

Girl Trouble

The Dutch Political Reformed Party and passive female suffrage 1922- present

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Introduction

The Dutch Political Reformed Party (*Staatkundig Gereformeerde Partij*, SGP), is something of a relic in Dutch politics. Founded in 1918, it is the oldest Dutch political party still in existence. Amidst an irreligious society, it continues to adhere to deeply conservative Christian principles regarding abortion, euthanasia, same-sex marriage and the separation of Church and State. For instance, it insists that the Dutch government has a responsibility to take political action against ‘false religions’ and ‘godlessness’¹. The SGP has maintained its principles in the face of an increasingly secularized society which has seen its peers, the Christian Democratic Appeal (CDA) and the Christian Union (CU), take on more pragmatic approaches now that matters such as abortion and euthanasia are a fact of life². The SGP’s position on passive voting rights for women has been a hot topic for decades – not the position itself, which is the SGP’s democratic right to have and voice, but its internal party regulations that naturally flow from this position. For a long time, women were not allowed to join the SGP as members. When they finally were allowed to do so in 2006, after legal action threatened to end the party’s government subsidies, they were still not allowed to hold or run for political office. In 2010, the Dutch Supreme Court called for the Dutch government to take measures forcing the SGP to grant of passive voting rights to women within its ranks. The SGP protested and brought the court before the European Court for Human Rights (ECHR), which affirmed the Supreme Court’s decision³. Out of options, the SGP formally enabled female passive suffrage within its ranks in 2013⁴. This new possibility was not left unused: in March 2014, the first female SGP candidates participated in the municipal elections⁵. One of them, Lilian Janse, even made it to the position of list header (*lijsttrekker*) in the town of Vlissingen. On March 19, 2014, she made history as the first female representative on behalf of the SGP, after her party won one seat – its first - in the Vlissingen city council⁶.

¹ Parlement.com, http://www.parlement.com/id/vh8lnhrouwy4/staatkundig_gereformeerde_partij_sgp, [April 28, 2014].

² H. Vollaard, ‘Christelijke sporen in de Nederlandse politiek’, in G. Voerman & J. Hippe (eds), *Van de marge naar de macht – de ChristenUnie 2000-2010* (Amsterdam 2010) 188, 194.

³ J.H.P. Donner ((April 8, 2011), *Evaluatie Algemene wet gelijke behandeling – brief van de minister van Binnenlandse Zaken en Koninkrijksrelaties*.

⁴ Parlement.com, http://www.parlement.com/id/vh8lnhrouwy4/staatkundig_gereformeerde_partij_sgp, [April 28, 2014].

⁵ NU.nl (January 30, 2014), *Drie SGP-vrouwen op lijst gemeenteraadsverkiezingen*, <http://www.nu.nl/politiek/3688535/drie-sgp-vrouwen-lijst-gemeenteraadsverkiezingen.html> [April 28, 2014]

⁶ S. van der Laan (March 20, 2014), *Lilian Janse wint als eerste vrouw ooit zetel met SGP*, website Elsevier, <http://www.elsevier.nl/Politiek/nieuws/2014/3/Lilian-Janse-wint-als-eerste-vrouw-ooit-zetel-met-SGP-1485657W/> [April 28, 2014].

What does all this say about the SGP's position on democracy? The SGP participates in the democratic process and commonly acts as a constructive member of opposition, neatly playing by the rules of parliamentary democracy. This would suggest that the party accepts democracy and the rights that accompany it. However, until recently the SGP also denied women one of their basic democratic rights – the right to run for political office. When the SGP finally did grant women the right of passive suffrage, it did so under legal pressure. After the groundbreaking decision, party president Maarten van Leeuwen stated that, even though it was now formally possible, he did not expect women to run for political office on behalf of the SGP⁷. Thus, it seems that while the party bowed to legal pressure, it had done so reluctantly – only because it realized there is no escaping the law of the land. The new possibility wasn't expected to be utilized. When it surprisingly *was* utilized by Janse and her two peers, the party accepted it – although it can be surmised that not everyone in the SGP welcomed this historical development.

How does the SGP combine these two – seemingly contradictory – ideals, and what does this say about the SGP's view on democracy? A word of caution must be noted here: this question does not concern the compatibility of the SGP's gender policies with commonly held democratic values, but the SGP's own internal weighing of rights and values. Thus, it is not the intended goal of this thesis to answer questions relating to the topic and nature of democracy itself, or whether or not the SGP's (former) policies fit within it. This matter *will* be covered in passing, as arguments stemming from compatibility of the SGP's rejection of passive suffrage with democratic value may influence the party's views on the matter.

i. Thesis overview

The main question this thesis will attempt to answer is how the SGP combines democratic values with its rejection of passive voting rights for women. The emphasis will be on the SGP's position regarding the introduction of female suffrage in the Netherlands in 1919 and the more recent debate regarding passive female suffrage within its own ranks. The SGP's treatment of women has been subject of scrutiny for decades, but the debate surrounding it especially flared up in the 1990s and subsequent decades, with important legal rulings made in 2005, 2007, 2010 and 2012. While the period between 1918 and the 1990s will not be ignored, the emphasis will lie on the aforementioned moments in history. This is intended to increase focus over breadth. First off, the thesis will analyze the representative aspects of democracy using insights from political theory, specifically within the context of the SGP's gender policies. While the main question of this thesis is to investigate the SGP's views on democracy in relation to its gender policies and not their relation to conceptions of democracy itself, it *is* relevant to have some understanding of what the SGP's rejection of passive female suffrage means democratically. After all, this in turn affects the SGP's view on the matter. Also, in order to provide this thesis with more context, various (legal, political, philosophical) analyses by other authors of the SGP case and the broader theme of equality versus freedom

⁷ Nieuwsuur, 'Deur voor SGP-vrouwen op een kier' (January 14, 2013), <http://nieuwsuur.nl/onderwerp/461710-deur-voor-SGPvrouwen-op-eeen-kier.html> [April 28, 2014]

of religion will be discussed. Further, I will analyze the following sub themes pertaining to the main topic – the SGP’s view on the introduction of universal suffrage in 1919, the party’s recent views on passive female suffrage, the party’s views on democracy in general, other parties’ views on the SGP’s gender policies and finally the SGP’s gender policies’ relation to various interpretations of democracy (specifically with regards to equality and representation). Also, the policies of other Dutch political parties with regards to female participation and passive voting rights will be analyzed, in order to provide a context (both historical and political) to which the SGP can be compared. This will be accomplished by sifting through various source materials, such as parliamentary debates, party documents, (auto)biographies, news reports and historical and theoretical analyses regarding parliamentary and political developments. By tapping into a variety of sources, I hope to get a view of the SGP’s developments that is at once a bird’s eye view and a more in-depth look, by alternately zooming in and taking a step back to look at the big picture. Also, using varied sources will provide a multitude of perspectives on the subject which I expect will provide it with increased nuance and understanding. Given the strong polarization surrounding the issue, such a fresh look is welcome.

ii. SGP – the state of affairs

Much has been said about the SGP’s staunch religious conservatism in the Dutch public debate, as well as the more general issue that is on the table here – the conflict between freedom of religion and gender equality (or equality in general). In 2005, a judge ordered the SGP’s government subsidies to be suspended due to its discrimination of women. Dutch parliamentary historian Carla van Baalen noted the decision’s mixed blessings. While it was, according to Van Baalen, a welcome development with regards to women’s rights, it was also an erosion of freedom of speech and religion. Van Baalen suggested the court made its decision out of fear for a future Muslim party with even less societally acceptable views⁸. This is confirmed by the text of the court’s judgement, which stresses the importance of zero tolerance towards discrimination due to the possibility of new parties emerging with discriminatory policies towards women. In an analysis of the decision, legal scholar Jit Peters and judicial policy assistant Karin Bleeker reject pluriformity as an argument for tolerating the SGP’s practices, stating that pluriformity is just as much an argument *against* tolerating discrimination of women as it is an argument in favor of it⁹.

In 2007, the Hague Court called for the Dutch government to take action against the SGP’s perceived discrimination of women. In 2010, the Dutch Supreme Court confirmed this position, declaring that the SGP was not allowed to reject women applied for a spot on its list of candidates outright, as this was deemed discriminatory. Its reasoning was that, in this case, freedom of religion and association should weigh less than the principle of non-discrimination. Previously, the Council of State, which advises the

⁸ C. van Baalen, ‘Overwinning met bittere bijmaak’, *Trouw* (September 10, 2005)

⁹ J. Peters & K. Bleeker, ‘Staat moet de SGP aanpakken maar ook subsidiëren’, *Nederlands Juristenblad* 83 (2008) 556-563.

Dutch government, had stated the opposite – in the Council’s view, the aforementioned freedoms *did* grant the SGP the right to refuse female candidacies¹⁰. The SGP objected to the Hague Court’s ruling and turned to the ECHR. In 2012, the ECHR affirmed the Supreme Court’s 2010 decision, rejecting the SGP’s complaints¹¹. In its decision, the ECHR noted that “*the Convention was designed to promote and maintain the ideals and values of a democratic society. Democracy . . . is the only political model contemplated in the Convention and the only one compatible with it. (...) (T)he only necessity capable of justifying an interference with any of the rights enshrined in those Articles is one that may claim to spring from a “democratic society. (...) (N)owadays the advancement of the equality of the sexes in the member States of the Council of Europe prevents the State from lending its support to views of the man’s role as primordial and the woman’s as secondary. (...)The Supreme Court (...) concluded from Article 7 of the Convention on the Elimination of All Forms of Discrimination against Women and from Articles 2 and 25 of the International Covenant on Civil and Political Rights taken together that the SGP’s position is unacceptable regardless of the deeply-held religious conviction on which it is based”*”¹². Much like the Dutch Supreme Court, the ECHR concludes quite definitively that the SGP’s gender policies are unacceptable in a democratic society.

Jaco van den Brink and Hans-Martien ten Napel, lawyer and Associate Professor of Constitutional and Administrative Law respectively, note that the ECHR previously upheld the ban of the Turkish Welfare Party because this party’s ‘ideas and practices were incompatible with democratic values’. This was due to the Welfare Party’s call for ‘legal pluralism’ and a Sharia-based order. In the case of the SGP, only a small aspect of the party’s ideology was on the table. Only ‘very weighty reasons’ would justify intervention on gender related grounds. One observer stated that the ECHR considered gender equality to be more important than ‘freedom of...’ rights. In line with this, the ECHR has upheld Muslim head scarf bans in the past. In addition to this, Van den Brink and Ten Napel note the influence of policy papers by other European institutions. The Council of Europe has had gender emancipation high on its agenda since 1979, supporting gender quotas in electoral politics. In 2010, the Parliamentary Assembly recommended the States Parties to ‘take the necessary measures to increase women’s participation in politics’. Summarizing, the authors state that the ECHR’s SGP decision is not surprising, though still noteworthy since the SGP intervention was less obvious than the Welfare Party one. The latter’s incongruence with democratic principles was more significant than the SGP’s. Of course, the ECHR’s SGP decision was also less dramatic in nature – unlike the Welfare Party, the SGP was not banned. “*The admissibility decision in the SGP case shows more concern for the procedural requirement of equal standing for every individual, than for the substantive principle that all kinds of different voices from civil society should be heard. (...) (G)iven its*

¹⁰ Parlement.com, ‘Staat mag vrouwenstandpunt SGP niet langer toestaan’, http://www.parlement.com/id/vie7demqt451/nieuws/staat_mag_vrouwenstandpunt_SGP_niet [June 2, 2014]

¹¹ Parlement.com, ‘Europees Hof voor de Rechten van de Mens: SGP moet vrouwen toestaan op kieslijst’, http://www.parlement.com/id/vj1cflslb5s1/nieuws/europees_hof_voor_de_rechten_van_de_mens [June 2, 2014]

¹² European Court of Human Rights, ‘Staatkundig Gereformeerde Partij against the Netherlands’, [http://hudoc.echr.coe.int/sites/eng/pages/search.aspx?i=001-112340#{"itemid":\["001-112340"\]}](http://hudoc.echr.coe.int/sites/eng/pages/search.aspx?i=001-112340#{), [June 2, 2014]

*earlier defence of broad freedoms for political parties, it does come as a surprise that in this particular case the pending restrictions for the SGP were so easily justified. Equally surprising is the lack of attention paid in the decision to the party's freedom of association and freedom of religion*¹³.

Legal scholar Maleiha Malik claims that religious groups are often disadvantaged in court cases involving a clash between gender equality, sexuality and freedom of religion, positing that there is a 'willingness of the judicial branch to impose a legal solution despite the lack of a social consensus about sexual orientation equality'. Quoting a judge's ruling on a case involving Muslim headscarves, Malik states that 'in a democratic society, I believe it is necessary to seek to harmonize the principles of secularism, equality and liberty, not to weigh one against the other'. Also, equality law and policy must 'recognize diversity within social groups', specifically 'minorities within minorities' who are not necessarily represented by consultants supposedly representing the group as a whole¹⁴.

Gareth Davies, also a legal scholar, has analyzed the 2005 court decision and asked the *quid bono* question – who would benefit from the enforcement of gender equality within the SGP's ranks? Davies claims that the only ones who 'benefit' are women within the SGP, who, he claims, never asked for help in the first place. Women outside the SGP would never want to be associated with the party anyway. Davies goes even further and claims that the 2005 court decision diminishes the rights of SGP women by robbing them of their freedom to accept a particular role, emphasizing that the internal regulations of the SGP are 'a voluntary arrangement between consenting adults of different sexes'¹⁵.

Alison Stuart, also a legal scholar, notes that while the Convention on Human Rights grants everyone the right to freedom of thought, conscience and belief, women presently lack an 'equal right to religion'. Since the quest for understanding the meaning of life is considered to be an important aspect of human life, Stuart notes that it is imperative that women attain this right in a fashion that is on equal footing with men. 'Patriarchal religious creeds and power structures' have prevented this thusfar – 'gender discrimination pervades religious structure, creed and practices'. Stuart further claims that current judicial interpretations of the right to freedom of religion have served mainly religious leaders, allowing them to stifle dissent and prevent change from occurring. Also, the outside world follows a policy of non-intervention when it comes to religious matters. These phenomena have, in Stuart's view, stood in the way of change and allowed the status quo to continue at the expense of female believers. While she recognizes that 'change must come from within', Stuart also points out that 'the State can help facilitate positive

¹³ J. van den Brink & H.M. ten Napel, 'The Dutch Political Reformed Party (SGP) and Passive Female Suffrage: A Comparison of Three High Court Judgement From the Viewpoint of Democratic Theory', *Merkourios* 2013, 29-41.

¹⁴ M. Malik, 'Religious Freedom, Free Speech and Equality – Conflict or Cohesion', *Res Publica* 2011, online version at <http://link.springer.com.proxy.ubn.ru.nl/article/10.1007%2Fs11158-011-9141-7/fulltext.html#Sec8> [May 30, 2014]

¹⁵ G. Davies, 'The Netherlands. Thou Shalt Not Discriminate Against Women: Public Subsidies to Religious Parties Condemned in *Clara Wichmann Foundation v. te Dutch State*. Court of First Instance, The Hague. Judgement of 7 September 2005', *European Constitutional Law Review* 2006, 2, pp 152-166

change'. To achieve this, Stuart suggests the State uses education and publicity to raise awareness of gender inequality within religious communities. Also, religion should no longer be exempt of compliance with existing equality laws – something that Stuart claims is already possible in the context existing current international human rights legislature. States should provide religions with incentive for change¹⁶.

In 2009, legal scholar Eva Brems proposed a plan to optimize the protection of human rights, specifically within the context of competing fundamental rights. The plan entailed an emphasis on compromise, if possible. When compromise is not possible, the judge can use several criteria to weigh the conflicting rights with one another. These criteria include a distinction between each right's 'core and periphery, recognition if other general interests involved (besides party interests) and the severity of limiting measures¹⁷.

iii. Democracy, up close and personal

It is futile to attempt an analysis of the SGP's stance on democracy without first analyzing democracy itself. While a complete analysis of the various conceptions of democracy which have been used throughout political and philosophical history stretches beyond the scope of this thesis, I will analyze conceptions of democracy that are relevant to the issue at hand. For instance, is rejecting female passive suffrage a problem for political representation in a democracy? And to what extent does the SGP have the right to operate by its own political and religious principles?

An important question regarding the topic of this thesis is whether or not the SGP's stance on passive female voting rights poses a problem for democracy. Some authors question the tight connection between democracy and basic rights. In his 1948 thesis, Jan van de Giessen states that democracy was not initially a matter of fundamental rights, freedom and equality. Democracy, according to Van de Giessen, was first and foremost a matter of expanding suffrage and giving more power to the people¹⁸. The Dutch social democrats saw democracy as a means to bring about social change or even revolution, whereas liberals attempted to link democratic thought with their ideals on freedom and the *rechtsstaat* ('state of law' or 'state of rights') doctrine. The Christian anti-revolutionaires, led by Abraham Kuyper, rejected sovereignty of the people (sovereignty could only come from God) but did claim to be democrats and 'of the people' (the so-called '*kleine luyden*')¹⁹. Following Van de Giessen's thesis, the support of democracy was not necessarily derived from advocacy of fundamental rights – the various political ideologies and the political

¹⁶ A. Stuart – 'Freedom of Religion and Gender Equality: Inclusive or Exclusive?' *Human Rights Law Review* 2010, 10/3, pp. 429-459.

¹⁷ H.M. ten Napel, 'Klein verschil, grote gevolgen. Het arrest van de Hoge Raad in de SGP-zaak nader geduid', *Wapenveld* 2010, 60/3, p. 1.

¹⁸ J. van de Giessen, *De opkomst van het woord democratie als leuze in Nederland* (The Hague 1948), pp. 98, digital version at http://www.dbnl.org/arch/gies0050pk001_01/pag/gies0050pk001_01.pdf [May 4, 2014]

¹⁹ H. te Velde, 'De domesticatie van de democratie in Nederland', *Low Countries Historical Review* 2012, 127-2, pp. 13-14.

parties they eventually spawned seemed to view it as a means to put their ideals to practice (the social democrats seem to be the most obvious example of this).

Dutch historian Remieg Aerts stresses that representation is not the same as imitation. Political representation is no 'surrogate for real democracy', but an 'alternative system with its own logic and legitimacy'. Aerts also points out that representation precedes that which is being represented – the representative body determines what the political nation looks like²⁰. Political theorist Albert Weale acknowledges that there are differing views on the relationship between democracy and representation. On one end, there is the 'Rousseauian' view, which equals democracy with total participation on one end²¹. According to these radical theorists, '(t)he democratic process is an end-in-itself in that it requires or rather means the maximum possible participation of all citizens in the activity of public decision-making'. Democratic government is considered important not just as a means of decision making, but also as a means of educating the citizenry²². On the other end, there is the liberal constitutionalist view in which popular participation is not an end in itself, but only a means to control the government through the will of the people. Also, there is a difference between participation and representation. Direct citizen participation is sometimes seen as an ideal, something that is to be preferred over representation²³. The liberal constitutionalist view described by Weale seems to correspond with Van de Giessen's analysis, viewing democracy as a means to an end and not an end in itself. The radical theorists *do* consider it to be an end in itself. If this end was 'more power to the people' one could still speak of similarities to the liberal constitutionalist view, but given the radical theorists' inclusion of other, unrelated goals such as citizen education, this does not seem to be the case.

While Van de Giessen and Aerts offer more focus on the history of democracy as a concept, other authors are more preoccupied with offering a view of democracy itself, laying out ideal types for democracy as a political system. In the ideal types presented by these authors, justice plays an important role – democracy is, at least in their works, perceived as a means to achieve a just society.

In 1971, political theorist John Rawls attempted to devise a way in which to create such a just society in the most unbiased way possible. He did so in the form of a now famous thought experiment – the developers of the ideal society were to imagine themselves as having no knowledge of their talents or personal characteristics. Rawls described this situation as the 'veil of ignorance' shrouding the developers as they were designing their society. What it means is that the developers also have no knowledge of what their place in society will be once the veil is lifted. This ensures that society will be structured in such a way that

²⁰ R. Aerts, 'Omstreden democratie - over de studie van een complex bestel'. In: R. Aerts & P. de Goede (eds), *Omstreden democratie. Over de problemen van een succesverhaal* (Amsterdam 2013) 263.

²¹ A. Weale, *Democracy* (London 1999) 84.

²² J. Lively, *Democracy* (Cambridge 1975) 131-132.

²³ Weale, *Democracy*, 84.

‘the minimum will be maximized’, which means that the least well-off in society will be the best off this way. Inequality is acceptable according to Rawls, so long as it benefits the least well-off²⁴.

A problem here is that a Rawlsian approach does not account for overlapping preferences – there are, for instance, female SGP supporters who agree with its views on female participation in politics, labor and other fields. How do we avoid forcing external views on a community when those whose rights we are claiming to defend do not think they are being violated in the first place? Of course, as we shall later see, the matter is more nuanced than this. One problem lies in the scale of analysis – do we look at national society as a whole, with all its diverse and conflicting views and interests, or to smaller communities with more homogenous ideologies? The doctrine of communitarianism comes into play here. Political theorist Charles Tilly notes that ‘every democracy faces dilemmas produced by the discrepancy between public politics and widespread understandings among the citizenry’. For instance, in some societies a majority of the populace supports religious law over secular law. Does this oblige the state to enact religious law?²⁵ According to communitarianism, ‘a society is just if its acts in accordance with the shared principles of its members’ (p.11), as stated by Michael Walzer in *Spheres of Justice* (1983). This means that, according to communitarianism, there is no such thing as a universal theory of justice like the one formulated by John Rawls – ‘justice’ is merely a matter of cultural interpretation, there is no ‘golden formula’ that can be applied anytime, anywhere. Communitarianism also stresses the importance of community, which is every bit as important as democratic ideals such as liberty and equality. According to communitarians, political thought should pay more attention to the importance of shared communal practices and ideas²⁶. Weale notes that ‘communal autonomy’ is not synonymous with democracy – some peoples strongly desire autonomy from the outside world while the form of self-government they entertain would not generally be considered democratic²⁷. Weale’s nuances notwithstanding, the main issue between Rawls on one end and Tilly and the communitarians on the other hand is that Rawls assumes universalism, whereas Tilly and the communitarians do not. Rawlsian justice could theoretically still work on the community level, leading to various Rawlsian communities coexisting side by side, with differing justice systems achieved through the veil of ignorance method practiced by local community builders. Thus, the views of Rawls and the communitarians are - in the view of this author - not necessarily contradictory.

²⁴ J. Rawls – *A Theory of Justice* (Cambridge 1971/1999)

²⁵ C. Tilly, *Democracy* (Cambridge 2007) 108.

²⁶ W. Kymlicka, *Contemporary Political Philosophy* (Oxford 2002) 208-2011.

²⁷ Weale, *Democracy*, 63.

1. The SGP and female suffrage

1.1. *The introduction of female suffrage*

Since its formation in 1918, the SGP has rejected female suffrage. The party's 1918 manifest condemns the 1917 introduction of passive female suffrage²⁸. This political milestone, which required a change in the Dutch Constitution, was achieved through a political deal between the Christian and secular parties: along with the introduction of universal suffrage desired by liberals and socialist, government funding of religious schools was anchored in the constitution as per the wishes of the Christian parties, and has been so ever since. This event is known as the 'Pacification of 1917', an important moment in Dutch political history²⁹.

After active suffrage was also introduced in 1919, the SGP congress adopted a motion declaring the right of suffrage to be 'in conflict with woman's calling as directed by the Word of God'. Noting the 'danger' female suffrage posed to politics and church, the motion called for SGP chapters to encourage abstention among their women, even if this led to electoral losses for the SGP. Party leader Gerrit Kersten decried the 'unbiblical' attempts to 'erase the differences between men and women', noting the woman's Biblical role as spouse, housewife and mother. Kersten's arguments, presented in various editions of the SGP party magazine *De Banier*, were based on Biblical texts³⁰. One such passage, 1 Corinthians 14:34, states: "*Women should remain silent in the churches. They are not allowed to speak, but must be in submission, as the law says. If they want to inquire about something, they should ask their own husbands at home; for it is disgraceful for a woman to speak in the church*"³¹. Also, Genesis 3:16 states that men rule over women - "*your desire will be for your husband, and he will rule over you*"³² - and that women were created by God to be 'helpers' of men - "*The Lord God said: 'It's not good for the man to be alone. I will make a helper suitable for him*"³³. Following these Biblical inspirations, Kerstens stated that female suffrage could not be viewed separate from women's position in church, leading him to apply Bible's word on the role of women in church to politics as well. The emancipation movement, in Kerstens' view, was indicative

²⁸ W. Fieret, *Een bibliocratisch ideaal: De Staatkundig Gereformeerde Partij 1918-1948* (Deventer 1990) 32

²⁹ J. Bosmans & A. van Kessel, *Parlementaire geschiedenis van Nederland* (Amsterdam 2011) 22-23.

³⁰ Fieret, *Een bibliocratisch ideaal*, 42, 44-45.

³¹ Biblegateway.com, *1 Corinthians 14:34*,

<http://www.biblegateway.com/passage/?search=1%20Corinthians+14&version=NIV> [June 2, 2014]. Modern Dutch translation: "*Waar gelovigen bijeen komen, moeten de vrouwen zwijgen. Zij mogen niet spreken, maar moeten zo nederig zijn dat aan de mannen over te laten. Dat staat trouwens ook in de wet van Mozes.*"

³² Biblegateway.com, *Genesis 3:16*,

<http://www.biblegateway.com/passage/?search=genesis+3%3A16&version=NIV> [June 6, 2014]. Modern Dutch translation: "*Je zult verlangen naar je man en hij zal jouw meester zijn!*"

³³ Biblegateway.com, *Genesis 2:18*,

<http://www.biblegateway.com/passage/?search=genesis+2%3A18&version=NIV> [June 6, 2014]. Modern Dutch translation: "*En de HERE God zei: 'Het is niet goed voor de mens alleen te zijn. Ik zal iemand maken met wie hij zijn leven kan delen en die hem kan helpen.'*"

of 'unbelief' and 'contempt of God'. Going against the differences between sexes was paramount to 'going against God's ordinance'. Equality between men and women existed 'only in heaven' – women's task in Earthly life was to run the household, whereas ruling and law speaking should be restricted to men. At the time, voter turnout was mandatory in the Netherlands – not signing in at the voting station was punishable. This matter led to disagreement within the SGP. Some more pragmatic chapters now considered it electorally necessary for women to vote. However, despite initial division, Kerstens managed to persuade the 1922 member congress to vote against it in unison³⁴.

Kerstens would rather see SGP women face fines for abstention than have them act against God's commands and giving up their 'God given position' in society. Prominent SGP politician Pieter Zandt defended provincial SGP women who were fined for abstaining, decrying the fact that they were being 'prosecuted for their innermost convictions of God's Word'. He also called the practice unjust, noting that female abstainers in major cities were commonly left alone. The SGP congress of April 7, 1926 discussed a code of conduct regarding female abstention. There were two options for abstaining women: turn in their voting card at the polling station and not voting, or staying home altogether. The first option would free the women from legal repercussions (while turnout was mandatory, actual voting was not), but the SGP board preferred the second: women were to say at home and the outside world was not to see whether or not they had voted. Kerstens, elected to the Dutch Parliament in 1922, routinely addressed mandatory voting there whilst maintaining a conservative stance on female suffrage. He rejected the mandatory turnout and called for the government to scrap it, at least for women³⁵.

In practice though, female SGP sympathizers voted for the party in abundance. Pieter Zandt disagreed with the rejection of female suffrage (though never publicly), propagating it as a means to strengthen the party's electoral base³⁶. This is evidenced by the choice of his words in his defense of the SGP women who were prosecuted for abstaining: he referred to 'their' rather than 'our' choices, subtly distancing himself. On November 22, 1922 Kerstens had markedly positive words to share on female voting: at least they had voted for right-winged, conservative parties and given the left an electoral blow. Kerstens lauded this as an example of the ever-present religious spirit of the Dutch people. He neglected to mention that this was the very reason the more pragmatic ARP had repeatedly called for women to vote. Henk Post describes Kerstens's stance on female voting as 'somewhat ambivalent' – according to Post, Kerstens implicitly accepted female voting, which played an important part in securing his – and the SGP's first – seat in Parliament. Kerstens's call for abstention came under fire from Reformed women, who urged other women to ignore Kerstens and cast their vote on a right-winged candidate. Kerstens, however, maintained the SGP's conviction that female voting was against the Bible. At a 1927 SGP congress, the Krabbendijke

³⁴ H. Post, *In strijd met de roeping van de vrouw* (Veenendaal 2009) 103-104.

³⁵ *Ibidem*, 101, 105, 109-110.

³⁶ F. van Lieberg, 'Dominee Kerstens', http://www.hdc.vu.nl/nl/Images/Lieburg%20%20over%20Kersten_tcm99-150508.pdf [June 2, 2014]

chapter, fearing the loss of its only city council seat, asked Kerstens whether or not candidates who incited female voting were acceptable. Kerstens refused to answer, although he apparently shook his head³⁷.

In 1948, Kersten lamented the ‘eroding principles’ and ‘defenses of female voting’ within the SGP’s ranks, although he also stated that female suffrage *could* be accepted into the party’s program if it wasn’t *definitively* made clear that it was in conflict with Biblical principles. The SGP maintained its opposition to active female suffrage until 1989³⁸. Some SGP women resisted the hard party line on gender issues. Riet Grabijn-van Putten campaigned for female membership in the 1980s and 1990s, not just internally but also in the public media³⁹. Grabijn-van Putten stated that she did not want to be discriminated against in the political group of her choice. She claimed that there were no Biblical grounds on which membership could be denied to her (if there were, she claimed she’s resign her membership), and claimed ‘indifference’ to any other arguments⁴⁰.

1.2. Recent views

As of 2014, the SGP’s party manifest still reads that, according to the order of creation, men and women have their own specific and separate callings and place. This order places man above woman. While the party accepts measures that recognize their equal worth, any emancipatory measure going against the ‘God given calling and place’ is considered to be ‘revolutionary’ and must be opposed⁴¹. Female suffrage is one such revolutionary measure of emancipation, ‘in conflict with a woman’s calling’. This also includes female participation in representative and administrative political organs. Female voting is left to a women’s own discretion⁴². The ‘own discretion’ nuance was added in 1989 in order to circumvent legal trouble arising from the adoption of the equality clause in the Dutch constitution in 1983 and the country’s accession to the international Convention on the Elimination of All Forms of Discrimination Against Women (CEDAW)⁴³. In the manifest supplement, last updated in 2003, the party notes that equal worth (*gelijkwaardigheid*) is not the same as equal (*gelijk*), often citing the Bible just as Kerstens did in the 1920s. Thus, the SGP rejects the equality ideal espoused by the 1789 French Revolution, stating that ‘differences must be respected’. The party also rejects the emancipation movement, due to its criticism of

³⁷ Post, *In strijd met de roeping van de vrouw*, 109, 111-112, 115.

³⁸ F. van Lieberg, ‘Dominee Kerstens’.

³⁹ W. de Lange, (June 15, 1996), ‘Had God Zich dan vergist Toen hij mij een politieke visie gaf? Grabijn-van Putten en haar lijdensweg binnen de SGP’, website *Trouw*, <http://www.trouw.nl/tr/nl/4512/Cultuur/archief/article/detail/2742716/1996/06/15/Had-God-Zich-dan-vergist-toen-Hij-mij-eeen-politieke-visie-gaf-Grabijn-van-Putten-en-haar-lijdensweg-binnen-de-SGP.dhtml> [June 9, 2014.]

⁴⁰ M. van Amerongen (July 10, 1996), ‘Riet Grabijn-van Putten’, website *De Groene Amsterdammer*, <http://www.groene.nl/artikel/riet-grabijn-van-putten> [June 9, 2014.]

⁴¹ SGP, *Program van Beginselen SGP*, Article 7.

⁴² *Ibidem*, Article 10.

⁴³ B. Oomen, ‘Between Rights Talk and Bible Speak: The Implementation of Equal Treatment Legislation of Equal Treatment Legislation in Orthodox Reformed Communities in the Netherlands’, *Human Rights Quarterly* 2011, 33/1, pp. 175-200)

deeply rooted societal traditions and structures⁴⁴. Interestingly, despite its rejection of female political participation, the SGP has never had any qualms against the female Queens that reigned during its existence. The party's reasoning behind this seeming inconsistency is that the monarch's regal authority is derived from God⁴⁵.

The SGP explains its views on women in the context of its broader view on society – it considers the Bible to be the leading authority on all matters in life. Following the Word of God is the core of the party's vision on politics. Like the ARP before it, the SGP rejects sovereignty of the people, stating that it is not the people who rule, but the government, which God has placed above man. Not the will of the people, but God's divine commands should dictate government policy. Due to the statistically limited influence of an individual vote, the SGP does not consider voting to be equal to governing, and hence has no objections to it. On female membership, the party has recognized the changing views of its electorate – in 2002, 41 % of elderly SGP voters and 63 % of younger voters accepted female party membership. The party attributes this apparent shift to its silence on the issue after 1984, but also maintains that its electorate does support the notion that men and women are, though of equal worth, not equal. On the issue of discrimination, which its treatment of women is often labeled as, the SGP notes that what constitutes discrimination is the *unjustified* unequal treatment of people. This does not include, for instance, children's inability to vote. Also, the SGP points to the fact that men and women are treated and judged differently in sports⁴⁶, apparently using these analogies to justify its treatment of women.

In 2005, SGP MP Kees van der Staaij (party leader since 2010) wrote an essay criticizing the 'absolutist' interpretation of liberal and secular values such as separation of church and state, equality of homosexuals and heterosexuals and equality of men and women. According to Van der Staaij, these concepts have been anachronistically projected into the past by the progressive movement and thereby wrongly presented as being the core values of democracy. A strict reading of this would, says Van der Staaij, mean that the Netherlands was not a democracy just several decades ago, since homosexuality was still widely considered a sin at the time. This 'secular interpretation' of democracy is leading to intolerance towards theocratic thinking, Van der Staaij fears⁴⁷. Party leader Bas van der Vlies responded to the criticism of the SGP by asking whether or not the pluriform Dutch society still had room for minorities with 'odd' views that differ from the societal mainstream. The SGP felt 'oppressed' in an age in which the equality principle reigned supreme⁴⁸. In his 2009 diary, Van der Vlies lamented the outside interference with the SGP's gender policies, stating that the SGP has a constitutional liberty to handle its internal affairs as it sees fit⁴⁹.

⁴⁴ SGP, *Toelichting program van beginselen* (The Hague 1996/2003) 32-33, 37.

⁴⁵ SGP, *Man en vrouw schiep hij Hen. Politieke participatie in bijbels perspectief* (The Hague 2006), 34

⁴⁶ *Ibidem*, 31, 33-37.

⁴⁷ C.G. van der Staaij, *Theocratie en democratie* (The Hague 2005) 25.

⁴⁸ A.H.M. Dölle, 'De SGP onder vuur', in Documentation Center Dutch Political Parties, *Jaarboek 2005* (Groningen 2006), 100.

⁴⁹ B.J. van der Vlies, *Elke dag van de partij* (Apeldoorn 2009) 11

Riet Grabijn-van Putten, interviewed again in 2007, called the SGP's acceptance of full female membership 'an important step forward'. While concurring with the Biblical principle that church positions were not to be held by women, she also stated that 'not everything said by St. Paul can be applied to political activity', expressing her desire for the party to take 'one more step' and enable female passive suffrage as well⁵⁰.

In 2009, a Hague court ruled that the government should enforce equal treatment of women in the SGP's parliamentary candidate lists. This would not encroach upon the SGP's freedom of religion, the court reasoned, because it 'only touched the shell' of freedom of religion, 'not the core'. Van der Vlies deemed it ridiculous that a legal court could decide what was and wasn't at the core of a religious community's convictions. He also claimed that, in this and other matters, the secular parties elevated the non-discrimination clause of the Dutch constitution to a 'super article', to which all other rights became inferior⁵¹. Current party leader Van der Staaij has also rejected the 'forced equality' mode of thinking, which has, in his view, led to intolerance of conservative minority views on matters such as same-sex marriage, euthanasia, abortion and the gender relations discussed in this thesis. Classical freedoms, such as freedom of education and religion, are being 'hollowed out', Van der Staaij says⁵². In 2011, the Dutch Parliament debated the Supreme Court decision on female passive suffrage in the SGP. In this debate, Van der Staaij fiercely criticized the 'absurd' and 'paternalistic' intervention in his party's internal policies, noting that the feminist organization that initiated the court case (the Clara Wichmann Foundation), had zero affinity with the party and unjustly painted SGP women as helpless and unable to defend their own position within the party. He noted the importance of the equal worth of man and woman, but also discerned a second, Biblical notion of differing positions and callings for women⁵³.

The SGP seems to have less qualms with women taking on board functions within its hierarchy. In 2006, as the party debated full female membership, its youth wing, the SGPJ, decided to allow women to join its national board⁵⁴. The SGP's board had previously stated that it had no problem with this⁵⁵.

Historian Henk Post states that the SGP has, despite a very lengthy resistance, gradually accommodated itself to prevailing norms on gender equality, for instance by granting full membership to women in 2006. Post speaks of as a 'shift' in the party's views, because it 'can no longer escape the ideals of the French Revolution'. According to Post, the Orthodox Reformed community in the Netherlands is no longer able to completely insulate itself from the rest of society – the SGP previously dropped its resistance to active

⁵⁰ P. van Leeuwen, *De vrouwen van de SGP – 10 gesprekken* (The Hague 2007) 155.

⁵¹ Van der Vlies, *Elke dag van de partij*, 156, 77

⁵² C.G. van der Staaij, *Woord houden. Christelijke politiek in de praktijk* (The Hague 2010) 119-120.

⁵³ Tweede Kamer der Staten-Generaal, *Evaluatie Wet gelijke behandeling* (July 8, 2011), 28 481, nr 15.

⁵⁴ *Trouw*, 'Vrouwen welkom in bestuur SGP-jongeren',

<http://www.trouw.nl/tr/nl/4324/Nieuws/article/detail/1464447/2006/04/29/Vrouwen-welkom-in-bestuur-SGP-jongeren.dhtml> [June 15, 2014]

⁵⁵ Parlement.com, 'SGP-jongeren willen vrouwen in hun bestuur',

http://www.parlement.com/id/vh5dkoy5rvzz/nieuws/SGP_jongeren_willen_vrouwen_in_hun [June 15, 2014]

voting rights for women in 1989 and allowed ‘special membership’ for women in 1996⁵⁶. In 2009, Post predicted that the right of passive suffrage would be granted to SGP women within ten years, possibly before the party’s 100th anniversary in 2018⁵⁷. In the end, his prediction came true in 2013. In a 2013 survey, 48 % of local SGP members supported female candidacies, and 70 % supported the national party board’s decision to enable them⁵⁸.

Once it was made possible, several women joined candidate lists for the 2014 municipal elections, among them Vlissingen list header Lilian Janse. Initially, this led to division within the party. Party president Van Leeuwen called the case of Vlissingen an ‘extraordinary situation’ (as no other candidates were available) and noted that while Janse’s candidacy was now formally possible, it did not fit with the SGP’s principles. Party leader Van der Staaij, however, claimed to support all candidates, Janse included. In the Vlissingen chapter, Janse’s candidacy got 23 votes in favor and 14 against. Janse herself had little to say about her historic candidacy, stating that her main interests were the SGP itself and the town of Vlissingen⁵⁹.

⁵⁶ Post, *In strijd met de roeping van de vrouw*, pp. 11, 254-256.

⁵⁷ P.H. de Jong, ‘Binnen tien jaar vrouw op SGP-kieslijst’ (*Nederlands Dagblad* - March 11, 2009)

⁵⁸ *Binnenlands Bestuur*, ‘Helpt lokale SGP’ers wil vrouw in gemeenteraad’ (January 16, 2013), <http://www.binnenlandsbestuur.nl/bestuur-en-organisatie/nieuws/helpt-van-lokale-sgp-ers-wil-vrouw-in-8740041.lynkx> [June 14, 2014]

⁵⁹ N. Schuyffel (March 19, 2014), ‘SGP-vrouw schrijft geschiedenis in Vlissingen’, website *De Volkskrant*, (<http://www.volkskrant.nl/vk/nl/2784/Verkiezingen/article/detail/3618631/2014/03/19/SGP-vrouw-schrijft-geschiedenis-in-Vlissingen.dhtml>) [June 9, 2014]

2. The SGP, theocracy and democracy

This thesis attempts to answer the question how the SGP combines its rejection of female passive suffrage with democratic values. Of course, this also requires a look at the party's views on democracy in general, which will be attempted here. Several publications by the party or prominent party members shed light on this matter.

As has been made clear from its manifest and several publications by the party and its leaders (discussed in previous chapters), the SGP rejects sovereignty of the people, maintaining instead that sovereignty comes from God. Following this, the SGP considers the Bible to be its most important political inspiration and states that government policies should be derived from the Bible as well. However, it does not reject suffrage – ever since 1918, it only objected to *female* suffrage. As the party states, the act of voting has little influence in itself and therefore does not equal governing. The SGP adheres to Article 36 of the Belgic Confession, which calls for the government to ban anything tainting the honor of God or the government's authority, as well as to resist 'false religions' in order to 'destroy the kingdom of the Antichrist' in favor of the Kingdom of Jesus. This especially concerns pantheism, deism, atheism and humanism, which the SGP abhors. It also indicates that the SGP rejects freedom of religion on principal grounds, placing Christianity above other religions. Earthly law must be based in divine law. In this law, man's duties are placed above man's rights. However, despite rejecting freedom of religion, the SGP has always stressed its support of freedom of conscience. Parliamentary historian Joop Hippe concludes that it is impossible to tell whether or not the SGP fully rejects the classic fundamental rights as laid down in the Dutch constitution, or if the party merely accepts their existence. SGP senator Gerrit Holdijk has stated that it's 'not just about freedom in itself, but about the freedom's intended goal'. During the parliamentary debate on the new Constitution in 1977, the party claimed to hold freedom rights in high regard, although it did vote against the article describing freedom of religion because the government's 'calling towards the Christian religion' was not properly represented in the text⁶⁰. A 1994 report by the SGP's scientific bureau, the Guido de Bres Foundation, offers a layout of the SGP's theocratic views and their development. According to the essay, the SGP has held a consistent line in theocratic politics – God's word is the chief authority for political and societal life. Connecting the government with the Word of God. The essay concludes that theocratic politics is a norm and not a form of government such as democracy or aristocracy. It is noted that the modern SGP faces a dilemma: it principally rejects certain fundamental rights, while at the same time benefiting from them⁶¹.

⁶⁰ J. Hippe – 'GPV, SGP en de vrijheid van de burgers. Enige verkenningen'. In Documentation Center Dutch Political Parties (DNPP), *Jaarboek 1988* (Groningen 1989) 73-101.

⁶¹ H.F. Massink *et al*, *Theocratische politiek. Principes, geschiedenis en praktijk* (The Hague 1994) 85, 108.

The essay's conclusion is reiterated on the current SGP website: democracy is a form of government, and theocracy is a political orientation. The two do not conflict, the party states. The SGP also explicitly rejects the notion that theocracy entails autocratic rule by religious leaders, and claims to be against state intervention in the personal beliefs of citizens (be they religious or secular)⁶².

In his 2005 essay on theocracy and democracy, SGP MP Kees van der Staaij paints a nuanced picture of the SGP's views on theocracy. He states that, while in a theocracy, civil rule is derived from God and there is no central government authority by man, this Old Testament interpretation of theocracy is too exclusive. The principles of the civil law prescribed by God to Israel are universal, but the prescriptions themselves are not meant to apply anytime, anywhere, Van der Staaij claims: there is room for translation to modern society. Theocracy for the SGP means, as Van der Staaij puts it, not the submission of state to church, but the submission of both to God and His divine law⁶³.

Some SGP politicians do reject democracy outright. In 2002, Rien Bogerd, leader of the provincial SGP in Flevoland, stated that the SGP would abolish democracy if it ever came into national power with an absolute majority in parliament. Bogerd stated that, in this scenario, abortion, euthanasia, homosexuality and prostitution would be banned. Non-Protestant religions would not be tolerated. Women would no longer be allowed to participate in church and politics. Of course, Bogerd may not represent the majority of the SGP – several months before him, party president W. Colijn claimed that the SGP accepted democracy. This does indicate that some anti-democratic sentiments still exist within the party⁶⁴. On its website, the party expresses support for democracy because it legitimizes political decisions and respects personal freedom. It does note, however, that democracy is only the 'least bad form of government' so far, quoting Winston Churchill and reiterating its rejection of sovereignty of the people⁶⁵.

⁶² SGP, 'Theocratie', <http://www.sgp.nl/Standpunten/Standpunten?letter=T&standid=228> [June 14, 2014]

⁶³ Van der Staaij, *Theocratie en democratie*, 11-13, 20-22.

⁶⁴ T. Crijnen, 'Mocht de SGP ooit regeren, schaffen we de democratie af' (January 5, 2002), <http://www.trouw.nl/tr/nl/5009/Archief/archief/article/detail/2583401/2002/01/05/Mocht-de-SGP-ooit-regeren-dan-schaffen-we-de-democratie-af.dhtml> [June 14, 2014]

⁶⁵ SGP, 'Democratie', http://www.sgp.nl/Standpunten/Standpunten/Standpunten_ABC?letter=D&standid=56 [June 14, 2015]

3. The SGP and other political parties

3.1. Female suffrage and participation in other political parties

When talking about female participation in the SGP and the party's views on this, it can also be useful to compare the party to other political parties. Is the SGP unique in its stance on the issue, or have other parties shared its sentiments in the past or the present?

The number of female MP's has gradually risen throughout the years. Suze Groeneweg of the SDAP was the first female MP in 1918. In 1922, the number of female MP's rose to 7 (out of 100), dropping again in the following elections. In 1977, there was a strong rise from 18 to 27; in 1997, women made up one third of Parliament for the first time in history. So far, the number of female MP's peaked at 64 (out of 150) in 2010. In 2012, 60 female MP's were elected⁶⁶. In general, the Netherlands scores high in comparison to other European countries with when it comes to women in political office. In 2013, 39 % of MP's were female and 38 % of cabinet positions were filled by women. The female share of municipal councils is smaller and has been stable at about 25 % since 1990 (it did rise from 23 to 27 % between 1998 and 2012). Only one in five mayors is female, female alder(wo)men are even scarcer. GreenLeft has the most female city councillors (38 %), the Socialist Party (SP) has the most female aldermen (41 %). Half of all GreenLeft mayors are female. Since 2006, the number of female VVD mayors has risen to 26 %, whereas the female share dropped from 23 to 18 % in D66⁶⁷.

The work of Hella van de Velde has shed more light on the topic of female participation in Dutch political parties. Van de Velde claims that the resurgence of feminism in the 1970s strongly affected political parties in the Netherlands. New women's organizations were formed and existing groups became more activist in nature. Besides increasing the number of women represented in political functions, these groups also influenced their parties' positions on important issues regarding women, such as abortion. Underrepresentation of women in representative bodies and party bureaucracies became a subject of debate, and government subsidies were granted to emancipation projects. The number of female politicians in Western Europe rose significantly between 1960 and 1990. Dutch political parties were on the European average in terms of development. In the 1980s, Van de Velde notes, the number of female candidates rose steadily, but the number of female MP's and party board members fluctuated⁶⁸.

⁶⁶ Parlement.com, 'Vrouwen in de Tweede Kamer'

http://www.parlement.com/id/vh8lnhrreozv/vrouwen_in_de_tweede_kamer [June 11, 2014]

⁶⁷ Y. de Koster (July 11, 2013), 'Opmars vrouwen in lokale politiek stukt al jaren', website *Binnenlands Bestuur*, <http://www.binnenlandsbestuur.nl/bestuur-en-organisatie/nieuws/opmars-vrouwen-in-lokale-politiek-stukt-al-jaren.9065766.lynkx> [June 11, 2014]

⁶⁸ H.L.J. van de Velde, 'Van pressie tot beleid. Het streven naar maar vrouwen in de partijpolitiek in de jaren tachtig'. In Documentation Center Dutch Political Parties (DNPP), *Jaarboek 1992* (Groningen 1993), 158-185.

In her 1994 book *Vrouwen van de partij* ('women of the party'), Van de Velde has thoroughly analyzed the history of female participation in political parties in the 20th century through four indicators: the position of the party on political representation of women, the position of women in the party organization, women's groups within parties and candidate selection.

First off: the Anti-Revolutionary Party (ARP), one of the three Christian Democratic parties which would later form the CDA. Founded in 1879, the ARP long rejected female participation outside the family sphere. As with the SGP, women were not allowed to run for political office on behalf of the ARP. In the Pacification of 1917, ARP dropped its resistance to female suffrage in turn for government subsidies for religious schools. After the introduction of universal the ARP urged urged female supporters to 'use the right to vote as a weapon against the Liberals and Socialists', realizing that mass abstainment would hurt it electorally. On *passive* voting, the ARP took a less permissive stance: women were allowed to run for office, but 'only as an exception'. After World War II, the ban on female participation had lost support due to the more active role played by Christian women in the Dutch underground resistance. The ban was lifted in 1953, although the party maintained its stance that women should not have executive power. Despite removal of formal barriers, female participation in the ARP remained limited until the 1970s. In the 1970s, the party actively strived to increase female participation. Women's groups within the ARP changed focus from family matters to emancipation⁶⁹.

The Christian Historical Union (CHU) was, for a long time, the only confessional party with a women's organization. It had no formal barriers against female participation, although it was a rare phenomenon in practice. Also, participation by *married* women was frowned upon. The CHU was initially divided on female suffrage. After female suffrage was realized in 1919, the CHU began actively recruiting women into its ranks. Women had to unite within the CHU to prevent 'seduction into other, non-Christian ideologies'. However, the CHU did not actively stimulate female candidacies for representative bodies until 1966. The emancipation wave of the late 1960s triggered a change in thinking within the CHU, and its women's groups started to become more active⁷⁰.

The Catholic People's Party (KVP) made no priority of female participation. Its predecessor, the Roman Catholic State Party (RKSP), initially supported 'organic suffrage' (one family, one vote), but did not reject female suffrage once universal male suffrage was realized. Still, it did not support female political participation. Its women's organization was discouraged by the Catholic episcopate from promoting female political participation, limiting itself to political education. In 1922, S. Bronsveld-Vitringa became the first female Catholic parliamentarian. As with the Protestant parties, World War II triggered a shift in Catholic thinking on female participation in politics. In 1956, Pope Pius XII declared that men and

⁶⁹ H.L.J. van de Velde, *Vrouwen van de partij – de integratie van vrouwen in politieke partijen in Nederland, 1919-1990* (Leiden 1994), 14-21, 40-41.

⁷⁰ *Ibidem*, 45-47, 50, 53,

women, though different in nature, had ‘the same Earthly destiny’, so no human activity should be off-limits to women. Catholic women’s groups took this statement as grounds to push for more female participation. Female KVP candidacies remained limited, however, and the issue disappeared from the KVP agenda. Internal conflicts between regional chapters and the ‘intrusive’ national Election Council about candidacies often had negative consequences for prospective female candidates⁷¹.

In 1977, the ARP, CHU and KVP merged into the Christian Democratic Appeal (CDA), still the mainstream confessional party of the Netherlands as of 2014. The new party’s attitude towards female political participation was ambivalent: like its predecessors it acknowledged differences between men and women, but these were no cause to strive towards more women in politics. The CDA did end up striving to increase its female political representatives, but these female politicians were not expected to represent female interests. In the 1980s, the new CDA women’s group frequently clashed with the party board over its goals, as it unilaterally shifted its focus from political education to ‘providing an independent political voice’. The group demanded a more even gender distribution among CDA work groups, as well as involving experts on emancipation affairs in relevant studies. Some in the party criticized the women’s groups (as well as other interest groups) as ‘shadow parties’ operating outside instead of within the party. During the 1980s, conflicts died down, although the CDA women still actively strived towards more female candidates. In 1986, the CDA women’s group adopted a motion calling for one thirds of candidates on ‘electable’ positions on the election list to be female. However, on the first CDA list (previous list were still handled by fusion parties ARP, CHU and KVP), only 35 % of *all* candidates were female, and only 15 % of the top 40. In 1988, the CDA started taking measures to counter female underrepresentation after being granted government subsidies. Electoral considerations and image played an important part in the CDA’s considerations⁷².

The Free-thinking Democratic League (VDB) and Liberal State Party (LSP), the largest Liberal parties in the Interbellum, made a priority of female suffrage. Female political participation was a given. Their predecessor, the Liberal Union (LU) was initially only in favor of limited male suffrage, but embraced full male suffrage and limited female suffrage in 1908. In 1918, it accepted full female suffrage as well. The VDB strived for universal suffrage since its founding in 1901. Between 1901 and 1940, there was at least one woman on its board. Prominent feminist Alette Jacobs was also active within the VDB. Before World War II, 25 % of VDB members were female. In 1937, however, the party stated that labor by married women should be limited in favor of male bread winners, except in conditions of mass unemployment. This contrasts its 1926 stance against any limiting measures for married women, and is attributed to its participation in the first (1933-1935) and second (1935-1937) Colijn cabinets, which were more conservative on the issue. Decreasing popularity of liberalism during the Great Recession also led to the waning of feminism within the VDB. Its women’s group, the VDVC, did not operate separately from the party, instead focusing on propagating its views among women. Promoting female candidates led to the

⁷¹ *Ibidem*, 69-71, 73-75, 98.

⁷² *Ibidem*, 104, 109, 111-112, 114, 117, 121, 124.

party's dismay, because it was considered to undermine party unity. Some criticized the VDVC as a 'party within a party'⁷³.

Within the LSP, a female member named W. Wijnaendts Francken-Dyserinck, strived for full equality of men and women. She was one of various female board members between 1921 and 1940, most of whom came from the feminist movement. Its women group had the stated goal of defending the interests of women in politics, and called for more female parliamentary candidates and more women in party positions. Its activities consisted of schooling and propaganda. The Great Recession also undermined the position of feminism within the LSP – interest in liberal politics among women decreased and the principle of gender equality was under pressure in liberal circles. The women's group called for recognition of the right of married women to work, a proposal which met resistance from the male members of the board. As with the VDB, the LSP's political cooperation with confessional parties in the second and third Colijn cabinets also played its part⁷⁴.

In 1948, the liberal People's Party for Freedom and Democracy (VVD) was formed. Female participation was considered a given, and did not feature on the party's agenda. The party felt that an increase of women in political organs should 'occur naturally'. All female members were automatically members of the VVD's women's group, which focused its activities on schooling and propaganda. There were female delegates in the board, party council and election council. When the government introduced affirmative action measures in the 1980s, the VVD recognized female underrepresentation in its ranks as a problem. It rejected binding measures such as quota, however⁷⁵.

Democrats '66 (D66), a progressive liberal party formed in 1966, paid more attention to the position of women than the VVD. D66's first election program (in 1967) featured female emancipation as one of its focal points. The party rejected any societal and political differences between men and women, as part of its radical program of democratization. This also meant that D66 long rejected a separate treatment for its female members. Underrepresentation of women within its ranks did not gain the party's attention until the 1980s. Measures to counter this were often rejected, similar to the VVD. Fearing internal division, D66 never formed a women's organization. D66's emancipation group, PEAC, became a *de facto* women's group, representing D66 at feminist gatherings and mobilizing female D66 members. D66 maintained an ideology of 'declared equality' – the general opinion was that there was no such thing as discrimination in D66. Separate attention to women was a taboo⁷⁶.

⁷³ *Ibidem*, 129, 131, 133, 136-137, 139,

⁷⁴ *Ibidem*, 140-141, 143, 145-148

⁷⁵ *Ibidem*, 155, 171-172.

⁷⁶ *Ibidem*, 175-177, 192-193.

The Social Democratic Workers Party (SDAP) mainly praised women for their qualities as mothers and housewives. The SDAP did, however, support universal suffrage and equal rights for women. In practice though, its focus was on other matters. Internally, it had no restrictions on female participation. Before World War II, the SDAP had more female members than any other party. Its multiple women's groups focused on recruiting women into socialism through schooling and propaganda activities. These groups and the party itself approached women in their role as mothers and housewives. In the 1960s, new women's groups such as the Red Women within the post-war Labor Party (PVDA) strived to influence the party. The Red Women successfully lobbied for a female quota of 25 % in all party organs, including lists of parliamentary candidates. Previously, gender was of secondary importance when recruiting candidates. Now, the PVDA initiated an affirmative action policy⁷⁷.

The Pacifist Socialist Party (PSP), founded in 1957, considered feminism to be a part of its socialist ideology after 1967 (previously feminism did not get the party's specific attention), and called for 'feminization' of its party structure and Dutch society. Still, women were underrepresented in its ranks – something that did not change until the 1980. The PSP was heavily influenced by new societal movements in the 1960s. The demands of the second wave of feminism were adopted quite easily. After 1973, women began to manifest themselves within the PSP. This culminated in a 'feminism congress' in 1983. Calls were made for more women in important party positions. The first female PSP parliamentarians were elected in the 1980s. Later that decade, the women's influence waned due to a decrease in active participation and the women's group's self-chosen autonomous position within the party (which meant that few of them actually held posts within the party hierarchy). Also, the debate on feminism in the PSP was largely theoretical⁷⁸.

The Political Party Radicals (PPR) was formed by progressive Christians which left the KVP and ARP during the second wave of emancipation around 1968. An even gender distribution was one of the criteria when the PPR's first election list was formed in 1971. In addition to striving for an increase in female participation within its ranks, the PPR adopted many of the themes of the women's movement into its program and called for societal 'feminization'. Women were not only 'different' but also 'better'. After 1986, the party lost its affinity with feminism, and the number of females in its bureaucracy decreased. When an affirmative action plan was launched in 1988, it met resistance from the party board. It was felt that the PPR had lacked a political course of its own, focusing too much on interest groups⁷⁹.

In 1990, the PPR and PSP fused with the Evangelical People's Party (EVP) and Communist Party Netherlands (CPN) into GreenLeft. Between 1988 and 1990, CPN, PPR and PSP strived for women to occupy 40, 40 and 33 % of positions on their 1990 municipal candidate lists. Chapters were schooled in increasing female participation. However, only 20 % of chapters actually took steps to accomplish this. After 1990, GL

⁷⁷ *Ibidem*, 197, 234-235

⁷⁸ *Ibidem*, 241, 265-267.

⁷⁹ *Ibidem*, 271, 295-296.

fractions were 37 % female, 10 % more than previously. The new party was divided on female quota. Some feared it would come at the expense of qualified politicians and board members, leading the board to change its initial quota plans to ‘*striving* towards an equal distribution of men and women’⁸⁰.

The Reformed Political League (GPV) seemed to espouse a moderate version of the SGP’s gender views. It paid little specific attention to the ‘order of creation’, which the SGP so often mentioned to legitimize its gender policies, although it did explicitly reject female emancipation, which it claimed was ‘absolutized’ by the feminist movement. In 1970, the GPV had a (local) female list header for the first time, who later became the first national female candidate for national Parliament in 1971. Some in the party objected to this, rejecting passive and/or passive suffrage for women. Most though, did not reject female passive suffrage – it only took until 1971 before there were any female candidates because of ‘practical reasons’ (married women with children were not accepted). In 1979, party leader Gert Schutte expressed his desire for women to hold political office on behalf of the GPV. In 1989, Schutte called for the ‘male monopoly’ to be broken in the next municipal elections. Unlike the CHU and the ARP, the GPV had no separate women’s organization. The GPV women did not consider this necessary⁸¹.

The Reformatory Political Federation (RPF), founded in 1966, differed greatly from the SGP in its acceptance of female participation in politics. Still, party leader Meindert Leerling considered anti-discrimination legislature to be a threat to Christian organization. It could, he feared, lead to discrimination against Christians⁸².

The Christian Union, formed in 2001 from a merger between GPV and RPF and often considered the SGP’s sister party, launched a women’s platform in 2002. This platform was to tackle the perceived underrepresentation of women in the party, both in the party organization and parliamentary representation. The party congress mandated that at least 25 % of parliamentary candidates should be female, with at least one woman in the top 3. Also, women should constitute 30 % of board positions within the party. Tineke Huizinga became the first female CU MP in 2002. Initially, she was put much lower on the list, which, along with the ‘undemocratic procedures’, led to criticism by the party congress. Huizinga would later become state secretary and minister in the fourth Balkenende Cabinet⁸³.

⁸⁰ Van de Velde 1992.

⁸¹ Post, *In strijd met de roeping van de vrouw*, 130-132.

⁸² *Ibidem*, 135

⁸³ G. Voerman – ‘Van de marge naar de macht. De ChristenUnie 2000-2010’. In G. Voerman & J. Hippe (eds), *Van de marge naar de macht. De ChristenUnie 2000-2010* (Amsterdam 2010) 97-98, 112.

3.2. *Other parties and the SGP*

Feelings of isolation and marginalization are increasingly widespread within the SGP, and in the Orthodox Reformed community in general. They claim that adopting the Bible as a central guideline in life is no longer acceptable in Dutch society, and that society has turned 'anti-God' in general. Sociologist Barbara Oomen suggests that the increased criticism of the SGP is a side effect of the backlash against multiculturalism after the terrorist attacks in the United States on September 11, 2001 and the rise of Pim Fortuyn in 2002. Due to the increased emphasis on 'Dutch values', such as tolerance of homosexuality and equal treatment of women, the SGP's Christian conservatism has also increasingly come under fire in the wake of increased concerns about Islamic fundamentalism⁸⁴.

Historically, the SGP's relations with other Christian parties are most important. As we have already seen, the SGP was not always as alone in its views on female suffrage (be it active or passive) – other Christian parties initially rejected it as well, although they have since long accepted it whereas the SGP has maintained its views.

In the 1920s, Kerstens used the issue of female suffrage as a means to discern the SGP from the more permissive ARP, whose program was otherwise virtually identical to the SGP's. Kerstens criticized the ARP's choice to 'sacrifice principle over votes', accepting the consequence that rejecting female suffrage would cost the SGP votes. The ARP, in turn, noted that the SGP wouldn't have secured a seat in Parliament without the women's vote; a rebuttal which Kerstens tended to ignore⁸⁵.

For most of their existence, the SGP has had close ties to the Christian Union and its predecessors, the GPV and RPF. The two/three parties would commonly enter shared lists of candidates for municipal elections, to increase the chance of gaining seats. The secular 'Purple' cabinets formed by PVDA, VVD and D66 between 1994 and 2002, the first cabinets without a Christian party since the beginning of the 20th century, unified the Christian parties in opposition on socio-cultural themes. Despite this development, the SGP and the GPV/RPF drifted apart during the 1990s. This is partly attributed to the SGP's stance on women, which gradually became less acceptable for the GPV and RPF. Also, the GPV and RPF were in a process of merger that would lead to the formation of the CU in 2001. This new fusion party had high expectations from both parties, which made them more self aware and independent of the SGP. The CU considered too close an association with the SGP to be disadvantageous. After Tineke Huizinga became the first female CU MP in 2002, an end was also put to the regular meetings between SGP and CU MP's. This also influenced the decision to scrap the shared speaker arrangements between CU and SGP, since this would have meant that Huizinga could speak on behalf of the SGP. The SGP, smaller than the CU, feared electoral competition, which it tried to prevent by minimizing the differences between the two parties (in

⁸⁴ Oomen, 'Between Rights Talk and Bible Speak' 2011.

⁸⁵ Post, *In strijd met de roeping van de vrouw*, 112.

parliament, they voted about 85 % the same), whereas the CU felt a need to distance itself from the SGP, with which it was often grouped into ‘the small right’. Under André Rouvoet in the 2000s, the CU followed a more progressive course on socio-economic issues under André Rouvoet. This was qualified as ‘left-winged’ by the SGP. The CDA, by far the largest of the Christian parties and the only one frequently in government, took a more pragmatic approach, viewing the SGP (as well as the RPF, GPV and CU) as any other party – a possible means to achieve a parliamentary majority⁸⁶.

A 2011 parliamentary debate on the SGP’s gender policies, attended by most parties represented in Parliament (except for the Party for Animals, but including the SGP itself), offers a good summary of other parties’ stances. In the debate, the PVDA and D66 stated quite bluntly that the SGP’s practices, described by them as discriminatory, were unacceptable in today’s society and the ECHR’s judgement should be respected. The SGP had protested the decision and consulted the ECHR, but PVDA and D66 did not want to wait for the ECHR decision. GreenLeft supported this line, but also emphasized the collision of fundamental rights, noting that while encroachment on the SGP’s rights should be limited, the state should ensure that the SGP complied with Dutch law. The PVV stated that the debate on the SGP’s gender policies should not be held in court, but within the SGP’s ranks, noting that the case was brought to the Supreme Court was not by an SGP woman hoping to run for office, but by an external party. Thus, the PVV preferred to wait for the ECHR ruling. The SP noted the dramatic nature of intervening in a political party’s internal democracy, and while supporting possible measures against the SGP, also wished to wait for the ECHR’s decision, preferring ‘thoroughness over speed’. The CU supported the SGP, echoing Van der Staaij’s sentiment that SGP women themselves have no qualms with the party’s gender policies, and noting that women who wish to use their right of passive suffrage have plenty of other parties to choose from. Expectedly, the CU also suggested waiting for the ECHR ruling. The VVD stressed its support of gender equality and the conflict in constitutional rights entailed by the SGP case, preferring to wait for the ECHR ruling. The CDA emphasized the difference between the SGP’s gender views and its own, also stressing that minority rights must be protected in society. Just as the VVD, PVV, CU and SP, the CDA preferred to wait for the ECHR ruling on the case⁸⁷. It should be noted that in 2011, the cabinet consisted of VVD and CDA, with parliamentary support by the PVV. In order to secure a Senate majority, the SGP’s support was also necessary⁸⁸. This may have influenced these parties’ more lenient stance towards the SGP’s gender policies and their desire to await the ECHR ruling, rather than take immediate action as PVDA, D66 and GL desired.

⁸⁶ Vollaard, ‘Christelijke sporen’, 182-185.

⁸⁷ Tweede Kamer der Staten-Generaal, 28 481, nr 15.

⁸⁸ Parlement.com, ‘Kabinet-Rutte I (2010-2012)’,

http://www.parlement.com/id/vijze8jky5lw/kabinet_rutte_i_2010_2012 [June 10, 2014]

4. The SGP's views on female passive suffrage – a democratic analysis

In the introduction, various insights from political theory were used to discern how democratic ideals relate to political representation and equality. This is, after all, a crucial part of the central thesis question regarding the SGP's views on democracy in combination with its gender policies. Now, what do these insights tell us about the SGP's views on passive female suffrage?

First off, we have the hypothetical 'veil of ignorance' of John Rawls. The best way to achieve a just and fair society is for everyone to pretend to be ignorant about their own personal qualities and resulting place in life while developing society. After all, if they are unaware where they will end up after the veil is lifted, their own self-interest provides them with an incentive to make sure that the most disadvantaged will be as comfortable as possible. The developers of this Rawlsian society would also be unaware of their gender. Thus, one can surmise that they would devise a system in which women and men were treated equally. Of course, conservative Christians such as the SGP and its supporters have a different view on the role of men and women in society, and the Rawlsian developers would also lack knowledge of what their religious views would be once the veil is lifted. These overlapping interests represent a difficulty for Rawlsian thought, because they require an impossible compromise. It's highly impossible to create a system in which both female and conservative Christian movements such as the SGP are fully respected. Service to one is disservice to the other. Perhaps the solution lies not in an universal conception of justice, but in a theory which takes into account the broad spectrum of societal groups and their differing interests.

This brings us to communitarianism – a society is just so long as its policies reflect the shared understandings of its members. Applied to the SGP case, the communitarian argument could be made that if the SGP members themselves, women included, support its policies regarding female passive suffrage, there is no real problem democratically. After all, why force equality upon a group when the subjects in question do not desire it? This reflects Davies's sentiments. If SGP women have no qualms with its policies, communitarian thought dictates that they should be left alone. To enforce equal treatment for women who themselves desire no such thing would be paramount to cultural imperialism. This sentiment is clearly reflected in Kees van der Staaij's reaction to the 2010 Supreme Court decision. Obviously, communitarianism is better suited for international relations and not issues taking place within the confines of a single country. A political party or association does not necessarily qualify as a community. Still, a more superficial strand or derivation of communitarianism may serve as a useful point of discussion regarding the SGP. Arguments that amount to 'who are you to force the SGP to abide when SGP women themselves have no problem with the current situation' are, in a way, communitarian in nature. This makes communitarianism very relevant indeed to the debate surrounding the SGP.

Following Aerts's suggestion that representation is not the same as imitation, one may say that the interests of women in the reformed communities in which the SGP is popular could just as easily be represented by the male SGP parliamentarians. After all, this is what political representation and indirect democracy is all about. Then again, this may be too strict an interpretation of Aerts's words – while it may not be problematic for every single strand of society to lack representation in parliament, it may be for a group as significant as women. In turn, does this counter argument hold up to the fact that the SGP is a very small party? Maybe – the SGP may be small nationally, but it is the (electorally) largest party in several municipalities. It should also be noted that, as evidenced by the variance in democratic thinking as laid out by Weale, that (total) political participation is not necessarily an end in itself in democracy. In this liberal constitutionalist view, the lack of female participation may not necessarily be problematic.

All in all, the case of the SGP offers an interesting challenge for the aforementioned conceptions of democracy, and representation specifically. After all, it requires reconciling two highly cherished democratic principles – freedom of religion and (gender) equality, and tests various idealist views on democratic representation due to the SGP's longtime exclusion of women within its ranks from the democratic process. Whether or not this poses a problem for democracy and representation will be answered in the conclusion to follow.

5. Conclusion

So, what does this all mean? In this thesis, I set out to investigate the SGP's views on female passive suffrage in the context of democracy. The SGP participates in the democratic process as a constructive parliamentary party, governing in various municipalities. This seems to suggest that the SGP accepts the democratic process and plays by its rules, making its stance on female passive suffrage all the more remarkable. How does the SGP's combine its longtime resistance against female passive suffrage conflict with accepted notions of democracy? Of course, this is only a superficial observation – what is the political, historical and ideological reality behind it?

The heart of the matter is that the SGP's deep Christian conservatism has led it to maintain conservative views on moral and ethical issues in the face of an increasingly secularized society. When the party was founded in 1918, its views on female political participation were not as unusual as they are today. The ARP long espoused the same views as the SGP, rejecting female suffrage outright. The CHU and KVP, while eventually accepting female suffrage, also rejected the participation of women in politics (especially married women). Other parties, such as the VVD and D66, accepted female equality and emancipation on principle but were against quota measures to further it. While other Christian parties accommodated themselves to the new reality of female suffrage and accepted it (even fielding female candidates themselves), the SGP maintained its rejection for decades. While active female suffrage was finally accepted by the party in 1989, female SGP membership stayed a contentious issue for a longer time (until 1996). Passive female suffrage within the SGP was a different matter still. As SGP leader Bas van der Vlies stated in 2009, the SGP considered this to be an internal affair with which the outside world had little to do. Still, several court rulings deemed it discriminatory. The ECHR, for instance, explicitly stated that the SGP's practices were 'incompatible with a democratic society'. Some scholars, such as Malik, Van Baalen and Davies, disagreed with this, lamenting the court's paternalism and infringement on freedom of religion. The SGP itself echoed these sentiments, claiming that equality had become an absolute principle at the expense of other freedoms, wondering if there was still room for unorthodox, principally Christian views in today's secularized society.

The SGP's views on democracy are innately connected to its Christian beliefs. God is the supreme authority to which both church and state must obey. The party espouses theocracy, but this means - the SGP claims - not an undemocratic rule by the clergy, but 'politics based on Biblical norms'. According to SGP ideologues and documents, the party rejects sovereignty of the people, since sovereignty comes not from man but from God. However, this does not lead the party to reject suffrage. The SGP's reasoning behind this is that voting, due to the statistically insignificant influence of an individual vote, is not equal to governing. Hence it is not problematic in the theocratic society as the SGP envisions it. The party's views on minorities is ambivalent – it principally rejects freedom of religion due to its strict adherence to Protestantism, which thus deserves more status in society than other beliefs, but seems to 'compensate' this by stressing the right to freedom of conscience. As Joop Hippe states, it is not always clear whether the SGP actually accepts

modern freedom rights or merely acquiesces their current existence, since removing or limiting them is impossible anyway. Also, it should be noted that it is that same freedom of religion which the SGP implicitly calls upon to defend its gender policies. All in all, the SGP's view of a theocratic government doesn't seem all that different compared to a liberal, Christian democratic or socialist government – it is simply a government governing on the basis of a set of ideological principles, in this case derived from the Bible. This is confirmed by the party itself on its website – it distinguishes between democracy as a form of government and theocracy as moral guideline for said government, much like any other political ideology.

While accepting suffrage in general, the SGP has long rejected female suffrage. Despite having been forced to formally enable passive female suffrage, the SGP still rejects it ideologically as indicated by the current text of its manifest. The candidacy of Lilian Janse in Vlissingen seems to be an exception, although one must not judge too soon. Only two elections have been held since the party's landmark decision of 2013. Time – and future elections – will tell if Janse was an isolated case. The SGP's reason for rejecting female suffrage was based on the Biblically inspired view that God has given man and woman different goals and roles in life. The woman's role is in the household, as a mother and housewife, whereas governing is meant for men. Still, the initial rejection of active suffrage for women is strange in the light of the party's expressed view that voting is not equal to governing. This is may be the reason the party's resistance to active suffrage died down sooner than the resistance to passive suffrage.

The theoretical analysis of various conceptions of democracy in the previous chapter complicates the answering of this thesis's main question. A relevant issue is whether or not there is a conflict of rights in the first place, as some authors note that democracy and fundamental rights are not necessarily connected. Van de Giessen claims that democracy in the Netherlands was first and foremost a matter of expanding suffrage and granting more power to the people. Fundamental rights were of secondary importance here. If this line were to be followed, the thesis's main question would be rendered moot – the SGP doesn't need to expense philosophical and political effort to rhyme these seemingly conflicting principles if there they're not relevant to one another in the first place. Communitarianism also seems to cast a shadow of doubt by challenging the idea that there is such a thing as a universal conception of justice. If there is not, the question whether or not the SGP's views on female passive suffrage are compatible with its views on democracy cannot be definitely answered because this would depend on the communal context. If a community is just according to the shared principles of its members, the SGP's views on female passive suffrage and democracy are compatible as long as the SGP considers them to be. Davies echoes communitarian sentiments by noting that women who join the SGP are consenting adults who enter into a discriminatory agreement at their own recognizance. This is also the point made by Van der Staaij in 2011 – the women of the Clara Wichmann Foundation have no relation to the SGP, whereas the actual SGP women support its stance on passive suffrage.

However, as it turns out the SGP is not as undivided on the issue as it seems. In the party's early years, prominent SGP politician Pieter Zandt accepted female suffrage, though never publicly. Even party leader Kerstens, known for his fierce criticism of female suffrage in the 1920s, later stated that it would be acceptable if it could be ascertained that it was not in conflict with Biblical norms (it should be noted that Kerstens was only referring to *active* suffrage in this case). More recently, one of the frequently discussed 'SGP women', Riet Grabijn-van Putten, publicly criticized her party's 'discriminatory' policies. As indicated earlier, 48 % of local SGP members supported female candidacies. Also, the fact that Lilian Janse and two other women ran for office in 2014 indicates that they, too, did not support the party's rejection of passive suffrage to women. A majority of the SGP's Vlissingen chapter supported Janse's candidacy. In the end, Janse won the SGP its first seat in the Vlissingen city council, suggesting that the SGP electorate does not necessarily have a problem with female candidates either (of course, this was only one local election).

In conclusion, it can be stated that there is no discrepancy between the SGP's views on passive female suffrage and its conception of democracy. Given the differing roles between men and women in the Bible, the SGP's gender policies are a logical consequence of the Biblically based politics it espouses. It accepts democracy, though not wholeheartedly as it rejects sovereignty of the people and expressly acknowledges Churchill's qualification of democracy as 'the least poor political system so far', and considers theocracy to be not an alternative to democracy, but an ideological guideline for a democratic government, much like socialism, liberalism or Christian democracy. The role of men and women as seen by the SGP fits in this ideology, and thus meshes with its conception of democracy.

How does this combine with the judgement of various courts, including the ECHR, that the SGP's practices *are*, in fact, not acceptable in a democratic society? These legal rulings do seem to suggest an insurmountable conflict between the SGP's gender views and democratic values. Alas, that is not the question this thesis seeks to answer— the topic is not the SGP's gender views in relation to democratic values in general, but the SGP's gender views and democracy *as perceived by the SGP*. After all, given society's broad rejection it was worth analyzing how the SGP itself justifies this, as this will help us understand the SGP's motivations and ideology, possibly aiding in settling future conflicts. The end of the SGP's girl troubles is not necessarily in sight – despite the party's landmark decision in 2013 and the historical election of Lilian Janse in 2014, it's still possible for future conflict to occur. What if, for instance, Janse turns out to be a onetime exception? Changing the party regulations to make female candidacies possible is not the same as actually letting female candidacies happen. If female candidacies remain rare or nonexistent after Janse, new debate on the SGP and gender equality may arise.

While it has been touched upon in this thesis, future research will do well to place a greater emphasis on the role of SGP women themselves. After all, they are at the core of this issue. Plenty of scholars and students discussing the SGP, myself included, talk about the SGP's gender policies, but rarely about the SGP women themselves. Petra van Leeuwen, with her 2007 book *Vrouwen van de SGP* ('women of the SGP')

which is briefly cited in this thesis, has made a good start by interviewing several of these illusive SGP women. Future research should focus on a more thorough sociological portrait of this group and their views, as well as a historical inquiry into the role of women in the SGP throughout its existence. One might expect this to be limited due to the SGP's views on female political participation, but that is merely an assumption – is it true? Did women play no role at all in the history of the SGP until the emergence of people like Riet Grabijn-van de Putten and Lilian Janse, or did they exert background influence on the SGP's all-male cadre? This is a topic worth exploring in the future.

6. Acknowledgements

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