broad public church where, “to balance everything,” public service was restricted to Bible reading and the singing of psalms, while all could exercise their freedom of conscience. Yet unlike Van den Enden, Plockhoy also explicitly created room for private congregations to have “their own particular meeting places and to maintain their own pastors, for this is an issue that does not concern the society in general.”<sup>61</sup> Plockhoy thus challenged Van den Enden’s unyielding anti-clericalism, proposing a confessional framework that was more akin to the religious practice in a city like Amsterdam, where dissenting congregations such as Lutherans, Catholics, and Jews were allowed to meet and practice their faith in private (which practically entailed the toleration of semi-clandestine *schuilkerken* or more visible religious centers such as the Amsterdam Synagogue). Within the limits of this established framework in terms of colonial sovereignty as well as religious openness, Plockhoy realized how to convince the directors of New Amstel to support his project by claiming that it was, in fact, not at all utopian. As the poet Jacob Steendam put it in his accompanying verse to the proposal, directed at the prospective colonists for the new society overseas: “It is no utopia, it rests on well-founded laws, which set you a clear rule for liberty.”<sup>62</sup>

60 Pieter Plockhoy, *Kort en klaer ontwerp, dienende tot een ondeling accoort, om den arbeyd, onrust en moeyelijckheyd van alderley-hand-wercx-luyden te verlichten door een ondelinge compagnie ofte volck-planting* (Amsterdam, 1662), unpaginated: “een vredigh, een-stemmigh en uyt-gesocht Volck.”

61 Plockhoy, *Kort en klaer ontwerp* (see above, n. 60), sig. Bv: “In saecken van Religie (om alles wel te ballanceren) sal elck vryheyd van Conscientie behouden ... haer eygen particuliere vergader-plaetsen hebben, en haer eygen Leeraers onder-houden. Als sijnde een sake die de Societeyt in ’t gemeen niet aen en gaet.... geen menschelijcke Formulieren van religie ... geen Fondament van Secterije of partijschap in hare herten geleyt worden.”

62 Plockhoy, *Kort en klaer ontwerp* (see above, n. 60), unpaginated: “’T is geen *Utopia*, ’t steund op gegronde wetten: Die tot de vryheyd u, een vasten Regel setten.”

The directors of New Amstel approved Ploekhoy's proposal in June 1662, but the first colonists, including Ploekhoy himself, did not leave until almost a year later, in May 1663. Yet for all this apparent cautiousness, the project soon turned out to be doomed: in 1664, New Netherland was conquered by the English and the nascent settlement at Hoerenkil, "the most radical religious and social experiment the republic's colonies ever saw," was plundered.<sup>63</sup> No more was ever heard of Ploekhoy: all physical traces of his colony have disappeared from the banks of the Delaware River. Yet Ploekhoy's and Van den Enden's written proposals remain vivid witnesses to the idea that religious concord, the *fata morgana* of Dutch society, could be found beyond the horizon by the creation of new societies overseas. The existence of a plurality of churches may have made confessional unity impossible at home, but a single, inclusive church still seemed an achievable goal in the colonial world. In the early 1660s, this colonial window of opportunity opened thanks to the exceptional context of the Amsterdam city-colony and its expansion at Hoerenkil. That window soon closed again, but it gave rise to freethinking experimentation that was further developed in later years. It might be argued that Van den Enden's failure to convince the directors of New Amstel to accept his proposal had the unforeseen consequence of directing all his attention, and that of his erstwhile pupil Spinoza, once again to reforming Dutch politics, church, and society from within, which resulted in Van den Enden's *Vrye politieke stellingen* (1665) and culminated in the publication of the *Tractatus theologico-politicus* in 1670.<sup>64</sup> Yet in the ensuing development of the Radical Enlightenment, the colonial world continued to be a platform for religious zeal, offering many a prospect of heavenly concord that was unattainable at home.

#### 4 Awaiting Doomsday in the Wilderness: The Labadists in Suriname

The New World attracted plans for a new society on the basis not only of ecumenical openness but also the opposite ideal: that of a faraway sectarian community flourishing in perfect isolation. In the Dutch context, the best illustration of such sectarian escapism was the community of the Labadists. Epitomizing the continuous confessional conflict that haunted Dutch society, this sect originated as a schismatic group within the Calvinist Walloon Church, led by Jean de Labadie, a French ex-Jesuit. In his writing and preaching, De Labadie strongly emphasized personal piety, inner spirituality, and asceticism, and eventually

63 Haefeli, *New Netherland* (see above, n. 4), p. 233.

64 Cf. Israel, *Radical Enlightenment* (see above, n. 53), pp. 175, 260.

he established an independent community in Amsterdam in 1669. Persecuted by the authorities for transgressing public order, the Labadists soon moved away and ended up after Labadie's death in Friesland, where they obtained significant privileges such as the right to hold public meetings. Moreover, they were allowed to settle their community near the village of Wieuwerd thanks to the invitation by the local aristocratic family of Van Aerssen van Sommelsdijck.<sup>65</sup> This autarchic community at Wieuwerd, whose members lived in community sharing goods and adhering to strict group discipline, soon became a tourist attraction of sorts, visited by curious travelers such as William Penn and John Locke. Clearly, the isolation the Labadists desired was not complete, and in the early summer of 1684, a large group left Wieuwerd to seek a proper refuge from worldliness in the wilderness of Suriname.

This choice for Suriname was obviously no coincidence. The year before, the Society of Suriname had been established to govern the Dutch colony at the 'Wild Coast,' conquered from the English in 1667; the three shareholders of the Company were the WIC, the city of Amsterdam, and Cornelis van Aerssen van Sommelsdijck, who was also appointed the colony's first governor. The sisters of Cornelis had invited the Labadist community to Wieuwerd, where the Labadists were granted official freedom of religion in 1675 by the States of Friesland, henceforth enjoying the right to practice their faith publicly. Now that the family had gained new territory overseas, the Labadists were offered a perfect opportunity to spread out. Once again, the issue of sovereignty proved to be crucial: Van Aerssen van Sommelsdijck was the legitimate sovereign over the colony of Suriname, onto which he copied the political-religious framework of Friesland. This circumstance gave the Labadists the exceptional possibility of creating a new religious settlement of their own. A sizeable portion of the community followed the governor, including his sister Lucia van Aerssen van Sommelsdijck, and after their arrival in 1684 they established a plantation some eighty kilometers up the Suriname River on land granted to Lucia. The settlement, far removed from the small colonial headquarters at Fort Zeelandia, was christened 'Providentia.'<sup>66</sup>

The rationale behind this providential escapism followed directly from the main principles of the Labadists' religiosity. According to the account by Petrus Dittelbach, an apostate of the community at Wieuwerd, Labadie had preached a millenarian vision wherein the situation of his church "would be

65 See Mirjam de Baar, 'Godsdienstvrijheid voor de labadisten in Wieuwerd (1675–1732),' *De zeventiende eeuw* 20 (2004), pp. 66–82, and more generally on the Labadists T. J. Saxby, *The Quest for the New Jerusalem: Jean de Labadie and the Labadists, 1610–1744* (Dordrecht, 1987).

66 L. Knappert, 'De Labadisten in Suriname,' *De West-Indische Gids* 8 (1926), 193–218.

the last state until the coming of Christ's judgment." A proper location was therefore needed to await Doomsday in isolation; Labadie had thought about moving his community to the Cape Colony or Madagascar for this purpose. Divine intervention, however, brought the Labadists after Labadie's death in contact with Van Aerssen van Sommelsdijck, and thus God had directed his elected flock towards Suriname, "the poorest land in the world as to the necessities of nature." A first reconnaissance of the territory was not very promising, but "nonetheless the Lord ordained ... that this would be the place that would be like a Zoar for his church, when God would destroy this world with its falsely pious people." According to Dittelbach, the Labadist leaders therefore sent a selection of the community's members overseas, telling them that "there they would be in a freer state, and they would be enabled to practice more intensely the freedom that God had given to his House and children and that cannot be discovered or enjoyed among or amidst the worldly believers." The ascetic life in the wilderness was thus considered a breeding ground for religious freedom and intense spirituality.<sup>67</sup>

On the basis of such deepened internal religiosity, a community would arise in utter autarchy and isolation to avoid any contamination by other Christians, who had strayed from the true path and had thus willingly shunned their own salvation: "Israel must live alone and far from the world, for those to whom Christ had already been revealed could not be helped, but the heathens would listen."<sup>68</sup> Like Hoornbeeck, the Labadists believed that while proselytizing at home was to no avail, it would succeed overseas among the unspoiled heathens; like Van den Eenden and Plockhoy, they believed that the establishment of a communal society on virgin soil would be a way to overcome religious pluralism. For orthodox theologians, utopian freethinkers, and millenarian sectarians alike, the colonial world thus served as a mirage of successful evangelization, internal concord, and eventual salvation.

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67 Petrus Dittelbach, *Verval en val der Labadisten* (Amsterdam, 1692), pp. 51–3: "den laatsten stand sou zijn tot op de komste Christi ten oordeel ... het armste Land ter wereld aangaande de nootsakelijkheden voor de natuur ... de Heere deed evenwel gevoelen ... dat dit de plaats sou zijn, die als een Zoar sou wesen voor dese sijne Kerke, wanneer God door sijne oordelen de hier zijnde Werelt met hare valsche pieusen sou te niet maken.... dat sy daar in een vryeren stand soudon staan, en in staat wesen om meer in te gaan in de vryheyt die de Heere aan sijn Huys en kinderen gaf, welke hier noch onder en in 't midden van de wereltlike vromen soo niet kon ontdekt noch genoten worden."

68 Dittelbach, *Verval en val der Labadisten* (see above, n. 67), p. 54: "Israel moest alleen wonen en veyre van de werelt: want aan die gene die Christus nu al was verkondigt, was niet aan te doen, de heydenen soudon horen."

Yet also for the Labadists, the colonial reality proved to be merciless. The conditions in the wilderness of Suriname were extremely harsh, the colonists from Wieuwerd were totally unprepared to work the soil of the rainforest or to withstand tropical diseases, and soon poverty and plague struck the community. A second expedition from Wieuwerd aimed to bring some relief, but the situation only got worse: the dream of colonial concord turned into a nightmare of discord and internal strife, and many of the colonists who survived the epidemic decided to return home. Only a few remained. In April 1700, some fifteen years after the first group had arrived at Providentia, the famous illustrator and natural historian Maria Sybilla Merian visited Suriname and saw the plantation colony almost entirely abandoned. Merian had lived among the Labadist community at Wieuwerd, and her religiosity was one of the initial inspirations behind her study of flowers, insects, and the finest details of God's creation. Her marvelous drawings of tropical caterpillars and butterflies made during her stay in Suriname were eventually published in *Metamorphosis Insectorum Surinamensium* from 1705.<sup>69</sup> The Labadists' colony, now mainly populated by black slaves, lingered on for a few more years until the plantation was sold in 1719; the community at Wieuwerd finally fell apart in 1732. Such was the tragic metamorphosis of what was meant to be a Zoar for the chosen ones.

## 5 Conclusion: Redrawing the Limits between Inner and Outer Religiosity

Dutch intellectual and religious life entered a maelstrom after 1650, and before long the colonial world was sucked into this maelstrom as well. The continuous dualism of the desire for religious unity and the reality of confessional plurality resulted in a centrifugal clash between the public church and dissenting congregations. All searched for deeper internal religiosity and personal piety, which strengthened religious communities from within but also led to the opening up of new vistas of interreligious dialogue, ecumenical openness, and communal living overseas. Johannes Hoornbeeck, as a representative of Reformed orthodoxy, defended the purity of the single public church by looking for connections with other belief systems; Franciscus van den Enden and Pieter Ploekhoy challenged orthodoxy from the outside by putting forth

69 On Merian, see Natalie Zemon Davis, *Women on the Margins: Three Seventeenth-Century Lives* (Cambridge, Mass., 1995), pp. 140–202, and Ella Reitsma, *Maria Sibylla Merian & dochters* (Zwolle, 2008). Her visit to Providentia is mentioned in *Metamorphosis Insectorum Surinamensium ofte verandering der Surinaamsche insecten* (Amsterdam, 1705), p. 20.

a radically different vision of a single public church, based on the Collegiant ideal of inclusivity; the Labadists challenged orthodoxy from within by establishing an exclusive independent community intended to isolate the true believers from the rest of the world. All looked overseas to realize their ideals: the maelstrom of religious and intellectual changes in the second half of the seventeenth century was not confined to the narrow borders of the Dutch Republic.

All three colonial projects turned out to be brilliant failures, mainly because of concrete political and geographical circumstances: Hoornbeeck's plea for worldwide evangelization was hardly equipped to meet the realities of Dutch sovereign control overseas; Van den Enden and Ploekhoy's plans were aborted because of colonial disputes in Amsterdam and warfare in New Netherland; the Labadists' millenarian dream of salvation was smothered in the worldly hardship of the wilderness. Clearly, the colonial escape route to concord did not lead anywhere. One of the main reasons for this failure was the unresolved tension between political authority and the church within the Dutch framework. In all three cases, the possibilities of success depended on the willingness of the civil sovereign: Hoornbeeck could realize his plans for global mission only if backed by the VOC and WIC, Van den Enden and Ploekhoy could put forward their plans for a new settlement only thanks to the relative openness of the directors of New Amstel, and the mirage of the Labadists could materialize only because of the support they received from Van Aerssen van Sommelsdyck. The problematic relationship between church and state thus heavily conditioned the success, and the failure, of religious experiments in the colonial world.

Such failure could have resulted in a further hardening of entrenched confessional positions. Yet after almost two centuries of endless infighting between Christians, a different outcome could be realized by redrawing the limits between inner and outer religiosity, between the private and public spheres of religious expression—at home and overseas. Over the course of the eighteenth century, the Dutch Reformed framework of a single public church eventually yielded to a multiconfessional reality, at home and also in the colonies, when other Protestant congregations such as Lutherans were officially allowed to establish churches in Batavia and the Cape Colony. In New England, the Dutch conception of the interdependence between church and state was replaced by the Erastian practices of the new colonial government, which created much more room for dissenting pilgrim settlements.<sup>70</sup> Indeed, the Labadists also established a community in Maryland, which had considerably more success

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70 See Haefeli, *New Netherland* (see above, n. 4).

than the outpost in Suriname.<sup>71</sup> Finally, Dutch evangelization overseas truly took off at the end of the eighteenth century with the establishment of the *Zendinggenootschap* or Missionary Society, which was founded as a private initiative in 1797.<sup>72</sup> Where the public church had failed, private religious zeal now took over. Colonial escapism and the experiments of the opening decades of the Enlightenment had contributed to this gradual demise of the primacy of the Reformed Church as the public church, and to the gradual rise of inner spirituality as the essence of colonial godliness.

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71 Saxby, *The Quest for the New Jerusalem* (see above, n. 65).

72 P. N. Holtrop, 'Van kerkstaat naar particulier initiatief: De Indische kerk en het Nederlandse Zendinggenootschap,' in: *Het Indisch Sion*, ed. Schutte (see above, n. 4), pp. 225–36.

# Negotiating Ideas: The Communicative Constitution of Pietist Theology within the Lutheran Church

*Martin Gierl*

## Abstract

In this chapter the emergence of enlightened religion is approached from the angle of the form rather than the content of religious communication. Here I analyze the communicative space in which religion was discussed and show how theological controversy, an essential element of the confessional religion of the seventeenth century, developed into new genres and media, ultimately changing not only the shape and tone of the conversation but its content as well. Taking the Pietist controversies in Germany as an example, I show how theological controversy worked and how it enabled innovation while maintaining orthodoxy. As this controversy unfolded in the 1690s the entire apparatus of the confessional church in Brandenburg became involved in the restoration of ecclesiastical peace. Yet the net result of these efforts was the formulation of an alternative, Pietist theology against an orthodox Lutheran one. Each party proved capable of finding its system supported by Scripture and started to propagate its views in the then-modern medium of scholarly journals devoted to partisan biblical exegesis. These journals were aimed at a theologically interested popular audience and appealed to its 'impartial' judgment. The new, critical approach to the Bible and traditional theology resulting from the Pietist controversies was thus successfully popularized, eventually superseding the confessional orientation. In a subsequent phase, the newly emerging discipline of church history and the eighteenth-century encyclopedias canonized and consolidated Enlightened approaches to religion and piety. Ironically, both genres perpetuated elements drawn from the technique of controversy. The introduction of new media genres thus forced a certain measure of *libertas philosophandi* upon the Lutheran church. They created church identity in new ways, but also meshed with the Enlightened values of impartiality and improvement and with new means of knowledge production.

## 1 Introduction<sup>1</sup>

Unavoidably, ideas are not only the outcome of thinking. They are constructed and answer problems that arise within the institutional setting they belong to. Modeled within the medial and institutional frameworks of debates and discourses, they are much more worked-out than thought-out. The constructive nature of ideas has three consequences. It makes the ideas dependent on communication: media formats, analytical methods, and all the complications connected with the public sphere. Second, it makes the ideas dependent on their social background: that is, all kind of interests and regulations triggering their reception, popularity, or rejection. Third, it links the success of a message with the success of the means of its propagation, which often leads to quite unexpected results.

Pietism and Pietist theology are good examples of this phenomenon. The harder Pietists tried to enshrine the Word of God in Christians' hearts by producing a vast spectrum of devotional literature, as well as a growing number of revised, painstakingly commented-on, mass-produced translations of the Bible, the more they instigated reading, writing, individual judgment, even critical analysis and a rapid expansion of the literary market.<sup>2</sup> Pietism in the narrower sense, that is in the sense of a groundbreaking movement and not only in the sense of a religious strand, existed exactly as long as the propagation of Pietism coincided with the employment of the then-leading tools and institutions to process information. Seen from the communicational side, the Pietist movement consisted of international and interconfessional networks of correspondence; journals; the organization of educational institutions; and the foundation of societies, associations, communities, and settlements. These all steadily proclaimed the message to the world: Pietism exists, Pietism is active, Pietism possesses a structure, a membership, and a coherent identity, as well as a certain diversity and plurality.<sup>3</sup>

Transforming religious drives into communicational tools and organization models, Pietism evolved from the field of Enlightenment and simultaneously

1 My thanks go to Jo Spaans and Jetze Touber for all the work they invested in this article.

2 See Jonathan Sheehan, *The Enlightenment Bible: Translation, Scholarship, Culture* (Princeton, 2005). On the recent interest in religion and Enlightenment, see: Dmitri Levitin, 'Historiographical Review: From Sacred History to the History of Religion: Paganism, Judaism, and Christianity in European Historiography from Reformation to 'Enlightenment,' *Historical Journal* 55, no. 4 (2012), 1117–60; Simon Grote, 'Review Essay: Religion and Enlightenment,' *Journal of the History of Ideas* 75, no. 1 (2014), 137–60.

3 A comprehensive overview on Pietism procures: H. Shantz, *An Introduction to German Pietism: Protestant Renewal at the Dawn of Modern Europe* (Baltimore, 2013), and H. Shantz, ed., *A Companion to German Pietism* (Leiden, 2015).

developed that field. Debates within the German-speaking public sphere of the eighteenth century had to take pietistic stances into account, and that is why, to a certain extent, the German Enlightenment took on its religiously idealistic, romantic, and mystical as well as its discipline- and order-loving flavor. The concept of *Wiedergeburt* (rebirth) developed into *Mündigkeit* (maturity), *praxis pietatis* produced *Gebrauch der Verstandeskräfte* (use of the power of reason), and it is probably the best Pietist joke of the German Enlightenment (if there are Pietist jokes) that Kant's dictum on "man's emergence from his self-imposed immaturity," rooted deeply in the Pietist tradition, became the globally accepted textbook definition of Enlightenment.

But how did Pietist theology evolve in the first place? Quite interestingly, Pietism did not emerge from a pre-existing Pietist theology. Rather, it first channelled the religious needs and drives of the day into a commonly shared maxim. Pietists stated that true Christianity requires and is equal to the permanently deepened and expressed love of Christ. This maxim rallied people to engage in pious practice, which in turn led to the formation of organized groups. A movement in the making activated the official theologians of the Lutheran church. An immensely intense controversy arose. It was in the wake of this controversy that Pietist theology took shape.

In this chapter, I would like to illustrate one phenomenon in particular. Theological controversy, as it had been institutionalized within the Lutheran church, was no free discourse—even by the low standards of the possibility of free discourses in the first place. Theological controversy was a highly regulated process, which combined theological argumentation with the regulated forms of academic disputations and legal procedures. Universities, *Konsistorien* (regional bodies of church government), and *Ministerien* (local committees of the ministers)—that is, the leading church institutions—provided its techniques, structured its battlefield, and were obliged to interfere as much as possible. Theological controversy was anything but an arbitrary wrangling. It was a highly regulated process on several levels at once: social, institutional, and textual. The orthodox clergy were the guardians of the rules and had the power to activate them and oversee their practice. Thus is why Pietist theology was not defined by the Pietists themselves but, to a very large extent, by their orthodox opponents. The orthodox side formulated the questions that the Pietists had to answer. Theological controversy was a coherent apparatus with one crucial aim: to guarantee confessional identity. It was set up to monitor newly developed religious positions and practices and to bring them into the form of a theological dispute in order to test which of these new positions matched the confessional dogma and which did not, and to expel the latter ones so as to re-establish orthodoxy. Deviating forms of piety were systematically translated into dogmatic idiom and thus theologically categorized.

Heterodoxy was thereby pinned down.<sup>4</sup> To a remarkable extent, theological controversy resembled modern football or car racing. Both are organized businesses, entirely conducted institutionally and practically through professional agents, referees, official training camps, and regulated performances staged in front of a highly interested audience. But there is one big difference: while football and car racing remain relatively constant over time, with only slight innovations in the way the sport is to be performed, the definition of religious truth in the Pietist controversy changed its media as well as its communicative practices during the run of the game. A culture of pamphlets and disputations became a culture of journals and historiographical textbooks. The defense of dogma became Enlightenment. These changes invited an enlarged circle of supporters to take part in the match.

I divide my argument into three parts: 1. How theological controversy functioned. 2. How Pietist theology emerged from the Pietist controversy. 3. How theological controversy became ecclesiastical history and, as such, contributed to the basic structures of the new, up-and-coming Enlightened historiography.

## 2 How Theological Controversy Functioned

In the seventeenth century, attempts to safeguard confessional doctrine dominated the theological institutions—the universities, consistories, and ministries. To defend orthodox doctrine was an official duty of the clergy. Controversial theology commanded media in the forms of the pulpit and the pamphlet. The controversialist was the highest-ranking professor at the universities, which taught the technique of disputation as one of their foremost tasks.

The objective of theological controversy was laid down in both positive and negative terms. Positive: to uphold the true doctrine; negative: to ascertain heretical doctrine and to isolate its champions from the church. According to Gratian's law, one had to identify heretics by furnishing evidence of heretical teaching and, moreover, by proving that such heretics obstinately persevered in their heterodoxy.<sup>5</sup> The former was achieved by argument, the latter demonstrated by the reactions of the accused. Formal proceedings in theological controversies were based on the well-known and much-quoted dictum from

4 In detail: Martin Gierl, *Pietismus und Aufklärung: Theologische Polemik und die Kommunikationsreform der Wissenschaft am Ende des 17. Jahrhunderts* (Göttingen, 1997).

5 Winfried Trusen, 'Rechtliche Grundlagen des Häresiebegriffs und des Ketzerverfahrens,' in: *Ketzerverfolgung im 16. und frühen 17. Jahrhundert* [Wolfenbütteler Forschungen 51], ed. Silvana Seidel Menchi et al. (Wiesbaden, 1992), pp. 1–20, there p. 3; Anders Winroth, *The Making of Gratian's Decretum* (New York, 2009).

the gospel of Matthew (Matt. 18,15): “If your brother sins, take him to task. If he won’t listen, admonish him with witnesses. If he still won’t listen, then take the matter to the parish. If that still doesn’t work, he is like a heathen and tax collector to you.” This passage defined the stages of escalation in a dispute: private warning, rebuke in the presence of witnesses, and public reprimand. This text from Matthew furnished churches with a guideline for ecclesiastical discipline. It was part of most of the Lutheran church ordinances and was enforced by church officials.<sup>6</sup>

There were also more specific rules for theological controversy, pertaining to the techniques and lines of argumentation. Three things were important: complete refutation as a fundamental precept of the approach; syllogistic deduction as an argumentation technique; and church dogma as guidelines for living according to the rules of one’s faith.

To start with the second: syllogistic deduction breaks down statements into premises and draws conclusions from them. This makes syllogistic deduction the perfect tool for academic disputation, where a consensus is undermined by a contentious opinion but is reinstated at the close of the argumentation.<sup>7</sup> Church dogma was the instrument for identifying heretical beliefs and those who denied the teachings of the church. Each article of the authoritative Lutheran Formula of Concord emphatically began “We believe, teach and confess.”<sup>8</sup> The application of syllogisms and the axioms of faith in the attack on perceived heterodoxies functioned like a well-oiled polemical machine. From there the controversy followed an inherent logic. To achieve victory, the accusing party had to launch an attack not only against a selection of the opponent’s offending points of view, but also against the supposedly heretical teaching in its entirety. On the other side, the party thus attacked had to defend not only specific points of the attacks but all its details.

Accordingly, theological controversy evolved as a chain of interrelated pamphlets that mutually referred to one another. This was clearly indicated in the pamphlet titles. In 1690 the Hamburg church ministry published a tract against

6 For sources Gierl, *Pietismus* (see above, n. 3), pp. 78–81.

7 On the Aristotelian tradition of syllogism see Marko Malink, *Aristotle’s Modal Syllogistic* (Cambridge, Mass., 2013); on *disputatio* and theology see Uwe Gerber, *Disputatio als Sprache des Glaubens* (Zurich, 1970); on the development of disputations, Kevin Chang, ‘From Oral Disputation to Written Text: The Transformation of the Dissertation in Early Modern Europe,’ *History of Universities* 2 (2004), 129–87; as contemporary introduction, Jakob Thomasius, ‘De processus disputandi,’ in: *M. Jacobi Thomasi Erotemata logica pro incipientibus* (Leipzig, 1670).

8 See Robert Kolb and James A. Nestingen, eds., *Sources and Contexts of the Book of Concord* (Minneapolis, 2001); Robert Kolb and Timothy J. Wengert, eds., *The Book of Concord: The Confessions of the Evangelical Lutheran Church* (Minneapolis, 2000); Irene Dingel et al., *Die Bekenntnisschriften der evangelisch-lutherischen Kirche: Quellen und Materialien, Bd. 2: Die Konkordienformel* (Göttingen, 2014).

Spener entitled *Abgenöthigte Schutz-Schrift* [Coerced Defense Pamphlet].<sup>9</sup> Spener replied with *Die Freyheit der Gläubigen ... in gründlicher Beantwortung der so genannten Abgenöthigten Schutz-Schrift* [The Freedom of Believers ... in a Thorough Reply to the Coerced Defense Pamphlet]. The opposition retaliated with *Mißbrauch der Freyheit der Gläubigen ... aus Hn. D. Philipp Jacob Speners ... Freyheit der Gläubigen ... gezeiget* [Abuse of Freedom Shown by Spener's Freedom of Believers], upon which Spener answered with *Sieg der Wahrheit und Unschuld, gezeiget in gründlicher Beantwortung Hn. Joh. Fridrich Mayers ... Mißbrauch der Freyheit der Gläubigen* [Victory of Truth in a Thorough Reply of Joh. Fridrich Mayer's Abuse of Freedom].<sup>10</sup> Each text by the opposition was exhaustively rebutted by a text of one's own: paragraph after paragraph, even sentence after sentence. Refutation meant controverting a specific text down to the last detail. The counter-pamphlet engulfed the initial pamphlet and expanded the discussion by relentlessly pursuing the cycle of answers and rebuttals as prescribed by the rules of engagement. Each individual pamphlet in the exchange is neither an independent unit nor an expression of an individual opinion; it is part of the greater controversy.

Theological controversy was a rule-bound process conducted 'text against text.' Simultaneously it involved disputes of 'man against man.' Both orthodox and Pietist sides recognized the formal precepts of the culture of refutation and censured those who did not comply. Not just anyone could enter the fray; nor was it permitted to dispute with just anyone. But one was, however, strictly obliged to personally defend oneself if one's opponent was of the same standing. If one had seven opponents, one had to reply with seven written apologies—a task one could delegate, but only under certain circumstances. To advocate a position meant having to find comrades-in-arms in numbers reflecting the sensation caused by one's contention. In this way, opinions were disputed with an intensity commensurate to the interest they aroused.<sup>11</sup>

9 [Johann Friedrich Mayer], *Abgenöthigte Schutz-Schrift. Worinnen wider die harte und ungegründete Beschuldigungen Herrn D. Philipp Jacob Spener &c.&c. Ihren Revers und Religions-Eifer vertheidiget das Ministerium in Hamburg* (s.l., s.a.).

10 Philipp Jakob Spener, *Die Freyheit der Gläubigen ... in gründlicher Beantwortung der so genannten Abgenöthigten Schutz-Schrift, welche im Namen deß Evangelischen Hamburgischen Ministerii von Herrn D. Johann Friedrich Meyern außgefertiget worden* (Frankfurt am Main, 1691); Johann Friedrich Mayer, *Mißbrauch der Freyheit der Gläubigen zum Deckel der Boßheit aus Hn. D. Philipp Jacob Speners ... Freyheit der Gläubigen ... gezeiget* (s.l., 1692); Philipp Jakob Spener, *Sieg der Wahrheit und Unschuld, gezeiget in gründlicher Beantwortung Hn. Joh. Fridrich Mayers ... Mißbrauch der Freyheit der Gläubigen zum Deckel der Boßheit* (Cölln an der Spree, 1692).

11 Gierl, *Pietismus* (see above, n. 3), pp. 114–92.

Taken together, the institutional, social, communicative, and (con)textual implications of theological controversy enabled the incorporation, through a regulated process, of the individual, ever-changing interests within the clergy into the body of theological learning and teaching. Theological controversy was the instrument that maintained the authority of revelation and church dogma, yet allowed the adaptation of beliefs to the changing demands of the church. The preservation of true doctrine ensured continuity between tradition and innovation in the church. It guaranteed doctrinal identity. So much for the theory.

### 3 How Pietist Theology Emerged from the Pietist Controversy

Between 1690 and 1720, somewhere around five hundred combatants exchanged some two thousand pamphlets on Pietism. The entire clergy took part in the controversy, actively or passively. The Pietist controversy developed in three phases: 1. The compilation of accusations. 2. The systematization and theologization of the controversy. 3. The historicization of the controversy. The Pietist controversy originated in a cluster of extremely vague accusations. The accusers took aim at the Pietist assemblies that had arisen from a desire for a more communally practiced piety, the conventicles, which had been held since 1670 by Spener in Frankfurt. It was alleged, very generally but ominously, that “something was happening”; women would rush there and preach, and even artisans took part. There were rumors about sexual excesses. These rumors led to inquiries and the inquiries to apologies. This in turn prompted Spener’s famous *Pia Desideria* and his tract *Das Geistliche Priesterthum* [The Spiritual Priesthood] in the mid-1670s.<sup>12</sup> Both texts justified the conventicles. Spener’s justification based their legitimacy on New Testament tradition and the contemporary flaws of the Lutheran church, which, it was claimed, did not deserve the name of ‘Evangelical’ it had arrogated. Spener argued that the Evangelical inspiration was losing ground in the Lutheran church. In his eyes it needed less disputation and more piety. The conventicles were one way to achieve this purpose. As the spiritual priesthood of all believers was an element of Evangelical doctrine, Spener considered conventicles to be permissible.

The orthodox side also took a stand. Queries on the part of the authorities had led to theological reports. One of the first was compiled in 1678 by the

12 Philipp Jakob Spener, *Pia Desideria oder hertzliches Verlangen, nach Gottgefälliger Besserung der wahren Evangelischen Kirchen* (Frankfurt am Main, 1676); idem, *Das Geistliche Priesterthum* (Frankfurt am Main, 1676).

Darmstadt superintendent Balthasar Mentzer against the local conventicle. Accusingly, it stated that the new religious movement valued 'good deeds' over church dogma; that it denied the authority of the church and rejected the theology of the universities; and above all that it called for a general priesthood and the establishment of conventicles. Mentzer saw the danger of a schism in the making.<sup>13</sup>

At about the same time the term 'Pietists' began to circulate. Thus, both subjects of discussion and a common denominator emerged from the new practice of piety. The subjects of discussion were a) the autonomous practice of piety in the conventicles, outside the bounds of congregational worship; b) the explicit or implicit criticism of the church that had become associated with these forms of piety; and c) the concomitant softening of church dogma. The outline of a principal danger was located. The clergy was pushed into alarm mode. But there was not yet a clearly delineated Pietist movement intense enough to trigger a general controversy.

A decade later, young Pietist theologians held *collegia pietatis* at the University of Leipzig, with overwhelming success.<sup>14</sup> The professors reacted with concern and jealousy. The pamphlet war began and with it the theologization of Pietism. Several critical commentaries were published. Next, the pamphlet *Unfug der Pietisten* [Mischief of the Pietists], portraying the Pietists as a homogeneous group, found twenty major objections to Pietism and made Spener the man to blame.<sup>15</sup> Pietism, the charge went, is not just a position within the Lutheran church but a sect. No fewer than thirteen counter-pamphlets from the Pietist side followed.<sup>16</sup> The theological faculty of Wittenberg took the next step. Together its members pored over Spener's complete works and found 284 doctrinal deviations. Spener painstakingly replied to the strongly orthodox pamphlet, which ran to more than two hundred pages. In more than three hundred pages of his own, he set forth why his doctrine corresponded to church dogma point by point.<sup>17</sup> Thus emerged the corpus of Pietist theology.

13 Balthasar Mentzer, *Kurtzes Bedencken von den Einzelen Zusammenkunfften, wie dieselbe etlicher Orten wollen behauptet werden* (Gießen, 1691), pp. 8–17.

14 Ryoko Mori, 'The Conventicle Piety of the Radicals,' in: *A Companion to German Pietism*, ed. Douglas Shantz (Leiden, 2015), pp. 201–24; Christian Peters, "Daraus der Lärm des Pietismus entstanden": Die Leipziger Unruhen von 1689/1690 und ihre Deutung durch Spener und die hallischen Pietisten,' *Pietismus und Neuzeit* 23 (1997), 103–51; Hans Leube, 'Die Geschichte der pietistischen Bewegung in Leipzig,' in: *Orthodoxie und Pietismus: Gesammelte Studien von Hans Leube*, ed. Dietrich Blaufuß (Bielefeld, 1976), pp. 153–267.

15 *Ausführliche Beschreibung des Unfugs welchen die Pietisten ... gestiftet* (s.l., 1693), pp. 27–33.

16 Gierl, *Pietismus* (see above, n. 3), pp. 148–53.

17 *Christ-Lutherische Vorstellung, In deutlichen Aufrichtigen Lehr-Sätzen, Nach Gottes Wort, und den Symbolischen Kirchen-Büchern, sonderlich der Augspurgischen Confession, und Unrichtigen Gegen-Sätzen, Aus Herrn D. Philippi Jacobi Speners Schriften* (Wittenberg,

A spate of smaller controversies ensued, specifying key standpoints. The Pietist demand for a life-determining, heartfelt belief in Christ was discussed in terms of justification, sanctification, the limits of God's mercy, and the essence of the sacraments. Over the course of this debate, a system of Pietist theology took shape that negotiated its 'principium cognoscendi,' 'finis,' 'subjectum,' and 'media.'<sup>18</sup> Justification, sanctification, Christology, grace, and other key concepts of theology could now be used to measure the *praxis pietatis*. Pietism received a theological face. The Lutheran church, on the other side, was given specified directives with which to measure the orthodoxy of this Pietist theological face. The upshot: there is a 'good' pietism within the church, in contrast to that of radical groups, from which one should distance oneself. Pietists accepted church dogma as the touchstone for the definition of orthodoxy; but they considered heretical not the person who upholds errors, but the person who upholds fundamental errors. To achieve a truly holy life is not possible but is a necessary aspiration. Good deeds cannot redeem a believer, but striving for a pious world in the here and now should be pleasing in the sight of God. The Bible remains the measure of belief, but piety must be the approach to understand the Word of God. The church and its dogma may not remain aims in and of themselves; rather, they exist to disseminate and deepen Christianity. In other words: they shifted the focus of the Lutheran church away from dogma and its defense and toward individual conviction and its profession.

Conviction and its profession were anything but new: they had been central aspects of Christianity since the Apostolic Age, evident in Paul's mission, Boniface's conversion of the Germanic barbarians, Bernard of Clairvaux's merger of knighthood and Christendom, and the Jesuits' obedience to God and his worldly representative. But the question was: How to reconcile the psychological and individual side of this demand with its social and organizational side?

A radically subjective conception—in its psychological as well as individual dimension—of conviction and its permanent profession had been at the center of Johann Arndt's definition of "true Christianity," which he propagated in endless repetitions in his devotional treatise *Die vier Bücher vom wahren Christentum* [Four Books on True Christianity, 1610]. This became the most widely owned book after the Bible in the German lands. Some three hundred editions were published up through the end of the nineteenth century.<sup>19</sup> Arndt

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1695); Philipp Jakob Spener, *Aufrichtige Übereinstimmung mit der Augsp. Confession, Zu nöthiger Vertheidigung seiner reinen Lehr, von ihm selbst entgegen gesetzt der so genannten Christ-Lutherischen Vorstellung* (Frankfurt am Main, 1695).

18 *Ausführliche Beschreibung des Unfugs* (see above, n. 14), p. 27.

19 Thomas Ilg, *Ein anderer Mensch werden: Johann Arndts Verständnis der imitatio Christi als Anleitung zu einem wahren Christentum* (Göttingen, 2011), pp. 15–6.

argued for the killing of the old Adam. True Christianity demands that one become a new creature: a Christian of the heart instead of a believer of the sheer word. A spiritual rebirth had to be substituted for one's carnal birth. An active faith had to replace vices and sins with the guidance of the inner Christ.

With its overt dependence on mystics and religious enthusiasts such as Tauler and Weigel, Arndt's concept of a vivid piety aroused suspicion. It was intensively scrutinized, attacked, and defended by theologians during the 1620s and was officially examined by the Jena theological faculty.<sup>20</sup> But it was ultimately accepted as an attempt to deepen faith in accordance with Lutheranism. Later, the radical critic of the church Christian Hoburg used Arndt's piety of the heart in publications like *Praxis Arndiana* (1642) and *Arndus redivivus* (1677) as a contrast to the uninspired theological faith of the official church.<sup>21</sup> Still, Arndt's radical call for an inner piety did not cause an openly contested affair, even if it was accompanied by a radical criticism of the church, as long as it remained a call to individual piety that did not lead to a spreading movement or—even worse—a movement that was organized.

The situation changed with the rising popularity of conventicles and the recognition of Spener as their intellectual father and principal defender.<sup>22</sup> Now, Mentzer's view that the Pietist emphasis on *praxis pietatis* meant a regression to justification by works, the dismissal and denial of the authority, theology, and dogma of the church, as well as the overstressing of Luther's general priesthood of all believers and that it thus would lead first to the accepting of conventicles and then unavoidably to a Church schism, got new brisance. The Pietist affair at Leipzig University in 1689 triggered an official inquiry. The leader of the growing Pietist student movement, August Hermann Francke, reacted by sending a statement of defense to the Elector of Saxony, rejecting the charges of erroneous dogmata and the introduction of unacceptable innovations. The opponents should point out a single wrong tenet or bad example, if

20 Martin Brecht, 'Die Aufnahme von Arndts "Vier Bücher von wahrem Christentum," in: *Frömmigkeit oder Theologie? Johann Arndt und die vier Bücher vom wahren Christentum*, ed. Hans Otte and Hans Schneider (Göttingen, 2007), pp. 231–62.

21 Hans-Jürgen Schrader, "Misbräuche," "ärgerliches Christenthumb" und "Teutscher Krieg": Christian Hoburgs kirchenkritischer Pazifismus unter Herzog Augusts prekärer Protektion,' in: *Wirkungen des Pietismus im Fürstentum Wolfenbüttel: Studien und Quellen*, ed. Dieter Merzbacher and Wolfgang Miersemann (Wiesbaden, 2015), pp. 47–87; Christian Hohburg, *Praxis Arndiana: Das ist, Hertzens-Seufftzer uber die 4 Bücher wahren Christenthumbs* (s.l., 1642); *ibid.*, *Drey geistreiche Tractätlein des sehl: Christian Hoburgs: I. Arndus Redivivus, Das ist: Arndischer Wegweiser zum Himmelreich....* (Frankfurt am Main, 1677).

22 Johannes Wallmann, *Philipp Jakob Spener und die Anfänge des Pietismus*, 2nd ed. (Tübingen, 1986), pp. 264–81; Mori, 'Conventicle Piety' (see above, n. 13).

they could. The theological faculty answered with a comprehensive report and on 10 March 1690 the Saxon government prohibited conventicles.<sup>23</sup>

Four days later, the controversy deepened when conflicts about the so-called Hamburger Revers [Hamburg Proclamation] began. Orthodox members of the Hamburg ministry had drafted an official pledge to fight all innovations, which should be signed by all members. Unsurprisingly, the Pietist members of the ministry, who had organized conventicles, refused. The orthodox side asked four theological faculties for their expert opinions. The Pietist side answered with five theological *responsa* from high-ranking clergymen. A published defense by Johann Friedrich Mayer, the leader of the orthodox members of the Hamburg ministry, followed. It triggered the exchange of pamphlets between Spener and Mayer mentioned above. The Hamburger Revers proclaimed: "We confess unanimously with our personal signatures, that we adhere not only strictly to the confessional documents, but that we publicly deny and reject the recently appeared "pseudo-philosophers, *Antiscripturarios*, lax theologians, and other fanatics, particularly Jacob Böhme as well as chiliasm' and that we will not acknowledge their followers as brothers."<sup>24</sup>

As I emphasized before, theological dispute was a highly official procedure, considered essential to providing and securing the identity of the church. During the preliminary stages, the leading representatives of church governance, from the Elector and the theological faculties to the local ministries, defined the pitch, outlines, and general objects of the controversy, i.e., they defined its political framework. In the second step, the opposing camps translated the conflicting positions about the theological public sphere—how to defend church dogma properly—into a *status controversiae*, a controversial question which could be disputed; i.e., they defined the theological topic. The orthodox members of the Hamburg ministry formulated the question: Isn't an ecclesiastical authority allowed to bind its members to fight new heresies, due to its obligation to defend the true faith, as the Hamburg ministry had done with its Revers? The Pietist camp refashioned this question: Isn't an ecclesiastical authority exceeding its competence when it demands things and condemns teachings—matters not yet been decided in the confessional documents—without the resolution of the entire church? Within this range Mayer and Spener disputed the question of how to tackle "pseudo-philosophers, *Antiscripturarios*, lax theologians, and other fanatics, particularly Jacob

23 Gierl, *Pietismus* (see above, n. 3), pp. 217–22; Mori, 'Conventicle Piety' (see above, n. 13), pp. 206–7.

24 *Vier Theologische Responsa, Auff einige Deß Hamburgischen Ministerii Fragen* (s.l., 1690), preface. On the Hamburger Revers and the following upheavals in Hamburg, see Hermann Rückleben, *Die Niederwerfung der hamburgischen Ratsgewalt: Kirchliche Bewegungen und bürgerliche Unruhen im ausgehenden 17. Jahrhundert* (Hamburg, 1970).

Böhme as well as chiliasm.”<sup>25</sup> Finally, Spener stated that only the entire church can formulate an obligatory confession of faith; chiliasm may be wrong but it is no fundamental error; the condemnation of Böhme presupposes the understanding and discussion of his entire work. In short: a quite open theological discussion should replace the restrictive defense of church dogma. The orthodox attacks had thus driven the Pietists, or at least Spener, to support an enlightened *libertas philosophandi* in matters of faith. Spener propagated individual freedom in religious matters in his *Sieg der Wahrheit* against Mayer in the autumn of 1692. In October, an official inquiry of Pietism was initiated in Halle, by now a hub of Pietist theologians.

Meanwhile, between 1690 and 1692 no fewer than forty radical adherents of a new practical piety claimed to have had divinely inspired visions. The Pietist movement threatened to run out of control and several governments reacted with proscriptions. By contrast, the Brandenburg government operated more ambiguously and with more sophistication in the Halle case: by electoral edict of December 1692 the doctrine of heartfelt piety as propagated by Francke and his fellow theologians was acknowledged to be orthodox and supportive of an active Christianity, useful for public order. But it prohibited the propagation and veneration of purported divine inspirations. A good ecclesiastical Pietism was contrasted with a sinister, radical variant.<sup>26</sup>

In the wake of the Brandenburg inquiry and edict, Johann Benedikt Carpzov, the influential leading theologian of Leipzig University, published anonymously his *Unfug der Pietisten*. Confronted with the Brandenburg acceptance of a moderate, ecclesiastical Pietism, Carpzov denounced Spener and his followers as a sect. According to ecclesiastical law, this implied the detection of a heterodox doctrine. The theologization of the controversy was underway. The *Unfug der Pietisten* outlined a “Systema theologiae pietisticae” consisting of twenty ‘loci’ regarding the ‘principium cognoscendi,’ ‘finis,’ ‘subjectum,’ and ‘media’ of theology—i.e., it employed classical analytical categories of Protestant systematic theology that reached back to Thomas Aquinas.<sup>27</sup>

Melanchthon’s *Loci communes rerum theologicorum seu Hypotheses theologicae* (1521), consisted of a system of *loci*, which were fundamental

25 *Vier Theologische Responsa* (see above, n. 23), preface.

26 Ryoko Mori, *Begeisterung und Ernüchterung in christlicher Vollkommenheit: Pietistische Selbst- und Weltwahrnehmungen im ausgehenden 17. Jahrhundert* (Tübingen, 2004), on the edict pp. 204–10.

27 Sung-Sup Lee, *Wirklichsein und Gedachtsein: Die Theorie vom Sein des Gedachten bei Thomas von Aquin unter besonderer Berücksichtigung seiner Verbum-Lehre* (Würzburg, 2006), pp. 51–63; Louis Berkhof, *Systematic Theology: New Combined Edition* (Grand Rapids, Mich., 1996), pp. 116–86.

topics about God, sin, grace, sacraments, and the church.<sup>28</sup> They constituted Lutheran systematic theology. The *Unfug der Pietisten* aligned itself with this tradition. Its “Locus I. de Scriptura Sacra” reads: the Pietists believe in a direct intuitive understanding of the Bible; “Locus II. De Visionibus & Revelationibus peculiaribus”: the Pietists hold visions to be the current revelations of God; “Locus III” rebuked Pietist beliefs “de beatitudine Chiliastica” and placed Spener’s hope of better future times into this category.<sup>29</sup> A couple of *loci* denounced the Pietist ambition to lead a completely pious life and their exclusion of *adiaphora*—morally indifferent things—from the social world. A couple of other *loci* expressed complaints about the self-empowerment of the Pietists in their claim of a spiritual priesthood of all and in their *collegia pietatis*. A third group of complaints addressed the Pietist’s attacks on the authority of the Lutheran Church: their rejections of theology, the confessional documents, and uninspired priests. Reacting to the Brandenburg edict, Carpzov and the Leipzig orthodoxy drafted the outline of their ideas about acceptable piety and unacceptable, inner-church Pietism, respectively, with the “Systema theologiae pietisticae.”<sup>30</sup>

Replying to the thirteen Pietist rebuttals of the *Unfug der Pietisten*, the theological faculty of Wittenberg took the next step by further expanding and systematizing the “Systema.” They excerpted Spener’s writings—especially his pamphlets—and thus distilled his theological positions, assigning each of them to one of the twenty-one articles of the Augsburg Confession, the fundamental confession of faith of the Lutheran church. After an introductory fundamental discussion of Spener’s convictions about theology, confessional doctrine, the status of Holy Scripture, and the confessional documents, the Wittenberg theologians concluded from each article of the Augsburg Confession the “sincere tenets,” followed by a discussion of Spener’s divergences from these tenets.<sup>31</sup>

In his answer, Spener further subdivided the resulting 284 sentences into single paragraphs. Pietism was here theologically enfolded, protocolled, and measured according to all aspects of Lutheran identity. Fusing legal, logical, and religious argumentation within the realm encompassing theology,

28 Philipp Melancthon, *Loci communes rerum theologicarum seu Hypotyposes theologicae* (Wittenberg, 1521); see also Wilhelm Schmidt-Biggemann, ‘Topik und Loci Communes: Melancthons Traditionen,’ in: *Der Philosoph Melancthon*, ed. Günter Frank and Felix Mundt (Berlin, 2012), pp. 77–94; Irene Dingel, ed., *Philip Melancthon: Theologian in Classroom, Confession, and Controversy* (Göttingen, 2012).

29 *Ausführliche Beschreibung des Unfugs* (see above, n. 14), pp. 27–8.

30 *Ausführliche Beschreibung des Unfugs* (see above, n. 14), p. 27.

31 See for example *Christ-Lutherische Vorstellung* (see above, n. 16), pp. 1–9.

jurisprudence, and confessional order, the controversy constituted the idea of Pietist theology in all its contemporarily relevant dimensions. The Wittenberg theologians had analyzed the Pietist concepts of rebirth, perfecting, and *praxis pietatis* with regard to the Lutheran confessional articles about God, justification, the sacraments (especially confession), penitence, grace, and good deeds. And Spener had rejected the accusations by commenting on them. The Wittenberg theologians had used the rhetoric of the Formula of Concord, a second linchpin of the confessional documents, to frame the single accusations: “We believe, teach, and confess....” Spener adopted the phrase in his reply: “I believe, confess, and teach....”<sup>32</sup> The Wittenberg theologians constituted the orthodox Lutheran idea of Pietist theology. And Spener completed the Lutheran idea of Pietist theology from the Pietist perspective by explaining the interdependencies linking rebirth, perfecting, and *praxis pietatis* on the one hand, and justification, penitence, grace, and good deeds on the other.

Two effects of the procedure are crucial. The core articles of Lutheran identity were submitted to a Pietist reinterpretation, and Pietism acquired a detailed Lutheran theological inventory. Arndt’s demand for a heartfelt, all-encompassing, active Christianity, in concert with the idea of a spiritual priesthood of all Christians, moved from the outskirts of pastoral care and individual belief into the core structure of the church-defining articles of the Lutheran church. Pietist piety merged with the confessional standards of the church. The rules, procedures, and conventions of the theological dispute ensured the production and steady transformation of practiced piety into a comprehensive theology, which answered to all the central aspects of the Lutheran church—from the concept of God and Christ to the use of sacraments.

Including the supporters’ as well as the opponents’ side theological controversies led to the realization of a systematic idea about religious stances not for the sake of the idea, but as a practical tool to organize church life. Spener’s position was that the Pietist convictions not only matched but vitalized the Lutheran articles of faith. Keeping in mind the practical sense of the efforts to elaborate a theology of Pietism, it becomes understandable why it was the answers to the practical consequences—the use of the sacraments, especially confession, absolution, remorse, penance, and divine mercy—and not so much to the abstract concepts like God and justification, that troubled Spener in his attempt to reconcile his positions with the Lutheran doctrines. He admitted that the Church practice of private confession and absolution were not satisfactory.<sup>33</sup>

32 *Christ-Lutherische Vorstellung* (see above, n. 16), pp. 1, 2, 3, etc.; Spener, *Aufrichtige Übereinstimmung* (see above, n. 16), pp. 7, 127, 129, etc.

33 Spener, *Aufrichtige Übereinstimmung* (see above, n. 16), p. 245.

These were exactly the points which led—not by chance—to extensive controversies between 1697 and 1710: the Berlin dispute about the confessional and the ‘terministic’ controversy. In Berlin in 1697 the Pietist deacon Johann Kaspar Schade rejected private confession for reasons of conscience.<sup>34</sup> In 1698, Johann Georg Böse, another Pietist theologian, published an account of his conviction that God had ‘terminated’ his divine mercy in order to exclude from his considerations the undiscerning sinner’s last-minute remorse before dying.<sup>35</sup> As the sheer extension of these conflicts already shows, the communicational execution of the theological controversy encompassed the concept of Pietism down to its last practical—that is, ecclesiastical—detail.

A central element in this creation of theological ideas and concepts out of communicational procedures was a steady discussion about the rules and obligations the opponents should respect in order to discuss their points in a proper and significant manner. One way to ensure that these norms would be followed was to sue the adversary before the local authorities; another way was to publicly discuss the formal rules and procedures of theological controversies, as in the case of the Hamburger Revers. A third option was to change the inner technical procedures used to obtain, measure, and assess theological truth.

This latter way was what Spener tried when August Pfeiffer attacked his ‘hope of better future times.’<sup>36</sup> Pfeiffer invoked the Second Coming of Christ. Luke 18,8 reads: “Nevertheless, when the Son of Man comes, will he find faith on the earth?” Pfeiffer took this passage as proof that the world would not be a better place at the end of time and that God had ordered it that way. Spener retorted that although Pfeiffer’s interpretation could be true, that there was another equally possible reading. If Christ came right now, he would not be pleased, finding the world still abounding in unbelief. Spener concluded that if all pertinent scriptural passages are read and compared carefully, everybody

34 Claudia Drese, ‘Der Berliner Beichtstuhlstreit oder Philipp Jakob Spener zwischen allen Stühlen,’ *Pietismus und Neuzeit* 31 (2005), 60–97; Helmut Obst, *Der Berliner Beichtstuhlstreit: Die Kritik des Pietismus an der Beichtpraxis der lutherischen Orthodoxie* (Witten, 1972).

35 Andreas Gössner, *Der terministische Streit: Vorgeschichte, Verlauf und Bedeutung eines theologischen Konflikts an der Wende vom 17. zum 18. Jahrhundert* (Tübingen, 2011).

36 Philipp Jakob Spener, *Behauptung Der Hoffnung künftiger Besserer Zeiten / In Rettung Des ins gemein gegen dieselbe unrecht angeführten Spruchs Luc. XII. 8* (Frankfurt am Main, 1693); August Pfeiffer, *Gerechte Sache / Welche wider Tit. Hn. Phil. Jac. Spenern, vertheidiget / Und dabey gründlich/ deutlich und glimpflich erwiesen wird / Daß die gemeine Auslegung der Evangel. Theologorum über den Spruch Luc. XVIII. 8.... anoch feste stehe* (Lübeck, 1695); see also Heike Krauter-Dierolf, *Die Eschatologie Philipp Jakob Speners: Der Streit mit der lutherischen Orthodoxie um die “Hoffnung besserer Zeiten”* (Tübingen, 2005), pp. 145–281.

should have the freedom to understand the divine truth according to his conscience.<sup>37</sup> No human authority had the right to prescribe an ultimate biblical exegesis.

During the same period, beginning in January 1695, Francke published a monthly journal, the *Observationes Biblicae oder Anmerkungen über einige Oerter H. Schrift Darinnen die Teutsche Übersetzung des Sel. Lutheri gegen den Original-Text gehalten und bescheidenlich gezeigt wird* [Observationes Biblicae or notes on several Bible passages, comparing Luther's translation with the original text, in which it is humbly shown how to discern the proper meaning of the text].<sup>38</sup> Unsurprisingly, the journal prompted many refutations.<sup>39</sup> Yet it was not the contents but rather the medial form of Francke's enterprise which upset his opponents. That he published his critique in German and especially in periodical form was a "damnable Satanic ruse."<sup>40</sup> Francke's 'Satanic ruse' actually furthered the change in media from disputations to journals as a means to defend and debate theological doctrine. The journal provoked the emergence of orthodox Anti-Pietist polemical journals.<sup>41</sup> These failed. But in 1701, the *Unschuldige Nachrichten von Alten und Neuen Theologischen Sachen* [Innocent Reports of Old and New Theological Subjects]—edited by Valentin Ernst Löscher (1673–1749), a leading opponent

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- 37 Martin Gierl, 'Befleckte Empfängnis: Pietistische Hermeneutik, Indifferentismus, Eklektik und die Konsolidierung pietistischer, orthodoxer und frühaufklärerischer Ansprüche und Ideen,' in: *Strukturen der deutschen Frühaufklärung 1680–1720*, ed. Hans Erich Bödeker (Göttingen, 2008), pp. 119–46, there 126–9.
- 38 'Observationes Biblicae oder Anmerkungen über einige Oerter H. Schrift Darinnen die Teutsche Übersetzung des Sel. Lutheri gegen den Original-Text gehalten und bescheidenlich gezeigt wird Wo man dem eigentlichen Wort-Verstande näher kommen könne,' in: *August Hermann Francke: Schriften zur biblischen Hermeneutik I*, ed. Erhard Peschke (Berlin, 2003), pp. 361–640.
- 39 For the refutations see Johann Georg Walch, *Historische ... Einleitung in die Religions-Streitigkeiten, welche sonderlich außerhalb der Evangelisch-Lutherischen Kirche entstanden*, 3rd. ed., 5 vols. (Jena, 1733), 1: 731–6; Kurt Aland, 'Bibel und Bibeltext bei August Hermann Francke und Johann Albrecht Bengel,' in: *Pietismus und Bibel*, ed. Kurt Aland (Witten, 1970), pp. 89–147, there pp. 102, 109–19; 'Observationes' (see above, n. 37), pp. 362–3. On the 'shocking' nature of the journal in comparison with the traditional correspondence see also Anne Goldgar, *Impolite Learning: Conduct and Community in the Republic of Letters, 1680–1750* (New Haven, 1995), pp. 44–73.
- 40 Johann Friedrich Mayer, *Anweisung Zum Recht Lutherischen Gebrauch Des Heiligen Psalter-Buchs / Sammt einer Vorrede An alle Studiosos Theologiae Ihro Königl. Majestät von Schweden Landes-Kinder in Teutschland Sich von Herrn M. Aug. Hermann. Franckens P.P. und Pastoris Glauch. Observationibus Biblicis nicht verleiten zu lassen* (Hamburg, 1695), § 17.
- 41 Johann Friedrich Mayer, *Herr D. Spener wo ist sein Sieg? Das ist Offenbahre Niederlage Hn. D. Philipp Jacob Speners ...* (Hamburg, 1696); Friedrich Christian Bücher, *Menses Pietistici* (Wittenberg, 1705).

of Pietism—appeared on the market: a learned review journal in the new style, yet having a boldly orthodox Lutheran bias. It would become the central orthodox Lutheran organ until 1761. Löscher emphasized in the preface to the journal that truth could no longer be asserted through disputations and the exchange of pamphlets. Rather, one had to be quick-witted, succinct, general, up-to-date, and—not least via the use of the German language—accommodating to the audience, just as Francke had demonstrated with his journal.<sup>42</sup>

Francke's *Observationes* were innovative in terms of not only the media format but also its use of Biblical studies and hermeneutics. After citing the original Greek text and Luther's translation, Francke presented his critique: Luther's translation was not verbatim, he had omitted words, and his grasp of the meaning of words was flawed. In short, Francke, who compared this translation with several other Bible editions, criticized Luther for philological imprecision.<sup>43</sup> Remarkably enough, improvement and research—central values of the emerging Enlightenment—popped up in this regard: they would be necessary for the “interpretation of the Holy Script, that one investigates continuously and that there was a steady increase in Christianity.”<sup>44</sup> Like Spener, Francke used critique to connect biblical exegesis with a solid but individually constructed sense of scriptural meaning. The next step of the Halle-led preoccupation with hermeneutics would see Siegmund Jakob Baumgarten asking about the demonstrability of a biblical interpretation, and his pupil Johann Salomo Semler about its historicity.<sup>45</sup>

#### 4 How Theological Controversy Became Ecclesiastical History

From the turn of the eighteenth century onwards, the controversy entered its third phase: historicization. Historical perspective was a regular element in theological controversy. To keep sight of the overall picture of the multifaceted controversy, there were controversy-specific media, the so-called synoptic pamphlets (*Generalschriften*), which summarized the controversy from the

42 *Unschuldige Nachrichten von Alten und Neuen Theologischen Sachen* (Leipzig, 1701–19 [Cont.: *Fortgesetzte Sammlung von alten und neuen theologischen Sachen* (Leipzig, 1720–50)]; Gierl, *Pietismus* (see above, n. 3), pp. 400–13.

43 ‘Observationes’ (see above, n. 37), pp. 363, 646–8.

44 “Auslegung der heiligen Schrift immer weiter nachforsche / und auch diesfalls ein stetiges Wachstum in der Christenheit sey,” ‘Observationes’ (see above, n. 37), p. 612.

45 Ulrich Barth, *Aufgeklärter Protestantismus* (Tübingen, 2004), pp. 169–98. On Francke's biblical hermeneutics, see Erhard Peschke, *Studien zur Theologie August Hermann Franckes*, 2 vols. (Berlin, 1966), 2: 13–126; idem, *Bekehrung und Reform: Ansatz und Wurzeln der Theologie August Hermann Franckes* (Bielefeld, 1977), pp. 59–88.

orthodox perspective. The longer the dispute lasted, the more these pamphlets became historical documents. Meanwhile, the Pietist side succeeded in institutionalizing itself in Halle. Pietists held many high offices in the church. The orthodox camp was on the wane. A turnaround occurred in many respects. In the early 1730s, Johann Georg Walch, a moderate Pietist theologian, published a five-volume work on the Pietist controversy, still regarded as the first comprehensive historical description of Pietism.<sup>46</sup>

Walch adopted the organizational scheme of the last great synoptic pamphlet, Schelwig's *Synopsis*.<sup>47</sup> Aligning his presentation with the Melancthonian tradition of systematic theology, as the *Mischief* and the Wittenberg faculty had done in the 1690s, Schelwig structured his overview of the Pietist controversy by linking the theological subjects of the controversy with the fundamental topics of Lutheranism. Melancthon's fundamental topics of Lutheran theology, which sketched out the Augsburg Confession, had been "Deus, Unus, Trinus, Creatio, Homo, Hominis vires, Peccatum, Fructus peccati, Vicia, Poenae, Lex, Promissiones, Instauratio per Christum, Gratia, Gratiae fructus, Fides, Spes, Caritas, Praedestinatio, Signa sacramentalia, Hominum status, Magistratus, Episcopi, Condemnatio, Beatitudo."<sup>48</sup> Organizing the issues of the Pietist controversy, Schelwig adopted this systematic grid of Lutheran theology in the composition of his own work. The outcome was a complete theology of Pietist tenets: "De Theologia, De Religione, De Scriptura, De Enthusiasmo, De Libris Symbolicis, De Deo Trinuno, De Jesu Christo, De Spiritu Sancto, De Creatione, De Providentia, De Homine, De Imagine Dei, De Peccato, De Libero Arbitrio, De Gratia Dei, De Electione, De Vocatione, De Illuminatione, De Regeneratione, De Justificatione et Fide, De Unione Spirituali, De Sanctificatione et Bonis Operis, De Poenitentia, De Lege et Evangelio, De Baptismo, De Eucharistia, De Ecclesia, De Hierarchia Ecclesiastica, De Hierarchia Politica, De Hierarchia Oeconomica, De Re Scholastica, De Cultu Dei, De Libertate Christiana, De Novissimis, De Chiliasmo, De Haeresibus aliis."<sup>49</sup> Walch used the synoptic pamphlets of the controversy to obtain the material for his history of Pietism, and his description of the controversy's contents were ordered according to Schelwig's arrangement. Only the topics 'enthusiasm,' 'chiliasm,' and 'heresy'

46 On Walch's *Historische Einleitung* (see above, n. 38), see: Gierl, *Pietismus* (see above, n. 3), pp. 248–53; Johannes Wallmann, *Der Pietismus* [*Die Kirche in ihrer Geschichte: Ein Handbuch*, ed. Bernd Moeller, vol. 4: O1], (Göttingen, 1990), p. 2.

47 Samuel Schelwig, *Synopsis controversiarum, sub pietatis praetextu motarum*, 3rd ed. [1st ed. 1701] (Dantzig, 1705).

48 Melancthon, *Loci* (see above, n. 27), introductory letter to Tilman Plettener.

49 Schelwig, *Synopsis* (see above, n. 46), treated articles.

are missing in Walch's narration of Pietist theology, because, as Walch stated, these issues did not belong to Pietism.<sup>50</sup>

Pietist historiography became the continuation of the controversy by other means and under different conditions. The general shift from the defense of dogma toward a permanent witness of faith was accompanied, quite remarkably, by a parallel shift from disputation to persuasion, from detailed and comprehensive refutation to permanent and systematic publication, hermeneutically from the detection of the deviant to the propagation of the coherent, in terms of media from pamphlets to journals and compendia. Johann Georg Walch's *Historische Einleitung in die Religionsstreitigkeiten der evangelischen Kirche* [Historical Introduction to the Religious Controversies of the Evangelical Church] is a perfect example of the transition from controversy to historiography. One can refer to Arnold's famous anti-orthodox *Unpartheyische Kirchen- und Ketzerhistorie* [Impartial History of the Church and Heretics] from 1699 as well, which some now regard as the beginning of modern ecclesiastical history.<sup>51</sup>

Syllogistic controversial argumentation and therefore the work of one group against another group became historical narration and thus the stated opinion of a single author distinguished by proven scholarship. On the old stage theologians had discussed cases denouncing certain beliefs, behavior, and incidents belonging to a person or group with the intent of completeness and absolute refutation. The historians took over all these elements on the new scene with its new rules of play. Ecclesiastical history maintained the complete treatment of its subject, exactly as had been done in theological controversy. Consequently, Walch's five volumes consist of two volumes of description of the Pietist debate, followed by a highly repetitive volume reordering exactly the same matters according to the points of the discussion, followed by two supplementing volumes, which Walch wrote to complete and to update the narrative. Arnold based his *Ketzerhistorie*, to give another example, on the biographies of individuals. He subdivided each biographical unit into a description

50 Walch, *Historische Einleitung* (see above, n. 38), 2: 75.

51 Gottfried Arnold, *Unpartheyische Kirchen- und Ketzerhistorie, Vom Anfang des Neuen Testaments biß auf das Jahr Christi 1688*, 2 vols. (Leipzig, 1699); see Hans Schneider, 'Der radikale Pietismus im 17. Jahrhundert,' in: *Geschichte des Pietismus*, vol. 1, ed. Martin Brecht (Göttingen, 1993), pp. 391–437, there pp. 410–15; Frank Carl Roberts, *Gottfried Arnold as a Historian of Christianity: A Reappraisal of the Unparteiische Kirchen- und Ketzerhistorie* (Nashville, 1973); Katharina Greschat, 'Gottfried Arnolds 'Unparteiische Kirchen- und Ketzerhistorie' von 1699/1700 im Kontext seiner spiritualistischen Kirchenkritik,' *Zeitschrift für Kirchengeschichte* 116 (2005), 46–62; Markus Sturm, "daß man wol an fremden und vorigen schaden klug werden möchte": *Aspekte einer pragmatischen Historiographie bei Gottfried Arnold* (Vienna, 2007).

of the teachings held by this person and a narration of their persecution. Along these lines he unfolded the history of the church. For Walch and for Arnold history still obeyed the logic of cases. Ideas were stressed not for their own sake but as events for teaching and therefore as a certain kind of action which caused certain effects in the network of events that makes up history.

The aim of the old theological controversies was to re-establish consensus through a process of regulated discussion. The basic idea was to define and ban errors. Ecclesiastical history, on the other hand, was based on narration. Instead of the regulated bipolar conflict within a group of combatants, revolving around an increasingly extended core of a syllogistic *status controversiae* that, step by step, made the whole process controllable, historiography provided comprehensive narration and therefore the personal opinions of individual authors, whose statements had to be legitimized within the framework of the discipline. The basic idea now was to safeguard confessional identity through a perpetual, and in the long run infallible, process of improving knowledge. Control shifted toward the possession of an ever more detailed knowledge about the subjects of the field and the facilities to disseminate it. The unfolding literary market and its media and institutions—libraries, textbooks, journals, universities—were on the threshold of becoming the players in a new game with new rules, but with the traditional aim of safeguarding belief and identifying deviation.

Historiography had inherited the twofold focus on events and ideas as well as the obligation of completeness. The old disputant would have stated: A is wrong, because of B. And his counterpart would then have answered A is right, because B is wrong, because of C, and so on. Walch would now report the event in the following manner: There was a conflict in Hamburg. This and that happened. Then the ministry published a pamphlet offending Spener by maintaining something, which Spener answered by stating this and that. This and that general topic was discussed, with some points of B turning out to be not completely wrong though the main aspects of Spener's C represented the most convincing position.<sup>52</sup>

In the old theological controversies the pamphlets had been the weapons and instruments of the dispute. They had been the acts of the event. Now cited for reasons of evidence, they were being dispatched to the footnotes and became references in the hands of the author, who filled the space above with his individual but institutionally as well as methodically authorized opinion as a voice in the chorus of ecclesiastical history.

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52 Walch, *Historische Einleitung* (see above, n. 38), 1: 612–43.

Remarkably—but not surprisingly for those who acknowledge that communication and with it the constitution of ideas rests upon interacting correspondences between cultural institutions and socially oriented media—the transition from dispute to historiography took place as an evolutionary process. Whereas Francke and Löscher had mutated pamphlets into journals, Walch, Arnold, and others transformed and embedded controversy into historiography. For Arnold—as for Walch and later accounts—church history consisted basically of the controversies of the past as they related to the constituents of religious communities. In this sense they resembled the former controversialists, especially the writers of synoptic pamphlets, who recounted the course of the controversy in order to prove the emergence of a sect. But Arnold's and Walch's narrations inverted the power relations inherent in controversy, so that what had been opponents and sects became religious groups—'parties,' Arnold would call them.<sup>53</sup>

Doctrinal controversies consisted in the fights between adversaries about specific dogma. They constituted official events. Walch's and Arnold's accounts, however, moved the individual innovator and his convictions into the forefront of a subjective description. Rebuttals and defenses of these convictions became elements of a process of reception. What the former generation had done by way of the official documentation of deviation mutated into an individual history of ideas, which now grounded the ecclesiastical history quasi-impartially by characterizing and then stringing together the different religious groups then in existence. Walch used that model for the Evangelical-Lutheran church, telling not only the story of the Pietist controversy but first describing systematically the disputes among Protestants and the resulting religious groups of the seventeenth century. Like Walch, Arnold contextualized the controversies in order to transform polemics into historiography.

With its double-sided character—at once a pamphlet and a comprehensive historiography—Arnold's *Ketzerhistorie* is probably the most impressive example of the ongoing evolution. On the one hand, Arnold introduced his work by raising systematically no fewer than 180 critical questions about *Kettermacherei* (the making of heretics), heretics themselves, how to treat them, and heresies in general, directly succeeded by his answers to these "quaestiones factorum or loci communes" respecting "problemata or so-called articles," as he called them.<sup>54</sup> Arnold fortified his position with quotations taken from a wide range of prominent Lutheran theologians, especially those

53 Arnold, *Unpartheyische Ketzerhistorie* (see above, n. 50), 1: table of contents, preface (pts. 23, 28), pp. 29, 67, etc.

54 Arnold, *Unpartheyische Ketzerhistorie* (see above, n. 50), 1: 1, 12.

of the seventeenth century. Around two thousand folio pages followed, in which Arnold developed his argument that the history of the official church consisted of the making of heretics and that these heretics were the true followers of Christ. He built his case by describing the conflicts, giving biographical and bibliographical outlines, citing theses and counter-theses, and quoting edicts and other sources. In short, Arnold defined the *status controversiae*, confirmed his position with testimonies, and proved his point by providing a comprehensive description of the *species facti*. Seen from this perspective, Arnold's *Ketzerhistorie* is nothing but a huge pamphlet in the common form and, as such, an endeavor and *coup de main* within the old praxis of theological controversies.

Yet Arnold packed the features of classical disputations into the classical formal elements of contemporary historiography. Following the patterns of chronicles—the still dominant historiographical format—and more specifically the method of the famous Protestant church history *Magdeburg Centuries*, Arnold divided his material into 'books,' each covering one hundred years, numbering seventeen in all from the beginning until 1688. Each book contains chapters on the outer and the inner conditions of the church, followed by description of the ongoing contentions. The first volume of Arnold's work covers the time until the Reformation, with volume two treating the Reformation age, but now in much greater detail. Arndt and Spener appear, mentioned in the general introduction on the Lutheran controversies of the seventeenth century in book 17, chapters 5 and 6, quite cleverly taken out of the series. Arnold used them as commentators and testimonies for his account of ecclesiastical history as a history of *Ketzermacherei*. Arnold addresses the Lutheran as well as the Reformed and the Roman Catholic churches, their main factions like the Socinians, Arminians, Syncretists, or Jansenists, and last but not least, contested innovators and individualists like Weigel and Böhme.

Temporal completeness with regard to chronology and material completeness with regard to the subject matter supplanted the former demand for a complete refutation of the opponents' arguments. Historical consistency was now a substitute for the logical consistency of the syllogistic disputes. In each book and each chapter, Arnold presented the diverse aspects of his subjects in paragraphs, each concluded by a bibliography. Bibliographical references here took the place of references to the *topoi* of the systematic theology. The presentation of arguments developed step by step into a constructed narrative. Arnold effected a turn from the negotiation of theological truth whose terms were bounded by official disputes toward an allegedly impartial historiography. Not only was this a conscious strategy, it was in fact the deliberate aim of his *Unpartheyische Ketzerhistorie*. Addressing the reader directly, Arnold stated at the beginning that his work would treat central Christian teaching, which

should not be left to “vulgar systematic scholastic theology” but rather be decided from “historical fundaments.”<sup>55</sup> Already in his work’s title, Arnold contrasted his aspirations for an impartial history against the aggressive partiality, and in fact party-making impetus, of doctrinal controversies. No wonder that the *Ketzerhistorie* provoked an extensive debate about Arnold’s own impartiality and the necessity as well as the possibility of impartiality in historical writings.<sup>56</sup> Core values of Enlightened historiography were on their way.

The further evolution from disputation to history may be demonstrated by the universal chronicle *Eröffneter Schauplatz der Allgemeinen Welt-Geschichte des achtzehenden Jahrhunderts* [Opened Stage of the General World-History of the Eighteenth Century].<sup>57</sup> This popular compendium was published in 1744 by Johann Heinrich Zedler, who between 1732 and 1754 also edited the largest German encyclopedia project of the Enlightenment, the *Grosses vollständiges Universal-Lexicon* [Great complete Universal Dictionary], often simply called ‘the Zedler’, in 64 volumes.<sup>58</sup> The *Eröffneter Schauplatz* was editorially supervised by Carl Günther Ludovici, a Leipzig professor and member of the Berlin Academy of Sciences, who also supervised the *Zedler* from volume 19 onward and who is still known for his comprehensive biographies of Wolff and Leibniz. Zedler included the chronicle as volume 13 in his historical series *Allgemeine Staats-, Kriegs-, Kirchen- und Gelehrten-Chronicke, In welcher alle geist- und weltliche Denkwürdigkeiten und Geschichte, so sich vom Anfang der Welt bis auf unsere Zeit zugetragen ... ans Licht gestellet* [General State-, War-, Church-, and Scholarly Chronicle, in which all spiritual as well as secular memorabilia, which happened from the beginning of the world until our time, ... are compiled], which was published from 1733 to 1754 in 21 volumes.<sup>59</sup>

55 Arnold, *Unpartheyische Ketzerhistorie* (see above, n. 50), 1: 1.

56 See Walch, *Historische Einleitung* (see above, n. 38), 2: 693–713; Friedrich Wilhelm Kantzenbach, ‘Theologisch-soziologische Motive im Widerstand gegen Gottfried Arnold,’ *Jahrbuch der Hessischen Kirchengeschichtlichen Vereinigung* 24 (1973), 33–51; Irmfried Martin, *Der Kampf um Gottfried Arnolds Unpartheyische Kirchen- und Ketzer-Historie* (Heidelberg, 1973), pp. 11–21; Jürgen Büchsel, ‘Gottfried Arnolds Verteidigung der Unparteiischen Kirchen- und Ketzerhistorie, dargestellt anhand seines Briefwechsels mit Hofrat Tobias Pfanner,’ in: *Der radikale Pietismus*, ed. Wolfgang Breul et al. (Göttingen, 2010), pp. 85–104; Ernst Berneburg, ‘Einige Gesichtspunkte und Fragen zur Wirkung der Unparteiischen Kirchen- und Ketzerhistorie,’ in: *Gottfried Arnold (1666–1714)*, ed. Dietrich Blaufuß and Friedrich Niewöhner (Wiesbaden, 1995), pp. 21–32.

57 Carl Günther Ludovici, *Eröffneter Schauplatz der Allgemeinen Welt-Geschichte des achtzehenden Jahrhunderts ...* (Leipzig, 1744).

58 *Grosses vollständiges Universal-Lexicon Aller Wissenschaften und Künste ...* (Leipzig, Halle, 1732–54).

59 *Allgemeine Staats-, Kriegs-, Kirchen- und Gelehrten-Chronicke, In welcher alle geist- und weltliche Denkwürdigkeiten und Geschichte, so sich vom Anfang der Welt bis auf unsere Zeit zugetragen ... ans Licht gestellet*. 21 vols. (Leipzig, 1733–54).

Taken together, Zedler's encyclopedia and chronicles promised to provide a complete inventory of all things that existed and had ever existed in the world. As the boastful titles of these publications indicate, they are directed to a wider audience. The representation of church history given by the *Eröffneter Schauplatz der Allgemeinen Welt-Geschichte* drives to its formal extreme the transformation of doctrinal disputes into historiography, as Walch and Arnold had pursued it. On the one hand, Church history still consists of the ongoing controversies. This is evident from the table of contents of "Chapter II: Of the Lutheran Church-Histories":

I. The history of the Pietist Controversies are told ... as at Gotha; II. As well as at Halle in Saxony. III. Princely-Brunswick-Wolffenbüttel as well as the Ducal-Celleian edict contra the Pietists. IV. As well as the Princely-Saxonian-Merseburgian edict contra the Pietists. V. Royal-Swedish Schwartzburg-Arnstädtian and Meynungian edict. VI. Pietist controversies at Danzig. VII. Schelwig's controversy with Spener on some doctrines of the so-called *Pietistery*. VIII. On occasion of the Pietist controversy the question rose: how to assess Jakob Böhme and his writings? IX. The entire theological faculty of Wittenberg declares itself publicly against Dr. Spener. X. Spener's controversies with Carpsov, Mayer and Alberti. XI. Continuation of the Pietist controversies at Danzig....<sup>60</sup>

And so on. All together the *Eröffneter Schauplatz der Allgemeinen Welt-Geschichte* divides Lutheran church history of the years 1701–10 into 176 conflicts.

On the other hand, the personal and local controversies are transformed into the building blocks of a historical narration. The *Eröffneter Schauplatz* offers them in yearly installments, registering the incidents and publications of the controversies year after year in the chronological order. The chronicle pretends to be a complete overview of the events as they had occurred, and attempts completeness with regard to the presented subjects. It addresses not only the Catholic, Reformed, and Lutheran churches but also includes sections about the Greek Orthodox church, the 'Mohammedans,' the 'contemporary Jews,' and the 'newer paganism' as reported by the unfolding Protestant missionary activities.<sup>61</sup>

The new historical completeness, which swallowed up the theological controversies, including and absorbing the conflicts, pamphlets, and argumentations side by side with the depictions of political and scholarly history, rested

60 Ludovici, *Eröffneter Schauplatz* (see above, n. 56), p. 103.

61 Ludovici, *Eröffneter Schauplatz* (see above, n. 56), pp. 328, 377, 383, 412.

upon compilation. It was built upon the new Enlightened media, especially the continuously updated handbooks and journals, which provided access to a steadily protocolled and comprehensively disseminated stock of information and facts. The *Eröffneter Schauplatz der Allgemeinen Welt-Geschichte* became possible because Walch's *Historische Einleitung in die Religionsstreitigkeiten* and Löscher's *Unschuldige Nachrichten Alter und Neuer theologischer Sachen* had transformed the old pamphlets and their form of argumentation by bringing them into new media formats. The *Eröffneter Schauplatz* cites Walch's *Historische Einleitung in die Religionsstreitigkeiten* fourteen times, the *Unschuldige Nachrichten* more than forty times.<sup>62</sup> As the institutions and officeholders of the old Lutheran Church stood behind the old procedures of theological controversies along with their official character and impact, the members and participants of the Republic of Letters, now finally come into its own, modern in its self-perception and later recognized as 'Enlightened,' instrumentalized the new media formats to organize and remodel knowledge according to their own demands and purposes. Using new instruments to process statements and facts implied that there were new rules to provide and tag information as knowledge. Theological controversy was sucked into the up-and-coming public sphere and its preferred media. It had to follow the rules that were now valid on the new, widened pitch. The ways to say and defend the theological truth were remodeled alongside the possibilities of the new narrative forms according to the changed audiences, markets, interests, necessities, and applications.

Ideas are the outcome of practice. They possess forms and invite resistance, are fixed or developed, become acknowledged or forgotten, because they are perceived and received. Ideas are and exist as integral elements of communication systems fulfilling certain purposes. A horse is a horse—but it makes an essential difference whether the horse stands in a meadow or before an equine butcher. Theological ideas remained theological ideas but, having once been tools to separate orthodoxy from heterodoxy, they were now elements of the Enlightened reprocessing of knowledge. Shifting from orthodox to Enlightened knowledge, theological ideas became part of new negotiations of knowledge. Whether an idea was heterodox or not became secondary. These ideas' primary function was now to share in the Enlightenment's moral economy of impartiality, actuality, improvement, perfection, reasonability, and completeness. The function of theological controversies had been to erase heterodoxies. The purpose of the Enlightened media was to provide access to the entirety of ideas, in order to keep them at hand for further use.

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62 Figures according to Google Books.

# The *Collegie der Sçavanten*: A Seventeenth-Century Cartesian Scholarly Society in Utrecht

*Albert Gootjes*

## Abstract

Scholarship on Dutch academic culture of the Golden Age often evokes a ‘college of savants’ held to have been operative in Utrecht during the middle decades of that century, be it as a network of Cartesians or as a rather vague ‘club’ of sorts. In this article I weigh a variety of source materials, often highly polemically charged, to demonstrate that such a thing as the ‘college’ really did exist, and describe its members and activities from inception to demise. It emerges that a network of ‘progressives’ was established in the early 1650s with the appointment of the Cartesians Johannes de Bruyn, Regnerus van Mansveld, Johannes Georgius Graevius, Francis Burman, and Louis Wolzogen to the university faculty, due at least in part to the secret scheming of the physician and councillor Lambertus van Velthuysen. This Cartesian network would clash repeatedly with the city’s ‘conservative’ party, led by the influential theologian Gisbertus Voetius, often seeking freedom from the meddling and censure of the latter’s Dutch Reformed church. I furthermore show how Van Velthuysen and company also began meeting weekly in the mid 1660s as a scholarly society, discussing a variety of literary, scientific, and philosophical themes in that closed setting until the early-to-mid 1670s. Above all, this scholarly society provided Utrecht’s leading intellectuals with a platform where they could openly reflect on and think through the latest and most provocative ideas—including those of Spinoza—and their implications for religion, away from the alarmed cries of the Voetians and their prying interference.

## 1 Introduction

Throughout the social, political, and intellectual upheavals of the seventeenth-century Dutch Republic, the city of Utrecht often found itself on center stage. Of course, towns such as Leiden, Amsterdam, and Groningen were hardly immune to the clashes between republicans (or ‘Wittians’) and Orangists, the campaigns for and against Cartesian philosophy, and the growing cleft dividing

the proponents of various currents of theological practice into ‘Voetian’ and ‘Cocceian’ camps. Nevertheless, in Utrecht these conflicts arguably reached a particular intensity due to the strength and vivacity of the former ‘conservative’ camp, under the leadership of Gisbertus Voetius (1589–1676), *professor ordinarius* of theology at the university as well as pastor to the city’s Reformed church. Voetius, who today is associated above all with his intransigent defense of outdated standpoints, was in his own time a force to be reckoned with because of his influence on Dutch Reformed culture through pulpit and lectern, pen and press.<sup>1</sup> His ‘progressive’ opponents were therefore forced to form a powerful front against him, which has led to the common evocation among scholars of a rather nebulous ‘college of savants’ (*collegie der sçavanten*).

The term *collegie der sçavanten* came into use after the publication of a nineteenth-century article by the Utrecht historian Jan Hartog,<sup>2</sup> written after he had come across an anonymous 1674 pamphlet containing the name in its title.<sup>3</sup> Imagining a fictional conversation between a pastoral candidate from Utrecht (*Proponent*) and a resident of the province of Holland (*Hollander*), this pamphlet reflects the new political situation following the end of the French occupation of Utrecht (1672–3), when the fortunes that had favored the city’s republican elite for the better part of the previous two decades now shifted to their Voetian opponents, with far-reaching implications for the makeup of the *vroedschap* (city magistracy).<sup>4</sup> The *Proponent* takes pains to warn his fellow traveler of a “Cartesian or Wittian college” in Utrecht, founded—after the example of the Catholic Council for the Propagation of the Faith and the Extirpation of Heresies—“for the extirpation of the truly pious and upright who love the church and the Prince, and for the propagation of Cartesian philosophy together with other related novelties.”<sup>5</sup> The pamphlet makes for entertaining reading, as the Voetian author not only identifies the main members of the ‘college’ but also launches a smear campaign against them to expose their errors, ranging from individual shortcomings like overfamiliarity with the wife

1 For an excellent treatment of Voetius, see the essay by Han van Ruler in *The Dictionary of Seventeenth and Eighteenth-Century Dutch Philosophers*, ed. Wiep van Bunge et al., 2 vols. (Bristol, 2003), 2:1030–9.

2 Jan Hartog, ‘Het Collegie der Scavanten te Utrecht,’ *De gids* 40 (1876), 77–114.

3 *Het Collegie der Scavanten van Utrecht: Behelsende een samenspraecck tusschen een Hollander en Utrechts proponent* (s.l., 1674, Knuttel cat. nr. 11240).

4 See D. J. Roorda, ‘The Utrecht “Government-Regulation”: Background, Events and Problems,’ *The Low Countries History Yearbook / Acta historiae neerlandicae* 12 (1979), 85–109, there 99–106; and P. C. Wilders, *Dienstbaarheid uit eigenbaat: regenten in het makelaarsstelsel van stadhouder Willem III tijdens het Utrechts regeringsregelement, 1674–1702* (Amsterdam, 2010), pp. 23–46.

5 *Het Collegie* (see above, n. 3), p. A2r.

of another ‘savant’ to the cabal-like mentality by which the members mutually protected one another from their respective positions. While Hartog indeed put the ‘college of savants’ on the map and continues to be cited as the author of the classic study about it, he in fact failed to make clear what the ‘college’ really might have been beyond a conniving group of Cartesian anti-Orangists, even if at one point he remarked that it must now be numbered among the growing number of ‘societies’ (*genootschappen*).<sup>6</sup> More than that, Hartog was unable to offer much in the way of supporting evidence for the ‘college,’ having found just two additional, very brief references to it in pamphlets from the period.<sup>7</sup> This doubtless explains why the name ‘college of savants’ has come to be used predominantly as a convenient collective term designating the members of Utrecht’s Cartesian network,<sup>8</sup> or else is described rather nondescriptly as a

6 Hartog, ‘Het Collegie’ (see above, n. 2), p. 102. Similarly, A. C. Duker, *Gisbertus Voetius*, 4 vols. (Leiden, 1897–1914), 3: 80 n. 1 (“dit gezelschap”).

7 Hartog, ‘Het Collegie’ (see above, n. 2), p. 102. The pamphlets in question are *Rehabeams raedt van Utrecht, behelsende de redenen der goede mannen van Utrecht, ende patriotten des Vaderlandts, waerom sy een request hebben over-gelevert aen sijn Excell: de Grave van Horne* (s.l., s.a. [late 1673, or more probably early 1674], Knuttel cat. nr. 10974), p. 4; and, in response, *Bileams raedt, ontdeekt en wederleydt, in het laster-boeckje, onlangs uyt-gegeven genaemt, Rehabeams raedt, tot Utrecht* (s.l., 1674; Knuttel, cat. nr. 11189), p. 7. According to a contemporary rumor, *Bileams raedt* was authored by the Utrecht magistrate Johan van Mansveld. See Piet Steenbakkers, Jetze Touber, and Jeroen van de Ven, ‘A clandestine Notebook (1678–1679) on Spinoza, Beverland, Politics, the Bible and Sex,’ *Lias* 38 no. 2 (2011), 225–365, there 300 (entry nr. 138): “Mansvelt senator composuit rehabeams raet [*sic*].” The text ought obviously to read “Bileams raet,” since *Rehabeams raedt* was a pamphlet from the Voetian party, while Van Mansveld (for him, see below at n. 62) belonged to the opposing, republican faction.

8 See, for example, Caroline Louise Thijssen-Schoute, *Het Nederlands Cartesianisme*, ed. Theo Verbeek (Utrecht: 1989), p. 444, § 269: “Leiding is van Burman uitgegaan, hij verzamelde te Utrecht een kring van geestverwanten om zich heen, die bekend stond als het Collegie der scavanten.” Similarly, M. J. A. de Vrijer, *Henricus Regius: Een “cartesiaansch” hoogleeraar aan de Utrechtse Hoogeschool* (The Hague, 1917), p. 62 (“het z.g. college der scavanten, d.w.z. ... een groep cartesiaansche geleerden”); Roorda, ‘The Utrecht “Government-Regulation”’ (see above, n. 4), 95 (“a circle”); J. C. Trimp, *Jodocus van Lodensteyn: Predikant en dichter* (Kampen, 1987), 140 (“een soort vriendenkring”); Wiep van Bunge, *From Stevin to Spinoza: An Essay on Philosophy in the Seventeenth-Century Dutch Republic* (Leiden, 2001), p. 100 (“a Utrecht circle of friends”); Alastair Hamilton, ‘Arabists and Cartesians at Utrecht,’ in: *Leven na Descartes: Zeven opstellen over ideeëngeschiedenis in Nederland in de tweede helft van de zeventiende eeuw*, ed. Paul Hoftijzer and Theo Verbeek (Hilversum, 2005), pp. 97–105, there 99 (“group of friends”); Jonathan I. Israel, *Enlightenment Contested: Philosophy, Modernity, and the Emancipation of Man 1670–1752* (Oxford, 2006), p. 415 (“philosophical circle”), and Ester Bertrand, ‘Johannes Swartenhengst (1644–1711): A Dutch Cartesian in the Heat of Battle’ (Ph.D. diss., University of Edinburgh and Free University of Brussels, 2014), p. 33.

“Cartesian club”<sup>9</sup> or (less felicitously) a “gentleman’s club.”<sup>10</sup> Not surprisingly, during the twentieth century some scholars began to doubt that such a ‘college’ had ever existed.<sup>11</sup>

Nevertheless, in a 1993 article on Dutch cultural societies predating at least some of these studies, Rienk Vermij briefly treated two letters of the ‘savant’ Johannes Georgius Graevius (1632–1703) confirming the reality of the *collegie der sçavanten* by his admission of membership in it—although, significantly, in doing so the Utrecht classicist countered the pamphlet’s depiction of the ‘college’ as an anti-Voetian network of conspirators with his own description of an innocuous scholarly society, whose activities included the discussion of classical texts and scientific experimentation.<sup>12</sup> In what follows I will build on Vermij’s work, which unfortunately has received little scholarly attention,<sup>13</sup> and will offer the first comprehensive account of the Utrecht ‘college of

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- 9 Theo Verbeek, *Descartes and the Dutch: Early Reactions to Cartesian Philosophy 1637–1650* (Carbondale, IL, 1992), pp. 10, 75, 131. Similarly, Stephen Gaukroger, *Descartes: An Intellectual Biography* (Oxford, 1995), p. 473; and Roger Ariew et al., *The A to Z of Descartes and Cartesian Philosophy* (Lanham, Md., 2010), p. 44 s.v. “Burman, Frans.”
- 10 Wiep van Bunge, ‘Introduction,’ in: Adriaan Koerbagh, *A Light Shining in Dark Places, to Illuminate the Main Questions of Theology and Religion*, trans. and ed. Michiel Wielema [Brill’s Studies in Intellectual History 207] (Leiden, 2011), pp. 1–37, there p. 3.
- 11 H. J. de Vleeschauwer, ‘Het alarm-pamphlet van Samuel Maresius bij het stadhouder-schap van Willem III en de val van J. de Wit,’ *Tijdschrift voor Philosophie* 2, no. 4 (1940), 551–86, there 571 n. 66: “Sindsdien [i.e., after Hartog] is wel twijfel opgerezen betreffende het bestaan van dit college. Het was wellicht niets meer dan een wekelijksch onder-onsje van gelijkdenkende vrienden.” Similarly, Ferdinand Sassen, *Studenten van de Illustre School te ’s-Hertogenbosch 1636–1810 ter reconstructie van het album studiosorum* [Mededelingen der Koninklijke Nederlandse Akademie van Wetenschappen, afd. Letterkunde 33 no. 2 (new series)] (Amsterdam, 1970), p. 12: “... ‘Collegie der sçavanten’ ... waarvan het bestaan nog wordt betwijfeld.”
- 12 Rienk Vermij, ‘Genootschappen en de Verlichting: Enkele Overwegingen,’ *Documentatieblad werkgroep Achttiende Eeuw* (1993), 3–23, there 15–7. The letters in question are J. G. Graevius to N. Heinsius (Utrecht, 29 and 30 April 1674), in: *Sylloges epistolarum a viris illustribus scriptarum*, 5 vols., ed. Pieter Burman (Leiden, 1727), 4: 256–8 (nr. 183) and 489–90 (nr. 416). The latter letter, erroneously dated 1677 by the editor Burman, is therefore separated from the former, with which it obviously belongs.
- 13 But see Eric Jorink, ‘Comets in Context: Some Thoughts on Bayle’s *Pensées diverses*,’ in: *Pierre Bayle (1647–1706), Le philosophe de Rotterdam: Philosophy, Religion and Reception*, ed. Wiep van Bunge and Hans Bots [Brill’s Studies in Intellectual History 167] (Leiden, 2008), pp. 51–67, there 61–2; idem, “‘Outside God, There is Nothing’: Swammerdam, Spinoza, and the Janus-Face of the Early Dutch Enlightenment,” in: *The Early Enlightenment in the Dutch Republic, 1650–1750*, ed. Wiep van Bunge [Brill’s Studies in Intellectual History 120] (Leiden, 2003), pp. 81–107, there 65; and idem, *Reading the Book of Nature in the Dutch Golden Age, 1575–1715*, trans. Peter Mason [Brill’s Studies in Intellectual History 191] (Leiden, 2010), pp. 156–7. Some details on the ‘college,’ developed independently of Vermij’s work, can be found in Roberto Bordoli, *Ragione e Scrittura tra Descartes e Spinoza* (Milan, 1997), pp. 292–6.

savants' re-examining old data and bringing forth new evidence. Above all, I will demonstrate how the 'college' represented a platform where Utrecht's Cartesians could freely examine and debate the latest innovations in religion and philosophy during the mid-to-late seventeenth century, unhindered by the sorts of restrictions that would have been imposed within the public arena given the theological and political climate of the time.

## 2 The 'Cartesian Professors'

There is no doubt that, as the *Collegie der sçavanten* pamphlet claims, by the third quarter of the seventeenth century a group of men were promoting Cartesian philosophy and republican, anti-Organist politics in Utrecht, particularly at the university. The presence of the 'Cartesian professors'<sup>14</sup> on the faculty demonstrates how, in spite of the ban on Cartesian instruction that Voetius and his cohorts managed to have proclaimed in 1642,<sup>15</sup> the tides of power were constantly changing, such that the progressives were able to claim the odd victory.<sup>16</sup> A first triumph came in 1652, when the *vroedschap* appointed Johannes de Bruyn (1620–75), a professed Cartesian as evidenced in his 1644 *pro gradu* disputation on tides, professor of natural philosophy, a position he would hold for the next two decades. De Bruyn was the first Utrecht professor to openly offer Cartesian instruction.<sup>17</sup> A second 'Cartesian professor' was added to the philosophical faculty in 1660 when Regnerus van Mansveld (1629–71), a well-connected member of the city's patrician class,<sup>18</sup> was appointed chair of logic and metaphysics. And the next year a third Cartesian, the aforementioned Graevius, was appointed professor of history and eloquence. Significantly, in a letter reporting on a trip to Utrecht made before assuming the post, Graevius hinted that the appointment had been made possible through secret efforts

14 This term is repeatedly used in *Het Collegie* (see above, n. 3).

15 See Verbeek, *Descartes and the Dutch* (see above, n. 9), p. 19.

16 As also argued by Tino Perlo, *De Staten van Utrecht en Willem III: De houding van de Staten van Utrecht tegenover Willem III tijdens het eerste Stadhouderloze tijdperk (1650–1672)* (Utrecht: 2000), pp. 46–7.

17 Sassen, *Studenten* (see above, n. 11), p. 23. On De Bruyn's Cartesianism, see also Rienk Vermij, *The Calvinist Copernicans: The Reception of the New Astronomy in the Dutch Republic, 1575–1750* [History of Science and Scholarship in the Netherlands 1] (Amsterdam, 2002), pp. 169–72.

18 His father Antonius van Mansveld and his cousin Johan van Mansveld held various positions in the Utrecht government. See Roorda, 'The Utrecht "Government-Regulation"' (see above, n. 4), p. 95; and the manuscript on the Van Velthuysen and Van Mansveld families in Utrecht, *Bijzondere Collecties van de Universiteitsbibliotheek Utrecht, Codices Belgici*, cat. nr. 1828, nr. 219.

undertaken by the Utrecht physician, philosopher, and theologian Lambertus van Velthuysen (1622–85). Writing to his mentor Johannes Fredericus Gronovius (1611–71), Graevius noted that Van Velthuysen's work on natural philosophy and morality represented full-fledged Cartesianism, then warned: "For that reason, we must take utmost care that it not be spread about that he and Wittich<sup>19</sup> are behind this matter. For if that pontiff of this episcopal city<sup>20</sup> and those who follow his sect were to find out, we will fail to obtain our wish."<sup>21</sup>

An Utrecht native of patrician stock, Van Velthuysen had studied theology at the orthodox Genevan academy from 1636 to 1639 before returning to his hometown to complete his studies. Back in Utrecht, he became a member of the French-speaking Walloon churches,<sup>22</sup> where discipline was known to be less rigidly exercised than in the Dutch-speaking church from which he hailed. This move was a harbinger of things to come: Van Velthuysen was to break definitively with the orthodox camp by 1651—notwithstanding Voetius's high hopes for a career in the church<sup>23</sup>—when he anonymously published a defense of Cartesian natural philosophy and an apology for Hobbes's *De cive*.<sup>24</sup> Having added the title of doctor in both philosophy and medicine during the intervening years, Van Velthuysen abandoned his candidacy for the ministry and began to practice as a physician. And, as might be expected given his patrician status, he went on to accumulate a variety of appointments in church, government, and society at large, ranging from elder (1651–3, 1657–9, and

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- 19 This is Christopher Wittich (1625–1687), at the time theologian at Nijmegen, who would go on to hold a chair at Leiden and become one of the leading voices within Dutch Cartesianism.
- 20 That is: the notorious (cf. *ille*) Voetius, to whom his adversaries commonly referred as the *papa ultrajectinus*. See Willem J. van Asselt, *The Federal Theology of Johannes Cocceius (1603–1669)*, trans. Raymond A. Blacketer (Leiden, 2001), p. 86.
- 21 Letter of J. G. Graevius to J. F. Gronovius (Deventer, 24 December 1660), Munich, Universitätsbibliothek der Ludwig-Maximilians-Universität (hereafter: UB LMU), 2° Cod., ms. 626, fol. 107v: "Multa enim prodi[erunt?] de causis rerum naturalium, nonnulla etiam de doctrina morum, sed totus est disciplinae Cartesianae. Idcirco diligentissime cavendum ne dispalescat illum & Wittichium huius rei auctores esse. Nam si id resciverit summus ille pontifex urbis episcopalis, & qui eius sectam sequuntur, votorum falleretur."
- 22 Acts of the Utrecht Walloon consistory, Utrecht, Het Utrechts Archief (hereafter: HUA), Archief Waalse hervormde gemeente te Utrecht, inv. nr. 1, fol. 40r (22 December 1639).
- 23 Letter of G. Voetius to N. Blancardus (Utrecht, 21 November 1649), in: A. C. Duker, 'Eenige onuitgegeven brieven van en aan Gisbertus Voetius,' *Archief voor Nederlansche kerkgeschiedenis* 4 (1893), 276–325, there 304; and idem, *Gisbertus Voetius*, (see above, n. 6), 3: 266.
- 24 Lambertus van Velthuysen, *Disputatio de finito & infinito, in qua defenditur sententia clarissimi Cartesii, de motu, spatio & corpore* (Amsterdam, 1651); and idem, *Epistolica dissertatio de principiis justi et decori, continens apologiam pro tractatu clarissimi Hobbaei de Cive* (Amsterdam, 1651).

1669–71)<sup>25</sup> to city physician (1656)<sup>26</sup> and governor to the Dutch West India Company (ca. 1663).<sup>27</sup> Most importantly, in 1667 he became a member of the Utrecht *vroedschap*.<sup>28</sup>

Remarkably, Van Velthuysen never held a university post, in spite of his evident capacities. Yet from the beginning he remained close to the academic scene, such that a 1657 letter recommending a young man (Lamoraal van Nottelen) to study philosophy under De Bruyn was sent to Van Velthuysen rather than De Bruyn himself.<sup>29</sup> Van Velthuysen's machinations to secure the appointment of Graevius in 1661 are therefore hardly surprising, and it is tempting to suppose that he was in some way responsible for the other Cartesian appointments from this period as well. In 1662 the Cocceio-Cartesian theologian Francis Burman (1628–79), at the time sub-regent to Leiden's *Staten-college*, was lured to the faculty of theology as Voetius's direct colleague—a particularly galling choice for the *papa ultrajectinus* and his followers, since Burman took the place vacated by their own Matthias Nethenus after his dismissal by the *vroedschap*. This was further aggravated by the pressure the *vroedschap* subsequently exercised on the consistory, in spite of its protestations, to add Burman as pastor and make him a member of the consistory.<sup>30</sup> Then, in the spring of 1664, Louis Wolzogen (1633–90) was called to Utrecht as pastor to the Walloon church, and that fall was also appointed *professor extraordinarius* of church history.<sup>31</sup> While no evidence has surfaced yet to confirm Van Velthuysen's

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- 25 For the three terms, see the acts of the Utrecht Walloon consistory in Utrecht (see above, n. 22), inv. nr. 1, fol. 85r (27 April 1651), and inv. nr. 2, fol. 1r (21 May 1671); as well as *Livre synodal contenant les articles résolus dans les Synodes des Églises Wallonnes des Pays-Bas*, 2 vols. (The Hague, 1896–1904), 1:561 (23–28 April 1659).
- 26 Acts of the Utrecht *vroedschap*, in: G. W. Kernkamp, *Acta et decreta senatus: Vroedschapresolutiën en andere bescheiden betreffende de Utrechtsche academie*, 3 vols. [Werken uitgegeven door het Historisch genootschap, 3rd series, vols. 65, 68, and 71] (Utrecht, 1936–1940), 1:317 (7 January 1656).
- 27 The earliest reference to this appointment can be found in the letter of J. G. Graevius to L. van Velthuysen (Düsseldorf, 3 August 1663), The Hague, Koninklijke bibliotheek (hereafter: KB), collectie Koninklijke Nederlandse Akademie van Wetenschappen, KA 213 no. 9.
- 28 Duker, *Gisbertus Voetius* (see above, n. 6), 3:267.
- 29 Letter of C. Wittich to L. van Velthuysen (Nijmegen, 16 July 1657), Leiden, Universiteitsbibliotheek (hereafter: UB), Bibliotheca publica latina (hereafter: BPL), cat. nr. 750. This letter has also been published in Hans Bots, 'Témoignages sur l'ancienne université de Nimègue (1655–1671),' *Lias* 19 no. 2 (1992), 215–53, there 230.
- 30 On Burman's appointment, see F. G. M. Broeyer, 'Franciscus Burman, een collega met verdachte denkbeelden,' in: Aart de Groot and Otto J. de Jong, eds., *Vier eeuwen theologie in Utrecht* (Zoetermeer, 2001), pp. 109–19, there 109–11.
- 31 P. J. H. Bodel-Bienfait, 'L'église wallonne d'Utrecht,' *Bulletin de la commission pour l'histoire des églises wallonnes* 3 (1888), 1–21, 241–92, and 4 (1890), 29–54, there 3: 19.

involvement in securing the nominations of these other like-minded brethren,<sup>32</sup> we still find, significantly, the Huguenot pastor Étienne le Moine (1624–89) thanking Van Velthuysen as late as 1671 for his efforts to obtain a position for him at the Walloon church and at the university in Wolzogen's place.<sup>33</sup> So, too, would Theodore Craanen (1633–88) write him later that year to recommend a former student and fellow Cartesian, Benjamin van Broeckhuysen (1647–86), for the vacancy left by the unexpected passing of Van Mansveld, testifying once again to Van Velthuysen's perceived influence in faculty appointments.<sup>34</sup>

During the third quarter of the seventeenth century, the theologically orthodox, philosophically conservative, and politically Orangist party under the leadership of Voetius therefore came to face a growing number of progressive thinkers, with De Bruyn and Van Velthuysen as their senior members.

### 3 Cohesion and Collusion

The pamphlet *Het Collegie der sçavanten* identifies Van Velthuysen and the 'Cartesian professors,' along with the physician Henricus van Solingen,<sup>35</sup> as the nucleus of the Utrecht 'college,' along with three student members named Johannes Fuyck, Specht, and Antonius van Schayk.<sup>36</sup> Apart from the many

32 Wilhelm Goeters was the first to suggest that Van Velthuysen worked to have Wolzogen brought to Utrecht; see his *Die vorbereitung des Pietismus in der Reformierten Kirche der Niederlande bis zur Labadistischen Krisis 1670* (Leipzig, 1911), pp. 135–6. However, there is no firm evidence confirming this supposition, not even—as Goeters's note appears to indicate—in the act by which the *vroedschap* approved the call. See Utrecht, HUA, Archief Stad Utrecht, secretarie 1577–1795, cat. nr. 121, nr. 27 (26 March 1664).

33 Letter of É. le Moine to L. van Velthuysen (Rouen, 7 March 1671), Leiden, UB, BPL, cat. nr. 885: "Je ne doute pas que Monsieur Grevius ne vous ayt déjà bien remercié de ma part, pour toute la bonté que vous avés fait paroître pour moy (ou qu'on a parlé de m'appeler en votre église, et en votre académie). Je vous en remercie encore de tout mon coeur..."

34 Letter of Th. Craanen to L. van Velthuysen (Leiden, 2 September 1671), Leiden, UB, BPL, cat. nr. 885.

35 *Pace* Thijssen-Schoute, *Nederlands Cartesianisme* (see above, n. 8), p. 449, § 276, who erroneously identifies him as Nicolaas van Solingen. Nevertheless, Nicolaas, who served as *schepen* (alderman) and *raad* (councillor) in the Utrecht government, also appears to have been closely associated with the 'college'; see *Collegie* (see above, n. 3), p. A4r–v, and below, n. 70.

36 Although the students' first names are not mentioned, Fuyck and Van Schayk are easily identified and appear as respondents to disputations that De Bruyn presided over; see below, n. 43. Two students named Specht appear in the Utrecht matriculation records of this time, but it is uncertain which of them was linked to the 'college'; see *Album studiorum Academiae Rheno-Traiectinae 1636–1886* (Utrecht, 1886), pp. 55 and 56 (Hermannus, 1661 and 1662); and 58 (Philippus, 1664).

defamatory accusations, a more serious complaint running throughout the pamphlet concerns the way these men collaborated as a cabal, and the surviving records suggest that the Voetians had a point.<sup>37</sup> For starters, the men who gathered around De Bruyn and Van Velthuysen in the early 1660s quickly formed a tight circle as they arrived in Utrecht. Thus in 1657 De Bruyn may have been the only person to whom the Amsterdam mathematician Johannes Hudde (1628–1704) asked Van Velthuysen to convey his greetings,<sup>38</sup> but later ‘college’ correspondence tellingly includes frequent requests to pass on greetings to several ‘savants.’<sup>39</sup> Baptismal records also indicate the cohesion among these men. In 1664 De Bruyn appeared as a godparent for Graevius’s daughter Johanna Wilhelmina, and the following year Van Velthuysen and Burman’s wife Maria Heidanus fulfilled this role for the young Aleida Graevius; in 1667 Wolzogen served as godfather to Nicolas Louys Graevius, who presumably was also named after him.<sup>40</sup> These details would perhaps not be significant had not this social cohesion extended to mutual protection.

In 1654, when De Bruyn was still the only Cartesian professor on the Utrecht faculty and had gotten into hot water with the Dutch-speaking Reformed

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- 37 This complaint is found among others also in *Bericht, rakende de Cocceaensche en Cartesiaensche nieuwigheden in de theologie, waer in die eygentlijk bestaen en wase voor een quaedt gevolgh hebben. Uyt-gegeven ten eynde daer in mochte worden versien, tot conservatie van de ware gereformeerde religie, ende tot rust van de gemeynte* (Amsterdam, 1674), pp. \*4–\*5. The complaint was also turned back on the Voetians, as can be seen in *Voor-loper op het Bericht raakkende de Coccejaansche en Cartesiaansche nieuwigheden in de theologie* (Leiden, 1674), pp. 3–4, 7–8, 39, 43–44. I am indebted to Jo Spaans for drawing my attention to these pamphlets.
- 38 Letter of J. Hudde to L. van Velthuysen (Amsterdam, 13 October 1657), Amsterdam, University Library (hereafter UBA), OTM D 29.
- 39 E.g., letter of J. G. Graevius to L. van Velthuysen (Düsseldorf, 3 August 1663) (see above, n. 27) (Burman, De Bruyn, Van Solingen); letter of J. Melchioris to J. G. Graevius (*Ubiis* [near Cologne], 23 July 1670), Copenhagen, Kongelige Bibliotek (hereafter: KB), Bibliotheca Thottiana, Ms Thott 1263 4<sup>o</sup> (folder “Joh. Melchioris”) (greetings for Burman and Van Solingen); letter of J. Perizonius to J. G. Graevius (Deventer, 5 January 1673), Leiden, UB, BPL 337, cat. nr. 106 (Van Velthuysen, Burman, De Bruyn); letter of J. Perizonius to J. G. Graevius (Deventer, 2 May [1673]), Leiden, UB, BPL 337, cat. nr. 105 (Van Velthuysen, Burman); and letter of J. Bouwmeester to J. G. Graevius (Amsterdam, 8 February 1676), Copenhagen, KB, Ms Thott 1258 4<sup>o</sup>, nr. 19 (folder “Joh. Bouwmeester til J. G. Graevius”) (*Etiam Do. Solingio nostro salutem dicas aliisque amicis, et prae cateris Do. Velthusio*).
- 40 Utrecht, HUA, Archief Burgerlijke stand van de gemeente Utrecht en van de voormalige gemeente Zuilen: retroacta doop- trouw- en begraafregisters, inv. nr. 5, p. 489 (27 February 1662); inv. nr. 20, p. 244 (5 July 1665), and p. 247 (3 December 1667). Presumably Nicolas Louys, who would die young, was named after Louis Wolzogen and Graevius’s closest friend, the statesman Nicolaas Heinsius. After all, on 22 October 1673 Joachim Nicolaes Graevius was baptized and present as his godfathers were Nicolaas Heinsius and Joachim Nieuwstad; see *ibid.*, inv. nr. 6, p. 413.

church over student corollaries defended under his presiding,<sup>41</sup> he, like Van Velthuysen and others seeking greater liberty, took refuge in the latitude offered by the Walloon church, which on that account had earned itself the derogatory name ‘whiners’ church’ (*pruykkerk*).<sup>42</sup> This may account for the provocative corollaries that seem to characterize De Bruyn’s disputations a decade later, some defended by none other than two student members of the ‘college,’ namely Fuyck and Van Schayk.<sup>43</sup> But it was certainly not the only factor. For by the mid-1660s the Cartesian professors could feel relatively secure in their position at the university, enjoying protection from the *vroedschap* and having little to fear from the side of the consistory. A case in point concerns the events surrounding a 16 June 1666 disputation on the Holy Supper defended by Absalom Malecoot. This disputation included provocative corollaries from the defendant suggesting, among other things, that the Voetians’ view on forgiveness under the old and new covenant dispensations risked being accused of Socinianism. The balance of power at the university may have left the conservatives handcuffed there, but when Malecoot soon thereafter requested an attestation from the Dutch Reformed consistory, it seized the opportunity to demand that he first account for his corollaries. Joined by Van Mansveld and Graevius, Burman—as the presiding professor—submitted a protest to the *vroedschap*, which took measures to protect the academic freedom of the university with a 26 January 1667 decision forbidding the consistory to formulate

- 41 Johannes de Bruyn, *Disputatio mechanico-mathematica de trochlea ...* (respondent: Theodore Craanen) (Utrecht, 1654), p. A4v (cor. 10): “Animae brutorum aequae sunt immortalitatis capaces ac hominum.” See, on this affair, Vermij, *Calvinist Copernicans*, (see above, n. 17), pp. 279–80; and Duker, *Gisbertus Voetius* (see above, n. 6), 3: 82, n. 2.
- 42 *Het Collegie* (see above, n. 3), p. A3v. For the term, see François Halma, *Woordenboek der Nederduitsche en Fransche taalen* (Amsterdam, 1720), p. 642 s.v. “pruilen.” The low opinion held by many Dutch Reformed of the standards in the Walloon church is reflected, for example, in *Getrouwe en naader openeninge van het discours, voorgevallen tusschen den heer professor Johannes de Bruyn en Laurentius Homma ...* (Utrecht, 1665), p. B4r. The earliest evidence for De Bruyn’s presence in the Walloon church comes from spring 1663, when his two-year term as elder came to an end; see the acts of the Utrecht Walloon consistory (see above, n. 22), cat. nr. 75, fol. 33v (17 May 1663).
- 43 E.g., Johannes de Bruyn, *Disputationum philosophicarum de naturali Dei cognitione nona* (respondent: Antonius van Schayk) (Utrecht, 1667), p. A4r: “3. Errores si velimus, evitate possumus.... 7. Motus terrae non contrariatur S. Script.” Idem., *Disputationum ... undecima* (respondent: Johannes Fuyck) (Utrecht, 1667), p. A4v: “1. Philosophia et Theologia sunt duae scientiae, diversis principiis fundatae; illa igitur huic non potest dici esse subordinata. Attamen veritas philosophica nunquam pugnare potest cum veritate Theologica. [...] 9. Occultarum qualitatum nomina ignorantiae asyla esse. Affirm.... 12. Terram moveri. Aff.... 14. Cometæ non sunt signa malorum.” I thank Aza Goudriaan for making these disputations available to me; see also his *Philosophische Gotteserkenntnis bei Suárez und Descartes, im Zusammenhang mit der niederländischen Theologie und Philosophie des 17. Jahrhunderts* (Leiden, 1999), pp. 250 and 273.

charges for ecclesiastical discipline on the basis of material derived from lectures, disputations, or corollaries.<sup>44</sup> The following year, when the consistory censured the student ‘savant’ Fuyck for defending under Van Mansveld’s presidency a corollary positing the necessity of Cartesian doubt, Graevius explicitly cited the former decision when he as *rector* once again approached the *vroedschap* to complain.<sup>45</sup> Only months later did the Cartesian professors’ position receive another boost when Van Velthuysen, recently inducted into the *vroedschap*, was appointed its ‘political commissioner’ “to see to it that nothing pertaining to and disturbing the commonwealth and politics was treated by the consistory.”<sup>46</sup>

Enjoying an increasing strength in numbers at the university over the first half of the 1660s, the Cartesian professors’ position came to be shored up also from the side of church and magistracy during the latter half of the decade.<sup>47</sup> Under normal circumstances the consistory would have been the first channel through which the Voetians would have brought their grievances to the attention of the city government. Yet that route was made more difficult when Burman became a member of the consistory by virtue of his contested appointment as minister, and he doubtless used his position there to good effect in favor of the Cartesian circle to which he belonged. In fact, Burman’s—perceived or real—betrayal of the consistory, perhaps most poignantly displayed in the Malecoot affair when he submitted charges against the very body of which he was a member, may well explain why he bears the brunt of the attacks in the pamphlet literature of the period. Furthermore, one can hardly underestimate the effect of Van Velthuysen’s appointment as political commissioner, charged to attend the meetings of the consistory to ensure that it did not deal with anything beyond its province. In fact, his appointment itself illustrates the uncomfortable position of the Voetians during this time, since it was made in spite of his earlier clashes with the Dutch Reformed consistory

44 See Duker, *Gisbertus Voetius* (see above, n. 6), 3: 87–102. The Malecoot affair is raised in *Rehabeams raedt* (see above, n. 7), pp. 4–5; with a response in *Bileams raedt* (see above, n. 7), pp. 10–13.

45 See especially Duker, *Gisbertus Voetius* (see above, n. 6), 3: 82 n. 2, and the sources cited there. For the pamphlets, see *Het Collegie* (see above, n. 3), pp. A4v–B1r; *Rehabeams raedt* (see above, n. 7), pp. 5–6; and *Bileams raedt* (see above, n. 7), pp. 13–5.

46 Caspar Burman, *Trajectum eruditum ...* (Utrecht, 1750), pp. 385–6: “a magistratibus enim anno MDCLXVIII. ad conventus ecclesiasticos deputatus erat, ut videret, ne quid rem publicam vel politicam spectans ac perturbans a coetu ecclesiastico perageretur.” The ‘political commissioners’ were introduced in 1660 amidst growing tensions between magistracy and consistory; see Duker, *Gisbertus Voetius* (see above, n. 6), 3: 161–70.

47 So also Perlo, *Staten van Utrecht* (see above, n. 16), pp. 46–7. This circumstance is also reflected in the acts printed in Kernkamp, *Acta et decreta* (see above, n. 26), 1: *passim*.

over his writings questioning the extent of the church's authority.<sup>48</sup> In fact, during his tenure Van Velthuysen would have been present at the very meetings of the consistory where it mobilized itself against his *Tractaet van de afgoderye en superstitie* (1669).<sup>49</sup>

There thus appears to be at least some truth to the *Collegie der sçavanten* pamphlet's description of the circle around De Bruyn and Van Velthuysen as a conniving network of Cartesian anti-Orangists.

#### 4 Scholarly Society

This image, however, is challenged in two letters written in 1674 by the 'savant' Graevius to his closest friend, the statesman Nicolaas Heinsius the Elder (1620–81).<sup>50</sup> By that time Graevius and his friends no longer had the protection they had enjoyed in their heyday during the late 1660s and early 1670s, and found themselves in a most vulnerable position. For following the end of the French occupation late in 1673, Prince William III of Orange had disbanded the Utrecht *vroedschap*, and there was little doubt that the new composition would heavily favor the Voetians.<sup>51</sup> Accordingly, Graevius lets on that he fears that he, Burman, and De Bruyn—i.e., all the remaining 'Cartesian professors,' following Wolzogen's departure for Amsterdam (1670) and Van Mansvelt's untimely death (1671)—will lose their positions at the university. He attributes this tight spot not only to his suspected Cartesianism, his friendship with the ousted magistrates, and his oration on comets but also to his participation in

the gathering of friends that for several years had the habit of meeting together every week to discuss various kinds of studies, in which

48 E.g., *Het predick-Ambt en 't recht der kercke, bepaelt nae de regelen van Godts Woordt, en de gronden van onse Reformatie: tegen het gevoelen van eenige Gereormeerde Leeraers, die derselve macht verder uytbreyden als het behoort* (Amsterdam, 1660). See the discussion in Willem Frijhoff and Marieke Spies, *1650: Hard-Won Unity*, trans. Myra Heerspink Scholz (Assen, 2004), pp. 323–5.

49 Van Velthuysen's attendance as political commissioner is mentioned, for example, in the acts of the Utrecht Dutch Reformed consistory, in Utrecht, HUA, Archief Nederlandse hervormde gemeente Utrecht, kerkeraad, cat. nr. 9 (10 and 24 January, and 7 February 1670). For the controversy over the *Tractaet*, see Duker, *Gisbertus Voetius* (see above, n. 6), 3:267–90.

50 For these letters, see also Vermij, 'Genootschappen' (see above, n. 12), 15–7; and n. 12 above.

51 See the literature cited in n. 4 above.

I expounded for these great magistrates<sup>52</sup> some satires of Juvenal, and Suetonius, and Grotius's *De iure belli et pacis*. At times we also looked at the anatomy of the principal parts of the body, such as the heart, the eye, the ears, the spleen, and others, which work De Bruyn, a very good and most experienced master of dissection, performed for us. We also read new books as they were published, either about the causes of natural things or other matters, and debated about them.<sup>53</sup>

The account Graevius gives of the 'college of savants' thus differs radically from its depiction in the pamphlets.<sup>54</sup> Far from a band of conspirators, it was a 'scholarly society' that he and his likeminded friends had formed. The timing indicated by the Utrecht classicist furthermore leads one to assume it was initiated in the second half of the 1660s, not long after the network of 'Cartesian professors' had been established, and continued until the early 1670s—long enough, at any rate, to still threaten Graevius's reputation when he wrote to Heinsius in the spring of 1674.

While scholarly societies may be a phenomenon typically associated with the eighteenth century,<sup>55</sup> there is no reason to doubt that the network that had gathered around De Bruyn and Van Velthuysen in the early 1660s had formed a kind of society later that decade.<sup>56</sup> These are, after all, the years of the establishment of the well-known Accademia del Cimento in Tuscany (1657), the Royal Society in London (1660), and the Académie royale des sciences in

52 *praetextatis*: literally 'those who wear the toga praetexta.' This was an outer garment worn by free-born children until they came of age, and by Rome's higher magistrates; see C. T. Lewis and C. Short, *Latin Dictionary* (Oxford, 1963), s.v. "praetexo," II.A.B.1. That Graevius envisions Utrecht's magistrate class is evident from the context, speaking in the preceding sentence of "those whose fortunes have recently been overturned"—that is, the ousted magistrates.

53 Letter of J. G. Graevius to N. Heinsius (Utrecht, 29 April 167[4]) (see above, n. 12).

54 Graevius explicitly identifies his description with what the pamphlets *Het collegie* and *Rehabeams raedt* called the 'college of savants'; see letter of J. G. Graevius to N. Heinsius (Utrecht, 29 April 167[4]) (see above, n. 12): "hoc Collegio doctorum: sic invidiose in probrosis, quibus exagitatur, libellis *College de Scavants* Gallico vocabulo appellant...."

55 See, for example, Wijnand W. Mijnhardt, *Tot heil van 't menschdom: Culturele genootschappen in Nederland, 1750–1815* [Nieuwe Nederlandse bijdragen tot de geschiedenis der geneeskunde en der natuurwetenschappen 24] (Amsterdam, 1988), pp. 82–3. For some critical reflection, see Jan C. C. Rupp, 'Theatra anatomica: Culturele centra in het Nederland van de zeventiende eeuw,' in *De productie, distributie en consumptie van cultuur*, ed. J. J. Kloek and W. W. Mijnhardt (Amsterdam, 1989), pp. 13–36; and Vermij, 'Genootschappen' (see above, n. 12).

56 Graevius uses a variety of terms within the same semantic range: *collegium*, *coetus*, *conventus*, *societas*; see his letters to N. Heinsius (29 and 30 April 1674) (see above, n. 12).

Paris (1667). And, closer to home, one might point also to the lesser-known Amsterdam Collegium privatum, founded in 1664, as an example for De Bruyn, Van Velthuysen, and their cohorts.<sup>57</sup> Graevius's enormous correspondence network included leading members of almost all these societies, such as Lorenzo Magalotti (1637–1712) and Melchisédec Thévenot (1620–95), as well as Matthias Sladius (1628–89) and Niels Stensen (1638–86). While a directed search in potentially promising letters between these men and the Utrecht classicist has yielded no discussion of these other societies, it is difficult to imagine, given also the dynamics of the Republic of Letters, that they never spoke or wrote to one another about these matters. At any rate, for all the similarities between the 'college' and the better-known societies abroad, there is one important difference: while the other scholarly societies all left records of their proceedings, published works bearing their name, and the like, no such documents survive for the Utrecht 'college,' nor is there any indication that they ever existed.

This is not to say that nothing supports Graevius's description of the 'college' as a scholarly society, akin to the way the university and *vroedschap* records confirm at least part of the pamphlets' account regarding the collusion of its members. One specific aspect Graevius mentions in his letter to Heinsius is that the meetings were occasionally attended by the likes of the classicists Gronovius and Marquard Gudius (1635–89) or the naturalist Jan Swammerdam (1637–80), a member of the Amsterdam Collegium privatum.<sup>58</sup> These men are obviously adduced as witnesses, with Graevius supposing that Heinsius's mind might now be triggered by something the late Gronovius had mentioned to him about a visit to the Utrecht 'college' in the course of their frequent correspondence. A search in their extant letters has yielded no definitive reference to the 'college' and its activities, however.<sup>59</sup> Visitors' attendance, however, is indeed reflected in a letter to Graevius from another naturalist and close friend of Swammerdam, the Dane Niels Stensen, who in 1670 had to decline an invitation from Graevius to attend a meeting of the 'college.' Citing the serious illness of a housemate as his excuse, Stensen assures Graevius: "Were it not for [the illness], nothing would be more welcome to us than that most learned

57 See G. A. Lindeboom, 'Het Collegium privatum Amstelodamenses (1664–1673),' *Nederlands tijdschrift voor geneeskunde* 119, no. 32 (1975), 1248–54.

58 Letter of J. G. Graevius to N. Heinsius (Utrecht, 29 April 167[4]) (see above, n. 12).

59 But see perhaps the letter of J. G. Graevius to J. F. Gronovius (Utrecht, 3 March 1668), Munich, UB LMU, 2<sup>o</sup> Cod., ms. 626, fol. 162r: "Iam pridem te hic expectavimus.... Sed spero nos proximis feriis te hic visurum esse. Non ignoras quam desideratus non mihi solum meis quidem, sed & nostris amicis omnibus sis venturus."

companionship, where erudite men contend for victory with gentleness.”<sup>60</sup> The setting Stensen depicts with this flowery accolade is a milieu where like-minded scholars can freely discuss and debate with a view to the advancement of science, recalling Graevius’s insistence that the guests of the ‘college’ “extolled to the heavens the most pleasant and innocent enjoyment we derived from these discussions on various studies.”<sup>61</sup>

The annotated title-page of Utrecht University’s copy of the *Collegie der sçavanten* pamphlet provides another piece of evidence, since there an unidentified seventeenth-century person has listed the names of those whom he presumably considered to be the leading members of the ‘college.’ These include the names we have seen before—i.e., Wolzogen, Van Velthuysen, Graevius, Van Mansveld, Van Solingen, De Bruyn, and Burman—as well as Van Mansveld’s cousin the Utrecht burgomaster Johan van Mansveld (1621–73) and the physician Everard van Sypesteyn (1637–1716). On the face of it, one might be inclined to think that this information was simply taken from the text of the pamphlet. Nevertheless, the only mention of Johan van Mansveld occurs in a context other than membership,<sup>62</sup> and Van Sypesteyn’s name does not even appear in the pamphlet, suggesting that the annotator had access to inside information. And indeed, this impression finds confirmation in a final annotation added below the names, observing that Burman and De Bruyn “seldom came.”<sup>63</sup> While this last annotation may fail to offer new information on the actual discussions held by the ‘savants,’ it does testify to the existence of the meetings and also suggests possible implications about the structure of the ‘college.’ After all, the pamphleteer explicitly sets Burman and De Bruyn apart from the other ‘collegiantes’ (*Collegianten*) as, respectively, the chair (*praeses*)

60 Letter of N. Stensen to J. G. Graevius (Amsterdam, 20 April 1670), in: *Nicolai Stenonis epistolae et epistolae ad eum datae*, ed. Gustav Scherz (Freiburg, 1952), 1: 213: “Absque eo esset, nihil nobis optatius foret doctissimo illo contubernio, ubi cum humanitate eruditio [*sic*; read *eruditi*] de palma contendunt.” I thank Eric Jorink for sharing his insights on this passage with me.

61 Letter of J. G. Graevius to N. Heinsius (Utrecht, 29 April 167[4]) (see above, n. 12): “... qui suavissimam hanc voluptatem & innoxiam maxime, quam capiebamus ex his sermonibus de variis studiis, in coelum extollebant.”

62 *Het Collegie* (see above, n. 3), p. A4r.

63 The complete annotations are as follows: “wolshogen velthuysen profesor greve [profesor] mansvelt mansvelt raatsheer Dr van solingen Dr sypesteyn profes de bruyn burman de twee laaste quamen seldom.” The annotated title-page of this copy held at Utrecht University has shelfmark: HS 3 L 17 dl 18. I am indebted to Jo Spaans and Piet Steenbakkens for help on this difficult transcription.

and the vice (*assessor*).<sup>64</sup> Indeed, Burman would have been the obvious choice for chair by virtue of his incomparable reputation, and the less flashy De Bruyn for vice chair on account of his seniority. Yet one wonders whether the pamphleteer gave the group a more formal organization than it actually had, so as to make it appear a larger threat—just as he had coined the name ‘college of savants’ for this group,<sup>65</sup> doubtless to give his Cartesian opponents an added air of pretentiousness.<sup>66</sup>

Further confirmation of Graevius’s account of the ‘college’ is found in yet another annotated period pamphlet. During the French occupation of Utrecht, several citizens kept diaries in which they recorded details pertaining to military events, political decisions, outrages committed by the occupying party, and even the French officers’ sociability. One such diary is Abraham de Wicquefort’s *Journal, of dagelijcksch verhael*, published anonymously in 1674. The copy held at the Utrecht University Library is heavily interleaved with pages containing numerous remarks from a contemporary eyewitness keyed to specific passages of the *Journal*.<sup>67</sup> At the place where De Wicquefort describes the controversial 1673 decision simply to extend the appointment of the incumbent Utrecht magistrates without the customary elections,<sup>68</sup> the unidentified annotator added remarks totaling no less than eleven sides. He begins with the observation that in response to the pending continuation of the magistrates, “a number of mostly Wittian-minded conspirators held a

64 *Het Collegie* (see above, n. 3), p. A2v. This is doubtless the passage that suddenly transformed Burman into the very *founder* of the ‘college,’ as reported in Verbeek, *Descartes and the Dutch* (see above, n. 9), p. 75; Gaukroger, *Descartes: An Intellectual Biography* (see above, n. 9), p. 473; and Luisa Simonutti, ‘Tra Cartesianesimo e Spinozismo: Limborch e la polemica con Burman,’ in: *Potentia Dei: Lonnipotenza nel pensioero dei secoli XVI e XVII*, ed. Guido Canziani et al. (Florence, 2000), pp. 525–45, there 527.

65 See the quotation from Graevius’s letter to Heinsius in n. 54 above. At times the name has been understood to have come from the members themselves; see the discussion in n. 82 below.

66 For the pejorative use of ‘*sçavant*’ in the period, see, for example, the Voetian pamphlet *Rehabeams regeering, ontdeckende d'intrigues der Machiavelsche politijken van Utrecht ...* (Hamelen, 1674; Knuttel cat. nr. 1190), pp. 8, 15.

67 [Abraham de Wicquefort,] *Journal, of dagelijcksch verhael van de handel der Franschen in de steden van Uytrecht en Woerden [...]* (Amsterdam: Jan Claesz. ten Hoorn, 1674). The annotated copy is held at Utrecht University (shelfmark: Hs. 3.L.17), and has been included in the Annotated Books Online database coordinated by Arnoud Visser (Utrecht University). It can be viewed online at <http://abo.annotatedbooksonline.com/#binding-9-1> (accessed 5 April 2017).

68 [De Wicquefort,] *Journal* (see above, n. 67), p. 214. The same decision had been less controversial in the fall of 1672, since it was imposed by command of the French and offered some stability so shortly after the invasion.

meeting of that great savant college on 1 October,” specifically naming “that great Argus<sup>69</sup> Van Velthuysen, aside from that pompous and seasoned mind of Van Solingen<sup>70</sup> who, having become a [city] councillor, beat his chest and said: ‘I’ll also make the [Provincial] States one day!’”<sup>71</sup> This brief remark of course calls into question Graevius’s insistence that the ‘college’ was in no way politically motivated. Yet the annotator, who is significant for providing independent firsthand information, continues with a further description of the ‘college’ that does indeed confirm the overall tenure of the Utrecht classicist’s characterization to Heinsius: “The ‘college of savants’ there was composed of ten men, almost all of them well-educated, who had the custom of meeting together at a certain place alone and set apart, since they always held heavy, deep, and erudite discussions there.”<sup>72</sup> This description of the discussions is easily matched with the list of ‘college’ activities detailed in the letter to Heinsius, just as this record of the October 1673 gathering in the wake of the continuation harmonizes well with Graevius’s worries over his recent association with the ‘college’ in the spring of 1674. What is new here, albeit hardly unexpected, is the annotator’s indication—using a redundant expression (cf. *alleen, afgesondert*)—that the meetings of the ‘college’ were closed or restricted in nature.

The most significant source confirming Graevius’s description of the ‘college,’ however, comes from the Groningen professor of theology Samuel Maresius (Desmarets, 1599–1673).<sup>73</sup> In a brief 1672 Latin treatise soon translated into Dutch, the Huguenot theologian laments the deplorable state of theological instruction in the Dutch Republic at the time, targeting among other things

69 *argus*: presumably referencing Argos Panoptes, the many-eyed giant of Greek mythology, to depict Van Velthuysen as overly watchful.

70 I.e., Nicolaas van Solingen; see above, n. 35.

71 [De Wicquefort,] *Journael* (see above, n. 67), fol. 87r<sup>o</sup>: “1 october hebbe enige meest witte cabalisten vergaderinge gelegd van dat groote scavante collegie die groote argus velthuysen neffens dat hoogdravende wel door kneet verstant van solingen die geworden synde raat op syn borst klopte seggende hier steeckt nog een staten in.” The men who opposed the decision were themselves incumbent magistrates, and as such stood to benefit from the proposed continuation. Their concern was thus procedural, perhaps anticipating the problems that they as republicans were bound to face after the imminent departure of the French occupiers. No doubt these republican men felt that if properly elected to their positions, the chance they would be ousted upon the arrival of the Prince of Orange—as indeed happened!—might be decreased.

72 [De Wicquefort,] *Journael* (see above, n. 67), fol. 87r<sup>o</sup>: “NB het scavante collegie bestont aldaer uyt 10 personen meest alle wel door lettert die gewoon waren op seeker plaets alleen by een comst te hebben afgesondert alsoo aldaer altyt swaere diepsinnige en gelcerde discoursen omgingen.”

73 For Maresius, see the old but still excellent work from Doede Nauta, *Samuel Maresius* (Amsterdam, 1935). See also the entry in Theo Verbeek et al., *The Correspondence of René Descartes: 1643* [Quaestiones infinitae 45] (Utrecht, 2003), pp. 279–82.

the threat posed by Cartesianism. The city of Utrecht features prominently in his discourse, with Maresius pointing out how it had once led the attack on Descartes but has now become the “Acropolis and Capitol of Cartesianism.”<sup>74</sup> In a passage laced with classical allusions, Maresius continues:

For since several years ago, a number of Pinarian and Potitian<sup>75</sup> brethren from the basest class of the Cartesian and Catalinarian<sup>76</sup> religion had the habit of holding their weekly, drink-filled<sup>77</sup> guild festivals,<sup>78</sup> or rather assemblies<sup>79</sup> for the propagation of the Cartesian faith (Voetius used to call them the ‘scholars’ daily,’ *Le journal des savans*)<sup>80</sup> in which they

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- 74 Samuel Maresius, *Tractatus brevis de afflictio statu studii theologici in Foederato Belgico* (Groningen, 1672), p. 17. For the Dutch translation, which has the tendency to flatten the rather colorful language typical of Maresius throughout (so also De Vleeschauwer, ‘Alarm-pamflet’ [see above, n. 11], 560), see *Een kort en merck-weerdigh Tractaet, van den bedroefden toestant der H. Theologie in ons Vereenight Nederlandt ...* (s.l., 1673), pp. B4v–C1r.
- 75 *Pinarii & Potitii*: two of the most ancient patrician families of Rome, perhaps conveniently chosen by Maresius because of their association with eating and drinking; see *An Universal, Historical, Geographical, Chronological and Poetical Dictionary, Exactly Describing the Situation, Extent, Customs ... of All Kingdoms ...* (London, 1703), vol. 2, s.v. “Potitians and Pinarians”: “The *Potitians*, as ’t is said, had their name from *πρὶ ζῆν*, to Drink, because they only drunk the Liquors presented to the Gods; and besides they eat all the Victims, leaving none to the *Pinarians*, who had their Name from *πεινᾶν*, to Hunger.” The Dutch simply translates as *spits-broeders* (brothers-in-arms).
- 76 *Catilinariae*: referencing the Roman senator Cataline (108–62 BCE), most probably for his hand in the Catilinarian conspiracy against the established consulship so as to reflect the Utrecht Cartesians’ opposition to the Prince of Orange.
- 77 *inter pocula* (in the Dutch translation: *onder den dranck*): literally ‘over drinks,’ but doubtless used insinuatingly here. Cf. how the Reformed theologian Marcus Friedrich Wendelin in his ethical manual discusses the question whether deliberations ought to be made over drinks (*An inter pocula sit deliberandum?*), concluding that the more prudent will respond negatively; *Philosophia moralis, praeceptis succinctis methodice comprehensa*, 2nd rev. ed. (Harderwijk, 1654), pp. 897–9 (l.1.35, §§ 45–8).
- 78 *suas Mercuriales*: in Roman religion, Mercury was the god of commerce, whom the merchants’ guild honored on the Ides of May. Thus the Dutch translation: *gilde-dagh* (literally ‘guild day’).
- 79 *Congregationes*: Maresius plays here on the Roman Catholic Congregation for the Propagation of the Catholic Faith, by this time a notorious agent of persecution against Protestants. The same comparison between the Utrecht *Collegie* and the Catholic ‘Congregation’ can be found in *Het Collegie* (see above, n. 3), p. A2r.
- 80 *Eruditorum diarium, le journal des savans*: according to Maresius’s report, Voetius compared the meetings to dailies, presumably for informing their attendees/readers of the latest scientific news. In Dutch the passage is translated: “*welke vergaderingen D. Voetius pleeght te noemen het dagh register der geleerde, lejournal [sic] des savants.*” It is not clear whether Voetius and Maresius were explicitly referencing the famous *Journal des savans* (1665–) of the French Académie royale here. For misinterpretations of this passage, see n. 82 below.

contrived careful plans for promoting their sect in both theory and practice. The gathering was chaired by Van Velthuysen, a man hardly troubled by Godhead or piety; it was also attended by the theologian Burman, and several other sworn-in professors of philosophy and the arts.<sup>81</sup>

This is a difficult passage on several accounts, so one should not be surprised to find that its importance for the ‘college’ has been overlooked or underestimated.<sup>82</sup> Nevertheless, when the classical references are properly placed and the overt vilification typical of the ever-belligerent Maresius is stripped away, his description of the Utrecht Cartesians, presumably gained from his former nemesis Voetius with whom he had finally allied himself in 1668, is entirely in line with the other known sources. With De Bruyn, Van Mansveld, and Graevius easily recognizable as the “professors of philosophy and the arts,” Maresius’s list of participants closely matches the principal *Collegianten* identified in the *Collegie* pamphlet. Moreover, like Graevius, the well-informed Maresius clearly describes weekly meetings devoted to scholarly pursuits, and so too the informal setting he depicts—albeit with highly insinuating terms—matches well with the Utrecht classicist’s depiction of gatherings held among friends. While some discrepancy with the pamphlet remains by virtue of the Huguenot theologian’s identification of Van Velthuysen (rather

81 Maresius, *Tractatus brevis* (see above, n. 74), p. 17: “Solebant enim ab aliquot annis nonnulli Pinarii & Potitii fratres ex ima cavea Religionis Cartesianae & Catilinae, singulis septimanis suas Mercuriales habere inter pocula, sive potius suas Congregationes de propaganda Cartesianae fide, quarum quamque D. Voetius solebat, *Eruditorum diarium*, le *Journal des savans*, appellare, in quibus de secta sua promovenda, tam Theorritice quam Practice subtilia agitabant consilia; Praeses conventus erat Velthusius, homo Numinis & Pietatis sic satis securus; Aderat Burman. Theologus, & quidam alii intimae admissionis Professores Philosophiae & artium....”

82 In paraphrasing the passage from Maresius’s *Tractatus brevis* above, the Dutch church historian Christiaan Sepp misunderstood the text on multiple points and erroneously reported that Maresius was expressing his displeasure at the way Van Velthuysen and Burman had treated his *Systema* in the *Journal des savans*; see his *Het godgeleerd onderwijs in Nederland, gedurende de 16<sup>e</sup> en 17<sup>e</sup> eeuw*, 2 vols. (Leiden, 1873–4), 2: 488. Hartog read Sepp but clearly failed to consult the *Tractatus brevis* itself, so that this crucial evidence regarding the ‘college’ escaped his notice. Rather, he erroneously posited on the basis of Sepp that the *Collegie der sçavanten* may owe its name to the members’ contribution to the *Journal des savans*. See Hartog, ‘Collegie’ (see above, n. 2), p. 103; so too Thijssen-Schoute, *Nederlands Cartesianisme* (see above, n. 8), p. 444, § 269. Most remarkably, De Vleschauwer did see the connection to the *Collegie* in Maresius’s pamphlet, but—perhaps out of ignorance of the Graevius letters—dismissed it as never having had a formal existence; see above, n. 11. This passage is also cited, albeit with scant commentary, in Bordoli, *Ragione e Scrittura*, (see above, n. 13), p. 292, who does connect it to the *Collegie* pamphlet, but he was apparently unaware of the Graevius letters.

than Burman) as the society's chair, the timeframe shows Maresius once again to be not far from what Graevius himself would later write.

## 5 Drafts and Pamphlets

Maresius also reveals additional details he had gained about the meetings of the Utrecht Cartesians, doubtless through his considerable network. He thus notes that “the intimacy between the sworn members was so great that they shared their latest drafts [*suos novos conceptus*] with each other, and sent them to others”<sup>83</sup>—that is, to other leading Cartesians in the Dutch Republic (and beyond), whom he colorfully describes as “birds of the same feather [*aves concolores*] in Leiden, Amsterdam, Nijmegen, Duisburg, Franeker, and perhaps Groningen.”<sup>84</sup> Maresius himself is interested particularly in the external correspondence of the ‘college’, since it forms the basis for the defamatory observation that entire sentences in the judgments on his *Systema* issued by Utrecht’s Burman and Nijmegen’s Wittich show such marked verbal similarities that the one must have taken them over from the other (in a pre-publication draft version).<sup>85</sup> For our purposes, however, it is also worthwhile dwelling on the exchange of ideas, which presumably took place during the sessions the ‘savants’ held together. For at the end of this passage Maresius cynically speaks of “the Trophonian cave”<sup>86</sup> of the Utrecht Dinner Sophists,<sup>87</sup> where each of them presented his contribution.”<sup>88</sup> Such exchange of ideas was not something Graevius had mentioned in his account of the ‘college’ to Heinsius, but it is of course entirely in line with the other activities he had outlined.

83 Maresius, *Tractatus brevis* (see above, n. 74), p. 17.

84 See, similarly, *Het Collegie* (see above, n. 3), p. B2r, which identifies the following men to be the correspondents of the ‘college’: Abraham Heidanus in Leiden, Antonius Perizonius in Deventer, Wittich in Nijmegen, and Balthasar Bekker in Franeker.

85 That is: Samuel Maresius, *Collegium theologicum, sive Systema breve universae theologiae ...*, first published in 1645, but with numerous subsequent, revised editions; Franciscus Burman, *Synopsis theologiae et speciatim oeconomiae Foederum Dei ...* (Utrecht, 1671); and Christopher Wittich, *Theologia pacifica, in qua varia problemata theologica inter reformatos theologos agitari solita ventilantur ...* (Leiden, 1671).

86 *antro Trophonii*: the Cave of Trophonius was a famous oracle of ancient Greece, albeit terrifying to consult. The Dutch reads: *dat vuyle en wonderlijcke hol* (that filthy and curious cave).

87 *Deipnosophistarum*: from the *Deipnosophistae*, a Greek work of Athenaeus of Naucratis (fl. late 2nd century and early 3rd century). The term describes people who excel in the refined conversation of Greek *symposia*, and is often used satirically, as here. The Dutch reads: *Tafel-broers* (literally ‘table brothers’).

88 Maresius, *Tractatus brevis* (see above, n. 74), p. 18.

Particularly tempting is the connection to the discussions Graevius mentions over the latest books (which, as a side note, is probably what Voetius had in mind when he reportedly characterized the Utrecht meetings as a “scholars’ daily”). Among all the works that appeared during the decade or so when the ‘college’ was actively meeting, two arguably stand out most: the *Philosophia Scripturae Sacrae interpres* (1666) commonly attributed to the Amsterdam physician Lodewijk Meyer (1629–81), and the *Tractatus theologico-politicus* (1670) of his friend the philosopher Benedict de Spinoza (1632–77). It is therefore only natural to suppose that both were read and debated in the context of the ‘college,’ all the more so due to the obvious threat these two expressions of a ‘radical’ Cartesianism represented to the Utrecht network.<sup>89</sup> More than that, in Wolzogen, De Bruyn, and Van Velthuysen the ‘savants’ were quite well represented among the *Philosophia*’s first public detractors,<sup>90</sup> and one wonders whether their ideas, or perhaps even portions of their texts, were discussed at the meetings of the ‘college.’ A similar case can be made for Spinoza’s anonymously published treatise. As has been demonstrated, shortly after the appearance of this work, the Utrecht Cartesians launched a veritable campaign against the *Tractatus*, which included recruitment efforts directed toward the celebrated Groningen orientalist Jacobus Alting (1618–79), as well as his former student, the Cologne minister Johannes Melchioris (1646–1689). The immediate flurry of anti-Spinoza activity in Utrecht, and its coordinated appearance, are in fact suggestive of collective discussions over the *Tractatus theologico-politicus* held in 1670.<sup>91</sup> So, too, one wonders whether the massive, chapter-by-chapter refutation (*Adversus anonymum Theologo-politicum liber singularis*<sup>92</sup>) that Van Mansveld wrote in the final year of his short life was not just a team effort in that fellow ‘savants’ Graevius and Wolzogen brought it to press posthumously,<sup>93</sup> but also because it owed something to the meetings of the ‘college’ as Maresius describes them in the *Tractatus brevis*.

89 This has also been suggested by Eric Jorink, “Outside God, There is Nothing” (see above, n. 13), p. 96, who also lists Adriaan Koerbagh’s *Een bloemhof van allerley lieflijkheyd sonder verdriet* (1668) as a third possible candidate.

90 For the early response to Meyer’s *Philosophia*, see Bordoli, *Ragione e Scrittura* (see above, n. 13), pp. 232–383.

91 See Albert Gootjes, ‘The First Orchestrated Attack on Spinoza: Johannes Melchioris and the Cartesian Network in Utrecht,’ *Journal of the History of Ideas* 79 (2018), 23–43.

92 Regnerus van Mansveld, *Adversus anonymum Theologo-politicum liber singularis* (Amsterdam, 1674).

93 See on this the letters of L. Wolzogen to J. G. Graevius (Amsterdam, 24 March and 27 April 1674), Copenhagen, KB, MS Thott 1267 4° (folder “Lud. Wolzogen”); and Gootjes, ‘First Orchestrated Attack’ (see above, n. 91).

The literary production of the ‘college’ was a delicate point, however, particularly when it came to pamphlets. When Maresius referred to the “Trophonian cave” of the Utrecht Cartesians, he did so to identify it as the place where—as he had it from hearsay—“the satires of the masked [author] Petrus ab Andlo,<sup>94</sup> written against me in favour of Cartesianism and Socinianism at the time the Pacific Theologian<sup>95</sup> was preparing to go to press, were forged.”<sup>96</sup> The charge of pamphleteering appears in the anonymous *Het Collegie der sçavanten* and *Rehabeams raedt* as well, as both recount how the ‘savants’ were aided by the city magistrates in bringing their pamphlets (*pasquillen*) to press.<sup>97</sup> Of course this charge is denied from the side of the ‘college’. The pamphlet *Bileams raedt*, whose title reflects the contention that the preceding Voetian tract contains not the wise counsel given to King Rehoboam (cf. 1 Kings 12) but the treacherous advice of Balaam that seduced the Israelites to evil (cf. Numbers 31:16), counters that the pamphleteer is in the dark on this point, and furthermore insists: “One of the members has declared to me on this occasion, as they would all be ready solemnly to declare, that they have never put their hand or pen to this in their meetings, or have deliberated doing so.”<sup>98</sup> So too Graevius, following his description of the ‘college’ as a scholarly society, writes that the charge of pamphlet-making is false: “No pamphlet was ever written by this *Collegium doctorum*.”<sup>99</sup>

While on the face of it the evidence over the pamphleteering charge presents us with a deadlock, consideration of the way the opportunistic Graevius writes as he finds himself in this tight situation appears to offer a way out. One gets the impression throughout that he has chosen his words most carefully when writing to Heinsius for support at the dawn of the new *stadholder*

94 That is: the pseudonymous pamphlets signed ‘Petrus ab Andlo’: *Specimen confutationis dissertationis quam Samuel Maresius edidit De abusu philosophiae Cartesianae* (Leiden, 1670); *Animadversiones ad Vindicias dissertationis quam Samuel Maresius edidit De abusu philosophiae Cartesianae* (Leiden, 1671); and *Specimina bombomachiae Samuel Maresii se defendentis Clypeo orthodoxiae ceu Vindiciae vindiciarum dissertationis De abusu Cartesianae* (Leiden, 1672).

95 That is: Wittich, alluding to his *Theologia pacifica* (1671).

96 Maresius, *Tractatus brevis* (see above, n. 74), p. 18: “Quin fando accipi personati Petri ab Andlo, satyras mihi oppositas in gratiam Cartesianismi & Socinianismi, dum se parabat ad justum praelium Theologus Pacificus, in illo antro Trophonii Ultrajectinorum Deipnosophistarum, cusas fuisse, unoquoque eorum suam symbolam eo conferente.”

97 *Het Collegie* (see above, n. 3), p. Biv; and *Rehabeams raedt* (see above, n. 7), p. 4. This is the only time the “Collegie De Sçavanten” (*sic*) is mentioned in the latter pamphlet.

98 *Bileams raedt*, (see above, n. 7), p. 7: “... ymant der leden heeft my verklaert by dese occasie, gelijk zy oock alle souden heylighlijck willen verklaren, noyt in hare byeenkomsten handt of pen daer toe geleent, of overlegh gemaect te hebben van sulcx te doen...”

99 Letter of J. G. Graevius to N. Heinsius (Utrecht, 29 April 167[4]) (see above, n. 12).

period. An example is the way he dissociates himself from the charge of Cartesianism: “I have constantly kept myself aloof from cultivating the teaching of Cartesian instruction, so far, in fact, that I do not even own any of his books, nor have I read them through.”<sup>100</sup> This assertion, and its more forceful version expressed to Constantijn Huygens the Elder (1596–1687) the following day,<sup>101</sup> certainly seems exaggerated in light of Graevius’s reputation as one of Utrecht’s ‘Cartesian professors.’ Nevertheless, if this statement is read literally and under the assumption that Graevius formulated this passage very carefully, it may not, after all, be that far from the truth. For it is quite possible that his knowledge of Descartes’s philosophy was largely secondhand, and his university appointment to lecture on history, rhetoric, and politics (rather than philosophy or theology) would have made it easy to steer clear of the more problematic elements of Cartesian epistemology, metaphysics, and physics. Moreover, in spite of his indubitable position within the Cartesian, republican camp, Graevius’s actual commitments are difficult to pin down, in spite of the myriad surviving letters, since he rarely expressed himself on the substance of debate. So, too, the entire letter to Heinsius, written in the hope of saving his career in Utrecht, leaves one with the impression that it was cast in most careful terms to tell formal truths while skirting falsehood—witness his admission, on the one hand, that the ‘college’ once spent a winter poring over Descartes’s replies to his sceptics in the *Meditations*, while insisting, on the other, that more poignant criticism was offered in their company than anywhere else.<sup>102</sup>

100 Letter of J. G. Graevius to N. Heinsius (Utrecht, 29 April 167[4]) (see above, n. 12).

101 Letter of J. G. Graevius to C. Huygens (Utrecht, 30 April 1674), Leiden, UB, BPL, cat. nr. 2212 (the minute is found in Copenhagen, KB, Thott 1268 4<sup>o</sup> (folder “II. Breve fra Graevius uden Paaskrift til hvem”): “Multorum hominum minime levium sermonibus ad me perfertur, fuisse qui malignos de me disseminarint rumores, invidiosumque me facere apud Serenissimum Principem Arausionensem studuerint, criminantes me Cartesianae familiae alumnum esse ac sectatorem, nec bene de Principali gubernatione sentire. Nihil potuit dici falsius. Cartesii doctrinam tantum abest ut imbiberim, ut ne libros eius unquam evolverim perlegerimque. Non hoc mihi laudi duco: sed meorum studiorum rationes sunt alienissimae ab hoc scriptorum genere, nec tulerunt unquam ut iis pertractandis invigilare potuerim. His accedit quod a teneris annis innutritus sim praecipit antiquorum dicendi sapiendique magistrorum, illorumque lectione capiar unice, quod non ignoram qui me publice privatimque in hac Academia & in aliis gymnasiis audiverunt Aristotelem unice praedicantem, & eius libros Rhetoricam imprimis, Ethicam & Politicam iis commendantem non solum, sed & ex illis multa de superiore loco explicantem. Nihil unquam docui, nihil scripsi, quod ullius animum, cuiuscunque ille sit ordinis & loci & sectae posset offendere, nec unquam de Serenissimo Principe ac eius gubernatione sinisterius existimavi. Hanc calumniam difflabit oratio, quam de laudibus Magni Principis scripsi, quae nunc typis mandatur.”

102 Letter of J. G. Graevius to N. Heinsius, Utrecht, 29 April 167[4] (see above, n. 12): “Unius hyemis horae nonnullae subsecivae datae sunt examinandis argumentis, quae *Cartesius*

Therefore, it may indeed be true that the ‘college,’ understood most literally in terms of its meetings, did not produce any of the anti-Voetian pamphlets in circulation. But there is little doubt that it was close to the fire. Graevius, at any rate, seems to have known more than he was willing to divulge. Thus, after denying that the *Collegie* ever made pamphlets in a letter to Heinsius, Graevius curiously adds that such pamphlets would have been printed even had there been no *Collegie*, and he remarks in closing: “At all events, I can plainly affirm in a sworn statement that nothing was mandated by writ from this college.”<sup>103</sup> The very next day Graevius sent Heinsius another letter, as his position was rapidly worsening because of those who spoke ill of him before the Prince of Orange. These detractors included Maresius’s son Henri (fl. 1652–96), since “several years ago a number of pamphlets on Cartesian philosophy bearing the name *Petrus ab Andlo* were published against his father, which he believed to have come from that company I discussed with you yesterday.”<sup>104</sup> In this second letter Graevius again insists he is willing to swear that the booklets were published “without the knowledge of that college,” but here, too, one cannot escape the impression that he actually knows more: “We might be able to guess at the author, but it is certain that he did not clearly stand with that company.”<sup>105</sup>

Given the vested interest of both the Voetian polemicist and the desperate Graevius in their respective versions of the Utrecht ‘college,’ neither the precise involvement of this society in the production of pamphlets nor the identity of *Petrus ab Andlo* can be definitively determined as long as new evidence remains wanting.<sup>106</sup> Nevertheless, there is no doubt that in the eyes of the Voetians, the meetings held by the ‘college of savants’ during the decade

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in Meditationibus suis Scepticis opposuit. Pleraque a plerisque gravius sunt impugnata, quam ab ullo adversario.”

- 103 Letter of J. G. Graevius to N. Heinsius (Utrecht, 29 April 167[4]) (see above, n. 12): “Saltem a collegio hoc nullum fuisse mandatum litteris possum juratus conceptis verbis affirmare liquido.”
- 104 Letter of J. G. Graevius to N. Heinsius (Utrecht, 30 April 1674) (see above, n. 12).
- 105 Letter of J. G. Graevius to N. Heinsius (Utrecht, 30 April 1674) (see above, n. 12): “Possum ego quovis sacramento contendere inscio plane illo Collegio hos libros publicatos esse. Auctorem forte conjectura nos posse assequi, sed certum non constare liquido illi coetui.”
- 106 Wim Klever was correct to draw attention to the scant evidence for the almost universally accepted identification of ‘*Petrus ab Andlo*’ as the Utrecht ‘savant’ Regnerus van Mansveld; see his ‘Information on Spinoza and Some of his Acquaintances,’ *Studia spinozana* 8 (1992), 297–309, there 305, n. 14. The attribution is supported only by a suggestion—and nothing more—Pierre Bayle once made in his *Dictionnaire historique et critique*, 1st ed. (Rotterdam, 1697), s.v. “*Andlo* (*Petrus ab*),” 1:259, n. B. At the same time, the reading of ‘*Andlo*’ as a cryptogram for ‘*Mansveld*,’ composed of the Greek root *and-* (from the noun *aner*, meaning ‘man’) and the Dutch *lo* (‘open clearing’ ≈ ‘field’), is quite tempting; see Bernard Glasius, *Godgeleerd Nederland: Biographisch woordenboek van Nederlandsche godgeleerden*, 3 vols. (’s Hertogenbosch, 1852–6), 2: 432, n. 1.

or so of its existence were not as innocent as Graevius depicted them. On 2 May 1670 the Utrecht Dutch Reformed consistory took note of “the teaching of a certain college,”<sup>107</sup> deciding a week later to speak to those “involved in certain disturbances during or over the teaching of a certain college.”<sup>108</sup> While this matter died a quiet death in the consistory acts,<sup>109</sup> the prevalent suspicions concerning the kind of ideas the ‘savants’ were exchanging (in draft form or otherwise) at their meetings, and the polemical pamphlets they were thought to be producing, make it entirely possible that this represents a final piece of evidence for the Utrecht ‘college.’<sup>110</sup>

## 6 Conclusion

The ‘college of savants’ is thus indeed an expedient collective term designating the circle of Cartesians that had gathered around Van Velthuysen and De Bruyn in Utrecht during the early 1660s, and may be used as such. Nevertheless, of equal or even greater significance is their formation not long thereafter of a scholarly society, around the same time when the Royal Society, the Académie royale, and the Accademia del Cimento were being established respectively in England, France, and Tuscany. That this development has long been overlooked is due not only to the paucity of extant evidence for the abortive Utrecht enterprise but also to its underlying, highly charged polemical circumstances, leading to exaggerated accusations on the one hand, and half-truths passing over less convenient details on the other. Yet when the evidence is carefully sifted, it would seem that the Utrecht ‘Cartesian professors,’ along with several of the city’s physicians and students from the university, and in the occasional presence of better- or lesser-known guests, met on a weekly basis from the mid-1660s to sometime before the spring of 1674 to read canonical philosophical and political texts together under the guidance of an authority, to witness

107 Acts of the Utrecht Dutch Reformed consistory, Utrecht, HUA (see above, n. 49), inv. nr. 9 (2 May 1670): “Ad notam nopende het leeren van zeker Collegie in dese Stadt.”

108 Acts of the Utrecht Dutch Reformed consistory, Utrecht, HUA (see above, n. 49), inv. nr. 9 (9 May 1670): “De Broederen van resp. Quartieren zullen aanspreken de personen van welke eenige onregeltheden waren voorgekomen op of omtrent de leering van zeker Collegie.”

109 The final mention is in the acts of the Utrecht Dutch Reformed consistory, in Utrecht, HUA (see above, n. 49), inv. nr. 9 (23 May 1670): “Het aanspreken van het Collegie daar eenige onregeltheden in het leeven waren voorgevallen blyft ad nota.”

110 The term *collegie* was used for a wide range of bodies, from less formal groups to officially instituted government entities. The very indefiniteness (cf. *zeker*, ‘a certain’) of the first passage above makes it tempting to understand it as a reference to the Utrecht *collegie der sçavanten*.

medical experiments performed by specialists, to inform each other of the latest books and to discuss them, and to share some of their ideas in nascent or draft form. Moreover, despite Graevius's protestations, it seems reasonable to suppose that the 'savants' produced, or helped to produce, anti-Voetian pamphlets, whose contents were at least to some degree inspired by the discussions held during their weekly meetings.

That the Utrecht 'college' failed to last and has largely fallen into oblivion is not entirely coincidental. By virtue of the enormous correspondence by which he gained the latest news, Graevius might be seen as a kind of intelligencer like Henry Oldenburg (1619–77). Yet as for the rest, the reports attributing some kind of formal structure to the 'college' conflict with each other, and their polemical nature makes it difficult to give one preference over the other. The Royal Society and the Académie royale, in contrast, each possessed not only a fixed organizational structure but also benefited from royal patronage promising them longevity. With the financial backing and interest of the Medici family, the Tuscan Accademia del Cimento would have enjoyed a longer life than the decade of its actual existence, had it not lost several of its key members within a short span.<sup>111</sup> Moreover, these societies all had an overriding experimental—Baconian or otherwise—program that required suitable tools and materials. Therefore, for the Utrecht 'college,' a member initiative without a formal institution or physical location, it would have been even easier simply to peter out and die—what appears to have happened after Wolzogen left for Amsterdam late in 1670, followed half a year later by the unexpected death of Van Mansveld.

But another reason for the demise of the 'college' was doubtless its somewhat *ad hoc* character within the theological and political climate specific to Utrecht and absent elsewhere. It was there that the 'conservative' camp of the public church, with its broad understanding of societal reform, continued to make its presence known, a fact that several 'savants'—who appear for all intents and purposes to have remained orthodox, still holding to such major doctrines as the Trinity, Christ's twofold nature, and even predestination<sup>112</sup>—experienced firsthand following upon their books and disputations. On the one hand, the local circumstances under which the 'college' grew makes it

111 For an account of the demise of the Accademia, see William E. Knowles Middleton, *The Experimenters: A Study of the Accademia del Cimento* (Baltimore, 1971), pp. 309–29.

112 For a fine treatment of the Remonstrant theologian Philippus van Limborch's (1633–1712) accusation that Burman was a Spinozist, see Simonutti, "Tra Cartesianesimo e Spinozismo" (see above, n. 64). Interestingly, this same rumor is noted in a student jotter from the later 1670s; see Steenbakkers, Toubert, and Van de Ven, "A Clandestine Notebook" (see above, n. 7), p. 286 (entry nr. 93): "burman omnem suam doctrinam traxit ex spinosa."

unfair simply to dismiss it as a “weekly chat among likeminded friends.”<sup>113</sup> For the meetings held in a closed circle provided the members with the very platform they needed in order to discuss and weigh the latest philosophical and scientific advances, as well as religious conceptions, away from the pervasive interference of the Voetians. Most illustrative in this regard may be the ‘savant’ response to a work as heretical as Spinoza’s *Tractatus theologico-politicus*. While the Voetian consistory immediately sought to have the book proscribed by the authorities for its content,<sup>114</sup> the ‘savants,’ who fully agreed that the *Tractatus* was a blasphemous book,<sup>115</sup> were also highly intrigued by Spinoza’s ideas, which they quite probably discussed at their meetings, obviously admiring his brilliant mind and consciously working on a refutation they judged to be worthy of him.<sup>116</sup> On the other hand, the reactionary character of the ‘college’ as a response to local political and ecclesiastical circumstances also meant its life could be cut short, as it indeed was. Even apart from the question of patronage and dwindling numbers, the Utrecht ‘college of savants’ above all lacked a positive ideal around which it might have rallied when, late in 1673 or early in 1674, the need for breathing space was no longer felt as poignantly as it had been a decade earlier at its inception.

113 So De Vleeschauwer, “Alarm-pamflet” (see above, n. 11), 571, n. 66: “wekelijksch ondersje van gelijkdenkende vrienden....”

114 Acts of the Utrecht Dutch Reformed consistory, in Utrecht, HUA (see above, n. 49), inv. nr. 9 (8 April 1670). This is, incidentally, the very first mention of the *Tractatus* anywhere after its publication.

115 E.g., letters of J. G. Graevius to G. W. Leibniz (22 April 1671): “liber pestilentissimus” and (27 April 1671): “sacri illius et horribilis libri”, in: *Gottfried Wilhelm Leibniz: Sämtliche Schriften und Briefe*, ed. Deutsche Akademie der Wissenschaften (Berlin: Akademie Verlag, 1923–), 1/1:141–5 (nrs. 82 and 83).

116 See my ‘First Orchestrated Attack’ (see above, n. 91).

**PART 2**

*Individuals*





# “Let no citizen be treated as lesser, because of his confession”: Religious Tolerance and Civility in De Hooghe’s *Spiegel van Staat* (1706–7)

Frank Daudeij

## Abstract

De Hooghe used the genre of chorography not only to praise the Dutch Republic but also to mirror it so it could be measured against his own ideals of a well-ordered polity. Reading the *Spiegel van Staat* [Mirror of the State] in conjunction with his other work, the earlier interpretations of De Hooghe as an adherent and popularizer of radical philosophical ideas must be rejected. Rather, De Hooghe was a faithful disciple of Hugo Grotius, who extolls unity as the foundation of good governance and the guarantor of liberty. Although religion should be free, the clergy should be firmly under the control of the secular government so as to prevent confessionally driven conflict and division within the body politic. De Hooghe makes innovations to Grotian notions, integrating them into a view on the crucial role of local custom, which has an almost sacred value. In turn, De Hooghe’s valuation of custom derives from the works of skeptical authors and satirists such as Barclay and Boccacini, and shows some affinity with the political theory of Spinoza, although it deviates from the latter’s work on certain essential points. The erudite artisan De Hooghe represents a new type of opinion leader emerging at the outset of the eighteenth century, one who, moreover, extolled a new concept of the fatherland.

## 1 Introduction

This article’s title is not derived from a scholarly work on the role of public religion. The quotation in it comes from the explanatory text accompanying an allegorical print depicting the excellence and splendor of the United Netherlands. Romeyn de Hooghe (1645–1706), who engraved the print and wrote the text, was not a professional philosopher or theologian but rather an educated artisan participating in public debate on religious and political affairs. The words themselves are spoken by ‘Lady Liberty’ (the character in the upper left corner of figure 6.1). Next to her stands an armed woman. According



FIGURE 6.1 The power of the State defending both Lady Liberty and True Religion, detail from the frontispiece for vol. 2, chapter 1, in: Romeyn de Hooghe, *Spiegel van Staat des Vereenigde Nederlands* 2 vols. (Amsterdam, 1706–1707). Leiden University Library, call nr. 1153 C 48

to De Hooghe, she symbolizes the government of the Netherlands. At her feet we see another woman, on her knees and removing a mask from her face. De Hooghe explains the scene as follows. “Kneeling before her, we see [the] true religion. She thanks the State for her protection and puts away the mask of hypocrisy”.<sup>1</sup> On her right we see a bishop walking out of the frame, taking the regalia of the Catholic church with him. In the same section of the text, the author argues that the presence of Lady Liberty is the most important reason for the well-being of the Dutch. Free from the shackles of ecclesiastical power, she joyfully declares that in the United Netherlands “Jews, Christians, Turks, Heathens, Catholics, Protestant, Lutherans and Anabaptists” can live together harmoniously. For as long as they obey the civil law, “no citizen should be treated as lesser, because of his confession”.<sup>2</sup> This praise of religious tolerance can be found in the first plate of the second volume of De Hooghe’s *Spiegel van Staat*, a comprehensive chorography of the United Netherlands, written in the vernacular and published in two volumes in 1706 and 1707.

The idea of religious tolerance was by then far from new or controversial.<sup>3</sup> However, De Hooghe’s arguments in *Spiegel van Staat* are interesting because they are notably different from earlier reflections that had been developed in a more scholarly context. As such, the *Spiegel van Staat* provides a colorful view on the changing ‘culture of debate’ in the United Netherlands outside its universities. This is especially so because De Hooghe’s authorship is a prime example of the increasing importance of a new kind of author: neither theologian, minister, or philosopher, nor claiming to belong to the traditional ‘learned professions’. Seeing themselves first and foremost as proud citizens of the United Netherlands, these authors claimed an authoritative position as civil educators.<sup>4</sup> Although their writings’ impact on the Dutch ‘culture of debate’

1 Romeyn de Hooghe, *Spiegel van Staat des Vereenigde Nederlands: Vervattende de macht der generaliteyt*, 2 vols., (Amsterdam, 1706–7), 2.1, p. 2 (hereafter cited as De Hooghe).

2 De Hooghe (see above, n. 1), 2.1, p. 5.

3 See, for example, the contribution of Henri Krop in this volume and his article “‘The General Freedom, Which All Men Enjoy’ in a Confessional State: The Paradoxical Language Of Politics In The Dutch Republic (1700–1750),” in: *Paradoxes of Religious Toleration in Early Modern Political Thought*, ed. John Christian Laursen and Maria José Villaverde (Lanham, Md., 2012), pp. 67–70. Also: R. Po-Chia Hsia and Henk van Nierop, eds., *Cabinism and Religious Toleration in the Dutch Golden Age* (Cambridge, 2004); Joris van Eijnatten, *Liberty and Concord in the United Provinces: Religious Toleration and the Public in the Eighteenth-Century Netherlands* (Leiden, 2003).

4 Inger Leemans and Gert-Jan Johannes, with the cooperation of Joost Kloek, *Worm en Donder, Geschiedenis van de Nederlandse literatuur 1700–1800: De Republiek* (Amsterdam, 2013), pp. 112–3, 182–90; Niek C. F. van Sas, *De Metamorfose van Nederland: Van oude orde naar moderniteit, 1750–1900* (Utrecht, 2004), pp. 52–5; Wijnand Mijnhardt and Joost Kloek, *1800:*

has now been well researched, many questions remain about the intellectual fabric of these accomplished citizens who began to present themselves as civil educators in the eighteenth century.

De Hooghe's plea for religious tolerance in the *Spiegel van Staat* is illustrative of his civic ideal. By exploring the relation between this ideal and his criticism of ecclesiastical power, I want to shed new light on the intellectual roots of these eighteenth-century civil educators. De Hooghe's arguments may, at first glance, seem purely pragmatic. His pragmatism is, however, closely connected to a peculiar appropriation of much older ideas about the customs and habits of a nation. De Hooghe thus popularizes a civic norm substantiated by arguments that move beyond earlier established oppositions: reason versus faith, theology versus philosophy, or State versus Church.

In the first part of this chapter I will focus on the *Spiegel van Staat* itself and the ways the secondary literature treats De Hooghe's thought. In the second part I will elaborate on De Hooghe's views on religion. In the third part I will focus on his ideas about the importance of custom and on the authors who influenced his thought on these matters. I will conclude with some remarks on the significance of the *Spiegel van Staat* for our understanding of 1700 as a faultline in (Dutch) cultural and intellectual history.

## 2 The Spiegel van Staat: A Radical Chorography?

Until recently the *Spiegel van Staat* received little attention from intellectual historians. In his *Embarrassment of Riches* Simon Schama uses the two volumes to illustrate his reading of Dutch culture as essentially Calvinistic without providing the reader with a more in-depth analysis of its content.<sup>5</sup> Jonathan Israel has given more attention to De Hooghe's political thought; based on some of the engraver's pamphlets and his *Spiegel van Staat* Israel includes De Hooghe in what he calls a Democratic-Spinozist or Modern tradition.<sup>6</sup> The influence of radical authors like Hobbes and Spinoza on De Hooghe's thought has been

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*Blauwdrukken voor een samenleving* (The Hague, 2001), p. 165; Joost Kloek, 'Burgerdeugd of burgermansdeugd? Het beeld van Jacob Cats als nationaal zedenmeester,' in: *De stijl van de burger: Over Nederlandse burgerlijke cultuur vanaf de middeleeuwen*, ed. Remieg Aerts and Henk te Velde (Kampen, 1998), pp. 100–22.

5 Simon Schama, *The Embarrassment of Riches: An Interpretation of Dutch Culture in the Golden Age* (New York, 1997), pp. 51–3.

6 Jonathan I. Israel, *Monarchy, Orangism, and Republicanism in the Later Dutch Golden Age* [Second Golden Age Lecture] (Amsterdam, 2004); idem, 'The Intellectual Origins of Modern Democratic Republicanism (1660–1720),' in: *European Journal of Political Theory* 3 (2004), 7–36; idem, *Enlightenment Contested: Philosophy, Modernity, and the Emancipation of Man, 1670–1752* (Oxford, 2006), pp. 241–5, 249.

suggested by Joke Spaans as well.<sup>7</sup> Henk van Nierop and Inger Leemans, however, have questioned this interpretation. Van Nierop deems that De Hooghe's vocabulary in the *Spiegel van Staat* is too slippery, too pragmatic, to allow one to make such a bold claim based on a few lines.<sup>8</sup> Inger Leemans views it as a conventional work on politics for its time, leaning heavily to the side of the Staatsgezinden. Although I don't fully agree with Israel, De Hooghe's political thought indeed shares more than a little with Spinoza's. It differs, however, in one crucial aspect: De Hooghe has far less confidence in human rationality. For him, custom is king.

What's more, if De Hooghe could be pinpointed by the direct reception of the *Spiegel van Staat*, and we employ Israel's division of a radical, moderate, and counter-enlightenment, the work seems to belong to the moderate tradition. Even De Hooghe's contemporary critics saw it first and foremost as a work of geographical history and, like De Hooghe's contemporary admirers as well, made no mention of radicalism or Spinozism.<sup>9</sup> According to the French chorographer François Michel Janiçon (1674–1730) the *Spiegel van Staat* was simply the most useful description of the Dutch Republic at that time.<sup>10</sup> Such high praise was repeated, with some reservations, later in the eighteenth century by the father of Dutch history, Johan Wagenaar.<sup>11</sup> In the foreword to his *État présent des Provinces-Unies et des pays qui en dépendent* (1729), an international bestseller read throughout the eighteenth century, Janiçon admits that he had made good use of De Hooghe's two-volume works. One of Janiçon's readers was Montesquieu (1689–1755), who even cited the French chorographer's work in his own *De l'Esprit des Lois* (1748). In the chapter on the republican form of government, Montesquieu used Janiçon's description of the Dutch Republic as a loose confederation or 'a Republic of fifty republics'.<sup>12</sup>

7 Joke Spaans, 'Hiërogliften, de verbeelding van de Godsdienst,' in: Romeyn de Hooghe, *De verbeelding van de late Gouden Eeuw*, ed. Henk van Nierop (Zwolle, 2008), pp. 48–57.

8 Henk van Nierop, 'Nieuwsprenten en de verbeelding van het nieuws,' in: Romeyn de Hooghe, ed. van Nierop (see above, n. 7), pp. 66–85; Inger Leemans, 'De vicerooy van de hel, radicaal libertinisme,' *ibid.*, pp. 32–48.

9 Roelof Roukema, *Romeyn de Hooghe's Spiegel der Vereenigde Nederlanden, Voor zo verre als die de Provincie van Friesland betreft. In een brief, aan een Heer van Staat, onderzocht en enigermate te regte geholpen* (Leeuwarden, 1707).

10 François Michel Janiçon, *De Republiek der Vereenigde Nederlanden*, 4 vols. (The Hague, 1731–2), 1: xxii; G. C. Gibbs, 'Some Intellectual and Political Influences of the Huguenot Emigrés in the United Provinces, c. 1680–1730,' in: *Bijdragen en Mededelingen betreffende de Geschiedenis der Nederlanden* 90 (1975), 255–87, there 282; William H. Riker, 'Dutch and American Federalism,' *Journal of the History of Ideas* 18 (1957), 495–521, there 521.

11 Jan Wagenaar, *Tegenwoordige Staat der Vereenigde Nederlanden: Eerste deel, vervattende eene algemeene beschrijving des lands*, 13 vols. (Amsterdam, 1739), 1: vii.

12 M. de Montesquieu, *Complete Works*, 4 vols. (London, 1777), 1: 165–8.

This interpretation of the Dutch Republic's constitutional form is also an apt description of the focus of the *Spiegel van Staat*. As stated above, it is a chorography, a historical-geographical work on the Dutch Republic. Unlike most chorographies produced in the Dutch Republic, the *Spiegel van Staat* concerns not a single city or province but encompasses the whole of the United Netherlands.<sup>13</sup> In accordance with the genre's conventions De Hooghe describes and glorifies the Dutch Republic: its inhabitants, its history, its many provinces, cities, and colonies, its governmental structure, the composition and jurisdiction of its many councils, and certain specifically local laws, privileges, and voting procedures.

Because of the structure of the two volumes the *Spiegel van Staat* reads like an overview of fifty republics. The individual parts all center on a sovereign Province, each part having its own frontispiece, and most of the chapters take as their topic a 'sovereign' city (that is, one with voting rights in the States of its province). It must be noted, however, that the entire second volume is dedicated to the States-General and throughout both volumes De Hooghe stresses their importance. As we will see, the structure of the work and this centralizing undercurrent correspond with his political views. But before I elaborate on this, more attention should be given to the work itself.

Although the author was familiar with the scholarly world in Holland at that time, the two volumes are meant for a different, broader audience. Written in the vernacular, devoid of academic self-fashioning, De Hooghe's work was intended to educate his fellow citizens and to convey one message. In both scope and style, the *Spiegel van Staat* stays true to its goal of hammering home the message that the Dutch, after William III's death but still at war with France, should put aside their petty disagreements to stand united against its enemies behind the banner of the States-General, the only unifying political council of the Dutch Republic. It is therefore a work of politics in the proper sense of the word, not only because political culture is its prime subject but above all because De Hooghe repeatedly argues that the well-being of everything Dutch,

13 For more on chorography in the Dutch Republic, see: Sandra Langereis, *Geschiedenis als ambacht: Oudheidkunde in de Gouden Eeuw: Arnoldus Buchelius en Petrus Scriverius* (Hilversum, 2001); E. O. G. Haitsma Mulier, 'De eerste Hollandse stadsbeschrijvingen uit de zeventiende eeuw,' *De zeventiende eeuw* 9 (1993), 97–111; Henk van Nierop, 'How to Honour One's City: Samuel Ampzing's Vision of the History of Haarlem,' *Theoretische Geschiedenis* 20 (1993), 268–82; Marijke Meijer Drees, *Andere landen, andere mensen, de beeldvorming van Holland versus Spanje en Engeland omstreeks 1650* (The Hague, 1997); Eddy Verbaan, *De woonplaats van de faam: Grondslagen van de stadsbeschrijving in de zeventiende eeuwse Republiek* (Hilversum, 2011); Raingard Esser, *Politics of Memory: The Writing of Partition in the Seventeenth-Century Low Countries* (Leiden, 2012).

including religion, depends on unity and civic harmony among the citizens of all the provinces united in the Dutch confederation.

De Hooghe claims to have written the *Spiegel van Staat* to kindle his readers' love for the fatherland in their hearts and minds. He argues that the work is therefore more than just a handy manual for a beginning regent; all the inhabitants of the Dutch Republic should know its contents by heart. True to this ambition, De Hooghe provides practical information about political life, but he also points out which ethical norms should guide the actions of everyone involved, and explains why. Most of his criticism and praise comes down to the idea that any kind of behavior that strengthens the Dutch civil community should be praised and, conversely, any harmful behavior should be condemned.

This emphasis on civic life partly flows from the fact that the *Spiegel van Staat* is a chorography. Popularized in Renaissance Italy, this classical genre took Europe by storm and developed in the Netherlands from the sixteenth century onward as a communicative space wherein civic virtues were discussed and celebrated.<sup>14</sup> Existing alongside the highly polemical world of pamphlets and tracts, the chorography in its structure and topicality seems to have provided a way to comment critically on current affairs without evoking too much outrage. Civic harmony, commerce, and religious moderation could be glorified without angering those who believed that civic life was less important than religious purity.

In a chorography the author first had to define the geographic outline of whatever city, province, or country he took as his subject. He would follow up by describing the first inhabitants, then provide a historical overview, and finally arrive at a description of the current situation. Greatest emphasis was placed on monumental buildings like churches and town halls. Although some authors merely described and glorified the province or city they lived in, most authors gave their accounts a more personal touch. Naturally, a chorography by someone from Amsterdam could differ more than a little from one written by someone from Gelderland, in the way that a legally trained author wrote in a different way than a minister or an engraver like De Hooghe. Authors showed their preferences by stressing the importance of various virtues of the first inhabitants of the area in question, spinning historical accounts in certain ways, or by making comparisons between the Dutch and other nations.

What makes De Hooghe's chorography interesting is that, apart from his focus on the entire United Netherlands, he also deviates from its conventional

14 Verbaan, *De woonplaats van de faam* (see above, n. 13), pp. 71, 122–4; Meijer Drees, *Andere landen, andere mensen*, (see above, n. 13); Esser, *Politics of Memory* (see above, n. 13), pp. 1–26.

structure in another significant way. Unlike what one would find in other chorographies, there is no chapter on the many religions in the United Netherlands and the organization of the public Church. This omission might be explained by De Hooghe's wishing to alienate as few people as possible: such an account would undermine his message of unity. But his writings on this matter in some of his other works, and some biting remarks in the *Spiegel van Staat* itself about the abuse of ecclesiastical power, give ample grounds for conjecture that there is more to this. Especially because, *pace* Van Nierop, his views on this matter were remarkably consistent throughout his life. Although they are not exactly radical, I agree with Israel and Spaans that De Hooghe's thought has more to offer than merely conventional topoi and commercial pragmatism.

Precisely because the *Spiegel van Staat* is a political work, De Hooghe's position, given the powerful doctrine of the two kingdoms of Christ, is fairly outspoken. Although the idea that Christ has two kingdoms, a civil and a religious one, is rooted in the orthodoxy of Roman Catholicism, it remained an influential doctrine within Protestantism as well.<sup>15</sup> Especially members of the Voetian faction upheld it with all the rhetorical power they could muster and adopted it to Reformed doctrine. After all, Calvin more or less argued that every human being possessed two consciences, one Christian, one civil. As a consequence, the relation between citizenship and church membership, and the position of the clergy—the questions, that is, of which aspect of human behavior was governed by which conscience, and which kind of officeholder was responsible for which kind of education—remained important topics for debate throughout the seventeenth century.<sup>16</sup> These debates transcended mere questions of ecclesiology. Because one's conscience was the ultimate judge of morality, questions of ethics, even mundane ones, could and did become debates on the existence of these two kingdoms or spheres, and the hierarchical relation between them. It is precisely De Hooghe's clear position on this matter that provides an entrance into his elusive writing.

15 David van Druenen, *Natural Law and the Two Kingdoms: A Study in the Development of Reformed Social Thought* (Cambridge, 2010), p. 207; Benjamin J. Kaplan, *Divided by Faith: Religious Conflict and the Practice of Toleration in Early Modern Europe* (Cambridge, 2007), p. 18; G. Groenhuis, *De Predikanten: De sociale positie van de gereformeerde predikant in de Republiek der Verenigde Nederlanden voor ± 1700* (Groningen, 1977), pp. 87–102.

16 H. A. Enno van Gelder, *Getemperde vrijheid. Een verhandeling over de verhouding van Kerk en Staat in de Republiek der Verenigde Nederlanden en de vrijheid van meningsuiting in zake godsdienst, drukpers en onderwijs, gedurende de 17e eeuw* (Groningen, 1972); Jonathan I. Israel, *The Dutch Republic: Its Rise, Greatness, and Fall 1477–1806* (Oxford, 1995), pp. 421–49; D. Nobbs, *Theocracy and Toleration: A Study of the Disputes in Dutch Calvinism from 1600 to 1650* (Cambridge, 1938); Matthew J. Tuininga, *Calvin's Political Theology and the Public Engagement of the Church: Christ's Two Kingdoms* (Cambridge, 2017), pp. 145–147.

### 3 Ecclesiastical Power Unmasked: De Hooghe's Ideas on Religion, Ecclesiastical Power, and the Well-Being of the Commonwealth

Because the *Spiegel van Staat* is mainly a work on politics, I will start with an outline of De Hooghe's political thought before moving on to discuss his view on ecclesiastical power. Since his views on religious matters can be derived only from several examples scattered over the two volumes, I will focus on a few illustrative passages and relate them to some of his other works. I will categorize the individual examples into two groups. De Hooghe views ecclesiastical power as, first, a threat to civic harmony and, second, a threat to the moral state of those inhabiting the Dutch civil sphere.

As stated above and as illustrated in the etching discussed at the beginning of this chapter, De Hooghe's main message concerns the importance of unity for the protection of liberty. Although these notions were far from original, ideas on the unity and liberty of all the various provinces and cities conflicted with the reality of the United Netherlands' highly fragmented political structure. De Hooghe, like most of his Dutch contemporaries, adopts the conventional idea that power ultimately should remain in the hands of the multitude—that is, the collective body of the citizens of the Low Countries.<sup>17</sup> In effect this meant the urban regent elite, for they represented the sovereignty of the people.<sup>18</sup> This creates a tension, since the interests and preferred policies of the many cities and provinces of the Dutch Republic could differ substantially—a fact acknowledged by De Hooghe. However, because he is committed to the traditional idea of popular sovereignty, he argues that unity should not be enforced by centralized power, for that would destroy what precisely the Dutch had to protect against the tyranny of the French: namely, their liberty. Unity should be the effect of a shared understanding of the common good.

Therefore, apart from a few pages dealing with different forms of government, De Hooghe is not interested in the formal structure of public authority. He is more concerned with the way that officeholders should behave and how their behavior should be evaluated by citizens not involved in ruling. De Hooghe is convinced that the actions of every human being, especially those with power, have personal glory as their aim. Because glory, or honor, is something that can be bestowed only by other members of their community, it is only logical that everyone, the ruling elite and the non-ruling citizens alike,

17 De Hooghe (see above, n. 1), 1.1, p. 62.

18 E. H. Kossmann, *Political Thought in the Dutch Republic: Three Studies* (Amsterdam, 2000); Graeme Callister, 'The City and the Revolutionary Dutch Nation, 1780–1800,' *Dutch Crossing* 36 (2012), 228–43.

ought to have a proper understanding of what is honorable and what is not. Because those in power will do everything they can to be praised by their fellow citizens, it is vitally important that all citizens possess a proper understanding of what is just and what is unjust.<sup>19</sup>

De Hooghe points out not only which moral standards should be used when matters of the commonwealth are discussed, but also which should be ignored. By making a well-informed understanding of the common good one of the necessities for good governance, the problem of the forces that corrupt such an understanding is automatically brought to the fore—a problem that De Hooghe himself discusses. Given the self-image of a nation cemented by anti-Catholic sentiment, it comes as no surprise that the abuse of power by ecclesiastical officeholders such as bishops, and of course the pope, figures prominently in these sections of the text. De Hooghe, like many of his contemporaries, participates wholeheartedly in fashionable Catholic-bashing, but he doesn't shy away from pointing out the troubling exercise of ecclesiastic power by others within the Dutch Republic. Although he argues that since the success of the Revolt the suppression by "Religious Judges" is "far away from here,"<sup>20</sup> all is not well, apparently. To understand his specific position within the Dutch 'culture of debating', these passages are the most revealing.

His first and main problem with religious bigotry is its disastrous effect on harmony and constancy within a given community. This can be illustrated by De Hooghe's historical account of the Revolt's aftermath. Although William of Orange tried to establish freedom of religion for everyone, even Roman Catholics, zealous believers interpreted his defense of tolerance as a weakness or a sign of impure faith. They cried out for the complete destruction of every hint of Catholicism. In doing so, De Hooghe argues, they threatened the newly formed state and hindered the defense of the fatherland.<sup>21</sup> In his overview of the many cities of the Netherlands, De Hooghe time and again points out, and corroborates with historical examples, that members of the Anabaptist, Catholic, and Jewish communities all played a vital role in the protection of the individual cities and the larger commonwealth against the many foreign invaders the Dutch had to face.<sup>22</sup>

Another example can be found in his historical overview of the conflict between the Arminians and the Gomarists during the Twelve Years' Truce. In

19 De Hooghe (see above, n. 1), 2.1, p. 37.

20 De Hooghe (see above, n. 1), 2.1, p. 5.

21 De Hooghe (see above, n. 1), 2.1, p. 130.

22 De Hooghe (see above, n. 1), 1.1, pp. 158, 178–9, 1.6, p. 7.

the 'official' chapter De Hooghe does not take a side.<sup>23</sup> However, in the second volume of the *Spiegel van Staat*, in the chapter on the Dutch colonies, he suddenly lashes out. First he describes the tension between Prince Maurits and Van Oldenbarnevelt and argues that a compromise had nearly been achieved: "until the clergy entered the game, they unleashed discord, brought fire into the hearts of excellent cities, people against people, governments, ministers, cities, streets, yes, even members of families were riled up against one another."<sup>24</sup> Although he does not ignore the political tension between the Stadholder and the Landsadvocaat at that time, he believes the ecclesiastics are most to blame.

Besides directly creating discord, the ecclesiastical abuse of power exerts a subtler but also more dangerous impact on the Dutch, according to De Hooghe. In a few lines, which could have been directly taken from the dictionary of Koerbagh, he writes that the secrets of the practitioners of religion, just like those of law and medicine, are created by their use of vocabularies that are foreign to most people.<sup>25</sup> Because even the most learned hardly know anything more than their colleagues, they invent words to keep up appearances. In doing so they corrupt knowledge and morality. In particular the 'middle kind of people', among whom De Hooghe also includes the nobility, are the real victims of this corruption of language and moral standards: those with power are safe; the common people have nothing to lose.<sup>26</sup>

De Hooghe's critique of persons who base their moral standards not on the needs of the civil community but on the demands of their religion may be noted throughout the work. In his introduction he writes that one of his main reasons for writing the *Spiegel van Staat* was to inure his readers against the pretensions of those who "achieve a certain status, by invoking the Spirit; to conspire against the virtue and honesty of their fellow citizens, and the behavior of their lawful governments; to corrupt the common with novelties and hatred, only to hide their own deplorable character; if it was possible, they would bring everything down and confiscate that which belongs to frugal and

23 De Hooghe (see above, n. 1), 1.1, pp. 173, 340.

24 De Hooghe (see above, n. 1), 2.5, pp. 49–50.

25 Bart Leeuwenburgh, *Het noodlot van een ketter. Adriaan Koerbagh 1633–1669* (Nijmegen, 2013), pp. 123–33.

26 De Hooghe (see above, n. 1), 2.4, p. 260. This is another example of De Hooghe's broad conception of the civic community, as most of his contemporaries used phrasings like 'the middle sort' to describe citizens. See Wyger R. E. Velema, 'Beschaafde Republikeinen: Burgers in de achttiende eeuw,' in: *De stijl van de burger* (see above, n. 4), p. 81.

industrious pious men. To make sure that just citizens will not be tempted by this kind [of people], is the reason I wanted to print this [book].”<sup>27</sup>

He underlines that people who act in ways that improve the strength of the Dutch in any form, whether through commercial, scholarly, or military activities, should be honored irrespective of their religion, instead of being condemned. Because the zealots’ ethical norms are based not on what is right for the commonwealth as a whole but on the spiritual kingdom, open to only a few, they threaten the character of the Dutch. In a similar fashion he writes about the Frisians and praises them for killing Saint Boniface—for the priests of the heathens were in many ways much better equipped to preserve the Frisians’ moral purity than these so-called Christian priests. The Frisians were therefore completely right to reject a religion that posed a threat to their heroic virtue.<sup>28</sup>

Despite his blunt criticisms of certain members of the clergy, De Hooghe stays within the confines of what Joris van Eijnatten has called the Calvinist Erastian position. This is a position which, according to C. D. Gunnoe, is simply in line with the Grotian ideal—and hence is better called neither Calvinistic nor Erastian.<sup>29</sup> In the seventeenth century it found ardent defenders in authors like Lambertus van Velthuysen and Johan van Bleiswijk.<sup>30</sup> Indeed, a minister is entrusted with a holy office, but because of the epistemic uncertainty about their personal sacredness, these officeholders should not be accorded extraordinary rights.

De Hooghe expressed this view most vividly in his *Hieroglyphica*, an allegorical work on the history of religion published posthumously in 1735 but written in the same period as the *Spiegel van Staat*. It consists of allegorical

27 “Op de naam van Geest, ... by haar soort een naam [verkrijgen], om de deugd en eerlykheyd, van hare Medeborgers, en t’ gedrag van hare wettige Overheden verdragt te maken; nieuwigheyd en quaad stokende om onder een gemeen verderf, haare quade toestand best te dekken; of was ‘t mogelyk, alles in duygen te smyten, en te azen van de vlyt en zuynigheyd der vromen. Om dat de goede Borgers niet zouden van zulken soort verleyd werden, lust my dit de doen drukken.” De Hooghe (see above, n. 1), 1.1, p. v.

28 De Hooghe (see above, n. 1), 2.2, p. 75.

29 Van Eijnatten, *Liberty and Concord* (see above, n. 3), p. 110; C. D. Gunnoe Jr. ‘The Evolution of Erastianism: Hugo Grotius’s Engagement with Thomas Erastus,’ *Grotiana* 34 (2013), 41–61, there 48.

30 Johan Cornelisz. van Bleiswijk, *Mose als een God over Aäron; dat is, Schriftuurlyke wederlegginge van al het gene door D. Brakel tegen haar Ed. Gr. Mog. Resolutie in dato den 17en. September 1687 binnen de Stadt Rotterdam op den 25en July 1688 openbaarlijk is gepredikt, tot nadeel van’t H. Regt der Christelyke Overheyd. Welke Predikatie naderhand, nevens sekere Voor-en Na-reden, door den Druk nog meer gemeen gemaakt is* (Delft, 1689); Lambertus van Velthuysen, *Het Predick-Ampt en ‘t Recht der kercke, Bepaelt nae de Regelen van Godts Woordt, en de gronden van onse Reformatie. Tegen het gevoelen van eenige Gereformeerde Leeraers, die der selve macht verder uytbreyden als het behoort* (Amsterdam, 1660).

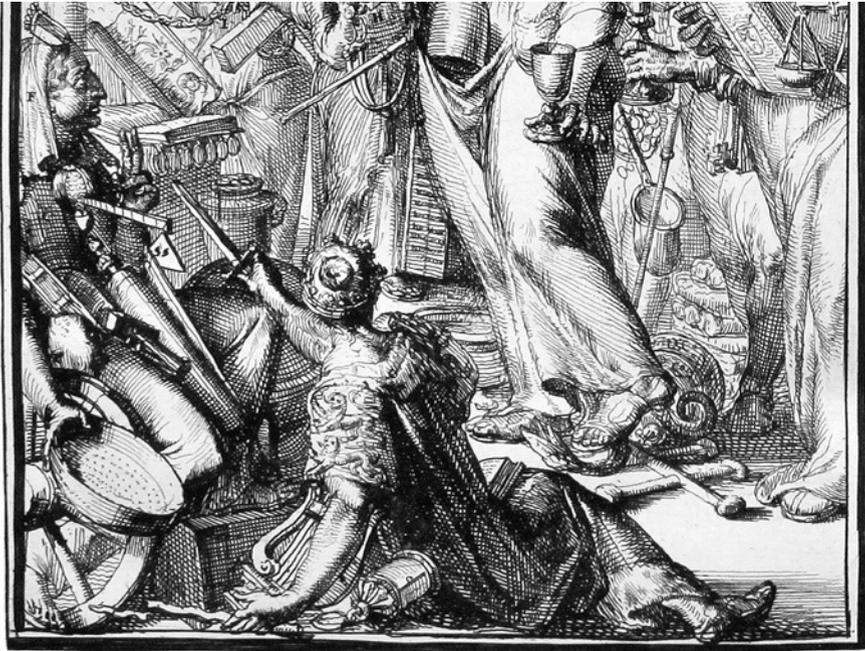


FIGURE 6.2 The States of Holland defending the Reformed Church by endorsing the Synod of Dordrecht, detail from plate 59, in: Romeyn de Hooghe, *Hieroglyphica* (Amsterdam, 1735). Private collection

prints complemented with lengthy explanatory texts. In the text explaining an allegorical representation of the Dutch Republic, De Hooghe comments on the doctrine of the two kingdoms, the worldly and the spiritual. He does not attack the doctrine or the idea itself, but puts forward the idea that the wisdom of the political authors of his time has shown that it is in everyone's interest to put sovereignty firmly in the hands of the secular government.<sup>31</sup> Therefore the oversight of the synods by representatives of the magistrate, the *commissaris-sen politiek*, is completely justified. In the print (Fig. 6.2), we see the sword of the worldly government pointing firmly at the synods, purposefully raised as if to signify that the synods convene only with the consent of the State. This view was far from controversial—De Hooghe basically justifies the kind of political

31 Romeyn de Hooghe, *Hieroglyphica, ofte merkebeelden der oude volkeren* (Amsterdam, 1735), p. 438.

oversight that was common practice—but his argument supporting it is substantially new.<sup>32</sup>

The idea that the well-being of the civil community does not depend on its members' religious purity or conformity to a specific confession can also be found in a pamphlet De Hooghe wrote in 1690. His arguments are again based on patriotism and experience. In a dialogue dealing with a conflict between Amsterdam and William III, one of the fictional characters claims that after the successful revolution of 1688 it is time to purge the Netherlands of Catholics as well. His opponent, evidently representing De Hooghe's opinion, rebukes him with the following words: "calm down, for many Catholics and members of other confessions are true patriots and upholders of true liberty."<sup>33</sup> Just as De Hooghe argues in the *Spiegel van Staat* that someone's confessional allegiance should not influence his or her legal status, the pamphlet makes it clear that people should be judged by the way they contribute to the fatherland, not by their faith.

We find an earlier defense of this view in one of his satirical prints published sometime around 1678, entitled *The Ecclesiastical Funeral Cortège of the pious minister Johannes van de Velde* (Fig. 6.3).<sup>34</sup> Although published anonymously, its style and choice of words leave no doubt that the author was Romeyn de Hooghe. In the print we see a mocking representation of the funeral cortège of one of the prominent members of the Voetian faction, the minister Van de Velde. The ministers and theologians making up the procession have donkey ears and on one of the tombstones in the graveyard around them we read: "Here lies the enemy of freedom." Joke Spaans, in her *Graphic Satire and Religious Change*, has provided an insightful analysis of the print's many allegations of hypocrisy, sedition, and pedantry on the part of the Voetians.<sup>35</sup> For now I want to focus on the figure on the left. Here we see a man standing with a field marshal's baton in his hand, a cloud of air leaving his mouth. He speaks the words, "Reyn af," complete destruction, a figure of speech also used in the *Spiegel van Staat*.<sup>36</sup> It was adopted by the zealots, mentioned above, who criticized the establishment of freedom of religion by William of Orange. The phrase can be found in Datheen's metrical rendering of Psalm 136,7—a Psalm

32 F. A. van Lieburg, *Profeten en hun Vaderland: De geografische herkomst van de gereformeerde predikanten in Nederland van 1572–1816* (Amsterdam, 1995), pp. 24–6.

33 Romeyn de Hooghe, *Postwagen-Praetjen tussen een Hgenaer [sic], Amsterdammer Beneficiant, Schipper en Frans Koopman* (s.l., 1690), p. 13.

34 Dutch title: *De kerckelijcke lijck-statie van den seer devoten domine Johannes van de Velde*; see Joke Spaans, *Graphic Satire and Religious Change: The Dutch Republic 1676–1707* (Leiden, 2011), p. 58.

35 Spaans, *Graphic Satire and Religious Change* (see above, n. 34), pp. 58–68.

36 De Hooghe (see above, n. 1), 2.4, p. 130.



FIGURE 6.3 'De kerckelijcke lijck-statie van den seer devoten domine Johannes van de Velde [The Ecclesiastical Funeral Cortège of the very pious minister Johannes van de Velde].' Satirical print on the political and ecclesiastical pretensions of the Voetian faction in the Reformed Church. Designer, engraver and publisher not indicated, probably by De Hooghe. Amsterdam, Rijksmuseum, cat. nr. RP-P-1944-3050

of David, for Jeremiah—and in Moerentorff's sixteenth-century version of the Bible from 1599.<sup>37</sup>

The connection with Jeremiah is probably more than a coincidence: the jeremiad was a popular form of preaching among the members of the Voetian faction. Every time the Dutch were confronted with misfortunes like war, a natural disaster, or famine, ministers argued in this sort of sermon that it was chiefly the sins of the people that had brought about these divine punishments, and

37 Jan Moerentorff, *Biblia sacra, dat is de geheele heylige schriftuer bedeyld in het oude en nieuwe testament ... gedrukt te Antwerpen by Jan Moerentorf 1599* (Brussels, 1838), Psalms 86,7 on p. 672.

therefore the only remedy was public and communal repentance.<sup>38</sup> In other words, in the jeremiads we find, in its most enunciated form, the idea that the well-being of the Dutch depended on the spiritual purity of the country's inhabitants. An idea that De Hooghe criticized throughout his life.

De Hooghe's aversion to Voetian ideas is accompanied by a preference for moderation and civility. This does not make his work secular. Throughout the *Spiegel van Staat* he makes it very clear that the Reformed religion is the true religion; unwelcome elements are almost always labeled as Catholic, and there are limits to his religious tolerance as well. Although he declares that no citizen should be discriminated against because of his confessional adherence, he registers no objection to the position that those holding a political office should be members of the public Church. He defends state control over the (religious) education of children and even claims that, in principle, the right to allow one's own children to be educated by Jesuit teachings or other forms of Roman Catholic superstition should be denied.<sup>39</sup> To understand his criticism of certain ecclesiastical officeholders, the limits to his tolerance, and his civic morality, it is important to grasp that De Hooghe's civic ideal is first and foremost a Dutch ideal. Although there are elements of secularization in his work, at the same time he sacralizes the Dutch civic sphere to an unprecedented extent. In other words, he attacks the idea that the conception of a spiritual kingdom provides a legitimate foundation for granting extraordinary rights for the clergy, but does not leave those who seek divine guidance (in these matters) empty-handed.

#### 4 The Power of Custom

De Hooghe's ideas about the importance of custom, like his critique of ecclesiastical power, is grounded in his political thought. As stated above, only a few pages of the *Spiegel van Staat* are dedicated to the various forms of government.<sup>40</sup> Although De Hooghe favors popular sovereignty, he points out that many different variations of the three Aristotelian forms—monarchy, aristocracy, and democracy—existed throughout Europe and that in many cases this is for the best.<sup>41</sup> Even more importantly, most of them hold sway

38 Groenhuis, *De Predikanten* (see above, n. 15), pp. 81–6; N. C. Kist, *Nêerland's bededagen en biddagsbrieven*, 2 vols. (Leiden, 1848).

39 De Hooghe (see above, n. 1), 2.1, pp. 265–7, 2.2, p. 251.

40 De Hooghe (see above, n. 1), 2.1, pp. 41–9.

41 De Hooghe (see above, n. 1), 2.1, p. 15.

only for a limited period, since politics by its very nature is unstable. He concludes this analysis on a more positive note: despite the ever-changing nature of human societies, there is one force that reliably provides some stability. He writes: “there is nothing stronger to keep a region than custom—we with a free government, and likewise Asia with a rule by one; but just like buildings, ways of clothing, trinkets and virtues are fads ... the same goes with forms of government.”<sup>42</sup>

In line with the rest of his work, De Hooghe argues that institutional safeguards are powerful instruments to keep a form of government from changing into its corrupted counterpart. But these don't suffice completely, and ultimately the customs of a nation represent the most constant foundation to build upon. Thus for De Hooghe the importance of these customs being preserved affects not only his ideal of a public Church that caters to the needs of the civil society, but also public education in general. Both these elements hinge on the way he sacralizes the customs of the Dutch.

In the chapter directly following his discussion of the various forms of government, De Hooghe sets out to explain why the United Netherlands has the best of all forms of government. Anyone looking for intricate theoretical or legal arguments here will be disappointed. The whole section is exclusively devoted to a historical account of the Dutch from the beginning of time onward. However, in relation to his ideas about the power of the customs and habits of a nation, it becomes clear that his idea of the Dutch as the oldest nation is the argument itself. This is not a version of the Machiavellian idea that its age means that its government is strongest, but rather the idea that the morals of the Dutch are the best. Tracing back the origins of the Dutch to the beginning of time, albeit in an idealized, fictional genealogy, enables De Hooghe to argue, more or less, that the customs and habits of the Dutch are unique in not having been corrupted by despotism or Church rule, give or take a few others like some tribes in the New World and Africa.<sup>43</sup>

De Hooghe traces Dutch history much further back than Grotius had. The engraver presents the Dutch nation as the oldest people in the world.<sup>44</sup> This idea goes back to the theory of Marcus Zuerius van Boxhorn about the Scythian origins of the Dutch and the Germans.<sup>45</sup> De Hooghe's version of Dutch origins

42 De Hooghe (see above, n. 1), 2.1, p. 54.

43 De Hooghe (see above, n. 1), 2.1, p. 14.

44 De Hooghe (see above, n. 1), 2.1, p. 57.

45 D. Droixhe, 'Boxhorn, Marcus Zuerius (1602/12–1653),' in: *Elsevier's Encyclopedia of Language & Linguistics*, 2nd ed. (online resource, 2006), p. 103. This idea can also be found in: Simon van Leeuwen, *Batavia Illustrata, ofte verhandelinge van den oorspronk, voortgang etc. van de Bataven*, 2 vols (The Hague, 1685). 1, pp. 2, 14–5. See also the contribution

reads like an ongoing warning about the dangers of tyranny from the time of the biblical Flood onward. After the Deluge, new despots tried to rule all of humanity. Often in cahoots with ecclesiastical leaders, they posed as gods to coerce people into obedience. Some people, because of their love for liberty, could not accept the legitimacy of these claims and traveled north to Europe, taking with them fully intact their natural love for liberty and their knowledge of the guiding light of nature and of God.<sup>46</sup> Despite the rise of tyrants in Europe, this love of liberty is still the defining character of the Dutch, according to De Hooghe.<sup>47</sup>

Every time the oppression of the worldly and ecclesiastical powers in concert became too harsh, the Dutch rose up to defend their liberty. This cyclical chain of events was finally broken with the complete restoration during the Revolt against Spain. The success of the Revolt was, according to De Hooghe, partly the result of the invention of the printing press.<sup>48</sup> The reading of the writings of the Chambers of Rhetoric made the people rediscover their inborn nature and the natural origins of their liberty, both worldly and spiritual.<sup>49</sup> The message seems to be that the customs and habits of the Dutch are sacred in and of themselves, because they are in part untouched by the corrupting forces of Church and statecraft. His attention to the role of the Chambers of Rhetoric is typical for De Hooghe and illustrates his awareness of the power of print for the populace at large. Before I elaborate on this, I will discuss the influence of satirical authors like John Barclay and Trajano Boccalini on his ideas about custom. Their attention to education in relation to the customs of a nation is especially illustrative for De Hooghe's rationality. After I have discussed their ideas, I will consider the ambiguous relation between Spinoza's thought and that of De Hooghe. In my view this relation is not only telling for the possible influence of Spinoza on De Hooghe, but gives us some insight into the way public debate in the Dutch Republic had shifted away from the polemical writings of the radicals of the seventeenth century. De Hooghe's ideas, after all, were received as rather conventional.

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of Jaap van Nieuwstraten in this volume and his dissertation, 'Historical and Political Thought in the Seventeenth-Century Dutch Republic: The Case of Marcus Zuerius Boxhorn (1612–1653)' (Haarlem, 2012), pp. 170–8.

46 De Hooghe (see above, n. 1), 2.1, p. 13.

47 De Hooghe (see above, n. 1), 1.1, p. 4.

48 De Hooghe (see above, n. 1), 1.1, p. 60.

49 De Hooghe (see above, n. 1), 2.1, p. 57.

## 5 Practical Custom versus Philosophical Reason: Barclay, Boccacini, and Spinoza

In the decades before De Hooghe's *Spiegel van Staat* was published, the Dutch Republic saw an increase in popularity of skeptical authors. In the last quarter of the seventeenth century, the *Essays* of Michel de Montaigne (1533–92), the complete writings of the Scottish satirist John Barclay (1582–1621), and the political fables of Trajano Boccalini (1556–1613) were all published in Dutch translation.<sup>50</sup> Very different works, of course, but apart from their political skepticism they also share a remarkable interest in education and the power of custom on a political community.<sup>51</sup>

John Barclay, a Scottish nobleman and ambassador for James I in France famed for his criticism of Puritans and Jesuits, wrote the satirical novel *Argenis* and a more serious work on the different nations of Europe entitled *Icon Animorum* [Mirror of Minds]. Written in Latin, this latter work was soon translated into English, French, and Italian. In 1683 Nicolaas Jacherides Wieringa included a Dutch translation in *Satyrikon of Heekel-schrift*, his Dutch edition of Barclay's complete writings.

Barclay's idea that every nation has a specific character leans heavily on Montaigne's essay on custom.<sup>52</sup> Barclay explains the influence of custom in his introduction: "The making or marring of mankind, as of other creatures, is, especially in their first age ... The seeds ... and fundamentall parts of virtue,

50 On the translator of Barclay and Boccalini, Nicolaas Jarichides Wieringa, see: Caroline Louise Thijssen-Schoute, *Nicolaas Jarichides Wieringa: Een zeventiende-eeuws vertaler van Boccalini, Rabelais, Barclay, Leti e.a.* (Assen, 1939); Michel de Montaigne, *Alle de werken*, trans. J. H. Glazemaker (Amsterdam, 1674); J. Barklai, *Satyrikon of Heekel-schrift, waar in, onder de naam, gevallen, en d'afbeelding der gemoederen van den Schotzen Euphormio, de stand, handel en wandel, inborst, zeden en staatsbeleid van verscheide Volkeren of Landsaard... ten toon werden gestelt, en onbeschroomdelijk in alle hare gebreken, op een geestige, scherpe en heylzame wijze, doorgestreeken*, trans. N. I. W. (= Wieringa) (Amsterdam, 1683). In this volume (as Part 2, Book 1, pp. 431–648): *Afbeelding der Gemoederen, of de Gaaven, aart, eygenschappen, geneigheden, gewoonten, &c. van verscheyden Rijkken, Landschappen, en Volkeren; Trajano Boccalini, Politieke toet-steen*, trans. Lambert van den Bosch (Harlingen, 1669); idem, *Kundschappen van Parnas, Waar in door Apollo, en züne Geletterden, allerleiye geheime en heylzame Heerschregels voor Koninkriken, Vorstendommen, en Vrijestaten; Pligten voor Amptenaars; en Zedelessen voor Onderzaten, nevens aanwizing van veler gevaarlike feilen, zeer aardiglijk verhandelt en voorgeschreven*, trans. N. I. W. (=Wieringa) (Harlingen, 1670).

51 On the role of custom in the writings of Montaigne, see: John Christian Laursen, *The Politics of Skepticism in the Ancients: Montaigne, Hume, and Kant* (Leiden, 1992), pp. 118–9.

52 William M. Hamlin, *Montaigne's English Journey: Reading the Essays in Shakespeare's Day* (Oxford, 2013), p. 270.

they are by an early and stronger persuasion, to be so integrated into them, that they need not know, whether nature or precept were the teachers of them.”<sup>53</sup> Barclay stresses the importance of a proper moral upbringing because the early years define what a person will perceive to be naturally right or wrong. In the second chapter, based on these ideas about education, he conceptualizes the character of a nation: “Namely, that spirit which being appropriate to every region, is infuseth into men, as soon as they are borne, the habit, and affection of their owne country.”<sup>54</sup> Just as an individual will be guided throughout his life by the teachings received in early life, so the morality of a nation is defined by a national spirit of shared customs. Thus a nation is not the slave of the shifting opinions of a certain era; ultimately it is guided by a stronger force, the power of its reigning character or custom. Therefore, to protect unity and constancy this national spirit should be nurtured and cared for. This line of thinking is very similar to De Hooghe’s in his chapter on the various forms of government, especially the idea that a nation’s character can withstand the influence of changing fashions.<sup>55</sup>

To infer Barclay’s influence is not farfetched. De Hooghe was well versed in the various satirical traditions and their authors, and in the Dutch Republic Barclay’s work was published more than sixteen times. De Hooghe’s signature appears on the frontispiece of Barclay’s political novel, the *Argenis*, and Jan ten Hoorn, the *Spiegel van Staat*’s publisher, brought out the Dutch translation of Barclay’s *Icon Animorum* in 1683. Barclay’s influence on De Hooghe’s indeed seems very likely.<sup>56</sup>

Even more important was the Italian satirist Boccacini, mentioned in *Spiegel van Staat* and figuring prominently in De Hooghe’s pamphlets. De Hooghe even made the illustrations for the Dutch translation by Wieringa (who also translated Barclay) of Boccacini’s *Ragguagli di Parnaso*, published in 1670. The influence of the Italian satirist on Dutch political thought is hard to underestimate. As Arthur Weststeijn writes in his work on the political thought of the brothers De la Court, *Commercial Republicanism*: “Boccacini was the author of two works that would become the seventeenth-century *locus classicus* of

53 Dutch translation: “De voornaamste toezicht op ’t menschelijk geslagt, gelijk op alle andere schepsels, geschied in haar wieg of eerste beginzel.... Voor al dienen de zaaden, en (als) grondleggingen der deugden, voor een ouden en zeer diepen genegentheid haar in-geboezemt te worden; zoo datse daar na niet en weten, ofse uyt de Natuur, of door leerlingen en beveelen ontfangen hebben,” Barklai, *Satyrikon of Heekel-schrift* (see above, n. 50), p. 435.

54 Dutch translation: “te weten, dien geest, die yder Landschap in’t byzondere eygen sijnde, den menschen, zoo haast die geboren worden, haares Vaderlands aart en neygingen terstond inplant,” Barklai, *Satyrikon of Heekel-schrift* (see above, n. 50), p. 456.

55 De Hooghe (see above, n. 1), 2.1, p. 39.

56 Barklai, *Satyrikon of Heekel-schrift* (see above, n. 50), p. 431.

Tacitean, republican satire of princely and clerical hypocrisy: the *Ragguagli di Parnaso* and the *Pietra del paragone politico* (1612–14).” Although this influence has now been amply researched, little attention has been given to the way that the Italian satirist utilized the notion of custom as an elementary force and gave it a specifically political twist.<sup>57</sup> Throughout his writings Boccalini defended the liberty of the Italian city-states but also argued that its form or governmental structure was incredibly hard to import or implement. The reason for this difficulty is custom. The customs and habits of a people, he writes, are ultimately even more important than its laws.<sup>58</sup>

According to Boccalini, this is because a free government lacks the disciplinary power of other forms of government, for example a monarchy. This means that other governments can force their subjects to behave in the interest of the common good. In a free government its citizens must behave this way of their own free will. Thus everyone must be able to judge impartially, to use their wealth virtuously, to accept the authority of an equal, and even to inhibit the exercise of individual skills when to do so would benefit the common good. Boccalini argues that an individual cannot learn this attitude of moderation and care for the common good from books or from education alone; it must be “taken in from birth” and nourished throughout life’s stages.<sup>59</sup> He continues his argument by emphasizing that this duty to conduct civic education should not be given to a community’s most learned men—its scholars, philosophers, and theologians—because they almost always have disdain for local customs.<sup>60</sup>

In one of his Parnassian fables he tells the story of a group of writers who had apparently burned down all the houses of the reformers. Brought before Apollo, they defended themselves thus: “These reformers hide under the cloak of improvement, but they don’t teach us anything. They just keep changing the rules. Instead of improving us, they only point out our vices to elevate themselves above us. They don’t properly explain why they are vices but just criticize

57 On the influence of Boccalini on political thought in the Dutch Republic, see: E. O. G. Haitsma-Mulier, *Constitutioneel Republikenisme en de mythe van Venetië in het zeventiende-eeuwse Nederland* (Amsterdam, 1978), pp. 42–4, 176; Arthur Weststeijn, *Commercial Republicanism in the Dutch Golden Age: The Political Thought of Johan & Pieter de la Court* (Leiden, 2012), p. 130; Simon Groenveld, ‘Pieter Corneliszoon Hooft en de geschiedenis van zijn eigen tijd,’ in: Simon Groenveld, *Hooft als historieschrijver: twee studies* (Weesp, 1981), p. 45.

58 Boccalini, *Kundschappen van Parnas* (see above, n. 50), p. 199.

59 Boccalini, *Kundschappen van Parnas* (see above, n. 50), p. 201.

60 Boccalini, *Kundschappen van Parnas* (see above, n. 50), p. 224. This advice goes back to the famous saying of another author De Hooghe knew by heart, Rabelais: “The greatest clerks are not the wisest of men.” For more on De Hooghe’s familiarity with Rabelais, see Meredith Hale, ‘Romeyn de Hooghe and the Birth of Political Satire’ (diss., Columbia University, New York, 2006).

what we are accustomed to doing.”<sup>61</sup> Apollo understands their complaints and admonishes the reformers to change their tune.

Boccalini's regard for the power of custom and his somewhat suspicious view of philosophical rationalism helps us understand the substantial difference between De Hooghe and Spinoza without ignoring their striking similarities. De Hooghe's attention to local custom and his distrust of ecclesiastical power in relation to public opinion make it very likely that he was familiar with Spinoza's writings. The abuse of power by ecclesiastics, the importance of free speech, and the nurturing of the right customs play an especially important role in Spinoza's *Tractatus Theologico-Politicus* and his unfinished *Tractatus Politicus*. Peace or unity, Spinoza writes in the *Tractatus Politicus*, is not the absence of war but the unity of spirits or *animorum unio*.<sup>62</sup> Laws and other measures should therefore always be implemented with the customs of the nation in mind.<sup>63</sup> This is necessary because most people are guided not by reason but by their affects.<sup>64</sup> In his famous description of the Hebrew Republic, Spinoza argues that because the spirit of their laws and of their religion overlap completely, religious piety and love for the fatherland direct the people to the same goal.<sup>65</sup> Together with their excellent political constitution and a shared hatred of the political communities around them, this love for the fatherland became second nature to them.<sup>66</sup> When he writes on the dangers of corruption in an aristocracy in the *Tractatus Politicus*, he links such corruption to the influence of foreign habits—French fashion in clothing, for example, or in the case of the Hebrew republic, alien religions.

De Hooghe does not, however, share Spinoza's complete lack of confidence in the ministers of the public Church at that time. Whereas Spinoza argues that a different 'National civil religion', overseen by a secular power, should replace the existing public Church, in none of De Hooghe's works do we find an attack on the existing public Church or the existence of the spiritual kingdom itself. Moreover, De Hooghe glorifies the character of the Dutch and their love for liberty to such an extent that the customs and habits based on this love make the Dutch nation a sacred sphere unto itself. This is an idea that Spinoza

61 Boccalini, *Politieke toet-steen* (see above, n. 50), pp. 49–60.

62 A. C. M. Roothaan, *Vroomheid, vrede en vrijheid: Een interpretatie van Spinoza's Tractatus* (Assen, 1996), p. 14. Baruch de Spinoza, *Staatkundige verhandeling*, trans. Karel D'huyvetters, 2nd ed. (Amsterdam, 2015), 3.7, p. 71, 6.4, p. 103.

63 Spinoza, *Staatkundige verhandeling* (see above, n. 62), 7.30, p. 163 and 10.7, p. 253.

64 Baruch de Spinoza, *Theologisch-Politiek Traktaat*, trans. F. Akkerman (Haren, 1997), 17.4, p. 369.

65 See, for an in-depth analysis, Wiep van Bunge, *Spinoza, Past and Present: Essays on Spinoza, Spinozism, and Spinoza Scholarship* (Leiden, 2012), pp. 91–96.

66 Spinoza, *Theologisch-Politiek Traktaat* (see above, n. 64), 17.24, p. 387.

explicitly dismisses: a nation's character is not something natural or divine but rather is purely artificial, because nature only produces individuals. A nation is therefore not guided by some innate genius or character but is the result of an interplay among language, laws, and customs.<sup>67</sup> In the *Tractatus Politicus* Spinoza makes it quite clear that although customs are something a wise politician has to deal with, custom itself is ultimately the sole product of the laws and the political structure of a given nation, not some intrinsic quality of that nation.<sup>68</sup> In his *Tractatus Politicus* we therefore find all kinds of advice, based on rational arguments or historical examples, on how certain laws and institutions influence the morality of rulers and subjects. Most of this advice, with its clear warnings and far-reaching proposals, reads as if it were addressed to the political institutions of the Dutch Republic.

Although it is clear that De Hooghe was not only familiar with Spinoza's political writings but often applied the same logic as the philosopher, I am reluctant to call him an outright Spinozist. Besides the reasons given above, the heart of the matter is that many of Spinoza's warnings were part of the established political vocabulary of the Dutch Republic. Spinoza's comments on the importance of custom in particular were actually quite conventional.<sup>69</sup> What's more, none of the advice regarding the organization of the army or the distribution of wealth in the *Tractatus Politicus* was echoed in the *Spiegel van Staat*. De Hooghe never follows the philosopher to his ultimate conclusions, simply because he doesn't have to. Every time De Hooghe's glorification of the Republic's political organization conflicts with his more cynical analyses of politics in general, he reassures his readers that the Dutch are superior by presenting the United Netherlands as an exception because of the superb moral character of its inhabitants. Despite De Hooghe's biting Tacitean or even Machiavellian remarks, it is this sacralization that enabled him to turn his *Spiegel van Staat* into a Ciceronean mirror of duties that Spinoza so forcefully tried to leave behind.

67 Spinoza, *Theologisch-Politiek Traktaat* (see above, n. 64), 17.26, p. 390.

68 Spinoza, *Staatkundige verhandeling* (see above, n. 62), 1.39, p. 39, 5-3, p. 95.

69 See also Niccolò Macchiavelli, *Discorsi: Gedachten over staat en politiek*, trans. Paul Heck (Amsterdam, 2007), pp. 143-4; Boccacini, *Kundschappen van Parnas* (see above, n. 50), p. 198; Michel de Montaigne, *De essays*, vertaald en toegelicht door Hans van Pinxteren met een nawoord van Afshin Ellian, trans. Hans van Pinxteren, 6th ed. (Amsterdam, 2012), 1.23, p. 149; Spinoza, *Theologisch-Politiek Traktaat* (see above, n. 64), 18.4, pp. 404-5; Lieuwe van Aitzema, *Historie of verhael van saken van staet en oorlogh in ende ontrent de Vereenigde Nederlanden, beginnende met 't uitgaen van den Trevis ende eyndigende 1669*, 14 vols. (The Hague, 1662), 7, p. 203; Pieter de Huybert, *Lauwer-krans ofte Apologie voor de stadhouderlijke en oude Hollandse regeringe* (Middelburg, 1672), p. 10; Pieter Valckenier, *'t Verwerd Europa* (Amsterdam, 1688), p. 1.

## 6 To Conclude: Faultline 1700?

De Hooghe's emphasis on the importance of custom and habits fits into a larger shift that took place sometime around 1700. Most notably this shift derived from the growing importance of a new voice within Dutch debating culture. Talented artists, craftsmen, and poets, despite their low rank, began voicing opinions on matters that had once been the exclusive territory of philosophers, theologians, and other learned men. Although many of the radicals of the seventeenth century had also worked and lived outside the world of academia, they clearly saw themselves in their writings as akin to academic scholars, in both rank and authority. Their emphasis on reason and the many ways they attacked and even tried to transform the public Church made them part of a debate which had originated in the clash between philosophy and theology at Dutch universities around 1650.<sup>70</sup> There are compelling reasons to put De Hooghe, with his *Spiegel van Staat*, into a different category, not that of a professional philosopher writing for the likeminded few but of a civil educator of the public at large.

In his description of the Batavian forefathers of the Dutch, De Hooghe mentions that they had three kinds of priests, none of which had any actual influence in their political assemblies. Those of the first kind were responsible for religion, the second kind concerned themselves with natural and supernatural wisdom, and those of the third kind were historians and poets who celebrated their pious and heroic deeds. With statues, songs, and national days of celebration, the forefathers of the Dutch honored their heroes in order to teach their male youth the same kind of manly courage. By boosting the importance of the preservation of the Dutch national character, he downplays the importance of ministers, theologians, and philosophers, and positions himself as a respectable and authoritative voice.<sup>71</sup> He writes as someone who took Boccacini's advice on civic education to heart.

De Hooghe's goal is therefore not to transform the public Church or the religious regime in any way, but to defend the fatherland by preserving the Dutch virtues of its citizens. Likewise, all who practice Dutch virtue in their behavior should be regarded as equals by their fellow citizens. This focus on a shared morality is visible throughout the eighteenth century. A telling fact

70 See the chapter on philosophy by Wiep van Bunge in: Marijke Spies and Willen Frijhoff, *1650: Bevochten Eendracht* (The Hague, 1999), pp. 281–314; Wiep van Bunge, *From Stevin to Spinoza: An Essay on Philosophy in the Seventeenth-Century Dutch Republic* (Leiden, 2001), pp. 34–93; Rienk Vermeij, *The Calvinist Copernicans: The Reception of the New Astronomy in the Dutch Republic, 1575–1750* (Amsterdam, 2002).

71 De Hooghe (see above, n. 1), 2.1, p. 71.

is the immense popularity in the Dutch Republic of John Locke's writings on education,<sup>72</sup> *The Spectator* of Addison (1672–1719) and Steele (1672–1729), and the writings of Justus van Effen (1684–1735), along with those of Christian Wolff (1679–1754) and Montesquieu.<sup>73</sup> All these writers accepted the position of the public Church and made custom and care for the fatherland central to their work.

With the emphasis on moral education, the eighteenth century's literary landscape, when compared to the preceding century, became far less polemical. It has been characterized as polite, moralizing, even provincial.<sup>74</sup> One of the consequences of this shift is that the radical authors of the seventeenth century, like the brothers De la Court, Spinoza, and Ericus Walten, were mostly ignored as if they had never existed.<sup>75</sup> This makes it hard to reconnect eighteenth-century authors with seventeenth-century thought. Why did the attention shift from debating political constitutions to discussing the inculcation of virtues? Why did a new civic ideal become so popular?

In my view, an answer can be found in the way De Hooghe uses custom as a means to sacralize the civil culture of the Dutch. Because it conspicuously lacks a chapter on religion, the *Spiegel van Staat* reads almost like the orthodoxy of a civil religion. Not a Machiavellian orthodoxy that should replace the official

72 On the skeptical influence on Locke's ideas on education, see: John Locke, *Some Thoughts Concerning Education (Including the Conduct of Understanding)*, ed. John William Adamson (Mineola, 2007), preface, pp. 1–20. On the popularity of Locke's educational ideas, see: Willeke Los, *Opvoeding tot mens en burger: Pedagogiek als cultuurkritiek in Nederland in de 18e eeuw* (Hilversum, 2005).

73 P. J. Buijnsters, *Justus van Effen (1648–1735): Leven en werk* (Houten, 1992), pp. 258–9. On the elusive relation between the English spectatorial writings of Addison and Steele and the satirical and spectatorial writings by the Dutch in the first half of the eighteenth century, see: A. J. Hanou, 'Dutch periodicals from 1696 to 1721: In Imitation of the English?' *Studies on Voltaire and the Eighteenth Century* 199 (1981), 187–204; Elly Groenenboom-Draai, *De Rotterdamse woelreus: de Rotterdamsche Hermes (1720–21) Jacob Campo Weyerman: Cultuurhistorische verkenningen in een achttiende eeuwse periodiek* (Amsterdam, 1994). On the popularity of Wolff and Montesquieu, see: Kloek and Mijnhardt, *1800: Blauwdrukken voor een samenleving* (see above, n. 4), pp. 155–6.

74 Van Eijnatten, *Liberty and Concord* (see above, n. 3), p. 11; Kloek and Mijnhardt, *1800: Blauwdrukken voor een samenleving*, (see above, n. 4), p. 148; Van Sas, *Metamorfose van Nederland* (see above, n. 4), pp. 54, 101; Wyger R. E. Velema, 'Ancient and Modern Virtue Compared: De Beaufort and Van Effen on Republican Citizenship,' *Eighteenth-Century Studies* 30 (1997), pp. 437–43.

75 Wijnand Mijnhardt, 'The Construction of Silence,' in: *The Early Enlightenment in the Dutch Republic 1650–1750*, ed. Wiep van Bunge (Cambridge, 2003), p. 235; H. W. Blom, *Morality and Causality in Politics: The Rise of Naturalism in Dutch Seventeenth-Century Political Thought* (Ridderkerk, 1995); p. 241; Velema, 'Ancient and Modern Virtue Compared' (see above, n. 74).

tenets of the public Church, but one wherein the teachings of the public Church are embedded within the civic culture at large—legitimizing its place, but emphasizing its civil duty above all. This represents an intellectual shift that is in agreement with the analysis of Peter van Rooden, who in *Religieuze regimes* has convincingly shown that in the seventeenth century the Dutch perceived the worldly and ecclesiastical spheres to be distinct from or even opposed to each other.<sup>76</sup> Even more importantly, the people's moral education was seen as a duty of the ecclesiastical sphere. In the eighteenth century, however, both spheres were understood to be equally important for the moral upbringing of the Dutch.

According to Van Rooden, this change resulted from a conceptual shift beginning in the first decade of the eighteenth century, so that around 1750 both spheres had come to be seen as equally important pillars of a new moral sphere, that of the fatherland.<sup>77</sup> Van Rooden argues that out of the many debates on the hierarchical order of the different moral spheres there emerged a new moral understanding of the fatherland. And because the fatherland, as a new moral sphere, transcended confessional allegiances and political ideologies, the friction between them dissolved within it. As a consequence, debating their importance no longer evoked the same passion as it had a century earlier. Although his thesis is largely accepted, one question remains, raised as a result of research conducted by Donald Haks and Ingmar Vroomen, who show that fatherland rhetoric is not a typical eighteenth-century phenomenon.<sup>78</sup> Throughout the seventeenth century this idea of the fatherland as an independent sphere had already become widespread. We may ask whether this idea simply became more popular after 1700—or did the idea itself change? Willem Frijhoff argued in 1992 that in the eighteenth century the humanistic image of the self, fabricated from classical topoi, was slowly replaced by more holistic ideas about the character of the nation. As a result the Dutch Republic, despite its fragmented political structure, could be envisioned as a cultural nation.<sup>79</sup> The *Spiegel van Staat* provides us some insights into the social and intellectual

76 Peter van Rooden, *Religieuze regimes: Over godsdienst en maatschappij in Nederland, 1570–1990* (Amsterdam, 1996).

77 Van Rooden, *Religieuze regimes* (see above, n. 76), p. 87; idem, 'Vroomheid, macht en verlichting,' *Documentatieblad werkgroep Achttiende eeuw* 32 (2000), 57–75.

78 Donald Haks, *Vaderland en Vrede 1672–1713: Publiciteit over de Nederlandse Republiek in oorlog* (Hilversum, 2013), pp. 286–97; Ingmar Vroomen, 'Taal van de Republiek: Het gebruik van vaderlandretoriek in Nederlandse pamfletten, 1618–1672,' unpublished PhD thesis (Rotterdam, 2012), pp. 259–63.

79 Willem Frijhoff, 'Het zelfbeeld van de Nederlander in de achttiende eeuw: Een inleiding,' *Documentatieblad werkgroep Achttiende eeuw* 24 (1992), 5–28.

dynamic of this transition and reveals the ways it signified both a continuation of, and a shift away from, the tumultuous seventeenth century.

In summary, by using the ever-popular language of fatherland and patria and connecting them to inherently skeptical ideas about custom as the prime force of human behavior, De Hooghe could claim that the Dutch had the best customs in the world and that their preservation should therefore be everyone's concern. His criticism of the conduct of ecclesiastical leaders and religious bigotry is based on the way these phenomena disturb the civil order by creating discord and by corrupting morality. Because Dutch morality itself carries with it a trace of the divine origins of humankind, this itself makes them ungodly. According to the same logic, he declares that it is unjust to condemn citizens who contribute to the well-being of the Dutch because of their dissenting faiths. With this rhetorical move De Hooghe can stress the importance of his own work, legitimize his position as a civil educator, and propagate a civic morality without entangling himself in the many snares of the debates between philosophers and theologians. This does not mean that he is a moderate in the sense of oscillating between an orthodox Reformed and a radical position. Rather, he has applied a new rationality.

# The Power of Custom and the Question of Religious Toleration in the Works of Marcus Zuerius Boxhorn (1612–1653): An Investigation into the Sources of the Transformation of Religion around 1700

*Jaap Nieuwstraten*

## Abstract

In this chapter I trace the influence of the popular Dutch professor Marcus Zuerius Boxhorn (1612–53) into the early Enlightenment, and argue that especially his theories about religion found a warm reception among its more radical authors. As a good humanist, Boxhorn subscribed to the Greek appreciation of custom as the only realistic basis for public morality. The product of time and place, custom was flexible enough to be adapted to changing circumstances. Boxhorn defended the confessional state, but unlike orthodox Calvinists, who accepted only one True Religion as the public religion of the state, for Boxhorn any religion that proved able to unite the political elite could legitimately fulfill this role—as in any given case only such a religion could be an effective mainstay of moral and public order. Significantly, Boxhorn's works on political culture remained popular long after his death, until the beginning of the eighteenth century. One of them was even adapted to the political situation in England shortly after 1700, among other things to defend the exclusion of Catholics from an otherwise broad religious toleration for reasons of state. Boxhorn's political theory supported the growing notion that different nations and different times call for different religious regimes.

## 1 Introduction

In the seventeenth century the Dutch Republic acquired a legendary reputation—still alive today—as the most religiously tolerant state in Europe. While this was certainly true for the western part of the country and especially the mercantile towns of Holland, the same cannot be said for the inward provinces and the Generality lands. In Utrecht, Overijssel, and Gelre, for example,

citizenship was connected to one's adherence to the right religion, namely Calvinism.<sup>1</sup>

Around the turn of the eighteenth century, this situation changed. After 1700 a "Holland-style toleration took hold in the outer provinces."<sup>2</sup> At the same time Pietist movements—born during the seventeenth century—flourished in Calvinist, Lutheran, Anabaptist, and Catholic circles.<sup>3</sup>

These developments were not restricted to the Dutch Republic. During the entire eighteenth century, lay devotion remained strong and sometimes flourished across Europe, giving birth to revival movements and other outbursts of popular piety. In England, the Glorious Revolution of 1688–9 opened up the way for Protestant Nonconformists to safely practice their religion and expand their activities. Thus, the eighteenth century remained very much a 'Christian century,' albeit more open and fragmented than the seventeenth.<sup>4</sup>

The transformation in European religious culture around 1700 did, of course, not materialize out of thin air. This study aims to investigate one of the sources of that transformation by looking at the historical and political works of the Dutch scholar Marcus Zuerius Boxhorn (1612–53). Now mostly remembered for his contributions to the field of linguistics, I will argue here that Boxhorn's works and their appropriation by later authors also provide a valuable insight into the intellectual origins of the transformation of religion around 1700.<sup>5</sup> As a professor at Leiden University, Boxhorn wrote several political works in which he expressed rather instrumental views on the role of religion in society. Published in the 1640s and 1650s, these works were met with renewed interest around 1700. Taking this revived engagement with Boxhorn's works as its point of departure, this study will suggest that Boxhorn's ideas on custom and religion helped later authors to argue for religious toleration and to 'nationalize'

1 Maarten Prak, 'The Politics of Intolerance: Citizenship and Religion in the Dutch Republic (Seventeenth to Eighteenth Centuries),' in: *Calvinism and Religious Toleration in the Dutch Golden Age*, ed. Ronnie Po-Chia Hsia and Henk van Nierop (Cambridge, 2002), pp. 161–75.

2 Prak, 'The Politics of Intolerance' (see above, n. 1), pp. 169–70; Jonathan I. Israel, *The Dutch Republic: Its Rise, Greatness, and Fall, 1477–1806* (Oxford, 1st ed. 1995, 1998), pp. 1019–37.

3 See Willem Frijhoff, 'How Plural Were the Religious Worlds in Early-Modern Europe? Critical Reflections from the Netherlandic Experience,' in: *Living with Religious Diversity in Early-Modern Europe*, ed. C. Scott Dixon et al. (Farnham, 2009), pp. 49–50 as well as the literature cited there.

4 Tim Blanning, *The Pursuit of Glory: Europe 1648–1815* (London, 2007), pp. 262–3, 385–92.

5 The best study of Boxhorn's linguistics endeavors and legacy is Toon Van Hal, *Moedertalen en taalmoeders: Het vroegmoderne taalvergelijkende onderzoek in de Lage Landen* (Brussel, 2010), pp. 365–401.

certain specific types of religions, thereby preparing the grounds for the religious Enlightenments of the eighteenth century.

## 2 A Tainted Reputation

Marcus Zuerius Boxhorn was born in Bergen op Zoom on 28 August 1612.<sup>6</sup> He did not come into this world alone. Just before he first saw the light of day, Boxhorn's mother had given birth to his twin brother, Hendrik Zuerius Boxhorn (1612–44). This seemingly trivial circumstance of birth would have a lasting impact on Boxhorn's life. It allowed Boxhorn, the younger son, to pursue an academic career, while his 'elder' twin brother Hendrik followed in their father's footsteps and became a minister.<sup>7</sup> This academic career led Boxhorn to thoughts about religion which were at odds with the more militant attitude of the orthodox stream of Dutch Calvinism to which his family belonged.<sup>8</sup>

On 12 August 1626, young Marcus matriculated at Leiden University.<sup>9</sup> Being something of a boy genius, he soon attracted the attention of Daniel Heinsius (1580–1655), at that moment probably Leiden's most famous professor. Under Heinsius's patronage Boxhorn started to climb the academic ladder.<sup>10</sup> When he was only twenty, Boxhorn became professor of eloquence. Some sixteen years later, in 1648, Boxhorn took over the duties of professor of history from Heinsius, whose health was now seriously deteriorating after a life of petty quarrels and

6 J. G. Frederiks and F. J. P. van den Branden, *Biographisch woordenboek der Noord- en Zuidnederlandsche letterkunde* (Amsterdam, 1st ed. 1878, 1890), p. 105.

7 "Gemellus & quidem natu major Marco huic fuit Henricus, qui paternis insistens vestiigiis Ecclesiae pastoratum desideravit ..." Jacobus Baselius, 'Historia vitae & obitus, Viri Celeberrimi Marci Zuerii Boxhornii,' in: Marcus Zuerius Boxhorn, *Epistolae et poemata* (Frankfurt/Leipzig, 1679), p. ii.

8 Boxhorn's grandfather Hendrik Boxhorn (ca. 1544-ca. 1632) was one of the leading figures in the Calvinist offensive against Catholicism in Brabant. J. P. van Dooren, 'De kerken van de Reformatie,' in: *Geschiedenis van Breda*, ed. V. A. M. Beermann et al., 2 vols. (Schiedam, 1977), 2: 213–9. Boxhorn's twin brother Hendrik served as a minister in the armies of the Dutch Republic. Baselius, 'Historia vitae & obitus' (see above, n. 7), p. ii.

9 *Album studiosorum Academiae Lugduno Batavae MDLXXV–MDCCCLXXV* (The Hague, 1875), p. 194.

10 Baselius, 'Historia vitae & obitus' (see above, n. 7), pp. iii–iv. According to Pieter de Groot (1615–78), the son of Hugo Grotius, Boxhorn was to Heinsius what Heinsius was to Joseph Scaliger (1540–1609), i.e., his teacher's favorite pupil: "Vereor me, quandoquidem tamdiu Boxhornii convictor fuit, multum Heinsiani imbiberit, est enim ille Boxhorn hodie Heinsio quod olim Scaligero Heinsius fuit." Hugo Grotius, *Briefwisseling*, ed. B. L. Meulenbroek, 17 vols. (The Hague, 1928–2001), 10: 247 (no. 4060).

heavy drinking.<sup>11</sup> Heinsius's retreat from public life offered Boxhorn the chance to step out of the shadows of his patron, but his premature death at 41 prevented him from ever truly coming into his own.

At his death Boxhorn left behind a corpus of more than fifty works. They cover a broad range of fields, including linguistics, history, and politics.<sup>12</sup> Boxhorn's productivity and seemingly eclectic choice of subjects—like a good humanist he edited, annotated, and published classical authors, but he also wrote treatises on such mundane topics as the wearing of long hair—earned him the reputation of being an erudite but superficial scholar, who sometimes had interesting but not really original ideas.<sup>13</sup> Indeed, it cannot be denied that the quality of Boxhorn's work suffered from his tendency to try to do too many things at the same time.<sup>14</sup> And yes, many of his comments and remarks—especially when examined in isolation—will not capture the hearts of anyone looking for new, brilliant, and exciting ideas.<sup>15</sup>

Boxhorn's tainted reputation can also partly be attributed to his occasional departure from well-trodden paths. Boxhorn's theory that many European languages—including Latin, Greek, and German—and several Near Eastern languages such as Turkish and Persian all derived from one common source, namely the language of the ancient Scythians, earned Boxhorn the distrust and mockery of more traditionally-minded humanists such as Johan Frederick Gronovius (1611–71) and Nicolaas Heinsius (1620–81), the son of Daniel.<sup>16</sup> But

11 For Boxhorn, see P. C. Molhuysen, *Bronnen tot de geschiedenis der Leidsche Universiteit*, 7 vols. (The Hague, 1913–24), 2: 183–4, 247; 3: 20. For Heinsius, see Paul R. Sellin, *Daniel Heinsius and Stuart England* (London, 1968), pp. 64–5.

12 For an overview of Boxhorn's work, see the entry 'Boxhorn, Marcus Zuerius (1612–53),' in: *The Dictionary of Seventeenth and Eighteenth-Century Dutch Philosophers*, Wiep van Bunge et al., 2 vols. (Bristol, 2003), 1: 146–51.

13 See, e.g., E. H. Kossmann, 'Enkele laat-zeventiende-eeuwse Nederlandse geschriften over Raison d'Etat,' in: idem, *Vergankelijkheid en continuïteit: opstellen over geschiedenis* (Amsterdam, 1995), pp. 102–13, there 103–6.

14 For example, in 1632, while he was busy compiling a topographical-historical description of the province of Holland, Boxhorn was also working on an new edition of the *Historia Augusta*. The latter, according to the German professor Johann Heinrich Boecler (1611–72), was 'full of faults' (*vittiosissimus*). Daniel Droixhe, 'Boxhorn's Bad Reputation: A Chapter in Academic Linguistics,' in: *Speculum historiographiae linguisticae*, ed. Klaus D. Dutz (Münster, 1989), pp. 359–84, there 360.

15 Boxhorn's works are littered with traditional humanist concepts, like the past being a mirror of the present. Marcus Zuerius Boxhorn, *Oratio inauguralis, dicta in Illustri Batavorum Academia, cum, Ex auctoritate publica, historiarum professionem aggrederetur* (Leiden, 1649), pp. 4–5.

16 While Boxhorn cannot be credited with the invention of the Scythian thesis, he did take this field of language comparison to a higher level by his innovative attention to intermediary words and grammatical similarities. Van Hal, *Moedertalen en taalmoeders*' (see

despite the scorn heaped upon him, Boxhorn's Scythian thesis proved to be a way forward. Bishop Brian Walton (1600–61), for example, who was responsible for the London Polyglot Bible, preferred Boxhorn's linguistic ideas to those of others.<sup>17</sup> So did Gottfried Wilhelm Leibniz (1646–1716), the great German polymath, who made good use of Boxhorn's labors.<sup>18</sup>

The reception of Boxhorn's Scythian thesis is symptomatic of the fate that befell a large part of his oeuvre. First of all, like his works on the Scythian language, Boxhorn's most popular works were all published at the end of his life or posthumously.<sup>19</sup> These works include the *Commentariolus* (*Commentary*, 1649), an analysis of the nature, structure, and workings of the Dutch Republic; the *Disquisitiones politicae* (*Political Inquiries*, 1650), a collection of sixty case studies in which Boxhorn discusses various political dilemmas; and the *Institutiones politicae* (*Political Instructions*, 1656), an academic book about the origin, nature, and goals of the state. In the second half of the seventeenth century these works gained considerable popularity, which lasted until the beginning of the eighteenth century. Between 1649 and 1702, the *Commentariolus* ran through at least fifteen editions and was translated into Dutch and French; the *Disquisitiones politicae* was reprinted at least ten times and appeared in Dutch, French, German, and English; and at least eight editions of the *Institutiones politicae* were published, all in Latin.<sup>20</sup>

After 1700 Boxhorn's works seem to have lost their appeal, although some of them were used well into the eighteenth century by people as diverse as the Dutch historian Jan Wagenaar (1709–73) and the American polymath Benjamin Franklin (1705–90).<sup>21</sup> In general, however, Boxhorn's ideas had to give way to

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above, n. 5), pp. 388–98; F. F. Blok, *Nicolaas Heinsius in dienst van Christina van Zweden* (Delft, 1949), p. 45; 'Heinsius, Nicolaas (1620–81),' in: *The Dictionary of Seventeenth and Eighteenth-Century Dutch Philosophers* (see above, n. 12), pp. 407–8.

- 17 Peter N. Miller, 'The "Antiquarianization" of Biblical Scholarship and the London Polyglot Bible (1653–57),' *Journal of the History of Ideas* 62 (2001), 463–82, there 481.
- 18 Prys Morgan, 'Boxhorn, Leibniz, and the Welsh,' *Studia Celtica*, 8–9 (1973–4), 220–8. Some modern scholars hold that after Boxhorn "the Scythian thesis" was the standard form in which claims of northern origins and privilege were encoded." Bruce Lincoln, *Theorizing Myth: Narrative, Ideology, and Scholarship* (Chicago, 1999), p. 81.
- 19 Boxhorn first expressed his Scythian thesis in 1647. His most learned book on the topic—the *Originum Gallicarum liber* [Book about the Origins of the Gauls]—was published posthumously by George Hornius (1620–70) in 1654.
- 20 The first edition of the *Commentariolus* was published in 1649. In 1702 the last edition of the *Institutiones politicae* appeared.
- 21 For his famous *Vaderlandsche historie* [National History], 24 vols. (Amsterdam, 1749–74), Wagenaar made use of Boxhorn's historical works, especially *Theatrum Hollandiae* [Theater of Holland], (Amsterdam, 1632), *Nederlantsche historie* [Dutch History] (Leiden, 1649), republished in 1700 and 1743, and Boxhorn's edition of Jan Reygersbergh, *Chroniick van Zeelandt* [Chronicle of Zeeland], (Middelburg, 1644). For Franklin, see n. 58 below.

the moral philosophies and economic ideas of the Enlightenment. For us, however, Boxhorn's works and their appropriation by late-seventeenth-century and early-eighteenth-century authors offer an opportunity to locate some of the sources of the transformation of religion around 1700. For in his works Boxhorn articulated a number of potentially dangerous ideas concerning religion and its place in society. Central to these ideas was the role of custom.

### 3 Custom: Local, Authoritative, and Changeable

Custom—here defined as the amalgam of local customs and traditions—has been given a mixed reception in European thought. For the ancient Greeks, custom was king (*nomos basileus*). In the sixteenth and seventeenth centuries, humanists affirmed this verdict. In the words of Francis Bacon (1561–1626), custom was “the principal magistrate of man's life” whose “predominancy” was “everywhere visible.”

Cicero saw custom as an important force behind the greatness that was Rome, creating men of outstanding virtue, but also as something vulnerable to corruption by not-so-virtuous men. The early church father Clement of Alexandria (ca. 150–ca. 215) spoke of custom in terms of a “deadly drug.” More importantly for our story, the attitude of Protestant reformers toward custom was downright hostile. Both Martin Luther (1483–1546) and John Calvin (1509–64) described custom as a “public pestilence.” Universal truths could be embodied only by the resurrected Christ, and not by local customs, which were inevitably contaminated by folklore and superstition.<sup>22</sup>

By descent and upbringing Boxhorn was an heir of the Protestant Reformation. He adhered to the doctrine of the Trinity and believed in the two different natures of Christ.<sup>23</sup> Boxhorn also decried Pelagianism—and with it the notions of free will and salvation by good works—as heresy.<sup>24</sup> These convictions reveal the character traits of an orthodox Calvinist.

22 Quotes and references taken from Donald R. Kelley, “‘Second Nature’: The Idea of Custom in European Law, Society and Culture,” in: *The Transmission of Culture in Early Modern Europe*, ed. Anthony Grafton and Ann Blair (Philadelphia, 1990), pp. 131–72 and Andy Wood, *The Memory of the People: Custom and Popular Senses of the Past in Early Modern England* (Cambridge, 2013), pp. 123–7. See also Cicero, *De Re Publica* 5.1 and *In Catilinam* 1.1.

23 Marcus Zuerius Boxhorn, *Historia universalis sacra et profana, A Christo nato ad annum usque MDCL. in qua Illustrium Gentium ac Principum origines, res gestae, variae mutationes in ecclesia et republica, aliaque ex variis, etiam hactenus ineditis, monumentis traduntur* (Leiden, 1652), pp. 1–2.

24 Interestingly, Boxhorn did this by borrowing the words of Gerard Vossius, who in the midst of the Arminian controversy during the Twelve Years' Truce (1609–21) had written

By education and profession, however, Boxhorn was also an heir of the Renaissance and the humanist tradition. He could therefore side with the ancient Greeks on the problem of custom. As Boxhorn makes clear in the opening chapter of the *Institutiones politicae*, adaptation to local circumstances and customs—*usus*—is essential if one wants to achieve success. The fate of the ancient Parthian king Vonones illustrates the point. Brought up in Rome, Vonones had acquired virtues that the Parthians were unaccustomed with and hence considered bad. They therefore cast Vonones out of their kingdom.<sup>25</sup>

Custom, however, is not something static. It is the result of a mixture of different ingredients such as geography and technological knowledge, and of the interplay of different actors. If one of these variables changes, custom can change accordingly.<sup>26</sup>

Boxhorn was aware of this changeability of custom. He detected such changes in custom in the province of Holland. In his contribution to the ‘hairy war’ of the 1640s—a public debate about the propriety of the wearing of long hair—Boxhorn pointed out that under the influence of “strangers, mainly Spaniards and Italians, and ... natives, visiting Spain and Italy,” the Hollanders had changed their clothing and hair styles.<sup>27</sup> These foreign influences had not limited themselves to mere externals.

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a history of Pelagianism to defend Remonstrants like Hugo Grotius. See Boxhorn, *Historia universalis sacra et profana* (see above, n. 23), pp. 314–20, and compare this with Gerard Vossius, *Historiae, De controversiis, Quas Pelagius ejusque reliquiae moverunt, libri septem* (Leiden, 1618), pp. 5–11.

- 25 Marcus Zuerius Boxhorn, *Institutiones politicae cum commentariis ejusdem et observationibus G. Horni* (Amsterdam, 1668), p. 2. Boxhorn quotes Tacitus, *Annals* 2.2.4. “Yet [Vonones] was readily accessible and had a forthcoming affability, virtues, unknown to the Parthians but novel as vices. And, because his forms of crookedness and honesty were alien to their own behavior, there was equal hatred for both.” In contrast, Zeno, whom the Romans had made king of Armenia but who was, as son of the Pontic king Polemon, a foreigner, had won the goodwill of the Armenians, “because from his earliest infancy he had emulated the customs and style of the Armenians.” Tacitus, *Annals* 2.56.2.
- 26 Kelley, “Second Nature” (see above, n. 22), p. 137; Wood, *The Memory of the People* (see above, n. 22), pp. 120–3.
- 27 “Dus vinde ick my genootsaeckt met dit tweede Spiegeltjen voor den dach te comen, om daer in duydelijck af te beelden, dat noch geen hondert jaer geleden soo door vreemde, voornaementlijc Spaenjaerts ende Italiaenen, als door ingeboorne, Spanien ende Italien versoeckende, ende by haer leerende het veranderen van de manieren [customs] ende drachten [clothes] van haer vaederlandt, het draegen van cort hayr hier te lande, niet sonder groote opspraecke van die welcke slecht ende recht het met de oude wet hielden, ingevoert is gheworden.” Marcus Zuerius Boxhorn, *Spiegeltjen Vertoonende 't corte hayr, By de Hollanders ende Zeelanders joncst ghedragen, ende van vreemde ontleent* (Middelburg, 1644), pp. 9–10. For the ‘hairy war’ and Boxhorn’s contributions to this debate, see Willem Otterspeer, *Groepsportret met dame*, 3 vols. (Amsterdam, 2000–5), 1: 320–1.

Commerce with other peoples had transformed the inhabitants of Holland from “rather simple” folk to a nation of merchants and entrepreneurs that “nowadays exceeds by far all other nations in cleverness and, during the planning and conducting of affairs, in diligence, dexterity and prudence.... Because thus it is common that we take upon ourselves the customs of them, with whom we frequently move about.”<sup>28</sup>

Custom, then, has “a historical dynamic,” and Boxhorn held a keen interest in this phenomenon.<sup>29</sup> The motto of the *Metamorphosis Anglorum* (*Metamorphosis of the English*, 1653) tells us that the changeability of custom was a subject that occupied Boxhorn’s mind until his death: “times change, and we change with them.”<sup>30</sup> This seemingly simple observation has some far-reaching consequences. If, to be successful, one needs to adapt to the prevailing local customs and traditions, and if those customs and traditions constantly change over time, then success requires a flexible, non-dogmatic attitude. It mandates acceptance of the rule that “everything should be adjusted to the circumstances and times.”<sup>31</sup> Following Francis Bacon, this orientation also implies accepting that one be willing to step into the unknown. “He that will not apply New Remedies, must expect New Evils: For Time is the greatest *Innovatour*: And if Time, of course, alter Things to the worse, and Wisdome, and Counsell shall not alther them to the better, what shall be the end?”<sup>32</sup> Boxhorn agreed with the English philosopher. “The word ancient and its authority deceives many. Because new matters, which have replaced the ancient ones and

28 “Hodie certe Hollandi, quanto olim simpliciores, tanto solertiâ, & in rebus moliendis gerendisque industriâ, dexteritate, prudentia omnes alias gentes longius antistant: dum commerciis, quae non modo cum vicinis suis, sed cum remotissimis nationibus, atque alio sole calentibus contrahere solent, velut cotibus, indies acuuntur. Ita enim fieri solet, ut eorum mores induamus, quibuscum frequenter versamur.” Marcus Zuerius Boxhorn, *Theatrum sive Hollandiae comitatus et urbium Nova Descriptio* (Amsterdam, 1632), pp. 46–7. For a discussion of Boxhorn’s *Theatrum*, see Raingard Esser, *The Politics of Memory: The Writing of Partition in the Seventeenth-Century Low Countries* (Leiden, 2012), esp. pp. 231–47.

29 Wood, *The Memory of the People* (see above, n. 22), p. 120.

30 “Tempora mutantur et nos mutamur in illis.” Marcus Zuerius Boxhorn, *Metamorphosis Anglorum* (s.l., 1653), p. 274. The *Metamorphosis Anglorum* was published anonymously in 1653, probably just before Boxhorn’s death on 3 October 1653, although an exact date cannot be given.

31 “Omnia rebus ac temporibus accommodanda sunt.” Marcus Zuerius Boxhorn, *Disquisitiones politicae. Id est, Sexaginta casus politici Ex omni historiâ selecti* (The Hague, 1650), p. 154.

32 Bacon had acknowledged that “if Time stood still” custom should be preferred to “New Things.” However, time “moveth so round that a Froward Retention of Custome, is as Turbulent a Thing, as an *Innovation*: And they that Reverence too much Old Times, are but a scorne to the New.” Francis Bacon, ‘Of Innovations,’ in idem, *The Essayes or Counsels, Civill and Morall* (Oxford, 2000), pp. 75–6.

that have already been observed for some time, have, if they are in good condition, more authority than those ancient ones.”<sup>33</sup> In short, if custom was king, then Chronos was emperor and Clio the emperor’s mistress. The effect of this ‘epistemological’ hierarchy on the role of religion in Boxhorn’s works and their republications around 1700 will be the focus of the remainder of this study.

#### 4 Custom and the Protestant Nation: Melchior Leydekker and the *Nederlantsche historie*

Around 1700 a number of Boxhorn’s works were republished. First was a new edition of the *Nederlantsche historie* (Dutch History) in Utrecht in 1700. The man responsible for this edition was Melchior Leydekker (1642–1721). Born in Middelburg, Leydekker studied theology, first at Utrecht under Gisbertus Voetius (1589–1676), then at Leiden under Johannes Hoornbeeck (1617–66) and Johannes Cocceius (1603–69). At the age of 21 Leydekker became a minister in his native province of Zeeland. In this capacity he developed into such an ardent defender of Reformed orthodoxy and advocate of the Further Reformation that Voetius dubbed him “the Zealot of orthodoxy” (*orthodoxiae Zelota*). In 1678 these credentials earned Leydekker an appointment as professor of theology at Utrecht University. There Leydekker continued his defense of orthodox Calvinism, picking fights with Dutch radicals such as Balthasar Bekker (1634–98) and Frederik van Leenhof (1647–1713).<sup>34</sup> Leydekker’s zeal to defend the true faith led him to Boxhorn’s *Nederlantsche historie*.

The first edition of the *Nederlantsche historie* had been published in 1649. Brought out a year after the peace of Münster, the book was meant to offer a justification of the Dutch Revolt against King Philip II of Spain. The immediate cause is not hard to discern. The Dutch, according to Boxhorn, had revolted for “no other cause than the forced and wrested defense of our innocence and freedom.”<sup>35</sup> Boxhorn, however, does not believe that the more fundamental

33 “Fallit plerosque antiquitatis autoritas & nomen. Nam nova, quae in veterum locum substituta & jam aliquandiu observata sunt, si bene se habeant, majoris sunt, quam vetera illa autoritatis. Sed & quae nunc antiqua dicuntur, & non alio titulo quam isto repetuntur, aliquando fuere nova, sicut ille apud Tacitum est locutus.” Boxhorn, *Disquisitiones politicae* (see above, n. 31), pp. 184–5. Reference to Tacitus, *Annals* 11.24.7.

34 J. P. de Bie et al., ed., *Biographisch woordenboek van Protestantische godgeleerden in Nederland*, 6 vols. (The Hague, 1907–49), 5: 772–85; Jonathan I. Israel, *Radical Enlightenment: Philosophy and the Making of Modernity, 1650–1750*, 2nd ed. (Oxford, 2002), pp. 27–8, 383, 391, 410–3; P. C. Hoek, *Melchior Leydekker (1642–1721): Een onderzoek naar de structuur van de theologie van een gereformeerd scholasticus* (Amsterdam, 2013), pp. 36–78.

35 “Eenen oorlooch, waer van ten laetsten geene andere oorsaeck is geweest als de opgedrongen ende afgeperste verdedinge van onse onnooselheit ende vryheit....” Boxhorn, *Nederlantsche historie* (see above, n. 21), pp. 4–5.

causes behind the Revolt can be so easily comprehended. “The change in religion and the worldly government in the Netherlands ... did not happen so suddenly.”<sup>36</sup> To understand this change in Dutch society, Boxhorn takes the reader back to the twelfth century, when members of the Waldensians, a proto-Protestant sect, moved to the Netherlands, as they were by “either the peculiar freedom that they understood to belong to the inhabitants there; or the said and known character of this people [i.e., the Dutch].”<sup>37</sup> Boxhorn thus makes a positive connection between local Dutch customs and the arrival of the true faith in the Netherlands.

In stark contrast to this positive connection stands the antithesis Boxhorn draws between the clergy and Dutch customs and traditions. As Boxhorn explains, the Waldensians’ arrival triggered a historical process in which the spread of the true faith in the Netherlands went hand in hand with a mounting oppression of Dutch society by the clergy, who disregarded and trampled on local privileges, as during the misguided witch trials in Arras during the second half of the fifteenth century.<sup>38</sup>

From his preface to the 1700 edition of the *Nederlantsche historie*, it becomes clear that it was precisely the positive and negative correlations between Dutch local customs, on the one hand, and Protestantism and Catholicism, respectively, on the other, that made the book so attractive to Leydecker. He lists “the venerability of our ancestral antiquities” and “the Love for our Reformed Religion” as two of the reasons that led him to republish the *Nederlantsche historie*.<sup>39</sup> These two reasons are closely connected, because Leydecker ranks the Reformed religion among the ancestral antiquities of the Dutch. To substantiate this view, Leydecker brought out Boxhorn’s *Nederlantsche historie* together with a Dutch translation of the *Sulpitius Belgicus* (The Dutch Sulpicius, 1656), written by Boxhorn’s friend and biographer, the minister

36 “veranderinghe in de Godtsdienst ende het Weereltlijcke bestier in Nederlandt ... soo plotselijck niet gesciet wesen.” Boxhorn, *Nederlantsche historie* (see above, n. 21), p. v.

37 “t sy aengelockt door de sonderlinge vryheit, die sy verstonden aldaer den ingeseten toe te comen; t sy de geseggelijcke ende bekende inborst van dit volck.” Boxhorn, *Nederlantsche historie* (see above, n. 21), p. 10. The Waldensians were the followers of Peter Waldo († ca. 1205), a merchant from Lyon. To substantiate his view that the Waldensians can be seen as the predecessors of contemporary Protestantism, Boxhorn supplies the readers with some articles of faith. Thus the Waldensians denounced the primacy of the bishop of Rome, pleaded for the destruction of images, and abhorred the worship of saints and the practices of Roman rituals. *Ibid.*, pp. 12, 34–5.

38 Boxhorn dedicates around fifty pages—almost one-fourth of the *Nederlantsche historie*—to the witch trials in Arras.

39 “de eerbiedigheid voor onse vaderlijke oudheden, de Liefde van onse Gereformeerde Godsdienst ... gaf ons daer toe meningvuldige reden.” Melchior Leydecker, ‘Voorreden tot den leser,’ in: Marcus Zuerius Boxhorn, *Nederlantsche historie*, ed. Melchior Leydecker (Utrecht, 1700), p. i.

Jacobus Baselius (1623–61).<sup>40</sup> In the *Sulpitius* Baselius traced the beginnings of the Christian faith in the Netherlands back to Saint Maternus of Cologne (ca. 285–315), who, in Baselius's anachronistic account, started to preach the Gospel in Dutch towns as Maastricht and Tongeren from the year 90 onwards.<sup>41</sup> Armed with both Boxhorn and Baselius, Leydecker claims that the Reformed religion—and especially its tenet of justification by faith—was and is “the old Religion of the Dutch.”<sup>42</sup>

This claim enables him to attack not only Catholicism but also Arminianism as a degeneration of ancient Dutch culture and custom.<sup>43</sup> For it was in defense of “the ancient *Teaching, Freedom and Privileges*” that the Dutch had taken up arms against Philip II, who had connived with the Pope “to dominate the free Netherlands”—a freedom “which Christianity and the Fatherland had given to her”—“and to rule the Citizens, in *Ecclesiastical* and *Civil* matters, with an unlimited tyranny and power.”<sup>44</sup>

In Leydecker's description of the past, the Protestant religion in its orthodox Reformed guise had been an integral part of Dutch society since the first century. Even when, during the Middle Ages, its proto-Protestantism had temporarily been eclipsed by the doctrines of Rome, it had lent a sense of stability to Dutch custom, with which it was intimately intertwined. Such a static view of custom and society, however, was far from Boxhorn's mind, as we have noticed above. Boxhorn emphasized change, not continuity, as Leydecker does. The implications of this emphasis on change for the place of religion in society would be great.

40 For Baselius, see De Bie, *Biographisch woordenboek* (see above, n. 34), 1: 333–4; P. C. Molhuysen et al., ed., *Nieuw Nederlandsch biografisch woordenboek*, 10 vols. (1911–37; repr. Amsterdam, 1974), 9: 68–9. Baselius probably named his book after Sulpicius Severus (363–ca. 425), a Christian author from Aquitaine, who had written a history of the world.

41 Among Maternus's audience were the Batavians, the legendary forefathers of the Hollanders. Jacobus Baselius, ‘Den Nederlandschen Sulpitius,’ in: Boxhorn, *Nederlantsche historie* (see above, n. 39), pp. 1–11.

42 “Zy wilden dog de oude Religie der Nederlanders verandert hebben, en 't is haer ook gelukt in de X. Provincien....” Leydecker, ‘Voorreden’ (see above, n. 39), p. xxii.

43 “De Leere van de genade is dog het oude geloof in Nederland.” ‘Voorreden’ (see above, n. 39), pp. xxiv, xxxiii–xxxiv.

44 “De *Vrye Nederlanders* moesten hare *vryheid* bewaren, welke haer het Christendom en het Vaderland toebagten ... 't Geen daer na te meer bleek in de raedslagen van *Philips* Koning van *Spanjen* met de Paus van *Romen*, gesmeed om het vrye *Nederland* te overheer[s]en, en de *Borgeren Kerkelyk* en *Politijk* met een onbepaalde dwinglandy en mogentheid te regeren. Dog daer tegen streed de edelmoedigheid der *Nederlanders*, welke haer aenrade en drong om de aloude *Leer, Vryheid* en *Voorregten* te verdedigen.” ‘Voorreden’ (see above, n. 39), p. xxx.

## 5 Custom and the Confessional State: Gerard de Vries and the *Institutiones politicae*

Boxhorn's political works were met with a last flash of early-eighteenth-century interest with the 1702 publication of the *Institutiones politicae*. This final edition of Boxhorn's political *magnus opus* was issued thanks to the Utrecht professor of philosophy Gerard de Vries (1648–1705). A native of Utrecht, where he had studied with Gisbertus Voetius, De Vries moved to Leiden in 1671 to pursue an academic career at the town's renowned university. However, the audacity of Cartesian philosophers such as Abraham Heidanus (1597–1678) and Johannes de Raey (1622–1702) so disgusted him that in 1674 he decided to leave Leiden and return to Utrecht. There De Vries became professor of logic and metaphysics and developed a philosophical empiricism to combat Cartesianism and its evil offspring Spinozism.<sup>45</sup>

As a professor of philosophy, De Vries also considered it his duty to teach politics, which he treated as a branch of moral philosophy. In his teachings, De Vries used a range of historical examples and modern authors, including Hugo Grotius (1583–1645), Thomas Hobbes (1588–1679) and Samuel Pufendorf (1632–94).<sup>46</sup> Yet De Vries still felt that his lectures lacked certain “unique examples,” especially regarding the Dutch Republic. Hence he jumped at the chance offered by Johannes Visch, a local publisher, to republish Boxhorn's *Institutiones politicae*. De Vries believed that this work not only was full of relevant material but also contained political advice that respected the time-honored connection between what was morally right (*honestum*) and what was useful (*utile*)—a holy bond that Niccolò Machiavelli (1469–1527) and Hobbes had rendered asunder.<sup>47</sup> For my present purpose, I will focus on what the *Institutiones politicae*—and by proxy De Vries—has to say about the relationship between religion and the state, and the role that custom plays in that relationship.

In the *Institutiones politicae* Boxhorn—like Hobbes in *Leviathan*—depicts the state as an artificial construct that runs contrary to man's natural equality

45 For biographical details, see the entry ‘Vries, Gerard de (1648–1705),’ in: *The Dictionary of Seventeenth and Eighteenth-Century Dutch Philosophers* (see above, n. 12), 2: 1052–5. For an interpretation of De Vries's philosophy, see Israel, *Radical Enlightenment* (see above, n. 34), pp. 479–80.

46 For an analysis of De Vries's political thought, see E. H. Kossmann, *Political Thought in the Dutch Republic: Three Studies* (Amsterdam, 2000), pp. 93–5.

47 Marcus Zuerius Boxhorn, *Institutiones politicae* (Utrecht, 1702), pp. i–xi.

and freedom.<sup>48</sup> A device is therefore necessary to create some unnatural inequality and to keep that ambitious, greedy, and egocentric animal called man in check.<sup>49</sup> Religion, according to Boxhorn, is precisely that instrument of inequality and restraint. On the one hand, religion gives rulers a certain air of divinity, thus allowing them to appear special or superior in the eyes of their fellow men.<sup>50</sup> On the other hand, religion instills fear in people's hearts by threatening subjects and rulers alike with "very severe punishment" if one of them does not properly fulfill their expected duties—a view also held by the famous Dutch etcher Romeyn de Hooghe (1645–1708).<sup>51</sup>

Now, ideally, every state has only one religion, for "there can be only one true religion and only one religion that can please God." Boxhorn, however, immediately pulls the rug out from under this axiom by pointing out that the state's religious configuration depends not on a religion's veracity but on its contribution to the state's welfare. Hence, religious toleration is not only admissible but even obligatory if it will benefit the state.<sup>52</sup> To prove his point, Boxhorn refers

48 For Hobbes's view of the artificial nature of the state, see Glenn Burgess, 'England and Scotland,' in: Howell A. Lloyd et al., ed., *European Political Thought, 1450–1700: Religion, Law and Philosophy* (New Haven, 2007), pp. 332–75, there 366–8.

49 For an analysis of Boxhorn's view of human nature and the nature of the state, see Jaap Nieuwstraten, 'Why the Wealthy Should Rule: Marcus Zuerius Boxhorn's Defence of Holland's Aristocratic Mercantile Regime,' in: Jan Hartman et al., ed., *Public Offices, Personal Demands: Capability in Governance in the Seventeenth-Century Dutch Republic* (Newcastle upon Tyne, 2009), pp. 126–49.

50 "Sed & Legislatores antiqui Deorum se uti Consillis fingebant, quod & observavit *Liv. Lib. I. Hist. de Numâ, cap. 19*. Tantumque ejus fictio haec profuit Reipublicae ut *Augustinus* dicat, *Romulum urbis, Numam Reipublicae Romanae Conditorem extitisse.*" Boxhorn, *Institutiones politicae* (see above, n. 25), p. 13. Reference to Augustine, *De civitate Dei*, 1.3.

51 "Ea, quae Magistratus subditis, & hi vicissim illis debent, non alia ratione, aut sanctiora fiunt, aut facilius obtineri possunt, quàm si supremam aliquam potestatem, illâ supremorum Magistratum majorem, esse agnoscant, & Imperantes & obsequentes, cujus scilicet jussu Imperia sint constituta, injectoque metu gravissimae poenae, in eos, qui aut male imperaturi, aut debitum obsequium detrectaturi sunt." Boxhorn, *Institutiones politicae* (see above, n. 25), p. 1. For De Hooghe, see the contributions of Frank Daudeij and Trudelien van 't Hof to this volume.

52 "Equidem una tantum religio vera esse potest, & una Deo placere, sed interim Magistratui placere plures possunt religiones, cum plures, quantumvis falsae, Rempublicam possint juvare; neque illa tolerantia adversa est aut divinis, aut gentium institutis." Boxhorn, *Institutiones politicae* (see above, n. 25), p. 82; "Itaque si fieri possit, & in eâ abunde prospectum sit Reipublicae, una; sin aliter expediat ad Reipublicae augmentum, non tantum una, nec tamen omnis tolerari debet." *Ibid.*, p. 82.

to the Dutch Republic, where such a policy of religious tolerance had led to great prosperity.<sup>53</sup>

Boxhorn's defense of religious toleration did not mean that he believed that all religious creeds should be treated equally. On the contrary, even in a religiously plural society one creed should dominate, especially among the governing elite, in order to prevent dissension.<sup>54</sup> "Which means, that those who are of one and the same religion, are in charge of the state and promote their one religion as much as possible."<sup>55</sup> This statement shows that Boxhorn, despite his rather instrumental views on religion and religious toleration, had not entirely given up on the ideal of the confessional state. In turn, this helps to explain why Gerard de Vries—one of the champions of Reformed orthodoxy and an anti-Machiavellian—still found it possible to promote a book in which—when push comes to shove—religious and ethical considerations are subordinated to the material interests of the state.

But Boxhorn's defense of the ideal of the confessional state also carried a great risk. The desirability of having a state in which ideally all citizens belong to a national or public Church had now become a matter of political convenience. For Boxhorn the religious composition of society depended no longer on the revelation of God's will but on a certain religious composition's chance of success. In turn, this success depended on its adaptation to local circumstances and customs, as Boxhorn had explained in the opening chapter of the *Institutiones politicae*. That this principle also holds good in the religious realm Boxhorn made clear by pointing to the Inquisition. In Boxhorn's view, the Spanish had made a crucial mistake by introducing the Inquisition into the Low Countries. Their error had not been that the Inquisition was an instrument of the devil but that its methods had been at odds with the freedom-loving nature particular to the Dutch. This mismatch between local customs and religious institutions had ensured that in the Low Countries the Inquisition

53 "Ubi autem Resp. ad ornamentum aut augmentum sui plures requirit, admittendae quoque sunt. Id enim facit i. ad augmentum Reip. ac multitudinis. Sic in his locis, quod tanta sit hominum frequentia, id praecipue effecit; quod omnis ferè religio recipiatur." Boxhorn, *Institutiones politicae* (see above, n. 25), p. 87.

54 "Diximus §. 19. etiam, ubi diversae sunt religiones, expedire unam praedominari, ne diversae religionis hominibus rerum summae admotis quilibet eorum ad sua trahat & distrahat Remp. quod incommodum regnum Poloniae experitur: quia enim diversarum Religionum Nobiles ad comitia conveniunt, frequentes existent dissensiones." Boxhorn, *Institutiones politicae* (see above, n. 25), p. 88.

55 "Adeò ut cautè agendum sit, initiis, si fieri possit, oppressis, si tamen vires acceperint, abstinendum. Sed &, ubi diversae religiones sunt in usu, expedit unam dominari, hoc est, qui unius ac ejusdem religionis sunt, Reipublicae praeesse, & quantum fieri potest, unam eorum promovere." Boxhorn, *Institutiones politicae* (see above, n. 25), p. 83.

had failed to garner the successes it had achieved in Italy.<sup>56</sup> The Spaniards had not known their history—and had paid dearly for it.<sup>57</sup>

Custom, then, triumphs over religious purity and veracity, and is not—as Leydecker had pictured it to be in the case of the Netherlands—a symbiotic partner of the true faith. That someone like De Vries, who shared Leydecker's religious sympathies, had no qualms about promoting a book that expressed such views indicates that even the religiously orthodox were not immune to the variety of intellectual and political impulses which, around 1700, led Europeans to rethink their religion and its role in society. Indeed, they were among the drivers of these impulses, which resonated throughout the Continent and across the sea to the British Isles and beyond.

## 6 Custom and Religious Toleration: Charles Davenant and the *Disquisitiones politicae*

In 1701 an anonymous English edition of Boxhorn's *Disquisitiones politicae* appeared under the title *Arcana imperii detecta* (State Secrets Revealed). The book became quite popular, especially among England's political elite. Benjamin Franklin tells us that during his first stay in England, between 1725 and 1726, he had learned that “a certain very great Personage” frequently studied the *Arcana imperii detecta*. Franklin subsequently bought the book and later used it in his famous correspondence with the mysterious ‘Charles de Weissenstein’ to illustrate the perversity of the English—the book containing some Machiavellian advice.<sup>58</sup>

56 “Ex hac quoque *ingeniorum & circumstantiarum diversitate* illud est, quod una eademque res saepè alio atque alio nomine, prout usurpata fuit, nominetur. *E.g.* Inquisitioni Hispanicae quidam Tyrannidem, quidam prudentiam inesse existimant, & utrumque verum. Nam, quia eâ usi Hispanio in Belgarum gente in libertate & *ad libertatem natâ*, meritò Tyrannidem dixerunt. At prudentiae usus apparuit in regno Neapolitano expugnando atque retinendo: Quod constitui non potuisset, nisi inquisitio fuisset adhibita ... Atque hinc videre est, quàm peccatum sit ab Hispanis, quod *non consideratâ gentium diversitate*, uno eodemque modo cum Belgis atque Italis egerint ... Sic adaeque ad Reipubl. membrorum medelam, quorum animi saepe corporis vitio laborant, *oportet semper ad ingenia & mores incolarum attendere.*” Boxhorn, *Institutiones politicae* (see above, n. 25), p. 3 (italics mine).

57 In the *Disquisitiones politicae*, Boxhorn uses the discussions about the Dutch Revolt in the secret council of Philip II (1527–98) as a case study to demonstrate that by opting for violence, the Spaniards had taken recourse to measures that were out of touch with local circumstances and hence impossible to carry out successfully. Boxhorn, *Disquisitiones politicae* (see above, n. 31), pp. 272–4.

58 Edwin Wolf 2nd and Kevin J. Hayes, *The Library of Benjamin Franklin* (Philadelphia, 2006), pp. 8, 146–7; *Letters from France: The Private Diplomatic Correspondence of*

The *Arcana imperii detecta* merits attention for at least two reasons. First, in addition to the original sixty historical case studies by Boxhorn, the book contains ten extra case studies. These ten case studies all deal with issues that were particularly relevant at the time of its publication, such as the English union with Scotland, the succession to the English throne, and the two partition treaties signed by William III (1650–1702) and Louis XIV (1638–1715) to divide the Spanish Empire. In other words, Boxhorn's *Disquisitiones politicae* was translated into English and deliberately reworked to contribute to contemporary English debates. Important for the present study is that one of these debates centered on the question of the proper religious organization of English society.

The other reason why the *Arcana imperii detecta* warrants consideration concerns the person or persons responsible for its translation and the additional material. Information on this topic is extremely scarce. Only one source, the Scottish politician Sir John Sinclair (1754–1835), provides a name, namely that of the political economist and Tory pamphleteer Charles Davenant (1656–1714).<sup>59</sup> Sinclair's claim can be supported by a number of arguments. For the sake of brevity only two will be mentioned here. First, there is much overlap between the political advice to be found in the *Arcana* and Davenant's own political positions. The *Arcana*, for example, defends the notion of excluding foreigners from political office and argues against the Spanish partition treaties.<sup>60</sup> Davenant was in cahoots with 'old' Whigs like Robert Harley (1661–1724) and Tories who lambasted William III's Dutch advisers, while in his *Essays*—published the same year as the *Arcana*—Davenant attacks the Spanish partition treaties.<sup>61</sup> Second, both the *Arcana* and Davenant's works of the late 1690s and early 1700s were all published by the London bookseller and publisher James Knapton (†1736).<sup>62</sup> Since no other candidate presents himself at

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*Benjamin Franklin 1776–1785* (New York, 2006), pp. 24–8; Neil L. York, 'Benjamin Franklin, the Mysterious "Charles de Weissenstein," and Britain's Failure to Coax Revolutionary Americans Back into the Empire,' in: *Benjamin Franklin's Intellectual World*, ed. Paul E. Kerry and Matthew S. Holland (Lanham, Md., 2012), pp. 43–76.

59 Sir John Sinclair, *The History of the Public Revenue of the British Empire. Part III*, 2nd ed. (London, 1790), p. 132.

60 Marcus Zuerius Boxhorn, *Arcana imperii detecta* (London, 1701), pp. 282–93.

61 J. A. Downie, *Robert Harley and the Press: Propaganda and Public Opinion in the Age of Swift and Defoe* (Cambridge, 1979), pp. 37–56.

62 Richard Stone, *Some British Empiricists in the Social Sciences, 1650–1900* (Cambridge, 1997), p. 469. Besides the *Essays* of 1701, these works include Davenant's *Essay on East India Trade* (1696); *Discourses on the Public Revenues*, 2 vols. (1698); *An Essay on the Probable Methods of Making a People Gainers in the Balance of Trade* (1699); *Discourse upon Grants and Resumptions* (1700); and *The Essays on the Balance of Trade* (1702).

the moment, I will stick to Charles Davenant as the person behind the English translation of the *Disquisitiones politicae* and the new material added to it.

Born in London in 1656, Davenant traveled to the Dutch Republic in the mid-1670s. It is quite possible that during this trip he came across and acquired some of Boxhorn's works, for, as we will see, his ideas and those of Boxhorn show some interesting similarities. Back in England, he became a Commissioner of Excise and, under James II (1633–1701), sat in Parliament for Saint Ives. The 'Protestant winds' of the Glorious Revolution deprived him of office, however, and turned Davenant into a Tory pamphleteer. In this capacity he wrote the *Essays*, which contained "a highly partisan attack on William III's foreign policy."<sup>63</sup> It is against this background of party rivalries between Whigs and Tories, and between 'court' and 'country,' that we must interpret Davenant's appropriation of Boxhorn's *Disquisitiones politicae*.<sup>64</sup>

Davenant has received a mixed assessment. His biographer David Waddell dismissed him as "neither an original thinker, nor a practical man of affairs, but merely a competent publicist."<sup>65</sup> John Pocock, on the other hand, heralded Davenant as "the most ambitious neo-Machiavellian thinker of the early Augustan period."<sup>66</sup> Many subsequent scholars have agreed with Pocock's verdict, although interpretations differ about the precise nature of Davenant's 'Machiavellianism.'<sup>67</sup>

To these interpretations can now be added the assertion that Davenant also had a particular 'Boxhornian' twist to him. Like Boxhorn, for example, he perceives the state as an artificial 'body, composed of many individuals.'<sup>68</sup> Second, both Boxhorn and Davenant see trade as a means to wealth, which,

63 The best biographical information on Davenant can still be found in David Waddell, 'Charles Davenant (1656–1714): A Biographical Sketch,' *Economic History Review*, 2nd series, 11 (1958–9), 279–88.

64 These two opposite blocks were not always identical. Indeed, English politics during the reign of William III was characterized by a fluidity of party divisions. Barry Coward, *The Stuart Age: England, 1603–1714* (Harlow, 2012), pp. 359–416.

65 Waddell, 'Charles Davenant' (see above, n. 63).

66 J. G. A. Pocock, *The Machiavellian Moment: Florentine Political Thought and the Atlantic Republican Tradition: With a New Afterword by the Author*, 2nd ed. (Princeton, 2003), pp. 423–61.

67 See, e.g., Istvan Hont, 'Free Trade and the Economic Limits to National Politics: Neo-Machiavellian Political Economy Reconsidered,' in: idem, *Jealousy of Trade: International Competition and the National-State in Historical Perspective* (Cambridge, 2005), pp. 201–46.

68 "Respublica est corpus multorum ad agnoscendam ejusdem Imperii Majestatem, iisdem legibus, omnium & singulorum utilitatis causa, imbutum." Boxhorn, *Institutiones politicae* (see above, n. 25), p. 8; Charles Davenant, 'Peace at Home,' in: idem, *The Political and Commercial Works*, 5 vols. (London, 1771), 5: 17.

in turn, forms the backbone of a country's military prowess.<sup>69</sup> Davenant is also 'Boxhornian' in the sense that he adheres to the principle that political effectiveness necessitates adaptation to local circumstances and customs. Compare, for example, the following three statements:

That form of ruling must be judged the best that suits the characters and the interests of its inhabitants the most. (Boxhorn, *Institutiones politicae*, p. 258)

The Laws of all Countries must be suited to the Bent and Inclinations of the People. (Charles Davenant, *An Essay on the East-India Trade* [James Knapton, 1696], p. 114)

All things are to be suited to Times and Things. (Boxhorn/Davenant, *Arcana imperii detecta* [James Knapton, 1701], p. 91)

In one of the case studies added to Boxhorn's *Disquisitiones politicae*, Davenant applies this line of reasoning to the religious situation in England around 1700. The question it specifically addresses concerns religious toleration. Or, to be more precise, the question whether Catholics should be allowed freedom of worship in England. The answer is revealing.

Tho' it seems to be as it were an Injustice to allow some that dissent from the National Church, the Liberty of their Religion and Worship, when others are totally denied it; yet there may be some Circumstances of time when it may very equitably and prudentially be done, as in the Case of our present settlement in *England*; when to encourage any of the Religion of the abdicated Prince, would be to encourage the loss of our own Religion and Liberty to boot: But otherwise a right Tolleration ought to be extended unto all, since all equally plead Conscience, of which God alone is the Judge.<sup>70</sup>

Three things stand out in this answer. First, Davenant accepts the existence of a national church—here, the Church of England—as a given and does not call into question its place in society. In this, he followed the opinion of the

69 For Boxhorn, see Jaap Nieuwstraten, 'Empire, Economy and the Dawn of the Enlightenment: Some Explorations into Seventeenth-Century Dutch Intellectual History,' in: *The Enlightenment: Political, Economic and Social Aspects*, ed. Evert School, special issue of *United Academics Journal of Social Sciences*, 3, no. 15 (2013), 30–47, there 34–8. For Davenant, see Hont, 'Free Trade and the Economic Limits' (see above, n. 67), esp. pp. 201–22.

70 Boxhorn, *Arcana imperii detecta* (see above, n. 60), pp. 263–6.

majority of the English population.<sup>71</sup> Second, Davenant seems to regard religious toleration as a kind of divine right that all human beings possess—a view shared by Boxhorn.<sup>72</sup> Third, in typical ‘Boxhornian’ style, Davenant denies Catholics this right on the grounds that local circumstances dictate that in England religious toleration could be extended to certain religious groups outside the Church of England—as indeed was the case, albeit grudgingly and within certain confined limits—but not to Catholics.<sup>73</sup> The risks of allowing Catholics the right to worship freely are simply too great “in the Case of our present settlement in *England*.”

With his denial of extending religious toleration to Catholics, Davenant once again opposed the policy of William III, who wanted English Catholics to have freedom of worship—a wish which Parliament refused to grant. Davenant’s ‘total’ denial also contrasts with the position taken by men like John Locke (1632–1704), who denied Catholics the right to worship in public but not in private.<sup>74</sup> But it was in tune with the view—commonly held in England around 1700—that England was a Protestant nation, to whose political and religious culture Catholicism was completely alien.<sup>75</sup> In that sense, Boxhorn’s *Disquisitiones politicae* offered Davenant the intellectual ammunition to attack the paper bulwarks of his enemies in a war in which he had custom and popular opinion on his side.

## 7 On the Threshold of a New Era? Custom, Religion and the Ascent of Historical Relativism around 1700

Boxhorn was very much a man of his time. An orthodox Calvinist by birth and upbringing, he saw no problems with following the latest trends in Late Humanism, such as the rise of Neo-Aristotelianism, Grotian Natural Law, and

71 Julian Hoppit, *A Land of Liberty? England 1689–1727*, 2nd ed. (Oxford, 2002), pp. 214–5, 222–3.

72 “Et nihil magis Religioni & paci publicae est adversum, quàm vim usurpare, & acerbitate suppliciorum in eos grassari, qui non ejusdem nobiscum sunt religionis. Nam in negotio religionis divino juri, & *privatae unius cujusque conscientiae, in quam solus sibi Deus imperium servavit*, cedere oportet jus dominationis.” Boxhorn, *Institutiones politicae* (see above, n. 25), p. 84 (italics mine).

73 Coward, *The Stuart Age* (see above, n. 64), pp. 374–8.

74 John Marshall, *John Locke, Toleration and Early Enlightenment Culture: Religious Intolerance and Arguments for Religious Toleration in Early Modern and ‘Early Enlightenment’ Europe* (Cambridge, 2006), pp. 135, 682–94.

75 Hoppit, *A Land of Liberty?* (see above, n. 71), pp. 214–5, 221–2; Tony Claydon, *Europe and the Making of England, 1600–1760* (Cambridge, 2007), passim, but esp. pp. 28–44.

Tacitism. In that sense, Boxhorn was merely tracking the shadows of the great men of his age, especially Grotius and Hobbes.<sup>76</sup>

The mixing of all these different currents of thought produced in Boxhorn a historical relativism in which almost everything was subjected to the winds of time. This included custom—as the outcome of a mixture of different ingredients which were all liable to change—and religion—both as an independent phenomenon and as part of a particular culture. Both custom and religion were historical products which differed from place to place and from time to time. Intentionally or not, that observation reduced the place of religion in society to a mere historical category. It also delegated questions concerning religious toleration to the realm of political prudence, even though Boxhorn had not entirely given up on more conservative ideas like the ideal of the confessional state.

The mixed reception of Boxhorn's ideas by Leydecker, De Vries, and Davenant indicates that around 1700 neither a purely instrumental nor a modern view of religion had yet been accepted. None of these three men advocated a separation of church and state, nor did they plead for a form of religious toleration which would embrace all faiths. Leydecker, De Vries, and Davenant take for granted a public or national Church, as well as the exclusion of certain religious minorities. Indeed, none of these three authors seem to have questioned the desirability of a confessional state. While they may have quarreled about the content of the ideal true religion—as Leydecker certainly did!—all three men would probably have agreed that in a perfect world the congregation of true believers would overlap with the association of the citizens of the state.

The world, however, was anything but perfect. Men were foul, corrupted creatures and their dispersion around the world meant that a range of differences existed among them—custom and religion being prime among them. Leydecker tried to bridge the gap between custom and religion by basically merging the true faith with local Dutch customs. Luther or Calvin, who detested local customs, would have abhorred such a merger. They would have had an equally vehement aversion to Boxhorn's—and in his wake De Vries's

76 For the influence of Tacitism on Grotius, see e.g. Jan Waszink, 'Your Tacitism or Mine? Modern and Early-Modern Conceptions of Tacitus and Tacitism,' *History of European Ideas* 36 (2010), 375–85. For the influence of Neo-Aristotelianism and Grotian Natural Law on Hobbes, see Annabel S. Brett, *Changes of State: Nature and the Limits of the City in Early Modern Natural Law* (Princeton, 2011), passim. For the influence of all three currents of thought on Boxhorn, see Jaap Nieuwstraten, *Historical and Political Thought in the Seventeenth-Century Dutch Republic: The Case of Marcus Zuerius Boxhorn (1612–1653)* (Rotterdam, 2012).

and Davenant's—subjection of the religious to the political, and, in turn, to the historical.

That religiously orthodox figures such as Leydecker, De Vries, and Davenant could accept Boxhorn's views of custom and religion, and use them for their own purposes, demonstrates that around 1700 the conservative confessional clouds that had loomed over Europe during the sixteenth and a large part of the seventeenth centuries were slowly moving away. The connection Leydecker and Davenant made between local customs and a specific type of religion contributed to the notion—popular during the Enlightenment—that different nations can and may have different creeds that are more suited to their particular characters and level of development. The acceptance of the universal application of freedom of conscience by De Vries and Davenant can be said to symbolize the advance of a more tolerant atmosphere in the Dutch Republic and Europe during the eighteenth century. Editing, customizing, and republishing the works of writers like Boxhorn, made Leydecker, De Vries and Davenant living examples of that very Boxhornian notion: “times change, and we change with them.”

# Romeyn de Hooghe's *Hieroglyphica*: An Ambivalent Lexicographical History of Religion

*Trudelien van 't Hof*

## Abstract

This article analyses De Hooghe's *Hieroglyphica* as a contribution to the unfolding debate on what we have come to call 'enlightened religion'. First Van 't Hof demonstrates the mix of genres that shaped this unique and enigmatic book, with its 63 chapters built around often very complicated allegorical prints, with explanatory text as secondary to the imagery. Consequently the author identifies two main strands of argumentation contained in this intriguing volume, one historical and one comparative. Both channel a lot of contemporary critique on confessional religion. Many images depict the genealogy of religion as one of decline and corruption. The historical warp of the book serves to show that the original revelation of religious truths to Adam in Paradise has become fatally lost in translation among his descendants and how recent reformation aims at recovering its essence. In other images, that provide the woof of the overall argument, central dogmas of Latin Christianity are compared to very similar notions in the religions of Antiquity, in Judaism and Islam, in the Eastern Churches and in some of the exotic religions of the Far East and the Americas. Although De Hooghe had a reputation for libertinage, Van 't Hof, like Daudeij, does not interpret the author of *Hieroglyphica* as an advocate of irreligion. Rather, he problematised religion, and invited the reader to shape his own informed opinion.

## 1 Introduction

An ongoing theme in early modern historiography is the relation—or discrepancy—between (Christian) religion and the Enlightenment. Many early modern thinkers and writers, especially from the late seventeenth century, have been put to the test: Were their ideas orthodox Christian or (radical) Enlightened, or did they belong to the moderate middle ground in between? The quite contradictory labels given to seventeenth-century thinkers as a result of this research are remarkable. The foregrounding of one or another

aspect of their writings is supposed to provide the answer to what their 'real' ideas concerning religion were, which then defines the category they fit. So we find the Whig member of parliament Robert Howard (1626–89) labeled both a deist and an Anglican; the clergyman and scholar John Spencer (1630–93) is referred to as a Socinian or as an Anglican; the philosopher John Toland (1670–1722) is a radical freethinker and a critical Christian; the Swiss theologian Jean Alphonse Turretin (1671–1737) is portrayed as Socinian and Calvinist; and the religiosity of the theologian and philosopher Pierre Bayle (1647–1706) is still much debated.<sup>1</sup>

The same sense of apparent contradiction goes for the subject of this paper, a book by the Dutch artist Romeyn de Hooghe (1645–1708) entitled *Hieroglyphica* (1735). If only a few elements from the book are selected, it can be seen as a radical work foregrounding the ingredients of Enlightened 'anti-clericalism, historicization, and rationalization.' If one focuses on other parts, however, *Hieroglyphica* seems to be a product of a Reformed position that rejects 'new' philosophical ideas and stresses the authority of the Bible. The co-existence of elements in the book that could sustain contradictory judgments on De Hooghe's own position shows that *Hieroglyphica*, like many other early modern religious works, defies the classification of authors along the convenient lines of conservatism and Enlightenment. The larger question, then, is whether it makes much sense to stick such labels to authors and their books and to assume a division of the Enlightenment into different, and sharply demarcated, strands (radical, moderate, conservative/religious). Perhaps it is better to argue, as I will in this paper, that around 1700 the notions of true religion were complex, ambiguous, contradictory, and to some extent undecided. Furthermore, there are reasons to assume that this ambiguity was not solely the result of the rise of radical Enlightened philosophical insights. It also grew from within confessional Christianity, which was never as monolithic and inflexible as it is presented in some contemporary analyses.<sup>2</sup>

Without entering the theoretical debate about the exact nature of 'the Enlightenment,' or into the dynamic nature of theology in the confessional age, this chapter provides nuance to the idea that intellectuals of the time necessarily harbored fixed ideas about religion by examining the ambiguity and flexibility in the notion of true (Christian) religion in De Hooghe's remarkable *Hieroglyphica*.

1 See also Dmitri Levitin, 'From Sacred History to the History of Religion: Paganism, Judaism, and Christianity in European Historiography from Reformation to "Enlightenment,"' *The Historical Journal* 55 (2012), 117–60, there 159.

2 Levitin, 'From Sacred History to the History of Religion' (see above, n. 1), pp. 119, 133.

## 2 The Author and His Book

Born in 1645 the son of a buttonmaker, Romeyn de Hooghe proved himself an excellent craftsman and acquired fame as one of the best, most productive engravers of his time. His etchings covered a range of topics, from depictions of battlefields and forays into political satire and theology to images showing beautiful gardens, judo skills, or pornographic scenes. The scholarly attention given to some of his work has not extended to his religious etchings. A good place to start here is his most important religious work: *Hieroglyphica, of merkbeelden der oude volkeren, namentlyk Egyptenaren, Chaldeuwen, Feniciers, Joden, Grieken, Romeynen enz. Nevens een omstandig Bericht van het Verval en voortkruypende Verbastering der Godsdiensten door verscheyde Eeuwen; en eyndelyk de Hervorming, tot op deze Tyden toe vervolgt* [Hieroglyphica, or emblems of the ancient peoples, Egyptians, Chaldeans, Fenicians, Jews, Greek, Romans etc. Containing an exhaustive essay on the progressive decline and corruption of religion through the ages, and its recent reformation until the present day]. The book, posthumously published in 1735, was written near the end of De Hooghe's life, probably around 1700.<sup>3</sup> In *Hieroglyphica* De Hooghe combined sixty-three elaborate etchings with extensive accompanying texts presented in a series of chapters. Each chapter provides an elaborate legend for one image, and together the chapters provide a story of the emergence, decay, and reformation of religion, from its beginning in ancient times until De Hooghe's own period.

Although De Hooghe had a reputation for mockery and atheism in his own time, his overall production of religious etchings was enormous. He was no theologian, but nonetheless he illustrated and probably read many religious works and can be seen as a well-informed and interested layman, part of the 'elite of the skilled.'<sup>4</sup> Such a characterization makes it interesting to look into the book that, rather than simply representing his illustrations of someone else's ideas on religion, was of De Hooghe's own conception, both in text and

3 Romeyn de Hooghe, *Hieroglyphica*, ed. Arnoldus Westerhovius (Amsterdam, 1735). Although it is not clear when exactly De Hooghe wrote *Hieroglyphica*, there are events mentioned which took place in 1702, indicating it was written in the years before his death in 1708.

4 A term coined in Jonathan Israel, *The Dutch Republic: Its Rise, Greatness, and Fall 1477–1806* (Oxford, 1995), pp. 348–51. For the phenomenon see also Patrick O'Brien, ed., *Urban Achievement in Early Modern Europe: Golden Ages in Antwerp, Amsterdam and London* (Cambridge, 2001), pp. 287–345; Wiep van Bunge, *From Stevin to Spinoza: An Essay on Philosophy in the Seventeenth-Century Dutch Republic* (Leiden, 2001), pp. 1–9; Arjan van Dixhoorn, *Lustige geesten: Rederijkers in de Noordelijke Nederlanden (1480–1650)* (Amsterdam, 2009).

image.<sup>5</sup> As such, *Hieroglyphica* can supplement and broaden the research into the religious ideas of theologians and philosophers by adding the opinions of a well-informed, skilled man hailing from a distinct sector of the middle class. In what follows I will present three cases in which De Hooghe's ideas concerning true religion are ambiguous or outright contradictory, preceded by some notions on how the genre and structure of the book—a combination of an emblematic lexicon and a history of religion—reflected conflicting views on key issues of religion and theology that De Hooghe shared with many of his contemporaries.

### 3 Genre and Structure: The Emblematic Lexicon and the History of Religion

The book's twofold title already points to *Hieroglyphica's* most remarkable feature: its combination of an encyclopedic visual compendium of religions and a verbal account of the historical development of religion. The first part of the title, *Hieroglyphics or emblems of the ancient peoples, Egyptians, Chaldeans, Fenicians, Jews, Greeks, Romans etc.*, concerns the book's design, consisting of allegorical representations of the religions and gods of ancient peoples. The word *Hieroglyphica* refers to a long, complex tradition concerning ideographic scripts, especially Egyptian hieroglyphics. Greek thinkers viewed these hieroglyphs to be 'holy' signs, bearers of antique wisdom that could yield up the essence and origins of all things.<sup>6</sup> The Renaissance witnessed a true cult of the hieroglyph, reviving classical ideas and myths about hieroglyphs as bearers of ancient wisdom, secrets, and the origins of things. Despite their popularity, this knowledge was not for everyone; hieroglyphs were believed to be open to the learned and closed to the vulgar. De Hooghe is critical toward 'veiled images' being bearers of religious deceit. At the same time, however, he used the symbols himself, which seems to indicate that the etcher uses this veiled language but applies it with a twist, so to unveil a different 'hidden religious meaning.'

5 The text, however, is not solely De Hooghe's. The book was published in 1735 (long after De Hooghe's death in 1708), after its text had been edited by a scholar of antiquity, Arnoldus Westerhovius (1677–1738). Although De Hooghe's images are the leading elements, and it seems that Westerhovius only added some elaborations, there is no complete certainty about authorship.

6 Margery Corbett and Ronald Lightbown, *The Comely Frontispiece: The Emblematic Title-Page in England, 1550–1660* (London, 1979), pp. 22, 23; Erik Iverson, *The Myth of Egypt and Its Hieroglyphs in European Tradition* (Copenhagen, 1961), p. 46.

Over time, however, hieroglyphs lost some of their arcane meanings and became just the equivalent of 'symbols,' 'allegorical images,' or even pictograms for the illiterate. Discussions about hieroglyphs resulted in many books that referred to them in their titles. De Hooghe was influenced by this vulgarizing symbolizing trend and himself contributed to the hieroglyph's vulgarization; he was an expert in the allegorical genre, especially as employed in frontispieces. But there were still connections in theory between hieroglyphs and frontispieces: like hieroglyphs, the design of frontispieces could and even should be 'open' and 'closed' at the same time. The iconography used should not be too enigmatic but certainly must not be too obvious either. It should require some form of decipherment and possess different layers of meaning, in order to intrigue and seduce people into buying the book. It is remarkable how frontispiece theory developed along the lines of hieroglyphical concealment. From the end of the Renaissance onward, title-print theory had become more iconographical and complex. Such complex symbolism needed to be not only new and inventive but also sharp-witted to prevent just any reader from readily understanding the image. Images, it was believed, needed to be 'closed to the vulgar and open to the learned.' Artists should avoid frontispieces that were too obscure and enigmatic, but they should also not produce images so commonplace that the invention required no decipherment.<sup>7</sup>

De Hooghe was sought after as an etcher of frontispieces. He practiced the art of the frontispiece on a yearly basis (for twenty years) for *De Hollandsche Mercurius*, a yearbook produced in Haarlem, where he lived. His contributions to these yearbooks offered a historical and political angle to the news.<sup>8</sup> His skills in fashioning religious imagery and allegory were developed in the illustrations he made for numerous religious works. Important in this respect was his *Alle de Voornaamste Historien des Ouden en Nieuwen Testaments* [All

7 Liselotte Dieckmann, *Hieroglyphics: The History of a Literary Symbol* (St. Louis, 1970), pp. 18–21, 32, 44, 52; Roelof van den Broek, *Corpus Hermeticum* (Amsterdam, 1991), pp. 13–25; Corbett, *The Comely Frontispiece* (see above, n. 6), pp. 12, 31. See also Jetze Touber's contribution to this volume.

8 This popularity is especially underlined by the title prints Romeyn made for *De Hollandsche Mercurius*, a magazine discussing current affairs. For twenty years the author invented title prints based on the most important events of the year, which, considering the length of this period, must have been a great success. As every chapter seems to have its own hieroglyphic frontispiece, *Hieroglyphica* can be considered an extreme version of the title-print genre, a book completely consisting of title prints in which De Hooghe proved himself capable of making allegorical representations of the gist of the history of religion. Comparing the images of *Hieroglyphica* with the title prints for other (religious) works, one sees great resemblances in the depiction of the content, as well as the composition, style, and allegorical approach.

the most relevant Histories from the Old and New Testaments] (1703).<sup>9</sup> In this work, De Hooghe provided the most important biblical stories with images that were halfway between illustrations and frontispieces combining various biblical stories. These engravings were intended for insertion into the Lindenberg Lutheran Bible. Many buyers had these images bound with their copies of the Bible, although this was prohibited by the Lutheran church. Furthermore they were re-used in Jacobus Basnage's (1653–1723) *'t Groot Waerelds Tafereel* [The Great Theater of the World] (1705/6).<sup>10</sup> Like De Hooghe's illustrations for *Hieroglyphica's* world history, his etchings for Lindenberg's biblical history also combine different genres, encompassing text and images, historical time-tables, geographical maps, and moralizing poetry. This mixture of all kinds of elements was probably intended to appeal to a larger public and therefore contribute to higher sales.<sup>11</sup>

The figures, style, composition, and allegories of the etchings in *Hieroglyphica* match the format of title-print images—they were meant to grasp the core message of the books for which they were made.<sup>12</sup> The title print of a book was

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- 9 Romeyn de Hooghe, *Alle de Voornaamste Historien des Ouden en Nieuwen Testaments Verbeeld in uytsteekende Konst-Platen, door den Wyd-beroemden Heer, en Mr. Romeyn de Hooghe. Met omstandige verklaring der Stoffen, en seer beknopte Punt-Digten, van den Eerw. Godsgel. Heer Henricus Vos. Waar by ook gevoegt zyn Nieuwe Kaarten, tot Opheldring der zaaken nodig* (Amsterdam, 1703).
- 10 Jacobus Basnage, *'t Groot Waerelds Tafereel, waarin de Heilige en Waereldsche Geschiedenissen en Veranderingen zedert de Scheppinge des Waerelds tot het Uiteinde van de Openbaaring van Johannes, worden afgemaalt, en ider Konst-prent door Godsgeleerde Wysgeerige en Waereldlyke Uitleggingen, Redeneeringen en Gedachten verciert. Benevens de Naaukeurige Tydrekeningen of Jaarboeken der Gevallen des Waerelds* (Amsterdam, 1705/1706); Wilco C. Poortman, *De Prentbijbel van Romeyn de Hooghe* (Amsterdam, 1980); idem, "De prentbijbel van Romeyn de Hooghe," *De Hoeksteen* 7 (1978), 83–90.
- 11 See for similar methods: Jo Spaans and Trudeliën van 't Hof, *Het beroerde Rome, spotprenten op de paus, in een pleidooi voor een 'Nederlandse' katholiek kerk, 1705–1724* (Hilversum, 2010).
- 12 Garrelt Verhoeven and Piet Verkrujssse, 'Verbeelding op bestelling,' in: Henk van Nierop, ed., *Romeyn de Hooghe: De verbeelding van de late Gouden Eeuw* (Zwolle, 2008), pp. 146–69, there 151. William Harry Wilson, *The Art of Romeyn de Hooghe: An Atlas to European Baroque Culture* (Cambridge, 1974), p. 6. Marjan Balkestein, ed., *Doorgaens verciert met kopere platen: Nederlandse geïllustreerde boeken uit de zeventiende eeuw* (Leiden, 1990), p. 48. Already in his own time De Hooghe's quality and inventiveness were noticed by his colleagues, even though they abhorred his behavior. The painter and writer Arnold Houbraken wrote: "Hy [Romeyn de Hooghe] [was] een man uitsteekend in groot vernuft en in vindingen, en die ik niet weet dat zyns gelyk in vaardigheid van orderneeren, in rykheid van veranderingen in de Etskonst gehad heeft waar van het oneindig getal van Boektytels en andere Printen getuygenis geven." [He (Romeyn de Hooghe) was a man who excelled in intelligence and invention, and a man unlike anyone in the skill of composition and in the wealth and variety of innovations as is witnessed by the innumerable number of book titles and other prints.] Arnold Houbraken, *De groote schouburgh der*

supposed to serve as the pictorial equivalent of the book's text; it needed to depict the complex core of the book in one image that would arouse the curiosity of potential readers. To carry out such a difficult task artists most of the time made use of allegorical imaginations, full of symbols and personifications. The ideal title print consisted of a creative and new composition of allegorical elements, which could be fully understood only by reading the book. Worn-out and well-known allegories, lacking any new approach, would not have been sufficient for the production of an interesting, attractive frontispiece.<sup>13</sup>

In *Hieroglyphica* the images are the prime medium, which is unusual, since 'hieroglyphic' frontispieces were usually considered to be mere embellishment and in any case of secondary importance to the texts for which they were made. But the hermetical, arcane connotation of the hieroglyphic genre was foregrounded in *Hieroglyphica*.<sup>14</sup> Both De Hooghe's fascination with Egypt, and the sources he used—such as the work of Athanasius Kircher (1602–80), the *Hieroglyphica* (1556) of Pierius Valerianus (1477–1558), and the *Mensa Isiaca*—indicate that De Hooghe chose to present religion as an enigma.<sup>15</sup> In his combination of hieroglyphs and religion De Hooghe was not unique: the late seventeenth and early eighteenth centuries saw a vogue in 'emblematic theology,' a genre in which biblical exegesis was practiced on several levels in a search for the deepest meaning and most complete understanding of the text. Several books containing 'hieroglyphical' biblical exegesis were published.<sup>16</sup> Examples are Hendrik Groenewegen's (ca. 1640–92)

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*Nederlantsche konstschilders en schilderessen*, 3 vols. (Amsterdam, 1718–1721), 3: 257–9. De Hooghe's facility in invention and his creativity in his works were appreciated not just for their artistic quality but also because of their commercial value. This was especially applicable to title prints made by the sort of gifted etcher Romeyn de Hooghe was, and this was likely the main reason that De Hooghe, although he was relatively expensive, was frequently asked to design and produce of all kinds of frontispieces. Christian Coppens, *Een Ars moriendi met etsen van Romeyn de Hooghe* (Brussels, 1995), p. 63.

- 13 Corbett, *The Comely Frontispiece* (see above, n. 6), pp. 34, 35, 37.
- 14 He mentions that he is going to treat the subject in a way nobody had done before: combining hieroglyphs, characters, and historic persons together in one image. "De manier van 't verhandelen deser Stoffe is sodanig als mijns wetens noch van niemand niet gebruyckt en is, en 't samen gevoegt uyt verscheyde soorten, as Hieroglyphen, Characters en Historiele personen." Romeyn de Hooghe, *Schouburgh der Nederlandse veranderingen* (Amsterdam, 1674), p. 6; De Hooghe, *Hieroglyphica* (see above, n. 3), pp. 12, 15.
- 15 See Athanasius Kircher, *Obeliscus Pamphilius* (Rome, 1650); idem, *Oedipus Aegyptiacus* (Rome, 1652–5); idem, *Latium* (Amsterdam, 1671). See also Jocelyn Godwyn, *Athanasius Kircher's Theatre of the World* (London, 2009).
- 16 W. J. van Asselt, 'De neus van de bruid, de "profetische" en "zinnebeeldige" godgeleerdheid van Henricus Groenewegen en Johannes d'Outrein,' in: *Profetie en godsspraak in de geschiedenis van het christendom: Studies over de historische ontwikkeling van een opvallend verschijnsel*, ed. F. G. M. Broeyer and E. M. V. M. Honée (Zoetermeer, 1997), pp. 163–84.

*Hieroglyphica, anders Emblemata sacra* (1693), Salomon van Til's (1643–1713), *Zoologica Sacra* (1714), Nicolaas Lydius's (†1687) *Lexicon Hieroglyphicum*, and most famously Johannes D'Outrein's (1662–1722) *Proefstukken der heilige sinnebeelden* [Examples of holy emblems] (1700) and Martinus Koning's (1662–1733) *Lexicon Hieroglyphicum Sacro-Profanum* (1722). In many of these books seemingly neutral words (for animals, stones, minerals, etc.), ordered alphabetically into a lexicon, were infused with sacred meaning. Although De Hooghe's *Hieroglyphica* resembles these works and fits the emblematic worldview of the theological works mentioned, *Hieroglyphica's* style, structure, and scope was much broader than biblical exegesis only. In *Hieroglyphica* we recognize the mythographical genre of the Renaissance, in which classical deities were analyzed and elaborated on in their historical, religious, and artistic aspects. Famous examples of this genre were the handbooks of classical mythological gods by Vincenzo Cartari (ca. 1531–69), Giglio Giraldi (1479–1552) and Natale Conti (1520–82).<sup>17</sup> Dutch examples are Carel van Mander's (1548–1606) *Schilderboeck* (1604) and Johannes Aysma's *Het Ryck der Goden onder den Eenige waare God. In veel Heerlijke Vertooningen van Goddelijke Bewijsen, naturelijke Speculatien, politijke Bedenkingen, aanmerkelijke Geschiedenissen, soete Poëzyen, Sinrijke Verbeeldingen, insonderheid, der Elementen en der voor-naamste Goden, neffens derselver Letter-kundige Benaamingen en Beduydingen, als mede Reedelijke, Zeedige en Grondige Toepassingen, etc.* [The Reign of the Gods under the Only true God. I many Delectable Expositions on divine Proofs, natural Speculations, political Considerations, remarkable Histories, sweet Poetry, Meaningful Illustrations, especially of the Elements and the principal Gods, as well as their literary Names and Epithets, and Reasonable, Moral and Elementary Uses] (1686).<sup>18</sup> But again, De Hooghe took an original path. Instead of ordering the classical lexicographical gods or topics separately and alphabetically, or explaining biblical words and lemmas in an emblematic way as his predecessors had, he combined material from both genres and included them chronologically in a much broader history of religion, going beyond Christian

17 Giglio Gregorio Giraldi, *Historia de deis gentium* (Basel, 1548); Vincenzo Cartari, *Le imagini con la spositione de i dei de gli antichi* [Images depicting the gods of the ancients] (Venice, 1556); Natale Conti, *Mythologiae sive explicationis fabularum libri decem, in quibus omnia prope Naturalis & Moralis Philosophiae dogmata contenta fuisse demonstratur* (Venice, 1567). This genre was especially popular in Germany; in 1744 *Hieroglyphica* was translated into German, supplemented with an introduction by the Halle theologian Siegmund Baumgarten.

18 Johannes Aysma, *Het Ryck der Goden* (Amsterdam, 1686).

history into what Guy Stroumsa considers to be the start of “a new science,” namely the history of ‘religion’ in general.<sup>19</sup>

#### 4 A Comparative Approach to Religions, Ambiguity, and a Focus on Decay

De Hooghe's lexicographic history not only broadened the scope of emblematic theology but also provided an image of true religion that was rather ambiguous and uncertain. Moreover, unlike most contemporary authors on the history of religions, De Hooghe is reluctant to measure other religions with the yardstick of his own or any other confessional orthodoxy.

This sort of orientation is engendered by the twofold structure of De Hooghe's historical account, which alternates between a chronological and a thematic approach roughly corresponding to, respectively, notions of sacred history and the broader, ‘profane’ history of religion.<sup>20</sup> On the one hand, De Hooghe's chronological account—exceeding the boundaries of the genre of ecclesiastical history—contains a sacred history, presenting the story of God's unique, chosen peoples from Adam and Eve, via the Israelites and Jews, to the Christians. Adhering to the theory of separation, the account shows pagan religions to be present in this story but most of the time they are separated from the Judaic and Christian religions.

This sacred history, chronologically organized, is challenged by De Hooghe's thematic comparative etchings that interrupt his chronological line and follow the identification theory. This theory was the obverse of the separation theory: instead of emphasizing the gap between true and false histories and religions, it foregrounded the similarities among religious stories and searched for areas of identification between pagan and Christian religions.<sup>21</sup> Whereas the first theory denounced rival religious stories as fictions, the second theory was based on the conviction that the ancient East was an environment in which

19 Guy Stroumsa, *A New Science: The Discovery of Religion in the Age of Reason* (Cambridge, 2011).

20 In the sense in which Jonathan Sheehan makes this distinction: profane as opposed to sacred, not in the current meaning of ‘nothing to do with religion.’ Jonathan Sheehan, ‘Sacred and Profane: Idolatry, Antiquarianism and the Polemics of Distinction in the Seventeenth Century,’ *Past & Present* 192 (2006), 35–66.

21 Paolo Rossi, *The Dark Abyss of Time: The History of the Earth and the History of Nations from Hooke to Vico*, trans. L. Cochrane (Chicago, 1987) pp. 152–7; Stroumsa, *A New Science* (see above, n. 19).

wise men, even before Christ, grasped valuable notions of the true religion, most importantly monotheism.<sup>22</sup>

Although the figures he used were not original—they were probably imitations of Valeriano's *Hieroglyphica* from 1556—the combination and composition of images were rather unique. Most other artists and authors categorized their material per distinct religion, treating these religions in separate chapters. Alexander Ross's (ca. 1590–1654) *Pansebeia*—from which De Hooghe used a considerable amount of information—dealt with each religion in a discrete chapter, and the same goes for the famous *Cérémonies et Coutumes religieuses de tous les peuples du monde* (1723–37) by Jean Bernard (1680–1744) and Bernard Picart (1673–1733), which consisted of distinct volumes for each of the religions considered. De Hooghe adopts a thematic approach, combining similar concepts found in different religions within a unifying frame. The matters depicted are to some extent also inconsistent with the tendency in books of this genre to focus on customs and habits: baptism, funerals, marriages, and sacrifices. De Hooghe's oeuvre shows that he did produce etchings on the ceremonial aspects of religion, for instance the Jewish funeral and mourning at a cemetery, and on dying in Catholicism, but in *Hieroglyphica* almost all the topics concern quite theoretical issues of faith.<sup>23</sup> These comparative etchings can be considered examples of an increasing tendency within the genre of the 'history of religions' to emphasize the historicity of religion and thereby to debunk the sacred character of canonical traditions, including those of Christianity.

Finally, De Hooghe's historical focus on religious decline is part and parcel of his ambiguous history of religion. This history of decline which he presents in his emblematic images is already announced in the second part of the title, namely the *exhaustive essay on the progressive decline and corruption of religion through the ages, and its recent reformation until the present day*. From the Egyptian, Roman, and Greek religions to Christianity and Islam, De Hooghe points out the signs of decay: religious abuse, schism, violence, and persecution. History proves itself to be full of examples, almost from the very beginning. Whereas the original true religion—written in hieroglyphic script by the biblical Seth (fig. A) in plate 2 (Fig. 8.1)—is positioned in the background and described in very general terms, most attention is given to kings, philosophers, and priests, who have perverted religion for their own ends to increase their

22 D. P. Walker, *The Ancient Theology: Studies in Christian Platonism from the Fifteenth to the Eighteenth century* (London, 1972); Jan Assmann, *Moses the Egyptian: The Memory of Egypt in Western Monotheism* (Cambridge, Mass., 1997), especially 76–90. Peter Harrison, *'Religion' and the Religions in the English Enlightenment*, pp. 132–8.

23 More customary topics are present, but very few: only the ritual of excommunication is presented in the comparative plate 51.



FIGURE 8.1 *Rakende de Naam en Eerste Gang van de Hieroglyphica of Beeldspraak-Konst in het algemeen* [On the Meaning of the term Hieroglyphics and the emergence of the Art in general], plate 2, in: Romeyn de Hooghe, *Hieroglyphica* (Amsterdam, 1735). Private collection

power and keep the masses in check.<sup>24</sup> Against this perennial religious decline, ongoing reformation was required, within the Protestant churches as much as any other.<sup>25</sup>

This approach, highlighting historical religious corruption, has been interpreted as radical, for instance in the work of Jonathan Israel, who places the argument of religious decline almost entirely within a radical Spinozistic program.<sup>26</sup> As such, however, the view that religion had declined throughout the ages was not radical at all, and certainly not new. Ever since the writings of the first church historian, Eusebius of Caesarea, historians have presented the history of Christianity to be a story of error and deviation from the original conception of the Apostolic Church, and the decline usually involved theological innovations. For 'new' religions, the only way to avoid the accusation of novelty was to prove that the new or adapted form of religion was not in fact new but rather a return to the ancient, pure, and true form of Christianity. Such a return had become necessary because the established Church had been corrupted, a line of reasoning especially popular during the Protestant era.<sup>27</sup>

The remainder of this chapter will demonstrate De Hooghe's line of reasoning, as analyzed above, on three ambiguous topics elaborated on in his *Hieroglyphica* in order to show how contradictory opinions and suggestions could coexist in early modern sources such as *Hieroglyphica*. Instead of considering such a work partly 'unreliable' or a half-hearted cover-up for radical ideas, I would opt for the possibility that it presents various solutions for an undecided question, presenting two different lines of thought at the same time and leaving it to the reader to choose between them, or not.<sup>28</sup> Besides

24 De Hooghe, *Hieroglyphica* (see above, n. 3), p. 25.

25 Trudélien van 't Hof, 'Radicale, partisane ou idéaliste? La présentation historique par De Hooghe du déclin de la religion et de la Réformation dans ses *Hieroglyphica*,' in: *Les Protestants à l'époque moderne : Approche anthropologique*, ed. Olivier Christin and Yves Krumenacker (Rennes, forthcoming).

26 Jonathan Israel, *Enlightenment Contested: Philosophy, Modernity, and the Emancipation of Man 1670–1752* (Oxford, 2006), pp. 94–114. Israel, ignoring the fact that the concept of religious decline was used in a very broad religious domain, describes it as a "profoundly Spinozistic idea": *ibid.*, p. 98.

27 For decline and reformation as a very common interpretative model for (Protestant) church history see e.g. Peter van Rooden, *Religieuze Regimes: Over godsdienst en maatschappij in Nederland 1570–1990* (Amsterdam, 1996), p. 149. It was used in an extreme form by Gottfried Arnold (1666–1714), also a source for De Hooghe.

28 See also the notion of 'selective neutrality' in Jetze Touber, 'Religious Interests and Scholarly Exchange in the Early Enlightenment Republic of Letters: Italian and Dutch Scholars, 1675–1715,' *Rivista di Storia della Chiesa in Italia* 2 (2014), 411–36. De Hooghe may also have derived this approach from academic culture, in which academic freedom allowed free discussion on any theological matter not decided upon by a national synod. Cf. A. C. Duker, *Gisbertus Voetius*, 4 vols. (1897–1915; repr. Leiden, 1989), 3:87–102.

the analysis given below, a more down-to-earth approach to the matter of ambiguity should be kept in mind, namely the possibility that contradiction and dissimulation were also part of a lucrative strategy involving the mystification of one's work. The very idea that a text was coded and needed deciphering appealed to readers and could therefore incite people to actually read (and buy) a treatise or book.<sup>29</sup> A similar suggestion has been made about images. In his contribution to the edited volume *Art in History/History in Art*, Jochen Becken states that

offering several different comments on the same picture was a rather popular game in seventeenth-century society. [...] There is no reason why we should not suspect that the painter, too, intended different "solutions" or at least left the meaning of the picture open. A picture is thus seen as an ambiguous communication (text) to be treated in a variety of ways.<sup>30</sup>

De Hooghe's ambiguity pops up several times with regard to smaller issues in *Hieroglyphica*, but also when he addresses topics that were quite contested. Three topics will be discussed below in which a clear idea about true religion or religious truths is lacking and images and text alike are ambiguous. These topics are, respectively, the dogma of predestination, the reality of the devil and demonic influence on people, and the role of priestcraft in religion. In all these matters De Hooghe is unclear about the specific content and authority of religion, which can be connected to a changing perspective on the history of religion (shifting from sacred history to a more comparative history of religions) resulting in a moderate attitude toward the specific dogmas of true religion.

## 5 Predestination and the Peace of the Church

Connected to the relation between Christianity and other religions is the question of the extent to which similarities existed between them. This topic is present in De Hooghe's comparative etchings, where the presentation of similarities between religions puts the authority of Christianity and its teachings on a par with that of other religions, questioning the unique, 'revealed'

29 See Mara van der Lugt, 'The True Toland? Inquiry Into the Religious Writings of an Irreligious Mind' (M.A. thesis, Erasmus University Rotterdam, 2010). See also idem, *Bayle, Jurieu, and the Dictionnaire Historique et Critique* (Oxford, 2016).

30 Jochen Becker, 'Are These Girls Really So Neat? On Kitchen Scenes and Method,' in: *Art in History/History in Art: Studies in Seventeenth-Century Dutch Culture*, ed. David A. Freedberg and Jan De Vries (Santa Monica, Calif., 1991), pp. 139–74.

origin of several of the Christian dogmas. In plate 6 multiple creation stories are juxtaposed under the title 'De Scheyding van de Chaos, of War-klomp' [On the separation of primeval chaos], highlighting their similarities, while the Christian dogma of 'creation *from nothing*' is absent. In plate 62 several hereafers are present, showing the options for true heaven to be quite broad. Such a comparative view on religion was itself not radical. The Christian religion had long been compared to other religions—to Judaism, for instance—in order, most of the time, to point to its superiority and exclusive truth claims. Still, in De Hooghe's images such a superiority is not clearly expressed: his juxtaposition could either mean that a certain Christian dogma had been invented, too, or that pagans' dogmas were imitations of the true Christian ones. Here we enter the field of the comparative history of religions, characterized by a less confessionally biased view on religion in which similarity is more foregrounded than difference. Whereas this development is traditionally traced to the nineteenth century, a growing body of research indicates that it started in the seventeenth century.<sup>31</sup>

The first comparative chapter is chapter 5, 'Van de Voorbeschikking en het Noodlot' [On Predestination and Fate] (Fig. 8.2). The engraving shows us the concept of fate in a number of religions, such as the classical Roman, Greek, and Phoenician religions. The accompanying text is rather elaborate in its introduction of the etching. It starts by explaining how scientists gained increasing power from their knowledge of the natural world and from developments in shipping, the domestication of animals, the discovery of herbs' medicinal properties, and other such areas. The scientists' knowledge, combined with their strong ties to political power, made the masses willing to listen and obey them. Over time, these scientists became more like priests, claiming to be intermediaries between men and gods and able therefore to foretell the future. The uncertain people, lacking knowledge, started to ask these 'artists and knowers' for counsel and predictions.<sup>32</sup> This was, according to De Hooghe, a tricky business; "if the answers did not match the course of events, their [i.e., the scientists' / clerics'] highly esteemed status would be overthrown; but to protect themselves against such storms they invented *Fate*."<sup>33</sup> Whenever the

31 A. Molendijk, *The Emergence of the Science of Religion in the Netherlands* (Leiden, 2005). Stroumsa, *A New Science* (see above, n. 19).

32 "De raadvragers, de vertwyffelden, en bevreesden, antwoord van den Priesters ontfangende, zouden, als de antwoorden met de zaken niet over een kwamen, den ontzagchelyken staat der Priesters over hoop geworpen hebben; maar om zig zelven tegen zulke stormen te beveyligen, vonden zy het *Noodlot* uyt." De Hooghe, *Hieroglyphica* (see above, n. 3), pp. 67–9.

33 De Hooghe, *Hieroglyphica* (see above, n. 3), p. 69.



FIGURE 8.2 *Van de Voorbeschikking en het Noodlot* [On Predestination and Fate], plate 5, in: Romeyn de Hooghe, *Hieroglyphica* (Amsterdam, 1735). Private collection



FIGURE 8.3  
*Eeuwige Voorzienigheid* [Eternal Providence],  
 detail B from plate 5, in: Romeyn de Hooghe,  
*Hieroglyphica* (Amsterdam, 1735). Private  
 collection

predictions of these clerics proved wrong, they told their followers that it was because 'fate' had ultimately decided differently. Very remarkable here is the presence of the Christian dogma of predestination in this image, depicted as the woman in figure B (Fig. 8.3).<sup>34</sup>

34 De Hooghe calls this figure 'Eternal Providence,' but the explanatory legend speaks about predestination.

The doctrine of predestination was highly debated in the seventeenth-century quarrels between the Arminians (named after Jacobus Arminius, 1560–1609, and later labeled Remonstrants) and Gomarists (followers of Franciscus Gomarus, 1563–1641, later to be called Counter-Remonstrants). In this debate the matter of predestination was the main bone of contention. Orthodox theologians viewed the lives and the afterlives of human beings as predestined, without the possibility that one could influence the course of events by the exercise of free will, and saw this doctrine as necessary for salvation.<sup>35</sup> Remonstrants endorsed a milder form of predestination in which, for instance, humans needed to actively accept God's grace. Remonstrants, who restricted their list of essentials to "the faith in the Bible as the Word of God, the willingness to live according to Biblical precepts, the belief in Christ as the Saviour of humanity and the belief in the immortality of the soul,"<sup>36</sup> did not perceive the doctrine of predestination and the lack of free will to be necessary for salvation. So the question here is why this figure stands between these gods of Fate invented by pagans. Did De Hooghe insert figure B into this engraving to underscore the Christian dogma by showing that even the ancient pagan religions had ideas about predestination? Or does this positioning of Eternal Providence between similar pagan *inventions* point to the non-original and extra-biblical character of this highly debated doctrine? Maybe we will never know the precise message De Hooghe wanted to convey, but the least he achieved was to create an ambiguous sphere that allows one to read both an orthodox and a radical point of view.

Supporting the more radical stance is De Hooghe's overall lack of much attention to predestination. At several points in *Hieroglyphica* De Hooghe gives short lists detailing what the basis of true religion is, and nowhere is predestination mentioned.<sup>37</sup> Moreover, when De Hooghe does mention predestination, he predominantly presents it as a cause of religious and political dissension, resulting in chaotic unrest and conflict.<sup>38</sup> Chapter 61, for example, touched on Arminian theology briefly in the description of its figure E. Here De

35 Cocceius also endorsed the orthodox view on predestination, and the connection within theology. He did place emphasis on the historicity of the salvation. When he was accused of Arian tendencies, he furiously stated that this was due to Voetius misinterpreting him: J. W. van Asselt, 'Voetius en Coccejus over de rechtvaardiging,' in: *De onbekende Voetius. Voordrachten wetenschappelijk symposium Utrecht 3 maart 1989*, ed. J. van Oort et al. (Kampen, 1989), pp. 32–47, there 40.

36 Sibbe Jan Visser, *Samuel Naeranus (1582–1641) en Johannes Naeranus (1608–1679): Twee remonstrantse theologen op de bres voor godsdienstige verdraagzaamheid* (Hilversum, 2011), pp. 25, 26.

37 See the chapter about the fundamentals of true religion in my forthcoming PhD thesis.

38 "The large Churches of the Christians are mostly destroyed by the Turks and the Mahometans—as is drawn here in the distance—after they wore out their powers by

Hooghe loosely notes that after the Reformation, the Dutch Reformed Church did not remain free from disturbance and factional strife, as some “hot-heated thinkers liked to dally with newly revived theological enigmas.”<sup>39</sup> De Hooghe points here to the Arminian controversy. Again, like the explanatory text with Arius in chapter 36, he ignores the doctrinal issues—except for mentioning that it concerned old theological matters (and enigmatic ones at that)—but emphasizes the discord, conspiracy, and murder it resulted in:

Jacob Arminius published five divisive articles; Episcopius refined the work; and others increased the differences to the point of Massacres in several cities, [opposing] the abuse of power in the highest circles of the Free Dutch Republic, which developed into imprisonment, decapitation and plotting of the most influential [people], before the storm calmed.<sup>40</sup>

Throughout *Hieroglyphica* there is additional emphasis on peace and the relative freedom of church members. Interesting in this regard is chapter 35, ‘On the Peace of God’s Church,’ in which the female depicted in the center of the plate in figure A is the Peaceful Church, Christ’s bride, representing the Church as an institution, and figure B is her sister, Freedom of Inquiry (Figs. 8.4 and 8.5).<sup>41</sup>

The heading reveals a link with the predestination quarrel between Remonstrants and Counter-Remonstrants, as it resonates with the title of a resolution promulgated in 1614, ‘Resolution for the Peace of the Church,’ which Hugo Grotius was commissioned by the States to write. In this resolution, ministers were told exactly what they should teach their flocks in matters related to the five points of the Arminians.<sup>42</sup> In this decree the doctrines of the Remonstrants were believed to be sufficient for salvation, and ministers were

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internal discord, after which they were powerless against the attack of the Muslims, Saracens and Turks.” De Hooghe, *Hieroglyphica* (see above, n. 3), p. 333.

39 De Hooghe, *Hieroglyphica* (see above, n. 3), p. 347.

40 De Hooghe, *Hieroglyphica* (see above, n. 3), p. 347. Episcopius was a student of Arminius and one of the leading Arminian theologians.

41 “De Vreede van Gods Kerk (Het Liefelykste boven alles) het Ware Salem, word verbeeld als een zeer beminnelyke, aangename en schoone Bruyd...” De Hooghe, *Hieroglyphica* (see above, n. 3), p. 269. With Salem De Hooghe makes reference to several passages in the Bible where Salem is representative of Peace, either as the place where Melchizedek was king or as another name for Jerusalem.

42 See the *Resolutie ... tot den vrede der kercken* [Resolution ... for the Peace of the Churches] (The Hague, 1614). Grotius’s text was seen as too Remonstrant, he was imprisoned in Slot Loevestein where he wrote *Het bewijs van de ware Godsdiens* [Demonstration of the True Religion], published first as idem, *Sensus librorum sex, quos pro veritate religionis Christianae Batavice scripsit* (Leiden, 1627).



FIGURE 8.4 *Van de Vrede van Gods Kerk* [On the Peace of God's Church], plate 35, in: Romeyn de Hooghe, *Hieroglyphica* (Amsterdam, 1735). Private collection

no longer permitted to preach on predestination. That De Hooghe chose this title could indicate that he preferred the Remonstrant stance on the issue, but the question is whether he even had a preference, because his emphasis is on peaceful coexistence within the church. In chapter 35 this is visualized in the two sisters, A and B. According to De Hooghe, it is peace, given to the Church by the Holy Spirit, that encourages Christian freedom for its *members*. This liberty existed in the freedom to search the divine writings for hidden treasures, a



FIGURE 8.5 *De Vreede van Gods Kerk* [The Peace of God's Church] and *Haar vlugge en werkelijke Zuster, de Vryheyd, om de H. Verborgenheden te doorzoeken* [Her quick and active sister Freedom to inquire into the Holy Mysteries], details A and B of plate 35. Private collection

form of research that is allowed “without fear of schism,” De Hooghe explicitly adds. The consequence of such research by individual believers might result in different opinions on different matters. De Hooghe’s answer to such diversity is given in the form of a pomegranate, “in which so many tasty and salutary parts are kept together in one peel.”<sup>43</sup> The pomegranate indicates De Hooghe’s preference for religious freedom and variety within the church, as long as the peel holds them together.

43 De Hooghe, *Hieroglyphica* (see above, n. 3), pp. 269, 270. See also *ibid.*, p. 438.

Nevertheless, a more conservative, orthodox position is also found in *Hieroglyphica's* chapters. In chapter 4, for example, predestination is lauded in figure L, *The Virgin, the Super Natural religion*. She is described as “a New Creature, denoting that the kingdom of God already begins in our souls; she feels the undeserved Grace of her Predestination and Election for Eternal Bliss.”<sup>44</sup> In chapter 61 figure F denotes the National Synod of Dordrecht (1618/9) which condemned the Arminian, Remonstrant view on predestination (Figs. 8.6 and 8.7).

De Hooghe talks about this figure with respect: she is an “honourable and wise, divine woman, with no intention of ruling over people.” She deliberates carefully, uses the original Hebrew biblical text and the writings of the Apostles and the Church Fathers, and in her hand she holds a sieve to sift the wheat from the chaff. In her lap we find a reference to the topic of predestination, namely “the steel hammer with diamond nails of the Divine Election and Predestination, triumphant over the Quarrelers.” And if there was any doubt left, De Hooghe ends his explanation by stating that this was truly “a council of all nations, who sent their brightest minds.”

Although the topic of predestination remained important to the maintenance of orthodoxy—in 1755 Antonius van der Os (1722–1807) was dismissed for his alleged Remonstrant ideas about predestination<sup>45</sup>—a trend in the early eighteenth century sought to “soften the doctrine of predestination.”<sup>46</sup> De Hooghe's ambiguous approach to the Arminian controversy might indicate that opinions were shifting, indeed, toward a focus on unity instead of stringent dogmas. The presence of Christian predestination among gods of Fate invented by pagans seems to suggest this unity, within either a conservative or a more radical view.

## 6 The Devil, Real or Invented

Another example of ambiguity is found in De Hooghe's treatment of the devil, both in his chronological and his thematic etchings. Throughout *Hieroglyphica* we encounter ambivalence about the devil. On the one hand, in his chronological chapters De Hooghe endorses the real existence of the devil, his role in the

44 De Hooghe, *Hieroglyphica* (see above, n. 3), pp. 64, 65.

45 J. van Eijnatten and F. van Lieburg, *Nederlandse religiegeschiedenis* (Hilversum, 2005), pp. 216, 217. See also R. A. Bosch, *Het conflict rond Antonius van der Os, predikant te Zwolle 1748–1755* (Kampen, 1988).

46 Johannes van den Berg, *Religious Currents and Cross-currents: Essays on Early Modern Protestantism* (Leiden, 1999), pp. 263, 264.



FIGURE 8.6 *Van de Gereformeerde Godsdienst* [On the Reformed Religion], plate 61, in: Romeyn de Hooghe, *Hieroglyphica* (Amsterdam, 1735). Private collection

Fall and in sacred history. Moreover, he explicitly states that the third-century theologian Origen was wrong to interpret the snake from Genesis allegorically. De Hooghe emphasized that the devil was actually present in Paradise in the



FIGURE 8.7  
The National Synod of Dordrecht, detail F from  
plate 61

form of a snake.<sup>47</sup> The devil is depicted in several etchings in *Hieroglyphica*. Chapter 4 presents the Lion of Judah that will conquer the devil, in chapter 33 we find a reference to the serpent/dragon, chapter 51 tells us that Judas devoted himself to the devil, and in chapter 58 the devil tries to destroy the Church. In the illustration for the parable of the wheat and the tares<sup>48</sup> in the book *Het voorhof der ziele* [The Forecourt of the Soul] (1668) by Frans van Hoogstraten (1632–96), it is De Hooghe who casts the devil as the unidentified enemy sowing weeds among the wheat.<sup>49</sup>

On the other hand, there are examples that question the devil's origins and render his power less visible. These sorts of representations contributed to a trend in which the devil was not taken so seriously. Wherever the devil occurs in De Hooghe's account, he is positioned very small in the background; evil has

47 De Hooghe, *Hieroglyphica* (see above, n. 3), p. 145.

48 Matt. 13,24–30 and Matt. 13,36–43.

49 Wilson, *The Art of Romeyn de Hooghe* (see above, n. 12), p. 155.

been brought to this world first and foremost by human clerics.<sup>50</sup> Furthermore, in chapter 37 devil worship is mocked as an idiotic and stupid practice, and in chapter 56 the figure of the frank man (a layman who in the run-up to the Reformation starts to read the Bible for himself) finds out that there are no ghosts and devils in the Bible.<sup>51</sup> Most important for this topic, however, are the comparative chapters 28, 'Van de Goede en Kwaade Goden' [Of good and evil gods], and 29, 'Van de Kwade Goden' [Of evil gods], where we find the Christian devil juxtaposed with pagan 'evil gods' (Figs. 8.8 and 8.9).

In chapter 28 De Hooghe describes the existence of good and evil gods in many religions, starting with the following reflections:

Most among the pagans, yes even some of the so-called Christians, thought that the Eternal Being, which they envisioned their Creator and Keeper, was Infinitely good, therefore nothing could come from him but blessing, [therefore] necessarily another Being or principle must exist, obstructing the good, or pouring out evil on them.<sup>52</sup>

De Hooghe proceeds with his engraving and an explanation of the good and evil gods in many pagan religions. Among the Egyptians, for example, Osiris was the good god and Typhon the evil one. Visually, many of these evil gods are depicted in the same manner, as dragon-like creatures with horns, claws, and sweeping tails. Such figures are found, according to De Hooghe, among Indians in Kolkata, among Japanese, Koreans, and Slavs, and even among Jews and Christians. With regard to Christianity, De Hooghe refers to the devil as the "seducer from the garden of Eden," a standard biblical description (Fig. 8.10). Without saying so explicitly, this positioning of the Christian devil among all kinds of false heathen evil gods and fairy-tale creatures such as ghosts, phantoms, and fairies suggests a rejection of the devil's existence as just one of many religious fabrications.<sup>53</sup>

This critical attitude is substantiated by De Hooghe's description of the contemporary state of belief in the devil:

50 De Hooghe, *Hieroglyphica* (see above, n. 3), p. 277.

51 De Hooghe, *Hieroglyphica* (see above, n. 3), p. 406.

52 "De meeste onder de Heydenen, ja zelfs eenige der zoogenaamde Christenen, hebben gemeent, dat het Eeuwig Weezen, het welk zy stelden voor hunne Schepper en onderhouder, was Oneyndig goed, en dat daar niets uyt konnende voortvloeyen als zegen, noodzakelyk een ander Wezen of beginzel moest zyn, het welk zulken goed belette, of kwaden op haar uytstortte." De Hooghe, *Hieroglyphica* (see above, n. 3), p. 237.

53 De Hooghe, *Hieroglyphica* (see above, n. 3), pp. 237, 238.



FIGURE 8.8 *Van de Goede en Kwaade Goden* [Of good and evil gods], plate 28, in: Romeyn de Hooghe, *Hieroglyphica* (Amsterdam, 1735). Private collection



FIGURE 8.9 *Van de Kwade Goden* [Of evil gods], plate 29, in: Romeyn de Hooghe, *Hieroglyphica* (Amsterdam, 1735). Private collection



FIGURE 8.10 *Den Verleyder in 't Hof van Eden* [The Seducer in the Garden of Eden], detail of plate 28, in: Romeyn de Hooghe, *Hieroglyphica* (Amsterdam, 1735). Private collection

Although in my native country there are some impetuous thinkers who rudely mock ghosts, and even would want to banish the devils themselves out of the Bible, I, however, want to leave behind some [descriptions of] ghosts which mean something, so they can be used for countries or people who reason a bit less and believe a bit more.<sup>54</sup>

“Impetuous thinkers” is De Hooghe’s clear reference to the notorious Balthasar Bekker (1634–98), who in his *De betoverde weereld* [The enchanted world] (1691–3) denied the power of ghosts and devils to act upon the material world and to influence humans. By describing Bekker as an “impetuous thinker,” who would even want to banish the devil from the Bible, De Hooghe insinuates that in his opinion Bekker had crossed the line. Reading more closely, however, we see De Hooghe explaining his own treatment of ghosts: “it can be used *for countries or people reasoning a bit less*” [my emphasis], as opposed to his own country, the Dutch Republic, where people no longer believed such things.<sup>55</sup>

In fact, *Hieroglyphica* contains ideas similar to Bekker’s. Bekker’s aim was to purge religion of the idolatrous elements that had infected Christianity, and he did so through his consideration of the topic of spirits and the devil, having thoroughly researched the meanings of biblical words in their original languages. Bekker believed in angels—spirits without bodies—on the authority of the Bible. Where the Bible was clear about the functioning of angels, their

54 De Hooghe, *Hieroglyphica* (see above, n. 3), p. 237.

55 De Hooghe, *Hieroglyphica* (see above, n. 3), pp. 283, 284. Pride in his country is also found in idem, *Spiegel van Staat* (Amsterdam, 1706–7), in which he cannot stop praising the goodness and the decency of the Dutch people.

existence should be accepted, even if reason or experience would not support such a supposition. But Bekker's point was that Scripture was not always clear about the actions of spirits. For instance, the word 'angel' also meant 'messenger' and 'Satan' also meant 'opponent,' and these words were sometimes used to characterize the actions of humans. And although the Bible did speak of the actions of good spirits, it did not mention the deeds of bad angels or devils, Bekker argued. Moreover, the Bible explicitly related how the devil and his bad angels had been chained and thrown into hell, so they were not capable of performing actions on earth. Eventually Bekker's criticism on the States Translation and alternative Bible exegesis became the main reason for his condemnation.<sup>56</sup>

De Hooghe's skepticism is not an isolated case. Others, and not only Bekker, questioned the powers of the devil, and in some cases doubted his existence. The publisher Willem Goeree (1635–1711) saw the seducer in Eden to be not some evil spirit or fallen angel but rather a representation of the base, fleshly desires of human beings. And De Hooghe's colleague, the painter Zacharias Webber (1644–96), for instance, bluntly stated that when the Bible spoke about the devil, this was actually a reference to the dark and evil hearts of human beings, not a remark about some sort of fallen angel. Still, Webber's writings seem contradictory, as he stressed the literal truth of the Bible several times.<sup>57</sup>

De Hooghe also remains undecided on such matters. After his critical comparison in chapter 28, plate 29 in the following chapter again shows evil gods taken from different religions, all depicted in a dragon-like manner, with claws, wings, and fangs, this time unaccompanied by the biblical devil. This chapter ends by making a sharp distinction between pagan idolatry—which had also influenced the Jews—and the true Christian religion. Here once again we encounter a sacred history of religion that marks a firm divide between Christian religion and pagan idolatry.

It seems that De Hooghe's overall take on the devil is quite similar to the conclusions reached by the lay admirers of Bekker well into the eighteenth century. Most of these people, when called to account by church authorities, recanted their more extreme opinions. They all eventually admitted that the devil existed and had played a role in the deception of Adam and Eve. They were not willing to make statements about how exactly this worked in people's lives, as they personally had not felt themselves affected by good or evil

56 Andrew Fix, *Fallen Angels: Balthasar Bekker, Spirit Belief, and Confessionalism in the Seventeenth Century Dutch Republic* (Dordrecht, 1999), pp. 59–74.

57 Frits Praamsma, *Zacharias Webber (1644–1696): Irenisch lutheraan—verlicht protestant* (Delft, 2013).

spirits. Most often they appealed to the notion that they did not know how the devil worked, and therefore did not want to make a statement about the matter. Michiel Wielema suggests that such sentiments may have existed even among ministers.<sup>58</sup> In De Hooghe's words: "Our understanding of Angels and [demonic] powers remains confused," and, "the holy scriptures tell us that they are legion, but does not tell us what they are." They are the "executors of God's will," but the Bible provides no ground for elaborating further details about the devil, argues De Hooghe.

## 7 Priestcraft and Pious Behaviour

Another important matter in the religious debates of the late seventeenth century concerned how deceitful leaders could and did corrupt religion. *Hieroglyphica* contains a strong current of anticlericalism. Whereas some view the presence of such anticlericalism as characteristic of libertine and radical antireligious sentiments, historians like J. S. Barnett in his *Idol Temples and Crafty Priests* and Justin Champion in his *Pillars of Priestcraft Shaken* have shown that matters were more complicated, not least because anticlericalism was firmly rooted in Christian polemics and apologetics, used most often to criticize the Catholic clergy. In *Hieroglyphica* we find a similarly differentiated use of the discourse on clerical office. First, the partisan anti-Catholic polemic is present in at least eleven plates of *Hieroglyphica* where De Hooghe points to the deviation from true piety by the Catholic Church in general and its priests in particular (Fig. 8.11). Whenever priests or monks are depicted in *Hieroglyphica* they are presented as lazy gluttons and religious deceivers who enrich themselves through simony.<sup>59</sup>

Another object of anticlerical criticism and derision was Muhammad. Protestants and Catholics may have accused each other of priestcraft, but when it came to Islam they stood on the same side. (Fig. 8.12) Ever since Islam's rise, Christians had considered Muhammad a lusty fraud, and an epileptic to boot, a deceiver who had cobbled together elements from Christianity with heretical ideas into a religion that persuaded Muslims to believe that he was Allah's prophet.

58 Michiel Wielema, *The March of the Libertines: Spinozists and the Dutch Reformed Church (1660–1750)* (Hilversum, 2004), pp. 58–78.

59 De Hooghe, *Hieroglyphica* (see above, n. 3), pp. 407, 422, 430, 432, 347, 315, 316, 348, 349, 365, 381.



FIGURE 8.11 *Van den Indrang tot Oppermacht der Roomsche Stoel* [On the Ambition of the Roman Pontiff for World Supremacy], plate 43, in: Romeyn de Hooghe, *Hieroglyphica* (Amsterdam, 1735). Private collection



FIGURE 8.12 *Van de Mohammedaansche Beginsselen* [On the Mahometan principles], plate 46, in: Romeyn de Hooghe, *Hieroglyphica* (Amsterdam, 1735). Private collection

So far nothing new. New, however, was the development that the more radical thinkers did not restrict their anticlericalism to Catholic or Muslim authors but broadened it to religious leaders in general, including those of their own confession. Adriaan Koerbagh (1633–69), the ally of Spinoza, for example, stated that Moses proved no exception to the rule: he too was an imposter who had faked having direct contact with God to keep the Israelites in check.<sup>60</sup>

De Hooghe is, again, ambivalent on the matter. There are many examples in *Hieroglyphica* that praise Moses as a true religious leader, divinely ordained. In chapter 6 of *Hieroglyphica*, for instance, Moses is commended as the historian of the earth's creation, and it is simply said that he had been inspired by the Holy Ghost to write the book of Genesis. Intriguing here is the passage in which De Hooghe states that Moses did actually meet with God, and that heathen imposters imitated having such an encounter. However, there are also signs of a more suspicious view of Moses, for example when De Hooghe relates how Moses's contemporaries accused him of fraud, a charge De Hooghe does not contradict. More critical, however, is the artist's visualization of the prototype of 'the religious imposter' in front of a mountain in plate 59, as "the distance from the eye" [i.e., the absence of witnesses] must support the deceit (Figs. 8.13 and 8.14).<sup>61</sup> Although De Hooghe mentions historical leaders such as Muhammad or Lycurgus in this regard, the conception might have influenced his take on what happened during Moses's visit to Mount Sinai. Referring to the stone tablets, De Hooghe states that they are "possibly the work of Angels and the engraving of God's Incomprehensible Hand."<sup>62</sup> The crux here is of course in the word 'possibly,' suggesting that we just don't know what happened there, as no witnesses were present.

Although Moses was the most famous example of a leader receiving the divine laws on a mountain, and in *Hieroglyphica* he also stands in front of a mountain, De Hooghe provides no further elaboration. Again, such reticence could conceal one of two attitudes. Either De Hooghe is making a distinction between pagan imposters and sacred priests from the Bible, believing that Moses had a real meeting with God out of sight of witnesses, or he is insinuating that priestcraft was not restricted to the 'other' religions but was present even in a core element of Judaism and Christianity: the Ten Commandments.

60 Adriaan Koerbagh, *A Light Shining in Dark Places, to Illuminate the Main Questions of Theology and Religion*, ed. and trans. Michiel Wielema (Leiden, 2011).

61 "Een Berg ziet men achter hem, om dat die afgelegenheyd van 't Oog, het bedrog dient te steunen, als in Mahometh, Lycurgus, en Numa Pompilius..." De Hooghe, *Hieroglyphica* (see above, n. 3), p. 424.

62 "... mogelyk 't werk der Engelen, en 't grafeerzel van Gods Onbegrypelyke Hand..." De Hooghe, *Hieroglyphica* (see above, n. 3), p. 173.



FIGURE 8.13  
*Wysmaking* [Fooling] and *Aanrading*  
 [Recommendation], detail D from *Van de Hervorming*  
 [On the Reformation], plate 59 in: Romeyn de  
 Hooghe, *Hieroglyphica* (Amsterdam, 1735). Private  
 collection



FIGURE 8.14  
 The lawgiver Moses, detail C from  
*Van Gods Volk* [Of God's People],  
 plate 14: in: Romeyn de Hooghe,  
*Hieroglyphica* (Amsterdam, 1735).  
 Private collection

A last remarkable ambiguity in this context lies in how clerical deceit is judged. Here also two possible views suggest themselves. On the one hand, De Hooghe denounces clerical fraud and tries to unmask these imposters in his book. On the other, however, *Hieroglyphica* endorses the benefits of such religious deceit. In De Hooghe's words:

These heathen priests are villains, but we have to be grateful to them because thanks to their imposture many dangerous murders, cases of poisoning and other atrocities have been prevented.<sup>63</sup>

For if they [the masses] knew clearly all this, there would not remain enough fear amongst them to keep them in check. Even if it counters reason that struggles for the naked truth, and wants to remove all superstition, it is politically expedient to increase superstition.<sup>64</sup>

Important in this 'white lies' position is De Hooghe's depiction of the hereafter. In line with his skeptical view on the devil, we also find a skeptical opinion on his residence: hell. The final chapter, on the hereafter in various religions, begins with a remarkable note:

A worldly reward was too limited to bring forth great merits, or restrain scoundrels, while some acts can escape justice, like perjury, poisoning and the like. So, great minds thought it more efficient to perpetuate both punishment and reward.<sup>65</sup>

De Hooghe claims that the whole idea of eternal punishment or reward was invented by political leaders to encourage the good behavior of their citizens. Such a subversive claim in the introduction to the chapter indicates that De Hooghe was indeed influenced by a trend that valued religion less for the truths of its dogmas and more for its pragmatic utility.

The appreciation of clerical deceit is found mostly in the writings of radical and deist thinkers, who perceived religious leaders no longer to be representatives of God or a pantheon of gods but as clever statesmen adept at controlling the masses. Religious leaders were not the frontrunners in a sacred history guided by God himself; rather they were Machiavellian leaders, movers and shakers in a global history of religion. Although it is remarkable that this view is present in *Hieroglyphica*, it is my contention that this criticism of religious leaders and the behavior of believers is not primarily the result of a

63 De Hooghe, *Hieroglyphica* (see above, n. 3), p. 34.

64 De Hooghe, *Hieroglyphica* (see above, n. 3), p. 28.

65 De Hooghe, *Hieroglyphica* (see above, n. 3), p. 443.

philosophical Enlightenment or the rise of comparative religion but is instead part of what is called the 'Long Reformation.' This label emphasizes the idea that the Reformation was not a demarcated historical event but a process unfolding over a long period. In its evolution the clergy was professionalized, and laypeople (including women) and even children profited from a "massive educational endeavour." Within the specific field of the history of religion, what is striking is the eighteenth-century adaptation of elitist humanist scholarship in theology and the history of the Bible for a lay audience, in books in the vernacular.<sup>66</sup> Lay access to theology changed the relationship between clergy and laity from a hierarchical order based on authority to a more egalitarian constellation consisting of professionals and their interested public.<sup>67</sup> Although this Long Reformation has been dated approximately from the late Middle Ages until the Thirty Years' War, there is no reason to insist that the process of an ongoing, 'further' Reformation ended in the middle of the seventeenth century. Indeed, it may have continued much longer, as many Protestants continued to see themselves as the Reformation's heirs.<sup>68</sup>

Another possibility is that De Hooghe was influenced by the distinction increasingly made between the elite and the 'common' believers. As historian Peter Harrison explains, the priestcraft theory provoked so many critiques that it was adapted into a version in which priests were conning their followers not for their own benefit but for reasons of state security and social order. The true core of religion was too delicate to be explained to simple believers, therefore it was better to teach them an outward religion which would at least make them better people. This new idea of the clergy's moral function was supported by the intellectual elite, who, because they were 'civilized,' needed no such paternalism itself but considered it necessary for the lower orders.<sup>69</sup>

66 Jeremy Gregory, 'The Making of the Protestant Nation,' in: *England's Long Reformation, 1500–1800*, ed. Nickolas Tyacke (London, 1998), p. 317. For professionalization of the clergy see: Peter van Rooden, 'Ministerial Authority and Gender in Dutch Protestantism around 1800,' in: *Gender and the Christian Religion*, ed. Anthony Fletcher, special issue of *Studies in Church History* 34 (1998), 301–11.

67 Remarkable is the rise of catechetical books, all meant to educate believers in their confessional interpretation of the Bible. See the contribution of Jo Spaans to this volume.

68 Thomas A. Brady Jr., 'From Revolution to the Long Reformation: Writings in English on the German Reformation, 1970–2005,' *Archiv für Reformationsgeschichte* 100 (2009), 48–64; Van Rooden, 'Ministerial Authority and Gender' (see above, n. 67).

69 Peter Harrison, *'Religion' and the Religions in the English Enlightenment* (Cambridge, 1990), pp. 85–96. This arcane, true religious knowledge was passed on among the intellectual elite via coded language—according to De Hooghe via hieroglyphs. Only the elite were able to live according to the basic notions of true religions, without ceremonial and practical external help. See also Justin Champion, *The Pillars of Priestcraft Shaken: The Church of England and Its Enemies 1660–1730* (Cambridge, 1992), pp. 146–7; Van Rooden, 'Ministerial Authority and Gender' (see above, n. 67).

Although De Hooghe's account still differentiates between the antics of heathen imposters and the genuine message of Moses, his overall emphasis on the general presence of priestcraft in religion does indicate that the critique of 'other' leaders was to some extent also applied to his 'own' Protestant leaders, who are presented in an ironically idealistic manner.<sup>70</sup>

In conjunction with De Hooghe's distaste for clerical power, *Hieroglyphica* contains many criticisms of scholastic quarrels and expressions of yearning for harmony. It seems that his idea of true religion was not so much centered on the correct doctrines regarding every detail of faith; rather, he articulated a vision of a Reformed religion that followed Christ's fundamental ordinances, consisting of a few central tenets only and focusing on the believer's pious and humble attitude.<sup>71</sup> Still, this shift from dogmatism to morality is nuanced by other parts of *Hieroglyphica* where De Hooghe visualizes his abhorrence toward religious dissidents (who are condemned to hell) and people contesting the importance of the Bible.<sup>72</sup>

## 8 Concluding Remarks

In *Hieroglyphica* De Hooghe made the unusual combination of some sort of history of religion and a pictorial lexicon of the symbolic images of ancient religions and their gods. The amalgam produced a rather ambiguous image of true religion. Through his lexicographical approach, De Hooghe was able to compare religions and religious matters on an abstract basis, resulting in a 'history of religion' approach. Here, the lines between Christianity and idolatry are blurred, and the general category 'religion' shimmers through. At the same time, however, De Hooghe's historical line foregrounds a confessionalized 'sacred history' which presents the Dutch Reformed Church as the true heir of original religion. The three cases discussed show that De Hooghe reflected on debates of his time but found it acceptable to present ambiguous and sometimes contradictory views, refraining from making an explicit judgment. Against the labeling of early modern religious authors as either Enlightened or radical, I have suggested here that one or another label cannot always capture a certain cluster of opinions so easily. The varied sentiments expressed mirrored

70 See Van 't Hof, 'Radicale, partisane ou idéaliste?' (see above, n. 26).

71 See my forthcoming PhD thesis.

72 De Hooghe, *Hieroglyphica* (see above, n. 3), pp. 427–33.

(whether out of opportunism or not) an ambiguous attitude towards true religion. As we saw, De Hooghe was not the only person mixing different opinions on the content of true religion. His colleague, the painter Zacharias Webber, for instance, posits contradictory statements about Christ—sometimes the Saviour, on other occasions a pious example.<sup>73</sup> The Mennonite preacher and physician Anthonie Van Dale (1638–1708) denounced oracles and was critical of the existence of ghosts, but he still believed that Jesus had freed people from demonic possessions.<sup>74</sup> Willem Goeree can be seen as at once a pious scholar and a radical libertine; the painter Samuel van Hoogstraten (1627–78) brought forth logically opposed statements in his writings.<sup>75</sup>

Such ambivalent approaches illustrate that much early modern thinking about religion—especially when examining the ‘elite of the skilled’ instead of the professional theologians and philosophers—contained elements of several intellectual currents at once. Divergence of opinion did not always occur along the convenient divisions modern scholars have made distinguishing radical, moderate, conservative, or religious Enlightenments. The situation, at least in the work of De Hooghe, could be much more ambiguous. Such ambiguity nuances the influence of ‘Enlightened’ philosophical ideas and underscores the recent attention given to the broader historical criticism applied to biblical exegesis from within—in this case—Protestantism.<sup>76</sup> This was combined with an ongoing demand for continued reformation, which included a critical attitude toward churches and religious leaders. Himself influenced by increasing notions of a more historical, critical history of religions, De Hooghe, with *Hieroglyphica*, contributes to the popularizing of the ‘new science,’ the history of religion, and offers evidence of a shift toward a less certain, less dogmatic, and more individual and pious conception of Christianity.

73 Praamsma, *Zacharias Webber* (see above, n. 58), p. 215.

74 Thijs Weststeijn, *The Visible World: Samuel van Hoogstraten's Art Theory and the Legitimation of Painting in the Dutch Golden Age* (Amsterdam, 2008), p. 40.

75 Jetze Touber, *Spinoza and Biblical Philology in the Dutch Republic, 1660–1710* (Oxford, 2018), pp. 56, 57. See also the list at the start of this paper. Frederik van Leenhof wrote both the Cocceian *Keten der Bybelse Godgeleerdheid*, which has not been studied, and the Spinozistic and therefore very controversial *Hemel op Aarde*.

76 See Levitin, ‘From Sacred History to the History of Religion’ (see above, n. 1); Sheehan, ‘Sacred and Profane’ (see above, n. 21), esp. pp. 61–6.

# Popularizing Radical Ideas in the Dutch Art World of the Early Eighteenth Century: Willem Goeree (1635–1711) and Arnold Houbraken (1660–1719)

*Jonathan Israel*

## Abstract

In this chapter I identify radical and spinozist traits in the works of Willem Goeree and Arnold van Houbraken. In many respects these men were, as publishers, booksellers, and graphic artists, in the same line of business as Romeyn de Hooghe, but they appear to have been much more radical. I show how both were also, like De Hooghe, ‘civic intellectuals’ fond of a “distinctively lay kind of vernacular, non-academic erudition.” I offer a finely drawn *tour d’horizon* of the cultural milieu in which these men moved, a milieu that included fellow artists and renowned scholars as well as ministers, rabbis, and radical thinkers. I infer new connections between their art theory, in which they strongly foregrounded close observation of the object and ‘naturalness,’ and the ideas of Spinoza, Bekker, and Van Leenhof—Reformed synods identified both Goeree and Houbraken as nefarious defenders of such ideas. I argue that this may have made them a connecting link between the early phase of the radical Enlightenment and the *libertinage érudit* of the Huguenot refugees from the second quarter of the eighteenth century.

There are grounds to include among the ranks of the early-eighteenth-century Dutch radical Enlightenment two connected, and hitherto rather neglected, figures—the publisher, antiquarian, and writer on art Wilhelmus Goeree (1635–1711) and the Dordrecht artist and art critic Arnold Houbraken (1660–1719).<sup>1</sup> Goeree was something of a living link between the founding generation of the *cercle spinoziste* of the 1650s and 1660s and the early eighteenth century. He himself reports that he had frequented and dined “more than once” with Franciscus van den Enden (1602–74), the young Spinoza’s Latin master who, at an earlier stage in his life, had been active as an art dealer in Amsterdam.

<sup>1</sup> This contribution is a reworked, expanded version of Jonathan Israel, ‘Spinozistic Popular Radicalism in the Dutch Art World of the Later Golden Age,’ in: *De tienduizend dingen: Feestbundel voor Reinier Salverda*, ed. Hanno Brand (Leeuwarden, 2013), pp. 129–44.

Arnold Houbraken was the author of the *Groote Schouburgh der Nederlantsche Konstschilders en Schilderessen* (The Great Theatre of Dutch Painters and Women Painters, 1718–21), a compendium that has been accounted the “first extensive study made of the lives and works of 17th century Netherlandish painters.”<sup>2</sup> Houbraken trained as an artist during 1674–8 in Dordrecht with Rembrandt’s pupil Samuel van Hoogstraten (1627–78), author of the *Inleydinge tot de Hooge Schole der Schilderkonst* (1678), and, to an even greater extent than Goeree, amassed an extensive and detailed knowledge of the Dutch art world of his own day and the recent past. These two critics both figured prominently among the just twelve writers active between 1600 and 1750 in the Netherlands who can be said to have written ‘extensively’ on the topic of Dutch Golden Age art.<sup>3</sup> Their remarkable careers and writings pose the question of the relation between Dutch Golden Age art as a sphere of cultural expression and spinozist radical thought at the turn of the eighteenth century.

Conceivably, Goeree and Houbraken barely knew each other personally even though both were renowned art connoisseurs and habitués of the art world of their time, since Houbraken moved permanently to Amsterdam, from Dordrecht, only in 1709, prompted by the Amsterdam regent and art collector, Johan Witsen, a key patron, little more than a year before Goeree’s death in early 1711. However that may be, these two personalities had much in common, being noted writers on art and prominent representatives of a distinctive new type of early Enlightenment Dutch civic intellectual culture. Both authors, furthermore, acquired somewhat dubious reputations as freethinkers, albeit neither acquired quite the notoriety of the engraver Romeyn de Hooghe (1645–1708), who became especially infamous among late Golden Age Dutch artists as a libertine and “een spotter met Godt en sijn woordt” (one who mocks God and his Word).<sup>4</sup> Both read widely, evincing strong views on numerous controversial topics, and stood out as eager amateur experts in classical antiquity, classicism, and ancient history, showing a fondness for a distinctively lay type of vernacular, non-academic erudition. Houbraken, who also had a liking for the aphorisms of the seventeenth-century Spanish Golden Age Stoic moralist Balthasar Gracián, has been called a “Stoic Deist” and a proponent of “deistic classicism” who believed God created the world according to a plan hidden in nature.<sup>5</sup>

2 Seymour Slive, *Rembrandt and His Critics 1630–1730* (The Hague, 1953), p. 177.

3 Paul Taylor, *Dutch Flower Painting 1600–1720* (New Haven, Conn., 1995), p. 77.

4 Inger Leemans, ‘De Viceroy van de hel: Radicaal libertinisme,’ in: *Romeyn de Hooghe: De Verbeelding van de late Gouden eeuw*, ed. Henk van Nierop et al. (Zwolle, 2008), pp. 32–47, there 34–5.

5 See Hendrik J. Horn, *The Golden Age Revisited: Arnold Houbraken’s Great Theatre of Netherlandish Painters and Paintresses*, 2 vols. (Doornspijk, 2000) and Eva Boom’s review of Horn’s book in *Oud Holland* 115, nos. 3/4 (2001–2), 235–7.

Both writers, as we shall see, were vocal defenders of Balthasar Bekker (1634–98), the Frisian preacher whose views on magic, Satan, and demonology, as well as the method of Bible interpretation, were emphatically condemned by the North Holland Synod at Alkmaar in July 1692. Bekker's celebrated book *De Betoverde Weereld* (The World Bewitched, 1691–3), generating what was perhaps the greatest Dutch public intellectual commotion of the age, came close to being banned in Holland and was actually prohibited by the States of Utrecht.<sup>6</sup> Beside their dogged Bekkerite allegiance, both personalities publicly sympathized with the embattled Zwolle preacher and clandestine spinozist Frederik van Leenhof (1647–1713). Expressing support for Van Leenhof in print was unusual during the opening decade of the eighteenth century and distinctly courageous in the wake of the vehement hue and cry against that renegade preacher (no less fierce and prolonged than that against Bekker).

In this latter connection, it is noteworthy that Willem's son Jan Goeree (1670–1731), born in Middelburg and figuring among the foremost engravers and book illustrators of the early eighteenth century, executed an elaborate depiction of Solomon's Temple signed 'J. Goeree del. et fecit' as the frontispiece to the now rather rare Amsterdam edition of Van Leenhof's book *'t Leven van Salomon en zyn bewys der Ydelheden* (The Life of Solomon and his Proof of the Vanities), published in 1700, a work treating Solomon's wisdom as a wholly natural phenomenon without any supernatural or miraculous component.<sup>7</sup> Both here and in his *De Prediker van den wijzen en magtigen konink Salomon* (The Preacher of the Wise and Powerful King Solomon, 1700) Van Leenhof used the figure of King Solomon "in part to throw all other kings into the least favourable and most dubious light possible,"<sup>8</sup> but also to echo Spinoza's 'Solomon' as an iconic figure, holding that only true wisdom teaches us to fear

6 Jonathan Israel, *The Dutch Republic: Its Rise, Greatness and Fall, 1477–1806* (Oxford, 1995), pp. 925–30.

7 Frederik van Leenhof, *'t Leven van Salomon en zyn bewys der Ydelheden* (Amsterdam, 1702); this is a different work from the better-known Frederik van Leenhof, *Het Leven van den wijzen en magtigen Koninck Salomon* (Amsterdam, 1700); a copy of the first is to be found in the Carl Gebhardt collection of Columbia University Library, New York; Jan Goeree became guild member as a book and art dealer in Amsterdam only in 1713. See I. H. van Eeghen, *De Amsterdamse boekhandel 1680–1725*, 5 vols. (Amsterdam, 1960–78), 4: 162. On the role of King Solomon in the work of Spinoza and in Van Leenhof, see Jonathan Israel, 'Spinoza, King Solomon and Frederik van Leenhof's Spinozistic Republicanism,' *Studia Spinozana* 11 (1995), 303–17; Jonathan Israel, 'The Democratic Republicanism of Frederik van Leenhof,' in: *Dall'origine dei Lumi alla Rivoluzione. Scritti in onore di Luciano Guerri e Giuseppe Ricuperati*, ed. D. Balani et al. (Rome, 2008), pp. 265–80.

8 Israel, 'Democratic Republicanism' (see above, n. 7), 267.

God properly and cultivate true religion: “hoc est, vera religione colere.”<sup>9</sup> For Spinoza, Solomon was *the* Biblical emblem of personal enlightenment. It is in man’s intellect, according to Spinoza’s ‘Solomon,’ that men find the source of their happiness, tranquillity, and blessedness: “thus, in Solomon’s view also, the happiness and peace of the person who cultivates natural understanding chiefly depend not on the realm of fortune (i.e. the external assistance of God), but upon their own internal power (or the internal assistance of God), because they preserve themselves best by alertness, action and good counsel.”<sup>10</sup> Willem Goeree, an avid collector of architectural models and drawings, had long nurtured a special fascination for the topic of Solomon’s Temple.<sup>11</sup> Both Willem and Jan Goeree, a prolific artist who executed all manner of illustrations for publishers and authors, showing a particular gift for historical scenes and classicizing allegories, must have been personally familiar with Van Leenhof, who besides being a major theological subversive possessed an outstanding and well-advertised art collection on display at his house in Zwolle. Willem’s connections with the art world extended throughout the Netherlands, as did his reputation for stalwart anti-Orangism in politics and anti-Voetianism in theology, first acquired during the noisy furore in Zeeland in 1676, when Stadholder William III ejected the Cocceian preacher Wilhelmus Momma (1642–77) from Middelburg.<sup>12</sup> But in addition he was a publisher and had published, among other texts, Van Leenhof’s best-known early work, *De Keten der Bybelsche God-Geleertheit* (The Chain of Biblical Theology, 1678), in which hints of spinozism were later spotted by the Zwolle preacher’s numerous adversaries. The title page of the 1684 reprint of *De Keten* identifies its Amsterdam publisher as “Wilhelmus Goeree op de Leidse Straat.”

Willem Goeree was born in 1635, just three years after Spinoza, and departed this world on 3 May 1711,<sup>13</sup> at a time when the Van Leenhof controversy still raged unresolved. Owing to the early death of his own father, Hugo Willemsz. Goeree (dates unknown), an eminent Middelburg physician, and the family’s subsequent straightened circumstances, the young Goeree was deprived of the opportunity to study at a university. Hugo Goeree was also a keen

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- 9 Benedict de Spinoza, *Opera*, ed. Carl Gebhardt, 4 vols. (Heidelberg, 1925), 2: 66–7; Wim Klever, *Een nieuwe Spinoza in veertig facetten* (Amsterdam, 1995), p. 14; Israel, ‘Democratic Republicanism’ (see above, n. 7), p. 272.
- 10 Benedict de Spinoza, *Theological-Political Treatise*, ed. Jonathan Israel (Cambridge, 2007), p. 67; Graeme Hunter, *Radical Protestantism in Spinoza’s Thought* (Aldershot, 2005), p. 53.
- 11 Charles van den Heuvel, ‘Willem Goeree (1635–1711) en de ontwikkeling van een algemene architectuurtheorie in de Nederlanden,’ *Bulletin Koninklijke Nederlandse Oudheidkundige Bond* 5 (1997) 154–76, there 155, 167–8.
- 12 Van den Heuvel, ‘Willem Goeree’ (see above, n. 11), 156; Israel, *Dutch Republic* (see above, n. 6), pp. 820, 898.
- 13 Frederik Nagtglas, *Levensberichten van Zeeuwen*, 2 vols. (Middelburg, 1890–1893), 1: 271.

amateur theologian specializing in Bible study who had frequently conferred, as Goeree recounts in his preface to his French edition of Petrus Cunaeus's famous work, *De republica hebraeorum* (1617), with the Sephardic rabbi Jacob Judah Leon 'Templo' (1603–75) whilst the latter resided in Middelburg as rabbi in the house-synagogue of the Sephardic merchant Paolo Giacomo (Jacob Jessurun) de Pinto.<sup>14</sup> Cunaeus's work, which appeared in eight Latin editions before Goeree published it in French translation in 1705, was noted for arguing that the laws of the ancient Hebrews were superior to those of the Greeks and Romans, a point later disputed by the celebrated Huguenot *érudit* Jacques Basnage.<sup>15</sup> Over many years, Jacob Judah had worked on and exhibited his celebrated model of the Temple of Solomon, renowned during the 1640s and 1650s in England as well as the Netherlands. This much-discussed model was based on a grandiose engraved conception of the Temple in Jerusalem published in 1604 by the Spanish Jesuit architect Juan Bautista Villalpando (1552–1608). Its contours were distinctly echoed in the mid-1640s in the innovative architecture of Jacob van Campen's Nieuwe Kerk then under construction in Haarlem. In 1650, Leon Templo dedicated his *Libellus effigiei Templi Salomonis* to Spinoza's father, Michael de Espinoza (d. 1654), serving at the time as one of the Amsterdam Sephardic synagogue elders.<sup>16</sup> Clear traces of this long-standing preoccupation with the iconic significance of Solomon's Temple are evident in Spinoza's *Tractatus Theologico-Politicus* where it is touched on repeatedly, in Willem Goeree's architectural theories, in Jan Goeree's engraving of Solomon's Temple for Van Leenhof of 1700, and especially in Van Leenhof's books.

Goeree's lifelong zeal for Hebraica and Jewish antiquities and his scepticism about Reformed theology doubtless owed much to his father and at least something to Rabbi Leon Templo. His fervour for research and study, especially into antiquities, and his profession as a bookseller—first in Middelburg and later in Amsterdam—led him to acquire a detailed knowledge of the books, prints, and book trade of his time and to become a man of substantial

14 Willem Goeree, 'Preface' to Petrus Cunaeus, *République des Hebreux* [French translation of his *De Republica Hebraeorum* (1617)], ed. Willem Goeree (Amsterdam, 1705) 2: fols. 3r, 6v–7r; Mozes Heiman Gans, *Memorboek: Platenatlas van het leven der joden in Nederland* (Baarn, 1978), pp. 37, 103, 260.

15 Gerald Cerny, *Theology, Politics and Letters at the Crossroads of European Civilization: Jacques Basnage and the Baylean Huguenot Refugees in the Dutch Republic* (Dordrecht, 1987), pp. 200–1.

16 Van den Heuvel, 'Willem Goeree' (see above, n. 11), 156, 158; Gary Schwartz, 'The Temple Mount in the Lowlands,' in: *The Dutch Intersection: The Jews and the Netherlands in Modern History*, ed. Yosef Kaplan (Leiden, 2008), pp. 111–2, 114–5.

learning in the vernacular. His compendious and ambitious *Mosaize Historie der Hebreuwsche Kerke* (Mosaic History of the Hebrew Church, 1700) reflects a zeal for topics with wide implications and a range of radical influences besides that of Bekker. Over the decades, Goeree developed and refined his distinctive, challenging outlook blending religious heterodoxy with art and architectural theory, an outlook acquired not solely through books but also through his cultivation of the company of other freethinkers. Besides knowing Van den Enden personally, he became acquainted with numerous notable personalities in various Dutch cities. During his stays in The Hague—where he also seems to have known Christian Huygens—he enjoyed long discussions, he informs us, with Isaac Vossius, “whose courtesy and friendliness I cannot sufficiently praise.”<sup>17</sup> In 1677, the year after Momma’s expulsion from Middelburg and the death of Spinoza at The Hague, and three years after Van den Enden’s execution in Paris, Goeree transferred his shop and collection of architectural models—which, he tells us, he hoped would be seen and appreciated by others “tot nut van ’t gemeene best” (for general edification)—permanently to Amsterdam. During the early 1680s his shop was situated on the Rokin; in or before 1683 he transferred his establishment to the house on the Leidsestraat located between the Keizers—and Prinsengracht, where he published Van Leenhof’s *Keten*.<sup>18</sup>

Very likely the individual suspected of heterodox opinions alluded to by David van Hassel in his preface to the Dutch-language version of Christopher Wittichius’s *Anti-Spinoza* published in 1695, in his native land Goeree was generally reputed to be a writer of suspiciously radical (and probably spinozist) views by the mid-1690s, if not earlier. According to Van Hassel, no egg resembles another as much as Spinoza’s philosophy resembles that of the Stoics, which this supreme modern impostor had disgracefully rehashed and served up as his own,<sup>19</sup> though this had not at all deterred his insidious following, which included the dubious personage in question who was now exerting a deplorable influence. In any case, there can be little doubt of Goeree’s religious heterodoxy during his later years. He was specified by name as a religious dissident and a rebel against ecclesiastical authority at the gatherings of the North and South Holland synods in 1703, and again by the North Holland Synod when it convened at Alkmaar in August 1704. On these occasions, he was cited for expressing Bekkerite views in his *Mosaize historie*, an impressively researched

17 Willem Goeree, *Voor-Bereidselen Tot de Bybelsche Wysheid en gebruik der Heilige en Kerkelijke Historien*, 2 vols. (Amsterdam, 1690), 1: 105.

18 Van Eeghen, *Amsterdamse boekhandel* (see above, n. 7), 4: 162.

19 David van Hassel, ‘Voorreden’ to Christopher Wittichius, *Ondersoek van de Zede-kunst van Benedictus de Spinoza* (Amsterdam, 1695), pp. i–ix.

and detailed account of early Israelite history illustrated with prints by Jan Luiken (1649–1712), which also caused a stir for its bold criticism of the way the Reformed Church had proceeded in the Balthasar Bekker affair.<sup>20</sup>

Like his son, a congenial lover of literary get-togethers and poetry as well as art, Willem Goeree was fond of combining learned conversation with meetings and conviviality. In one of his first publications, his *Inleydinge tot de Algemeene Teyken-konst* (Introduction to the Art of Drawing, 1668), he expressly looked forward to a more enlightened future age when “amateurs of learning” would be sufficiently numerous in each city and would be eager to gather for regular meetings as a *college* or literary society blending the arts and learning.<sup>21</sup> Training artists should by no means be just a matter of teaching them how to draw from life and other technical skills; it should also encompass the acquisition and diffusion of historical understanding, along with conviviality, sociability, and debate. A recurrent theme of Goeree’s writing is that men should strive not just for themselves but more especially for *’t gemeene best*, for “the common good,” and, as the French translation of one of his works puts it, “l’utilité du prochain, et sur tout je crois que le bien public lui doit tenir au coeur préféablement à toute autre chose.”<sup>22</sup>

Arnold Houbraken (1660–1719), for his part, possessed an unrivalled knowledge of which artists had studied with whom, were friends of whom, and had travelled abroad with whom. He, too, knew personally not only many artists and art dealers but also several prominent Reformed theologians, including Salomon van Til, whose treatise on classical and ancient Hebrew poetry and song, published in Dordrecht in 1692, he illustrated with several engravings, and David Fludd van Giffen, whose portrait he painted and whose collection of *curiosa* he reports on in his *Groote Schouburgh*.<sup>23</sup> Houbraken lived much of his life in Dordrecht, where he had studied art in the years 1674–8 with “SvH,” as he calls him in his *Philalethes Brieven*, that is Samuel van Hoogstraten (1627–78), whose views on painting and painters became a key stimulus to his own career both as an artist and as a writer on art, and by whom there is a portrait, painted

20 Acta North Holland Synod, Noord Hollands Archief, Haarlem, Provinciaal Kerkbestuur van Noord-Holland van de Nederlands-Hervormde Kerk, inv. nr. 8, acta Edam 31 July/9 Aug. 1703 and acta Alkmaar July/Aug. 1704.

21 Wijnand Meinhardt, *Tot heil van ’t menschdom* (Amsterdam, 1987), p. 82; Simon Schama, *Rembrandt’s Eyes* (London, 1999), p. 517; Taylor, *Dutch Flower Painting* (see above, n. 3), pp. 79, 88–9.

22 Goeree, ‘Preface’ to Cunaeus, *République des Hebreux* (see above, n. 14), 2: fol. 1r.

23 [Arnold Houbraken], *Philalethes Brieven. Verzameling van uitgelezene keurstoffen handelende over den godsdienst, natuur-, schilder-, teken-oudheid-, redeneer- en dichtkunst*, 2nd ed. (Amsterdam, 1713) [hereafter [Houbraken], *PB*], p. 4.

in 1670, thought by some modern researchers (probably incorrectly) to be of Spinoza. Hoogstraten was the first Dutch writer on art to explicitly set up a hierarchy of genres, ranking depictions of physical objects and still lifes as his lowest category and, as his highest level, paintings “which show the noblest emotions and desires of those creatures which are rational, that is, of human beings; and because these are subjects with more than merely the power of animal motion, so the artists who have a true capacity for this style of painting are spread the thinnest.”

Houbraken was a dedicated realist and naturalist, albeit not exactly in our twenty-first-century sense. Like Goeree, he shared a theory of art that heavily stressed realism in a wider context than just physical representation, one that applauded art that captured accurately and emphasized *houding*—‘pose,’ truthful reflection of movement, posture, positioning, and response and that eschewed the false, magical, and irrational. Among the lessons Houbraken professed to have learnt from Van Hoogstraten—and a key to his notion of good judgement in artistic matters—was that the artist should always strive “om waarheden te verthoonen” (to convey truths). Wherever the artist fails in this, he falls short and is reprehensibly helping perpetuate and propagate “false ideas.”<sup>24</sup> Hoogstraten was enthralled by acting and the theatre and constantly strove to get his students to observe and study the outward expression of emotion. He was like Goeree, who insisted on the need for naturalness of bodies, light, gesture, and perspective in drawing and painting, even designating accurate drawing “de Baer-moeder, en voester aller consten en wetenschappen” (the womb and wet-nurse of all arts and sciences).<sup>25</sup>

Houbraken laid an unusual stress on the need to devise ways to represent complex human scenes in a rational manner so as to meaningfully reflect the play of intention, motive, and emotion. He was greatly impressed with Romeyn de Hooghe’s inventiveness and originality in matters artistic (not just in drawing and etching but also painting), despite his reservations about de Hooghe’s character.<sup>26</sup> Likewise, he admired Rembrandt for widening the range of facial expressions, gestures, and attitudes in art, though he also criticized the artist

24 [Houbraken], *PB* (see above, n. 23), pp. 3–4; Svetlana Alpers, *Rembrandt’s Enterprise: The Studio and the Market* (Chicago, 1988), pp. 24, 38; 95; Horst Gerson, *Rembrandt’s Paintings* (New York, 1968), p. 48; Ernst van de Wetering, *Rembrandt: The Painter at Work* (Amsterdam, 2000), pp. 150, 169, 175, 179, 255, 282, 353.

25 Willem Goeree, *Inleydinge Tot de Al-ghemeene Teycken-kunst* (Middelburg, 1668), fol. 4v; Paul Knolle, ‘Een goede kunstwerk-plaats: De Haarlemse tekenschool,’ in: *Romeyn de Hooghe* (see above, n. 4), pp. 184–9, there 187.

26 Huigen Leeflang, ‘Waarheid, vlugheid en inventie,’ in: *Romeyn de Hooghe* (see above, n. 4), p. 127.

as someone who could have been greater had he put more smooth finish and care into his works. Art studies and tuition in Rembrandt's studio, Houbraken learnt from Hoogstraten and other former Rembrandt pupils that he knew, involved drawing nudes from life: a positive thing in the main, but he wished the great master had represented fewer naked women with fat bellies and sagging breasts, a form of realism he considered excessively physical and lifelike and insufficiently linked to expression and meaning.

Rembrandt had shown more patience, he thought, and had better captured the natural expression of human gesture and movement during his early years as a painter than he did later and had displayed greater expressive power. Rembrandt took no notice, Houbraken remarked, of even the most generally approved rules in art "but took his own opinion for his rule." For the paintings of his contemporary, the Rotterdam painter Adriaen van der Werff (1659–1722), by contrast, Houbraken expressed unqualified admiration, praising especially his highly polished, elevated painterly technique which to his mind placed Van der Werff amongst the finest Dutch artists. For Houbraken, projecting 'truths' evidently meant depicting subjects in an elevated, polished, classicizing manner without placing them in an unnatural or unhistorical context or milieu. His was an art theory stressing harmony, realistic posture, and the narrative logic of positioning and composition. For both Houbraken and Goeree, as for Van Hoogstraten earlier, art was not far from being a narrative science of emotion based on the close observation and study of posture and movement.

If Houbraken was unrivalled in his detailed knowledge of the lives and characteristics of Dutch artists, Goeree seems to have been widely respected, particularly in Middelburg and Amsterdam, for his wide-ranging erudition. Given their quantity and sometimes expensive format, his own published writings appear to have sold fairly well even if they were only sparsely cited in the scholarly literature of his time (and later). As the spinozist novel *Philopater* mockingly noted in 1697, his vernacular texts proved useful not least to learned preachers when preparing their sermons.<sup>27</sup> Doubtless his erudition was scorned by Latin-trained professional scholars of the age owing to his lack of any formal academic background, but his works are by no means uninteresting, even today. He did not hesitate to accuse professional theologians of lacking adequate expertise and betraying an inadequate knowledge of Hebrew—a language he vigorously championed and to which he claimed to have devoted a lifetime of study. Like Van Leenhof,<sup>28</sup> he accused the clergy of claiming a

27 [Johannes Duikerius], *Het Leven van Philopater*, ed. Gerardine Maréchal (Amsterdam, 1991), p. 119.

28 Jonathan Israel, 'Religious Toleration and Radical Philosophy in the Later Dutch Golden Age (1668–1710)', in: *Calvinism and Religious Toleration in the Dutch Golden Age*, ed. Ronnie

false authority on the basis of qualifications they did not possess. He especially charged professional theologians with ignorance of ancient history, Jewish and Gentile alike, and of antiquities.<sup>29</sup> His supreme offence in the eyes of Reformed ministers was his scornful rejection of the idea that theology and Bible study, and religious truth generally, constituted a fenced-off professional precinct, a speciality reserved for trained theologians. This was a conviction Houbraken fully shared and in both cases their heterodox theology and contempt for academic theologians were closely linked to their art and art theories.

Theology, Goeree echoed Cunaeus' scathing judgement of the professional theologians, was "un pais qu'ils se sont approprié de leur propre autorité, pour y exercer une domination absolue, et une dictature souveraine."<sup>30</sup> He robustly defended Bekker's bold stance on witchcraft, Satanism, and demonism and his style of scriptural exegesis.<sup>31</sup> Insisting on the fraudulent character and powerlessness of the Egyptian magicians recounted in the Pentateuch, he repeatedly asserts that sorcery and magic do not really exist.<sup>32</sup> Moreover, in his views on miracles, magic, and the Devil, Goeree goes noticeably beyond Bekker, referring to the Devil seemingly more in the spirit of Koerbagh than his Frisian hero as essentially simply human desire, a force at war "with reason and goodness" in the human soul that cannot be driven out of any human being except by death.<sup>33</sup> He approvingly quotes Hobbes on the subject of the Devil, which Bekker had certainly not done,<sup>34</sup> and he enthusiastically adopts Anthonie van Dale's radical perspective on ancient oracles and the impostures of the ancient priesthood.<sup>35</sup> Following Van Dale, he dismisses the *Sibylline Books* as totally fraudulent and in no way a prophecy of the coming of Christ.<sup>36</sup> Contrary to the Church Fathers, he contends that the pagan oracles continued to flourish "for around 400 years after Christ's birth" and did not cease through any supernatural agency, much less the coming of Christ, but were suppressed only

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Po-Chia Hsia and Henk van Nierop (Cambridge, 2002), p. 154.

- 29 Willem Goeree, *Mosaize Historie der hebreuwsche kerke*, 4 vols. (Amsterdam, 1700) [hereafter: Goeree, *MH*], 2: fols. 8r–9r.
- 30 Goeree, 'Preface' (see above, n. 14), 1: fol.
- 31 Goeree, *MH* (see above, n. 29), 2: fol. 619–620; Willem Goeree, *De Kerklyke en Weereldlyke Historien* (Amsterdam, 1705) [hereafter: Goeree, *KWH*], pp. 678–81.
- 32 Goeree, *MH* (see above, n. 29), 2: fols. 1v–2r and 3: 126–7, 137–9.
- 33 Goeree, *MH* (see above, n. 29), 2: 649–50, 687–93.
- 34 Goeree, *MH* (see above, n. 29), 2: 656.
- 35 Goeree, *MH* (see above, n. 29), 1, sig. k2r and 2: fol. 2r; [Houbraken], *PB* (see above, n. 23), 1: 164–5; see also Eric Jorink and Dirk van Miert, 'Epilogue: Isaac Vossius in Context,' in: *Isaac Vossius (1618–1689): Between Science and Scholarship*, ed. Eric Jorink and Dirk van Miert (Leiden, 2012), p. 314.
- 36 Goeree, *MH* (see above, n. 29), 2: 667; Jonathan Israel, *Enlightenment Contested: Philosophy, Modernity, and the Emancipation of Man 1670–1752* (Oxford, 2006), 429.

due to decrees passed by the Emperor Theodosius and his sons, Arcadius and Honorius.<sup>37</sup> He cheerfully ridiculed Bishop Huet's strenuous efforts to rescue the Church Fathers on this topic.

Explaining all supposedly demonic and magical phenomena narrated in Scripture in naturalistic terms, Goeree regularly dismisses 'possession' by devils as recounted in the New Testament as mere incidents of mental illness, fits, and madness.<sup>38</sup> During the discussions about "licentious book printing" at the gatherings of the Reformed Synod of South Holland at Gorcum in July 1703 and of the Province of Overijssel at Steenwijk in May 1704, extracts from the "last book of Goeree" were examined "waer in hy de gevoelens van Balthasar Bekker niet alleen met veel vrymoedigheid verdedigd, maer besonder ook de Synodus van Noord Holland over het removeren van voornoemden Bekker van syn predikdienst uitkrijt voor een voldoeninge van wraakheyt, om maer dien hupsen man van den cansel te schoppen, en meer andere" (wherein he not only defends the opinions of Balthasar Bekker with great boldness, but in particular decries the Synod of North Holland for having removed the said Bekker from his ministry to satisfy their vengefulness, just to kick this good man from the pulpit).<sup>39</sup>

Indignant at Goeree's impieties, delegates from the South Holland Reformed Synod had consulted the pensionary of the States of Holland, Anthonie Heinsius, about ways and means to suppress "this and other licentious books." At the time, Goeree was reportedly residing in the village of Maarssen in the province of Utrecht. The South Holland Reformed Synod gathering at Den Briel in July 1704 noted that Heinsius had also been asked to intercede with the States of Utrecht against Goeree, and the Utrecht "correspondent" confirmed that his provincial synod had indeed now presented a "request" to their provincial States to take action to counter Goeree's "harmful" ideas and damaging presence in their province.<sup>40</sup> The Synod of Overijssel was asked to inform

37 Goeree, *MH* (see above, n. 29), 2: 662–5; Jonathan Israel, *Radical Enlightenment: Philosophy and the Making of Modernity 1650–1750* (Oxford, 2001), pp. 363–4, 428.

38 Goeree, *MH* (see above, n. 29), 1: 22 and 2: 688.

39 Acta South Holland Synod, Het Utrechts Archief (HUA), Oud-synodaal Archief van de Nederlandse Hervormde Kerk (OSA), inv. nr. 265, acta Gorcum, 3/13 July 1703, art. 9; Acta Synod of Overijssel, Historisch Centrum Overijssel (HCO), Zwolle, Archief van de provinciale synode van Overijssel (APSO), inv. nr. 3, acta Steenwijk, 27 May art. 6 'licentius boekdrukken'; Jonathan Israel, 'The Bekker Controversies as a Turning-Point in Dutch Culture and Thought,' *Dutch Crossing: A Journal of Low Countries Studies* 20 (1996), 5–21, there, 10–11; Jacob van Sluis, *Bekkeriana: Balthasar Bekker biografisch en bibliografisch* (Leeuwarden, 1994), p. 71.

40 Acta South Holland Synod, HUA, OSA, inv. nr. 265, acta Den Briel, 8/18 July 1704 art. 23; Goeree, *MH* (see above, n. 29), 1: fol. 2r; 2: fols 1v–2r.

the States of Overijssel's deputies in The Hague to help ensure that the political authorities kept an eye on him and that his "damaging opinions" were carefully guarded against. Curiously, Goeree's name was specifically linked in this discussion with 'New Arianism,' currently perceived to be a fresh theological threat. How exactly this 'new' Arianism related to original Arianism and Socinianism remains to be clarified.

At the meeting of the South Holland Reformed Synod at The Hague in July 1705, it was reported that Pensionary Heinsius had agreed to raise the issue of Goeree with the burgomasters at Amsterdam, where the suspect author had now removed himself and "sich nu aldaar seer stil hieldt" (now kept himself there very quiet), presumably to avoid trouble in light of the political and ecclesiastical surveillance and persecution directed towards him.<sup>41</sup> He had no intention, though, of abandoning the fight over demonology, Satan, Bekker, biblical interpretation, and related topics. His *Kerklyke en weerdlyke historien* (Histories of the Church and the World, 1705), which tellingly and probably provocatively included a portrait of Spinoza and which many years later in 1730 was quietly reprinted in Leiden, initiated a new phase in his escalating encounter with the Reformed synods and preachers.<sup>42</sup> At gatherings of the South Holland Synod in 1706 and at the meeting at Leerdam in July 1707, the Delft delegates complained about his latest outpouring of irreverence and theological subversion wherein, just as in his *Mosaïze historie*, "vele aanstoetelijk en ergelycke passagien worden gevonden, waar in de gevoelens van Bekker, ja noch snoder wel stout en stijf worden beweert" (many shocking and offensive passages are to be found, in which the views of Bekker are boldly and forthrightly, indeed even more vilely upheld) and the Church's official proceedings against the dissident Frisian preacher were openly mocked.<sup>43</sup>

Like Houbraken, Goeree verged on excluding the supernatural and all notions of the divine as being altogether separate from nature. He came close to affirming that the Ten Plagues were not an instance of divine intervention or any kind of miraculous occurrence but rather were explicable purely in terms of natural causes.<sup>44</sup> In the case of the parting of the waters of the Red Sea, he does not entirely rule out the possibility of supernatural intervention but considers it incumbent on any responsible commentator on that 'miracle' to research

41 Acta South Holland Synod, HUA, OSA, inv. nr. 265, acta 's-Gravenhage 7/17 July 1705, art. 24.

42 Acta South Holland Synod, HUA, OSA, inv. nr. 265, acta Leerdam 1707, art. 18; Goeree, *MH* (see above, n. 29), 1: sig. k2r and 2: fols 1v–2r; G. Maréchal, 'Inleiding' to Johannes Duijkerius, *Het Leven van Philopater en Vervolg van 't Leven van Philopater* (Amsterdam, 1991), p. 44 and plate 7.

43 Goeree, *MH* (see above, n. 29), 3: 143.

44 Goeree, *MH* (see above, n. 29), 3: 345–9.

the likelihood of earth tremors, the role of shallows, and the movement of tides in order to exhaustively examine every conceivable natural explanation.<sup>45</sup> Superstition and belief in demons and sorcery Goeree ranks among the worst curses afflicting humanity, because manipulative priesthoods have regularly exploited popular credulity, demonology, and idolatry to enhance their power and exact obedience.<sup>46</sup> “Why,” he asks, “did the Saviour not vigorously combat and contradict all these gross errors?”<sup>47</sup> He repeatedly laments that Christ and the Apostles made no attempt to counter the superstitious beliefs of the people of their time, especially regarding demonology. Regrettably, he observed, Christ himself “sometimes used phrases accepting the teaching of demons and power of possession.” Against the background of his consistent anti-Trinitarianism, this remark implies a stance coloured by Spinoza’s idea that Christ and his Apostles, using phrases expressing the credulous beliefs of the common people, were concerned only to teach the people obedience to the moral code, remaining unconcerned with enlightening men, uncluttering their minds, or propagating truth.<sup>48</sup>

Typical of Goeree’s general stance is his undisguised disdain for the Voetian-Cocceian and other contemporary theological controversies within the public Church, which he considered irrelevant to men’s lives. At one point, he comments—with studied irony—that he does not consider that “ceux qui s’érigent en dictateurs des mystères sacrez” perform this role cogently or persuasively enough to oblige those who feel themselves “munis d’une conscience droite et éclairée, et dont les moeurs et la vie sont irréprochables, à se soumettre entièrement à ce qu’il leur plaît de décider.”<sup>49</sup> Men of genuine learning and goodwill should remain pure “spectateurs de leurs combats,” the feuding of rival theologians being more a matter of ambition and petty jealousy than theology. Readers should ponder these debates “sans y prendre part, sinon en ce que nous faisons des vœux et des prières pour la cause publique, et éloignez de la folle multitude;” the wise when having the leisure should devote themselves exclusively to the authentic, purposeful study of theology, not to “cette théologie de parti, mais à une theologie sobre, modeste, libre, fondée sur la littérature soit grecque, soit Hebraïque, soit Latin, dégagée de toute animosité, et de toute querelle, que nous faisons profession de fuir et de mépriser.”<sup>50</sup>

45 Goeree, *MH* (see above, n. 29), 2: 685–7.

46 Goeree, *MH* (see above, n. 29), 1: 23 and 2: 688.

47 Goeree, *MH* (see above, n. 29), 2: 688, 702; [Houbraken], *PB* (see above, n. 23), 1: 119–20, 125, 128–30.

48 Goeree, ‘Preface’ to Cunaeus, *République des Hebreux* (see above, n. 14), 1: 9.

49 Goeree, ‘Preface’ to Cunaeus, *République des Hebreux* (see above, n. 14), 1: 9.

50 Nagtglas, *Levensberichten van Zeeuwen* (see above, n. 13), 1: 271.

Although he seems to have mostly resided in Middelburg down to 1677,<sup>51</sup> Goeree must have spent periods in The Hague and Amsterdam well before moving to the latter permanently, having got to know Van den Enden “very well”<sup>52</sup> at some point before the notorious ex-Jesuit left Amsterdam for Paris in 1671.<sup>53</sup> Migrating from Antwerp at the close of the Eighty Years’ War, around 1648, Van den Enden had opened a shop in the Nes selling prints and books. After only about five years, his Amsterdam art business had gone bankrupt in 1652 at the start of the First Anglo-Dutch War (1652–4), which also ruined the business of Spinoza’s father. At the time of his bankruptcy, Van den Enden still had thirty paintings and a large quantity of prints and unsold books in stock.<sup>54</sup> Before 1648, he had participated in the art trade in Antwerp, producing and selling prints together with his brother, Martinus van den Enden.<sup>55</sup> At least one of Rembrandt’s pupils had lodged with Van den Enden in Amsterdam in or around 1652, a time when several talented young trainees in their late teens, Willem Drost (1633–59) among them,<sup>56</sup> were crowding Rembrandt’s ‘school.’ Although Drost was too young to have known Goeree when he ran his art shop in the Nes, it is not impossible that common ties to the art world shaped Goeree’s later connection with him.

That both men knew a great deal about the Amsterdam art scene may well have framed their mutual acquaintance,<sup>57</sup> even if, on the subjects of Van den Enden and Koerbagh, Goeree offered only unflattering and disapproving remarks in print. Having, he records, as a young man “more than once eaten and drunk with” Van den Enden, he had learnt little that was edifying and was not surprised that “Spinoza too picked up few good principles from this master who was very generous in peddling his godless convictions to young and old alike, and boasting that he was rid of the fable of faith.”<sup>58</sup> Taking up the profession

51 Goeree, *KWH* (see above, n. 31), p. 669.

52 Marc Bedjaï, ‘Libertins et politiques: le comte de Guiche’, *Revue de la Bibliothèque Nationale* 44 (1992), 29–33, here p. 32.

53 Wim Klever, ‘Inleiding’ to Franciscus van den Enden, *Vrije Politieke stellingen en consideration van staat* (Amsterdam, 1992), pp. 17–9; Steven M. Nadler, *Spinoza: A Life* (Cambridge, Eng., 1999), pp. 78–9.

54 Frank Mertens, *Van den Enden en Spinoza* (Voorschoten, 2012), pp. 10–29.

55 Jonathan Bikker, *Willem Drost (1633–1659): A Rembrandt Pupil in Amsterdam and Venice* (New Haven, Conn., 2005), p. 10.

56 Klever, ‘Inleiding’ (see above, n. 53), p. 18.

57 Goeree, *KWH* (see above, n. 31), p. 665; Koenraad O. Meinsma, *Spinoza et son cercle* (Paris, 1984), pp. 5, 192; Rienk H. Vermij, ‘Dirk Santvoort, een achttiende-eeuws materialist’, *Geschiedenis van de wijsbegeerte in Nederland* 11 (2000), 61–80, there 67 n.

58 Fokke Akkerman, *Studies in the Posthumous Works of Spinoza* (Groningen, 1980), pp. 3, 18 n. 12; Klever, ‘Inleiding’ (see above, n. 53), pp. 21–3.

of schoolmaster after 1652, Van den Enden devoted much energy to teaching his pupils good Latin style, requiring them to perform the plays of Seneca and Terence in the original. But it was also his practice, until ugly rumours spread about it, to inculcate his atheistic ideas into the young.<sup>59</sup> Adriaan Koerbagh, too, observes Goeree, “through contact with this man did not imbibe anything good [...] as is plain from all those offensive entries in his Dictionary, or stinking *Bloemhof*.”<sup>60</sup>

By contrast, his passages concerning Spinoza (whom Goeree may also have known) are by no means as disapproving and hostile as was then the rule in respectable Dutch intellectual discourse. Indeed, certain remarks allow the hypothesis that his sympathies and ideas bore a spinozist flavour. In any case, both he and Houbraken display a fairly comprehensive knowledge of radical thought; their testimonies show that both men had read Spinoza, Koerbagh, Bekker, and Van Leenhof. Theirs was a cultural and intellectual world that encompassed Geulincx, Vossius, Van Dale, Wittichius’s *Anti-Spinoza*,<sup>61</sup> Wolsgryn, Simon, Bayle, Hobbes,<sup>62</sup> Van Leenhof, and also Van Balen.<sup>63</sup> Goeree seems to have pondered Spinoza’s account of substance and the doctrine of the parallelism of mind and body discussing this problem and Spinoza’s treatment of it in one passage in his works.<sup>64</sup> Of course, no writer in the United Provinces in the eighteenth century could openly endorse Spinoza or spinozism. Goeree does pay lip service to the usual denunciation of him as an ‘atheist’ and decries a spinozist novel, the second part of *Philopater* published by Aert Wolsgryn at Amsterdam, in 1697, a cornerstone of Dutch popular spinozism, as a book in which the “deadly weed” produced by Spinoza, that *verdwaalden filozooft* (philosopher gone astray), came to full bloom.<sup>65</sup>

Yet there is plainly another side to the picture. A remarkable passage in his world history concerns the medieval scholastic philosopher Peter Abelard (1079–1142), based apparently on the article in Bayle’s *Dictionnaire* where Bayle cites Abelard as a courageous early example of the resort to philosophical reason, the “lumières philosophiques” which, he implies, had “enlightened”

59 Goeree, *KWH* (see above, n. 31), p. 665; Meinsma, *Spinoza et son cercle* (see above, n. 59), pp. 192, 381–2; Israel, *Radical Enlightenment* (see above, n. 38), p. 168.

60 Goeree, *KWH* (see above, n. 31), pp. 5, 667.

61 Willem Goeree, *Natuurlijk en Schilderkonstig Ontwerp der menschkunde* (Amsterdam, 1682), pp. 359–60; Goeree, *KWH* (see above, n. 31), p. 5; Goeree, *Voor-Bereidselen* (see above, n. 17), 1: 150.

62 Goeree, *KWH* (see above, n. 31), pp. 674–5; [Houbraken], *PB* (see above, n. 23), 2: 2, 64–5.

63 Goeree, *Voor-Bereidselen* (see above, n. 17), 1: 105.

64 [Houbraken], *PB* (see above, n. 23), 2: 83; Maréchal, ‘Inleiding’ (see above, n. 43), p. 36.

65 Goeree, *KWH* (see above, n. 31), p. 562; Israel, ‘Democratic Republicanism’ (see above, n. 7), p. 280.

(*éclairé*) the seventeenth century and rescued humanity from monkish superstition and ignorance.<sup>66</sup> The passage in Goeree illustrates the pervasive role that philosophical reason, and especially Spinoza's philosophy, played in his thinking. Abelard, he affirms, imbibed errors concerning the Trinity and denied both Christ's divinity and his being the Saviour who had come into the world and had become flesh to redeem sinners, holding, like Van Leenhof, that Christ's crucifixion and death did not constitute a work of redemption "maar tot een voorbeeld van gedult dat wy moesten volgen. Hy leerde dat de mensch geen vrye wil heeft, maar dat hy neffens alle dingen, ja Godt zelve, de noodzakelijkheid onderworpen is" (but just an example of patience which we were to follow. He taught that a person has no free will but rather, like all things, yes even God, is subject to necessity).<sup>67</sup> Abelard, as reported by Goeree, also taught that reason is the only guide in matters of faith. One perceives in Abelard, concludes Goeree, many things heaped up "die men 't thans Spinoza te last leyd" (that are now laid at Spinoza's door), a remarkable assertion made without any judgement, positive or negative, or further comment.

Although the *herem* (ban) imposed by the synagogue on Spinoza was uniquely harsh, and indeed according to Goeree in 1690 (who, on this point, is subsequently cited by Colerus, in his biography of Spinoza) entirely out of line with normal Jewish practice,<sup>68</sup> Spinoza's departure from the synagogue should nevertheless be attributed less to Jewish intolerance than to his wish "om zig van allerley gewetensdwang en sekten-aanhang los te maken, en een vrye geest te verkrijgen" (to free himself from all forcing of conscience and allegiance to sects, and to be a free spirit).<sup>69</sup> In another comment, Goeree claims the Jewish philosopher adhered consistently to his principles until he died in The Hague in 1677, showing no signs of weakening in his views, as one can see, he says, from François Halma's notes to his Dutch translation of Bayle's article on Spinoza, although these are "niet heel van Voor-oordeel vry zijn" (not entirely free from bias), a qualification again suggesting dissent from Halma's unqualified anti-spinozism.<sup>70</sup> Further on, repeating his assertion, reminiscent

66 Gregorio Piaia, 'Bayle et le moyen âge', in: *Pierre Bayle dans la République des Lettres: Philosophie, religion, critique*, ed. Antony McKenna and Gianni Paganini (Paris, 2004), p. 233.

67 Johann Colerus, *Das Leben des Bened: Von Spinoza* (Frankfurt and Leipzig, 1733), p. 22.

68 Goeree, *KWH* (see above, n. 31), p. 666.

69 Goeree, *KWH* (see above, n. 31), p. 666.

70 Pierre Bayle, *Écrits sur Spinoza*, ed. Françoise Charles-Daubert and Pierre-François Moreau (Paris, 1983), pp. 36–7, 113–14; Gianluca Mori, *Bayle philosophe* (Paris, 1999), pp. 158, 165.

of the Bayle article in question,<sup>71</sup> that Spinoza adhered to his views with great constancy to the end, he also follows Bayle in claiming that Spinoza's behaviour had been "geschickt, zedig, goed-aardig, vriendelijk, beleefd en gediensstig" (decent, modest, good-natured, friendly, courteous, and obliging), citing here the reference to Spinoza in Bekker's sequel to Hornius's church history.<sup>72</sup>

Goeree's most telling assertion concerning Spinoza, however, is his claim that in the Netherlands at the time, the latter's ideas were not being fairly considered. He characterizes Spinoza's goal to have been the dislodging from the minds of "both Jews and Christians all grounding of true religion and belief and to make known that religion was invented merely for political reasons, that is to keep society in tranquillity and the people in subjection." Spinoza had allegedly already set out on this quest in that "unknown work," the *De Jure Ecclesiasticorum* (1665) (a publication now considered possibly to be by his friend and ally Lodewijk Meyer).<sup>73</sup> The rest of Spinoza's ideas, holds Goeree, one must retrieve from his books "en 'er niet eer veel van na-praten, voor dat men ze in den grond onderzocht heeft; 't geen misschien weynige nog ter deugde gedaan hebben" (and not prattle about them too much before having studied them thoroughly; which few perhaps have done properly).<sup>74</sup>

This last remark is an unmistakable hint that he thought readers should examine and judge Spinoza's writings for themselves and also suggests that he believed that he himself had studied Spinoza carefully, whereas most of those who loudly condemned Spinoza had not—as was doubtless the case. Borrowing their views too readily from other people, many had thus "al te voorbarig" (all too rashly) assumed Spinoza to be a muddle-head. Such superficial reading and criticism was, in his opinion, both reprehensible and foolish. In short, Goeree disliked and courageously denounced the conventional anti-spinozism saturating the Dutch culture of his day. He seems to have thought that those spinozists "die altyd roepen dat men hem qualyk verstaat" (who always protest that he is wrongly interpreted) had more than a little justification for their view.<sup>75</sup>

A further indication of Goeree's hostility to religious authority and his broadly radical leanings lies in his remark that those few who have undertaken serious study of Spinoza's philosophy "zeggen, dat hy veel goede dingen heeft,

71 Goeree, *KWH* (see above, n. 31), p. 668; see Manfred Walther (ed.) *Die Lebensgeschichte Spinozas: Zweite, stark erweiterte und vollständig neu kommentierte Auflage der Ausgabe von Jakob Freudenthal* (2 vols., Stuttgart-Bad Cannstatt, 2006) i, 107 and ii, 65.

72 Goeree, *KWH* (see above, n. 31), p. 666.

73 Goeree, *KWH* (see above, n. 31), p. 669.

74 Goeree, *KWH* (see above, n. 31), p. 670.

75 Goeree, *KWH* (see above, n. 31), pp. 670–1; Israel, 'Democratic Republicanism' (see above, n. 7), pp. 274, 276.

en zelfs Kartesius in vele deelen verbeterd heeft. Dog zulx te zeggen schynd thans verbode taal” (say that he offers many good things, and in many sections has even improved on Descartes; though to say this today seems to be forbidden language).<sup>76</sup> This comment plainly alludes to the current furore surrounding Van Leenhof, who was lambasted for suggesting that good as well as bad things were to be found in Spinoza’s writings and that a particularly welcome and valuable aspect of Spinoza’s teaching was his unrivalled analysis of how emotions work—a philosophical topic of special relevance, of course, to artists, art critics, and art students. It was commonly frowned upon to refer to Spinoza in such terms, complains Goeree, “alhoewel ‘er den Heer Oldenburg nog Wittig niet beschroomd voor waren, hoe kragtig den laatsten zig nogtans tegen zyn *Zedekunst* en Beschryving van God heeft aangekant” (although neither Mr Oldenburg, nor Wittichius, were timid about saying so, however forcefully the latter nevertheless opposed his *Ethics* and account of God).<sup>77</sup>

Nor did the various available rebuttals of Van Leenhof’s *Den Hemel op Aarden* (Heaven on Earth, 1703) in any way reflect, in Goeree’s opinion, an adequate grasp of Spinoza’s philosophy.<sup>78</sup> That Goeree considered Van Leenhof a second Bekker and likewise sympathized with him, as well as endorsed his moral teaching,<sup>79</sup> emerges from a passing mention of the Zwolle *predikant* in his *De Kerklyke en Weereldlyke Historien*, where he suggests that the author of the *Betoverde Weereld* (Balthasar Bekker) deserved a “far better fate” than he had received from the Dutch Reformed synods, pointedly adding that as regards Van Leenhof he preferred to pass by that delicate topic with a “silent drum.”<sup>80</sup> It is fair to assume that he felt indignant at the public scandal being whipped up by the Reformed preachers and synods against Van Leenhof but deemed it advisable not to labour the point in print.

Houbraken evidently believed that he shared Goeree’s philosophical and theological views as well as his artistic and other cultural concerns. This emerges unmistakably from the text of his clandestinely published *Philaethes Brieven* (1711), among the most radical Dutch publications of the early eighteenth century, an anonymously published work that appeared in the wake of the Van Leenhof controversies and that for a time I, along with other scholars,

76 Goeree, *KWH* (see above, n. 31), 671.

77 Goeree, *KWH* (see above, n. 31), pp. 674–5; Israel, ‘Democratic Republicanism’ (see above, n. 7), pp. 273–4.

78 Goeree, *KWH* (see above, n. 31), 37.

79 Goeree, *KWH* (see above, n. 31), 37; [Houbraken], *Philaethes Brieven* (see above, n. 23), 1: 175–6.

80 [Houbraken], *PB* (see above, n. 23), 1: 6.

had wrongly attributed to Goeree.<sup>81</sup> Such was the uproar that this publication provoked in the Netherlands that in 1713, pressure from the Amsterdam Reformed consistory apparently forced Houbraken to take refuge in England for several months. That Houbraken himself was perfectly conscious of his intellectual affinities with Goeree is apparent from a pointed remark in his preface that describes Goeree as “een schryver die by my in groote waarde gehouden word” (a writer who is held in high esteem by me).<sup>82</sup>

*Philalethes Brieven* reworks many of the same broadly anti-demonic, anti-Trinitarian, spinozist, and Bekkerite themes and doctrines that Goeree advances in his two major controversial works. To Houbraken it seemed obvious that there exists no scriptural basis for the dogma of the Trinity.<sup>83</sup> The precise mission of Christ and the Apostles was to correct and improve the people's behaviour but, unfortunately, they proceeded in this regard without seeking to combat their ignorance, credulity, and damaging superstitious ideas, all of which were left intact and untouched.<sup>84</sup> Either at God's command or through his adroit grasp of politics, Moses, too, had adjusted his teaching and legislation to the people's superstitious and credulous mentality, aligning his rhetoric with their delusions, visions, oracles, dreams, and soothsaying.<sup>85</sup> As for the classical Greek and Roman oracles and soothsayers, these he dismisses as altogether fraudulent, designed to exploit popular superstition and credulity.<sup>86</sup> While it is certain that Moses did not write the Five Books—as others, including Petrus van Balen (1643–90), had shown, notes Houbraken, referring to the Rotterdam crypto-spinozist<sup>87</sup>—the Pentateuch was nonetheless also built on the credulity and false notions of the people.<sup>88</sup> At the same time, he professed, with an ironic flourish, to be championing the Five Books' sanctity and truth against the insidious arguments of “B. de Spinoza” and shielding its divine inspiration from the “blasphemies” of Hobbes, “Brown,” and the author of the perfidious *Philopater* whom, like Goeree, he takes to have been Aert Wolsgryn (1656/7–after 1698), the Amsterdam bookseller and spinozist arrested in 1698

81 [Houbraken], *PB* (see above, n. 23), 1: 127; Israel, *Radical Enlightenment* (see above, n. 38), pp. 432, 730.

82 [Houbraken], *PB* (see above, n. 23), 1: 119–20, 125; Israel, ‘Democratic Republicanism’ (see above, n. 7), 280.

83 [Houbraken], *PB* (see above, n. 23), 1: 56, 71.

84 [Houbraken], *PB* (see above, n. 23), 1: 164–5.

85 [Houbraken], *PB* (see above, n. 23), 1: 254.

86 [Houbraken], *PB* (see above, n. 23), 1: 55–6, 64; Israel, *Enlightenment Contested* (see above, n. 27), p. 429.

87 [Houbraken], *PB* (see above, n. 23), 1: 42, 57, 73, 124, 126.

88 [Houbraken], *PB* (see above, n. 23), 1: 254.

for his role in the composition of the *Philopater* text.<sup>89</sup> For that offence and for selling that strictly forbidden book under the counter in Amsterdam, the magistrates sentenced Wolsgryn to a 4,000 guilder fine and eight years' imprisonment, to be followed by perpetual banishment from Holland.

Just as Goeree had, Houbraken extolls Bekker and Van Leenhof as true heroes.<sup>90</sup> It was central to Houbraken's and Goeree's radical Enlightenment ideology that humanity has achieved considerable progress and has done so (at any rate since the Reformation) through advances in knowledge. Consequently, in "our days" there has been a "geheele te niet doening van de Heydensche bygeloovigheid, die de weerelt dus lang heeft betoovert gehouden" (a complete demolition of pagan superstition which until now kept the world enchanted).<sup>91</sup> The crucial point for them was that erudition, philosophy, and science, diffused in the vernacular not least by the likes of Goeree and Houbraken themselves, had been transforming the world to their way of thinking in a positive and irreversible manner. Here art joined forces with philosophy and science. Two modern thinkers expressly praised for assisting humankind in its progress—that is, teaching people to think in a clearer, more real, and orderly manner—were Arnold Geulincx (1624–69) and Van Balen, the highly controversial Rotterdammer several times favourably referred to by Houbraken. The result of this transformative process of enlightenment—and underlying it, the clandestine support for men like Bekker and Van Leenhof in lay society—is that "alle waarheid eindelijk openbaar wordt" (all truth finally is becoming manifest) and hence accessible.<sup>92</sup>

Convening at Schoonhoven in July 1712, the South Holland Synod was the scene of vehement complaints regarding this new, anonymously published, subversive text.<sup>93</sup> At the gathering of Gelderland's synod at Nijmegen the following August, the South Holland delegate submitted a file of extracts from the offending work printed at Amsterdam, a book in which "Bekker, Leenhof, Hattem and [John] Spenserus are defended in their views and where malicious propositions *contra Trinitatem*" abounded.<sup>94</sup> The following year, in 1714, the South Holland Synod was told that their standing committee had seen the pensionary of Holland, Heinsius, who, armed with a file of the most offensive

89 Michiel Wielema, *The March of the Libertines: Spinozists and the Dutch Reformed Church (1660–1750)* (Hilversum, 2004), pp. 89, 92.

90 [Houbraken], *PB* (see above, n. 23), 1: 5, 42, 57, 73, 124.

91 [Houbraken], *PB* (see above, n. 23), 1: 126.

92 [Houbraken], *PB* (see above, n. 23), 1: 64, 127, 131, 176, 253–4.

93 Acta South Holland Synod, HUA, OSA, inv. nr. 266, acta Schoonhoven 5/15 July 1712, art. 13.

94 Acta Synod of Gelderland, Gelders Archief (GA), Arnhem, Archief van de Nederlandse Hervormde Kerk, Synode van Gelderland te Arnhem (ANHK/SGA), inv. nr. 13, acta Nijmegen, 1712, art. 5 'licentieus boekdrukken.'

extracts, was now reviewing the problem of (theologically) seditious books and “in particular the dreadful opinions of *Philalethes*” with colleagues of the States.<sup>95</sup> The Synod of Gelderland, similarly reviewing the “appalling views of *Philalethes*,” gathered further extracts, noting especially passages expressing scepticism about demons and angels or sympathy for Van Leenhof.<sup>96</sup> In August 1714, the Gelderland Synod learnt that the Amsterdam Reformed consistory had now at last ‘discovered’ the clandestine author’s identity: the work had supposedly been written by a certain Samuel Mason, a preacher of the English church who had now, however, already fled to England.<sup>97</sup>

The Reformed Synod of Overijssel, meeting at Kampen in June 1714, heard from the South Holland delegate that Heinsius had assured his synod’s standing committee that he would do everything possible to persuade the States of Holland to undertake a more energetic suppression of “licentious books” while targeting in particular *Philalethes Brieven*, the most offensive text currently under surveillance.<sup>98</sup> A second edition of this subversive text, published in Amsterdam by Pieter Boetemans in 1712, was noted. Five specific charges against Houbraken’s work were formulated in the synodal minutes: first, that the story of Adam and Eve being tempted by the serpent is dismissed by ‘Philalethes’ as a mere allegory of human desire not to be understood literally;<sup>99</sup> second, the book endorsed the views of Van Leenhof and the so-called sect of ‘Hebreen’; third, holy scripture is generally belittled and held in slight regard; fourth, *Philalethes Brieven* holds that nothing definite whatsoever regarding the Holy Trinity can be gathered from Scripture;<sup>100</sup> fifth, the book categorically denies the existence of angels.<sup>101</sup>

A particularly striking feature of *Philalethes Brieven* is its binding together in a single compilation the milieu of Dutch radical thought with that of Golden Age art. ‘Philalethes’ continually weaves together the book’s discussion of artistic matters, and the representation of reality in painting, with philosophical and theological issues. Among the prints embellishing the book is an illustration, presumably by Houbraken himself, representing Truth accompanied by Reason adorned with armour and a hero’s helmet as well as a spear needed “to

95 Acta South Holland Synod, HUA, OSA, inv. nr. 266, acta Schiedam, 4/14 July 1713, art. 13.

96 Acta Synod of Gelderland, (GA), (ANHK/SGA), inv. nr. 13, acta Zutphen, 1713 art. 13 ‘licentius boekdrukken.’

97 Acta Synod of Gelderland, (GA), (ANHK/SGA), inv. nr. 13, acta Arnhem, 15 Aug. 1714 art. 17.

98 Acta Synod of Overijssel, (HCO), (APSO), inv. nr. 3, acta Kampen, 5 June 1714, art. 6.

99 [Houbraken], *PB* (see above, n. 23), 1: 5–7.

100 [Houbraken], *PB* (see above, n. 23), 1: 127.

101 Acta Synod of Overijssel, (HCO), (APSO), inv. nr. 3, acta Kampen, 5 June 1714, art. 6.

protect Truth from oppression.”<sup>102</sup> The author boldly follows Goeree as well as the libertine Adriaen Beverland (1650–1716) in maintaining that Adam and Eve had not been seduced by the Devil in the form of a serpent and in claiming that this biblical episode in reality amounts to nothing more than an allegory for “begeerte tot het verboden” (desire for the forbidden). Satan did not adopt the guise of a serpent and, anyway, one must not interpret scripture literally. Strikingly, this sceptical message is reinforced with a print of ‘Adam and Eve’ conspicuously represented without a serpent being anywhere present, an illustration this time expressly designated as the work of Houbraken.<sup>103</sup>

The question has been raised in recent years whether evidence exists of ties connecting the vigorous Dutch spinozism that flourished in various Dutch cities in the 1680s and 1690s, as manifested in the Dutch-language editions of the *Tractatus Theologico-Politicus* published in Amsterdam in 1693 and 1694 and the appearance of Aert Wolsgryn’s sequel to *Philopater* in 1697, with the generation of subversive Huguenot and other spinozists in the Netherlands, men like Charles Levier, active in the years around 1720 and through the 1720s and 1730s.<sup>104</sup> The evidence of the ferment caused by the censured books of Goeree and Houbraken during the opening years of the eighteenth century allows us to conclude that there was indeed such a cultural and intellectual continuity, and that among the notable links between the era of Van den Enden and Koerbagh and the eighteenth century’s opening decades were two heterodox critics intimately connected with the art world of their day, Wilhemus Goeree and Arnold Houbraken, subversive intellectuals who deliberately and systematically propagated spinozist, Bekkerite, and Leenhovian ideas among artists’ circles and more generally among the Dutch lay public. These two men have generally been neglected, and their significance for late Golden Age Dutch civic culture mostly missed, but it is fair to say that their lives and writings importantly illustrate one of the most formative and decisive transitions in early modern Dutch history.

102 [Houbraken], *PB* (see above, n. 23), 1: 156.

103 [Houbraken], *PB* (see above, n. 23), 1: 5.

104 See in this connection, Wiep Van Bunge, *From Stevin to Spinoza: An Essay on Philosophy in the Seventeenth-Century Dutch Republic* (Leiden, 2001), pp. 149–62.

# Bayle's Skepticism Revisited

*Wiep van Bunge*

## Abstract

Current historiography tends to present the Huguenot intellectuals as a relatively isolated group within Dutch society. In this article it is argued that it is vitally important to reconnect the exiled Huguenots, intellectuals as well as entrepreneurs and craftsmen, with their Dutch environment, a society in transition, politically and economically, and far less tolerant than its reputation had made them to expect, in the decades before and after 1700. In the case of Pierre Bayle, this offers possibilities for a new approach and for a possible solution of the 'Bayle Enigma': how did Bayle see the relation between faith and reason? Among leading Bayle scholars only those that are themselves committed Protestants tend to claim Bayle for the fideist cause, whereas others see his work as the prequel to the dechristianised eighteenth century French Enlightenment. Here Bayle's fideism is seriously questioned, arguing from an analysis of Bayle's plea for toleration, as developed throughout the body of his published works. It is shown how, departing from the ineffability of religious truth and an emphasis on the subjective nature of faith, Bayle moves to a position where he categorically denies the possibility of tolerance within a confessional context, as every Christian church or sect will eventually suppress or persecute others in the cause of what they consider true religion. On the contrary, Bayle extolled the virtue of the atheist, who does not expect a reward, over the morality of any religious tradition or custom. Any attempt to cast Bayle as a pyrrhonist when it comes to religion and, more specifically, theology should be rejected: whereas the natural sciences provide useful knowledge, Bayle denies the possibility of a sound natural theology and radically separates reason and religion. In this he essentially agreed with some of his compatriots who, under persecution, adopted Spinozist positions already before 1685.

## 1 Between Golden Age and Dutch Enlightenment: The Dutch Refuge

As a rule, historians have tended to consider the Dutch Refuge as an essentially foreign episode in the history of the Netherlands, and it is easy to see why. The sudden growth during the 1680s of the French-speaking population—

estimates vary but at least some thirty-five thousand Protestant *réfugiés* were involved, largely concentrated in the provinces of Holland and Zeeland—occurred precisely between the flowering of the Golden Age of the Dutch Republic and the breakthrough of Dutch Enlightenment, which until fairly recently was situated in the second half of the eighteenth century.<sup>1</sup> The Dutch Refuge simply arrived too late in the Dutch Republic to have contributed to what is still regarded its finest hour. It coincided with the gradual loss of power and prestige of the Republic, following the French invasion of 1672, at a time when the rapid expansion of the Dutch economy was coming to a grinding halt.<sup>2</sup> More importantly perhaps, it just remained too French. The fact that upon arrival French Huguenots joined Walloon churches, some of which dated from the sixteenth century, was not very helpful. Their proud insistence to remain Francophone and their dogged obsession with the theological politics of their country of origin hardly contributed to the integration of the Refuge into the Dutch Republic.

The Refuge presents a special challenge to the historiography of the Dutch Enlightenment because the latter's most authoritative accounts have turned eighteenth-century debates about the very nature of Dutch culture and politics into its crucially important issue. In both Wijnand Mijnhardt's and Niek

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- 1 Paul Dibon, *Regards sur la Siècle d'Or* (Naples, 1990), pp. 315–41; J. A. H. Bots, G. H. M. Posthumus Meyjes, and F. Wieringa, eds., *Vlucht naar de vrijheid: De hugenoten en de Nederlanden* (Amsterdam, 1985); Christiane Berkvens-Stevelinck, 'De Hugenoten,' in: *La France aux Pays Bas*, ed. Paul Blom et al. (Vianen, 1985), pp. 13–49; J. A. H. Bots and G. H. M. Posthumus Meyjes, eds., *La Révocation de l'Édit de Nantes et les Provinces Unies, 1685* (Amsterdam, 1986); Gerald Cerny, *Theology, Politics and Letters at the Crossroads of European Civilization: Jacques Basnage and the Baylean Huguenot Refugees in the Dutch Republic* (Dordrecht, 1987); Willem Frijhoff, 'Uncertain Brotherhood: The Huguenots in the Dutch Republic,' in: *Memory and Identity: The Huguenots in France and the Atlantic Diaspora*, ed. Bertrand Van Ruymbeke and Randy J. Sparks (Columbia, S.C., 2003), pp. 128–71; John Marshall, *John Locke, Toleration and Early Enlightenment Culture: Religious Intolerance and Arguments for Religious Toleration in Early Modern and 'Early Enlightenment' Europe* (Cambridge, 2006), pp. 138–93; David van der Linden, *Experiencing Exile: Huguenot Refugees in the Dutch Republic, 1680–1700* (Farnham, 2015).
  - 2 Jonathan I. Israel, *The Dutch Republic: Its Rise, Greatness, and Fall, 1477–1806* (Oxford, 1995), pp. 998–1018; Jan de Vries and Ad van der Woude, *The First Modern Economy: Success, Failure and Perseverance of the Dutch Economy, 1500–1815* (Cambridge, 1997), esp. pp. 673–681; Maarten Prak, *The Dutch Republic in the Seventeenth Century* (Cambridge, 2005), pp. 263–73. For a classic account of the subsequent loss of prestige of the Dutch Republic after the Treaty of Utrecht, see: J. Aalbers, 'Het machtsverval van de Republiek der Verenigde Nederlanden,' in: *Machtsverval in de internationale context*, ed. J. Aalbers and A. P. van Goudoever (Groningen, 1986), pp. 7–36. For a recent collection of essays on the theme of eighteenth-century Dutch decline, see Koen Stapelbroek, ed., *Dutch Decline in Eighteenth-Century Europe*, special issue of *History of European Ideas* 36, no. 2 (2010).

van Sas's analyses the predicament of the Dutch Republic constituted the essence of Dutch enlightened discourse—not unlike the state religion of Rome, in which the history of Rome itself was the main object of reverence.<sup>3</sup> In view of the massive amounts of literature produced by eighteenth-century Dutchmen in particular during the latter half of the century concerning the state of their ailing nation, Mijnhardt and Van Sas are able to point to a wealth of evidence supporting their claims. On close inspection their competing views on the Dutch Enlightenment reveal more similarities than its authors perhaps would care to admit. Both accounts concentrate emphatically on the late eighteenth and early nineteenth centuries. For obvious reasons around 1700 the Dutch Enlightenment was not yet as obsessed as it was to become with diagnosing the causes of Dutch decline, although by the early 1700s to many observers the French surely had something to do with the gradual loss of prestige the Republic was beginning to suffer. From 1672 to 1713 the Dutch Republic was almost constantly at war with Louis XIV and the finances of the States General would never recover from the strains this major military effort put on the national budget.<sup>4</sup> In addition, during the early eighteenth century Dutch commentators increasingly came to regard 'French morals' a major threat to the indigenous moral fiber. Throughout the eighteenth century the solid and sociable Dutch *burger* would be reinvented again and again, and his moral virtues were largely defined in opposition to the 'French' aristocrat, whose morals were, needless to say, effeminate, arrogant, and ultimately treacherous.<sup>5</sup>

Meanwhile, the Revocation of the Edict of Nantes came to strengthen the status of French as a vehicle of scholarly communication. A formidable array of the most prominent Dutch eighteenth-century authors, including Justus van Effen, Isaac da Pinto, Elie Luzac, Belle van Zuylen, and Frans Hemsterhuis,

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- 3 N. C. F. van Sas, *De metamorfose van Nederland: Van oude orde naar moderniteit, 1750–1900* (Amsterdam, 2005); Joost Kloek and Wijnand Mijnhardt, *1800: Blauwdrukken voor een samenleving* (The Hague, 2001). See also Wijnand Mijnhardt, 'The Dutch Enlightenment: Humanism, Nationalism, and Decline,' *The Dutch Republic in the Eighteenth Century: Decline, Enlightenment, and Revolution*, ed. Margaret C. Jacob and Wijnand Mijnhardt (Ithaca, N.Y., 1992), pp. 197–223; idem, 'Dutch Culture in the Age of William and Mary: Cosmopolitan or Provincial?,' *Anglo-Dutch Perspectives on the Glorious Revolution of 1688–1689*, ed. Dale Hoak and Mordechai Feingold (Stanford, 1996), pp. 219–33.
- 4 J. A. F. de Jongste and A. J. Veenendaal Jr, eds., *Anthonie Heinsius and the Dutch Republic, 1688–1720: Politics, War, and Finance* (The Hague, 2002); Donald Haks, *Vaderland en vrede, 1672–1713: Publiciteit over de Nederlandse Republiek in oorlog* (Hilversum, 2013).
- 5 Willem Frijhoff, 'Verfransing? Franse taal en Nederlandse cultuur tot in de revolutietijd,' *Bijdragen en Mededelingen betreffende de Geschiedenis der Nederlanden* 104 (1989), 592–606; Remieg Aerts and Henk te Velde, eds., *De stijl van de burger: Over Nederlandse burgerlijke cultuur vanaf de middeleeuwen* (Kampen, 1997); Joost Kloek and Karin Tilmans, eds., *Burger: Een geschiedenis van het begrip 'burger' in de Nederlanden van de Middeleeuwen tot de 21ste eeuw* (Amsterdam, 2002).

reached their compatriots publishing French journals, treatises, novels, and philosophical dialogues.<sup>6</sup> None of them play any part in either Mijnhardt's or Van Sas's accounts of the Dutch Enlightenment, with the obvious exception of the mature Van Effen, once he abandoned French in favor of the vernacular, that is. Both Mijnhardt and Van Sas insist on the importance of the late-eighteenth-century emergence of a national cultural and political arena, but their approach comes at a price, as their national perspectives exclude some of the finest minds of the age from having any relevance to the Dutch Enlightenment.<sup>7</sup>

Both Mijnhardt's and Van Sas's analyses carry the considerable advantage that they help us to understand why the Dutch Enlightenment failed to make any impact abroad: by concentrating on the Dutch Republic itself, the Dutch Enlightenment grew increasingly inward-looking, or so it would seem, and, as a consequence, it became largely irrelevant to observers from abroad. During its Golden Age, foreign commentators such as Sir William Temple considered the Republic "the envy of some, the fear of others, and the wonder of all their neighbours."<sup>8</sup> But by the end of the century the neighboring countries had, each in their own way, made huge steps forward on the road to recovery from such major crises as the Thirty Years' War, the Fronde, and the Civil War. By the early eighteenth century the Holy Roman Empire, France, and Great Britain were all well on their way to establishing a new and modern exertion of state power, while the Dutch Republic started to suffer from the inadequacies of its increasingly antiquated constitutional make-up.

Recent research has opened up a new perspective on the Dutch Enlightenment, and it now seems imperative to take the Refuge and its impact on Dutch society and Enlightenment culture into account. While the discontinuities between the seventeenth and eighteenth centuries should probably not be overestimated, a major difference between the seventeenth- and the eighteenth-century Dutch Republic was constituted by rapidly changing immigration figures, as the growing self-consciousness of Dutch enlightened discourse appears to have coincided with the virtual halt of immigration.<sup>9</sup> Most of the

6 Cf. J. J. V. M. de Vet, 'Francofone letteren en periodieke geschriften in de Verenigde Provinciën: Notities over de eeuw van Bayle en Hemsterhuis', *Spiegel der Letteren* 46 (2004), 289–98. See, more generally: Marc Fumaroli, *Quand l'Europe parlait français* (Paris, 2001).

7 See also Wiep van Bunge, 'Introduction,' in: *The Early Enlightenment in the Dutch Republic, 1650–1750*, ed. Wiep van Bunge (Leiden, 2003) and idem, 'The Presence of Bayle in the Dutch Republic,' in: *Pierre Bayle (1647–1706), Le philosophe de Rotterdam: Philosophy, Religion and Reception*, ed. Wiep van Bunge and Hans Bots (Leiden, 2008), pp. 197–216.

8 Sir William Temple, *Observations upon the United Provinces of the Netherlands*, introd. G. N. Clark (Cambridge, 1932), p. xi.

9 Jan Lucassen, *Migrant Labour in Europe, 1600–1900: The Drift to the North Sea* (London, 1987), pp. 133–205; Jan Lucassen and Rinus Penninx, *Newcomers: Immigrants and their*

history of the Dutch Republic, with the notable exception of the latter half of the eighteenth century, was characterized by a constant influx of immigrants: from the fall of Antwerp to the Revocation of the Edict of Nantes, hundreds of thousands of foreigners found their way to what Bayle dubbed “la grande arche des fugitifs.”<sup>10</sup> Traditionally, the Dutch Refuge has often been identified as a particularly successful example of foreign immigration. Thorough research, however, carried out by David van der Linden, has convincingly established how tough life must have been in the Dutch Refuge. Making ends meet was much more difficult than many of its more prominent members may have wanted us to believe.<sup>11</sup> It would seem that the traditional image of its prosperity needs to be scaled down considerably. To the large majority of French Protestants, Holland turned out to be anything but a land of milk and honey. Even in the printing industry, only a handful of Huguenot entrepreneurs managed to survive. In Rotterdam between 1680 and 1715, poor relief among the Walloons quadrupled, wrecking the finances of the Rotterdam congregation.<sup>12</sup>

The religious fervor of the Refuge also appears to have been seriously overestimated.<sup>13</sup> Apart from the fact that religious reasons were not the sole factors involved in the decision of many Huguenots to move to the Republic, living in exile turned out to present a considerable challenge to their loyalty to the Reformed creed. On the one hand, French Reformed ministers in the Dutch Republic, for obvious reasons, began to develop an increasingly exclusivist and intolerant discourse, and it has been argued that in doing so orthodox Huguenots actually continued a strong French tradition.<sup>14</sup> On the other, however, explaining the Revocation and its terrible consequences to its victims turned out to be a major theological challenge. The Calvinist argument, according to which the Revocation should be considered a providential punishment for the sins of the Huguenots, could not be developed successfully without

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*Descendants in the Netherlands, 1550–1995* (Amsterdam, 1997); Leo Lucassen and Jan Lucassen, *Winnaars en verliezers: Een nuchtere balans van vijfhonderd jaar migratie* (Amsterdam, 2012), pp. 189–221.

10 Pierre Bayle, *Dictionnaire historique et critique* (Rotterdam, 1697), article ‘Keuchlin.’ I have used the second edition (Rotterdam, 1702). On the history of the *Dictionnaire historique et critique*, which was first published in 1697 in Rotterdam, see H. H. M. van Lieshout, *The Making of Pierre Bayle’s Dictionnaire historique et critique* (Amsterdam, 2001). See also <https://artfl-project.uchicago.edu/content/dictionnaire-de-bayle>.

11 Van der Linden, *Experiencing Exile* (see above, n. 1), pp. 15–78. See also Frijhoff, ‘Uncertain Brotherhood’ (see above, n. 1).

12 Van der Linden, *Experiencing Exile* (see above, n. 1), pp. 73–4.

13 Van der Linden, *Experiencing Exile* (see above, n. 1), pp. 81–129.

14 Marshall, *John Locke, Toleration and Early Enlightenment Culture* (see above, n. 1), pp. 179–89.

adding the promise of imminent salvation for those concerned.<sup>15</sup> Thus, by the early 1690s *réfugié* pastors such as Pierre Jurieu started promising their flocks that following the ascension of William III to the throne of England, a return to France was now at hand. As early as 1686 Jurieu had published his infamous *L'Accomplissement des prophéties*, revealing how the Book of Revelation presaged the imminent restoration of the Church in France.<sup>16</sup> Jurieu's former friend Pierre Bayle was genuinely disgusted both by Jurieu's millenarian pretensions and by the bloodthirstiness of this Rotterdam pastor, who was relishing the prospect of the imminent military downfall of the Anti-Christ, that is Louis XIV, by a northern European Protestant coalition led by William III.<sup>17</sup> In the wake of the Treaty of Ryswick (1697), however, on which occasion William III preferred to ignore the plight of the *réfugiés* in exchange for his recognition by Louis XIV as rightful King of England, the large majority of the Dutch Huguenots started to realize that Jurieu's promises would not materialize in the foreseeable future: at least a thousand *réfugiés* in the Dutch Republic actually returned to France and converted to Catholicism once it became clear that William III was not about to topple the Sun King.<sup>18</sup>

The more recent views on the Refuge may also shed a new light on the philosophical stance of Pierre Bayle, the most brilliant *réfugié* who during the early Enlightenment found a new home in Holland, and more specifically on his alleged 'Pyrrhonism.' It would seem that some of the hardships suffered by Dutch Huguenots as well as a series of personal crises resulting from the Revocation of the Edict of Nantes left their mark on the increasingly despondent views articulated by 'le philosophe de Rotterdam.' Bayle had arrived in Rotterdam as early as 1681 to take up a position as professor at the newly established Illustrious School of the city, which he would never leave. He never learned Dutch because he never needed to: his employers as well as his friends in Holland all knew French and the French community of Rotterdam was rapidly growing. In 1687, Isaac Dumont de Bostaquet, a nobleman from Normandy, observed upon arriving in Rotterdam that "this beautiful town had become almost 'Frenchified,'" owing to the large numbers of inhabitants from Rouen and Dieppe who were now living in Rotterdam.<sup>19</sup> In 1708 Élie Richard from la Rochelle visited Rotterdam and estimated that its French population

15 Van der Linden, *Experiencing Exile* (see above, n. 1), pp. 131–59.

16 Pierre Jurieu, *L'Accomplissement des prophéties, ou la délivrance prochaine de l'Église*, 2 vols. (Rotterdam, 1686).

17 Hubert Bost, ed., *L'Affaire Bayle' : La bataille entre Pierre Bayle et Pierre Jurieu devant la consistoire de l'Église wallonne de Rotterdam* (Saint-Étienne, 2006). See also note 57.

18 Van der Linden, *Experiencing Exile* (see above, n. 1), p. 132.

19 Van der Linden, *Experiencing Exile* (see above, n. 1), p. 28.

numbered fourteen thousand people.<sup>20</sup> This was surely exaggerated, but by the late seventeenth century the Walloon community of Rotterdam must have accommodated a little under three thousand members at least. So it took Bayle little effort to *remain* French, living in Rotterdam for twenty-five years. But being a Frenchman living in the Dutch Refuge inevitably caused feelings of alienation and in the end, arguably, despair once the message hit home that the expectation of any imminent return to France was illusory.<sup>21</sup>

## 2 The Bayle Enigma

Bayle's philosophical stance, meanwhile, continues to baffle commentators. Indeed, few early modern philosophers have inspired such widely divergent interpretations as Pierre Bayle has. Although modern Bayle scholarship only started during the 1960s following the publication of Élisabeth Labrousse's two major volumes on the *philosophe de Rotterdam*,<sup>22</sup> by the late 1990s Thomas Lennon was fully entitled to conclude that the confusion surrounding Bayle's work had become tantalizing:

To take just the twentieth-century literature, the suggestions are that Bayle was fundamentally a positivist, an atheist, a deist, a sceptic, a fideist, a Socinian, a liberal Calvinist, a conservative Calvinist, a libertine, Judaizing Christian, or even a secret Jew, a Manichean, an existentialist ... [I]t is tempting to conclude that these commentators cannot have been talking about the same author, or at least that they have not used the same texts.<sup>23</sup>

20 Élie Richard, *Door ballingen onthaald: Verslag van reizen in Frankrijk, Vlaanderen, Nederland en Duitsland, 1708*, trans. Robert den Does, ed. Kees Meerhof (Hilversum, 2012), p. 9. See, however, R. N. L. Mirandolle and L. Bresson, *Rotterdam in den loop der eeuwen* 2.6 (Rotterdam, 1907), pp. 18–19.

21 For a recent biography, see Hubert Bost, *Pierre Bayle* (Paris, 2006). See also Hans Bots, *De Fransman Pierre Bayle en Nederland: Over een problematische verhouding en de betekenis van Bayles denken toen en nu* (Nijmegen, 2005); Antony McKenna, 'Yearning for the Homeland. Pierre Bayle and the Huguenot Refugees,' *Australian Journal of French Studies* 44 (2007), 213–26.

22 Élisabeth Labrousse, *Pierre Bayle*, 2 vols. (The Hague, 1963–1964). The first part delivers a biography: *Du Pays de Foix à la Cité d'Érasme*, the second part, re-issued in 1996, offers an interpretation of Bayle's thought: *Hétérodoxie et rigorisme*.

23 Thomas M. Lennon, *Reading Bayle* (Toronto, 1999), p. 15.

Over the past decade or so, the situation has only deteriorated further as the experts have continued to put forward interpretations of Bayle's thought that are fundamentally at odds with one another.

The reasons for these divergences are obvious, or so it would seem, for to begin with Bayle was a highly prolific author who published more than nine thousand double-column pages in folio; the *Dictionnaire historique et critique* alone, first published in 1697, counts some six million words, covering many hundreds of names but also sixty-one cities, twenty religious sects, eight islands, six peoples, six rivers, five provinces, three monasteries, two feasts, and one horse.<sup>24</sup> Second, Bayle was not a systematic philosopher, that is to say he never sought to create a philosophical system—in the way Descartes, Spinoza, and Leibniz had tried to do. Instead, he preferred to comment on topical issues, which it could be argued attests to the modernity of his approach, which is further complicated by the way his thought clearly matured. Bayle did not shy away from thinking twice. Third, especially in the *Dictionnaire*, Bayle's style has also caused confusion, as his immense erudition allowed him to create entries largely made up of quotations, comments, and further clarifications that more often than not makes it difficult to identify Bayle's personal stance. Finally, the skeptical fideism attributed to Bayle by Labrousse (and soon after by the indomitable Richard Popkin) is itself inherently ambiguous, for a skeptical fideist doubts *until* he or she believes—and anyone wondering whether and why the fideist's skepticism does *not* affect the contents of his or her alleged faith is simply expected to assume so. In short, fideism tends to turn the epistemological issue of the objects of doubt into the moral and psychological issue of the believer's *sincerity*. Traditionally, doubts about man's cognitive access to the world he inhabits was welcomed by theologians arguing for the necessity of faith. But skepticism comes in varying degrees, and in some cases it was just very hard to decide when exactly skeptics stopped questioning the veracity of our insights. Arguably the best known example of this complication is supplied in the final pages of Hume's *Dialogues on Natural Religion*, in which Philo, having destroyed the arguments for the existence of God, suddenly declares that a "person seasoned with a just sense of the imperfections of natural reason, will fly to revealed truth with the greatest avidity," and that "[t]o be a

24 Mara van der Lugt, *Bayle, Jurieu, and the Dictionnaire historique et critique* (Oxford, 2016), pp. 1–14; Antony McKenna, 'Pierre Bayle in the Twentieth Century,' in: *Pierre Bayle*, ed. Van Bunge and Bots, pp. 253–76, there 253.

philosophical sceptic is, in a man of letters, the first and most essential step towards being a sound, believing Christian.”<sup>25</sup>

Currently, two main lines of approach have come to dominate Bayle scholarship, for while Hubert Bost, José Maia Neto, and Michael Hickson are continuing and further developing the Labrousse-Popkin interpretation according to which Bayle was indeed a Pyrrhonist and a fideist, Antony McKenna and Jonathan Israel have embraced Gianluca Mori’s attempts to demonstrate that Bayle, although he was a skeptic *of sorts*, did not endorse Pyrrhonism, and was no fideist, but rather a rationalist, fiercely critical of revealed religion.<sup>26</sup> When Élisabeth Labrousse first launched her fideist reading of Bayle, she did so in order to reclaim Bayle for the history of French Protestantism. According to Labrousse, Bayle never left the church he grew up in, and she has argued eloquently that turning Bayle into a precursor of the French Enlightenment runs the risk of conflating the cultural context of the Huguenot refugees, desperately trying to come to terms with their predicament in the Netherlands of the 1680s and ‘90s, with the intellectual climate ruling Paris from the 1720s onwards.<sup>27</sup> At the time, the impact of her work was huge, as is evident for instance from the way it was incorporated into Quentin Skinner’s celebrated paper ‘Meaning and Understanding in the History of Ideas.’ Labrousse’s efforts have remained extremely influential: although Hubert Bost feels the term *fideism* does not suit Bayle’s final outlook on the relation between faith and reason, he also insists on characterizing the *philosophe de Rotterdam* as “un protestant compliqué.”<sup>28</sup>

25 David Hume, *Dialogues concerning Natural Religion*, ed. Henry D. Aiken (New York, 1948), p. 94.

26 Richard H. Popkin, *The History of Scepticism: From Savonarola to Bayle*, rev. and exp. ed. (Oxford, 2003); Hubert Bost, *Pierre Bayle, historien, critique et moraliste* (Turnhout, 2006); Gianluca Mori, *Bayle philosophe* (Paris, 1999); Jonathan I. Israel, *Radical Enlightenment: Philosophy and the Making of Modernity, 1650–1750* (Oxford, 2001), pp. 331–341; idem, *Enlightenment Contested: Philosophy, Modernity, and the Emancipation of Man, 1670–1752* (Oxford, 2006), pp. 63–93, 135–163 and 663–696; McKenna, ‘Pierre Bayle in the Twentieth Century’ (see above, n. 24); idem, ‘Pierre Bayle: Free Thought and Freedom of Conscience,’ *Reformation and Renaissance Review* 14 (2012), 85–100; José R. Maia Neto, ‘Bayle’s Academic Skepticism,’ in: *Everything Connects: In Conference with Richard H. Popkin*, ed. James E. Force and David S. Katz (Leiden, 1999), pp. 263–79; Michael W. Hickson, ‘Disagreement and Academic Skepticism in Bayle,’ in: *Academic Skepticism in Early Modern Philosophy*, ed. Sébastien Charles and Plinio Junquerio Smith (Cham, 2017), pp. 293–317.

27 Élisabeth Labrousse, ‘Reading Pierre Bayle in Paris,’ in: *Anticipations of the Enlightenment in England, France and Germany*, ed. Alan Charles Kors (Philadelphia, 1987), pp. 7–16.

28 Quentin Skinner, ‘Meaning and Understanding in the History of Ideas,’ *History and Theory* 8 (1969), 3–53, there 33; Hubert Bost, ‘Pierre Bayle, un “protestant compliqué,”’ in: *Pierre Bayle*, ed. Van Bunge and Bots, pp. 83–101.

The scholar who did more than anyone to establish the image of Bayle as a 'superskeptic' was of course Richard Popkin, a close personal friend of Labrousse. To Popkin, Bayle was such a crucial figure in his *History of Skepticism*, as he was the last major representative of the seventeenth-century 'crise pyrrhonienne' as well as the most important single influence on David Hume, arguably the greatest skeptical philosopher ever.<sup>29</sup> But unlike Hume, Popkin's Bayle remained a fideist, whose faith "was built on the ruins of reason."<sup>30</sup> Just read, Popkin argued, the entry on Pyrrho in the *Dictionnaire*, and in particular the accompanying remarks B and C; consider the Third *Éclaircissement* to the *Dictionnaire*, and the further clarifications concerning the articles on the Manicheans and on Atheism: following Pyrrho, Bayle emphasized the impotence of reason, which is nowhere more apparent than in our inability to account for the reality of evil in a world created by an omnipotent and benevolent deity.

### 3 Bayle on Toleration

Bayle's justly famous plea in favor of toleration, entitled *Commentaire philosophique sur ces paroles de Jésus-Christ Contrain-les-d'Entrer*, has often been portrayed as his first essentially skeptical book.<sup>31</sup> It was published in 1686, eleven years before the *Dictionnaire* and only several months after the Revocation of the Edict of Nantes. Bayle had just been informed that his beloved brother Jacob, a minister, had died in a French prison. According to Chris Laursen, the *Commentaire* promotes 'Pyrrhonist' or 'Academic' skepticism, and one of the reasons for this is that its famous doctrine of the erring conscience undermines

29 See also many of the articles collected in Richard H. Popkin, *The High Road to Pyrrhonism*, ed. Richard A. Watson and James E. Force (1980; repr. Indianapolis, 1993), and more recently also Gianni Paganini, 'Hume, Bayle et les *Dialogues Concerning Natural Religion*,' in: *Pierre Bayle dans la République des Lettres: Philosophie, religion, critique*, ed. Antony McKenna and Gianni Paganini (Paris, 2004), pp. 527–67; idem, 'Theism, Atheism, and Scepticism: Bayle's Background to Hume's *Dialogues*,' in: *Gestalten des Deismus in Europa*, ed. Winfried Schröder (Wiesbaden, 2013), pp. 203–43; idem, 'Hume and Bayle on Localization and Perception: A New Source for Hume's *Treatise* 1.4.5,' in: *Scepticism in the Eighteenth Century: Enlightenment, Lumières, Aufklärung*, ed. S. Charles and P. J. Smith (Dordrecht, 2013), pp. 109–24.

30 Popkin, *The History of Scepticism* (see above, n. 26), p. 292.

31 Pierre Bayle, *Commentaire philosophique*, ed. Jean-Michel Gros (Paris, 2006). The title page of the first edition said it was published in Canterbury and translated from an English text, composed by one "sieur Jean Fox de Bruggs." In reality the Rotterdam *libraire* Reinier Leers was its publisher, and Bayle's authorship would not remain a secret for long.

its own rationalist tendencies.<sup>32</sup> Thus, a direct line can be drawn between the *Commentaire* and the article on Pyrrho, which Laursen uses conversely to elucidate the *Commentaire*. As Laursen readily admits, this line of reasoning requires the caveats that should come with interpreting an earlier text based on a later one, but according to him it provides the only way to render the *Commentaire* coherent.

Let's first take a closer look at the *Commentaire*'s rationalism or 'dogmatism,' as Laursen prefers to call it. As will be only too familiar, Bayle's plea for toleration consists of two parts, and centers on the famous passage in Luke 14,23, according to which Christ would have advised his followers not to be lenient toward unbelievers: "compel them to come in, that my house may be filled." The first part of the *Commentaire* is a sustained attack on the literal interpretation of Luke, and is based on a maxim first put forward by Augustine, according to which *no literal interpretation of Scripture implying the necessity to commit a crime can be true*.<sup>33</sup> For God has provided us with reason and as a consequence we are obliged to make use of this gift:

Sans exception il faut soumettre toutes les lois morales à cette idée naturelle d'équité, qui aussi bien que la lumière métaphysique, *illumine tout homme venant au monde*.<sup>34</sup> (emphasis in original)

The Bible is such a difficult book, Bayle continues, that without the use of our rational abilities we would be unable to understand what God is trying to tell us, and as a consequence we would be *condemned* to the wretched state of Pyrrhonism.<sup>35</sup>

In short: it is *reason* which tells us what can be admitted as a truly biblical message and what not. It was, to be sure, Élisabeth Labrousse herself who first pointed to Bayle's moral rationalism, which appears to rest on a particular

32 John Christian Laursen, 'Skepticism against Reason in Pierre Bayle's Theory of Toleration,' in: *Pyrrhonism in Ancient, Modern, and Contemporary Philosophy*, ed. Diego E. Machuca (Berlin, 2011), pp. 131–44.

33 Bayle, *Commentaire philosophique* (see above, n. 31), p. 85.

34 Bayle, *Commentaire philosophique* (see above, n. 31), p. 89.

35 "Si nous n'avons pas une lumière naturelle qui soit une règle sûre et infaillible, et par laquelle il faille juger absolument de tout ce qui vient en question, sans en excepter même la question, *si une telle ou une telle chose est contenue dans l'Écriture*, nous n'aurions pas lieu de douter de la majeure de cet argument, et par conséquent de la conclusion? Comme donc ce serait le plus épouvantable chaos, et le pyrrhonisme le plus exécrationnel qui se puisse imaginer, il faut nécessairement en venir là, *que toute dogme particulier, soit qu'on l'avance comme contenu dans l'Écriture, soit qu'on le propose autrement, est faux, lorsqu'il est réfuté par les notions claires et distinctes de la lumière naturelle, principalement à l'égard de la morale*." Bayle, *Commentaire philosophique* (see above, n. 31), p. 95.

variety of Cartesianism—a Cartesianism that is without the voluntarist theory of the “création des vérités éternelles.”<sup>36</sup> Subsequently, Antony McKenna emphasized the extent to which these rationalist hermeneutics had already been prepared in a short pamphlet Bayle had published just before he wrote the *Commentaire*.<sup>37</sup> In 1685 Bayle had issued a first commentary on the Revocation of the Edict of Nantes, entitled *Ce que c'est que la France toute catholique*, in which he had underlined the existence of “cette charité générale que nous devons à tous les hommes, par les devoirs indispensables de l'humanité.”<sup>38</sup> According to Bayle, this universal charity can be rationally deduced from the natural law obvious to all rational human beings.<sup>39</sup>

According to the *Commentaire*, our natural abilities must be respected as they are God's gift to man and this is why the use of violence in matters of religion is always prohibited, for religion is defined by Bayle as “une certaine persuasion de l'âme par rapport à Dieu.”<sup>40</sup> This persuasion is a strictly personal, subjective matter, and no kind of external force or violence can and should ever interfere with it: “*La contrainte est incapable d'inspirer la religion.*”<sup>41</sup> Forced conversions will only result in hypocrisy, that is in false, merely external acts that are unrelated to the inner convictions of the believer. Laursen feels Bayle's account of toleration rests on a contentious definition of religion since it overestimates the powers of reason and because Bayle is not entitled to claim as he does that God hates insincerity.<sup>42</sup> But Bayle's position in the *Commentaire* appears to leave little room for doubt. It is both morally wrong and opposed to the light of reason to use violence in the conversion of others:

C'est donc une chose manifestement opposée au bon sens at à la lumière naturelle, aux principes généraux de la raison, en un mot à la règle

36 Labrousse, *Bayle* (see above, n. 22), 2: 257–89.

37 McKenna, ‘Pierre Bayle: Free Thought and Freedom of Conscience’ (see above, n. 26), p. 86.

38 Pierre Bayle, *Ce que c'est que la France toute catholique sous le règne de Louis le Grand*, ed. Élisabeth Labrousse (Paris, 1973), p. 72.

39 “Un esprit attentif et philosophe conçoit clairement que la lumière vive et distincte, qui nous accompagne en tous lieux et en tous temps, et qui nous montre *que le tout est plus grand que sa partie, qu'il est honnête d'avoir de la gratitude pour ses bienfaiteurs, de ne point faire à autrui ce que nous ne voudrions pas qui nous fût fait, de tenir sa parole, et d'agir selon sa conscience*; il conçoit, dis-je, clairement que cette lumière vient de Dieu, et que c'est une révélation naturelle: comment donc s'imaginera-t-il que Dieu vienne après cela se contredire, et souffler le chaud et le froid, en parlant lui-même à nous extérieurement, ou en nous envoyant d'autres hommes, pour nous apprendre tout le contraire des notions communes de la raison?” Bayle, *Commentaire philosophique* (see above, n. 31), p. 93.

40 Bayle, *Commentaire philosophique* (see above, n. 31), p. 99.

41 Bayle, *Commentaire philosophique* (see above, n. 31), p. 100.

42 Laursen, ‘Skepticism against Reason’ (see above, n. 32), p. 133.

primitive et originale du discernement du vrai et du faux, du bon et du mauvais, que d'employer la violence à inspirer une religion à ceux qui ne la professent pas.<sup>43</sup>

Laursen feels that the arguments Bayle put forward in the first part of the *Commentaire* are not very impressive, and Bayle, or so Laursen implies, was perfectly aware of their inadequacy: he destroyed them himself in chapters VIII–X of the second part of the *Commentaire*.<sup>44</sup> For the decisive argument developed in these chapters concerns the rights of the erring conscience, which in Laursen's view explode the rationalist foundations for toleration as they had been developed in the first part of the *Commentaire*. For Bayle is unable to meet the objection that full toleration results in the recognition that if your conscience tells you to persecute a particular sect, you should be allowed to do so.<sup>45</sup> While it is true that Bayle wrestles with this objection, he does provide two replies: first, that it is perfectly possible to commit a crime following your conscience, and second, that believers holding on to “false maxims” present a challenge to those of us who hold *true* maxims.<sup>46</sup> However, in view of Bayle's own admission that our choice to belong to any particular “sect” is largely the result of the customs and habits which we just happen to have internalized as well as the specific education we have been subjected to,<sup>47</sup> clearly we are left with the question of what to make of the powers of our God-given ‘natural light’ in matters of religion. According to Laursen:

The upshot is that a book which starts out taking for granted universal truths and conscientious morals ends up arguing that one reason we cannot be meant to persecute the people who are wrong is the good Pyrrhonian reason that we can rarely tell for sure who is right and who is wrong. Good Pyrrhonian reasons justify this conclusion: reason is weak and works itself into paradoxes, and we are products of our education.<sup>48</sup>

43 Bayle, *Commentaire philosophique* (see above, n. 31), p. 100.

44 Laursen, ‘Skepticism against Reason’ (see above, n. 32), p. 136.

45 “Qu’il s’ensuit de ma doctrine le renversement de ce que je veux établir; je veux montrer que la persécution est une chose abominable, et cependant tout homme qui se croira obligé en conscience de persécuter, sera obligé, selon moi, de persécuter, et ferait mal de ne persécuter pas.” Bayle, *Commentaire philosophique* (see above, n. 31), p. 298.

46 Bayle, *Commentaire philosophique* (see above, n. 31), p. 299.

47 Bayle, *Commentaire philosophique* (see above, n. 31), pp. 169–73.

48 Laursen, ‘Skepticism against Reason’ (see above, n. 32), p. 140.

#### 4 Bayle's Skepticism

This much seems certain: in the *Commentaire* Bayle's use of the term 'conscience' reveals a definite ambiguity. On the one hand, it refers to infallible reason, on the other to a subjective conviction.<sup>49</sup> It remains to be seen, meanwhile, whether the *Commentaire* is indeed at heart a Pyrrhonian exercise, casting doubt on our every attempt to reach any kind of certainty, for as both Gianluca Mori and Antony McKenna have argued, Bayle would not at all gradually abandon his moral rationalism. Instead, he would come to doubt the usefulness of unconditional religious toleration. As early as his *Ce que c'est que la France toute catholique* he had expressed clear reservations concerning the toleration of French Catholic fanaticism.<sup>50</sup> What is more, by the time he was composing the *Dictionnaire*, Bayle repeatedly expressed his disillusionment: in articles such as 'Abdas,' 'Braun,' 'Geldenhauer,' 'Ferrier,' and 'Socin,' he now complained that the only reason small sects seek to be tolerated is that they wish to grow into large sects, able to suppress the smaller ones.<sup>51</sup> In the *Réponse aux questions d'un provincial*, written during the early 1700s, he repeated this suggestion:

Or il est sûr que la doctrine de la tolérance ne produit rien; si quelque secte en fait profession, c'est parce qu'elle en a besoin; et il y a tout lieu de croire que si elle devenoit dominante, elle l'abandonneroit tout aussitôt.<sup>52</sup>

It would seem, then, that near the end of his life he came to consider toleration as a strictly *political* necessity, as the only possible answer of the State to the essentially violent nature of the Church, that is, the Christian Church. In the final pages of the *Réponse* he infamously wondered whether France would not be better off with "un roy Spinoziste," a Spinozist King surrounded by

49 McKenna, 'Pierre Bayle: Free Thought and Freedom of Conscience' (see above, n. 26), p. 90.

50 McKenna, 'Pierre Bayle: Free Thought and Freedom of Conscience' (see above, n. 26), pp. 96–8. Walter Rex was one of the first experts to question Bayle's commitment to toleration. See Walter Rex, *Pierre Bayle and Religious Controversy* (The Hague, 1965), pp. 181–5.

51 Mori, *Bayle philosophe* (see above, n. 26), p. 314.

52 Pierre Bayle, *Oeuvres diverses*, ed. Pierre Des Maizeaux, 4 vols. (The Hague, 1727–31), 3: 1011. I don't think that the discussion of this quote in Michael W. Hickson and Thomas M. Lennon, 'The Real Significance of Bayle's Authorship of the *Avis*,' *British Journal for the History of Philosophy* 17 (2009), 191–205, there 198–9, touches my argument.

peace-loving Spinozists as his subjects.<sup>53</sup> (It should be added that this political motive was already apparent in the *Commentaire*.)<sup>54</sup>

This should not lead to a denial of Bayle's skepticism. He was highly skeptical about all sorts of cognitive and moral claims, especially those made in the name of religion. In fact, from the early 1680s onwards his critique of Christianity became so devastating that both Labrousse's and Popkin's characterization of Bayle as a skeptical *fideist* fails to convince. For public use, the fideist stance served an obvious purpose: Bayle was definitively fired from the Illustrious School of Rotterdam in 1693, and he was fully aware of the risks of being portrayed as an atheist, but it would seem his critics had every reason to be suspicious, for by the end of his life his attitude toward revealed religion raised very serious questions indeed. Bayle's critique of Christianity basically involves two related issues: first, his continuing and increasingly devastating commentary on the actual history of Christianity, and second, of course, his insistence on the possibility of virtuous atheism. The latter in particular makes it difficult to characterize Bayle as a Pyrrhonist.

As early as the *Pensées diverses*, Bayle had formulated a devastating critique of the 'authority of tradition,' which effectively silenced the *argumentum e consensu gentium*, as it was plain to see that his comments on the prejudices relating to comets held true for all appeals to tradition: the fact that many people hold onto a notion for a long time does not in any way enhance its probability.<sup>55</sup> In a remarkably straightforward passage concluding the preface to the *Commentaire philosophique* Bayle claimed he was not at all surprised by the rise of unbelief. Instead, he was amazed that there weren't *more* "esprits forts" and "déistes," owing to the disasters wrought by religion.<sup>56</sup> The *Dictionnaire historique et critique* also testifies eloquently to Bayle's growing revulsion over the moral and political effects of this particular revealed religion. Apart from the scathing articles on such religious fanatics as Schwenckfeld and

53 Bayle, *Oeuvres diverses* (see above, n. 52), 3: 954–5.

54 "Il est évident que jamais les hommes ont formé des sociétés et qui ont consenti à déposer leur liberté entre les mains d'un souverain, n'ont prétendu lui donner droit sur leur conscience." Bayle, *Commentaire philosophique* (see above, n. 31), p. 145.

55 Pierre Bayle, *Pensées diverses sur la comète*, ed. Joyce Bost and Hubert Bost (Paris, 2007), pp. 72–3.

56 "Notre siècle, et je crois que tous les précédents ne lui en doivent guère, est plein d'esprits forts, et de déistes. On s'en étonne; mais pour moi je m'étonne qu'il n'y a en ait pas davantage, vu les ravages que la religion produit dans le monde, et l'extinction qu'elle amène par des conséquences presque inévitables de toute vertu, en autorisant pour sa prospérité temporelle tous les crimes imaginables, l'homicide, le brigandage, l'exil, le rapt, etc., qui produisent une infinité d'autres abominations, etc." Bayle, *Commentaire philosophique* (see above, n. 31), p. 81.

Savonarola,<sup>57</sup> Bayle was especially disgusted by the Crusades and remarkably mild in his assessment of Islam and the religion of the Chinese.<sup>58</sup> By the end of his life, he dryly observed that

(d)epuis le iv<sup>e</sup> siècle jusqu'au nôtre, les conspirations, les séditions, les guerres civiles, les révolutions, les détrônements, ont été des choses aussi fréquentes, et peut-être même plus fréquentes parmi les chrétiens que parmi les infidèles. Si certains pays y ont été moins sujets, ce n'est pas la foi chrétienne qui en a été la cause; il faut attribuer la différence aux divers génies des peuples, et à la diverse constitution des gouvernemens.<sup>59</sup>

In several respects, *pace* Labrousse, Bayle's moral outlook resembled the cosmopolitan attitude of the Parisian *libertinage* much more than the Reformed prudishness which appears to have dominated the Dutch Refuge. As David Wootton has demonstrated, Bayle's Calvinist detractors had every reason to be appalled by his treatment of, for instance, King David and the subjects of prostitution and abortion.<sup>60</sup>

As far as Bayle's comments regarding the possibility of virtuous atheism are concerned, Gianluca Mori has brilliantly analyzed how Bayle's careful introduction of the possibility of virtuous atheism in the *Pensées diverses* actually goes to show that the virtue of atheists is superior to that of the believer, since only the atheist is virtuous for the sake of virtue itself, instead of out of hope of reward.<sup>61</sup> Bayle first launched this provocative notion in the *Pensées diverses*,

57 Bayle, *Dictionnaire historique et critique* (see above, n. 10), articles 'Alix,' 'Braunbom,' 'Comenius,' and 'Kotterus'; see John Christian Laursen, 'Bayle's Anti-Millenarianism: The Dangers of Those Who Claim to Know the Future,' *Millenarianism and Messianism in Early Modern European Culture*, ed. John Christian Laursen and Richard H. Popkin (Dordrecht, 2001), pp. 95–106; Hubert Bost, 'Les faux prophètes dans le *Dictionnaire* de Pierre Bayle: fanatiques ou imposteurs?' in: *Critique, savoir et érudition à la veille des Lumières. Le Dictionnaire historique et critique de Pierre Bayle (1647–1706)*, ed. Hans Bots (Amsterdam-Maarssen, 1998), pp. 235–49. See also F. R. J. Knetsch, *Bayle's oordeel over Comenius* (Groningen, 1970).

58 See for instance the articles 'Japon,' remark E, where Bayle notes that Christianity turned into a violent sect from about the year 1000, and 'Grégoire VII.' See also Bayle, *Pensées diverses* (see above, n. 55), pp. 299–300; Rolando Minuti, *Orientalismo e idee di tolleranza nella cultura Francese del primo '700* (Florence, 2006).

59 Bayle, *Oeuvres diverses* (see above, n. 52), 3: 957.

60 David Wootton, 'Bayle Libertine?' in: *Studies in Seventeenth-Century European Philosophy*, ed. M. A. Stewart (Oxford, 1997), pp. 197–226. See also Lorenzo Bianchi, 'Pierre Bayle et le libertinage érudit,' *Critique, savoir et érudition*, ed. Bots, pp. 251–67.

61 Gianluca Mori, 'L"athée spéculatif" selon Bayle; permanence et développements d'une idée,' in: *De l'Humanisme aux Lumières, Bayle et le protestantisme*, ed. Michelle Magdelaine et al. (Paris, 1996), pp. 595–605; idem, *Bayle philosophe* (see above, n. 26),

famously arguing “que l’athéisme ne conduit pas nécessairement à la corruption des mœurs.”<sup>62</sup> Why? Because man does not act according to his general principles, but is motivated first and foremost by his particular temperament, his ‘taste’, and the habits he has grown accustomed to.<sup>63</sup> Next, the *Dictionnaire* presented an opportunity to paint a picture of the moral character of Spinoza, the most dangerous “athée de système” the world had ever seen, but whose moral excellence was beyond dispute.<sup>64</sup> Near the end of his life, Bayle was prepared to go even further, as is evident from the *Continuation des Pensées diverses* (1705): don’t forget to read Spinoza’s *Ethics*, and please read as well, Bayle now wrote, my article on Epicurus, and please consider the excellent moral precepts taught by Chinese philosophers; in darkest Africa even the “kaffers” show evident signs of natural equity.<sup>65</sup>

## 5 Bayle’s “Pyrrhonism”

The ease with which Popkin refers to the Pyrrhonist consequences apparent from the *Dictionnaire* article on Pyrrho is hardly self-evident, to say the least. According to Popkin, remark B of the article leads to

an attack on the entire rational world and raises the horrendous possibility, which no previous sceptic had entertained, that a proposition could be self-evident and yet demonstrably false—that there might be no criterion of truth whatsoever.<sup>66</sup>

But is this really what Bayle is saying? Remarks B and C actually claim that there is only *one* science that should be fearful of Pyrrhonism, namely theology. Consider the opening lines of B:

C’est par rapport à cette divine Science que le Pyrrhonisme est dangereux; car on ne voit pas qu’il le soit guere ni par rapport à la physique, ni par rapport à l’Etat. Il importe peu qu’on dise que l’esprit de l’homme est trop borné, pour rien découvrir dans les veritez naturelles, dans les causes qui produisent la chaleur, le froid, le flux de la mer, etc. Il nous

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pp. 200–5. See more in general Michael Czelinski-Uesbeck, *Der tugendhafte Atheist: Studien zur Vorgeschichte der Spinoza-Renaissance in Deutschland* (Würzburg, 2007).

62 Bayle, *Pensées diverses* (see above, n. 55), p. 288.

63 Bayle, *Pensées diverses* (see above, n. 55), p. 291.

64 Wiep van Bunge, ‘Spinoza’s Life: 1677–1802,’ *Journal of the History of Ideas* 78 (2017), 211–31.

65 Bayle, *Oeuvres diverses* (see above, n. 52), 3: 395–8.

66 Popkin, *The History of Scepticism* (see above, n. 26), p. 289.

doit suffire qu'on s'exerce à chercher des Hypotheses probables, et à recueillir des Expériences; et je suis fort assuré qu'il y a très-peu de bons Physiciens dans notre Siècle, qui ne se soient convaincus que la Nature est un abîme impenetrable, et que ses ressorts ne sont connus qu'à celui qui les a faits, et qui les dirige. Ainsi tous ces Philosophes sont à cet égard Académiciens et Pyrrhoniens. La vie civile n'a rien à craindre de cet esprit-là; car les Sceptiques ne nioient pas qu'il ne se falût conformer aux coutumes de son païs, et pratiquer les devoirs de la Morale, et prendre parti en ces choses-là sur des probabilités, sans attendre la certitude. Ils pouvoient suspendre leur jugement sur la question, si un tel devoir est naturellement et absolument légitime; mais ils ne le suspendoient pas sur la question, s'il le faloit pratiquer en telles et telles rencontres. Il n'y a donc que la Religion qui ait à craindre le Pyrrhonisme: elle doit être appuyée sur la certitude; son but, ses effets, ses usages, tombent dès que la ferme persuasion de ses vérités est effacée de l'ame.<sup>67</sup>

Clearly the "Pyrrhonism" Bayle attributes to physicists is of a completely different nature from the Pyrrhonism threatening theology: Bayle's skepticism only turns into genuine Pyrrhonism where he discusses the possibility of formulating a rational theology. His entire discussion of evidence in remark C on 'Pyrrho' exclusively concerns the theological concepts of the trinity and transubstantiation.<sup>68</sup> And the problem of evil, famously addressed in the article on the Manicheans, presents such a problem because *theologians* keep telling us that God is good, and that *as a consequence* evil shouldn't be there.<sup>69</sup>

What is more, Popkin's reference to the "suggestion" that a proposition could be self-evidently true and demonstrably false at the same time only comes up in an imaginary discussion staged by Bayle between two French "abbés"—and if only in view of his extremely critical assessment of the entire Catholic tradition, it seems *prima facie* odd to expect him to have chosen two Catholic theologians to express his own views. And the argument implied by Popkin seems itself incoherent, for it boils down to the conclusion that it is rational not to be rational in matters of faith. Rather, or so it would seem, Bayle was out to chastise the theological ambition to achieve 'mathematical' certainty when

67 Bayle, *Dictionnaire historique et critique* (see above, n. 10), article 'Pyrrhon', remark B.

68 See Todd Ryan, *Pierre Bayle's Cartesian Metaphysics: Rediscovering Early Modern Philosophy* (New York, 2009), pp. 21–6 and in particular Gianluca Mori, 'Pierre Bayle on Scepticism and "Common Notions,"' in: *The Return of Scepticism: From Hobbes and Descartes to Bayle*, ed. Gianni Paganini (Dordrecht, 2003), pp. 393–414.

69 See for the entire debate see Steven Nadler, *The Best of All Possible Worlds: A Story of Philosophers, God and Evil in the Age of Reason* (Princeton, 2010).

it came to defining the essence of God and his Son.<sup>70</sup> Natural theologians, or so Bayle must have felt, just aim too high. Indeed, the *critical* outlook Bayle fostered throughout his life makes little sense from a Pyrrhonist perspective, according to which man is essentially unable to distinguish between truth and falsity, right and wrong. Let's not forget what the *Dictionnaire* was all about: it was first conceived as an attempt to correct and set the record straight on the countless errors Bayle had encountered in previous dictionaries, most notably Louis Moreri's *Grand dictionnaire historique* of 1674.<sup>71</sup> For instance in the entry on Grotius, remark H, Bayle claims that historical research, being what it is, occasionally has to rely on eyewitness testimony, which of course does not result in mathematical certainty, but which has to be taken seriously, otherwise "on ouvre la porte au Pyrrhonisme."<sup>72</sup> Antony Grafton has crowned Bayle not only as the inventor of the modern footnote but as the "founder of historical learning" as we still know it today.<sup>73</sup>

It probably goes too far to attribute to Bayle a genuine philosophy of science, but as we have just seen in his comments on Physics, he was fully conscious of the crucial differences between the natural sciences and theology. In addition, he held firm views on the epistemological status of History and Philology, that is to say the humanities, as is evident for instance from the prefaces he wrote for the *Nouvelles de la République des Lettres*, the journal he published from 1684 to 1687, and the first announcement of his *Dictionnaire*, entitled *Projet et fragmens d'un Dictionnaire critique* (1692). In the Preface to the *Projet* Bayle writes:

Je sôtiens que les veritez historiques peuvent être poussées à une degré de certitude plus indubitable, que ne l'est le degré de certitude à quoy l'on fait parvenir les veritez Geometriques; bien entendu que l'on considerera ces deux sortes de veritez selon le genre de certitude qui leur est propre.<sup>74</sup>

70 Harry Bracken even felt 'Pyrrho' was an *attack* on Christian Pyrrhonism: Harry Bracken, 'Bayle's Attack on Natural Theology: The Case of Christian Pyrrhonism,' in: *Scepticism and Irreligion in the Seventeenth and Eighteenth Centuries*, ed. Richard H. Popkin and Arjo Vanderjagt (Leiden, 1993), pp. 254–66.

71 Labrousse, *Bayle* (see above, n. 22), 2: 3–68. See also Van Lieshout, *The Making of Pierre Bayle's Dictionnaire* (see above, n. 10).

72 Thomas M. Lennon, 'What Kind of a Skeptic was Bayle?,' *Midwest Studies in Philosophy* 26 (2002), 259–79, there 278. References to 'Pyrrhonism' in the *Dictionnaire* total 78: [http://artflsrv02.uchicago.edu/cgi-bin/philologic/showrest\\_?conc.6.1.28090.0.77.bayle](http://artflsrv02.uchicago.edu/cgi-bin/philologic/showrest_?conc.6.1.28090.0.77.bayle).

73 Anthony Grafton, *The Footnote: A Curious History* (London, 1997), pp. 190–222.

74 Pierre Bayle, *Projet et Fragmens d'un Dictionnaire critique* (Rotterdam, 1692), preface.

In the Preface to the first issue of the *Nouvelles* the way he distinguishes between theology and science, interpreted in a broad sense, acquires a decidedly polemical edge:

Il ne s'agit point ici de Religion; il s'agit de Science: on doit donc mettre bas tous les termes qui divisent les hommes en différentes factions, et considerer seulement le point dans lequel ils se réunissent ...<sup>75</sup>

For all intents and purposes, Bayle invokes a *moral* difference between religion and science: religion *divides* whereas science *unites*. By the same token, the dozens of scientific studies discussed in the *Nouvelles* testify to his genuine fascination with the natural sciences and with natural history in particular. Let's not forget either that his *Pensées diverses* from 1682 on the occasion of Halley's Comet reveals a pretty astute awareness of astronomy, and that many entries in the *Dictionnaire* are concerned with distinguishing real science from pseudoscience.<sup>76</sup> Again, from a Pyrrhonist perspective, Bayle's attempts at demarcation make little sense.

Philosophers tend to associate the emergence of the concept of probability with the rise of empiricism.<sup>77</sup> But the medieval concept of 'moral certainty' played a crucial part both in Descartes and in Spinoza, and surely the aim of Bayle's *Dictionnaire* in particular was not to arrive at the conclusion that we know nothing—on the contrary, he carefully sought to examine what we *probably* know, from 'Aaron' to 'Zeuchlin.' John Kilcullen feels that as a consequence Bayle was not even a skeptic, as "fallibilism is not scepticism."<sup>78</sup> Nor does it seem warranted to attribute to Bayle a fideist solution to the "ruins of

75 Cited from Ruth Whelan, *The Anatomy of Superstition: A Study of the Historical Theory and Practice of Pierre Bayle* (Oxford, 1989), p. 87.

76 Bost, *Pierre Bayle, historien* (see above, n. 26), pp. 9–16; Wiep van Bunge, 'Pierre Bayle on the History of Science: What Counts and What Does Not' (forthcoming). For an especially fascinating case study, see Koen Vermeir, 'The Dustbin of the Republic of Letters: Pierre Bayle's *Dictionnaire* as an Encyclopedic Palimpsest of Errors,' *Journal of Early Modern Studies* 1 (2012), 109–49.

77 Henry G. van Leeuwen, *The Problem of Certainty in English Thought, 1630–1690* (The Hague, 1970); Barbara J. Shapiro, *Probability and Certainty in Seventeenth-Century England: A Study of the Relationship between Natural Science, Religion, History, Law, and Literature* (Princeton, 1983). See, however, also Ian Hacking, *The Emergence of Probability: A Philosophical Study of Early Ideas about Probability, Induction, and Statistical Inference* (Cambridge, 2006).

78 John Kilcullen, *Sincerity and Truth: Essays on Arnauld, Bayle and Toleration* (Oxford, 1988), pp. 54–105, 101. See also, much earlier: E. D. James, 'Scepticism and Fideism in Bayle's *Dictionnaire*,' *French Studies* 16 (1962), 307–22; idem, 'Pierre Bayle on Belief and *évidence*,' *French Studies* 27 (1973), 395–404.

reason,” as he seems mainly intent on *separating* reason from faith. Admittedly, in remark H of his article on Spinoza in the *Dictionnaire*, Bayle seems to provide himself with the opportunity of a fideist “escape”:

(i) l’y a point de contradiction entre ces deux choses: 1. la lumiere de la Raison m’apprend que cela est faux; 2. je le croi pourtant, parce que je suis persuadé que cette Lumiere n’est pas infaillible, et parce que j’aime mieux déférer aux preuves de sentiment, et aux impressions de la conscience, en un mot à la Parole de Dieu, qu’à une Démonstration Métaphysique.

Several other passages have been identified in which Bayle presents “blind faith” as a solution to the antinomies resulting from a philosophical analysis of religion.<sup>79</sup> Even Labrousse, however, admitted that the abruptness with which Bayle interjected such phrases render them pretty artificial.<sup>80</sup> Popkin also noticed that these passages “suggest an absence of a crucial religious element.”<sup>81</sup> According to McKenna, on the other hand, Bayle used the fideist stance as a “last line of defense” for the simple reason that around 1700 it was simply impossible to admit a *real* loss of faith.<sup>82</sup> Jonathan Israel regards Bayle’s fideism as a “smokescreen ... which, indeed, serves no real function in Bayle’s philosophy other than categorically to separate philosophy from theology and deflect criticism by concealing the true implications of his stance.”<sup>83</sup>

At this stage it should be added, though, that this remains a highly controversial conclusion. Recent atheist readings of Bayle are still being questioned, for instance, by José Maia Neto and Michael Hickson, who have tried to improve the Popkinite interpretation of Bayle as a Christian Pyrrhonist by turning him into an Academic Skeptic.<sup>84</sup> According to Hickson:

While the Pyrrhonians presented and created disagreements in order to induce suspension of belief, the Academics presented disagreements in order (1) to combat prejudices, (2) to reveal the strengths and weakness of competing arguments and beliefs, and ultimately (3) to render the

79 For a collection, see Mori, *Bayle philosophe* (see above, n. 26), pp. 236–7.

80 Labrousse, *Bayle* (see above, n. 22), 2: 237.

81 Popkin, *The History of Scepticism* (see above, n. 26), p. 290.

82 McKenna, ‘Pierre Bayle in the Twentieth Century’ (see above, n. 24), pp. 266–7.

83 Israel, *Enlightenment Contested* (see above, n. 26), p. 82.

84 Maia Neto, ‘Bayle’s Academic Skepticism’ (see above, n. 26); Hickson, ‘Disagreement and Academic Skepticism in Bayle’ (see above, n. 26).

reader's judgment suitable for forming probable opinions about disputes *with integrity*.<sup>85</sup>

Bayle himself makes no distinction between Pyrrhonist and Academic skepticism, but according to Hickson it was not Sextus Empiricus but Cicero who had inspired Bayle. As a consequence, Bayle's aim was not to achieve a state of Pyrrhonian *ataraxia*, in which judgment is suspended indefinitely. His aim, Hickson argues, was simply presenting the best, that is the most convincing, argument. But Hickson's reconstruction leaves the question unanswered as to *which* untouched arguments can be considered superior.<sup>86</sup> And again: around 1700 it was simply impossible to argue *with integrity* that atheism was intellectually and morally superior to Christianity.

## 6 Conclusion

Nobody knows what Bayle believed by the end of his life, and it remains to be seen to what extent his writings allow us to reconstruct his intellectual and religious *Werdegang*, if only because of their volume. Over the past few decades, a stunning diversity of competing interpretations has been built on Bayle's vast literary output, and the Bayle Enigma continues to haunt us. Situating Bayle in the context of the Dutch Refuge will not allow us to break free of this deadlock, but it appears to confirm that Bayle's faith had been tested to the limit, first by his expulsion from his native country, next by the gradual realization that a return to France was never going to happen, and subsequently by the violent quarrels within the Refuge, ultimately leading to his own dismissal as professor. What kind of God could possibly have wanted this to happen?

That Bayle was deeply shocked when, by the end of 1685, news reached him about the death in prison of his brother Jacob is beyond dispute—he had already lost both his father and another brother this same year.<sup>87</sup> What is

85 Hickson, 'Disagreement and Academic Skepticism in Bayle' (see above, n. 26), p. 299.

86 Thus, commenting on the issue of atheism in the *Commentaire philosophique*, Hickson concludes: "the balance of the dispute is not intended to suspend judgment, but to force the reader to avoid hasty conclusions and to consider the arguments, weigh them carefully, and only then render judgment—a judgment that the reader can claim to have made with the freedom constitutive of Academic integrity."

87 Labrousse, *Pierre Bayle* (see above, n. 22), 1: 196–200; Bost, *Piere Bayle* (see above, n. 21), pp. 225–7. The answer to the question *when* Bayle abandoned Christianity, if indeed he did, is far from clear, although clearly the latter half of the 1680s was a particularly challenging period for Bayle. According to Mori the *Avis aux réfugiés* (1690) served as a watershed: Pierre Bayle, *Avis aux réfugiés, Réponse d'un nouveau converti*, ed. Gianluca Mori

more, it seems Bayle's anger over the way he was robbed of his position at the Illustrious School has been consistently underestimated.<sup>88</sup> All the major crises in Bayle's life, including his flight from France, the death of his brother, and his dismissal had been religiously inspired. Bayle's initial relief to have escaped the barbarity of French religious persecution, evident from the *Commentaire philosophique*, must have soured considerably when he arrived in a country celebrated for its tolerant history at a moment when it was actually curbing its tolerant politics.<sup>89</sup> To make matters worse, his nemesis Pierre Jurieu soon became the most powerful spokesman of the Dutch Refuge, violently arguing against tolerationism. In his *Dictionnaire* Bayle demonstrated a keen awareness of Dutch intolerance towards Mennonites, Arminians, and Socinians alike throughout the seventeenth century.<sup>90</sup>

There is a sense in which Bayle no longer seemed to care much about what his many critics made of his views. Paraphrasing Paul's letter to the Hebrews (10,38), he commented:

Si le Juste vit de sa foi, un philosophe doit aussi vivre de la sienne; c'est-à-dire qu'il ne doit point faire dépendre de ce que penseront les autres hommes ce qu'il doit des choses.<sup>91</sup>

There is, perhaps, one crucial passage in *L'Éclaircissement sur les pyrrhoniens* from 1702 which seems to illustrate how Bayle *really* felt:

Il faut nécessairement opter entre la Philosophie et l'Évangile; si vous ne voulez rien croire que ce qui est évident et conforme aux notions communes, prenez la Philosophie et quittez le Christianisme: si vous voulez croire les Mystères incompréhensibles de la Religion, prenez le Christianisme, et quittez la Philosophie; car de posséder ensemble

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(Paris, 2006). See, however, Hickson and Lennon, 'The Real Significance' (see above, n. 52), pp. 195–201.

88 Wiep van Bunge, 'The Politics of Appropriation. Erasmus and Bayle,' *Erasmus of Rotterdam Society Yearbook* 33 (2013), 3–21.

89 Marshall, *John Locke, Toleration and Early Enlightenment Culture* (see above, n. 1), pp. 138–93, 418–39. See also Benjamin Kaplan, *Divided by Faith: Religious Conflict and the Practice of Toleration in Early Modern Europe* (Cambridge, Mass., 2007), pp. 333–58.

90 Marshall, *John Locke, Toleration and Early Enlightenment Culture* (see above, n. 1), pp. 166–175. See Bayle, *Dictionnaire*, articles 'Anabaptistes,' remark D; 'Episcopus,' 'Socin,' remark L. See also Dibon, *Regards sur la Hollande* (see above, n. 1), pp. 431–55.

91 Bayle, *Oeuvres diverses* (see above, n. 52), 3: 237.

l'évidence et l'incompréhensibilité, c'est ce qui ne se peut ... Il faut opter nécessairement ...<sup>92</sup>

This is hardly an isolated comment, as it catches the drift of his critique of both Aristotelian and Socinian attempts to formulate philosophical theologies.<sup>93</sup> Bayle's final words appear to confirm suspicions that by the end of his life he had opted for philosophy, as he was reported to have commented that Christianity was at best "probablement probable."<sup>94</sup> In one of his last letters he claimed "je meurs en philosophe chrétien, persuadé et pénétré des bontés et de la miséricorde de Dieu." Anyone only slightly familiar with Bayle's permanent obsession with the *reality* of evil will simply have to recognize the cynicism revealed here. A similar sentiment recurs in his observation that throughout his life he had remained a true Protestant: "car au fonds de mon âme, je proteste contre tout ce qui se dit et tout ce qui se fait."

Some Dutch Huguenots, including such 'Spinozists' as Jean-Maximilien Lucas and the Chevalier de Saint-Glain, had started radicalizing even before 1685—and it seems that Bayle should be counted among them. The all-too-familiar examples of Simon Tyssot de Patot, Professor at the Illustrious School of Zutphen, but also of Bernard Picart and Jean Frédéric Bernard, illustrate how the Dutch Refuge would continue to produce radicals well into the eighteenth century.<sup>95</sup> In particular after the Treaty of Ryswick, when many *réfugiés* actually preferred to return to France even if this implied abandoning the Reformed creed altogether, 'la grande arche des fugitifs' occasionally appears to have served not only as a safe haven for orthodox Protestants but also as a cradle of disenchantment with Christianity as such, if not downright religious indifference.<sup>96</sup>

92 Quoted from Antony McKenna, 'L'Éclaircissement sur les pyrrhoniens, 1702,' in: *Critique, savoir et érudition*, ed. Bots, pp. 297–320, there 310.

93 See for instance Bayle, *Dictionnaire historique et critique*, articles 'Alting'; 'Aristote', esp. remark M,k; 'Socin.'

94 See Bost, *Pierre Bayle* (see above, n. 21), pp. 499–519, explicitly based on Labrousse, *Pierre Bayle* (see above, n. 22), 1: 255–7.

95 Aubrey Rosenberg, *Simon Tyssot de Patot (1655–1738) and His Work* (The Hague, 1972); Israel, *Radical Enlightenment* (see above, n. 26), pp. 593–8; Lynn Hunt et al., *The Book that Changed Europe: Picart and Bernard's Religious Ceremonies of the World* (Cambridge, Mass., 2010); Israel, *Enlightenment Contested* (see above, n. 26), pp. 377–80.

96 Paul Vernière, *Spinoza et la pensée française avant la Révolution* (Paris, 1954), pp. 333–446; Madeleine Francès, 'Un gazetier français en Hollande: Gabriel de Saint Glen: Traducteur de Spinoza,' *La Revue des Sciences Humaines* 79 (1955), 407–20; Paul-Laurent Assoun, 'Spinoza, les libertins français et la politique (1665–1725),' *Cahiers Spinoza* 3 (1979–80), 171–207; Israel, *Radical Enlightenment* (see above, n. 26), pp. 295–327 and 575–90.

# Between the Catechism and the Microscope: The World of Johannes Duijkerius

*Joke Spaans*

## Abstract

Johannes Duijkerius (1661/1662-1702) has attracted some scholarly attention as a minor Spinozist. This assessment may well be misconceived. He is best or rather almost exclusively known as the author of the novel *Het Leven van Philopater* (The Life of Philopater), a theological *roman à clef* published anonymously in 1691. A second, and likewise anonymous *Vervolg van 't Leven van Philopater* (Sequel to the Life of Philopater, 1697), has often been ascribed to him as well. Although Duijkerius emphatically denied authorship of this sequel, a plainly Spinozistic work, the suspicion of heterodoxy stuck. A closer look at Duijkerius's career supports the contention that *Vervolg* was indeed not his, and produces a much richer, more intriguing picture of a minor intellectual living in interesting times. Instead of a frustrated candidate for the ministry and reluctant 'radical,' Duijkerius proves to have been an ambitious schoolmaster in Amsterdam, who fully participated in the lively debates of the Early Enlightenment but did not transgress the boundaries of Reformed orthodoxy. His life and works provide a perfect example of the entanglement of religious and intellectual history in the early modern period.

## 1 The Lay Catechist

Johannes Duijkerius made his career in Amsterdam, but he was probably not born there. He first appears in the records in 1683, when he bought citizenship in Amsterdam and married Janneke de Coster. In the Amsterdam *Poorterboek* [Register of admissions to citizenship] he was registered as schoolmaster.<sup>1</sup> He

1 On Duijkerius, see: Gerardine Maréchal, *Johannes Duijkerius: Het leven van Philopater & Vervolg van 't leven van Philopater: Een spinozistische sleutelroman uit 1691/1697 opnieuw uitgegeven en van een inleiding en noten voorzien* (Amsterdam, 1991), pp. 11–40; Wiep van Bunge, 'Philopater, de radicale Verlichting en het einde van de Eindertijd,' *Mededelingen van de Stichting Jacob Campo Weyerman* 26 (2003), 10–9; Michiel Wielema, *The March of the Libertines: Spinozists and the Dutch Reformed Church (1660–1750)* (Hilversum, 2004), pp. 88–90; Ton Jongenelen,

is usually portrayed as a poor man with a grating voice, frustrated in his ambition to become a minister and forced by circumstance to eke out a miserable, marginal existence. It is true that he was not exactly rich. Also he was not Latinate, and therefore had no access to higher education. Yet in the following decade and a half he proved to be a successful schoolmaster and productive author. These achievements mark him as an ambitious man. All his works were dedicated to prominent ministers and contain dedicatory poems by professional men: a publisher, a painter, and a comforter of the sick, which places Duijkerius in a milieu of self-confident professionals and skilled artisans with specialist knowledge, men who partook in a largely vernacular 'culture of knowledge.'<sup>2</sup>

As far as we know, in his first years as an Amsterdam *poorter* he was not employed by one of the publicly financed schools but worked as an independent schoolmaster. The burgeoning city of Amsterdam offered such men ample opportunity for employment. School ordinances regulated the more practical aspects of education, such as school hours and discipline, but they did not prescribe a uniform curriculum for the vernacular schools. Moreover, their prescriptions could be enforced only in public schools. Besides reading and writing, catechism was considered an indispensable part of elementary education. Arithmetic was optional. Schoolmasters competed for pupils by offering additional subjects, from the composition of letters to navigation, and parents would pay extra for lessons they considered useful for their children. Some of these teachers published textbooks and primers, both in the basic subjects and on their specialist skills or fields of interest. In this sense there was as yet no sharp distinction between elementary education and vocational training. For the schoolmasters, publishing textbooks resulted in an additional source of income, but these books were also advertisements of what they could teach.<sup>3</sup>

Initially Duijkerius's specialty was catechism. He had a strong interest in theological matters and to all appearances was stimulated to pursue this interest by the Amsterdam ministers. His first publication, *Regtsinnige harp-stoffe*

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'Philopater. Een daderonderzoek,' *Mededelingen van de Stichting Jacob Campo Weyerman* 40 (2017), 17–31.

- 2 On skilled artisans and a vernacular culture of knowledge, see: Jonathan Israel, *The Dutch Republic: Its Rise, Greatness, and Fall 1477–1806* (Oxford, 1995), pp. 348–51; Patrick O'Brien, ed., *Urban Achievement in Early Modern Europe: Golden Ages in Antwerp, Amsterdam and London* (Cambridge, 2001), pp. 287–345; Wiep van Bunge, *From Stevin to Spinoza: An Essay on Philosophy in the Seventeenth-Century Dutch Republic* (Leiden, 2001), pp. 1–9; Arjan van Dixhoorn, *Lustige geesten: Rederijkers in de Noordelijke Nederlanden (1480–1650)* (Amsterdam, 2009).
- 3 Willem Frijhoff and Marijke Spies, *1650: Bevochten eendracht* (The Hague, 1999), pp. 237–44. Schoolmasters who published on several basic subjects including religion were, besides Duijkerius, Barent Hakvoort, P. Bakker, Simon de Vries, and Johannes Hilarides.

(Orthodox lyrics, 1685), was a volume of catechetical material that he dedicated to the Amsterdam minister Gijsbertus Oostrom. He called Oostrom his spiritual father and thanked him for reading and correcting his work before publication.<sup>4</sup> The volume contained first and foremost a rhymed version of the Heidelberg Catechism, in which questions and answers were set to well-known melodies. For each 'Sunday,' or chapter, he also provided a rhymed meditation and a quotation from the Church Fathers that supported the doctrinal content of that Sunday. Besides short rhymed pieces such as prayers for various times in the day and meditations on the life of Christ, it also contained a versification of the Dutch Confession that could be sung to the tune associated with Psalm 118. The printed text is heavily annotated, with numerous references to the Bible and the Heidelberg Catechism but also to vernacular theological works,<sup>5</sup> early Christian authors, and occasionally, although in a negative sense, to Catholic writers. It was a compendium intended to help its readers memorize and internalize Reformed doctrine.<sup>6</sup>

A book like this was aimed not exclusively at schoolchildren but also at more advanced readers. By the end of the seventeenth century, advanced instruction in the catechism was in high demand. In this confessional age, all churches had programs to instruct the laity in the tenets of the faith, and the Dutch Reformed Church was no exception. The synod of Dordrecht in 1618–9 had provided concrete guidelines for teaching the catechism, in a systematic review of the decisions of earlier synods. The Heidelberg Catechism was the preferred primer. Small children should memorize a simplified version of the text, whereas schoolchildren in the higher forms would have the entire text of the Heidelberg explained to them. There were crash courses offered to applicants for church membership. Meanwhile, ministers should organize interactive catechism sessions every Sunday afternoon in their parish churches,

4 Joannes Duijkerius, *Regtsinnige harp-stoffe, bestaande in Gesangen en Vaarsen over de Heydelbergse Catechismus, verciert met uytgesogte en zinrijke Sententien van de beroemdste Oudvaderen. Nevens een formeel Belydenisse van alle de Grond-Waarheden der Gereformeerde kerke, volgens desselvs Belydenisse en Catechismus. Als mede een Ziel-verquikkende Redemvoering tusschen Jesus en Nikodemus, rakende de Elendigheyd des Menschen, en desselvs wederoprechtinge in de Wedergeboorte. Als noch Eenige By-Dichten* (Amsterdam, 1685).

5 He mentions by name Simon Oomius, *Institutiones theologiae practicae, ofte Onderwijsingen in de practycke der godgeleerdheid*, 3 vols. (Bolsward and Schiedam, 1672–80) and Petrus de Witte, *Catechizatie over den Heydelbergschen Catechismus der Gereformeerde Christelijke Religie* (Hoorn, 1652).

6 An earlier argument for rhymed catechisms that could be sung, after the example of the Jesuits, is given in Johannes Hoornbeek, *De conversione Indorum et Gentilium* (Amsterdam, 1659), p. 242. For rhymed catechisms in relation to religious poetry, see Els Stronks, *Stichten of schitteren: De poëzie van zeventiende-eeuwse gereformeerde predikanten* (Houten, 1996). A rhymed *Confessio Belgica* was a first.

where the Sundays, the fifty-two chapters of the Heidelberg Catechism, were to be explained, and parishioners' doubts and questions answered. So determined the Synod of Dordrecht.<sup>7</sup> (Fig. 11.1)

In some cities, individual ministers had made systematic efforts to implement the catechetical program of the synod. Gisbertus Voetius and his colleague Johannes Cloppenburg introduced separate catechism classes for boys, girls, and adults in Heusden, and after his move to Utrecht Voetius, as professor of theology at the newly founded University of Utrecht, continued this practice.<sup>8</sup> In 1651 the Dordrecht ministers jointly wrote a new catechetical primer and drew up a roster for separate catechism classes for orphans, young men, and young women.<sup>9</sup> In 1659 the ministry of Rotterdam would follow their example.<sup>10</sup> Such experiments aiming for a more thorough reformation of the laity were, however, initially limited to the larger cities. In rural villages, schoolmasters probably taught the catechism to their pupils, but the mandatory sermons on topics related to the Sundays of the Heidelberg Catechism, followed by more interactive instruction of adult church members, were highly unpopular. When faced with empty pews or the attendance only of their own and the schoolmasters' families, ministers gave up. Some even joined their parishioners in Sunday sports and leisure, to the extreme displeasure of classes and synods.<sup>11</sup>

After the Peace of Westphalia, which ended the war against Spain and recognized the Dutch Republic as a sovereign state with a Calvinist public church, a new drive to build a truly Reformed religious culture seems to have taken hold in the churches. In the Great Assembly of 1651, where the cooperation among the seven sovereign provinces was discussed in the aftermath of the Peace and the untimely death of stadholder William II, with his heir yet

7 *Acta ofte Handelinghen des Nationalen Synodi, inden Name onses Heeren Jesu Christi. Ghehouden door autoriteyt der Hogh. Mogh. Heren Staten Generael des Vereenighden Nederlandts, tot Dordrecht, anno 1618. ende 1619.* (Dordrecht, 1621), pp. 54–7.

8 A. C. Duker, *Gisbertus Voetius*, 4 vols. (Leiden, 1989), 3: 128–30.

9 G. D. J. Schotel, *Kerkelijk Dordrecht, eene bijdrage tot de geschiedenis der vaderlandsche Hervormde Kerk sedert het jaar 1572*, 2 vols. (Utrecht, 1841–5) 1: 304–5; *Kort begriip der christelijke leere, gestelt in korte vragen ende antwoorden* (Dordrecht, 1651).

10 S. D. van Veen, 'Het godsdienstonderwijs en de aanneming van lidmaten in de gereformeerde kerk,' in: idem, ed., *Uit onzen bloeitijd. Schetsen van het leven onzer vaderen in de XVII<sup>e</sup> eeuw*, 3 vols. (Amsterdam, ca. 1907), 2: 41–86, there 15; *Kort voorbeeldt vande gesonde woorden, gestelt tot oeffeninge vande Christelijke Jeught, besonderlijk tot behulp van de gene, die haer bereyden om op Beleijdenisse hares Geloofs, tot het Heylige Avondmael te werden toe-gelaten* (Rotterdam, 1659), reprinted several times, latest known copy 1729.

11 G. D. J. Schotel, *Geschiedenis van den oorsprong, de invoering en de lotgevallen van den Heidelbergschen Catechismus* (Amsterdam, 1863), pp. 220–1; Wiebe Bergsma, "Zij preekten voor doven": *De Reformatie in Drenthe* (Assen, 2002), pp. 57, 67–90.



FIGURE 11.1 A minister publicly catechizing his parishioners: men, women and children. Title print in Petrus de Witte, *Catechizatie* (Amsterdam, 1657). Amsterdam, Rijksmuseum, cat. nr. RP-P-1878-A-2283

unborn, religion was high on the agenda. A delegation from the Synod of Zuid-Holland came to plead for resources to build a Reformed church organization in the *Generaliteitslanden*, extensive, almost solidly Catholic territories south of the Rhine and its tributaries that had been won by force of arms but had not been awarded political representation in the form of Provincial Estates. The assembly promised political support for such a policy, although they politely ignored one of the wishes of the synod, namely that the political authorities would compel Catholics to attend Reformed services.<sup>12</sup>

Instead, in 1654 the States of Holland ordered that in every church on Sunday afternoons, after the sermon, ministers would catechize their congregations—not only in the cities but also in rural parishes. Their order came in a letter sent to the provincial Synod of Zuid-Holland and to each of the classes under its jurisdiction, which included the classis Breda in the *Generaliteitslanden*. The letter stated explicitly that the ministers should not limit their efforts to their congregations but should also engage in missionary outreach to Catholics. Drily the letter observed that individual instruction would do more than rigorous placards to guide simple souls, and also papists, on the road to salvation. Therefore the States assembly required individual ministers, in the cities and in rural villages, to teach the tenets of the pure religion not only in church, after the afternoon sermons, but also in private homes, for groups or individuals, to everyone who was willing to listen. Emphatically ‘simple’—probably meaning amenable—Catholics were included among those to be thus approached. Sternly the ministers of the public Church were admonished to show greater zeal and industriousness in this public task than they had displayed so far. The letter ended with the pious expectation that God would certainly bless this endeavor.<sup>13</sup>

The Reformed Church never mustered much missionary zeal. Instead, throughout the seventeenth and eighteenth centuries, it would remind the political authorities of their obligations, reaffirmed at the Great Assembly, to exclude Catholics and other dissenters from public protection and access to public office. The Church itself focused its energies on its own constituency. The 1654 letter from the States of Holland seems to have been the spark that lit a wildfire of catechetical instruction. This is most visible in the market for religious books. In the second half of the seventeenth century a host of companion volumes to the Heidelberg Catechism was published, aimed at what

12 Lieuwe van Aitzema, *Herstelde Leeuw, ofte Discours, over het gepasseerde in de Vereenichde Nederlanden, in 't Jaer 1650 ende 1651* (Utrecht, 1652), pp. 196–208, 504–9, 511; cf. W. P. C. Knuttel, ed., *Acta der particuliere synode van Zuid-Holland*, 5 vols. (The Hague, 1908–16), 3: 241–52.

13 Quoted in full in Johannes Hoornbeeck, *Tractaat van catechisatie. Haare oorsprong, gebrück, ende nuttigheit in de Christen-Kercke* (Leiden, 1654), preface.

apparently was a very lively market. One example among many is the oeuvre of Balthasar Bekker, who would become famous above all as the author of *De betoverde weereld* [The Enchanted World] (1691–3). From the very beginning of his ministry in a small village in Friesland, he designed a series of courses in the catechism. He started with a little book for children who could not yet read. In his *Gerymde kinder-leer* [Rhymed instruction or children] (1661) he reduced the fifty-two Sundays of the Heidelberg to fifty-two very short rhymed stanzas, each containing a question and answer, easy to memorize and reproduce. He followed up with study aids of increasing complexity, *Kinder-melk* [Breastmilk] (1668) and *Gesneden broodt voor de Kristen kinderen* [Sliced Bread for Christian Children] (1668) for schoolchildren, and *Vaste Spyse* [Solid Food] (1670) for professing church members. The latter was an advanced course in Reformed theology of over 700 pages.<sup>14</sup>

Many other ministers, noticeably those in the larger cities who were the real career tigers of the Dutch Reformed Church, wrote similar books, often dedicating them to their own congregations but with an eye to wider sales. They were acutely aware that the market for this genre was saturated with catechetical textbooks, among which buyers could pick and choose. Each therefore aimed to satisfy a specific niche: using a more Voetian or a more Cocceian style, combining the Heidelberger with a catechization on providential history, writing in prose or verse, even setting the catechism's questions and answers to music or adapting the treatment of its sections to annual, weekly, or daily devotional routines resembling the traditional Catholic liturgical calendars and hours. Some advised their readers to consult and compare several authors, and so profit from each of their distinctive gifts. Quite a number of these books were frequently reprinted, a few even up through the present.<sup>15</sup>

This diversification was a response to market forces, but also to a deeply felt need to make catechization attractive, possibly inspired by the educational works of the Bohemian exile Jan Amos Comenius. Johannes Hoornbeeck, professor of theology first in Utrecht and later in Leiden, wrote a *Tractaat van Catechisatie* [Tract on Catechization] (1654) as a follow-up to the letter of the States of Holland, in which he sketched the history of catechization through the ages and pointed out best practices. He described how instructors should appeal to the natural curiosity of students young and old, as well as to peer pressure, and advised how to seduce them to join the lessons, captivate their

14 Bekker's catechetical oeuvre is reprinted in Balthasar Bekker, *De Friesche Godgeleerdheid. Begrijpende alle desselfs Werken in Friesland uitgegeven, en 't gene daar af geoordeeld, en daarover voorgevallen is* (Amsterdam, 1693).

15 On catechisms and catechisation generally see W. Verboom, *De catechese van de Reformatie en de Nadere Reformatie* (Amsterdam, 1986); on rhymed catechization, Stronks, *Stichten of schitteren* (see above, n. 6), pp. 55–8.

attention, spur their ambitions, praise their efforts, and reward their achievements. Remarkably, however, he also pointed to the example of the Bohemian Brethren, for whom catechism teaching was no mere rite of passage into membership but a form of lifelong learning.<sup>16</sup> The Brethren had been a persecuted minority in Bohemia from long before the reformations of the sixteenth century. Since the defeat of the Bohemian Estates by the Emperor in 1620, they lived as a diaspora community in exile. Throughout their existence, because they often lacked access to academies, they had trained up promising boys and girls for ordained priesthood through graded levels of catechization and in-service training as acolytes, deacons, and deaconesses with the authority to preach and administer the sacraments.<sup>17</sup>

All in all, the Bohemian Brethren were a somewhat surprising group to be held up as an example for the Dutch Reformed Church, with its public status and its academically trained clergy. Yet the Brethren model was exactly what prominent theologians like Bekker and Hoornbeeck had in mind. Their aim was to encourage the faithful to become theologically articulate. Through graded catechization courses undertaken in all stages of the lives of the faithful, they wanted to build the Church. They also aimed to create a pool of accomplished church members from which to promote suitable candidates to office as deacons and elders, and from which to recruit readers, comforters of the sick, teachers of the catechism, and *oefenaars* (lit.: trainers).<sup>18</sup> (Fig. 11.2) The most gifted of these could eventually seek ordination without going through the full academic study of theology. In a way, this was the re-introduction into the Reformed Church of the minor orders, even as a career path into the ministry. Remarkably, this did not raise any eyebrows at the time. On the contrary, even Gisbertus Voetius, professor of theology in Utrecht, a pillar of Reformed

16 Hoornbeeck, *Tractaat van catechisatie* (see above, n. 13).

17 Some recent studies on Bohemian reform movements are Thomas A. Fudge, *Jan Hus: Religious Reform and Social Revolution in Bohemia* (London, 2010); David R. Holeton, 'The Bohemian Eucharistic Movement in its European Context,' *The Bohemian Reformation and Religious Practice* 1 (1996), 23–48; on Utraquism: Zdeněk V. David, *Finding the Middle Way: The Utraquists' Liberal Challenge to Rome and Luther* (Washington, D.C., 2003); on Hussitism and the early Reformation: Siegfried Hoyer, 'Jan Hus und der Hussitismus in den Flugschriften des ersten Jahrzehnts der Reformation,' in: *Flugschriften als Massenmedium der Reformationszeit: Beiträge zum Tübinger Symposium 1980*, ed. Hans-Joachim Köhler (Stuttgart, 1981), pp. 291–307; on the Brethren: Rudolf Řičan, *The History of the Unity of Brethren: A Protestant Hussite Church in Bohemia and Moravia* (Bethlehem, Pa., 1992) and Craig D. Atwood, *The Theology of the Czech Brethren from Hus to Comenius* (University Park, Pa., 2009). Hoornbeeck on their catechism teaching: Hoornbeeck, *Tractaat* (see above, n. 13), pp. 103–4.

18 *Oefenaars* were lay church members who held advanced catechism classes under the supervision of the local consistory. Their classes often took on the character of religious meetings, which could substitute for regular church services in the absence of a minister.



FIGURE 11.2 Private catechism teacher for the well-to do. Illustration from Hieronymus van Alphen, *Kleine gedigten voor kinderen* (1787). Rotterdam, Atlas van Stolk, cat. nr. 25025

orthodoxy, enthusiastically supported this scheme, explicitly endorsing this reappropriation of traditional spiritual hierarchies.<sup>19</sup>

This catechetical movement and the formation of a minor clergy were hugely successful. By the end of the seventeenth century 'knowing one's catechism' had become part of one's decent upbringing, an integral part of civic religion. A market for vernacular theological literature developed for theology students and candidates for the ministry, as well as for comforters of the sick, teachers of catechism, *oefenaars*, and those church members who took their religious studies seriously. Remarkably, these books, for all their pious intentions, boldly popularized the results of biblical scholarship and natural philosophy, some of which had proved so contentious only a generation before. Bekker included in his *Vaste Spysse* many of the hotly debated issues of his day, from the nature of true religion to the question of allowing pawnshops to operate. Such questions had not been addressed in the Heidelberg Catechism itself, but he felt that confirmed church members should be able to have an informed opinion on them.<sup>20</sup> The Groningen minister and later professor *honoris causa* of the University of Groningen Abraham Trommius produced his massive Dutch *Concordance* to the Bible between 1672 and 1685, in which he proudly paraded his learning in the Semitic languages.<sup>21</sup> In 1700 Wilhelmus à Brakel, minister of Rotterdam, published his *Redelijke Godsdienst* [Reasonable Religion], the first compendium of Reformed theology written in the vernacular,<sup>22</sup> in which

19 Gisbertus Voetius, *Politica ecclesiastica*, 4 vols. (Amsterdam, 1663–76), 2: 508–27.

20 Announced in the preface to *Vaste Spysse*, reprinted in Bekker, *De Friesche Godgeleerdheid* (see above, n. 14). The same tactic is evident in Henricus Groenewegen, *Betragtingen tot bevordering van Geloov' en Deugd, volgens den Heydelbergschen Catechismus ofte de Hoofstukken der Christelijke God-geleerdheydt* (Rotterdam, 1672).

21 Abraham Trommius, *Volkomene Nederlandsche Concordantie ofte Woord-Register des Ouden en Nieuwen Testaments, waarin gevonden worden alle de Nederlandsche woorden na order van 't Nederduytsche ABC; met alle de Hebreusche, Chaldeeusche en Grieksche Grond-woorden daer by gevoegt, mitsgaders de verscheydene Beteekenissen en andere bequame Onderscheidingen der Nederlandsche woorden*, 3 vols. (Groningen and Amsterdam, 1672–85).

22 Wilhelmus à Brakel, *Logikè Latreia, dat is Redelyke godts-dienst. In dewelke de Goddelijke Waarheden des Genaden-Verbondts worden verklaart, tegen allerley partyen beschermt, ende tot de practijke aangedrongen. Als mede de Bedeelinge des Verbondts ende Handelinghe Gods met sijne Kercke in het Oude Testament onder de Schaduwen; ende in het Nieuwe Testament onder de Vervullinghe vertoont in een verklaringe van de Openbaringe Joannis* (The Hague, 1700); Fred van Lieburg, 'De Redelijke godsdienst van Wilhelmus à Brakel,' in: *Boekenwijsheid: Drie eeuwen kennis en cultuur in 30 bijzondere boeken. Opstellen bij de voltooiing van de Short-Title Catalogue, Netherlands*, ed. Jan Bos and Erik Geleijns (Zutphen, 2009), pp. 186–94.

he made frequent references to the discoveries of the current natural sciences and information on exotic peoples and their fascinating customs and religions.

Alongside the more traditional devotional work, the book market, by the end of the seventeenth century, provided interested lay readers with a wide variety of books in the vernacular that informed them about areas of theology that had exclusively been the domain of academically trained scholars. With his *Regtsinnige harp-stoffe*, Duijkerius seamlessly fit the vogue for catechesis and the lay theology of his era. Framing catechetical instruction within the format of a songbook, another hugely popular literary genre, Duijkerius promised to make learning one's catechism both easy and pleasant. Besides the Heidelberg Catechism, it offered additional material for studious and godly readers. He profiled himself as an active member of a 'minor clergy,' as a schoolmaster and perhaps also a teacher of catechism, with the full support of the formal ministry.

## 2 A Budding Lay Intellectual

After the *Regtsinnige harp-stoffe* Duijkerius branched out. His second book was again a textbook, this time on the history of the Church. Modestly the title announces the work to be a *Korte verhandeling der algemeyne kerkelyke geschiedenissen* [Short treatise on the general history of the Church]. It is, however, a fairly extensive work, published in two volumes in 1686. It covers the period from the ascension of Christ to his own time.<sup>23</sup> In the preface Duijkerius calls knowledge of history a gift of God, in which mankind can discern, as in a mirror, God's providential government of his Church. He even regards Church history as "almost a third source of Revelation, after the Bible and Nature." Moreover, he praises knowledge of history as being very useful for anyone preparing for a career in government or public administration, as well as for philosophers and poets. Its literary form—a presentation of the subject matter in a series of dialogues between a father and his son—suggests a didactic purpose. The book was based on a wide variety of historical works from Eusebius of Caesarea to books of martyrs and Alexander Ross's *Pansebeia, or a View of All Religions in the World*, all obtainable in Dutch. It presents the history of the Church as a succession of challenges to true Christianity that have been

23 Johannes Duijkerius, *Korte verhandeling der algemeyne kerkelyke geschiedenissen, beginnende van Jesu Christi hemelvaart en eyndigende op 't jaar 1686, waerin beknoptelyk werd voorgesteld het voorgevallene van jaar tot jaar in de Kerke Gods over den gantschen aardbo-dem* (1686; repr. Amsterdam, 1688).

overcome in due time. The Papal Monarchy had been one such challenge, as well as Arminianism.

The book also engaged with the challenges of the present. It described, at some length, the recent conflicts over the admissibility of Cartesian philosophy and the ‘fraternal strife’ between Voetians and Cocceians in the Republic. It concluded by stating that the time of writing polemics had abated, thanks to the level-headed reception of the innovative Cocceian theology by co-religionists abroad and the formal decision to maintain fraternal unity in the Reformed church of Amsterdam. This refers to the situation ten years earlier. In the 1670s tensions over Cocceianism had reached dangerous levels in the Reformed Church. The Synod of Julich in the Rhineland had sent a letter of warning and had urged reconciliation. The theology of both parties conformed to the tenets of the faith contained in the Formularies of Unity: the Dutch Confession, the Heidelberg Catechism, and the Canons of the Synod of Dordrecht. They should tolerate differences of interpretation that left these foundational doctrines untouched. The Prince of Orange had called for unity and concord, and in the synods of Zuid- and Noord-Holland *commissarissen politiek* (representatives of the political authorities) had insisted on compliance with these pious wishes. Thereupon the synods had agreed on a series of pacificatory articles.<sup>24</sup> The Amsterdam consistory had been the first to act on these decisions when they put forth a resolution to exactly balance the parties in its consistory by appointing Voetian and Cocceian ministers in equal numbers.

The then minister of Den Helder and Huisduinen, Salomon van Til, who had mapped out the grounds for accommodation in his book *Salems Vrede* [The Peace of Jerusalem] (1678), published both the resolution aiming for mutual toleration of the Amsterdam consistory and the extensive letter of Julich to the Dutch churches.<sup>25</sup> Duijkerius's *Korte Verhandeling* implicitly refers to *Salems Vrede* and testifies to what appears to have been a growing weariness of strife and a desire to overcome the theological infighting. Duijkerius dedicated his own work to his patrons, the Amsterdam ministers Petrus Schaak, Joannes Reeland, Balthasar Bekker—author of a dedicatory poem in Van Til's *Salems*

24 Resolutions of the Synod of Zuid-Holland, held in Woerden 1674, §16, synod held in Leerdam 1675, §24, synod held in Dordrecht 1676, §31, Delft 1677, §32, Knuttel, *Acta* (see above, n. 12), 5, 57–8, 101–4, 151–3, 197.

25 *Salems Vrede, in Liefde, Trouw en Waerheyd behartigt. Waer in de Vrede-weg tot beslissing der Hedendaagsche Kerk-geschillen werd afgebakent, der Broederen eens-gesintheyd in 't noodige vertoont, de weg om in 't overige tot een verstand te komen, bereyd, en de redenen tot voortsetting van soo heylsamen wit met alle beweginge werden aangebonden* 2nd ed. (Dordrecht, 1687), repr. 1698 and 1730. The letter of the Synod of Julich is included in full, pp. 152–88. *Salems Vrede*, like Hoornbeeck's *Tractaat van Catechisatie*, follows up on dictates from the political authorities, and offers an underpinning for the desired course of action in the vernacular, accessible to theologians and laypersons alike.

*Vrede*—and Adrianus van Wesel, as well as Henricus van Wesel, minister of Bovenkarspel, and the Utrecht schoolmaster, publisher, and author of school-books Simon de Vries. In the preface he announces a soon-to-be-published sequel to the history of the entire world since Creation, within and outside the Church. He may have collected notes for such a book, but in any case he never finished it.

Whether he assigned the *Korte Verhandeling* to his pupils is impossible to verify. History and morality were appropriate subjects for older children, so perhaps Duijkerius taught children of relatively well-heeled parents, who could afford to keep their sons and daughters in school for several years and who could pay for lessons beyond the most basic skills. In a sense, *Korte Verhandeling* presents itself as a rival and successor to the very popular history book *Spieghel der jevght* [Mirror for Youth] (1614). This book related the struggle of the valiant Dutch against the tyranny of Catholic Spain. Later editions added the bloody persecution of the Waldensians of Piedmont in 1656 and the cruelties committed by the French armies in the Year of Disaster 1672. Duijkerius's book both takes a longer view and brings its readers up to speed on the more recent developments, especially the debates on Cartesian philosophy. He endorses the pacification of the controversies, which at the time was seen as a victory for the Cartesians and Cocceians. Again, he puts the Bible, the book of nature, and history side by side as sources of revelation. *Korte Verhandeling* was reprinted once, testifying to a modest success.

In 1687 he published a smaller but still substantial book, in yet another genre: *De Geopende Deure tot de Heylige Godgeleerdheyd* [The Door to Sacred Theology Opened].<sup>26</sup> This was a reaction to the works of the merchant in leather goods and lay philosopher Willem Deurhoff. Rather than offering a full refutation, Duijkerius attempts to unveil Deurhoff as a dangerous Spinozist—the *geopende deure* in the title seems to be a pun on Deurhoff's name and Duijkerius's intention of exposing him. After a general lambasting of the frivolous philosophers who dared to attack all that was holy in his time, referring obliquely to Adriaan Koerbagh, Spinoza, and Lambertus van Velthuysen, Duijkerius discusses three themes in which Deurhoff's work impinged on Christian theology: divine Providence, the Bible as revelation, and the moment when the unborn child receives a soul. In an orderly, somewhat scholastic fashion, he demonstrates how Deurhoff's ideas contradicted Reformed doctrine. In the margin of his text he carefully notes references to the places where the

26 Johannes Duijkerius, *De Geopende Deure tot de Heylige Godgeleerdheyd. In zig behelzende een grondige Verhandeling van Over-Natuurkundige Gedagten, afgeleyd door zuyvere Reedeneeringen, van het ingeschaapen Denkbeeld, teegen W. Deurhoffz Beginselfen van Waarheyd en Deugd. En Voorleeringe tot den H. Godgeleerdheyd* (Amsterdam, 1687).

statements he discussed were to be found in Deurhoff's works. In the case of the ensoulment of the unborn child he even proposes a theory of his own, refuting not only Deurhoff but also Antonie van Leeuwenhoek.

Deurhoff had denied that God bestowed each human individual a soul, either from a host of souls created before time or at each individual conception. In his view to do so would detract from God's ineffability. Instead, Deurhoff argued that both body and soul were products of human procreation. In his refutation, Duijkerius points out that this view contradicts both Scripture and reason, and embarked on a review of current theories on the technicalities of fertilization. Van Leeuwenhoek had shown that the semen of both humans and cod contained a very large number of microscopically small but very agile, eel-like creatures (*dierkens*), but his contention that these already contained all the elements of man or fish, as was the case with willowseed, was thereby not proved. How could these little eels grow into human shape? Was it not much more probable that the little eels were ingested with food and ended up in semen through the stomach and the bloodstream? If the little eels were really miniature human beings—that is, beings with both bodies and souls—why would God allow such a multitude of little souls to perish? Would that not make God a Moloch? Trees might disperse many seeds that never grew into new trees, but trees and plants generally had been created to serve humans and animals as food or food sources, so there was no reason to equate vegetative and animal procreative processes. And if souls were the product of procreation, how could they be immortal? Duijkerius also discussed and rejected the alternative theory of procreation put forth by Dionisius van der Sterre in his *Van de Teeling* [On Procreation] (1682), and defended the traditional view that the first observable movements of the human foetus in the maternal womb indicate the moment when it receives its soul. From that moment onward it is a creature endowed with reason.<sup>27</sup> Here again, he gives accurate references to the publications of Van Leeuwenhoek and Van der Sterre.

Deurhoff's works, although they gained a reputation of being eccentric and impenetrable, made an extraordinary impression. He attracted academic and lay admirers alike. He emphatically cast himself as a philosopher, arguing strictly from reason in a Cartesian fashion. His ideas on God, man, and matter are of a decidedly deterministic bent, although it is hard to say whether

27 Duijkerius, *De Geoopende Deure* (see above, n. 26), pp. 173–203; cf. the well-known image of the homunculus in the human sperm cell in Nicolas Hartsoeker, *Essay de Dioptrique* (Paris, 1694), p. 230. The tract of Van der Sterre is part of his *Voorstelling van de noodzakelijkheid der Keyserlijke Sneeuw. Daar neven de verhandelinge van de Teeling en Baaring. Briefswijs opgedragen aan den onvermoeiden Genees-Heer Cornelius's Gravesande* (Leiden, 1682).

they really add up to Spinozism.<sup>28</sup> At first sight they certainly suggest that a decent religion can be founded on natural theology alone. Yet the ministers kept aloof, leaving the schoolmaster Duijkerius to come forward as the first combatant who dared to refute him. His *De Geopende Deure* was again dedicated to an Amsterdam minister, this time Wilhelmus Anslaer, a prominent Cocceian and son-in-law to Johannes Cocceius. Duijkerius may actually have been the ministers' cat's-paw, to sound out where the slippery Deurhoff might be vulnerable without risking their own reputations in a fight against a vociferous, well-connected opponent. Indeed, Deurhoff hit back hard. He forcefully refuted Duijkerius, insisting that his books were based exclusively on human reason and never on the Bible. In no way, therefore, had he trespassed on the prerogatives of theology. On the contrary, he had always acknowledged the necessity of Christian revelation for salvation and merely presented his work as a philosophical *prolegomena* to theology. Moreover, he slighted Duijkerius as a theological dilettante, who claimed to aspire to the ministry but would have to work long and hard ever to be accepted into it.<sup>29</sup>

There are several instances where the Amsterdam ministers used theologically educated laymen to speak up against opponents they were loath to handle themselves. In 1688 they again recruited Duijkerius, this time to write a refutation of millenarian speculation in order to bring to his senses Coenraad van Beuningen, one of the Amsterdam burgomasters, who had ruined himself in the pursuit of prophets and prophecies and was generally considered delusional. This work does not survive, nor did it save Van Beuningen.<sup>30</sup> In 1693 Balthasar Bekker delegated the answer to Johannes van der Waeyen's refutation of his *De betoverde weereld* to two anonymous but theologically educated laymen. In his preface to these lay assistants' book Bekker sang the praises of such 'Beroans,' who could read the Bible independently, for their ability to give witness to and defend the faith, echoing the advocates of a 'Bohemian style' policy of advanced catechization. He also suggested that he had not wanted

28 There are no specialized studies on Deurhoff. For a short overview of his main ideas see C. Louise Thijssen-Schoute, *Nederlands Cartesianisme* (Amsterdam, 1954), pp. 212–23; and Wiep van Bunge, 'Deurhoff, Willem,' in: *Biografisch Lexicon voor de Geschiedenis van het Nederlandse Protestantisme*, ed. D. Nauta and J. van den Berg, 6 vols. (Kampen, 1978–2006) [hereafter *BLGPN*], 4: 116–7. On his influence: Wielema, *The March of the Libertines* (see above, n. 1), pp. 133–61.

29 Willem Deurhoff, *Overtuigende kracht der Waarheid, of Verantwoording voor de Beginzelen van Waarheid en Deuchd, en Voorleeringen van de Heilige Godgeleerdheid. Waarin die twee verhandelingen teegens de lasteringen van J. Duikerius verdedigd, en van de aangewreeven smette gezuiverd worden* (Amsterdam, 1688). Dedicated to the Amsterdam ministers Balthasar Bekker and Johannes Dooreslaer.

30 Van Bunge, 'Philopater' (see above, n. 1), 14.

to write against Van der Waeyen himself because he considered it unseemly to engage in public discussion with a man who had been his enemy during an earlier stage of his career. His endorsement of his lay helpers' probity was doubtless meant to slight Van der Waeyen's professorial status.<sup>31</sup> In the same vein, having Duijkerius attack Deurhoff suggests that the ministers considered it beneath them to start a debate with a self-styled philosopher without academic credentials. It is, however, possible that the Amsterdam ministers were divided over the merits or demerits of Deurhoff's ideas: the latter dedicated his refutation of Duijkerius to the ministers Balthasar Bekker and Johannes van Doeslaar, which may well imply that he knew them to be sympathetic to his line of reasoning.

### 3 *Proponent, Novelist, and Public Schoolmaster*

A few years later Duijkerius sought official recognition for his efforts. As Deurhoff had written in 1688, he had indeed studied theology, albeit not at one of the universities or Illustrious Schools. The Synod of Dordrecht had allowed the ordination of *Duytsche clercken*: men who were literate but not Latinate and had studied biblical languages, exegesis, and theology under the tutelage of a classis or of individual ministers.<sup>32</sup> Over the seventeenth century the course of study for the ministry had become increasingly selective, and academic study had become a formal requirement—everywhere except in the classis Groningen. Armed with letters of recommendation from the Amsterdam ministry that he had so faithfully served over the previous few years, Duijkerius went to Groningen and requested the ecclesiastical examination that promoted one to the status of *proponent*, or candidate for the ministry. He passed

31 Balthasar Bekker, ed., *De Leeraar van de Hoge School door Voedsterlingen van de kerk ondersocht en wederleid. Zijnde aanmerkingen van ongestudeerde Personen op het Boek van den Professor Van der Waeyen tegen de Betoverde Weereld van B. Bekker uitgegeven* (Amsterdam, 1694). One of these men was later identified as the Lutheran Zacharias Webber: see W. P. C. Knuttel, *Balthasar Bekker: De bestrijder van het bijgeloof* (The Hague, 1906), pp. 257–8. The inhabitants of Beroa are praised for their open-minded and critical Bible study, Acts 17,10–15. It was not unusual for participants in an extended polemic to delegate part of the work to others; see Martin Gierl, *Pietismus und Aufklärung: Theologische Polemik und die Kommunikationsreform der Wissenschaft am Ende des 17. Jahrhunderts* (Göttingen, 1997), pp. 177–83.

32 *Handelingen des Nationalen Synodi (...) gemeynelyck genaemt Post-Acta, ofte Nae-Handelingen* ('s-Gravenhage, 1669), Session 159, art. IV, p. 10.

and was admitted.<sup>33</sup> A few months later he requested registration as a 'recommended candidate' in the classis Amsterdam. This registration licensed a candidate to preach publicly, and thus to advertise his abilities in the hope of attracting patronage and getting a call in the churches under the classis of his choice. The procedure again included an exam, which Duijkerius again passed satisfactorily. He requested a recommendation not for work in a congregation but for one of the churches 'abroad.' The classis Amsterdam was the main provider of ministers for the churches in the East and West Indies.<sup>34</sup>

So far, his studies had made Duijkerius a very successful product of the sort of lay theological education that was advocated by prominent Reformed ministers in the middle of the seventeenth century. As schoolmaster he was a member of the 'minor clergy,' and with the apparent support of tutors and supporters among the Amsterdam ministers he had risen to be a candidate for the ministry itself. His studies and his personal acquaintance with prominent ministers, however, had made him a critic of the rivalry between the theological schools. This had already been apparent in his *Korte Verhandeling*. Duijkerius expanded upon the growing disgust with the *rabies theologorum* in his novel *Het Leven van Philopater* [The Life of Philopater], published anonymously in 1691. He may have been the author of a much earlier, also anonymously published, satirical novella, *Verhael, van een wonderlijck Gesicht* [Recounting of a miraculous vision] (1682). This novella also poked fun at the controversies between Voetians and Cocceians, then raging in Friesland, and extolled the use of human reason as instrumental for attaining true religion. It does show similarities with *Het Leven van Philopater*. In both books the characters are barely veiled impersonations of existing contemporary figures, both ridicule extremes, and both end with a resounding plea for a reasonable religion, presented by a learned and well-spoken, yet modest *proponent*. Rather chaotic and devoid of literary merit, *Verhael*, whether by Duijkerius or not, is clearly the work of a beginner. If he is the author, this would also suggest that he originally came from Friesland.<sup>35</sup>

33 Acta classis Groningen, Groninger Archieven, Archive classis Groningen, inv. nr. 1, March 11, 1690.

34 Acta classis Amsterdam, Stadsarchief Amsterdam (SAA), Archive classis Amsterdam, inv. nr. 8, July 3, 1690. In 1689 a Johannes Duijkerius asked the classis Utrecht for financial support in preparing himself for work in the mission in the East Indies, Acta classis Utrecht, Het Utrechts Archief, Archive classis Utrecht, inv. nr. 6, October 29–30, 1689, §§14, 16, August 12–13, 1690, §11. The classis gave him 10 guilders. This may be 'our' Duijkerius, on his way to Groningen.

35 *Verhael, van een wonderlijck Gesicht, dat eenige dagen geleden een Fijn-man gehadt heeft, meynende Christus met sijn Apostelen en veele Engelen en Zielen op een Olijf-Berg gesien te hebben, rakende Cocceanerye, Cartesianerye, en in 't besonder dontrouw van de Classis van*

*Het Leven van Philopater* is, on the contrary, a well-executed and hilarious *roman à clef*, peopled by disguised and sometimes caricaturally distorted contemporary figures, that recounts a young man's quest for true piety. Its hero, raised by doting parents, first buries himself in the theological studies of a Puritan bent, and thereby develops an ascetic melancholy that almost carries him to an early grave. Rescued from his immoderate zeal by a level-headed Reformed minister, he radically redirects his interests. Whereas the description of the religiosity of his youth presents an extreme version of Voetian precisianism, in this second phase Philopater is made into the caricature of a Cocceian exegete and millenarian, scouring the Bible for prophecies. Eventually, however, he comes to the realization that true religion is not found by following the lead of the often pedantic and vain schoolmen. The book begins with a eulogy for Balthasar Bekker, who had advocated a reading of the Bible free of preconceived notions derived from medieval and pagan superstitions. It ends with the good advice of 'a *proponent* from Franeker' to the tormented Philopater to do exactly that. '*Proponent* from Franeker' should probably be read as a veiled reference to Bekker. Johannes van der Waeyen, in his refutation of Bekker, had called him an 'alumnus of Franeker', much to Bekker's indignation—he had studied in Groningen and saw this as a denigration of his doctoral degree from Franeker. Bekker also kept aloof from the rival schools, and had written a dedicatory poem to Van Til's *Salems Vrede*.<sup>36</sup> The book ends with the liberation of Philopater from the prejudices of theological systems. (Fig. 11.3)

Duijkerius's new status as *proponent* did not lead to an ecclesiastical appointment, but it immediately increased his market value as a schoolmaster. In 1692 he applied for the post of schoolmaster to the girls in the *Aalmoezeniersweeshuis*, the municipal orphanage for children of non-citizen birth. He was by far the most qualified candidate and the fact that his wife, Janneke, was also literate counted in his favor. The trustees of orphanages preferred to appoint couples. The schoolmaster's wife often served as general manager over the orphanage household (*binnenmoeder*), while the schoolmaster could be asked to keep the accounts and discipline the children, so that the couple was cast in the role of surrogate parents to its artificial family.<sup>37</sup> We do

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*Seven-Wouden* (s.l., [1682]). Authorship has been ascribed to both Duijkerius and Cornelis Bontekoe.

36 Maréchal, *Johannes Duijkerius* (see above, n. 1), p. 114, proposes identifying the *proponent* from Franeker as the Cartesian *proponent* Gijsbert Wessel Duker. The Spinozism that Van Bunge, 'Philopater' (see above, n. 1), pp. 13–4, reads into the advice the *proponent* gives Philopater and his friend may be overstated.

37 Resolutions of the Trustees, SAA, Archief van de Regenten van het Aalmoezeniersweeshuis, inv. nr. 29, fol. 118rv (May 23, 1692). On orphanage personnel: S. Groenveld et al., *Wezen en boefjes. Zes eeuwen zorg in wees- en kinderhuizen* (Hilversum, 1997), pp. 99–111.



FIGURE 11.3

Two sisters. De Hooghe represented Voetian and Cocceian piety as two calm ladies, encouraging each other in a sisterly way. Detail H–I from *Van de Gereformeerde Godsdienst* [On Reformed Religion], plate 61, in: Romeyn de Hooghe, *Hieroglyphica* (Amsterdam, 1735). Private collection

not know what Duijkerius and Janneke earned, but the combined salary for the schoolmaster and his wife in the boys' wing of the *Aalmoezeniersweeshuis* at this time was 700 guilders. The personnel of the girls' wing were usually paid somewhat less. Even so, Duijkerius's income in his new position was about equal to that of a village minister in Holland.<sup>38</sup> During their time in office the couple lived on the premises, along with Mara, their one surviving daughter.<sup>39</sup>

Although the *Aalmoezeniersweeshuis* housed a large number of children, Duijkerius's work apparently still left him time to write. In 1693 a new book of his was published under the title *Voorbeeldzels der oude wyzen* [Moral examples from ancient sages]. It proudly proclaimed his status as candidate for the ministry on its title-page and was dedicated to the board of trustees

38 List of salaries for the various classes of personnel for the year 1667. The schoolmaster for the girls then earned 350 guilders over and above bed and board, the schoolmaster for the boys 450 guilders, whereas several types of *binnenmoeder* earned salaries ranging from 260 to 500 guilders, Resolutions of the Trustees, SAA, Archief van de Regenten van het Aalmoezeniersweeshuis, inv. nr. 29, fol. 31rv (January 1st, 1667). In 1682 the combined salary of the schoolmaster of the boys' wing and his wife was raised from 600 to 700 guilders, *ibid.* fol. 38r. The guaranteed minimum salary of a minister in a village in Holland at that time was 650 guilders; in other provinces this minimum was lower.

39 An unnamed child of 'Joannes Duijkeris' was buried on May 29, 1685. The records of the Reformed Church mention the baptisms of Joanna (14-7-1686), another Joanna (3-8-1687), Mara (4-11-1688), and Alida Hillegonda (10-4-1691). Electronic database of burial and baptismal records on the website of SAA.

of the orphanage. The book was an expanded version of the eponymous work by the humanist engraver, publisher, and author Zacharias Heyns, which in turn was a very free adaptation of translations from an medieval Sanskrit book of virtues that had become popular in Europe through Arabic translations.<sup>40</sup> (Fig. 11.4) *Voorbeeldzels der oude wyzen* may have been used as reading material for the orphan girls, but it also sold well. It was reprinted several times up through 1765.

Public-office appointments were usually for life. Unfortunately for Duijkerius, Janneke died in 1694, and since they had been hired as a couple he had to leave the orphanage. For some time he courted the daughter of the woman who kept the orphan girls' heads free of lice (*kammoeder*), coming in evenings to smoke tobacco with her and sometimes staying the night. The *regentessen*, the female trustees who administered the girls' wing, allowed their former schoolmaster's comings and goings until the male *regenten* forbade the doorkeepers to let him in, afraid that such hanky-panky would reflect badly on the institution.<sup>41</sup>

#### 4 Decline and Fall

Duijkerius seems to have returned to his former way of life as an independent schoolmaster and author. The last work to appear under his name, in 1696, was a school textbook, *Schouburgh der Needer-Duytsche Letter, Spel- en Leeskonst* [Theatre of the Art of Writing, Spelling and Reading in Dutch]. It was presented as the first installment of a complete course in elementary and more advanced education, addressing not only the finer points of reading and writing but also theology, history and antiquities, geography, chronology, astronomy, physics, mathematics, mechanics, arithmetic, algebra, and even acupuncture. Only the *Letter, Spel- and Leeskonst* appeared in print, with a privilege that protected its copyright. Duijkerius sold the privilege to the printer, a fellow schoolmaster.<sup>42</sup> A later, hostile pamphlet written by the medical doctor J. Rodenpoort

40 Joannes Duikerius, *Voorbeeldzels der oude wyzen, waar in op een Zinryke voet, en bevalige zwier, de Menschelyke Hartstogten, en daar uit ryzende deugden en gebreken, behandeld werden. Uit meest alle de Oostersche, Grieksche en Romeinsche Taalen vergaderd* (Amsterdam, 1693).

41 Resolutions of the Trustees, SAA, Archief van de Regenten van het Aalmoezeniersweeshuis, inv. nr. 30, p. 61, 62, 79 (January 21, 28, August 15, 1695).

42 Johannes Duijkerius, *Schouburgh der Needer-Duytsche Letter, Spel- en Leeskonst. Geschied na de natuur der Taal, Kracht der Woorden, en Uytspraaken. Zeer dienstig om op Vaste*



FIGURE 11.4 The title print for Joannes Duikerius, *Voorbeeldzels der oude Wyzen* (Amsterdam, 1693) promises animal fables and wisdom from the ancient Orient. The Hague, Koninklijke Bibliotheek, call nr 25 C 13

suggested that Duijkerius indeed made a living by teaching children, curiously enough adding that he also made lenses, through which—for a fee—he let his pupils look at lice and fleas.<sup>43</sup> This unexpected picture of the use of naturalistic observations in early modern elementary education is not corroborated elsewhere. It may have been a cynical sneer, referring both to the arguments from microscopy in his much-maligned refutation of Deurhoff, his rumored adherence to the ideas of that other lens-grinder Spinoza, and to the lowly status of his current clientèle. Yet it would actually nicely fit Duijkerius's profile as a widely read lay intellectual and dedicated schoolmaster, who all his working life had been engaged in introducing youngsters to the latest intellectual developments.

A year later, in 1697, Duijkerius married Elisabeth Schouten, with whom he fathered a son, Johannes. This second marriage was not, however, a happy one. The couple was given to fighting and soon separated. Duijkerius, who was seen in lowly neighborhoods on the remotest outskirts of the city, was now drinking heavily. *Vervolg van 't Leven van Philopater* [Sequel to the Life of Philopater] appeared in 1697 as well, again an anonymous publication. Whereas the first Philopater novel had been well received, this sequel was immediately identified as barely veiled Spinozist propaganda. When the Amsterdam authorities initiated a search for the author, several witnesses testified that Duijkerius had not only acknowledged authorship of *Het leven van Philopater* but had also boasted that a sequel was ready for the press. Balthasar Bekker, a former patron of Duijkerius, was one of these witnesses. Perhaps they had fallen out, or else Bekker distanced himself from his former client and admirer at this moment to protect his own reputation.

The pamphlet by Rodenpoort gave a very unfavorable account of Duijkerius as the author of both Philopater novels. He ridiculed Duijkerius as a social upstart, a grubby schoolmaster who had managed to achieve *proponent* status but had since been brought low, a poor alcoholic who could not quite make ends meet by teaching poor children, who borrowed heavily from his friends and did not shrink from occasional embezzlement. Rodenpoort suggested that his failure to gain church employment had caused resentment against the ministers, which in turn had inspired his Spinozism and his anticlerical

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*gronden alle Letteren, tot Lettergreepen (of Sillaben) en de Sillaben tot Woorden zaamen te voegen. Opgesteld, soo voor Bejaarde, als Jonge Persoonen, om op de Schoole te gebruyken* (Amsterdam, 1696).

43 J. Rodenpoort, *Gedragh en Naam des Schryvers, van Philopater. Stukx wijze geschetst* ('s-Hertogenbosch, s.a.).

novels—an image that would be repeated in later historiography.<sup>44</sup> The consistory summoned Duijkerius, but he emphatically denied authorship of *Vervolg* and called those who had testified against him liars. The consistory placed him under censure—for drinking and living apart from his wife, but not for Spinozism. The classis confirmed this censure, and also deprived him of his license to preach.<sup>45</sup> Under secular law, authors of forbidden books could not be prosecuted, and there seems to have been no further inquiries. The publisher of *Vervolg*, Arent Wolsgrijn, denied knowledge of the author or authors and shouldered the burden of the heavy penalty alone.<sup>46</sup>

From that moment forward, Duijkerius vanishes from the records. His situation cannot have been quite as bad as Rodenpoort painted it. To all appearances he was able to support not only himself but also his daughter Mara. He died in 1702, leaving her no assets but no debts or pawned goods either. The girl, now thirteen years old, had been living with her maternal grandparents since the death of her mother. She had not yet learned a trade. Two days after her father was buried, she was accepted into the *Diaconieweeshuis*, the orphanage for children of Reformed Church members. She was entitled to the support and schooling offered by the orphanage because she was now a full orphan and her father had been a full member of the Church.<sup>47</sup>

The hapless Duijkerius is usually considered to be a failed theologian, unable to gain a ministry because of a stutter, and the anticlerical and fully Spinozist author of both Philopater novels. His authorship of *Vervolg* seems to me open to doubt. If he even had a speech impediment, his Amsterdam patrons and the classes of Groningen and Amsterdam did not consider it so bad to be disqualifying for the ministry. His reputation as a miserable loser rests solely on the hostile testimonials of the enemies he made over the course of his career, notably because of his refutation of Deurhoff. This career becomes quite respectable if he is considered to be what he was: an ambitious schoolmaster and the author of a series of textbooks for older pupils; a product of and contributor to the theological education of the laity as advocated by

44 Rodenpoort, *Gedragh* (see above, n. 43). The successful surgeon Monnikhoff (1707–87) also left manuscript notes on Duijkerius, in a comparable vein: see Maréchal, *Johannes Duijkerius* (see above, n.1), p. 11. The latter was an admirer of Deurhoff, whose polemic against Duijkerius may have colored his account.

45 Minutes of the consistory, SAA, Archief kerkenraad, inv. nr. 16, January 23, February 6, 1698; inv. nr. 17, May 20, 27, April 10, 1698; Acta classis Amsterdam, SAA, Archief classis Amsterdam, inv. nr. 8, April 21, June 1st, 1698; Register of Interrogations, SAA, Archief van schout en schepenen, inv. nr. 345, pp. 214–215 (March 1, 1698).

46 Marechal, *Duijkerius* (see above, n. 1), pp. 32–4.

47 Inventories of Pupils' Assets, SAA, Archief van het Diaconieweeshuis, inv. nr. 495 (May 16, 1702). (Database at the website of SAA.).

prominent theologians at the time; a man who made it to the candidacy for the ministry without academic training, after the then-much-admired customs of the Bohemian Brethren; and a trained amanuensis for the established ministry in their refutation of the materialistic natural philosophy of Deurhoff and the chiliasm of Van Beuningen.

## 5 A Legacy of Sorts

The problems raised by Deurhoff's and other freethinkers' philosophical approaches toward theological matters forced Reformed theologians into a re-evaluation of natural theology. In a way, Duijkerius also contributed to this effort, which would eventually redirect Reformed theology and religious practice. Repeatedly, he used human reason as an independent source of true knowledge, alongside Scripture. A mature example of the growing appreciation of natural theology is offered in the later work of Salomon van Til. In 1702, despite a documented speech impediment, Van Til had risen from minister to professor of theology at the University of Leiden and was also serving as *regent* of the *Statencollege*, a boarding school for theology students.<sup>48</sup> He was a productive author and engaged extensively with the controversies of this time. His popular *Salems Vrede*, in which he had defused the tensions between the opposing theological schools and insisted on the necessity of uniting forces against the enemies of the Reformed faith, has been mentioned above. After Duijkerius, Van Til was the first theologian to refute Deurhoff: in 1698 he argued against the latter's interpretation of the trees of Paradise and the meaning of God's interdiction to Adam against eating the fruits of the Tree of Knowledge.<sup>49</sup> In 1704 he argued more systematically in his *Theologiae utriusque Compendium*.

48 On Van Til: J. van den Berg, 'Toch een wegbereider? Salomon van Til (1643–1713)', in: *Verlichte geesten: Een portrettengalerij voor Piet Buijnsters*, ed. Kees Fens (Amsterdam, 1996), pp. 107–18; idem, 'Til, Salomon van,' in: *BLGNP* (see above, n. 28), 4: 424–8; Ernestine G. E. van der Wall, 'Til, Salomon van (1643–1712)', in: *The Dictionary of Seventeenth and Eighteenth-Century Dutch Philosophers*, ed. Wiep van Bunge et al., 2 vols. (Bristol, 2003), 2: 981–3; Elsin Groenenboom-Draai, ed., *Oog om oog: De karaktermoord van Hoogstraten op de Dordtse coccejaanse predikant-theoloog Salomon van Til* (Zoeterwoude, 2013), pp. 91–156; Matthias Mangold, 'Salomon van Til (1643–1713): His Appropriation of Cartesian Tenets in His Compendium of Natural Theology,' *Church History and Religious Culture* 94 (2014), 337–57.

49 Salomon van Til, *Eerste Weerelds Op- en Onder-gang. Na Moses oogwit en beschrijving ontvouwt, betoogt en verdedigt. Sijnde een grondige verhandeling over de VIII. eerste Hoofdstucken van Moses I. Boek* (Dordrecht, 1698), pp. 71–4; cf. Willem Deurhoff, *Volslaagen Afhankelykheid aller Schepselen van de Eeuwige Oorzaak, beweerd teegen de uitvluchten*

This, his main work, was an innovative juxtaposition of two distinct parts: an essay on natural theology, followed by a second part on revealed theology. It was intended to provide students of theology, his pupils in the *Statencollege*, with ammunition in the defense of Reformed doctrine against atheists, Spinozists, and freethinkers. In the dedication of his work to the trustees of his university, Van Til argued that the conflation of philosophy and theology, out of which theology had been born, had led to empty rhetoric and vain contestation. He praised the States of Holland, which already in 1656 had ordered a strict separation between philosophy and theology. Yet some had indiscreetly made their own philosophies the interpreter of Scripture, while others, in their eagerness to philosophize, had at least neglected the arguments from Scripture, and eventually had come to scorn and despise the Bible. Here we may recognize the author of the *Philosophia S. Scripturae Interpres* and the likes of Deurhoff.

Van Til emphasized that reason and Scripture were independent sources of truth, and that both were valuable. Yet their respective results should always be compared and weighed. Whereas philosophers tended to come to a variety of conclusions, eventually Scripture was needed as an umpire, to determine the truth of the matter and to provide theological knowledge out of the reach of unaided reason. Consequently, in the first part, Van Til demonstrated how natural reason, rightly applied, inevitably leads to certainty with regard to the existence and properties of God, the need to love and adore him, the awareness of human insufficiency, and the necessity of a mediator to bring about a meaningful relationship between God and man. A short introduction to Cartesian philosophy served as *prolegomena* for this part. Unlike Deurhoff, Van Til not only praised Cartesian philosophy for gaining insight into the nature of God, man, and Creation, but also demonstrated, by means of Cartesian reasoning, how the truth of the Christian religion necessarily followed from this natural theology. In the second part, Van Til offered his readers a very schematic overview of Reformed theology, providing proof-texts for each point of doctrine. As *prolegomena* for this part he defined the terms ‘theology’ and ‘religion,’ and presented the Reformed views on the composition, dignity, and right use of Scripture.

In the *Compendium*, translated into Dutch shortly before Van Til’s death, he encouraged his students to examine the most authoritative theologians and, rather than follow one authority or another, to come to their own conclusions and arrive at an inner conviction of the truth of the basic teachings of the Reformed Church. For curious minds he added a survey of the main arguments against Papists, Lutherans, Mennonites, and Socinians. However, he strictly refrained from polemics against contemporary authors. He seems

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*van de Hoog-geleerde Heeren Paulus Buchius, Geneesheer, en Salomon van Til, Leeraar in de Kerk en Doorluchtige Schoole van Dordrecht* (Amsterdam, 1702), pp. 115–43.

to have expected his students to measure the teachings of atheists and free-thinkers against the standard repertoire of heresies, superstitions, and anti-christian maxims of the historical enemies of the Reformed faith. In the part on revealed religion he also argued for the use of reason and against implicit faith, the blind following of the authority of the Church, as a remnant of popery and unbecoming for true Protestants. Van Til extended the right to study and interpret Scripture first of all to the clergy, but no less to the common faithful. (Fig. 11.5) As we have seen, this was fully in line with the opinions of prominent theologians at the time, and probably reflected part of his biography: his father the distiller Johannes van Til had been promoted to the ministry as *Duytsche clerck*. It is not known whether Van Til authorized the translation of his *Compendium* himself, but it certainly was in the spirit of his views that not only students but also studious laypersons would profit from his teaching.<sup>50</sup>

Van Til, in separating theology and philosophy, followed in the footsteps of Cocceian theologians before him.<sup>51</sup> Here, however, he also created a division *within* theology, between natural theology—what humans could know about God from the observation of nature and the deductions of human reasoning—and revealed theology. Thereby he made the realm over which revelation was the ultimate arbiter even more circumscribed than his predecessors had, limiting it to the ‘mysteries of the faith’: those doctrines beyond the reach of human reason that taught God’s plan about salvation. He thus widened the space for not only the natural sciences but also an accommodation of biblical studies with secular philology and antiquarianism and of theology with reason and natural philosophy. In his biblical commentary on the gospel of Matthew, the fruit of catechetical exercises with his congregation in one of his earlier postings, he placed the biblical text squarely in the cultural world in which it was written. In another earlier work he had not hesitated to use scientific theories. Thus to explain the creation of light on the first day, before the creation of the Sun on the fourth in the account of Genesis 1, he offered his readers an up-to-date essay about the nature of light.<sup>52</sup>

With Deurhoff, he acknowledged that reason could yield true knowledge of God, Creation, and the nature of humankind, especially when using the

50 Salomon van Til, *Theologiae utriusque Compendium cum Naturalis quam Revelatae* (Leiden, 1704); idem, *Kortbondig Vertoog der beyder Godgeleerdheyd, zoo der Aangeborene als der Geopenbaarde*, trans. Antoni de Reus (Dordrecht, 1712).

51 Ernestine van der Wall, ‘De coccejaanse theoloog Petrus Allinga en het cartesianisme,’ in: *Een richtingensrijd in de Gereformeerde Kerk: Voetianen en Coccejanen 1650–1750*, ed. Frits Broeyer and Ernestine van der Wall (Zoetermeer, 1994), pp. 131–45, there 141–4.

52 Salomon van Til, *Het Euangelium des H. Apostels Matthaei* (Amsterdam, 1683), reprinted up through a 6th edition in 1726; idem, *Eerste Weerelds Op- en Onder-gang* (see above, n. 49), pp. 33–4.



FIGURE 11.5 The educated believer. She reads the Bible and other religious texts, and uses a touchstone to determine their value. Detail D from *Van het Verval tot Ketterij* [On Decline into Heresy], plate 39 in: Romeyn de Hooghe, *Hieroglyphica* (Amsterdam, 1735). Private collection

Cartesian method. He thus drew the teeth of libertines and freethinkers like Deurhoff by taking them at their word that they did not practice theology. At the same time, he undercut the pretensions of partisan theologians to exclusively represent the orthodox form of Reformed Protestantism by empowering the laity to study Scripture for themselves and put the systems of professional theologians to the test, advocating *libertas prophetandi* in all but the most narrowly circumscribed essentials. He could have referred here to another resolution of the States of Holland, the Resolution toward the Peace of the Church of 1694, which ordered theologians to focus on their pastoral offices only and to refrain from polemicizing outside the walls of the academy about topics not contained in the Formularies of Unity.<sup>53</sup>

53 Text of the edict and its acceptance by the Zuid-Holland synod and the corresponding synods in Knuttel, *Acta* (see above, n. 12), 3: 517–9 and 4: 35–42.

By the end of the seventeenth century the more ambitious students of theology, or those among them that could afford it, lingered in their theological studies beyond what was necessary to become ministers. They took the time to immerse themselves in philological studies as well as in the various theological systems, studied at several academies under representatives of different schools of thought, and in their later careers they eclectically combined these systems. Such men also kept abreast of developments outside the theological world, which were integrated into their published work and their teaching. Van Til was one such figure, but by no means the first or only one. Educated lay persons, like the schoolmaster Duijkerius, who had been stimulated to study Scripture themselves to arrive at a well-founded assurance of their professed faith immersed themselves just as easily in philosophy, philology, the study of history and antiquities, or the sciences, and eventually in theological speculation. This was the fertile soil in which Enlightened freethinking and a variety of separatist movements flourished.<sup>54</sup> Yet that was not the only way Enlightenment could go.

Theological schooling and vernacular theological literature remained in demand among laypersons who, like Duijkerius, never considered leaving the Reformed fold. As yet, not much work has been done on the market for books on vernacular theology in the eighteenth century. My impression is that whereas the seventeenth century saw the production of a richly varied genre of study aids on the catechism, the eighteenth century shows an even more diversified catechetical landscape. For youngsters, new companions to the Bible were developed. Yet another schoolmaster, Berend Hakvoort, pioneered the Bible for children, and picture bibles offered help in memorizing biblical texts and histories.<sup>55</sup> The primer by Abraham Hellenbroek came to dominate the market for those preparing for admission to full membership. For further study, volumes of sermons by popular ministers took up their place beside the more traditional companion volumes to the catechism. The sermons of Johannes van der Kemp on the catechism were repeatedly reprinted over the course of the century, as were those of Bernardus Smytegeld. The layman Bernardus Nieuwentijt created a defense of Reformed Christianity on the basis of the newest Newtonian natural-scientific insights in his *Het regt gebruik der wereldbeschouwingen* [The right use of philosophy] (1715) and *Gronden van zekerheid* [Foundations of certainty] (1720).<sup>56</sup> The minister and professor of theology Wilhelmus van

54 Wielema, *The March of the Libertines* (see above, n. 1).

55 Willem van der Meiden, *Zoo heerlijk eenvoudig: Geschiedenis van de kinderbijbel in Nederland* (Hilversum, 2009), pp. 46–86.

56 Rienk Vermij, *Secularisering en natuurwetenschap in de zeventiende en achttiende eeuw: Bernardus Nieuwentijt* (Amsterdam, 1991); idem, 'Nieuwentijt en de physico-theologie,' *Documentatieblad Werkgroep Achttiende Eeuw* 20 (1988), pp. 215–29.

Irhoven composed his *Gronden van het verzekerd Christendom* [Foundations of Christian certainty] (1730) in the form of questions and answers, on various topics concerning the religious life, spiritual growth, and assurance of faith, based on his catechism classes on these topics with his parishioners in Ede.<sup>57</sup>

The availability of vernacular literature, on theology and on secular subjects that could touch on theology, forced students of theology to lay a broad and solid groundwork of general knowledge during their stay at the university, and to keep themselves informed about recent developments once they were in office. One can see these new demands reflected in a handbook for the clerical profession like one such book by the minister Henricus Ravesteyn, *Nasireer Gods* [Nazirite of God]<sup>58</sup> and in a spectatorial critique like the *Zeedemeester der Kerkekyken* [Ecclesiastical Moralist].<sup>59</sup> Both the minister and the critic abhorred ministers who parroted the doctrinal system of their professors. Both demanded for prospective ministers an all-round education, not only in theology but also in the humanities and the sciences. The book trade supplied lay church members with an ever-growing supply of vernacular works, from historical-critical biblical commentary to physico-theology, as well as on history and the sciences, enabling them to judge the learning of their ministers. The latter had to be familiar with current developments in many fields to preserve their authority among the laity and, above all, to keep them on their toes in their studies, to develop independent theological positions for themselves, and to sustain a well-grounded inner conviction of the truth of what they preached.

## 6 Conclusion

The histories of Enlightened philosophy, the emerging natural sciences, and theology in the later seventeenth century were entangled and should not be studied separately.<sup>60</sup> Perhaps nowhere do they cross more clearly than in

57 Enlarged editions of this work were published in 1737 and 1744. Willem van Asselt, 'Irhoven, Wilhelmus van,' in: *BLGNP* (see above, n. 28), 4: 225–7.

58 Henricus Ravesteyn, *De Nasireer Gods tot den Heiligen Dienst toegerust, of Heilzame Raadgeving aan Studenten, proponenten, en Jonge Leraren, hoe zy in het Huis Gods met vrugt kunnen verkeeren* (Amsterdam, 1731), reprinted with several supplements in 1743 and 1765.

59 Philippus Aletophilus [= Philippus Ludovicus Stadius Muller], *De Zeedemeester der Kerkekyken, onderzoekende, op een vryen trant, waarom, onder een zoo groot aantal van Leeraaren inde Nederlandsche Kerke, hedensdaagsch zoo weinig de Waare Godsdienstigheid bloeiende bevonden, veel min eene algemeene Kerkevrede bevorderd wordt*, 2 vols. (Amsterdam, 1750–2).

60 'Entangled history' is usually seen as the study of the interrelationship between histories of the Western and non-Western worlds: Michael Werner and Bénédicte Zimmermann, 'Vergleich, Transfer, Verflechtung: Der Ansatz der Histoire croisée und die

the work of lay intellectuals like the schoolmaster Johannes Duijkerius. As a schoolmaster he was necessarily something of a generalist. In a competitive market he popularized new knowledge produced in a variety of fields, from theology and history to civic morality and the natural sciences. Confessional culture could and did intersect with the advances of humanist scholarship, the introduction of Cartesianism, and the emerging natural sciences. As a layman he worked closely with the Amsterdam ministers. The ministers and educated lay persons such as Duijkerius himself entered into the continuous discussions among philosophers and theologians, among political authorities and synods, among Voetians and Cocceians, innovators and traditionalists, proponents of orthodoxy (however defined) and freethinkers. The battle-lines are usually represented in a rather static way, pitting progressives against conservatives and the philosophers, freethinkers, and politicians against the theologians. Intellectual history often studies either philosophers or theologians, Voetians or (more sparingly) Cocceians, clergy or (seldom) laity. In practice, however, the parties in the debate cannot be cleanly separated. Moreover, arguments brought forward changed the minds of the discussants as well as the direction of the debates—in Reformed theology as well. The result was an Enlightened religious culture in which secular knowledge unproblematically complemented revealed truths, and in which theologians and laypersons were expected to form their personal convictions rather than follow the dictates of ecclesiastical authority.

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Herausforderung des Transnationalen,' *Geschichte und Gesellschaft* 28 (2002), 607–36; idem, 'Beyond Comparison: *Histoire Croisée* and the Challenge of Reflexivity,' *History and Theory* 45 (2006), 30–50.

# Warning against the Pietists: The World of Wilhelmus à Brakel

*Fred van Lieburg*

## Abstract

In 1700 the Reformed minister Wilhelmus à Brakel published a voluminous compendium of theology in the vernacular for a Dutch lay audience. The book immediately proved a best-seller. Still in print, it remains highly valued as a work of devotional literature among Dutch neo-calvinists. In the third edition (1707) the author added a new chapter, delineating Reformed orthodoxy against various forms of 'natural' religion. Brakel appears to have been very apprehensive of the developments in German Pietism. The genesis and content of the new chapter, warning his audience 'against Pietists, Quietists, and ... Spiritless Religion Under the Guise of Spirituality' show how a prominent minister like Brakel found himself moving the frontiers between Reformed orthodoxy and rationalism, reacting against some of the pietisms of his day, and evolving towards a 'new Protestantism.'

## 1 Between Reason and Piety

At the turn of the eighteenth century, Wilhelmus à Brakel (1635–1711), 'Minister of the Divine Word' in Rotterdam, published his *Λογικη λατρευια*, *dat is Redelyke godts-dienst* (Logikè Latreia, that is Reasonable Religion). The author could not have predicted that his voluminous work would become and remain a best-seller.<sup>1</sup> Although the title might suggest a commitment to contemporary rationalism, in reality it referred to the apostolic vocabulary of earliest Christianity (Paul's letter to the Romans, 12,1). In ecclesiastical historiography Brakel is associated with post-Reformation confessionalism or even early Pietism. As a

1 Wilhelmus à Brakel, *Logikè latreia, dat is Redelyke godts-dienst. In dewelke de Goddelijke Waarheden des Genaden-Verbondts worden verklaart, tegen allerleye partyen beschermt, ende tot de practijke aangedrongen. Als mede de Bedeelinghe des Verbondts ende Handelinghe Gods met sijne Kercke in het Oude Testament onder de Schaduwen; ende in het Nieuwe Testament onder de Vervullinghe vertoont in een verklaringe van de Openbaringe Joannis* (The Hague, 1700).

minister in the Dutch Reformed Church he was of impeccable Calvinist orthodoxy. Up through the present he has belonged to a canon of true and trusted 'old writers' from before the Enlightenment, highly valued among an orthodox Protestant readership.<sup>2</sup>

The full title of the book continues: *in which Divine Truthes concerning the Covenant of Grace are expounded, Defended against Opposing Parties, and their Practice Advocated, as well as The Administration of this Covenant in the Old and New Testaments*. An explanation of the Apocalypse of John was meant to demonstrate the administration of the covenant under the 'shadows' in the Old and the 'fulfilment' in the New Testaments. By dealing with this matter Brakel joined a debate in Dutch theology about Bible exegesis between the followers of Gisbertus Voetius (1589–1676) and Johannes Coccejus (1603–1669). Apparently he felt an urgency to contribute to this controversy in a fruitful way, and with an eye on the religious practice of common believers.<sup>3</sup> More relevant to the topic of this chapter, Brakel also entered into an emerging debate on the position of religion between reason and irrational 'enthusiasm,' a debate spurred on by the flowering of prophecy, religious revival, and radical spiritualism during and in the wake of the religious wars of the seventeenth century.

The influence of *Redelyke godts-dienst* was largely restricted to the Reformed tradition in the Netherlands.<sup>4</sup> A comparable measure of interest could have been expected in several parts of Germany. Calvinism had been established there in a number of cities and regions, while developments in theology and the church in the Dutch Republic were closely followed. A German translation of Brakel's work was published in 1714 by Johann Daniel Günst in Kassel. It was soon followed by a reprint, but then was almost forgotten.<sup>5</sup> *Redelyke godts-dienst* was well known among Dutch colonists in the Republic's overseas territories as long as the language of the mother country remained in use and

2 F. J. Los, *Wilhelmus à Brakel* (Leiden, 1892; reprint Leiden, 1991); Fred van Lieburg, 'De Redelijke godsdienst van Wilhelmus à Brakel' in: *Boekenwijsheid. Drie eeuwen kennis en cultuur in 30 bijzondere boeken. Opstellen bij de voltooiing van de Short-Title Catalogue*, Netherlands, ed. Jan Bos and Erik Geleijns (Zutphen, 2009), pp. 186–94.

3 F. G. M. Broeyer and E. G. E. van der Wall, eds., *Een richtingenstrijd in de Gereformeerde Kerk: Voetianen en coccejanen 1650–1750* (Zoetermeer, 1994); Joris van Eijnatten, *Liberty and Concord in the United Provinces: Religious Toleration and the Public in the Eighteenth-Century Netherlands* (Leiden, 2003).

4 See Fred van Lieburg, 'Reformed Doctrine and Pietist Conversion: The Historical Interplay of Theology, Communication and Experience,' in: *Paradigms, Poetics and Politics of Conversion*, ed. Jan N. Bremmer, Wout J. van Bekkum, and Arie L. Molendijk (Leuven, 2006), pp. 133–48.

5 Wilhelm van Brakel, *Logikè latreia, das ist Vernünfftiger Gottesdienst*, trans. J. Quitter (Kassel, 1714; 2nd ed., Frankfurt/Leipzig, 1717).

its traditions were honoured. However, an initiative to have it translated for Reformed readers in North America around 1800 failed.<sup>6</sup>

Even disregarding its reception history, Brakel's handbook is an important research case for identifying religious changes around 1700. Beginning with its third edition in 1707, the work contained an intriguing new chapter that has never been published separately. It bears the title "Waarschouwende Bestiering tegen de Piëtisten, Quiëtisten, en dergelijke afdwalenden tot eenen natuurlijken en geesteloozen godsdienst, onder de gedaante van Geestelijkheid" (A Warning Exhortation Against Pietists, Quietists, and All Who in a Similar Manner Have Deviated to a Natural and Spiritless Religion Under the Guise of Spirituality).<sup>7</sup>

The following pages will give Brakel's "warning guide" against contemporary spirituality the attention that has never been paid to it in scholarly historiography, though it certainly deserves such consideration, especially in the present volume.<sup>8</sup> Whom did Brakel actually want to unmask? What type of new religiosity did he perceive? Which meaning may be given to this text, as it is, with hindsight, Brakel's swan song? This case study is based upon earlier biographical and contextual research. In addition, it is profitable to examine a handwritten letter by Brakel to August Hermann Francke (1663–1727), a founding father of German Pietism, discovered by Jan van de Kamp in the archives of the Franckesche Stiftungen in Halle.<sup>9</sup>

6 The Dutch Reformed Church in New York wanted to have it translated around 1800, but eventually the job was done by B. Elshout, resulting in the publication of *The Christian's Reasonable Service*, 4 vols. (Morgan, Pa., 1992–5). See for its influence in South Africa: A. Raath, 'The Dutch Second Reformation on the Frontier: Wilhelmus à Brakel (1635–1711) and the Relationship between the Church and Political Authorities in the Transvaal Settlements in South Africa (1845–1860),' *Studia Historiae Ecclesiasticae* 28 (2002), 76–119.

7 'Waarschouwende Bestiering tegen de Piëtisten, Quiëtisten, en dergelijke afdwalenden tot eenen natuurlijken en geesteloozen godsdienst, onder de gedaante van Geestelijkheid,' in: Wilhelmus à Brakel: *Redelijke Godsdienst* (3rd ed., Rotterdam, 1707), chapter 43, pp. 1103–58. No separate editions have been found.

8 Some surveys were offered in religious magazines in order to legitimate warnings against manifestations of present-day evangelicalism in Reformed denominations, for example W. van 't Spijker, 'W. a Brakel en de Piëtisten,' *De Wekker* 72, nos. 7–13 (1962–3); A. de Reuver, 'Wilhelmus à Brakel en het Piëtisme,' *De Waarheidsvriend* 27 November and 4 December 1992; L. M. P. Scholten, 'Terzijde: evangelisch,' *De Wachter Sions*, 29 January–12 March 1998. Cf. A. de Reuver, 'Wilhelmus à Brakel en het Piëtisme,' *Documentatieblad Nadere Reformatie* 22 (1998), 82–90.

9 J. van de Kamp et al., "'Een soort nieuw Licht en leven': Een onbekende brief van Wilhelmus à Brakel aan August Hermann Francke over piëtisme en mystiek,' *Reformatoisch Dagblad*, 4 October 2016.

## 2 Theodori Filius

At first sight it would appear that Wilhelmus à Brakel followed the typical career path of a successful minister in the Dutch Reformed Church. The son of Theodorus Gerardi à Brakel (1608–69), a preacher, he studied theology at the academies of Franeker and Utrecht before starting his pastoral service in 1662 in the village of Exmorra in Friesland. After that he worked in the towns of Stavoren, Harlingen, and Leeuwarden, the Frisian capital. Eventually he was called to the harbour city of Rotterdam, Holland's North Sea port. Only a pulpit in the metropolis of Amsterdam or an appointment at one of Dutch universities would have brought him to a higher step on the social ladder. To all appearances he lacked scholarly ambitions.

A closer look at Wilhelmus's biography shows that his identity was strongly marked by the career and character of his father. Theodorus à Brakel was far from an average minister, neither in his ecclesiastical career nor in his spiritual orientation. Although he attended a Latin school, he did not continue his studies in academia and became a schoolmaster in Leeuwarden, where a group of ministers persuaded him to seek admission to the clergy on the basis of 'singular gifts.' After he was ordained as minister in a Frisian congregation, an overzealous woman confronted him with published notes of his conversations with members of his congregation in 1649. Thus appeared *Het geestelijk leven, ende de stant eenes gelovigen mensches, hier op aerden* (The spiritual life and the condition of a believer here on earth). A bookseller in Amsterdam saw a market for this edifying work and indeed brought out several editions in the following two decades.<sup>10</sup>

As a student Wilhelmus, who presented himself as Theodorus Filius, became acquainted with professors and preachers in Utrecht who were congenial to Brakel *père*. The pious and learned Johan Godschalk van Schurman (1605–64) and his sister Anna Maria (1607–78) were personal friends of his father. Once they were his guests in Friesland. Theodorus's ascetic lifestyle and strict Sunday observance made a great impression upon them. In this Utrecht milieu the young Brakel met a minister's widow, Sara Nevius (1632–1706), a friend of Anna Maria van Schurman. He married her in 1662, just before his

10 Dirck Gerrits van Brakel, *Het geestelijk leven, ende de stant eenes gelovigen mensches, hier op aerden*, (Leeuwarden, 1649); this volume includes the appendix *Eenighe kenteeckens, waer uyt een geloovich mensche hem can verseecken, dat hy van Godt is bemint*. Corrected and enlarged editions appeared in Amsterdam in 1651, 1656, 1657, 1665, 1670. Another work was: Theodorus Gerardi à Brakel, *Eenige christelijcke gebeden, ende danck-segginge* (Amsterdam, 1652, many editions).

inauguration in the parish of Exmorra. Later in this story we will encounter this extraordinary minister's wife again.<sup>11</sup>

At his father's deathbed, Wilhelmus promised to prepare an unpublished manuscript of Theodorus à Brakel for publication. This text included a description of "the bliss and right practice of godliness" as well as an autobiographical account of his spiritual development from his early youth. The son completed the work by reporting the sorrows and sayings of his late father during his last days. A constant in the work was the latter's intense relationship with God and his heartfelt care for his congregation. The following year the entire testimony was published in Amsterdam under the title *De trappen des geestelijken levens* (The steps of the spiritual life).<sup>12</sup>

The 35-year-old Wilhelmus à Brakel thus first emerged as a publicist in an effort to pay homage to his father. As is apparent from the preface, he realized that the predominance of mystical experiences and extraordinary revelations could elicit concerns about the doctrinal purity of the protagonist of *De trappen*. Nevertheless, the reception of the book was very positive. It was reprinted as early as 1671, adorned with an emblematic engraved title print of a Christian mastering the stairs of faith during successive stages in life, despite the temptations of the world and the evil promptings of swarms of demons. As with *Het geestelijk leven*, many editions of *De trappen* appeared up through the end of the eighteenth century, as is also true for the *Redelyke godts-dienst* of Wilhelmus à Brakel Th.F. So the son followed in his father's footsteps in three ways: as minister, as writer, and as author of a 'steady seller'.<sup>13</sup>

### 3 Warning against the Labadists

In the 1680s, Brakel became involved in the public discussions about the new theological fashion in Reformed theology inspired by Cocceius. The Leiden professor had interpreted sacred history as a series of periods or covenants that were to be detected in many biblical texts with a generous dose of linguistic and hermeneutical creativity. Brakel, following the Utrecht professor Voetius, preferred a literal, unambiguous exegesis. In a book on the covenant of grace published in 1687, Brakel took sides in the controversies between the Voetians

11 Fred van Lieburg, 'Sara Nevius (1632–1706): The Pietist Ministry of a Dutch Reformed Minister's Wife,' *Studia historiae ecclesiasticae* 30 (2004), 52–74.

12 Theodorus à Brakel, *De trappen des geestelijken levens* (Amsterdam, 1670, 1671, 1680, 1684, and 1702).

13 Cf. W. Heijting, 'Protestantse bestsellers in de Republiek rond het begin van de achttiende eeuw,' in: *Pietas reformata: Religieuze vernieuwing onder gereformeerden in de vroegmoderne tijd*, ed. J. van de Kamp et al. (Zoetermeer, 2015), pp. 233–45.

and the Coccejans.<sup>14</sup> This conflict, later known as an ‘eighty years’ war’ in the church of the Netherlands, touched upon cultural and political as well as theological issues. The question whether Christians were morally bound to the Fourth Commandment on the strict observance of the Sabbath divided clergy and laity. Brakel defended strict Sunday rest.

Having entered the public arena, Brakel repeatedly took up his pen to comment on ecclesiastical developments. In 1669 the Walloon pastor Jean de Labadie (1610–74) in Middelburg left the Reformed Church in despair about its moral decline. Given the conduct of many ministers and church members, he concluded that the church was full of ‘unreborn’ souls or false believers. Brakel felt attracted to Labadie’s endeavour to form a separatist, pure community. He even contemplated joining the Labadists, as his and his wife’s Utrecht friend Van Schurman did. However, after theological reflection, he refused to depart from the public Church. After all, the Church existed by the grace not of sinful people’s piety but of the covenant of God.<sup>15</sup> Triggered by sadness over the secession of the Labadists, and well aware of the attractiveness of their ideal of purity, Brakel explained his views in his publications *Trouwhertige waarschouwinge* (Faithful warning, 1683) and in *Leer en leydinge der Labadisten* (Teaching and leading of Labadists, 1685).

Furthermore, as a Voetian, he resisted the government’s strong interference in ecclesiastical affairs. In 1688 he openly criticized the city fathers of Rotterdam who had disapproved a minister’s call. Brakel claimed a measure of spiritual autonomy for the local church that was in fact not far removed from the independent course of the Labadists which he had so recently refuted. His principled stand in this case earned him a suspension from his office and the deprivation of his salary for over a year. The conflict gained considerable notoriety, but Brakel and the Rotterdam magistracy were eventually reconciled, due to the intervention of the stadtholder, Prince William III (1650–1702).<sup>16</sup>

From that point on, the minister turned away from polemics and towards providing pastoral help to church members in many places who threatened to secede from their congregations. Reformed church members on the brink of secession aspired to live a puritan lifestyle, attended conventicles, and often even shunned the partaking of the Lord’s Supper because of the participation of so many ‘name-Christians.’ To keep these scrupulous believers within the

14 Wilhelmus à Brakel, *Hallelu-jah, ofte Lof des Heeren over het genaden-verbondt, ende des selfs bedieninge in het Oude en N. Testament, by occasie van de verklaringe van den achsten psalm* (Rotterdam, 1687, many editions).

15 T. J. Saxby, *The Quest for the New Jerusalem: Jean de Labadie and the Labadists, 1610–1744* (Dordrecht, 1987); Daniel Vidal, *Jean de Labadie, 1610–1674: Passion mystique et esprit de Réforme* (Grenoble, 2009).

16 W. Geesink, ‘De zaak van Brakel in 1688,’ *Rotterdamsch jaarboek* 8 (1888), 153–68.

Reformed fold, Brakel wrote *De scrupuleuse ontrent de communie des Heyligen Avontmaals in een verdorvene kerke* (Those who are scrupulous about partaking of the Holy Supper in a corrupted church, 1690).

Meanwhile an ambitious plan ripened in his mind. Brakel wished to offer plain people a complete overview of the teachings about church and faith according to the Bible and the Reformed creed. Over the course of ten years he composed what would become the *Redelyke godts-dienst*, completing one chapter after the other, using earlier writings where possible. Eventually in 1699 the manuscript of thousands of pages was ready for the press. As mentioned, the phrase *Redelyke godts-dienst* did not intend to elevate natural reason above revelation by God's Word. For Brakel as for all his orthodox colleagues, natural reason merely urges every human to honour and serve the heavenly Creator. Reasonable religion, however, denotes the assent of rational Christians to the truths of biblical revelation, as explained in creed and catechism, and experienced in the human conscience.

#### 4 Marketing a Manual

Who was better able to judge whether there was a market for a large companion to Christian religion—an experienced pastor or an experienced publisher? After receiving patent from the States of Holland on 17 September 1699, the (Catholic) States' printer Cornelis van Dijck in The Hague produced both volumes of Brakel's work. The bookseller Reinier van Doesburg (ca. 1650–1731) in Rotterdam, manager of a flourishing stock of theological writings, took responsibility for their distribution. This deal seems to have been inspired by the author, who wished to keep the price of his work low so that its buyers would include relatively impecunious people. As the Rotterdam book reviewer Pieter Rabus (1660–1702) noted in his journal, Brakel had wanted to share his work “in such a laudable way, that no printer (let alone he himself) would line his purse, but every student and practitioner of the reasonable religion could enrich his soul.”<sup>17</sup>

17 Pieter Rabus, *Twee-maandelijke uyttreksels van alle eerst uytkomende boeken* (Rotterdam, 1701), pp. 1–48, there 2. “op zoodanige loffelijke wijze aan de wereld heeft willen mededelen, dat geen drukker (veel min hij zelf) daarmee zijn beurs, maar een onderzoeker en oeffenaar van den redelijken godsdienst zijn ziel zoude verrijken”, as cited in: Jaques Alexandre de Chalmot, ‘W. à Brakel,’ in: *Biographisch Woordenboek der Nederlanden*, 8 vols. (Amsterdam, 1798–1800), 4: 177–82, there 178–9. See Hans Bots, *Pieter Rabus en de ‘Boekzaal van Europe’, 1692–1702: Verkenningen binnen de Republiek der letteren in het laatste kwart van de zeventiende eeuw* (Amsterdam, 1974); J. J. V. M. de Vet, *Pieter Rabus (1660–1702): Een wegbereider van de Noordnederlandse verlichting* (Amsterdam

Brakel wrote the preface of his work on 26 February 1700. He addressed it to “de gemeente Gods in Nederland” (God’s congregation in the Netherlands), in particular to the congregations of Rotterdam and Middelburg, the capital of Zeeland. The latter locale had twice honoured him with a call, both of which he had declined. Thinking of how the printing press had promoted the Reformation in the sixteenth century, Brakel had a wide readership in mind, restricted in neither time nor space. His optimism about the eagerness with which his book would be received proved to be well founded. Within six months the first print run of one thousand copies had sold out. Van Dijck immediately produced a second printing, according to the account of the author. Brakel wrote a short additional preface on 2 October 1701.

No doubt the interest in the work reflected the author’s popularity and his pastoral commitment to the reading public. Brakel offered something new for literate lay people who wished to receive more religious instruction than just sermons and catechizations. Church members need the translation from dogmatic theory to personal experiences and exchanges with fellow believers. In his preface Brakel gave his readers some remarkable advice, possibly based on personal experience in local practice. “Form small groups of acquaintances among yourselves for the purpose of reading a chapter or portion each time, and may that which is read present subject matter for edifying discussions.”

As for another stimulus for religion as a social practice of conscious individuals, reference can be made to the chapter “Concerning Experiences” as an aspect of spiritual life that Brakel wanted to promote among good Christians. He described such experience as a “godly practice, consisting in a recollection of numerous noteworthy incidents for the purpose of using them to our benefit and that of others.” Subsequently he worked out this definition in a series of exhortations. Brakel noted that there were many previous examples of this practice, not only in the Bible but also in church history and devotional literature. Among these he mentions a collection of spiritual biographies of children that followed a Dutch translation and an edition of an English Puritan work on the practice of piety.<sup>18</sup>

Brakel also wanted to draw readers’ attention to the experiences of the godly with whom they had fellowship. “In the Lord’s providence you may have the privilege of enjoying such company, enabling you to hear how the Lord has dealt with them and what manner of deliverances they have experienced—so

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1980); J. J. M. Baartmans and J. J. V. M. de Vet, eds., *Intellectual Emancipation during the Early Enlightenment: The Ambitions of a Pioneering Periodical from Rotterdam: An Essay Concerning the Digital Project* (Nijmegen, 2013).

18 William Guthry, *Het groote interest van een christen; ofte Het deel van een geloovige getoetst [...] wie het heeft, ende hoe te krijghen. [...] / Aanhanghsel, bevattende XXXij. exempelen van eenige vroomen* (Vlissingen, 1669; many later editions).

that you would take note of it and derive benefit yourself from it.” Indeed, Brakel provided a detailed outline for producing a spiritual autobiography, either for one’s own meditation or to pass on to others orally or in writing. “Therefore, take careful note of all that transpires, remember everything, write it down, reflect upon it often, tell it to others, and make daily use of what you have previously experienced—to the benefit of yourself and others.”

## 5 Interconfessional Exchange

In the early eighteenth century there was a growing interest in exemplary Christian life stories. However edifying Brakel may have considered those stories, they also posed a danger to confessional orthodoxy. Soon after the release of *Redelyke godts-dienst* the appearance of a volume of such stories provoked Brakel to make another public statement on the biblical judgment on spiritual experiences. A former Lutheran pastor of German origin, Friedrich Breckling (1629–1711), had been living in The Hague for a number of years.<sup>19</sup> For a project of his that focussed on the stories of pious individuals in church history, he had compiled a catalogue of “testimonies of truth” from Martin Luther (1483–1546) up to the present. Breckling passed these materials on to his colleague Gottfried Arnold (1666–1714), who used them for his book *Das Leben der Gläubigen* (The Lives of believers), printed in Halle in 1701.<sup>20</sup> Meanwhile, Johann Henrich Reitz (1655–1720) pursued his series *Historie der Wiedergeborenen* [History of the Reborn], a similar collection of religious life-narratives based on many printed and unprinted sources in several languages.<sup>21</sup>

Brakel and Breckling were in more or less regular contact. Thus the Rotterdam pastor learnt from his colleague in The Hague that Arnold’s

19 Friedrich Breckling, *Autobiographie: Ein frühneuzeitliches Ego-Dokument im Spannungsfeld von Spiritualismus, radikalem Pietismus und Theosophie*, ed. Johann Anselm Steiger (Tübingen, 2005).

20 Gottfried Arnold, *Das Leben der Gläubigen* (Halle, 1701).

21 Johann Henrich Reitz, *Historie Der Wiedergeborenen: Vollständige Ausgabe der Erstdrucke aller sieben Teile der pietistischen Sammelbiographie (1698–1745) mit einem werkgeschichtlichen Anhang der Varianten und Ergänzungen aus den späteren Auflagen*, ed. Hans-Jürgen Schrader (Tübingen, 1982). See also Hans-Jürgen Schrader, *Literaturproduktion und Büchermarkt des radikalen Pietismus: Johann Henrich Reitz’ “Historie der Wiedergeborenen” und ihr geschichtlicher Kontext* (Göttingen, 1989); Rudolf Mohr, ‘Niederländer und Niederländische Literatur in der “Historie der Wiedergeborenen” von Johann Henrich Reitz,’ in: *Pietismus und Réveil*, ed. J. van den Berg and J. P. van Dooren (Leiden, 1978), pp. 192–206.

collection included a chapter about Theodorus à Brakel.<sup>22</sup> Reitz also provided a chapter on Brakel *père* in his series.<sup>23</sup> The text was extracted from a German translation of the fourth edition of *De trappen des geestelijcken levens*, published in Bern in 1698.<sup>24</sup> However, the son was not amused by this international interest in the 'hagiography' of his father. In these German collections the man figured among a disparate host of characters of Catholic, Lutheran, Calvinist, or confessionally vague affiliation. The whole passion for collecting pious biographies was indeed targeted at inner religiosity, irrespective of ecclesiastical or institutional adherence.

Brakel could not just let it go. He seems to have suspected that this genre of pious biography signalled a trend away from established orthodoxies originating among Protestants in the German Empire. On 25 April 1702 he wrote a letter to the renowned professor Francke in Halle (Saxony), manager of the orphanage where Arnold's collection had been published.<sup>25</sup> Brakel had a positive impression of Francke, especially due to his contact with the Scottish minister James Brown (d. 1713) in Rotterdam, a pastor who had previously served an English congregation in Königsberg (Prussia). Francke was said to be congenial to the 1529 Marburg Articles on the Lord's Supper, indicating not the sacrament as such but the belief in Christ as the core of salvation. Brakel wisely opened his letter by praising Francke for combining great knowledge with particular godliness. Brakel recognized that Francke's writings revealed powerful piety.

In general this piety was also clear from the volume which Brakel mentions as the "collectio variorum Practicorum" (collection of several practical writers) published by the Halle orphanage. Without mentioning the name of its editor, Gottfried Arnold, Brakel gave the example of the biography of his father that, according to Breckling, figured among many testimonies of orthodox as well as heterodox Christians. He did not specify which of the subjects of these biographies he considered unorthodox, but merely the inclusion of medieval mystics must have been a thorn in his side. He could not abide the prospect of future church historians drawing direct lines between Bernardine

22 Theodorus à Brakel, 'Erzählung von seinem geistlichen Leben: Die Staffel des geistlichen Lebens,' in Arnold, *Das Leben der Gläubigen*, pp. 727–829.

23 'Historie von Theodorus à Brakel, in seinem Leben Prediger zu Makum in Friessland,' in Reitz, *Historie Der Wiedergebohrnen*, vol. 3 (1703), pp. 34–51. Reitz refers to Brakel's son as "sein Sohn, so auch Prediger, und noch gegenwärtig, wie geglaubet wird, im Leben ist."

24 Theodorus à Brakel, *Die Staffel desz Geistlichen Leben: Beschrieben in Holländischer Sprach, und zum vierdten mahl getruckt [...]*, (Bern, 1698), including 'Das Sterb-Stündlin Des Gottseligen Manns, Herren Theodor von Brackel,' unpagged, 16 pages.

25 Archiv Franckesche Stiftungen, Halle, C 714:4.

mysticism and Reformed spirituality as demonstrated by Theodorus à Brakel.<sup>26</sup> “Quæ communio Luci cum tenebris?” (What does the Light have common with the darkness?)

Finally Brakel asked Francke for information about the movement in Germany that was known for its claim of ‘*nova quasi Lux et vita*’ (a kind of new Light and life), ‘*nomine Pietistarum, et mysticorum*’ (under the name of pietists and mystics). He had immersed himself in pietist writings in sincere eagerness, but had come to the conclusion that good and evil were mixed up together in it. The truly godly were found between heretics and schismatics. “*Religio ipsorum, quo sublimior videtur, eo magis recedit a simplicitate quæ est in Christo Jesu, et accedit ad pietatem naturalem, in qua et Ethnici quidam præclari fuere*” (The higher the impression their religion leaves, the more it deviates from the simplicity which is in Jesus Christ and comes close to a natural piety, in which some heathens also have been excellent). And: “*Judico aliquid faciendum, ut pii in via recta conserventur, et dirigantur*” (I judge that something should be done to keep and direct the pious on the right way).

## 6 The New Religion in Germany

There is no evidence of any response from Francke to Brakel. In October 1702 the busy manager in Halle received a reminder from his former pupil Johann Hieronymus Liebenroth (ca. 1675–ca. 1730), who had settled in Rotterdam in order to promote the Pietas Hallensis in social and medical care.<sup>27</sup> Liebenroth let Francke know that Brakel was waiting for an answer, as he intended to write a treatise against the pietists, but again there is no evidence of a response. In July 1705 Francke made a journey across the Netherlands, communicating his reform ideas in public speeches and during visits with key figures. Nothing is reported about a meeting with Brakel in Rotterdam.<sup>28</sup> In the meantime Liebenroth worked on a Dutch translation of a book by Francke. May we

26 J. de Boer, *De verzegeling met de Heilige Geest volgens de opvatting van de Nadere Reformatie* (Rotterdam, 1968); I. Boot, *De allegorische uitlegging van het Hooglied, voornamelijk in Nederland: Een onderzoek naar de verhouding tussen Bernard van Clairvaux en de nadere reformatie* (Woerden, 1971); A. de Reuver, *Verborggen omgang: Sporen van spiritualiteit in Middeleeuwen en Nadere Reformatie* (Zoetermeer, 2002); id., *Sweet Communion: Trajectories of Spirituality from the Middle Ages through the Further Reformation* (Grand Rapids, Mich., 2007).

27 Archiv Franckesche Stiftungen, Halle, C 286:2.

28 Udo Sträter, ‘Interessierter Beobachter oder Agent in eigener Sache? August Hermann Franckes Hollandreise 1705,’ in: *Goldenes Zeitalter und Jahrhundert der Aufklärung: Kulturtransfer zwischen den Niederlanden und dem mitteleuropäischen Raum im 17. und 18. Jahrhundert*, ed. Jost Erdmut and Holger Zaunstöck (Halle, 2012), pp. 63–77.

suspect that this trip was a charm offensive undertaken by the German Pietist leader, provoked by his knowledge of Brakel's plans for an anti-pietist polemical work?<sup>29</sup>

A brief look at the Dutch book market can help get a clearer view on Brakel's apparent apprehension that what was happening in Germany paralleled similar trends in the Netherlands. An important mediator of the new movement was the Lutheran bookseller Sebastian Petzold (d. 1704) in Amsterdam. He propagandized for the large project in social care and education in Halle by publishing a Dutch version of Francke's prospectus on the "marks of the living God" in the Prussian kingdom.<sup>30</sup> What's more, at the beginning of the eighteenth century Petzold launched a true publicity offensive for the works of Arnold, the bold challenger of Protestant orthodoxy. Both the latter's series about the lives of the Church Fathers<sup>31</sup> and his history of the Church and heretics<sup>32</sup> were published in the Dutch language. The Amsterdam bookseller Jacobus van Hardenberg (fl. 1680–1700) offered a little bit of competition by publishing Arnold's volumes on the first Christians, translated into Dutch by the Quaker historian Willem Séwel (1654–1720).<sup>33</sup>

Special attention deserves to be given to Petzold's edition—also in 1701—of the first Dutch book with the label 'pietists' in the title: *De leere der mystiken, quietisten, pietisten, en der zo genaamde nieuwe religie in Duytsland, etc.* (The teaching of mystics, quietists, pietists, and of the so-called new religion in Germany, etc.).<sup>34</sup> The publication contained two texts in different genres. The first was a translated letter by the Reformed minister's widow Catharina Elisabeth Wetzels-Uckermann (1667–after 1705). 'Wittwe Wetzels' had gained renown as a prophetess and female leader of a group of mystical believers and church critics. She had become the centre of a controversy in the county

29 Aug. Herman Franken, *Schriftmaatige overweeging van genade en waarheid* (Amsterdam, 1706), translation of: August Hermann Francken, *Schriftmäßige Betrachtung Von Gnade Und Wahrheit / Zur Erkänntniß der Herrlichkeit Jesu Christi [...]* (Halle, 1705). The translator is not identified. That Liebenroth was the translator is evident from two letters to Francke, 29 February and 21 July 1706, in AFSt/H C 286:4 and 6.

30 Augustus Herman Franke, *Merkteekenen en voetstappen van den noch levenden [...]* *God [...]* *ontdekt [...]* *door een omstandig verhaal van het wees-huis [...]* *tot Glaucha by Halle* (Amsterdam, 1701).

31 Godfried Arnold, *Het leeven der voornaamste oudvaders of woestyniers* [engraved titlepage: *Leevens beschryvingen der heremyten en heremytinnen*] (Amsterdam, 1701).

32 Godfried Arnold, *Historie der kerken en ketteren* (Amsterdam, 1701).

33 Godfried Arnold, *Waare afbeelding der eerste christenen* (Amsterdam, 1700–1). See also William I. Hull, *William Sewel of Amsterdam, 1653–1720: The First Quaker Historian of Quakerism* (Swarthmore, Pa., 1933).

34 *De leere der mystiken, quietisten, pietisten, en der zo genaamde nieuwe religie in Duytsland, etc., voorgesteld in verscheide tractaten en brieven* (Amsterdam, 1701).

of Hessen, instigated by the ecclesiastical and political authorities.<sup>35</sup> She had defended herself in a series of letters, of which this was one. Here it was apparently published as a specimen of the “new religion in Germany.” The other part of the publication was an unrelated treatise by the Spanish monk Juan Falconi de Bustamante (1596–1638).

Another publication may be mentioned here because it is found in a convolute volume alongside the former work, reflecting the receptive climate for mystical or radical thought in the religious discourse of the time. Published by Barent Bos in Rotterdam in 1702, it highlighted in its title its focus on mysticism: *D'inwendige staat en de mystijke theologie of verborgen godgeleertheid ...* (The inner state and the mystical theology or hidden divinity ...).<sup>36</sup> The greater part of the volume offered texts from the debate about Quietism in the Roman Catholic Church. A short text was added, under the title *Brief waarin het Wesen Gods voorgesteld en ontdekt wort* (Letter in which the essence of God is proposed and discovered). Information on the background of this letter is not available.

Finally, the conversion story of Grietje Hendriks (1610–1702) in Amsterdam offers an intriguing document of unusual spirituality in those years. An illiterate widow and member of the Walloon Church, she had never distinguished herself by any interest in the practice of piety. When the 91-year-old woman—deaf, probably suffering from dementia, and hallucinating—related that she was hearing psalm-singing and seeing visions, her neighbours concluded that these were the direct effects of the Holy Spirit during her last days. After her death, maybe at the instigation of her pastor, an account of Hendriks' late-life experiences was published by Johannes Kitto (1699–1739) in The Hague.<sup>37</sup> Possibly through the intercession of his local agent Breckling,

35 Barbara Hoffmann, *Radikalpietismus um 1700: Der Streit um das Recht auf eine neue Gesellschaft* (Frankfurt am Main, 1996), pp. 99–106; id., ‘... daß es süße Träume und Versuchungen seyen. Geschriebene und gelebte Utopien im Radikalen Pietismus’, in: *Im Zeichen der Krise: Religiosität im Europa des 17. Jahrhunderts*, ed. Hartmut Lehmann & Anne-Charlott Trepp (Göttingen, 1999), pp. 101–28, there 115–8.

36 *D'inwendige Staat en de Mystijke Theologie of Verborgen Godgeleertheid, Verklaard in wigtige stukken, rakende d'Overdenkinge en Beschouwing van Gods Liefde. Hier by komen eenige Aanmerkingen; over een Uittreksel van Voorstellingen, om de Ziel tot die hooge bespiegeling op te heffen. Ter gelegentheid van de berugte Verschillen van de Aartsbisschop van Camerik en den Bisschop van Meaux. Door F.M. Mitsgaders een Brief over het Wesen Gods* (Rotterdam, 1702). A copy of this book is held by the Gemeentebibliotheek in Rotterdam (22 E 23:2).

37 *De wonderen, van Gods vrije genade, getoont in de bekeering van Grietje Hendriks, in het 91 jaar hares ouderdoms, in de tijt van 16 weeken door de Heere geroepen, geregtveerdigt, geheyligt en verheerlijkt. Gestorve den 22. January, 1702. Door liefhebbers der waarheit* (The Hague, 1702; many editions up to the present day).

Reitz could include a chapter on “Margreta Henrichs” in his collection of spiritual biographies,<sup>38</sup> which shows not only the common ground but also the interconnectedness between the “new religion” in Germany and the receptivity that Pietism met with in the Netherlands.

## 7 Publishing the Warning

It is obvious from the letters of Brakel and Liebenroth to Francke that in 1702 the author of *Reasonable Religion* intended to write a warning against the pietists. It took five years before this exhortation appeared in print. One of the reasons for the delay could be the serious illness of Brakel's wife, Sara Nevius, who died on 24 January 1706. As mentioned, they had come to know each other forty years earlier in Utrecht. Sara was a daughter as well as a widow of a Reformed minister. One of her brothers lived in New Amsterdam (New York), and another in Frankfurt am Main. The local problems around Philipp Jakob Spener (1635–1706) and Johann Jakob Schütz (1640–1690), which initiated the pietist movement in Germany by 1670, may have been communicated to Brakel by his brother-in-law, the merchant Peter Neefs (born 1630).<sup>39</sup>

According to her husband, Sara Nevius was a godly and gifted woman. Already during Brakel's time in his first parish she had started to organize small meetings of married women and spinsters, whom she taught and inspired to godliness. While busy as a mother and a minister's wife, she kept notes of her personal reflections and religious meditations. After she died Brakel decided to edit the greater part of these manuscripts for publication at his own expense. The book was entitled *Een aandachtig leerling, wordende van de Heere Jesus selve geleert sonder hulpe van menschen* (An attentive pupil, being taught by the Lord Jesus himself without the help of people). In his preface, dated 4 June 1706, he defends himself against those who would classify this strictly private and solitary interaction with God in the “soliloquies” of his wife as fanaticism or unhealthy mysticism.<sup>40</sup>

38 Reitz, *Historie Der Wiedergebohrnen*, vol. 5 (1717), pp. 252–76: ‘Vierzehende Historie, Von der sonderbaren Bekehr- und Erleuchtung Margreta Henrichs, einer 91-jährigen alten Frau und Bürgerin zu Amsterdam.’

39 Brakel's father-in-law Johannes Nevius was born in Frankfurt about 1600 and ministered several Reformed congregations in the Netherlands. His brother Peter, a Reformed merchant in Frankfurt, and his wife were suspected of sympathy for Valentin Weigel by the Lutheran pastors; see Andreas Deppermann, *Johann Jakob Schütz und die Anfänge des Pietismus* (Tübingen, 2002), p. 24.

40 Sara Nevius, *Een aandachtige leerling wordende van de Heere Jesus selve geleert sonder hulpe van menschen* (Rotterdam, 1706; editions 1718, 1725, 1735, 1737, and 1745).

The chapter “*Waarschouwende Bestieringe*,” his warning against the pietists must have been written or completed in the same period. Brakel wrote a preface to the third impression of his *Reasonable Religion* on 1 June 1707. Besides the warning, two other texts were added to this edition. To be sure, Brakel brought the urgency of discovering diverse doctrinal errors to the attention of the readers. “May it be useful in defending the truth and true godliness, both of which are under assault in these days. They are assaulted on the one side by people of a corrupt mind who propose reason to be the rule for doctrine and life; on the other side by people who, in striving for holiness and love, set aside the truth and stray towards a religion which proceeds from nature, revolving around the practice of virtue.”<sup>41</sup>

The treatise was added as chapter 43 to the first volume, which—in conformity with the classical division of Reformed dogmatics—consecutively dealt with theology, anthropology, Christology, and ecclesiology. Apparently, according to Brakel the appendix on spiritualism found its logical place after these chapters, rather than at the end of the second volume after the parts on soteriology and eschatology. In his encyclopaedic work the author noted doctrinal deviations at many places, including those of pietists.<sup>42</sup> In chapter 43 he passed over some themes and referred his readers to other sections in *Redelijke Godts-dienst* in order to avoid repetition. He also did not miss the opportunity to refer to familial publications: “If someone desires an example of holy meditations for the purpose of being instructed by them, he ought to read *De Trappen des Geestelijken Levens* by my deceased father, *Theodorus à Brakel*. If you desire meditations of a simpler level, you ought to read, *De Aandachtige Leerling* by my deceased wife, *Sara Nevius*.”<sup>43</sup>

Meanwhile the book printer Van Dijck in The Hague was no longer involved with the production of *Redelijke Godts-dienst* by this time. The 1707 edition was produced by the Rotterdam book printer Johannes de Melander for part I and by Hermanus Herts, also in Rotterdam, for parts II and III. Both volumes were financially guaranteed by Brakel. From 1713 onwards, Hendrik van den Aak and

41 “De Heere zegene ook desen derden Druck, dates zy tot verdediging van waarheyt, ende van ware Godtsaligheyt, welke beyde in dese dagen bestormt worden, aan de eene zyde door menschen van een verdorven verstandt, die de reden stellen tot een Regel van Leere ende Leven: ende aan de andere zyde door menschen, die geset zijnde op heyligheyt en liefde, de waarheyt ter zyden stellen, en afdwalen tot een natuurlijken Godtsdienst en Deughtsaamheyt.”

42 For example in the sections 31.8; 31.17; 32.24; 32.25; and 37.7.

43 Brakel, *Redelyke godts-dienst*, vol. 1 (1707), p. 1154. “Begeert yemant een Voorbeeldt van heylige Meditatie, om daar door opgeleydet te worden, die lese De Trappen des Geestelijken levens van my zalige Vader Theodorus à Brakel: Of begeert hy Meditatie in een lager trap, hy lese De Aandachtige Leerling van Sara Nevius mijn Vrouw zaliger gedachtenisse.”

his heirs were the regular publishers of the popular work up to the eighteenth impression in 1767. When Brakel died in 1711, his eternal fame was already established. According to his colleague Abraham Hellenbroek (1658–1731), who delivered the funeral oration, the manual was distributed so widely that even though one would hardly find devout believers anywhere, Brakel's *Redelijke Godts-dienst* could be found among them.<sup>44</sup>

## 8 Identifying Mysticism

Brakel's fifty-page "Waarschouwende Bestieringe" can be summarized along diachronic or historical lines and—in the following section—by a synchronic or contemporary approach. His opening is theocentric and universal. "It pleases the Lord to glorify Himself upon earth by separating unto Himself, from all other men, His own people—His congregation or church." The truth is entrusted to the church in the person of Jesus Christ and in the form of holy scripture. However, the truth has many enemies, who will attempt to eradicate the church either by external violence or by introducing false doctrines. The latter are often subject to a distinction between matters of faith and confession or matters of practice of life, but in essence they are all contrary to the truth.

A second observation concerns the rapid return of Christians to the heathendom that once received the gospel from God. "All wisdom is now defined in relation to the knowledge of natural sciences and to eloquence," writes Brakel, making reference to the Epicureans (considering worldly pleasure to be their heaven and felicity) or the Stoics (considering the absence of feeling to be happiness). "Others follow the example of religious pagans, some of whom, without knowing Christ, strive to cease from doing evil, and endeavour to do that which is good. Other religious pagans occupy themselves with meditating and speculating about God, finding their delight and religious practice therein." The latter way is followed by many so-called Christians who have a natural impression of, but no true communication with, God.

After his nod to antiquity, Brakel casts a similar judgement upon the Roman Catholic Middle Ages, a period in which he also identifies forms of natural spirituality. "Among those who espouse blind popery—whose religion does not differ much from paganism—there have always been those who have rejected creature-worship and who have written much about internal religion,

44 Abraham Hellenbroek, *Algemeene rouw-klagt in de straaten van Rotterdam over den zeer eerwaardten [...] Wilhelmus à Brakel [...]. Voorgesteld uit het laatste gedeelte van Prediker XII: 5* (Rotterdam, 1711).

elevating this as highly as their natural intellect would permit them.” Among mystical writers, Johannes Tauler (1300–1361) and Thomas à Kempis (1380–1471)—who wrote “that excellent treatise” *De imitatione Christi*—were excluded from general blame. “However, both Tauler and à Kempis have little to say about the Lord Jesus as being the ransom and righteousness of sinners.” Apparently Brakel presupposes that these authors circulated among his Protestant readers.

Just as Brakel in his overview had skipped the period of the Church Fathers, he paid no attention to the age of the great Reformers. He condemns with strong words all post-Reformation writers who deviated from the genuine practice of godliness, both within and outside popery. “Numerous imaginations originating in empty minds, natural speculations, deceptions of Satan, dreams, and zealotry go under the name of mysticism.” After mentioning Jacob Böhme (1575–1624) and his followers in Germany, as well as the Quakers in England, Brakel discusses the Spanish priest Miguel de Molinos (1628–1696) as an example of the new sect of the quietists. He also criticizes the French Archbishop of Cambrai, François de Salignac de la Mothe-Fénelon (1651–1715), for his mystical writing. Finally he turned to the pietists in a paragraph worth fully quoting here:

Some years ago there was a sizeable movement among the Lutherans in Germany toward religiosity. Of some we believe that it was in truth, but with the majority it was but an illusion. This counterfeit religiosity has in some places also affected those of Reformed persuasion. People of the world, due to observing that many of them turned to a godly lifestyle, called them Pietists, thinking to offend them in this way. Instead, they, being ungodly, actually condemned themselves in doing so, and placed a crown upon the head of the truly godly whom they intended to offend—for to be a Pietist means to be a godly person. In desiring to warn everyone against the Pietists and to give some direction in this respect, we do not have the truly godly in mind at all. Far, far be this from me! May the Lord bless them and give them more light to see the Lutheran error and to turn away from it. Rather, I have in view those who stimulate various fictitious notions and errors, such as mystics, Quietists, heretics, fanatics, David-Jorists, Boehmists, Quakers, and all such individuals who in our day are known as Pietists.<sup>45</sup>

45 Brakel, *Redelyke godts-dienst*, vol. 1 (1707), p. 1106: “Voor weynige jaren isser onder de Luthersche in Duytslandt een groote beweginge tot Godtsdienstigheyt ontstaan, sommige, gelooven wy in waarheyt, maar de meeste in schijn, welke schijn-Godtsdienstigheyt

## 9 Defining Pietism

Against whom did Brakel want to warn his Dutch (Reformed) readers, or which possible new readers did he want to convince of errors? He guides his readers in their choice of devotional literature from an international and non-confessionally-defined landscape of pious authors—Tauler, à Kempis, Böhme, Molinos—whose works were available in Dutch translations. Among those who make the wrong choices, the followers of David Joris (ca. 1500–1556) were casually mentioned. Although works of this early Anabaptist author were published far into the seventeenth century, Brakel could have meant the Mennonites in general. He also mentioned the Labadists among “all others who are in error as far as the practice of godliness is concerned.”<sup>46</sup> While Labadism was already condemned as a heresy in Reformed ecclesiology and theology, not least by Brakel himself, and the Labadist congregation (then domiciled in a Frisian lord’s manor in Wieuwerd) was in decline, tendencies of separatism might still have been alive among Reformed believers.

In any case, Brakel seems not just to have been aiming at dangerous books but at people who were deviating. Not without reason, he considers the communicative appeals of heretics to godly but unstable persons who would be impressed by what such “seducers” speak about. These people’s attractive proposals are concerned with the direct contemplation of God, the denial of self, and the delightfulness of love. “When these matters are presented in a most charming manner, they will find entrance into the hearts of those who are naturally pious and of those who are truly godly.”<sup>47</sup> Except for the Labadists (just mentioned) and the Quakers (to be discussed later), Brakel avoids making

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ook overgeslagen is tot de Gereformeerde in sommige plaetsen: de wereltsche menschen siende dat veele sich tot een Godtsaligh begaven, noemden dese Pietisten, meenende haar te smaden, maar in der daat veroordeelden sy daar mede haar selven, dat sy Godtloos waren, en setteden een kroone op het hoofd der ware Godtsalige die sy meenden te smaden, want een Pietist is een Godtsalige te seggen. Wy willende een yegelijk waarschouwen tegen de Pietisten, en willende daar omtrent eenige bestieringen geven, hebben ganschelijk niet in 't ooge de ware Godtsalige, verre, verre is dat van my. De Heere zegene haar en geve haar meerder verlichtinge om de Luthersche dwalingen te sien, en haar daar van af te wenden: Maar ik hebbe in 't oog de gene die allerleye phantasien en dwalingen voeden, als de Mystijke, Quietisten, Dwaal-geesten, Geest-dryvers, David-Joristen, Boemisten, Quakers en al sulken soort van menschen, die heen ten dage onder de naam van Pietisten bekend zijn.”

46 Brakel, *Redelyke godts-dienst*, vol. 1 (1707), p. 1132 (section 5.14).

47 Brakel, *Redelyke godts-dienst*, vol. 1 (1707), pp. 1106–7: “Als dese saken, op het lieflijkste voorgesteld worden, soo heeft het ingank in 't herte van natuyrlijk devote, en van de ware Godtsalige.”

explicit warnings against individuals or groups who we know were also active in the Netherlands around 1700, such as the Collegiants, Hebraists, or Spinozists, possibly because of the same caution he demonstrated in distinguishing the truly godly from the religious deviants among the (German) pietists.<sup>48</sup>

However, why should we look for concrete identifications of Brakel's concerns? The core of his contribution could just be found in his typology of true and false piety. On the one hand, he followed the track of tradition in preaching and pastorate by—as his father had done—listing the signs of true faith. On the other hand, we can detect a new approach, in which he distinguishes true, revealed religion from various types of manmade persuasions, or 'natural' religion. His argument, although expressed in theological, not logical, terminology, shows a remarkable similarity to the chapter "Of Enthusiasm" in Locke's *Essay concerning Human Understanding*. Locke added this chapter, in which he rejects direct inspiration and prophecy that cannot be confirmed by revealed (that is: biblical) authority, to the *Essay* after the English Calvinist John Edwards (1637–1716) criticized his rationalist exegesis in *The Reasonableness of Christianity* (1695). Both Brakel's argument in the "Waarschouwende Bestiering" and Locke's chapter "Of Enthusiasm" start with the demand for great love of the truth, and both point to self-interested conceit as the origin of religious 'enthusiasm.'<sup>49</sup> Rather than enumerate and refute the errors of named opponents, Brakel stated and defended general propositions, whereby the errors will be evident and whereby believers, holding fast to those truths, can judge for themselves and will be delivered from their temptations:

1. A Christian must have a great love for the truth; all splendid pretence void of love for the truth is deceit.
2. A Christian must have great love and esteem for the church.
3. The Holy Scriptures are the only rule for doctrine and life.
4. Regeneration is the originating cause of spiritual life, and of all spiritual thoughts and deeds.
5. A Christian continually avails himself of faith.

48 Cf. Michiel Wielema, *The March of the Libertines: Spinozists and the Dutch Reformed Church (1660–1750)* (Hilversum, 2004); Piet Visser, ed., *Socinianisme in de Nederlanden* (Amsterdam, 2004).

49 John Locke, *An Essay concerning Human Understanding* (from the 4th ed., 1700), IV, 19. On the controversy with Edwards: Roger Woolhouse, *Locke: A Biography* (Cambridge, 2007), pp. 351–4, 376–86, 398, on the chapter on enthusiasm there 417–9. The similarity between the titles of Locke's *Reasonableness of Christianity* and Brakel's *Redelyke Godts-dienst* may not be entirely accidental, and it is quite possible the two men knew each other, at least by reputation, from the time Locke resided in the Republic. I thank Jo Spaans for this suggestion.

6. All of man's felicity, here and hereafter, consists in communion with and the beholding of God.<sup>50</sup>

After elaborating on these six propositions at length, while referring to many proof-texts from the Bible, Brakel offered his own conclusion. "There is natural and spiritual religion, a natural and spiritual denial of self, a natural belonging to God as Creator and preserver and a spiritual and true belonging to God as a reconciled Father in Christ, a natural and spiritual love to God and to man, and a natural and spiritual reflection upon and beholding of God."<sup>51</sup> Of course Brakel, a prominent pastor in the Dutch Reformed Church, was orthodox enough to keep his distance from all who have been considered heterodox among the representatives of the (early) Enlightenment. But his conscious effort to come close to clear trends in contemporary religion makes him more than a defender of the old confessionalism—instead, he opened up a view on a new Protestantism.

## 10 Blaming Quakerism

Nevertheless, Brakel does not make it easy to support the general impression of a shift in religious culture around 1700. His writing style is prolix, and repetitions and overlapping passages obscure the core of his argument. Possibly his elaborate, even somewhat belaboured style results from origins of his text in (oral) sermons or catechizations, which would only underline the importance of Brakel's endeavours in the education of common (church) people. Rather than exploring his own explanations, section by section, on the six propositions, I will here deliver another example of his criticism of the

- 
- 50 "I. Een Christen moet groote liefde hebben tot de waarhey: al het schoon voordoen sonder liefde tot de waarhey is bedrogh.  
 II. Een Christen moet groote liefde tot en achtginge voor de Kerke hebben.  
 III. De Heylige Schriftuyre is de eenige Regel van Leere ende Leven.  
 IV. De Wedergeboorte is het beginsel des geestelijken levens, ende van alle geestelijke gedachten en daden.  
 V. Een Christen maakt geduyrig gebruyk van het Geloove.  
 VI. Al des menschen salighey hier en hier na, bestaat in de gemeynschap met, en beschouwinge van Godt."
- 51 Brakel, *Redelyke godts-dienst*, vol. 1 (1707), p. 1154 (section 6.44): "t Slot van al 't gene wy tot waarschouwinge van de Pietisten geseht hebben is, datter is een Natuyrlijke Godtsdienst en een Geestelijke: Een natuyrlijke verloocheninge ende een geestelijke: Een natuyrlijk eygendom aan Godt als Schepper ende Onderhouder, ende een geestelijke en ware als versoende Vader in Christus: Een natuyrlijke liefde tot Godt ende tot menschen, en een geestelijke: Een natuyrlijke verloocheninge ende een geestelijke: Een natuyrlijke bespiegeling, beschouwinge van Godt ende een geestelijke."

variety of contemporary representatives of “natural and spiritless religion,” now with respect to the Quakers. As with the pietists, this issue is very illustrative for the concrete local and international context of Brakel’s sense of urgency in transmitting his warning.

The Society of Friends was established by George Fox (1624–91) in London in 1648. These proponents of the ‘inner light’ were soon nicknamed ‘quakers’ because of the distinctive body language and spiritual passivity in their religious meetings. The Quakers developed successful missionary activities on the European continent.<sup>52</sup> Groups of adherents, often recruited from Mennonite congregations, were also formed in Dutch towns, among them Rotterdam, an important point of access into the Republic for English merchants, exiles, and travellers. The anti-institutional and anti-clerical movement attracted critical attention from Reformed theologians and ecclesiastical bodies. More commonly, certain members of the public church were associated with the new brand of piety. Brakel signalled in *Redelyke godts-dienst* that many “true godly” were smeared with the epithet Labadists, Quakers, or pious ones.<sup>53</sup>

It might be asked whether Brakel had any personal contact with Benjamin Furly (1636–1714), the undisputed leader of the Quakers in the Low Countries. From 1659 until his death, the English friend of Fox lived in Rotterdam, the city where Brakel had resided since 1683.<sup>54</sup> Furly was a relative of William Penn (1644–1718), another influential Quaker, who travelled through the Netherlands and Germany in 1677 and offered a new future to many (mainly Palatine) Protestants immigrating—via Rotterdam—to the North American colony of Pennsylvania after 1683. A very rich merchant, Furly had an immense library in his house consisting of numerous religious books in several languages.<sup>55</sup> If Furly and Brakel met at all, the spiritual distance between them must have been striking. A high servant at the English Court indicated the haughty individualism of the Quaker leader in a letter in 1706: “Furly is a pious Christian, but of no church, nor goes to anyone.”<sup>56</sup>

52 J. Barclay, ed., *William Penn’s Journal of His Travels in Holland and Germany, in 1677* (London, 1835); Oswald Seidensticker, ‘William Penn’s Travels in Holland and Germany in 1677,’ *Pennsylvania Magazine of History and Biography* 2 (1878), 237–82.

53 Brakel, *Redelyke godts-dienst*, vol. 1 (1707), p. 611: “En is ‘er hier ofte daar een Godtsalige, ofte een t’samenkomste van eenige om een Godtsaligh discours met malkanderen te hebben, ofte eens met malkanderen te bidden, die zijn het voorwerp van den haat, van bespottinge ende onderdruckinge, die noemt men Labadisten, Quakers, Fijne, enz.”

54 William I. Hull, *Benjamin Furly and Quakerism in Rotterdam* (Swarthmore, Pa., 1941); Johan A. van Reijn, ‘Benjamin Furly, Engels koopman (en meer!) te Rotterdam, 1636–1714,’ *Rotterdams Jaarboekje* (1988), 219–46.

55 *Bibliotheca Furliana, sive Catalogus librorum [...] Benjamin Furly [...]. Auctio fiet die 22 octobris 1714* (Rotterdam, 1714). Brakel’s oeuvre is missing in the title catalogue.

56 John Talbot, duke of Shrewsbury. Cf. Van Rheijn, ‘Benjamin Furly,’ p. 227.

In any event, in his warning against the pietists, Brakel listed the Quakers next to the Böhmissists among the post-Reformation deviating groups. He mentioned their origins and explained their popular name, referring to the physical effects of their pretended illumination by the Holy Ghost. Then he stated simply: "Their numerous fanatical practices are common knowledge."<sup>57</sup> Given these comments, it stands out that Brakel delivered an implicit description further on in his disquisition. In the following paragraph, the Quakers are quite recognizable due to their characteristic worship service. Apparently, the indirect portrayal sufficed to meet the pastoral-theological target of Brakel's warning against all those deviating from the path of godliness.

Some remain quiet and in a disposition wherein which they are turned unto God, and do nothing but wait upon the Spirit. If nothing comes to mind, then they again proceed, being well satisfied. If something occurs to them, they deem this to be of the Spirit; then this is truth, and is more certain and infallible than the Word of God which they consider to be but a dead letter, a primer for beginners, and of no benefit whatsoever. If the thought which occurs to them gives direction to do or not to do something, it is considered to be the leading of the Spirit and they give heed to it. They do not pray, speak, or do anything unless they are motivated by such an idea coming to mind; they thus, quietly and with delight, live on. When they are stirred up by an idea which occurred to them, they depend on this, irrespective of whether it either agrees with or is contrary to God's Word. This they do not investigate; it is a matter of indifference to them.... Some go further than that and play prophet. When thoughts about future events occur to their empty minds, they are deemed to be revelations which will either occur or not occur. Poor, misguided people! They desire to seek God and to do His pleasure, but completely miss the way itself. With all their ideas and the adamant passion of their own spirit they perish.<sup>58</sup>

57 Brakel, *Redelyke godts-dienst*, vol. 1 (1707), pp. 1104–5: "In Engelandt zijn de Quakers opgestaan, die soo genoemt worden om dat sy aan Godt in opgetoogenheit denkende, of van Godt en Goddelijke dingen sullende spreken begonden te beven ('t welk de waare Godtsalige door ontsach voor Godt ook wel gebeurt) quansuys als ofse dan den Heyligen Geest ontvingen, hare menighvuldige dweperyenzijn bekent."

58 Brakel, *Redelyke godts-dienst*, vol. 1 (1707), p. 1138 (section 6.13.d): "Sommige houden haar stil in een toegekeerde gestalte tot Godt, doen niets als wachten op den Geest, valt haar niets in sy gaan weer heen, wel te vreden: Valt haar wat in, dat is dan by haar de Geest, dat is dan waarheyte, en sekerder ende onfeylbaarder als het Woordt Godts, datse maar achten als een doode letter, en maar een A.B.C. voor de eerst beginnende, ofte van gansch geene nuttigheyte. Als de inval haar dit of dat aanwijst om te doen ofte te laten dat is de leydinge van den geest, die volghense, sy bidden niet, sy spreken niet, sy doen niets, soo een inval

## 11 Conclusion

Mystics and spiritualists, Pietists and Quietists, Quakers and Labadists—a lot of generic names and group labels configure the mirror Brakel wanted to hold up to the members of the Dutch Reformed Church around 1700. In essence, just like *Redelyke godts-dienst* in general, his specific warning in the additional chapter 43 is a tentative analysis of the changing religious minds of his time, which were no longer to be distinguished by clear confessional or ecclesiastical criteria but needed a systematic guide in order to separate ‘true’ divine and biblical religion from ‘false’ human and natural spiritual religion. At the same time, Brakel’s summary of current religious errors was obviously not drafted in isolation. It clearly resulted from his knowledge of international literature, correspondence with fellow theologians, and contacts with individuals and groups on both sides of the crucial border of ‘reasonable’ faith.

Reflecting on how Brakel’s lens through which we get a glimpse of religious thought could be integrated into historiography, it is curious to have a look at a scholarly yet similar effort to grasp the religious dynamics of the period. At the turn of twentieth century, the Dutch theologian Cornelis Bonnes Hylkema (1870–1948) published his *Historical Studies of Religious Movements in the Aftermath of the Golden Age*.<sup>59</sup> A liberal Mennonite pastor, Hylkema was concerned with figures such as Galenus Abrahamsz, Coenraad van Beuningen, Jan Rothe, Johann G. Gichtel, and Daniel Zwicker. Completely independent from and probably unaware of Brakel’s treatment of the criteria for true religion in six statements, his investigation resulted in a comparable list of five essentials, although his own preference is practically the opposite of Brakel’s:

1. An aversion of traditional church Christendom in doctrine as well as in life.

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haar niet drijft, en leven soo stil met genoeg en hene: maar als een inval haar drijft, daar gaanse dan op aan, of het dan na Godts of tegen Godts woort is, daar doense geen ondersoek na, dat is haar even veel, en worden alsoo door haar eygen geest wel vervoert tot grouwelen, daar ook de natyure voor schrikt, gelijk getuygen de gene die Godt door sijne goedtheyt van de dwalinge hares weghs bekeert heeft, en de dagelijkse ondervindinge leert. Sommige gaan verder en speelen de Propheet, als hare holle herssenen invallen opgeven van toekomstige dingen, dat sijn dan openbaringen, dat sal dan komen ofte niet komen. Arme verdoolde menschen! Sy hebben begeerte om Godt te zoeken, ende sijn welbehagen te doen, maar loopen den geheelen wegh mis, en gaan met hare invallen, en onversettelijke drift van eygen geest verloren.”

59 C. B. Hylkema, *Reformateurs: Geschiedkundige studien over de godsdienstige bewegingen uit de nadagen onzer Gouden Eeuw* (2 vols., Haarlem, 1900–2; reprint Groningen/Amsterdam, 1978).

2. A free and autonomous individualism, above all apparent from a passionate search for 'the long-lost truth,' either on the basis of 'the Scriptures and sound Reason,' or in the direction of oftentimes phantastic speculations by feeling.
3. The enthusiastic conviction, concerning 'true religion,' to have knowledge that was hidden to churches, 'the sects,' and of which the distribution would shortly dissolve the different denominations in 'the general belief.'
4. A lively religious consciousness, distinct from ecclesiastical piety on characteristic issues (the view of regeneration and sin, grace and reconciliation, freedom of will and predestination, the neglect of the 'ceremonies' and in general of the order).
5. Morals that recall sayings in the Sermon [Matthew 5].<sup>60</sup>

Of course, Hylkema's early contribution to understanding late-seventeenth-century Protestantism has been followed by a wealth of publications by (church) historians, syntheses as well as case studies. Whereas Hylkema generalized his heroes as "Reformers," others spoke of "Stepchildren of Christendom" or "Christians without Church."<sup>61</sup> An American historian opted for the umbrella term 'Second Reformation,' notwithstanding its different uses parallel to Post-Reformation confessionalism or movements of 'further reformation.' Anglophone historiography seems confident with traditional labels such as Baptism, Puritanism, or Quakerism. German scholarship sticks to the dichotomy of (ecclesiastical) Pietism and (separatistic) Radical Pietism, although

60 Hylkema, *Reformateurs*, pp. 462–3:

1<sup>e</sup>. Afkeer van het traditioneel kerkelijk Christendom zoowel in leer als in leven.

2<sup>e</sup>. Een vrij en autonoom individualisme dat zich openbaarde vooral in een hartstochtelijk zoeken naar "de overlang verloren waarheid", hetzij aan de hand van "de Schriftuur en de gezonde Rede", of in de richting van allerlei vaak phantastische gevoelsspeculatiën.

3<sup>e</sup>. De geestdriftige overtuiging, aangaande "den waren godsdienst" een kennis te hebben die aan kerken, "de secten," verborgen was en wier verspreiding eerlang de verschillende gezindten zou doen oplossen in "het algemeene geloof."

4<sup>e</sup>. Een levendig godsdienstig besef, hetwelk in karakteristieke punten (de opvatting van wedergeboorte en zonde, genade en verzoening, wilsvrijheid en voorbeschikking, de geringschatting der "ceremoniën" en in het algemeen van het geordende) zich van de kerkelijke vroomheid onderscheidde.

5<sup>e</sup>. Een moraal die herinnert aan de uitspraken van de bergrede.' [Mattheus 5]."

61 J. Lindeboom, *Stiefkinderen van het Christendom* (The Hague, 1929); Leszek Kołakowski, *Chrétiens sans Eglise: La Conscience religieuse et le lien confessionnel au XVII<sup>e</sup> siècle* (Paris, 1969). Cf. Richard H. Popkin, *The Third Force in Seventeenth-Century Thought* (Leiden, 1992).

recent studies favour a comparative approach of parallel renewal movements, including Quietism.<sup>62</sup>

Arguably, the challenge arising from our brief introduction to the world of Brakel is to connect the discourses of confessional orthodoxy, mystical spiritualism, pietism, and the early Enlightenment. Just as the concept of 'reasonable religion' asks for a revision of the customary description of the relationship between traditional theology and early modern philosophy, the contrast of 'natural religion' with 'true religion,' as emphasized by Brakel, hints at a decisive divergence between the public or state-controlled church in society and the personal freedom of belief and conscience of its members. At the same time, the discourses were deeply embedded in intellectual exchange, social networks, and popular culture. People around 1700 both faced and produced intensive religious change—not least of all a prominent pastor wrestling with the profile of piety.

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62 Hartmut Lehmann, Hans-Jürgen Schrader, and Heinz Schilling, eds., *Jansenismus, Quietismus, Pietismus* (Göttingen, 2002).

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