

Johann Heinrich Hummel, the Peningtons and the London godly community: Anglo-Swiss networks 1634–1674

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Like those of other leading seventeenth-century ministers, the death of Johann Heinrich Hummel (c.1611–1674), dean of Bern, was marked by publication of a collection of pious tributes from friends and colleagues, designed to celebrate the reputation of the deceased and to edify the faithful.¹ To a funeral oration delivered by Johann Heinrich Ott (1617–1682), at that date professor at the Académie de Lausanne, were added *Epicedia* contributed by 32 other scholars and ministers from across Protestant Switzerland, including several who had recently collaborated on the revision of the Zürich Bible.² The oration itself reveals a much wider circle of learned men whom Hummel had encountered during his life, many of them familiar names in the intellectual world of early modern Europe: among others, Henry Alting (1583–1644), Victorinus Bythner (c.1605–c.1670), John Durie (1596–1680), and Friedrich Spanheim (1600–1649).³ Yet in speaking of those whom Hummel had met on a youthful visit to England, Ott diverged from his catalogue of distinguished contacts to mention – in addition to London ministers Thomas Gataker (1574–1654, the high-profile vicar of Rotherhithe), and Jeremy Leech (1580–1644, the less well-known rector of St Mary le Bow) – two lay-people, with no visible pretensions to scholarship. The inclusion in the narrative of “*Danieli Poeningtono, mercatori praediviti et pio*”, and his wife “*Elizabetha Risbi*” arises from their generous sponsorship of a young student, acknowledged both here and in Hummel’s own account of his life, but the full nature and the long-lasting significance of this contact does not

¹ I should like to express my gratitude to Jan van de Kamp and to the anonymous reader of the draft of this article for their most helpful and constructive comments and suggestions, and in particular for the additional contextual references which they supplied.

² Bern, Staatsarchiv, B III.63, *Oratio Funebris Reverendi et Clarissimi Viri D. Joh. Henrici Humelii*, Bern, Georg Sonnleitner, 1675; James Townley, *Illustrations of Biblical Literature*, New York 1842, vol. 2, 492–3.

³ *Oratio Funebris*, 18, 22–3.

emerge from either text, and has hitherto gone unremarked.⁴ When investigated it offers not only an unusual perspective on pious networks in Charles I's London, but also an unexpected sidelight on longer-term Anglo-Swiss relations and a modification to the chronology of pietism in Switzerland.

The participation of English clergymen and scholars of the seventeenth century in European-wide networks of correspondence, their contact with visitors from the European continent and their own travels are all now much more widely recognised than they were fifty years ago.⁵ So too is the dissemination of their published works through Protestant countries abroad, and in particular the impact that made on the development of pietism.⁶ Thanks above all to major digital projects,

⁴ *Oratio Funebris*, 18–21; C. Erni (ed.), 'Histori des Lebens Johannis Henrici Hummellii', in: *Berner Zeitschrift für Geschichte und Heimatkunde*, 12 (1950), 24–57.

⁵ E.g. L. Forster (ed.), *A Calendar of the Correspondence of J. H. Ott 1658–1671*, Huguenot Society Quarto ser. 47 1961; Ole Peter Grell, *Dutch Calvinists in early Stuart London. The Dutch Church in Austin Friars 1603–1642*, Leiden 1989; Willem op 't Hof, 'De internationale invloed van het puritanisme', in: W. van 't Spijker et al., *Het puritanisme: Geschiedenis, theologie en invloed*, Zoetermeer 2001, 273–339; Anthony Milton, *Catholic and Reformed. The Roman and Protestant Churches in English Protestant Thought, 1600–1640*, Cambridge 2002 and 'Puritanism and the continental Reformed churches', in: John Coffey and Paul C.H. Lim (eds.) *Cambridge Companion to Puritanism*, Cambridge 2008, 109–26; Jan Loop, 'Johann Heinrich Hottinger (1620–1667) and the "Historia Orientalis"', in: *Church History and Religious Culture* 88 (2008), 169–203; P.-O. Léchet, *Un christianisme 'sans partialité'. Irénisme et méthodes chez John Dury (v.1600–1680)*, Paris 2011; Jan van de Kamp, 'Ein frühes reformiert-pietistisches Netzwerk in der Kurpfalz in der ersten Hälfte des 17. Jahrhunderts', in: *Archiv für Reformationsgeschichte*, 103 (2012), 238–265. See also clergy and scholars in *Oxford Dictionary of National Biography* at <http://www.oxforddnb.com>; searches for 'education' and 'residence' in specified European countries, e.g. between '1600' and '1675', yield many results. All digital publications referred to in this article have been accessed between June and September 2016

⁶ E.g. M. E. Welti, *Der Basler Buchdruck und Britannien. Die Rezeption britischen Gedankenguts in den Basler Pressen von den Anfängen bis zum Beginn des 17. Jahrhunderts*, Basel 1964, 245–69; R. Dellsperger, *Die Anfänge des Pietismus in Bern. Quellenstudien*, Göttingen 1984, 24, 35–6; Edgar C. McKenzie, *A catalog of British devotional and religious books in German translation from the Reformation to 1750*, Berlin 1997; U. Sträter, 'Die Schweiz als Umschlagplatz englischer Erbauungsliteratur', in: *Schweizer Kirchengeschichte - neu reflektiert. Festschrift für Rudolf Dellsperger zum 65. Geburtstag*, Bern 2010, 211–224; Milton, 'Puritanism and the continental Reformed churches', 117–8; Jan van de Kamp, 'Die Einführung der christlichen Disziplinierung des Alltags in die deutsche evangelische Erbauungsliteratur durch Lewis Baylys *Praxis Pietatis*

the sources for such intellectual and religious exchange are becoming more easily accessible to international study.⁷ This journal too has explored the implications of international interaction, tracing a web of connections beyond London to the English provinces.⁸

Tracing careers across political and linguistic boundaries still has its challenges, however.⁹ Furthermore, certain lines of communication have been relatively neglected: while Anglo-German and (especially) Anglo-Dutch pathways are relatively well-trodden, Anglo-Swiss relations – whether religious, political, commercial or cultural – have been somewhat overlooked, particularly in England, and above all with regard to the seventeenth century. This is despite the place of Protestant city-states like Zürich and Basel in the sixteenth century English Reformation and an acknowledged engagement by English literary figures with Switzerland in the eighteenth and early nineteenth centuries.¹⁰ What we have thus far is a series of scattered references which have not been aggregated.¹¹ In 1599 medical student Thomas Platter of Basel stayed in London and noted in his diary performances of plays by Shakespeare.¹² In 1640 Johann Heinrich Ott of Zürich (previously mentioned) visited

(1628)', in: *Pietismus und Neuzeit*, 37 (2011), 11–19; Willem J. op 't Hof, 'Puritan Emotions in Seventeenth-Century Dutch Piety', in: Alec Ryrie and Tom Schwanda (eds.), *Puritanism and Emotion in the Early Modern World*, Basingstoke 2016, 213–40.

⁷ E.g. via the Hartlib project at the University of Sheffield, <http://www.hrionline.ac.uk/hartlib/context> (accessed 29 February 2016); and Early Modern Letters Online, part of the University of Oxford Cultures of Knowledge project, <http://emlo.bodleian.ox.ac.uk/home> (accessed 29 February 2016).

⁸ W. J. op 't Hof, 'The eventful sojourn of Willem Teelinck (1579–1629) at Banbury in 1605', in: *Journal for the History of Reformed Pietism*, 1.1 (2015), 5–34.

⁹ Vivienne Larminie, 'Biographical Projects and the Reconstruction of Cross-Channel Lives. Progress and Challenges', in: Karine Bigand (ed.), *Transferts et interactions entre la France et les îles britanniques, 1640–1660*, <http://erevues.org/3703> (July 2014).

¹⁰ See e.g. Diarmaid MacCulloch, 'Heinrich Bullinger and the English-Speaking World', in: Emidio Campi (ed.), *Heinrich Bullinger (1505–1575). Leben, Denken, Wirkung*, 2 vols., Zwingliana 32, Zürich 2005, vol. 1, 891–934. For the later period, see e.g. E. Giddey, *L'Angleterre dans la Vie Intellectuelle de la Suisse Romande au XVIIIe Siècle*, Bibliothèque Historique Vaudoise [BHV] 51, Lausanne 1974; Pierre Morren, *La vie lausannoise au dix-huitième siècle*, Geneva 1970. For an attempt to repair the gap: Joy Charnley and Malcolm Pender (eds.), *Exercises in Translation. Swiss-British Cultural Interchange*, Bern 2006.

¹¹ A search of <http://www.oxforddnb.com> via 'resident' between '1520' and '1660' in 'Zurich' or 'Basel' yields examples.

¹² 'Thomas Platter', <http://www.oxforddnb.com>.

England with his friend and fellow scholar Johann Heinrich Hottinger (1620–1667) – as an evidently natural progression from university in the Netherlands.¹³ Education in England in the 1630s underpinned the negotiation by Baron Johann Jakob Stokar of Schaffhausen of peace between Britain and the Netherlands in 1653-4.¹⁴ Jean-Baptiste Stoupe from the Grisons was elected pastor of the French church in Threadneedle Street in 1652.¹⁵ Johann Zollikofer of St Gallen visited England in the 1650s, befriended Oxford academic and Independent minister John Owen, and subsequently translated works by English puritans like Joseph Hall¹⁶ After the Restoration Guy Miede of Lausanne became a language teacher and Whig pamphleteer, while Huguenot refugee networks oiled and accelerated lines of communication between Britain and the Confederation.¹⁷

Cumulatively, this suggests that for Protestant Swiss, just as for their co-religionists from France, Geneva, the Netherlands and Germany, England was a recognised destination for those seeking enlightenment and employment. It indicates that an attraction operated notwithstanding – as we shall see – the apparent reservations of some with regard to the Reformed credentials of a state that maintained an episcopal hierarchy and to a royal court containing Catholics and crypto-Catholics. The experience of Hummel, who left an autobiography to set alongside Ott's oration, reveals how links were forged. The correspondence addressed to

¹³ Forster (ed.), *Correspondence of J. H. Ott*, ix.

¹⁴ 'Johann Jakob Stokar', *Historisches Lexikon der Schweiz*, <http://www.hls-dhs-dss.ch/d/>; J. Dierauer, *Histoire de la Confédération Suisse*, A. Reymond (trans.), vol. 4, Lausanne 1929, 73–5; T. Ischer, 'Die Gesandtschaft der protestantischen Schweiz bei Cromwell und den Generalstaaten der Niederland 1652-54', in: *Archiv des Historisches Vereins des Kantons Bern*, 23 (1916), 18 seq. See also: K Stehlin, 'Ueber die diplomatischen Verbindungen Englands mit der Schweiz im 16. und 17. Jahrhundert dans Basler Beiträge zur vaterland', in: *Geschichte*, 7 (1860), 45-104.

¹⁵ 'Jean-Baptiste Stoupe', <http://www.oxforddnb.com>.

¹⁶ National Archives, Kew [TNA], SP18/105, f. 136; SP18/111, f. 61; SP18/99, f. 204; 'John Owen', 'William Pemble', <http://www.oxforddnb.com>; https://www.historicum.net/themen/hexenforschung/lexikon/alphabetisch/p-z/art/Zollikofer_Joh/html/artikel/5737/ca/9deb90e7a38e082f1198fd1de2d20624/ (accessed 4 March 2016).

¹⁷ 'Guy Miede', <http://www.oxforddnb.com>; Vivienne Larminie, 'Exile, integration and European perspectives. Huguenots in the Pays de Vaud', in: D.J.B. Trim (ed.), *The Huguenots. History and Memory in Transnational Context*, Leiden 2011; 'England', <http://www.hls-dhs-dss.ch/d/>.

him once he had returned to Switzerland demonstrates how long and how far they endured, and how significant they became.

Hummel was born in 1611 in Brugg, now in canton Aargau, then a subject territory of Bern.¹⁸ According to his own account, when aged about 20 he went to finish his education at the University of Gronigen; formally admitted in June 1633, he spent nearly two years there as a pupil of Henry Alting and encountered Victorinus Bythner.¹⁹ Although his funds from the Anglo-Genevan banking family of Calandrini were running low, he moved on to England, arriving in London with physician Dr Heinrich Lavater.²⁰ There he initially got lodgings with a table-maker (ein Tischmacher) from Winterthur in Canton Zürich, who introduced him to “a large number of men with whom he worked”, including (on 28 August 1634) Wilhelm Thilenus, pastor of the Dutch church in Austin Friars. The latter, having “looked through my testimonies and books”, recommended him to biblical scholar Jeremy (sometimes Jeremiah) Leech, who in turn introduced him to Francis Taylor (c.1590–1656), vicar of Clapham, Surrey. He lodged with the latter for nine months, during which time he made the acquaintance of Thomas Gataker.²¹

¹⁸ Erni (ed.), ‘Histori des Lebens’, 26; ‘Johann Heinrich Hummel’, <http://www.hls-dhs-dss.ch/d/>. I am grateful to my daughter Elizabeth Larminie for assistance in translating Hummel’s autobiography.

¹⁹ Erni (ed.), ‘Histori des Lebens’, 32; Historisch Genootschap Groningen, *Album Studiosorum Academiae Groninganae*, Groningen 1915, 28. Alting had himself visited England: Van de Kamp, ‘Ein frühes reformiert-pietistisches Netzwerk’, 187.

²⁰ Erni (ed.), ‘Histori des Lebens’, 32. His visit coincided with a spike in international interest in English piety: 1633 saw the petition from German scholars (encouraged by John Durie) for translations of English devotional literature; in 1634–5 there were visits from Palatinate scholars Peter Streithagen and Johannes Rulcius (previously a minister in Dorset). See Van de Kamp, ‘Ein frühes reformiert-pietistisches Netzwerk’, 192, 201–3.

²¹ Erni (ed.), ‘Histori des Lebens’, 32. Thilenus: Grell, *Dutch Calvinists*, 57–8; ‘Thomas Gataker’, <http://www.oxforddnb.com>. The ‘table-maker’ was probably the same man as “your Countriman the Joyner”, named ‘John’ and later married to ‘Tabitha’ mentioned in correspondence: Bern, Staatsarchiv, B III.56, ff. 1, 1v. Conceivably this couple were the John ‘Evanson’ and Tabitha Whitlocke married on 27 December 1637 (parish register of Holy Trinity, Clapham via <http://www.ancestry.com>); the burial of Tabitha ‘Robenson’, wife of John, on 10 September 1639 (parish register of St Benet Sherehog, London) accords with the death date reported by Daniel Penington in his letter to Hummel (10 October 1639). Alternatively, Hans Ulrich, joiner of Bevis Marks, London, and a member of the Dutch church, Austin Friars, made a will in 1654 which referred to his kin in Switzerland: TNA PROB11/237/338.

That Hummel should come within the orbit of Gataker is not surprising. Thilenus was one of a sizeable number of foreigners who had benefited from the hospitality of the vicar of Rotherhithe.²² Gataker himself revealed that he had enlarged his house there in order to accommodate not only “mine assistant and scribe, and a student or two” preparing for ordination, but also “Strangers, that from forain parts came over, to learn our Language and observe our Method of Teaching”. He was “seldom without some, and might have had more, had my House been more capacious”.²³ That Hummel was not accommodated there is doubtless testament to Gataker’s success, but it also highlights the similar, hitherto unnoticed, role of Leech and Taylor in the provision of household ‘seminary’ education – a phenomenon that had passed its heyday and of which Gataker had seemed the last practitioner.²⁴

Leech, a native of St Pancras, Soper Lane, London, and a graduate of Christ’s College, Cambridge, had been chaplain to the notably pious Thomas Knyvett, 1st Baron Knyvett (*d.* 1622), before becoming in 1617 rector of St Mary le Bow, at the heart of the City in Cheapside.²⁵ Despite a printed sermon of 1644 (on Romans chapter 8, verse 31: “If God be for us, who can be against us?”) and mentions of him as a published classical scholar in works by others, little is known of him.²⁶ Ott and Hummel refer to him as Dr Leech, but if he did hold this degree, it was not from Oxford or Cambridge, raising the possibility that he had studied abroad.²⁷ Leech’s subsequent ministry can only be glimpsed from stray references, such as the legacies he received under the wills of some parishioners; the mention

²² Samuel Clarke, *A Collection of the Lives of Ten Eminent Divines*, London, William Miller, 1662, 146.

²³ Thomas Gataker, *A Discourse Apologetical*, 2nd ed., London, R. Ibbetson for Thomas Newberry, 1654, 50–1 (E.731.1).

²⁴ Willem op ’t Hof, ‘Learned at Household Seminaries’.

²⁵ <http://venn.lib.cam.ac.uk/acad/2016/search-2016.html>; ‘Thomas Knyvett, Baron Knyvett’, <http://www.oxforddnb.com>; <http://www.historyofparliamentonline.org/volume/1604-1629/member/knyvett-sir-thomas-1545-1622>.

²⁶ Jeremiah Leech, *St Pauls challenge*, London, Thomas Paine for Francis Eglesfield, 1644 (E.49.25); John Spencer, *Kaina kai palaia Things new and old*, London, W. Wilson and J. Streater for John Spencer, 1658, 5.

²⁷ Erni (ed.), ‘Histori des Lebens’, 32; *Oratio Funerbris*, 18.

also in these sources of the church's lecturer and reader hint at the tradition of ample preaching on offer to parishioners since at least 1570.²⁸

Francis Taylor is easier to pin down. Having graduated from Christ's a few years after Leech, he became in 1615 rector of Clapham, Surrey, and remained there until he resigned in 1642; he had also become vicar of Yalding, Kent, three years earlier.²⁹ At some date, probably in the later 1610s, he married one of the stepdaughters of Thomas Gataker, who marked the relationship in his 1654 will with legacies to Taylor, his wife, his son and his daughter.³⁰ In the early 1630s Taylor published lectures delivered to the parishioners of St Magnus the Martyr near London Bridge, the dedication of which testifies to the wealthy community who had listened – among others, Lady Hester Pye (wife of Sir Walter Pye, attorney of court of wards) and her sons from her previous marriage including East India merchant Sir Nicholas Crisp (c.1599–1666) and Tobias Crisp (1600–1643), rector of Newington, Surrey, and their wives.³¹ As he was to reveal in another dedicatory epistle a few years later, Taylor was keen to re-establish the Church of England as the Reformed church he was convinced it had been intended to be at the Reformation. He aspired to “be a sho[e]ing-horne”, inspiring others – and in this particular context, Members of Parliament – to take action “against all new opinions of Arminianisme, Socianianisme, and Popery, which are thought to grow secretly among us, and shew themselves by fits in Preaching and Printing”. He desired to “regaine us a good opinion with other Churches abroad”, recently so compromised, he alleged, that “some” had “forbidden their young Students to come into England, as I have heard from a young man of excellent parts, who adventured to come hither, being sent from Berne

²⁸ TNA, PROB11/157/393 (Christopher Hill), PROB11/185/332 (Elizabeth Thompson), PROB11/187/73 (Anne Trott); Paul S. Seaver, *The Puritan Lectureships*, Stanford 1970, 123, 156.

²⁹ <http://venn.lib.cam.ac.uk/acad/2016/search-2016.html>; A.G. Matthews, *Walker Revised*, Oxford 1948, 53. Four miles south of London Bridge, the parish should have been moderately accessible to visitors on foot or by river.

³⁰ ‘Thomas Gataker’, <http://www.oxforddnb.com>; TNA, PROB11/241/56. Taylor's daughter was by this time married to Sampson Hieron, another Cambridge-educated minister of similar outlook: <http://venn.lib.cam.ac.uk/acad/2016/search-2016.html>.

³¹ Francis Taylor, *Selfe-satisfaction occasionally taught the citizens in the lecture at St. Magnes neere London-bridge*, London, John Norton for Robert Bird, 1633. ‘Sir Nicholas Crisp’, ‘Tobias Crisp’, <http://www.oxforddnb.com>.

into Holland”.³² Whether this young man was Hummel, or a compatriot, is unknown.

Hummel was sufficiently welcomed into the community to be invited to preach at Clapham. In his autobiography he does not say who chose the text, Psalm 10:1 (“Why standest thou afar off, O Lord? why hidest thou thyself in times of trouble?”), or explain its context, but it could stand both for the afflictions the godly perceived themselves to suffer as Archbishop William Laud presided over the church, and for his own difficulties.³³ At first Hummel seems to have had a relatively comfortable existence around London, meeting fellow Bernese Sigmund von Erlach (1614–1699), *who was soon to enter military service with Bernard of Saxe-Weimar, and who eventually became the most important man in Bern*, and Albrecht von Erlach (1614–1652), later a commander in the Swiss guard in France.³⁴ He was also met “other learned men”, including John Durie, and studied with Victorinus Bythner under Samuel Hartlib, although this last contact, revealed in Hartlib’s papers, goes unmentioned in his autobiography.³⁵ Eventually, however, since his “funds were stretched and Mr Taylor’s housekeeping was very expensive”, he decided to return to Groningen. Leaving Clapham with only an unexchangeable foreign coin in his purse, he went to see Leech, who “took me in and enlisted me to writing”. At supper one evening Leech explained Hummel’s situation to “his trusted neighbours” Daniel and Elizabeth Penington, who then gave him a room in their attic, paid for him to visit the universities of Oxford and Cambridge and generally treated him as their son.³⁶

Hummel’s profound gratitude is plain, but what he did not explicitly record is that through his adoptive ‘parents’ he gained closer access to the beating heart of English puritanism, and did so at a time

³² Francis Taylor, *The faith of the Church of England concerning Gods work on mans will*, London, I. L. for Nicholas Bourne, ‘1641’ [1642], ‘Epistle dedicatorie’ to Sir Edward Dering MP.

³³ Erni (ed.), ‘Histori des Lebens’, 35. The Geneva Bible and the Authorised Version of 1611 give almost identical translations of this verse.

³⁴ Erni (ed.), ‘Histori des Lebens’, 34–5.

³⁵ Sheffield, University Library, Hartlib Papers, 4/3/25A. In the early 1630s Durie received public avowals of support from Thomas Gataker and from Josias Shute and William Gouge, mentioned below as being in Hummel’s circle of acquaintance: British Library [BL], Sloane MS 1465, f. 2. (I am grateful to the anonymous reader for this reference.)

³⁶ Erni (ed.), ‘Histori des Lebens’, 33.

when it was experiencing increasing pressure – adherents might call it persecution – from the conformist, ceremonialist and sometimes Arminian ecclesiastical establishment under Archbishop Laud.³⁷ Such external forces were, moreover, provoking or exacerbating tensions within the community over antinomianism and Socinianism.³⁸ Daniel Penington (d.1665) was a prosperous member of the Fishmongers' Company who invested in the East India Company, like his elder brother Isaac Penington (c.1584–1661), the future MP and lord mayor.³⁹ In the 1634 heralds' visitation of London Daniel was recorded as living in the Cordwainer ward of the City; leases and other transactions of the later 1620s and 1630s reveal that he held substantial property in St Mary le Bow and around the Tower of London.⁴⁰ On 14 December 1624 at the staunchly puritan church of St Antholin, Budge Row, London, he married Elizabeth Risby (1604/5–1642/5), whose family was if anything even wealthier and more tightly knitted into the fabric of London godly society than his own.⁴¹ Elizabeth's grandfathers – Richard Risby, a Merchant Taylor, and Francis Bridges (d.1609), a Salter – belonged to London livery companies, as did her father William Risby (d.1625), a Draper.⁴² William's will, apart from providing amply for his family, left about £1,000 in

³⁷ The literature on early seventeenth-century English puritanism is vast, but among works which might be cited as a context for what follows are: J. Davies, *The Caroline Captivity of the Church, Charles I and the Remoulding of Anglicanism 1625–1641*, Oxford 1992; Tom Webster, *Godly Clergy in Early Stuart England: the Caroline Puritan Movement, c.1620–1643*, Cambridge 1997 and 'Piety of practice and practice of piety', in: Frank Bremer and Lynn A. Botelho (eds.), *The Worlds of John Winthrop. Essays on England and New England, 1588–1649*, Boston 2006; John Spurr, *English Puritanism*, Basingstoke 1998; Christopher Durston and Jacqueline Eales (eds.), *The Culture of English Puritanism 1560–1700*, Basingstoke 1996.

³⁸ E.g. see John Coffey, *John Goodwin and the Puritan Revolution*, Woodbridge 2006, 54–61.

³⁹ W.P. Haskett-Smith (ed.), *The Worshipful Company of Fishmongers of the City of London. Lists of Apprentices and Freeman*, London 1916, 33; W.N. Sainsbury (ed.), *Calendar of State Papers Colonial. East Indies, China and Japan, 1622–1624*, London 1878, 88–93, 477–93; J. Bruce (ed.), *Calendar of State Papers Domestic, 1636–1637*, London 1867, 306–26.

⁴⁰ J.J. Howard and J.L. Chester (eds.), *Visitation of London 1633–1634*, Harleian Society, 15, 1880, 152; D.J. Keene and V. Harding (eds.), *Historical Gazetteer of London before the Great Fire*, 389–96 (<http://www.britishhistoryonline>, accessed June 2013); *Calendar of State Papers Domestic, 1636–1637*, 313.

⁴¹ Parish register of St Antholin, Budge Row, <http://www.ancestry.com>.

⁴² 'Elizabeth Penington', <http://www.oxforddnb.com>.

charitable benefactions, divided among nine prisons, four hospitals, four London parishes (including St Mary le Bow and St Antholin), destitute artisans, and a range of ministers, preachers and parish officials. Among the beneficiaries were Richard Stock (1568/9–1626), rector of Risby's native parish of All Hallows' Bread Street, and Francis Taylor and his children, the last "for that their grandfather Mr Cooper sometime preacher of God's Word was the first man by whom my spirit was illuminated, and [I] received comfort at and by his preaching of the Word".⁴³

It was probably through Elizabeth's maternal relatives that the couple also leased a residence at Clapham and were woven closer into the web of connection around its rector.⁴⁴ The lord of the manor was Sir Henry Atkyns (d.1638), who left £10 to "my loving friend Mr Taylor" in his 1638 will.⁴⁵ His brother was Edward Atkyns (1587–1669) of Lincoln's Inn, defence counsel in two of the iconic religiously-driven prosecutions of the Charles I's personal rule, those of puritan pamphleteer William Prynne (1600–1669) in 1633 and of the feoffees for impropriations (in 1632–3), who, until they were suppressed, sought to buy up church livings and place in them 'godly' preaching ministers.⁴⁶ Another prominent parishioner was Elizabeth Penington's uncle Francis Bridges (d.1642), who like their kinsman Charles Ofspring (1586–1660), rector of St Antholin, and Richard Stock, was among the feoffees. That the demise of that group in no way dented Bridges' ardour for promoting godliness is demonstrated by his will of May 1642. In addition to extensive charitable provision around London and legacies of £50 to Taylor and £3 to Ofspring, Bridges mentioned numerous other clergy and left to four New England ministers (including Hugh Peter, 1598–1660, also formerly associated with the

⁴³ TNA, PROB11/147/605. 'Mr Cooper' was presumably William Cooper, first husband of Thomas Gataker's first wife, and thus father of Gataker's stepdaughters: 'Thomas Gataker', <http://www.oxforddnb.com>.

⁴⁴ Elizabeth Penington told Hummel on 21 February 1637/8: "we are now upon remove to London your father hath sould the lease of his house in Clapha[m], and at Christ tide the house cometh into his hands the next doore to that which we formerly lived in". As he knew, "I love not these changes" for "I did tell you I knew I should not be settled in Clapham, but my comfort is I shall one day have a restinge place, for which time I will waite": Bern, Staatsarchiv, B III.63.55, f. 6.

⁴⁵ TNA, PROB11/177/510.

⁴⁶ 'Edward Atkyns', and 'Feoffees for Impropriations' (Reference group), <http://www.oxforddnb.com>.

feoffees) £50 “towards the enlargement of a college in New England for students there” and £20 to clothe the poor.⁴⁷

It is understandable that, having experienced the hospitality of this community, Hummel felt tempted to stay in England. The Peningtons’ welcome extended, he remembered, to their offering to marry him to their daughter, specified as Elizabeth.⁴⁸ The gesture was almost certainly symbolic, and Hummel may have misremembered the detail: in the 1633 visitation the couple’s eldest surviving daughter was Mary, who had been baptised at St Mary le Bow only in April 1629, while their daughter Elizabeth was even younger.⁴⁹ None the less, the gesture was powerful and sustained. After Hummel had returned home in the spring of 1636, the Peningtons maintained a correspondence with their ‘son’, thereby cementing him into their community.

In the context of the haphazard communications characteristic of early modern Europe, it appears that not all of the letters directed by the Peningtons to Bern survive. Hummel preserved five from Daniel (dated between March 1636/7 and March 1649/50) and effectively eight from Elizabeth (dateable between 31 May 1637 and 4 September 1640); Elizabeth also countersigned her husband’s letter of 21 February 1641/2. Internal evidence, references in other letters, and sometimes Hummel’s endorsements of the date of receipt and/or acknowledgement more or less supply missing dates, and thus enable the historian to disentangle the confusing order in which the documents have been bound.⁵⁰ Not all the “epistles” the Peningtons assumed had “miscaried” in transit actually did so, but quite clearly some did, adding to the insecurity of maintaining a

⁴⁷ TNA, PROB11/189/406. Bridges also left £50 to his niece Elizabeth Penington.

⁴⁸ ‘Histori des Lebens’, 34.

⁴⁹ St Mary le Bow parish register, <http://www.ancestry.com>. They had had at least one previous child, Elizabeth, baptised on 5 July 1627 and buried on 20 December 1628. A daughter Judith, baptised on 26 September 1630, was also dead by the date of the 1633 visitation; that source additionally recorded another Elizabeth (baptised at St Mary le Bow, 2 February 1632) and Sarah: Howard and Chester (eds.), *Visitation of London 1633, 1634 and 1635*, 152.

⁵⁰ Bern, Staatsarchiv, B III. 63.49, 54, 56, 58, 79 (2 March 1636/7, 31 May 1637, 10 October 1639, 21 February 1641/2 and 1 March 1649/50); B III. 63.55, ff. 3–4v ([31 May 1637]), 1–2v ([summer] 1637); 63.53 (21 February 1637/8); 63.55, ff. 5–6 (18 July [1638]); 63.57, ff. 1–2 (after 4 December 1638 but ‘long’ before 23 April 1639); 63.57, f. 2 (23 April 1639, a postscript to the previous letter, which is described as a copy); 63.57, ff. 2–2v (4 September 1640, revealing both the preceding as copies).

relationship at such a distance.⁵¹ For example, in his first extant message to his “most deere & loving son” (2 March 1636/7), Daniel mentioned a letter sent by Hummel on 14 August 1636, soon after his return to Switzerland, which had arrived in Clapham on 13 December and been answered on 23 December; this has vanished.⁵² By the winter of 1638–1639 Elizabeth had sent so “many large espistells and could receive no answere, insomuch that I was weary of keeping ether the date or the coppie of them”, although she was reassured to discover from a recent letter to her husband that the loss was not as extensive as she had feared.⁵³

The agents employed to transmit and deliver the correspondence serve to illuminate the circles in which both Hummel and the Peningtons moved. In his letter of 2 March 1637 Daniel mentioned in passing his house guest that day, “your Countriman Mr Albertus Rutimeier”.⁵⁴ According to Daniel’s second extant letter of 31 May 1637, this man had been given its predecessor to take home to Hummel.⁵⁵ He must have been Albert Rütimeyer (1610–1659), son of the Aarau-born Swiss delegate at the Synod of Dort and subsequent rector of the Bern academy, Markus Rütimeyer (1580–1647). While the father was known in English puritan circles by virtue of the Synod, the visit to England by his son, who by that August was back in Bern to present his thesis on original sin, seems hitherto unknown this side of the Channel.⁵⁶ Unlike other continental visitors to England, he seems not to have learned much English, thereby earning a frosty reception from Elizabeth Penington, if it was he to whom

⁵¹ Bern, Staatsarchiv, B III.63.54, f. 1; 63.55, ff. 3, 5, 5v; 63.56, f. 2; 63.57, f. 2.

⁵² Bern, Staatsarchiv, B III. 63.49, f. 1.

⁵³ Bern, Staatsarchiv, B III. 63.57, f. 1.

⁵⁴ Bern, Staatsarchiv, B III.63.49.

⁵⁵ Bern, Staatsarchiv, B III.63.54.

⁵⁶ ‘Markus Rütimeyer’, <http://www.hls-dhs-dss.ch/d/>; Anthony Milton (ed.), *The British Delegation and the Synod of Dort*, Church of England Record Society 13, Woodbridge 2005, esp. liii; Christian Moser, ‘Reformed Orthodoxy in Switzerland’, in: Herman J. Selderhuis (ed.), *A Companion to Reformed Orthodoxy*, Leiden 2013, 205; Albertus Rutimeierus, *Disputatio Theologica de Peccato Originali*, Bern, Fabricius, 1637; Bern, Staatsarchiv, B III.33.427–56 (Briefe an Markus Rütimeyer); Hans Georg Wackernagel (ed.), *Die Matrikel der Universität Basel (1895–1951)*, vol. 3, Basel 1962, 378–9. According to the last, admitted to Basel 11 April 1637 (which given that it was New Style would have meant swift travel from England or obtaining admittance *in absentia*); he had also been admitted to Lausanne (December 1630), Groningen (June 1633) and Franeker (1634).

she referred in her letter of 31 May. “Your country man did profes himselfe to be an intimate frind of yours and saide he had bin your bedfellowe, but I confes I did not like him well [...] nor did I say much to him”. He appears to have conversed largely or solely in Latin, which “Mr Tayler did interpret”.⁵⁷

Uncertain as to whether Albert Rüttimeyer had delivered the March letter safely, Penington sent his May letter “by the conveyance of Mr Schennowerus Mr Buxstorfes Scholler of Bazill & a dweller there”.⁵⁸ The tutor in question was unmistakably Johannes Buxtorf the younger, professor of Hebrew at Basel, but the student’s identity is unclear.⁵⁹ The most likely candidate is Bernese-born Johannes Huldreich Tschenus (c.1606–1652), admitted to the University of Basel in July 1632 as “nuper ex Anglia advantans” and previously a student at Herborn, Groningen and Leiden, although why he might be in England in 1637 is unexplained, and again apparently otherwise unremarked.⁶⁰ According to Elizabeth Penington, this was “your country man of Bassell Mr Shenuere[,] a close student here, and an honest <man> I thinke”, who had packaged up her letter for dispatch with his “owne letters and bookes” as went “first into the low counteries”.⁶¹ Once back in Basel, he too remained in touch with his English friends.⁶²

It is evident that a variety of networks, not only scholarly, sustained these networks. “Lookeing over the coppies of my letters sent to you”, Penington noted that he had sent four which, as far as he knew, had gone unanswered. Letters of July 1638 and May 1639 were sent respectively courtesy of “Mr Westeencious” and “your Countriman the Joyner” (previously encountered), while another of April 1639 went sealed “up in a packett which Mr Peter Shavan of Geneva sent to his father whoe dwells there”, via “Mr Burlamachy”, for possible forwarding by “Mr Spanheim of Geneva”. Three received from Hummel over roughly the same period arrived via “Mr Peter Shavan of Geneva”; a second via “Mr

⁵⁷ Bern, Staatsarchiv, B III.63.55, f. 2v (?31 May 1637); cf. Milton, ‘Puritanism and the continental Reformed churches’, 118.

⁵⁸ Bern, Staatsarchiv, B III.63.54. Penington later called him ‘Mr Shenonterous’: B III.63.56, f. 1.

⁵⁹ Moser, ‘Reformed Orthodoxy’, 209; <http://www.hls-dhs-dss.ch/d/>.

⁶⁰ This man became a pastor at Bern Münster in 1647: *Die Matrikel der Universität Basel*, iii. 345.

⁶¹ Staatsarchiv Bern, B III 63.55, f. 2v (between 29 July-23 November 1637).

⁶² Staatsarchiv Bern, B III 63.58: see below.

Billingsley, secretarie to Sir Olliver Fleming”, Charles I’s ambassador to Zürich; and a third “by a Scotchman that came out of France and made noe staie here”.⁶³

Notwithstanding the “discouragement” of long silences, the Peningtons and their circle participated in meeting the insatiable desire of their Swiss friends for English books.⁶⁴ The importance of Geneva as a staging post appears here as elsewhere, but much of the traffic was more direct.⁶⁵ Penington conveyed to Hummel Billingsley’s report that Fleming took on his Zürich embassy “bookes both for our Mr Mayer a minister of yor Country & also for yor selfe”. Penington himself issued an open invitation: “if yow desire bookes lett us have A note of this yow have alreadie & thos yow wold have and Mr Tailer [seemingly distinguished later from ‘Mr Tailer of Clapham’] & my self will endeavour to furnish <them>”. However, he advised that Hummel identify a reliable supply route.⁶⁶ One such had been established by February 1642, when Penington noted that in September 1640 the couple had sent “the chest of bookes that Mr Shenuvoro of Basill did writ to Mr Tailer to furnish him withall who hath since writ to Mr Tayler of the Receipt of them”. In the same chest, books destined for Hummel had included (from Daniel) “Parr upon the Romanes & a small book of [?sermons]” and (from “your mother”) “Doctor Gouge his booke, gods Arrowes & Mr Borroughs of the excellencye of a gracious spirit”.⁶⁷ As Elizabeth explained on 4 September

⁶³ Staatsarchiv Bern, B III 63.56. ‘Sir Oliver Fleming’, ‘Philip Burlamachi’, <http://www.oxforddnb.com>. ‘Westeencious’ was possibly Johann Rudolf Wettstein (1614–1684) of Basel, while Peter Shavan was probably Pierre Chavannes, of a Huguenot family settled in Geneva and Bern: <http://www.hls-dhs-dss.ch/d/>. One Pierre Chavannes, born in Geneva 1588, was later a pastor there: Gabriella Cahier (ed.), *Registres de la compagnie des pasteurs de Genève. T[ome] XII 1614–1616*, Geneva 1995, 155, 167. Friedrich Spanheim ‘the elder’, who had visited England in the early 1620s, was at this point a professor at the Académie de Genève.

⁶⁴ See esp. Sträter, ‘Die Schweiz als Umschlagplatz englischer Erbauungsliteratur’, 215–22.

⁶⁵ Sträter, ‘Die Schweiz als Umschlagplatz englischer Erbauungsliteratur’, 221.

⁶⁶ Bern, Staatsarchiv, B III 63. 56 (10 October 1639).

⁶⁷ Bern, Staatsarchiv, B III 63.58. ?Elnathan Parr, *A plaine exposition upon the whole 8. 9. 10. 11. chapters of the Epistle of Saint Paul to the Romans* (editions in 1618, 1620, 1622); ?William Gouge, *Gods three arrowes, plague, famine, sword in three treatises*, London, George Miller for Edward Brewster, 1636; Jeremiah Burroughs, *The excellency of a gracious spirit* (editions 1638, 1639 and 1640). Gouge (1575–1653) had been another feoffee for impropriations.

1640, Hummel had “writ to me long sence for the whole armour of God”, but she had been unable to obtain it, “it beinge out of print, for nowe they bind all docter Gouges workes together, but at <last> I found one though not new yeat as usefull”. She too mentioned “Mr Burrues booke the excellencie of a gracious spirit, I knowe you will like it”.⁶⁸

In addition to books the Peningtons conveyed news which gives a window into the breadth and cohesion of the puritan fraternity to which Hummel had belonged in London, in which he was considered to have a lasting investment, but concerning the behaviour of which he might be in need of justificatory explanation. Although there was reassurance that “all yor ffrends & acquaintance are in health”, there was also contradictory intelligence that some friends had gone “to that place of perfection” where there would be “noe use of praier” but they would “spend all our tymes in praiseing of him from whome wee Receive all that both here wee enioye and there hope <for>”. “Mr Gardner [unidentified] is dead that married Mr Leech his youngest daughter at a liveing that was newly given him”, while “Tabitha that married John the Joyner god hath taken to him self the last month shee hath left a boye behind of her husbands name & was quicke of another but it pleased god to make her wombe a grave unto it & soe thei were buried & went to heaven together”.⁶⁹

Alongside personal news was intelligence of the fortunes of ministers of their acquaintance under ecclesiastical authorities (often vaguely referred to as ‘they’ or ‘them’) with whom the godly had an uneasy existence.⁷⁰ Noting that “Mr Walker the preacher is putt out of his liveing”, Penington could not account for it – “the cause I knowe not nor I think they that have done [it]” – but George Walker (?1582–1651), rector of St John the Evangelist, Watling Street, and the author of several published works, had already been under fire since 1631 from William Laud (initially as bishop of London), and was now under house arrest following a spell of imprisonment for allegedly factious and seditious preaching.⁷¹ On the other hand “Mr Carter hath laid downe his <lecture>

⁶⁸ Bern, Staatsarchiv, B III 63.57, f. 2v. Editions of William Gouge, *The whole-armour of God* had been published in 1616, 1619, 1627 and 1639.

⁶⁹ Bern, Staatsarchiv, B III 63.56, f. 1v (10 October 1639). See above n. 21.

⁷⁰ See e.g. Davies, *The Caroline Captivity of the Church*; Nicholas Tyacke, *Anti-Calvinists. The Rise of English Arminianism c.1590–1640*, Oxford 1987.

⁷¹ Bern, Staatsarchiv, B III 63.56; <http://venn.lib.cam.ac.uk/acad/2016/search-2016.html>; George Walker, <http://www.oxforddnb.com>. He had earlier accused John Goodwin of Socinianism: Coffey, *John Goodwin*, 55.

to prevent their depr[iving] him of it"; "hee was much followed", explained Penington, "& manie of them wold abide in the street till service was done & then wold come in rudely at the last psalme". Resignation gave Carter "libertie sometymes to preach whereas if hee had staid for a putting downe that wold have denied him that".⁷² Yet not all in their circle operated on the margins of acceptability. Penington also reported, without registering surprise, that "it hath pleased the lord of Canterbury to bestowe another liveing upon Mr Tailer of Clapham as an addition to his meanes which hee hath need of".⁷³ The living was Yalden, Kent; that Taylor resigned from Clapham in 1642 may have arisen from a stirring of conscience as to indulging in pluralism.⁷⁴ In the meantime Taylor had manifested his gratitude to Laud by a generously-worded dedication to the archbishop in 1639 of a manuscript set of dissertations – an action which constitutes one of many manifestations of the complexity of contemporary religious life.⁷⁵

Throughout the letters there was an element of consulting a Christian brother living under a different dispensation for advice, as well as of comparing the workings of God in different societies. Thanking Hummel for his "good councill", Daniel took "notice of gods open handednes to yor Country <in> blessings <for> ~~without~~ which hee is requited wth sinfulness the abuse of the Creature & unthankfull [*word missing?*]" and went on to "wish England had not as much cause for Complaine[t for] god will not give successe where his mercies are soe slighted & abused". The (mutual) remedy was not to "bee wanting in sending up or prayers to the Throne of grace for a generall reformation both in orselves & others the commonwelth & the Church".⁷⁶ By March 1650 - more than a year after the regicide and inauguration of the republic – Penington was obliged to "confesse it is true that yow writ wee live in miserable & distressed tymes[:] the Lord grant us patience & a profitable improvement of the Rod that is upon us".⁷⁷

⁷² Plausibly William Carter, who in 1640 was lecturing at St Mary le Bow and was reported by the authorities to be 'not very conformable': 'William Carter', <http://www.oxforddnb.com>.

⁷³ Bern, Staatsarchiv, B III 63.56 (10 October 1639).

⁷⁴ <http://venn.lib.cam.ac.uk/acad/2016/search-2016.html>.

⁷⁵ Lambeth Palace Library, Lambeth MS 468. I owe this reference to the anonymous reader.

⁷⁶ Bern, Staatsarchiv, B III.63.49, f. 1 (2 March 1636/7).

⁷⁷ Bern, Staatsarchiv, B III.63.79, f. 1.

Elizabeth Penington's surviving letters are at the same time more expansive, more rambling, more physically damaged and more vivid than those of her husband, and give an even more intimate picture of London piety.⁷⁸ As the outpourings of an Englishwoman of limited education in her thirties to a Swiss schoolmaster and minister only five or six years her junior, they are occasionally startling. Struggling to express the nature of her relationship with her "most sweet most lovinge and/ Not lesse beloved son", she observed that it "often puts me in minde of the love of Jonathan and David" – doubtless seen by their circle as the most intense non-sexual bond imaginable. However, Elizabeth seems aware that this might be misinterpreted: "I will boast my love is not lese towards you, but in all points as sencere and hartly, and hearin I shall desire also to aprove my selfe to God, ~~not~~, and my husband not careing what all the world besides may suspect."⁷⁹

She advised Hummel about acquiring a wife, even though "I feare my councell will come to[o] late", advocating "a Helvetian woman" not too "ould, nor to[o] younge for good reson, nor to[o] littell then you may have a race of pignies, nor to[o] bigge for other reason I know not how bigge your, beds be in your contry. nor a widdowe". Once he was married, she "would find roome for you and your wife too, your sweet hart my daught[er]"; indeed, she offered to take her into her home for a year to teach her "good English" so that Hummel would not lose his facility in the language or his inclination to return to England.⁸⁰ Elizabeth's advice was indeed too late. When a few months later she first "read the news of my sons marriage" to the widowed Sarah Meier in a letter he had sent to Taylor, "it struck coulde to my hart". This, however was "but selfe love". Now in receipt of her own letter from Hummel in which he outlined the "inward beauties, which are indeed the best ornaments" of his bride, she recovered to congratulate him on God's gift of "your pious Sarah. your meet companion, your lovinge yocke fell[ow]"; "I expect by your next to here of a granchild".⁸¹

⁷⁸ Holes in the ms. Bern, Staatsarchiv, B III 63.55 make a complete transcription impossible, while throughout her letters the continuation to text to the side and foot of the folio can present problems.

⁷⁹ Bern, Staatsarchiv, B III.63.55, f. 3v (?31 May 1637).

⁸⁰ Bern, Staatsarchiv, B III.63.55, f. 3v.

⁸¹ Bern, Staatsarchiv, B III.63.55, ff. 1v–2.

Their established intimacy led Elizabeth to reveal her details of her poor health and frequent pregnancies.⁸² Like other pious women she struggled both with tribulations and their absence: “in one of mine the which I thinke you have received, I did writ that it was an affliction to me that I had so longe bin <without> afflictions”. Since that time, “it hath pleased my good God to give me a large share of these, both on my selfe and mine”. God had “visited” her with an illness which sounds like migraine, although physicians could not identify it, “yet never did I feele more sweet comfort, then in my greatest extremity”. She saw it as “punishment” from “a just God”. This was “like the voice of thunder the which we read of, yet withal I heard the soft and still voice of merciful refreshings and sweet comforts, here I saw my God indeed, much better to be in a firery furnes with these delights then in a paradice without them, no marvile good David saide in psalm the 4 and the 7 verse I se by experiance that his ~~lovinge~~ with assurance is better then life”.⁸³

But such convictions did not prevent sufferings driving her to wish for death: “though I did labour with my owne hart, and divers good ministers <did perswade> me to it, yet I could hardly bringe me to the passe to be willing to live”. Even worse was to come. In a letter of mixed tidings on 18 July 1638 she wrote to Hummel of the death of her Clapham neighbour and fellow patron of Francis Taylor, Sir Henry Atkyns, but also of her “very frowward” and very much alive infant son Isaac, who had cut two teeth and “looketh so gravely” that he had already earned from his uncle Risby the nickname “Doctor Isaacke”.⁸⁴ However, a few months later there was an epidemic of measles. “It was mortall to many, and of this disease our son died, the 4 of December <1638> ... my son my only son Isaac whome I loved – heare was a triall indeed yet not like Abraham for God to take him, thou Lord hast done it, I therefore wil not open my

⁸² E.g. see for context: Sara H. Mendelson, *The Mental World of Stuart Women*, Amherst 1987; Jacqueline Eales, *Women in Early Modern England 1500–1700*, London 2005.

⁸³ Bern, Staatsarchiv, B III.63.57, f. 1 (December 1638-April 1639). “Thou hast put gladness in my heart, more than in the time that their corn and their wine increased”: Psalm 4:7 (1611 Authorised Version). The previous letter containing the comment about afflictions does not seem to have survived.

⁸⁴ Bern, Staatsarchiv, B III.63.52, f. 1v (18 July 1638). Sir Henry was buried at Holy Trinity, Clapham, on 19 July 1638.

mouth.”⁸⁵ Although the child “did still want something of a yeare ould”, Jeremy Leech preached a funeral sermon on the text “out of the 1 kings 17 chap the last words of the 23 verse”, emphasising the hope of resurrection through reference to the story of Elijah and the son of the widow of Zarephath (in that case literally raised from the dead).⁸⁶ In late June 1640 she received a consolatory reply from Hummel (dated 9 March), which she subsequently acknowledged (4 September): “my son Isaac laugheth in heaven as you say, and so shall I also when I am there”.⁸⁷

In the meantime, at Whitsun 1639 Elizabeth miscarried of “a duple blessing [...] of two perfect children” at “not above 9 weeks gone” while at Whitsun 1640 she had given birth to a healthy daughter, Rebecca. But now with five living daughters, and numerous miscarriages, stillbirths and infant deaths behind her, and with “a very weake body inclininge to a consumption if not already in it”, she was affected by melancholy and (apparently) by guilt that she had not managed to breast-feed her children. Observing that “we say that weake women are most apt for conception”, she announced her “feare I am againe with child”.⁸⁸ That it was a dangerous calling, she had acknowledged, but not entirely come to terms with, on a previous occasion when she shared such news with Hummel: “I am now with child [...] this may be saide not to be my owne act, for though not undeserved in regard of that loyall subiection which I owe to my husband, yet undesired and unexpected, so that i was a meere patient in the busines”.⁸⁹

Pregnancy and illness might keep Elizabeth “3 weekes together not being able to goe to church”, but when her strength allowed her again to “partake of his public ordinances” it appears to have been the obligation most likely to make her “sture out of our doores”.⁹⁰ Moreover, neither bodily ailments nor consciousness of her own lack of education prevented her from full participation in the life of her godly community.

⁸⁵ Bern, Staatsarchiv, B III.63.57, f. 1v (December 1638-April 1639). An allusion to Genesis 22:2, and the sacrifice of Abraham’s son Isaac, “thy son, thine only son Isaac, whom thou lovest” (1611 Authorised Version).

⁸⁶ Bern, Staatsarchiv, B III.63.57, f. 2. “See, thy son liveth” (1611 Authorised Version); “Behold, thy son liveth” (Geneva Bible).

⁸⁷ Possibly an allusion to Genesis 18:2, when Isaac’s mother Sarah “laughed within her self” at the thought of having a son in her old age, although it does not quite work.

⁸⁸ Bern, Staatsarchiv, B III.63.57, f. 2 (4 September 1640).

⁸⁹ Bern, Staatsarchiv, B III.63.55, f. 6 (21 Feb. 1637/8). Cf. 1 Peter 3:1, 5.

⁹⁰ Bern, Staatsarchiv, B III.63.55, f. 6 (21 Feb. 1637/8).

Aware that “I cannot iudge of a scoller”, she rated Hummel on other qualities: “of my learned and wise son, though not of his scollershipe, that I will only admire, but of his goddnes for my thinkes I know his hart”.⁹¹ Yet she had a certain self-confidence: “I praise God my hart is fixed, but my desire is in these daies of peace to get such sure grounds to my selfe, that if I should live to se [*erasure*] change, through Gods assistance I may remaine unmovable”.⁹² This allowed her to write to Hummel on contentious spiritual matters without Francis Taylor’s knowledge: “Mr Tayler doth not know that I did writ to you any thinge about it, nor d[es]ire I that he should know, for he and I have had some hote dispute about it”. Taylor had uttered “words which I was sorry to here”, and which she did not care to repeat. She acknowledged he was “a good scoller and hath a nimbell wit”, but on this issue – which she did not specify, but which is perhaps most likely to have related to the controversy within the puritan community over grace – “so f[ar] as I can iudge I find him leane the wronge way”. She conceded that he might have done it “alone for argument sake, yet he spake to the simpell who had need of his direction”, and thus (she implied) risked leading them astray. “My leaders I hope”, she continued, “shall never cause me to ere”. Hummel had evidently enquired after the purity of the English ministry, to which she replied that “our fountaines are corrupt and they send forth bitter stre[ames]”, but there were those who “are not tainted with this rottennes, the bitter watter hath not entered into there bowells”.⁹³

The godly congregations to which Elizabeth belonged were faced with numerous dilemmas, the solutions to which might divide them and alienate or mystify friends abroad. She apparently felt impelled to explain to Hummel how she and her circle sometimes justified acceding to the demands of Laudian ceremonialists. As she doubtless appreciated through comments made during his English visit and later (now lost), Hummel was accustomed to Zwinglian austerity in a republican oligarchical state: the communion service was simply a memorial of the Last Supper; unadorned music was acceptable in worship but visual distractions were not; funeral pomp was forbidden; it was unthinkable that an ecclesiastical figure could dictate practice to magistrates, still less to discipline the powerful élite through a court of high commission or

⁹¹ Bern, Staatsarchiv, B III.63.55, ff. 3, 3v (?31 May 1637).

⁹² Bern, Staatsarchiv, B III.63.55, f. 5 (21 Feb. 1637/8).

⁹³ Bern, Staatsarchiv, B III.63.55, f. 5 (21 Feb. 1637/8); Coffey, *John Goodwin*, 54-61.

consistories or exclusion from the sacrament.⁹⁴ For example, Laudian initiatives to move communion tables and restore them to a pre-Reformation “altarwise” position, indeed, to call them “altars” and to demand kneeling at the rail and other manifestations of respectful behaviour might well seem outrageous.⁹⁵ Elizabeth’s reasoning for acceding to such demands was subtle: “we say we bowe not to the alter but <to> God and towards the alter”. She went on to explain that “we say it is fit to shew some signe of reverence when we come into the house of God, for we doe and must shew reverence when we come into the presence chamber of a prince”. By extension, “what gesture more fit to expres our reverence then by bowinge”? Besides, “when the eye of my faith shall see God in a more spetiall manner present at the allter then els where, I shall then bowe toward the alter”. She anticipated, and perhaps had already received, a negative reaction – “son let it not truble you that you cannot exprese your selfe, for you have done it very well” – but invited him to consider further and “let me here what you think of it”. It constituted, she suggested, a necessary compromise: “let it not disturbe your patience, but rather provoke you to thankfulnes for yourselves, that God hath kept you free from these rudements, and also to prayer for us the more you here of our weakenes”.⁹⁶

Like her husband, Elizabeth sent news which both delineated their community and illustrated its public and private trials, especially in letters of 1637. John Goodwin (c.1594–1665), her brother-in-law Isaac

⁹⁴ “The era of Reformed Orthodoxy in Switzerland has not been much favoured by the fellowship of historians up to now”: Moser, ‘Reformed Orthodoxy in Switzerland’, 195. See also: Christian Grosse, ‘Pour une histoire comparée des disciplines ecclésiastiques réformées en Suisse’, in: Danièle Tosato-Rigo and Nicole Staremborg Goy (eds.), *Sous l’Oeil du Consistoire. Sources consistoriales et histoire du contrôle sociale sous l’Ancien Régime*, Lausanne 2004), 13–28; Henri Vuilleumier, *Histoire de l’Eglise Réformée du Pays de Vaud sous le Régime Bernois*, 4 vols, Lausanne 1927–1933; Bernard Reymond, ‘A la fois typique et atypique. l’Eglise réformée vaudoise d’Ancien Régime’ and Vivienne Larminie, ‘La vie religieuse en pays de Vaud et le contexte européen’, in: François Flouck, Patrick-R. Monbaron, Marianne Stubenvoll and Danièle Tosato-Rigo (eds.), *De l’Ours à la Cocarde: régime bernois et révolution en pays de Vaud (1536–1798)*, Lausanne 1998, 235–45, 261–80.

⁹⁵ See esp. Kenneth Fincham and Nicholas Tyacke, *Altars Restored. The Changing Face of English Religious Worship, 1547–c.1700*, Oxford 2006, chapters 5 and 6.

⁹⁶ Bern, Staatsarchiv, B III.63.55, f. 5 (21 February 1638). If Elizabeth shared her opinion on this point with Taylor, then such compromise may explain the preferment he received from Laud.

Penington's pastor, had returned from the country to discover that the plague had entered his house in Coleman Street. He was kept from entering while it raged, only to be then hauled before the court of high commission for his nonconformity. Disquietingly, from there Elizabeth had heard that "the good man", who was already beginning to part company with colleagues over his drift towards Arminianism, had "taken the oath ex officio [*ex officio*] which scarce any of our ministers will take, and it is much wondered at that he would doe it for hee must answere to whatsoever they aske him and against whomesoever". Her prayer that God would "keepe his hart aright, and free him from these trubles in his owne time" was answered at least in the second case, as there is no evidence of further proceedings on this occasion.⁹⁷ Dr William Gouge had lost a dearly-loved son, "a proper man, a batcheler he had bin two yeares a trader for himselfe", who had gone "out in the morninge early" but "came no more home", having encountered a disgruntled servant; he "was found stabd and thrown into the temes [Thames], no <man> can tell which way, or by whome".⁹⁸ "Mr Sedgwick" – either Obadiah Sedgwick (1599/1600–1658), lecturer at St Mildred, Bread Street, and friend of godly peer Robert Rich, 2nd earl of Warwick, or his brother John Sedgwick (1600/01–1643), rector of St Alphege, London Wall, and previously lecturer at St Giles, Cripplegate – had "buried his younge wife long sence" after she had "died in child bed of her first child".⁹⁹ Taylor had recently "buried his ould father", while "Mr Oldseward" (Richard Holdsworth, 1590–1649, rector of St Peter le Poer, Broad Street), had become master of the unofficial puritan seminary, Emmanuel College, Cambridge.¹⁰⁰ Elizabeth mentioned for special approbation "Mr Shut in lumber [Lombard] street which you and I did use to here". Of several brothers who entered the ministry, this was probably Josias Shute (1588–1643), rector of St Mary Woolnoth and preacher to the East India Company,

⁹⁷ Bern, Staatsarchiv, B III.63.55, f. 2 (summer 1637); TNA, SP16/339, f. 122; 'John Goodwin', *Oxford DNB*; Coffey, *John Goodwin*, 49–61, esp. 57.

⁹⁸ Bern, Staatsarchiv, B III.63.55, f. 5v. Ezekiel Gouge, murdered in 1637: 'William Gouge', <http://www.oxforddnb.com>.

⁹⁹ Bern, Staatsarchiv, B III.63.55, f. 6 (21 February 1637/8); 'Obadiah Sedgwick', <http://www.oxforddnb.com>.

¹⁰⁰ Bern, Staatsarchiv, B III.63.55, f. 6 (21 February 1637/8); 'Richard Holdsworth', <http://www.oxforddnb.com>.

“preacher-general of the City of London”.¹⁰¹ This was a man whose sermons drew large crowds but whose principles stood in the way of ecclesiastical promotion: he was “so far from seeking preferment the wrong way, that he doth refuse it being offered”. Elizabeth had heard that Archbishop Laud had sent for him “desireinge to prefer him, but he did not goe”. Approached again, apparently with an offer of whatever he wanted, “he did thanke his lordshipe, and saide he had enough, nether would he have any more”. The authorities would even have appointed him a member of the court of high commission, the same court which had pursued the feoffees for impropriations and others who fell foul of the Laudian establishment, “but he did refuse it, well knowing what be the snares that attend preferment”. As far as Elizabeth was concerned, “he doth approve himself a pious minister [:] I wish we had more of such”.¹⁰²

Elizabeth Penington did not live to see the fruits of the Westminster Assembly, called in 1643, to which Gataker, Taylor and other ministers in her circle were summoned. Some time between the making of her uncle Francis Bridges’ will in May 1642 and 1 September 1645, when Daniel Penington re-married, Elizabeth died.¹⁰³ With his brother Isaac, Daniel was an investor in the Protestant plantation of Ireland through the 1640s and 1650s.¹⁰⁴ By March 1650 “in regard of the times” Daniel could “sitt downe contented with what god hath done in taking” his first wife and numerous children to a better place, but for the first time he felt impelled to pursue the debt owed him by Hummel. “I must say I have neede for the state owes me One thousand pounds upon the publique faith & whether ever I shall see a penny of it againe I knowe not”; the payment of taxation meant he could not “mayntayne my charge without borroweing, besides it is Thirteene yeares agoe next month since you went from hence as I take it & I heare yow live wel & plentifully which I Reioyce in”. But he still signed himself “your loveing father”.¹⁰⁵ Following the Restoration and the death of an impoverished and politically disgraced Isaac in the Tower of London (December 1661), Daniel appears

¹⁰¹ Bern, Staatsarchiv, B III.63.55, f. 6 (21 February 1637/8); ‘Josias Shute’, ‘Christopher Shute’, <http://www.oxforddnb.com>. Like Taylor, Shute was possibly courted by Laud as a potential moderate.

¹⁰² Bern, Staatsarchiv, B III.63.55, f. 6 (21 February 1637/8).

¹⁰³ TNA, PROB11/189/406; St Giles, Cripplegate, parish register, (<http://www.ancestry.com>).

¹⁰⁴ TNA, SP63/294 ff. 65, 158, 162–4; SP63/285, ff. 169, 318.

¹⁰⁵ Bern, Staatsarchiv, B III.63.79, f.1.

to have opted for a quiet life in St Mary le Bow, where he died in 1665 having outlived all but one of his children. His will made no mention either of Hummel or of the circles in which he had moved thirty years previously.¹⁰⁶

Meanwhile, Hummel's ties to England endured. His correspondence contains letters in Latin from Gataker (1635, 1649) and Taylor (1637, 1644), while in 1652 Henry Altting wrote to him in English.¹⁰⁷ He published in 1650 and 1659 translations from English of devotional works by Sir John Hayward (?1564–1627).¹⁰⁸ In the 1650s and 1660s he re-engaged with old friends from the Hartlib circle through John Durie, Theodore Haak (1605–1690) and John Pell (1611–1685). Presented by Pell with William Gouge's *A guide to go to God*, he repaid the kindness by smoothing his diplomatic endeavours and by promoting Durie's ecumenical schemes.¹⁰⁹ Durie tried unsuccessfully to persuade the "churches of the cantons" to allow him to take Hummel with him on a mission to the court of Protector Oliver Cromwell, citing the precedent of the fraternal visits of Paul and Silas from Jerusalem to the churches of Asia Minor.¹¹⁰

However, Hummel's greatest chance to mark past friendships came after the Restoration when Edmund Ludlowe (1616/17–1692) and other fugitive regicides found Geneva too dangerous a place to hide from royal vengeance and sought sanctuary in the Bernese-ruled Pays de Vaud.¹¹¹ It was Hummel to whom the exiles chiefly owed their permission to remain in Lausanne and then Vevey, a fact which drew their grateful letters into the 1670s.¹¹² Ludlowe, who recorded that "our especial friend" had put in a good word for them to the Bernese authorities even

¹⁰⁶ *Historical Gazetteer of London*, index; TNA, PROB11/317/60.

¹⁰⁷ Bern, Staatsarchiv, BIII.63.50, 70, 81, 82.

¹⁰⁸ McKenzie, *A catalog of British devotional and religious books*, 255-6.

¹⁰⁹ Dury to Hartlib, 15 Aug 1654, Sheffield, University Library, HP 4/3/25A; Hummel to Pell, 1656–1658, London, British Library, Add. MS 24850, ff. 2, 8–11, 13–14, 16 (18 Oct. 1657, receipt of Gouge), 17–18, 20, 22; Bern, Staatsarchiv, B III. 32, pp. 115–23, 131–4; B III.63.51.

¹¹⁰ Bern, Staatsarchiv, B III. 32, 153–5.

¹¹¹ The different international protestant network which got them as far as Geneva is discussed in Vivienne Larminie, 'The Herbert connection, the French church and Westminster politics, 1643-1661', in: Vivienne Larminie (ed.), *Huguenot Networks 1550-1750. The impact of a minority in protestant Europe* (Taylor and Francis, forthcoming).

¹¹² Bern, Staatsarchiv, BIII.63.1, 17, 20, 32, 35, 38, 39, 41, 43.

when on his death-bed, well understood the value of an English-speaking advocate.¹¹³ As attested by letters from ministers in Vaud to Hummel, through their religious scruples the exiles had offended their local hosts by refusing requests to stand as godparents because it seemed a mere social formality (attracting false attribution of anabaptism), and by declining on occasion to attend the celebration of communion because the criteria for participation were insufficiently rigorous.¹¹⁴ When brought to account, they assembled their arguments and then “left to Mr Hommel to manage, as he should judge most convenient”. As Hummel “was pleased to write”, said Ludlowe, “he well understood the Customes and conscientious Reasons of the Independents in England”.¹¹⁵

That Hummel should possess such understanding and should give sympathetic assistance to those who held such opinions is noteworthy, as indeed was his reception of Durie.¹¹⁶ Not only has the harvest of English-inspired Protestant devotion traditionally been dated to the last decade of the seventeenth century, but in the period prior to that the Protestant churches of Switzerland and of canton Bern in particular have been viewed as inward-looking, conservative, austere and moribund, concerned to exclude suspect foreign doctrines and publications.¹¹⁷ Yet Hummel survived early suspicions of his orthodoxy to rise to the highest ecclesiastical position in the most important canton, and in the peasant war of 1653 was unusually prepared to mediate in a conflict which his former compatriot in London, Sigmund von Erlach, prosecuted without compromise.¹¹⁸ In the 1660s he was prepared to engage with the increasingly heterodox Jean de Labadie, one-time minister-elect of the French church Westminster, erstwhile minister of Geneva, and friend of

¹¹³ Oxford, Bodleian Library [Bodl. Lib.], MS Eng. hist. c.487 ‘A Voyce from the Watch Tower’, 1363–4.

¹¹⁴ Bern, Staatsarchiv, B III.63.34 (Abraham Mennet), 36 (Josué Chevalier).

¹¹⁵ Bodl. Lib., MS Eng. hist. c.487, 1184–6, 1286–8.

¹¹⁶ Moser, ‘Reformed Orthodoxy’, 209, 214, 216.

¹¹⁷ Moser, ‘Reformed Orthodoxy’, 213–16 and *passim*; Dellsperger, *Die Anfänge des Pietismus in Bern*, 9, 23, 35 and *passim*; Vuilleumier, *Histoire de l’Eglise Réformée du Pays de Vaud*; Larminie, ‘La vie religieuse’. See also e.g. A. Bonard, *La Presse Vaudoise. Esquisse Historique*, Luzern 1925; J.-P. Perret, *Les Imprimeries d’Yverdon au XVIIe et au XVIIIe Siècles*, BHV 7, Lausanne 1945; G. Marion, *Paroisses et Pasteurs de la Broye au XVIIIe Siècle. La Classe de Payerne 1675–1798*, BHV 101, Lausanne 1990.

¹¹⁸ <http://www.hls-dhs-dss.ch/d/>; Danièle Tosato-Rigo (ed.), *La chronique de Jodocus Jost. Miroir du monde d’un paysan bernois au XVIIe siècle*, Mémoires et documents publiés par la Société d’histoire de la Suisse romande 4, Lausanne 2009, 263–4 and *passim*.

Ludlowe.¹¹⁹ Hummel's sojourn in England may not have altered visibly his essential adherence to the church of his youth, but it surely gave him a certain tolerance of, and open-mindedness to, others' expressions of religious commitment. However refracted, the influence of the English puritans was surely germinating long before its full flowering.

Summary

Anglo-Swiss networks in the seventeenth century have received little attention. The autobiography of and the correspondence addressed to Johann Heinrich Hummel (1611-1674), dean of Bern, illuminate his visit to London 1634-1636 and its long-lasting consequences. They also expand knowledge of London clergy engaged in the education of foreign students, reveal the role of godly laity (Daniel and Elizabeth Penington) as hosts and as suppliers of English devotional books to a continental audience, offer insights into individual piety and comment on the sufferings of their community under Archbishop William Laud, and an early context for the development of pietism in Switzerland.

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¹¹⁹ Bern, Staatsarchiv, B III.63.45; T. J. Saxby, *The Quest for the New Jerusalem, Jean de Labadie and the Labadists, 1610–1744*, Dordrecht 1987, 110–1, 23; Bodl. Lib., MS Eng. hist. c.487, 951, 1226, 1376.

Spiritual marriage

A key to the theology and spirituality of Wilhelmus à Brakel (1635-1711)

W. van Vlastuin

Introduction

Wilhelmus à Brakel (1635-1711)¹ was an important representative of the Dutch further reformation. He was brought up in the God-fearing family of Theodorus à Brakel and completed the main part of his education in Franeker. He also studied under the supervision of Gisbert Voetius in Utrecht for a number of years.

¹ A. de Reuver wrote an English biographical sketch, *Sweet Communion. Trajectories of Spirituality from the Middle Ages through the Further Reformation*, James A. De Jong (trans.), Grand Rapids 2007, 231-34. J.R. Beeke and R.J. Pederson did the same in *Meet the Puritans. With a Guide to Modern Reprints*, Grand Rapids 2006, 745-52. Biographical information in Dutch can be found in A. Hellenbroek, *Algemeene rouklagt in de straten van Rotterdam over den zeer eerwaarden, godvrugtigen en geleerden heere Wilhelmus à Brakel*, Rotterdam, Reinier van Doesburg, 1714, later included in *Redelijke Godsdiens* 2:356-92; B. Glasius, 'Wilhelmus à Brakel', in: idem (ed.), *Godgeleerd Nederland. Biographisch woordenboek van Nederlandse godgeleerden*, vol. 1, 's Hertogenbosch 1851, 53-160; A. Ritschl, *Geschichte des Pietismus*, vol. 1, Bonn 1880, 291-301; F.J. Los, *Wilhelmus à Brakel*, Leiden 1892 (I used the reprint of 1991, Leiden); J.P. de Bie and J. Loosjes, *Biographisch Woordenboek van Protestantsche Godgeleerden in Nederland*, vol. 1, 's Gravenhage 1907, 563-71; H.C.H. Moquette, 'Wilhelmus à Brakel', in: P.C. Molhuysen and P.J. Blok (eds.), *Nieuw Nederlandsch Biografisch Woordenboek*, vol. 4, Leiden 1918, column 281-83; F.W. Grosheide and G.P. van Itterzon (eds.), *Christelijke Encyclopedie*, vol. 2, Kampen 1957, 13-14; J. van Genderen, 'Wilhelmus à Brakel (1635-1711)', in: T. Brienen (ed.), *De Nadere Reformatie. Een beschrijving van haar voornaamste vertegenwoordigers*, 's Gravenhage 1986, 165-91; W. Fieret and A. Ros, *Theodorus à Brakel, Wilhelmus à Brakel en Sara Nevius*, Houten 1988. The part about Wilhelmus à Brakel is published in *The Christian's Reasonable Service* I: xxxi-lxxxii; A. de Reuver, 'Wilhelmus à Brakel (1635-1711)', in: W. van 't Spijker (ed.), *Oude schrijvers. Een kennismaking*, Houten 1997, 214-32; D. Nauta, *Biografisch Lexicon voor de geschiedenis Geschiedenis van het Nederlandse Protestantisme*, vol. 4, Kampen 1998, 48-51; F.A. van Lieburg, 'De Redelijke Godsdiens van Wilhelmus à Brakel', in: J. Bos and E. Geleijns (eds.), *Boekenwijsheid. Drie eeuwen kennis en cultuur in 30 bijzondere boeken. Opstellen bij de voltooiing van de Short-Title Catalogue, Netherlands*, Zutphen 2009, 186-94; W.J. op 't Hof, 'Wilhelmus à Brakel', in: W.J. op 't Hof (ed.), *Encyclopedie Nadere Reformatie*, vol. 1, Utrecht 2015, 121-29. There are also several studies on aspects of À Brakel's theology, see 'Studies' at <http://www.ssnr.nl>, accessed 25 Jan. 2016.

After his ordination he became a pastor at Exmorra (1662), then Stavoren (1665), Harlingen (1670), Leeuwarden (1673) and Rotterdam (1683), staunchly defending the church's independence from the state, opposing the Labadistic separation and becoming well known for his ability to combine theology and spirituality; see *The Christian's Reasonable Service*.² This book has been published and republished many times through the centuries;³ in 1715 and 1717 two German editions were published and⁴ it was also translated in English.

For Abraham Hellenbroek (1658-1731) there was no mystery surrounding the success of this book. During a service held in honour of Wilhelmus à Brakel, Hellenbroek declared that *The Christian's Reasonable Service* was a book characterised by "a real piety that would endure the ages".⁵ These words seem to have been prophetic. At least it appeared that Hellenbroek understood the intention behind À Brakel's writing. In his introduction to his *magnum opus*, he wrote that his motivation had been to write a book that could be used for spiritual edification. So, to understand the message of this book, we have to understand its spirituality.⁶

The aim of this article is to study the spirituality of Wilhelmus à Brakel from the perspective of the spiritual marriage, because this

² Originally printed as *Redelijke Godsdienst*, Rotterdam, Reinier van Doesburg, 1700 (referred to as RG), J.R. Beeke (ed.), B. Elshout (trans.), *The Christian's Reasonable Service*, Grand Rapids 1992 (referred to as CRS). Book 1 of *Redelijke Godsdienst* includes Volumes 1, 2 and 3 of CRS. I use CRS and RG when referring to À Brakel's work.

³ Pietas mentions 24 printings in the eighteenth century (www.ssnr.nl/pietas, accessed 1 Oct. 2015). There are indications that some of the reprints are fake, as it is thought that the publisher announced a new print run to sell an older one. Pietas mentions five printings in the nineteenth century. After contacting the present publisher, I understand that this particular work of À Brakel was reprinted in 1908, 1965, 1967, 1973, 1979, 1981, 1985, 1991, 1994, 2002 and 2010 by several publishers.

⁴ Compare www.ssnr.nl/pietas, accessed 1 Oct. 2015. I could not find the 2006 edition which is mentioned in the Dutch Wikipedia. À Brakel's *magnum opus* was also translated into Spanish and Chinese, F.A. van Lieburg, 'De Redelijke Godsdienst', 193; W.J. op 't Hof, 'Wilhelmus à Brakel', 128.

⁵ A. Hellenbroek, 'Algemeene rouwklacht', in: RG 2:373.

⁶ For an introduction to À Brakel's spirituality, see also W. van Vlastuin, 'Inleiding' in the Dutch retranslation of the *Redelijke Godsdienst*, vol. 1A, Apeldoorn 2016, 11-42. This research also reflects a developing interest in the study of Christian spirituality as a new academic discipline. For the development of this discipline see, amongst others, E.A. Dreyer and M.S. Burrows (eds.), *Finding the Spirit. The Study of Christian Spirituality*, Baltimore 2005; D.B. Perrin, *Studying Christian Spirituality*, New York 2007.

metaphor is used at decisive moments in his *magnum opus*. Several times in his voluminous work À Brakel writes about Christ as the Bridegroom and the believer as the bride. In the chapter on the Trinity, Brakel first refers to this marriage.⁷ In his discussion of the human soul, À Brakel refers to the soul as if it was created for this spiritual marriage.⁸ When he deals with the central issue of the covenant of grace, it appears that the covenant can be understood as the marriage covenant.⁹ It is also striking how, in the chapter on the Surety of the covenant, he refers to Christ as Bridegroom.¹⁰ Writing about the offices of Christ, À Brakel mentions prophet, priest, king, Goel, Bridegroom and Immanuel. Apparently Christ's acting as Bridegroom demands special attention, because it is a specific topic in the context of Christ's offices. Also in the chapters on Christ's godhead and suffering, À Brakel mentions the relationship of Bridegroom and bride.¹¹

À Brakel uses the metaphor of marriage not only in his Christology, his soteriology and his anthropology, but also in his ecclesiology when he clarifies that Christ is the Bridegroom of his church and that Jesus cannot be separated from his bride.¹² He also uses the image of the marriage with Christ to explain the structures of the church and its authority.¹³ In the context of ecclesiology, the function of the ring in marriage serves as a 'model' to clarify the function of the sacraments; the ring represents the absent Bridegroom, confirms his faithfulness and mediates his spiritual presence.¹⁴ Participating in the Lord's Supper therefore, is understanding

⁷ CRS 1:178, 184 (RG 1.6.37, 42).

⁸ CRS 1:308 (RG 1.10.3).

⁹ CRS 1:441-42, 445 (RG 1.16.20, 24); 3:486 (RG 2.26.3).

¹⁰ CRS 1:483 (RG 1.17.26).

¹¹ CRS 1:499, 616 (RG 1.17.7, 22.34).

¹² The sentence: "Christ is the Bridegroom of the church, she being continually presented as the bride in the entire Song of Songs", clarifies that À Brakel interprets the marriage in Song of Songs as the relationship between Christ and the church, CRS 2:19, 24 (RG 1.24.18, 23).

¹³ "No kingdom, republic, home, or society can exist without order. This is also true for the church [...]. The Lord Jesus is the only and all-sufficient Head of the church - her [...] only Bridegroom", CRS 2:107 (RG 1.27.1).

¹⁴ CRS 2:475, 480, 488, 539, 573-74 (RG 1.38.11, 38.20, 39.2, 40.16, 41.5).

and obeying the voice of the Bridegroom,¹⁵ and promising one's faithfulness to the Bridegroom in the denial of the world.¹⁶

When we look at the communion with Christ as the heart of the Christian church, we can see many examples of the concept of marriage being used again and again to interpret spiritual life.¹⁷ The image is well suited for describing the mutual relationship of Christ and the believer¹⁸ and for explaining that believers participate in Christ's sonship with the Father.¹⁹ The concept is also used to clarify the benefits of Christ as justification and adoption.²⁰

These observations lead one to the hypothesis that the metaphor of the spiritual marriage is vital to any understanding of several key-aspects of the structure of À Brakel's theology and spirituality.²¹ It is relevant to search for the place that this metaphor has in his work, because this topic was not explicitly explored in the research of À Brakel's theology and spirituality.²²

¹⁵ "As you arise to go to the holy table, arise as if you were a bride about to be married, doing so in response to the voice of the Bridegroom Jesus, calling out, "Rise up, My love, My fair one, and come away" (Song 2:10)", CRS 2:591 (RG 1.41.9).

¹⁶ CRS 2:598 (RG 1.41.39). Compare CRS 4:39 (RG 2.37.1). This (Zwinglian) aspect can be found in Calvin's *Institutes* 4.14.1 but is missing in the reformed confessions.

¹⁷ CRS 2:88-90, 94-95 (RG 1.26.2-5, 10).

¹⁸ CRS 3:25, 287 (RG 2.1.28, 15.7.4).

¹⁹ CRS 3:486 (RG 2.26.3).

²⁰ CRS 2:404, 420 (RG 1.34.77, 35.4.3).

²¹ In the New Testament the head-body and the vine-branch metaphor is also used to describe the mystical union with Christ. À Brakel also refers to these concepts, especially the head-body metaphor, without using it as a theological interpretative framework. John Owen mentions the marriage metaphor too in William H. Gould (ed.), *The Works of John Owen*, 24 vols., London/Edinburgh 1850-1855 (repr. London/Edinburgh 1965-1991), vol. 1, 340-41, but it seems that he prefers the vine-branch metaphor, *Works* 1:367 and 3:414.

²² See 'Studies' at <http://www.ssnr.nl> (accessed 26 Jan. 2016) where 103 research studies of À Brakel's ecclesiology, eschatology, explanation of the Song of Songs, view on Jews, justification, faith, baptism, preaching, the Lord's Supper, sports, the covenant of works, etc. are listed. The studies of À Brakel's interpretation of the spirituality of T. Brienen, 'Vroomheid volgens het Gereformeerd Piëtisme in Nederland, met name bij vader en zoon à Brakel', in: W. van 't Spijker (ed.), *Spiritualiteit*, Kampen 1993, 199-208, L. Kim-van Daalen, *À Brakel's spirituality of virtues and its implications for soul care*, Louisville 2009 (thesis), H. Mosterd, *Triniteitsleer en vroomheid bij W. à Brakel*, Utrecht 2007 (thesis) and P.M. Smalley, *Satisfied with the Lord's All-Sufficiency*, Grand Rapids 2010 (Th. M. Thesis at Puritan Reformed Theological Seminary) do not focus on the issue of the spiritual marriage. The article by F.A. van Lieburg 'What novelty did *Reasonable*

In this article, I investigate the key-function that spiritual marriage has in À Brakel's theology in greater detail. The research-question posed in this article is, therefore: How can the metaphor of marriage provide a deeper understanding of Wilhelmus à Brakel's theology and spirituality? In answer to this question, I first explore the use and understanding of the concept of the spiritual marriage in a historical context. I then go on to investigate the relationship between the marriage-metaphor and three theological themes in À Brakel, namely the doctrine of the covenant, the doctrine of the church and spiritual life. These theological themes were derived from the abovementioned investigation and seem particularly relevant in regard to the marriage metaphor. After this investigation, I close with some conclusions and considerations.

Spiritual marriage in its historical context

The Jewish canon included the Song of Songs which was interpreted as a description of the relationship between God and the people of Israël.²³ This interpretation was adopted in the early Christian exegesis, although the relationship between the Bridegroom and the bride then was interpreted as the relationship between Christ and his church.²⁴ Origen (ca. 185-253/254) is seen as the first Christian theologian who applied the metaphor of the marriage between Bridegroom and bride to the individual soul rather than exclusively to the church as a collective. In the relationship between Bridegroom and bride on the one hand the human nature of the Bridegroom was important and on the other hand the gradual mystical ascent of the soul to Christ. Augustine (354-430), however, applied the bride of Salomon's Songs again to the church.²⁵

In the history of interpretation and application of the Song of Songs the collection of eighty-six sermons (*Sermones super cantica*

Religion bring in 1700? Guiding Reformed believers between Confessionalism and Pietism' has not yet been completed. The most deep and extensive treatment of À Brakel's spirituality has been made by De Reuver, *Sweet Communion*, 231-58, but spiritual marriage was not the focus in this chapter.

²³ S.M. Jansen, 'Bridal Mysticism', in: Ph. Sheldrake (ed.), *The New Westminster Dictionary of Christian Spirituality*, Louisville 2013, 155-57.

²⁴ M. Verduin had already recognised this interpretation in Hippolytus of Rome (160/170-235), *Canticum Canticorum. Het Lied der liederen*, Utrecht 1992, 63-77.

²⁵ I. Boot, *De allegorische uitlegging van het Hooglied voornamelijk in Nederland. Een onderzoek naar de verhouding tussen Bernard van Clairvaux en de Nadere Reformatie*, Woerden 1971, 34-37.

Canticorum) of Bernard of Clairvaux (1090-1153) is very well known. His way of interpretation can be understood as an Origen-revival.²⁶ As an Origen, Bernard interpreted the bride in the Song of Songs as the individual soul²⁷ without denying the application of the bride to the whole church. In the meditation on Christ's humanity the soul could ascend to the contemplation of Christ's godhead.

The image of the spiritual marriage was used by mystics such as Richard of St. Victor, the Beguines, Ruysbroec and John of the Cross. The time of the reformation was also characterised by a reorientation on Bernard; Calvin, for example, had a high appreciation of Bernard. In his interpretation of Psalm 45 the reformer accepted the typological exegesis in which Salomon is a type of Christ and the bride a type of church which indicates his understanding of Song of Songs even though he did not write a commentary on it. Calvin thus had a more ecclesiological understanding of the spiritual marriage than Bernard and also understood the relationship with Christ in an affective sense.²⁸

In the history of the reformed tradition the tension between the ecclesiastical and the mystical exegesis was a constant. See Theodorus Beza (1519-1605) and Godefridus Cornelisz. Udemans (1581-1649) followed Augustine and Calvin's ecclesiastical interpretation of Song of Songs and it was his interpretation that was also decisive in regard to the comments made in the Dutch and English authorised version of the bible.²⁹ This method of interpretation changed between 1640 and 1680 when both mystical and prophetic interpretations developed. This latter interpretation can be found in, among others, J. Cocceus (1603-1669), C.

²⁶ Boot, *De allegorische uitlegging van het Hooglied*, 41-42; Verduin, *Canticum Canticorum*, 233.

²⁷ Boot, *De allegorische uitlegging van het Hooglied*, 64-66.

²⁸ I. Boot, *De allegorische uitlegging van het Hooglied*, 102-12. D.E. Tamburello has shown that an affective knowledge of, and communion with, Christ is common to Calvin and Bernard, *Union with Christ. John Calvin and the Mysticism of St. Bernard*, Louisville 1994, however Bernard's piety is determined more by the experience of love and contemplation while Calvin's ideas spring from the framework of faith. For more detail about the relationship between Bernard and Calvin, see also T. Schwanda, *Soul Recreation. The Contemplative-Mystical Piety of Puritanism*, Eugene 2012, 38-42.

²⁹ For Udemans's influence on the Dutch authorised version, see Verduin, *Canticum Canticorum*, 630-702, 732-34. For his influence on the English bible, see 715-20.

Vtringa (1659-1722), S. van Til (1643-1713), J. d'Outrein (1662-1722) and F.A. Lampe (1683-1729).³⁰

The mystical interpretation of the Song of Songs developed partly in reaction to the prophetic way of interpretation. This stream of thought in the Netherlands included theologians such as W. Teellinck (1579-1629), G. Voetius (1589-1676), J. Koelman (1632-1695), H. Witsius (1636-1708), A. Hellenbroek (1658-1731) and B. Smytegelt (1665-1739).³¹ These theologians used aspects of Bernard to describe the several spiritual stages of the soul,³² although a more Trinitarian framework of faith than Bernard's was employed to interpret the relationship between the Bridegroom and the bride, one in which the sealing of the Holy Spirit could also function.³³

This development was not limited to the Dutch reformed tradition, there was also an interest in using language to describe experiential faith in the puritan-reformed tradition and a conviction that there was a biblical-theological foundation for this description.³⁴ In puritan England, pastors and theologians made use of the language and metaphors of Bernard, especially of the metaphor of spiritual marriage just as they did in The Netherlands.³⁵ This is an indication that À Brakel's use of the

³⁰ Boot, *De allegorische uitlegging van het Hooglied*, 260-87.

³¹ Boot, *De allegorische uitlegging van het Hooglied*, 143-259; Verduin, *Canticum Canticorum*, 738-46. See further Johannes de Carpentier, *De Bruyloft des Lams, Ofte Geestelick Huwelick tusschen Jesus en sijn Bruydt. Ende een Morgenwecker des Bruyts. 't Voorspel van de Bruyloft des Lams. Ende Voorbereydinge tot deselvige*, Amsterdam, Abraham van den Burgh, 1662; Theodor Undereyck, *Eheliches Ja-Wort der gläubigen Seele*, Bern, Christoph Stähelin, 1719.

³² Compare this with the experiential Christian life of Bernard, De Reuver, *Sweet Communion*, 27-60.

³³ Boot, *De allegorische uitlegging van het Hooglied*, 294.

³⁴ Tom Schwanda gave a recent overview of the contemplative-mystical piety in reformed Puritanism, *Soul Recreation*, 11-22. See also his "'Sweetness in Communion with God": The Contemplative-Mystical Piety of Thomas Watson', in: *Journal for the History of Reformed Pietism*, 1.2 (2015), 34-63, here 34-39. See also R.J. Pederson, *Unity in Diversity. English Puritans and the Puritan Reformation 1603-1689*, Leiden 2013 (Ph D-thesis), 61-63.

³⁵ Schwanda, *Soul Recreation*, 35-74. Pages 54-72 describe how the concept of the spiritual marriage was used by the puritans. See also his "'Sweetness in Communion with God'", 40-41, 58, 60. R.J. Pederson treats the contemplative-mystical theology of Francis Rous in *Unity in Diversity*, 118-59. Pages 147-150 are focused upon *The Mystical Marriage*. D.E. Tamburello shows that both Bernard and Calvin use the metaphor of marriage, *Union with Christ*, 106.

metaphor of spiritual marriage cannot be isolated from his own context and the international theological developments in the field of experiential piety.

The relationship between the covenant and the spiritual marriage

The original title of À Brakel's book is *THE CHRISTIAN'S REASONABLE SERVICE in which Divine Truths concerning the COVENANT OF GRACE are Expounded, Defended against Opposing Parties, and their Practice Advocated as well as The Administration of this Covenant in the Old and New Testaments*. It cannot escape our attention that the covenant of grace is the leading focus of this work, it can thus be stated that every part of this work is determined by the doctrine of the covenant.

The first part, or book, deals with the 'Divine Truths of the Covenant of Grace' and describes themes of a Christian theological work, such as the doctrine of God, Scripture, anthropology and sin, Christology, the covenant of works and of grace, church and sacraments, and the order of salvation.

A closer look at the Table of Contents clarifies that sin is treated in the framework of the breaking of the covenant of works, while the doctrine of Christ, the church, the order of salvation and the sacraments are treated as aspects of the covenant of grace.³⁶ Christology is called the doctrine of the "Surety of the covenant", the doctrine of the church is to be understood as the doctrine of the partakers of the covenant and the order of salvation is described as "the ways in which the Lord translates the partakers of the covenant in the covenant" or "the ways in which the Lord Jesus leads them to glory", while the sacraments are referred to as the "seals of the covenant".³⁷

The second book of *The Christian's Reasonable Service* has a practical character and concerns the life of the partakers of the covenant.³⁸ The life of God-fearing is treated here from the point of view of God's law, prayer, Christian virtues, conditions of the soul and spiritual

³⁶ The introduction in Chapter 17 is a good example of this: "We will now proceed to examine particular aspects of this covenant: 1) the Surety of this covenant; 2) the partakers of this covenant, the church; and 3) the way whereby the Lord translates them into this covenant, directs them in this matter, and leads them to its culmination – glory", CRS 1:465 (RG 1.17.1). Compare the introduction in Chapter 24 (CRS 2:3, RG 1.24.1) with the one in Chapter 30 (CRS 2:191, RG 1.30.1).

³⁷ CRS 1:446 (RG 1.16.25).

³⁸ CRS 3:3, 28-31 (RG 2.1.1, 2.1.30-31).

affections.³⁹ The third book explores the dispensations of the covenant in which the progress of God's work with his church in the Old and the New Testament is explained according to the message of the book of Revelation in the Bible.

In the first and second of À Brakel's books we recognize the two partners of the covenant, namely God and man. In the first book the accent is put on God's acts in the covenant, while the second book provides more detail about the dipeuric side of the monopleuric covenant. The believer as a covenant-partner has to be faithful, full of love, obedient and seeking a communion with Christ in prayer.

It is easy to understand how the spiritual marriage, as an interpretative framework of the doctrine of the covenant, leads to the most complete understanding of the covenant and its several aspects in À Brakel's theology. If we interpret 'covenant' as the 'covenant of marriage', the structures of his *magnum opus* are evident. As a marriage, the covenant consists of the two parties of Bridegroom and bride. At the same time, the marriage is a super-personal relationship which bears the life of faithfulness and love.

The metaphor of the covenant of marriage is developed further in À Brakel's approach. God in Christ is the promising heavenly Bridegroom, while the sinner is asked to enter the covenant. The entering sinner accepts the conditions of the covenant and gives himself up to the heavenly Bridegroom in faith and love. The mutual acquiescence is essential for the covenant.⁴⁰ In this context, À Brakel distinguishes four aspects in the spiritual marriage: "1) God's offer to the sinner to bring him into a covenant; 2) the allurement by way of offering numerous advantageous conditions; 3) the consent and acceptance of this offer; 4) the right - granted to the partaker of the covenant by virtue of being in covenant with God - to request, in faith and through prayer, those benefits which God has promised and upon which he now has a claim."

This also makes clear that the member of the covenant is a real believer. The covenant and the promises are essentially only applicable to those people who have entered the covenant. We can also say that the essence of the covenant and the election concern the same people; À

³⁹ À Brakel treats the issue as to whether the law was a covenant extensively, see CRS 3:40-52 (RG 2.45.10-20).

⁴⁰ CRS 1:442 (RG 1.16.22). Unlike marriage, God's covenant does not depend on the parties, but is vested in Him alone, so it is unchangeable, CRS 4:286-96 (RG 2.56.15-22).

Brakel, therefore, rejects an external covenant.⁴¹ This is confirmed by his understanding of the people of Israel in the Old Testament: “In a general sense God established this covenant with the entire nation, but not with every individual. Everyone was to truly enter into this covenant by faith.”⁴²

To enter the covenant, it is necessary to be conscious that God deals with human beings in a covenantal way. So, we are convinced “that man is permitted to have, can have, and indeed does have covenant dealings with God (...) Such covenant transactions with God yield more clarity, steadfastness, comfort, and consistent growth. We wish therefore to exhort everyone to proceed to transact with God in the consciousness of entering into a covenant with God, since the Holy Scriptures so clearly and frequently make mention of this.”⁴³ The consciousness of entering into a covenant with God implies that the believer accepts Jesus and his benefits consciously, presents these to God, and pleads for salvation;⁴⁴ believers can also wrestle against spiritual darkness by claiming God’s promises.⁴⁵

The invitation to enter this covenant of marriage is wide, spacious and lovely. This happens in the preaching of “The gospel, which is the offer of this covenant.”⁴⁶ All unbelievers receive an invitation to marry the Lord Jesus. À Brakel continually urges his listeners not to deny this proposal, but to accept the heavenly Bridegroom.⁴⁷

In this context it is understandable that À Brakel rejects the notion of the Labadists i.e. that a believer had to deny every personal interest in his salvation,⁴⁸ because this condition hindered souls in coming to Jesus.

⁴¹ CRS 1:457-63 (RG 1.16.37). À Brakel distinguishes himself from his contemporaries Koelman and Van Mastricht who understood – with an appeal to the Old Testament – the external covenant as being broader than the election, C. Graafland, *Van Calvijn tot Comrie. Oorsprong en ontwikkeling van de leer van het verbond in het Gereformeerd Protestantisme*, vol. 3, Zoetermeer 1996, 344.

⁴² CRS 1:462 (RG 1.16.44).

⁴³ CRS 1:429-30 (RG 1.16.4).

⁴⁴ À Brakel writes about praying in the way of the covenant, CRS 3:451-52 (RG 2.25.11).

⁴⁵ CRS 3:475 (RG 2.25.30).

⁴⁶ CRS 1:462 (RG 1.16.31.2). F.J. Los underlines the emphasis on the free offer of the gospel in À Brakel, *Wilhelmus à Brakel*, 153.

⁴⁷ CRS 1:439 (RG 1.16.17). Compare CRS 1:449 (RG 1.16.27).

⁴⁸ CRS 3:8, 22, 399-400 (RG 2.1.12, 2.1.25, 2.22.6). On pages 495-97 (RG 2.26.3) À Brakel deals with Labadists without mentioning their name. In Volume 2 he refers to them 15 times, but not to this aspect of self-denial. For more detail of the aspect of self-denial, see also W. à Brakel, *Leere en Leydinge der Labadisten ontdekt en wederleijt in een*

As Jacobus Koelman (1632-1695),⁴⁹ À Brakel stresses that people may seek Jesus to be saved, because Christ reveals himself as the saviour of sinners.⁵⁰ From the perspective of marriage, it is self-evident that anyone who enters the covenant of marriage expects to be happy by entering this new state of life.

Believers are also invited to transact with God as a partaker of the covenant so that they might enjoy the blessings of the covenant.⁵¹ The continuing deepening of self-knowledge, in particular, manifests the necessity of Jesus more and more: “They frequently, if not a thousand times, receive the Lord Jesus by faith. They always believe that their reception of Him has not been as unreserved as it ought to have been and that it has not been with sufficient clarity and sincerity; it was not as wholehearted as it ought to have been. This receiving of Him is their daily food and therefore they repeat it over and over, not so much with the objective to be included in the covenant of grace, but with the objective to be more and more intimately united with Christ.”⁵²

If we do not understand this covenant-character of the gospel correctly, it will cause much spiritual darkness: “Those who flee to Jesus apart from the foundation of this offer, seldom attain assurance about their state, unless the Holy Spirit deals with them in an exceptional manner. This assurance will last no longer than the duration of the sweet

antwoort op P. Yvons examens over onze Trouwhertige Waerschouwinge, Rotterdam, Reinier van Doesburg, 1685, 50, 82-83, 166-71. For À Brakel’s debate about Labadism in general, compare CRS 1:lxiv-lxxi. The most extensive treatment about the relationship between the Dutch Second Reformation and Labadism can be found in C. Graafland, ‘De Nadere Reformatie en het Labadisme’, in: T. Brienens (ed.), *De Nadere Reformatie en het Gereformeerde Pietisme*, ‘s Gravenhage 1987, 275-346. About De Labadie and Labadism, see T.J. Saxby, *The Quest for the New Jerusalem. Jean de Labadie and the Labadists, 1610-1744*, Dordrecht 1987; D. Vidal, *Jean de Labadie (1610-1674). Passion mystique et esprit de Réforme*, Grenoble 2009.

⁴⁹ J. Koelman, *Historisch verhaal nopens der labadisten scheuring en veelerley dwalingen met de wederleggingen derzelve*, Leeuwarden, Gerrit Tresling en Pieter Brandsma, 1770, 254-55; ‘Voorrede aan de lezer’, in: T. Hooker, *De ware zielsvernedering en heilzame wanhoop*, Houten 1988, 30-50.

⁵⁰ This implies that self-love can be valued. Augustin made self-love a theme, *De Trinitate* X, XIV. In Calvin the positive valuation of self-love has disappeared, W. Huttinga, *Participation and Communicability. Herman Bavinck and John Milbank on the Relation between God and the World*, Amsterdam 2014, 68.

⁵¹ CRS 1:450 (RG 1.16.28).

⁵² CRS 2:323-24 (RG 1.33.32).

consciousness of grace. When this dissipates, they again live in fear, and question their previous assurance and comfort.”⁵³ The opposite is also true: F.J. Los tells us that insight into the covenant-structure of salvation has been a very great blessing to many people.⁵⁴

These examples clarify that the believer as the partner in the covenant has an essential place in spiritual life.⁵⁵ From this perspective À Brakel stresses the responsibility of human beings: They have to make a firm resolution.⁵⁶ They have to use the means of salvation,⁵⁷ they have to exercise continually⁵⁸ and be zealous in the service of the Lord.⁵⁹ In these emphases, we can also detect the stress on the human subject of modernity.⁶⁰ If the human will is the decisive faculty of the human soul,⁶¹ it is understandable that À Brakel’s theology and spirituality are very appealing.

Evaluating this research on À Brakel’s use of the covenant in the context of the research-question, we can conclude that the marriage-covenant is an important hermeneutic key to understanding his doctrine of the covenant. The metaphor of marriage explains and clarifies how the covenant is related to spiritual life, namely as the formal context of the intimacy of spiritual life. The metaphor also works the other way round: The use of the metaphor of the marriage underlines what a high privilege it is to have an intimate relationship with the heavenly Bridegroom. At the same time spiritual life is the central focus of À Brakel’s comprehensive

⁵³ CRS 2:613-14 (RG 1.42.26).

⁵⁴ Los, *Wilhelmus à Brakel*, 115.

⁵⁵ The position of the partaker of the covenant is also strong in the Westminster Confession, see W. van Vlastuin, ‘Personal Renewal between Heidelberg and Westminster’, in: *Journal of Reformed Theology*, 5 (2011), 49-67, especially 59-61, 63-64.

⁵⁶ In the third volume of CRS, 6 (of the 11) references to choice concern the human choice and I found 12 references to ‘resolution’.

⁵⁷ *Ibid.* 231 references to ‘means’, which usually referred to the instruments of salvation used by believers.

⁵⁸ *Ibid.* 130 references to ‘exercise’.

⁵⁹ *Ibid.* 22 references to ‘zealous’ and 52 to ‘earnest’.

⁶⁰ *Ibid.* 10 references to the believer as a human subject. We can also perceive this sensitivity to modernity when À Brakel devotes a chapter to the doubts about the faithfulness of Scripture, prompted by the methodic doubts of Descartes, CRS 4:199 (RG 2.50.1).

⁶¹ CRS 4:68 (RG 1.32.22).

doctrine of the covenant of grace and, therefore, of his theology in general.

The relationship between the church and the spiritual marriage.

One of the most distinguishing features in the structure of À Brakel's *The Christian's Reasonable Service* is the place of the church. He treats ecclesiology after Christology and before the pneumatological order of salvation. This special place is all the more evident when we compare this structure with other dogmatic handbooks in the reformed tradition.

In the first book of the *Institutes*, Calvin dealt with the doctrine of the Father, in the second with the doctrine of the Son and, in the third, with the work of the Spirit. In the fourth book he discussed ecclesiology under the heading of "The external means or helps by which God invites us to fellowship with Christ, and keeps us in." When the church is called the 'means', this creates an impression that the church is instrumentalised and functionalised, and that it is not an ultimate purpose in itself.

This approach seems representative of the reformed tradition. We recognize it in the Belgic Confession. First, the work of the Spirit in justification and salvation is treated, and then the church. William Ames (1576-1633) in *The Marrow of Sacred Divinity* and Francis Turretin (1623-1687) in the *Institutes of Elenctic Theology*, as well as À Brakel's contemporary Van Maastricht (1630-1706) in *Theoretico-practica theologia* also follow this order.

Against this background, À Brakel's choice is remarkable.⁶² This raises the intriguing question: What were the reasons for 'father Brakel' to make this theological decision? To answer this question, we have to look rather more precisely at the structure of his ecclesiology. We remember that À Brakel, in his treatment of the covenant of grace, spoke about the Surety of the covenant, the partakers of the covenant and the way in which Jesus leads the partakers of the covenant. This means that ecclesiology is a doctrine about the partakers of the covenant. The conclusion of this observation is that the church cannot be seen as an

⁶² F.A. van Lieburg also mentions this order in À Brakel, 'Redelijke Godsdienst', 188. There is, perhaps, a certain parallel in John Owen's thoughts about worship being communion with the triune God, R.M. McGraw, *A Heavenly Directory. Trinitarian Piety, Public Worship and a Reassessment of John Owen's Theology*, Göttingen 2014, 12, 27, 69-79, 116, 179, 211.

instrument, but belongs to the covenant as such. Being a member of the covenant and being a member of the church are different sides of the same coin.⁶³

This becomes the clearer when we realize that the church - as an expression of the covenant - is treated before Pneumatology. Placing the locus of the church before the many aspects of Pneumatology underlines the important place of the church in God's acts. The church is the joy of the earth⁶⁴ and the honour of Christ, while the virtues of believers are the jewels of the church.⁶⁵ Another result of this approach is that the unity of the church is self-evident. There is indeed only one Christ and one covenant of grace, so that there can exist only one church: "We wish to establish at the outset that there are not two or more churches, but only one Christian church."⁶⁶

The character of the church also coheres with the understanding that only real believers can determine the essence of the church.⁶⁷ Chaff is not grain, so unbelievers cannot be understood as real members of Christ's body. They are in its deepest essence hypocrites and the church cannot be understood as an addition of believers and unbelievers.

This position also offers À Brakel an opportunity to explain the distinction between the visible and the invisible church.⁶⁸ À Brakel rejects the thought that the invisible church involves real believers and the visible church contains believers and unbelievers. This implies that there are two churches which are not identical and which contain different numbers. He accepts the distinction between the invisible and the visible church, but in another way. In times of reformation and revival the church is more

⁶³ Compare CRS 2:11 (RG 1.24.12): "The church is founded upon the covenant. As the covenant is, so is the church."

⁶⁴ CRS 2:648 (RG 1.43, thesis 2.1): "Who can reflect upon the church without being ignited in love toward her? Of all that is found upon earth, she excels in glory, purity, and excellency [...]. The church is "[...] the joy of the whole earth" (Ps 48:2) and "[...] a praise in the earth" (Isa 62:7). It is the chief joy of God's children - yes, it exceeds all that is joyful."

⁶⁵ CRS 4:87 (RG 2.41.9.4): "Meekness is a glorious ornament of the church. The church is the glory of Christ, and when she is glorious, God and Christ are glorified."

⁶⁶ CRS 2:5 (1.24.3). At CRS 2:15 (RG 1.24.14) À Brakel explains 'one' in the apostolic creed.

⁶⁷ CRS 2:8 (RG 1.24.8). Jesus is the Head of the Church, CRS 3:278 (RG 2.15.2).

⁶⁸ CRS 2:5-8 (RG 1.24.4-6). For a contemporary expression of this approach, see M. Horton, *The Christian Faith. A Systematic Theology for Pilgrims on the Way*, Grand Rapids 2011, 852-53.

visible than in times of decay and persecution.⁶⁹ The visible church can become invisible and vice versa. Furthermore, he uses the concept of the invisible church to refer to the inner spiritual dimension of the church, which consists of repentance, love and faith. This dimension as such is not visible, but has visible expression in the public meetings of the church, the confession of the church and the use of the sacraments. The metaphor of marriage is very apt. Marriage has an inner dimension of love and faithfulness, while there is also a visible dimension in the public aspects of marriage. These two dimensions do not concern two marriages, but two dimensions of the same marriage.

In this way, À Brakel clarifies that the visible expression of the church is essential, because it is the public expression of the invisible faith. This implies that believers cannot miss or reject the visible church. The ungodliness of other members can never be a reason for separating from the church or withdrawing from the Lord's Supper.⁷⁰ Despite the decline of the church,⁷¹ believers have "The Duty to Join the Church and to Remain with Her."⁷²

À Brakel deals with the criticism that this concept of the church leads one to conclude that we can achieve a sound church on earth⁷³ which also implies that we can know who the real members of the church are. This criticism reminds À Brakel of the Labadists with whom he had struggled so intensely.⁷⁴ It is also probable that, through this struggle he

⁶⁹ CRS 2:41-42 (RG 1.24.42). Compare C. Graafland, 'De kerk in de Nadere Reformatie – Wilhelmus à Brakel (1635-1711)', in: W. van't Spijker (ed.), *De kerk. Wezen, weg en werk van de kerk naar reformatorische opvatting*, Kampen 1990, 163-86, here 172.

⁷⁰ See À Brakel's treatment of this issue, *De scrupuleuse omtrent de communie des H. Avontmaals in een verdorvene kerke onderrechtet*, Rotterdam, Reinier van Doesburg, 1690.

⁷¹ Many people in the church do not love Jesus. This is apparent in the swearing, gambling, eating and fornication, CRS 3:277-79 (RG 2.15.2). The church of the Netherlands is corrupt in morals and novelties, CRS 3:359 (RG 2.20.9). See also CRS 2:73 (RG 1.25.18-19); W. à Brakel, *Trouwhertige Waerschouwinge*, 46-81; the introduction in *Leere en Leydinge der Labadisten*; Los, Wilhelmus à Brakel, 207-14.

⁷² The title of Chapter 25, see CRS 2:55 (RG 1.25).

⁷³ CRS 2:14 (RG 1.24.13).

⁷⁴ Of the 15 references to Labadie and his followers, all but one refer to the church. See also W. à Brakel, *Leere en leydinge der Labadisten*, 12-13. Compare Los, *Wilhelmus à Brakel*, 54-60, 191-231. According to F.A. van Lieburg, À Brakel's *Redelijke Godsdienst* led to the development of a labadistic subculture in the national church, 'Redelijke Godsdienst', 192.

arrived at his high estimation of the church. His response clarifies his essential difference with Labadism: “One ought not to identify the church by regeneration, but by the true doctrine, and the sanctification of the confessing members conjoined with this true doctrine. These two are identifiable, and wherever these two are present, the true church is to be found. Whether someone possesses these two in truth or in pretence is a personal matter, however, and is not to be a distinguishing mark for the church for others.”⁷⁵

This implies that it is not for the church herself to unmask the unbelievers in order to move them out of the church; the church is a community of believers who confess the real faith and we know that there are hypocrites among the confessors. We will never, therefore, realise a sound church on earth. There are times that the Spirit revives and reforms his church, but that is not an act carried out by human beings.⁷⁶

Because of this expectation of the Spirit, À Brakel can evaluate the unbelievers in the church as potential believers.⁷⁷ Despite the fact that he thinks of covenant and church in the smallest possible circles, he is still a pastor in the church privileged by political authorities. Although he does not explain this factor theologically, he also understands the church as an instrument to bring unbelievers to faith. So, the church is not only a gathering of believers, but also a mother of believers who can bring people to faith.⁷⁸

⁷⁵ CRS 2:14 (RG 1.24.13). À Brakel understands the purity of doctrine as the first mark of the church, CRS 2:29-34 (RG 1.24.34-35). He describes the holiness of the members of the church as its second mark. He also refers to the proper administration of the sacraments and the use of the keys of God’s kingdom, CRS 2:34-37 (RG 1.24.36-37).

⁷⁶ À Brakel is familiar with the concept of the outpouring of the Spirit, CRS 2:29, 61, 73, 84, 483, 487, 651 (RG 1.24.35; 1.25.9, 19, 28; 1.38.25; 1.39.1; 1.43.5).

⁷⁷ CRS 2:100 (RG 1.26.15).

⁷⁸ These notions are expressed by Samuel Rutherford in his understanding of a national visible church according to the model of the Old Testament which is clearly distinguished from the invisible church, *The Due Right of Presbyteries, or A Peaceable Plea for the government of the Church of Scotland*, London, Richard Whittaker and Andrew Cook, 1644, 244-88. See also J. Coffey, *Politics, religion and the British revolutions. The mind of Samuel Rutherford*, Cambridge 1997, 167-68. Rutherford rejected “the pure invisible church of the elect, and the mixed visible church of professors” and he defended the Augustinian understanding of the visible church as a draw net, 205-206. The National Covenant of 1638 in Scotland was an expression of this broader and public understanding of God’s covenant. C. Graafland remarks that À Brakel holds - in agreement with Beza and Zanchius - to a pure church in the midst of an empirical broad

This implies that, with regard to spirituality, we can speak about an ecclesial spirituality. Spiritual life has its centre in the union and communion with Christ in the heart of the individual believer, but it is not individualistic, because it functions in the midst of the church. The church has a meaning above the personal life. It is possible to speak about the super-personal dimension of the church, implying that believers seek communion with each other. This includes also communion with the spirits of just men in heaven.⁷⁹ Christians have a catholic spirit which they feel unites them with the children of God all over the world whom they pray for.⁸⁰ In short, they “cherish the church above their chief joy upon earth.”

From the perspective of the research-question, we can conclude that the metaphor of marriage fits the understanding of the church. As a married couple acknowledges the public and super-personal dimension of marriage, so the church belongs to spiritual life. This means that spiritual life is not completely subjective but is carried by, and gets its stability from, the objectivity of the church. Or, from the perspective of marriage, it is self-evident that unbelievers do not share the essence of the church, namely the mutual spiritual relationship with Christ. The metaphor of marriage as an interpretative framework of the church also clarifies that understanding the outer presentation of the church does not mean one can understand its essence or the essence of its real members.

The relationship between spirituality and the spiritual marriage

We look again at the chapters which deal with the church. Chapter 24 is called: ‘Of the church’. The next chapter is called: ‘The Duty to Join the Church and to Remain with Her’. Followed by the chapter: ‘The Communion of Believers with Christ and with Each Other’. Chapter 27 deals again with the church: ‘The Government of the Church, and Particularly the Commissioning of Ministers’. The next chapter about the church bears the title: ‘The Offices of Minister, Elder, and Deacon’.

national church, *Van Calvijn tot Comrie*, 3:345-47. So, despite some practical openness in À Brakel, exemplified by his call for a broader understanding of the church, unlike Rutherford and Augustine, theologically he connects the visible and invisible church.

⁷⁹ CRS 2:99 (RG 1.26.14).

⁸⁰ CRS 2:100 (RG 1.26.15). Jesus, angels and believers love the church, CRS 3:518-19 (RG 2.27.22). It is God’s glory on earth.

Chapter 29 is the last chapter about the church: ‘Ecclesiastical Authority and the Use of the Keys of the Kingdom of Heaven’.

We conclude that, in the heart of ecclesiology, we find a chapter about the communion with Christ and with each other which reveals in two ways how we have to understand the church spiritually. We can think from the perspective of the church and conclude that the heart of the church is determined by the communion with Christ and the other believers. We can also choose to think from the opposite direction - from the point of view of spiritual life and acknowledge that that functions in the midst of the visible church.

À Brakel explains that there is a union with Christ which can be experienced better than any union expressed in words could.⁸¹ This union with Christ is not a relationship as such, but something much deeper. Believers are one with Christ in reality. Here, the metaphor of the marriage is qualified by the indwelling of the Spirit and the uniting of faith.⁸² It must be remarked that the union with Christ as a person is primary with regard to participating in the benefits of Christ.⁸³ It is here that the great difference between hypocrites and real believers appears. Real believers unite themselves with the person of Christ, while hypocrites are only interested in Christ’s goods. Meanwhile, believers have an existential life-union with Christ and share his nature, son ship, satisfaction, obedience, intercession, glory, Spirit, strength, benefits and his sufferings.⁸⁴

After designing this framework, À Brakel is able to use it to spiritually explore the communion with Christ that grows from the union with Him. From this point he developed his thoughts about the

⁸¹ CRS 2:89 (RG 1.26.3).

⁸² The metaphor of marriage is used several times to clarify the mystery of the union with Christ, CRS 2:86-90 (1.26.2-5).

⁸³ CRS 2:91 (RG 1.26.6). Compare CRS 2:323-29; 3:20 (RG 1.33.33.2; 2.1.23). See CRS 2:323 (RG 1.33.33.2): “They receive Jesus by faith rather than indulging themselves in speculating about doctrinal issues and saving benefits. They go to the fountain itself and are engaged in transactions with God and Christ Himself.” This approach differs from Melancthon who explained knowing Christ as knowing his benefits, W. van Vlastuin, ‘The promise of *unio mystica*. An inquiry into the functioning of a spiritual-theological concept in the Heidelberg Catechism’, in: A. Huijgen and E.A. de Boer (eds.), *Spirituality of the Heidelberg Catechism*, Göttingen 2015, 168-85, here 173-74 and 183.

⁸⁴ CRS 2:91-92 (RG 1.26.7), 333-34 (RG 1.33.43).

communion with Christ - making six aspects more concrete.⁸⁵ First, this communion is practised in contemplation of the council of peace, Christ's incarnation, suffering, death, resurrection and ascension in which the believer reflects on the love and willingness of Christ, in order to glorify Him and to enjoy Him.⁸⁶ Second, communion with Jesus implies that "the heart of the believer goes out in love to Jesus, viewing Him as his own and as being his Bridegroom." In the work of À Brakel we perceive this mystery of love on a regular basis. When he describes the difference between the hypocrites and the real saints, he refers to this love as the person of Christ.⁸⁷ Remarkably enough, in the second book, after finishing a chapter about the love of God, he dedicated a special chapter to the love of Jesus (3.58) as an indication of the special place that Jesus has in his devotion.

A third aspect of the communion with Christ is "familiar discourse". This intercourse with Jesus is very intense and intimate, because it touches the deepest affections. The next aspect of the communion with Christ is exercised "in dependence upon Him. In love she leans upon Him, entrusting to Him her soul, her body, and whatever she may encounter." Communion with Christ is also practiced "by asking counsel. If something must be performed or refrained from, she will neither proceed blindly nor will she trust her own judgment."

The last spiritual frame which À Brakel mentions, concerns the use of Jesus' benefits, especially his strength: "By making use of His strength and all His benefits as her own. The believing soul knows that she may avail herself of Jesus' benefits, that this is pleasing to Him, and that He has given them to her for that very purpose. If a sin has been committed, she will flee to the blood of Jesus [...]. If she is weak, she will take hold of His strength, and in union with Jesus will overcome all resistance, doing whatever is according to Jesus' will."⁸⁸

⁸⁵ CRS 2:94-96 (RG 1.26.10). Compare De Reuver, *Sweet Communion*, 238.

⁸⁶ Compare De Reuver, *Sweet Communion*, 238.

⁸⁷ CRS 2:325 (RG 1.33.33). The language of Song of Songs, together with the Psalms is the most suitable for expressing spiritual experience, CRS 2:324 (RG 1.33.32). T. Schwanda mentions the special place of Song of Songs in puritan piety too, "Sweetness in Communion with God", 39, 58, 60.

⁸⁸ In the warnings against pietists and quietists, À Brakel stresses that the real communion with Christ has his reconciliation as its central focus, CRS 2:684 (RG 1.43.25): "You will then perceive that all this lofty speech only relates to the Lord Jesus as King, or as an example for imitation, but not as High Priest in order to find reconciliation and

À Brakel deals extensively with the effects of the communion with Christ.⁸⁹ It provides comfort in all the circumstances of life. It is the mystery which helps the believer to bear the contempt of the world. Because Christ is our wealth, communion with Him is the fountain in poorness. Communion with Christ gives the believer the strength to bear persecution and to experience the nearness of Christ in it. Furthermore, communion with Christ is the only remedy for the many sicknesses of our souls. This can be applied to the fear of death. Communion with Christ also functions in the framework of Christian hope. From the intercourse with Jesus we long for the last judgment, because it is then that we will see the full glory of the Bridegroom.

Finally, À Brakel advises that the communion with Christ should continue without decline.⁹⁰ On the one hand, believers have to be careful not to distress Jesus, not to be careless, not to be overwhelmed by the fear of human beings, while, on the other, they have to make positive use of the duties such as faith, patience, prayer and wrestling with God on the basis of His promises. He has to be used to the communion with Christ and to be patient if it is difficult. In this latter last case, the Christian has to be conscious that faith is not only affective, but also rational.⁹¹

His accent on the life of faith is remarkable. However affective the communion with Christ may be and must be, ultimately the believer cannot be led by it, but by the promises of the Word.⁹² Despite the fact

peace with God in His atonement, doing so by a continual and frequently repeated exercise of faith, which is the marrow and essence of true Christianity.”

⁸⁹ CRS 2:92-94 (RG 1.26.9). The chapter on Christian contentment is also important, CRS 3:379-396 (RG 2:21).

⁹⁰ CRS 2:96-97 (RG 1.26.11).

⁹¹ Compare CRS 4:267 (RG 2.55.3): “Some are not aware of the fact that spiritual life consists in the enjoyment of union with God through Christ, and that it manifests itself in the conscious yearning of the heart after God, in being united with His will, and in conducting ourselves as being in the presence of God. Instead, such only take notice of the emotions and the sensible motions within, and the clear revelations of God to the soul.” The original Dutch expression “*verstandige uitgangen des harten naar God*” is somewhat clearer than its English translation: “conscious yearning of the heart”.

⁹² CRS 2:97 (RG 1.26.11). Compare CRS 2:466-67 (RG 1.27.20). In spiritual darkness faithfulness is more important than sweet experience: “Love will indeed manifest itself in sweet affections, but in essence it consists in the will being engaged by the intellect [...]. It is a much more courageous deed to remain faithful to Jesus in darkness and while being subject to internal strife, than when you enjoy many sweet frames and the comforts of the Spirit”, CRS 3:363-64 (RG 2.20.9.4). It is the great error of pietists and

that he has written so much about the sweetnesses, he remarks that the full sweet communion with Christ will be kept for heaven and that the time spent on earth is a time to fight. Apparently, the sweetnesses in this life are the first fruits of the full harvest. Furthermore, during life on earth we have to live by faith and in the understanding that our full direct enjoyment of Jesus will be in the future.⁹³

The framework of faith in God's Word does not detract from the fact that the spiritual relationship with Christ has an affective character. À Brakel employs a rich devotional language that includes joy, peace, communion, love, experience, etcetera. Space prevents a more detailed analysis beyond the following treatment of joy. Looking at the Table of Contents in the first book of the *Christian's Reasonable Service* one can see that the theme of joy is discussed as a special subject. Unlike others in his tradition, À Brakel treats the affective dimension of faith explicitly. In the second book about the life of the believers there are more chapters which are related to the affective dimension of spiritual life, but it is nevertheless remarkable that, in the first book about God's act, the affective dimension is also present.

It is important to note that À Brakel starts this chapter about the affective dimension of faith by making the remark that human beings are created for joy.⁹⁴ The unconverted feel the emptiness of their hearts and seek satisfaction in visible things such as houses, jewels, clothes, money, gardens, meals, status, relationships of wisdom, but these things cannot fill the heart.⁹⁵ The believer understands the idleness of visible things and is conscious that satisfaction of the deepest needs can only be found in God. À Brakel says that we accept Jesus for justification, sanctification,

quietists that they live against and without the Word of God, compare A. de Reuver, 'Wilhelmus à Brakel en het piëtisme', in: *Documentieblad Nadere Reformatie*, 22.2 (1998), 82-90, here 88-89. From the third print run onwards À Brakel's *magnum opus* also included the chapter 'The Life of Faith in reference to the Promises', CRS 2:601-38 (RG 1.42).

⁹³ Believers cannot expect immediate experiences like those that Stephen and Paul had, CRS 1:652 (RG 1.23.44). A. de Reuver sees a tension in the eschatological aspect of À Brakel's spirituality, *Sweet Communion*, 239 but he acknowledges that À Brakel is careful to clarify that this interaction is not beside or without the Word of God. We can say, however, that the character as *viva vox* (living voice) of Scripture functions maximally.

⁹⁴ CRS 2:455 (RG 1.37.1). Compare CRS 2:601 (RG 1.42.1), 3:287 (RG 2.15.7.3).

⁹⁵ CRS 2:456 (RG 1.37.2).

peace, joy and felicity.⁹⁶ Apparently, joy is not only a fruit of justification, but is described as being on the same level as justification. This means that the essence of salvation can be described as joy.⁹⁷

Joy in God is an immediate effect of true faith.⁹⁸ But, because this joy is not only a privilege for some select believers,⁹⁹ it distinguishes the real believers from the hypocrites. The true believers “cannot experience any happiness until they may in actuality partake of and enjoy communion with God in Christ. Their joys and sorrows are proportionate to whether they are far from or near to Him.”¹⁰⁰ “This joy is very different from the faint glimmers experienced by temporal believers.”¹⁰¹

For this reason, À Brakel recommends that the ‘normal’ believer should get used to God, so that joy in Him becomes a basic attitude of his life. Believers should also be conscious that the melancholic life does not honour God.¹⁰² The lack of joy leads to spiritual decline and darkness. In this situation, believers have to seek the warming of their souls again. They have to realize that God is happy with the happiness of his children.¹⁰³ Above that, having joy in God is a great strength helping believers to withstand deceits.¹⁰⁴

Does the concept of spiritual joy imply that we do not take the old nature of sin seriously? The Rotterdam pastor said that this question reflected a life lived at the level of the covenant of works instead of the covenant of grace.¹⁰⁵ Joy in God is not founded on human spiritual qualities, but on the qualities of Jesus Christ.

The focus on joy is not restricted to the chapter about joy. A study of words such as ‘joy’, ‘joyful’, ‘rejoice’, ‘sweet’, ‘delight’ and ‘felicity’ in the total body of À Brakel’s work reveals that these concepts are manifold;

⁹⁶ CRS 4:210 (RG 2.51.4).

⁹⁷ CRS 2:601 (RG 1.42.1). Compare 3:263 (RG 2.14.1), 266 (RG 2.14.3), 286-87 (RG 2.15.7); 4:29 (RG 2.35.7).

⁹⁸ CRS 2:459 (RG 1.37.10.1).

⁹⁹ CRS 2:461 (RG 1.37.12).

¹⁰⁰ CRS 2:327 (RG 1.33.35.4).

¹⁰¹ CRS 2:329 (RG 1.33.35.4).

¹⁰² CRS 2:462 (RG 1.37.14).

¹⁰³ CRS 2:463 (RG 1.37.16).

¹⁰⁴ CRS 2:464 (RG 1.37.18).

¹⁰⁵ CRS 2:465 (RG 1.37.19).

research in the digital edition revealed 2,416 references.¹⁰⁶ Apparently, À Brakel can be called a ‘theologian of joy’. It is his conviction that believers can serve God with joy and, in this way, he proclaims the Christian life. This joy implies that, in God, all the needs of the human heart are satisfied, because in God is found the fullness of happiness,¹⁰⁷ and a satisfaction with His all-sufficiency.¹⁰⁸

This means that the application of salvation is an affected heart. Believers should meditate long enough to be touched inside by the message of the gospel.¹⁰⁹ In these meditations is real sweetness.¹¹⁰ Therefore, À Brakel distinguishes between intellectual understanding and the touch of the heart.¹¹¹ This leads to an “experiential vision, presently experiencing and tasting the efficacy and sweetness of these incomprehensible perfections.”¹¹² In the continuing reflection on the sufferings of Christ, believers increasingly apply the comfort of reconciliation: “Therefore be engaged in such reflection and rest not until you can rejoice in it.”¹¹³ In this way, there is special joy in Christ’s kingship.¹¹⁴ The reflection on Christ’ glorification, in particular, offers believers the possibility of satisfying the human soul.¹¹⁵

From the perspective of the research-question we can conclude that the inner affective and joyful communion with Christ belongs to the heart of the spiritual marriage. The interpretative framework of the

¹⁰⁶ Smalley, *Satisfied with the Lord’s All-Sufficiency*, 2. A search was also made of the words ‘enjoy’, ‘happy’, ‘happiness’ and ‘satisfied’. The result was that there are several more concepts that relate to joy in À Brakel. Jeremiah Burroughs calls the satisfaction of the heart “‘the life and soul of all practical Divinity’”, *The Rare Jewel of Christian Contentment*, London, W. Bentley, 1651, 1, compare 79. In the puritan Edward Leigh we also find an explicit connection between the happiness in God and the happiness in believers, *A Treatise of Divinity: Consisting of Three Books*, vol. 2, London, William Lee, 1646, 123-25.

¹⁰⁷ CRS 2:93 (RG 1.26.8).

¹⁰⁸ CRS 1:437 (RG 1.16.17).

¹⁰⁹ CRS 1:612-13 (RG 1.22.32).

¹¹⁰ CRS 1:614 (RG 1.22.32).

¹¹¹ CRS 1:653 (RG 1.23.38). I wonder whether the word ‘reflect’ is the right word for the Dutch ‘beschouwen’, because À Brakel understood ‘beschouwen’ as an aspect of the spiritual communion with Christ and the direct spiritual vision of Christ.

¹¹² CRS 1:654 (RG 1.23.39).

¹¹³ CRS 1:620 (RG 1.22.38).

¹¹⁴ CRS 1:570 (RG 1.21.13).

¹¹⁵ CRS 1:653 (RG 1.23.38).

spiritual marriage helps one to understand the character of the spiritual communion better, whilst its application helps to urge believers to have an intimate relationship with Christ. Although À Brakel does not make this explicit, one could also imagine this interpretative framework being useful as an extra instrument against the Labadistic understanding of the disinterested relationship with the Saviour.

Conclusions and considerations

How can the metaphor of marriage provide us with a deeper understanding of Wilhelmus à Brakel's theology and spirituality? Research into the major theological structures of his *magnum opus* has led to the following conclusions and considerations.

First, the metaphor of marriage provides a clearer understanding of the structures of À Brakel's theology and spirituality; the covenant is then understood as the formal status of the spiritual marriage, the church as the external expression of the spiritual marriage and the affective communion with Christ as the inner heart of the spiritual marriage. Using the interpretative framework of the spiritual marriage reveals that there is a great deal of coherence between the dimensions of covenant, church and communion.

Second, the investigations of this article show the unique approach of À Brakel in using spiritual marriage as a concept that unites covenant, church and communion with Christ. While, in the contemplative-mystical tradition, the metaphor of the spiritual marriage was used to understand the intimate spiritual and affective communion with Christ, À Brakel applied the same concept to the structures of the covenant and church. It appears that he unites the ecclesiastical approach of Augustine, Calvin and Udemans on the one hand with the mystical approach of Origen, Bernard and the later reformed tradition on the other hand. This means that this research has clarified that À Brakel cannot be categorised exclusively as a mystical interpreter of the spiritual marriage.¹¹⁶

Third, the spiritual marriage metaphor must not be made absolute. Absolutising it creates misunderstanding and bias because the metaphor becomes an aim in itself and several aspects of the Christian

¹¹⁶ Compare Verduin, *Canticum Canticorum*, 742-43, 746.

life are pressed into a system which does not honour the fact that spiritual reality cannot be completely summarised in a human concept.

Fourth, the use of the spiritual marriage as a key-metaphor to interpret À Brakel's theology and spirituality also clarifies the relationship between, and the coherence of, his theology and spirituality. His theology was not intended to be a method of speculating about theological issues, but to serve spirituality. We can also conclude that À Brakel's theology has a practical spiritual character.

Fifth, the research in this article can also help to clarify the relationship between the covenant and communion with Christ. As opposed to some interpretations which claim covenant-theology is opposed to communion-theology,¹¹⁷ the metaphor of spiritual marriage pleads for a union between the two and clarifies that an antithesis between these approaches is not necessary and cannot be generalised in the reformed-pietistic tradition.

Sixth, the suggestions for further research fit well with the themes in this article. The historical roots of À Brakel's theology of the covenant could be investigated, for example. Is there any coherence with Herman Witsius and how might the influence of Coccejan on À Brakel be described?¹¹⁸ What is the historical root of À Brakel's ecclesiastical

¹¹⁷ According to J.B. Torrance, in the Westminster Theology, union with Christ is opposed to the contract-thinking of the covenant, 'Strength and Weaknesses of the Westminster Theology', in: A.I.C. Heron (ed.), *The Westminster Confession in the Church Today*, Edinburgh 1982, 44-48. T.F. Torrance agrees and adds that the covenant belongs to a logical-causal structure in order to execute God's eternal decrees, *Scottish Theology. From John Knox to John McLeod Campbell*, Edinburgh 1996, 136-44. We find the same approach in J. Knight's understanding of the differences in Massachusetts, *Orthodoxies in Massachusetts*, Harvard 1994. See the introduction: "When I read Richard Sibbes, John Cotton [...], I find a passionate mysticism [...], an emphasis on charity at odds with the logic of contract", 2.

¹¹⁸ H. Witsius also developed his theology in the form of covenant-theology, *The Economy of the Covenants between God and man. Comprehending A Complete Body of Divinity*, London 1822 (reprint Phillipsburg, 1990). J. van Genderen denies that there is any Coccejan influence on À Brakel, 'Wilhelmus à Brakel (1635-1711)', in: *De Nadere Reformatie. Beschrijving van haar voornaamste vertegenwoordigers*, 's Gravenhage 1986, 165-91, here 167. C. Graafland, however, suggests that there is a Coccejan influence, *Van Calvijn tot Comrie*, vol. 3, 343, while W.J. van Asselt thinks positively about this influence, *Amicitia Dei. Een onderzoek naar de structuur van de theologie van Johannes Coccejus (1603-1669)*, s.l. 1988, 105, 144, 220.

approach of the spiritual marriage, in comparison with other reformed and puritan pietists?

An interesting, deeper investigation could be made with respect to the church: how did À Brakel derive his remarkable approach and what was his approach's influence? A deeper analysis of the precise ecclesiology of À Brakel would also deepen the understanding of this theology and spirituality. Many questions surrounding the communion with Christ are worthy of further research too. What, for example, was its relationship with the Middle Ages in general, and with Bernard in particular?¹¹⁹ It would also be interesting to examine the relationship between puritan theology and spirituality, or contemporary spirituality.¹²⁰ From a systematic-theological perspective researching how the communion with Christ relates to the communion with the triune God could produce interesting results.¹²¹ In addition to this current research on À Brakel, a fresh approach to his anti-intellectual affective concept of faith would be useful in furthering the academic understanding of À Brakel and serving the pastoral practice of the church today.

Summary

The author of this article was struck by the fact that Wilhelmus à Brakel (1635-1711) used the metaphor of the spiritual marriage at decisive moments in his *magnum opus The Christian's Reasonable Service*. Together with some remarkable theological decisions in this work it led him to the hypothesis that the metaphor of the spiritual marriage – as an interpretative framework – could clarify À Brakel's theology and spirituality. An investigation of À Brakel's understanding of the covenant, the church and the communion with Christ in the framework of the spiritual marriage was therefore made. À Brakel's use of these concepts was explored in more detail and it was concluded that the metaphor of the spiritual marriage helps one to understand the coherence in À Brakel's theology and spirituality better. The covenant can be interpreted as the formal status of the spiritual marriage, the church as the external expression of the spiritual marriage, while the personal communion with Christ as Bridegroom and its satisfaction of the soul can be understood as the heart of the spiritual

¹¹⁹ Compare D.E. Tamburello for the spiritual marriage in Bernard, *Union with Christ*, 91.

¹²⁰ According to I. Terlouw, the concept of a 'personal relationship with Jesus' in the evangelical movement has its roots in seventeenth century pietism, *Real Faith. Performativity and Materiality in the Personal Relationship with Jesus of Evangelical Protestants*, Delft 2015, 35, 67-68.

¹²¹ John Owen wrote about *Communion with God the Father, Son, and Holy Ghost*, Edinburgh 1990 (reprint of 1850-53).

marriage. This is not to absolutise the metaphor of the spiritual marriage in À Brakel's theology, but to use it as an instrument to clarify the relationships within the structures of his theology. It also helps the reader to understand the relationship between theology and spirituality and clarifies that applications of the spiritual marriage metaphor to the church and to the mystical union with Christ are not mutually exclusive.

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Book reviews

The Practice of Devotion in Early Modern Britain

Jessica Martin and Alec Ryrie (eds.), *Private and Domestic Devotion in Early Modern Britain* (St Andrews studies in Reformation history), Farnham and Burlington, VT: Ashgate, 2012; viii + 285 pp.; ISBN 9781409431312; £ 79.00.

Natalie Mears and Alec Ryrie (eds.), *Worship and the Parish Church in Early Modern Britain* (St Andrews studies in Reformation history), Farnham and Burlington, VT: Ashgate, 2013; vi + 250 pp.; ISBN 9781409426042; £ 70.00.

Alec Ryrie, *Being Protestant in Reformation Britain*, Oxford: Oxford University Press, 2013; xiii + 498 pp.; ISBN 9780199565726; £ 45.99.

The books under review here advance an approach to early modern religious history which owes a considerable debt to anthropology. All three works focus on how religion was practised, rather than theorized, debated, or sanctioned. It quickly becomes clear, however, that such distinctions are hard to maintain. Vital experimentation was to be found in the seemingly mundane aspects of religious life in sixteenth- and seventeenth-century Britain, creating tensions which further complicate and enrich our understanding of early Protestantism.

Private and Domestic Devotion is a book “about how people in early modern England and Scotland prayed when they weren’t in church” (p. 1). The first two essays lay down solid foundations: focusing on England, Ian Green tackles some who, how, and why questions and Jane Dawson looks to Scotland to consider some where, what, and when questions. Context was, unsurprisingly, formative to the character and function of prayer. Individuals, households, and churches each wrestled with defining and then fulfilling their devotional responsibilities; but, ‘the strong strand of continuity within devotional practices helped the transition from late medieval Catholicism to Reformation Protestantism’ (p. 34). Ten specialist essays follow.

Erica Longfellow places *Eikon Basilike* (1649) within early modern discussions about religious solitude. When presenting Charles I as “alone in prayer” (p. 58), the writer(s) of the text exploited “the English perception of solitary prayer as diminished and inferior” to turn “royal arrogance” into an act of self-imposed “suffering” (p. 63 and p. 61). Longfellow’s argument is intriguing rather than convincing, for solitary prayer remained an ideal for many Protestants (see,

Being Protestant, pp. 155-67). Alec Ryrie interrogates Protestant experiences of sleeping, waking, and dreaming. Prayers “not only sought sweet rest”, but offered a “means to it” (pp. 80-81). “Waking prayer was not so much a duty as a symptom of your spiritual state” (p. 83). And, dreams “provided a spiritual gauge which was otherwise rarely available” (p. 91). Notwithstanding some fascinating analysis, Ryrie’s study projects a somewhat idealized picture which fails to engage with the insights of A. Roger Ekrich’s noteworthy essay ‘Sleep We Have Lost’ (2001).

Through a close reading of the writings of Anne Lock (*fl.* 1560) which were bound within her edition of the *Sermons of John Calvin* (1560), Micheline White explores how select biblical passages (especially Isa. 38:9–22 and Psal. 50/51) were imbued with new forms of meaning inflected by Calvinist anti-Catholicism. Early Protestant devotion to the Cross was, as Jessica Martin makes clear, hardly devoid of sensual experience; although, in contrast to a Catholic sense of the Passion, it was “refracted through Pauline theory, where knowing Christ crucified is a mode of life, [...] rather than a meditation upon an event” (p. 123).

Marking a distinction between learning religious history and undertaking worship, Tara Hamling shows how “crafted images and objects distributed around the domestic interior could function as mnemonic tools to reinforce learning, to prompt and support approved forms of Protestant prayer” (p. 137). Whilst an exemplary study of its kind, it is a moot point whether Hamling’s reliance upon cognitive anthropology actually creates a barrier to historicizing early modern domestic spirituality. In addressing the tension between “lay Bible reading” and clerical “exegesis”, Kate Narveson shows how the “laity were not called to *interpret* Scripture”, but rather asked to implicitly “confirm the grounds of doctrine already laid down elsewhere” (pp. 167-68). Narveson’s essay may have benefited from a more robust consideration of the relationship between hermeneutics and exegesis; and, it is a shame that Andrew Cambers’s impressive *Godly Reading* (2011) arrived too late to be included in Narveson’s thinking. Jeremy Schildt investigates manuscript notebooks to understand better the “skills of biblical devotion” (p. 195): in the case of the nonconformist minister Owen Stockton (1630–1680) and his wife Elianor, “reading and reflection, writing and re-reading” are presented as “transforming the Word read into the Word written into the Word lived” (p. 205). This claim is thought-provoking; but then, it surely owes much to the seminal essay ‘Studied for Action’ (1990) by Lisa Jardine and Antony Grafton, and more problematically, risks reducing the acquisition and expression of spiritual knowledge to a set of worldly, inter-textual skills and strategies.

Hannibal Hamlin notes how, among both Catholics and Protestants, the “ecumenical appeal of the Penitential Psalms” (p. 221) meant they were “an essential piece of the furniture of domestic devotion” in the early modern home (p. 235). Yet, Beth Quitslund observes how singing the Psalms emerged out of an evangelical impulse for extra-liturgical reform. Functioning between “*pastime* and *recreation*”, prescribed learning was turned into a communal, domestic activity of “devotional expression”, especially at times of joy and distress (p. 240). Here the historical detail is most welcome; but it is unclear whether the general thrust of the discussion goes much beyond Patrick Collinson’s essay ‘Elizabethan and Jacobean Puritanism as Forms of Popular Religious Culture’ (1996) – strangely not cited by Quitslund.

Finally, Alison Shell examines John Austin’s *Devotions in the Ancient Way of Offices* (1668): a Catholic book which gained cross-confessional appeal. The *Devotions* gave spiritual succour to Catholic households by providing readers with the tools to “practise fraternal correction” and to undertake a “quasi-monastic” form of “intimate worship” (pp. 263, 271). However, as a work of “literary recusancy”, Austin’s text was appropriated and revised by the likes of Theophilus Dorrington, Susanna Hopton, and George Hicks as part of a polymorphous “counter-culture agenda” which spoke to the experiences of non-jurors, “Anglican” religious societies, and even John Wesley (p. 279). This line of thinking will be invaluable for the next generation of studies on religious activism and association at the turn of the eighteenth century.

Worship and the Parish Church is the companion volume to *Private and Domestic Devotion* and explores the “experience of parish worship in England and Scotland during the Reformation and the century that followed” (dust jacket). The volume comprises ten essays. When it came to Elizabethan baptism and burial, Hannah Cleugh shows how a tendency to uphold some pre-Reformation practices complicated the Church’s commitment to predestinarian soteriology, marking a distinction between “what “the Church” believed and what its members learnt as they participated in its services” (p. 30).

Natalie Mears investigates the official, specially commissioned liturgies that complemented the Book of Common Prayer. These “nationwide prayers, fasts, and thanksgivings were not “strategies of persuasion” to shore up Tudor authority”, but part of an ongoing tradition designed to elicit constructive forms of collective action in response to the apparent interventions of divine providence (p. 52). Mears’s unwillingness to consider a more nuanced approach to religio-political propaganda is something of a weakness. But, the significance of the study is, as Mears herself states, to force scholars to differentiate between different strands of liturgical practice when considering the nature and speed of

changing attitudes to reform and conformity (p. 53). Turning to official primers, Bryan Spinks presents a twofold argument: primers “added to the other ambiguities and mixed messages of the Elizabethan Settlement of Religion” by helping to maintain a “more traditional Catholic piety” (p. 81); and, as they were superseded by collections of prayers, communicants gradually became habituated to more Protestant modes of private devotion that were “quite different from the form of public worship of the corporate Church” (p. 85).

Alec Ryrie takes on the subject of fasting. Up to around 1550, “fast-breaking” was an appealing way of expressing evangelical anti-Catholicism (pp. 93-94). Tudor Protestants were, however, quick to ensure that fasting remained a pious ideal. Whilst ‘Reformed’ fasting was certainly different to its Catholic predecessor, there remained “a tendency to drift back” to quasi-Catholic “patterns of regular observation” (p. 102). Here Ryrie perceptively advances the historiography on both how people became Protestant and the subsequent “instability and contradictions of Protestantism” (p. 108).

Three essays address matters musical. Peter McCullough shows how Jacobean ecclesiastical culture gave rise to a brief period whereby preachers and choirs were not necessarily seen in binary, oppositional terms. The intervention of Lancelot Andrewes (1555–1626) exemplified a “synthesis of music and word” (p. 129): a significant claim which will challenge scholars to rethink the links between Andrewes and William Laud (1573–1645). Jonathan Willis reveals how “the ambivalence of the Reformed Church of England towards the role of music in religious worship” reflected some aspects of not just continental ‘Reformed’ Protestantism, but also patristic and biblical theology (p. 141). For Willis, Reformation music should be set in the wider context of “the early modern discourse of music” so that historians can understand its internally conflicted nature without explaining it away or artificially resolving its “creative tension” (p. 142). Such an approach leads to a useful thickening of the historiography, even if Willis’s recourse to Foucault seems a touch perfunctory. By deftly contextualizing a limited selection of loaded sources from ecclesiastical court records, Christopher Marsh counters the idea that bell ringing without divine service emerged as a “secular” activity of boisterous pleasure (p. 164). Instead, various forms of recreational bell ringing appeared to have helped satisfy a lingering yearning to express “deeply traditional socio-religious instincts that had been endangered by Reformation beliefs and sensibilities” (p. 168).

John Craig examines how the contested use of voices, eyes, and (men’s) hats whilst praying in public made some congregations dynamic participants in the shaping of liturgical culture. Some lay worshipers found ways of modulating their own experiences of public prayer with “sighs and groans” to show, by means of

affect, “fervency and sincerity” (p. 182). Furthermore, the traditional practice of looking heavenward in prayer was gradually undermined by those who thought that worshipers should close their eyes to avoid worldly distractions (p. 186). Moving beyond a simple account of the Laudian reforms, Trevor Cooper reveals the creative eclecticism behind the selection, arrangement, and usage of church furniture by the Ferrar family at Little Gidding. Key features of the Ferrar’s public worship included: a medieval eagle lectern, two pulpits, arcaded seating facing each other down the walls of the nave, the absence of a chancel screen, and lots of flowers. Lest scholars should think otherwise, *avant-garde* conformist worship in the 1630s could be a distinctly polymorphous enterprise. Judith Maltby ends the volume by exploring how *The Directory for the Public Worship of God* (1645) “represented a radical departure not only from the worship of the Elizabethan Settlement, but from aspects of the very Reformed tradition within which it claimed to stand” (p. 225). Here, the failure of *Directory* owed more than a little to the way it misjudged the capacity of ministers to perform their duties without a robust prescribed liturgy, “the Holy Spirit notwithstanding” (p. 240).

Working with plenty of hitherto unstudied primary source material, these two edited volumes speak persuasively of an enduring need amongst early modern men and women to locate and use diverse worldly resources to help them in their day-to-day devotions. There is, however, cause for some grumbles. Cynical readers might well guess that these books have their origins in a funded research ‘network’. With a few exceptions, the studies therein are disappointingly insular. For all the fresh detail, the scholarship could be said to aim at extending and consolidating recent research endeavours rather than forging ahead to bring original insights. There is limited engagement with European contexts. Despite explicit reference to ‘Britain’ in both titles, Scotland is under-represented and there is no discernible coverage of Wales or Cornwall. The lack of reference to Ireland should be noted too. There is little willingness to identify, let alone avoid, the methodological pitfalls of either interdisciplinary enquiry or an anthropologically inflected religious history. And, in defining a sharp contrast between everyday piety and religious politics, there is a strange, uncritical tendency to describe devotional practices in the context of the consequences of Reformation rather than interpreting them as actually formative in the process of Reformation.

Alec Ryrie’s hefty *Being Protestant in Reformation Britain* seeks to eschew all things theoretical in favour of an “empiricist” history that concentrates on “the material reality of the past” (p. 9 and p. 10). Working against studies that either perpetuate an account of “the puritan-conformist division” (p. 8), or claim to take the history of religious belief “seriously” whilst continuing to peddle “secular assumptions” about the realities of early modern religiosity (p. 13),

Being Protestant does a remarkable job of answering many fundamental, but hitherto unanswered, questions about how “earnest” British Protestants lived their lives (p. 9). Focusing on the period between 1560 and 1640, Ryrle makes a case for an “intense” and “dynamic” Protestantism that enveloped its “many contradictions” within “a broad, unified, religious culture” defined in chronological, geographical and confessional terms (pp. 469–71). The book is divided into five parts: the Protestant emotions; the Protestant at Prayer; the Protestant and the Word; the Protestant in company; and, the Protestant life.

“Emotion was a form of revelation” (p. 40). Protestant piety began through “despair”, but contrary to the Weberian myth this affection reflected a more general formative belief in and fear of the Devil. “Mourning” was the emotion of repentance, working through prayer, self-examination, and self-punishment to allow sinners to see themselves and God “more clearly” (p. 61). “True repentance” then had to be matched by a yearning in pious living for god’s gift of an earnest “desire” for “holiness, and for God himself” (p. 63). Such earnest affections helped create the conditions for moments of spiritual “joy”, an “emotional accompaniment to true knowledge” (p. 89).

Private prayer was “the active expression of the Protestant emotional life” (p. 99). The length, regularity, and quality of prayers were all tempered by the practical concerns of everyday life. Solitary prayer was “longed for, feared, and scarcely to be had” (p. 169). Notwithstanding controversy over the liturgy, the physicality of private prayer maintained strong continuities with pre-Reformation traditions, even if modulated by distinctly Protestant aspirations. The relationship between extempore and set prayers was typically viewed in pragmatic, rather than ideological, terms; a commitment to the set prayers endured, even if it perpetuated a paranoid fear of the hypocrisy of ‘works’. But then, “to persist in prayer under affliction” was to persist “patiently”, one of the “defining features of Protestant prayer” (p. 243).

“For Protestants, ignorance and sin were almost synonymous” (p. 269). The result was a mode of pious living that fused together “godliness” and “good learning” (p. 270) to nurture a literate, intellectually aspirational culture that thrived in church and at the university, as well as at home and in the street. The skill of “correct Bible reading” was to find the “personal applications of the text” (p. 279). A broader commitment to reading devotional texts showed how “Protestantism was much better equipped than Catholicism to be devotionally omnivorous” (p. 287). When it came to pious writing, “the practice anticipated the prescription” (p. 298). Putting pen to paper was an instinctive route to not just edifying one’s self and others, but also a state of communion with God (p. 312).

Public worship was essentially a test of one's "duty" (p. 320). The desire to attend church, such as it was, had less to do with servicing ideological commitments to either ceremony or preaching, than a craving for collective prayer. A yearning for a personal sense of God's promise was the driving force behind an anti-Catholic commitment to Baptism. Whilst Holy Communion offered a chance to reach an emotional zenith of the pious life, the prescribed preparation for receiving the sacrament was seen as so daunting that "most lay people" stuck with the "medieval pattern of annual reception" (p. 340). Experiencing the sermon involved confronting the ebbs and flows of not just a clergyman's career, but one's own capacity for church-led learning. Prayer in the household was no insular or subversive affair: it was a means of keeping the "public world" in view and the kernel of godly sociability (p. 378 and p. 390).

"Early modern Protestants did not have a life cycle", instead they embarked upon a "personal pilgrimage through life and death to their ultimate, pre-ordained destiny" (p. 409). This linear configuration of life engendered a perpetual sense of crisis about one's state of progression or regression, which in turn fuelled a distinctive sense of striving for the divine. Childhood was the period in which individuals were expected to learn how to be a proper Protestant. Early adulthood was characterized by "conversion", a series of events by which an individual did not change their beliefs but learned to own them (p. 436). Adulthood was all about striving to live a life of devotion and vocation that was free from hypocrisy and idleness. In death the believer finally reached a moment in which "assurance" could conquer "despair" (p. 468).

In many respects *Being Protestant* is mightily impressive: it sensitively and comprehensively catches vital aspects of life experienced by those whose existence was spent forging resourceful, and unwittingly inclusive, pathways between tradition and innovation, theory and practice, truism and paradox, duty and yearning, despair and joy, the ordinary and the extraordinary. In this sense, being Protestant was all about a continual striving for the divine. Ryrie's vision and skill successfully draws together a range of topics that have, hitherto, been studied somewhat independently of each other. And, the suggestion that "emotion was a form of revelation" (p. 40) is certainly daring.

Despite all this, some readers may well find Ryrie's book pretty frustrating. There are at least four, inter-related, areas of concern. One, robust historiographical engagement is thin on the ground. Ryrie's argument for a unified Protestant culture could be seen as a refinement of Ian Green's distinct sense of "orthodox

Protestantism”, but this is not discussed.¹ Ryrie’s position on the history of emotion is constructed without recourse to the relevant historiography. Moreover, Ryrie chooses to simply avoid thinking about how awkwardly *Being Protestant* sits alongside works such as Christopher Haigh’s *The Plain Man’s Pathways to Heaven* (2009), Alexandra Walsham’s *Charitable Hatred* (2006), Peter Lake’s *The Boxmaker’s Revenge* (2002), and Keith Wrightson and David Levine’s *Poverty and Piety in an English Village: Terling 1525–1700* (1979). Striving for the divine wrought division as well as unity, and to study the latter without considering its dialectical relationship with the former is more hazardous than Ryrie makes it seem. Two, Ryrie accepts the “inseparability of the personal and the political” in early modern Britain (p. 380), yet struggles to actually evaluate the political dimension to not just the writing of prescriptive texts on piety, but also the religiously inflected inter-personal tensions in households, congregations, and neighbourhoods. Such an approach risks overlooking, or downplaying, various forms of discord.

Three, an attempt to use ‘earnestness’ as a quasi-objective category of historical analysis is problematic because an understanding of earnestness arises from judgement, not observation. Ryrie’s category mistake means that his study does not transcend the problems associated with the history of Puritanism in the way that he suggests; in fact, it threatens to return readers to an outmoded method which was effectively blind to the phenomena that constructed and contested patterns of cultural identity. Hence Ryrie’s claim for a Protestantism unified by dynamic earnestness stands on very shaky ground. Four, Ryrie’s ‘empiricism’ risks being little more than a perverse act of doing the cultural history of religion without accepting the validity of the theory that makes such an approach work. *Being Protestant* is surely all about the ways in which early modern people constantly sought to ‘negotiate’, ‘fashion’, and ‘represent’ the content and function of their lives as pious agents, engendering ‘inter-subjective’ states which have subsequently been labelled as manifestations of Protestantism. But, setting aside the jargon, Ryrie will not countenance such theory-based interpretations; so, what, exactly, gives meaning to his interpretation (if not the “dead hand of Eltonian empiricism”)?² In sum: as a scholarly monograph designed to argue a case for a unified Protestant culture, Ryrie’s book is not hugely convincing; as a highly detailed synthesis set within certain implicit limits, however, *Being Protestant* is a masterful offering.

¹ Ian Green, *Print and Protestantism in Early Modern England*, Oxford 2000, esp. 553–66.

² The quote is taken from, Peter Lake and Steven Pincus, ‘The Strange Death of Political History’ (2012), *History Working Papers Project*: http://www.historyworkingpapers.org/?page_id=305, accessed 25 Aug 2015.

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Christopher Cleveland, *Thomism in John Owen*, Farnham: Ashgate, 2013; 173 pp.; ISBN 978-1-40945-579-0; £ 50.00.

Recent research of Puritanism has made two matters increasingly clear. First of all, this movement was a component of international Reformed orthodoxy which, in turn, had the church fathers and medieval theologians as its antecedents. Secondly, John Owen occupied a central place within Puritanism, and this is highlighted by a rapidly growing number of studies focusing on his theology and spirituality. The significant research of Christopher Cleveland is worthy of being noted within this recent revival of Owen-studies. In *Thomism in John Owen*, he assesses an interesting theme by stating that in several ways Owen has been influenced by the important medieval theologian Thomas Aquinas (1225-1274), and both directly and indirectly by thomistically orientated Roman-Catholic contemporaries such as especially Diego Alvarez (d. 1635) and Dominigo Bañez (1528-1604).

Thomistic influence becomes evident within three areas. First, in regard to the doctrine of God, Owen emphasizes God's sovereignty and omnipotence, whereby He creates and sustains spiritual life. Secondly, Thomas' influence can be observed in the area of Christology, where Owen emphasizes Christ's divine nature as being the secret of his unique personality as well as with respect to the hypostatic unity of his two natures. Cleveland posits furthermore that Thomistic influence is also apparent in Owen's pneumatology, and particularly in regard to his view on regeneration and sanctification. Aquinas had developed a doctrine of the *habitus*, which he viewed as a human quality forged by repeated activity and expressed in deeds corresponding to this habitus. In addition to there being a natural habitus Thomas also spoke about habitus as being a spiritual quality, given by God as the solid foundation of Christian virtues, such as faith and love. Thomas wanted to emphasize the priority of God's grace by stating that this habitus is directly infused by God.

Owen improved upon this thomistic emphasis on God's grace by giving the spiritual habitus a crucial place in his view of regeneration. God bestows this unchangable inner quality upon man, and this renews him and is also determinative for his Christian life. Upon being spiritually exercised, this habitus will yield the Christian virtues of faith, love, and hope, whereas spiritual negligence will trigger progressive backsliding. It is especially in his practical

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works dealing with sin and spiritual warfare that Owen develops these aspects in detail. As one would expect, the one significant difference between Thomas and Owen pertains to justification. Thomas holds to the opinion that the spiritual habitus plays a crucial role in the acquittal of guilt, because justification is only possible on the basis of God's renewing work in the human soul. Owen, however, wants to distinguish between justification and renewal, for whereas justification occurs by the imputation of Christ's righteousness, the habitus is of crucial significance in regard to the spiritual renewal of man.

Cleveland's research is important in that it affirms the significant influence of Thomas Aquinas and the thomistic tradition on Reformed orthodoxy. This influence can particularly be observed in Hiëronymus Zanchius (1516-1590) and others, but it is also evident in the case of Owen. The influence of the medieval scholastic tradition on the thinking of Reformed orthodox theologians has thus been impressive. Owen can therefore be viewed as a Puritan theologian deeply entrenched in classic western theological thinking, albeit he has developed this in his own unique way. This confluence of influence and development becomes visible in two ways.

First, it is remarkable how Owen uses the thomistic concept of the habitus in his formulation of the doctrine of regeneration and sanctification, having as his objective to ground spiritual life in God's grace. He thereby wished to focus upon the heart of Reformed theology in contrast to Arminianism and Socinianism. However, the manner in which Owen handles this thomistic concept theologically is determinative for his spirituality, for positing regeneration to be the beginning of spiritual life becomes crucial, whereas he views sanctification to be a process. Nevertheless, Owen establishes an intrinsic relationship between regeneration, sanctification and union with Christ, doing so mainly in his later writings regarding the person and work of Christ. His doctrine of infused grace is furthermore significant, when considering that in the Netherlands this concept is a prominent component of the theology of Alexander Comrie. Thus the connection between Owen and Comrie regarding this matter as well as the influence of Puritanism upon the Dutch Further Reformation, are interesting subjects for further research.

According to Cleveland, Aquinas' classic doctrine of the Trinity has helped Owen to formulate his own view of the triune God, for thomistic influence regarding the nature of the Father, the person of Christ and the graces of the Spirit can be traced in his writings. Puritan uniqueness can be observed in Owen's objective of his detailed discussion of classic theological views, namely, the promotion of knowledge yielding the proper service of God that culminates in worship and obedience. Here we clearly see the Puritan connection between classic Christian theology and affective spirituality.

Cleveland's detailed study of a substantial medieval source of Owen's theology constitutes a welcome contribution to the research of Puritanism in general and of Owen in particular.

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Brian H. Cosby, *John Flavel: Puritan Lie and Thought in Stuart England*, Lanham, MD: Lexington Books, 2014; 161 pp.; ISBN 9780739179529; \$ 80.00.

John Flavel shares the enviable characteristic with Thomas Watson of being one of the most readable Puritan writers for contemporary readers. Brian Cosby, pastor of Wayside Presbyterian Church on Signal Mountain, Tennessee, has likewise produced a very readable introduction to the life and theology of John Flavel.

This book is arranged into two parts. The first section consists of three chapters that examine Flavel's life. Cosby places Flavel within his Puritan context (ch. 1), offers a summary of his life and ministry (ch. 2), and concludes this introductory section with a consideration of Flavel's legacy (ch. 3). Flavel was well known among the early evangelicals of the eighteenth century and read by Jonathan Edwards, George Whitefield, John Newton, and William Wilberforce, to name but a few who were influenced by his practical divinity. Unfortunately, there are not any references made to those who shaped Flavel's own theology except John Calvin.

The second portion of the book, which is essentially twice the size of the opening section, examines Flavel's theology. Six chapters are devoted to Flavel's Theological Heritage (ch. 4), The Doctrine and Use of Scripture (ch. 5), Theology Proper (including the Doctrine of God and Christology), Creation and the Fall (ch. 6), Covenant Theology, Election, and Soteriology (ch. 7), The Law of God and the Christian Life (ch. 8) and Church, Sacrament, and Eschatology (ch. 9).

Cosby's primary thesis is that Flavel's theology is consistent with both John Calvin and the Westminster Assembly (pp. 50–52, 131, 137n101). Given his desire to confirm this, he correctly refutes the position of those who see a discontinuity between Calvin and the reformed theology of the sixteenth century and that of the Puritans of the next century. While there are shades of uniqueness both between Calvin and the seventeenth century, and among the Puritans, many were consciously and consistently in harmony with the Genevan Reformer.

There are a number of significant strengths to this small book. It is highly engaging and the author often articulates important and even thorny theological

Randall J. Pederson, *Unity in Diversity: English Puritans and the Puritan Reformation* (Brill's Studies in Church History 68), Leiden-Boston: Brill, 2014; 380 pp.; ISBN 9789004278509; € 140.00.

The correct definition of Puritanism has been such a complex issue since the initial research of the movement that one prominent scholar remarked that it would be possible one day to write a complete dissertation on the subject. This is just what Randall Pederson of the University of Leiden has done, resulting in the addition of a new volume to Brill's Studies in Church History. While some scholars of early modern English religion have abandoned the search for a correct definition of Puritanism and posit that there are two or more forms of Puritanism, others have attempted to articulate the components of a distinct Puritan style of practical divinity.

Pederson seeks to advance this research by a study of three Puritans who represent several strains within Stuart Puritanism: John Downname (1571-1652), Francis Rous (1580/81), and Tobias Crisp (1600-1642/43). Whereas Downname belongs to the dominant strain of precisionism, which combines a reformed-orthodox theology with a carefully ordered lifestyle, Rous is a prominent representative of the mystical strain. His reformed-orthodox theology is coupled with a decidedly subjective spirituality that is influenced by several medieval mystical works. Tobias Crisp, the third author, reveals antinomian traits in emphasizing, rather than precisionism, salvation through Christ and the inner work of God's Spirit. Pederson investigates whether these writers were so diverse that they hardly have anything in common, or whether there was some sort of theological and spiritual common denominator.

On the one hand, these Puritan authors are indeed of one mind in embracing the same reformed-orthodox doctrines regarding God, predestination, covenant, and grace. On the other hand, they demonstrate diversity, especially with regard to the relationship between justification, sanctification, law and gospel, and the Christian life. The similarities between the three authors, according to Pederson, are useful for detecting a discernable and distinct Puritan style among the members of the movement, whereas the differences make it clear that Puritanism was a broad movement containing divergent emphases. Pederson uses a two-pronged approach.

In regard to *Familienähnlichkeit*, he identifies distinct theological and social similarities between Puritans of divergent persuasions, but in terms of the greater narrative of Puritanism he asserts that these Puritans were united in their quest to reform their church and society. His conclusion is that even though Puritans were diverse and articulated at times competing ideas, and even though they were often embroiled in controversy with one another, there was still significant unity among them. Historically they were united in that they were

clearly progenitors of a movement for further reform, and theologically they were united in that they exemplified a distinct style of divinity and piety.

The terms 'Puritan' and 'Puritanism' imply a deep and intense devotion, an interest in Reformed piety, and a strong adherence to reformed orthodoxy, all of which were woven into a distinct style, resulting in precisionism. English Puritanism, then, should be seen as a discernable and distinct lifestyle practiced by its members—a lifestyle that manifested itself during a specific period of history and coalesced in a reform of morals and manners.

This is a very important study by virtue of its conclusion that the terms 'Puritan' and 'Puritanism' should be retained as a helpful, useful, and essential description of a group of early modern English reformers; at the same time, the study acknowledges that practical theological differences among them were on a number of occasions very real. Pederson's research and its definition of the early modern English reform movement can therefore be useful as a stepping stone toward future Puritan research.

However, as can be expected, notwithstanding Pederson's thorough research, not all problems are hereby solved. How are we to assess radical Puritanism, as, for example, in the cases of John Goodwin, John Millton, John Eaton, and Lodwick Muggleton? Here Pederson's position is ambivalent. On the one hand, he considers them as dissidents who were more nuanced than their confessional counterparts, because they neither belonged to mainstream Puritanism nor were they orthodox Reformed.

On the other hand, radical Puritanism emerged in response to and out of frustration with the mainstream tradition, especially in regard to the issue of assurance and comfort for the afflicted conscience. While mainstream Puritanism reached a consensus in the Westminster Confession, those radicals and revolutionaries who challenged the confessional mainstream and moved beyond its boundaries became so splintered and fractured that they never achieved this consensus. However, they were nevertheless related to this confessional mainstream. In light of this relationship, 'Puritanism' is best understood "as a rather broad conglomerate of tendencies and trajectories of such overlapping strains as precisionism, mysticism, antinomism and neonomism" (p. 228).

Therefore, even though it clearly remains somewhat challenging to define the exact parameters of Puritanism, the great profit of Pederson's study for future research is that in the final analysis it provides us with a very useful tool to differentiate within this early modern English movement, while at the same time affirming its common ground.

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