

# When the Breaker Calls: Factors that Influenced the Revival of August 1881 in Weerdinge<sup>1</sup>

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## Introduction

In the Old Testament book of Micah 2.12-13, we read about a ‘Breaker’<sup>2</sup> who opens a breach for the gathered remnant of Israel. Using the term ‘Breaker’, the prophet seems to be referring to God or a future Messiah King.<sup>3</sup> However, what He is breaking and where He guides the people to, remains unclear in this passage. But it is written within a context of sin, oppression, and disbelief among the landowners, prophets, and leaders of Israel. And God proclaims to them His judgment.<sup>4</sup>

The same expression ‘the Breaker’ is used in a tract that describes the revival of August 1881 in the Baptist congregation of Weerdinge.<sup>5</sup> The writer of this tract is Berend Roeles, an evangelist who was in the service of this congregation.<sup>6</sup> It is unclear if Roeles had Micah 2.13 in his mind, when he used the expression ‘Breaker’, but there is a striking similarity between them in their use of this term. Just like the Old Testament prophet, Roeles speaks about sin and disbelief and he emphasises that ‘the Breaker’

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<sup>1</sup> This article is an edited version of a lecture delivered at the ‘Religious Revivals and their Effects: Perceptions, Media and Networks in the Modern World’ conference, organised by the Amsterdam Centre for Religious History (ACRH) at the Vrije Universiteit in Amsterdam, on 1 June 2018. I want to thank Henk Bakker, Teun van der Leer, Jos Jumelet, Chris Dykstra, and Pieter van Wingerden for their comments on this article.

<sup>2</sup> See King James Version, Amplified Bible, and New American Standard Bible. The English Standard Version translates it as: ‘He who opens the breach’. Other translations, like the Contemporary English Version, already paraphrase that God is the one to whom the text refers.

<sup>3</sup> G. van den Brink, M.J. Paul, and J.C. Bette (eds.), *Studiebijbel Online. Commentaar Micha 2:1-13* (Doorn: Centrum voor Bijbelonderzoek, 2018). See also J. Ridderbos, *Korte verklaring der Heilige Schrift. De kleine profeten Obadja tot Zefanja* (Kok: Kampen, 1963), pp. 71-72 and W. Grudem (ed.), *Study Bible. English Standard Version* (Wheaton, Illinois: Crossway, 2008), p. 1699. For an alternative explanation, see E. Eynikel (ed.) and others, *Internationaal Commentaar op de Bijbel. Band 2* (Kampen: Kok, 2001), pp. 1339-1340, who state that verses 12-13 are the words of false prophets with whom Micah is arguing.

<sup>4</sup> See chapters 2 and 3 for the literary context of this passage: Micah 2.1-11 focuses on the abusing landowners, and God’s judgment on them (2.3-5); in 3.1-4 God speaks to the oppressing leaders and in 3.5-8 to the misleading prophets; 3.9-12 summarises the passage with God’s judgment on Jerusalem. In the centre of the passage (2.12-13), however, there is a message of salvation for the people of Israel.

<sup>5</sup> B. Roeles, *Het genadewerk Gods in de bekeering van zondaren in Weerdinge* (Sneek: Wiarda, year unknown), p. 10. Weerdinge is now called Nieuw-Weerdinge, which lies in the north-eastern part of The Netherlands, in the province of Drenthe, near the border with Germany and the province Groningen. Officially it then was part of Groningen, but factually it was in Drenthe.

<sup>6</sup> Because it is a tract, Roeles in the first place is trying to convince his readers to open their hearts and minds for his revival message. So it is not a descriptive document in pure form, but it does give us important information about the events that happened.

needed to break down this resistance. However, there is also an important difference between their uses of the term ‘the Breaker’. Instead of referring to God or a future Messiah-King, Roeles uses it as a reference to the Holy Spirit.<sup>7</sup> This need not be very surprising, because it matches the strong emphasis on the Holy Spirit within the holiness and revival movement of the nineteenth century, which strongly influenced Roeles. According to the evangelist, the Spirit was in control during the revival in Weerdingermond and He broke down the sinful resistance of the people that were involved.<sup>8</sup>

In this article, I will focus on the circumstances in which this revival started and try to delineate which of these circumstances might have had an important influence. In juridical terms, we could speak of ‘circumstantial evidence’, or: ‘Where there is smoke, there is fire.’ This leads to my research question, namely: ‘Which factors in the second half of the nineteenth century influenced the arising of the revival of August 1881 in Weerdingermond?’ In order to find an answer to this question, first I will describe what happened during the revival of August 1881 in Weerdingermond. Then I will delineate the socio-political context and focus on the ecclesiastical and theological context. Finally, I will give a tentative conclusion of my findings.

## The Revival of August 1881 in Weerdingermond

Around 1850, most peat areas in The Netherlands were excavated, except for the south-eastern part of Drenthe. So the surroundings of Weerdingermond were a sparsely populated area. During the last decades of the century, however, Weerdingermond would become the largest peat supplier of The Netherlands. This started with the unlocking of the area by digging an access to a nearby canal, from 1872 onward. This would lead to a rapid growth of the population, in particular after 1880.<sup>9</sup>

Of course, church people also moved to Weerdingermond. One of them was Philippus Lindeman, who was a peat boss – a manager and employee of the peat work – and member of the Baptist congregation in Stadskanaal. Lindeman became the elder of the Baptists in the area and he also committed himself to evangelisation. Because the group of believers was growing, a small church was built in 1875, which became independent from its ‘mother congregation’ in Stadskanaal later that year, and Lindeman

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<sup>7</sup> It is, however, not completely ruled out that Micah is referring to the Holy Spirit. Other Old Testament prophets – during the same period and later – speak about the coming of the Spirit; see for instance: Isaiah 32.15; Ezekiel 36.26-27; Joel 2.28-29 [3.1-2] and Zechariah 12.10. Micah 3.8 also mentions the Spirit, but does not specifically refer to His coming on all flesh.

<sup>8</sup> See, for instance, Roeles, pp. 4-10, 19.

<sup>9</sup> Author unknown, ‘Grepfen uit het verleden van de Drentse veenkolonie Nieuw-Weerdinge’, *Historisch Nieuw-Weerdinge* <<http://www.historisch-nieuw-weerdinge.nl/ontstaan.htm>> [accessed 03 August 2018].

became its pastor.<sup>10</sup> This Baptist congregation was the first church in Weerdingermond; in 1879 a Christian Reformed Church followed.<sup>11</sup> The fact that the population of Weerdingermond grew so rapidly during that period, in combination with the fact that the Baptist congregation was the first church there, might already be a first pointer to a factor that influenced the revival, as we will see below.

In November 1879 the flourishing Baptist congregation appointed the evangelist Berend Roeles. But there was misfortune too. In May 1880 a peat fire burnt down the church building. The members, however, were not discouraged and rebuilt their church.<sup>12</sup> Then the Baptist pastor from Sneek – Johannes Horn – was invited to come and preach in Weerdingermond for a couple of days. In May 1881 Horn had organised some revival meetings in the area of Sneek and Heeg (Friesland),<sup>13</sup> and on 28<sup>th</sup> July he wrote that he would come to Weerdingermond on 14<sup>th</sup> August. So Roeles hoped that August 1881 would be a month of spiritual harvest, and Horn encouraged him and his wife to pray daily for his coming.<sup>14</sup>

In Roeles' tract, mentioned earlier, he describes what happened during the following two weeks. Horn and Roeles would organise several meetings in Weerdingermond and the nearby Valthermond. When Horn preached, he started to read a biblical text. But instead of explaining the text, he simply urged his listeners to surrender to Jesus.<sup>15</sup> Then, after the Monday evening meeting during the first week, Roeles describes what happened:

The church was full, the after-meeting was heart-breaking. In, in front of, and behind the church, our whole house, in the front and back room, in the shed, behind the house, everywhere there were defeated people, calling to God because of the multitude of their sins. The "Breaker" had gone before us and there was nothing else to do but to take hold of the souls, to free them from their swaddling clothes and to let them go in freedom.<sup>16</sup>

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<sup>10</sup> J. van Dam, *Geschiedenis van het Baptisme in Nederland* (Arnhem: Unie van Baptisten Gemeenten, 1970), pp. 50-51; G.A. Wumkes, *De opkomst en vestiging van het Baptisme in Nederland* (Sneek: A.J. Osinga, 1912), pp. 219-221; Ph. Lindeman, 'Ongestudeerde predikanten', *De Zondagsbode in doopsgezinde en verwante christelijke gemeenten*, 1.22 (1887-1888).

<sup>11</sup> F. Verkade, 'Nieuw Weerdinge Gereformeerde Kerk', *Verkades Dominees Memories* <<http://dominees.nl/search.php?srt=g&id=12320>> [accessed 03 August 2018]. See also H. op 't Holt, 't Noorden's eerste bede om hulp', *De bazuin; gereformeerde stemmen uit de Christelijke Afgescheidene Kerk in Nederland-kerk- nieuws- en advertentieblad*, 29.50 (1881). It lasted until 1911, before the first Dutch Reformed Church was established in Weerdingermond: F. Verkade, 'Nieuw Weerdinge Hervormde Gemeente', *Verkades Dominees Memories* <<http://dominees.nl/search.php?srt=g&id=12321>> [accessed 03 August 2018].

<sup>12</sup> Wumkes, pp. 221-222. See also J.W. Brat, 'De veenbrand te Ter Apel bij de Weerdingermond', *Het nieuws van de dag: kleine courant* (3 June 1880), p. 2.

<sup>13</sup> Wumkes, p. 222. See also Author unknown, 'Heerlijke tijdingen uit Sneek en Heeg', *Het eeuwige leven. Tijdschrift gewijd aan de bevordering van de heiligmaking volgens de Schrift en aan de opwekking dezer dagen* (1881-1882), pp. 21-23.

<sup>14</sup> Roeles, pp. 1-2.

<sup>15</sup> *Ibid.*, pp. 4-7.

<sup>16</sup> *Ibid.*, p. 10; my translation (AS).

He continues by saying: 'In general the daily labour here stood still, the Holy Spirit seized all souls.'<sup>17</sup> The evangelist writes that in two weeks, over a hundred people were converted.<sup>18</sup>

The following Thursday, Horn started to focus on the alcohol abuse of the congregation, by saying that 'the same lips with which you touch the Lord's supper cup, some of you polluted with the drinking cup of the devil'.<sup>19</sup> So, when their pastor Lindeman solemnly pledged his abstinence from alcohol, the congregation members followed him. Even the peat shippers in the area were surprised about the quietness among the people of Weerdingermund, who were known as restless people.<sup>20</sup> The next Sunday, there was a baptismal service in which fifty-four people were baptised.<sup>21</sup>

However, soon the triumphal mood would turn into disappointment. On 12 March 1882, Lindeman organised a congregational meeting, because he had second thoughts about his decision to swear to abstain from alcohol and wanted to state a more moderate position. With an appeal to I Corinthians 8 he asked the congregation if they could tolerate their alcohol drinking brothers and sisters. Many of them declared that they could, and a few that they could not, including Roeles. Without any further explanation, Lindeman then stated that they were cut off from the congregation. Roeles protested and was even willing to withdraw his words, but Lindeman was unrelenting. So, over seventy people were forced to leave the congregation, and a few months later Roeles started a new ministry in Deventer. Later Roeles and Lindeman were reconciled, but the damage in the congregation was already done.<sup>22</sup>

It is unclear what the reason for Lindeman's sudden turn was and why he was so anxious to cut off the other members from the congregation. A possible explanation is that Lindeman, as a peat boss, also owned a shop and that he was afraid that he would lose a part of his income.<sup>23</sup> It is also possible that he almost felt compelled to swear to abstain from alcohol, because of the forceful character of Horn's speech and that later he started to have doubts about his decision. A third possibility is that Lindeman and Roeles struggled with regard to the question of who was in charge in the congregation.

I already noted that the rapid growth and the fact that the Baptist congregation was the first church in Weerdingermund, might be a factor that

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<sup>17</sup> *Ibid.*, p. 10; my translation (AS).

<sup>18</sup> *Ibid.*, p. 11.

<sup>19</sup> *Ibid.*, p. 13; my translation (AS).

<sup>20</sup> *Ibid.*, pp. 14-15.

<sup>21</sup> *Ibid.*, pp. 17-19. A week later, again six people were baptised, see p. 21.

<sup>22</sup> Wumkes, pp. 227-229, 232.

<sup>23</sup> In the next paragraph I will write more about the forced shopping in the peat areas.

influenced the revival. When we focus on the revival itself, some other possible factors come to mind. Horn's emphasis on prayer and the strong focus on the work of the Holy Spirit, for example, might be a pointer that the Spirit was in fact working through the revival meetings. On the other hand, the forceful character of Horn's speeches and his emphasis on instantaneous decisions may have been a reason why people felt almost compelled to respond to his calls.

In the following section I will focus on the socio-political context, paying special attention to the conditions in which the peat workers lived and worked. This sheds some new light on possible factors of influence.

## The Socio-Political Context

In 1848 King William II (who reigned from 1840-1849) accepted a new constitution, which gave sovereignty to the parliament, and which strongly reduced his power as king. This led to economic liberalisation, and also resulted in the long-awaited separation of church and state.<sup>24</sup> This meant that the Dutch Reformed Church<sup>25</sup> lost its privileged position. Other churches like the Roman Catholic Church and small dissenter groups, such as the Christian Seceded Congregations<sup>26</sup> and the Baptists,<sup>27</sup> finally enjoyed freedom of religion. But the Dutch Reformed Church had a hard time getting used to the new situation. Their officials still consulted the government in making important decisions<sup>28</sup> and their members protested strongly against the recovery of Catholic hierarchy.<sup>29</sup>

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<sup>24</sup> In fact this was already the case in the constitution of 1798, during the Batavian Republic. But during the period from 1801-1813, when The Netherlands were under the (direct) influence of Napoleon and especially during the reign of William I (who reigned from 1813-1839), church and state were tied together more closely.

<sup>25</sup> In Dutch: *Nederlands Hervormde Kerk*.

<sup>26</sup> In Dutch: *Christelijk Afscheiden Gemeenten*. These were the congregations that separated themselves from the Dutch Reformed Church in 1834 under the guidance of Hendrik de Cock. We call this separation the *Afscheiding* ('Secession'), the first big schism in the Dutch protestant church since the Remonstrants were forced to leave the church in 1619. Later the *Afscheiden* churches were called 'Christian Reformed Churches' (Dutch: *Christelijk Gereformeerde Kerken*). In 1892 most of these churches were merged together with the churches who separated themselves from the Dutch Reformed Church with the *Doleantie* ('grievance/complaint') of 1886 under the guidance of Abraham Kuiper. Since 1892 these churches were called 'Reformed Churches in The Netherlands' (Dutch: *Gereformeerde Kerken in Nederland*).

<sup>27</sup> The Baptists called their churches: 'Congregation of Baptized Christians' (Dutch: *Gemeente van Gedoopte Christenen*).

<sup>28</sup> For example, they asked the king to confirm their new General Regulations of 1852, even though it was unnecessary according to the constitution. A.J. Rasker, *De Nederlandse Hervormde Kerk vanaf 1795. Geschiedenis, theologische ontwikkelingen en de verhouding tot haar zusterkerken in de negentiende en twintigste eeuw* (Kampen: Kok, 1974), p. 156.

<sup>29</sup> In a short period of time, this so-called 'April-movement', in 1853 collected 200,000 signatures – there were 80,000 voters at that time – and they handed it over to King William III (who reigned from 1849-1890), instead of the parliament. Because the king received the signatures behind the back of the government, the prime minister Thorbecke offered the dismissal of his cabinet. To calm down the heated minds, his successor Van Hall would organise a certain supervision of the Catholic churches, but he did not

The second half of the nineteenth century was a period of far-reaching socio-economic transformations in The Netherlands, because industrialisation began to develop.<sup>30</sup> For a lot of people this meant a significant improvement in living conditions, but the working class were not able to benefit as much as other groups did. They had to work under tough conditions and had long working hours. These circumstances led to multiple problems like health issues, alcohol abuse, and developmental problems.<sup>31</sup> Also children had to work in factories, although in 1874 a law on child labour tried to stop their work in the industrial sector. But it was hard to enforce this law and it did not apply to work in the fields, such as peat work.<sup>32</sup>

I noted earlier that the excavation of the south-eastern part of Drenthe started in the same period. For a long time, Drenthe was an outsider among the Dutch provinces. People from Drenthe were merely seen as second-class citizens.<sup>33</sup> This was especially the case for the workers in the peat areas of Drenthe – mostly people from Friesland, Groningen and Germany – whereas the gentlemen farmers from the sandy soils were more respected. The image of people from Drenthe was that they were delayed in their development, that they lived among sheep and dolmens, and that their life was determined by peat, gin, and suspicion.<sup>34</sup> It is hotly debated how poor the peat workers in Drenthe actually were, but there is little doubt that they worked and lived under tough conditions.<sup>35</sup>

In accordance with the national economic growth, the peat industry flourished from 1850 until the end of the seventies. However, because of the growing competition with other sources of fuel supply – such as coal – and because of a crisis in the agricultural sector in 1880, wages started to drop and workers began to lose their employment.<sup>36</sup> Besides this there was the rule of forced shopping, which meant that a peat boss was owner of the store where the workers bought their own groceries. In most cases this was a large disadvantage for the workers, because prices were higher. And in the winter – when there was less employment – they had to buy groceries in advance,

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change their freedom of religion. See H. Selderhuis (ed.), *Handboek Nederlandse Kerkgeschiedenis* (Kampen: Kok, 2006), pp. 647-650.

<sup>30</sup> Industrialisation in The Netherlands started relatively late, compared to England, Germany, and Belgium. Also, the Dutch industry had a stronger focus on light and processing industries. J. Kennedy, *Een beknopte geschiedenis van Nederland* (Amsterdam: Prometheus, 2017), pp. 279-281.

<sup>31</sup> The peat workers had to cope with comparable problems. S. Siewert, *Representatie van de Drentse veenarbeiders. Een onderzoek naar het ontstaan van de representatie van veenarbeiders in Drenthe aan het einde van de negentiende eeuw* (Universiteit Utrecht: Unpublished master's thesis, 2009), pp. 32-48.

<sup>32</sup> Siewert, p. 10; Kennedy, pp. 279-281, 287-290; Rasker, pp. 201-212.

<sup>33</sup> In the seventeenth century, Drenthe was the only province that was not represented in the Dutch parliament, because it was considered as being too insignificant. See Kennedy, pp. 148-149.

<sup>34</sup> Siewert, pp. 11-12.

<sup>35</sup> R. Paping, (ed.), *De extreme armoede van arbeiders in de Drentse venen in de negentiende en eerste helft van de twintigste eeuw. Mythe of harde werkelijkheid* (Groningen: Boon, 2000) focuses on this debate and brings together several contributions of writers from both sides of the debate.

<sup>36</sup> Paping, pp. 65-66, 87-100, 103-110, 131-134, 207-209; Siewert, p. 50.

so they were in debt to their employer. This created relationships of dependency, which sometimes had far-reaching consequences, such as manipulation and poverty.<sup>37</sup>

The peat season lasted from April until autumn. During this season the workers had to work from sunrise until 4 or 5 pm.<sup>38</sup> In the autumn, most of them worked as guest workers in Germany or in other parts of The Netherlands.<sup>39</sup> In the winter it was much harder to find a job, so in the working season they had to earn enough money for the rest of the year.<sup>40</sup> The peat digging was tough work and was generally done by the men and older boys. The drying of peats was done by women and children, and men loaded the ships.<sup>41</sup> Because of the tough and monotonous work, and also because shippers and peat bosses sometimes paid the workers by giving them liquor, alcohol abuse was a common problem among peat workers. This could lead to multiple problems, but for those who stayed clear from alcohol abuse, life was more bearable.<sup>42</sup>

This description of the lives of the peat workers might point to a factor that influenced the revival, namely that the tough circumstances of the peat workers might have encouraged them to strive for emancipation. The revival meetings may have been a way to foster this purpose. Also, the religious freedom gave the Baptists the possibility to organise their own meetings, as we have seen earlier in this article. To get a deeper sense of the development of the Dutch Baptist movement in the nineteenth century and its most important influences, I will delineate the ecclesiastical and theological context in the next section, which will also provide more information about the influencing factors of the revival.

## **The Ecclesiastical and Theological Context**

In the nineteenth century theological academies and churches in The Netherlands were influenced by Enlightenment ideas. During the first half of the century, this took a moderate form, but in the second half it radicalised under the influence of modern theology, in particular German theology, such as Tübingen thinkers like D.F. Strauss and F.C. Baur. They used new methods, for example the empirical approach, evolutionism, and historical-critical research. They questioned the historical reliability of the Bible and

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<sup>37</sup> Paping, pp. 97-98, 108, 125, 147; Siewert, pp. 17, 29-30, 51-52.

<sup>38</sup> Paping, p. 106.

<sup>39</sup> *Ibid.*, pp. 90-91.

<sup>40</sup> *Ibid.*, p. 96.

<sup>41</sup> *Ibid.*, pp. 87-89, 107, 121-123; Siewert, pp. 19, 32-38. So people with large families had the advantage of getting a job in this industry and it was essential that the workers stayed physically healthy in order to keep their jobs.

<sup>42</sup> Paping, pp. 74-75, 125-126; Siewert, pp. 18, 21-22, 38-41, 52.

rejected the historical truth of Jesus' resurrection. For some pastors these insights led to the resignation of their ministry, but other pastors and professors wanted to use their new insights to modernise the church. Modern theology in particular influenced academics and people from the higher classes.<sup>43</sup>

This new theological direction led to a strong counter-response from the orthodox side of the church. In 1834 there already was a schism, which tore off a large group of orthodox inclined local churches across the country – especially in the northern provinces – from the Dutch Reformed Church. They wanted to reclaim the prominent position of the church confessions. In their slipstream Baptists and other groups followed, and in 1886 a large schism broke out again in the Dutch Reformed Church.<sup>44</sup> But also those who remained in the Dutch Reformed Church increasingly started to oppose modern theology and its forerunners. This was mainly due to the Dutch Réveil movement, which was a late continental offshoot of the First Great Awakening.<sup>45</sup>

An interesting person connected to the Réveil circle was the former Mennonite pastor, Jan de Liefde.<sup>46</sup> Moreover, he would have an important influence on the Baptists in the second half of the nineteenth century, although he had an ambiguous relationship with them, because of their strict view on baptism and church membership. His influence was especially seen through several students of his evangelism school *Bethanië*, and in particular

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<sup>43</sup> Rasker, pp. 113-124; Selderhuis, pp. 656-662.

<sup>44</sup> See note 26 for more information about these schisms and the relationship between the churches of the *Afscheiding* of 1834 and the *Doleantie* of 1886 and their merging in 1892. The first Baptist church in The Netherlands was founded in 1845 by Johannes Elias Feisser. For the background story of his turn from the Dutch Reformed Church (and a liberal view) to the Baptists (and an orthodox view), see A. Stellingwerf, *Johannes Elias Feisser. Nederlandse baptistenpionier in Gasselternijveen* (Theologische Universiteit Kampen: Unpublished Bachelor thesis, 2016).

<sup>45</sup> This was led by the Wesleys and George Whitefield in England and by Jonathan Edwards in America. See R.F. Lovelace, *Dynamics of Spiritual Life. An Evangelical Theology of Renewal* (Downers Grove, Illinois: InterVarsity, 1979), pp. 35-46. From England it moved to the European continent and especially from Switzerland it moved to The Netherlands in the first half of the nineteenth century. From 1845-1854 followers of the Dutch Réveil united under the name 'Christian Friends'. Among other topics, they spoke about how to relate to the developments within the church. But they had different approaches, varying from a strict juridical approach – with a strong emphasis on the church confessions – to a more moderate ethical approach, with an emphasis on the conscience. At their twentieth meeting in 1854, the different directions among Christian Friends would lead to a conflict, which meant the end of their close co-operation. See M.E. Kluit, *Het protestantse Réveil in Nederland en daarbuiten. 1815-1865* (Amsterdam: Paris, 1970), pp. 445-497.

<sup>46</sup> It was especially Jan de Liefde – who stood outside the Dutch Reformed Church – who clashed with the ethical-orientated pastor Daniël Chantepie de la Saussaye at the last meeting of Christian Friends, because he thought it was too much orientated towards the Dutch Reformed Church. After his break with the Christian Friends, Jan de Liefde more strongly moved into a Free Church and congregational direction. In 1856 he was the founder of a 'Free Evangelical Congregation' (Dutch: *Vrij Evangelische Gemeente*), which was united with other Free Evangelical Congregations in 1881. Because of his ambivalent relationship with the topic of baptism, they baptised both infants and adults (on confession of their faith). See Kluit, pp. 476-480, 494-497; Wumkes, pp. 97-102.



in two fields of ecclesial interest: more awareness of the missionary task of the church (inner mission), and the turn from the doctrine of particular election to the doctrine of general election. Some of De Liefde's students were sent out as evangelists to the peat colonies and were connected with the Baptist congregation in Gasselternijveen.<sup>47</sup> The fact that several evangelists worked in the peat areas may have made it easier for peat workers to visit the revival meetings and influenced their attitude towards the gospel.

One of the students of De Liefde was Kors Holleman, who also evangelised in the peat areas and then settled in Leeuwarden.<sup>48</sup> Just like his predecessor, he started a school for evangelists, and called it *Klein-Bethanië* (small *Bethanië*). This school brought forward several future Baptist pastors and evangelists. One of them was Johannes Horn, who was baptised by Holleman in 1869. He started to evangelise in Sneek and founded a Baptist congregation there in 1880.<sup>49</sup> Horn came in contact with Berend Roeles and baptised him in 1879.<sup>50</sup> These men would soon become leading figures among the Dutch Baptists.<sup>51</sup> They became key figures who, for example, were involved in the foundation of the Dutch Baptist Union in January 1881.<sup>52</sup> In visiting congregations, they preached at regular meetings, which in some cases led to new revivals.<sup>53</sup>

Especially in the late 1870s and early 1880s, the Dutch Baptist movement was influenced by the Anglo-Saxon holiness and revival movement. In 1875 there was a conference in Brighton with speakers including Dwight L. Moody and Pearsall Smith. Here several Dutch church leaders were present, such as Abraham Kuyper and Philippus J. Hoedemaker. Although at first some were optimistic, most orthodox leaders

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<sup>47</sup> Wumkes, pp. 102-141; O.H. de Vries, *Gelovig gedoopt. 400 jaar baptisme, 150 jaar in Nederland* (Kampen: Kok, 2009), pp. 119-120. The congregation of Gasselternijveen – the first Dutch Baptist congregation – was later continued in Stadskanaal. An example of one of the students of De Liefde is Eduard Gerdes, a German who studied Dutch literature and who evangelised among the German peat workers in Drenthe. He became the pastor of Gasselternijveen from 1858-1859 and baptised Philippus Lindeman in 1858. But, because he had a different opinion about an 'open' or 'closed' celebration of the Lord's Supper (the Baptists had the stricter view), Gerdes and the Baptists in Gasselternijveen went their separate ways.

<sup>48</sup> Before he went to the peat areas, he also evangelised in the surroundings of Haarlem.

<sup>49</sup> Wumkes, pp. 124-125, 194-216. Horn already started working in Sneek in 1869. Wumkes, pp. 204-206.

<sup>50</sup> Wumkes, pp. 221-222. Roeles came to faith under the guidance of D. de Gilde, another student from *Klein-Bethanië*, who trained Roeles as an evangelist.

<sup>51</sup> Another leading figure worth mentioning was Hendrikadius Z. Kloekers, who urged several starting congregations to build up their community with the Baptist principles of baptism and a closed membership (only baptised people could become members and only members could join the Lord's Supper). For more about Kloekers, see Wumkes, pp. 131-141, 165-179, 200-269.

<sup>52</sup> Wumkes, pp. 243-247. Although Roeles was absent at the actual moment of foundation, he was present in the pre-stage of development and he was a member from the beginning.

<sup>53</sup> Wumkes, pp. 232-242; J. de Hart, 'Heerlijke Opwekking te Hengelo (Overijssel)', *Het eeuwige leven. Tijdschrift gewijd aan de bevordering van de heiligmaking volgens de Schrift en aan de opwekking dezer dagen* (1881-1882), pp. 133-135.

responded negatively to the occurrences in Brighton,<sup>54</sup> while others, for example the Dutch Reformed pastor Pierre Huet,<sup>55</sup> tried to start a revival movement in The Netherlands. Together with like-minded people he organised conferences and started a magazine in order to exchange experiences and write about topics related to revivalism and sanctification. Also involved were Horn and the Baptist pastor J. De Hart.<sup>56</sup> The major contribution of the holiness and revival movement to the Dutch Baptist movement, was that the Baptists started to emphasise themes such as the work of the Holy Spirit, the idea of resistance and subjection, alcohol abstinence, general election, instantaneous decisions of faith, the use of after-meetings, and revivalism.<sup>57</sup>

The fact that the Dutch Baptists were open to the holiness and revival theology points to some new factors which might have influenced the revival. First, a reason for this openness might have been that it was an attractive third option besides the modernist option and the orthodox option. Next to an emphasis on general election, the holiness and revivalist theology also gave them a stronger focus on sanctification and personal emotions. But – as we already have seen in the section about the revival in Weerdingermond – in these revivalist meetings there was also a strong focus on instantaneous decisions, with an emphasis on emotions on the spot. This may have pushed people in certain directions. There is, however, also a strong emphasis on the work and person of the Holy Spirit within this movement, as we have seen earlier in the emphasis on prayer.

## Conclusion

The main focus of this article was to search for factors in the second half of the nineteenth century, which possibly influenced the arising of the revival of August 1881 in Weerdingermond. Now that I have presented some

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<sup>54</sup> Wumkes, pp. 217-218; H. Algra, *Het wonder van de negentiende eeuw. Over vrije kerken en kleine luyden* (Franeker: Wever, 1979), pp. 281-289. Kuyper was positive at first, he even used the Brighton conference as a positive example in a speech in the Dutch parliament. But most orthodox leaders thought it did not match with the Calvinistic election doctrine and found it too extravagant.

<sup>55</sup> This Huet wrote the word of recommendation for Roeles' tract on the revival in Weerdingermond: Roeles, front. For more about Huet, see F.L. van 't Hooft, 'Huet, Dammes Pierre Marie', in *Biografisch lexicon voor de geschiedenis van het Nederlands protestantisme. Deel 2*, ed. by D. Nauta and others (Kampen: Kok, 1983), pp. 263-265.

<sup>56</sup> Wumkes, pp. 217-219. But in 1882 there was an argument between Huet and the Baptists about the importance of (believer's) baptism, so each went their separate ways. Wumkes, p. 219. See also P. Huet, 'Baptisme en sabbatisme', *Het eeuwige leven. Tijdschrift gewijd aan de bevordering van de heiligmaking volgens de Schrift en aan de opwekking dezer dagen* (1881-1882), pp. 185-190; Author unknown, 'Overtuigingen!', *De Christen, Maandblad, uitgegeven door de Unie van Gedoopte Christenen in Nederland*, 1.6 (1882), pp. 1-2.

<sup>57</sup> De Vries, pp. 133-151.

decisive information, I will list the most important factors – in random order – below:

- I have noted that the population of Weerdingermond grew rapidly from the seventies and eighties onward. This might have been a reason why so many people visited the meetings of the Baptist congregation. Besides this, there were probably people among them who were already church-related. For several that might have been the reason to visit the Baptist congregation, because it was the first church in Weerdingermond. Also, the fact that they were in a new environment, might have encouraged them to visit a church from another denomination (which was possible because of the religious freedom).<sup>58</sup>
- I have described the life of the peat workers. They had to work under tough conditions and were committed to heavy and monotonous work. On top of this there were poverty and alcohol abuse. Revivalist theology may have offered them an opportunity to strive for emancipation and a purpose to live for. The emphasis on alcohol abstention, for example, could help them free themselves from their alcohol addiction.<sup>59</sup>
- I have mentioned that there were several evangelists who worked with the peat workers, of whom Roeles is one example.<sup>60</sup> The fact that the workers already knew the evangelists and their message, may have made it easier to join the meetings and have an open attitude towards the gospel.<sup>61</sup> In addition: there were other revivals in the area going on that may have been interrelated.<sup>62</sup>
- I have shown that Baptists were open to holiness and revival theology. One of the reasons for this openness may have been that it was the attractive third option for the (lower educated) working class,<sup>63</sup> besides the elitist option (modernist) and the rigid option (orthodox). Under the influence of Jan de Liefde and his students, most Baptists turned from the Calvinist particular election doctrine to the evangelical doctrine of general election, which was also an emphasis within the holiness and revivalist theology. In addition, this

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<sup>58</sup> See also Siewert, p. 16 about the absence of the Dutch Reformed Church in most peat areas.

<sup>59</sup> The 'emancipation' argument is also sometimes used with regard to the *Afscheiding*, *Doleantie* and the upcoming of socialism during this period.

<sup>60</sup> See, for example, B. Roeles, 'Eene roepstem', *Het Oosten; wekelijksch orgaan der Weesinrichting te Neerbosch*, 575 (1882).

<sup>61</sup> See also Siewert, pp. 16, 23 about the importance of evangelists and the high attendance at church services in peat areas.

<sup>62</sup> For example in Groningen, 't Zandt (North-eastern Groningen) and Hengelo. Wumkes, pp. 232-242; De Hart, pp. 133-135.

<sup>63</sup> Siewert, p. 26.

theological approach also made them more aware of the importance of sanctification and personal emotions.

- In close connection to the former point stands the observation that in Moodian revivalist meetings there was a strong focus on instantaneous decisions. This also became visible in the preaching-style of Horn. His invitation to repentance had an almost forceful character. There was a strong focus on emotions on the spot and decisions that had to be taken right away. This may have pushed people into certain directions.
- I have noted that the holiness and revival movement strongly focuses on the work and person of the Holy Spirit. This observation implies that believers strongly depend on the work of the Spirit, instead of depending on themselves, which is also closely connected to the theme of resistance and subjection. The emphasis becomes quite clear in the dominance of prayer, as Horn urged Roeles and his wife to pray daily for the meetings they were about to organise when he announced his coming to Weerdingermond.<sup>64</sup> It is, of course, possible that such a focus on the Holy Spirit may have actually resulted in a strong contribution of the Spirit during the revival.<sup>65</sup>

As I noted above, these (in)direct factors are not hard evidence. They are pointers at the possible ‘smoke’ and ‘fire’ of the historic revival in Weerdingermond. However, if we had asked Berend Roeles what caused the revival, I think he would have been less cautious and clearly stated that it was the work of the Holy Spirit. Because: when the Breaker calls, resistance will turn into surrender.

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<sup>64</sup> For the importance of prayer, see also P. Huet, ‘Inleiding’, *Het eeuwige leven. Tijdschrift gewijd aan de bevordering van de heiligmaking volgens de Schrift en aan de opwekking dezer dagen* (1881-1882), pp. 1-5; De Hart, pp. 133-135.

<sup>65</sup> See also Richard Lovelace’s scheme of spiritual renewal: Lovelace, p. 75. He also strongly emphasises that believers should depend on (the work of) the triune God, with special attention to the mediating work of Christ and the Holy Spirit with regard to the justification, sanctification, indwelling of the Spirit, and authority in spiritual conflict (primary elements) and its outworking in church life (secondary elements).