Eilardus Westerlo (1738-1790):  
From Colonial Dominee to American Pastor

ACADEMISCH PROEFSCHRIFT

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door

Robert Arnoud Naborn

geboren te Velsen
promotor: prof.dr. W.Th.M. Frijhoff
copromotor: dr. J. Noordegraaf
Acknowledgments

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I would never have started this study without the encouragement of Dr. Jan Noordegraaf, dating back to February 1979, my introduction to Dutch linguistics. It is Jan who suggested I write articles when I had long left the academic worlds of the Vrije Universiteit in the Old World, and of the University of Kansas in the New. Jan also put me in contact with Willem Frijhoff when it became clear that my study was going to be historical rather than linguistic. Without Jan’s zeal, perseverance, and enthusiasm, this dissertation would not have seen the light of day.

The New Netherland Institute in Albany, NY, under the leadership of Drs. Charles Gehring and Janny Venema, and its stimulating annual seminars and publications have been central to my appreciation of the history of New Netherland and colonial New York. It is also impossible to develop an understanding of everyday life in 18th-century Albany without Dr. Stefan Bielinski’s *Colonial Albany Social History Project*.

I happened upon Eilardus Westerlo through a transcription and translation project of the eighteenth-century records of the First Church in Albany, started by the late Dr. Robert Alexander, the Church’s historian. Bob shared the stories he had gathered about the eighteenth-century Dutch churchgoers in Albany, and his enthusiasm for the Church’s history inspired me to focus on Westerlo. Bob’s successor, Dr. James Folts, donated his time to allow me to do more research in the archives of the First Church.

Professor James Tanis generously shared his knowledge of eighteenth-century Reformed theology with me, and I have fond memories of the hours spent at his house discussing Frelinghuysen, Westerlo, and the Dutch Reformed Church. I am especially grateful for his editing support until the very end.

Special thanks are due to my father, Kees Naborn, for providing critical assistance along the way. His willingness and ability to edit and proofread all my drafts were crucial for the success of this project.

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Wedergeboorte

Die dus de stem van Jesus innig hooren,
Dien word het woord een kragtig Leevens-zaad,
En zy door Geest en Water-bad herboren:
Verplant van grond, geheel vernieuwt van staat.

Robertus Alberthoma, 1730

Rebirth

Those who thus intimately hear the voice of Jesus,
For them the Word becomes a powerful seed of life,
And they are born again in spirit and in a water bath:
Transplanted, in a fully renewed state.

Robertus Alberthoma, 1730
Foreword

Westerlo and a culture of change in New York State as a research topic

While researching an article on Francis Harrison’s *The English and Low-Dutch School-master*, I stumbled upon the controversy centered on Dominee1 Theodorus Jacobus Frelinghuyzen in the 1720s in New Jersey, recorded as *De Klagte [The Complaint]* by Henricus Boel.2 My interest in historical linguistics drew me to this immigrant minister’s problems in the Raritan Valley. He had largely abandoned his native language, German, to preach in Dutch in the New World.

Around the time of this research, I was asked to transcribe and translate some eighteenth-century documents of the Hervormde3 (Protestants) Nederduytsche Kerk [Reformed Protestant Dutch Church] in Albany, NY. During my work on these documents, one man’s thirty-year tenure as the Dutch Reformed minister stood out: Eilardus Westerlo had left behind hundreds of pages of his diary, switching from Dutch to English in 1782. From then on, I focused my interest on Westerlo and the circumstances under which he served the Dutch Reformed Church in America.

Later I drew a connection between Westerlo and Frelinghuyzen. My first interest in Westerlo was of a linguistic nature. It was limited to his switch from his native Dutch to English, and his reasons for doing so. Certainly, he made many of the grammatical mistakes Dutch people are guilty of when writing in English, but not enough to merit a lengthy study. My initial disappointment at this lack of significant material gave way to the wealth of historically interesting material from the time period and about this man, who at a young age had made America his second home. As a fellow Dutchman sharing an immigrant story, albeit under different circumstances and centuries apart, I immediately felt a connection with Eilardus Westerlo.

I gradually became more and more interested in Westerlo’s role in his adoptive city, in the movement toward independence of the Dutch Reformed Church from the Mother Church in the Netherlands. Not much had been written about Westerlo at all, let alone about his influence between 1760 and 1790, during the thirty-year period surrounding the American Revolution. The wealth of materials

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1 In the literature both “Dominee,” which is the vocative of Latin *dominus*, “Lord,” and “Dominie” are found to provide the Dutch equivalent of “Reverend Mr.” or “minister.” The form “dominee” probably originated in Scotland, where it was used to refer to either a minister or a schoolmaster, and it stands to reason that some in New Netherland spelled Dutch “dominee” as “dominie.” I prefer the Dutch spelling “dominee,” whose pronunciation in Dutch ends in /eː/.

2 The entire text of *De Klagte* was translated and edited by Joseph A. Loux, Jr. [Loux 1967].

3 The Dutch terms “hervormd” and “gereformeerd,” both translate into English as “reformed,” and they were both in use to refer to the Dutch Reformed Church until 1816. “Protestants” was sometimes added to the name as well, which became part of the official English name in 1792, and was subsequently dropped, together with “Dutch,” in 1867, when the name *Reformed Church in America* was adopted.
revealed a rich spiritual life during a historic period filled with conflict and change.

The result of my research, this dissertation, is a spiritual biography of Eilardus Westerlo. The focus is on Westerlo’s very personal development in piety and in his faith, especially as a pastor in the New World. The study answers questions about Westerlo’s Pietism and the important role it played in his life. In the relationship he felt with his Creator, both before and after his conversion experience, and in the pietistic environment among the Dutch Reformed clergy in North America that Westerlo lived in from 1760 until 1790, Westerlo’s Pietistic beliefs and actions are evidence of the importance of Pietism for him.

The function of the appendices

The appendices of the dissertation serve as primary sources for the original research that backs up my dissertation. The appendices are not a study of sources, and the sources in the appendices are not what guided my research. They have been added so that the texts I referred to can be studied in their original context.

The methods used

Because this is not a study about linguistic changes and variations, and for the sake of clarity and readability, I have changed the spelling and, to a large extent, the grammar and sentence structure of the English found in eighteenth-century texts. This is in line with the critical-normalizing method of the Richtlijnen voor het Uitgeven van Historische Bescheiden [Guidelines for the Publishing of Historical Records], sixth edition, published in 1988 by the Nederlands Historisch Genootschap and the Rijkscommissie voor Vaderlandse Geschiedenis.

The parts of the text that were illegible or obviously missing, I indicated by placing between square brackets, either to add what I could infer with reasonable certainty, or to indicate that a part was indeed missing.

The translation of the Dutch sections of Westerlo’s Memoirs and of any letters and documents in Dutch into English were done by me, as was the transcription of his Memoirs. However, the Bible texts in English, both as Westerlo referenced them and as he quoted them in Dutch, were taken from the 2001 version of The New Oxford Annotated Bible by Michael D. Coogan. References to God and Jesus were kept as “Thou,” “Thee,” and “Thine,” as they were also the forms of address used in the English version of the Bible Westerlo used.

Although the Universities of Cambridge (1762) and Oxford (1769) had published an updated standard text of the so-called Authorized King James Version, the English translation of the Christian Bible completed in 1611, it is likely that Westerlo used the original of this version. He not only claimed that he owned a
copy of *The Christian's Family Bible* (1763-1767), edited by William Rider (1723-1785) in May 1771, but he also mentioned using it in his *Memoirs*.4

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4 February 13, 1788.
1. **Introduction**

The subject of this study is Eilardus Westerlo, a Dutch Dominee who emigrated to America to serve the Dutch Reformed Church, and the role he played in the developments of this denomination in North America around the time of the American War of Independence. This spiritual biography will clarify that role.

How much is Westerlo’s life the typical story of an eighteenth-century minister coming to America to fill the pulpit of a Dutch Reformed congregation? How significant was the Dutch Reformed Church in New York and New Jersey in those days? How significant was it in Albany in particular? What was the role of the clergy in general in the thirteen colonies? What impact, if any, did they have on the Revolutionary War? By asking the above questions, I have tried to place Westerlo’s role in a larger context.

**The situation in the colony and state of New York in the seventeenth and eighteenth centuries**

When the Dutch surrendered New Netherland to the British in 1664, the Anglican Church replaced the Dutch Reformed as the established church. The Dutch population was granted freedom of Dutch Reformed worship in what became known as the provinces of New York and New Jersey. The new rulers, likely realizing the power of the Dutch in New York, were quite generous to the Dutch residents. They guaranteed the Dutch Reformed Church, which had now become “the principal institution embodying Dutch ethnic identity,” the enjoyment of many rights of establishment the Anglican Church had. For example, the Dutch Reformed were allowed to incorporate with the right to own property, whereas other denominations were not.

In the eighteenth century, when immigration from the Netherlands had already come to a virtual halt, the largest numbers of immigrants to North America came from Germany. Although many settled in Pennsylvania, they also came to the colony of New York, and to the area in and around Albany.

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5 An area that roughly covered the Connecticut, New Jersey, New York, parts of Pennsylvania, and Delaware, with settlements along the Hudson, Delaware, and Connecticut Rivers.

6 Historians are still debating 1664 as a turning point in the history of New York. It may be argued that for decades the government of the colony of New York was in flux, with a brief return to power by the Dutch in 1673-1674, the uncertainty following the Glorious Revolution in England (1688), and the ensuing Leisler Rebellion (1689-1691). Since the Reformed Dutch Church indicated that the “Articles of Surrender” were still in effect in 1695 [see E. T. Corwin’s *Ecclesiastical Records of the State of New York* [in this study henceforth referred to as *ER*] 1127], and the eighteenth-century Dutch Reformed ministers in North America also referred to 1664 as the first year their church was governed by British laws.

7 Kenney 1975:134.

8 See, for example, ER 3979-3980.

9 Thomas J. Wertenbaker thought that this “made the struggle of the Dutch population to maintain their national culture almost hopeless” [Wertenbaker 1963:24].

By the 1750s, the Dutch Reformed congregation in New York City had indeed begun to lose some of its younger members because the Church was continuing its services in Dutch. English had become the common tongue of Manhattan, in large part because the Dutch influx had stopped after 1664, combined with an increasing number of British immigrants.\textsuperscript{11} In Albany, however, the replacement of Dutch by English was a much more gradual development. When Westerlo arrived in 1760, the Dutch Reformed Church was one of the most powerful institutions in the city.

Due to the months letters took to be transported across the Atlantic, communication between the Classis of Amsterdam and the congregations in North America had always been slow. It was difficult for the Classis to supply all the congregations with ministers, especially in view of the fact that the number of congregations had been growing throughout the late seventeenth and eighteenth centuries. In accordance with Article 4 of the Church Order of Dort, all ministers to be employed in America had to be examined and ordained by the Classis of Amsterdam. However, of Westerlo’s twenty-two colleagues in 1760, only eight had been ordained by the Classis.\textsuperscript{12} Of the twenty-three Dutch Reformed ministers active in North America in 1760, the Classis of Amsterdam had sent only five (not even 25 percent).\textsuperscript{13} It had ordained fewer than 35 percent of the ministers of their Church in North America.

With only about two percent of the clergy in the New World,\textsuperscript{14} and also a relatively small number of Dutch having immigrated between 1609 and 1664 (an estimated 10,000 people arrived on ships from the Netherlands, half of whom were of Dutch descent), one might ask, borrowing from Joyce Goodfriend’s article \textit{Why New Netherland Matters}:\textsuperscript{15} did the Reformed Dutch Church matter in colonial North America, and does its history matter? By the same token, the question may be asked whether a study of the life and times of Eilardus Westerlo is pertinent.

This study will not attempt to provide a full answer to the first question. The reason for this is twofold: many studies have already focused on the role of the Dutch Reformed in New Netherland and in the Early Republic in general, and these and others have abundantly shown that its history matters.

\textsuperscript{11} See Goodfriend 1992:155-159.
\textsuperscript{12} Two of the Dutch-born ministers had been licensed in America: Johannes Leydt and David Marinus, both by the \textit{Coetus} (see Chapter 2 for the \textit{Coetus-Conferentie} conflict).
\textsuperscript{13} Although too complicated an issue to serve as a fair comparison, by 1752 the Classis of Amsterdam had sent eleven German Reformed ministers to Pennsylvania [in part to counter the Moravian threat] [Fogleman 2007:172].
\textsuperscript{14} In his \textit{Church and Clergy in the American Revolution}, Lester Joyce places the Dutch Reformed Church among the “smaller sects,” and he claims that it was “extremely small in America.” [Joyce 1966:138-139].
\textsuperscript{15} Goodfriend 2009.
One of the aims of this study is to push the view of the Dutch settlement back from “the periphery of historical consciousness” and to fill in some more of the gaps in the knowledge of the impact of the Dutch, by focusing on Eilardus Westerlo and on the period, 1760 to 1790. Westerlo was the minister of the second-largest Dutch Reformed congregation in New York, which would change from a colony into one of the first thirteen of the United States.

The influence of the Dutch on early American history, the role of the Dutch Reformed Church, particularly in eighteenth-century America, and the developments within the Church were largely ignored by historians until the second half of the twentieth century. Impetus was generated by the New Netherland Project, which has worked on translations of the administrative records of New Netherland (covering 1638 until 1674), known as the “Colonial Manuscripts,” since 1974. The project has resulted in many studies contributing pieces of the puzzle that is the complex history of the Dutch impact on America. The role of the Dutch in this history has also received international recognition since then.

Statistics about the total number of clergy and the relatively small number of Dutch ministers among them fail to show that on a local level in New York and New Jersey, the Dutch and the Dutch Reformed Church often played an important role, not only by the numbers, but also because of their positions of power, which they had held for well over one hundred years. All but two mayors of Albany, for example, were prominent members of the Dutch Reformed Church between 1686 and 1816.

In addition to estimates varying greatly over the years, and in the absence of a comprehensive demographic study of the New Netherland area, it is difficult and often impossible to draw firm conclusions. The records of the Albany congregation show the number of members at the time of Westerlo. In 1775, there were 820 pew holders in the Albany congregation (and many more, poorer families without their own pews who also attended the Church), when the city had about 4,000 inhabitants.

The Dutch Reformed Church in Albany was a powerful institution, and if many of these 820 plus the non-pew holders were regular attendees at the Church services, the numbers would attest to that. David Hackett, who tries to show ties

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17 Alice Kinney’s Stubborn for Liberty, Janny Venema’s Beverwijck, Joyce Goodfriend’s Before the Melting Pot and Revisiting New Netherland: Perspectives on Early Dutch America, Russell Shorto’s Island at the Center of the World, and most recently Martha Shattuck’s Explorers, Fortunes & Love Letters: A Window on New Netherland, deserve mention here.
18 See Voorhees 2005:312.
19 New efforts are under way to increase our understanding of New Netherland’s demography. See, for example, Folkerts 2010:93-110.
21 This was most certainly not the case every Sunday. When Ezra Stiles preached in “Rev. Dr. Westerlo’s Dutch Chh in Alby.” on October 1, 1786, he counted 408 people in attendance [Dexter
between religion and social order in seventeenth- through nineteenth-century
Albany, observes that in the 1760s, when religious pluralism was developing in
New England, “the weekly pilgrimage of Dutch families to the church at the
center of town remained the most consistent and continuous aspect of community
living.”

The arrival of Westerlo in North America

Eilardus Westerlo, called from Groningen in the Netherlands in 1760 to lead the
Dutch Reformed congregation in Albany, NY, became one of the leaders of his
denomination in America.

During his thirty years in North America, he successfully steered his own
congregation past its problems of discord. Moreover, he was instrumental in
helping the church organization in New York and New Jersey gain independence
from the Mother Church in the Netherlands.

On the one hand, Westerlo was fairly special: when he arrived in Albany, NY, in
1760, he had just seven Dutch-born colleagues as ministers in the Dutch
Reformed Church in America. On the other hand, at first glance it seems that the
Dutch Reformed in general and Westerlo in particular played a minor role during
the Revolutionary War: the estimated population of the thirteen colonies in 1775
was 3.5 million people. There were only about thirty Dutch Reformed ministers
in America, serving an estimated 9,000 people in their congregations, only about a
quarter of a percent of the population.

1901:241]. See also Roger Finke and Rodney Stark’s discussion of estimated numbers of
congregations of the various denominations, estimating the national adherence rate to religious
worshipping at 17% in 1776 [Finke 2005:29-54].

23 His Dutch-born colleagues among the 22 Dutch Reformed ministers were Lambertus De Ronde,
Reinhardt Erickzon, Johannes Leydt, David Marinus, Johannes Ritzema, Eggo Tonkens Van
Hoenenbergh, and Ulpianus Van Sinderen. When Theodorus Jacobus Frelinghuysen arrived in 1720,
he started with seven Dutch-born colleagues too.
24 Baird 1969:225. An estimated half a million were slaves.
Many sources on Westerlo credit him with being a fervent advocate of American independence throughout the Revolutionary War. I have found very few written examples to support such claims. Safest is to refer to a quotation such as the following: “It is also said that the sainted Westerlo, of the Dutch Church, the most influential pastor in the city at that time, was bold and zealous for the patriot cause in the pulpit and among the people.” Where most churches feared British repercussions, the Dutch Reformed Church and its minister in Albany, historians claim, continued their support for independence. For example, David Hackett stated that “throughout the Revolutionary War, Dominie Westerlo regularly gathered the community’s Dutch leaders and their families into the large stone church that continued to stand in the middle of the intersection of the town’s two main streets.”

Most of the estimated 1,400 clergymen in the colonies took sides in the War of Independence. Some were pro British (so-called “Loyalists,” among whom, predictably, the Anglican clergy), while others were pro independence (also known as “Patriots”), motivated by the urge to survive rather than to uphold religious principles, although they often invoked the Scriptures to justify their choices. Also noting that “there has been no general acceptance by academic scholars of the centrality of Protestant Christianity to an understanding of the American Revolution,” several historians have found that the Dutch ministers appeared divided between Loyalists and Patriots, as did their congregation members of Dutch descent, generally speaking. Eilardus Westerlo is on record as having been a staunch Patriot, preaching against the British.

This study will focus on Eilardus Westerlo, and on his role in the developments in the Dutch Reformed Church in North America, when the country of the United States gained its independence from Great Britain. Thus, this study will insert a few more pieces of the puzzle that is the complex history of Early America in general, and of the Dutch Reformed Church in particular.

What constituted his religious compass, who influenced it, and whom did Westerlo influence as a result? This study will answer these questions about his religious compass. An overview of his life, with a particular focus on his rebirth

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25 Howell 1886:393.
26 Hackett 1991:49. Hackett seems to base this assertion solely on Alice Kenney’s claim that “inhabitants of outlying areas fled to Albany for protection” and that “Dominie Westerlo conducted daily services of prayer for preservation from the hand of the invader” [Kenney 1969:105-106].
28 See Joyce 1966, especially 52-140.
29 Smith 1976:8. Richard Pointer answers the question whether religious differences caused or helped cause the Revolution: “[…] ecclesiastical grievances were not sufficiently divisive to provoke war. Nor can the revolutionary struggle in New York be simplistically summarized as a conflict pitting Anglicans against dissenters” [Pointer 1988:79]. He adds: “Members of all denominations were found on both sides of the conflict, though not always in equal proportions.”
31 See, for example, Kenney 1969:90.
experience and on his faith, will demonstrate that he was both a Pietist and a follower of the rules laid out by the Synod of Dort in 1618 and 1619.

I consider Westerlo a Pietist from early on in his life, even before his conversion experience in 1768. He was raised and educated in a (Reformed) Pietistic environment, and he tried to live a spiritual life of faith and grace. Pietists called for an individual conversion experience, and they insisted that ministers be spiritually qualified, but this did not mean that anyone who could not point to a clear moment of rebirth was not necessarily accepted as a Pietist.\textsuperscript{32}

The motivation behind Westerlo’s actions was to a large extent religious. The pages of his Memoirs that were found consist of a 20-page overview in two parts of the years 1738-1774 and some 500 pages covering the years 1781 until three weeks before his death in 1790.\textsuperscript{33} From them, a picture arises of a deeply Pietistic man. His library, his letters, his writings as a scribe for the consistory of his congregation, and his translation work serve to reinforce that notion.

Westerlo’s references to people and books and their authors that influenced him will give insight into who provided him with his moral and religious compass. I will further analyze his understanding of the religious teachings, which appears to have been influenced by Theodorus Jacobus Frelinghuysen and his sons. In spite of this, he makes few references to them in his writings. Westerlo’s leading role as a Dutch Reformed Pietist will be established. His relationship with his brother-in-law and colleague John Henry Livingston, who is seen by many as the father of the Reformed Church in America, will be investigated. The significance will be shown of an important sermon Westerlo delivered with George Washington in the audience.

Many studies display a painted portrait of their subject. Unfortunately, I have not been able to find a portrait of Eilardus Westerlo. One would expect Westerlo to have posed for a portrait some time after 1775, when he married Catharine Livingston, Stephen Van Rensselaer’s widow. The Van Rensselaer family was one of the richest in Albany, and there are extant portraits of many members of the family.

No museum appears to own such a portrait. The closest to a picture of Westerlo I have found is in a painting by Dennis Malone Carter (1827-1881). This artist painted the wedding reception George Washington gave for Alexander Hamilton and Elizabeth Schuyler on December 14, 1780, and a member of the clergy can

\textsuperscript{32} The Global Dictionary of Theology remarks that “[John Wesley] acquired the conventional badge of Pietist conversion ‘while one was reading Luther’s Preface to the Romans,’ […]” [Dyrness 2008:655], an event that took place in 1746, when Wesley had been “all devoted to God” for more than twenty years. It was also eight years after John and Charles Wesley had begun the Methodist movement in England.

\textsuperscript{33} A transcription of his Memoirs is to be found in Appendix 1. All transcriptions and translations are mine, unless indicated otherwise.
easily be identified in the painting. Since Westerlo officiated at the wedding, it would stand to reason that he is the minister who is depicted.


Unfortunately, not only did Carter paint this scene over fifty years after the wedding took place, we also know that George Washington was not in Albany that day.

Preceding his tribute to Hermanus Meijer, A. P. Waldron\(^{34}\) laments the lack of materials to enable him to write a eulogy:

> It is to be greatly regretted that so little pains have been taken to perpetuate the memory of those eminent and faithful men of God, who planted, and who watered in succeeding years, the Reformed Dutch Church on the Continent. Very often they did not themselves keep diaries; and even in many instances, where diaries and historical sketches have been left, being in Dutch, the descendents have undutifully suffered these precious fragments to perish with the decaying knowledge of their fathers' language. And even where these papers exist, as we have reason to be assured that they do exist, it is next to an impossibility to get them extracted from the rubbish of materials among which they are perishing. The memory of the righteous is blessed. And we linger over their memory, and their written or traditional remains, with as much interest and pleasure, to say the least, as does the antiquarian over the most curious and rare specimens of art, gleaned from ruins rendered famous as the scene of some great national achievement; or some disaster of the Church.\(^{35}\)

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\(^{34}\) The tribute to Hermanus Meijer was written by his son-in-law, A. P. (Phoenix) Waldron, and published in 1827, almost forty years after Meijer’s death.

This study will contribute to the perpetuation of the memory of Eilardus Westerlo, one of those “who planted and who watered in succeeding years, the Reformed Dutch Church” in North America. It will shed more light on the man who became a member of some of the most powerful families in Albany, who was the stepfather of the “Last Patroon,” Stephen Van Rensselaer III (and of long-time Mayor of Albany Philip Schuyler Van Rensselaer), who officiated at the wedding of Alexander Hamilton in 1780, who addressed General George Washington in 1782, and who received an honorary degree from the College of New Jersey (now Princeton) in 1785.

The historian Ihor Sevcenko, who passed away on December 26, 2009, exactly 219 years after Eilardus Westerlo, once wrote that historians fell into two categories: “the brightly colored butterfly flitting about over a flower bed” and “the crawling caterpillar whose worm’s-eye view covers the expanse of a single cabbage leaf.” Just as a caterpillar morphs into a butterfly, I will try to broaden my study’s horizon from single leaves to a beautiful flowerbed.

2. Living a religious life in the eighteenth century

Introduction

The information about Eilardus Westerlo’s life in the Netherlands and in America is based in large part on his unpublished Memoirs. Apart from the period between December 1774 and February 1782, all of his entries have been recovered and preserved. Until recently, only one person appears to have had access to these Memoirs: Harmanus Bleecker (1779-1849). In the volume of Annals of the American Pulpit dedicated to the Reformed Church, William B. Sprague published a biography of Eilardus Westerlo written by this Albany native and representative, chargé d’affaires to the Netherlands from 1839 to 1842. Bleecker based this 1848 piece entirely on Westerlo’s diaries written between 1770 and 1790.

It was not until 1984, almost two hundred years after Westerlo’s death, that the Rev. Howard Hageman reintroduced Eilardus Westerlo to the world, before an audience at the Albany Institute of History and Art, of which Westerlo’s stepson, Stephen Van Rensselaer III, became president in 1824. The title of Hageman’s informative lecture, Albany’s Dutch Pope, although somewhat tongue-in-cheek, represents Hageman’s assessment of Westerlo’s importance in eighteenth-century Albany. It should be seen as a “simple effort to revive the memory of someone who meant a great deal in the development of this city [Albany- RN] in one of the critical periods of its history.”

Hageman based his analysis on the information in Ebenezer P. Rogers’s Historical Discourse of 1857 and Edward T. Corwin’s

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37 A note, not in Westerlo’s handwriting, is stuck in the December 1790 section of his Memoirs. It reads: “1779 July 19. Received a Letter from Dr. Witherspoon of the Patroon’s arrival at Princeton.” Witherspoon was the President of the College of New Jersey at Princeton from 1768-94 (see Chapter 7); the Patroon referred to here was Westerlo’s stepson Stephen Van Rensselaer III. The note suggests Westerlo kept a diary before 1781 as well.

38 Sprague 1869:29-33.

39 As such he also played a role in locating historical Dutch seventeenth-century documents related to America. It was he who invited John Romeyn Brodhead to come to the Netherlands as his personal secretary in 1841, and Bleecker then assisted him in securing documents in Great Britain, France, and the Netherlands. For more on Harmanus Bleecker, see Rice 1924 and Van Minnen 1987.

40 This would suggest the three parts of the Memoirs were still together then, and not spread among today’s two research facilities.

41 The Albany Institute of History and Art holds Westerlo’s diaries of the period 1782-1790, but it seems Hageman had no access to them. He referred to them as “an unpublished autobiography which can no longer be found.” For a number of years, including 1984, some of the Historic Cherry Hill archives were stored at the New York State Library, and these archives included the remainder of Westerlo’s diaries. Hageman’s information was therefore only indirectly based on Westerlo’s own writings.

42 It appeared under this title in De Halve Maen a year later [Hageman 1985:8-10; 20-21].

43 Hageman 1985:21. David Hackett claims that “Westerlo’s nickname, ‘Pope,’ was given by British outsiders, [which] suggests their perception of the control he maintained over the congregation” [Hackett 1991:48].

44 Published by the Church’s Board of Publication in 1858 [Rogers 1858].
Manual of 1902. Rogers and Corwin’s sources on Westerlo were Bleecker’s biography of 1848 and Rogers’s Discourse, respectively.

Westerlo’s life can easily be divided into four parts. His formative years in the Netherlands, from October 1738 until his voyage to America in the summer of 1760, form the first part. The second part begins with his arrival in the New World in September of 1760 and ends with his marriage in July of 1775, on the eve of the Revolution. The third part covers his time during the War of Independence, and the final part is formed by his post-War years until his death in 1790.

The formative years: October 1738 – September 1760

When Eilardus Westerlo was born, his career in the service of the Dutch Reformed Church had seemingly already been decided. His father, Isaac, born in Oldenzaal in Overijssel, was the minister of the Dutch Reformed Church in Kantens, in the province of Groningen, having begun his career in Oosterhesselen in Drenthe (1733-1735). Eilardus’s mother, Hillegonda Reiners, was born in Dalen, five miles south of Oosterhesselen. Isaac was a junior colleague of the minister in Dalen, Eilardus Reiners, Hillegonda’s father, and it is likely Hillegonda and Isaac met through him.

Eilardus Reiners was the one of five sons of Dominee Lubbertus Reiners (1629-1720), all ministers, and he was the one to succeed their father in Dalen. The latter had come from Neuenhaus (Nieuwenhuis) and Veldhausen (Veldhuizen), in what is now Germany, barely ten miles North of Denekamp (in Overijssel).

At age 27, Isaac was called to Kantens, where he and Hillegonda were married that same year, 1735. Eilardus was their first-born son. He was named after his maternal grandfather, with this fairly uncommon name, his parents thus

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45 Westerlo’s date of birth was September 24, 1738. The baptismal records of Kantens, in the province of Groningen [see www.allegroningers.nl], clearly state, in Isaac Westerlo’s handwriting, that on “ditto” [September] 28 “een soon [was] gedoopt die mij, Isaac Westerlo, en mijn vrouw Hillegonda Reiners geboren was den 24 dito en is genoemt Eilardus” [“a son was baptized who was born to me, Isaac Westerlo, and my wife Hillegonda Reiners on the 24 of this month and who was given the name Eilardus”]. However, Eilardus himself very consistently used the date of October 30 throughout his life.

46 The Stichting Aold Daol’n mentions a field located between Dalen and Oosterhesselen, named Westeroo [www.aolddalen.nl]. Also Westvoorne (on Goeree, South of Rotterdam) put dikes around a polder in 1591 and named it Westerloo, and then there is Westerlo in Belgian Brabant, which is now a sister city of Westerlo, NY.

47 Not to be mistaken for Veldhuizen in Drenthe. See Stiasny 2001:59-61 for Lubbertus Reiners’s career in Veldhausen (1660-1673). Reiners got married in Dalen in 1660. Whereas Reiners wrote the church records in German, his successor, Jan Leonhard Speckmann, wrote them in Dutch.

48 In the period 1641 to 1806, only 16 other babies were given the name “Eilardus” in the province of Groningen, one of whom was a cousin of Westerlo’s: Eilardus Meurs (1746-1808: mother: Johanna Reiners), who also became a minister. The meaning of Eilardus, Eilard, Ellard, Ellert, is invariably given as “someone brave” or “the edge of a sword,” and the origin is given as Scandinavian or Frisian. An interesting detail concerning “Ellert” is that the most popular fairytale set in Drenthe, where
following the usual naming system. Eilardus himself, however, viewed this as sealing his religious destiny.

Eilardus’s own account of his birth:

As far as I know, the 30th day of the month of October in the year 1738 was the day I first saw the light of this world. My Reverend father, Isaac Westerlo, was then minister in Kantens, in the province of Groningen, where I was born out of his beloved wife, my honored mother, Hillegonda Reiners, and, probably on the first occasion conscripted by the Christian Reformed congregation by means of the Holy Baptism.

Eilardus’s parents met, is Ellert en Brammert, a story of two giants. They have their own museum in Drenthe: in Schoonoord, in the Ellertsveld area near Emmen. It seems the name Eilardus was slightly more popular in the province of Drenthe.
administered by my own father. *This is my comfort in my affliction, O My God, that Thy promise gives me life* I may write now, from Psalm 119:50. At the solemn baptism I was given the name Eilardus, after my mother’s father, in his lifetime minister in Dalen, Eilardus Reiners, a man whose descent and memory are blessed, and whose name my parents must have determined, among other things, to single me, their eldest son, out early on and starting in my youth, for the same Holy Service — *Elevate, oh my soul, thy fathers’ God*!

Clearly, Eilardus was convinced from an early age on that he was predestined for the ministry. At age ten he was sent to a grammar school, also known as a “Latijnse school,” in Oldenzaal, in the nearest town with such a school. This was also the town where his father was born, some 10 km southwest of Denekamp. Eilardus boarded with two of his mother’s cousins, Aleijda and Gesina Reiners, daughters of the late Dominee Arnoldus Reiners. Since a census was held in Denekamp and Oldenzaal in subsequent months in 1748, we have a complete picture of Eilardus’s family situation in both locations: in Denekamp, “Eilard” was the eldest of six children under the age of ten, and the family had two maids; in Oldenzaal, “Eijlerd” was no longer considered younger than ten, but one of two ‘free persons, boarders or otherwise living in the household’ (“vrije personen, die bij deselve in kost zijn of andersins inwoonen”), the other being Jan Bavink.

Life in the Reiners sisters’ household seems to have given rise to another deeply religious experience for Eilardus. His own words suggest a life in which Dutch Reformed teachings kept him from too many youthful indiscretions:

> When I was about ten, my parents entered me into the Latin School, in the said town of Oldenzaal; I was lucky to be living in the house of my mother’s cousins, two daughters of my great-uncle Arnoldus Reiners, in his lifetime minister and rector there. It was a family in which, in the evenings, I was especially expected to publicly read aloud some passages from the Holy Bible in sequence, and sometimes one or another edifying

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49 Interestingly enough, the first name “Eijlerd” was also in use on his father’s side of the family: one of the men Eilardus Westerlo dedicates his disputatio to is Johan Eijlard Borgeringh, identified as a relative. Westerlo’s maternal grandmother was Lucia Borgeringh, and I found one document mentioning an “Eil. Borgeringh” in Oldenzaal, possibly the father of both Lucia and Johan Eijlard.

50 *Memoirs*, January 17, 1770.

51 Van Lieburg confirms that this is a logical step for prospective theology students [Van Lieburg 1996:74].


53 Genealogische Werkgroep Twente, 1995:29. Westerlo does not mention this Bavink, but the Baving family genealogy [www.arendarends.nl/Peize/Peize%20families/Baving.htm] shows a Jan Baving (1740-1810), son of Lucas Baving and Casparina Reinders (who died in 1740), which may mean Eilardus was boarding with a cousin at the Reiners sisters.
sermon. There I also often heard mention of the dear truths of Christianity, which was a blessed means to keep me away from the many temptations of youth, although I will always have reasons enough to pray every time Lord, remember not the sins of my youth.54

After two years spent away from home, Eilardus lost his mother in childbirth. The unfortunate event of his mother’s passing, on October 17, 1750, caused Eilardus to worry about his academic future:

Meanwhile it pleased the omnipotent Lord of life and death to take away from me, when I was about twelve years old, most unexpectedly, my affectionately beloved mother, that faithful guide of my youth. She died in childbirth, giving birth to a well-formed son, and leaving my unfortunate father with seven children to be raised.55 A painful event that touched us all, and especially me, who lived far away, and who was so affectionately loved by her; the more so since this catastrophe increasingly deteriorated our family’s situation, and made it almost impossible for my poor father to supply me with the necessary means to keep me in school. I would have deserved to be left to my own devices and never to have been further equipped for the Sanctuary, had the Lord made me inherit the misdeeds of my youth.56 Then now I may and must acknowledge: Always an orphan will receive Thy mercy.57

In the fall of 1754, when he was almost sixteen, Eilardus matriculated at the University of Groningen, the alma mater of his father, both grandfathers, and several great-uncles.58 Eilardus’s fear that his father did not have the means to send him to the University seems unfounded: there is no record of his father receiving financial aid, although it was not uncommon for ministers to receive this. The fact that Isaac was not a minister of the Classis of Groningen may have prevented him from receiving funds for his son’s education, or perhaps, contrary to Eilardus’s assumptions, there was no need for such assistance. None of his siblings attended university, and none of them pursued a career in the ministry.59

54 Psalms 25:7. Westerlo’s words are taken from his Memoirs, January 17, 1770.
55 Westerlo’s later accounts only mention six children, all born before 1748: Eilardus, Jan Adolph, Lucas Lubbertus, Gerhardus Hermanus, Timon Christiaan, and Lucia Gesina. His parents’s last-born, “well-formed” son, Antonie, is never mentioned in any document. He must have died in infancy.
57 Hosea 14:3.
58 “Isacus Westerlo, Tubantinus [=from the Twenthe district of Overijssel], Literarum” was registered on September 25, 1725, “[Jean Westerlo, Suollanus [=of Zwolle], Jur.” on November 6, 1697, and “[Eijlardus Reiners, Drenthius, Theel.” On September 15, 1694 [Album Studiosorum Academiae Groninganae 1915:139, 144, and 173].
59 Much later his half-sister, Hillegonda Gesina Westerlo [1754-1841], married Jacobus Van Loenen, minister in Dalen.
When Eilardus enrolled at the University of Groningen, he was one of only thirty-three newly matriculated students at the university that semester. More than half, nineteen, majored in theology. Stadholder William IV, and later his widow, took interest in the University of Groningen, and thanks in large part to their efforts, three professors of theology were added to the faculty in 1752, bringing the total number of professors at the University to thirteen. The ratio of students to professors was not more than 14:1, and the ratio of theology students and theology professors might have been even better.

Not much is known about Eilardus’s life at the University. It is likely he took courses in Dogmatic Theology, Theologica Practica, Emblematica, Typica, Profetica, Elencctica, Exegetica, the Formulae [of Concord], the Canons of Dort, and the Liturgy. In 1759 he defended his disputatio, one of the requirements of his study of theology. It was a public academic exercise to test the student’s knowledge, and the number of declared theology majors in 1754, 23, was even 130 percent above that average. Critical note: the numbers are relatively small, and some students were registered without any further details, or with a major that does not point toward their later career as a minister. Princess Anne of Hanover, daughter of King George II of England, received a doctorate in theology from the University of Groningen, “in hac academia pro professionem ornandam recens vocati” on September 1, 1752 [Album Studiosorum Academiae Groninganae 1915:474]. Witteveen adds that Gerdes admitted them to the degree of doctor of theology “eleganti praeloquio,” [“with an elegant introduction”].

Leendertz 1880:486.

It was a so-called disputatio exercitii gratia, a rhetorical exercise for the student, as opposed to the disputatio pro gradu, which served as the last requirement of one’s studies, for obtaining a doctorate,
progress in a session presided over by a professor. The student defended printed theses, which were often based on material that had been covered during the professor’s lectures. Often, but not always, the professor would bundle the disputations of his students and publish them under his name. Daniel Gerdes did so several times once a subject had been covered by his students. Westerlo’s disputatio, chapter XV (of sixteen) on The First Letter of the Apostle Paul to the Corinthians, was thus published in Groningen in 1759.

In March 1760 Westerlo took his preparatory and peremptory exams, the exams required by the Reformed Church. Although the regulations were different for each classis, the Classis of Utrecht apparently set the standards. If the Classis of Groningen followed these standards, Westerlo must have shown up with his testimonials, necessary to be admitted to the preparatory exam. It was not the Classis, but the Theological Faculty who presided over this exam. The Acta Synodi Groninganae simply state: “Praeparatorie Geëxamineerde de Theol. Faculteit d. Eilardus Westerlo den 17 Meert 1760.”

The successful examination admitted him to the pulpit, and he was thus entitled to seek a pulpit. Since his professors had already given him the blank call from the Albany congregation, he did not have to wait to take the peremptory exam until he had received a call, which was customary. He took the peremptory exam almost two weeks later, on March 30, after which he was ordained for his post, some 3,000 miles away. Westerlo commemorates the peremptory exam and his ordination thus: “Blessed be our God and Father for the fresh instance of unchangeable faithfulness, it being 28 years that day when I was ordained for the ministry in the Senatus Academicus at Groningen, by the imposition of the hands of four professors: Daniel Gerdes, Michäel Bertling, Ewaldus Hollebeek, and for example. Disputations of the first category were presented by far more often than those of the latter. Westerlo’s was one of only 28 disputations exercitii gratia in theology at the University of Groningen between 1751 and 1760. See Van Sluis 1997:47-56. See Postma 1985:XV.

67 Professors also frequently used disputations for political ends. See, for example, Rabbie 1995:3, 4, 7. Daniel Gerdes presided over the dispute [copy in the library of the University of Utrecht]. The printing of the theses to be defended was financed by the government [Kuyper 1891:528-529]. A (negative) review of the publication can be found in De Godgeleerdheid en Hare Beoefenaars aan de Hoogeschool te Groningen: “En hoe gaat nu de Hoogl. in het uitlegkundig gedeelte te werk? Zóó, dat hij eerst den griekschen tekst geeft, dan een latijnsche vertaling en daarna eene omschrijving of paraphrase van den tekst. Dat wij in onze dagen geen volkomen vrede meer met Gerdes exegese kunnen hebben, zal wel waar zijn; maar zou de exegese onzer dagen na 100 jaren ook wel allen bevredigen?” [“And what method does the professor use in the explanatory section? Thus: he first gives the text in Greek, then a translation into Latin, and then a description or paraphrase of the text. It may be true that we cannot be entirely satisfied with Gerdes’s exegesis, but will today’s exegesis satisfy all after 100 years?”] [Heerspink 1875:8-10].


72 On December 24, 1783, Westerlo, having learned of Bertling’s passing, mentioned in his Memoirs that Bertling had studied under his grandfather, Eilardus Reiners [see Heerspink 1875:20].
Paulus Chevallier,\textsuperscript{73} and the Reverend Robert Alberthoma,\textsuperscript{74} then Deputatus Synodi and one of the ministers at Groningen.\textsuperscript{75} Clearly, both exams were academic affairs in Groningen.\textsuperscript{76}

The exams could be difficult and last very long, but the classes might have adapted their norms somewhat to the knowledge and circumstances of the candidates. When a candidate had already received a call and was anxiously awaited by a congregation, then his chances of successfully passing the exams were a lot better. Even if he were to perform below expectations, it was not likely that he would not be admitted. In those cases he might be given the advice to continue his studies and to practice more.\textsuperscript{77} This is indeed what Westerlo should do while traveling to America. At least this is what Gerdes hinted at in his letter to Crommelin (see below) concerning Frelinghuysen’s possible voyage back to America on the same ship as Westerlo.\textsuperscript{78}

This seems to have been Westerlo’s case: when he took his exams, he had already, albeit indirectly, received his call from Albany. This blank call, as mentioned above, was received by two of his professors, Daniel Gerdes and Michäel Bertling, in a request from the congregation in Albany, or more likely from its consistory, to find them a suitable minister.

No information is available as to what criteria, description, or profile were used by the consistory in the letter of call, nor what criteria Gerdes and Bertling used to find the most suitable candidate for the ministry in Albany. How did Gerdes come to his decision, presumably in consultation with Bertling, to select Westerlo? After almost six years at the University, and having defended his disputation, he was near finishing his degree in theology, possibly one of only twenty in that situation. In his dissertation on Daniel Gerdes, Witteveen does not mention Westerlo as one of Gerdes’s students, and Gerdes does not share the issue of having to choose a student to go to America in his correspondence with his friend Emo Lucius Vriemoet (1699-1760), professor at the Franeker Academy, although he frequently discussed personal and academic matters.

The request was submitted to Gerdes and Bertling through an agent, Daniel Crommelin, who was probably in contact with merchants in Albany and New

\textsuperscript{73} Paulus Chevallier expressed his political views later in life, as a Patriot (in letters to his son Petrus). See Van der Meer 1996:161-163.
\textsuperscript{74} It is Robert Alberthoma’s \textit{Uittreksel van de Leere der Waarheid} that Westerlo translated in the late 1780s [see Chapter 6].
\textsuperscript{75} \textit{Memoirs}, March 31, 1788. “That day” refers to the previous day.
\textsuperscript{76} Daniel Gerdes indicates this is the usual procedure, in his letter to Daniel Crommelin, 29 April 1760 [see Appendix 3]. However, Groningen was exceptional in not having the Synod examine the candidates in the Netherlands [Van Eijnatten 2005:232, Van Rooden 1996:51].
\textsuperscript{77} Van Deursen 1991:41-42. Van Deursen’s description focuses on the situation around 1650, but Kuyper’s \textit{De Opleiding tot den Dienst des Woords bij de Gereformeerden} of 1891 does not show major changes in the eighteenth century.
\textsuperscript{78} Letter written by Gerdes to Crommelin, May 10, 1760 [see Appendix 3].
York City at the time.\textsuperscript{79} The use of agents was not uncommon. The reason for bypassing the Classis of Amsterdam, at least initially, was not necessarily meant to spite the Classis. Mouw has found that agents were viewed by congregations to be “best suited to act in the interests” of the congregations, suggesting the Classis was not in a position to act in the best interests of the churches overseas.\textsuperscript{80} Indeed, one may doubt that the members of the Classis of Amsterdam had the information, knowledge, insight, and commitment necessary to assess a person’s ability to function as a minister in colonial American society, although the same might be said about professors at universities in the Netherlands. Congregations also often had a difficult time verbalizing what kind of person they needed.\textsuperscript{81}

At the time of the call to Westerlo, in 1759, the congregation in Albany may have had several reasons for not getting the Classis of Amsterdam involved: Frelinghuysen had left Albany to meet with the Classis, ostensibly to request permission from the Classis of Amsterdam to establish a classis and an academy in America. It would have appeared odd, to say the least, if Albany were to petition the Classis of Amsterdam for a new minister at the same time that its current minister was in Amsterdam. The Classis of Amsterdam never received such a request from Albany, nor did Albany ever send an official letter explaining the dismissal of its minister Frelinghuysen.

Although becoming the minister of the church in Albany, the second largest Dutch Reformed congregation in North America, must have been an attractive possibility for ministers already in America, the fact that the consistory dismissed Frelinghuysen under a cloud of controversy may have made this position less than desirable for these ministers. The fact that one third of the congregations in New York and New Jersey were without a minister at the time the blank call was sent to Groningen\textsuperscript{82} is also an indication that it was not easy to find a minister in North America. Since the consistory sent the letter of call so soon after Frelinghuysen had left for the Netherlands, it does not seem plausible that it spent a long time weighing the possibility of calling one of the ministers from smaller congregations.

\textsuperscript{79} Daniel Crommelin [1707-1789] was born in New York, where his father Charles, a British immigrant with French roots, set up the Holland Trading Company in 1720. Daniel moved to the Netherlands when he was seventeen, to set up an international trading company in Amsterdam. He was also involved in the sale of the musical notation of the 1767 New York City edition of The Psalms of David translated into English from the Dutch [ER 4031; Leaver 2005:115 n67].

\textsuperscript{80} Mouw 2005:90-91. He estimates that calls through agents account for one quarter [23] of the calls sent to the Netherlands between 1700 and 1772. Interestingly enough, Mouw mentions Gerdes and Berling as being involved in a call from Schoharie in 1762 [note 19 on p.96], but not the one from Albany in 1760. The records show there was indeed such a call from Schoharie, with involvement of Westerlo, but it never materialized: Johannes Schuyler [1710-1779] returned to Schoharie in 1766, after having been a minister at Schoharie between 1736 and 1755, to succeed Abraham Rosenkrantz [1728? - 1796], who supplied at Schoharie until he left in 1763 for German Flats, Schuyler’s first ministry in 1736.

\textsuperscript{81} Sometimes they did include the age and family situation (“married with children,” or rather the lack thereof) of the prospective candidate as part of the profile.

\textsuperscript{82} See Appendix 7. Of the 81 congregations, 27 had no minister. In his analysis of eighteenth-century Reformed ministers in the Netherlands, Van Rooden concludes that there was a permanent surplus of proponents until 1775 [Van Rooden 1991:365-367, and n10].
in New York or New Jersey at the time. This may also indicate that they were looking for a candidate without involvement in these conflicts - one with a clean slate.

4. Old Stone Church, Dutch Reformed Church, Albany, NY, built in 1715. [http://www.firstchurchalbany.org]

Whatever the advantages the consistory of the Albany Church saw in bypassing the Classis of Amsterdam and in using an agent, it was by all standards the most expensive method of acquiring a new minister. Mouw found that the total cost of recruiting a minister from the Netherlands could exceed the first-year salary for that minister.\textsuperscript{83} The invoice presented by Daniel Crommelin toward the end of 1760\textsuperscript{84} shows that the total costs of bringing Westerlo over - more than one third

\textsuperscript{83} Mouw 2009:368.
\textsuperscript{84} Document 43-11 in the archives of the First Church in Albany. The invoice is difficult to follow: Dutch guilders and British pounds sterling are added up to yield the mentioned total of £892.90 [that is, 892 guilders and 18 stuivers].
of it, a £300 “assignation,” to Professor Gerdes - amounted to £892.90, approximately €9,000 in today’s money.\(^{85}\)

Gerdes received a substantial sum of money, but it is not likely that the sum was large because of stipulations made by the consistory about the candidate’s convictions. Although Frelinghuysen had been explicitly commissioned by the Classis of Amsterdam to convince the Albany consistory to join the Coetus in 1745,\(^{86}\) this had little to do with a possible candidate’s position in the *Coetus-Conferentie* conflict.

The *Coetus-Conferentie* issue, which bitterly divided the Dutch Reformed ministers and congregations in New York and New Jersey between 1754 and 1771, pitted those wanting to establish a governing body of the Dutch Reformed Church in North America with the authority to examine and license candidates for the ministry against those wanting to remain subordinate to the Classis of Amsterdam. It was not fully resolved until after the Revolutionary War.\(^{87}\)

**The Coetus-Conferentie controversy**

The Albany consistory, and Eilards Westerlo himself, tried, fairly successfully, to steer clear of the *Coetus-Conferentie*\(^{88}\) dispute, but, in order to understand why they did, it would be helpful to explain this complex issue that long divided the Dutch Reformed denomination in North America in the eighteenth century.

Historians have struggled to explain the causes, circumstances, and implications of this schism for centuries, but their attempts have often obscured rather than clarified the issue. Fortunately, in his 2009 dissertation, Dirk Mouw brings much clarity to the issue by unraveling the confusing usage of the notion of *Coetus*, and by assessing the events leading up to the *Coetus-Conferentie* controversy.\(^{89}\)

Mouw shows that the traditional interpretation of the differences between the *Coetus* party on the one hand (Pietistic, American-born and -educated ministers, inspired by the Great Awakening,\(^{90}\) with a weak attachment to Dutch language

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\(^{85}\) The Church had to borrow £165 New York currency from its Poor Fund to pay its debts incurred in calling and bringing over Eilards Westerlo [ER 3800; document 43-1 in archives of the First Church in Albany].

\(^{86}\) See ER 2880, and personal correspondence with Dr. Robert S. Alexander, author of *Albany’s First Church* (1988), August 8, 2006. In the same letter, Alexander claims that the *Coetus* idea had first been developed by the Classis of Amsterdam to deal with problems in their Indonesian churches in the late seventeenth century.

\(^{87}\) James Tanis points out that the 1771 *Plan of Union* solved the ecclesiological differences, but that the theological differences (on “experimental, revivalist doctrines of piety, soul-searching and rebirth”) remained [Tanis 1976:237].

\(^{88}\) Pronounced /ˈsɪtəs/ and /ˈkɔnfərɛntʃi/ respectively, both Latin *coetus* and Dutch *conferentie* translate into English “meeting.”

\(^{89}\) Mouw 2009:243-325.

\(^{90}\) Spiritual revivals that swept much of Colonial America in the 1740s.
and culture) and Conferentie party on the other (anti-Pietist, Dutch-born ministers, fierce opponents of the Great Awakening, with a strong connection to Dutch culture), is to a large extent inaccurate.

One of the major causes of misunderstanding is that “Coetus” has been used to refer to three different entities:

- a functioning body that met twelve times between 1747 and 1754, supported by the Classis of Amsterdam;
- the “so-called Coetus” that met between 1754 and 1771, opposed by the Classis of Amsterdam (and by the Conferentie); and
- a party of clergy and laypeople within the North-American Dutch Reformed Church.

In 1735, the Classis of Amsterdam first encouraged and later insisted on the Dutch Reformed in North America holding a yearly Convention. Although it had no authority to promote and ordain,\(^{91}\) it did have the power to resolve issues such as the Klagte in the 1720s and 1730s.\(^{92}\) From 1747 until 1754, a Coetus\(^{93}\) functioned as intended. It was accepted by most congregations, and most ministers and elders attended.\(^{94}\)

In September 1754, this Coetus, judging itself to be “defective, fruitless, and disagreeable,” voted to “seek to become changed into a Classis.”\(^{95}\) This meant that they would seek to become a body that could “attend promptly to questions as they arise, furnish the congregations with candidates and ministers, and […] promote the real advantage of the churches.”\(^{96}\) Opposition to this move from the Classis of Amsterdam and some ministers and congregations in America was fierce, and the Coetus was referred to as the “so-called Coetus” until 1771, and the opposing clergy became known as the Conferentie ministers. This is the time period during which Westerlo arrived in Albany.

The Coetus-Conferentie controversy became much more than one of competing assemblies. Laypeople got involved, especially during the 1760s, when they developed a new sense of regional identity. This resulted in the strengthening of their attachment to their congregations and to the regional Coetus and Conferentie parties. Several congregations were so deeply split over the issue that they raised enough money to build their own Coetus or Conferentie church, and the records

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\(^{91}\) In order to push the idea of a Coetus, however, the Classis allowed the ministers in North America to examine and ordain four men between 1747 and 1751.

\(^{92}\) See Chapter 6.

\(^{93}\) Technically, it is better to speak of a series of twelve [“particular”] Coetuses between 1747 and 1754, instead of gatherings of “the Coetus,” as the meaning of “meeting” was applied to each [Mouw 2009:267 n591].

\(^{94}\) Major exception: the Albany consistory did not allow its minister, Theodorus Frelinghuysen, to attend any assembly meeting.

\(^{95}\) Demarest 1859:xci. See also Mouw 2009:304. The King’s College controversy [see Chapter 7], the deaths of Jacobus and Ferdinandus Frelinghuysen at sea in 1753, and of Johannes Frelinghuysen two days before the September 1754 Coetus [see Chapter 6], appear to have precipitated this motion.

\(^{96}\) Mouw 2009:306.
show parents were willing to travel miles to have their children baptized by a minister of their party.\footnote{Mouw 2009:357.}

Although much of the nineteenth-century analysis of the \textit{Coetus-Conferentie} controversy suggests that the dispute was rooted in differences in theological style, especially pitting Pietists against anti-Pietists, Mouw argues convincingly that the arguments put forth by both sides were intended to emphasize their Dutchness, by seeking the approval of both the Classis of Amsterdam and their constituents in America of Dutch ancestry.\footnote{Mouw 2009:614.}

For clarity’s sake, I will refer to the 1747-1754 Coetus by that name, and to the 1754-1771 Coetus as the “so-called Coetus.” If laypeople are obviously involved, I will refer to them as (members of) the \textit{Coetus} or \textit{Conferentie} party.

The Albany congregation was split over the \textit{Coetus-Conferentie} issue,\footnote{Actually, the Albany consistory is on record as not wanting to have anything to do with any regional governing body of the Dutch Reformed Church in North America prior to 1784: Theodorus Frelinghuysen was not permitted to attend any of the \textit{Coetus} meetings between 1747 and 1754, not to mention those of the controversial “so-called Coetus” after 1754.} and a candidate in Groningen could not have been aware of the conflict. Gerdes must have been asked to analyze the candidate’s character, making sure his personality would fit in a congregation whose split was worsened as a result of its current minister having made his convictions (read: those of the Classis of Amsterdam) clear.

Dirk Mouw has recently been working on a new idea that may explain why the consistory of Albany decided to write to Groningen for a minister.\footnote{The following is a brief outline of Mouw’s idea as explained in personal e-mails to me, February 8-10, 2011.} His solution may also make clear why the consistory decided to apply to the Netherlands for a newly ordained minister rather than for an experienced one.

In the years following the Synod of Dort, the Theological Faculty of the University of Groningen was the only academic body not barred by secular and religious authorities from conducting (Dutch Reformed) theological examinations in the Netherlands.\footnote{Indeed, the Theological Faculty examined Westerlo, both preliminarily and peremptorily, and four professors ordained him, with the help of a Deputatus Synodi.} In all other classes the exams were the responsibility of the Church, and no classis in the Netherlands would have been willing to help Albany find a minister, other than maybe Walcheren. Working with another classis would have angered Amsterdam even more than the solution through Groningen.

In the \textit{Coetus-Conferentie} conflict, the Albany consistory had to avoid getting in trouble with the Classis of Amsterdam and with the adherents of both \textit{Coetus} and \textit{Conferentie}. Examination of their prospective pastor by Groningen may have offered their best chance at that. In addition, it seems very likely that the Classis
of Amsterdam would have been hard pressed to find a minister for Albany. It had taken the Classis over five years to fill the last North American vacancy, in October 1745.102

This is a very plausible theory. By asking Gerdes and Bertling for assistance, the Albany consistory found a new pastor who was not tainted by the Coetus-Conferentie schism: he was neither with the Coetus or the Conferentie, nor with the Classis of Amsterdam, another party in the conflict. It may also make clear why they decided to apply for a newly ordained minister.

The consistory in Albany was not expecting a candidate with knowledge of the conflict in North America, but in Eilardus Westerlo it found a young Pietist pastor with a family background in the Dutch Reformed Church. Having shown the zeal and character needed to lead a congregation in turmoil, he was seen as the perfect candidate to be the minister of the second-largest congregation in North America.

The consistory must have known it would be impossible to find such a candidate closer to home, and certainly the Classis of Amsterdam would be of no help in this. During the years 1758-1770, the Boekzaal der Geleerde Waerelt did not contain information about vacancies in North America. The only advertisements in the Boekzaal for vacant positions abroad (for several years in a row) were for St. Martin, Ste. Croix, Paramaribo, and Curaçao, all of which gave the Board of the West India Company in Amsterdam as contact information.103

Albany had applied for ministers through agents prior to this call, though not always to its satisfaction. In 1700 it had ended up with two ministers on its doorstep, which was of course one too many.104 What made this call to Groningen special is that, in addition to bypassing Amsterdam and using an agent, it seems Albany had not told its minister at the time, Theodorus Frelinghuysen (1723-1761?), that he need not return. In any case, he appeared to be fighting his dismissal in the Netherlands, spending two weeks in Groningen,105 after which nobody seems to have heard from him again.

Ms. Anne Grant reports the folkloric account she heard of the reasons for Dominee Frelinghuysen’s sudden departure, and also of his death: Frelinghuysen found a club, old shoes, a crust of black bread, and a dollar in front of his door. The message, as explained to Frelinghuysen, was that he had thus received the advice to leave town (hence the shoes and the club), with the bread and money to

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102 The vacancy was for the position formerly held by Bernardus Freeman on Long Island, hoping that the replacement “may not be an old man” [ER 2738]. Ulpianus Van Sinderen (36) came over from Friesland [ER 2878].

103 For example, St. Martin was looking for ministers or proponents who could preach both in English and in Dutch [Boekzaal July-December 1759: 439].

104 Johannes Lydius and Bernardus Freeman. Luckily, Schenectady was in need of a minister, and Freeman accepted a call to Schenectady that year. See, for example, Mouw 2005:92-94, for the way this problem was resolved.

105 Letter by Gerdes to Crommelin, May 10, 1760 [see Appendix 3].
help him on his way out. In a letter from New York City to his wife on the eve of his departure, dated October 5, 1759, Frelinghuysen spoke of “an important affair which the Lord hath put in [his] heart” for which he had to go to Europe. The letter and its postscript show that the possibility that he might not return was on his mind.

The ship that carried Westerlo across the North Atlantic Ocean must have left towards the end of June 1760. Its first stop was Texel, to prepare for the voyage, just as Henry Hudson’s Halve Maen had done some 150 years earlier. His call, crossing, arrival, and beginning in Albany carry importance for Westerlo. He mentions their dates more than once in his diary. Only once does he give an account, albeit a brief one, of his voyage across the North Atlantic Ocean:

Twenty-three years ago I first, through Divine mercy, arrived in this city having been upwards of fourteen weeks on the vessel in my passage from Europe, and experienced the Lord’s preserving and protecting goodness. Already when we had just left Holland we saw a French privateer (for it was then wartime) near upon us but happily pursued by an English man-of-war, and not allowed to take us, and when laying ready at Stromnitz in the Orkneys, we got information of another on that coast and were prevented from being captured, and afterwards we escaped once more by safe sailing. Thus, the Lord’s eye was upon poor me that I should not be carried into an enemy’s land, and he brought me safely here, where I was received in friendship by the inhabitants, and preached the next Lord’s Day from Romans 1:15.

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106 Grant 1909:298. Anne MacVicar Grant [1755-1838], only child of an officer in the British army, spent the years 1758 to 1768 in and around Albany. She published Memoirs of an American Lady, a combination of her memories of pre-Revolutionary America and a biography of Margareta Schuyler [1701-1782], in 1808. Bearing in mind the words of caution concerning the accuracy of Ms. Grant’s recollections stated by John W. Beardslee III (Beardslee 1999:60-61), I cannot guarantee Ms. Grant’s account reflects what actually occurred.

107 ER 3738-39. Frelinghuysen’s whereabouts after May 14, 1760, when he sent the Classis of Amsterdam a letter from Rotterdam, are unknown. Grant heard that Frelinghuysen, on the same ship as Westerlo, threw himself overboard shortly before arriving back in America, upon learning that Westerlo was to replace him. Although often stated as fact since then, there is no indication they were traveling on the same ship. In fact, Westerlo never mentions Frelinghuysen’s name in any of his correspondence or in his Memoirs [see Chapter 6].

108 Little is known about the ship. Gerdes’s letter to Crommelin of May 10, 1760 [see Appendix 3] reveals the name of the captain: John Green.

109 Carel De Vos Van Steenwijk, who met Westerlo in Albany in 1784, gave a more elaborate account of his 15-week crossing in 1783 [De Vos Van Steenwijk 1999:35-38]. Westerlo only mentions meeting ambassador Pieter Johan Van Berckel and the fact that the latter stayed at the Westerlo’s and then traveled with Westerlo and Governor Clinton to Kingston [Memoirs, August 8, 1784], whereas De Vos Van Steenwijk notes that he and Westerlo both spent their youth in and around Oldenzaal, and that he could update Westerlo on the Latin School there [De Vos Van Steenwijk 1999:167-170].

110 The Seven Years’ War (1756-1763), between the French and the English. It is the European counterpart of the French and Indian War (1754-1763) in North America.

111 Memoirs, October 13, 1783.
It is not clear whether Westerlo means his arrival in New York City, and subsequently preaching there, or Albany. In New York City he was heartily welcomed by Dominee Johannes Ritzema, whose son Rudolphus may still have been at Groningen University when Westerlo left in the spring.

We do know that the Classis of Amsterdam was not happy with the way Westerlo was sent to America in 1760 (and similarly with Hermanus Meijer in 1763). On October 3, 1763, the Classis of Amsterdam wrote to the “Ministers who call themselves the Conferentie,” and, while admonishing them to adhere to the Classis of Amsterdam as a “Higher Assembly,” they added: “You will also inculcate this on those new brethren who you have recently sought and obtained from the Faculty of Groningen.”

[The only two ministers to have come over recently were Eilardus Westerlo and Hermanus Meijer - RN] These gentlemen, although passing through our city (Amsterdam), did not address themselves to us. We also think it highly befitting that you should seek for ministers whom you may require (in America), through the Classis of Amsterdam, or their committee Ad Res Exteras, or at least through members of that Classis to whose care the New York churches are committed. Or if any are sent to you from other quarters, they should refer themselves to us in order to receive our exhortations how to carry themselves properly and in due subordination to our Classis.

The Boekzaal was not simply a mouthpiece of the Classis of Amsterdam: it reported under academic news the fact that Eilardus Westerlo, “Is. Fil [=son of Isaac],” was admitted as proponent on March 17, 1760, after preaching on 1 Peter 2:9, and that on March 31, after preaching on Galatians 4:4, he was ordained as minister “in New Netherland, in West India, the congregation of New Albany, in the province of New York.” There is no record of any protest from the Classis of Amsterdam when this was reported.

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112 Album Studiosorum Academiae Groninganae 1915:213. In June 1758, Johannes reported to the Classis of Amsterdam that his “eldest and now only son, Rudolphus Ritzema, has so far completed his studies, that at the close of a four year’s course at the new college (Kings), established in this city, he is about to graduate. […] At once after that he expects to go, by way of Hamburg, to the Academy of Groningen, for the further pursuit of his studies” [ER 3713].

113 ER 3896. Corwin adds the names of Cook [Cock?], Meijer, and Kern in parentheses, but it can only be that the Classis was referring to Westerlo and Cornelis Blauw [matriculated at the University of Groningen in 1749; arrived in America in 1762, to preach at Pompton Plains, etc.] in addition to Meijer: Gerard Daniel Kok (Cock) didn’t arrive until 1764, did not graduate from Groningen, and the Classis had examined him [ER 3832-33] and approved of his call from Rhinebeck and Camp, NY, in September of 1762 [ER 3820], and Johann Michael Kern did arrive in New York in October 1763, but he graduated from Heidelberg, in Germany. Both Cock and Kern preached in German, in German Reformed Churches.

114 ER 3896-97. The New-York Historical Society’s Paltsits Ulster County Collection [Box 1 Folder 7, Item 70] contains an undated letter from the Classis of Amsterdam to the Coetus party, which seems to be a copy of the one to the Conferentie party as it is quoted on the pages mentioned in ER.

115 Boekzaal January-June 1760:631. It includes an apology that Westerlo’s ordination was not reported earlier [the list of proponents on p.90 does not include Westerlo, for example].
Finding his place in the New World: September 1760 – July 1775

Although the first comprehensive census in America was not conducted until 1790, unofficial figures show that in 1760, Albany had more than doubled in size since the British had taken over the colony of New Netherland in 1664 and changed Beverwijck’s name to Albany.\textsuperscript{116} Albany was definitely more than “a Dutch outpost in an English colonial society.”\textsuperscript{117} It was still an important town for trading with the Indians,\textsuperscript{118} and it seemed to have maintained much of its Dutch character and flavor.

When Peter Kalm (1715-1779), a Swedish botanist, visited Albany in June 1749 as part of his travels through North America, he gave the following description of its Dutch character:

Next to New York, Albany is the principal town, or at least the most wealthy, in the province of New York. It is situated on the slope of a hill, close to the western shore of the Hudson River, about one hundred and forty-six English miles from New York. […]. The Dutch church stands a short distance from the river on the east side of the market. It is built of stone and in the middle it has a small steeple with a bell. It has but one minister who preaches twice every Sunday. […] all the people understand Dutch, the garrison excepted. […] The houses in this town are very neat, and partly built of stones covered with shingles of white pine. Some are slated with tile from Holland, because the clay of this neighborhood is not considered fit for tiles. Most of the houses are built in the old Frankish way, with the gable-end towards the street, except a few, which were recently built in the modern style.\textsuperscript{119}

About the inhabitants of Albany, Kalm observed the following:

The inhabitants of Albany and its environs are almost all Dutchmen. They speak Dutch, have Dutch preachers, and the

\textsuperscript{116} The British “found a village with more than a thousand people” [Venema 2003:24]. Not all figures are reliable: Andrew Burnaby, vicar of Greenwich, found the 1759 figure to be 100,000 [Burnaby 1775:138], a figure copied by subsequent travelers through the area. This figure was certainly far off, of course: most estimates of the number of inhabitants in New York City around 1760 do not surpass 18,000. Edward Countrymen estimates the number of inhabitants to have been 12,000 in 1820, almost four times as many as in 1790 [Countryman 1996:120].

\textsuperscript{117} Hageman 1985:20.

\textsuperscript{118} In 1787, when Westerlo advertised the sale of the Church’s pasture lots on behalf of the Consistory, he mentioned that the city of Albany was one “affording the most facile and commodious intercourse with Niagara, Detroit, & Michillimackinac, the three great Indian marts […]” [Document 64-5 in the Archives of the First Church in Albany]. It was not until 1797 that Albany became the capital of the state of New York. In 1786 it was the sixth city in size in the United States.

\textsuperscript{119} Benson 1987:340-342.
divine service is performed in that language. Their manners are likewise quite Dutch.  

Indeed, by one historian’s assessment, Westerlo’s transition from a 21-year-old recent graduate from the Old World to the minister of a large congregation in the New World appears to have gone well:

Eilardus Westerlo [was] a brilliant and tactful young divine from the University of Groningen, who healed the schism in the church so effectively that the Common Council awarded him the freedom of the city a year after his arrival.  

The Common Council, and the seats in government of Albany in general, were often still occupied by people of Dutch descent, who were also influential in the Dutch Reformed Protestant Church, and vice versa. In October 1761, Volkert P. Douw had just been appointed mayor. He and the members of the Common Council, Peter Lansing, Frans Pruyun, Cornelis Ten Broeck, Volkert Douw, Abraham Ten Broeck, Henry I. Bogart, Jacob Van Schaick, Marte Mynderse [Van Iveren], and John Hansen, were also all prominent members of the Dutch Reformed Church, and all but one were descendants of influential 17th-century Dutchmen.

It was very important to be accepted by the mayor, the Common Council and the consistory of the Dutch Reformed Church, and young Westerlo achieved just that in a congregation that was split over the Coetus-Conferentie issue (and would remain so for several more years).

Anne Grant, having left Albany to return to her native Scotland in 1768 at age thirteen, may have been accurate in her depiction of Westerlo in his early years in Albany:

This young man [Westerlo - RN] had the learning, talent, and urbanity; he had all the sanctity of life and animated eloquence of his predecessor without his love of power, his bustling turn, or his eagerness for popularity; he was indeed a person of very singular merit, but studious and secluded, and unwilling to mix with strangers. To Madame [Margareta Schuyler – RN],

120 Benson 1987:343-344.
121 Kenney 1969:45. The text as it was recorded in Common Council is as follows: “Resolved that the freedom of this City be presented to the Reverend Eilardus Westerlo, Minister of the Reformed Protestant Dutch Church in the City of Albany, out of a particular regard this Board has towards his person and function, and the unwearied diligence in discharge of his duties of his calling since his arrival in this City; that the Mayor sign the said freedom in behalf of this Board and that the Clerk affix the City Seal to it and sign his name as Clerk thereto. The Mayor to deliver the same this evening in the presence of this Board” [Munsell 1865:128].
122 Munsell 1865:128. The family tree of the well-connected Livingstones of the seventeenth and eighteenth centuries also contains several of these names [see Appendix 8].
however, he was open and companionable, and knew and valued the attractions of her conversation.  

In 1763, Hermanus Meijer, a fellow Groningen graduate, arrived in New York, to become the minister of the Dutch Reformed Church in Kingston. Meijer, originally from Bremen, matriculated in September 1757, and it is likely that his situation in 1763 was similar to Westerlo’s in 1760: receiving a call just when he was about to finish his studies. He indicated he was sent by professors (as opposed to by the Classis of Amsterdam). It is also very likely that the call to Meijer was placed through Crommelin in 1763: Westerlo hints at that in his Memoirs.

The Coetus-Conferentie conflict may be at the root of both the blank call sent to Groningen and the fact that Meijer started in Kingston. Schoharie’s 1736 ordination of Johannes Schuyler, the selection of Hermanus Meijer to go to America, and his voyage on the same ship as Jacob R. Hardenbergh led to Meijer starting in Kingston, and not in Schoharie.

One might say that the first attempt by the Classis of Amsterdam to get a Coetus off the ground in North America, in 1737, was also precipitated by the installation of Johannes Schuyler as minister of the Schoharie congregation in 1736. In its letter of October 1, 1736, the Classis of Amsterdam approved the ordination of “John Schulerus, Philosophiae et Theologiae Studiosus.” It specifically stipulated that it was to be an exception to the rule that ordinations were to take place in Amsterdam. Since the correspondence between the Classis and the congregation in Schoharie was particularly slow, the ordination had already taken place by the time the approval reached Schoharie, in March of 1738, and Dominees Erickson and Haeghoort used the delay as an argument for the necessity of a Coetus.

When Johannes Mauritius Goetschius was ordained “in the Holy Ministry” at the High and Low Dutch congregation at Schoharie in December 1757, by Theodorus Freelinghuyzen (Albany) and Barent Vrooman (Schenectady), it was done “by order of the Reverend Coetus.” Schoharie lost Goetschius, physician and minister, to New Paltz in 1760. Like so many other congregations, Schoharie

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123 Grant 1909:41. Margareta Schuyler’s marriage to her cousin Phillipus Schuyler remained childless, but Margareta played an important role in pre-Revolutionary Albany society.

124 A “D. Hermannus Meijer,” is indicated as a proponent under the Classis of Middelstum, and as a candidate in Varik, Zaltbommel (Gelderland) [Boekzaal January-June 1761, p.370]. A Herman Meijer was baptized in Middelstum in 1737 – certainly a different Hermanus Meijer from the one who grew up in Bremen.

125 ER 4021.

126 ER 2675. Memoirs, December 27, 1783.

127 ER 2675. Crommelin was also the agent who helped Archibald Laidlie come to America in 1764 [ER 3921]. Issues on Long Island and in the Raritan Valley [see Chapter 6] in the early 1730s were also major contributors to the necessity the Classis of Amsterdam felt for “a yearly Convention,” which it expressed as early as January 1735 [ ER 2664; Mouw 2009:254].

128 ER 2702-2703.

129 Vosburgh 1917:385.
found itself without a minister in 1760. The records at Schoharie show that Eilardus Westerlo, newly arrived from Groningen, and Abraham Rosenkrantz, a German Reformed pastor at Canajoharie, NY, supplied Schoharie between 1760 and 1765.

5. 1778 Claude Joseph Sauthier Map of New York and parts of New Jersey, with the approximate location of towns mentioned in the dissertation. [William L. Clements Library, Ann Arbor, MI]
The same records indicate that Westerlo was asked to send a blank call, drawn up by the consistory of the “flourishing High and Low Dutch Congregation at Schoharie,” to his professors at the University of Groningen in March of 1762. Given the time it took for letters to cross the Ocean, the fact that Schoharie requested someone who could speak both Dutch and German, and that Meijer graduated from the University of Groningen, all make it more than likely that it was Meijer who was selected by Gerdes and Bertling. No other candidate came from Groningen to America until Isaac Rysdyck arrived in 1765, but he had probably already graduated in 1757.

Following Frelinghuysen’s unsuccessful trip in 1759, Jacob Rutsen Hardenbergh, ordained by the Coetus in 1758, traveled to the Netherlands with similar intentions, in 1763. In July of that year, he was received by the Classis of Amsterdam, but the Classis noted that Hardenbergh was “one of those ministers, whom, they who call themselves the Coetus examined and advanced to the candidateship and to the ministry in that land, against the resolution of Classis and Synod,” although it would consider the ordinations by that Coetus as accomplished facts. The Classis warned Hardenbergh not to undertake raising money for the plan of an academy in New Jersey, “for he has already begun to gather in the moneys secured by Rev. Frelinghuysen.” Without having accomplished much, Hardenbergh set sail for America again as soon as he could.

No record has been found to explain why Schoharie did not receive Meijer or any other candidate from Groningen, nor why or how Meijer ended up in Kingston, but the fact that he traveled on the same ship as Hardenbergh, a fervent Coetus member, may help explain this. It is not too far fetched to assume the experienced Hardenbergh and the newly ordained Meijer discussed the Coetus-Conferentie conflict, and the role Hardenbergh played, also including the plans for a college in New Jersey.

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130 Vosburgh 1917:391-394. The call does not allude to the Coetus-Conferentie conflict, and the only requirement out of the ordinary was that the person be “acquainted with the German and Dutch languages, with a good pronunciation and other requisite qualifications.”

131 More congregations were trying to accommodate for German-speaking members of their congregation. In 1734, the Classis of Amsterdam discussed a request from Albany for “a minister who preaches in both German and Dutch at a salary of £70, with fire wood.” [ER 2662]. At the time Albany already had two ministers, Petrus Van Driessen [1712-1738] and Cornelius Van Schie [1733-1744]. Forty years later, Albany had a separate German Reformed congregation for some time.

132 Isaacus Rysdyk, minister in Echtelt [Echteld, in Gelderland], was a candidate for the vacancy in Rhynberg (Overveluwe) [Classis of Overveluwe, in Gelderland] in September 1760 [Boekzaal July-December 1760:352].

133 ER 3875-76.

134 ER 3877. The Classis felt insulted by certain pamphlets by Johannes Leydt and by the letter signed by Verbryck (Tappan) and Leydt (Six Mile Run), both ordained by the Coetus. The Classis took issue with the fact that several men had already been ordained in America without permission from the Classis.

135 He reportedly also used the occasion to bring his wife Dina’s mother over [ER 3866].

136 The Board of Trustees called for a meeting in May 1767 included Jacob Rutsen Hardenbergh, Eilardus Westerlo, [his future father-in-law] Philip Livingston, Robert Livingston, Sir William
Assuming Meijer’s call was still from Schoharie at the time of his voyage, perhaps Hardenbergh convinced Meijer he could play a more important role in Kingston, a larger congregation than Schoharie, and whose situation was known well to Hardenbergh. His family in Rosendale was a member of the Kingston congregation, and he must have known that there had been a vacancy in Kingston since Dominee Mancius’s death in September 1762. The Kingston congregation was split in the Coetus-Conferentie controversy. However it happened, Meijer arrived in Kingston in November, and six months later he married Hardenbergh’s sister Rachel. Dominee Hardenbergh officiated at their wedding, in spite of the consistory’s request to Meijer “to suffer himself to be married by Do. Westerlo of Albany and not by D. Hardenberg [sic!] who was a minister of the Coetus and the genuineness and lawfulness of whose ordination was disputed in the Church.”

In 1774, Westerlo mentioned Meijer in his Memoirs as the last one of a list of friends in New York and New Jersey who have helped him, adding that he “should have mentioned [him] first.” When Meijer was in serious trouble with members in his congregation, among other things about his Coetus sympathies, also leading to a refusal to let him go to become minister in Caughnawaga (Fonda), NY, Westerlo helped him both through correspondence and actions, revealing the latter’s viewpoints of the role of the Church, both in New York and in the Netherlands, and his adherence to the Canons of the Synod of Dordrecht of 1618/1619.

The call to Hermanus Meijer that caused Westerlo to act was issued in the spring of 1768. That spring proved pivotal in Westerlo’s religious life. In his Memoirs he noted that, in early 1768, “new and strange doctrines in this congregation were introduced, even by those whom it does not behoove.”

During the years 1767 and 1768, the consistories of Albany and Schenectady were faced with “the annoying behavior and the false teachings” of Philip Reley.
chanter and grave digger, who had applied “strange interpretations, in addition to several distortions of the Holy Scripture.” On April 15, 1768, the consistory recorded the following:

The Hon. Consistory, in the fear of God united in assembly, has taken into consideration the contents of a certain letter, without day or date in the year 1767, addressed to our current Minister Eilardus Westerlo, signed by Philip Reyley, and after serious thought has found that the letter, which mainly consists of unfounded and false accusations brought against his Honor, was not worthy of further investigation. On the contrary, it is known among us, members of the consistory, and as far as we know in the congregation. That is why the Hon. Consistory has approved this our Church decree, and felt obligated, in defense of his Honor and his teachings, to declare his Honor entirely free from any wrongfulness in his teachings or life.

The incident of the “new and strange doctrines,” possibly Mr. Reyley’s letter, made Westerlo decide to dedicate several sermons “to the first principles of the doctrine of Christ,” but he also became convinced that he was filled with “sinful vices in [his] heart,” which made him “reform [himself]” by trying to purify [himself] completely,” knowing that he “had to be reborn for that.”

It was during that time that someone noticed that the call sent to Groningen in 1759, leading to Westerlo’s installation in Albany, lacked the necessary seals. Since this document was in Westerlo’s possession, it is most likely that it was Westerlo who discovered this, which in his eyes might have cast further doubt on the legitimacy of his position as minister of God’s Word in Albany. The consistory took the opportunity to renew the call, to reaffirm their commitment to Westerlo, to increase the salary, and to attach the appropriate (eight!) seals:

We the undersigned Elders and Deacons of the Christian Reformed Dutch Congregation in Albany, assembled in consistory, and through the grace of God desirous to timely avoid any possible strife that might arise between our dear congregation and its Reverend pastor and minister Eilardus Westerlo, having learned that the letter of call sent to Groningen in the year 1759 and issued to his Reverence by the then Reverend consistory had been signed by them but not sealed, have resolved unanimously, in the fear of God, after serious consultation, both to endorse the aforementioned letter of call and to assure fully and furthermore confirm our current minister, to offer his Reverence this complete and sealed call as

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143 This letter does not seem to have survived.
144 Memoirs, January 17, 1770.
145 This 1759 document has not been found.
a mutually further and more definitive contract in full legality of the first call by the Highly Reverend gentlemen, professors Daniel Gerdes and Michaël Bertling, issued to our current minister, only to affix the seals for the aforementioned reason, but also in order to repeat the increase in salary in the mentioned mutual agreement which follows.

That the Very Reverend minister Eilardus Westerlo by these our signatures is solemnly recognized as lawfully called and ordinary pastor and leader of the Reformed Dutch Protestant Christian Congregation in this city of Albany, for his part held to preach the Word of God, twice every Lord’s Day, in the fore and afternoon, in accordance with the guiding principles of the Heidelberg Catechism; also on holidays in accordance with the customs of the Reformed Church, and the Wednesdays for the three months in the summer once also the catechism exercises adequately to edify the Congregation, to make the youth practice and to teach them in the pure creed of the truth that is godliness, to serve the sacraments as Christ established them, to exercise the church discipline, and in sum to do everything that a loyal servant of Jesus Christ ought to do in accordance with God’s Word and the good order of the church, as they were established in the Synod of Dordrecht and the laudable custom of this congregation also entail that his Reverence may not preach elsewhere during the week without knowledge of and approval by the Reverend consistory.

For this service we, the undersigned current consistory members, will bind ourselves as elders and deacons of this aforementioned congregation and all our successors after us as such and in all sincerity assure this as long as his Reverence will serve the ministry as mentioned above, his Reverence will enjoy for it the sum of one hundred thirty-five pounds, to be paid in four phases, every three months exactly a fourth, plus an extra twenty pounds per year for firewood, to be paid every year on January 1st. An adequate house should also be found for his Reverence, with a large garden and other related necessities, and annually a horse and a cow in our church pasture as well.

May the great shepherd and king of His Church bless His congregation in this city through truth and peace, and therefore endorse the labor of His servants, and also this work of our hands.
The salary may cause historians to be surprised: 135 pounds, after almost eight years of service in the second largest Dutch Reformed congregation in North America, seems to be too low. Given the appreciation expressed in the renewed call, the fact that Westerlo was called from the Netherlands and that he was
educated there, one would expect Westerlo’s initial salary to be fairly high on the range of 110 to 300 pounds that Dirk Mouw found to have been commanded between 1750 and 1770.\textsuperscript{147} It does seem that Westerlo was provided generous non-monetary compensation: 20 pounds for firewood, a house plus garden with amenities, and a horse and cow taken care of by the Church.

On the first day of that same month, Gerrit Van Sante Junior,\textsuperscript{148} one of the members of the congregation wrote an ode to Eilardus Westerlo, entitled \textit{Over de onvermoede Eijveraar Eliardus Westerloo [sic], Predicant in Albany [On the Tireless\textsuperscript{149} Devotee Eilardus Westerlo, Minister in Albany]}. Again, this came at a moment when Westerlo said he was struggling with his sinful self, and doubting his role in the Albany congregation. Although the poem does not reveal much about Westerlo in general, nor about his state of mind in 1768, Van Sante’s poem must have given Westerlo courage. Van Sante extols Westerlo’s virtues as a passionate and tireless teacher of young and old, rich and poor. In the penultimate stanza he addresses Westerlo: “I wish you now much joy, elevated Mr. Westerlo, / That you may live long in true virtue on earth/ Rejoiced to be with us. The Lord bless your work. / May you stand in our church during your time in life.”

On April 20, 1768, Westerlo’s “incessant prayers, by day and by night”\textsuperscript{150} were heard. While reading in Thomas Boston’s \textit{Human Nature and its Fourfold State} he felt born again (through his arm), and, just as Boston had written, “the world will probably be in flames,” Westerlo got up to see a large fire in the woods. As soon as he realized what it was (no explanation given), he lay himself down to pray. After having gone downstairs to drink some water, he was driven to read Psalm 25, which calmed him down.\textsuperscript{151}

The \textit{Coetus-Conferentie} schism, and its solution in the form of the \textit{Plan of Union}, kept Westerlo working cautiously at maintaining good relations with his congregation. When John Henry Livingston brought the so-called \textit{Plan of Union} from the Classis of Amsterdam in 1770, he invited all the congregations in New

\textsuperscript{147}Mouw 2009:368. Mouw notes that it is difficult to know and compare salaries: non-monetary compensation varied, and not all records have survived.

\textsuperscript{148}A copy of this ode was generously provided by Dr. Stefan Bielinski, of the \textit{Colonial Albany Social History Project}, an invaluable resource for this dissertation, containing the eighteenth-century names and places in and around Albany. This Gerrit Van Sante (or Van Zandt) Jr. (1731-1806), who had extensive real-estate holdings in Albany, and who was alderman and a member of the Corporation of Albany in 1775, became disenchanted with the Dutch Reformed Church after Westerlo’s death, disappointed that the Church did not appoint a Dutch-speaking minister, as (he claimed) they had promised. In 1802 he published two poems on the subject: \textit{Een nieuw liedt van de onreght veerdigheydt aen de Duytse Gemeente gedaan; om gelt te heffe onn ut te verbouwe en de Duytse beloovde, as sy de tweede leeraar toestonde, een Duytse leeraar te ber oepe en \textit{Een klaag liedt over de ongevoeligheydt van de kerckraade die de Duytse haar Godtsdienst ontnemen tegen haar belofte} [see Murphy 1966:18-20]. In his will he left a substantial sum to the Dutch Reformed Church’s Poor Fund.

\textsuperscript{149}“onvermoed” [“unexpected”] differs only one letter from “onvermoed” [“tireless”], which seems to be more fitting as the title of this poem.

\textsuperscript{150}\textit{Memoirs}, January 17, 1770.

\textsuperscript{151}\textit{Memoirs}, January 17, 1770. Westerlo’s rebirth experience is discussed in more detail in Chapter 3. The importance of Psalm 25 to Westerlo and others is also discussed in Chapter 6.
York and New Jersey to an October 1771 “General Convention of the Reformed Churches” in New York City. After this meeting it became clear that several congregations were not ready (yet) to join this Union, most notably Albany.\textsuperscript{152}

At the so-called “Second Convention,” in June 1772, after the approval by the Classis of Amsterdam of the Articles of Union in January, Westerlo signed these articles, but only on behalf of the Schagticoke church, which he supplied in those years. Enough congregations joined the Union to effectively establish the General Synod of the independent Dutch Reformed Church in America.\textsuperscript{153}

In the months and years following the 1771 meeting, the Albany congregation, including meetings of its Great Consistory,\textsuperscript{154} remained divided. On September 17, 1773, a large number of members of the Albany congregation submitted a letter of remonstrance, in English and in Dutch, with many signatures attached,\textsuperscript{155} protesting both the suspected impending joining of the Union by the Albany congregation, and the fact that the Synod will meet in the Albany church on September 21. This letter followed the September 9 consistory meeting and a September 15 letter to the Albany Corporation, that is to say to the Mayor and Aldermen of Albany, in anticipation of unrest during the September 21 assembly meeting.

On January 5, 1774, Westerlo wrote a letter to his congregation in Albany, as a personal attempt to convince the congregation that joining the Union would be in its best interest, or even the most logical step to take by the congregation.\textsuperscript{156} Westerlo showed himself to be such a strong advocate of the \textit{Plan of Union} that the position he was considered to be taking in October 1771, that of one of the “neutral brethren,” reflected the one of his congregation, and not his own attitude toward the \textit{Plan of Union}. Since the other “neutral” member on the committee to draw up “a formula of union” was John Henry Livingston,\textsuperscript{157} it is clear that the neutrality referred to here was the position in the \textit{Coetus-Conferentie} schism, and

\textsuperscript{152} Hoff’s assessment of the situation, “By 1772, everyone had agreed to Livingston’s plan of union, and the future looked brighter for the reunited church,” \cite{hoff1985:7} contains three factual errors: it was not Livingston’s plan, not everyone had agreed, and this was not a reunification. For a discussion of the \textit{Plan of Union} and the congregations’ readiness to join, see chapter 7.
\textsuperscript{153} The Classis of Amsterdam could not approve of the use of the words “Classis” and “Synod” in America \cite{ER4207}, which delayed adoption of these terms until 1792.
\textsuperscript{154} Great Consistory meetings took place for important matters concerning the congregation. A Great Consistory included the members of the current and of all preceding consistories. It may not have been clear who were to be invited to these meetings, since, on August 20, 1772, “a list of the members of the Great Consistory was drawn up” by the Consistory before the Great Consistory was invited.
\textsuperscript{155} Document 52-2 in the archives of the First Church in Albany. How many members signed will probably never be established with certainty: some names appear several times, and more than once a series of names is written down in the same handwriting. Also, the total number indicated on the documents themselves (173 on the English document) is exceeded by the actual tally; 246 on the English, and 57 on the Dutch document. In a letter to Hermanus Meijer dated 17 October 1773, Westerlo mentions “[…] a Remonstrance of 230 people, within and outside the city, about 60 of whom are members.”
\textsuperscript{156} The entire letter and its translation can be found in Appendix 6.
\textsuperscript{157} ER 4212.
not the one toward the Plan of Union. It would take until after the War for the congregation to join the Union.

In his Memoirs, toward the end of December 1774, Westerlo explained why he had “sufficient reason to live happily in this congregation,” such as his unsolicited call to this congregation, God teaching him the way of the Lord, his spiritual and eternal salvation awoken by the Lord’s mercifulness, and the love and respect from dear friends who advocate the Gospel, and “the sweet harmony with his honorable consistory.”

A big change in Westerlo’s life occurred in the summer of 1775. He married the widow of patroon Stephen Van Rensselaer II, Catharine Livingston, daughter of Philip “the Signer” Livingston, on July 19, 1775, and this changed Eilardus from a seemingly lonely bachelor pastor to someone in the center of Albany’s powers. The marriage took place at the Van Rensselaer Manor. Westerlo’s friend, Dominee Elias Van Bunschoten (1738-1815), officiated. The [Presbyterian] Reverend Cortlandt Van Rensselaer (1808-1860), the seventh child of Stephen Van Rensselaer III, wrote the following about the marriage:

There is a tradition in the family that the marriage of the Dutch Dominie with the Patroon’s widow, was not popular with the worldly part of the family. But we look upon it as the highest honor. We know, too, that it was greatly instrumental in impressing divine truth upon the mind and heart of our honored father, who lived during his minority with Dr. and Mrs. Westerlo, in the Manor House. We have often heard him refer with delight to the private and public prayer meetings held in the Manor House in the olden time, and he always gave this as one of the reasons why its old halls should not be profaned by revelry and dancing. We place this upon record in memoriam.

Westerlo had thus become a member of two of the most influential families in the Hudson Valley, or three, if we count the Ten Broeck family as well. Given the Dutch Church’s impact on city matters, maybe Hageman was not too far off in
calling him “Albany’s Dutch Pope.” In any event, Westerlo’s new standing was evidently adequate to inspire him to draw up a will within six weeks after the wedding.\(^{163}\) Surprising may be that, upon his wife’s death or in case she remarried, he bequeathed more to his sister Lucia Gesina, than to his brothers, whom he did not even mention by name. As executors he appointed his father-in-law Philip Livingston, his wife’s uncle Abraham Ten Broeck, and his friend Thomas Hun, again when his wife died or if she remarried.

In November of the same year, 1775, Eilardus Westerlo and his colleague John Henry Livingston became brothers-in-law, when the latter married Catharine’s younger sister Sarah, in Kingston, NY. This may have even further increased Westerlo’s influence or standing within the Dutch Reformed Church, in which he was still in the difficult situation of representing a congregation that had not joined the Union.

**The War years, 1775-1783**

In Westerlo’s *Memoirs*, there is no text found covering the period between December 1774 and December 1781, a large part of the years during the War of Independence. Given the fact that the years from his birth until December 1774 were described in sixteen pages folio, and that the first pages of his diary-like entries begin on December 14, 1781, on a page numbered 113, it is certain that part of his *Memoirs* is missing, but it is unclear how many pages have not been found, but it must be at least 112 pages quarto.

How much could Westerlo write between 1775 and 1781? There was a scarcity of paper, and maintaining a diary may have been risky. If he had been captured by the British, the information in the *Memoirs* would have put Westerlo in an awkward position. It is clear that Westerlo decided at some point during the period to start writing more regularly.

What did Westerlo do during these years? The political situation in Albany during the first years of the War was unclear; there was an official government, the Common Council or Corporation, but the true power was already in the hands of the pro-Revolutionary men organized as the so-called Committee of Correspondence and Safety. They arrested the Mayor and City Clerk when they celebrated the King’s birthday on June 3, 1775. The Committee of Correspondence was financed by many of the citizens of Albany.\(^ {164}\)

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\(^{163}\) On September 1, 1775 [See Appendix 4]. He included possible children. His son Rensselaer was born eight months later, on May 6, 1776. The will is not among the *Index to Wills 1780-1895* in the Albany County Hall of Records in Albany. I found this handwritten copy, with seals, among the documents at *Historic Cherry Hill* in Albany.

\(^{164}\) Westerlo donated a small sum too [Sullivan 1923:992], which was probably not a risk-free move on his part.
The British targeted the Dutch Reformed Church clergy, and it seems likely that Westerlo fled Albany, at least at times, as sources indicate. Possibly he took his family to Salisbury in Connecticut, on the border with New York and Massachusetts, where relatives fled to a farm and land owned by the Van Rensselaer family.¹⁶⁵

Westerlo was still often in Albany too: baptisms, marriages, and other services were still performed, although not regularly.¹⁶⁶ In the literature, Westerlo is invariably referred to as a Patriot minister preaching against the British, but often no direct sources are given. Kenney quotes from a letter Leonard Gansevoort wrote to his brother Peter, when Philip Schuyler’s army had just visited on its way to invade Canada, on August 28, 1775:

> General Schuyler has yesterday been in the Dutch Church and desired the prayers of the Congregation for himself and the army under his command which he received, and I sincerely lament that you were not present that you might have heard it. Mr. Westerlo’s prayer was so very pathetic and so well adapted that he drew tears from the eyes of almost all there present. May God grant that a happy reconciliation take place upon constitutional principles and prevent the further effusion of blood.¹⁶⁷

In early 1776, Westerlo decided to draw up a genealogy of his family. It shows he was fairly well informed of his relatives’ situation in the Netherlands. The year “1776” is written across the top, but his [expected] child, Rensselaer, born on May 6, 1776, is not included, which is an indication Westerlo never revisited this document.¹⁶⁸

Harmanus Bleecker, in his biography of Westerlo written in 1848, seems to indicate that the Memoirs also cover the War, which could mean that those pages are still to be found among the missing memoir papers. Unfortunately, Bleecker’s account of what he read by Westerlo concerning that period is limited to two sentences:

¹⁶⁵ In the archives at the Albany Institute of History and Art, an August 6, 1779 letter by Thomas Hun (1736-1802), landowner, merchant, and a member of the Committee for Detecting and Defeating Conspiracies, formed by patriots to find out British loyalists and traitors, between 1777 and 1779, was addressed to Westerlo in Salisbury. Hun and Westerlo were friends.

¹⁶⁶ The birthplace of his daughter Catharine, born in August 1778, is given as “the [Van Rensselaer] Manor House,” in Watervliet, just outside Albany, NY.

¹⁶⁷ Kenney 1969:90. She adds, on p.105: “Dominie Westerlo conducted daily services of prayer for preservation from the hand of the invader.” Van Hinte simply includes Westerlo in “our people stand[ing] in the forefront in the war of Independence” [Van Hinte 1985:51].

¹⁶⁸ The document, included in Appendix 4, was found in the archives of Historic Cherry Hill in Albany. Rensselaer Westerlo (1776-1851) was apparently in possession of this document when he responded to inquiries made by distant relatives (ministers?) Donko Jan Westerloo and Lucas Donke Westerloo in 1841 [original letters, some by Harmanus Bleecker, in the archives of the Albany Institute for History and Art].
In the autobiography important occurrences of the Revolutionary War are frequently mentioned. The peace, and the crowning event, — the adoption of the Federal Constitution, were regarded by Dr. Westerlo with intense interest and gratification.\(^{169}\)

The information quoted here is part of the pages that have been preserved, so that we cannot know whether Bleecker saw more than we can read today of Westerlo’s Memoirs.

Westerlo is linked to a number of important events in the second half of the war. On December 14, 1780, he officiated at the wedding of Alexander Hamilton, then assistant to George Washington (and in 1791 the first Secretary of the Treasury), and Elizabeth (Betsy) Schuyler, a daughter of General Philip Schuyler, held at the Schuyler Mansion in Albany. In June 1782, Westerlo had the honor to address George Washington\(^{170}\) and other dignitaries in a sermon delivered in the Dutch Reformed Church.\(^{171}\)

By 1782, a certain normalcy had returned to Albany and other parts of North America, with the British losing ground. New York City, however, was still occupied, and John Henry Livingston was staying in Poughkeepsie, not to return to New York City until late in 1783. In an often cited and now famous letter to his brother-in-law and colleague Eilardus Westerlo of October 22, 1783, Livingston already seemed to take the departure of the British, and therefore the Episcopal Church’s rule, for granted:

> The revolution in our political interests has made a change in the general face of our American world, and as it has removed some difficulties which were taken into consideration in our former plan, so it has introduced others which deserve a very weighty and impartial discussion. The common enemy to our religious liberties is now removed; and we have nothing to fear from the pride and domination of the Episcopal hierarchy.

\(^{169}\) Sprague 1869:31. The earlier mentioned Bleecker was known to take an interest in everything Dutch – reason for Martin Van Buren in 1829 to promise him a diplomatic post in the Netherlands if Van Buren became president. Bleecker was United States Chargé d’Affaires to the Netherlands in The Hague from 1839-1842, largely during the Van Buren administration [see Van Minnen 1987:11]. In 1833, the St. Nicholas Benevolent Society of the City of Albany, with Bleecker as their president, toasted “the learned and pious man; the dignified and affectionate Pastor Eilardus Westerlo,” following toasts to King William I, to William the Silent (Prince of Orange), and to Hugo Grotius.

\(^{170}\) Washington was on a tour of several pro-Revolution cities – he visited Schenectady in the same month. To both he wrote a thank-you letter, in which he expressed the desire that “the preservation of your civil and religious liberties still be the care of an indulgent Providence” [June 28, 1782 George Washington in a letter to the Ministers, Elders, and deacons of the Reformed Dutch Church at Albany].

\(^{171}\) For a discussion of the sermon, see Chapter 8.
The final years: rebuilding the Church, 1783-1790

With the end of the War of Independence, the churches started the reconstruction of their congregations and their church buildings. This is also the time Westerlo began his Memoirs in a diary-style form, when he switched to English in his Memoirs, for his children’s sake, and when he started preaching in English in addition to Dutch.

A rare glimpse into Westerlo’s character by an outsider was provided by Simeon Baldwin (1761-1851), who was in Albany in 1782-1783, reportedly as Senior Preceptor of the Academy of Albany. Although he was impressed with Westerlo’s ability as a preacher, 21-year old Baldwin did not appreciate the dinner conversation he had with him on October 5, 1782:

Dined at the Dominie Westerlo’s. Had a very good dinner, but many disagreeable Latin proverbs which he is very fond of exhibiting with all the airs of pedantry and not without reflections. He is fond of their European education and seems to despise ours. He certainly transgresses the rules of politeness by introducing so much of his Latin upon every occasion, especially as he knows that from his manner of pronunciation it cannot be clearly intelligible and consequently must be disagreeable to those he converses with … But I find that this is his pretty general practice, and upon my word it is some comfort to me to find that others understand him no better than I do.

As with the meeting with De Vos Van Steenwijk in May 1784, Westerlo did not record this dinner with Simeon Baldwin. An explanation as to why Westerlo did not mention Baldwin may be found in Westerlo’s focus on religious matters, and possibly his status and Baldwin’s at the time. From his correspondence with Ezra Stiles it was already known Westerlo had kept up his Latin in writing. Baldwin’s account shows Westerlo could still speak Latin, although Baldwin claimed not to understand him.

Since his first contact with the Reverend Dr. Ezra Stiles of Yale College, when Westerlo sent a letter in Latin successfully requesting acceptance of his stepson Philip Van Rensselaer into the College in May 1782, Stiles and Westerlo regularly wrote to each other in Latin. Although they never met, they considered

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172 The only other information that is available about this precursor of the Dutch Reformed Church’s Academy is that it was founded in 1780. Hageman quotes from an as yet unpublished Albany diary in the archives of Historic Cherry Hill [Hageman 1985:20]. In 1888, Simeon E. Baldwin was the main editor of the excerpts of “a young man’s journal of a hundred years ago,” “a recent graduate of Yale College,” whose name Baldwin will not give [Baldwin 1888:192]. Two teachers from Yale were “engaged for the Academy” in 1782, Simeon Baldwin and John Lovett [Wagner 1992:189].

173 Baldwin 1888:196. In June of 1782, this Simeon Baldwin delivered an oration in Latin at his alma mater, Yale College [original preserved in the Yale Library].

174 Dexter 1901:20. Other letters are mentioned on pp. 26, 59, and 207. Stiles understood Philip to be Westerlo’s son-in-law.
each other friends. Stiles visited Albany one time during Westerlo’s lifetime, but Westerlo was in New York City then. Stiles is often quoted as saying that Westerlo “wrote Latin in greater purity than any man he had ever known.”

It was not until September 1784 that the consistory decided to join the Union, after the General Meeting of ministers and elders of the Church of New York in May of that year had expressed its concerns that so many congregations were still “outstanding.” This was most notably true for Albany, whose “Rev. Consistory, or at least their minister, is disposed to a union, but that the opposition of a portion of the congregation has excited their fears, and led them to request further time in order to bring them over.”

After Albany had joined the next May, Westerlo was elected president of the General Synod in October 1785. From New York, where he “was received by [his] friends with many tokens of pity and love,” Westerlo accompanied John Henry Livingston to Princeton, “where [he] was publicly honored and unexpectedly obtained the honorary degree of our profession.” The Trustee Minutes 1778-1796, simply state the September 28, 1785 resolution “that the Revd Erlardus Westelo [sic!] of Albany, the Revd Jonathan Edwards, of New Haven, the Revd Henry Purcell of Charleston in South-Carolina, be admitted to the degree of Doctor of Divinity.”

1785 was also the year Westerlo and his family had to move out of the Van Rensselaer Manor, since Stephen Van Rensselaer III (Harvard, 1782) had married and had come of age, in that order. The Church had a parsonage fixed up for Dominee Westerlo and his family: his wife, their three children Rensselaer, Catharine, and Joanna, and the two remaining stepchildren, Philip and Elizabeth Van Rensselaer, on Market Street, which was one of the streets intersecting with the 1715 Stone Church in the city’s center.

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175 Dexter 1916:393-394
176 For example, Corwin 1902:907.
177 Memoirs, September 26, 1784. On advice on the Great Consistory, the Consistory decided to subscribe the Articles of Union. Westerlo decided not to preach in English that day, to appease the oldest people in the congregation.
178 ER 4317.
179 Memoirs, July 6, 1785: “Yesterday I subscribed the Articles of Union between our Churches and was received as a member of the Classis.”
180 Memoirs, October 13, 1785. From New York, he also wrote to his wife with this news, in a letter dated October 4, 1785. The records at Princeton do not contain any information as to why and through whose efforts Westerlo was bestowed this honor (or any of the other honorary degree recipients for that matter. The selection and awarding of honorary degrees were made by the Board of Trustees [personal e-mail correspondence with Special Collections, Mudd Manuscript Library at Princeton].
181 In the General Catalogue of Princeton University, 1746-1906, published in 1908 by Princeton University, p.251.
182 On January 15, 1785, the Consistory paid William Duer over £50 for building the “Dominies huys” [Document 62-2 in the Archives of the First Church in Albany]. The parsonage might have been built in 1720, and was known after Westerlo’s death as the Bleecker House. In 1846 it was demolished to make room for Bleecker Hall [ER 2177].
In the second half of the 1780s, Westerlo’s health was clearly in decline, and the loss of his youngest daughter, Joanna, who was almost five, to a mysterious intestinal disease in 1788, had an impact on his health too. He visited the Saratoga Springs, which restored his strength somewhat, but not enough to stop the decline. His final efforts were for a religious cause again. In early 1790 his translation of a catechetical book by Robertus Albertoma appeared, and he was getting ready to translate one of his great-uncle Hermannus Reiners’s books into English, but this plan never came to fruition.

Eilardus Westerlo passed away on December 26, 1790, after a sickbed of several weeks. Westerlo’s last sermon was on Psalm 65: 4, which could be seen as

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184 He was buried in the Van Rensselaer family vault, which was not uncommon among wealthy families [Narrett 1992:40].

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In his last diary entry, dated December 4, he reported the sudden death of his colleague and fellow University of Groningen graduate Isaac Rysdyck. He also described his own rough night, with a sudden cold chill, when he was “awakened by the thought that I was struck with an apoplexy,” which term was used to describe a neurological impairment. Did Westerlo anticipate a similar fate as his father’s, who died following partial paralysis in 1766?187

Westerlo’s last words on paper were “May I live a life of faith and Holiness, and be found in peace. Amen.” He had served the Albany congregation for well over thirty years, the second-longest serving minister, after Gideon Schaets (1652-1694).58

John Henry Livingston’s letter of condolence to his sister-in-law Catharine Westerlo, dated New York, December 31st, 1790, contains the following passage:

I loudly hoped this sickness would terminate favorably, as others had done, but the Lord, whose thoughts are not as our thoughts, and whose ways are not as our ways, had determined otherwise; and the desire of our eyes, the object of our affections, is taken from us. He was the man, of all others in the world, whom I most loved. I have lost a brother who was as my own soul. My dear sister, I weep with you; I weep with your dear children; I weep with the Church of Christ. All have sustained a loss which exceeds our calculations.189

What became of the name Westerlo in America?

Hageman gives Westerlo high marks for skills in leadership, crediting him with guiding his church through difficult times, “dramatic ecclesiastical change, radical political shift, to say nothing of basic change in language and culture, without quarrel or dissension,”190 and even the fact that a second church building needed to be erected eight years after Westerlo’s death because the old church building could no longer accommodate the crowds attending the services.

In 1815, politicians in Albany, New York, by then the State capital, decided to join parts of the townships of Coeymans and Rensselaerville, some 20 miles South of Albany, and to name the town Westerlo, in honor of Eilardus. Since stepsons Philip Van Rensselaer and Stephen Van Rensselaer III and son Rensselaer at the

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185 “Happy are those whom you choose and bring near to live in your courts. We shall be satisfied with the goodness of your house, your Holy temple.”
187 Boekzaal July-December 1766: 618.
188 Thirty years was also well over the average number of years ministers served one congregation in the Netherlands during the eighteenth century [Frijhoff 1981:273].
189 Van Rensselaer 1851:525.
time were mayor of Albany and members of Congress respectively, it is highly likely that they were behind the renaming proposal. In the 1980s, the Belgian town of Westerlo near Antwerp and Westerlo, NY, became sister cities, and their respective historians have tried to establish historical links connecting the Westerlo family in the Northern Netherlands with the town in Belgium. In the 1980s, the Belgian town of Westerlo near Antwerp and Westerlo, NY, became sister cities, and their respective historians have tried to establish historical links connecting the Westerlo family in the Northern Netherlands with the town in Belgium.191

In 1540, traders from New France built a castle on what became known as Castle Island in Albany, which they soon abandoned due to flooding.192 In 1614, the Dutch went through a similar scenario with their Fort Nassau, after which the island was divided into farms as part of the Rensselaerswijck patroonship. After names such as Marte Gerritse’s Island and Patroon’s Island, the island has been referred to as Westerlo Island since the late nineteenth century. Stefan Bielinski believes that, after its name had changed to Patroon’s Island in 1767, it was named for Eilardus Westerlo, when the widow of the Patroon married Westerlo in 1775.193

The family name Westerlo disappeared two generations later. Eilardus’s only son had two sons and five daughters: the first son, Eilardus died in infancy, and the second, also named Eilardus, died unmarried and childless in San Francisco, California in 1859. Three of the five daughters, Catherine, Cornelia Lansing, Mary Lansing, Elizabeth, and Johanna, moved to New York City, as did their mother, Jane Lansing Westerlo (1785-1871).194 These four daughters remained unmarried. Among the Livingstons, Bleeckers, Goulds and Woodworths, the first name Westerlo was in use until 1907, when Edmund Westerlo Gould, great-grandson of Eilardus Westerlo’s daughter Catharine, passed away. In the Netherlands, the family name died out some time during the nineteenth century too.

Very recently, Westerlo became a literary figure. In the 2004 book The Bad Man of the Hudson, a work of juvenile fiction, Westerlo is described as a war-time minister, both man and angel, who “looks all awkward with great arms and legs, smooth shaven, with piercing eyes of a mysterious hazel that are spread somewhat apart.”195

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191 Attempts are made to prove that the forefathers of Eilardus were Protestants fleeing Westerlo in Brabant after the Fall of Antwerp in 1585, but there is no convincing evidence yet.
192 There is no evidence that this information from The Albany Chronicles [Reynolds 1906:79] is accurate.
194 The Federal Census of 1860 situates Cornelia Lansing, Mary Lansing, Elizabeth, and Jane Lansing Westerlo in New York City. In the mid-nineteenth-century, Jane Westerlo donated several volumes of Eilardus’s library to the Theological Seminary. Corwin gives the number of 200 [Corwin 1906:754], and the year 1852.
195 Wolfe 2004:48-51. He saves a young man from a life as a criminal. Personal e-mail correspondence with the author reveals their research on Westerlo is Internet-based. Unfortunately, the sequel, The Hog Money Mystery, shows a pious Theodorus Frelinghuysen, having finished his studies in Amsterdam, succeed Westerlo [Wolfe 2005:50-51], which sheds doubt on the accuracy of the description of Westerlo.
Hageman says that “apart from that little book [the translation of Alberthoma’s *Uittreksel van de Leere der Waarheid* – RN], his only memorials are a street in the *Pastures*, a town in the southern part of Albany County, and a street in Coeymans.” Hageman is hinting at this being too little for a man of Westerlo’s stature. Given the character of Eilardus Westerlo, diligently working in the background, it is plausible that he would have settled for the relatively few symbols that honor his work in and around Albany.

**Conclusion**

Forty years after Westerlo’s death, the *New York Christian Intelligencer* wanted to honor some of the Dutch Reformed greats of the eighteenth century, and JDW [likely Dominee John de Witt (1788-1831), pastor in Albany from 1813 to 1815.] wrote a tribute to Eilardus Westerlo. To sum up Westerlo’s significance to the Church in Albany and North America, De Witt ends the eulogy thus:

> The following is extracted from a notice subsequent to his death in the papers of the day: “This gentleman was called by the Reformed Dutch Church of Albany from Holland and during the pace of thirty years has been distinguished as an able, zealous, and successful minister of the Lord Jesus Christ. In few men did greater or more amiable qualities unite. He possessed an excellent understanding, solid learning, and fervent piety. As he experienced the power of truth on his own soul, so his life was evidence that he loved the Savior whom he served and preached unto others. A meek and benevolent disposition recommended him to all his acquaintances and his widow and children. His numerous friends, a large congregation, and all the churches with which he was connected bemoaned his death as the loss of a great and good man.”

The words of his friend, brother-in-law, and close colleague John Henry Livingston, when writing to Eilardus’s brother Gerhardus H. Westerlo in the Netherlands, notifying him of Eilardus’s passing, also seem to concur with Hageman’s assessment that more honor should be bestowed on Eilardus Westerlo: “Know that your deceased brother’s character and pious conduct has rendered the name of Westerlo precious and honorable in America.”

Dr. Eilardus Westerlo (1738-1790), born in Groningen, raised in Denekamp, and educated in Oldenzaal and Groningen, held but one full-time professional position during his lifetime: he was minister at the Reformed Protestant Dutch Church in

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197 Eulogy in the *New York Christian Intelligencer* by John de Witt, about 1830. It seems Munsell used this information for his *Annals* [see Munsell 1869:122].
198 Undated draft, signed by J. H. Livingston [Archives of Historic Cherry Hill, Albany, NY].
Albany for thirty years and two months, during which his adoptive country became independent from Great Britain, and his church became independent from its mother country and from the Classis of Amsterdam.
3. **April 20, 1768: rebirth**

The conversion of Saint Paul
[Hans Baldung Grün, first half 16th century, Germany]

**Introduction**

Arguably the most important event in Eilardus Westerlo’s adult life was April 20, 1768, the day he “met and greeted Jesus at his [Albany, NY] home […] as [his] God and Savior.” He later referred to the date as the “day the Lord leads His forces,” which may be a reference to Psalm 110:3: “Your people will offer themselves willingly on the day you lead your forces on the holy mountains.”

What exactly, as far as it can be determined two-and-a-half centuries later, did Westerlo experience that day, and what was the significance of his rebirth for Westerlo, both in terms of his everyday life and as a step in the Reformed faith? This chapter will analyze Westerlo’s description of his rebirth experience, and an attempt will be made to place it in its historical context, both of eighteenth-century Pietism in general, and of Westerlo’s faith in particular. Then I will compare his conversion experience to three other ministers: Theodorus Jacobus Frelinghuysen, George Whitefield, and John Henry Livingston. Finally, I will analyze the text Westerlo was reading at that moment.

The pre-1717 conversion of the father of Westerlo’s predecessor, Theodorus Jacobus Frelinghuysen, is interesting for the absolute necessity he felt for regeneration. The older Frelinghuysen is viewed by many as a precursor of the Great Awakening in North America. With his emphasis on experiential religion, Frelinghuysen’s influence on the Dutch Reformed in North America was felt long after his ministry, and some would argue his influence can still be felt today, and not only among the Dutch Reformed.

George Whitefield, the Anglican minister who was partly responsible for the spread of the religious revival in North America in the 1740s, and who, with John

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199 The *New Oxford Annotated Bible* commentary says that the Hebrew text is extremely difficult; it may refer to the king’s warrior exploits and his “birth” into royal status (see Psalms 2:7). Westerlo may also be referring to a meaning derived from a religious calendar.

200 Pietism is the subject of Chapter 4.

201 See Chapter 6 on the Frelinghuysens.
and Charles Wesley, brought the Methodist movement to America, considered his own conversion experience in 1735 an important starting point from which to advocate regeneration to the many people to whom he preached in America.

In 1765, Westerlo’s future brother-in-law, John Henry Livingston, experienced his conversion under different circumstances than Westerlo. In part as a result of this experience, Yale Law graduate Livingston decided to study theology in the Netherlands from 1766 to 1770, returning to America with a doctorate in Divinity from the University of Utrecht.

**Pietism and regeneration in the eighteenth century**

Over the centuries, the term “conversion” has often been used, in addition to regeneration, to refer to bringing people, “heathens,” into the Christian religion, or to switching or making someone switch religious denominations. In his *Memoirs*, Westerlo himself used conversion in two of these three senses of the word: we find over thirty references to regeneration, and about ten instances of conversion in the sense of converting people to Christianity.

**Regeneration**

Westerlo employed the expression “to be born again” only once in his *Memoirs*: when talking about the events leading up to his own conversion, on January 17, 1770. Most often his references to regeneration are “conversion,” as in a prayer to “enable conversions to life in and among us” (December 14, 1781), “a gracious conversion of precious immortal souls” as “the blessed consequence of both war and peace” (April 19, 1783), and “the conversion of students and ministers” as “peculiarly subservient and conducive to the propagation of the gospel” when mentioning the divinity school at New Haven College (now Yale) on September 1, 1783.²⁰²

Several times Westerlo used the phrase “convert the unconverted,” while referring to friends (October 12, 1782) or to family members (September 4, 1786), but also when referring to “friends, patrons, and […] enemies” (December 4, 1788). More often sinners and (“even”) enemies [of the Lord - RN] must be “converted to the Communion of Jesus Christ and His people” (September 22, 1783), or “convinced and converted” (March 1, 1787). Westerlo stated his conviction that “unregenerate souls” are impure and obstinate “in defiance of all warning from their consciences and ministers” (December 31, 1785).

²⁰² 1783 was not the beginning of the Divinity School at Yale. The main purpose of the College’s founding (in 1701) was training for the Christian ministry. The first Divinity professor was appointed in 1746. Westerlo may have been referring to a May 8, 1783 sermon that Ezra Stiles, with whom he corresponded in Latin, delivered on the fifth anniversary of his appointment as President of Yale.
Westerlo’s prayers for conversion extended to friends and family. On January 2, 1782, he prayed for “those who were born in Zion” to be confirmed. On his son’s seventh birthday, May 6, 1783, Westerlo prayed for all his children “to be born in Zion.” On June 25, 1783, when the news came that their son Stephen had fallen ill in Saratoga, Westerlo hoped that “this sickness be instrumental to his [= Stephen’s - RN] immortal interest.” He subsequently prayed for their lives to be spared, including his own, asking for them to be “convert[ed] to Thy blessed self and service.” Days after his stepdaughter Elizabeth’s twenty-first birthday he prayed for “her life and salvation,” and for her “to be born of God, and become alive unto God and righteousness” (August 17, 1789).

Many of Westerlo’s wishes involving conversion included prayers for help strengthening him in his conversion work. The following example, written in his Memoirs on December 27, 1783, shows not only how Westerlo credited the Lord with his ability to speak clearly, but also how he hoped to help people convert and be saved:

I cannot but must humbly acknowledge, that the Lord at some seasons gives me to speak with all plainness and simplicity, yes my own soul (if I do not deceive myself) longs for the conversion and salvation of my hearers – I feel more concern for the prosperity of Zion, and more freedom to pray for a revival of religion and for the rulers and magistrates, that they also may become more zealous for Christ’s Kingdom.

Although efforts to convert others is not typical in Reformed theology, Westerlo showed in his Memoirs that he was not a lone voice in wanting to convert people. For example, he credited two others with having helped to convert people; one in a case of regeneration, by his direct colleague in Albany, NY, John Bassett, and one as an example of conversion to Christianity, by a Presbyterian minister working with Native American people.

On October 20, 1790, Westerlo complimented his colleague in Albany, John Bassett, whose conversion through his sermon of the person in question alleviated her suffering:

Yesterday morning I was called to see Mrs. Wendell, who lay sick of a burning fever. I was rejoiced, however, to find her relating with much gladness that Jesus was hers and she His, and that Mr. Bassett’s preaching had been the means of her conversion.

203 John Bassett was confirmed “as Pastor and Minister of [the Albany] Congregation in the English language, and president of [its] Church Academy” on November 25, 1787 [Memoirs, November 27, 1787]. Following Westerlo’s death, some in the congregation, disappointed in Bassett, wanted to treat him as a “coadjutor” or assistant, which is how some reference books refer to him [for example, Pearson 1872:16].
Converting people to Christianity

The other instance of mentioning someone else’s success with conversions can be found in Westerlo’s Memoirs on October 30, 1783. After traveling from Schenectady back to Albany, with the Reverend Samuel Kirkland (1741-1808), a Presbyterian missionary among the Oneida and Tuscarora people in North America, Westerlo reported Kirkland’s work with Native American Indians:

Mr. Kirkland was my quiet companion, and related me great things of a powerful conversion work in New England. Oh, for a revival of religion and piety in the midst of these days. That our new empire may be instructed by a plentiful outpouring of the Holy Spirit and the Lord be glorified, also among the heathen nations for Jesus Christ our Lord and Savior’s sake. Amen.

Other regeneration conversions

When commenting on the idleness of youth, Westerlo would pray for divine assistance for himself to “be instrumental in converting the world” (January 23, 1785), or he would ask for a renewal of his “spirit and courage for Thy cause and interest” (March 26, 1785), and in general (for example on October 6, 1788) he would hope that his poor endeavors at home and abroad be accompanied with the efficacious influences of Divine grace, in and through Jesus Christ, that many precious souls be born of God and brought to His blessed Communion and service.

In April 1788, Westerlo ran into a person he only identified by the initials “WDR,” whose child [he] refused to baptize except he submitted himself to the discipline of the Church.” Claiming that Westerlo had driven him away from the Church, the man could not be convinced by Westerlo to return, and Westerlo “admonished and reproved him,” but to no avail. Westerlo then prayed, “fain would I still hope and pray that the Lord, of His infinite mercy, will be pleased to change his obdurate heart and give him repentance unto life.” He then showed that he considered this WDR to be a major sinner:

Oh, may our sins be forgiven and we experience that the Lord Jesus will sanctify His people, and bless the ordinances of His House to the actual conversion even of the chiefest sinners.

204 Westerlo did his best not to identify the people he mentioned in his Memoirs, making it difficult to find out the identities 220 years later.
On August 25, 1788, Westerlo was very happy to relate the story of a dying man who felt joy at facing death:

> Between the sermons I was visited by H. Fero, who told me of Mr. C. vd Bergh, a young convert, that, though at first much distressing, yet before his death, he expressed a peculiar desire to be delivered from all sin, and also declared that he felt uncommon joy, bidding his friends not to mourn over him, though being but 51 years old and leaving a wife and five children, one insane. Thanks to the Lord for this and every instance of grace and pity to His poor people!

The struggles with his own sickness often confirmed Westerlo in his belief that God had a purpose, be it to punish him or to show him the way. Once, on March 12, 1789, he felt his sickness might be used to convert, which would please him:

> But if it should please the Lord to bless even my being sick to the conversion of but one precious soul, I would, through grace, rejoice in hope.

In Reformed theology, regeneration, conversion, rebirth, new birth, and being born again are all terms used to describe an important aspect of the beliefs system of professing believers. The importance of the notion of conversion has varied throughout history. In the eighteenth century, thanks in large part to the Pietist movement in Europe and North America, and to men like Theodorus Jacobus Frelinghuysen, John Wesley, Thomas Boston, Jonathan Edwards, and George Whitefield, regeneration was seen as a *conditio sine qua non* for those who aspired to answer the gospel call. It was arguably the most important aspect Pietism focused on.

We know that the literature available to Westerlo on conversion was very diverse and included over thirty books, from Cornelius Adam’s *Exercitationes Exegetica* [...], Johann Arndt’s *Vier Bücher von wahren Christenthum* [Four Books about True Christianity], and Richard Baxter’s *Methodus Theologiae Christianae* [Method of Christian Theology], to Thomas Boston’s *Human Nature in Its Fourfold State*, which is the book he was reading when he experienced his conversion.  

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205 “Regeneration,” literally meaning “begetting again,” has been used in different ways. In the sixteenth and seventeenth centuries it included the Holy Spirit’s implantation of new life in man’s heart as well as conversion (repentance and faith) and sanctification. Eventually Reformed theologians narrowed their usage of “regeneration” to its strict biblical usage alone. Today “regeneration” is used in the more restricted sense of the divine act of endowing the sinner with new spiritual life. Augustine distinguished between regeneration, an initial change of heart followed by a conversion later on, and conversion per se (see Berkhof 1996: 465-467). Most of the Biblical passages that deal with regeneration appear to define it as solely an act of God.

206 With a section on the conversion of Paul and other sinners.
conversion, and Theodorus Gerardi à Brakel’s *De Trappen des Geestelycken Levens [The Steps of the Spiritual Life]*.\(^{207}\)

The fact that so many of the works on Westerlo’s shelves cover conversion is not proof in and of itself that Westerlo was well aware of the importance of conversions and of what the authors of these books said concerning conversions. Most books in Westerlo’s possession contain no notes or annotations at all, but even when commenting on the theories discussed or presented in these books, Westerlo never mentioned learning more about conversion, with the exception of Boston’s *Human Nature in His Fourfold State*, on the day of Westerlo’s own conversion experience in 1768.

A case in point is the copy of a 1705 edition of Johannes à Marck’s *Christianae Theologicae Medulla Didactico-Elenctica,*\(^{208}\) with interleaved notes, written down, some by Westerlo himself, but mostly by his grandfather Eilardus and his great-grandfather Lubbertus Reiners. The almost 40-page passage on regeneration in this heavily annotated book\(^{209}\) is completely devoid of notes.

The example of this book by Johannes à Marck (1656-1731) is appropriate here. À Marck’s spent 55 years as professor at three Dutch universities: Franeker 1676-1682, Groningen 1682-1689, and Leiden 1689-1731. His *Christianae Theologicae Medulla Didactico-Elenctica* was widely used by universities in the Netherlands,\(^{210}\) England, Scotland, and America\(^{211}\) throughout the eighteenth and nineteenth centuries.

There is no doubt, however, that his coursework at the University of Groningen covered conversion and its importance for the human soul, and his professors of theology must have taught him about conversion in great detail. Especially his mentor Daniel Gerdes must have done so: he wrote several books on conversion, he wrote prefaces to several translations of Isaac Watts’s works,\(^{212}\) and he was

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\(^{207}\) A copy of the book had already made it to the New World before 1680: Jasper Dankaerts mentioned this book in his 1679/1680 *Journal*: “As there were plenty of books around [in Fort Hamilton], my comrade inquired of him what book he liked or esteemed the most. Upon this he brought forward two of the elder Brakel, one of which was *De Trappen des Geestelyeken Leven*” [James 1913:134].

\(^{208}\) This particular copy is in the archives of the Gardner A. Sage Library of the New Brunswick Theological Seminary. The information on these notes and their authors is taken from a handwritten paragraph [by Eilardus Westerlo], in Latin, on a loose-leaf page in the book. The *Theologia Elenctica* is the theology that refutes the arguments of the adherents of non-Christian religion.

\(^{209}\) In 1774, the Classis of Amsterdam received a request from “New Brunswick,” duly noting that this was not the General Assembly of New York and New Jersey, for a professor who could teach in English and who “could lecture upon Marckii Medulla Theologiae Christianae” [ER 4274]. A similar request had been sent by “the Trustees of Queens College” in 1772 [ER 4256-4257].

\(^{210}\) Kuyper 1891:539.

\(^{211}\) An American edition was first published in Philadelphia, in 1824. Judging by the number of copies of his *Medulla* found in American libraries, Johannes à Marck is perhaps the most read of all the theologians in America.

\(^{212}\) Isaac Watts (1674-1748), known as “the Father of English Hymnody,” in turn had edited Philip Doddridge’s *Practical Discourses on Regeneration*. Its translation into Dutch was popular among the Reformed in the Netherlands. Westerlo mentioned both authors in his *Memoirs*, but not concerning regeneration.
also the principal editor of Friedrich Adolf Lampe’s manuscripts,213 many of which deal most explicitly with conversion. Lampe in turn edited Johannes D’Outrein’s major work, Het Gouden Kleinoot van de Leere der Waarheit die naar de Godsaligheid is, Vervattet in den Heidelbergschen Catechismus [The Golden Treasure of True Doctrine] in 1724.

D’Outrein (1662-1722) was very influential among Pietist ministers in the eighteenth century. He claims that the unregenerate need to realize their miserable state through introspection and humility, and from there look out for a means to salvation, which is exactly what Frelinghuysen preached in his sermons in New Jersey. D’Outrein also makes a distinction between the needs of the regenerate and the unregenerate. The regenerate should show humility, encourage each other to do good works, pray for the unregenerate, and work towards their salvation. Frelinghuysen’s emphasis on faith and conversion214 also seems to find its origin in D’Outrein’s Gouden Kleinoot.

In his 1963 dissertation, Klaas Witteveen analyzes the dogmatics of Westerlo’s main professor, Daniel Gerdes,

in his Doctrina Gratiae, sive, Compendium Theologiae Dogmaticae [Doctrine of Grace, or Compendium of Theological Dogmatics] and in his Elenchus Veritatum [A Logical Refutation of Truths], and compares it to Friedrich Adolph Lampe’s. Witteveen finds that the definitions of the dogmatics of Lampe (1683-1729), Gerdes’s teacher in Bremen and Utrecht, as explained in his major work, Das Geheimnis des Gnadenbundes [The Secret of the Covenant of Grace], in six volumes,215 are often literally the basis for the definitions given by Gerdes.216 The 213 The April 1745 issue of the Boekzaal warns readers that only those books by Lampe that appeared during his lifetime and those published by Professor Gerdes from Lampe’s manuscripts should be accepted as real [Witteveen 1963:9].
214 Tanis 1967:111.
215 This secret is revealed in Psalms 25:14, the text Westerlo referred to more than once in his Memoirs, and twice in the context of his conversion.
first volume, on the “nature of the covenant of grace,” seems to follow Cocceius closely, but in the subsequent volumes Lampe blends in more Voetian themes, with the typically Pietistic attention paid to the inner life of the individual. In his dogmatics, Gerdes follows Lampe’s *Die Staffeln des Glaubens* [*The Steps of the Faith*] very closely.

The level in the theory of Lampe and Gerdes that is most important for our understanding of the significance of Westerlo’s conversion experience is the level of regeneration. They view regeneration as the instantaneous changing from death into life. In their view, man is passive in this process. They explicitly reject the thought that man can prepare for this regeneration, and they consider those defending the theory of free will as liars. Lampe and Gerdes maintained that without the help of God, man cannot make decisions, simply by hearing the Word of God. They also criticized Voetius for his opinion that the chosen would be born again via their marital union.

The question of whether regeneration is solely an act of God, or solely an act of human will, and, subsequently, whether man must do something toward being converted has elicited a wide range of responses over the years. Although there has never been consensus on the answer, the eighteenth-century Pietist environment in which Westerlo was raised seems to have been one to view regeneration as an act of God alone. Predestination, one of the bones of contention between Remonstrants and Contra-Remonstrants 150 years earlier, played a large part in the early Pietists’ view of regeneration, but it was largely abandoned by the leading Revivalists in favor of a regeneration, if not deserved, obtained by means of a devoted life seeking salvation.

Although not all conversions were accomplished by the same means, the fact that they occurred was considered of high importance for the individual, and a necessary step towards salvation. Several Bible texts point in that direction (for example, John 3:3-7), and Pietists presented conversions in this light.

Today, most Protestant churches place little emphasis on a conversion experience. Relying on the individual's personal statement of belief in and commitment to Jesus Christ, they do not deny the validity of such an occurrence, but they use the term "born again" to describe the acceptance of the gift of salvation, not the experience.

The conversion experience of three eighteenth-century Protestant pastors will shed some more light on the issue of the role of regeneration among the clergy. Differences have been noted between the Pietistic disposition and conversion

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216 Witteveen 1963:123.
217 Gerdes especially singles out “Spinozists” such as Pontiaan Van Hattem (for his claim that regeneration is not at all a necessity, since “man acts the way he acts because God wants him to act that way”) [Witteveen 1963:148].
experiences of “ordinary people” and that of clergy.\textsuperscript{218} The comparison with the conversion experiences of Theodorus Jacobus Frelinghuysen, George Whitefield, and Thomas Boston will also allow for a better understanding of the personal importance of Westerlo’s experience.

In their way, each of these pastors had an influence on Westerlo. Theodorus Jacobus Frelinghuysen instilled Pietistic values, and especially the need for regeneration, in the Reformed clergy, his congregations, and the ministers of other denominations during his successful, inspired, but also controversial ministry in early eighteenth-century New Jersey. George Whitefield reached even more people, converting many believers and non-believers during his six journeys in North America between 1736 and 1770. John Henry Livingston, following his conversion experience, was to be the last American-born student to be ordained by the Classis of Amsterdam before the independence of the Reformed Church in America, and as Westerlo’s colleague and brother-in-law he exchanged ideas with him on an intimate basis.\textsuperscript{219}

**Theodorus Jacobus Frelinghuysen**

Eilardus Westerlo may have been influenced by Theodorus Jacobus Frelinghuysen (1692-1747), which is a strange twist of history, since Westerlo’s predecessor in Albany was Frelinghuysen’s eldest son, Theodorus Frelinghuysen,\textsuperscript{220} an ardent follower of his father. If the consistory in Albany wanted change, it came in the form of Eilardus Westerlo, another Pietist who had studied much of the same Reformed literature as the Frelinghuysens had.

Theodorus Jacobus Frelinghuysen grew up in a pious family in Hagen (Westphalia), “in the heartland of German Reformed pietism.”\textsuperscript{221} His academic studies seem to have embodied the blending of the two different currents in Reformed theology in the early eighteenth century.\textsuperscript{222} Frelinghuysen first studied two years at the Reformed Gymnasium Academicum in nearby Hamm, under Cocceian professors Wilhelm Neuhaus\textsuperscript{223} (1675-1744) and Gilbertus Wachius.

\textsuperscript{218} For example, W. Stephen Gunter, in his foreword to Van Lieburg’s *Living for God* [Van Lieburg 2006:xiv].
\textsuperscript{219} See Chapter 7 for more on their relationship.
\textsuperscript{220} Another coincidence: when the younger Frelinghuysen’s widow, Elizabeth Symes, entered into her third marriage (after Peter Roosevelt in 1762), to William Lupton (in 1770) of New York City, their daughter, Elizabeth “Betsey” Lupton, married John Barent Johnson in 1797, who was minister at the Dutch Reformed Church in Albany from 1796 until 1802.
\textsuperscript{221} Tanis 1967:23. He was baptized by his father, Heinrich Johannes Frelinghaus, on November 6, 1692. While recording the baptism of his third son, Frelinghaus changed the family name to “Freylinghausen.” Other spellings of the family name can be found. Theodorus Jacobus probably started using “Frelinghuysen” while in Lingen.
\textsuperscript{222} For the Cocceian/Voetian differences, see Chapter 4.
\textsuperscript{223} Neuhaus taught Frelinghuysen from Lampe’s *Compendium (Synopsis Historiae Sacrae)* [Witteveen 1963:21].
In 1711 Frelinghuysen transferred to the Gymnasium Academicum of Lingen, under two Voetian professors, Johannes Wilhelmius (1671-1754) and Otto Verbrugge (1670-1745), who was professor at the University of Groningen from 1717 until 1745.

In 1717 Frelinghuysen was called to Loegumer Voorwerk, near Emden in East Friesland, in present-day Germany. About two months into Frelinghuysen's ministry, East Friesland was visited with a devastating Christmas Eve flood, which left the town and his congregation too impoverished to maintain the ministry. Frelinghuysen accepted a call to the grammar school in Enkhuizen, in North Holland, recommended by Johannes Van Leeuwen and Johannes à Marck.

Although his fourteen months in East Friesland had been difficult in many ways, Frelinghuysen also struck up some lasting friendships, with theologians advocating rebirth and experiential divinity such as Eduard Meiners of the Classis of Emden, and Sicco Tjaden, who played a role in Frelinghuysen’s call to North America, and Johannes Verschuir of the Classis of Groningen.

One of Frelinghuysen’s main goals was the conversion of sinners: “All things should be directed to these two principal objects of the gospel, namely, faith, and the conversion of the soul to God.” He frequently discussed conversion in his sermons, yet he does not seem to have described his own conversion experience publicly. Some think that Frelinghuysen’s conversion occurred while he was still in school around Hagen: “God blessed the solid Reformed education Theodorus

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224 This may have been a Scottish Presbyterian. A website dedicated to Scotsmen in Prussia, www.electricscotland.com/history/prussia/part2-1.htm, claims Gilbert Wachius (Waugh) was the first of four clergymen of Scottish descent to officiate in the Presbyterian Church in Nassenhuben, in 1694. The year of his death is the same as Professor Wachius at Hamm.

225 Wilhelmius obtained a master’s degree from the University of Leiden, and received a doctor of theology degree, honoris causa, in Utrecht in 1704, when he had been professor at Lingen for four years. Until 1702, Lingen was a dominion of the House of Orange [Tanis 1967:27], and it was in Dutch-speaking Lingen, some 20 miles east of Denekamp, that Frelinghuysen learned Dutch and began to preach in Dutch [Tanis 1967:29]. The German Reformed Synod of the Ruhr Classis licensed him to preach in 1715.

226 Verbrugge was one of the professors in Groningen of Eilardus’s father, Isaac Westerlo.

227 Tanis 1967:38. Westerlo studied à Marck’s Christianæ Theologicae Medulla [The Marrow of Christian Theology] as a student in Groningen, as did his grandfather and great-grandfather. This may correspond with the Marrow Controversy in Scotland [see Thomas Boston, later in this chapter]. Westerlo owned eight of Meiners’s works. Tanis points out that the Classes of East Friesland in Germany and Groningen in the Netherlands shared much of their church life, dating back to 1520, even attributing to Emden the role of “mother-church of the Reformed movements in the Netherlands,” providing a safe haven for Dutch Reformed refugees later in the sixteenth century [Tanis 1967:35].

228 Mentioned when his opponents in the Klagte conflict (see Chapter 6), Simon Wyckoff and Henry Vroom, appealed to the Classis of Amsterdam on May 4, 1732, to “keep things in a Dutch way in our churches” [Beeke 2000:xxvii; see also ER 2583-2588].

229 The Church’s Duty to Her Members (on the Heidelberg Catechism, Lord’s Day 31) [Beeke 2000:62].

230 For example, in The Righteous Scarcely Saved (on 1 Peter 4:18; Beeke 2000:71), and in The Acceptable Communicant (on 1 Corinthians 11:29; Beeke 2000:40)
[Jacobus] received at home and school and brought him to conversion.”

It seems Tanis hinted at that too:

From his youth up, [Frelinghuysen] had been taught the essential role of rebirth in the Christian life and even the church-order of his father’s church back in Hagen had stressed the importance of rebirth. 233

Frelinghuysen taught that rebirth requires a radical conversion, based on John 3:3, “no one can see the kingdom of God without being born anew,” whereby he saw the way to true conversion as a narrow path. His insights seem to stem from the Frisian Catechism as described in [East Frisian] Johannes Verschuir’s Bevindelyke Godtgeleertheid [Experiential Theology], 234 but also from Johannes à Marck’s Kort Opstel der Christene Got-Geleertheid [Short Essay on the Theology of Christians]. 235

Frelinghuysen described, and seemingly prescribed, rebirth as a step-by-step process (concern, self-appraisal, contrition, repentance, and salvation through the grace of God), much like à Brakel in his Trappen des Geestelycken Levens. From Verschuir (1680-1737) he borrowed the classification of humanity into four types of people: 1. een sterk Christen (‘strong Christian’), who has been converted and who knows the truths of Jesus through experience; 2. een bekommert Christen (‘concerned Christian’), who has been converted but who is still struggling with his faith; 3. een letterwyse (‘literal man’), who is unconverted and who knows the truth but not through experience; and 4. een onkundige (‘ignorant man’), who is unconverted and unlearned. Different texts from Scripture and different approaches were to be used for each type. 237

Was Theodorus Jacobus Frelinghuysen, the father of Westerlo’s predecessor, a Voetian or a Cocceian minister? During his studies he came in contact with both types of theologians. Like Lampe and Gerdes, he was first taught by Cocceians, in Hamm, and later by Voetians in Lingen and in the Reformed circle of what had started out as the Coetus of Emden. 238 Of course, Frelinghuysen was a Pietist first and foremost, but, as Tanis points out, “in his teachings on the covenant, Frelinghuysen clearly aligned himself with the traditional position held by the Voetians rather than the developed covenant theology of the Cocceians.” 239 Since

232 Beeke 2000:viii. Grammatically, it says here that God brought him to conversion.
233 Tanis 1967:112.
234 Verschuir’s work did not appear until 1736, so Frelinghuysen relied on the contact he had with Verschuir during his time in East Friesland, 1717-1719.
236 “Frelinghuysen stressed the necessity of looking for evidences of the new birth through Word-centered and Spirit-centered self-examination” [Beeke 2000:xxxiv].
237 See Molhuysen 1921:1007-1008.
238 “Coetus” was the term coined by Johannes à Lasco in Emden, in 1544, to denote a weekly meeting of ministers [Eastern Synod 1908:38]. This Coetus did not have or seek the authority to ordain.
Pietism developed later in Cocceian theology than in Voetian thought, this would also position Frelinghuysen’s approach with the Voetians.240

George Whitefield

The man who became known as the “itinerant minister” for his travels through America and who was famous on both sides of the Atlantic for his role in the religious movement known as the Great Awakening, George Whitefield (1714-1770), descended from a well-to-do family, with Oxford graduates in several generations.241 His father was a prosperous innkeeper in Gloucester. George was the youngest of seven children, who lost their father when George was but two.

Their mother took over the business of the Bell Inn, and quite successfully, it appears. It was not until she married a widower businessman in 1723 that the success of the Bell Inn ended. This was largely attributed to the poor business skills of the new husband, who is described as having an unpleasant personality and causing George’s mother to abandon the long-held hope of sending George to Oxford.

Due to the family’s precarious financial situation, George left grammar school at age fifteen. Almost two years later George entered Oxford as a servitor, serving as lackey to more highly placed students in exchange for free tuition. He befriended Charles and John Wesley, with whom he would found the Methodist movement in America.242

240 Tanis 1967:37. He adds that the Pietistic group, the ernstige Cocceians, developed quite differently from the Leiden Cocceians, known as Groene Cocceians, after their leader, Henricus Groenewegen, by whom Westerlo also owned two books. Frelinghuysen made a point of quoting Lampe, “een ernstige man” [“a serious man”], extensively in his sermon De Pligten van Zions Wagteren [The Duties of Watchmen on the Walls of Zion], preached in Bucks County, PA, in 1741 [The quotation is attributed to “de Heere Campe” [Frelinghuysen 1747:33], but no such name is known of someone who was either a theologian or a minister, or both. The printer must have misread the name.
241 Most of the information on his family background and on his early years are based on Dallimore 1970:37-58.
242 Following their initial cooperation, also in America, Whitefield rejected the Wesleys’s [Arminian] call for perfection, in a letter to John Wesley from Georgia on Christmas Eve, 1740.
In 1739, at age 24, George wrote an autobiography, *A Short Account of God’s Dealings with the Reverend George Whitefield, A.B., from His Infancy to the Time of His Entering into Holy Orders*,243 after he had been preaching for two years with great success. In the opening paragraphs of the autobiography he describes more explicitly than Westerlo the sins of his youth: cursing, stealing, “behaving irreverently in God’s sanctuary,” and playing cards. Just as Westerlo wrote his Memoirs in English so that his children would be able to read them, Whitefield indicated in his autobiography that “God had called him to a public work, [and that] ‘he thought his children would be glad to know how [he] was trained for it.’”244

Whitefield, who, like Frelinghuysen, frequently warned against allowing unconverted men to enter the ministry,245 considered converting people to be his task in life. In his sermon *Marks of the New Birth*,246 he calls on people to “repent therefore and be converted, that your sins may be blotted out.” In this sermon, he also defends the Biblical comparison of converted people to little children: “When our Lord says we must be converted and become as little children, I suppose he means also that we must be sensible of our weakness, comparatively speaking, as a little child,” and it is in this light that Jesus’s words must be seen: “Verily I say unto you, except ye be converted, and become as little children, ye shall not enter into the kingdom of heaven.”247

Like Westerlo, Whitefield did recall and describe his own conversion. He did more than describe it: he published it widely, “to establish his own credentials for proclaiming experimental religion.”248 His conversion experience also occurred during the reading of a book. A year before his death Whitefield recalled his conversion experience and Charles Wesley’s role thus:

> I must bear witness to my old friend, Mr. Charles Wesley. He put a book249 into my hands called *The Life of God in the Soul of Man*, whereby God showed me that I must be born again or be damned. I know the place: it may perhaps be superstitious, but whenever I go to Oxford, I cannot help running to the spot where Jesus Christ first revealed Himself to me, and gave me the new birth.250

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243 Included in Whitefield’s Journals, pp.33-72.
245 He endorsed Gilbert Tennent’s famous 1740 sermon entitled *The Danger of an Unconverted Ministry*.
246 Whitefield 1739.
247 Matthew 18:3. This sermon is also known as *Marks of a True Conversion*.
249 Charles Wesley is also said to have given Whitefield a copy of August Hermann Francke’s *Nicodemus, or a Treatise Against the Fear of Man* (1704)  
250 Butler 1898:9. Westerlo also owned a copy of this seventeenth-century work by Henry Scougal, referred to by Frank Lambert as “Scougal’s treatise on the new birth” [Lambert 1994:22.]
Tyerman gives a more elaborate account of this event, which occurred seven weeks after Easter, in 1735. Whitefield had been fasting for weeks on end, thus allowing “the blessed Spirit to purify his soul,” all the while confessing his sins to God day and night:

Near five or six weeks I had now spent in my study, except when I was obliged to go out. During this time I was fighting with my corruptions, and did little else besides kneeling down by my bedside, feeling, as it were, a heavy pressure upon my body, as well as an unspeakable oppression of mind, yet offering up my soul to God to do with me as it pleased Him.  

A religious link between fasting, sickness, and conversion was not new in Whitefield’s day. Fasting is one of the classic rituals of Judeo-Christian ascesis. Suddenly, Whitefield felt a change, which convinced him that he had been reborn:

God was pleased to set me free in the following manner. One day, perceiving an uncommon drought and a disagreeable clamminess in my mouth, and using things to allay my thirst, but in vain, it was suggested to me that when Jesus Christ cried out, ‘I thirst,’ His sufferings were near at an end. Upon which I cast myself down on the bed, crying out,’ ‘I thirst! I thirst!’ Soon after this, I found and felt in myself that I was delivered from the burden that had so heavily oppressed me. The spirit of mourning was taken from me, and I knew what it was truly to rejoice in God my Savior, and, for some time, could not avoid singing psalms wherever I was, but my joy gradually became more settled, and, blessed be God, has abode and increased in my soul, saving a few casual intermissions, ever since. Thus were the days of my mourning ended. After a long night of desertion and temptation, the star, which I had seen at a distance before, began to appear again, and the daystar arose in my heart. Now did the Spirit of God take possession of my soul, and, as I humbly hope, seal me unto the day of redemption.

Whitefield was twenty when he experienced his conversion in 1735, three years before his fellow Methodists John and Charles Wesley mentioned theirs. In the

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251 Tyerman 1877:24. Praying outside, Whitefield added: “The night being stormy, it gave me awful thoughts of the day of judgment.”
252 See Frijhoff 1995: 393. The conversion experienced by Evert Willemsz. Bogardus (1607-1647) as a teenager, which left him deaf, dumb, and at times unable to see (Frijhoff 2007:10), played a pivotal role in his life. He was one of the first Dutch Reformed ministers in North America when he arrived on Manhattan in 1633. See also Frijhoff 1997:98-119.
253 Westerlo also reported he was very thirsty after he experienced his conversion (Memoirs, January 17, 1770).
254 Tyerman 1877:25.
case of Whitefield’s conversion, parallels can be seen between his experience and those of Sophia Agnes von Langenberg in 1621/22 on the one hand, and Evert Willemsz. Bogardus in 1622/23 on the other. All three achieved holiness at a personal level through a near-death experience, attributing their miraculous healing to God’s intervention. The public signs of their conversion, drawing the attention of the public to their message (Von Langenberg’s bleeding cross, Bogardus’s presentation and Whitefield’s publication of their experience), were intended to obtain public recognition of their experience.

George Whitefield is known today for being a major force in unleashing the Great Awakening in America in the 1740s, and for his evangelical mass sermons advocating conversion, as preached from Massachusetts down to Georgia, during six extended evangelical tours in America between 1738 and 1770, reportedly also touching John Henry Livingston’s soul in 1765.

An interesting detail here is that at some point during his travels through America, Whitefield reportedly stayed at the Van Cortlandt Manor and preached to the tenants of the Manor from its veranda. Pierre Van Cortlandt (1721-1814), Lord of the Manor and Lieutenant Governor of New York during the Revolutionary War, was an uncle of John Henry Livingston, through his marriage to Joanna Livingston (1722-1808), which makes it plausible that young John Henry met Whitefield in person.

John Henry Livingston

A descendant of seventeenth-century John Livingston(e), a prominent minister who fled Scotland and became a minister of the Scottish church in Rotterdam,
John Henry (1746-1825) was born into one of the most affluent families in colonial New York. In keeping with the family tradition, Livingston graduated from Yale and subsequently studied to become a lawyer.

Apparently homebound due to illness in 1764, Livingston, “apprehensive […] that his glass was nearly run, and that he would soon have to appear before the Judge of all the earth,”\textsuperscript{259} began to worry about his life as a sinner. Much later in life, Livingston recalled that the book \textit{Grace Abounding to the Chief of Sinners} by John Bunyan alarmed him about his own conduct,\textsuperscript{260} and that Philip Doddridge’s \textit{Rise and Progress of Religion in the Soul} was the first book that enabled him to understand religion. In this “treatise,” Doddridge shows the steps the unrepentant sinner goes through until condemnation, and gives advice to converts and young Christians.

Perusing Doddridge’s book and then “the sacred Scriptures,” Livingston spent his days studying the Bible to find “light and instruction.”\textsuperscript{261} At some point Livingston, still in doubt that his sins would be forgiven, felt that he had been converted. He wrote:

\begin{quote}
I believed the Lord Jesus was able to save me, but I could not believe that he was willing to receive and save a wretch, who had sinned so much, and resisted his grace so long as I had done.\textsuperscript{262}
\end{quote}

In his description of his conversion it does not seem to have been one moment, but rather a gradual process:

\begin{quote}
At length it pleased Him to conquer my unbelief, by convincing me that if the Savior was able to save me, He must, most assuredly, be also willing, and that as such, He had pledged Himself not to cast out any who came to Him. Thus broke the chains and brought me into liberty. This dispelled doubts, removed fears, and conquered despondency. This gave me free and cheerful access to a throne of grace. I found a warrant and freedom to give myself away to the blessed Jesus, and I did most unreservedly do it, with the greatest willingness, sincerity, joy, and eagerness, that I ever performed any act in my life. Now consolations succeeded to grieves. I lived by faith. I found rest, and knew what it was to have Christ living in me. I had joy
\end{quote}

\textsuperscript{259} Gunn 1829:23.
\textsuperscript{260} The book describes God’s mercy for the author, who appears confounded and doubtful before his conversion. The conversion experience occurred after his careful studying of the Bible, by a voice that spoke to him like a sudden rushing wind from the window, “Didst thou ever refuse to be justified by the Blood of Christ?” Then his spirit was visited by a strange seizure that brought light and put to rest all his anxious thoughts [Bunyan 1666:60].
\textsuperscript{261} Gunn 1829:25.
\textsuperscript{262} Gunn 1829:28.
and peace in believing. I was conscious that I had received the
divine Redeemer in all his offices, as offered to sinners in his
word; that I had devoted myself, for time and eternity to him,
and was no longer my own; and that I had actually become
united to him. I have never doubted of this transaction, through
all the trials of faith, to this day.263

The preface to the earlier mentioned Rise and Progress of Religion in the Soul
may be the answer to the question why Livingston could not pinpoint a particular
moment of conversion. Doddridge asserts that “some sense of sin” and “humbling
apprehension of our danger and misery in consequence of it” must be necessary to
open us up “to receive the grace of the Gospel,”

But God is pleased sometimes to begin the work of His grace in
the heart almost from the first dawning of reason, and to carry it
on by such gentle and insensible degrees, that very excellent
persons, who have made the most eminent attainments in the
Divine life, have been unable to recount any remarkable history
of their conversion.

This could have given Livingston the peace of mind that he need not be certain of
the exact moment of his conversion the way Westerlo knew it a few years later.
To reassure readers like Livingston, Doddridge adds:

And so far as I can learn, this is most frequently the case with
those of them who have enjoyed the benefit of a pious
education, when it has not been succeeded by a vicious and
licentious youth. God forbid, therefore, that any should be so
insensible of their own happiness as to fall into perplexity with
relation to their spiritual state, for want of being able to trace
such a rise of religion in their minds […].264

Livingston’s conversion experience was quite different from Westerlo’s three
years later. It is tempting to speculate about whether these two ministers, who
were first brought together by their work to resolve the Coetus-Conferentie
conflict in 1771, and whose ties became even closer when each married a daughter
of Philip “the Signer” Livingston in 1775, discussed their respective conversions
with each other.

It seems that not many among the Pietist pastors spoke of or described their own
conversion experiences, even though they insisted on the necessity of such a

263 Gunn 1829:28-29.
264 Doddridge refers to the eighth of his Sermons on Regeneration [Doddridge 1742] for a complete
discussion of conversion. In it, he reiterates that it does not matter if “you do not know how to fix the
precise time of your conversion [p.253], and he answers the question whether regeneration precedes or
follows faith. He believed that regeneration was strictly brought about by God through the work of the
Holy Spirit, without cooperation of the individual.
conversion for everyone they met and for the members of their congregation in particular. Perhaps having had the experience was sufficient among the converted, and such an intimate experience was not discussed, or at least not put on paper.265

Eilardus Westerlo’s conversion experience

Through the literature, his upbringing, and his education in Groningen, Westerlo was certainly familiar with conversions. For a better assessment of his own conversion, we must look into how it fit in his understanding of the divine workings as described and propagated during his life. I will attempt to place it in its eighteenth-century context.

What is exceptional about Westerlo’s conversion experience is not the experience itself, since many have described theirs, both lay persons266 and preachers, albeit the latter to a lesser extent, as mentioned earlier in this chapter. It is the detail in date, time, place, and sequence of events of his description that is remarkable.267

On Christmas Eve 1768, Eilardus Westerlo prepared for “the day of tomorrow, when I shall be called to commemorate the Lord’s benevolence in His Temple and to hold in our thoughts both the birth and the death of my Jesus,”268 and, as far as can be ascertained, this is the first time he mentioned his re-birth experience of the preceding April in writing. After some initial hesitation, he expressed the uncertainties he felt towards God:

Reveal Thyself to me and in me. I believe that Thou art powerful and willing to bless everyone who comes to Thee. Attract me to Thee, Lord, and I will come to Thee. I dare not deny but must and will willingly confess sincerely and openly that I have often come to Thee, as a lost and doom-worthy person, and begged, yeah, pleaded for freedom for the Lord’s sake, but, O my protector, my heart is disquieted, my soul affected, uncertain, conflicted, whether I was truly attracted to Thee and had come as I had to come: whether I had accepted Thy evidence and Thy Son’s sincerely; whether I am truly part

265 Lutheran Pietist August Hermann Francke (1663-1727) is credited with having been the first to describe his own conversion, as reported, for example, in Stoeffler 1973:12. Fahlbusch comments: “the importance of a sudden, datable, and one-time conversion thus entered Pietism through Francke” [Fahlbusch 2005:IV:220].
266 See, for example, Van Lieburg 2006b.
267 Although theologian Theodorus van der Groe (1705-1784), considered by most nineteenth-century church historians as the last (Pietist) representative of the Dutch Nadere Reformatie, dedicated seventeen sermons to conversion [Huisman 2007:156], but his own experience is only quoted through letters he wrote years later [see, for example, Van Lieburg 2007:14, and Leurdijk 2006:14-15], which contain few details.
268 Document (in Dutch) dated December 24, 1768, in the archives of Historic Cherry Hill in Albany, NY.
of His Spirit’s and Life’s justice and therefore in union with Jesus, that He lives in me and I in Him. O, God of my life and of my grace! Look down upon me, and view me with merciful compassion in the son of Thy love: shine Thy light in my darkness, and let me know, O my comforter, the things that Thou hast given to me.

It seems that Westerlo was desperate, seeking God’s help:

Why didst Thou forsake me, and for how long wilt Thou turn me away. O, return to me and bless me with the voice of Thy Spirit, that I insure my heart for Thee and I may come to rest, because Thou have done good to my soul. I wish to rejoice in Thy arrival! O dear Savior, O, may I see Thee in Thy splendor, and taste that mercy has been poured out on Thy lips. Give me to speak, and make me a messenger of good tidings both for me and for all Thy people! O, may Bethlehem’s heavenly news provide a melody to the heart and comfort to our insides: speak to our hearts and make us hear joy.

But then Westerlo also showed that he was well aware of and appreciated the events of April 20 of the past year:

This I remember and still rejoice in: that I met and greeted Thee here, as my God and Savior. Thou madest me humble and small. To be the least important in Thy kingdom was the most for me, the highest I wanted. One glance from Thy merciful eye, one kiss from Thy mouth was lovelier and sweeter than all that the world possesses and gives. O, come in my blessing, and make Thy dwelling near me. Stay in me and live, yeah, live off the best of me and of all those that love Thy appearance. Amen!

This appears to be the first time Westerlo described his conversion experience. Westerlo’s regeneration, which “brought [him] to Christ, in whom is life,” was not unique in Reformed theology, although it must be seen as a very personal experience. Several seventeenth- and eighteenth-century theologians wrote about regeneration, conversion, re-birth, or new birth, often using these terms interchangeably, and their texts ranged from simply describing the phenomenon to urging people to prepare themselves for such an occasion.

This conversion experience was arguably the most defining moment of Westerlo’s life. His life was never the same after April 20, 1768, and ever since Westerlo started to keep his Memoirs with some regularity, that is, different from the first installments, which covered the first thirty-one years of his life and the next five,

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269 Westerlo used this phrase to refer to Jesus twenty-seven times throughout his Memoirs.
respectively, he mentioned his conversion experience at least once a year, on or close to its anniversary, and sometimes in between those dates as well.

On April 22, 1783, Westerlo asked for acceptance of “his gratitude at Thy Table for the beginning of Thy mercy [...] 15 years ago, and do not leave me but lead me and help me safely through.” A year later, on April 20, 1784, he told himself that “this day should be forever remembered by unworthy me as a time of love and my first espousals to the Lord, a day of joy and salvation. Now 16 years ago, the Lord brought me, I humbly hope, to Christ, in whom is life, and, o, His goodness has followed me ever since.”

Three weeks later, on May 9, 1784, he remembered that day in 1768 again:

Direct my steps and studies, and oh, blessed Jesus, may Thy grace and glory rest upon me and my family and this city, wherein, I humbly hope, Thou hast revealed Thyself in mercy with poor, perishing me the 20 April 1768.

Westerlo mentioned the mercies he was given since 1768 on April 20, 1785: “I desire this day in particular, as a blessed anniversary, to remember with humble gratitude former, and to acknowledge present mercies.”

April 20, 1786 is an example of how Westerlo, through his weak physical conditions, remained grateful:

Blessed be the Lord for this day. Though still afflicted, yet I live, the monument of His mercy, and have been enabled to remember His loving kindnesses, 18 years ago, the evening I hope never to forget. […] I desire to begin another year with Christ Jesus our Lord.

On April 20, 1787, Westerlo referred to the events of April 20, 1768 again, now focusing on them as the moment Christ was revealed in him: “I bless the Lord for His peculiar mercies towards poor, unworthy me, especially since 1768, this day 19 years ago, when, I humbly hope, it pleased the Lord to reveal His Son in me.”

On the day after the twentieth anniversary of his conversion, April 21, 1788, Westerlo linked his eventual motto, “In Jesus is Life,” to the experience: “Blessed be the God of all mercies, who has brought and kept me hitherto. Yesterday it was twenty years ago, as I humbly hope, that the Lord said to poor, perishing, sinful, helpless me: live, yea live. In Jesus is life!”

In January 1789, in one of Westerlo’s frequent references to the devil as “the Wicked One,” Westerlo also pointed to his conversion experience: “When, more

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270 On March 16, 1789, Westerlo indicated that, following Dominee Meijer’s motto Spes Glorae (hope of glory), he had chosen this phrase to lead him: “My motto be henceforth ‘In Jesus is Life’.”
than twenty years ago, I was cast down and ready to perish, He graciously appeared for my deliverance and received me from the power of the Wicked One.”

April 20, 1789 is the clearest indication that Westerlo tried to stress the importance of (seeking) conversion to his congregation: “I thank the Lord for His grace yesterday evening, and for the opportunity of catechizing on what I hope to have experienced this day 21 years ago, for which I desire to bless and to praise His great and Holy name.”

On April 20, 1790, which would be the last anniversary, Westerlo showed he was still not entirely certain of the significance of the day of his conversion: “I thank the Lord for what I hope He has done unto my soul this evening 22 years ago. Oh, may it appear more and more to have been His own good work, and be finished in one, even to perfection and glory!”

Westerlo described the situation preceding his conversion in terms of his faith: he felt “the Lord’s providence” enabled “new and strange doctrines” to be introduced in his congregation. He did not think this introduction was always done appropriately. However, he did not elaborate, either about the doctrines themselves or about the way they were introduced.

A possible parallel can be found in the situation Dominee Guarnerus Soetens (1725-1790) found himself in while pastor of Oud-Vossemeer in Zeeland (the Netherlands) in 1758. Soetens was criticized by members of his congregation for not showing that he had experienced a personal conversion. This is an example of what Van Lieburg aptly calls “volkspiëtisme” [“popular Pietism”], in which lay Pietists, often members of conventicles, considered unconverted all those who could not tell about their own regeneration, and were especially critical of pastors who lacked experiential knowledge. Those pastors could only explain the letter of the Bible.

The disapproval of Soetens extended to his rejecting the practice of Pietism. He believed that his pastoral duties should limit his discourse on regeneration to what the Bible says about it. He saw a danger in inciting members of his congregation to examine their own souls, which could lead to their feeling superior to those who had not had conversion experiences. In his diary, Soetens subsequently described what should be considered his conversion experience, even though it was not preceded by the usual emotional distress.

It is not known whether Soetens shared the story of his conversion experience with his congregation, or whether we should classify it as a

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272 “Popular Pietism” as opposed to “official Pietism” or “Pietism of the elite” [Van Lieburg 1986:114].
“predikantsbekering,” which often led to a spiritual revival of the congregation. The disparagement Soetens experienced in 1758 shows a similarity with the criticism Westerlo felt preceding his conversion.

In response to the unrest in the congregation, Westerlo reported that God made him “recite to the people the first principles of the doctrine of Christ, in several sermons.” Westerlo did not specify what exactly he preached in those sermons, and they have not been preserved. It is likely, however, that he referred to Hebrews 6:1-2, in which the six principles of the doctrine of Christ are identified: repentance from dead works (sin), faith toward God, doctrine of baptisms, laying on of hands, resurrection of the dead, and eternal judgment.

During this period, Westerlo had become convinced that he himself was “perverted to the core.” He needed to come to both an external and, mostly, an internal “reformation.” By this he meant a cleansing, which he tried to achieve by praying “incessantly, by day and by night, yes, having learned and teaching others that one may accept Jesus through what was learned.” He was well aware that complete purification could only be accomplished through a rebirth.

All this took quite a long time – Westerlo could not remember how long – and he remembered very clearly what evening “the Lord looked in Christ upon [him], unworthy.” It was “the day the Lord leads His forces” – an unclear reference today. Westerlo went on to say that

suddenly [he] was touched by what [Thomas Boston] had written. Then it was as though [Westerlo] heard the sentence being pronounced: “Go away, you damned in the eternal fire” – not that I know it, as if it were spoken to me – but it struck me that “then,” says Boston, “the world will probably be in flames.” I put down the book and got up, and saw what looked like a large fire in the woods, which upset me somewhat. When I realized what it was, I went to lay myself by the side of my bed, as usual, with bent knees, to pray.

In Boston’s discussion of regeneration, which he calls “a supernatural real change on the whole man, fitly compared to natural generation,” there is no such prediction of the world set in flames, but Westerlo was likely referring to the passage in the same book on Judgment Day, in which Boston quoted “a sentence

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273 “The conversion of a pastor” - Term coined by Van Lieburg to denote the conversion of a pastor that “cannot be defined as achieving the (true) faith, or achieving a certain phase on the ‘road to conversion,’ but at most a conscious change in spiritual direction while fulfilling ministerial duties” [Van Lieburg 1996a:121]. In this article, Van Lieburg gives Abraham Kuyper’s conversion as a positive example, but the conversion of Georgius Alexander Lentfrinck (1701-1779) in 1734 shows the occurrence of a pseudo conversion early in a pastor’s career. There is no indication that Westerlo’s was a pseudo conversion, however.

274 In 1768, April 20 was a Wednesday, 17 days after Easter Sunday.

275 Boston 1830:243.
from the throne, saying: ‘Depart from me, ye cursed.’”

Boston went on to say that, “if the burning of Sodom and Gomorrah […] was so dreadful, how terrible will that day [of Judgment] be, when the whole world shall be at once in flames! How will wretched worldlings look when their darling world shall be all on fire!”

Westerlo understood what the “large fire in the woods” meant, but he did not explain his understanding in his Memoirs or anywhere else, as far as can be ascertained. He simply said that, once he understood the meaning of what he saw outside, he went to do his usual praying on his knees, next to his bed, similar to George Whitefield’s description of his routine around the time of his conversion. During his prayers Westerlo felt the rebirth occurring through his arm, which since had filled him with both anxiety and happiness:

Here something happened, my soul knows this really well, which since then has been an incessant cause for struggles on the one hand, and for happiness on the other. In the beginning of my praying I was somewhat afraid to lean on my arm, in which I had been renewed – but shortly thereafter I was unexpectedly occupied with a fear of death. Jesus, whom until then I had worshipped with lively images, disappeared. My prayer eluded me. I could not pray, and I thought for a moment the angel of the abyss came to my right hand to lead me to Hell – I despaired and tried to find What must I do? – and oh, wonder of free grace! This was the first urge of the Spirit – then it happened: It was, see, He is praying. It is impossible to tell what all went through my soul, but, Oh my soul, forget not all His benefits.

As described in theological works of the day, the regeneration itself did not mean the ordeal would be completely over for the person undergoing it. Westerlo was not freed from the anxieties and doubts that preceded his conversion.

At the same time I saw myself outside Christ, so far from Him as the Earth is from Heaven. I found myself lost, all my work, my praying, my speaking, and my preaching. Other things were proposed to me, and I had learned to say to each: ‘That is not it.’ I judged myself worthy to be damned forever upon and after all this. Yes, that is how obliterated and humbled in myself I became, that I did not once dare think of myself, being less than nothing.

276 Boston 1830:487. See also p.196: “Depart from me, ye cursed, into everlasting fire!” [Matthew 25:41]. George Whitefield also referred to Judgment Day when undergoing his conversion.
277 Boston 1830:491.
278 Psalms 103:2.
These anxieties continued, but, while his sense of personal unworthiness remained, Westerlo convinced himself that Jesus was going to grant him life, even though he no longer desired or expected it:

Meanwhile, as it were in the most inner of my thoughts, came to me in extreme need, this awesome word, *In Jesus is Life*. This made me active again with Jesus, elevated on His Father’s Throne, who held life in His hands and was not obliged to grant it to me – I admitted myself not worthy of this life – but I was meanwhile convinced that Jesus was mighty and willing to grant it to us. Oh, then I saw Him as it were prepared to receive me, but I could not come – this was a new distress, with Jesus under the eye and on the heart –, seeing that I had to come to Him, and not being able to, this is where I felt the strongest desires of the heart for the Community of Jesus Christ. I know I had never felt such profound and true desires for something as I did for Jesus, until I, who will say how: placed outside myself, and blessed, and empowered, to come to Jesus as I was: *suddenly I will come, thus I will come* – this much is certain for me: it was almost, if not absolutely the last one – am I to die, as I thought and expected to – I desire nor expect any life – Lord, heavenly Jesus Christ, as only in and through Jesus Christ.

Then Westerlo was taken by a sense of exhaustion and thirst, and a need to study a text in Scripture, which put him at ease:

This was the most awesome miracle that I have ever found before or after that time. I was so exhausted that I went downstairs to have something to drink, to refresh my distressed body. Back upstairs I was driven to read Psalm 25,\(^{279}\) which calmed me down so much, that I was refreshed that same night by an agreeable sleep. – *This was done by the Lord, and in my eyes it is miraculous.*

In the following days, Westerlo was not freed from his anxieties yet, but he had learned how to cope with his fears:

Were I to write down what all has gone through my soul since that time, I would not know how. In general this much is certain: nothing in me is fought any longer, as that there is a

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\(^{279}\) Psalm 25, a prayer for deliverance from enemies, is an individual lament in acrostic form. Psalm 25:22 may have been the subject of one of the last sermons Westerlo heard in Groningen before leaving. It was a sermon preached by Dominee [Robertus] Alberthoma, on February 20, 1760, “op de algemene Dank-, Vast- en Bededag” [“on the day of general thanksgiving, fasting and prayer”] [Feith 1894:199]. Dina Van Bergh had sung Psalm 25:4-5 just before Johannes Frelinghuysen proposed to her, in September 1749 [Muyskens 1993:103]. See Chapter 6 on the significance of Psalm 25 for Westerlo, Frelinghuysen and Van Bergh.
Jesus and that this Jesus is the true God. I was also, again and again, and especially while praying, affected by death fears, but because of it I was driven toward Jesus, which allowed me, time and again, to practice what I was taught and also given that night. I found a miraculous calm, to the bliss of both body and soul.

Slowly the result of his conversion experience seemed to settle in:

In the course of time I was deeply moved by God’s greatness and majesty, and by my own insignificance and mortality. This made me especially pray, to be allowed to live for Jesus, until I was comforted in a miraculously soothing way by the dear word: God is Love.

To ensure that God would keep him from evil thoughts, Westerlo quoted verses 23-24 of Psalm 119²⁸⁰ [in italics below]:

What special refreshments I found and still enjoy, among manifold struggles and urges, and notwithstanding my many acts of faithlessness, having received sin and death in this body, is known to the God of my life and my grace; may the Lord make me more and more faithful to the agreeable light that He has given me, Hell’s creature worthy of death and damnation, and if the root of the matter is not in me – Oh Lord, search me and know my thoughts, and see if there be any wicked way in me, and lead me in the way everlasting.

Not entirely certain that he would be able to resist the temptations surrounding him, Westerlo urged the Lord to protect him against himself:

Scariest for me are the innumerable urges and wicked deeds of my own deceitful and deadly heart, which naturally contains nothing good. Who will know it? Oh Lord, protect me against myself. Add to this the rotten temptation and the attractions of youth, and our honor is over. It is a cruel and impure enemy, whom I detest and who goes around. May the God of peace bless me entirely, and quickly trample Satan under my feet.

Concluding his description of the conversion experience, Westerlo returned to Psalm 103, a “praising of the Savior God.” After inserting “forget not all His benefits” earlier is the description of his conversion, when showing he did not know all the things that went through his soul, Westerlo finally quoted the second half of verse 5 [in italics]:

²⁸⁰ Meditation on God’s Law. This is also the Psalm Luther referred to [see note 257 below].
As for the remainder, oh my God, do not forsake me too much, and do not allow me to be torn away from Thee the living God, neither from the simplicity that is in Christ. Lord Jesus, increase my belief and renew my youth like an eagle.\(^{281}\) I am giving myself, again and forever, to Thee, oh my Savior and my Lord. Thee I acknowledge and honor. I embrace and accept Thee as my Lord and my God. I give myself to and I lean on Thee, as unworthy, as worthy of death and damnation as I am. With this, my hand, I write: I am Thine, Lord, save me. May Thy good Spirit lead me into a smooth land.

Thus ends Westerlo’s account of his conversion experience on April 20, 1768. His *Memoirs*, with the annual commemoration of the event, show him to be a changed man.

**Thomas Boston and his Human Nature**

It is significant that Westerlo was reading a pious book, Thomas Boston’s *Human Nature in Its Fourfold State*, when he experienced his conversion. Who was this Scottish minister, whose books are still in print today? What can be concluded from Westerlo’s understanding of *Human Nature in Its Fourfold State*?

The picture of the life of Thomas Boston (1676-1732) that emerges from his *Memoirs*, as understood by Westerlo,\(^{282}\) shows a deeply religious man with chronic health issues, who for that reason was often prevented from preaching, much like Westerlo. Boston also met “with opposition in his first ministry.”\(^{283}\)

\(^{281}\) Psalms 103:5.

\(^{282}\) On August 25, 1787 he borrowed a copy of Boston’s *Memoirs*, “the author I have loved long since,” from Mr. Elbert Willett, a trustee of the Dutch Church Academy in 1787, and an elder in 1788 and 1789, and he finished reading on September 7.

\(^{283}\) Westerlo saw a parallel here as well, since he mentioned the opposition he felt preceding his rebirth experience [*Memoirs*, January 17, 1770]. Thomas Boston is known in particular for his role in the so-called *Marrow Controversy*. His involvement in the republication in 1718 of the 1645 *The Marrow of Modern Divinity*, written by English Calvinist Edward Fisher, got him in trouble with the established
Boston’s purpose for writing his memoirs, “principally for the instruction of his own family,” almost made Westerlo revise his own for the same purpose, “and transcribe the better part of them, that [his] posterity at least may be edified, if not any other minister, by reviewing the manifold temptations and outgates during [his] pilgrimage in this land,” but he left this up to God to decide for him.

Westerlo not only focused on the life and character of Thomas Boston in his Memoirs, but he also mentioned some of Boston’s advice to his readers: “Boston recommends the ordinary reading of the Bible as a means to know the will of God in particular conduct,” and Westerlo called him “a man who was made great by means of the three which Luther mentions, Oratio, Meditatio, Tentatio, and I do indeed thank the Lord for the opportunity, time, and health to improve so much by that life.”

What Westerlo left out of the summary of Boston’s life was the conversion experience of the Scottish theologian. Actually, from the Select Works of the Late Rev. Thomas Boston, Minister of Ettrick: With a Memoir of His Life and Writings and other works it appears that Boston also never described his own conversion.

**Human Nature in Its Fourfold State**

Westerlo was reading Thomas Boston’s Human Nature in Its Fourfold State when he experienced his rebirth. This was an appropriate text to be read during this experience, since it not only explains the four “States” or stages of man, from the states of Innocence through Nature to Grace, and finally to the Eternal State, but it also dedicates a considerable number of pages to the question of regeneration, and to the need for people to be prepared for such an event. This work was the most frequently published book in eighteenth-century Scotland, acknowledged by George Whitefield and Jonathan Edwards. Its influence was felt by generations of evangelicals in Britain and North America.
Though it appears Boston never discussed his own regeneration in his writings, he preached and wrote about the necessity of regeneration, and of people to be prepared for it. A case in point is the *State of Grace* in Boston’s *Human Nature in Its Fourfold State*, which Westerlo was reading when he experienced his rebirth.

Boston tries to reassure his readers that conversion does not necessarily take place at a certain time noticeable by the person being converted. This is how Boston responds, when answering some questions “to afford some further help to true Christians in their inquiries into their state.” The remark “I doubt if I be regenerate, because I know not the precise time of my conversion; nor can I trace the particular steps in the way in which it was brought to pass,” elicits the following response:

Though it is very desirable to be able to give an account of the beginning, and the gradual advances of the Lord's work upon our souls, as some saints can distinctly do, (howbeit the manner of the Spirit's working is still a mystery) yet this is not necessary to evidence the truth of grace, happy he that can say, in this case, as the blind man in the gospel, “One thing I know, that whereas I was blind, now I see.” Like as when we see the flames, we know there is fire; though we know not how or when it began.\textsuperscript{289} so the truth of grace in us may be discerned, though we know not how, or when, it was dropt into our hearts. If thou canst perceive the happy change, which is wrought on thy soul; if thou findest thy mind is enlightened, thy will inclined to comply with the will of God in all things; especially to fall in with the divine plan of salvation through a crucified Redeemer; in vain dost thou trouble thyself, and refuse comfort because thou knowest not how, and what way it was brought about.\textsuperscript{290}

Interesting for the discussion of whether conversion must be actively sought by people or not is Boston’s treatment of regeneration in his *Human Nature in Its Fourfold State*. Boston states as a doctrine that in the state of *Grace*, “the state of begun recovery of human nature,”\textsuperscript{291} all men are born again, but, Boston warns, “many call the church their mother, whom God will not own to be his children,” and “good education is not regeneration.”\textsuperscript{292} Boston considered regeneration to be “absolutely necessary to qualify you to do anything really good and acceptable to God.”\textsuperscript{293}

\textsuperscript{289} This example of the flames is what Westerlo reported to have experienced during his rebirth experience, underscoring the significance of his reading Boston’s book during this experience.  
\textsuperscript{290} Boston 1830:177.  
\textsuperscript{291} Boston 1830:177.  
\textsuperscript{292} Boston 1830:242.  
\textsuperscript{293} Boston 1830:244. “Education may chain up men’s lusts, but cannot change their hearts. A wolf is still a ravenous beast though it be chains.”  
\textsuperscript{293} Boston 1830:185.
In this, his focus is similar to Theodorus Jacobus Frelinghuysen’s during the same decade. Frelinghuysen, interested in keeping unconverted souls away from the Lord’s Supper, wanted to make sure people could give a satisfactory account of their conversion, indeed giving ministers the role of judge in this matter. This was one of the most contentious issues that arose between Frelinghuysen and his opponents. In his defense it must be said that he also wanted ministers to judge themselves and each other.

Conclusion

Eilardus Westerlo’s conversion experience was not exceptional in that conversion was something many believers, and especially ministers, were familiar with, both personally and from many of the people they came in contact with. What makes Westerlo’s interesting is that he described it in great detail, allowing us insight into the process.

Clearly, Westerlo was convinced that his spiritual life after his 1768 regeneration represented a new life in the service of the one who gave him this life, Jesus Christ. He may have still expressed doubts about his own behavior and about his readiness to “meet his Savior at the Throne,” but he knew that an important step had been taken on April 20, 1768, when Jesus came to “dwell with him.”

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295 As shown in Chapter 6, much of the controversy found its roots in the Emden Reformed religious discussion group.
4. **A Pietist with Dutch and German intellectual origins**

**Introduction**

Reformed Dutch Pietist Eilardus Westerlo brought his form of faith to the New World. He was educated during a period and in an area with strong Pietistic influences. For an accurate assessment of Westerlo’s religious beliefs, which includes his understanding of the significance of the conversion he experienced, I will examine his upbringing, his education, and his writings.

Given the time period in religious history and the characteristics of Pietism evidenced in Westerlo’s writings, it is fairly easy to claim that Westerlo was a Pietist and to provide proof for it. The spectrum of Pietism, both in Europe and in North America during the end of the eighteenth century, ran the gamut from a very conservative form, with an emphasis on traditional Scriptural authority, to a more liberal form, rejecting the orthodox doctrines, on to even a radical Pietism, identified as the movement propagated by Count Zinzendorf. Among Catholics, eighteenth-century Jansenists also insisted on evidence of conversion and regeneration; they too viewed life before and after conversion as a fundamental difference, and in that sense they should be considered Pietists. Moreover, many different manifestations of Pietism appear among denominations, be they Reformed, Lutheran, or Methodist.

From the beginning of the rise of Pietism in Europe, it was viewed in both a positive and a negative light. Some considered it an example of “a hypocritical religious attitude,” whereas others viewed it as a movement to reform traditional church practices. One can see the first of these groups referred to by Jacobus Hondius when he drew up his list of all the descriptive names he had heard by 1679, from “affected hypocrites” to “zealots.” The eighteenth-century Pietists themselves typically did not want to be known as Pietists, which complicates matters when one tries to define Pietism.

Throughout the past three centuries, researchers of church history have understood Pietism differently, and even today no consensus can be found regarding its definition. I agree with Willem J. Op ’t Hof that it is not likely that general agreement on the matter of terminology about historical protestant pietistic

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297 See Lehmann 2006:313-322 and Coalter 1980:38-40. Nikolaus Ludwig Count von Zinzendorf was a zealous leader of the Moravian movement, also known as the Herrnhuters, whose headquarters is located on the grounds of the castle in Zeist, the Netherlands, they were given in 1746.

298 See Van Kley 2006:133-135. The most important difference between Pietism and Jansenism seems to have been in the latter’s political engagement, whereas Pietism typically did not challenge the secular authorities.


300 Van Lieburg 2006b:1, 2.

301 They would be referred to as “Precisionists” [Van Lieburg 2006b:2-4].
movements will ever be reached, and that it would help if every researcher made clear what he means by the terms he uses. 302

For the scope of this study, I understand Pietism to denote a movement within many Christian denominations that focuses on the quality and emotional intensity of people's faith. An important aspect of Pietism is the personal experience of conversion to a godly life.

Westerlo’s exposure to Pietistic ideas, his understanding of Pietism, and the particular form he likely adhered to will be the focus of this chapter. Eilardus Westerlo will be defined in terms of his beliefs, and the roots of his particular set of religious convictions will be traced, although this can by no means be definitive. The purpose is to explain Westerlo’s thoughts found on paper and his actions as seen by others. For Westerlo, a case could be made to establish more precisely where his religious convictions fit in. For this, an analysis will be presented of his education, focusing on his professors, on the authors and on the books he studied, and on his own writings.

Pietism, its origins, and its influence on the history of the Reformation are too complex to allow one to come up with a definitive answer as to what particular kind of Pietism anyone adhered to or was influenced by. The causes that led to the sixteenth-century break between Roman Catholicism and what came to be known as Protestantism are also complex and still in dispute today.

In his Der Pietismus [Pietism], Johannes Wallmann broached the subject of a more international perspective of the true roots of Pietism, 303 but it was not until 2009 that scholars such as Jonathan Strom proposed viewing the origins of Pietism in a broader context. In his Introduction: Pietism in Two Worlds, Strom states that “Pietists in Europe and North America were by no means homogeneous,” and that, although he does see Pietism as emerging in seventeenth-century Germany, it “was closely related to Puritanism in England and the Nadere Reformatie 304 in the Netherlands.” He goes on to define Pietism as a movement of believers dissatisfied with the Lutheran and Reformed church establishment, and seeking to breathe new life into Christianity by emphasizing “godly living, biblical devotion, regeneration, millennialism, and new forms of religious association.” 305 However, Pietists remained theologically diverse.

The literature on and the analysis of Pietism both in Europe and North America has not only shown a wide variety of movements, but also a divergence among

304 A period in Dutch church history following the Reformation, roughly in the seventeenth and early eighteenth centuries, often translated as “Second Reformation” or “Further Reformation,” in which both the personal experience of faith and godliness played dominant roles. One of its leading figures was Gisbertus Voetius. Beeke sees no adequate translation into English of “Nadere Reformatie,” as the best option, “(Dutch) Second Reformation,” “still misses the Dutch term’s emphasis on continuity” [Beeke 1991:383].
305 Strom 2009:2.
scholars as to the causes and effects that underlie the different strains that have been identified. If there is any consensus to be found today among scholars, then it would be that the many forms of Pietism, such as Puritanism in England, the Nadere Reformatie in the Netherlands, Lutheran Pietism in Germany, Switzerland, and Scandinavia, and Methodism in England, all of which found fertile ground in North America, are to be considered separate but connected forms of Pietism, and the same holds true for the revival movements both in Europe and America.

Until recently, the study of the Pietist movement was dominated by historians who viewed movements such as Puritanism, (Lutheran) Pietism, and the Nadere Reformatie as essentially stemming from within country borders, with maybe some influence felt across these borders. Even today, much of the literature on Pietism still points to Lutherans in Germany as its origin, and the recent proposals to approach the religious movements of the seventeenth and eighteenth centuries as part of a series of religious revivals in many European countries and in the Atlantic World may lead to a breakthrough in our understanding of the impact the various religious movements have had.

Pietism in eighteenth-century Europe

The Pietist movement that swept through Europe in the seventeenth and eighteenth centuries cannot easily be characterized by a common set of features unique to Pietism. Developing almost simultaneously with and influencing the various Pietistic movements, the main emphasis of the late seventeenth-century Pietist movement in Europe was on personal faith as opposed to the main church’s doctrine and theology.

Pietism existed in many forms, which is what makes it difficult to even find a definition that encompasses all its manifestations. What both its history and the textbooks since its inception make clear is that Pietism, based on a personal piety or upright conduct of the individual, applies to a spirit that emphasizes sanctification over justification and that makes religious practice anthropocentric away from the theocentric doctrine. Derived from this basic all-encompassing principle behind the Pietistic movement, which led many to a more personal participation in religion and an intense inward experience of faith, one finds attention paid to conversion and regeneration, personal diaries, and a personal

306 Op ’t Hof says that the historical outlines of Pietism cannot always be ascertained, due to its international, interdenominational and inter-secular nature. The Nadere Reformatie is one of the movements with more exact boundaries in which Pietism manifested itself [Op ’t Hof 1991:40-41].

307 Strom 2009:16. He shows that the theory on the history of Pietism as defended by established church historians of the late twentieth century either described Puritanism as somehow having been influenced in large part by (Lutheran) Pietism (Stoeffler 1965) or Pietism as merely an episode within early modern religious awakenings that originated in English Puritanism (Ward 1992). The concept of an “Atlantic World” was introduced by Bernard Bailyn to denote shared influence from movements on both sides of the Atlantic [Strom 2009:1].

308 James Tanis states that “Pietism’s cornerstone was the doctrine of rebirth” [Tanis 1976a:72].

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involvement shared with others in so-called conventicles, meetings of laypeople to discuss religious issues in an intimate setting.

The term “Pietism” found its origin in Germany: it can be traced back to Lutheran theologian Philipp Jakob Spener’s *Pia Desideria* (1675), in which he outlined a program for the development of piety based on the earlier-mentioned conventicles. He was the first to organize these unofficial meetings in which religious matters were discussed. Spener’s main goal was to correct the corrupt conditions in the orthodox Lutheran church. His followers were criticized for their stress on good works as proof of saving faith and condemned on account of their indifference to centralized authority.

Although the term is originally Lutheran, recent studies by Lehmann and Strom have shown that similar movements sprung up in other parts of Europe at about the same time, and also that these movements influenced each other. Thus it is incorrect to view the Pietist movement as one with local origins that spread from there all over Europe and hence to North America. It would be better to characterize Pietism as a religious movement without borders.

One may conclude that, since many view Pietism as a deeply personal expression of one’s own relationship with religion, with religious organizations, and with God, it may not even be helpful to label anyone’s Pietism as part of a larger group of Pietist beliefs. In the Netherlands the term *Nadere Reformatie* is not a universally accepted term today, although many people identified themselves with the movement at the time, and even recent discussions concerning Pietism and the *Nadere Reformatie* have not resulted in commonly established conclusions.

In order to come to a plausible determination of Westerlo’s Pietism, it is important to establish the general characteristics of Pietism first, and then to define Westerlo’s beliefs as a Pietist in terms of how they were shaped by his environment. If the belief system of Theodorus Jacobus Frelinghuysen, the father of Westerlo’s predecessor in Albany, can be defined as “East-Frisian Pietism,” and if Theodor Untereyck can be called “the father of Bremen Pietism,” we must be able to define Westerlo’s Pietism narrowly, in terms of the influences underlying his beliefs.

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309 For both Lehmann and Strom, see Strom 2002 and Strom 2009.

310 Coalter 1986:14. Coalter argues that Frelinghuysen’s “ecstatic impromptu prayers” were the result of Frelinghuysen’s exposure in Loegumer Voorwerk (near Emden), his first pastorate, in 1717, to the theories of confessional Pietists such as Witsius (covenant theology) and Koelman (who advocated keeping the unrepentant and sinners away from the Lord’s Table) on the one hand, and the Cocceian D’Outrein (catechetical instruction of the church’s laity; conventicles) on the other. See also Tanis 1967: 30-35.

The Pietist Westerlo

Looking into and analyzing the aspects that set Pietism apart from other religious movements in the eighteenth century, as Stoeffler called them, “the experiential, the perfectionistic, the Biblical, and the opposite emphases,”312 we see that in Westerlo’s approach to his faith all four of these aspects were abundantly present.

Experiential

The “experiential emphasis” must be understood in terms of the individual relationship with Jesus Christ, an individual whose main concern is living the life of a Christian who has experienced the reality of the doctrines. The conversion is the most important means toward that goal, and Westerlo’s experience on April 20, 1768, brought him so close to Jesus that he felt Jesus inside him. On Christmas Eve 1768 he implored Jesus to “stay in me and live, yeah, live off the best of me and of all those that love Thy appearance.” Westerlo also felt that his soul was (at rest) in Jesus: “The Lord speak peace to my soul, and do Thou, oh my soul, return unto Thy rest in Jesus Christ, who is our peace.”313

Another manifestation of Westerlo’s Christian life is his writing a diary, a personal account of his relationship to Jesus Christ. His writings do not necessarily describe his daily routines or his personal impressions per se. Although he did refer to occurrences in his life around him, including birthdays and sicknesses in his family, most of the pages were taken up by his understanding of his relationship to Jesus, his prayers and sermons, and encounters that had a bearing on matters of faith.

One personal expression of his faith Westerlo showed in his covenant with God, although some of the covenant references involved other people. Once he used it to express his hopes that a newborn child be blessed. On March 14, 1783, when his third child, daughter Joanna, was born, he addressed God thus: “May it be Thine in a covenant of peculiar love, mercy, and grace.” Neither mother nor daughter were mentioned by name in this passage.

In general though, Westerlo’s covenant references focused on his own covenant with his “God and Father in Christ,” and especially his desire to renew this covenant.314 In other instances he called God a “covenant-keeping God” or he asserted that his covenant was with “the God of mercy and grace.”

Stoeffler 1965:23. Stoeffler claims that each of these has “to a greater or lesser degree penetrated all Protestantism.” Donald Durnbaugh came to a slightly different list three years later (“experiential, emotional, individual, biblically centered, and ethically minded”) [Durnbaugh 1968:118-119], but I will focus on Stoeffler’s list, since he was an established authority on Pietism in the 1960s.

Memoirs, March 8, 1789.

Following one of Lampe’s seven means toward making progress toward sanctification – see below.
His first reference to these covenants is dated July 13, 1782, and it is not likely to be a coincidence that before his conversion experience in 1768 Westerlo did not make any mention of such covenants with God, to be renewed and to be considered “ever-lasting,” since it is coming from God.315

In addition, the covenant concept expressed here by Westerlo seems to be derived from Friedrich Adolf Lampe’s *Geheimnis des Gnadenbundes* [The Secret of the Covenant],316 of which Westerlo possessed a copy in Dutch, *Inleyding tot de Verborgenheid tot het Genade-verbondt*, and not from covenant theology, also known as “federal theology” or “federalism,” which uses the covenant as the organizing principle of Christian theology.

Lampe, whom James Tanis called a “German Reformed Pietist,”317 defined the covenant as an agreement between the Triune God and the elected sinner, in which God promises the sinner everything he needs for salvation, in exchange for the sinner’s right to salvation. The three main covenants are the covenants of redemption (the eternal agreement in which God appointed Jesus to redeem the elected from guilt and sin), of the works (the agreement made in the Garden of Eden and broken by Adam, in which life was promised for obedience, and death for disobedience), and of grace (agreement that promises eternal life for all who receive forgiveness of sin through Jesus).

In the seventeenth century, theologians such as John Owen (1616-1683), Herman Witsius (1636-1708), and Johannes Cocceius (1603-1669) (in his 1648 *Summa Doctrinae de Foedere et Testamento Dei* [The Doctrine of the Covenant and Testament of God]) published studies on covenant theology. Gisbertus Voetius (1589-1676) believed Cocceius overemphasized the historical character and the Biblical context in this, and Witsius attempted to reconcile the two movements, in his 1677 treatise *De Oeconomia Foederum Dei cum Hominibus* [The Economy of the Covenants between God and Man].

**Perfectionistic**

Although not all Pietists shared an expectation of perfectionism, or rather, not the same degree of perfectionism, Westerlo did seem to strive for it in his own faith and life, and he also expected others to have perfectionism as their goal. He lamented his own and others’ imperfections several times, he referred to “the Lord, His being Triune, and His perfections, the beauties of Holiness and

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315 Given the fact that his first diary-like entry is dated December 14, 1781, his July 13, 1782 entry was only the seventh of the kind, and the fourth in English.
316 Van Eijnatten mentions this book on the analysis of the soul as a “bestseller” [Van Eijnatten 2005:217].
317 Tanis 1976a:50.
happiness," and he often requested Jesus’s strength to be perfected in Westerlo’s weaknesses.

It is likely that Westerlo followed the description of perfection as given by Gerdes’s teacher Lampe, in the latter’s *Inleyding tot de Verborgenheid tot het Genade-verbondt* [*Introduction to the Secret of the Covenant of Grace*]. Specifically, in his chapter on *Heyligmakinge* [*sanctification*], Lampe discusses the issue of perfection. First he indicates that the most important duties of God’s law can be found in the Ten Commandments, but that it is impossible to follow the law perfectly (quoting James 3:2, “Wy struykelen alle in veele” [“For all of us make many mistakes”], and 1 John 1:8, “Indien wy seggen dat wy geen sonde en hebben, so verleyden wy ons selven, ende de waarheit en is in ons niet” [“If we say that we have no sin, we deceive ourselves, and the truth is not in us”]).

Lampe then answers the question “What then is the duty of believers in life?” by saying that “they must pursue perfection.” He uses a quotation from Philippians 3:12-14:

> Niet dat ik het alreede gekregen hebbe, ofte alredeem volmaakt ben; maar ik *jaage daar na*, of ik het ook grypen mochte, daar toe ik van Christo Jesu ook gegrepen ben. Broeders, ik en achte niet, dat ik selve het gegrepen hebbe. Maar een ding (doe ik), vergetende t’geene dat achter is, ende streckende my tot het geene dat vooren is, *jaage ik na het wit*, tot den prys der roeping Gods, die van boven is, in Christo Jesu. 

[Not that I have already obtained this or have already reached the goal [of perfection]; but I press on to make it my own, because Christ Jesus has made me His own. Brothers, I do not consider that I have made it my own; but this one thing I do: forgetting what lies behind and straining forward to what lies ahead, I press on toward the goal for the prize of the heavenly call of God in Jesus Christ.]

Lampe adds seven means to ensuring progress toward sanctification:

1. **Diligent promotion of the Word of God.** Westerlo’s profession obviously enabled him to “promote the Word of God,” and his *Memoirs* attest to the fact that he did just that. Westerlo mentioned his promoting God’s Word countless times in his *Memoirs*, often also indicating how it strengthened himself. On July 14,
1783, for example, his preaching led him to comment on the power of God’s Word:

   I preached from Hebrews 13:9, and the Lord Jesus was strengthening (I humbly hope) my fainting heart at His Table with those comfortable words of the same chapter; the same yesterday, today, and forever. Oh, the quickening power of His Word, when applied by His grace and Spirit.

2. **Serious prayer** Lampe quotes 1 John 5:14 here: “And this is the boldness we have in Him, that if we ask anything according to His will, He hears us” [“Want dit is de wille Gods, uwe heyligmakinge” [“For this is the will of God, your sanctification”].

Westerlo’s *Memoirs* contain many examples of his serious prayers, mostly asking for strength, pity, and mercy, or for success in certain endeavors. He then often would come back to the issue later, indicating and thanking the Lord for having granted him the strength to do his work.

3. **Continuous observation of Jesus, especially of His example.** The sufferings of Jesus should inspire the soul of the Christian to “develop an irreconcilable hatred against such foul and disgusting sins in order for Jesus not to be crucified again.” Lampe refers to Hebrews 12:3: “Consider him who endured such hostility against him from sinners, so that you may not grow weary or lose heart” [“Want aanmerkt desen, die sodanig een tegenspreken van de sondaaren tegen hem heeft verdragen, op dat gy niet en verflouwt ende beswykt in uwe zielen” [“Consider him who endured such hostility against him from sinners, so that you may not grow weary or lose heart”]

Westerlo’s *Memoirs* attest to his taking Jesus as an example to be followed. On September 12, 1785, Westerlo wrote: “Oh, may I learn to put on Christ Jesus the Lord, and experience that I am His, following His example and enjoying Communion with Him as the Lord of life and glory!” In addition, Westerlo was hoping to be able to serve as an example for others:

   Preserve me, both from self-righteous pride and also antinomian licentiousness, and let my heart be sincere in Thy service, in private and public, as well as fervent and zealous for Thy truths and worship. May I be an example to others, and love my neighbor as myself in all simplicity and godly conversation, seeking His happiness in soul and body, for time and in all eternity, and oh, let me become more and more savingly

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322 “Do not be carried away by all kinds of strange teachings, for it is well for the heart to be strengthened by grace, not by regulations about food, which have not benefited those who observe them.”
323 Lampe adds later that this is the most important of these means.
324 Verschuir 1862:244.
convinced of all the precious truths and duties which Thou has taught and commanded us to believe, to do, and to teach.\textsuperscript{325}

4. A total devotion to the workings of the Holy Spirit. Based on the belief that the Holy Spirit interacts with the individual Christian, this was meant to stimulate the pious to give in to the Holy Spirit wholeheartedly. Lampe refers to Thessalonians 5:19, “En bluscht den geest niet uyt” [“Do not quench the Spirit’’] to make his point.

Two months before his death, on October 19, 1790, Westerlo phrased his devotion thus: “O, Father of mercies; accept of my humble petition, and of my surrender in a covenant of life, and salvation in and through Thy dearly beloved Son, our most compassionate Savior and Lord, Jesus Christ, to whom, with Thee and the Holy Spirit, be all the praise now and forever.”

5. Frequent renewals of the covenant with God. Westerlo mentioned the concept of “a covenant with God” fifty times in his \textit{Memoirs}. He referred to this covenant mainly to express the “contract” he felt with God, and its desired renewal he alludes to more than twenty times.\textsuperscript{326} The Heidelberg Catechism mentions the covenant four times in connection with infant baptism. Once it puts baptism and the Lord’s Supper together, as sacraments of the new covenants [Lord’s Day 25, question 68]: “Question: How many sacraments has Christ instituted in the new covenant? Answer: Two: holy baptism and the Holy Supper.” In 1 Corinthians 11:25, Paul says Jesus refers to his cup as “the new covenant in my blood.”

6. Daily self-examination. The self-examination should at least take place each time before one could worthily partake of the Lord’s Supper: “Examine yourselves, and only then eat of the bread and drink of the cup” [1 Corinthians 11:28]. Westerlo never mentioned this self-examination in his \textit{Memoirs}, but it can only be assumed that he did so as required. Innumerable times Westerlo called himself “unworthy,” “the least worthy of His servants,” and “ill-deserving.” In entries before and after sermons, Westerlo typically wrote words in the vein of: “I desire to be found in the way of duty, and oh, may strength, prudence, and zeal be renewed and increased from the Lord.”\textsuperscript{327} He expressed the uncertainty of being allowed to partake of the Lord’s Supper, for example on May 29, 1788: “Oh, may my spirit be composed, and I enabled from on High to partake of the Sacrament in the fear of God, and to the edification and comfort of my own soul.”

7. A close communion with the Saints. Based on the Apostles’ Creed,\textsuperscript{328} the Reformed church identified “the communion of Saints” with the body of

\textsuperscript{325} \textit{Memoirs}, March 2, 1790.

\textsuperscript{326} Lampe uses an indefinite qualifier here, “frequent.” Verschuir’s text insists on “daily renewals” [Verschuir 1862:244].

\textsuperscript{327} Entry of November 16, 1786.

\textsuperscript{328} The last lines of the Apostles’ Creed (in its current form probably dating back to the eighth century) are: “I believe in the Holy Ghost; the holy catholic church; the communion of Saints; the forgiveness of sins; the resurrection of the body; and the life everlasting. Amen.”
believers, living and dead, a doctrine going back to 1 Corinthians 12, in which Paul sees all Christians as united in one body: “Now you are the body of Christ and individually members of it” [1 Corinthians 12:27]. Christians are viewed as “Saints” here to signify their consecration to God and Christ.

Westerlo understood this to be the meaning of “Saints” in this context. On December 22, 1774, he described his studying of Scripture, “the teachings of the truth,” and “the entrance [he] found […] with those whom I trusted that were learned in the Lord, both ministers and others with whom I have the honor and privilege to be in regular contact from now on” as his access to this communion:

The communion of the Saints then was my happiness. I rejoiced so much that I found those who were of this way, and my mind was lively and free when I could trust that those whom I spoke with or who heard me had been blessed with the mercy of God.

Striving for perfection was an important topic of debate during the eighteenth century, and it was a distinguishing feature of the Methodists’ belief system, and this issue famously led to George Whitefield and the Wesleys parting ways in 1740. Since there is a link between the Wesleys and Zinzendorf’s Herrnhuters on the topic of perfection, and Daniel Gerdes was vehemently opposed to the latter (see below), it stands to reason that Gerdes taught Westerlo about the issue of perfection. In his *Elenchus Veritatum*, however, Gerdes pointed out that sin is not a certain imperfection, but that Adam’s disobedience introduced sin into the world. It is difficult to find a direct discussion on the goal of achieving perfection.

Philipp Jakob Spener was Nicholas Zinzendorf’s godfather, and Zinzendorf tried to put into practice Spener’s Pietist ideas. Since John Wesley is credited with further developing Spener’s view of Christian perfection, and Zinzendorf and Wesley exchanged ideas concerning this perfection, one could claim Spener’s influence on Wesley as well.

John Wesley’s conviction that man should seek to live a perfect life was influenced by William Law’s 1726 *A Practical Treatise upon Christian Perfection*, in which Law (1686-1761) espouses the doctrine that the soul of a regenerated Christian may attain a high degree of virtue and holiness, and that the grace of Jesus Christ may help it become entirely holy. The Gospel makes it clear

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329 Verschuir calls it “the communion of the pious” [Verschuir 1862:245].
330 Letter to John Wesley, December 24, 1740 [large excerpts of this letter are included in Tyerman’s *The Life of the Rev. George Whitefield* [Tyerman 1877:469-471]]. Looking back forty years later, John Wesley maintained it was Whitefield who caused the rift between them [Tyerman 1877:472].
331 John Wesley visited Herrnhut in 1738, and he discussed perfection with Zinzendorf there.
332 Witteveen 1963:135.
334 See Law 1893, especially pp.23-35. Whitefield called Law’s *Treatise* “excellent” [Tyerman 1877:16]. He obtained a copy from the curate of Margate, whom he visited on his way to America in 1738 [Tyerman 1877:112], which must have been a book he was already familiar with [see below].
that “Christianity requires a change of nature, a new life perfectly devoted to God,” and “Christianity is another birth, that brings us into a condition altogether as new, as when we first saw the light.” William Law quoted the same Bible text Lampe used to make his point ten years earlier, namely Philippians 3:12-14.

Wesley understood Law’s Treatise to say that perfection is a work of grace in the regenerate, through a process of sanctification. Whitefield disagreed with John Wesley, and he let Wesley know in his letter of December 24, 1740, as part of his criticism of Wesley’s sermon entitled Free Grace, in which the latter refuted the doctrine of predestination. Law was acquainted with both the Wesleys and Whitefield, and together with other Oxford students of the Holy Club, which could be considered a conventicle, they discussed Law’s Treatise at length.

**Biblical**

The Pietists’ emphasis on the Biblical, also known as Biblicism, set it apart from mysticism. As Stoeffler points out, mysticism also embraced experiential faith, which, one could argue, also sets it apart from rational Protestantism. One of the results of the focus on Biblical texts was that laymen would discuss the sermon of Sunday morning or books with references to the Bible in the so-called conventicles. Westerlo participated in conventicles in his first years in Albany, calling them “mutual gatherings”:

> Above all, I have been confirmed, again and again, in the teachings of the truth by means of Alberthoma’s Catechism booklets, which I interpreted every week, and also during our mutual gatherings at some houses in the congregation, while Vermeer’s Oeffeningen and Hellenbroek’s Keurstoffen were being read aloud.

For Pietists, the Bible, “the Word of God,” was viewed as a guide to Christian practice. Westerlo made it clear in his Memoirs and his letters that he did indeed consider the Bible as his guideline for living, and Bible reading was an essential part of this life.

**Opposite**

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335 Law 1893:25.
336 Tyerman claims that Whitefield, who accused Wesley of seeking “sinless perfection,” [for example, in a letter to John Wesley of 23 September 1740, in which he states that “there is no man that liveth and sinneth not in thought, word, and deed”], “evidently misunderstood Wesley’s doctrine of Christian perfection. Wesley never contended for absolute perfection” [Tyerman 1877:436].
337 Dallimore has found that it is thought by many, wrongly, that William Law did not hold Whitefield in high regard [Dallimore 1970:593].
339 Memoirs, December 22, 1774.
Stoeffler explains the need for an oppositive element in Pietism as being “intrinsic to any historical movement to the designation of which we add the suffix ‘ism.’ […] The ‘ism’ part must assert itself against a dominant pattern.” Puritans’ Pietism in seventeenth-century England opposed the establishment, but Scottish Presbyterianism did not until later.

In the case of Dutch or East-Frisian Pietism, the opposition to the established church, the Dutch or German Reformed Church, might be seen in the Nadere Reformatie, which would then be considered a movement against the Reformation movement. This would not necessarily mean an opposition to the Reformation itself, but a call for more or more rigorous reforms. Pietism is often credited with having been such a movement, but it is certain that they shared their (personal) piety with the establishment.  

**Westerlo and his Memoirs**

In addition to the characteristics analyzed above, another aspect should be added to Westerlo as a Pietist: the fact that he wrote memoirs, and what he wrote in them. Over all, his Memoirs do not contain the kind of personal narrative the twenty-first-century reader would expect from a diary. To a large extent Westerlo used his Memoirs to reflect on his life as a faithful Christian, and perhaps even to practice his role as a minister in general, and his sermons in particular.

It was not exceptional at all for a Pietist such as Westerlo to write a diary or autobiography. Rudolf Dekker points to religious impulses for introspection, especially among Dutch Reformed Church members, as an important cause for the increase in the number of so-called egodocuments written in the Netherlands after 1780. There are many examples that have been analyzed.

While discussing one particular case of such an autobiography, that of a 67-year-old carpenter, layman Egbert De Goede in 1845, Van Lieburg comments that it is impossible to explain the conversion experience of one person as based on one model in Reformed theology. Van Lieburg provides a list of possible influences in De Goede’s case: at home by his parents, at school by his schoolmasters, in church by many ministers, in conventicles by many pious participants, by reading the Bible and other pious literature, and also by his own life story. In Westerlo’s case, this list should be expanded by adding in the house of his cousins in Oldenzaal, at the university by his professors, and in North America by his fellow ministers, both inside and outside the Dutch Reformed Church.

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341 See Van Deursen 1996:40.
342 Dekker 2000: 260. He adds that the clergy recommended it, and that encouragements to that effect can be found in “printed moralistic writings.”
The difficulties of identifying Pietists

It must be pointed out, however, that there are no clear guidelines or criteria by which historians have been able to decide the (degree of) Pietism among eighteenth-century theologians, ministers, and lay members of the Dutch Reformed Church, either in the Netherlands or in North America. A variety of forms of Pietism has come into existence since the seventeenth century. In addition, the different movements within these forms, and a variety of criteria applied to Pietism, have made it difficult to identify the different strains of Pietism and to what type of Pietism each belonged. To be clear: the eighteenth-century ministers themselves did not seem preoccupied with these distinctions, and Westerlo showed an interest in other denominations, although not always openly.

The various forms of Pietism have also led to confusion about the meaning of the word “Pietism.” As James Tanis has pointed out, early on there was no consensus about Dutch words such as “piëtisme” (movements within the church emphasizing “dappere vroomheid” (strong piety) and “godvruchtigheid” (godliness)) and “piëtisterij” (movements away from the church, for example, the Moravians), which led people like Theodorus Jacobus Frelinghuysen to write about Pietists in a negative way, although this same Frelinghuysen is today considered a Pietist by most historians. Robertus Alberthoma, whose catechism book Westerlo translated, also displayed a very negative attitude towards Pietists, as late as 1754, writing about “Bedorvene Piëtisten, Geestdryvers enz.” [“Rotten Pietists, Fanatics, etc.”]:

Hoe klinkt de naam van Piëtisten,  
Geestdryvers en gelyke soort’,  
Die zig verheffen boven ‘t Woord,  
Als of zy ‘t al onfaalbaar wisten?  
Wie is ‘er die dit volk geneest?  
Het mist de letter en den Geest.  

What does the name of Pietists sound like,  
Of fanatics and the like,  
Who put themselves above the Word,  
As if they already knew it infallibly?  
Who can heal this people?  
It lacks both letter and spirit.  

345 Tanis 1967:5-6. Frelinghuysen wrote in 1735 of “the corrupt Pietists” who were the “enemy of predestination” and the “advocate of the restoration of all things” [ER 2665]. Six years later, he complained that the pious (de vroomen) were being slandered with such epithets as püritynen and Piëtisten.

346 Alberthoma adds a reference to Isaiah 59:21: “And as for me, this is my covenant with them, says the Lord,” and 1 John 4:1: “for many false prophets have gone out into the world.”

347 Alberthoma 1754:22. Gerdes discussed the fanaticism of Zinzendorf and his Herrnhuters also in terms of “geestdryvery” [Witteveen 1963:70].
Verschuir and Westerlo’s Pietism

Johannes Verschuir viewed *bevindelijke godgeleerdheid* [experiential theology] as describing “the truths of Christ in their proper connection with the Word of God, and how the power of those truths must be felt in the soul in order to lead to the soul’s salvation.” Judging by the generally accepted terms of this *bevindelijkheid*, Westerlo’s faith displayed many of the characteristics of true Pietism: a soul-searching introspection in his *Memoirs*, correspondence, and sermons, as well as a rebirth experience that served as a clear turning point in his life.

Actually, Eilardus Westerlo must be seen as having aspired to live a life that fit Verschuir’s description. In his *Memoirs* entry of December 27, 1783, Westerlo wrote: “From an experimental knowledge of the truth as it is in the Lord Jesus, my heart, though frequently bowed down under a sense of depravity, guilt and anxiety of mind, in several respects, yet now and then desires to rejoice in the Lord, His being Triune, His perfections, the beauties of Holiness and happiness, His works and ways, with His Church and in the world and with poor unworthy ill deserving me.” Westerlo knew that this was needed for salvation.

Van Lodenstein

Another clear indication that Westerlo was Pietistic in his beliefs can be found in his moving account of the final days of his daughter Joanna, who died at age four in 1788. Even though Westerlo already indicated in 1782 that he would henceforth write his *Memoirs* in English so that his children would be able to read them, Joanna recited Jodocus Van Lodenstein (1620-1677) in Dutch.

Van Lodenstein, a student of both Voetius and Cocceius, is generally considered a mystical Pietist. Johannes Verschuir called Van Lodenstein “godly.”

Doubts about eighteenth-century Pietists

Should there be any doubts among twenty-first-century historians concerning the Pietism of certain seventeenth- and eighteenth-century ministers, many of whom have not left behind a body of printed work to be judged by, then those historians can be viewed as the most recent examples in a long line of Pietism doubters that began as early as the start of the Pietist movement in different parts of Europe. An eighteenth-century example may serve to clarify this point.

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348 Verschuir 1862:iv.
349 Memoirs, February 7, 1788.
In his work *Godts Woort in deszelfs Dierbaarheid een Heilbegeerig Christen tot een Naarstig en Godvrugtig Onderzoek en Betragtinge Voorgestelt en Aangeprezen* [God’s Precious Word Presented and Recommended to a Christian Seeking Salvation for a Diligent and Pious Study and Practice], published in 1746, Pietist minister Jeremias Hollebeek (1689-1775), father of Ewaldus Hollebeek, one of Eilardus Westerlo’s professors at the University of Groningen, emphasized the necessity of serious Bible study for anyone seeking salvation.

Jeremias Hollebeek may have had Frelinghuysen and the *Klagte* controversy in New Jersey/New York in the 1720s in mind when he lamented the major disagreements among Pietists, “many of whom judged each other’s faith according to signs derived from sermons, edifying books and conversion narratives rather than from the Bible.”

In his sermon *De Pligten van Zions Wagteren* [The Duties of Watchmen on the Walls of Zion], preached at the ordination of Johannes H. Goetschius in 1741, Frelinghuysen seems to repeat his warnings about unregenerate ministers he is accused of having uttered when crossing the Atlantic Ocean in 1719/1720.

**Westerlo on the piety of Gerdes and Bertling**

Westerlo showed his adherence to Pietism very clearly upon learning of Professor Bertling’s death. Westerlo commemorated the influence both professors Bertling and Gerdes had had on him, also by selecting him to go to Albany:

> I remember his [Bertling – RN] last farewell wish, may the Lord impress upon your heart the weight of immortal souls, and Professor Gerdes’s advice to preach on the benefits of the covenant of grace. Blessed be the Lord, this last has been blessed to my own soul and some others and I desire more and more to feel the worth of precious souls. Oh, whilst both my masters are gone, may I tread in their steps and follow their exemplary piety and zeal for the propagation of the truth as it is in Jesus Christ.

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351 Ewaldus Hollebeek (1719–1796) was a son-in-law of his colleague Daniel Gerdes. Westerlo quoted his professor Hollebeek in his letter to Hermanus Meijer of September 26, 1766, concerning some lay priests: “Doctores esse volunt, cum vix discere incipiunt” [“They want to be learned, while they barely begin to study”]. Hollebeek, a “progressive theologian” [Veldman 2005:474], was likely whom Elizabeth Wolff, a sister-in-law, modeled Professor Maatig after in *Historie van Willem Leevend* [Veldman 2005:477 (n74)].

352 Van Lieburg 2006a:244. Hollebeek’s point was that the emphasis of study of the Christian seeking salvation should be on the Bible rather than on the many available “human books.”


354 *Memoirs*, December 24, 1783.
Westerlo left little doubt about Bertling and Gerdes’s piety, and he took their advice about the benefits of the covenant of grace to heart. In this he unwittingly shared another point of interest with Theodorus Jacobus Frelinghuysen. Frelinghuysen also stressed the importance of the covenant of grace, saying that it was established only with the elect, which led him to believe that the church was a congregation of believers, which should only admit those who could give an account of their conversion.

Westerlo’s Pietistic upbringing

When we call Westerlo a Pietist, we can only do so after closely examining his background, including the environment he grew up in and the education he received. The education to be considered will not be limited to his schools and the university he attended, and the professors who taught him, but it will also include the authors of books Westerlo mentioned.

As the son of a father who was a Dutch Reformed minister in Denekamp and a mother whose father, four uncles and grandfather were all Dutch Reformed ministers, Eilardus Westerlo was born into a Dutch Reformed environment. When he left his paternal home to attend grammar school in a neighboring town, he stayed with his mother’s cousins, also daughters of a Dutch Reformed minister, who made him read extensively from the Bible.

What the family relations surrounding Westerlo fail to show is the religious denomination of the people of Oldenzaal and Denekamp in the eighteenth century. Both towns, although in the northern part of the Netherlands, were located on the Eastern border of an area that remained occupied by the Spanish during the Eighty-Years War until about 1630. The area below the truce line of 1609-1621 has remained Roman Catholic, with few exceptions. Census figures have consistently given Oldenzaal and Denekamp as towns with seventy-five percent or more Roman Catholics among the population. It is in this environment that Isaac Westerlo was born (Oldenzaal) and where he served longest as a minister (Denekamp (1739-1761)). The same towns form the background of Eilardus’s youth until his enrollment at the University of Groningen.

In the eighteenth century, the Roman Catholics in the Northern Netherlands were in a minority position, both officially and politically, but in many of the smaller towns right below the dividing line dating back to the twelve-year truce, including Denekamp and Oldenzaal, they in fact outnumbered the Protestants. The Roman Catholic church buildings were confiscated, and these were subsequently used by often relatively small congregations of Protestants. Catholics were not permitted

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355 Most of them in Drenthe, where Eilardus’s parents probably met, when father Isaac was minister in Oosterhesselen, near Coevorden, where mother Hillegonda’s father was the minister, Dominee Eilardus Reiners.
to avow or practice their religion, and their priests traveled around the region to preach secretly in barns and houses. It was not until the Batavian Revolution and the proclamation of the freedom of religion in 1796 that the situation for Catholics in Overijssel improved.

The impact on the minority Dutch Reformed, in possession of the often large Roman Catholic church buildings, such as the *St. Nicolaaskerk* in Denekamp and the *Plechelmuskerk* in Oldenzaal, must have initially been enormous. By the 1740s, after more than a century of suppression of public Catholic activity in the area, the situation might have been considered normal, and the Westerlo family might not have been involved in any controversies with Catholic families in the region.\(^\text{358}\)

Once Eilardus moved to Groningen to study theology, he was in a pre-dominantly Dutch Reformed city, where the Classis of Groningen reigned and the University’s faculty of Theology exerted considerable influence on appointments in the city and the consistory. The faculty was still enmeshed in the controversy between Cocceians and Voetians as far as appointing professors was concerned.

**Cocceian-Voetian controversy**

The major controversy in Dutch Reformed theology in the second half of the seventeenth century, which died out in most parts of the Netherlands before 1750, was between the Cocceians and the Voetians. Later a third movement developed, Cartesianism, often linked to Cocceianism, \(^\text{359}\) which was mostly questioned by Voetians, but also not fully embraced by all Cocceians. Both Voetius and Cocceius have influenced Dutch Reformed theology far into the nineteenth century. Some would argue that their influence is still felt today.\(^\text{360}\)

The Cocceians, followers of the theologian Johannes Koch (Cocceius) (1603-1669), born in Bremen and professor of theology and oriental languages at Bremen, Franeker, and Leiden, contended that

1) **historically, covenants were the basis of the relationship between God and man:** a Covenant of Works (*foedus operum*), followed by a Covenant of Grace, or *foedus gratiae*. This so-called federal theology

\(^{358}\) In his essay *Religious Life in Amsterdam’s Golden Age*, Frijhoff shows, in what he calls the “ecumenicy of everyday life,” that there was, generally speaking, a peaceful coexistence among people, regardless of (the differences in) their religious beliefs [Frijhoff 2002:31].

\(^{359}\) Van der Wall mentions both Leiden and Franeker as important “Cartesian-Cocceian centers” [Van der Wall 1993:125].

\(^{360}\) For example, in 1872, Trench said that “his [=Coccceius’s] influence for good on the Protestant communities of Holland and also of Germany, as the promoter of a Biblical in place of a scholastic theology, leading as he did those Churches from the arid wastes of a new scholasticism to the living fountains of the Word of God, was immense, and survives to the present day” [Trench 1872: 303]. Joel Beeke finishes his 2001 article on Voetius by saying that “Voetian theology lives on today in the Dutch Reformed experiential tradition still flourishing in parts of the Netherlands, South Africa, and North America” [Beeke 2001: 149].
held that these two covenants are separated by the Fall of Man, and it also viewed the New Testament as superseding the Old Testament. One of the implications was that the fourth commandment, the observance of the Sabbath, the Bible’s seventh day or Sunday, only needed to be ceremonial. There was no need to make it a day of rest by Christians since it was a Jewish institution.

2) Scriptural prophesies needed to be interpreted, resulting in a *theologia prophetica*. They viewed the Bible as a prophetic book with information about the history of the church, and of the world. They used biblical prophecies to interpret the Bible on the one hand, and historical world events on the other. Cocceians made frequent use of Salomon Van Til’s *Inleydinge tot de Prophetische Geschriften [Introduction to the Prophecies]*,361 and

3) the history of the Church was divided into seven periods, based on Revelation (Cocceius believed he was living in the sixth period. The seventh would begin as soon as the Jews and the Turks had been converted to Christianity). The idea of the seven ages of the Church’s history before and after the coming of Christ did not come directly from Cocceius’s brain. Richard Trench found English Puritan divine Thomas Brightman (1557-1607) to be the first to embrace this interpretation after the Reformation, in his *Apocalypse Apocalypses* (1612),362 whereas Dutchman Johannes Saskerides (1526-1594), professor in Copenhagen from 1557 until 1594, published *Carmina de Septem Temporibus Sacrae Ecclesiae* in 1555.363 Some of Cocceius’s most influential followers were Salomon Van Til (1643-1713) in Leiden, Franciscus Burman (1628-1679) in Utrecht, Christoph Wittichius (1625-1687) in Nijmegen and later Leiden, and Campegius Vitringa (1659-1722) in Franneker, who was only ten at the time of Cocceius’s death.

The Voetians, led by Gijsbert Voet (Gisbertus Voetius) (1589-1676), born in Heusden and professor at Utrecht, believed Cocceius overemphasized the historical and contextual character of specific ages, thus undermining both Reformed dogmatics and practical Christianity. Instead, Voetius and his followers viewed the Reformed doctrines as the key to the exegesis or interpretation of the

361 Published in Dordrecht in 1684. This was one of twelve books written by Van Til that Westerlo owned. See Van der Wall 1996: 449 on the Cocceians. Van Til’s book was reprinted in 1698, together with Van Til’s translation of Johannes Saskerides’s *Carmina de Septem Temporibus Sacrae Ecclesiae* (1555), the seven ages of the Church (see under 3 on this page).

362 Trench 1872: 301.

363 Trench adds: “But this distribution into seven periods of the Church’s history, seven before Christ’s coming, and seven after, is a sort of “fixed idea” with him. It is indeed his desire to make Scripture the rule in every thing, and to find all that concerns the spiritual life and development of man cast in a scriptural framework, this desire in season and out of season, which has led him astray. And thus it is that he finds, or where he does not find he makes, a prophecy of these periods everywhere; in the seven days of creation, in the seven beatitudes, in the seven petitions of the Lord’s Prayer, in the seven parables of Matthew xiii; not seldom forcing into artificial arrangements by seven, Scriptures which yield themselves not naturally and of their own accord, but only under violent pressure and constraint, to any articulation of the kind, as Hannah’s Prayer, the Song of Moses, of Deborah, the Song of Songs, not a few of the Psalms, and, I dare say, much else in Scripture besides.” [Trench 1872:303-304]
Scriptures. They rejected Cartesianism, which would lead to an outward-oriented and rationalized Calvinism, and emphasized an instinctive, god-fearing, and pious conduct in life (praxis pietatis) through the reform of sins, and a personal relationship with God.

Jodocus Van Lodenstein (1620-1677), himself a student of Voetius but who later studied with Cocceius for two years, nicknamed Voetians “Scottish clerks,” for the influence that the (English and) Scottish Puritans had on them. In Voetian circles the English and Scottish Puritans were influential through their works, such as William Perkins (1558-1602), William Ames (1576-1633), Richard Baxter (1615-1691), and John Flavel (1628-1691). The Scottish and English theological connection continued into the next century with authors such as Thomas Boston (1676-1732), and Philip Doddridge (1702-1751), most of whom were authors whose works Westerlo either owned or was at least familiar with.

However, it seems that both movements, Voetians and Cocceians, had to face the external threat of Cartesianism. The philosophy brought to the fore by Cartesianism, named after René Descartes (Cartesius) (1596-1650), also more broadly referred to as the Radical Enlightenment, argued that reason could free man from superstition and religious authoritarianism by reducing religion to those essentials that could be accepted rationally. Although many followers of Cocceius embraced the basic idea of Cartesianism (and in hindsight quite a few are categorized as Cartesian-Cocceian), Cocceius himself displayed a disdain for philosophy in general, and especially when it pertained to theology.

In Europe and North America other movements were distinguished, such as a separatist or radical pietism that sought to form communities more oriented toward the New Testament. Out of this movement grew the Moravians, the Brethren, the Methodists, and others.

In this light it is also worth mentioning that Friedrich Adolf Lampe had his own followers, who became known as the Lampeans, and who, in spite of Lampe’s

364 “Voetians considered Cartesianism a threat to Christianity which would lead immediately to atheism” [Van der Wall 1993:128]. It must be noted that in the seventeenth and eighteenth centuries “atheism” was a term used in a much broader sense than it is today, and that many believers of different religions were considered “atheists” then.


366 Some, such as William Ames, also known as Guilielmus Amesius, spent a considerable amount of time in the Netherlands.

367 On Thomas Boston as a Puritan, see Ryken 2004:270-284.

368 See Israel 2002, especially pages 320-327, on Dutch Radicalism in the early eighteenth century.

369 Van Asselt 2001:80-83. Van Asselt argues that followers of Cocceius later used philosophy to further explain Cocceius’s Biblically oriented theology.

370 See Morgan 1995:11 and 115.

371 A reference can be found in Bejte Wolff and Aagje Deken’s Historie van den Heer Willem Leevend, in which the wife of a rural minister is described as a “strikte, zuivere Lampiaansche matrone” [“strict, pure Lampean matron”] [Bekker 1785:66].
attempt of bringing Voetians and Cocceians closer together, are generally
classified as Cocceians. \textsuperscript{372} Otto Thelemann probably went too far or was
misinformed when he claimed that Lampe’s influence in the Netherlands was so
great that until early in the nineteenth century the faculty of theology at each
Dutch university had to have one Voetian, one Cocceian, and one Lampean
professor (for dogmatics, exegesis, and practice, respectively). \textsuperscript{373}

Late seventeenth-century and early eighteenth-century Enlightenment questioned
the relationship between Church and State and advocated the natural rights of
men. Although the eighteenth-century Enlightenment seems to have struck the
Low Countries in a milder form, \textsuperscript{374} the Voetian-Cocceian controversy plagued the
Dutch Reformed Church until long after the death of both theologians, splitting
theological faculties into factions. In many cities they rotated the appointment of
their pastors between Voetians and Cocceians, which, in the case of Groningen,
lasted until into the second half of the eighteenth century.

Although the differences between the two factions were increasingly difficult to
pinpoint, \textsuperscript{375} people like professors Daniel Gerdes and Cornelis Van Velzen, and
then minister Michael Bertling \textsuperscript{376} were very actively trying to secure either
Cocceians or Voetians in their capacity as members of the Groningen consistory
when even the Prince of Orange got involved in the calls in Groningen in 1750. \textsuperscript{377}

\textbf{Daniel Gerdes as Westerlo’s mentor}

Of all the professors under whom Eilardus Westerlo studied in Groningen, Daniel
Gerdes (Theology, Church History), Michael Bertling (Theology), Paulus
Chevallier (Theology), Ewaldus Hollebeek (Theology), Nicolaus Wilhelms
Schroeder (Greek and Oriental Languages), Leonardus Offerhaus (History),
Johannes Daniel Van Lennep (Greek and Latin), Nicolaus Engelhard
(Philosophy), and Dionysius Van de Wijnpersse (Mathematics, Theology), there is
no doubt Gerdes was his mentor. \textsuperscript{378} In his \textit{Memoirs} Westerlo said this numerous
times. When discussing having been selected by Gerdes for the call to Albany,

\footnotesize{\textsuperscript{372} See Van Eijnatten 2003:107 and Van Eijnatten 2005:217.}
\footnotesize{\textsuperscript{373} Thelemann 1868:89.}
\footnotesize{\textsuperscript{374} See Van der Wall 2007:13-16 on the influence of the Enlightenment on religion in the Netherlands.}
\footnotesize{\textsuperscript{375} See, for example, Witteveen 1963:96-101.}
\footnotesize{\textsuperscript{376} Bertling was not appointed as professor until 1752.}
\footnotesize{\textsuperscript{377} Witteveen 1963:96-99. On p.36, note 6, Witteveen reports that Gerdes, in his correspondence with
Vriemoet, twice exclaimed “Men wil weer een Voetiaan!” [“They want another Voetian!”] when
speaking of a possible new professor in oriental languages, which might be interpreted as negative
toward Voetians, and Gerdes identifying himself as a Cocceian.
\textsuperscript{378} Gerdes had likely been the mentor of some other ministers in the New World. In 1746, Dominees
Gualtherus Da Bois and Johannes Ritzema wrote to the Classis of Amsterdam about “a student named
Johannes Leydt,” whom they wish to examine in America. As a recommendation they added that “for
a year and a half, he has been instructed under our supervision, not to speak of what he has already
accomplished in the original languages of Scripture, and in the systems of Profs. Vitringa and Gerdes,”
suggesting that these systems were taught in North America [ER 2935].}
Westerlo called Gerdes “His Highly Reverend, one of my best friends,” and he called himself “a particular acquaintance of Professor Gerdes.”

The life and teachings of Professor Gerdes will provide insight into Westerlo’s learning at the University of Groningen. Character and personality of the professors often determined the curriculum, since there were no provincial or national educational requirements. Daniel Gerdes (1698-1765) was born and raised in Bremen, the city of Johannes Cocceius, where he attended the Gymnasium Illustre, a school that was led at that time by Cocceians such as Cornelius De Hase and his sons Jacob and Theodor. Gerdes was also much influenced by the arrival of Friedrich Adolf Lampe (1683-1729), who came to preach in Bremen in 1709, in a Reformed congregation that had been primed by Coccean Theodor Untereyck (1635-1693), seen as the father of Bremen Pietism.

Untereyck, who had studied under Voetius in Utrecht and under Cocceius in Leiden, attempted to combine Voetianism with Cocceianism, as did Lampe.

Lampe, who had studied in Bremen and Franeker (under Campegius Vitringa, a follower of Cocceius, but also an advocate of a Coccean-Voetian blend), considered Cocceius to be Apollos, the Jewish Christian in the New Testament who was especially gifted in presenting Christian doctrine: “But God’s providence reserved the main work for the great Apollos, Johannes Cocceius, who has laid in our hands the key to find the secret to the treasure trove of the Word.” In 1720 Lampe became professor at Utrecht, where Gerdes, who had arrived as a student one year earlier, welcomed Lampe with a poem in Latin.

The matter of labeling ministers in the New World as Voetians or Cocceians is a difficult one. Jonathan Gerstner points out that the situation in colonial South Africa was similar to North America in the early eighteenth century in that the majority of the ministers that had come over from the Netherlands had studied in Leiden, where “the Leiden Voetians of the school of Johannes à Marck were dominant in the eighteenth century.” As part of their ordination, the Classis of Amsterdam required all students to “sign that they ‘detest the opinions of Prof. Röell and Doctor Bekker,’ both of whom were radical Cocceians or Cartesians.”

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379 Memoirs, January 17, 1770.
380 Memoirs, December 27, 1783.
381 Van Sluis 2005. See also De Vrankrijker 1936:49-85. In Groningen some coordinated efforts at streamlining may have been made in 1752, when three theology professors gave their inaugural addresses [Van Eijnatten 2003:437].
382 Witteveen 1963:6. Untereyck was also spelled “UnderEyck.”
384 Graafland 1989:247. See also Witteveen 1963 5-17 on the influence of Lampe on Gerdes.
385 Witteveen 1963:7. It was published as an addendum to Lampe’s inaugural address, Oratio Inauguralis de Summa Sapientia […] , Utrecht 1720.
386 See De Jong 1978:74.
387 Gerstner 1991:103. Gerstner adds that German Reformed pastors “tended to be Cocceians almost by default.” Both were banned for their brand of Cartesian theology.
Gerdes showed himself a loyal follower of Lampe. Correspondence between Gerdes and Lampe attests to this, but his correspondence with other Lampe adherents such as Ulrich, Vriemoet, and Hurter also make clear that Gerdes defended his teacher again and again. After Lampe’s final two years in Bremen and his death in 1729, Gerdes published all Lampe’s remaining manuscripts.

Similar to Lampe, Gerdes spent his professional life trying to improve relations between the Lutherans and the Reformed. Lampe called the division between the followers of Luther on the one hand and those of Calvin on the other an “unselige Spaltung” [“unholy split”], and Gerdes followed Lampe in this and also in his vigilance against fanaticism in theological matters.

No love was lost between Gerdes and the earlier mentioned Zinzendorf and his Moravian Church. When Zinzendorf visited Groningen in 1736, he was “well-received by the Groningen theology professor Cornelis Van Velzen (1696-1752), a Voetian.” Gerdes was then a newly appointed professor there, and in his correspondence there is no indication he met Zinzendorf. Gerdes railed against the Herrnhuters in an “academic discourse” in 1738, and to Westerlo, who owned two works by Gerdes’s friend and fellow-Bremian Gerard Kulenkamp (1700-1775) that criticized the Herrnhuters, the success of the Moravians in Pennsylvania and New Jersey did not go unnoticed.

Westerlo’s efforts to come to some sort of Christian unity are reminiscent of Gerdes and Lampe’s attempts to improve relations between the Lutherans and the Reformed. Not only did Westerlo count Presbyterian ministers among his friends, he also invited some to preach in his church, and he helped establish a Presbyterian/Reformed congregation in Saratoga, where there were not enough...

388 Witteveen 1963:8.
389 Thelemann 1868:225.
390 Van Eijnatten 2003:52. Van Eijnatten credits German-born Cocceian Isaac Le Long (1683-1762), who translated Lampe’s works into Dutch, with first bringing the Herrnhuters to public attention.
392 Gerdes’s efforts seem contrary to his attitude towards the Moravian movement and to Zinzendorf’s goal of a unified church.
393 John Rodgers and John Mason of New York City [Memoirs, December 22, 1774], Samuel Kirkland [Memoirs, October 30, 1783], John Warford and James Francis Armstrong [Memoirs, June 1, 1784], and George Faitout in Jamaica, NY [Memoirs, July 12, 1790].
12. Page from Westerlo’s Memoirs (April 18, 1788), in which he reports having attended the Reverend Young’s services. [Archives, Albany Institute of History and Art.]
members for either a Presbyterian or a Reformed one.\textsuperscript{395} Westerlo also hired a Presbyterian minister to teach at the Albany Academy.\textsuperscript{396}

In April 1788, Westerlo went to hear Presbyterian minister John Young in Schenectady (twice!), and he

was very much pleased with the truth which he delivered, and with the pious prayers which he poured out before the Lord. I desire to love all who preach and teach Jesus Christ as the meritorious cause of man’s justification, and also the author and finisher of that faith which is productive of every good word and work. May such preachers increase throughout the world, and the Lord be exalted, in the salvation of His chosen and redeemed people.

Westerlo acknowledges that Young’s “handling the text was not agreeable to our method, and explanatory of the precise meaning of the expressions in that context, but more general on both the Divine attributes,” he “rejoice[d] in the common truths, so beneficial and comfortable to the people of God, and pray[ed] the Lord may extend His mercy and exert His gracious power in the conversion of many, and the establishment of His own people.” Two years later, he attended a special service that apparently was not part of the celebrations by the Dutch Reformed:

The Presbyterian brethren have their Sacramental feast, and I went to hear both Reverends Messrs. Young and McDonald preach the fast and preparation sermon. May the Lord increase His Churches and true worshippers throughout the land, and we love one another in the bonds of Christian brotherly love. I would lament our sins and shortcomings in regard to mutual Communion, and humbly pray that the Father of mercies, as a God of love and peace, be in the midst of all His people, and unite them more and more into one body to help and promote the common cause and interest of pure and undefiled religion.\textsuperscript{397}

\textsuperscript{395} \textit{Memoirs}, August 16, 1786. An effort for a similar combination of a Presbyterian and Reformed congregation seems to have been made in Lansingburgh, by seeking the help of Presbyterian minister John Rodgers and Reformed minister John Henry Livingston in New York City [\textit{Memoirs}, April 9, 1788].

\textsuperscript{396} Dominee Samuel Smith [\textit{Memoirs}, August 28, 1788]. Smith was technically Dutch Reformed until 1800, when he became minister of Connecticut Farms, NJ, but in 1798 he represented the General Assembly of the Presbyterian Church at the Convention of Committees from the Reformed Dutch, Presbyterian, and Associate Reformed Churches in New York City [Demarest 1859:281-282]. Until 1800 he was minister at Saratoga, and, although ordained by the Dutch Reformed in 1789, after having studied under J. H. Livingston and having been prepared for ordination by Westerlo [Demarest 1859:188], he led the congregation in Saratoga mentioned above. In 1799 Smith represented the Classis of Albany at the Particular Synod of the Dutch Reformed Church in New York City.

\textsuperscript{397} \textit{Memoirs}, April 19, 1790. Westerlo also reported attending Presbyterian minister John Newton’s sermons [\textit{Memoirs}, November 5, 1789].
He saw the hand of God in the Presbyterians in Albany considering calling a minister of their own. On December 31, 1782, looking back on his accomplishments of the past year, he is grateful to God “for enabling and encouraging me to preach even in the English language, which has excited at least the Presbyterian congregation to attend and to procure a minister for themselves, whom I hope the Lord will bless.”

Westerlo also commended the efforts by others to bring the Presbyterians and the Reformed closer together. For example, on September 11, 1788, he wrote in his Memoirs: “Though probably I will be prevented from going down to Synod, I rejoice in the prospect of further union with the Presbyterian brethren, among whom I humbly hope the truth as it is in Jesus is preached and preserved. Their Synod has appointed a committee to meet at the convention. May that new body succeed, and brotherly love reign and rule throughout all the Churches.”

**Did Westerlo manifest himself as a Cocceian or a Voetian?**

Without a body of theological work to refer to, we cannot claim that we know Westerlo’s position in the Cocceian/Voetian conflict. It is safe to say that the conflict was not very prominent anymore in the mid-1750s, when Westerlo was a student. As a follower of Gerdes and Lampe, who are both credited with trying to blend Cocceian and Voetian ideas, Westerlo must have understood the merits of both camps.

The only time he seems to have referred to one of them, the Cocceians, was in a letter to his friend and colleague in Kingston, Hermanus Meijer, in September 1766, two years before his rebirth experience. While talking about avoiding turmoil when seeking and making peace, he did not seem to imply he agreed or disagreed, and there does not appear to be any judgment of the Cocceians (or Voetians):

> [...] Alle nieuwe onrusten moeten vermijd worden, als men vrede zoekt en vrede maakt – ’t is in kerkelijke zaken met gesteld gelijk ’t is met politieke questien. De wareld zoekt ’t hoogste regt en weet niet wat de Coccejanen menen door πάρεσις en ἀφεσις maar de kerke en in ’t bijzonder een’ leeraar zoekt vrede – stichtinge, vermaninge, vertroostinge – verschoon mijne vrijheid, die ik nergens in liever misbruiken wil, als om vrede te maken.

[All new turmoil must be avoided if one seeks peace and makes peace. In church matters it is the same as in political issues. The world seeks the highest justice and doesn’t know what the Cocceians mean by forgiveness of sins, but the church and

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398 It would take a couple of years to actually install their minister, John McDonald, in November 1784 or 1785 [see Memoirs, December 3, 1785].
especially a minister seeks peace – edification, admonition, consolation. Pardon my liberty, which I would not like to use anywhere more than to make peace.]

At first glance, the New Testament Greek words πάρεσις and άφεσις appear to have similar meanings, forgiveness or remission of sins, or atonement, but Westerlo knew about the distinction Cocceius claimed to have found between πάρεσις (Romans 3:25: [Jesus Christ] whom God put forward as a sacrifice of atonement) on the one hand, and άφεσις (Hebrews 10:18: “Where there is forgiveness of these [sins], there is no longer any offering for sin”) on the other: the difference between “the forgiveness of sins in the Old and New Testament dispensations.”

Cocceius’s interpretation did not go unchallenged. The Voetians wondered how God could have forgiven sins in the Old Testament period, that is, before the crucifixion of Christ. Voetius viewed the reason behind the use of these two words as an indication of the difference between the period before and after the conversion of the individual, a distinction Cocceius disregarded entirely.

Van Asselt shows that the πάρεσις/άφεσις controversy, also known as the debate on the forgiveness of sins (or remissio peccatorum) raged in the Church for more than two years in the mid 1660s, and it continued to play a role until the early eighteenth century. Voetius used disputations to criticize Cocceius, who responded in writing, sometimes through his former student, Utrecht professor Franciscus Burman (1628-1679). Voetius approached the issue logically, considering Scripture to be without distinctions of time, whereas Cocceius’s approach was historical.

Another approach to determine Westerlo’s faith is by looking at the culture he found in the New World, and how he fit in. The minister preceding him in Albany, Theodorus Frelinghuysen, left abruptly for the Netherlands after fourteen years of service. The reasons for his dismissal are still shrouded in mystery, but when sent to Albany by the Classis of Amsterdam in 1745, Frelinghuysen

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399 J. Mark Bleach, on Turretin’s federal theology, shows that this would be in accordance with the words of Paul (in Romans 3:25), and Cocceians understood it thus: “that God put forward Christ as the propitiation through faith in his blood for this purpose: ‘to declare his righteousness by or on account of the remission of preceding sins’” [Bleach 2007:291-292].

400 Van Asselt 2003:39 [the order of πάρεσις and άφεσις should be inverted in the text for each correctly to refer to the Old and New Testament respectively – RN]. For a further discussion of the Cocceian distinction between πάρεσις and άφεσις see Trench 1857:157-164, and Van Asselt 1989:41-42.

402 Van Asselt 1989:34.
403 For example, 2022 יָשָׁע עָנַי, Utilitas Distinctionis Duorum Vocabulorum Scripturae πάρεσις et άφεσις [Guide of the Perplexed: The Usefulness of the Distinction Between πάρεσις and άφεσις, Two Words of Scripture]. Leiden: Lopez de Haro. 1665. In response to this work, Voetius dedicated five disputations to Psalm 103:3 [“[The Lord] who forgives all your inequity”], trying to prove that, in the Old Testament, David received forgiveness of his sins comparable to the New Testament believer.
“promised to support the Coetus in New York.”404 This proved a frustrating experience for him since a majority of the congregation in Albany was vehemently opposed to the Coetus.405 Although he was well-liked by the congregation, he could never persuade them to join the Coetus.

Westerlo was much appreciated from the first year on in Albany. Not only did he not display the same fervor toward the “so-called Coetus” as his predecessor, Westerlo’s personal approach through his Pietistic faith must have won him the hearts of the Albany congregation. Even though Westerlo was still only twenty-one when he first preached in Albany, he must have fit the call Albany had sent to Groningen in 1759.

Beardslee points out links in the Albany variant of Reformed faith with Cocceianism, which he sees as significant in a town that “held a peculiar position in the early years of the English colony,” hinting at the position of power the Dutch held in Albany, contrary to New York City. He concludes that studies of the situation in this prosperous Dutch community may be misleading for the Dutch church and the surrounding Dutch communities.406

Another reason Beardslee sets forth concerning the differences within the Reformed Church is the fragmented Dutch culture in the seventeenth-century Netherlands, and their urban merchant culture made up of provincial and local differences, also in religion. The myth of a “solidly Calvinistic Netherlands” must have influenced members of the older Reformed Church in America.407 He then attributes the Great Awakening, “the great schism of the colonial period,” to the Frisian form of Pietism,408 with German-born ministers Bernardus Freeman and Theodorus Jacobus Frelinghuysen as early representatives. He also considers it to have been the denomination’s main source of unity.

In eighteenth-century Albany, Alice Kenney distinguished a form of the Reformed faith far removed from the Frisian Pietism and from Voetian scholasticism of surrounding communities, which she called “an urban variant of the Reformed faith,” with Cocceian features.409 Unfortunately, she did not specify which ministers displayed this particular variant, which leaves the possibility open, unless she meant the role of the Albany Reformed Dutch Church.

404 ER 2880. Of course, Frelinghuysen’s promise was in reference to the soon-to-be functioning Coetus advanced by the Classis of Amsterdam. For a discussion of the Coetus-Conferentie dispute, see Chapter 2.
407 Beardslee 1999:56. On the topic of the myth of the Calvinistic Netherlands, see also Frijhoff 2008a.
408 Likely Beardslee meant “East Frisian,” whose main city Emden was a center of (Dutch) Reformed Protestantism in the seventeenth century, arguably until it was annexed by Prussia in 1744 (see Pettigree 1992).
Conclusion

Westerlo’s mentioning of πάρεσις and άφεσις in 1766 shows that he was familiar with Cocceian/Voetian issues in the Reformed Church, and the fact that he did not feel the need to explain this controversy to his fellow University of Groningen graduate Meijer is further proof that it was part of their curriculum there.

Since no judgment on the Cocceians (or the Voetians) can be discerned, neither here nor anywhere else in Westerlo’s writings, it could further be concluded that Westerlo was neutral to the issues, or that he valued both theological philosophies equally. As mentioned earlier, the true controversy between Voetian and Cocceian philosophy had in fact subsided by the 1750s, which would mean that there was no real need for Westerlo, especially not in the context of North America, to take a stand. Still, his attitude would be in line with his teacher Daniel Gerdes and Gerdes’s teacher, Friedrich Adolf Lampe, both Bremen-born and -educated theologians who tried to blend Voetian and Cocceian theories. Like Theodorus Jacobus Frelinghuysen, both Lampe and Gerdes started out from a Cocceian perspective. In light of the Pietist characteristics we have found in Westerlo, it would then be plausible to call him a Pietist with Dutch and German intellectual origins.
5. **Westerlo’s role in the adaptation of the Church Order of Dort to the circumstances in North America**

**Introduction**

This chapter will first establish that Westerlo was a follower of the rules set forth by the Synod of Dort in 1618 and 1619. When his friend and colleague Hermanus Meijer was involved in a dispute with his consistory in Kingston in the late 1760s, when the Albany consistory offered to renew Westerlo’s contract in 1768, and when his congregation in Albany was split over the issue of whether to subscribe the Articles of Union – each time his actions seem to have been based on his adherence to the rules established more than 140 years before he was ordained. When the Dutch Reformed Church in North America decided its church order should reflect its circumstances in North America after the Revolution, Westerlo was on the committee to adapt the rules to the situation.

It is certain that Westerlo studied the history and the impact of the Synod of Dort while at the University of Groningen, with professors and in a province that heavily favored applying the outcome of the Synod, both in 1619 and throughout the seventeenth and eighteenth centuries, also when Westerlo attended this university.

In the following, after a brief overview of the events leading up to the Synod of Dort and an indication of the principal points decided in 1619, an analysis is made of Westerlo’s understanding of the Synod of Dort and its “Canons,” and his reasoning behind and reasons for mentioning them. Then his influence on the continued usage of the Church Order in North America will be shown.

**The issues decided in Dordrecht in 1618/1619**

During the Twelve-Year Truce (1609-1621), about halfway into the Eighty-Year War with Spain, an important split that had been simmering for a while in the Reformed Church was solidified when one side was officially sanctioned, whereas the other side was rebuked. A theological issue with political implications caused the split.

**The theological issue**

The Calvinization of the Reformed Church in the Low Countries, a process the Church had been going through since its free establishment right after the onset of the Eighty-Year War, can be said to have been the catalyst or even the cause of the religious issues the Church and the States of Holland were trying to solve in the
The theological issue eventually splitting the Reformed Church had its origin in a disagreement concerning both predestination and election. A professor at the University of Leiden, Jacobus Arminius (Jacob Harmenszoon, 1560-1609), expressed his disagreement with the Belgic Confession of faith, the doctrinal basis of the Reformed Church. According to Arminius, all people are identified by God, through His mercy, either as believers until the end of their lives or as those who will reject His mercy at some point, and He will decide accordingly to either choose or condemn them, respectively.

Franciscus Gomarus (Fransoys Gomaers, 1563-1641), also a professor at Leiden, whose opinion on “double predestination” put him on the side of the church authorities, defended God’s decision in the reverse order: God chose who would go to heaven and who would go to hell, and His decision is come to pass without fail. The chosen and the damned are equally unworthy, and it is God’s decision to show mercy to some and save them, and not to others.

This clear-cut difference made it easy for all church members to understand and therefore to choose sides, something the magistrates of Holland did not want to happen, given their ideal of the libertine model of a popular church, with room for both interpretations.

The political issue

The conflict thus became political. Not only did the States of Holland feel the need to intervene, among the political leaders there were also some fervent supporters of the Arminian cause, such as the internationally renowned jurist Hugo Grotius (1583-1645), but more importantly Johan [Van] Oldenbarnevelt (1547-1619), the Grand Pensionary or Land’s Advocate of Holland, a man credited with playing an important role in the struggle for independence from Spain. This is significant since Oldenbarnevelt was developing from a political ally of Prince Maurits (1567-1625), the stadtholder of Holland, Zeeland, Gelderland, Overijssel, and Utrecht, into his adversary. At the time of the conflict, Oldenbarnevelt not only supported the Arminians but was also in favor of an alliance with France against Spain, to the growing resentment of Prince Maurits. Van Deursen concludes that Oldenbarnevelt’s secret intentions, while advocating equality for the Arminians, were in fact paving the way for acceptance of the Catholics. That would mean that the biggest obstacles for reconciliation between Spain and the Dutch Republic were taken away, allowing “Rome and Spain to be master of the country.”

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411 Van Deursen shows that the conflict is based on a dilemma from the Bible, created by Paul in his Letter to the Romans [Van Deursen 1993:132].
412 Van Deursen 1993:132.
413 Van Deursen 1993:133. Van Oldenbarnevelt had converted from Catholicism to the Reformed faith as an adult (in 1568), as Maurits’s father, William of Orange, nicknamed William the Silent, would convert to protestantism five years later.
Additional accusations against Arminius and his followers were set forth, of opposing the confession and catechism. This led to the conflict becoming a national issue, and the need was felt for a national synod to decide on the matter. The States-General agreed to such a synod in 1606, but by then the theological dispute had already grown into a political one. At issue was the relationship between Church and State. Should the Church be independent from the State, or should the State be sovereign over the Church? Who should appoint ministers and elders?

When the followers of Arminius were more and more excluded from church assemblies, they submitted a remonstrance arguing for a revision of the creed and catechism, a year after Arminius’s death. In five articles they claimed that God’s decree of predestination is conditional, and not absolute; that Jesus obtained the forgiveness of sins for all, but that only the believer enjoys this forgiveness; that man does not have saving grace of himself, but that he must be born again; that all good deeds must be ascribed to the grace of God; and that true believers can resist sin, but they can still fall from grace. The Gomarians drew up a contra-remonstrance, refuting the arguments. This explains their being referred to as Contra-Remonstrants as opposed to the followers of Arminius as Remonstrants.

The States of Holland intervened in 1614 with a “resolutie tot vrede der kerken” [“Resolution towards the churches’ peace”]. They basically took Article III, the one article the Remonstrants and Contra-Remonstants could agree upon, as the basis of this resolution, for, as Van Deursen put it: “who could disagree ‘dat het begin, midden ende eynde van ’r menschen zaligheyt, ende namentlijck oock het geloof, niet des menschen natuurlijcke krachten of wercken, maer alleen die toutere, onverdienbare ghenade Gods in Jesu Christo onsen Zalighmaecker toegheeyndight moet worden.’” The government was getting itself into dangerous territory with this active positioning in theological matters. As a result of this, the States were still involved in 1618, when the political conflict was more or less resolved between August of 1618 and May of 1619, with the arrest, trial, and beheading of Oldenbarnevelt. Maurits, leader of the House of Orange, although victorious, never really recovered his political power, and he died a weakened man in 1625.

Van Eijnatten and Van Lieburg [Van Eijnatten 2005:175] have the Arminians make their request for a general synod in 1610 when submitting their remonstrance, but for the argument here it does not make a difference, other than that in the latter case Arminius himself was no longer in on the Synod issue, as he had died in 1609. Van Deursen also does not mention an earlier date than 1610 [Van Deursen 1993:132], but as Schilling points out in his essay Religion and Society in the Northern Netherlands, “Dutch historical research has provided no generally accepted answer to this question [of the position and importance of the Calvinist church within the Dutch commonwealth]” [Schilling 1992:358]. He even goes so far as to say that “general historians and more specialized studies of Dutch cultural and intellectual history tend to relativize or even question the influence of Calvinism and the Calvinist church.”

“that the beginning, middle and end of man’s salvation and also belief must be ascribed not to man’s natural powers or doings, but solely to that unmerituable mercy of God in Jesus Christ our Savior.” [Van Deursen 1991:261]
The theological conflict was decided in favor of the Contra-Remonstrants, in the Canons drawn up by the Synod of Dort, but with the approval of the government. The titlepage of the 1620 edition of the *Kerken-ordeninge; Gestelt inden Nationalen Synode der Ghereformeerde kercken* states that not only was the Synod convened “by order of the lofty members of the States General of the United Netherlands,” but also that the Canons were “approved and confirmed by the Honorable States Gentlemen of Utrecht.” It was not a triumph of the Church over the State, but the government enjoyed the support of the Church, which enabled the government to maintain peace and quiet in the Church.\(^\text{416}\)

The decision of the Synod of Dort on the “five main points of doctrine in dispute in the Netherlands” is popularly known as the Canons of Dort. It consists of statements of doctrine adopted by the great Synod of Dort, which met in the city of Dordrecht in 1618-19. The Canon spelled out the rules and regulations for all Reformed Church members.

### The Church Order established in Dordrecht in 1619

The Synod of Dort of 1618 and 1619 started out as an ecumenical assembly of delegates from Switzerland, the Palatinate, Nassau, Hesse, East Friesland, Bremen, Scotland and England, but with a majority from the Netherlands, to deal with the theological disputes concerning divine election and reprobation among Calvinists in Europe. It subsequently became solely a national synod to settle the issues of the adoption of the *Belgic Confession* and the *Heidelberg Catechism* on the one hand, and of the rules for church government and the liturgy for use in public worship on the other,\(^\text{417}\) which became known as the *Post Acta Synodalia*. The decisions on the disputes, also known as the Canons of Dort, formed, together with the *Belgic Confessions* (1561) and the *Heidelberg Catechism* (1563), the *Three Formularies of Unity*, also known as the *Formulae of Concord*,\(^\text{418}\) which all prospective ministers signed following their satisfactory examination, preceding ordination.

What was the effect of this Church Order on the theology of the eighteenth century in the Netherlands in general, and on the theology in Groningen during that time period in particular? A possible answer can be found in Van den Berg’s *Religious Currents and Cross-Currents*, in which he describes “Protestant theology as it was cultivated in the Netherlands in the eighteenth century” as “not what may be called exciting.”\(^\text{419}\) No shocking or outrageous claims were made, especially not in the study of theology. He attributes this to the fact that all those

\(^{416}\) See Van Deursen 1993:135.

\(^{417}\) The new Church Order was only accepted by three States: Gelderland, Overijssel, and Utrecht [See Meeter 1989:51].

\(^{418}\) In accordance with rule 53 of the Church Order of the National Synod of Dort. See, for example, ER 309 (Gideon Schaets), 1114.

in official positions in the church, not only the earlier mentioned ministers, were expected to subscribe to the *Three Formularies of Unity*, and some other texts, for example, on antinomianism, and those containing the opinions of Balthasar Bekker. This maintained the cohesion of the established church, which, although not the official state church, was recognized and protected by the authorities.

**Westerlo’s learning about the Synod of Dort**

Since education in the Netherlands had been influenced by the Church Orders of Dort since the early seventeenth century - article 21 obliged consistories to ensure that there be good schoolmasters everywhere, “to teach not only reading and writing to the children, the languages and Liberal Arts, but also to instruct them in godliness and in the catechism” –, it is quite probable that Westerlo learned about the Synod of Dort in grammar school. Then, during his years at the University of Groningen, Westerlo learned about the history of the Synod of Dort. He owned a copy of the *Acta Synodi Dordracenae*, and Professor Gerdes’ courses in church history must have included detailed observations on the Synod of Dort, a gathering that has had an enormous impact on Reformed theology.

In the following I will discuss four instances that show how Westerlo understood the importance of the Church Orders of Dort. Westerlo applied his understanding of these rules to the issue of a colleague who wanted to accept a call elsewhere, to the question of whether his congregation should join in a union with other congregations in New York and New Jersey, to settling a matter in the congregation of The Boght, and to his seeking approval for a translation he wanted to begin.

1. **Assisting Hermanus Meijer in his conflict with his consistory in Kingston**

On June 22, 1768, and therefore before the *Plan of Union* had been proposed or adopted, Westerlo advised his colleague and fellow University of Groningen graduate Hermanus Meijer, “the intimate friend of Westerlo,” when the latter had received a call to Caughnawaga. He based his advice on the 1619 Church Orders of Dort.
With the *Coetus-Conferentie* conflict on the forefront in Kingston in 1763, when Meijer arrived to take up his position as minister, he was immediately involved in it.\textsuperscript{425} Some prominent members of the Kingston congregation forced Meijer to take the oath of allegiance to King George III, subsequently claiming that he was no longer subordinated to the Classis of Amsterdam. A “convention” of ministers from neighboring congregations, Johannes Frijenmoet, Gerhard Cock, and Isaac Rysdyck,\textsuperscript{426} upon Meijer’s refusal to meet with them, brought charges against him alleging that he did not recognize the authority of the Mother Church, resulting in censure and in Kingston no longer paying his salary. The Classis of Amsterdam sided with the consistory, but could not find them a new minister until 1775, when Georg Doll, of the German Reformed Church in Albany, came down to become the Dutch Reformed minister in Kingston.

The conflict between Meijer and the Kingston consistory lasted for more than eight years, during which time Meijer preached in private houses. The consistory in Kingston refused to give Meijer testimonials. Thus, in accordance with article 10 of the Church Order of Dort,\textsuperscript{427} Meijer would not be allowed to accept the call to Caughnawaga, or any call for that matter, even though that would have put an end to the dispute between the minister and the consistory in Kingston.

In the absence of precedent in this matter, Westerlo wrote, “the general Church laws here in this country [that is, in the American colonies – RN] should be applied.” A minister being called must show testimonials from his current consistory, which meant, according to Westerlo, that the minister was entitled to them.\textsuperscript{428} This shows that in Westerlo’s eyes the rules based on the Canon of Dort were still the church laws in North America at that time, so that he was basically advocating applying the rules in effect since Dordrecht 1618/1619.

2. Joining the Union of the Churches in New York and New Jersey
The Synod of Dort also formed the background against which Westerlo approached the issue for congregations whether or not to join the Union of Churches in New York and New Jersey, which was first proposed in 1771, as a solution to the *Coetus-Conferentie* conflict, but which kept playing a role for those congregations that did not join immediately. Eilardus Westerlo, whose adult life covered most of the second half of the eighteenth century, seems to have stuck to the rules and regulations set forth by the Synod of Dort, more than 150 years

\textsuperscript{425} He reportedly traveled to America on the same ship as “so-called Coetus” member Jacob R. Hardenbergh, whose sister he married within months of his arrival.

\textsuperscript{426} All three became naturalized citizens of Great Britain after 1764: Frijenmoet in 1765 [Scott 1975:29], Rysdyck in 1766 [Bockstruck 2005: 251], and Cock in 1773 [Bockstruck 2005: 51].

\textsuperscript{427} “A minister being lawfully called may not forsake or leave the church or congregation where he is regularly settled in order to accept a call elsewhere without obtaining the previous consent of the consistory and deacons, and of those who have formerly borne the offices of elder and deacon, together with the approbation of the Magistrate, and with the foreknowledge of the Classis. In the same manner, no other church may receive him, before he has produced sufficient testimonials of his regular dismission from the church and Classis where he last served.”

\textsuperscript{428} Naborn 2008:153.
earlier. This would seem normal. After all, he signed the Three Forms of Unity, as did all who were to play an official role within the church in the Netherlands.

Beginning as early as 1738, some ministers in New Jersey openly advocated the establishment of a North-American ecclesiastical organization under the name “Coetus,” in order to promote and ordain candidates to the ministry. The Classis of Amsterdam had been encouraging the idea of such a Coetus in North America, but for different reasons, and expressly not to enable ordinations. It took another nine years to get the Coetus off the ground. At the time of Westerlo’s arrival in Albany, in 1760, the Coetus idea had resulted in a bitter conflict. One group was referred to as the “so-called Coetus,” whereas the opposing group was called “the Conferentie,” with both sides trying to explain to and receive approval for their actions from the Classis of Amsterdam. The Classis, whose composition and therefore possibly its opinions varied over the years, had gone from encouraging and insisting upon the establishment of a Coetus (before 1747) to openly disapproving the developments in North America in the late 1750s and the 1760s. It did not appear in control of the situation, and it must not have known what to do during the almost two decades of this conflict.

While trying to convince the congregation in Albany of the need to join the other congregations in New York and New Jersey in the early 1770s, Westerlo used the fact that the Classis of Amsterdam said it was all right or that it even encouraged the North-American congregations to unite, but he realized opponents in his congregation might see him as abandoning the Church Order of Dort, which he had officially subscribed in March 1760, when he was ordained.

Westerlo, who was first faced with the conflict soon after his arrival in 1760, may have secretly supported the Coetus ministers, realizing that the situation in North America, with its chronic lack of sufficient ministers to serve all the congregations, was untenable. The Classis of Amsterdam could not and did not fulfill its obligation to supply enough ministers for North America in a timely fashion. Indeed, his own call by-passed the Classis of Amsterdam, in spite of the fact that all the Dutch Reformed congregations in North America were governed by the Classis of Amsterdam. This had not gone unnoticed to the Classis of Amsterdam, which in October 1763 erroneously admonished the members of

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429 For a discussion of this issue, see Chapter 2.
430 Nooter points out that Johannes Theodorus Polhemus (1598?–1676) repeatedly called for an American Classis in the 1660s, probably after the example of the Classis of Brazil, where he preached for 17 years before [Nooter 1994: 170 and 201].
431 The Classis of Amsterdam in turn was subordinate to the Synod of North Holland. Meeter points out that the laws of North Holland therefore required the congregations in North America to abide by the regulations of the Synod of Dort [Meeter 1993:31].
432 This was a mistake. The letter was addressed, correctly, to the “Ministers who call themselves the Conferentie.” Conferentie (or Coetus) membership generally went with ministers, not congregations, and officially congregations, not ministers, were in a position to request a new minister. Unofficially, however, people like Ritzema and De Ronde [see, for example, Mouw 2009: 369 n798] were trying to obtain certain fellow ministers, but it seems strange that an official body such as the Classis of Amsterdam would accuse ministers personally of “seeking and obtaining” new brethren. Even though the Conferentie members would typically be the ones adhering to the Canons of Dort, and therefore not
the Conferentie after several graduates of the University of Groningen did not address themselves to them, although they passed through Amsterdam on their way to America. Westerlo did not join either the Coetus or the Conferentie ministers, although the Conferentie assembly in June 1764 had understood that Westerlo wanted to join them, with his congregation, but that “he could not appear with the requisite authority, because his consistory, out of regard to their internal harmony and peace, was not inclined to act with us.” Not mentioned is here that Westerlo was truly neutral since he did not “act with” the Coetus either.

The Canons of Dort and the ensuing Church Order were a guiding principle during Westerlo’s life, both at home and at work. His correspondence, his memoirs, and the church records attest to that.

**Correspondence**

When Westerlo decided to write a personal letter to the “Christian Reformed Congregation in Albany” on January 5, 1774 (see below), most congregations had already embraced the Plan of Union, fully endorsed by the Classis of Amsterdam, but some were still holding out, notably Albany and Kingston. The Albany consistory had repeatedly voted for postponement of their joining the Union. Its Church Records indicate how the consistory decided not to sign on to the Plan of Union during its May 28, 1772 session:

The Hon. Consistory has unanimously resolved, after ample deliberation, to send their minister, with Mr. Johannes M. Roseboom, adequately to said place and at said time [the next “Reverend Meeting of Ministers and Elders of the Dutch Reformed Churches of the Provinces of New York and New Jersey,” in New York City in June], the Lord willing. This, however, only to better understand the contents of the Hon. Classis’s letter, and to hear first-hand which congregations may unite and how, and then to request a copy of the Classis’s letter, as well as of the further acts of the General Assembly, so that we receive more light on the matter, and can communicate this with our Congregation. For the time being no immediate commitments will be pledged by our delegates. However, we may expect them to provide the Hon. Assembly with all possible help and advice, if so requested.

act behind the Classis’s back in these matters, the Classis was probably right in accusing the Conferentie ministers here. Albany (obtaining Westerlo) and Kingston (obtaining Meijer) were not defined as Conferentie strongholds.

ER 433 Eilardus Westerlo and Hermanus Meijer were among these graduates. ER 434, and the Conferentie reiterated it in October 1767 [ER 4103].

Appendix 6 contains a transcription and a translation of the letter.

Dominee Hermanus Meijer, involved in a long labor dispute with the Consistory of Kingston, subscribed the Articles of Union “for [him]self” in June 1772 [ER 4246].
This must have been a setback for Westerlo, who personally supported the *Plan of Union*, devised by the Classis of Amsterdam and brought over by John Henry Livingston in October 1770. First officially presented to the various North-American congregations in October 1771, the June 1772 assembly was intended to get all the congregations to formally subscribe the Articles of Union and to “actually form [themselves] into one Ecclesiastical Body.” While 37 congregations subscribed then, 54 withheld their support. The latter number may be inflated because some of the smaller congregations did not send delegates (or a letter approving the *Plan of Union*), but the incomplete list of “subsequent signatures” suggests that it took quite a while to acquire a majority of congregations to join this “one Ecclesiastical Body.”

**Westerlo’s January 5, 1774 letter to his congregation**

In his letter, which Westerlo appears to have written of his own initiative, but doubtlessly with the approval of the consistory, he tried to give a rational account of why the Albany congregation should join the Union. The following is an analysis of the main reasons Westerlo provides in this document.

Westerlo’s approach was clearly trying to convince the skeptics of the legality of the Union, which had been joined by six more congregations since October 1772. Probably overwhelming the congregation with evidence based on the rules established at the Synod of Dort, he used articles 4 and 41 to show that it is absolutely necessary to have an American classis:

Another goal of that Union and general assembly is: to enable us to examine, license, and ordain ministers ourselves in accordance with our Church Order. In the Synod of Dort, 1618 and 1619, Article 4 puts examining ministers with a Classis. An assembly of the Classis shall, according to Article 41, consist of neighboring churches, which each will send a minister and an elder with sufficient credit to that place and at that time to examine the candidates. This proves that there are no ministers in this country who can be licensed and ordained for our congregations in accordance with our Church Order, unless the ministers and elders convene like that.

Westerlo then used the lack of a sufficient number of ministers to prove the point once more that an American classis is indispensable:

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437 ER 4245.
438 Only eight of those present did not subscribe the Articles on that day.
439 ER 4248.
440 ER 4248.
If we look at our own congregation as well as at others who have no ministers, our neighbors and close ones, then how can we object to thus legally licensing and ordaining our own ministers, also from the young men in this country? And should we have no objections, how can we still disapprove of that church assembly, without which no longer any legal ordination, in accordance with the order of the Synod of Dort and the stipulation of the church in Holland can take place here?

The fact that there were so many more congregations at that point, often without a minister, was used by Westerlo to stress that it was the Albany congregation’s moral obligation to support such an assembly:

It seems unthinkable to be in favor of licensing and ordaining ministers but at the same time against the general assembly, because it is only in that assembly that our ministers can and may be licensed and ordained. So, given the necessity of ordination of ministers in this country for our multiplied congregations, we are morally obliged to defend that church assembly that licenses and ordains our ministers, as much as possible, for the sake of our Dutch church in this region, with peace and love.

An issue such as the one his friend Hermanus Meijer found himself in was also employed by Westerlo as a tactic to prove, though from the perspective of the congregation, that an American classis was needed:

The shortest route, both to get rid of annoying ministers and to obtain another one, is to join the Union at said church assembly, which has taken over this church power at the express approval of the church in Holland, according to its Church Order.

Looking at the arguments used by those opposing the congregation joining the Union, Westerlo analyzed and refuted the most important two:

First it is claimed that the final article of the Synod of Dort prohibits it: that to its articles no amendments, reductions or additions may be made than those by a general or National Synod, which, after all, the above mentioned general assembly was not. However, these new church assemblies here in this country are no amendment, or at least no addition to that famous

441 Amending any article of the 1619 Synod of Dort. The focus of those objecting was presumably not on the first part of article 86, “These Articles, relating to the lawful regulations of the churches are, with common consent, so formulated and adopted, that if the benefit of the Church should require it, they may and ought to be altered, enlarged or diminished,” but on the second part: “No particular congregation, Classis or Synod, however, shall be permitted to do this: but all shall diligently observe them until the General or National Synod shall otherwise order.”
church order, to which we are bound in all its parts. Should we then, in case we unite, not run the risk of breaking our church constitution and charter?

Regardless of what benefit and advantage there are for other congregations from that Union, we fear that it will cause us to lose ours, which were ratified above others by charter, and that is why it would be best to remain as we were. This objection appears at first glance to have weight, but we will shortly show in response that by that church union no essential amendments to the articles of said Synod are made, but, on the contrary, that our churches are ruled and regulated by it. That must be the reason other congregations which also have charters have not uttered any objections concerning it. Let’s listen to the united congregations: “Onwards, Brethren!” Thus is their above-mentioned introduction: “We all belong to one body, after all. Also our charters, our letters of call, yeah, our own church constitution is based on the above-mentioned Synod of Dort. Thus we are each already connected to our neighboring congregations, and therefore to each other. All we are doing is regulating our churches according to their own orders and constitution.”

Westerlo concluded that since the Union’s first article showed that they supported the 1619 Church Orders first and foremost:

For that matter, if we ourselves compare the articles of the Plan of Union with those of the Synod of Dort, we will find that the first general assembly in truth and sincerity supports Article 1: in everything we uphold the constitution of the Dutch Reformed Church as it was established in the Church Order of the Synod of Dort, in the years 1618 and 1619.

**Memoirs**

On December 22, 1774, Westerlo left little doubt about his personal support for the Plan:

Now I must mention, if I am to write the truth, something that has got me talked about by many, and that has possibly made my office questionable for some. Yet, although scourges and adversities are often necessary and useful, above such to be counted among God’s blessings, I will limit myself here, and, without accusing anyone or pitying myself, I will only write down the following concerning our well-known disputes. In so far as I am disputed, I have tried to walk in this with a good
conscience, before God and people. From the beginning I was, and I still am, happy in the Lord about the Union based on the reported Plan, the more so since I sense that its effects have thus far not been without blessings.

He was confident that the members of the congregation would eventually understand his actions. Later that same day he added: “It only hurts me that my undertakings in this work have not appeared any less than in the eyes of some in this congregation. God will judge what the cause for this may have been, when our secret thoughts and deliberations will be made public.”

The entry was intended for Westerlo to assess his role in the Plan of Union thus far. Even though his own congregation had not joined yet, he believed the Plan he supported was in accordance with the Canons of Dort: “Yet, my heart gives me the candor to state that I had the essential usefulness, good and welfare of this and other congregations in mind, their order and perseverance in accordance with the origin of our Church, in teachings and governance.”

3. Settling an argument in The Boght
Certain members of the congregation in The Boght (now Cohoes, NY) trying to formalize religious meetings outside the church in 1787, other members of that congregation asked Westerlo to forbid these. Based on the Canons, he decided the case, “respecting some articles to erect a meeting for religious exercises, which I was requested to examine whether agreeable with the canons and usages of our Churches, it being intimated to the members that I intended to forbid them to convene in that manner.”

First he said that this kneeling at prayers “was not unlawful if agreed to, and by no means to be looked upon as Popish, that Paul kneeled with his company even out of doors when parting from them etc.,” but later, after learning more about the meeting in question and sensing a lingering animosity, advising the

return to the former method of reading a sermon etc., and not to oblige any person to pray himself or to kneel down.” Having studied the rules, he told them he “could not approve 1) of the erecting of such a convention without the approving consent of the consistory; 2) neither of inserting the ceremony of kneeling, as an article of admission or even of a condition to be observed by everyone, 3) much less, of promiscuously speaking, everyone his sentiments on a question of the catechism, which, I humbly conceive, may produce more strife and endless disputes than edification and instruction, at least where there is no

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442 Westerlo was likely referring to conventicles.
443 Memoirs, December 18, 1787.
444 Accusations of Roman Catholic tendencies often led to arguments among the Dutch Reformed.
445 Again, this is likely a description of what took place in conventicles.
president or person appointed to superintend who is well acquainted with the truths, and therefore I have advised, first, to sing and pray and read the book of P. Van Driessen,\footnote{Probably Petrus Van Driessen’s Aanbiddelyke Wegen Gods in Zyne Souveraine Bestieringe, Besonder over de Machten deser Weereld, Verklaart en Toegepast in Drie Predicatien [God’s Adorable Ways in His Souvereign Control, Especially about the Powers of this World, Explained and Applied in Three Sermons], which was printed in New York in 1726. Van Driessen, a 1705 graduate of the University of Groningen, preceded Westerlo as minister in Albany, NY, from 1712 until his death in 1738. Westerlo did not report himself owning books by Petrus Van Driessen, and none have been found thus far.} which they have read, and then to repeat some answers most remarkable without speaking much of their own. Lastly, if possible, to return to the former way of keeping such an exercise which was approved and, I pray, will be further blessed.

4. Approval for the translation of one of his great-uncle’s books

On 27 March 1790, Westerlo wrote in his Memoirs that he was planning the translation of a work by his great-uncle Hermannus Reiniers (1683-1736), Gods Onfeilbare Waarheden Voorgesteld in eene Verklaringe over den Heidelbergschen Katechismus [God’s Infallible Truths Shown in an Explanation about the Heidelberg Catechism]. He was referring to the Church Orders of the National Synod of Dort, article 55, when he wrote: “But I must submit my purpose to other judgments, […].” He was going to submit his translation to the church authorities for approval. Undoubtedly he would do so to the newly created Classis or Synod in North America, and not to the Classis of Amsterdam.

Interesting to note here is that his Memoirs do not contain any mention of Westerlo seeking approval for the translation of Alberthoma’s Uittreksel van de Leere der Waarheid, which he had just finished and which by then had appeared in print. It is likely that the authority of John Henry Livingston, professor of theology since 1784 and an important figure in the Reformed Dutch Church in America, who had commissioned the work, meant that Westerlo did not need to seek the approval for the translation.

The Church Order of Dort as basis for the North American Reformed Church

This Church Order was not only an important document in Westerlo’s eyes. As soon as the North-American congregations first met, in October 1771, to form a union based on the Plan of Union sent by the Classis of Amsterdam, the 1619 Church Order was discussed, not only to state that the assembly adhered to it, but also to assess how it could be adapted to the North American situation.

The “Reverend Assembly of Ministers and Elders of the Reformed Low Dutch Churches in the Provinces of New York and New Jersey, convened in the city of
New York, on the 15, 16, 17, and 18th day of October, 1771 started its preliminaries by stating that they adhered “in all things, to the constitution of the Netherland [sic] Reformed Church, as the same was established in the church orders of the Synod of Dordrecht, in the years 1618 and 1619,” and it added its adoption of “the Church-Order, or rules of Ecclesiastical Government,” printed after the concluding articles of their assembly.

Corwin points out that the congregations in America had always been under these rules before, but that this was the moment for them to formally adopt them, “so far as they were applicable to their present circumstances.” As it was felt directly in the case of Hermanus Meijer when he was forced to pledge allegiance to the British monarch, a looming issue for the Dutch Reformed Church had been the loss of the Dutch Republic’s authority in North America in 1674. Now the Church formally solved the issue, almost one hundred years later.

Corwin translated these articles for the *Ecclesiastical Records* in the early twentieth century. Although one might understand from the October 5-8, 1790 minutes of the Synod of the Reformed Dutch Churches in North America that Romeyn and Westerlo translated these articles for the 1771 assembly, the Assembly itself dated the attached articles in May 28, 1619, and wrote they had been done in Dordrecht, apparently to show their origin and to suggest that they were the same.

The fact that this first convened assembly discussed and formally adopted the Church Order is significant because the understanding of the 1619 Church Order on the one hand, and the differences in the Church Orders of Coetus versus Conferentie on the other, had been important bones of contention, as Coetus minister Johannes Leydt showed Conferentie ministers on June 19, 1764, “citing and explaining various passages of Scripture, and thus to make the impression on everyone that our [the Conferentie’s – RN] Church Order was contrary to the Scriptures, and in conflict with English freedom.” The Conferentie ministers viewed this as “the pretended freedom of living under an English government,” and they explained what Leydt meant by the “English freedom”:

> as they [= the Coetus members, RN] say, being subjects of the King of Great Britain, it is not allowed them to acknowledge a foreign power, yet the civic oath is only political, and has reference merely to the supremacy of the Pope in the Church of England.

447 ER 4210.
448 ER 4212.
449 ER 4218.
450 ER 4218-4226.
451 ER 4355.
452 ER 3927. Ritzema and De Ronde end their letter to the Classis of Amsterdam with the words “in the name and by authority of the Rev. Assembly of Ministers and Elders, subordinate to the Rev. Classis of Amsterdam.”
453 ER 3929.
The articles as adopted by the Assembly in 1771 follow the 1619 original almost verbatim, the exception being the omission of almost all the running heads. The problem with the early seventeenth-century original became apparent to more and more congregations. Not only did the number of congregations holding services in English go up from one before the Revolution, namely New York City (Archibald Laidlie), to about half all the congregations soon after 1783, but close reading of the 1619 Church Order revealed that certain phrasings did not apply to the North-American circumstances.

Articles 18, 53, and 55 speak of “Professors of Theology,” but there were no Dutch Reformed professors in the area, and there would not be any until 1784. One might argue that the issue had been hotly debated since the mid-1760s, with discussions about possible professorships at the (Presbyterian) College of New Jersey (founded in 1746; now Princeton University), Queen’s College (chartered in 1766; Westerlo was one of the first trustees; now Rutgers University), and (Anglican) King’s College (chartered in 1754; now Columbia University).

The caution used in the early seventeenth century with regard to the Roman Catholic clergy in the Netherlands, under Article 9, when admitting “Mispriesters” (translated as “popish priests”) to the ministry of the Church must not have been warranted in 1771 New York and New Jersey, when no Roman Catholic houses of worship were reported to have existed in these provinces. Article 19, telling congregations to do their best to have theology students supported by public funds, does not seem to be too applicable in North America at the time, and the same holds for Articles 51 and 52, concerning the Walloon churches in the Netherlands. The Huguenot refugees founded their own churches in New York, which later seem to have assimilated with the Dutch Reformed.

As it stood in 1771, Article 70, the literal translation of the solemnization of marriage, about petitioning “the Higher Authorities at the earliest opportunity to make a general ordinance thereon” would suggest that this issue had not been resolved in the 147 years the Dutch Reformed Church had been active in the region.

It was felt in the years immediately following the War of Independence, but likely much earlier than that, that these Church Orders of the early seventeenth century needed to be adapted to the circumstances the North-American churches found themselves in on the verge of the nineteenth century.

The need for a new Church Order outside the Netherlands had been felt before. As early as 1646, “a certain Church Order” was “introduced in the East Indies” in

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454 ER 4085.
455 Bonomi 2009.
456 See Carlo 2005:74-78. The example of the church in New Paltz (in which Theodorus Frelinghuysen occasionally performed baptisms) and its (incomplete) records in Dutch, French, and English in the 1700s shows how confusing the situation of the Huguenot churches was.
1643, but the Classis of Amsterdam “deemed [it] injurious,” and even though the people in Batavia claimed it was a matter of necessity, the Classis of Amsterdam expressed “its confidence that they [would] abrogate that Church Order and maintain the right of the churches.” In America too, requests to modify the Church Orders were made prior to 1771. The above reference to Batavia, made by the Classis of Amsterdam when addressing the Synods of South and North Holland concerning the issue of the right of licensing and ordaining in the East Indies, was apparently used to decide whether it was applicable to America. The Batavian Consistory was established as an autonomous body in 1621, functioning much like a classis.

During its meeting of October 7-10, 1788, the Synod of the Reformed Dutch Churches in New York and New Jersey resolved to appoint a committee to translate into the English language the Articles of Church Government of the National Synod, held at Dordrecht, 1618 and 1619, which, being accompanied by such articles taken from the proceedings of this Rev. Body as have particular reference to the circumstances of the Church in this country, will exhibit the true nature and form of government of our Dutch churches in America. And it is further resolved, that the Rev. Committee endeavor to have this collection and translation in readiness to lay before this Rev. Synod at its next ordinary convening, in order that the same, with our standards, may as speedily as practicable, consistently with all prudence, be given to the public by the press. Messrs. John H. Livingston, Eil. Westerlo, Will. Linn, Herm. Meyer, D. Romeyn, Jac. R. Hardenbergh, Is. Rysdyk, and Peter Low, were appointed the committee.

Two of these eight members, Dirck Romeyn and Eilardus Westerlo, were charged with the actual translation of the Church Order in October 1788. Under the heading of “Church Order,” the Synod of the Reformed Dutch Churches in North America, meeting October 5-8, 1790, gave them credit for the translation:

The report of the Rev. Committee upon this subject was presented: That the distinct translations of the articles of Church Order of the Rev. Synod of Dordrecht in the years 1618 and 1619, and of the Plan of Union adopted 1772, both made in England [must be meant: in English – RN] by Drs. Dirck Romeyn and Eil. Westerlo, be referred to a committee, who shall carefully

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457 ER 3380.
458 ER 3377.
460 Corwin 1906:263.
461 See also Meeter 1993:38.
compare the same with the original Dutch, and alter and amend all such English words and phrases as either are not pure, or do not actually and appropriately express the true and literal meaning.\textsuperscript{462}

The committee to be appointed, “the Rev. Ministers of the congregation of New York,” for the sake of convenience, was going to be charged with more than proofreading the translated document. Their editing would include leaving out certain articles and explaining why:

that the same committee likewise prepare some observations upon the articles of Church Order, to be incorporated among them, in which the proper sense and meaning of them, if necessary, shall be briefly declared, or sufficient reasons be assigned why some articles are not inserted, or cannot be carried out in our American churches. […]

Subsequent synods would then revise the \textit{Plan of Union}, enlarge it, “by inserting or adding some further rules, […] approving \textit{synodaliter} the foresaid translation and observations.” A “General Ecclesiastical Meeting” will decide the issue of whether the amended \textit{Plan of Union} “shall be issued in full or in part, and in what language, or whether both in Dutch and English, for the special benefit of our congregations.”\textsuperscript{464}

The work on the Church Order had not been finished at the time of Eilardus Westerlo’s death, in December 1790. During its October 4-8, 1791 meeting, John Henry Livingston reported to the General Convention of Reformed Dutch Churches in North America that “he had adapted, as was deemed necessary, the English translation of the rules for the regulation of Dutch churches ordained in the Synod of Dort, to local and other circumstances, and now presented it for approval at the table of the Rev. Body.”\textsuperscript{465} After its article-by-article revision, the General Convention decided to appoint yet another committee to revise the articles once more.

As it had been felt by many, dating back to before 1771, that the 1619 Church Order was not adequate for the Reformed Dutch Church in America: in May 1792, the committee reported it deemed it necessary to let the translated articles of the 1619 Church Order be accompanied by so-called \textit{Explanatory Articles}, so that “the people in general may be able to form a correct conception of our mode of Church Government.”\textsuperscript{466} Given the fact that these 73 \textit{Explanatory Articles} were

\textsuperscript{462} ER 4355.
\textsuperscript{463} The committee was composed of John Henry Livingston, William Linn, Gerardus Kuypers, and three elders [ER 4363].
\textsuperscript{464} ER 4355-56.
\textsuperscript{465} ER 4363.
\textsuperscript{466} ER 4363-64.
ready for approval barely five months after they were first mentioned, it is very likely that they had been debated in some form or other since 1771, also by Westerlo.

The translation and explanatory articles were presented at and adopted by the General Convention of October 2-6, 1792. Under the care of Livingston, his colleague William Linn, and Elder Peter Wilson, the text was published in 1793, in a book entitled *The Constitution of the Reformed Dutch Church, in the United States of America*, and it contained, among other documents, the exact translation of the text attached to the October 1771 proceedings, including the May 28, 1619 signatures and location, Dordrecht.

The *Explanatory Articles* that conclude the 1793 book seem purposely dated back to October 1771, perhaps to indicate that in spirit they were part of the adoption of the 1619 Church Order then, and the three persons having signed those minutes, are given on page 298 to explain that the “Articles of Union founded upon this adoption [of the Church Order of 1619 – RN], and expressing in general terms what is specified and more particularly applied to the local circumstances of the churches, in the following explanatory articles, were ratified and established on the 18th day of October, 1771, and were signed, John H. Livingston, Praeses, and Eilardus Westerlo, Scriba.”

The *Explanatory Articles*, officially prepared by a committee of six, Reverends John Henry Livingston, William Linn, Gerardus Kuypers, and their respective elders, but attributed to John H. Livingston, were intended to ensure that the translated Church Orders of the Reformed Dutch Church in America, which, just as the 1619 Church Orders were immediately “explained and more fully applied to […] local circumstances” in certain acts known as the *Post Acta Synodi Nationalis*, would be understood as to “in what manner the said rules are executed, consistent with the local circumstances of said church.” They stated that the churches in North America had also always applied the Church Orders to their local circumstances.

Of the 352 pages of the 1793 *Constitution of the Reformed Dutch Church, in the United States of America* over 50 pages are dedicated to the *Explanatory Articles*,

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467 John Henry Livingston reported that “he had completed the work entrusted to him at the last extra Synod on Church Order, and brought to the table a draft of explanatory Articles for Synodical approval” [ER 4365]. No mention of his committee members, let alone of any discussion having occurred prior to October 1790.

468 Licensed by the Presbytery of Donegal (Carlisle) in 1775; minister of the Collegiate Church in NYC, 1787-1805; president of Queen’s College, 1791-94.

469 Son of University of Groningen graduate Warmoldus; licensed by the General Synod in 1787; minister of the Collegiate Church in New York City, 1789-1833.

470 Meeter points out that a similar situation occurred in Dordrecht in 1619: the years preceding the Synod of Dort, there was a movement in favor of rewriting the Belgic Confession, but the Synod decided, instead of altering the document, to add the Canon, in order to ensure the correct interpretation of the Belgic Confession, the catechism, and the Scriptures [Meeter 1993: 179].

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compared to about 40 pages of the articles of the original Church Order, now translated into English.\footnote{Corwin 1906: viii-lxxxvi.} In his \textit{A Digest of Constitutional and Synodical Legislation of the Reformed Church in America}, Corwin compares the rules of the 1619 Church Order and the Explanatory Articles.\footnote{Corwin 1906: v.} The intended purpose of the Explanatory Articles is given in the “Preface to the Entire Constitution, Embracing Doctrines, Liturgy, and Government, 1792”:

> Her Government and Discipline are contained in the Rules of Church Government, ratified in the last National Synod, held at Dordrecht. These are illustrated in the Explanatory Articles, and applied to the circumstances and local situation of the Church. As many of the articles in the rules are sufficiently plain and applicable without any elucidation, such only are mentioned in the Explanatory Articles which were judged most necessary to give a connected and just view of the government of the Church as now established in America.\footnote{Corwin 1906:v. Note that “Dutch” is omitted in the name “Reformed Church in America” here, resulting in the name the church adopted in 1867.}

Corwin’s juxtaposed layout, covering 78 pages, shows that indeed not all the 1619 articles receive an explanation, and that some are given more text in explanation than their original article. Possibly more interesting is that some of the explanatory articles are not an explanation at all, but an addition to the 1619 articles, made visible by the blank left-hand-side pages of the 1619 Articles.

One such addition is Article 50:

> The Particular Synods shall continue to exchange every year a copy of their Acts with the Synod of North-Holland, and express in their letters the desire of the Reformed Church in America, to preserve a connection and cultivate a correspondence, which they highly esteem and have found to be beneficial.

The North American Particular Synod now being parallel to the Synod of North Holland, one could consider this article an application of Article 48 of the Church Order of Dort:\footnote{Meeter 1993: 130.}

> Each [Particular] Synod shall have the liberty to request and to hold correspondence with its neighboring [Particular] Synod or Synods, in such manner as shall be deemed most profitable for general edification.
The 1618/19 Synod of Dort could not have felt the need for such a text, since the Dutch Reformed Church had no representation outside the Low Countries until 1626. However, it is important to note that the Classis of Amsterdam appears not to have received information from the churches in New York and New Jersey after 1792. In October 1793, the Synod of North Holland noted, in its acts under article 43, New York and New Jersey, that it was “longing for information, and hoping to hear good things from those churches.”

After similar complaints in 1794 and 1795, the Synod of North Holland said during its July 1796 session that again no report had been received from New York and New Jersey, and that they might “drop the Article [43: New York and New Jersey – RN] from the Acts.”

In North America, the Synod was similarly dissatisfied with the lack of correspondence from Amsterdam. In June 1797 the minutes of the last Particular Synod show that “[…] the Deputies of Synod had prepared and forwarded a letter to the Classis of Amsterdam, but had as yet received no answer.” In October of the same year, the Deputati report that there is still no response from Holland, and in 1799 nothing had changed. Some mail may have been lost, but Explanatory Article 50 did not result in an annual exchange of minutes of their meetings.

“All are one in Christ”

The committee including Eilardus Westerlo that debated the Explanatory Articles included another observation, about slavery, added as Article 59:

In the Church there is no difference between bond and free, but all are one in Christ. Whenever therefore, slaves or black people shall be baptized or become members in full communion of the Church, they shall be admitted to equal privileges with all other members of the same standing, and their infant children shall be entitled to baptism and in every respect be treated with the same attention that the children of white or free parents are in the Church. Any minister, who upon any pretence, shall refuse to admit slaves or their children, to the privileges to which they are entitled, shall upon complaint being exhibited and proved, be severely reprimanded by the Classis to which he belongs.

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475 ER 4366. Meeter concludes from the fact that no regular exchange of Acts ever took place is proof that “the North American Synod had become a completely independent church” [Meeter 1993:130].
476 ER 4373.
477 ER 4376-77.
478 The situation must have been chaotic at times, during the Batavian Revolution.
With phrases such as “equal privileges,” “the same standing,” and “treated with the same attention,” Meeter calls this article “a notable benchmark.” Although he adds that the reality for “colored people” in the North American Reformed churches did not reflect the text of the article (they were not included in membership statistics until 1819, and many congregations still seated “colored members” in the back of the galleries until much later), the significance lies in it being introduced at all at this point in time.

Why was it included in the *Explanatory Articles*? It looks like there was an expectation that some ministers might refuse to admit “slaves or their children,” and that is an indication that there was or had been an issue of the kind. No eighteenth-century documents have been preserved that even hint at that, however. Another factor might be that other denominations were more accepting of or in general more positive towards African Americans, but, apart from perhaps the Methodists, who allowed “black lay exhorters,” most literature indicates that the Dutch Reformed was no worse than that of other American religious denominations during the colonial period.

Colonial slavery is still a chapter of American (or world) history of which large sections are yet to be written. Especially the texts on this particular aspect of New York’s history are largely based on very few documents, some of which were first mentioned in the *Ecclesiastical Records, State of New York* in the early twentieth century, and subsequently repeated or quoted throughout the twentieth century. Even the New-York Historical Society’s 2005-2006 exhibition *Slavery in New York* and its publication by the same name, although they claim that slavery played a much more important role in New York than is generally known, are not abundant in new facts to support this.

It was the Dutch West India Company that introduced slavery in New York, as early as 1626, and by the middle of the eighteenth century slaves constituted around 15 percent of the population of New York. During the seventeenth and eighteenth centuries, New York City had the largest urban slave population of North America, and it was not until the Gradual Emancipation Law of 1799 that

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479 Meeter 1993: 135. He adds that it also served to help them stave off some of the problems the South African branch would later have with apartheid, since it lacked this article.
480 Harris 2003: 52. This was seen as reinforcement of the Methodists’ statements about the religious equality of blacks and whites.
481 De Jong 1971: 434-435. Even among Quakers the anti-slavery movement was not widespread until the 1750s.
482 There are approximately twenty instances of slaves being mentioned in ER, but none regarding Westerlo directly.
483 De Jong 1971:423.
the New York Legislature set in motion a slow process of abolishing slavery, which was finally achieved towards the middle of the nineteenth century.

The Dutch Reformed Church encouraged blacks to come to the church in the early period of New Amsterdam, celebrating their marriages and baptizing their children. Although it is claimed that the Dutch Reformed clergy in North America in the eighteenth century took its cues concerning slavery from Jacobus Elisa Joannes Capitein’s *Dissertatio Politico-Theologica de Servitute, Libertati Christianae non Contraria*, published in Leiden in 1742. In it, Capitein defended slavery. An interesting detail is that Capitein himself was a man of color, born in Africa, and that his dissertation was presided over by Professor Joan Van den Honert, an influential Cocceian, who held positive feelings towards Voetians.

Towards the end of the New Netherland period, when it was felt that the slave population sought after baptisms ‘only’ in hopes of their children being set free, the clergy refused to comply: Brooklyn minister Henricus Selijns reported to the Classis of Amsterdam in 1664 that “[the Negros] lack[ed] knowledge and faith, and [their aims were] worldly and perverse, [wanting] nothing else than to deliver their children from bodily slavery, without striving for piety and Christian values.”

From early on in New Netherland, slaves had been granted certain rights (although never as many as the white population), even (religious) teaching was offered by some, and some were set free. When the English took over in New Netherland, the legal status and everyday situation of the slaves did not improve. British courts ruled that blacks could be held as slaves until they became Christians, but these courts’ rules did not always apply in the colonies.

The War of Independence was a time for many African Americans to gain their freedom: the British promised slaves their freedom in exchange for military service, and as a result of the British fighting battles across New Jersey and New

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485 Westerlo’s stepson Stephen Van Rensselaer III was Lieutenant Governor under Governor John Jay when this law was signed. Dutch lawmakers “from Long Island and elsewhere” fought the law [Burrows 1999: 349].
486 “By the census of 1830, only seventy-five slaves remained in New York State. […] The next census, of 1840, would list no slaves in the city.” [Berlin 2005:144].
487 Many Dutch families themselves did not think it important for their servants to attend. See Goodfriend 1992: 257 n103. See also Frijhoff 1995: 772.
488 Some hint at the possible link between what Capitein wrote and the attitude towards slavery in North America [De Jong 1971 and 1978]; others, such as L. M. Harris, plainly say that “the Dutch Reformed Church used the 1742 University of Leiden dissertation of Afro-Dutch theologian Jacobus Eliza Capetein [sic] to guard against the egalitarian effects of the Great Awakening” [Harris 2003: 51].
489 ER 548. He added that “not to administer baptism among them for the reasons given, is also custom among our colleagues.”
491 See Frijhoff 1995: 765-779 for more on African Americans and slavery in New Netherland.
492 See McManus 1966: 71-73.
York, slaveholders there lost their rights of ownership. Thousands of slaves left their owners, most often fleeing to British occupied New York City, which became a haven for these fugitives. Schama calls this mass flight and its implications “a formative moment in the history of African-American freedom.” Known as the Black Loyalists, these former slaves were to be returned to their owners after the British defeat, in accordance with the Treaty of Paris. The British refused to hand them over, however, and about 3,000 Black Loyalists left New York City with the British in 1783.

Relatively few issues were reported in the Dutch Reformed churches in New Jersey and New York concerning their African American members in the time during and immediately after the Revolution. Yet, although far greater than before the War, black membership in the Dutch Reformed Church was relatively small when compared to the number of African Americans owned by the Dutch. The Constitution of the State of New York, which was adopted on April 20, 1777, contains a provision on “the free exercise and enjoyment of religious profession and worship without discrimination,” but in it the issue of slavery is not addressed.

**Westerlo’s attitude towards slavery**

Westerlo had slaves in his household. This was not unusual for eighteenth-century households in New York. Goodfriend estimates the percentage of households with slaves there in 1703 at close to fifty percent. This was the normal situation, also among Dutch Reformed ministers.

How did Westerlo treat his own servants, and how did he deal with the topic of slavery in general? Disappointingly, the topic does not come up in any of his surviving correspondence, and Westerlo only mentions slavery in general, or his servants in particular, a very few times. The image of Westerlo that emerges is one of a caring person.

The words Westerlo used to refer to his servants are “handmaid,” “(Negro) maid,” “maid servant,” “servant girl,” “servant maid,” “house servants,” and “others living in my house.” Apart from sicknesses, the only reason for mentioning his servants was to include them in his prayers. The one time he

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493 See Berlin 2005: 96.
495 Hodges 1998: 52. Hodges attributes this fact to the difference between “rural Pietists” on the one hand, and “urban paternalists” on the other, with the latter being the group of “new liberalism.”
496 ER 4301.
497 Goodfriend 1992:76.
498 A servant was not necessarily black: some had come over from Europe as so-called indentured servants, hoping to some day be free members of society.
499 This is actually my translation of the Dutch “huisgenoten,” which would literally mean “housemates; people with whom he shared his house,” but it is clear that he was referring to his servants here.
referred to a servant as a “Negro wench” was when Leonard Gansevoort Jr.’s servant had found a letter that appeared threatening to Westerlo, which Gansevoort’s daughter then passed on to Westerlo’s son in school.

Once, on February 25, 1784, he mentioned a servant by name, when he had lost her due to the extremely cold weather:500 “Blessed be the Lord for preserving and restoring mercies. For though I have lost my maid servant Susan, other lives are graciously spared.” The cold had also prevented him from “prosecuting his annotations,” that is, writing his Memoirs.

An interesting case developed in September 1787. A female member of the congregation came to see Westerlo, who thought the case “may probably be of some consequence, and therefore I would commit the whole to writing as far as I remember.” She wanted a certificate of good standing for the Presbyterian Church, which she desired to join at her husband’s request. After his refusal Westerlo ran into the woman’s husband, who “was exceedingly bigoted and self-conceited, and also not a little censorious, on our Church discipline and government.” After exchanging some accusations of swearing and cursing, members of the Dutch Reformed congregation on the one hand, and of a drunken member of the Presbyterian congregation on the other, and having spoken with some other Presbyterian representatives, Westerlo concluded that he “may expect more trouble from that quarter, but [he] believe[s] that it is [his] duty to keep and preserve the members of [his] own charge, and without a sufficient cause give [them] no dismission.” Three days later he was not certain he had done the right thing: “I am anxious on account of my conduct the week past, but the Lord be pleased to forgive my imprudences, and give another spirit of mind to mortify every member of sin, and to quench every spark of wild fire.”

In a post scriptum on September 11, Westerlo turned his attention again to the woman and her husband, who has been busy with his wife, for some time past, to force her from our Church, and therefore I have reason to believe my suspicion was well founded, and of consequence my whole conduct consistent with the Word of God and His hidden providence.

Westerlo realized the woman was probably a lost cause since the woman by all reports seemed to have had some awakening through means of H. Fero’s501 mentioning that there were black

500 Henry Knox (1750-1806), senior officer of the Continental Army, whom the Continental Congress made Secretary of War in 1785, wrote from Boston to George Washington in Mount Vernon, on February 21, 1784: “We have little or no politics; all commerce frozen up by the uncommon severity of the season” [Sparks 1853: 58].
501 In East Greenbush, across the river.
people at the Table of the Lord when she was not still received as a member, and she appears still a seeking soul, but much harassed by the husband about her belonging to our communion.

Westerlo blamed the crisis on the husband’s insincerity or on his ignorance of the Dutch Reformed Church principles because otherwise “no doubt he would prefer his wife’s choice and edification before his own narrow notions and views.” It is clear that “black people” are mentioned here as inferior: the woman was still not received at the Table of the Lord whereas they had been.

In March 1788 Westerlo reported, matter-of-factly, that Dominee John Bassett baptized a servant, with hopes that many other servants might join the Church as well: “My worthy colleague assisted me in receiving others, and also baptized a servant maid, whose mother seems to be upright and diligent in attending the means and doing her work. May many more be piked and added to the Church, and me rejoice in their good conversation in Christ.” He seemed truly in favor of welcoming the African-American population into the Dutch Reformed Church.

Conclusion

The Church Order of the Synod of Dort, 1618/1619, has basically survived for close to four hundred years in the Reformed Church in America. When there was an opportunity to rewrite, abolish, or adapt it, in the second half of the eighteenth century, Eilardus Westerlo was among those helping to preserve it, by adding an explanation to ensure its intent was understood in the newly formed nation.

The addition to the Explanatory Articles of an article about the equality of everyone in the church, specifically mentioning blacks and slaves, was done by a committee of which Westerlo was a member until his death. It is plausible that he had a say in this addition, and in the wording of the article. His attitude towards the African Americans in Albany can therefore be called moderately positive.
6. Evidences of Westerlo’s religious creed

Introduction

Since the only printed work that bears Eilardus Westerlo’s name is a translation of a catechetical book that appeared in 1790, the last year of his life, claims about Westerlo’s belief system is largely based on his unpublished writings: his unedited Memoirs, his letters, and, to a lesser extent, his work as the scribe of the Albany consistory. In addition to the translation, a theory will be laid out of a possible relationship with his predecessor’s father, Theodorus Jacobus Frelinghuysen, and his family.

Alberthoma’s Uittreksel van de Leere der Waarheid

As a translator, Westerlo was bound by the text that needed to be translated. Yet, a few conclusions can be drawn concerning Westerlo’s beliefs from his translation of Robertus Alberthoma’s catechetical book, Uittreksel van de Leere der Waarheid die naar de Godzaligheid is: Zynde een Vervolg op de Eerste Waarheden van de Genadeleere [Extract of the Doctrine of Truth in Accordance with Godliness, a Supplement to the First Truths of the Doctrine of Grace]. The fact that he chose this work, the title he gave the translation, and the actual translation itself yield insight into Westerlo’s ideology.

Westerlo knew Robertus Alberthoma (1690-1772), both as a minister in Groningen when Westerlo was a student there, in particular as the Deputatus Synodi at Westerlo’s ordination in 1760, and as an author. In 1774, Westerlo referred to “the teachings of the truth by means of Alberthoma’s Catechism booklets,” without mentioning the title, Uittreksel van de Leere der Waarheid.

One of the reasons Westerlo chose a catechism book to translate is that there must have been an increasing demand for an English-language booklet intended for children. The Church was using a Dutch book, Theodorus Frelinghuysen’s Ieugd-Oeffening of Verhandeling van de Godlyke Waarheden, der Christelyke Religie [Exercise for Youngsters, or Discourse on the Divine Truths of the Christian Religion], published in 1749 and 1752, before Westerlo’s arrival in 1760. The members of the Albany congregation must have expressed the need for a catechism book in English throughout the 1780s. Westerlo himself, having switched to English for his Memoirs and for some of his sermons, was also acutely aware of the need to have more material available in English, especially for the younger generation.

502 Alberthoma was also the father-in-law of Paulus Chevvallier, one of Westerlo’s professors.
503 Memoirs, December 22, 1774.
504 The 1789 copy from the American Antiquarian Society in Worcester, MA, was owned by Catherine Schuyler Van Rensselaer, one of Westerlo’s granddaughters, who passed away at age twelve.
505 See below on Frelinghuysen and his Ieugd-Oeffening.
For obvious reasons, which are explained below, Westerlo decided not to translate his predecessor’s work, although suitable to be used in Albany, but why did he not adopt the book that had been in use, in translation, for over thirty years in New York City, Hellenbroek’s *Specimen of Divine Truths*? He certainly knew of its existence, it was very popular in the Netherlands, and Westerlo owned two other books by Hellenbroek (1658-1731). Hellenbroek was popular among traditionalist Reformed in the Netherlands, and generally with Calvinist Pietists in the eighteenth and nineteenth centuries.

The introduction of *Specimen* was somewhat controversial in New York. When Archibald Laidlie arrived in New York City in 1764, Lambertus De Ronde had just introduced his own English-language catechism book, *A System: Containing The Principles of the Christian Religion, Suitable to the Heidelberg Catechism […],* having just learned English, “a language against which I had had an antipathy for twelve or thirteen years.”

Much to De Ronde’s dismay, Laidlie submitted Hellenbroek’s *Specimen of Divine Truths, Fitted for the Use of Those, of Various Capacities, who Desire to Prepare Themselves for a Due Confession of Their Faith*, a translation by layman Petrus Lowe, for approval to the consistory of New York City. De Ronde reported that it was “the intention that the young people should be catechized from it.” Eventually, New York and other congregations adopted it, and it was reprinted into the twentieth century.

In addition to Westerlo’s possible rejection of Hellenbroek’s *Specimen* as being old school, he may also have preferred Alberthoma’s *Uittreksel* because it confirmed Westerlo’s understanding about the divine truths, and because he had “interpreted [it] every week, and also during our mutual gatherings at some houses in the congregation.” Although Westerlo did not include *Uittreksel* in his list of books of 1771, his frequent usage of and professed admiration for Alberthoma’s book shows that he was very familiar with it, and his goal of edifying the young

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506 The Reverend Classis of New Brunswick had adopted *Specimen* on June 18, 1783, “by reason of the increase of the English Language in the congregations under their care […]” [preface of the copy of 1789 edition, published by Abraham Blauvelt]. Westerlo’s publishers, Charles R. and George Webster, also published the Hellenbroek translation, in 1803, two years before the second edition of Westerlo’s translation of Alberthoma’s *Uittreksel*.


508 Steenbergen 2010:14. Politically his *Specimen* was also less popular with the more liberal Dutch *Patriotten* toward the end of the eighteenth century [Steenbergen 2010:14 n33].


510 ER 4007, Lambertus De Ronde in a September 1765 letter to Johannes Kalkoen (1709-1778), minister in Amsterdam, who had written to New York in his capacity of Deputatus ad Res Exteras in June 1765.

511 The original, *Voorbeeld der Godlyke Waarheden voor Eenvoudigen die Zig Bereyden tot de Beleydenisse des Geloofs* (1706), was very popular on both sides of the Atlantic [see Goodfriend 2003:159-160].

512 ER 4007.

members of his congregation shines through in his desire expressed toward the finishing of his translation: “Oh, may my poor labors in translating Alberthoma’s *Catechism* also be followed by His blessings upon the rising generation.”\textsuperscript{514}

Another reason is that Westerlo had promised his brother-in-law and colleague, John Henry Livingston, that he would write about the catechism:

I remember in my last sickness, I was led to promise to endeavor to publish an analysis on the catechism, as my brother Dr. Livingston has requested of me. I have, in a letter, promised to begin with this important work, and now I would pray the Father of mercies, if this purpose be of the Lord, to restore and strengthen me and my brother jointly, to finish this business for the edification of His Church.\textsuperscript{515}

Westerlo must have been referring here to a letter he received from John Henry Livingston dated July 14, 1788, in which the latter clarified his request:

What I meant respecting the Heidelberg Catechism is this. I mean to draw out an analysis of three or four sermons upon each section to assist our young divines, and I wish you would favor me with one analysis upon every section. Taken from your own sermons, you may make them short, but let them be complete in all their subdivisions. I shall consider such a present as a great favor from you and shall insert your plan of sermonizing on the Catechism among my other forms. – I shall hope you will not view what I request as too much trouble. It is good to have something as a task upon our hands – if you please to write it in English it will be the same to you and will greatly ease me in the business – pray draw out one or two and send them down as the first fruits of the volume.

This also makes it doubtful that Livingston suggested, at least at this point in time, that Westerlo translate any particular work on the catechism. Instead, Livingston was hoping for an analysis based on Westerlo’s own sermons. Hellenbroek’s *Specimen* was not a book Westerlo had used, contrary to Alberthoma’s *Uittreksel*.

Without any mention of the title or the author of the work, or of any translation at all, we can only assume that Westerlo himself decided to translate Alberthoma’s *Uittreksel van de Leere der Waarheid* to fulfill his promise to Livingston of writing about the catechism in English. It is around this time that Westerlo was working on the translation. On January 9, 1788, he asked God to “grant life and strength to finish the translation of the catechism book, and prosper [his] endeavors for the rising youth now.” In December of that same year he implored

\textsuperscript{514} Memoirs, March 28, 1789.
\textsuperscript{515} Memoirs, August 21, 1788.
God to “give [him] life, health, and strength to finish the translation of Alberthoma […]”

_Uittreksel van de Leere der Waarheid die naar de Godzaligheid is_ appeared under the title *The Principles of the Christian Religion, as Taught in the Reformed Protestant Dutch Churches*. The differences between the title of the original and its translation warrant two observations.

Although at first glance the title of the translation does not seem to cover the meaning of the original, the phrase “Leere der Waarheid die naar de Godzaligheid is,” it was typically used in the Netherlands for catechetical books in the seventeenth and eighteenth centuries. For example, Johannes D’Outrein’s *Gouden Kleinoot van de Leere der Waarheid die naar de Godsaligheid is, Vervattet in den Heidelbergschen Catechismus […]* [*The Golden Treasure of True Doctrine […]*], annotated by Friedrich Adolf Lampe in 1724, was such a book, and it was published at least nine times between 1719 and 1770.

_Uittreksel [Extract] kort begrip [synopsis], korte schets [brief outline], kern [essence], and voorbeeld [specimen]_ are all examples of words used in the title of catechetical books intended for children up to twelve years of age. These booklets typically consisted of a question-and-answer method to introduce the Bible through the Heidelberg Catechism, without much of an explanation. The authors generally stuck to the Bible texts. Alberthoma’s _Uittreksel_ fits this description.

The second observation is that Westerlo knew that in English the title of catechetical books such as Alberthoma’s book often contained the words “the principles of the Christian religion,” with or without “catechism.” In fact, by 1789 over one hundred titles had been published with those words in the title in Britain and America. Particularly noteworthy here is that Isaac Watts’s (1674-1748) *Catechism, or the Principles of Christian Religion* were published in 1730. Westerlo was very familiar with his works through the translations and introductions by Daniel Gerdes.

Westerlo’s translation of Alberthoma’s _Uittreksel van de Leere der Waarheid_ appears to be a faithful rendition of the original. Westerlo knew that the intended audience was young children. His (incomplete) notes that are found in the archives today show that the exact text as he wrote it down ended up in print. It is

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516 Memoirs, December 9, 1788.
517 After Luther, _kleine catechismus [small catechism]_ was also used. Henricus Alutarius named his catechism book *Melck-spijse der Kinderen Godes [Milk Food for the Children of God]* in 1621, and in 1721 Friedrich Adolf Lampe’s *Milch der Wahrheit/Melk der Waarheid [Milk of the Truth]* appeared.
518 Jan Stronks, in a personal e-mail, September 22, 2009.
519 Although Gerdes did not fully approve of Watts’s theology [Witteveen 1963:48].
520 Of this _Uittreksel_ only very few copies can be found today, in spite of at least eight printings. These books were not printed to be on the bookshelves, but instead to be used weekly by children younger than 12.
very well possible that Westerlo did not record this booklet among the books he owned, since Alberthoma’s original was also intended for young children.

What follows is a comparison of Chapter XXI, *Van de Wedergeboorte* [On Regeneration], and its translation, also because this topic held Westerlo’s particular interest. This will illustrate how Westerlo’s translation compares to its original.\(^{521}\)

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<table>
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<tbody>
<tr>
<td>1. vr. Welke is de naaste uitwerking van de krachtige Roeping?</td>
<td>1. Q. Which is the first <em>fruit</em> of effectual calling?</td>
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<tr>
<td>2. vr. Hoe word deze Levendigmaking anders genoemd?</td>
<td>2. Q. How is this quickening otherwise called?</td>
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<tr>
<td>ant. Eene nieuwe schepping, een verplanting, Ps. 1:3, maar meest ene Wedergeboorte: uit Joh. 3:3/5: Voorwaar, voorwaar zegge ik u: Zo iemand niet geboren word uit water en Geest: hy kan in Gods koningryk niet ingaan.</td>
<td>A. A <em>new creation</em>, a <em>transplanting</em>, Ps. i, 3, but most of all <em>regeneration</em>, from John iii. 3-5, <em>verily, verily, I say unto thee</em>, except <em>a man be born again of water, and of the Spirit, he cannot enter into the kingdom of God</em>.</td>
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<tr>
<td>3. vr. Waarom word dit Genade-good een Wedergeboorte genoemd?</td>
<td>3. Q. Why is this benefit of grace called <em>regeneration</em>?</td>
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<tr>
<td>ant. Dewyl een mensch wederom moet geboren worden, Joh. 3:7.</td>
<td>A. Because a man must be <em>born again</em>, John iii. 7.</td>
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<tr>
<td>4. vr. Wat is de Wedergeboorte?</td>
<td>4. Q. What is regeneration?</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>ant. De Wedergeboorte is ene krachtige en gantsche verandering en vernieuwing des menschen waar door hy uit de dood overgaat in het leven. Matt. 18:3. <em>Indien gy u niet verandert, en word gelyk de Kinderkens, zo zult gy in het Koningryk der Hemelen geensins ingaan</em>. Tit 3:5.</td>
<td>A. <em>Regeneration is</em> a powerful and total changing of man, whereby he passeth from death unto life, Matt. xviii, 3, <em>except ye be converted and become as little children, ye shall not enter into the kingdom of heaven</em>, Tit. iii. 5.</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>5. vr. Is alle verandering genoegzaam?</td>
<td>5. Q. Is <em>every</em> change sufficient?</td>
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\(^{521}\) The second edition of Westerlo’s translation, published in 1805, after Westerlo’s death, is identical to the first edition, apart from obvious errors.

6. vr. Welke zijn dan de eigenschappen van deze wedergeboorte?
   ant. ’t Is ene krachtige, ene geheele en ene schielijke verandering.  
7. vr. Waarom ene krachtige verandering?
   ant. Om dat zy door de Almogende kracht des H. Geestes begonnen en uitgevoert word; want zy word genoemt ene schepping, levendigmaking, en opwekking. 2 Cor. 5:17.

8. vr. Waarom is zy ene geheele verandering?
   ant. Om dat alles wat in en aan den mensche is vernieuwt word.

   ant. Zyn verstand word verlicht: zyne wille geheiligd, zyne hertstogen in ordre gebracht, de leden des lichchaams tot wapenen der geregtigheid gestelt, en de wandel gereinigt.

10. vr. Word hy dan aanstonds volmaakt?
    ant. De verandering is wel geheel door den gantschen mensche, maar ’er blyven nog vele verdorvenheden in ziel en lichchaam over waar uit de stryd tusschen geest en vleesch ontstaat.

11. vr. Geschied zulk ene veranderinge schielijk?
    ant. De overgang van de doot tot het leven geschied in een ogenblik: en daar is geen middelstaat tussen den staat der nature en der genade.

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A. No, there are *hypocritical* changes, and *forced* conversions, Jer. ii, 10, 1 Kings xxi, 29,\(^{522}\) Psalm lxxviii, 34-37.

6. Q. Which are then the properties of this regeneration?
   A. It is a *powerful*, an *entire* and a *sudden* change.

7. Q. Why called a powerful change?
   A. Because it is begun and effected by the almighty *power* of the Holy Spirit; therefore it is called a creating, quickening and raising of sinners, 2 Cor. v, 17.

8. Q. Why a *total* change?
   A. Because the *whole* man is renewed.

9. Q. Shew this in some *particulars*?
   A. His *understanding* is enlightened, his will sanctified, his *affections* regulated; *the members of the body* made instruments of righteousness, and the *conversation* holy.

10. Q. Is a regenerated person instantly *perfect*?
    A. The change is indeed throughout the *whole man*, but many corruptions do yet remain in soul and body; whence the warfare between the spirit and the flesh proceeds.

11. Q. Doth such a change happen *suddenly*?
    A. The *passing* from death unto life is in *a moment*, and there is no middle state between the state of nature and of grace.

\(^{522}\) The English translation, both in its first and second edition, has “Numb. 21:29,” but judging by the corresponding Bible texts of both Numbers 21:29 and 1 Kings 21:29, this must be an error in the translation.
12. Q. Which are the first effects of regeneration?
   A. Spiritual life begins commonly to discover itself,
      1. In a sincere mourning and sorrow for sin, Jer. xxxi, 9.
      2. In a desire of the milk of the gospel, 1 Pet. ii, 2.
      4. In an affectionate heart for the glory of God, Mal. i, 6.
      5. In love towards the spiritual brethren, 1 John iii, 14,
         "We know that we have passed from death unto life, because we love the brethren."

The translation itself, following the Dutch original so closely, does not lend itself to insightful conclusions to be drawn about Westerlo’s religious convictions. The fact that he chose this book to translate, and this author, however, does allow us some insight.

The Memoirs

Westerlo used his Memoirs to write down his thoughts, but they were also a reflection of events that occurred to him. Often towards the end of the year, or at the beginning of a new year, he would re-read the entries from the past few months of his diary, generally to conclude that he had been blessed. Given his health issues, the loss of his daughter, and other setbacks Westerlo was confronted with, it is unclear whether Westerlo was simply an incorrigible optimist or that his feelings about being blessed should be attributed to the religious rhetoric he displayed in his writings.

In the first preserved section of his Memoirs, in which Westerlo set out to describe his years in the Netherlands, looking back on them in January 1770, he provided a clear purpose for his writings:

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523 At the beginning of the second section, written down in December 1774, Westerlo makes a point of saying that the first section was the result of what he “had been pondering at the end of 1769 and what [he] had written down shortly thereafter.”
I would like to commemorate the Lord’s extraordinary benefactions and mercy, by putting [them] down by means of pen and ink on these pages, neatly and for my better practice, should it please the God of my life and grace to form me yet more and more through it to His praise.

Westerlo, again looking back, this time on the five years that had passed, in the second section, dated December 22, 1774, “decided to add some events concerning the work of [his] service, so that both these memoirs of God’s ways with [him], the lowest of His servants, may serve for [himself] or others to praise the bliss of the Lord’s merciful and steadfast help.”

He appreciated what he learned from his more experienced colleagues, and it is in this light that one should view his statement that “both in the continuous search for the truth as it is in Jesus, and through the common association in edifying contact with older disciples, both here and elsewhere, [he] was then increasingly convinced by and initiated in the findings of the Saints.” He sought “the precious Word of the Lord in [his] silent loneliness, following earlier pleas for light and wisdom from on High, especially to acquire a profound understanding of its exalted and spiritual contents.” To this end, he read the New Testament in its original (Greek) text, with the help of several explanatory texts.

The purpose of his Memoirs was twofold: on the one hand, Westerlo wanted to preserve the instances of “the Lord’s benefactions and mercy,” and, more in general, of “God’s ways” with him. On the other hand, he was hopeful that his Memoirs would serve to edify his colleagues and to let his children know how well God had treated him and his family. He stated his reasons for continuing in English, on May 22, 1782:

I now also begin to remember in this diary [in English] his loving kindness towards me, conscious, that perhaps my own children will be best able to understand my notes and render thanks to our God for the innumerable mercies they have received in their youth and infancy.

Westerlo’s goal of edifying colleagues through his Memoirs was never realized. As with his will (see Appendix 4), it seems his Memoirs were not read by anyone, possibly not even his children, until Harmanus Bleecker wrote a biography of Westerlo in 1848. Of his future colleagues, Ebenezer Platt Rogers (1817-1881),

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524 The Communion of Saints generally refers to the relationship between people made Holy by their link with Christ. For this particular reference to “the Saints,” see, for example, Ephesians 4:11-12: “The gifts He gave were that some would be apostles, some prophets, some evangelists, some pastors and teachers, to equip the saints for the work of ministry, for building up the body of Christ.” See Chapter 4 for Lampe’s inclusion of the Communion of Saints among the necessary means to ensuring progress toward sanctification.

525 Rogers had become a Dutch Reformed minister when he joined the Albany Church in 1856, after nine years as a Presbyterian minister.
for his address *A Historical Discourse on the Reformed Protestant Dutch Church of Albany*, delivered in 1857, and Howard Garberich Hageman (1921-1992), for his talk *Albany’s Dutch Pope*, given in 1984, came closest to fulfilling Westerlo’s goal, but neither Rogers nor Hageman appear to have held Westerlo’s original *Memoirs* in their hands.

**Correspondence**

Although we know, through Westerlo’s *Memoirs* and from reports, that Westerlo wrote and received many letters, only very few have been preserved. No letters sent to his family or his professors in the Netherlands have ever resurfaced, and the twenty preserved letters, some of which are drafts from his own collection, show a serious and pious man, often expressing his feelings in muted wordings.

Outstanding examples of Westerlo using Bible references are found in his letters to John Henry Livingston, his colleague and brother-in-law. From the *Memoirs* it is clear that after 1775 they maintained regular contact with each other, through correspondence, visits, and Synodical meetings. Westerlo wrote the following letter to John Henry Livingston on November 14, 1789.

**Reverend and Dear Brother**

I wrote you last week and since that time I have been confined to my room, except yesterday when we went to the Mills, and once, on a fair day, I walked to Mr. Hun. I am a little better this morning of my cold and cough and hope to preach again tomorrow, though want of exercise rather weakens my poor nerves and my spirits are but low with respect to bodily labor, and also to the public duties of my station. But the Lord liveth and is unchangeably the same, even then when He

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526 Four short notes to his wife while he was in New York City (in 1785 and 1787), four letters to Hermanus Meijer (September 26, 1766; July 10, 1765; June 22, 1768; October 17, 1773); one to Samuel Stanhope Smith at Princeton, in Latin [Stephen Van Rensselaer III, Westerlo’s step-son, “was placed in the family of the Rev. Dr. Samuel Smith, the son-in-law of Dr. Witherspoon, and Vice President of the College [in 1780 - RN]” [Munsell 1852:294]; two to Ezra Stiles (February 26, 1788 [copies in English and in Latin] and another one in 1788); six to John Henry Livingston (undated [1771]; undated [after September 19, 1773]; April 4, 1780; April 1, 1788; November 14, 1789; undated [before December 26, 1790]); one to William Duer (November 18, 1783); one to John Bassett (July 2, 1789); and one to Stephen Van Rensselaer III (December 16, 1789).

527 See Chapter 7 for more on their relationship.

528 In his *Memoirs* he noted on November 15: “[...] yesterday morning the Lord pitied and strengthened poor, unworthy me, granting me His aid, and enabling me to preach [...]” An epidemic of influenza hit New York State in the fall of 1789.

529 Home of his stepson Stephen Van Rensselaer III, where Westerlo lived from 1775 until 1785.

530 Thomas J.Hun (1736-1802), Albany merchant, alderman, elder, agent of Stephen Van Rensselaer III.

531 Jeremiah 23:8.

hides His face and withdraws the consolations of His Word and spirit. I have, however, no reason to complain but of my own unbelief, ingratitude and the hardness of heart when under affliction, and I cannot but lament that such who have obtained mercy and tasted that the Lord is gracious and good should even be tempted to harbor and indulge any hard thoughts of that God in Christ, who is only good and love itself to all who have been enabled to flee for refuge to the hope set before us in the Gospel. Jesus Christ, our hope; the hope of life and glory.

This is an exceedingly great temptation, and though common to many of the Lord’s people, yet it is our enemy and the disturber of that Holy rest and peace in God for which we ought to strive, and which is our greatest joy whilst here below, as well as our becoming duty. Blessed be God. We may have access to a throne of grace and a compassionate High Priest, who pities our infirmities and can make us more than conquerors. May we be enabled to call upon His name in every time of need with humble-filled confidence and to believe that thing to chastened and tempted, His love and mercy endureth forever.

You are acquainted with fiery locals and I only write to you because I have no other opportunity to converse with you, that it is a great mercy to stand in an evil day and in an hour of temptation, not to be removed from the faith of the Gospel, but to be strengthened in our most Holy and precious faith, even by these insults and as faults which we may be called to suffer and to endure. Oh, may we become more and more humble – waiting on the Lord’s free sovereign mercy and grace and relying on the atonement and interest from

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534 Ecclesiastes 8:8.
535 For example, Mark 8:17-21.
536 1 Peter 2:3; Psalm 34:8.
537 Romans 8:7 - See Henry 1793, volume 3:961: “Shall we harbor and indulge that which is enmity to God our Creator, Owner, Ruler, and Benefactor?”
538 Hebrews 6:18.
539 Colossians 1:27.
540 Hebrews 12:14.
541 Psalm 40:8.
542 Hebrews 4:15-16.
543 Romans 8:37.
544 Psalm 50:15.
545 Psalm 100:5.
546 Westerlo may be referring to New York’s ratification of the United States Constitution, by a vote of 30-27 (on July 26, 1788), which was preceded and followed by heated debate concerning changes to the Constitution, especially the addition of a Bill of Rights [see Schechter 1985:238-244].
548 Acts 14:22.
549 Explanation of Psalm 130:5.
Christ, Our Lord and Savior Jesus Christ as the only foundation of our hope in time and to all eternity. And if it shall please the Lord to spare our life and health and strength, let us be more and more ardent and fervent in spirit, serving the Lord in the Gospel of His Son – depending on His strength and blessing for success to ourselves and the precious souls committed to His love.

I must close these lines and can only add that our family, through Divine mercy, continues in the enjoyment of many blessings. May we be enabled to acknowledge them with Holy gratitude. We long to hear from you and yours and hope you are all restored. Accept of our joint wishes for your welfare and prosperity, and please to present our best respects to Mother, Dr. Jones and Sister Livingston with their families. I remain

E. Westerlo

This letter of 567 words contains at least twenty-two implicit references to passages in the Bible. In his Memoirs, during his sickness, Westerlo referred three times to temptation: “temptation to which I have been exposed for some time since [my last illness – RN], was rather removed,” “Deliver [me] from all and every sin and temptation,” and “let me experience that Thou art with me in every day of temptation,” and it is a theme broached in this letter as well. He hinted at a link between his being tempted and his illness. He did not feel that he was suffering undeservedly, like Job, but that sickness resulted in unbelief, which led to his being tempted to rebel against the will of God.

Westerlo had just written to Livingston on November 5, and he had probably not yet received a reply, which may explain the lack of information in this letter.

550 “Atonement” is a controversial term within the Reformed Church. “Limited atonement” is one of the five core doctrines of Calvinism in 1619: “Limited Atonement (Particular Redemption) is a doctrine offered in answer to the question, “for whose sins did Christ atone?” The Bible teaches that Christ died for those whom God gave him to save (John 17:9). Christ died, indeed, for many people, but not all (Matthew 26:28). Specifically, Christ died for the invisible Church – the sum total of all those who would ever rightly bear the name of “Christian” (Ephesians 5:25) – Definition taken from the website of the Center for Reformed Theology and Apologetics [http://www.reformed.org/calvinism/index.html, on August 19, 2010].
551 1 Corinthians 3:11.
552 Romans 12:11.
553 Romans 1:9.
554 Often the letter had to be finished because the person carrying the letter was about to leave.
555 Mrs. Christina Ten Broeck Livingston (1718-1801), Westerlo’s mother-in-law.
556 Dr. Thomas Jones of New York City; married Margaret Livingston in Kingston in 1776.
557 Margaret Livingston (1747-1830), sister-in-law of both Westerlo and John Henry Livingston; married to Thomas Jones.
558 On November 5, 6 and 15, respectively.
559 The letter has been lost. In his Memoirs Westerlo wrote on November 6 that the day before he had written to Livingston “about the congregations in The Boght and Niskayuna, and intimated that probably Dominee Schoonmaker would be the man proper for them.”
This letter is still a good example of his letter writing, since such an abundance of Bible references was very common in his letters.

The Church Records of the Albany consistory, 1760-1790

One can argue that the records of the consistory meetings of the Albany Church are a reflection of the discussions and words of the members of the consistory, of which the scribe, the minister, is just one. This is true to some extent, but as historians know, any recording of history involves choices, and it is difficult to argue that any report of events is entirely objective.

On September 13, 1772, when acceptance of the proposal to join the Union seemed almost a fact, but when support among members of the Great Consistory dissipated, Westerlo added a commentary to the consistory meeting, expressing his sentiments:

Nota Bene: This proposal was announced by the Hon. Minister after the morning service, which would be read aloud by the Voorlezer in the afternoon, which happened. Many however, even members of the Great Consistory, and most of those who had signed said documents, withdrew from the Church assembly, although invited in a friendly fashion from the pulpit to listen attentively, without having heard the proposal being read aloud, and this to the chagrin of the members of the rest of the Congregation.

The following day an open consistory meeting was held, and representatives of the local government, “respected Magistrates of this City,” expressed their “fear for turmoil,” and the dwindling support prompted Westerlo to put his job on the line:

For the remainder the Hon. Minister of the Congregation has openly declared that, should it not please God to bless his and the Hon. consistory’s peaceable attempts toward calm and harmony for now, his Honor would hand over to the current Assembly of the Hon. consistory and the deliberations and advice of the respected gentlemen of the government of this city [the decision] whether and to what extent the proposed request by the respected petitioners might be granted, to the benefit of God’s church in general and the Congregation of God here [in particular]. His Honor would consider have fulfilling and accomplishing his duty as a loyal pastor and minister of the Congregation of God in this town.

Abraham Yates (1724-1796), member of the Common Council, later chairman of the Albany Committee of Correspondence, and mayor from 1790 until his death in 1796, acted as spokesman.
To stress this last point, Westerlo asked for what seems to be a discharge and testimonials:

Then the Hon. Minister brought in a serious request, that in case of further postponement of the Union, his Honor’s life and teachings in their entirety would be judged, in accordance with the Acts of the Synod of Dordrecht, of 1618 and 1619.  

Westerlo subsequently clearly expressed his thoughts when casting his vote in favor of a postponement of the decision to join the Union:

The votes in favor and against postponement being in a tie, the Hon. Minister [decided] that, although his Honor’s choice would now be no more postponement, as he considered it most timely and best (the matter having been considered on its merits and with reasons), but in order to show to the gentlemen of the government and to the world that he protected the peace and harmony in the Congregation in every way, that he would content himself with the following decision [postponement – RN] by the Hon. consistory for now.

This passage not only shows Westerlo’s deliberations, but also how he decided to do what he thought best to keep the peace. It is difficult to assess what effect the postponement of the Albany congregation’s joining the Union, which eventually turned out to be a period of thirteen years, had on its congregation and on the Union, Albany being the second largest congregation at the time.

It is impossible to say what would have happened had the congregation joined in 1772. Given the interruption in meeting schedules and the difficulties in staying organized due to the War of Independence (1776-1783), the Union may not have suffered much additional damage from Albany’s not joining it in 1772. It is possible that Westerlo’s vote supporting postponement, also in view of the remonstrance of September 1773, prevented major riots from erupting in Albany, as both within the congregation and in the city of Albany, there was a considerable number of people opposing the Albany congregation joining the Union, some fearing it would be giving up its sovereignty; others fearing the ensuing unrest.

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561 It appears the meeting reassured him that his position was not in doubt: “The Hon. Assembly solemnly assured this as based on the Charter as well as on the Constitution of this Church Congregation.

562 See Chapter 2.
A Frelinghuysen connection

While researching and studying Eilardus Westerlo and his religious background, I was struck by the common background of Westerlo and Theodorus Jacobus Frelinghuysen (1691-1747). They shared religious convictions too, albeit often less pronounced in Westerlo’s case.

A brief overview of Frelinghuysen’s reported impact on the Dutch Reformed Church in New Jersey and New York, and possibly on the Great Awakening in North America, will suffice to demonstrate the important role he and his family ended up playing in Westerlo’s life. Contrary to James Lloyd Smyrl’s claims in his 2008 dissertation, and unlike those of many other eighteenth-century ministers in North America, the life and theology of Theodorus Jacobus Frelinghuysen has been described in great detail over the past fifty years.563

It was through a series of coincidences that Frelinghuysen received a call to several congregations in New Jersey’s Raritan Valley. Born in Westphalia, Germany, and educated there, first for two years at the Reformed Gymnasium Academicum in Hamm, and then for six years at the Gymnasium Academicum of Lingen, Frelinghuysen received his first call from Loegumer Voorwerk, near Emden in East Friesland, in 1717. After preaching there for fourteen months, Frelinghuysen accepted a new position as co-rector of the Latin school in Enkhuizen (in West Friesland, in the province of North Holland). On his way there, he spent some time in Groningen, meeting with exponents of the experimental divinity movement such as Johan Verschuur and Sicco Tjaden, as he had done in Emden with people like Eduard Meiners, Johannes Everhardi, Jakobus Isebrandi Harkenroht, and Henricus Eyssonius.564

In 1718, Sicco Tjaden (1693-1727) discussed his internal Pietistic struggles with Gerardus Van Schuylenburg (1681-1770) in Tienhoven.565 Van Schuylenburg lauded Theodorus Jacobus Frelinghuysen,566 and he exerted his Pietistic influence

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563 For a full assessment of Theodorus Jacobus Frelinghuysen I refer to Dutch Calvinistic Pietism in the Middle Colonies. A Study in the Life and Theology of Theodorus Jacobus Frelinghuysen by James Tanis [Tanis 1967]. Referring to this dissertation, Smyrl claims that “James Tanis writes briefly about Frelinghuysen in a short book,” erroneously citing page 112 [Smyrl 2008:3 n9]. He later adds that “no dissertations related to Frelinghuysen’s life or ministries are found” [Smyrl 2008:4] and that his own dissertation includes “a brief sketch of the churches in which [T.J. Frelinghuysen] served in the Netherlands” [Smyrl 2008:5]. These churches turn out to be Emden (?) and Loegumer. Smyrl himself writes on p.26 that both are in Germany. He is also wrong in claiming that Frelinghuysen’s Pietism was influenced by Philipp Jakob Spener’s Lutheran doctrine [Smyrl 2008:10].

564 Since the two classes of Emden and Groningen were both geographically and philosophically close, Frelinghuysen must have met the people mentioned on a regular basis during his time in Loegumer Voorwerk [see Tanis 1967:35-37].

565 Van Lieburg 2001:26. Van Schuylenburg also edited and published the late Justus Vermeer’s Leere der Waarheid die na de Godtzalighed is in 1750 [See Broeyer 2001:51], and Westerlo owned John Owen’s Oeffeningen Aangaande de Naam, Oorspronk […] en Standhouding van een Dag van Heilige Ruste, which was prefaced by Van Schuylenburg.

566 Van Schuylenburg praised Frelinghuysen’s powerful preaching in New Netherland [Van Lieburg 1992:119]. Moux calls him “a family friend” [Moux 2009:513, n1045], and says that he “had a stormy career […] which in many ways mirrored the elder Frelinghuysen’s” [Moux 2009:547].
on Theodorus Jacobus’s son Johannes and on the latter’s wife-to-be Dina Van Bergh. Tjaden, a friend of Antonius Driessen (1684-1748) at the University of Groningen, and seen by some as the founder of Pietism in the province of Groningen, is also credited with having found a suitable candidate for the congregations in the Raritan Valley, also in 1718.

When Frelinghuysen arrived in the New World in 1720, there were only eight Dutch Reformed ministers active in New York and New Jersey, who served about thirty-five different congregations. Between 1720 and 1747, Frelinghuysen served several congregations in the Raritan Valley. In comparison, when Westerlo arrived in Albany forty years later, there were twenty-two other Dutch Reformed ministers employed in New York and New Jersey, serving roughly eighty congregations.

Most historians agree that Theodorus Jacobus Frelinghuysen, who died more than ten years before Eilardus Westerlo came to America, has had a lasting influence on the Dutch Reformed Church (and on some German Reformed congregations) in the Middle Colonies. Some view him as a precursor of the Great Awakening, thereby implying that he laid the groundwork for it. Others even credit him with

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Theodorus Frelinghuysen referred to him as “my old father […] who regards me as his son,” in October 1759 [ER 3739].

Parts of Dina Van Bergh’s diaries have been preserved, in which she also recounts her contacts with Van Schuylenburg [see Van de Bank 1999].


Frelinghuysen’s Dutch Reformed colleagues in 1720 were Vincentius Antonides (1670-1744), Guiliam Bertholf (1655-1726), Henricus Boel (1692-1754), Thomas Bro[a]wer (?-1728), Guiltherus Du Bois (1671-1751), Bernardus Free[f]man (1662-1743), Petrus Henricus Van Driessen (about 1689-1738), and Petrus Vas (1666-1762). Johann Friedrich Hager (?-1723), the first minister in Saugerties, NY, from 1710 until 1720, was German Reformed, and Joseph Morgan (1674-1740), served Holmdel (Neversink), NJ, as a Presbyterian minister. Bertholf was Frelinghuysen’s only New Jersey colleague.

On permanent rotation he served Six Mile Run, Three Mile Run, Somerville, New Brunswick, and North Branch (Readington). Three Mile Run was probably claimed by his opponents in the Klagte conflict for several years – unfortunately, its records have been lost.

Westerlo’s colleagues in 1760 were Lambertus De Ronde (1720-1795), Jonathan Du Bois (1727-1772), Reinhardt Erickzon (1698-1771), Johannes Casparus Frijenmoet (1720-1777), Johannes Mauritius Goetschius (1723-1771), Jacob Rutsen Hardenbergh (1736-1790), William Jackson (1732-1813), John C. Lappins (unknown: Lappius? Lapp?), Johannes Leydt (1718-1783), Georg Wilhelm Mancius (1706-1762), David Marinus (1730?-after 1780), Johannes Ritzema (1710-1796), Thomas F. Romeyn Sr. (1729-1794), Johannes Schuneman (1712-1794), Johannes Schuyler (1710-1779), Benjamin Vanderlinde (1719-1789), Eggo Tonkens Van Hoevenbergh (1710-after 1764), Jacobus Van Nist (1735-1761), Ulpianus Van Sinderen (1708-1796), Samuel Verbruyck (1721-1784), and Barent Vrooman (1725-1784). Abraham Rosenkrantz (1725-1784) was mostly active as a German Reformed minister, but sometimes in Dutch Reformed Churches, such as in (bilingual Dutch-German) Schoharie, NY, from 1760 to 1763, and Stone Arabia (now Lansingburgh) NY, from 1759 to 1769, although the “so-called Coetus” reported in October 1757 that this latter church could not obtain the ordination of Johannes Mauritius Goetschius and that it therefore “has now become a prey to confusion and to German tramps” [ER 3708].

“[…] the revivals begun by Frelinghuysen were gradually spread by others until all Jersey was finally caught up in a ‘Great Awakening’” [Tanis 1967: 70] and “[…] he was able to influence the English-speaking community in the Middle Colonies and thereby augment his contribution to the Great Awakening” [Beeke 2000:xxv]. See also Mouw’s discussion of Frelinghuysen’s role toward the Great Awakening [Mouw 2009:584-585].
having caused the Great Awakening to occur: “The great wave of religious renewal in the Middle Colonies was provoked by Theodorus Jacobus Frelinghuysen […].”\textsuperscript{574} It is also argued that his influence can still be felt today:

[… the churches of America still confront the same problems – though their content be different – and Frelinghuysen’s answers are still proposed as once again experimental divinity takes shape in the new theology.\textsuperscript{575}

Some of the influence Frelinghuysen had on the Dutch Reformed may be seen through his offspring, who were all born in America. Between 1723 and 1738, the marriage between Frelinghuysen and Eva Terhune produced seven children: all five sons, Theodorus (1723-1760?), Johannes (1727-1754), Jacobus (1730-1753), Ferdinandus (1732-1753), and Henricus (1735-1757), became Dutch Reformed ministers, and the two daughters, Margaret (1737-1757) and Anna (1738-1810) both married Dutch Reformed ministers, Thomas F. Romeyn, Sr. (1729-1794), and William Jackson (1732-1813), respectively.

Frelinghuysen’s eldest son, Theodorus, served as minister for close to fifteen years, the longest of the Frelinghuysen brothers. Two of the five brothers, Ferdinandus and Jacobus, died of smallpox in 1753, on their way back to America from ordination by the Classis of Amsterdam, never having actually served as a minister. None of the five sons served for very long, but it can be argued that all in some way had their impact on the development of the Dutch Reformed Church in North America.

Theodorus (ordained in 1745) and Johannes (in 1749) traveled to the Netherlands to study and to be ordained by the Classis of Amsterdam. Theodorus was instrumental in his efforts to secure a Dutch Reformed college in the Colonies. Shortly after Presbyterians had founded the College of New Jersey in Princeton, and in the year the Anglicans obtained a royal charter for King’s College, the Coetus ministers sought to establish a college of their own to be able to train students for the ministry in America, and Theodorus Frelinghuysen was a driving force behind the eventual success (Queen’s College in New Brunswick, now Rutgers University) during the 1750s.\textsuperscript{576}

Johannes also joined the Coetus efforts, but it had not built up as much steam as after 1754, when his brother Theodorus had started to pursue the goals of the Coetus more zealously, especially the establishment of a Dutch Reformed academy. He seemed more concerned with strengthening the Dutch Reformed Church and its individual congregations, both in the Raritan Valley, where he served in the footsteps of his late father, and beyond. The important role Dina Van Bergh played in supporting her two husbands in the pastorate, first Johannes

\textsuperscript{574} Van Lieburg 2008:324.
\textsuperscript{575} Tanis 1967:162.
\textsuperscript{576} See, for example, ER 3532-3534, 3541.
Frelinghuysen, and later Jacob Rutsen Hardenbergh, must be brought up here. In 1753, Johannes Leydt and Johannes Frelinghuysen are mentioned in the royal charter they obtained for their five congregations.

In November 1790, Westerlo received a letter from Dina Van Bergh announcing the death of her husband, Jacob Rutsen Hardenbergh. The passing of Hardenbergh clearly shook Westerlo, and he devoted several pages in his Memoirs to it, quoting from Dina’s letter:

On Tuesday, the second November 1790 at four o’clock in the afternoon, it pleased the Lord to deliver him from his agonies and pains, by taking him to Himself. He resigned himself into the hands of that God whom he had so often recommended to his friends and congregation, not alone with a willingness usual for Christians, but seemed to have a clear view of the happiness he was about to enjoy, to such a degree, that he could not keep himself from open raptures and assuring his friends, that he had nearly finished his race on earth, and that the moment of his dissolution was fast approaching, where he would rest from labor and enjoy the blessing he had so long had in view and held up to others.

This was the second time Westerlo mentioned Hardenbergh’s death at some length. Two weeks earlier he had already reported it, without indicating how he learned about it:

From his early youth devoted to the ministry, as far as I know, he first studied with Dominee John Frielinghuizen, minister at Raritan, and after the death of that pious and zealous man he was chosen his successor, being also married to his worthy relict, a lady of exemplary Godliness and uncommon knowledge of the Christian religion.

Calling Johannes Frelinghuysen, someone he had never met, “pious and zealous,” Westerlo made no reference to the fact that this man was a brother of his predecessor. He also never spoke about University of Utrecht graduate William Jackson, who was ordained by the Classis of Amsterdam in 1757.

The influence of Ferdinandus and Jacobus must be viewed through the letters that both Johannes and Theodorus wrote to the Classis of Amsterdam, more convinced than before their brothers’ deaths that the ordination of their youngest brother, Henricus, should be permitted to take place in America. Johannes’s letter stresses

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577 See, for example, Bruggink 2004:57. James Tanis calls her “a pastor to pastors” [Tanis 1976a:59].
578 ER 3382-3384.
579 Memoirs, November 28, 1790.
580 Memoirs, November 16, 1790.
the extraordinary circumstances for his family, whereas Theodorus insists that Henricus be ordained in Amsterdam, going against the will of the three consistories that were ready to appoint Henricus. Dirk Mow has found that Theodorus reversed his position at some point before 1755, from then on supporting American ordinations in favor of ones in the Netherlands, likely under influence of the death at sea of his two brothers.

The fifth brother, Henricus, thus found himself caught between, on the one hand, a Classis of Amsterdam reluctant to allow more American ordinations, probably also to keep the Conferentie party at bay, and, on the other hand, three consistories that would not allow him to travel to Amsterdam for ordination, on the shifting advice of his older brother Theodorus, eventually telling him to stay put. Johannes Frelinghuysen had died in the meantime, in September 1754.

Henricus’s opinion and feelings concerning the matter have never been reported, but he followed his brother’s advice. In October 1757 the “so-called Coetus,” citing several articles of the Netherlands confession and of the Canons of Dort, lets the Classis of Amsterdam know that “Mr. Henricus Frelinghuysen was granted his preparatory and final examinations, and ordained over the churches of Mormel (Marbletown), Mombackus (Rochester, Ulster Co.), and Wawarsing (Naponoch).”

The satisfaction these three consistories must have felt concerning the ordination in America of Henricus was short-lived: in June 1758, Conferentie minister Johannes Ritzema reported the death of Henricus to the Classis of Amsterdam, in a letter complaining about the recent activities of the “so-called Coetus.” Henricus had died two weeks after his ordination.

581 ER 3406-3407.  
582 ER 3437. The Consistories of Marbletown, Rochester, and Wawarsing, NY, had already been against Jacobus’s ordination in the Netherlands, and his death reinforced their resolve to appoint Henricus without an ordination in Amsterdam, in spite of Theodorus insisting Henricus go to Amsterdam. By 1755, the Consistories had allowed Henricus to perform all duties except the Sacraments [ER 3620].  
583 Mouw 2009:300.  
584 “[John] died suddenly at the home of his mother's parents, Flatbush, Long Island, September 15, 1754, while on his way to attend what proved to be the last meeting of the united Coetus of New York” [Lee 1910:7].  
585 ER 3708-3709.  
586 ER 3714. In October 1758 the Conferentie ministers complained about the funeral sermon by Theodorus Frelinghuysen, in which he warned that “they who recognized a foreign authority were in danger of falling into the hands of the King’s Council” [ER 3721].  
587 “He died at the home of Mrs. Bevier, at Wawarsing, a fortnight after his ordination by the Coetus at Marbletown” [Lee 1910:7]. Henricus mentioned both children of his brother Johannes, Eva (born 1751) and Frederick (born 1753) in his will [Stoutenburgh 1902:236]. A handwritten note on the back of Extract uit een brief van de E Classis van Amsterdam aan de E Coetus geschreven, waerop in de onderstaande artikel gezien wort reads: “Romain and Hardenbergh were Coetus. Hardenbergh settled here in 1781, left in 1786 a short time before the Conferentie congregation united. 1772/3 church built united with Coetus in 1786. NB Hendrecus F died at Naponch and was buried at Marbltown where he had been ordained or installed a forthnight [sic!] before 1757” [found in the Palsits Ulster County Collection Box 1, Folders 1-11, document #110].
The death of Theodorus has always remained a mystery. Having left for the Netherlands in October 1759, he was seen or heard of several times between December 14, 1759, when he wrote a letter to the consistory of New York, and May 14, 1760, when he wrote a letter to the Classis of Amsterdam, from Rotterdam.588

Professor Gerdes, preparing Westerlo for his call to Albany, contacted Daniel Crommelin, the agent in charge of mediating between Albany and Groningen, on May 10, 1760, assuring the agent that Westerlo would be in Amsterdam “in the week following Pentecost,” offering that Westerlo could be there a week earlier if need be.589

The more pressing purpose of the letter was to let Crommelin know that

the deposed minister of New Albany, Rev. Frelinghuysen, in whose stead Rev. Westerlo was called and installed and confirmed as minister, is currently in the Low Countries, and he was also here in Groningen for 14 days, but no more than three days ago he unexpectedly left for [the provinces of] Holland […], with the intention to board the first ship bound for New York in order to return to Albany. So now it could happen that he will address your Honor or the captain of the ship, John Green, to sail on that ship back to New York, but this would be very uneasy and unpleasant for the new minister, and it could gradually involve both in arguments which they would not be able to decide, but which could, however, cause much alienation, and deprive the congregation of New Albany of its good hopes of attaining calm and unity, and to again shortly hear the Word of the Gospel for its edification and advancement.

Theodorus Frelinghuysen’s death has been the subject of much speculation, and some ‘accounts’ have often been repeated throughout history. Most persistent is the story that, in the fall of 1760, Theodorus fell or threw himself overboard and drowned in the harbor of New York City, supposedly upon learning that he had been replaced in Albany. It is clear that he had already learned of his dismissal in Groningen in April.

Somehow, people in Albany had received word about the death of Theodorus: less than two years after Westerlo’s arrival, on June 3, 1762, Elizabeth Symes, to whom Theodorus had written a heartfelt letter before embarking for Amsterdam in October 1759,590 was considered his widow: she married Peter Roosevelt, in the

588 Neither of these letters have been found.
589 In 1760, the Sunday of Pentecost was on May 25.
590 ER 3738-3739].
Albany Church, on that day. The wedding ceremony was very likely officiated by Westerlo.\textsuperscript{591}

The elder daughter of Theodorus Jacobus Frelinghuysen, Margaret (born 1737), married a minister, Thomas F. Romeyn Sr. (1729-1794),\textsuperscript{592} in 1756. She died the following year, one month after their only child, (Dominee) Theodore Frelinghuysen Romeyn (1757-1785), was born. Thomas Romeyn studied under Theodorus Jacobus Frelinghuysen before graduating from the College of New Jersey in 1750 and traveling to Amsterdam to be ordained in 1752.

Although several Romeyns are mentioned in Westerlo’s \textit{Memoirs} (all ministers: Dirck, James Van Campen, and Jeremiah), Thomas only appears twice. His name is given as one of the ministers ordaining John Bassett on November 25, 1787. He was also involved in ordaining his own son James Van Campen Romeyn, on June 16, 1788, but Westerlo merely mentions Thomas by name.

The ordination of Thomas and Margaret’s son, Theodore Frelinghuysen Romeyn, by the General Synod in 1784, is not mentioned by Westerlo in his \textit{Memoirs}, and neither is this young man’s untimely death one year later. Westerlo was absent at the General Synod in October 1784, and all he mentioned about the Synod was the main point on the agenda, the establishment of the Dutch Reformed professorates (of John Henry Livingston and Hermanus Meijer).

Frelinghuysen’s youngest daughter, Anna, married Dominee William Jackson (1732-1813) in 1757. Of their ten children, John Frelinghuysen Jackson (1768-1836) studied under John Henry Livingston, and he received his ordination from the General Synod in 1790. Westerlo was present at this Synod, in October, and he rejoiced in the fact that some candidates were ordained: “Three young candidates were examined, and one of them, with two others, was admitted for the ministry.”\textsuperscript{593} Westerlo did not mention any of these candidates by name.

Early on in his \textit{Memoirs}, while discussing the friends he has in New Jersey,\textsuperscript{594} Westerlo does mention Hendrik Visscher (1697-1779), who was Theodorus Jacobus Frelinghuysen’s close friend and assistant during the difficult years described in Boel’s \textit{Complaint Against Frelinghuisen}.\textsuperscript{595} Visscher translated five of Frelinghuysen’s sermons, which appeared as \textit{A Clear Demonstration of a Righteous and Ungodly man, in Their Frame, Way and End} in New York in 1731. Visscher (Fisher) outlived Frelinghuysen by more than thirty years, during which

\textsuperscript{591} The record shows that “Pieter Roozeveld, of N.Y., and Eliz. Frielinghuizen, wid., of A.” were married on June 3.
\textsuperscript{592} His second marriage, to Susanna Van Campen, produced two more Dutch Reformed ministers: James Van Campen (1765-1840) and Thomas, Jr. (1777-1857).
\textsuperscript{593} \textit{Memoirs}, October 19, 1790. Those “admitted for the ministry” were, in addition to John Frelinghuysen Jackson, Andrew Gray (1764-1819) and Nicholas Van Vranken (1762-1804).
\textsuperscript{594} \textit{Memoirs}, 22 December 1774.
\textsuperscript{595} See Loux 1979:66-67; 70-71. Visscher, spelled “Fisser” throughout this book, was also involved in the controversy, as his ordination as a deacon was questioned.
time he is reported to have played an important role in the resistance against the British during the War of Independence.

Westerlo and the Frelinghuysens

All the information given above about Theodorus Jacobus Frelinghuysen and his sons, daughters, and grandchildren, is intended to show that among the approximately sixty Dutch Reformed ministers active in New Jersey and New York between 1720 and 1790, the Frelinghuysens and their relatives represented a considerable number. Most members of Dutch Reformed congregations during that time period must have met or heard about some members of this family. This holds even more true for Dutch Reformed ministers.

However, in his writings Westerlo hardly ever mentioned any member of the Frelinghuysen family, including Theodorus Frelinghuysen, his immediate predecessor in Albany, and those who were contemporary fellow ministers, Thomas F. Romeyn, Sr., William Jackson, Theodore Frelinghuysen Romeyn, and John Frelinghuysen Jackson. In addition, in any of his writings he also never discussed or even mentioned books written by the Frelinghuysens.

My research, which combined Westerlo's own list of books and all the books he mentioned having read, has turned up 469 books, which means that he did not possess works by every author. However, there was a lively exchange of books, especially among ministers, in eighteenth-century North America, and Westerlo indicated more than once in his Memoirs and in his letters that he had borrowed and loaned books. In addition, on the list of books he drew up in May 1771 he indicated that he also sold and loaned books to fellow ministers.

All this makes it odd that Westerlo reported no books in his possession written by Theodorus Jacobus Frelinghuysen. Frelinghuysen was both revered and reviled by his fellow ministers in the 1720s and 1730s, particularly during the Klagte dispute, having also drawn the ire of the Classis of Amsterdam. Even though it is unclear whose side Westerlo would have been on, I can think of no reason for him not to have had at least some of the works mentioned below.

The first collections of Theodorus Jacobus Frelinghuysen’s sermons were published in New York in the 1720s: Drie Predicatien (1721) and Een Trouwhertig Vertoog.

596 In 1725 Henricus Boel, a Dutch Reformed minister in New York City, and his brother, a lawyer, prepared a document, known as De Klagte [The Complaint], against Frelinghuysen’s unorthodox behavior and preaching methods as submitted by lay people in the Raritan Valley, where Frelinghuysen served several congregations. For the full text see Loux 1979. Boel’s complaint included the Frisian catechism booklet that Frelinghuysen was using. Loux mistakenly took it to be East Frisian [Loux 1979:10].

597 Westerlo owned a collection of sermons by Frelinghuysen sympathizer Cornelis Van Santvoord, and also sermons written by Theodorus and/or Johannes Frelinghuysen. It is not known how these came into his possession. One possibility is that both collections were left behind by Theodorus Frelinghuysen, who was in Albany when Van Santvoord passed away in Schenectady in 1752.
van Eene Waare Rechtveerdige [A Faithful Discourse by a Truly Righteous Man] (1729), and, together with the English translation (by Hendrik Visscher, see above) entitled A Clear Demonstration of a Righteous and Ungodly Man, in Their Frame, Way and End (New York, 1731), these may not have been available in Groningen in the 1750s, but one would expect these to have been available to Westerlo in Albany.

However, Frelinghuysen’s Een Bundelken Leer-redenen [A Small Collection of Sermons] was published in Amsterdam in 1736, with a commendation from the theological faculty of the University of Groningen, and it must have been available and discussed during Westerlo’s time at the University.

In their commendation, dated October 7, 1735, Antonius Driessen and Cornelis Van Velzen wrote that the “Faculty of Theology has read this work for as much as its activities permitted it,” and they praised the work as “not only not incompatible with the accepted teaching of the Reformed Church, but also edifying and meant for useful instruction. [The faculty] also rejoices that noble pieces of fruit are coming to our door from the New World.” Daniel Gerdes, who only joined the faculty in 1736, was not among the signers. Since it can be argued that Gerdes and Frelinghuysen were at different places on the Cocceius-Voetius spectrum, it is possible that Gerdes never mentioned Frelinghuysen or his works. Of course, it is still highly probable that other Groningen professors acquainted Westerlo with Frelinghuysen’s sermons.

A fourth collection of Frelinghuysen’s sermons, Versameling van Eenige Keurtexen [Collection of Some Selected Texts], was published posthumously in Philadelphia in 1748, and, again, this book may not have been part of the libraries in Groningen in the 1750s. However, all three books printed in America could very well have been present in Albany when Westerlo arrived in 1760, since Theodorus Frelinghuysen, Frelinghuysen’s eldest son, immediately preceded Westerlo in Albany.

Works by Theodorus himself must also have been readily available to Westerlo. Theodorus’s Eeuwige Oeffening of Verhandeling van de Godlyke Waardheden, der Christlyke Religie [Exercise for Youngsters, or Discourse on the Divine Truths of the Christian Religion] was published in New York in 1749 and 1752, and copies must have been around in the Albany Church.

598 Frelinghuysen 1736: 2. The Dutch text reads “en het zelve bevonden niet alleen niet strydig met de aangenomene Leer der Hervormde Kerk, maar stigtelyk en gerigt tot nuttig onderwys. Verblyd zig ook dat uit de nieuwe Wereld edele vrugten aan onze deure komen.” The first of these sermons by Frelinghuysen is on Psalm 25:7, which is one of the first verses quoted by Westerlo in his Memoirs [January 1770]: “Remember not the sins of my youth or my transgressions; according to your steadfast love remember me, for your goodness’ sake, O Lord!”

599 See Chapter 4.

600 According to the Short Title Catalogue Netherlands, no libraries in the Netherlands mention owning copies of any of Frelinghuysen’s works published in America. On the other hand, only the library of the Vrije Universiteit Amsterdam appears to have a copy of Een Bundelken Leer-redenen.

601 There is no date on the title page of either edition, but Frelinghuysen’s preface is dated “Albany, July 22, 1748” in both. “Uitgegeven volgens Kerken-Ordre hier te Lande” (“Published in accordance
All other works by Theodorus Frelinghuysen, *Sermon Preached on Occasion of the Late Treaty Held in Albany*, published in 1754, *Wars and Rumors of Wars, Heavens Decree over the World*, published in 1755, would have been available in Albany, or even recommended by members of the Albany congregation, many of whom liked Frelinghuysen.

A possible explanation

It is indeed striking that Westerlo never mentions, let alone discusses, his predecessor or his work, but what explanation is there for this omission?

For this, we should look at Westerlo’s initial call to replace Frelinghuysen, and at the first letter sent to Gerdes and Bertling spelling out what type of person the Albany consistory requested them to find for their congregation. Unfortunately, neither one of these has turned up in any collection yet.

Westerlo must have known that the Albany consistory had decided to replace Frelinghuysen without his consent. Frelinghuysen expressed his sentiments in Groningen in 1760, and during his first years in Albany, Westerlo must have felt and heard what issues had been discussed between Frelinghuysen and a possibly divided consistory. It is very plausible that Westerlo decided early on that it would be better for his own success in guiding his congregation through the Coetus-Conferentie conflict not to speak about Theodorus Frelinghuysen, and by extension, about any other member of the Frelinghuysen family.

It would not be correct to conclude that Westerlo disagreed with the Frelinghuysens, either intellectually or spiritually. In fact, the following will show with the Church Order in this country” is an interesting claim: in 1749/1752 there was no such (written) order in North America.

Fortunately, Dirk Mouw has convincingly put an end to the confusing and wrongful attribution of publications penned by David Marinus to Theodorus Frelinghuysen [Mouw 2009:288 n646]. Since so little is known about David Marinus, it was preposterous for Beverly MacAnear in 1950 to claim that Marinus lacked the talent to write these pieces. The error does date back to the 1750s, though. Someone, presumably the minister under attack, Rev. W. Smith, scribbled “by Theodorus Vrelinghysen Dutch Minister at Albany” on the title page of a copy of *A Remonstrance*. What could be added is that in his *A Letter to the Independent Reflector*, Marinus clearly states that he is “the least and youngest son of a certain church in the Province” [Marinus 1753:5] [he had been licensed only a year earlier; Frelinghuysen was in his eighth year in Albany], and that he “would rather enter the Lists with you [William Livingston, RN] in Dutch or in Latin than in the English Tongue, being more expert in either of the former, than in the latter” [Marinus 1753:5]. He later adds that he is “an Englishman, born in the Dominion of the best of Kings on Earth [that is, George II – RN],” something Frelinghuysen would have been less likely to write [Marinus 1753:24].

The sermon is on Matthew 24:6, with a prediction of wars, but also an admonishment not to be discouraged, as these wars are “decreed so to be.” Frelinghuysen encourages “Ye People of Albany” to treat the brethren from New England with kindness and to help them whenever possible. [Frelinghuysen 1755:44-45]

“Theodorus Frelinghuysen Jr. was a very popular minister in Albany” [Mouw 2009:575].
that it is more likely that he approved of their actions on matters of Church Order on behalf of the “so-called Coetus,” for example. He must have decided to behave as a neutral party as much as possible, difficult as that proved to be at times.

**Common ground between Frelinghuysen and Westerlo**

Having grown up and having been educated worlds apart, Westerlo and Frelinghuysen may have had a number of things in common. A closer look at their education and academic contacts, their understanding of conversions, and their attraction to Psalm 25 will show that there was indeed some common ground. The family connections Frelinghuysen and Westerlo established in New Jersey and in New York, respectively, may help explain the differences in approach they employed in reaching their goals.

Frelinghuysen studied with Otto Verbrugge (1670-1745) in Lingen from 1711 until 1717. Although officially falling under the King of Prussia since 1702, the county of Lingen was still Dutch-speaking territory, and it was in Lingen, only about 20 km away from Denekamp (where Westerlo grew up), that Frelinghuysen learned Dutch and started to preach in Dutch, encouraged by Verbrugge:

> [...] the author is not a Dutchman by birth; he started preaching in Dutch on the advice of the Hon. Professor Otto Verbrugge, formerly professor of theology and Oriental Languages in Lingen, his esteemed teacher at the time; who is currently in Groningen. 606

Verbrugge is not the only person linking Groningen with Eilardus Westerlo (whose father studied under Verbrugge, too), and Theodorus Jacobus Frelinghuysen. While in Loegumer Voorwerk, under the Classis of Emden, Frelinghuysen was in regular contact with members of the Classis of Groningen.

**Collaboration with the Presbyterians**

It is often argued that the Dutch Reformed and the (Scottish) Presbyterians only differ in their confessions, and not in their church order. Indeed, for their church government the Reformed Churches use the Presbyterian polity, which emphasizes the authority of the local church, governed by elders. Yet, in eighteenth-century America, not everyone appreciated approaches between the two organizations, even though at the highest level efforts were made to work out

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606 "de Autheur is geen Hollander van geboorte; dat hy in ‘t Nederduitsch heeft begonnen te prediken is geschiedt op aanraden van de Wel Eerweerde Hoog Leeraar Otto Verbrugge, wel eer Professor in de Godegeleertheid en Oostersche Taalen tot Lingen, doe zyn geachte Meester, nu tot Grooningen” [Frelinghuysen 1736:[2] Preface].
“such regulations as might serve as a foundation for fraternal intercourse and Christian neighborhood” in 1784.\footnote{ER 4321. The efforts continued between 1785 and 1787 [ER 4328, 4332, 4341, 4345]}

One of the major bones of contention in the Raritan Valley in the late 1720s was that Theodorus Jacobus Frelinghuysen had allowed a Presbyterian minister, “a Dissenter,”\footnote{Term often used negatively by opponents of the Presbyterian Ulster Scots, who disliked the power of the English government and of the Anglican Church.} to preach in the Dutch Reformed Church. Indeed, Gilbert Tennent (1703-1764), licensed and ordained by the Presbytery of Philadelphia,\footnote{Tanis 1967:i68. Janet Fishburn gives New Brunswick as the Presbytery that ordained him [Fishburn 1994:31].} shared services on occasion with Frelinghuysen in 1728, much to the dismay of those opposing the latter’s methods.\footnote{See Tanis 1967:69-70; ER 2585. Boel also mentioned George Whitefield having been allowed by Frelinghuysen to preach to the Raritan congregation [Tanis 1967:81].}

Westerlo also invited some Presbyterian ministers to preach in his church, notably the Mohican Reverend Samson Occom.\footnote{Memoirs, May 20, 1784. Two months later Joseph Clark of Pennsylvania preached in the Dutch Reformed Church [Memoirs, July 16, 1784].}

It would not do Eilardus Westerlo justice to depict him as someone who was involved in arguments as much as Theodorus Jacobus Frelinghuysen was, but Westerlo did encounter some problems he wrote about in his Memoirs. Frelinghuysen’s tenure is often described in terms of his contentious relationship with the members of his congregation, with his brethren within the Dutch Reformed Church, and with the Classis of Amsterdam.

Unfortunately, Westerlo was not always very forthcoming as to the exact issues that bothered him. Apart from his regular lamentations concerning his sins, his weaknesses and his unworthiness, on January 17, 1770, as a preamble to his rebirth experience, Westerlo mentioned that “new and strange doctrines were introduced” in the congregation, without elaborating on what doctrines were introduced, or by whom,\footnote{Since he added “even by those whom it does not behove,” he seemed to suggest that he would have accepted these actions by some, but not by others. See Chapter 2 for a possible explanation involving Philip Reyley.} but also that he solved the issue through Divine intervention by reciting “the first principles of the doctrine of Christ.”\footnote{See Chapter 3.}
A case briefly mentioned in Chapter 5 in connection with the treatment of black people is also of interest in assessing Westerlo’s understanding of the regulations of his Church. Westerlo recorded an event on September 5, 1787, that had occurred the same day, realizing it might not end there and that his writing may be used to aid his memory: “This morning a case happened which may probably be of some consequence, and therefore I would commit the whole to writing as far as I remember.”

What happened on September 5 was actually the third episode in a case that would test Westerlo’s understanding of the Church Order of the Dutch Reformed Church. The first episode had occurred a few days earlier. He had tried to convince a female member of the congregation, who requested dismissal from the Dutch Reformed Church, that it would be in her interest to remain in the congregation. After all, the Church had brought her “benefit and edification,” and this could continue:

Last Friday morning when busy with entering the names of the children, came at my house one Mrs. ____, and after the parents were gone, she requested of me a dismissal, to join with the meeting, intimating that Mr. McDonald\(^{615}\) would rather receive her with a certificate. I asked for what reasons, since she was of a Dutch extraction, answering that her husband was desiring her to do so. I replied that in my opinion this was not a sufficient reason for me to dismiss her from under our care, and intimated that she being a member of the Dutch Church and having received benefit and edification there, which she was able to enjoy further, it was neither her duty nor interest to leave that communion, but if she did persevere in her purpose and leave us, she must do it at her own adventure and time.

Westerlo seemed to acknowledge the possibility for her to leave the Dutch Reformed Church if she desired to do so. The second episode took place on September 4:

Yesterday afternoon her husband accosted me in the street, and I told him he might tell me what he pleased to confer upon with me there, Mr. Hun\(^{616}\) being present. He repeated his wife’s request, and told me that the intention was to keep up unanimity in the family. Suspecting that something else was the true cause, I entered into a pretty warm discourse with the man, and found that he was exceedingly bigoted and self-conceited, and also not a little censorious, on our Church discipline and government. He owned the Churches were one in the essentials,

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\(^{615}\) Apparently, this woman’s husband was a member of the Presbyterian Church in Albany. Note that Westerlo did not divulge the name of the woman – not even in his own Memoirs.

\(^{616}\) Thomas Hun, merchant; former deacon and elder.
but not some externals, for example, they had elders for life, and we every two years. Their elders were first examined, and none but men of knowledge and piety, but some of ours did curse and swear.

Westerlo’s assessment of their discussion as a “pretty warm discourse” is mild, given the fact that his Church stood accused of having elders who were not properly vetted, and who “curse and swear.” Not to be outdone, Westerlo replied that “it was a pity, but [he] knew very well some of their elders’ characters and told him of Mr. Watson,\textsuperscript{617} having been an open drunkard when in the office of the church.”

In reaction to this, the man went on, and reflected upon our admitting ignorant people to the Sacrament. I told him this was not his business to judge, but when explaining 1 Corinthians 9 about drinking of the cup of the Devil’s, of the Communion of the Lord’s Supper, which I denied to be the meaning, we went into Mr. Hun’s house and I convinced him of his ignorance, in so far that he owned his forwardness and was confounded.

The man clearly attempted to beat the minister at his own game, quoting a Bible passage to prove his point. Westerlo was successful in refuting the man’s interpretation, forcing him to admit his presumptuousness and leaving him feeling confused.

Then Westerlo arrived at the events of September 5:

Now this morning Mr. Henry and John Boyd came to my house, and informed me that some of my congregation intended to join their meeting, and that the Jeffries would like to proceed regularly.

Robert Henry and James Boyd were trustees of the “Corporation of the Presbyterian Church in the City of Albany,”\textsuperscript{618} and the man and woman with whom Westerlo had had his discussions were not the only ones considering leaving the Dutch Reformed Church. Since its collapse in 1774, the Presbyterian Church in Albany had only reopened its doors in late 1785, with the installation of John McDonald. Was this pastor so successful that he attracted members of the neighboring Dutch Reformed Church within two years, or were the difficulties of the congregation to procure an English-speaking minister turning people away from the Dutch Reformed Church?\textsuperscript{619}

\textsuperscript{617} Matthew Watson was elected trustee in 1785 [McCook 1910:205].
\textsuperscript{618} McCook 1910:205.
\textsuperscript{619} John Bassett was ordained in Albany on November 25, 1787.
Referring to an (annulled) earlier agreement between the two denominations, Westerlo brought up the issue of the drunken trustee again, and concluded that he would not be obliged to allow any dismissals to take place:

I told them the whole matter as above related, and added also that they once had a drunken minister, that I thought the cause assigned not sufficient for a dismissal, that they might do as they pleased, and since all intercourse with the Dutch Churches was broke up by their Synod, as Mr. McDonald had told me, any former agreement was thereby annulled, that I would not be compelled by them to dismiss my members, neither be troubled with their church affairs.

Reflecting on his handling of the case, Westerlo’s believed that he had done the right thing:

I humbly conceive that marriage does not interfere with belonging to either of our communions, and that such a precedent would open a door to much discord in several families, who have always lived in peace, though the heads did belong to different congregations, and probably would prevent even intermarrying, at least disunite the Christian societies more than ever, whilst family union may at last, by the blessing of God, produce a full unity into the catholic church, which God may grant of His infinite mercy in His own time.

On more than one occasion in his Memoirs, Westerlo expressed the wish that all churches would unite, and his usage of the word “catholic” here reflects its original meaning in Greek: “universal.”

A few days later, Westerlo learned of yet another complaint the woman had brought in against the Church (the fact that “there were black people at the Table of the Lord when she was not still received as a member”), and he concluded that what had occurred was “somewhat in answer to [his] poor prayers this morning.”

While initially leaving the door open for the woman to leave his congregation, Westerlo decided against allowing her to do so, ostensibly because “the cause assigned was not sufficient for a dismissal,” as though there were regulations and standards in place that prevented him from doing so.

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620 The fact that, in December 1785, the barely 21-year-old Patroon Stephen Van Rensselaer, Westerlo’s stepson and a member of the Dutch Reformed Church, was offered the choice of a pew in the Presbyterian Church [McCook 1910:209] is an indication either of how close the two churches had become before annulling the agreement or of Van Rensselaer’s standing in Albany.

621 See Chapter 5.
Westerlo does not defend himself by resorting to the Church Order of the National Synod of Dort of 1618/1619, but by claiming Divine assistance through his morning prayers. In fact, the Church Order does not contain any mention of members desiring to leave the congregation for reasons other than Article 82, concerning “degenen, die uit de gemeente vertrekken”\(^{622}\) (“those who leave the congregation”), which seems to be aimed at those moving away. The Article’s intention is to ensure that members will be given an official certificate of their behavior.

**Converting others**

On October 26, 1788, Westerlo wrote that he “was glad to hear from [his] colleague [John Bassett] that one of [Westerlo’s] poor sermons on John 3:7,\(^{623}\) in the year 1768 preached at Raretans,\(^{624}\) had been the happy means to awaken a certain person, now living at New Brunswick, who requested him to thank [him] for it.” This as close as Westerlo got to discussing a case in which he had converted someone.

A conversion credited to Theodorus Jacobus Frelinghuysen that has received relatively little attention in Dutch Reformed literature may compel us to reassess the claim made in an article on Dutch Reformed Pietists and their missionary work that “even the well-known Pietistic minister Th. J. Frelinghuysen paid little attention to the non-white population.”\(^{625}\)

James Albert Ukawsaw Gronniosaw (c.1710-1773), the child of an African tribal chief who ended up as a slave in New York City in the late 1720s, describes his conversion experience involving Frelinghuysen.\(^{626}\) The latter, seeing how Gronniosaw was not allowed to exercise his beliefs, asked his owner, Mr. Vanhorn, to sell the slave to him. In Gronniosaw’s words:

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[...]
Freelandhouse, a very gracious, good minister, heard it [that Gronniosaw had been corrected for being a believer - RN] and he took a great deal of notice of me, and desired my master to part with me to him. He would not hear of it at first, but being greatly persuaded, he let me go; and Mr. Freelandhouse gave £50 for me.\(^{627}\)
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\(^{623}\) Do not be astonished that I said to you, “You must be born from above.”

\(^{624}\) Raritan, NJ. This is where Westerlo’s predecessor, Theodorus Frelinghuysen, was born and raised.

\(^{625}\) Boone 1990:21.

\(^{626}\) Gronniosaw 1774. See also Tise 1998:106-107. The 1774 edition, published by Hazard in Bath, is often cited as 1770 [which would make it the first published edition, before the Gye and Mills edition of 1772], but Vincent Carretta points out that Samuel Hazard did not acquire the business until 1774. Gronniosaw’s *Narrative* was published at least twelve times in the eighteenth century, both in the UK and in the US [Carretta 2004:54, n1].

\(^{627}\) Gronniosaw 1774:19. An analysis of the role Gronniosaw’s faith played can be found in *To Tell a Free Story* [Andrews 1988:36-39].
Frelinghuysen taught Gronniosaw to kneel and pray, and his wife Eva enrolled Gronniosaw in school, with a “very indulgent school-master, Vanosdore.” When Frelinghuysen preached about repentance (specifically Revelation 1:7: “Behold, He cometh in the clouds, and every eye shall see Him, and they that pierc’d Him”), Gronniosaw thought “[his] master directed them [these words] to [him] only.”

This incident distressed Gronniosaw so much that Eva gave him John Bunyan “On the Holy War” to read, and Frelinghuysen Baxter’s Call to the Unconverted. It made Gronniosaw even more ill at ease. At night, the words “Behold the Lamb of God” came to him, and Mr. Vanosdore rejoiced to see that his student was “enquiring the way to Zion.” Then, one day, under the influence of Baxter’s book, Gronniosaw experienced his own conversion:

I was so drawn out of myself, and so filled and aw’d by the presence of God, that I saw (or thought I saw) light inexpressible dart down from heaven upon me, and [it] shone around me for the space of a minute.

Upon Frelinghuysen’s death, Gronniosaw was set free. However, Gronniosaw stayed with the Frelinghuysen family, five sons, and two daughters, for several more years. When Eva (about 1750) and her sons had died, he decided to try to find one of Frelinghuysen’s closest friends, George Whitefield, in England, and to visit Baxter’s Kidderminster. He also went to the Netherlands, to visit “[his] Master’s old friends.” “On Thursdays, for seven weeks,” he told his life’s story to thirty-eight “Calvinist ministers.”

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628 Larry Tise thinks this must be Frelinghuysen’s friend Hendrick Visscher [Tise 1998:549, n21]; more plausible would be Peter Van Arsdalen, another helper of Frelinghuysen’s [Carretta 2004:55 n36], or the Dirk Van Aersdalen mentioned in the Klage of 1725 as Frelinghuysen’s deacon [Naborn 2002:135].

629 Gronniosaw 1774:20.

630 The Holy War, Made by King Shaddai upon Diabolus, for the Regaining of the Metropolis of the World: or, the Losing and Taking Again of the Town of Mansoul. London: Newman. 1682.

631 Richard Baxter, Call To The Unconverted: To Turn and Live, And Accept of Mercy, while Mercy may be had, as Ever they Would Find Mercy in the Day of their Extremity. From the Living God. To which is Added, Forms of Prayer for Morning and Evening for a Family, for a Penitent Sinner, and for the Lord's Day. London: Norris. 1657.

632 John 1:29: “Behold the Lamb of God, who takes away the sin of the world.”

633 Gronniosaw 1774:25.

634 The number of children is correct, but the eldest son, Theodorus, had already left for Albany in 1745. Gronniosaw states that all five sons died within four years of their parents, which is not correct, either.

635 Whitefield had visited Frelinghuysen when Gronniosaw was there [Gronniosaw 1774:28]. Mouw believes it is more likely that Gronniosaw confused George Whitefield with Gilbert Tennent as having been Frelinghuysen’s friend [Mouw 2009:589], but the Scots-Irish Presbyterian Tennent never lived in England.

636 This visit took place in 1762 [Potkay 24]. I have not been able to find any account in Dutch sources of his telling his life story to 38 Dutch ministers. It is odd not to find any such reference to an event that in the Netherlands must have been considered as special as Ghanaian Jacobus E. J. Capitein (1717-
Psalm 25

Another possible connection between Frelinghuysen and Westerlo is their attraction to Psalm 25. It would be futile to look for the contemporary source(s) of this well-known Bible text from which Westerlo quoted Psalm 25 in his Memoirs. It is, however, interesting to note that both Theodorus Jacobus Frelinghuysen and Dina Van Bergh, Johannes Frelinghuysen’s future wife, also use parts of Psalm 25 in a discussion of a religious topic.

When remembering “the truths he heard daily” while staying at his mother’s cousins’ house in Oldenzaal, and how it kept him from mischief, Westerlo admitted in his Memoirs on January 17, 1770, that he would always have enough reasons to pray to God “Lord, remember not the sins of my youth,” the first half of Psalm 25:7. Since he quoted the words in Dutch, on the same day as his description of the conversion that took place on April 20, 1768, it is safe to assume that he did not use the rhymed version of this by Isaac Watts that he owned, which reads Forgive the sins of riper days, and follies of my youth.

As part of Westerlo’s conversion experience, he wrote that he felt compelled to read Psalm 25, a prayer for deliverance from enemies. He had access to several versions of this psalm, both in English (for example, Isaac Watts’s Psalms of David, in short meters: Forgive the sins of riper days, and follies of my youth:) and in Dutch (for example, the Statenvertaling of 1637: Gedenk niet der zonden mijner jonkheid). Since at that time he still communicated in Dutch, it makes sense that the quotation of Psalm 25:7 earlier in his Memoirs was in Dutch: Heere gedenkt niet de Zonden mijner Jonkheid (“Remember not the sins of my youth”), and that it is almost identical to the text in the Statenvertaling.

Around 1733, Frelinghuysen dedicated two sermons to Psalm 25: De Zonden der Jonkheit Beklaagt en Afgebeden Zynde (“The Sins of Youth Lamented and Warded Off through Prayer”) and Gods Weg met Zyn Volk in het Heiligdom (“The Way of God with His People in the Sanctuary”). The first explains that “the sins of our youth” include all sins of all stages of human life before old age. One is to utter these words, “remember not the sins of my youth,” when one is a full-grown man. “The elect […] are not only convinced of the sins of their youth at their conversion but subsequently become so struck by them that they are distressed and deeply humbled on account of them.” 637 This applies precisely to Westerlo the moment he uttered these words, when, as an adult who has just been converted, he reflected on his youth. 638

638 Westerlo also used these words from Psalm 25:7 when he was in a lot of pain due to an illness [Memoirs, January 23, 1785].
The second sermon focuses to a large extent on the meaning and importance of the covenant with God, and Frelinghuysen stresses the importance of surrendering oneself wholly, and renewing that surrender daily. Westerlo made frequent references to his own covenant with God, including his desire to renew it.

Dina Van Bergh, who is known today for her diaries filled with pious reflections, and whom Westerlo called “a lady of exemplary Godliness and uncommon knowledge of the Christian religion,” reported in 1748 that Amsterdam minister Theodorus Van Schelluyne had prefaced Psalm 25 with a text concerning the covenant: “It is in our hearts that we make a covenant with the God of our fathers.” Van de Bank uses a reference to a sermon on Joshua 24:22 by Frelinghuysen, Dina’s deceased father-in-law, to point out that such covenants were more common then, as Frelinghuysen referred to a “personal, solemn Covenant, as practiced in the Church of Scotland.” As pointed out earlier, Frelinghuysen also preached on the covenant as mentioned in Psalm 25:10.

Family connections

Theodorus Jacobus Frelinghuysen’s work was marred by several clashes with colleagues in America and with the Classis of Amsterdam. Eilardus Westerlo, on the other hand, seems to have been successful by avoiding conflicts. An explanation for the difference in approach may be found in the way they established themselves in their respective societies.

Frelinghuysen seemingly sought confrontation from the start, possibly convinced that he was battling for the beliefs his friends in East Friesland held dear. His first sermon, a visit to his colleague’s home, and even his marriage, to orphaned Eva Terhune, stirred up controversy. Frelinghuysen fought the establishment in his congregations, from his first sermon in the Raritan Valley on. His efforts...

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639 See Beeke 2000:130.
640 See Chapter 4.
642 Memoirs, November 16, 1790.
643 Van de Bank 1999:41. Westerlo owned a copy of Bernhardus Zandyk’s *Verklaringe van het Driev-en-Vijftigste Hoofdstuk van Jesaias Godtspraken [Explanation of the 53rd Chapter of Isaiah’s Prophecies]* (1745), which had a preface by Theodorus Van Schelluyne.
645 *The Soul Covenanting with God*, a call on communicants to enter into a covenant with God, included in *Een Bundelken Leervredenen* (1736) [Beeke 2000:206-214].
646 Theodorus Jacobus died three years before Dina married Johannes Frelinghuysen, on March 9, 1750.
649 Tanis 1967:43.
towards promotions and ordinations by the Dutch Reformed clergy in America did not endear him to the Classis of Amsterdam.

Reportedly, Eilardus Westerlo was well liked by the powers in Albany from the beginning, and the cautious approach he employed to the issues that divided his congregation contributed to his successful thirty-year ministry. He married into the establishment of Albany, into families with positions of power and wealth. The complaint by the Classis of Amsterdam that he was one of those called to America while bypassing the Classis was addressed to the ministers who were behind the calls, and no ill effect can be found to have impacted Westerlo’s career.

One could argue that many of the battles that Frelinghuysen had fought in the 1730s and 1740s had been won by the time Westerlo arrived in 1760. Perhaps confrontation would no longer have been a successful approach. However, a few of those battles had not been settled yet. Westerlo did, quietly, favor the establishment of a college in New Jersey, and he also supported the Plan of Union, against the will of a considerable number of members of his congregation, as he noted in his Memoirs.

Conclusion

A closer look at Eilardus Westerlo’s translation of a Dutch catechetical book, along with his Memoirs, his correspondence, and the surviving Church Records that he wrote down as the scribe, yields new insight into Westerlo’s understanding of the role of religion in general and of the Dutch Reformed Church in particular.

The fact that Westerlo is not known to have discussed the Frelinghuysen family and the role it played before and during Westerlo’s tenure in Albany is striking, and somewhat puzzling. A possible explanation for this omission may lie in Westerlo’s understanding, right or wrong, of his congregation’s reception and assessment of his predecessor, Theodorus Frelinghuysen, who was minister in Albany from 1745 until 1759.

Eilardus Westerlo and Theodorus Jacobus Frelinghuysen, two Dutch Reformed Pietists who lived about forty years apart in North America, were both interested in learning from colleagues of other denominations, not shying away from inviting them into their churches. Westerlo’s and Frelinghuysen’s experiences in converting people, and their common interest in Psalm 25, combined with other aspects in their educational background may help explain how they were both successful in the New World. Their success came through different routes: Westerlo working with, and Frelinghuysen against those in power.
6. John Henry Livingston: father of the Reformed Church in America?

Introduction

In this chapter I will argue that Eilardus Westerlo, brother-in-law and colleague of John Henry Livingston, played an important role in the establishing of what came to be known in 1867 as the Reformed Church in America. Livingston is given credit for his involvement both in ending the Church’s schism, which lasted several decades in the eighteenth century, and in setting up the legal and academic framework of the Church. I will look into why the assessment of Livingston’s role has overshadowed that of Westerlo.

John Henry Livingston is viewed by many as the “father of the Reformed Church in America.” It seems the epithet was not used until his later years, or even after his death, in retrospect, but it was meant to highlight his role in the transition of the American branch of the Reformed Dutch Church to the Reformed Church in America. The Church was established in the first half of the seventeenth century, fully dependent on the Mother Church in Holland. In the late eighteenth century it severed its ties with Holland, largely with consent of the Mother Church. This was an important move in the direction of the Reformed Church in America, a name not agreed upon until 1867, when the words “Dutch” and “Protestant” were finally omitted. During the same time period, the notion “Protestant” saw a revival of its usage in the Netherlands.

Is Livingston’s fame in his work toward this transition justified? Was his role like that of a father founding and nurturing his family, or that of a patriarch establishing a new church? Why was Livingston not called “the father of the Reformed Church in America” until after his death? In order to answer these questions, I will examine his role as it is known today, and I will investigate the circumstances under which Livingston came to his actions. I will also compare these to the role Westerlo played in the increasing independence of the Church from the Mother Church in the Netherlands. I will evaluate and then try to establish a balance between the two roles.

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650 Coakley notes that, four years after Livingston’s death, Gunn (Gunn 1829:320) already calls Livingston “the father of the church’s constitution” – but not of the church [Coakley 1992:130].

651 Fred Van Lieburg, in his 2006 inaugural lecture at the Vrije Universiteit Amsterdam entitled Een Protestantse kerk in Nederland? ['A Protestant Church in the Netherlands?], points out that ‘Protestants,’ long used to equal ‘non-Roman Catholics,’ gained in meaning in the course of the eighteenth century: influenced by Pietism and the Enlightenment, the gap between Catholics and non-Catholics widened. 1870 marks the foundation of the Nederlandsche Protestantenbond, the ‘Dutch Alliance of Protestants,’ to unite liberal Christians.

652 Most scholars, including Gunn, do not address the issue of who came up with the phrase “Father of the [Dutch] Reformed Church in America,” or when it first occurred, and Coakley simply says he does not know “when or by whom Livingston was first called ‘father of the church’” [Coakley 1992:130].
The situation of the Dutch Reformed Church in America in the 1760s

The Dutch Reformed Church in America, possibly as a result of the *Great Awakening*, a religious revival that swept British North America between the 1720s and 1740s, slowly but surely started to express its desire to become independent of the Mother Church, to which it had been subordinate since 1624, through the Synod of North Holland. In the 1730s, with the encouragement from the Classis of Amsterdam, the North American congregations worked towards the establishment of a Coetus in North America.

The requestors believed the issue here was not the subordination to the Mother Church, which would remain intact, but a lack of insight in the Netherlands into the condition of the Church in North America. The often negative reporting on the state of the Church deterred ministers and candidates from the Netherlands from coming over, and the object of such a Coetus would be “to prevent or to heal the differences and disturbances which from time to time spring up among us.” Later two additional reasons were given: a possible solution to disputes such as the one with Theodorus Jacobus Frelinghuysen in Raritan, and the prevention of “the lording or the exaltation of one over another,” which would inevitably lead to independent churches.

A desire to be allowed to examine candidates for the ministry and to ordain them was not expressed until April 1738, when the approval to ordain Johannes Schuyler was not received until a year and a half after the Classis of Amsterdam had sent it. One week later a draft of a Coetus constitution was signed by nine ministers (including Haeghoort, Erickzon, and Schuyler) and eleven elders. It did not mention examining and ordaining candidates for the ministry. An accompanying letter, signed by Gualtherus Du Bois and Gerardus Haeghoort on behalf of the assembly which adopted the above-mentioned draft, claimed they had never received a reply to their repeated requests concerning a Coetus, which was desired by all the churches in North America, with the exception of four ministers who opposed it.

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653 Such a lack of insight was not new: it can be traced back to the early days of New Netherland [See, for example, Frijhoff 1995:584-585].
654 ER 2708.
655 By Dominee Gerardus Haeghoort (1709-1783), in a personal letter to a member of the Classis of Amsterdam, on September 23, 1737.
656 Long-lasting conflict, known as *De Klagte* [the Complaint], centered around Dominee Theodorus Jacobus Frelinghuysen of Raritan, NJ (1692-1741/2), between 1725 and 1742. One of the issues was whether Presbyterian ministers should be allowed to preach in Dutch Reformed church buildings. As a result of the controversies, some created consistories of disaffected members, in which directives from the Classis of Amsterdam were ignored [For an account of the conflict, see Loux 1979 and Tanis 1967].
657 ER 2696.
658 Letter to the Classis of Amsterdam, 20 April 1738, signed by Dominee Reinhardt Erickzon (1692?-1771) Neversink (Middletown), NJ, and Dominee Gerardus Haeghoort of Second River (Belleville), NJ.
659 Dominee Johannes Schuyler (1710-1779).
The Classis of Amsterdam reiterated\textsuperscript{660} that it would like to see a successful Coetus in New York and New Jersey, on the same basis as the one in Suriname,\textsuperscript{661} but that matters of church doctrine, preparatory and final examinations of candidates, and ordination of ministers should be left to the Classis of Amsterdam, as stipulated in Article 4 of the Church Order of Dort.

Starting in 1741, first by Dominee Dorsius\textsuperscript{662} of Pennsylvania and Theodorus Jacobus Frelinghuysen of New Jersey, and later by the Classis-inspired Coetus, several candidates were ordained, citing the shortage of ministers in North America Dorsius claimed he had the authorization either from the University of Groningen or from the Classis of Schieland (Synod of South Holland) to ordain any qualified person.

The Classis of Amsterdam played a confusing role in the first years of the Coetus. With a few exceptions, it would not allow ordinations in America, and in 1743 those of Johannes Henricus Goetschius and Johannes Casparus Frijenmoet, performed by Dorsius two years earlier, were declared illegal, resulting in all their baptisms and sacraments being considered invalid.\textsuperscript{663} The Classis’s request to Theodorus Frelinghuysen in 1745, apparently reiterated as an order in 1753, to “continue to urge the Rev. consistory of Albany to join the Coetus,”\textsuperscript{664} for which Frelinghuysen reported he had done all he could, must be understood in light of the fact that this Coetus was not to promote and ordain candidates.

The development before 1747 toward the eventual independence of the Dutch Reformed Church in America was hindered by many congregations being disinterested in establishing an official assembly in North America.\textsuperscript{665} After 1754, the opposition by the Conferentie party to more independence (read: to the authority to examine and promote candidates, and the establishment of an academy to train candidates) stood in the way of cooperation between the parties.

In the 1760s, the Canons of Dort, especially Article 36, on subordination, were the most important reasons given by ministers to oppose the loosening of the rules. For consistories and congregations one might assume that maintaining the ties with the fatherland formed a more compelling reason to vote against a more

\textsuperscript{660} Letter of April 6, 1739 [ER 2719]. See also ER 2664.

\textsuperscript{661} The first mention of the Coetus in Suriname is found in 1701 [ER 1479].

\textsuperscript{662} Peter Heinrich Dorsius (1711-1756/7), licensed by the Classis of Schieland (Rotterdam) and ordained by the Classis of Groningen, 1737. He had shown a disregard for the truth in 1738, when he presented himself to Johann Philip Boehm in Philadelphia as an "inspector" on behalf of the Classis of Amsterdam, when such a position did not exist [Hinke 1916:262].

\textsuperscript{663} Roberts 2002:73.

\textsuperscript{664} ER 3423. "I laid before them that part of the letter of the Rev. Classis, which related to the Coetus, and requested that I, with an elder, should now go to New York for the purpose of joining ourselves to the Rev. Coetus. But in vain! They declared that they would have nothing to do with the Coetus. When I asked them about my going alone, I was refused. I was not allowed even to go to New York to attend to my own necessary business. So far as I have yet discovered, and in more cases than this one – though throughout the whole world elsewhere, it is different – it may be said to be almost an axiom at Albany, ‘He that perseveres, loses.'"

\textsuperscript{665} See, for example, Mouw 2009:253.
independent church body in America. It might also have been unclear what other changes such a shift in power could bring for either the consistories or the congregations. On an individual basis, it is altogether possible that members of consistories and congregations were afraid of giving up their Dutch identity. Others, on the opposite end of the spectrum, may have been ready and eager to embrace their American identity.

The growing movement toward independence from Great Britain, occurring simultaneously in America in the years leading up to the War of Independence, must have added to the confusion in people’s minds as to what identity they had and were to assume given these developments. During a Great Consistory meeting at the Albany Church on August 28, 1772, dedicated to the question of accepting the Plan of Union, the objections expressed by the members were largely focused on the fear of additional costs and burdens on the Church. Additionally, the possibility of ensuing turmoil in the congregation was used as a second argument not to join the Union at this point in time. The Dutch versus American identity was not mentioned as such, but it could very well be an underlying cause of the (feared) turmoil if the Plan were accepted.

**John Henry’s path to the ministry**

John Henry Livingston was born near Poughkeepsie in May 1746. He spent his early years there, educated by private tutors, until he went to Yale College at age 12. At that point nothing pointed toward a career in the ministry. Most of his relatives were law school graduates and politicians. As contemporary Livingstons the following deserve mentioning:

666 See Appendix 8 for a partial family tree of the Livingstons.

William Livingston (1723-1790), brother of John Henry’s father-in-law Philip, was Governor of New Jersey (1776-1790), and one of the signers of the US Constitution; William’s son Henry Brockholst Livingston (1757-1823) was a Justice of the US Supreme Court (1806-1823);

William’s daughter Sarah Livingston (1756-1802) married John Jay (1745-1829), the first Chief Justice of the Supreme Court (1789-1795) and a drafter of the New York State Constitution; and
cousin Robert R. Livingston, Jr. (1746-1813) was one of the drafters of the Declaration of Independence and of the New York State Constitution. As Chancellor of New York, he administered the first-term oath of office to first president George Washington in 1789. As Minister to France, he negotiated the Louisiana Purchase in 1803.
John Henry was a member of the well-established Livingston family of the colony of New York. He descended directly from the Reverend John Livingston (1603-1672), a Scottish Presbyterian minister who had fled to Rotterdam, the Netherlands, in 1663. Livingston’s son Robert, John Henry’s great-grandfather, moved to America in 1673, settling in Albany, NY, in 1675. He married Alida Schuyler, the widow of a Dutch Reformed minister, Domine Nicholas Van Rensselaer.

Perhaps due to the time spent in Holland and to the fact that the Livingsons married women of Dutch descent in America, the transition of this branch of the Livingston family from Presbyterian to Dutch Reformed was relatively rapid. In his will, dated 1721, Robert bequeathed 100 acres for a house and farm “for the use of a Presbyterian minister of the established Church of Scotland, or for one of the churches of Holland which conform to the doctrine and discipline of the Synod of Dort.” His son, John Henry’s grandfather Gilbert (1690-1746), married Cornelia Beekman in the Dutch Reformed Church in Kingston, NY.

John Henry’s father, known as Dr. Henry Livingston, Sr., baptized at the Dutch

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667 Some historians insist on spelling his name “Livingstone,” whereas his memoirs, and also his A Letter Written by that Famous and Faithful Minister of Christ Mr. John Livingstoun unto his Parishioners of Ancram in Scotland (Rotterdam, 1671) show yet a different spelling altogether.

668 The Scottish Church in Rotterdam was an influential church in the seventeenth century, and immigration from Scotland into the Netherlands was not uncommon [see Catterall 1998].

669 For more on Alida Schuyler Van Rensselaer Livingston, see Rothschild 2008.

670 Fifth son (1636-1678) of Kiliaen Van Rensselaer, the founder of Rensselaerswyck.


672 The copy of the marriage records of the Dutch Reformed Church in Kingston, NY, gives him as “Gysbert Lievestont, of Roelof Janz Kil,” marrying Cornelia Beekman of Kingston, on December 22, 1711.
Reformed Church in Kingston, was an elder at the Dutch Reformed Church in
Poughkeepsie (1753), and became a deacon there in 1777.

John Henry was educated at Yale College in Connecticut (1758-1762), where he
also received his law degree in 1765. Due to ill health, he spent months at home
in Poughkeepsie in 1764-1765. When he attended a revival meeting of the British
evangelist George Whitefield, who was there on his sixth trip to America, he was
reportedly so impressed with the sermon that he decided to change careers and
prepare himself for the ministry.\(^{673}\) His sickness leading to his call to the ministry
might well qualify as his rebirth experience, but there is no such mention of it in
his memoir. It is clear that this period of ill health had afforded him time to read
and reflect:

> **Convictions of sin, of guilt, and misery, became clear and
> pungent; and some confused idea of redemption through a
> Savior, and the possibility of pardon, and the restoration of my
> depraved nature, engaged my thoughts and prayers, without
> intermission. For several months, I could do nothing but read
> and meditate, plead at a throne of grace, and weep over my
> wretched and lost estate. As new inquiries and difficulties
> arose, and new truths, with their inseparable consequences,
> came under consideration, I repaired to the Bible, I supplicated
> for light and instruction, and had to contend, study, and struggle
> for every article of faith in succession.**\(^{674}\)

His clear conviction that one’s life should be devoted to the service of God is
shown in a letter he wrote to his 15-year-old brother Henry, three months before
leaving for the Netherlands, in February 1766. He admonished him to keep up his
studies of Latin,\(^{675}\) and expressed the hope that “this noble principle may ever
influence you: may you always look upon yourself as in a threefold capacity and
state, viz. that of serving and doing your duty to your God, that to your neighbor
(who is the whole world with whom we are concerned), and that to yourself.”

In his memoir,\(^{676}\) Livingston gives his parents’s and his own membership of the
Dutch Reformed Church,\(^ {677}\) the ongoing schism in the Dutch Reformed Church in

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\(^{673}\) The discovery of several books by Philip Doddridge, also mentioned by Eilardus Westerlo, is also
reported by several sources as sparking Livingston’s interest in the ministry [for example, Brumm
1997].

\(^{674}\) Gunn 1829:52. There is a certain parallel with Westerlo’s rebirth while studying Thomas Boston.

\(^{675}\) Letter to Harry (Henry) Livingston, New York, February 4, 1766 [Livingston Family Papers, Hoes
Collection, NYPL]: “for, however strange it may seem, yet experience daily teaches that although
man’s judgment and reason may ripen and so be better qualified for knowledge yet in an advanced age
man cannot learn as in youth.”

\(^{676}\) Most of our information on John Henry Livingston’s life has come to us through Alexander Gunn’s
biography, published four years after Livingston’s death, in 1829. Gunn used Livingston’s personal
memoir, written in 1818, which is now lost.

\(^{677}\) Gunn 1829:113-114. “[…] I could have joined the Presbyterian Church with great freedom, and
would have done so, had not motives occurred which induced me to prefer the Dutch Church. My
America, \(^{678}\) and his contacts with Dominee Archibald Laidlie in New York City\(^ {679}\) as reasons to select this particular denomination over all others. It should be taken into account that Livingston supplied these reasons some forty-eight years after his return from the Netherlands. This could explain how Livingston included repairing relations in his Church in America as the reason for his decision to undertake four-year studies 3,700 miles away. It does not seem the indicated, easiest, or fastest way to achieve this goal.

#### Eilardus and John Henry

In 1775, Eilardus’s marriage to Catharine Livingston Van Rensselaer, widowed since 1769, and John Henry’s marriage to her sister Sarah made them brothers-in-law. As John Henry noted in his 1790 letter to Gerhardus Hermanus Westerlo, the brother with whom Eilardus had kept up correspondence, “he and myself had married sisters. This brought us more nearly connected, but our affections were previously formed upon higher principles, and I esteemed him as the best and dearest friend I had on earth.”\(^ {680}\)

The first time Eilardus Westerlo and John Henry Livingston met was most certainly on October 15, 1771, at the so-called Union Convention, the meeting called to discuss the Plan of Union, devised by the Classis of Amsterdam to bring the Coetus and Conferentie parties\(^ {681}\) of the Dutch Reformed congregations in New York and New Jersey back together. It is possible that the two met between September 1770 and October 1771, but if so, it has not been recorded,\(^ {682}\) and any discussion would probably have focused on the upcoming convention.

The contact between Westerlo and Livingston during the subsequent years until Eilardus’s death in 1790 consisted of sporadic family visits, several letters, and meetings at the Synods, if both were healthy enough to attend. The letters, as usual for the time period, do not show an abundance of affection, but they do convey exchanges of ideas. The most important of these may have been their discussion of a Dutch Reformed professorate, either in New Jersey or in New York.

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\(^{678}\) Gunn 1829:114-115.

\(^{679}\) See, for example, Bruins 1957.

\(^{680}\) Draft of letter [likely addressed to G. H. Westerlo in the Netherlands], written in early 1791 by John Henry Livingston.

\(^{681}\) See Chapter 2.

\(^{682}\) On June 14, 1771, Margaret Beekman Livingston, of Clermont, the mother of Robert R. Livingston, Jr., suggested in a letter to John Henry Livingston that he meet Westerlo [van Rensselaer 1851:523-525].
**John Henry Livingston and the Plan of Union**

Many sources have given John Henry Livingston credit for coming up with the plan to unify the Dutch Reformed Church in America. As far as can be ascertained today, this claim is based largely on the fact that John Henry returned to America with the 1770 version of the *Plan of Union*, and that he discussed the situation in the Church with John Witherspoon (1722-1794) in 1768.

In 1765 and 1766, prior to his departure for the University of Utrecht, John Henry is reported to have spent quite some time discussing religious matters with Dominee Archibald Laidlie in New York City. Such discussions undoubtedly took place, but it can easily be argued that Laidlie did not have the issue of the *Coetus* and *Conferentie* on his mind when he tried to advise young Livingston. The issue foremost on Laidlie’s agenda was how to steer clear of this controversy and how to continue to perform his duties in New York. Livingston’s motivation for going to the Netherlands cannot have stemmed from discussions with Laidlie on the rift in the Church.

In 1763, Laidlie became the first minister hired by any Dutch Reformed Church congregation in America specifically to preach in English. One might attribute the call for an English-speaking minister indirectly to the *Coetus*-*Conferentie* controversy, in as far as the *Coetus* adherents viewed sermons in English as yet another step towards independence, and those joined in the *Conferentie* would oppose any move away from the Mother Church.

It would be more accurate to view the call to Laidlie in light of the movement for the use of English in the Dutch Reformed Church in New York City. By the middle of the eighteenth century, English was not only the language of the courts in New York, but it was also the language spoken by the young New Yorkers, both at their place of work and at home. English-language use in Church was opposed by a group of conservative Dutch, not necessarily all *Conferentie* people, who appealed to the Classis of Amsterdam to forbid English sermons in the Church in New York City. This attempt to maintain Dutch ethnicity through language, in spite of a growing English-speaking population in the city and a dwindling Dutch-speaking congregation, was unsuccessful.

New York City’s Dutch Reformed congregation was also the largest in North America, and the call to this Scottish minister from Vlissingen [Flushing] in the Netherlands had been so highly controversial that even three years after his installation he realized his position was not without pitfalls. If he was involved in the *Coetus*-*Conferentie* dispute, it would not have been by choice, and it is far from certain that he discussed the situation in the Church with Livingston.

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683 Most sources quote directly or indirectly from Gunn 1829.
684 As early as the seventeenth century, the Mother Church accepted the appointment of Walloon and German ministers in the Southern Netherlands, for practical purposes [see, for example, Van Lieburg 1996:130].
685 See Goodfriend 2003.
When Archibald Laidlie wrote to his brother John in Scotland in 1773, for the first time in at least five years, he discussed certain practices in the Dutch Reformed Church, especially as they differed from those in the Scottish Church, and also the amount of work he had had to do for his congregation until the arrival of John Henry Livingston (whom he does not mention by name) in 1770 as “a fellow laborer who has taken part of the burden upon him.”

More interesting may be who and what Laidlie did not mention in his letter, the other two ministers in New York City: Johannes Ritzema (1710-1796), who served the New York City congregation from 1744 until 1784, and Lambertus De Ronde (1720-1795), serving in New York City and Harlem, NY, from 1750 until 1784. Also apparently not important enough to discuss with his brother was the Plan of Union or the underlying Coetus-Conferentie issue which had not even been resolved in many congregations in North America, most notably in Albany, NY.

Why did Livingston bring the Plan of Union to America?

Livingston studied in Utrecht under Gijsbertus Bonnet (1723-1805) and he befriended fellow students Pieter Leonard Van de Kasteele (1748-1810) and Hieronymus Van Alphen (1746-1803). About half way through his four years in Utrecht, Livingston received a visit from John Witherspoon, the well-known Scottish Presbyterian minister, who had accepted the presidency of the College of New Jersey at Princeton. It is not known with certainty why Witherspoon came to the Netherlands before embarking on his first voyage to America. He met with some scholars, including Professor Bonnet, and secured about 300 books for the College at Princeton.

Of interest here is that Witherspoon was introduced to Bonnet by Livingston. Gunn reports from Livingston’s memoir that “Dr. Witherspoon expressed, in the warmest terms, his cordial esteem and veneration for the Reformed Dutch Church, and declared his hope and expectation, that the two Churches of Holland and

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686 On November 5.
687 It is not clear whether the date of 1784 is correct. It is certain that all the Dutch Reformed ministers fled New York City during the War of Independence, which made it impossible for them to live or preach in New York City until October 1783.
688 Little is known as to why he specifically went to Utrecht, where Gijsbertus Voetius was the first professor of theology, and not elsewhere in the Netherlands. It is said that Professor Bonnet enjoyed an excellent reputation as a scholar, and Archibald Laidlie was apparently happy Livingston was at Utrecht with him [Gunn 1829:149]. Van Eijnatten mentions Livingston’s membership of a religious circle in Utrecht led by Professors Meinard Tydeman (1741-1825) and Gijsbertus Bonnet. Several members had experienced a conversion [Van Eijnatten 2003:450-451].
689 Van de Kasteele, a politician, patriot, and poet, wrote an entry in Livingston’s Liber Amicorum (Buijsters 1973:36). Van Alphen, a pietist, attorney, Orangist and poet, is known today for his poetry for children. Van de Kasteele and Van Alphen co-authored Stigtelijke Mengelpoëzij (1771).
690 Witherspoon is also known today as the only clergymen to have signed the Declaration of Independence in 1776.
Scotland would, by their mutual efforts and influence, while they still remained two distinct denominations, without any public union or blending, powerfully defend the doctrines of grace, and successfully co-operate in promoting the best interests of the Gospel in America.\textsuperscript{691}

This reflected the Classis of Amsterdam’s expressed interest in a professorship or at least its endorsement of plans to install a professor of Divinity at the Presbyterian-led College at Princeton\textsuperscript{692} – not at King’s College (now Columbia University), established by the Anglican Church in 1754. This stipulation was later dropped from the 1768 Plan, due to opposition from both the “so-called Coetus” and the Conferentie adherents in North America.\textsuperscript{693}

Contrary to what has been understood by some historians, Witherspoon’s visit was clearly not intended to help solve the schism in the Dutch Church in America, nor did it result in any recommendation in that direction.\textsuperscript{694} Witherspoon lent a willing ear to Livingston and Bonnet concerning cooperation between the Dutch Reformed Church in America on the one hand, and the Presbyterian-controlled College of New Jersey at Princeton on the other. It must be pointed out that Witherspoon had never been to America, let alone visited Princeton. It is difficult to envision Witherspoon committing anything on behalf of the College before actually having seen it.

During Livingston’s time in the Netherlands, on May 30, 1769, a call from the consistory of New York was sent to him.\textsuperscript{695} In the last months before returning to America, Livingston wrote and defended his dissertation, \emph{De Foedere Sinaitico}. Dr. Livingston was formally received by the New York consistory on September 6, 1770.\textsuperscript{696} On January 8, 1771, the Classis of Amsterdam sent a letter to the consistory of New York confirming its ordination of Livingston, in compliance with the consistory’s long-standing request of March 31, 1769. It also understood that Livingston had arrived in New York and that he had assumed his duties there.

\begin{footnotesize}
\begin{enumerate}
\setcounter{enumi}{691}
\item Gunn 1829:185.
\item ER 4124 and 4129.
\item ER 4141-4142.
\item Witherspoon visited Utrecht in May, whereas the 1768 Plan had been finished and sent to America in April.
\item The Classis of Amsterdam granted Livingston his preparatory examination in June 1769. He was admitted, by a unanimous vote, to the office of public preaching, with a laudable certificate. He signed the Formulas of Unity [Confession of Faith, the Heidelberg Catechism, and the decrees of the Synod of Dordrecht, including especially the five articles against the Remonstrants], promised to read the three questions in the Baptismal Form without change [“Dost thou believe in God the Father almighty?”, “Dost thou believe in our Lord Jesus Christ and in His Cross?”, and “Dost thou believe also in the Holy Spirit?”], repudiated the condemned opinions of Röell and Bekker, and took the oath against simony [ER 4163]. For Röell and Bekker, see Van Eijlatten 2003:95. The oath against simony reads as follows: “I do swear that I have made no simoniacl payment, contract, or promise, directly or indirectly, by myself, or by any other to my knowledge, or with my consent, to any person or persons whatsoever, for or concerning the procuring and obtaining of this ecclesiastical place, etc.; nor will, at any time hereafter, perform, or satisfy, any such kind of payment, contract, or promise, made by any other without my knowledge or consent: So help me God, through Jesus Christ!”
\item He left Holland on June 1, 1770, to arrive in New York on September 3 [ER 4194].
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\end{footnotesize}
The Classis expressed the desire that Livingston “contribute much to bring about unity and peace generally, and promote true edification and blessedness.”

In the same letter, the Classis regretted that the reconciliation efforts between the Coetus and Conferentie members had been thwarted by one Conferentie member, Johannes Ritzema, which they blamed on his attachment to, and taking the oath of, the Episcopal Society. This accusation refers to the actions undertaken by Johannes Ritzema and Lambertus De Ronde to secure a professorship of Divinity at King’s College, the establishment of which was pushed by the Episcopalians in the 1750s, although staunchly opposed by William Livingston, who showed “an English Church Establishment was lurking under the scheme.”

The Classis expressed the hope that a friendly meeting would lead to peace. “It is very agreeable to us, that our proposed Plan or Project for Union and the restoration of good order, in all its essential parts, [has] met with the approval of most (of the churches). We had not supposed that at the first, we should have hit everything so exactly that there would be nothing needing alteration or improvement. We had requested the consideration of it by the brethren, and consequently we have taken your suggestions into our consideration.”

**The Plan of 1768**

The original plan referred to here was developed by the Classis of Amsterdam in April 1768. It took into account the resolution of the Synod of North Holland of 1763 on the one hand, and the actual situation the congregations in New York and New Jersey found themselves in, five years after that resolution was adopted, on the other. The resolution of 1763 basically denied the request submitted by the Coetus members in New York and New Jersey, defended in person by Dominee Jacob Rutsen Hardenbergh, to allow them to become a classis, with power to examine candidates and ordain ministers in America. The reason for denial was that the Synod viewed the case as a “Res Judicata,” that is, they had already rejected a similar request (in 1755, 1756, and 1757).

The Classis of Amsterdam’s “Committee ad hanc causam” submitted its report (pre-advice) to the Synod of North Holland, which met to discuss the plan in July. In June the Classis of Amsterdam sent identical letters to the Coetus and the Conferentie in America requesting that both parties not take any definitive steps until the plan was forwarded to them, the more so since it “is cast in such a form, that we have reason to believe that it will not be distasteful to any of the brethren.

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697 ER 4194. The call to Livingston was dated May 30, 1769.
698 Johannes Ritzema welcomed and received Westerlo upon his arrival in 1760.
699 Corwin 1902:678. Since King’s College was founded by the Church of England in 1754, Livingston was proven to be right.
700 ER 4195.
701 At the time minister at Raritan, NJ.
in this dispute in the New Netherland Church, notwithstanding your present complications.\footnote{702}

The report gives three reasons the resolution of 1763 should be modified:\footnote{703}

1. The original Dutch families in America have grown substantially, but most do not speak or understand Dutch. Sending Dutch-speaking ministers from Holland will be useless.

2. Candidates for the ministry cannot or do not want to come over to our universities. Their options are the “imperfect instruction of certain ministers,” or attending Episcopalian\footnote{704} [they probably meant King’s College in New York City, NY, which was then led by an Anglican, Myles Cooper - RN] or Presbyterian\footnote{705} [for example, the College of New Jersey in Princeton, NJ - RN] universities already in existence, or else they must join “other sectaries.” One “cannot in the time that he pursues his studies here, become so well versed in [Dutch Reformed doctrine], that he would be able to preach in it.”\footnote{705}

   The churches will end up finding ones trained in America by either the Coetus or the Conferentie party, thus worsening the schism.

3. It may soon prove too late to reconcile the two parties: the Coetus party has already petitioned for and obtained a separate charter for itself for a school in New Jersey [Queen’s College, now Rutgers University, in 1766 - RN], for which they will probably appoint professors from their own ranks. As a result the orthodox doctrine and the connection with the Mother Church may be lost.

These three reasons compelled the Committee to propose the following:

1. A letter should be sent to both parties to urge them to agree to a quick and complete unification, forgiving each other for past wrongdoings. This point would be clarified at the next session of the Synod of North Holland.

2. The Coetus would be strongly advised not to continue on the path toward a separate school, for which the funds, as well as capable professors, were probably lacking.

3. Both parties should be asked to negotiate a deal with the school in Princeton, “situated at the heart of the Province,”\footnote{706} founded by Scottish Presbyterians, with a capable faculty and a good library in place, and with many students.

4. The deal should be not to turn the Presbyterian and Reformed Church into one, but to allow students of the Reformed Church to attend classes taught by professors already there.

\footnote{702}{ER 4126.}
\footnote{703}{This also shows that it is unlikely that Livingston assisted the Classis of Amsterdam in taking steps to put an end to the schism in 1768 [Meeter 1993:33-34].}
\footnote{704}{“Presbyterians, who, without binding themselves by Confessions and Formulae, freely teach what they think” [ER 4122].}
\footnote{705}{ER 4122.}
\footnote{706}{ER 4123.}
5. One or two professors of Theology, “Netherland Theologians of tried learning and orthodoxy, adhering irrefragably to the Netherlands Formulae of Concord” should be chosen. Dr. Witherspoon of Scotland, soon to be president there, might offer a helping hand here.

6. A lector to teach the Dutch language would help keep it in active use as much as possible. When more money becomes available, these arrangements could be amplified.

7. a. The Netherlands Confession and Church Order, with the subscription of, and firm adherence to, the Formulae of Concord should be the basis of the Church government;
   b. The connection between the American Church and the Mother Church should remain firm and unquestionable, with a high frequency in correspondence.
   c. The relationship should be expressed in terms of a nauwe verbindtenis [a close alliance], and not of subordinatie [subordination], which carries a negative weight in English; this on condition that the Coetus would abandon the terms ‘Classes’ and ‘Synod’;
   d. The name ‘Conventus’ could be used, if need be, for smaller gatherings of ministers and elders of neighboring churches;
   e. A General Coetus should be held annually, with delegates from the Conventus. This Coetus would solely have the right to carry out preparatory and final examinations, as well as to ordain; on condition that at least one professor of theology have a vote in the Coetus.
   f. This Coetus must send its Acta to the Classis of Amsterdam annually. It must also accept advice from the Mother Church and act upon it.

It was this plan that was subsequently amended between 1768 and 1770, following feedback received from North America. The basic change was that now the professorate was no longer sought in (collaboration with) the College at Princeton, but would be appointed following the advice of the Classis of Amsterdam, and it would be a professor from the Netherlands. Nothing came of the appointment of a professor until 1784: the Classis did not propose one, although it had committed itself to doing just that. The War of Independence (1775-1783) made sending anyone for that position dangerous, if not impossible, and universities did not function well, if at all.

In 1784, after the long hiatus in correspondence due to the American struggle for independence, John Henry Livingston was appointed professor of theology, after he had brought the issue before the Classis of Amsterdam again. Since neither the trustees of Queen’s College, the Classis of Amsterdam, nor the Synod provided any salary, Livingston continued teaching from his home, until 1787, when he became the first principal of Erasmus Hall in Flatbush, in the far southwestern part of Long Island. He taught his students there until 1810, when he moved to New

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307 ER 4124.
308 This is another clear indication that Witherspoon was not involved in the Plan, other than that his possible help is mentioned with regard to the Dutch Reformed professorate in Princeton.
309 Articles 28 and 29 [see ER 4215-4216].

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Brunswick, NJ, to accept the presidency of Queen’s College. The Reformed Church’s Theological Seminary was established in New Brunswick too, sharing some of Queen’s College’s facilities.

**Justification for naming Livingston “father of the Reformed Church in America”**

The reasons that are mentioned in the literature for Livingston’s elevation to ‘fatherhood of the Reformed Church in America,’ summed up in Coakley’s claim that “no other single figure of his time in the Reformed Church contributed to its development in so many prominent ways” can be clustered into five main ones. For each one I will also examine its value or justification.

1. Livingston brought the *Plan of Union* over, which he wrote or co-wrote.

Some indeed go as far as to say that he actually came up with or developed the plan, or even attribute to him the ‘foresight to meet with the Classis of Amsterdam and the Synod of North Holland,’ giving them ‘a firsthand interpretation of the situation’ and finding ‘a solution that would be satisfactory to everyone.’

In this chapter I have shown that the 1771 *Plan* was merely a slightly amended version of the 1768 plan, which was written without Livingston’s involvement. It seems highly unlikely for a 20-year-old student, without extensive knowledge of the controversies in the Dutch Reformed Church in North America or their root causes, to be in a position to ‘interpret the situation’ the Church is in and to come up with a solution many had been working to find for decades. In all likelihood, the Classis of Amsterdam seized the opportunity to instruct young Livingston, who turned out to be the last to receive his education in the Netherlands, to be ordained by the Classis of Amsterdam, and to become a minister in Colonial North America, on how to present their amended plan to the congregations in New Jersey and New York. The letter sent by the consistory of New York to the Classis of Amsterdam on October 30, 1771, clearly recognizes the role of the Classis of Amsterdam: ‘They [the consistory of New York – RN] write, that as our [Classis of Amsterdam – RN] letters have been the foundation of their Union, and the Plan (of Union) proposed by us has been followed as closely as possible in the Articles of their Union, they have reason to hope also that this Plan will be agreeable to all the churches in that country.’

Alexander Gunn enumerates the people who helped Livingston “to restore the peace”:

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710 Coakley 1992:120.
711 Bruggink 2004:55.
712 ER 4227.
There were others, it is granted, who zealously cooperated with him in this difficult and weighty matter, as Doctors Laidlie, Westerlo, and Romeyn, and the Rev. Messrs. Hardenburgh, Light, Ver Breyck and Rysdyck, and the judicious and highly useful efforts of these clerical worthies to restore peace must not be forgotten: but Dr. Livingston is pre-eminently entitled to the precious and enduring honor of having been the peacemaker.

Since these names cannot be found listed like this elsewhere, Gunn must have based his text here on Livingston’s since lost memoir. This would mean that Livingston could not or did not want to take sole credit for the success of the Plan of Union. An interesting detail here is that only two of these seven ministers were ordained by the Classis of Amsterdam, one of whom, namely Laidlie, was educated in Scotland.

2. Livingston organized and chaired the convention in 1771, and he brought the parties together, starting with his own congregation.

A major achievement of the convention of October 1771 in New York City was that it brought the feuding parties to the negotiating table. However, it would be

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713 Of these three ministers, only Archibald Laidlie (minister in New York City) had received his (honorary) degree by then (Princeton, 1770). Westerlo did not receive his until 1785 (also from Princeton), and Dirck Romeyn (minister in Marbletown, Rochester, and Wawarsing, all in NY, until 1776), licensed by the American Classis, that is, the “so-called Coetus,” in 1766, received an honorary degree from Queen’s College in 1789. Since Gunn does not appear to know (much about) Westerlo [no mention by him that he and Livingston were brothers-in-law, for example], it is understandable he copied him with his doctorate from Livingston’s notes.

714 Jacob Rutsen Hardenbergh (1736-1790); licensed by the American Classis, that is, the “so-called Coetus,” in 1758; minister in Raritan, Bedminster, and Readington, all in NJ, until 1781.

715 Johannes Leydt (1718-1783); licensed by the Coetus in 1748; minister in New Brunswick and Six Mile Run, Franklin Park, NJ, 1748-1783. In his Memoirs, Westerlo also spelled this minister’s name ‘Light.’

716 Samuel Verbruyck (1721-1784); licensed by the Coetus in 1749; minister in Tappan and New Hempstead, NY, 1750-1784.

717 Isaac Rysdyck (1730?-1790); unlike Westerlo, this fellow graduate of the University of Groningen was licensed by the Classis of Amsterdam on his way to America, on May 6, 1765; minister in Poughkeepsie, New Hackensack, and Fishkill, all in NY, until 1772.

718 Gunn 1829:239.


720 Sixty years later, Demarest comes up with the same list, spelling Leydt’s name correctly, and adding Jackson between Verbruyck and Rysdyck, as ‘names of his friends and co-workers’ that ‘should not be forgotten’ [Demarest 1889:82]. William Jackson (1732-1813), never mentioned by either Westerlo or Livingston, was educated at the University of Utrecht (before 1757), King’s College (1761), Yale College (1763), and the College of New Jersey (1771). Licensed by the Classis of Amsterdam in 1757, he was minister in Bergen, NJ, and Staten Island, NY, 1757-1793. His grandfather and namesake was a Presbyterian Scotsman.
stretching the truth to say that this four-day convention solved everything to the point of unifying the Church.

Letters such as the one sent by the Reverend Dr. Thomas Clark of the Associate Reformed Church of Salem, NY, to Westerlo on November 12, 1771, resolving publicly to mention the “peace being restored to the dear Dutch Churches, who succored our persecuted Mother Church of Scotland long 28 years,”\textsuperscript{721} and the one sent by the consistory of New York (signed by John Henry Livingston) to the Classis of Amsterdam on October 30, 1771, in which they claim that, “with the exception of those who were prevented by domestic affairs etc., all the brethren came thither at the time appointed, and that, after a four-day session, to their mutual satisfaction and rejoicing, they united with one another in the way indicated by the Articles of Convention sent us,”\textsuperscript{722} may lead to the conclusion that the issue was resolved and that indeed all the congregations united in peace, adopting the Plan of Union.

The issue was still on the table. The convention attracted a mere twenty-two ministers (including Hermanus Meijer on behalf of Kingston, whose consistory no longer considered Meijer their minister), representing less than a third of all the congregations in New Jersey and New York.\textsuperscript{723} Article III of Union, ‘Absent Ministers and Elders,’ simply states that “With respect to absent Ministers and Elders who were invited, we have reason to believe that the greater part have been hindered from attending by family inconveniences.”\textsuperscript{724} Although Eilardus Westerlo signed the articles as scribe [but not on behalf of his congregation],\textsuperscript{725} together with John Henry Livingston as praeses and Isaac Rysdyck as the other scribe, some congregations left the convention not joining the Union – most importantly, the congregations of Albany, NY, the second largest, and of Kingston, NY.

Johannes Ritzema, a member of the Conferentie party, wrote to the Classis of Amsterdam, on November 27, 1771, six weeks after the convention, saying that, since the Classis had not responded to his “Defense,”\textsuperscript{726} he withdrew from the convention. He took particular issue with the fact that Dominee Meijer, being ‘under discipline,’ was included in correspondence, as were the ‘illegally ordained

\textsuperscript{721} ER 4229.
\textsuperscript{722} ER 4227. “Us” refers to the Classis of Amsterdam, which made an abstract of the letter.
\textsuperscript{723} See Voorhees 2005:316 for the numbers of congregations. In his Manual, Corwin says that of well over 100 churches 34 were represented. For example, Westerlo also represented Schaghticoke, for which he signed the articles. Corwin also counts 7 of the 11 Conferentie ministers present, 10 of the 13 “so-called Coetus,” and 5 of the 10 neutrals [Corwin 1902:121].
\textsuperscript{724} ER 4211.
\textsuperscript{725} Corwin points out that Westerlo “was accounted a neutral in the convention, although his name appears the year before in the charter of Queen’s College, which was secured by the Coetus party” [Corwin 1902:122].
\textsuperscript{726} See ER 4205-06 for this July 24, 1771 letter, in which he denies that nine tenths of the churches are in favor of the Plan of Union of the Classis. He grieves about being thought close to the Episcopalians, although he is a Director of King’s College. He submits his own alternative to the Plan developed by the Classis.
ministers of the Coetus. Half of the Conferentie brethren were unable to attend, and those present were forced to approve the Plan.

It can easily be argued that at least five of the six members of the Committee appointed to present the Plan during the convention were in favor of the Plan, making the Committee lopsided in favor of the ideas of the Coetus party:

a. The two ministers representing the Conferentie party, De Ronde and Rysdyck, could hardly be seen as their most ardent members. Corwin viewed De Ronde as someone having “passed through a bitter experience,” and who “came to the work of reconciliation with a chastened spirit.” Rysdyck was an unlikely Conferentie member in that, although he had come to America the traditional way, licensed by the Classis of Amsterdam, he had been the only one of his party to endorse the 1768 plan, which included a professorate at Princeton.

b. The neutral members were Livingston, who was in favor of the Plan, and Westerlo, representing a neutral congregation, but having shown Coetus sympathies.

c. The Coetus representatives were Hardenbergh and Verbruck, both licensed by the Coetus. Hardenbergh, who had unsuccessfully pushed for independence of the Church in America by appearing in person before the Classis of Amsterdam in 1763, was one of the Coetus party’s strongest advocates. Verbruck had been very active in the formation of an American Classis in the 1750s.

As for Livingston’s own congregation, in New York City, it does not seem as though he needed to work on the congregation to win them over. With Johannes Ritzema having offended the Classis of Amsterdam with his Episcopalian sympathies, and Lambertus De Ronde as the lone minister preaching in Dutch and English, which had been introduced successfully by Archibald Laidlie several years earlier, John Henry Livingston must not have had a very difficult time convincing the New York City congregations of the necessity of adopting the Plan of Union. The call to him in the Netherlands made it clear New York City needed another English-speaking minister.

By contrast, in 1760 Eilardus Westerlo found himself in a divided congregation. The divisions were maintained all through the 1760s and during the Revolution.

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[272] Corwin 1902:122. As the main reason Corwin gives De Ronde’s leading role in the lawsuit against English preaching, which the “Dutch party” lost, but at great expense. This must have “softened his heart.”


[279] De Ronde’s role in New York City remains unclear. Gunn claims, without any specifics, that his “conduct made him many enemies” [Gunn 1829:139] in the English-over-Dutch dispute in New York City. He also translated the United States Constitution. This translation was published in Albany, NY, in 1788, at a time when six states had adopted it – New York not yet [Ford 1888:387].

[273] One could see a parallel with the Constitution of the United States: it took several months for the individual states to adopt it. As Edward Countryman observes: “Two centuries after ratification [of the
The Church records and Westerlo’s personal writings show that the votes were so close that Westerlo himself could have cast the deciding vote in the early 1770s, but he thought it better for the peace in his congregation to propose another year of reflection, eventually leaving the issue undecided all through the War of Independence. The issue was finally settled in favor of the congregation of Albany joining the Union in 1785, the year Westerlo was elected president of the Synod.

3. Livingston fought successfully for the establishment of a Dutch Reformed professorate.

Livingston must be given credit for keeping the issue of the professorate on the table in the years following the convention of 1771. It was one of the main articles of the Plan, and the Classis of Amsterdam had still failed to act upon it in 1784. Contrary to its promise to find a professor in the Netherlands, the Classis then proposed Livingston, and the Synod appointed Livingston professor of Divinity, but without funds or affiliation with a university.

In view of the professorate being located in New York City, it is interesting to note that Livingston had been pushing for New Brunswick, rejecting the New York City option. Before he could return to New York City after the Revolution, Livingston examined the three options [in a letter to Westerlo, October 22, 1783],

1. Wait for the New York State government to appoint a Dutch Reformed professor at King’s College (named Columbia College in 1784), to be supported by their funds.
2. Request a union with Princeton for a professor of our nomination.
3. Building a Divinity Hall in New Brunswick, NJ, and endorsed the third option, admitting that Dirck Romeyn’s arguments “have not a little conducted [him] to establish [his] mind upon this plan.”

On June 2, 1784, Westerlo wrote in his Memoirs that “Dr. Livingston also informed [him] that our Synod intends to settle a professor of Divinity there [in New York City – RN] for our churches, on a plan I formerly wrote of to Dr. Livingston. May the Lord bless the attempts, and may it also be subservient to the propagation of orthodox piety.”

In September 1784, Westerlo informs Dominee Elias Van Bunschoten “of some matters respecting the professorate to be fixed in the University of New York,” which seems to indicate the plans were still to appoint a professor at Columbia
College. However, on October 5, the day Livingston was appointed, it was unclear to Westerlo where the professorate would be established: “[…] wherever the professorate may be fixed and established. May it flourish to the latest posterity, and be administered by such men of piety, learning and industry, as the Lord will own and bless.” On October 19, Westerlo knows that the Synod has decided in his favor: “[…] my prayer is heard and my proposal for the professorate to be fixed in New York.” It was not until 1810, 26 years after John Henry Livingston’s appointment as professor, that the professorate moved to New Brunswick, NJ, which was Livingston’s original favorite among the three options.

4. Livingston was essential in preparing the Church’s first hymnal and the new Church Order, and in training students for the ministry.

Livingston appears to have been on all the committees preparing the various documents needed for the Church on its way to independence, although he shared membership of these committees with people such as Westerlo, Meijer, Romeyn, Linn, and Hardenbergh, but Livingston is credited with the Preface and the Explanatory Articles of the 1793 book *The Constitution of the Reformed Dutch Church, in the United States.* One could argue that these additions verbalize the definitive break with the Mother Church, ending a fifty-year struggle to define and determine the role and structure of the Reformed Dutch Church in America, which cut its last visible tie with the Netherlands in 1867, when it adopted the name *Reformed Church in America.*

Without diminishing the prominent role that Livingston played in severing the ties with the Mother Church, he must have been a reluctant opponent of the Classis of Amsterdam, which would have put him in a position to be biting the hand that fed him. He had been ordained by them and entrusted with their revised *Plan of Union* in 1770.

It is possible that he understood it would be politically impossible for the Reformed Dutch Churches in America to turn their backs on the Mother Church entirely in 1771. The reason some degree of subordination to the Mother Church still felt necessary at that time must have been the discord among the congregations in New York and New Jersey, more so than opposition to independence in the Netherlands. The turnaround came after the War of Independence, and it was not necessarily instigated by Livingston.

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734 In the Extraordinary Synod of May 1792, “Professor Livingston reports, in the name of the committee, that […] it will be necessary to add some articles in explanation of the way and manner in which said Church Order of Dort is put into practice, agreeably to the Articles of Union ordained 1771, […]” (Meeter 1993:40-41).

735 Almost quietly English is finally officially established as the language to be used. On the first call to a minister to preach in English [Laidlie in 1763 – RN], John Henry Livingston is quoted as saying that English should have been introduced [in the Dutch Reformed Church – RN] a hundred years ago” [Gunn 1829:108]. It should be noted that English had been used in Dutch Reformed churches for practical reasons from the seventeenth century on.

736 In 1784, they would propose him for the professorate of Theology.
In his letter to Westerlo (October 22, 1783), Livingston acknowledged the change in America: “The revolution in our political interests has made a change in the general face of our American world, and as it has removed some difficulties which were taken into consideration in our former plan, so it has introduced others which deserve a weighty and impartial discussion. The common enemy to our religious liberties is now removed; and we have nothing to fear from the pride and domination of the Episcopal hierarchy.”

Unless Livingston expected assistance from the Classis of Amsterdam against this domination, it is unclear that he expected the changes he was referring to here to prompt the American congregations to cut ties with the Netherlands. The situation had apparently not changed enough for Livingston to avoid seeking help from the Classis in the search for an appropriate professor a year later.

Since the Theological Seminary of the Reformed Church, created by an act of the Synod of 1784, did not find a home until 1810, it cannot be established how many of the 55 candidates ordained between 1785 and 1810 were truly and exclusively trained by Livingston, either in New York City or Flatbush. Before the establishment of the professorate many ministers were involved in the training of candidates, including Westerlo and Meijer.

The number of candidates doubled in the years 1785-1810 compared with 1748-1784, which includes the War years 1775-1783, but this may say more about the legitimacy of the American Synod as opposed to the struggles the Coetus was involved in during the years leading up to the War than it does about the effectiveness of the professorate itself.

An argument that is also used to defend Livingston’s being called “father of the Reformed Church in America,” in connection with the number of students he trained over the years, is his sixty years in the service of the Church, including 41 years as professor of Theology.

There are two problems with this argument. On the one hand, the number of years in the service of an organization depends heavily on someone’s longevity, which may obscure the role of others who died at a younger age, and on the other hand, it says nothing about the influence exerted during those years, at the onset of the independence.

John Beardslee is right when he says: “the Dutch theological degree of John Henry Livingston, the church’s first theological professor, may have helped establish his prestige at a critical moment.” And what to think of John

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337 ER adds “1772” here [ER 4312], but the Plan dates back to 1771, or even 1770, of course.
338 ER 4312.
339 See, for example, Corwin 1902:1047-1049.
340 Beardslee 1999:54.
Coakley’s commentary that not even Livingston’s “contemporary admirers considered him a creative thinker”?\textsuperscript{741}  

5. Livingston was the first to set up missionary work for the Church.  

Most of the credit for Livingston’s role in setting up missionary work for the Reformed Church is due to his 1804 address to the New York Missionary Society, ‘The Glory of the Redeemer.’\textsuperscript{742} As an earlier sermon, ‘The Everlasting Gospel’ (1799), Livingston urges his audience to spread the gospel among other cultures around the world before Christ’s second coming, which he expected in or before the year 2000. Livingston was one of the officers of the New York Missionary Society,\textsuperscript{743} which was founded by the Reformed, Presbyterian and Baptist churches in New York City in 1796.\textsuperscript{744}

Missionary work is viewed as an important pillar of the Reformed Church in America. Its origins date farther back than 1804 or 1796. Some Dutch Reformed ministers performed missionary work among the Native American population as early as the seventeenth century. Some of the earliest examples stem from Albany, in the Mohawk Valley, where Dominee Johannis Megapolensis tried to “carry the Protestant message to the Indians”\textsuperscript{745} around 1645. In the 1680s, Godfridus Dellius was very active as a missionary around Albany.\textsuperscript{746} In the beginning of the eighteenth century, Bernardus Freeman, then in Schenectady, translated parts of the Bible into Mohawk Indian.\textsuperscript{747}

In 1786, specifically as a result of efforts by Eilardus Westerlo in the area surrounding Albany, NY, in the preceding years, “the General Synod made ‘the extension of the Church’ a regular agenda item at its annual meeting.”\textsuperscript{748} It was the church at Saratoga, NY, that “petitioned the synod for a minister, and a committee was appointed to devise some plan of preaching the gospel in destitute localities. This was followed by similar applications from Dutch families in Pennsylvania and Kentucky, while a number of churches in Canada were also cared for.”\textsuperscript{749} Saratoga was the location where Westerlo worked hard to establish

\textsuperscript{741} Coakley 1992:119. Coakley cites John De Witt, a colleague at the seminary in New Brunswick, in his funeral oration, on Livingston’s lack of originality in his system of theology, and biographer Gunn’s observation that Livingston “was not distinguished, indeed, for fertility of imagination, or for originality and sublimity of thought.” [Gunn 1829:487]  
\textsuperscript{743} Brouwer 1977:94.  
\textsuperscript{744} Kansfield 2004:15.  
\textsuperscript{745} Alexander 1988:24-26.  
\textsuperscript{746} On Megapolensis, see, for example, Jacobs 2005:319 and Joosse 2008:255-269. For Dellius, see Richter 1992:471. Even by his own account, Megapolensis was not terribly successful in converting the native population around Albany [Jameson 1909:177-180].  
\textsuperscript{747} Tanis 1967:48.  
\textsuperscript{748} Kansfield 2004:14-15.  
\textsuperscript{749} Department of Commerce 1928:10.
a joint Presbyterian-Dutch Reformed congregation between 1786 and 1790, finally settling on Samuel Smith in 1790.\textsuperscript{730}

**Nineteenth-century view of the struggles of the Dutch Reformed Church**

Early in the nineteenth century, the ecclesiastical problems of the Dutch Reformed were apparently already forgotten by some: the Arminian-Gomarian controversy of the early 1600s, the *Coetus-Conferentie* conflict in eighteenth-century North America,\textsuperscript{751} and the breaking off of the ties between the Mother Church in Holland and the Dutch Reformed Church in America – none of these were deemed important enough to mention in an 1802 farewell sermon.

From the pulpit where Westerlo had preached for thirty years, John Barent Johnson, a former student of John Henry Livingston, asked the following rhetorical questions to explain God’s blessing, while singing the praises of the Dutch Reformed Church’s preaching of the Heidelberg Catechism, and the resulting divine protection:\textsuperscript{752}

Why has our church remained united, ever since the secession of the Remonstrant brethren? Why have we not been cut up into divisions, and become embittered against each other? Why have we not contended about important or even trifling matters, so as to end in irreconcilable parties?\textsuperscript{753}

Johnson explained this even further, namely that

no schism have taken place in our church, either in Germany, in Holland, or in America, as far as I have been able to learn, within the last three centuries. Bekar, Rouel,\textsuperscript{754} and some other learned men, though somewhat erroneous, yet did not succeed in propagating their errors, so as to perpetuate division, and become the heads of parties.\textsuperscript{755}

\textsuperscript{730} See Westerlo’s *Memoirs*, entries of 8/16/1786, 1/22/1789, 8/18/1789, and 1/21/1790. Smith later worked for the Presbyterian congregation of Connecticut Farms, NJ.

\textsuperscript{751} David Voorhees claims that seventeenth-century Dutch political factionalism in New York contributed to the emergence of the two-party system in the United States [Voorhees 2009:422]. If he is right, then the eighteenth-century split between *Coetus* and *Conferentie* ministers and the subsequent division among congregations and consistories on the question whether to embrace independence from the Mother Church must also be viewed as precursors to that two-party system. From this perspective, the role of Westerlo and other Dutch Reformed ministers should then also be considered differently.

\textsuperscript{752} In his *Sermon of Farewell*, preached when leaving Albany for his native Brooklyn in 1802.

\textsuperscript{753} Johnson 1802:35.

\textsuperscript{754} He meant Balthasar Bekker and Herman Alexander Röell – see Chapter 7. If Johnson had wanted to exclude the Reformation itself, then he also seems off by one hundred years.

\textsuperscript{755} Johnson 1802:35-36.
In this uncontested sermon, Johnson added that many other churches in the area were troubled “with animosities and divisions,” but that the Dutch Reformed Church was spared thanks to its preaching of the Heidelberg Catechism, which served not only to maintain sound doctrine, but also to preserve peace and unity.

Were Livingston and Westerlo successful in their efforts to maintain unity within the Dutch Reformed Church in America that such a sermon was accepted at face value? Maybe we should not read too much into a sermon preached to explain why the Dutch Reformed Church was blessed. One could argue with Johnson that, if he considered his Church blessed, he should have admitted that there certainly were other churches in America equally or more blessed.756

Conclusion

John Henry Livingston played an important role in the transitional years of the Reformed Church in America, when it severed the ties with the Mother Church in the Netherlands and became an independent church in the fledgling United States of America. Calling him the “father of the Reformed Church in America” unjustly obscures the role some others played during that same time period. Livingston would have been the first one to admit that and fight such injustice, and he gave credit to seven of his brethren for the work they performed toward their common goal, indicating success would have been impossible without their zealous cooperation.

Eilardus Westerlo was one of these brethren. Livingston sought Westerlo’s advice on ecclesiastical matters, both as a friend, a brother-in-law, and a senior colleague. Westerlo was pleased to note that the option of his preference was chosen by the Synod (professorate in New York City). Westerlo’s Albany congregation was the largest one to postpone joining the Union (until 1785), so his delicate role in steering his congregation towards accepting the articles of the Plan of Union was of vital importance to the success of the independent Church.

Both Livingston and Westerlo were on the various committees appointed to prepare, translate, and develop the constitution, psalms and hymnals, catechism, and the Church Order. It is difficult to assess who played the most important role, but it is certain that more work befell Livingston following Westerlo’s untimely death in 1790.

Westerlo’s missionary work, although certainly more systematic than that of his contemporaries, fits in the tradition of the Reformed Dutch Church in New York and New Jersey. It is on this tradition that Livingston built the Church’s nineteenth-century missions, by advocating a wider, more international scope.

756 In 1776, the Dutch Reformed are ranked eighth among denominations by the number of congregations; in 1850 they are no longer mentioned [Finke 2005:28; 191-192]. In the ranking of denominations as a percentage of the total US population, the Reformed Church did not make the list in 1850 [Finke 1986:190].

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8. **Westerlo’s sermon of June 27, 1782**

**Introduction**

Over the course of thirty years, Westerlo prepared and delivered some 3,000 sermons. This chapter will provide insight into his preaching style, by focusing on one sermon in particular, which contains the elements generally found in Westerlo’s sermons. A word of caution: it will be difficult to draw definitive conclusions about Westerlo’s methods and opinions in religious matters based on this one sermon. However, the style and structure of Westerlo’s preaching shines through, and the influence of his teacher, Daniel Gerdes, a follower of Friedrich Adolf Lampe, can be felt in this sermon.

The sermon was delivered when General George Washington was the most important guest in the Church. On June 27, 1782, during the last months of the War of Independence, Eilardus Westerlo had the honor of addressing military leaders in a sermon he wrote for the occasion. Westerlo chose Zechariah 12:5, “Then the governors of Judah shall say in their hearts, ‘the inhabitants of Jerusalem shall be my strength in the Lord of Hosts, their God,’ ” as the main text of this sermon. Robert Alexander called it “an address of tribute” to General Washington.

In order to explain the importance of Washington’s visit in 1782, I will first briefly describe the situation in North America in general, and in Upstate New York in particular. I will then consider which were the possible sources for Westerlo’s choice for the topic of this sermon. I will compare the structure of Westerlo’s June 27 sermon with those of his teacher, Daniel Gerdes, and with those of his teacher’s teacher, Friedrich Adolf Lampe, whom Westerlo mentioned in general as one of his sources in preparation of his sermons. Then I will discuss the influence Westerlo may have had through this sermon on an important piece of writing in 1783 by General George Washington, at that time Commander-in-Chief of the American army.

**The political context**

The threat of British attacks in general, and on Dutch Reformed churches in particular had passed by June 1782, and the Revolutionary War was drawing to a close. The leadership of the American army was preparing for its final military operations around New York City, when, in April 1782, General George Washington established his headquarters in Newburgh, New York, in the house of

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757 The manuscript of the sermon is part of the collection of Historic Cherry Hill in Albany, NY.
758 The full text of the sermon can be found in Appendix 10.
760 See Chapter 2. In spite of Westerlo’s reported anti-British preaching, the Dutch Reformed Church building in Albany was miraculously spared.

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the late Jonathan Hasbrouck. Although the Hasbroucks were patriots, widow Tryntje Hasbrouck left their house unwillingly.\footnote{Schenkman 2008:23. The family reclaimed the house after George Washington left in August 1783.}

Traveling north from Newburgh, Washington visited the Dutch Reformed congregations of Albany and Schenectady in upstate New York, while on a tour of military posts in the area, toward the end of June. It is likely that the main purpose of his trip was not to visit the congregations, but that he took this opportunity to thank the congregations for their support in the struggle against the British. In a letter dated June 24, Washington wrote to Count Jean De Rochambeau, a French officer in the American army, who was then assisting Washington in preparing for a siege of New York City, which was still in British hands:

\begin{quote}
I am at this moment on the point of setting out for Albany, on a visit to my posts in the vicinity of that place. My stay will not exceed eight or ten days, and will be shortened if any dispatches should be received from you in the meantime.\footnote{His secretary, David Cobb, wrote on June 27 to the “Secretary at War” [General Benjamin Lincoln - RN] that Washington had left Newburgh “up the River to view the Posts at Albany and its vicinity” and would return in 5 to 6 days.}
\end{quote}

Before attending the Sunday service in Schenectady’s Dutch Reformed Church on June 30, traveling from Albany by carriage with Philip Schuyler,\footnote{Howell 1886:53. The passage further describes the visit by George Washington, “the Father of Our Country”: “He was received with great honor by the civil and military authorities, and a public dinner given him at a hotel then situated on the south corner of State and Water streets, one of the houses spared in the great fire of 1690. It was kept at the time by Robert Clinch, formerly a drum-major under Gen. Braddock, and well known to Gen. Washington. The principal citizens of the place dined with him.”} Washington, who was a member of the Episcopal Church,\footnote{Several books have been written about Washington’s religious affiliation, including his deist inclination, which he shared with many in his day. As President he attended Christ Church in Philadelphia, an Episcopal congregation.} was the most important guest of the congregation in Albany on the preceding Thursday.

On July 5, Westerlo noted in his \textit{Memoirs}, as the last thing to be reported having happened in the preceding week: “I have also had the honor to address General Washington, who received us very friendly and honored the consistory with a polite answer.” In Washington’s letter addressed to “the Ministers [sic], Elders, and Deacons of the Reformed Dutch Church at Albany,” dated “Albany, June 28, 1782,” he wrote:

\begin{quote}
Gentlemen: I am extremely happy in this opportunity of blending my public duty with my private satisfaction, by paying a due attention to the frontiers
\end{quote}
and advanced posts of this State, and at the same time visiting this ancient and respectable city of Albany.

While I consider the approbation of the wise and the virtuous as the highest possible reward for my services, I beg you will be assured, Gentlemen, that I now experience the most sensible pleasure from the favorable sentiments you are pleased to express of my conduct.

Your benevolent wishes and fervent prayers for my personal welfare and felicity, demand all my gratitude. May the preservation of your civil and religious liberties still be the care of an indulgent Providence; and may the rapid increase and universal extension of knowledge, virtue and true religion be the consequence of a speedy and honorable peace.\textsuperscript{765}

His letter to “the Ministers,\textsuperscript{766} Elders, and Deacons of the Dutch Reformed Church in Schenectady,” dated two days later,\textsuperscript{767} is very similar in content. Washington referred to “the Supreme Being” in addition to “Providence.”\textsuperscript{768} Washington’s desire in both letters is for a speedy peace. Only in the Albany letter did Washington use the phrase “virtue and true religion,” but it cannot be ascertained what he meant by it.

On the same day Washington wrote his thank-you letter addressed to Albany, Westerlo wrote a letter in a similar vein to Washington. The letters must have crossed each other. Both used “Providence” to refer to the Almighty power:

\begin{quote}
To his Excellency, George Washington, Esq., General and Commander-in-Chief of the American army, etc. etc.\textsuperscript{769}

Sir:

The auspicious visit of the illustrious Commander-in-Chief fills the thankful hearts of the patriotic inhabitants of this city with extraordinary joy, whilst it indicates in the most pleasing
\end{quote}

\textsuperscript{765} The preserved draft of the letter was reportedly in the handwriting of David Humphreys, one of George Washington’s aides-de camp, later to become American minister to Portugal and Spain.

\textsuperscript{766} The congregations of Schenectady and Albany each only had one minister in 1782, Barent Vrooman and Eilardus Westerlo, respectively.

\textsuperscript{767} The draft of this letter was written by Benjamin Walker and David Cobb, members of Washington’s staff.

\textsuperscript{768} His letter to the “Magistrates and Military Officers of Schenectady,” also dated June 30, 1782, is shorter, but also calls on “divine Providence” to grant peace. On June 28 he also wrote a thank-you letter to “the Mayor, Aldermen, and Commonalty of Albany,” which contains no reference to divine entities.

\textsuperscript{769} Transcribed from document 59-2, First Church Archives, Albany, NY.
manner your Excellency’s famous and justly celebrated
attention to all, even the remotest corners of your extensive
command, and your friendly intentions to faithful citizens who
have been in former days and dangers and are yet so remarkably
preserved under the benign influences of a gracious Providence,
by your prosperous direction of our victorious arms from
threatening and impending ruin.
We, the Minister, Elders and Deacons of the Reformed
Protestant Dutch Church in this city, beg leave to address your
Excellency on this joyous occasion; deeply impressed with
sentiments of sincere gratitude and respect for your exalted
merits and justly dignified character; uniting our humble and
earnest prayers to the God of all mercies and grace, that He will
be pleased further to honor and crown your Excellency with the
choicest of His blessings; and to prosper your generous,
distinguished and disinterested attempts to restore and establish
to this injured and oppressed land of your nativity that
prosperity and happiness which the Supreme Possessor and
Ruler of the Universe shall judge most subservient and
conducive to the high purpose of His own glory and the
perpetual happiness of the free and independent United States of
America.
May your Excellency’s precious health and inestimable life be
graciously preserved and prolonged, and your Excellency
erelong enjoy the happy era when your unremitted zeal for the
common prosperity of this bleeding country shall be crowned
with never fading laurels of a triumphant and glorious peace.

By order of the Consistory

E. Westerlo
Your obedient Servant and Minister

Albany, 28th June, 1782

Westerlo, or the Albany consistory, in whose name Westerlo signed the letter, did
not reiterate the point made in Westerlo’s sermon of the previous day, but that was
not to be expected. After all, the addressee of the consistory’s letter, George
Washington, although Commander-in-Chief of the American army, was not the
(political) leader of the country or even the governor of any state.

Westerlo’s inspiration

Although Westerlo may have had little time to prepare for the sermon on this
special day with the high-level guests, he certainly realized an appropriate
message should emanate from this session. When Westerlo decided on the theme
of leadership, where did he find the inspiration for his sermon? How did Westerlo
come to his sermon based on the text from Zechariah 12:5 for this special occasion? Did he use any of his usual sources, or was there another author, or maybe a colleague, who guided him in writing his sermon?\textsuperscript{770}

Admittedly, lacking clear indicators in the sermon or in Westerlo’s other writing, it is not possible to conclude with certainty who or what served as the source of his June 27 sermon. Four possible sources present themselves, and each will be weighed to determine the most likely one.

1. In his \textit{Memoirs}, Westerlo was clear which authors supplied him with texts explaining the Bible. In December 1774 he mentioned Nicolaas Hartman, Philip Doddridge, Thomas Haweis,\textsuperscript{771} Herman Witsius, Jacob Elsner, Campegius Vitringa, Friedrich Adolf Lampe, and Jesaias Hillenius, as “especially helpful […] in searching the principles, progress, and occurrences of the spiritual life.”

In this particular sermon, Westerlo did not refer to any of these authors, which makes it difficult to claim that Westerlo used any of the above-mentioned sources for his June 27 sermon. It seems he did not refer to any other authors in this text, either.

The one exception may be Matthew Henry (1662-1714), since the initials “MH” are included more than once throughout the sermon. Westerlo was not unfamiliar with Matthew Henry, an English Presbyterian minister renowned for his \textit{Commentary on the Whole Bible} (1706). Westerlo owned a copy of one of Henry’s books, \textit{An Account of the Life and Death of Mr. Philip Henry, Minister of the Gospel […]}, and in June 1783 he referred to another book of Henry’s, \textit{An Exposition of the Five Books of Moses, viz. Genesis, Exodus, Leviticus, Numbers, Deuteronomy […]}, which five books received separate translations into Dutch.\textsuperscript{772}

Henry’s initial commentary on Zechariah 12:5 is brief: “That the endeavours of the church’s friends and patrons for her good shall be pious, regular, and successful.” When building on this first phrase, he analyzes the first eight verses, referring to many other Biblical texts, and his analysis of verse 5 stresses different points from the ones in Westerlo’s sermon as it is analyzed below:

\textsuperscript{770} It would be interesting to know what his colleague in Schenectady, Barent Vrooman, preached on that Sunday, with George Washington visiting. Unfortunately, no sermons by Vrooman have been found. In the early twentieth century he was described as “a forcible and vigorous preacher, who was so full of his subject and loved it so well, that his sermons were delivered without notes” [Roberts 1904:86]. See also Staffa 2004:243.

\textsuperscript{771} Haweis (1734-1820) was a contemporary of Westerlo, and it is particularly interesting to note that Westerlo owned a copy of the 1765 edition of Haweis’s \textit{The Evangelical Expositor}, which had come out after Westerlo had moved to America.

\textsuperscript{772} The \textit{Short Title Catalogue Netherlands} (STCN) shows 43 titles in Dutch translation of Matthew Henry’s books. In 1757, 1759, 1772, 1777, and 1779, selected writings by Henry were published in \textit{Boekzaal}, issues of which Westerlo read while in America.
The governors of Judah, the magistrates and gentry of the country, shall think honorably of the citizens, the inhabitants of Jerusalem, the merchants and tradesmen; they shall not run them down, and contrive how to keep them under, but they shall say in their hearts, not in compliment but in sincerity, The inhabitants of Jerusalem shall be my strength, the strength of my country, of my family, in the Lord of hosts their God. […] the governors of Judah shall say, These are my strength; they are so upon the account of their relation to, their interest in, and their communion with, the Lord of hosts, their God.\textsuperscript{773}

Henry explains the verse from the perspective of the governors, who must honor the inhabitants of Jerusalem because they [the inhabitants] will be their [the governors’] strength. Westerlo’s approach was to call on the inhabitants of Jerusalem (that is, the citizens of the United States) to support their leaders.

2. Even though Lampe and Gerdes are not mentioned by name in Westerlo’s written-out text, it can be surmised that Lampe and Gerdes inspired Westerlo. Not only did Westerlo follow the structure as taught by Gerdes, and via him by Lampe (see below), Gerdes prepared Westerlo for the ministry and especially for his position in Albany, even after Westerlo had passed his exams.

There is no sermon or any other writing on Zechariah 12:5 among Gerdes’s published texts, although it must be noted that very few of Gerdes’s sermons were printed after his friends published 

\textit{Uitgelesene Bybelstoffen, Verhandelt in Twaalf Bysondere Predikatien} in 1730. Of Lampe, no sermon on Zechariah 12:5 is mentioned in the literature.

3. Another interesting possibility is that Westerlo found his inspiration not in any of the authors mentioned earlier, but yet in his own study. The \textit{Albany Institute of History and Art} classifies several collections of sermons, some identified, others not, among the Westerlo papers, as they were found to have been in his possession. At the top of one of these piles of sermons is one most likely by Johannes Frelinghuysen, one of the younger brothers of Westerlo’s predecessor in Albany, Theodorus, preached before his return to America.\textsuperscript{774} He had come to Holland to be licensed and ordained by the Classis of Amsterdam, and this sermon could be his farewell sermon or his ordination sermon.

\textsuperscript{773} Henry 1793:1120 and 1122, respectively.

\textsuperscript{774} No author is mentioned, but a handwritten note in the top left-hand corner reads “Joh.s Frielinghyssen vertrek [sic] van Holland na America.” [“Johannes Frelinghuysen’s departure from Holland to America”] The Institute has this document filed as a sermon by Johannes or Theodorus Frelinghuysen. Since it is unlikely that either Johannes himself or his brother Theodorus, who preceded Westerlo in Albany, would have spelled his name “Frielinghyssen,” the contents of the sermon [“terwyl ik soude vertrecken van hier na een ander verafgeleegen land om ‘t Evangelium te verkondigen”] does suggest this sermon was delivered by someone preparing to move far away to preach. The addition “Johannes Frelinghuysen’s departure from Holland to America” dates this sermon around February 1750 (his marriage in Amsterdam), before John sailed back to America, where he arrived in 1750.
Zechariah 12:5 is in the exordium, and it is not the main text of Johannes Frelinghuysen’s sermon, 2 Thessalonians 3:1-5. The exordium, which is the very first part of the written text after the announcement of the main text, is given here as follows:


[Then the governors of Judah shall say in their hearts: “The inhabitants of Jerusalem shall be my strength in the Lord of Hosts, their God.” Zechariah 12:5.]

Frelinghuysen explains that what is said in this text from Zechariah 12:5 about the “governors of Judah” could be applied to contemporary leaders both in political and religious matters, and that the inhabitants of Jerusalem are encouraged by their leaders to give them strength through God, thus coming to the leaders’ aid. Before transitioning to the main text, Frelinghuysen states that the governors and the inhabitants of Jerusalem mutually strengthen each other, as believers, keeping each other in place where God put them.

It is very plausible to assume that Westerlo had these handwritten pages nearby, somewhere in his study, when he was preparing his sermon to be delivered on June 27. However, judging from what Frelinghuysen views as the meaning of verse 5, it must be said that Westerlo’s inspiration in this case did not go beyond finding this particular text, Zechariah 12:5, and, as was the case with Matthew Henry’s commentary, that Westerlo came up with his own reading of verse 5.

4. The most exciting possibility of a source of inspiration for Westerlo is to be found some twenty years earlier in his life, when he was still in Groningen, before he had even preached any sermons in Albany.

Bernardus Mourik (1709-1791) and Gerrit Noordbeek (fl 1737-1782) compiled an overview of all published studies and sermons on Biblical texts under the title Naam-Rol der Godgeleerde Schryvers, [...] throughout the eighteenth century

775 “Finally, brothers and sisters, pray for us, so that the word of the Lord may spread rapidly and be glorified everywhere, just as it is among you, and that we may be rescued from wicked and evil people; for not all have faith. But the Lord is faithful; He will strengthen you and guard you from the evil one. And we have confidence in the Lord concerning you, that you are doing and will go on doing the things that we command. May the Lord direct your hearts to the love of God and to the steadfastness of Christ.”

776 The full title reads: Naam-Rol der Godgeleerde Schryvers, Welke over den Geheelen Bybel, of Byzondere Boeken, Kapitellen en Verzen, uit denzelven in het Nederduitsch geschreven hebben, zo Gereformeerden, Lutherschen, als Remonstranten, en Mennoniten, enz. […] Zynde een Handleiding voor Predikanten, Proponenten, Studenten en Alle Liefehebbers der Godgeleerdheid, [List of Names of the Theological Authors, Who Have Written about the Entire Bible, or its Special Books, Chapters and Verses, Reformed, Lutherans as well as Remonstrants and Mennonites, etc. […] Being a Manual for Ministers, Candidates for the Ministry, Students and All Theology Devotees].
The 1,006 pages of the fifth edition, the last to appear during the life of both authors and benefiting from their updates, contain references to hundreds of authors, and these include all but one (Haweis) of those Westerlo mentioned as his sources.

There is no indication that Westerlo owned a copy of Mourik’s *Naam-Rol*, but many, especially theological books were available to ministers through purchases or borrowings from colleagues. Even lay members of the congregation owned theological works. Examples of books Westerlo obtained in this manner can be found mentioned in his *Memoirs*. On December 22, 1783, Westerlo received a book from Dominee Ritzema, “which I intend to read for my edification.” In April 1789, Westerlo reported purchasing some books from the family of the late Dominee Barent Vrooman of Schenectady. In August 1787, he borrowed a book from Elbert Willett, a trustee of the Dutch Church Academy, who later became an elder of his congregation: “Yesterday at Mr. Willett[t]’s I met with Rev. Boston’s *Memoirs*, […]”

Only two authors who focused on Zechariah 12:5 in particular appear in Mourik’s *Naam-Rol*. At first glance, these two authors were not ones Westerlo may have known. Thomas Vieroot (1698-1780) wrote on the entire chapter 12 of Zechariah, in *De Weg des Allerhoogsten in Zyn Heiligdom* [*The Way of the Very Highest in His Sanctuary*], and Johannes Bril (1712-1764), chose Zechariah 12:5-6 as the main text for his April 13, 1760 sermon, preached on the occasion of a minister’s confirmation in Windeweer (province of Groningen).

Three reasons can be given to make the argument that Westerlo was not inspired by Vieroot’s book. First, Thomas Vieroot was minister in Diemen, near Amsterdam, from 1726-1729, and then in Wormer, 7 miles north of Amsterdam, from 1729 until his retirement in 1770. This geographic location makes it not very probable that Westerlo had had access to Vieroot’s material. Second, *De Weg des Allerhoogsten in Zyn Heiligdom* does not focus specifically on one verse. It covers chapters 12 through 14, the last three chapters, of Zechariah. Third, the book came out when Westerlo had been in America for five years (in 1765), and apparently no copy can be found in any library today. These are persuasive arguments to assume that Westerlo was not familiar with this book.

Even though the printed version of Johannes Bril’s confirmation sermon on Zechariah 12:5-6 appeared later in 1760, too late for Westerlo to have received a copy in Groningen, it is highly likely that Westerlo heard the sermon in Windeweer (10 miles south east of Groningen), together with his professor, Daniel Gerdes. Unfortunately, no notes of Westerlo’s time in Groningen have survived, other than the Hebrew phrases with their translations into Dutch.

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777 Vieroot published eight works between 1748 and 1770, all with Hendrik Vieroot in Amsterdam, but this particular book is not found in the STCN or on WorldCat.org.

778 Molhuysen 1937:1101-1102.
English and Latin, so that no conclusion can be drawn as to whether he was familiar with and remembered Bril’s sermon on Zechariah 12:5-6.

Johannes Bril of Middelbert (Groningen) and Johannes H. Jansonius of Groningen officiated at the confirmation of Hermannus Knock in Windeveer. Knock (1736-1795) was one of Westerlo’s fellow theology students. He defended a *Disputatio exegetica IX in Cap. XV Epistolae prioris ad Corinthios* in 1755, and also *Disputatio exegetica XIV*, a few months before Westerlo defended his *Disputatio exegetica XVI*. Westerlo and their professor Daniel Gerdes, who had presided over these disputationes before publishing them in 1759, must have attended this confirmation session, which took place at the time Gerdes was preparing Westerlo for America. Bril’s sermon on Zechariah 12:5-6 was not published until after Westerlo had left Groningen, but Gerdes may have discussed it with Westerlo as an example of how to analyze a Bible text.

In Johannes Bril’s exegesis of Zechariah 12:5-6, the governors of Judah are equated with the ministers, and the members of the congregation are the inhabitants of Jerusalem. Towards the closure of his sermon, Bril addresses Hermannus Knock as “waarde medebroeder” [“dear brother”], mentioning that Knock’s predecessor [Bernardus Heine – RN] died in office. He addresses the elders and then includes them in the governors, making sure they will help the minister in his “fight against the members of the congregation.” The latter are admonished not to make life more difficult for their new minister, who is guided by God.

Although in his sermon Bril chooses to focus on ministers as leaders, a logical theme on the day a minister is to be confirmed, and he views “the inhabitants of Jerusalem” as the members of the new minister’s congregation, the example of the application of Zechariah 12:5 to leaders and subordinates of those leaders would not have been lost on Westerlo, who probably discussed the sermon, the text, and its implications, with his professor Gerdes, assuming they attended this sermon.

Of the four possible sources of inspiration for Westerlo’s sermon on Zechariah 12:5, the sermon preached by Johannes Bril near Groningen in 1760 is the most likely one, although it is also possible Westerlo weighed the arguments of some or all of these sources to create his own analysis set forth on June 27, 1782.

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779 See letter Gerdes to Croomelin, May 10, 1760 [see Appendix 3]. Johannes Bril’s son Johannes (1740-1801), known as Johannes Brill Joh. Z., also graduated with a degree in Theology from Groningen in 1760. He did not defend a disputation under Gerdes, but a dissertation, *Dissertatio Historico-Ecclesiastica de Synodo Ephesina*, under Leonardus Offerhaus.

780 The only copy of Bril’s sermon found in libraries today is in the Universiteitsbibliotheek of the University of Amsterdam.

781 No notes on sermons have been found among the Westerlo papers, other than the references in his *Memoirs*. 
The importance of the sermon

Eilardus Westerlo was well aware of the significance of the particular mid-week day in June 1782 when he delivered his sermon. Most preaching took place on Sundays, the Lord’s Day. Exceptions were holidays, such as Ascension Day, Good Friday, and Christmas, and special days of prayer and thanksgiving. This Thursday, then, was not a regularly scheduled day, and, although “word reached the eastern Mohawk Valley in June that George Washington […] intended to visit the Albany region,” there is no indication that the Dutch Reformed Church in Albany or Westerlo himself knew long in advance about Washington’s exact plans.

Having started preaching in English only three months earlier, Westerlo addressed his high-ranking guests in that language fairly directly, acknowledging their presence and their importance at the beginning of the sermon:

A declaration, [namely in Zechariah 12:5, And the governors of Judah shall say in their heart: ‘the inhabitants of Jerusalem shall be my strength in the Lord of hosts, their God’ - RN] which I thought might be not improper for the present occasion!

Seeing that we are honored with the presence of some of the illustrious governors of our Judah; for it intimates our duty and may at the same time bring comfort to our souls.

The theme of Westerlo’s June 27 sermon also seems tailored to his exceptional audience. He based his sermon on the previously mentioned Old Testament text from Zechariah 12:5. A recurrent theme in this sermon is the role of leadership, in the Biblical case the governors of Judah, compared with the governors in his audience, and of the citizens, in the Biblical case the inhabitants of Jerusalem, compared with the citizens of the new nation.

There was a considerable shortage of Dutch Reformed ministers in New Jersey and New York in the second half of the eighteenth century, and most ministers typically preached more than fifty times a year in their own congregation alone. Westerlo supplied the congregations of Schagticoke and Niskayuna, a few miles north of Albany, and several other congregations around Albany for many years, in addition to assisting numerous congregations in the area in establishing themselves. Since he reported often missing preaching due to illness, a conservative estimate would put the number of sermons he preached in his thirty years in North America at around 3,000.


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784 “Our duty” likely referred to the obligation of the citizens to obey their rulers.
the extant sermons of four “representative Dutch ministers,” namely Theodorus Jacobus Frelinghuysen, Archibald Laidlie, John Henry Livingston, and William Linn. Klunder poses the question of how reflective of the time the extant sermons in manuscript are. Not only could it very well be that the rarely used sermons survived and the often used ones did not, but the 500 sermons considered in his study represent less than 0.2 percent of all the sermons preached during the time period 1720-1800. Using Klunder’s estimation method, the sermon Westerlo preached on June 27, 1782 probably represents less than 0.034 percent of all his sermons, and about 3.5 percent of the surviving Westerlo sermons. Tied in with this issue is Klunder’s second question, considering handwritten sermons: how accurately do these sermons reflect the thinking and preaching of the pastors they represent? Are these sermons indicative of the main themes addressed by these men?

Klunder’s viewpoint is clear: “The availability of sermonic literature becomes an evident limitation, and the possibility of misrepresenting an individual increases in proportion to the limited amount of preserved material. In short, the fewer the sermons the less concrete the conclusions.” Although about thirty of Westerlo’s sermons have been preserved, the handwriting in his sermons is so much smaller and sloppier than in his Memoirs, which contain many more words that are crossed out or overwritten, that it is very difficult to decipher and read these texts. Only a clearly understood and accurate transcription allows a researcher to use and analyze these texts, and in the case of Westerlo’s sermons, this appears to be extremely difficult.

A number of reasons for this lack of legibility can be found. Whereas Westerlo indicated in his Memoirs that he switched from Dutch to English so that his children would be able to read them, he may not have had any intention of sharing his sermon notes with anyone. The words Johannes Frelinghuysen added to the sermon could in all likelihood be included in many written-out sermons, including Westerlo’s:

De leeser gelieve in ’t leesen te herinneren dat dit geschrift niet was geschreven voor de druck, maar alleen tot een schets voor de spreker.
[The reader please be reminded that this text was not written down to be printed, but solely as an outline for the speaker.]

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785 The word choice and claim are unfortunate here. These four ministers were born in Germany, Scotland, America, and America, respectively. Combined spent less than 10 years on Dutch soil, and only one, Livingston, received a Dutch Reformed education in the strictest sense. Frelinghuysen was (first) ordained by the German Reformed, Laidlie by the Scottish Church, and Linn by the Presbytery.

786 Klunder 1984:7.

787 Klunder 1984:10.

788 Another question that should be asked in this respect: if a minister prepared his sermon notes for publication, did the ensuing text faithfully repeat the original sermon?
Westerlo did reuse some of his own sermons, sometimes switching between languages,\(^789\) which is an indication he used them more as notes than as completely written-out sermons.

Another reason for the fact that his sermons cannot easily be deciphered is that, unlike for his *Memoirs*, he may not always have had or have taken the time to write out his sermons. This is also borne out by the abbreviations and acronyms he used in his written-out sermons. Some of these must have been written while he was not in his own house, with possibly different and difficult circumstances under which he had to write down his notes. In the case of the June 27 sermon, it is very well possible that Westerlo did not know long in advance that George Washington was expected to attend this service, which was held a few days after the regular Sunday service.

A third reason for the cramped writing style, with so many words per page, can be seen in the situation ministers found themselves in: they were often asked to preach in other congregations in the area, which made travel a necessary part of the ministry. Klunder points out that the size of the paper most sermons were written on (5x8-inch sheets) was convenient for traveling on horseback, allowing the minister to carry his manuscripts in standard saddle bags.\(^790\)

Finally, as was customary, Westerlo included many Biblical references, but not the actual texts in his handwritten sermon notes, all of which he would read aloud as part of the service. All told, a sermon could last up to two hours. It is reported that Lampe’s sermons also typically lasted two hours,\(^791\) and Gerdes appeared to have been a close follower of Lampe in this, too. Today one can find people advocating cutting the average length of sermons, which stands at about 20 minutes. While the average was a little over an hour in the nineteenth century, when Westerlo was minister in Albany, sermons still averaged two hours.\(^792\) The hourglass on the right side of the pulpit\(^793\) was turned over after its sand had run out, indicating that one hour had passed.\(^794\)

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\(^789\) As indicated at the top of the first page – without including an actual translation.

\(^790\) Klunder 1984:37n.


\(^792\) De Jong 1978:129.

\(^793\) This is reportedly the oldest pulpit in the United States. It was sent over from Amsterdam in 1656 [ER 2092], arriving in Albany in 1657.

\(^794\) See De Jong 1978:131.
Gerald De Jong has provided us with a clear picture of church life in general, and of the Sunday worship in particular, in Dutch Reformed Churches in eighteenth-century North America. In the services the churches followed the Church Order of the Synod of Dort. The result was conformity, to a degree, throughout Dutch Reformed congregations on both sides of the Atlantic.

In Westerlo’s Albany congregation, the services were opened by the so-called voorlezer, a “reader,” often a layperson who assisted in the liturgy, read the psalms, and led the singing, by reading a passage from Scripture and occasionally by singing verses from a psalm. In the Church records in Albany only a few names of these voorlezers can be found. They were also sometimes called voorzangers, “chanters,” and often were employed as schoolmasters as well. In one of his letters to Hermanus Meijer, Westerlo mentioned an issue regarding a certain “Philip Reley,” who was such a paid voorlezer. He stood accused of

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795 De Jong 1978:125-146.
796 Although “voorzanger” is usually translated as “precentor” today, the Dutch Reformed Church seemed to have preferred the Dutch “voorzanger,” even in English texts, until 1800. The contemporary dictionary by William Séwel [I used the 1766, reprinted 4th edition] provides “chanter” or “clerk.” The only exception I could find was when Paulus Van Vleck was mentioned as suspected of having preached in Kinderhook in November 1702. He was a “clark” of the congregation, and then also their “precentor and schoolmaster,” as the successor of Joghem Lamersen and Hendrick Abelsen [Munsell 1855:97-98]. Lay preachers often had a bad reputation: Arnoldus Van Gennep, a staunch defender of conventicles in the Netherlands, compared them to quacks [Van Lieburg 2007:100].
797 The issue was also discussed in the Consistory - see Chapter 2. This may have been the same person as Philip Reley who was voorlezer in Schenectady from 1750 to 1757 [Van Vranken 1880:160 and Staffa 2004:210].

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having taught unsound doctrine. Elsewhere it is reported that the last two to serve in this capacity in Albany were brothers Cornelius and David Groesbeeck, in the nineteenth century.\footnote{Succeeding their father William, in 1802. Munsell 1869:130. Hendrik Roseboom served as voorlezer in the late seventeenth century [Munsell 1850:122].}

In \textit{Albany’s First Church}, Alexander describes how until the 1780s, many in the congregation did not accept any music into the service other than the singing of the psalms, rejecting any meaningless elements of worship, following strict Calvinism. When Westerlo switched to preaching in English in 1782, the psalms were no longer sung in Dutch, but read in English. Although in the new church building completed in 1798 space was left for an organ, the Albany Church did not have its first organ installed until 1845.\footnote{Alexander 1988:246, 247 and 253. This must not seen as an indication that Westerlo was a strict Calvinist, but rather that ”Albany’s Dutch Church lacked hymn books with the psalms translated into English in appropriate meters for hymn singing.” [Alexander 1988:246].}

The sermons themselves generally followed a set pattern. The minister would open his part of the service by pronouncing an invocation, or \textit{votum}, and a salutation. Written-out sermons typically do not include the words spoken here. Following would be the \textit{exordium (remotum)}, an introduction to the sermon, often based on a text from the Old Testament. It would include an overview of the main points to be covered and an explanation to the text from Scripture read earlier by the voorlezer. A prayer would be held, and possibly a Psalm sung, to transition into the actual sermon. The two-hour sermon was interrupted about halfway through for the collection for the poor by the deacons. The minister announced the collection from the pulpit.\footnote{See Munsell 1869:128 and ER 2092-93. The collection was held during the sermon until 1795 [Munsell 1869:124].}

**Westerlo’s sermon compared with sermons by Lampe and Gerdes**

The sermons of both Friedrich Adolf Lampe and Daniel Gerdes have been categorized as Cocceian in style and structure.\footnote{See, for example, for Lampe: Graafland 1989:256b258, and Brienen 1974:138b146, and for Gerdes: Witteveen 1963:111.} The style of Cocceian sermons was often viewed as dry and pedantic. Cocceian ministers seemingly explained every word of the original text, showing off their erudition by interspersing their explanations with linguistic remarks on the Greek and the Hebrew.\footnote{See, for example, Ypey 1795:248.} Without making a distinction between believers and non-believers, or between regenerate and unregenerate, their applications were brief and very general.

Lampe stuck to the same structure for all his sermons. When his \textit{Naleesinge van Eenige Uytgesogte Predikatien} [\textit{Collection of Several Selected Sermons}] appeared in 1721, Lampe himself commented, seemingly with pride, on how he had
persevered in not changing the “orde en leerwyse” [“order and teaching method”] in his sermons over the past ten years. His sermons were structured as follows:

1. An introduction, often based on a text related to the main Biblical text;
2. An overview of the composition of the text to be preached;
3. A representation of the contents and subdivisions of the text;
4. An analysis of the text;
5. An experiential application of the text, with an indication of the caesura, distinguishing between the converted and the unconverted, and addressing the unconverted in various ways, pointing out the danger they are in, and describing the converted as bekommerden and vrezenden who needed to be admonished to persevere and to be reminded that their imperfection was permanent.
6. A brief conclusion.

As early as around 1700, Lampe indicated that he had come to see that explanation and application should receive equal attention in a sermon, which actually led to very lengthy sermons. His follower Daniel Gerdes seemed to apply a more extensive analytical method in his sermons. Gerdes typically subdivided his sermons into innumerable sub points: I, A, AA, BB, α, 2, α, β, etc. Hebrew and Greek words received extensive explanations about their meaning. However, Witteveen does not consider Gerdes’s sermons as typical of the Cocceians. After an introduction, his sermons usually gave the coherence of the text, its theme, a systematic explanation of the text, followed by an application of the text close to the hearer. Gerdes usually emphasized the need to convert.

Luckily, in spite of their low readability, the structure of Westerlo’s sermons can be assessed fairly easily. As will be discussed below, they seem to be modeled after the Cocceian style. The June 27 sermon provides us insight into how Westerlo structured and styled his sermon. From what can be established from the remaining Westerlo sermons, this sermon appears to be a good representation of all these sermons.

Taking into account the structure visible in Westerlo’s sermons, it appears that, just as Gerdes had taught him, Westerlo divided his (written) sermons into main sections I and II, which were further subdivided into 1, 2, and 3, and then α, β, and α and β. These seemed to follow the outline of the Lampe sermons, but the

103 "welke ik, […], noch onverandert volharde" [Brienen 1974:139].
104 See Brienen 1974:139-140.
105 This is actually an approach observed in Voetius. See Brienen 1989:51.
106 "The concerned and (God)fearing (Christians).” The same classification method, even the same word, bekommerde, was used by adherents of experiential divinity such as Theodorus à Brakel [Van Genderen 1986:170], Johannes Verschuir [Verschuir 1862:198] and Theodorus Jacobus Freelinghuysen [Tanis 1967:109].
107 Witteveen 1963:106.
108 Witteveen 1963:105-121.
109 See Appendix 9 for a complete list of all the passages in Scripture mentioned by Westerlo, including an indication which sermons have survived.
content was different. Like a Cocceian sermon, Westerlo’s June 27 sermon was somewhat structured as a philosophical argument, but not by emphasizing the experiential importance and the effects of the covenant of grace.

What Lampe adopted from the typical Voetian-style sermon was its very analytical, dry and scholastic content. The sermon Westerlo delivered to George Washington does seem analytical and dry at times, but the analysis therein does not attain the level of detail often described when criticizing Voetian sermons. The allegorical and mystical often present in Lampe’s analysis is not part of Westerlo’s exegesis.

In his *The Thousand Generation Covenant* (1991), Gerstner shows that both the Voetian and the Cocceian theologians applied scholastic methods to their works. It may be difficult for our 21st-century eyes to assess all the intricacies of the difference between the two styles of preaching, especially since Lampe and Gerdes, whom Westerlo followed, tried to reconcile the differences between the two. In 1751, the call of a new minister to Groningen was rejected when the Cocceians considered him an adherent of Voetius, and the Voetians were convinced he was Cocceian. In 1679, the Labadist Jasper Danckaerts seems to have had little trouble telling whether a minister was Cocceian or Voetian in his preaching: on his way to America, he heard the newly arrived minister in Nieuwendam preach a sermon in which “he gave a short exposition of his opinions, from which we clearly saw that he was Cocceian.”

The structure of the June 27, 1782 sermon

In the written text of this particular sermon, there is no mention of an invocation, and Westerlo seems to have started off with a text from Zechariah 12:5, concerning the governors of Judah. Westerlo mentioned in his *Memoirs* that his sermons began with an *exordium* (*remotum*), an introduction based on a text from the Old Testament, which was often not or loosely related to the main text. Most of his preserved sermons do start with one, but the beginning of this particular sermon cannot be said to be an, even unrelated, introduction to the main part of the sermon: the text from Zechariah is the main topic of the sermon, and

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810 See, for example, Dargan 1912:79. In his *Disputatio de Theologia Scholastica*, Voetius himself defined “scholasticism” simply as “a method of doing theology” going back to the medieval method applied by Petrus Lombardus (1100-1160) and then developed by Thomas Aquinas (1225-1274) [see Beeke 2001:134].

811 Applying the scholastic method often resulted in many quotations, throughout the sermon, from several sources to support one’s arguments.

812 Gerstner 1991:68-70. He distinguishes two types of scholasticism, one built on a logically consistent Biblical theological system on the one hand, and one that also includes extra-scriptural speculation on the other, but he admits that these cannot always be told apart.


814 For example, November 27, 1787, September 25, 1788, and October 16, 1788.
the sermon in its entirety is dedicated to the topic of leadership and its implications.

Looking at the other points typical of Lampe’s structure, one must conclude that the sermon does not follow the pattern very closely. Unlike Lampe’s, Westerlo’s introduction goes straight to the main Biblical text. Before providing an overview of the text to be preached, Westerlo places verse 5 in its context, by telling his audience what happened in the first four verses: “the prophet foretells an awful, terrible judgment, which the Lord should inflict upon the enemies of His Church in the latter days.”

Then Westerlo focuses on the contents and subdivisions of the text: “We shall first consider the distinguished personage whom the prophecy introduces speaking with and among themselves, and then their pious discourse.” He then proceeds to an analysis and explanation of these two points in the text. The Governors of Judah are “the rulers, […] both in Church and State.” The further explanation here is that “Judah was a peculiar type of the Church of God under the New Testament, the overseers and leaders thereof [were] both political and ecclesiastic [and] may be most emphatically called the Governors of Judah.” Governors, either in Church or State, […] ought to be friends to the people of God, trusting fathers and nursing mothers.”

An experiential application of the text could be seen in Westerlo’s interpretation of the phrase they shall say in their heart: first he mentions that some would translate this as the inhabitants having a “strong confidence,” or “I will strengthen and encourage myself considering the promised assistance and experienced faithfulness of the Lord,” but then he gives his own translation, in which “קֶחֶץ” [adita/ ???] has the meaning “strength.” Then the phrase means that “for me and the inhabitants of Jerusalem there is strength in the Lord,” their weakness having been turned into strength. As experiential applications Westerlo later adds “the spiritual growth in grace” of the inhabitants encourages their governors, but also that “they should continually wrestle with god in prayer, pleading not only the power but [also] the relation of God unto them as their God.”

A further explanation follows of who the inhabitants of Jerusalem are, and why the governors were confident they would be their “strength in the Lord of hosts, their God.” Instead of Lampe’s distinctions between the converted and the unconverted, Westerlo shows a connection between this story of the inhabitants of Jerusalem and their willingness to assist their governors on the one hand, and the early Christians, and even William the Silent, on the other:

Hence we meet in history with striking examples of heroism and bravery in the first Christians when serving, even under heathen emperors; and I remember to have read in the history of Prince

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815 Westerlo’s phrases and words in Hebrew all seem to be a little off. Here, the ק cannot be used word-ending. He likely had not kept up his studies of Hebrew since 1760.
Willem the I that when even the States General of Holland seemed to be discouraged, he wrote unto them, that he hath made a covenant with God the Almighty, to deliver his oppressed country and therefore was resolved to persevere, though all should leave him. Thus willing and faithful should the governors be.

Westerlo does not single out the unconverted in any way. He wants to make sure he and his audience are “professing Christians,” and he regrets that “many among us [are] hitherto void of all exercises of faith in God, […] like as many are ignorant how to commit their own spiritual or temporal concerns to Jesus, thus they also do not know how to act faith upon the Word of God for our country, and oh, how few that actually appear before God to seek a blessing for their governors.”

Turning to the ongoing problems in the country, Westerlo says that “we are rather the sinful cause of the continuing of this terrible war, for we do not turn to the Lord, who has punished us.” If he addresses the unregenerate at all, to admonish them to seek Christ, it must be those “who never before did stand in the gap to heal the breeches.” He calls on them to “endeavor first to get the Lord for your God and to join yourselves to the inhabitants of Jerusalem, for as long as you are without Christ and aliens from the Commonwealth of Israel, your prayer is of little worth. God doth not hear sinners.”

In his conclusion, Westerlo turns to the converted, whom he admonishes to persevere, which is in line with Lampe, and to fulfill God’s expectation:

continue and persevere; do not faint in this good work [of strengthening the leaders and praying for their country – RN], but multiply your supplications for your governors, like Jacob. Be Holy, the Lord expects it from you. Your leaders think so of you. Do answer and confirm yourself, yea, this prediction, for all things are yours. Amen.

It is very well possible that the entire service for this special day did not follow the usual order, which could also explain the absence of an exordium and of a clear distinction between the converted and unconverted in the audience, although from his other sermons it is clear that Westerlo did not always address this issue. The special occasion may have presented itself only days or hours before the actual service. It could even be argued, when we compare the length of the text of the June 27 sermon to that of Westerlo’s other sermons, that this sermon likely took less than two hours to be delivered.

For an understanding of the reception by George Washington of Westerlo’s sermon of June 27, 1782, we need to examine Washington’s Circular Letter of June 1783, and the circumstances under which it was written.
When General George Washington had decided he would retire from his post as Commander-in-Chief, he announced this in his annual Circular Letter to the thirteen governors of June 1783, which would be his last such letter. In it, he focused on the obligations of and the opportunities for the new nation of states and its citizens. It was his opinion that, “if their citizens should not be completely free and happy, the fault will be entirely their own.” Washington also showed foresight, saying that “it is yet to be decided whether the Revolution must ultimately be considered as a blessing or a curse, […] for with our fate will the destiny of unborn millions be involved.”

In this Circular Letter, 51-year-old Washington first mentions that he is preparing “to return to that domestic retirement, which, it is well known, [he] left with the greatest reluctance,” and “in which (remote from the noise and trouble of the world) [he] meditate[s] to pass the remainder of life in a state of undisturbed repose.” He did not expect to be called to preside over the Constitutional Convention in Philadelphia in 1787 and to serve two terms as President (1789-1797).

The main points of his letter are a discussion of “four things […] essential […] to the existence of the United States as an independent power.” He discusses the first three at some length: the need for a federal structure of government, acceptance of a system of public justice, and the adoption of a peace plan, and he wants to leave the last of these four points to “the good sense and serious consideration of those immediately concerned.”

In truth, the essence of the fourth point, namely that the citizens of the United States should “sacrifice their individual advantages to the interest of the community,” captures the same spirit as the crucial wish Washington sets forth in the often quoted last paragraph of the letter (see below).

The text of this last paragraph is fairly well known. Michael and Jana Novak go as far as to claim that “in not a few households around the land, even today, the following “Prayer of George Washington,” with which Washington concluded his Circular Letter to the States at the end of the war, hangs on a family wall.”

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816 As will be shown later in this chapter, this Circular Letter has appeared in many publications. The latest reprint of the text appeared in Friends of the Constitution [Sheehan 1998:12-22], as an example of how the Federalists tried to prove that Washington was a Federalist, in 1787.

817 Some even added “on disbanding the army” to the reason behind this letter, but in the first paragraph Washington made it clear he was merely “preparing to resign it [=his appointment] into the hands of Congress.”

818 The dates on the different surviving copies vary from June 11 to June 21, and different aides wrote each copy, although Washington signed them. They were written at his headquarters in Newburgh, NY. In July 1783 he visited Albany (and the military posts in the Mohawk Valley) again.

819 Washington called his discussion “a few observations.”

820 Novak 2006:97, which quotes the text as it is in the Circular Letter. Curiously enough, in the same book, on page 215, the Novaks indicate they know that the “Prayer of George Washington” is not the
It is more likely that the Novaks are referring to the altered version as it can be found on a plaque in St. Paul’s Chapel in New York City, in which Washington is quoted as addressing “Almighty God” directly instead of the thirteen governors, and this version was popularized after his death.

The original, as found in the several handwritten copies of Washington’s *Circular Letter*, was the final paragraph:

> I now make it my earnest prayer that God would have you, and the State over which you preside, in His holy protection; that He would incline the hearts of the citizens to cultivate a spirit of subordination and obedience to government, to entertain a brotherly affection and love for one another, for their fellow-citizens of the United States at large, and particularly for brethren who have served in the field; and finally that he would most graciously be pleased to dispose us all to do justice, to love mercy, and to demean ourselves with that charity, humility, and pacific temper of mind, which were the characteristics of the Divine Author of our blessed religion, and without a humble imitation of whose example in these things, we can never hope to be a happy nation.

This last paragraph of Washington’s *Circular Letter* of 1783 is often quoted, and it has even come to be known as “Washington’s prayer.” Especially since the late twentieth century, and up until today, a fierce debate has been raging concerning the question whether those referred to as the *Founding Fathers* in general, and George Washington as one of them in particular, believed in God or exact text of his *Circular Letter*: “In many homes across the country, a print of this famous scene [Washington on his knees praying at Valley Forge – RN] has a place of honor, and in others, Washington’s “Prayer,” adapted from his Circular Letter to the States, has such a place.”

Also at Pohick Church in Lorton, Virginia, where George Washington was a vestryman between 1762 and 1784.

Other significant alterations include substituting “Thou” and “Thee” for “you,” and an added closure: “Grant our supplication, we beseech Thee, through Jesus Christ our Lord. Amen.” This is all the more remarkable since others have pointed out that Washington never mentioned Jesus Christ in any of his writings.

Text as it appeared in Sparks 1837:452.

There are those who believe Washington was an enlightened free-thinker [Allen 2006]), a Christian with Deist tendencies [Novak 2006], an orthodox, Trinitarian Christian [Lillback 2006], or a theistic rationalist [Frazer 2002].

Who were the *Founding Fathers*? Different answers can and are given to this question. If those who signed the *Declaration of Independence* in 1776, the *Articles of Confederation* in 1781, and the *Constitution of the United States* in 1787, those who attended the *Constitutional Convention* of 1787, and those who served as Senators or US Representatives in the *First Federal Congress* (1789-1791) are all considered *Founding Fathers*, then as many as 204 individuals are in this group. Only 6 (or 3.7%) of these were affiliated with the Dutch or German Reformed Church. Most discussions on the *Founding Fathers* include only the most prominent figures: George Washington, Thomas Jefferson, Samuel Adams, Benjamin Franklin, John Adams, John Hancock, James Madison, and Alexander Hamilton.
not. In broad terms, those involved in this debate are on the one hand people who want to prove that the Founders were Christian believers, and on the other those who maintain that religion was purposely kept out of the Constitution of the United States.

What interests me here has little to do with finding out whether Washington used the word “prayer” to mean “wish,” or whether “God” in this paragraph was used to encompass a broad idea of a supreme being or to denote the Christian deity. Here the focus is on Washington’s idea that the citizens of the United States should give up their focus on their individual interests for the sake of the nation’s, and for that they should “cultivate a spirit of subordination and obedience to government, to entertain a brotherly affection and love for one another, for their fellow-citizens of the United States at large, and particularly for brethren who have served in the field.”

To answer the question of whether George Washington took the role religion played seriously, it is important to note in this context that Washington, in his Farewell Address to the People of the United States in 1796, when he was about to retire from public life after two terms as President, he stressed the importance of religion and morality for private and public happiness, but also for the political prosperity of the nation. Arguing that religious principles promote the protection of property, reputation, and life, which are the foundations of justice, he warned that the nation’s morality cannot be maintained without religion: “reason and experience both forbid us to expect that national morality can prevail in exclusion of religious principle.” This also extended to maintaining a democratic government: “virtue or morality is a necessary spring of popular government.”

The “subordination and obedience to government” Washington included in his Circular Letter of 1783 may be traced back to Romans 13:1-7, which begins with “let every person be subject to the governing authorities; for there is no authority except from God, and those authorities that exist have been instituted by God.” He goes on to explain that resisting the rulers means resisting God.

The “brotherly affection and love for one another” seems to be referring directly to a passage in the Old Testament, “and what does the Lord require of you but to do justice, and to love kindness, and to walk humbly with your God?” [Micah 6:8], or two passages in the New Testament, “Owe no one anything, except to love one another; for the one who loves another has fulfilled the law” [Romans 13:8], and “For the Lord’s sake, accept the authority of every human institution, whether of the emperor as supreme, or of governors, as sent by Him to punish those who do wrong and to praise those who do right” [1 Peter 2:31-14].

In all the discussion of George Washington’s passage that has taken place, it seems the question concerning the inspiration for his text, namely where he

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826 Also identified as such in Washington’s God [Novak 2006:158]. Westerlo referred to this passage as well, on August 29, 1787.
obtained his information, or who inspired him to include this point in his Circular Letter has never been asked. The analysis of Eilardus Westerlo’s June 27, 1782 sermon given above may provide an answer to it. As George Washington began to focus on government and citizenship for the new nation, the ideas he may have cherished about a country’s success depending on the subordination of its citizens were reinforced on that day in Albany, NY.

Westerlo expressed the idea about the need for citizens to obey their rulers in his sermon, purposely quoting Romans 13 to make his point:

> It is but decent and becoming, that the people should acknowledge and honor them [=governors – RN] as their leaders and teachers, whose duty is to instruct not only in the truths and ways of virtue and holiness, but also to admonish and direct them in the proper use of the necessary means for the obtaining of the common prosperity of the governed people - ought to be subject in the Lord to their governors.

As indicated before, Washington’s wordings on this subject are also a clear reference to Romans 13, albeit without explicitly mentioning the Bible text.

Although it is not very probable that George Washington took written notes during Westerlo’s sermon, there is no doubt he could have picked up the idea behind the text Westerlo presented, and the main point of the sermon. No direct correspondence has been found between Washington and Westerlo, but it is certainly possible that Washington’s ideas on the role of citizens expressed in June 1783 were reinforced by the sermon he heard on June 27, 1782.

**Westerlo and Washington**

Almost a year passed between Westerlo’s sermon of June 27, 1782, and George Washington’s June 8, 1783 Circular Letter. What was the extent of the acquaintance of Washington and Westerlo? How much did Washington value Westerlo’s opinion?

Eilardus Westerlo and George Washington had met two years earlier, for a baptism in the Dutch Church in Albany. Although Washington was not present on December 14, 1780, at the wedding in the Schuyler Mansion of his aide-de-camp Alexander Hamilton and Elizabeth Schuyler, daughter of General Philip Schuyler, his friendship with the Schuyler family suggests that he must have been well aware of the details of this wedding, including the fact that Westerlo officiated.

How much the Washingtons were involved with the Schuylers shows their presence, three months later, at another joyous Schuyler family event, the baptism of Catherine, the last of the Schuylers’s children:
George Washington acts as godfather (so it is narrated) of Catherine Van Rensselaer Schuyler, daughter of Gen. Philip Schuyler and Catherine Van Rensselaer; godmother, Mrs. Washington, the baptism performed by Dominie Eilardus Westerlo, recorded as performed in the register of the Reformed Dutch Church standing in the center of Yonkers (State) street a little west of its intersection with Market (Broadway) street, March 4.  

Philip Schuyler accompanied Washington on his trip to Schenectady in June 1782, three days after his visit to Albany. The men knew each other fairly well. General Philip Schuyler commanded the American Army of the North early during the Revolutionary War, and as such worked closely with the Commander-in-Chief, General George Washington.

Schuyler was also active in the political arena. He was a member of the New York State Senate from 1780 to 1784, and as such played a role until the British left New York City on November 25, 1783, ending the War, and in 1789 he was elected a US Senator (from New York) to the First United States Congress, when George Washington was President and Schuyler’s son-in-law Alexander Hamilton was Secretary of the Treasury.

Philip Schuyler and Eilardus Westerlo knew each other well, too. Their first contacts may have been as opponents, in a land dispute between Schuyler and the Dutch Church, but family ties were strengthened between Philip and his wife Catherine Van Rensselaer on the one hand, and Westerlo on the other, when the latter married Catharine Livingston Van Rensselaer in 1775. As pastor of the Dutch Reformed Church, Westerlo officiated at many Schuyler family events such as baptisms, weddings, and funerals.

During Westerlo’s first years in Albany, the Church had to deal with an issue concerning the new mansion Schuyler had built in part on the so-called Pastures, which were the meadows rented out by the Church. The Church spent considerable amounts of money in litigation, and the case was settled several years later, when Schuyler compensated the Church by giving it another plot of land. Schuyler remained a member of the Dutch Church throughout the years of litigation.

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827 Reynolds 1906:352.
828 Schuyler’s friend Colonel John Bradstreet (after whom Schuyler’s eldest son was named) oversaw the construction while Schuyler was in England settling some of Bradstreet’s accounts. Schuyler named the house “The Pastures.” It is now known as the Schuyler Mansion.
829 For example, the Consistory Minutes of the Dutch Reformed Church read, on May 31, 1762: “[...] of the deacons’ fund two hundred and fifty pounds will be used to continue the current defense of our church against Philip Schuyler.”
Much later, Westerlo was more positively involved with Philip Schuyler and his family. Stephen Van Rensselaer III, “the last Patroon,” the oldest stepson of Westerlo, married Margaret Schuyler, daughter of Philip Schuyler and Catherine Van Rensselaer Schuyler, in 1783. The wedding of John Bradstreet Schuyler, eldest son of Philip and Catherine, and Elizabeth Van Rensselaer, Stephen’s younger sister, took place in 1787. In the following years Westerlo shared several grandchildren with the Schuylers.

Romans 13:1

Westerlo quoted Romans 13:1 (“Let every person be subject to the governing authorities; for there is no authority except from God, and those authorities that exist have been instituted by God.”) to support his claim that the “governed people […] ought to be subject in the Lord to their governors.” In this sermon he did not discuss, explain, or even allude to the fact that he, and George Washington, and with them many other British subjects in America, had felt justified in not feeling subject to their governors and in fighting their leader, Britain’s King George III.

The thirteen (British) colonies that became the first American states were indeed led by governors appointed by the King of Britain. Some colonies originally indirectly elected their governors,\(^{831}\) but in the years leading up to the Revolutionary War, the British monarch began to appoint them directly. During the War, all but one of these so-called royal governors were expelled. The exception was Jonathan Trumbull of Connecticut. He was the only governor to support the American side.\(^{832}\) The Americans retained the title of governor for the leaders of the states and territories after the War.

It must be pointed out that the phrase “as long as they rule in equity and righteousness,” which follows his quotation of Romans 13, proves that Westerlo qualified his statement about standing up against one’s rulers, but he did not discuss this point any further. Westerlo was not speaking of the British king here, nor did he refer to George III by name in his sermon.

One would expect some explanation that George III no longer “ruled in equity and righteousness,” but that would have required a mixing of religion and politics, and Westerlo said, probably meaning he was not to speak about political matters:

\[
\text{I decline to speak this morning whilst I am obliged to limit my discourse to political matters,}^{833}\text{ but in subordination to what}\]

\(^{831}\) That is, not by the people, but through assemblies.

\(^{832}\) He was governor of Connecticut from 1776 to 1784 and aide-de-camp to Washington from 1781 to 1783.

\(^{833}\) Lester Joyce found that during the Revolution “clergymen were even required by their local government to confine their weekday sermons to national rather than religious issues” [Joyce 1966:39]. Often ministers explained that their political involvement was based on “the widely accepted belief that human liberty was of divine origin” [Bonomi 2003:212].

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every Christian ought to do, do we show sufficient evidences, that the Lord is our God so that the Governors may look upon us, as the people of God. I do not hint now at such who speak against our cause and government, nor them who decline fighting etc., but do we not speak idle and hard words that do not become a professing Christian, and does our speech betray us to pious Governors.

It seems here that Westerlo wanted specifically to include political dissidents, those who “speak against our cause and government,” and those “who decline fighting,” in “the people of God,” which would mean recognizing that following one’s leaders does not mean everyone must have the same opinion and display the same, positive, attitude toward the actions of their government.

Similarly, George Washington expressed the wish, in the latter part of his Circular Letter, “that He would incline the hearts of the citizens to cultivate a spirit of subordination and obedience to government,” ignoring the fact that this same “subordination and obedience” would have prevented the American army from being successful in its struggle against the British in the years preceding Washington’s words here, since most of the inhabitants of the thirteen colonies were British citizens then, subordinate to the King.

**Conclusion**

On June 27, 1782, Eilardus Westerlo preached a sermon with the appropriate theme of leadership and responsible citizenship to a special audience that included some military leaders preparing for the final actions of the Revolutionary War in New York. The sermon, likely inspired by a sermon preached near Groningen in 1760, called on citizens to follow and support the leaders of the new nation.

The theme of Westerlo’s sermon is reflected in General George Washington’s last annual letter to the governors of the thirteen states, whose final point was that, for the continued success of the United States, its citizens must obey their government and work together in brotherly love. The reasoning Washington gave for his claim seems inspired by the same Bible text Westerlo expressly mentioned in his sermon to Washington, Romans 13:1:

> Let every person be subject to the governing authorities, for there is no authority except from God, and those authorities that exist have been instituted by God.
9. **Conclusion**

Eilardus Westerlo was born, raised, educated, and employed in the Dutch Reformed faith. His *Memoirs*, of which substantial parts have been preserved, are an excellent example of his struggle with his faith, as well as a record of his deeply personal introspection. Westerlo’s acceptance of his faith led him across the Atlantic, to the New World. Due to the circumstances in America he became a subject of three nations during his lifetime: the Netherlands, Great Britain, and the United States. He served the Albany congregation for over thirty years.

I have set out to show that Westerlo was a Dutch Reformed minister leading the life of a Pietist, which had an impact on his environment in Albany. His Pietism displayed both Dutch and German influences, which can be traced back in large part to his mentor Daniel Gerdes in Groningen, and the latter’s teacher, Friedrich Adolf Lampe.

He experienced his rebirth in his eighth year as a minister, which he viewed as an event of enormous personal significance. Eilardus Westerlo’s conversion experience was not exceptional in itself, but his description of it, in great detail, allows us insight into the process and importance of the experience. Westerlo knew that his spiritual life after his rebirth embodied a new life in the service of Christ.

The translation Eilardus Westerlo made of a Dutch catechetical book, his *Memoirs*, his correspondence, and the surviving Church Records together yield new insights into Westerlo’s understanding of the role of religion in general and of the Dutch Reformed Church in particular.

Westerlo’s mentioning of πάρεσις and άφεσις proves that he was familiar with the Cocceian/Voetian controversy that had rocked the Reformed Church for decades. It can further be concluded that Westerlo was either neutral in the matter or an equal follower of both theological doctrines. His approach is in line with Gerdes and Lampe, who both tried to find common ground in the Voetian and Cocceian theories.

Westerlo should be remembered for his contributions as a member of the committee that adapted the Church Order of the Synod of Dort of 1618/1619 to the American situation. He helped to preserve the order. The committee added an explanation to ensure its intent was understood in the newly formed nation. An added article about the equality of everyone in the church, specifically mentioning blacks and slaves, makes it plausible to call Westerlo’s attitude towards the African Americans in Albany moderately positive.

In spite of the significant role one of his famous predecessors, Theodorus Jacobus Frelinghuysen, and his family played in the history of the Dutch Reformed Church in North America, Westerlo hardly ever discussed them or the role they played
before and during Westerlo’s tenure in Albany. This is odd and somewhat puzzling. A possible explanation for this omission may lie in Westerlo’s understanding that his congregation considered the tenure (1745-1759) of his predecessor, Theodorus Frelinghuysen, in a conflicted light.

Westerlo and Theodorus Jacobus Frelinghuysen, two Dutch Reformed Pietists who lived about forty years apart in North America, were both interested in involving colleagues of other denominations. Their common interests and their educational background may help explain their success in the New World.

John Henry Livingston, who played an important role in the transitional years of the Reformed Church in America, is often called the “father of the (emerging denomination of the) Reformed Church in America.” This unjustly obscures the important role played by others, including Westerlo. Livingston sought Westerlo’s advice on ecclesiastical matters, both as a friend, a brother-in-law, and a senior colleague. Westerlo’s subtle role in navigating his congregation towards accepting the articles of the Plan of Union was vital to the success of the independence of the Dutch Reformed Church in America.

On June 27, 1782, Eilardus Westerlo preached a sermon on leadership and responsible citizenship. His audience was special: it included General George Washington and other military leaders preparing for the final stage of the Revolutionary War. The sermon on Zechariah 12:5 calls on citizens to follow and support the leaders of the new nation. This theme is reflected in Washington’s 1783 letter to the governors of the thirteen states, which claims that the citizens of the United States must obey their government and work together in brotherly love.

**Westerlo in fiction**

Attaching much value to a historical figure’s inclusion in a novel or other piece of fiction is not without risk. As Alice Kenney pointed out in 1975, in her chapter *Folklore, Fiction, and Fact*, works such as Washington Irving’s *Diedrich Knickerbocker’s History of New York* (1809) “have created an image of the Dutch in America which is only partly an accurate reflection of the actual Dutch tradition.” How much of the description is authentic and accurate? What is the author’s knowledge based on? How biased is the author toward the subject, and what is the intention of his/her including this historical figure? An answer to these questions is elusive if not impossible to find, especially about fiction that was written centuries ago.

In Chapter 2, I quote Anne Grant’s *Memoirs of an American Lady*, but not without the caveat that Mrs. Grant’s entries on Westerlo and Albany are based on her

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834 Kenney 1975:191. Her conclusion: “authors of other [than Dutch] backgrounds interpreted [the Dutch characteristics] in terms of their own standards, without realizing that they were distorting the proportions of that tradition.” [Kenney 1975:208-209]. On Washington Irving, see also Funk 2009:103.
memories as a child, written down many years later. I also mention two novels by Dorothea Boyd Wolfe, *The Bad Man of the Hudson* (2004) and *The Hog Money Mystery* (2005), as books in which Eilardus Westerlo makes an appearance. He is shown as a pious man with piercing eyes, “awkward, with great arms and legs,” which would be a useful and welcome description. Unfortunately, some of the other descriptions and circumstances in these books are blatantly wrong, so that we cannot be certain that this depiction of Westerlo is accurate.\(^{835}\) Westerlo has appeared in three nineteenth-century works of fiction as well.

The first one of these, namely the 1827 and 1828 issues of *The Magazine of the Reformed Dutch Church* may yield the answer to a question that arises from Westerlo’s rather cryptic mention of “those whom it does not behoove” to introduce “new and strange doctrines in this congregation,” in the spring of 1768. A seemingly authentic story is told set in early nineteenth-century New York State (the author admits only that some of the names are fictitious).\(^ {836}\)

In this story told in several installments of a magazine, Westerlo is described as “a profound theologian” who at first does not approve of the conventicles in the city, and he excludes “from religion the ardent feelings of the devout soul - or [he] frown[s] on such feelings, and the recounting of Christian experiences.”

Westerlo goes through a personal crisis, wrestling with his faith. The resulting change within him is felt all around him: “what a preacher Dominie Westerlo became!” It also results in a “happy revival of religion.” The words “That anecdote is authentic […]. It will form an incident in the memoirs of Dominie Westerlo” end the story about Westerlo.

It is tempting to assume that some of the story is based on facts, and even that the author, who remains anonymous, knew of the existence of Westerlo’s *Memoirs*. As told, the story seems to be in line with the lemma dedicated to Westerlo in the *Cyclopaedia of Biblical, Theological and Ecclesiastical Literature* in 1894:

\begin{quote}
  About eight years after coming to Albany he fell into a state of religious despondency, which proved to be an eventful period of his spiritual life. Relief came only with much prayer and struggle of soul, but it seemed like “life from the dead.”
\end{quote}

\(^{835}\) In an e-mail exchange with the author I have learned that her research into the historical accuracy of her books is largely Internet-based.

\(^{836}\) Brownlee 1827. The following quotations are all from Volume II, pages 15-18. The full story, under the title *Traits of Primitive Character*, appeared, anonymously, in eight installments in the magazine.

\(^{837}\) McClintock 1894:961. The lemma on Westerlo was contributed by W. J. R. Taylor, who was secretary of the American Bible Society. Mary Lansing Westerlo, a granddaughter of Eilardus, was a member of this society, which may explain the *Cyclopaedia*’s access to Westerlo’s *Memoirs*.  

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However, this is not enough to serve as evidence that the information provided in the fictional account is accurate.

The second nineteenth-century work to mention Westerlo is *The Dutch Dominie of the Catskills, or, the Times of the “Bloody Brandt”* (1861), which seems to be the only work in print by Scottish-born David Murdoch (1823-1899), who was Presbyterian pastor in Elmyra, NY, from 1851 until 1860. In a discussion on the merits of certain Dutch Reformed clergy, Albany minister “Doctor Dominie Westerloo, the chief of their Sanhedrim”838 is accused of using a racial slur to set his consistory straight, and of propagating a separation from the Mother Church, “to throw off all allegiance to the old mother of Amsterdam.”839

The troubling discourse attributed to Westerlo and his alleged opposition to remaining subordinate to the Classis of Amsterdam may have been an accurate reflection of how he was perceived in Ulster County, about 50 miles South of Albany. However, the author of this book of fiction attempted to give the appearance of a story based on facts, by prefacing it with a letter written by Lambertus De Ronde in “Catsbaan”840 in December 1778, addressed to “the Consistory of the Collegiate Church in New York City.”841 De Ronde was minister in New York City from 1750 until the beginning of the Revolutionary War. The inaccuracies842 in this letter make it improbable that the scenes portrayed are anything other than fictional.

The third nineteenth-century work of fiction to have Westerlo as one of its characters is *In the Valley* (1890) by Harold Frederic (1856-1898). Westerlo is introduced at a party hosted by the widow Catharine Livingston Van Rensselaer in 1772. The author mentions quite a few people correctly, and about Westerlo he says “the learned and good pastor of the Dutch church, of whose intended marriage with the widow, our hostess, there were even then rumors.”843

Unfortunately, when the novel’s main character, Douw Mauverensen, makes a reference to Theodorus Frelinghuysen’s sermon against “the theatrical band who had come and performed for a month at the hospital,” he dates it at three years earlier, but Frelinghuysen had already left the Albany scene thirteen years earlier.

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838 Murdoch 107. *Sanhedrin*, also *sanhedrin*: [from Greek *synedrion*] a rabbinic court; hence it has also taken on the meaning of leadership in general.
839 Alice Kenney focused on the descriptions of Dutchness in the novel, and concluded that the heroine’s character was “most unusual - and most Dutch.” [Kenney 1975:204-205].
840 Kaatsbaan (Saugerties), NY.
841 Given De Ronde’s issues with English replacing Dutch, he would more likely have addressed his letter to the (Hervormde) Protestantse Nederduytsche Kerk.
842 Just a few to make the point: De Ronde signs his letter, written in English but for the last three lines, “Dom. De Rainde,” rather than “Lambertus De Ronde, V.D.M.,” and he refers to his colleague Johannes Ritzema as the late Rudolphus (which happens to be Johannes’s son): Johannes Ritzema died in 1796.
843 Eilardus Westerlo and Catharine Livingston Van Rensselaer were married July 19, 1775. Alice Kenney also included a brief analysis of *In the Valley* in her *Stubborn for Liberty*, and she viewed the story as one that emphasizes the Dutch traditions.
Of course, the authors of these works of fiction were not historians, and generally speaking historians use facts as their source material. I point out these pitfalls for the sake of clarity, and to be of help for future researchers. By no means would I claim that I have not made similar mistakes along the way. I have tried to avoid them, and if I have misinterpreted dates, names, or information, then this was not intentional, as I would assume this was also the case with most historians of the past.

**Westerlo’s tenure in Albany**

Asking why Westerlo stayed with the same employer for over thirty years may be somewhat of a twenty-first-century question. Much of the changes in employment among Dutch Reformed ministers in North America were inspired by the promotion of the minister in question, and for Westerlo, having started in one of the largest congregations, there were very few possibilities for such a promotion.

Westerlo appears to have been a happy man as far as his work was concerned. In December 1774, at what we now know was about the half-point mark of his tenure in Albany, Westerlo stated that he felt blessed to be in Albany: “[…] I have, some difficulties notwithstanding, sufficient reason to live happily in this congregation, if the Lord wants me to, and if I live, in the work of the Lord […]”

Westerlo did do much work outside his own congregation, and also outside Albany, but he could do that work precisely because he was the minister of the Reformed Protestant Dutch Church in Albany. He worked hard to assist neighboring communities establish congregations (thereby seemingly ignoring Article 38 of the Church Order of Dort of 1618/1619, which insists on previous advice and concurrence of the Classis), and he never refused to preach at other congregations, unless his health prevented him from doing so. His tireless work to establish schools in and around Albany was in line with Article 21, which obliges consistories to provide teachers for the children, to be taught the catechism.

If Westerlo ever thought about leaving Albany and his congregation, he must have been mindful of Article 12, which binds ministers to the service of the sanctuary for life. In addition, given his education and profession, Westerlo would not have had many options had he wanted to leave.

His was the largest Dutch Reformed congregation in the area, which would only leave him with two options if he were to seek work outside Albany, considering his status and likely also his income. He could have vied for one of the two Dutch Reformed professorates in New Brunswick, or he could have accepted a call from the only larger congregation, in New York City.

In 1784, the Synod of the Reformed Dutch Church, to which Albany still did not belong, elected John Henry Livingston (as professor of theology) and Hermanus
Meijer (as professor of “inspired languages”). The decision to select Livingston appears to have been influenced by practical reasons: with little money available, the professor was expected to reside in New York City. Reasons behind the appointment of Hermanus Meijer were not given, but practical considerations may have guided the Synod here too: Totowa is less than 40 miles away from Queen’s College, where Meijer was expected to teach. “Outstanding” Westerlo, in relatively far-away Albany, must not have seemed a viable candidate for either position.

In January 1787, while he was having difficulties convincing Peter Wilson from Hackensack, NJ, to accept the position of president of the Albany Church Academy, Westerlo received word from his colleague in Schenectady, Dirck Romeyn, that “by letters from New York, he [Romeyn] was informed of [Westerlo] being proposed as minister for the Dutch there, since his [Romeyn’s] refusal.” Westerlo feared that this would become public, but he seemed to accept his fate should he receive the call:

I am very anxious on account of this intelligence being public, what I thought was but secretly intended, but the Lord be pleased to direct and dispose of poor, feeble, unworthy, sinful me, not as I will but as Thou wilt, if there be no party spirit, if there be a sincere desire for the gospel truths, which I hope I have preached among them, if the Lord would provide for this my flock a younger and stronger laborer, and my weak endeavors should be blessed, there in my advancing years, if change of air and society may prove beneficial to my impaired constitution, but what shall I say. Let me wait and not anticipate trials. Oh, may this new instance of His goodness humble but also encourage me in His work.

Nothing came of it, and Westerlo never mentioned this call again, or any other call for that matter. Later in 1787, the consistory of New York City hired William Linn, thus ending his career as a Presbyterian minister.

But even if Westerlo had been interested in leaving Albany, his family may not have accepted the move. His wife, Catharine Livingston, had most of her family (the Ten Broecks, some of the Livingstons, and the Van Rensselaers) and considerable real estate in Albany. Also, her children by Stephen Van Rensselaer owned real estate and land in and around Albany (in current-day Greene, Albany, and Rensselaer Counties). In September 1787, Westerlo bought some lots of the Church Pasture grounds in Albany, which may be seen as his acceptance of Albany as his home.

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844 Corwin 1902:127. Elsewhere it may seem that these professorates were decided by the (General Meeting of) Ministers and Elders of the Church of New York [ER 4321-4323]. Hebrew and (Koiné) Greek were considered the “inspired languages,” as the ones in which the “inspired Word of God” was originally written.

845 ER 4319, referring to the fact that in 1784, Albany had not joined the Union yet.
During his thirty years in Albany, Westerlo played an important role in the establishment of educational opportunities and in the expansion of the Dutch Reformed Church in North America. He was a member of the first Board of Trustees of Queen's College in New Jersey, and one of the men advocating a college in Schenectady after 1779, which became Union College in 1795. He also tried to ensure Albany would offer education within its walls.

Both the *Albany Church Records* and his *Memoirs* show that he worked tirelessly to establish and maintain a (Reformed) Church Academy in Albany during the late 1780s. He contacted prospective principals and instructors, participated in the hiring process, and ensured the Academy had a sound financial backing. Unfortunately, the Albany Church Academy had to close its doors after only a few years of existence.\(^6\)

To ensure the safeguarding of the established position of the Dutch Reformed Church in the area, Westerlo helped many neighboring congregations survive, by supplying and supporting Schagticoke, Schoharie, Niskayuna, Schenectady, Schodack, Kingston, Livingston Manor, New Paltz, Red Hook Landing (Old Red Hook), and Halfmoon in New York, and Raritan in New Jersey.

He was also instrumental in founding congregations in Schuylerville (Old Saratoga) (1770), The Boght (Cohoes) (1784), East Greenbush (1787), Guilderland Center (Helderberg) (1767), Upper Red Hook (1788), Stillwater (Sinthoik) (1789), Waterford (Halfmoon) (1771), and even some that were established after his death, such as Buskirk (Sinthoik) (1792) and Wynantskill (1792) may have benefited from his efforts.

Yet, he was afraid he had not done enough. On January 30, 1787, 48-year-old Westerlo confided in his diary, after visiting “his old friend” Ritzema (76): “I tremble at the thought when I reflect upon my indolence and inactivity compared to what others have done and are still doing, even in old age. Poor me, with a body of sin and death, burdened and full of pains.”

Westerlo expressed doubts about the correctness of his conduct in other places as well. Although he was generally recognized as being very knowledgeable on the Articles of the Canons of Dort, and he is mentioned as having translated them for the independent Dutch Reformed Protestant Church in America,\(^7\) Westerlo seemed to have forgotten or was uncertain about Article 17 of Chapter I, *The Salvation of the Infants of Believers*, which should have reassured him that the soul of his daughter Joanna, who died a few weeks before her fifth birthday, was saved:

\(^{6}\) Very little is known about this first Albany Academy.
\(^{7}\) Meeter 1993:37-38.
Since we must make judgments about God’s will from his Word, which testifies that the children of believers are holy, not by nature but by virtue of the gracious covenant in which they together with their parents are included, godly parents ought not to doubt the election and salvation of their children whom God calls out of this life in infancy.

Westerlo feared that he had relied too much on physicians, and on February 13, 1788, a week after she died, he confided to his Memoirs: “I lament my neglectfulness with respect to the instruction of my departed child.” In 1787, Westerlo had bought A Token for Children: An Exact Account of the Conversion, Holy and Exemplary Lives, and Joyful Deaths of Several Young Children by James Janeway for Joanna.

Although writing that day: “My principal comfort is that I hope and trust from a merciful God that her immortal spirit is with Christ in glory, surrounding the Throne and singing praises to God in Christ,” he also expressed his uncertainty that Joanna had been received in heaven: “[…] may I be enabled to trust that she is now enjoying and seeing the Lord in glory?”

Westerlo must have been familiar with Article 17, which seems intended to take away any fears pious parents may have about the fate of their deceased infant children’s souls. If one did not know how often Westerlo had expressed doubts about things, one would conclude that Westerlo’s uncertainty meant he did not know whether his own covenant with God was valid.

**Westerlo in a changing world**

Eilardus Westerlo became a naturalized British citizen within one year of his arrival in Albany. He never talked about this event himself, and it may very well have been a formality or executed by the stroke of a pen. When the United States Naturalization Law was adopted on March 26, 1790, Westerlo automatically became a United States citizen. Again, this was not an event he recorded in his Memoirs.

Westerlo played an important role in successfully guiding the Dutch Reformed congregation of Albany through many changes and difficulties. One is filled with a sense of amazement when realizing how two professors, thousands of miles from Albany and unfamiliar with the situation there, and faced with a limited choice for a candidate, appear to have chosen the right person for the job.

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848 It is possible that Westerlo had known about Janeway through Jacob Koelman, who translated many of these stories into Dutch [see Groenendijk 1997:323].
849 Bockstruck 2005:321. About fifty people were naturalized in New York on the same day, September 11, 1761. Almost all the names of these fifty suggest they were of German extraction.
850 Some 100,000 people (3.4 percent of the American population) were identified as being of Dutch descent in the Census of 1790 [Jacobs 2009:252].
As a 21-year-old recent graduate from the University of Groningen, Westerlo immediately understood the issues at hand in Albany. He navigated a large, divided congregation, with a powerful consistory and many strong-willed and politically connected members, first through the Coetus-Conferentie dispute, and later the issue of whether to adopt the Plan of Union. Other problems that required careful handling by Westerlo were the American Revolution, which put the Dutch Reformed clergy at risk, and the gradual switch from using Dutch to English.

The replacement of Dutch by English in Albany can be said to have been a slow process, but it was accelerated by the presence of British troops in and around Albany during the French and Indian War. Westerlo’s switch to English in 1782 in his writing and part of his preaching revealed his ambivalence on the subject: he did not want to offend the older members of the congregation, but at the same time he realized that maintaining Dutch as the sole language in the Church would result in the loss of a growing non-Dutch-speaking section of the population to other churches in Albany.

There is some justification for Howard Hageman’s calling Eilardus Westerlo “Albany’s Dutch Pope” in his 1984 paper, in that Westerlo was a person of influence in the city of Albany. Yet it would seem that Westerlo was not so much a power broker or that he displayed other features associated with a pope, but he should be remembered more as a careful and successful shepherd of his flock.

It is unclear what effect W. C. Brownlee’s plea of 1827 has had, when he asked for people “to come forward and put into our hands written materials, or traditional narratives, which might enable us to tell the rising generation what their fathers were, how learned, how zealous in the cause of their Lord, and how painstaking they were as ministers, and how honored and useful they lived as citizens.”851 Documents such as Eilardus Westerlo’s Memoirs allow us to gain insight into the inner world of those who lived through a period of enormous change in American history.

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851 Brownlee 1827:297.
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Samenvatting

Eilardus Westerlo (1738-1790):
van koloniaal predikant tot Amerikaanse dominee

Het onderwerp van deze studie is de van oorsprong Nederlandse predikant Eilardus Westerlo en de rol die hij gespeeld heeft in de ontwikkeling van de Nederduitsche Gereformeerde Kerk in Noord-Amerika rond de tijd van de Amerikaanse Revolutie. De vroege geschiedenis van Amerika in het algemeen en die van de Nederduitsche Gereformeerde Kerk in het bijzonder vormen een ingewikkelde legpuzzel. Aan de hand van deze studie zullen nu een aantal ontbrekende stukjes van die legpuzzel worden ingevuld.

De invulling van deze stukjes geschiedt door een antwoord te geven op de vraag hoe Westerlo’s geloofsopvattingen gevormd zijn, wie hem beïnvloed hebben, en wie hij zelf beïnvloed heeft. Het resultaat is een spirituele biografie die ook laat zien hoe hij aan de ook politiek belangrijke functie van predikant in Albany, NY, gedurende de jaren voor, tijdens en na de Amerikaanse Revolutie invulling gegeven heeft, wat zijn achtergrond in Nederland was, en welke rol hij binnen de Nederduitsche Gereformeerde Kerk in Noord-Amerika gespeeld heeft.

Eilardus Westerlo en de Nederduitsche Gereformeerde gemeente in Albany

Eilardus Westerlo, geboren in Groningen, opgegroeid in Denekamp, en opgeleid aan de Latijnse school te Oldenzaal en aan de Universiteit van Groningen, heeft in zijn leven slechts één full-time betrekking gehad, als predikant van de Nederduitsche Gereformeerde Kerk in Albany, van oktober 1760 tot en met december 1790. Gedurende deze periode werd Amerika onafhankelijk van Groot-Brittannië, en werd de kerk waartoe Westerlo behoorde, onafhankelijk van haar moederkerk in Nederland.

Westerlo groeide uit tot een leider van de Nederduitsche Gereformeerde gemeenschap in Noord-Amerika. Gedurende dertig jaar loodste hij zijn eigen gemeente door het woelige water der interne en externe problemen. Ook speelde hij een belangrijke rol in de ontwikkelingen binnen de kerkorganisatie in Noord-Amerika, die tot haar onafhankelijkheid van de moederkerk in Nederland leidden.

Gezien de relatief hoge concentratie van de Nederduitsche Gereformeerde gemeentes in de staten New Jersey en New York, en ook het belang van Albany in de regio, oefende de Kerk en ook Westerlo toch een zekere macht uit. Door zijn in 1775 gesloten huwelijk met Catharine Livingston, een dochter van Philip Livingston, een der ondertekenaars van de Onafhankelijkheidsverklaring, en de weduwe van de rijke en machtige Stephen van Rensselaer II, was Westerlo’s positie in Albany nog belangrijker geworden. In een periode vol veranderingen en problemen heeft hij een cruciale rol gespeeld in het bijeenhouden van zijn kerkelijke gemeenschap in Albany, de op-één-na-grootste Nederduitse Gereformeerde gemeente in Noord-Amerika.

Westerlo wordt traditioneel gezien als een voorvechter van Amerika’s onafhankelijkheid tijdens de oorlog, maar er zijn weinig voorbeelden van concrete actie in deze zin te vinden. De meeste kerken bleven terughoudend, omdat ze Britse strafmaatregelen vreesden. Veel historici beweren echter dat de Nederduitse Gereformeerde Kerk en in het bijzonder haar dominee in Albany openlijk de strijd voor onafhankelijkheid steunden.

Piëtisme met Nederlandse en Duitse intellectuele wortels

De beweegredenen voor Westerlo’s handelen waren meestal religieus van aard. Aanwijzingen daarvoor zijn te vinden in zijn dagboeken, waarvan een samenvattende beschrijving van de periode 1738 tot 1774 (in twintig bladzijden folio) en bijna wekelijkse aantekeningen van de jaren 1781 tot en met 1790 (in 500 bladzijden quarto) bewaard zijn gebleven. Uit deze dagboeken komt het beeld naar voren van een zeer vrome man die aan alles wat in zijn leven gebeurde zijn gaf in het licht van zijn geloofsvertuiging. Dit beeld wordt nog eens versterkt door de analyse van zijn collectie boeken, zijn brieven, zijn werk als scriba van de kerkenraad, en zijn vertaling van Robertus Alberthoma’s *Uittreksel van de Leere der Waarheid*.

Een analyse van Westerlo’s levensloop, met daarbij speciale aandacht voor zijn wedergeboorteervaring en voor zijn geloof, laat zien dat de intellectuele wortels van zijn Piëtisme gezocht moeten worden zowel in Groningen als in Bremen. Zijn leermeester was Daniel Gerdes, een discipel van Friedrich Adolf Lampe.

Wedergeboorte

Dat Eilardus Westerlo een wedergeboorte ervoer, was niet uitzonderlijk. Vooral predikanten waren bekend met de wedergeboorte, zowel uit persoonlijke ervaring als uit de verhalen van andere gelovigen. Het belang van Westerlo’s ervaring in 1768 schuilt in het feit dat hij deze zeer gedetailleerd beschrijft en ons daarmee inzicht verschaf van de beleving van zo’n ervaring.
Westerlo was ervan overtuigd dat zijn wedergeboorte een nieuw leven inhulde in dienst van degene die hem dit leven schonk, Jezus Christus. Hoewel Westerlo regelmatig twijfelde over zijn gedrag en over hoe gereed hij was om “zijn Heiland op de Troon te ontmoeten”, wist hij dat zijn wedergeboorte plaats had gevonden toen Jezus “zich in hem nestelde”.

**Westerlo en het behoud van de Kerkorde van Dordrecht**

Westerlo heeft een belangrijke rol gespeeld in de verkondiging van het evangelie op gereformeerde grondslag in het noordelijke deel van New York. Toen Amerika onafhankelijk geworden was, kreeg de evenementen onafhankelijk geworden Nederduitse Gereformeerde Kerk de kans de Kerkorde van de Nationale Synode van Dordrecht gehouden in 1618 en 1619 te herschrijven of af te schaffen. Westerlo hield vast aan de richtlijnen van de Kerkorde, en hij hielp haar te behouden. Van de Kerkorde kan worden gezegd dat zij de afgelopen vierhonderd jaar overleefd heeft in de Reformed Church in America, zoals de Nederduitse Gereformeerde Kerk in Noord-Amerika sinds 1867 heet.

Ook heeft Westerlo zich met succes ingezet voor het onderwijs, dat vaak een religieus karakter had. Hij was lid van het eerste College van Bestuur van Queen’s College in New Jersey, de huidige Rutgers University, en na 1779 heeft hij zich sterk gemaakt voor de plannen voor een universiteit in Schenectady, die uitmondden in het oprichten van Union College in 1795. In zijn woonplaats Albany was Westerlo een drijvende kracht achter de Albany Church Academy, een voorloper van de huidige Albany Academy.

Om de positie van de Nederduitse Gereformeerde Kerk in de regio te verstevigen preekte Westerlo regelmatig voor de gemeentes van Schagticoke, Schoharie, Niskayuna, Schenectady, Schodack, Kingston, Livingston Manor, New Paltz, Red Hook Landing (Old Red Hook) en Halfmoon in New York, en Raritan in New Jersey. Ook hielp hij bij de oprichting van gemeentes in Schuylerville (Old Saratoga) (1770), De Boght (Cohoes) (1784), East Greenbush (1787), Guilderland Center (Helderberg) (1767), Upper Red Hook (1788), Stillwater (Sinthoik) (1789), en Waterford (Halfmoon) (1771). Tenslotte is het waarschijnlijk dat er ook na zijn dood nog gemeentes zijn opgericht dankzij zijn inspanningen, zoals Buskirk (Sinthoik) (1792) en Wynantskill (1792).

**Westerlo’s geloofsovertuiging**

Door in te gaan op de discussie over de Nieuwtestamentische betekenis van πάρεσις en άφεσις, ‘vergeving’ of ‘kwijtschelding’, liet Westerlo zien dat hij op de hoogte was van de geschillen tussen Coccejanen en Voetianen. Het feit dat hij deze controverse niet verder hoeft te leggen aan een voormalige medestudent, bewijst dat hij hier in Groningen mee vertrouwd was geraakt.

**De rol van de Frelinghuysens**

Theodorus Jacobus Frelinghuysen, zijn kinderen, schoonzonen en kleinkinderen hebben een belangrijke rol gespeeld in de Nederduitse Gereformeerde Kerk in New York en New Jersey in de achttiende eeuw. Toch noemt Westerlo, die Theodorus Frelinghuysen opvolgde in Albany en hem waarschijnlijk in Groningen had ontmoet, de leden van deze familie niet of nauwelijks. Een mogelijke verklaring hiervoor is dat Westerlo begrepen had dat er in zijn gemeente negatieve gevoelens leefden jegens zijn voorganger.


Hoewel het na de Britse overname van Nieuw Nederland in 1664 meer dan honderd jaar zou duren voordat het Engels in Albany het Nederlands vervangen had, kwam dit proces in een stroomversnelling terecht door de aanwezigheid van Britse troepen in en rondom Albany gedurende de Frans-Indiaanse Oorlog (1754-1763). Westerlo’s overgang van het Nederlands naar het Engels in zijn dagboeken in 1782, en de toevoeging van Engels als taal waarin hij prees naast het Nederlands, legden zijn tegenstrijdige gevoelens hierover bloot: hij wilde de oudere leden van de gemeente niet teleurstellen, maar tegelijkertijd was hij zich ervan bewust dat vasthouden aan Nederlands als taal in de kerk tot het verlies van de groeiende niet-Nederlandssprekende bevolking in Albany voor de kerk zou leiden.

**John Henry Livingston: vader van de Reformed Church in America?**

John Henry Livingston heeft een belangrijke rol gespeeld in de overgang van de Nederduitse Gereformeerde Kerk naar de uiteindelijke Reformed Church in America. Wanneer men hem “de vader van de Reformed Church in America” noemt, doet dat onrecht aan de rol die anderen, onder wie Westerlo, gedurende
dezelfde periode gespeeld hebben. Livingston zou zo’n eretitel afgewezen hebben, want hij noemde zeven collega’s die de transitie mede mogelijk gemaakt hadden. Eilardus Westerlo was één van deze collega’s. In kerkelijke zaken vroeg Livingston vaak advies aan Westerlo, als vriend, zwager en collega. Westerlo’s gemeente in Albany was de grootste die niet direct toetrad tot de Vereeniging, en dit maakte zijn rol om zijn gemeente tot acceptatie van het Ontwerp van Vereeniging te brengen van vitaal belang voor het succes van de onafhankelijke Kerk.


**George Washington en Westerlo’s preek**


Dit thema is terug te vinden in George Washingtons *Circular Letter* uit 1783, waarin hij zijn lezers op het hart drukt dat de burgers hun regering dienen te gehoorzamen en broederlijk dienen samen te werken voor het welzijn van de Verenigde Staten. Washington lijkt zich te hebben gebaseerd op Romeinen 13:1, dezelfde Bijbeltekst die Westerlo in zijn preek noemde.

**Conclusie**

Het succes van Eilardus Westerlo dient deels teruggevoerd te worden op Daniel Gerdes en Michäel Bertling, die in 1760 vanuit Groningen een geschikte opvolger voor Theodorus Frelinghuysen als predikant van Albany moesten aanwijzen. Duizenden kilometers van die stad verwijderd en onbekend met de plaatselijke situatie aldaar, blijken deze Groningse hoogleraren uit een beperkt aantal kandidaten een uitermate geschikte te hebben geselecteerd als nieuwe predikant.

Binnen enkele maanden na zijn afstuderen van de Universiteit van Groningen toonde de jonge Westerlo dat hij de problemen in Albany niet alleen begreep maar ook met werkbare oplossingen kon komen. Hij leidde de grote, politiek verdeelde gemeente, met haar machtige kerkenraad en veel invloedrijke leden, naar een oplossing, eerst in het *Coetus-Conferentie*-geschil, en vervolgens over de vraag of de gemeente in Albany moest toetreden tot de vereniging van de Noord-
Amerikaanse gemeentes onder het door de Classis van Amsterdam voorgestelde *Ontwerp van Vereeniging*.

De lang uitgestelde toetreding van Westerlo’s gemeente tot de Vereniging van Nederduitse Gereformeerde Kerken in 1785 leidde direct tot zijn verkiezing tot voorzitter van de Algemene Synode. Wellicht daarom, maar tevens als waardering voor zijn inspanningen voor het onderwijs, werd hem in datzelfde jaar een eredoctoraat in de theologie toegekend door het College of New Jersey, de huidige Princeton University.

Een andere netelige kwestie die onder Westerlo’s leiderschap tot een goed einde gebracht werd, was de stellingname binnen de gemeente ten opzichte van de Amerikaanse Onafhankelijkheidsoorlog. De oorlog betekende een verhoogd risico voor de Nederduitse Gereformeerde predikanten. Ook de omschakeling van het Nederlands naar het Engels was niet eenvoudig, wat ook in Westerlo’s preken vanaf 1782 tot uitdrukking kwam.

In 1984 noemde Howard Hageman Eilardus Westerlo “Albany’s Nederlandse paus”. Dit zegt iets over de invloed die nu aan Westerlo in Albany wordt toegeschreven. Hij was echter meer een succesrijke vertegenwoordiger van zijn kerkelijke gemeenschap in de snel veranderende wereld van revolutionair Noord-Amerika.

**Bijlagen**

Dit proefschrift gaat vergezeld van een aantal bijlagen, die belangrijke bronnen zijn waaruit ik heb geput om mijn betoog te ondersteunen. De meeste van deze teksten zijn slechts in handschrift te raadplegen, maar zij kunnen nu in hun originele tekst bestudeerd worden.
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<td>Von Zinzendorf</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

**On the cover:** The Stone Church building of the Dutch Reformed Church, in which services were held between 1715 and 1798 [http://www.nysm.nysed.gov/albany/drc.html].

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