A Bouquet of Nettles : remembering the Religious Past in the Netherlands, 1960-1965

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A Bouquet of Nettles. Remembering the Religious Past in the Netherlands, 1960–1965

James C. Kennedy

«On the 27th of May of this year, 1964,» the Protestant writer A.C. de Gooyer intones in commemorative style, «it was exactly 400 years ago that Calvin died in Geneva. In two years time it will be four centuries ago that the great Iconoclasm raged across the Low Countries.» In this way De Gooyer began his book «Het beeld der Vad'ren» («The Image of the Fathers»), a «documentary» on orthodox Protestant life in the period between the First and Second World Wars. But then De Gooyer continues in a more ironic vein:

> «This book makes its appearance between these two memorable dates quite without intention. It does not aim at declaring holy he who lent his name to Calvinism. It also does not want to turn the image of the Calvinist fathers into a holy image, but it neither does it aim at destroying this image. We are not participants in an iconoclasm. We are even prepared to lay a wreath at the foot of the image, but one should not think evil of us if that wreath consists only of oak and laurel. One must allow also allow us a few dandelions and a bouquet of nettles.»[1]

De Gooyer's book did not stand alone. As this brief article shall show, his ironic and consciously detached documentation of the past was part of a broader pattern in the Netherlands in the early 1960s, in which the interwar period in particular was framed as a past from which an ironic detachment was an appropriate, and perhaps the only possible response. It was not necessarily an attitude of hostility, of iconoclasm, toward that past, as De Gooyer insisted – though the 1960s certainly generated a heated anti-traditionalism. It was in the first place a conscious coolness toward a religious tradition. The religious tradition (whether Protestant of Catholic) remained alive, but the links one felt with that past, increasingly, were tenuous and deeply ambivalent. And that required a commemoration of the past consist not only of oak and laurel but dandelions and nettles, not only praise but also a keen eye for the human frailty and moral limits of one's religious heri-

[1] A. C. de Gooyer, *Het beeld der vad'ren. Een documentaire over het leven van het protestants-christelijke volksdeel*, Utrecht 1964, p. 9.

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tage. But perhaps above all, it meant constructing a consciously «modern» self that stood over and against a world still shrouded by pre-modern certainties and prejudices. That «modern» self might yet legitimately cultivate a certain respect, or even a measure of nostalgia, for the «image of the fathers.» But in the last analysis it could only do so with a deep sense of distance toward that past, and with the coolness and irony that were ostensible hallmarks of modernity.

Much of the historiography of the modern period concerned with commemorative culture and collective memory has focused on the nineteenth and first half of the twentieth century, when both the nation-state and its constituent parts constructed grandiose visions of the past, developing rituals and myths to define and sacralize particular forms of identity. This is not only the high point of the nation as object of commemoration, but it is also the time when various religious milieus, particularly the Catholic milieus in Western and Central Europe developed a strongly commemorative culture which developed historical memory out of religious, regional and national sources. Almost all of the papers given at the Fribourg conference, and now presented in this edition, fall into the period from the late nineteenth century until about 1960. But what happens to the commemorative cultures of both the nation and its religious subcultures after 1960? Sustaining these milieus, with their traditional rituals and pieties, constituted a serious problem in the years prior to the 1960s, as Mark Edward Ruff shows in this volume about German Catholicism.

But there is much research that needs be done about commemorative culture, including within religious milieus, *after* 1960. It is probably true that ritual processions, sacralized public ceremonies, hagiographies and other forms of commemorative culture as it had emerged in the nineteenth century declined significantly in most parts of Western Europe after 1960. This was certainly true of the commemorative cultures that had marked the religious subcultures in Europe. In the 1960s, more than before, they were confronted with both the accoutrements of modernity (the increased prosperity, mobility and educational level of church members) as well as an ideological modernism that regarded many rituals, practices and collective forms as memory as atavistic at best. But we still don't know very much about the particulars. Where across Europe did these cultures of commemoration persist, and where did they not? How did this differ from milieu to milieu? And perhaps even more interesting, how were commemorative culture transformed and revitalized after 1960? What new purposes did it serve? And by what kind of religious sensibilities was it driven? Recent literature about the postwar Netherlands has suggested that religious ritual could be both transformed into new public religions (such as the one around Auschwitz, as Jan Oegema has argued, with its own saints and rituals) as well as recon-

ceptualized local rituals, seen in the recent revitalization of the «Silent Walk», reinitiated in 1881 by Catholic pilgrims in the Dutch capital to honor the 14th-century «Miracle of Amsterdam».[2]

This brief article examines one specific genre of historical commemoration that in the Netherlands was particularly in evidence in the early 1960s, a form of «documentation» that stressed not the closeness of religious tradition, but its distance, not its ability to inspire but its powerlessness to do so, and the tradition's lack of modernity in contrast to the «modern» sensibilities of believers in the 1960s. This particular construction of modernity, which contrasts the «modern» 1960s with the un-modern, even anti-modern subcultures of the 1920s and 1930s, has become less persuasive in recent years. From our vantage point, a generation later, it seems clear, as recent scholarship has argued, that «modernity» did not fall out of the sky some time after the Second World War but was present in interwar Catholic and Protestant movements, and in their symbols, in their rites, and in the way they conceived of their collective identity and mission.[3] But works like De Gooyer's offer compelling insights into how the (religious) past was constructed in a period and in a country deeply impressed by the imperatives of modernity. And it also shows, as we shall see, how the commemoration of the past could differ across modernizing subcultures, particularly between Protestants and Catholics. The two religious groups might both offer their forebears a «bouquet of nettles», but they did so in different ways.

In order to understand the «modern» commemoration of the religious past as articulated by De Gooyer, it is important to see with what religious, social and political developments were confronted in the period immediately after the Second World War. Up until about 1960 or 1965, the Netherlands was a society dominated by religious subcultures – much more than was the case in Switzerland, owing to the strength of the orthodox Protestant parties. By the early 1900s, a «confessional» coalition of one Catholic and two orthodox Protestant parties had wrested government from the once dominant liberals, winning the full state funding of religious schools, a goal for which they had fought fiercely. Between 1918 and 1939 these «confessional» parties dominated Holland, garnering a consistent majority (between 50% and 60%) at the ballot box. At the same time, the interwar period witnessed the creation and consolidation of confessional organizations, in which the orthodox Protestant, Catholic, and, by extension, socialist and liberal subcultures developed their own youth organizations, broadcasting networks, professional associations, and a host of other

[2] Jan Oegema, *Een vreemd geluk. De publieke religie rond Auschwitz,* Amsterdam 2003; Charles Caspers and P.J. Margry, *Identiteit en spiritualiteit van de Amsterdamse stille omgang*, Hilversum 2006.

[3] See for example also George Harinck and Marjet Derks, «Stralende strijdlust, taaie zelfverloochening. De dynamiek van traditie en modernisteit in de Graalbeweging,» in Madelon de Keizer and Sophie Tates, eds., Moderniteit. Modernisme en massacultuur in Nederland, 1914–1940, Amsterdam 2004, pp. 284–299.

groups. The result was the *verzuiling* (pillarization, *Versäulung*) of Dutch society, in which contact among people of differing religious or philosophical worldviews was typically limited.

By the late 1930s, this arrangement was increasingly criticized from various directions: certainly liberals and socialists, but also significant numbers of progressive Catholics and Protestants, who decried the lack of national unity, the defensiveness of the religious subcultures, and the «anachronistic» nature of Dutch society in general, and the notion of religion as the organizational basis for public life in particular. This powerful impulse to renew was criticized by the freethinker and historian Pieter Geyl already in 1945:

> «The air reverberates with slogans; everything has to be reformed, many seem to believe; the old generation and her wisdom are finished. Sometimes it appears that people judge the catastrophes that came over us not as the work of Hitler and his armies, but as if we ourselves bear the guilt for them, as if the culture and society in the Netherlands before May 1940 were rotten through and through....»[4]

The hopes of many reformers to change the political and religious structures of society were largely unattained in the immediate postwar period; as in other European countries, Dutch voters preferred in practice to stick with what they knew than engage in adventuresome new political projects. Nevertheless, the need of the Netherlands to «modernize» its material and spiritual infrastructure remained an important impulse among a widespread group of Dutch elites, both at the national and regional level. A mixed economic model had been in the works since the early 1930s, but massive wartime destruction (Holland suffered more damage than any other Western European country), the impending loss of the Indies and an ever burgeoning population made state-guided industrialization imperative. Economic reformers were also keen on demonstrating a their radical break with the 1930s, to leave behind the «conservatism that was not prepared in the changed circumstances to seek new forms,» as one senior official at the Ministry of Economic Affairs put it in 1947.[5] To be sure, Dutch elites did not meet this rapid industrialization without considerable concern. The literate public in Holland, like their counterparts elsewhere, had access to a host of books that warned of the dangers of technology and modernization, of the «crisis» of loneliness, nihilism, and collectivism.[6] Obviously, the mixture of optimism and wariness varied from person to person. In 1950, the prominent sociologist Sjoerd Groenman likened industrialization to moving from one house to a better one: moving costs would accrue, but these inconveniences could not serve as reason

[4] «Openingscollege op 1 october 1945,» reprinted in Pieter Geyl, *Historicus in de tijd*, Utrecht 1954, p. 93.

[5] F. A. G. Keesing cited in J. R. M. van den Brink, *Zoeken naar een «heilstaat.» Opbouw, neergang en perspectief van de Nederlandse welvaartsstaat*, Amsterdam/Brussels 1984, p. 435.

[6] For popular books on crisis, see S. W. Couwenberg, *De vereenzaming van de moderne mens. Een nieuwe formulering van het sociale vraagstuk,* The Hague 1957; H. Brugmans, *Crisis en roeping van het Westen,* Haarlem 1952; Hendrik van Riessen, *The Society of the Future,* Philadelphia 1953. Van Riessen's book went through five Dutch-language editions.

to call off the whole project, which was «necessary, desirable, even yearned for» by the Dutch people.[7] The inexorability of modernization could not have been felt more painfully than by David Kodde, head of the tiny Calvinistic *Staatkundig Gereformeerde Partij* (SGP), the Reformed State Party, in Zeeland's provincial legislature. The SGP represented isolated bastions of tradition that now would be linked with the outside, and Kodde knew that worldliness would come with the erection of the Delta works. Yet he did not reject the Delta Plan; «Zeeland needs change,» he noted, pointing to the depopulation of villages as a result of underemployment.[8] Whether optimists or pessimists, Dutch elites were convinced that modernization must occur.

Great care was taken by the ruling parties – Catholics, socialists, Protestants, liberals – to minimize the pernicious effects of a rapidly modernizing society. They sought to foster communitarian ties between people, not only through family and neighbourhood,[9] but also through a cautious approach toward modern inventions that threatened to undo this community. Frequently, this translated into a rather conservative stance toward dangerous forms of technological innovation, notably television, which got a yellow, rather than green, light from Dutch politicians, intellectuals and church leaders in the 1950s.[10] For many Dutch leaders, one sure way to increase communitarian ties lay in the building up of the pillarized subcultures in a way that would be compatible with the demands of modernity. As heirs of a pillarized system, they were quite sensitive to the charge of old-fashionedness, and they strove in word and deed to make the subcultural system «modern». Everywhere, it seemed, things were changing, and everywhere, it seemed, people were writing about it. Nowhere was this more true than in the discussion about the triumph of the city over the countryside. In nine short years (1947–56), the percentage of Dutch workers employed in agriculture declined from 20 to 13%. By 1956, 57% of the population lived in urban areas, compared to only 36% twenty years before.

These experiences encouraged a common teleology, namely, that the Netherlands was going through great processes that were transforming it beyond recognition. Moreover, further substantial change was considered inevitable. In the modernizing telos of the 1950s, the «old» or «antiquated» was always giving way to the «new» or «modern». This kind of linear thinking was, of course, confined neither to Holland nor to the 1950s. But this juxtaposition of old and

[7] Sjoerd Groenman, «Industrialisatie langs lijnen van geleidelijkheid,» *Sociologisch Bulletin*, 4 (1950), p. 33.

[8] Jan Zwemer, *In conflict met de cultuur. De bevindelijk gereformeerden en de Nederlandse samenleving in het midden van de twintigste eeuw,* Kampen 1992, pp. 402–404.

[9] See, for example, J. P. Kruijt, «Sociale en culturele problemen van de moderne grote stad,» *Sociologisch Bulletin*, 10 (1956), pp. 84–94, esp. 93.

[10] Henri Beunders, «Media en sociaal-culturele verandering: televisie als voorbeeld,» in Henk Kleijer, Ad Knotter, and Frank van Vree, eds., *Tekens en teksten: Cultuur, communicatie en maatschappelijke veranderingen vanaf de late middeleeuwen,* Amsterdam 1992), pp. 223–234. The cautious support for television is evidenced in the Queen's Throne Speech, 15 September 1962, and A. Dronkers, «De kerk en het nieuwe psychologische klimaat der moderne massamedia,» *Wending*, 17 (1962), 7, pp. 430–440.

new was especially weighty to the basically cautious Dutch leadership of the 1950s, who were keenly sensitive to the changes being wrought. Moreover, they believed that it was the Molech of modernization, not themselves, that determined the parameters of public policy. Modernization, that inexorable force, was leaving little of the old moral fabric intact. This position is well summed up in an article by the sociologist P. J. Bouman that appeared in the September 1958 issue of *Wending*. Nothing could stop the «revolution of manners and morals» of the past decades, which entailed

> «sports and associational life, freer relations between the sexes, traveling and camping, a radio in every family, the newspaper and the telephone, the cinema and the television, the interest in technology, and less time spent with the family. One can render a value-judgment about all of this. Everyone knows that for this ‹progress› many have paid a heavy price. But we also know that the hands of the clock cannot be turned back. We can only try to prevent excesses.»[11]

In this context, many Dutch politicians were willing to concede that someday, at least, pillarization must, or should, come to end. In part, this conviction stemmed from the perceived «end of ideology» evident by the late 1950s, in which many observers, both inside and outside Holland, questioned the future of ideological movements in a technocratic and democratic society. In Holland, confessionals were ever more sensitive to the increasingly sharp attacks on *verzuiling*, both inside and outside religious circles. *Verzuiling*, a term first coined by civil servants in 1936 in order to make distinctions among the various subcultural organizations,[12] was not only used as a neutral, scientific term. Very quickly, the word took on a negative connotation when its use became widespread after 1945. The secular press in particular used the term in a mostly uncomplimentary fashion. The charge against religious subcultures seemed to stick. When the socialist Jacques de Kadt accused the Catholics in the early 1960s of *«apartheidspolitiek»*,[13] it was hardly a charge to which the Catholic (or Protestant) leaders were insensitive. As early as 1957, the Catholic intellectual Tellegen had called *verzuiling* an anachronism – and was quickly joined by others in this assessment.[14] The sociologists J.P. Kruijt and Walter Goddijn predicted that the malaise of Catholic and Protestant intellectuals about the extent of postwar pillarization could itself lead to «depillarization».[15]

Scepticism toward the traditional bases of society gained momentum in the early 1960s. In the shock of massive bloodlettings, in the midst of ruins, and in the shadow of Stalinism it had not been difficult to see «spiritual» values (namely, traditional religion, anti-materialism, and hard work) as a kind of talisman

[11] P. J. Bouman, «Sociaal-culturele achtergrond,» *Wending*, 13 (1958), 7, p. 369.

[12] According to Piet de Rooy in a conversation; see his *Werklozenzorg en werkloosheidsbestrijding, 1917–1940*, Amsterdam 1979, p. 235.

[13] J. de Kadt, *Ketterse kanttekeningen*, Amsterdam 1965, p. 158.

[14] Ed Simons and Lodewijk Winkeler, *Het verraad der clercken. Intellectuelen en hun rol in de ontwikkelingen van het Nederlandse katholicisme na 1945*, Baarn 1987, p. 207. This work is the most comprehensive and knowledgeable overview of changes in the Roman Catholic Church after the Second World War.

[15] Kruijt and Goddijn, «Verzuiling en ontzuiling,» p. 247.

against further catastrophe. Even in the early 1960s, hard times were well within recent memory. Prins Bernhard's Christmas message in 1960 was still urging his audience to make a virtue out of «struggle».[16] By 1963, however, the virtues of struggle were fading fast in a society flush with new wealth and new opportunities. In 1959, large natural gas reserves were discovered at Slochteren, Groningen, giving the Dutch an unexpected energy source and a valuable export product. With the economy heating up, Holland's carefully controlled system of wage ceilings collapsed in 1963–4. Between 1959 and 1962, real wages had already risen 22%, but after 1963 the Dutch work force witnessed an explosion in their real wages; in 1964, real wages went up 16.5% (although some of this gain was the result of turning «black» wages into legal ones), and 10% per annum for the following few years.[17] As late as 1957, only 4% of Dutch households owned a TV; 8% a car; and 3% a refrigerator. A decade later, the numbers were 80%, 45% and 55%, respectively.[18] The pleasance of prosperity was soon coupled with a thaw in the Cold War; with the passing of the Cuban missile crisis, new tones of optimism crept into the newspapers.[19] Lastly, 1963 witnessed the introduction of «the pill» in the Netherlands, which had farreaching consequnces of its own. Suddenly, the old virtues had lost their relevance in a world whose future seemed freer and brighter than ever before. Sobriety and asceticism, whose imprint was clearly stamped in popular magazines only a few years earlier, became unfashionable. Around 1960, family magazines like *Katholieke Illustratie* (Catholic) and *De Spiegel* (Protestant) dropped their pious tone and stodgy format, opting instead for color photos of potential (and often exotic) vacation spots. Books, too, changed in style and content, as morally ambivalent works replaced the moralistic novels of the 1950s.

Indeed, the past, especially the recent past, had become quite remote, both to young and old. The passing of old statesmen and their replacement by new ones seemed to confirm the passing of an age. This was not only true of John F. Kennedy's inauguration – which the Dutch, no less than the Americans, interpreted as a sign of a new age – but of Dutch politics as well. Politicians who had dominated their party for decades retired from public life. None of them were replaced with personalities as charismatic as Kennedy, but their successors were, in their own way, suitably «modern» replacements: they were all «businesslike» in their approach to politics, lacking an outspoken commitment to the past.

[16] Prins Bernhard, «Kerstviering 1960,» in *Vijftig toespraken*, Max Nord, ed., Amsterdam 1961, pp. 204–205.

[17] T. J. A. M. van Lier, «‹Regeren zonder socialisten valt mee.› De Tweede-Kamerfractie van de Partij van de Arbeid tussen Drees en Nieuw Links (1959–1966), in J. T. J. van den Berg, et al., *Tussen Nieuwspoort en Binnenhof. De jaren 60 als breuklijn in de naoorlogse ontwikkelingen in politiek en journalistiek*, The Hague 1989, p. 85; J. J. Woltjer, *Recent verleden. De geschiedenis van Nederland in de twintigste eeuw*, (Amsterdam: Balans, 1992), pp. 320–321.

[18] Han Lammers, Andre van der Louw and Tom Pauka, eds., *De meeste mensen willen meer,* Amsterdam 1967, p. 112.

[19] H. J. A. Hofland, *Opmerkingen over de chaos*, Amsterdam 1964, p. 7.

By the early 1960s, then, many Dutch perceived an enormous distance with the past, particularly the interwar period (1918–1940). Weakened by the ineluctable «process» of modernization, the old theologies, politics, and morals that in that period had seemed to invulnerable now seemed very fragile indeed, in no small part because of their own widespread *expectation* that they had no future. «Tomorrow Everything Will Be Different» was both the book title and assessment of Thijs Booy, former secretary to the late Wilhelmina.[20] Although Booy's wistful and rapturous work did not exactly reflect the sentiments of more sober figures, it did represent the conviction of most religious and political elites that many more things would have to change because many things had changed already.

And in a world where everything would be different, it was hard to generate much appreciation for the past. S. U. Zuidema, a neo-Calvinist philosopher of the old school, wrote of the period: «We distance ourselves from our ancestors, make them laughable, or are ashamed of them, [and] soil their nest for the greater self-justification of our own ‹social› sensitivity, big-world-politics, anti-colonialism, to the point of what one Dutch newspaper called an ‹away-with-us mentality›»...[21] It was into this context that, suddenly, between 1963 and 1965, the interwar period now became the subject of a flurry of books which accentuated the quaint oddities of that age. They were popular books that sought to show just how much each subculture had changed in a quarter of a century. Most of these books not only highlighted the enormous distance between 1939 and 1964; they sought to commemorate an old-fashioned past that was largely alien to the present values and concerns. This old-fashionedness was irrelevant at best, harmful at worst, but in either case, *uit de tijd* (literally, out of the time).

This exercise was not restricted to the religious subcultures: the liberals and the social democrats also received popular histories in which the interwar past was called to account. And the liberal account was far more critical of its own past. The young and rising VVD politician H. J. L. Vonhoff wrote «De zindelijke burgerheren» («Well-Heeled Gentlemen») in 1965, that portrayed prewar liberals with stuffy, old patricians. Eager to show that the liberals constituted not a society of stuffed shirts but a real *volkspartij*, and one open especially to younger voters, Vonhoff, too, assured his readers that the age of these gentlemen was «in the past, completely in the past.»[22] The great leader of the liberals in the interwar years, P.J. Oud, was compelled to concede the point in his preface to the book: «Especially the youth will look back with a smile of surprise...*Il faut juger les écrits dáprès leur date.* Let us above all realize that much has changed for the good.»[23]

[20] Thijs Booy, *Morgen zal alles anders zijn*, Amsterdam 1967.

[21] S. U. Zuidema, «Antirevolutionaire politiek in de welvaartsstaat en de welvaartsstaat in de Antirevolutionaire politiek,» *Anti-Revolutionaire Staatkunde*, 34 (1964), p. 188.

[22] H. J. L. Vonhoff, *De zindelijke burgerheren. Een halve eeuw liberalisme,* Baarn 1965, p. 268. *Zindelijk* means both «proper» and «potty-trained.» I can only guess at which definition Vonhoff intended.

[23] P.J. Oud, «Een word van een oud-vrijzinnig-democraat,» in Vonhoff, *Zindelijke burgerheren*, 5.

The red pillar also did not escape satire, as when the socialists aired on a television a comedy program put out a segment called «The Rich Red Life,» which showed film clips of socialist folk dancing and other «outdated» aspects of the life in the 1930s.[24] But the portrayal of interwar socialists in the documentary book «The Tough Red Rascals» («Taaie rooie rakkers», 1965) was at once more scholarly and sympathetic to its subjects, written as it was by three well-known leftists, Igor Cornelissen, Ger Harmsen and Rudolf de Jong. «Tough Red Rascals» demonstrated an appreciation for social democratic activism before the war, and it was the only one of the book «documentaries» of the early 1960s to write a largely positive account of the past. It is possible, of course, that the difference is fortuitous; another set of authors might also have chosen to be as critical of the socialist past as Vonhoff had been of the liberals or De Gooyer of the orthodox Protestants. But perhaps it was an indication of things to come; after the mid-1960s, the «New Left» would point the Labor Party in a more militant direction, and the Communist Party (of which Harmsen was a leading figure) would gain a new popularity. Perhaps they sensed that leftist activism belonged not only to the past, but also to the future.

The two documentary books on the orthodox Protestants, as should already be clear, more clearly resembled «Well-Heeled Gentlemen» than «Tough Red Rascals». Both books, De Gooyer's «The Image of the Fathers» (1964) and Ben van Kaam's «Parade of the Brethren» («Parade der mannenbroeders»; 1964) stressed the distance from the past. The gender tilt of both titles suggest the central role of male authority in the orthodox Protestant culture, though both authors focused in different ways on this hierarchy. For De Gooyer, the orthodox Protestant culture was characterized by a kind of ancestor veneration of such figures like the enormously influential statesmen Abraham Kuyper and Hendrikus Colijn; Van Kaam emphasized that the «brethren» preferred «to parade, hold mass meetings, cherish banners, honor veterans and remember great battles in the past» rather than to envision a better tomorrow.[25] Both consciously selected material from the interwar period that emphasized just how strange and outlandish the 1920s and 1930s in fact could be. Van Kaam admitted that he was most curious about the «many mistakes and shortcomings» of the past that the older generation referred to only in passing, and his book was, in effect, a chronicle of many of these failings.[26] Both books stressed the certitude of the interwar period, linking it to a tunnel vision and a small-minded bourgeois ethic. Van Kaam was particularly critical of the defensive social and political stance of the

[24] Igor Cornelissen, Ger Harmsen and Rudolf de Jong, comps., *De taaie rooie rakkers. Een documentaire over het socialisme tussen de twee wereld oorlogen*, Utrecht 1965; Jan Blokker, et al., *Zo is het toevallig ook no's een keer*, Amsterdam 1966, pp. 17–21. The creators of the program were freelancers, not permanent VARA people, but it remains significant that the VARA itself was prepared to broadcast what essentially amounted to self-parody.

[25] De Gooyer, *Beeld*, 282–283; Ben van Kaam, *Parade der Mannenbroeders, Protestants leven in Nederland, 1918–1938*, Wageningen 1964, p. 272.

[26] Van Kaam, «Woord vooraf,» *Parade.*

orthodox Protestants in those years, De Gooyer more in the spiritual narrowness of the period. Writing a postscript at the end of De Gooyer's book, D. van der Stoep deftly summarized how the interwar period had become a laughing matter:

> «...All those certainties. All those straight paths. Our great men. Our solid organizations. Our great political deeds. Our unmovable principles. Long live Colijn and Soli Deo Gloria. It would not have been so bad if it hadn't been accompanied by spiritual coercion.»[27]

«[Those years] will, in a time when relativism has replaced fundamentalism, look a little ridiculous,» De Gooyer admitted, «but one might also feel some tenderness...», or perhaps even a sense of loss in a time of spiritual vacuum, as Van der Stoep allowed.[28] But however much tenderness the Protestant reader might feel in reading these Protestant documentaries, he or she could not easily escape the conclusion that the «fundamentalist» past and its certainties had been left behind, and that a new generation with new ideas living in a modern world would have to find their own way.

Michel van der Plas' very popular «Out of the Rich Roman Life» («Uit het rijke roomsche leven»; 1963), the earliest and by far the most popular of these documentaries, was also the most insistent that the Catholic past between 1925 and 1935 (which Van der Plas regarded as the highpoint of Catholic insularity) be closed off as a period. In many ways, Van der Plas' work parallels the critique of the Protestants: a work that deliberately sought out difference and not similarity with the present, and which commemorated the smallness of prewar Catholic life: the smothering morality and conformity, the protectiveness of the milieu, and concomitantly, the wrongheaded antithesis between church and world. But Van der Plas (pseudonym of the journalist Ben Brinkel) went further than the Protestants in highlighting the most unpleasant aspects of the Catholic subculture, such as negative Catholic views on Protestants, Jews and art. All this was meant to encourage his readers to say «never again» to all that.[29] More than his Protestant counterparts, he saw his book as contributing to a process by which the right kind of Catholic might be encouraged:

> «People speak often and rightly of an antithesis between two ecclesiastical views that Catholics hold nowadays: between the view of the church as a closed body that self-confidently sets itself in haughty defense against the world, and that of the church as an open house, oriented toward the world, whose inhabitants are no less able to make their way in the world than those who ‹stand outside›.»[30]

For that reason, Van der Plas thought, it was a task for the new generation (he himself was 36 when the book appeared) to «write off» (*afrekenen*) the Catholic past of his boyhood; only by ridding themselves of such harmful accouterments could Catholics really become Catholics.[31]

[27] D. van der Stoep, «In het vacuum. Nawoord» in De Gooyer, p. 310.
[28] De Gooyer, p. 24; Van der Stoep, p. 310-312.
[29] Michel van der Plas, *Uit het rijke roomsche leven*, 2nd ed., Utrecht 1965, p. 20.
[30] Ibid., 10.
[31] Ibid., pp. 20–21.

Van der Plas' account is different from that of his Protestant counterparts in part because of the greater changes that Catholic perceived that they had undergone in the past few years. The Second World War and the ensuing «modernization» had arguably changed the Catholic world more than that of many orthodox Protestants. More than among Protestants, Catholics felt as if they had «come of age»: through socio-economic developments they were no longer second-class citizens in Dutch society. The reforms of Pope John XXIII accelerated that collective impression; Dutch Catholics no longer needed to hold on to any of the forms of faith that had so long defined – and confined – them, and many of them developed in the course of the 1950s and 1960s a critical, even hostile attitude toward the practices that they neither (now) needed nor wanted. «Uit het rijke roomsche leven» articulated what many educated Catholics thought about the interwar past, and by extension, much of their Catholic heritage: as a closed-off period, characterized by an excess of conformity and collective isolation. Entertaining feelings of nostalgia was legitimate, but a critical distancing, even aversion was the most appropriate response for a period that should now be marked off as «past».

Orthodox Protestants, in contrast, did not quite feel the same impulse to throw off the past as their Catholic counterparts, though Dutch Calvinism generated literary figures like Jan Wolkers and Maarten 't Hart who in their atheistic critique of their respective childhood found no analog in Dutch Catholicism. In the first place, Protestants were more divided than Roman Catholics about the past because they did not share the same history. Divided across various denominations and theological orientations, they continued to contend with each other about the meaning of the past, and there were a large share of orthodox Protestants who continued to commemorate the past along the same lines, or who conceived new heroes and new saints from the past, including the interwar years. Perhaps, and only perhaps, the Protestants were less dependent on the particular forms of religion that had shaped their past; forgetting or rejecting former heroes like Kuyper and Colijn may have helped change the content of their faith, but many of them found new ways to conceive of their Protestant faith in a «modern» age cut loose from traditional forms. It is not clear that Catholicism can function as well without the «obsolescent» forms on which it long relied.[32] Perhaps this is one reason why today Dutch Protestants are more religiously observant than their Catholic counterparts.

All of this is reflected also in the resonance that the books on the religious subcultures generated. Van Kaam's book in particular enjoyed considerable success, and along with a co-author he later published another documentary book, this time with more photographs, entitled, «The preacher went by».[33] This, too, was a popular attempt to present the Protestant past of the the early twentieth

[32] For an interesting exploration of this argument, and how this relates to the history of American Catholicism, see Joseph Bottum, «When the Swallows Come Back to Capistrano Catholic Culture in America», *First Things* 166 (October 2006), pp. 27–40.

[33] Ben van Kaam and Anne van Meiden, *De dominee gaat voorbij. Familiealbum van driekwarteeuw protestants leven in Nederland*, Bilthoven 1974.

century to an audience rooted in that world, and it aimed at generating a wry nostalgia for a bygone era. But one could argue that the Protestants had a hard time developing a distinct concept or *topos* about their past. All of the titles on orthodox Protestant life, as has already been suggested, suggest a male hierarchy. And if there is a word in Dutch today that connotes the orthodox Protestant past it is the word «mannenbroeders» («brethren»), conjuring up images of purposeful men in dark suits striving to order the world according to their straight-and-narrow principles. But this was only a facet of orthodox Protestant subculture in the twentieth century. Contrast this with Van der Plas' «rich Roman life,» a metaphor that covers the entire way in which Catholics lived their collective existence. The concept had non-ironic origins in the early twentieth century, but in Van der Plas' hands the concept took on an entirely new and ironic meaning. From 1963, «rich Roman life» would designate a closed-off period that one could remember with both «melancholy and aversion,» to cite a recent commemoration of Dutch Catholic life before 1960.[34] Since the 1970s, too, the Catholic Broadcasting Association (KRO) would depict a «rich Roman life» with a mixture of critique and appreciation. But it was also with a sense of a period closed off from the present. This sense of being closed off from the past was accentuated by the lavishly illustrated 1996 work of Jan Roes and Herman Pijfers in 1996, appropriately titled «Memoriale».[35] Although the book closed with signs of renewed life in the Dutch church, the general picture is one of a memorial to a «life» that is now largely or wholly past.

In summary, the «documentaries» of the early 1960s were indications that the Dutch had been bound up in a modernity that made them largely, even wholly different, from their ancestors, or from whom they once had been. But the effects of this realization were not uniform, nor was the significance of a new ironic kind of history. Protestants might feel cut off from their past, but there were always other identities to imagine. It was not so easy for Dutch Roman Catholics. For them, offering their ancestors a bouquet of nettles constituted a «memoriale» to their own faith.

A Bouquet of Nettles. Remembering the Religious Past in the Netherlands, 1960–1965

The Netherlands underwent a considerable religious metamorphosis in the course of the 1960s, of which an anti-traditional stance toward the past was an important part. This had important repercussions for the way that religion was constituted in cultures of commemoration and in the way historians sought to reconstitute the religious past. But how did change take place, and how did these processes differ across confessional lines? In what way – if any – did anti-traditionalism and deconfessionalization lead to new kinds of history-writing and religious commemoration? Finally, has there been a shift back to a more traditional religious mode in recent years? This paper offers an overview of these changes.

[34] Ad Rooms, *Het Rijke Roomsche Leven II. Herinneringen met weemoed en weerzin* Raamsdonksveer 2002; see also Pieter de Coninck and Paul Dirkse, *Roomsch in alles. Het rijke roomsch leven, 1900–1950,* Zwolle [1995], a book accompanied a temporary exhibit at the Museum Catharijneconvent Utrecht.

[35] Herman Pijfers and Jan Roes, *Memoriale. Een eeuw katholiek leven in Nederland*, Waanders 1996.

Ein Bouquet von Nesseln. Die Erinnerung der religiösen Vergangenheit in den Niederlanden, 1960–1965

Im Verlaufe der 1960er Jahre erlebten die Niederlande einen beträchtlichen religiösen Wandel, in welchem antitraditionalistische Haltungen gegenüber der Vergangenheit eine wichtige Rolle spielten. Dies beeinflusste nicht unwesentlich die Art und Weise, wie Religion in der Erinnerungskultur konstituiert wurde und wie Historiker die religiöse Vergangenheit rekonstruierten. Wie geschah dieser Wandel, worin unterschieden sich diese Prozesse in verschiedenen Konfessionen? Wie – wenn überhaupt – führten Anti-Traditionalismus und Dekonfesisonalisierung zu einer neuen Geschichtsschreibung und religiösen Erinnerungskultur? Und fand in den letzten Jahren auch ein Shift zurück zu einer traditionelleren Religiosität statt? Dieser Vortrag konzentriert auf diese Transformationen.

Un bouquet d'orties. Le souvenir du passé religieux en Hollande, 1960–1965

Au cours des années 1960, la Hollande subissait une métamorphose religieuse considérable, dont une part importante consista en une position anti-traditionnelle vis-à-vis du passé. Cela eut des répercussions importantes sur la manière dont la religion était constituée dans les cultures de commémoration et dont les historiens cherchaient à reconstituer le passé religieux. Mais comment le changement a-t-il pris place, et comment ces processus ont-ils différé entre les diverses confessions? Dans quel sens – si c'est le cas – l'anti-traditionalisme et la déconfessionalisation ont-ils mené à de nouveaux types d'écriture de l'histoire et de commémoration religieuse? Finalement, y a-t-il eu un pas en arrière vers un mode religieux plus traditionnel dans ces dernières années? Cette conférence offre une vue d'ensemble de ces changements.

Keywords – Schlüsselbegriffe – Mots clés

Netherlands, history, pillarization, 1960s, politics of memory, Roman Catholicism, Protestantism

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