The introduction explains the reasons for the choice of the theme and title of this book. Subsequently, Chapter I deals with the context of church and religion: it sketches the theological climate and the church life of the world in which both Da Costa and Groen were raised and the birthplace of the Kingdom of the Netherlands. Chapters II and III provide biographies of Da Costa and Groen, after which Chapter IV requires attention for a number of Revival characters, with whom Da Costa and Groen were in close contact. Acquaintance was made with Willem de Clercq, Abraham Capadose, Carel Maria van der Kemp, Pieter Jacob Elout van Soeterwoude, Jan Willem Gefken, Jan Adam Wormser, Hendrik Jacob Koenen, Nicolaas Beets and Gerrit Barger.

The last two mentioned functioned as a bridge to Chapter V, being members of the Brotherhood ‘Ernst en Vrede’ [Earnestness and Peace]. Daniel Chantepie de la Saussaye Sr was introduced, a man with a special position within the Revival movement, although he was an orthodox theologian *sui generis*. This position was somewhat ambiguous. He valued the movement greatly and felt closely related to it in its experience of faith, but he classified the direction taken by the mainstream of the Revival under the leadership of Groen van Prinsterer as ‘confessionalistic’, and gradually he became increasingly dismayed by it.

The characterization of Groen’s approach to the question of church as ‘confessionalistic’, however, we deem depreciatory of the goals which the confessional leader had set for himself. If one word would satisfy to classify the person of De la Saussaye Sr, it would be ‘synthetic’. It did not matter with whom he engaged in conversation; he would always try to find an element of truth in the other so he could justify that element. He desired to be orthodox-reformed, but not without recognizing the legitimacy and motivation of modernity, whose questions he took entirely seriously. He believed in the possibility of a modern theology, i.e. a theology attempting to justify someone else’s truth by placing it in a wider context, both in a theological and scientific sense.

For these reasons, La Saussaye made a half-hearted impression on many people, even causing him to be distrusted. Just like Gunning he experienced first-hand what it meant to be regarded as one of the ‘halves’. However, he preferred the shame to be seen as half-hearted and to be avoided like pariah above disregarding the truth.

La Saussaye knew himself to be closely related to Da Costa and Groen; notwithstanding he went on a different and solitary path. On this path Da Costa, who was perhaps much closer to him than he himself was aware of, because of his emphasis on the necessity of ‘novelty’ and ‘development’, accompanied him for a long time. There is ample reason to question whether the ‘abyss’ which divided the two, according to Da Costa’s own words, was really as deep as he made appear.

Chapter VI dealt with the correspondence as such, using it as an introduction to the treatment of the different themes. Various aspects of the correspondence were dealt with: the uneven amount of letters by Da Costa in comparison with the amount of letters by Groen; the fragmentary character of the correspondence; the relation between the letters published by Groen and the authentic, hand-written letters; the letters which are kept elsewhere; the question about the intention which Groen had with the publication of his correspondence with Da Costa – and others; his part in the work involved...
in the publication; the question why he waited so long with publishing his correspon-
dence with Da Costa; the character of the Vereeniging ter Bevordering van Christelijke
Lectuur [Association for the Improvement of Christian Reading Material], who made the
publication possible, and the fact of amicitia Christiana as the foundation of the relation
between Da Costa and Groen.

Chapter VII shows Da Costa’s and Groen’s view on the Afscheiding [Secession]. The
conclusion was that they were angry about the injustice done to the Seceders both by
the government as well as the Synod, convinced as they were of the their proven right
about the ‘hervormde Gezindheid’ [Reformed Persuasion]. It was shown how Groen
protested in his brochure De Maatregelen tegen de Afgescheidenen aan het Staatsregt
getoest [the Measures against the Seceders tested against the Constitutional Law] against
the persecution to which De Cock and his followers were subjected, although he disap-
proved of the secession itself. Both in his support for the persecuted as well as in his
fear for a division, Groen knew that he was not just supported by Da Costa but by the
entire movement of the Revival. In his essay Het Regt der Hervormde Gezindheid [The
Right of the Reformed Persuasion] in which he describes these developments, he accused
the Seceders of a threefold inconsistency: 1. They made the Secession into the ‘indis-
pendable characteristic of the truth of faith’. 2. Caused by this servile restriction to ‘hu-
man writing’, a new division had soon taken place. 2. They had erroneously renounced
their right for freedom of religion.

Chapter VIII is devoted to the fight for church reform and almost forms a perfect
match with the previous chapter. Both chapters testify of the struggle for the sole right
for proclamation in the orthodox spirit. Chapter VII shows this resulting in a division in
the church of the fathers, while Chapter VIII sheds light on the struggle that took place
within the national church. Subsequently attention was paid to the Adresbeweging [Ad-
dress Movement] in the years 1834 and 1835, the address of the ‘Haagsche Heeren’
[Lords of The Hague] (1842) and their Brief aan de Hervormde Gemeente in Nederland
[Letter to the Reformed Congregation in the Netherlands] (1843). After that, the centre
of attention was transferred to Da Costa’s Rekenschap van Gevoelens [Explanation of
Feelings], to the correspondence between Da Costa and Groen as a result thereof, and
to Groen’s articles on Het Regt der Hervormde Gezindheid [The Right of the Reformed
Persuasion]. After looking at the meeting of ministers in the Odeon in Amsterdam (1848),
the last part of the chapter was devoted to the controversy with the ‘Dordtsche mannen’
[Men of Dordt].

The paths of Da Costa and Groen diverged further regarding the struggle for church
reform than regarding other areas. The uniqueness of Da Costa’s ‘systema’ is brought
forth clearer here than in any other respect. This uniqueness is mainly found in the idea
of ‘freshness’ or ‘development’, the one, at least the most important string that was sin-
gular to Da Costa’s violin. Da Costa wanted to open our eyes to the ongoing work of
the Holy Spirit. He had enormous praise for the confessional scriptures of our church,
but they were not to be regarded to be at the same high level as the Holy Scriptures,
as he repeatedly emphasized. We should not even once appear to put any confession
at the same level as the Word of God. Not only that: we should not close our eyes for
the ‘continuously deeper, wider, more intimate revelations’ given to us by God in the
truths, the secrets, the promises of His Kingdom, His Grace, His Word. In the revelation
a progression and development can be discerned: ‘Life is movement, is development, no standing still, no going backward!’ God continuously presents us with new surprises. When we think we can only profess our faith in traditional forms, we live far beneath our status. We will not be able to live a real life based on God’s gracious deeds.

The difference between ‘church doctrine’ and ‘teachings of the Lord’ is characteristic for Da Costa, as we have discovered: it would be against the Bible to overemphasize the importance of church doctrine. On the basis of this difference it is possible to explain Da Costa’s fear for a legal solution of the question of church: his determined choice for the ‘medical’ way to church reform, which caused him to drift apart from Groen.

At first sight it seemed as if Groen took much less notice of this than his friend. Time and again he voiced his opinion that actually Da Costa and himself saw completely eye to eye. That is the reason why he trivialized the difference in opinion with his friend repeatedly, calling it merely a ‘distinction’.

Allard Pierson has characterized Groen’s inclination to disguise these differences in opinion with Da Costa as ‘voluntary blindness’. This expression, however, pays no respect to the great importance attached by Groen to all that connected him with Da Costa. In addition to that, also Da Costa used the word ‘distinction’ many times when discussing his differing view from Groen’s way of thinking, thereby automatically invoking an image of congeniality with Groen. Therefore Groen may have had the idea quite often that he had managed to pull his friend across the divide. Da Costa indeed made things very often very difficult for Groen. Much more than strictly necessary he distanced himself from the strategy promoted by his friend. G.J. Vos is indeed right in depicting him as ‘the individualistic father of the Dutch Revival’, ‘the man, who stayed a Jonathan to Groen until his death, but who indeed paralyzed his ambitions concerning a very important issue’.

In Chapter IX (Theological Controversies) we recognize the leitmotiv running through the Brieven [Letters] in Da Costa’s fight against the ideas of the Groningers and the modern direction of J.H. Scholten c.s.. This was a fight in which Groen completely joined him. He also saw ‘Groningen’ and ‘Leiden’ as a serious threat to the testimony of the Holy Scriptures. However, in their approach of the opponent they took a different road. It becomes apparent from Da Costa’s correspondence with S.K. Thoden van Velzen that he did not avoid a dialogue with the Groningers. Undoubtedly, he had more appreciation for their positive points than Groen. Nevertheless, his brochure Eenige opmerkingen omtrent het onderscheidend karakter der Groningsche Godgeleerde School [Some remarks on the distinguishing characteristics of the Groningen Theological School] (1847) contains an unmistakable rebuke of their ideas. His judgement of the modern direction otherwise – in the brochure Wat er door de theologische faculteit te Leyden al zoo geleerd en geleverd wordt [Whatever is taught and delivered by the theological faculty in Leyden] (1857) – is even more negative. His statement that Scholten’s theology is nothing else than ‘an attempt to reconstruct a Christianity that is assessed as untenable, keeping its names and sounds, into an indeed entirely new Religion according to its own concepts’ (p. 49) is furthermore an accurate classification of the ‘Leyden system’.

In Chapter X (The Meaning of History) the leitmotiv, already quite remarkable in the Letters, is clearly shown in the statement that when things really matter all history really is Church History. This may have been Groen’s feeling; in his fight against the spirit of
the age as revealed in the popular contemporary study of history (which allowed no place for the *Dieu dans l'histoire*), Da Costa stood firmly at his side.

Groen's view of history - with its strong emphasis on the unbreakable connection between ‘It is written’ and ‘It has happened’ – was furthermore not only shared by Da Costa but by all Revival friends. Standing in the Reformation tradition, they departed from a plan of salvation, realized by God's providential government in history. That concerns everything what happens in the world. With great determination they refused the thought of a development towards an immanent goal. They believed in 'an end, transcending in history, determining the direction of its path, therefore making it into a meaningful and coherent whole'. Together with Hendrik Pierson they confessed 'The Lord reigns!' This confession, however, was not without struggle. Their God was Luther's *Deus absconditus*. And even though in incidental cases they thought to be able to discern the hand of this God, in general they were very careful to do so. Mainly this applies to Groen, who was much less fast inclined than Da Costa to attribute the achievements of the spirit of the age to God's will. 'The Lord reigns' indeed, but as the 'hidden Presence'. We should honour Him as such.

In Chapter XI we dealt with Groen’s ‘Platonism’. As a starting point the statement was taken that a 'true relationship' could be shown between Groen and Plato, explained by Allard Pierson in his *Oudere Tijdgenooten [Older Contemporaries]*. Pierson thought that Groen revived Plato's doctrine of ideas in orthodox theology, Plato's state or city in the Reformed congregation, his laws in the Dutch Confession of Faith and his regulation of life practice in church discipline; at the same time he recognized Plato's philosopher with his godly light in the Christian with his *testimonium Spiritus Sancti* and his theocracy in the unity of church and state, which was aspired by Groen. In short, Groen displayed this relationship everywhere.

Nevertheless, we questioned whether this was not too far-fetched. Indeed: whenever Groen fights for the church reforms, whenever he pleads for rehabilitation of the confession of the fathers and for the maintenance of church discipline, when he defends the 'testimonium Spiritus Sancti' and also when he emphasizes the importance of a close connection between church and state, time and again he refers to the Bible. This appeal is completely legitimate, both concerning the Old Testament as well as the New Testament. We only have to remind ourselves of the Mosaic laws and Paul's letters, both strongly emphasizing the great importance of 'sound doctrine'.

Additionally, we asked whether Pierson's qualification of 'Platonism' – even if correct – could not be applied to all theologians, which he considers to be part of Groen's 'family tree', yes, whether his 'Christian Platonism' should not be seen as an essential characteristic of the reformed Protestantism as such, even perhaps of the entire Christianity as the 'book religion'.

A third objection we have against the identification which Pierson thinks to observe, is the difference in the idea of God, dividing Groen from Plato: while Plato mentions 'an Unchangeable thing', Groen means 'the Unchangeable in Person'. This difference we consider to be vital.

Fourthly, we have shown, that while Plato thinks that the world of ideas is accessible for the human brain, this is not possible for the knowledge of God in a biblical sense.

The second part of Chapter XI was devoted to a few writers, who adopted Groen's
image as depicted by Pierson. Subsequently F.J. Fokkema, J.Th. de Visser, G.C. van Niftrik, N. van Egmond and A. Kinneging were highlighted.

In his dissertation *De godsdienst-wijsgeerige beginselen van Mr. G. Groen van Prinsterer* [The religious-philosophical principles of Mr. G. Groen van Prinsterer] (1907) Fokkema paid extensive attention to Groen’s intellectualism, and went on to shed light on the ‘legalistic’ traits which he observed in Groen’s considerations on religion, the Holy Scriptures, church doctrine, church law and politics. We have concluded that Fokkema strongly agrees with Pierson’s feelings.

In his study *Kerk en Staat* [Church and State] (1927), J.Th. de Visser demonstrates another opinion. He esteems that the relationship between Groen and Plato as stated by Pierson can only be indicated in very few instances: there are indeed formal, but no material points of similarity.

We looked at two publications of G.C. van Niftrik, namely his essay ‘Groen van Prinsterer en de Kerk’ in: *Groen van Prinsterer herdacht* [A Commemoration of Groen van Prinsterer] (1951) and his article ‘Christologisch-anthropologische heroriëntatie der dogmatiek bij dr. D. Chantepie de la Saussaye’ [Christological-anthropological reorientation of the dogmatism of dr. D. Chantepie de la Saussaye] in the volume *Ernst en Vrede* [Earnestness and Peace] from the same year. In the first article Van Niftrik states that Groen thought in a ‘platonic’ way about the church: the confession has a ‘too static character’ with him. It ‘floats too much as an elevated idea above the unsatisfactory and frightening reality of the church’. In the second article Van Niftrik reaches the conclusion that a ‘certain Platonism’ controlled Groen’s view of history.

N. van Egmond takes the same position in his dissertation, *Consequent Christendom* [Consequent Christianity] (1964): according to Groen, man should adhere – in keeping with Plato – to ‘some greater truths’, which are above and beyond him. Personal decision comes second.

Last in the series, the floor was given to the Leiden legal philosopher A. Kinneging. In his article ‘Groen van Prinsterer en Plato’ [Groen van Prinsterer and Plato], in the volume *Groen van Prinsterer in Europese context* [Groen van Prinsterer in a European context] (2004), he refers to the *Nederlandsche Gedachten* [Dutch Thoughts] of 2 December 1873, when Groen, reviewing his student days, calls Plato his favourite author among all writers from the Classics. On the basis of that statement Kinneging concludes that Plato continued to be still Groen’s ‘favourite author’ also at his advanced age.

After listening to the aforementioned writers, Groen himself was given the floor. His words cannot be misunderstood: ‘yet, however excellent and glorious both content and form are of Plato’s writings, also here it is evident what difference exists between a human word and the Word of Him Who descended from Heaven. God is the measure of all, not man.’ This unmistakable testimony provides us with the basis to agree with J. Zwaan’s judgement that Plato’s influence on Groen is ‘grossly overestimated’.

In Chapter XII we brought Da Costa’s ‘specialty’, namely his *chiliasm*, out into the open. Da Costa occupied an exceptional position between his Revival friends – leaving his cousin Capadose aside – because of his eschatological orientation: ‘the essence of the poet’s religious considerations’ (Pierson). The following expression is characteristic of his view: ‘The Scriptures can be seen especially in our times as a prophetic book’. Da Costa expected the ‘resurrection of the Kingdom for Israel’. Regarding this, one should not think of a spiritual, but of a worldly kingdom.
From Da Costa’s great interest in the *Lectures* of Edward Irving at the beginning of the thirties, we concluded that he was already greatly occupied with ‘prophecies’ in an early stage. Whoever Da Costa is – also the Da Costa of before 1840 – he is that because of his messianic expectation. This is mainly expressed in his topical songs, but also in the *Letters* we repeatedly encounter this Da Costa, even if less clearly distinctive.

Pierson states that Da Costa did not obtain Groen’s ‘unequivocal response’ to his chiliastic ideas. However, their relation did not suffer from this; this even was the case while Da Costa, who was definitely influenced in his view on the developments in church and society by the chiliastic perspective, quite often had a considerably brighter outlook on the ‘rise of the Nations’ than his friend.

In Chapter XIII we have shown Da Costa and Groen took a different approach to the political questions of their time. Two factors are important with regard to this difference in approach. First of all is the chiliastic light which Da Costa usually shed on the events on the world’s stage, which enabled him to put things into perspective, even if he could be quite melancholy at times, just like Groen. The second factor concerns Da Costa’s development from a counter-revolutionary to an anti-revolutionary that he went through – a development that led from Bilderdijk to the direction of Groen. If the Da Costa of the *Bezwaren [Objections]*, a true follower of Bilderdijk, was vehemently opposed to the ‘spirit of the century’, the anti-revolutionary Da Costa, the Da Costa of *Het Oogenblik [The Moment]* (1848) and of the *Politieke Poëzy [Political Poetry]* did not just pay attention to the wrong, but also to the good things produced by this spirit, and was even grateful: ‘in its essence fruit of the times, in its form, from these times’. The Christian should accept these good things, even integrate them. And that is why there should be no more depreciation of the constitution, but a democratic monarchy, a strong appeal to ‘extensions of freedom’.

Da Costa’s development from counter- to anti-revolutionary is apart from that no final destination, but just a transfer stadium. The process continued, to be exact into the direction of ethical theology. This however did not mean that Da Costa became one of the ‘Ethicals’. The significance of the difference in opinion with Groen did not compensate the binding power exercised by the mutual viewpoint on the *sub specie aeternitatis*; that is why they knew they were continually and closely connected with each other during their fight against the revolutionary principle, united as they were in their faith that God would surely reign.

Chapter XIV is devoted to the question of education and demonstrated how Da Costa and Groen fought side by side for education which was founded on a completely Christian and reformed basis; Da Costa aimed his attacks at the university education, in his opinion the *fons malorum*, while Groen committed himself to a reform of the primary education.

For years Da Costa, together with Wormser, pursued the institution of a seminary for the education of Reformed ministers. Several times this question was raised in the meeting of the *Christelijke Vrienden [Christian Friends]*. However, these meetings brought no result at all. In August 1852, it was decided to institute a *Theologisch Seminarie voor binnen- en buitenlandsche Evangelisatie [Theological Seminary for national and international Evangelization]*, together with a delegation of the Scottish church, which was intended for the education of missionaries, who could be sent anywhere in the world where Dutch
was spoken. The Letters provide us with the impression that the existence of the Scottish Seminary, notwithstanding the positive sounds we occasionally heard, even when not quite lingering on, was quite uncertain through the years. Therefore it came as no surprise that it was abolished soon after Da Costa’s death.

Where Da Costa was quite unsuccessful in his attempts to reform the education of ministers, also Groen lost his battle concerning the area of primary education. On July 20, 1857, the Bill of Education was submitted to the Lower Chamber by the State Department of Van der Brugghen, and accepted with 47 to 13 votes, upon which Groen stante pede resigned as a Member of Parliament in order to be able to be henceforth active for special education.

In Chapter XV we dealt with the social problems that our country (‘the happiest country on earth’ – J.H. van der Palm) had to face during the first half of the nineteenth century. We saw how a rich, partly even extremely rich, upper class was divided by a deep abyss from the larger mass of people who suffered extreme poverty, also often subject to miserable living conditions. There was occasionally put some pressure on the government, by institutions like Maatschappij tot Nut van ‘t Algemeen [Society for Public Welfare] and at times in some cases also by individuals, to remove the abuse which caused he ‘pauperism’. But it would take many years before this was really started.

Between those who committed themselves to alleviate the many needs, several Revival friends took prominent positions. Moved as they were by the ‘full Gospel’ as a Gospel-of-deeds, they displayed a strong social commitment. In this context we should especially mention Minister O.G. Heldring, a pastor in the Betuwe village Hemmen, who did pioneering work in many respects as the ‘father’ of the ‘Heldring-institutions’.

Also Da Costa and Groen demonstrated what it means to put the biblical message into practice. Groen additionally made his voice heard in several publications in which he attacked the social abuse in our country. In their social commitment, Da Costa and Groen were also concerned with their faraway neighbour, which became obvious in their contribution to the fight for the abolition of slavery.

Chapter XVI sheds light on the relation of Da Costa and Groen with dissidents – in their days Jews and Roman Catholics. Da Costa thought that the equation of religions was sacrosanct, when regarded from an antirevolutionary viewpoint, since that belonged to the rights obtained as rewards from the Revolution. He stated that the emancipation of Jews and Roman Catholics belonged to ‘the development of human society by God’s will, even if through his enemies and including the great danger of manifold abuse, this in its always imperfect state, consisting of a mixture of good and evil’. We should uphold the Godly and human rights and follow ‘the line drawn by God’s finger across the midst of events’. These are remarkable statements and make us wonder whether Da Costa was perhaps a little too ready to transform the spirit of the age to God’s will. Groen realized also that the Revolution had not just produced wrong things. In his view on the emancipation of Jews and Roman Catholics he knew to be in agreement with Da Costa. But Da Costa’s statements on the relation between the spirit of the age and the finger of God went clearly too far for him.

As we have seen, Groen’s relationship with the Roman Catholic Church was somewhat ambiguous. Next to statements indicating a feeling of connection in faith, there are countless expressions testifying of rejection. The intolerance of the Roman Catholic
Church in countries where the Holy See exercised authority is one reason, and another the amount of disappointing experiences gained by Groen in his own country. Nevertheless, when things came to a head, the balance was tipped to a plea for unifying powers in order to be able to better attack the mutual enemy, namely unbelief. This attitude led to vehement reactions from the Dordt-favouring membership, the ‘Datheen party’ or ‘Utrecht Faction’, who regarded Groen on account of his opposition in the April movement as a ‘crypto-catholic’, a ‘traitor of Fatherland and Church’ and a ‘friend and ally of Jesuits’.

In the last part of Chapter XVI we involved the Islam in our study. Even though quite occasionally, we saw that Da Costa and Groen were indeed occupied with Mohammed and the religion instituted by him, although the Islam in the *Letters* was no subject for discussion. Da Costa’s feelings towards these matters became apparent in his poem *Hagar*: an unmistakable ‘no’ to the prophet and his doctrine. In Groen’s case we discovered an obvious incongruity: in his *Bedenkingen tegen een oproeping tot ondersteuning der Grieken* [*Considerations against an appeal to support the Greeks*] (1825) a very positive sound, in his *Proeve over de Middelen waardoor de waarheid wordt gekend en gestaafd* [*Examination of the Means by which the truth can be recognized and verified*] (1834) an expressly negative judgement.

In Chapter XVII we questioned the actuality of Da Costa and Groen. We have concluded that the memory of Da Costa has become very vague over the years. He lived on only as a poet after his death; but at present his poems are hardly read at all, except as a subject for obligatory literature study, For Groen van Prinsterer, a man who was active for many years as a politician and who did pioneering work, it is a different matter. Asking whether and if so, how he lives on among us, is asking for the remaining strength of validity of his principles in our age. We have concluded that the interest for his ideas has continually diminished through the years; not only because of the radical changes which affected society and politics over the years, but also because of the mostly vehement criticism of sympathisers which started since the midst of the last century. Yet even today there is a circle of people, fighting in their own way against the ‘spirit of the age’, who found the basis for their ideology in revelation and history. For them, Groen’s *Ongeloof en Revolutie* [*Unbelief and Revolution*] is a rich source for inspiration. Along with Gerretson they experienced that Groen belongs to ‘all times’, that he is ‘a soul of fire’, still capable of warming us in our age.

(vertaling: drs. G.W.J. Verburg – Balke)