

AT THE CROSS-ROADS:
EARLY DUTCH SCIENCE OF RELIGION IN
INTERNATIONAL PERSPECTIVE

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I. INTRODUCTION

Discussion of the beginnings of an academic field of study is never a completely harmless affair. National pride can be easily wounded, for example, when a major historian of comparative religion claims that the German-British scholar Friedrich Max Müller (1823–1900) is the father of the field, and not the Dutchman Cornelis Petrus Tiele (1830–1902).¹ Luckily for Dutch supporters, the Canadian Louis Henry Jordan, who published in 1905 a capable overview of the state of the art, found it at the time “surprising that, in some quarters, it should still be maintained that the Oxford savant [= Müller, ALM] was unquestionably *the* Founder of Comparative Religion”.² Although Jordan considered the question of who founded the field as relatively unimportant, he added an appendix to his book to refute the claims of Müller. Further, Jordan praised the courteous way in which Tiele himself dealt with this delicate subject. One can entertain some doubts, however, as to whether Tiele was that courteous to Müller. In fact, he was rather sensitive about his own prestige. But he made an apt observation when he noted that a new branch of study can hardly be said to be “founded”. Comparative religion, Tiele argued, “was called into being by a generally felt want in different countries at the same time and as a matter of course”.³

The rise of science of religion, as I prefer to call the field,⁴ was

¹ Sharpe 1986: 35.

² Jordan 1905: 151 (emphasis in the original).

³ Tiele 1893: 586.

⁴ I will not go into terminological niceties here, as important as they may be; for the sake of convenience, I will use “science of religion” as a covering term for the new field in all its ramifications. This does not imply that there existed (or, for that matter, exists) a consensus about the name or the content of this scholarly endeavour. Many other terms, like comparative religion, religious studies, science

perceived by all proponents at the time as an international affair.⁵ Certainly, if one compares this field with traditional theological disciplines, such as dogmatics (a comparison which makes sense, especially in the Dutch context), the international character of science of religion was striking. The career of the great scholar we honour at this occasion, William Brede Kristensen (1867–1953), nicely illustrates this international tendency. Starting his studies at the University of Oslo, he later went to Paris and Leiden to continue his education under scholars like Gaston Maspéro, Hendrik Kern, Abraham Kuenen, and Tiele. Eventually, he would succeed Tiele in 1901. On the short list of the Leiden theological faculty were, besides Kristensen, the names of the Swede, Nathan Söderblom, and the Dane, Edvard Lehmann. I doubt if this predominance of Scandinavian scholars was sheer coincidence. Söderblom revised, at Tiele's own request,⁶ the German edition of Tiele's handbook on the history of religions. This so-called Tiele-Söderblom compendium became very popular; the sixth and last edition appeared in 1931, the year Söderblom died. It almost looks as if Scandinavian scholars took over Dutch science of religion at the beginning of the twentieth century. But I am exaggerating, no doubt. Nonetheless, one should consider what happened to the other German-language Dutch handbook, Pierre Daniël Chantepie de la Saussaye's manual on the history of religions. Was it not Lehmann who was asked by la Saussaye to prepare the fourth edition of this handbook?⁷ But leaving this point aside, I shall turn to the theme of this paper: early Dutch science of religion and its international ramifications.

II. THE FAME OF EARLY DUTCH SCIENCE OF RELIGION

For our starting-point, we have to face the question of what importance is accorded to early Dutch science of religion in the historiography of the field. When discussing this issue, historians mainly

of religions, history of religion, history of religions, philosophy of religion, phenomenology of religion, psychology of religion, hierology, and hierography, were used. Terminology was not fixed, and the relationship between the various branches was a matter of discussion. Cf. note 8.

⁵ Cf. Müller 1873: 35; Albert Réville's introduction to Tiele 1882b: ix.

⁶ Tiele had first asked Lehmann, who refused; cf. Sharpe 1990: 235, note 113.

⁷ Cf. the prefaces to the various editions of the manual. The name Chantepie de la Saussaye was usually abbreviated to la Saussaye.

refer to the following three factors: (1) the institutionalization of the field within the Dutch university system, (2) the international prestige of scholars such as Tiele, Chantepie de la Saussaye, Kristensen (who became a Dutch citizen in 1917), and Gerardus van der Leeuw, and (3) the Dutch contribution to “phenomenology of religion”.

(1) I will begin with some comments on the institutionalization of Dutch science of religion. By the Act on Higher Education of 1876, the field was established within the four Dutch universities of the time. In Leiden and Amsterdam, special chairs were even created in history of religions. These positions were occupied, respectively, by Tiele and Chantepie de la Saussaye.⁸ Together with the first professorships in Switzerland in the 1870s and the foundation of the religious studies section at the *École Pratique des Hautes Études* in Paris in 1886, this development in the Netherlands is generally seen as a first and important step in the establishment of an autonomous science of religion. Thus, the history of the field is conceived of as a gradual emancipation from the patronizing power of theology. Personally, I have some doubts about this point of view. There is a danger that the agenda of present-day scholarship determines the way in which the history of the discipline is written. Doing good historiography does not mean giving grades to the pioneers of the field according to our own standards, e.g., to the extent they distanced themselves from theological premises. Instead, we should try to understand their methods and objectives. What is badly needed is a more contextual approach to the beginnings of the scientific study of religion, however difficult this may be.

The Dutch case amply illustrates why a teleological interpretation fails to a large extent. When we take a closer look at the debates in the Netherlands in the 1860s and 1870s, we see that they focus not so much on the introduction of a new discipline as upon the organization of the theological faculties as such. Various liberal members of parliament, influenced by the Leiden theological modernism, aimed at a transformation of the theological faculties into faculties of science of religion. In this way, science of religion was expected

⁸ Actually, the process was somewhat more complicated. Both “history of religions in general” and “philosophy of religion” were introduced into the curriculum of the theological faculties. To Tiele and many of his Dutch colleagues, these two disciplines were part of science of religion as such; they did not want to do “just” history, but to analyze and evaluate religions and religious phenomena as well. This is the reason why I prefer to use the term “science of religion” in the Dutch context.

to fulfil (most of) the tasks of the old theology and to show the superiority of Christian religion. On the basis of an evolutionary scheme, Tiele was even tempted to speculate about the development of liberal Protestantism into the religion of mankind.⁹ Admittedly, this was a rather extreme point of view, but the idea that science of religion should judge the value of various religions was shared by many scholars at the time. Chantepie de la Saussaye, to take another example, who certainly was no modernist and whose expectations with respect to the new endeavour were much more modest, saw history of religion and philosophy of religion as two intimately connected parts of the overarching science of religion. He stated in the introduction of his famous manual: “The unity of religion in the variety of its forms is what is presupposed by the science of religion”.¹⁰ The belief that an interrelated study of religions would contribute to the understanding of religion *as such* was widespread.¹¹

(2) What about the second factor—the prestige of early Dutch science of religion? Before answering this question, I shall make several preliminary remarks. Prestige is certainly the most important asset of a scientist. But it is hard to objectify. We all admire the scholar who produces a new book every year, publishes articles in every conceivable journal, or is invited to deliver the keynote lecture on important occasions. Yet, high output, as it is called nowadays, is not enough. Prestige, ultimately, has to do with the quality of the scholarly production and performance. Quality, however, is a somewhat evasive property. The quality attributed to a scholar or an article depends, at least to some extent, on the preferences of one’s peers. What is more important then—that there are no mistakes in a book that it is well-written, or that it offers new perspectives and hypotheses?¹² Both quality and prestige are socially

⁹ Tiele 1874: 262.

¹⁰ Chantepie de la Saussaye 1887–1889, Vol. I: 6 (English edition: 9).

¹¹ On the institutionalization of early Dutch science of religion and the views of Tiele and Chantepie de la Saussaye on the field, see Molendijk 1998 & 1999; cf. Platvoet 1998.

¹² Marcel Mauss who made a trip to Holland in 1897/1898 to meet, among others, Tiele, Hendrik Kern, and Willem Caland, was rather critical about Holland in this respect. He wrote to Henri Hubert in an undated letter, probably from 1897: “[En Hollande], on [ne] pense pas, on [n]’invente pas. Nulle excitation philosophique. Ils [mettent] en un style clair de bonnes dissertations allemandes; ils adaptent lentement leur pays à l’utilitarisme anglais, au progressisme européen [. . .]. Si tu savais comme on est loin du bouillonnement d’idées de Paris; le grand souci

constituted properties which depend upon the recognition of one's work by the scientific community. Honours such as honorary doctorates, prizes, fellowships, memberships on important boards and in honorable academies, and so on, determine the value of a scholar.

I shall not try to list the honours that were bestowed on Tiele, Chantepie de la Saussaye, Kristensen, and van der Leeuw. They were highly respected in the Netherlands; they were all elected members of the Dutch Academy of Sciences and, with the exception of la Saussaye, received honorary doctorates.¹³ Tiele was elected into various foreign academies, was invited to give the Gifford Lectures, and at his retirement received congratulations from all over the world. He and Max Müller, who were both unable to attend the First International Congress for the History of Religions in Paris in 1900, were made honorary presidents. Chantepie de la Saussaye chaired this congress at its first convention in the Netherlands (Leiden) in 1912.¹⁴ Kristensen, however, did not play such a prominent international role. He published most of his work in Norwegian and Dutch, and it was only after the publication of *The Meaning of Religion* in English by John Carman in 1960 that he became better known outside Norway and the Netherlands. Kristensen's pupil, Gerardus van der Leeuw, was surely more prominent on the international scene. His fame is founded on his "Phenomenology of Religion" which appeared originally in German in 1933 and in an English translation in 1938. He was approached to succeed Friedrich Heiler in Marburg in 1931,¹⁵ and, shortly before his death in 1950, he presided over the Seventh Congress for the History of Religions in Amsterdam.¹⁶

Although prestige is a very real thing, it is hard to determine in a more exact way. Perhaps it is easier to look at the influence that a particular scholar possesses. Influence is not the same as prestige, which is not to deny that a prestigious scholar is more likely to be influential. However, the two qualities are undoubtedly correlated.

est d'être 'accurate', et d'être fin, d'être clair et d'être complet. C'est tout. Nulle préoccupation de l'idée réellement neuve et originale. Intellectuellement, le voyage n'est pas à faire [. . .]."; quoted in Fournier 1994: 127.

¹³ La Saussaye refused an honorary doctorate from the University of Glasgow at the beginning of the twentieth century because of the anti-Dutch role of the British in the Boer War in South Africa; cf. Aalders 1990: 105.

¹⁴ Cf. Leiden 1912.

¹⁵ Hofstee 1997: 81.

¹⁶ Cf. Bleeker, et al., 1951, including a necrology by Pettazzoni (pp. 5–6).

For example, the writing of textbooks, encyclopedia articles, let alone popular books does not automatically earn one the acclaim of one's fellow specialists, but it can play a significant role. For the sake of brevity, I shall specify two markers of influence: one is being widely read and known, and the other is being able to place one's students in the right academic positions, where they in turn can exercise influence.

Were the Dutch pioneers of science of religion influential in the sense specified here? The question of whether they succeeded in creating scientific *Nachwuchs* is the most difficult to answer. In the beginning, at least, there was no specific Dutch science of religion school. We know that Tiele's courses were not very well attended, and both Tiele and Chantepie de la Saussaye were succeeded by scholars with different interests and approaches.¹⁷ Whether Kristensen, although he studied with Tiele in the early 1890s, can be said to have worked in Tiele's spirit seems doubtful. The original Tielean programme of science of religion was downsized to a considerable extent by Kristensen. Kristensen's renown is based on a careful and respectful analysis of the data of ancient religions. In the course of time all traces of an evolutionary view of religion were wiped out, and Kristensen developed his own phenomenology of religion, which aimed at a discussion of religions and religious phenomena in their own right and not as stages in some presumed development of religion as such.¹⁸ The grand schemes and high hopes of his "master" Tiele were gradually abandoned.¹⁹ One could claim that the deaths of Müller (1900) and Tiele (1902) marked the end of an era, and the work of Kristensen marked the beginning of a new period in history of religions, which gradually emancipated itself from philosophy of religion.²⁰

¹⁷ Tiele was succeeded by the Norwegian Kristensen, and la Saussaye left his Amsterdam chair to Wilhelm Brandt (1855–1915), who was of German descent and whose previous teaching assignment was in New Testament Studies at the same faculty. Brandt published on Mandaean religion. Brandt was succeeded in 1913 by the German *Religionsgeschichtler* Heinrich Hackmann (1864–1935).

¹⁸ Kristensen 1901: 16 ("different stages of development"); Kristensen 1955: 23 (religions can only be measured by their own standards).

¹⁹ Cf. Kristensen 1901: 19.

²⁰ I am not sure if this thesis is correct. The actual history of comparative religion seems to be a bit more complicated. The tendency of some scholars of religion to do "just" history and to get rid of philosophy and cross-cultural comparison stems from a more recent date.

Compared to Tiele, the influence of Chantepie de la Saussaye was smaller. He did not possess Tiele's zeal to fight for the new discipline, and in the course of his career he was drawn ever more to ethics and traditional theology. He exchanged the chair for history of religions at the University of Amsterdam for a Leiden professorship in theology in 1899. He was appointed against the wishes of the faculty to succeed the only non-liberal theologian in Leiden at the time, J.H. Gunning. Gunning originally taught philosophy of religion, but because of confessional qualms (he could not reconcile his Christian belief with the then current presupposition of philosophy of religion that in principle all religions are on a par), he exchanged this field with Tiele in 1891. In this way, Tiele got hold of the two disciplines which, in his view, were the two main constituents of science of religion. Gunning obtained in return the field of "history of the doctrine of God", which he could teach without disavowing his positive Christian standpoint. As his successor, Chantepie de la Saussaye was responsible for this field, as well as for ethics. When one considers the continuing struggles over the identity and method of science of religion and the accompanying conceptual and methodological shifts, on the one hand, and, to a lesser extent, the role of contingent factors in succession procedures, especially in a small country like Holland, on the other, the criterion of measuring influence by *Nachwuchs* is perhaps less workable.

On the other criterion—that of being widely read—the four "great men" mentioned above score rather well, with the exception of Kristensen, who was hesitant about publishing the fruits of his work and did not write a major textbook.²¹ Van der Leeuw's *Phenomenology*, Chantepie de la Saussaye's *Manual*, and Tiele's *Outlines of the History of Religion* doubtless shaped the standards in the field. La Saussaye's *Manual* went from 1887–1889 to 1925 in four editions, and was partially translated into English and French.²² Tiele's *Outlines*, originally published in Dutch in 1876, was translated into English (1877; the fifth English edition appeared in 1892), Danish (1884), French (1880), Swedish (1887), and German (1880, 1887; the following editions—1903, 1912, 1920, 1931—were revised and enlarged by Söderblom). Van der Leeuw's *Phenomenology* was also published in several European

²¹ For bibliographical information, see Waardenburg 1973–1974, II: 137–139, and Kristensen 1960: 497–500.

²² Chantepie de la Saussaye 1891; 1904; cf. Waardenburg 1973–1974.

languages.²³ The German-language handbooks were largely produced in the Netherlands up till the 1930s.

The international reach of early Dutch science of religion, however, is probably best exemplified by the work of Tiele. He published extensively, also in foreign languages. He contributed to the *Zeitschrift für Assyriologie*, the *Zeitschrift für Religionsgeschichte*, the *Theologischer Jahresbericht* (he compiled the review articles on history of religions for the years 1897–1898), and the *Revue de l'Histoire des Religions*, the first specialized journal in the field. He was asked by William Robertson Smith, the editor of the ninth edition of the *Encyclopaedia Britannica*, to supply the entry on “Religions”. Tiele also contributed several items to the *Encyclopaedia Biblica*. He wrote two volumes on Babylonian-Assyrian history for a German handbook on ancient history, and many of his articles and books were translated.²⁴ The Gifford Lectures, which he delivered in 1896 and 1898, were attended by large audiences. Tiele’s voyage to Scotland attracted much attention, not only from Dutch newspapers but also from British and Scottish dailies and magazines. The lectures appeared in Dutch, English, German, and Swedish. They were not translated into French, but the book was read in France. The first volume received a rather favourable review by Marcel Mauss in Durkheim’s *L’Année Sociologique*.²⁵ And many non-Dutch scholars at the time did read Dutch and took notice of the *Theologisch Tijdschrift*, in which Tiele reviewed some 200 books and published 26 articles from 1876 till 1892. The Tiele Collection of the Leiden University Library contains approximately 1700 letters from scholars and interested lay people from all over Europe and North America. There are letters by Marcel Mauss, James Darmesteter, G. Maspero, E.B. Tylor, J.G. Frazer, Andrew Lang, William Robertson Smith, Abraham Kuenen, P.D. Chantepie de la Saussaye, Goblet d’Alviella, Otto Pfeleiderer, Franz Delitzsch, and Nathan Söderblom, to mention only a few of the more famous names.

(3) To come to the third factor, Dutch science of religion is famous—or, as others would say, notorious—for its contribution to phenomenology of religion. But although the value of a phenome-

²³ Cf. also van der Leeuw 1925.

²⁴ For more bibliographical information, see Waardenburg 1973–1974; de Ridder 1900b.

²⁵ Mauss 1899.

nological approach has come under attack in more recent times,²⁶ it was once an influential force in the field of the study of religion. It all began with Chantepie de la Saussaye's manual on the history of religions. In the first edition from 1887 a phenomenological part was included, which was located—from a disciplinary point of view—somewhere between history of religion and philosophy of religion, all these disciplines being part of the overarching science of religion. In the English translation by Beatrice S. Colyer-Fergusson (née Max Müller),²⁷ the phenomenological section takes up about 175 pages, in which topics like “idolatry”, “sacred stones, trees, and animals”, “the worship of nature”, “the worship of men”, “magic and divination”, “sacred places”, “religious times”, “sacred persons”, “religious communities”, “the sacred writings”, and “the relation of religion to morality and art” are treated. According to la Saussaye, this section is “the first more comprehensive attempt to arrange the principal groups of religious conceptions in such a way that the most important sides and aspects should appear conspicuously from out the material”.²⁸ Because it was supposed to be a “border discipline”,²⁹ the section was dropped in later editions of the manual. The book on phenomenology which Chantepie de la Saussaye was preparing³⁰ would never appear. A reason for this is probably his transfer to Leiden where he had to meet other (teaching) obligations. In the manual we only find scant indications about the enterprise of phenomenology of religion, and in other writings there is likewise no information that can help us any further.

Much energy has recently been spent on the question: where did the concept of phenomenology of religion originate?³¹ The term

²⁶ Jacques Waardenburg, himself a proponent of phenomenology of religion, recently wrote: “Ein Wissenschaftler, der von sich überzeugt ist und der sich in der akademischen Szene bewähren will, würde es zur Zeit kaum wagen, als Religionsphänomenologe in Erscheinung zu treten” (Waardenburg 1997: 731).

²⁷ In this way the name of the translator is indicated in the book itself. The “Translator's Preface” tells us that she undertook the translation of the *Lehrbuch der Religionsgeschichte* on the advice of her father, the famous Max Müller.

²⁸ Chantepie de la Saussaye 1891: vi. I do not see the point of translating “aus dem Material von selbst” (1887–1889, Vol I: vf.) as “from out the other [?] material”, as Colyer-Fergusson does.

²⁹ Chantepie de la Saussaye 1897, Vol. II: vi.

³⁰ Ibid.

³¹ Baumgartner, et al., 1989; Lanczkowski 1992; G.A. James 1995: 22–46; Hofstee 1997: 173–178.

“phenomenology” can, no doubt, be traced back to Hegel (*The Phenomenology of the Spirit*, 1806) and, even further back, to J.H. Lambert. Lambert is a not too well-known correspondent of Kant, who used the word in the last section of his *New Organon* (1764) to refer to a theory of optical appearance in relation to the (in)correctness of human knowledge. But does this genealogy yield much insight with respect to the origin of the concept of phenomenology of religion? Why did Chantepie de la Saussaye choose exactly this term? Of course, there had been scholarly overviews of religious phenomena in a comparative perspective for a long time. C. Meiners’ *Critical History of Religions* from 1806 is often mentioned in this respect.³² But these supposed predecessors do not use the term “phenomenology”. I have looked in vain for scholars who could have inspired Chantepie de la Saussaye during his early career in this matter.³³ My guess would be that he borrowed it directly from Hegel himself, whom la Saussaye considered to be the main figure in the emergence of science of religion.³⁴

Another relevant issue involves which scholars should be considered within the field of phenomenology of religion. Opinions differ considerably here. Eric J. Sharpe devotes an entire chapter to phenomenology in his book on the history of comparative religion. He discusses a variety of authors, but in the period up to the Second World War the main characters in his story are probably P.D. Chantepie de la Saussaye, Nathan Söderblom, Edvard Lehmann, William Brede Kristensen, Gerardus van der Leeuw, C.J. Bleeker, Joachim Wach, Joseph M. Kitagawa, and Mircea Eliade. Although Sharpe also mentions the British scholars E.O. James and A.C. Bouquet, the predominance of the Dutch and Scandinavians is, at least at the beginning, undeniable. Sharpe is prudent enough not to give a precise definition of phenomenology. Instead, he introduces the subject as follows: “a method was sought which would eliminate . . . value judgements, allow the believer to speak clearly for himself, and in this way to arrive at an objective assessment of the role of religion in human life”.³⁵ By summarizing some of the main con-

³² Meiners 1806–1807; Lehmann (1913 & 1925) praises this book several times; cf. van der Leeuw 1933: 654.

³³ O. Pfleiderer, G.Chr.B. Pünjer, J.I. Doedes (the supervisor of la Saussaye’s thesis), D. Chantepie de la Saussaye (his father, a theologian himself, who exerted a deep influence on his son).

³⁴ Chantepie de la Saussaye 1891: 4.

³⁵ Sharpe 1986: 220.

tributions of these scholars, Sharpe suggests retrospectively a more or less delimited approach in the study of religion. I am not sure if this is the best way to deal with the subject. The reason for my reservation is given by Sharpe himself in his illuminating study on Söderblom. In a chapter entitled “Toward a Phenomenology of Religion”, Sharpe notes that Söderblom did not use the word “phenomenology”. He calls Söderblom “a phenomenologist of religion before the label had even been invented”.³⁶ The label, of course, had already been invented, but it had not yet gained currency.

To circumvent such problems, one may take another approach—the one that seems to be favoured by Jacques Waardenburg. In his overview of a century of phenomenology of religion in the Netherlands, published in 1972, he states: “By phenomenologist we mean here those who considered themselves to be so and who have developed an explicit phenomenology of religion or who have devoted part of their studies to explicitly phenomenological work”.³⁷ He ends his overview by distinguishing five, to some extent rather different, strands in the Dutch phenomenology of religion over this period. The starting-point is Chantepie de la Saussaye’s thesis from 1871, which is not, as far as I know, explicitly phenomenological. Waardenburg also includes Tiele in his article, whereas a recent study on the beginnings of Dutch phenomenology of religion limits itself to Chantepie de la Saussaye, Kristensen, and van der Leeuw.³⁸

In the older historiography we encounter still other “phenomenologists of religion”. Eva Hirschmann, in her thesis on this subject, which she defended just before the outbreak of the Second World War at the Theological Faculty in Groningen under the supervision of van der Leeuw, dealt with Chantepie de la Saussaye, Tiele, Söderblom, Lehmann, Friedrich Pfister, Max Scheler, Georg Wobbermin, Robert Winkler, Joachim Wach, Rudolf Otto, Heinrich Frick, Gustav Mensching, and van der Leeuw himself. Oddly enough, van der Leeuw’s own teacher—Kristensen—is missing here. What could be the reason for this? To answer this question we have to take a closer look at the actual history of phenomenology of religion in the Netherlands.

³⁶ Sharpe 1990: 167.

³⁷ Waardenburg 1972: 128f.

³⁸ G.A. James (1995) is criticized by Strenski (1997) for not dealing with Tiele.

III. EARLY PHENOMENOLOGY OF RELIGION REVISITED

There is a distinct difference between our retrospective view of phenomenology of religion and the way those alleged “phenomenologists” looked at themselves. To clear the ground, we have to suspend (a typical phenomenological device) our idea of what phenomenology (really) is about. For a start, we have to conduct our historical research in a nominalist way. It is important to look at the actual usage of the term “phenomenology” in this context. By whom and in which ways was it defended? Who advocated a phenomenological programme or method in the study of religion? If we do not ask such precise questions, the danger exists that we will only reproduce our own ideas on phenomenology in its historiography. In the following I cannot give a full-scale analysis (much research still has to be done), but I shall dig up some pieces of information and venture some thoughts on the subject.

As we saw above, *Chantepie de la Saussaye* was the first to use the term phenomenology of religion in 1887. He did not intend to introduce some new method, but, apparently, found it important to provide the readers of his manual with an “outline of religious phenomena”, including phenomena from the Jewish and Christian tradition.³⁹ In the oeuvre of *Cornelis Petrus Tiele* the term appears rather late.⁴⁰ Only in the second edition of his Gifford Lectures, which appeared in Dutch in 1900, and in his last book, *Main Features [Elements] of the Science of Religion*,⁴¹ did he use the word to clarify the outline of his work. Tiele distinguished here between the “morphological” and the “ontological” investigation of religion. Morphology treats the development of religion and gives a classification of religions. Ontology concerns “‘being’—that which *is*, as distinguished from that which grows or *becomes*, the *ousia* as distinguished from the ever-changing *morphai*”.⁴² Ontology is subdivided into “phenomenological-analytical” and “psychological-synthetic” parts,⁴³ which examine the

³⁹ Chantepie de la Saussaye 1891: 8f.

⁴⁰ Originally, he favoured other terms—“hierography” and “hierology”—to designate the new endeavour; cf. Tiele 1877.

⁴¹ Tiele 1901.

⁴² Cf. Tiele 1897–1899, II: 188 (second Dutch edition: 165); emphasis in the original.

⁴³ Tiele 1901: 61. The second Dutch edition of the Gifford Lectures makes things more complicated by introducing the asymmetrical contrast between “phenomenological-analytical” and “synthetic-psychological” (Tiele 1900, II: 2).

“manifestations” and the “constituents” of religion, respectively. By manifestations, Tiele primarily meant “words and deeds”; by constituents, “emotions, conceptions, and sentiments, of which words and deeds are at once the offspring and the index”.⁴⁴ The phenomenological research deals with religious concepts, deeds, and institutions; it aims at a description and analysis of their essential elements.⁴⁵ Here Tiele discussed, to some extent, the same phenomena (worship and sacrifice, for instance) as Chantepie de la Saussaye. But Tiele’s coverage was much less extensive, because he was interested in the unchanging core of religion as such and not in “transient” developments like fetishism, which are discussed in the morphological part. Tiele’s phenomenological research was not so much a grouping of religious phenomena as a critical evaluation of what in his view, on the highest level of development, were the essential manifestations of religion.

In his inaugural lecture, “The Relationship between Religion and the Urge [Longing] for Self-Preservation” from 1901, *William Brede Kristensen* addressed the theme that would be of great importance to his scholarly and personal life: the theme of life and death in connection to religion.⁴⁶ On this occasion, in the presence of Tiele, Kristensen tried to follow in the footsteps of his honoured teacher and to show how, in his own view, philosophy of religion and history of religion may be related to each other. This connection was not obvious to Kristensen, and therefore he looked for a way to connect the two approaches. Since philosophy of religion’s main objective is to determine the essence of religion, the two disciplines come closest to each other, according to Kristensen, when the historian investigates how the believers themselves perceive the essence of their religion. Taking up Tiele’s terminology, Kristensen assured his audience that such an investigation is of a “completely phenomenological-analytical” nature. While philosophy has to take good notice of the results obtained by phenomenology, Kristensen allowed for the possibility that, philosophically speaking, religious persons did not always

⁴⁴ Tiele 1897–1899, II: 6f.

⁴⁵ These phenomena express the underlying “constituents”, which are treated in the psychological-synthetic part. For a more detailed analysis of Tiele’s views on this subject, see Molendijk 1999.

⁴⁶ Kristensen 1901. His thesis is that religious people choose life and believe in the ultimate victory of life over death. Cf. the contribution of Jan Bremmer to this volume.

understand their own religious feelings correctly. It could hardly have escaped the attention of his audience, however, that he considered the faith of believers as most precious and something to be taken very seriously. In a critique of “evaluative comparison” and evolutionism as such, which was aimed at Tiele some 15 years after the inaugural lecture, he was still more explicit in this respect. Kristensen wrote that we have to become “Persians in order to understand Persian religion, Babylonians to understand Babylonian religion, and so forth”.⁴⁷ Here Kristensen already voiced the hermeneutics of sympathetic love toward the object of understanding, for which he would become famous later.⁴⁸ The phenomenological principles he formulated later in his career are well-known and do not need to be summarized here.⁴⁹

But was Kristensen a phenomenologist from the start? His more programmatic statements in this regard are from a rather late date. The main sources for his position are the *Introduction to the History of Religions*, based on his Oslo lectures from 1946, and, of course, the work that made him known in the English-speaking world, *The Meaning of Religion*, which was published posthumously in 1960.⁵⁰ Kristensen lectured on phenomenology before 1940, but I have not been able to find a single older publication in which some sort of “phenomenology” was defended. This could be due to the fact that he preferred the actual work in history of religions to the exposition of methodological issues. Yet, it is characteristic that the only text in which the issue received some attention was a review of the inaugural lecture of his student Gerardus van der Leeuw, who obtained the Groningen chair in history of religions in 1918. Kristensen stressed the importance of religious difference, and criticized van der Leeuw

⁴⁷ Kristensen 1915: 77.

⁴⁸ Cf. Kristensen 1955: 22: “If we want to learn to know them [historical religions] as the believers conceived and judged them, we must first attempt to understand their own evaluation of their own religion. . . . Let us not forget that there exists no other religious reality than the faith of the believers. If we want to learn to know genuine religion, we are exclusively assigned to the expressions of the believers. What we think from our standpoint about the essence or value of foreign religions bears witness to our own faith, or to our own conception of religious belief, but if our opinion deviates . . . from the opinion and the evaluation of the believer himself, then we are no longer dealing with their religion. In that case we overlook historical reality, and are exclusively concerned with ourselves” (my translation is based upon that of Plantinga 1991: 170).

⁴⁹ Cf. Waardenburg 1972; 1978; Plantinga 1989; 1991; G.A. James 1995.

⁵⁰ Kristensen 1955; 1960.

for his subjectivism and his belief that phenomenology of religion should define the essence of religion. In this text there is no evidence that Kristensen claimed the term “phenomenology” for his own approach. It is not necessary to dig any deeper here into the differences between their views on phenomenology which emerged in their later work.⁵¹ Looking at his publications, one gains the impression that Kristensen defined himself as a phenomenologist of religion in a later phase of his career.

Early historiographers did not mention Kristensen as a phenomenologist. One could try to account for this omission by pointing to van der Leeuw’s influence on this early historiography and by suggesting that van der Leeuw was not willing to accept a competitor with a largely different view of the approach that he had made popular. But I am not sure that this suggestion is very helpful, because in other respects he gave Kristensen the credit he deserved and also did much to construe a respectable line of intellectual descendancy for the phenomenological study of religion.⁵² If Kristensen really had developed a full-blown phenomenology of religion of his own at the time, I find it hard to believe that van der Leeuw would have neglected this contribution so ostentatiously. Van der Leeuw did refer to Kristensen several times to illustrate the importance of a psychological approach in the study of religion, which, although related to phenomenology, is yet to be distinguished from it.⁵³

Another important witness is *C. J. Bleeker*, who published an *Introduction to Phenomenology of Religion* in Dutch in 1934, which aimed at a classification of religious phenomena that would show their inner structure and deeper reality.⁵⁴ In the preface, Bleeker said

⁵¹ Cf. Hofstee 1997: 170f. (who cites Kristensen’s letter from 20 November 1933 in which he thanked van der Leeuw for sending him the *Phänomenologie der Religion*).

⁵² Van der Leeuw 1918: 4; 1954: 9. Speaking about phenomenology proper, van der Leeuw only mentioned Chantepie de la Saussaye and E. Lehmann; cf. p. 10: “I realized that in carrying on the magnificent, but essentially unphilosophical, work of Chantepie and Lehmann, I was in the centre of the great phenomenological stream which was at that time flowing through philosophy, psychiatry and other sciences” (translation in Sharpe 1986: 231).

⁵³ Van der Leeuw 1918: 7 (with reference to Kristensen 1904: 237, where the term phenomenology is not used); 1954: 9: “L’enseignement de Kristensen était d’allure plutôt psychologique et faisait ressortir les traits qui se retrouvent partout et de tous temps plus que le développement historique. Cette préférence m’a influencé beaucoup . . .”. The relationship between phenomenology and psychology of religion seems to me to be a very important topic for further research. As yet, this relationship has still not been cleared up.

⁵⁴ Bleeker 1934: 9–11.

that his approach owed most to his teacher Kristensen. Van der Leeuw was cited only once and not in a methodological context. On another occasion, Bleeker wrote that Kristensen hardly cared for methodological questions,⁵⁵ and in later historiographical overviews he stressed the importance of van der Leeuw and hardly mentioned Kristensen.⁵⁶ This can perhaps be explained by the fact that Kristensen did not do much, at least not in public, to develop and proclaim a new method of inquiry.

Nonetheless, Kristensen was probably the first Dutch scholar of religion who officially taught “phenomenology of religion”. By the Royal Act of Queen Wilhelmina of 23 September 1922, his teaching assignment was redefined as “the history of religions in general and the phenomenology of religion”, and “philosophy of religion” was transferred to his colleague Karel Hendrik Roessingh, the successor of Chantepie de la Saussaye. This change suggests that Kristensen promulgated phenomenology in his courses at a much earlier time than is evident from his publications. One would expect that Kristensen’s lecture notes, which are kept in the Leiden University Library,⁵⁷ would be of great help. Several courses are in fact titled “Phenomenology” (1904, 1908–1926, 1907–1927). But when exactly did Kristensen start calling his approach “phenomenological”? There are very good reasons to suppose that these titles were written on the outside cover of the lectures at a later date,⁵⁸ and, further, there are many corrections in the manuscripts, which are composed upon loose-leaf, that suggest that “phenomenology” terminology was introduced at a later date. However, the collection contains an opening lecture from the year 1926, in which phenomenology is defined as the comparison of separate elements of various religions. In what probably are

⁵⁵ Bleeker 1941: 37f.

⁵⁶ Bleeker 1956; 1959; 1963; cf. Widengren 1969: 5f.: “When I first met Bleeker—more than twenty years ago—it was obvious that the influence of G. van der Leeuw had outweighed the influence of his own teacher in Leyden, W. Brede Kristensen. He was more attracted by the phenomenological study of religion in general than by the historical investigation of some special religion”. On Bleeker’s views, see Waardenburg 1972: 183–190.

⁵⁷ Under the signature BPL 2587. I would like to thank Sigurd Hjelde (Oslo) for sending me the bibliography of Margo Koene’s Master’s thesis, “William Brede Kristensen. Norges første religionshistoriker” (1995), which includes an inventory of Kristensen’s manuscripts in the Leiden University Library.

⁵⁸ Phenomenology is spelled “phenomenologie” on the cover in Dutch, whereas the text has “phacnomenologie”.

earlier lecture notes, Kristensen referred several times to the work of Georg Wobbermin⁵⁹ and specified the phenomenological approach as trying to do justice to the self-understanding of believers. The “inner power” of religious phenomena, Kristensen claimed, has to be brought to the fore. Phenomenology is focused on typical phenomena, which it tries to understand in their religious determination. This sounds familiar to the student of the work of Kristensen, although these early lecture notes also display a clear interest in more philosophical issues. Only a meticulous analysis of the manuscripts might relinquish the exact time at which Kristensen introduced the term “phenomenology” to describe his way of doing things. Without doubt, the teachings of Kristensen form an important undercurrent in the genesis of Dutch phenomenology of religion. We know for sure, however, that his pupil Gerardus van der Leeuw elaborated on a special method of phenomenology of religion.

Probably the best thing to do, therefore, is to start writing the history of phenomenology of religion with Gerardus van der Leeuw, who really put it on the map. The fact that the older historiography of comparative religion does not touch upon “phenomenology of religion” supports this approach.⁶⁰ The first more or less *historiographical* article on this subject which I have been able to uncover is van der Leeuw’s contribution “Phenomenology of Religion” to the second edition of the encyclopedia *Religion in Geschichte und Gegenwart* from 1930.⁶¹ The objective of phenomenology of religion, van der Leeuw wrote, is to classify religious phenomena such as sacrifice, mysticism, and prayer (non-cultic phenomena are explicitly included) and to understand their meaning and essence. Contributions which aim at a survey of religious phenomena as such come from Chantepie de la Saussaye, Lehmann, and van der Leeuw himself.⁶² Although

⁵⁹ Wobbermin 1913. Wobbermin advocated the importance of a psychological approach for theology; an approach he paralleled with phenomenology; cf. Wobbermin 1930: 1922. Both Wobbermin and Kristensen admired Schleiermacher for his (in their view) decisive contribution to a renewal of the study of religion; cf. Kristensen 1934.

⁶⁰ Cf. Hardy 1901; Jordan 1905; Jordan 1915; Pinard de la Boullaye 1929–1931.

⁶¹ Van der Leeuw 1930. The encyclopedia was published in instalments; the instalments of volume IV, of which this entry is part, all appeared in 1930. On the history of the publication of RGG², see Özen 1996. Van der Leeuw contributed 51 articles, mainly in the field of the study of religion, to this influential reference book.

⁶² Van der Leeuw (1930) referred to the following contributions: Chantepie de la Saussaye 1887–1889; Lehmann 1910; 1925; van der Leeuw 1925.

van der Leeuw admitted that this may seem to be a somewhat meager result, he was quick to point to some of the older introductions to the history of religion (Tiele, F.B. Jevons, Albert Réville) which, he alleged, also cover the field. Besides, one should not forget Wilhelm Wundt's "Völkerpsychologie" and special studies such as Söderblom's *Werden des Gottesglaubens*, Friedrich Heiler's *Das Gebet*, and Rudolf Otto's *Das Heilige*. Van der Leeuw concluded this two-column entry by stating that a general phenomenology on a firm methodological basis still had to be written. Now we know that he was on his way to fill this lacuna. The "Great Phaeno" was to appear in 1933.

At the time that van der Leeuw wrote this encyclopedia article, it was hard to detect any phenomenological method in the study of religion. After the initial achievement by Chantepie de la Saussaye, only *Edvard Lehmann* had given a classificatory overview of religious phenomena. He contributed the substantial article "Erscheinungswelt der Religion" to the first edition of *Religion in Geschichte und Gegenwart* (1909–1913), which ran over 84 columns and was the main systematic contribution to the field of science of religion in this handbook. The phenomena were arranged under the headings "holy customs", "holy words", and "holy people", with further subdivisions. Interestingly enough, this article was subtitled "Phenomenology of Religion", but the term was not explained or used in the contribution itself. We do know, however, that there was a lot of discussion about how the history of religions part of this encyclopedia was to be shaped. The encyclopedia was, to a large extent, the product of representatives of the German "History of Religions School",⁶³ who were mainly concerned with the Old and New Testament and its *Umwelt*. Some of them thought that they could handle the remaining fields of history of religions in passing. Finally, Hermann Gunkel put up a list with relevant items. This solution did not convince Ernst Troeltsch, who was responsible for the articles in the dogmatics section. He feared that in this way no justice was done to non-Christian religions and suggested naming the encyclopedia "Our Religion in Past and Present".⁶⁴ But to return to the main line of the story, Lehmann was on the original list of suggested contributors⁶⁵ and, finally, it was he who wrote the above mentioned

⁶³ Lüdemann & Özen 1997.

⁶⁴ Özen 1996: 165 (emphasis in the original).

⁶⁵ Özen 1996: 157.

Sammelartikel. This still leaves the occurrence of the term “phenomenology of religion” unexplained. Was the term introduced in this context because the outline of the article was reminiscent of the work of Chantepie de la Saussaye? Or were there other factors at work? Further research into the relationship between Chantepie de la Saussaye and Lehmann could shed some light on the subject. Lehmann was awarded an honorary doctorate on behalf of the Leiden Theological Faculty in 1910, probably at the instigation of la Saussaye, who also entrusted further editions of his manual to his Danish colleague. Already in the second and third editions of the manual, Lehmann was mentioned as la Saussaye’s closest collaborator.⁶⁶ But it is not certain whether the usage of “phenomenology of religion” in the first edition of *Religion in Geschichte und Gegenwart* should be explained by a Dutch connection. The role of various Scandinavian scholars in the development of phenomenology of religion needs to be examined in more detail.⁶⁷

In my view, it was *van der Leeuw* who developed phenomenology into a characteristic, much discussed approach within the study of religions. But even he was a little hesitant about which name to choose for the new approach. Van der Leeuw referred to other names such as “allgemeine Religionsgeschichte” (H. Hackmann) and “Formenlehre der religiösen Vorstellungen” (H. Usener) which circulated at the time,⁶⁸ and he warned about the confusion that could arise from the proliferation of phenomenological methods in areas like philosophy (Edmund Husserl) and psychiatry (Karl Jaspers). Friedrich Heiler, the editor of the series in which the German translation of van der Leeuw’s introduction to the history of religion appeared under the title “Introduction to the Phenomenology of Religion” in 1925, assured the readers in his preface to this booklet that “phenomenology” was not meant in the sense of Husserl or Max Scheler.⁶⁹ Van der Leeuw, in developing his own method of

⁶⁶ Chantepie de la Saussaye 1897, Vol. I: viii–ix; Chantepie de la Saussaye 1905, Vol. I: vi–vii; Chantepie de la Saussaye 1925, Vol. I: iii.

⁶⁷ As far as I know, the article in RGG¹ is the first time we find the term in Lehmann’s work; cf. Sharpe 1986: 226f; Sharpe 1990: 151. It is not clear how much the term “phenomenology” meant to Lehmann. He wrote a new, extended version of his article for the fourth edition of Chantepie de la Saussaye’s manual without using the word; cf. Lehmann 1925b.

⁶⁸ Cf. van der Leeuw 1933: 638, note 1.

⁶⁹ Van der Leeuw 1925, Preface [by Heiler]: “Zum rechten Verständnis des Titels

research, always maintained some distance from other sorts of phenomenology, although he often referred to them. These references also served to gain respectability for his own enterprise.

I shall make a few remarks concerning the origin of the concept in van der Leeuw's work. The first important text in this respect is the inaugural lecture from September 25, 1918. On this occasion van der Leeuw referred to Nathan Söderblom's booklet *Natural Theology and General History of Religion*,⁷⁰ which had made a plea for the rehabilitation of the old *theologia naturalis*, reshaped as general history of religion. Van der Leeuw stated that he preferred to call this endeavour "phenomenology of religion" without specifying why. He made clear, however, what he had in mind. Phenomenology of religion aims to understand the phenomenon of religion as such, to penetrate "to the psychological bottom [ground]" of religion.⁷¹ Van der Leeuw did not favour the term "history of religions". Instead, he preferred to speak of "history of religion" because, according to him, the religious phenomenon is a unity, originating in "the same function of our spirit".⁷² This point of view, of course, was also shared by older scholars like Tiele and Chantepie de la Saussaye.⁷³ Van der Leeuw did not present a full phenomenological method in this lecture, but he gave all kinds of clues as to how one should proceed. The approach has a psychological character, considers religion an independent phenomenon, is not limited to foreign religions, but does include Judaism and Christianity, and tries to understand the phenomena in their own terms in order to arrive at the essence of religion. Some kind of intuition is needed to reach this goal, and scholars have to be religious themselves to be able to trace the similarities in other religions. The fact that religion has to be understood "by itself" does not exclude comparison because of the presupposed basic unity of religion. One of van der Leeuw's favourite quotes is the following by the classicist scholar Hermann Usener: "Nur durch

sei beigefügt, daß der Verfasser dieses Buches das Wort 'Phänomenologie' nicht im Sinne der Philosophie von Husserl und Scheler gebraucht, sondern im Sinn der vergleichenden Religionshistoriker wie Tiele, Chantepie de la Saussaye, Edvard Lehmann, die darunter die systematische Darstellung der religiösen Einzelphänomene wie des Gebets, des Opfers, der Zauberei, Askese usw. verstehen."

⁷⁰ Söderblom 1913.

⁷¹ Van der Leeuw 1918: 7 (referring to Kristensen 1904: 237).

⁷² Van der Leeuw 1918: 6.

⁷³ Tiele-Söderblom 1912: 7f; Chantepie de la Saussaye 1891: 9.

hingebendes Versenken in diese Geistesspuren . . . vermögen wir uns zum Nachempfinden zu erziehen; dann können allmählich verwandte Saiten in uns mit schwingen und klingen, und wir entdecken im eigenen Bewußtsein die Fäden, die Altes und Neues verbinden".⁷⁴ The Romanticist strand in this hermeneutics of congenial understanding is unmistakable. Ultimately, van der Leeuw's phenomenological study of religion is subservient to theology proper, which takes its start in the revelation in Christ.⁷⁵

Van der Leeuw's most extensive statement on the principles of phenomenology of religion is to be found in the last section of his *magnum opus*, *Phenomenology of Religion*.⁷⁶ These so-called "Epilegomena" are a rather complex whole. Several stages in the phenomenological process—for instance, naming the phenomenon, (re-)experiencing and understanding (the meaning of) the phenomenon, and giving testimony of that which is shown—were distinguished by van der Leeuw, and reference is made to a wealth of (methodological) literature.⁷⁷ Obviously, he wanted to show that phenomenology was a main trend in intellectual life at the time, but this factor makes it difficult to discern who was really important to him. Besides the sources of inspiration mentioned above (Chantepie de la Saussaye, Lehmann, Söderblom), it seems clear that, from a methodological point of view, a hermeneutical orientation was prevalent in van der Leeuw's attempt to establish a "phenomenological" approach. His account of phenomenon and experience ("Erlebnis") draws from the work of Wilhelm Dilthey and Eduard Spranger. The book ends with the observation that a hermeneutical history of religion, which van

⁷⁴ Van der Leeuw 1918: 14; 1933: 639; cf. Usener 1896: vii.

⁷⁵ Van der Leeuw 1918: 21f. Cf. Waardenburg 1978: 187–247. His friend, K.H. Roessingh, considered van der Leeuw, because of his Christian theory of knowledge, to be the exact counterpart of Kristensen; cf. Hofstee 1997: 38f. (who quotes from a highly interesting letter Roessingh wrote to van der Leeuw, June 17, 1919). As far as his point of departure is concerned, van der Leeuw seems more strongly influenced by the "ethical theology" with which he became familiar through his teacher P.D. Chantepie de la Saussaye (cf. the many references to the work of J.H. Gunning) than by the approach of Kristensen, who stressed differences between religions and who highly valued objective knowledge, minimizing the role of subjectivity in the process of knowing.

⁷⁶ The *Phänomenologie der Religion* was originally published in 1933; the English translation appeared in 1938 under the title *Religion in Essence and Manifestation*. A revised and enlarged edition appeared first in French and later, in 1956, in German.

⁷⁷ Waardenburg 1978, Hubbeling 1986, and Hofstee 1997 give summaries of the stages in the phenomenological process.

der Leeuw considers his own work part of, is gaining more and more ground.⁷⁸

IV. INTERNATIONALIZATION

The internationalization of science of religion was progressing steadily at the end of the nineteenth century, as is clear from the large conferences which were organized. In the beginning, a strong ecumenical, religious interest was noticeable. The meeting of people from various religious backgrounds was supposed to contribute to mutual understanding, and sometimes even a universal religion of mankind was envisioned. The World's Parliament of Religions, held in Chicago in 1893, illustrates these hopes very well. Representatives of the great world religions were invited to express their views on various religious topics.⁷⁹ Scholars like Max Müller and C.P. Tiele, who could not attend this event, both sent papers to the organizing Committee. Their papers were read, but, probably due to their scholarly tone, were not received very enthusiastically by the audience, which was more interested in genuine religious themes. Tiele and Müller both addressed topics from the science of religion proper.⁸⁰ The scientific character of the study of religion was very important to these early scholars.

Even the much more scholarly Stockholm congress on religious sciences in 1897 was criticized by some for not being scientific enough.⁸¹ The Paris conference in 1900 is generally considered to be the first scientific congress in the field. To mark a new start, the French organizers took the liberty of naming their gathering the *First International Congress on the History of Religions*. The regulations of the congress stressed the historical (scientific) character of the contributions and discussions, and explicitly forbade confessional or dogmatic polemics.⁸² This point was stressed on later occasions,

⁷⁸ Van der Leeuw 1933: 658: "Religionsgeschichte des Verstehens". For more extensive discussions of the later work of van der Leeuw, see Waardenburg 1972; 1978; Sharpe 1986: 229–235; Plantinga 1989; 1991; G.A. James 1995; Hofstee 1997. I hope to publish a detailed analysis of van der Leeuw's phenomenological method in the future.

⁷⁹ For the proceedings, see Barrows 1893; cf. Seager 1993; 1995; Ziolkowski 1993.

⁸⁰ Tiele 1893; Müller 1893; cf. Müller 1894. On the reception of Tiele's paper, see Hugenholtz 1893: 110.

⁸¹ Stockholm 1897; cf. Aall 1897.

⁸² Paris 1900: vii (article 7).

too.⁸³ The historical outlook of these early congresses was rather strong. The Paris congress had a section on the history of “non-civilized” religions, many sections on Oriental religions, one on German religions, and one on the history of Christianity.⁸⁴ There is no outspoken “philosophical” contribution in the proceedings.

What is rather striking from our present-day perspective is the strong (institutional) support for this new endeavour. The first congress on history of religions in the Netherlands, held in Leiden in 1912 and presided over by Chantepie de la Saussaye, is a good example. The congress was made possible financially by a grant from the Dutch government and was held under the patronage of His Royal Highness Prince Henri of the Netherlands, who, because of a “*légère indisposition*”, was unable to attend. In the Committee of Honour were, among others, the Home Secretary, the Minister of Foreign Affairs, the Minister of Colonial Affairs, and the Mayor of Leiden. The Home Secretary delivered a speech of welcome; the Mayor received the members of the congress at the town hall and placed the major municipal festival hall at their disposal; the city of Rotterdam offered them a boat trip; the Dutch Railroad Company arranged a special train to Rotterdam; the Dutch Tramways Company made a free ride in Leiden and to the sea resorts of Katwijk and Noordwijk possible, and many Leiden families hosted the guests.⁸⁵

In his welcome speech, the President of the Honorary Committee, Mr. W.H. de Beaufort, a former Minister of Foreign Affairs, referred to the great liberal Dutch tradition which made free scholarship possible; to the study of theology, philosophy, and orientalism, which had always enjoyed such a prominent place in the University of Leiden; and to the fact that the establishment of a Dutch colonial empire in the Indies and economic relations to the colonies did not fail to promote scholarly studies. In particular, de Beaufort pointed to the cosmopolitan character of “your science”; its field consisted not only of the whole of history, but of all countries of the universe as well. Its most attractive aspect seemed to him to be the fact that it related the student to the highest aspirations of mankind, especially

⁸³ Cf. Leiden 1912: 14: “Le Congrès sera exclusivement scientifique et sera consacré à des recherches purement historiques sur les religions. Toute discussion concernant des question [sic] de foi sera interdite”.

⁸⁴ For the list of sections, see Paris 1900: v.

⁸⁵ Cf. Leiden 1912: 17.

to the “sentiment of the mystery of the infinite, in all times and with all peoples”.⁸⁶

This speech by a layman touched upon several points which are important for the understanding of early (Dutch) science of religion. After having addressed the ubiquity of the object of research of this conference, de Beaufort made special mention of the importance of the Orient for the study of religion. The focus of many of these early scholars was indeed on the ancient religions of the Orient. This was surely true of the Dutch contribution to the field. With the notable exception of Chantepie de la Saussaye, who wrote on *The Religion of the Teutons*,⁸⁷ Dutch scholars were mostly interested in ancient, oriental religions, especially in those of Ancient Egypt. Leiden University had long been a center for the study of oriental, including Semitic, languages and cultures which were relevant to the study of religion.

The Sixth International Congress of Orientalists, which had convened in Leiden in 1883, had given ample testimony to the contribution of Dutch orientalist studies. But, admittedly, this was not the only reason to come to Leiden. During the opening ceremony, the fact that the Netherlands were a colonial empire was mentioned several times. In his speech, the Old Testament scholar Abraham Kuenen showed pride at the way the Dutch had performed their colonial *mission civilatrice*, and he listed many of the (religious and scientific) societies that had contributed to it.⁸⁸ A special section on Malaysia and the Polynesian archipelago was added on this occasion. Many of the contributions to this section were in Dutch, which was one of the official languages of the congress.⁸⁹

One question that imposes itself concerns the connection between colonialism and the study of religion. It is difficult to give a satisfying answer to this question. In my view, the relationship between oriental studies as such (including the study of religion) and colonialism is much clearer than that between the rise of a separate science of religion and colonialism.⁹⁰ For instance, the 1883 International

⁸⁶ Leiden 1912: 21–29.

⁸⁷ Chantepie de la Saussaye 1902.

⁸⁸ De Goeje 1884: 42ff.; cf. Otterspeer 1989.

⁸⁹ De Goeje 1884: 23 (“Dispositions generales”): “Les langues officielles du Congrès sont le Hollandais, le Français et le Latin. Toutefois on pourra se servir aussi pour les communications de l’Allemand, de l’Anglais et de l’Italien.”

⁹⁰ The most debated book, of course, is that of Said 1995 (orig. ed. 1978); cf. Breckenridge & van der Veer 1993; Prakash 1995.

Congress of Orientalists was originally scheduled for the year 1884. It was advanced a year so that it could coincide with the International Colonial Exhibition in Amsterdam in 1883. One rather small part of the exhibition was devoted to the display of religious objects from the colonies. The organizer, the main specialist on the Dutch East Indies at the time, P.J. Veth, arranged the items under three headings: "Polynesian religions", "Hinduism", and "Islam".⁹¹ The Orientalist Congress visited the exhibition, after which the members were received by the Amsterdam municipal authorities.

It is a well-known fact that scientific congresses and major international exhibitions, which showed the "Works of Industry of All Nations",⁹² were joint ventures at the time. The Chicago World's Parliament of Religions (1893) and the Paris First International Congress on the History of Religions (1900) were both convened in the context of World Exhibitions.⁹³ These were great occasions, in which the Western nations could display their influence and power. The catalogue on the Dutch Indies for the Paris exhibition contained more than 450 pages. In its introduction, a parallel was drawn to the Amsterdam exhibition in 1883, and it was explained that the current emphasis was less focused on indigenous products and more on what the colonial empire had established in the colonies. Not only the indigenous religions, but also the missions, education practices, and scientific collections were highlighted.⁹⁴ Colonialism was a factor that undoubtedly stimulated the study of foreign cultures and their religions.

The intricacies of this relationship, however, are difficult to judge. Dutch ethnographers (anthropologists) concentrated on the Dutch

⁹¹ Veth 1883; on Veth, see van der Velde 1992.

⁹² Cf. Stocking 1987: 1.

⁹³ In his contribution to this volume, Björn Skogar points to the fact that the Stockholm conference in 1897 took place on the occasion of a large exhibition as well.

⁹⁴ Guide Paris 1900: xi: "On a accordé plus de place aux cultures destinées au marché européen, mais moins aux moyens d'existence purement indigènes, comme la chasse, la pêche, les petites industries, etc. Les établissements d'instruction pour les indigènes comme pour les Européens, différentes branches de service de l'administration européenne sont traitées plus en détail. L'attention a été fixée sur plus d'un sujet important de la vie matérielle, et en outre sur les résultats salutaires des missions, sur l'institution des caisses d'épargne et sur de nouveaux courants dans la vie intellectuelle et scientifique". To get an impression of the enormous scope of the "Universal Exposition", see also Paris Report 1901.

East Indies, and the anthropologist J.G. Frazer pointed to the importance of this scholarship.⁹⁵ Although Dutch ethnographers did research on religions in the colonies, this was not their main interest.⁹⁶ The Dutch study of religions in general concentrated more on the great “universal religions”.⁹⁷ With the exception of the study of Chinese religion, which was relevant to colonial practice due to the presence of the large number of Chinese in the Dutch East Indies,⁹⁸ this knowledge was not directly instrumental to the “colonial project”. I have never encountered an argument for the establishment of science of religion within the Dutch academic system which referred to the colonies. The scholars and politicians of those days would certainly have made this reference if it would have strengthened their case. In a broad sense, however, the study of foreign culture and religion was deemed important because of economic and colonial interests.

Apart from international conferences, the making of encyclopedias illustrates the internationalization of the study of religion. Foreign scholars were asked to write major entries in, for example, the *Encyclopaedia Britannica*, Hasting’s *Encyclopaedia of Religion and Ethics*, and the German *Religion in Geschichte und Gegenwart*. Holland could not compete with these prestigious undertakings, but the contribution of Dutch scholars to the founding of the *Encyclopaedia of Islam* is remarkable. William Robertson Smith had called for such an undertaking at the International Congress of Orientalists in London in 1892. It was very difficult to get such a huge project, which would cost a lot of money, off the ground. Yet, the organizing committee succeeded in gaining the (financial) support of several governments, associations, and academies of sciences. One of the reasons why this undertaking was located in the Netherlands was the fact that the Leiden pub-

⁹⁵ Frazer 1981 (1890: first edition): xiii: “The works of Professor G.A. Wilken of Leyden have been of great service in directing me to the best original authorities on the Dutch East Indies, a very important field to the ethnologist.” Frazer learned Dutch in order to read Dutch authors. Cf. also Tylor 1892, who commemorated the death of Wilken in his Anniversary Address for the Royal Anthropological Institute.

⁹⁶ Cf. Molendijk 1998.

⁹⁷ A term made famous by Kuenen 1882.

⁹⁸ The study of Chinese religion in the Netherlands goes back to an active policy on behalf of the Dutch government; cf. Blussé 1989 (esp. pp. 326ff.). The study of Islam in the Dutch East Indies should also be mentioned in this context, but scholarship on Islam did not limit itself to the colonies.

lishing house, Brill, could print such a work. M. de Goeje asked his pupil M. Th. Houtsma to coordinate the whole undertaking, which would prove to be a mixed blessing to him personally. It turned out that some of the financial support was promised on the condition that the encyclopedia appear in the language of the donor. Therefore, the *Encyclopaedia of Islam* had to be published in three languages: English, German, and French.⁹⁹ Instead of editing only one encyclopedia, Houtsma had to coordinate the publication of three encyclopedias—a truly international affair, which surely nuances the naive view of the first major historiographer of “comparative religion”, Louis Henry Jordan, who wrote in 1905: “A Science is never fenced in by artificial national barriers. It is essentially international; nay, in essence it is universal. A particle of knowledge, be it ever so small, is like a particle of gold: it passes current everywhere”.¹⁰⁰

V. EPILOGUE: SOME DESIDERATA AND HYPOTHESES

Science of religion really was an international venture at the time. Influence was reciprocal. Kristensen and Heinrich Hackmann, for instance, held for a long time the chairs in history of religions at the universities of Leiden and Amsterdam. It would be a rewarding task to research the influence of foreign scholars on science of religion in the Netherlands.¹⁰¹ Books from foreign scholars, especially from Britain, were translated into Dutch.¹⁰² The perceived international character of the study of religion heightened the sensitivity to one’s own national contribution. In his preface to the French translation of Tiele’s *Comparative History of Ancient Religions*, Albert Réville deplored the fact that France was, in his view, somewhat behind Germany, Britain, and the Netherlands.¹⁰³ And in his Gifford Lectures,

⁹⁹ Houtsma, et al., 1913–1938. On the genesis of the encyclopedia, see Houtsma & Kramers 1942: 9–20.

¹⁰⁰ Jordan 1905: 168.

¹⁰¹ On the influence of German scholars on the Netherlands, see Gressmann 1993.

¹⁰² Cf. Müller 1871 (probably a pirate edition; the circulation of such unauthorized editions was the reason for Müller to publish his *Introduction to the Science of Religion* in 1873; cf. Müller 1873: Preface); Müller 1879; A. Lang 1889. The reason why English books in particular were translated is probably because most Dutch people at the time were better acquainted with French and German than English.

¹⁰³ Tiele 1882b: ix.

Tiele took the opportunity to point out that “little Holland” was ahead, institutionally, of many of the greater European nations.¹⁰⁴

While, as a Dutchman, I may be a bit prejudiced, the extent of the influence of Dutch scholarship on religion is amazing. I have already touched upon the German-language textbooks and the intricate relationships between Scandinavian and Dutch scholars of religion, but also unmistakable was the Dutch influence on the Fifth Section (*sciences religieuses*) of the *École Pratique des Hautes Études* in Paris. Even a superficial look at this Fifth Section shows us to what a large extent French pioneers in the study of religion, such as Maurice Vernes, and Jean and Albert Réville, were influenced by Dutch scholars.¹⁰⁵ They translated books of Tiele, Abraham Kuenen, and Hendrik Kern. The early volumes of the *Revue de l'histoire des religions* (1880) contain many articles by Dutch scholars as well as numerous references about the state of the art in the Netherlands, which functioned more or less as a model for these Frenchmen.¹⁰⁶ Tiele was the only non-Frenchman on the board of the *Revue*. This “French Connection”¹⁰⁷ was by no means a one-way street, as if Dutch science distributed its superior knowledge to underdeveloped regions, but it illustrates the broad influence of early Dutch science of religion.

In this article I have investigated several aspects of early Dutch science of religion which have a bearing on its international prestige and influence. The Dutch role in the spread of the new field—by way of journals, handbooks, encyclopedias, and congresses—has been placed into perspective. I am well aware of the rough character of the picture I have presented. The international ramifications of the field have to be researched in much more detail. For instance,

¹⁰⁴ Tiele 1897–1899, I: 2f.

¹⁰⁵ The Révilles and Tiele became acquainted in the late 1850s, as Albert Réville was a minister in the *Walloon Church* and Tiele in the *Remonstrant Brotherhood* in Rotterdam. The Tiele collection of the Leiden University Library contains 31 letters (1859–1900) written by A. Réville, 17 letters (1881–1900) by Jean Réville, and 5 letters (1876–1881) by Vernes.

¹⁰⁶ There was, of course, also the “sociologist” school—Émile Durkheim, Marcel Mauss, Henri Hubert—in the study of religion, which was in many ways opposed to the Fifth Section; cf. Strenski 1998. But even the Durkheimians established contacts with the Dutch, and Henri Hubert contributed to the French translation of Chantepie de la Saussaye’s manual (1904), to which he added a lengthy introduction in which he expounded his own views on the study of religion and deplored the fact that la Saussaye had skipped the phenomenological part in the second edition of his manual.

¹⁰⁷ On the French-Dutch connection, see Cabanel 1994, especially p. 58f.

what was the actual contribution of Dutch scholars to the various journals, series, encyclopedias, and international conferences? What role was played by the scholarly competitions, which internationally respected Dutch associations such as “Teyler’s Genootschap” and the “Haagsch Genootschap” issued?¹⁰⁸ The dissemination of ideas would be an especially promising field of study. Hans Kippenberg has given interesting specimens of such research and traced the spread of influential Dutch-produced distinctions between natural and ethical, race (national) and world religions. He has even succeeded in showing the influence of Tiele’s contrast between “theantropic” and “theocratic” religion in the work of Max Weber and Jürgen Habermas.¹⁰⁹ This kind of research could be conducted even more fruitfully if we had a more precise map of the exchanges between the early students of religion.

A careful prosopography would also show to what extent early science of religion was a Protestant affair. The Dutch connections with the Fifth Section, which in the beginning was dominated by Protestant scholars like the Révilles and Vernes, and with Scandinavian scholars such as Lehmann, Söderblom, and, last but not least, Kristensen, point in this direction. The influence of early Dutch and Scandinavian scholars in the field may also have something to do with the fact that their cultures were relatively marginal. They had to publish (or have their works translated) in the main European languages. This meant also that they could step in when there was some lacuna. Germany is a good example. Because science of religion had a hard time establishing itself as a distinct discipline within the German university system, Dutch scholars could penetrate the German book markets, and the Scandinavians Lehmann and Söderblom could occupy the first chairs in history of religions in Germany.¹¹⁰

The Dutch-Scandinavian connection could be partly explained by a common theological interest in the study of religion. The scholars in these countries were trained as theologians. Tiele, for instance, wrote a thesis on the Gospel of John and pleaded later for the transformation of theology into science of religion. Other scholars wanted

¹⁰⁸ Teylers Stichting 1978; Kuenen 1885; Haagsch Genootschap 1985.

¹⁰⁹ Kippenberg 1993: 356–360; 1995: 138–144; 1997: 79.

¹¹⁰ Lehmann in Berlin (1910–1913) and Söderblom in Leipzig (1912–1914); cf. Rudolph 1962; Sharpe 1990. Their Lutheran background was probably an advantage in Germany too.

at least a close cooperation between theology and science of religion. Söderblom almost failed to notice a difference between the two.¹¹¹ The assumed connection between theology and science of religion was to some extent canonized in phenomenology of religion, which aimed at the understanding of the intentions of believers and the essence of religious phenomena as such. It is difficult to generalize on this point because of the variety of standpoints all designated by the term “phenomenology of religion”. But one can safely say that many kinds of early phenomenology favoured cooperation with theology.

Any discussion of early Dutch science of religion in an international perspective will inevitably be confronted by the question of what explained its success. First of all, we have to refer to the general preconditions for the rise of the field, such as the reconceptualization of religion as a separate sphere of human activity; the waning of the belief that there was no place for religion in modernity; the availability of relevant materials; the application of historical and empirical methods; the awareness of the importance of religious diversity; and the rising conviction that it was meaningful to compare religions (from an evolutionary point of view). But such an enumeration does not suffice to explain the particularly fruitful start of science of religion in the Netherlands. Is it possible to be a little more specific about the factors which determined the rise of science of religion in the Netherlands? I shall propose a few general hypotheses which refer, partly, to the study of religion in a broad sense, and, partly, to the establishment of science of religion *stricto sensu* within the academy.¹¹²

(1) The fact that Holland was a colonial power and that it tried to strengthen its hold on the colonies in the second half of the nineteenth century is a factor to be reckoned with. Oriental studies were able to flourish because of the economic interests overseas. The Dutch colonial government and the Dutch Trade Company in Amsterdam financially supported the edition of the *Encyclopaedia of Islam*. A rise in popular interest in foreign (oriental) religions is to be noticed, too. To some extent this “religious orientalism” functioned as an alter-

¹¹¹ Cf. Hjelde 1998: 111f.

¹¹² Waardenburg (1991: 52–54) offers some stimulating views on the question why phenomenology of religion was so popular in the Netherlands.

native to ecclesiastical forms of Christianity, which were considered restrictive, fossilized, or harmful to the free religious development of the individual. In this sense, oriental religions, especially Buddhism (often mixed with some blend of Spinozism), could function as a religious “counter-culture” *avant la lettre*. The tight connection between *Religionswissenschaft* and missiology in some Dutch theological faculties (up to the present day) can also be mentioned in this context.

(2) A second explanation is to be found in the alternative view of religion which science of religion, and phenomenology of religion in particular, offered against the dominant church praxis and theory. The individual and psychological aspects of religion were emphasized by many authors at the cost of the social and institutional dimensions. In this way science of religion contributed to the ideals of a free, individual religiosity, opposed to “authoritative” or even “authoritarian” forms of church religion. The phenomenological method itself emphasized the personal experience of the scholar. This new way of looking at religion appealed to many at the time, although it was a minority affair.

(3) It is perhaps possible to express the previous points in a still more general way by suggesting that the popularity of science of religion in the Netherlands can be explained by the fact that it presented an alternative to the dominant intellectual and religious mood at the time. Some sort of nostalgia for past and primitive religion(s), which appeal to direct emotions and intuitions and are not “rationalized”, was certainly influential in this regard. Van der Leeuw enjoyed citing the following words by G.K. Chesterton: “When the professor is told by the barbarian that once there was nothing except a great feathered serpent, unless the learned man feels a thrill and a half temptation to wish it were true, he is no judge of such things at all.”¹¹³ Tiele, Chantepie de la Saussaye, Kristensen, and van der Leeuw were fascinated by the arts, wrote poetry, and were not unwilling to see their “science” as an art. This fits in with the view of science of religion as deeply influenced by Romantic thinking and critical of dominant Western rationalism.

(4) Fourthly, the intricate connection between science of religion and theology in the Netherlands contributed much to the success of the former. This may seem to be a paradox to many present-day

¹¹³ Van der Leeuw 1933: 639; Chesterton 1925: 116.

scientists of religion who strive for an emancipation of their discipline from theology. But as long as science of religion was viewed as theologically important, it could obtain rather broad support. Science/history of religion was institutionally located within the theological faculties. This may be a matter of regret, but I do not see how science of religion could have made such a flying start from outside the theology departments.

The connection between science of religion and theology is especially clear in the debates surrounding the Act on Higher Education of 1876, which led to the introduction of History of Religions and Philosophy of Religion (considered by many at the time to be the main parts of science of religion) into the theological curriculum. The rise of Dutch science of religion can, to some extent, be explained by the dominant position of liberal Protestants (or Liberals in general) at the time, who thought that some sort of supra-denominational religion (their religion) could be an integrating force in the Dutch nation.¹¹⁴ Accordingly, theology had to be of a non-confessional, supra-denominational kind; in short, it had to be transformed into science of religion.

But the study of religion was not limited to “science of religion” within the theological faculties. Depending on whether one takes science of religion in the narrow sense (the debates referred to above were about the establishment of a distinct discipline) or in a wider sense (also including the study of religions within the faculties of arts), one has to stress different aspects to explain its emergence and development. Trying to explain the rise of Dutch science of religion is not the same as accounting for its international success, although the first is a prerequisite for the second. Ultimately, only a more detailed historical narrative (about the factual international relations and exchanges) can provide the answer to such a question. But let me finish by pointing to yet another general factor that played a role in this respect. In many senses, early Dutch science of religion was at a cross-roads: between nations, between various (emerging) fields of study, and between different approaches and people. As sociology of science has shown, scientific success does not depend

¹¹⁴ The liberal Protestants were influential, but not the only group favouring the introduction of science of religion into the academic system, and they did not succeed in getting their objectives fully realized; on the debates which led to the Act of 1876, see Molendijk 1998.

solely on academic qualities, but also on the ability to transfer ideas and raise money. The international success of those Dutch scholars could also be related to their capabilities as “wheeler-dealers”—the well-known Dutch spirit of commerce. But, to be honest, I am still a little dissatisfied by all these explanations for the glorious start of Dutch science of religion. A more detailed analysis of the international scene of science of religion at the time is probably needed to obtain a clearer view of the development and spread of Dutch science of religion.

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