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Autor(en): **Paul, Herman**

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Religious Discourse Communities. Confessional Differentiation in Nineteenth-Century Dutch Protestantism

Herman Paul

«The battle has thus begun», observed a Dutch Protestant book reviewer in 1848.[1] Hitherto, he said, theological disagreements within the Dutch Reformed Church had occasioned «merely two distinctive movements». But these movements had now «openly become parties», which «engaged in battle» and opposed each other not only on theological, but on judicial grounds as well.[2] This observation was prompted by a confrontation between two well-known Protestant writers. The first was Isaäc da Costa (1798–1860), a converted Jew and celebrated poet, whose polemical treatises included the Bezwaren tegen den geest der eeuw (Objections to the Spirit of the Age, 1823) – an exercise in conservative cultural criticism that had made no small stir at the time of publication. Da Costa's opponent was Petrus Hofstede de Groot (1802–1886), a professor at the University of Groningen and co-author of a theological handbook that summarized and systematized insights developed within the so-called «Groningen School» of theology.[3] Da Costa read this book as a sacrifice of Christian orthodoxy on the altar of Enlightenment reason and strongly objected to its «unbiblical» teachings, while Hofstede de Groot, in his rejoinder to Da Costa, barely concealed his distaste for his critic's «unscientific» theology (and lack of academic theological training). The reviewer's opening remark suggested that more of such confrontations between orthodox and liberal Protestants were to be expected – especially since Da Costa was «one of the principal members, yes, leaders»

[1] I wrote this essay at the Center of Theological Inquiry in Princeton. Funding was provided by the Netherlands Organization for Scientific Research (NWO) and the C.J. de Vogelstichting.

[2] [Chr.] S[epp?], review of I. da Costa, Eenige opmerkingen omtrent het onderscheidend karakter der Groningsche godgeleerde school and P. Hofstede de Groot, De berigten omtrent het onderscheidend karakter der Groningsche godgeleerde school van Mr. I. da Costa toegelicht, in: Godgeleerde Bijdragen, 22 (1848), 256. Jasper Vree drew my attention to this source.

[3] Gert-Jan Johannes, Bezwaren tegen welke eeuw? Over Isaäc da Costa's fundamentalistisch manifest, in: De Negentiende Eeuw, 30 (2006), 3–18; Jasper Vree, De Groninger godgeleerden. De oorsprongen en de eerste periode van hun optreden, Kampen 1984.

of an association strongly opposed to Hofstede de Groot's theology, while the latter, in turn, represented an energetic movement centered around the journal *Waarheid in Liefde* (Truth in Love).[4]

Recent historiography tends to confirm the accuracy of the reviewer's observation. Although, during the early decades of the century, disputes over the church's confessional heritage had occasionally resulted in bitter polemics,[5] only few church members had dared to prioritize these disagreements over «the maintenance of order and harmony» that the Dutch Reformed Church sought to enhance.[6] But when, in 1848, the church became officially separated from the state, this «order and harmony» discourse lost much of its rationale. Now that the former public church could no longer act as a religious complement to the nation state, its main reason for suppressing internal tensions and diversities had been undermined.[7] At the same time, the liberal constitution of 1848 facilitated modes of religious organization that historians in recent years have increasingly began to study. By putting an end to state regulation of voluntary associations, this constitution not only lifted restrictions on Catholic convent communities, but also enabled groups of like-minded Protestants to organize themselves institutionnally.[8] The simultaneous increase of confessional differentiation among Dutch Protestants and the rise of countless associations based on «liberal», «ethical», «evangelical», «confessional» or «orthodox» Protestant principles can thus be seen as closely related.[9] In this light, the exchange between Hofstede de Groot and Da Costa was paradigmatic also because both authors represented a modern medium (an association and a journal) aimed at creating connections between like-minded Protestants.

Despite an increasing body of scholarly literature, a satisfactory answer to the question what kind of like-minded communities these post-1848 associations created has not yet been provided. What did it mean for nineteenth-century Dutch church members to claim that they belonged to a «liberal» or «orthodox»

4 S[epp?], review (as footnote 2), 286.

5 See, for example, the critical responses provoked by Nicolaas Schotsman's Eere-zuil, ter nagedachtenis van de voor twee hondert jaren te Dordrecht gehoudene Nationale Synode, Leyden 1819.

6 Algemeen reglement voor het bestuur der Hervormde Kerk in het Koningrijk der Nederlanden, in: Reglementen, vervaardigd door het Algemeen Christelijk Synode der Nederlandsche Hervormde Kerk, en goedgekeurd door Zijne Majesteit den Koning, 's-Gravenhage 1816, 8.

7 Joris van Eijnatten/Fred van Lieburg, Nederlandse religiegeschiedenis, Hilversum 2005, 271. A mid-century shift from «unity» toward «principles» in the clergy's ecclesial vocabulary is documented in Herman Paul/Bart Wallet, A Sun that Lost its Shine. The Reformation in Dutch Protestant Memory Culture, (forthcoming).

8 Joos van Vugt, «Should It Happen that God Should Permit...» The Political and Legal Position of Orders and Congregations in the Netherlands, in: Jan De Maeyer/Sofie Leplae/Joachim Schmiedl (Ed.), Religious Institutes in Western Europe in the 19th and 20th Centuries. Historiography, Research and Legal Position, Leuven 2004, esp. 291; George Harinck, De vereniging als nieuwe organisatievorm binnen het Nederlandse christendom, in: Documentatieblad voor de Nederlandse Kerkgeschiedenis na 1800 28 no. 63 (2005), 8–15.

9 Harinck, Vereniging (as footnote 8), 14. Hundreds of organizations operating within the Dutch Reformed Church alone were annually listed in M. W. L. van Alphen's Nieuw Kerkelijk Handboek (1878–1985).

wing of Protestantism? Echoing much of the older historiography on the richtingenstrijd (internal battle) in the Dutch Reformed Church, one might say that such persons subscribed to theological convictions that, in a nineteenth-century context, could be characterized as «liberal» or «orthodox».[10] This, however, does not resolve the question what kind of liberal or orthodox Protestant alliances the nineteenth century saw emerge.

On a local level, this question can partly be answered in institutional terms. After the democratization of local church leadership in 1867, a good number of congregations got relatively unambiguous theological profiles. This, in turn, prompted the rise of local «minority churches» (evangelisaties), which usually were even more outspoken «liberal» or «orthodox» communities. It is significant, however, that many of these evangelisaties were supported, and sometimes founded, by national organizations such as the Confessioneele Vereeniging (Confessional Association, 1864) and the Nederlandsche Protestantenbond (Dutch Protestant League, 1870).[11] Through periodicals, booklets and various sorts of regional meetings, these organizations communicated their vision of Protestantism to audiences which included, but were not limited to, institutionalized, geographically-bound communities. Interestingly, both the Confessioneele Vereeniging and the Nederlandsche Protestantenbond were associations that served, but could not exclusively claim to embody, «orthodox» or «liberal» Protestantism. This suggests that an institutional approach to intra-Protestant group-formation is insufficient. Besides, the question what kind of coalitions the words «liberal» and «orthodox» represent can of course not be answered without taking into account the rhetorical connotations, metaphors, images, rituals and collective memories produced in support of as well as in opposition to the movements. So, how are these alliances in nineteenth-century Dutch Protestantism to be conceptualized, given that both theological and institutional approaches do not sufficiently explain the social, ritual and non-geographical dimensions of this religious group-formation?

This article suggests that the «parties» that Da Costa and Hofstede de Groot helped create were not merely «imagined communities» (Benedict Anderson) or «communities of memory» (Aleida Assmann), but, more specifically, «discourse communities».[12] I will argue that the concept of discourse community, fashionable as it may be, helps explain in what respect the intra-Protestant alliances of the second half of the century differed from both the national community that the

[10] Th. L. Haitjema, De richtingen in de Nederlandsche Hervormde Kerk, Wageningen [1934]; Armand Fiolet, Een kerk in onrust om haar belijdenis. Een phaenomenologische studie over het ontstaan van de richtingenstrijd in de Nederlandse Hervormde Kerk, Nijkerk 1953; A. J. Rasker, De Nederlandse Hervormde Kerk vanaf 1795. Geschiedenis, theologische ontwikkelingen en de verhouding tot haar zusterkerken in de negentiende en twintigste eeuw, 3rd ed., Kampen1986.

[11] G. J. Mink, Op het tweede plan. Evangelisten in Nederland in de tweede helft van de negentiende eeuw, Leiden 1995.

[12] Benedict Anderson, Imagined Communities. Reflections on the Origins and Spread of Nationalism, 2nd ed., London/New York 1991; Aleida Assmann, Erinnerungsräume. Formen und Wandlungen des kulturellen Gedächtnisses, München 1999.

early-nineteenth-century Dutch Reformed Church sought to establish and the network of small, like-minded congregations produced in 1834 by the Afscheiding (Secession). Using modern communication means, these religious networks stimulated like-minded Protestants from across the country to develop distinctive confessional identities and to «fight» for causes that became increasingly more specific in their scope.

Community types

In the days of King Willem I (1815–40), nationalist strategist par excellence, the Dutch Reformed Church was an imagined community, a community of memory, but not a discourse community. It was an imagined community, in Anderson's sense of being larger and more anonymous than a face-to-face community and in the sense of being an ideal, a dream to be realized in time.[13] Much of the administration and parts of the clergy aspired to a church in which geographical and confessional differences would be replaced by national unity and theological ecumenism – a vision not unlike that of Willem I, who sought to amalgamate the Dutch provinces into a single, modern nation state.[14] The parallel was not accidental, for the monarch considered the former public church a helpful means for promoting nationalist values. Through his Ministry of Worship, which was officially supposed only to regulate the church's administrative and financial affairs,[15] the king used Reformed clergy to spread values that contributed to national unity: religious tolerance, freedom of conscience and «Protestant fraternity».[16] In more than one sense, therefore, early-nineteenth-century pastors could be called «servants of the Kingdom».[17] Church and state found themselves cooperating in their attempts to stimulate imagined communities.

The Reformation's tercentenary, celebrated in 1817, serves as an example of how invented traditions and collective memories were employed in shaping such communities. Annaeus Ypey (1760–1837), the church historian, provided a nationalist ecclesial genealogy, in which not Luther (Germany) or Calvin (France),

[13] Anderson, Imagined Communities (as footnote 12), 6–7.

[14] On the relation between nationalism and religion as «imagined communities» (Benedict Anderson), see Hartmut Lehmann/Peter van der Veer (Ed.), Nation and Religion. Perspectives on Europe and Asia, Princeton 1999. On the interplay and overlap of religious and nationalist perspectives, see, among other recent studies, the contributions to Heinz-Gerhard Haupt/Dieter Langewiesche (Ed.), Nation und Religion in der deutschen Geschichte, Frankfurt am Main/New York 2003; Heinz-Gerhard Haupt/Dieter Langewiesche (Ed.), Nation und Religion in Europa. Mehrkonfessionelle Gesellschaften im 19. und 20. Jahrhundert, Frankfurt am Main/New York 2004; Michael Geyer/Hartmut Lehmann (Ed.), Religion und Nation, Nation und Religion. Beiträge zu einer unbewältigten Geschichte, Göttingen 2004.

[15] Cf. W. H. den Ouden, De ontknoping van de zilveren koorde. De geschiedenis van de rijkstraktementen in de Nederlandse Hervormde Kerk, Zoetermeer 2004.

[16] For the emergence of these ideals in late-eighteenth-century Holland, see Joris van Eijnatten, Liberty and Concord in the United Provinces. Religious Toleration and the Public in the Eighteenth-Century Netherlands, Leiden/Boston 2003.

[17] David Bos, In dienst van het Koninkrijk. Beroepsontwikkeling van hervormde predikanten in negentiende-eeuws Nederland, Amsterdam 1999.

but Dutch thinkers such as Gansfort, Erasmus, Veluanus, Coornhert and Grotius figured prominently. Their «biblical humanism» was interpreted as a Reformation avant la lettre and even as a more significant break-through than Luther's polemics against Rome.[18] Moreover, as a supposedly irenic reform movement – less dogmatic and more tolerant than Calvin and his seventeenth-century Dutch followers – this biblical humanism harmonized well with the Enlightenment appreciation of «love and toleration» expressed in the instructions that Dutch Reformed pastors received for the celebration of the Reformation tercentenary.[19] Due to these recommendations and the personal influence of Jacobus D. Janssen (1775–1848), «secretary of ecclesial affairs», invented traditions like Ypey's circulated widely through sermons, hymns and poems read on October 31, 1817.[20]

Whereas the early-nineteenth-century Dutch Reformed Church can thus be called both an imagined and a memory community, it was, according to John Swales' definition, not a discourse community. Swales' primary example of such a community is the Hong Kong Study Circle – a hobby club that aims «to foster interest in and knowledge of the stamps of Hong Kong (the various printings, etc.) and of their uses (postal rates, cancellations, etc.)». Members of the Hong Kong Study Circle are scattered over the globe, have different occupations, speak different native languages and, in most cases, do not know or ever meet each other in person. Only their «shared hobby interest», expressed in and encouraged by a bi-annual journal and newsletter, brings these stamp collectors together in some kind of community.[21] Swales then specifies the mechanisms that make this community function, which include effective means for long-distance communication, the use of specific genres and vocabularies as well as «a threshold level of members».[22] For my purpose, however, most significant is the fact that this community of philatelic-minded people exists by virtue of written communication, rather than through personal acquaintance, social bonds or regular meetings. A discourse community, as I understand the term, is a group of people who discuss their shared interests through written communication and are recog-

[18] A. Ypeij, Beknopte geschiedenis van de Hervorming der christelijke kerk in de zestiende eeuw. Een leesboek voor belangstellenden in de viering van het derde eeuwfeest der Kerkhervorming, Groningen 1817; A. Ypeij, Leerrede ter gedachtenis van de groote verdiensten der Nederlandsche vaderen, betrekkelijk het werk der Kerkhervorming, Groningen 1817. Cf. A. Ypeij/I. J. Dermout, Geschiedenis der Nederlandsche Hervormde Kerk, vol. 1, Breda 1819, esp. 1–45. As Wim Janse explains in The Protestant Reformation in the Low Countries. Developments in Twentieth-Century Historiography, in: Reformation and Renaissance Review, 6 (2004), 183, Ypey echoed «the Remonstrant voice of Johannes Uytenbogaert (1647) and Hugo de Groot (1613).» Cf. Peter van Rooden, History, the Nation and Religion. The Transformations of the Dutch Religious Past, in: Lehmann/Van der Veer, Nation and Religion (as footnote 14), 99–103.

[19] B. Verwey, Derde eeuwgetijde der Kerkhervorming, of bijdragen tot deszelfs plegtige viering in october en november 1817, 's-Gravenhage 1817, 65.

[20] Janssen's role in the orchestration of this commemoration is highlighted in Paul/Wallet, «Sun that Lost its Shine» (as footnote 7).

[21] John M. Swales, Genre Analysis. English in Academic and Research Settings, Cambridge 1990, 27.

[22] Swales, Genre Analysis (as footnote 21), 25–27.

nizable as a community only through their channels of communication.[23] According to this definition, the Dutch Reformed Church, with all its local congregations, can impossibly be called a discourse community.

The same argument can be made with regard to the afgescheiden churches that resulted from the Secession, in 1834, or with regard to any other church denomination. Although, theologically, the afgescheiden churches are often contrasted with the Dutch Reformed Church – a contrast that still pervades much of the historiography – both denominations invested much of their resources in processes of group-formation.[24] In the case of the separated churches, the construction of a distinct group identity was supported by lieux de mémoire that openly competed with those of Ypey: the Magisterial Reformation, the Synod of Dordrecht (1618–1619), Scottish Puritan preachers and, in particular, a Calvinistic-oriented church in the Republic's «Golden Age», to which the afgescheidenen claimed to return.[25] The fact, though, that this «return» resulted in a network of local congregations with strong social ties distinguishes these groups from discourse communities in Swales' sense of the word.

Memory and discourse

Could one then characterize the Protestant «parties» that Hofstede de Groot and Da Costa helped emerge as discourse communities? What evidence or argument would justify the suggestion that these mid-nineteenth-century coalitions were communities like the Hong Kong Study Circle, which discussed a shared (theological or ecclesial) interest by means of written communication? To be sure, not all those who agree that theological and institutional explanations of nineteenth-century confessional differentiation fall short will be convinced that Swales' discourse communities are the only conceptual alternative. Would it not suffice, for example, to characterize Protestant «liberalism», «modernism», «orthodoxy» and so forth as imagined communities that justified themselves through history? Could one not argue that the conceptual apparatus of collective memory studies (memory sites, memory managers, conflicting memories, communities of memory, etc.) provides historians with adequate means for analyzing the dynamics of this confessional differentiation?

[23] Some other uses of the term are listed in Erik Borg, Discourse Community, in: ELT Journal, 57 (2003), 398–400.

[24] For the historiography, see G. J. Schutte, De Afscheiding van 1834, in: Het calvinistisch Nederland. Mythe en werkelijkheid, Hilversum 2000, 105–124.

[25] Cf., e.g., H. P. Scholte/A. Brummelkamp/S. van Velzen/G. F. Gezelle Meerburg/Dr. A. C. van Raalte (Ed.), Stemmen uit vroegere tijden, in: Compleete uitgave van de officiëele stukken betreffende den uitgang uit het Nederl. Herv. Kerkgenootschap van de leeraren, 2nd ed., Kampen 1884, 126–148. Reformed memory cultures in the nineteenth- and early-twentieth-century Netherlands are analyzed extensively in George Harinck/Herman Paul/Bart Wallet (Ed.), Het gereformeerde geheugen. Protestantse herinneringsculturen in Nederland, 1850–2000, Amsterdam (forthcoming).

Indeed, divergent interpretations of perhaps the most elusive Protestant lieu de mémoire – the «three forms of unity», as the Heidelberg Catechism, the Belgic Confession and the Canons of Dordrecht came to be called – were one of the factors contributing to confessional differentiation. In his Bezwaren, De Costa had already complained over derision and scorn heaped on divine election and other «blessed fundamental truths» professed in the church's confessional documents.[26] In the 1830s, particularly after the Secession, increasing tensions emerged over the authority of these documents. Hofstede de Groot, among others, argued for «freedom» from the confessions,[27] which united his opponents from both the Dutch Reformed Church and the separated churches into what retrospectively became known as an «orthodox» camp.[28] A second argument in favor of this collective memory approach is that the richtingen or «parties» that the second half of the century saw emerge frequently defined themselves under reference to early-modern lieux de mémoire. Hofstede de Groot's followers, for example, joined Ypey in preferring «Dutch» humanism over «foreign» Calvinism, while «ethical» Protestants felt more inspired by figures like Pascal and Hamann. Pietistic groups, in and outside the Dutch Reformed Church, published cheap editions of eighteenth-century «old writers», while neo-Calvinists and members of the Gereformeerde Bond (Reformed League, 1906) primarily considered themselves heirs of Calvin.[29] The fourth centenary of Luther's Reformation, celebrated in 1917, illustrated that none of these groups wanted to deny historical continuity with at least one of the reformers – thereby producing a multitude of contested historical interpretations that sharply contrasted with the «Protestant unity» celebrated in 1817.[30]

For three reasons, however, the collective memory approach cannot exhaustively explain the differentiation of nineteenth-century Dutch Protestantism. First, processes of confessional group-formation did not in all cases correspond to disagreements over the question which historical examples or genealogies best befitted Dutch Protestantism after 1848. Johannes H. Scholten (1811–1885), for example, the influential modernist, who used Hegelian philosophy to radicalize Hofstede de Groot's theology, had no sympathy at all for the latter's lieux de mémoire. Declaring Ypey's historical visions «at variance with history», Scholten argued that the Dutch Reformed Church was Calvinistic, rather than indebted

[26] I. da Costa, Bezwaren tegen den geest der eeuw, 3rd ed., Leiden 1823, esp. 5–7.

[27] E.g., P. Hofstede de Groot, De Groninger godgeleerden in hun eigenaardigheid. Toespraak aan zijne vroegere en tegenwoordige leerlingen, na vervulde vijfentwintigjarige hoogleraarsbediening, Groningen 1855, 225–227.

[28] In his Religieuze regimes. Over godsdienst en maatschappij in Nederland, 1570–1990, Amsterdam 1996, 194, Peter van Rooden argues that before the richtingenstrijd starting around 1848, the meaning of the word «orthodox» is difficult to determine.

[29] John Exalto, Wandelende bijbels. Piëtistische leescultuur in Nederland, 1830–1960, Zoetermeer 2006; J. Vree, Den Ouden en Van Benthem. Een casus betreffende de verspreiding van gereformeerde lectuur in Zeeland (1823–1836), in: Jaarboek voor Nederlandse Boekgeschiedenis, 8 (2001), 171–186.

[30] Herman Paul/Bart Wallet/George Harinck (Ed.), De Reformatie-herdenking van 1917. Historische beeldvorming en religieuze identiteitspolitiek in Nederland, Zoetermeer 2004.

to Erasmus, Gansfort or Coornhert.[31] Thus, in spite of their shared ideals and overlapping audiences, these theologians positioned themselves in different historical trajectories. The reverse could also occur: Scholten's pupil, Abraham Kuyper (1837–1920), shared with his teacher an appreciation for Calvinistic theology – as well as a deep indebtedness to German-idealist philosophy – but this future leader of a church split known as the Doleantie (1886) annexed the sixteenth-century reformer for goals that were rather different from those of Scholten and his modernist disciples.[32]

These modernists of the 1880s and 1890s illustrate a second problem for the collective memory approach. After the death of Scholten, the Dutch modernist movement fractured in several subgroups, which called themselves «mystic» in so far as they opposed Scholten's «rationalism» or «socialist» to the extent that they allied with the Social-Democratic Labor Party (1894) instead of with bourgeois liberalism, as an earlier generation of modernists had done. This differentiation, however, was neither caused by nor a manifestation of divergent historical identity politics. It rather stemmed from philosophical and political concerns as well as from a growing disappointment with the modernist inability to relate to congregational practices of faith. If collective memories influenced this process of differentiation at all, they only did so, at a certain level of abstraction, among the «modernists of the right» (rechts-modernen), who wished to release their theological modernism from its rigid anti-traditionalism.[33] So, instead of reducing confessional differentiation to divergent memory politics, I would suggest that, in at least some cases, «inventions of traditions» were merely one factor among others, the relative weight of which has to be established by comparative means.

Finally, although there is currently no lack of collective memory studies, not all historians who contribute to this flourishing subfield are as eager to write social histories of collective memories, that is, histories which not only examine the production of lieux de mémoire, but their circulation and consumption as well. Whereas it is one thing to ask how lieux de mémoire served as bearers of symbolic meaning, or to inquire how so-called «memory managers» used the past for contemporary purposes, it is another to inquire how certain interpreta-

[31] J. H. Scholten, De leer der Hervormde Kerk in hare grondbeginselen, uit de bronnen voorgesteld en beoordeeld, vol. 1, 4th ed., Leiden 1870, 61. Haitjema emphasizes the theological affinities between Hofstede de Groot and Scholten in his Richtingen (as footnote 10), 35–9.

[32] A. Kuyper, Het calvinisme. Oorsprong en waarborg onzer constitutioneele vrijheden: een Nederlandsche gedachte, Amsterdam 1874; A. Kuyper, Tractaat van de reformatie der kerken. Aan de zonen der Reformatie hier te lande op Luthers vierde eeuwfeest aangeboden, Amsterdam 1884.

[33] C. M. van Driel, Dienaar van twee heren. Het strijdbaar leven van theoloog-politicus B. D. Eerdmans (1868–1948), Kampen 2005, 148–65. For the disappointments of second-generation modernists, see K. H. Roessingh's classic account in Het modernisme in Nederland, Haarlem 1922, 145–78. The political factors contributing to the modernist conflicts are emphasized in C. W. Mönnich, De ontwikkeling van de vrijzinnigheid van de negentiende eeuw af, in: B. Klein Wassink/Th. M. van Leeuwen (Ed.), Tussen geest en tijdgeest. Denken en doen van vrijzinnig protestanten in de afgelopen honderd jaar, Utrecht 1989, esp. 40.

tions of Erasmus, Luther or the Synod of Dordrecht actually helped people define themselves as «liberal» or «modern» or «faithful to the Reformed tradition». Yet, this second step is required for anyone who wants to sustain the claim that lieux de mémoire created collective memories which helped foster collective identities. For studies of collective memory to be worth the name, they need to examine what Daniel Woolf calls the «social circulation of the past».[34] Questions to be asked include: What audiences did «memory managers» reach? How did they communicate their messages? How where these messages received? And how were memory politics, as means for strengthening (religious) group identities, related to other processes of «social structuration» within the same communities?[35]

This suggests that collective memories are best studied within another framework than «memory cultures». Arguably, the concept of discourse community can serve as such a framework. More formally defined than «memory communities», Swales' notion may, first, help distinguish between non-identical groups that propagated similar lieux de mémoire, or between audiences that shared religious, ecclesial or political ideals without having common historical identification figures. Moreover, by focusing on media of communication, rather than on a particular sort of messages transmitted through these media, the concept can not only overcome the limitations of theological and institutional approaches, outlined above, but also account for processes of group-formation that were not caused or justified by collective memory politics. In the case of modernist Dutch Protestantism, for example, the «anti-anti-traditionalist» movement at the turn of the century can better be seen as a discourse community created by a series of convocations and meetings, organized from 1904 onward, than as a theological position articulated by some intellectual leaders.

Third, like memory cultures, discourse communities can overlap, interact and be part of larger communities. Socialist modernism, for example, can be conceived of as a discourse community gathered around De Blijde Wereld (The Joyous World). But this community, in turn, was part of a larger modernist discourse community, associated with De Hervorming (The Reformation) – at least until Gustaaf A. Van den Bergh van Eysinga (1874–1957) turned this magazine into another socialist-oriented periodical.[36] In other words, a study of confessional differentiation along communicative lines, rather than along the lines of memory alone, allows for distinctions between «socialist modernism», as a small, journal-based discourse community, and «modernism» as a larger type of discourse community, constituted by the De Blijde Wereld group and a variety of other small discourse communities.

[34] Daniel Woolf, The Social Circulation of the Past. English Historical Culture, 1500–1730, Oxford/New York 2003, 10.

[35] Anthony Giddens, The Constitution of Society. Outline of the Theory of Structuration, Cambridge/Oxford 1984, 376.

[36] Van Driel, Dienaar van twee heren (as footnote 33), 164; Haitjema, Richtingen (as footnote 10), 120–121.

For the same reason, the concept of discourse communities helps analyze interactions between theological, ecclesial and political alliances in nineteenth-century Protestantism. It allows one to recognize, for example, that Kuyper's conflicts with his colleague, Alexander F. de Savornin Lohman (1837–1924), were not only caused by incompatible interpretations of Calvin and Calvinism, but also, and arguably to a larger extent, by different visions on the relation between the Reformed Churches in the Netherlands (resulting from the Doleantie of 1886) and a number of Reformed discourse communities in the spheres of politics, education and scholarship. Whereas De Savornin Lohman opted for a variety of overlapping and interacting discourse communities, Kuyper can be understood as intending to draw sharp boundaries and to unite the truly Reformed (gereformeerde) communities under a single banner.[37] Finally, Swales' concept invites historians to answer the question I will discuss in the next and final section of this essay: why at all did Dutch Protestants, during the decades after Hofstede de Groot and Da Costa, consider the creation and fostering of discourse communities such an urgent task?

Age of Confessionalism?

Recent years have seen an upsurge of historical interest in nineteenth-century periodicals and voluntary associations. In 2004, for example, the Institute for Dutch History chose associations as a major research topic for the next few years. Some interesting monographs and journal theme issues have been published since a few years earlier.[38] Most of these studies are particularly valuable in reconstructing personal networks in and around such associations and periodicals. However, some exceptions notwithstanding, they spend relatively little time inquiring how associations and periodicals served as *means* for differentiation and subgroup-formation. Frits Broeyer, for example, observes that journals like the Godgeleerde Bijdragen (Theological Contributions), the Jaarboeken voor Wetenschappelijke Theologie (Yearbooks for Scientific Theology) and De Gids (The Guide) reflected a growing diversity of Dutch Protestantism in the decade after Da Costa and Hofstede de Groot. But not for a moment does he ask how periodicals like these contributed to diversity, or how they helped create dis-

[37] Cf. Jeroen Koch, Abraham Kuyper. Een biografie, Amsterdam 2006, esp. 325–90. De Savornin Lohman's non-Kuyperian position is most clearly expressed in his posthumously collected polemics, H. van Malsen (Ed.), Calvijn en Rome. Historisch-politieke bijdragen, Utrecht 1927.

[38] I only mention Hans Bots/Sophie Levie (Ed.), Periodieken en hun kringen. Een verkenning van tijdschriften en netwerken in de laatste drie eeuwen, Nijmegen 2006; Helleke van den Braber et al., Floppen en fiasco's. Mislukkingen uit de tijdschriftgeschiedenis, [Nijmegen] 2002; the theme issue of Documentatieblad voor de Nederlandse kerkgeschiedenis na 1800 28 no. 63 (2005); G. Harinck/D. Th. Kuiper (Ed.), Anderhalve eeuw protestantse periodieke pers, Zoetermeer 1999. I have not yet been able to consult Maartje Janse's (published) doctoral thesis, De afschaffers. Publieke opinie, organisatie en politiek in Nederland, 1840–1880, Amsterdam 2007. Other doctoral dissertations on nineteenth-century sociability are in preparation.

course communities (groups of like-minded Protestants, scattered around the country, discussing their common interest through written communication).[39] Is there a way in which such «source-oriented» studies can be supplemented with analytic frameworks that help interpret the significance of discourse communities constituted by voluntary associations and periodicals? Can one, for example, follow the methodological example of Remieg Aerts, who sees De Gids as a major contributor to an emerging «liberal culture» among Dutch bourgeois elites, or that of Henk te Velde, who argues that nineteenth-century voluntary associations can best be studied as actors in a «political culture»?[40] While, of course, these authors' exclusively political focus needs to be widened, could there be a religious equivalent to «liberal» or «political culture» which served as a rationale for the creation of religious discourse communities in the second half of the century?

Olaf Blaschke's proposal of a «second confessional age» suggests an affirmative answer. I recall that, in a polemic directed against secularization narratives in modern European historiography, Blaschke has drawn attention to Christianity's pervasive influence on individuals' lives in the period between roughly 1830 and 1970. According to Blaschke, this influence, in the private and the public spheres alike, was exerted through confessionally-specific disciplining programs, which told the faithful what to believe, whom to vote for, which newspaper to read and which schools to attend. This «confessionalization», which was invariably accompanied by interconfessional conflicts – caused by public processions, church building, educational reform and the politics of the Holy See – in certain respects so much resembled the period between Luther's Reformation and the Peace of Westphalia, known as the «confessional age», that Blaschke proposes to call the period between the first third of the nineteenth and the last third of the twentieth centuries a «second confessional age».[41] This thesis, to be sure, has been challenged by other historians, who have accused Blaschke of heuristic, historical, geographical and denominational overgeneralizations.[42] Be-

[39] F. G. M. Broeyer, Theologische en kerkelijke pluriformiteit weerspiegeld in tijdschriften. De jaren vijftig van de negentiende eeuw, in: Harinck/Kuiper, Anderhalve eeuw protestantse periodieke pers (as footnote 38), 12–50.

[40] Remieg Aerts, De letterheren. Liberale cultuur in de negentiende eeuw. Het tijdschrift De Gids, Amsterdam 1997; Henk te Velde, Politieke cultuur, verenigingen en sociabiliteit, in: De Negentiende Eeuw, 28 (2004), 193–205.

[41] Olaf Blaschke, Das 19. Jahrhundert. Ein zweites konfessionelles Zeitalter?, in: Geschichte und Gesellschaft, 26 (2000), 38–75; Olaf Balschke, Der ‹Dämon des Konfessionalismus›. Einführende Überlegungen, in: Olaf Blaschke (Ed.), Konfessionen im Konflikt. Deutschland zwischen 1800 und 1970, Göttingen 2002, 13–69.

[42] E.g., Martin Schulze Wessel, Das 19. Jahrhundert als ‹zweites konfessionelles Zeitalter›? Thesen zur Religionsgeschichte der böhmischen Länder in europäischer Hinsicht, in: Zeitschrift für Ostmitteleuropa-Forschung, 50 (2001), 518–519; Carsten Kretschmann/Henning Pahl, Ein ‹zweites konfessionelles Zeitalter›? Vom Nutzen und Nachteil einer neuen Epochensignatur, in: Historische Zeitschrift, 276 (2003), 385; Christopher Clark/Wolfram Kaiser, Introduction. The European Culture Wars, in: Christopher Clark/Wolfram Kaiser (Ed.), Culture Wars. Secular-Catholic Conflict in Nineteenth-Century Europe, Cambridge 2003, 2; Anthony J. Steinhoff, Ein zweites konfessionelles Zeitalter? Nachdenken über die

sides, Helmut Walser Smith has convincingly objected that attempts at building strong confessional identities do not justify the conclusion that the nineteenth century really was a confessional age.[43] Interestingly, in a recent essay, Blaschke seems to accept this rebuttal when he uses the less pretentious alternative «second age of confessionalism».[44]

I will not attempt to settle the question whether the late-nineteenth-century Netherlands went through a «confessional age» – even though, compared to other countries, the high level of institutionalization of religious differences in the Netherlands provides relatively strong evidence for Blaschke's thesis. Relevant for my purpose is only the practice of confessionalization, the existence of which none of Blaschke's critics have doubted. Interestingly, unlike some other German historians, Blaschke not merely defines this confessionalization as an increasing tendency to emphasize Protestant-Catholic differences in a time of redefining the churches' role in society, but also as a program aimed at making believers live according to confessional standards of life and thought.[45] Distinguishing between external and internal confessionalization, Blaschke understands the former to refer to an increasing polarization between different forms of Christian thought and practice in the nineteenth century, to a politicization of their differences and to rigorously polemic attitudes toward each other. Internal confessionalization, in turn, took place within faith communities and aimed at increasing uniformity, regulation and standardization in matters of theology, piety and moral behavior. Whereas the Vatican Council (1869–70) illustrates this type of standardization in the realm of theology, the confessional schools and newspapers that the last decades of the nineteenth century saw emerge serve as examples of internal confessionalization in the spheres of education and media.[46]

Unfortunately, Blaschke postulates a rather direct relationship between this twofold confessionalization program and the «confessions» (Konfessionen) produced by the Reformation era: Roman Catholicism, Lutheranism, Calvinism and Anglicanism. Although Blaschke briefly mentions «the intra-Protestant antagonisms between orthodox and reform Protestants, between moral and cultural Protestantism», he primarily speaks about Catholic-Protestant polemics in so far as external confessionalization is concerned. Illustrating the dynamics of internal

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Religion im langen 19. Jahrhundert, Geschichte und Gesellschaft 30 (2004), 561; Tobias Dietrich, Konfession im Dorf. Westeuropäische Erfahrungen im 19. Jahrhundert (Köln/Wiemar/Wien 2004, 396–397; Ulrike von Hirschhausen, Die Grenzen der Gemeinsamkeit. Deutsche, Letten, Russen und Juden in Riga 1860–1914, Göttingen 2006, 301, 315–316.

[43] Helmut Walser Smith in a review of Blaschke's Konfessionen im Konflikt, published by the German Historical Institute London in its Bulletin 25 no. 1 (2003), 105–6.

[44] Olaf Blaschke, Abschied von der Sekularisierungslegende. Daten zur Karrierekurve der Religion (1800–1970) im zweiten konfessionellen Zeitalter. Eine Parabel, in: Zeitenblicke, 5 no. 1 (2006), online at ‹www.zeitenblicke.de/2006/1/Blaschke/index_html› (consulted June 13, 2007).

[45] For confessionalism in the first sense of the word, see Gangolf Hübringer, Confessionalism, in: Roger Chickering (Ed.), Imperial Germany. A Historiographical Companion, Westport/London 1996, 157 and Blaschke, 19. Jahrhundert (as footnote 41), 40.

[46] Blaschke, 19. Jahrhundert (as footnote 41), 61–63. A third definition, highlighting the ideal of «counter-modernization,» can be found at page 71.

confessionalization, he also exclusively deals with Catholicism and Protestantism at large.[47] Obviously, however, as some critics have correctly pointed out, neither Protestantism nor Roman-Catholicism can be treated as a monolithic bloc. On the contrary, what changed the religious landscape from the mid-nineteenth century onward were processes of internal differentiation, subgroup-formation and polemics – within Protestantism, as illustrated above, but to some extent in Catholicism, too.[48] What makes Blaschke's categories interesting, though, is that the creation of out-groups and the rigidification of group boundaries (external confessionalization) as well as the standardization and specification of religious thought and practice (internal confessionalization) accurately characterize the processes by which subgroups in nineteenth-century Dutch Protestantism defined themselves and related to each other.

In an ideal-typical mode, Anton van Harskamp has argued that the rise of these subgroups was, at least partly, caused by the differentiation of Western societies in the nineteenth century. From 1848 onward, the former public church found itself relegated to a «private» domain and, for the first time in its history, on equal footing with the afgescheiden churches and the former dissenters, which included Lutherans, Mennonites and Remonstrants. United in their struggles against the functional marginalization of religion in modern society, but opposing each other in their efforts at self-definition, the churches became «antagonistic partners», as Van Harskamp quotes Pierre Bourdieu.[49] Interestingly, these antagonisms not only caused tensions between, but also within the denominations. The more the churches saw themselves confronted with the demand to specify how religion related to other spheres of life (such as science, politics and education), the more they created potential for internal disagreement. Whereas the polemics between Hofstede de Groot and Da Costa had still focused on theological issues such as the Trinity, the need to counteract the marginalization of Christian faith in a differentiating society added social, political, cultural and philosophical lines of division and conflict (as illustrated by the example of Dutch modernism presented in the previous section). So, ideal-typically, the

[47] Blaschke, 19. Jahrhundert (as footnote 41), 64.

[48] Wessel, 19. Jahrhundert (as footnote 42), 528; Kretschmann/Pahl, Zweites konfessionelles Zeitalter (as footnote 42), 377–378; Steinhoff, Zweites konfessionelles Zeitalter (as footnote 42), 555–556. For the German Kaiserreich, David Blackbourn emphasizes this differentiation within Protestantism and Roman Catholicism alike in his The Long Nineteenth Century. A History of Germany, 1780-1918, New York/Oxford 1998, 291–292, 296–297.

[49] Anton van Harskamp, Katholicisme en protestantisme als antagonistische medestanders. Geïllustreerd aan het debat tussen J. A. Möhler en F. C. Baur, in: Erik Borgman/Anton van Harskamp (Ed.), Tussen openheid en isolement. Het voorbeeld van de katholieke theologie in de negentiende eeuw, Kampen 1992, 45–91; Anton van Harskamp, The Authority of the Church and the Problematic Nature of Modern Subjectivity in Johann Adam Möhler's Symbolik, in: Donald J. Dietrich/Michael J. Himes (Ed.), The Legacy of the Tübingen School. The Relevance of Nineteenth-Century Theology for the Twenty-First Century, New York 1997, 195–196.

changing position of religion in a differentiating society asked for constructive reflection on the relation between religion and other areas of life, which in turn caused a differentiation in Dutch Protestantism along a number of different lines.

Although this model is in need of historical verification and refinement, it provisionally helps understand why discourse communities, or means for communication between like-minded Protestants, were so important in post-1848 Dutch Protestantism. For if «like-mindedness» was defined not only in theological, but in social, cultural and political terms as well, local groups of «like-minded» Protestants could become remarkably small. In the increasingly orthodox town of Harderwijk, for example, politically liberal Protestants not only found themselves in a minority position – attracting less than seven percent of the votes in the 1918 elections – but also faced the fact that their liberal camp was so divided along ecclesial and theological lines, that these liberal votes went to four different parties. Likewise, the local branch of the Social Democratic Labor Party was practically run by a single active member.[50] For such local minority groups, associations and periodicals were important means, not only for keeping informed about what happened elsewhere in the country, but also for deriving inspiration, ideas and support from «like-minded» Protestants in other parts of the Netherlands. For the village of Naaldwijk, Frans Groot has argued that such translocal communication networks or discourse communities provided decisive support in the «battle» for Christian primary education, fought by minorities of orthodox Reformed Christians who came to call themselves «anti-revolutionary». In accord with Blaschke's confessionalization thesis, Groot suggests that the military metaphors of these religious minority groups – «the battle for the schools» – reflected, if not a front mentality, then at least an awareness of boundaries, conflicts, in- and out-groups and distinctive confessionally-based identities.[51]

So, in a century that had witnessed both the Dutch Reformed attempt at creating a nation-wide religious community and the afgescheiden efforts at establishing local groups of orthodox Reformed Christians, the «parties» that the book reviewer of 1848 saw emerge represented a third strategy. As discourse communities in Swales' sense of the word, they created nation-wide networks for like-minded Protestants. They facilitated their interaction, provided them with resources and stimulated them to «fight» the right cause. On the one hand, these non-geographically-bound communities were a product of external and internal confessionalization in Blaschke's sense of the word. They embodied a variety of religious, social, political and cultural positions, generated by the debate on how Christian religion could possibly relate to differentiated spheres of modern life. On the other hand, these «modern», «ethical», and «confessional» discourse communities reinforced the differences, encouraged Protestants to ally them-

[50] Dirk Jan Wolffram, Bezwaarden en verlichten. Verzuiling in een Gelderse provinciestad, Harderwijk 1850–1925, Amsterdam 1993, 220.

[51] Frans Groot, Roomsen, rechtzinnigen en nieuwlichters. Verzuiling in een Hollandse plattelandsgemeente, Naaldwijk 1850–1930, Hilversum 1992, 240, 252.

selves and to advance their specific Protestant causes. Mediating between national resources and local needs, these discourse communities offered an alternative both to the national Protestant church envisioned in the early nineteenth century and to the local afgescheiden churches. Employing modern communication means, these discourse communities served as major agents in the confessionalization of nineteenth-century Protestantism. They fought the battle that Da Costa and Hofstede de Groot had symbolically begun and confirmed the intuition of the book reviewer that increasing confrontations between various Protestant «parties» were not only due to differences of theological judgment, but also, and more importantly perhaps, to discourse communities of the type that both Hofstede de Groot and Da Costa began to represent.

Religious Discourse Communities. Confessional Differentiation in Nineteenth-Century Dutch Protestantism

If Dutch Protestantism, in the early nineteenth century, constituted a «community», so did local congregations in and outside the Dutch Reformed Church. After 1848, however, a new type of community came into being: the network of like-minded Protestants from around the country, virtually assembled around some specific Protestant principles, regularly expressed in periodicals and propagated by voluntary associations. Such networks, I argue, caused and reflected increasing disagreement among Dutch Protestants over the role of religion in a differentiating society. Examining conceptual categories such as «imagined community» and «memory culture», I suggest that these networks of like-minded (modern, orthodox, socialist, etc.) Protestants can best be characterized as «discourse communities». By mobilizing members and emphasizing in/out-group distinctions, these discourse communities served as primary agents in the «confessionalization» of late-nineteenth-century Dutch Protestantism.

Religiöse Diskursgemeinschaften. Konfessionelle Differenzierung im niederländischen Protestantismus des 19. Jahrhunderts

Wenn der niederländische Protestantismus im frühen 19. Jahrhundert eine «Gemeinschaft» darstellte, so taten dies auch die lokalen Kongregationen innerhalb und ausserhalb der niederländischen reformierten Kirche. Nach 1848 hingegen, wurde ein neues Gemeinschaftsmodell erschaffen: Das Netzwerk von gleich gesinnten Protestanten, die sich um einige spezifische protestantische Grundsätze sammelten, welche regelmässig in Zeitschriften ihren Raum fanden und durch Freiwilligenvereine propagiert wurden. Ich argumentiere, dass solche Netzwerke eine steigende Unstimmigkeit unter den niederländischen Protestanten über die Rolle der Religion in einer sich ausdifferenzierenden Gesellschaft verursachten und spiegelten. Indem ich konzeptuelle Kategorien wie «imagined community» und «memory culture» untersuche, lege ich nahe, dass diese Netzwerke von gleichgesinnten Protestanten (modern, orthodox, sozialistisch etc.) als Diskursgemeinschaften charakterisiert werden können. Durch die Mobilisierung von Mitgliedern und der Unterscheidung von dazugehörenden und nichtdazugehörenden Gruppen, dienten diese Diskursgemeinschaften als primäre Vertreter einer «Konfessionalisierung» des niederländischen Protestantismus im späten 19. Jahrhundert.

Communautés religieuses de discours: Différenciation confessionnelle dans le protestantisme hollandais du XIXe siècle

Si au XIXe siècle le protestantisme hollandais constituait une communauté, il en va de même pour les congrégations locales internes et externes à l'Eglise réformée de Hollande. Toutefois, après 1848, un nouveau type de communauté se forma: le réseau de protestants de même tendance, rassemblés virtuellement autour de quelques principes spécifiquement protestants régulièrement exprimés dans des périodiques et propagés par des associations volontaires. Je soutiens que de tels réseaux causaient et reflètaient le désaccord croissant

entre protestants hollandais à propos du rôle de la religion dans une société différenciée. En examinant des catégories conceptuelles comme «communauté imaginaire» et «culture de mémoire», je suggère que ces réseaux de protestants de même tendance (moderne, orthodoxe, socialiste, etc.) peuvent très bien être qualifiés de «communautés de discours». En mobilisant des membres et en insistant sur des distinctions «dans le groupe/hors du groupe», ces communautés de discours furent des acteurs principaux de la «confessionnalisation» du protestantisme hollandais à la fin du XIXe siècle.

Keywords – Schlüsselwörter – Mot clés

Netherlands – Niederlande – Pays-Bas, Protestantism – Protestantismus – protestantisme, history – Geschichte – histoire, religion – Religion – religion, differentiation – Differenzierung – différenciation, discourse communities – Diskursgemeinschaften – communautés de discourse, collective memories – kollektive Erinnerungen – mémoire collective, confessionalization – Konfessionalisierung – confessionalisation

Herman Paul, Ph.D., lecturer in historical theory at Leiden University and research fellow in modern intellectual history at the University of Groningen