

A historical reflection concerning the Dutch model of the separation of church and state and the role the Christian traditions played.

[preliminary draft]

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The position and function of the church in public life has become an open question since the separation of church and state became one of the marks of modern societies. Until the 19<sup>th</sup> century the position of the church in Europe was as secure as the position of the state. Both were responsible for the well being of the people, the one in secular matters, the other in the spiritual domain, and none of the institutions, and the well being they represented, could exist without the other. There was a self evident relation between God and his creation, between the spiritual and the secular, and between Christianity and culture. And as each territory knew only one state (otherwise there was war), each state recognized only one church. After the Reformation of the 16<sup>th</sup> century the problem of several denominations was solved by the state by recognizing only one of them, either as a state church (England, France, German states) or as a predominant church (The Netherlands).

This all changed with the rise of Enlightenment and the invention of the modern nation state. Firstly, the separation of church and state, achieved in the United States in 1776 and in many Western European countries in the course of the 19<sup>th</sup> century, forced the church and the state to redefine their position and aims. The state declared itself neutral in religious matters and went on the offensive in the field of education and social care. The presumption of the state was that the church, having lost its public position, now only had to take care for the spiritual well being of the people. This affected all churches. They were de-secularized by the state, only leaving room for their focus on eternal life. Secondly, the disappearance of the state church or the predominant church made all churches equal before the law and forced them to redefine their mutual relationship

As far the churches did not give in to socialism (working class) or a form of cultural Christianity, the churches answered this challenge in three ways.

1. The free churches changed from second-rate organisation to modern solution, and these churches could decide to concentrate on spiritual matters, just as the state wished, and become an independent and closed group within society, sometimes anti-society, tradition playing no dominant role in their religious character, conversion and revival becoming the key experience (Dutch Reformed in US, Methodism, Revival, free churches)
2. The former state church or predominant church could reject the non-established position and reclaim the public domain. Such a church still claimed to be the primal and national church, associated easily with nationalism, and giving it a supranational dimension sometimes regained an official position in the state (Germany), sometimes lost the struggle for the dominating position (Scotland, Chalmers; Dutch Reformed Church, Hoedemaker).
3. The former state church or predominant church could accept its non-established position as a new challenge and criticise the state for taking education and social care away from the church. No longer the national church, and challenging the omnipotent state, such a church could try to regain influence in public life by redefining the public role of religion. Instead of a public role for the institution of the church, a public role for Christianity and Christian organisations could be claimed. A small state and a small church leave the field for a pluriform public domain (Kuyper, the Netherlands, CRC).

The underlying issue for the churches that grew out of the separation of church and state was the relationship between Christianity and culture. The Reformed and Presbyterian churches did not want to mix or separate Christianity and culture, but did accept the two in the 19<sup>th</sup> centuries as different entities. In solution 3 they considered Christianity as a constitutive part of culture, antithetical and in competition with other world views; in Richard Niebuhr's terms: Christ as transformer of culture. In solution 2 they considered Christianity being harmoniously related to and elevating culture; in Richard Niebuhr's words: Christ above culture. In solution 1 they considered culture worthless unless it was converted and placed under direct influence of the church; in Niebuhr's words: Christ against culture. Abraham Kuyper's model of a free church (solution 3) met three challenges: 1. the secularisation of society, that demanded for active Christians in all spheres of life and not for an all and everyone

embracing church organisation; 2. the social differentiation, that demanded for a church in accordance with the religious, social and cultural position of its members; and 3. the redefinition of Reformed theology concentrating on culture and Kingdom instead of religion and church (neocalvinism). In this paper I explore some aspects of the implementation of this third option in the Netherlands, stressing the tension between pluriformity/diversity and unity.

### The separation of church and state

The Dutch Republic (1588-1795) was an administrative patchwork. The authority of the States General extended so far that it included defence and foreign policy, while however regional differences abounded. This resulted in different units for weights and measurements, national costumes, tax systems etc. In the religious sense there was also much variety. At the Unie van Utrecht of 1579 it had been determined that in the various provinces ‘every private person may remain free in his religion’.<sup>1</sup> In practice this stipulation turned out to mean that there was freedom of conscience and that also the non-reformed were allowed to practice their religion, albeit not in public. Jews, Catholics, Baptists, Lutherans, Remonstrants and Old Catholics together formed just less than half of the Republic’s population and all had their own church structures and buildings. As a minority in society they could not be ignored.

However, the Reformed Church was the dominant church, that is to say the only public church recognised and financed by the state. Whoever wanted a position in government office usually had to be a member of this church. In short, this church had a monopoly in the public domain. But it was not a state church. Together, church and state embodied the divine order of reality, but defended their independence of each other, whereby the church got the short end of the stick more often than the state. In the Reformed Church the emphasis also lay with the regional authority. The national administrative body, the general synod, had never again convened since 1619. Most skirmishes between church and state took place on the regional and local level.

The spirit of the French revolution that also spread to the Netherlands at the end of the eighteenth century brought with it the idea of the state as the embodiment of national society and the separation of church and state. The 'separation of the church from the state' as laid down in the constitution of 1798 threw the relations that had formed in the public domain into some confusion. The constitutional laws that had been drawn up since then did unify the judicial patchwork of local rights and customs, but did not make explicit what that separation of church and state entailed exactly. It meant the priority of the state within the national order, but equality for all religions. But only time could tell how this would work out in practice. Unlike in France, at least religion was not opposed or ridiculed, but in the constitution already mentioned was 'most highly recommended' as the cement of society. It was also clear that the only loser in the religious gathering was the Reformed Church. It lost its preferential position and resigned itself to being outclassed by the state.

When, after various political changes had occurred in 1813 and the years that followed, the Kingdom of the Netherlands - including what is now Belgium - took shape as a unified nation under King William I (1815-1840), the separation got its own Dutch form. The government forged administrative and financial alliances with the various denominations, whereby these were given the task of 'promoting Christian morals, the maintenance of order and unity, and the cultivation of love for King and Fatherland'. This task gave the Reformed Church - now renamed as the Dutch Reformed Church - the impression that a degree of restoration of its dominant position was possible. It identified itself with the national aims of the state and like the state started to think in national terms. It saw itself as the 'national church'.

An important difference with the period before 1798 was that now the Dutch Reformed Church was led by the state, just like the other denominations. The unity of the nation state was no longer compatible with an independent role for the church next to, and if necessary, opposite to the state. The emphasis in the government of the country was on national interest. The king personified the nation state. He was an expression of Dutch unity and nothing in the public domain existed outside of his will. In this way, the freedom of religion was also tied to the acknowledgment given by William I. The constitution of 1814 attributed that freedom to 'all existing religions'. The situation was hereby fixed. In principle, every new form of public cooperation or groups breaking down into smaller groups

formed, within the unified state, a threat to that unity and therefore repeatedly needed his approval. No existence in the public domain was possible without the government's acknowledgment.

Could this be called freedom? The Dutch Catholics hesitated. They had welcomed religious freedom and did not long for their old second-rate status from the time of the Republic. However, in the face of the rational ideas of the French revolution, they did maintain their belief in the divine order, which the Catholic Church maintained on its own after the state as worldly representative, had fallen away. In practice it turned out that William I's government offered Protestants opportunities in the public domain, but was a threat to Catholics. Royal approvals put a check on the freedom of the Catholics. Their church denomination was used as an instrument of national politics that turned out to have a Protestant hue. That was why Catholics preferred to keep the government at a distance and wanted no interference in their existence as Catholics.

Despite this, in the southern Netherlands a confrontation between state and church about education issues seemed inevitable. When, in the name of national unity and an enlightened civilising offensive, the king closed Catholic schools and instead made public schools and a Collegium Philosophicum in Leuven responsible for the education of the clergy as of 1827, such strong resistance erupted that he had to reverse the measure. But by then the damage had been done. In cooperation with the anti-clerical and French-oriented Liberals, the southern Catholics formed a union against the Protestant king from the north that led to the separation of the southern Netherlands in 1830. Owing to Catholic resistance, William's attempt to unify the nation had resulted in its opposite.

The result of William's policy of unity was not only a separation within the state. In the Dutch Reformed Church similar events also occurred. Religion was the spoilsport yet again. At the time that the separation of church and state was implemented in 1798, a movement of confessionalisation broke out on an international scale, which in contrast to the enlightened clergy and the established churches, called for a radical conversion and the right for lay people to explain the Bible themselves. These self-assured lay people also stepped out into the public domain with their moral message, where it translated into a struggle for abstinence, education and equal rights.<sup>2</sup> Methodism is one of the most well-known examples from the Anglo-Saxon world, but also within the Dutch Reformed Church a similar reveal movement appeared. In 1834 and the years that followed, a number of members left the

church in order to found a 'pure' church after conflicts had arisen. In doing so, some of these 'secessionists' took the old Reformed Church as their example, others looked for a new model for the church.

Anyhow, asking for royal approval from the king for their church was unthinkable to the secessionists. As opposed to the king's rigid pursuit of unity, they defended the opinion that there existed a dependence on God that led to independence of the state. From the viewpoint of the unified state, this idea meant that the secessionist community placed itself outside the existing structures and was therefore illegal. Secessionists were persecuted, fined and had the military billeted. However, the new church movement grew despite the opposition to it, and as in the conflict with the Catholics, the state bit the dust in its handling of these Reformed Protestants. King William II (1840-1848), who succeeded his father, carried out a more moderate policy. Then secessionist congregations were 'admitted to and recognised in civil society'.

Up until now at least two issues stand out. Firstly, that the separation of church and state is often called a 'principle', but that the way it is modelled differs between countries to such an extent that this description sooner points to an ideal than a reality. As a principle, the separation of church and state is a fixed idea. The important point is how that rule functions in practice.<sup>3</sup>

That is when it appears that at the time Dutch society quite radically moulded and adapted the model of revolution witnessed during the separation. This was due to specific Dutch circumstances. For example, Dutch Enlightenment was not anti-clerical, but was tied up with Christianity.<sup>4</sup> Furthermore, as far as religion was concerned, the Netherlands was a country of minorities. Nowhere else in Europe were Protestants and Catholics numerically so well matched within one single state. Given these proportions the other's philosophy of life could not be ignored in the public domain, in spite of all the rational measures towards unity.

Secondly, to the failure of William I's aims towards unity with regard to religion must be added that the churches were not only opposed to revolutionary import and forcing the state to change. In turn they too adapted to the new situation. However powerful the opposition to William's vision on the state was at times, the churches did remodel themselves from representatives of the all-embracing

natural order to communities of Christians that were part of the nation. Also in the religious sphere, new national leaders became a constant.

In short, both the church and the state made adjustments and concessions. For the Reformed Protestants of the Secession this meant that they accepted the separation of church and state and therefore opted for a church that was free of the state instead of a restoration of the position of the Reformed Church as had existed before 1795.<sup>5</sup> The Catholics made use of the few possibilities that William I allowed them, among other things by constructing their own social structure through medically and socially oriented congregations and orders that were independent of the state.<sup>6</sup> Thus, the state in particular was kept at a distance in order to create a space in which to model the conviction of the group in the public domain.

#### A radical solution by Thorbecke

The new constitution which was introduced in the Netherlands in 1848 under pressure from Liberal revolts was particularly disconcerting for a broad middle group in the Dutch Reformed Church, which believed that the church and the state had reached an acceptable *modus vivendi*. For the question of the relationship between the two, the spiritual father of the constitution, Johan Rudolf Thorbecke (1798-1872), presented a solution that was radical at that time in Europe. In his mind he made a distinction between Christianity and the religious denominations. For the state to function as an entity, he believed in a 'Christianity above religious factions', as he called it. Such Christianity belongs to the citizens, not to churches of divers denominations. According to Thorbecke, the religious denominations were no concern of the state. The state no longer needed them for the formation of the state; for the achievement of that aim, well-thinking Christian citizens were much more suitable. As a result, the constitution gave the denominations freedom. The administrative and financial bond between the state and the churches disappeared over time; what remained of the bond between church and state was a small degree of state supervision over the churches in the interest of public order. The Roman-Catholic Church was grateful to Thorbecke. For this church the stricter separation of church and state meant an end to state interference with its growth in the Netherlands as an

independent world. Just five years after the introduction of the constitution, Rome reintroduced the episcopal hierarchy; even Thorbecke felt that he was caught unawares by this rapid action. Protestants trembled and blamed him for having handed over the country to Rome. That turned out better than expected. It appeared that the problem actually lay with the large 'national church', which had difficulty in getting to terms with the fact that it had to operate on a free market and had to face the competition with both the mature and the inexperienced in the religious field in the Netherlands without extra support from the state, ranging from Rome and the secessionists to para-ecclesiastical movements from the Anglo-Saxon world such as Baptists and Pentecostals.

In the midst of this competition, those in the Dutch Reformed Church also became divided among themselves about the aim of the struggle. Now in a sense the question that had been asked in secessionist circles was repeated: ought the church without a role recognised in law in the public domain aim for the restoration of its position as a public church or not? Modern theologians doubted whether Christianity still had exclusive rights to the public domain. Was it not rather reason that played first fiddle? Thorbecke, a Liberal and a Lutheran, identified with this reasoning.

The orthodox-protestant Member of Parliament Guillaume Groen van Prinsterer (1801-1876) emphasised in opposition to this spirit of the French revolution - he called himself Antirevolutionary - that the Netherlands, historically speaking, was a protestant nation and that therefore the state could not take a neutral attitude towards religion. According to Groen the public institutions, such as the state and the schools, had to be rechristianised and build a bond with the Dutch Reformed Church. It seemed like a rearguard action, all the more so as many an orthodox supporter of Groen was not in favour of rechristianising public institutions. They yielded to Liberalism in the state and modernism in the church by attaching more importance to the Christian personality than to doctrinal and institutional Christianity.

The passing of a new education bill that did not allow any space for doctrinal Christianity in public schools seemed in 1857 to be the deathblow to Groen's Antirevolutionary movement. The public domain remained free of the church and its doctrines. There the neutral state now only acknowledged religious expressions 'above religious divisions', in other words made to measure Thorbecke's Liberalism. Modern theologians now really only saw one problem with regard to the radical separation

of church and state: in this way the nation state had also lost control of the international Roman-Catholic Church and to them this seemed unwise.<sup>7</sup> In the meantime Groen shifted his attention from parliament to the orthodox members of the congregation and continued the struggle.

#### Kuyper's change of direction

This was the situation when Abraham Kuyper (1837-1920) appeared on the stage in around 1870. This figure is difficult to place in our political and church history. Was he a restorer or an innovator? The ambivalence regarding his person and what he did stems in part from the combination of a modernist theological education and a transition to Groen van Prinsterer's orthodoxy. In as far as the French revolution had brought about anything worthwhile in Kuyper's opinion, it was as a caricature of Calvinism, which had given the world democracy and freedom of conscience. From this traditional-modern mixture there came forth an extraordinarily strong elixir, but changed the practical implementation of this doctrine to such a degree that the religions in their various confessional forms returned in full to the public domain that had been declared neutral. Kuyper accepted the separation of church and state as consequently as he rejected the thinking about the unity of the state.

While both Groen van Prinsterer and Thorbecke believed that the public domain ought to be a unified entity, in the Protestant or Liberal spirit, Kuyper, an active clergyman who was familiar with the dynamic life of the big city, acknowledged the wide range of opinions in society and argued for a pluriform public domain. The supporters of the various opinions in society ought not to conform to the neutral argument in the public domain, such as the idea of Christianity above religious divides, but should be able to speak out fully. This meant that in the public domain not only the fairness of the Liberals ought to sound, but also the convictions of everyone.

Thorbecke had always abhorred parties and the breakdown of large groups into smaller groups in society. In addition to his aim towards a Christianity above religious differences, he also aimed for a political science removed from political differences, two related armchair proposals. But the historian from Leiden, Robert Fruin, being a Liberal, did appreciate Kuyper's breaking of the public struggle for unity: 'Without the spur of competition we are in danger of falling asleep', he wrote to him in 1880.<sup>8</sup>

He saw Kuyper's aim as a result of the modern, Liberal spirit of the times that strove for freedom in every field. In this regard he was right to a degree. The modern aspect of Kuyper's conviction is evident in his location of the church institute. While his spiritual father, Groen van Prinsterer, had striven for the restoration of the Dutch Reformed Church as a national church, and most of the Reformed held onto that ideal until well into the twentieth century, Kuyper chose for the independent, free church that maintained itself as a congregation of believers and limited its public role. He aimed for a free church in a free state and of both had an instrumental idea in the Liberal spirit. According to him, the separation of church and state offered both the opportunity to focus on their true task and he insisted that they let their public aspirations rest. In the public domain both institutions ought to concentrate on their essential task of respectively evangelizing and maintaining law and order, in favour of free initiative in society. Thus, neither Christianity (Groen) nor Liberalism (Thorbecke) could serve as the criterion for Dutch citizenship.

Kuyper's supporters did not found church schools, did not found a university on religious foundations and did not create ecclesiastical social organisations. From the very beginning, the distance between church and organisation was larger in Protestant than in Catholic circles. The Kuyperians strove for the free formation of associations of citizens of Catholic, Protestant, Liberal, Jewish or whatever hue there was, and turned against state education and state poor relief. The difference between Fruin's Liberal and Kuyper's Calvinist vision for society did not particularly lie in the place that religion or the church ought to obtain in the public domain, but rather the question as to where the guarantees for civil freedom lay: in law or in Calvinist convictions, in the constitution or in the people.

Based on the ideal of freedom, Liberals and Calvinists met in a democratic administrative structure that demanded of citizens with wide-ranging convictions that they regard the public domain in a utilitarian way as a place where they had to live with these differences. Popular influence in the Netherlands could only be achieved if citizens with opposing convictions respected each other in the public domain. That democracy implied tolerance of those with whom one disagreed was a learning process for everyone. In this way Kuyper's introduction into politics of the sharply-phrased concept of 'antithesis' during his term as Prime Minister (1901-1905) was a failure. His successors to this office and sympathetic to his convictions, Theo Heemskerk and Hendrikus Colijn, avoided this word. It took

some getting used to, but in the case of public tolerance another language was fitting, in which words such as ‘suppression of minorities’, ‘antithesis’, ‘papist’, ‘monstrous alliance’ (a Liberal term for the political cooperation between Antirevolutionaries and Catholics) and ‘false doctrine’ did not belong. That foreigners sometimes also had to get used to it became apparent when in 1910 Pope Pius X blamed the ‘false reformers’ Luther and Calvin for their heretic false doctrine in his *Borromaeus* encyclical. The Heemskerk cabinet, fearful disruption in the nation’s religious peace, lodged a complaint against this offence to Protestant feelings in the Netherlands, upon which Rome climbed down.<sup>9</sup>

Through public influence Kuyper still hoped to achieve what Groen had not managed through the public institutions: the Christianisation of society. He achieved much and even became Prime Minister in 1901 of a Christian coalition, but he did not get round to rechristianisation. To achieve that, the group of Reformed parishioners who in 1886 followed him in founding a free church was too small and his person and attitude aroused too much opposition. However, his influence was such that the ousting of religion from public institutions could, for the greater part, be made reversed by making room for organisations, financed by public money, on ideological foundations. By minimising the role of church and state as regards religion in favour of society in the public domain, he bound the Dutch, with all their various convictions, to the nation.

In 1904, Kuyper as Prime Minister once more summarized the role he intended for the state in relation to the various ideological movements within society: ‘The state declares: I cannot let those movements fend for themselves, because they do not have the means to get ahead by themselves, I cannot chose for one or other party, but I will take the system of *parallelism*, I will let both run parallel and in this way will act according to the system of *equality before the law*. With that system, since 1889, we have arrived at a better path. It is with this system that the present cabinet wishes to continue. It does not wish to lend precedence to one group or another, does not want to relinquish the nation’s unity, does not wish to offer privileges or misjudge, yet give both the antithetical parts the same chance, just as the father of the house will support and help along both sons, even though they have different philosophies of life.’<sup>10</sup> This parallelism was a *modus vivendi*, a practical solution to a principally

unsolvable problem. It was no more and no less than a way of dealing with differences; one must not make a political philosopher of Kuyper.<sup>11</sup>

For the greater part this neutral system of parallelism came about through what Kuyper undertook, but the Liberal house of Thorbecke had given him enough room to manoeuvre, while the leftist Liberals in particular supported the Antirevolutionary change of direction towards greater freedom.<sup>12</sup> This support was expressed during the amendment to the constitution of 1887 when the Liberals cooperated on political recognition of movements in society.<sup>13</sup> They agreed to link the extension of suffrage with subsidies for denominational education. This meant that Thorbecke and Groen's idea of a uniform public domain ended and that the plural society found expression in politics and education. Now the political party developed into the pivot of the political system, and the struggle for equal rights in education now changed into a struggle for strengthening its identity.<sup>14</sup> Compared to this constitutional amendment, that of 1917 - in which the same issues were linked - went over old ground about an issue that had already been resolved. 1917 was not the moment of birth of what Arend Lijphart once called the politics of pacification, but became the symbol of the idea that everybody in the Dutch public domain was allowed to be different.<sup>15</sup>

The new system was that of equality before the law, the conviction that had taken root in the Netherlands concerning the separation of church and state, which in fact is more a question of integration than of separation. In the meantime, equality did not bring about this solution. For some considerable time, the Catholics remained behind in the process of nation building, and the nation was and remained predominantly Protestant. But the system did offer opportunities for the struggle for preference between the various groups. The condition supported by the Calvinist range of thought was the acknowledgment of minority rights in the public domain. It was a small rudder, but large enough with which to steer the ship of society.

I would like to add two remarks about this development. First and foremost, what Kuyper did is an example of a 'conservative revolution' as described by Edmund Burke: a revolution 'to preserve our *ancient* indisputable laws and liberties'.<sup>16</sup> An administrative structure imposed on the Dutch people by the rationalism of Enlightenment failed, until it was adapted to fit the relationships within society that had evolved historically. Calvinism must be mentioned separately here, even though the changes to the

public order could only be brought about with help of the Liberals. The concept of Calvinism in this case should not be taken in the doctrinal sense. Kuyper wanted to raise the concept 'out from the fragmented tangle of confessional narrow mindedness' and give it a function in the public debate as an indicator of a philosophy of life and a worldview. To his mind, the believer's independence of church and clergy, thanks to his personal bond with God, was the first characteristic of this neocalvinism. Secondly, the recognition of an individual's worth gave it a democratic character. Thirdly, Calvinism accepted the world and this made it culture-oriented. As civil Calvinism, in other words as *civil religion*, its influence has been felt in Switzerland, England, the United States and the Netherlands.<sup>17</sup> Calvinism shaped the Liberal idea of the separation of church and state for society.

The second remark regards the idea of the separation of church and state itself. As mentioned previously, this concept does not have a fixed content and means among other things: the strict separation of the two, equality for the churches granted by the state, or that the state refrains from intervening in church matters. In the case of the Netherlands, the concept has been eroded to such a degree that it actually is no longer adequate. Since the nineteenth century the question here no longer concerned the separation of church and state, but rather how ideologically diverse organisations in the public domain related to national unity. And the Dutch have tried to solve this problem with the *modus vivendi* of equality before the law plus tolerance.

#### What united the Netherlands

Since Thorbecke and Kuyper the church was no longer a match for the state, although the law always retained a few provisions with regard to religious denominations. And the state was faced with an increasingly ethnised society.<sup>18</sup> Even those who did not belong to anything identified with the state, but sought or also formed an ethnic minority, if necessary with the inadequate name of 'general'. It was difficult to avoid the organisational aims of the Catholics and Protestants in a society that was modernising. It offered security in a society people experienced as cold; it offered the company of like-minded persons and it offered education and development. The success of the new system was so

great that even associations and institutes that opposed the organisation of society along ideological lines became part of the increased ideological diversity, albeit with the rather pale word 'general'. How did the ideologically diverse society fare? The Liberal-Calvinist model of the separation of church and state in a sense passed the Catholics by. In other parts of Europe Catholics took advantage of the modernisation of society with intergralism - the rejection of the separation of church and state and the formation of a more or less autarchic world from within the church.<sup>19</sup> In this regard Pope Leo XIII (1878–1903) was more moderate, but the fact remained that Catholicism, being a world of its own, had to come to an understanding with modernity less emphatically than Protestants.<sup>20</sup> Since 1848 the Catholic Church in our country was still quite satisfied with the legal and actual relationship with 'the modern state'. The Catholics were satisfied with the opportunities this polity offered to found their own organisations. Unlike the Reformed Protestants, their interest lay with the church and not with political influence. The proportional representation implemented in 1917 however, offered them a lawful position. A highlight in Catholic emancipation was the opening of the Catholic University in Nijmegen in 1923, which - totally in Kuyper's spirit - was to lead 'to higher national integration'.<sup>21</sup>

The Reformed Protestants organised themselves in the Netherlands, independently of the Liberals and the other Protestants, as broadly as the Catholics did (Kuyper was an admirer of the Catholic *societas perfecta*) and played an important role in the public domain. This effective orthodox solo performance did not occur anywhere else in Europe. Herein lies the unique quality of the Dutch societal structure, which also explains the world-wide interest for the neo-calvinist tradition. The aptitude for organising that was demonstrated by Catholics and Reformed Protestants in many areas of life, reformed society. Social-democrats followed suit with their own organisations, and the Liberals and the members of the Dutch Reformed Church, both of which opposed this system, also had to go the same way. In this way, the public domain became divided into plots along ideological lines without the help of church and state. Not socio-economic, but ideological dividing lines repeatedly determined relations in society. The problem that faced Dutch society, with its 'narrow' Liberal-Calvinist system as far as the public domain was concerned was: how and where is national unity expressed amid so much organised separation? Tolerance is not the same thing as solidarity. In this regard the state did not have much

influence. It was no more than an administrative machine; who would support that wholeheartedly? Regularly there were fears that national unity would give way under the weight of the ideological differences or the lack of national self-awareness. A judicial framework such as the state or the constitution would not in the Netherlands form the basis for citizenship. Ideological groups, with Liberals and Protestants in the forefront, would form it. Distrust of Catholics, Social-Democrats and Communists as Dutch citizens was related to the suspicion that they had a double loyalty, both to the Netherlands and to Rome, the international worker's movement or Moscow.

That this society did not disintegrate as a result of the formation of these groups was all the more amazing as the groups themselves were also strongly internally divided. Moreover, the state, unlike the church, had a limited social function. In contrast to France, in our country the state was not a big player with political weight.<sup>22</sup> The state as an institute emerged from the nineteenth century almost empty. The state hardly had public attributes and the constitution did not play a part in the national consciousness.<sup>23</sup> William I had intended that the church take upon itself the 'cultivation of love for King and Fatherland', but in the public domain after 1900 the church hardly played a role in the Netherlands. The nation was first and foremost the Dutch citizens themselves, and a state or a church was hardly even involved.

From the end of the nineteenth century the House of Orange filled the void that arose after the two institutions that formed identity, state and church, had withdrawn from the public domain. From the time that women occupied the throne (when Emma became queen in 1890), this politically neutral institute had an affective function. A figure with political immunity, independent of the political parties, became the binding element in an ethnised nation. The historian C. Gerretson even put it this way: 'The idea of the nation is identical to the idea of Orange'<sup>24</sup> The Dutch sense of nation could not be captured in one organisation or ideological movement, but only in a royal house that stood above the political parties. The Liberal and Protestant parts of the nation strongly supported the development of the royal house as a symbol of the nation. Churchgoers prayed for the House of Orange on a regular basis. This connection reached a temporary highpoint in 1933 when the 'Wilhelmus' was chosen as the national anthem. More so than in the nineteenth century, the House of Orange was surrounded with an implicit Christian aureola.

During the interbellum in particular, the new constellation proved what it was worth. In the confusion that arose after the First World War, the peoples of Europe looked for new ways to form bonds. Some found it in totalitarian ideologies in which the state incorporated society. In fascist and national-socialist countries the churches approached the new regimes and contributed to the sacralisation of the state. For a similar elevation of the state's power, no support could be found within the Dutch system with its emphasis on the primacy of society. The cooperation between church and state could not go further than the historical veneration of William of Orange as father of the nation in 1933 - a unique event of national unity, but not a form of sacralisation of the nation or of nationalization of religion. Constitutionally, the crown as *neutrum*, nationally the House of Orange, offered enough of a counterweight against totalitarian political or religious aspirations.

The ideological movements themselves, which owing to the stimulus of the Liberal-Calvinist system had substantially reorganised themselves in society, ideologically withstood the religious temptation of national-socialism and fascism to an important extent. Thanks to their independence of the state, in the thirties the Catholic Church and various Protestant churches in the Netherlands could officially voice a more powerful 'no' against the national-socialist ideology and organisations than elsewhere in Europe. The pluriform model of society offered few legal weapons against the threat of totalitarianism - national-socialist, pacifist and communist organisations could not be forbidden - but ideologically all the more: the official statements made against the NSB voiced by various Dutch churches formed a noteworthy interference in the public domain - also within the European perspective. Not the state, bound to its international neutrality, but society - churches and organisations - developed the defence against totalitarian interference.

### Prosperity and protest

However, during this type of society's prosperity, resistance against it also grew. Enthused by Karl Barth's protest and that of the German *Bekennende Kirche* against Hitler, a group of Dutch Reformed

intellectuals made a successful race to cover lost ground in their church around the time of the Second World War. They tried to bring about more unity in society by no longer regarding differences in worldview as the foundation when forming political parties. In contrast to the Catholic Church or other Protestant churches, the Dutch Reformed Church once more took responsibility for all of society as the 'National Church Confessing in Christ'.

This was an attack on the kuyperian model with immediate consequences for the Dutch version of the separation of church and state. It was also the first attack on the Catholic 'state within the state'.<sup>25</sup> The Catholic Church defended itself with the episcopal charge of 1954, in which it stuck to the relationship between society, church and state according to the Liberal-Calvinist model: 'unified within its own association and from there working together with others'. The Dutch Reformed Church now explicitly turned against linking Christians to one of the Christian political parties. In the Reformed Churches too, uncertainty arose about the formation of separate groups in society that seemed to have become an aim in itself.

But the hoped-for Breakthrough did not yet occur. At the crucial moment, the opening came not from within the religious groups, but from without. The period of prosperity of the ethnised society occurred at the same time as the emergence of television, which opened up the culture of group communication. In 1957, four percent of Dutch households had television, a decade later this had risen to eighty percent. What did the church or the Christian organisations have to say about the world news that was becoming part of individual existence? The insight expressed by the Antirevolutionary politician Bruins Slot in 1963 that it was but a small party in a big world, firmly put into perspective the importance of the group to which one belonged. More strongly than before, in the sixties it came down to the interpreting one's own conviction in relation to the demands of the age, in relation to contemporaries.

In the fifties the system of parallelism increasingly became known by the name that critics of it had thought up: pillarisation. What had formerly had been known as a possibility for the development of various groups, was now widely regarded as a hindrance to the individual. Unlike the church or the Christian organisation, in the fifties the state increased its claim on society, not by way of a national appeal, but through a social offensive that is indicated by the term 'welfare state'. This was initiated

by the social-democrats and the Catholics, who, unlike the Calvinists, put less emphasis on the independence of social circles. The state even assumed the social tasks that the churches and ideologically-based social organisations had carried out, or subsidized them. But it was the individual with an anonymous character that the state took care of. This new function did increase state influence on society, but this was not accompanied by a new, cohesive vision.

With a certain amount of eagerness, the churches followed the modern trail, also professionalized and adopted a more client-friendly attitude. This kind of modernism was however counterproductive and further eroded the church's involvement. People took leave of religion, or it became an individual matter without the church.<sup>26</sup> This was in fact the next step after Kuyper had shifted the ethos in society from the church to the organisation. The next step was now a shift from the organisation of the group to the individual. This was not individualism born from opposition to social oppression by church or state, but to institutions as such, ranging from party membership to marriage as a mode of cohabitation. The leftist progressive movement of the seventies strived for a democratic community of critical and articulate citizens. Unlike in Germany, its extreme radicalism made no victims, in part thanks to the attitude of tolerance the police and the judiciary took. However, most of the population's trust in the institutions did suffer a blow. State and church only retained meaning as a function of the individual, no longer as institutions that legitimized or motivated social cohesion.

The royal house followed in this development. It remained a national symbol, but under the rule of Queen Beatrix it received legitimacy on the basis of professionalism in addition to its affective meaning. Furthermore, the family of Orange represented our individual singularity. In dealing with emotions surrounding birth, choice of partner, illness and death, the Dutch identified themselves on an individual level with the House of Orange.

Individual adulthood and solidarity with the oppressed was the credo, and therefore people experienced collectivity in a different way than during the period of pillarisation. The 'Interkerkelijk Vredesberaad' (IKV) did manage to mobilize the masses in the eighties, but no longer as an extension of the church. The peace movement presented itself as an independent social movement, which did not make the religious motivation more explicit. The 'reds' of social democracy disappeared, as did the Communist, Catholic and Reformed Protestant worlds. The churches no longer exerted influence over

the organisations to which they had contracted out their social presence. They did not take these tasks upon themselves again, but turned inwards, powerless to deal with individualism. The growth of the non-institutional, para-ecclesiastical movements by no means compensated for the institutional churches' loss of members, but did illustrate in the ideological field the transition from a society that functioned on the basis of groups to one based on individualism. In part due to, and in contrast to, other West-European countries the state had already been stripped of an explicitly Christian argument during the period of pillarisation, and because from the sixties onwards society went on to show the general European trend towards secularization, the Netherlands became known as one of the most secularized countries. Religion remained present, but disappeared behind the front door or became an activity for the happy few.

What dominated was a sense of liberation and the desire to embed individual freedom. The new constitution of 1983 offered the following foundation in law: 'Discrimination on the grounds of religion, philosophy of life, political inclination, race, gender, or on whatever ground, is prohibited.' A new social regime was emerging in which the Christian religion was no longer a determining factor. Whatever changed in the sixties, not the pluriformity of the public domain. Instead of others, the individual occupied centre stage. From now on tolerance meant that the other had to put up with your singularity. This interpretation of the plural structure of society gave newcomers to the Netherlands the opportunity to remain themselves completely, as individuals and in groups. The Netherlands had become a liberal society in the nineties in which the other had to be tolerant.

Nobody seemed to be responsible for the public domain. Church and state had withdrawn and had left behind a society that was becoming increasingly uncultivated. This situation first changed when at the end of the nineties, in a worsening economic climate, the difficult integration of newcomers to the Netherlands who were socially underprivileged led to tensions. With rising costs the need to reorganize the welfare state became more urgent, which meant that the public domain lost a social aspect of which one had always thought that it was part of the Dutch identity. Society had to start taking responsibility for itself and appeal to volunteer aid - but since individualisation this was exactly what no longer existed.<sup>27</sup> The paradox was that the national government itself took up an instrumental

position vis à vis the society that it had called upon to explain standards and values once more. What held the Dutch together, after depillarisation, without state welfare and without neighbourly help?

No democracy on ice

Since the end of the nineteenth century the Netherlands had had a broad, pluriform public domain, with in its margin free churches and a small state apparatus, which independently but with mutual respect, took care of the moral, judicial, police, military and financial preconditions. At times the church's influence dominated, at other times that of the government, but the separation of church and state was not in dispute again. In this constellation of parallel groups the Dutch nation remained a weakly developed concept.

This weakness backfired on the Netherlands when from the sixties on it individualised and secularised. The influence of churches and religion became too small to continue to influence society, thereby weakening the Christian moral element that had determined the relations between the parallel groups. The question arose as to whether other philosophies or the constitution could fill that gap. That remains unclear for the time being.

Since a number of years pressure has once more been explicitly brought to bear on the state to fulfil a moral role; the church is not mentioned. The state must again embody the unity that is lacking in the Dutch nation. Here the old problem once again arises as to whether a state can dictate to a society how things ought to be and whether the state is right in only bestowing citizenship on that part of the population that keeps to those rules.

Ambitious efforts to this end foundered in the past. The Netherlands is also not helped by a democracy kept on ice, a reservoir in which the state fixes and protects the leading opinion of that moment against points of view that could damage it. A democracy that wishes to ward off deviant convictions has as its greatest drawback that it clings to the law when there is a lack of life force. But the law is a straw one clutches to, because even the strictest legislation cannot guarantee freedom. Such a democracy does not have a future. A healthy democracy can handle the debate with the deviant convictions, not

because it has such a strong state or a good constitution that is easy to memorize, but because it has strong citizens.

That is also the path to which the Islam and the dogmatic supporters of Enlightenment should be drawn. Tolerance is not a characteristic of democratic citizens that comes naturally. It is a virtue that citizens in a living democracy must repeatedly impress upon one another and teach each other as a precondition for the freedom of everyone, because ‘the Herod, who plans the attack on another person’s freedom and spiritual life, will roam around in every era’.<sup>28</sup>

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<sup>1</sup> Art. XIII, according to the text edition in S. Groenveld en H.L.Ph. Leeuwenberg (red.), *De Unie van Utrecht. Wording en werking van een verbond en een verbondsacte*. Den Haag: Martinus Nijhoff (1979), 29.

<sup>2</sup> See: Hugh MeCleod, *Religion and the People of Western Europe 1789-1989*. Oxford/New York: Oxford University Press (1997<sup>2</sup>), 36-43.

<sup>3</sup> For a short historical survey of the constitutional relationship of church and state, see: S.C. den Dekker-van Bijsterveld, ‘Kerk en staat. Grondwettelijke ontwikkeling in Nederland sinds 1814’, in: S.C. den Dekker-van Bijsterveld e.a. (red.), *Kerk en staat. Hun onderlinge verhouding binnen de Nederlandse samenleving*. Baarn: Ambo (1987), 27-39.

<sup>4</sup> Cf. E.G.E. van der Wall, ‘De Verlichting – christelijk of antichristelijk?’, in: Jack de Mooij en Ineke Smit (red.), *Balans van een eeuw. Wendingen in de historiografie van het christendom 1901-2001*. Heerenveen: Groen (2002), 67-91.

<sup>5</sup> J. Vree, ‘Van separatie naar integratie: de afgescheidenen en hun kerk in de Nederlandse samenleving (1834-1892)’, in: R. Kranenburg & W. Stoker (red.), *Religies en (on)gelijkheid in een plurale samenleving*. Leuven/Apeldoorn: Garant (1995), 161-176.

<sup>6</sup> Joos van Vugt speaks of a ‘half-hearted suppression’. See: 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 Lepelae, Joachim Schmiedl (eds.), *Religious Institutes in Western Europe in the 19th and 20th Centuries. Historiography, Research and Legal Position*. Leuven: Leuven University Press (2004), 280-284.

<sup>7</sup> Vgl. Leen Dorsman, ‘C.W. Opzoomer en de *Scheiding van kerk en staat* (1875)’, in: F.G.M. Broeyer en D.Th. Kuiper (red.), *Is ’t waar of niet? Ophefmakende publicaties uit de ‘lange’ negentiende eeuw*. Zoetermeer: Meinema (2005), 215-234.

<sup>8</sup> H.J. Smit en W.J. Wieringa (eds.), *Correspondentie van Robert Fruin 1845-1899*. Groningen/Djakarta: J.B. Wolters (1957), 247.

<sup>9</sup> C. Fasseur, *Wilhelmina. De jonge koningin*. Amsterdam: Balans (1998), 480-482.

<sup>10</sup> A. Kuyper, *Parlementaire redevoeringen*, IV. Amsterdam: Van Holkema & Warendorf (z.j. [1910]), 26-27, 55 (10 december 1904).

<sup>11</sup> Vgl. George Harinck, ‘A Historian’s comment on the Use of Abraham Kuyper’s idea of Sphere Sovereignty’, *Journals of Markets & Morality* 5, nr. 1 (2002), 277-284

<sup>12</sup> Vgl. J.Th.M. Bank, *De symfonie van kerk en staat. Rede uitgesproken ter gelegenheid van het afscheid als hoogleraar vaderlandse geschiedenis na 1500 aan de Universiteit Leiden op 27 mei 2005*. Z.p., z.j., 12.

<sup>13</sup> Gert van Klinken, *Actieve burgers. Nederlanders en hun politieke partijen*. Amsterdam: wereldbibliotheek (2003), 190-191.

<sup>14</sup> Zie: H. Bavinck, *Paedagogische beginselen*. Kampen: J.H. Kok (1904).

<sup>15</sup> Piet de Rooy, ‘De pacificatie van 1917. Iedereen in Nederland mag anders zijn’, *Historisch Nieuwsblad*, april 2005, 9-14.

<sup>16</sup> Edmund Burke, *Reflections on the Revolution in France*. Londen: Penguin Books (1986), 117.

<sup>17</sup> A. Kuyper, *Lectures on Calvinism*. Grand Rapids: Eerdmans (1931), especially lecture 1.

<sup>18</sup> Vgl. Hans Knippenberg, ‘Nationale integratie en de ‘etnisering’ van katholieken en protestanten: de rol van het onderwijs’, in: Henk te Velde en Hans Verhage (red.), *De eenheid en de delen. Zuilvorming, onderwijs en natievorming in Nederland 1850-1900*. Amsterdam: Het Spinhuis (1996), 178-182.

<sup>19</sup> Zie: Hans Righart, *De katholieke zuil in Europa. Het ontstaan van verzuiling onder katholieken in Oostenrijk, Zwitserland, België en Nederland*. Meppel/Amsterdam: Boom (1985).

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<sup>20</sup> J.A. Bornewasser, 'Twee eeuwen kerk en staat. Een veelledige confrontatie met de moderniteit', in: J. de Bruijn e.a. (red.), *Geen heersende kerk, geen heersende staat. De verhoudingen tussen kerken en staat 1796-1996*. Zoetermeer: Meinema (1998), 46-48.

<sup>21</sup> Thus spoke J.H.F.M. Schrijnen, the first rector magnificus of Nijmegen University at the opening ceremony in 1923, quoted in: Johan van Zuthem, *'Heelen en halven'. Orthodox-protestantse voormannen en het 'politieke' antipapisme in de periode 1872-1925*. Hilversum: Verloren (2001), 265.

<sup>22</sup> Cf. Piet de Rooy, *Republiek van rivaliteiten. Nederland sinds 1813*. Amsterdam: Mets & Schilt (2002), 287-292.

<sup>23</sup> Cf. Ido de Haan, *Het beginsel van wasdom en leven. De constitutie van de Nederlandse politiek in de negentiende eeuw*. Amsterdam: Wereldbibliotheek (2003), 211-218.

<sup>24</sup> C. Gerretson, *Verzamelde werken III*. Baarn: Bosch en Keuning (1974), 43.

<sup>25</sup> Raedts, 'Tussen Rome en Den Haag', 40.

<sup>26</sup> Cf. Peter van Rooden, 'Oral history en het vreemde sterven van het Nederlandse christendom', *Bijdragen en Mededelingen betreffende de Geschiedenis der Nederlanden* 119 (2004) 524-551.

<sup>27</sup> See: Menno Hurenkamp, 'Burgers moet zichzelf leren redden – wel zo handig voor de overheid', *NRC Handelsblad*, 24/25 september 2005.

<sup>28</sup> G. Puchinger, *Kuyper-herdenking 1987 (de religieuze Kuyper)*. Kampen: J.H. Kok (1987), 30.