"BECAUSE WE ARE CATHOLIC, WE ARE MODERN"

THE ADAPTATION OF DUTCH CATHOLICISM TO MODERN DUTCH SOCIETY 1920-1960

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1. Introduction

At the end of a revival meeting the famous preacher Borromaeus de Greeve (1875-1947) once said: "World, may I talk to you?". He continued by comparing the life of the sincere, sober, faithful Christian with the life of the non-believer who wallows in luxury, despises the poor and breaks up marriages as easily as contracting them. Being sure of this being the wrong way – "I defy you, I defy you, world, to call me one of your followers…" – he closed the meeting with "This is my conclusion, my last curse on this meeting against the world, that as a Christian I should hate" (Van der Plas [1964]: 112-114). Surely, Father De Greeve went over the top, but his words reflected the official stance of the Dutch Catholic Church towards modern society fairly well: it was bad and a 'good' Christian should keep a distance from it. But his voice wasn't the only one during this period. This is best expressed by the Dutch Catholic intellectual Pieter van der Meer de Walcheren (1880-1970). He stated against his opponents, who held the opinion that the Catholic Church was not suited for modern society, that there was no conflict between the two: 'Because we are Catholic, we are modern' (quoted by Rogier/de Rooy 1953: 646).

The general picture of the history of Dutch Catholicism is that of a unified, ultramontane, conservative, exclusive block until the second Vatican Council, that completely changed this position for a liberal, pluriform, world-oriented position since then. For example, Goddijn et al. (1999) describe the period 1946-1960 in terms like 'restoration', 'well-tried models', 'traditionalism' and so forth. They pay attention to some changes in Dutch Catholicism, but these were either suppressed by Church leaders or did in another way not break through. Therefore, they can give the period 1960-1970 the title 'restoration defeated'. Duffhues et al. (1985: 265-278) also see a 'turning point' in 1960.

As Goddijn et al., they see the period 1945-1960 as a time of restoration and exclusivity (of the Catholic social and cultural organisations in this case). They point however to the weaknesses of this organizational system, as it could not formulate new goals after the emancipation was completed and could no longer unify the different groups in the Catholic subculture already before 1960. These weaknesses became clear in various protest movements and defections. The same view is held by Hellemans (1990), who continues ultramontane Catholicism – though it needed a restoration in 1945 – until 1960.

But I think we have to change this view on the history of Dutch Catholicism. Despite the official position of the Church, Dutch Catholicism already changed to a great extent in the period after 1920 – unwillingly or unintentionally, but it did. These changes can only be observed and valued if we drop the concentration on the organizations, as is the case with the authors cited above, and instead focus on the social characteristics of this subculture and the trends within it. I am not the first one to point at the interesting developments in *interbellum* Dutch Catholicism. Already in the classic work of Rogier and De Rooy (1953: 569-713), these changes were seen as a new stage in Dutch Catholicism that had reached a higher cultural and intellectual level, which was necessary to bring Catholicism to its destined national level. Also Van Vugt (1994) points in his study of the Dutch Catholic school system to the changes that were already underway before 1960, e.g. the deployment of lay people, the decline of Church authority and the changes in pedagogy. And Luykx (2000) has written some excellent essays on the social tensions and changes that occurred in pre-1960 Dutch Catholicism. Most authors see these changes as a scholarly problematic intermezzo in the history of Dutch Catholicism: a small reaction in a closed subculture and a positive sign of protest that unfortunately was given no opportunities. But I will argue that these changes need to be interpreted as an adaptation to modern society that was underway well before 1960. That these developments eventually caused the decline of Dutch Catholicism is a line of argument that I will not pursue here (cf. Sengers 2003: 9-12, 117-136, 183; Sengers 2004).

I will present the changes in Dutch Catholicism with the help of the rational choice theory of religion. This theory describes the natural development of religious organisations as one from 'sect' to 'church' and points to several factors that are supposed to further and stimulate this development. It is my opinion that we can describe the changes in Dutch Catholicism in terms of 'sect' and 'church', and that the factors specified were also at work in this social group. The rational choice theory is presented in section 2. In section 3, I present the changes that took place in Dutch Catholicism. First I describe the

particular characteristics of Dutch modernity and the official reaction of the Church, then I describe the changes that occurred in Dutch Catholicism in this period. In the conclusion I will make a plea for a re-evaluation of the period 1920-1960, as I think this is a central period in the history of Dutch Catholicism with important decisions for its future development.

2. Deviance and the effect of success

Rational choice theory orders religious organizations according to their level of tension with the surrounding society. Tension – also called 'deviance' or 'sectarianism' – is defined by the degree to which a religious organization is separate and different from the surrounding society and is antagonistic towards it. Organizations that are highly different, separate and antagonistic are called 'sects'; organizations that are not and that are thus adapted towards the surrounding society are called 'churches' (Stark/Bainbridge 1996: 124; Stark/Finke 2000: 143-144).

Rational choice theory indicates four factors that cause an organization in high tension to move towards lower tension. First the growth of a deviant religious organization. Deviant organizations are expected to grow (Stark/Finke 2000: 142, 145, 154) –a thesis that is not of interest for this paper-, and this success is expected to cause a decline in tension. Growth means that local communities become bigger and have more members (Stark/Finke 2000: 154). In these communities, individual members have less intense contacts among each other and thus relatively more intense contacts with the outside world. Larger organizations also have more worldly interests like buildings, business contacts, social and political influence. In these ways, growth causes a decline in the tension of the organization (Stark/Finke 2000: 160-162; Stark/Bainbridge 1996: 61). The second factor that lowers tension is the professionalization of the organization. Big organizations need bureaucratic structures and full-time clerics to run it. In the course of this professionalization, authority in the organization will be centralized, standardized and rationalized. This reduces the freedom of local congregations and limits their diversity (Stark/Finke 2000: 102, 162, 164, 167). Furthermore, the clerics will favour growth because they need a secure material basis for their own future (Stark/Finke: 2000: 165), and thus they contribute to the further decline of tension. Finally, the more they have worldly resources at their means, the more they will adapt and become adapted to the world (Stark/Finke 2000: 165, 166).

The third factor that causes a decline in tension is regression. Regression means that every social group after a certain period of time will automatically look

more like the surrounding society. Specific characteristics like the distribution of men and women or level of education will become less specific after one or two generations. This of course does not go for groups that artificially keep their deviance high, like monasteries, communes or ethnic religious groups (Stark/Bainbridge 1996: 261, 262, 277). The fourth factor that causes a decline in tension is socialization. Religious organizations themselves reduce the tension with society by teaching their adherents the general norms for successful social interaction (Stark/Bainbridge 1996: 268). In a religious organization, people learn how to make social contacts and to bear responsibility; they are disciplined by the demands of their god and of the religious organization; they come in contact with people who can offer them a job, et cetera. Thus, through socialization, religious organizations adapt their members to the general society.

I will show how the Dutch Catholic Church adapted to modern society in the period 1920-1960 and so changed from a more sect-like to a more church-like organization. I will focus especially on the factors specified by the theory: growth, the professionalization of the church, regression and socialization.

3. Dutch Catholicism from high to low tension

3.1. Dutch modernity

In the late 19th and early 20th century, the Netherlands modernized at a very fast pace. First, several technical innovations knitted Dutch society together into a nation-state. Local societies were integrated into a larger structure by the improved infrastructure, the introduction of the telegraph (1852) and telephone (1888) and the development of the media, especially radio (1919) and television (1930). The unity of Dutch society was further boosted by a standard vocabulary (1883), the standardization of grammar (1896) and the introduction of a national standard time in 1909. Reorganization of suffrage and of the political system involved more citizens in national politics. Finally, a distinct Dutch nationalism came about, inspired by the Golden Age of Dutch history (16th century) and the royal House of Orange (Knippenberg/De Pater 1988: 19, 31, 40, 52-86, 137; Schuursma 2000: 20-34, 44-55, 211-228; Bank/Van Buuren 2000: 21-88). Second, the Netherlands became a bourgeois society after 1870. Upcoming industrialization demanded specialized and higher educated workers, who were paid better and thus became more independent of their employers. Reorganization of secondary and higher education and the improvement of the training of teachers raised the quality of education and made it available for a larger audience. Increased urbanization, early welfare-laws and universal

suffrage decreased the social and political differences in the Dutch population (Bank/Van Buuren 2000: 133-149, 523-566; Van Tijn 1978: 306-313; Van Zanden 1997: 81-100; Schuursma 2000: 76-103; Dasberg/Jansing 1978: 129-136, 361-366). Third, Dutch society became pluriform in a religious sense due to various sectarian movements and the introduction of eastern religions. Secularism grew, according to the census, from 0.3% in 1870 to 7.8% in 1920 and 18.4% in 1960, especially in the big cities and some industrial regions. Due to the decline of the former protestant state church, the Catholic Church was the biggest church in the Netherlands during the census of 1930 and has continued to be so until the present day (De Kok 1978; Dekker 1987: 172; Knippenberg 1992: 231, 235, 238).

The Dutch Catholic Church, prior to 1960, generally opposed modernity, separated itself from Dutch society, created a distinct sub-culture and could thus be described as a deviant organization in Dutch society. Almost all Catholics followed the will of the bishops, expressed in several letters written between 1870 and 1960, that Catholics should engage only and exclusively with Catholic organizations. These letters damned socialist, communist and neutral organizations (the national-socialist NSB as well) and threatened Catholic sympathizers with excommunication. Several apologetic organizations fought the 'evils' of modernity, 'defended' the Church against the 'attacks' the liberal and non-Catholic society aimed at it, 'prepared' ordinary Catholics for the 'seductions' the outside world had in mind and tried to convert the modern world to the only safe haven left: the Holy Roman Catholic and Apostolic Church. The modern media – newspaper and other printed materials, radio, film, television – were under strict clerical control in order to protect ordinary Catholics from modern influences. Finally, the Church promoted a distinct group-identity and the bonds among Catholics: interreligious marriage was discouraged, several Dutch saints – beatified in the second half of the nineteenth century – were used to create a Dutch-Catholic identity, a yearly meeting fostered the national contacts among Catholics and Catholic organizations, and the Catholic sub-culture differed from protestant and national culture in small things like verbal expressions, surnames, the wedding ring (on the left hand) and the interior of a house (Sengers 2003: 90-102). Although this 'deviant' position was the official one until 1960, it gradually shifted in daily church life after 1920.

3.2. becoming Dutchmen

In the early 20th century, Catholics were mainly located in the lower classes of Dutch society. Because of their position, they were not very well integrated

in Dutch society. But the Catholics themselves succeeded in overcoming their minority position.

For example, Catholics were statistically more involved in petty crimes than members of other churches, and this was blamed on their bad living conditions (Kempe 1938: 37-43, 102-103; Havermans 1953: 16). To overcome these, a 'civilization offensive' among Catholics was started. A central role in this offensive was to be played by the youth organizations. These not only contributed to the moral and religious competences of the young workers by keeping them away from the temptations of modern society, but they also wanted them to become good and reliable employees, good fathers and mothers and trustworthy members of society. A fine example of this work of charity is the work of 'Saint Francis', which was already founded in 1894. The members of this organization, who were all lay people, founded community centres where they offered the young 'rascals' suitable forms of leisure activities instead of hanging around on the streets. The parents were involved in these activities also (Poels 1987; cf. Heikens 1985: 45-68; Nijenhuis 1987: 138-148, 264-265). After the Second World War, there was again concern for the moral standard of the population, especially of the youth that came under the influence of the consumer-society of the American and British liberators. As many young women went to work, they could no longer be reached by traditional church activities. In cooperation with the government, the 'Mater Amabilis'-school was founded in 1945, aimed at fighting the 'degeneration' of the female youth and teaching them to be loving and caring mothers who knew how to run a household. In 1951, the 'Pater Fortis'-school for boys was founded; boys who were to be raised as head of the family and decent members of society (Vossen 1994).

Alcohol abuse was a severe problem among the workers. It was the origin of the observed criminal behaviour, it created unhealthy families and unemployment and thus poverty. One of the many organizations that tried to stop alcohol abuse among Catholics was Sobriëtas (1895). In the beginning, it was connected with the Catholic Labour Union and reserved for men, but later separate societies for women and youngsters were founded. At the same time, the society expanded its activities in the social world: there were alcohol-free meetings, alcohol-free cafés (!) and Sobriëtas maintained libraries. They helped alcoholics and their families with publications, clinics, rehabilitation centres and 'rescue brigades' that prayed for their salvation (Van Schaik [1985]). The social position of the Catholics was further improved by the expansion and professionalization of Catholic welfare and health-care in the early 20th century. It counted Catholic hospitals, nursing homes and sanatoria. In mental care

there were Catholic psychiatric institutions and clinics for advice in upbring-
ing and marriage. The Catholic home-nursing service developed, parallel to
the specialization and differentiation of health-care, into an organization
engaged in child- and youth-work, mental-care, venereal diseases, rheumatism,
et cetera. In Catholic welfare, organizations for the 'protection' of young girls,
for unmarried mothers and for families, for child protection and for social work
among soldiers, caravan dwellers and the elderly were active (*The Catholic
Church in the Netherlands* [1959]: 16-17; Duffhues et al. 1985: 83-98, 102-
114; Wijnen-Sponselee 1997: IX, 36-39).

Catholics participated in secondary education in small numbers because they
opposed the 'naturalistic' and 'intellectualistic' character of the state curricu-
lum. Legislation introduced between 1905-1909 however made a subsidy to
secondary religious schools possible, first partially and, after 1917, fully. Now
that they could, to a large extent, decide about secondary education themselves,
the objections of the Catholics against these schools were lifted. Between 1913
and 1925 and again after the Second World War, Catholic secondary educa-
tion expanded (Matthijssen 1958: 72-84). After 1948, the seminaries of the
regular orders adapted to the state curriculum and they became acknowledged
as regular secondary education (Hoogbergen 1991: 248-251). Table 1 shows
how large the Catholic education sector had grown by the end of the 1950's
and that it was more or less parallel to their relative position in Dutch society.

Table 1.: Catholic education

Type of school	Year	Number of Catholic schools	% all schools	Number of Catholic schoolchildren	% all children	% Catholic in population
Kindergarten	1958	1,485	37.7	167,151	46.2	40.0
Primary school	1958	2,917	55.1	657,044	43.2	40.0
High school	1958	398	38.1	20,682	10.2	40.0
Grammar school	1956	139	27.4	40,328	33.7	39.9

*Source:* The Catholic Church in the Netherlands *[1959]: 21*

The crowning of Catholic emancipation had to be a Catholic University. It was
thought that a university could improve the position of the Catholics in Dutch
society (cf. De Valk 1998: 270-271). It however took a long time to arrive at
this, and in this period a number of organizations stimulating science among
Catholics was founded. The idea of a Catholic University was first posed in
the mid-19th century, but only in 1903 was the Nuyens-foundation for the stim-
ulation of science among Catholics founded and in 1904 the Thijm-society for
Catholic intellectuals. The Radboud-foundation (1905) wanted to make use of

the opportunity to install extraordinary professors at public universities and to establish private universities. Finally, in 1923 the Catholic University was opened in Nijmegen and typically, it bore the name of the medieval Emperor Charlemagne, as the Catholics did not want to separate themselves with the University from society, but to use it as a vehicle to integrate into society and to let society benefit from it (Roes 1980; Van Voorst van Beest 1980: 8-26, 67-71). One of the first public presentations of the results of Catholic science – deliberately presented to the benefit of the whole of Dutch society – was the publication of the 24-volume general Catholic Encyclopaedia between 1930-1940 (Clemens 2004: 166-169).

Because of the civilization-offensive and the growth of Catholic education, Catholics acquired an equal position on the labour market. Graph 1 shows that in 1930 Catholics were represented in all sectors more or less proportionally.

Graph 1: distribution of Catholics over the working population (1930)
source: Kruijt 1935: 436
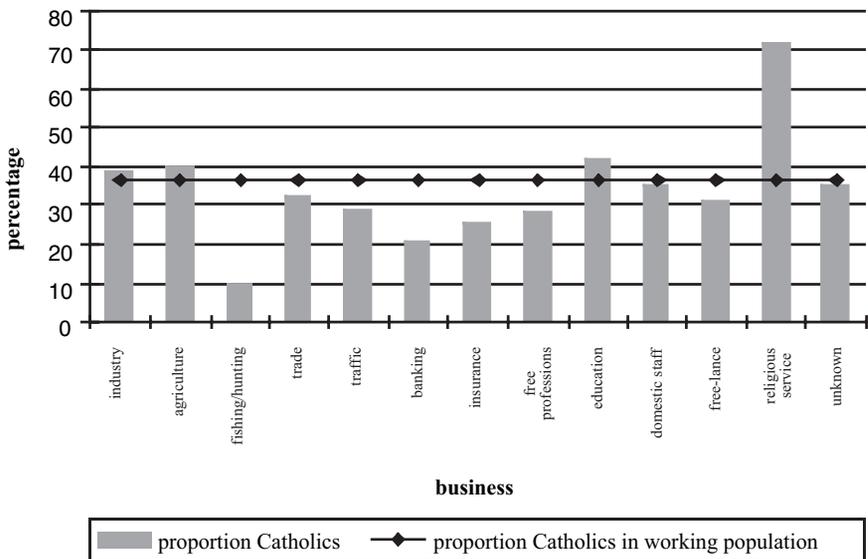
Later research based on the census of 1947 and 1965 – that unfortunately is difficult to compare with the pre-war research – shows that Catholics formed a bigger part of the working population than before and, within that, fulfilled 'better'

jobs (Kuiper 1953: 27; Kuiper 1964: 416). Faber and Ten Have also give information about the representation of the religions over leading and subordinate positions (1970: 62, 64). The impression concerning Catholics is the same: peaks here and there, but a considerable representation of Catholics in both layers, also in leading positions. Their research indicates however that the percentage of Catholic 'managers' slightly declined between 1930 and 1947.

The expectations of a Catholic university for the emancipation of the Catholics were fulfilled as well. Between 1900 and 1956 the number of Catholic professors grew from 1.0% to 21.9% and the number of Catholic students from 7.1% to 27.3%. In 1954 about 14% of the high-ranked civil servants was Catholic (Matthijssen 1958: 30-38). In 1965, the proportion of Catholic students had grown further to 32% (Van Hooijdonk 1965). Not only in numbers, but also concerning content, Catholic scholarship adapted to the environment, as is shown by an analysis of dissertations in history. Ten years after the publication of the first dissertation in history, their numerical deficiency had decreased, but their Catholic character was difficult to discern (Bornewasser 1980: 44-52). The ideal of integration into Dutch society while maintaining the Catholic identity, which was the ideal of the Catholic University, had thereby disappeared.

3.3. becoming acceptable

Catholics not only accidentally moved to the social centre by processes of socialization, they also willingly adapted to the mainstream of Dutch social culture. After 1900, Dutch Catholics discovered their national role and demanded an equal position in society (Van Miert 1999). Several Catholic historical journals wanted to improve Catholic scholarship in historical sciences, as well as stimulate Catholic group identity and the Dutch identity of Catholics in the Netherlands (Bornewasser 1986: 453-475). On the occasion of the centenary of national independence after the French occupation in 1913, a memorial book was published with the title *Het katholiek Nederland* (*The Catholic Netherlands*), in which the positive contribution of the Catholics to Dutch society in the area of charity, youth care and education was displayed. The two volumes were concluded by biographies of Catholics of national importance.

The adherence to the royal family among Catholics was traditionally weak. The protestant character of the nation was emphasized at the national feasts celebrated between 1860 and 1865, which raised protests among Catholics. But after 1874 -at the silver jubilee of the government of King William III- the bishops stimulated Catholics to participate in national festivities. The

believers were given dispensation for the Lenten fast, the bishops called for respect for the King and the Pius-society arranged a National Concert (Groot 2000). At the inauguration of Queen Wilhelmina, Catholic historians tried to connect her descent to Charlemagne and Saint Elisabeth of Thuringia, thus connecting the royal House of Orange not with Protestantism alone but with the glorious days of medieval Catholicism as well, making identification for contemporary Catholics easier (Raedts 1992: 714).

The many Catholic organizations, though aimed at separating Catholics from modern society and from non-Catholics, paradoxically contributed to the integration of Catholics into Dutch society. The right to establish Catholic schools was struggled for in national politics, so schools had to meet national standards, and the pupils took national exams for which they were initiated in national culture (Knippenberg 1996). As described in the previous paragraph, Catholic social organizations wanted to educate Catholics to be loyal citizens. Although the bishops opposed national organizations for a long time (because it would interfere in diocesan autonomy), Catholic unions, scouts, sports and youth movements finally became organized as national membership organizations, which cooperated with other denominational organizations and with the government. Even in its aversion to modern society, the Catholic Church showed its national side. Since 1930, it was argued that Catholic unity contributed to peace and national unity. Also the apostolate – traditionally fiercely opposing modern times and 'defending' the Catholic faith – saw its function for the whole society and moderated its tone (Sengers 2003: 92-96).

After the Second World War, the Catholic Church finally received the recognition it had strived for. The position of the Church before (the ban on membership of the national-socialist movement) and during the German occupation earned much respect by non-Catholics. Especially Cardinal De Jong became one of the symbols of Dutch resistance: he refused cooperation with the occupying forces to protect the Catholic organizations, he protested against the exclusion of Jewish children from schools, against the deportation of the Jews in 1942, against forced employment in Germany and the *Gleichschaltung* of Dutch social and political life. He promoted Catholics to help fellow Dutchmen irrespective of their confession and he occasionally cooperated with other churches. The fate of the Blessed Titus Brandsma and Saint Edith Stein, who both died in a concentration camp, also impressed non-Catholics as a sign of the 'good' attitude of Catholics during the war (Stokman [1945]; Manning 1978; Van Schaik 1996: 48-70; Gevers 2004).

In the first half of the 19th century, the relationship between the Church and the state had been quite tense. The Church demanded more freedom and less

state control in the public realm, for example in the case of charity and schools, which the liberal government would not grant. The new constitution of 1848, that firmly guaranteed the freedom of religion and made it possible to re-establish Catholic diocesan organization (1853), however ended this debate. Around 1870 the State Secretariat for the Roman Catholic Cult, which was experienced as a severe means of state control on Catholics, was abolished. Finally, the relationship of the Catholic Church and the state was relaxed, because after the introduction of general suffrage, the Catholic Party became the biggest party in parliament and Catholics started to play an important role in national politics. (Oud/Bosmans 1990: 295).

In accordance with the constitution, the government continued to pay (a part of) the salary of Catholic ministers. Moreover, the government expanded the payments to the Church (and other churches) in the case of resettlement, for example during the industrialization of South-Limburg, or damage of church buildings after natural disasters (Den Dekker-Van Bijsterveld 1988: 32-44). Of more importance for the acceptance of the Catholic Church were the subsidies to the Catholic social organizations. Thereby, the government acknowledged the importance of these organizations for society. Parallel to the settlement of the debate about religious schools – the government paid but the Church governed the school –, the government subsidized health care, welfare, youth organizations et cetera on a religious basis (not only for Catholics) (cf. Wijnen-Sponselee 1997: 32-33, 53-61). Because of the conditions of the government concerning professionalization that these organizations had to meet, the amount of funding sharply increased after 1915 (Pennings 1991: 145-149). The partition of public funds over different kinds of organizations is shown in table 2.

Table 2: government subsidies to Catholic organizations 1880-1930

Sector	%
Religious organizations	2.9
Health care	23.2
Education	50.8
Culture	16.2
Professional organizations	3.9
Housing	2.9

Source: Pennings 1991: 146

Already in the 1930's, the negative position of the Church towards society and other churches changed. The modern world was no longer condemned unconditionally and Catholics endeavoured to improve the world *as it is* from a Catholic perspective. Non-Catholics and non-believers were addressed as to their

similarities with Catholics, especially concerning the common goal of building a better world. Throughout the whole country, ecumenical discussion groups that wanted to prepare the peace between Catholics and Protestants by giving open, true information about one's church were founded (Jacobs 1992: 70-79; Jacobs 1998b: 5-10). Participation in those 'Rome-Reformation- groups' caused influential Catholics to re-think their Catholic identity and to express self-criticism. These groups put pressure on the influential apologetic society 'Petrus Canisius' not to concentrate on winning converts but to search for a broader, non-confessional unity of the churches. In 1948, there was a radical reform of this society: the defensive and pedantic tone was abandoned to counteract the idea that Catholics wanted to take over the state. The patron saint, intimately connected with the contra-reformation offensive, was changed to Saint Willibrord, who brought Christianity to the Low Countries and thus represented the unity of the early church. As Rome decided to leave ecumenical contacts to the local bishop, the number and the intensity of these ecumenical contacts in the Netherlands grew. And although the Episcopal letter of 1954 (that re-stated Catholic unity and forbade cooperation with neutral and socialist groups) and the dogma of the Assumption of Our Lady (also declared in 1950) posed a setback to ecumenical understanding, the time of animosity was over. In 1951, a book called *Geloofsinhoud en geloofsbeleving* (*Content and experience of faith*) was presented, the result of ecumenical talks that tried to find a new content of the faith that was acceptable for both parties (Jacobs 1998a). Also in Protestantism, more nuanced tones were expressed (Van Ruler 1953).

3.4. elites

Finally, the Catholic elites, educated at the Catholic university or another institution of higher education and used to bearing social responsibility, adapted the Catholic Church and especially the social organizations in which they were working to modern society. Catholic intellectuals wanted more freedom in the choice of their social contacts and confronted the teaching of the Church with modern science. Examples are the commitment of some Catholic intellectuals in the ecumenical movement (Luykx 2000: 34-36), in the Jewish-Christian dialogue (Van Schaik 1992: 54-99; Poorthuis/Salemink 2004), in a neutral committee that warned against the growing national-socialist movement (Luykx 2000: 127-129) and in the Rotary (Luykx 2000: 77-104). All contacts were prohibited or at least discouraged by the joint episcopate, and in some cases they were more severe in this than the official Roman rules. It was only after the Second World War that Catholic and non-Catholic scientists, for example

in the composition of general and religious handbooks and encyclopaedias (Clemens 2004: 169-175), started to work together.

Since the 1930's, the influence of psychology and the social sciences in Catholic social organizations, traditionally dominated by neo-thomistic ideas, increased (Luykx 1997: 80-87). Already before the war organizations for mental health-care gave attention to empirical psychology and an adjusted version of psychoanalysis (Ter Meulen 1988). The themes discussed in the clinics for problems in upbringing, marriages and alcohol wore out the traditionally religiously motivated taboos about sexuality and made room for more scientifically based advice (Westhoff 1996). Directly after the Second World War, modern psychological and pedagogical insights found their way into youth work and youth-workers tried to adapt to the needs of the youth (De Wolf 1979: 78-93). Since the 1930's, there was a more scientific and thus more neutral attention given to homosexuality: it was seen as a medical problem and was no longer condemned in moral terms (Oosterhuis 1992). Finally, already before 1960 Catholic intellectuals adopted the Nouvelle Theologie which emphasized the cultural context of human existence and nuanced the absolute thomistic claims of the Church in ecclesiology (the Church as an institute of salvation), morals (marriage, family life and sexuality), the stubborn position towards other churches and its universal claims on social life (Simons/Winkeler 1987: 16-20, 192-193, 201-208, 233-260).

4. Conclusion

In official terms, the Dutch Catholic Church opposed modern society and separated itself from it until 1960. But after 1920, as the Church was increasingly forced to deal with modernity, this position gradually changed. First, the social, mental and physical level of Catholics was improved through the Catholic social organizations. The expanding Catholic school sector heightened their educational level and so they could readily integrate into the expanding job market that demanded more specialized workers. Catholics held more and more diverse jobs, and even entered managerial functions. More and more Catholics earned academic degrees and entered academic professions. Second, the adaptation was the result of a deliberate policy. The antagonism towards the national state and the ruling (protestant) House of Orange was given up and it was the explicit aim to make ordinary citizens out of Catholics, besides being firm believers. The struggle with the state calmed down after the state decided to subsidize a variety of Catholic organizations without exercising control on them. The contacts with other churches greatly improved. Third, the Catholic

elite introduced modern scientific ideas into the daily practice of the Catholic social organizations. By 1960, we can no longer speak of the Dutch Catholic Church as a 'deviant' religious organization: Catholicism and modernity were thought to be quite compatible.

Rational choice theory specified four factors causing such a change: growth, elites, regression and socialization. However, some factors were not easy to discern or to specify with the historical method used. The Catholic Church became the biggest Church in pre-war Holland, but it is not easy to show that *because* of that it became a 'lazy' church or that Catholics became stronger tied to the outside world. It is also not easy to show the effect of regression. This thesis was originally designed by Stark and Bainbridge to hypothesize about the development of newly created, very deviant religious organizations, which typically have an over-representation of either men or women, young or older people, rich or poor people that over the course of time is expected to disappear. As the Catholic Church has existed in the Netherlands since the early Middle Ages, it can be expected that these differences have already 'regressed' and thus this effect cannot be distinguished in the modern era. The effects of elites and socialization can be described well. We can show that the consequence of the acts of the elites in the Catholic organizations consisted in reducing the tension with the outside world, but that was certainly not their deliberate intention as the crude theses of rational choice theory suggest. And it is almost impossible to show this effect in the Church organization itself. The effect of socialization can very well be described. However, most of all, the adaptation of the Dutch Catholic Church was the result of a deliberate policy: the Catholic Church definitely *wanted* to become an accepted church. As this was the thread in the modern history of the Dutch Catholic Church, I have characterized it as a 'church movement' in the terms of rational choice theory (Sengers 2003: 184-185).

It is important to notice that the adaptation of the Dutch Catholic Church was not a mass movement in this period. It was confined to the clerical and lay executives within the Catholic Church and the normal believer was hardly affected by it. Higher education was not accessible to everybody, the ecumenical contacts were the business of a select group of clerics, and the social and political contacts of the Catholic organizations with the outside world were the privilege of a select elite. The deviant character of the Dutch Catholic Church thus mainly remained, at least in the official policy, despite the clear and more silent adaptation that occurred between 1920-1960. But the adaptation could not be stopped in the executive elite. After 1960, the 'aggiornamento' of the Dutch Catholic Church became a mass movement

and this made it famous throughout the world up to the present day. The modern world was treated much more positively, the organization of the Church and the pastoral ministry were highly professionalized and adapted to worldly standards, the bishops released the Catholic organizations from their exclusive relationship with the Church and these offered their services to every Dutchman and no longer to Catholics alone, and the Catholic Church strongly engaged in ecumenical and interreligious dialogue (Sengers 2003: 150-162). From a social, political and moral point of view, Catholics can now no longer be distinguished from the Dutch population as a whole (Peters/Schreuder [1987]). Interestingly enough, there are personal and thematic threads that run throughout the changes made in the period 1920-1960 and after 1960.

The openness of Dutch Catholicism in pre-war Holland was not a small well in a calm sea. It was the sign of a larger social change that was taking place. To pursue the view of a tsunami: the withdrawal of the Church after the war was the sign that sooner or later the energy collected in the movement would smash on the coast – as it did after 1960. The changes that took place can be interpreted as an adaptation of the Church to Dutch (modern) society and this path was chosen well before 1960, partially even before 1920. I therefore plea for a re-evaluation of the period between 1920-1960 as a special period in Dutch Catholicism from this perspective: modernization, change, pluriformity that make this period so interesting – however valued – were actually an adaptation of the Dutch Catholics to modern society. Further social and historical research can highlight the speciality of this period between ultramontanism and progressive liberalism and the continuities and discontinuities between these stages (cf. Salemink 2005). Moreover, an international perspective could indicate if the Netherlands was a special case or if the adaptation to society can be seen in other countries as well.

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