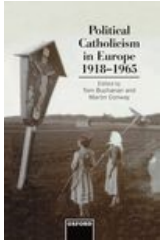

Political Catholicism in Europe, 1918–1965

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CHAPTER

7 The Netherlands

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Abstract

This chapter discusses the emergence of Catholicism as a powerful force in Dutch political life, and attempts to shed light on the underlying reasons and distinctive features that have characterized this process. Through an examination of the phenomenon of 'pillarization' and of the influence of the Catholic Church, the reasons for the growth in Catholic power can be clearly identified. It considers the support for corporatism and family policy as the main motives of Catholic political action. The chapter also looks how Catholic politicians assumed responsibility for national tasks and issues.

Keywords: Dutch Catholics, Dutch Catholicism, political activity, pillarization, family policy, corporatism, Catholic Church

Subject: European History, History of Religion, Political History, Modern History (1700 to 1945), Social and Cultural History

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During the half-century between 1917 and 1967, Dutch Catholics formed a strong social bloc and a significant political force. The granting of universal male suffrage in 1917 confirmed the emergence of Catholicism as a major force in Dutch politics. This remained the case until the political and social changes of the 1960s—notably the electoral defeat suffered by the Catholic Party in 1967. This combination of political and social strength was, however, in marked contrast to the position of Catholics in earlier centuries. During the era of the Dutch Republic from the sixteenth to the eighteenth centuries, the Catholic minority had suffered severe discrimination. The public exercise of their religion was forbidden and they were barred from occupying any public office. Although the Republic—which had come into existence through opposition to the Catholic Habsburg Empire—recognized no official state religion, it was Calvinism which formed the dominant faith. Long into the twentieth century there remained a belief among Protestants that the wars of the sixteenth century had been exclusively religious in nature and that the Netherlands was therefore essentially a Protestant nation. However, in 1795 the arrival of the French revolutionary armies and the consequent Batavian revolution brought about the end of the Republic and

established a strict division of Church and State, as well as the legal equality of the Catholic community. Indeed for a short time the Catholics came to form a majority of the population in the new Dutch monarchy which was created by the conservative powers at the Congress of Vienna in 1815. This state was intended to serve as a bastion against a potentially revolutionary and warlike France, and it therefore incorporated the former southern Habsburg Netherlands, which were exclusively Catholic in composition. In 1830, however, these territories broke away from northern rule to form the new Belgian state and the frontiers of the Nether-lands have subsequently remained almost unchanged to the present day. The Catholics have formed a significant minority within this state, comprising approximately 35 per cent of the population, of whom half live in the homogenous Catholic areas in the south of the country and the remainder in the centre and west.[1]

p. 220 It was only in 1853 that the Catholics once again obtained their own Episcopal ↳ hierarchy. This stimulated a fierce anti-Papist reaction among some Protestants known as the 'April Movement', but this movement proved to have little relevance for the development of relations between Catholics and Protestants. By 1888 relations between Catholic and Protestant politicians had improved so markedly that they were able to form their first confessional coalition government. In the late nineteenth and early twentieth centuries the modernization of Dutch society and the democratization of the State gained momentum. With the exception of the increasingly marginalized Liberals, it was above all Socialism, orthodox Protestantism, and Catholicism which came to the fore in political life and which contributed to the shaping of the modern Dutch state. Until 1939 the Socialists did so, however, exclusively from the ranks of the parliamentary opposition.

The Catholics have therefore played a permanent role in government from 1918 to the present day and their parliamentary party has almost invariably been the largest grouping represented in parliament. Their political organization, the Rooms Katholieke Staats Partij (Roman Catholic State Party) or RKSP, which was established in its definitive form in 1926 and remodelled as the Katholieke Volks Partij (Catholic People's Party) or KVP in 1945, has collaborated in all forms of parliamentary coalitions, working with the Protestants as well as with the Socialists and the Liberals. Although until the Second World War political leadership lay with the Protestants, after the war this role moved more and more to the Catholics, to such an extent that the era from the 1950s to 1967 can be regarded as marking the high point in the political power of the Dutch Catholics. The decline of the KVP since 1967 was one of the reasons for the creation of an interconfessional Christian unity party, the Christen-Democratisch Appél (Christian Democratic Party) formed out of the former Catholic and Protestant parties. The CDA participated in national elections for the first time in 1977 and has subsequently proved able to prevent the further decline of the confessional parties.

The 1960s thus formed a turning-point in the development of political Catholicism, and indeed of Catholicism as a whole. The German occupation from 1940 to 1945 and a short period of post-war uncertainty and instability from 1944 to 1946 had already clearly demonstrated the decline in the internal cohesion of the Catholics, while the unity of the pre-1940 era had also been on occasions more apparent than real. Attempts by various parties and groups in the post-war era to challenge the established confessional party-system were nevertheless entirely unsuccessful and the Catholic politicians and the Church leadership were therefore able to re-establish—at least in their external forms—the former structures of Catholic organizational life. When, however, in the 1950s and the early 1960s a second wave of industrialization and modernization gathered momentum, the unity of the Catholic world came under renewed substantial pressure. Secularization has subsequently advanced remorselessly and the organizational unity of Catholicism, both politically and socially, has been repeatedly undermined. Even in the mid-1990s, the ultimate outcome of these radical changes is still not evident.

p. 221 This contribution focuses, however, on the period of the full emergence of ↳ Catholicism as a powerful force in Dutch political life, and will attempt to shed light on certain of the underlying reasons and

distinctive features which have characterized this process. Through an examination of the phenomenon of ‘polarization’ (in Sect. 1) and of the influence of the Catholic Church (in Sect. 2), the reasons for the growth in Catholic power can be clearly identified. The problem which then arises was what Catholics chose to do with their political power? Did they use it to impose their own alternatives in the process of the construction of a modern state and society? In this respect, it is necessary to investigate their support for corporatism (Sect. 3) and family policy (Sect. 4) as the main motives of Catholic political action. Catholic politicians also, however, had to assume responsibility for national tasks and issues, and this aspect of Catholic policy is considered in Sect. 5 of this chapter. In the conclusion, some more general remarks and conclusions will be attempted.

1. Political Catholicism and Pillarization

In this section, a brief analysis will be attempted first of the concepts of pillars and pillarization. Then, a number of explanations of the historical reasons for this phenomenon will be presented, with special attention paid to the factors which clarify the relationship between the Catholic pillar and Catholic politics.[2]

The classic quotation from the Dutch historian L. J. Rogier will perhaps provide a useful starting-point:

> A Dutch Catholic, at least one who has lived in [the majority Protestant areas of] ‘Holland’ was, as it were, aware every day of the fact that he was not a Protestant. He did his best to ensure that he decorated his home in such a way that a visitor on entering the house could judge from the wall decorations, crucifixes, saints, and sometimes even devotional candles that he was entering Roman Catholic territory. Not only did he pray differently from most of his neighbours, he voted differently, read a different paper and different books, listened to his own radio programmes, watched his own television channel, travelled, swam, cycled, played tennis, billiards, and football and even insured his life in a Roman Catholic fashion. Moreover, he was considered to have denied his faith from a false sense of shame if he wore his wedding ring on his right hand (which no self-respecting Catholic would ever do) or if he wished people a ‘Happy’ New Year rather than a ‘Blissful’ New Year or if he used the Protestant spellings of Biblical names such as Isiah, Solomon, Samson, and Nebuchadnezzar or spelt Christ as ‘Jezus’ and not ‘Jesus’.[3]

p. 222 To describe the phenomenon that Rogier depicts so aptly, the word ‘pillar’ has firmly taken hold in Dutch sociology and social history. This term has been applied not only to the Catholics but also to the orthodox Protestants and Socialists, and even by some to the middle-class liberals not included in the former categories. The use of the term ‘pillarization’ is intended to indicate that Dutch politics, society, and culture have been systematically and profoundly affected by this phenomenon, notably through the actions of the major political parties, all of which were closely tied to their respective pillars. In addition, both words have now entered into common usage to de-scribe societies elsewhere in the world.

In their original meaning, these terms—as they were used from the late 1930s to approximately 1950—had a positive connotation. The different sections of the population were seen as distinct pillars, all of which supported the common national ‘roof’ and possessed a shared loyalty to national values, traditions, and institutions. In spite of these independent groups or pillars, there did indeed exist—so the initial theorists of the concept of pillarization declared—a sense of national solidarity. Hence, a subsidiary discussion soon developed as to whether the Socialists could really be considered to form a pillar. Given that they continued to adopt a political stance inspired by Marxist principles and proclaimed their commitment to class struggle and revolution, they could hardly be regarded as constituting one of the props of the existing order.

Principally among Socialists but also in liberal Protestant circles, and to a lesser degree among Catholics, there was dissatisfaction with the system of confessional pillarization. In the case of orthodox

Protestantism and of Catholicism, some found the fusion of religion and politics in the form of separate confessional parties highly objectionable. Moreover, the Socialist Party, which after the Second World War was transformed into the Labour Party (Partij van de Arbeid), directly experienced in its election results and membership the consequences of this system of confessional pillarization. It was believed, not without reason, by the Socialists that the stagnation in their growth was due to the fact that significant sections of the working class remained loyal to the Protestant or Catholic parties, rather than rallying to their cause. Nevertheless, the efforts to bring about a remoulding of the existing party structure after 1945 were a complete failure, principally as a consequence of the comprehensive restoration of the Catholic organizational institutions and the reorganization of the Catholic Party (KVP). Because many workers were from Catholic backgrounds and remained strongly attached to the Catholic pillar, the Partij van de Arbeid entertained high hopes of bringing about the disintegration of the Catholic pillar. Frustration at this failure gave the terminology of confessional pillarization a highly negative connotation in left-wing circles. Moreover, as during subsequent decades the concept of natural confessional party-political divisions also disappeared among Protestants and Catholics, so too among these groups the word took on a critical connotation.

As, however, the term was introduced into scholarly discourse, first in the social sciences and then also in historiography, so it gradually lost its critical-normative character and became a generally accepted
p. 223 technical concept. It is therefore, for ↳ example, possible nowadays to describe in neutral terms the Catholic pillar as a comprehensive organizational complex, ranging from the Catholic Party to the much-maligned Catholic goatbreeders club, all held together and integrated by a common religious belief and loyalty to the Church. This pillarization created a society of vertical pluralism, cutting across horizontal divisions of social class and extending into all sectors of society. In this manner, the social system was characterized by a cementing of the different pillars, with as the consequence a marked segmentation of society.

In the Netherlands pillarization firmly established itself in the late nineteenth and early twentieth centuries, after the Protestants and Catholics had begun the struggle earlier in the nineteenth century to achieve state-financing of their separate confessional educational systems. This demand was finally satisfied in 1917. But pillarization continued and reached its high point around 1950. At the same time it became evident that the need for a linkage between religious beliefs and politico-social organizations was evident to fewer and fewer people. Since the 1960s this deconfessionalization has led to a partial erosion of the organizational structures of Protestants and Catholics, often described by the term ‘depillarization’.

It is generally accepted that this process of pillarization was most marked among the Catholic population. Some figures serve to illustrate this point. If one combines the number of organizations active in eight areas of social life (social work, education, youth groups, the press, sport, health care, culture, and trade unions), it emerges that the percentage of broad-based non-pillarized social organizations fell between 1914 and 1956 from 56 per cent to 47 per cent, while at the same time the share of distinctly Catholic organizations rose from 13 per cent to 21 per cent. The participation rate of Catholics in these specifically Catholic institutions is even more striking. Thus, in 1959 about 90 per cent of Catholic parents sent their children to a Catholic elementary school and approximately 95 per cent of Catholic farmers belonged to Catholic farmers’ unions, while some 79 per cent of Catholic newspaper readers read a Catholic newspaper.[4] As far as the political party was concerned, between 1920 and the 1960s 80–90 per cent of the Catholic electorate always voted for the Catholic Party (RKSP/KVP).[5]

The explanations which have been advanced for this phenomenon of pillarization have been highly varied and have laid emphasis on a number of different factors.[6] As far as the leaders of the Catholic community have been concerned, they have always sought to justify pillarization as part of a process of emancipation. For Catholics, organizational isolation was a necessary consequence of the backwardness imposed on the Catholic community by the discrimination which they had experienced during the Republic and which

remained evident during the nineteenth century. This explanation receives little support from historians
p. 224 today. Around 1900 the traditional ↳ discrimination against Catholics by Protestants was limited exclusively to the higher middle classes, notably concerning posts and offices in government, the universities and education, the legal system, and other professions. It would therefore not seem possible to explain—or indeed to provide any evidence of—how the mass of Catholic farmers and workers were discriminated against at this time because of their religion. Thus, their willingness to form Catholic organizations cannot be explained solely on the basis of supposed religious discrimination.

The two explanations of pillarization most frequently advanced by scholars are excellently summarized in the title of a recent collection of essays. According to its Belgian editor, the motives for pillarization were *Between Protection and Conquest*, namely they were both defensive and offensive in nature.[7] It is, however, the defensive, protectionist motive which has been most frequently emphasized in the research of the last twenty years. Thus, according to this interpretation, the purpose of Catholic organizations was the defence of the interests of the Church and faith which in the course of the nineteenth century were increasingly threatened by the remorse-less secularization of State and society while, at the same time, protecting the faithful from the dangers and risks which threatened them in a modernizing society and culture. Several different variants of this interpretation have been given. According to one version, in order to ensure that this protective structure was able to call on wide social support, Catholic leaders were sometimes willing to make concessions to modern developments and adapted their traditions to the realities of modern life. 'Protection by Adaptation' would be the most concise summary of this interpretation.[8] An example from the political sphere, the so-called householders' suffrage, serves to illustrate this case. Though ideologically entirely in accordance with the patriarchal traditions current in religious circles, the application of this measure would in fact lead to a substantial expansion of the suffrage which would almost amount to the universal male suffrage demanded by the Socialists. Another, more radical, variant of this protectionist theory is the neo-Marxist and feminist-inspired interpretation which sees pillarization as directly connected to the need to respond to the challenge posed by socialism and feminism, which threatened to alienate Catholic workers and women from their Church and faith.[9] Despite their differences, all these variants are agreed in the emphasis which they place on negative motives as the dominant influence behind the process of pillarization, and in this respect this interpretation concurs with a much older liberal interpretation which saw pillarization as 'a contemporary form of social control'.[10]

On the other hand, a number of researchers whose work has come to prominence in recent years have preferred to see pillarization as merely the organizational basis for a broader social movement seeking to
p. 225 construct an alternative to a liberal and ↳ capitalist version of modernity. This was particularly pronounced in the case of Catholicism.[11] The pillarized social institutions contributed to this social movement not only in the negative sense of assisting in the struggle against liberalism and capitalism, but also in the positive role of helping to bring about a viable alternative to these dominant ideologies. Moreover, these different social movements, each possessed of their own vision of the ideal social order, came inevitably into conflict provoking what could be termed a 'Struggle for Modernity'. This last phrase is the title of a book which provides the best presentation of this interpretation and which has developed it as a general theory for four countries, considering in each case both the Socialist and Catholic movements.[12] Given that political power is an essential condition for bringing about an alternative social order, it is natural that the advocates of this interpretation should place greater emphasis than others have done on the role played by the political party. This does not mean, however, that politics or the political party are regarded as the central focus of the explanation of pillarization. On the contrary, pillarization is seen as the organizational manifestation of a much wider movement, the origins of which lie in a nineteenth-century Catholic religious revival. This emphasis on religious motives, which preceded the creation of the Catholic movement and thus also the Catholic pillarization which it helped to bring about, is an essential element of this interpretation.

In these two interpretations of pillarization, both that which stresses its defensive, protectionist role and that which looks instead to an offensive, creative purpose, the Church and religion emerge as the central forces. It is important that this should be stressed at the beginning of an essay on political Catholicism. The only author to have taken the opposite approach and to have sought the origins of political Catholicism in politics, R. Steininger, has received no support from historians.[13] Steininger, who by no coincidence happened to be a political scientist, simply could not conceive that religion and the Church could have had a major influence and therefore concluded, without much empirical research, that politicians must therefore have played a central role. In his opinion, pillarization was a permanent mobilization of the electorate designed to serve party-political ends. In fact, the development in the Netherlands of political Catholicism was on the contrary an extremely slow and complex process which finally led to the creation of a political party only in the 1920s. Thus, it is the creation of the political party which needs to be explained, rather than using that party to explain the process of pillarization.

This applies not merely to the creation of the Catholic Party but also to its subsequent operation. In the
p. 226 course of the years between 1920 and 1960 a wide variety ↳ of Catholic pillar organizations assisted 'their' party in many ways. Thus, the impact of the permanent support of the Catholic press and radio can hardly be overestimated. Still more important for its success was the continuous support which the party received from Catholic social organizations, especially those of farmers and workers. Many instances of such support, notably during the crises of the 1930s, could be provided. It was precisely the fact that the Catholic Party was embedded in what can variously be described as the Catholic pillar or the Catholic social movement which made its operation possible and which contributed substantially to its success.

2. Political Catholicism and the Church

If political Catholicism did indeed form part of a more general Catholic religious revival, it is to be expected that the ecclesiastical hierarchy played an important role. In the Netherlands, the foundations of the Catholic Party were laid during the 1880s and 1890s by a priest, Herman Schaepman (who died in 1903), and during the two decades after 1910 it was again a priest, Willem Nolens, who was the political leader of the Catholics. But it was especially the overt support for a unified Catholic Party by the Dutch Catholic bishops and their condemnation of other political and social groupings which sought to win the support of the Catholic electorate that greatly strengthened the power of the Catholic Party between 1920 and 1960. This section will consider the various aspects which this support took.[14]

A first remark might appear somewhat surprising. During Schaepman's efforts to found a Catholic party, the bishops did nothing to assist him. On the contrary, some of them sought wholeheartedly to frustrate his work. This was especially true of the bishop of Haarlem, Mgr. C. Bottemanne, a strongly conservative prelate, who in many respects managed to dominate his fellow bishops. On controversial political issues such as suffrage reform and compulsory education he followed traditional conservative opinion in opposing both policies, while the more progressive Schaepman supported an extension of the suffrage and the introduction of compulsory education. The conflict between the two men reached its climax in 1894 when the bishop imposed a temporary ban on Schaepman speaking in his diocese. The archbishop of Utrecht then followed his example. Although the relationship between the bishops and Schaepman was not always as bad as at that time and showed some improvement in the early years of the twentieth century, the difference in their attitude from that which they were to adopt after 1918 was very marked.[15]

p. 227 The bishops' attitude is not difficult to explain. The religious climate during these years was highly conservative. The openness and progressive character of the pontificate of Leo XIII must certainly not be exaggerated, as the encyclical *Graves de communi re* indicated. Christian democracy, so it declared, should take the form of a social movement for the benefit of the working class and must not take on the character

of a political party. Moreover, the manner in which during the era of Pius X anti-modernism in the form of religious integralism temporarily gained a dominant influence within the Church is well known. Ecclesiastical conservatives set themselves against any form of Catholic Party whatsoever, insisting that parties were an integral element of the modern, democratic state and therefore could bring no benefit to the Catholic cause. The Dutch episcopate felt very much at home in a traditional society and they opposed the progressive Schaepman, who, in order to achieve his goals, was willing to make the necessary concessions and who was even willing to participate in coalition cabinets with the Protestants (in the eyes of the bishops the hereditary enemies of Dutch Catholics). In the bishops' opinion, a purely religious grouping of parliamentary deputies who could defend the general cause of religious freedom and more particularly the religious interests of the Church was quite sufficient. Hence, they were more inclined to rely on the substantial group of Catholic conservative deputies in parliament, than on the more modern approach of Schaepman and his few supporters.[16]

However, as the modernization of state and society progressed during the twentieth century, so the willingness of the bishops and politicians to adapt to modern realities increased. Thus, there gradually emerged an alliance of the Church and of political Catholicism. In the years after 1917, this process gained momentum as a consequence of three factors. First, in that year the most important goal of political Catholicism up until then, the complete financial parity of the Catholic education system with the state system, was achieved. In order to ensure that, deprived of the unifying bond of the educational issue, the Catholic Party (RKSP) was not seriously weakened, its need for the support of the Church authorities was all the greater. Secondly, also in 1917, universal suffrage for men was introduced, followed in 1919 by universal suffrage for women. As at the same time voting was made compulsory, the issue arose as to whether all these new Catholic votes would rally behind the Catholic Party (RKSP) and more especially whether they would instead be captured by the Socialist Party. This formed a further common concern of both Catholic politicians and the Church. Lastly, at the beginning of the 1920s, Catholic political unity began to be seriously threatened. Small Catholic dissident parties of the right and left were established and there also emerged a substantial grouping of progressives, the so-called Michaelists, who threatened to break away
p. 228 from the single party. The leadership of the party was naturally anxious to forestall these defections, but ↳ the bishops also wished to prevent internal Catholic political disputes from leading to serious discord among the faithful.

This combination of factors led the bishops from 1918 to participate actively in Catholic politics. They recognized the political monopoly of the Catholic Party (RKSP) as well as forbidding all other Catholic organizations from becoming involved in politics and until the 1950s they consistently intervened to support the unitary Catholic Party. Indeed, in 1922 their support led to uproar in parliament and the government had to respond to questions about the pressure being exerted by the Church hierarchy on the Catholic faithful. This did not make much impact on the bishops and it became commonplace during national elections for them to impress on the faithful from the pulpit which party they must support. To vote for the Catholic Party was felt to be and was presented as a natural duty of conscience, as is clearly evident from an internal memorandum written by one of the bishops in 1918. When a Catholic does not vote for the Catholic Party, it declared, he 'betrays himself; he denies his Catholic principles; he does harm to the Church; and he undermines Catholic education, thereby harming the souls of our children'.[17] That the Catholic Party could not and did not wish to resist this intermingling of religion and politics was clearly evident from the phrasing of its General Programme of 1936 in which the party in reciprocation for the support of the Church undertook to act 'as the shield and protection for the Catholic Church in the Netherlands'.[18] After 1945 the episcopate still acted in a similar manner on a number of occasions, for the last time in 1954, two years after the party had lost a substantial number of votes to a right splinter party as well as to the Labour Party.

The Church did not merely advance the interests of the Catholic Party by these direct forms of support. Clerical attacks on those movements which could be considered to be competitors of the party were also indirectly of great advantage to political Catholicism. The greatest danger was, in the opinion of the bishops, posed by the Socialist Party. Indeed, some historians have even argued that clerical and Catholic anti-socialism formed the most important cause of pillarization. Two interconnected motives lay behind their anti-socialist obsession. On the one hand, in terms of ideology, they feared above all that ideas of atheism, materialism, and class struggle might infect Catholic workers. But, on the other hand, the Catholic leaders were also aware that the working class formed a particularly large group within the Catholic community and that the unity and power of the Catholic bloc would therefore be seriously undermined by Socialist success. Hence a tradition of anti-socialism within Catholicism can be traced back into the latter decades of the nineteenth century when especially at a local level there was an intense struggle for the loyalty of the Catholic worker. Significantly, nowhere else within society were so many priests deployed as in this sector. Of special significance was the role played within Catholic workers' organizations by priests
p. 229 who, though formally restricted to a narrow advisory role, in ↳ practice intervened in all possible social and political matters.[19] From 1918 the bishops regularly rejected any Catholic support for Socialism and spoke out against any form of collaboration between the 'Romans' and the 'Reds'. They directed their energies strenuously against the pre-war Social Democratic Party, threatening the heavy sanction of refusal of the sacraments to any Catholics who became involved with the party. In contrast, membership of the post-war Labour Party was denounced in their declaration of 1954 'only' as irresponsible.

The Nationaal Socialistische Beweging was also condemned by the bishops. This extreme-right movement which took much of its inspiration from the model of German Nazism, remained on the whole relatively insignificant and Catholics played only a very limited role among its leadership and membership. This was partly a consequence of the stance adopted by the bishops. In 1934 participation in the movement or support for it had been forbidden only to certain categories of the faithful, but after the NSB had won almost 8 per cent of the vote in 1935 the bishops acted in the following year to forbid any significant form of Catholic support for the party and supplemented this ban with the threat of refusal of the sacraments to those who ignored their order. Though it is clear that in this case the ideological incompatibility between Catholicism and National Socialism also played a role in determining the attitude of the bishops, structural considerations should also not be forgotten, for the NSB was also perceived as a threat to Catholic unity.

The consequences of these various clerical interventions for the successful operation of the Catholic Party was, as stressed earlier, highly important. It must be emphasized, however, that it is not possible to measure precisely their impact. Only occasionally can the effect of clerical intervention be conclusively demonstrated. In 1954, for example, the total membership of the party had fallen to 269,000, but the year after it rose to 430,000. This can only be attributed to the impact of the bishops' message of 1954. The Canadian political scientist H. Bakvis, in his study of the structures of power within Catholic circles, has spoken in general terms of the 'overwhelming importance of the Church in determining all aspects of Catholic political life'[20] and, even though this may be something of an exaggeration, it is nevertheless impossible to doubt the importance of the actions of the bishops.

In conclusion, two further remarks need to be made. The action of the clerical authorities and of the élites of Catholic pillar organizations in favour of the Catholic Party had a depoliticizing effect on the Catholic rank and file whose political passivity was thus greatly reinforced. This had adverse consequences for the development of a democratic spirit within Catholic ranks, as it hindered or at least delayed the emergence of independent political opinions. This was, however, only one side of the coin. The strength of a pillarized political Catholicism also served to reinforce the political stability of the Netherlands when, as during the era of National Socialist and Communist totalitarian ideologies in the 1930s, it was threatened by extremism
p. 230 of the left and right. And since, as one Dutch politician once remarked, 'political ↳ stability is not something to be despised',[21] this positive consequence of Catholic pillarization should not be neglected.

Finally, it should be noted that, though there exists no extensive study into the precise relationship between the episcopacy and the Catholic political leadership,[22] it is clear that here too there were two sides to the coin. While it is clear that the alliance of Church and party offered advantages for both sides, there is also evidence to suggest that the leaders of the Catholic political party soon began to distance themselves from some of the consequences of the Catholic revival, preferring to adopt instead a more modern attitude towards the autonomy of political action and the individual responsibility of politicians. One example serves to illustrate this point. The episcopal ban on co-operation between the Catholics and the Social Democrats issued in 1921 was weakened by the politicians in the following year by the addition of a single word which made co-operation '*exclusively* between Catholics and Social Democrats' impossible, thereby leaving open the option that such cooperation might be possible if a third party was included. Some years later in 1925, moreover, a further significant step was taken when it was decided that in circumstances of the utmost necessity ('de uiterste noodzaak') collaboration was possible, thereby opening up the possibility of all sorts of casuistry. Shortly afterwards, the parliamentary faction of the Catholic Party (RKSP) decided that it and not the episcopacy should have the final say on such matters.[23]

In addition, it is clear that not all bishops in every circumstance believed that it was right to interfere in political matters. This was especially so after the Second World War. Thus, it is striking that during the restoration of the Catholic pillar in the years 1944–1946 the bishops regularly advocated the reconstruction of the Catholic social organizations, but that they made no such statement regarding the Catholic political party. Moreover, it is known that during the preparation of the last episcopal letter on political matters in 1954 the college of bishops was severely divided internally.[24] However, it would not be until 1967 that one of the bishops finally announced publicly that a Catholic could vote freely for a party other than the Catholic Party and thereby brought to an end a tradition which had lasted half a century.

3. The Corporatist Alternative

The intransigent ideology of the Catholic revival was clearly apparent in the goals of the Catholic Party but here too the impact of modernization had an effect on the ideology of the party and eventually caused a
p. 231 process of adaptation to modernity to ↳ prevail. In order to examine this process, it is the attitude adopted by political Catholicism towards liberalism and capitalism which will form the focus of this section.[25]

Even in the nineteenth century, however backward and untouched by modern ideas they might have been, there were among some Dutch Catholics traces of an enlightened and liberal Catholicism. Thus, for example, around 1848 a group of Catholic politicians (who became known as 'papothorbeckians') co-operated with the Liberal leader Thorbecke in devising a constitution for the country. Similarly, in the political disputes over education, Catholic parliamentary deputies regularly supported the cause of public schooling, although this was directly opposed to the stance adopted by the bishops. It was only in the 1860s and the 1870s that under the pressure of the Catholic religious revival they developed into conservatives. In 1892 one of them declared 'I hold the democratic doctrine to be a gross and most unfortunate error'[26] and his comment was highly representative of the opinions of Catholic deputies at the time. This was even true of Schaepman and his small band of supporters, for the founder of the Catholic Party was no more a believer in democracy than were his conservative opponents. He too completely rejected, in accordance with Catholic teachings at the time, the principle of the sovereignty of the people and the democratic system based on it, and his political stance can only be described at best as progressive rather than truly democratic.[27]

In the years around 1900, alongside attacks on liberalism and democracy, a vision of a Catholic alternative gradually began to take shape around the concept of corporatism. This term had two meanings. It was used by some to define an alternative political organization of the State; while for others, it indicated a different structure for society. The first of these options, political corporatism, remained for a long time a minority

current within the party and it was only in the 1930s that it emerged as a distinctive trend. Around 1935, it began to be advocated by a number of party commissions which helped to devise a new programme for the party.[28] According to the party chairman, Goseling, corporatism should serve to strengthen and restore the health of the democratic system. Thus, any form of dictatorship, at least in the Dutch situation, was explicitly rejected by the Catholic Party and the support of quite a few commission members for a
p. 232 corporative parliamentary chamber should therefore be ↳ seen as supplementing rather than replacing the existing democratically elected chambers. Catholic politicians also proposed controls on the legal authorization of political parties, advocating that when any party expressed morally inadmissible opinions it should be outlawed. This was a proposal which was aimed especially at the Communist Party and, on the same basis, they also advocated limitations on the rights of association and assembly.

The party never went beyond these limited proposals and it cannot therefore be argued that the Catholic Party as a whole was committed to a wide-ranging revision of the constitution of the state. Nevertheless, individual Catholic politicians were on occasions willing to make much more radical proposals. The best known of these was C. Romme who until shortly after the Second World War continued to defend radical corporatist political ideas.[29] In his opinion, both the existing parliamentary chambers should be replaced by a corporatist chamber (rather than merely supplemented by such an institution) and he was similarly explicit on the conditions for the granting of legal status to political parties. They must, he insisted, acknowledge both the existence of God and the right to private property and he believed that similar conditions should also be extended to appointments to public offices. In addition, Romme sought a reduction in the powers of parliament and a strengthening of the responsibilities of the executive. These radical views did, however, distinguish Romme from other Catholic politicians and the number of actual initiatives and reforms remained limited. In 1938, in order to counter political extremism, Goséling (who in the mean time had become a minister) introduced legislation to parliament which limited freedom of association and assembly. Similarly, as a consequence of Catholic political initiatives, the Netherlands also experienced some limited measures of censorship of radio and film. The radio measures were intended above all to control the broadcasts of the Socialist broadcasting organization while the restrictions on film were aimed principally at the protection of children. Given their minority position, the Catholic Party (RKSP) had, however, only a partial responsibility for all such measures.

Nevertheless, as can be imagined, many non-Catholic Dutch found Catholic support for such views and ideas surprising. This was also true of the sympathetic attitude adopted by some in Catholic circles towards authoritarian regimes in Europe which were based on Catholic corporatist principles, such as those of Dollfuss in Austria and Salazar in Portugal. The greatest stir was caused by Catholic support for Franco's Nationalist forces during the uprising of 1936 and the subsequent Spanish Civil War. In the context of Dutch politics, this was an extraordinary stance and their support for Franco was shared only by Mussert's extreme-right National Socialists.[30]

Outside the mainstream of the unitary Catholic party, however, other elements within Dutch Catholicism were at the same time advocating extremist antidemocratic and Catholic authoritarian ideas. These were
p. 233 predominantly small groups ↳ of students and intellectuals, who gathered around certain journals which attacked the democratic system together with the Catholic Party which operated within it as well as advocating radical Catholic integralist and fascist views. In addition, these young self-styled Catholic revolutionaries denounced the mentality of small-minded complacency and indolence which they perceived in Dutch Catholic circles. For them, capitalism and socialism were both equal enemies, and there was sometimes an unmistakable flavour of anti-Semitism to their rhetoric. The actions of these small groups and individuals have tended to attract a degree of attention from historians which is out of proportion to the limited scale of their activities.[31] Nevertheless, in certain cases, they did succeed in creating some form of political organization. This was true in the case of the Zwart Front (later renamed the Nationaal Front) which contested national elections without ever winning a parliamentary seat. Subsequently, during the

German Occupation, the Nationaal Front collaborated closely with the Nazi authorities. The influence which these radicals had on the stance of the Catholic Party (RKSP) was on the whole insignificant and it is clear that in general the Catholic Party did not devote a great deal of attention to the construction of a Catholic alternative to the modern, liberal democratic state.

Nevertheless, the legacy of these ideas was evident in the political behaviour of some Dutch Catholics during the German Occupation of the country from 1940 to 1945. The Nazi regime attacked the Netherlands on 10 May 1940 and won a rapid military victory. The Queen fled to exile in London but within the country there were many Dutch who felt that it was necessary to reach some form of accommodation with the Nazi authorities. This led to the establishment of contact between the Dutch and German authorities over issues relating to the economy and public administration. It also, however, led a number of political figures to develop plans for the introduction of a new political system, modelled in part on the Nazi model. Though these ideas were advocated by political figures from many political backgrounds, Catholics were not absent from these discussions. As elsewhere in Europe, Dutch Catholics during the early months of the Occupation were torn between loyalty to the political status quo and the attractions of political reform.

The most important political initiative at this time was the Nederlandse Unie (Dutch Union) which was established shortly after the German invasion of 1940 and which hoped, somewhat naïvely, to carry through a corporatist reform of the political system in collaboration with the German occupation authorities.[32] The Catholics were prominent in their support for this initiative but at the end of 1941 the Unie was outlawed by the German authorities. Moreover, it must also be borne in mind that the Nederlandse Unie served as a safety-valve for the expression of patriotic and anti-German sentiments, and that it perhaps owed its
p. 234 success principally to this ↳ aspect of its activities. With the collapse of the Unie, it was the Nationaal Socialistische Beweging led by Anton Mussert which emerged as the advocate of unlimited collaboration with the Nazi authorities. As has already been indicated, however, the NSB had been strenuously denounced by the Dutch Catholic bishops during the 1930s and few Catholics were active in this movement. Instead, the Catholic population, in common with most of their compatriots, were gradually drawn towards a stance of resistance to German oppression.

The corporatist initiatives during the 1930s and the years of the Second World War merely serve to highlight the ambivalence and vagueness which often characterized Catholic attitudes. However, they also raise the question as to how political Catholicism came gradually to move towards a full acceptance of the democratic system. In explaining this evolution, four factors need to be stressed. First, both the ecclesiastical and secular Catholic élites from the nineteenth century onwards were inevitably obliged to appreciate that their own emancipation as well as the interests of the Church had been favoured by the acquisition of various democratic rights and freedoms. Thus, it may be assumed, that they evolved from a purely instrumental attitude to democracy to a more principled appreciation of its benefits. Secondly, their participation and integration in the democratic system had a substantial effect. From 1919 onwards no cabinet was formed without the co-operation of the Catholic Party, and this participation in the democratic exercise of power has deeply influenced their attitude towards the system as a whole. Thirdly, their experience of National Socialism, and of the German Occupation of their country during the Second World War served to make the Catholics aware of the fundamental virtues of democracy. Finally, the Second Vatican Council confirmed all these positive experiences by breaking with traditional Catholic political and social teachings and indicating that the Church did not possess a monopoly over truth. In this respect, the constitution *Gaudium et Spes* was of especial significance.

If one turns from political corporatism to social corporatism, then a similar combination of factors is evident, with the distinction that in this case Catholic social organizations, working in co-operation with Catholic politicians, made a much greater effort to construct an alternative to capitalism. This had already begun directly after the First World War. Between 1919 and 1921 an experimental system of joint industrial councils was established on a private basis among Catholics, in the hope that they would prove so popular

that they would lead to the establishment of a public system of such councils. Catholic employers and employees worked together in these councils as a demonstration of their resolve to replace capitalism by a better social system. Judging from the sixty-four councils which were established quite rapidly, this experiment was a success, but already in the course of 1920 the first difficulties began to emerge. Reluctance on the part of the employers as well as the radicalism of the initiator of the councils, Veraart, who wanted them to assume immediate responsibility for many economic matters, led eventually to the failure of this experiment.[33]

p. 235 Some ten or fifteen years later, during the economic crisis of the 1930s, the Catholics once again played an active part in the sometimes seemingly endless debates in the Netherlands about a restructuring of society. It was the Catholic workers' movement which was to the fore in these debates, bringing intense pressure to bear on the Catholic Party to enact essential social reforms. Through a vast campaign entitled 'Towards the New Community' ('Naar de Nieuwe Gemeenschap') they sought to mobilize the entire Catholic population to ensure that this was the last time that a capitalist crisis would cause such suffering to the working population. From within the ranks of the political party, their efforts were supported by, among others, the radical figure Max van Poll. He sought to 'break the power of capital' by advocating that even the banks should be subjected to the authority of a system of economic councils. The German wartime Occupation merely imposed a pause on these efforts to create a corporatist reorganization of society which were pursued after 1945 in collaboration with the Labour Party and resulted finally in 1950 in a parliamentary Act on Public Industrial Organization which was Unanimously welcomed by the Catholic population. It was intended that this legislation would provide the legal framework for an anti-capitalist reorganization of society along the lines laid down in the papal encyclical *Quadragesimo Anno*, in which the corporatist industrial councils would take on wide-ranging public responsibilities.[34]

Nevertheless, although the former Catholic workers' leader, De Bruyn, was appointed as the new Minister for Public Industrial Organization, this law proved to be a failure. This was the consequence of various factors, including the lack of determination on the part of the Catholic Party (KVP), the obstruction which the law encountered from employers, and the absence of firm support from the Protestant parties, which had always been much less enthusiastic towards the project. By far the most important factor was, however, the enormous rise in prosperity and the remarkable levels of economic growth which were achieved during the 1950s and 1960s, with the consequent benefits for large sections of the population. It is noticeable that the ideal of a corporatist economic system attracted widespread support principally in times of economic hardship, such as the years after the First World War, the economic recession of the 1930s and the years of economic reconstruction after 1945. Conversely, as soon as capitalism recovered and began to bring higher levels of prosperity, so the appeal of the corporatist alternative faded. When during the 1950s one wage increase succeeded another and cars, televisions, and refrigerators came within the reach of almost everybody, it seemed possible to dispense with a fundamental reorganization of the very capitalist system which was responsible for all these benefits. Thus, it is clear that the defeat of a social corporatist model of society was essentially a product of the success of modern capitalism.

p. 236 This does not, however, mean that the Catholic pursuit of a corporatist alternative ↳ had no consequences for the existing socio-economic system. Its influence must be sought instead in the emergence, principally after 1918, of a substantial network of governmental institutions and advisory councils in which employers, employees, and the government consulted with each other and discussed matters of common concern. Thus, for example, the Socio-Economic Council, which was provided for in the law of 1950, has subsequently become the most important advisory organization to the government. Moreover, in two other significant respects, Catholic corporatism has had an effect. First, in no other country in the world was a system of collective wage bargaining—this 'truce in the class struggle', as it has been termed[35]—developed as rapidly and applied so widely as in the Netherlands. Secondly, among many Catholic moral theologians and politicians, the right of workers to resort to industrial action was resolutely rejected. Dutch strike

figures rank among the lowest in Europe, and the right to strike has never been firmly established in law. Whether a strike was legal or not was left to the judges who acted on the basis of jurisprudence. Only with the establishment of the European Social Charter has the government recently been obliged to accept the legal recognition of strikes.[36]

Thus, although it must be accepted that the ideals of social corporatism have indeed been rendered redundant by modern developments, they nevertheless made a substantial impact on the nature of the socio-economic system. And, in this respect, the influence exercised by social corporatism differed markedly from that exercised by concepts of political corporatism which finally failed to leave any trace on the structures of the Dutch political system.

4. Family Policy

In a recent article, it was pointed out that the Catholic revival of the nineteenth century contained a strong disciplinary and moralizing component.[37] By means of its separate educational system, clerical poor relief, and various new religious associations, the secular and ecclesiastical Catholic élites sought to keep the Catholic working class under social and moral control. Visits to homes by the clergy and by members of organizations such as the associations of St Vincent de Paul were a commonly used means of supervision while the campaigns for the strengthening of marriage and family ties and against alcoholism, promiscuity, indolence, prostitution, and neo-Malthusianism all featured prominently. Thus, it is not surprising that political Catholicism as a part of the wider Catholic movement should have also sought to contribute to these goals.

p. 237 The family as the basis and central unit of society had long been a central article of Catholic belief but it was one which took on a particular importance during the nineteenth century. The reasons for this lay primarily in the perception of 'the family as an anti-revolutionary project under clerical supervision'.[38] The Church's fear of riots and revolution was shared by much of the nineteenth-century bourgeoisie and this common concern formed an important opportunity for collaboration between the two. A close-knit family life would, they hoped, provide a rampart against the recurrence of revolution and chaos and would ensure the eventual creation of a contented and hard-working population. The Church's concern for the family, however, also arose from the fact that the Church relied on the family, along with the education system and the new Catholic associationism, as a means of clerical recruitment and religious socialization. Moreover, the Church's desire to bring about a full emancipation of the Catholic population within Dutch society also played a role in fostering the Church's concern for the family, for, by reinforcing family bonds, the Church hoped to strengthen numerically the place of the Catholic minority in society. Thus, these various considerations combined to ensure that the Catholics used all available means—including political ones—to strengthen the family and to reinforce the bonds between marriage, procreation, and the family in the face of modern trends towards their dissolution. In collaboration with the Protestant parties and with broad support from the Liberals and the Socialists, political Catholicism was temporarily able to achieve much needed successes in this field.

The immorality laws of 1911, which were prepared and brought into force by a Catholic minister, marked a break with the former liberal-inspired legislation of the nineteenth century. This had been limited to excluding immorality from the public sphere in order that the citizen would not be confronted 'despite himself ' with such immorality. The laws of 1911, on the other hand, sought to establish a supra-personal moral order, which would govern the behaviour and relationships of citizens. Thus, the State assumed a new role as the moral arbiter of society. For example, a new regulation was introduced which protected adolescents against homosexual temptation and for the first time since 1811 homosexuality became a punishable offence. A further indication of the new mentality was the strengthening of the regulations

against pornography. Whereas formerly the law had limited itself to protecting the citizen against accidental contact with pornographic materials, the production and trade in pornography was now forbidden and made an offence. This was also true of the sale and distribution of contraceptive and abortion devices, which were similarly banned. By means of all these measures, the minister sought, so he declared, to build a dam against 'the great threat which immorality in its continually changing forms poses to the life of society'.[39]

In the course of the following decades, Catholic politicians made life difficult for movements aimed at
p. 238 sexual emancipation such as the Neo-Malthusian Federation ↳ and the homosexual association, the COC, which were refused a corporate legal character and were therefore seriously hampered in their public activities. As late as 1950, the Centrum voor Staatkundige Vorming (the Centre for Political Education) which was affiliated to the Catholic Party (KVP), proposed that homosexuality between consenting adults should also be forbidden and that convicted homosexuals should be committed to hospital for medical treatment. These far-reaching proposals were not, however, adopted by the party.[40]

In Catholic tradition, marriage had always been considered to be an indissoluble bond. But the Protestant influence on Dutch legislation had ensured that serious grounds for divorce such as desertion or adultery were acknowledged and laid down in law. Divorce on the grounds of mutual agreement by the partners concerned was not, however, permitted. But when in 1883 a judge decreed that the admission of adultery by one of the partners was sufficient proof of adultery an increasing number of couples used this possibility—regardless of whether adultery had actually taken place—to bring about a dissolution of their marriage. This procedure rapidly became known as 'the big lie' as there was apparently often reason to doubt the admissions, mostly by husbands, of their supposed adultery. In the course of the first half of the twentieth century, numerous Catholic committees, party politicians, and ministers tried to end this practice by bringing about a reversal of the 1883 decision in order to ensure that an admission of adultery would no longer be sufficient and positive proof would instead be required. The Catholics were, however, always opposed by a majority of the other political parties and on this point the efforts of the Catholic politicians, though highly revealing of the nature of their ambitions, brought no reward. At the end of the 1960s divorce legislation was changed but finally only in the opposite, more permissive direction.

Catholic family policy also sought to keep women out of the public and political spheres and to maintain them within the home. This was evident, for example, in the campaign to ensure that female civil servants and teachers were dismissed from public service when they married. This goal was achieved in 1924 and the Catholic minister Romme even proposed in 1937 that married women should be forbidden from working in factories.[41] Several factors underlay this proposal, including the wish to diminish mass unemployment during the depression, but it was also indicative of a patriarchal ideology which believed that a woman ought to devote herself to her family and home. The opposition aroused by his suggestion was, however, so substantial that the minister was forced to retreat and chose to withdraw his proposal. Moreover, in 1957 some Protestant and female Catholic deputies voted with the opposition to force the government (of which the Catholic Party—KVP—was a member) to withdraw the 1924 legislation which discriminated against married female civil servants and teachers.

p. 239 Catholic politicians have also striven to create a strong material foundation for family life in which its self-reliance and independence would be guaranteed and strengthened. One element of this policy was, for example, the idea of a family wage, which was directly inspired by the encyclical *Rerum Novaram* and which meant that the wages of a husband and father should be sufficient to support a family. Housing policy was similarly influenced by these goals in so far as the provision of sufficient housing for large families was always kept in mind and, more especially perhaps, because private home ownership was always strongly favoured. The same was also true of children's allowances. The first extensive provision of such allowances in 1939 was the product of an initiative by the Catholic Party (RKSP), and in the subsequent decades the

Catholics and the Social Democrats were their strongest advocates. Various elements of Catholic family policy have thus come to form an integral element: of Dutch social legislation.

If one was to try to assess how successful the Catholic attempts were to impose their views concerning the family, then the answer must be rather similar to that already provided concerning their corporatist policies. The moral offensive by the Catholic movement, via the influence of the Catholic Party, wording with orthodox Protestantism and supported by other groups, did indeed temporarily exert an incontrovertible influence on Dutch legislation and thereby on the behaviour of the Dutch population. This impact was, however, only temporary for between 1969 and 1981 legislation with regard to contraception, homosexuality, pornography, abortion, and divorce was again changed, this time in a liberal direction. These were the years in which 'the permissive society' was created. At the same time, moreover, the under-representation of women in public offices and the professional world was slowly but surely overcome. If some financial elements of Catholic family policies have remained in force, this is because they have become instruments of social or welfare policy, and not because they are generally regarded as serving moral purposes.

The conclusions of demographic analyses of Dutch society also demonstrate the influence which Catholic teachings exerted during the first half of the twentieth century. In comparison with other countries, the Netherlands experienced a much slower decline in marital fertility (as part of the wider demographic revolution) and a marked fall in the total number of extra-marital births as well as low divorce and abortion rates. The historical demographer E. W. Hofstee has no hesitation in attributing these trends to what he terms 'the organized confessionalism' that has left a strong mark on Dutch society, whereby 'a concern for family, marriage and procreation and for the relationship between the sexes in general [was] central, especially for the Catholic population'. A characteristic feature of Dutch society in the first half of the twentieth century was, he concludes, 'a far-reaching control of sexual behaviour which by comparison with other countries appears sometimes unreal'.[42]

On the other hand, as a number of recent publications have stressed, the modernization of fertility patterns
p. 240 and of sexual behaviour did, nevertheless, steadily ↳ progress in the Netherlands during these years.[43] This was also true of the Catholic population, the rates of marital fertility among whom, though higher than the Dutch average, did nevertheless show a steady fall. Moreover, it seems that this somewhat higher figure was much more a product of economic wishes or necessities than of the pressure of Catholic teachings. For the Catholic population as a whole it was, thus, certainly not true that the Catholic revival and the moral offensive was sufficient to prevent them from sharing all modern opinions and forms of behaviour.

This last point appears very strikingly from a recent study of the practice of rhythm methods of contraception in Catholic circles during the 1930s.[44] Until the decision of Pius XII in 1951, the question as to whether this method of contraception was permitted or not remained unclear. In the Netherlands most moral theologians favoured a restrictive interpretation and argued that the method could only be permitted in exceptional circumstances. Nevertheless, it appears from this study that a significant number of Catholic couples who were in no sense exceptional regularly used the rhythm method under the guidance of Catholic doctors and with the knowledge of the parish priest. Although it was an unreliable form of contraception, the rhythm method was nevertheless clearly a system of birth control and it is therefore scarcely surprising that among many Catholics the practice of this method was only a transitional stage towards the adoption of other more modern forms of contraception. In addition, a number of recent studies have drawn attention to the more general imbalance between the enormous volume of verbal denunciations levelled by Catholic groups at neo-Malthusian ideas and 'other forms of immorality' and, on the other hand, the gradual but remorseless process of adaptation which characterized the behaviour of the Catholic population. In the light of this analysis, the conventional perception of the Dutch as a somewhat prudish nation becomes no more than a misleading cliché.[45] This may be something of an exaggerated revision of the traditional interpretation but it is nevertheless clear that the co-operation of the Church and the Catholic Party in the

moral offensive during the first half of the century proved unable to halt the modernization of marital and family life.

5. National Policy

As has been outlined in the earlier sections of this chapter, participation in the democratic system gave political Catholicism the opportunity to advance its own ideals. It could attempt to give shape to its alternatives to the modern liberal and capitalist structures as well as striving to reinforce both the family and personal morality. However, this participation in both parliament and government also involved
p. 241 Catholic ↳ politicians in other tasks and responsibilities at a national level which had little to do with Catholic doctrines, but which drew on national traditions and even on sentiments of loyalty and devotion to the Dutch nation. A comprehensive analysis of the connection between Catholic and national politics is not possible here, and this section of the chapter will therefore concentrate on an investigation of two questions which serve to illustrate this more general theme. First, what stance did the political arm of Catholicism adopt towards defence policy and imperialism and colonialism? And, secondly, how monarchist were the Catholics? In both cases, the analysis will highlight Catholic traditions and ideals and seek to examine how far these conflicted with national ideals, just as in the other fields already examined, Catholic teachings on occasions came into conflict with modern ideas.[46]

Until the Netherlands became part of NATO after 1945, its defence policy was a source of continual problems. Catholic politicians, moreover, did little to assist in the resolution of these problems. Their relative lack of attention to defence issues was due to a number of widely differing motives which had their origins in the nineteenth century. Thus, at that time, it was rare to encounter a Catholic officer in the army or navy, and, as far as the higher officer corps was concerned, this remained the case during the first half of the twentieth century. Unintentionally, the military hierarchy therefore acquired a Liberal and Protestant character which reflected the traditional backwardness of the Catholics as a minority group in society. Secondly, there was the problem of universal military conscription, which was only finally introduced in 1898. In their long-standing and determined opposition to this democratic reform during much of the nineteenth century, two considerations were of importance to the Catholics. On the one hand, their oft-expressed objections to the coarseness of barracks life was, of course, a product of their religious convictions and would indeed continue to be expressed regularly until long into the twentieth century. But, on the other hand, conservative Catholic politicians also wished to maintain the undemocratic and discriminatory replacement system which enabled an individual to avoid military conscription by paying for it to be undertaken by somebody else. Apparently, moral dangers were more threatening to the rich than to the poor....

The malaise in national defence policy during the inter-war period was due not only to the pursuit of disarmament by the Liberals and Social Democrats but also to the hesitations and reluctance shown by the confessional groups, above all the Catholics.[47] This was most clearly apparent in the failure of the Navy Act of 1923.[48] Within the Catholic parliamentary group, ten dissidents voted against this measure and thereby obstructed the enlargement and strengthening of the Dutch navy. Similarly, until the second half of the 1930s, many in Catholic circles remained opposed to essential reforms of the army. From 1917 onwards,
p. 242 these Catholics could derive ↳ new justifications from the peace initiatives of Pope Benedict XV. Though it is true that these proposals had stressed arbitration and mutual disarmament, some Catholics believed that in order to reach this goal it was necessary to begin with unilateral national disarmament. Like the German Dominican, Stratmann, some also questioned the validity of the Church's teachings on the concept of a just war and in the ranks of the Catholic Youth Peace Action (Katholieke Jongeren Vredes Actie) any form of conscription was rejected in favour of a professional army. A very different but highly important motive behind the hesitant behaviour of the Catholic Party was the pressure exercised on its parliamentary group

by deputies from the Catholic workers' movement. Because of its heterogeneous social composition, the party was continually faced with the dilemma of deciding whether to give priority in the budget to expenditure on social policy (favoured by the Catholic workers' movement) or on national defence.

Certainly, as far as the navy was concerned, the Catholics always displayed little interest. Its main purpose was to defend the Dutch East Indies and the Catholics felt little sympathy with the colonial world. They did not play a significant role either in the economy or the administration of the East Indies and on matters of colonial policy the Catholic Party was content to follow the lead of its Protestant coalition partner. Catholic enthusiasm for the colony was only aroused where the issue of missionary activity was concerned. With the number of missionaries that Catholic Holland produced, they easily dominated the foreign Catholic missionaries and it was therefore all the more galling for them that the constitution of the Dutch East Indies proved to be far more favourable to Protestant missionaries than to the Catholics. The colonial policy of the Catholic Party (RKSP) during the inter-war period, thus amounted to little more than continual efforts to bring about a reform of the constitution of the East Indies on this matter. However, despite heavy pressure from their supporters, the leaders of the Catholic Party were never willing to put their alliance with their Protestant coalition partners at stake over the issue. A similar pragmatism—some preferred to call it opportunism—was displayed by the party towards a number of Catholic intellectuals, youth figures, and politicians from within their own ranks who, on the basis of their Catholic beliefs, expressed support for the nationalist independence struggle in the colony and thereby sought to bring Catholic doctrine in line with a principled anti-colonialism. On an ideological level, the leaders of the Catholic Party were unable to counter these arguments, but in practice they always preferred to ignore the demands of the East Indian nationalists.[49]

Thus, the stance of the Catholics on defence and colonial matters could be criticized on a number of grounds and it is not surprising that their ideological and political opponents should have accused them of being too weak in their defence of the national interests of the country. That such criticisms were often mixed with old Protestant prejudices about the unpatriotic character of the Catholics should not be allowed to undermine these arguments. Nevertheless, the extent of Catholic hesitation should not be exaggerated. Under pressure
p. 243 from the German threat, the ↳ Catholic Party (RKSP) in the second half of the 1930s did make strenuous efforts to rectify the military situation. And when after 1945 Catholic politicians came to play the leading role in the process of decolonization from the Dutch East Indies, they defended Dutch national interests (or what they took them to be) as consistently and determinedly as possible, including the repeated use of military means in order to break the nationalist resistance. Thus, as regards both of the issues analysed briefly here, the stance of political Catholicism in effect lay somewhere between Catholic and national traditions, interests and opinions.

The impression of a somewhat ambivalent attitude on the part of the Catholics towards Dutch national interests was reinforced by the extensive cult of the Papacy which was current in Catholic circles. This orientation towards Rome, which had already been evident among the Catholic minority during the era of the Republic, increased considerably during the nineteenth century as a consequence of the anti-revolutionary triumphalism of the Papacy. The manner in which Dutch Catholic loyalties were focused especially strongly on Rome and the Pope was evident from two factors: the already mentioned missionary movement and the Zouave movement of the 1860s. This consisted of volunteers who assisted the papal army in their defence of the Papal State against the Italian nationalists and cost quite a number of young Catholic men their Dutch nationality or even their lives. In comparison with other countries, the number of Dutch participants was in both cases exceptionally high while other evidence, such as, for example, the representation and mythologization of the Popes in the Catholic press and the growth in organized pilgrimages to Rome also points towards a highly developed identification with the Papacy as the centre of the universal Church. Where else, for example, did Catholics build a small-scale replica of St Peter's in Rome, as the Dutch Catholic architect Cuypers did at Oudenbosch? And where else could an ode to the Pope

—the famous *To You, O King of Ages (Aan U, o Koning der Eeuwen)* composed by Schaepman—become the favourite song of Catholics?

Thus, Dutch Catholics and their political party regularly came into conflict with their non-Catholic fellow citizens over policy towards the Papacy. The best known example of such conflict was provided by the long-drawn-out question of the Dutch diplomatic representation at the Vatican, which was removed as the result of a Liberal initiative in 1872 but restored as a diplomatic listening-post during the First World War. Shortly after the war, the Liberals, Socialists, and Protestants refused to confirm its re-establishment, provoking a serious political crisis in relations with the Catholic Party (RKSP), and the embassy was only definitively re-established in 1943. Problems also, however, arose at other times, notably, for example, on the occasion of the Borromaeus encyclical of 1910. In this text, the Pope referred to the sixteenth-century religious reformers as 'haughty and rebellious people', who suited, among others, 'the first and most corrupted monarch or nation'.[50] Public protests and a debate in parliament ensued, leading the Catholic Party
p. 244 leadership to take ↳ action and draw up an apology on the part of the Pope. His words, so it was insisted, could not be taken as a reference either to the Dutch royal family of Orange-Nassau or to the Dutch Protestants.

Over this issue, the Catholic cult of the Papacy came directly into conflict with the pre-eminent symbol of Dutch nationalism, the royal family. And it is this which provided one of the roots of the Catholic glorification of the Dutch royal family. What better way for the Catholics to refute allegations regarding their extra-national ultramontane loyalties than by a glorification of the Dutch monarchy? However, there was also a second reason for their royalist devotion. One of the major motives for the establishment and development of the Catholic pillar by the clerical and secular Catholic leaders had, after all, been their not unfounded fear that the power of attraction exercised by the Socialists might draw the Catholic workers away from the Church and the Catholic faith. Moreover, until the 1930s the Socialists retained a strong anti-monarchist tradition.[51] In the 1880s their leader had spent some time in jail on a charge of *lèse-majesté* and they referred to William III as William the Last. For a long time, the Socialist Party remained committed in principle to republicanism and its deputies refused to attend the annual speech from the throne by the head of state. It was no wonder then that one of the songs popular among the bourgeoisie which began 'Up, Up, Up, Hang the Socialists Up' concluded equally naturally 'Up with Orange, Long Live Queen Wilhelmina'. Catholic leaders seized upon this socialist anti-monarchism by seeking to give their own monarchism a marked anti-socialist bias. This was evident, for example, at the inauguration of Queen Wilhelmina in 1898. The Socialists absented themselves from this ceremony, but the R. K. Volksbond (Roman Catholic People's Union), which relied on the support of workers and the middle class, was prominently represented and took the opportunity to send an Address to Her Majesty, in which the Catholic workers declared themselves to be 'faithful subjects, devoted to the House of Orange'.[52] The climax of this strategy was the role which Catholic working-class organizations played, under the direction of Catholic politicians, during November 1918 when the spectre of a Socialist revolution briefly raised its head. Once the danger had passed, a substantial homage to the royal family took place in The Hague in which Catholic organizations played the major part.[53]

How closely Catholic loyalty towards the monarchy was linked to considerations of Catholic self-interest was clear from the attitude which for half a century Queen Wilhelmina adopted towards her Catholic subjects. She felt no sympathy whatsoever for them and barely tolerated Catholic ministers.[54] For the
p. 245 Catholic leaders, the ↳ unrequited nature of their love was, however, of no real significance. Their monarchism had its own particular motivations and, thus, even the loyalty shown by the Catholics to the House of Orange as a symbol of their national loyalty was not entirely devoid of ambivalence.

6. Conclusion

Rooted in the organizational pillarization of the Catholic world, and assured of the consistent support of the Church hierarchy, political Catholicism considerably influenced Dutch politics and society over a number of decades. Though it did not ultimately prove able to enact a distinctly Catholic alternative to the liberal, capitalist system and the national traditions of the Netherlands, its influence, nevertheless, remains noticeable today, even if since the 1960s the ideological impulses which lay behind Catholic political action have all but disappeared.

In conclusion, it is perhaps worthwhile to examine more closely the dates of 1917 and 1967 chosen at the outset of the chapter as the framework for this study. On the one hand, it is not difficult to argue in favour of the importance of both of these dates. As has already been described, the introduction of universal male suffrage in 1917 exacerbated the fears of the Church and of the Catholic leadership and therefore hastened their wish to create a clearly defined Catholic Party (the RKSP). In the elections held in the subsequent year, the party immediately won thirty of the hundred parliamentary seats and, despite some fluctuations, it maintained this position until 1967. In that year, however, as has also already been mentioned, one of the bishops openly stated that Catholics were free to vote for whichever party they wished. Consequently, in 1967, the party (KVP) experienced its first major defeat, and in the subsequent elections of 1971 and 1972 this dramatic decline continued. Though some 40 per cent of the Catholic population still supported the Catholic Party, this marked a radical change from the 80 or 90 per cent who had formerly habitually voted for it. The successful development of co-operation with the Protestant parties, from which would emerge a few years later the new Christian Democratic Party (Christen Democratisch Appèl) is inconceivable without the decline of the Catholic Party which began in 1967. On the other hand, the complex historical trends described in this chapter cannot be confined by neat end-dates. Thus, despite numerous divisions, political Catholicism was already a reality in the Netherlands in the decades around 1900 while the debate about the possibility and desirability of a distinctly Catholic form of politics did not suddenly emerge after 1967 but had gradually developed from 1945 onwards.

How far Catholic politicians were willing to go in their efforts to bring about an alternative form of Catholic political and social organization is very difficult to ascertain. In a recent provocative article, the German ecclesiastical historian C. Weber has proposed a sketch of an ideal type of what he terms ‘ultramontane fundamentalism’, a coherent, anti-modern, and fundamentalist range of objectives, incorporating not merely the strengthening of the central power of Rome and a cult of the Papacy, but ↳ also a complete programme of conservative, not to say reactionary, policies in such fields as politics, economics, sexual relationships, science, and religious faith.[55] If one seeks to compare Dutch political Catholicism with the political and social components of this ideal type, then the limited influence of such ultramontane objectives would inevitably become evident. Radical voices could certainly be heard among Dutch Catholics, and in preceding sections of this chapter some of these have been described. But they did not exert a dominant influence. Two factors would seem to be of importance in explaining this relative moderation. Catholics were always aware of their position as a minority group in society, and this prevented them in advance from pursuing far-reaching ambitions. But of even greater importance was the influence which distinctive Dutch traditions of freedom and tolerance, that were in marked opposition to ultramontane fundamentalism, gradually gained over Dutch Catholics. Thus, in many cases, the commitment of Dutch Catholics to a distinctly Catholic or ultramontane alternative was limited to no more than lip-service and verbal denunciations.

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That the influence which such ultramontane ideas exercised over the Catholic rank-and-file should not be exaggerated can also be emphasized by one last remark. In seeking to explain the process of depolarization in Dutch society in recent decades, sociologists have generally stressed the internal religious-theological crisis provoked by trends such as the emergence of the New Theology movement and the Second Vatican

Council and the consequences which this had for undermining old certainties among priests and the Catholic faithful. According to this explanation, this religious crisis then spread to the secular components of Catholicism, including political Catholicism, and eroded the identification of the Catholic community with their pillar. Not unreasonably, other sociologists have pointed to the role played by external factors, above all the rapid economic growth of the 1950s and 1960s which definitively transformed the Netherlands into a modern society, thereby posing an unprecedented challenge to religion and tradition and severely weakening the strength of confessional structures of power. These interpretations have an undoubted validity but the historian is more inclined to seek the origins of depillarization further back in history. On the basis of an increasing number of studies, it is clear that the process of pillarization among Dutch Catholics was not easily achieved.[56] On the contrary, it was from the outset a process which was dominated by serious differences of opinion and beset by conflicts and frictions. In the case of political Catholicism, this was always evident but it was also true of the development of the Catholic workers movement as well as of numerous other initiatives which were directed at binding widely divergent groups such as intellectuals, women and young people to the Catholic cause. Opposition and resistance to these initiatives by the Church
p. 247 and Catholic élites was commonplace and only the deployment of the power ↳ and authority of the Church enabled the Catholic pillar to be held together. The significance of these historical studies is that it was not merely the short-term developments highlighted by sociologists but also long-standing historical factors which explain the rapidity and intensity of the process of deconfessionalization and depolarization in the Netherlands during the 1960s and 1970s, as well as the retreat and subsequent disappearance of the phenomenon of political Catholicism.

Notes

* The author is most grateful to Mrs J. Moonen and Dr M. Conway for the considerable assistance which they have so generously given to the translation of this chapter.

1 A general account of Dutch history in the 19th and 20th cents. is provided in E. H. Kossmann, *The Low Countries 1780–1940* (Oxford, 1978).

2 A general account of social science theories and of the historiography on pillarization is provided in a number of articles. See e.g. W. ten Have, 'De geschiedschrijving over crisis en verzuiling', in W. Mijnhardt (ed.), *Kantelend geschiedbeeld: Nederlandse historiografie sinds 1945* (Utrecht, 1983), 256–88; J. C. H. Blom, 'Onderzoek naar verzuiling in Nederland. Status quaestionis en wenselijke ontwikkeling', in J. C. H. Blom and C. J. Misset (eds.), *'Broeders sluit U aan': Aspecten van verzuiling in zeven Hollandse gemeenten* (n.p., 1985), 10–29; J. A. Righart, *De katholieke zuil in Europa: Een vergelijkend onderzoek naar het ontstaan van verzuiling onder katholieken in Oostenrijk, Zwitserland, Belgi'ë en Nederland* (Meppel, 1986), 189–95; T. Duffhues, 'Staat "De wankele zuil" nog overeind? Een verkenning van de recente literatuur over verzuiling en ontzuilling', *Jaarboek Katholiek Documentatie Centrum*, 17 (1987), 134–62; J. Ramakers and H. Righart, 'Het katholicisme', in P. Luykx and N. Bootsma (eds.), *De laatste tijd: Geschiedschrijving over Nederland in de 20e eeuw* (Utrecht, 1987), 99–134. A classic account of the phenomenon of pillarization in English is A. Lijphart, *The Politics of Accommodation: Pluralism and Democracy in the Netherlands* (Berkeley and Los Angeles, 1968).

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10 J. A. A. van Doom, 'Verzuiling, een eigentijds systeem van sociale controle', *Sociologische Gids*, 3 (1956), 41–9.

11 See e.g. A. T. M. Duffhues, *Generaties en patronen: De katholieke bemeging te Arnhem in de 19e en 20ste eeuw* (Baarn, 1991). For a contribution from this perspective in English, see T. Duffhues and A. Felling, 'The Development, Change and

Decline of the Dutch Catholic Movement', *International Social Movement Research*, 2 (1989), 95–114.

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