A crumbling fortress is our God

The maintenance mechanisms of the Dutch reformatoric community

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Contents

The Calvinist pillar of which Sela and her family are part is creaking on all sides. Will those who have,

of old, had their place in the Netherlands persevere? … Will the pillar be saved from certain death or

will the entire reformatoric world perish?

⸻ Sela (Liesbeth Labeur)[1]

Chapter 1. *Introduction*

In 2010, Zeeland artist Liesbeth Labeur published the reformatoric community's first-ever graphic novel. In characteristic black-and-white, the novel follows the concerns of a thirteen-year-old girl, Sela, about the pietist-reformed pillar's continued existence. This community is her home. It hurts seeing it perish before her very eyes as the secular Dutch community encroaches on its rights – the right to act in accordance with the demands of the living God. Eventually, her community sees no other solution than to leave the once-majoritarian reformatoric province of Zeeland in search for a better life. Hoping to find the city of refuge to which Lot and his daughters fled after Sodom and Gomorra's destruction, they travel across the Zeeland Bridge. There, in the elusive biblical land of Zoar, they would finally be safe.

1.1 Introducing the reformatoric community

The reformatoric pillar about which Sela worried, is an orthodox Calvinist grouping of seven reformed churches.[2] In the 1960s and early-1970s, this community was re-established against

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[1] "De calvinistische zuil waar Sela en haar familie deel van uitmaken kraakt aan alle kanten. Zullen zij die vanouds hun plaats in Nederland gehad hebben standhouden? … Wordt de zuil van een gewisse ondergang gered of gaat de hele refowereld ten onder?" Blurb on the cover of Sela (Liesbeth Labeur), *Op weg naar Zoar: Een calvinistische strip over de laatste zuil van Nederland*, Amsterdam: Prometheus, 2010. Front page image taken from the novel, cf. Gerrit-Jan KleinJan, 'Je haalt de kerk niet zomaar uit de refo', *Trouw*, 11 November 2012, available online at https://www.trouw.nl/home/je-haalt-de-kerk-niet-zomaar-uit-de-refo~ade298c5/, last accessed on 20 February 2018.

[2] These include the Restored Reformed Church (Hersteld Hervormde Kerk, HHK), Reformed Congregations (Gereformeerde Gemeenten, GG), Reformed Congregations in the Netherlands (Gereformeerde Gemeenten in Nederland, GGiN), Reformed Congregations in the Netherlands unconnected (Gereformeerde Gemeenten in Nederland buiten verband, GGiNbv), Old Reformed Congregations in the Netherlands (Oud Gereformeerde Gemeenten in Nederland, OGGiN), Christian Reformed Churches (Christelijk Gereformeerde Kerken, CGK), and most of the Reformed Association in the Protestant Church in the Netherlands (Gereformeerde Bond in de Protestantse Kerk in Nederland). A number of free churches, in particular Free Old Reformed Congregations and home churches, are also counted among the reformatoric pillar.

rampant secularism in accordance with an exclusion-based model first used by rev. G. H. Kersten during the early-twentieth century. Reformation thought, in particular French theologian Jean Calvin's *Institutio Christianae Religionis*, permeates its identity. This is combined with a Pietist application of Reformation principles derived from the Dutch Further Reformation of the seventeenth and eighteenth centuries to all aspects of everyday life.

Dogmatically, the community underwrites the bible's indivisibility as the literally inspired Word of God.[3] Only the 1637 *States Translation* of the bible, in its 1657 revised *Ravensteyn* version, is commonly accepted as the divinely illuminated Dutch version of Scripture.[4] In addition, the *Three Forms of Unity* are endorsed as containing the bible's correct and unalterable interpretation.[5] The community's theology emphasises the need for a deep-rooted awareness of sin, the personal experience (*bevinding*) of God's saving grace, the necessity of conversion to escape eternal damnation, and the doom-worthy individual's complete dependence on God.

Geographically, the largest reformatoric agglomerations are located in the 'bible belt': a region with a relatively high demographic concentration of orthodox Pietist believers stretching from Zeeland in the Netherland's deepest southwest, through the islands of South Holland and the northwest of Brabant, Utrecht, and the Veluwe forests and moors, into the north of Overijssel. Politically, the community adheres to a religious conservatism identified as a continuation of the Netherlands' seventeenth-century Calvinist tradition.[6] This conservatism is represented by the Reformed Political Party (*Staatkundig Gereformeerde Partij*, SGP), which holds 3 out of a total of 150 parliamentary seats as of 2012. The reformatoric pillar's cultural unity is further maintained through a host of organisations and institutions, including pillar-specific radio stations, magazines, a newspaper, publishers, schools, healthcare institutions, occupational organisations, and types of leisure. Particular attention is accorded to wearing proper attire, maintaining distance from modern (secular) media, and denouncing Sunday labour, euthanasia, and abortion.

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[3] Henri Bloemen, 'Over de persreacties op de Nieuwe Bijbelvertaling', *Filter*, 1999, 6, 4, pp. 2-16.

[4] John Exalto, 'Niets kan haar glans verdoven: Het verzet tegen de herziening van de Statenbijbel', *Tijdschrift Nederlandse Kerkgeschiedenis*, 2011, 14, pp. 94-103.

[5] The *Three Forms of Unity* include the *Canons of Dort*, the *Belgic Confession* and the *Heidelberg Catechism*. Their foundational role for Dutch state-led Protestantism during the 1618-1619 General Synod has imbued them with near-mythological status reminiscent only of the veneration of Scripture.

[6] George Harinck and Lodewijk Winkeler, 'The twentieth century', in H. Selderhuis (ed.), *Handbook of Dutch church history*, Göttingen: Vandenhoeck & Ruprecht, 2014, pp. 592-594.

Legal scholar and former party leader for the Reformed Political League (*Gereformeerd Politiek Verbond*, GPV), Gerrit Jan Schutte, considers the pillar to be increasingly socially diverse due to increased urban-rural and social mobility, calling it a demographic undergoing controlled change.[7] At the same time, the community is marked by high denominational complexity and antagonism within and between its seven denominations and myriad independent local congregations. As such, the reformatoric community is what Duke Divinity School sociologist Mark Chaves calls an institutional sphere, "one relativized sphere among other relativized spheres, whose elites jockey to increase or at least maintain their control over human actions, organisational resources, and other societal spheres".[8]

1.2 A crumbling community

Sela's story is exemplary for the reformatoric community's current status. As the Dutch society's last remaining 'pillar', this religious community has traditionally been characterised by an introspective attitude based on a literalist interpretation of the bible, clear external traits of dress and language use separating them from other social groups, and strong internal structural integrity.[9] Scholar of reformatoric history, Jan Zwemer, refers to this self-manifestation as "an attempt to realise the ideal society on a microscale"[10]. Yet, many of its members fear that their ideal society's demise is imminent.[11] The group's distinctive character is slowly evaporating due to the inescapable nature of modern media, rising educational standards, and more permissive dress codes. Conservative publicist Bart-Jan Spruyt in 2011 described the pillar as a house of cards bound to implode.[12]

The parameters of this transformative process are subject to active negotiation by the community's intellectual elite. Conservative and progressive religious factions strive to maintain the

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[7] G. J. Schutte, Review of the book *Bewaar het pand*, *BMGN – Low Countries Historical Review*, 1989, 104, 2, p. 253.

[8] M. Chaves, 'Secularisation as declining religious authority', *Social Forces*, 1994, 72, 3, p. 752.

[9] G. J. Schutte, Review of the book *Bewaar het pand: De spanning tussen assimilatie en persistentie bij de emancipatie van de bevindelijk gereformeerden* by C. S. L. Janse, *BMGN – Low Countries Historical Review*, 1989, 104, 2, pp. 252-254.

[10] "[E]en poging tot verwezenlijking van de ideale samenleving op microschaal", in Jan Zwemer, *In conflict met de cultuur: De bevindelijk gereformeerden en de Nederlandse samenleving in het midden van de twintigste eeuw* (2nd Ed.), Kampen: De Groot Goudriaan, 1993, p. 9.

[11] G. J. Schutte, 'Over het reformatorisch volksdeel en zijn verleden', *BMGN – Low Countries Historical Review*, 2013, 108, 2, pp. 229-235.

[12] Bart Jan Spruyt, 'Het eigenbelang van de groep', *Nederlands Dagblad*, 14 October 2011, available online at https://www.nd.nl/nieuws/columns/het-eigenbelang-van-de-groep.256705.lynkx, last accessed on 20 February 2018.

community through the implementation of the changes they deem most in accordance with its terrestrial function and transcendental purpose. Such strategies are inseparable from these factions' varying perspectives on reformatoric ontology. They are therefore combined with a process of introspection and discussion that informs these decisions: what does it mean to be reformatoric? Why are these religious perspectives worth maintaining? And for whom do they still carry value?

The ways in which the reformatoric community's negotiates its secularised Western European environment provide insight into the discursive tools it employs to ensure its *survival*. John Exalto, VU Amsterdam's preeminent authority on the history and status of the reformatoric community, describes the group's sociological survival model as a four-pronged 'ethnicisation process'.[13] (1) Its membership is defined by birth, not by choice. (2) Its continuous interaction with other groups results in a relational self-definition based on clearly defined in-group and out-group characteristics. (3) Its definition as 'reformatoric' overrides other devices of self-categorisation. (4) The individual internalisation of group codes leads to the partial adaptation of one's personality to reformatoric standards. Such institutionalised interplay between individual internalisation and social construction, sociologist of religion Gerard Schutte argues, was crucial to orthodox churches' membership increase from 7% of the Dutch population in 1966 to 9% in 2006.[14]

This growth seems reason for optimism concerning the community's future. Nevertheless, its pillarised structure has become a vulnerable anomaly in the secularised Dutch socio-religious landscape. Pillars, or *zuilen*, originated in the Netherlands' politico-legal development of the late-19th century. They were a response to an environment in which no one single group, whether catholic, socialist, liberal, or protestant, was strong enough to fully impose its meaning-making systems on others. This situation fostered the necessity to practice pragmatic tolerance vis-à-vis the immediate Other. However, the dissolution of most pillars between the 1960s and the 1980s resulted in largely shared rationalised, democratised, and subjectivised ontological understandings.[15] Speaking with psychologists of religion Ralph Hood, Peter Hill, and Bernard Spilka, *horizontally transcendent* religious understandings that seek meaning in this-worldly concerns gradually replaced the *vertically*

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[13] John Exalto, 'Een tijd van schifting: Over het ontstaan van de reformatorische zuil', *Zicht*, 2012, 38, 3, p. 22.

[14] Gerard Dekker, 'Het christelijk godsdienstig en kerkelijk leven', in Ton Bernts, Gerard Dekker and Joep de Hart (Eds.), *God in Nederland: 1966-2006*, Kampen: Ten Have, 2007, pp. 12-73.

[15] Gerard Dekker, *De stille revolutie: De ontwikkeling van de Gereformeerde Kerken in Nederland tussen 1950 en 1990*, Kampen: Kok, 1992.

transcendent belief in higher powers.[16] While individual religiosity remained, religion's presence in the public sphere underwent a steady decline. As theologian, economist, and historian of religion Henk Post contends, secularism's homogenising effect weakened the pillar's position by undermining the subjective validity of alternative perspectives.[17] Moreover, ontological differences between social and political parties having diminished, a majoritarian perspective that could be imposed on dissenting minorities now *did* exist. And while 55% of the Dutch population still reports to feel personally related to Christianity, this relationship generally refers to its cultural, not its religious manifestations.[18]

The depillarisation process polarised the Dutch Christian community. On the one hand, the majority of denominations witnessed a decline in orthodoxy, weakening of transcendence, and loss of ultimate meaning-giving functions.[19] By and large, these churches were quick to embrace secular values. They decreased religious teaching and chose to emphasise commonalities rather than differences with other religious manifestations. Nevertheless, these churches witnessed a rapid drop in membership. Orthodox churches, on the other hand, increased in both absolute and relative size. Dekker finds that their often-small nature fostered closely-felt connections to the congregation, allowed young people to feel heard, and cultivated regular church attendance.[20] He also considers their members to increasingly reject secular societal tendencies in pursuit of ever-greater permissiveness. He thus suggests a growing polarisation between believers and non-believers: "many turn their backs on the churches and the Christian faith, but those who remain Christian-religious or ecclesiastical, experience their religiosity more intensely".[21]

1.3 Social and cultural emancipation

To explain both the rise and demise of social pillars, sociologist and former editor-in-chief of the *Reformatorisch Dagblad* Chris Janse usefully distinguishes between two contradictory emancipatory

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[16] Ralph W. Hood, Jr., Peter C. Hill, and Bernard Spilka, *The psychology of religion: An empirical approach* (4th Ed.), New York, NY: Guilford, 2009, p. 282.

[17] H. A. Post, *In strijd met de roeping der vrouw: De Staatkundig Gereformeerde Partij en het vrouwenkiesrecht*, unpublished doctoral thesis, Amsterdam: Vrije Universiteit, 2009, pp. 7-8.

[18] Dekker, 'Het christelijk godsdienstig en kerkelijk leven'.

[19] Gerard Dekker and Hijme C. Stoffels, 'Maintaining orthodoxy in a modern world: The case of the orthodox Reformed and Evangelical Christians in the Netherlands', *Social Compass*, 1993, 40, 1, pp. 101-110.

[20] "[V]elen keren zich af van de kerken en het christelijk geloof, maar zij die christelijk-gelovig of kerkelijk blijven, beleven hun godsdienstigheid intenser", in Dekker, 'Het christelijk godsdienstig en kerkelijk leven', p. 36.

[21] Ibid., p. 47.

forces.[22] *Cultural* emancipation refers to a community's successful claim to discursive and societal space for the manifestation of an institutionalised distinctive identity. *Social* emancipation denotes the extent to which a community's members hold wealth, influence, and prestige. Most pillars, including the catholic, socialist, and various types of protestant, were established during the late-nineteenth century to allow groups of lower socio-economic standing to achieve shared legal and material interests. Constructing protectionist boundaries around these communities allowed for the development of their own intellectual, mercantile, and religious cadres. However, the combination of social and cultural emancipation harbours an intrinsic tension between the desire for emancipation of one's own invented culture, on the one hand, and the successful social emancipation of their formerly poorer constituents, on the other. As Sciences Po political scientist, Jan Rovny, argues in the case of Western socialism, the greater affluence facilitated by cultural emancipation increases the individual independence of a pillar's members.[23] A sequence of protectionist cultural emancipation and the consequent possibility of social emancipation hence risks making the originally emancipating pillar superfluous.

This is precisely what happened in most Dutch protestant communities. Gerard Dekker was the first to make this point in his influential account of the emancipation of the Reformed Churches in the Netherlands (*Gereformeerde Kerken in Nederland*), which he describes in his seminal 1992 work *De stille revolutie* (The quiet revolution).[24] In his 2013 *De doorgaande revolutie* (The continuing revolution), Dekker concludes that the development of the highly pillarised Reformed Churches liberated (*Gereformeerde Kerken vrijgemaakt*) follows a similar pattern to that of the Reformed Churches in the Netherlands, from which they split in 1944.[25] Reformatoric sociologist, Teus van de Lagemaat, draws similar parallels with the Reformed Association (*Gereformeerde Bond*) in the Protestant Church in the Netherlands in his 2013 dissertation *De stille evolutie* (The quiet evolution).[26] And Fred van Lieburg, professor of religious history at VU Amsterdam specialised in the development

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[22] C. S. L. Janse, *Bewaar het pand: De spanning tussen assimilatie en persistentie bij de emancipatie van de bevindelijk gereformeerden*, Houten: Den Hertog, 1985.

[23] Jan Rovny, 'What happened to Europe's left?', *LSE European Politics and Policy*, 20 February 2018, available online at http://blogs.lse.ac.uk/europpblog/2018/02/20/what-happened-to-europes-left/, last accessed on 21 February 2018.

[24] Dekker, *De stille revolutie*.

[25] Gerard Dekker, *De doorgaande revolutie: De ontwikkeling van de gereformeerde kerken in perspectief*, Barneveld: Vuurbaak, 2013.

[26] Teus van de Lagemaat, *De stille evolutie: Individualisering in de Gereformeerde Bond*, Barneveld: BDU, 2013.

of the reformatoric community, in 2014 notes a 'silent refolution' (*stille refolutie*) in the social circles around the Reformed Political Party (SGP).[27] As Dekker points out in his final book on the topic, *Zie hoe alles hier verandert* (See how everything here is changing), the developments within these denominations, while not simultaneous, all follow a similar pattern.[28]

1.4 Three-generational model of pillar development

To elucidate this pattern, I propose a simplified three-phase model of pillar evolution in which each phase, by approximation, lasts for the duration of one generation. During the phase of *establishment and consolidation* (1), a religious pillar emerges out of a schismatic sentiment of marginalisation. Its membership primarily consists of deeply orthodox, socio-economically disadvantaged classes that mistrust 'society' and the government. I suggest that the pillars' founders, initially influenced by the Zeitgeist of the fin de siècle and later referring to the pillarisation experiences of their predecessors, make use of strategies reminiscent of the invention of nation-state identities.[29] These include the creation of own rituals and celebrations, veneration of important leaders, and pillar-specific media, leisure activities, and even schools. The group's concentrated structure allows it to strive for cultural emancipation. This can render concrete political results, such as when the Reformed Churches in the Netherlands secured the equal funding of confessional schools with the Education Pacification (*Onderwijspacificatie*) of 1917.

During the phase of dogmatic and institutional *rigidisation* (2), a pillar's originally revolutionary and emancipatory identity and institutions become objectives in themselves. In this situation, the pillar's existence and dogmatic foundations are utilised as authority-based arguments to stifle attempts at continuing development. Such rigid one-sidedness may result in intra-pillar rifts, as exemplified by the 1926 Geelkerken schism in the Reformed Churches in the Netherlands. Nevertheless, the pillar's overall structure is successfully maintained. This combination of the pillar's stability and its gradual integration as a power factor within the wider social field allows for the community's gradual increase in Janse's markers of social emancipation: wealth, power, and prestige.

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[27] Fred A. van Lieburg, 'De stille refolutie: Mentaliteitsverandering bij de staatkundig gereformeerden in Nederland', *Religie en Samenleving*, 2014, 9, 2, pp. 44-61.

[28] Gerard Dekker, *Zie hoe alles hier verandert: Het verloop van de gereformeerden*, Utrecht: Kok, 2016.

[29] Cf. Anderson's account of the conscious creation of nations as 'imagined communities', Benedict Anderson, *Imagined communities: Reflections on the origin and spread of nationalism* (3rd Ed.), London: Verso, 2006, pp. 39-48.

The phase of *integration* (3), finally, arrives in response to this process of social emancipation. During this phase, the pillar gradually changes its strategy from exclusion to ever-expanding inclusion through the co-optation of secular symbols, ontological frameworks, and institutions. Dogmatic emphasis shifts from afterlife expectations to a terrestrially applied religiosity. The bureaucratisation and centralisation of pillar structures all but eliminate local ownership. Within-church pluralism and loss of homogeneity make it harder to identify with a unified community. As its cultural transmission mechanisms decline in effectiveness, the community's social emancipation precipitates its cultural assimilation.

The reformatoric community may be analysed along this same three-step model. As Janse describes in his foundational 1985 study, *Bewaar het pand* (Guard what was committed to thy trust),[30] the reformatoric community banded together after WWII as a minority underprivileged in prestige, power, and well-being. Nevertheless, as a brief terrestrial life of strangerhood lived in isolation from 'the world' was regarded merely as preparation for the afterlife, its leadership had no outspoken emancipating objectives. Obtaining higher education was nonetheless encouraged to foster the development of an elite-driven reformatoric governance structure. As the pillar consolidated, education, income, and employment levels all increased. Important socio-cultural institutions such as the *Reformatorisch Dagblad* and reformatoric schools were established in the mid-1970s. But the group's prestige and social power declined. A unifying secular majority gradually lost sympathy for these traditional protestants.

During the late-1970s and early-1980s, the pillar's development gradually came to a standstill. Athough the community's strict interpretation of Calvinist dogma had never been particularly permissive of deviations, theologian and Utrecht University professor Anne van der Meijden in 1976 noticed the struggle of centrifugal and centripetal powers in the wake of the group's half-achieved emancipation. [31] Janse concluded that, by the mid-1980s, no visible signs of dogmatic or liturgical assimilation had taken place. More changes, however, occurred with regard to the pillar's ethical convictions. SGP gradually came to tolerate passive women's suffrage, the community accepted radio use, and most of its members got vaccinated. Average income levels and social prestige similarly

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[30] Janse, *Bewaar het pand*. Janse's book title is derived from 1 Timothy 6:20, "O Timothy! Guard what was committed to thy trust" (KJV). In Dutch: "O Timotheüs! Bewaar het pand u toebetrouwd" (Statenvertaling).
[31] Cf. A. van der Meiden, *Welzalig is het volk: Een bijgewerkt en aangepast portret van de zwarte-kousen kerken*, Baarn: Ambo, 1976, pp. 232-235.

increased. To avoid further pillar decline spurred on by democratisation, women's emancipation, and higher levels of education, Janse advised what for Schutte amounted to "a spirited holding on to the already-practiced strategy of pillarisation".[32] In advising thusly, Janse's study *itself* played an important role in the pillar's rigidisation: his study was repeatedly used to justify doubling down on conservative maintenance strategies.

More recent publications, including Van Lieburg's *De stille refolutie* and Van de Lagemaat's *De stille evolutie*, suggest that a gradual process of assimilation is currently taking place. Van de Lagemaat concludes that micro-level individualisation among members of the Reformed Association denomination results in the progressive replacement of the importance of tradition with that of individual opinion.[33] Building on this conclusion, Van Lieburg argues that the Reformed Party's gradual outreach to other Christian and right-wing political groups since moderate Kees van der Staaij's assumed leadership in 2010 might pose the clearest example yet of the community's entering into the third phase of pillar development.[34]

Yet, this analysis begs careful consideration. In the first place, the community's development did not run parallel to that of its reformed, catholic, or even socialist counterparts. Whereas these pillars' developments influenced each other through the law of communicating vessels between the late-nineteenth century and the nineteen-seventies, the reformatoric community's largely depillarised sociocultural environment is decidedly different. Second, the *reformatoric* pillar is a schismatic consequence of the *reformed* pillar's integration process that undermined its structural integrity after World War II. There is only circumstantial evidence available justifying the community's analysis along the lines of its predecessor. Third, unlike the denominational pillars analysed by the likes of Van de Lagemaat and Dekker, the reformatoric community is not a single hierarchical institution but rather a space of meaningful disagreement comprising a host of churches, house churches, and individual believers. And fourth, its final step of assimilation is not yet finalised and may therefore only be projected from the observations of authors like Van Lieburg, Van de Lagemaat, and Dekker.[35]

Assimilationist processes nonetheless seem to create clearly visible friction within the reformatoric community. Van de Lagemaat locates this tension between the relatively progressive

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[32] "...een bezield vasthouden aan de reeds gepraktiseerde verzuilingsstrategie", Schutte, Review of the book *Bewaar het pand*, p. 253.

[33] Van de Lagemaat, *De stille evolutie*, pp. 385-388.

[34] Van Lieburg, 'De stille refolutie', pp. 44-48.

[35] Dekker, *Zie hoe alles hier verandert*, pp. 127-135.

individual *members* of a reformatoric denomination and its conservative clerical and intellectual *elite*.[36]

Van Lieburg identifies it as a generational divide between SGP's relatively *young* parliamentarians and the *older* party board.[37] Wherever they may be located, such tensions may be interpreted as symbolic for the different means through which these progressive and conservative elites seek to maintain the reformatoric community by either decreasing or increasing their conflict with the secular "world".

1.5 Maintenance mechanisms

Building on this tension between progressive and conservative attitudes, this study seeks to investigate the means through which different reformatoric elites attempt to avert the community's feared demise. In order to classify these strategies, I apply Meerten and Berend ter Borg's *maintenance mechanisms* to three cases. Ter Borg and Ter Borg define maintenance mechanisms as "tried ways of rendering disturbing elements of meaning-making systems harmless, upon which one often calls without much consideration".[38] These mechanisms' necessity is premised on the human need for ontological security, a structurationist Giddensian concept indicating the subjective certainty that one's conception of, and meaning found in, the order of existence, or one's *ontological framework*, is accurate.[39]

Intended to maintain and restore *ontological security*, maintenance mechanisms focus not on religious beliefs, praxis, and institutions but on the meaning-making systems that underlie them and their accompanying worldview. Ter Borg and Ter Borg argue that avoidance of *anomy*, or ontological desolation, defined as "the feeling that the routines, the rules, the meanings that one uses to confront reality, are not, or to a decreasing extent, applicable to the world",[40] is fundamental to the human condition. Anomy eliminates one's sense of being 'at home in the world'. This results in alienation, elementary mistrust of both one's own judgment and the intentions of others, and deep existential anxiety. Maintenance mechanisms thus seek to keep shared ontological frameworks consistent,

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[36] Van de Lagemaat, *De stille evolutie*, pp. 389-390.

[37] Van Lieburg, *De stille refolutie*, p. 50.

[38] "[B]eproefde manieren om storende elementen van zingevingssystemen onschadelijk te maken, waarop men vaak zonder veel nadenken een beroep doet", in Meerten B. ter Borg and Berend ter Borg, *Zingeving als machtsmiddel: Van zinsverlangen tot charismatisch leiderschap*, Zoetermeer: Meinema, 2009, p. 111.

[39] Anthony Giddens, *Modernity and self-identity: Self and society in the late modern age*, Stanford, CA: Stanford UP, 1991.

[40] "[H]et gevoel dat de routines, de regels, de betekenissen, waarmee men de werkelijkheid te lijf gaat, niet of steeds minder op die werkelijkheid van toepassing zijn", in Ter Borg and Ter Borg, *Zingeving als machtsmiddel*, p. 88.

coherent, and continuous. As ontological frameworks are, of necessity, improvised bricolages of opinions, behaviours, and attitudes, a wide array of mechanisms is required to keep these inconsistent meaning-making systems in place.

In the 1991 monograph in which he introduces the concept of maintenance mechanisms, *Een uitgewaaierde eeuwigheid* (A fanned out eternity), Meerten ter Borg discerns two types: *acute* mechanisms that eliminate disturbances to the worldview, and *continuous* mechanisms that support the worldview regardless of its ontological stability.[41] It are the acute mechanisms that are relevant to this study. In their 2009 book, *Zingeving als machtsmiddel* (Meaning as a source of power), Meerten and Berend ter Borg refine their classification of acute mechanisms by placing them in either of two categories. *Integration* mechanisms accord troublesome disturbances to a given worldview a place within the present meaning-making system. *Defence* mechanisms do exactly the opposite: they keep the disturbing element outside the ontological framework to maintain and even reinforce its 'common sense' nature.

Within this dichotomy, Meerten and Berend ter Borg identify seven integration and six defence mechanisms. Integration mechanisms include *manifestation*, or consciously expressing the identity of the group in both internal and external social settings, and ritual *routinisation* which results in continuity due to repetition. In the reformatoric community, this might include the *manifestation* of the introduction of a different bible translation than the *Statenvertaling* through a public campaign and its institutionalising *routinisation* through consistent use in church services.[42] Both manifestation and routinisation may integrate hostile elements, or *disturbances*, if done gradually and with caution. *Inclusion and annexation* refers to the redefinition of the disturbance in terms of the community's extant ontological framework. Meerten and Berend ter Borg consider the initial success of Western Europe´s Christianisation to be the result of such inclusive practices through, among others, relating the Germanic winter solstice celebrations to the birth of Christ and spring celebrations to his death and resurrection.[43] Unlike the previous mechanisms, a *correction* is a sudden short-term change to achieve long-term durability. In terms of the first example, the choice to introduce a new bible translation that is in line with the pillar's identity is a corrective measure intended to induce greater engagement with

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[41] Meerten B. ter Borg, *Een uitgewaaierde eeuwigheid: Het menselijk tekort in de moderne cultuur*, Baarn: Ten Have, 1991, pp. 59-77.

[42] See the discussion concerning the controversy over the *Herziene Statenvertaling* in chapter 3.

[43] Ter Borg and Ter Borg, *Zingeving als machtsmiddel*, pp. 91-92.

scripture and church and, eventually, with the community's worldview. As they tend to be self-accelerating, corrections must be limited in scope and number to remain effective. *Compartmentalisation* refers to integrating exclusively the new paradigm's useful components and invalidating or disregarding what remains. If a societal paradigm advocates the use of contemporary bible translations over the 1637 *Statenvertaling*, one might choose to compartmentalise by integrating the implied need for modernised vocabulary into a revision of the *Statenvertaling* while otherwise disregarding or actively warning against the existing modern translations. *Theodicy* is the argument that all occurrences are in accordance with divine providence and therefore require their passive acceptance by believers. And *relativizing and humour* disarm disturbances by rendering them too useless to be taken seriously.

Defence mechanisms are invariably based on strategies of othering and dichotomisation. Religious traditions may choose *negation* and act as if the disturbance, such as the introduction of a competing bible translation into the pillar, does not exist, routinise the hostile element's non-discussion through *tabooing*, or *escape* into a higher world deemed to *be* the real world as opposed to the competing paradigm. Meerten and Berend ter Borg provide the examples of American politics and Russian culture. In both instances, societal groups are motivated to flee the disillusionment of existence and dream of desired realities like the American dream or a Russian fictional dream world. In such cases, "the ideal world in which everything is right ... that is the world that matters and to which one can escape from the real, banal, bad reality on the wings of fantasy".[44] This is equally applicable to some religious groups' focus on the afterlife.[45] *Nihilation* is the strategy of negative labelling to increase the value of the own group, strengthen in-group and out-group boundaries through negative suggestions or judgment, and increase in-group attractiveness. For example, those who use another bible translation than one's own group might be labelled 'heretics'. Alternatively, communities might *scapegoat* misfits for anything that fails to go according to plan, thereby creating an alternative political reality in which the personification of abstract, paradigmatic hostile elements allows for the simplified identification of causation and solution. For instance, conservatives might blame the fact that the *Statenvertaling* is not as widely read as it used to be on the laziness of youth instead of on its archaic and sometimes impenetrable vocabulary. Finally, *fundamentalism* is the claim to "the irrefutable

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[44] "[D]e ideale wereld, waarin alles klopt ... dat is de wereld die er toe [sic] doet, en waarheen men uit de echte, de platvloerse, de slechte werkelijkheid kan vluchten op de vleugels van de fantasie", in ibid., p. 101.
[45] See chapter 4 for a demonstration of this mechanism in the reformatoric community.

correctness of worldview on grounds of a fundament true beyond doubt" that allows communities to be 'steadfast'.[46] For many pillar members, the authority of the *Statenvertaling* and the *Three Forms of Unity* is this fundament.

Meerten and Berend ter Borg imply that these strategies, except for theodicy, each have a polar opposite.[47] In order to make this dichotomisation explicit, I suggest that each of these polar opposites shares an element of which the mechanisms themselves are either an integrative or a defensive manifestation. Moreover, from the mechanism of manifestation all the way to relativising and from negation all the way to fundamentalism, these mechanisms increase in terms of the amount of human action required to practice them. In this model, *manifestation* and *negation* are understood as the low-action presence or absence of the verbal occupation of space within the worldview under negotiation. *Routinisation* and *tabooing* both refer to the repetition of manifested or negated practices. Routinisation establishes the normalcy of a manifested novelty, while tabooing establishes the normalcy of negating, or not discussing, a given disturbance. On the third level of human action, *inclusion* refers to the neutralisation of a disturbance by placing it within the community's demarcations, whereas *escapism* is a conscious choice to leave the disturbance outside the community. *Correction* and *nihilation* are the acknowledgment and denial, respectively, of a given disturbance's validity. *Compartmentalisation* and *scapegoating*, in turn, refer to the inclusive or exclusive assignment of limited space. Unlike inclusion or escapism, these mechanisms clearly define and label the space within which the disturbance is located.

In Meerten and Berend ter Borg's overview, *theodicy*, or the positive belief that a disturbance results from divine providence and should therefore be integrated within the worldview, is the only mechanism that lacks a defensive counterpart. I therefore propose the addition of *judgment*, or the negative belief that a given disturbance results from divine punishment, as theodicy's opposing equivalent. Unlike theodicy, judgment requires defensive human activity in order to keep the disturbance outside a given community. In the context of a new bible translation, for instance, the community might regard a flood occurring in the same year as the translation's adoption as divine judgment for relinquishing its traditional predecessor. Both judgment and theodicy thus refer to a

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[46] "[H]et onweerlegbare gelijk op grond van een boven iedere twijfel verheven fundament", in ibid., p. 103. 'Standvastig', the Dutch translation for 'steadfast', is the title of the fundamentalist Reformed Bible Society's monthly publication.
[47] See the table in ibid., pp. 89-90.

divine intervention in space assignment. But whereas theodicy advocates the disturbance's inclusion, judgment refers to its active expulsion from the community's social space. This requires human action that goes beyond nihilation, which constitutes a refusal to accord the disturbance validity, or scapegoating, which attaches the disturbance to a given societal group. Instead, like in nihilation, it delineates and labels the disturbance but, unlike the previous two defence mechanisms, it necessitates ritual or spontaneous actions that signify its removal from the community.

The ultimate integration and defence mechanisms, *relativising/humour* and *fundamentalism* touch most directly on the ontological stability of the truth claims that maintenance mechanisms seek to preserve. Relativising does so by integrating different perspectives and downplaying tradition. Fundamentalism does the opposite.

The following table depicts these relationships.

Integration mechanism	Defence mechanism	Shared element
Manifestation	Negation	Verbal occupation of space
Routinisation	Tabooing	Repeated series of practices
Inclusion / annexation	Escapism	Demarcation
Correction	Nihilation	Acknowledgment validity
Compartmentalisation	Scapegoating	Space assignment
Theodicy	*Judgment*	Divine intervention in space assignment
Relativising and humour	Fundamentalism	Truth claims

Table 1.1: Ter Borg and Ter Borg's adapted maintenance mechanisms

1.6 Research questions

The above discussion renders the following research question to be answered within the scope of this study:

> *What maintenance mechanisms do conservative and progressive factions within the reformatoric community, respectively, use to ensure the community's continued existence in the face of secularising disturbances to its ontological framework?*

This research question relates Meerten and Berend ter Borg's maintenance mechanisms to the tensions within the reformatoric community while acknowledging the existence of different approaches among the pillar's elite. I dedicate specific attention to the identification of three general patterns. In the first place, I identify the location and nature of the *disturbances* facing the reformatoric community. I differentiate between *primary* and *secondary* disturbances to indicate whether these arise from outside (primary) or within (secondary) the pillar. In the second place, I comment on the choice and use of *maintenance mechanisms*. Opposing integration and defence mechanisms that are based on the same shared element tend to be invoked during discussions concerning the community's future. Moreover, some mechanisms have greater salience in the community's context due to their rooting within its ontological framework. In the third place, I analyse the differences between the pillar's progressive and conservative *factions*. I highlight that their differentiated use of maintenance mechanisms stems from their differentiated identification of disturbances. I conclude with a brief reflection on the three innovations I propose to Ter Borg and Ter Borg's framework: the identification of *shared elements* among opposing integration and defence mechanisms, the introduction of *judgment and expulsion* as theodicy's defensive counterpart, and the classification and influence of disturbances on the use of maintenance mechanisms.

1.7 Case selection

I operationalise the above-given systematisation of maintenance mechanism by applying it to three cases. These are chosen for their impact on the reformatoric community since 2010. All three cases feature significant dilemmas with which the community has grappled over the previous decade. Each of them thus constitutes a symbolic struggle, a focal point of the broader conflict in which the community's power relations and strategies are redefined.

The first case study is an analysis of the debate concerning the introduction of a new bible translation, the *Herziene Statenvertaling*, in 2010. Presented by its advocates as a revision of the traditional *Statenvertaling*, this translation's success forced churches to take a stance on its acceptance or rejection, eliciting bitter accusations of heresy in the process. The debate is particularly crucial due to the community's highly text-based nature. Most of its oral and written religious tradition, moreover, is couched in a religion-specific archaic discourse. As linguist C. van de Ketterij argued in his still-relevant 1972 dissertation on the topic, this discourse, referred to as *tale Kanaäns* (language of

Canaan), is significant both for the experience of social belonging and as the demarcation of in-group and out-group status. [48]   The discourse's intertemporally static nature ensures the maintained connection with the 'old writers' of the Second Dutch Reformation, such as Bernardus Smytegelt, Theodorus à Brakel, and Theodorus van der Groe. Couched in pietist language, their theology still defines the community's religious convictions. And many, such as former *Gereformeerde Bijbelstichting* (Reformed Bible Foundation) president, L. M. P. Scholten, regard the *Statenvertaling* translation as approaching, if not attaining, the holiness of the pure Word of God.[49] By analysing the struggle over discourse that came with the *Herziene Statenvertaling*, this case thus reveals the struggle over the fundaments of the reformatoric worldview.

The second case study presents the arguments supporting the 2014 *Day of Penance*. Organised by the reformatoric community's largest denomination, the *Gereformeerde Gemeenten* (Reformed Congregations, GG), the Day of Penance was a response to an alarming synodal report on within-denominational secularisation. The report regarded secularisation as divine judgment and called for the combined use of penance, escapism and corrective measures to ensure the denomination's future. Both this report and the choice for penance to deal with secularising tendencies provide insight into conservative mechanisms. This case is slightly different from the other two as it focuses exclusively on the denomination's official correspondence rather than on the debate between progressives and conservatives. Nevertheless, I chose to include it in this study as it both sheds light on the denomination's internal discussions and illuminates a significant maintenance mechanism for the reformatoric worldview not fully discussed by Meerten and Berend ter Borg.

The third case study evaluates the discussion concerning Paula Schot's candidacy as party leader of SGP Amsterdam in the 2018 municipal elections. As female passive suffrage had been prohibited by the party's leadership until the Dutch Supreme Court and the European Court of Human Rights both declared this to be in violation with the Convention on the Elimination of all forms of Discrimination Against Women (CEDAW) in 2010 and 2012, respectively, Schot's candidacy in the Dutch capital elicited considerable controversy within the community.[50] Her case is significant for two

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[48] C. Van de Ketterij, *De weg in woorden: Een systematische beschrijving van piëtistisch woordgebruik na 1900*, Assen: Royal Van Gorcum, 1972.
[49] L. M. P. Scholten, *Statenvertaling in de 21^e eeuw: De HSV op de keper beschouwd* (2nd Ed.), Leerdam: Gereformeerde Bijbelstichting, 2011.
[50] European Court of Human Rights, third section, application no. 58369/10, Staatkundig Gereformeerde Partij v. The Netherlands, 10 July 2012.

reasons. First, whereas Lilian Janse from Vlissingen in 2014 became SGP's first female council member, she placed her bid for public office only because no men had come forward to take up this responsibility.[51] Schot, on the other hand, is the first woman actively *chosen* over a male candidate to lead the party. Second, Schot is not an anomaly. A former *SGP-Jongeren* (SGP-Youth) board member, she is the product of a decade-long emancipation movement within the party's relatively progressive youth wing.[52] Schot's candidacy therefore also exposes a fundamental rift within the party.

These three case studies, while recent, resulting in direct action, and functioning as symbols for the friction with which the pillar needs to cope, are by no means representative. As symbolic elite struggles concerning the future of the reformatoric community and its respective churches they do, however, provide indications of the pillar´s current status and its near future. A longitudinal study is suggested to keep track of the pillar´s development.

1.8 Initial caveats

In assessing the pillar's maintenance mechanisms, this study is based on three assumptions. First, the reformatoric pillar is a religious *community* while Meerten and Berend ter Borg's theory deals primarily with the maintenance of ontological systems. In order to provide a logical foundation upon which to construct an argument, this study therefore assumes that the entire community seeks to maintain the overarching Calvinist meaning-making system as defined in paragraph 1.1, albeit through different means and with different emphases. Second, while the reformatoric community comprises seven denominations and a number of non-ecclesiastical protestant groups as well as dozens of educational, political, and societal institutions, this study regards it as a singular *religious tradition*. With Aarhus University sociologist of Religion, Jeppe Sinding Jensen, a religious tradition is specified as "a semantic space where the interlocutors may meaningfully disagree".[53] Disagreements arise due to the similar nature of subjects' and denominations' meaning-making systems. These spaces of disagreement thus are the most telling location of negotiation and change in the reformatoric

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[51] Margriet Oostveen, 'Hoe Lilian Janse als eerste SGP-vrouw de leiding nam. Maar dan echt', *De Volkskrant*, 19 January 2018, available online at https://www.volkskrant.nl/opinie/hoe-lilian-janse-als-eerste-sgp-vrouw-de-leiding-nam-maar-dan-echt~a4559452/, last accessed on 9 March 2018.

[52] Wilma Kieskamp, 'Dit is de jonge vrouw die de SGP in Amsterdam gaat leiden', *Trouw*, 12 January 2018, available online at https://www.trouw.nl/democratie/dit-is-de-jonge-vrouw-die-de-sgp-in-amsterdam-gaat-leiden-~ad5255a4/, last accessed on 9 March 2018.

[53] Jeppe Sinding Jensen, *What is religion?*, New York, NY: Routledge, 2014, p. 10.

community. Third, the pillar's internal discussions regarding persistence and assimilation are, by nature, elite discourses taking place among the community's ministers, writers, school directors, and other thought leaders. Default conservatives by virtue of their power positions, these elites tend to follow, rather than lead, the community's unstable development. As they have a vested interest in the pillar's continued existence, their 'meaningful disagreements' most pertinently reflect their varied perspectives on ways in which not only the community, but their very positions may be maintained. At the same time, their shared personal interest in reformatoric survival makes these elites exceptionally well-equipped to discuss and apply Ter Borg and Ter Borg's maintenance mechanisms.

"Horrible," said Hans. He felt besieged and at the same time profoundly protected with these strong brothers in faith. Together they were a strong fortress against a world riddled with sin.

— Jan Siebelink[54]

Chapter 2. *Literature review of the reformatoric community*

In 1989, Gerrit Jan Schutte candidly remarked that C. S. L. Janse's *Bewaar het pand*, published four years prior, constituted "the first social-scientific analysis of this particular community, that previously exclusively received theological attention".[55] Since then, research on the reformatoric pillar has witnessed a significant increase. Public interest was spurred on by the literary success of Jan Siebelink's 2005 bestseller *Knielen op een bed violen* (Kneeling on a flower bed of violets) and Franca Treur's 2009 hit *Dorsvloer vol confetti* (Confetti on the threshing floor).[56] Both authors grew up within the community and decided, albeit to a different extent, to distance themselves by reflecting on its particularities.[57] This interest of apostates in their personal background also plays a role in sociological research on the pillar. In an opinion article in the *Reformatorisch Dagblad*, VU Amsterdam sociologists and historians of religion John Exalto, Fred van Lieburg, Johan Roeland and Maarten Wisse suggest that scientific study of this complex community is almost impossible for those who have not once been its members.[58] Academic interest focuses on the community's institutions, overview studies, and attitude formation. I dedicate specific attention to the activities of the VU Amsterdam's Dutch Bible Belt Network.

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[54] "'Verschrikkelijk,' zei Hans. Hij voelde zich belaagd en tegelijk heel veilig met deze sterke geloofsgenoten. Samen vormden ze een stevig bastion tegen de in zonde liggende wereld," in Jan Siebelink, *Knielen op een bed violen* (33rd Ed.), Amsterdam: De Bezige Bij, 2005, p. 154.

[55] "[D]e eerste sociaal-wetenschappelijke analyse van de betreffende bevolkingsgroep, die voorheen hooguit theologische aandacht genoot", Schutte, Book review of *Bewaar het pand*, p. 253.

[56] Jan Siebelink, *Knielen op een bed violen*, and Franca Treur, *Dorsvloer vol confetti*, Amsterdam: Prometheus, 2009.

[57] Arie Kok, 'Het leven heeft nog steeds geen zin', *De Nieuwe Koers*, 4 October 2017, available online at https://www.denieuwekoers.nl/franca-treur, and Peter Henk Steenhuis, 'Interview Jan Siebelink: En wat als ik er niet meer ben?', *Trouw*, 28 February 2006, available online at https://www.trouw.nl/home/interview-jan-siebelink-en-wat-als-ik-er-niet-meer-ben-~ae73eff2/.

[58] John Exalto, Fred van Lieburg, Johan Roeland and Maarten Wisse, 'Zelfs theologie kan wezen refocultuur niet peilen', *Reformatorisch Dagblad*, 23 February 2013, p. 14.

2.1 Reformatoric institutions

Most research dealing with the community focuses on its three most relevant institutions: reformatoric schools, the Reformed Political Party (SGP), and its seven denominations. Studies on reformatoric schools tend to be either historiographic or focused on its position within pluralist societies. John Exalto, for instance, composed an article on the history of the Utrecht reformatoric primary school, Eben-Haëzer.[59] In addition, he recently authored a historical overview of the growth and considerable significance of these types of schools during the twentieth century.[60] With the increase in political emphasis on cultural diversity and reformatoric schools' careful opening up to non-reformatoric perspectives, a few studies have been conducted on the role of the community's education system with regard to multiculturalism. Most of these are collected in *De multiculturele refoschool* (The multicultural reformatoric school), a volume edited by Exalto with contributions by Wisse, conservative publicist Bart Jan Spruyt, VU researcher on religious education Gerdien Bertram-Troost, and lecturer at Driestar reformatoric pedagogical academy, Bram de Muynck.[61] Each of their articles clearly reflects the tension schools experience between openness and maintaining their distinctive identity.[62]

Aside from historiographic studies on its development commonly written by its members,[63] most research on the Reformed Political Party deals with its two major twenty-first century controversies. The first of these is the party's denial of female passive suffrage, the slow yet bitterly contested erosion of which under national and European legal pressure led SGP to open up the ranks to women in 2013. In his dissertation on the topic, Post regarded the demise of this *vrouwenstandpunt* (stance on women) as one of the community's main symbolic concessions to its secular environment.[64] The affairs surrounding this issue also prompted reflections of legal scholars on the extent of tolerance and

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[59] John Exalto, 'Een school van eigen richting: Het reformatorisch onderwijs in Utrecht in de 20e eeuw', *Oud-Utrecht*, 2009, 82, pp. 178-182.

[60] John Exalto, 'Het reformatorisch onderwijs en de vrijheid van richting, 1920-1980', in John Exalto (Ed.), *De multiculturele refoschool: Het reformatorisch onderwijs en de uitdaging van het pluralisme*, Apeldoorn: Labarum, 2017, pp. 79-118.

[61] John Exalto (Ed.), *De multiculturele refoschool: Het reformatorisch onderwijs en de uitdaging van het pluralisme*, Apeldoorn: Labarum, 2017.

[62] Cf. Maarten Wisse, 'Christus in het midden: Identiteit en pluraliteit in het reformatorisch onderwijs', in John Exalto (Ed.), *De multiculturele refoschool: Het reformatorisch onderwijs en de uitdaging van het pluralisme*, Apeldoorn: Labarum, 2017, pp. 215-238.

[63] Cf. Wim Fieret, *De Staatkundig Gereformeerde Partij 1918-1948: Een bibliocratisch ideaal*, Houten: Den Hertog, 1991, and Jan Zwemer, *Het gevaar van het hellend vlak: De Gereformeerde Gemeenten en de SGP in historisch perspectief*, Kampen: De Groot Goudriaan, 1994.

[64] Post, *In strijd met de roeping der vrouw*, pp. 253-260.

freedom of religion. For instance, Leiden and Ghent University legal scholars, Rikki Holtmaat and Alexandra Timmer, argued that the Dutch Supreme Court initially allowed SGP too much freedom in defending its right to exclude women from positions of power.[65] Erasmus University Rotterdam's Sohail Wahedi, on the other hand, regarded the Supreme Court's ruling as symptomatic for the secular state's inability to valorise religious motivations for actions that refuse to align with hegemonic secular thought.[66]

The second controversy concerned SGP's putative similarities with Islamic fundamentalism. In the wake of 9/11 and stimulated by the decade-long legal battle over the position of women within the party, legal scholars like Leiden University's Hans-Martien ten Napel raised the question to what extent the party constitutes a 'Dutch Taliban'.[67] While Ten Napel and Utrecht University's Joas Wagemaker both rejected this phraseology – "SGP ... has been an utterly decent political party for decades; the Taliban are a regime that has repeatedly executed and mutilated people and has destroyed Afghan cultural heritage" –[68] the latter *did* discern similarities between the party and Salafi Muslims. Wagemaker considered these to include their shared roots as protest movements as well as their veneration of scripture, desire for purity, reluctance to play political games, and overlapping conservative norms. Yet, studies of the party´s internal sociological development have been surprisingly scarce. Only Van Lieburg´s 2014 article, *De stille refolutie*, described SGP´s gradual development from a testimonial party to a political party willing to make concessions on its principles in its search for earthly power.[69]

Equally limited historiographical research has been conducted on reformatoric denominations and related associations. Where available, most of these studies were authored by clergymen and focused on the lives of ministers rather than on the development of the churches themselves. The

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[65] Rikki Holtmaat and Alexandra Timmer, 'De SGP-zaak anders bekeken: Naar een holistische uitleg van artikel 7 VN-Vrouwenverdrag', *Nederlands Tijdschrift voor de Mensenrechten*, 2011, 36, 4, pp. 445-457.

[66] Sohail Wahedi, 'Marginaliseren van godsdienstvrijheid door abstraheren van de religieuze dimensie: Over de normatieve verhouding tussen het strafrecht en de uitoefening van godsdienstvrijheid', *Religie & Samenleving*, 2014, 9, 2, pp. 128-147.

[67] Hans-Martien ten Napel, 'Een Nederlandse Taliban?', in N. F. van Manen (Ed.), *De multiculturele samenleving en het recht*, Nijmegen: Paul Scholten Instituut, 2002, pp. 151-157.

[68] "De SGP … is al decennia lang een uiterst fatsoenlijke politieke partij; de Taliban is een regime dat meermalen mensen heeft geëxecuteerd en verminkt en Afghaans cultureel erfgoed verwoest", Joas Wagemakers, 'SGP: de Salafistisch Gereformeerde Partij?', in Joas Wagemakers and Martijn de Koning (Eds.), *Islam in verandering: Vroomheid en vertier onder moslims binnen en buiten Nederland*, Almere: Parthenon, 2015, pp. 35-41.

[69] Van Lieburg, *De stille refolutie*, p. 59-61.

work of rev. Marinus Golverdingen, related to the Theological University of Apeldoorn, is a noteworthy exception. Golverdingen composed an authoritative work on the history of the *Gereformeerde Gemeenten* (Reformed Congregations, GG) between 1928 and 1948, *Om het behoud van een kerk* (On the maintenance of a church).[70] He also carefully described the painful schism between the *Gereformeerde Gemeenten* and the *Gereformeerde Gemeenten in Nederland* in his 2014 book, *Vernieuwing en verwarring* (Renewal and confusion).[71] And Van Lieburg chronicled the century-long history of the *Hervormd-Gereformeerde Jeugdbond* (Reformed Youth Asociation, HGJB), the youth association of the Reformed Association in the Protestant Church in the Netherlands, in *Jeugdwerk met een watermerk* (Youth work with a watermark).[72]

2.2 Overview studies

Apart from Janse's 1985 dissertation, none of these publications thus offered a comprehensive analysis of the reformatoric community. Van Lieburg provided an excellent *cultural-historical* overview of the pillar in his article *De bijbelgordel* (The bible belt) as part of an edited volume on the *History of Christianity in the Netherlands*.[73] Hijme Stoffels, a prominent VU Amsterdam sociologist of religion specialised in the debate between evangelical and reformatoric Christians, edited a comprehensive volume on the *Bevindelijk gereformeerden* (Pietistic reformed).[74] This volume discusses the community's theology, healthcare, leisure, and organisation. However, published in 1993, the book has been overtaken by recent developments. The same can be said for historian Jan Zwemer's 2001 *De bevindelijk gereformeerden* (The pietistic reformed). In addition to having lost some of its pertinence in 2018, this book is also characterised by a strong emphasis on reformatoric theology at the expense of achieving a socio-cultural understanding of its structure.[75] Neither of these publications provided a structural analysis of the considerable disturbances to the community's integrity and

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[70] Marinus Golverdingen, *Om het behoud van een kerk: Licht en schaduw in de geschiedenis van de Gereformeerde Gemeenten 1928-1948*, Houten : Den Hertog, 2004.

[71] Marinus Golverdingen, *Vernieuwing en verwarring: De Gereformeerde Gemeenten 1946-1950*, Houten: Den Hertog, 2014.

[72] Fred A. van Lieburg, *Jeugdwerk met een watermerk: De hervormd-gereformeerde jeugdbeweging 1910-2010*, Zoetermeer: Boekencentrum, 2012.

[73] Fred A. van Lieburg, 'De bijbelgordel', in Willem Bouwman, Joris van Eijnatten, Tanja Kootte, Menno van der Laan, Fred van Lieburg, Inge Schriemer, and Casper Staal (Eds.), *Geschiedenis van het christendom in Nederland*, Zwolle: Waanders, 2010, pp. 248-277.

[74] Hijme C. Stoffels (Ed.), *Bevindelijk gereformeerden*, Religieuze bewegingen in Nederland, 26, Amsterdam: Vrije Universiteit, 1993.

[75] Jan Zwemer, *De bevindelijk gereformeerden*, Kampen: Kok, 2001.

worldview. VU Amsterdam sociologist and former *Gereformeerde Bijbel Stichting* (Reformed Bible Foundation, GBS) in-house academic, John Exalto, managed this to a certain extent when assuming a meta-perspective on the development of reformatoric historiography. He too, however, stops short of describing and analysing changes within the community itself. [76]

2.3 Attitude formation among adolescents

One type of change within the community has received considerable scholarly attention: the formation of attitudes among adolescents. While proper longitudinal studies are absent, three studies conducted during the 2000s demonstrate the variety of ways in which young people deal with assimilationist pressures. Driestar school administrator, Wim Büdgen, in 2004 divided reformatoric teens up into traditional, reforming, evangelical, ambiguous, existentialist, and deceiving-appearances categories.[77] Based on fieldwork among 15-year-old girls at Kampen's Pieter Zandt comprehensive school in 2006, anthropologist Jose Baars-Blom identified introspective confessors, conservative guardians of tradition, those alienated from the group, and spirited innovators.[78] In Büdgen's terms, introspective confessors are existentialist pietists, conservative guardians are traditionalists, those alienated are 'deceiving in appearance', and spirited innovators may be both evangelicals leaning towards mainstream reformed orthodoxy, and reforming youth seeking to reconstitute a less traditional reformatoric community. Educator Wim Fieret, former lecturer of identity at the reformatoric Hoornbeeck college of vocational training and Van Lodensteijn College for secondary education, condensed this categorisation even further. In his 2014 study among 1,600 adolescents, he identified youth who connect the bible to their everyday lives, those who switch between the reformatoric and the secular life-worlds, and disconnectors intent on leaving the pillar behind.[79] More than a complete classification, his model, which excludes Büdgen's 'reformers' and Baars-Blom's 'innovators', might however betray the hesitance among the pillar's old elite to provide space for modernising influences.

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[76] John Exalto, 'Van zwartekousenkerken naar biblebelt: De opmars van de bevindelijk gereformeerden in de historiografie', in Paul H. A. M. Abels, Jan Jacobs and Mirjam van Veen (Eds.), *Terug naar Gouda: Religieus leven in de maalstroom van de tijd*, Zoetermeer: Meinema, 2014, pp. 97-116.

[77] Cf. Fred van Lieburg, 'Stille revolutie ook gaande in gezindte rond SGP', *Reformatorisch Dagblad*, 6 June 2014, available online at https://www.rd.nl/opinie/stille-revolutie-ook-gaande-in-gezindte-rond-sgp-1.396072, last accessed on 23 February 2018.

[78] Jose M. Baars-Blom, *De onschuld voorbij: Over reformatorische cultuur en wereldbestormende meisjes*, Kampen: Kok, 2006.

[79] Wim Fieret, *Verbinders, schakelaars en ontkoppelaars in uw gemeente*, Amersfoort: Hoornbeeck College, 2014.

2.4 Dutch Bible Belt Network

As may be apparent from the above overview, VU Amsterdam is the epicentre of research on the reformatoric pillar. In early 2013, a group of scholars including Exalto, Van Lieburg, theologian and anthropologist Johan Roeland, KU Leuven sociologist Anneke Pons-de Wit, scholar of religion Martha Visscher-Houweling, and dogmatic Maarten Wisse established the Dutch Bible Belt Network. In an op-ed in the *Reformatorisch Dagblad*, Exalto, Van Lieburg, Roeland, and Wisse affirmed that the reformatoric community, following a successful half-century of social emancipation, is in a crucial phase of increasing assimilation.[80] They argued that, while numerous studies on components of the community had been authored since C. S. L. Janse's foundational 1985 research, comprehensive interdisciplinary research on its developments was still lacking. Since then, the Network has published a book a year. Pons edited a volume on the influence of the digital revolution on the pillar's consistency, *Biblebelt online*,[81] and another one in 2015 on modern reformatoric church architecture, *Vensters op refodomes* (Windows on refo domes).[82] Exalto took responsibility for a volume on reformatoric schools in 2016.[83] And Van Lieburg did the same with regard to the sociological, anthropological, and historical study of the community's organ-centric musical culture.[84] Each of these topics deals with a gradual change of reformatoric culture: from book-centric to smartphone-focused, from holding church services in farm stables to spending Sundays in enormous buildings, from closed schools to cautious openness, and from singing sober psalms to organising extravagant concerts with idolised star organ players. Yet, while each of these books provides crucial insights into the details of the community's developments, they similarly fail to systematically address and analyse community-wide ways of dealing with challenging changes in its social environment.

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[80] John Exalto, Fred van Lieburg, Johan Roeland, and Maarten Wisse, 'Refozuil gebaat bij studie van eigen ontwikkeling', *Reformatorisch Dagblad*, 9 February 2013, p. 15.

[81] Anneke Pons (Ed.), *Biblebelt online: Bevindelijk gereformeerden en nieuwe media*, Biblebelt Studies, 1, Apeldoorn: Labarum, 2014.

[82] Anneke Pons (Ed.), *Vensters op refodomes: Bevindelijk gereformeerden en moderne kerkbouw*, Biblebelt Studies, 2, Apeldoorn: Labarum, 2015.

[83] Exalto, *De multiculturele refoschool*.

[84] Fred A. van Lieburg (Ed.), *Orgelcultuur in de Biblebelt: Reformatorische muziekbeoefening in heden en verleden*, Apeldoorn: Labarum, 2017.

2.5 Conclusions

Three conclusions may be drawn from this overview of available literature on the reformatoric community. In the first place, all authors agree that the community is changing. Although it has inevitably seen major developments throughout its history, what Janse called its 'social emancipation' has largely been concluded. According to the model introduced in the previous chapter, this means the pillar is facing the final stage of assimilation. This stage is not a singular process. Whereas their manifestations within the mainstream of the pillar, such as the veneration of musicians and the construction of large houses of prayer, are earthly, their objects are still heavily defined by tradition.

In the second place, this process of change is commonly regarded as a bidirectional process. Exalto identifies an 'evangelicalising' group intent on making religious experience more accessible, and a 'musealising' group that increases its traditionalism by means of psalm singing events (*Psalmzangdagen*), leisure fairs (*Wegwijsbeurs, Naar Buiten*), and a fetishisation of church history magazines (*Oude Paden*, *In Het Spoor*). [85] This is akin to Büdgen's distinction between traditionalists and existentialists, on the one hand, and evangelicals and reformers, on the other. It is also reflected in the difference between SGP's politicians, who favour greater pragmatism, and its traditionalist party board. Differences in perspectives on the desired future course of the pillar can thus arguably be reduced to a progressive stance favouring adaptation to remain relevant, and a conservative stance favouring strengthening pillar-specific structures, institutions, and dogma. The large group of centrists, 'ambiguous' in Büdgen's classification, is relevant for the practical determination of this course – but, due to their refusal to participate in the discussion, not for the analysis of the community's maintenance mechanisms.

Finally, in spite of the Dutch Bible Belt Network's activity, no general analysis of the community's way of dealing with these changes has yet been composed. Van Lieburg therefore calls for fundamental research that would assist in "understand[ing] and explain[ing] the complicated and contradictory experience of these compromisers between orthodoxy and modernity". [86] This study seeks to contribute to the formation of that understanding. It pretends not to be a comprehensive overview study of the community's development, situation, or disturbances. Rather, it seeks to draw

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[85] John Exalto, 'Welkom in de strijd: Dynamiek en desintegratie van de bevindelijk gereformeerde narratieve gemeenschap', in Fred van Lieburg (Ed.), *Refogeschiedenis in perspectief: Opstellen over de bevindelijke traditie*, Heerenveen: Groen, 2007, pp. 92-117.
[86] Van Lieburg, 'De stille refolutie', p. 44.

general inferences on the *means* through which progressive and conservative factions within the community attempt to maintain its ontological framework. The end of the pillar's worldview would precipitate its collapse. It is therefore crucial to gain a general understanding of the means through which this collapse is being prevented, the way in which these means are wielded and, in so doing, also of the community's general situation within a fluid society.

We are living in a time during which we must be very careful with the re-translation of the bible. After all, we are living in spiritually dark times. And we can so easily get lost in the dark. There is so much false doctrine and criticism of scripture these days. [...] It is therefore preferable to conserve bible translations from the time that true piety and scholarship went hand-in-hand instead of carrying out changes according to our own discretion.

— A. W. de Lange[87]

Chapter 3. Case study I. *The Herziene Statenvertaling*

On Saturday December 4, 2010, the *Herziene Statenvertaling* (*HSV*) bible translation was officially presented to the public at the Church of Our Lady in Dordrecht.[88] Its revisors, members of the Dutch reformatoric community's left wing, sought to maintain the 1637 *Statenvertaling* translation for new generations by adapting it to contemporary lexicographic conventions and including recent academic insights.[89] Yet, from its earliest inception, the *Herziene Statenvertaling* was subjected to the reformed community's right wing's intense criticism. At the 2013 annual meeting of the *Gereformeerde Bijbelstichting*, Genemuiden Reformed Congregrations rev. C. Hoghem denounced "all kinds of bible translations, revisions" as God-sent heresies "in order that the upright believers are revealed".[90] And Krimpen aan den IJssel rev. A. Kort, spokesperson for the Old Reformed Congregations in the Netherlands (*Oud Gereformeerde Gemeenten in Nederland*, OGGiN), considered the *Statenvertaling* re-translation to be an outright wile of the devil. "When [Satan] failed to influence a certain section of congregational life with those new, conspicuous, false translations, he took the *Statenvertaling* itself in hand. He is messing with the translation that has been such a blessing to the Dutch people and uses

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[87] "[W]ij [leven] in een tijd [...] waarin wij zeer voorzichtig moeten zijn met het hertalen en opnieuw vertalen van de Bijbel. Het is immers een geestelijk donkere tijd waarin wij leven. En in het donker kunnen we gemakkelijk verdwalen. Er is heden ten dage ook zoveel dwaalleer en Schriftkritiek. [...] Het is daarom beter om Bijbelvertalingen uit de tijd toen ware vroomheid en geleerdheid meer samengingen, te conserveren en niet naar eigen goeddunken te gaan veranderen", in *In Het Spoor*, a publication by the extremely conservative Landelijke Stichting tot Bevordering van de Staatkundig Gereformeerde Beginselen (in no way related to SGP), A. W. de Lange, 'De Herziene Statenvertaling: Een sluipend gevaar!', *In Het Spoor*, 1 February 2011, 16-20.

[88] John Exalto, 'Niets kan haar glans verdoven'.

[89] Reinier de Blois, *De Statenvertaling herzien: Korte toelichting*, Zeist: Stichting Herziene Statenvertaling, 2009.

[90] "[A]llerlei Bijbelvertalingen, herzieningen", so that "de oprechten openbaar komen", in 'Strijd richt zich vooral op de prediking: Honderden bezoekers wonen in Barneveldse kerk 48e toogdag van Gereformeerde Bijbelstichting bij', *Reformatorisch Dagblad*, 14 October 2013, p. 2.

our own people to that end."[91] Both responses were manifestations of the traditionalist backlash in the ensuing pillar-defining symbolic struggle.

In Meerten and Berend ter Borg's terms, the *disturbance* to the reformatoric community's consistency which this case demonstrates plays out on two levels. For the progressive introducers of the *HSV*, the disturbance is the *Statenvertaling*'s complexity and resulting lacklustre appeal for large parts of its membership, especially youth. They regard the *HSV* as a means of increasing the bible's accessibility on the community's own orthodox terms. In doing so, they seek to fortify the pillar's ontological framework against the *external* challenges of language change, the decreased readership of books among youth, and declining overall interest in theological complexities. In contrast, conservative traditionalists regard the *HSV itself* as the most important disturbance to their worldview. While often noting the validity of the progressives' arguments, they regard adaptive *internal* change as a greater ontological challenge than the *external* disturbances identified by their counterparts. In part, this might be explained with reference to progressives' greater proximity to the secularised world in their general environments. Progressives' challenges might indeed be less acute for the conservatives that lead more sheltered lives. This means that the maintenance mechanisms used by the two factions are responses to two *different* disturbances.

Two distinct components of the debate's corpus can be identified. In the first place, both proponents and opponents of the *HSV*'s introduction published a brochure outlining their respective arguments. For proponents, this work of reference was *De Statenvertaling herzien: korte toelichting* (Revising the *Statenvertaling*: brief explanation).[92] Issued by the *Stichting Herziene Statenvertaling* (Foundation Revised *Statenvertaling*) one year prior to the *HSV*'s official release, the brochure was authored by VU Amsterdam-educated linguist and missionary bible translation consultant for the Reformed Associations, Reinier de Blois. In 2011, the *Gereformeerde Bijbelstichting* responded to the brochure with *De Statenvertaling in de 21ᵉ eeuw* (The *Statenvertaling* in the 21ˢᵗ century) which featured a main article by former SGP parliamentarian, journalist, and *Gereformeerde Gemeenten in Nederland* (Reformed Congregations in the Netherlands) theologian, L. M. P. Scholten. Interviews with four ministers were attached. To expand the brochure's appeal, each of these ministers was

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[91] "Toen het hem niet lukte een bepaald deel van het kerkelijke leven door die nieuwe, in het oog lopende, valse vertalingen te beinvloeden, nam hij de Statenvertaling zelf ter hand. Hij gaat knoeien met de vertaling, die zo tot rijke zegen voor het Nederlandse volk geweest is, en gebruikt daarvoor onze eigen mensen", in Wim Hulsman, 'De kerken en de HSV', *Reformatorisch Dagblad*, 30 November 2010, p. 2.
[92] De Blois, *De Statenvertaling herzien*.

introduced as a spokesperson for a different denomination: rev. J. M. D. de Heer (Middelburg) for the Reformed Congregations, rev. M. A. Kempeneers (Elburg) for the Christian Reformed Churches, rev. A. Kort (Krimpen aan den IJssel) for the Old Reformed Congregations in the Netherlands, and rev. P. Korteweg (Oud-Beijerland) for the Restored Reformed Churches. These two publications were augmented with a sharp public debate conducted by means of interviews and op-eds published in the *Reformatorisch Dagblad*. In addition to the aforementioned spokespersons, important roles on the proponents' side were played by former Driestar University of Applied Sciences director, Izak Adriaan Kole; retired Christian Reformed minister, rev. Elbert Boot; Christian Reformed minister, rev. W. N. Middelkoop (Urk); retired Reformed Associations minister, rev. Pieter van der Kraan (Arnemuiden); and Reformed Associations general secretary, rev. Piet Vergunst. Traditionalist advocates of the *Statenvertaling*, often related to the *Gereformeerde Bijbelstichting* (GBS), included former GBS president and retired Restored Reformed Churches minister, rev. Tj. de Jong (Staphorst); Reformed Churches in the Netherlands nestor, rev. J. Roos (Barneveld); and retired Reformed Congregations minister, rev. A. Moerkerken. The debate is thus clearly one among the community's clerical elite, exposing both the progressive unity of the Reformed Associations and the traditionalist unity of the (Old) Reformed Churches in the Netherlands and Reformed Congregations, as well as the division within the Christian Reformed Churches.

3.1 Progressive maintenance mechanisms in favour of the HSV

To foster broad acceptance of the HSV, the *Foundation Herziene Statenvertaling* organised an extensive public relations campaign that relied on teaching guest lectures in church and student groups throughout the country, the monthly publication of newly translated bible books for correction by the public, and extensive media coverage in the *Reformatorisch Dagblad* (Reformed Daily, RD). The Foundation was highly aware of the resistance their endeavour would spark within its religious community. Some, such as former Dutch Reformed Church (*Nederlands Hervormde Kerk*, NHK, since 2004: Reformed Association within the Protestant Church) chairman, rev. B. J. van Veenendaal, even regretted that the SV in its current form 'needed' to be replaced. In the *Reformatorisch Dagblad*, HSV board members however underlined what they regarded as the need for a high-quality revision "that

could last at least 25 years".[93] Three maintenance mechanisms were central to the progressive side: the *corrective* need for an understandable translation, the *fundamentalist* preservation of the divine gift of the SV, and the *relativising* comparison between the SV and the HSV. In addition, they used *manifestation* through their public campaign, and *routinisation* through the HSV's use in churches, to increase the impact of their corrective measure.

Advocacy for a *correction* constituted the principal argument in favour of a *Statenvertaling* revision. According to proponents, the average believer needed a faithful, source language-oriented, and especially understandable translation. As De Blois argued, four hundred years of Dutch linguistic evolution left many words obsolete in any context other than religion. Worse, some words had acquired a different meaning sometimes bordering on the obscene.[94] Modern scholarship had also shed light on a number of wrongful SV translation practices. On the other hand, the community's strict source language-based and concordant translation principles prevented the adoption of already-existing modern translations. These tended to be target language-oriented, paraphrased, or based on the New Testament's critical source texts that were compiled after the SV's original publication in 1637. Moreover, the SV's widely shared symbolic authority among the HSV's target population precluded the success of any completely new reformatoric translation. At the same time, as rev. Van der Kraan contended during a congregational information night about the new revision, "an explanatory list of words in the back [of your bible] doesn't cut it, because it is not just about a few words, but about the entire discourse of the SV (sentence structure etc.)".[95] Just like during the Reformation, progressives argued, believers needed to be able to read the bible *by themselves*. A translation's diction should not hamper access to God's Word. In the words of Christian Reformed minister rev. W. N. Middelkoop, "[t]he bible is the living Word, that is alive again for each generation and needs to be translated as such. Not a translation, but scripture itself is inspired".[96]

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[93] "[D]ie tenminste 25 jaar mee kan", I. A. Kole in K. van der Zwaag, 'Direct toegankelijke Bijbel als doelstelling', *Reformatorisch Dagblad*, 23 September 2003, available online at https://www.rd.nl/kerk-religie/direct-toegankelijke-bijbel-als-doelstelling-1.189665, last accessed on 3 February 2018.

[94] Cf. De Blois, *De Statenvertaling herzien*.

[95] "[J]e [redt] het niet met een verklarend woordenlijstje achterin, want het gaat niet om enkele woorden, maar om het hele taalkleed van de SV (zinsbouw e.d.)", P. van der Kraan, 'Informatie SV en HSV', presentation delivered to the Gemeente-avond Hervormde Gemeente Arnemuiden, 11 October 2017, available online at http://www.hervormdarnemuiden.nl/wp-content/uploads/2017/10/2017-10-11-Inleiding-gemeenteavond-Statenvertaling-en-Herziene-Statenvertaling.pdf, last accessed on 3 February 2018.

[96] "De Bijbel is het levende Woord, dat voor elke generatie weer levend is en als zodanig vertaald moet zijn. Niet een vertaling, maar de Schrift zelf is geïnspireerd", in K. van der Zwaag, 'De Heilige Schrift voor iedere

HSV advocates justified their position through reference to the SV and its *theodicy*-related ancillary discourse of its nature as divine. The community believed the *Statenvertaling* to be a gift from God to his Dutch people. The Foundation therefore presented the *Herziene Statenvertaling* as a *preservation* of that divine gift for the benefit of a new generation.[97] God's asserted mythical guidance of the *Statenvertaling* translators was mirrored in De Blois' and Boot's assertion that the HSV revision team's harmonic collaboration was a sign of God's support in the process.[98] And by saying that "the Lord's gift from 1637 to the Dutch people is, as it were, *delivered* to us again [through the HSV], to my gratefulness and wonder",[99] rev. Piet Vergunst shifted focus away entirely from the active human process of revision. By rendering the HSV the passively received product of divine grace, this discourse distracted from the contentious nature of fallible human translation and connected the HSV to the similarly divine SV. This argument is also a nod to the *fundamentalist* assertion of the SV's divine nature shared mainly among traditionalists. More than anything, it indicates the progressives' preparedness to carefully navigate conservative resistance.

At the same time, a *relativising* deconstruction of the SV's unassailable authority had to make the HSV's introduction more palatable to a critical audience. To that end, De Blois compared the resistance "regular church folk" felt upon the SV's initial introduction to current orthodox resistance to the HSV.[100] Van der Kraan recalled seventeenth-century Elburg minister Johannes Haenius' fulmination against the *Statenvertaling*'s "peddlery" and "dishonourable novelty" compared to the *Deux Aes* bible used by Dutch protestants prior to 1637.[101] De Blois further reminded his readership that, like the HSV, the SV was not a fully literal translation.[102] In almost 10,000 cases, the States Translators opted for a translation diverging slightly from the literal meaning of the source text. Such choices were made not for reasons of theological purity, but to bring the SV more in line with its predecessor, the *Deux Aes.* Crucial, however, was the blunt assertion that the SV contained translation mistakes. These included the erroneous phrase "Jacob en zijn broederen" (Jacob and his brethren, Genesis 47:11), which should have read "his father and his brethren", and "verhoor mij van

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generatie', *Reformatorisch Dagblad*, 26 September 2003, available online at https://www.rd.nl/kerk-religie/de-heilige-schrift-voor-iedere-generatie-1.190002, last accessed on 3 February 2018.

[97] De Blois, *De Statenvertaling herzien*, p. 33.

[98] Ibid., and Elbert Boot, 'De Statenvertaling herzien', *Met Andere Woorden*, 2010, 29, 4, p. 9.

[99] Hulsman, 'De kerken en de HSV'.

[100] De Blois, *De Statenvertaling herzien*, p. 8.

[101] Van der Kraan, 'Informatie SV en HSV', slide 46.

[102] De Blois, *De Statenvertaling herzien*, p. 17.

de hoornen der eenhoornen" (redeem me from the horns of the unicorns) in Psalm 22:22, which should have been translated as "verlos mij van de hoornen der eenhoornen. Gij hebt mij verhoord" (Thou hast heard me). These examples, which would "clarify that translation is always a human endeavour", and that, "despite [the States Translators'] deep realisation to be dependent on the Lord in everything, the SV is not free from imperfections and mistakes", were consciously included by the Foundation to deconstruct the SV's sacred image.[103]

In addition to these explicitly stated arguments, HSV advocates also used *manifestation* and *routinisation* to their advantage. The *Foundation Herziene Statenvertaling* created space for the HSV within the reformatoric community through their grassroots campaign. Going church-by-church and school-by-school, De Blois, Boot, and Kole demonstrated the HSV's existence and potential benefits. Through the monthly publication of newly revised bible books and providing avenues for public scrutiny and correction, the Foundation engaged its potential readership and gave them ownership over the process. The revision's use was eventually *routinised* through its adoption for use in the Reformed Association and Christian Reformed denominations as well as in parts of the Restored Reformed Churches. The publication of a myriad of different editions, including a specific church, wedding, and school edition, also contributed to its increasing popularity. By December 2015 its publisher, Jongbloed, had sold 300,000 copies – a number exceeding that of the community's approximately 250,000 members.[104]

Strategy	Maintenance mechanism
Campaign promoting the HSV	Manifestation
Use of HSV in church services	Routinisation
Need for understandable translation	Correction
Preservation of divine gift	Theodicy/fundamentalism
SV in same position as HSV	Relativising

Table 3.1: Maintenance mechanisms in favour of HSV adoption

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[103] Ibid., p. 20.

[104] Gerard ter Horst, 'Meer dan 300.000 HSV's, maar zeker geen half miljoen', *Nederlands Dagblad*, 8 December 2015, available online at https://www.nd.nl/nieuws/geloof/meer-dan-300-000-hsv-s-maar-zeker-geen-half.1104071.lynkx, last accessed on 21 April 2018.

3.2 Conservative maintenance mechanisms in opposition to the HSV

Unlike their progressive colleagues, conservatives like then-*Gereformeerde Bijbelstichting* chairman, rev. Tj. de Jong, "with frankness recommend[ed …] young and old to continue using the *Statenvertaling* the way we currently have it".[105] The Borgian disturbance they identified was not the decrease in bible reading noticed by the progressives, but rather the introduction of what they regarded as a false, or at best unnecessary, translation. This bore consequences for their use of maintenance mechanisms: they employed these primarily in defence against the perceived threat of the HSV. These include the *negation* of the disturbance identified by HSV proponents, *tabooing* of intra-denominational discussion concerning the HSV, *nihilation* of the HSV through the application of the labels 'translation' and 'satanic', an element of *scapegoating* in their attitude towards young people, and *fundamentalism* both in their technical approach to the HSV and to the projected consequences for the pillar's consistency.

Traditionalists based their rejection of the HSV primarily on either of two *negation* strategies. On the one hand, they simply denied the necessity for linguistic revision to understand the *Statenvertaling*. Rev. De Jong deemed the SV's lack of intelligibility to be highly exaggerated.[106] Even if cases where its text lacked transparency might exist, Scholten argued the SV to be crystal clear 'where it mattered'. Drawing a comparison with the legal term "loonderving" (loss of income),[107] he mocked those who said the phrase "derven de heerlijkheid Gods" (literally: miss God's glory, KJV: come short of the glory of God, Romans 3:23) was too complicated. Moreover, conservatives like rev. Roos deemed the Scriptures to *always* be unintelligible for sinful human beings who lacked the illumination of the Holy Spirit.[108] This argument was based on the Pauline observation in 1 Corinthians 2:14 that "natural man" cannot understand things pertaining of the Spirit of God. In rev. Kort's words,

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[105] Tj. de Jong, 'Inleiding', in L. M. P. Scholten (Ed.), *De Statenvertaling in de 21^e eeuw*, Leerdam: Gereformeerde Bijbelstichting, 2011, p. 5.

[106] Ibid., p. 4.

[107] "And then making problems about the word 'derven', but everyone does understand what 'loonderving' means!" ("En dan maar moeilijk doen over het woord 'derven', maar ieder weet wel wat met loonderving bedoeld wordt!"), L. M. P. Scholten, 'De Herziene Statenvertaling op de keper beschouwd', in L. M. P. Scholten (Ed.), *De Statenvertaling in de 21^e eeuw*, Leerdam: Gereformeerde Bijbelstichting , 2011, p. 11.

[108] J. Roos in Hulsman, 'De kerken en de HSV', n.p.

> When I received my first bible, I did not understand anything. To me, it was a book that was closed with seven seals. When I heard my first sermon, I did not understand that at all. My heart was closed and filled with iniquity.[109]

On the other hand, changes in the Dutch language that resulted in difficulty to understand the *Statenvertaling* were regarded as the undesirable by-product of secularisation. Rather than resulting from inevitable linguistic evolution, Dutch linguistic development was seen as consciously moving away from the *bible*. In Scholten's words, "[t]he language of the bible should not be adapted to our spiritually increasingly impoverished Dutch language, but *we* need to return".[110] Not a new translation, however, good, was therefore the solution to understanding the *Statenvertaling*, but illumination by the Holy Spirit that would allow the reader to discern the bible's complex depth and beauty.[111] Traditionalists thus fully denied the disturbance identified by progressives.

Ministers Kort of the Old Reformed Congregations in the Netherlands (OGGiN) and Roos of the Reformed Congregations in the Netherlands, the two most conservative of the reformatoric denominations, moreover completely *tabooed* any intra-denominational discussion concerning the HSV. According to Kort, his denomination would not even consider discussing "such an evil affair".[112] The OGGiN vowed to never engage with the HSV. Similarly, Roos emphasised that the Reformed Congregations in the Netherlands' synod at no point sought to discuss the HSV's introduction. Noting its heretical nature, he discouraged the *Herziene Statenvertaling*'s purchase among members of his denomination.[113] Both ministers thus sought to taboo any possibly emerging positive sentiments concerning the HSV's use among their members.

In addition, traditionalists *nihilated* the *Herziene Statenvertaling* through the application of two negative labels: *translation* and *heresy*. Some, such as Scholten, deemed the HSV's translation principles to be so far removed from the SV's concordant, literal, and source language-oriented

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[109] "Toen ik mijn eerste Bijbel kreeg, begreep ik er niets van. Het was een boek voor mij dat met zeven zegelen gesloten was. Toen ik de eerste preek hoorde, verstond ik die in het geheel niet. Mijn hart was gesloten en vol van ongerechtigheid", in A. Kort, 'In hetgeen God mij leerde, was voor mij niets onduidelijk meer', in L. M. P. Scholten (Ed.), *De Statenvertaling in de 21ᵉ eeuw*, Leerdam: Gereformeerde Bijbelstichting, 2011, p. 62.

[110] Italicisation by the present author. "De taal van de Bijbel moet niet worden aangepast aan onze steeds geestelijk armer wordende Nederlandse taal, maar wij moeten terug", Scholten, 'De Herziene Statenvertaling op de keper beschouwd', p. 16.

[111] Cf. A. Moerkerken, 'Een herziene Statenvertaling?', *De Saambinder*, 22 January 1998, p. 5.

[112] "[E]en dergelijke kwade zaak", A. Kort in Wim Hulsman, *De kerken en de HSV*, p. 2.

[113] J. Roos in ibid.

original that it needed to call itself a new *translation*.[114] Its failure to translate the bible word-by-word was deemed to invalidate the SV's translation principles to such an extent that it ceased to be worthy of the name. Written with reference to other modern translations, such as the *Nederlands Bijbelgenootschap* translation of 1951 (NBG-1951) and the 1983 *Groot Nieuws Bijbel*, the HSV had to be regarded as a new translation *itself*.[115] This made the HSV particularly suspect: it lost the borrowed authority of the *Statenvertaling* as it was placed in line with other translations commonly distrusted by a majority of members of the reformatoric pillar.

These differences with the SV were considered to lead to a theologically impure, or even downright *heretical*, bible edition. Comparing the HSV to the NBG-51, rev. Kort recounted how, "[d]uring [his] days in college [he] felt the power of Satan, who wanted to impose this bible with the new translation on [him]".[116] Rev. A. van Voorden of Opheusden called the HSV "an attack of the lord of darkness".[117] In addition, rev. De Heer considered any attempts at SV simplification a rejection of God's decision to bestow upon the world the gift of a complicated bible.[118] Tampering with the scripture's literal translation was therefore equivalent to adding to, or taking away from, God's Word constituting a corrupting violation of Revelations 22:18. Most references to theological impurity, moreover, called the *intentions* of the revisers into question. Some, like rev. A. Moerkerken, did so implicitly by suggesting that they did *not* want to doubt the revisers' integrity.[119] Others, like rev. De Jong, explicitly contended that the revisers' *true* intentions necessarily differed from their *stated* intentions. "We wonder what really is the true objective of those who wanted this translation. What is it that really moved them?"[120] This suggestive line of argumentation had the effect of discrediting the HSV based on its revisers' presumed heretical theology.

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[114] Scholten in K. Van der Zwaag, 'Herziene Statenvertaling is een nieuwe vertaling', *Reformatorisch Dagblad*, 25 September 2003, p. 2.

[115] J. M. D. De Heer, 'Verantwoord omgaan met geschenk van Gods genade', in L. M. P. Scholten (Ed.), *De Statenvertaling in de 21ᵉ eeuw*, Leerdam: Gereformeerde Bijbelstichting, 2011, p. 46.

[116] "Tijdens mijn studententijd gevoelde ik de macht van satan, die mij deze Bijbel met de nieuwe vertaling wilde opdringen", A. Kort, 'In hetgeen God mij leerde, was voor mij niets onduidelijk meer', in L. M. P. Scholten (Ed.), *De Statenvertaling in de 21ᵉ eeuw*, Leerdam: Gereformeerde Bijbelstichting, p. 61.

[117] "[E]en aanval van de vorst der duisternis", A. van Voorden in 'Gods woord is een scherp zwaard", *Reformatorisch Dagblad*, 11 October 2010, p. 2.

[118] De Heer, 'Verantwoord omgaan met geschenk van Gods genade', p. 44.

[119] Moerkerken, 'Een herziene Statenvertaling?', p. 5.

[120] "We vragen ons ook af wat in feite de wezenlijke doelstelling is van hen die deze vertaling wilden. Wat bewoog hen eigenlijk?", in De Jong, 'Inleiding', p. 4.

Traditionalists' resistance to the HSV included a remarkable element of *scapegoating* children and young people. Conservatives regarded youths' lack of understanding of SV discourse, an argument introduced by HSV-proponents, to be the result of their spiritual laziness caused by innate human evil. "The fact that we do not want bible reading to take too much effort is typical for our wicked and insidious heart", stated rev. De Heer.[121] The more one read the SV, the more easily it would be understood, Scholten said.[122] So, without young people's laziness, the HSV would not have been deemed necessary.

But *fundamentalism* was the conservatives' ultimate traditionalist strategy for defending the community against the *Herziene Statenvertaling*. Since the *Statenvertaling* itself was considered to be a bible translation true beyond doubt, any revision or re-translation *could*, by definition, only be less pure than the original. This argument was made in two ways. On the one hand, the HSV's lexical choices were deemed to be too irreverent. Scholten argued that the *Statenvertaling* translators, led thereto by their deep awe for God, explicitly chose for ceremonious vocabulary. "If you take the bible to be the Word of God, then that also requires you to willingly accept the *Statenvertaling*'s solemn and ceremonious tone",[123] as this was "the classical language of faith of the church of all ages".[124] HSV´s lexical choices were also said to impoverish the bible's artful language. With reference to Genesis 32:30 which, in Hebrew, mentions the equivalent of "aangezicht" (face) four times within the same sentence yet not a single time in HSV, Scholten pointed out that the revision "lack[ed] reverence for the narrative style of the Holy Spirit".[125]

The second way in which conservatives used *fundamentalism*, was by claiming that accepting the HSV would inevitably have adverse consequences for the future of the reformatoric community. Its adoption would mean abandoning God's unadulterated Word as the one remaining pure and unchangeable monument of Christendom in a chaotically secularised world.[126] Scholten held the SV´s

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[121] "Dat het lezen van de Bijbel ons niet te veel mag kosten, tekent ons boos en arglistig hart", De Heer, 'Verantwoord omgaan met geschenk van Gods genade', p. 51.

[122] Scholten, 'De HSV op de keper beschouwd', p. 9.

[123] "Als je uitgaat van de Bijbel als het Woord van God, dan vraagt dat ook de bereidheid om de plechtige, gedragen toon van de Statenvertaling te accepteren", in Van der Zwaag, 'De Herziene Statenvertaling is een nieuwe vertaling', p. 2.

[124] "[D]e klassieke geloofstaal van de kerk van alle eeuwen", ibid. This implies a rejection of any form of Christianity utilising a different discourse as not belonging to the church of all ages.

[125] "[G]etuigt van gebrek aan eerbied voor de verhaalstijl van de Heilige Geest", Scholten, 'De HSV op de keper beschouwd', p. 18.

[126] De Jong, 'Inleiding', p. 5.

symbolic value to be of too crucial a nature to let go.[127] Moreover, the revision of the *Statenvertaling* would be the first step on a slippery slope of revising the liturgy and the *Three Forms of Unity*, too. This, in turn, opened the door to the acute dangers of historical textual criticism.[128] All this would undermine the reformed tradition: the lost discourse would sever the ties with Second Reformation authors, older readers would feel alienated from their trusted bible, and revisions themselves would result in more superficial theological content. The only way of avoiding such was by clinging on to the certainties of the *Statenvertaling*'s indivisible truth.

Strategy/argument	Maintenance mechanism
Denial HSV's necessity / language chance as secularisation	Negation
Unwillingness to discuss introduction HSV	Tabooing
Application labels 'translation' and 'heresy'	Nihilation
Blaming young people's 'spiritual laziness'	Scapegoating
Only SV can be true / adverse consequences for pillar's future	Fundamentalism

Table 3.1: Maintenance mechanisms against HSV adoption

3.3 Chapter conclusions

Three tentative conclusions may be drawn from this effort to enhance insight into the reformatoric pillar's struggle with the *Herziene Statenvertaling*. In the first place, the location of the *disturbance* in this case differed between progressives and conservatives. Progressives located the disturbance *outside* the community. They regarded language change, the general decrease in book reading, and the resulting attractiveness of 'easier' yet non-sanctioned bible translations as disturbances to the reformatoric worldview. Future generations' inability to read or understand a 'correct' translation would undermine the community's ontological framework and precipitate its demise. Traditionalists, on the other hand, regarded the primary maintenance mechanism of the progressives, the introduction of a revised *Statenvertaling*, as the disturbance *itself.* A disconnect thus developed on the most fundamental level of disturbance identification.

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[127] Scholten in Van der Zwaag, 'Herziene Statenvertaling is een nieuwe vertaling', n.p.
[128] Roos in Hulsman, 'De kerken en de HSV', n.p.

Unsurprisingly, therefore, the strategies employed by progressives and traditionalists, respectively, were each other's mirror images. Overall, progressives used *integration* mechanisms, integrating the threat of limited bible reading by carrying out the *corrective* measure of introducing the *Herziene Statenvertaling*. Meanwhile, traditionalists used *defensive* mechanisms to defend themselves from the HSV's introduction. But the overlap is more distinct than that. Each mechanism used by conservatives was the *linear defensive equivalent of progressive integration mechanisms*. While progressives *manifested* the HSV, conservatives denied its occupation of space through *negation*. While progressives *routinised* the HSV's use in schools and churches, conservatives *tabooed* even the slightest discussion of its introduction. While progressives *corrected* the disturbance of limited bible reading, conservatives failed to acknowledge the validity of the argument and pushed for the HSV's *nihilation* by calling it a 'translation' full of 'heresy'. While progressives used *theodicy* to justify the HSV (space assignment with divine intervention), conservatives *scapegoated* young people for lacking spiritual vigour (space assignment without divine intervention). And while progressives *relativised* the *Statenvertaling*'s infallibility, conservatives doubled down on their truth claims and employed *fundamentalism* to maintain both the SV's symbolic status and the community's consistency.

Finally, and surprisingly, both progressives and traditionalists made use of *fundamentalist* maintenance strategies to legitimise their stances. Progressives adhered to the notion that the SV enjoyed divine guidance. They even appropriated this notion by claiming that the HSV's revisers, too, experienced God's help. This suggests that fundamentalism, or a claimed return to sources the supreme authority of which had already been established, constitutes a device with particular overarching legitimacy in the reformatoric context. In turn, the significance of fundamentalism among both progressives and traditionalists suggests a willingness among progressives to address fundamental conservative concerns. While both groups are afraid this debate will break any semblance of unity within the reformatoric pillar, this shared fundamentalist worldview might provide further grounds for cooperation.

Q: But doesn't God do us an injustice by requiring in his law what we are unable to do?

A: No, God created human beings with the ability to keep the law. They, however, provoked by the

devil, in wilful disobedience, robbed themselves and all their descendants of these gifts.

⸺ Heidelberg Catechism[129]

Chapter 4. Case study II. *The 2014 Day of Penance*

On Sunday May 11, 2014, the Synod of the Reformed Congregations, with 107,650 members in 2017 the largest denomination of the reformatoric pillar, organised a 'Day of Penance'.[130] A day dedicated exclusively to penance, humility and prayer had not been arranged since the nation-wide General Memorial Day in the wake of the North Sea flood of 1953.[131] But the denomination's General Synod deemed the "serious nature of our times", characterised by the secularisation of both 'the world' and 'the church',[132] to be best approached through a day of collective atonement. Reformed Congregations minister C. J. Meeuwse defined the event as "[a] day during which you rest from your work, you leave the media alone and do not seek any form of entertainment, during which your attention is requested for repentance, remorse and conversion".[133] Despite official invitations, a public discussion in the *Reformatorisch Dagblad*, and several public calls from Christian and Restored Reformed ministers, the Reformed Congregations were joined by only a few congregations belonging to the latter two denominations.[134] Churches that refused to participate, in particular the Reformed Congregations in the Netherlands led by rev. Roos, mentioned the human inability to truly repent as their primary motivation to decline the GG's offer.[135] This chapter analyses the Reformed

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[129] Heidelberg Catechism, Lord's Day 4, question 9.

[130] Another 11,000 members live in Canada, the United States, and New Zealand. 'Ledental GG stabiel door geboortes', *Reformatorisch Dagblad*, 23 May 2017, available online at https://www.rd.nl/kerk-religie/ledental-gg-stabiel-door-geboortes-1.1402898.

[131] 'Zondag algemene gedenkdag', *Leidsche Courant*, 44, 12806, p. 1.

[132] "[D]e ernst van de tijd waarin wij leven", 'Weinig steun voor boetedag over kerkmuren heen', *Reformatorisch Dagblad*, 6 March 2014, p. 2.

[133] "Een dag waarop je werk blijft liggen, je de media met rust laat en geen enkel amusement zoekt, waarop je aandacht gevraagd wordt voor boete, berouw en bekering", in C. J. Meeuwse, 'Boetedagen vroeger en nu', *Daniel*, 1 May 2014, p. 18-20.

[134] 'Weinig steun voor boetedag over kerkmuren heen', p. 2.

[135] J. Roos, 'Bid- en boetedag', *De Wachter Sions*, 6 March 2014, p. 3.

Congregations denominational leadership's argumentation for the decision to organise this specific day of penance as a maintenance mechanism in the face of secularising threats.

In terms of Meerten and Berend ter Borg, the *disturbance* to which the Reformed Congregations responded was the trend of secularisation. The Synod of the Reformed Congregations defined 'secularisation' as 'loss of heaven'.[136] A secular *life* was defined as a life "exclusively in service of the terrestrial; nothing else exists. One is capable of doing everything on earth by oneself, knows everything by oneself, has no need for God and religion."[137] Such thinking represented a "digression from God and His Word and [a] life fixated on the here and now".[138] Any digression from the Reformed Congregations' particular interpretation of God's demands and scriptural stipulations was regarded a sign of secularisation. This disturbance took place on three levels: that of 'the world', of church members, and of the denomination itself. The *world*, an essentialisation of anything non-reformatoric, was considered to have aspects of a competing church: it had a gospel to share (equality), a metaphysical objective to reach on earth (absolute neutrality of public spaces), and a clergy (secular politicians and intellectuals). *Church members*, too, internalised worldly values that led them astray: they were increasingly materialist, demanded equality between men and women, and sought worldly entertainment. Both 'the church' and 'the world' were therefore secularised. As representatives of God's church, the *Reformed Congregations* were considered to be in a vulnerable position. The Synod portrayed it as a small denomination caught in the tensions of a postmodern culture. Its members followed virtually none of the church's dogmatic ideals, paid little attention to the need for strangerhood and lacked the desire to suffer for their beliefs. Divergent theological views among churchgoers, interpreted as deliberate heretical falsehoods, were regarded as more harmful even than if they would distance themselves from Christianity completely. Meanwhile, its clerical elite struggled to maintain the denomination's purity of faith.

As the Day of Penance was a largely intradenominational affair, the corpus for this case study is twofold. The case study is built on the report authored by the committee tasked by the denomination's General Synod with finding a 'solution' to this disturbance, *Kerk-zijn in een seculiere samenleving*

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[136] Synodale Commissie van de Gereformeerde Gemeenten, *Kerk-zijn in een seculiere samenleving*, Utrecht: Gereformeerde Gemeenten, 2013.

[137] "…alleen voor het aardse; iets anders is er niet. Men kan op aarde alles zelf, weet alles zelf, heeft geen behoefte aan God en godsdienst", in Synodale Commissie, '*Kerk-zijn in een seculiere samenleving*', p. 11-12. Note that the word 'religion' in Dutch translates to 'godsdienst', the literal meaning of which is 'service to (or: of) God'.

[138] "[A]fwijking van God en Zijn Woord en het leven gericht op het hier en nu," ibid., p. 12.

(Being church in a secular society). Because this report was accepted by the denomination's 2013 General Synod, it reflects the denomination's official stance on both secularisation and its proposed maintenance strategies. In the second place, a few articles from the *Reformatorisch Dagblad* and denominational publications on the Day of Penance are briefly mentioned above to demonstrate the generally negative responses of other reformatoric denominations to the Reformed Congregations' proposal.

4.1 Maintenance mechanisms of the Reformed Congregations

The report leading up to the Day of Penance offers a unique in-depth insight into the maintenance mechanisms of one of the community's more conservative denominations. These propose a threefold use of Borgian maintenance mechanisms. *Judgment* is used to downscale the broad disturbance of secularisation, ascribe divine action to it, and keep it within the denomination's ritual control. *Escapism* into strangerhood-based isolation from 'the world' is used to re-establish the strict boundaries between church and non-church. And the Day of Penance itself forms a combination of *manifestation* of strangerhood-based resistance through public confession, *routinisation* of this resistance through continuous prayer, *correction* through proposed changes within the church, and *escapism* from the world through living life in expectance of Jesus' return.

4.1.1 Judgment and expulsion to maintain ritual control

To understand the dismal state of the church, the report turned to the mechanism of *judgment*. In this view, the Reformed Congregations sinned. It had forsaken its God-given duty to confess, upkeep, and transfer God's absolute truth as professed in the holy scriptures and the Three Forms of Unity, protect congregational cohesion, lead apologetic lives, provide material and pastoral care to those in need, pray for unity with other *reformatoric* denominations, and remind their members to remain 'strangers' to 'the world'.[139] Instead, the Committee argued, church members replaced the *praxis pietatis* with materialism, hedonism, and individualism. Even the 'people of God' lived less 'tenderly'.[140] The committee deemed itself and all true Christians to have failed at demonstrating to

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[139] Ibid., p. 35.
[140] 'Teer leven' refers to one's complete dependence on God for all things, ibid.

new generations the beauty of living in accordance with God's desires.[141] As a consequence, the report predicted, God would punish the entire country for the church's shift toward Arminian thought and its failure to "convert to the living God".[142] The committee concluded that the Reformed Congregations themselves were to blame for these dismal developments. In their perspective, God abandoned his church for its deeply sinful nature in the same way he used to periodically abandon the people of Israel during the time of the Old Testament.

The choice to ascribe guilt to oneself is dogmatically consistent with Reformed Congregations theology. Due to their paradoxical nature in Calvinism, guilt and blame play a crucial role in the reformatoric community. Calvinist dogma holds each individual to be inherently sinful and therefore *a priori* incapable of any good.[143] Hence, the individual is guilty of transgressing God's commandments and therefore doom-worthy *no matter the content of their actions*. The individual is nonetheless deemed responsible for his or her own inability to do what pleases the godhead. Attending church on a regular basis only adds to this responsibility.[144] Only God's saving grace is capable of breaking this paradoxical cycle of guilt. Yet, as the individual is dependent on God's grace for *everything*, their prostrations, humiliations and supplications cannot help them curry God's favour. The individual's experience of their existential God-less misery is a necessary prerequisite to 'truthful' prayer. But this misery *itself* can only be God-given. The individual is essentially powerless – and to blame even for this powerlessness itself. Even if the individual believes to have undergone a conversion experience, they may have insufficiently 'appropriated God's glory'. Because appropriation may only be worked through the Holy Spirit yet adds to the individual's guilt if unsuccessful, this requirement adds another dogmatic paradox.

The committee's identification of those guilty of secularisation was similarly paradoxical. On the one hand, it assigned blame squarely to the church, the clergy, and the 'people of God'.[145] At the same time, the committee argued humans to be incapable of even understanding the current times, let

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[141] The report here references Psalm 106:4 (Dutch poetic interpretation of 1773): 'Wij zijn van 't heilspoor afgegaan / Ja, wij en onze vaad'ren tevens'.

[142] Ibid., p. 33.

[143] Cf. Lord's Day 3, question 8 of the Heidelberg Catechism, which states that man is "totally unable to do any good and inclined toward all evil".

[144] 'De oproep tot genade', indicating sermons and other ways in which Biblical knowledge is related to an individual.

[145] 'People of God' is a term used to indicate 'truly', meaning spiritually, converted Christians as opposed to those who are merely members but have not been 'saved'.

alone change their course, due to their clouded ratio and their inextricable entanglement in sin.[146] Nevertheless, the report asserted the Reformed Congregations to have failed at doing God's bidding and deserving of divine punishment.[147]

The use of this paradoxical, if provisional, mechanism of *judgment* strengthened the reformatoric ontological framework in three ways. In the first place, it reaffirmed the existence and influence of the supernatural on earthly affairs by demonstrating that the godhead personally engaged with the lives of the denomination's members. In the second place, it enhanced social cohesion through shared guilt and fear. And in the third place, unlike *theodicy*, *judgment* requires human action. Its use therefore provided the Reformed Congregations with a call to agency in order to share *ownership* of the maintenance of its ontological framework. This strategy allowed both the denominations' elite and its members to regain ritual control of the disturbance of secularisation.

Strategy	Maintenance mechanism
Crisis situation as result of church (member) negligence	Judgment

Table 4.1: Maintenance mechanism locating guilt and blame

4.1.2 Strangerhood as escapism

To combat the temptations of secularisation, the committee recommended the denomination to reaffirm its *escapist* maintenance mechanism of 'strangerhood' vis-a-vis 'the world'. 'The world' here functioned as a rhetorical device lumping together all non-Christian, or rather, all non-reformatoric, traits, characteristics, and ideas. It typically functions as the 'strange Other' in reformatoric discourse. [148] Living as a 'stranger' requires one to develop a continuous awareness that earth is a transitory location on the way to the afterlife rather than one's permanent destination. This awareness results in maintaining distance from worldly affairs in favour of according attention to the spiritual. The committee believed strangerhood to be the place that the bible accorded to God's people in a heathen

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[146] "[H]et [is] voor nietige mensenkinderen levend buiten het paradijs ondoenlijk het huidig tijdsgewricht te doorgronden", in Synodale Commissie, *Kerk-zijn in een seculiere samenleving*, p. 12.

[147] Ironically, the Committee's distance from young people's lived experiences is apparent from their archaically phrased recommendation to transfer such divine education in an intelligible fashion, "op een verstaanbare wijze over[…]brengen",ibid., p. 13.

[148] In addition to 'liberals', which in this report encompasses all non-traditional think between Enlightenment and postmodernism, other 'Others' have included Roman Catholicism and, increasingly, Islam.

environment. Like the Jewish people in Palestine, their separate nature from the heathen 'world' needed to be *visible* in their actions, words, and dress.[149] In this context, the report repeatedly mentioned Hebrews 13:14, "For here we have no continuing city, but we seek one to come" (KJV).[150] Practically, Reformed Congregations members were called upon to live in relative seclusion focusing on the spiritual world that finds its perfect manifestation only in the afterlife.

Strangerhood should not lead to one's complete disengagement from the 'world', nor in a desire to (violently) establish the Kingdom of God on earth: God would establish this in its full perfection only after the last judgment. Reformatoric submission to worldly authority, however, should be limited by its orthodox interpretation of God's commandments. These should be followed even if doing so resulted in social marginalisation, for "[a]fter marginalisation follows incomprehension, mockery, repression, expulsion, and suffering".[151] Implied was the notion that the church must welcome any suffering as biblical. Only a persecuted church is a truly Christian church. These convictions, which combine excellently with the desire to be a 'stranger', are highly vulnerable to confirmation bias and might, in due time, even become a self-fulfilling prophecy. This mechanism for countering secularisation thus centred on the 'stranger's' exclusive self-image, internal social cohesion, and self-imposed distance from 'the world' in favour of an elusive ideal-type afterlife that accompanied this strict dichotomous thinking.

Strategy	Maintenance mechanism
Strangerhood: isolating oneself from 'the world'	Escapism

Table 4.2: Maintenance mechanism 'strangerhood'

4.1.3 Humiliation and penance as integration mechanisms

The committee presented four practical bible-based maintenance mechanisms for dealing with the church's decrepit condition.[152] A public confession of guilt was a *manifestation* of the disturbance. The call to continuous prayer was a *routinisation* of this acknowledgement of the disturbance.

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[149] Colloquially referred to as 'daad, praat, gewaad en gelaat' or 'actions, words, dress and face'.
[150] The report here provides several Biblical references, including to Hebrews 11:13, 1 Peter 2:11 and 12, Ephesus 2:19, and Revelations 11:1-14 and 13:6. The Committee furthermore describes the Jewish people's presence in Israel as that of strangers in God-owned Palestine.
[151] "Na marginalisering volgt onbegrip, spot, verdrukking, uitstoting en lijden", ibid., p. 30.
[152] Bible texts supporting these recommendations are provided in the footnotes.

Changes within the church constituted *corrective* mechanisms. And living in expectance of Jesus' return functioned as an *escapist* strategy similar to the 'strangerhood' analysed in the previous paragraph. [153] All of these were pragmatic mechanisms resulting from the identification of the disturbance as divine *judgment* requiring the human action of *expulsion*.

According to the report, the denomination needed to publicly *manifest* its acknowledgement of the secularisation disturbance by humiliating itself before God and the world. [154] Public penance served two purposes. Confessing guilt was the logical extension of identifying the blame for secularisation with the church's lack of faith. In this way, the disturbance was *integrated* within the Reformed Congregations´ ontological framework. Moreover, public penance enhanced social cohesion through shared humiliation. That is why, contrary to reformatoric dogma prohibiting the performance of external 'good deeds' as leading to salvation, church members were encouraged to seek public abasement. God might use public penance as a tool for leading both the church and the world back to him.

Resistance to the disturbance was further *routinised* through the exhortation to ´pray without end´ for the reversal of secularisation. Like true penance, the ability to 'truly pray' is a God-given grace that must be *routinised*. Not every church member was therefore capable of praying in a way that pleased the godhead. Nevertheless, the disturbance was deemed so substantial that a continuous maintenance mechanism was invoked to foster the institutionalisation of awareness of the threat within the denomination.

Moreover, the denomination was advised to apply *corrections* in two ways. In the first place, members should not be the double-faced believers 'the world' accused them of being. Instead they should love their neighbour,[155] be fruitful in good works,[156] and lead holy[157] and heavenly lives. [158] As an institution, the church must ensure a good connection between their message and the requirements of the times. Likewise, the sermons' and catechisms' format and use of language must be more closely aligned with young people's needs and understanding. Members of the clergy were

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[153] As the Scriptures are regarded as the infallible Word of God containing all information necessary to sustain His church, each recommendation and sub-recommendation is justified exclusively by reference to Biblical texts.
[154] Nehemiah 1:6.
[155] Acts 20:35.
[156] Colossians 1:10.
[157] 2 Peter 3:14.
[158] Philippians 3:20.

called upon to provide greater pastoral care to children and young people. In addition to the initial *defensive* proposal of public penance, the church needed to dedicate greater attention to the positive *integrative* aspects of belief: confession, biblical ethics, a missionary calling, and an apologetic attitude.[159]

Finally, believers' continuous confrontation with their own limitations should lead them to seek *escape* from this world by living in expectance of Jesus' return.[160] Based on their analysis, the committee concluded to be living during the end times. The apocalypse was imminent. Only God was capable of redeeming mankind from their inability to any good. Believers should therefore always think of,[161] and expect,[162]

the Almighty One in a desire to abandon this sinful earth.[163]

Strategy	Maintenance mechanism
Public confession	Manifestation
Continuous prayer	Routinisation
Changes within the church	Correction
Living in expectance of Jesus' return	Escapism

Table 4.3: Maintenance mechanisms humiliation and penance

4.2 Chapter conclusions

This second identification of maintenance mechanisms, analysed in the context of the report prepared by the Reformed Congregations' Synodal Committee, supports the observations identified in the previous chapter. Four tentative conclusions may be drawn.

In the first place, the denomination used a combination of *defensive* mechanisms – judgment and escapism – and *integration* mechanisms – manifestation, routinisation, and correction – to fend off the disturbance of secularisation. At the root of these strategies was the *acknowledgment* of the disturbance's validity. Upon closer inspection, however, a difference can be identified between the ways in which defensive and integrations mechanisms are used. The defensive mechanisms played a

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[159] Rather than as completely novel requirements, these 'changes' are however presented as continuations of established denominational regulations which clergy members have failed to follow adequately.
[160] Titus 2:13.
[161] Ephesians 3:20.
[162] Ecclesiastes 3:25.
[163] 2 Peter 3:13.

role in placing the disturbance within the denomination's *theological* framework. Secularisation was a form of divine *judgment* against which the church needed to protect itself. Regaining theological purity required the *escapism* of relative isolation linked to eschatological expectations. On a *practical* level, however, the denomination opted for the use of mechanisms integrating the acknowledgement of the disturbance within their own worldview. They *manifested* this acknowledgement through public penance, *routinised* this manifestation through continuous reference and prayer in church, and they proposed *corrections* in the way the church approaches their young members in particular.

This also indicates that the use of integration mechanisms is not exclusively a *progressive* strategy. Unlike the previous case study, the report on the Day of Penance reflected exclusively the actions and perspectives of a relatively conservative denomination. This means that the denomination acted *primarily* on an independently identified disturbance, rather than *secondarily* on a progressive maintenance mechanism (the *Herziene Statenvertaling*) used to counter a disturbance identified *primarily* by progressives (lack of bible readership). One might note that the conscious and independent first step of *identification* of a given disturbance within one's own sub-group is more likely to result in attempts to integrate the disturbance.

Similarly, this case demonstrates the use of *judgment*, one of my additions to Meerten and Berend ter Borg's system of maintenance mechanisms, as a defence mechanism. On the one hand, the interpretation of the disturbance as divine judgment functioned as an affirmation of the intervention of the supernatural in the Reformed Congregations' affairs. This immediate proximity of God, and his specific way of intervening, strengthened the denomination's self-understanding as a community with a close relationship to the divine. On the other hand, unlike *theodicy*, it required human action to avert further punishment: the community needed to be *defended* against the disturbance of secularisation rather than *including* its tenets within its own worldview.

Finally, this case is an example of how maintenance mechanisms tend to be elite-led yet followed by their members. Of course, the report was an elite product commissioned by the denomination's highest authority, the Synod. But the Day of Penance also required special actions by a special agent with privileged access to the supernatural, the minister, who tweaked ordinary causality by downscaling societal developments of secularisation into a form of judgment requiring human agency. At the same time, this mechanism strengthened ontological security through clear in-

group and out-group demarcation, inspiring a sense of shared ownership among the denomination's members to preserve the ministers' positions of power against the encroachment of 'the world'.

I think that the pillar's framework … is fading anyway. We look around us more and are active

participants in society. That way, we are also better capable of promulgating our norms and values.

⸻ Paula Schot[164]

Chapter 5. Case study III. *Paula Schot's municipal candidacy for SGP*

In a shock decision in early January 2018, the SGP's local Zaanstad committee voted 7-3 in favour of nominating Paula Schot to lead the party bid for a seat on the Amsterdam municipal council.[165] Founded in 1918 as a protest party against women's suffrage, SGP had traditionally opposed the "revolutionary striving for emancipation [which] is incompatible with woman's calling".[166] After a series of appealed court cases that took the better part of a decade, the party officially cancelled its sex-based limitations to active suffrage in 2013.[167] Yet, the uproar among reformatoric conservatives that followed the announcement of Schot's candidacy demonstrated that this decision was far from accepted by the entire community. Instead, the affair exposed a fundamental rift between the party's relatively progressive leadership and its conservative governing body. Nowhere was this manifested more clearly than by the drama that unfolded when the *Reformatorisch Dagblad*, after presenting party leader Kees van der Staaij's off-the-record congratulatory text message to Schot as official party endorsement, was made to retract its reporting by the SGP party board.[168]

Much like in the first case study, the identification of the *disturbance* differs between progressives and conservatives. Progressives regard the threat of party disbandment in case of failure

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[164] "Ik denk dat de kaders van de zuil … sowieso vervagen. We kijken meer om ons heen en staan midden in de maatschappij. Zo kunnen we ook onze normen en waarden verder uitdragen", Paula Schot, Twitter post, 8 March 2018, available online at https://twitter.com/P_aaulaa/status/971843320463970305, last accessed on 9 March 2018.

[165] Jeroen van Raalte, 'Een tot voor kort ondenkbare lijsttrekker bij SGP Amsterdam: een jonge vrouw', *De Volkskrant*, 12 January 2018, available online at https://www.volkskrant.nl/binnenland/een-tot-voor-kort-ondenkbare-lijsttrekker-bij-sgp-amsterdam-een-jonge-vrouw~a4556510/, last accessed on 9 March 2018.

[166] SGP Statement of Principles, art. 10, translated in European Court of Human Rights, third section, application no. 58369/10, Staatkundig Gereformeerde Partij v. the Netherlands, 10 July 2012, art. 9.

[167] Pieter van den Akker, 'Vrouwen welkom bij de SGP, maar niet van harte', *BNR*, 14 January 2013, available online at https://www.bnr.nl/nieuws/politiek/10085255/vrouwen-welkom-bij-sgp-maar-niet-van-harte, last accessed on 8 March 2018.

[168] Hoofdredactie, 'Spagaat SGP geen dubbelhartigheid', *Reformatorisch Dagblad*, 6 February 2018, available online at https://www.rd.nl/opinie/commentaar/spagaat-sgp-geen-dubbelhartigheid-1.1465653, last accessed on 8 March 2018.

to comply with the court rulings obliging SGP to include women on their electoral lists, as the paramount *primary* disturbance. Conservatives, while weary of the threat of disbandment, regard the *secondary* progressive choice to practically include women on these lists as the paramount threat to their ontological framework, within which women do not occupy public functions. Unlike in the case of the *Herziene Statenvertaling*, however, here factional allegiances intersect denominational divides. Paula Schot is a member of the relatively progressive Reformed Association within the Protestant Church. SGP political leader in parliament, Kees van der Staaij, on the other hand, belongs to the highly conservative Old Reformed Congregations in the Netherlands. Both support women´s active participation in the political arena. Moreover, this progressive-conservative divide is legally institutionalised: SGP's statement of principles still holds women to be subordinate to men, while its statutes were changed in 2013 to reflect, that, "given the Supreme Court decision of 9 April 2010 ... candidates' gender cannot ... legally be used to object to candidates". [169] This puts SGP in a vulnerable position. A nation-wide survey among local SGP politicians found this divide replicated on the local level, with 30% of these in favour of female candidates and 30% opposed.[170] The remaining 40% said to prefer maintaining pillar unity to the imposition of any specific policy on the issue.

The corpus for this case study consists primarily of newspaper articles, opinion pieces, and interviews. Unlike in the previous two cases, there is no foundational document in which the two sides propose their arguments. Maarten van Leeuwen, SGP president and former chairman of the board of both the Hoornbeeck and Van Lodenstein Colleges, played a crucial role in leading resistance to Schot's candidacy. Local party leaders, including Piet de Gruijter of Molenwaard and Jan ten Hove of Oldebroek, also voiced their conservative concerns. Naturally, Paula Schot was herself the most outspoken proponent of her leading role in the Amsterdam elections. Her views were obtained from interviews and articles in secular media such as *Brandpunt+*, *EenVandaag*, and *De Volkskrant*, and from her private Twitter account. She found support from Theological University of Apeldoorn professor in systematic theology and former Christian Reformed minister, Arnold Huijgen, and local

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[169] "Gelet op het arrest van de Hoge Raad van 9 april 2010 … kan het geslacht van kandidaten … niet aan kandidaten worden tegengeworpen", *Algemeen Reglement*, Staatkundig Gereformeerde Partij, article 14, p. 20, available online at https://lidworden.sgp.nl/l/library/download/urn:uuid:44a1125a-c2c3-4250-a711-16cda50d7569/algemeen+reglement.pdf?format=save_to_disk&ext=.pdf, last accessed on 25 April 2018.
[170] Addy de Jong and Anne Vader, 'Een derde SGP-raadsleden positief over meer SGP-vrouwen in de raad', *Reformatorisch Dagblad*, 3 March 2018, available online at https://www.rd.nl/vandaag/politiek/een-derde-sgp-raadsleden-positief-over-meer-sgp-vrouwen-in-raad-1.1471117, last accessed on 8 March 2018.

party leader Jan Broere of Oudewater. To maintain his neutrality, party leader Kees van der Staaij stayed clear of the discussion.

5.1 Progressive maintenance mechanisms in favour of Schot's candidacy

Schot's election to head the SGP in Amsterdam can be regarded as a publicity stunt for the party. For the first time in its history, SGP participated independently in the city council elections of the national capital. While prominently in the news, Schot's candidacy was only a symptom of an emancipation process that had taken decades. She, and her progressive predecessors, made use of five maintenance mechanisms to mainstream women's political participation within the community. First, her candidacy amounted to the *manifestation* of women's factual participation. This was the result of incremental bottom-up *routinisation* of female passive suffrage. Moreover, her election was a *correction* of the SGP's century-long resistance. Schot chose to *relativise* parts of the SGP's fundamentalism, and in particular the disturbance posed by her own participation. Yet even in defence of her own candidacy she resorted to the *fundamentalism* characteristic for the party.

By accepting her nomination and standing for election in the Zaanstad chapter of SGP, Schot *manifested* the new course set out by progressives. These feared that, without women's participation, the party would have only limited success. The initial disturbance of potential disbandment, acknowledged throughout the party's decade of trials, was now manifested in Schot's candidacy. Though against the will of the party board, this mechanism of "clearly showing who you are" integrated the notion of women bearing political responsibility into the SGP and, in doing so, also tentatively into parts of the reformatoric community.[171]

The road towards Schot's candidacy had taken 30 years of extremely gradual *routinisation*. Former party leader Bas van der Vlies, whilst proceeding cautiously on the matter in public, already privately professed his desire for women to become members already during the late-1990s.[172] Each successive step, from the party's formal acknowledgement of a woman's right to active suffrage in 1989, through the mid-1990s extraordinary membership and 2006 regular membership, slowly prepared the way for women to stand for election in the 2010s. Local councils and the party's youth wing both played an important role in the normalisation of women's participation, as Schot

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[171] "[D]uidelijk op de kaart zetten wie je bent", in Ter Borg and Ter Borg, *Zingeving als machtsmiddel*, p. 90.
[172] As repeated by former party leader Bas van der Vlies in Paul Rosenmoller, 'De vrouwenkwestie binnen de SGP', *Spraakmakende Zaken*, 22 August 2006, IKON TV.

acknowledged in an interview with *Brandpunt+*.[173] This long-running internal process explains the party's unexpectedly accommodating response to the European Court of Human Rights decision in 2013. While external legal pressure animated the sentiments of righteous persecution among the reformatoric revolutionary right, they soon found out they had been overtaken by a bottom-up process of moderate modernisation that left their arguments to fall mostly on deaf ears. The consequence of this non-uniform internal development was an ambiguous and often contradictory strategy that resulted in the current contradiction between the party's Statement of Principles and party board, on the one side, and the party regulations and political leadership, on the other.[174] As the *Reformatorisch Dagblad* pointed out in an editorial, this ambivalent strategy was both unpleasant and unavoidable in order for the party to stay together through a process of gradual decrease in internal and external tension.[175]

Proponents of Schot's candidacy provided a twofold justification for their *corrective* action. On the one hand, the decision to elect Schot was itself a correction to traditional SGP policy. Now that the possibility had been created in 2013, a woman was, for the first time, chosen as party leader *while a male candidate was running* in the same election. Other proponents of women's participation, like Oudewater municipal council member Jan Broere, however identified a different disturbance to which women's participation constituted a practical correction: men's unwillingness to run in local elections. Broere pointed out the community's increased individualism and materialism.[176] With men poised to benefit their careers rather than fulfil their societal duties, women had become indispensable for the reformatoric pillar's institutional maintenance. And since many of the party's youth members were women, guaranteeing its continuation, especially on the local level, required providing them with sufficient ownership to enable them to stay involved.

Schot also emphatically *relativised* SGP's inherent fundamentalism by *including*, or *annexing*, a secular political pragmatism to appeal to the Amsterdam population. During her campaign, she expressed the wish to demonstrate that SGP "are very normal". "Usually, you would not be able to tell

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[173] Schot in Veerle Weustink and Roos van Tongerloo, 'Twee van onze redacteuren (v) in gesprek met Paula, lijsttrekker van de Amsterdamse SGP', *Brandpunt+*, 16 February 2018, available online at https://brandpuntplus.kro-ncrv.nl/brandpuntplus/paulas-schot/, last accessed on 8 March 2018.

[174] Frank Hendrickx, 'Richtingenstrijd binnen SGP: verdient jonge vrouwelijke lijsttrekker steun?', *De Volkskrant*, 2 February 2018, available online at https://www.volkskrant.nl/binnenland/richtingenstrijd-binnen-sgp-verdient-jonge-vrouwelijke-lijsttrekker-steun~a4565557/, last accessed on 8 March 2018.

[175] Hoofdredactie, 'Spagaat SGP geen dubbelhartigheid', n.p.

[176] In De Jong and Vader, 'Een derde SG-raadsleden positief', n.p.

me apart as somebody who *clearly* goes to church", she told journalists Veerle Weustink and Roos van Tongerloo.[177] Another method of tension-decreasing discourse normalisation used by Schot was her insistence on using societal arguments to express scriptural principles, such as when motivating her biblical opposition to window prostitution by referencing women's rights. *Brandpunt+* described this as "a fundament existing of two, exactly equally portentous pillars: a conviction derived from the bible and a stack of societal arguments".[178] On the other hand, Schot attempted to shift the focus away from her identity as a woman towards "what [she] want[ed] to accomplish. That ha[d] more to do with character than with [the fact] that [she was] a woman".[179] This statement provided an especially compelling compromise between the markedly secular and emancipatory discourse of ambition and, at the same time, a mitigating protection of SGP's traditional stance on women. Unlike traditional SGP politicians, Schot regarded her political office as her 'ambition', not her 'calling', and she declared her political accomplishments to be a result of autonomous 'character' rather than 'God-given grace'.

Nevertheless, Schot made sure to invoke the *fundamentalist* authority of both scripture and tradition in defending her choice. On the one hand, she argued that the bible texts mentioned by SGP to justify women's political exclusion referred not to public, but to ecclesiastical offices.[180] Rushing to her support, Arnold Huijgen, lecturer at the Theological University of Apeldoorn, called applying these specific texts to all of society a "mistake of categorization".[181] Schot thus maintained that her arguments were dogmatically sound. What is more, she arguably regarded her view as 'more correct' and therefore, in a way, *more fundamentalist* than the conservative views denying women ownership over the political process. In addition, Schot attempted to downplay the revolutionary nature of her candidacy by repeatedly iterating her pride to be a member of a party of such long and unwavering

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[177] "…we heel normaal zijn". "Meestal kun je mij er niet uitpikken als iemand die dui-de-lijk naar de kerk gaat", Schot in Weustink and Tongerloo, 'Twee van onze redacteuren (v) in gesprek met Paula', n.p.

[178] "[E]en fundament dat bestaat uit twee, precies even zware pilaren: een aan de Bijbel ontleende overtuiging en een stapel maatschappelijke argumenten", in ibid., n.p.

[179] "…wat ik wil bereiken. Dat heeft meer met karakter te maken dan met dat ik een vrouw ben", in ibid., n.p.

[180] Paula Schot, Twitter post, 8 March 2018, available online at https://twitter.com/P_aaulaa/status/971803853048905729, last accessed on 8 March 2018. Cf. Arnold Huijgen, 'SGP, vrouwelijke kandidaten, felicitaties', *Arnold Huijgen*, 5 February 2018, available online at https://arnoldhuijgen.nl/2018/02/05/1321/, last accessed on 26 April 2018, and Jan ten Hove, 'Laat SGP oorspronkelijke weeffout lidmaatschap vrouwen herstellen', *Reformatorisch Dagblad*, 26 October 2012, available online at https://www.rd.nl/opinie/laat-sgp-oorspronkelijke-weeffout-lidmaatschap-vrouwen-herstellen-1.695699, last accessed on 26 April 2018.

[181] "[C]ategoriefout", in Huijgen, 'SGP, vrouwelijke kandidaten, felicitaties', n.p.

traditions.[182] In a similar appeal to conservative sentiments, she also asserted to still consider women to be subordinate to men. Any consequent cognitive dissonance was offset by her clarification that "[t]hat does not mean that we are [not] equal, but that when it really matters, the woman follows the man".[183]

Strategy	Maintenance mechanism
Standing for election as a woman	Manifestation
Incremental change within the party	Routinisation
Electing Schot as Amsterdam party leader	Correction
Adopting secular political arguments / pragmatism	Relativising / inclusion
Different interpretation bible / defence traditionalism	Fundamentalism

Table 5.1: Maintenance mechanisms in favour of Schot's candidacy

5.2 Conservative maintenance mechanisms in opposition to Schot's candidacy

Conservatives used five maintenance mechanisms to defend their opposition to women´s participation in the political arena. To some extent, they *negated* the disturbance by arguing that reformatoric women were not interested in politics in the first place. They also *nihilated* women's participation by applying the heresy-related label of ´Enlightenment teaching´ to any type of equality movements. At the same time, they implicitly *annexed* certain Enlightenment ideas to justify their conservatism. Some of them argued that the legal ruling forcing the party to include women was a *theodicy*. And two types of *fundamentalism*, again based on the authority of both bible and tradition, were invoked.

Several party members attempted to *negate* the problem posed by the SGP´s changing official perspective on women. One way in which they sought to do so, was by underestimating the number of women wishing to become politically active for the party. Shortly after the Dutch Supreme Court decision to force the party to open its doors to women, party president Van Leeuwen said not to

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[182] Paula Schot, Twitter post, 8 March 2018, available online at https://twitter.com/P_aaulaa/status/971816596200148994, last accessed on 9 March 2018.

[183] "Dat betekent niet dat we [niet] gelijkwaardig zijn, maar dat als het er echt toe doet, je als vrouw de man volgt", in Els Anker, 'SGP-lijsttrekker (24): 'De man is boven de vrouw gesteld'', *EenVandaag*, 12 January 2018, available online at https://eenvandaag.avrotros.nl/item/sgp-lijsttrekker-24-de-man-is-boven-de-vrouw-gesteld/, last accessed on 8 March 2018.

expect a great deal of interest among female SGP members in joining the political ranks.[184] Former Oldebroek party leader Jan ten Hove similarly argued that "[women] are absolutely not eager to present themselves politically".[185] The party leadership further ignored the challenges arising from women's increased assertiveness by relegating practical decisions on their status to local party chapters. By acting as if the problem did not exist, the national party leadership postponed having to assume a stance that would most likely aggravate its revolutionary right wing. Implicitly, however, this attitude of local 'toleration' allowed for support for women to be routinised within the party.[186]

Furthermore, conservatives *nihilated* the disturbance of women's participation by labelling the principle of equality between men and women 'heretical Enlightenment teaching'. The ruling of the European Court of Human Rights (EHCR) reports, that "the SGP professes the absolute authority of the Word of God over all areas of societal life [and] rejects the idea of absolute equality of human beings, *which it sees as false teaching of the French Revolution*".[187] Similarly, rev. De Jong said at the 2012 annual *Gereformeerde Bijbelstichting* family day, that "liberalism and socialism are conspiring to form a government. *Such attempts arise from the French Revolution*, [which was] a repetition of the revolution [or fall] in paradise".[188] The latter statement, in particular, combines a fundamentalist emphasis on the unalterability of the bible with a nihilationist strategy in which women's emancipation is made suspect by reference to the French Revolution. The latter's evil is then located in the biblical fall of mankind in paradise, thus closing the circle with fundamentalism. 'Heresy', while not explicitly mentioned, is implied in this reference to what is regarded as the origin of humanity's sinful nature.

Even Schot's candidacy was regarded as an expression of God's divinely unalterable will. Societal challenges to SGP's traditional principles were thus interpreted as a *theodicy* in the form of either a satanic attack or the Lord's providential decision.[189] As the Calvinist godhead is almighty, satanic attacks, too, were regarded as a manifestation of God's will. The extremely conservative

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[184] In Van den Akker, 'Vrouwen welkom bij de SGP', n.p.

[185] "Ze staan absoluut niet te dringen om zich politiek te laten gelden", in Jan ten Hove, 'Laat SGP oorspronkelijke weeffout lidmaatschap vrouwen herstellen', *Reformatorisch Dagblad*, 26 October 2012, available online at https://www.rd.nl/opinie/laat-sgp-oorspronkelijke-weeffout-lidmaatschap-vrouwen-herstellen-1.695699, last accessed on 8 March 2018.

[186] Cf. Maarten van Leeuwen, 'Over een alom bekend standpunt', *De Banier*, 1 February 2018, p. 5.

[187] European Court of Human Rights, application no. 58369/10, art. 8, italicisation by the present author.

[188] "Het liberalisme en het socialisme slaan de handen ineen om tot een regering te komen. Zulke pogingen komen voort uit de Franse revolutie, een herhaling van de paradijsrevolutie", rev. Tj. de Jong in 'De boog van de ruiter op het witte paard', *Reformatorisch Dagblad*, 15 October 2012, p. 2, italicisation by the present author.

[189] Andre Bijl, 'De Gruijter: Waken over identiteit', *Reformatorisch Dagblad*, 4 March 2013, p. 7.

Landelijke Stichting ter bevordering van de Staatkundig Gereformeerde beginselen (National Foundation for the Advancement of the Reformed Political principles) described any concessions to the demand to include women within the party as 'the devil's political objective'.[190] Van Leeuwen, on the other hand, regarded the ECHR's decision as a divine test. "[W]hat does the Lord want with this[?] In the end, He guides everything, so this as well. Is he testing us? Have we, as SGP, done enough to advocate for our principles?"[191] These two different interpretations also defined the difference in their responses: whereas Van Leeuwen's party board actively discouraged women's participation, the men behind the Landelijke Stichting explicitly distanced themselves from the party. Most seemed to accept this as an expression of divine will necessitating no human action, rendering this *theodicy* rather than the maintenance mechanism of *judgment*.

Crucially, conservatives, too, employed two types of *fundamentalism* to underpin their stance. In the first place, they deemed scripture to reveal an 'order of creation' (*scheppingsorde*) that defined traditional gender roles as being so designed by the godhead.[192] This argument rested on the biblical creation account in Genesis, in which God first created Adam as 'man' prior to creating his female counterpart, Eve, out of one of Adam's ribs.[193] The 'order of creation' was thought to be reiterated in 1 Corinthians 11:3, which states, "[b]ut I would have you know, that the head of every man is Christ; and the head of the woman is the man; and the head of Christ is God" (KJV). Article 7 of the SGP Statement of Principles explicitly referred to this bible text in saying that,

> [t]he Word of God holds that, on the basis of the order of creation, man and woman have each been given their own and distinct mission and place. In this order the man is the head of the woman. Any measures aimed at acknowledging the equality of men and women are to be regarded positively. Every effort at emancipation that negates the God-

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[190] 'SGP-beginsel over regeerambt niet opgeven', *Reformatorisch Dagblad*, 6 November 2012, p. 3.

[191] "[W]at [wil] de Heere [hiermee?] Uiteindelijk leidt hij alle dingen, dus ook dit. Beproeft hij ons? Hebben we als SGP wel voldoende gedaan om ons gedachtegoed naar buiten te brengen?", Van Leeuwen in Gerard Vroegindeweij, 'SGP-partijvoorzitter Van Leeuwen: Onbegrijpelijk, schrijnend, zorgelijk', *Reformatorisch Dagblad*, 20 July 2012, available online at https://www.rd.nl/sgp-partijvoorzitter-van-leeuwen-onbegrijpelijk-schrijnend-zorgelijk-1.267697, last accessed on 26 April 2018.

[192] '[A]an tijd noch plaats gebonden', in W. Verboom, 'Eeuwig en alomtegenwoordig', *De Waarheidsvriend*, 16 September 2010, p. 13.

[193] H. Hageman, 'Scheppingsorde wel in Bijbel terug te vinden', *Reformatorisch Dagblad*, 3 May 2006, p. 9.

given mission and place of men and women is considered revolutionary and has to be combated forcefully.[194]

Conservatives' biblical *fundamentalism* is so ingrained within the party's history that it obtained an element of *tradition*. This argument is derived from the fundamentalism described above, yet differs from it in its insistence that this *particular* biblical interpretation is legitimate due to its historical nature rather than its objective accuracy. Party chairman Van Leeuwen, in a page-long article explaining that the party board did not support party leader Van der Staaij's 'congratulations' for Schot, referred to the SGP's resistance to women's suffrage as a "commonly known stance".[195] Paramount was the *vrouwenstandpunt*'s symbolic role as the last remaining of the party's three foundational issues. These originally included resistance to vaccines, mandatory insurance, and women's suffrage. With the disappearance of the latter, the uniquely tradition-conscious party would have distanced itself from all three principles that once justified its establishment. In response to Schot's candidacy, Van Leeuwen therefore contended that

> [t]he SGP stance on women is not something that came about on a rainy Thursday afternoon. … The rule that the office of government does not befall on women is deeply rooted in SGP thought. Already since its establishment in 1918.[196]

Implicit in these statements of fact was the argument that tradition must be honoured. As such, they represented a conservative take on the need to maintain the original integrity of institutions in order to preserve community consistency.

While explicit emancipation was thus deemed heretical, the party *integrated* some of its tenets by means of their *compartmentalisation*: women's equality, freedom of religion, and freedom of association. Since the second feminist wave, SGP consistently contrasted women's *equality* with their differential *calling* from men. The Dutch Supreme Court summarized it as follows:

> The rejection of the right of women to stand for election is grounded in the SGP's conviction that in God's order of creation men and women are admittedly complete

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[194] SGP Statement of Principles, translation quoted in European Court of Human Rights, application no. 58369/10, art. 9.

[195] "[A]lom bekend standpunt", in Van Leeuwen, 'Over een alom bekend standpunt', p. 5.

[196] "Het SGP-vrouwenstandpunt is niet iets wat op een regenachtige donderdagmiddag tot stand is gekomen. Het gaat om een diepgewortelde overtuiging gebaseerd op de Bijbel. De regel dat het regeerambt vrouwen niet toekomt, zit diep geworteld in het SGP-denken. Al sinds de oprichting in 1918", in Vroegindeweij, 'SGP-partijvoorzitter Van Leeuwen: Onbegrijpelijk, schrijnend, zorgelijk', n.p.

equals (they are 'an equal bi-union within creation') … but not the same and that they

each have received their own specific, distinct calling and place.[197]

This argument implicitly integrated the 'Enlightenment notion' of gender equality while explicitly denying to do so, thus neutralising its pull on reformatoric women while attempting to nihilate secular normativity. As such, this strategy was a complex maintenance mechanism integrating the disturbance of Enlightenment equality within reformatoric thought. At the same time, the space dedicated to the accommodation of this Enlightenment thought was hermetically sealed off: women's equality might be invoked only in highly specific cases. In much the same way, conservatives *compartmentalised* two other classical Enlightenment freedoms they otherwise, by upholding article 36 of the Belgic Confession, said to oppse: the freedom of religion and the freedom of association. The state, in this pragmatic perspective, was regarded as unlawfully infringing on the liberal rights of SGP as an 'association' guided by 'religious' principles.[198] This constitutes a compartmentalisation of secular thinking applied to the defence of absolutist Christian ideals.

Strategy	Maintenance mechanism
Regarding interest women in SGP as low or non-existent	Negation
Labelling women's participation 'false Enlightenment teaching'	Nihilation
Reference to bible / tradition	Fundamentalism
Regarding legal obligation to include women as divine will	Theodicy
Invoking equality and freedom of religion and association	Compartmentalisation

Table 5.2: Maintenance mechanisms in opposition to Schot's candidacy

5.3 Chapter conclusions

The most striking aspect of this discussion is Schot's readiness, as an example of the party's urbanised, young, and relatively progressive vanguard, to forego tradition and discard the pillar. Much like the party, which recently turned away from its demographic base to 'share the values of Calvinism with all of society', Schot thought that "the pillar's framework … [was] fading away". By being "active participants in society", SGP was deemed "better able to propagate [its] norms and values".[199]

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[197] Translated and quoted in European Court of Human Rights, application no. 58369/10, art. 49.
[198] Ibid.
[199] Schot, Twitter post, 8 March 2018, cf. note 238.

Nevertheless, both her decision to stick with the political party that defines the reformatoric community and the tenets of the debate concerning her leadership role revealed her implicit desire to maintain the pillar. Three tentative conclusions may be drawn.

The location of the *disturbance* continued to define progressive and conservative responses. To some extent, unease with state intervention in the party's traditional position on women was a disturbance shared among the two factions. But while progressives worried more about the *primary* possibility of party disbandment, conservatives regarded Schot's *secondary* progressive decision to stand for election as the main disturbance to their ontological framework. They saw the forced adaptation of their statement of principles purely as a hypothetical exercise to acquiesce legal pressure, not as a practical admittance of women to the hallowed halls of power. But reducing this stance to a purely patriarchal strife for dominance would be incorrect. Conservatives feared that, with the demise of the worldview-defining 'order of creation', progressives could undermine the entire pillar. In addition, some progressives identified another practical disturbance: men's limited interest in local government. One might suggest that the disturbances identified by progressives were therefore more *practical* in nature than the *theological* disturbances to which conservatives responded.

Many of the maintenance mechanisms used by progressives and conservatives in Schot's context were each other's integrative and defensive mirror images. Schot's candidacy was a *manifestation* of an emancipating strife that conservatives attempted to *negate*, or refused to occupy verbal space, by denying that SGP-women would be interested in assuming political roles. Her election by the Zaanstad SGP chapter was a *correction* of traditionalist principles that conservatives attempted to *nihilate* by labelling them 'Enlightenment thinking' and thus, by implication, heretical and dangerous to Christianity. And while conservatives turned to *fundamentalism* in their absolutisation of bible texts and party tradition, Schot *relativised* their truth claims by co-opting or *including* secular arguments for her political choices. Schot's candidacy was also the result of a long-term *routinisation* process of emancipation within the party that conservatives were unable to *taboo* due to its continuously resurfacing nature. Yet, conservatives also made selective use of integration mechanisms. Some regarded forced women's participation as *theodicy*, a provident provision of the godhead against which resistance might be futile or undesired but acquiescence might, paradoxically, run counter to scripture. And many *compartmentalised* the disturbance of the Enlightenment principles of equality between the sexes, freedom of religion, and freedom of association to benefit their own

interests. Notably, this constituted the integration of a *different* set of disturbances than that of the SGP's internal change.

   Fundamentalism remained a stable factor across both traditionalist and progressive arguments. Schot used not the relativising argument that the bible is a human-made product of a given cultural era used to delegitimise SGP's insistence on 1 Corinthians 11:3, but the fundamentalist argument that conservatives misinterpreted its literal meaning. Again, progressives used the fundamentalism of the conservatives against them to assert that they hold a *more correct* version of indivisible truth. Moreover, both progressives and conservatives used the twofold fundamentalism of *bible* and *tradition* to further their respective arguments. Only conservatives, however, treated history and tradition in-depth as a component inherent to this fundament. Schot merely paid lip service to SGP's traditional values. Progressive use of fundamentalism may thus be regarded as at least partially stemming from the pragmatic wish to limit conservatives' alienation from progressives' chosen maintenance mechanisms.

It can ... never end up well with our principles if we do not continuously calibrate and re-source these biblically. Too much carefulness leads [the reformatoric community] to increasingly lose their connection to the principles of old.

— Rev. M. van Reenen[200]

Chapter 6. *Conclusions*

> *What maintenance mechanisms do conservative and progressive factions within the reformatoric community, respectively, use to ensure the community's continued existence in the face of secularising disturbances to its ontological framework?*

This study reaffirms the fragile state of the reformatoric community. As Van Lieburg, Van de Lagemaat, and the studies of the Dutch Bible Belt Network indicated, the community finds itself caught in the midst of a drawn-out negotiation process. At stake are its identity, its worldview, and the roles of its elites, institutions, and members. Janse's *social* emancipation has taken place at the expense of the group's *cultural* distinctness. Secularism's challenges, identified by Van Lieburg and Dekker, exert both external pressure on this small orthodox group and challenge it from within. In terms of the three-stage model of pillar development proposed in this study's introduction, the pillar is now moving into its *assimilation* stage. As a consequence, the community needs to negotiate both its internal consistency and its attitude vis-a-vis a rapidly changing world threatening to absorb it. This feat is complicated by the existence of two influential factions: a *progressive* that seeks to adapt the community to its unstable environment, and a *conservative* that regards any alteration as a direct threat to its ontological framework. Speaking with Meerten and Berend ter Borg, both try to avoid *anomy* by fortifying the shared reformatoric worldview. But their strategies diverge. These groups are ad hoc coalitions: a minister might be progressive on the position of women within SGP yet conservative with regard to the *Herziene Statenvertaling*. Their alignment with denominational membership, while valid

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[200] "Het kan … nooit goed gaan met onze standpunten als we die niet voortdurend Bijbels ijken en herbronnen. Bij een te grote voorzichtigheid verliezen partijleden steeds meer de verbondenheid aan de aloude principes", M. van Reenen, 'Eenheid SGP mag niet ten koste gaan van Bijbelse orde', *Reformatorisch Dagblad*,

to a certain extent, is therefore not seamless: Old Reformed Churches in the Netherlands' rev. A. Kort might well be the *Herziene Statenvertaling*'s most fervent opponent, while Old Reformed Churches in the Netherlands' SGP political leader, Kees van der Staaij, supports Paula Schot's candidacy for SGP.

6.1 Maintenance mechanisms

Meerten and Berend ter Borg's *maintenance mechanisms* provide an excellent tool in the analysis of the ways in which these two groups seek to conserve their shared ontological framework. The specific maintenance mechanism employed depends on the location and nature of the *disturbance* that prompts their activation. A disturbance located *outside* the community, often in larger societal trends over which the community has no influence, could be called a *primary* disturbance. This is the case for the de-reading, equality movement, and individualism discerned across Dutch society. A *secondary* disturbance is a disturbance detected in the maintenance mechanisms activated by a particular group *within* the community. These include the publication of the *Herziene Statenvertaling* in response to the primary disturbance of de-reading and Schot's candidacy in response to the increasing salience of gender equality. The *location* of the disturbance appears to be related to the *nature* of the disturbance as interpreted by the community. Primary disturbances tend to be interpreted as being of a *practical* nature. The SGP's threatened party disbandment is an example. The influence of secular thought is another. Secondary disturbances, because they derive from within the community itself, tend to be regarded as *theological* in nature. They are interpreted as demonstrating an incorrect or incomplete understanding of the theological tenets underlying the reformatoric community. This divide is clearly demonstrated by the difference between progressive and conservative ad hoc coalitions. Progressives tend to identify practical primary disturbances. Conservatives, on the other hand, respond to progressive maintenance mechanisms by identifying secondary theological disturbances. The case of the Day of Penance issued by the Reformed Congregations, a centrist-conservative denomination, demonstrates that conservatives may also identify primary disturbances. This case suggests that, if a given group takes the first step in identifying a primary disturbance, this group is also more likely to integrate the disturbance within its worldview.

Location and nature of identified disturbances determine the maintenance mechanisms employed by the respective sub-group. In general, progressives tend to use *integration* mechanisms to

practically include a given primary disturbance within their ontological framework. The existence of the disturbance is thus *acknowledged*, upon which a practice (*manifestation*) or repeated series of practices (*routinisation*), the demarcation of the disturbance through *inclusion*, and the acknowledgment of the *validity* of the disturbance (*correction*) are activated. The disturbance may be assigned a specific space within which it holds validity (*compartmentalisation*) and *relativised* by similarly relativising the absolute nature of the initially held worldview. Conservatives are more likely to employ *defence* mechanisms in response to secondary disturbances created by their progressive counterparts. Unlike integration mechanisms, these are often *theologically* motivated. They may fail to *acknowledge*, or *negate* and eventually *taboo*, the primary disturbance. They may also seek to place the disturbance completely outside their community by employing the world-church dichotomy (*escapism*), *nihilate* the disturbance's validity through the application of labels suggesting heresy, assign the disturbance a location with a specific group – youth, in the case of the *Herziene Statenvertaling* – *scapegoated* for causing the disturbance, regard the disturbance as the result of divine intervention in space assignment requiring human counter-action (*judgment and expulsion*), and employ a *fundamentalist* approach to truth claims. Based on the limited number of three cases, no statement can be made on which of these mechanisms is most often used by either faction. Moreover, given the inconsistency of ontological frameworks, communities tend to invoke a bricolage of maintenance mechanisms to respond to a variety of disturbances. The cases of the *Herziene Statenvertaling* and Schot's candidacy however show that the *shared element* of opposing integration and defence mechanisms may be concluded to underlie their activation by either faction in a dialogue of mechanisms. In many cases, a maintenance mechanism activated by one faction is countered by the other faction using the *opposing equivalent* mechanism.

But this is not the full story. In some cases, conservatives may cross over to using integration strategies and progressives may make use of defence mechanisms. This is in particular the case in two situations. *Conservatives*, for instance with regard to women's political participation, may *compartmentalise* by including secular or progressive discourse. And in each of the above cases, *progressives* activate *fundamentalist* discourse to maintain the connection with conservatives. In each case, this use of cross-over mechanisms is not a direct response to the disturbance at hand. They are, instead, mechanisms intended to fortify the appeal of one's dominant maintenance mechanism (often correction or nihilation) by reference to the argumentation of the opposing party. *Fundamentalism* is of

particular interest. Its twofold use, as referring both to bible and tradition, by each of the parties involved in each of the above cases indicates its central role within the community. This should not be surprising. The fundament *is* the community's ontological framework. That is why progressives, too, seek to maintain it. Discussions on the exact content of the fundament, such as whether or not the bible indicates that women cannot hold public office, are therefore dangerous. Because both progressives and conservatives assume an uncompromising stance deeply rooted within their fundamental worldview, any compromise on such an issue would be a compromise on the worldview itself. This would destabilise the ontological framework and, eventually, might result in the anomy the community attempted to avoid.

Three observations can be made with regard to maintenance mechanism's contextual occurrence. In the first place, conservative groups, which predominantly using defence mechanisms, always pursue the clear identification of an at least partly *external* cause. In the case of the *Herziene Statenvertaling*, this led to the *nihilation* of *HSV* revisors and the *scapegoating* of young people that found the *Statenvertaling* hard to understand. For the Day of Penance, this was the imposition of divine *judgment*. And for Schot, it was the *theodicy* of divine intervention and the *nihilation* of Enlightenment-inspired equality movements. In the second place, the implementation of *integration* in all three cases requires a threefold basis of mechanisms: the *correction* of a given disturbance, and this correction's subsequent *manifestation* and *routinisation* to facilitate its presentation and institutionalisation within the community's framework. This is visible in the case of the *HSV*'s introduction, in the case of proposed changes to the Reformed Congregations, and in the case of female candidacy for SGP. Whereas other integration mechanisms seem ancillary, these three are crucial to the proper integration of a given disturbance. Again, this demonstrates that integration mechanisms' primary requirement is *practical action* while that of defence mechanisms is *theological understanding*. Finally, *fundamentalism* is inevitably related to one of two types of divine intervention. This can be *direct* if the community interprets social occurrences, natural disasters, or political developments as either *judgment* or *theodicy*. Or it can be *indirect* if the community interprets scripture and the Three Forms of Unity in a particular way that supports their argument.

The defence mechanism of *judgment* plays a special role. A mechanism that I introduced in the first chapter as the defensive counterpart of *theodicy*, judgment is used to assign a disturbance space by invoking the notion of divine intervention. Unlike theodicy, which is the integration of a god-willed

disturbance, judgment requires the human action of *expulsion* to fend off the disturbance. Its use was particularly visible in the case of the Reformed Congregations' lead-up to the Day of Penance. I consider judgment and expulsion to serve three purposes. The affirmation of direct divine intervention in the life of the community strengthens its self-perception as the chosen people of God. This further strengthens their worldview, within which God plays an active role in adjudicating earthly affairs. And by formulating a common threat and a common response, the consequently required integrative action – acknowledgement through penance (*manifestation*), continuous prayer (*routinisation*), and changes to the church (*correction*) – strengthens group cohesion. *Judgment* thus inevitably results in attempts to expulse the disturbance and purify the community.

6.2 New light shed on the broader research field

Meerten and Berend ter Borg's maintenance mechanisms, in my adapted version that includes a differentiation between disturbances, an identification of shared elements, and the addition of *judgment and expulsion*, is of great value to understanding the means through which communities seek to cope with change. Surprisingly, aside from Meerten ter Borg's publications, no scholar of religion has ever applied these maintenance mechanisms to any religious group or organisation. Even Ter Borg's own monographs did not constitute research, but rather were exposés of a suggested theoretical model.

In the above case studies, I provided three contributions to Meerten and Berend ter Borg's model. In the first place, I suggested the significance of disturbances. I argued that the location and nature of disturbances influences the type of maintenance mechanisms chosen. I regard primary disturbances as generally practical in nature, whereas secondary disturbances are likely to be interpreted as theologically threatening. In the second place, I enhanced the structure of maintenance mechanisms. I made Meerten and Berend ter Borg's implicit claim that each integration mechanism has a defensive counterpart explicit, I identified shared elements between these mechanisms, and I argued that, from manifestation to relativising and from negation to fundamentalism, they increase in terms of mental effort required to carry them out. And in the third place, I identified the missing maintenance mechanism of *judgment* as *theodicy*'s defensive counterpart, differentiating between them on the basis of the practical effort they demand in response.

Following this analysis, the model may be applied to a plethora of religious groups. These do not need to be moving toward the stage of assimilation. Muslim groups in the Netherlands, arguably in the process of constructing their own pillar, may be similarly analysed. But so can the negotiation of Hinduism in India, the Salafi strife for theological purity, or the motivations of Buddhist extremists in Myanmar. Its analytical power is not limited to religious groups, however. With a few alterations – *theodicy* and *judgment* might prove less relevant in non-religious contexts – its usefulness extends to far-right movements, anarchists, and even free-market capitalists. All that is needed is a clearly identifiable social group with a shared ontological framework and, preferably, an ongoing discourse continuously reconstituting this framework's maintenance. That includes business, political, and social organisations. It is especially useful to analyse the pattern of directional struggles within these organisations. Once such patterns have been analysed, either of these parties may seek to find common ground based on this new strategic knowledge.

Establishing the *effect* of the above-described maintenance mechanisms on the reformatoric community is beyond the scope of this study. It must be noted, however, that both progressives and conservatives seek to preserve what they regard as the community's shared Calvinist and traditionalist ontological framework. But the differences in their approaches may indicate something more: a disagreement on the framework's *nature*. If theological understandings of bible interpretation and the importance of tradition differ too greatly, the community may not be able to maintain its relative consistency. To some extent, further pillarising fragmentation has already taken place. The Reformed Congregations in the Netherlands, one of the community's most conservative denominations, has its own churches, schools, and publications, and a stricter version of the *tale Kanaäns*. If disagreement on its fundamental ontological framework persists, as it now seems it will, denominations like these may seek to break with the wider community.

Such observations are in line with the three-generation model of pillar development proposed in paragraph 1.2. First constructed in the late-1960s and early-1970s, the reformatoric pillar has undergone a period of *establishment and consolidation* during the first generation (25 years) since approximately 1965. For the following generation, it *rigidised* into an immobile pillar with unquestionable truths. Since the mid-2010s, part of the pillar started on the road to *assimilation*. If this process continues, the pillar will disappear in its current by approximately 2040. But its basic tenets will survive. In conjunctural fashion, one or multiple conservative groups might branch off and survive

on their own merit in a way similar to the emergence of the *reformatoric* pillar from the then-assimilating *reformed* pillar in the 1960s. In fact, that is what the Reformed Congregations in the Netherlands may have already begun doing.

New research may therefore focus on three types of studies. Longitudinal studies of the reformatoric community are needed to trace its current development. If the analysis that the community has moved to the *assimilation* stage is correct, closely following the way in which the pillar unravels, its internal changes, and the emergence of a new orthodox community from its ashes will shed light on general pillar development. In addition, the wider application of the model to a variety of communities, whether religious or otherwise sharing an ontological framework, will elucidate not only the community itself. More importantly, it will test the model's generalisability and calibrate its still-unpolished prototype. Finally, further studies must seek to identify and analyse the conditions in which specific maintenance mechanisms are invoked. What prompts a social community to choose escapism over nihilation? Or why does a religious group choose to routinise a disturbance rather than taboo it? While tentative answers may be found in this study, only its repeated multiplication among widely divergent groups can lead to the systematisation of the invocation of maintenance mechanisms.

6.3 Concluding remarks

This study is not the new overarching study of the reformatoric community's development that Van Lieburg had in mind when he called for fundamental research helping us "understand and explain the contradictory experience of these compromisers between orthodoxy and modernity".[201] Such a scope is too ambitious given spatial constraints and the limited generalisability of the three case studies. But this study did seek to shed some light on this compromise between orthodoxy and modernity. It identified the orthodox and modernist parties involved, it demonstrated the challenges they identified, and it showed the maintenance mechanisms they employed to maintain the community. Sometimes, even that is too ambitious. In a private conversation with the author, SGP party leader Kees van der Staaij admitted that maintaining the pillar's structural integrity was not one of his primary objectives. Provided current developments continued unabated, he even ventured so far as to concede that a merger between SGP and centre-left Christian Union would be a realistic future

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[201] Van Lieburg, 'De stille refolutie', p. 44.

possibility.[202] And so, the community might again assimilate with the reformed pillar from which they

consciously decoupled half a century ago.

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[202] Kees van der Staaij in discussion with the author, 12 March 2018.

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