

Science, religion and emancipation: Dutch Calvinist and Roman Catholic responses to modernity in the early twentieth century

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Introduction and central question

Central question: How did 'science' gain increasing acceptance in the religious subcultures of Calvinists and Roman Catholics in the Netherlands in the period 1880-1960?

Outline:

- I. Social and organizational developments in the Netherlands, 1880-1960
- II. Case study: discussions on the theory of evolution among Calvinists and Catholics
- III. Concluding remarks

I. Social developments in the Netherlands in the late nineteenth and early twentieth century

- Calvinists and Catholics in the nineteenth century and their approach of the sciences
- The initial impetus to change: the foundation of confessional organizations

Confessional scientific organizations and their objectives:

- 1880: the Calvinist *Free University*: science based 'only on the foundation of the Calvinist principles'
- 1896: the Calvinist *Christian Society for Physicists and Physicians*: science 'by the light of the Word of God'
- 1904: The *Society for the Advancement of Science among Catholics in the Netherlands*: 'promoting the sciences among the Dutch Catholics'
- 1923: *Roman Catholic University*: science with 'as the highest authority God's revealed truth, of which the R.C. Church is acknowledged the bearer'

General remarks:

- Similarities between Calvinists and Catholics
- 'Pillarization' (*verzuiling*) in the Dutch society in the early twentieth century
- Pillarization and circulation of knowledge

II. A case study: discussions on the theory of evolution among Catholics and Calvinists

- Among Catholics
 - Till c. 1880
 - In 1918 (A.C.J. van Goor)
 - In the 1950s/1960s (A.G.M. van Melsen)
- Among Calvinists
 - Till c. 1880
 - In 1899 (A. Kuyper)
 - In the 1930s (J.P. de Gaay Fortman, W.J. Schouten)
 - In the 1950s/1960s (J. Lever)

III. Concluding remarks

- Three periods:
 - Till c.1880: neglect/condemnation of the sciences
 - 1880-1950: tension between participation and isolation
 - 1950s/1960s: increasing acceptance of mainstream science

- Factors that played a role in the circulation of knowledge:
 - Striving for emancipation
 - A new synthesis between science and religion?
 - The role of the confessional universities
 - Increasing professionalization of the sciences
 - Start of the de-pillarization of Dutch society

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