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published in

Zeitschrift für Kirchengeschichte
2022

document version

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citation for published version (APA)

van de Kamp, J. (2022). Piety doctrinally tested: The Reformed Wilhelmus à Brakel's approach to the Lutheran Pietist Francke. *Zeitschrift für Kirchengeschichte*, 133(2), 184-205.

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Piety doctrinally tested: the Reformed Wilhelmus à Brakel's approach to the Lutheran Pietist Francke

Jan van de Kamp

Introduction

Around 1700, scholars, theologians and others were reflecting on and debating a wide range of questions relating to church, state, theology and religion. Some of these questions concerned the relationship between Christian life and doctrine (which of the two was more important?), the localisation of religion (is it a heartfelt conviction or something imposed by the government?) and the issue of tolerance towards religious minorities.¹ In this discourse, the adepts of the Enlightenment, but also those in Pietistic movements, arrived at a redefinition of religion. They found Christian life more important than the doctrine. Furthermore, religion had to be a heartfelt conviction, not something imposed externally, which was held to be superstitious and unreasonable. A final point of agreement reached was that religious minorities ought to be tolerated. The discourse resulted in the recommendation of a religion that satisfied heart and mind alike, a 'reasonable religion'.² Gradually, church-state relations and the understanding of what domain

¹ Jörn Steigerwald/Daniel Fulda (Hg.), *Um 1700: Die Formierung der Europäischen Aufklärung: Zwischen Öffnung Und Neuerlicher Schließung*, Berlin 2016; Joke Spaans/Jetze Touber, *Enlightened Religion: From Confessional Churches to Polite Piety in the Dutch Republic*, in: Joke Spaans/Jetze Touber (Hg.), *Enlightened Religion: From Confessional Churches to Polite Piety in the Dutch Republic*, Leiden 2019, 1–18.

² Ernst Troeltsch, *Die Bedeutung des Protestantismus für die Entstehung der modernen Welt*, in: *HZ* 97 (1907) 85–103; Paul Hazard, *La Crise de la conscience Européenne (1680–1715)*, Paris 1935; Emanuel Hirsch, *Geschichte der neuern evangelischen Theologie im Zusammenhang mit den allgemeinen Bewegungen des europäischen Denkens*, Bd. 3, 4, Gütersloh 1952, 1954; Albrecht Beutel/Volker Leppin/Udo Sträter (Hg.), *Christentum im Übergang. Neue Studien zu Kirche und Religion in der Aufklärungszeit*, Leipzig 2006; David Sorkin, *The Religious Enlightenment: Protestants, Jews and Catholics from London to Vienna*, Princeton-New Jersey 2008.

religion inhabits came to be redefined: „From Confessional Churches to Polite Piety“, as Joke Spaans and Jetze Touber have called it.³

This was a slow process, and in its nascent stage it was not primarily the contents of religion that changed but rather the circumstances in which those contents were expressed and articulated. For example, the theoretical legitimation of religion underwent some changes, as did the spatial and temporal framework in which religion was placed and the media that were used to communicate religion. Christians began to be aware that their truths were but relative, that the world was larger and more religiously diverse than they had imagined, and that new media were at their disposal, such as magazines and books in the vernacular, to communicate religion to an increasingly sizeable, theologically well-versed popular audience.⁴

A compelling question that arises is to what extent these changes influenced the way in which people viewed those of other Christian confessions and movements. What approach did they take to outsiders? What criteria did they use to judge the other? How did they depict the other? How was such an approach interpreted by the other?

I will research these questions by making a case study of an influential Dutch Reformed theologian, one accounted to be a representative of a significant segment within the Dutch Reformed church around 1700: Wilhelmus à Brakel (1635–1711).⁵ Spaans and Touber’s aforementioned compendium characterises him as ‚orthodox and pious‘, but also argues that he tended more towards an individualist, polite, egalitarian and reasonable, and thus Enlightened, form of religion.⁶ I aim to investigate in the present article how applicable such characterisations are of à Brakel, evaluating the approach he took towards those of other confessions and persuasions.

My case study will take the form of an analysis of a letter, discovered by me, which à Brakel wrote from his home city of Rotterdam on 25 April 1702 to his Lutheran fellow clergyman August Hermann Francke⁷ in Halle an der Saale.⁸ I shall also research several related sources.

Judging by what we already know about à Brakel and Francke, one might expect that they felt very akin to each other, since both of them aimed at the furtherance of piety and the reformation of church and society. Both were preachers and, in

³ Spaans/Touber, *Enlightened Religion* (see n. 1).

⁴ Spaans/Touber, *Enlightened Religion* (see n. 1) 15–17.

⁵ Frans Johannes Los, *Wilhelmus à Brakel*, Leiden 1892, Neudruck Leiden 1991; Willem Jan op ’t Hof, Art. „Wilhelmus à Brakel“, in: Willem Jan op ’t Hof/Arie Baars/Frans W. Huisman/Jan van de Kamp/Arie de Reuver (Hg.), *Encyclopedie Nadere Reformatie*, Bd. 1, Utrecht 2015, 121–129.

⁶ Spaans/Touber, *Enlightened Religion* (see n. 1) 3, 14.

⁷ Holger Zaunstöck/Thomas Müller-Bahlke/Claus Veltmann (Hg.), *Die Welt verändern: August Hermann Francke. Ein Lebenswerk um 1700*, Halle-Wiesbaden 2013; Wolfgang Breul, *August Hermann Francke (1663–1727)*, in: Wolfgang Breul/Thomas Hahn-Bruckart (Hg.), *Pietismus-Handbuch*, Tübingen 2021, 122–137.

⁸ Archiv der Franckeschen Stiftungen Halle, Saale (AFSt/H), C 714. For a description of the letter, see the ‚Datenbank zu den Einzelhandschriften in den historischen Archivabteilungen‘ of the AFSt/H, <http://192.124.243.55/cgi-bin/gkdb.pl> (consulted 31 March 2020). My thanks to Dr C.A. de Niet for his translation of the letter.

this function, held conventicles and wrote devotional books. Moreover, Francke had been a professor at the University of Halle since 1691 and from 1695 onwards had led a school and orphanage complex where he sought to bring up children as godly citizens. In recognition of his zeal for piety, Francke was known as a ‚Pietist‘.⁹ Furthermore, he became embroiled in controversy in the 1690s, finding himself accused of teaching that a Christian was able to attain sinless perfection and of maintaining contacts with pious women who had ecstatic, visionary religious experiences.¹⁰ It is questionable whether à Brakel was aware of the latter accusation. As well as both being promoters of piety, à Brakel and Francke lived in territories – the Dutch Republic and the mid-German territories (*Mitteldeutschland*) – which enjoyed an intensive cultural transfer, not only on a religious but also on a political and cultural level.¹¹

In spite of these similarities between à Brakel and Francke, and notwithstanding the networks between the areas where they lived, the question remains to what extent they felt mutual affinity. À Brakel mentions in his letter several points which might indicate differences between him and Francke, which concern doctrine – especially the Lord's Supper – and the concept of piety. Besides, Francke did not, as far as we know, visit à Brakel during his journey through the Dutch Republic in 1705,¹² nor did he respond to à Brakel's letter. What were the reasons for à Brakel's above-outlined attitude to Francke, how did Francke interpret it, and why did he apparently not reply? These are the key questions for this article.

In approaching the issue, I choose a different basic premise than Fred van Lieburg does in his article on à Brakel and Pietism, and in which he also refers to my discovery of the letter of à Brakel to Francke.¹³ Whereas van Lieburg largely covers a publication by à Brakel on Pietism which came out some years after his letter to Francke, my current article addresses how à Brakel views Francke in the letter and how Francke might have taken this. To that end, I have appended to this article some transcribed passages from the letter, as well as from a related letter by a friend of Francke's.¹⁴ In analysing these letters, I avail myself of secondary litera-

⁹ Spaans/Touber, *Enlightened Religion* (see n. 1)

¹⁰ Veronika Albrecht-Birkner/Udo Sträter, *Die radikale Phase des frühen August Hermann Francke*, in: Wolfgang Breul/Marcus Meier/Lothar Vogel (Hg.), *Der radikale Pietismus: Perspektiven der Forschung*, Göttingen 2010, 57–84.

¹¹ Erdmut Jost/Holger Zaunstöck (Hg.), *Goldenes Zeitalter und Jahrhundert der Aufklärung*, Halle 2012.

¹² On this trip, see: Udo Sträter, *Interessierter Beobachter oder Agent in eigener Sache? August Hermann Franckes Hollandreise 1705*, in: Jost/Zaunstöck (Hg.), *Goldenes Zeitalter* (see n. 11), 62–77.

¹³ Fred van Lieburg, *Warning against the Pietists: The World of Wilhelmus à Brakel*, in: Spaans/Touber (Hg.), *Enlightened Religion* (see n.1), 346–368, there 348.

¹⁴ The other letter concerns AFSt/H C 286: 2; for a description of it, cf. the aforementioned ‚Datenbank zu den Einzelhandschriften‘. I would like to express my gratitude to the students of my class on Reformation history in 2015/2016 who collaborated with me on the analysis and reconstruction of à Brakel's letter: Johan van Asselt, Danny van den Brink, Eimert Haakmeester, Paul van den Herik, Suzanne de Jong, Steven Middelkoop, August Moens and Arjan Speksnijder. Furthermore, I am thankful to Henk van de Belt, Willem op 't Hof, Wim Janse, Fred van Lieburg, Arie de Reuver, Arie van der Schoor, Leen van Valen, Christian Witt and Rolf van der Woude for remarks and information provided.

ture on fellowship with other confessions and on theological polemics in the early modern era.

My article is structured as follows. First, I will outline some theoretical considerations on the encounters of European Protestant theologians with theology deviating from their own confessional community from the late sixteenth to the early eighteenth century. Secondly, I will devote three sections to à Brakel's letter, since a setting-out of principles, a kernel and a codicil can be clearly discerned in the letter. Finally, I draw conclusions and provide an appendix of transcripts of the letters in question.

Encountering discrepant theology

When those of differing confessions encountered each other in Early Modern Europe, the first factor at play was how the other was perceived. That is the initial aspect we shall consider below. The encounter in question could take on the form of a polemic. How was it conducted, and were there developments in that regard during the early modern era? Moreover – and to become specific about à Brakel and Francke – how did Reformed and Lutheran theologians view each other in the period in question? Those questions will also be addressed below.

As regards the first aspect, perceptions of the other, research has determined that this was highly decisive for interconfessional discourse. Christian Witt and others have found that the image of the self often affected the perception of the other, and vice versa. In addition, since claims of religious truth lay behind Early Modern confessional discourse, such perceptions were combined with the act of confessing, whether implicitly or explicitly. This was an individual, subjective act which was bound up with supra-individual, religious-institutional confession. When the perception of the self or of the other was expressly uttered, this in turn strengthened the confession.¹⁵ To give an example of this interaction between perception and confession within an interconfessional discourse: a Lutheran who held closely to the Formula of Concord probably would have interpreted the approach of a Reformed theologian who was expressing his supposed intellectual and religious superiority, and who himself might describe his strategy as irenic, as actually polemical.¹⁶

As for the second aspect, religious polemics, the development in that regard around 1700 has been researched in the case of Lutheran Germany by Martin Gierl, who discerns a shift from the practice of *elenchus doctrinalis*, or the opposing of doctrinal error, towards the pursuit of religious controversy with a concern for the errant brother or sister. The latter approach can be seen in the writings of the German Lutheran Pietistic theologian Philipp Jacob Spener. A further step was taken by Enlightened scholars such as Christian Thomasius, who developed a schol-

¹⁵ Christian V. Witt, Wahrnehmung, Konflikt und Confessio, in: Mona Garloff/Christian V. Witt (Hg.) *Confessio im Konflikt*, Göttingen 2019, 9–20.

¹⁶ Malte van Spankeren/Christian V. Witt, Einleitung, in: Malte van Spankeren/Christian V. Witt (Hg.), *Confessio im Barock. Religiöse Wahrnehmungsformationen im 17. Jahrhundert*, Leipzig 2015, 10 f.

arly method of criticism, in which controversy was depersonalised and judgement was left entirely to the conscience of individual believers.¹⁷

Thirdly, a pattern is observable in how Reformed theologians approached the Lutheran confession from the late seventeenth to the early eighteenth century, both in the Old Empire and in the Dutch Republic: that the former stressed the points of agreement between both confessions in what were known as the fundamental articles of faith.¹⁸ This thread can also be seen in Dutch Reformed theologians encountering Lutheranism, as the former also maintained that they agreed with Lutherans on the core doctrines. Some Reformed ministers even held that Lutherans could join the Reformed churches, and attempted a reunion with the Lutherans. Regarding the quarrels between Luther and the other Reformers over the Lord's Supper, the Dutch Reformed theologians downplayed the conflict by stating either that it was soon resolved or that Luther may have later regretted it. In 1729, the Dutch Reformed theologian Johannes Mauritius Mommers published a book entitled *Luther gereformeert* (Luther Reformed), demonstrating the similarities between Luther and Calvin.¹⁹ The existence of dissimilarities with Lutheranism was indeed acknowledged by Dutch Reformed theologians, but they rhetorically argued that their own doctrine was in agreement with that of Luther and that it had been his followers who had deviated from him.²⁰

Whereas Reformed theologians, both in Germany and the Netherlands, from the sixteenth century onwards, acknowledged a fundamental agreement between themselves and the Lutherans, this proposition was only adapted by Lutherans in Germany, such as Georg Calixt and Philipp Jacob Spener, from the latter half of the seventeenth century onwards. After the Peace of Westphalia, neither Reformed nor Lutheran theologians in Germany in their mutual polemics used confessional standards to prove their own orthodoxy or to reject the heresies of others.²¹

After my analysis below of à Brakel's letter, we shall see how this Reformed clergyman viewed the Lutheran Francke, and what role his perception of himself and the other, as well as the act of confession, played in the communication between the two theologians.

¹⁷ Martin Gierl, *Pietismus und Aufklärung: Theologische Polemik und die Kommunikationsreform der Wissenschaft*, Göttingen 1997.

¹⁸ Christian V. Witt, *Protestanten: Das Werden eines Integrationsbegriffs in der Frühen Neuzeit*, Tübingen 2011. See also Hans Leube, *Kalvinismus und Luthertum im Zeitalter der Orthodoxie*. Bd. 1: *Der Kampf um die Herrschaft im protestantischen Deutschland*, Leipzig 1928. On the fundamental articles, see: Otto Ritschl, *Dogmengeschichte des Protestantismus*, Göttingen 1927; Leube, *Kalvinismus und Luthertum* (see n. 18) 138–163, 243–256.

¹⁹ Johannes M. Mommers, *Luther gereformeert, ofte Vertoog dat Luther en anderen van zyne ampt en tydenooten, gelyk in de andere hoofdstukken des geloofs, soo ook in de leere van de predestinatie [...] overeenkomen*, Leiden 1729. Cf. Joris van Eijnatten, *Liberty and Concord in the United Provinces: Religious Toleration and the Public in the Eighteenth-Century Netherlands*, Leiden 2003, 127–140.

²⁰ Henk van den Belt, *Luther in Dutch Reformed Orthodoxy: A Bag of Worms against the Lutherans*, in: Herman J. Selderhuis/J. Marius J. Lange van Ravenswaay (Hg.), *Luther and Calvinism: Image and Reception of Martin Luther in the History and Theology of Calvinism*, Göttingen 2017, 427–442; Mirjam van Veen, *Luther en calvinistisch Nederland*, Utrecht 2017, bes. 147–149.

²¹ Witt, *Protestanten*, (see n. 18) 159–256.

À Brakel's encounter with Francke: presuppositions

À Brakel writes a brief introduction before coming to his point. He praises Francke for his zeal and prudence in establishing a school at Halle. From a letter written from Königsberg (now Kaliningrad) to the minister of the Scots Church at Rotterdam (*è literis Regiomonto ad Pastorem Ecclesiae scotianæ hac in urbe*), he has learned with pleasure that Francke largely shares his convictions (*quousque nobiscum consentiatis*).

The minister in question is probably James Brown (1634–1713), who from 1691 until 1713 served the Scottish congregation in Rotterdam. Before that, he was minister of a British congregation in Königsberg.²² From Rotterdam, Brown remained in touch with his countrymen in Königsberg.²³ À Brakel may also have heard about Francke and Pietism from other channels, such as by several publications, including those of the Lutheran bookseller Sebastian Petzold of Amsterdam, who around 1700 published Dutch translations of works by the ecclesiastical critic Gottfried Arnold.²⁴ In 1701, he also published *De leere der mystiken, quietisten, pietisten, en der zo genaamde nieuwe religie in Duytsland*²⁵ (The doctrine of the Mystics, Quietists, Pietists and of the so-called New Religion in Germany), containing a letter by Catharina Elizabeth Wetzel-Uckermann, the widow of a Reformed preacher, a prophetess and the leader of a group of mystical believers and critics of the organised church. She was a profoundly controversial figure in the County of Hesse, where she lived.²⁶ In her social circle, the Reformed theologians Heinrich Horch and Samuel König, who had both been deposed from office,²⁷ propagated the expectation of a millennial reign of Christ (chiliasm) and rejected the institution of the church, as a consequence of which stance a couple of separatist conventicles were established.

De leere der mystiken also contained a text by the Spanish monk Juan Falconi de Bustamente (1596–1638).²⁸ Closer examination reveals that it is a communication

²² For Brown in general, see: Hew Scott, *Fasti Ecclesiae Scoticanæ: the Succession of Ministers in the Church of Scotland from the Reformation*, Bd. 7, Edinburgh 1928, 551; on his ministry in Danzig and Königsberg, see: Th. A. Fischer, *The Scots in Germany: being a contribution towards the history of the Scot abroad*, Edinburgh 1902, 190 f.; Fischer, *The Scots in Eastern and Western Prussia*, Edinburgh 1903, 140–142; Steve Murdoch, *Network North: Scottish kin, commercial and covert associations in Northern Europe, 1603–1746*, Leiden 2006, 113 f.; on his ministry to the Scots Church in Rotterdam: William Steven, *Scottish Church in Rotterdam*, Edinburgh 1832, 107, 145; J. Morrison, *Scots on the Dijk. The story of the Scots Church*, Rotterdam, Craig 1981, 20; L.J. van Valen, In God verbonden: Gereformeerde vroomheidsbetrekkingen tussen Schotland en de Nederlanden in de zeventiende eeuw, met name in de periode na de Restauratie (1660–1700), Apeldoorn 2019, 422–424.

²³ In 1685, Brown authorised the transfer of funds from Rotterdam to a Scots merchant in Königsberg: see Kathrin Zickermann, *Across the German Sea: Early Modern Scottish Connections with the Wider Elbe-Weser Region*, Leiden, The Netherlands 2013, 218.

²⁴ Antje Missfeldt (Hg.), Gottfried Arnold. Radikaler Pietist und Gelehrter, Köln 2011; Lothar Vogel, Gottfried Arnold (1666–1714), in: Breul/Hahn-Bruckart (Hg.), *Pietismus-Handbuch* (see n. 7) 137–146.

²⁵ *De leere der mystiken, quietisten, pietisten, en der zo genaamde nieuwe religie in Duytsland*, [...] voorgesteld in verscheide tractaten en brieven, Amsterdam 1701.

²⁶ Van Lieburg, Warning against the Pietists (see n. 13) 357–359.

²⁷ Hans Schneider, *Der radikale Pietismus im 18. Jahrhundert*, in: Martin Brecht/Klaus Deppermann (Hg.), *Geschichte des Pietismus* Bd. 2, Göttingen 1995, 119–123.

²⁸ Van Lieburg, Warning against the Pietists (see n. 13) 358.

to one of his spiritual daughters, instructing her on prayer. Falconi can be regarded as a predecessor of the Spanish mystic and chief representative of Quietism,²⁹ Miguel de Molinos (1628–1696), since Falconi too pleads for a quiet spirit and passivity of the soul as the quickest way to God.³⁰

In summary, *De leere der mystiken* derives its contents from radical Pietistic and mystical circles. In line with radical Pietism, the contributors to the book state that Scripture should be interpreted through the current experience and revelation (*Offenbarung*) of the Spirit, that Christians should separate from the Babylonish churches, their structures, sacraments, symbolic books, and the like, and should instead conceive of the church as a spiritual communion. Furthermore, the authors play down confessional boundaries (the stance of Philadelphianism), plead for the freedom of personal faith and conscience, and have scant regard for theological scholarship.³¹ Finally, the book reveals mystical traits, such as a simple obedience to Jesus, the inner experience and the testimony of the Spirit of truth, the process of becoming nothing, desisting from one's own works and all sensual things, and letting only Christ work in oneself. These are all regarded as the hallmarks of a true Christian.³²

À Brakel's encounter with Francke: presuppositions (continued)

To return to à Brakel's letter, he continues by expressing his joy that Francke shares his own opinions to such a great extent, for he has discovered that Francke endorses the Marburg Articles (*Articulos Colloquii Marpurgensis anno 1529 habiti*), which were published after a colloquy in that city between Martin Luther, Huldrych Zwingli, Martin Bucer and others in 1529.³³ These articles were written by Luther and subscribed by the other participants in the disputation. À Brakel maintains that he also agrees with these articles if rightly interpreted, particularly as regards Article 3 (on Christology), 9 (on Baptism) and 14, as well as the distinction mentio-

²⁹ François Laplanche, *De Gausson à l'abbé Duguet*, in: Hartmut Lehmann/Hans J. Schrader/Heinz Schilling (Hg.), *Jansenismus, Quietismus, Pietismus*, Göttingen 2002, 67–75; Jacques le Brun, *Echos en pays germaniques de la querelle du pur amour*, in: Schrader/Lehmann/Schilling (Hg.), *Jansenismus, Quietismus, Pietismus* (see n. 29) 76–91; Hanspeter Marti, *Der Seelenfrieden der Stillen im Lande*, in: Schrader/Lehmann/Schilling (Hg.), *Jansenismus, Quietismus, Pietismus*, (see n. 29) 92–105; Klaus vom Orde, *Der Quietismus Miguel de Molinos bei Philipp Jakob Spener*, in: Schrader/Lehmann/Schilling (Hg.), *Jansenismus, Quietismus, Pietismus* (see n. 29) 106–118.

³⁰ Elías Gómez, *Fray Juan Falconi de Bustamante (1596–1638). Teólogo y asceta. Estudio biográfico-expositivo*, Madrid 1955.

³¹ Schneider, *Der radikale Pietismus im 18. Jahrhundert*, (see n. 27) bes. 107–112, 167–169; Douglas H. Shantz, *An Introduction to German Pietism: Protestant Renewal at the Dawn of Modern Europe*, Baltimore, Maryland 2013, 147–178.

³² For the major currents of seventeenth-century Christian spirituality in Europe, see: Jill Raitt, *European Reformations of Christian Spirituality (1450–1700)*, in: *The Blackwell Companion to Christian Spirituality*, Arthur Holder (Hg.), Hoboken, New Jersey 2007, doi:10.1002/9780470996713.ch8, section on 'The Seventeenth Century'.

³³ For the Colloquy of Marburg, see: Gerhard May, *Das Marburger Religionsgespräch 1529*, Gütersloh 1979; Wolf-Friedrich Schäufele (Hg.), *Die Marburger Artikel als Zeugnis der Einheit*, Leipzig 2012.

ned there (*articulo tertio et nono bene intellectis, et manente discrimine noto in Articulo decimoquarto*). As Article 14 contains no such distinction, but Article 15 does,³⁴ à Brakel will have meant the latter article.

Article 15 concerns the doctrine of the Lord's Supper, the most controversial doctrine discussed at the Colloquy of Marburg. Luther strongly defended a literal interpretation of the words of ordinance ‚Hoc est corpus meum‘ (This is my body, Mt 26:26; Lk 22:19; I Cor 11:24). Zwingli and his supporters, however, held the opinion that Christ is not bodily present in the Eucharist, but that this sacrament simply serves as a commemoration of the death of Christ.³⁵ The Reformer Martin Bucer took an intermediate position between Luther and Zwingli: he maintained that Christ is present in the Eucharist, but ‚in the manner of the Holy Spirit‘ (*spirituale*).³⁶

I return to à Brakel's letter. What does he mean by the distinction that he mentions? He writes that he is very pleased (*Pergratum nobis est*) to find out that Francke, ‚together with the brethren of Marburg‘ (*cum Fratribus Marpurgensibus*), states that the most important aspect of the Lord's Supper is eating the body of Christ, namely the acceptance of Christ and his merits by faith and with confidence (*manducationem corporis Christi in cœna, quæ est apprehensio fiducialis Christi sponsoris et meritorum ejus per fidem, esse præcipuam*). By ‚distinction‘, à Brakel probably means the following phrase from Article 15 of the Marburg Articles: „das auch das Sacrament des altars sey ein Sacrament des waren leibs vnd pluts Hiesu Christi, vnd dj gaistliche niessung, desselbigen leibs vnd pluts Einem yeden Christen, furnemblich von notten“ (that the sacrament of the altar is a sacrament of the true body and blood of Jesus Christ, and that in particular the spiritual partaking of this body and blood is necessary for every Christian).³⁷ By this distinction between the true

³⁴ Wolf-Friedrich Schäufele, *Der Text der Marburger Artikel. Faksimile – Transkription – Übertragung*, in: Schäufele (Hg.), *Die Marburger Artikel* (see n.33), 26. Zwingli held several reasons for rejecting a ‚sacramental eating‘ of the Eucharist: firstly, the full accomplishment of salvation by Christ excludes any additional material-religious work; secondly, the Words of Institution do not have the character of words of promise, but of a ceremony of thanksgiving for his suffering; thirdly, the aim of the celebration was not only the strengthening of faith, but also brotherly love and other goals; fourthly, God in Christ is a free agent and should not be bound too tightly to ceremony; finally, God is permanently present in the church through his Spirit, by which he illuminates the hearts of the hearers and justifies them; see Peter Opitz, *Die Marburger Artikel als Zeugnis der Einheit: Artikel 15: Das Abendmahl – Die reformierte Perspektive*, in: Schäufele (Hg.) *Die Marburger Artikel* (see n.33) 175–196.

³⁵ Several factors account for this difference of conviction. For Luther, any compromise regarding the words of institution of the Eucharist was a darkening and betrayal of the perspicuity of Scripture, Athina Lexutt, *Das Abendmahl. Die lutherische Position*, in: Schäufele (Hg.), *Die Marburger Artikel* (see n.33) 169.

³⁶ On the debates over the Eucharist among the Reformers, see: Lee Palmer Wandel (Hg.), *A Companion to the Eucharist in the Reformation*, Leiden 2013.

³⁷ Schäufele (Hg.), *Die Marburger Artikel* (see n.33), 26. À Brakel could also have been referring to another distinction in that article, which states that although the subscribers had been unable to reach agreement on the question of whether Christ's body and blood is bodily present in the elements, they should demonstrate Christian love to each other and should pray for the obtaining of the the true interpretation: „Vnd wiewol aber wir vns, Ob der war leib, vnd plut Christj, leiblich Jm Brot vnd wein sey, dißer zeit nit vergleicht haben, So sal doch ein teill Jegen dem andern,

body and blood of Christ on the one hand and the spiritual enjoyment of it on the other hand, Luther, Zwingli and Bucer were all acknowledged: first proposition—that the bread and wine are the sacraments of the true body and blood of Christ – did justice to Luther and Bucer; the second – that it is particularly a spiritual enjoyment that is necessary – to Zwingli and Bucer. À Brakel's wording demonstrates that he closely approximates Bucer's position.

À Brakel here paraphrases Article 15 of the Marburg Articles. He reworks the phrase on the sacrament of the true body and blood of Christ into „eating Christ's body“ – which almost sounds Lutheran! – but gives account of himself. He explains that concerns not just Christ – Luther would endorse this position – but also Christ's merits and the way in which these are accepted: by faith and with reliance. With this formulation, à Brakel is making overtures to Bucarianism. He hopes that Francke's Lutheran fellow theologians will join him in his opinion on the Lord's Supper: „If only all of yours ventured so far!“ (*utinam omnes vestri eo pervenissent!*).³⁸

Let us pause for a moment to consider how à Brakel approaches Francke. First, he seems to be looking for common ground with him, which he finds in a confessional book, though not a Reformed one such as the Heidelberg Catechism, but rather in the Marburg Articles, which were written before the Lutheran and Reformed confessions drifted apart. Moreover, à Brakel specifies three articles which seem to be core doctrines for him, namely Christology, Baptism and the Lord's Supper, and confesses his agreement with him on these. However, he adds that the first two articles should be understood in the correct sense, thereby inherently claiming that sense for himself. Almost as a demonstration of this claim, he continues by giving the ‚correct‘ exegesis of the article on the Lord's Supper. It may be that, strategically, he comes close to Luther in his wording. By closing with the wish he expresses regarding the other Lutherans, à Brakel is drawing a division between Francke and them. Thus, à Brakel was in line with previous Reformed theologians who encountered Lutherans by stressing agreement on the core doctrines between the Reformed and Lutheran confessions and by creating division within the Lutheran camp. Just as Luther had been rhetorically presented by the Reformed theologians as in agreement with their own position against that of the Lutherans, Francke is considered the ally of Reformed Christians against his own fellow Lutherans. The question arises of how Francke would have perceived this approach by the Dutch Reformed minister, an issue which will be addressed later on.

Christliche liebe sofer yedes gewiessen ymmer leyden kan, erzeugen, vnd bedeteil, got den almechtigen vleissig bidten, das er vns durch seinen gaist, den rechten verstandt bestettigen wolle Amen.“ However, as à Brakel does not elaborate on this sentence, it is more likely that he had the other sentence in mind.

³⁸ According to Francke, the Lord's Supper was an intensive appropriation in man's mind of the work of salvation, connected with a correct reverence for Christ. It was intended as a strengthening of the converted and should not be used habitually or as *opus operatum* (the notion of the spiritual effect in the performance of a religious rite being held to spring from the virtue inherent in it): Martin Brecht, August Hermann Francke und der Hallische Pietismus, in: Brecht (Hg.), Geschichte des Pietismus Bd. 1, Göttingen 1993, 465–466.

In his letter, à Brakel not only expresses his delight about his doctrinal agreement with Francke, for which there do indeed exist some grounds,³⁹ but also for how Francke combines his massive knowledge with a special godliness (*Eruditionem vestram cum pietate singulari esse conjunctam*), a rare phenomenon among the learned and the professors of the time (*hoc tempore rarum quid in Doctis et Professoribus*), as à Brakel puts it. This phrase is redolent of the title of the inaugural lecture of one of à Brakel's professors, Gisbertus Voetius: *De pietate cum Scientia conjungenda* (1634), in which the latter called upon scholars to devote their academic work to the service of God.⁴⁰ Francke's writings testify to this piety, as does „a collection of various practical [authors]“ (*collectio variorum Practicorum*).

The parts of that collection were translated from several languages. À Brakel writes that he has heard this from Friedrich Breckling, an unfrocked Lutheran minister who at that time was living in The Hague.⁴¹ Breckling notified him that this collection contained *De trappen des geestelijken levens* (The Grades of Spiritual Life) by his father, the late Theodorus à Brakel. This text, together with a biographical sketch of Theodorus, was published by Wilhelmus.⁴²

By this „collection of practical authors“, A Brakel is referring to the book *Das Leben der Gläubigen* (The Life of the Faithful) by the German Lutheran minister Gottfried Arnold.⁴³ It was published in 1701 in Halle by the publishing house attached to Francke's orphanage, and contains conversion narratives of pious people from the Middle Ages down to the seventeenth century. Arnold regarded such folk as the „quiet in the land“ (Ps 35:20), whom he set against the institution of the church, which in his eyes was in great decay. Arnold's book has elements including a biography of the Italian Franciscan nun Angela de Foligno (1248–1309).⁴⁴ Through several mystical experiences, she attained union with God. The book also contains

³⁹ Veronika Albrecht-Birkner regards Halle Pietism as one of the more significant examples of an intensive reception of Calvinism by Lutheran authorities and theologians in the seventeenth and eighteenth centuries. She categorises Francke's organising of small circles of pious people (*collegia pietatis*) as well as his requirement that one has a datable conversion experience, as Reformed influences upon him; see Veronika Albrecht-Birkner, Calvinismusrezeption im Luthertum. Eine kirchengeschichtliche Spurensuche zwischen Calvinjahr und ‚Lutherdekade‘, in: Georg Plasger (Hg.), Calvins Theologie – für heute und morgen. Beiträge des Siegener Calvin-Kongresses 2009, Wuppertal 2010, 292.

⁴⁰ Gisbertus Voetius, Inaugurele rede over Godzaligheid te verbinden met de wetenschap, gehouden aan de Illustre School te Utrecht op de 21ste augustus 1634. Latijnse tekst opnieuw uitgegeven met Nederlandse vertaling, inleiding en toelichtingen, Aart de Groot (Hg.), Kampen 1978; Andreas J. Beck, Pietas cum scientia coniungenda. De verbinding van geloof en wetenschap bij Gisbertus Voetius, in: G.T.S.V. Voetius Jaarboek 2000–2001 (2002) 5–19.

⁴¹ Brigitte Klosterberg/Guido Naschert (Hg.), Friedrich Breckling (1629–1711). Prediger, ›Wahrheitszeuge‹ und Vermittler des Pietismus im niederländischen Exil. Eine Ausstellung zu seinem 300. Todestag, Halle 2011; Viktoria Franke, Rebel with a Cause. Gesellschaftliche Reform und radikale religiöse Aufklärung bei Friedrich Breckling (1629–1711), Münster 2021.

⁴² Theodorus à Brakel, *De trappen des geestelijken levens*, Amsterdam 1670. New editions followed in 1671, 1680, 1684, and 1702. See W.J op 't Hof, Brakel, Art. „Theodorus à“, in: Op 't Hof/Baars/Huisman/van de Kamp/de Reuver (Hg.), *Encyclopedie Nadere Reformatie*, Bd. 1 (see n. 5) 117–121.

⁴³ Fred van Lieburg, *The Dutch Factor in German Pietism: Handicap or a Head Start?* in: Douglas H. Shantz (Hg.), *A Companion to German Pietism 1660–1800*, Leiden 2014, 73, Anm. 63.

⁴⁴ Gottfried Arnold, *Das Leben der Gläubigen, oder Beschreibung solcher Gottseligen personen*, Halle 1701, 294–327.

a biography of à Brakel the Elder, who by meditation on the passion of Christ attained greater spiritual intimacy with God, or, to put in his own words, a higher grade of spiritual life'.⁴⁵

Kernel of the encounter

By this point in the letter, à Brakel has come to his main thrust. As a reader, one senses that a mainstream Reformed minister such as à Brakel would probably have a problem with *Das Leben der Gläubigen*. It holds forth a combination of mystical experience and a meditative style of reading the Bible; how can these be reconciled? This is the very question that à Brakel poses to Francke. He holds the latter responsible for the publication of Arnold's book, including the biography of his father. À Brakel the Younger is surprised that this biographical collection combines heterodox with orthodox subjects (*mixtionem heterodoxorum cum orthodoxis*). „What does light have in common with darkness?“ (*quæ communicio Luci cum tenebris*), he asks (II Cor. 6:14b).

As Francke appreciates the work of à Brakel's father, Wilhelmus encloses two copies (*en tibi duas*: here are two for you) of a portrait of him. He also adds a devotional writing of his own for Francke's library. This probably refers to an edition of his *Reasonable Service* (see below).⁴⁶

À Brakel continues that a couple of years ago, especially in Germany, „a supposedly new light and life“ (*nova quasi Lux et vita*) arose „under the name of Pietists and mystics“ (*nomine Pietistarum, et mysticorum*). Initially, he was delighted by this, as he esteems the fear of the Lord, and he investigated what this new light was about and the kind of people who adhered to it. À Brakel may have done his research by corresponding with people such as Brown (see above) or by reading books such as *De leere der mystiken* and *D'Inwendige Staat*.

The results of his research were quite negative: „evil things [were] mixed with good things and, therefore, I do not reject it all, but neither do I approve of it all“ (*mala esse mixta bonis, et bona esse mixta malis, ideoque non omnia damno, nec omnia approbo*). Among the Pietists and mystics are heretics (*hæretici*) and separatists (*schismatici*), people ignorant of the truth of the Gospel and who have abandoned the love of the truth (*rudes veritatis Euangelicæ, qui amorem veritatis abjecerunt*), but there are also truly pious individuals (*vere Pii*). „The more sublimely impressive their religion is, the more it deviates from the simplicity which is in Christ Jesus [II Cor. 11:3], and the more closely it approaches natural piety, in which some pagans have been luminaries too“ (*Religio ipsorum, quo sublimior videtur, eo magis recedit a simplicitate quæ est in Christo Jesu, et accedit ad pietatem naturalem, in qua et Ethnici quidam præclari fuere*). À Brakel himself has also read mystical authors, a

⁴⁵ Theodorus à Brakel, *Erzählung von seinem geistlichen Leben: Die Staffel des geistlichen Lebens*, in: Arnold (Hg.), *Das Leben der Gläubigen* (see n. 44) 727–829.

⁴⁶ The auction catalogue of Francke's library makes mention of an edition published in The Hague in 1701; cf. the database ‚Franckes Privatbibliothek‘ held by the archive of the Francke Foundations in Halle: <http://digital.francke-halle.de/mod7/content/titleinfo/133862> (consulted 13 March 2020).

long time ago, but, as he admits, it damaged him, and he praises God for having set him free from those snares.

In this confession, a sentence follows which reveals à Brakel's deepest motives: „I am convinced that something has to be done to keep the pious on the right path and to lead them along it“ (*judico aliquid faciendum, ut pii in via recta conserventur, et dirigantur*). For that reason, à Brakel would like to receive more information on the ‚new light‘ from Francke. With that request, he ends his letter.

Codicil to the encounter

Approximately half a year later, on 3 October 1702, Francke received a letter with a reminder: not from à Brakel, but from his former pupil Johann Hieronymus Liebenroth. The latter was at that time staying in Rotterdam, translating a writing of Francke's into Dutch, founding a school in Rotterdam and functioning as a sort of intermediary between Halle, the Netherlands, England and North America, as can be concluded from letters in the archive of the Francke Foundations.⁴⁷

In this letter, Liebenroth informs Francke about himself and others, and about religious life in Rotterdam. From his letter, it is clear that at the time of writing other contacts of Francke's are staying in Rotterdam, namely Leonhard Lindhammer (1651–1732) and Johann Dittmar (b. ?1675).⁴⁸ Liebenroth writes quite extensively about a Dutch translation of a letter that Samuel König has sent from Germany, possibly from Magdeburg – notably close to Halle – to his parents in Switzerland.⁴⁹ König was a Reformed minister in Berne who had been deposed from office and expelled from the country in 1699 for having criticised the state church and propagated millenarian ideas. For the next twelve years, König travelled through Germany, one of his stays being in the county of Hesse, where he associated with Heinrich Horch and others.⁵⁰ The latter was regarded as the means of conversion of Widow Wetzel (see above).

⁴⁷ AFSt/H C 286: 2. Liebenroth was born in Ellrich in the Nordhausen district. In 1692, he began his studies at Halle University: Matrikel der Martin-Luther-Universität Halle-Wittenberg, Teil 1 (1690–1730). Bearb. v. Fritz Juntke. Halle 1960 (= Arbeiten aus der Universitäts- und Landesbibliothek Sachsen-Anhalt in Halle a.d. Saale; 2), p. 264. He had worked as a home tutor for the Metzendorff family at Lüneburg. From at least 1699 until 1723, he lived in Rotterdam. See the database of the Halle archive entitled ‚Datenbank zu den Einzelhandschriften in den historischen Archivabteilungen‘, http://192.124.243.55/cgi-bin/gkdb.pl?x=u&t_show=x&wertreg=PER&wert=liebenroth%2C%20johann%20hieronymus%20%20-%20BIOGRAFIE&reccheck=150792 and http://192.124.243.55/cgi-bin/gkdb.pl?x=u&t_show=x&wertreg=PER&wert=liebenroth%2C%20johann%20hieronymus%20%20%5BBetroffener%5D&reccheck=30919,32311,33240,207965 (consulted 13 March 2020). See also Jürgen Gröschl, Denn was wir da gutes hineinschreiben, das geht durch alle christlichen Gemeinen in America – das internationale Kommunikationsnetzwerk August Hermann Franckes, in: Zaubstöck/Müller-Bahlke/Veltmann (Hg.), Die Welt verändern (see n. 7) 177; van Lieburg, Warning against the Pietists (see n.13) 354 f. n. 29.

⁴⁸ On these men, see the ‚Datenbank zu den Einzelhandschriften in den historischen Archivabteilungen‘, <http://192.124.243.55/cgi-bin/gkdb.pl> (consulted 23 March 2020).

⁴⁹ See also Rudolf Dellsperger, Königs ‚Weg des Friedens‘ (1699–1711), in: PuN 9 (1983) 152–179, there 160 f., who presumes that König was about that time staying at Halle or Magdeburg.

⁵⁰ Dellsperger, Königs ‚Weg des Friedens‘ (see n.49); Schneider, Der radikale Pietismus im 18. Jahrhundert (wie Anm, 27) 121–123; Rudolf Dellsperger, Art. „Samuel König“, in: HBLs, <http://www.hls-dhs-dss.ch/textes/d/D9863.php> (consulted 13 March 2020).

Liebenroth notes that a letter by König, as well as his book *Neue Klage Mosis* (Moses' New Lament), has been translated into Dutch, causing much upheaval among the Reformed citizens. Many of them considered it worse than the plague and one of the ministers had denounced it. Liebenroth deplors the „Arme blinde leute!“ (poor blind people), but is glad that God has blessed König's book for a couple of people.

The letter that is referred to could be one of the letters that were written by König in 1699 and 1700 to several audiences, the first to the believers in Eschwege, the second to the Count (Landgraf) of Hesse-Cassel, the third to his former colleague Kaspar Kocher of Berne, and the fourth, which bore the title *Der Weg des Friedens* (The Way of Peace), to his relatives and friends.⁵¹ In these letters, König radically criticised the institutional church, its officers and the training for office, its soteriology and the entanglement of the church with secular authorities. The radical tenor of these letters may provide an explanation for the upheaval which, according to Liebenroth, arose among the Reformed citizens in Rotterdam.

The *Neue Klag Mosis Von den Abweichungen Der aus Egypten auffsteigenden Israeliten, Oder Von den Fehlern Der anfangenden Christen* (Moses' new lament over the perversions of the Israelites coming out of Egypt, or, On the mistakes of new Christians) first appeared, anonymously, in 1701.⁵² Its contents are similar to the third sermon of *De leere der mystiken, quietisten, pietisten*: the mistakes of inexperienced Christians are deplored and emphasis is laid on the inner and spiritual imitation of Christ, for which one has to become poor, deaf, mute, crippled, leprous and fully dead in regard to reason, philosophy, the devil, unbelief, one's own power and the desires of the flesh. According to König, these mistakes proceed from natural pride. Concretely, he mentions, among others, the following failures: reliance on one's own reason, being hyperactive instead of resting in God, novel doctrines, worldliness, political programmes, staying under the control of Law rather than Grace, lawlessness, and lack of mutual love.⁵³ These points are also mentioned in the second sermon of the aforementioned Dutch book. No traces of the Dutch translations of König's letter and pamphlet, or of responses to it, could be found.

After Liebenroth has reported on König and on other issues, he reminds Francke about à Brakel's letter: „Domine Brakel wartet mit Verlangen auff seine Antwort“ (Rev. Brakel eagerly awaits your response). From this, it seems clear that Liebenroth remained in direct or indirect contact with à Brakel, who may have notified Liebenroth that he had not had a response from Francke.

Liebenroth continues his letter by suggesting a potential reason for à Brakel's request: he has heard that the Reformed minister is planning to write against the errors of the Pietists („vielleicht darum, weil, wie mir ehemals gesagt ist, er Vornehmens ist, wieder die Irthümer der Pietisten zu schreiben“). Furthermore, he

⁵¹ Dellsperger, Königs ‚Weg des Friedens‘ (see n. 49) 166–174.

⁵² Samuel König, *Neue Klag Mosis Von den Abweichungen Der aus Egypten auffsteigenden Israeliten, Oder Von den Fehlern Der anfangenden Christen*, Offenbach 1701. On this and other editions, see: Rudolf Dellsperger, *Zwischen Offenbarung und Erfahrung*, Zürich 2015, 127–129 and Anm. 17.

⁵³ König, *Neue Klag Mosis* (see n.52). Some of these aspects already point to a shift in König's position from radical criticism of the church towards an emphasis on growing in faith and love; cf. Dellsperger, Königs ‚Weg des Friedens‘ (see n.49) 173 f..

writes that à Brakel is regarded by the pious in Rotterdam and its surroundings as „einen algemeinen Vatter“⁵⁴ (a father to all) and as one who loves good things. With his planned book, à Brakel could, according to Liebenroth, both cause damage and be profitable. For that reason, Liebenroth, in his reply to Francke, wishes his former professor wisdom from God.

Whether Francke ever replied to à Brakel is unknown; at least, a letter of reply has never been found. Three years later, from May until July 1705, Francke made a trip across the Dutch Republic.⁵⁵ Van Lieburg suggests that this journey might have constituted „a charm offensive undertaken by the German Pietist leader, provoked by his knowledge of Brakel’s plans for an anti-pietist polemical work“.⁵⁶ Although Francke may also have visited Rotterdam, on the whole his trip was probably not a „charm offensive“, since the journey was not strategically planned and Francke, as Sträter has demonstrated, met almost exclusively with Lutherans and dissenters, such as the followers of Böhme and Philadelphian-minded individuals. Francke served on his travels as a representative of his establishments in Halle by forming useful ties with diplomatic circles and promoting Pietistic ideas in the sermons he delivered.⁵⁷ This strategy of promoting his own aims and abstaining from debates on dogmatic and ecclesiological issues can also be observed in Francke’s initial approaches to Anglican theologians around this time.⁵⁸

On the other hand, Francke did express his opinion of mystical theology during lectures given in 1704. He asserted that he who teaches this form of theology must partake in the Spirit of Jesus Christ, lest he should make use of his natural, corrupted mind. One must have knowledge of his own wretchedness and of the grace of Christ; he must be regenerate and justified.⁵⁹ Francke’s lectures were not published until 1726 onwards, which is after à Brakel’s death (1711),⁶⁰ so the latter cannot have known of them. It must be mentioned that Francke’s lectures on mystical theology had a reactionary character – mystical writings were widely read among students at Halle – and that he himself was deeply influenced by the mystical mindset. One illustration of this is the fact that, as a student, he had translated the *Guida Spirituale* (1675) of the Quietist de Molinos (see above) from Spanish into Latin.⁶¹

Three years later, à Brakel published a polemical work against the Pietists: *Waerschouwende bestieringe tegen de piëtisten, quiëtisten en dergelyke* (An admonitory cor-

⁵⁴ À Brakel was already being called such in his own day: cf. John Exalto, *Gereformeerde heiligen*, Nijmegen 2005, 186.

⁵⁵ Sträter, *Interessierter Beobachter* (see n. 12) 63–77.

⁵⁶ Van Lieburg, *Warning against the Pietists* (see n. 13) 354.

⁵⁷ Sträter, *Interessierter Beobachter* (see n. 12).

⁵⁸ Alexander Schunka, *Zwischen Kontingenz und Providenz. Frühe Englandkontakte der Halle-schen Pietisten und protestantische Irenik um 1700*, in: *PuN* 34 (2008) 82–114.

⁵⁹ August Hermann Francke, *De Theologia Mystica, Lectio paraenetica*, 1704, in: ders., Erhard Peschke (Hg.), *Werke in Auswahl*, Berlin 1969, 202–212.

⁶⁰ Ders., *Lectiones Paraeneticae, oder, Oeffentliche Ansprachen, an die Studiosos Theologiae auf der Vniversitat zu Halle*, 7 Bde., Halle 1726–1736.

⁶¹ Erhard Peschke, *Studien zur Theologie August Hermann Franckes Bd. 1*, Berlin 1964, 113–115, 133–135, 150 f.; W.R. Ward, *Early Evangelicalism: A Global Intellectual History, 1670–1789*, New York 2006, 40–46.

rection against the Pietists, Quietists, etc.).⁶² It was brought out to supplement the third edition of à Brakel's well-known work of popular dogmatics: *Logikè latreia, dat is redelyke godts-dienst, in welke de goddelijke waarheden des genaden-verbonds worden verklaart, tegen partyen beschermt, en tot de practyke aangedrongen* (The Christian's Reasonable Service in which Divine Truths concerning the covenant of grace are Expounded, Defended against Opposing Parties, and their Practice Advocated).⁶³

À Brakel starts this admonition by stating that the church often has to deal with heresies, and by mentioning a few of these – specifically mystics, Quietists, Quakers and Pietists, both among the Lutherans in Germany and among the Reformed Christians in several places, as well as warning against authors such as David Joris, Jacob Böhme, de Molinos, and François de Salignac de la Mothe-Fénelon.⁶⁴ After this introduction, à Brakel provides his readers, by way of six theses, with some means for discerning what true piety is.⁶⁵ According to him, it is bound to the truth, which is the way of salvation that is revealed by God in his Word to the church, and Scripture, which is the only rule for doctrine and life. Similarly to Francke, à Brakel emphasises that it is regeneration, not nature, that constitutes the origin of spiritual life, and that faith in Christ has to be continually exercised, since without Jesus there is no access to God. Communion and beholding of God is practised not by natural means, but in the face of Jesus and through the Holy Spirit.

When approaching the Pietists, à Brakel is on the one hand very sharp about them, calling them flatterers, lacking all knowledge of true doctrine, advocates of several heresies, whose lofty words arise from their natural, unregenerate hearts, and of maintaining contact with Roman Catholics, Socinians, Mennonites, and even with followers of other religions.⁶⁶ On the other hand, although à Brakel assumes that a majority of the Pietists appear merely to serve God, he believes that there are some true believers among them.⁶⁷ Throughout his warning, à Brakel urges new believers, and those of little faith, to beware of the Pietists.⁶⁸

⁶² Cf. A. de Reuver, Wilhelmus a Brakel en het Pietisme, Documentatieblad Nadere Reformatie 22 (Autumn 1998) 82–90; Van Lieburg, Warning against the Pietists (see n. 13) 357–363.

⁶³ Fred van Lieburg is right in stating that Admonitory Correction was first printed in 1707: van Lieburg, De Redelijke godsdienst van Wilhelmus à Brakel, in: Jan Bos/Erik Geleijns (Hg.), Boekenwjsheid. Drie eeuwen kennis en cultuur in 30 bijzondere boeken. Opstellen bij de voltooiing van de Short-Title Catalogue Netherlands, Zutphen 2009, 186–194, there 191. Wrong publication years are given by A. de Reuver (1683) and W.J. op 't Hof (1690): see de Reuver, Wilhelmus a Brakel en het Pietisme (see n. 62) 84, and Op 't Hof, „Wilhelmus à Brakel“ (see n. 5) 125.

⁶⁴ Jan van de Kamp, Kerkhistorische inleiding, in: Jasper J. Stam (Hg.), Wilhelmus à Brakel, Redelijke Godsdienst, dl. 1B: hoofdstuk 30 tot en met 43, Apeldoorn 2016, 7–24, there 16–19.

⁶⁵ The rules for traditional theological polemics prescribed the setting-out and rejection of all heresies (Gierl, Pietismus und Aufklärung (see n.17) 119–121), but for practical reasons – the Pietists differ on several points – à Brakel chose to draft and defend only a couple of theses: Wilhelmus à Brakel, *Logika latreia, dat is redelyke godtsdienst*, Rotterdam 1707, 1107.

⁶⁶ À Brakel, *Logika Latreia* (see n. 65) 1110 f., 1135–1136.

⁶⁷ À Brakel, *Logika Latreia* (see n. 65) 1106.

⁶⁸ À Brakel, *Logika Latreia* (see n. 65) 1111: „En ghy kleyne geloovige, die, ook kleyn zijt in kennisse van de waarheden, dat bestraffelijk in u is, zijt ghy op u hoede, ghy zijt in 't meeste gevaar [...]“; 1146: „Sommige kleyne kinderen in Christo, die lichtelijk met allerlei windt der Leere

Conclusion

Although one might expect at first glance that à Brakel would in theological and religious terms be aligned with Francke and his Pietism, it turns out that this is not the whole of the matter. His approach is layered: while he does praise Francke for his zeal for piety, he also judges him by confessional and doctrinal yardsticks, which prompts him to pose critical questions.

In applying this confessional yardstick, à Brakel goes far indeed, although at first glance it seems that à Brakel is seeking common ground between himself and Francke. After all, he uses the Marburg Articles as criteria for orthodoxy and mentions some of the fundamental articles from among them. Moreover, in his wording of the article on the Lord's Supper, à Brakel comes very close to Luther. For Francke, however, it must have been annoying in the extreme that à Brakel claimed to possess the correct interpretation of these articles and that à Brakel was strategically exploiting division between Francke and his fellow Lutherans, casting Francke implicitly as his own ally.

For these reasons, it is very possible that à Brakel's letter was poorly received by Francke, as he may very well have been aware of the strategies of Reformed theologians for managing encounters with Lutherans. To conclude, à Brakel's image of himself as a correct interpreter of confessional standards, and of Francke as being in his camp and as a deviator from his fellow Lutherans, may have negatively affected the communication. This may, in turn, explain why Francke seems not to have responded to à Brakel despite Liebenroth's having sent him a reminder, and why also he apparently did not visit the Reformed minister during his trip to the Netherlands. In addition, Francke was presumably not taken with the idea of sharing with a Dutch Reformed minister his opinion of Pietism, nor of paying him a call. This does not detract from how he does approximate à Brakel's position in his view of mysticism, albeit that he was less negative on it than was à Brakel.

À Brakel likewise applies the above doctrinal yardstick in his *Admonitory Correction*. While he does show a concern for people in the writing—to some extent, for Pietists who serve God sincerely – his primary interest is in warning new believers among his readers who are in danger of being misled by the Pietists. To some extent, à Brakel even goes along with the scholarly method of criticism here, as he depersonalises the controversy, although he only mentions three authors, of whom Fénelon was his only contemporary. Other references are to movements, of which à Brakel does not specify living representatives. However, à Brakel does not go so far as to practise the new, academic manner of controversy, in which decisions in religious controversies are left fully to the conscience of individual believers. He does let his readers decide for themselves which persons and ideas represent natural religion and which true religion, but he does so by laying down normative criteria, although he does not refer directly to

omgedreven worden, hoorende bevalligh spreken van de hooge beschouwingen, en niet merkende de angel die daar onder verborgen leyt, verlieven op soo een staat door het geestelijke licht ende leven dat in haar is [...]"; 1156: „En gy kleyne begenadigde die tot de natuyrljke beschouwinge, verloocheninge, liefde afgetrocken zijt, u roepe ik na: *Keert werder, keert weder ô Sulammith, keert weder, keert weder op dat wy u mogen aansien. Hoogl. vi.13.*“

confessional standards, nor to the public order in the Netherlands in which the Reformed Church with its confessions was the privileged church.

We may conclude that à Brakel, on the whole, did not in essence make the shift from confessional churchmanship to polite piety. It must be admitted that he was open in some measure to Pietism and that he made use of the new medium of a dogmatic book in the vernacular, *Reasonable Service*.⁶⁹ However, when assessing Pietism, such as in that manual, he applied confessional criteria. He held that piety must be checked for confession. Other Reformed preachers in the Republic, like Johannes Verschuur, Dionysius de Kesel and Anthonie van Hardeveldt, emulated à Brakel on this point in their own assessments of Pietism.⁷⁰

⁶⁹ Similar books, however, had been published from about 1650 onwards, cf. W.J. op 't Hof, *Het ambt aller gelovigen in de Nadere Reformatie*, in: *Documentatieblad Nadere Reformatie* 41 (2017) 117–155, there 142–152.

⁷⁰ Johannes Verschuur, *De zegepralende waarheid vergezelschap met godvruchtigheid: ter onderrigting van alle vrome Nathanaels en tot ontdekking van alle dwaalgeesten, welke waarheid en gods vrucht van elkander scheiden*, Groningen 1724; Dionysius van der Keessel, *Oorsprong en voortgang der dwepery, met de getrouwe en bescheiden waakzaamheid tegen dezelve*, Deventer 1744; Anthonie van Hardeveldt, *Eene volledige historie der zo genaamde piëtisten [...] van beide de protestantsche hoofdkerken in Duitslandt en Zwitserlandt veroordeelt*, Leiden 1770. Cf. Fred Van Lieburg, *Wege der niederländischen Pietismusforschung. Traditionsaneignung, Identitätspolitik und Erinnerungskultur*, in: *PuN* 37 (2011) 211–253, there 217. I owe the reference to van der Keessel's writing to Joke Spaans.

Appendix

Wilhelmus à Brakel to August Hermann Francke, April 25, 1702⁷¹

Archive of the Francke Foundations, Halle (Saale) (AFSt/H) C 714 : 4⁷²

[recto]

Clarissimo Viro, Venerando in Christo Fratri, Augustino Hermanno Frank Salutem plurimam precatur W à Brakel.

Zelus et Labor vester indefessus in aperienda, tam apto ordine constituenda, et feliciter gubernanda schola (insolitum hisce diebus opus) ut et fructus ejus optati, nobis innotuere. Libenter percepimus è literis Regiomonto ad Pastorem Ecclesiae scotianae hac in urbe quousque nobiscum consentiatis: meo iudicio ex ijs liquet vos approbare Articulus Colloquii Marpurgensis anno 1529 habiti, quos et nos approbamus, articulo tertio et nono bene intellectis, et manente discrimine noto in Articulo decimoquarto: Pergratum nobis est intelligere vos cum Fratribus Marpurgensibus statuere manducationem corporis Christi in cœna, quæ est apprehensio fiducialis Christi sponsoris et meritorum ejus per fidem, esse præcipuam. utinam omnes vestri eo pervenissent! Maximæ fuit nobis lætitiæ audire Eruditionem vestram⁷³ cum pietate singulari esse conjunctam; (hoc tempore rarum quid in Doctis et Professoribus) cujus et Testimonia sunt scripta vestra efficacem spirantia pietatem, ut et collectio variorum Practicorum, ex aliis linguis in germanicum versorum, in unum volumen, ut mihi author est D. Breckling, qui addidit inter eos esse Gradus vitæ spiritualis, per quos in cœlum ascendit, et quos nobis reliquit Theodorus à Brakel, Pater meus pientissimæ⁷⁴ memoriæ: Sed miror mixtionem heterodoxorum cum orthodoxis: quæ communicio Luci cum tenebris? Quoniam ergo Scripta Patris mei apud vos aliquo sunt in pretio, non ingratum forsitan⁷⁵ erit videre ejus Effigiem, en tibi duas: addo opus ab ipsius filio unico, jam sene sexaginta septem annorum in ædificationem Ecclesiae conscriptum: accipias quæso eo quo donatur animo, et concedatur ej obscurus in Bibliotheca vestra angulus.

⁷¹ In the transcription, abbreviations have tacitly been written out in full. Alterations in the manuscript are documented in the footnotes, as are short biographical notes to persons mentioned in the letters, with the exception of those who are mentioned in the article above and those who could not be identified. I would like to express my gratitude to Dr Cornelis A. de Niet for checking the transcription and for making a Dutch translation of the first letter, and to Dr Viktoria Franke for her assistance in deciphering a few words in the second letter.

⁷² For a description of the letter, cf. the ‚Datenbank zu den Einzelhandschriften in den historischen Archivabteilungen‘ of the AFSt/H, <http://192.124.243.55/cgi-bin/gkdb.pl> (consulted 31 March 2020).

⁷³ Verstram, but first ‚r‘ struck through.

⁷⁴ Should be: *piissimæ*.

⁷⁵ Collateral form of: *forsitan/fortasse*.

[verso]

Ante annos aliquot exorta est, et indies crescit, præcipue inter vestros, nova quasi Lux et vita sub specie pietatis, et nomine Pietistarum, et mysticorum: In principio tacite gaudebam, nam pietatem amo, et quo quis majores in ea faciat⁷⁶ progressus et sublimius vivat, eo amabilior est mihi, avide expectabam quid ea de re fieret: Exploravi, quantum potui, qualis esset illa Lux et vita, et quales essent qui eam sectantur. Deprehendi inter eos non convenire, nec de Fidei nec de Praxi, mala esse mixta bonis, et bona esse mixta malis, ideoque non omnia damno, nec omnia approbo: Sunt inter illos hæretici, schismatici, rudes veritatis Euangelicæ, qui amorem veritatis abjecerunt, et etiam vere Pii. Religio ipsorum, quo sublimior videtur, eo magis⁷⁷ recedit a simplicitate quæ est in Christo Jesu⁷⁸, et accedit ad pietatem naturalem, in qua et Ethnicis quidam præclari fuere. Legi et ipse ante annos plurimos varios⁷⁹ et præcipuos mysticos, sed damno meo, gratias ago Deo meo, qui me ex laqueis eis eduxit. judico aliquid faciendum, ut pii in via recta conserventur, et dirigantur. Sententiam vestram maxime desidero, quæso me ejus certiozem facias. Vale.

Rotterod[amum] 25 Aprilem 1702.

Joh. Hieronymus Liebenroth to August Hermann Francke, October 3, 1702

AFSt/H C 286 : 2⁸⁰

[1r]

Immanuel!Rotterdam den 3. Octobrem 1702

In den selben geehrter herr Professor und gelieber br[uder]

In liegende sind eine durch Monsieur Ieddo, der den 30 Septembrem aus England wieder zurück kommen umb nach Franckreich über zu gehen, von H. Wiegers⁸¹ zugesandt worden, daß ich sie ferner bestellen sollte. Dannach habe Sie unter diesem couvert an den g[eliebten] bruder wollen fortsanden, nicht zweiffelnde, es werde ein jeder, insonderheit wohl bestellt, und an gehörigen Ohrt gebracht werden. Lindhamer⁸² und Ditmar⁸³ sind vor einigen Wochen hier bey uns

⁷⁶ ‚at‘ added from above.

⁷⁷ Character struck through between ‚i‘ and ‚s‘.

⁷⁸ Character after ‚u‘ struck through.

⁷⁹ Word struck through; *varios* added from above.

⁸⁰ For a description of the letter, cf. the ‚Datenbank zu den Einzelhandschriften‘.

⁸¹ Jacob Bruno Wiegers (1694-c.1712), cf. ‚Datenbank zu den Einzelhandschriften‘. Also cf. this database also for the references to persons below.

⁸² Leonhard Lindhammer (1651–1732), minister, who had chiliastic views and lived in Halle from 1701.

⁸³ Johann Dittmar (b. c.1675) studied theology at Halle, travelled via Rotterdam to England in 1702 and became a representative of the Philadelphian Society.

gewesen, und jener von hier wieder nach Teutschland, dieser aber nach Engeland übergegangen, wo er auch glücklich angekommen, wie ich aus des bruder Wiegers seinem Schreiben ersehen, der Herr leite sie, mich und uns alle nach seinem Rath, und erhalte doch die Hertzen seiner Kinder, denen sein Gesetz ins Hertz geschrieben ist, bey dem einigen, daß sie seinen Nahmen fürchten, und demühtig bleiben für ihrem Gott. Ein blind Mensch ist wohl ein arm mensche; allein derjenige, welcher alles zu sehen meinet, weil ihm einiges Lichtlein ist auff gegangen, ist, nach meinem Urtheil, viel elendiger, als ein leiblich blinder. Denn dieser begehrtet sehend gemacht zu werden, jener aber verblendet sich selbst sein eigen Licht, oder viel mehr durch die Vermeßenheit und Einbildung, die er von sich, als einem erleuchteten christen hat, dadurch man dann leicht in allerhanden ex cesso verfällt, anstoß giebt, und selbst den grösten Schaden darüber leidet. O reichthum der langmuth Gottes! Einen solchen Vater dienen die noch ungezogene Kinder zu haben, der mit leiden mit ihrer Schwachheit haben, und durch seine Weisheit alle ihre Thorheit zu einem guten Ende bringen kan. Königes sein brieff, den er aus Teutschland (vielleicht aus Magdeburg) nach der Schweitz an seine Eltern gesandt, und hier ins niederlantsche oder holländische über setzt ist, nebst seinem anderen büchlein, genandt: Neue Klage Mosis etc. hat das Glück, welches Paulus vor dem Landpfleger Felix hatte, Act. 24. v. 5., hier in Rotterdam auch, oder noch wohl ein größers

[1v]

in dem die, welche für anderen Eifferer, der reformirten religion sind, sich meistens dar wieder legen, und einige derselben gesagt hatten, daß, wenn die pest in diese stadt gekommen, solch ein Unglück in dieselbe nicht gekommen wäre, als dieses Buch etc. Dahero auch einer deren Prediger die refutation derßelben auff sich genommen, als ein buch das aus lauter Ketzereien und Irthümern zusammen gesetzt. Arme blinde leute! Unterdeßen muß Gott vor den segen gepriesen seijn, den er mancher Seele, bey Lesung deßelben hat laßen in die Seele flußen. Es bleibt also darbey, daß waß dem einen ein geruch des lebens zum leben ist, wird dem anderen ein geruch des todes zum tode, welcher nichts mehr thun kann, als das leben in seiner herrligkeit zu zeigen, und solches mehr und mehr helffen verklären.

Hier finden sich nach und nach mehr Seelen, welche meinen Umbgang und Bekantschafft such, und die mich gleichsam aus dem Winkel heraus ziehen, worin ich mich wegen⁸⁴ der Unreinigkeit meines Herzens und Lippen zu verbergen wohl Ursache habe. Geliebter bruder, er helffe mir denn getreulich und beständig Gott bitten, daß er in mir ein neues und reines schaffen wolle, daß des vorigen nicht mehr gedacht werde, umb also bequem gemacht zu werden zum geistlichen Tempelbau, und deselben dienst, wor zu ehrmahls niemanden zu gelaßen wurde, als das geheiligte Volck Levi, und nun viel weniger iemanden zu gelaßen wird, als herrlicher⁸⁵ dieses hauß und tempel ist gegen das vorige.

⁸⁴ Struck through: *wohl*.

⁸⁵ *sic*.

Domine Brakel wartet mit Verlangen auff seine Antwort, vielleicht darum, weil, wie mir ehemals gesagt ist, er Vornehmens ist, wieder die Irthümer der Pietisten zu schreiben. Ob er nun zu dem Ende correspondentz mit ihm sucht, oder aus anderen Uhrsachen, weiß ich nicht. Dieses weiß ich, weil er gleichsam vor⁸⁶ einen allgemeinen Vatter⁸⁷ derer hiesigen frommen in und außerhalb dieser Stadt und province, gehalten wird, und ein Man ist, der Liebe vor das gute hat, daß er sehr bequem

[2r]

ist, sowohl Schaden, als Nutzen mit seinem Schreiben zu thun, wiewohl nicht weiter, als es ihm der Herr zu läset. Ich wünsche derowegen göttliche Weisheit um also zu antwortten, daß da durch die Wahrheit geoffenbahrt, die Liebe auffgerichtet, und ein brüderlicher Friede in Gott zu einer genaueren Gemeinschaft gestiftet werde. Sein letzeres an mich habe zwar nicht mit buchstaben, doch mit der That beantwortet, und gesehen, daß sein Raht wieder den Ausgang der Sache, oder das Ende derselben nicht gewesen, weil die Umstände der Sachen keinen anderen Raht erforderten, als einen solchen. Der Herr, der bishieher versehen, wird seine Väterliche providentz ferner über mich, und alle meinen noch zu gehende Wege halten, damit ich mit seinen Augen, und nach seinem Raht geleitet, und endlich mit Ehren angenommen werde. Wer bin ich? Und was ist meines Vaters hauß? Ich hätte noch wohl eins und das andere zu schreiben, allein weil ich nicht weiß, ob schweigen nicht beßer ist, als schreiben, darumb wil ichs vor dieses mahl laßen, und auff eine beßere gelegenheit warten. Nach Empfehlung in des Herren schutz und fernere gnädige Regierung, grüße denselben nebst allen bekandten und freunden Gottes, insonderheit herr monsieur Michaelis,⁸⁸ (mit bericht, daß ich vor ohn gefehr 2 Monachten aus Archangel von dem bruder ein Schreiben gehat, die er in⁸⁹ seinen noch ziemlich guten zustand mit wenigem meldete, und nach meinem ernstlich fragte, und begierig war zu wissen, wie, und wo ich lebte etc.) und verhar-

re
des geehrten und geliebten bruder
Verbundener

Joh. Hieron. Liebenroth.

Abstract

Anhänger der Aufklärung und des Pietismus kamen um 1700 zu einer Neudefinition von Religion, nämlich einer „vernünftigen Religion“, die nicht vom Staat aufgezwungen wird, sondern eine Überzeugung des Herzens ist. In diesem Beitrag wird untersucht, welche Auswirkungen dies auf das Verhältnis zu Menschen aus anderen christlichen Konfessionen und Bewegungen

⁸⁶ Added from above.

⁸⁷ Struck through: *Von*.

⁸⁸ A certain Michaelis, who had been a teacher and cantor at Plauen prior to 1712.

⁸⁹ The ‚n‘ added from above.

hatte. Zu diesem Zweck wird eine Fallstudie über einen Brief des niederländischen reformierten Pfarrers Wilhelmus à Brakel (1635–1711) an den deutschen lutherischen Pfarrer August Hermann Francke (1663–1727) aus dem Jahr 1702 durchgeführt. Aufgrund ihrer theologischen und religiösen Ausrichtungen würde man erwarten, dass sie sich einander sehr nahestanden. Die Untersuchung zeigt jedoch, dass der Reformierte A Brakel den Lutheraner Francke nicht nach modernen, sondern nach traditionellen konfessionellen Maßstäben beurteilte.