RELIGION AND THE DUTCH TRIBE

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Van Baal is one of the first anthropologists who attempted to carry out research on certain aspects of Dutch religion and compare them with the same aspects of other religions studied in the field, in Indonesia. His concern was not only to establish a documentary record, but to interrogate the data as an anthropologist with the question in mind as to why these Dutch people, as one of the varieties of mankind, expressed themselves religiously, why they did it in this way, and what was implied in the way they did it from a comparative point of view. The problem is legitimate, and the investigation of the "home religion" also belongs to the tasks of the scholarly study of religion. The interesting question is rather why at present, more than twenty-five years after Van Baal's publication, Dutch science of religion, with a few exceptions, has hardly paid any attention to the scholarly study and interpretation of present-day religion among the Dutch themselves.

This may partly explain the relative lack of good solid information concerning the different religious communities and their affiliated institutions which exist in Holland at present: Protestant, Catholic and Orthodox Christians, Jewish and Muslim communities, some Hindu and Buddhist groups and meditation societies, and other groups with religious or generally idealistic intentions and inclinations. As far as we know there does not even exist a simple listing of them in printed form. About their ideas it is still more difficult to obtain unbiased information. One result of this lack of information is that those who are not concerned with religion themselves often have not the slightest idea of what it may mean to others. Another result is that a number of opinions are current now on what is going on in Holland religiously, but most of these opinions are the result of what Church pastors consider to be their pastoral responsibility, or of what laymen consider to be, on the basis of their own experiences and thoughts, the positive or negative sides of that particular kind and shape of religion with which each one of them
came into touch in the course of his or her contingent life history. Such opinions may also be the result of what a particular scientific outlook, ideology or world view makes people think of religion generally. From a scholarly point of view, however, they are just opinions about religion in this country. If we want to arrive at scholarly conclusions, valid for Dutch and non-Dutch, religious and non-religious readers because they are true, we must take a realistic point of departure, analyze things as they present themselves, and use procedures of research which not only do justice to the data, persons, and groups that are subject of inquiry, but also have their own, theoretically based self-critical rationality. We are concerned here with a domain of life in Dutch society about which, strictly speaking, we have much less reliable information than is claimed to be available by the different parties involved. Actually, this lack of information pertains not only to the "inner" religious experience, but also exists with regard to the "outer" side of verifiable empirical data and facts.

THE PAST AND ITS RELIGION

In Dutch society one often finds the opinion, sometimes as an explicit idea and often as a latent feeling, that people of former times were more religious than people are nowadays, that they had a stronger faith and a deeper religious awareness than the present generation. One may even hear that Holland, as far as the past is concerned, has been an eminently religious country. Such opinions are to be found both among those who can see their own faith only under the authority of what the faith of the forebears or the spiritual life of the community was at the outset, and among those who mirror their own ar eligiosity or unbelief over against the religiousness or belief of others, at present or in the past. Now what do the historical data themselves say about this matter, and how are we going to interpret them?

The region of the Low Countries as a whole was "Catholic Christian" until the first half of the 16th century, when the Reformation movement obtained adherents here and there, especially on the Calvinistic side, so that among the Christians a distinction was made between "Protestants" on the one hand and "Roman Catholics" on the other. During the war of independence (1568-1648) against Catholic Spain, Calvinism in particular developed and was to put its stamp on official Christianity in the Netherlands for several centuries. How relatively weak Calvinistic
Protestantism still was at first appears for instance from the fact that in 1573, the year in which William the Silent became a Protestant, only about 5% of the population happened to be Calvinist. The "Reformed" Church was consolidated only at the Synod of Dordrecht (1618-19). On this occasion the more liberal Arminians or "Remonstrants" were condemned for their doctrine of free will, in favor of the stricter Calvinistic Gomarists or "Contra-Remonstrants" with their doctrine of double predestination. As the established orthodoxy the latter group was not only to determine the main lines of the establishment and development of official Protestant religion in the Republic of the United Netherlands, but they would also draw political, social, and economic consequences from their stern convictions with theocratic tendencies, that would put their stamp on social life in Holland. Characteristically, however, among the Protestants of the Reformed Church of the country there would continue to exist, side by side with this strict and exclusive Calvinism, a more liberal and tolerant current. Depending on circumstances, this non official undercurrent could exercise sometimes more and sometimes less influence, and so allowed Christianity in the Netherlands to offer more room for different convictions and kinds of religious experience than was the case in the neighbouring countries. In this way, Roman Catholics were tolerated; in its "Golden Age" (17th century) and later, the country could assimilate a number of Protestant refugees from France and Central Europe, Jewish immigrants from Portugal and later from Eastern Europe, and original, liberal minds like the philosophers Descartes and Spinoza. Between 1651 and 1795, Calvinism was state religion, with limited tolerance of Roman Catholics, Lutherans, Mennonite groups, and the Remonstrants. In 1816 this church received the name Nederduitse (at present: Nederlands) Hervormde Kerk. In 1853, thanks to Thorbecke's liberal policy, the Roman Catholics received the right to organize themselves freely, so that bishops could be nominated in the Netherlands. Although important spiritual movements like Pietism in the 18th century and the réveil movement in the 19th century developed practically outside the church institution (and implied an indirect protest against the religious institutional state of affairs), religious history in the Netherlands until the 20th century coincides by and large with the church history of this country. Every Dutchman was a nominal member of the church and in his spiritual life had to direct himself toward it. In the 19th century, within the Dutch Reformed Church, there occurred "Calvinistic" splits which were to have important consequences for Protestant religion and society in the Netherlands. On the one hand, there were the hyper-
orthodox scriptural and fundamentalist movements leading to the 
Gereformeerde break-away groups of 1834 and 1892. In the first case, 
church and state took repressive measures against the separatist church 
group claiming to be more Calvinistic than the Calvinists, and a number of 
adherents emigrated to America. In 1892 the neo-Calvinist Gereformeerde 
Kerk established itself as an independent church institution alongside 
the Hervormde Kerk, and could assimilate part of the members of the 
church group of 1834. On the other hand, there were modernist groups in 
the second half of the 19th century who organized, not without difficulties, 
their own liberal Christian communities over against the more orthodox 
communities of the official church. In addition, during the last hundred 
years a number of other Protestant churches and spiritual-religious 
communities developed outside the Hervormde Kerk; at the same time a 
growing number of workers loosened or lost their links with religion or 
started to revolt against it, like some free-thinking intellectuals.

SOME FACTS 4)

As far as the Roman Catholics are concerned, their percentage of the 
total population increased slowly after an initial decrease in the 18th 
century: from 47% in 1656, it became 34% in 1726, 38% in 1850, 35% in 1909 
and 40.4% in 1960. The history of Christianity in the Netherlands has 
been dominated by the opposition of Protestants and Catholics; some forms 
of this opposition are still visibly at work today. Protestants and 
Catholics began to find each other in the common attempt, by means of 
specific Protestant and Catholic political parties, to obtain government 
subsidy for private schools of a confessional character. This was granted 
after World War I.

It is instructive to trace over a period of a hundred years the 
percentage of Dutch people belonging to a church (Roman Catholic, 
Calvinistic, "Other") or not belonging to any church, according to the 
successive official censuses. 5)
RELIGION AND THE DUTCH TRIBE

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Year</th>
<th>Roman Catholic (Herroormde Gereformeerd)</th>
<th>Calvinist (Calvinist)(Neo-Calvinist)</th>
<th>Other churches (incl. Lutheran, Mennonite, Baptist groups, and also Jewish communities)</th>
<th>Without church affiliation</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>1859</td>
<td>37.1</td>
<td>54.6</td>
<td>8.2</td>
<td>0.1</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>1869</td>
<td>36.5</td>
<td>54.6</td>
<td>8.8</td>
<td>0.1</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>1879</td>
<td>35.9</td>
<td>54.5</td>
<td>9.3</td>
<td>0.3</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>1889</td>
<td>35.4</td>
<td>48.7 (52.7)</td>
<td>4.0</td>
<td>10.4</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>1899</td>
<td>35.1</td>
<td>48.6 (56.8)</td>
<td>8.2</td>
<td>5.8</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>1909</td>
<td>35.0</td>
<td>44.3 (53.7)</td>
<td>9.4</td>
<td>6.3</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>1920</td>
<td>35.6</td>
<td>41.3 (50.4)</td>
<td>9.1</td>
<td>6.2</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>1930</td>
<td>36.4</td>
<td>34.5 (43.2)</td>
<td>8.7</td>
<td>6.0</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>1947</td>
<td>38.5</td>
<td>31.1 (40.8)</td>
<td>9.7</td>
<td>3.7</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>1960</td>
<td>40.4</td>
<td>28.3 (37.6)</td>
<td>9.3</td>
<td>3.6</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

Either because one wants to be considered explicitly as such, or because one has to be considered implicitly as such since one has not been baptized or confirmed or is a member of a Jewish community.

This table shows a clear decrease, over the last hundred years, of membership of the *Nederlands Hervormde Kerk* and of "Other churches", and a manifest increase in the percentage of those without church affiliation.

Apart from these figures at least three facts may be mentioned which could give rise to and support the current opinion that the country was more religious formerly than at the present time:

a) There are enough data available to ascertain much more intensive church-going in the past. This concerns both the number of people attending church service or mass, and the number of services or masses held each week.

b) The authority of religious leadership -- minister or pastor, Protestant ecclesiastical institutions or the Catholic hierarchy directed from Rome -- was much greater formerly. This holds true not only for the individual church members but also for society as a whole, including institutions and channels of public authority, so that one could speak of the Netherlands in past time as a ministers' or a pastors' country ("domineesland").

c) Formerly there was a great number of religious institutions which played an important role in communal life and society, not only in view of people living in poverty, and in need of help but also in view of the needs of specific groups, leading to the establishment of Christian or Catholic youth, women's, and professional associations. Part of the work of such institutions was done directly by the churches,
but the greater part of it rested on private initiative of Christian
inspiration, basis, or principles. One could include in this group also
the missionary societies and groups, working within the country and
abroad, which found a broad audience precisely among the "laymen".

So four facts have been advanced in support of the opinion that the
Netherlands were more religious formerly than at the present time:
decrease of the percentage of church-affiliated people, less churchgoing,
less authority on the part of religious leaders, ministers, and pastors,
and a decreasing number of institutions working on Christian principles.
Now what is the nature of these facts and how are they to be interpreted?

INTERPRETATION OF THESE FACTS

To start with, one should be aware of the ambiguity of the facts
themselves. If at the census of 1859, 0.1% of the Dutch population admits
not to be church-affiliated, and in 1960 18.4%, the difference is
impressive, but it does not say very much about the attitude of 99.9%
of the population toward religion in 1859, and the corresponding 81.6%
a century later. The other facts, taken by themselves, are also not without
a fundamental ambivalence or ambiguity. The churchgoers of former times
indeed went to church, but this act could to a large extent be interpreted
as social rather than specifically religious behavior. The authority of
ministers and pastors in numerous cases rested not so much on a greater
recognized knowledge of religion alone, but rather on the simple fact
that they provided leadership and authoritative advice, if not prescriptions,
in all kinds of affairs to a population which -- even if people were able
to read and write here and there -- in many respects must be considered
not to have been able to know and judge, and in any case as uninformed.
As to the place of religious institutions, it could be as prominent as it
was since there were hardly any other institutions that could cater to
existing human needs. How many of the people who were actively involved
in this work did it in the first place for "human" reasons which were then
as now self-evident from a human point of view, be it now rather in public
or "neutral" institutions?

Looking back at the religious Netherlands of the past one cannot be
but struck by such ambiguities and ambivalences of innumerable "religious"
facts. This ambivalence must have been partly visible to the religious
leadership at the time, but it certainly was not investigated by them.
This ambivalence, to a certain extent, had to do with the fact that
belonging to a given church or community had direct social consequences
and, conversely, that in social intercourse a person stepped back behind the ramparts of the church or religious community to which he belonged. Social status and religious status being interwoven, one had, in order to be taken into account socially and economically, to be religious at least in a social sense, since one's place in society was largely determined by one's choice, position, or standpoint with respect to a given church or religious community, or to religion as such. The consequence is that, with some clear exceptions, there is no absolute guarantee that a given case of socio-religious behavior or participation was really "religious" in its motivations or intentions, even if one uses the religious convictions of the period as the norm. The fact of the ambiguity of given religious facts is connected, moreover, not only with their social function but also with an inherent quality of what we call "religious". Actually, it is intimately related to the very problem of human authenticity.

Given the ambivalence or ambiguity of religious facts as far as their religiousness is concerned, as students we must be most careful in our interpretative efforts so as not to draw incorrect conclusions. A few examples may suffice. In the first place, there are indications in the literature and in ecclesiastical documents of former times that even then there was irreligion. This could be found perhaps less among the burghers than in certain regions in the countryside, in the lower classes in general, in artistic circles and the world of entertainment, and not least among those who wanted to leave the Netherlands for one reason or another and who preferred the wider world, which for most of them in practice meant living overseas in the colonies. The way of life of such people and groups abroad caused many a minister or pastor to give serious warning and threaten hellfire and brimstone. Nor did the life of the burghers themselves, who have always played a major and serious role in the Netherlands, always conform to the stern prescriptions and direct rules of Protestant or Catholic ethics. The very protests of spiritually-minded and religiously-oriented movements and revivals, and the emotional utterances of individual ministers and monks indirectly indicate that even at home there existed realities of life that did not in the least correspond with what the religious-ethical ideal prescribed.

In the second place we have to take into account that formerly, even apart from the fact that not everybody was able to write, everything that was explicitly anti-religious was not only not allowed to be expressed, but actually could not officially be printed and distributed. Only in certain cases -- as in literature and the plastic arts, in popular ballads, and in the amusement sectors -- people could express themselves against
the established religion, not only in action but also in words. This did not happen necessarily by way of anti-moral or anti-theological statements. In many cases it happened indirectly, via criticism of the religious leadership, of the credulous masses, and of institutional church affairs; such an internal criticism of religion runs like a red thread through and parallel to religion. In many cases, of course, it was not by words but by action that one was able to make a moral compromise with Providence, whatever offence it must have caused the faithful. Taking this into consideration, a correct interpretation of the facts becomes more and more difficult. It actually remains an open question whether the masses at the time did indeed think in religious terms, whether the majority's normative ideas were indeed determined by religious views, and whether the ways in which large groups of the population acted and behaved were indeed determined or even strongly influenced by religion. All things considered -- apart from the theological doctrines and the ethical-moral prescriptions as they were held and exemplified by a religiously moved elite-- what the people themselves believed remains largely an open question. We shall never know the answer with any certainty, but from the existence of hierarchical social structure, religiously legitimized, we may conclude that there must have existed powerful mechanisms of suppression, even repression. There certainly was a broad spectrum between the truly faithful and the unbelievers. We may assume that the majority of the people found their place somewhere within that spectrum.

In our investigation we need not, however, only oppose a "religious" to a "non-religious" Holland and speculate on the size of the latter in different times and places. We can also investigate religion in the Netherlands by relating it to certain manifest social developments, particularly over the last hundred years. It is our task, then, to ascertain the relationship between changes in church constitutions, religious institutions, and actual religiosity, on the one hand, and broader social movements and processes, on the other as for instance:

1. the self-identification of groups of the population -- workers in town or in the countryside, lower-middle classes -- which had been practically imperceptible until the middle of the 19th century, and which could now express and identify themselves as "non-religious" (socialist workers over against the churches) or as "religious" (groups in Christian associations, Reformed, Catholic, or other);

2. the rise of a class which had been impoverished particularly by the new industrialization and which identified itself now as "proletarian". They would acquire their own "non-religious" or anti-religious ideology over and against the established classes and the established religion which, with its institutions, was felt to be exploiting the people;
(3) the emancipation of an intelligentsia which had not been able to rise in the older social structure but which -- by increasing education and consequently by continuous inspiration of recent scientific discoveries -- was able not only to take a critical stand against existing religious ideas and interests, but which was also in a position to choose new attitudes and to develop new ideas;

(4) the growing participation of women in public life, in social institutions and in the labor process. This meant not only essential changes in the given social structures including the family, but to a large extent also restructuring a number of human relations and revision of religious norms governing these relations;

(5) the slow but inevitable disintegration of existing social constellations and traditional structures under the impact of industrialization, and of the modernization processes connected with it. The kind of religion conditioned by the old constellations and structures was unable to function in a society caught up in the throes of reorganization.

Such movements and processes, to which others could be added, imply that not only the place of the churches but also the function of a given religion within society had to undergo considerable changes. If from time to time regressions in religion occurred in the form of fundamentalistic movements, the latter could retard the effects of the historical process by keeping to themselves and obstructing "progress". They could not prevent the course of history; at most they could isolate themselves from it.

THE PROBLEM OF DUTCH RELIGION

There are at least three preliminary questions to any research on religion in any society, and they must also be posed for the Netherlands. These questions are: (1) whether there is religion in this country nowadays; (2) if so, what the evidence is for the presence of religion; and (3) how this religion can be investigated, making use of what the Dutch themselves understand by "religion". This may seem to be an academic starting point, but actually we find ourselves in the midst of the problem in any scholarly study of any religion. In such an investigation we formulate questions which are hardly put by the people themselves and which actually may be resisted by them, but posing them is of basic importance for the success of the scholarly enterprise.

Let us imagine someone visiting the Netherlands and, being interested in religion, someone who happens not to be a Christian. He will look for "religion" in this country in order, first, to make an inventory of it; second, to describe what Dutch people are doing with their religion; third, to try and understand this; and, fourth, to explain why Dutch society has this kind of religion at all. Our visitor finds himself before a most formidable task. He must collect the data
which are relevant for his research, interpret these "religious" facts in a correct way, and assess what these facts actually mean to people, not only rationally but also -(and perhaps especially)- in terms of feelings and emotions. And then he must develop and test hypotheses that may lead to explanation.

During his stay our visitor, insofar as he is able to grasp the Dutch language, will hear and see a lot of things (for instance, through radio and television); but he will have difficulty in bringing this into a clear connection with the "religious" fact of the Christian broadcasting companies. Making his way through the country, he will find churches, mostly closed during the week and sometimes even on Sundays. If he discovers the numerous religious institutions that built these churches, still the mutual connections between these institutions that built these churches relations between these institutions and the world at large will be a problem to him. He will have difficulty, not so much perhaps in finding religious leaders, but in deducing from their way of speaking, acting and thinking relevant information about what is actually happening in the Netherlands, religiously speaking. If he contacts the people themselves, probably no one will be capable of giving him realistic, unbiased and correct information. On the contrary, as soon as he touches the subject, our inquirer will find, especially among those who adhere to religion, a fairly irrational and poorly thought out way of acting and behaving, and also a flood of words that show relatively little logical coherence and that are difficult to understand. If he is around at Christmas time, the significance of this feast will most probably escape him. Once he understands its meaning, he may ask why the festival takes place the way it does, without receiving a clear answer.

Our visitor will be struck, to be sure, by a great many emotions that are disguised as all kinds of convictions and pertinent opinions. These emotions are the more indicative of psychological dependencies and fixations, as the corresponding ideas are promulgated with greater absoluteness, pretension and conceit. Contrariwise, if our visitor should travel to certain regions in the countryside, he will then have difficulty in recognizing religion in what is held to be religion there, and in seeing more in it than a pattern of life which has been traditionally determined, is in unsteady equilibrium and has been endowed with a religious quality. He will be able to recognize the most important features of this pattern of life in the towns among theburghers, the lower-middle classes and the workers as well, be it with other nuances, not necessarily religious; that is to say, often more religious or, on the
contrary, non-religious. Listening to sermons of religious preachers, or to sermon-like speech in general, will strengthen the impression of our visitor that religion in Holland may be summarized to some extent as the reactive and irrational world of representations of people who have singular ways of dealing with the world around them and with their fellows. Whatever his particular experience, it would be very difficult for such a visitor to arrive at an idea or even an image of Christianity on the basis of the confusing impressions he would receive during even the most conscientious and systematic research performed in this country, impressions he would try to explain. What moves these people, where they are going, will remain largely hidden from our visitor. He will also wonder where their soul is to be found beyond their ordinary daily life, which is not so very different from that of people in other countries.

Religion in Holland indeed has special features and plays a curious role in the country. In this respect, Holland is, from a descriptive, comparative point of view, more comparable to countries like Lebanon and Israel, India and Pakistan, than to any other country in Europe. One may think of the role that religion plays in numerous conflicts, debates and discussions concerning subjects that are not in the least of a religious nature, and one may point to the authority assigned in those discussions to statements by religious leaders. One thinks of the role of religion at a moral level, in a pedagogical sense, and in the self-identification of individuals and groups. One would certainly point to the role of religion in the process of vertical pluralization (verzuiling): in education, political parties, communication media, labor unions, professional associations, sport and other leisure organizations, and the promotion of other group interests. It is interesting to observe that this vertical pluralism has been determined less by the church institutions as such than by religious pressure groups which succeeded in subjecting the vital sectors of social life to their interests. This was done by means of ideologies with religious tenets, or by presenting complete philosophies of life and views of the world. They succeeded in making the pragmatic and human functioning of these sectors subordinate to principles which, all considered, hardly anyone is able or even willing to stick to. One could also point to the continual tension which exists among the faithful between, on the one hand, those who (consciously or not) submit to the authority of Bible, Tradition or Church as a whole -- be it applied to the situation of the moment -- and, on the other, those who claim to be led by intelligence, insight and experience. In hardly any country, as far as we can ascertain, is the
opposition between those who in religious matters appeal or explicitly refuse to appeal to an authority from outside—whatever that may be—as strong as in the Netherlands. This reflects the perennial tension between the orthodox and the liberal trend in the history of this country, as alluded to above. One may also point to the practical absence, at least at the present time, of a real living Dutch culture and of a genuine, creative, independent intelligentsia. One finds, however, nearly everywhere in this country what may be called the weapon of the narrow minds: the instinct to lay bare the mistakes made by others, the need to pass judgment on other people, the desire to be critical at all cost.

On the whole, there is a singular lack of what most other societies know: a basic human warmth and wisdom. Comical as it may appear from the outside, it seems impossible to live with on the inside; but the Dutch succeed in doing so.

Calvinism and Jansenism have put heavy demands on the people; although the religious intention slowly may have lost its force, the same kind of psychological attitude nevertheless has continued to permeate in human relations, scholarship and the arts—making any major creativity in these domains a near impossibility. Like other things, religion can present itself as a monster.

The huge impact of Calvinism may be summarized in simple words: a totalitarianism of absolute control, not only of the outward but also of the inner life and conscience of one's fellow men, a life coming under the great Interdiction; the rise of staunch, simple-souled and direct-minded people, counterparts of policemen and schoolmasters, silent tyrants as upholders of order, who were always small-minded because so many dimensions of life were lost on them. People with repressed feelings and emotions no longer suffered under this repression because they suppressed themselves. A rigid social order with great formalism and arrogance of leadership; dignity and importance attached to one's opinions, ideas and theology; endless meetings of democratic decision-making with coffee and cigars and weight throwing on all sides.

The impact of Catholicism with Jansenist tendencies can be summarized in parallel terms: a kind of "people's religion" under the laws of nature or sublimating it; an induced naiveté, submission and respect for the established hierarchy and order; over against the stiff unconsciousness of the Calvinists an abundant love of life. The perfect obedience: when the pastors called for more babies, they arrived; when the orders called for more missionaries, they went; when the clergy called for more money, it came; when a new generation called for Revolt and Insurgence, people conformed.

The true saints in Holland were those that kept silent....

As far as religion in Holland is concerned, one may point to the presence of an almost national tradition of theological thought at least among Protestants, but also to the practically complete absence of a national philosophical tradition. One may note that in matters such as
world economic policies and international politics, family planning and social legislation, the State of Israel and the rights of Palestinians, marxism and air pollution, quite a number of people can only be brought to a decision on religious grounds or with a religious legitimation. Finally, one may point to the dialectics of excessive obedience and submission to ecclesiastical or biblical authority on the one hand, and the complete refusal of any authority at all on the other. If one adds to this a predilection for endless considerations and argumentation, and the increasing fear of being manipulated when not taking militant action, it is legitimate to ask whether this religion should not be seen as one of the deeper causes of the turbulences of new generations.

CHANGE OF CHURCHES

In Western Europe, the Netherlands have the highest degree of non-church affiliation; that is to say, the process of "dechurchment" is stronger here than elsewhere. In 1960 the percentage of non-church affiliated people was 21% in Utrecht, 30% in the Hague, 34% in Rotterdam, 48% in Amsterdam, and 53% in the Ijmond-region near the North Sea coast not far from Amsterdam. Also within the churches the actual participation of the members is decreasing. In the Roman Catholic Church, the number of vocations in the orders has sharply reduced, and on the whole the number of vocations to become priest or minister has very much diminished.

Among the reasons brought forward by sociologists to explain this process are: the inadequate answer of the churches to the proletarization which resulted from industrialization, the loss of function of the churches within the context of Dutch society, and the ending of traditional patterns with which the churches identified themselves.

... the churches in their traditional form have considerably lost significance for their members. Participation has decreased to private life, and normative integration has become weaker. Moreover, the pattern of expectation has changed...

As a consequence, the place of the churches in Dutch society has changed fundamentally. They have been obliged to adopt new attitudes toward non-church affiliation. L. Laeyendecker distinguishes three attitudes which occurred in historical sequence, depending on whether the churches identified the process of "dechurchment" with a decline of religion as such, or whether the churches rather concluded that they had given an inadequate answer to the problems of the time:

(a) the defensive reaction by the churches, their unwillingness or inability to change themselves and their consequent isolation. This
attitude itself is reflected theologically in the idea that the present problem of the Church is how to translate revealed truth into the language of the time and how to use new techniques in order to transmit this truth.

(b) the organizational reorientation making for the formation of communities and parishes on a new, smaller scale and in new forms, together with a recognition of the ecclesiastical structure and a reconsideration of the relation between office-bearers and the laity. This is connected with a new theological interpretation of religious authority.

(c) the theological reorientation which allows for changes in ecclesiastical structures and in life patterns. This actually implies a theological reinterpretation of religious truth.

The churches themselves have also become more pluriform, which makes for a greater differentiation in their own circle. This also has its consequences for given pretensions of being absolute, making for new relations among the churches themselves. A sign of this is the expansion and deepening of the ecumenical movement in the sixties, both on the side of the Protestants and of the Catholics. In the Netherlands the movement became possible only when a clear Protestant majority had disappeared and when the birthrate of the Catholics showed a clear decrease. This resulted in a numerical balance between Protestants and Catholics in the Netherlands and was the beginning of a "defrosting" of the sharp, even inimical opposition between the two which had lasted until long after World War II. Then other oppositions softened as well: between gereformeer-de (neo-Calvinist) and other (e.g., hervormde) Protestants, or the opposition within the churches between the more orthodox and the more liberal wings. In many respects, the Netherlands' religious situation of the second half of the nineteenth and the first half of the twentieth centuries can be characterized as that of a front situation: a confrontation between churches themselves, between church-affiliated and non-affiliated people, between the faithful and the unbelievers. At the time the air was full of rivalry and critical position taking. In the ecumenical movement, positive as it showed itself to be, the constraints of given historical and sociological factors appeared to be strong and painfully palpable for those looking for ecumenical union out of a deeper longing or expectation. The ecumenical action of churches has, of course, apart from religious also practical and social-psychological motivations. Human factors like disillusionment with one's own church or a resentment caused by one's own negative experiences in religious matters may have played a part.

The change of the place and function of the churches in Dutch society has other consequences as well. One may think of a lesser normative integration of the people, a lesser mutual assimilation of existing religious value systems, a more restricted degree of identification of people with given church denominations, a decreasing authority of the
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religious leadership and a general decline of religiously organized life. Laymen nowadays play a larger part in the churches, so that church leaders are no longer necessarily all theologians. On the whole, the influence of the churches is on the decline.

CHANGE OF RELIGION

As a consequence of the weakening of a central religious authority and of mundane factors like modern communications media, the shades of meaning --negative and positive -- which religion represents for people in the Netherlands have become pluriform, too. Not only details but the fact of religion itself has become poly-interpretable. This implies not only that people are actually freer to go with or against and can determine their thought and action accordingly, but also that religion as such much less than formerly can be said to represent one objective, generally recognized -- whether accepted or rejected -- value. Religion actually evolves into a number of subjective forms of meaning -- accepted or conferred; that is to say, it evolves into patterns of interpretive meaning, which run parallel to the "life worlds" and life projects of individual persons and distinct groups. Moreover, most denominations have lost their fixed identity, and hence their absolute meaning, and they have become poly-interpretable. In many churches, more varied attitudes and positions can be taken nowadays than in the past, and one can move from one church to the other with less difficulty than in former times. It is now also possible to dissociate oneself from a given church without the worst secondary mundane consequences.

This all points in the direction of a greater freedom -- a greater consciousness and demand for that freedom -- which people have acquired when confronted with the fact of religion. If it is true that people are conditioned or even determined in their innermost being by their religion, it is now possible to enjoy a dimension of freedom in it: to "choose" one's religion, to "keep" one's freedom or to 'acquire" it with regard to any or all religion. Less than formerly can one claim to be a victim of a given religion.

Another interesting element of change is that nowadays a number of religious attitudes can be found in the Netherlands which have little if anything to do with the churches. One may think of individual expressions in literature and art, of new religious movements -- christian and non-christian -- which arose in the sixties, of action committees opposing established religious institutions and ideas - often precisely from a
religious standpoint or out of moral-ethical motivations - of ideological participation of religiously motivated persons in non-religious, marxist and other groups. This diffusion of religious motivations in many directions would be an interesting subject for further investigation.

Again, change has occurred in the role which religion plays in a given social context. This role can be ascertained, for instance, by an analysis of given social structures and processes which take place in that social context. It should be possible to assess the degree to which religion is interpreted by the people as a reference to a purely religious focus, and the degree to which it's function is instrumental to reaching non-religious aims; in practice the two go together. In a great many cases, religion today - perhaps more than formerly - is actually used as an ideological means either to realize or to legitimate a mundane aim. It is a well-known fact that at present any independence or autonomy of "religion" is often denied precisely on religious grounds. One curious consequence of this is that, to the extent that religion is more "diffused" or "utilized", its existence for its own sake becomes rarer. Thus it is an ever more difficult subject for sociological inquiry as something apart: either because it is relativized under an absolute transcendence or because it is utilized for immanent purposes.

A final major change of religion in the Netherlands stems from the gradual secularization of Dutch society, so that not only culture and social life, but probably even to an increasing extent politics in the country no longer may be subjected to religious legitimation, and certainly not to any direct religious authority. This process of secularization is at the basis of the shifting of the place of the churches from the center to the margin of Dutch society. Conversely, this very shift means the rise of secular sectors of society; this implies that the churches will become in their turn an even more marginal social phenomenon. One consequence is that ethico-religious values and norms that derive from a religious inspiration may continue to function as secular social values and can be used for other aims and purposes in the social process. Another consequence is the rise of quite a number of theoretical or practical ideologies which pretend to offer solutions for particular problems and which contest each other bitterly in terms of power as well as of rational self-legitimation. The norms have simply taken a subjective validity, such that it actually becomes more and more difficult to perceive any unified structure of Dutch religion, or even to claim its existence. The 1966 poll is instructive in this respect, too.
Our hypothetical visitor to the Netherlands, making further inquiry, could begin assembling data and facts like those mentioned here: on the history of the religious groups, on the churches, on religious changes as perceived by people on the spot, and he might use the results of polls held on religion in the country. However, the problem of how to interpret such data would then become the more and more urgent. The simplest solution would be that our visitor naively measure and evaluate these data simply according to his personal religious ideals or to his personal ideal image of religion. Another easy but unsatisfactory solution would be that he simply pass judgment on these data on the basis of theological, philosophical and ethical criteria which he considers to be authoritative, depending on the community to which he belongs or to the theological revelational system to which he adheres. This, however, would not help him to interpret the data adequately according to their proper meaning as data.

It would appear to be a methodological requirement of our visitor—if he wants to arrive at an adequate interpretation of such "religious" data—that he acquire access to the world in which these data exist and whose religion he wants to know about. There is evidently only one way to gain access to this world, namely via the people who live there. To make sense, a poll, for instance, presupposes that the student has a certain foreknowledge of the matter under investigation and the people he wants to interrogate, so that he can decide what facts he wants to acquire and formulate his questions accordingly. He must still do this in terms of the minds of the people to whom he has to convey questions which they can understand.

So in this case our visitor would have to address himself first of all to people who can be good informants: who, in other words, can give him correct factual information. But as soon as he wants to interpret this information, he must again have informants who can not only give him information on the subject of the information acquired, but who can discuss the meaning of this subject and thus make it clear to him. Here, however, we have a requirement of a different order: this informant must be a potential discussion partner, otherwise the meaning cannot be conveyed to the student. But this is still not enough. Our visitor, in his contact with his informants, must use a third criterion to minimize the chance that they won't speak the truth and maximize the possibility that they will come to a human communication and valuable discussion with him. That is to
say, he must assess the degree of authenticity of his informants, not only in their dealings with him but also, as far as he is able to see, in their relations with other people. This requirement may be most difficult to fulfill, but our visitor simply must strive after it if he does not want to be misled about Holland, consciously or unconsciously, by those Dutch informants at his disposal. Further on, in the course of his research, especially if our visitor will have found quite a number of informants and if he succeeds in knowing them better, he will try to coordinate on the one side what they tell him about religion and other matters in Dutch society, and on the other side what they are saying and doing in their own lives, insofar as he can penetrate them. A next phase in his research will be to assess what may be called the human and social position of the informants: within the society—its personal relations and its communities—of which they are part and in which they participate. In other words, our visitor must arrive at a stage in which he can ascertain, while personally checking his results, the place of his Dutch informants within the Dutch social and religious life of which he acquires knowledge. In this it will be helpful to compare the informants with each other and to look at their mutual relationship.

We would not have pursued such a detailed description had we not wanted to prove a specific point. For any interpretation which wants to call itself adequate, it is a basic requirement to relate given data, phenomena or expressions to the words or action of individuals or groups of whom we may assume that their words or deeds are authentic, even if this can never be demonstrated with absolute certainty. So many students have been misled by their informants that, methodologically speaking, given data, phenomena and expressions can be interpreted, understood and explained adequately only on the basis of authentic human expressions, in words or in acts. And in the case of religion, this is a necessary requirement. Evidently it is only if behavior is authentic that one may assume in or behind religious data (in some cases explicitly called "irreligious") a religion, a religious conviction or a faith; or that, conversely, an attitude or behavior against such a religion, conviction or faith may be deduced. Whether the authenticity is on the part of the subject under investigation or on the part of the informant as a third party, is another problem: our contention is that it is only through authentic expressions that human intentions in general, and religious intentions in particular, can be known. This leads, of course, to a number of practical and theoretical problems into which we cannot enter here.

In each society (including the Dutch), on the other hand, many ways of
saying, kinds of reasoning and forms of acting can be demonstrated to go back to inauthentic behavior; they will be understood only when this inauthenticity -- or the degree of alienation -- in its turn will have been interpreted, understood and explained. The major theoretical issue in this whole discussion revolves around the basic problem what role religion plays in a given authenticity or in a given degree of inauthenticity. This problem is to be solved for each case separately; the attitude which the given person or group takes with regard to the larger religious community to which this individual or group belongs may provide a clue to it. In all these considerations it should be acknowledged that a clear distinction between "authentic" and "inauthentic" can be made only in a relatively small number of cases; there often will remain an ambiguity as to authenticity or inauthenticity, an ambiguity which calls itself for further research. What we want to stress here, however, as a methodological requirement, is that the authenticity of the informant in his relation to the student is a condition sine qua non for the validity of any knowledge and interpretive understanding acquired through this informant as intermediary. The student's own honesty and concern for his authenticity are presupposed.

A typology may be an important heuristic tool in the study of a given religion. For further inquiry into Dutch religion one might develop a typology like the following, whereby four types of persons are distinguished according to their attitude in religious matters:

(1) those who have an explicit faith with personal experience, whether they are considered to be "orthodox" or whether, by deviating from that orthodoxy on the basis of their own explicit faith, they are considered as "liberals" or "heretics";
(2) those who believe in an implicit way, who take a given truth to be true in some indirect way, mostly on the authority of someone or something that represents truth but is not truth itself. Religion is here imbedded within a given social behavior; sometimes it simply is the legitimation of it. The personal problem what and how to believe what is "real" and "true" hardly imposes itself here;
(3) those who are aware, in an existence that confronts them with problems, that they are lacking a faith or who even despair of all faith; whatever may be the reasons that such an absence of faith is felt as a lack or as a want;
(4) those finally who, after all, don't have the foggiest notion of what religion or faith might be, who have not the slightest idea of missing anything or of what they might be missing. To them religious matters are no problems and they are virtually incapable of understanding what moves their more religious fellow men.

Such a typology is only auxiliary of course, and it should never be applied as a scheme. In terms of research, the problem is not how to classify given persons and groups within a typology, but rather how people identify themselves, how they act and where they stand within the social
context in which they find themselves. But a typology like this one, refined and expanded where necessary, may render a useful service in determining this. An inquiry could then proceed along the following lines:

(a) To the extent that people have a religion or confess a faith, what are they doing with it? We are concerned here less with the effect of such a religion upon their acting and thinking, than with where they stand with regard to their religion, and how this may develop itself eventually into a faith. One may think here of persons of types 1 and 2.

(b) To the extent that people have no religion or faith, it may again be asked what they are doing with the fact. Again the question is not so much what the social consequences of this attitude are in the context of Dutch society, but rather what attitude these people take with regard to a radically secularized society, and what stand they take with regard to problems with which others deal in a "religious" way. The question may be added whether or not such persons, who may be supposed to belong to types 3 and 4, ever had a religion or faith themselves, what kind of religion or faith they eventually may have known or met, how they interpreted that religion at the time, and how they do so at present.

(c) With regard to all people the question is legitimate whether they have something which takes the place of religion, performs a religious function or conveys a religious meaning, even if it is not qualified as being "religious" as such. One need not only think here of a philosophy of life or of an ideology which may substitute for a religion or may link up with a certain religion. One may think as well of certain everyday activities, attachments, representations, emotions, etc. that implicitly bear an absolute character for the people involved and that may also consciously have an absolute meaning for them.

In any such inquiry a central issue should be whether or not there is a religious authority with which the person or group concerned identifies himself, either positively (to which he submits or to which he appeals) or negatively (against which he opposes himself). This authority need not be a church institution per se. Apart from the fact that such an institution itself appeals to higher authority, it is within a given institution always a particular concrete part or element that is authoritative, be it the person of a minister or priest. Also, if such a religious authority is, for instance, the Bible, a tradition, the example of others, or personal experiences - even if not considered to contain a direct affirmation of God's will - it is always possible to describe the setting and limitations of what is considered to be the source of such authority.

It is of interest to assess more closely how the person or group concerned see their own freedom with regard to that source of authority, and what value this personal freedom may or may not have for the person or group.

When interpreting religious data one will of course also have to take into account their historical origin and their social setting. Within a more theoretical framework it is legitimate, moreover, to develop a more
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general point of view, by which the person or group involved is seen, for instance, in terms of a secularization process, of a dialectic between church-mindedness and "dechurchment", or between religiosity or a-religiosity, of levels of cultural development reached by means of education (including communication media), of the degree of originality (spontaneity, creativity) which is proper to a given person under given circumstances, etc. Any serious study of religion in the Netherlands must also give due attention to specific psychological, social and cultural features that are proper either to Dutch society as a whole or to specific groups within it.

It is possible to direct one's inquiry in the first place to those concrete changes (including disappearances and renewals) of religion in the Netherlands which can be observed and analyzed in an empirical and even direct way. One may think of the decrease of auricular confession and of the second church service on Sunday, the changing character of sermon and liturgy as a whole, changing attitudes to non-Christians (for instance, in the Third World), the changes in religious education at home and in school, in confirmation classes and Bible study groups. These latter points, which have to do with the instruction in and appropriation of religion, and the awakening and growth of a particular faith, are of major importance for the future. From this point of view, the present-day changes in the theological education of theologians and religious leaders are also of major interest; such changes cannot be seen only in terms of better professional education, didactic technique and rationalization, for the whole education of the future clergy is at stake here. Of particular interest would be, for instance, a closer study of the relations at different levels, institutional as well as personal, between Protestants and Catholics during the period of their five-year "Gentlemen's Agreement" in the Faculty of Theology of the University of Utrecht, over the period 1970-75. 13)

THE STUDENT OF THE STUDY OF RELIGION

In the work of Van Baal and of other students of religion the attempt is made to come to grips with man's religious expressions and to arrive at a general valid knowledge of them on the basis of reason and experience. These studies are concerned in principle with everything calling itself religious, behaving in a religious way, or having religious pretensions. In the absence of a very close cooperation between several specialists, such studies seem to become more and more problematic, appearing to be
doomed to onesidedness and even failure. And as the interpretive work of Van Baal\(^{14}\) and others shows, the study of religion is much more than classifying so-called "religious phenomena", although descriptive classifications may be useful in an auxiliary way. If we have learned anything since the times of classical phenomenology of religion,\(^{15}\) it is the truth that the meaning of a phenomenon is linked to the scale of the scholar, to its own context and to the people involved in it. Any real understanding of a religious fact is precluded from the outset if it is isolated from the culture in which it has its place and from the people who live with it. As is visible in the work of Van Baal, new vistas have been opened of which only two may be mentioned. In the first place there occurs the problem of what may be called the "subject's meaning", that is to say, what a given (religious) phenomenon may have meant or may mean to certain groups and persons involved in it. In the second place there is the more philosophical problem of what may be deduced from the very fact of such meaningfulness of (religious) phenomena, not only with regard to the meaning-conferring capacity of mankind's different religious views, but also with regard to the fact that man by entertaining such views has tended to be a \textit{homo religiosus}. Like G. van der Leeuw on the basis of his classical phenomenology, J. van Baal arrives at the age-old problem of man and his religion on the basis of his descriptive anthropology. Both Van der Leeuw and Van Baal have devoted a great deal of work to the treatment of this problem, however different their approaches and actual treatments may be.\(^{16}\) Once this problem has been posed by two eminent scholars of religion, we may continue to investigate these religious phenomena as closely as possible, interpret them as human expressions, and attempt a systematic reflection on the phenomenon of religion considered precisely as a human expression. That is to say, the problem of man's religion is redefined as the \textit{phenomenon of religion in its relation to the phenomenon of man}.

What can be said now about the religion or religiousness of the student of religion? What could we say about the religion or religiousness of someone studying the religion of the Dutch (or, for that matter, any other) tribe, and what relation does the student's religion bear to the religion of the people under investigation? The more experience the study of religion as a special field of research has acquired, the less important this question has turned out to be in practice, notwithstanding the many theological and ideological discussions on the subject during the first decades of the scholarly study of religion when this problem was raised. It is the research
qualities, not the religion of the student, which determine the quality of his work and, specifically, whether he has found an approach and perspective that do optimal justice to that aspect of his material which he wants to study. From experiences in the past as well as on theoretical grounds it is fair to say that a given religiosity, a-religiosity or anti-religiosity on the part of the student may be a handicap as well as a benefit to accomplishing a given research task: it all depends on what mental shape this religiosity, a-religiosity or anti-religiosity takes, especially whether it is fixed. In this profession we are not concerned whether a student believes or not, has a faith or not, but whether his particular (ir)religion or (un)faith generates presuppositions that are either favorable to accomplishing this research or that strip it from the very start of its positive meaning and even may obviously stand in the way of any adequate interpretation, understanding and explanation. For this reason it is not a specific faith that matters, but the way in which a possible faith functions within a given research task. And it is interesting to see that in practice it is much less the student himself who wonders about his faith or unfaith as an alternative, than the people around him who may pose nasty questions about his presumed faith or unfaith. Just as there are examples of students who could not come to any fruitful research due (in part) to the consequences of their form of belief in personality traits and mental fixations, so there are examples of students, who, being constantly involved with their surroundings on matters of faith and unfaith (as is usual in theological seminaries and faculties!), became most seriously handicapped in the pursuit of their research. The profession of the scholarly study of religion has established itself now; like other professions, it has its right of existence when the professional work done is of quality and actually bears fruit. And since in other professions people are free to develop their own thoughts on religion and the like, the same rights are to be claimed for those holding the profession of the scholarly study of religion. Van Baal's lifework is a case in point. 17)

Another problem which is often raised with regard to the professional student of religion is that of the student's being an "outsider" or an "insider" with respect to the subject under investigation. We would suggest a solution along the following lines. In the first instance, the student of religion establishes data, ascertains facts and analyzes them. With the help of working
hypotheses, models or theoretical points of view, he tries to explain and to understand these data. In order to do this he will take an "objective", that is essentially an object-directed attitude: not only with regard to the factual data under investigation, but also with regard to the religiosity or a-religiosity of the persons and groups whom he studies. Like a physician who starts taking a pragmatic, object-directed and realistic attitude with regard to his data -- which is also his professional attitude with regard to the interaction of people and to the relation of the people with the world around them -- the student of religion will take in the first instance the attitude of an observing outsider with regard to the religion he studies. In this he must be detached from whether the religion studied rises or falls, externalizes or interiorizes itself, lives or dies. It is his task to analyze the data and to ascertain what is happening to the people in a given society, as far as a given religion plays a role in it, especially where the meaning of existence of these people is concerned. He must make his diagnosis; and if his loyalty should lie anywhere, it is with the people he gets to know and understand through his work, rather than with their particular religion, philosophy or ideology.

It is only in the actual practice of his research that such a student may arrive at an awareness that he has become partly insider, too, although this may be for a short period, and it may be due to many reasons -- for instance, to an increased interest taken in the other people, or to comparisons made between one's observations and one's other, mostly earlier, experiences. The result of it is that, with regard to the data under study, a kind of "understanding capability" comes into operation, which may even take the shape of a sort of "mental participation". In this stage, too, the student's striving after objective truth can very well remain intact and his rational capacities can be pushed until the bitter or sweet end, when he can "turn back" from being a "half-insider" to the status of an "outsider". On theoretical grounds one may reject any such form of involvement of the student with his subject of inquiry, and in practice one may doubt in certain cases the student's capacity to carry out pertinent objectivations with regard to such involvements. On such grounds, procedures of formalization may be preferred.

In the kind of research outlined here, however, with a certain degree of involvement on the side of the student while maintaining full rationality, there occurs for the student a dialectic of "outside" and "inside" with regard to the subject chosen for investigation. Here the "outside" is the
point of departure. It may be of interest to note in this connection that a similar kind of dialectic exists for those involved in a particular religion; here, however, the "inside" represents the point of departure. The student party on the one hand, and the involved party on the other hand, both enjoy a margin of relative freedom which allows them to become conscious of a given situation both from the outside -- as "analyst" or "observing party" -- and from the inside -- as "participant" or "involved party". The general human possibility of moving from the "inside" to the "outside" of a given situation (with numerous variations) is realized by a student, so to say, in the reverse way. Instead of the usual sequence from the "inside" to the "outside", he is able to move from being an outsider an insider (at least partially, and if he wants it). This moving from "outside" to "inside" may happen in different ways -- for instance, by the fact that one's imagination (including memories, experiences, etc.) takes effect (which one can then objectify), or by the fact that working on data of other people evokes certain kinds of inter-human interest and "mental participation" (which one can then also objectify). The curious result, however, is that the student in this way may somehow arrive at an "inside" position with regard to the people he studies. From a philosophical point of view, this could be formulated thus: that the student's ex-istence out of his own being and his co-existence with other human beings are conditions enabling him to understand what has meaning for other people.

This "understanding" itself takes new forms. It would appear that a time of increasing and most varied interaction -- in which people experience a great number of situations with different degrees of participation and with different ways of reflecting upon it (through actual experience or through imaginative experience, as evoked, e.g., by reading or by the mass media) -- is conducive to a situation in which one can become both outsider and temporary (partly) insider with regard to a given religion, and in which the insider of a given religion can become an outsider as well. It actually is only in the modern life situation that the whole dialectic of inside and outside could develop itself, since nowadays a great number of people are "outsiders" with regard to a given ideology, religion or faith, without having to be ashamed of it. From a philosophical point of view, there seems to be a clear possibility at the present time to be both insider and outsider to given religions and ideologies, and this may account for the very interest taken in "understanding". It also may generate new kinds of understanding on the basis of a certain inter-human loyalty.
Coming back to our main subject, the departing inquisitive visitor to the Netherlands mentioned earlier could only plead, on the basis of his experiences in the country, for more research and better information about religion in the Netherlands. Apart from the argument of scholarship there are at least five main arguments to be brought forward:

1. People in the country itself, in order to see things in their true perspective, have to be much better informed about religion and religious communities existing in the country. Unless one would wish a definite break with regard to a past that has been stamped by religion over nearly the whole social and cultural realm, and if one wants to avoid an alienation with regard to this past, one should be informed about the data of that past and about the nature of that "religious" stamp which continues to work be it in more hidden secular ways. We don't mean here only the desirability of knowledge of the Bible in order to understand the work of Rembrandt, or the desirability of knowing church history in order to appreciate old church architecture and buildings. Our concern is a clear elementary knowledge of the history and the present situation of the Protestant, Catholic, Orthodox, Jewish and since recently also Muslim communities in the Netherlands, so that Dutch people may better understand the Netherlands and themselves.

2. There is within the religious communities the ever-present risk that people, because of the intimate character of their own circle with its particular problems, hardly keep a sound outlook on reality, its possibilities and impossibilities. When one is sufficiently entangled ideologically and sufficiently tied emotionally -- as happens in these communities -- one may be at the mercy of those evil forms of stupidity and blindness that are sanctioned religiously or ideologically. A better pragmatic knowledge of "religion in the Netherlands" in the social, cultural and historical framework of this country is requisite for those who are themselves involved in that religion.

3. There is the simple human argument that someone who has put himself under whatever religious authority owes it both to himself and to others to be lucid about the reasons and aims for which he has done this. He or she has to know its implications not only for his or her own sake but also with regard to its effect on and possible fruits for other people. We have become conscious of the strange effects of an almost unbridled and religiously legitimized individualism on the liberal side, and of a corresponding religiously legitimized collectivism on the orthodox side. The then current views on others and on society made existing together a near impossibility.

4. A better study of "religion in the Netherlands" may be helpful to see both religion and irreligion in this country in a deeper common perspective. Just as the religious history of the Netherlands can be studied better within the larger framework of Dutch or West European history, so religion in the Netherlands can be studied better within the broader framework of the present-day social and cultural situation in the Netherlands and in Western Europe. If both religious and non-religious expressions and movements are analyzed and understood according to their intentions, it could very well be that common denominators will be found for both "religious" and "non-religious" intentions. There is no reason why the scholarly study of religion would have to concentrate itself particularly on far-
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away, non-Christian religions, since so little research on present­
day religion in the Netherlands has been done and since a precious
service could be rendered here.

5. A real study of religion in the Netherlands can actually be an
eye-opener for the relative inadequacy of the actual performance of
this religion: measured not only from the point of view of its own
norms and claims, but also from the point of view of the very real
problems with which the population of this country will have to
cope in the near future. Such a study could indeed throw a light on
the provincial, nearly comical and certainly middle-class character
of religion in the Netherlands as it functions today. It could,
among many other things, provide a better insight into the strange
relationship between Dutch reality and the often unbridled pretentious
judgments -- with "religious" arguments -- with regard to everything
that takes place -- or ought to take place -- on earth between
Jerusalem, Mecca and Moscow. And so it could induce a reasonable
self-knowledge in the Dutch people.

It is our sincere hope that some younger scholars will get together and
publish in the not too distant future an informative book that gives a
clear description of the starting points and main tenets of the religious
communities in the Netherlands -- especially those of Christianity,
Judaism and Islam -- where the concrete organizations and institutions
of the different communities are summed up with relevant data like
membership, fields of activity and names and addresses of the different
institutions, and where an "Introduction" would survey the most important
problems which are discussed nowadays within these communities, and which
they are objectively facing. Further studies are needed as well. 18)

ANNEX THE 1966 POLL

One of the few polls on religion held in the Netherlands on a national
scale is that of 1966 among people age 17 years and over, 1708 in number
(847 men, 861 women), as an ordinary random test. The results were
published under the title of God in Nederland. Een statistisch onderzoek
naar godsdienst en kerkelijkheid in Nederland (God in the Netherlands. A
statistical inquiry into religion and church-affiliation in the
Netherlands. 19) We shall present here some of the many data acquired.

I. THE MEANING OF FAITH

(1) It appears that 81/84% of the Dutch of 17 years and over have been
raised within a religious faith (Question 51 a).

(2) It appears that 34/32% of the people are not church-affiliated. This
is 58/51% in the larger cities, 34/31% in the other towns, and 20/21%
in the countryside. On the other hand 36/35% is a member of the
Catholic Church, 19/20% of the Hervormde (Dutch Reformed) Church,
and 8/8% of the Gereformeerde (neo-Calvinist) Church. The higher the income, the greater the percentage of those affiliated with a church (Qu. 64 a).

(3) It appears that for 34/29% of the people "faith" has no particular meaning in life. It is interesting to note that this percentage is 12/9% of the Catholics, 16/17% of the Hervormden, and 3/0% of the Gereformeerden. On the other hand, of those who say that they never go to church 24/32% state that "faith" has yet a certain significance in their lives (Qu. 61).

(4) On the question of how one would react upon one's child taking a quite different religious orientation, 14/15% answer that they would oppose it; 25/21% of the Catholics and 26/23% of the Gereformeerden make this statement (Qu. 44). And on the question of how one would react upon one's child having no faith at all, 25/25% answer that they would oppose it; 44/40% of the Catholics and 40/48% of the Gereformeerden make this statement (Qu. 45).

II. CONTENTS OF FAITH

(5) It appears that 46/48% of the people are of the opinion that what happens in the world happens according to a certain plan; 18/13% hold that it is due to accident, and 31/32% hold that there is a combination of plan and accident (Qu. 4).

(6) On Question 15, "Do you consider the Bible as the word of God?" 58/60% answer in the affirmative, 24/21% with a denial; 14/14% answer "partly", and 4/5% say that they don't know. An affirmative answer is given by 66/63% of the Catholics, 70/76% of the Hervormden, and 97/98% of the Gereformeerden. Interesting is the percentage of those not affiliated with a church: of them an affirmative answer is given by 17/30% of those who did not receive a religious education, and by 35/40% of those who did receive such an education.

(7) It appears that 59/60% of the Catholics believe that Adam and Eve existed as such; this percentage is 74/74% for the Hervormden and 89/97% of the Gereformeerden (Qu. 14).

(8) It appears that 56/57% of the people believe in an afterlife; 37/32% don't believe in it, and 7/11% answer that they do not know for sure. Interesting again is the percentage of those not affiliated with a church and believing in an afterlife; 9/15% of those who did not receive a religious education, and 26/31% of those
RELIGION AND THE DUTCH TRIBE

who did receive such an education (Qu. 12).

III. THE CLERGY

(9) It appears that 84/84% of the people do not believe that the clergy can be easily missed, and that 9/7% believe so (Qu. 31).

(10) On Question 13, referring to a problem of conscience about which one cannot talk at home or with the family and asking to whom someone would turn, more than a third of the people questioned state that they would turn to a clergyman: 18/18% to a Protestant minister; 17/13% to a Catholic priest. Among the Catholics 46/37% would turn to a member of the clergy, among the Hervormden 49/44%, and among the Gereformeerden 52/66%.

IV. PLACE OF THE CHURCH

(11) It appears that 67/69% of the people go to church or to other religious meetings; 52/50% of them go regularly (Qu. 55). Of the Catholics, 4/5% never go to church, 23/25% of the Hervormden, and 2/1% of the Gereformeerden (Qu. 54).

(12) It appears that 46/45% of the respondents were married in church, 30/36% not in church, 24/19% are not married (Qu. 17).

(13) It appears that 90/88% of the people are of the opinion that someone can be a believing person without ever going to church; this opinion is held by 87/84% of the Catholics, 91/93% of the Hervormden, and 82/71% of the Gereformeerden (Qu. 21).

(14) It appears that 71/69% of the people are of the opinion that the influence of religion on life is decreasing; 55/52% deem this to be a less favorable sign (Qu. 30).

V. CHURCH RULES

(15) Question 66 asks those who are church-affiliated whether they are of the opinion that they have to keep to all the rules of the church or religious group with which they are affiliated. Apart from the 34/32% who are not church-affiliated, 31/34% answer affirmatively, 22/19% negatively; 12/14% answer "it depends", and 1/1% do not know.

(16) Apart from the 34/32% who are not church-affiliated, 36/32% think that the churches have no right to prescribe binding rules to their members, and 15/12% think that they have (Qu. 23).
VI. VERTICAL PLURALISM (VERZUILING)

(17) It is interesting to see the percentages of those who are in favor of associations being based on a religious basis or on religious principles, both on the whole and per denomination (Qu. 35). The following percentages are in favor of a religious basis or of religious principles for:

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Category</th>
<th>Of all respondents</th>
<th>Of the Catholics</th>
<th>Of the Hervormden</th>
<th>Of the Gereformeerden</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Youth associations</td>
<td>58/54%</td>
<td>71/62%</td>
<td>69/65%</td>
<td>90/95%</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Radio and TV broadcasting</td>
<td>41/39%</td>
<td>53/46%</td>
<td>47/49%</td>
<td>82/92%</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Labor unions</td>
<td>32/31%</td>
<td>41/40%</td>
<td>36/30%</td>
<td>75/83%</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Sport associations</td>
<td>21/24%</td>
<td>26/29%</td>
<td>21/21%</td>
<td>53/69%</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

(18) At the elementary school level, 86% of the Catholics, 54% of the Hervormden and 96% of the Gereformeerden would send their child(ren) to a school with a religious basis (Qu. 36).

(19) The following table summarizes the data of the percentage of those advocating that social activities be based on religion or on a definite philosophy of life:

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th></th>
<th>Of the church-affiliated</th>
<th>Of the non church-aff.</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>Of the total</td>
<td>Of the Catholics</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Elementary school</td>
<td>56%</td>
<td>86%</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Youth associations</td>
<td>56%</td>
<td>67%</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Radio &amp; TV broadcasting</td>
<td>40%</td>
<td>50%</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Politics</td>
<td>32%</td>
<td>35%</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Labor unions</td>
<td>31%</td>
<td>41%</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Sport associations</td>
<td>23%</td>
<td>27%</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

From this poll it appears that on the whole the more well-to-do people are more religious than the less well-to-do; the countryside is more religious than the towns and cities. There is no parallelism between church-affiliation and affirmation of belief or faith; actually there is a growing discrepancy between faith on the one hand and the church on the other hand. If the church has often been a symbol of religious group solidarity, this function disappears in a pluralistic society with not only a greater number of churches but also other institutions that have taken over tasks formerly performed by the churches. Whereas until the sixties changes with
regard to the churches expressed themselves in an increase of non-church affiliation, they express themselves since the sixties in changes within the churches themselves, also apart from a decreasing church-going. The bond with the churches turns out to be greater among people who are not to be counted among the "active" population, in terms of profession and marriage, than among those involved in active commitments in their everyday life. Compared with other countries in Europe, religious changes express themselves in the Netherlands in the first place in canceling church affiliation; elsewhere in Europe, the church affiliation is retained but church-going decreases. Characteristic for the Netherlands is the existence of associations and groups on the basis of religion and philosophy of life. This organization of society on a religious-philosophical basis is the so-called "vertical pluralism" (verzuizing); newer generations, however, tend no longer to accept this as self-evident.

NOTES


2) Studies have been made by Dutch sociologists of religion and something is done now in psychology of religion on this subject. Historians and phenomenologists of religion, however, have remained largely unaware of the work being done, since they have been concerned with the study of religions other than Christianity and Judaism.


4) A number of data in this and also some other sections have been taken gratefully from the study by Leo Laeyendecker, "The Netherlands" which appeared in Hans Mol, ed., Western Religion: A Sociological Inquiry (Religion and Reason, Vol. 2; The Hague & Paris, Mouton, 1971), pp. 325-363. It also contains a good bibliography on the subject (pp. 356-363).


6) The author is indebted to Dr. R.C. Kwant and Dr. P.H. Vrijhof for discussing at length ideas of this section, and the typology given later. This article would not have been written without the stimulation of these discussions.

7) Also at the level of higher education, the (neo-Calvinist) Vrije Universiteit (Free University) in Amsterdam was founded in 1880, the Catholic University of Nijmegen in 1923.
8) The dates at which the most important political parties were founded are: Anti-Revolutionaire Partij (Anti-Revolutionary Party) 1878; Roomsch Katholieke Staatspartij (Roman Catholic State Party) 1883; Sociaal Democratische Arbeiders Partij (Social Democratic Workers Party) 1893; Christelijk Historische Unie (Christian Historical Union) 1895. Three of these parties are explicitly religious parties.

9) L. Laeyendecker, "The Netherlands", p. 337.

10) Until 1947 the average number of living born children in the one hundred first marriages of Catholics surpassed that same number of the Gereformeerden (neo-Calvinists) with 13.6%, of the Hervormden (Dutch Reformed Church) with 44.6%, and that of those not affiliated with a church with 63.2%. On the Protestant side this has been interpreted (and I think correctly so!) as a conscious birth policy on the side of the Roman Catholic hierarchy, following its doctrine of natural law, in order to have in the end a Catholic majority in the country. If realized (and it still went into that direction during the fifties), this would have been a catastrophe for the country from a demographic point of view. The "binding advice" in the so-called mandement (1954) of the Catholic bishops in the Netherlands imposed on Catholic citizens to vote for the Catholic political party. In the Netherlands the rules of the Roman Catholic Church with regard to mixed marriages, as valid until the new decisions at Vaticanum II, were obeyed conscientiously. As far as the Netherlands are concerned, the "pill" came just in time!

11) L. Laeyendecker, "The Netherlands", p. 342

12) See the Appendix.

13) At the moment that this is written, the discussion on the possible definite cooperation of Protestants and Catholics in this Faculty is still going on and the result cannot be foreseen. Among the many considerations, those of scholarship and education seemed to be less than might be expected at a faculty of a regular State University (Reikuniversiteit). During this period, weaknesses and deficiencies were critically exposed: personal honesty, administrative competence, democratic policymaking were put on trial; and the dependency on decisions taken by a professorial Männerbund or by Vatican authorities made the trial more painful. Events show to what extent such a faculty can be subject to fears from the inside, pressures from the outside, power manipulations and incompetencies, not less than other faculties.


16) Both Van der Leeuw and Van Baal, in their thought on religion, pay attention mainly to nonliterate religions and enter from there into the discussion of man as a religious being. The approaches themselves are of course completely different.

17) It is interesting to note that at present Van Baal has an appointment in the two Faculties of Social Sciences (section of anthropology) and of Theology (section of geadienstwetenschappen) at the University of Utrecht. It is indeed the author's firm conviction that the study of religion and scholarship in this field should not be limited to the Faculties of Theology. The best solution would be to establish an inter-Faculty program (Arts, Social Sciences, Theology) in which students from all three faculties can obtain degrees in geadienstwetenschap (study of religion), be it with different kinds of emphasis. In such a program scholars can work together on an interdisciplinary basis.


20) God in Nederkand, p. 292.