Dutch Baptist Identity (1845–2021): A Multi-Coloured Robe

Teun van der Leer and Arjen Stellingwerf

Teun van der Leer was rector of the Dutch Baptist Seminary from 2007 to 2019 and is a tutor and researcher at the Baptist Seminary, and since 2020, pastor of Cama Church Woerden.
teun@unie-abc.nl

Arjen Stellingwerf was pastor of Pernis Baptist Church from 2017 to 2021, is a teacher of religion at a secondary school, and a researcher of nineteenth-century congregationalism in the Netherlands.
arjenstellingwerf@gmail.com

Abstract:
Dutch Baptist history is relatively short. In 1845 the first Baptist Church was founded in Gasselternijveen (Drenthe). During the 176 years of its existence, Baptist life has displayed different colours as it has responded to its environment and as the community has swayed back and forth between 'movement' and 'institution'. This becomes visible in the different historical phases that are described in this article. A variety of influences emerge, such as the pillarisation and de-pillarisation in Dutch society, revival movements, and ecumenical engagement. An important factor in the colouration of the community is the Baptist Seminary, which since its inception in 1958 has worked closely with the local churches, and whose successive rectors have helped shape the community. At the beginning of the third decade of the twenty-first century, the Dutch Baptist Union is about to merge with the CAMA churches and functions in a broad network of evangelical and ecumenical churches, educational institutions, and organisations.

Keywords:
History; Baptist identity; Dutch Free Church history; Dutch Baptist Union; Dutch Seminary

Introduction

In an article in *Inspirare* — a Dutch journal for charismatic and evangelical theology — pastor Kelvin Onyema writes about the church as a replica of the robe of Joseph: multi-coloured. In his contribution he

is referring to a multi-cultural church.[1] In this article we use the image in a slightly different way (although we note that Dutch Baptist churches are becoming increasingly multi-cultural). By looking at 176 years of Baptist history in the Netherlands, we will identify the various 'colours' of its identity throughout the years. So, the central focus of this article is the question of what has characterised Dutch Baptist identity throughout its history from the beginnings in the 1840s until the first decades of the twenty-first century. What were the important changes that came about over this time and what important marks have continued to exist?

To answer our question, we use the concept of Baptist identity as a historical phenomenon, as introduced by Baptist professor Olof de Vries (1941–2014)[2] in his *Gelovig gedoopt*. Olof de Vries wrote this study on '400 years of Baptist history, 150 years in the Netherlands' (subtitle) after a life of teaching and research as a tutor (from 1981–2014) and rector (from 1986–1993) of the Dutch Baptist Seminary, and professor of Baptist history at the University of Utrecht (1991–2009). According to De Vries, Baptist identity is historically determined, so it comes most clearly to the fore in its history, as opposed to traditions which derive their identity from factors which stand above history, such as Eastern-Orthodox liturgy, Roman Catholic apostolic succession, and Protestant church-confessions. As De Vries would say, Baptist identity is 'not of eternity, but of time'. This manifests itself externally through a lively interaction with its context by accommodation as well as opposition towards its environment, and internally by swinging back and forth between the extremes of 'movement' and 'institution' (like a pendulum clock).[3] This does not mean that the Dutch Baptists were in their

[1] N. van Hierden and S. Stoppels, 'Koersvast knoeien in Den Haag: Reflecties bij een kerk in transitie', *Inspirare,* 2, no. 3 (2020), 29–35; the contribution of Kelvin Onyema is on page 30.

[2] Teun Van der Leer and Arjen Stellingwerf, eds, *Terug naar de toekomst* (Amsterdam: Unie van Baptistengemeenten, 2020), pp. 95–102.

[3] O. H. de Vries, *Gelovig gedoopt* (Kampen: Kok, 2009), pp. 19–27; for a critical discussion of this concept, see H. Bakker, 'Niet van de eeuwigheid: Reflectie op een kritisch prolegomenon', in *De geschiedenis van het Schriftwoord gaat door,* ed. by H. Bakker, A. Boerrigter, J. Van Es and W. Ramaker (Utrecht: Kok, 2014), pp. 76–100. Bakker states that 'the eternal cannot simply be read in the Christian congregation, because the congregation is a product of church history, a historical phenomenon that is constantly changing. I would say that the one does not exclude the other or, in other words, *a church of time can also be a church of eternity.'* (Citation on page 77, our translation,

different periods either an institution or a movement, but that their history shows a permanent tension between these two poles. We will use this same lens in this article, with special interest in the various 'colours' of Dutch Baptist identity that come to the fore. With all its variations, De Vries sees three identity markers develop and return, which colour the Dutch Baptist identity from the end of the nineteenth century onwards:

1. The tendency to maintain an ordered local community of baptised believers, structured in the order of faith–baptism–membership–communion.

2. The independence of local churches, combined with supra-local connectedness with sister-churches.

3. Passion for revival and evangelism.[4]

We will see them emerge in the nineteenth century and return and develop through the twentieth century, and in our conclusion show that, and in what ways, they are still relevant.

The article is structured as follows: we describe four periods and in each we will discuss three topics which mark that period. These periods broadly correspond with the swinging of the internal 'pendulum clock' of Dutch Baptist identity and the (external) responding to important developments in the Dutch (and international) church and society. The first period is 'Dutch Baptist beginnings' (1816–1869), in which we discuss its context, the first beginnings and the influence of 'outsider' Jan de Liefde.[5] The second period is about supra-local

our emphasis.) After discussing the epistemology of 'time' and 'eternity' in the Gospel of John, he comes to the following conclusion on page 95: 'In John suffering transcends ontological and epistemological dualism. God is beyond the dualities and connects the extremes, as is evident from Jesus's coming and suffering in the Gospel of John. Dualism has been cracked in the suffering of Christ. *The church may not be of eternity, but conversely, eternity gives the church insight from above.'* (Our translation, our emphasis). So in this article we use De Vries's concept to study Baptist identity as a historical phenomenon, but theologically that does not rule out Divine intervention.

[4] De Vries, *Gelovig gedoopt,* pp. 169–181, 281–291, 296–297, 325–328.

[5] In 1816 the much-criticised General Regulation was imposed on the Dutch Reformed Church. These regulations played a significant role in the impeachment proceedings of the Dutch Reformed minister Johannes Elias Feisser, who would become the first Dutch Baptist minister. In 1865 Feisser died and in 1869 De Liefde died, which marks the end of the first period.

structuring (1869–1914), with attention to the Dutch Baptist Union, the influence of the Brighton movement, and consistency within the Baptist community.[6] The third period is about institutionalisation (1914–1963), in which we deal with pillarisation, the start of the Dutch Baptist Seminary and an ecumenical orientation.[7] The fourth and last period concerns old and new directions (1963–2021), in which we deal with an evangelical orientation, an international and renewed Anabaptist orientation, and the shift from learned to lived theology.[8] We conclude the article with our most important findings.

Dutch Baptist Beginnings (1816–1869)

Context of Dutch Baptist Beginnings: Protest against Liberal Theology

The roots of Dutch Baptist history lie within the protest movements of the *Réveil* and the Dutch Secession (1834). These protest movements responded to the influence of the French revolution (1789) and its effects throughout the European continent. Enlightenment ideas spread and churches embraced a liberal identity. The Swiss/French revival movement *Réveil* introduced the Anglo-Saxon concept of a free church to continental Europe. In several countries this led to collisions between committed believers who wanted to found a free church, and the established liberal elite, mostly a close collaboration between the established church and the state.[9]

In the Netherlands the Enlightenment influence on the established Dutch Reformed Church had its own moderate colour, which was actually a strange mixture of rational liberal and orthodox

[6] 1869 also was the year of the first attempt to start a Dutch Baptist Union. 1914 is the year that the First World War started; together with the Second World War it would mark a new period in the history of Western Europe in particular.

[7] In the second decade of the twentieth century a new generation of leaders arose within the Dutch Baptist community: Weenink (1911), Louw (1912) and K. Reiling (1918). They left their strong mark until the 1950s. In 1963 this period of institutionalisation took a first turn with the Dutch Baptist withdrawal from the World Council of Churches.

[8] From the 1960s onwards, a period of emancipation from the old 'pillarised' structures in Dutch society started. A new and open 'landscape' of society came about, which also influenced Dutch Baptist congregations (as counter- and co-movement) until this day, with a retrieval of various old strands from (Dutch) Baptist history.

[9] De Vries, *Gelovig gedoopt,* pp. 77–84.

ideas, called 'supra-naturalism'. After the 'French Period' — between 1795 and 1813 The Netherlands was a vassal state under French domination — King Willem I (reigning from 1813 to 1839) pursued a restorative policy which was moderately liberal. Willem kept his influence over the Dutch Reformed Church, which was more a state privileged and patronised church than strictly a state church, and imposed a General Regulation upon them. This General Regulation (1816) changed the organisation of the church from a Presbyterian structure to a top-down structure, and local congregations could only discuss topics concerning external government.[10]

These changes led to strong protests from the orthodox side of the church. So, in the Dutch context, the *Réveil* movement was largely committed to an internal struggle within the Dutch Reformed Church about the status of the church confessions (besides philanthropic activities in Dutch society). Aristocratic urban *Réveil* adherents were most likely to stay within the Dutch Reformed Church, but lower-class rural orthodox believers from the provinces united together in the Dutch Secession movement of 1834. They stated that the Dutch Reformed Church was in fact a false church and that they were the true adherents of the old Reformed church in the Netherlands, which was grounded on the 'Three Forms of Unity': the Dutch Creed (1561), the Heidelberg Catechism (1563), and the Canons of Dordt (1618/19). The Dutch Secession was the turning point for new protestant groups to emerge, such as the Baptist churches, of which the first was founded in 1845 by a former Dutch Reformed minister, Johannes Elias Feisser.[11]

Beginnings of the Dutch Baptist Movement: 'The True Calvinist is a Baptist'

Feisser (1805–1865)[12] adhered to liberal ideas as a student (1823–1828) and during his first period as a minister (1828–1838). His time in his third church in Franeker (Friesland) ended dramatically after he lost his

[10] A. J. Rasker, *De Nederlandse Hervormde Kerk vanaf 1795,* 2nd ed. (Kampen: Kok, 1981), pp. 19–42.

[11] De Vries, *Gelovig gedoopt*, pp. 80–84.

[12] T. van der Leer and A. Stellingwerf, *Terug naar de toekomst*, pp. 14–22. See Stellingwerf's bibliography: A. Stellingwerf, *Johannes Elias Feisser: Nederlandse baptistenpionier in Gasselternijveen* (unpublished bachelor's dissertation, Kampen University, 2016), p. 46, available online from *Unie-ABC* <https://www.unie-abc.nl/seminarium/archieven/feisser-archief> [accessed 4 May 2021].

wife and two of his children. Feisser returned to his parental home to recover. In that time, he read some Puritan literature, which led to a strong theological conversion a few years later. After his recovery, he was called in 1839 by the Dutch Reformed Church of Gasselternijveen (Drenthe). He was still committed to his liberal ideas, but around 1841–1843 his theological turn took place.

Feisser — now committed to Puritan ideas, especially in his ecclesiology — wanted to reform his church, which he called a 'reformation of the reformation'.[13] This led to several collisions with the congregation. He refused a candidate for eldership because they lacked the 'characteristics of grace', and did not want to lead Communion because the elders refused to censure a member of the congregation. Also, Feisser started to prefer believer's baptism over infant baptism. He called for an intervention from the higher authorities, but, in line with the General Regulation of 1816, they would not listen to his theological objections. On 19 December 1843 he was removed from his office 'for categorically refusing parts of his work and for creating scandal and disorder'.[14]

Rumours of Feisser's dismissal spread, and between 1843 and 1845 he wrote several tracts about his new insights, especially on ecclesiology, pneumatology, and baptism. In 1844 this led to some encounters with other dissenters. First with adherents of the Dutch Secession movement, which did not lead to a collaboration. Feisser wrote that they 'were separated, but not merged'.[15] His main critique was that by baptising infants they were unable to distinguish between believers and unbelievers. The second meeting — with the Mennonite pastor Jan de Liefde — at first led to a warm correspondence. But soon the relationship cooled, which we will discuss in the next section. The

---

[13] J. E. Feisser, *Eene roepstem tot alle ware geloovigen en begeerigen* (Groningen: W. van Boekeren, 1843), p. 5 (our translation). Available online from *Unie-ABC* <https://www.unie-abc.nl/seminarium/archieven/feisser-archief> [accessed 9 May 2021].

[14] G. A. Wumkes, *De opkomst en vestiging van het baptisme in Nederland* (Sneek: Osinga, 1912), p. 22 (our translation).

[15] J. E. Feisser, *Toespraak over den H. Doop des Heeren en de onderlinge bijeenkomst der heiligen* (Groningen: P.S. Barghoorn, [n.d.]), pp. 16, 20 (our translation). Available online from *Unie-ABC* <https://www.unie-abc.nl/seminarium/archieven/feisser-archief> [accessed 9 May 2021].

third encounter with German Baptists, however, led to a new direction for Feisser, which started the Dutch Baptist movement.

For Feisser it was an internal Calvinistic process. He did not think of starting a Baptist church, he did not even think of considering himself unbaptised. This changed when the German Baptist leader J. G. Oncken sent J. Köbner and A. F. Remmers to Gasselternijveen.[16] Several encounters and a correspondence followed. Feisser became convinced that he needed to be baptised (again), which happened with six followers on 15 May 1845, and started the first Baptist church in the Netherlands. Feisser was convinced now that his baptism was the logical consequence of his Calvinistic theology: 'The true Calvinist is a Baptist.'[17]

The Influence of Jan de Liefde: An Evangelical and Missional Contribution

In the paragraph above we already mentioned Jan de Liefde (1814–1869).[18] When he met Feisser in 1844, he was pastor of the Mennonite church in Zutphen (Gelderland). Just like Feisser, De Liefde made a turn to orthodox theology in the 1840s. When Feisser met the German Baptists in November 1844, he and De Liefde started discussing baptism. De Liefde also started to consider himself unbaptised — although he was baptised at the age of twenty — since he did not reckon himself a believer at that time.[19] But unlike Feisser, he started to have doubts about Baptists. He struggled with their succession thinking and was influenced by millennialism, in contrast to the German Baptists and Feisser. When Feisser and Köbner went to Zutphen after Feisser's baptism in Gasselternijveen, they were convinced that De Liefde wanted to be baptised. De Liefde strongly protested, and after a quarrel Feisser and Köbner left.[20]

---

16 See for Oncken's influence on Baptists in continental Europe, I. M. Randall, *Communities of Conviction: Baptist Beginings in Europe* (Schwarzenfeld: Neufeld Verlag, 2009).

17 The quote is from De Vries, *Gelovig gedoopt*, p. 90; cf. T. van der Leer, 'The true Calvinist is a Baptist', *Baptist Quarterly,* 44 (2011), 21–35.

18 See Van der Leer and Stellingwerf, *Terug naar de toekomst,* pp. 23-31; Wumkes, *Opkomst en vestiging,* pp. 40–74, 96–141.

19 Wumkes, *Opkomst en vestiging,* pp. 49–50, 280–287.

20 See his letters to Feisser and Köbner, in Wumkes, *Opkomst en vestiging,* pp. 271–361.

De Liefde would keep an ambivalent relationship with Baptists and to believer's baptism. In 1849 he was baptised in a Baptist group in Amsterdam,[21] which, however, he left within three months. In 1854 he wrote a tract about preferring infant baptism and in 1856 he founded the Free Evangelical Church in Amsterdam. In this congregation persons baptised as infants as well as persons baptised on confession of faith were admitted as members. The 'preaching of salvation' was most important, while other topics should be freely discussed. De Liefde's preaching had a strong missional focus: in 1853 he started a school for evangelists (*Bethanië*) and in 1855 the Association for the Salvation of People (*Vereeniging tot Heil des Volks*). Through these organisations, De Liefde and his students had a major influence on Dutch Baptists in the second part of the nineteenth century. He sent several evangelists to the north-eastern peat colonies in the 1850s and 1860s, of whom some became pastors of the Baptist church in Stadskanaal (former Gasselternijveen). His student Kors Holleman worked in Leeuwarden (Friesland) and started an evangelist school in the same spirit (*Klein-Bethanië*). He baptised several students in his Free Evangelical Church and some became leading Baptist pastors.

In summary, the first period of Dutch Baptist history is marked through its context as a protest movement. Because Dutch church history is strongly 'coloured' by Calvinistic theology, this was an internal Calvinistic struggle, causing a mainly Calvinist Baptist identity. This becomes visible in the life of Feisser, who turned from a liberal stance to Puritan Calvinistic theology with a Baptist ecclesiology. In addition, we see the influence of De Liefde, who had a different background (Mennonite). He and his students emphasised the doctrine of general atonement and the importance of mission. This led to a different 'colouring' of the next generations of Baptists. So, we see the lively interaction of Baptists with their context, by protesting against it and by deriving from it. Also, we see the internal 'pendulum clock': Dutch Baptist history begins as a movement, but unlike Free Evangelical Churches, Baptists emphasised their ecclesiological structure of faith–baptism–membership–communion as the right order. Ironically, it was the two opposites Feisser and De Liefde who would define the two 'legs'

[21] This group officially became a congregation in 1866.

of Dutch Baptist identity: a strong focus on an ordered ecclesiology, based on believer's baptism, and a missional drive for making new disciples. In the next section we will see how H. Z. Kloekers was an exponent of both emphases.

Starting Supra-Local Structuring (1869–1914)

The Dutch Baptist Union: A Union of Free Local Congregations[22]

From the late 1860s onwards, Baptist congregations started to investigate how to cooperate in an association. There were three leading congregations in this process: Stadskanaal, Franeker, and Amsterdam, with the leading pastors Kloekers (Stadskanaal) and De Neui (Franeker). Henrikadius Zwaantinus Kloekers (1828–1893)[23] was a former Reformed missionary who had worked in China. During his first period in China, he was baptised by an American Southern Baptist missionary and in his second period he worked for the English Baptist Missionary Society, BMS. Back in the Netherlands in 1866, the Baptist church in Stadskanaal called him to become their pastor. Kloekers worked fruitfully and founded several new congregations in its surroundings. Peter Johannes De Neui (1828–1907)[24] was a German Baptist who was sent to Franeker in 1864 and founded a Baptist church after two years of evangelising. He also laboured in other Frisian places, which led to new Baptist churches.

In 1869 De Neui tried to bind together the Dutch congregations under the wing of the German Union. This union worked in a centralised way and the congregations had to subscribe to a (Calvinist minded) confession. The German churches were willing to take the Dutch churches into their union, if they would endorse their confession. Franeker agreed, Amsterdam hesitated, and Stadskanaal strongly protested, which resulted in a rejection. Yet the Dutch churches associated by starting their own monthly magazine and yearly

[22] Wumkes, *Opkomst en vestiging,* pp. 161–179, 243–269; De Vries, *Gelovig gedoopt*, pp. 151–159; J. van Dam, *Geschiedenis van het baptisme in Nederland* (Bosch en Duin: Unie van Baptisten Gemeenten in Nederland, 1979), pp. 69–74.
[23] Van der Leer and Stellingwerf, *Terug naar de toekomst*, pp. 32–39.
[24] Wumkes, *Opkomst en vestiging,* pp. 142–193.

conference. But the independence of the congregations was especially emphasised, so in the long run the alliance was not viable and after 1875 cooperation quickly deteriorated.

From 1879 onward several pastors again met on a regular basis. In 1880 they decided to start a union and later that year the draft statutes were formulated. So, on 26 January 1881 the Dutch Baptist Union was founded, with Kloekers as its first chair (De Neui had already emigrated in 1871to serve a church in the USA). Kloekers left a significant mark on its character: instead of a centralised model, the freedom of local congregations was emphasised, just as it was with the English Union. And the confession was limited to a fundamental statement: the Union included churches 'that confess and experience, that Jesus Christ is the only begotten Son of God and an all-sufficient Saviour for sinners; who maintain the baptism of believers, in distinction from sprinkling'.[25] However, the unspoken presupposition was clearly classical orthodoxy. Thus, when in 1884 Kloekers rejected the classic (Anselmian) doctrine of atonement in an article for the Union's periodical *De Christen*, his co-editor Johannes Horn responded indignantly, stating that this was going too far: 'Christ has done it for us. You turn it into: he showed it to us.'[26] It led to a big quarrel in the Union and on 25 June 1885, Kloekers stepped down from his position as chair and left the Union with part of his congregation.

The Influence of the Brighton Movement: Revivalist and Holiness Theology

In the early 1880s a revival wave went through several Baptist churches in the Netherlands, with Johannes Horn (1849–1924)[27] as its foremost advocate. Horn was a student of Holleman's school *Klein-Bethanië*. After being baptised in 1869, he was sent to Sneek (Friesland) as an evangelist of *Tot Heil des Volks*. There he worked fruitfully, and after Kloekers visited them, the evangelism group was constituted as a Baptist church in 1880. In 1875 Horn visited the Brighton conference together with his Baptist colleague Jan de Hart and Dutch pastors from various church denominations. This led to a sort of Brighton movement in the

[25] Wumkes, *Opkomst en vestiging,* p. 245 (our translation).
[26] Wumkes, *Opkomst en vestiging*, pp. 254–255 (our translation).
[27] Van der Leer and Stellingwerf, *Terug naar de toekomst*, pp. 40–48; Wumkes, *Opkomst en vestiging,* pp. 194–242.

Netherlands: revival meetings in the spirit of Moody were organised and they published their own magazine *Het Eeuwige Leven* (Eternal Life).[28]

Horn and other Baptist pastors would preach at Sunday and weekday meetings throughout the country. Especially in the north-eastern parts of the country this led to many converts. But sometimes it also led to conflicts and schisms within congregations. The most striking example is Weerdingermond:[29] in August 1881 there were over a hundred converts within this congregation through the preaching of Horn, and sixty people were baptised over two Sundays. But in March 1882 the congregation split over a conflict about abstinence from alcohol. Their pastor Philippus Lindeman, who held the moderate position, threw out the radical members. So, after a short and exponential growth, the congregation languished. In Groningen however, the revival campaigns of 1882 and 1883 led to a significant growth with seventy converts in 1882, and eighty in 1883. This congregation had been structured by Kloekers into a Baptist church in 1880 and was able to maintain itself under the guidance of their pastor Nicolaas van Beek. At the end of the 1880s the church had over two hundred members.[30]

The most important influences of the revival and holiness movement on Dutch Baptist churches was the emphasis on the work and person of the Holy Spirit, sanctification (for example alcohol abstinence), using follow-up meetings (emphasising instantaneous decisions on conversion), and a further emphasis on an universal offering of salvation.[31] It shows that among Dutch Baptists the revivalist

---

[28] It should be noted that the Brighton conference was part of the Anglo-Saxon holiness movement, usually called the Keswick movement. In the Dutch context however, the holiness movement and the Moodian revival movement, both stressing revivalism and themes regarding the sanctification of the saints, were intertwined in one.

[29] A. Stellingwerf, 'When the Breaker Calls: Factors that Influenced the Revival of August 1881 in Weerdingermond', *Journal of European Baptist Studies,* 18, no. 2 (2018), 19–30; B. Roeles, *Het genadewerk Gods in de bekeering van zondaren in Weerdingermond en omstreken* (Sneek: Wiarda, [n. d.]), available online at *Unie-ABC* <https://www.unie-abc.nl/seminarium/archieven/19e-eeuw> [accessed 9 May 2021].

[30] De Vries, *Gelovig gedoopt*, pp. 149–152.

[31] De Vries, *Gelovig gedoopt,* pp. 142–148.

Arminian input, that had already started with De Liefde, gradually gained the upper hand over its Calvinistic beginnings.[32]

The Years of Consistency: Nicolaas van Beek and the Third Way

Earlier we mentioned the clash between Kloekers and Horn in 1884, resulting in Kloekers leaving the Union in 1885. Horn still had some influence — for example he ensured that the Dutch Union would be under the wing of the German Union in the last decade of the nineteenth century, which resulted in several students attending the *predigerschule* in Hamburg — but after a quarrel with his congregation in Groningen in 1895, he also left the Baptist Union. It was Nicolaas van Beek (1850–1931)[33] in particular who most strongly influenced the further course of the Baptist community around the turn of the century. In the conflict between Kloekers and Horn (and De Hart), Van Beek pointed to a 'third way'. He could not agree with Kloekers's rendering of the doctrine of atonement, but also struggled with Horn and De Hart's polemical response. It was Van Beek's more nuanced approach that helped the Baptist community through the conflict. Even though he had gifts as an evangelist, Van Beek was especially a man of consistency, depth, and a mediator. With these qualities, he led the Dutch Baptists into the twentieth century, a period in which the community continued to grow.[34]

In summary, the second period of Dutch Baptist history is a period of supra-local structuring with the start and continuity of the Dutch Baptist Union. Also, it was a period of significant growth through the influence of revival movements (for example, apart from the Brighton movement, the revival wave from Wales in the first decade of the 20th century, although Baptists rejected the Pentecostal movement emerging in that same period), and the consistency of men like Van Beek, who managed to relate together numerical growth, spiritual growth, and church development. Again, we see the lively interaction

[32] Though the advocates of the holiness movement were at pains to show its compatibility with Calvinist doctrine, nevertheless in the Dutch (Calvinist dominated) context, among other things, revivalist and holiness impulses gradually resulted in a stronger emphasis on the human ability to make choices and less on predetermined election.

[33] Wumkes, *Opkomst en vestiging,* pp. 213–216.

[34] Van Dam, *Geschiedenis baptisme,* pp. 87–133, 272–291.

with the context, especially in terms of a number of Anglo-Saxon influences. The English model for a union of free local congregations without a confession is favoured over a German centralised model. Also, the influence of the Brighton movement 'coloured' the Dutch Baptist identity with an emphasis on themes like sanctification and revivalism. Regarding the 'pendulum clock' of the internal side of the identity, we see a beginning institutionalisation with the forming and growth of the Union. But we also see that revival movements and the emphasis on evangelisation led to a lasting dynamism, which prevented the structure from ossifying. In the next section however, we will see a further degree of institutionalisation.

Institutionalisation (1914–1963)

Further Degree of Institutionalisation: Pillarisation in the Interwar Period

For a period of about forty years — approximately from the First World War until the 1950s — Dutch Baptists were led by the triarchy Jan Willem Weenink (1886–1975), Jan Louw (1887–1969) and Koop Reiling (1892–1973).[35] Weenink[36] was an enterprising person, who was involved in the founding of several associations as part of the Baptist Union. For example, the Dutch Baptist Youth Movement (NBJB, 1925), the Commission for Internal Mission (CIW, 1932) and a commission for publishing their own songbook (1940). He also played an important role in sending Geertruida Reiling as the first missionary on behalf of the Dutch Baptist Union to the Congo in 1923; from the 1950s onwards, others followed (previously other Dutch Baptists were sent directly by BMS).[37] Furthermore, the missionary work was supported by women's groups, which in 1932, led to the founding of the Dutch Baptist Women's Movement (NBVB), with Weenink's wife as its first chair. Louw[38] was more of a thinker. He, for example, was the editor of *De*

[35] Van Dam, *Geschiedenis baptisme*, pp. 123–128.
[36] Van der Leer and Stellingwerf, *Terug naar de toekomst*, pp. 49–57.
[37] Van der Leer and Stellingwerf, *Terug naar de toekomst*, pp. 68–76, 86–94.
[38] Van der Leer and Stellingwerf, *Terug naar de toekomst,* pp. 58–67.

Christen for fifty years (with short interruptions);[39] he especially tried to teach leaders of congregations, although his writings were quite complicated for the average Baptist; also, he gave a voice to the community in a context in which Baptists were seen as sectarians and in that way, he helped them to emancipate. The third person of the triarchy, Koop Reiling, belonged to a family who played an important role in Dutch Baptist history. His grandfather Roelof was one of the first seven Baptists in 1845, his sister Geertruida was the first missionary sent by the Baptist Union, and his son Jannes would be the first rector of the Dutch Baptist Seminary. Koop Reiling was particularly a networker, who for example helped found the first Baptist churches in the south of the Netherlands, namely Treebeek (Limburg, 1925) and Eindhoven (Brabant, 1925).[40]

As we can see, this is a period of emancipation and further institutionalisation with the development of a great number of associations. The rise of particularised associations was part of a specific Dutch phenomenon: pillarisation. Each group with its own philosophy or religion organised its own associations, radio broadcasters, schools, political parties, newspapers, and so forth. Because the Baptists were a relatively small group, they were not able to found all of these associations, so maybe we could call the Baptist pillar a 'mini-pillar'. Moreover, it is characteristic of the Baptists that these associations were often part of the local congregation. During this time the Baptist community still grew, several new churches were founded, and congregations gained new members. One of the reasons for this growth was the (work) migration from the peat colonies in Groningen and Drenthe — where there were many Baptists — to industrial regions, like Twente (in the east), Limburg and Eindhoven (in the south), and IJmuiden and Rotterdam (in the west), which led to the founding of new congregations.[41] This process was somewhat disrupted by the Second

[39] *De Christen* (The Christian) was the Union's periodical, which started in 1882 with its first monthly circulation.
[40] Van Dam, *Geschiedenis baptisme,* pp. 150–152.
[41] De Vries, *Gelovig gedoopt*, pp. 164–229.

World War, but soon the entrepreneurial spirit was rekindled, which led to the start of the Baptists' own seminary.[42]

Their Own Seminary: An Academic Bible School

The desire of Baptists to train their own ministers emerged early in the Union. Two years after its foundation, the church of Haulerwijk (Friesland) proposed starting such a training at its Assembly in 1883. One delegate expressed the fear that this might breed learned gentlemen rather than practical workers, but nevertheless the decision was made to try to find financial resources for such an undertaking. This would be the 'story' of ministerial formation for a long time: ambivalence regarding academic studies and lack of money. Until the 1950s most ministers would study at Baptist colleges either in Hamburg or in London.

But after the Second World War there was a renewed desire for their own training, aimed at the Dutch context. After a failed attempt from 1946 onwards, a second effort in the 1950s was more successful.[43] On 1 September 1958, the Dutch Baptist Seminary was founded, with Jannes Reiling[44] as its rector, a position he would hold until 1987. In the light of the previous history, it is interesting to see that Reiling called the brand-new Seminary 'an academic Bible school'. While this may sound like a certain ambivalence or compromise, he meant something else. He was in favour of good academic training and supported and developed this in the coming decades. But its starting point would always be the Bible, more specifically, the community in which the Bible is read and studied in a joint submission to the living Lord Jesus Christ. As he said in his opening speech, 'What we need is an education that is academically sound and grouped around the relation to Christ.'[45] So from its start, academic theology, Christ-centred Bible reading in community, and practical work were blended, although it took another twelve years before the cooperation with the University of Utrecht took shape and the education of Baptist pastors became a joint venture of

[42] Van Dam, *Geschiedenis baptisme*, pp. 189, 207.
[43] See O. H. de Vries, ed., *Een seminarium als roeping* (Leeuwarden: Friesch Dagblad Offset, 1987).
[44] Van der Leer and Stellingwerf, *Terug naar de toekomst*, pp. 77–85.
[45] J. Reiling, 'Rede uitgesproken bij de aanvaarding van het rectoraat op 1 september 1958', *De Christen,* 19 September 1958, pp. 1–3.

seminary and university. Reiling obtained the position of professor of Baptist history and theology in 1976 and some years later the position of professor of New Testament at Utrecht University. He was in favour of a linguistic approach to theology. According to him the Bible text is the lively witness of God's history with his people in the past, which is also God's history today and in the future. He criticised any theology that was dogmatically and philosophically predominant. Theology ought to be biblical theology. He was an adherent of this new branch of theology, which he commended because of its concentration on the Bible text as the source of theology.[46]

Not a Sect Anymore: Ecumenical Orientation

In 1946 the Dutch Baptist Union, without much discussion, joined the World Council of Churches (WCC) in its formation, which was founded in 1948 in Amsterdam. In contrast to the first half of the twentieth century, there was a growing openness among churches, and Baptists were not regarded as a sect anymore. Looking back on this period, Reiling commented in 1987, 'we, as Dutch Baptists, had to show a little more self-awareness, a little more awareness of the value of the theology we represented'.[47] Also, Karl Barth's rejection of infant baptism fuelled their self-confidence and the hope that things would change for the better. Reiling himself was member of the Commission on Faith and Order and initiated a (failed) attempt to have an international conference of 'baptiser theologians' in 1964 in Amsterdam to articulate the voice of believer's baptism in the ecumenical realm.[48] As a biblical scholar he expected that biblical theology would force a break-through in fixed dogmatic and traditional positions and in inter-church relations. He

[46] In the wake of neo-orthodoxy (Barth, Brunner) Biblical Theology was on the rise after 1945, marked by an emphasis on the Bible as a theological resource, the unity of the Bible, and the revelation of God in history. Representatives were, amongst others, W. Eichrodt, G. von Rad, H. H. Rowley, C. H. Dodd, O. Cullmann, and B. S. Childs.

[47] J. Reiling, 'Bijbel en gemeente', Farewell lecture 4 April 1987, available online *Unie-ABC* <https://unie-abc.nl/seminarium/archieven/jannes-reiling> [accessed 18 October 2021].

[48] It failed because of insufficient interest, but eventually became the springboard for a series of Believers Church Conferences, starting in 1967 in Louisville, Kentucky, USA, and continuing until today. About Reiling's initiative see Teun van der Leer, 'The Believers Church Conferences', in *Come Out from among Them, and Be Ye Separate, Saith the Lord. Separatism and the Believers' Church Tradition,* ed. by William H. Brackney with Evan L. Colford (Eugene: Pickwick, 2019), pp. 189–197.

hoped that it would inaugurate a new era of church renewal and ecumenical blossoming. His booklet entitled *Gemeenschap der Heiligen* (*Community of Saints,* 1964) breathes a bold Baptist vision of the church and an ecumenical spirit. He describes the church as a community of the Spirit that pervades church life in its entirety. Neither ministry, tradition, dogma, nor church order are basic for the church, only the Spirit. As Christians we not only have to lose our lives for the sake of the gospel but also 'our own ecclesiastical forms'. All the more since we live 'in the twentieth century, the post-Christian and ecumenical century'. He calls for a *kenosis*, an emptying of (fixed) forms, structures and traditions as a precondition for unity, a unity of the Spirit. The one holy catholic *ecclesia* will not be possible with anything less than *metanoia*.[49] But within the Dutch Union the ecumenical flame was already dying. The institutional shape of the WCC gave many an unpleasant feeling. They preferred a spiritual ecumenism as a movement of the Spirit; many saw institution and Spirit as opposites. The need to root their own identity firmly in their conviction of the church as a community of believers, even *baptised* believers, came at odds with institutional ecumenism. In 1963 the Assembly voted to withdraw from the WCC. Reiling tried in vain to convince them of the value of unity in diversity and to learn from and contribute to the ecumenical debate, since Baptists too needed to reconsider their 'sacred houses'. That they had sacred houses became clear when four years later emotions ran high over believer's baptism by sprinkling. A proposal to accept for membership those who were baptised based on personal faith but not by immersion, had already caused such a heated debate in the corridors that it was taken off the agenda even before being discussed. Both decisions showed that the ecumenical tide had passed, and that they needed to reflect on their own identity once more.

In summary, the third period of Dutch Baptist history is marked by numerical growth, development of their own organisation, and the emancipation from sect to church, which is in line with the pillarisation and the starting de-pillarisation of Dutch society before and after the Second World War. In 1963 it still valued the order of local gatherings

[49] J. Reiling, *Gemeenschap der heiligen: Over de gemeente van Jezus Christus naar het Nieuwe Testament* (Amsterdam: Ten Have, 1964), pp. 146–154.

of baptised believers with closed membership and (mostly) closed communion. However, its institutionalisation and ecumenical 'colour' began to come into friction and resulted in the decisions of 1963 (to leave the WCC) and 1967 (to drop the proposal to acknowledge believer's baptism without immersion). For Olof de Vries this marked the beginning of the turnaround from church to movement.[50]

Old and New Directions (1963–2021)

Passion and Polarisation: Evangelical Orientation

In the 1970s and 1980s another wind began to blow in Dutch society and accordingly in the churches. From the 1960s onwards the pillarisation began to crumble and traditional religious and socio-political barriers started to disintegrate. This not only led to a huge drop in church attendance, but also to a huge shift in church affiliation. Baptist and evangelical churches grew in these years partly through disappointed or concerned members of the larger traditional churches; disappointed for its supposed lack of living and cheerful faith, and concerned because of neo-orthodox or liberal theology. In particular, liberalism as a result of cultural changes in society regarding gender and homosexuality met with a lot of suspicion.

At the same time the evangelical movement grew in numbers and influence.[51] Christians from different denominations united in what they called 'ecumenism of the heart' to defend biblical values and to evangelise the secularising country. In 1967 the Evangelical Broadcasting Company (EO: *Evangelische Omroep*) was founded, and in 1979 the Evangelical Alliance. Interdenominational conferences on mission, evangelism, church growth and church development emerged everywhere, and global praise worship conquered its thousands. This appealed to many of the Baptist churches, which coloured them gradually more evangelical. In itself this was not a problem since

[50] De Vries, *Gelovig gedoopt,* p. 251.

[51] See for an overview of the development of the evangelical movement in the Netherlands, Henk Bakker and Laura Dijkhuizen, eds, *Typisch Evangelisch: Een stroming in perspectief* (Amsterdam: Ark Media, 2017) and C. van der Kooi, E. Van Staalduine-Sulman and A. W. Zwiep, eds, *Evangelical Theology in Transition* (Amsterdam: VU University Press, 2012).

revivalist impulses generally fitted well with Baptist life, as we saw in the second period (1869–1914). However, part of the evangelical movement was closely connected to forms of fundamentalism, which was strange to most traditional Baptist churches, but attracted several pastors and churches.[52] Attached to the influx of concerned, mainly reformed and dogmatic Christians, it fuelled the old suspicion towards academic theology. A 'battle for the Bible' emerged in the first half of the 1980s around the Seminary, mainly because of its link with the university and its historical-critical approach. Add to that a growing openness towards the ordination of women in a couple of congregations, and in at least one of them towards gay marriage, and one can imagine that a crisis around the Seminary in the eighties almost split the Union. Reiling tried to convince his critics that the difference was not so much over how to view Scripture, but how to interpret it.[53]

Two opposing groups emerged, one robustly evangelical and one robustly ecumenical, both representing the extremes of Baptist spirituality and identity in respectively 'movement' and 'church'.[54] Both were a minority and appealed at different points to the wide middle. In the end, this middle held the wings together and peace returned, after some shifts in the leadership of the Union and in the staff of the Seminary. The new rector Olof de Vries led 'the flock' with his modest and thorough performance into calmer waters. De Vries was a systematic theologian who had done his doctorate on the early Anabaptists, interpreting their work as a theology of history.[55] For De Vries it is in this concrete history of everyday life that Christians and churches are called to follow Christ. Doing theology is a way of loving

---

52 Fundamentalism was a strand within modern evangelicalism which had its height during the 1930s in the UK and notably the USA. However, after WW2, missionary endeavours also brought fundamentalistic views to Europe; see the recent book by Hans Krabbendam, *Saving the Overlooked Continent: American Protestant Missions in Western Europe* (Leuven: University Press, 2020).

53 In his 1987 book, J. Reiling, *Het Woord van God: Over Schriftgezag en Schriftuitleg* (Kampen: Kok, 1987), Reiling explained, amongst other things, why the statement that the Bible is 'the inspired, infallible Word of God' (as was asked of the Seminary tutors to endorse) was not helpful at all, since 'infallibility' is a rational positivistic concept of truth, alien to the Bible.

54 De Vries, *Gelovig gedoopt*, pp. 278–281.

55 O. H. de Vries, *Leer en praxis van de vroege dopers, uitgelegd als een theologie van de geschiedenis* (Leeuwarden: Uitg. Gerben Dykstra, 1982).

God with your mind, which serves the communication of the Gospel and the articulation of discipleship. This makes theology a human, relative, and provisional effort, where every believer can participate. Under De Vries's leadership the Seminary continued its cooperation with the university in the 1990s and thereafter. In addition, it collaborated with several evangelical (bachelor level) schools and became co-founder of the Centre for Evangelical and Reformation Theology (CERT) at the Vrije Universiteit in Amsterdam in 2003. The increasing border traffic between churches and the network society led to new hybrid forms of connectedness. As a consequence, most congregations switched to open communion. In this same period, evangelism as reaching out to the people around was increasingly shaped as church development, implementing programmes such as Natural Church Development (NCD),[56] Willow Creek Community Church (WCCC),[57] and Purpose Driven Church (PDC).[58]Also new challenges and opportunities with more flexible, so-called liquid forms of church, emerged.[59]

A Broadened Horizon: International and Anabaptist Orientation

At the turn of the century and after a major reorganisation, both the Dutch Baptist Union and the Baptist Seminary received new leadership (again).[60] The struggles of the 1980s had turned the gaze inward for years, but now there was room and vision to broaden the horizon. By visiting the centennial Baptist World Alliance Congress in 2005 in Birmingham with the staff, and by organising the 400-year celebration of Baptist beginnings in Amsterdam in 2009, many ties were (re)made. Also of great significance was the growing contact with the International Baptist Theological Seminary in Prague (now the International Baptist Theological Study Centre based since 2014 in Amsterdam) and with the Anabaptist Network, the Incarnate Network, Urban Expression and the

---

56 *Natural Church Development* <http://www.ncd-international.org/public/> [accessed 19 May 2021].

57 *Willow Creek Community Church* <https://www.willowcreek.org/> [accessed 19 May 2021].

58 *Purpose Driven Church* <https://pd.church/12-characteristics-purpose-driven-church/> [accessed 19 May 2021].

59 See also P. Ward, *Liquid Church* (Ada, MI: Baker, 2001).

60 After a short interim period Teun van der Leer became the new rector (2007–2020) and Albrecht Boerrigter the new General Secretary (2007–2021).

Northumbria Community in the United Kingdom. Pioneering places for church plants emerged and were stimulated and sometimes sponsored by the Union. A part-time coordinator was appointed to guide the pioneers and to monitor the projects to reflect on and learn from these new practices.[61] It stimulated a renewed study of the (Ana)baptist roots and its spirituality,[62] and led to the establishment of the James Wm McClendon Chair for Baptistic and Evangelical Theologies at the Faculty of Religion and Theology (FRT) of the Vrije Universiteit (VU), with Dr Henk Bakker as full professor. From 2005 onwards, the number of bachelor, master and doctoral students at the Seminary grew substantially, and accordingly so did the staff. 'Doing theology the Baptist way' became a popular concept in these years and research was stimulated at all levels. Churches, students, and tutors were challenged not to take things at face value, but to be as curious as possible and ask the long questions. A learning and researching community developed under the stimulating leadership of Henk Bakker and Rector Teun van der Leer, with an appetite for research and the double focus of academic excellence and grassroots relevance.

Churches as Laboratory: From Learned to Lived Theology

The above-mentioned developments resulted in a much closer cooperation between the staff of the Seminary and the staff of the department for church development within the Baptist Union, and accordingly with the local churches. Tutors from this department reinforced the Seminary, and students and tutors related their research to practices in local congregations and in society.[63] Tutor Hans Riphagen (and now from 2021 rector of the Seminary) specialised in ethnographic research and developed a practical theological research programme on patterns of baptistic and evangelical belonging, as part of a broader

[61] See the booklet, Oeds Blok, ed., *Avontuur van geloof: Praktijkverhalen van gemeentestichting met reflectie voor heel de kerk,* Baptistica Reeks, 11 (Amsterdam: Unie van Baptistengemeenten, 2016).

[62] In 1955 the first vice rector (appointed 1958) of the Baptist Seminary, Jan Kiwiet, had written his thesis on Pilgram Marpeck (Jan J. Kiwiet, *Pilgram Marpeck: Ein Führer der Täuferbewegung im süddeutschen Raum* (Kassel: J. G. Oncken Verlag, 1957)), and in 1982 Olof de Vries wrote his thesis on the Anabaptists (see note 55).

[63] See the article by Hans Riphagen elsewhere in this issue.

research programme on 'belonging and inclusion in a network society'.[64] Where the Seminary had its focus on biblical theology in the first decennia, and later on Baptist history and theology, now there was a growing attention to practical theology. A shift occurred from learned to lived theology, and participative observation and grassroots theology became more central. In 2013, at a symposium at the start of his Chair of Baptist History and Theology (held until 2017), Henk Bakker put it this way:

> Systematic Theology and Practical Theology should not be separate disciplines. The church of Christ is, after all, the laboratory and the meeting place for theology. The Lord, who lives among the believers, speaks and makes the church into a worshipping, confessing, praying and singing church. This is where the essential features of true theology are to be found.[65]

Also important in the second decennium of the twenty-first century was the rapprochement of the Baptist Union with the Alliance of Baptist and CAMA-Churches (ABC), which presumably will result in a merger in 2023. This will not only double the size of the denomination, but will also give a new dynamic through another tradition (CAMA) with its roots in the holiness movement of the nineteenth century, its strong Christ-centred approach, and its focus on world mission.[66] At the same time, at the FRT of the VU, Baptist tutors and researchers work collaborative with Mennonite, Reformed, and migrant churches, and also with colleagues of different religions.[67] Doubtless this will add new colours to the churches, as there is a renewed openness to ecumenical

---

[64] Johannes Riphagen, 'Church-in-the-neighbourhood: A Spatio-Theological Ethnography of Protestant Christian Place-making in the Suburban Context of Lunetten, Utrecht' (doctoral thesis, Vrije Universiteit, Amsterdam, 2021). See also *James Wm McClendon Chair for baptistic and evangelical theologies, Vrije Universiteit, Amsterdam:*
<https://mcclendonchair.com/research/belonging-and-inclusion-in-the-network-society> [accessed 30 March 2021).

[65] Henk Bakker, 'Mapping Dutch Baptist Identity', in *Zo zijn onze manieren! In gesprek over gemeentetheologie*, ed. by Teun van der Leer, Baptistica Reeks, 1 (Barneveld: Unie van Baptisten Gemeenten in Nederland, 2009), pp. 23–31 (p. 30).

[66] CAMA is the Christian and Missionary Alliance, founded in the United States of America in 1887 by A. B. Simpson. In 1975 CAMA started church plants in the Netherlands. Simpson developed a 'Fourfold Gospel' with the Christological summary 'Christ as Redeemer, Sanctifier, Healer, and Coming King'. He also raised 'as a banner' Matthew 24:14 as the responsibility 'to hasten Christ's return'. See A. B. Simpson, *The Fourfold Gospel*, online version <http://awf.world/repository> [accessed 10 November 2021] (chapters 1–4).

[67] For example, in the research group 'Religious Martyrdom in Dialogue'.

collaboration, also among local congregations and pioneering communities. However, the call for a 'classic' Baptist identity is heard as well, even one returning to a Calvinistic 'colour'.[68]

In sum it can be said that in the last decades of the twentieth century the 'pendulum clock' moved back from institution to movement. Somehow this continued in the first two decades of the twenty-first century. Many congregations continued to integrate an evangelical 'colour' in their practices, especially regarding worship, church development, and church planting. At the same time, the renewed Anabaptist orientation and the growing attention for missional and ethnographic ecclesiology gave a new 'colour' to church practices and to the curriculum of the Seminary, focusing on the Kingdom of God and *Missio Dei*. Also, the borders between evangelical and ecumenical have become much smoother. So while still a member of *Missie Nederland* (the former Evangelical Alliance), the Dutch Baptist Union also participated in several ecumenical networks and in 2019 — during a 'National Synod' with several different churches — signed the so-called 'declaration of solidarity'. In this declaration churches covenant together around the Nicene Creed to love and serve each other and strengthen the common witness of Jesus Christ in society. Somehow the ecumenical and evangelical orientation seem to merge in this period.

Conclusion

In the introduction we asked the question of what important alterations in the Dutch Baptist identity came about throughout the time under discussion and which important marks continued to exist. In short, which 'colours' marked Dutch Baptist identity within the various periods? As a lens we used Olof de Vries's concept of researching Baptist identity as a historical phenomenon, with an internal ('pendulum clock') and external (lively interaction with context) element.

---

[68] From 2007 a group of Calvinist minded Baptists started to collaborate under the name *Sola 5 Baptisten,* since 2017 called *Stichting Proclaim* <http://www.stichtingproclaim.nl/geschiedenis/> [accessed 4 May 2021].

In the first period (1816–1869) Dutch Baptist history originated within a Calvinistic protest movement against liberal theology. This Calvinist 'colour' strongly influenced Feisser's Baptist identity, and with him, the first generation of Dutch Baptists. However, with the influence of De Liefde and his students, an evangelical 'colouring' came about, with an emphasis on general atonement and a focus on mission. So, in this period, Baptists tended to protest against the established church, but also derived marks from other protest movements. Within that frame Baptist identity is marked as movement, although the ecclesiological ordering of faith–baptism–membership–communion was also emphasised.

In the second period (1869–1914) we see a further sense of structuring, with the starting of supra-local collaboration within the Baptist Union (1881). Through the influence of revival movements there is a significant growth of congregations and members, but also conflicts arise. The influence of Anglo-Saxon revival movements leads to new 'colours' with emphases on sanctification and revivalism. In this period, we see a starting degree of institutionalisation but also a dynamic movement of evangelising congregations.

The third period (1914–1963) is also marked by numerical growth, but especially by the development of organisations and the emancipation from a sect to a church. With the membership of the WCC and the originating of their own seminary, the Dutch Baptists emancipated from their status as a sect and moved toward an institution and 'coloured' more and more ecumenical. A counter movement led to the withdrawal from the WCC and new internal discussions about the openness to other churches emerged. A new motion into a 'movement' came about.

From 1963 onwards, a renewed evangelical 'colouring' became manifest. In the 1970s and 1980s this led to a significant quarrel between the ecumenical and fundamentalist evangelical Baptists, especially around the leadership of the Dutch Baptist Seminary. In the next decades however, this evangelical 'colour' turned more moderate. Since the turn of the century other old and new 'colours' also (re)occurred: an Anabaptist and international orientation, which led to a turn from learned to lived theology; new institutional collaborations came about,

at the university, with an upcoming merge with ABC, and in the participation in ecumenical networks; but we also see a motion towards liquefaction of congregations and the influence of open pioneering communities, which connects to the de-institutionalisation of society.

We can conclude that the Dutch Baptist community has gained a 'multi-coloured' identity throughout its history, which started as a more or less 'mono-coloured' Calvinist minded community, and evolved into a community with various 'colours' and strands. This process is reinforced in the last decades by the retrieval of various old strands that influenced Dutch (and international) Baptist identity within its earlier periods. We already mentioned the strong evangelical influence on Baptist congregations, which among other marks led to some megachurches with strong organisational leadership. But also, we saw the renewed search for the Anabaptist roots of Baptist history (for example in pioneering and missional groups) and the revival of a Calvinistic Baptist strand. Furthermore, the increasing collaboration with churches of other denominations leads to a rekindled ecumenical orientation and the merge with CAMA could lead to a renewed interest in holiness theology. And last but not least, several migrant churches have emerged within the Dutch (Baptist) 'landscape', with whom there is initial contact from local congregations and the national church community.[69]

However, although the Baptist community is becoming more plural, still the three basic identity markers that surfaced at the end of the nineteenth century and developed throughout the twentieth century, remain visible in their own way. Most congregations tend to maintain the structure of an ordered local community of baptised believers, even though in some congregations, membership becomes less clearly framed.[70] Also, while there have always been independent Baptist churches, most congregations are bound together in the national union — in which the local church is central — which becomes visible in the upcoming merge of the Dutch Baptist Union and the ABC.

---

[69] See E. Groen, 'Baptisten zijn niet van deze tijd', in *De geschiedenis van het Schriftwoord gaat door,* ed. by Bakker et al., pp. 103–118 (pp. 111–112).

[70] See Jaap-Harm de Jong and Teun van der Leer, eds, *Land in zicht! Doop en lidmaatschap opnieuw in kaart gebracht,* Baptistica Reeks, 5 (Barneveld: Unie van Baptistengemeenten, 2012).

Furthermore, passion for revival and evangelism remains an important mark, which became manifest in the 1990s around the different aforementioned church development programmes (NCD, WCCC, PDC) and thereafter in the originating of pioneering and missional communities. That also rekindles the passion for evangelisation within local congregations.[71] From 1958 onwards, the Baptist Seminary also achieved its own place within the Dutch Baptist community. After a deep crisis within the 1980s, it gradually reinforced its own position. Today it has its roots deep in the community, and through collaborative research it seeks to integrate education, research, and church practices.

Clearly, Dutch Baptist identity has never been unambiguous, and this is true for the twenty-first century as well. All church identities become increasingly plural, being part of a network society that leads to what some call a VUCA world: volatile, uncertain, complex and ambiguous. Nevertheless, the Dutch Baptists retain some of their typical Baptistic 'colours', in a combination of a certain self-evident Reformed orthodoxy, seasoned with a strong evangelical flavour, and a growing ecumenical curiosity and openness.

[71] See De Vries, *Gelovig gedoopt,* pp. 169, 281–291, 296–297, 325–328.