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GOVERNMENT AND CHURCH IN THE PROVINCE OF HOLLAND,  
ca. 1670-1780: THE LOCAL PERSPECTIVE

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In its ecclesiastical aspect social life in the Republic of the United Provinces was characterized by pluriformity throughout the seventeenth and eighteenth centuries. As a result of the Reformation and the Revolt church and society no longer coincided. Calvinists, Catholics, Mennonites and other protestant dissenters formed separate segments with their own church organization. This ecclesiastical pluriformity did not imply equality. During the Revolt the Calvinists had managed to acquire for themselves the position of a privileged church, a status which was recognized and guaranteed by the civic authorities. The other denominations were tolerated by the state, but their followers were condemned to second-class citizenship. The Calvinists did not form a state Church but, through their privileged position as the 'public' or 'recognized' church, they were closely linked with the civil government. This connection showed itself in a number of ways. Thus the church buildings which the government had expropriated were placed at the disposal of the Calvinists for their services and the salaries of their ministers were paid out of public funds. In 1651 it was once more confirmed officially that holders of public offices had to be members of the Reformed Church, albeit with the ominous addition: 'or at least well disposed towards it'.

The Reformed Church saw the task of the government in the rigorous maintenance of 'the true Christian religion', as it had been laid down by the Synod of Dordrecht in 1618-1619. This meant, for example, that the state had to adopt rigorous measures against Catholics and protestant dissenters, and to oppose every deviation from Christian doctrine. In practice the government was often unwilling or, in the opinion of the orthodox within the Church inadequately prepared to fulfill this demand. The government, for its part, expected the ministers of the 'public' Church should refrain from political pronouncements and theological hairsplitting - an expectation which was not always fulfilled. The views of what was or was not permitted or demanded,

therefore, frequently clashed. In this context it is, however, as important as it is characteristic, that both among the political elite as well as in the Reformed Church there was no question of ideological uniformity. It had become abundantly clear during the troubles in the Twelve Years' Truce (1609-1621) that both circles knew their 'moderates' and their 'orthodox'. The coup d'état which Prince Maurice carried out in 1618 and the subsequent Synod of Dordrecht had brought victory to the 'orthodox' Counter-Remonstrants both in politics and within the Reformed Church. Before long, however, the old controversies re-asserted their influence. The relations between government and church, closely interwoven with the political problems of the young state, remained an essential part of discussion and polemics<sup>1</sup>.

The often precarious character of the relations between the state and the 'public' church becomes apparent whenever the local level is taken into consideration. Although an excessive emphasis on conflicts and incidents can easily distort the picture, the relationship was certainly not free from friction. The approach chosen for this article is the nomination of Calvinist ministers in a number of towns in the Province of Holland centred on the period between about 1670 and 1780<sup>2</sup>. The beginning coincides with the revolution of 1672, when after a period of more than twenty years the stadholdership was re-established with the nomination of William III. The end was chosen because the theological dissension within the Reformed Church lost its original character in the course of the eighteenth century. Furthermore the sharpened political antagonism which culminated in the violent struggle of the 1780's did add new elements of a quite different nature.

On the local level the appointment of ministers was a crucial moment in the relations between the civil government and the calvinist church. In the first instance the nomination was the business of the 'great' consistory or church council (*kerkeraad*), consisting of the ministers, the lay elders and the lay deacons. The procedure which was followed in nominating a new minister did, however, offer the town government numerous possibilities to influence and direct it.

The filling of a vacancy which had arisen through death, retirement or removal of a minister was in almost all towns in Holland, tied to the agreement of the

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<sup>1</sup> An important general treatment of the subject is still J.Th. de Visser, *Kerk en staat* (3 vols., Leiden 1926-1927), whose second part concerns the Dutch situation before and during the Republic. Useful information is also found in H.A. Enno van Gelder, *Getemperde vrijheid* (Groningen 1972) chapter I ('De Kerk in de staat').

<sup>2</sup> For a detailed survey with special reference to the conflicts between town governments and Reformed consistories cf. Jan A.F. de Jongste, 'Conflicten rond predikantsbenoemingen in enkele Hollandse steden, ca. 1670-1770', *Nederlands Archief voor Kerkgeschiedenis* 75 (1995) 64-101.

burgomasters. A delegation from the consistory had to ask their permission in order to start the procedure. The burgomasters could refuse this request or grant permission tied to a general or a more specific recommendation. When agreement had been granted the church council settled down to drawing up a list of the ministers who might be considered, whereupon they were reduced in successive meetings to a dozen, then to half a dozen and finally to a list of three candidates. Their names were put before the burgomasters who could immediately or after an interval give their approval ('*approbatie*') or announce their rejection ('*improbatie*' or '*seponering*'). In the latter case the whole procedure from the long list down to three candidates would have to be gone through once more. If approval was given the consistory elected the desired minister with a majority of votes ('*dispectie*'), and his name would then be put before the burgomasters. Also at this stage they could reject or accept the designated minister. If they approved the actual invitation could be sent out - naturally with the risk that the minister who was being approached did not accept the nomination. Then the consistory once again had to ask for permission and the procedure began again.

Thus the possibilities for the burgomasters to make their influence felt were very great. On the basis of a resolution of the States of Holland from 1687 they were not obliged to explain to the church council their reasons if they rejected the list of three candidates<sup>3</sup>. They were also able to tie their approval to all sorts of conditions dressed up as 'recommendations' which the church council had to carry out, the penalty being a veto. Thus in 1669 the town government of Haarlem indicated that the proposed candidates had to be inhabitants of the province of Holland, and in 1755 the burgomasters of Rotterdam demanded the nomination of a minister who had been born in that town<sup>4</sup>. The recommendation could also contain clearly defined instructions concerning the religious position of the candidates. In Leiden, for example, the church council in 1674 had to look for 'a peaceable, edifying, and pious man who would adhere to the ancient, orthodox doctrine'. And in 1677 the burgomasters of that same town let it be known that the list of names had to contain exclusively 'persons who do not follow the current new ideas'<sup>5</sup>.

<sup>3</sup> Resolutie Staten van Holland, 17-9-1687; for the resulting polemic see De Visser, *Kerk en staat* II, 406-421.

<sup>4</sup> Haarlem 1669: Gemeentearchief (GA) Haarlem, Oud-archief Nederlands Hervormde gemeente, Acta Kerkeraad (AKR), 11-10-1669. Rotterdam 1755: J.P. de Bie, *Het leven en de werken van Petrus Hofstede* (Rotterdam 1899) 86-93, where the conflict arising from this case and the subsequent discussion of principles is described.

<sup>5</sup> GA Leiden, Oud Stadsarchief II, 191, Notulboeken burgemeesters 1668-1682, ff. 187, 259 and 265; Archief Ned. Herv. Gemeente I, AKR 20 and 22-4-1674, 6-11-1676.

With these descriptions in the recommendation the Leiden magistrates indicated that they wanted a Voetian as minister. The Voetians derived their name from Gisbertus Voetius (1589-1676), professor of theology in Utrecht since 1634 who had great influence on the developments within the Dutch Reformed Church. They based their theological and scientific views on the traditional Christian doctrine and scholastic philosophy. Directly opposed to them were the followers of the Leiden professor Johannes Coccejus (1603-1669) who, on the basis of knowing many languages provided biblical studies with a solid historical foundation and rejected scholastic philosophy. His covenant theology implied among other things that the Ten Commandments were to be interpreted as pure ceremonial and were no longer valid. In the late 1650's this led to a fierce controversy concerning Sunday observance where followers of Coccejus and Voetius opposed each other. Fundamental differences of opinion arose also concerning other matters. An essential constituent of the vehement dispute was the fear of the Voetians that the philosophy of Descartes, which they passionately opposed, would undermine the true doctrine. The examples from Leiden demonstrate clearly that the burgomasters indicated the line of the minister who was to be nominated in carefully chosen words but without mentioning the group by name. Later, however, it became more usual in some towns simply to instruct the consistory to propose a Voetian or a Cocceian. It also happened repeatedly that the leading regents by naming one or more individuals made it quite clear which minister had to be chosen or what persons were acceptable in their eyes.

Also in other respects the town government could further curtail the limited freedom of the consistory. In 1680 the States of Holland resolved that the ministers in the eighteen towns with the right to vote and in The Hague had to be at least 27 years old<sup>6</sup>. In 1694 Amsterdam decided that a minister had to have at least six years' service and be 32 years old in order to be considered<sup>7</sup>. And in 1725 Rotterdam laid down that the minister could not be older than 46 years<sup>8</sup>. In Haarlem the burgomasters instructed the consistory in 1781 to look for a minister of 'ability, piety and peaceableness, not too young in years and with too little experience in church matters but also not too old, so that the congregation might have his services for a long time'<sup>9</sup>. During that period the Haarlem regents frequently went a step further and demanded a maximum

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<sup>6</sup> Resolutie Staten van Holland, 21-12-1680. For the towns not represented in the States of Holland and for rural municipalities the ages were respectively 25 and 22 years.

<sup>7</sup> R.B. Evenhuis, *Ook dat was Amsterdam* (5 vols., Amsterdam 1965-1978) III, 163.

<sup>8</sup> GA Rotterdam, Resolutie van de vroedschap, 10-4-1725.

<sup>9</sup> GA Haarlem, Oud-archief Ned.Herv.Gem., AKR 21-9-1781.

age of 40 years<sup>10</sup>. The demand for age limits on the part of the government signified, of course, that the number of candidates and therefore also the freedom of choice of the consistory were substantially limited.

To appoint a minister cost the city money, according to a Haarlem estimate from about 1720 some 1.400 guilders<sup>11</sup>. Especially in times of high prices or war, whenever every town government had to aim at making savings, the financial aspect counted for much. At such times the church council was firmly urged to consider the necessary economies, for example, foregoing the 'hearing' of a candidate, that is sending a committee to the place where the candidate lived in order to listen to and assess his preaching. Very much against the intentions of the consistory the burgomasters of Schiedam insisted that all candidates on the list had to visit the town in order to give a trial sermon<sup>12</sup>. In the eighteenth century a number of towns abolished the special delegations to the place where the candidates resided for financial reasons. Their visits and the financial conditions resulting therefrom were henceforth settled by correspondence.

Financial considerations were also at the bottom of decisions by town governments in order to make it as difficult and unattractive as possible for ministers to accept a call to another place. Thus the magistrate of Gouda in about 1700 obliged the ministers to remain seven years in the town<sup>13</sup>. In some cities they even introduced penalties in order to prevent ministers from moving after a short time. Rotterdam imposed a fine of 3.000 guilders on removal within four years after appointment; for removal after between four and eight years 2.000 guilders had to be paid and after between eight and twelve years 500<sup>14</sup>. The ruling which Haarlem introduced in 1719 was very rigorous indeed. When a call to another place was accepted the departing minister, in addition to the 1.400 guilders which his appointment had cost the town, had to repay the sum of 405 guilders which had been added to his salary every year, 'and that for each year he had enjoyed the benefit'. This last condition through its very cumulative effect made it practically impossible for ministers who preferred another parish to accept a nomination elsewhere. It was indeed determined some years later that these measures should not apply to persons

<sup>10</sup> Ibidem 19-8-1777, 17-9-1779 and 25-9-1783.

<sup>11</sup> GA Haarlem, Resolutie van burgemeesters, 28-3-1719.

<sup>12</sup> On this see K. Buitenhek, 'Regenten en predikanten in Schiedam 1670-1770', unpublished master's thesis in the Department of History, University of Leiden (1992) 52-69.

<sup>13</sup> GA Gouda, Oud stadsarchief 88, lias 15, f. 148.

<sup>14</sup> J.R. Callenbach, 'De Nederduitsche Hervormde Kerk in Rotterdam', in: *Rotterdam in den loop der eeuwen II* (Rotterdam 1909) 45-46.

who had received the honour of an appointment to a chair of theology in Leiden or Utrecht<sup>15</sup>.

In effect this ruling had the consequence that ministers in Haarlem showed no ambition to exchange the town for another place. It was, however, a negative effect that ministers from elsewhere saw a reason for refusing a call to Haarlem in these conditions. These measures thus weakened Haarlem's competitive position. Realizing this, the burgomasters decided in 1751 that the ruling applied only to those ministers who wanted to move to another parish within three years and limited the obligation to refund to only those expenses which had been incurred on account of the nomination and removal to Haarlem within that period<sup>16</sup>. Within a short time this softening led to an increased mobility: in the years 1751-1795 six ministers moved to another parish - in the first half of the century only one minister had taken this step.

Given the role of the consistory in nominating ministers, its composition - as mentioned before, after the incumbent ministers the elders and the deacons - could not leave the civil authorities indifferent. There were, however, enough other reasons for their active concern. For, together with the ministers the elders exercised the control over the parish. The aspect which was seen as the most important was the ecclesiastical supervision of the life of the congregation and the life-style of its members with a strongly disciplining character<sup>17</sup>. The deacons had special tasks in the area of looking after the poor, which during periods when food was scarce and the basic necessities of life were dear soon became linked to questions of finance and public order. In the big towns the annual election of elders and deacons which took place under a system of co-optation and thus excluded the ordinary members of the parish from participation had the character of a recommendation to the burgomasters. These could reject one or more of the candidates who had been proposed, which happened repeatedly so that the consistory was then forced to nominate new candidates.

Some towns had the institution of 'political commissaries' (*commissarissen-politiek*). The magistrate, if they considered it desirable, could delegate one or two members of the town government as observers with an advisory vote to the church council. This, however, did not find general acceptance. In 1632 after a conflict which had created a great stir, there suddenly appeared two commissioners in the

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<sup>15</sup> GA Haarlem, Resoluties van burgemeesters, 28-3-1719 and 9-7-1726.

<sup>16</sup> Ibidem 10-8-1751.

<sup>17</sup> See Herman Roodenburg, *Onder censuur. De kerkelijke tucht in de gereformeerde gemeente van Amsterdam, 1578-1700* (Hilversum 1990); for the office as such A. van Ginkel, *De ouderling. Oorsprong en ontwikkeling van het ambt van ouderling en de functie daarvan in de gereformeerde kerk der Nederlanden in de 16e en 17e eeuw* (Amsterdam 1975).



Amsterdam consistory, where they clearly exercised a controlling function. After 1650, however, their regular attendance was never mentioned. On the other hand, in Delft the commissaries played a definite role during conflicts as intermediaries between the Reformed consistory and the town government even in the eighteenth century. The existence of this institution of 'political commissaries' was the exception rather than the rule at the local level, certainly during the eighteenth century<sup>18</sup>.

In this connection the question of the interest of the regents in a place among the elders in the church council is of special importance. In Leiden they provided during the decades before 1672 about five of the twelve elders, then three, in the 1680's suddenly seven, and after 1690 and throughout the eighteenth century only one or two. Haarlem follows this development: there, too, a great interest in the office of elder in the 1680's and then a rapid decrease in the share of the regents during the eighteenth century, so that for long periods not a single regent was a member of the consistory. Despite the much more capricious pattern a decreasing interest can also be observed in Delft<sup>19</sup>.

On their own numbers and percentages do not tell us much about the influence of the town government on the formation of opinion within the church council. The real question is which regents within a particular period were members of the consistory. Did they belong to the most powerful group or were they simply regents who were politically put out to grass and knew themselves to be part of a defeated faction? Conflicts among the regents could in this way be reflected in the church council. The regent-elders who, in the town government belonged to a minority group which had been eliminated, could demonstrate their opposition to the ruling elite also within the church council. As they saw themselves supported by the majority within the council, a situation could arise where consistory and town government opposed each other.

Phenomena and processes which are so characteristic for the rule of the regents, occurred also within the church councils: the development of an oligarchy, the formation of factions and the conclusion of formal contracts. A clear example of the

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<sup>18</sup> Evenhuis, *Ook dat was Amsterdam I*, 314; R. Bisschop, 'Nadere Reformatie en politiek. Over de doorwerking van de Nadere Reformatie in Delft', *De Nadere Reformatie* 17 (1993) 118-120; G. Groenhuis, *De predikanten. De sociale positie van de gereformeerde predikanten in de Republiek der Verenigde Nederlanden voor + 1700* (Groningen 1977) 26-29.

<sup>19</sup> Leiden: H. Schilling, 'Calvinistische Presbyterien in Städten der Früneuzeit. Eine kirchliche Alternativform zur bürgerlichen Repräsentation?', in: W. Ehbrecht (ed.), *Städtische Führungsgruppen und Gemeinde in der werdende Neuzeit* (Cologne/Vienna 1980) 385-444. Delft: De Jongste, 'Conflicten rond predikantsbenoemingen', 66 (fig. 1). Haarlem: De Jongste, 'Rumoer in en om de gereformeerde kerkeraad in Haarlem, ca. 1670-1780. Enkele consistoriale verkenningen', in: H. Brokken a. o. (ed.), *Hart voor Haarlem* (Haarlem 1996) 168-169.

growth of an oligarchy can be seen in the course of events in Delft where, towards the end of the seventeenth century, the church council was dominated by a small group who again and again had themselves elected as elders. In the end the proportion of new members declined to less than 15% whereas more than 60% of the elders were in office for the third time or more. A typical development of factions occurred in the Leiden consistory in the 1680's. At that time the Cocceian ministers together with the regent-elders, who in the town government were part of a minority in opposition, formed the majority in the consistory. This group stubbornly opposed the policy of the burgomasters to appoint Voetian ministers<sup>20</sup>.

The agreements concluded within the regent elite concerning the manner in which the available offices were to be shared out, the so-called 'correspondence agreements' (*contracten van correspondentie*), are well-known. They may be compared to the arrangements whereby a number of members of the church council engaged themselves to pursue the same policy especially in appointing a minister. In this way there existed a Cocceian 'correspondence' of five ministers and five elders in Leiden during the 1730's and 1740's. It was their aim to appoint as many ministers of the Cocceian persuasion as possible. They were supported by the deacons, who were hoping in due course to acquire the position of elders which was considered more honorific. Until the 1750's this arrangement was successful and thanks to their majority position and internal discipline they were able to impose their view on the control of appointments<sup>21</sup>.

In a number of towns, however, arrangements were in force which aimed at ending factional conflicts. The arguments then concerned rulings whereby Voetians and Cocceians were appointed alternately or at least the nominations were made in line with the religious attitudes of the parishioners. In such 'conventions' two groups or 'friendships' within the consistory arranged how the proportions in nominating ministers should be preserved in practice. Sometimes such agreements were put in writing, within the aim of 'preventing new troubles', as it was put in a formal agreement between the members of the church council in The Hague in 1719<sup>22</sup>.

The pressure to conclude such 'conventions' probably always came from the civic authorities who were greatly concerned to have peace within the 'public' church and frequently intervened in other ways in order to put an end to ecclesiastical quarrels.

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<sup>20</sup> De Jongste, 'Conflicten rond predikantsbenoemingen', 67-68.

<sup>21</sup> L. van Poelgeest, 'Cocceianen en Voetianen in Leiden. De Leidse kerkeraad en de beroeping van Ds. J. van Spaan in 1754', *Leids jaarboekje* 1989, 109.

<sup>22</sup> J. de Witte van Citters, *Contracten van correspondentie en andere bijdragen tot de geschiedenis van het ambtsbehag in de Republiek der Vereenigde Nederlanden* (The Hague 1873) 311-316.

The best-known example at the local level occurred in Amsterdam. There the burgomasters in 1677 put a peace proposal to the consistory which was accepted by all members. In the preceding years fierce conflicts had arisen within the council and with the burgomasters over the appointment of ministers and it was laid down that from then onwards only moderate and peaceable persons were to be proposed without considering at which university those whose names were put forward had been educated<sup>23</sup>. This agreement which in Amsterdam provided the basis for a successful *modus vivendi* was copied elsewhere - Haarlem, for example, followed suit as early as 1679<sup>24</sup>. Not everywhere, however, did quarrels about theological questions belong to the past. For this reason the States of Holland approved a proposal of the stadholder William III in 1694 'concerning the preservation of tranquillity and peace in the churches of this province'. In regard to the appointment of ministers it was laid down there that exclusively such persons could be considered 'who are edifying in doctrine and life and of a moderate and peaceable disposition'<sup>25</sup>. Moderation and peaceableness were the keywords of official policy, both at the provincial and the local level.

The 'conventions' whose purpose was to steer the theological quarrels towards peaceable channels always mentioned two parties, based on the difference between Voetians and Cocceians. These names which had their origin in the quarrels about sabbath rest were connected from the beginning with the political controversies between the supporters of a powerful stadholder government under the House of Orange, and the republicans or *staatsgezinden* who advocated a government by the regents in the town councils and States, perhaps or preferably without a stadholder. In the second half of the eighteenth century when the theological quarrels had lost their original character, the names gradually acquired a strong party flavour. In relation to church affairs it was, however, more important that the division into two groups no longer fitted the religious reality now that new theological ideas of widely divergent character (Enlightenment, pietism) had made their influence felt. For the appointment of ministers this meant in practice that the bi-partite gave way to a tri-partite division, to fit the main currents within which further distinctions could be made between different groups<sup>26</sup>.

<sup>23</sup> Evenhuis, *Ook dat was Amsterdam III*, 131-133.

<sup>24</sup> GA Haarlem, Archief Ned.Herv.Gemeente, AKR 16-8-1679; J.W. Spaans, 'Levensbeschouwelijke groeperingen', in: *Deugd boven geweld. Een geschiedenis van Haarlem, 1245-1995* (Hilversum 1995) 214.

<sup>25</sup> Groenhuis, *De predikanten*, 95.

<sup>26</sup> These main currents are referred to as Voetians, 'Leiden' or 'Green' Cocceians and 'New' or 'Serious' Cocceians.

Public authorities who saw the preservation of peace within church and parish as the most important aim of their policy naturally could not object to such a development. Thus when in 1761 it became clear in The Hague that the two-party system had outlived itself, the initiative of the civil authorities moved in favour of a replacement by a three-party division. After the old arrangement of 1719 had been abrogated a new agreement was concluded in 1769 between three 'columns' or 'friendships' where it was laid down in detail how in future a fair division of posts could be brought about in the churches<sup>27</sup>. In 1777 the consistory in Delft accepted a proposal from the burgomasters to see to it in future that two ministers from each of the three main groups should be active in the town. Here, too, it was the local authority which, fully aware of the realities of the situation, intervened in order to settle matters<sup>28</sup>.

From what has been said it is abundantly clear that the secular authorities on the basis of their own specific responsibilities demanded to play an important role in the appointment of ministers. Aware of its dependent position, the church had reluctantly recognized the legitimacy of the demands of the civil authorities. The real question, however, was where the borderline was to be drawn between the competence of the town government and the right of the consistory freely to settle ecclesiastical affairs. The uncertainty concerning the competence of the two bodies, especially in appointing ministers was increased in the absence of a uniform arrangement for the whole province. The organization of the church which the Synod of Dordrecht had accepted in 1618-1619 was never officially approved by the States of Holland. As a result most towns continued to adhere to the arrangement of 1591 which granted the authorities much influence, other - such as Delft and Gorinchem - based themselves on internal agreements from the beginning of the seventeenth century, while Dordrecht did indeed follow the rulings of 1618/19<sup>29</sup>.

In some towns the appointment of ministers repeatedly led to - sometimes protracted - conflicts between church council and local government. In the period from 1670 to 1780 it is striking that:

I. especially Rotterdam and Schiedam stand out with a great number of conflicts, both before and after the dividing lines of 1702 and 1747;

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<sup>27</sup> C.J. Toebes, *Haagse hervormde historiën* (Zaltbommel 1978) 148-154; De Witte van Citters, *Contracten van correspondentie*, 316-322.

<sup>28</sup> GA Delft, Oud-archief Delft 1, inv.nr.16, dl. 11, Minuut-resoluties van burgemeesters, 6 and 13-11-1777.

<sup>29</sup> See Enno van Gelder, *Getemperde vrijheid*, 22; F.L. Rutgers, *De geldigheid van de oude kerkenordening der Ned. Gereformeerde kerken* (Leiden 1890) 34.

2. that in Delft and Leiden conflicts arose especially in the last quarter of the seventeenth century, whereas in Gouda and Haarlem they are concentrated in the eighteenth century;

3. that in Dordrecht clashes occurred only in the period from 1672 until 1702. Of course, it must be remembered that the number of positions for ministers and thus also the frequency of vacancies varied greatly. As against 55 vacancies in Leiden or 47 in Dordrecht considerably fewer places became vacant in Delft (33), Gouda (31), Schiedam (27) or Schoonhoven (16). A statistical comparison of vacancies and conflicts shows that in Schiedam almost 52% of nominations were connected with quarrels between church council and city government. In Schoonhoven with only five conflicts, they occurred in 31% of nominations, whereas for Rotterdam a percentage of almost 30% and for Delft a percentage of 27% can be observed. Dordrecht stands out with a remarkably low percentage of only about 6% of contested nominations.

The minutes of the consistories are the most important source. Usually, however, they do not blind us with detail when it is a question of the motives behind the choice of a particular minister. Especially in the case of disagreements a considerable amount of self-censorship was exercised. Nevertheless an analysis of the nature and course of all these conflicts offers the possibility of becoming aware of patterns and thus achieve a certain classification. In doing so it must incidentally be observed that a rigid schematic framework does not do justice to the many-sided character of numerous confrontations. The borderlines are vague and we regularly find overlaps. With these reservations conflicts can be categorized on the basis of obviously dominating factors<sup>30</sup>.

**1. The influence of theological dissension within the Reformed Church** ('richtingenstrijd'). In many appointments differences of opinion concerning the theological outlook of the minister who was to be called played a large part. Thus in the 1670's the mostly Cocceian consistory in Leiden strongly resisted the burgomasters who, with the support of William III had set their heart on a minister of Voetian outlook. The opposite happened in Schoonhoven in the years 1740-1743 where after a conflict with the fiercely resisting consistory lasting almost three years the magistrate succeeded in imposing the appointment of a Cocceian.

**2. Interference of the House of Orange.** It is known of William III that he preferred the more orthodox Voetians. Thus he supported the Leiden burgomasters

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<sup>30</sup> The categories and examples of clashes between town governments and consistories are taken from De Jongste, 'Conflicten rond predikantsbenoemingen', 76-100.

in their just mentioned conflict with the Cocceian consistory. Later his attitude was dictated above all by considerations of a practical, political nature: it had to be prevented that theological disagreements should exert a detrimental effect on policy. The decision of the States of Holland, which has already been referred to, to introduce the ruling 'concerning the preservation of tranquillity and peace' (1694) fits in with this strategy.

After the restoration of the stadholdership in 1747 through which once again a member of the House of Orange, in the person of William IV, held the reins of government, we once again hear of meddling of the stadholder's court in appointments of ministers. William IV as well as his wife, who took charge of the office of stadholder after his premature death in 1751, exerted pressure on town governments in order to have Voetian ministers appointed. Especially in Leiden this led to some heated clashes between the Cocceian majority in the church council and the burgomasters. It is striking that Voetian parishioners with grievances against the policies of the political elite or the church establishment expected assistance from the House of Orange. They expressed this in petitions above all in the turbulent autumn of 1748<sup>31</sup>.

**3. *The influence of factional quarrels.*** It happens sometimes that conflicts between church council and city government, which at first sight are of a purely ecclesiastical and religious character on closer inspection also contain a predominantly political element. Leiden offers an obvious example of this. The intervention of William III in the composition of the most important organs of government both in the revolutionary year 1672 and afterwards, culminating in an open conflict between Stadholder and town government concerning foreign policy in the years 1683-1685 produced great tensions within the Leiden regent patriciate<sup>32</sup>. The vehement party conflict which resulted had its repercussions on the attitude of the consistory in nominating ministers. A majority consisting of the Cocceian ministers and the elders who, as town regents belonged to the minority in opposition, resisted the governing political elite and attempted to prevent the appointment of Voetians. After the peace

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<sup>31</sup> Rebellious citizens in Leiden emphatically requested the appointment of Voetian ministers, see *Nederlands wonder-toneel, geopend in de jaren 1747 en 1748* (2 vols., Leiden 1749) II, 700-702, 710-711. In Schiedam the citizens furthermore demanded above all the abolition of the obligation that candidates had to give a trial sermon in the town. In this they supported the consistory in its revolt against the town government (*Ibidem*, 747-750).<sup>30</sup> The categories and examples of clashes between town governments and consistories are taken from De Jongste, 'Conflicten rond predikantsbenoemingen', 76-100.

<sup>32</sup> J.J. Woltjer, 'Willem III en Leiden', in: J.W. Marsilje a.o. (ed.), *Uit Leidse bron geleverd. Studies over Leiden en de Leidenaren in het verleden, aangeboden aan drs. B.N. Leverland bij zijn afscheid als adjunct-archivaris van het Leidse gemeentearchief* (Leiden 1989) 417-431.

between the factions had been signed with a formal agreement concerning the distribution of offices in 1685, a new clash occurred between church council and burgomasters only in 1715. In Dordrecht (1677), where the direct influence of politics on the nomination of ministers was greater than elsewhere, and in Schoonhoven (1690-1692), too, the interrelationship of church conflicts with factional quarrels can be observed.

**4. *Nepotism and intrigues.*** In a period when administrative offices usually were considered to be 'hereditary', the nomination of the nearest relatives of sitting ministers or elders in office did not cause a stir. In a number of towns ministers were succeeded by their sons or these received a position next to their father. Once only this open nepotism was opposed. In 1725 the burgomasters of Delft rejected a proposal because the consistory in their eyes had for years preferred members of the family and gave no chance to able ministers. It is noticeable that the authorities there made use of the institution of 'political commissioners' to prevent the consistory and higher church organs (class and synod) from giving their opinion in official statements on the question. It was unacceptable that an ecclesiastical authority should presume to express views concerning the actions of the civil authorities. During this phase of intensified opposition the conflict clearly changed its character. It was no longer a question of intrigues and nepotism, but a matter of principle concerning the limits of responsibility and competence, of rights and power.

**5. *The position of the consistory in relation to the town government.*** The magistrates of those towns which have been studied made full use of the scope which the procedure offered them to influence the appointment of ministers. A small selection of cases can show what measures they employed: refusal to agree to start the proceedings; stating narrowly defined conditions concerning age or theological opinions, giving the names of one or more acceptable candidates, disapproval of proposals which had been put forward, sometimes even repeatedly. They did not shrink from even harder measures such as occasionally nominating a 'political commissary', threatening to interfere with the composition of the consistory or with measures against opposing ministers and elders, calling in the highest authority through an appeal to the Grand Pensionary or the States of Holland.

Usually the church council gave way to the demands of the town government at an early stage in the proceedings. Sometimes, however, the conflicts escalated because the majority in the church council was not willing to give in and wielded its own arms in the conflict such as the complete refusal to accept the demands and conditions, sticking to traditional rules and appealing to good old customs, refusing to start the proceedings or making proposals, calling in superior ecclesiastical organs (class and synod) and sometimes also an appealing to the States of Holland.

Behind such vehement resistance always stood the conviction that the public authorities were rightly concerned in appointing ministers but that obvious limits had to be placed to their intervention through the proper competence and responsibility of the consistories. Ecclesiastical affairs had to be treated and settled 'ecclesiastically', that is by the church authorities. In this view the imposition of conditions in the form of what was officially called a 'recommendation' was a violation of the rights and liberties of the church council and just as inadmissible as the exercise of the right of disapproval.

At the local level of the towns of the province of Holland the manner in which appointment of ministers took place offers a remarkable yardstick for the relations between public authorities and churches. By far the most numerous appointments came about in harmony after friendly consultations. In a number of cases, however, serious conflicts arose between town government and consistory. In this a number of, mostly interrelated, factors of a political, socio-cultural or ecclesiastical and religious nature played a dominant part. Usually local circumstances were of decisive importance for the origin, nature and progress of such clashes. At the heart of these confrontations lay the question of the borderline between the power and competence of the town government and the rights and liberties of the church council. The result was almost always that the civil authorities, in spite of sometimes vehement and prolonged resistance on the ecclesiastical side, were able to enforce their views. Seen from the local perspective there could be no doubt, also in the years 1670-1780, where the power lay in the relations between state and church.