

# Experiential Protestantism and Emotional Communities

## A Case-Study of an Eighteenth-Century Ego-Document<sup>1</sup>

113

FRED VAN LIEBURG

The new history of emotions and the modern history of religion share the important question of the interconnection of mind and body in building and experiencing world views. This article offers a micro-analysis of the complex pattern of cognitions, feelings and practices in a specific context of Protestant culture in the Dutch town of Willemstad in the middle of the eighteenth century. A detailed account of what happened among a group of pious men and women during a single week in 1757 enables us to reveal the interplay of Biblical examples, theological notions, use of language, social interactions and intensive communication in an outburst of spiritual and bodily emotions in a private community within the public order of the confessional state. The case is placed against the background of religious 'regime change' that allowed people to express their individual and inner faith in and outside the official church or civil organisations.

*Bevindelijk protestantisme en emotionele gemeenschappen. Een case-study van een achttiende-eeuws egodocument*

De nieuwe emotiegeschiedenis en de moderne religiegeschiedenis delen de belangrijke vraag naar de verbinding tussen geest en lichaam in de vorming en ervaring van wereldbeelden. Dit artikel biedt een micro-analyse van het ingewikkelde patroon van cognities, gevoelens en praktijken in een specifieke context van protestantse cultuur in Willemstad in het midden van de achttiende eeuw. Een gedetailleerd verslag van gebeurtenissen in een groep van vrome mannen en vrouwen in een enkele week in 1757 maakt de onthulling mogelijk van het samenspel tussen bijbelse voorbeelden, theologische noties, taalgebruik, sociale interacties en intensieve communicatie in een uitbarsting van spirituele en lichamelijke emoties in een private gemeenschap binnen de publieke orde

van de confessionele staat. De casus wordt geplaatst tegen de achtergrond van een religieuze regimewisseling die mensen ruimte gaf om binnen en buiten de officiële kerk of burgerlijke organisaties uitdrukking te geven aan hun individuele en innerlijke geloofsbeleving.

The rise of ‘emotional history’ as a new branch of cultural history without doubt is one of the most interesting challenges for the study of history of religion. If religion may be viewed as a configuration of cognitions, performances and emotions, or in other words a conglomerate of ideas, practices and feelings, then the emotional dimension of religious history has received less attention than the dimensions of theology and liturgy or those of doctrines and rituals. Certainly, there has been a general paradigm shift from ‘histoire de l’église’ to ‘histoire religieuse’, pointing to traditionally neglected aspects of ecclesiastical and religious cultures such as popular beliefs and practices, every-day piety and other forms of ‘lived religion’. However, the more theoretically based and anthropologically oriented ‘emotional turn’ is a pressing invitation to the newer historiography to refine its ‘cultural turn’ with respect to specific bodily functions of the *homo religiosus*.

Several leading scholars in the field of emotional history have established the link with religious traditions by studying historical cases of Protestantism, the wing of Christianity that is usually considered to be somewhat blind or immune to the believers’ emotions, senses and bodily experiences. Besides a broad investigation by Susan Karant-Nunn of the German Reformation (encompassing Lutheranism, Calvinism and revised Catholicism) and Monique Scheer studied such a non-confessional movement as Methodism, the latter emphasising the corporeality of emotions.<sup>2</sup> Similarly, John Exalto and Herman Roodenburg explored the emotional body language of Calvinist preachers and believers in the early modern Netherlands.<sup>3</sup> All these contributions suggest numerous possibilities for further research. Other

1 The author thanks the editors of *BMGN - Low Countries Historical Review*, the guest editors and the anonymous reviewers for their remarks on the first version of this paper.

2 Susan Karant-Nunn, *The Reformation of Feeling: Shaping the Religious Emotions in Early Modern Germany* (New York 2010). Monique Scheer, ‘Feeling Faith: The Cultural Practice of Religious Emotions in Nineteenth-Century German Methodism’, in: Monique Scheer et al. (eds.), *Out of the Tower: Essays on Culture and Everyday Life* (Tubingen 2013) 217-247.

3 See most explicitly John Exalto, ‘Gekerm, gekrijt, geweest. Emotie en lichaamstaal in het Nederlandse piëtisme’, *Documentatieblad Nadere Reformatie* 27 (2003) 50-79. Cf. Herman Roodenburg, ‘Tranen op het preekgestoelte. De achttiende-eeuwse kanselwelsprekendheid tussen toneel en authenticiteit’, *De Achttiende Eeuw* 41 (2009) 15-32; idem, ‘From Embodying the Rules to Embodying Belief: On Eighteenth-Century Pulpit Delivery in England, Germany and the Netherlands’, in: J. van Eijnatten (ed.), *Preaching, Sermon and Cultural Change in the Long Eighteenth Century* (Leiden 2009) 313-342.

promising subjects are the eighteenth- and nineteenth-century religious revivals known among historians as the First (1710s-1740s) and the Second (1820s-1850s) Great Awakening and taking place both in the North American colonies and in Europe's confessional mother churches. In this context, Dutch Calvinism had its own 'Great Awakening', known as the 'Nijkerkse beroeringen' between 1749 and 1755.<sup>4</sup>

In the following pages an aftermath of this revival will be explored in detail. Starting at a micro-level, I will offer a discussion of a handwritten text belonging to the genre of ego-documents and reflecting that tradition of Protestant religion that is usually described as Pietism.<sup>5</sup> This single source meets some interesting conditions. Firstly, it originates directly from a social community of pious individuals in the middle of the eighteenth century. Secondly, it deals explicitly with an 'imagined community' in the sense of a supernatural entity, understood as the *communio sanctorum* in the Christian world-view. Finally, to speak with Barbara Rosenwein, it reports on a specific 'emotional community', revealing a coherent system of religious feelings and expressions or a typical set of pious 'emotional styles'.<sup>6</sup> The text, written by an anonymous but engaged observer present on the spot, enables an in-depth analysis of the emotional practices, including its linguistic practices (the 'language of Canaan') in a special religious environment. My article then, is about the bodily emotions of the 'hotter sort of Protestant', not its cooler or calmer sort.<sup>7</sup>

4 Joke Spaans (ed.), *Een golf van beroering. De omstreden religieuze opwekking in Nederland in het midden van de achttiende eeuw* (Hilversum 2001). Cf. Fred van Lieburg, 'Interpreting the Dutch Great Awakening 1749-1755', *Church History* 77 (2008) 318-336.

5 Rudolf Dekker (ed.), *Egodocuments and History: Autobiographical Writing in Its Social Context since the Middle Ages* (Hilversum 2002). Cf. Fred van Lieburg, *Living for God: Eighteenth-Century Dutch Pietist Autobiography* (Lanham 2006). Pietism originally refers to an eighteenth-century German Lutheran reform movement. As a historiographical construction, it was widened to 'forerunning' seventeenth-century pious, puritan and mystic traditions in several European confessional states. See for a critical review of

the construction of Dutch Reformed Pietism, Fred van Lieburg, 'Wege der niederländischen Pietismusforschung. Traditionsaneignung, Identitätspolitik und Erinnerungskultur', *Pietismus und Neuzeit* 37 (2011) 211-253.

6 Barbara Rosenwein, 'Problems and Methods in the History of Emotions', *Passions in Context: Journal of the History and Philosophy of the Emotions* 1:1 (2010) 11 (online at <http://www.passionsincontext.de>).

7 Cf. Martin van Gelderen, "'Hot Protestantism". Die Rhetorik und politische Sprache der englischen und niederländischen Calvinisten', in: Ansgar Reiss and Sabine Witt (eds.), *Calvinismus. Die Reformierten in Deutschland und Europa* (Dresden 2009) 189-195.

### An ego-document in time of revival

The manuscript in question was published in 1968 in a Reformed students' almanac; the original's whereabouts are not known at the moment.<sup>8</sup> We have only a few pages totalling less than 1,750 words that contain the observer's daily notes written between 27 and 31 January 1757. Together with his wife and daughter he offered hospitality to various pious people from the same town. Elsewhere in the town religious gatherings were held in which an old lay preacher, called Father Van Noord, addressed the young and the old, the pious and the not so pious. On the basis of genealogical and church-historical indications we could establish that it all took place in Willemstad in the province of Noord-Brabant, a small fortified town of scarcely 1,500 inhabitants, virtually all of them coming from a Reformed background.

#### Timetable of the ego-document

January 1757	Author's home (circle of friends)	Lay preacher's home (religious meeting or 'exercise')
Thursday 27	Sorrow about departure of friends Evening: visit from friends (song experiences of mother and daughter)	
Friday 28	Morning: continuing sorrow Afternoon: visit of bombardier's wife, telling her experience Visit of Lijsje, telling the experience of Widow De Leeuw	Until 4 pm: exercise Van Noord
Saturday 29	Visit of several pious friends until 7 pm (testimony of Lijsje)	Evening: 'praying hour' Van Noord
Sunday 30		Evening: exercise Van Noord General ecstasy (Pentecostal experience) Night: wife's sleeplessness
Monday 31	Wife's exhaustion Evening: writing the ego-document	

8 *Lustrumalmanak van het corpus studiosorum in Academia Campensi cui nomen est Fides Quaerit Intellectum* 1968 (Kampen 1968) 9-31 (only uneven

pages). In spite of inspection of the archives of the corpus studiosorum, and of many inquiries to Kampen students involved in editing this almanac, I did not succeed to find the original source.

The anonymous diarist turns out to have belonged to the same circle that some years earlier was responsible for the publication of a religious biography that was printed three times within a short period. The subject of this biography was Geertruy Verbroek, a fourteen-year-old girl who had died in Willemstad on 6 February 1754. She was the daughter of the town mayor Carel Verbroek. Her conversion and deathbed experience caused a sensation. Someone wrote it all down and published the text, together with the spiritual narrative of a seventeen-year-old girl that circulated without her knowledge.<sup>9</sup> The booklet makes clear that in 1751 a religious revival began to take hold of Willemstad, a revival that in its turn was part of the ‘Nijkerk’ movement in those years. Until recently, according to the editor of the booklet, Satan had been served in Willemstad ‘with very much diligence and pleasure’, but then various Reformed people began to worship ‘King Jesus’ (the title of ‘King’ being a beloved name of the Lord as the ruler of one’s personal life). During the severe winter of 1754-1755 in particular there was a wave of conversions, not only of older people, but of teenagers and adolescents as well.

The fire of the widespread mid-eighteenth century troubles had already dwindled due to the authorities’ intervention, but it still smouldered in Willemstad. Although the document from 1757 does not contain any reference to these earlier events, it teems with the revivalist piety that characterised a certain circle within the local community. The description of various religious emotions (joy, sadness, love) and the resulting body language (tears, cries, nervous exhaustion), all embedded within a specific social framework, in my opinion turn it into an intriguing text. Let us try to put the contents to good use in designating a number of phenomena which are described here in an authentic way within a coherent context.

### Mythical universe

Sometimes one has to read the end of a text first to understand its origins. In this case the writer allows us to share in his bedroom secrets, after a long weekend full of intense religious experiences that his wife underwent among

9 *Exempel van de vrye genade Gods, bekent gemaekt en ontdekt, in een dogtertje genaamt Geertruyd Verbroek, zeer godzalig overleden binnen Willemstadt den 6 february 1755. Oud zynde 14 jaren en ruim 5 maanden. Door een liefhebber van Zion* (third edition; Dordrecht 1755). Transcription and

explanation in: L.F. Groenendijk and F.A. van Lieburg, *Voor edeler staat geschapen. Levens- en sterfbedbeschrijvingen van gereformeerde kinderen en jeugdigen uit de 17e en 18e eeuw* (Leiden 1991) 145-167.



▲ Example of God's free grace, announced and revealed in a young daughter, named Geertruyd Verbroek, very godly deceased within Willemstad on the 6th February, 1755, aged fourteen years and more than five months. By a lover of Zion. The latest print (Deventer [1755]).  
Special Collections, University of Amsterdam.

their pious friends.<sup>10</sup> On Sunday night, he writes, she lay awake until two o'clock, overwhelmed by 'so much ecstatic love being wrought in her heart', meaning the love of Jesus. The excitement became almost unbearable. 'I will now soon die, my body is being broken into pieces; but what trouble is there, I will go to my sweet King Jesus, to heaven'. This was not a cause for action or panic on her husband's part. 'I said, yes, my child, no difficulty, in this way I shall be glad to miss you; I do not begrudge you this blissful heaven'.

But still she was carried into the inner chamber of Jesus' eternal love in such a way that she cried out: 'O sweet Lord Jesus, my body is at the end of its tether, support me, you know that my weak body needs rest and with so much love from you in my heart I cannot sleep. Take your work from my heart a little, that I may get some rest'. Then quiet and sleep seemed to come, and while dozing off before falling asleep, her last words were: 'I slept but my heart was awake' [Song of Songs 5:2a].

We witness here a triangle of relationships in which the tie between God and the faithful ranks higher than the one between two people, even husband and wife. This tie is so strong that negotiations about the lack of sleep have to take place: the woman prays for a decrease of the spiritual experience of God's love in order to repair the balance with her physical strength. This prayer is spoken in the spirit of the Song of Songs. The love story of the groom and his bride is traditionally interpreted as an allegory of the relationship of Christ and his church.

This scene of a living exchange between heaven and earth calls our attention to the mythical universe within which religious emotions must always be interpreted. In the circles we are now discussing the biblical metaphor of King Jesus and his subjects on earth plays a crucial part, with the devil also playing his part as God's opponent. People are naturally inclined to serve the prince of darkness, but thanks to the enlightenment by the Holy Ghost some are able to change their allegiance. This changes cognitions,

10 Translation of: 'Die Rustdagnacht had mijn vrouw met Jezus als haren heer en koning, onder een levendig inzien van haar zalig voorregt wel tot 2 uren in de nacht op haar bed zoo veel versmeltend liefdewerk aan haar hart, dat zij onder anderen tot mij zeide: Nu zal ik haast sterven, nu wordt mijn ligchaam geheel verbroken; maar wat zwaarigheid, ik ga na mijn lieven koning Jezus, na den hemel toe. Ik zeide, ja mijn kind, wat zwaarigheid, nu zoo wil ik u ook gaarne missen; ik misgun uw deze zaligen hemel

niet. Maar nog wierd zij in het binnenvetrek van Jezus eeuwige liefde zoo ingebragt dat zij uitriep: Och, Heere Jezus, lief, mijn ligchaam is ten einde kragten, ondersteunt mij, gij weet dat mijn zwakke ligchaam rust noodig heeft en met zoveel liefde van U aan mijn hart kan ik niet slapen. Neemt dan U werk wat van mijn hart, opdat ik wat rusten mag. Daarop scheen er stilte en slaap te komen en sluimerende eer zij nog sliep was haar laatste zeggen: Ik sliep maar mijn harte waakte' (*Lustrumalmanak*, 27-29).

behaviours and emotions, but the devil remains active in affecting these. In the sphere of emotional relations between religious people we see how this negative interaction between the empire of the evil one and the domain of the pious takes place by examining the curious passage with which our source begins<sup>11</sup>:

27 January: being a Thursday, all in our family were very sad about the departure and saying farewell to two of our good friends, namely Wilhelmus van Dort from Bergen op Zoom and Gijben van der Plas from Steenberg, so that we felt almost physically ill and had to decide to invite some good company that evening to make us relax a little, as we indeed received a visit from some pious people who cordially spoke of King Jesus; and the Lord was among us, but the enemy also played a not inconsiderable part, for he insinuated to my wife that if she were really converted, then she would have to love Van der Plas as much as she loved Van Dort, and that she did love Van der Plas because he loved God, but did not love him as much as Van Dort; which made her frightfully anguished and distressed.

### **Communio sanctorum and Ordo salutis**

These apparently trivial concerns reflect the intimacy and vulnerability of the *communio sanctorum* insofar this Catholic notion transcends confessional divisions in conceptions of holiness.<sup>12</sup> Calvinists believe that as the faithful are not yet in heaven, they struggle against the devil, the world and their own sinful 'flesh'. In that struggle the mutual contacts in circles of friends and fellow believers have a supportive and constructive function. Distinction on the basis of gender turns out to be of little significance, which does not exclude that the religious experiences were particularly 'gendered' at the emotional level; but it says a lot that the author of our text speaks so candidly about his

11 Translation of: '27 Jan: zijnde donderdag, waren wij alle in ons huisgezin zeer bedroeft over het vertrek en afscheid nemen van twee onzer goede vrienden, zijnde Wilhelmus van Dort van Bergen op Zoom en Gijben van der Plas van Steenberg, zoodat wij als ziek na het ligchaam waren en moesten besluiten om die avond eenig goed gezelschap te verzoeken om van onze banden middelijk wat los te worden, gelijk wij ook eenige vroomen kreegen die hartelijk van Koning Jezus

spraken; en de Heere was in het midden van ons, doch de vijand speelde daar ook niet weinig zijn rol, want hij wierp mijn vrouw in, dat als zij bekeerd was, zij dan zooveel liefde voor Van der Plas, als voor Van Dort moest hebben, en dat zij Van der Plas wel liefhad omdat hij God liefhad, echter niet zoo lief als Van Dort; waaronder zij een doodelijk pak van benaauwtheid en bekommering kreeg' (*Lustrumalmanak*, 9-11).

12 See Jürgen Beyer et al. (eds.), *Confessional Sanctity c. 1500-c. 1800* (Mainz 2003).



own wife's feelings of spiritual love towards two other men. In the daily notes virtually only women appear, who in any case seem to have dominated the pious circle of the author's friends. It might be that in the group surrounding preacher Van Noord men and women were represented more equally. The fact that the lay preacher himself was a man was in accordance with the exclusiveness of male preachers within the church, based on the Pauline command that women be silent. Nonetheless, in the more informal context of the religious meetings or 'exercises' (in historical literature often also called 'conventicles') women were frequently allowed to speak on the basis of the office of all believers.

Among the pious women in Willemstad a concrete social position is mentioned in only one case, that of a bombardier's wife. Two other women are mentioned by name, but counted as members of the lower classes in the general sense of the word.<sup>13</sup> Leentje de Leeuw was 'a poor widow who is sustained by the church's relief system', and 'our old Lijsje' is referred to as someone who was also 'very poor in terms of the world'. Remarkably, Lijsje had a nickname: 'our Lydia the purple seller', referring to the woman from the New Testament who as a recently converted Christian received the apostle Paul and his companions into her home at Philippi. This identification of a poor woman from eighteenth-century Willemstad with a woman of high standing from first-century Macedonia gives expression to the community of the saints across temporal, ethnic and social borders.

The reference to Lydia the purple seller above all has a theological meaning. According to the Acts of the Apostles she was a heathen who paid tribute to the God of Israel but during Paul's preaching her heart was opened up by the Lord. This brings us to the *ordo salutis*, the way in which some of the faithful are directed onto the road leading to eternal salvation. In Reformed theology a great number of models of this order circulated giving a more or less coherent pattern to all sorts of scriptural details (for example the two main concepts of Calvin – justification and sanctification; the three chapters of the Heidelberg Catechism – misery, deliverance and thankfulness).<sup>14</sup> This pattern was adopted, experienced or appropriated in individual lives in numerous varieties, ultimately resulting in some certainty of having a personal share in

13 Translation of: Leentje de Leeuw: 'een arme Wed. die van de diacony bedeed word'; 'ons oude Lijsje (ook zeer arm na de wereld)'; 'oude Lijsje, onze Lydia de purperverkoopster' (*Lustrumalmanak*, 15, 17, 23).

14 Cf. David N.J. Poole, *Stages of Religious Faith in the Classical Reformation Tradition: The Covenant Approach to the Ordo Salutis* (Lewiston, N.Y. [etc.] 1995); Joel R. Beeke, *The Quest for Full Assurance: The Legacy of Calvin and His Successors* (Grand Rapids 1999).

Christ's salvation work.<sup>15</sup> To grasp this we just need to listen to a passage from our Willemstad journalist<sup>16</sup>:

[29 January]. Friday morning we were still very sad about the departure of our friends and my wife continued to be rather distressed. However, just after noontime the bombardier's wife visited my place in a mood of great exhilaration, saying that by the glory of free grace she had to tell us how she had been assured by the Holy Spirit and in an overpowering way that Jesus was her redeemer, her husband, her saviour, her everything. Oh! how she cried out that it was God who had taken regard of her, since otherwise she would have remained lying deeply under the wrath of God; and how she called out with great amazement that Jesus and all his work of salvation was now hers and that she was now headed for glorious salvation and that she had heaven in her soul already, and countless other things.

This quoting of esoteric religious language is crucial for our argument. In these sentences typical terms and concepts from the Pietistic Reformed conversion discourse resonate, such as the glory of free grace, the sealing by the Holy Spirit, and the eternal election of the sinner to the undeserved salvation in Christ. Modern linguistics has shown that the 'language of Canaan', which at first sight seems to be a strange mixture of words and expressions from the Bible, Psalter, Catechism or other religious literature, in fact was a finely-tuned group idiom in which collectively accepted terms correspond to specific moments in a more or less lengthy or dramatic individual conversion process.<sup>17</sup> Emotional utterances also have their own position in this discourse,

15 Fred van Lieburg, 'Reformed Doctrine and Pietist Conversion: The Historical Interplay of Theology, Communication and Experience', in: Jan N. Bremmer, Wout J. van Bekkum and Arie L. Molendijk (eds.), *Paradigms, Poetics and Politics of Conversion* (Leuven 2006) 133-148.

16 Translation of: '29 dito. Vrijdag voormiddag zaten wij nog zeer treurig over het vertrek onzer voorn: vrienden en mijn vrouw bleef nog al in het duistere. Doch even na de middag kwam de bombardiersvrouw met een opgetogen blijdschap aan mijn huis, zeggende dat zij tot roem van vrije genade moest komen vertellen, hoe zij door H. Geest en met kracht verzegeld was, dat Jezus haar lossen, haar goël, haar man, haar heyland, haar eenig al was. O! wat was haar uitroepen groot, dat juist God op haar had nedergezien, daar zij

anders eeuwig in den afgrond onder Gods toorn had moeten blijven leggen; en wat riep zij uit met verbazende verwondering dat nu Jezus met al zijn heilverdienste de hare was en dat het nu zoo met haar na eene zalige heerlijkheid ging, en dat zij den hemel reeds in hare ziel had en ontelbare zaken meer' (*Lustrumalmanak*, 13).

17 C. van de Ketterij, *De weg in woorden. Een systematische beschrijving van piëtistische woordgebruik na 1900* (Assen 1972). See for a survey of international research of Pietist language: Hans-Jürgen Schrader, 'Die Sprache Canaan. Pietistische Sonderterminologie und Spezialsemantik als Auftrag der Forschung', in: Hartmut Lehmann (ed.), *Geschichte des Pietismus IV: Glaubenswelt und Lebenswelten* (Göttingen 2004) 404-427.

such as in this case the ‘great exhilaration’ and the great ‘cries’ after the apparent experience of assurance of faith. This shows to an even greater extent in the testimony of old Lijsje’s, who after the meeting at Van Noord’s came with some of the other participants to our diarist’s house to share her feelings<sup>18</sup>:

[...] and having fallen down on a chair, (she) cried out before the entire company: O, eternal free grace, o eternal miracle. Oh, that that divine merciful eye of Jesus should be cast on me, when I was polluted in my blood in the open field as a loathsome soul in my culpability [Ezekiel 16:5-6], that I had to be cured of my blindness and be converted, after having served the devil for 55 years with so much pleasure and affection. Oh! such great, Oh! such eternal mercy bestowed on one so simple and wretched as I am, did Jesus have to disclose himself so much in his gracious mercy and love, and did that sweet Lord Jesus have to reveal himself to my heart still and so continuously in his rays of love as that blessed sun of justice. Where shall I find words to praise and honour him?

### Believing by singing

Old Lijsje indeed did not find any more words to communicate her exhilaration, but she proposed to sing a song. She immediately suggested a stanza from a collection that must have been generally known and used in that circle, the *Uytspanningen* (or ‘musings’) of the seventeenth-century Reformed preacher-poet Jodocus van Lodenstein. In 1752 the thirteenth edition had been published of his ‘devotional songs’ that were originally from 1677.<sup>19</sup> It is remarkable of course, that this collection was so popular among the Reformed Pietists, because according to the Reformed church order it was only rhymed versions of texts from Holy Scripture, mainly the Old Testament psalms, that were allowed to be sung during services. This can be explained only from the additional value inherent in these free songs about themes from the New

18 Translation of: ‘[...] en daar op een stoel neergevallen zijnde, uitriep in het volle gezelschap: O, eeuwige vrije genade, o eeuwige wonder. O, moest op mij, doe ik vertreden lag in mijn bloed op de vlakke des velds, als eene walgelijke in mijne schulde, moest doe dat godlijk ontfermend oog van Jezus op mij geslagen worden, moest ik van mijn blindheid genezen en bekeerd worden, doe ik 55 jaar met zooveel lust en genegendheid de duivel gediend had. O! wat groote, o! wat eeuwige genade aan zoo een slegte, aan zoo een elendige als ik ben, moest

Jezus zich in zijne ontfermende genade en liefde daar zoo aan ontdekken, en moest die lieve Heere Jezus zich nu nog en zoo gedurig in zijne liefde stralen als die zalige zonne der gerechtigheid aan mijn hart openbaren. Och, waar zal ik woorden vinden om hem te loven en te verheerlijken’ (*Lustrumalmanak*, 17).

19 Jodocus van Lodensteyn, *Uytspanningen, behelzende eenige stichtelyke liederen en andere gedichten* (...) (First edition; Amsterdam 1676; thirteenth edition; Amsterdam 1752).

Testament and the Christian life. The songs explain the Pietist concerns with Jesus' love and the believer's sanctification.

The same applies to the eighteenth-century song collection by Johannes Groenewegen, *De lofzangen Israels* from 1751 (meaning the community of true believers as the spiritual Israel). The author was a minister near Werkendam and must have been known personally to the pious in Willemstad. This applies even more to his brother Jacob Groenewegen, who was a travelling preacher and as such performed in Willemstad as late as 1767.<sup>20</sup> He was the editor of the song collection and provided it with a preface in which he went into detail about the role of singing in the private gatherings of the pious. When exchanging spiritual experiences, he wrote, whether complaints about 'Jesus hiding from us' or feelings of joy about the tangible presence of the Holy Spirit, a song could always be found which expressed these feelings and at the same time provoked new movements of the soul and heart. The part played by these spiritual songs in the private religious world of believers made Groenewegen's song collection a national bestseller.<sup>21</sup> At the same time, the Psalms were certainly part of their repertory. The 1566 rhymed version of Petrus Datheen was used for centuries in the Dutch Reformed church. It was only in 1755 that the States-General ordered a new hymnal.

Our ego-document clearly demonstrates the way singing served to express emotions. Old Lijsje broke into a song of Lodenstein, a merry song, 'Rejoice, rejoice for forever etc.'<sup>22</sup> The pious folk in our author's living room sang along with great enthusiasm. 'Some of them stayed behind with me and together we sang praising the Lord with a mighty union of hearts until seven o'clock in the evening'.<sup>23</sup> The singing was probably without musical accompaniment and served an intermediary function in the spiritual community of God with his children. The author writes that the devil's assault on the woman's soul was somewhat fended off when a Groenewegen song was sung: 'although her heart was not wholly relieved, yet the enemy failed to achieve his aim'.<sup>24</sup> However, his daughter too felt something 'touching her heart' and strengthening her tender faith while singing another song

- 20 Zie F.A. van Lieburg, 'Het gereformeerde conventikelwezen in de classis Dordrecht in de 17e en 18e eeuw', *Holland, regionaal-historisch tijdschrift* 23 (1991) 2-21.
- 21 Johannes Groenewegen, *De lofzangen Israels* waar onder de Heere woont, zynde eenige geestelyke liederen (First edition; Gorinchem 1751; second edition; Gorinchem 1753; third edition; Gorinchem 1757).
- 22 Translation of: 'Verblijd, verblijd, tot alle tijd etc.' (*Lustrumalmanak*, 13-15).

- 23 Translation of: 'Ik hield er eenige van dat volk bij mij en wij mogten tezamen met veel hartsvereening tot des avonds ten 7 uren den Heere met zingen verheerlijken' (*Lustrumalmanak*, 17-19).
- 24 Translation of: '[...] doch wierd korten tijd daarna onder het zingen van een lied uit Groenewegen fol. 75: weder wel eenigins gered, doch niet volkomen verruymt, echter zoodat de vijand zijn oogmerk niet bereikte' (*Lustrumalmanak*, 11).

by Groenewegen. ‘That made such an impression on her that she dissolved in tears and broke down completely’. She was then restored to her senses by recognising Jesus’ love for her.<sup>25</sup>

### Religious body language

The emotional expressions of faith in exalted language, exclamations and intensive singing together continued imperceptibly into even stronger expressions of a psychosomatic nature. The experiences of God’s love according to body and soul or in nature and grace occurred as a fixed pair, which suggests an underlying theological pattern. Thus for example, it could be biblically based on the Song of Solomon mentioned above, in which the Sulamitian woman feels ‘love-sick’ toward her ‘dearest’. The application of this to Jesus’ love appears in the ego-document in a story of Lijsje, who came to the author’s house to tell that she had found Leentje de Leeuw ‘love-sick for Jesus’.

This poor soul had experienced so much in her heart while seeing all the great privileges that she enjoyed, both in nature as in grace, that she must exclaim it with great sincerity in the presence of several people being with her, with a hearty and involved commitment and release from herself with soul and body to a fully blessed Trinitarian God and whole Lord Jesus.<sup>26</sup>

The climax of this repertoire of emotional experiences of faith was an ecstatic outburst during one of the regular Sunday evening meetings led by Father Van Noord. That evening he dealt with Question and Answer 34 from the Dutch Reformed (Heidelberg) Catechism, where it is said that Jesus ‘has redeemed both our body and soul from sin, not with gold or silver, but with his precious

25 Translation of: ‘In dat gezelschap kreeg mijne dochter ook nog iets aan haar hart onder het zingen van Groenewegens lied fol. 75: en wel onder dat versje: Was die vreugd dan maar bedrog. / Proeft dan nog. / ‘k Wil niet voor den Heere liegen. / Geeft mijne ziele nu nog licht. / En gezicht. / Dat ik mij niet mag bedriegen. Dat kwam met zoveel indruk op haar gemoed, dat zij in tranen mogt wegsmelten en zeer verbroken wierd. Daaronder wierd zij nog met veel licht bij en in haar eerste liefdewerk met Jezus ingeligt en met verkwikking bij gebracht’ (*Lustrumalmanak*, 11).

26 Translation of: ‘Dit arme mensch had zooveel aan haar hart gekregen onder het zien van al de groote voorregten die zij genoot, zoo in de natuur als genade, dat zij het met veel hartelijkheid tot bijzijn van verscheidene menschen die bij haar waren moest uitroepen met een hartelijk en verbinden overgeven en kwijt worden van haar zelve met ziel en ligchaam aan een volzalig drieëenig God en volle Heere Jezus’ (*Lustrumalmanak*, 15).

blood, and has delivered us from all the power of the devil'.<sup>27</sup> The exercise itself was intended to reach an emotional high point as well, which would happen during what was known as the application at the end of the lay sermon on a Bible text or a chapter from the Catechism. Just as in an official sermon, the listeners were called on to check their own hearts and lives against the distinguishing marks of the true faith and true salvation that were offered. The result was a sort of chain reaction of loud response among all those present, both the converted and the unconverted, both children and the elderly.

According to the application, during the presentation of the features of those people who had Jesus as Lord and King, it was apparently a very great day of the Son of People, because it brought a very great measure of tears and weeping among the pious and impious, even in a small boy of 12 years old who had to put his handkerchief in his mouth in order not to cry out how unhappy he was; as also a flood of tears and sighs were heard and seen. And oh, how glorious, beautiful and divine Christ came to express himself to the heart of his folk as their Lord and King. How he himself was held on the beautiful galleries upon the loving heart of his folk [cf. Song of Songs 7:5b]. What an awe-inspiring sight and sound it was. What clamorous crying about seeing their so blessed privilege there was. What a melting away of tears and what a crying aloud there was. To me, such a bad, such a wrong, such a disgusting, such a damnable one – to me, Lord Jesus, you must reveal yourself as my Lord and King so blessedly. Oh! Wonder of free and eternal grace.<sup>28</sup>

27 Heidelberg Catechism Sunday 13, question 34 (Translation of: 'Waarom noemt gij Hem onzen Heere? Antwoord: Omdat Hij ons met lichaam en ziel van al onze zonden, niet met goud of met zilver, maar met Zijn dierbaar bloed gekocht, en van alle heerschappij des duivels verlost heeft, en ons also Zich tot een eigendom maakt').

28 Translation of: 'Wat in de toepassing onder het voorstellen van de kenmerken van dat volk dat Jezus tot hun heer en koning had was, scheen het een zeer grooten dag van den Zone des menschen te zijn, want onder vroom en onvroom ging het tot eene zeer groote hoogte van tranen en geweent, zelfs in een jongetje van 12 jaren oud, die om niet uit te roepen hoe ongelukkig hij was, zijn neusdoekje in den mond moest

steeken, gelijk ook van veele bejaarde onder het onbekeerde volk een vloed van tranen en zuchtinge gehoord en gezien werden. En och wat kwam dien heerlijke schoonen en goddelijke Christus zich aan het hart van zijn volk daar als hun heer en koning uitlaten. Wat liet hij zich binden op de schoone galerijen op het verliefde hart van zijn volk. Wat was het een ontzag verwekkend gezicht en gehoor. Wat was er een overluid roepen over het zien van hun zoo zalig voorregt. Wat was er een wegsmelting van tranen en wat was er een uitroepen. Aan mij zoo een slechte, zoo een verkeerde, zoo een walgelijke, zoo eene verdoemelijke, aan mij Heere Jezus, moest gij u daar aan als mijn Heer en Koning zoo zalig ontdekken. O! wonder van vrije en eeuwige genade' (*Lustrumalmanak*, 19-21).

There was a remarkable dichotomy in this company that caused the outburst of emotions to be understood in two quite different ways. On the one hand we see the unconverted who experienced deeply the absence of Jesus in their lives, among whom there was even a little boy who put his handkerchief into his mouth in order to stop himself from crying out. On the other hand we see the pious who received confirmation of their share in salvation. They evoked a sort of jealousy among the others, who showed that they wanted to belong to the same community of the elected by crying as well.

Oh how many tears there were of love and deep-felt desire from many to be allowed to experience Jesus in their hearts in the same way as others whom they heard and saw!

as our reporter wrote.<sup>29</sup>

The author of the ego-document described these scenes as an eye-witness because on this occasion he was himself present at the gathering in Willemstad. He described his own participation in the event from the viewpoint of a sympathetic but passive observer and as a personal supporter of his wife, who experienced the most violent emotion during the above mentioned collective ecstasy as experience of God's love. During this she lost consciousness, fell into his arms and then remained lying in the arms of an unmarried woman who was also present. She only became conscious again after the meeting was over.

My wife felt so much in her heart that she collapsed out of her chair into my arms, completely overwhelmed by Jesus' love, crying for everyone to hear and with a flood of love-tears: 'Oh! Yes, Lord Jesus, thou art my lord, my king, my redeemer, now I know'. As if love-sick and physically depleted she lay in the arms of a maid until the exercise was over, saying (when she was strong enough to speak again) that due to Jesus' work in her heart she had not heard anything of the final prayer.<sup>30</sup>

29 Translation of: 'O! wat rolden er tranen van liefde en hartelijke begeertens van vele om ook Jezus zoo aan hun hart als andere die zij hoorden en zagen te mogen ondervinden en aan hun gemoed te verklaren' (*Lustrumalmanak*, 25).

30 Translation of: 'Daarvan had mijn vrouw zooveel aan haar hart, dat zij van hare stoel in mijne armen nederzeeg, als geheel overstelpd van Jezus' liefde, uitroepende zoodat het van vele kon gehoord en verstaan worden, onder een

vloed van liefdetranen. O! Ja Heere Jezus, gij zijt mijn heer, mijn koning, mijn goël, nu weet ik het. Blijvende als krank van liefde en naar het ligchaam als buiten haar zelve in de armen van een vrijster leggen, tot na het eindigen van de oefening, betuigende (doe zij weer krachten kreeg om te kunnen spreken) dat zij van het werk met Jezus aan haar hart van het nagebed niets gehoord had' (*Lustrumalmanak*, 21-23).

After the meeting at Van Noord's another informal gathering of some pious friends followed at the author's home. There the events and experiences were discussed until late at night. After the guests had departed, the author remained behind with his wife, who had gone through such a shattering experience that it was too much for her to bear physically. 'She remained very vividly conscious of this work during the whole evening (although not quite to such an extent) which quite broke her physical strength'.<sup>31</sup> They tried to get some sleep but the woman was afraid she would die, upon which her husband said he could accept this as God's will, as was related earlier in this article.

### Pentecostal ecstasy

In the diary account this Sunday evening full of religious experiences is a sort of climax, which might have occasioned the recording of all the events occurring in the first place. Let us have a closer look at the way in which the eyewitness reporter read and explained these emotions. What is clear is that he saw these events as exceptional, speaking of 'marvellous signs of the Lord's auspicious presence among his people'. During the religious gathering, and above all during the application, when many began to cry or call out, events reminded him of the original feast of Pentecost as described in Scripture, when the apostles' preaching in Jerusalem brought some 3,000 people to the faith (Acts 2:1-41).

It appeared to me to be like another Pentecost of the New Testament. The water not only reached the ankles, knees, thighs, shoulders and mouths but it even came higher than the lips, so that people sunk and drowned in the bottomless sea of God's eternal love and mercy.<sup>32</sup>

This water metaphor neglects the fiery tongues that were visible over the apostles' heads during the 'first' Pentecost. The image of drowning in a sea of love is a typical element of the 'language of Canaan'. The author continues the metaphor when he describes those returning home with him as 'spiritually drunk', showing this in their busy talk of 'enjoying Jesus' love in their hearts'.

31 Translation of: 'Dit werk bleef haar (schoon in die hoogte zoo niet) den ganschen avond zeer levendig bij hetgeen hare lichaamskrachten zeer verbrak' (*Lustrumalmanak*, 23).

32 Translation of: 'Het ging zoo dat het mij toescheen te zijn als eene tweede pinksterdag van het N. Testament. Het water kwam niet alleen aan de enkelen, knien, dijen, schouderen en mond, maar zelfs over de lippen, zoodat het een zinken en verdrinken werd in de grondelooze zee van eeuwige liefde en ontferming Gods' (*Lustrumalmanak*, 25).



This exuberant expression of emotions in words conjures up images of the Pentecostal story in the Acts of the Apostles, where some who heard them speak in strange languages mocked the apostles as being ‘full of sweet wine’.

Our reporter however, connects the events in Willemstad to a different text from the New Testament, one in which the apostle Paul would have spoken of ‘a spiritual inebriation’. He undoubtedly refers to a text of Paul (II Corinthians 12:2-4), where the apostle (speaking in the third person) gives an account of a mysterious experience of many years before of which he was uncertain ‘whether it happened within the body or outside the body’. Paul had been lifted up into the ‘third heaven’ and into ‘paradise’ where he ‘heard unspeakable words, which it is not lawful for a man to utter’. This passage was cited just a few years earlier, in 1753, by a Leiden professor to correct the above-mentioned Jacob Groenewegen’s published views on the ‘dialogues of those in heaven’.<sup>33</sup> The sensory dimensions of the *communio sanctorum* in heaven and on earth were clearly being discussed in these circles.<sup>34</sup> The link made to this extraordinary apostolic experience and to the equally extraordinary Pentecostal events underlines the fact that among these pious Reformed in Willemstad the system of theological language and cognition was giving way to a register of mystical emotions, wordless visions and highly expressive body language.

The author himself seems to have been aware of any disruption of the balance between normality and abnormality of acceptable religious experiences. On the day after the turbulent night all his attention was devoted to restoring his wife’s emotional and physical equilibrium. The stress she apparently suffered in gaining individual assurance of salvation and possibly also gaining recognition within the local community of the pious had taken its toll on both husband and wife. After inner and outer peace was restored there came a suitable moment for writing down an eyewitness account of the whole affair:

33 Bernardinus de Moor, *Paulus opgetrokken in den derden hemel, en van den Satan met vuysten geslagen; of twee leer-redenen over 2 Cor. XII.2-4, met een voorbericht aangaande de Samenspraken der hemellingen van Jacob Groenewegen* (Leiden 1753).

34 Cf. on this issue for sixteenth-century Italian Catholicism: Wietse de Boer, ‘A Neapolitan Heaven: The Moral Universe of G.B. Giustiniani’, in: Wietse de Boer and Christine Göttler (eds.), *Religion and the Senses in Early Modern Europe* (Leiden, Boston 2013) 363-391.

[31 January] On Monday morning her soul was very vibrant and replenished but physically she was as weak and exhausted as somebody who has been very ill for a number of days. Therefore she needed some wine and water to feel more energetic and due to weakness she could not get out of bed and sit on a chair before late in the afternoon. All day and the following night she was in a very gentle and satisfied state of mind while her heart was turned towards the Lord. At this moment she has no desire for or delight in anything outside God and Christ, but her only longing is to dedicate soul and body solely to God and Christ, to glorify his freely given grace.<sup>35</sup>

### Private community

The ego-document has given us a unique insight into the religious world of a subculture of pious Protestants in a small town in 1757. Before situating our case within the broader perspective of an emotional history of eighteenth-century Dutch Protestantism, the most remarkable silence in the source must be dealt with. Nowhere in the notes is there any mention of the official church to which the pious belonged. The daily notes describe a long weekend in quite some detail, but the Sunday morning and afternoon, when the official church services would have been held, are a major gap. The local minister or other representatives of the Reformed community are not mentioned either.

Specific local circumstances might well explain this. Minister Nicolaas Zegers served the Willemstad Reformed Church from 1730 until his death in 1776. We have neither reports about his pastoral activities nor about any theological achievements or charismatic gifts displayed by him.<sup>36</sup> He was

35 Translation of: '31 dito. Maandagmorgen was zij na de ziel nogal zeer levendig en verkwikt, maar na het ligchaam zoo zwak en afgemat als een mensch die eenige dagen zwaar ziek geweest was. Waarom zij wat wijn en water moest gebruiken om verkwikt te worden en niet voor in de namiddag wegens zwakheid uit het bed kon komen en op een stoel zitten. Zijnde vervolgens den geheelen dag en volgende nacht in eene zeer zoete bevredigde gestalte des gemoeds en toegekeertheit des harten tot en na den Heere, en vindt voor het tegenwoordige geen lust nog vermaak in iets dat buiten God en Christus is, maar alleen daarin om nu ziel en ligchaam alleen voor God en Christus te gebruiken, tot roem van zijne vrije genade' (*Lustrumalmanak*, 29-31).

36 C.A.I.L. Nispen, 'De Predikanten van de Ned. Herv. Gemeente te Willemstad, een bijdrage tot de geschiedenis van de Hervormde Gemeente te Willemstad', *Willemstad. Een Brilliant in de Gouden Delta* (Willemstad 1978). The consistorial acts of 1730-1765 are practically unusable because of moisture damage of the volume. It appeared after Zegers' demise that church administration (acts, registers of baptism, marriage and church members) had been greatly neglected. An effort of reconstruction succeeded only to a limited extent.

probably a moderate orthodox minister who felt an aversion to the private Pietistic world in which part of his congregation lived. The activities of lay preachers, who because of their own style and message appealed to a lot of people, he might have felt to be competitors, while having his share of criticism from the Pietists. However, this does not mean that the pious took no part in official church life. No doubt the men and women whom we have come to know went to the regular church services and took part in the Lord's Supper. At any time, Geertruy Verbroek's parents had people pray for the sick girl in church.

Nonetheless it seems to me that the evidence of the ego-document warrants our attribution of an independent religious significance of social communities outside the official church congregation – the communities of the family, the circle of friends, and the conventicle. Whereas Roodenburg and Karant-Nunn pointed mainly to confessional, liturgical or homiletic contexts of worship services and sermons, and Dixon and Scheer addressed such free or mixed religious gatherings as the Methodist camp-meetings in the open air, I would stress the emotional potencies of private religious communities gathering in houses or other small-scale spaces. I believe that our Willemstad case-study underlines how important it is to involve such communities in the research agenda, certainly when looking at the eighteenth century.

A central question arising almost naturally from the Willemstad example is how the private religious communities could operate to such an extent separate from the public religious community. In my view, it is the very categories of rationality and emotionality that might explain how believers could belong to both communities while giving their primary loyalty to one of them. In the Dutch confessional state, in which the government together with the privileged Calvinist church took care of public preaching and education, rationality, or in other words a commitment to a certain theology with its confessional, liturgical and moral consequences, was the pillar of the population's religious life. Deviations could be tolerated, as long as they did not undermine the confessional order.<sup>37</sup>

A serious threat to this order was precisely this sensory oriented religiosity in which individual feelings and emotions determined people's participation in society. In theological terms this was usually referred to as 'enthusiasm', which in the Dutch context was especially found in the circle of certain Mennonites who based their specific individual and group lifestyles on the inner enlightenment by the Holy Ghost. However, within the public church such emotion-driven individuals and groups could also emerge.

37 See in general Joris van Eijnatten, *Liberty and Concord in the United Provinces: Religious Toleration and the Public in the Eighteenth-Century Netherlands* (Leiden 2003).



At Nieuwkerk people at worship – perhaps touched by the preacher's earnestness – begin to cry, scream and make a devout clamour; this was something unknown in earlier times and became wide-spread, but of short duration.

Simon Fokke Az., 'Godsdienstige beroerte te Nieuwkerk op de Veluwe', in: *Historische, Geographische Konst- en Reis-Almanach 1782* (Amsterdam 1782), image CLXXXV.

Atlas Van Stolk, Rotterdam.

The established authorities in politics and church, especially the orthodox ministers, therefore warned against such radicalised piety and, if necessary, tried to curb independent manifestations of emotions in church services or conventicles. This quite clearly happened on a national scale during the ‘Great Awakening’ in the middle of the eighteenth century, which involved Reformed believers and Mennonites in particular.

### Contextual public discourse

This micro-analysis of a Dutch local religious community should be linked to a meso-level of cultural history in the second half of the eighteenth century. Presumably the snapshot we were offered of these believers’ thoughts, emotions and body language is representative of a national subculture in a period that emphasised the significance of particular, individual and collective, expressions of emotion to indicate a person’s true or false personal faith. In order to situate the religious emotions described within the broader contemporary context of the public sphere in the Netherlands, we will shortly look at the genre of the spectatorial magazines, one of the best thermometers of religious sentiments in the age of Enlightenment.<sup>38</sup>

If the diarist in Willemstad was a subscriber to *De Philanthrope or Menschenvriend*, he could have read an imaginative but recognisable account of a meeting of ‘fijnen’ in the issue number 186 in 1760.<sup>39</sup> One Sunday evening the ‘spectator’ went to visit a friend, at whose home the sermon of the day was considered. As he entered, the sad faces of the people assembled gave him a fright, until he realised that this emotional display had to express their godliness. They talked more about ministers than about God’s Word, criticised people still living in their ‘natural state’ and considered each other’s state of faith. Due to the continuous talking and touching the hearts a girl fainted from emotion, for which the Lord was thanked. After an interminable-seeming prayer before drinking tea, they sang or rather screamed for quite a while. The visitor joined the conversation, brought up the new Psalm rhyme being made and discussed predestination with a ‘fijn proponentje’ (a pious theological candidate). He was condemned as an atheist and considered as not worthy of a farewell, although all the others kissed each other rather intimately.

The spectator’s view – and that of ‘right-thinking’ people seeking civilization, sophistication and improvement – was clear. He considered the

38 Dorothee Sturkenboom, *Spectators van hartstocht. Sekse en emotionele cultuur in de achttiende eeuw* (Hilversum 1998) 168-183.

39 *De Philanthrope of Menschenvriend*, Volume IV (Amsterdam 1760) 129-136 (no. 186, 23 April 1760).

religiosity displayed as an example of false piety, steeped in melancholy. True godliness should be attended by joyfulness, for which he referred to Joseph Addison, the English founder of the spectatorial genre in the early eighteenth century:

In one word: the sincere piety cheers and soothes one's soul. It is true that it condemns all rash, irregular and sinful pleasure; but in compensation it bears a continuous calmness, a never stopping gladness, a habit of desire to please anyone, and a satisfaction from which no one can deprive us.<sup>40</sup>

This 'true piety' held the balance between atheism and enthusiasm.

Here we approach the dilemma of eighteenth-century Protestant theology, both in its systematic and practical aspects, with reference to the broad historical conceptions of Pietism and Enlightenment. Both movements searched for the essence of being a good Christian and found a criterion in the quality of emotions as fruits of the root of good faith. According to Pietist thought, sadness and joy were both results of religious experience. According to Enlightenment thought, only joy was a virtue of faith. Rationally speaking, sadness was viewed as a deficiency or an aberration of faith and in the worst case as an indication of hypocrisy and fanaticism.

Parallel to this typology, the popular authors Betje Wolff and Aagje Deken distinguished three sorts of 'fijnen', personified with telling names of the characters in their novels: beside the notorious hypocrites (Broeder Benjamin) and feeble souls (Cornelia Slimpslamp) there were true virtuous godly (Abraham Blankaart and Suzanna Hofland). All of them countered the 'ijskoude stijve godgeleerdheid' (chilly rigid theology) of more or less traditional rationalism.<sup>41</sup> In this way, emotion as opposed to ratio became a manner of distinguishing between false and true piety in the civil Christian discourse, in which ideally ratio rules emotion. The enlightened theologian and politician Ijsbrand van Hamelsveld even linked this hierarchy to the susceptibility of women and children to the devaluation of religion: 'fanaticism originates from feelings, never from intelligence'.

40 Translation of: 'Met een woord; De opregte Godsvrugt vervrolykt en zult de ziel: het is waar dat zy alle ligtvaardigheid, onregeltheit en zondig vermaakt doemt; maar in vergoeding baart zy eene gedurige gerustheit; eene nooit afgebroken blygeestigheid, eene aangewende begeerte om ieder te behagen, en eene vergenoeging, waar van niemant ons kan berooven'. *De Philantropie*, 129, with general

reference to Thomas Addison in *The English Spectator*.

41 Zie P. van der Vliet, *Wolff en Deken's Brieven van Abraham Blankaart. Een bijdrage tot de kennis van de Reformatiorische Verlichting* (Utrecht 1982) 246-264. Cf. Fred van Lieburg, 'Vroomheid kent geen sekse. Piëtistes in de achttiende eeuw', in: Mirjam Cornelis et al. (eds.), *Vrome vrouwen. Betekenissen van geloof voor vrouwen in de geschiedenis* (Hilversum 1996) 109-128.

The less one knows and understands of the essence of religion, the more one is focused on its experience. However, what God had joined together, let no man put asunder. Cool ratio and the warmness of emotions should balance each other. However, women naturally have the limitation of being more sensitive to passions than men. Both a lack and a surplus of passion cause fanaticism. Women with no or with bad experiences of love escape the world in order to find consolation in fanaticism and to weep and sorrow without disturbance.<sup>42</sup>

The question is to what degree these opinions differed from the norms that were held in Protestant culture, preaching and pastoral care a century earlier. Orthodox Reformed theology considered faith as spiritual joy, devaluing emotion and body language, although the seventeenth-century professor Gisbertus Voetius reflected on the ‘grace of tears’ in the context of soteriology.<sup>43</sup> The very practically oriented handbook of dogmatics by Wilhelmus a Brakel from 1700 – typically entitled *Reasonable Religion*, according to Romans 12:1 – deals mainly with church, offices and sacraments, and stresses the importance of knowledge and assurance.<sup>44</sup> Readers had to gather passages about aspects of emotional faith experience from several chapters. During the eighteenth century Brakel’s guidebook became a bestseller and the author was nicknamed the ‘pole star of the *fijnen*’. Pious readers internalised his religious discourse in their emotional practices. This is nicely illustrated by a spectator in 1768 who depicted a ‘godly sister’ as gloomy, sulky and stingy, though frequenting the company of pious people, often going to church and weeping while reading ‘the great Brakel’.<sup>45</sup>

42 *De Welmeenende Raadgever*. Volume I, (Amsterdam 1792) 45. Translation of: ‘Hoe minder je van het wezenlijke van de godsdienst weet en begrijpt, des te meer ben je op de bevinding ervan gericht. Men scheidt echter niet wat God samengevoegd heeft: de koele rede en de warmte van de aandoeningen moeten met elkaar in evenwicht zijn. Echter, vrouwen hebben natuurlijk ‘gebrek’ dat zij gevoeliger zijn voor hartstochten dan mannen. Zowel een tekort als een teveel aan hartstocht veroorzaakt dweperij. Vrouwen zonder of met slechte ervaringen in liefde, ontvlieden de wereld om in dweperij troost te vinden en ongestoord te wenen en droefgeestig te zijn.

43 See his *Exercitia pietatis* (Utrecht 1664) caput v: ‘De praxi resipicentiae, ejusque actibus seu partibus tribus’; caput vi: ‘De lachrymis et oppositu risu’. Cf. F.G.M. Broeyer, ‘Voetius en Utrecht’, in: J. van Oort et al. (eds.), *De onbekende Voetius. Voordrachten symposium Utrecht 1989* (Kampen 1989) 57-72.

44 Cf. Fred van Lieburg, ‘De Redelijke godsdienst van Wilhelmus à Brakel’, in: Jan Bos and Erik Geleijns (eds.), *Boekenwijsheid. Drie eeuwen kennis en cultuur in 30 bijzondere boeken. Opstellen bij de voltooiing van de Short-Title Catalogue, Netherlands* (Zutphen 2009) 186-194.

45 *De Grijzaard*, 7 October 1768.

## Conclusion

Having moved from the micro-level of an informal circle in the south of the Dutch Republic to the meso-level of a public debate in the north, an extrapolation to the macro-level of European religious history would certainly go too far. Nevertheless, the emotional practices as manifested in small communities and discussed in a national medium might well confirm the religious regime change in the eighteenth century as observed by several historians over recent decades. It claims a shift from the confessional state, in which religion is located in a public order, to the nation state, in which religion is located in the inner life of individuals belonging to a moral community.<sup>46</sup> It was in this light that Peter van Rooden interpreted the micro-stories from the (Dutch) Great Awakening, which may be seen as a meso-narrative of western Protestant history, a mirror of the great separation of the public and private spheres in the modern history of religion.<sup>47</sup>

Following Van Rooden, who explained the remarkable body language of the Nijkerk movement around 1750 using the anthropological notion of ‘agency’, I also consider the 1757 Willemstad events as an example of the contemporary regime change.

People who had no voice within the church used religion in their own ways. Precisely the convulsions, the bodily manifestations, screaming and sighing, fainting and humming, singing loudly during the sermon, are modes of religious activity of the self, both with and within the body.<sup>48</sup>

My case-study may suggest that such forms of agency were more than incidental signs of frictions in the declining regime of knowledge-oriented religion. The relative independence of private pious circles from official church life indicate rather a structural problem in culture and society that had to be resolved and indeed was resolved by the growing individualisation and privatisation of religion since the eighteenth century.

The insights of emotional history and its vocabulary of ‘emotionologies’, ‘emotional regimes’, ‘emotional communities’ and ‘emotional styles’, might help historians of religion to acknowledge the inextricable

46 Peter van Rooden, ‘History, the Nation and Religion: The Transformations of the Dutch Religious Past’, in: Hartmut Lehmann and Peter van de Veer (eds.), *Nation and Religion: Perspectives on Europe and Asia* (Princeton NJ 1999) 96-111.

47 Peter van Rooden, ‘De communicatieve ruimtes van de Nijkerkse beroeringen’, in: Spaans, *Een golf van beroering*, 125-151.

48 *Ibid.*, 131: Translation of: ‘Mensen die geen stem hadden binnen de kerk gingen met godsdienst aan de haal. Juist de convulsien, de lichamelijke verschijnselen, het schreeuwen en zuchten, het flauwvallen en zoemen, het hard zingen tijdens de preek, zijn manieren om heel nadrukkelijk zelf, met en in het eigen lichaam, godsdienstig actief te zijn’.



ties between mind and body, discourses and practices, or experiences and expressions. On the other side of the coin, students of emotional history should always be aware of the complex contexts of an individual's or a group's religious thoughts, feelings and practices. Metaphysical worldviews, Biblical language and Christian doctrines appeared to be of great influence in shaping bodily behaviour and in making sense of bodily functions in a religious way. Moreover, religious life was constituted by several interconnected or overlapping networks and communities, the church rarely offering the only framework to experience religion. If the very impression of what happened in the small world of the 1757 diarist would help us to realise the dynamics of religious emotions, then its presentation in this journal of history might have reached its goal. ◀

**Fred van Lieburg** (1967) is Professor in the History of Dutch Protestantism and Lecturer in Cultural History at VU University Amsterdam. He specialises in Dutch religious history and the international history of Protestantism. He authored many books and articles and edited English language volumes on Confessionalisation, Pietism and Revivalism, with a *Brill Companion to the History of Dutch Pieties (1480-1820)* forthcoming. His recent books in Dutch include explorative surveys on modern Bible promotion (*De wereld in. Het Nederlands Bijbelgenootschap 1814-2014* (Amsterdam 2014)), local religious history (*Heilig Nijkerk. Religiegeschiedenis van een landstad* (Zoetermeer 2013)), sacral geography (*Heilige plaatsen in een Hollandse stad. Duizend jaar religieuze gebouwen op het eiland van Dordrecht* (Dordrecht 2012)), Revival historiography (*Opwekking van de natie. Het protestantse Réveil in Nederland* (Hilversum 2012)), and Protestant youth work (*Jeugdwerk met een watermerk. De hervormd-gereformeerde jeugdbeweging 1910-2010* (Zoetermeer 2012)). He co-ordinates, among others, the VU Centre of Dutch Religious History ReLiC, the network for Dutch Bible Belt studies, and the workgroups for the History of Pietism and Revivalism, and the History of Governance and Religion. Email: f.a.van.lieburg@vu.nl or fredvanlieburg@gmail.com.