

G U I L L A U M E

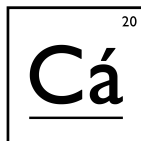
# GROEN

VAN PRINSTERER

S E L E C T E D S T U D I E S

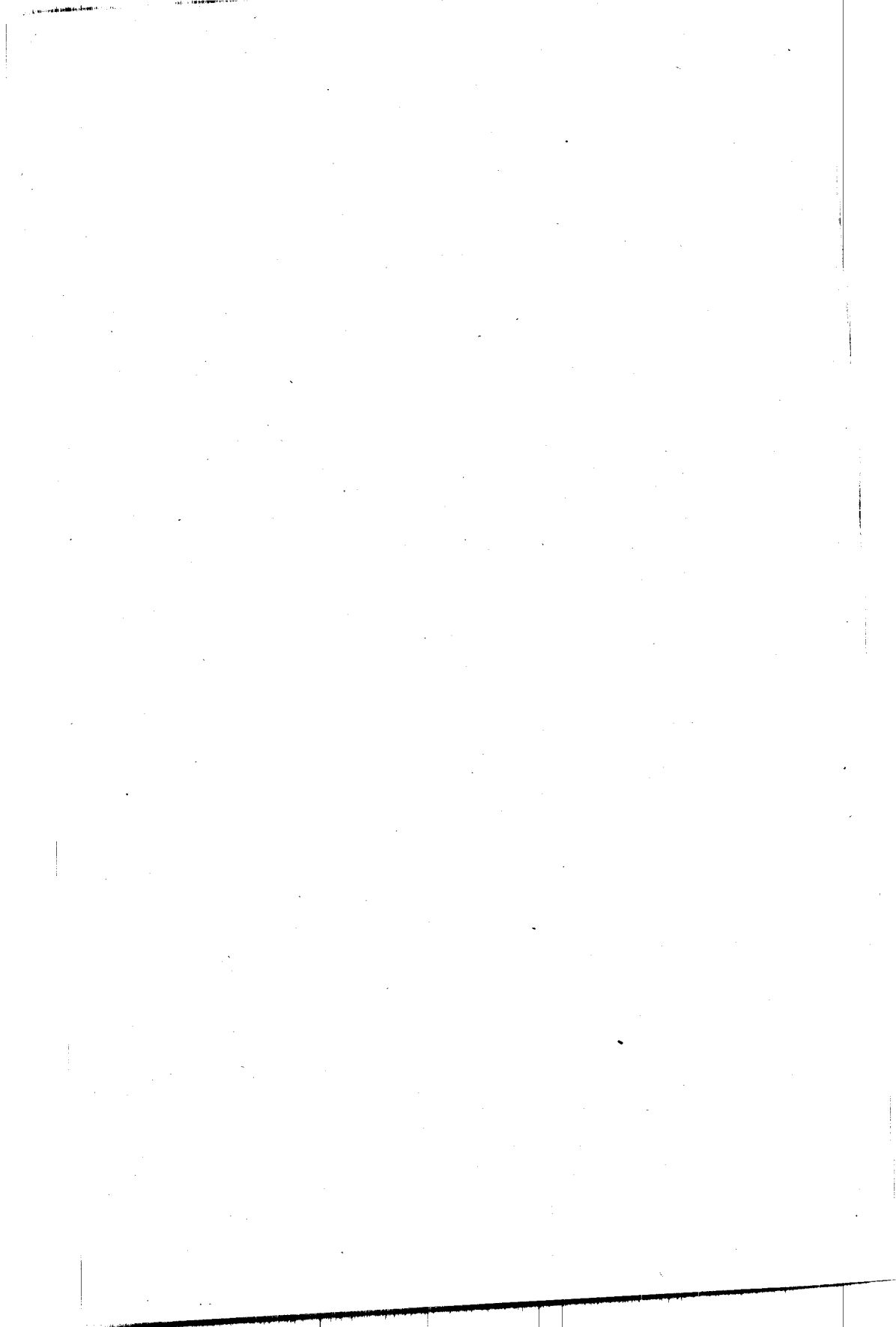


J. L. VAN ESSEN



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**Guillaume Groen van Prinsterer**  
*Selected Studies*



**Guillaume Groen van Prinsterer**  
*Selected Studies*

*Jantje Lubbegiena van Essen*  
and  
*Herbert Donald Morton*

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1. The first part of the document discusses the importance of maintaining accurate records of all transactions and activities. It emphasizes that proper record-keeping is essential for ensuring transparency and accountability in the organization's operations.

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3. The third part of the document focuses on the implementation of quality control measures. It describes the processes and standards used to ensure that all products and services meet the highest quality standards and customer expectations.

4. The fourth part of the document addresses the challenges and risks associated with data management and security. It provides recommendations for mitigating these risks and ensuring the integrity and confidentiality of the organization's information assets.

5. The fifth part of the document discusses the role of technology in improving operational efficiency and productivity. It explores various digital tools and platforms that can be leveraged to streamline processes and enhance collaboration among team members.

6. The sixth part of the document concludes with a summary of the key findings and recommendations. It emphasizes the need for ongoing monitoring and evaluation to ensure that the organization remains agile and responsive to changing market conditions.



## Introduction

**T**he lectures and essays contained in this book will serve, in a modest way, to meet a need that exists for English-language information about the life and work of the nineteenth-century Dutch historian and statesman Guillaume Groen van Prinsterer (1801-1876). While a very great deal has been written about various aspects of Groen's legacy in the language of his native Holland, little material is available about him in English. Just a few of his own key writings were done in French, but even their existence is of negligible help in the current lingual environment. To enhance the usefulness of Miss Van Essen's studies to English readers not specialized in Dutch and European affairs, translator's notes providing additional background information have been supplied together with an index.

The studies presented in this volume focus mainly on Groen's work in the fields of education and history. Light is shed only incidentally on his work in the fields of constitutional law, parliamentary politics, the church, Christian journalism, and the classics.

I. In the first of her four selections, Miss Van Essen explores Groen's Christian conception of history. It is appropriate that this study should open the volume, since Groen's international scholarly reputation is based in the first instance on his work as editor of the archives of the House of Orange and as a historian. Miss Van Essen devotes attention to Groen's family background, training, and formative Christian experience before going on to discuss his views of progress, the kingdom of God, the meaning of history, the consequences of ideas, and his conceptions of providence, Scripture, unbelief and revolution, causality, and God's presence in history. She concludes with a survey of the histories Groen wrote.

In Christian circles Groen is perhaps best known for his long fight for freedom of education in The Netherlands. His campaign for the 'school with the Bible' became a decisive factor in Dutch politics and society. He viewed the school as an extension of the home, not as a province of the state: children were "an heritage of the Lord" and their rearing and education a covenant family responsibility. The story of

benevolently intended liberal (and conservative) intolerance and abuse of power in the secular state, unfolded in Miss Van Essen's second and third studies, is quite astounding. In a situation in which Bible history and "the nation's history" were effectively excluded from the religiously "mixed" and "neutral" state schools and in which the system ruled out viable alternatives, Groen appears as the prisoner of conscience, the advocate of excellence through competition, the courageous champion of the poor and, indeed, of liberty and justice for all.

At the outset of his campaign for "positive Christian education," Groen regarded The Netherlands as a Protestant Christian nation: "*Christelijk-nationaal*" was a fact of history, a national patrimony, a sacred trust and mandate, certainly the heart of the matter politically for him. Having to adopt another assumption later, namely that the state had become secular and was no longer Christian—as he did once the *Primary Schools Act* of 1857 was passed, precipitating his resignation from Parliament—must have seemed to him the political equivalent of having to accept the formal apostasy of one's church.

II. Miss Van Essen's second study, prepared as a survey for visiting students from Dordt College in Sioux Center, Iowa, recounts in a clear and factual way the story of the struggle for freedom of education in The Netherlands, from Groen's days through those of Abraham Kuyper, who founded the Free University in Amsterdam in 1880, until the year 1920, when the Dutch government finally instituted guarantees of equality for free education and state education.<sup>1</sup> The existence of Dordt College, Calvin College, Redeemer College and a number of similar institutions in North America suggests that Groen and Kuyper have had some influence in American history; as the early Puritans founded Harvard and Benjamin Franklin the University of Pennsylvania, so heirs of the Christian school movement in The Netherlands eventually established schools and colleges in the United States and Canada. Today such institutions flourish in the freedom of North America's richly variegated religious and ethnic heritage, but American communities whose roots are in non-English language cultures do face a unique challenge and have a special obligation to keep lingual access to those seminal cultures open. Why, a Dutch Calvinist American deprived of access to the writings of Groen van Prinsterer is like any American deprived of access to the thought of John Adams or Abraham Lincoln, like any Englishman unable to read Lord Acton or Edmund Burke! The influence persists, but the ability to evaluate it in proper historical perspective is lost when, with the language, access to the sources is lost.

III. The Dutch version of Miss Van Essen's third article, which was written earlier than her other contributions to this collection, appeared in the official weekly magazine of The Netherlands Department of

Education and Sciences on the occasion of the centennial of Groen's death. At that time, in 1976, the Dutch postal service issued a commemorative stamp, there were gatherings and ceremonies, and the constant trickle of publications on Groen was transformed, for a brief season, into an alpine torrent. This article is focused narrowly on Groen's tactics and can be read best against the broader background of the second selection.

IV. In the second and fourth studies Groen is a key figure but not the central focus of Miss Van Essen's attention. Since this fact only enhances the light these studies shed on Groen's role and influence, it has not seemed an obstacle to entitling this volume *Groen van Prinsterer: Selected Studies*. "The Struggle for Freedom of Education in The Netherlands in the Nineteenth Century" presents Groen's formative work in the field of education in the context of a broader, balanced, factual survey. The fourth selection, "God's Hand in History," reveals Groen's influence more obliquely. Here Groen is quoted directly—"in the wonders of history, the glory of [God's] perfections shines"—but, more importantly, the entire recent evangelical debate on the subject in The Netherlands, into which Miss Van Essen plunges willingly in this mildly polemical article, has been stimulated in no small measure by the way Groen wrote history. Groen is the father and aegis of modern Dutch Christian historiography, especially as it functions in the Christian school system, where he is arguably an enduring model, a mentor of preference. He set standards by which his successors are inevitably judged.

Miss Van Essen's polemical concerns are equally evident in the first selection in this volume, particularly in the passages dealing with Groen's view of causality. It is clear in all her work that Miss Van Essen values history written in the spirit of Groen van Prinsterer and that she writes such history herself. To Groen van Prinsterer, history, education and politics were fields of witness and all Christian endeavor a divine vocation. The Christian who edits archives and writes histories must do so to the glory of God.

The final article in this collection may be read as an epilogue on Groen's style. It was written by the translator and is included here at Miss Van Essen's request. An excellent Dutch version of the article, translated by Harry Van Dyke, was published in the May 1976 issue of *Tot vrijheid geroepen* as part of the Groen van Prinsterer centennial, but the English original was left to languish in a drawer.<sup>2</sup>

Finally, this book is Miss Van Essen's in more than the sense that she wrote the material collected in it and approved the translations. It is her book as the gift and tribute of gratitude felt by the translator, the publishers, and their supporting North American community to one who has spent her professional life since 1943 editing Groen's cor-

respondence—initially with Frederik Carel Gerretson, Adriaan Goslinga, and Homme Jacob Smit, and later alone. This book is a way of saying thank you to her—in English, naturally.

Ludi Van Essen was born in Rotterdam 28 March 1913, the daughter of Arend Jan Van Essen (1881-1965) and Lubbegiena Bus (1886-1982), of Barneveld and Groningen, respectively. Her father was an assistant district director of the Dutch PTT. As a child she attended a 'school with the Bible' in Rotterdam. She was nine when her family moved to Arnhem, where she attended a Christian elementary school and, from the age of thirteen, the Christian Lyceum. Another family move took Ludi to Maastricht, where at the age of seventeen she went to the Municipal Gymnasium

Ludi was raised in the Gereformeerde Kerken in Nederland. Although as a youngster she sometimes passed the time during a long service counting the windows in the walls, she recalls with animated enthusiasm large congregations, packed communion services where the people gathered round up to twelve tables, the inspiring Bible reading and Psalm singing. She enjoyed learning the Heidelberg catechism with the Reverend J. G. Kunst in Arnhem. In Maastricht her pastor was the Reverend Karel Willem Dercksen, whose preaching she compares to that of the Reverend Klaas Schilder, the professor of theology at the Gereformeerde Theologische Hogeschool in Kampen.

Ludi's parents were adherents of the *Doleantie*. Her paternal grandfather, Brand Van Essen (1835-1923), a farmer and grain dealer in Barneveld, was an elder in the church who participated in the local "Reformation of 1886." Her maternal grandparents, also originally Nederlands Hervormd, were divided on that issue—grootvader Hendrik Bus (1850-1928), the director of an official municipal pawn brokerage, remained Hervormd, while grootmoeder Jantje de Jonge (1848-1923) joined the *Doleantie* and, eventually the Gereformeerde Kerken in Nederland. Two of their four children followed the father and the other two the mother; Ludi's mother Lubbegiena, the youngest, was Gereformeerd, and she married a Gereformeerde man.

Ludi graduated from the Municipal Gymnasium in Maastricht at the age of nineteen. Then, in 1932, her father went to Amsterdam to see if he could arrange proper chambers for her there. Upon answering a newspaper advertisement, he found a place for his daughter in *Eigen haard*, a dwelling on the Prinsengracht for young studying and working women. On the appointed day, Paps and Moekie brought her to the great city by train to enroll her at the Free University.

In those days students in the Faculty of Letters and Philosophy followed lectures for three years and then studied for a year at home. Ludi's major subject was Dutch language and literature, together with

Germanic languages (Gothic, Old Norse), linguistics and Dutch History; and her minor subject area was World History. Her professor in Netherlandic studies was Jacobus Wille. For history before 1648 and philosophy of history she studied with Aart Arnhout van Schelven; for history after 1648 and for Middle Dutch, her mentor was Adriaan Goslinga. She followed the lectures of Pieter Arie Diepenhorst in economics and Dirk Hendrik Theodoor Vollenhoven's obligatory introduction to philosophy. Ludi completed her first degree, the *candidaats*, in 1937 and her second degree, the *doctoraal*, in 1943.

In the meantime the Second World War had broken out, and Amsterdam was an occupied city. Far towards the other end of the Prinsengracht, but on the same side of the canal, Annelies Marie Frank (1929-1945), who had arrived in Amsterdam as a kindergartner in 1933, would hide with her family in the 'Achterhuis' throughout some of the same years that Ludi carried on studying and working in Amsterdam and The Hague. "We didn't know," she says sadly, thinking mainly of Anne Frank. She remembers well, however, the wartime anxiety, the discriminatory yellow stars in the street, the tension. Various old acquaintances eventually began to disappear, never, as it turned out, to return—an old teacher; a girlhood friend; the family's butcher in Maastricht . . .

Whether one did so or not was as closely guarded a private matter as a Dutch person's first names, which are customarily known only to family and intimate friends, but Ludi always refused to collaborate, to sign the papers required to gain a proper job. That is why her first years on the Groen project as Goslinga's assistant were 'unofficial'—Ludi became a civil servant only after the Office was reorganized following the war, in 1950. Not until she was fifty-four could she afford to purchase her cozy flat on a quiet street in Rijswijk, near The Hague.

Ludi was in Maastricht with her family for the summer vacation when the war came in 1940, in May, with the German bombardment of Rotterdam. She went back to Amsterdam in June to pack her bags and send them home to Maastricht. Beginning in September, however, she returned to Amsterdam once every two weeks for lectures on the theory of teaching with C. Tazelaar, the author of a work on Groen van Prinsterer's youth. The trip was now long and difficult, requiring up to seven hours, because so many bridges had been blown up. In January 1941 she took up quarters with friends in *Harmoniehof*, not far from the Concertgebouw, and began her duties as a practice teacher at the nearby Christian Hogere Burger School (HBS), in Tazelaar's bustling class of fourteen- and fifteen-year-old youngsters. Ludi remembers the time as a wonderful one of teenage pranks, high spirits, and camaraderie with students and colleagues alike. She would certainly have become a teacher, she says, somewhat wistfully, if the great task of the Groen

publications had not intervened in 1943, in wartime circumstances.

For the world was at war, and in the spring of 1943, the year of the turning tide, there was a knock on the door at Ludi's family home in Maastricht. "Where is your daughter? She must report to the Labor Office," an unfriendly voice said to Ludi's father. "Not on your life," Paps replied. "She isn't here." And he added for good measure, "I don't know where she is. She's gone away." The authorities had doubtless gotten her name from the student lists, but Jantje Lubbegiena Van Essen, by now a graduate, was in Wageningen with friends. Later in the spring of 1943 she would stay briefly with other east province evacuees in the North Holland village and polder of Anna Paulowna—which had been populated in the preceding century, as Ludi knew, by starving colonists brought there from the Betuwe and set up as potato farmers by Ottho Gerhard Heldring, the evangelical philanthropist!

In the meantime, Goslinga and Gerretson were seeking a research assistant to help them with their work at what was then called the Office for National Historical Publications (Bureau voor 's Rijks Geschiedkundige Publicatiën). Ludi's flight—two weeks here, three weeks there—from the prospect of Nazi-dominated employment ended auspiciously when she was invited by Goslinga, her former professor, on Wille's recommendation (Wille had liked her paper on the style of the obscure eighteenth-century Dutch writer Paulus Dortsma) to join the Groen project, which had been initiated by the Ministry of Education on 22 January 1915.

Goslinga lived in Sloten, near Amsterdam. In 1943 the trains were still running, so Ludi travelled down from Anna Paulowna to see him there, and then on to The Hague to confer with H. J. Smit, under whose immediate oversight she would actually work. She resided with distant relatives for two years, then with the Smit family and elsewhere, and did her work in a room at the old quarters of the Algemeen Rijksarchief on the Bleijenburg in The Hague. Soon she met F.C. Gerretson; for while she was to be Goslinga's assistant for the fourth volume of the *Briefwisseling*, she was to be Gerretson's for the second volume (she did not work on Smit's volume of the Groen van Prinsterer correspondence, the third one).<sup>5</sup>

Gerretson, a professor of history at the University of Utrecht, was a great character. He would mail Ludi a long list of questions one day and a postcard asking what the holdup was the very next. Ludi soon sorted him out and went on with his blessing and full confidence to do most of her work independently. She recalls Goslinga as a scholar of great precision and attention to detail, Gerretson as a brilliant painter in broad strokes, so impatient with details that he sometimes even wrote over his precious archival sources with a ballpoint pen! George Puchinger, she says, has that same buoyant genius. Puchinger, who has written widely,

is certainly an authority on Gerretson and on Hendrikus Colijn, Ludi says. Johan Zwaan is the Groen van Prinsterer expert. Other historians whom she holds in especially high esteem include Arie Theodorus van Deursen and the Roman Catholic writer Bernard Antonius Vermaseren, both of whom are experts on the Low Countries in the period of the Reformation.

Miss Van Essen was seven when Kuyper died in 1920; she was just old enough to sense the memorable gravity of the moment as it was experienced in a *Gereformeerde* home. Of course she never knew Groen, but she does like to recall the one person she did know who by the age of twelve *had* seen him, more than once, making his way through the Binnenhof, the great public courtyard at the Dutch houses of Parliament. Leendert Alexander Eijgenraam (1863-1949) of the Hof van Delftlaan in Delft, a market gardener, was 79 when Ludi went to stay with him and his daughter for a month in August 1943. He had been born in the 1860's. Now, during the Second World War, a farmer often clandestinely supplied him milk, by leaving it at a secret spot from which his daughter could fetch it by bicycle. Ludi fondly remembers him sitting with a bottle of cream, rocking it gently to make butter. "I'm busy with the baby," he'd say.<sup>4</sup>

Miss Van Essen has given us the cream, and some butter too, in the monumental publication of Groen's correspondence and in a number of articles and lectures. Words in any language are almost inadequate to say thank you for the work of a lifetime, but it must be clear that we are grateful.

A number of people and organizations have contributed in some way, directly or indirectly, to making the present publication possible. For their encouragement of my personal interest in Dutch studies I would like to thank Prof. Dr. A.Th. van Deursen of the Free University in Amsterdam; Dr. Bernard Zylstra of the Institute for Christian Studies in Toronto; Dr. William Stronks and Dr. John C. Vander Stelt of Dordt College; and Dr. Brian Wilks, Dr. Keith Shahan, and Dr. G.N. Menon, *Chairman emeritus of the Board*, of the International School of Amsterdam.

I am indebted to Ludi Van Essen and Harry Van Dyke for reading the selections in manuscript and making many valuable suggestions and to John Roney for checking the galley proofs. I am indebted also to Dr. Robert Godfrey and Dr. Moises Silva of *The Westminster Theological Journal*; to Dr. W.J. Ouweneel and Drs. J.A. van Delden of *Bijbel en Wetenschap*; and to John Hultink of Paideia Press for their cooperation. Prof. Dr. J. Klapwijk and Dr. J. Zwaan of the Free University supplied some helpful information.

The translations which appear here were made possible in part by a grant from the Groen van Prinsterer Fund.

The closing essay on Groen's style could not have been put into its definitive English form without the earlier publication in English translation of the chapters from Groen's *Unbelief and Revolution* on which it is mainly based; for their support of that earlier project, out of which this essay grew, I therefore wish gratefully to acknowledge once again the assistance extended at that time to Harry Van Dyke and myself by Stichting Zonneweelde, the Dutch division of the International Association for Reformed Faith and Action, Vrouwen VU-Hulp, and The Netherlands Organization for the Advancement of Pure Research (Z.W.O.).

I am grateful to the Central Interfaculty of the Free University in Amsterdam, who for a decade have extended me every courtesy as an independent guest translator.

Finally, I am indebted to the ministers and members of the Bible Presbyterian Church whose trials and fervent endeavors first awakened my youthful interest in the grand themes of these selected studies: religion and politics, faith and history, culture and salvation, and freedom of worship and education.

Amsterdam,  
July 4, 1985

HDM

#### Notes

1. For an authoritative centennial statement on the historical and current legal status of the Free University in Amsterdam, see: Prof. Dr. G. J. Sizoo. *The Distinctive Character of the Free University*. Translated by Herbert Donald Morton. Amsterdam: The Association for Higher Education on Reformed Foundation, 1980. 29 pages.
2. Material from this manuscript formed part of a special lecture on "Dutch Christian Historiography in the 19th and 20th Century" presented 14 December 1981 by the translator, at the invitation of C.T. McIntire, at the Institute for Christian Studies in Toronto. McIntire, a Senior Fellow at the Institute from 1973 to 1984, is now Associate Professor of History and Fellow of Trinity College, University of Toronto.
3. For bibliographical details, see note 2 to the opening selection.
4. Miss Van Essen added that Groen's last period in the Second Chamber was from September 1862 to April 1865, and that Groen was thus undoubtedly retired from parliament when her old friend saw him strolling through the Binnenhof, round the corner from his home in The Hague.



# Guillaume Groen Van Prinsterer and His Conception of History<sup>1</sup>

Jantje Lubbegiena Van Essen<sup>2</sup>

*Translated from the Dutch with additional notes  
by Herbert Donald Morton*

## I. *The Course of Groen's Life*

**T**o understand Groen's conception of history, it is necessary to know something about Groen himself and his spiritual development. Therefore I shall start by presenting a brief survey of the course of his life.

### 1. *The Groen Family*

Guillaume Groen van Prinsterer (1801-1876), or Willem Groen, as he was called in ordinary life, was born 21 August 1801 in Voorburg, near 's-Gravenhage, at "Vreugd en Rust," the country estate of his parents Petrus Jacobus Groen van Prinsterer (1764-1837) and Adriana Hendrika Caan (1772-1832; m. 1797). His father, a well known 's-Gravenhage physician, was attached to the house of the Grand Pensionary Rutger Jan Schimmelpenninck (1761-1825); then to the court of Louis Bonaparte (Lodewijk I, King of Holland); and after 1813 to that of William I, King of The Netherlands. He was a member of various national medical commissions and of the Provincial States of Holland. A progressive doctor, he advocated bathing in the sea and opposed interment in and around churches. The cemetery "Ter Navolging" at Scheveningen, where Groen would be buried in 1876, came into existence partly as a result of his efforts.

Groen's mother was from a leading merchant family in Rotterdam. Orphaned at an early age, she was the heiress of a great fortune. Groen had two sisters. Keetje<sup>3</sup> was two years older. In 1821 she married the Rotterdam merchant Mari Aert Frédéric Henri Hoffmann (1795-1874), who for many years was a member of the Second Chamber of the Dutch

Parliament. Mimi<sup>4</sup> was five years younger. In 1828 she married Johan Antoni Philipse (1800-1884), who eventually would rise to high judicial posts and for eighteen years preside over the First Chamber, or senate, of the Dutch Parliament. Groen received an excellent upbringing, attended the finest schools, and in 1817 matriculated at the University of Leiden in two faculties, law and literature. A bright and, indeed, celebrated student, he successfully completed doctorates in both fields by defending two dissertations<sup>5</sup> in a single day in 1823.

## 2. *Spiritual Climate*

The milieu in which Groen grew up was religious and moderately liberal. He described it afterwards in his *Handboek der geschiedenis van het vaderland*<sup>6</sup> in approximately the following terms: People in those days wanted to share in the progress being made in every field. Belief in the gospel was considered reconcilable with independent science. People disliked extremes and thought that Christianity would not be in conflict with the light of reason. Indeed, the reconciliation of religion and philosophy seemed to promise a shining future. The renewal then underway brought tremendous material advancement. Improvements were made in society, and the seeds of civil and political liberty were sown at that time.

Groen felt very much at home in this spiritual climate. In late 1873 he wrote in his *Nederlandsche Gedachten*:<sup>7</sup>

Until 1828 I was approximately as Guizot<sup>8</sup> before the lightning bolt of 1848 had taught him to understand the satanic character of the Revolution; as the leading Protestant majority. *Liberal and Christian*: with the motto, *medio tutissimus ibis* [it is safest to follow the middle course]; as nearly everyone in the Reformed church, a member of the *great Protestant party*. As the thermometer required, *conservative-liberal* or *liberal-conservative*.

To this he added, however, "*More or less*: I did not go along in everything. In 1823, for example, I did not share (far from it!) the indignation aroused by Isaac Da Costa's *Bezwaren tegen den geest der eeuw*."<sup>9</sup> Going on, he said, "I showed signs of slowness myself in the *Verspreide geschriften*."<sup>10</sup> Not until *Volksgeest en burgerzin* (April 1829)<sup>11</sup> do there appear signs of a change of principles." As an example of his slowness he mentions his infatuation with Professor J.H. van der Palm's "celebratory address" of July 1828, in which he praised the spirit of unity that pervaded all The Netherlands—that is, the North and the South. "What do we see in our days?" van der Palm inquired. "The Netherlands are the object of the envy and emulation of their neighbors—envy of the wisdom of their institutions, the gentleness of their administration, the tolerance of their principles; The Netherlands

famed and praised on all sides as the happiest land on the face of the earth!" And to the king personally, who was in attendance, Van der Palm directed these words: "To your prudent leadership we owe our reputation amongst the powers, to your just, firm moderation [we owe the fact] that two peoples, through long separation grown foreign to each other in language and morals, have again been fused into a single nation." "You respect the rights and guard the interests of all. Alongside freedom of conscience you have established here the seat of true enlightenment." This was not sheer flattery, Groen said, but "rather the echo of the praise heard throughout Europe for the exceptional leadership of a ruler, model-king, who in the midst of reactionary and revolutionary foolishness had not gone *too far* but at the same time had gone *far enough*." "Such was the panegyric, in July 1828—just two months before the outbreak of the constitutional clash that tore the Kingdom of The Netherlands in two."<sup>12</sup>

### 3. *Influence of Bilderdijk*<sup>13</sup>

Doubts about such smugness had already been raised in Groen's mind by Willem Bilderdijk, whose private lectures he had followed in his student years. Bilderdijk, after all, was the great opponent of the spirit of the age! And how could anyone who attended his lectures escape entirely the influence of his impassioned and seductive language? Not Groen, in spite of his independence and critical judgment. While he did not surrender blindly to Bilderdijk, he was given pause to think. Groen himself said later, "There was not a trace of Bilderdijkianism in me. I was not swept along by this counterrevolutionary vehemence." Reading his favorite author Plato had "safeguarded [him] against being overwhelmed by exceptional brilliance." Nevertheless, "I have learned much from him . . ."<sup>14</sup>

In 1843 he had already written:

Whether we accept this title [of a student of Bilderdijk's]? No, if it indicates either that we followed the great man blindly in any field or that in Constitutional Law and History we adopted his conception with respect to every main point. Yet at the same time we are pleased to acknowledge candidly and with gratitude that some of us also learned a great deal from his conversation and writings; that we esteem and respect him for his inimitability as a profound knower of language and, in every discipline of poetry, as a many-sided and scarcely rivalled poet; for the astonishing scope of his erudition; and especially for his courageous resistance to the foolishness of his age; to that we add that the Fatherland would have lost nothing had it followed some of his hints and suggestions and that the history of our own days, so forlorn and unredeemed, furnishes proof that the somberness of his conception was not just the fruit of the exaggerations of a cantankerous and captious old geezer.<sup>15</sup>

Citing these words in 1849, Groen added:

I still say that I am very far from underwriting all his theses in History and Constitutional Law: I still also rejoice that one of the greatest poets of all lands and times is one of us, that he was not ashamed of the truth to which he bore witness, with admirable resilience and self-sacrifice, against the idols of the age (cf. *Ongeloof en Revolutie*, 39).<sup>16</sup> Yet, what I said in 1843 no longer adequately expresses my position in 1849. I must say in addition that in recent years, too, events have furnished ever more telling evidence of the correctness of his insights and that many a person who once regarded his poems as tedious lamentations readable only for the excellence of their poetic forms now reads them, and correctly so, not just for the poetry but also for the prophecy they contain. A higher tone, a tone not of embarrassment and apology but of justifiable pride at the merit of their vilified mentor, may henceforth course through those who are called the students of Bilderdijk, now that what was once conceded to his detractors and dismissed with a shrug as poetic madness or with caustic reproach as catastrophic disesteem for the excellence of the times has been shown to be astonishingly correct. I wish I could run through the complete series of his poems in order to point out in them the multiplicity of hints, and plays on meaning, and warnings and complaints that, although irritating and beyond comprehension to his contemporaries, have now already become the true and unfarfetched description of what is seen in the history of our days.<sup>17</sup>

While Groen did not have this same insight into the poet's merits at the time of their personal acquaintance, Bilderdijk did cultivate in him from the outset a turn of mind critical of prevalent ideas.

#### 4. *Employment*

Following completion of his formal studies, Groen permitted himself to be registered as a lawyer in 's-Gravenhage. There had been some discussion of the possibility that the young doctor would succeed Joan Melchior Kemper (1776-1824) as a professor at Leiden, with an appointment in history; but it was supposed he knew too little of the field for such a post. His father preferred that he pursue a career in politics. Groen himself, however, felt more drawn to historical study, which is why in 1826 he entered the competition for appointment as official national historian.

The king had appealed to all "fatherland experts in history and letters" to contribute a plan for a general history of The Netherlands based on known and unutilized sources that would "cultivate love of the fatherland, promote civil virtue, and uphold the national interest."<sup>18</sup> The one who submitted the best scheme would be appointed historian of the realm. Five submissions were crowned, including Groen's. Printed in 1830 in The Hague by the official *Algemeene Landsdrukkerij*, it was entitled *Proeve over de samenstelling eener Algemeene*

*Nederlandsche Geschiedenis, naar aanleiding van 's-Konings besluit van 23 dec. 1826, art. 2.*<sup>19</sup> An official national historian was not appointed, however, partly because the union of the northern and southern Netherlands effected by the Congress of Vienna in 1815 was soon broken by the crisis of 1830 and the establishment of modern Belgium.

At the insistence of his father, Groen solicited for the post of referendary to the Royal Cabinet.<sup>20</sup> He was appointed in September 1827. In 1829 he became the secretary. While he was thus brought into contact with weighty state papers and consulted by the king from time to time, a great deal of his work involved opening letters and analyzing reports, and this gave him no satisfaction. On 15 January 1829 he presented to the king the freshly printed version of his address of 1 December 1826 to Diligertia in 's-Gravenhage, *Redevoering over de redenen om de geschiedenis der natie bekend te maken*;<sup>21</sup> on that occasion he received permission to work at home, which gave him more time for his historical studies. By a royal decree of 29 October 1831 he was made responsible for the Koninklijk Huisarchief—the family archives of the House of Orange. In keeping with powers granted his predecessors by a royal decree of 28 September 1828 his task would include the preparation of the archives for publication.

##### 5. *Spiritual Turnabout*

Meanwhile, Groen married Betsy van der Hoop,<sup>22</sup> daughter of a *burgemeester* of Groningen, Abraham Johan van der Hoop (1775-1826). To her, Christianity was not just a surface varnish or something just for Sunday, no, she lived by her faith in the reconciling death of Christ. All that she did she did in prayerful deliberation with the Lord. Her relationship with Groen could not be without influence. As a result of his repeated stays in Brussels as secretary to the Royal Cabinet, Groen came to sit under the court preacher there, J.H. Merle d'Aubigné,<sup>23</sup> one of the leading figures of the Swiss Réveil.<sup>24</sup> In The Hague he made the acquaintance of Willem de Clercq<sup>25</sup> and his wife, Caroline de Boissevain (1779-1879; m.1818), both of whom allowed God's Word to rule their lives. He also came into contact with the Walloon pastor Secrétan,<sup>26</sup> who preached not virtue-reason-faith but rather the biblical message of sin and redemption. And in this way, Groen's life was gradually turned about. As early as 1831, he wrote to his friend Van Rappard:<sup>27</sup>

I had the privilege of enjoying a very religious upbringing, in and outside the home. Still, its objective was confined to convincing the understanding and to desiring to be virtuous in order to serve and gain respect. This rational conviction would not have stood up in the long run, however, against

the reading of unchristian books in an atmosphere of general lukewarmness and indifference had I not been powerfully warned against it in various ways, including attendance at Bilderdijk's lectures, and restrained on the slope, as it were. You must not imagine the impression made by this great man to have been greater than it actually was, however. He put me off unbelief more than he brought me to belief. After leaving the Academy, too, I observed the external forms of religious obligation, but without particular interest, and occupied myself with various studies; meanwhile, I always regarded religion more as something apart than as a *life principle that ought to be united and interwoven with our entire existence*. In the last three or four years a number of circumstances have combined to give me an entirely different perspective on the matter. You should know that among these circumstances I also count my marriage especially, and beyond that the acquaintance and fellowship of men like Merle, Secrétan, and De Clercq; finally also the publication of *Nederlandsche Gedachten* [where in connection with the difficulties involving what would become Belgium Groen had already attacked Revolutionary theory — LvE], which compelled me to reflect more and more about the causes of the evil, until finally the main cause, namely, systematic apostasy from Christianity, became clear to me. Since that time thousands of matters have become clear to me that I had once regarded as unsolvable riddles, and the whole of history became a continuous confirmation of the truths that the Holy Scriptures reveal. So now I lack less than ever the conviction of the understanding and indeed it is incomprehensible to me how, on such inane grounds, people can doubt truths the stamp of which appears on everything around us.

This conviction still had little influence on his heart, he thought.

That belief by which a person becomes a new creation, by which in place of one's own will and passion the desire to serve God holds sway, by which people are wholly satisfied and peaceful and happy and already feel saved on earth, that belief I do not have, or in any case have in such small measure that I am still practically insensible of it. And yet that belief, from which alone spring true faith and love, is absolutely essential. That belief must be given us. The means to acquiring it are prayer and Bible reading. I now feel animated to use these means more every day, and this increased interest gives me new courage. I constantly recognize God's guidance in what befalls me and begin to have more trust in the help of Him who will finish His good work in me.<sup>28</sup>

But the full light shined for him only when he experienced a serious illness in 1833. Then he could say to his wife, "Do not be anxious, I believe in Christ, without much influence on my life, true, but for all that with more influence on my heart in recent weeks, so that there is also no reason in that respect why I should be shut out; the statements of the Bible are sure."<sup>29</sup>

6. *Spiritual Struggle*

At the end of 1833 Groen received his discharge as secretary of the Royal Cabinet at his own request. The reason stated was his health, but left unsaid in his letter of request for dismissal to the king was his disagreement with William I's policies towards the southern Netherlands, which he had already openly opposed in the first series of his *Nederlandsche Gedachten*. He retained oversight of the Koninklijk Huisarchief, and until 1849 was free to devote himself to the study of historical sources. During these years he published the eight volumes of the first series of the *Archives ou correspondance inédite de la maison d'Orange-Nassau*;<sup>30</sup> his *Proeve over de middelen waardoor de waarheid wordt gekend en gestaafd*;<sup>31</sup> *Kort overzicht van de geschiedenis des vaderlands*;<sup>32</sup> *Ongeloof en Revolutie*;<sup>33</sup> and *Handboek der geschiedenis van het vaderland*.<sup>34</sup> During these years he also involved himself in the struggle for restoration of the church, as his publications attest: *De maatregelen tegen de Afscheidenen aan het staatsregt getoetst*;<sup>35</sup> *Adres aan de Algemeene Synode der Hervormde Kerk over de formulieren, de academische opleiding der predikanten, het onderwijs en het kerkbestuur*; and *Aan de Hervormde Gemeente in Nederland*.<sup>36</sup> Likewise, he participated in the political struggle with his *Bijdrage tot herziening der grondwet in Nederlandschen zin*;<sup>37</sup> his *gelijkheid, broederschap*;<sup>38</sup> and his *Grondwetherziening en eensgezindheid*.<sup>39</sup> Meanwhile, he was already active in these years in the cause of freedom of education.

In 1840 Groen was a member of the Double Second Chamber (it had twice the usual number of members that year in connection with the constitutional review then taking place). Then, from 1849 to 1853 he was a member of the Second Chamber for Harderwijk, from 1853 to 1854 for Zwolle, from 1855 to 1856 for 's-Gravenhage, from 1856 to 1857 for Leiden, and from 1862 to 1865 for Arnhem. Thereafter he carried on his campaign for anti-Revolutionary or Christian-historical principles outside parliament in numerous publications, until he passed away 19 May 1876 at 's-Gravenhage.

This, then, is a bird's eye view of the course of Groen's life. An extensive biography has not yet been written; I am happy, however, to recommend the short one by G.J. Schutte entitled *Mr. G. Groen van Prinsterer*.<sup>40</sup> For Groen's ideas in the fields of history, political theory, literature, and philosophy, I recommend Johan Zwaan's important dissertation, *Groen van Prinsterer en de klassieke oudheid*. For further literature on Groen see also my list, "Werken en artikelen over G. Groen van Prinsterer."<sup>41</sup>

## II. Groen's Conception of History

### 1. The Idea of Progress

"And the whole of history became a continuous confirmation of the truths that the Holy Scriptures reveal," Groen wrote in 1831, as we have seen. The prevalent conception of history in Groen's day was based on the idea of progress. Despite Rousseau's opinion that there was no reason to speak of progress, certainly not where man himself was concerned, people remained optimistic. While until the end of the eighteenth century the idea of progress had been based mainly upon increasing knowledge on every hand to achieve social improvement, industrial development, better remedies for disease, expanded means of communication, and increasing prosperity, people in the nineteenth century undertook to discover a law of progress that would assure the upward trend for the future. This led to the application to history of the theory of evolution that had been developed for the natural sciences.

In 1850, nine years before Charles Robert Darwin (1809-1882) would publish his *Origin of Species*, Herbert Spencer (1820-1903) provided a sample of it. Progress is not coincidence but a necessary, mechanical process. Human nature, too, will become constantly more perfect.

Karl Marx (1818-1883) likewise accepted uniformity of development. On his standpoint there is nothing besides observable reality; he denied the existence of supernatural or divine forces. Society in all its forms is determined by the production process. The class struggle will overthrow capitalism and inevitably lead to communism, a method of production superior to capitalism. People can lend this uniform development a hand. Hence the call of Marx and Friedrich Engels (1820-1895), in the communist party manifesto of 1848, for action by the proletariat. Progress can only be achieved by the fall of the bourgeoisie, the rule of the working class, destruction of capitalism, replacement of a society based on class contradictions by a communist one in which capital would be held not privately but collectively. In this purely materialistic system there is no place for the church, which is viewed as an apparatus of repression with no other goal than to serve capitalism by pacifying the poor, exploited class with misleading fantasies.

But Groen rejected thoroughly every idea of progress, whatever its basis. While the things that he wrote before 1830 are still alive with an optimistic rationalistic spirit (for example, his *Redevoering over de redenen om de geschiedenis der natie bekend te maken*<sup>42</sup> and his "Historische proeve over de geschiedenis en de gevolgen der steeds naauwer gewordene vereeniging van de beschaafde volken"),<sup>43</sup> the turn-about in his religious life was accompanied by a change in his concep-



tion of history. Now his point of departure became Holy Scripture. "Therein we have an infallible touchstone."<sup>44</sup>

## 2. *Reconciliation the "Center"*

In his *Proeve over de middelen waardoor de waarheid wordt gekend en gestaafd*<sup>45</sup> of 1834, which has been called his declaration of scientific principles, Groen writes:

Humanity, gradually developed and civilized, strives via byways towards a perfection that it shall, because of its aptitude, someday attain. Such is the harbor in which the tossed and battered beholder of history at last drops anchor. The scheme is as antihistorical and unchristian as it has been long cherished and vaunted. According to the Bible, the perfection of man can never consist of culture and development. Development presupposes an uncorrupted germ; Christianity teaches general depravity . . . Perfection of the human race, advancement of mankind, as it were, in the mass, is unknown in Revelation. Revelation discloses contrast, contradictoriness of destination; belief and unbelief, salvation and corruption, heaven and hell, a people of God that shall someday be made perfect in Christ.<sup>46</sup>

The main thought of the book, as he told his friend H.J. Koenen on 16 July 1834, is

that all views, also of constitutional and international law, far from being left to drift in the region of arbitrary systems, ought to be brought over onto a Christian historical soil. I feel with you, I know by experience that efforts of this nature, given the present mood, have to contend with many obstacles. But we also know that this is not chargeable to our account and that God can bless these efforts.<sup>47</sup>

The purpose of the chapter about history is "to contend that the center of world history is the reconciliation through Christ."<sup>48</sup> The Bible requires rebirth: John 3:3; Eph. 4:22-24.

The anti-Christian character of the doctrine of perfectibility is thus evident not only or mainly from the texts of Holy Scripture that foretell an appalling depth of corruption but from the nature of man, which underlies the doctrine of reconciliation: ' . . . by one man sin entered into the world . . . by the offence of one judgment came upon all men to condemnation' (Romans 5:12 and 18); this one word, the confirmation of which is found on every page of the Old and New Testaments, shatters every illusion of one's own perfectibility.<sup>49</sup>

Not far from attaining perfection, humanity would long since have become brutish if God had not intervened by establishing and preserving His Church, the light of the world, the salt of the earth. This higher intervention is visible in the whole of history, and would, if people were more mindful of it, soon set the system of perfectibility atottering.<sup>50</sup>

Groen asked himself how this system, that is given the lie by the Bible as well as by history, could have become so popular. Well, he answers, "there was a need for coherence and unity that unbelief was unable to meet in any other way. Besides, it is attractive to imagine man as originally good, one's self and one's contemporaries as elevated above all who have gone before us."<sup>51</sup> In this way historical thought, too, reached the peak of corruption:

Fatalism, which sees in man an instrument, and in crime and virtue necessary results of relations and circumstances; pantheism and indifference, which have no preference for one thing above another and consign to oblivion the difference, inseparable from God's presence, between good and evil; so that people finally fall into an impartiality lacking force or vitality, without sentiment—by this time, to the minds of many, the highest degree of historical ingenuity.<sup>52</sup>

### 3. *The Two Kingdoms*

Groen's conception of history joins the views of Augustine, Otto von Freising, and the reformers Luther and Calvin. In his twenty-two volume *De civitate Dei* Augustine argued that the principles of the Christian view of history, which acknowledges God's providence, must form the basis for assessing history. He distinguished two kingdoms: the *civitas Dei*, the kingdom of God; and the *civitas terrena*, the kingdom of the world. These two kingdoms stand diametrically opposed to each other from before the foundation of the world until the last days. They are the kingdoms of the saints, the righteous, on the one hand; and of the godless, the unrighteous, on the other. They are mixed on earth, but in the final judgment they will be separated for good. For the citizens of the kingdom of God the eternal sabbath will dawn, but those of the terrestrial kingdom will subsist in strife and discord in outermost darkness.

In his *Chronicon sive Historia de duabus civitatibus*, or "Chronicle of the history of the two kingdoms," Otto von Freising, the twelfth-century bishop, also regards history as a contest between the worldly, temporal kingdom of satan and the eternal, heavenly kingdom of God.

One finds a similar conception in the Reformers. In history God fulfills the plan of His counsel, with Christ as the center. History is made by God, and His grace and wrath are its core. According to Calvin, God's chastening justice is everywhere observable. A fully rounded explanation of phenomena lies beyond his reach; God's ways are unsearchable and unfathomable; God's decree far surpasses our understanding. History is a contest between God and satan, but they are unequal powers, for God is the victor, also in actual events. God does not assume a passive stance; He is active even in the work of satan, in the sense that apart from God the latter could accomplish nothing. Satan is the ex-

ecutor of God's wrath. The church as the body of Christ occupies a special place, but Calvin does not identify it with the kingdom of God, which will only be realized at the end of the world. The state as an independent entity must be serviceable to the kingdom of God. Man plays an essential role in history, is a rational being, and is responsible for his deeds. Yet he is an instrument in God's hand in the execution of His divine plan. Ultimately, all things happen through God's almighty will, He rules the world, never looking on passively, and He disposes over all things according to His good pleasure.

In his *Proeve* Groen puts it this way:

Christ is the beginning and the ending of the annals of mankind. Holy Scripture contains the plan of God; how can the undertakings and the intentions of people, mere creatures of the moment (however great and important in their own eyes) be more than a subordinate affair before the plan of the Eternal, of the Lord of heaven and earth; a subordinate affair that derives importance only from the link to the main issue! This divine plan is announced in the Bible in absolute and clear terms. Victory of the Kingdom of Christ over the one who was man's murderer from the beginning, salvation of those who have put on the Savior through sincere belief. To this purpose, all that happens is serviceable and subordinate.<sup>53</sup>

#### 4. *The Place of the Church*

Groen describes the place of the church in world history in the following words: the core of general history must be the history of the Christian church;

the description not of denominations, rituals and sects, but of the constant operation of God's Spirit and Revelation, to the establishment and maintenance of Christ's Church. Without this one essential and main matter, no general history, no philosophy of history, no history of mankind, no real pragmatic history, except where people equate deceptive illusion with the essence of the matter . . . The unity of history is already contained in the promise made in paradise; the outcome is the vanquishment of evil and the condition is struggle; the seed of the woman is the Victor and Savior; yesterday, today, and forever the same.<sup>54</sup>

The unity of history, which unbelief seeks in the dream world of evolutionary theory, is founded here by Groen in the Word of God.

Groen saw this perspective confirmed in the course of history. "History reveals a constant struggle of divine truth with unbelief and superstition." Before the flood, wickedness and corruption had reached a peak, but Noah preached righteousness. Before Christ there were the heathen, who walked according to their own ways, and there were the children of Israel. But even this "highly favored and profoundly corrupted" nation was finally divided by phariseeism and sadduceeism, doubt or self-justification. Everywhere there was darkness when Christ,

the light of the world, appeared. After Christ, the pagans and Christians stood opposed to each other. Through the propagation of the Gospel there was a "rebirth of mankind." "Decrepit Europe arose in youthful strength." Concepts of law, order, and morality returned. Then Christianity declined, and after that came the Reformation. "When the Bible was put in the foreground again by the reformers, a period followed that, in force of faith and morals, gave a wonderful testimony to the salutary influence of the Gospel."<sup>55</sup>

Afterwards, and soon, too, there was again decline. There was superstition in Roman Catholic countries and dead orthodoxy in the Protestant churches. Ultimately there was apostasy; it dominated science, the state, and society, yes, even the church, as the Roman Catholics persisted in their rituals and forms and the Protestants surrendered to rationalism and neology. But even now the triumph of the gospel was again being prepared. In many lands a spiritual revival could be observed, accompanied by a return to obedience to God's Word. The good news was being proclaimed to the most remote peoples. Even as unbelief seems to triumph, sooner or later the fall of satan draws near, "perhaps quickly." The return of Christ, or at least the beginning of the great conflict, is probably closer than many suspect.

The purpose of all events is the triumph of Christ's church. "This is what Christian unity of world history means." World history is the pod of the evangelical development. "In connection with the church triumphant that will one day appear, it is the stalk in which the seed is basked to ripeness; the chrysalis in which the wonderful butterfly is formed, and which, while the world with its splendor passes by, therefore, therefore alone, merits notice."<sup>56</sup>

##### 5. *The Meaning of History*

On the basis of Holy Scripture, Groen concludes that the meaning and purpose of history is the restoration of the creation, the new heaven and the new earth, of which Christ is the center. The assertion of this thesis is an act of faith. For Groen believed that God's Word is truth. And that he was right, he saw confirmed by events: the struggle between Christ and satan is everywhere apparent; in history the power of the gospel, too, has been revealed. And while he saw in his own time a climax in man's apostasy, he knew that there would one day be an end to that, too.

God's Word is a lamp unto our feet on the path of history, too. Without Holy Scripture, world history remains a riddle; by faith we know its content and destination: the fulfillment of the promise made in paradise; the triumph of the Messiah over the tempter; Christ, having come to give His life as a ransom for many, shall come again to judge the living

and the dead. The destinies of persons and nations of all races and epochs are subordinate to the establishment, maintenance, and glorification of His Church. The testimony of Christ is the spirit of world history as well as of prophecy.<sup>57</sup>

With these words Groen opened his inquiry into the history of the fatherland.

#### 6. *The Meaning of Ideas*

The place Groen assigns to concepts or ideas is intimately linked to his biblical point of departure. The course of history is determined in large measure by ideas—ideas based on God's Word or in conflict with it.

The historical thought of the Enlightenment gave no consideration to this factor. It explained historical events in terms of conscious calculations of persons or of external contingencies. No influence was attributed to the spirit of the times or to supernatural forces, whatever they might be called. Romanticism reacted against this pragmatic conception of history. Wilhelm von Humboldt declared as early as 1821 that all history is the actualization of an idea.<sup>58</sup> His theory, however, is not based on the same grounds as Groen's conception. Groen is much more akin to Guizot, according to whom the historian must seek the inner causes of the demonstrable facts. "It is the *raison* of the ideas, the sentiments, the intellectual and moral dispositions of man that regulates and impels the world; the visible state of society depends on the inner state of man."<sup>59</sup> "Beliefs, sentiments, ideas, habits precede the external condition, the social relations, the political institutions."<sup>60</sup> Groen laid special emphasis on the spirit from which the ideas would have come forth. By doing so he gained a deeper insight into the causes of historical events than his contemporaries. Smitskamp put it thus:

In this way it was possible for him to penetrate to the unity of complicated events like the Reformation and the Revolution and to set the larger lines of development in relief. He constructed his surveys, which give a clear view of the meaning and coherence of the course of history, with unmistakable mastery. As a result, there is a monumental quality to his conception of history. The larger contours are heavily outlined, the deep contrasts strongly elaborated.<sup>61</sup>

### III. *How Groen Wrote History*

#### 1. *Unbelief and Revolution*

Groen did more than theorize. In his magisterial work, *Ongeloof en Revolutie*,<sup>62</sup> he illustrated his theses from the history of the French Revolution. Despite a great deal of generally misguided criticism, this

book remains of universal significance and far transcends its time. In it, Groen showed that the root of the Revolution [understood as an event broader than the French Revolution—Ed.] is unbelief, the assertion of man's sovereignty in place of God's. Reason replaced divine revelation. It became the infallible standard. Departure from God's Word resulted in atheism and radicalism.

"The Revolution, with its variety of schools of thought and historical manifestations, is the consequence, the application, the unfolding of unbelief." "The real formative power throughout the revolutionary era . . . has been atheism, godlessness, *being without God*." "The Revolution doctrine is the religion, as it were, of unbelief."<sup>63</sup> The Revolution did not arrive as a bolt out of the blue. It was prepared by the philosophy of the eighteenth century, the principle of which was the sovereignty of reason, and the outcome apostasy from God and materialism. Reason was the touchstone of the truth, so that one believed only what he could understand; this involved rejection of biblical truth, for the "natural man receiveth not the things of the Spirit of God: for they are foolishness unto him . . . because they are spiritually discerned."<sup>64</sup>

In politics, the sovereignty of reason courses towards radicalism. Sovereign man has freedom of thought, but also of conduct. The origin of evil, according to the Revolutionary theory, lies not in man, who is of himself good, but in the "forms," in the institutions.<sup>65</sup> Incorrect institutions have forced human penchants and passions in wrong directions. That is why the remedy must be found in their overthrow.<sup>66</sup>

But Groen argues:

Just as all truth rests upon the truth that is from God, so the common foundation of all rights and duties lies in the sovereignty of God. When that sovereignty is denied or (what amounts to the same thing) banished to heaven because His kingdom is not of this world, what becomes then of the fountain of authority, of law, of every sacred and dutiful relation in state, society and family? What sanction remains for the distinctions of rank and station in life? What reason can there be that I obey and another commands, that the one is needy, the other rich? All this is custom, routine, abuse, injustice, oppression . . . Eliminate God, and it can no longer be denied that all men are, in the revolutionary sense of the words, free and equal. State and society disintegrate, for there is a principle of dissolution at work that does not cease to operate until all further division is frustrated by that indivisible unit, that isolated human being, the *individual*—a term of the Revolution's naively expressive of its all-destructive character.<sup>67</sup>

Man degrades himself if he bows to another. He demeans himself if he submits to a fellow creature.<sup>68</sup>

But what is to be done about society, in that case, assuming no one wishes to render society impossible? There is just one solution: mutual

consent.<sup>69</sup> In this way Rousseau arrived at the social contract, the meaning of which, Groen wrote, is "each associate's absolute assignment to the community of himself and all his rights."<sup>70</sup> The result is a state absolutism based on the general will; but in the meantime all freedom is destroyed, and children become the property of the state.<sup>71</sup>

And what of religion? All religions are tolerated. With one proviso—the Revolutionary state commands reverence for its own precepts for politics and morality, and bans any religion that refuses to bow before it!<sup>72</sup>

It is worth the effort to read Groen's *Unbelief and Revolution*. The book is marvelously instructive even for our times. Listen to the following passage:

For it is of little profit to know how pernicious all these doctrines are if one never comes to see that they are manifestations of a coherent system, the ramifications of a single root. Look at the effect of unbelief on conjugal and family life. These ties, too, must be loosened when Divine sovereignty is not acknowledged; and naturally so, since the most tender relationship is also the most sacred. If *Honour thy father and thy mother* no longer holds, what else can there be save a passing bond based on utter helplessness and near animal-like attachment? Whatever goes beyond that can be no more than a matter of convention. So Rousseau says:

Children remain attached to their father only as long as they need his protection. As soon as that need ceases the bond of nature is dissolved. The children, exempt from the obedience they owed their father, and the father, from the care he owed his children, return equally to a state of independence. If they continue to remain together they do so no longer by nature but by choice of will, and the family itself is continued by reason of convention only (*Du Contrat social*, I, ii.).

Where the will of all gives birth to state omnipotence, where the security and well-being of the state is the highest law, and where the will of woman too is part of the general will, why should it not be argued in connection with education that "children belong to the republic before they belong to their parents"—

a maxim which, translated into plain language, means that no paternal right or authority whatever is acknowledged; that the family is a fiction, or at least an abuse in need of reform; that the sole object of marriage is to supply the State with "young" of the human species, which the State may arrange to have educated as it wishes and may dispose of as it sees fit.<sup>73</sup>

## 2. Criticism

These, according to Groen, are the consequences to which the Revolution leads, rooted as it is in unbelief. Was he wrong? Have the children not long since become the property of the state in lands where

society is based on these unbelieving Marxist theories? Are these theories not being applied even here in The Netherlands? Are not ever more numerous voices being lifted to proclaim the freedom and independence even of very young children? Are there not already many reception centers for children who withdraw themselves from parental authority? How many attempts have not already been made to legalize an alternative social structure in place of the family? Is it not apparent here, too, that the course of history cannot be viewed in isolation from the ideas or concepts that hold people in their grip? Righteousness exalts a nation, but sin is a reproach to any people.<sup>74</sup>

Thus Groen was convinced that concepts, ideas, theories control the course of history. Did he set aside all other factors, which many historians regard as the causes of events? Factors such as natural phenomena, chance situations, or what we call the conjunction of circumstances? Or the practical objectives of persons, of their natures and characters? Groen has sometimes been reproached for fatalism. After all, given the ideas in question, must history not develop inevitably in a certain direction? Others have thought he attributes events sometimes to supernatural and at other times to historical causes, depending on what happens to suit him best at the moment. According to Jan Cornelis Hendrik de Pater, Groen rejected the idea "that there are circumstances of an entirely different nature that contribute to determining the course of things and fall outside his logical system."<sup>75</sup> On this view Groen would eliminate the influence of persons entirely and thereby confuse cause and effect. Moreover, he would ignore economic factors. And then there was Pieter Catharinus Arie Geyl's devastating criticism! In his opinion, Groen thought that

everything could be known through logical reasoning from the starting point of false principles, and that one needed to consult history only in order to find confirmation of his surmises . . . With Groen one can hardly speak of any real historical study, of any intimate familiarity or even consideration for events or societal relations. Here, indeed, one really could predict, by inference from the fallacious idea with which he approached history (the fallacious idea that ideas are everything in history), that it could hardly be otherwise.<sup>76</sup>

De Pater speaks of mechanical idealism in Groen; Smitskamp of an identification of mechanism and historical causality; Geyl of logical reasoning. All these critics represent Groen's conception of history much too simplistically, because they fail to penetrate to the core of the matter.

### 3. *Refutation: The Dominion of God*

Eighteenth-century historiography had, in its conception of causality, secularized history. In Groen's judgment, it had forgotten the



greatest lesson of history, namely, that God rules. Consequently, events were explained from subordinate causes and driving forces. Yet everything pointed to a "general cause, to whose influence forms of government and circumstances and national character and acting personages have been subordinate. This cause must be sought in the *ideas* which have predominated." "The history of Europe, for more than half a century, has been the inevitable consequence of the errors that have made themselves the master of the prevailing mode of thinking."<sup>77</sup> In a letter of 13 May 1845 Groen wrote to the Utrecht professor G.W. Vreede that he did not find that the enumeration of the "manifold and very serious deficiencies" of the constitutional order prior to 1795 "furnished proof that the revolution of 1795 issued *only* or *mainly* therefrom, and not much sooner from the theories of the eighteenth century."<sup>78</sup>

Groen emphatically dissociates himself from a fatalistic view: "Do not infer that I would thus teach some sort of fatalism. Or was Newton a fatalist when he asserted that by the law of gravity the apple *has* to fall once it is detached from its stem? As there are forces and laws in the physical world, so there are forces and laws in the realm of morality."<sup>79</sup> Those who resist God fall from bad to worse. If one speaks of what is mechanical, he has machines in mind: revolution issues mechanically from unbelief. But that was not what Groen meant. Groen thought in terms of the biblical passage, "Do men gather grapes of thorns, or figs of thistles? Even so every good tree bringeth forth good fruit; but a corrupt tree bringeth forth evil fruit. A good tree cannot bring forth evil fruit, neither can a corrupt tree bring forth good fruit."<sup>80</sup> Thus Groen advanced the causal connection as it is presented in the Bible.

In circumstances or in persons, it is asserted, lie cause and fault. In this manner, through evasions of all sorts, the uniqueness of the root is ignored. With equal right one could blame the aridity of the soil, the instability of the weather, the multiplication of vermin or the incompetence of the vinedresser for the fact that one cannot gather grapes from thorns or figs from thistles. With equal right one could praise the qualities of a tree from which none but deadly fruits were ever picked . . . One complains about the deviations and aberrations of men and forgets that, under the influence of the ideas of the Revolution, free choice is restricted to the variety of ways that lead astray.<sup>81</sup>

Groen's expectation of the way in which events would develop in The Netherlands was likewise based upon this thought.

In all likelihood we shall pursue the course we have now taken for some considerable time yet; perhaps, through the influence of the false principles amongst the lower classes, we shall be faced with even more violent revolutionary upheavals. If this should prove to be the case, I shall appeal to the future as I have appealed to the past. The Netherlands will learn that the

same tree produces the same fruit. No reforms of the constitution, no revolutions of the state, will effect anything truly salutary as long as we continue to apply liberal politics!<sup>82</sup>

In the case of supernatural causality, which in Smitskamp's view Groen distinguishes from historical causality, the issue is that of God's hand or God's finger in history. Groen appeals to it, according to Smitskamp, "when the operation of God's providence is visible either in direct causes or even apart from them."<sup>83</sup> This always pertains to cases involving an unexpected, sudden turn in the course of events. These are the result, says Smitskamp, of an operation that transpires entirely outside the scope of human calculation and action, or the effects of which are not proportionate to the modesty of the means humanly advanced to account for them. Groen perceives the intervention of God precisely where the historical-causal explanation, given its exclusive concern with human or intrahuman factors, fails. Opzoomer calls this using "the sword of providence" to cut through knots that can be disentangled in no other way.<sup>84</sup> Smitskamp would not support that formulation without qualification; still, he finds that there is a semblance of truth in it. Examples would be the fall of The Netherlands in 1795, and its liberation in 1813 by the "single stalwart deed" of Van Hogendorp;<sup>85</sup> the success of the Ten-day Campaign,<sup>86</sup> "when as by an angel of God a highroad was opened before the advancing army"; and the outbreak of the Crimean War<sup>87</sup> in spite of the desire of the powers to avoid it.<sup>88</sup>

#### 4. *The Sword of Providence*

Did Groen use the sword of providence to cut through knots? He commented on the subject himself as follows:

Philosophy, according to which God is everywhere excluded, has done more damage in this country, too, than most people commonly imagine. One indication of this is that many, including those in whom belief has not yet been eliminated as the factor governing their personal lot, disesteem the consoling thought of [divine] world government and belittle it as a chimera of superstition the moment it is applied to particulars. Why should the history of nations be treated any differently than personal vicissitudes are treated in the reflection of everyone who believes in providence? In the clearest indications of God's hand, people see only the operation of natural and coincidental causes. They are able to ascribe the hurricane in which the Invincible Armada was destroyed, the northwester that compelled the Spanish to abandon the siege of Leyden, or, to speak of our own times, the early winter that checked Napoleon in his absurd arrogance, all to what the pagans call fate. They are able to do so given the assumption either that God does not command the seasons and the storms or that He does so without regard to man.<sup>89</sup>

Is this to speak of twofold causality? In the nature of the case, no. For natural disasters, poor harvests, sickness and health—the so-called direct causes—together with the human will, the pageant of personalities, their characters, their passions and ambitions are means in God's hand to bring His counsel to pass. That is how Groen saw it. The Goths brought judgment upon the Romans, but it was God's work: "And [the Lord] will lift up an ensign to the nations from far."<sup>90</sup> The gospel was proclaimed in the Lowlands, and "the Lord performed His word and confirmed it with signs that followed."<sup>91</sup>

Groen acknowledged God's providence in the course of history and linked it in his thinking to the relationship of people and nations to Him. In that light he sought the explanation of what happened, appreciating all the while, however, the words of Paul that resonate in the following passage; in the introduction to his *Handboek* we read:

It is not permitted the short-sighted mortal, in idle delusion, to anticipate the decrees of God and to lift the veil<sup>92</sup> that He has put upon the mysteries of the governance of the world; but even less is it permitted the believing and humble *Christian* to close his eyes to the beams of light in which, in the wonders of history, the glory of His perfections shines, and which do not leave unattested to the nations God's love and righteousness in the ways of His providence.<sup>93</sup>

Thus in his practical historiography, Groen regarded God in His acting as concretely knowable. If we do not do that, the Lord, as M.C. Smit has so aptly observed, will vanish from our field of vision. "What we are left with," he writes, "is the historical order, its laws and events and its human agents—yes, it is from the latter that guidance now comes, to judge from our historical experience. God, however, has become a peripheral figure, as unsearchable and past finding out as ever, and hence imponderable by historical science, even as a mere factor." For, however, people may attempt to deal with the fact, God is intimately present in this world, He acts in it from moment to moment, and He has related all things to Himself. If this is true, Smit asks, how can anyone hope to say anything true about history while leaving it out of account?<sup>94</sup>

That is something Groen, too, had already understood. We can gain a sound insight into his conception of history and his historiography only when we keep in mind that he associated the providence of God with the relationship of people and nations to God. And in that case we cannot follow Geyl in saying that as a matter of fact Groen was not a historian after all but a confessor of the gospel, yes, that his historical writing was really a miscarriage, scientifically speaking. Geyl failed to understand that Groen was a confessor of the gospel even as a *historian*. Because Geyl could not fathom Groen as a confessor

of the gospel, it was impossible for him to appreciate Groen as a historian.

How did Groen apply his biblically founded perspective in his practical historiography? To answer this question, it is necessary to know what determines the relationship between God on the one hand and people and nations on the other.

The Holy Scriptures teach us that God made man good. Obedience to the Creator's commandments bears the promise of everlasting life. But man rebelled against God; he wanted to be like Him, which is to say, he desired to take the sovereignty unto himself. The price he paid was death.

Then God had mercy upon him and gave His only begotten son, who by His suffering and death and by His blood took the penalty of sin upon Himself, thus opening the way to renewed fellowship with God. Believing in Him and living according to God's commandments bears anew the promise of everlasting life. Unbelief, disobedience, and walking after one's own ways implies, in contrast, the threat of the judgment of God. This holds not only with respect to the hereafter but also here, now, in life on earth.

Well then, Groen wanted to call attention to this in his relations of the course of events. Groen considered God's relationship to people to be a *historical* truth, too.

I have not misused history to favor my own perspective in religion . . . But even less have I considered it acceptable, in a science called above all to give testimony to the whole truth, to set the highest truth aside . . . That the vicissitudes of the fatherland have shown and established the force of the promise, ". . . them that honour me I will honour"<sup>95</sup>—these truths, too, ought not to be barred from the circle of accomplished facts to which they so eminently belong. These are the pervasive facts, the marrow and bone from which the frame gains coherence and firmness.<sup>96</sup>

##### 5. *Groen's Use of Scripture*

Groen stands in the tradition of Calvin, for whom God's grace and wrath were the core, when he ascribes a significant role to God's promises and threats. In this connection he refers frequently in his *Handboek* to passages of Scripture. It will be useful to provide several examples. The first follows:

In the fifth century, and even earlier, the territory of the Romans was menaced, violated, occupied, and ruled by tribes arriving from the north. This was the lot of the Netherlands as well; even the name of the Batavians yielded to the names of the Franks and the Frisians. The Romans had no shortage of leadership, courage, and perseverance; they had conquered the whole known world; singularly, the Prophet had described the rule of this violent folk as a kingdom of *iron*, which subdues and breaks in pieces all

things.<sup>97</sup> Outstanding soldierly qualities were paired with numerous vices; with insatiable lust for glory, power, riches, and sensual pleasure; with mercilessness and profound corruption: "professing themselves to be wise, they became fools, filled with all unrighteousness."<sup>98</sup> They had persecuted Christ in His disciples three centuries long in the most atrocious way; at Rome or on Roman territory many thousands had been decapitated, burned, crucified, and torn by wild beasts for the spectacle and to wile away the time. The Romans had fulfilled the prophecies against Jerusalem; now the time of retribution had arrived for them. Countless multitudes streamed out of the barren North towards the fruitful Southern regions. For them, too, the prophecy held: "And he will lift up an ensign to the nations from far, and will hiss unto them from the end of the earth: and, behold, they shall come with speed swiftly."<sup>99</sup> The empire disintegrated; the supreme city whose command had gone out over the whole earth was plundered and devastated, more than once.<sup>100</sup>

In connection with the preaching of the gospel in the Lowlands, Groen wrote the following:

Christian missionaries arrived as early as the eighth century. "Men filled with faith and the Holy Ghost and who had surrendered their lives for the name of our Lord Jesus Christ."<sup>101</sup> Willebrord and Bonifacius are known for their zeal and self-sacrifice. Thus did the light shine in the Netherlands for the people that walked in darkness in a land of the shadow of death.<sup>102</sup> "Preach the gospel to every creature,"<sup>103</sup> the Lord had said, "baptizing them and teaching them to observe all things whatsoever I have commanded you."<sup>104</sup> The apostles and those who believed their word "went forth, and preached everywhere, the Lord working with them, and confirming the word with signs following."<sup>105</sup> After the most brutal resistance, the gospel had won the victory, over the Romans and over the conquerors of the Romans. This small country was elevated beside and above the greatest powers by prosperity, wealth, power, and influence. God did it. "Our fathers' arm did not save them: but thy right hand, and thine arm, and the light of thy countenance."<sup>106</sup> He glorifies Himself "in the weak things and base things of the world, that no flesh should glory in His presence."<sup>107</sup> The history of the Republic is the confirmation of the promise, "But seek ye first the kingdom of God, and his righteousness; and all these things shall be added unto you."<sup>108</sup> Happy is he whose God is the Lord."<sup>109</sup>

When people in The Netherlands praised the theories of the French Revolution and danced around the liberty tree, Groen wrote, they forgot "that it is forever the case that when a folk that has been blessed with the gospel chooses unbelief, the prophecy applies, 'I will bring evil upon this people, even the fruit of their thoughts, because they have not hearkened unto my words, nor to my law.'<sup>110</sup> And with respect to his own times he said, "In bitter fruits of steady practice the nature and tendency of the Revolution was visible, together with the judgment of God: 'My people would not hearken to my voice. So I gave them up unto their own hearts' lust: and they walked in their own counsels.'<sup>111</sup>

Groen's use of Scripture is, as it turns out, pertinent after all, and not just a "somewhat understandable consequence" of his starting point, as Smitskamp would have it. Smitskamp acknowledges that there is generally discernible in Groen's citing of Bible texts "a clear intent to call attention to how God's promises and threats are fulfilled in history." But "frequently there are no other grounds to be found for it than perhaps a need to speak the language of Canaan or, by hook or by crook, to insert an edifying remark." "How otherwise can one explain, for example, his having added to the observation that the Batavians were pagans: 'without Christ, having no hope, and without God in the world' (Ephesians 2:12)?"<sup>112</sup>

J. Kamphuis has correctly called attention to the fact that this very text occurs quite frequently in Groen, assuming a place of central importance in other of his writings as well.<sup>113</sup> That is the case, for example, in Groen's *Proeve over de middelen waardoor de waarheid wordt gekend en gestaafd*. There Groen writes: "There is one true religion; one religion through which the broken bond is secured again, one Mediator,<sup>114</sup> one Name given whereby we must be saved,<sup>115</sup> one Christ outside whom one lives without God in the world."<sup>116</sup> It comes down to this: one who does not believe in Christ can have no fellowship with the living God; he lives without God. Groen uses this text as evidence against the general belief of the Enlightenment in God without Christ. We encounter it in *Ongeloof en Revolutie*, too, in connection with Groen's argument that the so-called Christian deism of the Enlightenment is essentially atheism.<sup>117</sup>

What we have here is not a need to use the language of Canaan or to speak an edifying word but a scriptural assessment of a religion without Christ. For to be without Christ means to be without God.

## 6. *Blessing and Curse*

Thus Groen introduces the fulfillment of God's promises and threats as a real element in the course of history. Does this mean that he equates prosperity and adversity with blessing and curse? Decidedly not. To do that would also be out of harmony with what the Bible teaches about the subject. The psalmists sometimes complain that the ungodly prosper while the righteous experience all kinds of difficulties. Groen himself warned in 1849 against seeing in the advantages still enjoyed by The Netherlands "in the midst of the turmoil of the nations" "a seal of approval from on high." One has to keep in mind, Groen argued, that the constitutional revision of 1848, "if the principles that triumphed in it retain the upper hand, has brought us a giant step closer, on the road of Revolution, to the fall of the fatherland."<sup>118</sup> As early as 1832 he had written, in a letter to H.J. Koenen: "The gospel has nowhere promised, to my knowledge, that the good cause will always triumph here below,

and we need only glance at history or look about us to discover that evil often triumphs, even for long periods."<sup>119</sup> At about this time he also remarks that God's help may never be expected on the basis of the righteousness of the cause being fought for, since ultimately "nations like particular individuals are always guilty before God."<sup>120</sup>

The reverse, too, is true: God sometimes provides deliverance and prosperity despite apostasy, and history sometimes produces examples of "injustice triumphant" in which the signs of God's impending retribution can be discerned only later.<sup>121</sup> Prosperity is certainly no touchstone of right. If, given the "persistent neglect of what once was the cause of overflowing blessing," the decline of welfare and thriving at the end of the reign of King William I does not seem surprising, nevertheless, "progress and development in material and intellectual fields alike" "has been surprising" since 1789, despite the increasing apostasy.<sup>122</sup>

Faith in God's Word, not events as such, must be the basis for speaking of blessing and judgment as these reflect the nature of God's providence vis-à-vis walking, or not walking, in His ways. Such an approach protects one from the propensity to hitch God to his own wagon. Prosperity can be for one's destruction, adversity for one's blessing.

Hoping against hope is very good, assuming one has the promises of God, but where is this promise insofar as the Netherlands are concerned? The true basis for not losing courage lies, I think, not in the conviction that this land will be raised to an unprecedented level of splendor, although showing the possibility of that, the agreement of that with the analogy of history, has its uses; no, maintaining courage is, I think, far more firmly based on the belief that if God desires the fall of the Netherlands, His will will be fulfilled in that, too, and that all things work together for good to them who believe.<sup>123</sup>

And this "for good to them who believe" is most intimately linked to the belief that the core of universal history lies in the history of the universal Christian church: "The destiny of the church of Christ, revealed in the Scriptures, rules, until the end of the ages, the destiny of the human race."<sup>124</sup> This derives from what Groen confessed as the meaning of history, God's plan: "Victory of the kingdom of Christ over that which Satan has established, salvation of those who have put on Christ through sincere belief. To this plan, all that happens is serviceable and subordinate."<sup>125</sup>

I have mentioned the important role played by ideas or concepts in the course of events in Groen's conception of history. Unbelief leads to Revolution. The ultimate consequence of belief in the sovereignty of man is anarchy or despotism. Liberty becomes profligacy and ultimately the worst imaginable slavery. Yet, Groen recognizes the existence of forces that resist this development, or at least retard it. Among these factors are nature and time. By nature Groen means the objective real-

ity of things. As early as 1831 he observed that the theory of Revolution is in conflict with the nature of things: it "resists, in order to maintain a concoction of its own creation, the demands of a beneficent and ever recurring nature and of ceaselessly onward moving time."<sup>126</sup> The Revolution's ideas will never be realized for the simple reason that they are in conflict with the divine order and the essence of human nature. The Revolution can murder persons and abolish institutions, but it cannot alter the nature of things. Since that is so, consistent application of the Revolution's principles leads to chaos. "In the history of the French Revolution the Revolutionary ideas ultimately encounter the historical and unalterable nature of things." Thus time, too, works as a brake. The Revolution, striving "absurdly" for an entirely new creation, seeks to destroy the linkage of the times. This must of necessity miscarry, since people would re-create by human agency "that which is established of itself and by the force of the times."<sup>127</sup>

Other circumstances, too, can have a braking effect. For example in 1787 the revolution in The Netherlands was temporarily checked by Prussian forces.

#### 7. Summary

We can summarize Groen's conception of history in the following points.

(1) The meaning of history: God's plan with the world, as that plan is revealed in God's Word, is the meaning of history.

(2) Causality in history: (a) the relationship between God and persons (or nations): belief and obedience lead to blessing (which is not identical with prosperity), while unbelief and disobedience lead to cursing (which is not identical with adversity); (b) closely linked to this is the influence of ideas or concepts—a good tree brings forth good fruit, an evil tree evil fruit; (c) the essence and nature of things as God created them cannot be altered by man; they unmistakably influence the course of history; (d) time has a consolidating effect, so that the total overthrow of the established order cannot occur without penalty; (e) causality cannot be viewed in isolation from God's presence in history; God is pervasively at work in all things; He rules.

### IV. The Histories Groen Wrote

#### 1. Publication of Sources

Lastly, a word about Groen's practical work as a historian. At the age of seventy-two he wrote in his *Nederlandsche Gedachten*:

In 1827, with the self-assurance of youth, I participated in the competition for appointment as historiographer of the realm. The rashness of such



presumption now became clear and evident to me, immersed as I was [as archivist of the Koninklijke Huisarchief] in the abundance of scientific material. To me at least, in the middle of a hitherto locked treasure chamber of correspondence of statesmen and heroes, it was incontestable that any thought of writing the history of the country along the lines the government had desired was unwarranted. Such a project needed to be preceded by the presentation of historical contributions from past generations themselves, in much larger measure than people had imagined.<sup>128</sup>

The writing of a history should be preceded by precise study of the historical sources. Therefore, Groen first devoted himself to "the more humble, less conspicuous, and much more burdensome work" of a publication of primary sources. He hoped thereby "to be able to do justice to many misjudged characters, to set in the right light many events concerning which erroneous conceptions now prevail."<sup>129</sup>

In those days the publication of historical sources was not yet the self-evident matter it has since become. Thus Groen was attacked by M.C. van Hall,<sup>130</sup> who thought it entirely incorrect to make private correspondence public. Van Hall maintained that historians should be satisfied to present just extracts and summaries and that they should not publish the documents as such. Groen masterfully defended himself against this conception, and was supported by eminent historians such as R.C. Bakhuizen van den Brink.<sup>131</sup> Van Hall's method would short-change the truth and leave room for the subjective views of the editor or publisher. Groen was concerned to do justice to the historical truth. To retreat before a demand that could not be rhymed with this requirement would be to ignore what conscience and good faith prescribe as the first of our duties: it would mean "degrading a noble task to idle show."<sup>132</sup> Groen wanted to compile pieces

which, in proportion to their being more intimate and more confidential, disclose hidden motives and mainsprings, furnish unembellished truth in place of decorations and deceptive appearance, read the heart, and, in a word, cast light even into the secret corners where the actual facts of matters, the uniqueness of persons and epochs, lies hidden.<sup>133</sup>

In the sources he had found much "that conduces to a more correct assessment of various personalities in our history."<sup>134</sup> Granvelle, for example, "regarded by our historiographers as a wily, cruel, mean supporter of the Spanish tyranny," turned out not to have been at all favorably disposed towards the Spanish cause; on the contrary, he had struggled to maintain the privileges the land enjoyed and had declared himself opposed to Alva's brutality.<sup>136</sup>

## 2. *The "Handboek"*

After Groen had become familiar with the sources and published a number of volumes of his *Archives*, he decided that the time had come

for telling the story. His *Handboek der geschiedenis van het vaderland* is based on knowledge gained from the sources. The *Archives* were for the scholarly world; the *Handboek* was for the Dutch people.

The historian must strive to report the truth, that is, the actual state of affairs. He may not represent something as having happened unless the sources provide grounds for doing so. While it would be impermissible for him to surrender to poetic fantasies, it is likewise the case that the power of imagination is indispensable to him; he needs it for freeing himself from the present and for moving empathically into other times and worlds of thought. But "all that is fictive, embellished, exaggerated or reduced, that is not simple and unadulterated truth and that is nevertheless reported as truth, is fatal for history."<sup>137</sup> Not only the truth but the *whole* truth must be told. The writer of history may not delete something that happens not to suit his preference. He must recount the *whole* truth, "even when the most cherished Protestant notions are sacrificed to it."<sup>138</sup>

The historian may appropriately occupy himself not only with the facts as such but also with their evaluation and with the assessment of characters. In doing so, however, he must maintain certain standards. In the first place, the historian should know the circumstances and the concepts of the age upon which he would render judgment.

It is a rich source of misconceptions, that people misappraise the influence of prevailing concepts and in too large measure view the deeds of earlier times as if the acting persons shared our own standpoint, saw through our eyes, and felt and knew nothing less and nothing more *then* than what we ourselves feel and know *now*. So people see as cruelty what was superstition, as stupidity and foolishness what was ignorance, as ambition what was religious fervor, as political acumen what was disinterested self-sacrifice.<sup>139</sup>

The historian must be able to identify himself with the periods and persons at issue. Only then can he arrive at a more or less impartial judgment. In this way Groen acquired an entirely different view of persons and events than people had hitherto entertained. Philip II, Granvelle, and Alva, for example, were cast in an entirely different light. Philip's persecution of heretics could no longer be ascribed to cruelty and narrow-mindedness. He was not a bloodthirsty tyrant but a man who on the basis of his standpoint had of a right to uphold his authority, and whose honest religious convictions led him to his acts against those who in his eyes were heretics. Here again the role of ideas emerges clearly.

Yet according to Groen, even in making historical judgments, only someone who has taken a stand can be impartial. He therefore applies the standard of his principles to persons, without respect to persons. "Denying or disguising principles" is no "condition or guarantee of a valuable and desirable impartiality."<sup>140</sup> "Better no history at all than an

objective treatment," if this means that as a historian "one may be neither a Christian nor a Dutchman."<sup>141</sup>

In his *Handboek* Groen characterizes Dutch history as follows: "The history of the Netherlands is the story of the formation, the development, the life of the Dutch people, a nation distinct in origin, language, religion, and mores. This national life is eminently conspicuous in the Republic of the United Netherlands."<sup>142</sup>

Groen divided the history of the Republic into four periods:

1. "Suffering for the faith, 1517-1568." [This is the period from the inception of the Reformation to the outbreak of the Eighty Years' War.]
2. "Fighting for the faith, 1568-1648."
3. "Preserving and protecting the faith, 1648-1713." [This is the period from the Peace of Westphalia till the Treaty of Utrecht.]
4. "Apostasy from the faith, 1713-1795." [This is the Age of Reason and of the periwig up to the French Revolution's arrival in Holland.]

The period 1795-1840 follows. Groen initially called it, "Punishment for apostasy, and restoration." In later editions he called it simply, "The Revolution."

Although in some sense Groen joined and continued the Reformed tradition that liked to call The Netherlands the Israel of the new dispensation, he is rather more cautious here. The blessings of the gospel have been granted to The Netherlands not exclusively, as they were to Israel, yet most excellently. The Netherlands cannot be put on par with Israel, but can be compared to it. In little Holland, too, God had done great things.

### 3. *The "Kort overzicht"*

The *Handboek* was intended primarily as a guide for teachers. Because its completion required much time, Groen first published a "brief survey" of Dutch history, entitled *Kort overzicht van de geschiedenis des vaderlands*.<sup>143</sup> It commences as follows:

Of particular importance are the vicissitudes of those nations where more than elsewhere is found the knowledge of the one true God, and of Jesus Christ, whom He sent (John 17:3). Thus first of all of the people of Israel, unto whom were entrusted the oracles of God,<sup>144</sup> and "of whom as concerning the flesh Christ came, who is over all, God blessed forever" (Romans 9:5). Next, of the Christian nations, to whom, after the Savior's ascension, at His command, the good news of forgiveness and salvation through the blood of the cross was proclaimed. Finally, of the Christian-Protestant nations among whom, sunk in superstition as they were, God again brought the gospel truth to light. The Dutch nation belongs to this final category; so that the history of the fatherland is important not just

because it is the land of our birth and residence but especially because it concerns the truth by which we hope to be saved.<sup>145</sup>

The book concludes with the following moving words, which I shall make my conclusion as well:

The fatherland, privileged above other nations through the knowledge of the gospel, has had abundant opportunity and exhortation, even since the salutary revolution of 1813, to make God's revealed will a guideline for government and subject alike, as it was before. Despite the uncertainty of the future, it is certain the whole duty of man is to fear God, and keep His commandments (Ecclesiastes 12:13); that righteousness exalteth a nation: but sin is a reproach to any people (Proverbs 14:34); that where people trust in their own wisdom, God will destroy the wisdom of the wise, and will bring to nothing the understanding of the prudent (I Cor. 19); that except the Lord build the house, they labour in vain that build it (Psalm 127:1); and that in any age, the ability to say "The Lord will save us" depends on first acknowledging the Lord as our judge, the Lord as our lawgiver, the Lord as our king (Isaiah 33:22).<sup>146</sup>

#### Notes

1. [The present article is an approved translation of "Groen van Prinsterer en zijn geschiedbeschouwing," *Bijbel en Wetenschap* 4/23 (January 1979) 13-28. *Bijbel en Wetenschap* is an organ of the Evangelische Hogeschool (Postbus 957, Amersfoort, The Netherlands), where Miss Van Essen originally presented this material in lecture form. The translation, which has been slightly emended for republication, appeared in *The Westminster Theological Journal* 44 (1982) 205-49.]
2. [The evangelical Dutch historian Jantje Lubbegiena Van Essen (1913-)—Ludi to her friends—has been professionally engaged on a full-time basis since 1943 in editing Groen van Prinsterer's correspondence for publication in the official national series, *Rijks Geschiedkundige Publicatiën*, Grote Series (hereafter referred to as *RGP*). She participated in preparing two of the original four huge volumes of the *Briefwisseling*—a multi-volume work within the *Groen van Prinsterer Schriftelijke Nalatenschap* (Literary estate; hereafter referred to as *GSN*), which in its own turn is a work within the *RGP* series. (I refer to these books by their *RGP* vol. number.) Miss Van Essen's most important contribution will certainly be the two equally monumental supplementary volumes (5 and 6) of the *Briefwisseling*, the first of which appeared in 1980 and the second of which, now in the early stages of preparation, she continues to work on in retirement.

The *RGP* is a project of the Office of the State Commission for National History, an agency of the Dutch Ministry of Education and Sciences. The chairman of this commission from 1978 to 1986 was A. Th. van Deursen, a professor of modern history at the Free University of Amsterdam.

The *GSN* ('s-Gravenhage: Martinus Nijhoff, 1925), may be itemized as follows:

RGP 93, GSN 1, *Bescheiden* (Papers and reprints; ed. [Frederik] C[arel] Gerretson, 1951, not available to the book trade).

RGP 58, GSN 2, *Briefwisseling* (Correspondence) 1: 1808-1833 (ed. C. Gerretson, 1925; xxxii, 912 pages).

RGP 114, GSN 3, *Briefwisseling 2: 1833-1848* (ed. C. Gerretson and completed by J.L. van Essen, 1964; xvi, 1012 pages).

RGP 90, GSN 4, *Briefwisseling 3: 1848-1866* (ed. H[omme] J[acob] Smit, 1949; xxviii, 1004 pages).

RGP 123, GSN 5, *Briefwisseling 4: 1866-1876* (ed. A[driaan] Goslinga and completed by J.L. van Essen, 1967; xxiv, 964 pages).

RGP 175, GSN 5, *Briefwisseling 5: 1827-1869* (ed. J.L. van Essen, 1980; x, 903 pages, with indexes [pp. 839-70] of letter writers, personal names, and newspapers and periodicals, plus a bibliography [pp. 871-903] of works cited in letters and footnotes).

RGP (number unassigned), GSN 7, *Briefwisseling 6: 1869-1876* (ed. J.L. van Essen, in preparation).

It needs to be noted that the entire, hastily prepared and unreliable contents of a volume that was published as an RGP pre-print from GSN 5—namely, *Briefwisseling van Mr. G. Groen van Prinsterer met Dr. A[braham] Kuyper, 1864-1876* (ed. A. Goslinga; Kampen: J.H.Kok, 1937; xii, 412 pages)—are being re-edited and seeded into the grander framework of the supplementary volumes, which meet the highest modern standards for archival source publications.

Finally, there is a story connected with GSN 1, the *Bescheiden*, that deserves recounting. Miss Van Essen related to me in an interview in Amsterdam 17 November 1981 that this volume exists and at the same time does not exist. Frederik Carel Gerretson (1884-1958), the original editor, like Pieter Geyl a Great Netherlander, was once falsely accused, on Miss Van Essen's report, of sympathy with the Dutch Nazi movement. To demonstrate the falseness of the accusation to fellow-members of the First Chamber of the Dutch Parliament, he let the *Bescheiden* appear in a limited edition of perhaps forty sewn, but unbound, copies intended for members of the chamber only. It was never sold or distributed to libraries; upon inquiry, subscribers were informed that RGP 93 was not finished yet. Gerretson died. Hendrik Smitskamp subsequently did little but organize the project somewhat and perhaps add a few notes. Now it is in the hands of Johan Zwaan, who expects to see it to completion, undoubtedly in two volumes covering Groen's entire literate life, and hopefully by 1986. Gerretson's rather odd non-volume contained materials from 1810 to 1829 only; it included some newspaper columns and governmental documents that are not properly part of Groen's literary estate and that Zwaan is therefore deleting. Gerretson also included lengthy passages of his own that would now be considered inappropriate in an archival publication. Miss Van Essen and the library of the Free University in Amsterdam and perhaps a few others are in possession of copies. The plates were eventually destroyed by order of the Office of the State Commission for National History, probably because they took up too much space.]

3. [Cornelia Adriana Groen van Prinsterer (1799-1858).]

4. [Maria Clasina Groen van Prinsterer (1806-1869).]
5. [*Disputatio juridica inauguralis de juris Justinianei praestantia ex rationibus ejus manifesta* (On the excellence of the Justinian Code, manifest from its principles; Leiden: Hazenberg, 1823; viii, 102 pages) and *Disputatio literaria inauguralis qua continetur Platonica Prosopographia, sive expositio judicii, quod Plato tulit de iis, qui in scriptis ipsius aut loquentes inducuntur, aut quavis de causa commemorantur* (Proper names in Plato, or an exposition of Plato's assessment of the persons he names in his writings, or of the reason he introduces them; Leiden: Hazenberg, 1823; xvi, 246 pages).

The modern Dutch bibliography of 152 writings by Groen, annotated and arranged chronologically, was prepared by the classicist Johan Zwaan of the staff of the library of the Free University in Amsterdam and published in his extremely well documented dissertation, *Groen van Prinsterer en de klassieke oudheid* (Groen van Prinsterer and classical antiquity; Amsterdam: Uitgeverij Adolf M. Hakkert, 1973) 467-83. Where pertinent, the translator's notes to the present article are based on this bibliography. For secondary literature on Groen see Zwaan's bibliography, pp. 483-527; and J.L. Van Essen, "Werken en artikelen over G. Groen van Prinsterer," in *Een staatsman ter navolging: Groen van Prinsterer herdacht* (1876-1976) ([The Hague]: Stichtingen Kader- en Vormingswerk, ARP, CHU en KVP, 1976) 238-46.]

6. [Mr. Guillaume Groen van Prinsterer, *Handboek der geschiedenis van het vaderland* (Handbook of the history of the fatherland; 1st ed., 5 installments, Leiden: Luchtmans, 1841-46). 1: *Van de vroegste tijden tot den opstand tegen Filips* (From the earliest times to the revolt against Philip; 1841); 2: *De tachtigjarige krijg* (The Eighty Years' War; 1842); 3: *Van den vrede van Munster tot den vrede van Utrecht* (From the Peace of Munster to the peace of Utrecht; 1843); 4: *Van den vrede van Utrecht tot den ondergang van het gemeenebest, 1713-1795* (From the Peace of Utrecht to the fall of the Republic, 1713-1795; 1845); 5: *1795-1840* (1846). The references here are to the 3rd, revised ed. (Amsterdam: Höveker, 1872; xxxii, 906 pages). For an index to this frequently reprinted work, see A.J. van Lummel, *Register op het Handboek der geschiedenis van het vaderland van Mr. G. Groen van Prinsterer* (Utrecht: Kemink, 1877). (The "Mr." often seen with Groen's name is the abbreviation not of "Mister," but of the Dutch lawyer's title *Meester*; moreover, by Dutch convention he may correctly be called Groen for short, after the first part of his surname, but not Prinsterer or Van Prinsterer.)]
7. [Dutch Reflections. There are two series of these little newspapers (the early numbers of which Groen published anonymously): 1st series, 4 vols. ('s-Gravenhage: Vervloet, 1830-1832); 2nd series, 6 vols. (Amsterdam: Höveker, 1869-1876). Groen's *Nederlandsche Gedachten* are an early example of Christian journalism in the field of politics.]
8. [François Pierre Guillaume Guizot (1787-1874), a professor of history at the Sorbonne and a member of the Evangelical Alliance, was the French Minister of Education from 1832-1837 and of Foreign Affairs from 1840 to 1848, when Paris sneezed again and forced him into retirement from public life.]

9. [Isaac da Costa (1798-1860) was a Dutch Christian romantic poet whose social and political attitudes were influenced by Willem Bilderdijk, his spiritual father. Like Groen, he held doctorates in law and literature from the University of Leiden. A convert from the Sephardic Judaism of Amsterdam's Portuguese Synagogue, he became an evangelical leader of the Réveil circle in Amsterdam, where for many years he held popular lectures on the history of The Netherlands and, at Sunday evening gatherings of friends at his home, led Bible studies and emphasized the Bible as a family book. He was a close friend and frequent visitor at Groen's home in The Hague. A work of impassioned youth that has been called the birthcry of the Dutch Réveil, his *Bezwaren tegen den geest der eeuw* (Grievances against the spirit of the age; Leiden: Sijthoff, 1823) was received by a horrified Dutch society with that special contempt enlightened elites reserve for hot and unsolicited jeremiads. Here Da Costa asserted, among many other things (including the legitimacy of slavery), that a king must follow his conscience, not the constitution, when forced to choose between them—a standpoint which confronts Protestant political theory with the question of whether the injunction to obey God rather than men is not a prescription for absolutism when applied personally by princes.]
10. [The reference is to Mr. G. Groen van Prinsterer, *Verspreide geschriften* (Selected writings; 2 vols.; Amsterdam: Höveker, 1859-60). Vol. 1: *Staatsrecht en politiek* (Constitutional law and politics); vol. 2: *Kerk, School, Volkshistorie* (Church, school, national history).]
11. [See n. 10, above; a number of the writings collected in Groen's *Verspreide geschriften* antedate *Volksgeest en burgerzin* (The spirit of the nation and civic spirit; Leyden: van der Hoek, 1829; iv, 52 pages).]
12. Mr. G. Groen van Prinsterer, *Nederlandsche Gedachten* 5 (2 December 1873) 255-58. [The allusion is to J. H. van der Palm, *Redevoering, ter feestvierende herinnering van den akademischen leeftijd, uitgesproken in 's-Gravenhage den 23sten July 1828* (Leiden: D. Mortier en Zoon, 1828). This address was delivered in the Lutheran church in The Hague to a select group of some 221 alumni of the University of Leiden then alive who had matriculated prior to 1790 (including Groen's father, who had matriculated in 1785), at the first alumni meeting ever organized by the university. It celebrates golden days of happy youth rewardingly spent at the academy. Johannes Henricus van der Palm (1763-1840) was a leading light of the Age of Reason in The Netherlands. After a brief career first as a preacher at Maartensdijk and then as a librarian at Middelburg, he became in 1795 the leader of the revolutionary movement on the Dutch island of Walcheren. By 1799 he was in The Hague reorganizing the country's elementary education system. From 1806 to 1833 he was a professor of oratory and poetry at the University of Leiden and a bulwark against Bilderdijkian "obscurantism." As a student, Groen followed his lectures with pleasure.]
13. [Willem Bilderdijk (1756-1831), the "flawed" aegis of the Dutch Réveil, was an Amsterdam-born romantic poet of great power who contributed to the development of the Dutch language. In his uncompleted literary epic, *De ondergang der eerste wereld* (The destruction of the first world; Amsterdam, 1820), he aspired to do with the Genesis flood what John

Milton had done with the fall in *Paradise Lost*. According to an entry he made in his Bible while an Orangist exile in London, he married Katharina Wilhelmina Schweickhardt 18 May 1797; there is no other record he actually did, however, which is perhaps just as well, since his "first" wife, Catharina Rebecca van Woesthoven, who had declined to join him in exile, did not divorce him until 1802. He settled in Leiden and from 1817 to 1827 held at his home a *privatissimum* on Dutch history subversive of the program at the academic establishment further up the canal. On Bilderdijk's fate in the hands of some historians, including Herman Bavinck, Abraham Kuyper, F.C. Gerretson, and, "by implication," Meijer Cornelis Smit, see Pieter Geyl's critical essay, "Een eeuw strijd om Bilderdijk" (A century of controversy about Bilderdijk; 1956).]

14. *Nederlandsche Gedachten* 5 (2 December 1837) 250.
15. Mr. G. Groen van Prinsterer et al., *Aan de Hervormde Gemeente in Nederland* (To the Reformed Church in The Netherlands; Leiden: Luchtmans, 1843) 139.
16. Groen cites the 1st ed. [Here he says, "And now for my final witness, Bilderdijk. You are a disciple of Bilderdijk, they say, and so I am. A great poet and a rare genius, Bilderdijk was not ashamed of the truth. On the basis of his Christian conviction he never tired of testifying against the idols of the age. Nevertheless, I am far from subscribing to every one of his opinions in history and political theory . . ." (tr. Harry VanDyke). See n. 33, below.]
17. Mr. G. Groen van Prinsterer, *Grondwetherziening en eensgezindheid* (Constitutional revision and consensus; Amsterdam: Müller, 1849) 86-87.
18. *Koninklijk Besluit* 186 (23 December 1826) article 2.
19. [Essay on the compilation of a general Dutch history in response to the royal decree of 23 December 1826, article 2; 's-Gravenhage: Algemeene Landsdrukkerij, 1830; x, 176 pages (hereafter referred to as *Proeve over de samenstelling*)]
20. [The Royal Cabinet is a secretariat responsible for the flow of official communications between the reigning head of state and the parliamentary government of The Netherlands. Today it is located in The Hague in the gracious home that Groen inherited from his parents and occupied with his wife from 1838 until his death in 1876; situated on the Korte Vijverberg cater-corner to the Mauritshuis Museum, the house overlooks the length of the lake that nestles against the parliament complex.]
21. [The case for publishing the nation's history; Brussels: Brest van Kempen, 1829.]
22. [Elizabeth Maria Magdalena van der Hoop (1807-1879), daughter of Arnoldina Aleida Maria Thomassen à Thuessink (1776-1859) and Abraham Johan van der Hoop (1775-1826; m. 1797).]
23. [Jean Henri Merle d'Aubigné (1794-1872), who was converted to the Réveil—an evangelical awakening that affected many Europeans in the early nineteenth century—by Robert Haldane in 1816, studied under Neander and Schleiermacher at the University of Berlin. After pastorates in Hamburg and, at the invitation of King William I, at the Walloon church in Brussels (1828-30)—where he met Groen and perhaps intro-



duced him to Edmund Burke's *Reflections on the Revolution in France*—Merle helped found the Theological School at Geneva; there he taught church history from 1831 to 1872. His works on the Reformation written "in its own spirit" enjoyed widespread popularity; see, e.g., his *History of the Reformation of the Sixteenth Century* (5 vols.; tr. Henry White; New York: American Tract Society, 1849); and *The Reformation in England* (2 vols.; ed. S.M. Houghton; London: Banner of Truth Trust, 1963). In 1836 Merle and his wife, Marianne Brélaz, named their son Willem Oswald after Groen and the sixteenth-century Swiss Reformer Oswald Geisshüsler, called Myconius (RGP 114.162n.). Merle was instrumental in Groen's conversion to fundamental Christianity: ". . . there was something in our meeting not found in any other," he wrote to Groen 6 January 1837. "I refuse to believe that that preaching of the gospel which you heard from my mouth in Brussels was of any great utility to you and the source of great blessing. And yet, it is true, I believe your soul had more or less begun to awaken from the great slumber which has fallen over all our race and in which every man dwells until a powerful word from Christ comes to stir him, to awaken him; causing his eyes to open, to discern, as yet dimly, new objects, to see men as trees [see Mark 8:24, where Jesus heals a blind man—HVD]. Yes, dear friends, it was in Christ, it was through Christ that we met. I confess that the qualities God has given you added greatly to Christian affection; nevertheless, the *principium* was from Christ." (RGP 114.182; excerpt translated from the French by Harry Van Dyke.)

24. [In her extensive and usefully documented study that is now the standard general work on the subject in Dutch, Marie Elisabeth Kluit (1903-1977) describes the early nineteenth-century European Réveil as "a quickening of the religious stream" and "an inner event: often imperfectly reflected in outer events"; see *Het Protestantse Réveil in Nederland en daarbuiten, 1815-1865* (The Protestant Revival in The Netherlands and abroad; Amsterdam: H.J. Paris, 1970) 8.]
25. [Willem de Clercq (1794-1844) was a spiritual leader in the Réveil's Amsterdam circle. A successful grain dealer and life-long diarist who travelled through Germany to St. Petersburg on business in 1816, he in 1831 became acting director and in 1834 director of the Nederlandsche Handel-Maatschappij, the trading company which, as an instrument of national policy, promoted the recovery of the ship-building industry and the introduction of the steam engine in Dutch spinneries in the 1830s and 1840s. Citing statements by De Clercq, Willem van Hogendorp, Da Costa, and Groen, the economic historian Izaak Johannes Brugmans states that the Réveil, which he otherwise describes as the Dutch Protestant version of romanticism, was the movement that recognized and was concerned about the problems of the poor and the growing class division that accompanied early industrialization; see I.J. Brugmans, *De arbeidende klasse in Nederland in de 19e eeuw, 1813-1870* (The working class in The Netherlands in the 19th century; 7th ed.; Utrecht and Antwerp: Aula-Boeken, 1967) 199-200.]
26. [Jean Charles Isaac Secrétan (1798-1875) was an evangelical preacher in

- Stockholm in 1825 and at the Walloon Church in The Hague from 1828 until his retirement in 1860 and departure for Lausanne in 1861. He was Groen's pastor.]
27. [Anthony Gerard. Alexander ridder van Rappard (1799-1869) became referendary at the Department of Education in 1831; director of the Royal Cabinet in 1840; minister for Hervormde Religion (1854), for Home Affairs (1857), and minister of State (1858). He was a co-editor of Groen's *Nederlandsche Gedachten*, 1st series.]
  28. Groen to Van Rappard, 20 November 1831, *RGP* 58.503. [Cf. Phil 1:6.]
  29. Mrs. E.M.M. Groen van Prinsterer-Van der Hoop to Willem de Clerq, 10 January 1833, *RGP* 58.648.
  30. [Hereafter referred to as *Archives*. 1st series, 8[9] vols. (Leiden: Luchtmans, 1835-47—vol. 1: 1552-1565 (1835; 2nd, enlarged ed., 1841); vol. 2: 1566 (1835); vol. 3: 1567-1572 (1836); vol. 4: 1572-1574 (1837); vol. 5: 1574-1577 (1838); vol. 6: 1577-1579 (1839); vol. 7: 1579-1581 (1839); vol. 8: 1581-1584 (1847); vol. 9; *Supplement* (1847). 2nd series, 5 vols. (Utrecht: Kemink, 1857-61)—vol. 1: 1584-1599 (1857); vol. 2: 1600-1625 (1858); vol. 3: 1625-1642 (1859); vol. 4: 1642-1650 (1859); vol. 5: 1650-1688 (1861).]
  31. [Essay on the means by which the truth is known and established, vol. 1 of *Beschouwingen over staats- en volkerenregeert* (3 vols.; Leiden: Luchtmans, 1834). The 2nd ed., abridged by Groen (Amsterdam: Höveker, 1858) will hereafter be referred to as *Proeve*.]
  32. [Brief survey of the history of the fatherland; Leiden: Luchtmans, 1841 (hereafter referred to as *Kort overzicht*). An excerpt was published as *De Kerkhervorming op Nederlandschen grond* (The Reformation of the church on Dutch soil; 's-Gravenhage: Gerretsen, 1867; 5th ed., revised by G. Schutte and A.A. Kleijn, Utrecht: Van Bentum, 1893.)]
  33. [*Ongeloof en Revolutie; eene reeks van historische voorlezingen* (Leiden: Luchtmans, 1847; 2nd ed., Amsterdam: Höveker, 1868). Other editions appeared in the century following Groen's death. For key chapters of this work in English translation see Guillaume Groen van Prinsterer, *The History of the Revolution in Its First Phase: The Preparation (Till 1789): Lecture Eleven from "Unbelief and Revolution: A Series of Lectures in History"* (ed. and tr. Harry Van Dyke in collaboration with Herbert Donald Morton; Amsterdam: The Groen van Prinsterer Fund, 1973; hereafter referred to as *Unbelief and Revolution, Lecture XI*), and *Unbelief in Religion and Politics: Lectures Eight and Nine from "Unbelief and Revolution: A Series of Lectures in History"* (ed. and tr. Harry Van Dyke in collaboration with Herbert Donald Morton; Amsterdam: The Groen van Prinsterer Fund, 1975; hereafter referred to as *Unbelief and Revolution, Lectures VIII & IX*). The translation of the remaining twelve chapters is in progress.]
  34. [See n.6, above.]
  35. [The measures against the seceders (of 1834) measured against the Constitution; Leiden: Luchtmans, 1837; iv, 72 pages.]
  36. [Address to the General Synod . . . ; Utrecht; Kemink, 1842; iv, 52 pages; and cf. n. 15, above.]

37. [Contribution to revision of the Constitution in the Dutch spirit; Leiden: Luchtmans, 1840; iv, 152 pages.]
38. [Liberty, equality, fraternity; 's-Gravenhage: Roering, 1848.]
39. [See n. 17, above.]
40. Gerrit Jan Schutte, *Mr. G. Groen van Prinsterer* (Goes: Oosterbaan & Le Cointre, 1976).
41. [See n. 5, above.]
42. [See n. 21, above.]
43. Historical essay on the history and consequences of the growing unity of the civilized peoples (1826); 's-Gravenhage: Algemeen Rijksarchief, Archief Groen van Prinsterer, no. 10; printed in *RGP* 93.92-153.
44. [*Proeve*, 2. Groen corresponded with S.R.L. Gaussen, a colleague of Merle d'Aubigné's at the Theological School in Geneva, about the nature of the inspiration and infallibility of the Bible. Gaussen's *La Théopneustie ou pleine inspiration des Saintes Ecritures* (Paris and Geneva, 1840) is a source of the line of thought on Scripture developed in North America by Benjamin Breckenridge Warfield (1851-1921) and upheld by the Princeton theology. Groen wrote to Gaussen in January 1861: "I rejoice that the Savior has again strengthened you to bear witness to the infallibility of His word, for it is more urgent than ever to set the doctrine of the inspiration of the Holy Scriptures in the light." *RGP* 90.423n.; see also *RGP* 114.391.]
45. [For the *Proeve*, see n. 31, above.]
46. *Proeve*, 50-51, 51-52, [Cf. John 17:23.]
47. Groen to H.J. Koenen, 16 July 1834, *RGP* 114.77. [The lawyer Hendrik Jacob Koenen (1809-1874) became a member of the Amsterdam city council in 1842, a city commissioner in 1847, and a member of the Provincial States of North Holland in 1850. Perceiving the need for Christian journalism, he helped found the weekly (later monthly) *Nederlandsche Stemmen* (Dutch voices; 1834-1840), and at the invitation of Ernst Wilhelm Hengstenberg (1802-1869) of Berlin contributed some articles on developments in the Dutch church to the *Evangelische Kirchen-Zeitung* (1834). He wrote a work on the history of industry in The Netherlands, *Voorlezingen over de geschiedenis der nijverheid in Nederland* (1856). Beginning in 1830 he carried on a wide-ranging, life-long correspondence with Groen, who eventually wrote him in excess of four hundred letters (Amsterdam, Réveil Archief, Archief Koenen). Typically revealing of the Réveil's concern with the relation between the gospel and history is Koenen's letter to Groen of 29 October 1841 (*RGP* 114): Is it possible, he asks, that Merle d'Aubigné has idealized the effectualness of the Reformation amongst the people, that purification of theology was unaccompanied by sanctification of life, that true revival still remains to be accomplished? In that case has Groen, too, not erred, in his periodization (see section IV.2) of Dutch history, by placing the golden age of Protestantism in the early periods of the Reformation? Surely, Koenen argues, 1648-1713 was not an age of religious blossoming. Where in Europe in that period was there to be found a Whitefield or a Wesley, a Zinzendorf or a Spangenberg, a Spener or a Francke? Koenen's perception of a period of dead orthodoxy, whatever its merits, is obviously self-serving: it assigns the

Réveil a remarkable mission and place in history. It is also sociologically unrefined: Abraham Kuyper, in many ways Groen's successor, found his main support in a tradition of genuine Calvinist piety that had been unbroken since the Reformation in sectors of Dutch society little touched by the Réveil.]

48. *Proeve* 47.
49. *Ibid.*, 52n.
50. *Ibid.*, 54.
51. *Ibid.*, 55.
52. *Ibid.*, 56-58.
53. *Ibid.*, 59.
54. *Ibid.*, 59, 60. [Cf. Gen 3:15 and Heb 13:8.]
55. *Ibid.*, 60-62.
56. *Ibid.*, 64.
57. Groen, *Handboek* (see n. 6, above), 1. [For the biblical language resonant in this passage, see Ps 119:105; Heb 11:3-12:2; Gen 3:15; Matt 4:1-11 and 20:28; Acts 10:42; Rev 19:10.]
58. See [Friedrich] Wilhelm [Christian Carl Ferdinand] von Humboldt (1767-1835), "Ueber die Aufgabe des Geschichtschreibers," in *Wilhelm von Humboldt's Gesammelte Werke* (Berlin, 1841) 1.1-25, p. 23. This piece originally appeared in *Abhandlungen der historisch-philologischen Klasse der Königlichen Akademie der Wissenschaften zu Berlin, 1820-1821* (Berlin, 1822) 305-322.
59. F.P.G. Guizot, *Cours d'histoire moderne. Histoire générale de la civilisation en Europe depuis la chute de l'Empire romain jusqu'à la Révolution française* (Paris, 1828) 3rd leçon, p. 19.
60. *Idem*, *Cours d'histoire moderne. Histoire de la civilisation en France, depuis la chute de l'Empire romain jusqu'en 1789* (Brussels, 1835) 1.38.
61. Hendrik Smitskamp, *Groen van Prinsterer als historicus* (Amsterdam: H.J. Paris, 1940) 58. [Smitskamp (1907-1970) was a professor of history at the Free University in Amsterdam from 1947 until his death. Early in 1941 Holland's Nazi occupiers confiscated the printer's proofs of his heavily presubscribed popular work, *Wat heeft Groen van Prinsterer ons vandaag te zeggen?* (What does Groen van Prinsterer have to say to us today? 's-Gravenhage: D.A. Daamen's Uitgeversmaatschappij, 1945), because of its "unmistakable" line and the introduction written for it by Dr. Hendrik Colijn, the former prime minister of The Netherlands and leader of the Anti-Revolutionary Party. The first "printing" of this volume was thus a single, clandestine copy saved with difficulty from the censors. Dutch Christians familiar with Groen's views understood Colijn's warning, expressed in various forums, that "idolatrous reverence of the State with a centralizing administrative regime . . . is a fruit of Revolutionary theory" (p. 10), and they rejected Hitler as Groen had once rejected Bismarck.]
62. [See n. 33, above.]
63. *Unbelief and Revolution, Lectures VIII & IX* 1, 3, 17.
64. *Ibid.*, 18. [Cf. 1 Cor 2:14.]
65. *Ibid.*, 40.
66. *Ibid.*, 41.

67. Ibid., 41-42.
68. Ibid., 43.
69. Ibid., 46.
70. Ibid., 49. [Groen is quoting Jean Jacques Rousseau, *Du Contrat social, ou principes du droit politique*, 1.6.]
71. Ibid., 57. [Cf. n. 73, below.]
72. Ibid., 58-59.
73. Ibid., 57-58. [In editing this passage for the English translation, Harry Van Dyke discovered that the words in quotation marks were spoken by Danton at the French National Convention, 12 December 1793. The final paragraph is a quotation from Lamennais, *Des progrès de la révolution*, 147.]
74. [Cf. Prov 14:34.]
75. J.C.H. de Pater, "Groen's beschouwing over het beloop der Franse revolutie" (Groen's view of the course of the French Revolution), in L[eeindert] C[hristian] Suttorp, Z[eger] W[illem] Sneller and J[an] Veldkamp, eds., *Groen's "Ongeloof en Revolutie": Een bundel studiën* (Wageningen: Zomer en Keuning's, 1949) 100-117, p. 101.
76. Geyl, *Reacties* (Utrecht: Oosthoek, 1952) 11. [*Reacties* contains two lengthy essays Geyl devoted to Groen: (1) "Fruin contra Groen (1853/4)" and (2) "Groen contra Motley (1874/5)."]
77. *Ongeloof en Revolutie* (ed. H. Smitskamp; Franeker: Wever, 1976) 19.
78. *RGP* 114.667. [George Willem Vreede (1809-1880) taught law at the University of Utrecht from 1841-1879.]
79. *Unbelief and Revolution, Lectures VIII & IX*, 2.
80. [Matt 7:16-18.]
81. *Unbelief and Revolution, Lecture XI*, 14-15.
82. Mr. G: Groen van Prinsterer, *Adviezen in de Tweede Kamer der Staten-Generaal* (2 vols.; Utrecht: Kemink, 1856-1857) 1.18.
83. Smitskamp, *Groen van Prinsterer als historicus*, 41.
84. [C.W. Opzoomer, *Onze godsdienst* (Amsterdam: Gebhard, 1875), 112; cited in Smitskamp, *Groen als historicus*, 43. Smitskamp says that Opzoomer means Groen, although he does not mention him explicitly. Cornelis Willem Opzoomer (1821-1892) was a professor of philosophy at the University of Utrecht from 1846 to 1889. In 1871 he initially accepted and finally declined a similar post at the University of Leiden; the episode allowed J.J. van Oosterzee (1817-1882), a professor of theology at Utrecht from 1836 to 1882 and a friend of Groen's who translated Merle d'Aubigné's history of the Reformation into Dutch, a short-lived hope of "deliverance" for the theology faculty. See Van Oosterzee to Groen, 21 September 1871, *RGP* 123.512-13n.]
85. [On the fall of The Netherlands, see n. 89, below. Gijsbert Karel van Hogendorp (1762-1834) led the provisional "General Administration of the United Netherlands" that on 17 November 1813 declared the nation liberated from the Napoleonic regime whose forces and functionaries were then fleeing southwards before advancing Russian troops, and that on the eighteenth dispatched an invitation to the Prince of Orange to return as a sovereign from exile in England; the Prince did, landing at Scheveningen

November 30 to become King William I. In 1815 Van Hogendorp was made *Graaf* (count) and Minister of State; from 1815 to 1825 he represented Holland in the Second Chamber of the Dutch Parliament. The authoritative general work on this period in English is now Simon Schama's *Patriots and Liberators: Revolution in the Netherlands, 1780-1813* (New York: Alfred A Knopf, 1977).]

86. [To secure better terms from the Great Powers convening in London to decide the shapes of Luxemburg, Belgium, and The Netherlands in the aftermath of the successful southern revolt initiated at Brussels, 26 September 1830, King William I on 1 August 1831 ordered an invasion of Belgium. From the following day until 12 August Dutch troops shot and sabered their way to within a short distance of Brussels; then, in the face of an approaching French army dispatched by the Powers, they halted their advance, declared victory over the foe they had come to fight, and agreed to immediate withdrawal.]
87. [In the Crimean War of 1854-56, which was the first war covered by newspaper correspondents, Great Britain, France, Sardinia, and Austria defended the declining Ottoman Empire against a Russian invasion of Wallachia and Moldavia (now Rumania), to prevent the expansion of Russian influence through the Balkans towards the Mediterranean area; at the same time, Florence Nightingale established the precedent of women serving as army nurses.]
88. [These examples are cited in Smitskamp, *Groen als historicus*, 42-43, in a section (pp.40-50) about Groen's view of God's hand in history.]
89. *Nederlandsche Gedachten*, 3/28 (1 December 1831) 112. [The Spanish Armada of some 130 ships and 30,000 men commanded by the duke of Medina Sidonia was destroyed by a storm in late July, 1588. The siege of Leiden conducted by Don Luis de Requesens was relieved 3 October 1574, after the adjacent countryside was flooded by William the Silent's forces, aided by a long-hoped-for favorable wind. On 27 December 1794 General Jean-Charles Pichegru's Napoleonic army crossed the frozen Waal River in a successful invasion of Holland.]
90. [Isa. 5:26.]
91. *Handboek*, 5. [Cf. Mark 16:20.]
92. [Cf. 2 Cor. 3:12-18; 1:3.]
93. *Handboek*, xii.
94. Meijer Cornelis Smit, "The Divine Mystery in History," in vol. 1 of M.C. Smit, *Writings on God and History* 2 vols. (tr. Herbert Donald Morton; Toronto: Wedge Publishing Foundation, forthcoming).
95. [1 Sam. 2:30.]
96. *Handboek*, xiii.
97. [Cf. Dan. 2:40-45.]
98. [Cf. Rom. 1:22 and 29.]
99. [Isa. 5:26.]
100. *Handboek*, 4.
101. [Cf. Acts 2:4 and 4:31.]
102. [Cf. Isa. 9:2.]
103. [Cf. Mark 16:15.]

104. [Cf. Matt. 28:19-20.]
105. [Cf. Mark 16:20.]
106. [Cf. Ps. 44:3.]
107. [Cf. 1 Cor. 1:27-28.]
108. [Cf. Matt. 6:33.]
109. *Handboek*, 5, 2. [Cf. Ps. 33:12 and 144:15.]
110. *Ibid.*, 672. [Cf. Jer. 6:19.]
111. *Ibid.*, 673. [Cf. Ps. 81:11-12.]
112. Smitskamp, *Groen als historicus*, 88. [Cf. Isa. 19:18.]
113. [Jacob] Kamphuis, *De hedendaagsche kritiek op de causaliteit bij Groen van Prinsterer als historicus* (Present-day criticism of causality in Groen van Prinsterer as a historian; Goes: Oosterbaan & Le Cointre, 1962) 13-15 (2nd ed.; Groningen: Uitgeverij "De Vuurbaak," 1971).
114. [1 Tim. 2:5.]
115. [Acts 4:12.]
116. *Proeve*, 20-21. [Cf. Eph 2:12.]
117. See *Unbelief and Revolution, Lectures VIII & IX*, 3 ["What I am anxious to show is that the real formative power throughout the revolutionary era, right up to our own time, has been atheism, godlessness, being without God."], 22 ["Bossuet therefore gave a correct definition: 'Deism is only atheism in disguise.' . . . It is a definition given already in the Bible: 'Ye were without Christ, . . . having no hope, and without God in the world.' "], and 30 [". . . to show you . . . how being without God in the world entails certain natural consequences: how when the bond between heaven and earth is severed proud man becomes the helpless prey of destruction and ruin"].
118. *Grondwetherziening en eensgezindheid*, 1 [See Ps. 17:14, 73:12, and 94:3; see also Jer. 12:1.]
119. Groen to Koenen, 21 June 1832, *RGP* 58.575.
120. *Nederlandsche Gedachten*, 1st series, 3/26 (10 November 1831) 104.
121. Mr. G. Groen van Prinsterer, *Parlementaire Studiën en Schetsen* ([Fortynine collected] Parliamentary studies and sketches; 3 vols.; 's-Gravenhage: Van Cleef, 1866).
122. *Handboek*, 874, 674.
123. Groen to Koenen, 29 June 1832, *RGP* 58.579. [Cf. Rom. 8:28.]
124. *Archives*, 1st series, vol. 7: 1579-1581 (Leiden: Luchtmans, 1839) xlv.
125. *Proeve*, 59.
126. *Verspreide geschriften*. 1. 139.
127. Mr. G. Groen van Prinsterer, *Verscheidenheden over staatsregt en politiek* (Sundry writings [six collected brochures] on constitutional law and politics; Amsterdam: Müller, 1850; vi, 342 pages) 242.
128. *Nederlandsche Gedachten* 2nd series, 5 (20 September 1871) 167.
129. Groen C.J. van Assen, 12 March 1835, *RGP* 114.111. [Cornelis Jacobus van Assen (1788-1859) was a professor of law at the University of Leiden from 1821 to 1858. In 1830 he was an advisor and secretary to Prince Frederick and then, until 1833, to the Prince of Orange, the later King William II. Groen and he shared many areas of professional and personal interest and carried on an extensive and remarkably spontaneous correspondence.]

130. [Maurits Cornelis van Hall (1768-1858), whose career included service as a city attorney (1795-1801) and legislator during the Revolutionary period, became president of the Court of First Resort in Amsterdam in 1831 and was a member of the First Chamber of the Dutch Parliament from 1842 to 1848.]
131. [Reinier Cornelis Bakhuizen van den Brink (1810-1865) became Rijksarchivist in The Hague, 1 January 1854, succeeding Johannes Cornelis de Jonge (1793-1853), a veteran of the Battle of Waterloo who had held the post since 1831.]
132. Mr. G. Groen van Prinsterer, *Antwoord aan Mr. M. C. van Hall* (Reply to M. C. van Hall; Leiden: Luchtmans, 1844; 104 pages) 66.
133. *Ibid.*, 41.
134. *Verspreide geschriften*, 2.274 [see n. 10, above].
135. [Antoine Perrenot, Cardinal Granvelle (1517-1586), was a councillor and minister of King Philip II (1527-1598) of Spain and an instrument of royal policy towards The Netherlands. Fernando Alvarez de Toledo, duke of Alva (1510-1582), commanded the Spanish army that entered The Netherlands on the king's business in 1567. He sacked Mechelen, Zutphen, and Naarden in 1572 and executed some 2,000 persons following the fall of Haarlem in 1573. The standard English work on the period is now Geoffrey Parker, *The Dutch Revolt* (Harmondsworth: Penguin Books, 1977).]
136. [See n. 6, above.]
137. *Proeve over de samenstelling* (see n. 19, above), 4.
138. [Mr. G. Groen van Prinsterer, *Narede van vijfjarigen strijd* (Epilogue to five years' struggle; Utrecht: Kemink, 1855; 168 pages) 24. The title alludes to Groen's major effort in the field of Christian political journalism, the publication of *De Nederlander, Nieuwe Utrechtsche Courant*, nos. 1-1539, 1 July 1850 to 30 June 1855; Groen purchased control of this paper, which had existed since 1848, and wrote most of its political columns, usually anonymously. *Narede* reprints nos. 1525-39. Writing of this period, Harvey Hillson Ginsburg says, "Groen van Prinsterer had too much political acumen (and principle) to allow either himself or his followers to be allied with a movement (the Great Protestant party) which owed its existence chiefly to negative forces—anti-Catholicism and anti-Liberalism" ("The Struggle For the Control of Primary Education in The Netherlands 1848-1917" [Ph.D. dissertation, Yale University, 1952] 54).]
139. *Proeve over de samenstelling*, 32.
140. *Handboek*, ix.
141. *Verspreide geschriften* 2:219n. [On the struggle for "the school with the Bible," see Ginsburg, "The Struggle" (cf. n. 138, above).]
142. *Handboek*, 1.
143. [See n. 32, above.]
144. [Rom. 3:2.]
145. *Kort overzicht*, 1.
146. *Ibid.*, 98-99.



# The Struggle for Freedom of Education in The Netherlands in the Nineteenth Century'

Jantje Lubbegiena Van Essen

*Translated from the Dutch with additional notes  
by Herbert Donald Morton*

**I**n the seventeenth century, public elementary education in The Netherlands was positively Reformed. Gradually, a change took place under the influence of rationalistic Deism, which began to slay its thousands in the church and thus also amongst the teachers. Church and state, and education too, were closely associated. As a consequence of the French Revolution, ties were severed. Separation of church and state became the new basis, and education became entirely the province of the state.

In 1806 a *Primary Education Act* was adopted that would remain in force until 1857. All primary education was made a state affair, and there was no thought at all of freedom of education. The *Act* alluded to free (*bijzondere*) schools, but such schools could be established only upon gaining government recognition, and nor were they financed by the public treasury. The costs of maintaining them had to be met from private (*bijzondere*) funds.

There were two kinds of free schools: schools of the first class and schools of the second class. Those of the first class were (1) diaconate schools and the schools of orphanages and institutions; (2) schools of the benevolent society Tot Nut van 't Algemeen, which had been established in 1784, its stated goal "general morality through propagation of the knowledge necessary thereunto amongst the lower classes," without, however, any positive Christian basis; and finally, (3) schools that were maintained by one or more persons. Schools of the second class were those maintained exclusively from tuition income and for which the schoolmaster was personally responsible. All schools were subject to

state supervision by means of school inspectors and local school commissions.

The *Regulations* attached to the *Act* of 1806 included a general list of books, some of which contained Bible stories; but the Bible itself was left out. The *Act* itself does not mention religious or Christian education. *Article 22* of the *Regulations* states:

All primary education shall be so instituted that while the children are learning applied and useful skills, their rational faculties will be developed and they themselves reared to all social and Christian virtues.

According to *Article 23* of the *Regulations* the teacher might not, however, give dogmatic instruction. Thus the *Act* of 1806 was clearly a result of the principles of the French Revolution—the state could establish schools and determine the character of education: the child belonged to the state.

The *Act* of 1806 provided that children of all persuasions, including Israelites, should be able to attend school without they or their parents being offended in their religious sensibilities. A general Christianity had arrived in the place of Reformed education. Religious education was relegated to the churches.

Even after the liberation of The Netherlands from the French yoke in 1813, education remained the province of the state. Education was dominated by the adherents of a "supernaturalism" which, as Herman Bavinck put it, made God a Supreme Being, Christ a teacher, man a rational being, sin weakness, conversion improvement, and sanctification virtue.<sup>2</sup>

A general Christian spirit dominated the State Normal School that was established in Haarlem in 1816. Here, in order to avoid offending Roman Catholic and Jewish students, the tunes of the Psalms were sung without the words. When the French professor Victor Cousin<sup>3</sup> visited this school in 1836, he was struck by the absence of all dogmatic instruction.

The first opposition to the prevailing spirit in education came from the southern Netherlands, now Belgium, which since 1815 had been united in a single state with the northern Netherlands under King William I. The population there were preponderantly Roman Catholic, and the clergy especially were opposed to the King's educational policies. Ultimately, 330 petitions were presented to the States General, 215 of them requesting freedom of education.

In response, on 30 June 1829 the King appointed a Committee to study the matter. This Committee recommended the enactment of a law that would incorporate the principle of freedom of education. A schoolmaster would thereby be empowered to open a private school of the second class without seeking state authorization to do so.

A number of other bills were also framed at the King's request, all of them potentially providing for freedom of education. However, the opposition was so intense that the King finally decided not to seek the adoption of a new Education Act. Thus the *Primary Education Act* of 1806 remained in force. Free schools could be founded only with the authorization of municipal governments or, in rural areas, with the authorization of local governments subject to approval by the Provincial States of the Province involved.

Guillaume Groen van Prinsterer (1801-1876), the Secretary to the Royal Cabinet who would later come to the defense of freedom of education, feared that granting authorization to local governments would serve to strengthen Roman Catholicism in the southern Netherlands and generate still more friction with the North. He too, however, opposed the provision that education should give no offense to any persuasion, on the grounds that this would lead to a school without religion.

*Article 226* of the *Constitution* of 1815 said only: "Public education is an abiding object of the government's concern." Thus here the monopolistic character of the public school was not explicitly established in law. Yet in practice that is what it amounted to, since the free school was dependent upon the authorization of local governments, and pretenses were usually sought to deny authorization. Moreover, even free schools were ultimately under state supervision.

Great influence was exercised on public education by the "Groningen school" under the leadership of Professor P. Hofstede de Groot (1802-1886), a follower of Professor P.W. van Heusde (1778-1839).<sup>4</sup> According to Van Heusde's philosophy, people should be educated to the true, good, and beautiful. While this philosophy goes back to Socrates and Plato, Christianity, according to Van Heusde, towers above the Greek philosophers: Christ is the perfect idea of the true, good, and beautiful. In contrast to the "supernaturalists," Van Heusde saw no contradiction between reason and divine revelation, and man in his view was not just a rational but also an ethical and aesthetic being. However, his Christ was not the Redeemer of sinners but merely the perfect teacher of the human race. It was not conversion and regeneration that people needed but education and development. Humanity was not corrupt by nature; people bore a germ of perfection within themselves that could be developed through a good education.

People needed to be educated into conformity to the divine. And this is what Hofstede de Groot, a school inspector, wanted to put into practice in the public schools of The Netherlands. He watched sadly as the public school gradually became a school without religion. He wanted to strengthen the religious element once again — but then in Van Heusde's sense.

Hence the public schools gave no satisfaction to orthodox Protestants—certainly not to those amongst them who had seceded from the Hervormde Kerk in 1834 (the *Afgescheidenen*)—and the desire for freedom of education began to grow. Meanwhile, the Seceders were scandalously persecuted, and it was Groen van Prinsterer who, though not a member of the secessionist church himself, ventured to denounce their persecution. He did so in 1837, in his *De Maatregelen tegen de Afgescheidenen aan het staatsregt getoetst*, several pages of which he devoted to the question of education. The public school, Groen argued, had fallen prey to the principles of the French Revolution. The Gospel was no longer the guideline of the national government, and since it was now impossible to present the full Gospel in the public school without breaking the law—dissenters, for example the Jews, might not be offended—Groen advocated the founding of free schools: “Freedom of conscience, freedom of worship, freedom of education, between these there exists an indissoluble connection.”<sup>5</sup>

Groen took up the question again in 1840 on the occasion of the revision of the *Constitution* that was made following the secession of Belgium from the Kingdom of The Netherlands. In his *Bijdrage tot herziening der Grondwet in Nederlandsche zin* he called attention to the anti-Christian drift of the *Act* of 1806:

Directly or indirectly to require dissenters to place their children in schools the tenor of which they disapprove is always unjust; it is more than this if in a Christian land the institution of the school is, in the real sense, anti-Christian.<sup>6</sup>

And in the Second Chamber of Parliament, Groen said:

Parents who, with or without adequate grounds, are earnestly convinced that the tenor of education at existing schools is un-Christian must not be hindered, directly or indirectly, from providing their children with the kind of education they believe they can justify before God. This coercion, I say the result, is intolerable and should be terminated . . . It is an arrogance sprouted from the Revolutionary theory, which while ignoring the rights of parents views children as the property of the state.<sup>7</sup>

Roman Catholic ecclesiastical authorities also presented the King an Address, on 29 May 1840, in which they lamented the religionless character of the public school and requested freedom of religion.

The *Constitution*, however, was not changed. But King William II, who acceded to the throne in 1840,<sup>8</sup> did appoint a Commission on 12 November 1840 to investigate the grievances presented in the petitions. Groen van Prinsterer was a member of this Commission. He polled a wide variety of people associated with education in one capacity or another for their ideas. Personally, he strongly favored facultative division. On 30 December he wrote to his friend J. T. Bodel Nijenhuis<sup>9</sup> that

he would most prefer improving local community schools (*Gemeentescholen*) in a more positive Christian sense, albeit that would necessarily lead, he believed, assuming the maintenance of mixed schools, to separating the Roman Catholic and the Protestant children during a part of the school day. He also desired more freedom to establish private (*eigen*) schools. In public (*openbare*) schools religious education would always remain imperfect. "And yet the Gospel and the nation's history must once again be proclaimed purely and powerfully to the Protestant population."<sup>10</sup>

The result of the Commission's work was the Royal Decree of 2 January 1842, which prohibited teaching anything in the public schools that could offend anyone of any persuasion whatsoever; which provided for one hour each week on a rotating basis for dogmatic instruction for each persuasion; and which opened the possibility of appealing to the appropriate Provincial Council if a local government denied authorization for the establishment of a free school.

Significantly, the Minister of Home Affairs [W.A. baron Schimmelpenninck van der Oye van der Poll (1800-1872)] put out a circular explaining the Royal Decree. Existing legal provisions pertaining to public primary education were to be maintained, it said, and education would remain purely civil-societal in character, free from the influence of the dogmas of any religious denomination. Thus there would be no religious education at the public school. Furthermore, teachers would be required, upon request, to allow the clergy to examine all the textbooks in use at a school. Should a clergyman have objections, he could appeal to the school inspector with a view to having an offending text removed from the school. The effect of this provision was that Roman Catholic clergy secured the removal of the Bible (and Bible stories) from the public schools wherever possible! They did not want their pupils to receive biblical instruction from a Protestant teacher—and given their standpoint, they were right!

Some attempts were now made to establish free schools. In The Hague Groen van Prinsterer joined six other local gentlemen in urging the Hervormde Kerk to establish schools. In 1842 they presented an Address to the Synod<sup>11</sup> criticizing the church for showing too little interest in education and for leaving free (*vrije*) schools too much to Nut van't Algemeen. They urged the Synod to oppose the provision that made the founding of free (*bijzondere*) schools dependent on local authorities. When the Synod took no action, they addressed themselves to the Hervormde congregation.<sup>12</sup> In 1844 a diaconate school was established in The Hague despite the opposition of the school inspector there. Moreover, Groen himself, together with P.J. Elout van Soeterwoude and Dirk van Hogendorp,<sup>13</sup> approached the Mayor and Commissioners of the city in 1843 with a request for authorization to establish a free school

of the first class. The request was rejected, however, whereupon the petitioners appealed to the Provincial Council of the Province of Holland, albeit again without success. Not until 1849, after repeated appeals to both the municipal and the provincial authorities, was authorization granted.

The absence of freedom of religion and of education led many Seceders to emigrate to America.

1848, the year of revolutions in Paris and Berlin, witnessed changes in a liberal direction in The Netherlands, too. A new *Constitution* was adopted, and naturally education was an issue. In the draft, framed mainly by J.R. Thorbecke,<sup>14</sup> the pertinent article said:

The institution of public education shall be regulated, with respect for everyone's religious ideas, by law. The provision of education shall be free (*vrij*) except for examination of the competence of the teacher, and government supervision, both to be regulated by law.

Thus anyone who satisfied the requirement of competence and accepted government supervision might offer free (*bijzondere*) education.

A great deal of criticism was forthcoming, much of it directed against freedom of education especially. Hofstede de Groot feared that now everything would be taught: rioting, regicide, communism, religious war. Others were mainly concerned to preserve the mixed school. The liberal *Arnhemse Courant* came out for freedom of education. Groen van Prinsterer protested against coercion by state power: the principle that the state, separated from the church, has the right and duty to govern education according to its own discretion and insight is pernicious, he wrote in *Aan G. Graaf Schimmelpenninck*.<sup>15</sup> J.J.L. van der Brugghen<sup>16</sup> believed that the right to educate belonged not to the state but to parents. Still others sought freedom only for establishing church schools. The Second Chamber received petitions in favor of the public school and, especially from Roman Catholics and orthodox Protestants, in favor of freedom of education. The Hervormde Kerk mainly favored the mixed school.

The wording that was finally incorporated into the *Constitution* of 1848 by the Second Chamber as *Article 194* said:

Public education is an object of abiding concern to the government. The institution of public education shall be regulated, with respect for everyone's religious ideas, by law. Everywhere in the Kingdom the government shall provide adequate public primary education.<sup>17</sup> The provision of education is free (*vrij*) except for supervision by the government and, moreover, insofar as secondary and primary education is concerned, except for examination of the competence and morality of the teachers; these matters to be regulated by law.

"These matters" were not regulated by law yet, however, and until they were, the *Act* of 1806 would remain in force. New legislation was

meant to be adopted at the next session of the States General. Yet as it turned out, such legislation was not adopted until 1857. A number of Bills were considered in the meantime.

Once again it was Groen van Prinsterer who pressed persistently for a new Education Act. He proceeded at this time on the principle that The Netherlands was a Christian state because he viewed the Christian part of the population as the core of the nation. Accordingly, he gave no preference to free above public education. "Against the system of mixed schools, I regard the free school as an indispensable surrogate."<sup>18</sup> Groen wanted liberty for free education in accordance with the *Constitution*; he wanted public schools adequately equipped to compete with the free schools; where possible, he wanted separate, government-sponsored schools for Protestants and for Roman Catholics, and facultative division. Groen opposed a school without religion, where the Bible and the nation's history would be set aside.

Nicolaas Beets,<sup>19</sup> the orthodox preacher, disagreed with Groen on this point. The public school, he believed, should be a concern of the church and not of the state. The state was atheistical in character and thus could never meet the moral and religious needs of the people. Dr. J.I. Doedes, a preacher at Rotterdam, wrote in the *Gids* in 1851 that educating their children is a right and duty of parents but that state and church both have an interest in it.<sup>20</sup> The Dutch Committee for Christian Education, a group formed in 1850 to succeed the older societies *Unitas*, *Christelijke Hulpbetoon*, and *Welstand*, advocated mixed schools of a general Christian but non-doctrinal character.

Minister Thorbecke, an avowed advocate of freedom of education, in reality did nothing for Christian education. He criticized Groen for attempting to dominate the field of politics with his religious positions instead of being, with his associates, a "calm" party.

Why did the liberals work everywhere against the founding of Christian schools? At bottom, there was a struggle of the spirits: they had an aversion to orthodoxy.

In 1854 and 1855 the conservative minister Van Reenen<sup>21</sup> submitted two Education Bills. These were based on the mixed school, but the first one left open the possibility of facultative division. This provision failed to gain acceptance and was accordingly scrapped from the second one. However, so many petitions were now presented from various sides that the King declared he would not ratify, whereupon the Cabinet resigned.

Thus we come to the story of the *Primary Schools Act* of 1857.

Even before the Van Hall<sup>22</sup> Cabinet fell, the King solicited Groen's views concerning the desirability of revising some principles of the *Constitution* and his understanding of what such revisions would entail. Groen advised that a new Cabinet would have to withdraw Van

Reenen's Bill, but that he did not consider amendment of the *Constitution* desirable. The possibility of facultative division would have to be held open. The Second Chamber would of course first have to acknowledge that Van Reenen's Bill was in conflict with the desires, rights, and needs of the greater part of the Protestant Christian population.

Groen was also sounded out about the possibility of his perhaps being interested in a Cabinet post. "I would no longer hesitate," he replied, "only if circumstances combined to convince me that the proposed basis would render success not impossible even for me and hence the refusal of collaboration not responsible."<sup>23</sup> This seems to have been interpreted as a rejection. Moreover, Groen was not immediately re-elected to the Second Chamber, which made the King fear that as a minister he would not receive adequate support from the representatives.

Now J.J.L. Van der Bruggen was sounded out. He wished first to assure himself of Groen's support. Van der Bruggen was not in favor of facultative division, nor did he suppose that the state was Christian. On 15 June 1856 at Groen's country estate Oud-Wassenaer, near The Hague, they held a tête-à-tête. It resulted in a misunderstanding and in a falling out between the two friends. Groen was not convinced that Van der Bruggen would submit a Bill in harmony with his spirit, but Van der Bruggen seems in any case to have counted on Groen's support. At least, he accepted the Cabinet post. The difference in their positions, however, came quickly to light. In his closing speech to the Second Chamber 5 July 1856, Van der Bruggen said:

The King, moved by the conscientious objections of many of his subjects, desires that a means be sought to settle this weighty matter in such a way that no one's conscience is offended, without departing from the principle of the mixed school to which the nation has been devoted since 1806.

Groen had not anticipated anything like this. It was precisely the mixed school provided for in the *Act* of 1806 that he opposed.

In August Groen was back in the Second Chamber. He fulminated against the mixed school that could serve Christian and Israelite alike, pointed to the pleas of those who presented petitions, and criticized the Catholics for initially favoring facultative division but now settling for the mixed school.

The Van der Bruggen Bill contained the following specifications on the character of the public school:

Primary education, while teaching applied and useful skills, shall be made serviceable to the development of the rational capacities of the children and to their rearing in all Christian and social virtues. The educator shall refrain from teaching, doing, or permitting anything in con-



flict with the respect owed to the religious ideas of dissenters. The provision of education in religion shall be left to church societies. For this purpose the classrooms shall be available to students of the school outside school hours.

Where children are prevented from attending the public school by reason of the religious objections of the parents, and these objections cannot, after careful investigation, be removed, then if these can be met by the establishment of a free (*bijzondere*) school, such a school shall be established and maintained with the assistance, if necessary, of a national subsidy. The provision of such assistance shall be according to law.

In each community, according to population and need, primary education shall be provided in an adequate number of schools, which shall be open to all children regardless of religious persuasion.

In the Parliamentary debate on the Bill, Van der Brugghen again expressly emphasized that "rearing in all Christian virtues" at the mixed school might be construed in no other sense than that all doctrines and dogmatic components—everything, in a word, belonging to the concept of Christianity, of its truth, its facts, its history—must be excluded from the mixed school. An amendment moved by Wintgens<sup>24</sup> and nine others deleting the clause on subsidies for free schools was adopted almost unanimously.

On 20 July 1857 the Bill for mixed, actually religionless schools with no subsidy for free schools was adopted by a vote of forty-seven to thirteen. This was such a great disappointment to Groen van Prinsterer that he immediately resigned his seat in Parliament, as a protest against principles of legislation and administration that prohibited taking into account the people's religion, the people's rights, the people's needs, the only foundation of true national enlightenment, and the pre-condition of national blessing.

The consequence of the new *Primary Schools Act* of 1857 was thus the school without religion. There were many who disliked it. These included the Great Protestant party, who wanted a school having a Christian character even if only of a general, vaguely defined sort. They wanted Bible history to be taught at school. This view was represented by the educational weekly *De Wekker*.

The modernist and Jewish communities were satisfied with the *Act*, since it prescribed a religionless school. The Confessional party in the Hervormde Kerk and the Seceders were of course not happy with the *Act*. That the free school would receive no subsidy was not especially objectionable to the Seceders, however, since they wanted no help from the state in any case. At least they would now be able to establish free schools without seeking the permission of some government authority. Yet, in practice that was not so easy, for now people had to pay all the costs of a free school themselves while still contributing through taxes to the public school. It was difficult to raise the money.

To stimulate the founding of free schools, the Association for Christian National Primary Education was established in 1860. Groen van Prinsterer played a leading role in this Association and was its honorary chairman for many years.

Most of the free schools were so-called commission schools. These were established by well-to-do persons who raised the necessary funds, built a proper facility, and then served as the school's Board of Governors. One could become a member of the Association supporting such a school by making a significant financial contribution. In the cities there were schools maintained by a teacher. Naturally, tuition fees at such schools were high, so only the children of prosperous families were able to attend them. Then there were the church-sponsored schools. These had Groen's preference.

The Association for Christian National Primary Education supported free schools financially. It also subsidized teacher education. There had been a normal school, or paedagogical academy, in Nijmegen since 1846; one was established in Utrecht in 1855 and others in Groningen and Rotterdam in 1857; and Heldring<sup>25</sup> founded one in Zetten in 1864.

The effort to establish free schools encountered much resistance. Once again it became apparent just how great the hostility to orthodox Christianity was. Various weapons were employed against the free school, foremost among them cost-free education at the public school. Often, cost-free education was introduced into a community just as people were engaged in establishing a free school there.

Secondly, certain ecclesiastical posts were subject to exploitation for the benefit of the public school. It was the custom to have the local school teacher serve as the sexton, reader, and music director of the local state church. *Article 24* of the new *Act* now made this possible only with the approval of the pertinent Provincial States. However, approval was usually granted. In effect, a teacher gained a source of extra income while the public budget was thus freed for use to improve the quality of the public school. Free schools found it all the more difficult to compete. Only when the local Hervormde church sponsored a school itself was the combination of teaching and ecclesiastical posts to the free school's advantage.

Another instrument of resistance to the free school was compulsory vaccination against the smallpox. At that time many orthodox Christians—sometimes entire communities—opposed the practice as a form of meddling with providence. They were not likely to send their children to a state school in any case, for reasons of conscience, preferring to keep them home instead; and the possibility of sending them to a free, positively Christian school was blocked and the school itself stymied wherever authorities prosecuted headmasters admitting unvaccinated children.

Finally, although it was against the intent of the law, the Bible was often still kept in the public school, and classes were often still opened with prayer.

In 1862 Groen returned to the Second Chamber. He now had to proceed on the assumption of the religiously neutral state. Therefore, he proposed that the word "Christian" in the clause "reared to all Christian and social virtues" be struck from *Article 23* of the *Primary Schools Act* of 1857; that the ecclesiastical posts be declared incompatible with public school teaching; and that every child be charged school fees. He also insisted that the law be obeyed—but to no avail. In 1865 he resigned for reasons of health. When Groen failed to gain a response in the Chamber by 1864, he turned to the people, in a series of pamphlets entitled *Aan de kiezers*.<sup>26</sup> Here he advised the voters to support no one whose commitment to strict observance of the law was questionable, and he declared that the shibboleth of every anti-revolutionary must now be: the defense of *Christian* popular education (*volksonderwijs*). Groen's pamphleteering bore results. The education question was aired in the newspapers, and the conservatives came out in favor of free schools (*bijzonder onderwijs*). There was talk of Education Act "agitation." In Friesland the Popular Education Association was established to defend public school education.

The Roman Catholic position underwent a clear change at this time. Roman Catholics had often joined the liberals, but now the Catholic daily newspaper *De Tijd* began to defend the free school. Contributing importantly to this change was the influence of the papal encyclical *Quanta cura* of 1864, which referred to education.

The conservative Van Zuylen-Heemskerk Ministry, which took office in 1866, did not have any plans to amend the law. Even the word "Christian" would be retained.

In 1867 the conservative De Brauw presented a Bill that would permit free schools to receive municipal subsidies. Groen responded with his *Wat dunkt u van het voorstel-De Brauw? Bijdrage ter beantwoording*.<sup>27</sup> Groen argued that subsidies to free schools should be made not just permissible but mandatory, lest they be made dependent again on the whim of municipal administrations. The Chamber was dissolved before this Bill could be brought to the floor.

Meanwhile, in 1868 the Seceders established an Association for Gereformeerde Primary Education. They were not always in complete agreement with the Association for Christian National Primary Education, which favored the Hervormde Kerk. However, the two groups were not opposed to each other and sometimes worked together.

The struggle for free education continued. From 1868 to 1873 a weekly newspaper, *De Hoop des vaderlands* (The Hope of the fatherland), was published under the auspices of the Association for

Christian National Primary Education. This paper was directed mainly by M.D. van Otterloo,<sup>28</sup> a teacher in a public school in Valburg who was nonetheless a courageous fighter for Christian education and a real personal support for Groen.

On 5 November 1868 the benevolent society Tot Nut van't Algemeen circularized all its departmental administrations warning against "an ecclesiastical movement aimed against the neutral school" and against an action that "threatens to rob the citizen of the Netherlands of something essential to them and their children." And then Dr. Abraham Kuyper joined the fray with his brochure, *De Nuts-Beweging*.<sup>29</sup> He exposed the preposterousness of the charges against the free school, which according to Nut van't Algemeen sowed discord and led youngsters to disrespect the government. Kuyper charged the public school with intellectualism, the result, he said, of dereliction of duty on the part of the Hervormde Kerk.

During the General Meeting of the Association for Christian National Primary Education in May 1869, Kuyper delivered his address, *Het beroep op het volksgeweten*.<sup>30</sup> In this address Kuyper supported Groen's *Ons schoolwetprogram*<sup>31</sup> in calling for amendment of *Article 23* (deletion of the word "Christian"), *Article 24* (incompatibility of the post of teacher in the public school with the ecclesiastical posts), and *Article 33* (no cost-free education) of the *Primary Schools Act* of 1857. After discussion of these proposals, the General Meeting voted in favor of deleting the word "Christian"; it voted against combining the office of teacher in the public school with posts in the church; and it voted in favor of mandatory school fees except in the case of the poor. With respect to *Article 194* of the *Dutch Constitution* of 1848, the General Meeting declared:

The amendment of *Article 194* of the *Constitution* must be given precedence in the pursuit of more decisive guarantees of freedom of conscience, that free education may be the rule and state education the complement.

This proposition was adopted by acclamation.

Now, Groen was not entirely in agreement. He had reservations about incorporating the preference of free education into the *Constitution*. The ordinary legislator should be left unhampered and the possibility of Christian state education with facultative division left open, Groen thought.

The desirability of state subsidies to free schools was discussed at the General Conference of Christian teachers in 1869. It was feared, however, that through subsidies the state would gain too great a say, and it was accordingly decided to work in God's strength to awaken people's consciences rather than to expect aid from the state. *De Tijd* sup-

ported the orthodox Protestants in their struggle for the free school, but in 1869 the liberals held the upper hand.

In October of that same year, the Dutch School Association (*Nederlandsch Schoolverbond*) was founded with the aim of overcoming non-attendance at school. The leading founders were two brothers, Pieter Harting, a professor at Utrecht, and Dirk Harting, a Baptist minister at Enkhuizen.<sup>32</sup> Whether Kuyper and his associates would join depended in part on the Association's intentions with respect to advocating compulsory school attendance. Kuyper's group did not favor compulsory school attendance because in many cases it meant having to send one's children to the public school, where a general Christianity or modernism was propagated. At an Association meeting Kuyper accordingly attacked a proposal advanced by Otto Verhagen,<sup>33</sup> a member of the Provincial States of Zeeland, that preparations be made for the introduction of legally mandatory school attendance. When N.M. Feringa,<sup>34</sup> a member of the Commission of the Association for Christian National Primary Education, arose to speak about freedom of conscience and the conscientious objections many people had to the school law, the assembly attempted to hoot him down. Nevertheless, the Dutch School Association decided not to make compulsory school attendance one of its *objectives*. However, when he sought assurances that the Dutch School Association would not use compulsory school attendance in conjunction with cost-free instruction as one of its *means*, Kuyper found people indisposed to meet the demands of the advocates of the Christian school, whereupon he and most of those who shared his views walked out of the meeting.

Meanwhile, a number of ethical-irenicists including D. Chantepie de la Saussaye<sup>35</sup> and Nicolaas Beets who opposed deleting the word "Christian" from the law resigned as members of the Association for Christian National Primary Education.

Because Christian conservative friends in the Second Chamber took no initiative at all, Groen decided to break with them for the 1871 elections. To make his point he supported only Kuyper, Keuchenius, and Van Otterloo<sup>36</sup> as candidates. Their program was to campaign against *Article 194* until the "wretched clause"—"Everywhere in the Kingdom the government shall provide adequate public primary education"—was rescinded.<sup>37</sup> The deplorable thing about this clause was the fact that it provided a basis for setting up state schools even in small communities where there were just a few or even no pupils to attend one; parents who sent their children to a Christian school were thereby confronted with doubled costs, since the public school had to be financed even if no one attended it. None of the three candidates was elected.

In 1872 two things happened that were beneficial to the struggle for

free, Christian education. The Christian daily newspaper *De Standaard* was founded with Kuyper as editor-in-chief; and an association, the *Antischoolwetverbond*, was set up with the aim of amending *Article 194* so that free education would be the rule and state education the complement. The objective was to influence public opinion, petition the government, and win elections.

In a by-election held 21 January 1874 the electors of the district of Gouda sent Kuyper to the Second Chamber. Partly as a result of his efforts, the introduction of compulsory school attendance was dropped from Samuel van Houten's Child Labor Bill.<sup>38</sup> According to the retired school inspector Pieter Romeyn<sup>39</sup> compulsory school attendance could be insisted upon only after the state made adequate provision for the supporters of Christian education to have their own schools. Kuyper advocated both a general revision of the *Constitution* and the rebate system whereby the state would pay out to free schools what it otherwise would have to expend to establish and maintain public schools in their stead.

J. Kappeyne van de Coppello,<sup>40</sup> Thorbecke's successor as leader of the liberals, supported compulsory school attendance.

Groen was now old and enfeebled, but Kuyper found in A.F. de Savornin Lohman<sup>41</sup> a strong collaborator in the struggle for freedom of education.

At the meeting of the Association for Christian National Primary Education in June 1874, Kuyper proposed the appointment of a Committee to study and report on the following questions: What demands must be made of the state to preserve Christian education from ruin? What could be expected of the churches in support of education? What ties could there be between the Association and unsubsidized schools? The proposal to appoint a Committee was adopted.

The Committee's report was discussed at the May 1875 meeting. It was clear that the free schools were chronically short of funds. Furthermore, teacher training programs were not satisfactory, and there was too little cooperation between school boards and teachers. The opposition were out to eliminate free schools, and there were many more public schools than were necessary.

On the Christelijk Gereformeerd side (that of the Seceders of 1834) great objections arose to the rebate system: it would sap Christian fortitude and render the Christian school dependent on the state.

In 1878 there was again a new Education Bill, the Kappeyne Bill. It projected an improvement of public education. Classes were to be smaller, and student teachers would no longer be permitted, as they had been, to function as independent teachers. Now, this implied disaster for free schools, because practice teachers were less expensive than fully qualified instructors, of whom there was a shortage in any case. Public

education would be provided for by the state. There were training schools enough. The public school was to be perfectly neutral. There was to be no compulsory attendance.

The Bill was adopted, but the King was immediately enveloped in the storm of a tremendous popular petition. The initiative for this petition came from Kuyper, De Geer van Jutphaas,<sup>42</sup> and A.F. de Savornin Lohman, who in May 1878 proposed to the General Meeting of the Association for Christian National Primary Education the appointment of a Petition Committee. The objective was to unleash a great mass movement. The Address to the King must declare that the petitioning parents favored the school with the Bible and that because the public school could not be such a school according to the *Constitution* and because the new *Act* worsened the situation, the King was beseeched to grant the people's desires.

The moment the plan became known, it was thoroughly mocked and ridiculed by the liberal side. Yet it was a stunning success: 305,102 petitioners signed on behalf of 114,375 children aged six to twelve; 306 church consistories of the Nederlands Hervormde Kerk and 108 of the Christelijk Gereformeerde Kerk attested their adherence; and additional petitions were presented by the Association for Christian National Primary Education and by the Christian teachers.

A delegation led by P.J. Elout van Soeterwoude presented the petitions to the King: fifteen green volumes entitled *Smeekschrift aan de Koning om een school met de Bijbel* (Petition to the King for a school with the Bible). The King received the delegation in a friendly and sympathetic manner. Then he solicited Kappeyne's official ministerial advice. Kappeyne's Report was unfavorable, as anticipated. The Petition served only partisan interests, not those of the state. If it achieved its objective, the Crown would be brought into serious conflict with the States General, and the nation would thereby be foolishly exposed to a shock the consequences of which could not be calculated. Kuyper printed an exposé of the misrepresentations in the Kappeyne Report in the issues of *De Standaard* of 24, 28, and 30 August 1878. Yet in the nature of the case the King, a constitutional monarch, had to sign the Kappeyne Bill.

The proponents of the Christian school had been shaken thoroughly awake. They began to understand that nothing was to be expected of the liberals and conservatives and that they would have to become the ruling party themselves. Asked by Lohman whether he thought the King would ratify the Kappeyne Bill [the *Primary Schools Act* of 1878], Kuyper replied, "I think he will, but in ten years you will be occupying the liberals' seats."

On 23 January 1879 a Union was formed with Lohman as chairman. Its name was *Een school met de Bijbel* (A School with the Bible).

It was to sponsor an annual fund drive for Christian education. The monies raised were partly for local schools and partly for the Union, the latter part to be divided equitably, in keeping with their expenses, between the Association for Christian National Primary Education and the Association for Gereformeerde Primary Education.

Kappeyne resigned in 1879, and his Cabinet was succeeded by that of Van Lynden.<sup>43</sup> A reinforced Anti-Revolutionary party again raised the issue of education, and this time powerful support was forthcoming from the Roman Catholics, whose spokesman was J.H.L. Haffmans.<sup>44</sup> Haffmans told Van Lynden that before a confessor of Christ—which Van Lynden was—lent a hand to the implementation of an *Act* forcing upon the nation a school without Christ, he should put that hand into the fire as Muscius Scaevola had done and burn it off!

Despite determined opposition from the Anti-Revolutionary and Roman Catholic parties, funds were appropriated and the *Act* was implemented in 1880—whereupon the Anti-Revolutionaries, like Groen in earlier times, began to campaign for revision of *Article 194* of the *Constitution* of 1848.

In 1882 Lohman was able to secure passage of a Bill that limited the applicability of the new high standards set for classrooms to public schools and publicly subsidized free schools. The liberals became divided. There were a group who perceived that the Kappeyne Act served only to strengthen the Anti-Revolutionary party and who therefore now wanted to accommodate them. There were even some who regarded neutral education as antiquated, impossible, and noxious. Meanwhile, the Anti-Revolutionaries and Roman Catholics developed closer ties.

In 1889 an Anti-Revolutionary and Roman Catholic coalition came to power. A new Education Act, the Mackay<sup>45</sup> Act, was adopted. On 26 September 1889 it passed in the Second Chamber by a vote of seventy-one to twenty-seven; and on 6 December it passed in the First Chamber, despite much liberal opposition, by a vote of thirty-one to eighteen. The costs of free education were to be met by means of government subsidies.

In 1900 school attendance was made compulsory. *Article 194* was finally altered during the constitutional revision of 1917 so that the good quality of primary education, both free and public, was henceforth to be financed entirely from the public treasury. At the same time, free schools were guaranteed their independence with respect to the choice of educational materials and the appointment of teachers. Free primary education that met legally established conditions was to be financed from the public treasury in like measure to public education.

In 1920 the new constitutional guarantees of freedom and equality of education were incorporated into the De Visser<sup>46</sup> Act. Financially, free education was no longer to be treated unequally. A difference



remained in the matter of actually establishing schools, for there was to be an adequate opportunity to receive a public education everywhere, while of course a minimum number of students were required before it became feasible to start a free school in a given community.

### Notes

1. [Invited to participate in the translator's evening lecture series and college course on the History of the Lowlands, sponsored jointly by the Dordt College, Sioux Center, Iowa, Overseas Seminar and the International School of Amsterdam, and to address broadly the question of the development of Christian education in The Netherlands in the nineteenth century, Miss Van Essen drafted the Dutch version of the present article to serve as the basis of her remarks. The lecture was held in a classroom at ISA 21 April 1983. Notes in brackets have been supplied by the translator.]
2. See Herman Bavinck, "De Theologische richtingen in Nederland" (The theological currents in The Netherlands), *Tijdschrift voor Gereformeerde theologie* (1894), pp. 164-65. [Bavinck (1854-1921), the distinguished professor of systematic theology, first, after 1882, at Kampen Theological Seminary, and later, after 1902, at the Free University in Amsterdam, joined Abraham Kuiper and Frederik Lodewijk Rutgers' (1836-1917) in preparing a readable modern version of the Dutch Bible (1895). He delivered the keynote address to the national convention of the Anti-Revolutionary Party 13 April 1905 and served for a time as Chairman of the Party's National Committee.]
3. [Victor Cousin (1792-1867), a professor at the Sorbonne and briefly, in 1840, the French Minister of Education, paid an official visit to The Netherlands and Prussia in 1836 to investigate their educational institutions.]
4. [After serving briefly as a minister of the gospel at Ulrum, Petrus Hofstede de Groot became an influential professor of theology at Groningen, where he taught from 1829 to 1873. Philip Willem van Heusde was a classical scholar at the University of Utrecht.]
5. Mr. G. Groen van Prinsterer, *De Maatregelen tegen de Afgescheidenen aan het staatsrecht getoetst* (The measures against the Seceders (of 1834) measured against the Constitution; Leiden: Luchtmans, 1837) 90.
6. Mr. G. Groen van Prinsterer, *Bijdrage tot herziening der Grondwet in Nederlandschen zin* (Contribution to revision of the Constitution in the Dutch spirit; Leiden: Luchtmans, 1840) 94.
7. Mr. G. Groen van Prinsterer, *Adviezen in de Tweede Kamer der Staten-Generaal in dubbelen getale* (Opinions in the double Second Chamber of the States General; Leiden: Luchtmans, 1840; xii, 160) 57.
8. [In the period dealt with in the present study, the Kingdom of The Netherlands was served by the following heads of state: William I (1813-1840); William II (1840-1849); William III (1849-1890); Wilhelmina (1890-1948).]
9. [Johannes Tiberius Bodel Nijenhuis (1797-1892), an attorney, was a partner in S. and J. Luchtmans, the Leiden publishing firm that saw many of

Groen's writings into print. He compiled the index volumes to the two series of the Archives of the House of Orange edited by Groen: *Table des matières et des lettres dans le Recueil 'Archives de la maison d'Orange Nassau'*; 1st series: Leiden: Luchtmans, 1847; and 2nd series: Utrecht: Kemink, 1862.]

10. [RGP 114.367.]
11. [The allusion is to *Adres aan de Algemeene Synode der Nederlandsche Hervormde Kerk over de Formulieren, de Academische opleiding der predikanten, het onderwijs en het Kerkbestuur* (Address to the General Synod of the Dutch Reformed Church concerning the creeds, the academic training of preachers, education, and church administration; Leiden: Luchtmans, 1843; iv, 52 pages). The Address was signed by Groen, who had drafted it; Dirk van Hogendorp (1797-1845); M.B.H.W. Gevers (1789-1873); P.J. Elout van Soeterwoude (1805-1893); Abraham Capadose (1795-1874); Johan Anne Singendonck van Dieden (1809-1893); and Carel Marie van der Kemp (1799-1861)—the "seven gentlemen from The Hague."]
12. [The allusion is to *Aan de Hervormde Gemeente in Nederland* (To the Reformed Church in The Netherlands; Leiden: Luchtmans, 1843; iv, 164 pages).]
13. [Jonkheer Pieter Jacob Elout van Soeterwoude (1805-1893) was a staff officer to the Prince of Orange in 1831; a judge in The Hague; a member of the Second Chamber from 1853 to 1862 and 1879 to 1880, of the Council of State from 1864 to 1874, and of the First Chamber in 1886 and 1887. One of Groen's intimate and life-long Christian friends, he wrote *Enkele herinneringen uit Mr. Groen van Prinsterer's laatste dagen* (Some recollections of Mr. Groen van Prinsterer's final days; Amsterdam: Kon. Ned. Stoomdrukkerij, 1885).

Dirk Count van Hogendorp (1797-1845), likewise a close friend of Groen's and the son of an illustrious father, was considered by Willem de Clercq to be one of the "strict" group in the Réveil circle in The Hague. He opposed vaccination as a practice inconsistent with faith in Providence; stressed divine predestination to salvation and, in Dutch history, the case of Prince Maurice against Johan van Oldebarneveldt and the Arminians; and ruined his early career chances by refusing as a matter of principle to swear an oath to uphold a Dutch Constitution he considered defective. Influenced by his fellow-Bilderdijkian friend Isaac Da Costa, he declined as late as May 1826 to solicit even for a secretarial post at the Royal Cabinet, but after 1830, having reinterpreted the oath of office, he entered public life as a municipal justice department counsellor and prosecuting attorney, first in Amsterdam and then, beginning in 1833, in The Hague; after 1838 he was attached to the Provincial Court of the Province of Holland (South Holland after the province's partition in 1840). The doubled Second Chamber refused to seat him in 1840 on the technicality that an in-law already represented Holland—despite impending implementation of the province's partition. Van Assen attributed the episode to prejudice: "One Groen was enough for them. Believe me, there was the catch. It was so perfidious! The Act of Partition had already been adopted by the regular Chamber" (C.J. van Assen to Groen, c. 25 February 1848, RGP 175.172).]

14. [Johan Rudolf Thorbecke (1798-1872), the pre-eminent statesman of the nineteenth century in The Netherlands, is mainly known for shaping the liberal *Constitution of 1848*. He led the Dutch Cabinets of 1 November 1849-19 April 1853; 1 February 1862-10 February 1866; and 4 January 1871-6 July 1872. A fair bust of Thorbecke stands beside a smaller but finer one of Groen van Prinsterer, his principal opponent, in the Historical Collection in the Rijksmuseum in Amsterdam.]
15. [The allusion is to *Aan G. Graaf Schimmelpenninck over De Vrijheid van Onderwijs* (To G[erit] Count Schimmelpenninck concerning freedom of education; The Hague: Van Stockum, 1848; 118 pages) part 2. There is an unpublished sequel, penned by Groen the same year, in the Rijksarchief in The Hague. Gerrit Schimmelpenninck (1794-1863) served as an envoy to St. Petersburg (1837-1840) and London (1846-1848, 1848-1852) and headed the Dutch Cabinet of 25 March to 21 November 1848.]
16. [Justinus Jacobus Leonard van der Brugghen (1804-1863) finished his doctorate in law at Leiden in 1825 and served with the Nijmegen Guards in Belgium from 1830 to 1834. He founded a Christian school on the Klokenberg in Nijmegen in 1844 (the school's teacher training program was inaugurated in 1846) and edited an educational newspaper, the *Nijmeegsch Schoolblad*, from 1844 to 1852. Having served as a judge and member of Parliament, Van der Brugghen headed the Cabinet of 1 July 1856 to 18 March 1858, in which he was Minister of Justice. See also note 35, below.]
17. Because of the misuse made of this provision, Groen later called it "the wretched clause" (*de ellendige zinsnee*).
18. [*Narede van vijfjarigen strijd* (Epilogue to five years' struggle; Utrecht: Kemink, 1855. iv, 168 pages) 35.]
19. [Nicolaas Beets (1814-1903) was a Réveil man and poet and, from 1875 to 1884, a professor of theology at Utrecht. See also note 35, below.]
20. J. I. Doedes, "Vijf en zeventig stellingen voor den eersten 31sten October van de tweede helft der negentiende eeuw" (Seventy-five theses for the first October 31 of the second half of the nineteenth century), in *De Gids* (Vol. 2, Amsterdam, 1851) 505-520, p. 512, theses 38 and 39.
21. [Gerlach Cornelis Johannes van Reenen (1818-1893) was a city councillor and mayor (1850-1853) of Amsterdam and the Minister of Home Affairs in the F.A. van Hall Cabinet of 1853 to 1856. He was also a member of the Second Chamber (1858-1875) and vice-president of the Council of State (1876-1893).]
22. [Floris Adriaan van Hall (1791-1866), an Amsterdam attorney, served as Minister of Finances (1843-1847; 1860-1861) and of Foreign Affairs (1853-1856), and he led two Cabinets, those of 19 April 1853 to 1 July 1856 and 23 February 1860 to 14 March 1861.]
23. See Mr. G. Groen van Prinsterer, *Hoe de Onderwijswet van 1857 tot stand kwam. Historische bijdrage* (How the 'Primary Schools Act' of 1857 came about: Historical contribution; Amsterdam: Høveker, 1876. xiv, 216 pages) 26; cf. 35.
24. [Willem Wintgens (1818-1895), an attorney from The Hague, was a member of the Second Chamber (1849-1868; 1871-1885) and, from 4 January to 4 June 1868, the Minister of Justice in the conservative Van

- Zuylen-Heemskerk Cabinet of 1 June 1866 to 4 June 1868.]
25. [Ottho Gerhard Heldring (1804-1876) was for forty years, from 1827 to 1867, a socially concerned activist evangelical pastor at Hemmen. A strong supporter of foreign and especially of home missions, he believed that social programs divorced from the gospel would not solve the nation's pressing problems in the fields of poor relief, prostitution, prison reform, and education. He was a knowledgeable and effective campaigner and builder of Christian institutions. Miss Van Essen has called him a "pioneer in many fields of philanthropy" (*RGP* 175.116n.).]
  26. [To the voters; The Hague: Van Cleef, 1866. The twenty pamphlets bundled in this volume appeared singly during 1864 and 1865.]
  27. [What do you think of the De Brauw Bill? Contribution to the response; 2 vols. Amsterdam: Höveker, 1867. Willem Maurits de Brauw (1810-1874) was a public prosecutor and judge in The Hague and a member of the Second Chamber from 1853 to 1874.]
  28. [Michiel Derk van Otterloo (1810-1880) was headmaster of the public school in Valburg for forty years, from 1839 to 1879. Miss Van Essen, curious to see if his heirs might have some letters to him from Groen, succeeded in locating them, in Wanneperveen. They did—almost three hundred of them, carefully preserved in an old cedarwood cigar box in a fireproof cabinet in the study of their home, the official residence of the headmaster of the local 'school with the Bible'. Sometime after Ludi visited the family on a memorably cold winter's day in February 1963, Rudolph Herman van Otterloo arranged for the preservation of these letters in the Algemeen Rijksarchief in The Hague. Many of them have since been published in *RGP* 175.]
  29. [The *Nuts* movement; Amsterdam: Höveker, 1869. xiv. 83 pages. As a leader of the Neo-Calvinist movement in The Netherlands, Abraham Kuyper (1837-1920) was instrumental in organizing the nation's first formal political party, the Anti-Revolutionary Party, founded 3 April 1879; in establishing the Free University in Amsterdam, which opened 20 October 1880; and in promoting the formation, in 1892, of the Gereformeerde Kerken in Nederland through the union of communions deriving from the Secession of 1834 and the "Reformation of 1886." For a simple popular biography of the preacher from Beesd who became Prime Minister of The Netherlands from 1 August 1901 to 16 August 1905, English-language readers can consult Frank Vanden Berg, *Abraham Kuyper*, Grand Rapids: Wm. B. Eerdmans, 1960 and St. Catharines, Ontario: Paideia Press, 1978. On Kuyper's thought and experience in the area of Christ and culture, two more succulent topical studies command attention: Sytse Ulbe Zuidema, "Common Grace and Christian Action in Abraham Kuyper," translated by Harry Van Dyke, in *Communication and Confrontation*, Toronto: Wedge Publishing Foundation, 1972, pages 52-101; and the handy new volume by McKendree Langley, *The Practice of Political Spirituality: Episodes from the Public Career of Abraham Kuyper, 1879-1918*, with a Preface by H. Evan Runner; Jordan Station, Ontario: Paideia Press, 1984.]
  30. [Appeal to the national conscience; Amsterdam: Höveker, 1869. This was Kuyper's opening address to the General Meeting of the Association for Christian National Primary Education at Utrecht 18 May 1869.]

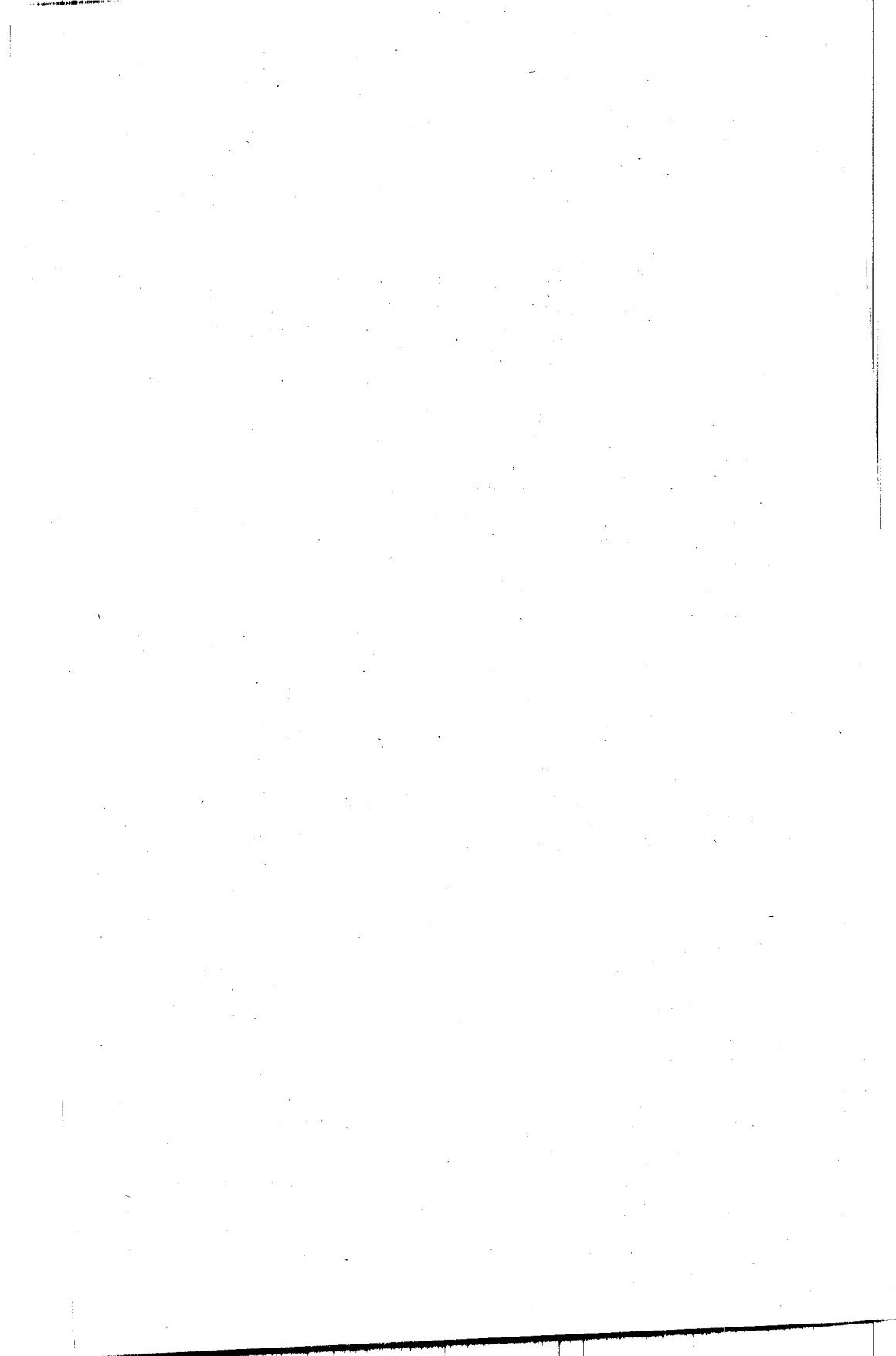
31. [*Ons schoolwetprogram: Aan de hulpverenigingen voor Christelijk-Nationaal Onderwijs* (Our program for a Primary Education Act: To the auxiliary associations for Christian National Primary Education; Amsterdam: Höveker, 1869). Printed twice as a brochure, this piece was included as the second of ten statements in *Zelfstandigheid herwonnen; of Parlementair cijfer en Zedelijke Volkskracht* (Independence regained; or Parliamentary statistics and moral national will; Amsterdam: Höveker, 1869).]
32. [Dirk Harting (1817-1892) studied at the Baptist seminary in Amsterdam and served as a pastor at Enkhuizen, one of the old, picturesque Zuyder Zee cities, from 1840 to 1888. In 1848 he wrote a treatise defending the authenticity of the epistle to the Ephesians, and in 1872, being a lover of church music, he wrote a cantate entitled *Enkhuizen ontwaakt* (Enkhuizen, awake). He and his brother Pieter Harting (1813-1885), a professor of mathematics and physics at Utrecht, and others founded the Dutch School Association in 1869.]
33. Otto Verhagen (1814-1870); born at Utrecht; 1836, corn chandler at Goes; 1858, chief director of the Society to Improve the Madder Preparation; thereafter salt maker; municipal councillor at Goes; 1859-1870, member of the Provincial States of Zeeland.
34. [Nicolaas Mattheus Feringa (1820-1886) taught school in Sappemeer (1837), Beerta (1840), and Appingedam (1845) before becoming headmaster, in 1849, of a tatterdemalions' school in Amsterdam. From 1860 until his death, he served as Secretary to the Association for Christian National Primary Education. Feringa also served as Secretary to the Committee that prepared the great petition to the King for a school with the Bible in 1878. See RGP 175.480n. and N.M. Feringa, *Gedenkboek betreffende het volkspetitionnement* (Record of the people's petition), Amsterdam: J.H. Kruyt, 1878.]
35. [The "Christian national" idea of the Dutch state, church, and school upheld by Groen van Prinsterer and the *juridical-confessional* wing of the Réveil was not shared by the *ethical-irenacist* group, certainly not, for example, by J.J.L. van der Bruggen, who correctly regarded what he called "a differing estimation of Christianity's calling with respect to the Christian state" as the main point of difference between himself and Groen (Van der Bruggen is quoted at greater length in M.E. Kluit, *Het Protestantse Réveil in Nederland en daarbuiten, 1815-1865*, pp. 489-90). Groen's termination of their personal friendship—"I hope to be able to call you my friend once again, to do so now would not be consistent with the seriousness of the case" (Groen to Van der Bruggen, 5 August 1857, RGP 90.279)—upon passage of the *Primary Schools Act* of 1857 is just one of many signs that the Réveil movement was splitting along ideological lines in the 1850's, in the absence of a common approach to the universe of ecclesiastical, educational, social, and political problems and possibilities then actively engaging the "friends" and "brothers." Van der Bruggen, saddened but unbowed, found consolation in a correspondence with Nicolaas Beets; Groen adjusted his tactics and soldiered on.

Daniël Chantepie de la Saussaye (1818-1874) was the Walloon preacher in Leeuwarden (1842) and Leiden (1848) and a Hervormde pastor in Rotter-

- dam (1862) before becoming a professor of theology at Groningen in 1872. Cf. *RGP* 175.268n.]
36. [On Van Otterloo and Kuyper, see notes 28 and 29, above. Levinus Wilhelmus Christiaan Keuchenius (1822-1893), a member of the Second Chamber from 1879 to 1888 and from 1890 until his death, was Minister of Colonial Affairs from 1888 to 1890. He made his career mainly in the Dutch East Indies, where he held high legal and administrative posts and was editor-in-chief of the *Nieuw Bataviaasch Handelsblad*. See *RGP* 175.468n.]
37. [See Note 17, above.]
38. [In 1874 Samuel van Houten (1837-1930) sponsored the first Dutch law restricting child labor. For a concise discussion of his utilitarian, 'anti-Thorbeckian' liberalism, see E.H. Kossman, *The Low Countries 1780-1940* (Oxford: The Clarendon Press, 1978), 298-300.]
39. [Having defended two doctoral dissertations on Plautus at Leiden in June 1836, Pieter Romeyn (1810-1894) became a history teacher and successful school administrator. In the 1860's and 1870's he wrote several studies about the problems of religious education and compulsory education in primary and secondary schools—for example, *Wat te doen tegen schoolverzuim?* (What to do against absenteeism?) which was published in 1867 by Nut van't Algemeen.]
40. [Johannes Kappeyne van de Coppello (1822-1895) formed the liberal Cabinet of 3 November 1877 to 20 August 1879, in which he was Minister for Home Affairs. The Primary Education Bill he sponsored in 1878 prescribed, with feisty liberal logic and ingenuity, new high national standards for school buildings and faculty that were so expensive they could be met only with the assistance of state subsidies—to the enhancement of the state power, not least of all with a fresh capacity to enforce strict religious neutrality in the public schools while at the same time ruining free schools financially. The Kappeyne Act received a hostile public response from Roman Catholics and Protestants alike and set the stage for Abraham Kuyper's appearance in the role of the "great Emancipator" of the Christian common man.]
41. [Jonkheer Alexander Frederik de Savornin Lohman (1837-1924), a jurist and gentleman of the old school in an increasingly rough and tumble age of democratic politics, eventually helped organize, in 1908, the Christian Historical Union, the second major Dutch Protestant political party, which accented safeguarding the interests of the Protestant community but approached cautiously energetic programs for reforming society comprehensively along Neo-Calvinist lines. Lohman edited *De Standaard* in Kuyper's absence from February 1876 to May 1877; formerly a judge in 's-Hertogenbosch, he became a professor of law at the Free University in 1887; he was a leading figure in the "Reformation of 1886"; one of eleven Anti-Revolutionary representatives elected to the Second Chamber in 1879, he worked successfully with the distinguished Roman Catholic leader Hermanus Johannes Aloysius Maria Schaepman to eliminate some of the less acceptable features of the Kappeyne Act; he was for a time the Minister of Home Affairs in the Aeneas Mackay Cabinet of 21 April 1888 to 21 August 1891; an 'anti-Takkian', he walked out of the Anti-Revolutionary Party con-

vention at Utrecht 30 March 1894 after it boisterously supported Abraham Kuyper for favoring the bills introduced into the Second Chamber of 21 September 1892 and, more recently, 3 February 1894 by the Liberal Minister of Home Affairs Johannes Pieter Roetert Tak van Poortvliet (1839-1904) meant to expand the franchise from the then current 350,000 voters to 800,000.]

42. [Barthold Jacob Lintelo baron de Geer van Jutphaas (1816-1903), who became a key figure in the Anti-Revolutionary Party, was a judge at Maarsse and a professor, first, beginning in 1847, of Roman law and its history and later, from 1855 to 1887, of Hebrew, Arabic and oriental letters, at Utrecht. Elected to the Second Chamber in 1884, he worked on the Constitutional revision of 1887 and the *Primary Schools Act* of 1889.]
43. [Constant Theodore baron van Lynden van Sandenburg (1826-1885) led the Cabinet of 20 August 1879 to 23 April 1883. A lawyer, he was a member of the Provincial States of Utrecht from 1861 to 1868. He was elected to the Second Chamber in 1866 and served briefly as Minister of Religious Affairs (Protestant) in 1868. He was the Minister of Justice (1874-1877), of Foreign Affairs (1879-1881), and of Finances (1881-1883). Thereafter he was a Minister of State and member of the First Chamber. See *RGP* 175.519n.]
44. [Joseph Hendrik Leopold Haffmans (1826-1896) began as a clerk, school inspector and judge in Venlo and became a member, for over thirty years, of the Provincial States of Limburg and, after 1860, of the Second Chamber. A champion of Roman Catholic causes, he edited the *Venloosch Weekblad* for thirty-four years. In The Hague he seems to have acquired a reputation for not infrequently tedious picturesque speech.]
45. [Aeneas baron Mackay van Ophemert en Zennewijnen (1839-1909) secured adoption of the *Primary Schools Act* of 1889 while holding the portfolio for Home Affairs in the Cabinet of 21 April 1888 to 21 August 1891, which he headed. His doctoral dissertation, defended at Utrecht in 1862, was a study of the exclusion of clergymen from the Parliament by *Article 91* of the *Constitution* of 1848.]
46. [Johannes Theodoor de Visser (1857-1932), a Hervormde pastor, was a member of the Second Chamber from 1897 to 1918. He became the first Dutch Minister of Education, joining the C.J.M. Ruys de Beerenbrouck Cabinet of 9 September 1918 to 18 September 1922 upon the Department's inauguration 25 September 1918.]





# Groen van Prinsterer's Tactics in His Campaign for Freedom of Education<sup>1</sup>

Jantje Lubbegiena Van Essen

*Translated from the Dutch with additional notes  
by Herbert Donald Morton*

**I**n his struggle for Christian education, Groen van Prinsterer did not always use the same tactics. This is not to be attributed to a constantly changing viewpoint but to ever altering circumstances. He was influenced by the positions of both his opponents and his friends. His contemporaries and later generations as well have not always fully understood this.

In 1840 he was appointed to a Commission on Education formed by King William II in response to objections advanced mainly from the Roman Catholic side against the religionless character of the public primary schools. Groen now began to ask questions of school inspectors, clergymen, teachers, and many other persons connected in some way with education. He had already thought about the problem for a number of years, and he felt increasingly in favor of "facultative division" in state schools. To his friend J. T. Bodel Nijenhuis he wrote on 30 December 1840:

Confidentially, I want to tell you what I still think would be the best solution: improvement of the community schools in a more positive Christian sense, which, given retention of the mixed school, would always require separation of the Roman Catholic and Protestant children during a part of the school day; and then besides these improved schools, much greater freedom than we now have to establish private (*eigene*) schools. Education at the government schools will always be defective in matters of religion, and in everything related to it, Bible history, the history of the fatherland, etc. And yet the Gospel and the Nation's history must once again be proclaimed purely and powerfully to the Protestant population.<sup>2</sup>

On 22 November 1840 he posed the following question to Isaac da Costa: "What do you think of complete separation? Catholic and Pro-

testant schools?" He also asked himself if there might still be a middle way "by offering education in the government schools in the main truths, in which the Lutherans, the Reformed, and the Catholics too are agreed."<sup>3</sup>

The result of the Commission's work was the Royal Decree of 2 January 1842 whereby it was forbidden to teach anything in the public schools that might offend one persuasion or another; one hour each week, by turns, would be devoted to the doctrinal instruction of each persuasion; and the possibility was created of appealing to the Provincial Council should a local government deny a permit to establish a free (*bijzondere*) school. For Christian education the prospects were not much improved.

The *Primary Schools Act* of 1857 was also a great disappointment to Groen. In the Second Chamber the mixed school was defended by many. The Israelite M.H. Godefroi<sup>4</sup> demanded it on the basis of the equality of the persuasions. The law too favored the mixed school meant for everyone. Facultative division, which would still have permitted positive Christian education at state schools, was now excluded. In *Article 23* of the *Act* it was provided that the mixed school must rear students in all Christian and social virtues, but the central point of Christianity, the Cross, would have to be left out in a school that would also be acceptable to Israelites. Hence the Government also declared that every doctrine, all that belonged to the concept of Christianity, must remain excluded. The public school would thus be religionless. Directly following adoption of the *Act* 20 July 1857 Groen handed in his resignation as a Member of the Chamber.

When Groen was elected again in 1862, he took the standpoint that the state was neutral. He advocated changing the articles in the *Primary Schools Act* of 1857 that made it almost impossible for free Christian schools to compete with public education. He proposed scrapping the word "Christian" from *Article 23*, declaring the holding of ecclesiastical posts incompatible with the office of public school teacher, and charging every child school fees. He also insisted on strict observance of the law so that the public school, which in the course of the years had become the "sectarian school of the modernists," would again be truly neutral.

Groen, who was supported by "the people behind the voters"—there was still no universal franchise—found little interest in the Chamber or in the Government. Ultimately, he concluded that there could be no amendment of the law before the "wretched clause"—"Everywhere in the Kingdom the government shall provide adequate public primary education"—had been removed from *Article 194* of the *Constitution*. This sentence had been incorporated into the *Constitution* in 1848 at the insistence of the society Tot Nut van't Alge-

meen, which had feared dangerous competition from the free school. Groen had found this provision ill-considered even insofar as the public school was concerned, because competition would provide precisely the stimulus to make public education as good as possible.

He did not consider *Article 194* as such to be an insuperable obstacle to a good Education Act. Yet it had proven vulnerable to various interpretations. Everyone used it to suit himself. The original intent was that the Government would meet the need. The Government was not obligated to maintain schools everywhere in proportion to the population if adequate education was provided in some other way. However, with the application of "revolutionary constitutional law," Groen wrote in September 1871 in *Nederlandsche Gedachten*, the public rights of the religious persuasions are eliminated, and a Christianity-above-confessional-divisions loses itself in the anti-Christian religiosity of the modernists;<sup>5</sup> hence the propensity to see in *Article 194* the obligation to maintain state schools everywhere. If the public school is imposed on the people, then to the extent that it is not homogeneous with the people's beliefs and needs, the people are oppressed.<sup>6</sup> Freedom of education is limited to those having money enough being able to escape the coercion by establishing free (*bijzondere*) schools. Groen found it unreasonable to be consigned to the arbitrariness of a portion of the citizenry:

Yet, according to the revolutionary theory, the supreme power of the will of the people always ends in the supreme power of the majority. Take as a basic idea, namely in the revolutionary sense, the unity and indivisibility of the state. Then there must be unity of revolutionary perspective, unity of the centralizing form. Unity of the school system becomes indispensable.<sup>7</sup>

Already in 1857 Groen called *Article 194* "a constitutional scandal": "The adversary will always be strong as a result of the chameleon content of *Article 194*."<sup>8</sup> He now wanted an immediate revision of this article but resisted efforts, which the general meeting of the Association for Christian National Primary Education had come out for in 1869, to establish the preference of free education in the *Constitution*:

Do not do yourself, in the interest of your own will and wisdom, what you deplore in the adversary. Stand up for your view concerning the main idea of the forthcoming law, this is right! but do not weave your own system into the *Constitution*.<sup>9</sup>

In 1872 the Anti-School Law League (*Antischoolwetverbond*) led by Jacob Voorhoeve<sup>10</sup> made the same mistake. In *Article 1* of its *Statutes* it set as one of the League's objectives an amendment of *Article 194* whereby "free education can be the rule and state education the complement." By seeking to incorporate too much into the *Constitution*,

people had rendered Groen's tactics ineffectual and lost any chance to amend *Article 194*. This was understood by the Valburg school director M.D. van Otterloo, who through his writings and articles had always supported Groen faithfully. He wrote to Groen 10 February 1874:

Not only in the Second Chamber but in the press as well, the discussion of *Article 194* is ridiculous. Voorhoeve's clumsy obstinacy has spoiled a great deal and given the opposing party a weapon in hand that allows them to take no further account of us and offers them the opportunity to make a few concessions to the Catholics and sidetrack, at least temporarily, the education question which was initially so threatening to them.<sup>11</sup>

Groen complained to Kuyper 19 January 1874, "Many seem still not to understand that what I intended has been made impossible"; and 30 January he added, "The addition insisted on by Voorhoeve has become a hindrance for what I desired. A constitutional quarrel in the city of Christian national élan."<sup>12</sup> Groen wanted the ordinary legislator left free to hold open the possibility of positive Christian education at the state school too. The Anti-School Law League had deviated, as Van Otterloo wrote to Groen 6 January 1873, from the "historical line, which we do not follow if we surrender public education to neutrality, which is to say to unbelief."<sup>13</sup> The quest to amend *Article 194* alone would henceforth be futile and had thus become a useless tactic, or as Groen put it, "spiked ordnance."

It was Kuyper who now conceived the idea of seeking a general revision of the *Constitution*. In a memorandum to Groen 4 February 1874 he argued "that our present constitutional order, especially under the organic and ministerial interpretation, has failed to keep pace with the development of the political life in the bosom of the nation, is frozen ice beneath which the current has ebbed away, and lacks viability to catch up with the political course of the nation. From this it follows that 1st our party has to take its stand not behind but in front of present-day liberalism; 2nd that liberalism has to be qualified as stationary and conservative and therefore our party ought as its objective to choose constitutional revision not in a partial but in a general sense. Our party too must be liberal, but it must stand for Christian liberalism in opposition to revolutionary liberalism." From the *Constitution* everything should be expunged "that tends, to make the State carry on, in spite of itself, a religion of its own which in nature and essence must be anti-Christian. Expunged, everything that separates the State from the life of the nation. Expunged, everything that restricts the free course of Christianity. Expunged, finally, everything that obstructs the free development of the organic life of the people."<sup>14</sup> Although Groen had never expected much good to come from a general revision of the *Constitution*, he gave Kuyper his adherence in a letter of 5 February 1874.<sup>15</sup> In this connection he wrote in *Nederlandsche Gedachten* 10 February 1874: "Spiked ord-

nance can be a sign of retreat, but also of the opening up of an even more formidable reserve battery."<sup>16</sup>

Coenraad Mulder,<sup>17</sup> a teacher at the theological school in Kampen, could not believe that Groen would agree to a general revision of the *Constitution*. In an article in *De Wekstem* of 5 November 1874, he tried to bring Groen and Kuyper into contradiction with each other. "Nowhere can we find that Groen calls general constitutional revision his reserve battery." In the *Standaard* of 14 and 24 November Groen responded to this misunderstanding, but on 19 November he acknowledged to Mulder that in 1871 he had indeed only sought revision of *Article 194*: "Both for itself and to avoid general constitutional revision."

Actually, Groen had provided some basis for this misunderstanding. In the *Nederlandsche Gedachten* of 19 March 1874 we read:

Postponement of partial revision, where an article violates the people's conscience, is the surest means of bringing about a general constitutional revision, as in 1848! Constitutional revision in the Netherlandic sense is something I desired already in 1840. Yet let it be kept in view that with the next revolution of all the States, The Netherlands will face a *da capo* of 1848. Constitutional revision by the force of a triumphant coterie and following the foreign model. This time in the socialistic sense.<sup>18</sup>

That Groen had hereby meant to speak of the necessity of a general constitutional review as the reserve battery is clear from his letter of 2 February 1875 to prof. A. Brummelkamp.<sup>19</sup> Yet the formulation was indeed not very clear, and Mulder had seen in it a warning against the "March storms of 1848." Brummelkamp had nevertheless understood Groen to mean by it that however much he had always advocated partial constitutional revision and warned both against the lessons from Paris and against delay *ad calendas Graecas*, he had always definitely espoused general constitutional revision "if and when possible as a reserve battery, as it is now put."<sup>20</sup>

Another point on which Mulder misunderstood Groen concerned his failure to oppose the rebate system propagated by Kuyper. This involved the state paying out to free schools the amount their existence saved the state on public schools. According to Mulder this was a hidden subsidy, and in *De Wekstem* of 5 January 1875 he cited a number of statements Groen had made against it in 1867. Groen wrote to him the following day: "One must judge writings by their date."<sup>21</sup> And on 2 November 1875 he informed Mulder that it occurred to him "that you are wrong in your opposition. Perhaps mainly because you equate rebates with alms, while on the contrary they are demanded as a debt by virtue of rights for all."<sup>22</sup>

The last turn in Groen's tactics is his return to the idea of facultative division, separate state schools for every religious

denomination. In a letter to Van Otterloo on 5 March 1876 he announced he would "speedily show in a number of the *Nederlandsche Gedachten* that in numbers 1-6 I have already returned to the tactics of 1837-1857, the polemics against the neutral state school." He did this in the last number, that of 29 April 1876: "In the school question, following the sorely failed experiment with fair competition, I declare facultative division at the state school once again the agenda of the day. Many are surprised that I return to the shibboleth I always favored."

Mulder too, who would hear nothing of negotiations with the revolutionary state that "knows neither God nor commandment," expressed his astonishment in a letter of 23 April 1876.<sup>23</sup> He recalled a statement of Groen's from 1861 to the effect that state education should be made as superfluous as possible by free education.<sup>24</sup> It is clear from the context, however, that Groen regarded this as desirable if opposition to separate state schools for each of the several religious persuasions persisted and if every state school accordingly had to be general and hence neutral in character. In the passage immediately preceding, Groen had remarked that it was perhaps less than advisable to raise the matter of facultative division since many considered such an arrangement beyond practical realization. Van Otterloo inferred from this entire passage precisely the evidence that Groen had never abandoned the idea.<sup>25</sup>

Groen championed rights for all and opposed the domination of the majority. The state school would have to satisfy the desires of every persuasion, including the desires of the Christian part of the population, the "core of the nation." To achieve this, it would have to be split up to allow freedom of choice. Should this prove unattainable, education would have to be strictly neutral and the establishment of free schools absolutely unhampered. But the neutral mixed school remained an eyesore as far as Groen was concerned. For after all, what was neutral? "The moment you provide education, there is rearing there, which is based on some moral doctrine, rooted in some religion or in none. And where the nature of your school excludes positive religion, people fall into the generalities of rationalism, deism, sentimentality." What is intolerable in this is "that the state school is made compulsory, that this religionless education is forced upon a Christian nation,"<sup>26</sup> he wrote in 1871.

The basis of Groen's struggle was and remained, even with altered tactics, the right of a Christian nation, or at least of the Christian part of the nation, to positive Christian education.

## Notes

1. [The present article is an approved translation of "Groen's gedragslijn in zijn strijd voor de vrijheid van onderwijs," *Uitleg*, Weekblad van het Department van Onderwijs en Wetenschappen Nr. 462 (19 May 1976) 17-21. The issue of *Uitleg* in which the article appeared (without the references) was devoted entirely to Groen in commemoration of the centennial of his death. Notes in brackets have been supplied by the translator.]
2. RGP 114.366-67.
3. Groen to Da Costa, 22 November 1840, *Brieven van Mr. Isaac Da Costa medegedeeld door Mr. Groen van Prinsterer* [Letters from Isaac Da Costa, Esq., presented by Groen van Prinsterer, Esq.; 3 vols. Amsterdam: Höveker, vol. 1 (1830-1849), 1872; vol. 2 (1850-1855), 1873; vol. 3 (1856-1860)], vol. 1, 67-68.
4. [Michael Hendrik Godefroi (1813-1882), an Amsterdam attorney, was a member of the Second Chamber in 1849-1860, 1862-1870, and 1871-1881 and the Minister of Justice from 1860 to 1862. A consistent adherent of the liberal principles of the *Constitution* of 1848, he was the first Jewish person to hold a Dutch Cabinet post. He participated significantly in the parliamentary debates on the *Primary Schools Act* of 1857 and kept a skeptical eye trained on Groen's tactics in the years that followed. In a remark to the Second Chamber 29 September 1868 that led to a public exchange of letters, he asserted that before Groen had begun to give and take, he had once called revision of *Article 194* the only means of recovery. Groen expressed his surprise at this assertion in a letter to Godefroi published in *Hoop des Vaderlands* 3 March 1869; and in a gloss to Godefroi's reply, published in the same paper a week later, Groen wrote: "By *compromising* (*transigeren*) he by no stretch of the imagination meant *forsaking principles*." Cf. RGP 123.315n. and 752; RGP 175.573, 748.]
5. *Nederlandsche Gedachten* 2nd series (6 vols.; Amsterdam: Höveker, 1869-1876) 3 (2 September 1871) 177.
6. *Nederlandsche Gedachten* 3 (8 September 1871) 200.
7. *Nederlandsche Gedachten* 3 (25 September 1871) 241-42.
8. *Nederlandsche Gedachten* 3 (21 September 1871) 230.
9. *Nederlandsche Gedachten* 4 (15 July 1872) 243.
10. [Jacob Voorhoeve (1811-1881), a securities broker at Rotterdam and an active Hervormde layman of strongly orthodox and Darbyist views (see RGP 175.737-38), served as a member of the Board of the church's Dutch Missionary Society but resigned in April 1858 to help found the "separatist" Dutch Missionary Association later that year. An unsympathetic reaction to Voorhoeve's approach to such matters is contained in a letter from L.J. van Rhijn (1812-1887), Groen's pastor at Wassenaar, to Groen 25 June 1858, RGP 90.316-19. When dissatisfied with official church agencies, evangelicals in the Reformed tradition sometimes resorted, like Voorhoeve, while remaining church members in good standing, to founding and maintaining independent agencies; they were then liable to be criticized by others in the church, like Van Rhijn, who was not only not about to abandon the denomination's official mission agency despite "a very great deal of wrong

- [that] has crept in," but who even expressed with plaintive sincerity the "fear" that supporting a competing agency would "grieve the Holy Spirit." Van Rhijn wrote also, however, of the need to "not only *develop* but also *purify*" the three historic creeds of the *Hervormde Kerk* and emphasized a practical Christian *life in the Holy Spirit* as "more important in God's eyes" than orthodox doctrine. In his letter to Groen, Van Rhijn's judgment of "honest, well-intentioned even if at the same time serious errors of doctrine" in the modern church is accordingly conspicuously "milder" than his judgment of Voorhoeve's "strongly separatist" and "sectarian" initiative, which arose from concern for missions committed to *the historic Christian faith.*]
11. RGP 123.698.
  12. *Briefwisseling van Mr. G. Groen van Prinsterer met Dr. A[braham] Kuyper, 1864-1876* (RGP pre-print from GSN 5; ed. A[driaan] Goslinga; Kampen: J.H. Kok, 1937) 274, 275. The primary meaning of "Hemmschuh," or "hindrance," the German term Groen uses here, is "brakeshoe."
  13. Van Otterloo to Groen, 6 January 1873, The Hague, Algemeen Rijksarchief, archief-Groen van Prinsterer, no. 134. This letter is to be published in GSN 7, *Briefwisseling 6: 1869-1876* [ed. J.L. van Essen, in preparation].
  14. *Briefwisseling van Mr. G. Groen van Prinsterer met Dr. A[braham] Kuyper, 1864-1876*, 278-82. [In Kuyper as in Groen, the concern for freedom is at once striking, compelling, and convincing. See further note 25, below.]
  15. *Ibid.*, 282. [Groen wrote, "I need not keep you waiting long. After all, I assume you want my judgment only on the main idea. A striving for general constitutional revision in the Christian historical sense. All the particulars, the *modus quo*, the time when, the articles requiring revision, do not permit treatment *currente calamo*. With your resoluteness you have always combined a rare prudence. *Qui va piano va sano*. You know our Nation. As long as one does not spook them, they are thoroughly vulnerable to being galvanized where the highest interests of the people are at stake. In God We Trust [*Deo Confidentes*] is your motto and has a proven stamp in our national history. In short, it occurs to me that in this Memorandum you have made *much clearer than ever before* the duty inherent in the very imminent decision. And further: God's blessing, without which we can achieve nothing and which is sufficient against all obstacles, rest, dear friend, upon your person and upon your work! P.S. When your decision is made, I expect a telegram" (Groen is alluding here to Kuyper's decision whether or not to accept membership in the Second Chamber. —JLvE).]
  16. *Nederlandsche Gedachten* 5 (19 March 1874) 360.
  17. [Coenraad Mulder (1837-1914) played a leading role in organizing anti-revolutionary party politics in the Kampen-Zwolle area beginning in the 1870's. Desiring to propagate Groen's principles amongst the theological students at Kampen, he wrote to Groen on 9 November 1870 requesting some of his writings. Groen responded on 16 November: "Your letter pleased me greatly. Doubly welcome, first for your agreement with the principles which I believe the future, too, of our beloved fatherland depends on; and further for your influence on youngsters whose forthcoming sphere of work bestows the opportunity and imposes the duty to confess the Gospel as an all-permeating leaven . . . I have asked Höveker to send you the



- Ned[erlandsche] Gedachten* of 1829-32, in which, in the midst of revolutionary storms, my convictions gradually formed and developed. Further a number of shorter writings. Of these, *Le Parti-Antirévolutionnaire [et Confessionnel dans l'Eglise Reformée des Pays-Bas; étude d'histoire contemporaine]* (Amsterdam: Höveker, 1860)] especially provides an overview of my political activities to 1860. Further, you can use the enclosed letter at Utrecht to pick up a copy of my *Adviezen* . . . and the *Narede*, in which I have tried to pull together the main contents of my articles in the daily newspaper *De Nederlander*." Cf. *RGP* 123.427-28.]
18. *Nederlandsche Gedachten* 5 (19 March 1874) 400.
  19. *RGP* 123.758. [In the draft copy of this letter that has been preserved, Groen writes ". . . that in the meeting at Utrecht I was driven from the field; that the way in which people in the Anti-Schoolwet-Verbond interwove the popular question with the constitutional question was the spiking of my ordinance; and that at the end of *Ned[erlandsche] Ged[achten]* I pointed to the necessity of a general constitutional revision as the reserve battery." In the same letter Groen told Brummelkamp about his latest work in history: "I am almost ready with the defense of Maurice and especially of our Gereformeerde Kerk, in its Calvinistic peculiarity, against [J. Lothrop] Motley and Arminianism, also in its current forms. It is a work the burdens and scope of which I did not foresee at the outset; months on end I have lived more in the seventeenth century than in our own. The exertion was rather strenuous for my old age, and I feel very tired." Anthony Brummelkamp (1811-1888) was a Secessionist pastor at Hattem, Schiedam, and Arnhem before he joined the faculty at the Theological School in Kampen, where he taught from 1854 to 1882.]
  20. Brummelkamp to Groen, 3 December 1874, quoted in *RGP* 123.750, note 5.
  21. *RGP* 123.756.
  22. *RGP* 123.847.
  23. Mulder to Groen, 23 April 1876, *RGP* 123.908-10.
  24. [For the statement alluded to by Mulder in his letter of 23 April, see Mr. G. Groen van Prinsterer, *Het voor Christelijk-Nationaal Schoolonderwijs niet ongunstig vooruitzigt. Openingsrede der Eerste Algemeene Vergadering te Amsterdam 23 April 1861* (The not unfavorable prospects for Christian national primary education: Opening address to the First General Meeting at Amsterdam 23 April 1861; The Hague: Van Cleef, 1861) 34.]
  25. In his letter of 23 April, Mulder doggedly dismisses Van Otterloo's correct interpretation of Groen's position as "very weak," attacks the "satanic Church-and-school-state" that Groen's own writings would have taught Mulder to "know, see through, abhor, etc.," and generally badgers Groen to acknowledge that opposition to all state involvement in education would be the more logical outcome of his life's work (*RGP* 123.909). In a letter of 25 April inspired by Groen's prompt reply, Mulder alludes to "State education, that we detest in principle" and glides on to instruct the master, wrong-headedly: "Whether a person is statesman or citizen, representative, yeah minister, whenever a person belongs to the Christian-historical party, one is a declared opponent of every State institution of education . . . And yet,

again and ever again, so many of our persuasion want to go to work on that dead element: trying to accommodate for Christ and His people! It's so naive, isn't it?" However, in a subscript to this letter, Mulder's colleague Brummelkamp states the issue somewhat more perceptively, and without Mulder's unctuous and misleading if well-intentioned patronizing: "We have adopted the slogan: The State must cease to be schoolmaster (except for its forlorn poor), and now it is really. It must, and more than ever, be schoolmaster" (*RGP* 123.910,911n.). But was the issue one of government control, of separated Christians versus the secular state and statism in education and society, of spiritual emigration from Caesar's and the devil's world? Or was it one of equity for all citizens, including Christian *citizens*, within the body politic? Consistently with the first position, Mulder had to say, in his letter of 25 April, "The Christian-historical party simply has no right to participate whenever State education is being handled." Groen, however, wanted not only free schools but also public schools including some offering, facultatively, positive Christian education—in short, Groen wanted a noncoercive model he believed would secure liberty and justice for all citizens equally. What Langley calls Abraham Kuyper's "political spirituality" is a logical outcome of Groen's Christian pluralist insight.]

26. *Nederlandsche Gedachten* 3 (8 September 1871) 200.

# God's Hand in History<sup>1</sup>

Jantje Lubbegiena Van Essen

*Slightly abridged and translated from the Dutch  
by Herbert Donald Morton*

**I**s God's hand in history? Could this even be a question for Bible believers? Surely the Bible leaves no room for doubt that God determines the course of history? No, certainly not. Yet the question is still debated, even by Christian historians.

That is not to say that they deny God's leading in history. That God guides history from the beginning of the creation to its final goal, the return of Christ, the definitive defeat of satan, the new heaven and the new earth in which justice and righteousness shall dwell, that is certainly accepted. Likewise that Christ is the center and that in Him history becomes meaningful.

Christ is the beginning and the ending of the annals of mankind. Holy Scripture contains the plan of God . . . This divine plan is announced in the Bible in absolute and clear terms. Victory of the Kingdom of Christ over the one who was man's murderer from the beginning, salvation of those who have put on the Savior through sincere belief.<sup>2</sup>

People still like to repeat these words of Groen van Prinsterer's.

This pertains to the broad line in the course of history. But now for the details, history as we know it from the sources. Yes, what is history, actually? It is a martialling of events, in which people, circumstances, natural phenomena, sickness, health, death and life, wars, triumphs, defeats, political and social developments play a role. In particular, man: his concerns, decisions, passions, ideas, plans. Is God's hand in all that, too? Yes, says the Christian historian drs. H.G. Leih in his little book, entitled *Gods Hand in de geschiedenis?*

Gratefully, believers confess that God in His grace leads history, that nothing on earth happens outside His will or His permission. Yes, God is so intensively involved with the world that not even a sparrow falls to the ground without His will.<sup>3</sup>

What, then, remains to be debated, you will ask. Not the question concerning whether God's hand is in history, but that of whether this can be shown concretely in the course of events.

No, responds drs. Leih. In Bible history, yes; for in that, "God's acts, His blessing and His wrath, are clearly and concretely indicated."<sup>4</sup> "In the Bible God constantly explains why He does thus and so."<sup>5</sup> However, "should we, little people, transfer this element of explanation" to profane history? How can we show the Finger of God "when we can not know certainly because God has not Himself revealed it, that He was busy, in particular, there and there?"<sup>6</sup> "We should then be so reckless as to think it possible to show, with our own human understanding, God's hidden ways on the map of world history. Such recklessness no longer recognizes human limitations."<sup>7</sup>

Leih is afraid of wanting to make the ways of God's providence transparent because of the danger that people will speak of God's Hand or Finger as of a fragmentarily acting Hand, and he cites G.C. Berkouwer's remark, from his *De Voorzienigheid Gods*:

Indeed, the danger is not inconceivable that we will associate the Finger of God with, especially, various striking and surprising events. In that case there is a threat of a serious fragmentation of the Providence of God. Then, although the unstriking and ordinary are not withdrawn from Providence, they are isolated with respect to the Finger of God. God's guidance in history threatens to be narrowed.<sup>8</sup>

According to Leih, matters are made even worse if we have the temerity to go on and use God's Finger to support our personal opinions. In that he is right, and it is true that the dangers mentioned are far from imaginary. I would still deny, however, that God's guidance can not be perceived concretely in the course of events. Yet, just as the incontrovertible fact *that* God rules can only be seen through the faith that the Holy Spirit has worked in our hearts, so only through faith can we see *how* God rules. Still, there are some limitations.

In the first place we must have a correct knowledge of the facts of the events, and that in itself is no simple matter.

From this explanation [of the problems involved in establishing facts through historical research] it will be clear . . . how difficult it is [even for the working historian] to acquire a correct knowledge of the facts. And this is one of the reasons why we must be cautious in interpreting history and pointing to God's Hand in it. When our knowledge rests on inadequate data and the facts are thus not established with certainty, we may not venture any interpretation. It is accordingly a prerequisite that we dispose over sufficient data to know the precise course of affairs. We can then also go on to speak of the Hand of God in these affairs—but only with God's Word as guide. From the way in which the

stories told in the Bible are presented, we gain an insight into the close relation between God and His creation, between God and man, whom He created, between God and what happens as history. It is simply not the case, as it turns out, that God is remote and that He draws near only occasionally to intervene in a fragmentary way, that we can therefore speak only in special cases of intervention, of the Hand of God. No, God's Hand is there always and everywhere.

In his *Evangelie en geschiedenis* K.J. Popma has warned against the dualistic scheme of nature and grace, of sacred and profane, which assumes that God is remote. Popma even calls this dualism an invention of the antichrist. God's Word is very near you, in your mouth and in your heart. God is always near in human history. He writes:

When we speak of God's Hand in history, then Scripturally we can never understand this to mean that He leaves His sacred remoteness to enter the world and the profane. For He is always there: in His judgments, in His struggle against the power of darkness, and in His victory, in which His people share. He is always there beforehand: "I will [rejoice in Jerusalem, and] joy in my people"; and "... it shall come to pass, that before they call, I will answer; and while they are yet speaking, I will hear" (Isaiah 65:19, 24). There is a very close relation between God and human history, and the people of God in ancient and modern times have always been aware of it . . . We actually experience the Hand of God in history when we contemplate the humanity of the Son of God and His Gospel. Not only philosophy of history but also historical practice as a science has directly to do with the divine mystery in history, namely that in its entirety and in all its facts and events it is determined by the caring and fact-establishing activity of God, who bears it and brings it further.<sup>9</sup>

Thus Popma.

Now then, how can God's hand be shown in history concretely? In order to discover that, we can take only one way, that of studying God's Word. There we can learn to know the Lord, who He is, how He is, how He made the heavens and the earth and all that is in them. There we learn His plan of salvation, His deliverance through His Son Jesus Christ, His purpose with this world, how He guides history towards its final goal. But here we also learn how He is active with people and nations. He is the living God who reacts to our deeds. Concerning how He does so, too, He does not leave us in uncertainty. That is not to say that we understand everything. His ways are higher than ours. Here, too, it holds that we know only in part. Yet He is faithful, and we can trust His Word and promises.

How He deals in relation to people has been presented clearly from Scripture by the Reverend Adriaan J. Moggré in his articles on God's Hand in history in the *Kerkbode van Nederlands Gereformeerde kerken* of 8 December 1979 to 22 March 1980 . . . Not only God's judgments but also God's protection and deliverance are evident from the history of God's people.

God acts in relation to people. He is moved by the world in need and has therefore not spared His only begotten Son. He allows Himself to be stayed. The judgment He had in store for Ninevah He did not bring to pass, because the city repented. And we have no intention of falling into the dualism so rightly deplored by Popma by *separating* profane history from salvation history, although it is necessary to *distinguish* the latter from the former. Gerard Goossens<sup>10</sup> calls attention to this need in his opposition to Leih in the issues of *Tot vrijheid geroepen* of January, February, and March 1977.

If we would know what distinguishes salvation history since the Fall from all other history, then we must note that by it God lets Himself be known as the Creator, Upholder, Ruler, and then also as the Deliverer of this world through His Son Jesus Christ. That is the great, all-controlling fact of salvation: Jesus Christ's coming to earth to save sinners. And thus does salvation history picture to us the gracious God of the Covenant, who unfolds His plan of salvation in human history step by step until the coming of Christ in the flesh, in the fullness of time, and thereafter until His return.

Distinction, yes; separation, no. All history is one.

History is a history of people who act on their own initiative and who are themselves responsible for their deeds. And yet all these deeds are contained in God's great plan. God is present here as well. The Reverend Moggré points to the story of Joseph, who was sold by his brothers for motives that were certainly not noble. Yet Joseph later told them that God had sent him ahead. And does Peter not speak to the Jews of Jesus, whom they had crucified, saying that it had nevertheless happened according to the counsel and foreknowledge of God? That is how we, too, as professional historians, should regard historical events.

Gereformeerde historians of the seventeenth and eighteenth centuries did not hesitate to point out God's Hand in history. In a work of 1610 written by a certain Willem Baudart, entitled *De Morghenwecker der vrije Nederlantsche Provintien, ofte een cort verhael van de bloedighe vervolginghen ende wreetheden door de Spanjaerden enz.* (The morning alarm of the free Dutch Provinces, or a brief account of the bloody persecutions and cruelties by the Spanish, etc.), one reads that the Dutch have every reason "with joy and happiness to thank and to praise God the Lord that He has thus far delivered them from the teeth and claws of their enemies."<sup>11</sup> But, the passage continues, we must remain vigilant. God grant our governments wisdom and prudence. Yet, for *that*, we need to have God on our side—and we will, "as long as we remain stedfastly in the true religion, fearing and serving Him according to His laws and commandments." For "war and attack by foreign nations are nothing other than the rods by which God chastises lands and people on account of their sins."

In 1668 a work appeared by the Middelburg preacher Abraham

van de Velde: *De wonderen des Alderhoogsten* (The mighty works of the Most High, or—as the subtitle continues—the signs of the causes, ways, and means whereby the United Provinces have been so wonderfully elevated against the expectations of the entire World to such great power, wealth, honor, and respect, etc.). The writer was moved to his publication by “the great apostacy, everywhere increasingly apparent, so that (not denying the good) the people are forsaking God who made them.”<sup>12</sup> He now wants to recount the great acts of God, displayed in the rise of the United Netherlands. Both writers clearly link God’s acts to the acts of people.

Drs. Leih . . . comments that God’s leading is not concretely invoked here to justify a personal opinion, as in other accounts, but to thank God. “Today, too, when we seek the ordinary causes of what happened in the Eighty Years’ War and know that everything was not so black and white, we have to point out that gratitude to God accompanied the attribution of events to Him. Is that so much different than the thanksgiving and singing of Psalm 124 right after the liberation in May 1945? In other words: people have experienced deliverance from great need themselves, people are personally involved.”<sup>13</sup>

People want to thank God, just as they want to pray for deliverance that has not yet arrived. “But viewed objectively, in science and education, can people point to God as cause?”<sup>14</sup> Leih thinks not. He distinguishes between someone who has experienced the events personally and someone writing after a long time. He finds it understandable that people during the Eighty Years’ War, in 1813, and in 1945 should experience liberation as a gift of God Himself, but he believes that those who write of these events later on only have the task of recounting data that can be checked and verified. It is not that God is used as an explanation more or less for the sake of convenience, for there is little convenience to be had in that which can never be known precisely. Yet he adds that he *does* acknowledge God’s guidance in history and likewise has no objection to gratitude to God for the marvelous deliverance one believes or knows he has received from Him. What he objects to is the ease with which people suddenly find God’s Finger there, and there (for they do not do so with all events)—and then go on to proclaim it as the truth, although they can not know it with certainty: God Himself, after all, has not revealed that He has been active there, and there, in particular.<sup>15</sup>

That reasoning seems a bit strange to me. Why should contemporaries but not posterity be able to see God’s Hand in a particular event? God has not revealed that He is active there, and there, in particular, He has revealed that He is active always and everywhere, and hence also in *that* particular event. The contemporaries told the great acts of God to the generations following—may they not believe in them?

Leih, invoking the following point<sup>16</sup> made by prof. J. Roelink, thinks it may even be absurd to do so: the teacher who lets Jean Jauregui's bullet be guided to a good end in 1582 would have to say of the successful attack in 1584: God now regarded Orange's time as come. That would be a clincher, and presumptuous as well. People would be so pretentious as to think they could point out God's hidden ways. Nevertheless, those are the facts. The attempts to assassinate William the Silent failed in 1582 and succeeded in 1584. Is God's Hand not there? God apparently still wanted to use Orange in 1582; and in 1584, according to God's leading, The Netherlands had to carry on without him. That is certainly clear.

Perhaps it would even be possible to inquire into God's further purposes in this case, but it is of course true that we can not always and fully fathom God's ways. Yet that does not detract from the fact that they are God's ways. Might it not have been God's purpose to deprive the people of all hope so they would learn to repose their confidence in Him alone? For the death of the Prince of Orange was not the only setback. Groen says in his *Handboek*:

Never, perhaps, had the chances been less favorable; neither from England nor from Germany could help be expected. Even less from France. The South was in hostile hands, in the North people were vulnerable to an enemy invasion; people were exhausted and discouraged. Thus the fall of the United Netherlands was already imminent? No! The Prince had made a covenant with God, and his dying cry was the recommitment of the pitiable folk to the mercies of this invincible ally. The Lord had heard the prayer!<sup>17</sup>

Groen van Prinsterer took the Holy Scripture as guideline in his view of history and his historical writing. History is the history of people. Yes, but not exclusively. For how can the history of people be uncoupled from the relation between these people and their Creator? The Creator—who created from nothing heaven and earth and all that is in them and who through His eternal counsel and providence still sustains and rules them (*Catechism*, Sunday 9)?

Some have criticized Groen for carrying the covenant relation between God and His people through to all people, including those who deny God. Would God's promises and threats apply, however, only to His children? At the time of the Flood and of the tower of Babel there was still no covenant relation between God and His people Israel. Even less was there a covenant relation with respect to Nineveh. The living, dynamic God acts in reaction to the deeds of people. That need not be viewed as in contradiction to God's acting according to the plan of His counsel. In my article on Groen's conception of history I said the following with respect to the question concerning what determines the relation between God on the one hand and people and nations on the other:



The Holy Scriptures teach us that God made man good. Obedience to the Creator's commandments bears the promise of everlasting life. But man rebelled against God; he wanted to be like Him, which is to say, he desired to take the sovereignty unto himself. The price he paid was death.

Then God had mercy upon him and gave His only begotten son, who by His suffering and death and by His blood took the penalty of sin upon Himself, thus opening the way to renewed fellowship with God. Believing in Him and living according to God's commandments bears anew the promise of everlasting life. Unbelief, disobedience, and walking after one's own ways implies, in contrast, the threat of the judgment of God.<sup>18</sup>

Groen wanted to focus attention on this in his historical writing.

God's Hand is not only in supernatural events, in miracles; we may also try to recognize it by the light of the Scriptures in what is ordinary. In doing so we must certainly pray for the illumination of the Holy Spirit. Calvin says that to the eye of the unbeliever secondary causes are as a veil but that the eye of faith sees deeper and finds God's Hand in all these developments in the world around us.

In his article "Het Koninkrijk van God en de Geschiedenis" in the July 1981 issue of *Radix*, W. van 't Spijker emphasizes that we must exercise the greatest possible caution when dealing with the Hand of God in history. All questions concerning the recognizable Hand of God involve an anticipation of glory. History presents many examples of this. Our own history is often interpreted in terms of the Hand of God as if The Netherlands were the Israel of the Occident. However, he asserts, God's glory is revealed only later.<sup>19</sup> Well, of course. Yet the fact that the quest to recognize God's Hand in history has sometimes led to incorrect interpretations does not mean that a good interpretation in the light of the Bible is impossible.

In speaking of God's Hand in history we must on the one hand not desire to know more than God's Revelation makes it possible for us to know, but on the other hand we may on the basis of this Revelation still see something of how God works in history. Groen van Prinsterer formulated the matter this way:

It is not permitted the short-sighted mortal, in idle delusion, to anticipate the decrees of God and to lift the veil that He has put upon the mysteries of the governance of the world; but even less is it permitted the humble and believing *Christian* to close his eyes to the beams of light in which, in the wonders of history, the glory of His perfections shines. That God's love and righteousness do not leave themselves unattested to the nations in the ways of His providence; that the vicissitudes of the fatherland have shown and established the force of the promise, ". . . them that honour me I will honour" [I Samuel 2:30]—these truths too ought not to be barred from the circle of accomplished facts to which they so eminently belong.<sup>20</sup>

J. Schaeffer asserts in his article "De leiding van God in de geschiedenis" in the April 1980 issue of *Radix* that Groen sees God's dealings with The Netherlands in punishment of disobedience and blessing of obedience and adds, correctly, the question of where God has promised us external prosperity . . .<sup>21</sup> He has, however, in my opinion, construed Groen's view of history too simplistically. Groen *did* point to the fulfillment of God's promises and threats as an actual element in the course of history; yet he certainly never identified weal and woe with blessing and curse—not any more than the Bible does. Does the poet of Psalm 73 not complain that the ungodly prosper in the world and the righteous are beset by many difficulties? Groen warned already in 1849 against seeing in the privileges our land still enjoyed a seal of higher approval.<sup>22</sup> Even much earlier, in 1832, he pointed out that the Gospel has nowhere promised that the good cause will always triumph here below, "and," he wrote then, "we need only glance at history or look about us to discover that evil often triumphs, even for long periods." God sometimes grants deliverance and prosperity in spite of apostasy, according to Groen. Since 1789, despite increasing apostasy, "progress and development in material and intellectual fields alike" "has been surprising."<sup>23</sup> Speaking of blessing and judgment on the basis of the nature of God's providence may in that case not be done in terms of the events but in terms of faith in God's Word.

Schaeffer's question of where God has promised us external prosperity was also posed by Groen himself:

Hoping against hope is very good, assuming one has the promises of God, but where is this promise insofar as The Netherlands are concerned? The true basis for not losing courage lies, I think, not in the conviction that this land will be raised to an unprecedented level of splendor, although showing the possibility of that, the agreement of that with the analogy of history, has its uses; no, maintaining courage is, I think, far more firmly based on the belief that if God desires the fall of The Netherlands, His will will be fulfilled in that, too, and that all things work together for good to them who believe.<sup>24</sup>

God's Hand is in history—not only in special, unexpected events, not only where no historico-causal explanation can be given, but in both natural disasters, sickness and health, and in indirect causes, the human will, a change of persons, and the like. And God's Hand is concretely discernible in history, to the extent this is possible in the light of God's Word, in connection with the relation between God and people. For why, asks Groen van Prinsterer correctly, should people not, in reflecting on the history of nations, do what everyone who believes in providence does in reflecting on his own personal vicissitudes? In the clearest signs of God's Hand people sometimes see only the working of natural and accidental causes or attribute them to fate, if they assume

CORRIGENDA

On page 53, note 129 should begin: Groen to C. J. van Assen

On page 97, the paragraph following the reference to note 26 should read in its entirety:

Can that pass muster, Leih asks. "Can we show God's activities in history? In the sense of naming God as primary cause of a particular event?"<sup>27</sup>

either that God does not command the seasons and storms or that He does so without taking people into consideration. Thus Groen could say "that it is forever the case that when a folk that has been blessed with the gospel chooses unbelief, the prophecy applies, 'I will bring evil upon this people, even the fruit of their thoughts, because they have not hearkened unto my words, nor to my law.'" And with respect to his own times he said, "In bitter fruits of steady practice the nature and tendency of the Revolution was visible, together with the judgment of God: 'My people would not hearken to my voice. So I gave them up unto their own hearts' lust: and they walked in their own counsels.'"<sup>25</sup>

Groen van Prinsterer is not the only one who has attempted to show God's hand in history. The Reverend P.K. Keizer has done so too, in his *Kerkgeschiedenis*. And Leih has been sharply critical. To mention just one example, Keizer writes in connection with the Eighty Years' War: "Not the church here rose up to take the sword, but God the Lord Himself rose up to deliverance and heard the supplications of His heavily persecuted church."<sup>26</sup> history? In the sense of naming God as primary cause of a particular event?"<sup>27</sup>

I think we can. Surely God is always the primary cause? But even Dr. R. H. Bremmer has objections in his *Er staat geschreven! Er is geschied!* In the first place, there is the use of the little term "rose up" (*opstaan*) in two senses: "You cannot put the uprising in The Netherlands on a line with God's rising up to deliver His people."<sup>28</sup> The Reverend Keizer knew that too, no doubt, but he probably employed the play on words purposely. Bremmer goes on to observe, correctly: "Historically, it is not correct to have God act alone here." This impression is indeed created, but despite his way of formulating the passage, Keizer would not deny the role played by the people. He wants to emphasize that in the first instance it was God who did it. In His time and in His way, he added. It is in any case superfluous for me to defend ds. Keizer, since he has already done that himself in his article "Oratio pro domo" in the February 1977 issue of *Tot vrijheid geroepen*.

Another perennial question involves the role of satan. Surely, his deeds and influence cannot be ascribed to God? No, not that. Then is God's Hand still in it? For the answer we must again consult Holy Scripture . . . Satan could have undertaken nothing against Job if the Lord had not permitted it. But, you will say, this was a special case. It was. Yet it illustrates that the power is in God's hands, not satan's. God is not the doer of evil. God abhors evil. He does not do evil, but it is under His governance. Although we can not comprehend this with our human understanding, it may still be a comfort to us. Not satan but God reigns. It is not the powers driven by satan in this world that determine the course of history. Almighty God is the sovereign Ruler who leads all

in accordance with His plan, working all things together for good to them that believe. For in Jesus Christ this almighty God is our Father, unto whose leading we can entrust ourselves completely, even in a threatening world.

Now then, how is our answer to the question concerning God's Hand in history to be summarized in brief?

1. God is always and everywhere present in history. He reigns and irresistibly guides history towards its final goal, the new heaven and earth, according to the plan of His counsel. Christ is the center.

2. God's Hand is not only in marvelous and striking things like natural disasters, unexpected deliverances and catastrophes but also in the so-called secondary causes—in people's acts and omissions, in ordinary events.

3. It is not given us to fathom God's acts; His ways are above our ways: the hidden things are for the Lord our God. Therefore we must interpret God's acts with the utmost caution.

4. Only in belief is it possible, by the light of God's Word and under the guidance of the Holy Spirit, to discern in the course of events God's acts as they relate to people and nations. In his article "De zin der geschiedenis" Herman Dooyeweerd wrote: "Belief is always connected to a revelation of God's in His works or in the nature of the creation, a revelation that is explained in its true meaning only through the Word-revelation. Apostate belief, in contrast, interprets God's revelation in the nature of the creation according to its own apostate fantasy."<sup>29</sup>

Christ has called us to watch the signs of the times: "When [the branch of the fig tree] is yet tender, and putteth forth leaves, ye know that summer is nigh. So likewise ye, when ye shall see all these things, know that [the coming of the Son of man] is near . . . But of that day and hour knoweth no man." "Watch therefore." For "Behold, I come quickly." Then the history of this world is at an end—for "Behold, I make all things new."<sup>30</sup>

### Notes

1. [The Dutch version of the present essay, originally a lecture presented by Miss Van Essen at the "Gereformeerde Studieclub" in Rijswijk, South Holland, was published without annotation as "Gods Hand in de geschiedenis" in *Bijbel en Wetenschap* 9/66 (March 1984) 14-21. An anonymous popular translation of some version of the manuscript appeared, with Miss Van Essen's tacit authorization but without her scholarly approval, in *Christian Renewal* (10 January 1983) 4-5, 14. Miss Van Essen corrected and approved the present translation and provided the information for the notes which follow, except for material in brackets, which was supplied by the present translator.]
2. Mr. G. Groen van Prinsterer, *Proeve over de middelen waardoor de*

- waarheid wordt gekend en gestaafd* (Essay on the means by which the truth is known and established; 2nd ed. Amsterdam: Höveker, 1858, hereafter referred to as *Proeve*) 59; [quoted also in J.L. Van Essen, "Guillaume Groen van Prinsterer and His Conception of History," p. 25 above].
3. Hendrik George Leih, *Gods Hand in de geschiedenis?* (God's Hand in history? Kampen: J.H. Kok, 1977; 101 pages) 44. Leih teaches history at the Gereformeerde Gymnasium in Kampen.
  4. Ibid.
  5. Ibid., 50.
  6. Ibid., 47.
  7. Ibid.
  8. Gerrit Cornelis Berkouwer, *De Voorzienigheid Gods* (Kampen: J.H. Kok, 1950), pp. 194-95, as quoted in Leih, op. cit., pp. 49-50. [Cf. Lewis B. Smedes, tr., G.C. Berkouwer, *The Providence of God*, Grand Rapids: 2nd printing 1961; 280 pages.]
  9. Klaas Johan Popma, *Evangelie en geschiedenis* (Gospel and history; Amsterdam: Buiten & Schipperheijn, 1972) 278-79, 284.
  10. Gerard Goossens (1903-1983), was a teacher of political economy in Semarang, Java, Indonesia, before his repatriation to The Netherlands in 1958.
  11. As quoted in J.C. Breen, "Gereformeerde populaire historiographie in de 17de en 18de eeuw," in *Christendom en Historie: Lustrumbundel uitgegeven vanwege Het Gezelschap van Christelijke Historici in Nederland* (Amsterdam, 1925) 213-42, p. 222.
  12. Ibid., 232.
  13. Leih, *Gods Hand in de geschiedenis?* 46.
  14. Ibid.
  15. Ibid., 47.
  16. Ibid.
  17. Mr. G. Groen van Prinsterer, *Handboek der geschiedenis van het vaderland* (8th ed., 2 vols., Baarn: Koning, 1928; hereafter referred to as *Handboek*), vol. 1, 172-73.
  18. [P. 34 above.]
  19. Willem van't Spijker, "Het Koninkrijk van God en de Geschiedenis" (The Kingdom of God and History), *Radix*, July 1981. Prof. dr. W. van't Spijker, who was born in 1926, teaches Church History and Church Law at the Theologische Hogeschool of the Christelijke Gereformeerde Kerken in Nederland at Apeldoorn. *Radix* is a paper of the Vrijgemaakt community.
  20. *Handboek* xii; [cf. p. 33 above].
  21. J. Schaeffer, "De leiding van God in de geschiedenis" (God's leading in history), *Radix*, April 1980. J. Schaeffer teaches history at the Gereformeerde Scholengemeenschap in Rotterdam.
  22. [P. 36 above.]
  23. [P. 36-37 above.]
  24. Groen to Koenen, 29 June 1832, *RGP* 58.579; [p. 37 above; cf. Rom. 8:28].
  25. *Handboek* 672; [p. 35 above; cf. Jer. 6:19].
  26. Pieter Koop Keizer, *Kerkgeschiedenis: Leerboek voor het middelbaar en voorbereidend hoger onderwijs* (Church history: Textbook for secondary

- and college preparatory education; 2 vols. Groningen, 1971) vol. 2, 52.
27. Leih, *Gods Hand in de geschiedenis?*, 49.
  28. Rolf Hendrik Bremmer, *Er staat geschreven! Er is geschied! Introductie tot het leven en werk van Groen van Prinsterer als getuigend historicus* (It is written! It has come to pass! Introduction to the life and work of Groen van Prinsterer as confessing historian; Apeldoorn (P.O. Box 642): Willem de Zwijgerstichting, 1981; 71 pages) 67-68. Bremmer is a church historian and pastor of the Gereformeerde Kerken Vrijgemaakt (Article 31) in Enschede.
  29. Herman Dooyeweerd, "De zin der geschiedenis" (The meaning of history), in J.D. Bierens de Haan, ed., *De zin der geschiedenis* (Assen, 1942) 17-27, p. 26.
  30. Matthew 24, II Timothy 3 [and Revelation 21 and 22].

# “A Christian Heroism” Elements of the Style of Guillaume Groen van Prinsterer

Herbert Donald Morton

**T**he style is the man and the man his style. One who gains the acquaintance of Groen van Prinsterer's thoughts is soon scarcely able to distinguish them from the form in which they are cast. We honor Groen van Prinsterer for his *prophetic* word. Also for his prophetic word? Renowned for his scholarly accomplishments and Christian witness, he must, indeed, be esteemed as highly for his literary style. Groen's prose is lean, strong, rich in imagery and allusion, and surprising in its combinations. It elicits response. It is aesthetically satisfying, like lush summer gardens under the sun, like late summer gardens heavy with ripe fruits and wild vines that have overgrown the gardener's classical, ordered intentions.

I have recently had occasion to sojourn for some while on the vast estates of Groen's style, as a visiting translator, and I would like to comment upon some of the technical appointments I have observed there which contribute to a general impression of grace and charm.

If I were asked to describe the man himself in a word first, I should have to say that Groen van Prinsterer was a fighter. I do not mean by that that he was quarrelsome, brawling, contentious. Far from it. He was a mender of quarrels that could be mended, a maker and lover of peace. Groen van Prinsterer was a gentleman of that nineteenth-century, aristocratic school in which morality mattered and manners were informed, if perhaps distantly, by the medieval code of Christian knightly conduct, of self-sacrificial combat for the good and higher cause. He desired peace for all—and for half a century wielded fine weapons, which he gained from classical and biblical literature and from law and history, with the distinction of a samurai.



Two letters, both of July 18, 1837, both written in French, reveal something of the man. The first, appropriately, was addressed by Groen to the young Queen Victoria. In it he politely presented Her Majesty the continuation of a work which, he noted, her predecessor had deigned to accept, his second volume of the archives of the house of Orange.<sup>1</sup> The second letter of July 18 was written to Groen, by the French-speaking pastor of the Walloon Church in Breda, to thank him for the *Maatregelen*, his pamphlet defense of the Seceders of 1834, hapless believers who were then being prosecuted at law and even having troops quartered on them. "Not only have you written a beautiful book, a noble defense of the oppressed," wrote the pastor, "but you have done a good deed and displayed *un h ero isme chr etien*, fearing God more than man and seeking His glory more than your own."<sup>2</sup>

If we would fully appreciate and enjoy the man's style, we must step into his world. For times have changed! The circles in which "Mr. G. Groen van Prinsterer" moved and served belong to Anthony Trollope's novels of the Pallisers. Indeed, had Groen become a prime minister of The Netherlands, as it seemed for a while in the 1850's he might, and had Plantagenet, the Duke of Omnium, been more substantial than a character from fiction, they could have met and liked one another. Both had large and simple hearts, an instinctive grasp of the great issues, and a temperamental abhorrence of unnecessary pomp. Truth, compassion, and courage are universal values which transcend any age. Are such values continuities that can usher us from our times into Groen's world? We are drawn irresistibly to attempt the step.

Having briefly made the acquaintance of the man, we may profitably examine technically some elements of his style.

To begin with a small but interesting point, one encounters in Groen's sentence structures some *patterns* which seem rather quaint and which are probably of *classical*, that is of Latin, provenance. Rather than say that "Adam delved and Eve spanned" (to take a familiar Puritan ditty), Groen would very likely have said, while meaning precisely the same thing, "Adam and Eve delved and spanned/Who was then the gentleman?" Here is a good example: "It is the theory and practice of unbelief that shaped the Philosophy and Revolution of the eighteenth century" (*VIII & IX* 1-2).<sup>3</sup> With Groen, it will be understood that if Jan and Griet milked cows and goats, Jan milked cows and Griet milked goats!

Among the heaviest weapons in Groen's arsenal is one which every school child is severely warned never to touch at all, *the sentence fragment*. Groen casts one after another at times, and as he does so, his words gather terrific force and lose no clarity. In the example which

follows, Groen exposes the most fundamental flaw in the heavenly city of the eighteenth-century philosophers, their failure to solve the problem of evil:

Freedom of thought, but also of conduct. Supremacy of the intellect, but also of the will. Reason uncorrupted, but also the heart. Man, of himself good; but then—whence evil? Man, of himself, disposed to good works and deeds of love; but then—whence a society disturbed and consumed by a thousand swords of human passions? (*VIII & IX* 40).

A whole paragraph. Utter devastation. No sentence.

Such sentence fragments occur in Groen's unpublished notes and manuscripts: "Hints. Thoughts. Not to convince you right away, more for your further reflection. To show the weight I attach to your objections" (*VIII & IX* App. A, 76). Nor is this surprising, since every writer will have his own shorthand. Their appearance in this form in his working papers does suggest, however, that fragments in Groen's finished work will sometimes be more the result of the press of circumstances than of stylistic calculations.

Fragments may grow into exclamations to signal infectious excitement: "The eighteenth century lies before us for judgment . . . What a subject! How momentous! How difficult! And how liable to divergent evaluations! I shall censure what is for many, even today, an age to admire" (*VIII & IX* 5-6). The comparison with Sir Winston Churchill's utterance is irresistible: "Some chicken! Some neck!"

The most flexible instrument in Groen's panoply is the *rhetorical question*.

He uses it like a halberd, singly, to pull down a passing horseman from behind: "Do not infer that I would thus teach some sort of fatalism. Or was Newton a fatalist when he asserted that by the law of gravity the apple *has* to fall to the ground once it is detached from its stem?" (*VIII & IX* 2).

He uses it like a double-headed battle axe, in couplets, to chop an opponent down and finish him off: "How can any truth remain unasailed? Does not the highest truth, which is from God, remain fixed forever as the foundation of all truths religious and moral?" (*VIII & IX* 26).

He uses it like a volley of arrows from a single bow, in series, to break up hostile ranks: ". . . should we then have any doubt that with respect to this terrain, too, the enmity between the seed of the woman and the seed of the devil is inevitable? Is tolerance toward the living God conceivable in a genuinely revolutionary state? Will the Revolution permit the ark of God to stand in all its shattering power before Dagon?" (*VIII & IX* 61).

He interjects the rhetorical question dangerously into declarative statements, forcing the enemy to stir and reveal his position: "For we know, do we not? and we confess, that there can be no Christian life without a living faith in Christ, bound to historical facts—call them points of doctrine or not" (*VIII & IX 22*).

Interrogatory devices are simply magnificent in Groen's hands. They glitter even in his conclusions: "And if I were asked [!] to render my judgment in a word, then I would say that in every respect and on the broadest possible scale the eighteenth century has confirmed, but then in reverse, the promise that all things will be added unto those who seek first the Kingdom of God and His righteousness" (*VIII & IX 13*).

These devices are the marks of an inquiring mind. They are more than that. They are the devices of Socrates. And in *Unbelief and Revolution, Lecture IX*, Groen uses them to exhibit the implications of Rousseau's *Social Contract* like the local poulterer uses meat hooks to hang out Christmas turkeys in row after plucked, orderly row. Groen's interrogation of Rousseau culminates in his scornful reaction to the philosopher's final formula that "whosoever refuses to obey the general will shall be constrained to do so by the whole body. This is no more than to say that he will be forced to be free . . ." To this seminal notion Groen responds mockingly: "Are you recalcitrant, and do they coerce you?—it is only (oh, deny not this act of love!) that through submission to the General Will you might attain to a fuller enjoyment of your freedom" (*VIII & IX 54*). Has Groen got it right? And could such insights have any possible relevance today? Compare Rousseau's formula and Groen's scornful response to the words of Tomás Borge Martínez, the Interior Minister of a Marxist regime in Nicaragua: "Class struggle can be seen either from the point of view of hate or from the point of view of love. State coercion is an act of love."<sup>4</sup> One need not unfairly condemn all that is good and necessary in contemporary revolutionary movements any more than Groen condemned what was beneficial in the eighteenth century in order to join him in asking rhetorically, "Do they coerce you?" Of course they do. They regard coercion as an act of love. And it is that element of totalitarian, idolatrous coercion inherent in the Revolution that we still need to be warned against today, as in Groen's day. Have times really changed? .

Used in combination, the rhetorical question and the fragment are potentially lethal stylistic devices. As a formidable latter-day pugilist and sometime poet might have put it, they allow Groen to "float like a butterfly and sting like a bee." Notice Groen's attack on the Illuminists: "What was the principal thrust of their doctrine? Demolition. Indeed; and not in order to build up again, either" (*VIII & IX 66*). The floating, sparring question is followed by two heavy blows and a flooring flurry of additional accents. These are the rhythms of the classical

master. Here we begin to see a pattern. We can begin to sense Groen's style. And we begin to seek words with which to characterize it: trenchant, incisive, pithy, terse, animated, spare.

The most archaic of Groen's weapons is *the Latin apothegm*, which he looses from time to time like a dart from a heavy crossbow. That contraption, as everyone knows, was superseded by a variety of arms, even by heavy artillery. Groen was among its last masters. By the time death retired him from the field, Latin had become useless even in Groen's world, which was changing fast. Democracy was ascendant, and vintage craftsmanship was increasingly lost on the body politic. No matter. Groen passed on what he could and left more in his papers. If understood, as they assuredly were in the early nineteenth-century world in which he was most at home, Groen's Latin citations give light and clarity, easily and without affectation.

Observe for a moment. "*Naturae vivere convenienter oportet*" (VIII & IX 24). There, at a crucial point in the argument, Groen brings forward the very sum of Stoic wisdom: live in harmony with nature. He does so in order to refute it in its modern revolutionary guise: it is only the wisdom of this world.

And notice, if you will, how he disposes of Montesquieu, whom he regards as having been unattractively inconsistent: "His is a case of *desinit in pisces mulier formosa superne*, 'a bad end of a good beginning'" (VIII & IX 64). More literally, Montesquieu starts out as a lovely lady and then tails off, like any mermaid, into an ugly fish. Sad case, that.

It would be rewarding to examine Groen's *classical and biblical allusions* at length, for his prose is rich in them. I shall mention, however, only one passage here, because it contains both, and even more importantly because it indicates at the same time just how fine and articulate a web our sentence maker can spin:

So if we should now take the system as a whole in its full import for religion and politics and recall that its success is expected to usher in an endless future of bliss for mankind, and then set it opposite the inexorable Word of Revelation (of which the Revolution might well say, as Demosthenes did of Phocion, 'This is the axe that cuts down all my discourses'), — should we then have any doubt that with respect to this terrain, too, the enmity between the seed of the woman and the seed of the devil is inevitable? (VIII & IX 61).

In this single sentence we have a veritable formal garden of elegantly groomed and ordered prose, sloping gently away from the veranda, set off by Greek statuary in the middle distance, and rising at last in a fine fountain at the lower end. Let all who visit enjoy it to the full,

sybaritically. It is Groen at his intense and complicated best; and while his enlightened father would perhaps have found the substance slightly subversive, he would still have taken pleasure in the form.

I shall mention one other element of Groen's style. It is one which I find very playful and attractive in him but which some may occasionally find exasperating. I have dubbed it *the quest for the better metaphor*, and I mean by that Groen's persistent, sometimes puckish predilection for improving and correcting figures of speech, whether his own or someone else's. It is just as well that no one ever made him aware of this slight distemper, for he might then have remedied his ways to avoid giving offense, and we should have been that much the poorer for his modesty's sake. It would doubtless have pained him to have done so, but had he thought good manners required it, he would have drowned picturesque speech in a sea of equanimity.

Here, then, we have flat contradiction. Guizot looked at the eighteenth century and saw "a flight of the human spirit . . . very beautiful, very good, very useful." Groen saw ("if the image is not too trivial," he said) "a reckless plunge from an upper storey, ventured for a fatal reliance on artificial wings" (*VIII & IX 8*).

Here we have a certain tutorial condescension, a certain miffed spite: "Men celebrate the advance of 'enlightenment'. Unjustly so! There were fire works and torch lights in abundance. But sunlight was lacking. And without the light of the sun no human wisdom can make the field fruitful" (*VIII & IX 9*). The point is well taken, but the manner in which it is made borders on bickering about words.

Here we have too, at times, a colorful kaleidoscope of carelessly altering images, but it doesn't matter too much the point has to be made let's get on with it Robespierre: "They were leaders who themselves were led, driven by the surging masses behind them" (*VIII & IX 14*). (Perhaps I have exaggerated, but such a precipitate alteration of metaphors deserves to be harried even in Groen.)

Here we have the literature of Christian reflection, the thinker with skull in hand, the scholarly mind in pursuit of understanding. Notice the following, important passage. Of matters which profoundly concerned him, of "*justice, liberty, toleration, humanity and morality*," Groen wrote: "Plants that flourished on the banks of the Gospel stream could only wither when transplanted to a dry and thirsty land. But no, even in this metaphor there is faintness and inaccuracy. In the poisonous fields of atheism the plants degenerated into harmful growths whose brilliant colors and sweet fragrances concealed deadly toxins" (*VIII & IX 11*). We are allowed to see the metaphor develop at the quill's tip, so that we will know the truth and avoid the deadly essence, or seek its antidote. The sword's point is at our breast. The master,

witnessing, has penetrated our defenses again and touched us with the Gospel again. *Touché*.

Even at its worst, Groen's fencing wordplay/swordplay is no more obscure or misleading than is some of the manipulation of statistics that one encounters in the social sciences today. And it is infinitely more charming. In any case, Groen was also not innocent of the possible uses of quantification in polemics—witness his citation in *Vrijheid, Gelijkheid, en Broederschap* of the diminished number of Dutch vessels passing through the Danish Sound into the Baltic in the early 1780's, during the revolutionary "hiatus" in the nation's history.<sup>5</sup>

Groen's style did not escape uncensored in his own time. The *Nederlandsche Spectator* carried a cartoon in 1866 in which a demure Catholic maiden is portrayed spurning the advances of a certain Protestant gentleman with the words, "Your ingenious pen has at its disposal for all circumstances adroit phrases with artful reservations; but never a round, open, unambiguous word." Such an attack may say more, however, about Catholic anxieties at the time than it does about Groen's style, for his positions on important public issues were usually plain enough.

Likewise, when Dr. H.J.A.M. Schaepman writes, as he did in *Onze Wachter* in 1876, "In one respect one perhaps has the right to call Groen Thorbecke's inferior. His hatred of the Catholic Church, of the Romanists in the land, would probably have been stronger in him than his sense of justice,"<sup>6</sup> then, like Alice in Wonderland, one can only cry, "Nonsense!" And in all fairness, either the good Catholic doctor did not know his man, or he sadly failed to distinguish impassioned rejection of a position from personal disesteem for those upholding it. Meanness, the low blow, the "would probably," the *ad hominem* attack, are not elements of Groen's style.

In his lifetime Groen van Prinsterer was in fact widely regarded as a master of the Dutch language. For example, in a formal address on the subject entitled "Redevoering over Mr. G. Groen van Prinsterer als Nederlandsch Prozaschrijver" that was presented to the *Maatschappij voor Letterkunde* in Leiden and reported, in brief, in the *Leydsche Courant* of 18 April 1859, H.J. Koenen compared Groen's Dutch prose style to the styles of J.R. Thorbecke, J.H. van der Palm, and P.C. Hooft. "Now it is your turn to tell me," he wrote to Groen upon sending him a copy of the handwritten manuscript for critical appraisal, "if I have been a faithful interpreter of your rhetoric; or if you would prefer, if I have understood the beating of your heart and the taste of your aesthetic feelings."<sup>7</sup> Koenen knew that the style was the man and the man his passionate, prophetic style.

Having returned from an examination of some technical elements of his style to the whole man, I should like to conclude with some general observations concerning Groen's *tone* and *polish*. His outlook and vision are reflected in both, like the morning sun in the upper windows of his great home on the Korte Vijverberg in The Hague.

Was Groen too much the fighter to have attempted a final polishing, a last, delicate perfecting of certain passages? Anyway, he lacked the time. The short, choppy assault, the pithy statement, the ironic nuance were his trademarks, even if they often occurred within a matrix of compound-complex sentences and interrogative devices. Groen's native gifts, his early training in the classics, his scarcely controlled passion, his inexorable logic and, above all, his high sense of calling to fight the good fight of faith, impart to his prose a brilliance which no translation can hope to equal.

As for tone, it is worthwhile to note what Groen once praised in the pages of his friend, Johan Adam Wormser, Sr. (1807-1862), whose personal correspondence with him he published before his own death: "They sparkle here and there, whenever Wormser alludes to unbelief, with irony, with that smile of indignation which, in a man of his temperament, is one of the unmistakable hallmarks of unshakable faith and holiness of purpose."<sup>8</sup> Groen, too, had a renowned (notorious, one would say, if it were levelled against himself) sense of humor, a gift for irony and even satire. Indeed, he enjoyed citing one witness against another while disagreeing with both! One can sit through an evening laughing heartily at the way he uses one adversary to defeat another. Both his telegraphing of blows and his timing are in the best comic tradition. Quite seriously, all the fun of a cream pie fight in the kitchen of an old silent film is to be had in watching Groen handle his own and others' arguments. While everyone else is smashed in the eye, Groen seems to stand blithely erect, eventually to walk out untouched, the quiet victor after a mad scrap.

Groen gains sympathy as the apparent underdog.

As a confessor, Groen planted himself in the arena. No mere observer, he was involved, and he was vulnerable. One need therefore never fear that his humor is too cutting, too devastating. Groen was a compassionate man. While sympathetic towards his opponents, he was often derisory of their arms.

Groen's humor is in the nature of a challenge flung: "Joust, if you dare!" he seems to say. Or rather, it is in the nature of a challenge accepted: "You said you would joust! You rushed to the assault! May I not laugh now that your horse has thrown you before you reached me? Here, let me pick you up—the Gospel is a better sort of horse, and armor too."

Mr. G. Groen van Prinsterer was an attorney, a student of international affairs and of constitutional law. His Christian witness was made mainly on the terrains of history and politics. It should therefore not be surprising that he pressed so vigorously the destruction of the contrary case or that he appealed to the image of the sword, which was the traditional symbol of power wielded in behalf of justice.

Groen's humor is that of the Christian who has heard the laughter of the Lord: "He that sitteth in the heavens shall laugh: the Lord shall have them in derision" (Psalm 2:4). Groen's compassion is that of one who knows that the Lord has "no pleasure in the death of him that dieth" (Ezekiel 18:32). Groen's cause was hard pressed ("The Sea of Faith/Was once, too, at the full . . ."), and throughout his life his isolation increased. Here, then, are the keys to some of the subtler aspects of his tone and style. And there is another key. Like the Church in all the ages, Groen awaited the final triumph.

#### Notes

1. RGP 114.200.
2. Louis Gabriël James (1795-1867) to Groen, RGP 114.201.
3. References in parentheses are to the English translation of *Unbelief and Revolution*.
4. Reported in *Time*, 16 April 1984, p. 41.
5. The Hague: Roering, 1859; H.J. Gerritsen, 1871 ed., p. 2: "in 1780 . . . 2,058, in 1781 only 11."
6. See H[ermanus] J[ohannes] A[loysius] M[aria] Schaepman, "Mr. G. Groen van Prinsterer," *Onze Wachter*, 1876, vol. 2, 65-74. Schaepman means (and perhaps rightly so) that Groen would probably not have consented to Catholic emancipation if he rather than Thorbecke had been premier in 1853.
7. See H.J. Koenen to Groen, 18 April 1859, RGP 90.352.
8. G. Groen van Prinsterer. Preface to *De kinderdoop, beschouwd met betrekking tot het bijzondere, kerkelijke- en maatschappelijke leven* (Infant baptism, viewed in relation to private, church, and societal life), by J.A. Wormser. Amsterdam: Höveker, 2nd printing 1864; xvi, 134 pages.



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1. The first part of the document discusses the importance of maintaining accurate records of all transactions and activities. It emphasizes that proper record-keeping is essential for transparency and accountability, particularly in the context of public administration and government operations. The text notes that without reliable records, it becomes difficult to track the flow of funds, identify inefficiencies, and ensure that resources are being used as intended.

2. The second part of the document addresses the challenges associated with data collection and analysis. It highlights that while modern technology offers powerful tools for gathering and processing information, the quality and consistency of the data are often problematic. Incomplete records, outdated information, and inconsistent reporting standards can all lead to misleading conclusions and poor decision-making. The document suggests that investing in training and infrastructure to improve data management practices is a critical step towards more effective governance.

3. The third part of the document focuses on the role of internal controls and audits in ensuring the integrity of the financial system. It argues that a robust system of internal controls is necessary to prevent fraud, detect errors, and ensure compliance with applicable laws and regulations. Regular audits, both internal and external, are presented as a key mechanism for providing independent verification of the financial statements and the underlying transactions. The text also discusses the importance of a strong audit culture, where individuals are encouraged to report concerns and hold each other accountable for their actions.

4. The fourth part of the document explores the impact of external factors on the financial performance of an organization. It notes that economic conditions, market fluctuations, and changes in government policy can all have significant effects on revenue and expenses. The document suggests that organizations should adopt a proactive approach to risk management, identifying potential external risks and developing strategies to mitigate their impact. This may involve diversifying revenue sources, improving operational efficiency, and staying informed about relevant regulatory changes.

5. The fifth and final part of the document provides a summary of the key findings and recommendations. It reiterates the importance of accurate record-keeping, effective data management, strong internal controls, and proactive risk management. The document concludes by stating that these measures are essential for ensuring the long-term sustainability and success of any organization, particularly in the public sector where the stakes are high and the public's trust is paramount.

