

Effects of globalisation and pluralism on Reformed communities in the peat reclamation area of North-East Holland, 1880-1940

Modernisation in belief and science

The Dutch peat reclamation area bordering Germany, in the provinces of Groningen and Drenthe, was renowned for both its technological progressiveness and religious pluralism. Already in the eighteenth century Jewish, Lutheran and Roman-Catholic communities (with a substantial German influx)¹ co-existed with the dominant Reformed Church. After the separation of Church and State in 1796 and the Liberal Constitution of 1848 many Protestants left the Dutch Reformed Church, to found new denominations of their own. The Secession of 1834 resulted in the Christian Reformed Church, Baptist Churches and the Salvation Army also established a strong presence in the area.

Globalisation in this part of Holland manifested itself in two separate ways. First, there was a marked influence of American Evangelicalism. Many secessionists from Groningen, Friesland and Drenthe had migrated to the United States and contacts remained strong. This influence, which stressed the importance of personal conversion, suited the context of the peat colonies. Churches weren't inherited from the past, but built by newly formed communities. Individuals joined freely, urged by personal faith. The traditional historiography has always stressed the anti-Liberal tendencies of many of these convictions, which indeed presented similarities to the contemporary phenomenon of Fundamentalism in the United States. However, globalisation was also present at quite a different level. Farmers and industrial entrepreneurs in this recently reclaimed land aimed at large-scale production and the use of the latest technologies. The potato flour industry is just one of the many examples. The area entered a world-wide competition and kept in touch with agricultural developments in far-off countries like America, Australia and the Dutch Indies.

Globalisation in the religious field was indebted to Evangelicalism, but in the socio-economic field it was connected to Positivism. Too often, historians have only considered one of these manifestations at a time, forgetting that both could co-exist in one and the same person – especially in the class of innovating farmers and entrepreneurs. Among them we find believing and devoted Christians, who at the same time were deeply interested in contemporary human science.

An age of modernisation

Reformed communities in the Netherlands, especially those derived from the Secession of 1834, have often been interpreted as being anti-modernist in their outlook. A case can be made for that point of view. The Secessionists often stated that they preferred the ecclesiastical, theological and political state of affairs as it had existed before the impact of the French Revolution, over its counterpart in the nineteenth century. In the twentieth century, after the merger with Abraham Kuypers' *Doleantie*-movement and the establishment of the Reformed Churches in the Netherlands in 1892, their Synod repudiated the accepted scientific interpretation of the origins of the planet earth.

This happened as late as 1926. And yet, there is something to be said against the view that Reformed Dutchmen in the century between 1840 and 1940 rejected the secular versions of their contemporary culture or were ignorant of it. Let's take a closer look at the situation in the peat reclaiming area's of the Dutch North-east, in the parts of the provinces of Drenthe and Groningen adjoining the German borders. For our subject the so-called *Veenkoloniën* are a promising focus. Here we find Reformed communities, which trace their spiritual roots to

Calvinism. Simultaneously we meet a bristling class of modern self-made farmers. In the way they order their business and make good use of the latest technology, the impression these Reformed farmers create is that of a thoroughly rationalist and pragmatic attitude. My great-grandfather Arend Brouwer was one of them.

All in all, the picture before our eyes is diverse. Reformed communities in this part of Holland harboured a surprising variety of attitudes. To understand this mixture, it may be useful to study the details. We may start with a sociological explanation model and apply this to the Christian Reformed Church of Weedingermond, established in 1879.

The Hendriks hypothesis

An influential model for the study of Reformed communities in the Netherland has been proposed by the sociologist J. Hendriks in 1971. In his well-known study *Emancipatie van de gereformeerden (Reformed Emancipation)* Hendriks distinguishes three consecutive periods. According to Hendriks they were characterised by 'ideological awakening and agitation' between 1860 and 1880, by 'organisation and confrontation' between 1880 en 1920 and by fulfilled aims (and subsequent stagnation) between 1920 and 1950. The next stage in this scenario - cultural integration into the society as a whole – only starts as late as 1950.²

Though stimulating, this model doesn't fit well with developments in Weedingermond. The Christian Reformed Church in this locality was founded in 1879 by a consistory in which most of the members, at that time, belonged to the labour class. It was a great achievement that they successfully organised a community, which held together. It managed to build a church and pay a minister in the newly reclaimed land. In the following decades however, we find almost no traces of 'agitation and confrontation'. That attitude, aiming at those who not belonged to the Reformed community, only arose after the majority in the consistory had been taken over by representatives of the emerging class of farmers and peat dealers, engaged in large-scale reclamations. The Reformed community of Weedingermond was split in 1906, into two new bodies. Nieuw-Weerdinge for the time being retained a strong labour class representation in the leadership, Ter Apel being controlled from the start by the new middle class. It was not in Nieuw-Weerdinge but in Ter Apel that 'agitation and confrontation' erupted. The immediate cause was the founding of a Christian school in 1911-1913,³ combined with a concentrated effort to induce children of other Protestant communities to forsake the public school for its Christian counterpart. It was quite a shock for the village. 'We were stunned', said one of the children who remained in the public school. 'All of a sudden many of our comrades were gone and our parents were embittered about it.'⁴

The case of Weedingermond and Ter Apel⁵

So far, one can argue that the developments in Weedingermond and Ter Apel follow the pattern of Hendriks' model. The delay in the arrival of 'agitation and confrontation', by three decades, might be explained by the fact that we deal with a far-off region in the Netherlands. Most striking however is what happens in the next two decades. In the twenties and thirties, far ahead of what we would suspect, we note a clear impact of the secular scientific world-view on the Reformed community of Ter Apel. Apparently a full-grown Reformed community was established relatively late and its modernisation started relatively soon.

This needs some elaboration. Many Reformed Dutchmen from a previous generation were hewn from oak. When I was a kid in 1962, it was permitted to me to be photographed on the knees of my great-grandmother Jantje Groenwold. She was born in 1864 and ninety-eight by then.⁶ As an adolescent I enjoyed the opportunity to meet representatives of the next

generation, born between 1885 and 1915. When discussions touched metaphysical matters, it was clear that they fully adhered to the word of the apostle Paul to the Ephesians 4:20. 'You did not so learn Christ' was translated from the Greek into Dutch as 'Maar gij geheel anders; gij hebt Christus leren kennen.'⁷ 'Thou completely different.' If contemporary culture and the authority of the Bible clashed, there was no doubt at all where they stood.⁸

In following generation however, born between 1915 and 1935, things are different. Here we witness a new phenomenon: representatives of the Reformed communities who combine the tenets of their faith seemingly effortlessly with the insights of secular science. My father Johan van Klinken (* Nieuw-Weerdinge 1934), a loyal church member till this very day *and* a nuclear physicist, exemplifies this attitude.⁹ Clearly, well ahead of the secularisation in the sixties a powerful process of change must have occurred in this Reformed community in the twenties and thirties. To analyse this process of change, church history alone won't suffice. We'll have to take account of the practical living conditions and the education system too.

The founding generation

The Christian Reformed community of Weerdingermond was founded by self-made people in previously uninhabited territory. At the very least, they had to earn their own living in the former wilderness. Neither the church nor the state would come to the aid of an able-bodied man who wasn't able to achieve that. People had to be self-sufficient, even though they initially didn't enjoy much of a financial surplus. In 1883, four years after the founding of the church, just two members of the congregation paid taxes of any substance.¹⁰ The other heads of family however contributed too, albeit for smaller sums. At the very least they could fend for themselves without external support. This must have taken a considerable effort, especially as we have to take into account that apart from the needs of the families a minister and a church had to be financed. For the self-esteem of any full member of the community it was essential to take a share in this burden.

Though the peat area attracted many immigrants, the majority didn't come from very far. Eighty percent of the adult members of the Christian Reformed church of Weerdingermond in 1884-1887 was born in the provinces Drenthe and Groningen. Ten percent had arrived from Frisia.¹¹ Just one family came from abroad. Frederik Geerlinks, baptised in the Reformed church of Emlichheim, had migrated from the Kingdom of Hannover (Germany) in the sixties. The melting pot of Weerdingermond was quite effective. Even among those who spent far more hours with the spade than with the pen, the Christian Reformed church never lacked elders with an aptitude for correspondence and the keeping of minutes in quite acceptable Dutch and fine handwriting. Unlike the Roman Catholic parish and the Jewish kehilla, where the use of German and Yiddish remained distinctive until well into the twentieth century, members of the Reformed community couldn't be recognised as such by their language. It was common to use the dialect of Groningen in personal conversation, but only Dutch was used for correspondence, in official meetings and for the readings of the Bible. Unlike the German-born Frederik Geerlinks and his offspring, the Frisians persevered in their ancestral language, but not outside the intimacy of their families.

As to background and language, the Reformed community in its openings years was quite homogeneous. The occupation of the adult male members (it is rare to find a professional entry for the women, though many of them were actively engaged in the labour process) can be deduced from the municipal registers. Over 70% of these adults in the eighties are classified as labourers and some 10% as farmers. The remaining 20% (including the minister) mainly consisted of artisans and traders.¹²

During the first three decades after the founding of the church in 1879, the population shifted continually. As said before, it was essential to be self-reliant *and* to take a share in the maintenance of the church's fabric and finances. Those who didn't find the necessary opportunities, soon went on to try their luck elsewhere. Those who remained, guiding the church through its first quarter of a century, may be considered as a founding generation. Many of its representatives share a set of common characteristics. They tended to link together a Calvinist confessional theology and a strong sense of independence. The former was rooted in the Dutch Reformation, the latter showed affinity with the awakenings in the Anglo-Saxon world. Neither of these tendencies is amazing, yet the combination is. In the best tradition of the Secession of 1834, it was a common belief that the state of affairs in the State and especially the Church once had been 'better' than in the present age. Frederik Geerlinks, a fond reader, preferred books from the 17th and 18th century over contemporary ones.¹³ And yet, people like Geerlinks family were no reactionaries. In fact, they got on well with the conditions of their own time. They appreciated the freedoms guaranteed in the Liberal constitution of 1848, which allowed them to arrange their ecclesiastical matters without interference from the State.

Self-reliance meant a lot in the new society of the reclaimed peat lands. As the minutes of the church show, the male and even the female members could be quite headstrong. Unlike the popular association of Dutch Calvinism with stiffness and formality, emotional outpourings and noisy meetings were common in the ecclesiastical life of Weerdingermond. The Evangelical undercurrent is apparent in the favourite songs. Though translated into Dutch, most of these songs belonged to an international context of Protestant awakenings in the 18th and 19th century. Far from being exclusively Christian Reformed, the same texts were used by the Baptists, the Evangelical wing of the Dutch Reformed Church and the Salvation Army. The common spirituality of these groups added to the sense of freedom by offering alternatives. If pressures within a community got too high, the losers in one of the endemic internal conflicts could switch to a denomination that didn't differ too much of their own. There was an easy way in, but also a way out.

The second generation

The Secessionists of Weerdingermond became part of the Reformed Churches in the Netherlands in 1892. In 1906 the community split up after the founding of the new church in Ter Apel (Groningen). These dates mark the entry of a new generation, with a different attitude when compared with the previous one. Ideology became far more important than it had ever been, the Reformed Churches providing a national context. Only now, we find the 'agitation and confrontation' of Hendriks' model. It makes a difference in comparison to the missionary efforts of the previous generation, which had been connected to the concept of predestination. Those people who seemed to be inclined to the faith had been sought out and addressed in private conversation. The general idea had been the gathering in of the elect. This had been a matter of individuals or at the best of families.

The new generation however sought the offensive. It did so by targeting the jewel of Liberal mass education: the public school of Ter Apel. The Reformed church took the lead in the establishment of a Christian school, that was supported by the Evangelical wing of the Dutch Reformed Church and the Baptists. To the great annoyance of both Liberals and Social-Democrats they made a concentrated effort to convince *all* parents who considered themselves biblical Christians, that they owed it to their faith to send their children to the new school. Evangelisation thus took a new character. The aim was no longer to gather the elect by looking for signs of divine grace in 'seeking' individuals, but to unfold the banner of Christ in an unbelieving world.

The young reformed church of Ter Apel considered it important to be seen and heard in society, whether it was appreciated or not. It took some courage. The Jewish mission, also a new phenomenon in these parts, was clearly *not* appreciated by its recipients.¹⁴ Reformed evangelists in the fun fair or at the gates of sports manifestations were also at the constant risk of coming to blows. The youngsters didn't seem to mind too much. They willingly entered the political field as well, as part of the Antirevolutionary Party. In this 'untamed' part of Holland street politics could be quite rough. It was not uncommon for Reformed families to store arms, to be prepared in the case of a Communist uprising.

In later years, this epoch would be considered the 'heroic' stage of the development of the church in Ter Apel. At first sight, it looks as if the Reformed community was more different from the world than ever. At the same time however, the statistics of the municipal archives reveal a strong upward tendency in the socio-economic field. If we sum up the adult members of the church for whom an occupation was given between 1921 and 1940, then we find that the relative number of labourers - who had accounted for 70% of the community during the eighties of the nineteenth century - had shrunk to hardly more than 20%. The variety in occupations in the Reformed community was greater than ever. By now the middle class had become dominant, ranging from skippers (7%) to tradesmen, artisans and employees of the customs in this border region. The number of farmers (almost 12%) hadn't expanded much, though the value of their holdings had substantially. Peat contractors accounted for a mere 4%, but between 1906 and 1940 a third of the elders of the church was derived from their ranks.¹⁵

The peat area during the initial reclamation stage has been characterised as a 'Wild West', where chances opened up for anyone who was willing to work, regardless of class prejudices in the 'old' parts of Holland. This seeming equality didn't last long, as the growing social diversity within the Reformed community shows. Some of the most enterprising colonists established themselves as big farmers or mill owners, the less successful went on as labourers or small traders. Under the former the Evangelical influence remained very strong, including a widespread belief in miracles (faith healing) and a marked emotionalism in their Christian message. Under the latter, the developments are more complex to trace. These farmers and the entrepreneurs were prominent members of the consistory in Ter Apel. They lobbied for Sunday observance in the potato flour factories.¹⁶ In ecclesiastical controversies, such as the proceedings in the Reformed Churches in the Netherlands against Johannes Geelkerken, they favoured a strictly confessional, orthodox stance. And yet, without comment in public, they made sure that the most promising of their children kept in touch with the pace of science. Fathers who had done very much to establish Christian primary school, sent their brightest sons (less often their brightest daughters) to *public* secondary school, if that school offered the best available courses in subjects like mathematics and physics. It is surprising to find that this happened silently, apparently unnoticed in public debate and unrecorded in the files of the Reformed Church.

The third generation

The homogeneity of the first generation (the 'founders') had thus given way to diversity in the second. One can't resist the feeling that the intensified stress on spiritual unity of the church was somehow connected to the fact that socio-economic unity was falling apart. Gone were the days in which the labourers had enjoyed a clear majority in the consistory of Weerdingermund. In Ter Apel the peat contractors, the farmers, the director of the AGO-factory and some representatives of the middle class held the key positions.

The third Reformed generation grew up in this context during the twenties and thirties, in a church in which this profound alteration had already taken place. During the opening years of their lives all the members of this generation shared the experience of belonging to a tight community, which expressed itself in the closely connected entities of family, church and school. From their twelfth year however, things would become different. Many of these children left school and began to work in the fields, the factories or the households. Some of them may have accepted this as normal, but we do well not to take that for granted. Personal correspondence in this period shows a very real apprehension that one might well be excluded from the full potentialities of life. Dirk Zijlstra (1896-1971) confessed his faith and became a communicant member in the church of Ter Apel in 1918. At the same time in a letter Zijlstra, who belonged to the lower middle class, expressed the fear to descend into the grave before he had ever truly lived. The quotation in Dutch reads: 'oud zijn voor ze het weten en met al hun ploeteren *nog voor den dag* van zalige rust de kelder ingaan'.¹⁷

Only the scions of rather well-to-do families and those who were considered exceptionally gifted could aspire to obtain a prolonged formal education. It was an opportunity Dirk Zijlstra would never enjoy. From the beginning this implied a social differentiation, with a marked effect on careers. The rift deepened in the twenties, due to the effects of economic globalisation. After some final profitable years during the First World War, the peat industry had entered a irreversible decline. The modern fuel markets were dominated by coal and oil. For Northeast Holland this meant unemployment and poverty for many, well before the impact of the Wall Street crash in New York in 1929. One of the remedies proposed for the stricken area was the founding of a secondary school of the highest standards. Despite competing efforts to get it in Emmen or Coevorden (both in Drenthe), the project was granted to Ter Apel in Groningen. The Rijks Hogere Burgerschool (HBS) opened in 1924. Though neutral in the fields of religion and politics, and Positivistic in the field of science, it was the express intention of the management to attract the brightest teenagers from *all* the denominations in the neighbourhood.¹⁸

Reformed teenagers whose parents were able and willing to pay for it, initially attended the Christian secondary school in Stadskanaal.¹⁹ Their parents held the key positions in the Reformed consistory. All of them had been actively engaged in the founding of a Christian elementary school in Ter Apel. In 1926, when contention arose on whether the story of Eve and the snake in Genesis might be read allegorically, they opted squarely for the orthodox, official opinion in this matter: the correct way to read the biblical stories dealing with the primordial history of mankind, was a literal one. As the Assen synod concluded, the snake in paradise belonged to the empirical reality of hard facts. No one in Ter Apel even considered joining the *Hersteld Verband*-movement of Johannes Geelkerken and other 'Liberal' dissidents. As far as anyone could see, Reformed Ter Apel was staunchly orthodox, and that's also the view taken in the historiography.

Or was it? The striking thing is that, quietly and without any fuss, some of the teenagers of the community were being trained to analyse the material reality in quite a different way. The subject was never discussed in the consistory, but was certainly not without implications for the church. Differentiation of income and status between the members during the previous decade had been countered by an increasing stress on ideology, common to all. This ideological unity, both in the fields of Reformed theology and Antirevolutionary politics, was indeed well established in day-to-day life. And yet, it was unrealistic to assume that the new top layer of the community, having gained access to the higher strata of the local society in the socio-economic field, would exclude themselves from those same circles in the intellectual field. In comparison to the Liberals, the Social-Democrats and the Roman-Catholics they, as Calvinists, thought in a different way. But it didn't occur a moment to them that they should know *less* than those others, especially where

the material world of hard facts was concerned. As Geert van Klinken (1896-1941), farmer and tradesman in fertilizers, remarked: the leading figures of the Reformed community couldn't avoid the themes of the present age, an age in which the candle had given way to electricity and the towboat to the motorcar. 'Avoiding the world', according to him, 'would be sectarian, not truly Calvinist.'²⁰

And so, some privileged few members of the third Reformed generation, had to combine two very different sets of thinking. Arie and Jaap van Klinken (* 1925 and 1927), sons of the aforementioned Geert, went to the HBS. Piet Meijer (* 1925), son of the headmaster at the Christian school in Nieuw-Weerdinge, was also fond of learning. For that reason he too enjoyed the opportunity to attend the famous secondary school in Ter Apel to the full. In retrospect, Meijer called it a highly stimulating intellectual environment. The teachers took great care never to offend the religious or – in the case of scions from Communist families – political feelings of their pupils. And yet, Meijer realised, there *was* a clash of two worlds. 'At school we were taught by teachers whose views on reality were Positivistic. At home on the other hand, we were taught that the world had literally been created in seven days.'²¹ Schoolmate Jan Eggink (1919-1999) used a German expression to describe the same thing: a *Umwertung aller Werte*. Like Meijer, Eggink would remain loyal to the church. But from now on he didn't necessarily feel obliged to remain within its boundaries. Not only did Eggink develop a liking for playing tennis, he learned to dance as well. Enterprises like these introduced him to people who had little in common with the Reformed community.²² The two worlds coexisted, but never met. In the HBS religion was not considered to be a fitting subject for discussion. At home, the exegesis of Genesis was never linked to the contents of the courses on natural history young Piet Meijer was taking during his school hours.

For this segment of the third Reformed generation, the gap between Positivism and Calvinism had to be bridged in silence. The Assen synod had proved that the subject was unsuited for public discussion in the Reformed Churches. The minister of the church, reverend Willem Oosterheert, worried about the consequences. But not even he could distract himself from the new realities. Two of his children attended the public secondary school, his daughter Geertruida (1913-1998) positively having *begged* him to be allowed to go there.²³ The curriculum was not lost on their father. Reverend Oosterheert became interested in the results of modern science, especially of archaeology. He liked to visit the digs of Bronze Age barrows and Iron Age cremation sites in Laudermarke, to the North of Ter Apel. At the same time, interests such as these did not influence the contents of his preaching in the slightest.²⁴ While the globalisation of Protestantism in the forms of Evangelicalism and world mission had reached every member of the community, the globalisation of the natural sciences remained restricted to a tiny top layer. Reformed youngsters like Piet Meijer faced the task of reconciling these two intertwined faces of globalisation. This would become their own personal quest, in a field from which the local church kept aloof.

It is important to note that the dilemma's concerning globalisation were not restricted to the upper classes. Those who were raised in lower middle class and labour families experienced the effects very acutely. It is rare to find expressions of their feelings in the archives of the church, so we are gratified that preserved letters in family archives have given us a clue. We already mentioned Dirk Zijlstra, who was certainly aware of the fact that broader opportunities for experience and improvement existed than he would ever enjoy. In the end Zijlstra accepted this, finding solace in faith, marriage and hard work.²⁵ The undertone of melancholy in his correspondence is nevertheless undeniable. The same applies to the letters of Froukje van der Ploeg (1900-1985). She was a manual worker in the fields of the farmers.²⁶ It was there that she picked up the science debate, mainly from Socialist workers who tried to demonstrate that the biblical writings were man-made myths instead of divine

truth.²⁷ As Frouktje noted during a spring evening in 1918, she was ‘appalled by doubts’. In a way not unlike that of Dirk Zijlstra, she concluded that self-denial was the only way forward, ‘following where Jezus goes ahead’. This was her confirmation of faith.²⁸ Zijlstra and Van der Ploeg were determinists, though not in a Positivist sense.

Why these problems are important to examine

These problems are interesting, because we understand them so little. For too long, the history of Reformed communities has been studied as a theological phenomenon only, thereby forgetting how important the effects of globalisation were for Christians, who had to deal with its effects in their agronomic and commercial enterprises.

In the area under study, the Reformed communities encountered pluralism in their local environment. Though not without frictions, they learned to co-exist peacefully with many others, Christian and non-Christian. This process, nowadays known as ‘pillarisation’ in Dutch historiography²⁹, fitted Calvinism well. Globalisation however introduced the phenomenon of intellectual pluralism *within* the Reformed community. Those Reformed Dutchmen who were ambitious, couldn’t avoid social and economic competition in society. This implied that they couldn’t afford to fall behind in skills or in practical knowledge. The emergence of a new upper class, consisting of those who successfully entered this competition, drastically altered the structure of a community that equated identity and ideology. The Reformed church is not the only example. The Social-Democrats too illustrate the point very well. Successful entrepreneurs in their midst learnt to speak two separate languages, one concerned with the social network surrounding their profession and the other concerned with their party. Only the second language could be shared with the co-believers who still were part of the proletariat.

Something similar happened in Calvinist circles. All members of the Reformed communities were acquainted with the global phenomenon of Evangelicalism, as popular songs can witness (especially those of Johannes de Heer, who had attended the awakenings in Wales in 1905).³⁰ Equally important however was the spread of a contemporary scientific worldview, which fitted Calvinism well by being rational and deterministic, but which could only with great difficulty be reconciled with popular belief in miracles. The leading members of the consistories tried to manage this problem by keeping it private to themselves and their children. The strategy reduced the risk of a potential spiritual split in their communities – between those who in 1934 tried to stick to the faith of 1834 and those who honoured the Reformed faith and yet had to reconcile it to their informed calculations of the workings of the laws of nature. The result was a unprecedented class difference within the Reformed communities, based on scientific knowledge rather than income. The upper class could turn to contemporary Calvinist philosophy³¹, but the fact that this ‘wijsbegeerte van de wetsidee’ was Calvinist didn’t alter the fact that it was certainly not shared by the entire community. Others within that same community turned into the opposite direction of faith healing, where they underwent direct influences of the English-speaking world.

At either side of the split, both in the new Evangelicalism and in the new Rationalism, the effects of globalisation are obvious. The Reformed were no recluses. The prodigious celebration of the Secession centenary in 1934 didn’t alter the fact that the spiritual legacy of Hendrik de Cock *cum suis* was carried on in a church that he would hardly have recognised.

These trends are of topical interest for Reformed communities in the Netherlands even nowadays. It may be more easy to share a common Reformed tradition than a up-to-date scientific knowledge, that is restricted to a top layer of the community only. Especially in a

society in which educational levels in the population, despite all efforts, have remained widely divergent.

How the questions raised might be addressed

This type of research requires a lot of painstaking research. Not only do we need a comparative approach. Reformed communities in the region should be compared with each other and with non-Reformed communities. It's also clear that the traditional difference between 'Church history' and 'socio-economic history' can no longer be sustained. To discover what people's beliefs really were, we not only need to know what they believed on strictly religious topics. It is important to know how they dealt with their business and jobs as well, how they calculated and anticipated world-wide trends. It implies a thorough use of the statistical contents of municipal archives.

We've noticed that some of the most relevant questions relating to globalisation were never raised in the consistories. They left no trace in the archives of the Reformed communities. To find them, we have to get access to family archives and personal memories. Well-prepared interviews are an important tool. Though susceptible to fallacies relating to imperfectability of human memory, interviews are indispensable for the study of topics on which the church maintained silence.

All this means painstaking and time-consuming work. It implies that at this moment the effects of globalisation and plurality in the Netherlands are better understood in a rural than in an urban context, simply because our tools are best suited for relatively small communities. A challenge for the future is to find strategies to study these questions in larger urban communities.

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¹ Cf. for the Jewish community: R.C. HAGE and J.H. DE VEY MESTDAGH, *De joodse gemeenschap van Veendam-Wildervank, Muntendam en Meeden*, Groningen 1985; for the Lutherans: J. HALLEWAS, *Twee eeuwen Lutheranisme in Pekela. Geschiedenis van een Lutherse gemeente in de Veenkoloniën*, Pekela 1953; for the Roman-Catholics: J.B. EIKENS en J.J. DE WOLFF, *1843-1993. Honderdvijftig jaar Sint Josephparochie Zandberg*, Katwijk 1996.

² J. HENDRIKS, *De emancipatie van de gereformeerden. Sociologische bijdrage tot de verklaring van enige kenmerken van het huidige gereformeerde volksdeel (Reformed Emancipation. A sociological contribution to the explanation of some traits of the present Reformed part of the nation)*, Alphen aan de Rijn 1971.

³ "Afdeeling Ter Apel en Omstreken", in: *Gedenkboek 1854-1929. Vereeniging van christelijke onderwijzers en onderwijzeressen in Nederland en de overzeesche bezittingen*, Scheveningen 1929, 225-226; W.J. RAVE (ed.), *1913-1988. P.C. 'De Hoeksteen' Ter Apel*, Bedum 1988.

⁴ Personal communication by mr. Jan Jakob Mulder (1901-1998), Ter Apel 18-6 and 23-9-1997.

⁵ Cf. GERT VAN KLINKEN, *Op de grens. Gereformeerden in de marge van moderniserend Nederland. Ter Apel 1879-1940*, Kampen 2000.

⁶ ARIE BROUWER, *Het veenkoloniale geslacht Brouwer 1550-1992*, Zeist 1992, 199-204; *Het geslacht Groenwold 1650-1994*, Zeist 1994, 169-171. Genealogical studies such as these tell us a lot about a Calvinist world-view that was both pious and rationalistic.

⁷ Compare the text of the Ephesians 4:20 in the Revised Standard Version of the English Bible and the wording in the edition of the Dutch Bible Society, which was common in most Reformed Churches in the Netherlands in the 20th century.

⁸ The theme is reflected in the title of Dick Mulder's study of the Reformed community in Wildervank: *Anders dan de wereld. Anderhalve eeuw Gereformeerde Kerk in Wildervank 1835-1985*, Wildervank 1985.

⁹ A recent specimen of his views can be found in: Johan van Klinken, "Energy constraints with limited options", in: BOB VAN DER ZWAAN and ARTHUR PETERSEN (eds.), *Sharing the Planet. Population-Consumption-Species. Science and Ethics for a Sustainable and Equitable World*, Delft 2003, 58-77.

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- ¹⁰ Tax register of the municipality of Emmen (Drenthe), 1883. The financial position of those members of the Christian Reformed Church who lived in the municipality of Vlagtwedde (Groningen) can be reconstructed from notarial and other sources. The register is kept in the Municipal Archive of Emmen.
- ¹¹ Protestant Church of Nieuw-Weerdinge (Drenthe), register of members 1884-1887 (kept in the Provincial Archive of Drenthe, Assen).
- ¹² Protestant Church of Nieuw-Weerdinge (Drenthe), register of members 1884-1887 (kept in the Provincial Archive of Drenthe, Assen), squared with the municipal registry of Emmen (Drenthe) and Vlagtwedde (Groningen). There we find the same individuals, but with the occupations added. The former registry is being kept in the Municipal Archive of Emmen, the latter in the Municipal Archive of Vlagtwedde, based in Sellinger.
- ¹³ A commentary on the Bible books of Leviticus, Numbers and Deuteronomy by Joan van den Honert, printed in Amsterdam by Isaac Tirion and Jacobus Loveringh in 1740 with annotations in Greek and Hebrew, is kept as a heirloom by mr. Jan Geerlinks in Schoonebeek.
- ¹⁴ The intensification of the Jewish mission after 1916 is considered in: GERT VAN KLINKEN, *Opvattingen in de Gereformeerde Kerken in Nederland over het Jodendom, 1896-1970*, Kampen 1996, 105-153.
- ¹⁵ Data derived from the 1921-1940 registry for Ter Apel and surroundings, in: Municipal Archive of Vlagtwedde.
- ¹⁶ Examples can be found in: Provincial Archives of Groningen (Groninger Archieven), AVEBE-archive inv.nr. 8.7 (co-operative potato flour factory in Ter Apel), minutes 24-5-1913 and 6-5-1916.
- ¹⁷ D. Zijlstra to J.A. Kippers, Ter Apel 23-2-1918. I thank mr. J.J. Spanninga for giving me access to this letter.
- ¹⁸ A broad outline of the history of the school can be found in: B.H.A. BODEWITZ and H.J. LAGERWEIJ, *1921-1971 Rijks Hogere Burgerschool Ter Apel*, Ter Apel 1971.
- ¹⁹ Cf. K.J. VAN BEEKUM and D. REEDER (eds.), *Christelijk Lyceum Stadskanaal 1919-1959*, Groningen 1959.
- ²⁰ GEERT VAN KLINKEN, *De wacht bij het beginsel* (lecture), Nieuw-Weerdinge 1918. Handwritten lecture in the family archive in the custody of Johan van Klinken, Haren (prov. Groningen).
- ²¹ Personal communication by mr. Piet Meijer, Ter Apel 28-8-1998.
- ²² Personal communication by mr. Jan Eggink, Eindhoven 16-4-1997.
- ²³ Personal communication by mrs. Geertruida Willemina Oosterheert, Stadskanaal 3-7-1997.
- ²⁴ An example of Oosterheert's homiletics, with explicit reference to the risk of eternal damnation for the non-believers, can be found in: WILLEM OOSTERHEERT, "Dood en leven" (sermon), in: *Menigerlei Genade. Wekelijksche Predikatiën XXIV* (1934), 577-592.
- ²⁵ Personal communication by mr. Jaap Spanninga, Ter Apel 15-3-2006.
- ²⁶ The life of these women has been investigated by AMARENS HIBMA, WIEBE HOEKSTRA and TILLY UIL, *Interviews met landarbeidsters uit het Oldambt 1920-1940*, Groningen 1987.
- ²⁷ Cf. JANNES HOUKES, "De invloed van het natuurwetenschappelijk denken op de vroege arbeidersbeweging in de stad Groningen", in: PETER DERKX, ULLA JANSZ, CORRIE MOLENBERG and CARLA VAN BAALEN (eds.), *Voor menselijkheid of tegen godsdienst? Humanisme in Nederland, 1850-1960*, Hilversum 1998, 34-50.
- ²⁸ The notes of Frouwktje van der Ploeg are in the custody of mrs. A. Bergshoeff-Oosterbaan, Coevorden.
- ²⁹ See for the debate on 'pillarisation' in Holland: J.C.H. BLOM, "Onderzoek naar verzuiling in Nederland. Status quaestionis en wenselijke ontwikkeling", in: J.C.H. BLOM and C.J. MISSET (eds.), *'Broeders sluit U aan.' Aspecten van verzuiling in zeven Hollandse gemeenten*, 's-Gravenhage 1985, 10-29.
- ³⁰ DOMUS ELSMAN, *Johannes de Heer. Evangelist in het licht van de wederkomst*, Zoetermeer 1995; GERT VAN KLINKEN, "Johannes de Heer: Israëls herstel en terugkeer naar Palestina (1918)", in: FRITS BROEYER and DICK KUIPER (eds.), *Is 't waar of niet? Ophefmakende publicaties uit de 'lange' negentiende eeuw (Jaarboek voor de geschiedenis van het Nederlands protestantisme XIII)*, 327-342.
- ³¹ Cf. J.M. SPIER, *Inleiding in de Wijsbegeerte der Wetsidee*, Kampen 1946.