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Eenheid in Verscheidenheid

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2017

document version

Publisher's PDF, also known as Version of record

[Link to publication in VU Research Portal](#)

citation for published version (APA)

Kromdijk, P. (2017). *Eenheid in Verscheidenheid: Doorbraak in de Nederlandse Hervormde Kerk en de samenleving tijdens het interbellum*.

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Summary

Unity in diversity

The Doorbraak in the Dutch Reformed Church and Dutch society in the interwar-period

This study focuses on the origins of the Doorbraak (Breakthrough). The Doorbraak consists in the idea that the existing societal and ecclesiastical structures were so vast and divided that they needed to be breached. The people who in this study are called doorbrekers mainly tried to ensure some form of contact between the different groups who were divided in society. The biggest divisions were socialism, liberalism, catholicism and protestantism, they lived next to each other but apart from each other. Not much is known about the Doorbraak and what is known, mainly focuses on the political perspective or after-Second World War period. This study fills that gap. The book demonstrates that the developments in the Dutch Reformed Church and the society during the interwar-period were decisive in the development of the ideas of the Doorbraak. Both church and society had to deal with crises in that period. The idea of working together and unity as ways to get out of the crisis derived from that period.

There's an important ecclesiastical component to the Doorbraak. The big number of Dutch Reformed people that came to be a member of the Doorbraak-party, the PvdA, suggests that this church had something to do with the Doorbraak. The census that was being taken in 1930 showed a big loss in the amount of members of the Dutch Reformed Church. As a cause, this church had a turbulent interwar-period. Everybody could see the different groups in that church scarcely working together. From the thirties onwards two associations tried to reform the identity of the church. The association Kerkherstel advocated a stricter way of dealing with the confession. The other association, Kerkopbouw, stressed the importance of a renewal of the church and it's way of dealing with the modern times. Both associations failed to get the majority of the votes to reform the church. What most frustrated the population of the church is that even their joint proposition didn't get the majority of the votes. That frustration formed a breeding ground for the Doorbraak.

Within the Dutch Christian Students Association (the ncsv) protestants could hear and form their ideas about society and church. They were allowed to think for themselves and as a result to be critical towards society and church. This is where a lot of doorbrekers found each other. Inspired by the consideration that was given to the oecumenical and missionary movement, the doorbrekers thought national and international unity would be the solution to the crises.

However, this unity needed a christian foundation. The doorbrekers recognised that all unity that wasn't based in the bible, could be dangerous. They only needed to point at communism and national-socialism to emphasize their reasoning. The doorbrekers had several theological sources available for their christian foun-

dation for unity. Kuyper gave them the theory that every area of life had its own sovereignty and unity. Hoedemaker emphasized the need for a united church for all the people of the Netherlands. The third option was to adapt the mystical unity of Gunning in his vision of a worldchurch. However, they chose a fourth source for unity, the dialectical theology of the Swiss theologian Karl Barth. This theology formed a critical tool to judge all christian parties or associations. All human strivings needed godly approval, so every initiative should at least be based on the bible. This meant that unity consisted in modesty en openness towards oth-erthinking people. This way the dividing walls between for example socialists and christians could be breached.

The contours of the Doorbraak became clearer as the interwar-period went by. First, the thoughts about unity were foremost theoretical or adressing the bigger societal movements. Later, the cry for unity became louder and more urgent. The doorbrekers saw the results of the census of 1930 and the worldwide economi-cal crisis as proves of the failure of the divided and individualised Dutch society. Their writings from the mid-thirties also show the controversy between them and the neocalvinists. The neocalvinists were the main proponents of Kuypers views on society, moreover they supported christian organisation. The doorbrekers heavily resisted the idea that christianity could be embodied in parties or systems. This difference in thought caused a lively debate in the late-thirties.

The personal lives and choices best demonstrate the content of the Doorbraak. The vicar Jan Buskes and the teacher Willem Banning both showed the Doorbraak as the encounter between socialism and christianity. They pointed out that the social message in the gospel could mean for christians to advocate socialist thoughts or politics. The theologians Heiko Miskotte and Jan Koopmans showed the theological backgrounds of the Doorbraak. For them, Doorbraak meant critical reflection on the christian organisations and the rejection of the antithesis of Kuyper (the principle distinction between believers and non-believers). There were also those who showed Doorbraak in their role in society. Johan Eijkman, the leader of the General Association for Young Men (AMVJ), Gerardus van der Leeuw as a professor and publicist in Groningen and Philip Kohnstamm as a young researcher and pedagogue showed in their daily activities that Doorbraak was all about finding unity and rapprochement in church and society.

One of the important conclusions drawn from the last period before the Second World War is that Doorbraak wasn't finished. The doorbrekers wrestled with their own principle of not wanting to be a party. They at most organised themselves in editorial offices. They did so very cautiously, afraid of being found inconsistent. After all, their principle said only God sanctioned all human ideals. Nevertheless, there were doorbrekers who wanted to organise the Doorbraak. They didn't want to postpone the Doorbraak and wait untill the population was being educated with its ideas. In particular the young jurists and members of the Christian Historical Union (CHU) Paul Scholten, Gerard van Walsum en Sam Rozemond are mentioned. In the editorial office of the magazine *Woord en Wereld* that appeared two-monthly from 1939 to 1941 they organised a group of doorbrekers. An important motive for this form of organisation was the failure of the renewal of the Dutch Reformed Church in 1938. Because of the Second World

War the thinking through of the further organisation of Doorbraak stopped. Because of this new exceptional situation the Doorbraak got a direction she probably would never have had if it wasn't for the occupation by the Germans.