

History, Reform, and *Aufklärung*. German Theological Writing and Dutch Literary Publicity in the Eighteenth Century  
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Introduction

In 1776 the *Deutsches Museum* published a letter written in Amsterdam by a certain 'S.' and addressed to a certain 'Herrn B. in H.', in Germany. The letter contained a report on the contemporary reception of German books in the Dutch Republic. 'Wenn Sie nach der Menge deutscher Schriften, die unaufhörlich *vertaald* [i.e. übersetzt, JvE] werden, die Liebe dieser Nation zu unsern Produkten beurtheilen wollen,' wrote S., 'so muß gewiß Ihr Urtheil für Holland rühmlich ausfallen. Bücher von allerley Art und Inhalt, grosse und kleine, gute und mitelmäßige und elende, nichts ist vor einem Holländischen Uebersetzer sicher (...)' S., who claimed to have had a theological education, was especially concerned to point out the impact of religious writing in the Netherlands. Authors like H. Meene, J.F. Jacobi, J.L. Mosheim, J.P. Miller, J.E. Schubert, A.F.W. Sack, J.J. Spalding, J.A. Nösselt, and G. Less were now all read in Dutch, he observed. It was a pity, though, that so many German writings were translated which did not at all reflect Dutch tastes. Why render the philosophical essays by J.G. Töllner into Dutch? It could hardly be expected that Töllner's books would sell sufficiently in a country so backward in philosophy, and with such a high regard for orthodox theology.<sup>1</sup>

The writer of this not unprejudiced letter subscribed to the general view of the Dutch that characterized many German travel accounts of the time. According to S., the Dutch reading public basically consisted of uneducated merchants and persons of private means who had a penchant for orthodox theology or otherwise exhibited the mentality of a provincial backwater population.<sup>2</sup> This biased view no doubt had some basis in reality. The point is, however, that S. was perfectly correct in observing that the Dutch avidly translated German theological writings during the second half of the eighteenth century. At the same time, Dutch opinion makers were highly irritated by the many German journalists and critics who looked down upon Dutch intellectual culture with what seemed unfounded arrogance. With some frequency Dutch commentators vented their frustrations. For example, the editors of a major clerical periodical observed in 1790 that three things had made Germany the 'general marketplace of European learning': the abundance, the variety, and the novelty of the books it produced. Many of these professed novelties, they added, had been plagiarized from Dutch authors who had earlier written in Latin or

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<sup>1</sup> Briefe aus Holland an Herrn B. in H., in: *Deutsches Museum*, Leipzig (Weygand) 1776, II (Julius bis Dezember), 696-709. 'B.' is presumably Heinrich Christian Boie (1744-1806), one of the editors of the *Deutsches Museum*, who held a position in Hannover at the time; I have not been able to trace 'S.'

<sup>2</sup> See also Julia Bientjes, *Holland und der Holländer im Urteil deutscher Reisender (1400-1800)*, Groningen (J.B. Wolters) 1967, 107-109.

French. The Germans, moreover, tended to radicalize. Those who criticized the Dutch in journals such as the *Allgemeine Deutsche Bibliothek* and the *Allgemeine Literatur-Zeitung* were also the ones who objected most to confessional loyalties, and were therefore bound to reject Dutch divines who remained faithful to the Synod of Dort. The editors were quite willing to recognize the excellence of German books, but noted that it would have been better if some of them had been left untranslated.<sup>3</sup> Around the turn of the century, another theologian warmly supported the endeavours of a German lawyer from Hamburg, Diederich Ulrich Heinemeyer (1771-1814), who was compiling material for a lexicon on Dutch scholars. Modelled after Hamberger and Meusel's *Das gelehrte Teutschland*, it was to be called *Das gelehrte Batavien*. Heinemeyer's lexicon, the theologian believed, would finally put an end to the misleading accounts of Dutch scholarship spread by prejudiced German journalists.<sup>4</sup>

In the light of these contemporary observations it is remarkable that so little attention has been paid to the profound impact of German writings in general, and German theological books in particular, on Dutch intellectual culture. It is not difficult to explain this lack of interest on the part of Dutch scholars. Ever since the eighteenth century the Dutch, having lost the superior international status they once enjoyed, have had to come to terms with the growing economic, military, political and cultural predominance of Germany. Hence they tended to put up their defences, especially after the Second World War, resulting in a disinterest in, and even an aversion to, German affairs, and a general focus on the Anglo-Saxon world. Not surprisingly, most studies on Dutch-German intellectual relations were written before the War.<sup>5</sup> This seems to apply also to German scholars: the most recent major study on eighteenth-century German religious history which reveals a particular interest in Dutch affairs is Karl Aner's *Die Theologie der Lessingzeit*, written in 1929.<sup>6</sup>

Much, therefore, remains to be done on German intellectual influence in the Netherlands. This applies especially to religious thought, if only because German theological writings were the most popular genre. The following is a first comprehensive appraisal of such influence, based on an analysis of translations from German or 'German' Latin into Dutch, on their reception in review periodicals, and on other responses of contemporaries to books of a broadly German provenance. In particular, the way these translations reflected the nature of, as well as de-

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<sup>3</sup> Maandelyksche uittreksels of boekzaal der geleerde waereld, Amsterdam (erven D. onder de Linden) 150 1790, VI-XIII.

<sup>4</sup> F.J.H. Hochstenbach and C.B.F. Singeling, Heinemeyer's onvoltooide. Een onuitgegeven lexicon over de achttiende eeuw, in: Documentatieblad 18e Eeuw 20 1988, 29-50; the theologian mentioned was J. van Nuys Klinkenberg (see below). The lexicon, incidentally, was never completed.

<sup>5</sup> Cf. Willem J. Noordhoek, Gellert und Holland. Ein Beitrag zu der Kenntniss der geistigen und literarischen Beziehungen zwischen Deutschland und Holland im achtzehnten Jahrhundert, Amsterdam (H.J. Paris) 1928; Henriette A.C. Spoelstra, De invloed van de Duitsche letterkunde op de Nederlandsche in de tweede helft van de 18e eeuw, Amsterdam (H.J. Paris) 1931.

<sup>6</sup> Halle (Saale) (Max Niemeyer) 1929.

velopments within, Dutch literary ‘publicity’ (*Öffentlichkeit*) of the eighteenth century will be discussed.<sup>7</sup> The period examined ends with the divorce between church and state in the Netherlands in 1796; the latter four decades of the century will receive particular emphasis, since the impact of German religious books was greater by far in these years than in any previous period. First the significance of German religious books in respect of the Dutch market will be examined. Some quantifiable data will be presented; this is followed by a description of the general contours of Dutch literary publicity, and the consequences this had for commercial and intellectual possibilities regarding translations from the German. Subsequently four main trends evident in the state of translations of German theological writing after about 1760 will be discussed: apologies for confessional orthodoxy in particular and Christianity in general, philological and historical writings, critiques of the clerical establishment, and theological radicalism. In a final section the main conclusions are summarized.<sup>8</sup>

#### Prologue: A Reversal in Relations

The influx of German books was exceptionally large during the latter four decades of the Dutch Republic. An analysis of review periodicals, bibliographies and electronic databases reveals that at least 1,130 independent publications of German provenance, written in German or ‘German’ Latin, were translated between 1760 and 1796. The significance of this number is evident from the share of originally German books in review periodicals. They account for 20 % of all books reviewed in three major periodicals.<sup>9</sup> This is twice the number of reviews devoted to books of English or French origin (each about 10 %). Two categories are especially prominent in the books translated from the German. Writings related to ‘entertainment’ – novels, plays, poetry, anthologies of fables – account for about 20 % of all translations of originally German books. Religious writings made up about 40 %.<sup>10</sup> This means that on average more than 12 books on

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<sup>7</sup> Recent accounts of eighteenth-century ‘publicity’ include John Christian Laursen, *The Subversive Kant: The Vocabulary of “Public” and “Publicity”*, in: *Political Theory* 14 1986, 584-603; Anthony J. La Vopa, *Conceiving a Public: Ideas and Society in Eighteenth-Century Europe*, in: *Journal of Modern History* 64 1992, 79-116; B. Redekop, Thomas Abbt and the Formation of an Enlightened German “Public”, in: *Journal of the History of Ideas* 58 1997, 81-103. For the German context, see especially the work of Hans Erich Bödeker, among others *Aufklärung als Kommunikationsprozeß*, in: ed. Rudolf Vierhaus, *Aufklärung als Prozeß, Aufklärung 2*, Hamburg (Felix Meiner Verlag) 1988, 89-111.

<sup>8</sup> In the following, originally German writings translated into Dutch will be referred only by the title and the year of appearance; the date of publication of the Dutch translation of a German work will be preceded by ‘D.tr.’

<sup>9</sup> These periodicals are the *Vaderlandsche letter-oefeningen (...)*, Amsterdam (A. van der Kroe and Yntema & Tieboel) 1761-1796; *Nederlandsche Bibliotheek (...)*, Amsterdam (M. de Bruijn) 1774-1788; and *Vaderlandsche Bibliotheek van Wetenschap, Kunst en Smaak*, Amsterdam (M. de Bruijn) 1789-1796 (henceforth: VL, NB and VB. The periodicals each appeared twice annually; thus VL 1780-ii refers to the second volume of 1780). The third periodical was, in effect, a continuation of the second, which had started out as a journal dominated by the confessional Reformed clergy, but was unable to retain its specific character in the long run.

<sup>10</sup> Note that in German book production the share of works related to entertainment increased at the cost of religious and edifying literature during the second half of the eighteenth century; see Helmuth Kiesel/Paul Münch, *Gesellschaft und Literatur im 18. Jahrhundert. Voraussetzungen und Entstehung des literarischen Markts in Deutschland*, München (Beck) 1977, 200-203. The figures used in these books are based on Rudolf Jentzsch, *Der deutsch-*

explicitly religious subjects were translated from the German per year during the last four decades of the eighteenth century – a relatively large number, given the limited demand for Dutch-language books from a population of about 2 million people. ‘Religion’, of course, can be interpreted very broadly. An eighteenth century novel or ethical treatise was also very likely to discuss religious issues. If these were taken into account as well, the percentage of books actually concerned with religion would be considerably higher. And the Dutch were not as parochial as German journalists judged them to be. Developments in Germany were followed closely: on average, books of a religious character translated into Dutch between 1760 and 1796 were published within 9.8 years of their first appearance in Germany; 47 % were published within four years.<sup>11</sup>

No comprehensive research has been done into translations from the German before 1760. But there is some indication of the kind of books the Dutch found interesting in this earlier period. The philosopher Christian Wolff enjoyed certain popularity: between 1738 and 1745 no less than nine of his writings were translated. Among the theologians, Lampe (more than ten book titles before 1740), Mel (at least nine titles before 1753) and Ulrich (at least seven titles before 1758), were best-selling authors. It is worthwhile to take a closer look at these German and Swiss authors and their writings. A number of Wolff’s philosophical treatises were rendered into Dutch by two rather obscure translators of German provenance. One was Johann Christoph Sprögel, born in Hamburg in 1686. Sprögel studied medicine in Jena and worked as a physician in his hometown until 1736, in which year he established himself in Amsterdam as a private tutor in chemistry. The other translator, Adolph Friedrich Marci, had similarly left Hamburg during the 1730s after a career (probably as a tutor) in Germany, and subsequently worked in Amsterdam as a Lutheran schoolmaster.<sup>12</sup> It would seem that before the 1760s major German authors or their translators had close connections with Germany itself. An examination of the three theologians mentioned supports this conclusion. Friedrich Adolph Lampe (1683-1729) was a Reformed professor in Bremen who had worked for a while in Utrecht; the ties between the Calvinist city of Bremen and the Dutch Republic stemmed from the sixteenth and seventeenth centuries, but gradually petered out during the eighteenth. Many of Lampe’s pastoral writings were translated by Isaac Le Long (1683-1762), a German of French Calvinist descent who left Frankfurt am Main for the Dutch Republic at the beginning of the century. Conrad Mel

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lateinische Büchermarkt nach der Leipziger Ostermeß-Katalogen von 1740, 1770 und 1800 in seiner Gliederung und Wandlung, Leipzig (Voigtländer) 1912, who shows that in absolute terms there was an increase in ‘theological’ literature.

<sup>11</sup> This figure is based on 289 book titles in the category ‘religion’ of which it was possible to trace the date of publication of both the original and the translation. New (German) editions of older books were taken as original publications.

<sup>12</sup> Michiel R. Wielema, Leibniz and Wolff in the Netherlands. The eighteenth-century Dutch translations of their writings, in: *Studia Leibnitiana* 25 1993, 55-69.

(1666-1733) was a foremost Reformed theologian from Hessen, who had studied in Bremen and Groningen and was deeply influenced by Dutch Calvinist theology. He was a court preacher and professor at Königsberg for some time but spent most of his working life as a preacher in Hersfeld in Hessen.<sup>13</sup> Hans Jacob Ulrich (1683-1731), finally, was a Reformed professor of theology in Zurich, whose connection with the Dutch Republic is evident from the fact that he once declined an invitation to work at Groningen. All three theologians had a pronounced tendency towards pietism. By contrast, in the second half of the eighteenth century the majority of religious writers translated were Lutheran rather than Reformed, few had a close affinity with pietism, and most had no evident connection with the Dutch Republic. Also, the main translators were now often either native Dutchmen or second- and third-generation German immigrants.

While Dutch opinion makers of the latter half of the century often complained about the enormous popularity of German books in their country, such complaints were all but lacking in the period before 1760, when frenchification was seen as a far greater problem. A fair indication of the quantitative and qualitative changes in the intellectual relations between the Dutch Republic and Germany is provided by the number of religious books translated from Dutch into German during the eighteenth century. A recent bibliography mentions eight religious books of Dutch origin translated into German in or after 1760, as opposed to 100 books between 1700 and 1760. Almost 60 % of these 108 translations had been originally published in Dutch before 1700; and only two were originally published after 1760.<sup>14</sup> In other words, in comparison with the period after 1760, German interest in Dutch religious thought was much stronger during the first six decades of the eighteenth century. In particular, two kinds of religious literature appealed to German readers. The first kind was pietist in nature. A good example is *Die Staffeln des geistlichen Lebens* by the Dutch Reformed pietist Theodorus à Brakel (1608-1668), first published in German in 1701 in a collection of tracts edited by Gottfried Arnold. The second kind of religious literature concerns Cocceianism, a brand of Reformed theology based on the work of the Bremer-Dutch theologian Johannes Cocceius (1603-1669). Cocceians generally attempted to devise a historical rather than traditional scholastic theological system, and partly because of their emphasis on bible studies they exerted a strong influence on both Reformed and Lutheran divinity in Germany.<sup>15</sup> An important translation was the *Auszlegung der Wiessagung Jesaja* by one of the famous continental exegetes of the early eighteenth century, Campegius

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<sup>13</sup> W. Zeller, Conrad Mel und die Marburger Bibel, in: *Reformatio und Confessio. Festschrift W. Maurer*, Berlin/Hamburg (Lutherisches Verlagshaus) 1965, 180-189.

<sup>14</sup> These figures are based on Jan van der Haar, *Internationale ökumenische Beziehungen im 17. und 18. Jahrhundert. Bibliographie von aus dem Englischen, Niederländischen und Französischen ins Deutsche überstetzten theologischen Büchern von 1600-1800*, Ederveen (Antiquariat Kool Boeken) 1997.

<sup>15</sup> Gottlob Schrenk, *Gottesreich und Bund im älteren Protestantismus vornehmlich bei Johannes Coccejus. Zugleich ein Beitrag zur Geschichte des Pietismus und der heilsgeschichtlichen Theologie*, Gütersloh (C. Bertelsmann) 1923, 300-332.

Vitringa Sr. (1659-1722). The book was published in 1749 with a foreword by no one less than Johann Lorenz Mosheim.

### Translations on the Dutch Market

After about 1760 there was, then, a sharply declining market for Dutch religious books in Germany, but a rapidly growing market for German religious books in the Netherlands.<sup>16</sup> This latter market was quite diverse, as we shall see, but it had certain features and shortcomings that were peculiar to Dutch literary publicity. Firstly, a probably considerable number of educated readers could understand written German, and many read Latin. 'Die meiste Liebhaberey für die deutsche, zumal schöne Litteratur ist unstreitig hier in Amsterdam, wo es ordentlich Mode ist, deutsch zu verstehn und zu lesen,' observed S. in the *Deutsches Museum*. This meant that it was not in all cases necessary to translate German books into Dutch. For instance, I have been unable to find any translation of a work by Christian Thomasius, but it seems likely that at least some of his writings were read in either German or Latin.

Secondly, until well into the nineteenth century the Dutch tended to emphasize much more strongly than the Germans the need for a conciliatory form of literary publicity.<sup>17</sup> Hence controversial books were not well-publicized. For a review periodical to risk a religious dispute meant that potential readers could be lost, and on the relatively small Dutch book market this could imply a fatal blow to its existence. The inability of the *Nederlandsche Bibliotheek* to continue for long as an expressly orthodox journal illustrates this. It was wiser for editors to include reviews of books that were either reputable best-sellers or kept to the religious middle. A periodical had to be sold in order to survive, and this implied that literally *all* potential readers had to be seduced to a subscription, irrespective of their literary or religious leanings. In a typical commentary on controversial religious developments the conclusions would be summed up like this:

[Anyone who has followed recent developments in Germany knows] that mistakes have been made on both sides. An all too strong attachment to the old on the one hand, and an all too strong longing for novelties on the other, have embittered the Parties, and made them diverge from each other more than perhaps would have been the case if they had treated each other with more composure.<sup>18</sup>

If German books of a critical nature were published, they were generally reviewed (if, indeed, they were reviewed at all) in such a manner that only the very orthodox or the very heterodox

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<sup>16</sup> The change is illustrated by the large number of Germans whose treatises were selected for translation in a short-lived theological journal, *De schatkamer der geleerden*, Amsterdam (Jacobus Loveringh), 2 vols. 1762-1764. The emphasis was on uncontroversial articles on bible studies by, among others, T.C. Lilienthal, J.G. Walch, C.W.F. Walch and H.S. Reimarus.

<sup>17</sup> On the underdevelopment of a Dutch tradition of literary criticism, see Gert-Jan Johannes, *De lof der aalbessen. Over (Noord-)Nederlandse literatuurtheorie, literatuur en de consequenties van kleinschaligheid 1770-1830*, Den Haag (SDU Uitgevers) 1997, 47-50.

would object. The outcome of this policy – an apparent mediocrity – was, of course, ridiculed by German journalists. Similarly, very few radical books were published in the Dutch Republic. This was probably the result of several factors: the sometimes strict censure policy of the civil authorities, the need for a publisher to maintain his good repute, and the fact that books could be read in the original language.<sup>19</sup> Commercial prudence disguised as moderation seems to have been the publishers' general code. Thus a publisher at Utrecht had intended to translate the infamous *Fragmenten* by Hermann Samuel Reimarus (1694-1768), published anonymously by Lessing after 1774. However, Franz Rütz (1733-1803), a Dutch Lutheran divine noted for his critical theological attitude, advised him not to do so until they had been publicly refuted by a reputable Dutch scholar. In the end, the *Fragmenten* were never published.<sup>20</sup>

Thirdly, Dutch publicity was characterized by the relatively firm hold of the Reformed (Contra-Remonstrant or Calvinist) church on public life. The Reformed church was usually denoted the 'public' or 'dominant' church of the land. It was not a state church, but generally functioned as one, being the only church officially supported and financed by the political authorities. Hence for the political elite membership of the Reformed church was mandatory. Since no more than about 55-60 % of the population belonged to the public church, it was obliged to subsist side by side with substantial religious minorities. These included above all the Roman Catholics (35 %) and the Protestant dissenters (5-10 %). While the former played a minor role in intellectual life, the contribution of the latter group, comprising Remonstrants, Mennonites and Lutherans, was substantial. Because the political structure was exceedingly complex, and because the civil authorities were intensely aware that the subtle balances of power in the Republic were bound to be endangered through religious strife, the Reformed church managed to retain a comparatively strong hold on public life until the 1770s. This, again, meant that extremes were avoided and that 'moderation' was earnestly propagated. To put it another way, there were no figures of unquestionable power who could lend open support to, or actively stimulate, anti-clerical critics: there was, that is, no Frederick the Great in the Dutch Republic. All this does not imply that the confessional clergy was not subject to criticism. Traditionally Remonstrants and *politiques*<sup>21</sup> had taken the lead in opposing the established Calvinist church, but in the eighteenth century criticism was growing, or at least becoming more evident, in all sections of society.

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<sup>18</sup> VL 1791-i, 556.

<sup>19</sup> For example, the library catalogue of Nicolai's translator A.A. van der Meersch (see below) contains, among many others, Semler's *Von freier Untersuchung des Kanon* (1774), Bahrdt's *Die neuesten Offenbarungen Gottes* and Reimarus' *Von dem Zwecke Jesu und seine Jünger* (1778); see *Catalogus librorum (...) A.A. v.d. Meersch, Amsterdam (Petrus den Hengst, Wed. Jan Döll) 1792*, 51 (no. 925) and 52 (nos. 946 and 954).

<sup>20</sup> NB 1779-i, 337-343.

Given the parameters of Dutch literary publicity, the amount and the variation of books translated from the German is quite astonishing. The main German writers, in terms of the number of translated book titles explicitly concerned with religion, are shown in the first set of figures in Table 1. This first set is not, however, conclusive, since it is difficult to classify books in any definitive way. Many authors who wrote on other than solely religious topics could be regarded as religious writers. For example, the German pietist Johann Ludwig Ewald (1748-

Set 1		Set 2		Set 3	
Rank	Writers on explicitly religious topics (more than 5 book titles)	Rank	Writers on all categories (more than 10 book titles)	Rank	'Publicity exposure' of writers on religious topics (more than 12 volumes reviewed)
1	J.L. Mosheim (21)	1	J.K. Lavater (25)	1	J.L. Mosheim (59)
2	J.E. Schubert (20)	2	C.F. Gellert (16)	2	J.D. Michaelis (45)
3	J.K. Lavater (18)	3	J.L. Mosheim (22)	3	J.E. Schubert (28)
4	J.D. Michaelis (17)	4	J.E. Schubert (20)	4	J.J. Heß (27)
5	J.J. Heß (11)	5	J.D. Michaelis (18)	5	J.A. Cramer (23)
6	K.F. Bahrtdt (9)	6	A. Kotzebue (14)		J.K. Lavater (23)
	J.A. Cramer (9)	7	J.L. Ewald (13)	6	G.J. Zollikofer (22)
7	J.F. Jacobi (7)		C.G. Salzmann (13)	7	T.C. Lilienthal (19)
	C.C. Sturm (7)	8	J.A. Cramer (11)	8	J.F. Stapfer (15)
	J.G. Töllner (7)			9	A.H. Niemeyer (13)
8	G. Less (6)				C.C. Sturm (13)

1822), one of the best-selling German authors, does not figure in the first set because only five of his writings can be classified as explicitly religious in nature on the basis of book titles alone. But as the second set of figures in Table 1. shows, his place among the main German writers on all categories was high, partly on account of books like *Ueber Volksaufklärung; ihre Grenzen und Vortheile* (1790, D.tr. 1793). Of course, the ranking of a writer is not necessarily indicative of his reputation among the reading public. Some authors were better known than others. Hence the third set of figures in Table 1., showing the amount of 'publicity exposure' to which writers on religious topics were subject. These figures are based on the number of volumes (rather than book titles) reviewed in the three main review periodicals mentioned above.<sup>22</sup> Combining the various groupings makes clear which authors the Dutch generally found interesting or important. Recurrent names include Mosheim, Michaelis, Schubert, Lavater, Heß, Cramer, and Sturm. Some authors, who might have been expected on account of their significance in Germany it-

<sup>21</sup> Cf. Heinz Schilling, Afkeer van domineesheerschap: Ein neuzeitlicher Typus des Antiklerikalismus, in: *Anticlericalism in Late Medieval and Early Modern Europe*, ed. P.A. Dykema/Heiko A. Oberman, Leiden etc. (Brill) 1993, 655-668.

<sup>22</sup> I.e. VL, NB and VB.

self,<sup>23</sup> are lacking in Table 1. For example, the arch-pietist of German Lutheranism, Philip Jakob Spener (1635-1705), awakened only limited interest with the Dutch. The reason for this is probably that German pietism developed much later than Dutch pietism and therefore had little to offer to the Dutch reading public. Pioneering Wolffian theologians were not prominent either; a major divine from Halle like Siegmund Jakob Baumgarten (1706-1757) remained untranslated. As we shall see, second and third generation Wolffian divines such as Stapfer, Schubert and Jerusalem enjoyed much greater popularity. The more radical theologians are conspicuously absent – a case in point are the *Fragmenten*. But many German divines active during the second half of the eighteenth century were very much in vogue in the Dutch Republic. These divines will be examined more closely in the following, using Table 1. as a general lead.

#### Traditionalists, Pastors and Apologists

German pietism failed to attract much attention, not only because of the relatively strong indigenous pietist traditions in the Netherlands, but also because pietism as a ‘high church’ phenomenon was on the wain in the second half of the century. Pietist publications after about 1750 consisted mainly of reissues of seventeenth-century native Dutch writings.<sup>24</sup> Quite the contrary was the case with what in German historiography is usually called *Spätpietismus*. Many Dutchmen responded with increasing warmth to writers such as Johann Caspar Lavater (1741-1801), Johann Ludwig Ewald (1748-1822) and Matthias Claudius (1740-1815). Although certainly not all Dutchmen appreciated Lavater’s flights of fancy and idiosyncratic style, or felt attracted to Stilling’s seemingly *schwärmerische* belief in providential guidance, these pietistic authors would remain best-sellers until well into the nineteenth century.<sup>25</sup>

One genre that was clearly on the rise were writings of a traditionalist, explicitly confessional nature. This is not surprising, given the growing influence of religious trends generally associated with moderate ‘Enlightenment’: the emphasis on moral action rather than dogmatic precision, the rejection of confessional strictures, the preference for bible studies over systematic theology, and so on. To be sure, in orthodox quarters the opposition to these new trends was

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<sup>23</sup> Cf. the fine essay by Friedrich W. Kantzenbach, *Protestantisches Christentum im Zeitalter der Aufklärung*, Gütersloh (Gütersloher Verlagshaus Gerd Mohn) 1965.

<sup>24</sup> For a general overview of Dutch pietism and its literature, see W.J. op ’t Hof, *Die nähere Reformation und der Niederländische reformierte Pietismus und ihr Verhältnis zum deutschen Pietismus*, in: *Nederlands Archief voor Kerkgeschiedenis/Dutch Review of Church History* 78 (1998), 161-183. This article is limited in scope, however, in that it exclusively treats orthodox pietism within the Reformed church. It should be pointed out that Dutch pietist literature also included works by radical German pietists, such as *Fatum fatuum* (1709; D.tr. 1709) by Johann Konrad Dippel.

<sup>25</sup> E.g. Courrech Staal, *Matthias Claudius in Nederland*, in: *De nieuwe taalgids* 11 1917, 41-50; Willem J. Noordhoek, *Lavater und Holland*, in: *Neophilologus* 10 1925, 10-19; M. van Rhijn, *Jung Stilling en Nederland*, *Nederlands Archief voor Kerkgeschiedenis/Dutch Review of Church History* 65 1963, 208-234; and the bibliography in Hans-Martin Kirn, *Deutsche Spätaufklärung und Pietismus. Ihr Verhältnis im Rahmen kirchlich-bürgerlicher Reform bei Johann Ludwig Ewald (1748-1822)*, Göttingen (Vandenhoeck & Ruprecht) 1998.

not unqualified. While corruptions of traditional doctrine were rejected, the orthodox clergy, both the Lutheran and the Reformed, certainly valued new developments in philology and criticism. At the same time, however, they were bent on defending their respective confessional traditions in a period of increasing polarization. Conflicts between rival factions respectively defending and criticizing confessional orthodoxy ultimately led to a schism in the Lutheran church at Amsterdam in 1791. The anti-confessional faction included a pupil of Semler, August Sterk (1748-1815), who was responsible for translations of Heumann, Michaelis and Bahrdt (see below). The orthodox faction included Johan M. Boon (1727-1804), who supervised the first Dutch translation of the *Institutiones theologiae dogmaticae* (1723) by Johann Franz Buddeus (1667-1729) in 1784.

The demand for translated German books was hardly the result of internecine Lutheran quarrels alone. Dutch Lutherans, who in the Netherlands formed only a small minority, were almost wholly dependent on German writers in order to keep in touch with their religious roots. Indubitably the most important author who provided them with a sense of religious continuity was Johann Ernst Schubert (1717-1774), professor of theology at Greifswald, and in all respects a major best-selling writer. His 20 translated books include the *Geschichte des römischen Papstes Vigilius* (1769; D.tr. 1770), containing a traditional defence of formularies of faith. But Schubert was especially valued – he was the ‘Held der meisten Lutherischen Geistlichen dieses Landes’, noted S. in the *Deutsches Museum* – for a series of orthodox apologies on the trinity, angels, inspiration, redemption, the sacraments, eschatology, and other traditional theological topics. He wrote these as a Wolffian, aiming to reconcile reason and revelation; many of his book titles typically begin with ‘Vernünftige und schriftmäßige Gedanken (...)’. The main translator of his books was Antoni F. Klenke, the director of a Dutch and German school in Amsterdam, about whom unfortunately little else is known. Schubert was very well-received among the Reformed also, and had to vie in this respect with another popular traditionalist, the Swiss Calvinist Johann Friedrich Stapfer (1708-1775). He, too, was an orthodox Wolffian, of whom seven writings were translated, including the multi-volume *Institutiones theologicae polemicae universae* (1743; D.tr. 1757-1763). The cases of both Schubert and Stapfer testify to the growing interest in Wolffian philosophy among Dutch theologians, especially in the 1760s and 1770s.<sup>26</sup>

German authors were, of course, not only regarded as a support for Lutheran and Reformed confessionalism. Pastoral and moral writings also found a ready market. To the Dutch the greatest German moralist of all was indubitably Christian Fürchtegott Gellert (1715-1769). He was considered eminently reliable in doctrinal terms, a man of deep personal piety and excellent

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<sup>26</sup> Georg Friedrich Seiler (1733-1807) should also be mentioned (5 translations). On Wolffianism in the Netherlands, see Michiel R. Wielema, *Ketters en Verlichters. De invloed van het spinozisme en wolffianisme op de Verlichting in gereformeerd Nederland*, unpublished Ph.D. Vrije Universiteit, Amsterdam 1999.

tastes, and an able poet and intelligent essayist. Gellert was probably the most uncontroversial religious writer to be exported from Germany to the Netherlands.<sup>27</sup> Explicitly pastoral writings were sometimes translated to cater to orthodox Lutheran needs, but many others were translated for a broader public, such as the Lutheran Christian Wilhelm Oemler (1728-1802) and the Swiss Reformed Heinrich Stähelin (1698-1778). One writer of pastoral books stands out: Christoph Christian Sturm (1740-1786), with seven books in all. His popular *Betrachtungen über die Werke Gottes im Reiche der Natur* (1772; D.tr. 1773) was also translated into French, English, and Swedish.

Another important category of German writers that attained unparalleled popularity were apologists who claimed to face the threat of freethinking radicalism imported from England and France. A good indication of who, exactly, were regarded as competent opponents of indifferentism, scepticism, deism, atheism or naturalism is provided by a middle-of-the-road Dutch minister, Joannes F. Martinet (1729-1795), whose own physico-theological best-seller was, incidentally, translated into German as the *Katechismus der Natur* (1779-1789). According to Martinet, the best opponents of notorious freethinkers like Toland, Collins, Tindal, Hume, La Mettrie, Helvétius, Voltaire, and Johann Christoph Edelmann (the only German radical mentioned: none of his works were translated) included writers of a broadly German provenance like Sack, Haller, Lavater, Mosheim, Reimarus, Jerusalem, Lilienthal, Goeze, Leß, and Nösselt.<sup>28</sup> His list is quite inclusive. The odd one out in this list seems to be the Hamburger pastor Johann Melchior Goeze (1717-1786), the able Lutheran adversary of, among many others, Lessing and Bahrtdt. Like Schubert and Stapfer, Goeze was an orthodox Wolffian; he was particularly valued by the orthodox Dutch clergy, as Martinet well knew. To the Dutch version of his *Theologische Untersuchung der Sittlichkeit der heutigen teutschen Schaubühne* (1769; D.tr. 1774) was appended a defence of his character and writings by Ludolph Gottlieb Cordes (1740-1827), a Dutch Lutheran minister who prided himself on his friendship with Goeze. Cordes, originally from Jeverland, translated some 40 books from German into Dutch between 1769 and 1798. Curiously, he seems to have become interested in less explicitly confessional writings as his career as a Lutheran minister progressed. He was the translator of J.J. Rambach and C.C. Sturm in the 1770s, J.A. Hermes, J.H. Campe and C.G. Salzmann in the 1780s, and A. Knigge and Ewald in the 1790s.<sup>29</sup>

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<sup>27</sup> On Gellert, who was widely read and enormously popular, see Noordhoek, Gellert und Holland (n. 5). Note that many pedagogical writings by more controversial authors were also translated: among others J.H. Campe, C.G. Salzmann and J.G. Rosenmüller.

<sup>28</sup> Johannes F. Martinet, *Historie der waereld*, 9 vols., Amsterdam (Johannes Allart) 1780-1788, vol. IV (1783), 230, 237.

<sup>29</sup> See Heinemeyer's unfinished *Das gelehrte Batavien*: MS University Library Leiden, shelf number Ltk 867, C-D: 143-144.

Of the other apologists mentioned by Martinet, the *Verteidigter Glaube der Christen* (1748-1751; D.tr. 1752, second edition 1768) by the Reformed minister at Berlin August Friedrich Sack (1703-1786) was the first to be translated.<sup>30</sup> This was soon followed by a physico-theological book by Reimarus, *Abhandlungen von den vornehmsten Wahrheiten der natürlichen Religion* (1754; D.tr. 1758), annotated by the Leiden physicist Johann Lulofs (1711-1768). In the three following decades all the other main German apologists were published in Dutch: the Swiss-German scholar Albrecht von Haller (1708-1777) with *Briefe über die wichtigsten Wahrheiten der Offenbarung* (1772; D.tr. 1773); Lavater's annotations to the German edition of Charles Bonnet's *Recherches philosophiques sur les preuves du christianisme* (1770; D.tr. 1771); Mosheim's *Einleitung, die Wahrheit und Göttlichkeit der christlichen Religion zu beweisen* (1762; D.tr. 1773); the Braunschweiger Johann Friedrich Wilhelm Jerusalem (1709-1789) with the enormously popular *Betrachtungen über die vornehmsten Wahrheiten der Religion* (1768; D.tr. 1772-1781); the Königsberger Theodor Christoph Lilienthal (1717-1781) with *Die gute Sache der in der Heiligen Schrift alten und neuen Testaments enthaltenen göttlichen Offenbarung, wider die Feinde derselben erwiesen und gerettet* (1750; D.tr. 1766-1785); the Göttinger Gottfried Leß (1736-1797), with the *Beweis der Wahrheit der christlichen Religion* (1769; D.tr. 1771); and the Hallenser Johann August Nösselt (1734-1807) with his popular *Vertheidigung der Wahrheit und Göttlichkeit der christlichen Religion* (1766; D.tr. 1770; a concise edition was published in Dutch in 1783). These books were all well-known in Germany in their day. In the Netherlands they were generally presented as reliable mainstays of the Christian tradition. Sack and Jerusalem tended to be criticized by the orthodox for taking too much freedom, although Jerusalem, whose sermons were also translated, was generally considered an excellent preacher. As was the case in Germany, these writers were admired for developing up-to-date apologies for Christendom. However, as the Dutch reception of German theological books broadened and deepened, critics began to point out that this apologetic façade was precisely what made German divines so dangerous. Claiming or pretending to defend the Christian tradition, they (authors like Mosheim and Lilienthal excepted) in effect undermined it.

### Philologists, Exegetes and Historians

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<sup>30</sup> Sack's apology is criticized in one of the very few deist writings by a native Dutchman: [Pieter Huisinga Bakker] *De godsdienst zonder bijgeloof, betoogende het geloof der deisten*, Deventer (Jacobus de Vries) <sup>2</sup>1755 (first impression 1752), 27. The foreword of Sack's book, on the freedom to examine Scripture, was later included in a collection of essays: *Uitgezogte verhandelingen over onderwerpen tot den godsdienst, de Heilige Schrift, zedekunde en andere dergelijke stoffen betrekkelijk*, Amsterdam (Wed. J. Döll) 1782.

In terms of intellectual history, theologians concerned in one way or the other with the interpretation of historical sources form the most influential group of writers imported from Germany.<sup>31</sup> This illustrates once again the change in the intellectual relations between the German lands and the Dutch Republic. Earlier in the eighteenth century, Dutch philology and linguistics had generally enjoyed an excellent reputation abroad. This applies not only to New Testament Greek<sup>32</sup> but also to the oriental languages, particularly Hebrew and Arabic.<sup>33</sup> The Leiden professor Albert Schultens (1686-1750) was one of the most famous Arabists of his time, and recognized as a trail-blazer by the outstanding German scholars of the latter decades of the century (as Dutch reviewers frequently observed). Even a pronounced critic of Schultens, the Leipzig professor Johann Jacob Reiske (1716-1774), recognized his former teacher's merits. Although after the 1760s Dutch philological scholarship by no means disappeared, Dutch intellectuals looked above all towards Germany for inspiration.

One of the German scholars with immense authority in the Netherlands was Johann David Michaelis (1717-1791), often regarded as one of the founding fathers of modern critical bible studies. In his autobiography (1792, D.tr. 1794) he recounted that he met the famous Schultens in Leiden during his *Bildungsreise* in the early 1740s. He held Schultens in the highest regard, and apparently the feeling was mutual.<sup>34</sup> As far as the Dutch were concerned, this display of respect to one of their canonized heroes of national scholarship was an excellent recommendation, and it added to Michaelis' reputation. In 1764 he (like Haller in the same year and Jerusalem a decade later) was made a member of one of the major scholarly societies of the time, the *Hollandsche Maatschappij der Wetenschappen*. Johan Jacob Schultens (1716-1778), Albert's son and the second in a three-generation dynasty of oriental language professors at Leiden, was an exception to the rule. He believed Michaelis to have been obsessed with novelties, plagiarizing others when he could not find them himself. But then Michaelis had recently criticized the Dutch school of oriental studies for focusing exclusively on Arabic, in his *Beurtheilung der Mittel, welche man anwendet, die ausgestorbene hebräische Sprache zu verstehen* (1757; D.tr. 1762).<sup>35</sup> The book, however, that established Michaelis' reputation in Germany and elsewhere was his six-volume *Mosaisches Recht* (1770-1775; D.tr. 1772-1776).<sup>36</sup> The Dutch reviews were

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<sup>31</sup> For the theoretical-theological background, see above all Walter Sparr, *Vernünftiges Christentum. Über die geschichtliche Aufgabe der theologischen Aufklärung im 18. Jahrhundert in Deutschland*, in: *Wissenschaften im Zeitalter der Aufklärung*, ed. Rudolf Vierhaus, Göttingen (Vandenhoeck & Ruprecht) 1985, 18-57.

<sup>32</sup> Jan G. Gerretzen, *Schola Hemsterhusiana. De herleving der Grieksche studiën aan de Nederlandsche universiteiten in de achttiende eeuw van Perizonius tot en met Valckenaer*, Nijmegen/Utrecht (Dekker & Van de Vegt N.V.) 1940.

<sup>33</sup> Jan Nat, *De studie van de Oostersche talen in Nederland in de 18e en de 19e eeuw*, Purmerend (J. Muusses) 1929.

<sup>34</sup> J.D. Michaelis, *Lebensbeschreibung von ihm selbst abgefaßt*, ed. J.M. Hassencamp, Rinteln 1793, 28; translated into Dutch by the Mennonite Pieter Beets. The VL 1790-ii, 253-262, had already published a translation of Michaelis' autobiography, submitted by Cornelis Muller (1767-1793), a Reformed minister.

<sup>35</sup> The translator was Christian Albert de la Villette (1726-1770), a Reformed minister of Huguenot descent.

<sup>36</sup> The translator was Augustus Sterk (1748-1815), a Dutch Lutheran minister who had studied in Halle and Leipzig, and whose orthodoxy would later be subject to dispute.

excellent. They attest to the reason why this erudite study on the cultural background of Mosaic law was welcomed so eagerly. The writings of Michaelis represented the ‘noble spirit of free Inquiry’ that had become widespread in Germany, observed one reviewer. Michaelis dared to open new ways without leaving the old, and was therefore bound to be read with pleasure by all lovers of truth.<sup>37</sup> The 13 volumes of the *Deutsche Übersetzung des Alten Testaments mit Anmerkungen für Ungelehrte* (1769-1785), published in Dutch from 1776 onwards,<sup>38</sup> elicited similar responses. Michaelis wrote modestly, it was said, and ventured to depart from accepted views without dispensing with tradition.<sup>39</sup> In other words, his writings both moulded and reflected the conciliatory nature of Dutch literary publicity.

Compared to the views of the more radical exponents of the German *Aufklärung*, the tenor of Michaelis’ bible studies was, indeed, rather conservative. He generally mediated between reason and revelation, claiming that Mosaic law had been divinely inspired, albeit indirectly: Moses had been inspired by God to derive his rules and regulations from Egypt.<sup>40</sup> To many eighteenth-century minds this seemed a clever way of combining tradition with a measure of historical criticism. Even in traditional quarters Michaelis’s writings were often subjected to unequivocal praise. To be sure, Calvinist critics in the Netherlands took great exception to his derisive comparison of the doctrine of predestination with Islamic fatalism in a prize-winning essay for the Berlin Academy, and rebuked the Dutch translator, a Mennonite, for not having blue-pencilled the text.<sup>41</sup> But in general church leaders respected Michaelis’s judgement and erudition.<sup>42</sup> They applauded his 24-volume *Orientalische und exegetische Bibliothek* (1771-1780) as the best periodical they had ever laid eyes upon.<sup>43</sup> Only gradually did it dawn upon orthodox reviewers that Michaelis had a somewhat suspicious predilection for innovation and was much too free in his criticism. Soon enough he was censured for his observation that if formal church approbations were required in Holland, they were superfluous in Germany, where freedom of thought prevailed. And he was admonished on account of his habit of continuously issuing enlarged editions of his books, so that the Dutch translations tended to be obsolete even before they were published.<sup>44</sup>

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<sup>37</sup> VL 1772-i, 319.

<sup>38</sup> The translators were Willem Emery de Perponcher (1741-1819) and IJsbrand van Hamelsveld (1743-1812).

<sup>39</sup> E.g. VL 1773-i, 45; VL 1795-i, 45-48.

<sup>40</sup> See Anna-Ruth Löwenbrück, Johann David Michaelis’ Verdienst um die philologisch-historische Bibelkritik, in: *Historische Kritik und biblischer Kanon in der deutschen Aufklärung*, ed. Henning Graf Reventlow/Walter Sparr/John Woodbridge, Wiesbaden (Otto Harrassowitz) 1988, 157-170.

<sup>41</sup> A positive appreciation of Michaelis in NB 1774-i, 45; for the critical comment, see NB 1774-i, 301-302, note. The translator was Cornelis van Engelen (c. 1722-1793).

<sup>42</sup> NB 1777-i, 14-15; 1778-i, 561.

<sup>43</sup> NB 1782-i, 263. Five volumes, based on selections from the whole series, were translated between 1780 and 1785.

<sup>44</sup> NB 1775-i, 486; 1778-i, 366-367; 1785-i, 389-390, where the translator of Michaelis’s version of the Old Testament, De Perponcher, is praised for annotating the text with critical comments; and 1786-i, 113-114.

When Michaelis died, *Einige Bemerkungen über seinen literarischen Character* (1791; D.tr. 1791) by Johann Gottfried Eichhorn (1752-1827) was immediately translated into Dutch by Hendrik Albert Schultens (1749-1793). The latter was Albert Schultens' grandson, and like him professor of oriental languages in Leiden (after 1778) and a scholar of international fame.<sup>45</sup> Eichhorn's own *Historisch-kritische Einleitung in das Alte Testament* (1780-1783), in which he developed Jean Astruc's hypothesis concerning the authorship of the Pentateuch, was generally considered a respectable companion study to the work done by Michaelis.<sup>46</sup> Other authors concerned with biblical criticism were valued, too. The rather conservative 12-volume *Erklärung des Neuen Testaments* (1750-1763) by Christoph August Heumann (1681-1764), which appeared in Dutch translation from 1776 onwards, was highly regarded.<sup>47</sup> Despite this evident interest in bible studies, until well into the 1780s the writings of Michaelis and Eichhorn were as far as the Dutch publishers were willing, or able, to go. The Reformed professor IJsbrand van Hamelsveld (1743-1812), who translated writings of both authors, was a popular exegete of the later eighteenth century, favouring moderate adjustments to traditional Reformed theology. But he certainly did not intend to throw out the baby with the bath water. The Dutch much preferred uncontroversial authors like Johann Andreas Cramer (1723-1788), a rather conservative professor of theology at Kiel, whose treatise on the poetic quality of the Psalms, expository writings on the New Testament, and biography of Gellert were translated in the 1770s and 1780s. Likewise, Robert Lowth's *De sacra poesi Hebraeorum praelectiones academicae* in the Göttingen edition by Michaelis (1758) was well-known and much-used in the Netherlands. Also well-received was Johann Gottfried Herder's *Vom Geist der Ebräischen Poesie* (1782-83, D.tr. 1784).<sup>48</sup> But it is noteworthy that Semler's *Von freier Untersuchung des Kanon* (1774) remained untranslated.

In the field of church history Johann Lorenz Mosheim (1694-1755) undeniably dominated the scene. We have seen that he ranked top of the list in terms of the number of books translated from the German between 1760 and 1796. Few Dutch intellectuals would not have recognized him as the chancellor of the university at Göttingen, since the fact was mentioned on nearly every title page of his many books. Mosheim's writings had not always been welcomed so warmly. One of his earlier books, *De auctoritate Concilii Dordraceni paci sacrae noxia* (1724, D.tr. 1726), in which he argued that the Dutch Calvinist church had better abolish the dogmatic

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<sup>45</sup> Another translation of Eichhorn's essay in VB 1792-ii, 246-263, 297-309, 341-355.

<sup>46</sup> Eichhorn's introduction was translated into Dutch by IJsbrand van Hamelsveld (D.tr. 1784; <sup>2</sup>1789). Van Hamelsveld also translated Michaelis' introduction to the Old Testament (1787; D.tr. 1788); Michaelis' introduction to the New Testament (1760) had appeared in Dutch translation in 1778.

<sup>47</sup> The translator was A. Sterk.

<sup>48</sup> Other books by Herder include the *Briefe Zweener Brüder Jesu* (1775, D.tr. 1775) and the *Briefe, das Studium der Theologie betreffend* (1780, D.tr. 1785).

points drawn up at the Synod of Dort, had been translated by an Arminian dissenter.<sup>49</sup> The Calvinist side promptly countered with a translation of a German critic of Mosheim.<sup>50</sup> Nor did Mosheim's popularity among the Reformed increase when he published, under a pupil's name, a historical account of Michael Servet and John Calvin's role in his execution. It too was translated into Dutch.<sup>51</sup> But in due course no eighteenth-century Dutch theologian could avoid Mosheim.

Like Michaelis' edition of Lowth, Mosheim's Latin edition of Ralph Cudworth's *True intellectual system of the universe* (1733) was well-known. It was, however, his historical work which established his reputation in the Netherlands as elsewhere, and set an example to Dutch church historians. As Michaelis was one of the founding fathers of historical criticism, so Mosheim was one of the fathers of modern church history. His approach to church history was bound to attract divines less given to defending circumscribed doctrinal positions. His societal definition of the church implied a broad view that included heretics as well as the various orthodoxies; his impeccable, matter-of-fact approach to historical sources did justice to many of the 'Sekten' and 'Parteien' who had previously been disregarded; and the absence of doctrinal presuppositions gave his work the semblance of being 'unpartheiisch'. On the other hand, Mosheim did not approve of overemphasizing philosophy and reason in religious matters, which in his view had always been the principal cause of sectarianism and dissension. The church historian had to try to understand sects and heresies, since they were unavoidable and inextricably connected with the history of the Christian church. This, however, did not make heresies acceptable in a social-ecclesiastical sense. Impartiality, the hallmark of Mosheim's 'pragmatic' history-writing, made allowances for the inconsequentiality and therefore harmlessness of certain historical phenomena and the religious claims connected with them, but this did not imply recognition of their validity or truth.<sup>52</sup>

Thus Mosheim was bound to gain popularity among divines of diverse religious leanings. He was first introduced into the Netherlands by a major publisher at Utrecht, the Van Paddenburg company. In the 1760s this company started off with the *Allgemeines Kirchenrecht der Protestanten* (1760, D.tr. 1765) and a commentary on Timothy (1755, D.tr. 1765). It then chartered a virtually unknown Mennonite preacher (who may have translated the earlier works as well) to translate a large number of Mosheim's heavy tomes, including the *Sittenlehre der heiligen*

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<sup>49</sup> The translator was Cornelis Westerbaen (1690-1774).

<sup>50</sup> Stephan Veit (1687-1736), a Reformed theologian at the Collegium Carolinum in Kassel, whose own (Latin) tract (1726; D.tr. 1728) had sparked a controversy in Germany.

<sup>51</sup> H. von Allwoerden, *Historia Michaelis Serveti* (1727; D.tr. 1729).

<sup>52</sup> On Mosheim's historical writing, see Ulrich Johannes Schneider, *Zum Sektenproblem der Kirchengeschichte*, in: Johann Lorenz Mosheim (1693-1755). *Theologie im Spannungsfeld von Philosophie, Philologie und Geschichte*, ed. Martin Mulsow/Ralph Häfner/Florian Neumann/Helmut Zedelmaier, Wiesbaden (Harrassowitz Verlag) 1997, 147-191.

*Schrift* (first version 1735, D.tr. in nine volumes 1768-1778) and the *Versuch einer unpartheyischen und gründlichen Ketzergeschichte* (1746, D. tr. 1776).<sup>53</sup> The younger associate in the Van Paddenburg company, Abraham, may have had personal reasons for dedicating his firm to the publication of Mosheim's writings. The Dutch version of the *Sittenlehre* contains a dedication to, and an introduction by, persons associated with a somewhat pietistic religious circle at Utrecht during the 1760s. But others also occupied themselves with making Mosheim available to the Dutch public. For example, a translation of the *Vollständiger Auszug* (1765; D.tr. 1771), a summary of the *Sittenlehre* by Mosheim's son-in-law Johan Peter Miller, was dedicated to both Reformed and Lutheran students at all the theological faculties in the Republic. The grand *Institutionum historiae ecclesiasticae* (1755; D.tr. 1770-1774) was published in Dutch by yet another company in a series of eleven volumes. The anonymous Dutch translator had made use of the commentary appended to the English translation by Archibald Maclaine (1722-1804), a minister at the English church in The Hague. On the advice of William Warburton, the English prelate, Maclaine had adjoined supplements, annotations and chronological tables to his translation. The anonymous but erudite Dutch translator, who maintained contacts with Maclaine, also translated portions of Mosheim's *De rebus Christianorum ante Constantinum Magnum commentarii* (1753) and *Institutiones historiae Christianae majores* (1739), which he annotated with learned references and published together in three volumes (D.tr. 1774-1775).<sup>54</sup> Many of the annotations pertained to Eusebius' history of the church, which had been translated into Dutch by Abraham Arent van der Meersch (1720-1792), a Remonstrant minister with an immense dislike for the orthodox clergy. Van der Meersch himself translated a précis of Mosheim's *Sittenlehre* (1763; D.tr. 1765) by G.F. Sommerau. We shall come back to Van der Meersch below.

Divines from all religious currents in the Dutch Republic valued Mosheim's immense erudition, careful scrutiny of the sources and impartial judgement. His thesis concerning the corruption of Christianity by Platonic philosophy was widely supported, since it was a useful means of disqualifying Roman Catholic theology; his extenuation of the Reformers' excessive intolerance was similarly applauded.<sup>55</sup> Yet Mosheim's reputation for being anti-Calvinistic lingered, and he was not popular in less conservative quarters without good reason. Mosheim was impartial, the Calvinist clergy said, but only when he was not obliged to comment on the Reformed, since he could not help lashing out against them. Mosheim had even been forced to avoid the debate on the status of the Synod of Dort which he himself had begun, the *Nederlandsche Bibliotheek*

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<sup>53</sup> The Mennonite translator was A.A. van Moerbeek (no dates).

<sup>54</sup> The Dutch title: Noodige ophelderingen der kerklyke geschiedenissen, tot den tyd van Constantinus den Grooten, Amsterdam (F. de Kruyff/A. van der Kroe/Yntema & Tieboel), 1774-1775.

<sup>55</sup> E.g. NB 1774-i, 224-230; VL 1781-ii, 45-53.

noticed: Mosheim knew that he could never have got the better of the argument.<sup>56</sup> In the end the Dutch meditated on Mosheim's many qualities by publishing the obituary by Johannes Matthias Gesner.<sup>57</sup> Although part of the *Neueste Religionsgeschichte* (1771-1783, D.tr. 1772-1774) by Christian W.F. Walch (1726-1784) was translated, and although other church historians like Lorenz Friedrich Leutwein (1710-1798) received excellent reviews,<sup>58</sup> it was Mosheim who virtually held the monopoly during the eighteenth century. There was perhaps one exception: the Swiss popularizer Johann Jacob Heß (1741-1828), who, like Mosheim, wrote 'immanent', 'pragmatic' history. Distrusted by the orthodox,<sup>59</sup> his histories of the bible, such as the *Geschichte der drey letzten Lebensjahre Jesu* (1768; D.tr. 1775-1780), were immensely popular.<sup>60</sup> If in the eleven books that were published in Dutch Heß seemed to conspicuously avoid specific doctrines, he was nevertheless unanimously recognized as an excellent story teller.

### Critics of the Clerical Establishment

We saw above that neither Michaelis nor Mosheim had a particularly high opinion of religious freedom in the Netherlands, despite the reputation for tolerance the Dutch Republic had long enjoyed. Perhaps it is revealing of the still relatively strong hold of the traditional clergy on public life that the Dutch found it necessary to translate a number of German tracts critical of the officially safeguarded position held by orthodox confessions within the old regime. A Berlin minister and contributor to Friedrich Nicolai's *Allgemeine Deutsche Bibliothek*, Friedrich German Lüdke (1730-1792), had begun a controversy over the authority of confessions in 1767; several years later he restated his views in *Ueber Toleranz und Gewissensfreiheit* (1774, D.tr. 1776).<sup>61</sup> Clearly this German controversy was closely followed in the Netherlands. Johann Gottlieb Töllner (1724-1774), a Reformed professor in theology at Frankfurt an der Oder, seemingly took a middle position in his *Unterricht von symbolischen Büchern überhaupt* (1769, D.tr. 1774). Confessions, he claimed, should be upheld but heretics tolerated. This mediating stance appealed, of course, to Dutch reviewers, who were unwilling, if only for commercial reasons, to take sides. But an orthodox Dutch reviewer immediately recognized the book as an attempt to

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<sup>56</sup> NB 1777-i, 266, 447-448; 1780-i, 13.

<sup>57</sup> In vol. 3 of Mosheim's *Noodige ophelderingen* (n. 54).

<sup>58</sup> L.F. Leutwein, *Entwurf einer vollständiger Geschichte der Religionsmeinungen des ersten Jahrhunderts* (1782, D.tr. 1784-1786); cf. VL 1784-i, 266-270.

<sup>59</sup> Again, the Swiss-German controversies concerning Heß were followed in the Dutch Republic. Cf. the translation of the critical Gedanken eines sächsischen Predigers über die Geschichte der drey letzten Lebensjahre Jesu (1774; D.tr. 1776), probably by Johann Friedrich Teller (1739-1816), W.A. Teller's brother.

<sup>60</sup> See also the 'Heß-Bibliographie' in F. Ackva, *Johann Jakob Heß (1741-1828) und seine Biblische Geschichte. Leben, Werk und Wirkung des Zürcher Antistes*, Basler und Berner Studien zur historischen und systematischen Theologie 63, Bern etc. (Lang) 1992, 286-299.

<sup>61</sup> On the controversy, see Aner, *Theologie der Lessingzeit* (n. 61), 254-258.

undermine the status of confessions, and heartily condemned it.<sup>62</sup> The Berlin *Oberkonsistorialrat* Anton Friedrich Büsching (1724-1793), well-known in the Netherlands as an eminent geographer, also joined the fray. He made clear, in his *Allgemeine Anmerkungen über die symbolischen Schriften der evangelisch-lutherischen Kirche* (1770, D.tr. 1772), that he did not consider confessional strictures very important. This provoked a reviewer to remark that many German writings offered excellent proof of this enviable Prussian freedom. Then, as if remembering his obligation as a reviewer to keep to the middle, he added that unfortunately some Germans were inclined to overdo things.<sup>63</sup>

The most controversial German critic of the established church who was introduced into the Netherlands was indubitably the Berlin journalist Friedrich Nicolai. His novel *Das Leben und die Meinungen des Herrn Magister Sebaldus Nothanker* had appeared in Germany in 1773; the Dutch translation was published two years later.<sup>64</sup> The novel had a particular bearing on the Netherlands. In Nicolai's tale, Sebaldus Nothanker is a country pastor from Thüringen who is removed from office and driven out of his house on account of his heterodox views. After the loss of his job, his home and his wife he is obliged to travel from town to town, attempting to earn his living variously as a corrector and a vicar, in the meantime continuing his work on the Revelations according to John. Because of the incorrigibly candid and optimistic manner in which he puts forward his unconventional views, Nothanker is everywhere rejected by intolerant clergymen and hypocritical pietists. After a number of adventures he decides (in the third and final volume) to go to Amsterdam, from whence to set sail for the East Indies. On his way to the Republic he is ship-wrecked off the Dutch coast, but manages to reach Alkmaar, a town in the province of Holland. After some time Nothanker gets a position as governor to the children of a merchant in Rotterdam, but again has to leave because of his heterodox opinions. He is advised to travel to Amsterdam in order to join the 'Rijnsburger Collegianten', who had the reputation of excluding no Christian from their gatherings. Nothanker is, however, held in captivity by an illegitimate recruiter for the East Indies; but he escapes and again finds a benefactor. At this point Sebaldus translates a controversial English book into Dutch (Thomas Amory's *The Life of John Bunclie, Esq.*, which had appeared in two volumes in London, 1756-1766), and once again is obliged to flee. He returns to Germany, where he finally finds a place to live his life in peace.

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<sup>62</sup> Cf. VL 1775-i, 11-14, where a reviewer notes with satisfaction that Töllner emphasized the usefulness and the necessity of confessions, but also limited their authority; NB 1774-i, 336-342.

<sup>63</sup> VL 1772-i, 465. Büschings boek was duly answered by J.M. Goeze, *Notwendige Erinnerungen* (1770, D.tr. 1773); translated by A.F. Klenke.

<sup>64</sup> Friedrich Nicolai, *Het leven en de gevoelens van den eerwaarden heer Sebaldus Nothanker*, 3 vols., Amsterdam (Jan Döll) 1775-1776.

The fact that the life story of Sebaldu Nothanker was promptly translated into Dutch was anything but fortuitous. Apart from Nothanker's adventures in the Republic itself, the book contained other clear references to the Netherlands, notably to a controversy that had raged in France and Holland between 1768 and 1773. The debate, known as the Socratic War, was sparked off by what was considered by some to be an inordinate praise of pagans in Jean François Marmontel's *Bélisaire* (1766, D.tr. 1767). The question debated was the possibility of heathens earning salvation by performing good works. The Socratic War, which was terminated by government rescript in 1773, forms an important part of the background to Nicolai's novel. Indeed, one of Nothanker's principal heresies was his denial of eternal punishment. As a governor in Rotterdam, Nothanker taught his wards Greek by giving them Xenophon's *Memorabilia* and Marcus Aurelius' soliloquies to read, both of which referred directly to the Socratic War. His choice of books was repudiated by another employee in his master's service, a certain 'Domine [reverend] Puistma' (whose name is derived from the Dutch for 'pimple'). Puistma discussed Nothanker's heretical views with his colleague 'Domine Dwanghuysen' (derived from the Dutch for 'coercion'), a particularly obnoxious character modelled, though rather unjustly, on one of the major orthodox protagonists in the Socratic War. This was Petrus Hofstede (1716-1803), an orthodox minister who in German quarters had earned the dubious reputation of being the Dutch Goeze.<sup>65</sup> Nicolai was supplied these and other characters by Theodor Gülcher, one of his informants on the goings-on in Holland. Gülcher was a trader in Amsterdam who had corresponded with Nicolai since 1770 and apparently translated into Dutch Johann August Eberhard's controversial contribution to the Socratic War, the *Neue Apologie des Sokrates oder Untersuchung der Lehre von der Seligkeit der Heiden* (1772, D.tr. 1773).<sup>66</sup> Gülcher also gave the Dutch translator of *Sebaldu Nothanker* a helping hand. This was Van der Meersch, now a professor at the Remonstrant Seminary in Amsterdam.<sup>67</sup>

Given the all too obvious allusions to a major conflict that had only recently been ended through an official decree by the States of Holland, and because of the continuous attacks in Nicolai's book on confessions of faith and his subjection to ridicule of the various traditions

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<sup>65</sup> One of Hofstede's books was translated into German, provoking a reply by Eberhard (see below). Hofstede, in fact, prided himself on his correspondence with Goeze, and wrote a foreword to the translation of Goeze's *Pastoral-schreiben an die Gemeinen Gottes in Hamburg* (1764; D.tr. 1788).

<sup>66</sup> See Richard Schwinger, Friedrich Nicolais Roman "Sebaldu Nothanker". Ein Beitrag zur Geschichte der Aufklärung, *Litterarhistorische Forschungen* Heft 2, Weimar (Felber) 1897, 68, note 1. Schwinger also quotes (55, note 3) a letter to Nicolai written from Holland by Gülcher. Puistma was apparently modelled after Johannes Tissel (1752-1813), a Dutch Lutheran minister who had studied in Göttingen and had in 1774 written against Eberhard's *Neue Apologie für Sokrates*. Gülcher does not figure in Dutch or German biographical dictionaries.

<sup>67</sup> Schwinger, 255, notes that a first (expurgated) version had been prepared by a minister from the Pfalz, a certain Faber. Van der Meersch wrote a biting foreword to the novel and added a number of annotations; on him, see also Joris van Eijnatten, *Mutua Christianorum Tolerantia. Irenicism and Toleration in the Netherlands: The Stinstra Affair 1740-1745*, *Studi e testi per la storia della tolleranza in Europa nei secoli XVI-XVIII* 2, Florence (Leo S. Olschki) 1998.

within Dutch Calvinism, the translation was bound to draw out a vigorous response. The storm of indignation did not, however, break until 1776, when the third volume was about to be published. The reviewers of the *Nederlandsche Bibliotheek* accused Nicolai of justifying all kinds of profligate behaviour, ranging from sexual debauchery to murder and blasphemy, while he generally portrayed the clergy as a bunch of drunkards and disgraceful opportunists. Moreover, in his foreword the translator had shamelessly suggested that the ridiculous characters in the novel were perfectly applicable to Dutch clerics. The publication, so the clergy not incorrectly pointed out, was a clear transgression of the edict of 1773 that had put an end to the Socratic War.<sup>68</sup> ‘(...) welche Verdrehungen, falsche Anführungen, welche elende, niederträchtige und unwürdige Beschuldigungen’, Gülcher wrote to Nicolai, after he had read the review.<sup>69</sup> Curiously, the periodicals did not comment in any detail on the explosive third volume. The orthodox clergy probably considered it better to let the matter rest, or may have been warned off by the authorities; other periodicals may have been unwilling to get their fingers burnt.

*Sebaldus Nothanker* was not the only German book modelled after Laurence Sterne’s rambling and satirical *Life and opinions of Tristram Shandy*. Johann Karl Wezel’s *Lebensgeschichte Tobias Knauts, des Weisen* (1773, D.tr. 1776) was also deeply influenced by Sterne.<sup>70</sup> The same applies to Amory’s *The Life of John Bunclie, Esq.*, which Nothanker supposedly translated and was in fact published by Nicolai in 1778. The Dutch version was based on the German translation rather than the English original and appeared in the same year, together with Nicolai’s annotations. The *Nederlandsche Bibliotheek* considered the book, which had pronounced deist tendencies, to be even more blasphemous than *Sebaldus Nothanker*, and called for a ban on the book. Its sale was forbidden in Holland in June 1779.<sup>71</sup>

### The New Reformers

After the anti-clerical and anti-confessional onslaught of the Berlin critics, an all-round attack on the traditional tenets held by the established clergy was not long in coming. There had been some warnings already that the vogue of German translations was not going to leave the Dutch religious landscape unchanged. As we saw above, writings by among others Hess, Jerusalem

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<sup>68</sup> NB 1776-i, 154-165 and 1777-i, 184. The VL 1777-i, 138-140 and 479-481, kept itself out of harm’s way by printing non-committal reviews.

<sup>69</sup> Schwinger, Friedrich Nicolais Roman “Sebaldus Nothanker” (n. 66), 206, note 7. Some of the German tracts against Nicolai were translated into Dutch, such as the anonymous Sendschreiben an den Verfasser des Lebens und der Meinungen der Hrn. Mag. Sebaldus Nothanker von dessen weiland untergegebenen Schulmeister (1774, D.tr. 1778). Also translated were David Christoph Seybold’s Predigten des Herrn Magister Sebaldus Nothanker, aus seinen Papieren gezogen (3 vols., 1774-1777, D.tr.1776), and Nicolai’s reply to this: Zuverlässigen Nachricht von einigen nahen Verwandten des Hrn. Magister Sebaldus Nothanker (1774, D.tr. 1776).

<sup>70</sup> Wezel’s novel was not reviewed; Sterne’s novel was only published in Dutch in 1776-1779.

<sup>71</sup> Translated and published by J.H. Munnikhuizen, a Lutheran minister who was suspended in 1774 and subsequently resigned (he was probably a relative of A.E. Munnikhuizen, the publisher of Tobias Knaut and Tristram Shandy); NB 1779-i, 241-252.

and Michaelis had not been received without serious doubts concerning their orthodoxy. In the meantime the more controversial writings by Johann Joachim Spalding (1714-1804) had been translated, above all his *Bestimmung des Menschen* (1748; D.tr. 1764 and 1769), *Gedanken über den Wert der Gefühle im Christentum* (1761; D.tr. 1771) and *Über die Nutsbarkeit des Predigtamts* (1773; D.tr. 1776).<sup>72</sup> Some of Töllner's essays had been included in a series called 'Specimens of the contemporary German taste in matters concerning theology and philosophy' (1773-1775). The translator was Johannes Petsch, a Herrnhuter of Norwegian descent, who had also translated Leibniz's *Theodicee* and was a warm supporter of Wolffian philosophy.<sup>73</sup> Other translated *Neologen* include the celebrated Reformed preacher at Leipzig, Georg Joachim Zollikofer (1733-1788),<sup>74</sup> and the Hallenser theologian August Hermann Niemeyer (1754-1828), who achieved a reputation in the Netherlands with his relatively uncontroversial *Charakteristik der Bibel* (1775; D.tr. 1779-1783). Johann August Hermes (1736-1822), a pastor at Quedlinburg and one of the three much-translated Hermes brothers, must also be mentioned here.<sup>75</sup>

In the Dutch Republic the greatest turmoil in the public church was caused by two authors, Gotthilf Samuel Steinbart (1738-1800) and Daniel Heinrich Purgold (1708-1788). It is, again, characteristic of the mediating policy of the leading Dutch review periodicals that neither author was honoured with a review. Steinbart was Töllner's successor to the chair in Reformed theology at Frankfurt an der Oder. His reputation among the *Aufklärer* was firmly established when he published his *System der reinen Philosophie oder Glückseligkeitslehre des Christentums* (1778; D.tr. 1781). Felicity, in Steinbart's view, was the inward conviction that the good prevailed in one's personal life; an inner happiness reinforced by the consciousness of increasing conformity to the moral law, and thus of growing perfection. The point about the book was, of course, that much traditional dogma – above all the satisfaction of Christ – was superfluous in the sense that it did not directly conduce to felicity. That an established academic, and one who was Calvinist to boot, could make such claims, and write with such haughty disdain for those who appreciated traditional dogma, was more than the Dutch clergy could fathom. The general outrage caused by the book was probably exactly what the anonymous translator intended.<sup>76</sup> It has been suggested that this translator was Paulus van Hemert (1724-1804), an outstanding writer and well-known adversary of the orthodox clergy, who would later become an ardent

<sup>72</sup> A book by J.A. Cramer against Spalding's *Werth der Gefühle* was translated in 1772.

<sup>73</sup> Petsch included essays from Töllner's *Kurze vermischte Aufsätze* (1767-1770). Previously *Meine Überzeugungen* (1769; D.tr. 1771) and *Meine Vorsätze* (1772; D.tr. 1773) had been sent personally by Töllner to an unknown person in the Dutch Republic, who had the book translated. Before this, Töllner was primarily known as the prizewinner for an essay submitted to the 'Stolpiaansch Legaat' at Leiden in 1769.

<sup>74</sup> His collections of sermons were published in installments from the 1770s to the 1790s.

<sup>75</sup> *Handbuch der religion* (1779; D.tr. 1782); his brother J.T. Hermes was a popular novelist. On Dutch interest for the eldest brother, H.D. Hermes, who was an orthodox advocate of Wöllner's *Religions-Edict*, see Joris van Eijnatten, *Hogere sferen. De ideeënwereld van Willem Bilderdijk (1756-1831)*, Hilversum (Verloren) 1998, 148-151.

follower of Immanuel Kant;<sup>77</sup> but as yet there is no evidence to support this. A later critic of the new theology coming from Germany did bracket Bahrtdt, Steinbart, Semler and W.E. Teller together with Van Hemert and Balthazar Bekker;<sup>78</sup> on the other hand, when an attempt was made to emulate Steinbart's *System* in 1792, the anonymous author turned out to be a rather obscure Remonstrant, Cornelis Maas († 1810).<sup>79</sup>

To the Dutch clergy, Steinbart was one of the most notorious renewers of German theology; his book attracted much attention. His *System*, together with the publication in 1784 of a Dutch translation of Joseph Priestley's Unitarian *Corruptions of Christianity* (the second volume of which was published at Lingen in Germany, after the publisher in Dordrecht had got into trouble) was considered such a provocation of the religious establishment that a number of conservative divines in 1787 founded a 'Society for the defence of the main truths of the Christian religion, in particular against their present adversaries'. The society was established in The Hague and therefore also known as the *Haagsch Genootschap*. Priestley is usually mentioned as having occasioned the founding of this society. In fact, however, it was a confutation of Steinbart's *System* by a Frisian minister, Jacob E. Mebius (1749-1838), which had led to the first initiatives to found the *Haagsch Genootschap*.<sup>80</sup> The uproar concerning Steinbart and Priestley had barely subsided when Purgold's *Resultat meines mehr als fünfzigjährigen Nachdenkens über die Religion Jesu* (1783) was translated into Dutch.<sup>81</sup> In a number of towns copies of the book were confiscated and their sale forbidden. For 51 years Purgold had been a preacher in Magdeburg, where he had written a large number of anonymous tracts and contributed to the *Allgemeine Deutsche Bibliothek* and the *Journal für Prediger*. His 'calm' examination of religious truths over half a century, and his demonstration of a 'pure' desire to obtain essential knowledge, was bound to attract the attention of 'impartial seekers after truth', observed the *Letter-Oefeningen* carefully.<sup>82</sup> The *Vaderlandsche Bibliothek* expressed its disagreement with the book, but this did not prevent it from including an extract from another treatise by Purgold

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<sup>76</sup> In 1782 a translation was published, at the same publishing house and probably by the same translator, of Steinbart's *Philosophische Unterhaltungen zur weiteren Aufklärung der Glückseligkeitslehre* (1782).

<sup>77</sup> Michiel R. Wielema, *Die erste niederländische Kant-Rezeption 1786-1850*, in: *Kant-Studien* 79 1988, 450-466; Ton Jongenelen, *Van smaat tot erger. Amsterdamse boekverboden 1747-1794*, Amsterdam (Stichting Jacob Campo Weyerman) 1998, 41.

<sup>78</sup> VB 1791-i, 348. Bekker's *Bezauberte Welt* was published by Semler in 1781-1782.

<sup>79</sup> *Onderwijzing in den weg ter gelukzaligheid volgens de leer van Jesus Christus*, Gouda (M. van Loopik en Cie.) 1792.

<sup>80</sup> *Brieven van G.N. en V.v.O. behelsende aanmerkingen over het zaamenstel der zuivere wysbegeerte*, Leeuwarden (Johannes Seydel) 1785. Mebius was befriended with one of the initiators of the *Haagsch Genootschap*, Johannes Kneppelhout (1745-1803). Note that Steinbart's *System* was often mentioned in the same breath as Priestley's *Corruptions*; e.g. VL 1795-i, 89.

<sup>81</sup> D.H. Purgold, *Resultaat van myne meer dan vyftig jaarige overdenkingen over den godsdienst van Jesus*, Wesel (Franz Jacob Röder) 1790; the translator was indicated as 'J.C.S.'

<sup>82</sup> VL 1791-i, 246-250. The reviewer added that while not everything in the book could be approved of, it would help the reader to do some independent thinking. One warm supporter of Purgold was the Mennonite J.H. Floh (1758-1830).

in its Miscellany.<sup>83</sup> Purgold disputed a number of traditional doctrines. His book resulted in a number of reactions, one of which warned in no uncertain terms against the habit of publishing dangerous books like this.<sup>84</sup>

Dutch divines naturally consulted the writings of their German colleagues who had confuted the ‘new reformers’, as the *Neologen* and radicals were called.<sup>85</sup> An ample extract from an orthodox German periodical, *Die neuesten Religionsbegebenheiten, mit unpartheiischen Anmerkungen* (1778-1796), written by Heinrich M.G. Köster (1734-1802), was published in the *Nederlandsche Bibliotheek* in 1779 as a ‘Report concerning the new reformers of religion in Germany’. This account of what the religious writers who claimed to restore and improve the Christian faith actually professed was highly influential. It was soon common knowledge in Dutch clerical circles that the German new reformers – C.T. Damm, J.B. Basedow,<sup>86</sup> Teller, Töllner, Eberhard, Semler, Bahrtd, Spalding – explicitly rejected or undermined traditional doctrines: the divinity of Christ, the atonement, original sin, the sacraments, the spiritual world; that they impaired the authority of Holy Writ; and that their arguments resembled the Socinian most of all.<sup>87</sup> In 1791 a translation of *Die neuesten Religionsbegebenheiten* was published independently in four parts; the anonymous translator was Van Hamelsveld, who probably had commercial rather than religious reasons for translating it.<sup>88</sup> A similar book opposing the new divinity was the *Briefe über die neuen Wächter der protestantischen Kirche* (1778, D.tr. 1792), by Simon L.E. de Marées (1717-1802). Johann Friedrich Jacobi (1712-1791), *Consistorialrat* in the principality of Lüneburg, was another popular author among the more conservative Dutch theologians. His irenic *Abhandlungen über wichtige Gegenstände der Religion* (1773-1778, D.tr. 1788) defended the possibility of miracles against the new reformers, and was well-received, even by those who considered his arguments out-dated.<sup>89</sup>

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<sup>83</sup> For the extract, see VB 1790-ii, 337-350 and 385-398, taken from Purgold’s *Was hat Luther für ein Recht gehabt zu reformiren? Was für ein recht haben die jetzigen Theologen? Welches ist das non plus ultra der protestantischen Kirche?* (1785); for the review, see VB 1791-i, 289-298. A tract attributed to Purgold, on Wöllner’s *Religions-Edict*, was included in VB 1791-ii, 49-61.

<sup>84</sup> *Korte aanmerkingen op het resultaat van Purgolds meer dan vijftig jaarige overdenkingen (...)*, Breda (W. Oukoop) (1791), by Cornelis Pantekoek (1758-1834). Cf. also Herman Royaards (1753-1825), a co-director of the *Haagsch Genootschap*, with a *Diatriben de divinitate Jesu Christi vera*, Utrecht (G.T. van Paddenburg & Zn./H. van Otterloo) 1791-1792.

<sup>85</sup> German opponents of Semler included J.A. Cramer, *Der Brief Pauli an die Römer* (1784; D.tr. 1787). Another German opponent was Carl V. Hauff: *Bemerkungen über die Lehrart Jesu* (1788; D.tr. 1791).

<sup>86</sup> The theological work of C.T. Damm, often mentioned as a major *Neologe*, remained untranslated; the same applies to Basedow.

<sup>87</sup> NB 1779-ii, 380-392, 417-436 and 453-473.

<sup>88</sup> The reviewer (who may well have been Van Hamelsveld himself) in the VB 1791-i, 366-370 and 581-588, considered the periodical too uncritical and too orthodox. An excerpt from *Die neuesten Religionsbegebenheiten* was published separately as *Berichten van een groot, maar onzichtbaar verbond tegen den Christelijken godsdienst*, Leiden (A. en J. Honkoop, etc) [1793].

<sup>89</sup> Cf. *De recensent, of byrdagen tot de letterkundige geschiedenis van onzen tyd*, Amsterdam (W. Holtrop) 2 1792 (no. 9), 1-25. Note that Jacobi had occasioned a row in the Netherlands through his literal interpretation of the Song of Songs (1771; D.tr. 1774); orthodox theologians reacted strongly against what they regarded as an attack from wholly unexpected quarters on the allegorical explanation upheld by all traditional Reformed divines.

The translator of Jacobi's book was Dirk C. van Voorst (1752-1833), one of the members of the *Haagsch Genootschap*.<sup>90</sup> In a periodical he issued in 1789, Van Voorst included an essay by an anonymous contributor who discussed the pervasive influence of the German new reformers, indicating that they had become a major problem. The author of this essay argued that the secular arm of the authorities ought to be invoked more regularly to combat blasphemous and offensive books. But he also tried to counter the new reformers by putting their own means and methods to good use. Above all, he called for the establishment of orthodox societies willing to refute irreligious foreign writings, even if they were as yet untranslated. The societies were also to cater for a 'characterology' of all 'new Reformers' at home and abroad, and for histories, poetry, novels, fables, plays and satires in which the Reformed faith was defended and made palatable to the general public.<sup>91</sup> Indeed, the spread of German *Neologie* during the 1780s and 1790s must have been exceedingly rapid, given the sudden frequency of complaints.<sup>92</sup> The most capable and best-informed Dutch opponent of the German new reformers was probably the Amsterdam professor Jacob van Nuijs Klinkenberg (1744-1817).<sup>93</sup> In 1797 he translated an essay on the Trinity which he had found in the three-volume *Schrift und Vernunft für denkende Christen* (1793-1794) by Gottlob August Baumgarten-Crusius (1752-1816), *Stiftssuperintendent* and *Konsistorialassessor* at Merseburg. Nuys Klinkenberg added annotations that were twice as long as the translated text. While he valued the philological and exegetical work done by Ernesti, Nösselt and Döderlein, he particularly attacked Bahrtdt, Kant, Johann August Dathe (1731-1791), and Eucharius F.C. Oertel (1765-1850) – all of whom he had read in the original German. None of the books by Wilhelm Abraham Teller (1734-1804), the leading *Neologe* in Berlin, were translated into Dutch. But his *Wörterbuch des Neuen Testaments* (1772) was well-known, and even emulated in 1790 by Gerrit Hesselink (1755-1811), a Mennonite theologian.<sup>94</sup> This Dutch biblical dictionary, which like Teller's dispensed with a great many traditional doctrines, was duly attacked in a book denouncing the fact that Dutch Mennonites, too, had now

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<sup>90</sup> One of the essays published by the *Haagsch Genootschap* was a defence of the authenticity of the book of Job against Döderlein and the Erlanger divine Wilhelm F. Hufnagel (1754-1830).

<sup>91</sup> See D.C. van Voorst, *Uitlegkundig en godgeleerd magazijn*, Leiden (A. en J. Honkoop) 1789. Note that a number of new but short-lived orthodox journals were founded in the 1790s, such as the one-volume *De gereformeerde godsdienst ongedwongen gehandhaafd*, Leiden (A. en J. Honkoop) 1794.

<sup>92</sup> One debate was begun by [C.V.S.], *Brieven van eenige Jooden, over den tegenwoordigen toestand van den Christelijken godsdienst*, Haarlem (C. van der Aa) 1786; the author argued that the Jews were now rejoicing in the reduction of positive Christianity to sheer naturalism. The book was attributed to Daniel A. Reguleth (1749-1794), one of the founders of the *Haagsch Genootschap*. See the anonymous *Bericht wegens de zoogenaamde brieven (...)*, Amsterdam (Schalenkamp, etc.) s.a. [1787], which includes a highly critical translation of a review of the *Brieven* in the *Allgemeine Literatur-Zeitung* (Jena) 118 1786; and the anonymous *Drie brieven van Janus Phileusebius*, Utrecht (B. Wild) 1786.

<sup>93</sup> Ernestine G.E. van der Wall, *Verlicht christendom of verijnd heidendom? Jacob van Nuys Klinkenberg (1744-1817) en de Verlichting*, Leiden (Rijks Universiteit Leiden) 1994.

<sup>94</sup> *Uitlegkundig woordenboek ter opheldering van de schriften des N. Verbonds*, Amsterdam (J. Yntema/erven P. Meijer/G. Warnars) 1790.

been contaminated with the excesses of the new reformers.<sup>95</sup> If anything, all these disputes make abundantly clear that by the 1790s Dutch literary publicity was much more flexible than it had been when German theological writings first began their incursion in the Netherlands in the early 1760s.

But there were limits nonetheless to the leniency of, or the commercial possibilities within, late eighteenth-century Dutch publicity. Significantly, a contemporary translation of Bahrdt's *Apologie der Vernunft durch die Gründe der Schrift unterstützt*, a vehement rejection of Seiler's *Über den Versöhnungstod Jesu Christi* (1778-1779), has been conserved in manuscript form. It was never published and seems to testify, once again, to the limited possibilities of publishing radical books in the Netherlands.<sup>96</sup> The part played in the Dutch Republic by Karl Friedrich Bahrdt (1740-1792), the *enfant terrible* among German theologians, is difficult to interpret. His books were apparently quite popular, but hardly any of them were deemed worthy of an outright rebuttal. The only independently published opposition in Dutch came from Germany. One of them was Goeze's *Beweis, dass die Bahrdtische Verdeutschung des Neuen Testaments keine übersetzung, sondern eine vorsätzliche Fälschung und frevelhafte Schändung der Worte des lebendigen Gottes sei* (1773; D.tr. 1778). Goeze had confuted Bahrdt's version of the New Testament, *Die neuesten Offenbarungen Gottes* (1773-1774), which was not translated into Dutch but must have been well-known.<sup>97</sup> Indeed, the *Nederlandsche Bibliotheek* soon published a translation of the *Theologisches Gutachten* (1779) concerning the book by the faculties at Göttingen and Würzburg.<sup>98</sup> Another translated attack on Bahrdt was *Der wahre Charakter des Herrn Doktor K.F. Bahrdt: in vertrauten Briefen geschildert von einem niederländischen Bürger an seinen Freund in London* (1779; D.tr. 1779), a particularly vitriolic anonymous assault.<sup>99</sup> The *Freimüthige Betrachtungen über das Christentum* (1780, D.tr. 1790-1791) by Johann August Starck (1741-1816) must also be mentioned at this point. It was intended as a defence of Semler's attack on Bahrdt's *Glaubensbekenntnis*, and translated into Dutch by Willem Goede, a Lutheran minister who joined the Remonstrant Brotherhood in 1795 after falling foul of the orthodox clergy. In his annotations, Goede defended Semler against Starck, and Bahrdt against his Dutch detractors.

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<sup>95</sup> De nieuwe hervorming onder de doopsgezinden, s.l. 1793; the book was written by Jacob Klinkhamer (1749-1838).

<sup>96</sup> MS Library Vrije Universiteit Amsterdam, shelf number XV 00007: 'Verdeediging van het gezond verstand teegen de Christelyke verzoenings-leer.' The manuscript comprises two volumes of more than 200 pages each; it is not dated and no translator is mentioned.

<sup>97</sup> Another translated attack on *Die neuesten Offenbarungen Gottes* was Heinrich E. Teuthorn's *Brief eines reisenden Juden über den gegenwärtigen Zustand des Religionswesens unter den Protestanten* (1776, D.tr. 1778).

<sup>98</sup> NB, 1780-i, 1-34. Earlier the NB 1779-i, 333-354, had included excerpts from the anonymous Bahrdt's *Glaubensbekenntnis (...) mit Anmerkungen versehen* (1779); cf. Otto Jacob/Ingrid Majewski, *Karl Friedrich Bahrdt. Bibliographie, Schriften zum Bibliotheks- und Büchereiwesen in Sachsen-Anhalt* 69, Halle (Saale) (Universitäts- und Landesbibliothek Sachsen-Anhalt) 1992, no. 433.

<sup>99</sup> See Otto Jacob/Ingrid Majewski, nr. 284. The book is attributed to a certain W. Triest.

Yet given the number of translations (9 in all), Bahrdr was obviously one of those new reformers whose clandestine influence was, in the eyes of the church, causing so much doubt and despair among the church-goers and so much pleasure among irresponsible wits. The translations of his books include the early and relatively orthodox *Versuch eines biblischen Systems der Dogmatik* (1769, D.tr. 1781). But Bahrdr's edition of *Eden, das ist Betrachtungen über das Paradies und die darinn vorgefallenen Begebenheiten* (1772; D.tr. 1783), a notorious attempt at rationalist exegesis, appeared in Dutch soon enough (it was written by Johann H. von Gerstenberg (1712-1776) but the Dutch attributed it wholly to Bahrdr). An excerpt from the book concerning the metaphorical interpretation of the paradisaical serpent had already been published in a rather obscure heterodox journal in 1773 or 1774.<sup>100</sup> The *Philanthropinischer Erziehungsplan oder vollständige Nachricht von dem ersten wirklichen Philanthropin zu Marschlins* (1776; D.tr. 1777), translated by August Sterk, was characteristically rejected by the *Nederlandsche Bibliotheek*.<sup>101</sup> Other translations include well-known Bahrdr-tiana: the *Briefe über die Bibel im Volkston* (1782; D.tr. 1783 and 1795); the *Handbuch der Moral für den Bürgerstand* (1789; D.tr. 1790); the aggressively political play *Das Religionsedict* (1789; D.tr. 1789), which received no review;<sup>102</sup> and the *Geschichte und Tagebuch meines Gefängnisses nebst geheimen Urkunden und Aufschlüssen über Deutsche Union* (1790; D.tr. 1790).<sup>103</sup> This seems evidence enough that this radical *Aufklärer* and controversialist was readily appreciated in the Netherlands, albeit by certain groups. Bahrdr himself recounts that during his travels in the Republic he visited a group of freethinkers in Amsterdam who with great joy and fervour ridiculed 'Dogmatik und Priesterdespotismus'. Bahrdr was happily surprised that even in a land so obviously inhabited by bigoted and rigidly confessional Dutchmen there still existed a temple 'wo die Vernunft als Gottheit verehrt wurde (...)'.<sup>104</sup>

### Conclusion

In this general overview of the impact of German theological writing in the Netherlands I have attempted to examine the way translations from the German reflected the nature of, as well as developments within, Dutch literary 'publicity' between 1700 and 1796. The decade around 1760 forms a clear watershed in the eighteenth-century intellectual relations between Germany

<sup>100</sup> According to the NB 1774-ii, 22-23, note, the excerpt was published in the Uytlandsche Bibliotheek, Rotterdam (J.F. Ebert), vol. 2; the translator was a certain 'J.H.M.' (= J.H. Munnikhuizen?).

<sup>101</sup> NB 1778-i, 332-341.

<sup>102</sup> Christoph Weiß, «Krieg gegen die Aufklärer.» Carl Friedrich Bahrdr's Kritik der Wöllnerschen Religionspolitik, in: Carl Friedrich Bahrdr (1740-1792), ed. Gerhard Sauder/Christoph Weiß, St. Ingbert (Werner J. Röhrig Verlag) 1992, 318-351.

<sup>103</sup> Attributed to H.W.D. Bräss, J.A. Hermstädt, and F.C. Dreyßig; see Otto Jacob/Ingrid Majewski (n. 99), nr. 19. Another translation was D. Karl Friedrich Bahrdr's unruhiges Leben, sein Tod und Begräbnis, für Neu- und Wissbegierige beschrieben (1792; D.tr. 1792).

and the Netherlands. This watershed is especially evident with regard to both the quality and the quantity of the literary traffic between the two territories. Before 1760 Dutch religious (largely pietist and Cocceian) books found ready buyers in Germany, but from about 1760 onwards a large and growing number of German books of a broadly religious nature began to be published in Dutch. The impact was so large that contemporaries were seriously worried as to the effects German books would have on Dutch scholarly and literary creativity as well as confessional loyalties. Three peculiarities characterized the reception of German books within Dutch literary publicity. Firstly, many Dutch intellectuals were probably able to read books of German provenance in the original (German or Latin) language; secondly, Dutch literary and theological criticism was characterized by the need for conciliation and moderation, partly as a result of commercial considerations; thirdly, the control over book publication of the confessional clergy and/or the civil authorities was still relatively strong – as contemporary German journalists frequently observed. This resulted in a general tendency to favour authors who represented an interconfessional middle or who otherwise encouraged moderation.

The most popular religious authors were Mosheim, Michaelis, Schubert, Lavater, Heß, Cramer and Sturm. In general, eighteenth-century German authors can be divided into four separate but (often) interrelated groups. By examining these groups and their impact on Dutch intellectual life, the changes in Dutch publicity during the last four decades of the century become evident. The first group comprises pietists, especially those who wrote from the perspective of *Spät pietismus*; writers within the Lutheran and Reformed confessional traditions, particularly those with Wolffian leanings; writers on pastoral and moral topics, above all Gellert; and apologists from various religious backgrounds who defended the Christian tradition against the threat of English and French freethinkers. The latter category in particular contributed to a widening of Dutch literary publicity by developing new forms of argumentation within the traditional Christian framework. The purposeful neglect, for apologetic or critical reasons, of specific confessional doctrines in authoritative writings was becoming a publicly acceptable phenomenon. The second group of writers, concerned with the interpretation of historical (including biblical) sources, had a similar impact. The most influential writers in this group were Michaelis and Mosheim. Although their thought was relatively conservative, they nonetheless contributed substantially to opening up Dutch literary publicity through their ‘pragmatic’ approach to history, which had the general effect of playing down confessional loyalties and dogmatic differences. The third group of writers were the outright critics of the clerical establishment, who attacked the privileged position of the orthodox confessional clergy and their relations with political power. In particular Nicolai’s satirical novel *Sebaldus Nothan-*

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<sup>104</sup> Bahrdt, *Geschichte seines Lebens, seiner Meinungen und Schicksale*, Berlin (Friedrich Vieweg) 1790-1791, vol. III, 282.

tions with political power. In particular Nicolai's satirical novel *Sebaldus Nothanker* caused an uproar. The fourth and final group comprised the so-called 'new reformers': *Neologen* and religious radicals such as Töllner, Teller, Eberhard, Spalding, Semler, Bahrdt, and, as far as the Dutch were concerned, above all Steinbart and Purgold. During the 1780 and 1790s both the Reformed and the Lutheran confessional clergy regarded the 'new reformers' as a grave threat to their respective traditions. The fact that they were perceived as such attests to the growing flexibility of Dutch literary publicity, even though this publicity would continue to be characterized by the need for moderation and by the control of religious-political authority until well into the nineteenth century. The continuing massive influence of German theological writing on Dutch literary publicity during this later period – and beyond – is, however, a tale that still remains to be told.

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History, Reform, and *Aufklärung*. German Theological Writing and Dutch Literary Publicity in the Eighteenth Century

Abstract

In the second half of the eighteenth century, German books achieved an unprecedented degree of popularity in the Netherlands. The increase in popularity was accompanied by an enormous growth in the number of writings translated from German into Dutch. While this spate of translations has often been noted, it has never been subject to a thorough analysis. German theological writings were the most popular genre, so that our lack of knowledge applies especially to books of a religious nature. The following is a first comprehensive appraisal of the massive introduction of German theological writing on the eighteenth-century Dutch market, based on an analysis of translations from German or 'German' Latin into Dutch, on their reception in review periodicals, and on other responses of contemporaries to books of a broadly German provenance. In particular, the way these translations reflected the nature of, as well as developments within, Dutch literary 'publicity' (*Öffentlichkeit*) is discussed. The emphasis is especially on the last four decades of the eighteenth century, because the impact of German religious books was greater by far in these years than in any previous period. Four main trends are examined: apologetic writings, philological and historical writings, critiques of the clerical establishment, and theological radicalism. The article generally illustrates the effects of international intellectual developments on a minor European country in the age of the Enlightenment. The article includes 1 table.