

Zeitschrift: Schweizerische Zeitschrift für Religions- und Kulturgeschichte = Revue suisse d'histoire religieuse et culturelle = Rivista svizzera di storia religiosa e culturale

Herausgeber: Vereinigung für Schweizerische Kirchengeschichte

Band: 103 (2009)

Artikel: Constructing a Catholic Milieu - Visual Catholic Temperance Propaganda in the Netherlands, ca. 1900-1945

Autor: Dols, Chris

DOI: <https://doi.org/10.5169/seals-130446>

Nutzungsbedingungen

Die ETH-Bibliothek ist die Anbieterin der digitalisierten Zeitschriften auf E-Periodica. Sie besitzt keine Urheberrechte an den Zeitschriften und ist nicht verantwortlich für deren Inhalte. Die Rechte liegen in der Regel bei den Herausgebern beziehungsweise den externen Rechteinhabern. Das Veröffentlichen von Bildern in Print- und Online-Publikationen sowie auf Social Media-Kanälen oder Webseiten ist nur mit vorheriger Genehmigung der Rechteinhaber erlaubt. [Mehr erfahren](#)

Conditions d'utilisation

L'ETH Library est le fournisseur des revues numérisées. Elle ne détient aucun droit d'auteur sur les revues et n'est pas responsable de leur contenu. En règle générale, les droits sont détenus par les éditeurs ou les détenteurs de droits externes. La reproduction d'images dans des publications imprimées ou en ligne ainsi que sur des canaux de médias sociaux ou des sites web n'est autorisée qu'avec l'accord préalable des détenteurs des droits. [En savoir plus](#)

Terms of use

The ETH Library is the provider of the digitised journals. It does not own any copyrights to the journals and is not responsible for their content. The rights usually lie with the publishers or the external rights holders. Publishing images in print and online publications, as well as on social media channels or websites, is only permitted with the prior consent of the rights holders. [Find out more](#)

Download PDF: 09.02.2026

ETH-Bibliothek Zürich, E-Periodica, <https://www.e-periodica.ch>

Constructing a Catholic Milieu – Visual Catholic Temperance Propaganda in the Netherlands, ca. 1900–1945*

Chris Dols

Yes, the sin of drinking is the curse and the destruction of the family! [...] O, who counts them, those frightful, long nights – for wives, mothers and children – full of anxiety, moaning, and crying, until the drunkard, the executioner of the family, finally shows up: staggering, clumping, raving or, even more painfully, sometimes senseless and bestial [...].¹

During the first half of the 20th century, Dutch Catholics marched through the streets of many towns and villages, often led by clergymen, and accompanied by temperance bands. In addition, they attended lectures and seminars on temperance, read temperance magazines and papers, and flourished wooden swords with which they hoped to throw «King Alcohol», that «Tyrant», off his throne. The Catholic temperance movement certainly was not a uniquely Dutch phenomenon. It was part of a much larger European and Atlantic culture of religious tem-

* I gratefully acknowledge the generous help I have received from Marjet Derkx (Radboud University Nijmegen), Franziska Metzger (University of Fribourg), Marit Monteiro (Radboud University Nijmegen), and Benjamin Ziemann (University of Sheffield). This article can be regarded as a synthesis of my publications in Dutch about the history of the Catholic temperance movement in the Netherlands, especially: Chris Dols, *De geesel der eeuw. Katholieke drankbestrijding in Nederland 1852–1945*, Zaltbommel 2007; Chris Dols, *Koning Alcohol. Katholieke drankbestrijding in Limburg 1897–1945*, Zaltbommel 2008; Chris Dols, *Dwing'land Alcohol. Een discours-analyse van de katholieke drankweerpropaganda in Limburg*, in: *Publications de la Société Historique et Archéologique dans le Limbourg*, 144 (2008), 125–134.

¹ Voor vader en moeder. Oudersboekje door de Limburgsche Onderwijzers-Club, Roermond 1908, 25. «Ja, de drankzonde is de vloek en de ondergang van het huisgezin! [...] O, wie telt ze, die bange, lange nachten, doorwaakt, doorzucht, doorscheid door echtgenooten, moeders en kinderen, in angstige afwachting van den dronkaard, den beul der familie, die eindelijk opdaagt, waggelend, stommelend, razend of, pijnlijker nog, soms wezenloos en dierlijk [...].»

perance movements. These manifested themselves in the 19th century, and struggled against one of the most prominent consequences of modernization and the industrial revolution: alcoholism.

The context in which temperance activities took place in the past has been studied intensively.² However, when looked at more closely, the historiography is rather one-dimensional. Its major shortcoming is an excessive concern with the political and legal aspects and, as a consequence, a lack of attention to factors related to the Catholic religion.³ By analyzing the visual Catholic temperance propaganda in the Netherlands as a cultural discourse, set against the background of the first decades of the 20th century, this article attempts to contribute to the international debate on Catholic temperance in two ways.

On the one hand, I argue that «alcoholism», alongside a cluster of genuine problems, was a caricaturized *cultural construct*.⁴ Clergymen were the main group of Catholic temperance reformers in the Netherlands. On local, diocesan and national levels, they drew other elites into their temperance activities, including bankers, lawyers, doctors, teachers, politicians, intellectuals, and noblewomen. The Dutch Catholic temperance movement served as a vehicle of communication that enhanced the integration of the Catholic milieu in the modern society. Catholic temperance reformers, often clergymen, tried to build a homogeneous Catholic milieu, by the propagation of key values such as domesticity, temperance, and sobriety, and by the depiction of alcoholism as the Catholic religion's most abhorrent anti-image, especially among (illiterate) working class people.⁵ What clergymen labelled «alcoholism» was, of course, based on their specific, narrow, class-bound world view.⁶ Their perception of alcoholism, moreover, was embedded in a lar-

² Brian Harrison, *Drink and the Victorians. The Temperance Question in England 1815–1872*, London 1971; A. E. Dingle, *The Campaign for Prohibition in Victorian England. The United Kingdom Alliance 1872–1895*, London 1980; Lilian Shiman, *Crusade against Drink in Victorian England*, Basingstoke 1988; Barbara Epstein, *The Politics of Domesticity. Women, Evangelism, and Temperance in nineteenth-century America*, Middletown 1981; Ian Tyrell, *Woman's World, Woman's Empire. The Woman's Christian Temperance Union in International Perspective 1880–1930*, Chapel Hill 1991; Carol Mattingly, *Well-tempered Women. Nineteenth-century Temperance Rhetoric*, Carbondale 1998; James Roberts, *Drink, Temperance and the Working Class in nineteenth-century Germany*, Boston 1984.

³ The following studies about the Catholic temperance movement – somewhat outdated but still useful – can be regarded as influential: Joan Bland, *Hibernian Crusade. The Story of the Catholic Total Abstinence Union of America*, Washington 1951; A. E. Dingle/Brian Harrison, *Cardinal Manning as Temperance Reformer*, in: *The Historical Journal*, 12 (1969), 485–510.

⁴ In this I follow for instance the Dutch sociologist Jaap van der Stel and the Scottish historian Callum Brown: Jaap van der Stel, *Drinken, drank en dronkenschap. Vijf eeuwen drankbestrijding en alcoholzorgverlening in Nederland*, Hilversum 1995 and Callum Brown, *The Death of Christian Britain. Understanding Secularisation 1800–2000*, London 2001.

⁵ Whether Catholics have indeed «subjectified» the temperance propaganda is a question to which I do not seek an answer here.

⁶ Alphons Ariëns, *Wat wij willen*, in: R.K. Drankbestrijding in Nederland, 's-Hertogenbosch, undated, 19–25: 21.

ger discourse in which narratives and metaphors of indulgence and the re-claimed classical virtue of temperance were used to stress what was «right» and «wrong» in Catholic culture.

Moreover, I argue too that the temperance culture was not merely a textual culture but also a *visual* one.⁷ In the 20th century, the temperance press proved very helpful in forming and reforming public opinion. In 1908, 1,235 brochures, 37,000 songs, postcards, posters and envelopes, 136,000 pamphlets and 13,797 badges were sold nationwide.⁸ Eleven years later, one local Catholic propaganda club bought 200 posters for use in classrooms.⁹ While artists were urged to paint the «problem of alcoholism» in very intense colours, Dutch clergymen and laypeople wrote temperance articles, poems and stories. Clergymen and laypeople thus constructed the temperance discourse together, although it seems that clergymen were the most important and influential constructors of the discourse, as was the case in other countries as well.¹⁰

The first section of this article turns to the conceptual and historical framework. Because it is almost impossible to understand the propaganda without knowledge of the Catholic temperance movement in the Netherlands, the second section reviews the rise and fall of the temperance organizations. The third and fourth sections analyze the movement's narratives and metaphors.

Concepts and Historical Developments

The first important conceptual tool that must be linked to visual Catholic temperance propaganda in the Netherlands, one which is grounded in the thought of post-modern scholars, is the notion of discourse, and the analysis of discourse.¹¹ A discourse can be characterized as a meta-narrative, a set of gendered, class-bound dispositions, that constructs both individual and collective identities and everyday behaviour. Disseminated by texts and images, a discourse does not exist independently but is produced by individuals and groups for a purpose. The production, form and meaning of discourse can be illuminated by applying the concepts and methods of discourse analysis. Discourse analysis understands texts and

⁷ This also has been argued in the recently published: Evelien Dekens/Julie Debrauwere/Davy Jacobs, *Pierre le Buveur et Jean l'Abstinent. Het laat 19de-eeuwse en vroeg 20ste-eeuwse anti-alcoholoffensief in beeld*, Hasselt 2008.

⁸ Katholiek Documentatie Centrum (KDC), Nijmegen, Archive Sobriëtas (AS): 415.

⁹ KDC, AS: 2381.

¹⁰ See, for example: Dekens, Debrauwere and Jacobs, *Pierre le Buveur et Jean l'Abstinent*; Chris Dols, *Marching Towards Heaven. The Temperance Culture of the League of the Cross*, unpublished paper, University of Dundee 2009.

¹¹ This passage is based on: R. Gill, Discourse Analysis, in: MartinBauer/George Gaskell (ed.), *Qualitative Research with Text, Image and Sound. A Practical Handbook*, London 2000, 172–190; Geoff Danaher/Tony Schirato/Jen Webb, *Understanding Foucault*, London 2000. I owe this reference to Julie Debrauwere.

images as not only the products of social reality but also constructors of this reality. They are therefore explicitly treated as parts of social systems, connected to knowledge and power.

The second concept, the «Catholic Communication Society» («katholische Kommunikationsgemeinschaft»), has been developed into a wider conceptual framework by the Swiss historian Franziska Metzger in order to analyze Catholic discourses.¹² In Metzger's perception of 19th century history communication between the different groups in a milieu forms a backbone of culture. Elites resorted to discursive mechanisms («diskursive Mechanismen») which fostered a homogeneous Catholic milieu, including confessionalization (i.e. stimulation of religiosity), clericalization (i.e. stimulation of hierarchy and power of priesthood), and disciplinization (i.e. stimulation of behaviour that complied with the Christian virtue of *temperantia*).

The third useful concept is that of «feminization of piety».¹³ The Scottish historian Callum Brown applied this notion, which originated in US historiography that described Protestant bourgeois culture, to British history. In *The Death of Christian Britain*, he describes how Christian discourse stimulated the feminization of piety. «After 1800», Brown writes, «the religiosity of women was paramount to the evangelical scheme for moral revolution. They were regarded as having special qualities which placed them at the fulcrum of family sanctity».¹⁴ In dominant clerical discourse, women's religiosity became privileged and centrally located in the home, while men were typified as gamblers and drinkers, and thereby equated with heathens, who were in need of spiritual guidance and religious conversion.

Two interwoven historical processes, the Catholic revival and the emergence of a modern temperance movement, resulted in the establishment of Catholic temperance societies in the Netherlands. How did this development take place historically? In the aftermath of the Protestant Revolt against the Spanish rulers, Dutch Catholics were second class citizens until the end of the 18th century, both socially and culturally. They were forbidden by law to observe their religion in public. After 1795, a new national constitution granted Catholics equal rights with their Protestant fellow-citizens. Later, in 1853, Rome restored the Episcopal hierarchy, thus transforming the Netherlands into a regular Church province. The second half of the 19th and the first half of the 20th century was a period in which Dutch Catholics energetically strove to regain cultural, political and intellectual power. This struggle for emancipation resulted in the construction of a distinct Catholic milieu, in which clergymen acted as entrepreneurs or milieu-mana-

¹² Franziska Metzger, Konstruktionsmechanismen der katholischen Kommunikationsgemeinschaft, in: *Schweizerische Zeitschrift für Religions- und Kulturgeschichte*, 99 (2005), 433–447.

¹³ Bernhard Schneider, Feminisierung der Religion im 19. Jahrhundert. Perspektiven einer These im Kontext des deutschen Katholizismus, in: *Trierer Theologische Zeitschrift*, 111 (2002), 123–147.

¹⁴ Brown, *The Death of Christian Britain* (see footnote 4), 59.

gers.¹⁵ They set up clubs and societies in all kinds of worldly domains, through which they communicated with their flocks. The temperance movement was one of these. The struggle against alcoholism was a goal, the famous apologist and temperance reformer Gerard Brom (1882–1959) once wrote, but at the same time a means «to strengthen our Catholic race».¹⁶

The Catholics were not the first temperance reformers in the Netherlands.¹⁷ As early as 1842, a national organisation had appeared, called the «Dutch Society». It was ideologically and religiously neutral, and strongly influenced by the ideals of the Enlightenment.¹⁸ The founders of the Dutch Society believed in the possibility of engineering society. Mankind no longer had to wait and see what would happen, as it had for centuries. No, the future was malleable.¹⁹ The «modern temperance movement» differed from older attempts to fight alcohol because it regarded alcoholism as a «societal problem»: “A terrible monster [alcoholism] wanders through the Netherlands. It has no teeth nor jaws; it has no flesh nor bones. Nonetheless it goes through the deepest rivers, climbs up hills, and crawls through the bushes. This monster does not hide in woods, and swamps or deep caves. No, it creeps along footpaths, and shows up threatening in towns and villages [...]. [...] This monster walks about everywhere, in order to bring forward destruction, ruin people, drive away prosperity and rest, cause misery and brutalization, and transform virtue and honour into crime and dissoluteness.”²⁰

Thinking of alcoholism as a «societal problem» nourished «societal solutions», i.e. the scientific study of alcoholism, the foundation of temperance organisations, and the struggle for legal measures.²¹ In the wake of the Dutch Society, socialist, liberal, Protestant and Catholic temperance organizations developed,

¹⁵ This term, «milieu-managers», is coined by the German historian Olaf Blaschke. Olaf Blaschke, *Die Kolonisierung der Laienwelt. Priester als Milieumanager und die Kanäle klerikaler Kuratel*, in: Olaf Blaschke/Frank-Michael Kuhlemann (ed.), *Religion im Kaiserreich. Milieus, Mentalitäten, Krisen*, Gütersloh 1996, 93–135.

¹⁶ Gerard Brom, *God wil het! Rede op den Tweeden Limburgschen Drankbestrijdersdag*, Maastricht 1907, 7. «Drankweer is ons doel, maar een middel tegelijk voor nog grooter bedoelingen: de versterking van ons roomsche ras». Brom, by the way, was not a clergyman.

¹⁷ Van der Stel, *Drinken, drank en dronkenschap* (see footnote 4), 149–165 and Maartje Janse, *De afschaffers. Publieke opinie, organisatie en politiek in Nederland 1840–1880*, Amsterdam 2007, 129–142.

¹⁸ Dols, *De geesel der eeuw* (see footnote *), 24. Its full name was: «Nederlandse Vereniging tot Afschaffing van Sterke Drank».

¹⁹ Auke van der Woud, *Het nieuwe land. Het ontstaan van het moderne Nederland*, Amsterdam 2006, 12.

²⁰ Joannes van Mulukom, *De kwaal van onzen tijd*, Maastricht 1929, 5. «Een vreeselijk monster dwaalt er rond in Nederland. Tanden en klauwen heeft het niet; vleesch en beenen heeft het niet. Toch waadt het door de diepste rivieren, toch klimt het over heuvels en dringt het door de struiken. Want het monster houdt zich niet op in bosschen en verbergt zich niet in moerassen of diepe holten, maar het kruip langs voetpaden en wegen en vertoont zich dreigend in steden en dorpen [...]. [...] Overal waart dat monster rond om alles te verwoesten, mensen te verderven, welvaart en rust te verdrijven, ellende en verdierlijking te brengen, deugd en eerbaarheid te veranderen in misdaad en liederlijkheid.»

²¹ Johannes Theunisse, Jan Frederik Vlekke, 1849–1903. *Ethiek en rentabiliteit in een ondernemersleven*, Tilburg 1966, 208; Van der Stel, *Drinken, drank en dronkenschap* (see footnote 4), 153–156.

mostly during the second half of the 19th century. By the turn of the century, the whole movement in the Netherlands had become ideologically and religiously «pillarized».

Organized Catholic Temperance Reform in the Netherlands

One of the first organized Catholic efforts to fight alcoholism was undertaken in 1852.²² Every attempt, however, to establish a strong temperance society failed until the «League of the Cross» («Kruisverbond») was founded in 1895 by the priest Alphons Ariëns (1860–1928), in the industrial town of Enschede.²³ This was inspired by the League of the Cross founded by the English Cardinal Henry Manning (1808–1892).

The morality that showed Catholics how to live on earth in order to end up happy in heaven, taught that alcoholism was the «mother of all sins». The battle against alcoholism therefore was in part a «moral crusade». But social-Christian motives for the struggle may not be neglected. Ariëns, regularly typified as a social reformer, had his eye on the structures that made living a dignified life almost impossible for the working class people.²⁴ His battle against social injustice originated in close personal knowledge of the conditions in industrial cities such as Enschede.²⁵ The encyclical *Rerum Novarum* (1891), in which pope Leo XIII (1810–1903) directly addressed the social question, provided encouragement. Leo XIII highlighted humanity, neighbourly love and solidarity. Although the encyclical did not mention the temperance movement explicitly, clergymen saw *Rerum Novarum* as a suitable frame of reference for their temperance actions. Later on, Pope Pius X (1835–1914) did connect the temperance movement to the «social question», claiming that there was no more urgent social problem than alcoholism.²⁶

From the age of sixteen, Catholic men could become members of the branches of the League of the Cross.²⁷ They were not only recruited among the working classes but also drawn from the middle and upper classes, although recruiting the latter turned out to be difficult. The most important pledge was that of abstaining from alcohol, partially or totally. While a number of the members became total

²² Dols, *De geesel der eeuw* (see footnote *), 33–34.

²³ Dols, *De geesel der eeuw* (see footnote *), 39–41.

²⁴ Peter Nissen, *Sociale gerechtigheid en de deugd van de matigheid aan het eind van de negentiende eeuw*, in: *Stap terug, sprong vooruit. Matigheid als fundament van de toekomst*, Valkenswaard 1995, 13–24.

²⁵ Gerard Brom, *Alfons Ariëns*, Amsterdam 1941, I, 435.

²⁶ Alphons Rijken, *Ons getuigschrift*, in: R.K. Drankbestrijding in Nederland, 's-Hertogenbosch, undated, 11–18; Alfons Ariëns, *Wat Rome zegt*, 's-Hertogenbosch 1924, 12–16 and 26–30.

²⁷ Gerardus Kraan, *Wat willen het Kruisverbond en de Mariavereeniging?*, 's-Hertogenbosch 1922; L. Simonis, *Onze organisatie*, in: R.K. Drankbestrijding in Nederland, 's-Hertogenbosch, undated, 26–32; Marius Lamers, *Hoe werken de volwassenen?*, in: R.K. Drankbestrijding in Nederland, 's-Hertogenbosch, undated, 34–43; André van de Venne, *Alcoholisme en Kruisverbond. Eene rede*, Maastricht 1910.

abstainers or teetotallers («geheelonthouders»), others promised not to drink strong alcoholic drinks like gin, and to be temperate in drinking beer and wine («afschaffers»).²⁸ Furthermore, members were expected to wear a badge, to attend the temperance lectures and seminars, to read the temperance lecture, and to participate in public temperance marches. They also supported the League financially by paying a contribution.

The League of the Cross took off quickly. Laymen governed many of the local branches, but clergymen invariably demonstrated that they were the leading echelon. They were officially appointed by the bishops as supervisors and also paid regular home visits, thus presenting themselves as the true leaders.²⁹ They also participated in temperance activities. The clergy, however, was not unanimous in matters of alcohol and temperance. Keen on a glass of wine or beer, some regarded the battle against alcoholism as «Calvinist», and therefore essentially non-Catholic.³⁰ These clergymen did not want to engage in what they saw as a «rigorist movement».

In 1895, the first female equivalent of the League was founded, again in Enschede.³¹ It was called the «Society of Mary» («Mariavereniging»). The «societal disease» of alcoholism could not be cured as long as women remained excluded, Ariëns argued. He wanted, moreover, to «emancipate» women, and therefore portrayed the woman as «the powerful queen, yes the sole master in the nursery room». If women were willing to change the habit of drinking, he claimed, they would change it. If not, the habit would never change.³² In this regard, Ariëns followed the same path as did both Catholic and Protestant equivalent movements in other countries; everywhere women became the acclaimed saviours from alcoholism.³³ Ariëns articulated the notion of a woman's «serving love» («dienende liefde»), i.e. a self-sacrifice in favour of the well-being of the family, but without becoming a slave) both within the temperance movement, and in other Catholic sub-domains such as the Catholic Women's League.³⁴ Members of the Society of Mary had to be at least sixteen years old and took the same pledge as

²⁸ Gerardus Kraan, *Als één man! Practisch handboekje voor alle Roomsche drankweermannen en drankbestrijders van Nederland*, Helmond 1911.

²⁹ These supervisors were often so-called «geestelijke adviseurs». Ludovicus Rogier, *Herdenken en herzien. Verzamelde opstellen van L.J. Rogier*, Bilthoven 1974, 140.

³⁰ Marit Monteiro, *Gods Predikers. Dominicanen in Nederland 1795–2000*, Hilversum 2008, 216.

³¹ Dols, *De geesel der eeuw* (see footnote *), 44–45.

³² Gerardus Kraan, *Dr. Ariëns aan het woord. Eene beknopte uiteenzetting van het alcoholisme en deszelfs bestrijding*, Maastricht 1906, 33. Also: Maria Brabants, *Vrouw en kind in de drankweer*, Antwerpen 1921; André van de Venne, *Het alcoholisme en de vrouw*, Maastricht 1910; Alfons Ariëns, *Ariëns spreekt tot de r.k. vrouwen*, 's-Hertogenbosch 1930.

³³ Shiman, *Crusade against Drink in Victorian England* (see footnote 2); Catherine Prelinger, *Charity, Challenge, and Change. Religious Dimensions of the Mid-Nineteenth Century Women's Movement in Germany*, New York 1987.

³⁴ Marjet Derkx, *Dienende liefde en feministerij*, in: Marit Monteiro/Gerard Rooijakkers/ Joost Rosendaal (ed.), *De dynamiek van Religie en Cultuur. Geschiedenis van het Nederlands katholicisme*, Kampen 1993, 181–208.

the members of the League of the Cross. However, the women had extra tasks, such as organizing charity activities, preventing their husbands from going to an inn after work, and taking care of their children.

A sub-division of the Society of Mary, the «Society of the Holy Anna» («Sint Annavereniging»), was subsequently established, which aimed at children.³⁵ Promoting a dislike of alcohol could not start early enough. Ariëns wrote that God had conquered Satan with Angels, and that He would conquer alcoholism with children.³⁶ Generally, the parents of these children were members of the Society. They promised to raise their children in total abstinence until they were twelve years old. Sometimes the young Catholics even had to sign a contract, to ensure that the pledge would be taken and respected. Once a year the children, on occasion several thousands of them, came together for a propaganda day.

Catholic boys and girls between twelve and sixteen were united in the «League of Boys» («Jongensbond») and the «League of Girls» («Meisjesbond»).³⁷ Some Leagues only accepted members who promised to be teetotallers, others also accepted members who promised to exercise restraint with respect to alcohol. Thus from the age of twelve onward the Catholic temperance movement was gendered, in accordance to the common assumption among clergymen that man and woman were created differently in order to complement each other. It was this difference that had to be propagated.³⁸ The boys and girls, especially, marched through the streets of Dutch towns and villages, cheering, singing, and making music.

While qualifying the temperance movement as part of the Catholic pillarization process, its public activities can also be interpreted as important elements of popular religious culture. Together, the boys and girls engaged in what the Dutch historian Gerard Rooijakkers called «celebrating God» («vierend van God»).³⁹ The temperance activities unified, created confessional militancy, made the members of the movement visible in society, and, above all, invigorated religious fervour.

Once various temperance societies had been founded in Dutch towns and villages the call for coordination increased. The goals of the national organisation Sobriëtas, founded in 1899, were to propagate the Christian virtue of *temperantia*, and fight alcoholism.⁴⁰ It organized the Catholic battle against alcoholism in the Netherlands, by overseeing all the local branches of the temperance societies.⁴¹ Establishing an umbrella organization turned out to be a good move, as Sobriëtas continued to grow until the 1920s. Alongside clergymen such as Ariëns, Alphons Rijken (1859–1924) and Gerardus Kraan (1875–1930), and laymen like

³⁵ Dols, *De geesel der eeuw* (see footnote *), 45–52.

³⁶ Dols, *De geesel der eeuw* (see footnote *), 45.

³⁷ Dols, *De geesel der eeuw* (see footnote *), 52–57.

³⁸ Peter Selten, *Het apostolaat der jeugd. Katholieke jeugdbewegingen in Nederland 1900–1941*, Amersfoort 1991, 117. The entire Catholic youth movement was constructed upon this assumption.

³⁹ Jan Bluyssen/Gerard Rooijakkers, *God verborgen en nabij. Religie als heilig spel*, Amsterdam 2002, 239.

⁴⁰ Dols, *De geesel der eeuw* (see footnote *), 62–67.

⁴¹ Dols, *De geesel der eeuw* (see footnote *), 62–67.

Charles Ruijs de Beerenbrouck (1873–1936), Arnold Engels (1869–1940) and Jan-Frederik Vlekke (1849–1903), laywomen like A. de van der Schueren, C.M. Maseland-Nieuwenhuis, E. Hermans-Geelen and M. Engels-Brinkhuis also became leading figures.⁴² In 1921, when the membership of the movement was at its height, Sobriëtas had a membership of 177,879, although it may not be assumed that every member was equally driven and enthusiastic.⁴³

In the 1920s, the movement lost influence, partly due to the «death of King Alcohol».⁴⁴ Public intoxication and the consumption of alcoholic drinks had declined visibly. The membership of Sobriëtas shrank, and the new generation of adolescents was far less enthusiastic than their predecessors had been. In order to counteract the decline, Ariëns decreed that Sobriëtas had to widen its scope. Besides alcoholism, modern dance and clothing, «an eagerness» for cinemas, sports and cigarettes were also deemed «dangerous».⁴⁵ In 1930 the «New Direction» was proclaimed officially.⁴⁶ This did not produce the desired results. Conflicts and uncertainty were here to stay. The membership continued to fall. The organisational diagnosis was hard but realistic: «dying, eroding, growing nowhere».⁴⁷ The Second World War resulted in a further decline of support for the cause. «More than ever we need to lean on God's mercy», the 1941 report of Sobriëtas states.⁴⁸ Many local branches of the societies were dissolved.⁴⁹ After the Second World War, in a general atmosphere of restoration, the temperance reformers re-established Sobriëtas.⁵⁰ However, there was not much sympathy left. A temperance reformer wrote in 1949: «I did not meet anyone who complimented me on doing good work by practising total abstinence. On the contrary, most of the people tell us we are crazy (...).»⁵¹ But Sobriëtas managed to survive. In the 1990s, it dissolved its membership, and turned into a funding organisation.⁵² At present, Sobriëtas is one of the oldest Catholic organisations left in a de-pillarized Dutch society.

⁴² Gerard Brom, *De nieuwe kruistocht. Drankweergeschiedenis van Rooms Nederland 1895–1907*, Helmond 1909.

⁴³ Dols, *De geesel der eeuw* (see footnote *), 96.

⁴⁴ Dols, *De geesel der eeuw* (see footnote *), 102–106.

⁴⁵ Dols, *De geesel der eeuw* (see footnote *), 102–106.

⁴⁶ Marius Lamers, *De nieuwe richting van Sobriëtas*, 's-Hertogenbosch 1931.

⁴⁷ KDC, AS: 2354.

⁴⁸ KDC, AS: 435.

⁴⁹ KDC, AS: 435 and 436.

⁵⁰ KDC, AS: 437, 438 and 439.

⁵¹ Sociaal Historisch Centrum voor Limburg (SHCL), Maastricht, Archive Maastrichtse Maria-vereniging, EAN 670, 2. «Ikzelf ben tenminste nog niemand tegengekomen, die me 'n pluim op de hoed stak, omdat ik zo'n prachtig werk doe door geheelonthoudster te zijn. In tegen-deel, het grootste percentage verklaart ons in hun hart voor gek [...].»

⁵² Dols, *De geesel der eeuw* (see footnote *), 106.

Temperance Narratives

What dominant narratives were part of the Catholic temperance discourse in the Netherlands? Figure 1, which is accompanied by the text «No, mother, I will never...not a single drop» («Neen, moeder ik nooit...geen druppel»), tells the melodramatic narrative of the disruption of harmonious family life. From the 19th century on, Catholic clerics propagated the family as extremely valuable both socially and religiously, while also extremely vulnerable. In their perception of the home as a micro-cosmos, temperance reformers followed Henry Manning, who wrote: “If the homes of the people are orderly, peaceful, industrious, and moral, then there is a broad foundation upon which the public peace and the commonwealth can securely rest; but when these homes are wrecked, as they are wrecked by intemperance more than by any other cause – when fathers and mothers set the example to their sons and daughters, and when the bonds of domestic life, the authority of parents, and the obedience of children, are set aside, all is ruined. [...] Unless there is in the homes of the people the order, the peace, and the solidity which come from sobriety, there will come a danger which no legislation can avert, nor any power of man control.”⁵³

Figure 1 shows a wrecked home. The cheaply boarded floor, the demolished brickwork and the hole in the window illustrate the desolate life of this family, which is the product of the workman’s life of drunkenness. He stumbles out of the room with the bottle still in his hand. Alcoholism has destroyed him, both mentally and emotionally. His eyes and cheekbones reflect apathy. He is not depicted as a family man, as a role model. Here the workman is clearly inferior to his wife and children. Two little wooden benches and a bed constitute the entire property of the family. The woman’s clothes have been mended with patches. Apparently, there is no money to buy new clothes. The boy has understood the problems alcoholism can cause. He promises his mother never to drink, not a single drop. She desperately lays her hand upon his head. The other child sleeps, symbolizing innocence.

⁵³ Paul Kegan (ed.), *The Temperance Speeches of Cardinal Manning*, London 1894, 62–63.

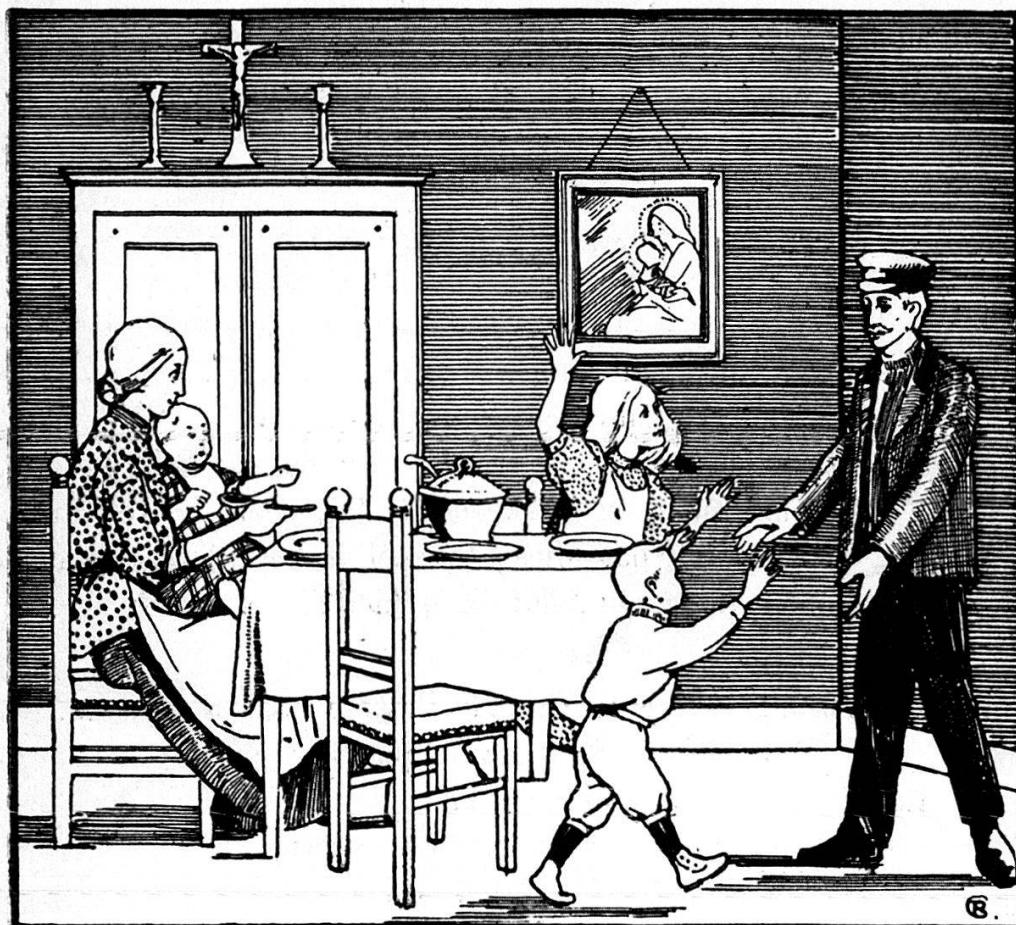
Figure 1



NEEN, MOEDER IK NOOIT . . . GEEN DRUPPEL.

Catholic temperance reformers did not always resort to a negative, frightening narrative. Figure 2 is a telling example of a positive temperance narrative. The text under the picture says «gladdening will follow suffering» («na lijden komt verblijden»). A working class family is depicted. The father, who has not gone to the inn after work, comes home happy. A meal is waiting for him. The picture of Mary and little Jesus on the wall is a reflection of the mother's care for the children, who cannot wait to hug the workman, and have already started running towards him. Money that the father has not spent on drink is spent on decent clothing and furniture. The crucifix on the closet symbolizes piety, another blessing of the father's virtuous life.

Figure 2



Na lijden komt verblijden.

When women do not clean the house and prepare dinner, they develop the drinking habits of their husbands, and thus destroy family life. This is the central narrative in figure 3. The main characters are members of a working class family. The starving workman has returned home immediately after a hard day of work, having resisted the appeal of the doors that open into an atmosphere of the alcoholic spirits that he loves. But he is angry at his wife, because all he finds is dirt and disorder: the food has not been prepared, and lies on the floor. It is not the mother who is using the broom, but the little child, ignored by its mother. Where prosperity, love and order should reign, poverty and violent quarrels dominate. There is only one option left for the workman, to spend the final hours of the day at the inn, seeking the comfort he cannot find at home.

Figure 3



The narrative of the battle between «the good» (temperance) and «the evil» (alcoholism) was repeated over and over again. The didactical power of figure 4 comes from the fact that both the blessings of a temperate life and the consequences of an intemperate life are depicted. The devil and the archangel try to convince the boy that he should take «the right» direction. Of course, the devil wants the boy to walk the road of alcoholism, while the archangel points to the road of temperance. Temperance will lead to «happiness» («geluk») and the Church. Houses with beautiful gardens express prosperity. The growing flowers and trees symbolize life. Alcoholism, on the other hand, starts in the tavern («herberg»), and leads directly to poor housing, the hospital («hospitaal»), the prison («gevangenis»), and ultimately to the graveyard. Flowers and trees are absent on this side, and the one tree that is visible is dying.

Figure 4



The central narrative in figure 5 evokes poverty, theft and, above all, betrayal of loved ones. A man and woman, both with a working class background, are the main characters. He is a drinker. His partner has to make some extra money working at home, because otherwise, this family will not survive. The husband's drinking habit costs a great deal – money that ought to have been spent on the necessities of life. A basket full of clothing is the visible fruit of a day of labour. She has worked so hard that she cannot manage to keep her eyes open, although the work is not yet done. While she was working, he was out drinking and apparently, has spent all the money. He returns home, but not to end the day together with his wife. Unable to resist his alcoholism, while his wife is sleeping, he carries off the sewing machine to sell it, thus extinguishing the family's last hope.

Figure 5



Temperance Metaphors

What metaphors did Catholic temperance reformers in the Netherlands use frequently? In figure 6, attention is drawn primarily to the temperance metaphor of King Alcohol, which expresses domination, power, and hierarchy. It was intended to generate religious militancy. A skinny king, the personification of alcoholism, sits on a throne of barrels, against a dark background. The expression on his face is terrifying. He is depicted as the direct rival of the one to whom the po-

wer should belong: Jesus Christ. With his foot, King Alcohol crushes a lily, which symbolizes purity. A skull is part of the royal necklace, another skull lies on the ground, representing death. A monster and an aggressive snake, with its mouth open, accompany the king. The snake refers to the story of Adam and Eve, and embodies evil. With one hand the king holds a glass triumphantly, while the other is a clenched fist. He certainly has a reason to be triumphant. His power – expressed by the central position in the composition – has overcome another working class family. The workman is drunk, defeated, and lies in the corner, physically, mentally, and spiritually crippled. The knife in his hand is a reflection of the «suicide of drunkenness». His wife and three children cannot do anything but submit to this «cruel tyranny». The youngest child reaches out its thin little arms, as if it is hungry, while the oldest child rebels against King Alcohol, and clenches its fist too. The thorns, linked to the passion of Christ, symbolize pain and sorrow.

Figure 6



Catholic temperance reformers clung to, even re-invented, the past. The Middle Ages especially, perceived as «unspoiled», furnished inspiration, were mobilized to express discontent with modernity. Figure 7 takes the viewer back to such a medieval setting. It presents the metaphor of «the new crusade». The Catholic Church is an *ecclesia militans*, a fighting Church. The armies of King Alcohol and Sobrietas are lined up opposite of each other. A battle is approaching. A bottle of an alcoholic drink is visible on the shields of King Alcohol's army. The shields

of the Sobriëtas army show the chi-ro symbol, the logo of Sobriëtas, and the symbol of the cross. The words on the banner of the Sobriëtas army, «God wants it» («God wil het»), are the words with which Pope Urban II proclaimed the First Crusade in 1095 («deus vult»). King Alcohol's army is inferior to the Sobriëtas army: the army on the left is overshadowed by clouds and an atmosphere of darkness, while the army on the right is draped in the light of a rising sun. Mary, the first of all of her sex, is appealed to for help: «O Mary, help them» («O Maria, help hen»).

Figure 7



Figure 8 disseminates the temperance metaphor of the barrel. With a prominent barrel of extreme proportions temperance reformers emphasised the magnitude of «the problem». The illustration produces a sense of unity. A number of Catholics are setting «the right example». Everyone should take an axe and start chopping up the immense barrel, because alcoholism gives rise to «general decay» («algemeen verval»), «irreligiousness» («ongodsdienstigheid»), «moral downfall» («onzedelijkheid»), «poverty» («armoede»), «misery» («ellende»), «weakening» («verzwakking»), «hatred» («haat»), and «weakening of the will» («wilsverzwakking»). What were, according to the temperance reformers, the main causes of alcoholism? «Pressure of drinking» («drinkdwang»), «ignorance» («onkunde»), «drink capitalism» («drankkapitaal»), and «habit of drinking» («drinkgewoonte») form the legs of the table on which the barrel rests.

Figure 8



The temperance reformers also provided positive metaphors. Figure 9 illustrates the «vegetable garden of the Catholic temperance movement» («kweekerij der r.k. drankbestrijding») that looks like the Garden of Eden, and is separate from the rest of the world. The rising sun symbolizes resurrection, the blossom mirrors life. Man, woman and child are living temperately. In this way they make the fruits of *temperantia* grow. Very soon, they will be able to harvest «happiness at home» («huiselijk geluk»), «self-exaltation» («zelfopvoeding»), «popular power» («volkskracht»), «Christian love» («christelijke liefde»), «civilisation» («algemeene beschaving»), «prosperity» («welvaart»), «religion» («godsdiest») and «morality» («zedelijkheid»).

Figure 9



Figure 10 shows the frightening temperance metaphor of the graveyard. The central theme is death as the fatal consequence of alcoholism. The darkness contributes greatly to the melodramatic character of the drawing. A drunkard is sitting next to thirteen gravestones. His right hand still holds a bottle. Apathy and dismay dominate. Who has died because of the drinking habit of the main character? The drunkard buried «my domestic bliss» («mijn huiselijk geluk»), «my future» («mijn toekomst»), «my piece of mind» («mijn zielevrede»), «my health» («mijn gezondheid»), «my children's happiness» («het geluk van mijn kinderen»), «my purity» («mijn reinheid»), «faith, hope and love» («geloof, hoop en liefde»), «my prosperity» («mijn welvaart») and «my virtues» («mijn deugden»). The biggest gravestone, in front of which the drunkard sits, belongs to «my religion» («mijn godsdienst»). The only thing left to lose is his life.

Figure 10



Conclusions

In this article, I have attempted to tie together the concepts of «discourse», «Catholic Communication Society» and «female piety», and relate them to visual Catholic temperance propaganda. There was a strong link between the battle against alcoholism and the formation of a homogeneous Catholic milieu, with the virtue of *temperantia* and its division by gender. Clergymen especially, who acted as «milieu-managers», used the battle against alcoholism as a meta-narrative. They provided Catholics, very frequently working class people, with reference points for individual and collective identities.

Nationwide, tens of thousands of Catholics became members of the different temperance societies. Men joined the League of the Cross, while women met each other in the Society of Mary. Boys and girls were members of the League of the Boys and the League of the Girls. The Society of the Holy Anna was founded in order to protect children. The collective battle against alcoholism generated unity and religious militancy.

The strategies employed to construct a Catholic milieu were reflected in the visual discourse of temperance. In a specific historical, social and cultural context, what was defined as «alcoholism» reflected the perceptions and interests of the people who used this word, the temperance reformers. As early as the 1930s, someone noted that reality had been transformed into a caricature: «it [the Catholic temperance movement] has its own press, artists, and writers, who are perfectly able to joke, and lie about the old fashioned Christian moral principles».⁵⁴ Although lucid explanations were essential for the success of the propaganda, exaggerated statistics and dramatized stories were even more important.⁵⁵

Well chosen narratives were used, such as that of the disrupter of harmonious family life, and the battle between the good and the evil, together with metaphors, such as that of the King, and the new crusade. The power of these narratives and metaphors rested not only on what they told, but also on what they excluded from the discourse. Every Catholic, even the illiterate, could understand and remember the narratives and metaphors. Their didactical power rested on their expressive, melodramatic character, and on numerous binary oppositions such as woman/man, drunken/sober, good/wrong, piety/sin, heaven/hell, happy/unhappy, wealthy/poor, aggression/love, faithful/unfaithful and life/death. Important themes were: being intemperate was unchristian and anti-social behaviour; a happy family life was something that made life valuable, but also something that could be destroyed by alcoholism; (working class) men were drunkards, dangerous and undermining social stability; (working class) women were

⁵⁴ H. Hermans, *De sociale beweging*, 's-Hertogenbosch 1932, 7. «Het bezit een eigen pers, eigen teekenkunstenaars en eigen broedschrijvers, die meesterlijk kunnen spotten en liegen over ouderwetsche christelijke zedelijkheidsprincipes.»

⁵⁵ Jaap Braakman, *Gebouwd op schouders van het voorgeslacht. Vier eeuwen geschiedenis van de Franciscus Xaveriusgemeenschap te Enkhuizen ter gelegenheid van het 100-jarig bestaan van het kerkgebouw*, Enkhuizen 2006, chapter 5.

both victims of alcoholism and guardians of piety, responsible for their children's welfare, and for the redemption of their drunken husbands. In the domestic sphere women should heed their religious and moral vocation.

This temperance discourse was anchored in a distinct cultural and religious context, in which emancipatory Catholicism set the tone. Once the process of emancipation had led to self-confidence and triumphalism, and was over its peak, a new generation of Catholics proved less receptive of the discourse. Thus the temperance movement reflected the course of Catholicism in the Netherlands: despite its vigorous public display of homogeneity, in the 1930s differentiation and decline had already begun.

Constructing a Catholic Milieu – Visual Catholic Temperance Propaganda in the Netherlands, ca. 1900–1945

Describing and analyzing the visual Catholic temperance propaganda in the Netherlands as a cultural discourse leads to two main conclusions. On the one hand, 'alcoholism', alongside a cluster of factual problems, was a caricaturized cultural construct. The Dutch Catholic temperance movement served as a vehicle of communication which enhanced the integration of the Catholic milieu into modern society. Catholic temperance reformers, often clergymen, tried to construct a homogeneous milieu through the propagation of key values such as domesticity, temperance, and sobriety, and by the depiction of alcoholism as the Catholic religion's most abhorrent anti-image. Moreover, the temperance culture was not only a textual culture but also a visual one. Well-chosen narratives and metaphors were used which every Catholic could understand and remember. Their didactic power rested on their expressive, melodramatic character, and on the numerous binary oppositions. Important visual themes were: intemperance as un-Christian and anti-social behaviour; happy family life as something that makes life valuable, but can be destroyed by alcoholism; (working-class) men as dangerous drunkards, who undermine social stability; (working-class) women as both victims of alcoholism and guardians of piety, responsible both for their children's welfare and for the redemption of their drunken husbands; the domestic sphere as an arena in which women should find their religious and moral vocation.

Die Konstruktion eines katholischen Milieus – Visuelle katholische Abstinenzpropaganda in den Niederlanden 1900–1945

Die Analyse und Beschreibung der bildlich dargestellten katholischen Abstinenzbewegung in den Niederlanden als einem kulturellen Diskurs führen zu zwei Hauptschlussfolgerungen. Zum einen, dass 'Alkoholismus', neben einer Reihe von sachlichen Problemen, ein kulturelles Konstrukt war. Die niederländische katholische Abstinenzbewegung diente als Kommunikationsinstrument zur Integration des katholischen Milieus in die moderne Gesellschaft. Reformatoren der katholischen Abstinenzbewegung, oft Priester, versuchten ein homogenes Milieu zu konstruieren indem sie Schlüsselwerte wie Häuslichkeit, Abstinenz und Nüchternheit propagierten und damit Alkoholismus als von der katholischen Religion am meisten verabscheutes Feindbild darstellten. Darüber hinaus war die Abstinenzkultur nicht nur eine schriftliche Kultur, sondern auch eine bildliche. Gut gewählte Geschichten und Metaphern, die jeder Katholik verstehen und erinnern konnte, wurden benutzt. Die didaktische Macht beruhte auf deren ausdrucksvollen, melodramatischem Charakter und auf zahlreichen binären Gegensätzen. Wichtige bildliche Themen waren: Zügellosigkeit als unchristliches und asoziales Verhalten; ein glückliches Familienleben als etwas, das das Leben lebenswert macht, aber von Alkoholismus zerstört werden kann; (Arbeiter)Frauen als Opfer des Alkoholismus und Wächter der Frömmigkeit, verantwortlich für das Wohlergehen der Kinder und die Erlösung ihrer betrunkenen Ehemänner; die häusliche Umgebung als Bereich in dem die Frauen ihre religiöse und moralische Berufung finden sollten.

Construction d'un milieu catholique – la propagande visuelle catholique de l'abstinence aux Pays-Bas en 1900–1945

L'analyse et la description du mouvement catholique d'abstinence aux Pays-Bas et de ses illustrations en tant que discours culturel mènent à deux conclusions principales. D'une part, l'*'alcoolisme'* était, outre de nombreux problèmes concrets, un construit culturel. Le mouvement catholique néerlandais d'abstinence servait d'instrument de communication pour intégrer le milieu catholique dans la société moderne. Les réformateurs du mouvement catholique d'abstinence, souvent des prêtres, cherchaient à construire un milieu homogène en propageant les valeurs-clé de l'amour de la famille, de l'abstinence et de la sobriété, et en établissant l'alcoolisme comme l'un des pires ennemis de la religion catholique. D'autre part, la culture de l'abstinence était non seulement écrite, mais également imagée. Son pouvoir didactique reposait sur le caractère expressif et mélodramatique d'histoires et de métaphores choisies avec soin et connues et comprises de tout catholique, ainsi que sur de nombreuses contradictions binaires. Les principales valeurs transmises par l'image étaient les suivantes: l'intempérance est un comportement asocial et indigne d'un chrétien, une vie de famille heureuse rend la vie digne d'être vécue mais elle est menacée par l'alcoolisme, les femmes (ouvrières) sont victimes de l'alcoolisme et gardiennes de la piété, portant la responsabilité du bien-être des enfants et de la rédemption de leurs maris ivres et trouvant leur vocation religieuse et morale au sein du foyer.

Schlüsselbegriffe – Mots clés – Keywords

Abstinenzwerbung – propagande d'abstinence – temperance propaganda, Bildgeschichte – histoire visuelle – visual history, Diskursanalyse – analyse de discours – discourse analysis, Katholische Abstinenzbewegung – mouvement catholique d'abstinence – Catholic temperance movement, Katholisches Milieu – milieu catholique – Catholic milieu, Niederlande – les Pays-Bas – the Netherlands, 1900–1945.

Chris Dols, MPhil., junior researcher at the Radboud University Nijmegen. His current research project is called «Narratives of the New. Engineering, Tradition and Reform in the Dutch Catholic Community, 1958–1974».